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Edition

The First Annual PC Gamer Awards

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Goldberg-style machines
in this addictive puzzler
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ALIENS!

Exclusive!

Your first look at
Mindscape's *Aliens* —
It's *The Bitch* like you've
never seen her before!

Scoops!

- *Powerhouse*
- *X-COM: Terror
From the Deep*
- *Conqueror*



Could this game launch a
new publishing empire?
— p. 62

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Vol 2 No. 3
March 1995
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Reviewed

- *King's Quest VII*
 - *Wing Commander III*
 - *Metaltech: EarthSiege*
 - *Creature Shock*
 - *Hell*
 - *HardBall 4*
- ...and more!

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The Wait Was Torture.



Product Information Number 125



Cover Story

Exclusive!

Aliens

This month, we take a look at the development of *Aliens*, the latest graphic tour de force from Mindscape and Cryo — the design house behind titles like *Dragon Lore* and *Last Eden*. It's a dark and deadly graphic adventure, based on the art and storylines from the wonderfully disturbing graphic novels of Dark Horse Comics. One of the year's best-looking titles!



Speaking of Aliens...

Working on *Aliens*, this month's cover feature, was an enlightening and encouraging experience. Like most people, I suspect, I'd seen the *Aliens* movies. And when I first heard about Mindscape's planned PC game based on the subject, I assumed we were in for another of those interactive recreations of the film, kind of like that *Terminator* arcade game that lets you step in and blast the characters from the movie.

As it turns out, developer Cryo wasn't interested in a retread of the *Aliens* films — no matter how good those films were. Instead, they went to Dark Horse Comics to draw on more source material, more *Aliens* theory, history, and lore, than appears in the three films put together — certainly more than I was aware of. They then set about creating a unique adventure, drawing on the Dark Horse material, but combining

it with new characters, new settings, and the thoroughly interactive presentational techniques that mark the very best computer games.

What I found most impressive about all this, and so incredibly encouraging, is that the new game manages to blend facets of an exciting, almost legendary license — one that's already flourished both as a film and print property — and transform it into an interactive experience worthy of its predecessors. It's like what Interplay did with *Star Trek: 25th Anniversary*, creating a new medium through which to enjoy our favorite fictional worlds.

Thanks to projects like *Aliens*, PC games are becoming as important and popular an art form as movies, novels, or comics. They're gaining the respect they deserve.

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53 Aliens

In our exclusive first look at *Aliens*, we'll show you how Cryo is going to bring the 2D style of Dark Horse Comics' *Aliens* series to a fully modeled 3D environment.

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After developing some really smoking games for Origin — like *Ultima Underworld I* and *II* and their latest, *System Shock* — Looking Glass Technologies is heading out on their own. We sent Bernie Yee to check out the new titles LG hopes will make them the next game-publishing giant.



Scoops!

And oh, the joys we have found....

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THE CD

INSTALLING • PLAYING • QUICK TIPS

Welcome to The CD! This month, with more gaming than we've ever had before — over 600MB's worth!



Here it is, the March CD — stuffed with more gaming than you can shake a CD-ROM at. When you see the demos we have for you this month, we know you'll be anxious to get started. So just read on — we'll explain it all right here in The CD Pages.

If you're familiar with our disc, jump down to the Quick Start and get rolling. If not, hang on; it won't take

long to have you up and running.

Our 3.5" floppy demo this month features that excellent Rube Goldberg-inspired game, *The Incredible Machine 2* by Dynamix. You'll find instructions and other helpful tidbits in The Floppy Pages on p.16.

The rest of this section is dedicated to The CD, and helping you squeeze every last drop of fun from it. In a major coup, we've secured demos of *Dark*

Forces and *Under A Killing Moon*, both on the same disc! And there's plenty more, too, like *DOOM II* wads and, not to be thoughtless, a new *DOOM I* wad. Plus you'll find the latest bug patches from "Extended Play," our Online Section, and all the other stuff you can only get with *PC Gamer* and The CD!

The CD is manufactured by DISCTRONICS, one of the foremost disc duplicators in America. Before pressing, it is rigorously tested and certified virus-free.

Quick Start The CD

If you're already familiar with DOS, configuring your system, and all those fun things that make PC gaming such an adventure, getting started couldn't be easier:

1. Insert The CD, and change to your CD-ROM drive (usually D: or E).
2. Type PCG, and press Enter.
3. Look through the text files and help screens for specific demo requirements, and go to it. Remember, you can install and run all of the demos directly from DOS, bypassing the front end altogether if you like.

Getting Started

For those of you who're new to PC gaming, we've done our best to create a front end for The CD that'll make finding and installing the demos a bit easier. But since most games are DOS-based and memory requirements can vary significantly, you'll have to read the help files included with each demo carefully.

To get started, put The CD into your CD-ROM drive, switch to that drive (usually D: or E:) and type PCG. Our front end is in SVGA, and requires that a VESA driver be loaded. In the event our front end doesn't load or informs you that your video resolution is less than what you really have, type VPCG instead. If this doesn't do the trick, you can still install and run each game without it. Just go into each game's respective directory from DOS and type the appropriate command for that demo. A table of the directories and commands is provided in these Disc Pages.

The CD: Requirements

Minimum Requirements: 386SX; SVGA (640x480, 256 colors); VESA driver; mouse.

We Recommend: At least a double-speed CD-ROM drive, capable of 300k/sec data transfer. The CD will work on a single-speed, but very slowly.

The above requirements are for loading The CD and its front end only. Each game demo will have its own additional require-

If Nothing Works...

Unfortunately, we can't provide technical and customer support for problems you may encounter with the specific demos, and patches on The CD. But should your copy fail to run, or display error messages that indicate your CD-ROM drive cannot read the disc at all, return it to the following address for replacement:

**The CD #4 Replacement
PC Gamer
1350 Old Bayshore Highway
Suite 210
Burlingame, CA 94010**

Indicate any error message you receive.

ments — so be sure to read the text files for each demo carefully!

Installation Commands, Names and Locations

Here's a list of the directories on The CD, where you'll find each game demo. If you're having a problem installing a specific game, go to the following subdirectory on The CD and type the appropriate installation command for that game.

Game	Directory	Installation Command
Dark Forces	\LUCASART	DEMO
U.S. Navy Fighters	\USNF	INSTALL
The Incredible Machine 2	\TIM2	INSTALL
Klik & Play	\KLIKPLAY	SETUP
Virtuoso	\VIRTUOSO	INSTVIRT
Shadows of Cairn *	\CAIRN	SETUP
The Lemmings Chronicles	\LEMMING	INSTLEMM
Ultimate Backgammon	\UBG	INSTUBG
Casino Tour. of Champions	\CAP	INSTCTOC
World Cup Golf *		SETUP
Spectre VR *	\SPECTRE	SETUP
Cyclemania	\CYCLEDEM	INSTALL
Wings of Glory	\WOG	INSTALL
Brett Hull '95	\BRETT	INSTBRET
Drug Wars	\DRUGWARS	INSTALL
Under A Killing Moon *		INSTALL
ImagiNation Network	\IMAGINE	FUN
GEnie	\GENIE	INSTGENI
DOOM Wads	\DOOMWAD	
Bug Patches	\PATCHES	

* *Under A Killing Moon* and *World Cup Golf* are located on the root directory. *Shadows of Cairn* and *Spectre VR* must be loaded through Windows.

Dark Forces

— LucasArts

Readers who saw the cover story in our October issue have been drooling for this game ever since, so we're bringing you a tantalizing taste of it on The CD. Consider yourself warned, though — this demo will only make you want the full version even more.

Dark Forces, LucasArts' latest foray into the Star Wars universe, drops you into the boots of Kyle Katarn, an intrepid

rebel commando. In this demo, your mission is to storm an Imperial base and steal the plans for the Death Star (apparently, there's some princess from Alderaan who thinks the Rebel Alliance can use them to find the battle station's weaknesses — but, of course, that's another story entirely).

Even in the demo, there's a lot of wholesome, shoot-'em-up goodness to be found. As the fallen stormtroopers



This number indicates the strength of your personal shields.

This is your health meter. If it falls to zero, you're one dead rebel.

This tells you how many lives you have left.

Here's how much energy you have left for your blaster — be sure to pick up energy cells from fallen enemies to keep this number high.



Two stormtroopers take aim at your vital organs as you make your way toward your goal — the Death Star plans. Taking them out is gonna be a real pleasure.



These jokers are even tougher than stormtroopers. If I take four well-placed shots to bring each of them down — unless you find this full-auto blaster.

pile up like cord wood — just like in the movies — you'll forget you're sitting at the computer and swear you're starring in some legendary lost episode of the Star Wars saga.

We think *Dark Forces* could be the first *Doom*-inspired game to come close to rivaling the original. See if you agree. Oh, by the way — the *PC Gamer* record for clearing this demo is two minutes flat. Can you top that?

Main Commands

ESC	Main menu
TAB	Turn overlay map on/off
+ -	Automap Zoom In/Out
F1	PDA
F2	Goggles Toggle
F3	Cleats Toggle
F4	Gas Mask Toggle
F5	Headlight Toggle
F6	HUD On/Off
F7	Head Wave and Weapon Waggle On/Off
1-10	Select Weapon

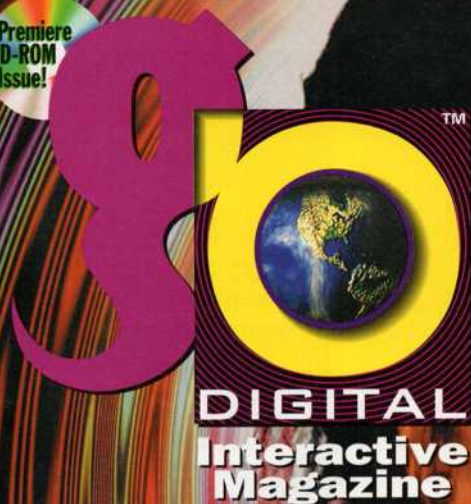


Gleaming white armor won't protect this guy from your searing plasma blast! I wonder if Vader feels a disturbance in The Force....

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Product Information Number 135

..... Shadows of Cairn

— Masque

His name is Quinn, and he's about the worst thief ever to join the Thieves' Guild. That's not to say he's the most dangerous; he's just utterly unsuited to the whole breaking-and-entering thing. As the game begins in the sewers under the multi-level city of Cairn, poor old Quinn doesn't even know a dagger when he sees one. He'll need your help if he's going to survive his mission — he's got to stop the assassi-

sination of the Duke of Cairn, or his disenchanted fellow thieves will frame him for the Duke's death.

Quinn has a pretty complex set of keyboard and/or joystick commands to control his actions and fighting moves. Just remember that the "F" key switches between Explore Mode and Fight Mode, and — in the Windows version — hit that good old "F1" key to access the help file and a detailed listing of commands.



A gargoyle attacks the mighty Quinn in the Wizard's Hedge Maze.

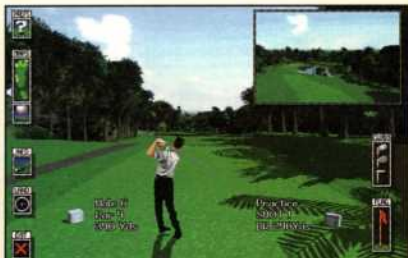
World Cup Golf

— U.S. Gold

It may not have the complexity or flexibility of *Links 386 Pro* or *GTA Tour 486*, but U.S. Gold's *World Cup Golf* has got to be the simplest golf game on the market. Install our demo from The CD and see for yourself.

Getting started is simple enough — the demo is even set up to automatically choose the right club for you — but the interface needs a little explaining if you want to get more than a few feet out of each swing. When you're ready to hit

the ball, click on the golfer to bring the control window up. You can use the arrows to set the strength of your stroke, then you click once on the curved graph to start your swing, again as the moving bar reaches the center, and a third time as it comes back toward the center on its return trip. The idea is to get the second and third clicks as close to the center as possible to avoid hooking or slicing — it's tricky, but you'll get the hang of it.



Knock the ball far enough, and an inset window follows its trajectory toward the green.

..... Cyclemania

— Accolade

Accolade's full-motion video racing extravaganza careers onto The CD this month in a single-track, single-bike version. You'll have to use the keyboard to control your superbike in this demo, but you'll have your choice of full-screen VGA graphics or a high-res Super VGA screen that combines a smaller action window with a map showing each racer's position on the track. Just press the "M" key to switch between video modes.

You can run a nice, clean race if you want, but

here in *PC Gamer* land we like to see how many opponents we can run off the road — does wonders for those deadline-induced migraines. *Cyclemania* accommodates this nasty streak by awarding bonus points for each competitor you manage to shake up or knock down.



Bearing down on the pack, you lean into a hair-raising hairpin. Nothing like the smell of kneecaps burning on asphalt!

Drug Wars

— American Laser Games

If happiness is a warm gun, this demo must be heaven. The latest kill-fest from American Laser Games pits you and your trusty large-bore pistol against a South American drug cartel. Just like *Mad Dog McCree* and *Crime Patrol*, *Drug Wars* will have you taking aim at a series of full-screen, full-motion video sequences in a no-holds-barred, kill-or-be-killed orgy of flying lead. This is just the kind of fun you

congressman doesn't want you to have on your computer, so kick back, load up that shell-slinging mouse with low-points, and take a few shots for the First Amendment. So real, you can almost smell the cordite!



Another bad guy bites the dust in American Laser Games' *Drug Wars*.

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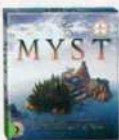
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Arcade Game 5007000
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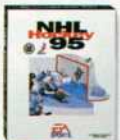
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MAC	LCIII			M	J	P
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SYSTEM Button indicates the available operating environment(s) for a given selection: DOS (for PC), Windows (for PC), Macintosh.

CPU Button indicates the minimum processor required. If a title is available in PC and Macintosh formats, the top half of this button represents PC system requirements and the bottom half represents Macintosh system requirements. Note: Ser.=Series, Class=Classic, Pent.=Pentium. For Mac.-LC listed includes LC 475, Performa 475, Quadra, Centris, Powerbook 180C, iFX or better.

RAM Button indicates the minimum amount of RAM required.

PERIPHERALS Button indicates required peripherals: M.=mouse, J.= joystick, K.= keyboard, P.= printer.

For all titles, the minimum system requirements recommended (unless otherwise indicated) are: Hardware: SVGA monitor (256 color), sound card, 40MB hard drive, double speed CD-ROM drive. Operating System: DOS 3.1, Windows 3.1, Macintosh System 7.0.

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Historical 5020003
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Arcade Game 5022405
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General Ref. 5009402
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MAC LCIII 4mb M J P

System Shock Enhanced
Arcade Game 5022900
DOS 386 CD-ROM 4mb M J P
MAC LCIII 4mb M J P

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Travel 5011606
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MAC LCIII 4mb M J P

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Music 5013909
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Arcade Game 5021505
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Advent. Game 5002803
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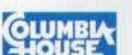
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Driving Simul. 5001300
DOS 386 CD-ROM 8mb M J P
MAC LCIII 4mb M J P

X-Com
Strategy Game 5008802
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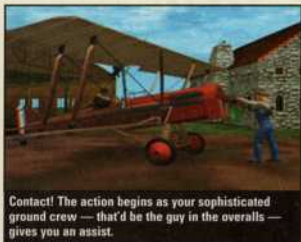
Product Information Number 90

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Wings of Glory

— Origin

First there was *Strike Commander*, then *Pacific Strike* — now, Origin's latest sim continues the time-travelling trend and takes us back to the earliest days of air combat. *Wings of Glory* casts you as a World War I fighter pilot, and challenges you to become an ace in the days when dogfighting was king, and the only kind of missile you had to worry about was a slug from a machine gun.



Contact! The action begins as your sophisticated ground crew — that'd be the guy in the overalls — gives you an assist.

Gamers who have been following Origin's aviation program closely will be pleasantly surprised to find that *Wings of Glory* has a nice, respectable frame rate on a fast 486. The bad news is that you're

not in an F-16 this time around. Just listen to the creaking of your wood-and-canvas fighter as you pull a tight turn, and you'll know you're not in Falconville anymore. Compared to today's jets, those WWI fighters were rocks with wings, and *WoG* reflects that. Immelmans and half-loops are almost out of the question in this demo, so you'll probably need some new tactics to score a kill. We've found out it can be done — but can you do it?

Weapons

T	Next air target out
Shift+T	Next air target in
Ctrl+T	Next ground target out
Shift+Ctrl+T	Next ground target in
Spacebar	Fire machine guns

Maneuvering/Navigation

1-0	Engine power
+	Step up engine
-	Step down engine
<	Left rudder
>	Right rudder
A	Autopilot
N	Navigation map
C	Cockpit art on/off

Game Interface

Alt+O	Options (flight only)
P	Pause
Alt+J	Recalibrate joystick
Alt+X	Exit the game

Camera Views

F1	Front view
F2	Chase camera
F3	Left view
F4	Right view
F5	Back view
F6	External camera
CTRL+F6	Cycle through ground targets
F7	Target view
F9	Victim camera
[]	Zoom in, out
Y	Eyes fixed on locked target

Brett Hull '95

— Accolade

You say you want some fast-paced sports action? Sounds like a job for Accolade Sports' latest game. It's *Brett Hull '95*, and if this hockey sim isn't fast enough for you, it's probably time you switched to Sanka.

Once again, Accolade has sportscaster extraordinaire Al Michaels calling the slapshots. So if you suffered from a bad case of hockey withdrawal during the long strike, *Brett Hull '95* should be right up your alley.



With less than two minutes left in the first period, the game is scoreless. Where's Brett when you need him?

Joystick

Button A on the joystick is for passing, and for selecting the player nearest to the puck.

Button B of joystick is for wrist shots and poke checks.

Button A with B is for those slapshots and body checks.

Keyboard

The "." key is the same as Button A of joystick

The "7" key is the same as Button B of joystick

The right shift key is same as pressing A & B together

Other useful keys

ALT+1-5	changes speed of game (recommand 5 for 486/50 MHz or faster)
F1-F4	changes lines
ALT-C	recalibrates the joystick

Klik & Play

— Maxis

Ever wonder if you have what it takes to design a computer game? *Klik & Play* from Maxis and Europress Software gives you the tools you need to find out. From arcade-style shooters to cute educational games, *K&P* is a complete development system for Windows. The digitized video tutorial in our demo shows you how easy it is to get started, and the sample games will give you an idea what can be done with the full version and a little patience. If you do nothing else with The CD this month, you've got to check out "Hungry Hedgehogs" — the digitized sound effects in this one had people all over the PC Gamer offices asking "Who the hell keeps doing that?"



The video tutorial will step you through the creation of this game.

"Triad is a truly awesome game!" But don't take our word for it.

RISE OF THE TRIAD

D A R K W A R

"Rise of the Triad is sure to have every DOOM freak in the world lining up just to drool all over it."

— Interactive Entertainment

"Rise of the Triad provides everything an action gamer could want."

— Computer Game Review

"This game is the most multiplayer-friendly product we've seen. DeathMatch will never be the same again."

— Computer Gaming World



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Die as one of five unique characters (male & female) on over thirty levels of action!

This is the game you've been waiting for. An all-out blast fest. The unrelenting blood and fire rampage of your most twisted nightmares. With ten incredibly vicious weapons, you annihilate the enemy. Your machine gun blasts holes in the walls. Sparks and metal fly as you blow apart everything in sight. Mass destruction has never been this fun!

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Available on disk and CD. Supports serial, modem, and 11-player network (individual or team) play.
(body bags not included)

Product Information Number 96

The Lemmings Chronicles — Psygnosis

Can you believe it? This is at least the fourth generation of Lemmings to grace the PC, and these crazy critters still haven't evolved a decent survival instinct. Naturally, it's up to you to save them from themselves — again. But experienced Lemmings fans will notice that Psygnosis has made some changes this time around. Basic talents like walking and jumping are available to any lemming at any

time, but others — like those umbrellas that save the little guys from long drops, or the shovels that let them dig tunnels — are only available as items that must be picked up and used by one lemming at a time. If you think this complicates things, you don't know the half of it. Go ahead and install our demo, which takes three puzzles from the 90 found in the full version, and see for yourself — but don't blame us if you get hooked.



A herd (flock? pride?) of lemmings marches dutifully toward death in our demo.



This button makes any lemming you select stop, blocking any other lemmings behind him.



Click on this button to make a lemming jump over obstacles or across gaps.



This button makes the selected lemming use whatever object he may have picked up.



Press this button, then click on a lemming to make him walk or change direction.



To make a lemming drop an item, click here, then on the lemming.

Capstone Strategy Games

— Capstone

Capstone has thrown its hat into the strategy-game arena with two

new entries, *Ultimate Backgammon* and *Casino Tournament*. Both games feature digitized speech and attractive SVGA graphics — the *Casino Tournament* demo is limited to Blackjack, but the full version will have a complete assortment of Las

Vegas games. Now, if we could just figure out a way to get the computer to pay off in real money....



The human player places a bet in the *Casino Tournament* demo.

Spectre VR CD-ROM

— Velocity

Velocity brings its futuristic tank-combat classic to Windows and CD-ROM with this classy update.

Spectre VR features a powerful new graphics engine for improved enemies and obstacles — complete with Gouraud shading and texture mapping for a more realistic look — and it keeps the network support for multiple players that made the original a hit. There's plenty of multimedia action here, too, with digitized sounds and movies —

there's even 3D sound support via QSound for owners of AWE32 sound boards or Sound Blaster 16 cards with the Advanced Signal Processor upgrade.



Spectre VR combines multimedia flash with multi-player network action.

VIRTUOSO™

Life Sucks. Rock And Roll Is Dead.
So Blast A Few Heads.

In the year 2055, life is just another word for chaos. Sure, your music has given you some moments of escape, but your rock superstar status has also given you too many nights locked away in hotel rooms, away from the din of crazed fans. Virtual Reality is the only reality that means anything anymore. In the world of Virtuoso you'll blast cyborgs in cavernous, sub-Martian passages, encounter the living dead in a Haunted House and submerge yourself with strange life forms in an Underwater Biosphere. Now, isn't that just what you needed?



VIC TOKAI INC. 22904 Lockness Ave. Torrance, CA 90501

PC CD-ROM

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Product Information Number 140

Virtuoso

— Vic Tokai

Don't forget, you saw it here first — the perfect PC game for the head-banger in all of us. A digitized speed-metal soundtrack drives the shoot-'em-up action in some truly bizarre settings. You can select the Haunted House, a Marine research station, or the surface of Mars. But wherever you choose to go, your on-screen persona is armed to the teeth and dressed for a Metallica concert. The object in this one is simple and familiar — shoot everything that moves, grab power-ups and keys, and find the way out. Use your joystick, or these keys:

Virtuoso controls

Cursor keys	Move left, right, back and forth
Space Bar	Press to fire.
<	Side-step left.
>	Side-step right.
Tab	Throw smartbomb
M	Display map of current level (if you have Map Bonus).
ESC	Pauses the game, lets you return to the main menu.

GENie for Windows with Cyberstrike and SVGA Air Warrior

— GENie

Not to ignore on-line gamers, here's the front end for the on-line network GENie. GENie offers e-mail, BBS access, conferencing and, as our readers will be glad to note, multiplayer gaming. To take advantage of the multiplayer games, we've included the front ends to two of the most popular games on GENie.

SVGA Air Warrior will have you flying all types of warplanes through sev-

eral eras of air combat, from biplanes to modern aircraft. The controls are pretty simple and missions challenging.

Cyberstrike takes you into a futuristic battle scenario where you pilot a battle craft. Your craft will roam around fighting other on-line pilots. Energy runs everything in this game; shields, guns and engines, so stay powered up.

The GENie front end will require Windows, 4MB hard drive space and VGA graphics. Cyberstrike will require an additional 2.5MB hard drive space and SVGA

Air Warrior will require an additional whopping 38MB hard drive space. Each game comes with a README.TXT or MANUAL.DOC file to learn those little control variables.

For basic service including e-mail, multiplayer games and chatting the current rates are \$8.95 per month for first 4 hours non-prime time and \$3.00 per hour once the first 4 hours have been used. There's an additional surcharge of \$9.50 per hour for prime time usage. All rates are for the continental U.S. And you can call the folks at GENie at 1-800-638-9636 for more information.

Imagi-Nation Network

— ImagiNation Network

Check out *The ImagiNation Network*. Where most services have screen after screen of indecipherable jargon, or at best glitzy colors with the same jargon, *ImagiNation* offers an entirely different interface — a town motif where the various utilities and services are couched in friendly, familiar surroundings. The friendliness even extends to your own on-line persona, a graphic representation you can customize to mirror you.

E-mail, conferences, entertainment areas, and the promise of future on-ramps to the Info Autobahn make *ImagiNation* a viable alternative to the millions who don't really want to know the ins and outs of Z-Modem and Wildcat, or learn the lexicon of the Internet...at least not yet. Install *ImagiNation* and get all the info on how to go online.

Running the install program — FUN.BAT — loads *ImagiNation* onto your hard drive, and will require about 15MB of disk space. Then type INN from the DOS prompt to go into the sign-up screens. At the time of this writing, rates for *ImagiNation* were:

Basic Plan	\$9.95/month 5 hours/month
Gold Plan	\$49.95/month 25 hours/month
Platinum	\$99.95/month 50 hours/month

You can call 1-800-IMAGIN1 to get the latest rates and other information about getting started.



The opening *ImagiNation* land will take you to all sorts of destinations at the click of a button.



Here's an ME109 diving on a pack of unsuspecting bombers — it's like shooting fish in a barrel.



"... A prince must act like a beast ...
a fox to recognize traps, and a lion
to frighten off wolves."

Machiavelli the Prince™

It's 15th century Europe – resources are bountiful and deception is king. It's the perfect time to execute your plan for world domination. Manipulate military, political and religious powers using bribery, piracy and assassination. Acquire wealth by trading with over 40 cities. But plan your strategy carefully, young prince. Because every move can mean the difference between exaltation and excommunication.



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MICRO PROSE

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Product Information Number 131

THE FLOPPY

INSTALLING • PLAYING • QUICK TIPS

On this month's floppy disk, we've got one of the most addictive puzzlers of the year. You'll get hours of joy from our demo of *The Incredible Machine 2!*

Quick Start The Floppy

You say you're a PC guru, and you don't need any help getting the demo up and running? Well, OK then!

1. Insert The Floppy, and change to your 3.5" drive (usually A or B).
2. Type INSTALL, and press Enter.
3. There you have it! You'll be gaming in just a few minutes — unless something's gone horribly wrong, and you're not quite the computing wiz you thought you were. If that's the case, maybe you *should* take a look at the rest of this page...

Requirements:

Minimum Requirements: 386SX; VGA; 2MB RAM; 2MB hard-drive space; Mouse

We Recommend: 386/40Mhz or faster to really keep things clicking along

If Nothing Works...

Unfortunately, we can't provide technical and customer support for problems you may encounter with The Floppy or *The Incredible Machine 2*. But should your copy fail to run at all, or display error messages that indicate the disk itself is bad, return it to the following address for replacement:



The Floppy Replacement
March, 1995
PC Gamer
1350 Old Bayshore Highway
Suite 210
Burlingame, CA 94010

Indicate any error message you receive.

The Floppy is manufactured by MegaSoft, one of the foremost disk duplicators in America. Before duplication, it is rigorously tested and certified to be virus-free.

The Incredible Machine 2

— Sierra

Sierra/Dynamix's *The Incredible Machine* was a terrific, innovative puzzle game that had a lot of gamers spending way too much time pushing mice around. The sequel is *finally* out, with all-new puzzles and gadgets to play with — and we've got it.

The idea is to use an assortment of bizarre parts to complete an elaborate machine in the Rub-

Goldberg tradition and accomplish a specific goal, like getting bowling balls into a basket or setting off a fireworks show. Like all good puzzle games, *TM2* is not nearly as simple as it looks or sounds — the first couple of puzzles in our demo are easy, but sooner or later you'll hit a real brain-teaser. Click on the question mark in the control panel to get more information on how to play.



Here's one of the stranger puzzles from the demo — the idea is just to get the bowling ball off the screen. Getting it in motion's not too tough, but *keeping* it moving is the real trick.

When you think you've solved the puzzle, click here to set it in motion.

To return to the main menu, click this icon.

Gears are used to connect parts or to reverse rotation.

Belts can stretch to connect any two rotating parts.

Caution walls are slippery and impervious to explosions.

Blimps float in one direction until they hit something, then they turn around.

When you have more objects to use than will fit in the window, the arrows let you scroll through them.



Click here to turn the control panel on and off.

This window contains the objects you use to complete the puzzle. In some cases, you won't need all the parts provided with a given puzzle. You'll just have to experiment to find the best combination. The full version of *TM2* provides more than 100 different animated parts to help you solve its 150 puzzles.

Click here to turn the background scenery on and off.

THIS CAT LOVES TO DOGFIGHT



DESIGNED BY THE BEST: The award-winning creators of Chuck Yeager's Air Combat.



TOTAL IMMERSION: Full texture-mapping, digitized explosions, video briefings, and hyper-realistic 4-track stereo sound effects and wingman audio.



4 WAYS TO PLAY: 50 Single Mission Campaign with carrier wing command, Quick Mission Builder, and Pro Mission Builder with extreme detail.



LOCK ON: Bandits use team tactics, vertical maneuvers, jinking high G turns, chaff, flares, and the design strengths of their aircraft.



OPTIMIZE IT: Multiple graphics options and selectable resolution modes for MAX performance.

When it comes to defending its share of 24,000 feet, the F-14B Tomcat will tangle with anything.

But so will any of the fighters you can fly in the most sophisticated flight simulation on the market. Advanced simulation technologies and a custom graphics/audio package create the most riveting, in-the-cockpit experience available for the PC CD.

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Powerhouse

Fun and Profit During The Energy Crises

Impressions' David Lester says energy resource exploitation is more than just drilling oil wells — but every bit as fun.

—Gary Meredith



Game: Powerhouse
 Developer: Impressions
 Publisher: Impressions, 222 Third St., Suite 0234,
 Cambridge, MA 02142 (617) 225-0500
 Projected Price: \$89.95
 Percentage Complete: 20%

In a nutshell:

Powerhouse puts you in control of one of four near-future energy conglomerates, all of which must deal with a dwindling fossil fuel supply, finding the energy sources to replace it, and the environmental and political consequences of those actions.

What's so special?

The huge database and open-ended design make for a game you can play again and again, while the multimedia resources make *Powerhouse* seem almost film-like.

Why should I care?

Sure, you could build power plants in *Sim City*. But previous games in the genre have not fully considered the effects of energy generation on the whole of society. *Powerhouse* does.

And when's it coming out?

Impressions expects to release *Powerhouse* in April, 1995 — but it might be more like May.



In *Powerhouse*, a randomizing factor means that you can't rely on known geology to pinpoint deposits of oil, coal, or fissionable materials.

It's the near future, only a few decades hence. The world is caught up in an energy crisis that reduces the shortages of the 1970s to little more than an economic hiccup by comparison. Despite the bold predictions of late-20th century scientists that a golden age of cheap, clean energy was on the horizon, most of us still depend on rapidly depleting fossil fuels. A spate of acquisitions and mergers within the oil industry is inevitable. And out of the settling dust arise four major conglomerates — the Powerhouses.

So begins Impressions' newest creation, *Powerhouse*. Certainly, there have been other "oil tycoon" games before, but these concentrated almost exclusively on drilling for oil and selling it. As we can see from the daily news, energy production goes far beyond the monetary aspirations of some wildcatter. It has become, for better or worse, woven into the fabric of our daily lives.

