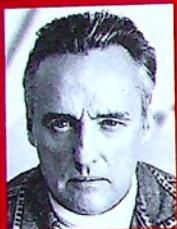


A NEW BREED



Dennis Hopper



Stephanie Seymour



Grace Jones



Geoffrey Holder

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OF EVIL.



HELL

A CYBERPUNK THRILLER

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Product Information Number 171

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VOLUME 1 NUMBER 6 • NOVEMBER 1994

Cover Story:

The Shape of Things to Come

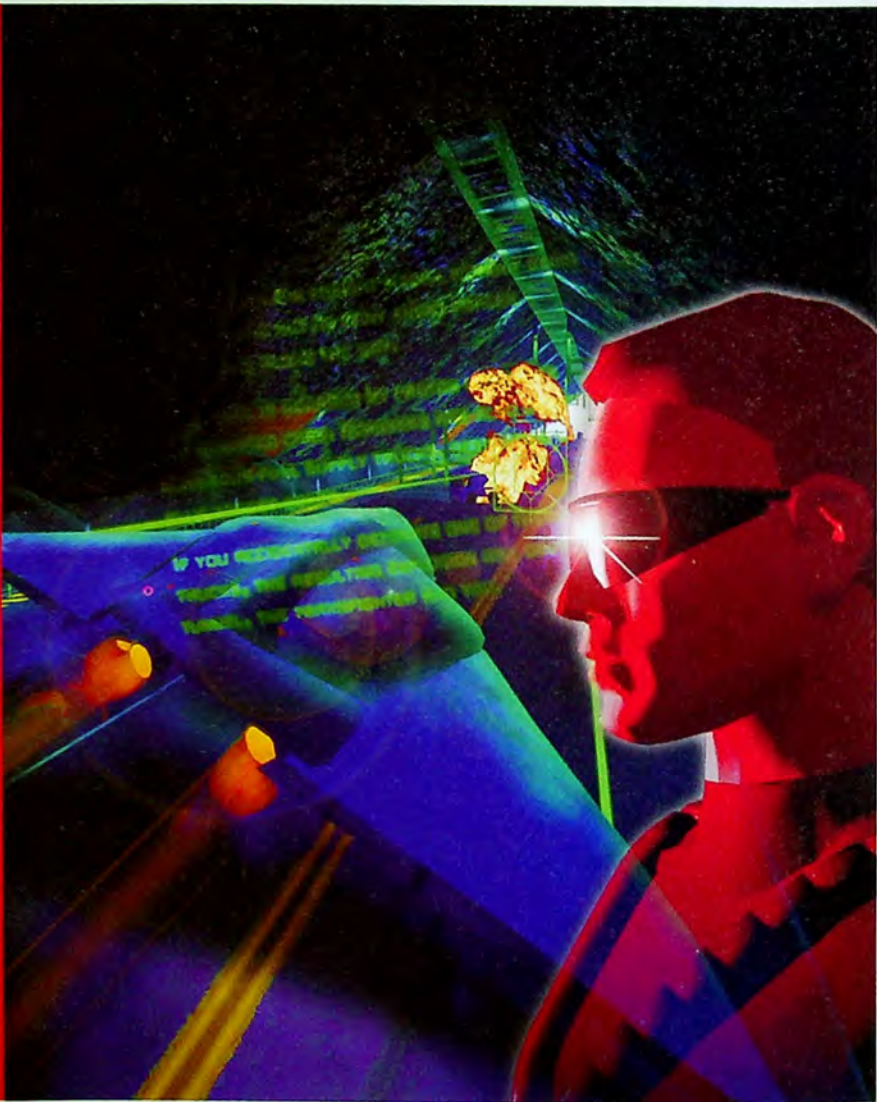
Part One: *Cyberia*

The art of computer graphics and 3D modeling has come a long way — all the way to *Cyberia*, in fact.

With *Cyberia*, Interplay and developers Xatrix Interactive Design have created a game they hope will open up a whole new market of PC Gamers. Featuring 3D graphics throughout — the kind that were once reserved only for game intros — *Cyberia* will have unbeatable appeal for all the new multimedia PC owners out there who want the very latest in high-tech gaming to show off their new machines. And with its entirely variable difficulty level, *Cyberia* will be accessible to both newcomers and veterans alike.

Part Two: Games of Future Past

To truly appreciate *Cyberia* — as well as the impressive accomplishments that seem to mark most PC games these days — it really helps to step back and look at the state of gaming graphics just a few short years ago. Gary Meredith shows us where we've been, and helps to put the future in perspective.



Matt

Steve

Goodbye, Hello, and Other Stuff Too

It's "Good news, bad news" time — but fortunately there's a lot more good news than bad news to report. The bad news is that our own fair-haired Trent C. Ward — Associate Editor, gamer extraordinaire, and all-around swell guy — is leaving us to become Reviews Editor at *Next Generation*. He'll be sorely missed here at *PCG*, but he always did have a secret longing to play games on systems other than PCs. We wish Trent the best, and know he'll be a major part of making *Next Generation* the best multi-platform games magazine possible.

But what with the entire *PC Gamer* crew compiling demos for our first CD-ROM edition next month, there wasn't much time for farewells. We're excited at the prospect of giving you a chance to try out some great games — *Wing Commander III*, *Star Crusader*, *Lords of Midnight*, *Quarantine*,

Desert Strike, and much more — but we're also working on a couple of other features to make the demo work *with* the stuff inside the magazine.

Tom McDonald, for instance, will be scouring the on-line services to gather all the bug patches he writes about, so now you can try them as soon as you read about them. The same goes for Scott Wolf and his Lupine On-Line column — when he writes about a great shareware game, you'll be able to play it yourself without spending a penny downloading it.

We've got a lot more in store for the disc, but we don't want to give away everything right now. Stick with us — it's only going to get better!

Steve & Matt

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Welcome to *Cyberia*, where terrorism is just another word for nothing left to do

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You should have seen Gary as he gleefully dug through his collection of old games, gathering screen shots of yesterday's idea of "cutting-edge" graphics!

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Help young Werner explore his visually stunning land in this amazing new RPG from The Software Toolworks (soon to become Mindscape — see Eyewitness!)

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Sir-tech is back, with a role-player's dream come true: great graphics and true RPG feel. It's been awhile since RPG fans had anything this good to look forward to.

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Blackthorne

by Interplay

Blackthorne is one of the best action games we've seen in a long time, with all the strategy, blood-letting, and devilish demons you could ask for.



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We all had the same dream, about a magazine just full of great stuff. This is that dream.

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COVER DISK

INSTALLING • PLAYING • QUICK TIPS

We've got something really special for you this month. In conjunction with Interplay and Blizzard, we're thrilled to bring you *Blackthorne*, an arcade-adventure/shooter that's sure to keep you riveted to your

keyboard. Imagine a berserk version of *Prince of Persia* with lots more blood, and you've got the game in a nutshell. On this month's disk you'll find the first three of seventeen levels of *Blackthorne*. But be forewarned — these first



three levels will only leave you wanting more. Much, much more.

Blackthorne

by Interplay

Sarlac's hand had tightened its grip over all of Tuul. Stonefist, the outland bastion ruled by King Vlaros and home to the fabled Lightstone, stood alone against Sarlac's Ka'dra'suul warriors. As the warriors prepared to storm the gates of Stonefist, Vlaros instructed his sorcerer to spirit his son, Prince Kyle, and the Lightstone away to safety on a strange planet — Earth. It's now 20 years later, and you, as Kyle, have returned to Tuul, trained and ready to free your world from Sarlac's tyranny. Teleported to the very depths of Sarlac's keep, you must battle and think your way through the catacombs, gathering weapons and other items you'll need in your quest to find and destroy the evil dictator.



Watch out for any metal floor plates. A step on one of these will really spoil your day, unless, of course, you're a quick tumbler.



Trying to outrun or leap over a hover bomb is a no-win proposition — just hide against the wall until the bomb has gone past and exploded...



...and then wait for an opening to start blasting away. These warriors fire in predictable patterns, so good timing lets you get a shot in before he ducks back into the shadows.

Getting Started

To run *Blackthorne*, you'll need at least a 386/25MHz, 4MB RAM, VGA, and about 1.5MB hard-drive space. You'll also need 2MB of Expanded Memory. *Blackthorne* supports Sound Blaster and 100% compatible sound cards, as well as Adlib and Pro Audio Spectrum boards, and MIDI output. Keyboard play is standard, and you can use most joysticks as well. Probably the best input option would be the Gravis Gamepad.

To install *Blackthorne*, insert the disk in your 3.5" drive, type the letter of that drive followed by a colon (e.g., A: or B:), and press Enter. Next, type *INSTALL* and press Enter, and *Blackthorne* will install itself on your hard drive. After the game's been copied and unpacked on your hard drive, access the *Blackthorne* setup program by returning to the C: drive and going into the *BTHORNE* subdirectory. Then type *SETUP*, which will take you to a screen where you can choose a sound board for both music and sound effects. It will ask you for address, interrupt and DMA channel information — for most boards just accept the default values. Refer to your sound board setup info should the defaults not work. Save the setup, and when you're returned to the DOS prompt, simply type *BTHORNE* to run the game. **NOTE:** You may select the "No Sound" option, should your particular sound board cause problems with running the game.

Quick Tips

- When moving from one scene to another, it's always wise to enter the new scene with your weapon unsheathed. More often than not, one of Sarlac's minions will be waiting for you.
- While it can be fun to blast away at everyone you meet — you won't be penalized, so why not? — you might miss some valuable info by not talking to them first. Then you can blow 'em away.
- Examine the scenery of each area carefully. Often there are paths to take which might not be all that obvious at first sight. Look behind waterfalls and at the bottom of chasms.
- When hiding against a wall, don't bother pressing the down arrow in order to shoot. Just fire, and you'll step forward and blaze away — and then automatically return to your hiding position.



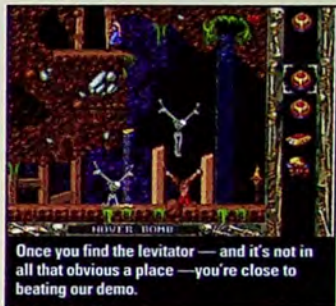
Always examine the bodies of your fallen foes for any useful items. They don't all carry something you can use, but can you really afford not to look?



Don't waste your ammo on these guys — you need some major firepower in the form of a hover bomb. Just remember to stand well clear of the blast area, or you might end up blowing yourself to kingdom come.



The remote wasp is just what you need when things are a little out of your reach.



Once you find the levitator — and it's not in all that obvious a place — you're close to beating our demo.

Controlling Your Character

You can use a the keyboard, a joystick, or the Gravis PC Gamepad to control your character.

Movement

Keyboard:

- E = Use item
- PgUp/PgDn = Select item
- UP Arrow = Climb ladder, grab ledge, talk to other characters, or hide against wall
- DOWN Arrow = Climb down or duck
- RIGHT/LEFT Arrow = Move right/left
- Q = Give up
- ESC = Exit program

With weapon sheathed:

- Space bar/F/ENTER = Jump
- S = Draw weapon
- D = Run

With weapon unsheathed:

- Space bar/F/ENTER = Fire forward
- S = Put weapon away
- D = Fire behind

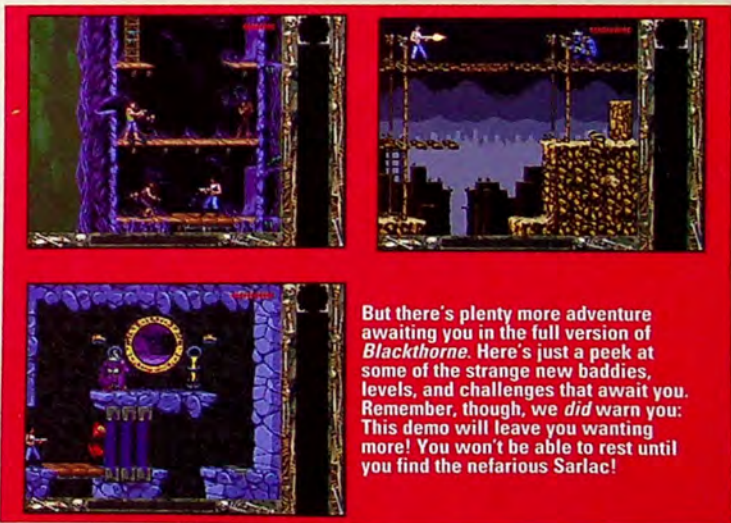
Gravis Gamepad:

Arrow keys same as with keyboard option.

- Red button (#1) = Fire (weapon unsheathed); Jump (weapon sheathed)
- Blue button (#2) = Shoots behind (weapon unsheathed); Run (weapon sheathed)
- Yellow button (#3) = Use inventory items (items selected using PgUp/PgDn keys on keyboard)
- Green button (#4) = Sheathe /unsheathe weapon

Joysticks:

Movement is as you would expect. Because of differences in fire button setups, you'll need to experiment with your own particular joystick. You may find that the best solution is a combination of joystick and keyboard.



But there's plenty more adventure awaiting you in the full version of *Blackthorne*. Here's just a peek at some of the strange new baddies, levels, and challenges that await you. Remember, though, we *did* warn you: This demo will leave you wanting more! You won't be able to rest until you find the nefarious Sarlac!

If You're Having Technical Problems

If your Coverdisk is damaged and won't load, mail it to:

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Greensboro, NC 27407

You can also address technical questions to Interplay on CompuServe (GO GAMBPU8 and select section 4 for Interplay Productions),

America On-Line (keyword INTERPLAY, then select Leave A Message), or Interplay's own bulletin board (714-252-2822).

You can write to Interplay at:
17922 Fitch Avenue,
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Product Information Number 126

SCOOP!

EXCLUSIVE! BEHIND-THE-SCENES OF THE HOTTEST GAMES

Dragon Lore

The High-Tech Side of Fantasy

Fantasy roleplaying fans have been waiting for a game that truly looks as good as it plays. Now, their patience has been rewarded.

by T. Liam McDonald

F.Y.I. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: *Dragon Lore*
Developer: Cryo
Publisher: Software Toolworks, 60 Leveroni Court,
Novato, CA 94949 (415) 883-3000
Projected Price: \$69.95
Percent Complete: 60%

In a nutshell:

Dragon Lore is the first fantasy roleplaying game to really exploit the capabilities of CD-ROM for an eye-popping, 7th *Guest*-style graphic environment with which you can actually interact.

What's so special?

The graphics alone are enough to make this a standout, but there appears to be a healthy amount of gameplay here as well. Having both a violent and non-violent approach to each problem — and letting your decision as to which solution to use affect how the game unfolds — gives *Dragon Lore* the depth and breadth to please a broad spectrum of gamers, and still satisfy the hard-core crowd.

Why should I care?

For all the titles recently released with stunning visuals and sound, very few have incorporated fundamentally interesting and challenging gameplay and a dense story, the kind you expect in an absorbing FRP. *Dragon Lore* appears to have not only flash and bang, but depth as well.

And when's it coming out?

November

The milking pail's leaking. See if you can find a bowl or something, Werner. Old Gertie has to be milked!



Unbeknownst to Werner, this cheery fellow is actually his adoptive father. Do the chores he asks, and he'll reveal your true descent — and your destiny.

Since the CD-ROM revolution began, loyal fantasy roleplaying gamers have been waiting for the RPG-equivalent of *Myst* or 7th *Guest*. They've been patient so far, looking on as high-end graphics are pumped into worthless game after worthless game. They knew it was one thing to hang gorgeous graphics on games which only technically qualify as interactive, and quite another to do it in as demanding a genre as fantasy roleplaying. Real-time combat, extensive character interaction, the world size — all presented challenges which had to be faced and dealt with before such a game could exist.

Cryo, the inimitable French developers behind *Dune* and *MegaRace*, set their sights on creating a roleplayer with next-generation graphics and satisfying, challenging gameplay — and it looks as though they're going to pull it off. Together with their publisher, The Software Toolworks, they're the first company to create a role-playing game with truly eye-popping first-person graphics.

If all of *Dragon Lore* looks as good as the preliminary version I've been playing,

there can be no question that it will be one of the most talked-about games of the year. Like many titles, *Dragon Lore* opens with a whiz-bang intro; unlike other titles, though, the graphics are just as good in actual game as they are in the opening scenes. With a fairly large world to explore and a richly orchestrated soundtrack featuring dozens of voices, this is more than just a slide-show of pretty scenes: It's a fully interactive world.

The action unfolds in a vaguely medieval, Tolkeinesque land of heroes, villains, magic, monsters, and evil. This world



To place items you've acquired into your inventory, right-click in the upper left-hand corner of the screen, then drop the object in the inventory window.



Your cow needs to be tied up and brought in to be milked. It may not sound heroic, but go ahead and do it anyway.

has been engulfed in chaos, death, and mayhem, spread like a disease across the land by the King of Chaos. Only one place has remained immune to this encroaching evil: a small valley encircled by a steep wall of mountains. Here, a group of elite Dragon-Knights have banded together to maintain order and keep the evil hordes at bay. These Dragon-Knights are chosen by a Council of Elders — 12 wise people who accept only the most worthy in their ranks.

You take on the role of Werner, a simple farm boy, and see the game world as he would — i.e., from a first-person perspective. As the game begins, your adoptive father has you run some simple errands for him: finding a pail to milk the cow, bringing the cow home, and so on. These opening scenes help you get a feel for the envi-

ronment and how to interact with it, but they also serve another very important function — they lead to the discovery of your true identity.

You learn that the man who you believe is your father actually took you in as baby, raising you as his own son. He tells you that you're now of age, and must go off and search for your destiny in the castle of the von Wallenrods. Your real father was assassinated 16 years previously, and now you're compelled to find your father's ancestral castle, become a Dragon-Knight, and seek out his murderer and bring him to justice.

Your adoptive father gives you a few items to help you on your journey, and you find some others around the house, like the



With a name like Werner, you might understandably suspect that our hero is goose-stepping here. But it's actually a special technique his dad taught him to prevent back strain when hauling firewood.

"We believe that there are different types of people who play these games — they're not all combat-oriented, nor are they all puzzle hounds.

The idea is that you can go through the whole game using one approach or the other, or a combination of the two."

Dragon Lore producer Manny Granillo



As with many of the puzzles in *Dragon Lore*, there are usually two ways to deal with a problem. Here, you can either try fighting your way past this cute little puppy, or go off in search of a more cerebral solution. Besides, who could get angry at a face like that?

signet ring that belonged to your true father and which identifies you as a von Wallenrod. With some armor, a sword, a flint, and a buckskin canteen, you go off into the countryside in search of your fate. One of the first places you'll need to visit is your father's crypt. There, a guardian informs you that you have to find the Red Crystal and then come back. So you depart on the first of several quests, meeting goblins, elves, undead creatures, and other odd characters as you venture through different and distinctive lands. Several odd twists provide for intriguing side adventures: For instance, you have to shrink in size to travel through a mushroom village, but once shrunk, you become vulnerable to attack from insects.

The design of *Dragon Lore* is as intriguing as its graphics. In the same vein as some of the Ultima games, just how you play and how you deal with certain obstacles can alter the outcome. *Dragon Lore's* producer, Manny Granillo, describes how game play unfolds: "There are a lot of puzzles, and a lot of action, but it's all linked by the dynamic structure of the game. As you play, the game adapts to what you're doing. For example, if you tend to be more aggressive and use your sword a lot, the game will adjust itself to that. If you get through a section by violence, it will make the puzzles up ahead a lot harder. There's more than one way past each obstacle. You can play all the way through with just your mind, or all the way through with your sword. We believe that there are different types of people who play these games — they're not all combat-oriented, nor are they all puzzle hounds. The idea is that you can go through the whole game using one approach or the other, or a combination of the two."

For instance, early in the game when your adoptive father sends you off looking for a bowl, you encounter a guard dog blocking your way. If you choose to fight the big mutt, he'll move — but if you go around him you'll find a bone to lure him from your path.

How you play also has an impact upon a key element of the game. Along the way, you meet various members of the

Your first look at..

Council of Elders — and since part of your quest is to become a Dragon-Knight, you talk to each of them to learn which way their vote will go. Every person votes differently depending upon what you did.



So your dear ol' dad's been a little overbearing lately, eh? Then whip out your sword and show him who's the new boss in town!

One character may tell you she really likes men with blood on their sword, so if you follow that path, you'll definitely get her vote. However, you might lose the vote of someone who doesn't like aggressiveness as much. If they vote to make you a Dragon-Knight — and it happens very late in the game — you go on to a final conflict with your father's killer. If they don't, the game pretty much stops there.

Control in *Dragon Lore* is simplicity itself. Every action is mouse-based, and



We've not yet found out who this guy is, but his throne is very cool.

there's no "picture frame" or icon bar to clutter the view — you see the world as Werner would see it. A dragon-shaped cursor is your main controller. If its wings flap forward, you can move ahead; if they flap backwards, you can move back, and so on. When the dragon icon is over something that can be picked up, it is shown making a lifting gesture.

The inventory system is straightforward and unobtrusive. Clicking the right mouse button in the upper left-hand corner reveals a view of Werner and everything in



The Head Evil Guy is an extremely natty dresser; check out those spiked duds!



Gorgeous, evocative visuals, like the ones in this scene, are par for the course in *Dragon Lore*.

his possession. Pick up an object and drop it anywhere in this inventory screen, and it stays in his pack until you need it. When you find the sword (it's in the cart, right at the beginning) put it in Werner's left hand and it will appear at the center of your view. Just click on the target to strike.

Three character-level bars are planned, but were not implemented in the version we looked at. There are levels for health, magic, and wisdom, and you can configure the game so that they either appear in the inventory screen or are present in the main view. You start out with a full health bar; as that begins to drop due

enter that combination by clicking on the coins. At this point there is no gauge for tracking the character's wisdom level.

The entire production will be professionally voice-acted, and feature a rich soundtrack of effects and music. Approximately 60 characters are included in *Dragon Lore*, and you can interact with each of them; Granillo estimates that there'll be around 50-60 hours of gameplay in the finished product. Thanks to the technology Cryo developed for *MegaRace*, there'll probably be very little information stored on the hard drive, making *Dragon Lore* even more impressive.

"We're trying to bring the elements people enjoy, such as the graphics of *7th Guest* or *Myst*, and add some gameplay value to them to bring this project to the next level."

Manny Granillo

to damage taken during combat, you can find all kinds of spells and potions with special rejuvenating powers.

To use magic, you need both your father's signet ring and a spellbook which you find later in the game. To cast a spell, you place the spellbook in Werner's hand in the inventory screen, and it appears in your first-person view. Four coins with multiple sides appear at the lower right-hand corner when the book is in hand. The coins have different symbols on each of their numerous faces, and as you click each the symbol changes. There's a combination of symbols for each spell; just

In the version I've been playing, I could fight, talk to people, pick up things, and travel around to several locations. Though there are many smooth-scrolling animations for cut scenes and long-distance travel (such as from town to town), most motion involves stepped imagery a-la-*Myst* rather than *Doom*-like scrolling. Still, the movement is quite fluid (more so than in *Myst*), and the environment is exquisitely detailed. Judging from the early script that came with the preliminary version, there also looks to be plenty of interaction and numerous intriguing locations.

"We're trying to bring the elements people enjoy," Granillo concludes, "such as the graphics of *7th Guest* or *Myst*, and add some gameplay value to them to bring this project to the next level. We want to give them a feeling of interaction, but we also to add the excitement of magic spells, combat, and the ability to make true decisions based on how they approach certain problems — players won't feel like they're controlling an interactive slide show. This is the next step in gaming."

Blake Stone: Planet Strike!

New!

"... tops the original
Wolfenstein™..."
— PC Review



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Powered by an advanced, fast version of the 3D engine originally used in *Wolfenstein 3D™*, this game has the fast, fluid graphics you love and ultra-realism that will keep you spellbound!

The reviewers are already in orbit over *Blake Stone*:

"Did you like *Wolfenstein 3-D*? If you did, you'll love *Blake Stone*." —PCM Magazine

"There's more of just about everything... Plenty to keep you on the edge of your seat!"
—Electronic Entertainment

"The first-person viewpoint and smooth movement will have you peering sideways into the monitor to see if there's another monster around the corner." —PC Magazine

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Product Information Number 157



Your first look at...

Realms of Arkania:

Pen-and-Paper Roleplaying Returns in Style

If you long for the good old days of role-playing but don't want to give up the look of today's best titles, here's a game you can't miss.

by Trent C. Ward



...and the Salamander Stone, it was lost."

As soon as you leave the temple, your party will run across this strange looking fellow. The elf tells you about the history of the Salamander Stone, and why it must be returned to its rightful owners.

FYI
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Realms of Arkania: Star Trail
Developer: Attic Entertainment
Publisher: Sir-tech, PO Box 245, Ogdensburg, NY 13669 (315) 3993-6451
Projected Price: \$79.95
Percentage Complete: 90%

In a nutshell:

A detailed roleplaying adventure that has all the features that RPG fanatics are looking for.

What's so special?

Star Trail has everything a fan could want in an RPG, including an advanced character creation routine, an absorbing storyline with plenty of twists and turns, and complex combat with all the extras you could want.

Why should I care?

Because Sir-tech took all of the letters they received about the original *Realms of Arkania* and used that input to change almost everything about the game. This is a title that was in part developed by the gaming public.

And when's it coming out?

End of October '94

For a good while now, it's seemed like no one is interested in producing the hard-core RPG titles of old — the classic stories that had gamers digging into charts and tables, and spending their nights by the dim light of their monitor in hopes of reaching that next level. But

after taking a peek at Sir-tech's latest epic, *Realms of Arkania: Star Trail*, it looks like all of that may be about to change. After role-playing fans get a taste of this game's incredible devotion to the feel of traditional pen-and-paper RPGs, I'll bet that midnight oil will be burning again.

Like the best RPGs, *Star Trail*'s storyline and goals aren't spelled out in the instruction manual. Instead, it's the responsibility of the player to discover,

through conversation and exploration, what objectives need to be met. To get the ball rolling, your characters are approached by an elf ambassador just as the game begins, and he tells them of the legendary Salamander Stone — an artifact created long ago to represent the friendship between the elves and the dwarves. When



Star Trail's character creation process forces players to not only work with their party members' positive skills, but also to try and balance out the character's weaknesses.

Star Trail



Shortly after parting company with the elf, a sly merchant will approach you and tell you the true value of the stone. Now the party must decide who they trust and what to do about it.

the two races began to squabble, the stone disappeared along with their amity. Now the Orcs are preparing to invade the land (don't you hate those Orcs?), and the only way either the elves or dwarves can survive is by teaming up to face the common threat.



Star Trail uses a comprehensive automapping system that allows player to get a good feel for where the various buildings of a town are located. If that's not enough for you, you can also make notes on the maps and save them.

So the ambassador asks you to locate the Salamander Stone and help unite the wee folk. Shortly after the strange elf leaves, the characters are approached by a well-dressed merchant named Sudran who also knows of the



Once you decide to leave the town, travel is handled a bit differently. Players can plot out points on their main map, and then sit back and watch the story unfold.

Salamander Stone. Sudran tells the party that there is no such thing as an elvish ambassador, and that you are being used as pawns so that the stone's powers can be harnessed for personal gain. He offers you a reward for bringing the stone directly to his mistress, who has her own reasons for pursuing the object. Now your party must decide whether or not they'll bother going after the troublesome



Unlike many RPG's, Star Trail allows the casting of many different spells outside of combat. If you're getting confused about where to go next, for example, try out one of those Clairvoyance spells.

"Star Trail's advanced character creation system will draw you into the game even before the intriguing storyline rears its head."

rock — and if they find it, who they should entrust it to. Along the way, they'll face all sorts of vile beasts and races preparing to benefit from the upcoming storm.

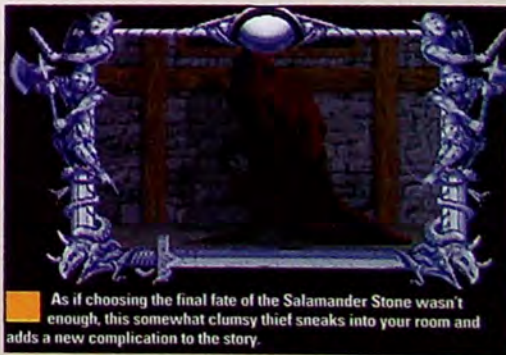
Star Trail's advanced character creation system will draw you into the game even before the intriguing storyline rears its head. As in most RPGs, you'll build your characters by rolling for stats and assigning them in seven different attributes. But Star Trail adds a little flavor to the often two-dimensional characters by forcing players to also roll for stats in each of seven different negative attributes, including such wonderful burdens as necrophobia, acrophobia, claustrophobia, and Daffy Duck's favorite, avarice.

When your characters get into a situation where they might be tempted to succumb to one of their failings, the computer checks against their negative stats to determine how well they'll hold up. It can get pretty interesting when your most powerful fighter keeps refusing to venture into the restricting confines of a dungeon, and you're forced

to find a new way to proceed.

After determining your character's stats, you can finish rounding them out by choosing from one of twelve different classes, including such uncommon choices as jester, druid, and ice-elf. Once your alter-ego and the rest of the party are complete, it's time to venture out into the world.

Star Trail's movement interface is



As if choosing the final fate of the Salamander Stone wasn't enough, this somewhat clumsy thief sneaks into your room and adds a new complication to the story.

pretty straightforward, and is similar in many ways to New World's Might and Magic series. By positioning an on-screen cursor in each of the primary directions, a quick left click will either turn the character or send him a step forward or backward. If you get lost, there's a map icon on the right side of



After combat your party's experience will go up, and they may even gain a level. Each time characters advance, they can gain new attribute scores, and get rid of some of their bad habits.

the screen that'll bring up a detailed map of the area you're in, and even let's you make notes on where certain people or objects can be found. Once you leave the confines of a city or dungeon, travel is handled from a large, overhead map where players can plot out several waypoints on their journey across the vast Arcanian countryside.

For those who spend a lot of time outside, combat becomes a constant part of the game. *Star Trail* is filled with dozens of well-designed enemies, each of whom has its own specific methods of attack that you'll have to learn to

Betrayal at Krondor. And here, as in the rest of the game, *Star Trail* features unusually impressive graphics for an RPG that is primarily stat based.

One weakness that has plagued other attempts at putting together a true RPG is the tradeoff between graphics and complexity; it seems like almost every game that emphasizes stats is visually unappealing, and games that try to concentrate on strong imagery tend to leave gameplay in the lurch. *Star Trail*, with its smoothly animated movement engine and highly detail maps, is one game that bucks this trend. The still shots in the game are expertly drawn and colored, and do a great job of pulling you into the experience. The animated sequences are equally impressive, and I never detected even a hint of slow-down in the dozens of intro sequences. For a game that's so devoted to the basics of roleplaying, *Star Trail* sure looks like a graphic adventure.

While a roleplaying title as pure as this won't appeal to everyone, *Star Trail* is sure to be well-received by those players who miss the subtle strategies and problem solving of the classic RPG. Due for release in late October, *Star Trail* makes a stand against the industry's current stampede toward form-over-function products by giving us both form and function.

PCG



Just about every situation the character's get in can go one of several different ways. In this instance, the characters can decide to just keep on walking, or enter a combat to save someone who may be an enemy.

counter. Some of the larger enemies are absolutely huge, with the mighty dragons taking up almost a fourth of the entire combat screen.

To defend themselves, characters can take advantage of over 80 different spells from a dozen different "colleges," such as domination, demonology, and transmutation. Combat is turn-based, using a movement grid and attack process similar to the ones used in

Oh The Places You'll Go!

The towns of *Star Trail* are filled with all kinds of neat places to visit and purchase things. Here's a sneak peek at some of the locations that will become your home away from home.

The temple is where you'll begin your adventure, and is always a good place to come back to when you're ready to replace some members of your party who may not be working out as you planned. From here you can pray, create new characters, and add or remove party members.



When you need information, it's time to head to the pub. All sorts hang out here, and if you're a clever conversationalist, you may find some tidbits that aren't available anywhere else. The pub owner will also sell you food and drink.



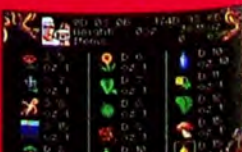
After a couple of combats, you'll probably be ready to visit the town's healer. Because she can help characters recover from wounds, petrification, and disease, it's best to stay on her good side.



The wilds of Arkania are not the wisest places to sleep if you don't have to, so head back into town and take advantage of the local hotel. Sleep is much more restful here, and the owner will also be willing to sell you food and drink to replenish your stock.



There are a lot of goods you'll need to survive life in this often cruel world, and there's no better place to find them than at the merchant's tent. Here you can find everything from sleeping bags to lanterns, but you might find prices a touch steep in the city.



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Suggested Retail Price - \$69.95
Available for PC 3.5" and PC CD-ROM



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Product Information Number 186

NOVA

LOGIC

Your first look at...

Quarantine

This Ain't the Taxi Harry Chapin Was Drivin'

Cross *Death Race 2000* with *Escape From New York*. Drench with blood, season with humor, and you've got an idea of *Quarantine's* like.

by Steve Poole



Game: *Quarantine*
 Developer: Imagexcel
 Publishers: GameTek, 2999 Northeast 191st Street, Suite 500, North Miami Beach, FL 33180 (305) 935-3995
 Projected Price: \$69.99 for PC CD-ROM, \$59.99 for floppy-disks, \$14.99 for network-play upgrade
 Percent complete: 90%

In a nutshell:

Quarantine casts you as Drake Edgewater, a 21st-century cabbie trying to drive and shoot his way out of Kemo — a city that's degenerated into a combat zone after being abandoned by the authorities.

What's so special?

You might think that *Quarantine* is simply "Doom in a Taxi," but you'd be wrong. The animation is as good as in *Doom*, and that's not all: There are enough weapons to satisfy a *Soldier of Fortune* subscriber, more blood than you can shake a plasma bag at, and a cast of warped pedestrians for you to tote through five huge levels.

Why should I care?

This is GameTek's first attempt to produce and release a truly high-end PC game. If it succeed, then you can expect them to move full-steam into the PC gaming market.

And when's it coming out?

Mid-October to early November



For a weary cabbie in Kemo City, there's nothing quite like the sight of a Weapons Shop — if you've managed to pick up enough spending money to make stopping worthwhile, that is.

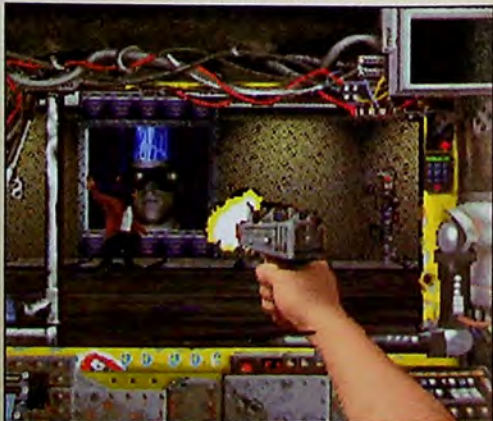
When you first see *Quarantine* in action, you might be inclined to dismiss it as "Doom on wheels." It's a smoothly scrolling first-person action-fest with plenty of shootin' and blood, so comparisons to the shareware megahit are inevitable. But hey — what if it were just "Doom on wheels?" That sounds like a pretty happening concept to us!

But play *Quarantine* for a few minutes (which you'll get to do if you pick up the CD-ROM edition of next month's *PC Gamer* — we've got the demo all lined up), and you'll realize that any resemblance between *Quarantine* and *Doom* is purely coincidental. Well, maybe that's a little extreme, but the point is that while there's nothing wrong with being included in the company of an all-time classic like *Doom*, *Quarantine* is definitely its own game — and a damn good one at that.

There's nothing new about driving a heavily armed and armored hovercar through a city crawling with scumbag punks who'd like nothing better than to blow you away — Accolade's *Hoverforce* and Cyberflix's *Jump Raven*

immediately come to mind — but no one's made it as convincing, exciting, and just plain fun as this.

You play as Drake Edgewater, a cabbie working the ravaged streets of 21st-century Inner Kemo — a sub-section of New Kemo that's become so overrun by gangs and crime that the city government has walled off the place and pulled out all police and social services. Life was never easy in the "quarantined" Inner Kemo, but things were at least tolerable until overcrowding and poverty led to a dramatic surge in crime — and that's when megacorporation Omnicorp stepped in with its new drug Hydergine 344, designed to



Every now and then you've got to slow down, take a deep breath, take a look at all the beautiful things around you — then open fire with an Uzi on one of the murderous mutants roaming the streets of Inner Kemo. Now this is what we call defensive driving!

Motor City Madhouse

You'll see a lot of other vehicles roaming around Inner Kemo, but unfortunately most of them are being driven by citizens in the throes of sociopathic psychoses — so you're better off just killing them all, if you've got enough ammo. Here are a few of the vehicles you'll be taking a bead on.



Choosing your destination is as easy as marking it on this map, then following the directional arrow on your cab's dashboard. Any fare dressed like this is gonna get a cab, even in Inner Kemo.

reduce the "criminal thoughts" of users.

Just like with flouride in the 1950's, the authorities figured there was no quicker way to get the populace laced with this stuff than to dump it in the water supply. Too bad they hadn't tested Hydergine in the sort of water being consumed by the residents of Inner Kemo; if they had, they'd have discovered that the bacteria, viruses, and Hydergine could merge to form a "psychoactive virus" that turns ordinary folks into maniacal killers with a bloodlust as big as all outdoors.



Even in the middle of the 21st century, convenience stores continue to thrive. It's little touches like this that make *Quarantine* feel real — or at least as real as you can get in a futuristic, high-octane shooter.

It's now 2048, and you've decided to make your escape from this hellhole. Good thing that your '52 Checker hovercab has machine guns mounted where the headlights should be, and that you can stop at stores throughout Inner Kemo to pick up even more exotic (and more destructive) weaponry. These guys aren't giving guns away, though, so you've got to keep hauling fares even as the city crumbles in anarchy all around you — it's the only way a working man like you can get the dough to acquire the latest advances in mass destruction.

As you cruise the city, you'll be swarmed by red-eyed lunatics tossing Molotov cocktails and generally making a nuisance of themselves. Plowing through them with your cab is a pretty effective (and satisfying) technique for getting these sickos out of your hair, but for some reason there's also a fair amount of innocent,

law-abiding citizens strolling around this virtual combat zone — and running one of them down results in a loss of the fares you've accumulated.

Every so often you'll see someone hailing a taxi, but it's a crap shoot as to whether they'll tip generously or leave a time bomb in the back seat as they scurry off without paying their fare. These folks are just plain crazy for the most part, and don't try to make a secret of it. You'll see — and hear — some pretty strange stuff when these nut cases climb in your cab, but just keep repeating to yourself: I need the money, I need the money....

Of course, all this wouldn't mean diddly squat if *Quarantine* didn't play well, but I'm here to tell you that this baby runs like a charm. A look at the screenshots on these pages will give you an idea of how the game looks, but they don't come close to conveying how utterly convincing the animation is. The texture-mapped pavement realistically zips underneath your cab, buildings scroll smoothly by when you look out either side window, your see your hands turn the wheel as you scream around a corner — it all works together to create a wonderful sense of motion. You've got to see it to really appreciate how good a job Imagexel has done with the animation — it's fantastic!

I've never found it easy to play true driving sims with digital gamepads, analog joysticks, or using the keyboard, preferring instead to drag out a flight yoke or steering wheel to get the job done. But *Quarantine* handles so smoothly that even using the cursor keys, I could tool all around Inner Kemo without ever losing control. Still, Gametek plans for *Quarantine* to support all sorts of high-end peripherals, most notably Thrustmaster's Formula T1 wheel-and-pedals setup.



These hovercycles are easy to take out with your machine guns, but sometimes it's better to just drive on by and save your ammo for more deadly enemies.



The days of over-the-road trucking are a thing of the past, but many Kemo City gang members have figured out just how good a warwagon a hover-tractor makes. Avoid these as much as possible.



This is the best way to make sure your potential customers aren't doing business elsewhere! In a nod to realism, all the vehicles you shoot at take gradual damage before finally exploding in flames.



This little number looks a little like one of those old Volvo sports coupes — except that even a Volvo can't make driving a safe proposition in Inner Kemo.

Gametek has a couple of other extras lined up for *Quarantine*, too. They're working on a deal to have 10 Australian punk bands do original songs for the CD-ROM version of the game, and both the floppy and CD-ROM editions will include a feature to let your record your very own insults to hurl at drivers and pedestrians.



This fella's apparently knocked back one two many glasses of the contaminated Kemo City water: The glowing red eyes are a dead giveaway that it's either your life or his. What are you waiting for? Stomp on that pedal and save yourself some bullets!

If you haven't figured it out by now, *Quarantine* isn't for people who take their gaming as seriously as they do their job, marriage, or health; it's for people who take virtual destruction that seriously. And if you're one of those folks, you're in store for some heavy-duty fun when Gametek starts shipping *Quarantine* this October.

PCG

King's Quest VII: The Prince

Equal Opportunity Adventuring

This time around, that familiar green adventurer's cap is worn by the women of Daventry.

by Leslie Mizell



Game: King's Quest VII: The Prince-Less Bride
Developer: Sierra On-Line
Publisher: Sierra On-Line, P.O. Box 485,
 Coarsegold, CA 93614 (209) 683-4468
Projected Price: \$79.95
Percent complete: 85%

In a nutshell:

In this latest King's Quest adventure, Queen Valance and Princess Rosella are thrown into a wild fantasy world, and take turns looking for 1) each other and 2) a handsome, mysterious stranger.

What's so special?

With *King's Quest VII*, Sierra promises not only the usual high-quality puzzles and plot people have come to expect from this classic series, but also some of the slickest animation the company has ever produced.

Why should I care?

There's a reason the King's Quest series is one of the most popular in PC gaming history. Whether you're new to graphic adventures or a fan from way back, you get your money's worth in plot, puzzles, animation, sound, and all the other stuff. There's no such thing as a sure bet in PC gaming, but if anything comes close, it's a new King's Quest game.

And when's it coming out?

Look for *The Prince-Less Bride* in late November.

The people of Daventry must look at their royal family the same way the Brits look at theirs — just what are they going to be up to next? If the king's not off fighting wizards, then the queen's kidnapped or the prince is bringing strange foreign girls back to the kingdom.

Well, those wacky royals are at it again in *King's Quest VII: The Prince-Less Bride*. This is a watershed in the series, in more ways than one: It's the first time that you'll be able to switch between two characters; you can stage-select to get past sticking points (for the record, it's frowned upon); and it's Queen Valance's first foray into the world of graphic adventuring.

Lorelei Shannon, co-designer of *King's Quest VII*, started at Sierra as part of the marketing staff before working on *Laura Bow 2* and the VGA version of *Police Quest*. The prospect of this, her biggest game yet, might have seemed daunting, but Shannon had the good luck of getting to work closely with King's Quest creator Roberta Williams — one of the most respected game designers in the business. "Roberta and I developed it together from the beginning," says Shannon. "We got a huge stack of resource materials and

slowly narrowed things down and developed a storyline, and then we worked out all of the puzzles."

So just what is that storyline? Well, King Graham and Queen Valance have decided that it's high time Princess Rosella get married. Valance takes Rosella for a walk in the woods to suggest a particularly loathsome (and therefore especially eligible) prince. Rosella isn't really listening to Valance's suggestions as she sits next to a pond, and suddenly a vision of a strange land appears. When a tiny dragon leaves the pond and buzzes in front of her face, Rosella realizes that her eyes aren't playing tricks on her, and does what any hero of an adventure game would do — she dives in. Mom jumps in after her.

What follows are the adventures of the two women as Rosella searches the land of Eldritch looking for the cloud-land of Etheria, while Valance searches for Rosella. You alternate between the two



The cast of characters in *KQ7* includes, from left to right: the jeweler troll, the Desert Spirit, Attis, the Troll King, the Archduke of Folderol, Princess Rosella, and Queen Valance.



It looks like Rosella has run into some trouble in the troll kingdom — are those pointy ears we see as she faces the Troll King?



Here's Andy Hoyos' original rendering of the well in which Rosella and Valance enter Eldritch, and how it finally appears in the finished game scene.



Ice-Less Bride



The landscape in Ooga Booga land includes the ghoulish kids' treehouse, complete with black cat.

characters, each of whom is pursuing her own goals. Every chapter is a game unto itself in which you must complete some sort of sub-quest, and you can jump around and play any chapters you wish. You can even sit down and choose to play the final chapter first, complete with the end-game payoff.

"We think there are very few people who will play Chapter 7 right off the bat," notes Shannon. "It's like skipping to the last chapter in a novel. Being able to choose the chapter you play mainly has to

do with the game's replay value."

"It's like reading a book," adds Mark Seibert, *KQ7*'s producer. "You can pick it up, even for half an hour, and get some satisfaction from it. You can check to see how much farther you've got to finish the chapter, and you can bookmark your place when you've finished. It's not like you have to spend two or three hours with the thing just to make some progress."



Valanice isn't exactly a damsel without distress. Here the boogeyman makes an unexpected appearance.

The other big change in *KQ7* is its single-icon interface, which it shares with Sierra's other new game *Phantasmagoria* (also created and designed by Roberta Williams). Instead of selecting from a bank of Walk-Talk-Use/Pick Up icons at the top of the screen, you have an on-screen inventory and an icon that changes to indicate the different ways you can interact with items

"There's a huge debate as to whether or not you can have a challenging game with a single cursor that changes to indicate actions instead of a selection of cursor icons from which the player can choose," Seibert says. "but *King's Quest VII* is fun and complex, and there are some really good puzzles.

"This interface was originally planned for just *Phantasmagoria* and *King's Quest VII*, but then again we designed a new interface

just for *King's Quest V* that proved so popular that all the Sierra games went to it. The fact is that the main goal in designing a game and interface is to make sure people will have fun with it, and that's what we've done with this game.

"*KQ7* is all in high-res, and it's a Windows-only product that's as close to plug-and-play as it gets. The animation is really extensive — there's so much animation that I think people will be shocked. There are cartoon movies at the beginning and end, complete with flying camera angles, full lip-synching, songs, and choreography. The colors, look, and feel are a lot of fun. *Phantasmagoria* is such a dark game; it leaves you with a whole different attitude. It's interesting to go from that into something cute."

There are six major regions in *KQ7*, including a volcanic underground filled with trolls and Ooga Booga. This latter land, Shannon insists, was totally designed prior to the release of *The Nightmare Before Christmas* last October, though it features the same spooky but silly characters. The final chapter is set in the cloud-land of Etheria. And how about that end-game sequence? Does Rosella find true love in Eldritch, or is she forced to enter a (gasp!) loveless marriage?

"Well, I can't give you any hints," Shannon says, "but there's a big surprise at the end, and a big payoff for people who've played the entire series." And for a lot of gamers, that's reason enough to grab this one as soon as possible.

Once upon a time...

A King's Quest Retrospective

It's possible to play *King's Quest VII* without looking at any of the other games in the series. But to appreciate the inner workings of the Daventry crowd, you need at least a passing familiarity with the stories that have gone before. Here's a wrap-up:

•King's Quest I: The Crown

This title introduced us to Graham — knight, adventurer, and all-round nice guy. As King Edward, ruler of Daventry, lay on his deathbed, he told Graham of three quests he must complete in order to inherit the throne. You lead the king-to-be on his journey.

•King's Quest II: Romancing the Throne

A king needs a queen, and Graham finds his better half in lovely Valanice of Kolyma. But no sooner does he marry the lady than she's kidnapped and imprisoned in a Crystal Tower. King Graham dons his adventurer's cap once again to uncover the keys to the tower doors.

•King's Quest III: To Heir Is Human

Seventeen years have passed since the last adventure, and King Graham and Queen Valanice have had twins, Alexander and Rosella. But there's no happy-ever-aftering for the reigning monarchs — Alexander is kidnapped as a baby and brought up to be a slave to the wizard Manannan. *KQ3* chronicles Prince Alexander's escape from the wizard's clutches and return to his family.

•King's Quest IV: The Perils of Rosella

This adventure begins literally seconds after *KQ3* ends. His family reunited, King Graham throws his adventurer's cap to his twin children — only to collapse. Rosella is told by the fairy Genesta that he will die unless she can recover a magical fruit from Tamir. The princess begins her first quest, only to find that she must also save Genesta from the evil fairy Lolotte.

•King's Quest V: Absence Makes the Heart Go Yonder

The first of the series with an icon-based interface, *KQ5* puts King Graham back in the driver's seat. This time around, the wizard Mordack has swiped the king's castle, family and all. With the help of a talking owl named Cedric and a wand belonging to the magician Crispin, Graham journeys far from Daventry to rescue his family.

•King's Quest VI: Heir Today, Gone Tomorrow

A shipwreck threatens the life of Prince Alexander, but he washes up on an island far from Daventry. And, there's a beautiful woman held captive by local tyrant Vizier Alhazred, and his evil shape-shifting genie. *KQ6* marks the series' experiment with digitized actors.

Your first look at...

Hell

Is Stephanie Seymour Worth a Trip to Hell?

The pits of hell are full of deserving residents. But can you find a way to prove that you don't belong there, too?

by Gary Meredith

H

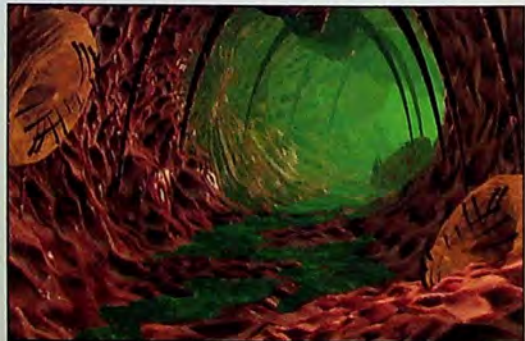
ell. Everyone seems to know instinctively what it is, and through the ages the literati have tried to paint fiery images of horror and despair. For Orwell's Winston Smith it was Room 101 and rats; Orpheus losing Eurydice became his vision of torment. I myself can imagine no greater damnation than spending eternity locked in a doctor's waiting room with a three year old copy of *U.S. News and World Report* and Barry Manilow singing "I Write the Songs" over a tinny Muzak system.

Game designers John Antinori and Laura Kampo have been thinking long and hard about the netherworld for quite some time, and are about to unleash their own version of damnation with *Take 2's* release of *Hell* — and it promises to be one wild ride.

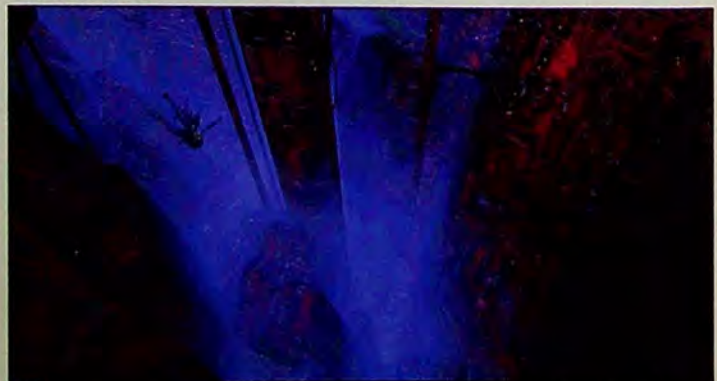
Hell takes place one hundred years in the future, and the



Play as either Rachel Braque or Gideon Eshanti — whomever you don't pick will be your constant companion and confidante, providing a different and valuable viewpoint in many ticklish situations.



Something tells you that green ooze is probably not good for you, but you may have no choice but to travel this passageway.



Shades won't help you much in this none-too-bright future. Social institutions have changed radically, and the only thing you can count on is that you can't count on anything.

F.Y.I.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Hell
Developer: Take 2
Publisher: Take 2 575 Broadway, New York, NY
 10013 (212) 941-2988
Projected Price: \$69.95

In a nutshell:

A gorgeous game that takes you through a cyber-punk nightmare and into the pits of hell. You and a companion must clear your names and defeat the corrupt government that has framed you.

What's so special?

3D modeled animation and beautifully rendered scenes make *Hell* an interactive tour de force, full of unforgettable images and brow-knitting puzzles. On top of all that, you've got the services of memorable actors — including Mr. Over-the-Top himself, Dennis Hopper.

Why should I care?

Lots of so-called interactive games are just excuses for some neat video and sounds. They're usually so linear any real gameplay is sadly missing. Not so with *Hell* — it should satisfy both the casual and the hardcore gamer.

And when's it coming out?

Fittingly, *Hell* should make its appearance around Halloween. Don't be surprised when your house gets egged because you've been game-playing at the expense of treating the trickers.



These ruins feature glyphs that recall Egyptian culture, but no pharaoh ever erected anything like this.

world is a haze of violence and cyberangst that would make *Bladerunner* look like Epcot Center. You play as either of two characters (Rachel Braque or Gideon Eshanti) who were once government investigators, but are now fugitives, wanted for crimes against the state. The fact that you don't remember any of these crimes poses no dilemma for the state, but a large one for you. The two of you must survive the nightmare of the streets, cyber reality — and



The dentist from *Hell* had to be on any list of nightmarish visions. If you can get over your fear of the drill — a bit of gas in the corner might help — you can pick up some useful info here.

yes, hell itself — in order to clear your names and save the world from the evil that rules it.

Multiple plot branches ensure long game play and intriguing situations. Laura Kampo feels "it would be hard to imagine writing fiction in the usual linear way, after dealing with so many options in this game."

Whether you play as Gideon or Rachel, you still work as a pair. One of



Mr. Beautiful — AKA Dennis Hopper — is a real operator, dealing with the Italians, Colombians, and some new players on the mob scene, native Americans who've progressed from the first reservation casinos.

the things the designers tried to do was bring more depth to the lead characters. In many games, you learn a great deal about the characters you meet, but often very little about yourself. Through conversations between the lead characters, and with other characters, a strong portrait evolves of just who you are.

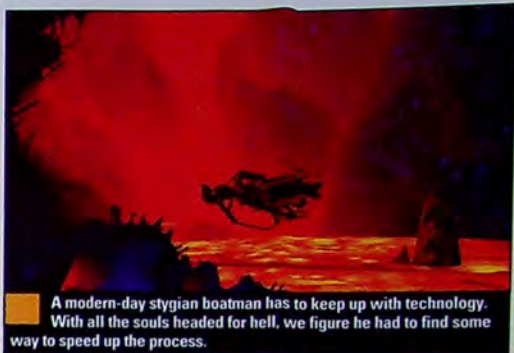
While certainly not the first game to tackle the underworld, *Hell* may have finally done it visual justice. These visions of hell evoke either stark terror — as is true of the lair of Beelzebub, Lord of the Flies — or whistling-past-the-graveyard laughs with Stygian boatman Charron cruising around on a jet ski. The artwork is in some places simply breathtaking, with several scenes suggesting Bosch at his most terrifying. The images were so effective, in fact, that the decision was made well into the design process to forego a diskette version and go solely with the much larger canvas of CD-ROM.

The visions draw from a number of sources, but as John Antinori points out, "What we tried to do was a cyberpunk vision of hell, where man and machine have merged.

Medieval visions of hell don't really resonate for us today,



The stunning Stephanie Seymour and the versatile Geoffrey Holder are two of the additional stars lending their talents to *Hell*.



A modern-day stygian boatman has to keep up with technology. With all the souls headed for hell, we figure he had to find some way to speed up the process.

so they surely won't for people a hundred years in the future."

Laura Kampo adds, "We felt it was a natural marriage, cyberpunk and hell — man/machines, a dark world and a darker afterworld. And this is a sophisticated view of hell, focusing on the grand scheme of things — no junk on Satan worshippers, etc."

The images in the game include a hell dentist's office, which is probably already on most people's list of eternal

"We've tried to create a game with great art, slick programming, and a storyline worthy of both."

— John Antinori, designer

torment. A hell schoolroom, under the command of everyone's least fondly remembered teacher, is the sort of place visited after one too many latenight pieces of pizza. A hell zoo echoes a classic old *Twilight Zone* episode, "People Are the Same All Over," with humans as the featured attraction. Laura feels "there's a bit of everyone's idea of hell here, with hopefully a few that are unique to our game."



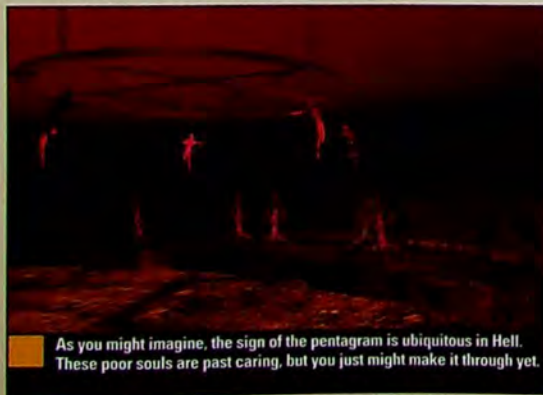
The perfect room for entertaining — if torture is your idea of entertainment. Obviously the guy on the rack isn't impressed with the stunning skull motif.

One of the ways the designers tried to enhance game play was by building in "epiphanies," as John put it, throughout the game; way points, if you will, by which the game's nature changes. Reaching one of these totally changes your viewpoint of the game, and others' viewpoints of you.

"It's the kind of game I'd go out and buy, even after a workweek spent designing computer games."

— Laura Kampo, designer

They also wanted to add to the gaming challenge by filling each room as creatively as possible, with tough puzzles which are actually germane to the plot. The puzzles and epiphanies all help to give the game direction. Also fun are the comic bits strewn about the nether-landscape. With so many centuries of exposition upon hell, there's a wealth of material to draw on. So expect to find subtle



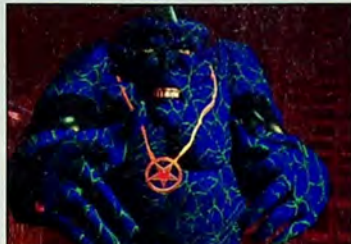
As you might imagine, the sign of the pentagram is ubiquitous in Hell. These poor souls are past caring, but you just might make it through yet.



We couldn't let you off without showing at least one real demon. The puzzles you must solve in Hell will cause you more trouble than all the demons in Hades.

and not-so-subtle references, from the aforementioned Orwell to de rigueur Dante.

Of course, the game's biggest selling point is the attraction of Hell's stars. Imagine Dennis Hopper as a demon with mob connections, according to the designers a combination of Hopper's character in *Blue Velvet* and Joe Pesci's in *GoodFellas*. There's also supermodel Stephanie Seymour, pop diva Grace Jones, and renaissance man Geoffrey Holder — an impressive list certainly, but what the designers



Just one of the many creature you'll meet in Hell, this fellow looks as though he might be the result of too many bedtime snacks.


want to emphasize is the acting quality from star to smallest bit part. John Antinori states, "Poor actors in the minor roles can make playing this sort of game intolerable, no matter how good your lead actors may be. As far as acting goes, from top to bottom, people are going to enjoy listening to this game — it will stack up well against anything else out there."

Indeed, Antinori, Kampo, and company had to totally revise their notions of producing a game, particularly with regard to characterizations and voice-overs. With a tight schedule that more resembled a movie or sound studio, a good deal more overall organization was required. Employing professionals helped with the deadlines, although fitting recording sessions into the stars' busy schedules has been something of a logistical hell in itself.


Lots of newer "interactive" games use big-name actors simply by digitizing video footage of them. *Hell* approaches acting from a different direction, using the actors' voices, but creating their on-screen characters with 3D modeling. This not only gives the characters an other-worldly feel, but also the sort of effects that would be difficult (if not impossible) to create with makeup. Witness Dennis Hopper's character, Mr. Beautiful, and that jaunty set of horns. The graphic designers have done a great job of capturing Hopper's essence, and there's no mistaking any of the others, either.


Hell could be likened to a photographic negative version of *Myst* — still visually hypnotic, satisfyingly deep, and unavoidably addictive, but with a 180-degree detour into the darker regions of the mind. It should set the perfect tone for its projected Halloween release, and promises to be one the years most talked-about games. How about an eighth deadly sin — addiction to *Hell*?


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Product Information Number 160

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Product Information Number 177

Retooling the Entertainment Machine

The Software Toolworks changes its name — and announces *Aliens*

The Software Toolworks (415-883-3000) might not be the first name you think of when the subject turns to PC games.

The company, which has concentrated past efforts on the development and distribution of CD-ROM educational and productivity titles, was originally formed to work on such nuts-and-bolts stuff as compilers. And while the name The Software Toolworks may be appropriate for such technical endeavors, it never seemed quite right for an entertainment publisher.

But now, the company has decided it's time to leap head first into the rapidly expanding entertainment software market — and to facilitate that move, The Software Toolworks decided a

ALIENS

You've seen this logo before. Soon, thanks to Mindscape, you'll be playing the game.

facelift was in order.

Starting October 1, 1994, The Software Toolworks will be no more. As of that date, the company will take the name Mindscape.

Mindscape was an important developer back in the early days of computer gaming, and was purchased by The Software Toolworks a few years back. The Toolworks adopted the name for use in its videogame products — and now, as the company gears up



Although *Aliens* is a long way from finished, the preliminary shots we've seen look very promising.

for its big assault on PC gaming, the decision has been made to drop the old Software Toolworks moniker altogether.

And there's more! The other big news from The Company Formerly Known as The Software Toolworks — and certainly in keeping with the pursuit of unique titles — is the announcement that the Toolworks (we mean Mindscape) has signed an agreement with Dark Horse Comics to create a new graphic adventure based on the popular Dark Horse series, *Aliens*. The new game, also called *Aliens*, will feature the same detailed, 3D-modeled backgrounds used



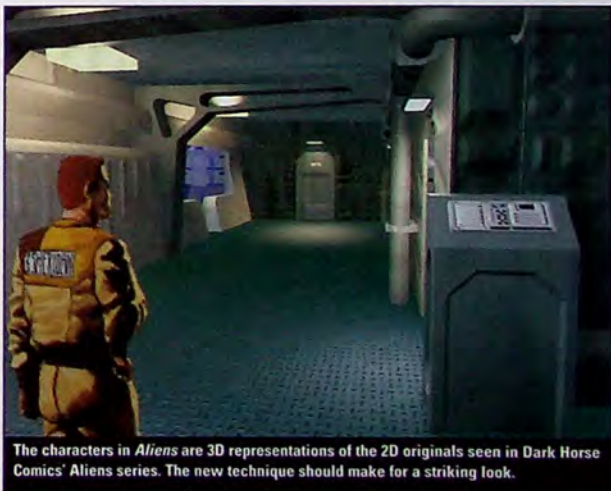
The objects and backgrounds in *Aliens* are 3D Studio-type works.

throughout *Dragon Lore* (see the Scoop! on p. 8) to create a distinctive, cutting edge look in keeping with the comic's dark feel. French developers Cryo will be designing this new game.

While the backgrounds will employ 3D Studio-type graphics, the characters in *Aliens* will be

Software Too... Mindscape's Public Relations manager Kevin Bachus.

Aliens won't be ready until August or September of 1995, but there are several other titles much closer to release. First up is an intriguing new multi-player military sim called *Metal Marines*. Designed for use with the Windows operating system, *Metal Marines* is a great little game that's perfect for settling those corporate disputes without ever leaving the office. Set in a futuristic world of battling islands, *Metal Marines* puts players in charge of their own



The characters in *Aliens* are 3D representations of the 2D originals seen in Dark Horse Comics' *Aliens* series. The new technique should make for a striking look.

brought to life using an all-new process that will enable the designers to bring the two-dimensional characters from the comic book into a full 3D environment. "It'll be a lot like the techniques used in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, but on a computer," explains

little island, complete with bases, missiles, and anti-missile rockets — all for the sole purpose of ridding their little paradise of any intruders (or neighbors, for that matter). *Metal Marines* is currently slated for a November release, and should contain options for network



The near-photographic quality of the images in *Ticonderoga* is quite impressive, to say the least.

play in its final form.

If you're looking for a fight that's a little more realistic, then you'll definitely want to take a look at *Legions*. This complex wargame has all of the options that strategists are looking for, and pays careful attention to historical accuracy. More than just another country-vs.-country battle, *Legions* will pit characters against several opposing warlords of a given era, forcing players to engage in diplomatic maneuvering as often as they deal in battlefield strategy. All



Legions will give desktop militarists the opportunity to re-fight some important battles.

the while, players will need to keep a close eye on the economic conditions of the land to ensure that the soldiers are well equipped and still have a country to defend. *Legions* is also scheduled to ship sometime in November.



USS Ticonderoga looks like it has the potential to be a big hit. Just look at the impressive detail on this shot of a Soviet MiG 21 letting fly with its deadly payload.

Moving forward in history, wargamers will also be pleased to see *USS Ticonderoga*, a high-impact missile-carrier sim with all the realism naval fans could ask for.

In addition to the standard strategy fare, *Ticonderoga* also contains



The Agony of Defeat, as seen in the new *Mindscape Winter Sports*.

a light role-playing element, and allows player to walk through the realistically designed ship and talk to different members of the crew to get more info on their surroundings. Another November release, this is one game *Harpoon II* fans may want to watch for.

Bringing back some fond memories of the golden age of computer gaming is Mindscape's new shot at the winter Olympics, *Mindscape Winter Sports*. Not to be confused with the old *Winter Games*, *Winter Sports* offers the opportunity to engage in



Another impressive visual from *Revenge*. Convincing evidence that Mindscape's serious about graphics.

international winter sports competition, and features the kind of graphic refinements you'd expect from today's games. Coming sometime in December.

Another big sports title, coming in August of '95, is *NCAA Football*. This MPC multimedia title looks impressive, but it's still a long way from the '95 season....

Those who're more interested in the sci-fi genre will probably find one Mindscape's other new



Obviously, *Metal Marines* is a Windows product. It's designed to take full advantage of the Windows OS.

talk to various crew members looking for clues on how best to proceed. Players can engage in combat both on the ground or in space, or go on expeditions to explore new areas and planets.

If you feel like you need more practice before you put your life on the line, there's also a full practice sim included to hone your skills to razor sharpness. During the course of the game, you'll be given the chance to pilot such diverse vehicles as starfighters, atmospheric planes, hovercrafts, and even 'mechs. This one's pretty far off, and as not even the final title is set. Watch for it to come out sometime in August or September of next year.

Considering this impressive, full-scale entertainment assault — complete with a new company name and new philosophy — Mindscape is definitely going to be a publisher to watch in the months ahead.



No, it's not a postcard from Shanghai. This is one of the early shots from *Revenge* — and a big reason we're so eager to get our hands on the game.

Alphabet Soup, FRP-style

Interplay to publish TSR'S AD&D games for PC, CD-ROM, 3DO, and more; announces upcoming release of *Virtual Pool*

Ever since SSI announced its decision to discontinue its agreement with Advanced Dungeons & Dragons' creators TSR (414-248-3625) to publish computer versions of that company's popular pen-and-paper roleplaying games, FRP fans have been wondering when, where, and how the popular AD&D games would make it back to PCs. At the time of the split with SSI, TSR announced it would begin developing and publishing PC games in-house, but there was much speculation as to how long it would take TSR to assemble a development team, set up distribution channels, and more.

But now TSR doesn't need to worry about those things — at least

when it comes to games from their Forgotten Realms and Planescape product lines. This past August, Interplay (714-553-6655) announced an agreement with TSR that gives Interplay exclusive license to produce all electronic versions of games from those two lines. The agreement gives Interplay rights to publish Forgotten Realms and Planescape titles for home computers, videogame systems, coin-op arcade machines, and even for online networks.

This is Interplay's second major roleplaying deal this year. Back in May, the company announced the acquisition of Steve Jackson Games' G.U.R.P.S. (Generic Universal Role Playing System), an open-ended roleplaying game with

basic rules that apply to every game based on it. "Source books" add specific rules that can be applied to a nearly infinite variety of settings, from prehistoric eras to the age of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*.

Roleplaying games account for a considerable portion of gaming software retail sales — somewhere between 20 and 25 percent — and these two acquisitions put Interplay in a good position to lay claim to a large chunk of that market. But it could be a while before we see what the company does with these licenses: No release dates have been set for the G.U.R.P.S. games, and Interplay says its first AD&D products won't arrive until late 1995. Fans of the Forgotten Realms game world will have to content themselves with

SSI's *Menzoberranzan* until then.

Shortly after the TSR licensing agreement was made public, Interplay announced that it would be publishing *Virtual Pool*, a 3D pool simulation being developed by California-based Celeris, Inc. (818-709-2181). Celeris' first PC game, *FixMix*, was a puzzle game boasting nicely rendered 3D images, but was on the short side when it came to replay value. That shouldn't be a problem with a pool/snooker sim, though, and Celeris' past work developing software for aerospace and defense contractors bodes well for simulating something as down to earth (and as much fun) as billiards.

No release date was given for *Virtual Pool*, but keep checking the pages of Eyewitness for updates.

Top Ten Lists

August
(figures through July 31)

It's time to check out what's happening on the charts, courtesy of *PC Gamer's* Top Ten Lists. Our monthly charts come direct from

two of the largest retail software stores in the country (soon to become one big company), and detail current trends in consumer buying. As always, these charts can often be slightly inaccurate, affected by discounts, sales promotions, and end-of-the-month arrivals. Even so, there's really no better way of getting a good look at general trends in consumer activity.

As we predicted last time, this month's charts were shaken up by the arrival *TIE Fighter* and *Outpost*, as well as no less than ten new entries. Oddly enough, though, the two charts didn't agree on which game was the big winner. *TIE Fighter* was the hands-down champ on the Software Etc. list, while Sierra's *Outpost* dominated the Babbage's charts. The strange thing is that

neither game showed up on the other list at all.

Other winners were MicroProse's *X-COM*, slipping a couple of points on one list while making a major comeback on the other, and Maxis' *SimCity 2000*, which is maintaining a solid position in spite of the new games. There also seems to be some renewed interest in LucasArts' *X-Wing*.

Lots of old friends didn't make it through this month's barrage of new titles. Most notably absent are Microsoft's *Flight Simulator* and Disney's *Coaster*, which seem to have lost some of the following that kept them afloat for so long. Also losing some major ground were Broderbund's *Myst*, and MicroProse's *Master of Orion*, which disappeared from the Software Etc. charts entirely.

But ah, those newcomers! We have Origin's CD-ROM version of *Privateer*, SSI's *Dark Legions*, and Microsoft's *Best of Windows Entertainment Packs* all

Babbage's Top Ten List

This Month	Last Month
1. <i>Outpost</i> (Sierra)	New entry
2. <i>X-COM</i> (Microprose)	New entry
3. <i>Myst</i> (Broderbund)	(2)
4. <i>Harpoon II</i> (360 Pacific)	(1)
5. <i>Sim City 2000</i> (Maxis)	(3)
6. <i>Master of Orion</i> (Microprose)	(8)
7. <i>Rebel Assault</i> (LucasArts)	(5)
8. <i>X-Wing</i> (LucasArts)	New entry
9. <i>7th Guest</i> (Virgin)	(4)
10. <i>Privateer</i> (Origin)	New entry

(Based on sales at 333 Babbage's stores)

Software Etc.'s Top Ten List

This Month	Last Month
1. <i>TIE Fighter</i> (LucasArts)	New Entry
2. <i>SimCity 2000</i> (Maxis)	(2)
3. <i>Lion King Print Studio</i> (Disney)	New Entry
4. <i>AD&D Collectors Edition 2</i> (Wizardworks)	(10)
5. <i>X-COM</i> (Microprose)	(3)
6. <i>Dark Legions</i> (SSI)	New Entry
7. <i>Best of Windows Entertainment Packs V.1</i> (Microsoft)	New Entry
8. <i>X-Wing</i> (LucasArts)	(4)
9. <i>SimCity Classic</i> (Maxis)	New Entry
10. <i>Might & Magic: Dark Side of Xeen</i> (New World)	New Entry

Computing..... New Entry
(Based on sales at 352 stores)

making impressive showings. And although *Coaster* may be gone for now, Disney's *Lion King Print Studio* showed up at number 3 on the Software Etc. chart. Next month the charts should remain

fairly stable, but we predict *TIE Fighter* will surge to the top of both charts. Stay tuned!

Falling Down

Activision brings two classics to the PC

After the incredible success of Activision's *Return to Zork*, it's no surprise that the company has decided to resurrect two other past hits and relaunch them on the skyrocketing PC platform. This time, though, in addition to updating a PC text adventure in their own special way with *Planetfall*, Activision will be bringing us a rare treasure from the heyday of the Atari 2600 — *Pitfall*.

Steve Meretzky, who designed the original *Planetfall*, will be returning to help develop the graphics-intensive sequel. And there's more writing star power, thanks to the addition of two "Star Trek: The Next Generation" screenwriters — Hans Beimler and Richard Manning — to the production staff. And although Activision still hasn't released any names or details, the company states that the new version of *Planetfall* will "feature a cast of 15-25 Hollywood performers."



Planetfall's never looked so good. Activision plans to fill the game with live actors digitized over more fantastic backgrounds like this one.

Using the same basic engine that made *Return to Zork* so popular, *Planetfall's* story will team your character up with Floyd, a robot from the original story, as you both attempt to save the race of Lobots from the oppression of the brutal Hibots. As with most of Meretzky's designs, the game will

have a decidedly humorous slant, and will contain lots of devious puzzles for players to solve. A spring 1995 release is anticipated, but if you watch the pages of *PC Gamer*, we'll keep you up-to-date on how the game's progressing.

Also due in the spring of next year is the return of the first

true arcade hero, Pitfall Harry, in the new *Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure*. The original *Pitfall* was one of the best-selling videogame carts ever, and helped make the Atari 2600 the success it was. But it's been a long time since those days, and fans of the old stick-figure hero will be delighted to see that Harry is a part of the graphics revolution of the '90s.

In this new adventure, Pitfall Harry has apparently been captured by some sort of evil Mayan cult, and it's up to his son HJ (Harry Jr., of course) to get past hosts of possessed animals and Mayan warrior spirits and set Dad free. Fortunately, HJ has learned a few tricks that Harry just couldn't pull off back in the eighties, including the ability to throw charged ammo with his power sling, and to bungee-jump, swim, and even surf. Since the original *Pitfall* sold close to 4 million copies, Activision feels sure that this game is destined to be a hit.

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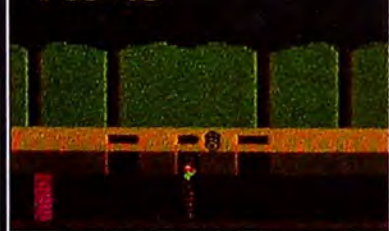
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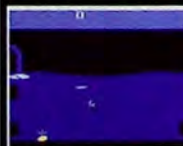
Product Information Number 125

The Evolution of a Pixelated Hero

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In the original *Pitfall*, Harry was little more than a blocky stick figure wearing clothes. Pixelicious, isn't he?



Also on the 2600, *Pitfall 2* tried to reduce Harry's size to make him look a little more like a real (but very tiny) person.



In the new *Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure*, Harry's son takes full advantage of the new age of graphics and animation. I wonder what Dad is going to look like when we find him?

EPIC

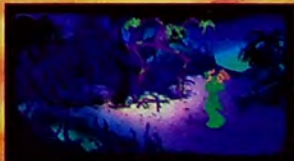
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SIERRA

Product Information Number 199

A Feather in Their Capstone

Intracorp set to acquire Three-Sixty Pacific

Though *Harpoon II* soared to the top spot on sales charts all over the country this summer, it wasn't in time to save Three-Sixty Pacific (408-879-9144) from bankruptcy. As has already been reported, Three-Sixty filed Chapter 11 to protect itself from destruction and gain some time to reorganize its debts. Unfortunately, those debts were simply too great, and the California-based company went on the block for acquisition a few weeks ago.

The main contender to snap up Three-Sixty and its newly organized development team is IntraCorp, parent company of Capstone (305-591-5900). And though the legal wrangling is still going on at press-time, it appears fairly certain that IntraCorp will be acquiring Three-Sixty and all of its product line. At the same time, Three-Sixty's Director of Product Development Carl Norman — the man who, along with Technology Director Mike Steele, is largely responsi-

ble for reorganizing Three-Sixty after a series of setbacks and making *Harpoon II* a reality — announced he'll be moving to Strategic Simulations Inc. as a producer.

We had a chance to talk to Norman and Three-Sixty about the difficulties they've faced lately. Norman built their Texas development team after some notorious failures, such as *Patriot* and *Theater of War*, resulted from their lack of any internal development capability. He began by assembling and streamlining the team which would later do *Harpoon II*, and it was about halfway through that project that Norman says "the company started having a cash crunch. We all took pay cuts, and though it was rough, the programmers were dedicated to getting this product out.

"The whole idea was that when *Harpoon II* hit, we would have all the money we needed for growth, and to get our development geared to other product lines. But the cash just never

materialized, and it got to the point where the financial pressures were too great for anybody to manage." Money from the *Harpoon II* sales was even needed to pay for the Chapter 11 proceedings, and with so many past debts, any *HII* profits were already spent. "The only solution was acquisition," said Norman.

"We've had a rough road lately, but we've still done some really good work," Three-Sixty's president Tom Frisina explains. "It became apparent to me that with the kind of ambitious projects we were doing we simply got into a hole, and the best way to get us out of the hole would be to have somebody purchase the company and make the capitol investment. IntraCorp came forward and made us a decent offer, and my objective at that time was to see that our creditors were taken care of and that our employees found a home in a place that really cared about them.

Although I won't be retained by the company, virtually all of our employees will. They'll take good

care of the brand name, they'll make investments in hardware and additional resources, and they will assuredly get the entire suite of *Harpoon II* products finished and the long-awaited fix and final version of *Victory at Sea* for Mac and PC."

SSI is eager to have Norman involved with the *Great Naval Battles* series and a submarine simulator they have planned, as well as other role-playing and strategy games. SSI's Chuck Krogel observes, "We look at him as a good senior project manager, someone who can get in there and help us coordinate our resources to make those products happen."

Since the acquisition isn't final, IntraCorp is guarded about their plans for Three-Sixty, but they're obviously eager to have control of the proven strength of the *Harpoon* license. Stay with us for further details on this story.

The PC Gamer Playlist

This was the kind of month that makes editors cringe. With all of these great games floating around and deadlines looking tight, it was a disaster waiting to happen. Obviously we made it through, or you wouldn't be reading this. But it was close.

Resident strategists Joe and Trent found themselves stopped cold by a wave of great titles, including MicroProse's *Masters of Magic*, Blizzard's *Warcraft*, Sierra's *Battle Bugs*, and of course Virgin's long awaited *Cannon Fodder*. Matt and Steve were too busy with *Doom II* and *TIE Fighter* to do much complaining, and Gary indulged the action lover in himself with Sierra's new

remake of the classic *Lode Runner* and Interplay's *Blackthorne*. Shelli and Scotty waged their own battles over real estate with a little *Monopoly*. And Eddie just sat hunkered over his Mac, playing *Links Pro* from Access. We try to tell him he's not allowed to play games on a Mac, but he only grunts and keeps on swinging.



Blackthorne had us all feeling a little bloodthirsty this month.

- 1) *TIE Fighter* (LucasArts) - Trent, Matt, Steve
- 2) *Monopoly* (Virgin) - Shelli, Scotty
- 3) *Battle Bugs* (Sierra) - Steve, Joe
- 4) *Masters of Magic* (Microprose) - Joe, Trent
- 5) *Warcraft* (Blizzard) - Matt, Joe, Trent
- 6) *Cannon Fodder* (Virgin) - Trent, Joe, Matt
- 7) *Blackthorne* (Interplay) - Steve, Gary, Trent, Eddie
- 8) *Lode Runner* (Sierra) - Steve, Gary
- 9) *Doom II* (id) - Matt, Steve, Eddie
- 10) *Links Pro* (Macintosh) (Access) - Eddie, Shelli

Druidic Rites and Armored Fights

Koei's two newest titles are worlds apart — except in the strategic challenge they have to offer

In the late eighties, Koei (415-348-0200) was an active player in the PC gaming market. While Asian-themed titles like *Nobunaga's Ambition*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and *Genghis Khan* weren't blockbuster hits, they did earn a steady and devoted following (William R. Trotter, our own Desktop General, was a huge fan of *Nobunaga* and *ROTK*).

But as PC games became more technologically advanced at the start of this decade, Koei struggled to keep up the pace — they continued to use EGA for at least a year after VGA was the de facto standard, didn't have mouse support until 1992, and never fully exploited the growing availability of sound cards.

A year or so ago, however, Koei committed itself to produc-

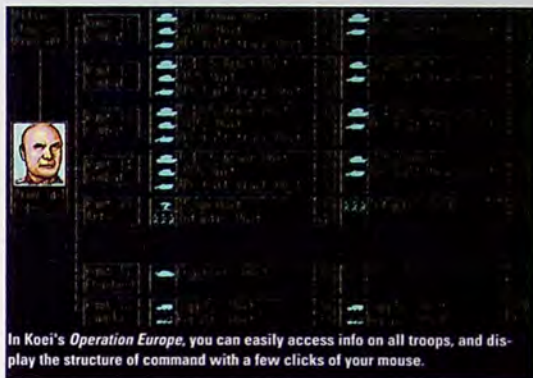


Scroll around the tactical map, then click to begin the process of allocating the forces you need to exploit the enemy in *Operation Europe*.

ing solid games with an emphasis on strategy and replayability. The first title they released that embodied this new philosophy, *Genghis Khan II: Clan of the*



It's April, 1945. Even Hitler's favorite commando Otto Skorzeny can't turn the tide of battle this late in the war — unless you've managed to change what's happened up to that time through your shrewd leadership.



In Koei's *Operation Europe*, you can easily access info on all troops, and display the structure of command with a few clicks of your mouse.

Gray Wolf (PCG rating: 81%), was a fairly complex but playable strategy game with handsome, high-res VGA graphics and a manual that benefitted greatly from being written in English (earlier manuals had been translated from Japanese).

Now the company is getting set to release two new games in time for Christmas, and while they both look to be fairly deep in the strategy department, they couldn't be further apart in their subject matter. *Operation Europe* puts you in control of the Allied or Axis forces in six famous WWI campaigns: North Africa, Kursk, the Normandy invasion, Battle of the Bulge, and the assault on Berlin. And when we say "puts you in control," we mean it: Patton, Rommel, von Runstedt, Zhukov, and others answer directly to you.

In addition to making decisions on grand strategy, you'll also be able to do things like send Special Forces units on missions to assassinate key enemy leaders, order engineers to sabotage supply lines, or drop paratroops into important enemy-controlled cities.



Seasonal cycles play a crucial role in *Celtic Tales: Balor of the Evil Eye*. Besides forcing you to plan for the lean months of winter, each season carries a religious significance as well.

Both the CD-ROM and floppy versions of *Operation Europe* will feature a two-player mode, but Koei hasn't said whether or not the game will support modern play.

Koei's other new game, *Celtic Tales: Balor of the Evil Eye*, is much more similar to their earlier efforts. Set sometime between the first and fourth centuries B.C., *Celtic Tales* hurls you into a land threatened by bands of ruthless warriors wreaking havoc on a peaceful island nation. The Fomorians, led

by Balor, are the most powerful of these evil clans, and have their sights set on ruling the entire country. Several tribes, seeking to escape the tyranny and heavy tributes imposed by the Fomorians, have fled their homes and now roam the war-torn countryside.

Playing as one of three character types — Warrior, Druid, or Bard — you and up to three other human opponents take charge of one of these nomadic tribes. Your immediate goals are to find a safe haven for your followers, expand your power base, and raise an army capable of finding and defeating the Fomorians. To do that you must exploit the resources of your province, gain the support of the population, make beneficial alliances with other clan leaders, and eventually begin taking control of other provinces.

Koei says that while playing *Celtic Tales*, gamers will be introduced to Druidism and its underlying philosophies, along with the usual resource management and

diplomatic processes that are the hallmarks of most previous Koei games.



The graphics in *Celtic Tales* are a marked improvement over Koei's earlier offerings.

Sit On It!

The Flight Stand helps you hold that stick

If you're one of those PC pilots whose expensive flight stick winds up on the floor during an intense dogfight, or who can't easily issue keyboard commands because you're clutching your joystick with both hands, you might want to check out the Flight Stand from Duggan DeZign (401-823-8073). It's pretty easy to use — just Velcro your stick to the top of the Flight Stand, place the stand on your chair, then straddle the T-shaped base with your legs. This positions your flight stick in roughly the same spot an actual fighter plane's would be, and ensures stability when things get hairy during your favorite air-combat sim.

Both Thrustmaster and CH Products recommend the Flight Stand for use with their high-end controllers. Duggan DeZign claims you can use two Flight Stands to "mount" a joystick plus Thrustmaster Weapons Control System to your computer chair. But the Flight Stand

gains its stability from your weight being on both ends of the base — if you use two Flight Stands, you're sitting on only half of each base.

The Flight Stand carries a \$24.99 price tag, and is sold in most national retail software outlets. You can also order it directly from Duggan DeZign by calling the number listed above.



Cool shades and Khakis not included.

Muppet Madness Returns

Jim Henson Productions to produce CD-ROM entertainment titles.

Muppet fans everywhere will be glad to hear that Jim Henson Corporation is joining forces with Starwave Corporation to produce a series of PC products based on the loveable characters created by Henson over the years. At the same time, Jim Henson Corporation announced the launch of its own interactive media division, Jim Henson Interactive.

The new products will feature all of your favorite Muppet characters, including Kermit the Frog and the indomitable Miss Piggy, while encouraging learning through fun games and exercises. Although they're new to the computer industry, Henson Cor-

poration has a long history of producing entertainment products, including music, feature-films, home-video productions, and children's books. According to Brian Henson, president and C.E.O. of Jim Henson Productions, "Our company and our characters are uniquely suited to enter the interactive marketplace."

Henson Interactive's entry into the computer entertainment market is yet another example of the increasingly important role industry big-wigs throughout Corporate America feel computing will play in the future of entertainment. So don't be surprised to see other mainstream television and motion picture interests attempting forays into the world of PC entertainment within the coming year.

**Fighting 40 floors of terrorists
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Babbage's, Etc.

Two of software's biggest retailers join forces

Major behind-the-scenes changes might be coming soon to your local software store.

Babbage's Inc. and Software Etc. — two of the biggest purveyors of computer entertainment software in the country — recently announced their intentions to merge and form a holding company responsible for overseeing both corporations.

The merger, which has yet to be approved by the boards of both companies, shows how the virulent growth of "superstores" like CompUSA and Computer City is affecting traditional software merchants.

Both companies will continue to operate under their current names and management, and no stores will be closed. The new holding company, still as yet unnamed, will contain a balanced number of members from both companies with Jim McCurry, one of Babbage's

founders, as the holding company's chairman. And Software Etc. chairman Leonard Riggio will become the chairman of the new executive committee.

While no long-term plans have been announced, this merger should put the new company in a very good position, since it can now make buying and marketing decisions that carry the weight of a combined 700 stores. The merger may also mark the beginning of a price war among software retailers, as the superstores attempt to resist the new competition. Whatever the outcome, the union shows that computer software — and particularly entertainment software — is in a phase of real growth. And as the market continues to grow, we can look forward to better selection, lower prices, and superior customer service as retailers battle for our software dollars.

Does a Pair of Mages Beat a Flush?

MicroProse teams with Wizards of the Coast to bring *Magic: The Gathering* to PC

There's an interesting new trend/hobby sweeping the country, a game of trading cards and role-playing called

Magic: The Gathering. *Magic* players collect sets of trading cards, each with different spells, magicians, and game rules. They then gather to play against other collectors, playing the strengths of their collections against opponents.

The cards were introduced last year, and sold more than 10 million pieces in only six weeks. More than 300 million cards have sold to date, so you can bet there's already a well-established market for a computer version of the game.

Best of all, the game will be available in stand-alone and online versions. Both will feature high-res, 640 x 480 256-color graphics to help preserve the artistic integrity of the cards — one of *Magic*'s biggest strengths. And obviously, the ability to play against opponents all around the country will be a welcome feature to the millions of fans of the trading-card original.

Magic will ship in CD-ROM compilation sets, each disc holding all the cards from one of the original *Magic: The Gathering* collection or the four subsequent expansion sets: *Arabian Knights*, *Antiquities*, *Legends*, and *The Dark*. For more info, call MicroProse at (410) 771-1174.

Good thing, you'll need 'em.

Product Information Number 122

Operation Body Count.TM Terrorists have taken ambassadors hostage in the new *United Nations Towers*. They occupy 40 barricaded, trip-wired, booby-trapped floors. And if you're not busy wielding the power hammer perhaps you can coax them out with the gentle persuasion of a blazing Uzi, grenade launcher, or flame thrower. You're beading up already, right? Available on IBM CD-ROM. Featuring 3D animation, and modern and network play. Call (305) 373-7700 • (800) 468-7226 • BBS (305) 374-6872

Capstone

GP Publications: The *Next Generation*

GP Publications to publish *Next Generation*

We've got some big news of our own this month, concerning the launch of what will become the premier magazine of multi-platform electronic entertainment.

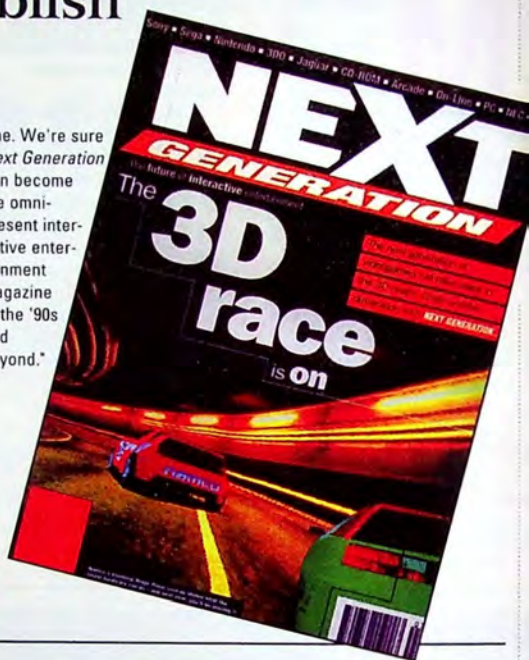
Debuting nationwide on December 8, 1994, *Next Generation* will cover the latest trends, technologies, and titles in the rapidly evolving interactive arena. *Next Generation's* editorial focus will embrace both established entertainment platforms, such as the PC, Sega Genesis, and 3DO, as well as the new platforms looming on the horizon. The magazine is aimed at the important early-adopters and hardcore

videogame fans who crave the latest information on their multi-billion dollar hobby.

Next Generation is the American version of the incredibly successful European magazine *Edge*, published by Future Publishing UK. *Edge* has enjoyed such enthusiastic response overseas that it was named Magazine of the Year for 1993 by the European Software Industry — and that after only three issues!