Whatever happens within the industry affects us on many levels — and that's the idea behind *Powerhouse*.

You play the CEO of one of the four Powerhouses. In the shadow of a looming fossil-fuel shortage, it's up to you to both consolidate and improve your oil drilling operations, while at the



Careful allocation of personnel is a primary concern, so study your exploration reports closely before sending your people off to work.

same time searching for and exploiting alternate energy sources. These sources, which include solar, wind, geothermal nuclear, hydro-electric, and wave/tidal energy, aren't just handed to

relationships between energy production and the rest of society. Government takes an important role, for instance, requiring you to work with and appease the political powers or risk losing your



Energy resource development is a real gamble — just what technology would you bet on to eventually replace fossil fuels?

you. You must make shrewd investments in research and development even as you weigh the environmental, social, and political implications of your

franchise. With *Powerhouse*, Lester hopes to bring a third dimension to a genre whose previous games have been mostly two-dimensional, near-arcade presentations. Obviously, we're wading out into the much deeper waters of a serious simulation here.

Don't think that *Powerhouse* sacrifices gameplay for harsh realism, though. At the heart of any great game is the sense of fun — something *Powerhouse* delivers, dare I say, by the barrel. Indeed, Lester feels that the game's subject matter has a good deal of inherent excitement

to begin with. That sense of the tycoon as adventurer — personified in films and TV shows like "Dallas" — are, Lester thinks, a continuation of the

"We wanted to provide the option for players to invest in other energy sources...to eventually move away from fossil fuel production."

— David Lester, *Impressions*

actions. To help in the decision-making process, you'll be provided with not only the results of your own research and exploration teams, but with a constant flow of market reports, news items, and database accesses as well.

David Lester, head of Impressions and one of the game's creators, feels that the "oil tycoon" genre has never really been properly executed. Most games, he says, have operated more or less in a vacuum, without realistically addressing the intertwining



Keep an eye on the stock market, especially when considering what acquisitions you might undertake.

romance of the Wild West legends. A part of the American dream, if you will. There were some definite decisions made regarding actual game design.

Previously, Impressions' games have been DOS-based, in consideration of the fact that Windows performance for their graphically sophisticated, data-heavy creations would be sluggish at best. In particular, Impressions intended *Powerhouse* to have SVGA graphics and sharply modeled, tile-based terrain maps, both of which



The financial report screen lets you keep tabs on where your competitors' money is going, and helps you to compare strategies.

place considerable demands on a computer's processor. With the introduction of Microsoft's Win G editor, they discovered that they could finally produce Windows games with the speed and playability of a DOS game. Thus, *Powerhouse* marks Impressions' first Windows game.

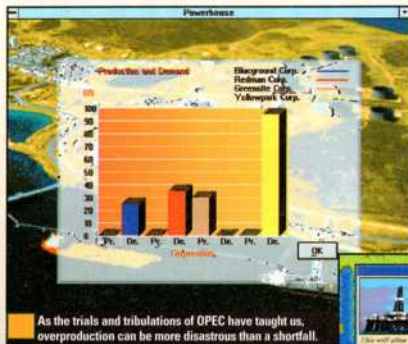
And as an added bonus of the Windows environment, Impressions found they were able to utilize SVGA



Tapping an energy source is just part of the job. You must also develop and operate a transportation network to distribute your product.

graphics and multimedia to produce a truly enveloping game. In fact, with the introduction of full-motion video and professional voice actors, *Powerhouse* wanders perilously close to interactive film territory.

One of the goals of *Powerhouse*'s designers was to bring to life future technologies that are now only theories. With a buffer of a few decades separating game- and real-time, they were free to indulge in considerable speculation on just what tomorrow's energy alternatives will be. Sure, there are the givens, such as solar and nuclear power; but there's also considerable



As the trials and tribulations of OPEC have taught us, overproduction can be more disastrous than a shortfall.

exploration of new technologies within the fossil fuel industry. Improved exploration and drilling techniques are addressed, as well as more sophisticated refineries which utilize every drop — or chunk — of fossilized energy in the cleanest, most efficient ways.

You can't just go drilling anywhere — you've got to satisfy the concerns of the government and other groups before a permit can be issued.

"Every time we look at the game, we try to envision how we can make it exciting for the player"

— David Lester, Impressions

To keep things interesting, *Powerhouse* offers a couple of randomizing features. For those who want a comfortable familiarity with the known world, there's a standard geographical layout which still allows you to randomize energy deposits, so that you can't assume the huge oil reserves of the Persian Gulf area. Beyond this, you can even randomize geography and play on a completely unknown world.

Playability was another concern. With the reams of data available to a player, the designers feared *Powerhouse* might become more spreadsheet than game. So a conscious effort was made to balance game-play, so that you don't get bogged down in the

and act upon too much information.

David Lester and Impressions have high hopes for *Powerhouse* — and from all indications, there's good reason for hopefulness. Impressions has always been committed to strategy gaming, even as other publishers turned to the flashier allure of movie/games. And now they've stepped up to SVGA and multimedia components, without sacrificing the challenging, detailed game-play that has been the company's hallmark.

Powerhouse looks to be another impending success. And as Lester says, if it can educate a few people on the complexities of the energy equation and the stake we all have in its future, then so much the better.



From the Hot Icon List you can customize the reporting process so that the reports you want to see are just a click away.

Form After Function

Impressions is a company any die-hard gamer can respect, because it's been dedicated to game design first, and has long resisted the "extras" — full-motion video, SVGA graphics, and so on — that lesser publishers hide behind.

But while that philosophy has served Impressions well over the years, today's prevalence of SVGA graphics and 3D-modeled flourishes has left a few of the company's titles — most recently, *Detroit* — showing a bit of age, despite the excellence of their content. We had mentioned that fact, both in our review of *Detroit* and in our coverage of 1994's Summer CES. And Impressions, apparently, was listening.

At this past CES in Las Vegas, Impressions' president David Lester brought the subject up. "You've said you like our games, but that you felt they could look better," he said. "And with *Powerhouse*, we said to ourselves 'We'll just show 'em that we can do both.'"

Visual impact is an important facet of any computer game — but it's not what Impressions looks at first, according to public relations manager Chris Foster. Don't misunderstand: Impressions' designers are very aware of the appearance of their games. It's just that they feel putting graphics before game play — especially in a strategy simulation — is really a matter of the tail wagging the dog. The graphics should serve the game, not dominate it.

Still, Impressions' latest offerings have certainly evolved visually over the past year. Foster notes three principle points in this evolution, beginning with the bringing on board of Art Director Chris Beatrice. He credits Beatrice with bringing a new and dynamic outlook to game graphics. The move to SVGA with games such as *Frontlines* was another bellwether, as was the somewhat cautious foray into 3D *Studio* with the classic modeling in *Lords of the Realm*.

"Our priority is not to be at the forefront of graphics technology," says Foster. "We strive to strike a balance between clarity and flamboyance — an aim we hope we've reached with *Powerhouse*."

From what we've seen, Impressions is well on track. The company's dedication to solid game design is commendable — and its move to SVGA should assure that an even broader audience will enjoy that dedication.

NOTHING, NOTHING CAN PREPARE YOUR PC.



FINISH HIM!



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FRIENDSHIP?



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NOTHING, NOTHING CAN PREPARE YOU...for the *ultimate* arcade translation of Mortal Kombat® II. "Finish Him" with *all* the true graphics, character animations, CD-quality music and awesome sound f/x of the arcade blockbuster. Brutal special moves, Friendships, Babalities, hidden surprises, crushing combos and outrageous finishing moves are yours to kommand. Let the Kombat Kontinue!!!



MIDWAY

PC CD-ROM



3.5" DISK

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Product Information Number 145

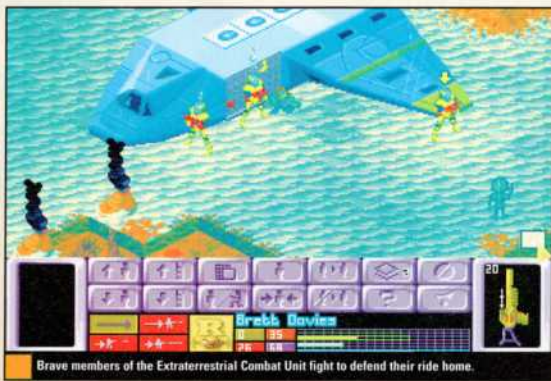
X-COM: Terror From

Sequel Threatens Humanity With Watery Death!

X-COM: UFO Defense

came out of nowhere to win critical acclaim. But can the Extraterrestrial Combat Unit's next mission match the excitement of the first?

by Dan Bennett



Brave members of the Extraterrestrial Combat Unit fight to defend their ride home.

Game: *X-COM: Terror From the Deep*

Developer: MicroProse UK

Publisher: MicroProse Software Inc., 180 Lakeside Drive, Hunt Valley, MD 21030-2245, (410) 771-0440.

Projected Price: TBA

Percent Complete: 75

In a nutshell:

X-COM: UFO Defense was good enough to win the first PC Gamer Award for Best Strategy Game. The sequel promises more bug-eyed-monster-blasting fun in an entirely new setting.

What's so special?

The folks at MicroProse UK are throwing all-new aliens and technology, plus improved graphics and sound, into *Terror From the Deep*.

Why should I care?

If you liked the first *X-COM*, you'd probably be satisfied with more of the same — but MicroProse is going the extra mile to make the sequel something different.

And when's it coming out?

MicroProse is aiming for a Summer 1995 release.

X-COM: *UFO Defense*, MicroProse's sci-fi strategy game, was probably the biggest surprise hit of 1994. No one in the PC Gamer offices was very impressed with the early demo that made the rounds before the full version hit the shelves. But that demo left so much of the *X-COM* story untold, barely hinting at the game's true depth.

Turned out that this odd-looking game from MicroProse had something for everyone: rich strategic and tactical elements, attractive graphics and sounds, plus technology, story, and character development that put some current roleplaying games to shame. All these components worked together to make *X-COM* a big success — and a major consumer of gamers' free time. That's why it earned Editors' Choice and our first award for the year's best strategy game, and why so many people are still playing it today.

But there are always some gamers who can't get enough of a good thing, which is why MicroProse UK is now hard at work on a sequel.

X-COM: UFO Defense challenged gamers to command their own Extraterrestrial Combat Unit, managing global funding to build bases; recruiting soldiers, scientists and engineers; researching captured alien technology to develop new weapons, aircraft and armor; and leading tactical-level battles in the cities, deserts, jungles, and cornfields of Earth.



While most of *Terror's* battles take place underwater, there will be some surface combat.

The tactical combat system was nearly perfect, balancing a wealth of options with a simple interface, and the strategic-level game added depth to the package. The goal, of course, was simplicity itself: Save humanity from destruction at the hands of marauding aliens. But unlike most strategy games, *X-COM: UFO*

Defense had an underlying story and a definite ending, more like a role-playing game or graphic adventure.

In *X-COM: Terror from the Deep*, Earth is in danger again. Faced with defeat, the evil aliens have turned to

the Deep

their last resort and initiated a second line of attack. You might even say they've called in the marines; they're reviving a hidden army of oceanic

verse and others which used the engine in other settings. In the end, we chose to develop *Terror From the Deep* because it's unique.

"We knew we had a great game on our hands and sat down to brainstorm what else we could do with the game's engine"

—Valentina Britten, MicroProse brand manager

aliens who've been hibernating in the murky depths for ages. Their ultimate plan is to flood the planet and make it their summer home — which, of course, means dealing with the planet's unfortunate infestation of humans.

Only the courageous men and women of the Extraterrestrial Combat Unit stand between mankind and extinction. So what else is new?

Quite a bit, as it turns out.

Valentina Britten, brand manager for MicroProse UK, said *Terror From the Deep* will have more than just a handful of new enemies to fight. The game's setting is almost exclusively aquatic, she

"There aren't too many games that take place underwater," Britten said, "primarily because it's difficult to bring believable underwater scenes. It requires the development of unusual palettes that vary with depth, and a great deal more animation, like bubbles and waving green seaweed."

To that end, the MicroProse UK designers came up with new sound effects to distinguish undersea missions from surface battles, and they created more than twice the graphics and animation contained in the original. *Terror From the Deep* will also boast more than twice as many terrain types and maps. "There are over 15 different landscapes," Britten said.

Even the game's audio driver system will be new, and the CD version will provide CD-quality audio for gamers with standard sound cards.

Otherwise, *Terror From the Deep* will have the same look and feel that captured so many fans of its predecessor. Britten says that "like the original X-COM, this one is a challenging, turn-based strategy game which — as one of our users said — will 'eat at your brain.'"

In fact, fans of X-COM have had a part in designing the new game. "As is always the case with MicroProse products, we have

given a sympathetic ear to the comments raised about the original product, and have tried to incorporate as many of them as possible into *Terror From the Deep*," Britten said.

Play balance is one area where gamers have influenced *Terror From the Deep*. "We received conflicting player feedback about the difficulty of the first game," Britten said. "For example, some players posted BBS comments which stated that the game is too difficult, even at beginner level." But other users said the game's sharply-increasing difficulty curve was the very thing that kept them interested in the game.

"This sort of balance is exactly what we try to achieve," Britten continued.



The Creature from the Black Lagoon has nothing on the genetic horrors the "aquatoids" will send against you.

"We think we got the difficulty level right with X-COM, and we are targeting *Terror From the Deep* at the same level."

MicroProse's Public Relations Manager Paula Rebich said *Terror From the Deep* probably won't be the last X-COM game. MicroProse understands the "brand-name" value of the X-COM

franchise and plans to capitalize on it — in a big way. And although it isn't yet on the schedule for release in the states, MicroProse UK is already working on a third X-COM title. You can bet that we'll be tracking that one down, too.



The Triton is your basic flying submarine / troop-transport — a necessity for fighting the new alien threat.



No, it's not the dreaded Landshark — it's another one of the invaders' hideous mutations.

said, which means a lot more work for the design team.

"We knew we had a great game on our hands, and sat down to brainstorm what else we could do with the game's engine," Britten said. "We came up with over 30 ideas for potential games, some of which were set in the X-COM uni-

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Conqueror

Surely You Joust!

Time-travel back to medieval England for an adventure that combines detailed fief-management and long-range strategy with lots of bone-crunching, first-person action.

—William R. Trotter



To initiate a joust with any of the available knights, simply click on one of the shields hanging outside the tents.

incorporation of Domesday Book data into the game's economy and geography.

You can start with a pre-generated character, or "roll your own" until the resultant stats please you. If you chose the latter method, the game will present you with a series of six "moral dilemmas," each representing a pivotal, character-shaping experience you must live through between the ages of 12 and 17. Your responses will influence the weight and distribution of character points when you reach the game-start age of 18. In some cases, the choices may also result in your being equipped with special items.

One of the tastier qualities of *Conqueror* is that the system allows you to take the moral high road in this process, thus giving yourself useful ratings in the area of "piety" (hero or scoundrel, at some point during the game, you'll have to do business with the Church...), and still play the rest of the game out as a black-hearted, treacherous rogue, if you want to.

"The consequences of your 'moral dilemma' choices are neither as obvious

None of us, I dare say, would actually care to live in eleventh-century England, where even the nobility only bathed three or four times a year and the average life expectancy was 37. But so rich is the lore and legend of the

Middle Ages, so fixed and evocative are its images of castles, armored princes, and winsome ladies in conical hats, that it has never lost its romantic allure.

And, for all its squalor and brutality, it was an age that valued honor and valor. A bold, ambitious man who did not flinch before the vicissitudes of Fortune could carve out a place of power and privilege for himself and his descendants for generations to come.

It is no accident, then, that the entire sword-and-sorcery genre, in both fiction and gaming, is essentially medieval in its trappings; the Middle Ages offer a near-perfect environment for roleplaying adventure.

Software Sorcery recognized this fact, and its new title, *Conqueror*, begins in 1086 A.D. — the year William the Conqueror ordered the "Domesday Book" census, the most complete extant record of any medieval society. Part of the exceptionally rich texture of *Conqueror*, and much of its feeling of historical accuracy, derives from the



Open-field combat scenes have a stylized look reminiscent of the battles depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry.

nor as immediate as you might think," said Shon Damron, one of the game's creators. "But sooner or later, those choices determine who will talk to you and how, who will give you information, who will want to assist you, and

F.Y.I. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: *Conqueror*
Developer: Software Sorcery
Publisher: Time-Warner Interactive, 2210 West Olive Ave., Burbank, CA 91506 (818) 295-6600
Projected Price: \$49.99
Percent Complete: 80%

In a nutshell:

Conqueror is designed to be four games in one: a fief-management simulation, a strategic war game, a hand-to-hand combat and jousting arcade game, and — overlaying these other three elements — a role-playing adventure set in a colorful and dangerous era.

What's so special?

Although the roleplaying and empire-building elements in *Conqueror* seem to leave nothing to be desired in terms of detail and historical plausibility, the main emphasis in the game is on action — and plenty of it.

Why should I care?

Software Sorcery makes games that are beautiful to look at, supported by lush music and sound effects. *Conqueror* is no exception, with a smooth, movie-like polish that's a treat for the senses.

And when's it coming out?

April or May, 1995

very importantly, who will marry you. You can play the game victoriously as an utter blackguard, if you want to. But generally speaking, the game rewards balance — in character and in accomplishments, both military and economic.

Once you have a character you're happy with, you're dubbed a knight and given your basic start-up resources: a sword, a lance, a steed, 240 shillings, and a fief of no great size or importance. From this universal beginning, you can choose a career of conquest and plunder, or one based on chivalry,



Throughout the game, the great fire-breathing dragon will periodically scourge various parts of the realm. If you succeed in your climactic duel with him, you will be chosen King's Champion and you will have conquered Conqueror.



hard work, and good deeds. From there, you'll follow one of two paths to ultimate victory: Slay the dragon that has been terrorizing England for many years and thereby achieve the rank of King's Champion, or increase your wealth and power until you're strong enough to march on London and commit regicide.

Once you've been dubbed, you get to try your knightly skills at a tournament held in your honor. To do this, you move to the Tournament area — a kind of medieval arcade, with plenty of opportunity for rough-and-tumble gaming. Before breaking lances with an experienced knight, you would be well advised to put in some time training against the quintain, a dummy opponent that doesn't lance you back. When you're ready to joust for real, click on the shield of one of the six knights available for combat.

Before the joust begins, visit the grandstands and exchange pleasantries with the fair maidens gathered there to observe your prowess (well, "pleasantries" is not always what you get —

one young strumpet tells you to sod off and calls you a "dirty chamber pot"). Some of these ladies have large dowries and may be willing to offer you money, land, or skilled advice, so it behooves you to make a chivalrous response, no matter how provoked you may be.

You may joust three times in a single day (presumably after the third bout, you'd be too bushed to try it again). The lance is controlled by mouse, and believe me, it's trickier than it looks — not to mention the fact that some of these guys have been jousting longer than you've been alive. Still, if you persist, you should eventually win a tilt and receive a favor from your chosen lady as a reward.

While you're on the Tournament Screen, you should spend a few days practicing melee combat (only one melee allowed per day), because that's where you learn the mouse-control skills that will enable you to successfully storm an enemy's castle. And as with the jousting, the moves aren't as easy as they first appear.

Your village — and any other village you may travel to — offers several interest-

ing and useful sites: an inn (where you can pick up information by talking to folks), a blacksmith's (where you can buy or sell an amazing variety of arms and armor), a church (speak often and respectfully to the priest — antagonizing the Church is not a wise move), and a money lender (to be avoided like the plague except in dire emergencies, due to extortionist interest rates).

Successful fief management is a prerequisite for advancement, and I was favorably impressed both with Conqueror's economic model and the handsome graphic display that depicts the fief itself — a lush, scrolling, aerial view of your castle, your serfs' dwellings, and the fields and forests that produce whatever wealth you may have.

Castle-building is but one part of your overall development, albeit the most visually dramatic one. You must first clear the land, then decide — based on your geographical location and the type of resources available — whether to invest in livestock, forestry, or mining. Once your fief is a going concern, the game's excellent economic model



Storming a castle is no easy task, and often requires a lot of combat in passageways and other tight places. These scenes put one in mind of sword-and-sorcery RPGs.

really kicks in, and your ongoing prosperity is dependent on a number of genuinely medieval factors: marriage to a prudent woman (a large dowry helps too, of course), rotation of crops for maximum yield, fair taxes on your serfs and prompt payment of your own taxes to the overlord, building roads to facilitate trade — the game offers you many, many choices, and the task of finding a proper, profitable balance among them is quite challenging.

For activities beyond your own fief, Conqueror supplies a tactical map of England, designed in accordance with the data preserved in the original Domesday Book. Using time compression, you can travel abroad — alone, or in command of an army — fulfilling quests, hunting down brigands, and always on the lookout for a weak castle you can knock off.



The village smithy stocks a wide variety of weapons and armor — all of it pretty costly. But don't worry — the sword you receive at your dubbing is quite adequate for the first stages of the game.

Siege warfare itself is not represented in the game (some players may find this a weakness — I have mixed feelings about it myself); instead, the game cuts right to the chase by means of "castle skirmishes" which represent the storming that, presumably, brings a

successful siege to a climax.

When you enter the "castle skirmish" mode, the game will select an objective — the central keep, for instance. Using mouse or keyboard commands, you must battle your way through to the objective in first-person style, slaying the enemy soldiers who



Jousting is thirsty work. Buy a cool, refreshing ale at the village inn, and while you're there, chat with the other customers — you never know what useful information you might pick up.

confront you and sometimes passing through various rooms or passages. The game allows you to pick up weapons, change weapons (if your crossbow runs out of arrows, for instance), and give generalized orders to your own soldiers.



Fief management made easy. Well, not so easy, maybe, but at least comprehensible, thanks to the clean layout of data.

Although I have an almost generic aversion to arcade-style combat sequences, I found those in *Conqueror* to be livelier and more engaging than most. The heavy emphasis on first-person action is nicely balanced against the more thoughtful and painstaking element of fief management, making the game much more than a one-trick pony. And open-air combat is handled in a traditional manner: you select formations, position your troops, give the orders, and

What Else is Available?

For readers who are new to PC gaming and who might want to get a taste of the Medieval Experience before *Conqueror* hits the stores, here's a list of readily available games that cover the same general period.

Castles II (Interplay)

The floppy version has been around since 1992, but this was the game that started the whole Medieval genre — and the CD-ROM's enhancements make it quite fascinating still. The emphasis is on castle-building and besieging, and the animated scenes that depict both activities have lost none of their power to charm and delight.

PC Gamer rating: **84%**

Kingmaker (Avalon Hill)

A richly textured PC conversion of a classic board game, *Kingmaker* focuses on statecraft, skullduggery, and high-level strategies. It successfully untangles one of the bloodiest and most confusing eras in Medieval history (England from 1450 to 1490), but novice gamers may bog down in its wealth of historical detail and complicated game-play. If your idea of a good time is to become enmeshed in the gaming equivalent of six or seven Shakespearean history plays simultaneously, give it a try.

PC Gamer rating: **82%**

Serf City: Life is Feudal (SSI)

A lightweight variation on your basic little-computer-people-building-big-kingdom theme, this game is neither as amusing as its title would indicate nor as challenging as others of its ilk. Our reviewer summed it up this way: "Fun if you're unfamiliar with kingdom-building, but it needs more variety."

PC Gamer rating: **75%**

Lords of the Realm (Impressions)

Our reviewer found this game very appealing indeed, citing its superb balance between macro and micro elements. A solid economic model and realistic castle-building contribute to its realism, the computer's AI program is sophisticated, and the interface is so intuitive you can almost play without reading the manual.

PC Gamer rating: **91%**

hope their valor will carry the day.

One thing is for certain: *Conqueror* is gorgeous to look at, with smooth animation and colorful, cinematic shots galore. Music and sound effects are also first-rate, starting with the dramatic excerpt from *Siegfried's Funeral Music* that accompanies the opening title (shades of John Boorman's *Excalibur*).

"We worked to achieve a movie-like gloss and texture, including very cinematic camera angles and movements. From the beginning," remarked Shon Damron, when I mentioned the

obvious cinematic influences. "Everyone who worked on the game is a movie buff, and we all re-watched and learned from the whole knights-of-the-round-table genre, from *Ivanhoe* to *Excalibur*. If the game player feels immersed in a movie, then we've met one of our goals."

Here is Software Sorcery's vision of the Middle Ages, then — not as they really were, but as we might wish them to be. 'Tis a fine realm for adventuring, and I expect that *Conqueror* will appeal to a broad, enthusiastic audience.

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Each fief has different requirements for prosperity. In northern counties, coal mining may bring the highest return; in the midlands, sheep herding is likely to be a suitable use for the land. And don't neglect forestry, wherever you are.

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CARMEN WORLD DLU	BMCC	361	BARBERSHOP VOL. 20	BMCC	353	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	359	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	370	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	378
CARMEN WORLD DLU	BMCC	362	BARBERSHOP VOL. 21	BMCC	354	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	360	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	371	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	379
CARMEN WORLD DLU	BMCC	363	BARBERSHOP VOL. 22	BMCC	355	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	361	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	372	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	380
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CARMEN WORLD DLU	BMCC	366	BARBERSHOP VOL. 25	BMCC	358	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	364	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	375	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	383
CARMEN WORLD DLU	BMCC	367	BARBERSHOP VOL. 26	BMCC	359	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	365	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	376	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	384
CHESS MASTER 3000 META	BMCC	368	BARBERSHOP VOL. 27	BMCC	360	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	366	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	377	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	385
CHIFFERFACE	BMCC	369	BARBERSHOP VOL. 28	BMCC	361	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	367	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	378	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	386
CHICKEN WINGS	BMCC	370	BARBERSHOP VOL. 29	BMCC	362	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	368	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	379	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	387
CHICKEN WINGS	BMCC	371	BARBERSHOP VOL. 30	BMCC	363	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	369	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	380	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	388
CHICKEN WINGS	BMCC	372	BARBERSHOP VOL. 31	BMCC	364	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	370	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	381	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	389
CHICKEN WINGS	BMCC	373	BARBERSHOP VOL. 32	BMCC	365	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	371	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	382	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	390
CHICKEN WINGS	BMCC	374	BARBERSHOP VOL. 33	BMCC	366	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	372	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	383	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	391
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CHICKEN WINGS	BMCC	379	BARBERSHOP VOL. 38	BMCC	371	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	377	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	388	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	396
CHICKEN WINGS	BMCC	380	BARBERSHOP VOL. 39	BMCC	372	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	378	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	389	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	397
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CHICKEN WINGS	BMCC	389	BARBERSHOP VOL. 48	BMCC	381	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	387	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	398	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	406
CHICKEN WINGS	BMCC	390	BARBERSHOP VOL. 49	BMCC	382	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	388	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	399	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	407
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CHICKEN WINGS	BMCC	398	BARBERSHOP VOL. 57	BMCC	390	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	396	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	407	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	415
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CHICKEN WINGS	BMCC	400	BARBERSHOP VOL. 59	BMCC	392	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	398	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	409	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	417
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CHICKEN WINGS	BMCC	405	BARBERSHOP VOL. 64	BMCC	397	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC	403	PAINTS GENERAL	BMCC	414	SUPER-ACE GAMES	BMCC	422
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CHICKEN WINGS	BMCC	416	BARBERSHOP VOL. 75	BMCC	408	INDIA JONES 4 ARTISTS	BMCC							

New Connections with Windows '95

Microsoft plans its own online service

When one of the world's largest software publishers decides to take on a new market such as online communication, it's sure to draw a lot of attention — especially if the software giant in question happens to be Microsoft. During the COMDEX show held in Las Vegas, Microsoft confirmed it's been developing an online service to be included as a standard feature of Windows '95. Titled Microsoft Network (catchy, huh?), the new service will compete directly with the nation's most popular services — CompuServe, America Online, and Prodigy.

While rumors of the network have been bouncing around the industry for some time, it was generally assumed that the service would focus on technical users, business organizations, and Microsoft's own software

customers. But in the official announcement of the Microsoft Network, chairman Bill Gates made it clear that the new service will have the same mass appeal as the current market leader, CompuServe, and feature improvements that will allow new technical and presentational opportunities the existing online networks can't yet provide.

This last bit is of vital importance, since Microsoft itself won't actually be providing the specific services available through the Microsoft Network. Instead, the company will rely on outside service providers — and making MS Network attractive enough to interest top-quality providers will be the main objective if the venture is to compete with the more established services.

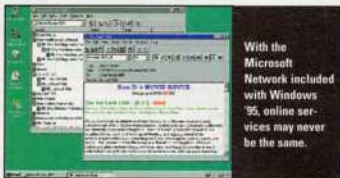
As they move into the growing world of online communica-

tion, Microsoft hopes their high profile in the computer industry will help attract the millions of new customers predicted to join the "information superhighway" over the next few years (and the billions of dollars they are expected to spend). According to Microsoft, the current number of online subscribers makes up only about four percent of the nation's households, leaving untapped millions as potential customers for the MS Network.

But even for a company as well known as Microsoft, getting the new service out to all those potential customers could prove to be a costly and time-consuming proposition — so they have announced a marketing plan that would package the MS Network software with all versions of the upcoming Windows '95.

Microsoft's near-monopoly on PC computer operating systems will allow the MS Network to tap into a huge consumer base of current Windows 3.1 users who want to upgrade to the improved features of Windows '95 — or new computer purchasers who will find Windows '95 preinstalled on their systems. The potential of this ready-made market could put the MS Network at the front of the pack in a very short time, and bypass the traditional marketing problems and expense encountered by the other online services.

In fact, Microsoft Online president Steve Case said the near-monopoly Microsoft enjoys in the OS arena amounts to an unfair advantage in getting the



With the Microsoft Network included with Windows '95, online services may never be the same.

Microsoft Network to the public. But Microsoft is confident that the growing demand for online communications will accommodate many different services, including America Online.

Because the MS Network will use Windows '95 as, in effect, its front end, even the best of the other networks will have to improve on their current interfaces in order to compete with Microsoft effectively. With the MS Network, the usual offerings of E-Mail, support forums, and information services will be easi-



Users new to online services will appreciate the Microsoft Network's simple interface.



The advanced features of Windows '95 will mean companies providing services via the MS Network can bring visual style into the online equation.

er to use and understand. For example, downloading or uploading will be as simple as dragging and dropping a selected file icon. Most importantly, Microsoft has been able to incorporate these simplified features into Internet access — increasingly important as new subscribers move into the murky and high-tech realm of the old Infobahn.

Watch for the Microsoft Network to become available as soon as Windows '95 does — probably some time around August or September.

If We Had Two heads, We'd Buy One For Each!

More VR peripherals are on the way

The virtual worlds every game publisher has promised us still haven't materialized, but we are beginning to see manufacturers creating devices that will allow us to enjoy all that VR goodness to its fullest when it finally does arrive.

Virtual i/O (206 382-7410) of Seattle is one of the companies moving forward in what could become a highly competitive market during the coming year. They've recently unveiled a line of cutting-edge peripherals that will accommodate the future of virtual reality, yet easily adapt to a variety of present-day uses.

Their first product, called i-glasses, is an ergonomically-designed headset (or "Personal Display System," as the company literature calls it) that projects light from two Liquid Crystal Displays (LCDs) onto semi-transparent lenses mounted in the unit. Virtual i/O says this allows the wearer a view equivalent to an 80" wide-screen television in a comfortable, easy-to-use, and lightweight (only eight ounces) package.