Jonathan Simpson-Bint, Publisher of *Next Generation*, is confident that the magazine will enjoy much the same response in the U.S. "The time is right," Bint says, "and we're confident that we can deliver a uniquely stylish and informative maga-

zine. We're sure *Next Generation* can become the omnipresent interactive entertainment magazine of the '90s and beyond."



Round Midnight

Domark's debut fantasy roleplaying game proves the company is dedicated to broadening its horizons — and isn't sacrificing quality in the process

A couple of months ago we received a demo of *Lords of Midnight*, which is being developed by Mike Singleton (*Ashes of Empire*, *Midwinter*) for Domark Software. We had some problems running the demo (i.e., it wouldn't run at all), so we filed it away and waited on a new version.

And it looks to have been worth the wait. *Lords of Midnight* has everything that FRP fans are looking for: a dynamic first-person perspective, real-time combat and gameplay, a wide variety of characters with distinctive personalities, and an interface that con-

stantly invites exploration.

The storyline itself is rich, with fantasy elements complementing a believable, absorbing plot. Luxor, the King of the land of Midnight, has been taken captive and imprisoned by Boroth the Wolfheart, who is holding the king for ransom from Prince Morkin. Morkin's first inclination is to raise an army and assault Boroth's Black Citadel, but he knows that Boroth will kill his father as soon as he receives word of any action being planned against him.

In desperation, Morkin decides on a different approach, one based on stealth and surprise, to rescue his father. So Morkin

Anderlane of the Arakai

The River Elmbrand, in the Follows.

To halt the action press **SPACE**

Consult the Chronicle to find out all the plot developments up to the current point in gameplay — a handy way to stay on top of the realistic and twisting story upon which *Lords of Midnight* is based.

makes up his mind to start out with only two friends, Aric and Corleth, and raise an army comprised of soldiers from the 12 realms surrounding Midnight. Unfortunately, Boroth has kidnapped the leaders of those realms as well, and the people of those lands will not join Morkin's quest until their leaders are freed.

As the game proper begins, you control Morkin as he journeys throughout the realm, meeting distinct characters and trying to persuade them to aid him in his battle. If you pause the game during the first-person movement and combat sequences, the graphics may look chunky; but while you're moving, the graphics take on a



whole new appearance, creating a glorious sense of 3D that sucks you into the game world. Should you tire of playing as Morkin, you can take control of other characters — and your choices of personas increases as the plot develops. If you make all the right decisions in the game, you'll eventually be able to control up to 24 characters (though each one has its own AI, ensuring that you won't lose a character who runs into a dangerous situation while on his own).

In keeping with the game's realism, the month, day, and actual time are taken from your computer's BIOS, so if you're playing in December, for example, you might well see snow on the ground. For players who don't want to handle Morkin's adventure in real time, there's a feature that lets you advance time at any rate you wish.

Mike Singleton, the driving force behind *Lords of Midnight*, earned a reputation for producing complex games of much depth



Lords of Midnight lets you control up to 24 different characters. After choosing one from the Heroes and Villains icon, you're presented with this screen showing where he's located and his current status; if the eyes in the upper-right hand corner are open, you can immediately assume that persona.

and play value. One criticism that's been leveled at some of his games, however, is that the minutiae can be overwhelming — but that's not the case with *LOM*. There's certainly detail here, but it never seems to get in the way of completing the tasks that are crucial to advancing the game. But we'll let you be the judge of how good *Lords of Midnight* is: We're hard at work right now, lining up an interactive demo of the game for the CD-ROM Edition of the December *PC Gamer*.

Getting a Grip on Reality

There's more than just seeing to Virtual Reality

Now that VR helmets are starting to come into the market with prices that are almost within reach of most consumers, it's time to ask for a clearer definition of what VR is really all about. Because while a helmet might let you peek into a virtual world, you'll need more than that to actually reach in and interact with it. Players will need new tools to help them manipulate virtual objects intuitively, instead of remaining tied to the somewhat limited options of a mouse or joystick. Just as important is the need to keep the costs of such items fairly low, or the masses will turn their back on them no matter how impressive they are.

Paradigm Shift Research and Development is a small company in Florida that's working on just this problem. By the middle of next year, the company plans to have a two-glove VR interface system out on the market that will retail for less than \$300. The system will be able to continually feed the computer information about where the user's hands are, along with their position and rotation. These features will enable users to interact with their machines in the same way that they manipulate objects in day-to-day life.

Paradigm Shift is currently looking for funding from venture capital groups in order to set production in motion, but the compa-

ny is trying to make sure that the unit itself doesn't suffer while waiting on the commercial process. The company has plans for several applications that will take full advantage of the new controls, including tentative plans for a boxing game that actually allows the user to throw different punches realistically. The drive towards more and more realistic peripherals is going to result in some impressive new technology over the next couple of years, so if you're interested in keeping up with the latest in PC-based VR, keep watching *PC Gamer's* Eyewitness section for the latest news as it develops. And for more on Paradigm Shift, give them a call at (407) 830-8033.

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Product Information Number 164

The Shape of Things to Come:

Cyberia



A far cry from the angular images of *Alone in the Dark*, *Cyberia* uses smooth shapes and subtle variations in coloring to create virtual actors extremely convincing.

In the past, PC games have been enjoyed by only a tiny percentage of PC owners. Will Interplay's newest



This woman seems to appear from time to time to give you a hard time. Since she's got the gun, you'd probably better do as she says.

adventure bring the silent majority into the gaming fold?

Trent C. Ward

The Shape of Things to Come Part 1

Over the past two years, PC gaming has seen changes in just about every possible aspect. Huge advances have been made in game graphics, sound cards have become an industry unto themselves, processors are faster and more powerful, and CD-ROM drives have become standard equipment on almost any new machine. Add this to the enormous surge in homes with a PC-compatible computer, and you have a situation that's completely new to game developers — an audience whose size is beginning to rival those of the music and film industries. In fact, according to the Optical Publishing Association, at the end of 1993 there was an installed base of 7.5 million CD-ROM drives in North America alone.

But while having millions of new customers might be clearing up a lot of the financial problems that development companies may have had in the past — at least in terms of acquiring venture capital to forward their vision — designers are faced with the challenge of writing games that will appeal to an uninitiated mass market without alienating the faithful consumers who've always demanded the best technology and the newest challenges.

Enter Interplay. This long-time industry leader was one of the first to announce that all its new games would be published only on CD-ROM, showing their commitment to exploiting technology in order to provide a more compelling gameplaying experience. And now they're facing the challenge of attracting the lucrative novice market head-on with *Cyberia*. Developed by newcomers Xatrix Interactive Design, *Cyberia* blends the latest in graphics and sound with gameplay that's designed to provide full-bore entertainment for everyone from the most eager newbie to hardened cyberveterans.

A World Gone Mad

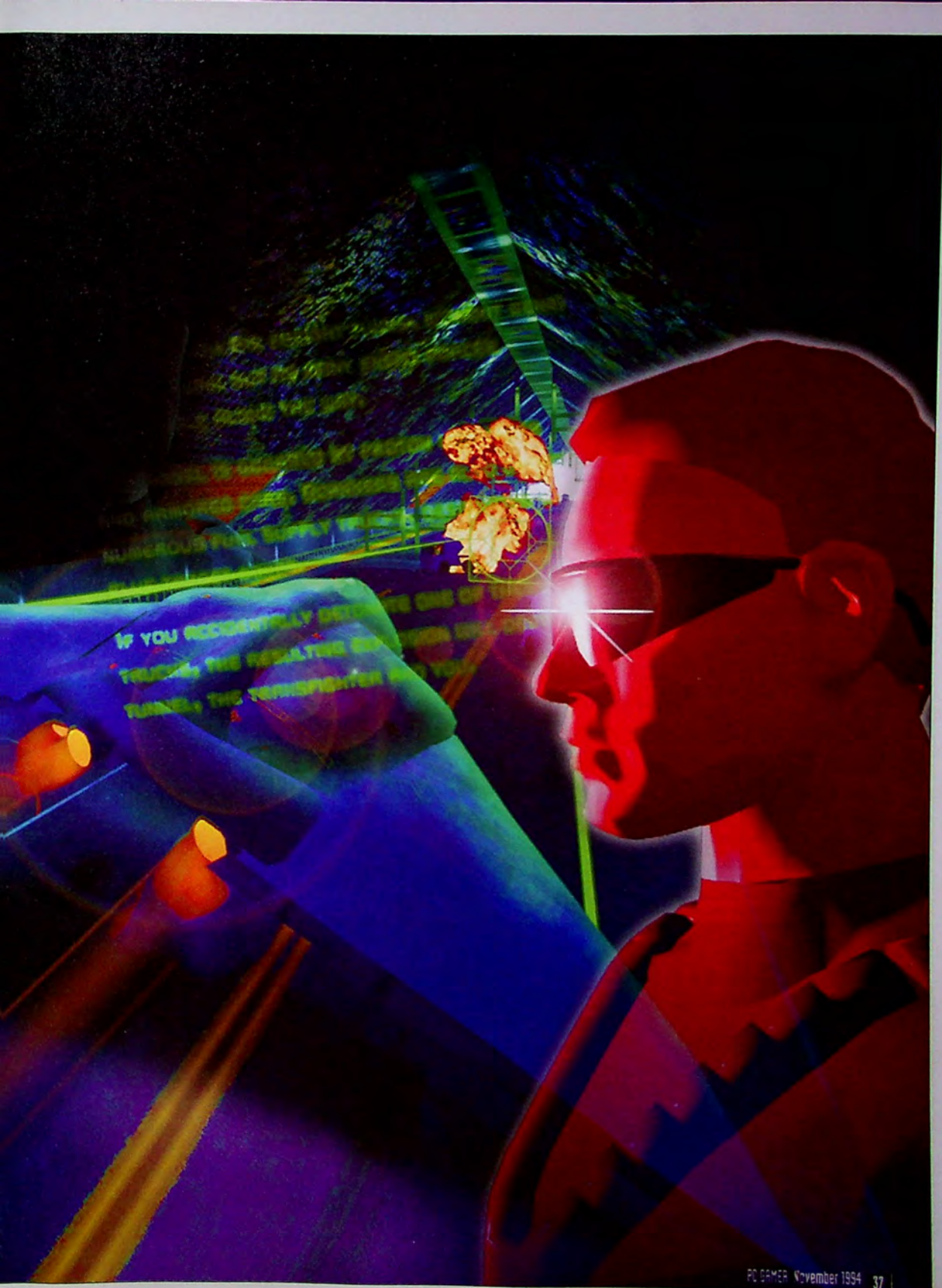
Like many other recent thrillers, *Cyberia* takes place in the future, and it's not exactly the days of wine and roses — the world of *Cyberia* is desolate, ripped asunder by the forces of a major cataclysm. Shortly after the economic and physical destruction of the land, two major governments take shape, each bent on controlling the planet.

The first, The Free World Alliance, is in some ways very similar to the governments of today, consisting mainly of old-style politicians and diplomats. The other government's name, The Cartel, says it all: a conglomeration of affluent drug-lords and crime bosses. Looking to rid them-

selves of the police states that have hounded them for years, The Cartel has been taking advantage of their vast stockpiles of money and weapons to try and make this world their own.

The game begins with your character, Zack, imprisoned by the Free World Alliance (the exact reason is never given, but from what I've seen, he probably swept the wrong girl off of her feet). Instead of prosecuting him, the Alliance offers Zack a chance to earn his freedom by helping them out of a sticky situation. The Cartel managed to find a weapons-development base hidden deep in the wastes of Siberia, and while the Alliance doesn't have much information on the discovery, they believe that what lays within the complex could turn the tide in their battle against The Cartel. In return for his release, the Alliance wants Zack to go on a longshot mission to infiltrate the base and bring back anything he finds there. Not content with the prospect of life in jail, Zack decides to take a chance, and the action begins.

Drew Markham, chief developer of the *Cyberia* project and president of Xatrix Interactive Design, explains how the game evolved. "We'd been building motion simulators with Silicon Graphics workstations for some time, and we knew the machines had promise for CD-ROM projects. Our



goal from the start was to define a new genre of interactive experience." With that much in mind, the small group began to look for ideas. Markham says the company's first concept was to develop a western, but began running into problems in



In this arcade sequence, you've got to get past air defenses and destroy this ship before it can be launched. Take care — it's not as defenseless as it looks.

finding enough good puzzle situations to make the game worth playing. "The idea that became *Cyberia* really came one night when we began to imagine a future where weapons manufacturers were stockpiling weapons not to sell to just one country, but to the highest bidder," says Markham. "After the team started fleshing out the details of this imaginary landscape, they decided to find out just how far they could take it. "In the Summer of '93, Xatrix was only four people. We got the idea for this, and we didn't really know what was technologically possible. So my art director and I began working on a demo."

Just Like in the Movies

Xatrix's art director Robert Stahl had plenty of ideas for creating this strange new world, but no real experience in the computer field. Actually trained as a vehicle designer, Stahl depended on pencils and brushes to create the hundreds of drawings that were part of the production process. Worried about the delay that the extra steps of converting the art to computer was causing, Markham came into work early one morning and cleared

Robert's desk of every implement he could find, and replaced them with a Macintosh loaded with the latest in design software. Stahl responded by creating even more impressive images than before, and in a fraction of the time previously required. The end result is breathtaking, as a look at the actual game screens on the following pages clearly proves.

Like Origin's *Bioforge* and Sierra's *Phantasmagoria*, *Cyberia* refines the virtual studio techniques first used in Infogrames' *Alone in the Dark* — not surprising, when you consider that two members of the *Cyberia* team, Michel Royer and Franck DeGirolami, actually left Infogrames to work on the project. Virtual studios are basically a way for game developers to produce titles much in the same way that they would produce a movie. The first step is the creation of a virtual room (this can be any size), really nothing more than computer-defined walls, a ceiling, and a floor. After the basic dimensions have been laid out, the artists place "texture" over the bare-bones objects. Texturing is Xatrix's specialty, and *Cyberia* is filled with 3D rooms that look almost as real as anything you would see in live film — much more convincing than digitized photos of real sets.

After the room has been rounded



Flying through these canyons can get pretty hairy, but you've got to make sure to hit every target that you can get your sights on.



This hallway is a perfect example of the level of graphical detail you can expect to see throughout *Cyberia*. All of the bars, hatchways, etc. you see are actually just carefully created textures.

out, inanimate objects such as ships, chairs, barrels, and so forth are put in their proper location. After this has been completed, the programmers have a room that they can "move" about in, and view from any possible angle. After deciding on a spot to place their virtual camera, and "film" the room just as if they were shooting a live-action shot.



One of the more insidious puzzles facing you, this bomb will ruin your day if you don't take the correct approach to disarming it. Hint: The Off button doesn't perform like you might think.

Then it's time to begin the painstaking process of moving their virtual actors to every possible location in the room and rendering the shot. At the current stages of production, all of the work that's been done so far on *Cyberia* takes up around 25.5 Gigabytes of hard-drive space. To allow the game to fit onto a CD-ROM, the designers are forced to compress each frame from its grandiose 32-bit format down to 8-bit graphics, a process which the crew calls "taking an eight-bit dump." But even after being run through this

She Blinded Me With Headspace!

Though *Cyberia*'s programmers had a great deal of experience with developing the finest of new-age graphics, they weren't quite as confident when it came to sculpting the sound and music to accompany the action — so they turned to the experts. And by choosing Headspace, an audio production company launched a couple of years ago by '80's pop star Thomas Dolby, Xatrix proved its commitment to making every aspect of *Cyberia* as polished as possible. The company — which consists of five composers, two sound effects designers, a voiceover producer, and a recording engineer — was created by Dolby to bring the same level of quality and control to the audio in computer entertainment projects that is expected in video and film audio, and is quickly

becoming the preeminent source for top-notch computer sound generation.

In the end, Headspace was responsible for almost every aspect of the game's audio production. Markham met with members of the Headspace team, and together they came up with an idea of the types of music and sound they wanted in the game. Next, video tape of the completed graphics and animations were sent from Xatrix to Headspace, where an appropriate soundtrack was composed for the scene. After the music had been added, sound effects were created — many of which were actually several different sounds that were blended together to create just the right effect. Lastly, Markham sent the voice actors for the game's human roles to the Headspace studios to be recorded; when all of the voice acting was

completed, all the audio was recorded and sent back to Xatrix, where the programmers added it to the game.

In addition to its work on *Cyberia*, Headspace has been busy with other projects — creating a virtual string quartet for show at the Guggenheim in Oct. of 1993, composing the soundtrack for Sega's *Double Switch*, and even designing the sound and writing the theme music for DIVE!, Steven Spielberg's restaurant in Los Angeles.

As computer entertainment continues to grow in scope, look for innovators like Headspace to continue to carve new niches for themselves in the games market.

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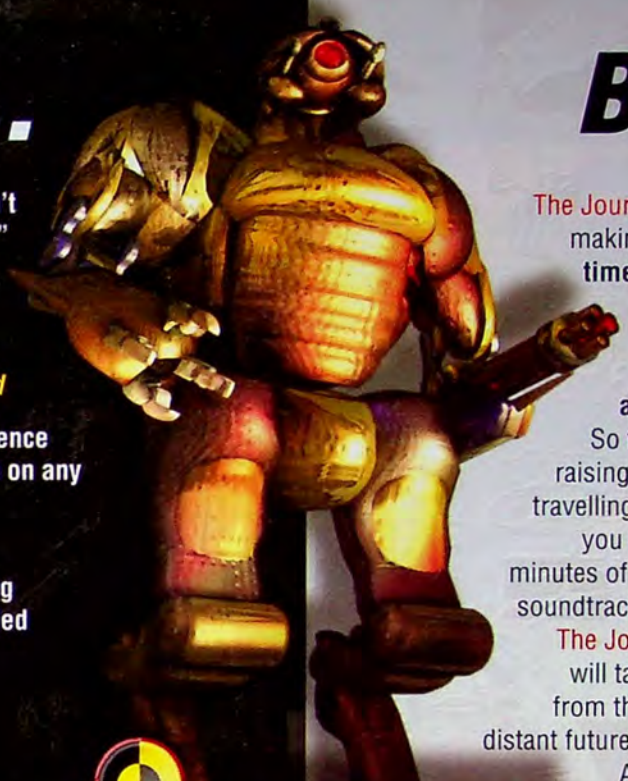
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process, the completed visuals are definitely worth it.

Finding the Perfect Balance

These advances are undeniably impressive, but the most important thing about any game is how it actually plays. Fortunately, this is where *Cyberia* is at its best, opening up a whole new world to players who may have been frightened off computer gaming by unfriendly interfaces, weighty manuals, or abstruse gameplay. The game consists of three major parts, each with its own



You won't always be fortunate enough to get room to maneuver when fighting. To make matters worse, there's plenty of places to hide guns in this indoor complex.

variations in style and play. The first type of gameplay you'll run across consists mainly of moving your character around and exploring your surroundings. Control during these segments is in many ways similar to that of *Alone in the Dark*, but only allows the player to walk down certain pre-defined pathways instead of offering complete freedom of motion.

The decision to somewhat limit the player's control was a source of much dis-



If you manage to complete this mission, you're rewarded with some truly amazing destruction. Reflections and light sources have all been figured out to make this extremely explosive scene as realistic as possible.

cussion in the planning stage. "One of the toughest choices facing us was whether or not we should give full-motion control to the characters, or use pre-defined routines," says Markham. "We were actually pulling people off the street and asking them what they thought, and we found that for a beginning player, completely free motion added a great deal of unnecessary complexity and confusion." During the

graphic adventure portion of the game, characters will talk with others to learn more about their quest, manipulate objects they run across, and just generally explore this strange artificial world that they've been placed in.

If you manage to survive long enough, you'll probably be placed into a situation that forces you to enter *Cyberia*'s final mode, the arcade combat sequences. While every scenario is different, most of the fighting sequences put you behind the weapons controls of the powerful Trans-fighter, a new-age aircraft that's got more than enough firepower to take on even the most heavily armored foes. While racing down a pre-determined flight path, you'll take charge of the craft's offensive batteries. In order to make it through each level, you'll have to destroy a certain number of enemy ships before your time runs out. Various levels will have you flying over blind- ing snowscapes, claustrophobic tunnels, and more. Additional scenarios put you in control of other types of futuristic weaponry like the huge anti-aircraft guns. The graphics are just as impressive here as in any other part of the game, and result in a 3D feel that's quite eerily convincing.

You might think you're home-free after surviving the rigors of your first combat, but you'll soon learn that success here

is dependent on your deductive powers as well as your trigger finger. Certain situations in the game are actually fiendish puzzles, varying in complexity depending on the player's skill level. These brain-teasers range from something as innocuous as the opening of

a door, to obviously life-threatening predicaments such as disarming a live bomb. Mixed with the furious action of the arcade sequences, *Cyberia*'s problem-solving sections give the game a sense of balance not seen in many other high-end products.

In the end, Xatrix had almost as much development time devoted to the gameplay end of production as they did on



A lot of the decisions you'll be forced to make will seem relatively unimportant. But even something like kissing another character may create whole new opportunities, or invite an early doom.

the graphics. Xatrix and Interplay wanted to be sure that the final result would be a product that beckoned that aforementioned glut of new players into the world of computer games, but beyond that they wanted to make avid gamers out of this group. To that end, Xatrix took an interest-



This sequence is just a good old-fashioned shoot-em-up combined with the latest in graphics technology. Keep an eye both on attacking aircraft and the multitude of floating mines that will assault you from below.

ing approach to the traditional concept of multiple difficulty levels. Players can choose from a difficulty rating of one (the easiest) to three (very hard) in both puzzle and arcade categories. This allows gamers

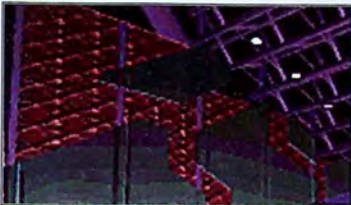


Control during these walking sequences is very easy — the emphasis is on exploration, rather than on figuring out how to make your character respond correctly.

to get the exact challenge that they think is best suited for their style of play.

In order to ensure that the game would remain challenging, the programmers designed the levels so that the total skill level must always remain at four or higher. For example, players who feel their arcade skills aren't quite up to snuff will have to solve level-three puzzles if they

want to reduce the action skill to one. Though the harder levels may seem impossible at first, rest assured that it is possible to destroy every enemy — the *Cyberia* team was told, in fact, that if none of the game testers could achieve a perfect score in a section, they would have to adjust things until it could be done.



The beautiful Trans-fighter in all of its radiant glory. Like all of the rest of the objects in the game, this is a fully three-dimensional image that was set into a virtual studio, then "filmed."

In addition to the varying skill levels, Xatrix also had to come up with creative solutions to producing believable enemy attacks. Using a proprietary system called a Tracker, members of the *Cyberia* team actually "flew" the enemy crafts on their attack paths, making for an opponent that combines the processing speed of the computer with the deviousness of a human opponent. Look for the company's future titles to further exploit this technology.

Cyberia will ship in time for Christmas this year, and will no doubt end up big on many gamers wish lists. Interplay has a title on its hands that will appeal to newcomers and long-time enthusiasts alike, one that bridges the gap between action and puzzle games — and looks extremely classy doing it. More than anything, this is the type of game that players should expect to see in the coming years, as more and more diverse personalities began to make PC gaming their playground of choice.

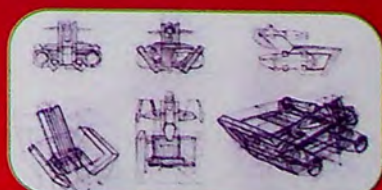
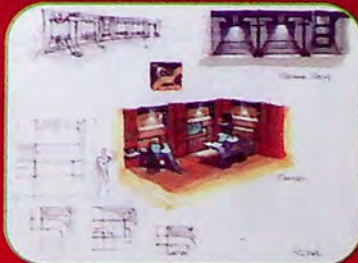
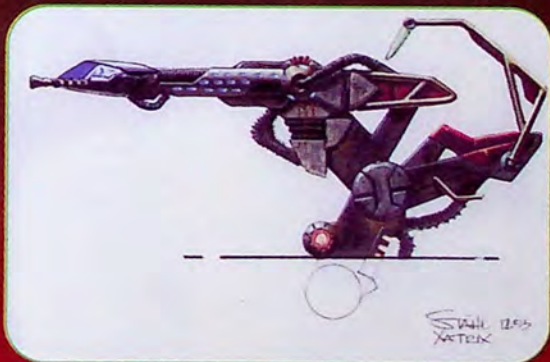
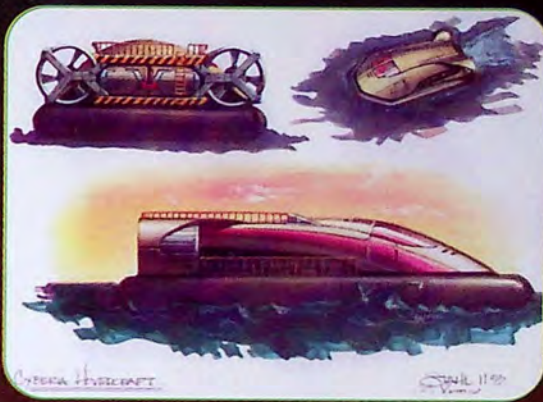
That doesn't mean, of course, that hard-core veterans are going to be left out in the cold, forced to play games designed for as broad an audience as possible. Once novices learn that playing computer games can be fun, then the market will expand. Some may think that, as with television and movies, the quality of games will drop as the industry gets bigger — but what it actually means is that even small companies will have a better chance than ever at making real profits, even if they only capture a small percentage of the newfound market. And that will result in more games for all sorts of PC fans, be they arcade fanatics or thoughtful strategists.

See, *Cyberia* isn't such a cold place after all!

In The Beginning

Using his background in vehicle design, *Cyberia*'s art director Robert Stahl began to create his dark vision of the future through these prelimi-

nary sketches. Every facet of the bases and weaponry was considered, from the sleek look of the Trans-Fighter to the complex design of everyday furniture.

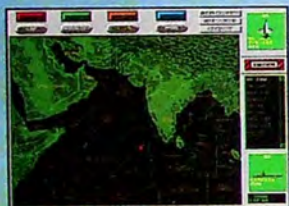


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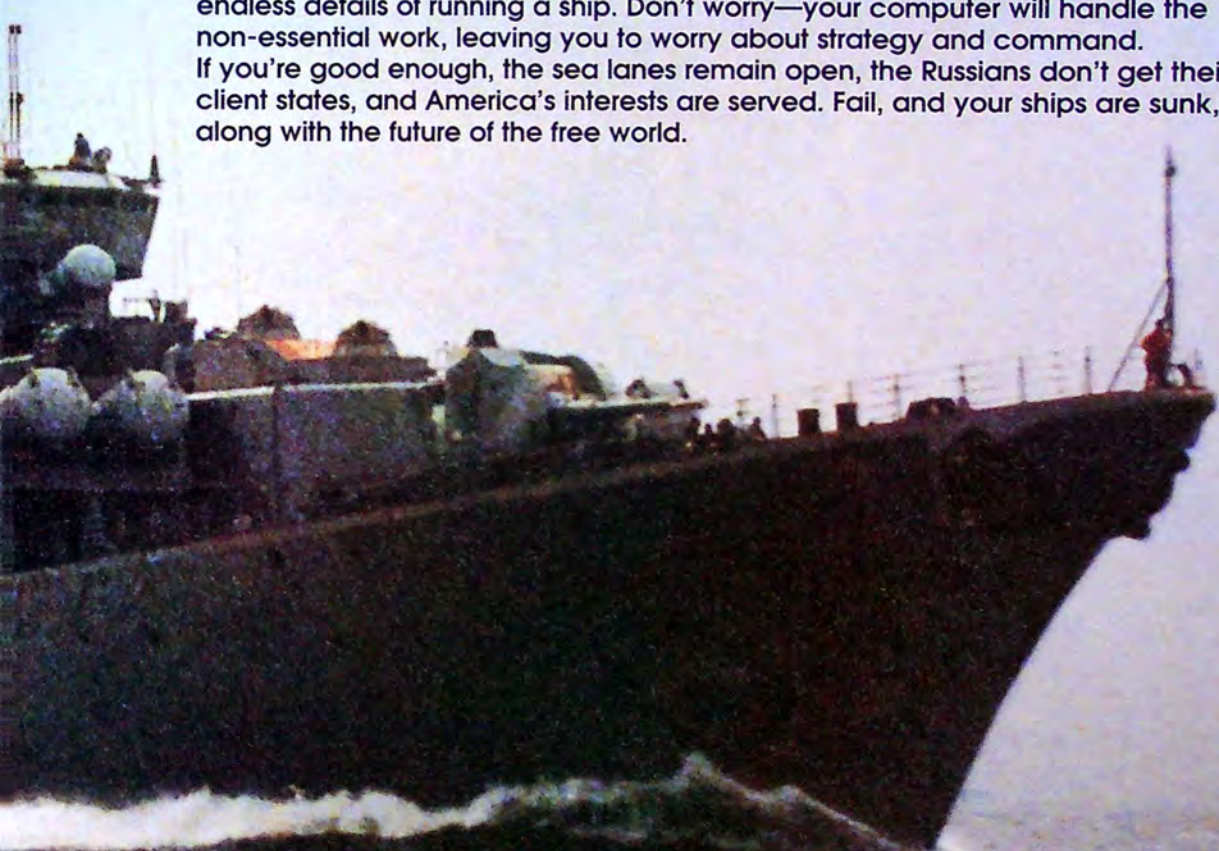
...and the Russian Bear is Back!

Zhirinovsky has seized the reins of power in the Kremlin, and he's got his eye on warm-water ports and rich oil deposits in the Persian Gulf and Indian Oceans. While the *Kirov* cruises toward Bahrain, and Typhoons prowl the Gulf, where is the United States?

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5th FLEET gives you a new engine—a new design—and a new standard for Modern Naval warfare. Hi-res graphics give you crisp, vivid maps and screens. Play against a wily computer opponent at variable levels of aggression and difficulty, "hot-seat" a friend on the same computer, or play via E-Mail.

Whichever way you play the game, you'll agree that *5th FLEET* splashes the competition!



The Shape of Things to Come: Games of Future Past

Gary Meredith

Have you noticed that games are a lot prettier now than, say, five years ago? Think of some state-of-art game like a mid-series King's Quest, or an early Ultima. Okay, got that image in your head? Now, just take a look at Interplay's *Cyberia* — whoa... we're

play 16 colors out of a palette of 64 at 640 x 350 resolution — entered the scene. But like the 286, it was thought of as a high-end luxury. So it was something of a crap shoot for game designers to begin producing 16-color games, when so few home systems were available to play them.

We've brought together a few screen shots from yesterday and today to illustrate how the graphic design process has pushed gaming to new heights. Because roleplaying adventures and sims have always been such a big part of computer gaming we chose to focus on these two genres for this visual trip down memory lane.



Millennium Auction really illustrates just how far games have come from a graphics standpoint.

talking sensory overload. You've got richly modeled, believable 3D characters and objects moving easily and realistically through the most breathtaking scenery. And *Cyberia* is by no means the first or the last of this new generation. From Take 2's *Hell* to Sierra's *Gabriel Knight* to Broderbund's *Myst*, a deluge of graphically sophisticated games are inundating the market. And the flood's nowhere near cresting.

It wasn't that long ago that text-based games were the norm, and our imaginations were the first true video adaptors. When companies such as Origin, Sierra On-Line, Accolade, and Electronic Arts began producing the first 16-color games in the mid 80's, it truly was a revolution, and more than a little risky. Relatively few people enjoyed the then-blazing speed of the 286 AT computers, and those were primarily business users. Home machines were still mostly of the XT variety, and graphic capabilities were primitive. The amazingly crude four-color CGA standard was pretty common — I still have nightmares of a world colored cyan, magenta, yellow, and black — although many preferred the less-queasy looking Hercules monochrome emulation.

Then EGA — with its ability to dis-

Obviously, the gamble paid off. The new games provided the impetus for an en masse upgrading of graphics capabilities. EGA monitors and boards quickly became standard items for all but the most basic systems, while several designers became quite adept at the arcane art of dithering, which made it seem like there were more colors onscreen than there actually were.

And then, almost before we gamers could catch our collective breath, the number of available colors squared with the quick acceptance of VGA. 256 colors could now be shown, albeit at the retrograde resolution of 320 x 200. But the extra colors more than made up for the chunkier resolution. Game designers were off and running — and they've haven't looked back since.

Evolution By Genre

It's fascinating just to look at some of today's graphics and realize how far computer gaming has come in the past few years. It's almost shocking to see what yesterday's hottest hits look like when compared with today's. And that's what we're going to do here.

The First-Person Perspective

The first person chase/adventure has long been a staple of gaming. But only since the introduction of faster processors have we finally been afforded a true first person-experience.



Total Eclipse, a French game from 1988 is a direct ancestor of *Doom*. The color shading isn't exactly subtle, is it?



GameTek's *Quarantine* is two parts *Doom* to one part *Hoverforce*, with a premise that puts it out on the mean streets. Perspective transition, always a problem with this type of game, is the smoothest we've seen so far.

Sabre Team



Four hostages are being held at the American Embassy in London's West End. You are in control of the smallest and most secretive fighting unit in the British Army - The Sabre Team. It is your duty to infiltrate the embassy, rescue the hostages, and treat the terrorists with extreme prejudice. Complete this mission successfully, then proceed on to four more scenarios: rescue British prisoners from a jungle POW camp, destroy a subversive underground nuclear installation, rescue a hijacked ocean liner, and destroy a hostile nuclear weapons center deep in the desert.

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If you've played DOOM, stop reading and haul ass to the nearest game store *now*. If you haven't, we can only say (respectfully, of course): Go to hell.

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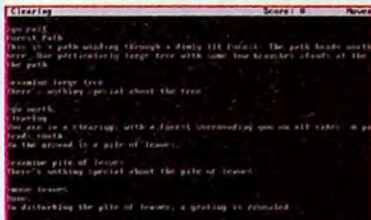
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Graphic Adventures

Graphic roleplaying adventures have perhaps benefitted most from the improvements in graphics techniques. The older games such as *Police Quest 1*, revolutionary though they were in their day, were really only a couple of steps removed from the text adventures. The crude graphics meant that you still had to fill in a lot with your imagination, but at least there were actually articulated characters you could manipulate instead of the icons or sprites of the earliest graphic games.

The graphics in today's games are becoming so sophisticated as to totally blur the dividing line between caricature and reality. The newest products feature either digitized video of real actors or finely modeled 3D images that are nearly as lifelike. These two approaches will most likely merge in future games, so that an actual person is used only as a baseline for 3D-modeled extrapolations.



This is how it all started for a lot of us. Graphic adventures were available, but were so primitive that many gamers preferred just to color things in with their imaginations. All-text gaming was king.

YESTERDAY



Sierra recruited real cop Jim Walls to consult on this groundbreaking series. Graphic refinement was obviously sacrificed in the interest of smooth play and content.



Take a look at our *King's Quest VII* Scoop! on page 18, then flip back to this pic from the EGA *KQ1*. It uses only 16 colors, and the graphics are almost an afterthought.



Origin's Ultima series was always at the forefront of graphic design, even in this early incarnation, *Ultima II*.



Along with *Neuromancer*, *Circuit's Edge* brought a much-needed science fiction sensibility and — for 16-color graphics — nicely rendered characters to PC games.



The rather juvenile *Spellcasting 101* nevertheless featured sophisticated EGA graphics, and was a bridge between the blocky 16-color games of the mid-to-late '80s and the lush graphic adventures of today.



It's rare that a single game can capture the imagination of so many, but *Myst* with its open-ended game play and especially its lushly surreal graphics, captured the hearts of PC and Mac gamers alike.



Few new games can equal the glorious graphics and the smooth game play of Software Toolworks' *Dragon Lore*.



The long-awaited *Under a Killing Moon* has a bloodline reaching back to Access' original digitized masterpiece, *Mean Streets*. With actors such as Brian Keith — shown here — and Margot Kidder, star quality won't be lacking.

TODAY

Flight Sims

Flight sims, along with tank and naval simulations, were the darlings of gamers in the early days of enhanced graphics. Some of the great titles in the genre, such as *Jet Fighter* and *Falcon*, got their starts in 1987 and '88, and offered the gamer a small taste of virtual reality flight. The first flight sim I ever bought, *Chuck Yeager's Advanced Flight Trainer*, was a marvel back in 1987, with 18 aircraft designs to choose from and the ability to actually share the sky with another plane. Never mind that, like other flight sims of the era, the planes were only barely recognizable as planes at anything but point blank range, or that the scenery was polygonal at its most basic; you could still suspend belief

for a few moments and feel as if you, too, had the right stuff.

Today's flight/space flight sims are coming closer than ever to a photo-realistic experience, with ever more sophisticated sky and ground rendering. The very newest take full advantage of 486 and Pentium processing power to show considerably improved graphics, along with smoother flight. Because there's so much more graphics processing involved here, the difference in appearance between flight sims of yesterday and today may not be nearly so dramatic as with other games. A side-by-side comparison, however, shows just how far flight sims have come.

YESTERDAY



Chuck Yeager's Advanced Flight Simulator: The crack pilot lent his name and his expertise to this pioneering flight sim. The colors weren't much, but it was the first chance a lot of us had to experience the joy of flight.



What can you say about CGA graphics, at least in polite company? *Test Drive* may not have been a flight sim, but it's a perfect example of the level of graphic detail you could expect in any game that required the processor to do a lot of calculations throughout most of actual gameplay.



Falcon 3.0 represented a quantum leap in flight sims, by featuring a more detailed cockpit and scenery, with more exacting flight parameters and awesome graphics.



The EGA polygons of *LHX Attack Chopper* didn't stand in the way of gameplay. But they didn't help matters any, either. A couple hundred more colors and some shading, and you'd be in business.



Flight sims require constant screen refreshes plus independently moving multiple objects, factors which make the realism and playability of *Dawn Patrol* all that more amazing. Looks sweet, doesn't it?



TIE Fighter features all the action and great graphics of *Wing Commander*, with the added bonus of being part of the ever-popular Star Wars saga.



How many games become a genre unto themselves? There were space battle/strategy sims before *Wing Commander*, but does anyone actually remember them?

TODAY

The Shape of Things to Come Part 2



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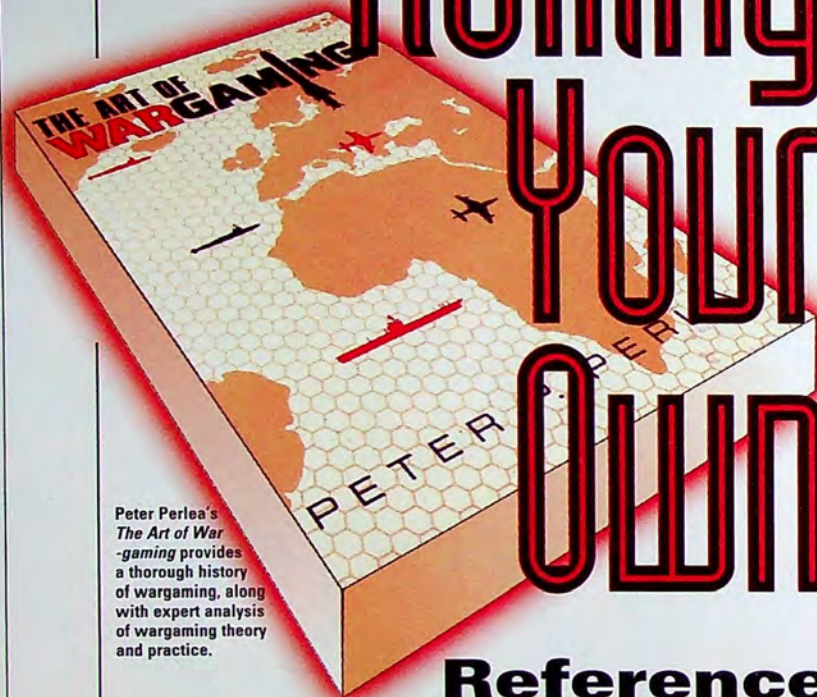
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Product Information Number 182

Rolling Your Own



Peter Perlea's *The Art of War-gaming* provides a thorough history of wargaming, along with expert analysis of wargaming theory and practice.

Reference Sources for the Avid Wargamer

William R. Trotter

Many of today's best-selling wargames do more than simulate actual events — they also contain construction sets that enable the gamer to create ahistorical variants on the program's basic theme. But whether you want to make an existing wargame more authentic or tweak it in order to explore the fascinating world of "what-if?" scenarios, it's helpful to have access to as much solid historical data as possible. Thankfully for us wargamers, there are several top-flight publications that offer that sort of information — and much, much more.



oll Your Own" sub-programs are nothing new to wargamers. As far back as 1986, the *Universal Military Simulator* featured a custom scenario-builder — but like many games from that period, it was burdened with one of the most baroque and user-repellent interfaces in the short history of PC gaming.

Today, nearly all wargames offer the player a chance to tweak history, to move beyond the rigid constraints of historical authenticity and just muck about in the endlessly fascinating realms of what-might-have-been. By far the most powerful and flexible construction sets, however, are found in the epic-scale generic war games *Empire Deluxe*, *Battles of Destiny*, *Warlords II*, and most especially SSI's super-duper new *Tanks!* (See this month's Desktop General column for more on *Tanks!*). Designing a custom wargame has never been so easy, so rich in detail, so satisfying to the imagination.

Naturally, most custom scenarios are not designed in a theoretical or historical vacuum; In fact, many wargamers base their creations on battles that they've become interested in through reading, studying, traveling, watching movies, or playing board games. Some players are satisfied if their custom-made games are only roughly approximate analogs of historical events; others worship the God of Authentic Detail with a zeal that the sympathetic observer characterizes as "dedication," and the unsympathetic observer regards as "fanaticism."

Most of us fall in between the casual and the obsessive: The level of



Thanks to its hard-back format, *Military History Quarterly* is the most handsome wargaming publication available. Each cover features a hand-tipped, full-color painting, and the spine is gold-embossed.

authenticity in the scenarios we create varies from game to game depending on the time available, the technology to be simulated, and moods of the individual player. All serious wargamers, however, have some degree of interest in reference material that presents information — terrain, firepower, tactics, and orders-of-battle — directly relevant to scenario design.

There are quite a number of newsstand periodicals that contain illustrated, easy-to-read accounts of episodes in World War Two, the Civil War, and Vietnam. There's little need for a "consumers' guide" to such publications — their quality is wildly variable, and a quick flip-through at the local newsstand will tell you whether a given title contains useful information or not.

What follows, then, is a basic guide to publications that are not easily found in bookstores or newsstands, and which carry information of special interest to the dedicated wargamer.

The Genre in a Nutshell

For a detailed account of the evolving history of wargaming in general, and a fascinating analysis of how real-life military planners have been influenced by various types of wargames, wargamers can turn to *The Art Of Wargaming* (Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1990), by Peter P. Perlea, a naval operations research analyst who has been deeply involved in both commercial and professional wargaming for more than 30 years.

This 361-page tome offers a finely detailed history of wargaming, from the first dedicated wargame — called *Koenigspiel* ("King's Game"), and devised in 1664 by a German officer named Weikmann — to the mammoth computerized scenarios regularly undertaken by the Pentagon today. (Perlea does not include symbolic wargames such as Chess, Go, and Wei Hai).

Perlea also presents a detailed account of the modern commercial wargame publishers, such as Avalon Hill, as well as a look at some of the noteworthy figures of the genre, such as the legendary James F. Dunnigan. The heart of this book, however, is Perlea's painstaking

analysis of such arcane fields as "conflict dynamics," "reproducible outcomes," and "resource-constrained force-availability." Some gamers love this kind of bureaucratic jargon; others become glassy-eyed when they encounter so much as a page of it.

The Art of Wargaming is not an especially graceful piece of writing — most of the time the prose is as dryly academic as some of the issues being discussed — but it is the most complete and up-to-date account of both the theory and practice of wargaming, and as such it is an essential resource.



As you can plainly see, the maps in *Military History Quarterly* are uniformly excellent.

an 8.5" x 11" hardback book, with gold-embossed spine and a hand-tipped full-color painting on the cover. Each issue is further enhanced by a portfolio of artwork, most of it previously unpublished, inspired by one of the battles or campaigns described in that issue.

MHQ's writers are all qualified experts in their given fields of interest, and they often present startlingly revisionist accounts of familiar subjects — probably due to the fact that they have access to the newest research. Maps are abundant, clean, and attractively rendered; these alone are enough to make MHQ a desirable addition to any wargamer's library. It's not cheap, but it delivers maximum value for the asking price (MHQ contains no advertisements, relying solely on subscriptions for its existence).

Taking Command

Now in its fourth year of publication, *Command Magazine: Military History, Strategy, and Analysis* (bi-monthly, \$25.95 per year for magazine only, \$60 per year for magazine plus rules, maps, and playing pieces for six wargames; *Command*, P.O. Box 4017, San Luis Obispo, CA, 93403) is largely the brainchild of veteran wargamers. Editor Ty Bomba, for instance, used to contribute



A Tonic for the Troops

Tactical Notebook may not be the slickest of the wargaming publications, but it does contain information you simply can't find anywhere else. Of special note is the magazine's *Classic Reprints*, which give wargamers their first look at nearly forgotten writings of generals and military scholars. While some of the material here may not be of particular use in creating more authentic scenarios, the *Classic Reprints* do make for fascinating reading nonetheless.

Excerpts from General Guderian's "Information Sheet for Armored Troops" No. 11, May, 1944 (as published in *Tactical Notebook*, June 1993)

Experience With Assault Guns

• Russian tanks are no proper enemy for us! When the situation permits, wait and let them run by you! Tanks that have broken through are entirely helpless. At night, only fire after making a reconnaissance... and watch out for tanks that are "playing possum." Shoot them until they burn...

• Running over infantry fighting holes doesn't work. They're too deep and too well built. Shooting into them with pistols doesn't work either. The only thing that works is the "egg" grenade (*Eierhandgranate*). Don't throw it too soon! Practice throwing egg-grenades... and carry as many as possible in your vehicle.

• To cause enemy snipers to expose themselves, it is useful to carry a straw dummy, which for this purpose is provided with a helmet or cap....

• Watch out for Soviet deserters. Don't shoot them down. Encourage them by waving handkerchiefs. As soon as a deserter is shot, the will to resist of others is strengthened.



Tactical Notebook is filled with detailed orders of battle, even for some of these interesting but obscure colonial wars.

Let them come. Encourage them by waving handkerchiefs. As soon as a deserter is shot, the will to resist of others is strengthened.

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Product Information Number 220

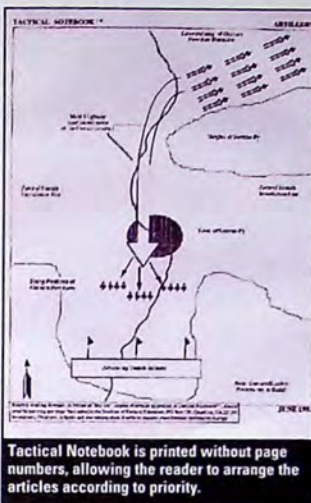
regularly to *Strategy and Tactics* during that magazine's heyday in the 1970s (it's no longer in print).

While wargames are advertised in *Command*, there are no articles on wargaming per se. The historical accounts, however, are mostly written by gamers, so the information tends to be presented in a format that easily lends itself to scenario design. In the May-June 1994 issue, for instance, enough data was presented about the Iran-Iraq War (1981-1988) to permit the construction of a relatively accurate PC simulation, using the scenario builders from *Tanks!*, *Empire*, or *Battles of Destiny*.

Command features few photographs (and many of those are poor reproductions taken from other reproductions), but its maps, charts, and order-of-battle diagrams are superb, and are intentionally designed to appeal to the wargaming hobbyist. Each issue contains not only a mass of historical data, but also well-written accounts of relatively unknown battles, troop units, weapons, and interesting military personalities.

Periodicals Humble, but Proud

Operations — *The Wargaming Journal* (quarterly, \$12.00 per year; The Gamers, Inc., 500 W. Fourth St, Homer, IL, 61849) is devoted entirely to board games, but since many of the best PC games are more or less based on



Tactical Notebook is printed without page numbers, allowing the reader to arrange the articles according to priority.

the same classic hex-grid system as their board-game brethren, many of the articles in *Operations* are quite relevant, and easily applied to either format.

A random sampling of back issues turned up several features that are as applicable to PC simulations as they are to specific board games: "An Analysis for the Defense of Stalingrad", "Design Theory: Playability, Detail, and Realism," "Assaulting with Success," and so on.

Editor Dean Essig often writes thoughtful and philosophical pieces on the nature of wargaming as a whole ("Fun" versus "Realism," the nature of human competition, a theory of play-testing, to name a few), and each issue contains a remarkable directory of wargaming conventions, clubs, and newsletters, no matter how obscure (I had no idea that there is an entire fanzine devoted to nothing but the Battle of Gettysburg!). On-line wargame tournaments are sometimes listed here.

If detailed data — the real nuts-and-bolts of military history — is your thing, you'll probably love *Tactical Notebook* (monthly, \$12.00 per year; P.O. Box 125, Quantico, VA, 22134-0125). Each issue comes in the form of unnumbered pages, the idea being that the reader can hole-punch and bind the articles to form a personalized reference work, organized according to individual priorities.

Tactical Notebook is spartan in appearance, but clear and well-organized in style and format. Most of the contributors are military professionals, and the depth of research is astounding. It is also eminently suitable for the creation of data bases for PC games: Where else would you find an in-depth analysis of "French Trench Artillery of World War One" or "The Colonial Army of Portugal?"

One of the most fascinating features of this invaluable publication is its on-going series of "classic reprints" — translations of professional articles and analyses from the past three centuries of military history, often of works that have never before been publicly available. This is wonderful stuff, really, whether you're reading for research or simple pleasure. What other opportunity would you have to read the newsletter published by General Heinz Guderian for the troops in his armored divisions (see "A Tonic for the Troops" sidebar)? And what other magazine gives you the chance to read "A Summer Night's Dream" — a richly embroidered discussion of the Franco-

You want data? These magazines are crammed with information you can use.

Prussian War, written by a German General Staff officer and published anonymously in 1890!

Whether you're looking for specific input for a PC simulation, or just enjoy learning more about the history of warfare, these publications can surely enhance and deepen the pleasures of your wargaming.

PCG

From Tabletop to Monitor

Operations: The Wargaming Journal is devoted entirely to board games, but since so many computer wargames employ the conventions of board wargaming, the commentary here is often valuable to PC generals. The following analysis of wargaming personalities is a perfect example. (Excerpted from *Operations* magazine)

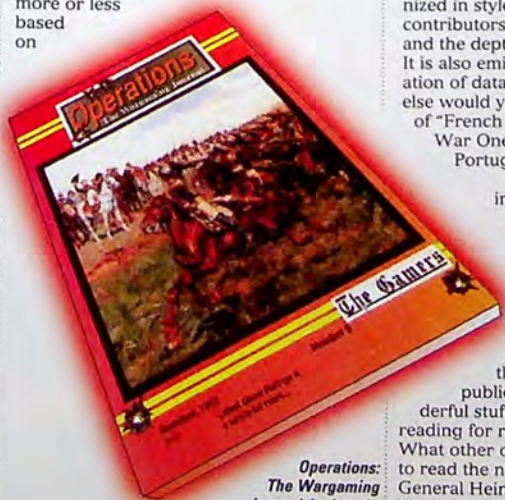
Bad Tactics

•**The Beer and Pretzels Approach:** Unfortunately, some players feel that wargaming is simply moving a stack of units to the nearest enemy stack and rolling the dice. You can easily lure these types into traps by hanging out inexpensive bait. In no time at all, you will have swept their units from the field.

•**The McClellan Syndrome:** These opponents are excessively cautious. This predisposition to caution can be encouraged by giving them a bloody nose at the earliest opportunity.

•**The Hood Syndrome:** These players have only one option in their tactical repertoire — ATTACK. Against these players, you must be a matador. The red cape will be that division or corps that you maneuver into a threatening position. Set up a strong defensive line and let him bang his head against the wall.

•**The Predictables:** These players will always attempt a flanking maneuver or always try to capture a dominant terrain feature. They may also be excessively concerned with unit symmetry (i.e., having all the infantry units in a straight line...). Usually, if you upset their combat architecture, you can run rings around them.



Operations: The Wargaming Journal deals only with board wargames, but much of the information it contains applies to PC wargames, too.

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They Abandoned You On A Hillside,
Stole Your Kingdom & Kidnapped Your Mom!

Now, Are You Hero Enough
To Face The...



Torched Again!



The Wrath Of Zeus



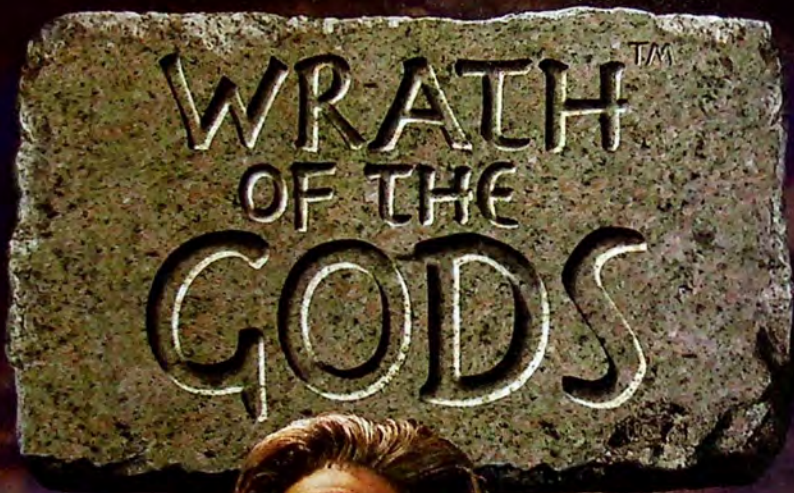
One Way Ticket To Crete



Don't Be Shy, Dive In



Yess!



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PC Gamer

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The PC Gamer review system

Reviews: The PC Gamer Way

Take a look at our reviews pages, and one of the first things you'll notice is that big ratings box in the lower-right corner. We see ratings as an important part of every review, and we take them seriously. Combine the concrete judgement of those ratings with our in-depth, honest reviews, and we think you'll end up with some of the best information a PC gamer can have.

What the Ratings Mean

100%-90% Classic

Not many games can earn a rating over 90%, and even fewer can approach the magic 100. Anything that we rate over 90% is an instant classic — a game that's truly significant in both content and design, and one that we'd recommend without reservation to anyone interested in PC gaming.

89%-80% Excellent

These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your attention, though it may not make any significant advances over its rivals. Also, some genuine benchmark games of decidedly specialist taste will fall into this area — it may be the best 7th Cavalry simulation on the market, but not all of us want to relive Little Bighorn.

79%-70% Very Good

Good games, which we'd recommend to fans of the particular genre — although there are probably better games out there.

69%-60% Good

A reasonable, above-average game. It may be worth buying, but probably has some significant flaws.

59%-50% Fair

Very ordinary games. Not completely worthless, but not a great way to spend your gaming dollar, either.

49%-40% Below Average

Poor quality. Only a few, slightly redeeming features keep them from falling into the abyss of the next category...

39%-0% Don't Bother

Just terrible games — and the lower you go, the worse they get. Avoid these titles like the Black Plague — and don't say we didn't warn you!

Hardware Requirements

With each *PC Gamer* review comes two very important pieces of information: the game's minimum hardware requirements, and the hardware configurations we'd recommend as the least you'll need to *really* enjoy the game. The thing is, while a program generally will run on the minimum system as specified by the manufacturer, it'll often be so clunky and slow all the fun goes out of it. Because of this, we test each game independently on a variety of machines, so we can bring you a more realistic assessment of what you'll really need.

PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards



Each and every month, we honor the best games we see — those earning 88% or above — with our coveted Editors' Choice Award. Only the very finest can earn the Editor's Choice, so when you see it you know you're buying a quality product.

Wolf
At last, a real innovation in roleplaying
p.81

Cannon Fodder
You hold dozens of lives in your hands, so go nuts!
p.56

Lords of the Realm
Complex, involving medieval strategy
Do you consider yourself a fitting lord? My jester would make a better ruler!
Click right to exit...
p.89

This month's Editors' Choice winners — check out the reviews, and find out why!

Cannon Fodder

PC GAMER
EDITORS'
CHOICE

Category: Action/Strategy
Developer: Edward Grabowski/Impressions Software
Publisher: Impressions Software, 222 Third Street, Suite 0234,
Cambridge, MA 02142 (714) 833-8710

REQUIRED

386SX/20MHz; 2MB
RAM; 10MB hard-
drive space; Dos 5.0
or higher; VGA;
Mouse

WE RECOMMEND

Supported sound
cards

M.S.R.P.: \$39.99

For several months now, English magazines have been filled with tips, tactics and reviews of a little wargame that's taken the British Isles by storm. Developed by Sensible Software, Virgin's new action title *Cannon Fodder* promises to create the same sensation in the U.S. — just as soon as it's released. And since you've been sending us so many letters asking for strategy and info on the game — and since Virgin has been so slow in releasing the title over here — we've decided to go ahead and review the European version to give you some idea what to expect when an American version does become available.

One of the great joys of *Cannon Fodder* is how easy it is to pick up and start playing, even the very first time you see it. And the top-down view of the cute little soldiers as they go about their deadly mayhem is irresistible. The object of the game is to complete missions, which may or may not be broken up into several phases, while losing as few of your men as possible. At



From this main screen, you can view how many new recruits are joining up, and save and load your games. Since you can only save between missions, it's vital to do so when you get a chance.

This deceptively simple and unabashedly bloody little strategy title will keep you gaming for a long time to come.



To get a better idea of what's going on in the rest of the area, click on the globe icon to bring up this handy map screen.

the beginning of each mission, you're given a quick briefing that fills you in on the goals you must accomplish in order to successfully complete that particular phase. In the early stages, most goals are pretty straightforward, requiring either the destruction of all enemy buildings or the termination of all enemy soldiers.

After reading your instructions, you'll enter the mission area in control of an assigned number of men. Once the phase goals have been completed, you're immediately taken to the beginning of the next phase, and any members of your party who were killed are replaced by soldiers from your pool of new recruits.

After the completion of the last phase in a mission, you'll get a report that lists all of your battle casualties — and if you're a poor commander, the list can get depressingly long. You'll also see a list of heroes, soldiers who survived and distinguished themselves in battle, who are rewarded with promotions. In addition, new recruits will join your team, adding to the pool of soldiers available in upcoming missions.

And this is important, because when you run out of men, the game is over.

While *Cannon Fodder* seems to be more of a pure action title than anything else, there's actually a pretty heavy strategic element behind its somewhat bloody (but cute) exterior. Although a given level will contain the same basic objects at the same locations each time you play it, how you approach the destruction of those targets is up to you. If you get stuck on a particular phase (and you will), you'll have to go back in with fresh

troops, and this time approach the goals in a different — and hopefully safer — way.

One feature that can really help you solve those strategic puzzles is the game's split unit feature. If you're looking to conserve men, or you wish to guard a particular area while you explore another, you



When you are ready to begin, a quick and dirty briefing will appear with the requirements for finishing your next mission. Pay attention so that you don't try to accomplish unnecessary goals.



After you finish a mission, you will be given a list of soldiers who survived the battles. If they've earned, promotions may also be given.

can choose members of your team to split off into a second attack group. While you move your new group around the screen, the original team will stay in place, automatically firing at any enemy units that come too close. This is a really good way of covering a location that you're unable to



■ When you've made it past the first few levels, you'll start waging war on different terrains. The snow makes it easier to spot your enemy, but it doesn't offer many places to hide.

destroy, while still moving about to complete your mission objectives.

Adding to the long-term play value of the game are the many weapons and vehicles you'll find during the course of the action. In addition to scrapping it out on foot, armed only with your standard-issue rifle, you'll soon discover unoccupied enemy transports that you can hop in and use to start inflicting some serious damage on your opponents. The first vehicle you're likely to run across is the Skidooz, a sort of snowmobile with an attitude. These units are good because they protect the men inside from enemy bullets, and you can use them to run over your foes, producing a very satisfying shriek and a tiny blood-red stain. Don't get too cavalier, though: The Skidooz can be destroyed (along with everyone inside) with a single bazooka shell.

The Jeep is almost identical in function to the Skidooz, but is better suited for desert and jungle landscapes. If you're lucky, you can find both Jeeps and Skidooz equipped with front-mounted machine guns — just perfect for picking off distant targets.

Next up is the mighty Tanx, a levithan that can only be harmed by rockets, heat-seeking missiles, and shells. Although it's very slow, the Tanx fires shells at your opponents, causing mass destruction wherever you roll. When invading enemy bases, your troops may also run across the Biggunz, a stationary cannon that fires either rockets or shells.

Last but certainly not least are the nimble Choppas, which like the Biggunz come in two varieties. The first, the unarmed Transporta, won't help you much when it comes to putting a hurtin' on your foes, but it can certainly help you get away from them. The other, the fearsome Killa, can be armed with bombs, rockets, or even heat-seeking missiles. Though they're both pretty vulnerable on the ground, both

Meet the fodder...

There's plenty of different enemies to keep you on your toes as you traverse each of the different mission levels. Learn to predict the movements of each one of these baddies, or you'll find yourself waiting for a few minutes after each mission as the honor scroll rolls out the lists of your fallen comrades.



This is your basic, everyday grunt. He's got a gun, but he'll probably try getting pretty close to you before he opens fire. Don't let your guard down around these guys, but don't worry about them much, either.



The blue-clad troops of the arctic wastes area's much worse than their jungle-dwelling counterparts, but they do seem to have a little better aim. Take the time to destroy their bases first so that you won't lose men later.



The most feared of your early foes, these bazooka troops can cause massive carnage with just one shot. The best tactic for defeating them is to charge straight at them with your gun blazing. Most often, this trick will cause them to shoot behind you without leaving themselves any defenses.



The last of the major foes you can expect to find in early levels is the machine gunner. These fiends are particularly dangerous, because they look exactly like the common grunt troops of the earlier levels. These guys can fire a barrage of bullets that's capable of leaving your entire team crippled, so kill them quick and move on.

Choppas can only be hit by rockets or heat-seeking missiles while in the air.

Cannon Fodder is one of those games that doesn't really rely on heavy graphics and sound content to achieve its addictive play — although the game fares well in both departments. The VGA maps are detailed with carefully drawn landscape art, and the tiny soldiers — so tiny,



■ Grab any grenades that you may find in order to destroy nearby enemy headquarters. Be careful though, if you get hit by any of the shrapnel you're a goner.

in fact, that it's easy to think of them as mere cannon fodder — add a real sense of fun. They can be tough to see sometimes, but that seems more by design than by accident. The game's soundtrack is pleasant, and varies enough so that you don't find yourself gritting your teeth at the thought of hearing it again during long

game-play sessions. Sound effects are crisp and entertaining, though the gun noises are sometimes a little flat.

All things considered, Cannon Fodder is one of the better action games available for the PC. Control is easy and smooth, graphics and sound are both good, and each round of the game is short enough to allow for quick game breaks. If you're a fan of any kind of shooting game, or you're a strategy fan who's not afraid to try something new, I highly recommend Cannon Fodder. If you're easily offended by the sight of blood, though, you'll want to leave this game to others (ya big sissy!).

— Trent C. Ward

PC GAMER **FINAL VERDICT** **PCG**

VERDICT: Incredible fast-paced game-play, solid graphics engine, good sound effects.

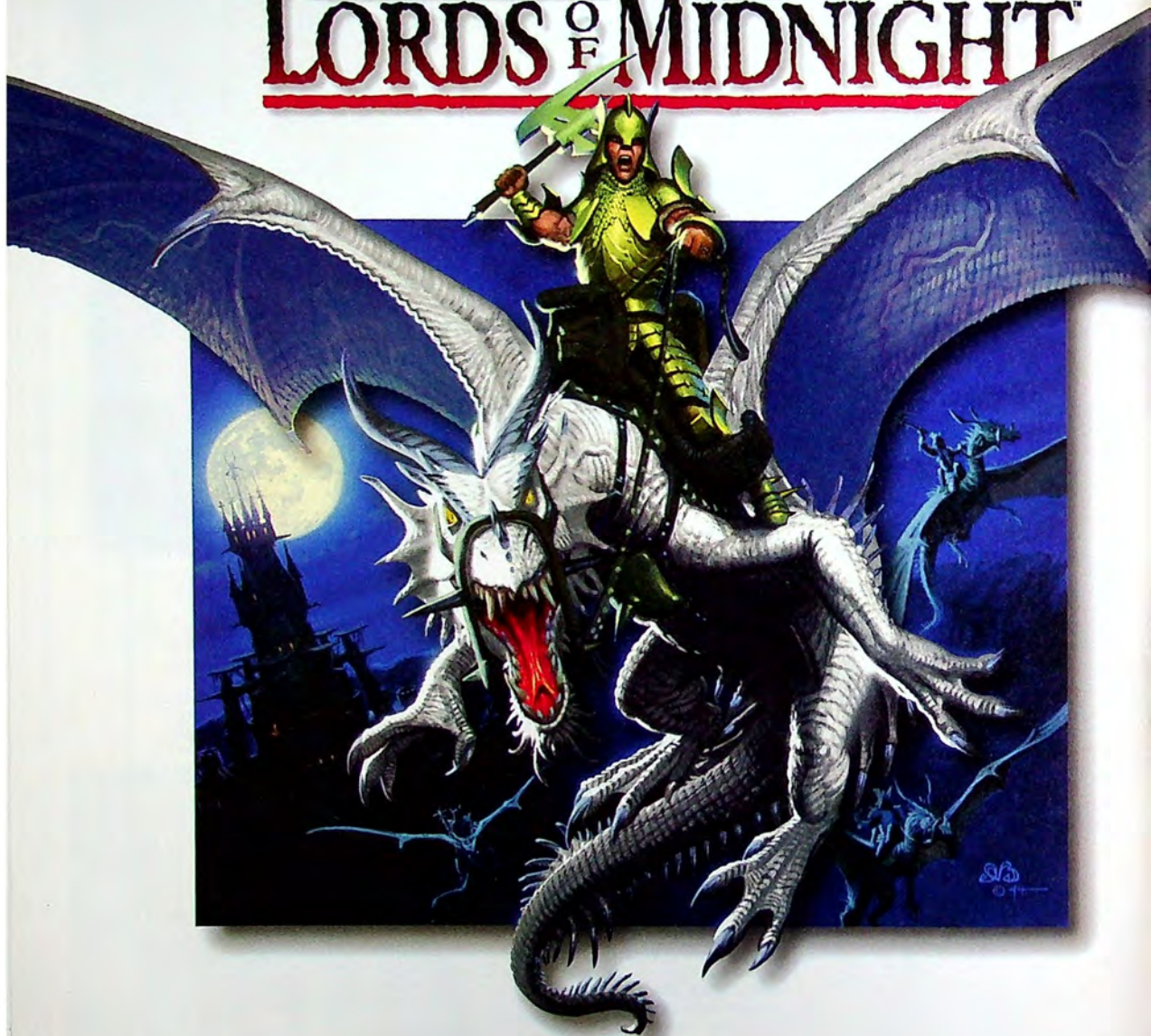
88%

LOWES: Sometimes hard to get exact control from the mouse interface.

BOTTOM LINE: Overall: A great arcade game in every sense of the word, a simple idea that has been done up right.

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—Computer Game Review

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—QuestBusters

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COMING IN
OCTOBER

Lode Runner: The Legend Returns (Windows Version)

Category: Arcade/Puzzle
 Developer: Dynamix
 Publisher: Sierra On-Line, P.O. Box 485, Coarsegold, CA 93614
 (209) 683-4468

REQUIRED

486SX/25MHz; 4MB
 RAM; 13.5MB hard-
 drive space; VGA

WE RECOMMEND

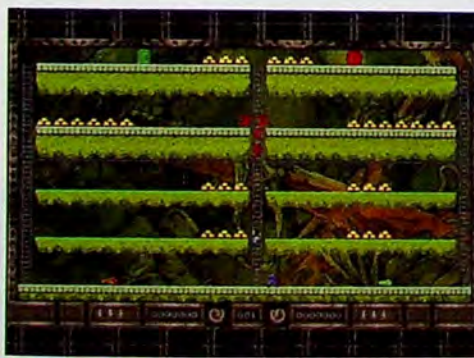
486DX/33MHz;
 Windows-compati-
 ble sound card;
 Gamepad

M.S.R.P.: \$49.95

I'd better admit it up front — I've never played the original *Lode Runner*. Sure, I've heard a lot about it, and from everything I've been told I figured it was one whiz-bang game. But what with all the new stuff coming in, I just never could get around to playing an "old" game like *Lode Runner*, no matter how much fun it might be.

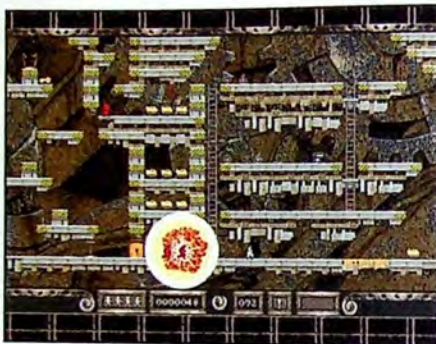
But now I'm one of the initiated, thanks to Sierra's decision to do an updated version of the 80's classic. And Dynamix, the wholly own-

ed Sierra subsidiary who did the development work for *Lode Runner: The Legend Returns*, has done a lot more than made it easy for a jaded game reviewer to experience a classic. Besides updating the graphics to SVGA and adding a near-perfect MIDI soundtrack (Sound Blaster sound effects and music are also supported), they've included a Puzzle Editor for modifying the 150 "puzzle rooms" that come with the game, as well as creating your own brain teasers to give to friends who also own *Lode Runner: The Legend Returns*. The animation's slick, the graphics pleasing, and the challenge satisfying — in a word, this game is *fun*.



Think it's too easy to beat the computer? The two-player mode lets you compete against a gold-hungry human opponent — although you gotta do it sitting at one computer.

Sierra's spruced up a classic by adding just the right amount of chrome. The result? One of the best arcade/puzzle games around.



Them hooded fellas blow up real good!

I guess there's a plot to explain why you're controlling a little guy in a white suit who's running around picking up gold

and dodging menacing characters in red robes and hoods, but once the action started, it just didn't seem to matter. Besides, who needs a reason for snatching up gold that someone carelessly left lying around; after all, I'm a gamer, ain't I?

When you begin the game, all your little guy has to defend himself with

is a blaster that opens up craters for the red-robed thugs chasing him. But the craters aren't permanent, so the trick in the early levels is to open them up long before a hooded guy falls into them; then they close up before the red-robes can scramble out. They'll reappear somewhere else after they're crushed, but usually it's farther away from your character, giving you more time to snatch up all that booty.

As the game progresses, you'll start finding various tools lying around to help you out: time bombs you can drop as your being chased, canisters that spray a gas that renders your assailants hopelessly befuddled, jackhammers to pound your way through normally impenetrable surfaces, transporters that take you from one end of the screen to another, and more. There might be six or seven of these things lying around on

a screen, but you can only carry one at a time — and figuring out which ones to pick up, and when to pick them up, gives each puzzle more depth than you might expect at first glance.

Should you tire of grabbing that loot all by yourself, Sierra's included a two-player mode that lets you and a friend vie to be the first to snatch all the goodies. Even though both of you have to play on the same system (a modem option would be a welcome addition), it works pretty well — especially since the game comes with a Windows joystick driver (the first one I've seen) that does permit one player to use

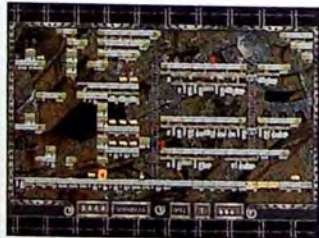
keyboard, the other joystick. And even if you both use the keyboard, the keyboard control for each player is very smooth,

and you can reconfigure the keys any way you like.

About the only complaints that can be leveled at the Windows version of *Lode Runner* are that the characters are teeny-tiny, and that at the end of the day it really is just an update (albeit a very classy one) of an old game. If you've played the old *Lode Runner*, you might think this version is gratuitous — but you're wrong. Sierra and Dynamix have proven that there's a lot more to updating a game

than just cashing in on nostalgia, and in the process have set a standard for other publishers seeking to bring old games to a hard-to-please market. Nuff said.

— Steve Poole



One of the best features of the updated *Lode Runner* is the ability to skip ahead to any puzzle you want to.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Easy to learn but very tough to stop playing; perfect mood music and captivating character animations.

LOWS: A modem-support option would give the head-to-head mode much more replay value.

BOTTOM LINE: Great fun for puzzle fans and arcade fiends alike — a real winner!

85%

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- Product Information Number 158

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The Battle of Britain

Category: Strategy wargame
 Developer: Rene Vidmer
 Publisher: Deadly Games, 38 Waujaawi Avenue, Bayville, N.Y.,
 11709-10115 (516) 482-4000

REQUIRED
 Windows 3.1 or
 higher; 386/16MHz;
 4MB RAM; VGA;
 Mouse
 N.S.R.P.: \$59.95

WE RECOMMEND
 386/33MHz; Win-
 dows-compatible
 sound card

One sure sign that the PC game market is a lucrative one is the sudden rash of older games being gussied-up, re-packaged, and funneled into the retail pipeline — sometimes with nothing on the box to indicate that these are, in fact, old games.

Case in point: *The Battle of Britain*. Nowhere on the box is the consumer informed that this is a recycled Macintosh game from 1989 or thereabouts; the prominent display of "Windows 3.1 or higher" and "VGA" in the hardware requirements on the box gives the impression that this is a contemporary product. Its true age is revealed only in small print on the inside back cover of the manual.



The main game screen. Across the top you'll see intelligence reports based on intercepts of German wireless transmissions.

So what do we have here? A shameless con-job, or a decent product getting a second chance?

A decent product, on the whole — but a decidedly modest one. *B.O.B.* is a strategic-level game in which the player takes control of the Royal Air Force's fighter defenses, starting on August 10, 1940. Each game runs 30 turns and ends on September 10, by which time you have either blunted the Luftwaffe offensive or the Germans have invaded England.

It's always good when a game achieves all its goals — unless there aren't enough of them to give it long-term playability.

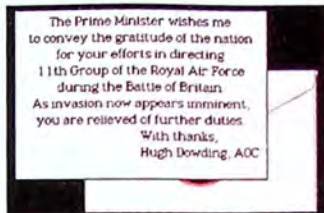


It's easy to assign missions in *Battle of Britain*; the tough part is figuring out when (and how many) of your planes should take off.

Using data supplied by primitive radar, the Ground Observer Corps, and top-secret Ultra intercepts, you must decide which and how many squadrons to send up against each German raid. There are never enough fresh British squadrons to meet every threat, so a large part of your strategy consists of

deciding which raids to ignore and which to take seriously. Weather reports are important, too, for the Luftwaffe is unlikely to make a maximum effort on a rainy day — giving you a chance to rest your crews and repair their damaged planes. Just as they did historically, the Germans are likely to shift target priorities unexpectedly, switching their attacks from airfield to port facilities. After a few games, you'll probably decide to copy Air Chief Marshal Dowding's strategy: allow some German raids to go unchallenged in exchange for protecting your air bases and conserving your fighter strength.

B.O.B. does a good job of recreating the strategic challenge that faced the RAF in the autumn of 1940. And, to be fair, that's all the game aspires to do.



Talk about the agony of defeat! Leave it to the Brits to thank someone for a job well done as they give them their pink slip.

But to be competitive in today's burgeoning game market, a title needs to do more. *B.O.B.* doesn't give you the option of playing the German side. Its graphics are spartan in the extreme (there are only a few screens in the entire game). There's not a lot of replay value, either, and I found myself becoming bored after only a few games. British tactics are irritatingly inflexible — you can only intercept a raid one time, and only when it's approaching; you

cannot vector nearby squadrons to bushwhack the attackers as they're going home. And finally, there are no combat scenes to spice things up, just a flashing icon and a brief rat-a-tat-tat gun sound.

LucasArts' *Their Finest Hour: The Battle of Britain* is also a relatively old game, but it offers both a strategic element and lots of terrific dog-fighting. This *Battle of Britain*, while not inherently unworthy, pales in comparison — and fares even worse against more recent titles.

—William R. Trotter



At the end of each day of the battle, you're shown newspaper reports that sum up how your strategies are working.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

PLUSES: Gives a realistic impression of what the RAF command was up against in the autumn of 1940.

MINUS: That's all it does. The graphics are drab, and there's just not much depth of gameplay.

BOTTOM LINE: Competent, but uninspiring. There are a lot of better choices out there.

55%

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Who Killed Brett Penance?

Category: Multimedia adventure
 Developer: Creative Multimedia
 Publisher: Creative Multimedia, 513 NW 13th Ave. Suite 400,
 Portland, OR 97209 (503) 241-4351

REQUIRED

Double-speed CD-ROM drive;
 486SX/25MHz; 4MB RAM; 1MB hard-drive space; Windows 3.1; SVGA; Windows-compliant sound card

M.S.R.P. \$29.99

WE RECOMMEND

6MB RAM; CD-ROM disk-caching utility

In *Who Killed Brett Penance? The Environmental Surfer* — the sequel to *Who Killed Sam Rupert?* — you take on the role of the detective in charge of investigating the murder of an 18-year-old surf champion on his way to Stanford on a scholarship. He supposedly had few enemies, but it doesn't take you long to find out that's a load of bunk. To make matters more complicated, Penance had joined a local environmental group opposing a land developer building condos on their cove. Could the developer's greed be so great as to lead to murder?

But the challenge doesn't end at merely uncovering the murderer; you're working against the clock, too. After listening to some spiel about how 90% of all cases are solved within the first six hours, you're informed that — you guessed it — you have only six hours to solve the case. Luckily, your assistant Lucie Fairwell (Sheryl Lee of "Twin Peaks" — she's the one who played the dead Laura Palmer and her not-dead lookalike cousin) has taken the liberty of



Everything you need is easily accessed from this main menu. There's a Sheryl Lee icon in the left column, but she's not often available to give you advice.

This interactive mystery may have enough pizzazz for newcomers, but seasoned crime-solvers will finger the villain in no time flat.



The suspect screen. Don't start picking blindly; you'll just waste time you could have used getting leads at the crime scene.

interviewing and videotaping the nine suspects, nine witnesses, and herself.

Your entire investigation is portrayed in a series of video clips, whether it's interviewing suspects, checking the crime scene, or listening and talking to Lucie, your boss, or the judge who'll (hopefully) issue an arrest warrant.

Other than reading the murder report, every step in your investigation takes time out of your six-hour total. Interviewing a suspect takes 20 minutes, for instance, while checking out an alibi takes 10. You don't have enough time to interview every suspect and witness and still have enough left over for all the other little things, so it's best to pick up crime-scene clues and then narrow your search.

The goal is to gather enough data to fill out a warrant application. Yep, like all good crime mysteries, it comes down to placing Colonel Mustard in the Library with the lead pipe. To be fair, the actual gameplay isn't all that much like the board game Clue. But the warrant application is strongly reminiscent of that game, only a little more involved: Instead of three details to choose from, you have five (suspect, weapon, motive, alibi status, and time of murder). And to make sure you've done your homework, you have to pass a Q&A session on case details, answering at least seven out of ten questions correctly before you're allowed to fill out a warrant.

You'll need to reserve 20 minutes at the end of the game to make out the warrant. If the information is accurate enough, the judge will grant the warrant (even a rejected warrant takes 20 minutes). Either that suspect will confess, or Lucie will pop up to tell you the person's innocent. Even if you're wrong,

NAME	Age	Sex	Height	Weight	Build
Lucie Fairwell	28	F	5'6"	120	Slender
Sheryl Lee	28	F	5'6"	120	Slender
Johnnie	35	M	5'10"	180	Medium
Johnnie	35	M	5'10"	180	Medium
Johnnie	35	M	5'10"	180	Medium
Johnnie	35	M	5'10"	180	Medium
Johnnie	35	M	5'10"	180	Medium
Johnnie	35	M	5'10"	180	Medium
Johnnie	35	M	5'10"	180	Medium
Johnnie	35	M	5'10"	180	Medium
Johnnie	35	M	5'10"	180	Medium
Johnnie	35	M	5'10"	180	Medium

The all-important warrant application. Hmm, no lead pipe, conservatory or Colonel Mustard — what kind of murder mystery is this?

you may gain valuable information — at least you'll know who's *not* the killer.

There are three separate cases built around the death of Penance, but there's little variation between them; the only apparent differences are the murderer (though within each case the murderer is always the same), murder weapons, and crime scene evidence. The nine witnesses, suspects, and their alibis are always the same, so once you've solved one case it makes the other two much easier. (Even with such knowledge, you're still forced to spend time interviewing a suspect in order to obtain a warrant, or get the police to let you check out non-testimonial evidence like fingerprints, tire tracks, and so forth).

That said, it should be pretty obvious that *Brett Penance* has little or no replay value. The ironic thing is that the game's short shelf life is directly related to the game's big selling point — i.e., multimedia. Video clips take up a lot of space, and even though Creative Multimedia packed this CD-ROM with over 600MB of stuff, the result is three short-lived scenarios.

— Joe Novick

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGH: Armchair detectives may be entertained for an hour or two.

68%

LOW: No replay value; it's disappointing that suspect and witness stories remain constant for all three cases.

BOTTOM LINE: Good multimedia elements, but there's not enough meat in this mystery title for experienced crime-solvers.



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Product Information Number 172

The Psychotron

CD-ROM

Category: Interactive movie
 Developer: The Multimedia Store
 Publisher: Merit Software, Inc., 13707 Gamma Rd., Dallas, TX 75244
 (800) 238-4277

REQUIRED

486SX/25MHz; 4MB RAM; 8MB hard-disk space; Windows 3.1; Super VGA; Windows compatible sound card, Double-spin CD-ROM drive

WE RECOMMEND

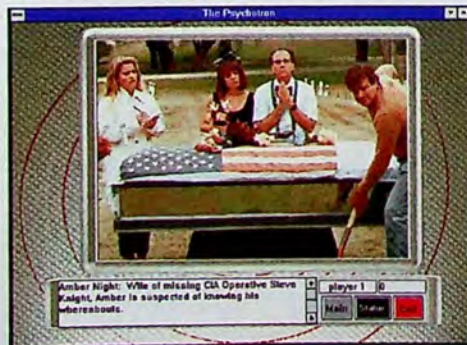
That should about do it.

M.S.R.P. - \$59.95

The plot of *The Psychotron* sounds like a story out of the *Weekly World News*: While the U.S. has spent the past 50 years developing ICBMs and nuclear warheads, the Soviets have been busy at work on the Psychotron, a gadget designed to control the minds of others (it also detects "psychic residue"). The U.S. has managed to buy the prototype Psychotron (the Russians are really hard-up for cash), but shortly thereafter the device is lost in a mysterious plane crash.

Also missing after the crash is a renegade CIA agent, who's naturally under suspicion for theft of the Psychotron. As a crack agent under orders from CIA director Darin Bird, you must ferret out information that will lead you to the Psychotron and, perhaps more importantly, to the people behind its subversion.

The trail of clues begins in the offices of the agents who "died" in the plane crash,



You have up to four opportunities to question a character before moving on to a new scene.

The latest entry in the Interactive Movie sweepstakes is a strong case for a standardized definition of the word "interactive."

then takes you to a funeral for Steve Knight, the agent beloved by the government to know the whereabouts of the Psychotron. After grilling as many attendees as possible, it's on to the crash site, where some touchy inbred locals provide a few more leads. From there, Bird's machinations send you to a poker game with some mob types who don't mind dealing from the bottom of the deck. Eventually, you'll end up in the clandestine research

each hand) or the research lab. But it's still clumsy, and very limiting.

One way the designers have sought to enhance gameplay is with a multi-player option. One, two, or four players can take turns questioning suspects and searching areas. Each question asked and each clue uncovered adds points to a player's score, and the player with the most points at the end gets to answer the final questions that uncover the mastermind behind the Psychotron plot. Not exactly what the phrase "four-player option" might conjure up, but it does give the game an extra selling point as a party game.

Visually, *The Psychotron* is well-crafted, if not breathtakingly imaginative. The voices for the video sequences are well-synched, which gives the game an edge on many of its competitors. But as in most games that use digitized video, the viewing window is rather small, and while the images are comparatively good they still tend to be slightly grainy. And the interface can be frustrating: You must use the cursor as a "mine detector," moving it about the entire screen until it changes to indicate an action that can be performed or the presence of an object. You'll need a steady hand and plenty of patience to avoid missing an important clue.

Players looking for depth of gameplay will be disappointed with *The Psychotron* — four to six hours of gaming is about as much as you can ring out of this one. But *Psychotron* is obviously not intended for the hardcore crowd, and it should satisfy casual Windows gamers looking for a little multimedia glitz.

—Gary Meredith



Jim Bob can provide some important clues as to what went on after the plane crash. Just don't mention school to him, or talk about his father's war injuries.

lab where the Psychotron was developed from the Russian prototype. With time running out, you must collate your evidence and finger the person responsible for stealing the top-secret device.

Psychotron is being billed as an "interactive mystery movie," a claim that's all true: While it may look like a movie, it just barely qualifies as interactive. In a truly interactive adventure game, you determine your course of action, backtracking as you wish and deciding for yourself how you want to go about solving problems. Your path in *The Psychotron*, however, is immutably set for you.

After you've given the CIA offices the fine-tooth-comb treatment, for instance, you move on to the crash site — but once you're there, there's no going back to the offices. You can load a game you saved while you were checking out the offices, but that starts you at the very beginning of each scene — and that means doing everything required in a scene all over again. There are exceptions, such as the poker game (you can save after

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

WINS: The quality of the video is fairly good, as is the acting.

LOS: Veterans will find little challenge in this very linear adventure; clumsy save-game routine.

BOTTOM LINE: Another stab at "interactive movies" falls short of the hype.

57%

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— PC Gamer, September 1994

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Product Information Number 187



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Product Information Number 113



On CD-ROM and
3.5" disks for IBM & Compatibles.

IBM 256-color SVGA Displays



Chessnet 3 & Chessnet 3 Club Edition

Category: Chess Simulation and Tutor
 Developer: Masque Publishing
 Publisher: Publisher: Masque Publishing, P.O. Box 5223, Englewood, CO
 80155 (303) 290-9853

REQUIRED

386/20MHz; 2MB
 RAM; Windows 3.1;
 1.5MB hard-drive
 space

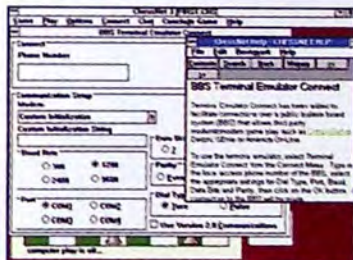
WE RECOMMEND

386/33MHz; 4MBRAM;
 Modem; Mouse

M.S.R.P.: \$19.99 for single user, \$49.99 for club edition

It's can be hard for chess players to find real, live opponents, but Chessnet 3 fixes that with a front end for modem chess.

ting connected and playing on a third-party BBS was a lot easier and well-thought out than I had anticipated — a big thumbs-up for the production team. Help files for connecting by the different methods are simple and direct. Setting up various time limits is easy, the moves transmit quickly and smoothly, and you can chat with your opponent during play.



From the Connection menu, you can customize modem settings and get help on how to dial in and start playing against a remote human opponent.

There are quite a few goodies included in the single-player game (a little surprising, since the program comes on a single 3.5" disk). You'll find most standard options like Take Back moves, Load/Save games, or open windows to view captured pieces, game clocks, and other game info. You can also run music CDs while playing, and there's even voice recognition. But a few commonly seen features are missing — most notably a much-needed Force Move option.

The reason a force move option is so essential here is due to one of the oddest setups for time controls and strength settings I've ever seen: You can only use one or the other! Don't get me wrong, the time controls are extremely flexible. You can set up just about any time limits you'd like by using several different controls. But once you've set a time limit, you can no longer use a strength setting, or vice-versa.

According to the manual, when using a strength setting the computer searches for its best move regardless of how long it takes. This left me with no idea of the time constraints (if any) the computer uses on a particular strength setting, or how long the game might go on. Practicing against the AI on its toughest setting, I lost patience waiting for the computer to move — main-

ly because the computer was taking so very long to respond to my very standard book opening (Ruy Lopez Open Variation), one any program should know. During another book opening, I purposely made a very bad play on move 6 — and the computer took 42 minutes to reply! This is simply unacceptable in a stand-alone chess program.

What about when I used time controls instead of strength settings? Well, when I played similar variations with time limits, the program consistently lost on time, sometimes as early as move ten! I've yet to complete a game with time controls against the computer in which it didn't lose on time (I'll admit that I didn't try setting up a five-hour game).

Well, forget all that strength/time and AI stuff. I'll use some other program to practice my chess. It's the easy access and quick response time of the network and



For the Club Edition, each board is color-coded. Just click in that multicolored box at the upper right to go between the eight boards.

modem play that give this package its value — especially as modem users become more populous and there are more and more ramps onto the vaunted superhighway.

— Joe Novicki

The Chessnet 3 series for Windows combines a stand-alone chess program with modem support to create two separate (but not quite equal) avenues of use. The modem support is, in my humble opinion, unequalled — it lets you play a game against a human opponent, with graphics, on the usually graphics-less information superhighway (some call it the Internet). Playing against the game's AI, however, is very disappointing for any serious chess fan.

But back to the game's strong point. In case you don't have Internet access, Chessnet 3 supports direct modem-to-modem play, or uses a terminal emulator to sign on to commercial services such as CompuServe, Delphi, or America Online in order to find opponents. There's also null modem and LAN support, and Chessnet 3 Club Edition even adds the ability to play eight boards at a time — over a single connection! These are features that should



Here's my favorite board color combo — why's he taking so long to move?

make chess clubs very excited. Instead of traveling to a match, they can reach out and touch-move someone from a local site. The only requirement — both sides must be using Chessnet 3.

The graphics aren't stunning, but they're better than what you'll find on most networks that support some form of front-end graphics program. And actually get-

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: As the front-end for playing over third-party BBS's, networks, and direct modem connections, this program is the king daddy.

LOWS: As a stand-alone chess opponent, this program bites.

BOTTOM LINE: If you're a chess player with a modem and \$20, buy Chessnet 3.