The i-glasses! accept several standard video inputs that will be used for watching movies, television programs, or your



Though the price is a bit steep, the versatility of the i-glasses! makes it a value over other systems.

favorite video games in full color. A pair of stereo headphones is also included, so users will be able to listen to their program or game without disturbing others. While the basic unit doesn't support PC applications, an expansion module will let you connect the i-glasses! to your computer's VGA output. The PC module will include motion sensors, too, letting you look up, down, or even over your shoulder to see all of your virtual surroundings in games that support head-tracking.

While most manufacturers only envision customers using VR headsets to immerse themselves in a game environment, Virtual i/O pictures their i-glasses! being used for many other applications, such as personal entertainment on airlines, buses, and even the dentist's office. Though we doubt

there's much that could take our minds off of the whine of the dentist's drill and the smell of burning enamel, being distracted with a movie or video game might take some of the stress out of those regular cleanings.

Virtual i/O will release several as-of-yet-unnamed versions of their PDSs during 1995 — but the i-glasses! should be available by the time you read this at a retail price of \$599 for the base version, and \$799 for the i-glasses! and PC module.



Get ready for the coming of virtual reality. PC gaming may never be the same.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

While the last-minute product announcements that typically flood into our office slowed to a trickle as publishers prepared for the Winter CES, we were still able to track down some of the thrilling products that will soon be making their way onto computer store shelves. Just be sure to keep an eye on your doubleboons, because our first one's about a ruthless pirate!

RedJack's Revenge

Even though pirates have found their way into a couple of successful PC games, Cyberflex feels the outlaw spirit and mysterious lives of these rough individuals just hasn't been given the full attention they deserve. While it's still in the early stages, the concept of *RedJack's Revenge* is strong enough that we predict this high-seas adventure will intrigue a lot of gamers when it finally sets sail. ETA: Fall '95

Creation

Take the incredible graphics engine of *Magic Carpet* and plunge it underwater, and you'll get a pretty good idea of how Electronic Arts' *Creation* will look. You'll expe-

(Continued on page 35)

Who Shot the Perfect General?

American Laser Games announces acquisition of QQP

Even though we're saving our full-on Winter CES coverage for next issue (mainly because we need the rest), we caught wind of a pretty important acquisition as we were making our rounds at the show, and felt it warranted immediate attention.

During a meeting with QQP, Director of Marketing Peter Alexander revealed that American Laser Games, producers of live-action shoot-'em-ups like *Mad Dog McCree*, *Who Shot*

Johnny Rock?, and *Crime Patrol* had just acquired the 5-year-old strategy game publisher. When we heard the news, fears of a new genre of strategy shoot-'em-ups bounced around in our heads; but we spoke to both sides, and it looks like everything will remain status quo for each company.

Both Alexander and American Laser Games President Robert Grebe assured us that even though QQP is now a wholly-owned subsidiary of ALG, it

will remain a separate entity and continue to produce the quality titles it's known for. But that doesn't mean the two companies won't share technology or creative talents wherever it might lead to improvements in each company's products.

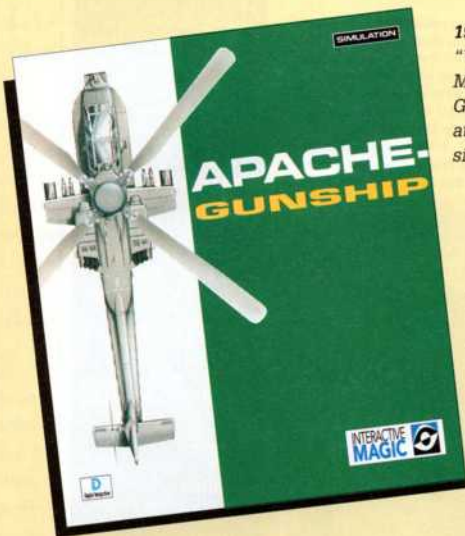
QQP's president and founder, Bruce Williams Zaccagnino, stated, "We believe the synergy of QQP joining forces with American Laser Games will result in superior games and improved marketing which will

benefit both companies."

ALG's Grebe said the only major change he foresees for QQP will be better distribution and packaging, which should improve QQP's presence in the marketplace. And as QQP prepares to release *The Perfect General II*, gamers will certainly be happy to find it in their software stores, rather than just reading about it in the magazines.

APACHE-GUNSHIP

Armed and Dangerous



- Hot new 3-D visual technology
- Combat helicopter simulation for the serious sim fan and the first time helicopter gunner in arcade free-for-all level
- Outstanding high resolution low level terrain graphics with highly variable explosion graphics
- Great fun

1984...

"Wild Bill" Stealey and MicroProse® introduce Gunship® — the first attack helicopter simulation.

1989...

Gunship 2000® arrives, incorporating the hottest technologies and graphics.

Now...

Technology marches on. A new generation must lead the way. Who better to once again push the gaming envelope than the man who's been doing it all along? "Wild Bill" and Interactive Magic.

PC CD-ROM



"[Apache-Gunship] is going to push all directions in serious combat air simulation to the limit, to produce a system even the most jaded veteran gamers are likely to drool over."

Strategy Plus



For more information call 1-919-461-0722

* MicroProse, Gunship and Gunship 2000 are registered trademarks of MicroProse Inc. and are not affiliated with Interactive Magic.
Product Information Number 99



INTERACTIVE MAGIC
P.O. Box 13491
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

Interactive Magic's Apache-Gunship

Desert Strike, eat your heart out!

Even though we've seen lots of high-end simulations lately — ranging from the bumper-to-bumper stock car excitement of *NASCAR Racing* to those dueling World War I biplanes of *Dawn Patrol* and even some bizarre flying-carpet action with *Magic Carpet* — we haven't seen a major helicopter sim for the PC since Novalogic's two-year-old *Comanche: Maximum Overkill*. Interactive Magic hopes to fill that void and please would-be chopper jocks with their upcoming CD-ROM title, *Apache-Gunship*.



The star of the show: The Apache AH-64D is just bristling with enough high explosives to level a town or a battalion of tanks.

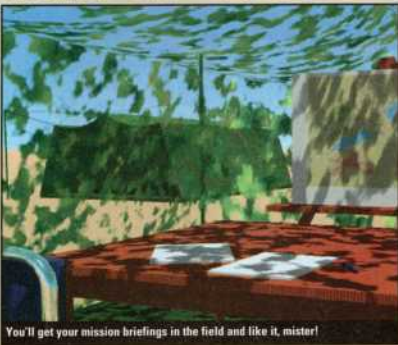
Apache-Gunship is currently under development in the UK by Digital Integration, designers of the award-winning *Tornado*. Using Digital Integration's latest 3D engine, combined with state-of-the-art texture mapping and Gouraud shading techniques, *Apache-Gunship* is designed to be one of the most detailed flight sims ever. In it, you'll take the controls of the U.S. Army's finest attack helicopter, the AH-64 Apache Longbow, and face down a variety of foes over several geographic locations, from Central Europe to the current hotspots in the Persian Gulf and East Asia. While they want the 60-plus missions to be challenging, Interactive Magic hopes to



The terrain looks great at altitude, but the view will improve as you get lower.

balance the difficulty of *Apache-Gunship* somewhere between the satisfyingly realistic content of sims like *Tornado* and the fast-paced gameplay of *Comanche*.

A newly founded company, Interactive Magic wants to establish themselves as a leader in developing challenging simulations and strategy games, and they're



You'll get your mission briefings in the field and like it, mister!

Apache-Gunship. They've even got the backing of one of the industry's top guns, J.W. "Wild Bill" Stealey. Stealey was the founder of sim and strategy giant MicroProse, and

after a brief absence from the computer gaming scene following MicroProse's acquisition by Spectrum HoloByte, he's decided to get back into the PC gaming arena as an investor/consultant with Interactive Magic.

We recently got a peek at *Apache-Gunship* (and blew up a few suspicious-looking water towers), and it's definitely moving in the right direction. With Stealey's reputation and the capabilities of the design team at Digital Integration, *Apache-Gunship* is already at the top of our spring wish list.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

perience the hazards and spectacular beauty of the world's oceans from the controls of a high-tech mini-sub as you deal with an alien threat.



Although *Creation* looks like an underwater paradise, there's danger lurking everywhere.

While we don't expect to see any turban-wearing wizards in this one, we do expect to see lots of action on our company network when *Creation* comes out; like *Magic Carpet*, it will support up to eight players over a network or modem. ETA: Late Spring '95

Dark Seed II

Even though several time-sensitive puzzles made the original *Dark Seed* a very frustrat-



The unique graphic style of the original *Dark Seed* has been updated for the upcoming sequel, *Dark Seed II*.

ing adventure game, H.R. Giger's dark artwork kept many gamers coming back for more, and was seen as one of the game's most intriguing aspects. And since *Dark Seed*, Cyberdreams has been working with the artist to integrate even more of his otherworldly visions into a sequel. In *Dark Seed II*, there'll be plenty of Giger's bio-mechanical nightmares stalking unwitting hero Mike Dawson as he attempts

Continued on page 38

UNDER CONSTRUCTION



to thwart a sinister plan to destroy the earth.
ETA: Late Spring '95

Fast Attack

Wow! We got a first look at a very early version of *Fast Attack* during a recent visit by



This is just one of the many surface ships you'll get to destroy in *Fast Attack*.

Time Warner Interactive, and we've got to say this high-tech submarine sim was looking pretty hot. The designers have been paying a lot of attention to the realism factor, looking over Navy specs to create the displays and operating parameters for the various systems. *Fast Attack* uses SVGA graphics throughout, the missile launch animations are particularly impressive.

ETA: Late Spring/Fall '95

R.M.S. Titanic

Did the Titanic really strike an iceberg, or was it sabotaged? If you've ever been curious about what happened to the great "unsinkable" ocean liner, Cyberflix's *R.M.S. Titanic* gives you the chance to find out. You'll board a fully-rendered version of the doomed vessel on its first and only voyage, and after talking to passengers and snooping about the ship, you just might discover the truth behind the mysterious iceberg incident. Don't forget to wear your lifejacket.
ETA: Fall '95

JetFighter III

Fans of the original *JetFighter* and its sequel, *JetFighter II*,

Continued on page 38

But When's Happy Hour In Ten Forward?

Star Trek: The Next Generation Interactive Technical Manual will answer your NCC-1701D queries.

While it seems the bulk of multimedia developers are in a perpetual struggle to find a balance between interaction and non-interaction in their products, there are a few instances where the two are seamlessly combined and become a prime example of multimedia's current capabilities.

After spending a few lazy afternoons with Simon & Schuster's *Star Trek: The Next Generation Interactive Technical Manual*, we think it's one of those examples. This Windows-based CD-ROM is the follow up to their best-selling paperback, *Star Trek: The Next Generation Technical Manual*, and makes excellent use of those 600 megabytes of storage space. Whether you're a die-hard fan of the series or just a casual viewer, you'll appreciate the attention to detail that characterizes *ST:TNGITM*.

Starting with over 15,000 photographs taken before the series' final episode, *ST:TNGITM* has been designed to let you visit every nook and cranny on the fabled Starship *Enterprise NCC 1701-D*, from transporter to engine room. Seamlessly combined photographs of many of the major areas (like the bridge) make it



If you take a guided tour of the *USS Enterprise*, you'll soon find yourself on the main bridge.

possible to turn 360 degrees to view the whole room as if you were there. Every room contains several "hot" areas, so when you find something of interest, you'll be able to move in closer and examine the object's finer details. If you want to know more about the *Enterprise* in general, the ship's computer (voiced by Majel Barrett Roddenberry) will give you the declassified briefing on most of the objects and the ship functions.

And if you can't find the main bridge, or if you'd rather just sit back and see the sights, Jonathan Frakes reprises his role as Commander

Riker to serve as your official tour guide. He'll show you through the more obvious areas of the ship, and tell about the day-to-day operation of a Federation starship; he'll also dish out some behind-the-scenes info about the television series.

More adventurous trekkers, however, will want to skip the guided tour and poke around the ship on their own. Overall, we've found that *ST:TNGITM* to be a high-quality product that preserves the tone and spirit of the series. And while it's not a game, it is one of those products every gamer will be interested in. Retail price for *ST:TNGITM* is \$69.99, and it's available at software retailers everywhere.



Learn the details of the ship's construction and then watch a demonstration of its power!

And the Winner is...

The Bi-Annual PC Gamer Contests Update

One thing we've wanted to do since our very first issue was to give our readers a chance to participate in some really great contests, and the response has been overwhelming. From the *PC Gamer* bowling shirts to the *Wing Commander III* Pentium contest, we've seen baskets of mail flood into our offices. We're betting plenty of you have been

hoping you might actually have won some of these prizes, but have been too shy to ask. Well, we've decided to ease those anxieties and announce the following grand-prize winners.

The winner of our first contest was Kenneth Savinaugh of Buffalo, New York. He took the top prize in Dynamix's *FPS: Baseball* contest, but he hasn't exactly been able to enjoy his

trip to the World Series (thanks to the player's strike (we had nothing to do with it, we swear!)).

Fortunately, Ken has been patient enough to let Dynamix iron out the details for a suitable replacement prize. As for the rest of us baseball fans, here's hoping the boys of summer will be a little more reasonable this year.

During our second contest, sponsored by Sierra and Coktel

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Go ahead and scream. From deep within your nightmare, utter a piteous cry — as though your life depends on someone hearing you. Because, in this reality, it does.

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Product Information Number 120



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will no doubt recall these games' emphasis on fun and flying over the demanding realism and control-juggling



Don't expect to be flying over flat, dull landscapes in *JetFighter III*. Instead, you'll be rockin' and rolling over Southern California. Cool, dude.

of sims like *Falcon 3.0* and *F-14 Fleet Defender*. With original *JetFighter* designer Bob Dinnerman heading up the programming team on this one, don't expect any of that to change as *JetFighter III* prepares for its inaugural roll-out later this spring.

ETA: Summer '95

Star Trek Omnipedia

To follow up the completely engrossing *Star Trek: The Next Generation Interactive Technical Manual*, Simon & Schuster is preparing to launch a new title aimed at fans who can't get enough of Star Trek lore. *Star Trek Omnipedia* covers the entire Star Trek history from the early days of the original series, through the films, and even up to the first season of "Star Trek: Voyager."

If you've ever wondered who wrote "The City on the Edge of Forever," or who created the Klingon language that was used in the first series, *Star Trek Omnipedia* has the answers. And with the Star Trek license ever-growing, Simon & Schuster promises regular updates so the Omnipedia will always be as current and accurate as any Trekker could ask.

ETA: Late Spring '95

Vision, a trip to France was on the line — and we received so many great entries that picking a winner was especially difficult. But Seth Bruckner of Atlanta and his essay, "Why I should be PC Gamer's Ambassador to France," took top prize with its rose prose and rapier wit. We wonder if Seth remembered to thank us as he watched those French models stroll by on the Champs Elysees while munching on croissants....

Judging by the envelopes and postcards, the August LucasArts *TIE Fighter* contest brought out the creative talents of several of our readers. Many of the entries were lovingly covered with pictures of favorite *Star Wars* characters or ships, all just screaming for some winning attention. Yet our random

drawing yielded a plain, white envelope from Matt Council of Laurel, Mississippi. He took the grand prize of the Pioneer LaserDisc Player and *Star Wars Trilogy LaserDisc* set.

If the response to our September Media Vision Pro Deluxe Multimedia contest was any indication, plenty of people were looking to upgrade their computers. Our winner, Mike Wilson from Athens, Georgia, was definitely excited about being able to play CD-ROM games — although since he doesn't even own a computer, he may need to do some sweet-talking if he wants to add the kit to his girlfriend's PC.

When our October *Wing Commander III* contest was announced, we were ready to quit our jobs (employees weren't

eligible, doggone it) for a chance at that amazing Pentium computer decked out with all the trimmings, courtesy of Origin Systems. Even with the incredible demands being made by today's gaming software, we doubt our winner, Ida Mae Hooper of Hiawatha, Kansas, will be outgrowing that system anytime soon. And Ida Mae, don't forget to read Tim's column this month; we don't want you to worry about that nasty old Pentium bug making you miss any of those rampaging Kirathi devils.

So, congratulations to all our winners — and to those of you who entered and didn't win, thanks for playing. Just remember, each month is another chance to win. So keep trying!

Sanctuary Woods Gets Serious

More focus on games, says The Woods' Ted Markley

In May of '94, Sanctuary Woods recruited Ted Markley, the former VP of MicroProse's Entertainment Division, to lend his expertise and direction to their PC entertainment division and add the sort of gameplay that would allow them to compete with gaming's big boys. We asked Ted what he's doing to achieve this and to give us his thoughts on multimedia gaming. But first we asked him to tell us about his departure from MicroProse.

PCG: Did you leave MicroProse on good terms, and did you feel they were moving away from certain products or changing the way they operated?

TM: Oh, it was very amicable. As I was leaving, MicroProse had just been through some bad financial times and was going back to the basics, like flight sims and strategy games, and backing away from products like role-playing games and graphic adventures. Even though that was only

a small part of what I was in charge of, it made the opportunity at SW even more attractive.

PCG: When you moved to SW, did you take a look at their products and think "They're pretty, but they're not working because..."

TM: Well, I tried to put it politely and say "They just weren't what the market wanted." They did have nice-looking graphics; it's just that the market didn't want what they'd produced. But I think we're changing that now. We acquired the graphic adventure "walker system" from MicroProse and have enhanced it to actually handle hi-res graphics and the demands of CD-ROM.

PCG: We're seeing lots of multimedia games that are really attractive, with gobs of potential wasted on muddy gameplay and a poor interface. What are you doing to change that?

TM: One of our strategies as we got into multimedia was to make



sure that we addressed what we think the real market is. Other companies are saying, "We're making this for the mass-market." But the mass-market is *gamers*. There is no large group of people looking for products where they can sit down at the computer like they're watching television. So we've focused on gameplay and good, solid puzzles. And yeah,

you've got to have great graphics, but that's a given these days. You know, if I see another "stunning graphics" quote on a box I think I'll lose my lunch!

PCG: Do you think there's anything out right now that lives up to multimedia's potential?

TM: No, but I think there have been inroads made with some products. I mean, I can take half a dozen different products and say "Gee, that was a good component." The graphics were great in *7th Guest*, but it was like a fool's errand. It was a collection of little puzzles to play with, with a loosely-linked story between them.

PCG: Even though *Wolf* was a very creative title — in fact, it won a *PC Gamer* Award for Special Achievement in Innovation — it appeals to a limited audience. Is it important to you to keep developing innovative products, even if it doesn't help the company's bottom line?

TM: I think you've got to do some experiments. When *Civilization* came out, it was really an experiment in terms of trying to be a new type of strategy game. I think you've got to do that, or you'll never get a *Doom*. So yeah, we'll continue to develop these but we just won't have a steady diet of the really innovative things.

The jury's still out on how well *Wolf* will ultimately do.

Sometimes a title like that will often do well over time, and what we're hearing from distributors and retailers is that they feel *Wolf* will be that kind of title.

PCG: Origin has moved to the CD-ROM as their sole format, and lots of other companies are considering the idea. Do you think this is viable for SW?

TM: Well, I hope so, because that's basically what we're doing. As a matter of fact, we just produced our first and last floppy product, *Once Upon a Forest*.

I was just talking to one of our people about how there were some great expectations for huge PC sales of multimedia systems over Christmas, and I was told that those expectations were exceeded by about 15 percent.

PCG: Would you like Sanctuary Woods to be known for one type of product, or do you want to try and cover all the bases?

TM: We want to excel in story-based products. But at the same time, we don't want to go knocking our own products off the shelves. In '95, you'll see a series of story-based products coming out of the Sanctuary Woods studios, like *The Riddle of Master Lu*, and in '96 you'll begin to see a wider variety. But we don't want to do it if we can't do it well.

Wrap-Around Sound

Altec Lansing brings Dolby Pro-Logic to the PC

If you've been reading *PC Gamer* for long, you already know our current fave speakers are the ACS300s from Altec Lansing. But if the prototypes we heard at the Winter CES in Las Vegas are any indication, we may be about ready to switch allegiances.

Altec Lansing's latest model, the ACS500 subwoofer and satellites system, are designed to bring big, surround-sound audio to your home PC. The two tower satellites — taller than most monitors — and subwoofer combine to kick out truly impressive sound, with an AC-powered amplifier to make even the most meager soundboards plenty loud.

But best of all, the ACS500 system includes built-in Dolby Pro-Logic surround sound circuitry. The towers provide both the center and side chan-

nels, thanks to their configuration of center- and side-firing speakers. This also gives them surprising stereo imaging capabilities — in fact, you'd swear that wide sound field was coming from much larger speakers, placed much farther apart.

We haven't had a chance to really put these beauties through their paces, but you can bet we will just as soon as we get them in. Look for more in an upcoming installment of Matt's column, "Peripheral Visions."



The tower speakers of the ACS500 are designed to provide both center and side channel audio for full surround sound.

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-Ted Chapman, Computer Game Review



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Product Information Number 95

Top Ten Lists

This month's charts reflect the peak of the '94 Christmas buying season, but a few old ghosts from Christmas past, like Broderbund's *Myst*, Virgin's *7th Guest*, and LucasArts' *Rebel Assault*, were able to draw some pretty respectable spots on Babbage's and PC Data's lists.

Despite the longevity of those titles, the top dog in PC gaming was the sequel to our all-time favorite, id Software's *Doom II: Hell on Earth*, which blasted its way into two #1 spots. LucasArts captured the remaining upper berth with *Defender of the Empire*, the first campaign disk for *TIE Fighter*, but it's a little surprising to see that neither *TIE* or *X-Wing CD-ROM* made the cut.

Sierra's *MetalTech: EarthSiege* and FPS: *Football Pro '95* prevailed on their respective battlefields, and earned spots on both Babbage's and PC Data's lists. Simon & Schuster's

ST:TNGITM has apparently intrigued a lot of people since, it was the only non-gaming title to make Babbage's and PC Data's lists.

MicroPro keeps a firm grip on strategy gaming with *Masters of Magic* and *Colonization*, while Access scores with their four-disk extravaganza, *Under a Killing Moon*, and their excellent golf sim *Links 386 Pro*. Microsoft's latest offering, *Space Simulator*, was nowhere to be found this month, but *Flight Simulator 4.0* managed to grab a place in Software Etc.'s Top Ten. Rounding out the rosters were *SimCity 2000*, Interplay's *Castles II* and *Sirius' 5 Ft. 10 Pack Vol 2*. Next month we'll see if Origin's *Wing Commander III* or *Hell from Take 2* is able to break *Doom II*'s grasp on the #1 spot.

Smite Thine Enemies With a Flick of a Finger!

The ultimate in PC weapons control is here

With the arrival of the F-16 Throttle Quadrant System (TQS), Thrustmaster (503 639-3200) completes their successful and popular line of F-16 controllers — and PC pilots may forever be in their debt. This latest contribution to the world of high-end peripherals has been designed with the most discriminating PC-pilots in mind. Constructed from high-impact plastic, the TQS features improved ergonomics over its predecessor, the Weapons Control System MK II. By modeling the multi-function features of the TQS after the throttle quadrant from the real-life F-16 Fighting Falcon, the TQS ensures you won't lose a dogfight due to uncomfortable or sloppy controls.

As with the MK II, the TQS is a programmable alternative to keyboard-intensive commands, compatible with all flight simulation software. After assigning those tricky commands to six tactile knobs, switches, and buttons on the comfortably molded grip, you'll chase down bogeys with new confidence and control. There's even a target trackball to help you pin down the enemy in those long-range encounters.

The only requirement for the TQS is that must be used in conjunction with Thrustmaster's premier joystick, the FLC-16. With a M.S.R.P. of \$199.95 for the TQS and \$100.00+ street price for the FLC-16, don't expect

this capable pair to come cheap. But if you've got the bucks, you literally can't miss!



TQS: The ultimate controller? If you just purchased a Weapons Control System Mark II you're probably kicking yourself right now.

Babbage's Top Ten List

1. *Doom II/id Software*
2. *MetalTech: EarthSiege/Sierra*
3. *Star Trek: TNGITM/Simon & Schuster*
4. *Under a Killing Moon/Access*
5. *Myst/Broderbund*
6. *FPS: Football Pro '95/Sierra*
7. *Masters of Magic/MicroProse*
8. *Colonization/MicroProse*
9. *The 7th Guest/Virgin*
10. *SimCity 2000/Maxis*

Software Etc.'s Top Ten List

1. *TIE Fighter: Defender of the Empire/LucasArts*
2. *Doom II/id Software*
3. *SimCity 2000 (Windows)/Maxis*
4. *Colonization/MicroProse*
5. *Links 386 Pro SVGA/Access Software*
6. *Battle Chess (Windows)/Interplay*
7. *MS Flight Simulator 5.0/Microsoft*
8. *Caesar's Palace (Windows) Virgin Games*
9. *SimCity 2000/Maxis*
10. *Castles II/Interplay*

PC Data's Top Ten List

1. *Doom II/id Software*
2. *Myst/Broderbund*
3. *5 Ft 10 Pack Vol 2/Sirius*
4. *FPS: Football/Sierra On-Line*
5. *Under a Killing Moon/Access*
6. *Sim City 2000/Maxis*
7. *ST: TNGITM/Simon & Schuster*
8. *MetalTech: EarthSiege/Sierra*
9. *7th Guest/Virgin*
10. *Rebel Assault/LucasArts*

The PC Gamer Playlist

While you might think our steady diet of high-end games would leave us jaded, we still get an exuberant rush when something special comes along. We just didn't expect to see such forceful enthusiasm from our usually mild-mannered Shelli! But when she got her first look at the SVGA graphics of *Wing Commander III*, she made it clear to everyone that it would be hers until she said otherwise, or there would be serious consequences.

Matt seemed to take it all in stride, though, and spent much of his time practicing those neat trickshots with Interplay's *Virtual Pool*. We just wish he didn't have to smoke that cigar while he plays.

While Dan and Todd were pretty upset by Shelli's ultimatum, they were soon giggling like school girls as they tried out *Descend's* network options.

Bill tried to cope with *Wing Commander* withdrawal by plugging away at *SSI's Panzer General*, though we think he may have found a new favorite while looking over Joe's shoulder at *Cyclones*, *SSI's Doom-style* shooter.

Even though Scotty was busy showing our new associate art director, Carol Ellison, how to get under par on his longtime favorite *Links 386* course (we've really got to get that away from him!), he did find time to power his Herc through a few demanding levels of *MetalTech: EarthSiege*.

And finally, we were a little worried when our old pals Steve Poole and Gary Meredith formed a strange alliance to puzzle through *Take 2's Hell*. Their lively banter didn't bother us, but the daily episodes of ritual chanting drove us nuts! That's about the time Matt decided we should try to get a few more copies of *Wing III* to settle things down a bit. Like high-tech pacifiers, you know?

1. *Wing Commander III/Origin* — Everyone (but Shelli first)
2. *Virtual Pool/Interplay* — Everyone
3. *Descend/Interplay* — Everyone
4. *Hell/GameTex* — Gary, Steve
5. *WarCraft/Blizzard* — Dan, Carol
6. *MetalTech: EarthSiege/Dynamix* — Dan, Todd
7. *Cyclones/SSI* — Steve, Joe
8. *Nascar Racing/Papyrus* — Joe, Matt
9. *Panzer General/SSI* — Bill, Scotty
10. *King's Quest VII/Sierra* — Todd, Shelli

V for Victory — Continued

Frisina Answers Zabaloui

EDITOR'S NOTE:

In the February issue of *PC Gamer*, *Atomic Games* President Keith Zabaloui commented at length on the tangled legal situation surrounding the CD-ROM rights to the *V for Victory* series, originally published on floppy disks by *Three-Sixty*. His remarks included detailed references to former *Three-Sixty* President Tom Frisina. Our reporter attempted repeatedly and unsuccessfully to get in touch with Frisina for that article. We are now happy to offer Frisina an opportunity to tell his side of the story, in his own words:

Mr. Zabaloui of *Atomic Games, Inc.*, has strongly implied in an article he instigated with *PC Gamer* magazine that I forged his signature to a contract during the time I was President of *Three-Sixty*.

I did not, nor would I ever, forge anyone's signature to any document.

His implication that I was involved in the forgery is an outright fabrication of what really happened. Had Zabaloui dug deeper to get the facts, he would have found the following to be true:

An Agent contacted *Three-Sixty's* Controller during the Spring of 1993. He represented that his contacts for secondary markets could produce a large cash opportunity for *Three-Sixty* if we were interested in providing our back catalog of older titles for use by some budget-priced retailers.

I authorized the Controller to be the point person at *Three-Sixty*, to write the contracts and to negotiate favorable terms with the Agent. I gave her approval to provide all the back catalog titles for which we had the rights.

Mainstream America, the

company currently involved in the allegation, was one of four or five companies to whom the Agent delivered our back catalog titles. Contrary to the way Craig Boyd of *Mainstream* characterized my involvement, I have never personally spoken to him. Only our Agent communicated with him. *Three-Sixty* never entered into the alleged agreement because we did not have the rights, and my signature was forged. So, it's fallacious for him to say that we were not on "the up and up."

In June 1993, after suffering disappointing releases of *Patriot* and *Theatre of War* and the subsequent return of close to \$1,000,000, *Three-Sixty's* cash flow turned sour. Complicating this event, our exclusive distributor — and only source of cash — began withholding ever increasing percentages of our checks to cover distribution channel allowances and returns. By September 1993, it was all I could do to make payroll. Paying developers and vendors with consistency, even employees, became impossible.

Three-Sixty owed *Atomic Games*, the developer of the *V for Victory* series, a sizable sum of back royalties. *Atomic* filed suit to recover its money. We settled out of court, and part of

I thought this would be a good thing for *Atomic* and *Three-Sixty*, so I had my Development Vice President contact *Atomic*. *Atomic* refused to cooperate. My Controller related this to the Agent, and told him "no deal."

After one further solicitation and refusal, that was the last time the subject of *V for Victory* or *Mainstream* was ever discussed with me until November 15, 1994, two months after the sale to *Intracorp* through Chapter 11. Our Creditor Committee Counsel received a phone call from *Atomic* with allegations that *Three-Sixty* forged *Atomic's* signature to an agreement with *Mainstream* allowing *Mainstream* the CD-ROM *V for Victory* rights.

Knowing I did not do this, I asked to see a copy of the contract. I read it over and found the following:

My signature was a forgery.

The date of signature, September 20, 1994, four days before the sale of Three-Sixty to Intracorp in the Court, was reflective of how preposterous the allegation of my forging a signature actually was. A forgery as flagrant as that surely would not go unnoticed.

The construction of the paragraph dealing with payments to the Licensor stated that all advances and future royalties

reading this record and not becoming upset at the possibility that they, sometime down the road, would become the target for such a malicious act.

I am now thrust into having to defend myself against these false allegations, allegations that become even more painful in light of *Three-Sixty's* closure. When companies face bankruptcy, many people suffer from the fallout; vendors, developers, and employees. I tried everything I knew to save *Three-Sixty* and pay off the debts, including mortgaging all my assets — but to no avail.

I am appalled that a major publication like *PC Gamer* would lend credence to these untrue statements by printing these allegations. The very least the publication could have done was to contact me for verification of these allegations.

I appreciate the opportunity to shed some light on this important and apparently industry-wide topic. *Three-Sixty* accomplished a lot during its seven years, and I hope its legacy will be that of a company with ambitious expectations, striving to push the product envelope, but in the end not financed well enough to overcome some bumps in the road. I know that my trails at *Three-Sixty* taught

"I cannot image anyone reading this record and not becoming upset at the possibility that they, sometime down the road would become the target for such a malicious act."

—Tom Frisina

the settlement precluded *Three-Sixty* from further licensing of the *V for Victory* products.