81%

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Product Information Number 174



Star Crusader CD-ROM

Category: Space combat
 Developer: Take 2 Interactive
 Publisher: Take 2 Interactive, 575 Broadway, New York, NY 10013
 (212) 941-2988

REQUIRED

CD-ROM drive; 386/33;
 2MB RAM; DOS 5.0 or
 later; VGA; Mouse or
 joystick

WE RECOMMEND

Double-speed CD-
 ROM drive; 486/33;
 Supported sound
 cards (required for
 digitized speech);
 Joystick

M.S.R.P.: \$69.95

A worthy addition to any space-combat fan's library, *Star Crusader* boasts great graphics and an incredible storyline.



■ This is what you'll be looking at throughout most of the game: the view from the cockpit. The cockpits will change depending on the ship you're flying, but all of them feature three user-definable monitors. This lets you customize the cockpit to suit the mission, and your own preferences.

Take 2's first release, *Star Crusader* isn't the kind of game that overwhelms you all at once. Not that it isn't impressive: Its 20-plus minute intro — complete with expository narration, explosive space-combat scenes, and 3D-modeled main characters — does a great job of setting the stage for the action to come, and tells an interesting story. It's the tale of the Gorene Empire, a kind of totalitarian regime, and its attempt to "civilize" the many alien races of a sector of space called the Ascalon Rift.

You're an up-and-coming fighter pilot for the Empire named Roman Alexandria, a squadron leader based at the edge of the

And your character is certainly a moralistic type. Alexandria objects to a number of his Gorene commander's orders — such as destroying a freighter that's already been promised it won't be destroyed. Early in the game, these moral dilemmas cost Alexandria his status as



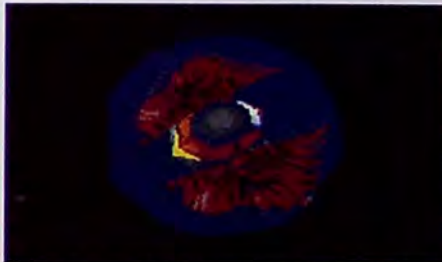
■ Getting to know the personalities of your wingmen is vital. Some of them are great shots, but terrible order-takers.



■ When Ferrand takes command of the squadron, you know the end of the Gorene rule is near. The subtle characterizations throughout the game add a lot to the whole.

Rift just as the Gorenes begin their offensive. Of course, the Gorenes don't see their taking of the Rift as an aggressive act so much as a humanitarian one. Like the missionaries of old, the Gorene Empire seeks to spread its influence and philosophies to every race it encounters — whether they want to be "converted" or not.

So the title *Star Crusader* is meant to be taken quite literally. The Gorenes — and the story as a whole — are based on the exploits of the medieval Crusaders, and the sometimes ambiguous morality involved in any kind of high-purposed conquest.



■ Here's what that fabled hyperspace jump looks like in *Star Crusader*. Your ship recedes, and then disappears.

squadron leader; later, they open up plot twists involving defection. How you handle these plot twists is up to you, though. You can choose to stay and fight for the Gorenes, or switch allegiances to the many different alien races native to the Ascalon Rift.

These opportunities to take control of your character — and change the course of the game — are part of *Star Crusader*'s subtle and building charm. As I said, you're really not overwhelmed by the game and its Gorene plotline at first; in fact, you might find Roman Alexandria a bit too "goody-goody," and just skip through the between-mission dialogue to get back to the space combat that makes up the real backbone of the game. But as

The Ascalon Rift: A Sightseeing Tour

The visuals throughout *Star Crusader* are distinctive, colorful, and just all-around impressive, and give the game a unique look and feel. So here, for your viewing enjoyment, is a little tour of the magnificent sights of the Ascalon Rift.



In these scenes from the dramatic intro, you get a good idea of *Star Crusader's* stylized version of outer space. No dull, black-and-white ships here! Also neat is the jump gate in the bottom-right shot, which the vessels of *Star Crusader* use to traverse great distances. It's a lot like the thing they use in the beginning to the new series "Babylon 5!"

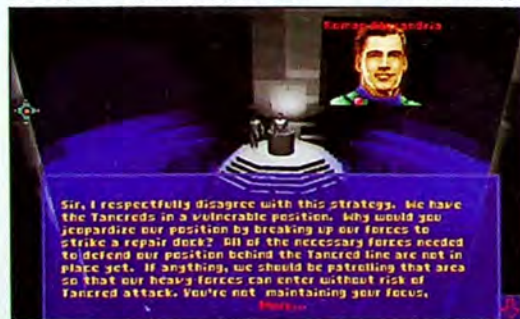


In all the major expository sequences, the characters of *Star Control* are represented with striking, 3D-modeled characters like

these. The animation is remarkably smooth, even on a 486/33.



different bits of plot are revealed and supporting characters (commanders, wingmen, aliens, and so on) become more familiar to you, you soon find yourself as interested in the storyline and your place in it as you are in blasting spaceships.



Roman Alexandria, the character you play throughout the game, can be a bit of a moralist. But considering his situation, you can see why.

Obviously, this kind of story-driven combat will remind a lot of players of *Wing Commander*. But *Star Crusader* takes the concept several steps beyond the relatively passive exposition of *Wing Commander*. In *Star Crusader*, you eventually earn the rank of Commander, and get to call just about all the shots. That goes for both individual missions — where you decide which wingmen to take along, which ships you'll fly, and so on — and the campaign itself. You can, for example, pull wingmen from active duty and employ them as instructors in the pilot academy; the more experienced your academy instructors, the better your new recruits will be. There's even an option that lets you plan secondary missions to be carried out while you're flying the primary missions. These secondary outings can be offensive or defensive, ranging from search-and-

destroy to resource acquisition, and you get to choose which ships to use and who'll fly them.

All this gives *Star Crusader* a real edge over other space-combat games in terms of strategy. And with so much control at your fingertips, it's hard not to be drawn in to the campaign. Throw in that seductive storyline, and the *Star Crusader* experience turns out to be a lot more enticing than it first appears.

But the success or failure of a game like this depends on how it handles the main course: combat. *Star Crusader* uses polygon graphics — shaded using the now-common Gouraud method, as well as the less frequent Phong technique — for a very appealing, distinctive look. The ships are all brightly colored, and almost always atypically designed (shapes range from that of a scorpion to pointy spike-ball things). And each has its own strengths, weaknesses, and special features, making for plenty of variety.

As good as it all looks, though, I didn't find the space combat as satisfying as that in *TIE Fighter* — or the older *X-Wing*, for that matter. My biggest problem with it is that you never get the sense of the vastness of space while flying; ships are either in your face (or in the very near vicinity), or so far away that they're visible only as a little white dot. In the LucasArts titles I mentioned, you get a more convincing sense of what it might be like to fly in space. *Star Crusader* feels more like an arcade representation than a sim.

Despite all this, you'll find a lot to like



In the training simulator, you can stage missions against any enemy vessels, and fly any ships available at the time.

here. The graphics — especially the 3D-modeled sequences and rendered combat scenes — are very good, and give *Star Crusader* a look and feel unlike anything else in the genre. The sound and music are excellent, always complementing the story and action without overwhelming them. And with its branching storyline, good voice-acting, and depth of command options, you'll likely get plenty of gaming out of this one. All in all, this is a very impressive debut by Take 2.

— Matt Firme

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: A seductive, involving storyline; Unequaled degree of campaign control.

LOWS: The space combat — the very core of the game — could be more satisfying.

BOTTOM LINE: This very promising first title from Take 2 is a terrific, and in many ways innovative, addition to your sci-fi collection.

86%

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Product Information Number 149

Nothing But Net! Pro League Basketball

Category: Sports Simulation
 Developer: Strategic Gaming Designs
 Publisher: Strategic Gaming Designs, 659 Cary Towne Boulevard 176,
 Cary, NC 27511 (919) 552-1807

REQUIRED

286/12MHz; 640K
 RAM; 3MB hard-drive
 space; DOS 3.2 or
 higher; VGA; Mouse

WE RECOMMEND

486/33MHz; Sound
 Blaster

M.S.R.P. \$49.95

Ready for some roundball? *Nothing But Net!* might be just the ticket — if you've got plenty of time on your hands.

computer randomly matches first and last names of real NBA players — you might get Alonzo Webber at point guard and Tyrone Mourning at center, for instance. Real NBA players would be nice, but that's an expensive license. Still, SGD could have gotten around that by including a feature to edit players' names, but there's no way to do that.

When it comes to sports simulations, there's a dedicated group of gamers for whom pretty graphics take a backseat to statistics, strategic options, and realistic results. Most of these folks got their start with stats-based board games, and for them the advent of computer games was a godsend — not because they could see animated players, but because the computer could handle all the drudgery involved in playing board games.

It's this small but enduring stats-based sim market that Strategic Gaming Designs is targeting with its new pro basketball simulation, *Nothing But Net! Pro League Basketball*. And while this sim is a thoughtful and detailed re-creation of professional basketball, it misses the mark in three fundamental requirements of stats-based sims: Make it easy, make it fast, and make it real.



From the main menu, you can create leagues, draft teams, check stats, and play ball.

First the strong points, and there are many. To get started, naturally, you have to create a league. You can make a league in just about any configuration you like, from six to 24 teams. Then the program generates 293 players, each randomly rated in 10 statistical categories and assigned names. The names are fictional, but only in that the



When making draft picks, you can sort available players by an overall scouting rating, or by numerous skill ratings such as outside shooting, rebounding, and defense.

Drafting players is a piece of cake. *NBN* gives you all the tools you need to make intelligent decisions when building your team. You can stake your franchise around a dominant center, assemble a group of three-point sharpshooters, or go for a team of defensive wizards. The game is very friendly here. Every team must have two centers, one center/forward, four forwards, one forward/guard and four guards, and the game keeps track of what positions you need to fill to round out your team.

The playbook function is another gem in *NBN*. Here you can set six separate lineups to be used in different game situations. The decisions are yours: starters, second team, defensive stoppers, inside strength or outside shooting. The game compiles overall ratings — offensive, defense and rebounding — for the different lineups. You can also set the overall offensive and defensive strategies for each lineup — five settings, from conservative to aggressive.

The interface continues to be friendly as you move to the actual playing of games. You call timeouts, make substitutions, and change strategies, all with a mouse click or keystroke. But where *NBN* starts throwing up air balls is in its downright plodding

gameplay. The action proceeds so slowly that it takes almost as much time to play a game as it does in real life. We want realism, but hey, let's pick up the pace! Even in the superfast mode, used to play out games between computer-controlled teams, a game takes more than a half-hour to complete — and that's on a 486/33!

Speaking of a schedule, there isn't one. It's baffling to find a stats-based sports simulation that doesn't provide a built-in schedule or a schedule generator, and *NBN* isn't the first game to fail in that department. Scheduling a full season is one of the great chores of running a simulated league. Players shouldn't be expected to create their own schedules — not when the computer can do it effortlessly.

NBN might satisfy some gamers hungry for a computer basketball simulation.



Game stats are a little thin, focusing only on scoring.

But for the rest of us, the game moves much too slowly. If SGD fixes the speed, gives me a schedule, and fork over the bucks for real NBA names — or at least lets me edit player names and stats — I'll be glad to give it another try.

— Lee Buchanan

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT
HIGHS: The draft and playbook features are as good as you'll find.

64%

LOWS: Lack of a schedule creator makes for a lot of needless work; no real NBA players used; gameplay is slow.

BOTTOM LINE: *NBN* is a good coaching simulation, but its shortcomings are too serious to justify a recommendation.

NEWSWEEK

"The VW Bug is now a Mercedes with all the options."

STRATEGY FIRST

"Winner: Adventure Game of the Year."

"... a monumental adventure game, destined to become as much a classic as the original."

BUSINESS WEEK

"Pumped-up software ... radical transformations."

THE NEW YORK TIMES

"Return to Zork opens nostalgically, and then things start to run and jump and shout and sing."

PC ENTERTAINMENT

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"A truly amazing, next-generation product, of such unparalleled quality that it *must* become the model for all tomorrow's designers."

MULTIMEDIA WORLD

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You're *in* the movie"

CD-ROM WORLD

"A beautiful, engrossing game... with a ground-breaking interface."

PC ZONE

"Return to Zork leapfrogs far beyond the shoulders of its ancestors and lands smack bang in the land of complete up-to-dateness."

GAMES MAGAZINE

"Winner: Adventure Game of the Year."

SPIN MAGAZINE

"One of the most technically advanced and artistically satisfying computer games you'll ever have the pleasure to die in."

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

"Top 10 electronic selection."

PC FORTUNE

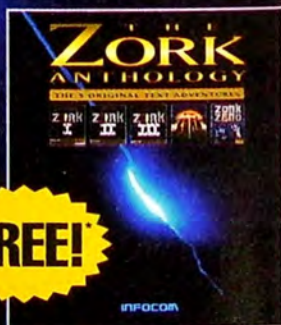
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Wolf

Category: Roleplaying simulation
 Developer: Manley & Associates
 Publisher: Sanctuary Woods, Suite 260, 1875 S. Grant St., San Mateo, CA 94402 (415)-578-6349

REQUIRED

CD-ROM drive; 386SX;
 640K RAM; 4MB hard
 drive-space; DOS 5.0
 or later; VGA

WE RECOMMEND

Double-speed CD-
 ROM drive;
 486/33MHz; 2MB
 RAM; Supported
 sound cards; Mouse

M.S.R.P.: \$49.95

**Wolf let's you get
 inside a wolf's skin and see
 the world through amber eyes.**



Since all of the video clips in *Wolf* are from the Disney archives, it's not surprising to see *Jed*, the wolf hybrid star of *White Fang* and *The Journey of Natty Gann*.

For as long as I can remember, I've been fascinated by wolves; so much so that in 1979, against the advice of friends, family, and wildlife professionals, I got a wolf as a companion for my Siberian Husky.

No amount of reading could have prepared me for the mayhem caused by having a wolf in the house (or the yard, for that matter). A wolf — even a tame wolf — is a creature of the wild, and thousands of years of natural instinct cannot be changed by giving it a name, a comfy place to sleep, and rides in the back of a Jeep. Wolves do not generally make good pets. They are willful, destructive, independent and will not regard you as The Master Who Is To Be Obeyed. But with their remarkable beauty and clearly defined personalities, it's easy to understand why early man chose to domesticate this wild dog whose social nature is so close to his own.

And yet, as the wolf's domestic descendants flourished, its wild cousins were being decimated in a misguided campaign of fear, hatred, and misunderstanding. As man greedily claimed more and more land, the wolf was seen as an unwanted intruder, a competitor for food, and a wanton killer of livestock.



You can't see 'em, but they're there. Brief flashes of glowing eyes reveal the presence of wolves in the woods behind the main menu.

Fortunately, though, ignorance is curable — and thanks in part to films like *Never Cry Wolf*, *The Journey of Natty Gann*, *White Fang*, and *Dances With Wolves*, our more enlightened society has come to appreciate the wolf for what it is: a vital part of nature's plan and an intelligent, capable predator with an exemplary family life and a well-developed sense of humor.

For Sanctuary Woods' *Wolf*, Manley & Associates have done an outstanding job of representing life in the wild from the wolf's point of view. If you read Trent Ward's preview of *Wolf* in the September issue of *PCG*, you already know that the game is unique in many ways — not the least of which is the staggering amount of factual information available in the About Wolves documentary section.

It's also a refreshing change from those tedious RPGs whose tenuous relationship with reality renders them so inconsequential. *Wolf* represents the real-world concerns of an endangered species holding on to existence by its toenails. Forty different wolves are available in the game, five of whom are actual residents at Wolf Haven International in Tenino, Washington, a non-profit facility dedicated to wolf conservation.

The CD-ROM version of *Wolf* opens with a stunning, 15-megabyte animation which includes live-action video and a *Return to Zork*-like fly-through of the countryside. The main menu then offers an introductory overview of wolves; a self-running demo illustrating all aspects

of the game; the About Wolves interactive documentary; over 40 individual scenarios; and the full simulation in which you tailor factors such as weather, availability of prey, size of your pack and the



Like a pilot's briefing, the Scenario Profile gives you vital information about your mission.



Data on the individual wolves helps the selection process. Shown here is Wolf Haven's own Nakomis.

ABOUT WOLVES

The interactive documentary section About Wolves contains a comprehensive amount of information on the skills, habits, history and everyday lives of God's dog.



highlighted words which open related subjects when clicked on.

About Wolves features digitized photos and hyper-text-style



photograph of it's subject.

Each section of About Wolves is headed by a magnificent



only been around about 15 million years.

A relative newcomer on the evolutionary scale, the wolf's



exactly how each sees the same scene from 50, 250 and 2500 feet away.

This comparison of wolf and human eyes goes on to illustrate



marked by scratching the ground and urination.

Each wolf pack has a clearly defined territory, scent-



to it's human counterparts.

Wolf society's complex hierarchy is made simple by comparison

air. The animals, both predator and prey, are small but easily visible, and their animation is surprisingly lifelike. The pack's artificial intelligence is quite good, too, and the other members will go about their business with or without you. But you're entirely in control of your wolf, and it's up to you to decide when to hunt, sleep, scent-mark, or howl. You may challenge an alpha (the highest ranking) wolf for his position, or even attempt to mate — provided that all the important factors are favorable.

Hunting is also an exercise in persistence. Despite their mythical status as unstoppable killing machines, wolves actually fail at most attempts to bring down their prey, especially when it's particularly feisty. If you don't keep a close eye on your stamina, you'll have to abandon the hunt and go hungry — possibly even starve.

Hopefully, you'll have buried some of that last kill for times like this.

Because of it's open-ended nature, the full Simulation sometimes tends to get a little boring. There are long stretches where absolutely nothing happens,

like when your belly's full and the world's at peace. These are good times to switch on Autoplay, which will continue playing the game for you. However, *Wolf* is such an extraordinary game

number of hunters out for the bounty on your pelt.

Both Scenario and Simulation play are offered in three different geographic regions — Arctic, Timber, or Plains — and your survival depends on finding food and water, maintaining your health and stamina, and most important of all, not getting shot.

Individual scenarios feature preset conditions with specific wolves, and each



The Not Ready For QuickTime Players demonstrate the finer points of lupine body language.

requires the completion of a specific task — some as seemingly simple as finding water, others as arduous as bringing down a moose on your own. The Scenario Profile screen serves as a detailed briefing on the conditions in your selected scenario, including information on your wolf's status within the pack, land-

mark events in its life, and an itemized listing of successful kills.

Unlike real wolves, whose senses are always active, you must manually activate the use of sight and hearing (for distance), and smell. Each sense will bring up icons indicating what you've detected and in which direction. Most helpful of all is your sense of smell, which also tells you how many screens away the objects are. On one hand this seems kind

of ridiculous, but on the other it gives you some idea how alert wolves must constantly remain.

The scenarios have a disproportionately high number of hunters, both on foot and in the air, and these chumps never miss. Despite the information on how sensitive the wolf's hearing is, you won't hear the hunter's planes and helicopters until they're practically on top of you. Alternately, sound samples of running water, bird songs, wind, and falling rain are crystal clear, and add enormously to the game's realism.

Simulation mode is more free-form, and can last anywhere from half a month to your wolf's entire life span. You may customize virtually every external world factor before selecting which wolf you are to become, or have them generated for you randomly.

Gameplay is seen from above, and reminded me of documentary footage of wolfpacks filmed from the



Settings for the full simulation offer complete control of all external world elements. The rest is up to you and your wolf.

that it's equally easy to get so completely lost in it that you don't even notice the passing of time.

And if the sound of distant wolves responding to your howl on a cold clear winter's night doesn't touch your heart, I'm afraid you haven't got one.

—Scott Wolf



Smells like wolf spirit. Your sense of smell tells you what's in the wind and how many screens away it is.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Hours pass like minutes in this fascinating RPG for nature lovers.

88%

LOWS: In simulation mode, the game can get a little slow.

BOTTOM LINE: An unusual, entertaining game that gives genuine insight into one of nature's most magnificent and misunderstood creatures.

Within the City Limits, Beyond the Boundaries of Desire.

NOCTROPOLIS. It glitters before you, with menace and allure. Does the Succubus bend to you in tenderness or carnal rage? Will you escape the corrupt longings of the surgically sadistic Master Macabre? Can you keep the Sovereign of darkness from the light? Come into the city. And enter a nightmare only consummate evil could conceive.

Handpainted scenes of eerie beauty draw you ever deeper into a tale of twisted desire.

The graphics are gorgeous. The characters, devious and debauched. And the story for mature audiences only.

More than 2 hours of non-linear digitized video with spoken dialog.

NOCTROPOLIS

The City of Night
An Adventure in Depravity



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WARNING:
CONTAINS
MATURE
THEMES

Sabre Team

Category: Squad-level combat
 Developer: Hrisalis Software, Ltd.
 Publisher: MicroLeague Interactive Software
 Bellevue Bldg., Suite 201 262 Chapman Road, Newark,
 DE 19702, (308) 368-9990

REQUIRED

386; 2MB RAM;
 DOS 3.3 or later;
 VGA; Mouse

M.S.R.P. \$49.95

WE RECOMMEND

386/33; Supported
 sound cards

To its credit, MicroLeague's new European import, *Sabre Team*, checks out fine in the interface department. You really can play without any documentation, as the point-and-click movement system and action icons are self-explanatory.

Unfortunately, the rest of the product doesn't live up to this promising start. It's a squad-level tactical combat game that, when you get right

down to it, seems to have been designed by people who were either ignorant of the many other games out there that have successfully handled the subject matter, or have just chosen to willfully ignore them.

The whole thing begins with some powerful introductory screens showing



This is the view you'll see when you plan combat, moving your men into position and arming them appropriately.



The cut scenes are often quite striking, and do a good job of setting up each mission. If only the missions themselves were as good....

Sabre Team is much like any number of other other squad-level combat games out there — except in terms of gameplay....

SAS commandos doing the hoodoo that they do so well, and then you find yourself in command of a party of elite special forces troops. Depending on the mission briefing, you choose which soldiers to deploy and what their equipment will be, then enter the tactical situation for real.

Each soldier has a basic "action points" rating which determines how far he can move in a given turn; extra gear will lower that rating. Every movement, however slight, deducts from the action points available;

Before each mission, you can view these profiles of the available soldiers to make sure you've got the best men for the job at hand.

even swiveling one's head to face a different direction costs points, so you'll run out of them very quickly. This gives combat a halting quality, and detracts considerably from the game's *raison d'être* — recreating

the action of a high-powered firefight.

The turn-based combat is initiated on a realistic, overhead-view screen showing people, guns, and environment, but is resolved with an overhead view of the shooter, which then switches to a blueprint-looking map on which bullets are represented by moving dots and enemy targets by a circle with an "e" inside — then it switches back to the overhead view for a look at the intended

target. Moreover, each cut from good guys to villains to blueprint is punctuated by empty black screens that hang around for a second or so.

The total effect is jarring, and shatters whatever frail illusion of reality the game has managed to create up to that point. And beyond that, overall gameplay just isn't that satisfying. Some of the visual effects are nice — the detonation of a stun grenade, for instance — but even at its best, the game looks like it might easily be a couple of years old.

As much as I would like to welcome MicroLeague's venture into other genres besides its admirable series of sports sims, I find this offering too seriously flawed to recommend. It's essentially the same game as *Swat Team*, *Special Forces*, *D.R.A.G.O.N. Force*, *Breach 2*, or even *X-COM* — but any of those titles beats the Kevlar off of it in terms of playability and fun.

— William R. Trotter

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

PGG

49%

PROS: Easy to get into; novices may enjoy it for a brief period.

CONS: Serious design flaws and impossibly jerky game-play; why should it cost 3 Action Points to turn my head?

BOTTOM LINE: This simulation simply does not measure up to the competition.



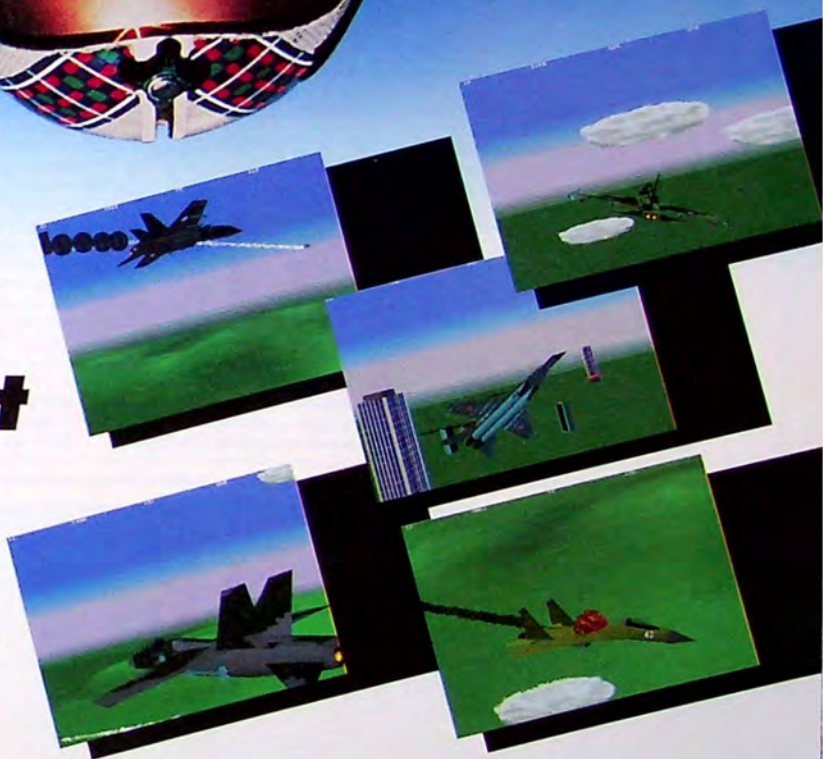
FIGHTER WING

**It's combat
no matter
how you
look at it!**



Fighter Wing is a new breed of flight simulation game, offering the ultimate arcade flight combat experience with the world's top fighter aircraft, but without the steep learning curves. Armed with the high

performance Gemsoft™ 3-D engine with real time terrain generation, using real maps, a wide variety of challenging combat missions, and actual combat video footage, **Fighter Wing** packs an awesome arsenal that can outgun any flight combat simulator.



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- Featuring actual video footage from the award winning TV series **FirePower™**
- Choose from **Training Missions; Multiple player Missions** for up to 16 players playing over a **Local Area Network; and Complex Missions** for 1-3 players competing against the computer
- Pilots can fly all of today's state-of-the-art aircraft from the world's most powerful nations, in the world's most dangerous hot spots.

CD-ROM Edition

Product Information Number 220

Published by
Merit Software
Dallas, Texas 800-238-4277

Developed by
GEMSOFT CORP.

Monopoly Deluxe

Category: Board Game
 Developer: Virgin Interactive
 Publisher: Virgin Interactive, 1806 Fitch Avenue, Irvine, CA 92714
 (714) 833-1999

REQUIRED

386; 640K RAM;
 3MB hard-drive
 space; mouse; VGA.

M.S.R.P.: \$39.99

WE RECOMMEND

386/33MHz; Sound
 Blaster-compatible
 sound card.

Monopoly was first introduced in 1935, and quickly became one of the most popular board games in the world. But, if you think you've seen all Monopoly has to offer, think again. This new computer version, *Monopoly Deluxe* from Virgin, is definitely not the Monopoly you remember from your childhood.

Virgin first released a Monopoly computer game in 1985, but after incorporating customer sugges-

tions, they've re-released the title in a more jazzed-up package. This time around, the game has improved music and graphics, as well as the ability to accommodate up to 10 players of varying skill levels.

The animations in the updated version really made me smile. Roll the dice, and Rich Uncle PennyBags pops out of the "O" in the Monopoly logo and throws the bones for you. Each of the tokens is animated: The top hat spins, the iron steams along, and a miniature PennyBags hoofs behind the wheelbarrow. Even the Community Chest and Chance cards have their own animations.

As in the board game, players wheel and deal, trade, and mortgage and sell property. If you don't have the money to buy a property when you land on it, it automatically goes up for auction and you actually hear an auctioneer calling the bids as you watch the action on a graph.

Since no two people seem to play the board game the same way, *Monopoly*



Rich Uncle PennyBags grabs his \$200 as he passes go. This is just one of the many animated scenes in *Monopoly Deluxe*.



The board in *Monopoly Deluxe* looks just like the one you remember playing on as a kid — only with a few more goodies.

Deluxe's rules are adaptable. You can set time limits, bend the rules to suit you, or play by the official rules. Just like the board game, *Monopoly Deluxe* can be enjoyed by gamers of all ages. And with all the bells and whistles Virgin has added, you may find its more fun to play today than it was when you were a kid.

—Shelli Craig

PC GAMER **FINAL VERDICT** **PCG**

PLUSES: Smooth VGA graphics and enchanting animations; change the rules to suit you.

85%

MINUS: Some of the animation is repetitive and merely slows down game play.

BOTTOM LINE: Enjoyment for gamers of all ages and skill levels.

Orcs Vs. Humans... Who Will Survive?



Terrace for Windows

Category: Strategy Game
Developers: Anton Dresden, Buzz Siler, and Mercury Software
Publisher: Siler/Siler Ventures, PO Box 2405, Lake Oswego, OR 97035
(503) 635-6333

REQUIRED

386SX/16; Windows
3.1 or later; 2MB
RAM; 3MB hard-
drive space

WE RECOMMEND

That ought to do it.

M.S.R.P.: \$39.95

being that some are larger than others. There are four different sizes in fact, and four pieces of each size.

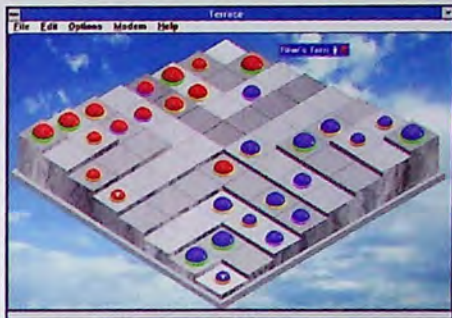
You can capture equal or smaller pieces by dropping down on them from a higher terrace. Capturing can only be done diagonally, much like a pawn in chess. Each side has one piece (one of the four smallest) that is the key to the game: It's marked with a letter T to distinguish it from the three other small pieces.

The game can be won in two ways, both hinging on the T piece: You can capture your opponent's T piece, or cross the board and occupy your opponent's lowest square with your T piece. And since it's so small, and thus vulnerable to attack by any other piece, neither method is easy.

The game supports modem play, which I highly recommend over playing against its AI. After only 30 minutes of learning the game, and on its toughest difficulty level, I found I could beat the program almost at will (it has a bad habit of bringing its T piece out early and exposing it to attack). Against a real opponent, the strategic elements seem quite rich. You can play aggressively or defensively, with many possibilities for traps. But will it become a classic? Well,

the chances of any new board-type game achieving that status are slim, so we'll wait and see how it fares.

—Joe Novicki



This attractive board is a big plus. Notice the little T-marked piece preparing for a run at Blue's lowest square.

One of the latest board-type games to come along touting itself as a future classic is *Terrace*, now available for PC's in a Windows version. Like many games, it's played on an 8 x 8 board. But rather than using a flat board, *Terrace* takes on an abstract, futuristic feel by terracing the squares — hence the name. And its brief appearance on "Star Trek: The Next Generation" does nothing to hurt this image.

Being a new strategy game, *Terrace* does the right thing by keeping rules simple, unlike the 3D chess from the original "Star Trek." All pieces have the same movement qualities, the only difference

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: The rules are simple and the play is lively.

LOWS: Finding an equal opponent might be a challenge in itself.

BOTTOM LINE: A game for all ages. But even with the Star Trek tie-in, it may not be enough to beat the Chess-Checkers-Backgammon barrier.

75%

New from BLIZZARD, the Winner of the Best Entertainment Software Developer Award!



A FANTASY STRATEGY GAME

"With its combination of real-time strategy, resource management, simple combat system, and great graphics and sound, WarCraft has all the elements to become a mega-hit!"

Matt Firme Editor, PC GAMER

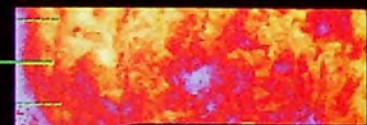
Enter the world of WarCraft, a mystical land where evil orcs and noble humans battle for survival and domination. With an ingenious arsenal of weaponry and powerful magic, these two forces collide in a contest of cunning, intellect, and brute strength.

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Interplay

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Product Information Number 182

Lords of the Realm



Category: Strategic simulation
 Developer: Impressions Software
 Publisher: Impressions, 222 Third Street, Suite 0234, Cambridge, MA
 02142 (617) 225-0500

REQUIRED

386SX/16; 640K RAM;
 DOS 3.31 or later; VGA
 graphics; hard drive
 with 10MB (plus an
 additional 6MB during
 installation); Microsoft
 mouse

WE RECOMMEND

386/33; supported
 sound cards

M.S.R.P.: \$69.95

**Cattle, coronations
 and crossbows form an
 intricate tapestry — and a great game.**

exclusion of all else, but that has certainly been my experience with this Impressions creation.

The game begins normally enough, casting you as one of the noblemen who control parts of England and Wales. The difficulty levels are thoughtfully divided into parts, so that you could, for example, play the game with the economic model set at difficult, but warfare set

beginning of the game to prevent early raids on one another. There are independent counties for the taking, though, and therein lies one of the first major choices you must make. Do you want to rush out and conquer as many surrounding counties as possible, or should you consolidate and develop the holdings you already have? If you have the manpower, conquering most counties early on is no problem — a matter of sheer numbers, since no one has enough money to equip anything more than simple yeoman at the beginning.

There is, however, something to be said for developing your home county before venturing forth. It will be several years before you have to worry about other nobles showing up on your door-



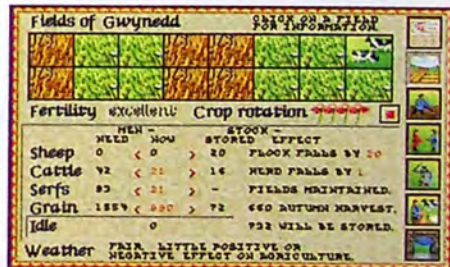
At the beginning of each season, the county overview is updated. If there's any internal trouble looming on the horizon, this is where you'll see it first.

at novice. You're also asked whether you want to see what your rivals are doing or to play completely blind, relying only on your own reconnaissance or information picked up from the traders who travel the countryside.

The map of your county uses icons to show a general state of the nation, but more in-depth information is just a mouse click away. This presents you with several info screens giving a detailed picture of your initial holding.

These screens show allocations for land usage, labor, military power, and inventory, as well as the overall health, happiness, and diet of your subjects, and a running census. You can also deal with traders here, selling excess inventory and buying material you're short of.

Each of the counties run by a lord are separated enough at the



Allocating farm labor is a delicate balancing act, often a matter of robbing Peter to pay Paul — at least until your population has grown enough to fill all the job openings.

step. And you won't have much of a fighting force anyway without happy, healthy, motivated people. Ideally, you'll want to spend the first few seasons of game time establishing your crop rotation and finding the right mixture of crops and livestock. The documentation suggests sowing grain and cows while living entirely on your sheep for food. That works well in most counties, although if you're lord over Cornwall you might want to consider eating your grain and developing an economy based on livestock. Cornwall's harsh and unpredictable weather makes farming only slightly less frustrating than training swallows — European swallows, that is — to carry coconuts.

Pursuing relations with your neighbors, at least to the point of getting an idea of their personalities and tendencies, is essential. This will take some experimentation with the various types

Balance — it's an important aspect of any game's design, but it's particularly crucial in strategic simulations. Often these games tilt toward either the "micro," and become bogged down in minutiae, or they land on the "macro" end of the spectrum with a global view that's unsatisfyingly broad. There are advocates of either viewpoint, to be sure, but the majority of us would rather have both micro and macro in more or less equal parts. That's why *Lords of the Realm* is such a revelation.

In our Scoop! on the game a few months ago, we noted that *Lords of the Realm* was a project near and dear to the heart of Impressions' president David Lester. That sort of personal commitment usually presages a good game; in the case of *Lords of the Realm*, it means a great game. This is as balanced and satisfying a strategic simulation as you're likely to find. It's not often that I find a game so enjoyable that I play it to the



The main map provides a quick iconic display of your territory, a handy feature when you've conquered several counties. This view can also give you info about happenings elsewhere in the country.

of dispatches. Fortunately, any missteps made initially with a particular lord can usually be made up for by either being dreadfully obsequious or overtly menacing later on. It all depends on just whom you're dealing with. The Countess, for example, can be flattered into an alliance, but it may not be one you'll want to pursue. She's terminally duplicitous, and vulnerable besides. The Knight, on the other hand, probably won't listen to you at first, and even takes occasional shots at your competence. He's an aggressive sort, and as the game unfolds and you more clearly discern the patterns of conquest, you might want to consider an alliance with him, should he deign to offer one.

Keeping your subjects happy is perhaps the most difficult aspect of *Lords of the Realm*. Happiness has a

county's happiness down fast, as can unavoidable problems like bad weather or wolves attacking the herds. If the happiness level in a county drops to five, you're "put on probation" and given five seasons to turn things around. You can "buy" some short-term happiness by purchasing a few barrels of ale, or bumping up the food ration level. In a lot of cases, however, getting out of the happiness hole is tough without some aid from providence, in the form of a popular wedding or maybe some extra births.

Warfare (when you do finally bite the bullet) can be hands-on or automatic

— your choice. Once you've decided you really want to attack another county, you choose whether to leave the details to the computer, or to actively direct the battle. The results are usually the same either way, based on numbers and relative troop strengths. The exception is when armies are closely matched. I tried the same battle on both automatic and hands-on, and you can make a difference in the outcome. Besides, it's fun to indulge your



While most other lords stay at home building their counties, the arrogant Knight sets out immediately to conquer any county he can. He may eventually over-extend himself, then come begging to you for an alliance.

direct effect on performance, and especially military performance. In fact, your army can become so depressed and ambivalent that they won't even form up and march. That elusive happiness is really a combination of factors: Having enough to eat is primary, although your subjects can have full bellies and still gripe. Army conscription can drive a

martial side after spending so much of your time administering economies.

The other end of the spectrum, defense — in the form of castles — is a slow, steady process lasting several years, and requiring considerable resources. You'll need castles for each county to discourage other lords from conquest. There are several historical castles already in the castle-building module; you can use these as they are, modify them to suit your needs, or erect a castle of your own design. Castles like Harlech or Carnaeron are temptingly grand, but are out of reach of all but the most prosperous lords. Stick with small, simple designs, and add to them as your coffers allow.

All the necessities of good gaming are present in *Lord of the Realm*, with pleasant graphics, complementary music and sounds, and an intuitive interface that makes documentation almost superfluous. I say almost, because



You can forego the battles and let the computer decide the outcome, but you should at least try your hand at a few skirmishes, especially the evenly matched ones where the right strategy could be a deciding factor.

you will want to delve into the wealth of period information supplied with the game. It provides an easy introduction to a less-than-familiar era, and really adds context to your gameplay.

The depth of *Lords of the Realm* transcends a two-page review. The sophistication of the AI and the overall game design mean many, many hours of rewarding game play. Experimenting with different strategies, starting out from different regions, exploring the varieties of the multi-player (up to six human players) and modem options, all



Building a castle takes a lot of time and resources, but each county will eventually need one to dissuade would-be invaders. Design your own here, or use one of the historical castle designs.

make *Lords of the Realm* a rarity in gaming — a product that returns magnitudes of enjoyment on the player's initial investment. Worthwhile at twice the asking price, *Lords of the Realm* is one game you won't want to miss. It made a believer out of me.

—Gary Meredith



A visiting trader is the best way to get building materials quickly, although he won't always have what you need. Sometimes his gossip can give you a tip on a vulnerable county you can capture.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: A good balance between micro and macro management.

LOWS: The battle-field screens could stand a bit of enhancement. The happiness ratings also sometimes seem arbitrary.

BOTTOM LINE: *Lords of the Realm* has all the ingredients, and in the right proportions, to satisfy anyone interested in historical simulations.

91%

Ride like
a maniac.
Without
becoming a
kidney
donor.



5 ROADS, 1 AMBULANCE AND 400 MEGABYTES OF REAL, LIFE-THREATENING ROAD FOOTAGE ON CD-ROM. OPEN IT UP. IT'S TIME TO SPREAD YOUR BRAINS ALL OVER THE ASPHALT.

CYCLEMANIA

A RACING GAME BY SPORT ACCOLADE

Star Reach

Category: Sci-Fi/Strategy
 Developer: Technionics
 Publisher: Interplay, 17922 Fitch Avenue, Irvine, CA 92714
 (714) 553-6655

REQUIRED

386/25MHz; 2MB
 RAM; 8MB hard-
 drive space

WE RECOMMEND

386/33MHz; 4MB
 RAM; Joystick or
 gamepad; Sound
 Blaster

M.S.R.P. - \$59.95

Just when you thought the glut of space strategy games had abated, along comes *Star Reach*. This could have been a serious contender, since there are some fundamentally interesting elements in it, but for several reasons it just doesn't provide much long-term play value.

The story is refreshingly simple: You are a supreme commander from one of eight spacefaring races. As you prepare to settle

At first glance, *Star Reach* looks capable of going toe-to-toe with *Master of Orion*. But it falls a little short in the end.

down in a nice little solar system, you discover that another race has also laid claim to it (isn't it always that way?). Instead of bogging things down with boring diplomatic relations, you decide to wipe out the intruders completely. In order to prevail, you'll need a strong military force and a hard-working civilian force to keep it supplied.

Star Reach is an easy title to get into, with control via joystick or redefinable keyboard commands. You can play head-to-head with another player, or match wits against a capable AI across a number of scenarios with specific goals (i.e., colonize X number of planets). Each leader controls an Imperial Star Cruiser, capable of short-range travel



To increase planetary production, have your workers build factories and farms on the surface of underdeveloped worlds.

and armed for space combat. By docking at planets currently controlled by your race, your ship can issue orders for the construc-

MANEUVERS COMMONLY PERFORMED WITH NEW WINGMAN EXTREME.



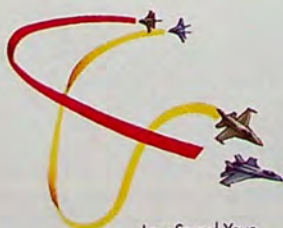
Barrel Roll Attack.



Offset Head-on Pass.



The Immelman.



Low Speed Yoyo.



Barrel Roll.



Rollaway.



■ You can choose to play as one of seven different races, each with their own habitats.

tion or repair of different structures and combat units. In order to expand your empire, send out these units to attack and capture neutral or enemy planets.

Each planet under your yoke will add its planetary resources to your war machine, making you stronger and stronger as you sweep through the system. To win the game, you must either control every planet in the galaxy, or destroy your enemy's headquarters.

Though the basic framework of the game is pretty sound, *Star Reach* lacks the depth necessary to make this sort of game fly. With seven different ground structures and ten different unit types to construct, there are only so many possibilities for successful strategies, making creative approaches to victory nearly impossible. There's only one ship that can attack planets, one ship that can carry troops, and two real attack fighters — and while this specialization may make forming strategies easy, it just doesn't allow for much variation in play.

Even more frustrating is your Imperial Star Cruiser, the vessel that you command throughout the game. Given the arcade-style control you have over this mighty-looking craft, you'd expect some hot and heavy shooting action as you cruise around supporting your ships in battle. But your craft is too flimsy to be formidable, and the arcade sequences are a snooze.

The numerous scenarios are nicely varied, and for a while there's some enjoyable, challenging game play. Capturing new planets, forming convoys, and establishing supply lines kept me amused for a few scenarios. Ultimately, however, *Star Reach* suffers from a simple shortage of things to build, and from rather mediocre production values. There's no finesse involved in constructing colonies and keeping people happy, and to make things even more limiting, you can't determine the locations for buildings you erect. An embarrassingly poor surface view makes things even more ho-hum.

Like most recent sci-fi strategy games, *Star Reach* is really just a pale shadow of *Master of Orion* and *Outpost*; the sad part is that it didn't have to be. With a little more variety and better graphics, *Star Reach*



■ Here's where you'll spend most of your time — looking for enemies and launching planetary strikes. Be careful — if you run out of fuel, it's back to square one.

could definitely provide some long-term challenges, but as it is, it's only fun for the short haul.

— T. Liam MacDonald

PC GAMER **FINAL VERDICT** **PCG**

70%

PLUSES: Fairly challenging and varied computer opponents; nice two-player mode.

MINUS: Graphics and sound effects are mediocre, and there are very few things to build.

BOTTOM LINE: A simple space-strategy game, but without the depth to keep you interested in the long run.

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NEW WINGMAN EXTREME. THE JOYSTICK WITH ATTITUDE!

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Reunion

Category: Sci-fi Strategy
 Developer: Amnesty/Grandslam
 Publisher: Merit, 13707 Gamma Road, Dallas, TX 75244 (800) 238-4277

REQUIRED

CD-ROM drive; 386;
 4MB RAM; MSCDEX
 v2.22 or higher; VGA

WE RECOMMEND

Double-speed CD-
 ROM drive; Sup-
 ported sound cards;
 Mouse

M.S.R.P.: \$59.95

Like an infestation of chiggers, space strategy games have been crawling all over retail shelves this past spring and summer. Wading hip-deep through piles of the little buggers, gamers must be starting wonder: Do we really need another *Civilization*-in-space game?

The latest entry is the oddly titled *Reunion*, an import from Hungary released by Merit. The premise offers an Earth several centuries in the future, where the United Nations Military Forces have achieved global peace (this must really be the future!). This has resulted in an era of enlightenment and scientific progress, with new space technologies allowing humans to explore the far reaches of the universe — and to meet some strange new challenges.

But during the 27th century, things start to come unravelled. Rebel groups seeking to tear apart the U.N.-imposed peace start winning battles, and eventually gain control of the planet. The last hope for Earth

is the orbiting colonization ship Explorer Two, which manages to escape from Earth and make its way to a habitable world, given the inspired name New Earth. As their leader, your goal is to build up New Earth, explore the solar system, and prepare to return to Earth to defeat the rebels and reunite with your home planet.

This story is told in a jarring mixture of black-and-white line drawings and full-color animation (the former to fill in Earth history, the latter to handle recent events), narrated by a funky, heavily accented, alien-sounding voice. The game then drops you on New Earth, where you must hire a team of four advisors from a dozen possible candidates — one each to head up construction, scientific development, fighting forces, and space flight. All but the development advisor are well-nigh useless for at least the first 15-20 hours of gameplay — I couldn't get much out of them except "I don't need anything now." The development advisor, however, helps you research, design, and build your first inventions: transports, mining stations, satellites,

translators, etc. Most of the New Earth colony is built at the beginning of the game, so your first tasks are to increase mining, invent and design new stuff, explore all the planets in the solar system, and begin mining operations on minable planets. These tasks are handled on a number of screens, and involve various steps that will be repeated throughout much of the game. To learn if nearby planets can be mined or colonized, for example, you must build satellites and spacecraft to transport them into space. For reasons that are left unexplained, a carrier can haul only one satellite, which means every time you deploy a satellite you have to return to New Earth to pick up a new one. A remedy to this bit of inefficiency is to build a fleet of satellite carriers in one fell swoop, but that doesn't explain why satellite-delivery technology hasn't advanced one whit in 600 years.

translators, etc.

After creating a group of satellite carriers and loading each with a satellite, you click an icon and switch to a first-person view from the cockpit of one of the carriers, and hit the Launch button. Once the fleet's in orbit, you can access a map of the current planetary system that shows all the moons in orbit around that planet.

From there you can zoom out to see all the planets in the star system, then choose a planet (and one of its moons, after you get to that planetary system's map) where you want to send a satellite, then watch space zip by as the ship (and the rest of the fleet) travels there. After arriving at your destination, you can launch your satellite, which begins scanning the surface of the moon or planet to see if it's good for mining, living, or both.

I describe this process in so much detail because it's such a very large part of



■ The Jaanosians, who are only found when you send a transport ship to Jade, offer help and technology. Trust them.



■ The satellite carrier launches a satellite into orbit around an unexplored planet. Make a note when they disappear — it probably means someone on the surface is blasting them to smithereens.

If You Build It, Will They Come?

New Earth may be a friendly planet, but you're not here for a vacation. You've got a lot of work ahead of you building the structures and equipment you'll need if you ever hope to make it back to your homeworld.



Space Port: Necessary for docking different kinds of ships. Transports

can land anywhere, but satellite carriers need docks.



Storage: You'll need these to stockpile the ores you mine on your home planet, as

well as the ones shipped in from colonies.



Stadium: Keeps the great unwashed masses moderately pacified.



Building: Houses 300 families in relative

comfort. They people will let you know when they need more.



Observatory: Gathers astronomical data — but also serves as

an early warning against invasion.



Derrick: Mines and processes gasses and liquids from the planet. Primary

source of the Detoxin, which is necessary for most production.



Mine: Mines solid ores via robot miners. More than nine per planet is

counter-productive, however.



Nuclear Generator: A relatively safe source of power, but you'll need more

than one as your colony grows.



Command Center: HQ of planetary operations.



Radar: Provides a complete map of the planet.



Hospital: You can't contain epidemics without one of these.



University: Send your advisors here to increase their skill levels.

the game — and what a tiresome process it can be, since it's repeated over and over again with other fleets and other ships. There's an icon available for just sending the

erals, I still couldn't build a colony.)

Eventually, you'll run across two alien races — one good, one bad. Once these elements come into play, new technologies arise that allow you to expand your military forces, battle the bad guys, expand your colonies, and all the peachy stuff that allow you to do — and *Reunion* does all these things very well. You can compose your battle fleets, conduct trade, build the usual range of structures in the colonies, develop new things, keep your people happy (not too difficult), conduct ground or space wars, etc.

Reunion features good graphics and great music, but is hampered by its interface. Some of the most important functions require a high level of micro-management, which means less time to concentrate on strategies for winning. It does, however, have more balanced play than *Outpost*, as well as a decent wargaming element. If some other interface design decisions had been made (completely automating the use

of spaceships is the first I would suggest), and if there were more than two alien races to deal with, *Reunion* would be a much better game. It also would be a shorter game: Merit estimates that there's 100 hours of game play. You can take that to the bank, but the problem is that all of those 200 hours aren't necessarily interesting.

If you have a penchant for managing every detail of a game, then *Reunion* is for you, but if the thought of taking a dozen steps to launch a satellite makes you woozy, steer clear. There's an awful lot of micro-management here. Probably too much.

—T. Liam MacDonald



Your advisors, as sage a group as can be imagined, gather around a map display to offer sound advice, such as "I'm feeling awful."

flight groups somewhere, but it only eliminates the launch step, and requires an extra click to access anyway.

After you've mapped the solar system and determined which planets are good, you can start mining them with machines and begin thinking about colonizing them with people. (I say "think about" because after 20 hours of play and a stockpile of min-

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGH: *Reunion's* exploration, colony building, and military strategy provide its depth.

LOW: Takes a *loooooong* time to get to the good stuff. Too much time is spent with busy work.

BOTTOM LINE: An interesting, accessible game undermined somewhat by a slow beginning and too much micro-management.

72%

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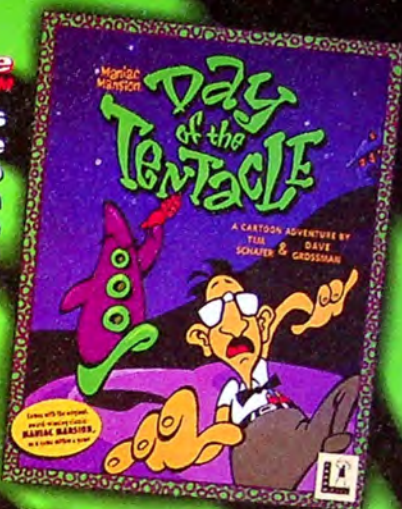


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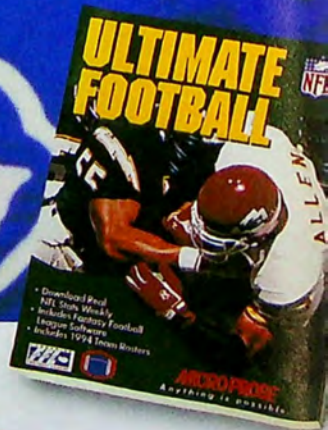
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Roll Out the Tanks!

If you like wargames and haven't yet picked up SSI's *Tanks! War-game Construction Set II*, then go get it now: This is one of the most enjoyable titles of the year. It's not that *Tanks!* is a great leap in technology or design; as a matter of fact, it's a bit of a throwback, styling itself after board wargames. What it *does* do well is give the user a data base full of tanks, from the dawn of tank warfare up to the most recent advances in armored technology. Not only does it come with numerous scenarios covering the entire gamut of 20th-century conflict (check out The Desktop General for William Trotter's favorite scenario), but it also has a feature that lets you to build your own wargames from scratch, from designing maps and creating orders of battle to assigning victory conditions.

As might have been expected, fans of *Tanks!* are busy building their own scenarios. One enterprising designer and publisher named David Landrey, a member of the *Tanks!* beta-testing team, is publishing a slew of these scenarios under his label, **Novastar**. Done with the full cooperation of SSI and *Tanks!* programmer Norm Kroger, the Novastar disks are going to be published by the truckload, with an estimated 20 scenario sets planned

for eventual release. *Scenario Disk #1* and *Scenario Disk #6* are the first off the presses, and they look good. The documentation is quite thorough (much better than SSI's), featuring historical backgrounds, scenario setup, full conditions, and complete orders of battle. And each scenario set will include any new patches and bug fixes.

Disk #1 features Germans versus Russians in World War II, with battles as diverse as Crisis in the North (German drive on the Dvina River), Berlin, Kursk South, the Demyansk Pocket, and Winter Storm (German drive on Stalingrad). Designed by Mike Musser and Richard Hooks,

pair of Tallil scenarios, As Salam, Khafji, Khafji West, Madinah, Blackjack (Americans ambushed by Iraqis during a feint up the Wadi al-Batin), Buck97 (a hypothetical American/Soviet engagement), and Rats (British 1st Armored outnumbered by Iraqis).

Some of Novastar's future disks will include #2: *France 1940*; #4: *Gold/Juno/Sword*; #9: *North Africa*; #10: *Race to Rumagen* (with variants plus five play-balanced, non-historical scenarios); and #12: *Arab-Israeli Wars*. Other sets from World War II, World War I, Korea, Vietnam, and even the Falkland Islands are all in the works, as well as campaign disks for Sicily and

the Battle of the Bulge. The patch included in the first set (and also available separately from SSI's BBS and on-line services) is v.1.1, which corrects the effects of air power against forces in heavy terrain, fixes bugs involving infantry crossing streams, and decreases the inordinate amount of damage mortars were doing against armor. There's still a bug in "strong" level play which completely screws up the game, but this should be fixed in v.1.2, so just stay away from that difficulty level for the time being.

Each Novastar add-on set costs \$15.00 (plus \$4.00 shipping per order), and there are discounts for multiple purchases. You can reach Novastar at PO Box 1813, Rocklin, CA, 95677, or phone (916) 624-7113. Tell 'em I sent ya, and maybe I'll get a gift basket for Christmas or something.

T. Liam McDonald



this is a good mix of Eastern Front battles, taking on some conflicts rarely — if ever — dealt with in computer games.

Mark Walker's Gulf War battles for *Disk #6* are also quite strong, and include a

Tom McDonald, one of *PC Gamer's* most experienced writers, brings great game playing knowledge to everything he does. Who better to review all the new expansion disks and bug patches?



Scenario Disk #6 for *Tanks!* features some very strong Gulf War scenarios, including one based on a hypothetical American/Soviet engagement.

All Roads Lead to CD-ROM

Slap me with a fish and call me silly, but I sort of liked Capstone's *Corridor 7*. It's no *Doom*, of course, but then again what is? And while some of the monsters are a bit silly looking (it's hard to take a monster seriously when it's the same shade of purple as Barney the Dinosaur), overall it's got enough action to keep you rolling right along. The new, enhanced *Corridor 7 CD-ROM* gives you 16 extra levels, more aliens, more weapons, CD-quality music, and new cinematics to further the story (story? what's that?). And features such as a game randomizer (which puts monsters in different positions), the ability to place mines on the levels, and a choice of either cooperative or "Deathmatch"-type games via network or modem (the latter supporting up to 12 players!) mean there's enough here to satisfy all you action hounds out there.

Theme Park CD-ROM from Electronic Arts/ Bullfrog fixes some of the oddball bugs players of the disk-based version were experiencing, such as the 8-bit/16-bit sound errors. The sound and music generally seem cleaner and



The CD-ROM version of *Corridor 7* has a bevy of new features, including CD-quality music, 16 extra levels, and support for up to 12 network players.

more dense than in the original, plus there's added animation to spice things up a bit — Bullfrog has added an option to let you get aboard selected rides in a series of Autodesk-animation sequences. Done in

ROM (a small front-end program is loaded onto the hard drive), and runs pretty smoothly. At least 9.5MB of hard-drive will be needed for all the flight sims — a pretty large chunk, but one that's

the heaviest software package I've ever hefted, puts the latest versions of *Falcon 3.0*, *MiG-29*, *Hornet*, *Naval Strike Fighter*, and *Operation: Fighting Tiger* all on a single CD-ROM. Also in *Falcon Gold* is *The Art of the Kill*, fighter-ace Pete Bonanni's book and video combo on jet-fighter tactics.

The video plays from the CD-ROM (a small front-end program is loaded onto the hard drive), and runs pretty smoothly. At least 9.5MB of hard-drive will be needed for all the flight sims — a pretty large chunk, but one that's

"Slap me with a fish and call me silly, but I sort of liked Capstone's *Corridor 7*.

It's no *Doom*, but then again what is?"

the style of the introduction, you can jump on the Bouncy Castle, ride the Tea Cups, or hop on board any of 13 other rides. The first-person perspectives during these bits are quite good, but they're more window-dressing than a substantial addition to the game. *Theme Park CD-ROM* is mostly playable from the CD, using only about 2.5MB on your hard disk.

necessary for smooth flight, and isn't all that much nowadays. *Tetris Gold* gives us both DOS and Mac versions of the classic *Tetris* games: *Tetris*, *Welltris*, *Faces*, *Tris II*, and *Wordtris*, DOS and Windows versions of *Tetris Classic*, and DOS, Windows, and Mac versions of *Super Tetris*. There's also a ten-minute interview with Alexey Pajitnov, the Russian inventor of the line.

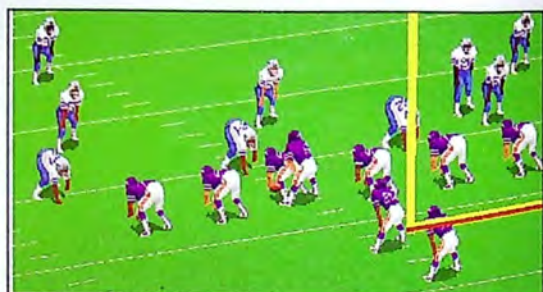


Falcon Gold is an idea whose time has come: On one CD-ROM you get the latest version of *Falcon*, *MiG-29: Deadly Adversary* of *Falcon*, *Hornet*, *Naval Strike Fighter*, the *Operation Fighting Tiger* scenario disk, and the *Art of the Kill* videotape.

Spectrum HoloByte has produced a value-packed pair of CD-ROM compilations based on their two flagship products: *Tetris* and *Falcon*. *Falcon Gold*, which could be

This is an excellent pair of classic packages, and an essential cornerstone in any gaming library.

Accolade has done its share of successful sports



Unnecessary Roughness is probably the best-looking of the three games on Accolade's new *All-Star Sports Collection CD-ROM*.

games, and now they're offering three of their best on one CD-ROM. *All-Star Sports Collection* includes *Hardball III*, *Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition*, and *Unnecessary Roughness*, with a simple front end and on-disk documentation. *Unnecessary Roughness*, in its

meaning you must either jump out of the program to read up on an element of play, or print the whole thing out — a real pain. This is one case where saving a few bucks in production really wasn't worth it.

Bug Patches

Contact game publishers for bug patch availability



Still one of the most popular baseball sims around, *Hardball III* now has the advantage of being played directly off the CD-ROM.

- **Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition:** Removes the copy protection from the game so you no longer need to use the code-wheel to start the game.

new, fixed-up form, holds up the best of all, with good graphics and sound (though I suggest at least a 486/50 to run the game in SVGA). Nicklaus shows its age most of all, and simply can't match Access' *Links 386 Pro*, even with its super course designer.

Of the three, *Unnecessary Roughness* is the only one that

- **The Grandest Fleet:** Fixes some minor officer ranking and save-game problems, and advanced rules. Two different patches are available, one for the CD-ROM and one for the floppy-disk version.

- **Outpost v.1.1** contains a new beginner level, a more play-balanced "easy" level, a tutorial, a saved game, and miscellaneous improvements.



Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition plays well, but really shows its age in the graphics department.

demands hard-drive real estate (about 4MB for league play); the other two require only configuration files. Though this is a generally good collection, it is somewhat marred by the fact that no printed documentation comes in its oversized — and very empty — box. All documentation is in text files, with no illustrations,

- **Pacific War v.1.1** is an SSI patch, and will not work in conjunction with any of the Grigsby patches.

- **Putt-Putt Joins the Parade CD-ROM** adds support for the Microsoft Sound Card, allows the use of IRQ 10 or 2, fixes DMA3 problems for the Sound Blaster and Thunderboard drivers, and corrects a rare color problem on some faster machines.

- **Tigers on the Prowl v.1.1** fixes several bugs, including the mortar problems,

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Product Information Number 113

The Personal Touch

If you want to teach a seven-year-old boy how to subtract large numbers, you'll have more success if you use his baseball cards instead of his math text book. A sixth-grade girl will learn more about elementary statistics by surveying her friends on their favorite foods and generating graphs of the data she collects than she would by solving a boring word problem. It's a proven fact: Kids'll learn more quickly if you personalize the material you're teaching, and bring it closer to their worlds.

Three software packages released this past summer employ just this teaching strategy, giving African animals memorable personalities, animating musical notes, and employing charming characters to help kids remember what they learn. One is aimed at preschoolers; the other two are designed for elementary school children on up to adults.

The Scavenger Hunt Adventure Series: Africa

Listen to the birds calling, the insects whirring, the monkeys screaming, the bush pig saying, "Psst. Psst. Hey you. Yeah, you with the funny snout. That thing you call a nose. How come it's so small?"

No, this isn't your average jungle safari.

Designed for people six and older, this CD-ROM package from Davidson & Associates introduces players to the animals and ecosystems of Africa. Though it's primarily a game of exploration, there are some simple puzzles to help



The artwork in *Scavenger Hunt* looks like it was created as a collage of various media, but much like illustrations in a children's book, it still suggests the real animals effectively.

reinforce the knowledge you pick up during your adventure.

When you start your virtual tour, a culture named Vica explains the interface and gives you a list of animals to hunt — with your camera, of course. In each ecosystem, you use your mouse to scroll through the scenery. Click on any animals you find, and he or she will perform a short soliloquy. To travel to another ecosystem, click on one of the "glyphs," icons that looked like they



The animals in *Scavenger Hunt: Africa* are masterworks of characterization. This leopard, for instance sounds more like a Bowery Boy than a wild jungle beast.

Heidi E. H. Aycock



were carved into the rocks and trees of each scene.

The strength of *The Scavenger Hunt Series: Africa* is in its presentation. The program looks like it was created as a collage of vivid colors and various textured media. It reminded me of Eric Carle's children's books. And while the animal's didn't look realistic per se, they suggested their real-world

counterparts more effectively than any digitized photos or videos have in older packages.

Although I'm seldom awed by sound in a program, *The Scavenger Hunt Series* knocked my headphones off. The voices were clear and the background noises convincing, but the best part was the acting. Each animal has a different voice. The leopard, for example,

is a defensive thug, saying "You looking at me? Yeah, I got spots. You got a problem with that? I ain't got a problem with that." Other animals sound like British colonels, valley girls, or young children. The voice actors — in league with the animators and artists — infused the animals with such strong personalities that you'll remember each one as though they were characters in a movie, and that helps kids

remember the information they picked up from each of the many characters.

The weakness of the program is its interface. Overall, it seemed too finicky. You really have to search each of the busy landscapes to find the subtle glyphs that transport you between ecosystems. The hot spots are hard to locate, so it can be difficult to activate an animal. To address this problem, the documentation tells you to center the animal in the screen before clicking on it. But this remedy draws too much attention to the interface, and detracts from the adventure of the program.

The interface problems don't overpower the stunning presentation, however, so I'd still recommend this program. I just hope that future installments in the series will make the nuts and bolts of the software as good as the look and sound of it.

Music Ace

For a program which works as well as it looks — and sounds — try *Music Ace*, a disk-based music tutorial from Harmonic Vision. Of all the programs I've tried this year, *Music Ace* is among the few nearly perfect packages.

Designed for ages 8 and up, *Music Ace* introduces you to music notes, sight reading, the piano keyboard, and musical scales. The program features a series of 24 lessons, each accompanied by a game that reinforces what you've learned.

It's one thing to pack plenty of educational content in a learning game, but making sure kids remember what they've learned is another. Heidi's found three packages that do just that.



For *Music Ace*'s tutor, Harmonic Vision created Maestro Max, an Arthur Fiedler look-alike with his long white hair and his bushy moustache.



Maestro Max uses singing musical notes to teach players how to read musical notation.

Music Ace also offers a unique feature, The Music Doodle Pad, which lets you write your very own songs.

To guide you through the lessons, Harmonic Vision has created Maestro Max, sort of an Arthur Fiedler clone. As explained in the manual, poor Max lost his voice in a terrible accident while singing opera at La Scala, so he communicates through speech balloons. (The real reason for Max's muteness is that the company wasn't ready to put *Music Ace* on CD-ROM, and they didn't want to use up a bundle of floppies just to include digitized speech.) Usually, speech adds realism—but for me, the lack of it here somehow makes the character more tangible; Max's silence just adds another dimension to his personality.

Assisting Max are a bunch of animated music notes. These little notes are simple spheres with teeth and eyes. They open their mouths wide to sing as you strike their corresponding keys, they smile when you answer a question correctly, and sometimes they even bounce off each other in their excitement. These characters are perfect foils for the formal, sedate Max.

The music tutorials run the risk of becoming static drills, but Harmonic Vision has successfully hidden the drudgery and busy work. Max presents the content in short bits of nicely paced lecturing. Then he helps you remember the information by challenging you with games that are fun enough to play over and over again.

Besides terrific instructional design, *Music Ace* features a first-rate interface. Every part of the program is easily accessible. Buttons are well-labeled, and menus are clear and attractive. I especially liked the graphs that indicate how far the player has progressed in a lesson. Bright spots abound in this program: well-drawn graphics, clear sound, good controls, and a collection of engaging characters to draw you into the lessons. In fact, try as I might, I just couldn't find any dark spots.

Sammy's Science House

Edmark, known for creating casts of fun and interesting characters for its educational products, offers a new gang in its latest release, *Sammy's Science House*. My three-year-old and I stopped by this newest home in Edmark's ever-growing neighborhood, and we enjoyed our visit.



Sammy the Snake welcomes players to his house, and directs them to the learning activities he has to offer.

Like previous games from Edmark (*Millie's Math House* and *Thinkin' Things*), *Sammy's Science House* gives kids a chance to explore a topic at an appropriate developmental level. In this newest title, children can manipulate weather variables, classify items, place related pictures in proper se-

quence, and follow visual plans to build different objects.

Again as with Edmark's other products *Sammy's Science House* works quite well, and features a simple interface—my three-year-old could easily navigate the entire program all by himself. The educational content of all the activities is sound, with plenty of gentle encouragement and many opportunities for experimentation. The graphics are, for the most part, attractive, smoothly animated, and very

more difficult for kids to investigate away from a computer. For example, a cooking activity would help kids learn about cause and effect—and it's perfect for the computer because it's an activity that's tough to



In *Sammy's Science House*, the sorting cans clap their hands down on their lids to indicate when a player is putting an item in the wrong place.

"It's a proven fact: Kids'll learn more quickly if you personalize the material you're teaching, and bring it to their worlds."

colorful.

The characters in the program will grab your child's attention. For example, the animated sorting pails raise their lids with their own hands to receive items that belong inside them, and clap their hands tightly over their lids for the items that don't. Hoping to keep the pails happy, my son was eager to learn which items went in which pail.

Despite the good qualities of this program, though, I was ultimately disappointed with *Science House*. In all honesty, I liked Edmark's early titles much more, mainly

because *Science House* lacks some of the whimsy present in both *Millie's Math House* and *Thinkin' Things*. It also focuses too heavily on nature—an important topic, but one that can be easily (and arguably better) explored in the concrete world. I wish they'd covered some other topics that are

conducted in a real kitchen. An on-line chemistry lab where kids could mix noxious compounds would be even more fun—and virtually impossible to do in the real world.

Still, any Edmark program is a good choice for a preschool software collection, and *Sammy's Science House* is no exception. It's just not a step forward for Edmark, and I'd like to see them continue to grow as exceptional software developers.

Character-Based Programs

Like a character-based movie, the personalities of these programs are what make the software work. Not only do they make the content more palatable and more memorable, but they may draw you back to a program, and subsequently, back to the learning. Any one of these packages could have fallen flat on its face without the help of such memorable friends as Maestro Max in *Music Ace* or the belligerent leopard in *The Scavenger Hunt Series: Africa*. Instead, they are engaging and fun, and are all fine values for any family.

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The Advanced Gravis Phoenix

I've been an Advanced Gravis fan for a lot of years, primarily because they're the company that manufactured my beloved PC GamePad. There are a lot of new controllers released each year, and I try them all. But I always seem to keep coming back to that GamePad.

One reason it appeals to me is that I am, admittedly, a videogame fan. That GamePad, with its little directional pad instead of joystick, just seems more natural to me, and more precise, than a big flight stick. When you're trying to make a little caveman jump across a pool of lava or maneuver your Street Fighter in for the kill, you just can't beat the GamePad.

Yes, I know that pilots don't use videogame controllers to fly fighter planes (although I kind of like the image). But I have another confession to make: I do. That's right, I fly with the GamePad, too. I flew *TIE Fighter* with it, and *1942: Pacific Air War*, *X-Wing*, *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat*, and *Red Baron*. I'm not an ace or anything, but I'm a hell of a lot better with the GamePad than with any stick I've come across.

All that may change, though, because of the new Advanced Gravis Phoenix. This complete flight and weapons control system boasts a flight stick with two triggers (of course), rudder control, throttle, and 22 function buttons, all but one of which can be configured to control two game functions. That's a total of 42 possible commands — all right at your fingertips.

It's because of this configurable button stuff that the Phoenix is right now threatening my GamePad's standing as Matt's Controller of Choice. See, the GamePad has four buttons that can each handle a different function, and that's always been one of my favorite things about it. In *Doom*, for example, I could fire my weapons, strafe, run, and open doors all from the GamePad. But with the Phoenix, I can do all those

things, plus fastsaves and restores, access the map, and even input the Degreelessness code — all without ever touching the keyboard.

With so many functions available on the console, the Phoenix is obviously a flight-sim fan's dream. In *TIE Fighter*, for example, I was able to place every major game function — from weapons selection to targeting, from wingman commands to shield and laser recharge — in easily accessed and logical button groupings. And since the function buttons are all grouped so well, you'll never have to take your eyes off the screen to select and perform a function.

Best of all, how the Phoenix

When you're finished, you can save the configuration as a .PHX file for easy access.

When you load any of your .PHX files (either with the Phoenix Control Console, or using the simple PHX command), the Phoenix is configured with that command set and ready to use. Because the Phoenix itself stores the information in non-volatile RAM, there's no need for TSRs. Even after you turn your system off for the evening, the Phoenix will be ready to go with whichever .PHX configuration you used last.

In addition to all the configurable buttons, the Phoenix has its own rudder and throttle



The Phoenix Control Console lets you individually configure each button on the unit — and print out PCX images detailing each button function, too!

control. These are paired on the little wing you see jutting down from the left of the unit: pull the wing back and forth for throttle, and move it side to side for rudder. Both work well, although rudder-pedal users will probably opt to keep using their feet. But the nice thing about the rudder and throttle controls of the Phoenix is that, whether a sim supports rudder pedals or not, you can make it work with the Phoenix by changing the throttle and rudder to simulate keyboard inputs. So if your sim only supports keyboard rudders of, say, "<" and ">" keys, you just set the rudders on the Phoenix to correspond and away you go.

But now for the most important question: How does the Phoenix feel? Well, as I said before, I'm a GamePad lover. But thanks to its incredible adaptability and ease of configuration, I've actually found myself re-flying some of my favorites with the Phoenix. I like the feel of the stick itself — and especially the fact that its resistance is adjustable through four directions — quite a bit; the button groupings are all logical and easy to get to, especially when you're flying two-handed with one mitt on the stick, the other on the throttle.

So am I a convert? Well, yes and no. When it's time to fly one of those sims loaded down with keyboard commands, you can bet I'll be using the Phoenix. But if you see me coming at you in multiplayer *Doom*, rest assured I'm gripping that GamePad.

Matt Firme



Phoenix works with a given game (or whether it works at all) is not dependant on the game itself. It can be easily configured to any game — and without memory-hungry TSRs or special drivers. The key to all this is the very nifty Phoenix Control Console, a Windows-like (but DOS-based) program that lets you set every function on the stick. It's a graphical program, with a big, SVGA picture of the Phoenix taking up almost the entire screen. There's even online help — although I doubt you'll need it.

Setting the individual button functions is as easy as pointing at the button you want to configure and clicking. This brings up a little menu, where you can assign a keystroke and modifier (Shift, Ctrl or Alt). You just continue in this way, working through the keyboard commands of a given game, until you've got the Phoenix performing exactly as you want it.

For years now, we've cringed at the sight of Matt flying flight sims with a gamepad. Now, thanks to Gravis, he's finally stepped up to a proper stick. Now if only he'd learn to drive....

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[There must be] 50 Ways to Beat the Russkies

As those who've played it surely know, SSI's *Tanks! War-game Construction Set II* has one of the best "custom scenario" programs ever designed. It allows you to create orders of battle using every significant unit ever fielded by any of the major powers from 1918 to the present, and to deploy them on

beautiful maps.

I've used that custom-scenario program a lot in the past two weeks, for I've become obsessed with one of the game's built-in campaigns, and I've been trying out all manner of tactics and deployments built around the scenario's basic premise — an all-out Soviet assault on American garrison troops stationed in Germany during the winter of 1945-1946.

The attack seems to be a surprise — the scenario depicts American forces that are poorly equipped with armor and unprotected by minefields. The assault begins at night, during a howling blizzard, so the Americans' advantage in air support is negated.

For the player commanding the Americans, several fairly depressing facts quickly impact the troops. For one thing, none of the American tanks, not even the Pershings, can swap close-range cannon fire with the Red Army's Stalin IIs and Stalin IIIs and expect to survive more than a couple of turns.

Furthermore, Soviet armor is frighteningly impervious to all but the heaviest indirect shellfire, and the Americans' only anti-tank guns are obsolete little 57mm weapons, unable to do more than scratch the paint off the frontal armor of the multitude of Russian assault guns and tank-destroyers bearing down on them.

Worse yet, the Americans have no artillery to match the destructive power of the dreaded Katyusha rocket batteries,

nor any mortar as devastatingly effective as the Soviets' 120mm tubes. Time after time, I looked on as entire armored platoons were annihilated by these fear-some weapons.

But all is not hopeless. There are some steps you can take to offset the initial Soviet advantage. Here are some tactical suggestions based on the marathon sessions I've just spent with this particular campaign scenario:

1. Go all-out for the flag.

Battles in *Tanks!* have a capture-the-flag strategic element, with a junction or village whose occupation is worth many victory points. Whatever the AI setting, the Russians tend to put most of their effort into a single,

for your artillery. Once you have a fix on those Katyusha batteries, use your deadliest and most accurate weapons (8-inch Howitzers and 155mm Long Toms) to take them out. These rocket batteries are terribly vulnerable to accurate shellfire, and you can frequently wipe out six or seven launchers with a single salvo. Repeat this process with other artillery units and you'll gradually sap the strength of the Reds' attack.

3. Use your armor defensively and carefully.

American tanks stand a significantly greater chance of knocking out Russian ones if their attacks are launched from the side or the rear, where the target's armor is thinnest. Hide the Pershings

and Chaffees in urban or wooded hexes and use them to bushwhack passing enemy vehicles. Never station them up front, in direct infantry support — that's the quickest way to lose them. Your infantry, especially when fighting from fortified positions, has a respectable rocket-launcher capability and can endure tank attacks for a surprisingly long time.

4. Don't pin your hopes on air support.

Even in those battles that allow air support, you can't control it. As in real life, your side's planes may be shot down or turned back, they may miss the target, or they may misread the situation and bomb friendly units. Whatever the planes manage to do, it probably won't seriously affect the battle until late in the campaign, if at all.

5. In the absence of any firm targets, you may obtain results by firing blindly into junctions or urban hexes.

In fact, junctions and urban hexes are the only hexes you can fire into without a visual fix on a target. In the earliest round of the campaign — the Russians' night attack over a frozen river — I committed terrible slaughter by systematically hammering every urban hex on the enemy side. If you pay attention during the computer's turn, you may see hidden batteries reveal themselves for a split second when they fire. Take note of their locations, then blast them when your turn comes. I should add, however, that this tactic yielded significant results only in the first battle of the campaign. In all subsequent battles, the Russians did not make that same mistake, but spread their heavy weapons in hexes that could not be shot into without a confirmed sighting. That's when *Tactic No. 2* came into its own.

6. When all else fails, cheat!

Long-range artillery often misses its intended target and drops onto an adjacent, sometimes empty, hex. If you don't think a salvo has given you your money's worth, click on the "undo" button and give it another shot. I sometimes did this until I was happy with the results, and the computer didn't seem to mind.

PCGG

William R. Trotter



headlong battering-ram assault on the American center, paying only marginal attention to their flanks. Several times, even though I was being badly whipped in terms of casualties, I managed to salvage a strategic victory by using my fastest armor to sneak around the edges and capture the designated objective. Even if you can't hold it against the inevitable counterattacks, you can distract the Russians from their primary objective — and just maybe you can hold on to your own strategic objectives until time runs out.

2. Bombard their artillery.

Unless the units in a given hex are considered "visible" from your position, they remain unseen except when they fire. Send your speediest reconnaissance units on wide flanking maneuvers, then sneak them close enough to the Russian batteries for them to "spot"

Okay now,
everyone sing
along: You
don't need to
go nuke,
Duke; You
just need to
deploy, Roy;
Just fire
some HE,
Lee, and set
your tanks
free! (You get
the idea....)



WACKY WHEELS

Coming October 15, 1994



“Wacky Wheels: A fun, action-packed 3D racing game you can play alone or against friends via modem!”

That's right, nothing beats the excitement of playing against other human racers. You really feel the thrill of racing when you blast by your opponent, slam their car into a water trap, and beat them by a hair to the finish line. It's so fun, you'll hate to finish!

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The wild kingdom of racing!

You can play any of eight wacky animals in Wacky Wheels. Each animal has its own colorful antics, sounds and animations, including a tiger, elephant, racoon, panda, shark, and more.



The Split-Screen mode allows two players to race on the same computer.

You get 15 original race tracks
After you select your wacky race character, you get to select any of fifteen unique race tracks (30 if you have the Upgrade Edition). Each track has a distinctive winning strategy. It's up to you to figure out the best way to race each one.

There are three classes of tracks, from novice to expert, as well as two racing car speeds.

All tracks have special obstacles and dangers: Water traps (you can race underwater!), lava lakes, jump ramps, posts, turbo lanes, ice, oil slicks, bushes, and many other hazards.

Wacky weapons help you win!

But what you're not expecting are the hedgehogs! Grab all the track-populated hedgehogs you can, and hurl them like baseballs at the other racers to send them spinning out of control – giving you time to pass 'em by. Other weapons to collect include bombs, oil slicks, and flame balls.

High-speed racing action

Apogee games are action-packed, and Wacky Wheels is a perfect example. From start to finish, you get edge-of-your-seat excitement and action. When playing, you'll grit your teeth, lean your body into the corners and scream “EAT MAGMA!” as you launch a hedgehog that sends the racer in front of you spinning into the lava!



Speed across a narrow bridge to avoid the bubbling lava!



Once you play Wacky Wheels, you just can't stop. Ask yourself: Is that a bad thing?

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A Woldven Epic

Welcome back, Wolfpack. No, it wasn't just some crazy, wonderful dream — I'll actually be here each month, to bring you news from the world of Shareware and Online gaming! I'm still in the process of setting up accounts with all of the online services, but by next month I should have all kinds of addresses where you can reach me on America Online, CompuServe, Delphi, GEnie, the ImagiNation Network, Prodigy, and the wild and wacky Internet itself!

In the mean time, here are a couple of worthy new titles from Epic MegaGames. Enjoy.

Jazz Jackrabbit

You're all familiar with Epic MegaGames, right? Besides the outstanding *Epic Pinball*, they've got a roster of shareware titles almost as long as my arm (the disks themselves, laid end to end, are actually longer than my arm).



Leapin' Lepus! The 3D Bonus Stage in *Jazz Jackrabbit* is especially nice-looking, and really sets this title apart from the competition.

Their latest is a lightning-fast, Sonic-the-Hedgehog-style action-adventure starring a Ramboesque rabbit named Jazz. Yes, the fate of planet Carrotus is in the hands of one little bunny with a big gun, and it's up to you to rescue the rabbit

princess, Eva Earlong, from the slimy beak of Devan Shell, notorious leader of the turtle terrorists. It's 3000 years in the future, and the Tortoise and the Hare are still at it.

Jazz faces enemies like the Turtle Goons, Bumbling Bees, Sparks, Ghost Rapiers, and Helmut (who look like a certain wabbit-unfriendly Martian), armed only with an LFG-2000 Blaster. The LFG has an unlimited supply of tiny bullets, but is also upgradable to fire red-hot Toaster shots, RF Missiles, and the BBT Rubber Explosive Launcher.

The requisite multitude of other power-ups includes fully automatic Rapid Fire for Jazz's Blaster, Jump Around spring-

called), and helps set *Jazz Jackrabbit* apart from the other "Sonic-beaters" like Gremlin's *Zool* and Team 17's upcoming *Superfrog*.

Five more episodes are available in the registered version, which you can now purchase, register, and download from CompuServe's Epic forum (GO EPIC).

TD 2192

Epic's other new offering comes from their newly acquired Safari Software division, through which Epic will release smaller games and experimental titles. *Jason Storm: Space Chase* and *Heroes* were Safari's first two releases, and now they're

Scott Wolf



shoes to increase Jazz's jumping abilities; Hip Hops (armed bird companions); Fast Feet for 20 seconds of super speed; a flying AirBoard, and much, much more.

There are plenty of secret areas and hidden treasures that are very impressive, but the game's 3D Bonus Stages will really blow you away. If Jazz finds an oversized red gem, he will be transported to the 3D Bonus Stage when he clears the level. Here, the view shifts to a "chase" view from behind Jazz as he

speeds along, collecting Power Gems that Devan has stashed. It's a dizzying display that resembles Nintendo's (*We warned you about using the "N" word.* Wolf — Eds.) *F-Zero* and Mario's *Dodgem*, *Little Kart Race* (or whatever the hell it's



Nice shootin', Vel! Them Vultures blow up real good!

bringing us *Traffic Department (TD) 2192*, a grim science-fiction blaster set in the dangerous city streets of the desert planet Seche.

The year is 2192, 95 years after the invention of the HoverSkid — a floating vehicle capable of attaining high speeds with very little energy consumption, making it the ideal form of transportation on a desert planet like Seche. Naturally, when the planet is threatened with a takeover by the Vulture Cult Army, it also becomes the ideal war machine. Now the Traffic Department, which was originally conceived to regulate the movement of HoverSkids through the city, finds itself the planet's major defense force.

You play as Lt. Marta "Vel" Velasquez, a tough member of the Traffic Department whose father was killed in a Vulture ambush, leaving her with a Pentium-sized chip on her shoulder. The action is seen from overhead as you pilot your HoverSkid through 20 missions in the killing streets of Vulhaven, one of Seche's larger cities.

While the gameplay is nothing special, the presentation is quite slick, featuring beautifully rendered narrative screens and a progressive storyline that could have been sneaked out of Origin's back door. The game's original script contains coarse language and sexually suggestive elements throughout, but a tamer alternate version has been included and may be chosen before the game begins. (The potentially offensive text may be removed entirely by deleting the file `DIALOGUE.DAT` from the game directory.)

Like *Jazz Jackrabbit*, the full version of *TD 2192* containing two additional levels may be purchased, registered and downloaded from the Epic forum on CompuServe.

One of the hottest names in shareware today is Epic MegaGames. They're known for creating first-rate arcade-style games, and *Jazz Jackrabbit* and *TD 2192* continue that tradition.

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SVGA: 486 66MHz or greater, 8MB RAM, MS-DOS 5.0 or later, VGA, hard drive with 15MB free.



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The Final Frontier

Microsoft doesn't step into the computer entertainment market often, so when the software giant makes a rare appearance on these pages, that's news in itself. Except for *Golf for Windows*

and a small line of arcade games aimed at desk-bound executives, Microsoft's only entertainment product is its highly respected *Flight Simulator*, with its many add-ons.

Flight Simulator is proof that when the folks at Microsoft decide to create a simulation, they do it right. But even the nearly flawless realism of *Flight Simulator* won't prepare you for their next entertainment project.

Simply put, *Space Simulator* is like nothing you've ever seen. It simulates not only our solar system, but most of our entire galaxy — about 8.4 billion light-years of virtual space. And it renders our galaxy in images that are truly breathtaking.

In SVGA mode, planets and other objects are almost photo-realistic — better than in any of the astronomy programs I've seen. And everything's here, too, just where it

should be: planets, comets, asteroids, and all stars from magnitude 0 to 7.

Space Simulator shines as a purely educational astronomy program, but it doesn't stop there. After checking out Jupiter's moons, you can fly there to visit them. Just choose from several spacecraft, plot your course, and set sail. And the space flight isn't a gimmicky afterthought to attract gamers. The craft appear to be accurate simulations in their own right, governed by the same precise physics as the rest of this vast virtual galaxy.

Leigh Kole, product manager for *Space Simulator*, says that the sim's developers — the Bruce Artwick Organization,

activities as flying the Apollo 17 mission to the Moon, visiting space stations, or docking a shuttle and then landing at Cape Canaveral.

But while *Space Simulator* offers a fair share of fun, it is not a game. Don't expect to be firing proton torpedoes at Klingon space ships — the focus here is on realism, and combat just wouldn't fit into the equation.

"We think that *Space Simulator* is more of a niche product than flight sims," Kole says. "However, we do believe that this product will have a high level of appeal for flight sim users, and that's a pretty big group of folks. Secondly, we think there's a great deal of

educational value to this. This is one product that parents won't mind their kids playing."

Just how sophisticated is *Space Simulator*? The program creates each star, then gener-



Microsoft should be rolling out *Space Simulator* sometime this October. If it generates the same sort of devoted following as *Flight Simulator*, you can expect a shuttle full of third-party add-on disks to give it even more replay value.

Lee Buchanan



creators of *Flight Simulator* — sought to strike a difficult balance: an accurate, detailed, and educational scientific model with a healthy dose of entertainment. "We really feel we are the first and only product to effectively bridge the gap between something that's very educational and something that has a lot of entertainment value," Kole says. "Some people will learn a lot and some people will just fly around."

For people like flight-sim fans who crave specific missions, *Space Simulator* features such structured

Microsoft is putting the finishing touches on its newest sim, and a lot of you virtual astronauts are going to be very happy. You really will have an entire galaxy to explore!

ates its surrounding environment based on star models, as well as physics and mathematical calculations. Using this data, the program will "sprout" a planetary system if it decides the star would be likely to support one. Travel there, and you'll find a unique solar system to explore. Go back a year later, and it will still be there.

If you're a realism freak, you can play it perfectly straight in *Space Simulator*. You want to go to the Moon? It'll take you four days in real time. How about Mars? Try eight months. Or for a really relaxing vacation, take off for the core of the Milky Way, a journey of 450,000 years. Of course, you can choose to travel at the speed of light, or accelerate time to make the far reaches of the galaxy a little more accessible.

Space Simulator is so accurate and detailed, in fact, that Space Center Houston is considering using it as a visitors' exhibit. *Space Simulator* is expected to land on store shelves by mid-October, but if it generates even a tenth of the following that *Flight Simulator* has, then you can expect to see it around for a long, long time.

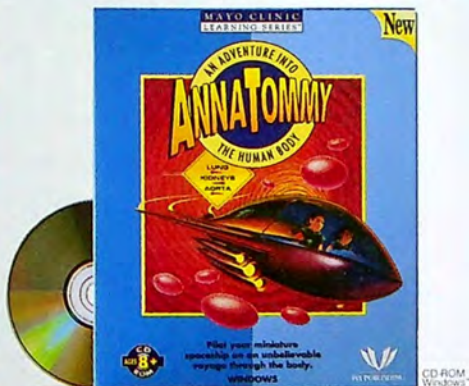
PCG



It wouldn't do to have ole-timey VGA graphics when the subject matter is so high-tech, now would it?



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Video Cards: Less is More



You can spend a lot of money on a monster video card, but for PC games, expensive doesn't always mean better. This month in the Tech Shop, we'll look at some differences between the good ones and the bad ones, and name some cards that work well for games, and some that don't.

Before we get down to the nuts and bolts, I'd like spend a little time on this "accelerated Windows video" business. A traditional VGA or SVGA display card is a dumb frame buffer. Memory on the card holds a pixel-by-pixel description of the image on the screen, and there's circuitry that convert this description into a video signal, but there's no processor to animate or modify the image. That's why it's "dumb." The system's CPU does all the processing for each frame of graphics, then writes the data into the display memory.

Nowadays, all but the cheapest PC's come with accelerated video cards, which include a simple graphics processor to draw lines, circles, boxes and text, and to scroll and erase regions of the screen. A few games can take advantage of accelerator cards (Domark's *Super-VGA Harrier* comes to mind), but they're rare exceptions, partly because most games still run outside of Windows, where there's no standard driver interface to deal with the details of operating each card's accelerator.

The heart of any video card is its video controller, called a "chipset" for historical reasons even though every current controller is a single chip. Among its many functions, the video controller interfaces with the display memory, provides VGA emulation, and does all the accelerator processing. A couple of video card makers, like ATI and Matrox, design their own controller chips, but

most buy them from chipset specialists like S3, Tseng Labs and Weitek.