I upheld that restriction throughout the remainder of my days at the Company.

The Agent approached *Three-Sixty* in the Spring of 1994 on behalf of *Mainstream America*. *Mainstream* wanted a license to do a CD-ROM compilation of the *V for Victory* series.

were paid directly to the agent. If there had been any monies paid under those circumstances, none of it would have gone to Three-Sixty, Intracorp, or Atomic Games.

The source of this forged contract is unknown to me at this time. I am attempting to find out what exactly did happen and will report my findings to the appropriate legal entity.

I cannot imagine anyone

me as much about business as I learned in the previous 18 years of work. Respect for the lives and well being of all employees, developers, and vendors, and the degree to which they should be placed at risk, is probably the greatest of these lessons learned.

—Tom Frisina

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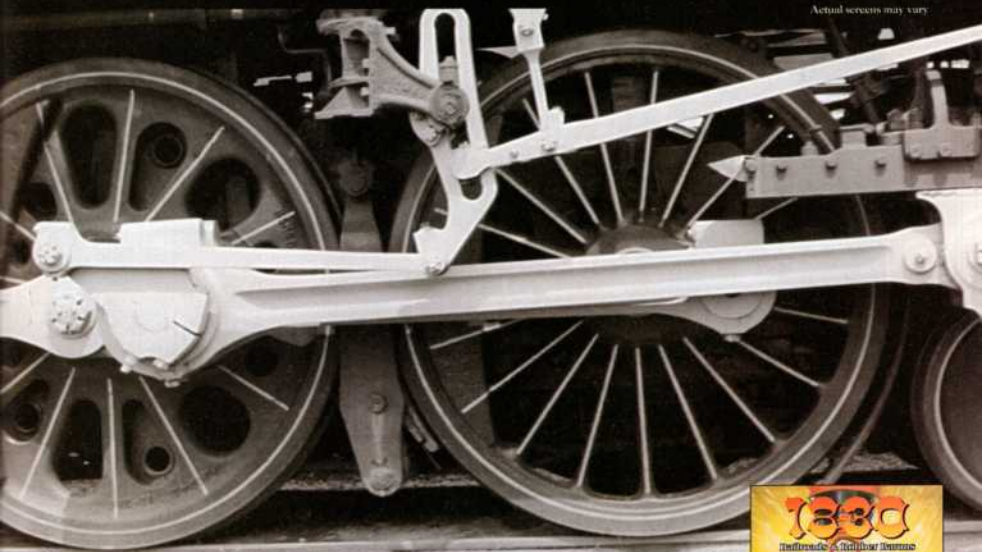


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Product Information Number 121

The First Annual PC Gamer Awards

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—The Editors

In a year that saw the release of some of the finest PC games in history, we knew singling out the very best of the best would be tough — and it was....

We're just back from the Winter Consumer Electronics Show as we put this piece together, and the experience just confirmed something we've been saying for months now: The PC has come into its own, and is now viewed by most publishers as the gaming platform of the future. With the

videogame market in upheaval and PC technology advancing like never before, you can bet that the best games in electronic entertainment will be designed for the once-overlooked PC.

That's great news for us PC gamers, as the past year proves. In our combined decades of gaming experience, none of us can recall a year that held so many exceptional releases. But when it comes time to recognize the

best in PC gaming, the embarrassment of riches we've experienced over the past 12 months can make for some pretty tough decisions. Still, we got the job done, and we've come up with a list of winners we think represents the cream of a very good crop. So here they are — the First Annual *PC Gamer* Awards. If you want the best gaming money can buy, *this* is the list you can't afford to miss.



Game of the Year

Doom

Developer: id Software
Publisher: id Software 18601 LBJ
 Freeway, Suite 615,
 Mesquite, TX 75150
 (800) 434-2637

Considering that we named *Doom* the Best Game of All Time just a few months ago, we spent a surprising amount of time debating whether it deserved Game of the Year honors. But after taking into account the impact this shareware-only release has had on the computer-gaming industry, the choice was clear.



Was there any doubt that *Doom* would be chosen as our Game of the Year? Well, yes, just a little, but Matt talked some sense into everyone just in time for this feature....

Think of all the changes *Doom* has brought about: Major game publishers are now releasing shareware versions of their retail products; modem and network play options are increasingly important to discerning gamers; and the list of *Doom*-style games (we call 'em *Doom* clones) grows longer each day. Oh, one other thing — *Doom*'s still a hell of a lot of fun. And nuts to you if you don't like it.



Best Action Game

TIE Fighter

Developer: LucasArts
Publisher: LucasArts,
 P.O. Box 10307,
 San Rafael, CA 94912
 (800) 782-7927

X-Wing designer Lawrence Holland scores another direct hit with *TIE Fighter*, the best space-combat simulation ever created. Most games set in space cast you in the role of the good guy, but not *TIE Fighter*: here, you not only fly for the Empire, but also seek to gain favor with the Emperor and Lord Vader by ful-



The animation in *TIE Fighter* will have you believing that you really are dueling in the void of space — and the artificial intelligence routines of the enemy pilots will have you scared that you might die out there, too.

filling special mission goals.

The Gouraud-shaded ships are a wonder to behold, and the action is fast, tense, and full of pyrotechnics. Even if you cheered for the Rebels in the Star Wars movies, you'll thrill to the destruction of X-Wings, A-Wings, freighters, and more. If you like action and haven't tried *TIE Fighter*, go pick up a copy now. You won't be disappointed.



Best Adventure Game

System Shock

Developer: Looking Glass Technologies
Publisher: Origin
 12940 Research Blvd.
 Austin, TX 78750
 (800) 245-4525

From Looking Glass, the creators of *Ultima Underworld I* and *II* comes *System Shock*, a first-person adventure game that truly immerses the player in a 3D gameworld. Trapped inside a high-tech orbital facility controlled by a computer intent on destroying all human life forms, you must battle your way past mutants, robots, and security systems, then find a way to disable the computer — if you want Earth to survive, that is.

Game control is excellent: You can jump, crouch, crawl, peek around corners, look up and down, and more. And thanks



Static images like this don't come close to conveying the sense of realism that *System Shock* evokes at every turn. To quote our own T. Liam McDonald, "System Shock really smokes!"

to numerous configuration options, you can set the game for just the amount of combat you desire, make the story more elaborate, or increase the difficulty of the puzzles. No matter what kind of game you're looking for, you'll find something in *System Shock* to delight you.



Best Simulation

1942: The Pacific Air War

Developer: MicroProse
Publisher: MicroProse
 180 Lakesfront Drive,
 Hunt Valley, MD 21080
 (410) 771-1151

We all know that an acceptable frame rate and realistic flight options are more important in an air-combat simulation than good graphics, but isn't it wonderful when you find a sim that looks as good as flies? That's exactly the case with *1942: The Pacific Air War*. The texture-mapped planes are simply stunning, making this the best-looking WWII flight sim ever created.



Thanks to skillful use of texture-mapping, the planes in *1942: The Pacific Air War* are quite possibly the most realistic ever created — at least for a game that's as realistic and as playable as this one.

But *Pacific Air War* does more than just look good. With a bevy of historic missions, career modes as either an American or Japanese pilot, modem play option (not included in the original release, but available on various online services and directly from MicroProse to registered PAW owners), and a satisfying variety of aircraft to fly, this one offers hours and hours of replay value. An essential component of any flight-sim fan's library.



Best Role-playing Game

Star Trail: Realms of Arkania

Developer: Attic Software
Publisher: Sir-Tech, Ogdensburg
 Business Center, P.O. Box
 245, Ogdensburg, NY 13669
 (315) 393-6633

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Product Information Number 141

As developers struggle to make fantasy roleplaying games more appealing to a wider audience, veteran roleplayers have had fewer and fewer pure roleplaying games to choose from — the kind that feature highly detailed character generation, complex magic systems, and a challenging combat system.



Realms of Arkania may not have the flashiest graphics you've ever seen, but its deep, challenging gameplay more than compensates for that.

That's just what *Star Trail: Realms of Arkania* delivers, though, and diehard RPG enthusiasts will spend hour after hour exploring the huge game world. And while it's not the most graphically impressive title, it is the most engrossing we've seen in a long, long time. And best of all, it's true to the CRPG spirit that has made this genre so successful. One word of warning, however: The complexity that makes *Realms of Arkania* so appealing to veterans may be offputting to newcomers. But *Realms of Arkania* has so much to offer that you can at least give that steep learning curve with the knowledge that you'll be rewarded with a game you'll be playing — and enjoying — long after you purchase it.



Best Strategy Game

X-COM: UFO Defense

Developer: MicroProse
Publisher: MicroProse 180 Lakefront Drive, Hunt Valley, MD 21030 (410) 771-1151

At first glance, *X-COM* doesn't really look like a strategy game. You control a team of soldiers sent to points around the world to repel invading extraterrestrials, and the turn-based combat — which you view from a 45-degree overhead view on a wide variety of terrains — might have you convinced that this is all shooting and no thinking.

But in addition to issuing combat orders, you're also in charge of the entire *X-COM* program, and that means you're responsible for funding, weapons research and development, maintenance, and other types of resource management. Your success in each mission directly affects how much support you can expect



You don't know how satisfying it is to incinerate a pesky extraterrestrial until you've gone a few rounds with *X-COM: UFO Defense*.

from world leaders, and if you're not careful you'll find country after country falling under the domination of the ETs — and these aren't friendly, Spielberg-style aliens, either. *X-COM*'s classic mix of action and strategy will have you hooked for hours, and made this one of the finest games of the year.



Best Wargame

Panzer General

Developer: Strategic Simulations, Inc.
Publisher: Strategic Simulations, Inc. 675 Almanor Avenue, Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901 (408) 737-6800

Panzer General is, to the best of our knowledge, the first historical wargame to incorporate elements from fantasy roleplaying — specifically, the concept of experience points and their affect on combat. In traditional wargames, the soundness of your tactics and the performance of your troops affects the outcome of a battle or campaign, but in *Panzer General* they also determine the path your career will take. Your successes or failures are reflected through Prestige and Influence points, which you use to upgrade what basically amounts to your own private army.

The SVGA graphics in *Panzer General* are razor-sharp, the hex-based



A clean and efficient interface ensures that even novices can jump into battle with *Panzer General*.

maps are richly detailed (you can toggle the hexes off, if you like) and SSI has interspersed authentic WWII film footage to keep things lively. Hardcore wargamers may turn up their noses at the simplified rules for supply and reinforcements, but for the vast majority of players, *Panzer General* offers a gripping experience not often evidenced in wargames.



Best Sports Game

NASCAR Racing

Developer: Papyrus Design Group
Publisher: Papyrus, 35 Medford Street, Somerville, MA 02143 (617) 868-5440

When Papyrus announced they'd be following up their smash hit *IndyCar Racing* with a stock-car sim, racing fans everywhere were itching to get their hands on it — and they weren't disappointed. Simply put, this is the best racing sim ever created. It delivers not only the thrills of the world's most popular motor sport, but all the crucial nuances of racing as well, from deciding on gear ratios and tire pressure to setting shock absorbers and spoilers.



About the only thing missing from *NASCAR Racing* is... well, come to think of it, there's really nothing missing. This game rocks.

Nine tracks have been included to represent the different challenges of the NASCAR circuit, from the twisting road course at Watkins Glen to the 200-mph super speedway at Talladega. Multiple realism options allow beginners to gradually acclimate themselves to the rigors of stock-car racing, while vets will appreciate the ultra-realistic physics incorporated in the game.

If you're a NASCAR fan, you'll love the opportunity to race with some of the stars of the sport. The pros drive with remarkable realism, and even their individual styles are well represented.

Graphics? The game looks great in VGA, jaw-dropping in SVGA (though you'll need a 90 MHz Pentium and a lightning-fast video card to run it in that mode). And the modem-play option means that you can race head-to-head with a friend.



Best Historical Simulation

Lords of the Realm

Developer: Impressions
Publisher: Impressions Software, Inc.,
222 Third Street, Suite 0234,
Cambridge MA 02142
(617) 225-0500

The premise of *Lords of the Realm* is a familiar one—you're one of several nobles with designs on the throne of England during the Middle Ages—but after a few minutes of play you'll realize that this is a very special product. Many empire-building games either bog you down in minutiae or present you with easy-to-understand but unsatisfyingly broad options. But *Lords of the Realm* strikes the delicate balance between micro- and macro-management—and the result is one of the richest historical sims ever.



Lords of the Realm is one of the most well-balanced historical simulations ever designed, simultaneously drawing in newcomers and challenging experienced players.

To gain the throne, you must take control over the land usage, labor, military, and economy of your realm; you also have to keep an eye on the happiness of your subjects. It sounds daunting, but the superior interface—in conjunction with graphics that actually complement the information process—lets you get up and conquering without a glance at the manual (which you will want to read, since it's a great source of period information). If you have the heart of a leader beating inside you, try *Lords of the Realm*.



Best Puzzle Game

Goblins Quest 3

Developer: Cocktail Vision
Publisher: Sierra On-Line, P.O. Box
485, Coursegold, CA 93614
(209) 882-4468

This third Goblins title—and easily the best of the series—follows a simple premise through a whole series of inter-



Your alter-ego, here perched atop a tiny castle, is as much fun as the puzzles he'll face.

connected, brain-twisting puzzles. You play as a goblin, obviously, whose goal is to unite feuding monarchs and win the love of the fetching she-goblin Wynrona.

At first glance, *Goblins Quest 3* looks more like a graphic adventure than a puzzle game—and its adventure-game graphics, wonderful sound effects, bizarre and enchanting locales, and instantly likeable characters will compel you to stick with your goblin hero to the very end. But the puzzles are really the backbone of thing, and will challenge and delight even the most experienced gamers. A terrific package!



Best Arcade Game

Pinball Fantasies

Developer: 21st Century Entertainment
Publisher: 21st Century Entertainment,
Inc., P.O. Box 415, Webster,
NY 14580 (617) 225-2042

Back in the early '70s, the word "arcade" was synonymous with pinball, so it's somehow fitting that *Pinball Fantasies* won our award for Best Arcade Game. There were several pinball games released for the PC in '94, but none have as much to offer as *Pinball Fantasies*.

For starters, you get not one but four tables, all of which can be played in VGA or SVGA, color or monochrome. You'll want to play them in color, though, because the artwork on these tables is so well-done that it would be a shame to see it in black-and-white. What's more, the tables have been lovingly designed with all the ramps, bumpers, rollover lanes, and bonus targets that a pin-



All four tables in the *Pinball Fantasies* package are good, but "Party Land" is our personal fave. Hey, you have to like any pinball game where the rollover lanes spell P-U-K-E!

ball fan could ask for. Up to eight people can compete on each table, and the soundtracks for all of them (not to mention the *Pinball Fantasies* theme song) are superb: this is near CD-quality stuff, and it really adds to the experience.



Best Educational Product

The Way Things Work

Developer: Dorling Kindersley Multimedia
Publisher: Dorling Kindersley Multimedia 95
Madison Avenue New York, NY
10016 (800) 356-6575

The Way Things Work, from Dorling Kindersley Multimedia, is based on David Macaulay's popular book about machines and the scientific principles underlying them, and built on a hyper-media engine. Its wonderful design—complete with clear and entertaining explanations as well as animated examples of the principles it covers—make it appeal both to those who learn well through reading and those who prefer to see a concept in action.

But above all, *The Way Things Work* is fun. It encourages exploration, with cross-referenced entries on related machines and mechanical principles, and entertains as it teaches. It's utterly engaging—and what software, of any type, can hope to do better than that?



Best CD-ROM Enhancement

X-Wing Collector's CD-ROM

Developer: LucasArts
Publisher: LucasArts, P.O. Box 10307,
San Rafael, CA 94912
(800) 782-7927

We've seen plenty of existing floppy-based products—and good ones, too—shoveled onto CD-ROM and rebounded as new products. What makes this one so special is that LucasArts wasn't content to rest on the reputation of *X-Wing*; they actually went into the program and improved it.

Best of all, the new CD-ROM updates the classic *X-Wing* to such a point that it holds its own against the terrific *TIE Fighter*. We had almost forgotten how good *X-Wing* really is until the *Collectors Edition* came along to remind us.

This is enhancement above and beyond the call of duty, and sets the new standard by which future CD editions will be judged. Great job, LucasArts!



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Product Information Number 82



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Under A Killing Moon

Developer: Access
Publisher: Access, 4910 W. Ameila
Earhart Drive, Salt Lake
City, UT 84116 (800) 800-4280

The concept of "interactive movies" has been hyped almost to death, but *Under a Killing Moon* is one of the few games to truly immerse the player in a cinematic adventure. Sure, the digitized video is good — it'd better be, with big-name talent like Brian Keith, Margot Kidder, and Russell Means — but it's the ability to explore every nook and cranny of the gameworld from a true 3D perspective that makes *Under a Killing Moon* so compelling.

Special Achievement in Innovative Design

Wolf

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

There are plenty of roleplaying games, but this is the only one that lets you vicariously experience the trials and tribulations of one of nature's most misunderstood animals. *Wolf* is simultaneously entertaining and enlightening — and a breath of fresh air in a genre that some say has run its course. Kudos to Manley and Associates for designing a game that's both different and fun, and hats off to Sanctuary Woods for taking a risk by publishing it.

Special Achievement in Graphics

Creature Shock

Developer: Argonaut Software
Publisher: Virgin, 18061 Fitch Avenue, Irvine CA
92714 (800) 874-4607

Whatever you think of the gameplay in *Creature Shock*, there's no question that the graphics and animation here are some of the smoothest around. Even with the glut of games using 3D-modeled characters and objects, the fluid movement and rich textures in *Creature Shock* will have you convinced you are in an alien environment. In a word, breathtaking.

Special Achievement in Acting

Sam & Max Hit the Road CD-ROM Version

Developer: LucasArts
Publisher: LucasArts, P.O. Box 10307, San
Rafael, CA 94912 (800) 782-7527

When it comes to choosing voice talent, LucasArts is one of the best in the business. Don't believe us? Then take a look at *Sam & Max Hit the Road CD-ROM*. The script in the floppy version of the game — released well before the CD-ROM — was so funny, some of us here were afraid that no actors could do it justice. But LucasArts has a flair for details, and somehow managed to come up with just the right voices to bring the Freelance Police to life.

Special Achievement in Dialogue

Beneath a Steel Sky

Developer: Revolution
Publisher: Virgin Interactive,
1806 Fitch Avenue, Irvine, CA 92714
(714) 833-1999

It's not often that anyone on the PC Gamer crew laughs out loud while playing an adventure game, but *Beneath a Steel Sky's* oddball combination of clever puns and one-liners had several of us in stitches. A couple of the voice actors left a bit to be desired, but most of the time their delivery added much to the extremely well-written dialogue. Best of all, there's a good game lurking behind neath all the lunacy.

Special Achievement in Musical Score

TIE Fighter

Developer: LucasArts
Publisher: LucasArts, P.O. Box 10307,
San Rafael, CA 94912
(800) 782-7527

LucasArts does it again! This time around, they bested the field with the iMUSE soundtrack for *TIE Fighter*, based on the original score by John Williams. The iMUSE system actually tailors the game music to suit the situation at hand — ominous when your TIE is under attack, victorious as you crush that last Rebel transport. It's been used in other LucasArts games, but reached new heights in *TIE Fighter*.

Special Achievement in Sound Effects

FIFA International Soccer

Developer: Electronic Arts
Publisher: Electronic Arts, P.O. Box 7578,
San Mateo, CA 94403-7578
(415) 571-7171

Several games have tried to incorporate play-by-play commentary, but none succeed as well as *FIFA International Soccer*. The sound couldn't be better synched to the on-field action, and the ambient noises of the crowd give the whole affair an intense, lifelike feel. "Soc-cer! Soc-cer!"

And The First Runner-Up, Miss North Carolina....

Obviously, not every game can be called the best — although sometimes, the line separating the best from the runner-up can be mighty thin. That was certainly the case with this year's awards, as a number of excellent titles missed the top position by a single vote. So here they are — the Second-Best Games of The Year. And every one of them is worth your attention.

Runners Up

Game of the Year

TIE Fighter
LucasArts

Best Roleplaying Game

The Elder Scrolls: Arena
Bethesda

Best Wargame

Harpoon II
Three-Sixty Pacific

Best Arcade Game

Mortal Kombat
UltraTech

Best Action Game

Wing Commander III
Origin

Best Adventure Game

The Legend of Kyrandia, Book Three: Malcolm's Revenge
Virgin

Best Simulation

NASCAR Racing
Papyrus

Best Sports Game

PGA Tour Golf 486
EA

Best Puzzle Game

Lode Runner: The Legend Continues
Sierra

Best Strategy Game

Warcraft: Orcs and Humans
Blizzard

Best Historical Simulation

Kingmaker
Avalon Hill

Best CD-ROM Enhancement

Tie:
Aces of the Deep
Sierra
and
Castles II
Interplay

Best Educational Product

Microsoft Encarta '95
Microsoft



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Aliens

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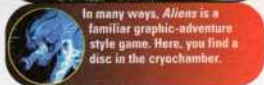
— Matt Fierse

The *Aliens* films introduced us to the galaxy's most perfect killing machines. But as fans of the Dark Horse graphic novels know, there's a lot more to the story than even Sigourney Weaver had the chance to discover.



Not many monsters survive the torch-bearing villagers to become cultural icons — perhaps because most of them are spawned in the forgettable and cheesy realms of the B movie. I can't even count the number of times I've sat down to a promising horror film, only to disappointed and end up salvaging the experience with homemade "Mystery Science Theater 3000" wisecracks.

If you've ever seen *Humanoids From the Deep*, you probably know just what I'm talking about. Here are these big, dumb, latex-covered mutated salmon-men with the sharpest claws since Tyrannosaurus Rex. They possess the remarkable ability to rip a man's chest open to his beating heart, yet



In many ways, *Aliens* is a familiar graphic-adventure style game. Here, you find a disc in the cryochamber.

reign in the sharp-claw action with such careful precision that the exact same swipe of the claw only tears the bikini tops off of their women victims. Now

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Product Information Number 136



In one of the game's most memorable intro sequences, we see the disaster that befell BS4C. Aliens drop from above...



...capturing an unwary victim. For a horrifying moment, Alien and victim are face to face. And then, with a jerk...



...the Alien tears the man's head from his body. It's a startlingly good indication of Aliens' powerful graphics.

that's cheesy.

But in the final scene of *Humanoids*, something so horrific happened that I can still remember every detail. A pregnant woman was on the delivery table in a hospital, when suddenly her belly began to move — and a baby Humanoid popped right through her flesh. It was such a shock after the preceding silliness, so incongruously disturbing, and I remember thinking that it was the most terrifying single scene in the history of monster movies. The rest of the thing was just schlock, really. Just throw-away surprises and excuses for T&A — and one moment of terror.



The source of the SOS that wakes the crew of the *Sheridan*, one of the last survivors of BS4C, sends for help.

The Modern Dragons

A few years after *Humanoids*, we once again screamed at the sight of a monster bursting through human flesh. But *Alien* wasn't frightening for just that one moment. It was unrelenting, professional, stylish horror from beginning to end, and it introduced one of those rare monsters that can survive countless deaths, yet never really die.

It also influenced Nicolas Choukroun, a project leader for renowned development house Cryo — the man who's bringing Aliens to life once more, in the new Mindscape title *Aliens*. Choukroun was struggling to become a comic book artist when he saw *Alien* for the first time. "I was very bad," Choukroun laughs, his thick French accent lending plenty of Charles Boyer charm. "And when I went and saw the movie, it was a big shock. It was so different than *Star Wars* or anything else. So dark, and

so strange. I just dreamed of working on this. So when I was offered the Aliens project, I really had no choice. I just had to do it."

Bringing the Aliens and their world to the PC sounds like a natural. In fact, it's almost hard to believe it hasn't been done before. They've certainly made their presence known on the videogame side of electronic entertainment, in shoot-'em-ups that let you blast the slick, acid-spitting predators by the bushel. But Choukroun says that's precisely the kind of game — the treatment of the Aliens theme — he wanted to steer away from.

"I could never understand why in all the videogames, designers simply made the Aliens enemies to be destroyed," Choukroun says. "Because Aliens are much more than that. They're special. Aliens are the modern dragons. I'm sure that we'll still be talking about Aliens in 100 years."

So Choukroun bypassed the Aliens films — where, in truth, the monsters really are only enemies to be killed — when looking for the inspiration behind Cryo's new project. He turned instead to Dark Horse Comics, and its series of graphic novels based on the tantalizing but incomplete sketches of the monsters as we saw them in the movies.

Contrary to what you might think, it wasn't Choukroun's early dabbling with comic art that made him go

the Dark Horse route. In fact, he says now that he's never been a big fan of comic books. But Dark Horse had done more with the Aliens than the films had, and the Dark Horse stories jibed more closely with Choukroun's own vision for the project. "Dark Horse has given the Aliens a history," Choukroun explains. "I hope that the films will think this is a good idea and use this in *Aliens 4* or *5*. It's much more inter-

esting than just killing monsters — and that's what I wanted to capture in our game. I wanted it to be a graphic adventure, and not a shooter."

The Right Look

Considering the source material — the stark, distinctive films and the stylish graphic novels — it becomes a bit easier to see why Aliens haven't appeared on the PC before now. Any attempt at bringing either the films or the comic books to life on the PC would beg comparison to the originals, and getting the right look would be very important.

But graphic technology has come a long way in the past year, and with titles like *Dragon Lore* to their credit, Cryo is among the leaders in pushing the graphics envelope. This experience no doubt encouraged Choukroun to tackle the Aliens project — and from what we've seen so far, it looks like every last bit of Cryo's experience has been brought to bear on Aliens.

We've only been working with a very early alpha version of the game, but *Aliens* is already one of the best-looking titles we've seen to date. Although 3D-modeled graphics are becoming the norm in intro sequences from even the most modest publishers, Aliens uses 3D modeling from start to finish, and to very good effect. Cryo did much the same thing in *Dragon Lore*, modeling everything from the smallest object to the largest set piece; but they've done it



Cryo provided us with a number of their concept sketches for the game, and the quality of even this preliminary art was impressive. Here, in a scene from late in the game, you stumble upon a lab full of body parts being



Artist Bernard Bittler's concept art impressed the design crew of *Aliens* in the way it captured the feel of the Dark Horse comics, and so they decided to use the art as texture over the 3D-modeled characters.

even better in *Aliens*.

One of the most interesting graphic effects in *Aliens* is the use of comic-book style art overlaid as texture on 3D-modeled characters. "It was the natural thing to do, really," says Choukroun. "We are working with a very good artist, Bernard Bittler, and he began by sketching the game on paper. From the beginning we liked his work, so we decided to use it."

The effect of this distinctive, 2D texturing over 3D models is quite remarkable, and creates the appearance of living comic book characters — which



Combat in *Aliens* employs an overhead, turn-based engine, and adds yet another dimension to gameplay.

we're used to seeing only on paper — somehow moving in three dimensions. It also makes the characters look more natural in a way, because it swaddles the obviously modeled "virtual actors" in, say, *Dragon Lore*, with visuals we can more readily accept in an adventure. They don't look like the puppets from "The Thunderbirds" or "Davey and Goliath;" they look like heroes right out of the comics, miraculously brought into the third dimension.

But the technology isn't quite up to the level necessary to move the comics-shaded characters as freely as Cryo wanted, and so the use of the technique is limited to specific areas in the game where strong inter-character relationships must be explored. The rest of the time, the characters wear exoskeletons — "mech-like battle armor. This not only makes sense in the context of the story, but proves to be quite effective in over-

coming the limitations of the impressive comic shading. It works so well, in fact, that you might never have guessed there was any reason for the exoskeletons other than the obvious: protecting frail human beings against the almost unstoppable Aliens. And the exoskeletons in action are as impressive as the characters inside them.

But it's the Aliens themselves that'll really make you sit up and take notice. They're completely modeled, and look so real you'd almost swear they exist behind the thin glass screen of your monitor. And just wait 'til you see The Bitch — the colorful

nickname given to the Queen Alien in the films.

So Where's The Beef?

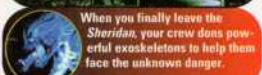
Mindscape's Kevin Bachus has an acrylic block on his desk, and inside is one of those flip novels — you know, "If you decide to kill the troll, turn to page 125; if you befriend the troll, turn to page 87." The block is labeled Interactive Entertainment, and that pretty much sums up the Mindscape position on gaming. So-called interactive entertainment — the kind that challenges you to watch some pretty visuals — has no place at Mindscape. Mindscape is a game publisher.

Perhaps that's why Mindscape and Cryo have struck up such a close relationship: Cryo is a game developer.

Aliens will cast you as the leader of the crew of the *USS Sheridan*, a four-person terraforming vessel en route home after a long mission. The crew — three men and one woman, each with his or her own specific duties and skills — is unexpectedly awakened from cryosleep when their ship intercepts a distress call from planet B54C. In accordance with the spacer's code, the crew

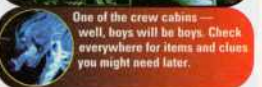
of the *Sheridan* is forced to respond. And they do.

What follows, then, is a kind of hybrid graphic adventure/roleplaying game. In the beginning, the characters aboard the *Sheridan* go about their business, and you're free to wander the ship.



When you finally leave the *Sheridan*, your crew dons powerful exoskeletons to help them face the unknown danger.

You'll have to do the usual collecting of useful objects — but you can't simply grab everything, use it in every possible location, and expect to get through the game. "Everything in *Aliens* is logical," says Choukroun. "You can't take an apple and put it on a door to open it. You have to think, to understand, and



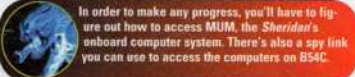
One of the crew cabins — well, boys will be boys. Check everywhere for items and clues you might need later.

then take the appropriate action.

"For example, at a certain stage in the game you'll face a fire. You have to remember that there's an extinguisher at the beginning of the game — although you can't take it at that time, because

you don't need an extinguisher then. It would be illogical to take it. But when you encounter the fire, the extinguisher becomes important. It wouldn't make sense to carry everything you find. That's why you only have eight slots in your inventory."

Adding another dimension to the game is the fact that you can't expect to make it alone. You have to rely on your crewmates, on their perceptions and expertise. "Always, there will be locations where the crew will get out of the exoskeletons and speak together," says Choukroun. "This is very important, because there are relationships between all the



In order to make any progress, you'll have to figure out how to access MUM, the *Sheridan's* onboard computer system. There's also a spy link you can use to access the computers on B54C.



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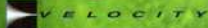
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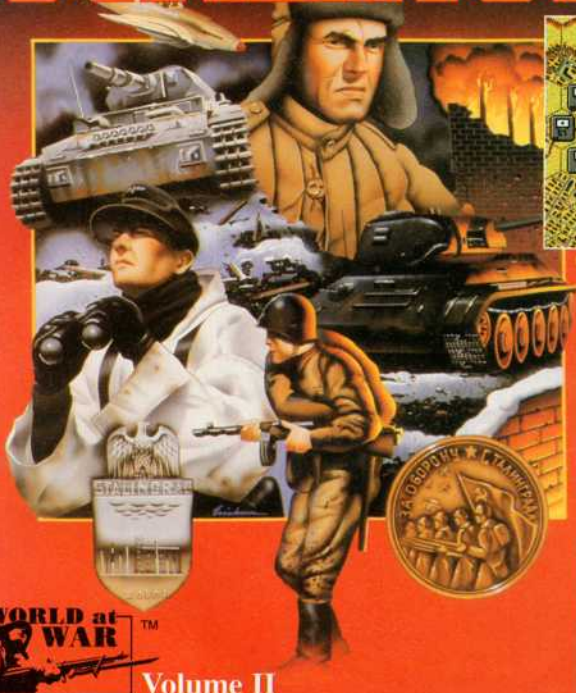


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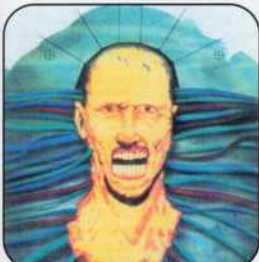
In talking with your crewmates, you'll have to take their opinions of you and the others into account. If the person you're talking to doesn't like you — and Lora obviously doesn't! — you won't get as much useful information from them.