Just knowing the brand and model of a video card's chipset gives you a pretty fair idea of the performance to expect from it, but there are a couple other factors to take into account. For one thing, video cards can use two different kinds of memory chips. Dynamic RAM (DRAM) is the same type of memory as the 4 or 8 meg of SIMMs that your PC probably has on its motherboard, though in a slightly different package. But video RAM (VRAM) is a whole different type of chip, designed with two interface ports to speed up access to display

high-performance games usually use a 256-color display at fairly low resolutions like 320x200 or 640x480. VRAM won't do a whole lot for your game playing.

The same goes for extra display memory — you might need 2 or 4 megabytes on the video card for high resolutions and high color depths, but I haven't seen a game yet that needs more than a meg.

Pick A Card

When it comes to actually choosing a video card, we should be able to compare their benchmark scores and simply pick the fastest card for our particular use, but this approach has its problems. For

one thing, benchmarks test an entire system, so a benchmark that's supposed to measure video performance is still affected by CPU speed and motherboard design.

Still, with determined research, you can at least draw a few educated conclusions about the relative performance of the different cards and chipsets, even if you don't have a shelf-full of state-of-the-art video cards to compare. And here's the bottom line: Some of the fastest Windows accelerators really stink up the place when they're running DOS games. Video cards that use the Weitek P9000 chipset, like the Diamond Viper and Cardinal WARPSpeed, lay rubber like a top fuel dragster under Windows; when running DOS games, they're more like an old Rambler with bad valves.

The Tseng Labs ET4000 chipset is the long-time king of the hill for game performance, particularly on a VL-Bus video card. This unaccelerated SVGA card it isn't much of a contender under Windows, but Tseng's newer ET4000/W32 chipset keeps the same stellar DOS performance and adds a modest accelerator, so boards that use this controller can still blow away more expensive cards that have better Windows performance. For instance, Diamond's Speed-Star 32 is a better choice for games than the pricier Stealth 24 with its costly VRAM and S3 928 chipset. Hercules' low-cost Dynamite board does a better job than their high-end Graphite, built around an IIT AGX015 accelerator.

Although they're no match for the ET4000/W32, some other low-priced accelerator chipsets still work fairly well under DOS, including the DRAM-based S3 805 and Cirrus Logic's 5426, and recent ATI video cards seem to strike a good balance between DOS and Windows performance. But a lot of more expensive boards either don't work any better for games, or are actually slower. So when it comes to video cards, DOS gamers are often better off with the less expensive cards. And that's a pretty cool situation to be in.

PCGG

Tim Victor



memory. You see, the video controller has to read display memory to get pixel values, which it converts into the video output signal. When it shares a memory port with the CPU, as is the case with DRAM, the controller gets higher priority and the CPU can spend a lot of time waiting for the video controller's accesses to finish.

Using VRAM to give the CPU and video controller separate memory ports can make a big speed difference, but it's only critical when the video controller is really hogging display memory, usually in high resolution, full-color display modes. And VRAM is expensive, about twice the price of DRAM, so it can add \$100 or more to the price of a card. If you spend a lot of time running Windows with a 1024x768 pixel, 16.7 million-color screen, the extra cost will probably pay off. But since

If you're about to upgrade your PC, Tim's got good news — the priciest new graphics cards aren't necessarily the best for playing games. Read on to find out why....

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Whaddaya Wanna be When You Grow Up?

Well, I have this story. It might not seem relevant at first, but bear with me. It'll be clear enough in a few paragraphs.

Picture this: It's Russia, in the winter of 1942. Actually it was Brantford, Canada (Wayne Gretzky's hometown), and it was 1980, but I was really deep into *pretending* it was Russia, 1942. Two friends and I were playing a huge, huge paper war-game called *War in Europe*, which had a map that stretched 9' x 5' and little cardboard pieces that numbered in the thousands. We'd been playing it every Friday evening and some Saturdays for about five months, with me taking the German side and the other two taking the Western Allies and the Soviet sides respectively.

Thinking I could succeed where Charles XII, Napoleon, and Hitler had failed (isn't that why most people play these things?) I'd marshalled my forces for the Soviet invasion, avoided those earlier leaders' obvious errors, and now found my forces stretched hopelessly across the terrain, concentrating all my mental energy on mounting one more offensive against Moscow while trying not to get split up and wiped out down in the south. I no longer cared about western Europe; the prize was Moscow, those three tiny hexes of absolutely essential real estate.

Then, as I was resting after an exhausting turn, the Allied player quietly landed some troops at Casablanca. On that huge map, Casablanca was a blip on the horizon, some seemingly insignificant port way over to my left. Hell, I didn't even know it was there — but when I saw the landing, my heart sunk. I'd

have to defend against an advance on the other side of the room, and I had no idea where to start.

So what's this got to do with role-playing? Lots.

Even though *War in Europe* was a wargame, a military simulation, for me it had suddenly become a role-playing game. I suddenly realized, at the moment of the Casablanca invasion, what Hitler must have felt like when the actual invasion occurred. After months of concentrating intensely and exclusively on positions a thousand miles away, he must have found himself brought up short by an event that he probably should have foreseen. Like

stars, we pretended we were cowboys and Indians (now known as cowpersons and indigenous persons, I would presume) — the list goes on and on.

The computer role-playing hobby is the same thing, only on a much more technical level, and based on a story that's created by a game designer rather than ourselves. And for most of us, role-playing games are the only way of continuing to make-believe we're someone else.

So why is it, I keep asking myself, that my choices are so limited? I can make believe I'm a warrior, or a sorcerer, or in some cases a minotaur. I can make believe

I'm a planetary explorer, maybe a starship captain, maybe a couple other things. But that's about it. Why don't computer RPGs let me be anything else?

The reason, quite simply, is that RPGs don't *really* put you in the world of make-believe. When I'm traipsing down the corridors of any fantasy RPG, I might have full control over a party of four adventurers — but I don't actually feel that I'm one of them. Not at all. Not even in a game as intense as *Ultima Underworld* or *Doom* do I get a feeling of actually *being* someone. In computer war-games, I feel like an automaton rather than a commander, and while a couple of soon-to-be-released games show promise, I doubt they'll give me that feeling of despair I encountered a decade and a half ago in that basement in Brantford.

Maybe there's hope, though. I was excited to read in the September *PC Gamer* about *Sanctuary Woods' Wolf*. Here is a game that promises something different: instead of taking on the role of a warrior, a wizard, or a sci-fi adventurer, you get to play a wolf! Now, if the game works well, it should force you to feel some of the pressures and delights of actually being a wolf (or, obviously, what we think it would be like to be one), and as soon as I have a chance to play it I'll let you know if it does that. I'm skeptical, but I'm hopeful.

E-mail or write me, and tell me who or what you'd like to role-play as. I simply can't believe we've experienced all there is to experience. I'll print the results in a couple months.

Neil Randall can be reached at the usual *PC Gamer* mailing address, or by e-mail at one of the following:

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(CompuServe) 73637,1733
(America Online) Nrandall

Neil Randall



me, his reaction might well have been, "I don't wanna play any more." The difference? He had to — I didn't.

In that one brilliant gaming moment, I had an insight of just how powerful role-playing could be — and it's never happened since, at least not to that degree. Not once, in all my years of playing role-playing games with pencil and paper or on computers, have I felt as completely in the role of an historical or a fictional character. And that's a damned shame, because it tells me that computer role-playing has failed miserably in one important respect.


See, role-playing is about make-believe. As kids, we did this kind of thing all the time. We pretended we were mommy or daddy, we pretended we were teachers (well, I did, anyway), we pretended we were baseball, basketball, football, or hockey

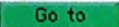
Neil Randall has been busy playing and writing about role-playing games for over 20 years now. He's also a novelist, and an English teacher at Ontario's University of Waterloo.

“Bulletin Bored?”




I was “bulletin bored” to death the way I used to use my computer and modem. The same old files with the same cheesy interfaces – borrring. Today, I’ve discovered something new that makes text-based games and absentee sysops a thing of the past. It’s called The ImagiNation Network, and it’s like nothing I’ve ever seen before.

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Fokker dog-fighting my new friend, MISSY2 (don’t be fooled by her name; she’s a two-time ace).

Whoa! It’s been nice chatting with you, but I’ve got to get to my weekly on-line squadron meeting. 

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Ultima Underworld II

Pyramid schemes

This month, we received a pile of letters from readers asking for help on just about every game under the sun, along with the usual batch of sneaky cheats and tips that we love so much.

Dear PC Gamer

I am writing in desperation for help in *Ultima Underworld II*. I have been stuck at the same point for what seems like ages now and any help would be appreciated. My first problem (and the most frustrating) is that I am at a complete loss in the Ethereal Void. I've been through the golden maze, rooms with multi-colored paths going in all directions, and blue rooms with about ten portals each, and *still* haven't found my way through. I haven't found the black stone yet, or the place to use the Rod of Altara.

Which brings me to my second problem. I haven't found the room to use the Rod of Altara in the following worlds, either: The Ice Caverns, Killorn Keep, and of course the Ethereal Void.

Thanks for your help,
Chris Ladd
Mineral Point, WI

Alright Chris, here are the answers to your problems. In the Ethereal Void, you've got to perform several tasks in each of the four color-planes in order to proceed. On the blue plane, you'll run into a fellow named Prinix who wants some eyeballs. Find and kill a brain creature, and take the eyeballs back to Prinix. Find and cross the moving bridge, walk to the far side of the path, and cross over to the circle. Walk through the golden moongate, and then turn the pyramid you find there blue by stepping on all of the cubes until they turn to the color you want. Now walk through the white moongate and return to the center of the void. Repeat this process for each of the three remaining colors, finish any quests you might be sent on, find the golden gate, and then change the pyramid color to match the color of the level you're on. After you've cycled the pyramid through all four colors, it will fade and turn partially orange. Use the same technique as before to manipulate the pyramid until it has turned completely orange. After you have finished, a new golden moongate will appear. Go through the gate and use the scepter (you knew we were going to get around to that scepter, didn't you?), and you'll then be able to grab the black gem. Now step into the remaining moongate to exit. This should be enough info to get you back on your way, and the remaining locations for using the scepter will be pretty evident after completing the void.



Remember to use your communications key to get much-needed help from your wingmen in Mission 3. If you try to do it all alone, you'll end up running out of weapons before you can get the job done.

target one of the Cargo Ferries and use the Shift-A command to send one of your wingmen out to attack it. Target each of the three remaining Cargo Ferries and destroy them with four torpedoes. When they've finished with the ferry you assigned them, order your wingmen to begin attacking the Y-Wings that start harassing you. Now that everyone's all tied up dogfighting, go and inspect Transport Dawn for a few of those handy bonus points. With that finished, turn up your

Mission 2: Red Alert (TIE Fighter)

It looks like the Rebels weren't too happy about the capture of their forces, and they're out for revenge. Your flight crew has been kind enough to arm your craft with some handy concussion missiles for this mission. You are instructed to destroy *all* incoming forces before they can start slamming your base — but since you often serve a higher purpose (like the Emperor himself), you might want to be a little more gentle with Shuttle Scutz.

To finish this mission, I recommend getting rid of as many of the potentially dangerous enemy fighters as quickly as you can. Start with the Y-Wing groups since their heavy weapons pose the greatest threat to your base, and then move on to the quicker X-Wings. As soon as Shuttle Scutz appears, head out and inspect it, and then get back into the fray. When you feel that the station is no longer in immediate danger, make an attempt to get out and destroy the Corellian Corvette Group Ubote. Remember, all of the bonus points in the world aren't going to help you if your platform gets destroyed, so don't attempt to attack the Corvettes unless you're sure your fellow Imperials have the platform's defense well in hand.

When the Imperial Star Destroyer Hammer appears on the scene, your mission is over.

Mission 3: Counter-Attack (TIE Bomber)

Now it's your turn to put the enemy on the defensive. By tracing the Mugaari pirates' hyperspace jump, you've found one of their loading areas in the Tundra sector. In your mission briefing, you are instructed to keep the Ferries from escaping, and then to destroy just about everything in sight. This is the first time you'll get a chance to fly the deadly TIE Bomber, and you need to get used to the ship's greater size — and lower speed and maneuverability — quickly.

The first thing you'll want to do is

laser power and begin destroying all of the remaining large vessels. If you're playing on hard level, you'll also need to go back out and destroy a pesky group of B- and X-wings that should have appeared by now (this will also get you some bonus points).

Mission 4: Outpost D-34 Has Fallen (TIE Interceptor)

Bad news... the Rebels have managed to capture our old friend Outpost D-34. As you prepare to launch, the honorless scavengers are grabbing everything that isn't nailed down and preparing to depart. Launching from the Frigate Fogger, you must get down there in your sleek new Interceptor and protect shuttles full of shock troops until they can board the platform and teach those traitors what pain is all about.

It's best to get the little things out of the way first. After launch, immediately



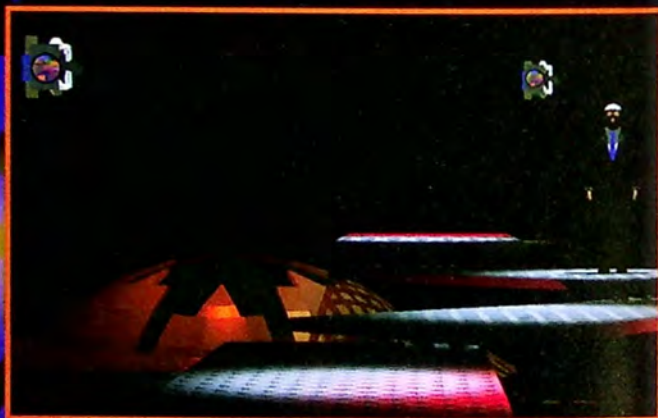
Mission 4 is pretty tricky. Just stay close to the shuttles, and don't get distracted from your mission goals.

head for Container Transport Gopher and inspect it. Once this is done, you need to zip right back to the shuttles and keep *anything* from getting close enough to damage them. Don't let yourself be tempted into a dogfight with one ship, only to leave the shuttle group vulnerable to attack. When the enemy's combat craft start to thin out, make a run to destroy some of Escort Shuttle Group Claf and pick up some bonus points. Throughout the entire battle, you must keep an eye on any enemy attacks on the Fogger. If she is destroyed, the mission will be a failure.

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W

elcome to another installment

of Strategy Central! This month we'll take an in-depth look at LucasArts' *TIE Fighter*, answer some reader questions about Sierra's *Conquests of the Longbow* and Origin's *Underworld II*, and then share some great reader hints and tips for *SimCity 2000* and *Arena: The Elder Scrolls*.

Remember to keep those letters coming, folks, and let us know what kind of strategies you want to see in future issues. And as always, if you've got a hot tip, don't keep it to yourself — let Strategy Central proclaim your gaming prowess to the world!

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Be sure to include your address and daytime phone number with your strategy letter. Sorry, we can't answer each letter personally, but we read all of 'em.

TIE Fighter

Making your mark in the Empire

While the mission simulator and practice targets will give you a taste of real combat, only accurate information and fast reflexes will get you through the actual campaigns. We've got the info right here, but you'll have to supply the skills yourself.

Just follow our step-by-step guides, and you should be rising through the Imperial ranks in no time. And plus, you'll have the satisfaction of making sure those cowardly Rebels don't escape the Emperor's justice.

Mission 1: Patrol Jump Point D-34 (TIE Fighter)

This first mission is pretty easy, but it's a very good way to start establishing yourself as an extraordinary pilot in the eyes of your master. The primary task before you is to inspect the freighter groups Onece and Daya, looking for any hidden cargo the Rebels might be smuggling from their ruined base on Hoth. In addition, you must inspect the Corellian transport group Yander and the container transport group Taloos. After discovering contraband on one of the freighters, you'll also be expected to assist in the capture and destruction of that vessel.

Here's the best way to tackle this mission: Immediately head for the Daya group and quickly inspect both ships. Next, start inspecting each ship in Freighter Group Onece. Even though you'll find Rebels in only one freighter, make sure to inspect the entire Onece Group before you do anything else. After finishing your inspection, head back to Onece 3 and reduce its shields to zero. By now you should see some aggressive activity from some of the enemy shuttles. Destroy all nearby shuttle groups, and then find and eliminate TRN Glich (this is only necessary on the hard level).

With this accomplished, head for the Corellian Transport Group Yander and inspect the three ships. Be careful, though: the Corellian vessels are big and they move fast, so don't risk a collision with them. Next, find and inspect the Container Transport Group Taloos. If you're playing on the easy or medium levels, this should be about it — but if you're using hard settings, you'll now have to seek out and destroy the Shuttle Group Tough. Now on to the second mission.



After you've checked all of the other transports in the group, just match speeds with Onece 3 and start blasting away!



These Corellian Transports in Mission 1 will flat out destroy your craft if you run into them. Be careful... more or less.



This shuttle from Mission 2 could be your ticket into the Emperor's elite core. Don't screw up — the Emperor isn't exactly a forgiving kind of guy.



The key to Mission 3 is to destroy the cargo ferries quickly, while staying out of their gun range. If you get too close to these monsters, it's just a matter of time before you're destroyed.

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Product Information Number 232

The Elder Scrolls: Arena

Better cheating through magic

We received a lot of *Arena* tips this month, too. And while both of the ones we're running here are a bit underhanded, they're a great way to get you moving again if you've been having trouble.

Dear PC Gamer,

Arena's system contains an opportunity (cheat is such a strong word) to create spells which max out the attributes of the caster for long periods of time, and which cost almost no spell points once you reach level 10 and above. Everyone knows how to create a Fortify Attribute spell, but what they don't all try is adjusting the rate of release. This controls how fast you lose the additional attribute points once the spell's duration runs out. If you set this to 10 points per 1 round (the maximum) it reduces the cost of the spell so dramatically that you can really go nuts. For example, I created a



Find the spellmaker by talking to the magicians you meet in the Guild of Magic.

Thug spell which added 30 to strength and endurance, lasted 60 rounds per level, and cost 2 spell points to cast (spell points depend on class and level, but you get the idea).

For characters who are good fight-

ers as well as magicians, this can make you the equal (or better) of a fighter-class character, but Super Thief (IQ and agility) or High IQ (IQ and will) spells also help the thief and spellcaster.

Scott Correia
Santa Ana, CA

Now that you've got the spells to take on anything, here's another little cheat to help you win the game in record time.

Dear PC Gamer,

If you're getting frustrated trying to find all the pieces of the Staff of Chaos, have I got a treat for you! To finish the game quickly without much of a challenge, do the following...

- 1) Find the location of Stonekeep in Hammerfell.
- 2) Once you enter, walk a few paces and then turn to the right. Behind the door there should be a long room with more doors on either side.
- 3) Take the last door on the right. Once you enter, you should be facing north. To the left you should see a passageway which you must jump to enter.
- 4) Once in the next room, quickly head to the southwest through the water. When you reach land, search around until you find the parchment.
- 5) After finding the parchment, head



Take advantage of the spellmaker to magically enhance your character's strength, intelligence, vitality, and much more.



The first dungeon is located in the province of Hammerfell. By carefully navigating its halls, you can win the game with ease.

- 6) Outside Stonekeep, travel to the nearest town.
- 7) Enter the town, then turn around and go back to Stonekeep.
- 8) Go through Stonekeep the same way you did before. You will now find that where the parchment was, there is now a piece of the staff. Just keep repeating steps one through eight, and soon you will have the whole staff!

Ryan Burns
Everett, WA

Well, there you have it! *Arena* beaten in just eight easy steps!

Conquests of the Longbow

If at first you don't succeed, check the manual!

Our next letter comes from Ted Nash of Canada, who's currently having trouble with Sierra's medieval adventure, *Conquests of the Longbow*. Ted writes:

Dear PC Gamer

A while back, I got this game called *Conquests of the Longbow: The Legend of Robin Hood* by Sierra. I've made it most of the way through the game and have a score of about 5000 out of 7000. But now I'm stuck at the castle. I reached the castle by way of the boat and the ring that controls water, and am at the base of one of the towers. I know that this is the right way because the Queen's Knight had been captured and is being held there. All I need to know is the Druid name of Ivy. I have tried everything, but nothing works. Please help me!

Ted Nash
British Columbia,
Canada



Marion can be found in the mystical willow glade. Make sure to follow her instructions to the letter and write down everything she tells you. By the way, she won't take kindly to you toting around that bow.

Fenlon: 500 Ouleus: 84 Score: 2240 of 7000



After you retrieve Marion's scroll from the Fen Monastery, she will teach you how to use the Druid's hand code.

No More Questions



Page 83: 5th Paragraph;
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4 words backwards.

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OK Ted, we'll get you through this. First off, all you need to do is look in the front part of your game manual (there's a listing of the Druidic names), and find the listing for ivy. Go to the Fen Monastery, and use the water ring that you received from the King's Jester. Accept the aid of the Will O' the Wisps and carefully follow them with the boat to the Monastery walls. From the boat, click the hand icon on the ivy leaves and then use your eye icon to examine the leaves. Using your secret hand code, spell out the name for ivy that you found in your manual. After entering your code, the vine will grow strong and you will be able to climb into the tower, where you'll find the Queen's Knight. He won't just trust any criminal who climbs through his window, so you'll have to use your secret hand gestures once again to spell out the word that Marian whispered to you in the secret garden. With this, you will not only earn his trust, but will have also finished the game! Now that wasn't so bad.

Random: 900 Outlaws: 34 Score: 3145 of 7325



When you find yourself pursued by the Sherrif's men, you can escape by using your hand code to spell out the Druidic name of nearby plants.

Random: 15300 Outlaws: 34 Score: 4775 of 7325



In order to get the password, you need to heal Marion's wounds. Use your half of the heart to bring her back to full health.



When she comes to, Marion will whisper a password to you. Write it down and then spell it out in hand code when you encounter the Queen's knight.

SimCity 2000

A Carton of Codes

We received some terrific tips from readers this month, too — as this Strategy Central Letter of the Month demonstrates:

Dear PC Gamer

Here are some of the tips, strategies, and secrets I've learned about *SimCity 2000*, from my own experiences and others'.

- Type CASS anytime during the game to get \$250. But if you do it more than about three or five times, your city will be stricken by disaster. You can earn a lot of money by putting the game on pause and typing in CASS, then saving your city after every time you type it. If the emergency button becomes active, do not save your city, but load up your last saved game and keep on going.

- Type HECK, DARN, or DAM_ (I'm not allowed to cuss) and something quite interesting will happen.

- Type FUND and the city council will give you a rip-off bond at 25% interest. It's just too bad you can only take out 50 bonds maximum!

- Type VERS to see the version number of your copy of the game

- Type MEMY and you will be given a memory check.

- Type TEST and you will find out what version you own — and some other weird things, too!

- Type PORN and, if you have a sound card, you'll hear one of the programmers moaning, "I can't get enough."

- Clicking on a helicopter will cause it to go down in flames.

- If you bulldoze enough trees and ignore the citizens' complaints, you'll get a warning message about destroying the habitat of the Bull Moose. You can then hear the moose roar at you if you have a sound card!

- It is possible to overlap some kinds of buildings like you could in *SimCity Classic* by doing this:

1. Select the Landscape Tree tool.
2. Click the tool on the map and hold down the mouse button. You will see a tree or two pop down, but don't worry — that's OK.

3. While holding down the Shift key and the mouse button, move the cursor over any zone, building, or object to "erase" it as if you had a magic eraser!

You can get rid of polluting buildings and still keep them functioning this way. Unfortunately, the more of a power plant you erase, the less power it produces. The eraser method works best on arcologies, because the population stays the same even after being erased completely! Try erasing all of a hospital and zoning light residential over the land where it used to be. When you click on any of the houses with the query tool, it will still think and act as if a hospital was there, but will also count the homes toward the total residential population! This is one totally awesome trick!

- You can have a maximum of 140 arcologies in version 1.0, the simulation will not recognize any more. This makes for a maximum total arco population of 140 x 65,000 (the maximum number of people that will fit into a Launch Arco), for a total of 9,100,000 citizens.

- The maximum amount of money you can get is \$2,139,029,504.

Note: Not all of the tips will work for version 1.1 or higher. Sorry.

David Antosh
Shawnee, OK

Great tips, David! Thanks from all of us frustrated city-planners.

Star Trek 25th Anniversary

Almost there...

Cliff Chan had a small problem tying up the loose ends in Interplay's *Star Trek 25th Anniversary*. He writes:

Dear PC Gamer

I bought *Star Trek 25th Anniversary* from Interplay, and I liked playing it a lot. But one slight problem kept me from fully enjoying it. The problem is in mission three, ARK-7. All I managed to do was mix the chemicals, find the cure for the virus, make the guards unconscious, and free the scientists from the lower deck. Please tell me how to complete the mission!

Cliff Chan,
San Francisco, CA

You were already pretty close to doing it yourself, Cliff! Make sure that you've taken the cure and used it on the open vent, which will cure the entire ship of the deadly disease. Next, walk through the door that's labeled "restricted," and use the cure on the Preax. After you've untied the hostages, talk to the Preax and select 1 from your conversation menu. This will end the mission, and carry you to Another Fine Mess.

EGG

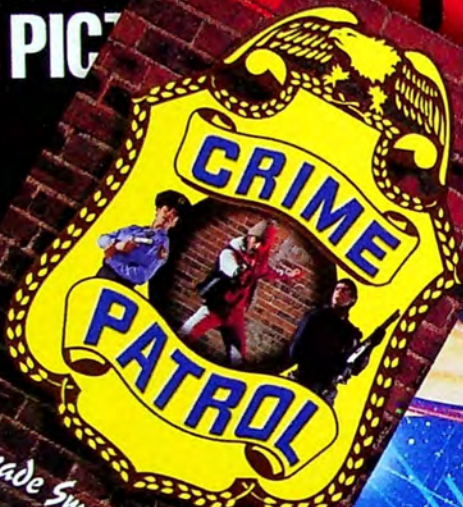
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As we figured it would, that Top 40 feature we

ran back in the August issue is really prompting feedback. We're still getting letters from readers — some who agree with our choices, some who disagree — and plenty of brand new Top 40 lists. We're compiling those reader lists, by the way, and will have the results in next month's Eyewitness.

Another continuing topic of interest has been our cover price, and the action-packed *PC Gamer* cover-disks — and we've got big news on both those fronts.

And again, thanks for sending so many incredibly positive letters. It's awfully nice to get so much praise, but jeez! You don't want it to go to our heads, do you? So come on — don't be afraid to tell us if you dislike something, or have suggestions for improvement. This is your magazine, so tell us what you want.

Besides, yours might be chosen as Letter of the Month, and then you'd win some free games!

So you want a free game?

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Letter of the Month! The Top 40, and More Bang for the Buck

Dear PC Gamer,

I purchased your new magazine about 2 days ago and I love it greatly. The August Top 40 issue with the *Detroit* demo disk really caught my eye at the local bookstore. It just so happened that *IndyCar Racing*, pictured



IndyCar Racing from Papyrus garnered the honor of 20th best game of all time in our Top 40 feature — but David Chan wanted more...

at the top of your cover, is my favorite game and I just couldn't control my urge to find out how it fared in the list. I was both elated and disappointed by its 20th place ranking — happy because it was in the top 20, but disappointed that it hadn't placed a little bit higher, like maybe 15th place. There is a sizable *IndyCar Racing* crowd here on AOL that'll agree with me, and you can see their dedication by jumping over to the Papyrus message board and into the "Pit Stop" area under the Grandstand section of the service.

In analyzing your new publication, I must take my hat off to congratulate you on a well-written, detailed, and dedicated magazine. I love the look and all the columns in *PC Gamer*. But there are two small issues that I hope you'll address. First, the price of the magazine is quite high (I'm sure that you're well aware of that). I personally think that the high cost discourages many potential gamers from picking up your publication at the store or the newsstand. I understand that it costs more to produce a magazine like yours, but I think "more bang for the buck" is still more important to many people — including myself. The subscription price is a more reasonable newsstand price in my opinion. You seem to defend the cost of *PC Gamer* by stating that it includes a HD disk; this should not be the case. By including a demo of their games with

the magazine, the software publisher is essentially getting the best advertisement available, which should cost you — and ultimately the reader — nothing.

My second suggestion is to ask your game experts to at least dedicate a future issue or section of an issue to reviewing auto-racing simulations (ie, *IndyCar Racing*, *World Circuit*, *Car and Driver*). I think that auto racing sims are a growing market and I would definitely look forward to such an issue.

Again, my congratulations, and I hope that you can somehow address my two concerns.

Thank you!
David Chan
Boston, MA
via AOL

*We considered a lot of things when making that Top 40 list, and we agree that *IndyCar* is an excellent game. But ultimately, we just enjoyed the 19 games above it more. Keep in mind, though, that the 20th best game of all time, selected from all the thousands of PC games that've ever been published, is an impressive achievement.*

A driving sim round-up might be a good idea, especially once NASCAR Racing and World Circuit II hit the shelves. We'll keep you posted on when you can expect it.

And as for your other suggestions, you read our minds! We're with you on the cover price, and the part about more bang for the buck. You weren't the only asking that we address these issues, either. Just take a look at what some of your fellow readers had to say on the subject...

More Mind-Readers

Dear PC Gamer,

The one thing that drove me to purchase my first copy of *PC Gamer* was my strong desire to get the most out of the money I spend on software. It's frustrating to spend \$50 on a game that looks

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October 1994**

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fantastic on paper, but ends up being boring and less than entertaining (I'm sure I'm not the only victim of this trap).

However, *PC Gamer's* honest(!) and timely reviews have helped me to add top-notch games to my library that I'm sure will bring me enjoyment for years to come.

My only concern about *PC Gamer* is the demo disk. By its very nature, a demo disk is the best possible medium for reviewing a game (you know exactly what you are buying). Would it be possible to add more demos to the disk.?



We knew the idea of a playable demo every month would go over well, but the response has been fantastic. Now just think how nice a CD-ROM will be!

As *PC Gamer* grows, I'll be there with you. Enclosed is my first subscription. Thank you for a thoughtful and refreshing look at the exciting world of PC games.

Mark Peterson
New York City, NY

And here's another mind-reader...

First of all, I'd like to say how much I enjoy reading your magazine. When it first hit the newsstands I was excited to see a new gaming magazine, but was reluctant to buy it because it was in plastic and I couldn't see what was inside. I wasn't aware of the price (\$7.95) until I got to the cashier — and I almost decided not to get it. That would have been a big mistake, because yours is without question the best computer

gaming magazine available.

I would like to comment on an article in your July issue about the game *MegaRace*. I feel that the rating of 83% is much too high. I guess what really bugs me about the article is that the last two sentences read like this — "If you own a CD-ROM drive, you've gotta pick up *MegaRace*. Trust me." I bought this game and played it for 30 minutes (half of which was watching the host!) and took it back as it was the worst game I ever played.

One more question I would like to address is in your Final Verdict part of the Reviews section. Is this the sole opinion on the person that wrote the article or the whole staff?

Thank you, and keep up the great work!
Sean Burnos
Parkville, MO

There it is again: price, and the desire for more of a good thing. You'll all be glad to know that we're making changes here at *PC Gamer* to address both issues.

Most obviously, we've dropped our price to \$4.95 — and that's

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UNDER A Killing Moon



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include a CD-ROM each month, filled with the biggest, best, most exciting demos we can get our hands on. We're talking cutting-edge stuff, with SVGA, full-motion 3D modeling, CD audio, and demos bigger than many entire games! All that, plus your friendly old PC Gamer, for only \$7.95 a month.

So there you have it: a lower price, and more bang for the buck!

On the MegaRace issue, Steve sticks with his 83%. The game looks great, plays great, and is plenty of fun — if you're into that sort of thing. As is the case with just about any genre, though, some people just aren't going to enjoy it. As far as the final verdict goes, the whole PC Gamer team usually discusses each rating.

Why Doom Stinks

Matt & Steve.

Doom? Best Game of all Time? Come on! I was bored after 15 minutes! Any one of numbers 2-5 would be a better choice (especially *Civilization* or *X-Wing*). Frankly, I don't understand all the

hoopla over *Doom*; it's just a simple-minded "shoot-'em-up" that for me has no replay value. OK, I ran around and shot stuff. That's it?

Boring!

Aside from that, I'd like to congratulate you on a great magazine. These days, with games costing more and



Loring Rose of Chicago, Illinois writes of *Doom* "OK, I ran around and shot stuff. That's it? Boring!" Obviously, Loring doesn't think much of the game.

more (and fewer and fewer stores willing to take back a "dud"), you need all the information you can get before dropping a small fortune on one of today's entertainment products. I think your mag is a good source for that information, so I've just mailed in the subscription card. I look forward to seeing *PC Gamer* in my mailbox!

Loring Rose
Chicago, IL
via AOL

OK, so not everyone likes *Doom* as much as we do. But we decided to name it the Best Game of All Time based on more than just its gameplay.

We also admired the way id Software ensured the game's continuing entertainment value by allowing... ah, just read the next letter.

Why Doom Rules

Dear Editors

I just purchased your August 1994 issue, where you list your candidates for the

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"Lots of games claim to be pushing the envelope—*Under a Killing Moon* blows it to smithereens!"

—William Trotter, *PC Entertainment*

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"*Under a Killing Moon* combines the best elements of movies and computer games and creates an amazing interactive experience that's better than either of them. It literally pulls you into the screen."

—Denny Atkin, Entertainment Editor, *Compute*



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CHRIS ROBERTS

Vice President, Origin Systems

(producer of the *Wing Commander* series)

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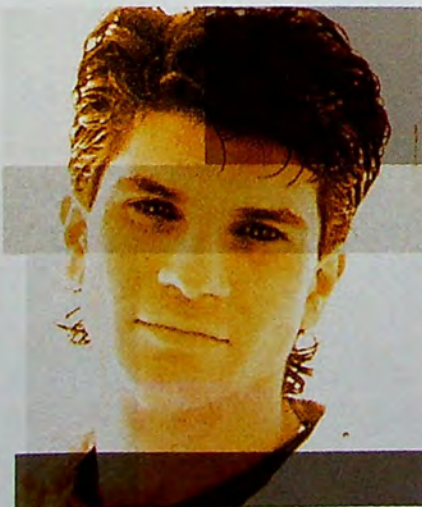
JOHN MANLEY

Game Director, Electronic Arts

(best-selling games producer)

Essentials:

1. good friends
2. major motion pictures
3. the freedom to be creative
4. the ability to laugh
5. the cutting edge product reviews in **NEXT GENERATION**



TOMMY TALLARICO

Director of Music & FX,
Virgin Interactive Entertainment

(winner of 9 awards for his game soundtracks)

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DISAGREE



JOE MORICI

Boss of Capcom USA

(heard of *Street Fighter 2*? Thank Joe...)

TOM ZITO

**Founder,
Digital Pictures**

(creator of cutting-edge
CD-ROM games)

Essentials

1. good Italian cuisine
2. my Mercedes Benz 300SL
3. my beautiful wife Cindy and two children Lauren and Caitlin
4. golf
5. reading **NEXT GENERATION** every month



Essentials

1. my 1953 Fender Telecaster
2. red-eye flights to the east coast
3. the Jimmy Thackery CD "Empty Arms Motel"
4. my Motorola Alpha-Numeric pager
5. the ever-insightful Joseph Lieberman (D-CT)
6. a monthly copy of **NEXT GENERATION**



STEVE POOLE

Co-editor, PC Gamer

(the man you trust for buying advice)

Essentials

1. my collection of Ramones albums (yes, that's right folks— we're talking 100% vinyl here)
2. *Doom* (the registered version)
3. fried catfish
4. *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* by Hunter S. Thompson
5. the exclusive previews in **NEXT GENERATION**

...**NEXT GENERATION** is a new magazine from the makers of *PC Gamer*. It talks about **PC, CD-ROM, 3DO, Atari, Sega, Nintendo, Sony** and is regarded as the USA's top authority on the future of interactive entertainment. Available to the public on December 8th. Read it. You'll be in good company.

NEXT GENERATION

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Top 40 PC Games of all time. Your selection of *Doom* as the number-one game of all time is one that I completely agree with! In just under one year, *Doom* has changed forever the face of PC gaming, and given people the most tantalizing taste of what virtual reality may be.



Don't search your registered version of *Doom* in hopes of finding this scene. It's from *Doom Tet*, one of hundreds of homemade *Doom* levels.

As you stated, *Doom* is a fast-paced, first-person action game with loads of realistic environs and enemies. But what I like the most about *Doom* is that it's the only game I've played where I momentarily forgot that I was playing a game! The stereo soundtrack and spatial sound effects really get you into the game, which adds a lot to an already realistic interface.

One of the other great things is my ability, as a registered user, to edit and create my own maps and maze levels for the game. As I rabidly await *Doomsday*, when id unleashes *Doom 2: Hell on Earth*, I can play any one of the seemingly endless user-created levels that await me on public services like the Internet FTP sites, or AOL.

I'll look for many more great things from id Software, as they have the best track record of any recent start-up company in PC gaming: first *Wolfenstein 3D*, then *Doom*. I can't help but wonder what will be next!

Sincerely Yours,
Kent Daniel Bentkowski
Angola, New York
via AOL

Yep, that would about sum up our feelings, too. Any product that allows its users to so thoroughly re-program and redesign the game itself practically guarantees almost endless replayability — and certainly earns our respect!

More Top 40 Feedback

Dear Guys,

I'm kinda surprised that you don't have *Warlords II* listed in the Top 40. I haven't played many games like it so maybe it isn't that good

compared to others of its type, but I find it to be quite enjoyable, and I'm still playing it more than 8 months after I bought it.

I think I agree about *Doom*, though. I wasn't sure it was the best of all time, but I agree with your reasoning and haven't thought of anything better, so *Doom* it is. It just seems to one-dimensional at times... but sometimes, one-dimensional is just what I want.

I would have put *Wing Commander* above *X-Wing*. I found *X-Wing* technically impressive, but so fast even on my (old) 386/25MHz as to be unplayable. And its 100% success requirement for the missions sucks! Why don't more games do it the way *Wing Commander* does, with several story lines for you to follow?

Well, I should get back to work. I've still got a lot ahead of me. I enjoy your magazine, and I'm already waiting for the next issue!



We won't argue with you that *Wing Commander* is a great game. But better than *X-Wing*? Sorry, but we just can't agree with that. Now *WCIII*....

Yours,
Eric Smith
via e-mail

There were one or two editors who agreed that Wing Commander should be above X-Wing, but they were easily out-voted. Most of us felt that Wing Commander, while a great game, was too easy and didn't look as good as X-Wing. You're right, though: The 100% mission success requirements suck.

Warlords II? It didn't make the list because, frankly, it just wasn't a title that any of us thought of while compiling our lists. You're absolutely right that it's a great game, and you're not alone in thinking so. Take our next letter, for instance...

Yeah, Where's Warlords II?

PC Gamer Staff:

I must say, a job well done. I have just finished reading my 4th issue of the new *PC Gamer*, and am still impressed with the publication you put out. I consider myself to be an avid



Warlords II didn't make the Top 40, but it's a fantastic game with a huge following.

gamer (since that's the only reason I turn on my computer) and receive two monthly mags about computer games. Yours is by far the better of the two in terms of real ratings and great extras like Scoops!, and I really look forward to your Strategy Central. I wish SC would contain more info than 1-2 games a month. It seems like it'll take you forever to cover all the games I would like to see!

There is one game that I really enjoy, but haven't seen listed in your mag ever, and that is *Warlords II*. I tell people it's a cross between the board game Risk and AD&D. A friend loaned me his copy to try, and I rushed out to buy my own. This game, for some strange reason, has got me as hooked as *Doom* or *X-Wing*. I didn't think it would rate high on your Top 40 list, but was I surprised not to see it at all — including your runners-up list.

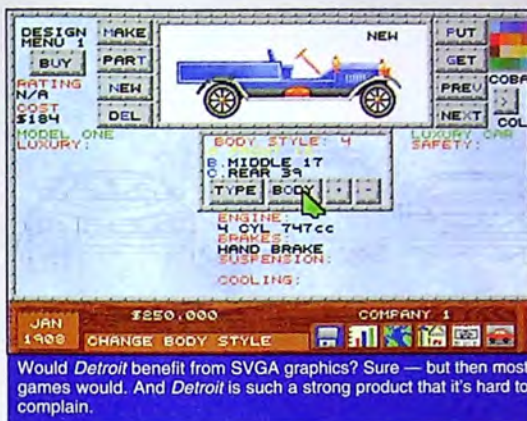
Has anyone there played this game? If not, give it a try. I think it's a winner. Keep the rating system just the way it is; don't change a thing. If a game doesn't measure up to today's standards, I want to know before I shell out 40 or 50 dollars.

Sincerely,
John Janoch
Cleveland, Ohio
via e-mail

Thanks for the kind words, John. And thanks for mentioning Warlords II, which really does have a strong following. Sure, we've played (and enjoyed) the game. But when you're trying to narrow your choices down to only 40 titles, some real winners will inevitably miss the cut.

The Case Against the Top 40

Just wanted to compliment you on your fine publication. Your first three issues are definitely giving [another mag] a run for their money. However, I had one BIG problem with issue #3, pertaining specifically to your list of Top 40 games. This is a complete waste of magazine space. Eleven pages were spent on an arbitrary, purposeless, and



had to do, and the game itself was so good that it's hard to complain.

Stife Censorship!!!

Dear PC Gamer,

First of all, congrats on the magazine. I've found it very enjoyable to read and easy to get into. Though I'm not a big fan of numerical rating systems, I am glad to see the content of the written reviews retains an in-depth look at the games. This is not the case in some of your competitors, where the numbers take all. But on to other things.

I'm disturbed by the recent shufflings in Congress, namely with regard to the rating system that's being considered for videogames and PC games. What bothers me is the government

(or adults, for that matter). How does the subject matter of one game played by one person affect those around him or her? Not at all, unless in aggravation the gamer chucks the monitor out the window, landing on the unsuspecting head of a neighbor. Well, sorry for going on and on. It just scares me that such a wonderful and potentially creative environment can be hobbled by a government that ought to be protecting us. Will it stop there? I doubt it, since it sounds like the government wants to also stick its fingers into the Internet, as well. U.S. Postage stamps for e-mail?

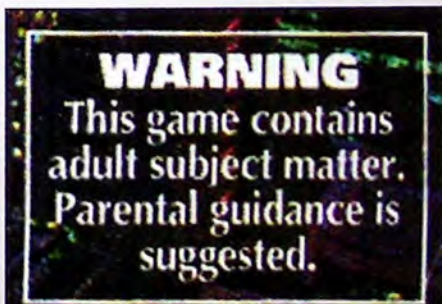
Thanks,
Phil Florian
Cincinnati, Ohio

We agree with you that the government has no business trying to regulate game content. It just seems to us that there are a lot more important things to do, and real dangers to protect us from. Why go after computer games, when there's so much meaningful work to do?

PCG

subjective ranking of games that have long since been reviewed. Please leave meaningless pieces like this to lesser magazines such as [the one mentioned above]. Instead, put those 11 pages to reviewing new games, providing hints/advice on recent games, or informing us about hardware, graphic modes, etc. There are lots of hardware issues that the gaming public needs to know about.

Lastly, great demo of Detroit. However, don't you think all these type of games should be in SVGA by now? They aren't particularly taxing of hardware or systems, and the VGA still screens in games like Detroit instantly date them a few years. Just an opinion.



This voluntary rating label appeared on Sierra's *Police Quest: Open Season*. Considering the current push toward regulation, ratings may become as common as hardware-requirement lists.

Keep up the good work!
Bill Cranston
via e-mail

Sorry you didn't like the Top 40, but we do feel it was a meaningful feature. After all, the Top 40 is really just a massive review, ranking all the PC games ever. In many ways, it's no different than the ratings of individual titles in our reviews, and it serves the same purpose — it gives our readers extra information that we hope will help them make wise buying decisions.

And yeah, we liked Detroit a lot, too — and we thought it could have looked a bit better than it did. But the graphics really did all they

appointing itself the moral watchdog, as it has tried to do with music. They're again trying to remove choice from our hands. Sure, it really is still our choice what we purchase, even if it does say "Mothers: Don't Let Your Children Grow Up To Be Doomers" in bold letters on the box. Who knows? It could even become a selling point, acting as a beacon to violence-starved youth

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Product Information Number 122

The PC Gamer Review Index









We've been getting a lot of letters and e-mail from you, asking that we begin a running index of all the games we've reviewed, to make it easier to get the info you need when making your game-buying decisions. And a review index does make sense — after all, it's conceivable that some freeloading friend nabbed your August issue, and you can't remember what we rated *X-COM*. So sure, we can see where an index would come in handy.

But we decided that to run an index in *every* issue might get a bit repetitive for our regular readers, and that it would rob us of precious editorial space we could use for more reviews, Scoops!, and so on.

So here's what we're gonna do: Every six months, we'll run the *PC Gamer* Review Index — a complete rundown of all the games we've covered in the past half-year, complete with the Highs, Lows, Bottom Line, and Rating.

Now all you have to do is make sure nobody lifts your Index issues, and you'll have it made!