Inside the base on B54C, you find a lone survivor. Will you help him, or kill him? The choice is entirely up to you.

the characters."

In fact, you'll have to consider not only which of your crewmates to consult in a given situation, but also how they feel about you and the others on the team. During dialogue sequences, each character has at least five possible answers to each question. If he doesn't like you, his answer will be less complete. By watching the opinion bars that come up on the right side of the screen during conversations, you can gauge how the person feels about you and the others. As leader, you have to manage relationships between characters to make sure the team is working as efficiently as it can.



One of our favorite drawings, this one shows the disembodied head of one of those nifty synthetics. Everybody should have one, we say!

When you're ready to leave the Sheridan, once you've landed on B54C, you'll enter a whole style of gameplay. The crew will suit up in their exoskeletons, and from that point you'll lead all three of them, in addition to your own character. It's almost like a classic roleplaying party. And should you encounter any Aliens, you'll shift into yet

another gaming style: isometric, phased, squad-level combat. "The combat system was created because, while playing through the game, we felt we needed to add another level of interactivity," Choukroun says.

All This, And Secrets Too

So *Aliens* will clearly be a gamers game — but it'll also be an Alien-lovers game, and Choukroun promises plenty of surprises as you work through the base on B54C. "You'll be surprised," he says, "when suddenly you'll meet an Alien more ugly, more cruel, and harder to kill than the others. And you'll understand that you actually have to save the regular Aliens from them, because if the regular Aliens and humans don't work together against the new threat, both species will be killed off."

Don't expect to learn all there is to know about the Aliens, though; Choukroun says he's holding quite a bit back this first time out. So does that mean there'll be another game in the series?

"Why not?" Choukroun asks, laughing again. "We've been working on this game for eight months now, but the crew is still not tired of the Aliens. One year isn't enough to do all I want to do with this subject, or this game. There is much more to be done. Much more."

PCG

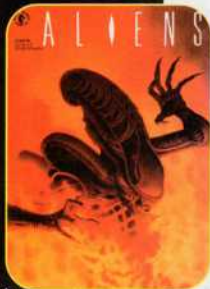


Each character has his or her own status screen, where you can check their health, inventory, and other vital stats.

The Dark Horse

Dark Horse Comics has been taking trips into the *Aliens* universe since 1988, when they published their first comic about the ongoing struggle between humanity and those nasty xenomorphs.

Simply called *Aliens*, this black-and-white, six-issue miniseries joined two of the survivors of James Cameron's *Aliens* movie several years after their fateful adventure on planet LV-426 (Sigourney Weaver's character, Ripley, was



nowhere in sight — presumably because Dark Horse couldn't get the rights to use her in their comics at the time.)

The miniseries, written by Mark Verheiden (screenwriter of Jean-Claude Van Damme's *Time Cop*) and drawn by Mark A. Nelson, told the story of the military's misguided attempts to research the aliens as potential weapons. Needless to say, the second series dealt with the aliens' near-destruction of the human race.

Ripley finally appeared in *Earth War*, the third miniseries, just in time to lead a battle for her home planet. Later came *Newt's Tale*, a sort of prequel to *Aliens*, it told what happened to the colonists on LV-426 before Ripley and the Marines arrived, seen through the eyes of little Rebecca "Newt" Jorden, the colony's only survivor.

The Dark Horse comics eventually took on a life of their own, leaving the film characters behind entirely and going off in directions that the Aliens creators probably never imagined.

Dark Horse has made the most of the license over the years, producing several more stories, like *Colonial Marines*, *Aliens: Hive*, and *Earth Angel*. Their ownership of another popular movie license even led to *Aliens vs. Predator*, the miniseries that inspired the popular arcade and videogames.

— Dan Bennett



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Through the Looking Glass



They're the talented team behind Origin's smash-hit *System Shock*, as well as the *Ultima Underworld* series. And now, the decidedly off-the-wall crew at Looking Glass Technologies is ready to become the next game-publishing empire.

—Bernie Yee

It's 1:50 a.m. in the Cambridge, Massachusetts offices of Looking Glass Technologies, but the sounds of magpulze rifle blasts still echo everywhere. The high-tech firelight of computer monitors illuminates an inflatable Spiderman crawling across the ceiling. The smell of coffee is everywhere.

Even though it all seems like a college dorm hall, the appearance of the place is deceptive. Yes, everyone's listening to music and playing games — but that's how the men and women at Looking Glass go about creating some of the most captivating, innovative environments on the PC. After spending more than 72 straight hours with the crew from Cambridge, I think I know just why Looking Glass games are so interesting, entertaining, and cool: The games reflect the atmosphere and strange mix of talents working

at 1 Alewife Center.

Cambridge is also the home of MIT — another factor contributing to Looking Glass' success. MIT was the birthplace of Infocom's *Zork*, the most compelling game of its time. Infocom was founded by MIT



The author ventures into the pit, where *Terra Nova* development is in full swing.

graduates, and its no accident that compelling virtual worlds are created by the Generation X hackers from MIT who roam Looking Glass at all hours.

Looking Glass began as Blue Sky Productions. Originally an outside developer for Origin, Blue Sky/Looking Glass created the first true three-dimensional, first-person games with *Ultima Underworld I* and *II*. Although it was planned as sort of a second fiddle to *Ultima VII*, *Ultima Underworld*'s 3D, first-person engine easily stole the thunder from the buggy *Ultima VII*. And Looking Glass' latest hit, *System Shock* — the Neuromanceresque cyberpunk adventure/roleplaying hybrid and one of the best games of '94 — easily outshone Origin's interesting but ultimately flawed *Ultima VIII*.

Visiting the site of such obvious talent really was a bit like a trip through



Bernie has a very bad flashback to his high school BC calculus class talking to Eric Twittemeyer, Looking Glass's resident mathematician.

Wonderland — populated by appropriately animated and surreal characters, but led by a rather normal-looking man named Paul Neurath. Old-time gamers might remember Neurath from his days with Sir-tech and Origin, where he produced an RPG/space simulation hybrid called *Space Rogue*.

Although they still maintain close ties with Origin, Neurath and Director of New Technologies Doug Church decided the time was right to cast off the laws of Britannia and venture into the world of publishing. Looking Glass Technologies is ready to take up the mantle of virtual reality — or immersive reality, as they call it — buoyed by past success and poised to capitalize on their upcoming hits.

Flight Unlimited takes off

Seamus Blackley's business card reads

"Mad Scientist." He paces before a white drawing board as he tries to explain how a man who studied high-energy particle physics at the Fermilab supercollider in Chicago wound up working on PC games. Six feet tall, with closely cropped red hair and a huge hoop earring, Blackley is hardly the vision of either game designer or physicist. Holder of a Tufts masters degree in physics, Blackley stopped short of his Ph.D. by choosing not to do his thesis.

"Physics appeals to me because it reflects the dynamic beauty of nature," he says, absent-mindedly diagramming what happens when protons and anti-protons meet. Blackley is the guy responsible for the real-world physics models in *System Shock*, where thrown objects arc gracefully according to their angle and velocity, and the weapons all



New-agers flock to Sedona, Arizona for the energy vortex; you can just enjoy the desert terrain as you soar above them.

Blackley's theory is that using real-world physical models give players emotive, almost instinctive cues, and reinforces the overall believability of the game-world. "If games don't obey physics, we somehow feel that something isn't right. Yet it takes a tremendous amount of effort — all math and physics — to express a concept we understand almost intuitively as a simple and elegant game component."

Blackley is an avid pilot, just about to purchase his first aircraft — a graceful sailplane, and the exact same sailplane you'll be able to fly in

Flight Unlimited. "Sailplanes are so cool because they're about soaring. It's what a sailboat is to a powerboat; the art is to stay aloft as long as you can, without an engine."

The first thing you'll notice about *Flight* is the stunningly photorealistic terrain that humbles the competition. The terrain isn't generated on the fly — it is the actual landscape of scenic places like Sedona, Arizona. Two

sets of aerial photographs are taken of a particular piece of real estate, from carefully controlled positions; special software then mathematically interpolates the two sets into a true 3D landscape. The result is enough to dazzle even the most jaded hangar jockey.

But perhaps the most impressive aspect of *Flight* isn't the graphics, but rather the flight model. Blackley picks up a

pack just the right recoil. He's also the designer behind Looking Glass' next release, *Flight Unlimited*. But he's content to keep science out of the limelight.

"The biggest compliment to me is when a gamer doesn't notice the physics, but only notices that they feel the way they should."

book and thumbs to the back pages.

"They publish numbers on the flight dynamics of the F-16 they used in *Falcon 3.0* somewhere in here; but they got those numbers from a model in a wind tunnel. When you exceed those parameters in the game, the thing just doesn't fly right," Blackley says triumphantly, closing the book with a thump. "Our approach here is to model the fluid dynamics — the airflow over the surface of the wings and flaps of actual aircraft. Once you have that model, you could drop the physical dimensions of a Piper into *Flight* and it would behave precisely the way a Piper should; if you used a lawnmower, it would fly like a lawnmower would. Pull back on

your stick and stall your plane — it'll behave exactly like that plane really would, not like it does in *Microsoft Flight Simulator*."

It's clearly the potential to meld gaming and physics that drives Blackley, the challenge of using real science to achieve immersive



Seamus Blackley gives a crash course in physics as he figures out how the make *Flight* fly in a more realistic manner.

reality. "Games today are like checkers; they have the potential to be like chess."

It's the emotion, not the science, that Blackley wants to convey in his games. "The combat version of *Flight* should feel so real that pilots will be afraid. They'll feel the gun hits." I asked Blackley why he didn't do the combat version first. "We have to retrain computer pilots, so they can really feel like they're flying."

Terra Nova Rising

In another corner of the Looking Glass offices, a group of programmers is working under project leader Dan Schmidt — one of those MIT graduates. The project is *Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri*, and PC gamers should be waiting for this one on the edge of their seats. It uses a first-person 3D engine, but unlike *System Shock* and *Ultima Underworld*, this one places you in the great outdoors — as in different planets, cli-



Richard Sullivan models his creation for *Terra Nova*.

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Dan Schmidt settles in for another day of tweaking *Terra Nova's* artificial intelligence.

mates, and gravity effects.

Terra Nova is a tactical RPG/combat simulation, where you and a squad of soldiers defend your home colonies against the fascist Terran Hegemony in the year 2327. Even in its pre-alpha state, the 3D renderer is far beyond what any other game designer has publicly shown.

The renderer is largely the work of Eric Twietmeyer, a Harvard/MIT math

Ph.D who, like Blackley, brings his own unique perspective to game design. "I wasn't a student of 3D graphics, so maybe my approach was a little different. But PCs simply can't manage all the polygons an outdoor renderer requires." Twietmeyer's solution was to combine a texture mapped polygon foreground with a bitmapped background in the distance to create a seamless illusion of detail without pixelation. That done, he's already thinking about a new project. "What I'd like to do next is a combination indoor and outdoor engine, which hasn't been done yet. I'd like to restructure the whole physics and rendering models, to be more interactive with each other; it makes sense, because what an object looks like affects its physical characteristics."

Dan Schmidt, who's in charge of *Terra Nova's* AI, was lured out of MIT after he wrote a virtually unbeatable AI

subroutine for a tank/frisbee game on MIT's X-Windows system. He's putting that skill to use, too. "The computer-controlled characters actually do what they're supposed to do, intelligently. You want them to be helping you, not just staying out of your way. And we also want to give them personalities, so that you won't just say 'send her into this mission because she's the best scout we have,' but also 'I hope she survives because she's a cool person.'"

Seamus Blackley had a hand in this project, too; the model for bipedal movement is all physics-based, not the library of movements used in games like *Alone in the Dark*. Given an accurate physics model, the animated and articulated characters should be able to walk, run, fall, and get tossed around just as realistically as any poor guy on the street might if subjected to the whims of sadistic game designers.



Industrial designers and artists get together to create a more "real" experience for *Terra Nova*.

Vision Through The Looking Glass

Paul Neurath has some ambitious plans for this rapidly growing company.

"*Flight* should do well for us," he says, fully expecting it to prove more popular

than Microsoft's *Flight Simulator*. "But we want to design games that also appeal to the connoisseur, like *System Shock* — even though those games aren't as profitable. Simulations are a big market, and we wanted to do our first flight simulator our way. But we are primarily committed to creating more realistic environments."

With that philosophy in mind, Looking Glass is one of the first companies to wholeheartedly support virtual reality devices like motion platforms and VR headsets. *Flight* will ship with drivers supporting a



Cheshire Cat and Company

It's not just programming and science that make Looking Glass games so captivating; it takes well-rounded, artistic people. Seamus Blackley, who says game designers need to go out and experience life, is a pilot, physicist, game designer — and former jazz pianist. Doug Church learned to pick locks in his spare time at MIT, and said that the experience — a controlled trial-and-error procedure with some intuitive process guiding you along — gave him the ideas for the logic puzzles in *System Shock*. A few of the Looking



Robb Waters' art for *System Shock* is fit for Marvel Comics; luckily for us, he's working on *Terra Nova*.

Glass folks were members of the alternative band Tribe, which disbanded after recording a critically acclaimed debut for Warner Brothers; the ominous soundtrack for *System Shock* was written by Tribe bassist Greg LoPiccolo, while the very creepy and slightly sexy voice of SHODAN in the CD-ROM version is Terri Barrow. Tribe's keyboard player and vocalist.

Dan Schmidt (who received degrees in music and computer science) and Doug are handmates, rehearsing in the basement of their house. It's co-owned by their ten-person partnership called "DecMo" — a contraction meaning ten dumb guys. Art Director James Dollar (yes, someone in his family tree owned our currency's namesake, a silver mine in Scotland) once did matte paintings at LucasArts; Michael Marsicano was a top industrial design student at Rhode Island School of Design, and created much of the interior of Citadel Station in *System Shock*.



The *Flight* developers try to debug the "fly through hoops" subroutine at 2 a.m.

continued on page 68.



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Free Fall

Terra Nova is still very early in development, but the vistas created so far for this 3D outdoor rendering engine are jaw-dropping, with snow-capped peaks and lakes which reflect the landscape. Originally called *Freefall* because the powered battle units sim-



Terra Nova was originally titled *Freefall*, because of the way your squad is deployed.



You'll be able to deploy your flying drones to scout out any ambushes that might be ahead.



Your powered battle armor will give you a complete 360 degrees of panoramic view, perfect for helping you spot anything trying to sneak up on your squad.

ply leap out of aircraft. *Terra Nova* has a groundbreaking look to it because it so successfully simulates 3D action in the great wide-open.

Terra Nova is set in the Alpha Centauri solar system, where humans have settled to escape political turmoil back on Earth. But The Hegemony, a fascist movement back on Earth, rises to power and decides to annex the prospering colony. When political talks fail, the Hegemony sends their military muscle.

TN uses a squad-based combat system, so your hero and up to three other battle-armor clad tough guys go out on recon, or search-and-destroy missions. The whole thing is linked in with expository sequences that reflect your progress, much like the *Wing Commander* games. Look for full-motion video to add to the experience. And it's no coincidence that the four-man squad setup lends itself nicely to network play. "Network support is definitely in the plans for the *Terra Nova* games, and other Looking Glass products," says Dan Schmidt.

Terra Nova games? Yep, you heard right. "We own the *System Shock* engine, but *Origin* owns the game universe," says Schmidt. "But we want to do a whole series of games that take place in the *Terra Nova* world."

Want to get a sneak-peek at *Terra Nova*? In the end-game sequence of *System Shock*, the hacker breaks into



Your squad mates in battle armor will move more realistically thanks to physics modeling and fancy rendering.



Don't stop too long to gaze at the fullscreen mode; you never know what will be lurking behind that ridge.

another corporate computer — and his booty is data on *Terra Nova*'n powered battle armor!





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Paul Neurath's experience in the game industry reaches all the way back to *Deep Space*, an Apple space exploration game for Sir-tech.



The people at Looking Glass plan their strategy for their first CES as an independent game developer and publisher.

soon-to-be released, \$4,000, single-seat motion platform which simulates g-forces; a two-seater sits in a corner office, wired to a PC. *Flight*, like *System Shock* CD, will also support VR headsets — which should be pleasantly disorienting.

"Should we do another game with the *System Shock* engine, or start over and do the next-generation 3D renderer?" Doug Church muses. "We've got so many ideas, I don't know if we're going to do *First Contact*," he says, referring to a planned first-person sci-fi RPG. "In fact, we wanted to make the whole cyberspace thing in *System Shock* consistent with a virtual operating system, so the player would learn how to 'hack' the world; you could actually reimplement SHODAN's (the game's villainous AI) ethical constraints. It was too complicated for Origin. We could've done it, though," he says with a mischievous smile.

As they scramble in a sort of organized chaos to combine their esoteric sensibilities, aesthetics, and subatomic physics with the concept of immersive reality, the people at Looking Glass seem



Doug Church is Looking Glass's Director of New Technologies as well as the mind behind *Ultima Underworld* and *System Shock*.

to challenge the status quo — and anyone who doubts their ability to take gaming to new heights. As we're watching a demo of *Flight* in action, Looking Glass VP Jerry Wolosenko whispers to me, "And they said implementing physics in real-time on a PC was impossible." He tilts his head to indicate the high-energy physicist Blackley — or maybe the Harvard University campus a few miles beyond him.

It Takes Horsepower to Fly Right

Seamus Blackley has a poster of one of the pilots on the United States Aerobatic Team on his office wall. "Mike Goulian, the president of the U.S. Aerobatic Team, hasn't found a PC flight simulation he's liked yet — in fact, he hates 'em. When he flew *Flight Unlimited*, he just said 'pretty cool.' I was so psyched."

Because of the physics model, *Flight Unlimited* can accurately simulate effects that traditional sim models don't usually account for — like high-risk maneuvers. But Goulian was able to fly his entire basic aerobatic routine on *Flight*. The unbelievable graphics — like the light-sourced aircraft and SVGA graphics that'll tax even the fastest Pentium — are undeniably impressive, but what makes this sim

an almost hypnotic experience is the way the plane feels. And if you thought Origin was demanding in the minimum system requirements, just wait 'til you see *Flight*.

When 150MHz Pentiums and 128-bit graphics cards come out, their proud owners will be able to fly *Flight* at a super-smooth frame rate with maximum detail. Today's machines won't quite be able to handle the sim as well, though. Hell, even *System Shock* is a bit choppy in 640x480 full-screen mode a P90. "Too many pixels to move around," shrugs Doug Church.

That isn't to say *Flight Unlimited* and *System Shock* can't be enjoyed on speedy 486s and current Pentium; it's more a case of

creating software that future Pentium owners can enjoy — and get more out of — in the years to come.

Wrong roll
Watch that horizon

two point roll



Don't be distracted by the terrain as *Flight*'s on-line instructor will give you tips on executing basic flight maneuvers — notice that the wing flaps are separate objects on the plane.



No PC flight simulator gives this kind of view from the cockpit.



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Product Information Number 112

Now it can be told! The REAL low-down on Game Reviewers

While reviews take up the bulk of our time here at PCG, it's all too easy to get carried away with a favorite game to the exclusion of all else — especially real work. We all do it, and in our own special ways.

Shelli will claim she has to check out hardware requirements, then spend the rest of the morning blasting Kilrathi. When caught in a bit of extraneous gaming, Joe says he's "doing research for The CD." Dan calls in sick, saying he's eaten some bad ham or something; but we know he's really at home with a white scarf around his neck, flying *Dawn Patrol*. Todd just sits there and tries not to move too much, hoping no one will notice his frantic mouse-clicking and send him

packing back to West Virginia. Trotter doesn't care who knows what he's doing. He bounces in his chair with headphones on, waving a pencil around as though conducting a symphony, and occasionally swearing as that *Panzer General* AI surprises him. Matt games openly, too, but he acts like he doesn't enjoy it.

But there always comes a time when someone has to take charge, and remind everyone of how much work we have to do, and how far behind we are. And so we've come up with a kind of code system, a way of gently reminding one another that there really are more important things to do than slay orcs. Here it is, revealed publicly for the first time ever:

When We Say	We Really Mean
• How goes the war, General?	• Quit screwing around and write that column, Trotter!
• You sure are a good shot, Shelli	• I don't care how many kills you've made. Work, or I'll rewrite your CONFIG.SYS.
• I didn't know we were running that demo this month.	• Are you out of your mind? That demo is two months old, and your reviews are three days late!
• Hey, Todd, how's it going?	• You're about to find yourself unemployed in West Virginia.
• Glad you're feeling better, Dan	• Looks like you'll be staying late tonight, Ham-Boy.
• Did McDonald give you his column yet?	• You're sitting on copy, Matt, and you can be easily replaced.

Hardware Requirements

With each *PC Gamer* review, you'll find two very important pieces of information: the game's minimum hardware requirements, and the hardware configurations we recommend as the least you'll need to really enjoy the game. While a game will run on the minimum system the manufacturer specifies, it might not run all that well. Because of this, we test each game on several systems so we can bring you a more realistic assessment of what you'll really need.

THE PC GAMER RATINGS SYSTEM

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 a few significant flaws.

59%-50% Fair

Very ordinary games. Not completely worthless, but not a very good 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!

PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards

Each and every month, we honor the best games we see — those earning 88% or above — with our coveted Editor's Choice award. Some months (like last time, for instance) there'll be more of these than others. But rest assured, any game thus honored will be well worth your money and time.



<p>Wing Commander III</p> <p>p.78</p>	<p>Warcraft</p> <p>p.93</p>
<p>Metaltech: EarthSiege</p> <p>p.85</p>	<p>Transport Tycoon</p> <p>p.88</p>
<p>Hell</p> <p>p.82</p>	

King's Quest VII: The Princeless Princess

Category: Graphic adventure

Developer: Sierra On-Line

Publisher: Sierra On-Line, 3380 146th Place SE, Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (206) 641-7617.

Required

CD-ROM drive; 386; DOS 3.3 (or Windows 3.1); 4MB RAM; 5MB hard-drive space; Supported sound card; SVGA; Mouse.

We Recommend

Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486; 8MB RAM

M.S.R.P.: \$49.99

Once upon a time, there was a lovely princess named Rosella who was so happy she didn't even realize that she came from one of the most dysfunctional royal families in history — and isn't that saying something!

Her father was always putting on a green felt hat and leaving the kingdom, her brother would disappear for days without explanation, there were wizards and witches out for her blood, and the one guy she really could have gone for has disappeared from the scene. Now her mother, with whom she's shared a good relationship (even during those difficult early teen years), is trying to marry her off.

Well, enough is enough. Luckily, there are always magical pools around that a princess can throw herself into. But no



Use logic when you're stealing pieces from the statue at the bottom of the well. The gods get angry when you take everything from them.

It's tag-team gaming as the Daventry women split up to save an endangered kingdom from another evil magician.

sooner does Rosella — the young princess of Daventry — toss herself into a mysterious pond than her mother, Queen Valance, follows her. The two are separated by the swirling waters, and land in different, mysterious areas of a land called Eldritch. Now they must reunite — not only to return to Daventry, but also to save Eldritch from the enchantress Malicia.

There's a lot that's new in Sierra's *King's Quest VII: The Princess Bride*: The look is new, the interface is new, and the lack of options is new. Sierra's gone for a cartoony — dare we say Disneyesque? — touch with this one, from the opening musical number to the creative creatures who bound through the seven chapters of the adventure.

You don't have to switch icons to walk or talk or get or use objects this time around, either. You simply use a magic wand icon to walk to new areas or interact with different things. The wand icon sparkles when there's something to see or use, so you end up doing a lot of the

dreaded "metal-detecting" action — especially when you get stuck and think you might have overlooked something. Once you have an object, you can hold it over an eye icon to see it, or rotate it in well-shaded 3D.

As far as customizing your game or trying lots of different methods to finish the adventure, forget it. Your only options seem to be volume control, playing a new or saved game, and exiting (see sidebar).

Something else that's new in *KQ7* is its non-linear, tag-team approach. You play both Valance and Rosella in alternating gaming chapters. You don't even have to play



Some might find the troll Rosella cuter than the willowy princess. Certainly the king... or is he the king?... seems to.



A neat feature about *KQ7* is the ability to see items in your inventory in 3D. Far corners of certain items hold vital secrets.

straight through the quest to reach the end-game sequence. You can jump right to it, or you can play all Valance's chapters, or you can play all Rosella's chapters, or... you get the picture. If you skip ahead, your character begins with any vital items in her inventory, or else she can find anything she needs a hop, skip, and a screen away.

As is often the case in games that allow you to skip around, you'll find that the best way to play *KQ7* is from beginning to end, just the way the designers intended. Each chapter ends with a cliffhanger in which the queen or her daughter are endangered, and putting off the conclusion for another chapter is some of the only suspense you're going to get in *The Princess Bride*.

You see, *KQ7* is a typical mixed bag. The look the designers chose to go for

ss Bride

CD-ROM



■ The crystal dragon holds the final ingredient Rosella needs to escape her life of warts and sallow skin. Getting the item, however, must wait until the dragon takes a nap.

works well — if it doesn't look as incredible as Disney, it at least equals Don Bluth. Each character has a lot of animation, too. But it unfolds too slowly even on a 486, so the comical stretches and funny facial expressions take about twice as long as they should.



■ What would a King's Quest game be without a person under an evil spell? Attis may be a stag now, and his wife Ceres an oak tree, but hopefully Valance can change all that.

Most of the voice actors are good (and be sure to read the credits to spot some surprising multiple roles), but they sound like they're recording a kid's disc; every line is full of high emotion, and oh-so-much feeling. On the other hand, the music is great, and the sound effects are just perfect.

The best thing about *KQ7* is the imagination that's evident in every chapter. As always, the game is influenced by everything from *Mother Goose* to *The Wizard of Oz*, and from *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* to *Lost City of the Incas*. As an example, the engaging Chapter 2 traps Rosella in the underground lair of the trolls. But where



■ Just as every chapter ends with a cliffhanger, every chapter begins in dire straits. Valance must escape the gila monster before you can get started with chapter 3.

earlier games would have the princess simply wander around troidom, in *KQ7* she's transformed into a stubby, warty little troll herself — and she's darn charming, too. If it's spookiness you're after, Chapter 4 takes place in Ooga Booga Land, where mummies, ghouls, and bogeymen are shadowy and threatening. There are also haunted woods, swamps, and cloud cities.

As adventure games go, *KQ7* is fairly simple to get through. There are plenty of the standard pick-up-this-to-work-that puzzles, but since each chapter is self-contained, it's too easy to figure out how all the pieces of the puzzle fit together. And that magic wand icon sparkles on items in your inventory, too, so there's no real sleuthing required to figure out which items you can combine or dismantle.

This latest visit with the Daventry royals is an enjoyable trip, but an all-too-brief one. The technical aspects are in place — all on one disc, too! — but gameplay seems to have been shoved aside. If there's such a thing as a pleasant disappointment, this is it.

—Leslie Mizell



■ You can't trust anyone in Ooga Booga Land — even a distressed mourner can turn out to be deadly.

Save While the Savin' Is Good

Anyone who has played Sierra games for more than a year or two has had some adjusting to do. First we lost our text parser, so we couldn't check out the designers' vocabulary of naughty words. Then we lost the familiar characters as Sierra experimented with digitized actors.

But now Sierra may have gone too far. In *KQ7*, we not only lose the familiar icons we've finally gotten used to, but we also lose a traditional standard of adventuring — the ability to save, and save often.

Part of the fun for a masochistic *KQ* adventurer is the idea that villainy and danger lurk behind every castle corner and every leaf in the haunted woods. You can die at any moment, and if you haven't saved your game, hours of questing can be lost. Similarly, you're often given choices in the game — should you pick up the sword or the tea cup? — and your decision can affect the rest of your game. That's the suspense that keeps you glued to the computer for days on end.

In *KQ7*, however, you can't save the game with the click of a button and try something new. You can save only by quitting the game — and each time you quit, the game is saved automatically. So if you reach a point in the game where you have a choice to make, there's no way to save and then try each alternative. Because if you pick up the cup and then exit to reload from your previous save, you'll be saving the game after the choice is made.

There's no way to create a "gaming tree" of selections without setting up troublesome alternate directories. Of course, the game is designed so that you won't have to worry about that. When you die, you can just try again. But where's the challenge? Where's the sadistic satisfaction of having just saved when the avvil falls on your head? Where's the frustration of being decapitated by an unexpected beast? The loss of the save-game feature takes control out of the player's hands — and in compensating for its loss, the designers make the adventure that much easier.



Died on the job? No problem — you can repeat the game as often as you wish. You're not required to save the game.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Sierra always delivers pretty, enjoyable graphic adventures.

LOWS: The interface doesn't leave much for the gamer to do, and the save-game method stinks.

BOTTOM LINE: It's not the best graphic adventure — or even the best in the *KQ* line — but it's fun and pretty and not too hard.

84%



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Product Information Number 132

Dawn Patrol

Category: Air-combat simulation

Developer: Rowan Software

Publisher: Empire Interactive, #4 Professional Drive, Ste. 123, Gaithersburg, MD 20879 (301) 216-9707

Required

386/25MHz; 4MB RAM; 8MB hard-drive space; VGA; DOS 3.0 or later

We Recommend

486/33 MHz for VGA; Pentium for SVGA; 8MB RAM; 14MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Supported sound card; Joystick; Mouse

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

This WWI air-combat sim is fast and furious, and boasts the best plane graphics we've seen. But is it better than Red Baron?



■ Pour enough lead into an enemy, and you'll be rewarded with one of these realistic-looking fiery explosions.



■ Fly as—or against—one of over a dozen of the most famous aces from The Great War.

Fokker Scourge," and highlights the incredible advantage the Fokker Monoplane (Eindekker) enjoyed during 1915-16.

Dawn Patrol can be played in VGA, SVGA, or a combination of the two (mission descriptions or "book pages" in high-res, combat in VGA). The detail of the aircraft in the SVGA mode is simply incredible, creating a sense of realism only hinted at in previous lookers like *Commodore's 1942: The Pacific Air War*. But be forewarned: To dogfight in SVGA, you'll need a Pentium with a very fast video card (and I don't mean fast in Windows, either). Thankfully, the planes look gorgeous in VGA, and the frame rate in that mode is quite good.

But it won't take many missions before you start finding all the little problems that keep *Dawn Patrol* from challenging *Red Baron* for WWI air superiority. For starters, there's the sound effects—machine gun fire sounds great, but engine noises are little more than a feeble hum. Thanks to its U.K. heritage, the layout of the keyboard commands will be confusing to players accustomed to the semi-standardized keyboard commands of American products.

There are a plethora of external views, but accessing them during flight, let alone combat, can be a daunting task.

At first glance, the missions seem quite varied, but soon they all sort of feel the same, and it's not uncommon to find the same mission used in several parts of the book. I didn't find the Pilot Biographies nearly as absorbing as a traditional career mode option, but that's my opinion—others may like assuming the persona of a nondescript pilot and filling up the pages

devoted to him in the history book.

I'm no expert on flight models of WWI planes, but I do know one thing: If the rudders on these aircraft were as touchy in real life as they are in this game, the death toll from spins and stalls would have been astronomical. You can turn off rudder control, but as any longtime PC pilot will tell

you, there are certain maneuvers that can only be performed with independent rudder control. And on the other hand, the planes seem unreasonably forgiving. Unless you nose into the ground, it's almost impossible to crash.

But despite these drawbacks, *Dawn Patrol* is still a lot of fun, if only because it is the only other WWI flight sim in town. If you're at all interested in the nascent era of dogfighting, you'll probably get a real kick out of *Dawn Patrol*.

—Steve Poole



■ Even the VGA graphics are outstanding; too bad that accessing an external view to enjoy them is such a chore.

With the release of *Dawn Patrol*, one question's on everyone's lips: Is it better than *Red Baron*? Unfortunately, *Dawn Patrol* isn't quite up to the task of dethroning *Red Baron* as king of WWI air-combat games, due mainly to *Red Baron*'s mind-boggling array of options and features. But *Dawn Patrol* does deliver a lot of in-your-face dogfighting action, and looks pretty damn good in the process. As a matter of fact, I'd have to say that *Dawn Patrol* is the most graphically impressive air-combat game I've seen, bar none.

One of the most unique things about *Dawn Patrol* is its presentation: it's structured as an interactive history book of air combat during the Great War. The first chapter, "The First Air War," features seven missions, each chosen to highlight new technology or new tactics. The mission in the opening chapter, for instance, is "The



■ The SVGA graphics of *Dawn Patrol* give the planes a highly realistic appearance, but you'll definitely need a Pentium with a superfast video card to fly in this mode.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Some of the finest plane graphics; and forgiving flight physics

LOWS: Flight physics may be too forgiving; many missions feel the same; confusing keyboard commands.

BOTTOM LINE: Doesn't knock *Red Baron* from the skies, but makes a good addition to your flight-sim library.

83%

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Product Information Number 126

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Skyrealms of Jorune: Alien Logic

Category: Roleplaying game

Developer: Ceridus Software

Publisher: SSI, 675 Almanor Avenue, Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086
(408) 737-6814

Required	We Recommend
CD-ROM drive; 486DX/33; 8 MB RAM; 10MB uncompressed hard-drive space; DOS 5.0 or higher; 1MB SVGA; Mouse	Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66; Supported sound cards

M.S.R.P.: \$50.00

If you're ready for a new experience in RPGs and don't mind arcade-like combat, Alien Logic will transport you to a new world.

Everyone knows that TSR, the company that owns AD&D, decided to take their valuable license from SSI over to Interplay. So faced with the prospect of losing their once-lucrative stake in the RPG market, SSI picked up a new license from a company called Chessex for their successful pen and paper RPG, Skyrealms of Jorune. Skyrealms is about as far removed from the AD&D world as Alien Logic is from *Menzoberranzan*—or any other computer RPG to date, for that matter. And that's good news for SSI:



Not all of the characters you'll meet are eyeless aliens...

a rudimentary civilization, and while both remember the past, no open hostilities remain.

Except for one individual, called the Red Shantha. Violent where most of his race is peaceful, he has captured most of your village and stored them in stasis for some evil purpose. Your goal is to find the Red Shantha and defeat him.

Jorune is populated with several races and distinct cultures. Since *Alien Logic* is based on an established RPG, a rich history surrounds all the races you'll meet—one of game's real strong points. You'll want to explore as much of this fascinating world as you can, and *Alien Logic* allows you to do just that because it doesn't tether you to a totally linear plot.

To get around the planet easily, you'll have to master "cleesh-tas," entrances into Jorune's WarpWorld—a sort of interdimensional shortcut system covering all of Jorune. The Red Shantha is only accessible through WarpWorld, but you can also use it to get to a number of other locales.

And thanks to that non-linear structure, you're free to take time and visit these places, interacting with the locals through a very detailed menu-driven conversation system.

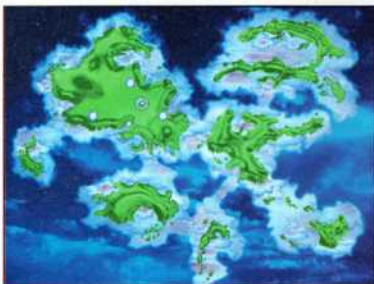


The dreaded side view. It wouldn't be that bad if only it didn't look so videogamey.

One of the quirkier features of *Alien Logic* is its side-view mode. You'll view the planet from an overhead map, and moving to some locations switches you to another overhead view, with photo-realistic images. But when you enter certain locales, like a shantha temple, a tavern, or a creature encounter, the view switches from top-down to a side perspective—distressingly similar to legions of Sega and Nintendo combat games. But you don't even get as much control of your character as you would in a Nintendo action game; all you can do is move from screen to screen, and unleash magic on your enemies.

So no, *Alien Logic* isn't perfect. But right now, I'd rather be playing *Alien Logic* than *Menzoberranzan*, and I'm hoping that SSI continues creating RPGs in the Jorune universe. *Alien Logic* offers a new approach to role-playing, with rich alien cultures, a nice mix of science and sorcery, great SVGA visuals, and an original plot that's refreshingly free of elvin types. And most of all, it's fun.

—Bernie Yee



Unless you like to do a lot of walking, you'll want to learn to master the cleesh-tas that let you warp around Jorune.

despite the fact that *Menzoberranzan* is a pretty good game, SSI's recent RPGs have tended to feel like just more of the same.

Alien Logic takes place in the far future. Humans settled on the planet Jorune early in the 21st century, where they lived with several alien races like the

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Beautiful graphics and intriguing plotline.

83%

LOWS: Real-time combat and a so-so side view will turn off cerebral RPG veterans.

BOTTOM LINE: If you're tired of "more of the same" in RPGs, then you'll agree—*Alien Logic* is a breath of fresh air in a stale genre.

Wing Commander III: Heart of the Tiger

Category: Space combat

Developer: Origin Systems

Publisher: Origin Systems, 12940 Research Blvd., Austin, TX 78750, (512) 335-5200

Required

Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/50; 8MB RAM; 10MB hard-drive space; VGA; Supported sound card

We Recommend

Pentium 60; 16MB RAM; 40MB hard-drive space; SVGA with at least 1 MB of memory; Joystick; Mouse

M.S.R.P.: \$60-\$90

It's been quite clear, since the advent of CD-ROM, that computer games are steadily moving towards some new hybrid of movie and game. We've been subjected to numerous "interactive movies," and all of them have failed on some level — whether in writing, acting, filming, animation, or pure gameplay. Whatever the reason, the potential of this new movie/game hybrid has, until now, gone unfulfilled.

But with *Wing Commander III: Heart of the Tiger*, Origin has produced a title that succeeds so perfectly and on so many levels that it must be considered the new benchmark against which all interactive entertainment will be compared. With its all-star cast, big-budget production, intriguing storyline, sumptuous sound, and beautiful 3D rendering, *WCIII* is a game in which every element is meticulously crafted, and brought together flawlessly.

WCIII opens with a jaw-dropping



Talk to HOBBIES.

On the main level, you can go to the next mission, take the elevator, hit the flight deck, run the cockpit simulator, or talk to someone.

Finally, what everybody has been waiting for — an "interactive movie" that's both truly interactive and a good movie.



The Emperor puts some Confed fighters to death.

mini-movie, setting the stage for the drama to follow and establishing the main characters. In a series of soaring scenes, we're taken from the vast palace of the Kilrathi emperor to a shoreline where a space carrier lies in ruins. Along the way we meet our main characters



In the game's opening sequence, Blair and Paladin view the wreckage of the *Concordia* from the shore.

and begin to sense the tension and conflict which your character, Colonel Christopher Blair, will face. Blair is being assigned to the slightly disreputable carrier *TCS Victory* by the scheming Admiral Tolwyn, whose plans are not immediately clear. The crew of the *Victory*, lead by Captain Eisen, is competent enough — but the *Victory* is still the kind of assignment pilots pull when they've pissed someone off.

The usual array of *Wing Commander*-style characters, mostly wingmen and women (wingpeople?), are here as in previous versions, but the high-quality video and acting bring them to life as never before (see sidebar). Everything about the production, casting, and performances is executed at a level of quality and professionalism we've never seen before in a game. The backgrounds are finely rendered and the video is smooth, full-screen — and, for the most part, clear. There is some pixelation in the video sequences, but it's still the best that's possible at the current level of technology.

None of the actors are "A-list" stars (though some used to be), but they

prove in *WCIII* that they can still turn in solid, compelling performances in the truly unusual context of a computer game. Casting Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker himself) as the Wing Commander is a stroke of genius that pays off big. Not

only does he do a good job, but he evokes the swashbuckling spirit of the *Star Wars* flicks as well, giving the entire proceedings a nostalgic resonance.

Even more exciting are the animatronic puppets used for the Kilrathi. Large, imposing, and fully articulated, these are the cats as you imagined they would look in reality. With growling, distorted voices and the vocal talents of actors such as Tim Curry and John Shuck, they are menacing yet regal.

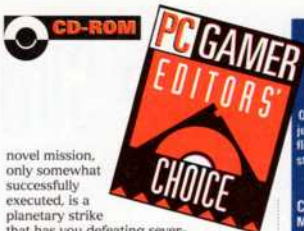
True to *Wing Commander* form, you experience these scenes between flying missions. Some scenes have a level of interactivity, in which you can choose how you respond to certain people. Only a few of these seem to really alter the course of the game, though, and then only in minor ways. (One choice you *do* get to make is who you'll boink: Flint or Rachel. It's purely a matter of taste, however, and only changes the very last scene.)

You get to wander the entire ship, including the flight deck, bar, gunnery control, flight simulator, bunks, and more. When ready for a mission, you enter the briefing room, where Captain Eisen describes the mission elements and goals. From there, you drop to the ready room to pick your wingman and then its off to the flick deck for a long wait while the game loads the mission



A Draithi takes a hit to the shields.

f the Tiger



novel mission, only somewhat successfully executed, is a planetary strike that has you defeating several waves of fighters, then taking out ground-based tanks, and finally blowing up a few buildings.

There's enough that's familiar here to please fans of the series, while providing a couple of new tricks to keep things interesting. The flight dynamics and (for the most part) the mission structure are the same-old *Wing Commander*, with more of an emphasis on arcade-like action than true "space sim-



Coming in for a landing on the Victory.

ulation." At times you still get the feeling that you're in a bubble with the scenery rotating around you, but this hardly matters. *Wing Commander III* delivers in spades where it counts — in the action and drama departments.

Computer entertainment has been struggling towards some synthesis of Silicon Valley and Hollywood: "Sillywood," some have dubbed it. In *Wing Commander III*, that synthesis has actually arrived, and it'll forever change how multimedia games are viewed. Of course, there's some cost for all this: *WCIII* will fight even the most advanced systems for a proper configuration, and on my Pentium 60 with 24 MB of RAM and a full installation it still features a protracted, almost two-minute-long mission load time.

But the rest of the game flows quite well — so well, in fact, that you'll soon forget this is a game and just become wrapped up in its fully realized world. It's a tour de force, and the culmination of years of work on a series that many consider the finest in computer gaming history.

— T. Liam McDonald



Pick FLASH.

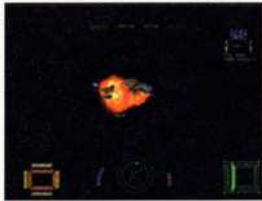
After mission briefing, you can select who will fly on your wing.

details. Hey, nobody said it was perfect.

The point of all this *sturm und drang* is to put you in the cockpit of a Confed fighter in a series of fast-paced missions. The heart of *WCIII*, it's action sequences, are vintage *Wing Commander* made even better, and guaranteed to impress even the most jaded gamers. The most striking element of this new flight engine are the SVGA graphics. Simply put, no game has ever had this level of detail and this kind of high-quality rendering in action scenes. The ships look so good you feel like you could reach out and touch them, with laser blasts taking chunks out of enemies and Kiltrathi exploding into blinding fireballs. The action never lets up, and you can set it for as easy or as hard as you like without changing the outcome of the game.

On easier modes, the Kiltrathi ships explode with only a hit or two, while on harder levels they're much more difficult to kill.

Altogether, the Kiltrathi fly with a high level of competence and offer quite a bit of challenge on many missions. The missions themselves run the traditional gamut from fighter sweeps and scrambles to bombing raids, escorts, and search-and-destroy. Some added twists new to *WCIII* are the ability to fly into some Kiltrathi ships, such as carriers, and destroy them from the inside. Another



Another Kiltrathi dies in a bitmapped blast.



Eisen gives you your mission objectives in the Briefing Room.

The Stars of Wing Commander III

Origin lined up some impressive talent for *WCIII*, and just about everyone in the cast does a great job in the fledgling field of computer-game acting. Here are those stars — and a few of their memorable non-game roles...

Colonel Christopher Blair
Mark Hamill
(*Star Wars, Corvette Summer*)
Your character — a swell but tormented guy.



Admiral Tolwyn
Malcolm McDowell
(*Clockwork Orange, Caligula*)
Well, it's Malcolm McDowell, so this must be the bad guy. Watch out for him!



Captain Eisen
Jason Bernard ("The White Shadow," "Herman's Head")
An all-around good guy, he'll brief you before each mission.



Paladin
John Rhys-Davies (*Raiders of the Lost Ark, "Archaeology"*)
Paladin is your buddy, but don't believe everything he says.



Maniac
Tom Wilson (*Back to the Future*)
The required hot-dogger. He's an arrogant dillweed, but an aggressive flyer.



Rachel
Ginger Lynn Allen (*Vice Academy, New Wave Hookers*)
She's the flight engineer who prepares you're fighter for the missions. Possible love interest.



Flint
Jennifer MacDonald (*Terminal Force, California Dreamin'*)
A pilot looking for a little revenge. Also a possible love interest.



Hobbes
John Shock
(*"Holmes and Yo-yo," M.A.S.H.*)
A Kiltrathi fighter who has defected, but is far from accepted by his fellow pilots.



PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: A stunning visual and aural feast. Good acting.

LOWS: Requires the ultimate PC to work properly, and even using a dream machine, it features a long wait during mission loading.

BOTTOM LINE: A fantastic interactive experience blending drama and action so skillfully that it will redefine multimedia standards.

96%

Microsoft Space Simulator

Category: Simulation

Developer: Bruce Artwick Organization

Publisher: Microsoft, 1 Microsoft Way,
Redmond, WA 98052-6399
(206) 882-8080

Required

386/25; 768K expanded memory;
VGA; Mouse

We Recommend

486/33; SVGA;
Supported sound cards

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

You've conquered the galaxy in *X-Wing*, *TIE Fighter*, and *Wing Commander*. But isn't it about time you got serious about space? Sure, you're a hero, but do you have what it takes for real space exploration? Forget about Luke Skywalker. Welcome to the universe of real physics, time, and space. Microsoft's *Space Simulator*, like *Flight Simulator* before it, doesn't go for the big bang of combat. What you get here is realism. Too much realism, perhaps, for some gamers—but *Space Simulator* is just that: a simulator that gives you nothing less than the Milky Way galaxy as your playground.

Planets, moons, stars, comets, asteroids, black holes—the universe of *Space Simulator* has them all. You can view these heavenly bodies in the observatory, or you can visit them aboard a variety of spacecraft, some real and some futuristic.

Above all, *Space Simulator* strives to convey the intricacies and excitement of space travel. Whether you're recreating

If your interest in space goes beyond lasers and photon torpedoes, you'll enjoy exploring this outstanding tool for education—and fun.

the Apollo missions to the Moon or embarking on a journey to the core of the Milky Way galaxy, this program will deliver as close to the real thing as any commercially viable product can. If you're used to stopping and turning on a dime in a starfighter, piloting the spacecraft here might be a rude introduction to the laws of physics. As in the real world of space travel, an object in motion will come to a stop only when equal force is exerted in the opposite direction. You can't just step on the brakes. This physics-based space flight takes some getting used to, but there are enough autopilot options to get around the more bothersome of Newton's laws.

The universe according to *Space Simulator* encompasses our solar system and the surrounding Milky Way galaxy, a diameter of 8.4 billion light years. If you're a true stickler for realism, you can make your journeys in real time—that's four days to the Moon, eight months to Mars, and about 450,000 years to the center of the galaxy. Of course, most of us don't have that much time to spare, so you can accelerate the trip to visit any point in the galaxy within minutes.

While *Space Simulator* generates most of the known stars in our galaxy, the only planets whose existence can be absolutely confirmed are those right here in the solar system. But logic tells us that our sun isn't unique in its complement of planets, so the *Space Simulator* program "sprouts" planetary systems around those stars it deems likely to support them. Once created during installation,

those systems are there forever. If you discover a distant solar system during your stellar travels, you'll find it again if you return next year.

There are several pre-planned missions to play with, including the Apollo 17 mission, docking the shuttle, a space walk, and an interstellar journey. But the real fun here is planning your own star trek, using one of the varied space craft provided. These include intergalactic vehicles, fighters, freighters, and terrain landers, along



The interface allows plenty of control, although it can be a bit confusing at times.

with the more familiar shuttle and the lunar landing module.

Space Simulator operates in a VGA mode of 320x400, 256 colors, but you'll want to step up the resolution if your machine can handle it. At the higher resolutions, the galaxy comes alive with images of planets and moons that rival the best astronomy programs.

Of course, in space no one can hear you scream. And they can't hear you groan, either, when you get tired of the limited and disappointing sounds in *Space Simulator*. Except for the planet-side missions there's no sound to hear, and even there the sound effects aren't much. Several pieces of classical music are provided, though.

Whether you just want to gaze at the heavens in the observatory or plan and fly the first manned mission to Mars, *Space Simulator* is your ticket to the cosmos. This remarkable and unique program isn't for everybody, but if your interest in space goes beyond Buck Rogers, you'll find this Galaxy in a Box to be an unforgettable experience.

—Lee Buchanan



The space shuttle roars from its launch pad at Cape Canaveral in one of several missions awaiting you.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Stunning high-res graphics, realistic approach to space travel.

84%

LOWS: Poor or non-existent sound and the interface can be awkward and confusing.

BOTTOM LINE: Solid science combined with a sense of wonder equals an entertaining, educational tool for galactic exploration.

The Scroll

Some Things Are Better Left Dead And Buried.



Its spell petrified a city's populace, anointed a prince of Ancient Egypt to spread the cult of the dark god, Nyarlathotep, and ensured that the blood of the serpent people ran through the veins of all his descendants. Centuries would pass, and it would be buried at the end of a long, lost tunnel in a temple beneath the unsuspecting city of Alexandria. But in 1920, one Yussuf Al Rashid begins to dig a hiding place for his ill-begotten money and unearths the 2,000 year old magical scroll which sets in motion an adventure which begins with death and could finish with the end of the world.



VIC TOKAI INC.

22904 Lockness Ave. Tompkins, CA 90501

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PC CD-ROM

Product Information Number 142

Hell

CD-ROM

Category: Roleplaying Graphic Adventure

Developer: Take 2

Publisher: Take 2, 1004 Ligonier St., 3rd Floor, Latrobe, PA 15650 (412) 539-3077

Required

CD-ROM drive;
386SX/33; 560K
RAM; SVGA; 20MB
hard-drive space;
Compatible sound
card; Mouse.

We Recommend

Double-speed CD-
ROM drive;
486DX2/50.

M.S.R.P.: \$79.95

Talk about rude awakenings. You're sleeping peacefully one moment, and the next you're running down the streets of Washington, D.C. wearing little more than a terrified look. Special agents with orders to "terminate with extreme prejudice" have turned you into a fugitive from your own organization, ARC (Artificial Reality Containment). You were one of their best agents, but things have a way of changing instantaneously, one hundred years hence. And change they have, as the government — and so all of society — is run exclusively by the Hand of God party, an ultra right-wing group.

Somehow in this world of 2094, the gates of Hell have been opened. An aberration in the space-time continuum has resulted in a dimensional rift (you know, like the ones that happened every other week in "Star Trek: The

Next Generation") which has allowed demons to enter our world. They've even taken over the Pentagon, although the in-joke is that there's not much difference between the pre- and post-demonic military establish-

With Stephanie Seymour in attendance, just how did Dennis Hopper end up being called "Beautiful?"

ishment. In fact, the blurred distinction between actual Hell and the real world makes for pointed social commentary. Could this rift be the product of abusing cyberspace? Perhaps something more meta-physical? Interesting questions, but you have more pressing matters to worry about at first, such as who you can really trust and how you can hang onto your skin.

In the long-anticipated *Hell*, you play either Rachel Braque or Gideon Eshanti, top ARC agents who must scour the streets of Washington, and beyond, in order to discover why they're on the Hand of God's scrub list. And by beyond, I don't mean Virginia or Maryland — I mean the Great Beyond. You'll make several visits to the netherworld, to both battle the demons in control there and to gather the information needed to

Holder as Jean St. Mouchoir, also lend their voices to great effect. Indeed, the voices are the real stars here; the acting is consistently good, even down to the

most minor character. There's very little of the dialogue awkwardness of some interactive movie/games.

Of course, even the greatest voices sound hollow when given weak lines to speak, but fortunately writing is a strong point of *Hell*. Most of the characters have nice moments, but Hopper's character, Mr.

Beautiful, has some really choice lines. Almost all of the characters are represented as 3D-rendered creations. The rendering gives the figures an other-worldly feel that would not have been possible using real actors, even with the best makeup and prosthetics. The figures do still move rather stiffly compared to live actors, but not so much as to detract from the game.



This little demon will conjure up Mr. Beautiful for you, if you can come up with the right word. Just listen closely and he'll tell you what to say.



Shades of TV's "Red Dwarf": Cynna's knowledge of explosives can be a big help, even if she is now a hologram.



With the opening of the rift between Hell and Earth, even the Pentagon has been taken over by demons. But are you working for or against this guy?



The hand of god and the fate of mankind are forever entwined here. From the first time a demon is seen, to the last time you see the hand of god, you'll never be the same.

Can you trust anyone? There are some who oppose the Hand of God — just remember to save the game before you place your trust in anyone.



After one too many deals, Mr. Beautiful's body has parted with his head. You might still want to let him join your party, though.

where the answer to the guard's question is literally staring you in the face — to some rather complex and convoluted computer hacking.

You will do battle, but the challenge here is in the preparation rather than the technique on your trips to Hell. You'd be amazed — or maybe you wouldn't — at how densely Hell is littered with all sorts of weapons. With fairly capacious inventory storage, you can pretty much pick up anything you find, a tactic to practice religiously. You won't use everything you find, but on the other hand, you don't want to be caught short, weapon-wise, when battling Beelzebub. Once you've got your weapons, the fighting is mostly automatic. The game was originally designed to allow complete control of

Beyond the characters themselves, the overall look of the game is simply stunning. Effective use of shadows and dynamic color schemes give *Hell* a truly unique atmosphere. And it's quite interesting how hellish many of the earthly scenes look, painting a very bleak picture of 2094 — similar to the future in movies such as *Blade Runner*.

Unlike many games in the genre, *Hell* is fairly non-linear, in that you don't have to follow any set progression. There are certain things you must seek out, and certain people you must speak with, but the order in which you do



Lovey girl, huh? In a world where the dividing line between reality and virtual reality has disappeared, sex is, as always, one of the few constants.

combat situations, but that aspect was eliminated just prior to the game's release. This is probably for the best, as the logistics of effectively maneuvering rendered figures would have made actual combat an exercise in frustration.

The game interface is for the most part effective, giving you access to all parameters by simply moving the cursor to the top of the screen. Maneuvering your characters is a bit tricky, but then there aren't many instances where you need to place a character in a certain spot. If you need to talk with someone, you just place the cursor over that person, which causes Rachel and Gideon to move to that spot. Same process goes for picking up objects.

Interactive games are still very



Well, you've gotten as far as the Gates of Hell, but what awaits you within? Could it be that only one of you leaves here alive?



Winning any battle in Hell means having the right weapon for the right situation, and then just blasting away. Pick up anything you find — you've got the room for it.

these things is up to you. One word of warning, however — the way you deal with a certain character may have repercussions in other areas of the game. Also, there are specific stages in the game — such as your many visits to Hell itself — where the time continuum changes, which in turn affects the course of the game.

A big part of *Hell* centers on the puzzles you must solve in your quest. There are more than 42 separate puzzles in the game, with varying degrees of difficulty. They range from getting into the Interface to meet Cynna —

Hell's Stars, in Character



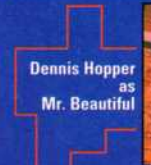
Grace Jones
as
Solene Solux



Stephanie
Seymour
as
Cynna Stone



Geoffrey
Holder
as
Jean St.
Mouchoir



Dennis Hopper
as
Mr. Beautiful

much in transition, and while many companies are content to simply string together live-action video segments into something resembling a game, it's great to see companies like Take 2 pushing the envelope of both graphic technology and creativity. *Hell* won't be everyone's cup of tea, but anyone who enjoys great graphics, emotionally evocative voice-overs, challenging puzzles, and a wonderfully wicked sense of humor, should get their tickets punched for Take 2's Stygian ferry.

—Gary Meredith

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Great story, puzzles, graphics, and believable voice-acting.

92%

LOWS: For some the nudity, violence, and strong language may be a bit much for some folks.

BOTTOM LINE: Hell draws the latest line in the sand for other designers to cross.

EPIC

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COMING SOON ON MULTIMEDIA CD



SIERRA
Product Information Number 124

Metaltech: EarthSiege

CD-ROM

PC GAMER
EDITORS'
CHOICE

Category: Battling robots

Developer: Dynamix

Publisher: Sierra On-Line, 3380 146th
Place SE, Suite 300, Bellevue,
WA 98007 (206) 649-9800

Required

CD-ROM drive;
386DX/33; 4MB
RAM; 20MB hard
drive space; VGA

We Recommend

Double-speed CD-
ROM drive; 486;
8MB RAM; Compa-
tible sound card;
Mouse, or joystick

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

**Don't turn your back, Mech-
Warrior: The Metaltech
series is here — and it kicks 'bot.**

Battling bipedal robots have an appeal that's undeniable. They're massive, heavily armed, vaguely human fighting machines that can inflict a delightful amount of damage when in the right hands. Going *mano a mano* in a 'bot armed to the teeth with missiles, lasers, chainguns, and an entire battery of other weapons is just more fun than one human should be able to have.

Until now the main players in this genre have been the Battletech games and centers, and Cyberstrike on GENIE. While everyone has been waiting (and waiting) for *MechWarrior 2: The Clans*, Dynamix was quietly creating their own fighting robot game using the technology from their Aces games, and the competition is going to have to work really hard to make a game as good as *Metaltech: EarthSiege*.



The CD-ROM version of *EarthSiege* features a 3D-rendered, animated introduction. The HERCs in the actual game look nearly as good as these.

Set in a post-nuclear 25th century, *EarthSiege* pits humans against "Cybrids" in a fight to death for world domination. Cybrid (short for cybernetic-hybrid) technology was the first true biologically-mapped artificial intelligence, allowing the creation of machines that could truly think on their own.

Of course, some power-mad dudes got the idea to stick this new AI into their burgeoning HERCULEAN (or HERC) mil-

itary units. HERCs are bipedal, all-environment fighting units just bristling with weaponry, and once the Cybrids got control of them, they decided to take control of the planet and wipe out all humanity. They pretty much succeeded, and now only a small pocket of human resistance fighters remain to overthrow Cybrid dominance of the Earth. You begin an *EarthSiege* career as a new HERC pilot in this resistance, driving a wide array of bots in numerous missions to thwart them pesky Cybrids.

EarthSiege gives you plenty of options for play, too. You can check out various randomly generated single missions, for instance, to get a feel for your HERC and learn the controls. The missions come with various goals: recon, scouting, patrols, raids, scrambles, search-and-rescues, and strikes on installations. The difficulty level for single missions can be set to make you invulnerable, give you better weapons capabilities, etc., so it's a good place to ease into working these monsters.

And believe me, learning to drive a HERC ain't easy. You have an amazing degree of control over the thing, requiring two-handed play almost all the time. They can move forward or backward, as well as turn, at various speeds. This is easy enough to master once you fiddle with it a bit, but you also have a fully tracking turret which can move about 180 degrees side to side, as well as up and down. This means there's a lot of control if you're to get the most out of your HERCs. Two joysticks are optimal, but I've found that using the keyboard for motion and the joystick for turret control (which requires more finesse) works well, too.

And that's just to move these robots! Then you have to work on weapons control, targeting, strategy, and directing any other robots that may be backing you up. Each HERC has shield and power levels, which can be redirected much like in any

space sim. Beam weapons, such as lasers and pulse guns, also draw power, meaning you have to configure them to fire in "chains" so an active weapon is always available. For instance, you can alternate chainguns, lasers, and missiles in the fir-



The armament screen lets you choose a HERC and load it down with your choice of weapons and defense systems.

ing chain, so that you never go for a shot and find there's no power available for a particular weapon. Larger HERCs can have nine weapons bolted to their turrets, so things get pretty complex pretty fast.

Single missions begin with a briefing on mission goals by General Gierling (the CO), followed by a detailed walk-through of waypoints and primary targets. In single missions you can pick whatever HERC you like, fit it out with weapons, and drop into action. Missions are hard, though, and require hit-and-run guerrilla tactics, good planning, and proper use of wingmen.

You'll fight it out across a good variety of landscapes, from frozen wastelands that hide the white Cybrids quite well, to blasted red wastelands, to green plateaus. Mountains break up the landscape, and Cybrid bases and posts never seem far away. These disgorge enemy bots in depressing quantity, and some of these



Your commanding officer, General Gierling, will brief you on each mission, but he tends to be a man of few words.

Meet the HERCs!

HERCS come in all shapes and sizes, with all manner of cool weapons available to allow you to generally inflict some serious damage. Here's some of what you'll get:

HERCS

There are at least eight main HERCS ranging from the small and fast to the heavy and powerful. Here are a few:

Roadrunner

Small and fast, good for recon and hit and run, but weak in a clinch.

Raptor

A good all-around medium weight HERC, good for recon in which you might want to stand and fight a bit.

Patriot

This suitably named HERC mounts the most missiles and is recommended for mission with heavy air opposition.

Rhino

A favorite attack HERC, the Rhino is fast and very powerful.

Colossus

This largest HERC can mount nine weapon arrays, and is used for heavy assault.

WEAPONS

Lasers

The most common weapon, dependable but not extraordinary.

Electron Flux Weapon (ELF)

Emits an electrostatic charge as long as the trigger is depressed, disabling bots without destroying them. Hard to

use and short-ranged, but effective.

Particle Beam Weapons (PBW)

Fires a burst of charged particles at medium ranges, providing a devastating blast but high power consumption.

Electromagnetic Pulse Cannon (EMP)

The EMP's high-energy burst of plasma not only damages the target, but drains energy as well.

Automatic Cannon (ATC)

Your basic all-around chain gun, good for when you're low on power and as an alternate weapon in a chain.

Missiles

Missiles arrays can be mounted on most HERCS, and can be stocked with semi-active radar homing, active radar homing, anti-radiation, and electro-optical missiles.

enemies can be tough customers. The most annoying are the weak, flying "Buzzards," which circle and dive and annoy you like mosquitoes. Arachnons are spiderlike kamikazes; these walking landmines just plow into you and detonate. Other enemies are more conventional bipeds and quadrupeds.



A Cybrid gun tower goes up in flames, the victim of this HERCS powerful weapons.