TITLE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	ADDRESS	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITOR'S CHOICE
 Interactive	Music Interactive	Compton's New Media	2320 Camino Vida Roble, Carlsbad, CA 92009	Great full-motion videos, and two new jams.	The gaming is silly with sluggish movements and a total absence of interaction with ∇ .	If you are a true ∇ fan you should consider waiting awhile for this baby to be reduced in price before purchasing it.	49%	—
 1942: Pacific Air War	Air-Combat Simulation	MicroProse	180 Lakefront Drive, Hunt Valley, MD 21030-2245	Great graphics; optional tactical control of carrier battle; lovely details.	Demanding hardware requirements for high graphic settings; thin sound effects.	A great simulation that both novice and veteran PC pilots can enjoy.	95%	
 Aegis: Guardian of the Fleet	Simulation	Time-Warner Interactive Group	2210 Olive Avenue, Burbank, CA 91506	A realistic but manageable simulation of one of the world's most sophisticated ships.	May be too high-tech for some; the lack of full-screen battle images mutes the intensity.	Easier to get into than <i>Harpoon</i> ; perfect for players scared off by that game's complexity.	85%	—
 Al-Qadim: The Genie's Curse	Beginner Role-playing	SSI	675 Almanor Avenue, Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086	The game's series of simple challenges makes it accessible to beginning players.	The series of simple challenges isn't very likely to satisfy experienced players.	Good for the very young, maybe ages 8-11, as an introduction to the world of fantasy role-playing.	76%	—
 Alien Breed	Arcade	Microleague	University Office Plaza, 201 Bellevue Bldg., Newark, DE 19702	Delivers plenty of fun.	Not much variety involved.	A good, solid shooter lacking in razzle-dazzle but full of solid no-brain game play.	75%	—

TITLE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	ADDRESS	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITOR'S CHOICE
Alien Legacy 	Strategy/ Adventure	Sierra On-line	PO Box 485, Coarsegold, CA 93614-0600	Smooth and chal- lenging, with solid graphics and an intriguing story- line.	The same things occur everytime you play, so it can get too easy to cheat the fates.	A fresh new feel in strategy gaming — although the straight-arrow story- line that makes it fresh also hurts replay value.	80%	—
Alone in the Dark 2 	Action/ Adventure	I-Motion	1333 Ocean Avenue, Suite J, Santa Monica, CA 90401	Fantastic graphics and gameplay sure to please all but the most jaded gamer.	<i>Alone 2</i> lacks quite the same eerie atmosphere and devious puzzles that made the origi- nal game such a hit in the first place.	A great game; superior to the already excellent original in all but atmosphere.	85%	—
Archon Ultra 	Strategy/ Action	SSI	675 Almanor Avenue, Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086	Modem play, strategically chal- lenging.	Very picky about sound cards and mouse drivers.	The combination of strategy and arcade sequences give <i>Archon Ultra</i> great replay value.	76%	—
AstroFire 	Arcade/ Action	ORT Software	2A Berceau Walk, Watford, Herts WD1 38L United Kingdom	The prettiest ver- sion of <i>Asteroids</i> we've seen; plays well on a 286.	Pretty or not, it's still just <i>Asteroids</i> ; no music, loads slowly on that 286.	A good trigger-fir- ger workout, and its easy to try before you buy.	72%	—
Battle Bugs 	Tactical Wargame	Sierra On-line	PO Box 485, Coarsegold, CA 93614	Idiot-proof inter- face, funny anima- tions, and a thor- ough on-line help system.	The two-player mode suffers greatly from lack of modem support.	A real winner! This is the perfect wargame for peo- ple who don't nor- mally like war- games.	89%	
Battle Isle 2200 	Sci-fi wargame	Accolade	5300 Stevens Creek Boulevard, San Jose, CA 95129	<i>BI 2200</i> has the most important qualities of any good wargame: it's easy to learn yet tough to master.	Only one unit can attack an enemy unit at time; the graphics and sound are aver- age.	A wargame you can jump right into, but which offers plenty of challenge.	86%	—
Bridge Baron for Windows 	Bridge simulation	Great Game Products, Inc.	8804 Chalon Drive, Bethesda, MD 20817	Basic strength of play is its best feature — but there's so much more.	If you don't like bridge, there's nothing here for you. But any faults beyond that would be petty nit-pick- ing.	Stacked with well-thought-out features, <i>Bridge Baron</i> really deliv- ers the goods.	88%	
Bridge Olympiad 	Bridge simulation	QQP	495 Highway 202, Flemington, NJ 08822	Great graphics, and a smooth interface makes for quick play against strong opponents.	Playability is slight- ly hampered by lack of minor features, such as auto-play- ing, forced moves, and cancelling a rubber match.	A really solid pro- gram.	86%	—
Campaign II 	Military simulation	Empire Software	4 Professional Drive, Suite 123, Gaithersburg, MD 20879	Fans of the origi- nal will probably like it.	This game has weak graphics, a clunky interface, and very confusing arcade sequences. It's just not much fun.	It all adds up to frustration with a capital F. Only the games' designers (and possibly their mothers) could love this gobbler.	35%	—
Carriers at War II 	Naval Wargame	SSG	PO Box 30085, Pensacola, FL 32503-1085	Simple interface, a wealth of infor- mation, and varied scenarios make it a winner.	Graphics could be a lot better, and a decent campaign mode would be welcome too.	The best carrier wargame around: easy to get into and deep enough to last.	85%	—
Casino Experts for Windows 	Gambling simulation	Expert Software	800 Douglas Road, North Tower, Suite 355, Coral Gables, FL 33134	You won't be risk- ing much even if you don't like the game.	You just can't lose, so this ain't gambling. And the games are all quite average.	If realism doesn't matter to you and you're tight on cash, you might like it.	51%	—

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Product Information Number 220

TITLE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	ADDRESS	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITOR'S CHOICE
Classics Jackpot! for Windows 	Casino game pack	Impressions Software	222 3rd Street, Suite 0234, Cambridge, MA 02142	Five fast-playing casino games; perfect for work breaks.	Three of the games require lit- tle or no skill, and there is no tutorial to help you master the other two.	A fun — and safe — way to enjoy casino action.	77%	—
Conspiracy 	Graphic adventure	Virgin	18061 Fitch Avenue, Irvine, CA 92714	The video clips, and Donald Sutherland's fine performance, real- ly stand out.	Aside from the new high-tech shell, this is a very basic game, with a linear plot and confusing tone.	A case of new clothes for an old game.	58%	—
Corridor 7: Alien Invasion 	Action	Capstone	7200 NW 19 Street, Suite 500, Miami, FL 33126	Fast-paced action, plenty to do, and some nice extras.	The sound and graphics aren't all that great, hurting the overall pack- age.	If this is the sort of gameplay you'll love, <i>Corridor 7</i> is worth a look. If it's not, though, this game won't con- vert you.	68%	—
Cowboy Casino 	Poker Simulation	Intellimedia Sports, Inc.	Suite 300, Two Piedmont Center, Atlanta, GA 30305	The interaction with each charac- ter is good for a few hoots and belly laughs.	Limited game play, and what's here just isn't very challenging.	The game's best feature is the live action video. When the novelty wears off, though, you're left with a mediocre game.	64%	—
Crossword Wizard 	Puzzle	Cogix Corporation	419 Redwood Road, San Anselmo, CA 94960	Easy to use, tons of puzzles, and lots of options to personalize the game.	Obviously, if you don't like cross- word puzzles, this one won't hold a lot of appeal for you.	A great way for crossword addicts to get their fix.	88%	
D-Day: The Begin- ning of the End. 	Wargame	Impressions Software	222 Third Street, Suite 0234, Cambridge, MA 02142	Simple interface, good graphics, and a fun Campaign game.	Micro-Miniatures combat is often confusing, making tactics nearly impossible.	Some interesting qualities, but they don't add up to a satisfactory whole.	71%	—
Dragon's Lair 	Action Adventure	ReadySoft	375 14th Avenue, Suite 7, Marham, Ontario, Canada L3R 2L6	It plays exactly like the arcade original.	It plays exactly like the arcade original.	If you liked the coin-op, you'll probably like this new CD-ROM ver- sion. But if you didn't, this won't change your mind.	65%	—
Dragonsphere 	Graphic Adventure	MicroProse	180 Lakefront Drive, Hunt Valley, MD 21030	An exciting new graphic adventure, packed with peo- ple and places to discover.	It could be longer, allowing for more detailed interac- tion with the char- acters you meet.	It's easy to lose yourself in this fresh, engaging adventure game.	87%	—
Elements 	Puzzle game	Vila Crespo	1725 McGovern Street, Highland Park, IL 60035	A novel concept with nice graphics and sound.	Having to repeat things so often can be a real pain.	A simple puzzler, but entertaining and challenging enough to keep you coming back.	78%	—
Empire Soccer 	Sports simulation	Empire Software	4 Professional Drive, Suite 123, Gaithersburg, MD 20879	Fast, fun and easy to play, but it pre- sents a real chal- lenge at higher levels.	Passing is tough because you can't see very far upfield. Hold onto your seat — it may run too fast on the faster 486 machines.	There's plenty of entertaining soc- cer action packed into this little game.	79%	—
Evasive Action 	Air-combat simu- lation	The Software Toolworks	60 Leveroni Court, Novata, CA 94949	Fast, fun and easy to play, especially in two player mode.	Planes stall too easily and the machine guns are set to semi-auto- matic.	Great fun, but probably too sim- ple for serious flight sim fans.	80%	—

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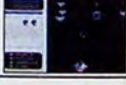


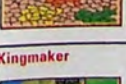
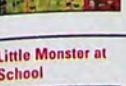


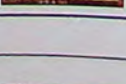


Product Information Number 241

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P.O. Box 4302, Hollywood, CA 90078

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TITLE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	ADDRESS	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITOR'S CHOICE
Fast Action Paq 	Arcade	Quackers (Mallard Software)	3207 Justin Road, Flower Mound, TX 75028	It will not interfere with normal Window's operations.	There are only four games, and none of them is any fun.	There are better ways to spend your gaming dollar, and better choices in Window's entertainment.	49%	—
Fields of Glory 	Historical simulation	Spectrum HoloByte	2490 Mariner Square Loop, Alameda, CA 94501	Epic sweep combined with a fantastic amount of detail; very friendly interface; stunning graphics.	The AI routines are dodgy, and tend to spoil the realism.	The finest tabletop miniatures war-game yet released, and a true joy to play.	89%	
FIFA International Soccer 	Sports simulation	Electronic Arts	PO Box 7578, San Mateo, CA 94403-7578	Looks great, plays smooth, and has all the extras that a fan could want.	Difficult passing and power kicks take a great deal of the fun out of play, at least at first....	A very deep soccer simulator for players who have the patience to deal with some quirky controls. Another winner from EA.	84%	—
Fleet Defender 	Flight simulation	MicroProse	180 Lakefront Drive, Hunt Valley, MD 21030	Great graphics and sound; multiple realism options make it as challenging (or as easy) as you like.	Much horsepower needed to keep it airborne; learning the controls can be time-consuming.	MicroProse has scored a direct hit with it. If you enjoy modern air-combat sims, this is definitely for you.	88%	
Flight Sim Toolkit 	Flight simulation	Domark	1900 S. Norfolk Street, Suite 202, San Mateo, CA 94403	A super program which really does let you create your very own game worlds.	It's in dire need of better documentation and can prove frustrating at first because of it.	Despite its limitations, a clever and original program worth sticking with.	87%	—
Games Magazine Presents: Word Puzzles, Vol. 1 	Puzzle	Vila Crespo Software, Inc.	1725 McGovern Street, Highland Park, IL 60035	Good range of puzzles for a little bit of cash.	Once you've done each of the puzzles, there is really no replay value.	Lots o' puzzles; lots o' fun. — at least for a limited time period.	79%	—
Ghengis Khan II: Clan of the Gray Wolf 	Historic simulation	Koei	One Bay Plaza, Suite 540, 1350 Bayshore Highway, Burlingame, CA 94010	A detailed sim with speed, drama and depth.	Might be too complex for some.	One of the best Koei titles in some time. If you like historical sims, get this one!	81%	—
Goblin's Quest 3 	Puzzle adventure	Sierra	PO Box 600, Coarsegold, CA 93614-0600	Terrific gameplay, graphics and sound.	A few of the puzzles might be a little too tough.	Part puzzle game, part graphic adventure, Goblins Quest 3 is sure to please fans of either genre. A very good title.	89%	
Good to Firm 	Horse-racing simulation	Wizard Games of Scotland	PO Box 498, Wilmington, MA 01887	Loaded with all the statistics and information you need to go horse racing.	Primitive graphics and lack of sound effects severely handicaps the racing action.	A solid horse-racing simulation, but a visually weak presentation.	75%	—
Great Naval Battles II: Guadalcanal 1942-1943 	Military simulation	SSI	675 Almanor Avenue, Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086	Sound; graphics; realism.	Steep learning curve.	A detailed, rich, and terrific-looking naval combat simulation. Good job, SSI!	85%	—
Hannibal 	Military strategy	MicroLeague	University Office Plaza, Bellevue Building, Suite 201, 262 Chapman Road, Newark, DE 19702	Good strategic elements.	No real tactical component.	Beautifully detailed graphics, but <i>Hannibal</i> lacks the depth to make it great.	65%	—

TITLE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	ADDRESS	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITOR'S CHOICE
Harpoon II 	Naval warfare simulation	Three-Sixty Pacific	2105 South Bascom, Suite 165, Campbell, CA 95008	Sleek interface, extraordinary realism, excellent scenarios, and a massive database.	A tough game to learn and master; appeal is limited to those with an interest in modern naval warfare.	Simply the best modern warfare game ever. This is a classic made even better.	93%	
Hexx: Heresy of the Wizard 	Roleplaying	Psygnosis	675 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139	Nice atmosphere, fast action, and a cleaner interface than in most RPG's.	There may be too many puzzles and not enough variety to keep your interest alive.	A well-designed, straight-forward game, well worth considering if you crave a simpler form of roleplaying.	79%	—
Inherit the Earth 	Graphic adventure	New World Computing	PO Box 4302, Hollywood, CA 90078	Beautiful VGA graphics, good voice acting, and an exciting new game world.	Slow-paced, with tedious gameplay and puzzles that just never seem to entertain.	<i>Inherit the Earth</i> has everything going for it, except the thing that matters the most — enjoyable game play.	63%	—
Interplay's 10 Year Anthology 	A little of Everything	Interplay	17922 Fitch Avenue, Irvine CA 92714	A great collection for nostalgia fans, with some surprisingly playable old titles.	If you already have the two newer titles, the rest might not be worth the asking price.	A solid collection, and one of special value to those with a serious interest in the history of PC gaming.	83%	—
Invasion of the Mutant Space Bats of Doom 	Arcade shoot-'em-up	Pop Software	PO Box 60995, Sunnyvale, CA 94088	Cheap, challenging, and runs on almost any system.	Gets very hard very fast.	If you're a shooter fan, there's no excuse not to get this one.	80%	—
Jump Raven 	Arcade action	Paramount Interactive	700 Hansen Way, Palo Alto, CA 94304	Nice graphics and voice acting; a lot of work went into creating this game world.	Little variation in background graphics, in-flight dialogue, and game play.	Die-hard arcade fans will probably love it, but others may not feel they're getting their money's worth.	76%	—
Jurassic Park 	Arcade action	Ocean	1855 O'Toole Ave., San Jose, CA 95131	Solid graphics and two types of gameplay.	The action quickly becomes repetitive.	There are much better action games out there.	54%	—
Kingdoms of Germany 	Wargame	Realism Entertainment	6N 522 Pine Street, Bensenville, IL 60106	The game's easy-to-learn, easy-to-use interface gets you into the fray fast.	There's not much in the way of chrome, and the relative simplicity of game play limits overall complexity.	A good, solid wargame — although perhaps not as detailed as it could be.	77%	—
Kingmaker 	Historical/Military simulation	Avalon Hill	4517 Hartford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214	A historical soap opera in the best blood-and-gust tradition.	So-so graphics and steep base memory requirements; complex game play will frighten newcomers.	A great game for hard-core strategy fans that has the added value of unraveling a confusing historical area.	81%	—
Little Monster at School 	Electronic storybook	Living Books	PO Box 5144, Novato, CA 94948-6144	Excellent graphics and music provide long-term interest for kids.	It doesn't make advances over previous Living Books; a little more educational content would be nice.	This is a program you'll really enjoy exploring along with your kids.	89%	
Mad Dog McCree II: The Lost Gold 	Shooting game	American Laser Games	4801 Lincoln Road NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109	Good video, good acting, good music; you'll need a calculator to keep track of the body count.	It doesn't take long to finish even if you play all three games.	<i>Mad Dog II</i> doesn't have a lot of replay value, but it's a real kick while it lasts.	78%	—

TITLE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	ADDRESS	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITOR'S CHOICE
Merchant Prince 	Strategy/Simulation	QQP	495 Highway 202, Flemington, NJ 08822	If smooth, addictive gameplay packed with skull-duggery appeals to you, so will this.	The graphics aren't anything to write home about.	With its balanced gameplay, this is one of the best new trading games around.	85%	—
Microcosm 	Arcade Action	Psygnosis, Ltd.	675 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139	Fluid animation and a good soundtrack keep the game moving.	Frustration levels are high and the gameplay value low.	<i>Microcosm</i> could only appeal to the hard-core arcade shooter fans, but there's not enough gameplay on display for that crowd.	45%	—
Millennium Auction 	Strategy/Simulation	Eidolon	5716 Mosholu Avenue, Riverdale, NY 10471	Lavishly rendered solid 3D characters, surreal animation and lovely digitized photos flesh out this engaging simulation.	Little variation from game to game.	A believable game world that's entertaining and (gasp!) educational. Much fun for CD-ROM owners.	79%	—
Mortal Kombat 	Arcade Action	Ultratech	584 Broadway, New York, NY 10012	Great fighting action, clever graphics, and near-perfect gameplay.	A little bit too violent for some people — but, hey, it is a fighting game.	If you've been burned by watered-down IBM action in the past, here's your chance to make up for it!	91%	
Myst 	Graphic adventure	Broderbund	500 Redwood Boulevard, Novato, CA 94948-6121	Graphics, sound and gameplay that pull you in and never let go.	It's a crap shoot as to whether or not your particular hardware set up combo will bring even more woe to Myst Island.	Finally a game that validates the hype of CD-ROM. If you were looking for a reason to move up to those silvery little discs, <i>Myst</i> is it.	95%	
Nigel Mansell's World Championship 	Driving simulation	Gremlins Graphics	2-4 Carver Street, Sheffield, England	Driving is a snap, since you couldn't wreck if you tried.	There's no real challenge whatsoever; racing has never been this tedious.	There are much better driving sims around especially at this price.	40%	—
Origamo 	Puzzle game	QQP	495 Highway 202, Flemington, NJ 08822	One of the better Tetris-style games of late.	If your mouse is sluggish, you'll be frustrated; limited number of puzzles.	Plenty of options make <i>Origamo</i> accessible to all skill ranges, and the back-grounds and music spice things up nicely.	78%	—
Outpost 	Strategy	Sierra On-Line	PO Box 600, Coarsegold, CA 93614	Unbelievable graphics, fantastic sound, addictive and ever-changing gameplay.	Windows slows it down and there isn't enough info in the manual to get you started on your first colony. Might be hard for first-timers.	If you're a strategy fan, you simply must own <i>Outpost</i> . Period.	93%	
Pacific Strike 	Air-combat simulation	Origin Systems	PO Box 161750, Austin, TX 78716	The story setting makes for a great flight-sim environment, and there are tons of great planes to fly.	Poor frame rate, touchy controls, and confusing setup instructions.	Hold off until a CD-ROM version comes out. It's bound to be the best choice.	70%	—
Planet Soccer 	Sports simulation	Infogrames	1341 Ocean Avenue, Vox 417, Santa Monica, CA 90401	Great graphics, full team rosters, and plenty of options.	Bad documentation, awkward view of the action, and vague player control.	With all its stats and options, <i>Planet Soccer</i> has plenty of strengths — but you have to contend with a lot to enjoy them.	70%	—
Power Poker 	Poker simulation	Electronic Arts	PO Box 7578, San Mateo, CA 94403-7578	Great new graphics and a million extra features add depth to a classic game.	The graphics seem a little spartan, even while you play in SVGA mode.	A great game if you're into playing all those crazy poker variations, but only fair to mid-dlin' if you ain't.	79%	—

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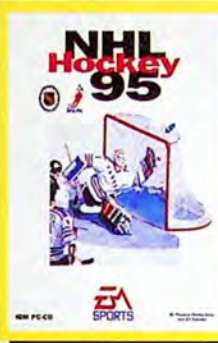
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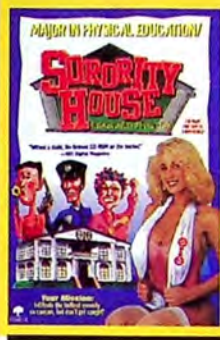
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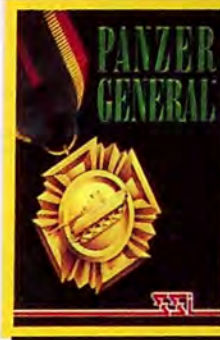
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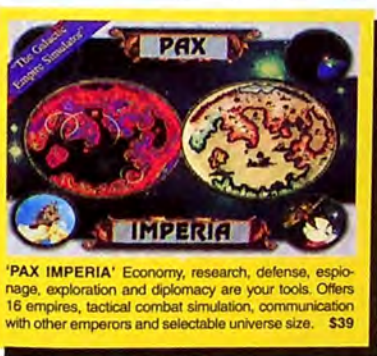
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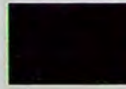






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TITLE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	ADDRESS	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITOR'S CHOICE
Pro League Baseball 	Sports Simulation	Micro Sports	One Northgate Park, Suite 103, Chattanooga, TN 37415	A potentially solid combination of stats replay and action graphics.	The game locks up a lot, and the thin manual isn't much help.	Micro Sports supports their products, so there's a good chance this game could be excellent once they work out the kinks.	77%	—
Pursue the Pennant 	Sports Simulation	Pursue the Pennant	PO Box 19703, Greensboro, NC 27419	Full rosters, realistic results and statistics — and all in a flexible, easy-to-play game.	They could have spruced up the display a bit. But nah, why bother?	You can't ask for anything more from a text-only baseball sim.	84%	—
Raptor: Call of the Shadows 	Arcade Shoot-em-up	Apogee Software	3960 Broadway, Suite 235, Garland, TX 75043	Satisfies the appetite for destruction and looks good doing it.	Like all shooters, it gets a bit repetitive after a while.	This one's about the best-looking PC shoot-'em-ups around.	82%	—
Ravenloft 	Fantasy Roleplaying	SSI	675 Almanor Avenue, Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086	Great graphics, plenty of options; nice cut-scenes; new horror-setting adds much.	Weapons, spells, attributes, etc. all getting very, very familiar now.	One of SSI's best AD&D-based games, packed with character, featuring just enough novelty, and being very nicely put together.	82%	—
Red Crystal 	Fantasy Roleplaying	QOP	1046 River Avenue, Flemington, NJ 08822	Your goals are clear, the interface is simple, and you'll be ready to play in no time.	The game won't blow you away with innovations.	<i>Red Crystal</i> is fun, fast and addictive, but not particularly complex.	75%	—
Red Sky at Morning 	Wargame	Simulations Canada	PO Box 452, Bridgewater, Nova Scotia, Canada, B4V 2X6	Realistic depiction of the tribulations of strategic naval command.	Poor documentation; minimalist graphics; can be off-putting.	Naval combat buffs might get their money's worth — but all others should steer clear of this anachronism.	62%	—
Return to Ringworld 	Graphic Adventure	Tsunami Media Inc.	48677 Victoria Lane, Suite 201, Oakhurst, CA 93644	An expansive game-world, challenging gameplay, all true to Niven's works.	The Ringworld landscape is a bit overwhelming, and the graphics could be better.	True Niven fans — and anyone looking for an enormous new world to explore — will enjoy this one tremendously.	88%	
Richard Scarry's Best Neighborhood Ever and Busiest Neighborhood Ever 	Preschool education and entertainment	Activision	11601 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 1000, Los Angeles, CA 90025	The programs are true to Richard Scarry's style, and are very nicely animated.	The graphics are so-so, with the kind of jaggies we used to see years ago; little depth.	Both Neighborhoods will engage children through words and pictures, but parents will wish each disk had more activities.	73%	—
Robinson's Requiem 	Roleplaying Adventure	ReadySoft	30 Wertheim Court, Suite 2, Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada, L4B 1B9	A well-thought-out world that might have been interesting in another game.	Pixel lovers will find a lot to cherish here. These are big, juicy pixels you can really sink your teeth into. It's pixelicious!	The meaningless wandering puts this one high on the frustration index.	49%	—
Russian Six Pack 	Puzzle Games	Interplay Productions	17922 Fitch Avenue, Irvine, CA 92714	Six games in one; Windows environment makes for easy access.	Only two of the six are worth playing.	It may be from Russia, but <i>Tetris</i> it ain't. This collection will appeal to only especially dedicated puzzle gamers.	54%	—
Seaworthy 	Simulation	Alliance Interactive Software	1859 N. Pine Island Road 103, Plantation, FL 33322	These games should run fine on just about any machine. Deep in historical data and play options.	Graphics are just too dated and the games weren't top-of-the-line even when new.	Unless you just can't afford better, don't waste your money on these.	55%	—

TITLE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	ADDRESS	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITOR'S CHOICE
Sensible Soccer 	Soccer Simulation	Everyware	1119 Colorado Avenue, Santa Monica, CA 90401	Good control and fast action combine for fun gameplay.	Sub-par graphics and a lack of options may have you shelving this one before long.	A semi-realistic soccer simulation that's relatively easy to learn, but lacks replay value.	62%	—
Serf City: Life is Feudal 	Strategy	SSI	675 Almanor Avenue, Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086	Good landscapes, and engaging gameplay.	So-so character graphics, cluttered interface, and only moderate depth.	Fun if you're unfamiliar with kingdom-building, but it needs more variety.	75%	—
Shadow of the Comet 	Graphic Adventure	i-Motion	1333 Ocean Avenue, Suite J, Santa Monica, CA 90401	It can be a lot of fun to play, especially if you're a Lovecraft fan.	Primitive interface, and the game never really delivers on its horror premise.	Steadfastly average gaming. It's not bad, though, and you might enjoy it. But there are a lot better games out there.	59%	✓
SimCity 2000 	Simulation	Maxis	2 Theatre Square, Orinda, CA 94563-3346	Great new graphics and a ton of extra features add depth to a classic game.	It can take an awfully long time to get to stage where you can really enjoy some of the game's new options.	One of those rare games that presents a different challenge each time you play.	95%	
Soccer Kid 	Arcade	MicroLeague Interactive Software	University Office Plaza, Bellevue Building, Suite 201, 262 Chapman Road, Newark, DE 19702	Sharp graphic detail, smooth animation, pleasant soundtrack.	Somewhat repetitive gameplay; may be a little difficult for beginners.	A good platform title if you're looking for some pretty mindless gaming.	75%	—
Spaceship Warlock 	Interactive movie (uh-oh)	Reactor	442 West Erie, Chicago, IL 60610	It doesn't take up any hard drive space. Graphics are okay.	Boring, slow, and bereft of imagination; the lack of an install program costs this one 15 points right off the bat.	It's a drag, man, a real drag.	40%	—
Spectre VR 	Arcade Action	Velocity	PO Box 2749, San Francisco, CA 94126	Can be mucho fun when a lot of players compete on a network.	Weak graphics, and the one- and two-player games get tiresome pretty quick.	If this is Virtual Reality, I'm in no big hurry to "jack in."	68%	—
SSN-21 Seawolf 	Naval Warfare	Electronic Arts	PO Box 7530, San Mateo, CA 94430	Sweet graphics and sound; modem play gives it life beyond its 32 scenarios.	Stupid interface decisions, spotty AI, bad campaign mode, and some unrealistic elements.	An entertaining game, but one that could have been so much better.	75%	—
Star Trek: Judgement Rites 	Graphic Adventure	Interplay	17922 Fitch Avenue, Irvine, CA 92714	Smooth play, excellent characters, clever storylines and a real Star Trek feel.	The space-combat scenes could be more realistic, and installing the game can be pretty time consuming.	Whether you're a true Trekker or a casual fan, you're going to enjoy this game.	90%	
Superhero League of Hoboken 	Roleplaying	Legend Entertainment	PO Box 10810, 14200 Park Meadow Drive, Chantilly, VA 22021	Good solid gameplay with a high level of difficulty and plenty of humor.	Mediocre graphics and sound; movement can become irritating during exploration.	An exciting mix of adventure and roleplaying, perfect for the gamer who's more concerned with game play than graphics.	84%	—
Thanks! War Game Construction Set 	Tactical War Game	SSI	675 Almanor Avenue, Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901	Incredibly friendly interface; virtually infinite replay value.	If you're not naturally fond of board wargames, this computerized adaptation isn't likely to convert you.	An old and honorable style of wargame and loads of fun.	84%	—

TITLE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	ADDRESS	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITOR'S CHOICE
The Blues Brothers' Jukebox Adventure 	Side-scrolling Shooter	Titus Software Corporation	20432 Corisco Street, Chatsworth, CA 91311	Mindless arcade fun, and you can play it straight off the disk!	Weak graphics, repetitive action, and a disappointing sound track.	You don't have to be a nostalgia hound to enjoy this side-scrolling shooter, but it helps.	65%	—
The C.H.A.O.S. Continuum 	Multimedia Adventure	Creative Multimedia	514 NW 11th Avenue, Suite 203, Portland, OR 97209	Very impressive graphics and sound.	Pretty short on actual gameplay.	Like many CD-ROM games, it looks great, but you'll have to decide if that's enough.	61%	—
The Classic 5 	Board Game Collection	Interplay Productions, Inc.	17922 Fitch Avenue, Irvine, CA 92714	Mouse interface is easy to use; lots of games for one price.	No bells or whistles; you'll probably yearn for a more intelligent computer opponent.	Individually these games have been done before and done better.	56%	—
The Elder Scrolls, Volume 1: Arena 	Fantasy Roleplaying	Bethesda Softworks	1370 Piccard Drive, Rockville, MD 20850	Fantastic graphics and sound, and a very intuitive interface.	The storyline is a little thin, and there's not much meaningful interaction with NPCs.	A stunning technological achievement give this game a better storyline, and you might have the best FRP ever designed.	88%	
The Grandest Fleet 	Strategy	QQP	495 Highway 202, Flemington, NJ 08822	Plenty of depth; easy to learn but tough to master; good graphics.	Contrived scenarios require suspension of disbelief.	If you like <i>The Lost Admiral</i> , you'll love this, though there are as many differences as similarities between the two.	82%	—
The Horde 	Strategy/Action	Crystal Dynamics	2460 Embarcadero Way, Palo Alto, CA 94303	Good acting in the video clips, a great soundtrack, and fast-paced gameplay.	The interface is somewhat clunky, and gameplay can get a little repetitive.	This is a solid mix of strategy and fun that anyone can start enjoying as soon as they pop it in their CD-ROM drive.	80%	—
The Lawnmower Man 	Action/Arcade	Sony Electronic Publishing	1 Sony Drive, Park Ridge, NJ 07656-8003	Sounds great, lots of animation, and addictive.	32-color palette; no saved games — three strikes and you're out.	An intriguing, but flawed, first effort. Wait for the 256-color sequel that'll be released later this year.	67%	—
Theme Park 	Strategy	Electronic Arts	1450 Fashion Island Boulevard, San Mateo, CA 94403	Terrific premise, great sound and graphics and more resource management than most strategy fans could hope for.	Annoying movement interface; control of the park is unreliable; little long-term play value.	A first rate-strategy game with some let-downs. Fans of <i>SimCity</i> will like it.	79%	—
Tie Fighter 	Space-combat simulation	LucasArts	PO Box 10307, San Rafael, CA 94912	This is one of the most absorbing and satisfying PC games ever designed.	There are no add-on disks available — yet.	If I were stuck on a desert island (with electricity and a PC) and could only have one game to play, I'd choose <i>TIE Fighter</i> .	96%	
Tigers on the Prowl 	Wargame	HPS Simulations	PO Box 3245, Santa Clara, CA 95055	More guns and tanks than you can shake a panzerfaust at.	Let's face it — even Zhukov might get frustrated trying to move these units.	A wealth of detail, but badly in need of plastic surgery. Gameplay is cumbersome for all but hard-core wargamers.	65%	—
Time Out Sports Baseball 	Sports/Utilitarianism	MicroLeague	University Office Plaza, Bellevue Building, Suite 201, 262 Chapman Road, Newark, DE 19702	Great graphics; games are quick, clever, and easy to learn.	Lacks depth, but that's to be expected from a product like this; the ump-baiting game is pretty silly.	A nice time-out from work.	75%	—

TITLE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	ADDRESS	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITOR'S CHOICE
Tubular Worlds 	Shooter	Dongelware Publishing	35 Howard Street, Cambridge, MA 02139	A good-looking, good-sounding shooter.	If you don't like shooters, there's not much here for you.	A lot of fun, but it seems pretty pricey for what you actually get.	75%	—
TuneLand 	Interactive Cartoon	7th Level	5225 San Fernando Road West, Los Angeles, CA 90039	The sound and graphics are very well crafted.	There's not a whole lot to do in the program, and some of the voices are pretty hard to understand.	In spite of the admirably creative presentation, <i>TuneLand</i> could be more engaging than it is.	80%	—
Ultima VIII: Pagan 	Fantasy Roleplaying	Origin	PO Box 161750, Austin, TX 78716	Great graphics sound, storyline, and special effects.	The arcade emphasis is likely to turn off roleplaying fans, and the roleplaying elements will turn off arcade fans.	A really strange mix of gameplay that doesn't quite pay off.	78%	—
Ultimate Domain 	Strategy	Software Toolworks	60 Leveroni Court, Novata, CA 94949	<i>Ultimate Domain</i> has some of everything—great graphics, strategy, and AI that will give you a run for your money.	The game tends to get unbalanced towards the end, and a few more sound effects would have been nice.	An all-round excellent title.	91%	
Unnecessary Roughness 	Sports Simulation	Accolade	5300 Stevens Creek Boulevard, San Jose, CA 95129	Great graphics, an NFLPA license, and easy-to-use tools for creating custom leagues.	The football action is so unrealistic that it all but cripples the game.	Unless you just don't care about realism, pass this one up. Although it looks great, it just ain't football.	64%	—
Who Shot Johnny Rock? 	American Laser Games	Arcade Shooter	4801 Lincoln Road NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109	You couldn't ask for a simpler interface, and there's lots of bang-bang.	Games like this need good graphics—and <i>Johnny Rock</i> doesn't have 'em. Video-card compatibility problems don't help, either.	If you want a CD-ROM shooter, with live action video, wait on <i>Mad Dog McCree II</i> .	59%	—
Wing Commander Armada 	Space-combat simulation	Origin	PO Box, 161750, Austin, TX 78716	Solid arcade-like strategy and action. Outstanding multi-player options.	In combat against the computer, the battles start to feel all too similar.	<i>Wing Commander</i> nuts will find a lot to like in <i>Armada</i> ; everyone will enjoy battling friends head-to-head via modem.	88%	
World Series of Poker 	Poker simulation	Masque Publishing	PO Box 5223, Englewood, CO 80155	The strongest poker AI to date, plus you get to sit in on the World Series.	No tutorial option included; poor segue graphics.	One of the best poker sims on the market, and a true Las Vegas experience.	86%	—
Wrath of the Gods 	Graphic Adventure	Luminaria	3288 21st Street, Suite 64, San Francisco, CA 94110	<i>Wrath</i> has a load of puzzles, and the acting is good to excellent throughout.	Very choppy animation; moving between locales can take an eternity.	A good choice for novice or average gamers, but there's so much gameplay here that veterans can appreciate it too.	79%	—
X-COM 	Strategy/Resource Management	MicroProse	180 Lakefront Drive, Hunt Valley, MD 21030	The gameplay is great. Custom characters, great storyline, and simple combat interface make it absorbing.	Graphics and sound are simple fare. It's not for those who want to be wowed by imagery.	Well worth buying—what it lacks in flash, it makes up for in playability.	88%	

PC GAMER

proudly presents...



We know you've seen this baby in the pages of *PC Gamer*, because we've been fielding dozens of calls a week from readers wondering how they can get their hands on one! Well, now the answer is simple: You can run

out and purchase one (if you can find a store that hasn't sold out), or you can enter this contest and try to *win* one!

The Forte VFX-1: Real Virtual Reality

You want to know what the VFX-1 is like? Then just relive with us this description, by our own T. Liam McDonald:

"From what we've seen so far, the VFX-1 looks to be the most impressive VR peripheral yet. Constructed of a light-weight, durable plastic, it consists of a visor and earphone arrangement that fits over the top of the user's head. This helps evenly distribute the weight of the helmet, and allows for large ventilation cutouts, helping users stay cooler — and hopefully less aware that they are wearing a helmet. An adjustable, padded lining attaches with velcro, so that it can be changed or cleaned. The flip-down visor means you don't have to keep taking the helmet off to return to reality, and

makes future upgradability much easier. The headset comes with its own card that plugs straight into the motherboard with little fuss; sound is through a pair of hi-fidelity stereo headphones that will work with any soundcard. There's even a microphone built into the visor.

"The heart of VFX1, however, is its visual technology. When you flip down the visor, you're essentially looking through a pair of adjustable lenses with diopters, just like a pair of binoculars. These lenses each work with their own 428 x 240 full-color active matrix monitor. The system provides two separate images, one for each eye, creating an illusion of depth that makes images look much more lifelike than if you saw them on a normal PC monitor. Forte's new Visual Orientation System (VOS) tracks the movement of the head along all

The Forte VFX-1 Virt



planes: As the head moves, VOS provides roll, pitch, and yaw input to the program. There's no discernable lag in processing time, something that has been a major issue in the development of VR technology — if the movement of the image lags as much as a split second behind the movement of the head, a user can experience motion-sickness and become extremely disoriented.

"An integral element of this system is Forte's new Cyberbat. The three-button, hand-held device is a slick, smooth, alternative to the joystick and mouse. It doesn't require a base or desktop to work, and responds to varying degrees in wrist movement.

"The helmet feels odd when you first put it on, since it blots out all but the illusory reality of the video game. The first game I tried was *Doom*, which had me in a cold sweat right from the start. The bobbing motion of the game and the intense, you-are-there sensation made me feel a bit woozy, and though Paul Travers urged me to play standing up, I had the distinct

feeling that I might keel over if I did. I could turn my head to the left or right and see everything around me."
Now *that's* what we call fun!

So what do I have to do?

Sure, it sounds too good to be true. But if you're our lucky winner, you'll be enjoying *real* virtual reality in the comfort of your home. And all you have to do is try your hand at a little thing we like to call Joe's Crazy Pics.

Here's the deal: Each of these five pictures is taken from this very issue of *PC Gamer*. Now all you have to do is figure out which page each pic appears on! Yes, we did zoom in on them a bit. But if you didn't want a little challenge, you wouldn't be a PC gamer, would you?

So just write down the picture number, the page that picture appears on, and send it to us — including your name, address, and daytime phone number. The address is:

PC Gamer
VFX-1 Contest
P.O. Box 29364
Greensboro, NC 27429

All entries must be received no later than December 1, 1994.

We'll gather all the entries, and the first correct one we open wins the VFX-1!

No purchase necessary. Void where prohibited. One entry per person. To enter the contest or for a complete set of rules, write your name, address, age, and telephone number on a 3x5" card and mail to: PC Gamer VFX-1 Contest, P.O. Box 29364, Greensboro, N.C. 27429. All entries must be received by December 1, 1994. Winners will be selected at random. The editors' decision is final.

Sponsored by Forte Technologies

Virtual Reality Contest!

We're gearing up for some big things next issue: a new CD-ROM edition, a bigger mag than ever before, and the busiest time of the year for new releases....

Issue 7 Goes
On Sale
Nov. 8
Don't Miss It!

Wing Commander III: Heart of the Tiger

We got you ready for it back in August with a three-page Scoop! You've read stories about the budget, the talent, the plot, the technology. Now, as Origin begins putting the finishing touches on *Wing Commander III*, journey with our very own William R. Trotter to Austin, Texas for a hands-on look at what could very well be the biggest PC game of all time. He'll talk with *Wing Commander* wunderkind Chris Roberts, he'll fly the new missions, he'll die a fiery death (virtually, anyway)... and if you don't believe what he has to say, just pop the *PC Gamer* CD-ROM disc in your drive and try it for yourself! That's right — *PC Gamer* is the only gaming mag that has a playable demo of the year's most hotly anticipated title! But you knew you'd find it here, didn't you?



If you're as eager as we are to see Origin's *Wing Commander III*, do not miss our December issue! We'll even have a *WCIII* demo on our CD-ROM cover disk!

'Twas the Month Before Christmas...

And all through the stores, the sales clerks were busy trying to stock even more — PC games, that is. It happens every year: Software publishers hold off on releasing new titles until the Christmas holidays, the most lucrative time of the year in terms of sales. It's great to have such a huge selection when you go shopping, but it can get downright frustrating when it comes time to make that final buying decision.

That's why we've had our gaming experts take a look at every genre — fantasy roleplaying games, flight sims, strategy games, puzzlers, gaming peripherals, and more — and tell you what to buy, and why. We'll also be evaluating some of the games that won't be finished until just before Christmas, and tell you which ones we think will give you the most value for your gaming dollar.

PC Gamer Reviews

Looking for an honest opinion? Then you've come to the right place! *PC Gamer* reviews have all the info you need to make up your mind about a game, from concise, insightful analysis and full hardware requirements to the most respected ratings system in the business. Right now, we're

lining up reviews of Virgin's *Beneath a Steel Sky* (finally!), SSI's new roleplaying world of *Alien Logic: Skyrealms of Jorune*, MicroProse's super-long *Ultimate Football*, Accolade's motorcycle arcade game *Cyclemania*, Bethesda's long-awaited *Delta V*, and many more! You know the rule: Don't buy a game until you've read the definitive *PC Gamer* review!

And the Debut of the PC Gamer CD-ROM Demo Disc!

If you're one of the thousands of who've upgraded to CD-ROM, have we got a treat for you! With our next issue, you'll have your choice of the usual *PC Gamer* with an interactive demo on floppy disk, or the *PC Gamer* CD-ROM Edition — a CD-ROM that's been jam-packed and double-stuffed with playable demos of the games you want to play. Only *PC Gamer* gives you the chance to test drive today's hottest titles — every month!

All this and more, headed
your way in the December
issue of *PC Gamer*

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The water was cold all around him, and salt spray irritated his eyes. The black fumes of burning diesel and gunpowder hung close to the surface, filling his mouth and nose at every breath. But Lance Noonan was smiling, sometimes singing to himself, as he gripped the shell of his sea turtle and skimmed along the water. He didn't notice the American PT boat to the west.

"And what would happen if I just tossed it way out into the water?" Chip Eiko asked, fondling a hand grenade. "That would be OK, wouldn't it, Skipper? How could that hurt the boat?"

Lieutenant Bender didn't like the chattering Stars and Stripes reporter. He just wanted to deliver Eiko, let the wet kid head back to the states, and be done with him.

"You just won't let up, will you?" Bender snarled. He spotted a sea turtle to the east, tangled in a life preserver. "Alright, why don't you try and put that turtle out of its misery —"

Before Bender could finish, Eiko had tossed a perfect lob right at the turtle. A plume of water shot skyward, and the sea grass slightly pink. The turtle was nowhere to be seen.

"God, I love to do that!" Eiko shouted. "I thought I heard that turtle singing," Bender said.

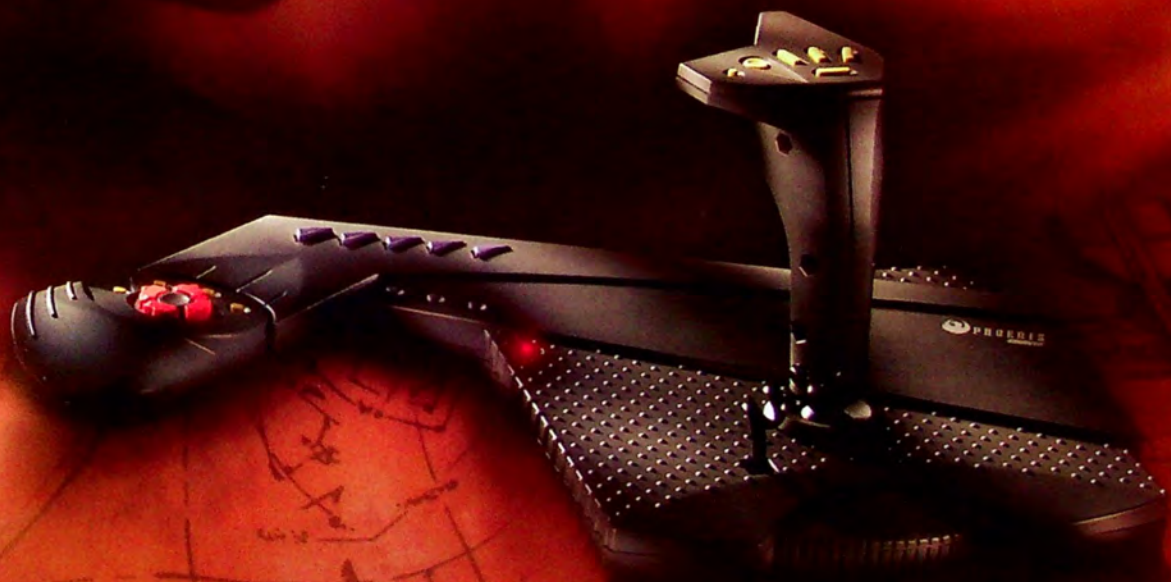
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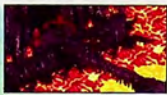
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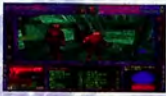
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