And all this is just for starters. Once you've got the hang of the controls and have developed some workable tactics for dealing with enemies, you can begin an entire career. Career mode starts you up with a tiny group of low-end bots, such as the Roadrunner or Outlaw. These are characterized more by speed and agility than strength, and over a few solo milk runs you learn how best to use the avail-

able HERCS for the tasks at hand.

Missions build on one another, and are dynamically linked. Pyrrhic victories are simply not allowed, since a large part of the career game is conserving your limited forces, bringing them back with minimal damage, and picking up salvaged scrap metal and Cybrid technology. See, in campaign mode you have to upgrade your HERC if you want to improve your battle readiness, and you have to make

constant repairs to keep your units in the field. You do this by blasting pieces off of the Cybrid HERCS so you can take 'em back and use them to patch your HERCS, as well as dupe any discovered technology for Human use. So not only must you kill the enemy bots, but you have to kill them in such a way that you get the maximum amount of useable scrap. A hull blast is an easy kill, for instance, but produces little useful scrap. So you have to



The external view shows off Earth Siege's texture-mapped polygon graphics.



You can order your wingmen to keep formation with you, attack targets, or split off and go to an assigned waypoint.

disable the enemy by going for the legs, thus keeping the body and weapons intact.

Career mode has a few problems, though. Unlike the single mission mode, there are no difficulty settings in a career, and some of these missions are pretty damn hard. Wingman AI is also lacking at times. There's been quite a lot of belly aching from some users about this, and Dynamix is apparently considering addressing the issue with a patch,

patience with the best battling robot game ever, bar none. The graphics are detailed and wonderfully executed, and the wide array of exterior views is terrific. Ignore the naysayers who have been

Still, it's better to have a challenging game with a long play life than an easy game you can waltz through in just a few short nights.

Though *Metaltech: Earth Siege* is quite difficult at times, it rewards practice and

attacking this game on various online services and elsewhere; they're the same ten twerps who bitch about everything that comes out. If you're willing to spend the time with it, you'll be surprised how much fun this title can be.

—T. Liam McDonald

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Plenty of action and a wide degree of control.

LOWES: Hard to master the controls. Some overly difficult missions.

BOTTOM LINE: A super battling robots game; undoubtedly the best on the market. A challenging but rewarding game.

90%

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Product Information Number 117

Transport Tycoon

CD-ROM

**PC GAMER
EDITORS'
CHOICE**
Category: Simulation

Developer: Chris Sawyer

Publisher: Microprose, 180 Lakefront Drive, Hunt Valley, MD 21030 (510) 522-3584

Required

CD-ROM drive; 386; 4MB RAM; 3MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse

We Recommend

Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486; Supported sound cards

M.S.R.P.: \$40.00

This masterful mix of world-building and business simulation is in a class by itself.

Take the gorgeous graphics of *SimCity 2000* and combine them with the intricate economic model of *Railroad Tycoon*, and what do you get? *Transport Tycoon*, an instant classic. This artful and engaging simulation of dog-eat-dog business strategy is as good as computer gaming gets.

Though it clearly draws more than a little inspiration from *SimCity* and *Railroad Tycoon*, *Transport Tycoon* is very much its own game. It picks up where those classic sims left off, creating a small world that evolves under the influence of your decisions, then forces you to change strategies with its roller-coaster economy and a host of cutthroat competitors. Unlike *SimCity*, you don't build the cities in *Transport Tycoon*; but the transportation networks you create — by road, rail, air, and sea — are

instrumental in nourishing the cities in your world.

Play begins in 1930, and your challenge is to link the cities of your world by building a transportation network that will not only help the world thrive, but also make you filthy rich. It's no simple matter of connecting the dots, though, as topography will force you to work through, over, and around mountains and waterways to link towns. At the normal setting, you'll have 20 towns to work with — enough to keep you busy for weeks of gaming.

In the beginning, you'll only have access to a couple of locomotives and buses, and a single small airplane — plus a few hundred thousand dollars — with which to build your empire. That bankroll isn't a gift: it's a loan, so use your capital wisely. Start small — maybe a few bus routes — but keep your grand strategy in mind.

Naturally, time marches on as you're building your transportation empire. And so each move you make — especially early in your career — is a strategic decision that may have a profound impact on whether you end up in rags or riches. Will it be roads or rails to start? Should you borrow \$50,000 to build that tunnel? Should you buy the exclusive rights to that new, untested locomotive? These decisions and a host of others challenge your strategic thinking at every turn.

Your *Tycoon* rivals are pretty savvy, too. They might build some funny-looking roads at times, but on a strategic level, their decisions are usually sound. They go after the larger, more



Your competitors are as varied as their faces. One might concentrate on rail systems, while another prefers to jump right into the airline business.



This small airport is overburdened with traffic. If you don't do something, there could be a senseless tragedy!



The town of Statesville is bustling, thanks to a masterful road, rail, and air transportation network.

lucrative cities to establish themselves, then they'll move into your turf to compete against your routes. Once, after careful study, I was set to click the mouse button to build a four-track railroad station, when — poof! — a competitor slapped a station down right in my path. The sight of a rival's construction near one of your transportation centers is guaranteed to throw you into a panic.

As in *Railroad Tycoon*, linking industries and materials is the key to success. You have to be alert for opportunities to, say, transport iron ore from the mine to the steel mill, which produces the steel you can then haul to a nearby factory. There are forests, sawmills, oil wells, power plants, and farms — each with a demand to meet and a product to distribute. Industries



This graph shows the operating profit of the player and the competition. Better keep your eye on your bottom line so your competitor doesn't have an advantage!

come and go, and their production varies as well. Your cities grow, too, and their needs change constantly.

The three-quarter, SVGA overhead perspective is very effective, and quite detailed. You can watch construction sites, luxury homes, churches, and giant apartment buildings come and go as your city evolves. And as your transport systems grow, this virtual world comes to life before your eyes in stunning realism and detail. In fact, your world is so much fun to watch that it's easy to forget that you must constantly monitor your operations to remain profitable and stay

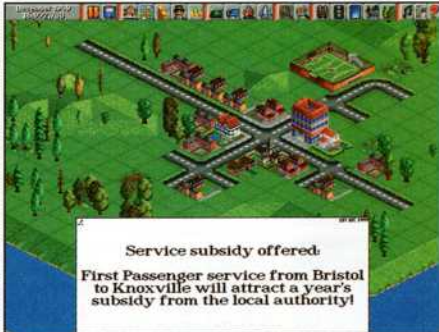
water and different terrain elevations, the number of cities and industries, the head-start you have on your rivals, the occurrence of disasters, and even choose between a steady or a cyclical economy. Some of these options can be changed during the game, too.

Transport Tycoon also boasts one of the friendliest and most flexible interfaces you'll find anywhere. You can call up a list of cities, then move to that location on the map with a click. Click on any plane in your empire, and a window pops up so you can watch it fly its route, or check its cargo, performance, age,

and maintenance history. This game is so complex that the task of managing your empire can really become overwhelming, but it's hard to imagine a more efficient interface for the job.

I have only one major complaint: The manual is woefully thin, providing just barely enough information to get you started. There are no strategies, no tips, no behind-the-scenes data to

help you take over the world. What does that tell you — a strategy guide on the way, perhaps? C'mon, MicroProse, don't force your customers to buy another product that provides the basic information that should have come with the game. Strategy guides should be



Pop-up windows alert you to subsidy offers and other newsworthy events in your world. Be sure to pay close attention!

ahead of the competition. The animation is incredible — from wrecks on the highway to plane crashes — and the sounds are as delicious as the sights.

The difficulty options let you tailor the world to your liking. You can set the number of competitors, the amount of

Tips For Tycoons

Planes, trains, and automobiles. You'll need them all — plus shipping — if you're going to outwit and out-muscle your opponents. The shallow manual provides precious few tips on how to succeed, so here are a few that have worked for me.

Study the map carefully before you lay your first piece of track or pour any asphalt. Look for a large city near the center of the map, one with several good-sized towns close by. Pay attention to nearby industries, since they play a big part in determining how fast nearby cities will grow. The biggest city on the map may not be the best place to start.

Try to concentrate your early routes, but don't be afraid to jump across the map to take advantage of a subsidy or a lucrative industry link. Watch your competitors closely, but don't respond hastily to their every move. You'll go broke quickly if you try to keep up with everything they do.

When placing rail stations, build the biggest you can afford. A single-track station will quickly become an expensive bottleneck. And before you build any station, study the lay of the land closely. Will your primary routes run north and south, or east and west? And take care not to destroy a city just to build a station in the middle of town.

Don't ignore road transportation. It's not glamorous, but a network of bus and truck routes can keep you in the black early in the game, while you plot your grand strategy. When you find a city that's growing fast, be prepared to jump in early with an airport and rail station.

The subsidies offered for linking towns and industries can be an important source of income, especially early in the game. Win a subsidy and you'll earn two or three times the usual income during the first year of the route's operation, depending on the difficulty level. You can't afford to ignore subsidies; you can bet your opponents won't.

supplemental, not fundamental.

There are a few aggravating nuances in the game, such as idiot rail engineers who can't seem to find their way to a station, and planes that crash with annoying frequency. But forget those hassles; *Transport Tycoon* is a rare jewel. I like to tell people who don't understand my addiction to computer games, "It's not a game; it's a simulation." Well, *Transport Tycoon* isn't just a simulation. It's a world.

—Lee Buchanan

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: You name it — beautiful graphics, a near-perfect interface, and a chance to play god (or at least Andrew Carnegie).

LOWS: The inadequate documentation is the game's only big drawback.

BOTTOM LINE: Buy it. Classic games like this don't come around often.

91%

Flight Commander 2

Category: Tactical simulation

Developer: Big Time Software, Inc.

Publisher: Avalon Hill, 4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214 (410) 254-9200

Required

386SX; 4MB RAM; 9MB hard-disk space; Windows 3.1 or higher; VGA; Mouse

We Recommend

486/33MHz; 8MB RAM; Supported sound cards

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

There are, Lord knows, plenty of terrific flight sims on the market, and all of them incorporate the basic tactics of one-on-one dogfighting. But there's another whole dimension to aerial "tactics" — the operational, squadron-sized level — and *Flight Commander 2* is currently the only PC game devoted solely to this specialty.

The original *Flight Commander* was a board game designed by Charles Moylan. It



The Data Library is extensive, colorful, and easy to use.

gained a small but fanatical following, even though it was too complicated to capture a large market. That seems understandable; just think of the challenge involved in attempting to model, in two dimensions, a variety of combat whose primary characteristic is its three-dimensionality...not to mention all the paper-and-pencil work required to keep track of altitudes, ammo supplies, damage accumulation, fuel consumption, etc.

Fortunately, *Flight Commander 2* leaves all that stuff to the computer, freeing the player to enjoy a smooth and creative gaming system without having to keep track of all the minutiae. The tutorial, and the simpler scenarios, can be played

Here's something that's refreshingly different: a squadron-level, operational simulation of post-WWII aerial combat.



The interface only looks complicated — you'll quickly learn to appreciate its logic and efficiency.

in a basic mode that involves two dimensions only; when you're confident enough, add altitude and be prepared for a deadly game of 3D chess.

Each turn consists of a give-orders phase followed by an action phase; together, they are scaled to represent 7.5 seconds of real time — no mean feat of data-crunching, this, considering that more than fifty aircraft are modeled, and each one of them is going to perform differently in that period of time. After each turn, though, the game pauses to let you study each and every aspect of the situation and issue orders accordingly. Then you just click to start the action and see how your fliers fare.

A nice variety of scenarios is included, with a couple of fairly wild shoot-em-ups from the classic days of the Sabre Jet and the MIG-15, along with five campaigns of graduated difficulty. The easiest

campaign puts you in charge of an A-10 tank-buster unit during Desert Storm; the hairiest is Red Storm, 1997. In these linked battles, your pilots gain experience and improve when they win, but end up dead or captured when they don't. Part of your job as squadron commander is to select the right munitions for the mission and the best-qualified, but also the least-exhausted pilots.

There's a good tutorial; together with a well-designed interface, it makes *Flight Commander 2* fairly easy to learn. The numerous realism and difficulty options, however, give it a high replay value. The play-by-e-mail feature is a welcome addition.

As a straight conversion from boardgame to computer, the game looks bland and attractive. I do feel, however, that more advantage might have been taken of the computer's graphic potential. Dogfights between early jets — with machine guns and cannon only — are exciting to play but awfully bland to look at: A little red gunsight pops on when one plane is shooting at another, and that's it. Some animated scenes or camera footage, with plenty of tracers and flying debris (a la *Panzer General*), would have done a lot to add sparkle to some very pedestrian screens.

Flight Commander 2 is a fairly specialized product; gamers who crave their dogfighting action at afterburner speeds may find it much too thoughtful and sedate. Personally, I found the whole package thoroughly refreshing, absorbing, and most instructive.

—William R. Trotter



Choose your munitions carefully. Even if no enemy planes are expected, it's smart to pack some air-to-air missiles, just in case.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: A thoughtful, intelligent simulation, and one that really has no current competition.

82%

LOWS: May be too leisurely for many flight-sim fans; pedestrian graphics still barely pull the plug.

BOTTOM LINE: If the subject interests you, by all means give it a try. It's different, and it's designed very cleverly.

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Warcraft

 CD-ROM


Category: Action-Strategy

Developer: Blizzard Entertainment

Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment,
PO Box 18077, Irvine, CA 92713
(714) 556-66712

Required

386/25 MHz; CD-ROM drive; 4MB RAM; 2MB hard-drive space; VGA; Mouse

We Recommend

486SX/25 MHz; Compatible sound card

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

Warcraft mixes action and strategy in a brew so addictive it should come with a warning label.

Many strategy gamers will find that *Warcraft* strongly reminds them of an earlier game. Often, this would be a problem — but in this case, that earlier game is Virgin's *Dune II*, one of the most entertaining and absorbing action-strategy games ever published.

Fans of the Virgin game will see similarities right off the bat: As in *Dune II*, you begin *Warcraft* with an unexplored map, send troops out to locate and harvest resources, and build structures and military units in preparation for the inevitable battle — all in real time. *Warcraft*'s keep-it-simple interface is also very close to *Dune II*'s. Just click on a unit, issue a movement or combat command, and click on the destination or target. Also like *Dune II*, *Warcraft* has a near-perfect difficulty curve. Early battles give



This human settlement is well-defended by footmen, archers, clerics and a knight. It looks like they can't lose...

you very simple goals and just a few types of units and structures to worry about, while more complex options are introduced bit by bit as the game progresses.

But *Warcraft* is far from a *Dune II* clone. It has everything the earlier game offered, and much, much more. For

starters, there's more diversity in *Warcraft*'s battles. While the bulk of the game consists of simply locating the enemy's base and wiping it out, the occasional quest is thrown in to spice things up. In these battles, you're sent into enemy territory to accomplish a specific task, like healing and rescuing captured soldiers. With a fixed number of troops and no way to build more, these scenarios are almost like little dungeon adventures, and they require a completely different approach.

There's also plenty of diversity in the types of units and structures you can create in *Warcraft*. Whether you choose to command the humans or the orcs (they're the little folks at war here),



Accept your mission, and you'll zoom in on a beautifully rendered, and animated 3D map of the battlefield.

you'll start your campaign with just the basics: a city hall for training workers who gather gold and lumber and build other structures, a barracks for training swordsmen, and farms to feed your

growing population. But as you progress through the game's 24 scenarios, things get more interesting. Soon you'll be building a lumber mill, which makes it possible to train archers or spearmen; a temple, where clerics

or orcish necromancers are trained; a blacksmith's shop for upgrading armor and weapons; stables, which lead to knights on horseback (or orcish raiders on wolfback); and a tower for training conjurers or warlocks.

In the temples and towers, you can research increasingly effective spells. Human Clerics can learn a healing spell that lets soldiers hang in battle much longer, and orcish Necrolytes can develop the ability to raise the dead, turning fallen troops into skeleton warriors. Then there are the conjurers and warlocks, with their summoning spells —

Outcome			Victory		
Rank: Corporal					
Score: 1,049					
money units destroyed	structural destroyed	gold mined	you	enemy	you
you	you	you	1	0	4500
enemy	enemy	enemy	0	1	0
structures built	units killed	units resurrected	you	enemy	you
you	you	you	0	0	2100
enemy	enemy	enemy	0	0	0

The scoring screen at the end of each mission features some sharp-looking 3D animation.



...but the tables can turn quickly in *Warcraft*. Lesson for the day: Don't get greedy and spread your forces too thin.

"The feature that will excite some gamers more than anything else is *Warcraft's* two-player mode."

which in turn lead to some of the nastier military units, like giant spiders, scorpions, elementals, and even daemons.

What all this means is that you'll never find a single, sure-fire strategy that'll serve you throughout the game; your tactics will have to evolve as each new wrinkle appears. That translates into oodles of replay value, ensuring that *Warcraft* is definitely not one of those games you'll toss on the shelf as soon as the next pretty game comes along.

Of course, the feature that'll excite some gamers more than anything else is *Warcraft's* two-player mode, which lets a

pair of desktop despots connect their computers via modem, network or serial port. So, in the unlikely event that the game's strong AI isn't tough enough for your tastes, you can try your hand (or claw, as the case may be) against a living, breathing opponent. The Custom Game option even lets you pit orcs against orcs or humans against humans, so you and your friend won't have to



You can group as many as four soldiers and issue basic commands to all of them at once.

fight over who gets to be the orc commander and who has to lead those goody-goody humans.

On top of all that, *Warcraft* is full of nice extra touches — those little things

If you build it, they will attack

Even the noblest humans and most rapacious orcs get homesick for their castle or mountain stronghold. But with a little planning, a frontier outpost can have all the comforts of home.



The city hall is where human peasants and orcish peons learn to harvest lumber, mine gold and build other structures.



All soldiers are trained in the barracks. If the enemy is killing your troops as fast as you train new ones, you might want to build a second barracks.



In the temple, human clerics and orcish necrolytes learn the spells that make them indispensable in combat.



Building a lumber mill makes it possible to equip archers and spearmen with the tools of their trade. Later, you can spend some gold here to research improvements to those weapons.



In this POW-rescue mission sequence, the game takes on a dungeon-adventure slant.

the designers didn't have to do, but which make the game even more entertaining. There's the digitized sound, for example: The human troops respond to a mouse click with lines like "Your will, Sire?" and the orcs have a guttural language all their own. Click on a soldier four or five times in a row, and he'll get impatient, finally he will respond with "What do you WANT?!" or "Stop poking me!!!" Even some of the buildings have their own sound effects — select the temple, and you'll hear pious chanting; click on the blacksmith, and you'll hear the ringing of steel on steel. It's a small thing, something many gamers might never notice — and it adds nothing to game-play. But it's testimony to how much care went into *Warcraft*.

— Dan Bennett

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Good graphics, two-player options and unbeatable play value.

92%

LOWS: It's so addictive, it belongs on the FDA's controlled-substance list alongside *Civilization* and *SimCity 2000*.

BOTTOM LINE: If you like action, strategy or fantasy games, you have to check out *Warcraft*. It doesn't get much better than this, folks.

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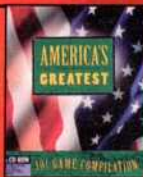
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Bobby Fischer Teaches Chess



Category: Board Game Simulation

Developer: Learning International Inc.

Publisher: Mission Studios Corporation,
PO Box 1265, Palatine, IL 60078
(708) 991-0594

Required

CD-ROM drive; 386
or better; 640K
RAM; SVGA; 4MB
hard drive space;
Mouse

We Recommend

Double-spin CD-
ROM drive or
faster; Sound
Blaster compatible
sound card

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

unattractive 2D chess board for actual play.

On the Dr. Jekyll side, the program incorporates an excellent AI, 500 of Bobby Fischer's greatest games, and two books: *Bobby Fischer Teaches Chess*, the basis for the interactive lessons; and Fred Wilson's *A Picture History of Chess*. For teachers or coaches, there's even a lesson maker using scripting language.

The pictorial history of chess included with the program should appeal to any enthusiast. It's a fascinating collection of rarely seen material ranging from ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics and medieval manuscripts, right up to modern events.

A handsome 3D board is used to replay any of 500 classic games, and to display the 300 lessons. The lessons are taken directly from the Fischer book, and make for an excellent beginners guide to not only how the pieces move, but basic strategies as well.

The Mr. Hyde of this program comes in the form of the 2D board used to play against the program. It's hideous. Why



Is it that EGA shareware game from a decade ago? Make it go away!

the 3D board that's used for lessons and replays isn't available to you is beyond me. The most important aspect of any good chess program — a strong AI — is present. But

options are sparse, and even the time controls aren't very flexible.

Ultimately, whether you like this one or not will depend on how much you'll like the tutorial and historical references — and of course, you can get either of these from the books.

—Joe Novicki

In some ways, *Bobby Fischer Teaches Chess* is as much a paradox as the man it's named for: Bobby Fischer's brilliance on the chessboard has always been counterbalanced by his crack-pot ideas, and *Bobby Fischer Teaches Chess* gives us a program with an attractive historical reference, a beautiful 3D board for instruction and classic game replays, weighed down by an



This layout illustrates how the lessons are presented in *Bobby Fischer Teaches Chess*.

PC GAMER **FINAL VERDICT**

HIGHS: Excellent for beginners.

LOWS: Graphics in play mode take you back to EGA days.

BOTTOM LINE: It's a matter of content vs. aesthetics — do the excellent beginner lessons, historical reference and strong AI outweigh that ugly 2D board with sparse options?

67%

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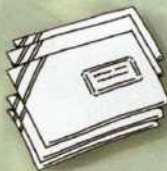
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Creature Shock

 CD-ROM

Category: Science Fiction Shooter

Developer: Argonaut Software Ltd.

Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment, 18061 Fitch Avenue, Irvine, CA 92714 (714) 833-8710

Required

CD-ROM drive;
486SX/25; 4MB
RAM; 10K hard-
drive space; VGA;
Sound Blaster-
compatible Sound
Card; Mouse

We Recommend

Double-speed CD-
ROM drive;
486DX/33; 9MB
hard-drive space;
Local-bus VGA

M.S.R.P.: \$59.99

The graphics are some of the best in the industry. But as for gameplay, *Creature Shock* doesn't quite deliver.

This is a tough call; just take a look at the screen shots, and you'll see why. I almost wish I'd never used the word "stunning" to describe the graphics in any other game, because if those other games were stunning, I don't know how to describe the graphics in *Creature Shock*.

So let's just say this game sports some of the most impressive visuals I've ever seen in a computer game. On a reasonably fast system, the 3D animation is smooth as silk, and the digital characters are more believable than many real-life actors. Even wearing a pitch-



The first interactive sequence is an arcade-style space shootout. Nice graphics, but it feels like it was grafted in from another game.

black space helmet, your viewpoint character is utterly convincing as he expresses tension, fatigue, relief, determination — all through painstakingly rendered body language. Combine that with eerie settings and atmospheric lighting, and you've got a claustrophobic sense of fear



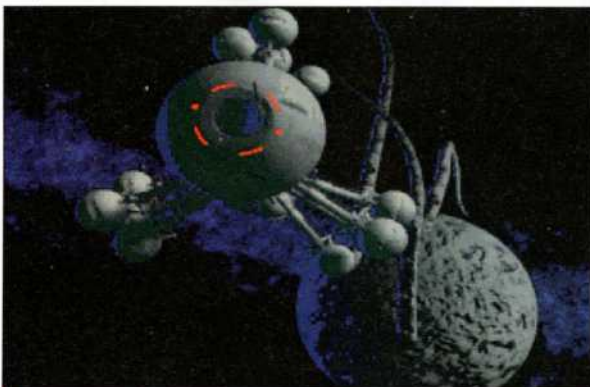
Commander Barr takes aim in one of the game's many terrific animated scenes.

worthy of a movie like *Alien*.

Considering all the work that went into the look of *Creature Shock* — and how wildly successful that work turned out to be — I really wanted to love this game. The problem, though, is the same one we keep coming across in these days of CD-ROMs and graphic extravaganzas: There's just not enough game here to back up the pretty pictures.

In *Creature Shock*, you're Commander Barr, a lone troubleshooter-type assigned to investigate the mysterious disappearance of the space survey ship *Amazon* out near Saturn. Naturally, aliens are involved, and they don't have our best interests in mind.

In the first mission, you'll fly your scout ship to the *Amazon's* last known position, fighting your way past a host of alien meanies. This is a straightforward



As the game opens, the survey ship *Amazon* encounters an asteroid that turns out to be more than it seems.

Shocking Creatures

Creature Shock is populated by a monstrous menagerie of evil aliens, each with its own unique approach to ruining your day. Here are a handful of the most interesting ones:



Once in a while, you'll find glowing spheres that can heal your injuries or give your weapons and shields more power.



In some cabinets, you'll find a nasty surprise instead of a power-up.

arcade shoot-'em-up, but it's not an easy one. If you're good enough to make it to the mothership — the "boss" of this sequence — you'll have to keep pounding on it for a few minutes or more before it finally gives up the ghost. Ultimately, this sequence doesn't seem to fit in with the rest of the game — and since it'll probably take most gamers a few tries to get past it, it's an unwelcome obstacle.

When the real meat of *Creature Shock* begins, you'll be walking alone through the maze-like corridors of space-ships and space stations, watching your scanner for signs of life — and dreading the moment when it reads a positive contact. The monsters in the game are varied but they're all deadly, and their menacing mugs are rendered and animated in beautiful 3D graphics.

Your only weapons are a generic



Let this creepy-crawly past your defenses, and he'll go for the throat. A good aim will keep him at bay.



The Crawler is small, but impervious to blaster fire. All you can hope to do is shoot it in the face until it slithers away.



The Washy Monster (don't ask us — we didn't make up these names!) is one of the creepier-looking aliens; kind of a cross between a spider and a skeleton. Like the Honey Monster, he's got a vulnerable spot on his chest — but he covers it better, and it'll take several hits to kill him.



The Eye Monster drains you of a bunch of health points every time its beam passes over you. Don't let it get too close, or it'll just grab you and get it over with.



The Honey Monster carries a big gun, but one good shot to that dome on his chest will knock him head over heels.



The Tentacled Horror's eyes are its weak spot, but the way it blinks and whips that head around makes it one of the toughest creatures to kill.



This is the big one, the alien of aliens. Its eyes are vulnerable, but it can kill you with just a few strokes of that knife. Good luck!

space-hero type blaster pistol and a few smart bombs. For protection, you've got an energy shield that can stop almost any attack cold. The catch is that the

shield draws power from your gun, so it can only be active for a second or two. You'll need good timing to find a winning balance between your offense and defense.

Beyond that, there's not much to think about. You'll try to kill everything that moves before it can kill you, and eventually you'll make it to the mothership for a showdown with the big boss alien. But that's easier said than done. *Creature Shock's* designers made sure you won't get through the game too quickly — possibly because there's just not much to it. *Creature Shock*

comes on two CDs, but most of that data apparently goes into those amazing graphics and animations. Like *The 7th Guest* in years past, *Creature Shock* succeeds more as a great way to show off your new multimedia computer than as an actual game.

—Dan Bennett

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

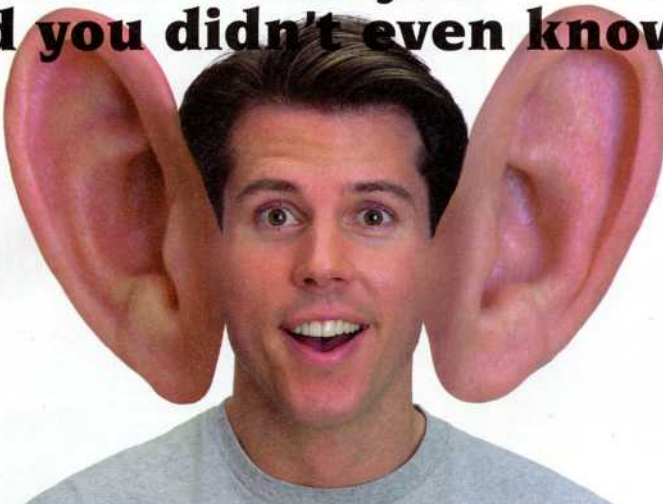
HIGHS: Incredible graphics, great atmosphere...did I mention the incredible graphics?

83%

LOWS: The gameplay is thin, and the controls are occasionally frustrating.

BOTTOM LINE: The visuals in *Creature Shock* earn it a high rating — but if you're hoping for depth and replay value, keep looking.

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Ishar 3: The Seven Gates of Infinity

Category: Fantasy Roleplaying

Developer: Silmarils

Publisher: ReadySoft, 3375 14th Avenue, Markham, Ontario, Canada, L3R 0H2 (905) 475-4801

Required	We Recommend
386; 4MB RAM; VGA; Sound Blaster-compatible sound card; Mouse	486; 8MB RAM

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

There's a hunger out there for roleplaying games, and this new adventure should satisfy it for, oh, 70-80 hours at least.

there are, of course, numerous mini-quests and peripheral adventures to be completed before you confront the ultimate challenge.

The time-travel angle adds a nice touch to the game, but for the most part, *Ishar 3* hews closely to the tried-and-true traditions of its genre: character development, points' enhancement in both physical combat and magical proficiency, navigating through mazy landscapes, defeating ever-more-powerful foes, tracking down potent magical objects, etc. If you're a fan of these games, you know the drill by heart.



Character development and relationships are generally quite well done.

This third in the popular *Ishar* series of FRPG's begins where the second game ended (and lets you import your party from that game with their attributes intact). The evil wizard Shandar's body has been destroyed, but his vile life-essence (yech!) survives on a magical plane. All he needs for a come-back is a new body to inhabit, and he chooses a potent one: that of the great winged dragon Wohrath. He can't move in, however, until a certain rare and potent astronomical conjunction takes place — and if you, the gameplayer, manage to prevent that from happening, his evil plan will be thwarted forever.

Time-travel is the key to success in *Ishar 3*, for in order to defeat Shandar's plot, you and your party must navigate through a series of time-portals and do some fancy history-changing by being in the right place at the right time. In keeping with the traditions of this genre,



The real-time combat system, however, represents the dreaded Euro-arcade syndrome at its worst — you have been warned.

Ishar 3 does have a lot going for it. The fantasy-world is huge and pleasantly varied, including temples, libraries, cities, jungles, forests — you name it, it's here.

The graphics are often breathtakingly beautiful — as richly textured as oil paintings — and are complimented by day and night, clear or stormy, lighting effects that impart a look of real moodiness.

There are some

things I didn't like, though. The necessity of having to retrace your route, block by aggravating block, to revisit some urban location you've already mapped (why can't you just click on the map?), and the real-time combat system both made me increasingly angry as I played.

Aside from positioning your stronger characters in front of your vulnerable ones, you have no tactical control over combat. You must click, as fast as you can, on various weapon and spell icons — and if you're to be quick enough to win, you can't ever spare a second to actually watch what's happening on the screen. In short, arcade action at its most irritating.

But then this is a roleplaying game for hardcore fans of the genre, and they tend to be inordinately tolerant of such irritations as long as the game gives them a basic fix of what they crave. *Ishar 3* certainly does that, and often very beautifully.

—William R. Trotter



Graphics are lush and atmospheric — this forest glade surely looks inviting!

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Thoughtful character development, sumptuous graphics and a vast world to explore.

74%

LOWS: The combat system stinks and the auto-mapping function is frustratingly limited.

BOTTOM LINE: Hardcore FRPG fans will probably like it — novices will find it tedious, overwhelming, and frustrating.

Hammer of the Gods



Category: Fantasy / Strategy

Developer: Holistic Design, Inc.

Publisher: New World Computing,
P.O. Box 4302, Hollywood,
CA 90078 (818) 889-5650

Required

CD-ROM Drive; 386;
4MB RAM; 1MB
hard-drive space;
DOS 5.0 or later;
VGA; Mouse

We Recommend

Double-speed CD-
ROM drive; Sup-
ported sound cards

M.S.R.P.: \$56.95

One of the happier aspects of this job is the sudden discovery of a beguiling, addictive game that more or less just appears one day, unheralded by the usual shrill choruses of hype.

That said, it must be acknowledged that *Hammer of the Gods* is going to get sandbagged by some hard-core players because of the perceived weaknesses of its component elements. Since it was developed by the same "Holistic

Dudes" who created *Merchant Prince*, it's inevitably going to be compared to that popular game — and found lacking in several departments: The quests you're assigned by the various Norse gods are often silly, trivial, and seemingly pointless: The military aspect involves no real "strategy" — just a lot of head-bashing of the crudest, brawn-over-brains variety; Trade and economic development are primitive, and once set in motion, more or less func-

Here's a delight: a madcap, bloodthirsty romp through the fields of Midgard with some of Scandinavia's Finest!

tion automatically, without further player involvement.

To these objections, I respond: The Norse deities were a capricious and whimsical lot — why should their quests not reflect these qualities? Besides, the early quests prepare you for the tougher ones to come: The Vikings were neither strategists nor tactical innovators. Basically, they were just real good at hacking and chopping, and the game reflects that accurately; Trade and economies in northern Dark-Age Europe were primitive — the game does nothing more than reproduce that fact. And finally, if you choose to ignore this game, you're missing out on a lot fun.

So what, exactly, do you do in *Hammer of the Gods*? Well, you explore the world (using accurate or random geography), you complete a lot of quests, you sort-of build an empire, and you kind-of compete with three other Viking chieftains, although you're not supposed to fight wars with them (although you can, and even if you're technically at peace, none of them seem to get too pissed off if you mount an occasional raid on one of their settlements)...

Got that? Never mind — it all makes twisted sense in the context of the game.

Whichever of the myriad available paths you take through this Dark Ages world of hairy men and long-necked sea serpents, your ultimate goal is to become Odin's most favored Viking, earning glory for yourself in the title *Hammer of the Gods* — and, presumably, a seat near the fire in Valhalla. To achieve this



Peasants with pitchforks are the only defenders of many small villages. Easy pickings, usually, but occasionally one of them gets lucky.



Decisions, decisions! To plunder, raze, or subjugate? Such intellectual conundrums kept the Vikings' wits as sharp as their helmet-horns.

legendary rank, you must complete a long string of tasks, starting with some simple, even silly ones that could be out-takes from a Monty Python sketch, and gradually working up to heroic, Beowulfian deeds of valor.

Depending on which Viking tribe you choose to lead (humans, elves, trolls, or dwarves), you'll serve a different hierarchy of gods and goddesses — some of them decidedly obscure (my reference books on Norse mythology offer no information at all about "Ratatosk, the Squirrel-Tale Bearer") and quirky in their demands.

Each variety of quester has different priorities: humans must accumulate magic items, trolls go for military victories, elves for colonization, dwarves for treasure. One thing that makes the game click so well, however, is that there is plenty of overlap — your fighting, exploring, colonizing, and diplomacy all contribute toward advancing



Different tribes have different priorities. Trolls, for instance, strive mainly for military conquest, which makes them kinda fun to play.



When you complete a quest, the god or goddess will reward you with either elite troops or a magical object of great potency.

your status on the diagrammatic "god tree," a symbolic representation of Yggdrasil which shows you, at a glance, how many quests you've completed and how far you have to go.

Even if you opt for a relatively peaceful strategy vis-a-vis your fellow Vikings, there's still plenty of fighting to



Use the diplomacy screen to keep track of trade, treaties, and your status among your peers — as shown on the red Honor Bar.

do. Given the primitive state of trade and agriculture, plunder is the economic fuel that drives the whole game. When you attack a town, you get to duke it out on colorful animated screens where berserkers rampage, swordsmen hack, trolls bash with club blunts, and hapless peasants do the can with pitchforks.

In the later, more dangerous quests, you will also have to do battle with frost giants, dragons, and sea serpents. In all of these battle screens, the various combatants' movements are



Your progress toward the exalted rank of Hammer of the Gods is depicted on the "god-tree," a symbolic representation of Yggdrasil.

beautifully rendered, including the way they crumple into a bloody heap after a troll bashes their heads in with a spiked club. Sound effects are yuckily vivid: cracking bones, "squish" noises for skewered brisquets, and falling-pumpkin splats for the skull-bashing.

If you're victorious, you can simply Plunder for loot, or you can Raze the place utterly, slaughter the inhabitants, and import colonists from your home base. Razing gains the most plunder, but it also

uses up whatever movement points your band still has and if there's an enemy castle nearby, you might get counterattacked by armored knights — against whom even the stoutest Viking might not prevail.

Among the game's most tempting targets are monasteries, which are usually poorly defended and always have a pretty good hoard of gold (unless, of course, one of your rivals has already raided them). In this detail, as in many others, the designers show how deeply they have studied the history of the

actual Viking age.

Graphically, the exploration screens are nothing special — about on par with *Civilization* — but the animated battle screens are a delight, and the heart of the game. When one of your heroes dies in battle, a Valkyrie on a horse descends, to the strains of Wagner, to carry him away to Valhalla. Special kudos to composers Rob Lefebvre and Bruce Nunley, who have enriched the game with a gorgeous soundtrack of medieval-style music that segues flawlessly to match the game's many changes of mood.

It should be apparent from the foregoing description that *Hammer*



Yes, the military aspect of the game is simplistic, but then the Vikings were not noted for their brilliance as tacticians.

of the Gods is neither a conventional role-player nor a conventional strategy game. It is instead a big, rich, stewpot of a game, simmering a lot of tasty ingredients into a mix that might not look promising on paper, but that proves to be royally entertaining in practice.



Recruiting ordinary swordsmen and archers is easy, but if you're going to do some really ambitious plundering (large or fortified towns), better take along some heroes or monsters for added muscle.

E-mail, modem, and network play are all supported, and the game should be a hit in all three formats. *Hammer of the Gods* is refreshing, creative, and bursting with energy. Odin would be pleased.

—William R. Trotter

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Vikings, this is your game.

LOWS: If the whole Nordic thing turns you off, you probably won't get it.

BOTTOM LINE: A fresh and original concept, realized with energy and zest. The whole is decidedly better than its parts.

83%



The Lemmings Chronicles

Category: Puzzle Game

Developer: DMA Design Ltd.

Publisher: Psygnosis, 675 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139 (617) 497-7794

Required

CD-ROM drive;
386SX/20MHz; 4MB
RAM; MS-DOS 3.3
or later; Mouse

We Recommend

Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/25; Supported sound cards

M.S.R.P.: \$59.99

With *The Lemmings Chronicles*, Psygnosis tries to improve on an old favorite — and ends up with rather mixed results.

Whether you like yours fried, baked, or broiled, those pea-brained lemmings are a rare delicacy gamers have been enjoying ever since the very first Lemmings game. That original title and its subsequent sequels are so addictive, I'm almost ashamed to admit the number of hours I've spent putting those mop-headed twits through their paces.

Even though the premise behind these games seemed deceptively simple, the result was often maddening. Basically, you're supposed to guide as many as 99 furry, dumb critters through levels filled with water hazards, drop-offs, and monsters, by empowering selected lemmings with a single, limited skill. If you were lucky, you'd dig, build, and tunnel the whole pack to safety before time ran out. But all too often, keeping the other lemmings from harm until your skilled lemmings could complete their tasks was just as tough as that ticking timer, and you'd end up watching



The classic Lemmings are back in *The Lemmings Chronicles* as one of the three tribes trying to establish a new colony.

your wards walk obliviously toward some horrible death. This is where a lot of players — including me — would launch into some choice cursing.

The folks at Psygnosis must have

heard all of these curses, because their latest Lemmings game, *The Lemmings Chronicles*, sports a few changes that are supposed to make the lemmings less frustrating to control, yet keep the game just as challenging. Unfortunately, the changes aren't too successful.

Graphically, the new game hasn't changed much — except for the lemmings themselves, which are now a lot larger than before. There are fewer of them, too (only 20). I didn't feel these bigger lemmings held quite the same charm as those in *The Lemmings* or *Lemmings 2: The Tribes* — although, after playing through a few levels, I didn't mind the new look. What



The main menu, from here you'll be able to pick one of the three lemmings tribes, look at the overall map and change system options.

I did mind, however, were the changes made to the classic Lemmings interface. First off, the special skills you'll need to save your little lemmings — once conveniently located on a control bar along the bottom of the screen — are now left lying around each level in tiny toolboxes. At first, this seems like it could be a clever way to add some really devious puzzles to the levels by spreading important (or not-so-important) tools all over the place. But instead, these toolboxes end up adding more frustration than anything.

Getting the boxes is simple enough — just turn your lemmings loose and they'll pick them up. But instead of being able to use the newly-acquired tool on just any old lemming, you'll have to track down the lemming that picked up the toolbox before you can use that skill. And since all lemmings look alike, this

can be a real headache. As a remedy for this identity nightmare, the designers saw fit to add what's called "lock-on Lemming" control, which allows you to "paint" a particular lemming red (hopefully the one with the tools) so you can better track its movements during the game.



The shadow tribe is probably the cutest of the bunch as they prance around like little ninjas stalking down an unsuspecting victim.

However, this does little to solve the problems you'll encounter when more than one toolbox is readily available to the lemmings. You'll often end up with several of the little guys carrying around a variety of needed tools that you missed while you were busy playing with "red," and since you can't use the lock-on with more than one lemming, you'll have to search through the crowd with the mouse cursor in order find the tool you want and then transfer the "lock-on" to that lemming.

I enjoyed *The Lemmings Chronicles*, but I guess I just don't understand why this toolbox stuff was added to what could have been a much better game (it is Lemmings, after all). The classic interface worked well, and I didn't feel the need for this added hassle. Even though I'd recommend *The Lemmings Chronicles* to fans of the original games, I'd have to caution new gamers to stick to the earlier titles.

—Todd Vaughn

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Challenging puzzles, lots of levels.

LOWS: New interface doesn't measure up to the classic.

BOTTOM LINE: Die-hard fans of previous Lemmings will probably want to add this to their collection. Newbies should try the earlier games.

77%

SHADOWS OF CAIRN™

OF



Ghostly guards protect the treasures of Cairn.

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The wizard's tower is not a friendly place.

Unfortunately, neither is his hedge maze.



Shadows of Cairn is the story of a young thief named Quinn, who has a serious problem. He's too honest to steal anything. Worthless to his guild, his own master has set him up to take the blame for the murder of the Duke of Cairn. His only hope for survival is to make sure the assassination fails.

In order to help Quinn save himself, you'll have to guide him through slimy sewers, a trap filled dungeon, an evil wizard's tower, and a monster filled hedge maze (not to mention guards in the streets and buildings) to save the Duke in his palace at the top of the city.

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Zephyr

Category: Action shooter

Developer: New World Computing

Publisher: New World Computing,
P.O. Box 4302, Hollywood, CA
90078, (818) 889-5650

Required

486; CD-ROM drive;
8 MB RAM; 5 MB
hard drive space;
DOS 5.0 or later

We Recommend

90 MHz Pentium;
Double-speed CD-
ROM drive; Joystick,
Sound Blaster com-
patible sound board

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

Not all Scoops! turn out to be winners...

Zephyr was encouraging, but the final product feels like it's still on the drawing board.

Zephyr is another of those science-fiction games that takes place in a future where political and economic wrangling have been replaced by a government-sanctioned blood sport; this time around, you're flying a heavily-armed hovercraft for your corporate sponsors, fighting other mega-corporations for control of the galaxy's resources. Kinda makes you wonder what some game designers would do for a plot if the movie *Rollerball* had never been made.

Of course, that little slip in the original department would be excusable if it were the game's only flaw — and it's not. *Zephyr* looked promising in its early demo versions, but the final product feels like it wasn't ready to leave the New World offices.

For starters, the game is unforgivably choppy. On a respectably fast machine like a 66MHz 486 — with graphic detail set to the absolute minimum — *Zephyr* chugs along so slowly that just controlling the action is difficult. Even on

a 90MHz Pentium, the game's frame rate is disappointing — acceptable, but hardly exciting.

Zephyr's graphics are another big problem. The 3D-scrolling backgrounds are so cluttered with meaningless detail that it's easy to lose an enemy hovercraft in a sea of swirling pixels — and you can't aim at what you can't see. But fighting is hit-or-miss even if you can make out the bad guys, since you have no crosshairs to indicate where your firepower is heading. All this means that combat is reduced to little more than letting loose with guns and missiles and just *hoping* a



■ The eject sequence begins as your Zephyr bites the dust. Get used to it — you'll be seeing all too often.

target stumbles into your field of fire.

The documentation only adds to the frustration. More than half of the manual's 32 pages are devoted to one of those badly-written novelettes some designers seem compelled to include with their games. Only ten pages are given to the hows and whys of playing *Zephyr* — and a lot of important information is left out.

For instance, you'll read that you can score points by completing "laps" — but the exact definition of a lap is never explained. Is it one trip around the battlefield's outer edge? Clockwise or counter-clockwise? I certainly don't know, and the manual isn't telling.

So is this another case of the Christmas Curse — rushing an unfinished or untested game out the door to take advantage of the increased holiday sales? Usually, reviewers can only speculate on whether or not a game was



■ As this shot reveals, all the enemy ships look exactly the same — except for a tiny bit of color around their gun turrets. This makes it tough to go after a specific driver with a bounty on his head.

released too soon — but with *Zephyr* it's a certainty, since a major feature advertised on the game box was left out completely. Gamers who buy *Zephyr* will find a notice in the box informing them that the current version doesn't have multi-player support — but that New World will send them a "free upgrade" as soon as this feature is finished.

That's right — for no extra charge, they'll "upgrade" the game to the product they led you to believe you were getting in the first place. That's roughly equivalent to buying the latest Stephen King novel and finding a notice halfway through that says "Mr. King hasn't written Chapters 12 and 13 yet, but send us your address and we'll mail them to you as soon as he's finished." This is a really ugly trend in software marketing, and it's sad to see New World Computing jumping on the bandwagon.

In fact, it's doubly disappointing, since a multi-player feature might at least have made *Zephyr* interesting.

— Dan Bennett



■ Can you spot the enemy hovercraft in this shot? Here's a hint — it's just below and to the left of the green missile blast.

PC GAMER **FINAL VERDICT**

HIGHS: *Zephyr's* sound effects and music are good.

LOWS: Cluttered graphics, poor documentation and a slight case of vaporware.

BOTTOM LINE: If *Zephyr* is any indication, New World should stay away from action games and stick to publishing good strategy and RPGs like *Hammer of the Gods* and *Might & Magic*.

48%

Cyclones



Category: First-Person Shooter

Developer: Raven Software

Publisher: SSI, 675 Almanor Avenue,
Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA,
94086-2901 (408) 737-6800

Required	We Recommend
CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 4MB RAM; VGA; DOS 5.0 or higher; 6MB hard drive space	Double-speed CD- ROM drive; 486/66; Supported sound cards; Mouse

M.S.R.P.: \$55.00

It's often said that imitation is the most sincere form of flattery. So id Software, creators of *Doom*, must be flattered as hell, because it's getting to the point where you can't throw a stick without hitting a new *Doom* clone. And the ones that distance themselves from the wannabe pack will be those that give more than the original, or mix what's been done in a way that is novel and entertaining.

Enter *Cyclones* by SSI and Raven Software, a first-person shooter that casts you in the role of a cyberwarrior facing your basic alien invasion. Yes, you are Earth's last defense against total alien control. Your mission? To overtake a variety of alien bases, buildings, and ships, and to find and destroy the root of this otherworldly menace.

We packaged a very early demo of *Cyclones* with our September issue, so some of you may already be familiar with it. Though it was plenty of fun, that demo didn't really capture the 3D feel of the graphics — or the variety of locations, missions, and bizarre foes — you'll

Cyclones provides yet another first-person shooter in the Doom tradition. But it's got plenty more for your gaming enjoyment....

get in the finished CD-ROM version. Each mission has specific goals (above and beyond killing everything that moves), which range from gathering data to commandeering alien ships for research.

The goals are explained in debriefing sessions using full-motion video clips. Yep — real, live actors! And though the unpolished performances might leave you wondering why some scenes weren't re-shot, they do get the job across.

You step into the game equipped with armor, a laser pistol, and a steel-clawed hand for that up-close and personal fighting. As you scavenge around for health and energy bonuses, more powerful alien weapons are made available. Quite a good assortment, too! First there's the chaingun, followed by an alien pistol, chain rifle, grenade launcher, twin lasers, missile launcher, and the ultimate weapon — the plasma accelerator. There are other goodies, too, such as the buzzsaw, power armor suit, and demolition.

The advanced weaponry is necessary, too, as the enemies increase in toughness. They fall into four main categories: attack machines, alien monsters, cybernetic clones (the eponymous *Cyclones*), and, if you get far enough, actual alien warriors and the alien commander himself.

The *Cyclones* make up the majority of the alien armed forces. They can range from dumb *Beserkers* who can't fire weapons (but pack a mighty punch) to advanced *Cyclones* who carry specialized equipment. The attack machines are 100% mechanical devices with devastating firepower. Alien monsters are genetically altered beasts that bite, claw or rip you to shreds. And what about the alien warriors? Well, you'll learn first-hand why they've conquered so many worlds.

Much of the action will, of course, remind you of *Doom*. But unlike *Doom*, *Cyclones* lets you aim your shots, using a crosshair that changes color when passed over enemies, items, and even secret doors. You can also jump on and over things, and look up or down. These extra actions do mean you'll need to adapt to a more complex set of controls, though. The game defaults to a



This catwalk leads to your first *Cyclone* commander. He'll use a sword instead of his gun if you get up close on him.

DOOM MANIA BBS

If you enjoyed or haven't seen the *Cyclones* demo we distributed with our September issue, a newer, more polished and up to date demo can be obtained from the *Doom Mania* BBS. This BBS also offers other great shareware programs, such as the newly released *Heretic*, and plenty of *Doom* WADS. The number is 317-662-8842.

combination of keyboard and mouse, though a joystick or gamepad can be integrated. Once you set the controls the way you like 'em, you'll be peeking over and around all sorts of obstacles, and feeling considerably more of that 3D perspective than *Doom* offers.

In the world of "Give me a gun and let me hunt my scurvy dog of an enemy" PC gaming action, *Cyclones* stands up pretty well. And though the premise is nothing new, there's enough uniqueness here to prove that protecting Earth can still be a lot of fun.

—Joe Novicki



This converted army base is where you'll meet your first enemy, the can't-shoot-but-I'll-punch-you-to-death *Beserker*.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: It has all the good things that make a first-person shooter tick.

81%

LOWES: Moving while shooting in the heat of battle can be awkward at times. And that full motion video — why?

BOTTOM LINE: *Cyclones* reassures us that *DOOM*-like games are here to stay, and they don't have to be poor rip-offs.

Silverload

**Welcome To Silverload,
A Devil Of A Town.**

Folks don't come to Silverload much anymore. A'int been no silver here in years. And when they do come, they don't stay any longer than they have to. Missing persons? No, mister, a'int never seen no missing persons. Of course, folks here don't pay much attention to strangers. Have a look around? Can't say anybody will stop you from looking around, mister. Except the last man who came here looking for kin is buried over there on that hill.



 **VIC TOKAI INC.**

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PC CD-ROM

Product Information Number 143



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Hardball 4

Category: Sports Sim

Developer: MindSpan

Publisher: Accolade, 5300 Stevens Creek Blvd., #500, San Jose, CA 95129
(408) 985-1700

Required

386/33; 4MB RAM;
18MB hard-drive
space; SVGA

We Recommend

486/33 or faster;
Supported sound
cards; Joystick

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

The latest incarnation of Hardball adds some great features — modem competition, serious stats, and dressed-up graphics.

ated size of the players allows them to cover a lot of ground in the field. There's just no sense of uncertainty — you know immediately if it's a hit or an out.

While the SVGA graphics are easily the best around and the stats are much improved, *Hardball 4* still fails to completely satisfy as a well-rounded baseball simulation. These games have always boasted the prettiest graphics — that's a given. My gripe with *Hardball* has always been with the stats. I'm a stats nut, especially when it comes to baseball. And as good as earlier versions of *Hardball* looked, the lack of record-keeping kept them from becoming the baseball sim.

The new stat system might not satisfy real number junkies, but it's definitely a vast improvement over *Hardball 3*.

To the designers' credit, that gaping hole has been patched pretty well in *Hardball 4*. While the stats package may not satisfy baseball purists, the game gives you enough numbers to keep things interesting, tracking league leaders in most of the important batting and pitching categories.

The new focus on stats is a welcome change to *Hardball*, but there's still some work to be done. When simulating a season on "background" — with the computer playing all the games — the results are reasonable enough, with the numbers-crunching producing believable statistics. But the games in which the player actually participates yield considerably more suspicious results. *Hardball 4* suffers from the same flaw as its predecessors — too many home runs, most of them solo shots. In fact, a dozen home runs isn't uncommon in *Hardball 4*.

Hardball has always excelled at arcade play, and the new version is no exception. Despite beefing up its statis-



You'll have your choice of stadiums; the information on them is detailed and accurate.

tics, that's still where *Hardball 4* belongs — in the arcade category. Controls for pitching, hitting, and fielding are all friendly and intuitive. Its strength as an action game — and its modem support — makes *Hardball 4* an ideal two-person sim. While you're smashing your buddy into pulp, you won't care that you're both hitting more home runs than singles.

And, yes, there's Al Michaels calling the play-by-play. I'm still not convinced that a halting description of plays that I can see for myself adds any real value to a sports simulation, though. And the rest of the sound effects are pretty lifeless. But the audio is much improved over *Hardball 3*, and Al delivers probably the most realistic play-by-play outside of FIFA International Soccer.

So the new *Hardball* is better than ever, with super graphics and a new emphasis on statistics. But while it's been dressed up for 1995, *Hardball 4* is much the same as its predecessors — long on fun, but short on realism.

—Lee Buchanan

Accolade's *Hardball* simulations are the wily veterans of the sport. Once flashy but shallow, *Hardball* has improved with each new version. Now, in its fourth generation, *Hardball* once again steps up to the plate with fresh graphics and more attention to statistical detail. The result is a friendly, fun, and beautiful re-creation of Major League Baseball.

The batter/pitcher screen — with its digitized-video renditions of the batter's swing and the pitcher's delivery — is simply stunning. So how can a game that looks this perfect, built on a new statistical foundation, possibly go wrong? You find out quickly, as soon as the ball is hit into the field. When you switch from the batter/pitcher view to the full-field perspective, the players still look great, but they've suddenly become giants — and I'm not talking about San Francisco Giants, either. These guys are huge, as tall as the outfield walls. They look like a pee-wee baseball field.

OK, maybe I can live with these bigger-than-life players, but the action on the field just doesn't measure up to the superb graphics. The plays and the flight of the ball look canned, and the exagger-



The SVGA graphics are sharp, and the player animation is top-notch.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

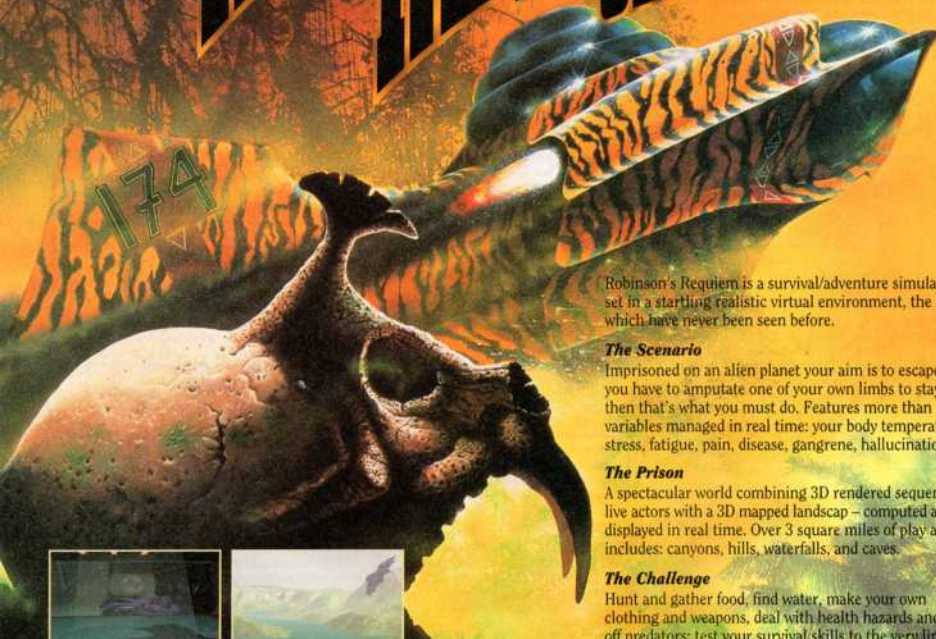
HIGHS: Stunning SVGA graphics. More extensive statistics than previous *Hardball* games.

79%

LOWS: Unrealistic play on the field, disappointing sound effects.

BOTTOM LINE: If you're a *Hardball* fan, or more interested in fun than realism, this latest version will surely satisfy.

ROBINSON'S REQUIEM™ CD-ROM



Robinson's Requiem is a survival/adventure simulation set in a startling realistic virtual environment, the likes of which have never been seen before.

The Scenario

Imprisoned on an alien planet your aim is to escape. If you have to amputate one of your own limbs to stay alive then that's what you must do. Features more than 100 variables managed in real time: your body temperature, stress, fatigue, pain, disease, gangrene, hallucinations...

The Prison

A spectacular world combining 3D rendered sequences, live actors with a 3D mapped landscape – computed and displayed in real time. Over 3 square miles of play area includes: canyons, hills, waterfalls, and caves.

The Challenge

Hunt and gather food, find water, make your own clothing and weapons, deal with health hazards and fight off predators; test your survival skills to the very limit and get the hell off the planet!



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READYSOFT



Silmarils

In Living Color

take children — and therefore children's software — seriously. So in this column, I've come up with a list of requests for children's software publishers: Check your facts, respect your audience, and send me stuff that works. Rule number one, however, is more complex and more controversial: Don't cyber-ize activities that work better offline.

Plenty of activities translate beautifully to an electronic platform. For a simple example, consider the board

game Candy Land. Although a computer could't add much to the play of the game, it could add a lot to the administration of the rules. Without starting an argument, the program could prevent kids from moving to the wrong square. When a child lands on one of the penalty spaces, such as the Goopy Gumdrops, the program could deactivate a player's piece until he or she drew the appropriate color. And, best of all, no one would have to shuffle those unwieldy cards. Of course, Computer Candy Land wouldn't teach kids about following rules and playing fair, but that's an argument for another day.

For a more complex example of an activity that translates beautifully to an electronic platform, consider a computer tour of a toy factory. Kids could fiddle with machin-

ery that would normally be off limits in the real world. They could move at their own pace, dawdling in areas that interest them and skipping the boring parts. They might even invent new toys, or repair broken ones.

A nature walk would gain nothing from a move to the cyber-universe, though. True, there are children who can't walk through their neighborhood or local park. But we would mislead children who can't get outside if we said that a computerized nature hike could impart anything akin to the real thing. They couldn't smell the air, the dirt, the flowers. They couldn't feel the leaves or the

tioned above — ride the cusp between good and weak uses of computerization. And the value of an electronic board game or a cyberized nature walk depends on the program design, not the activity that's being translated into code. For a long time, I've attacked computer coloring books — but the act of coloring rides the cusp more expertly than most.



Sometimes electronic crayons are more difficult to manipulate — as in the *Flintstones Coloring Book*, where even an adult can find it hard to stay in the lines.

Heidi E. H. Aycock



puddles or the worms.

But add a level of detail hard to find in the real world, and the computerized nature walk is redeemed. For example, offer an online microscope and kids can study those electronic worms up close. Stop a process, such as

the growth of a flower, speed it up, slow it down, or otherwise warp it, and the computerized nature walk breaks free of the constraints of time and space.

So obviously, most activities — including those men-

Heidi feels there are some kids' activities that are more enjoyable when they aren't computerized — like walking through a mud puddle on a warm rainy day, digging for worms — or coloring.

Coloring with crayons is a developmentally significant activity. Kids learn indispensable skills from coloring. They learn how to hold a marking utensil. They learn that how they hold the utensil produces different results, how the angle and the pressure exerted on the crayon affect the look of the line. They learn to move predictably and deliberately on a page, particularly in a coloring book. And all of these skills are vital — first, because they help foster the motor skills needed for handwriting. And second, because they exercise the creative skills needed to communicate ideas, and the feelings associated with those ideas.

Electronic coloring books seem to strip the coloring experience of its developmental value. Using a mouse instead of a crayon is like driving a car by remote control. You're using the utensil on a different plane from where your marks are showing up; the workspace for the mouse is a different size and different shape than the page where your lines appear. And when you run out of room on the mousepad or table top, you just pick up the mouse and put it somewhere else as though you could fold space, then smooth it out like a tablecloth. This warp between work space and output space defies logic. Plus, the mouse feels nothing like a crayon. You can't change drawing angle or pressure. You don't even hold it the same way.



Featuring well-known characters in a humorous environment, the *Flintstones Coloring Book* offers a kid-friendly entry to the world of computers.



MicroGraf's Crayola series offer a broad range of educational activities beyond simple coloring book pages, such as "What's In What's Out?," an exercise in classification and sorting.

Thus riled up into an iconoclastic lather, I shout, "Electronic coloring books should be banned!"

Whenever I find myself in a lather, I rinse off in someone else's perspective. The fact is, there's usually another side to most arguments, and the froth of indignation just drowns out any other reasonable viewpoints. So, I called a few companies who market electronic coloring books, railed at them for a while, and smugly waited for their responses.

The bottom line was that they weren't trying to replace paper-based coloring books. They were just trying to market a product that kids would find familiar.

Dominique Claessens, president of Image Smith (Image Smith released the *Flinstones Coloring Book* earlier this year), says "We should not aim to replace [the experience of paper-based coloring books]. That should not be the goal." Claessens says such coloring books are really a means of introducing young children to computers in a friendly way. "I think if you can get a two year old on a computer, it's a godsend," he said.

Besides introducing kids to computers, electronic coloring books offer children a chance to solve problems. Claessens says children explore different ways to color

pages — some fill in a whole sky and then use finer tools for adding details, while others start with the details.

Some work with erasers to fix errors, and others use errors as fodder for new ideas. Like lessons learned in real-world coloring, these things help grow intelligent, capable kids.

Also teaching these lessons — and more — is MicroGraf. In conjunction with Binney and Smith (of Crayola Crayons fame), the company has released two programs that combine drawing and painting tools with coloring pages and

other classic coloring book activities, such as dot-to-dots and mazes. The company has also created activities that feel like they were ripped from the pages of a coloring book even though they could only exist electronically.

Besides providing an easy entry into the world of computers, these two programs — *Crayola Amazing Art Adventure* for kids 3-6 and *Crayola Art Studio* for kids 6-12 — offer a wide range of learning exercises disguised as coloring activities. Most especially, though, the programs stimulate creativity,

paper, since some of the electronic tools make it easier to produce neater, well-groomed pictures. "The programs level the playing field," says Saitov, by making it possible for kids with average or below-average coloring and drawing skills to turn out above-average pictures.

There's an upside to this leveling of the playing field, and a downside. The upside is that it builds confidence; the downside is that the confidence may be limited to the electronic arena. Does the confidence translate back to the developmentally impor-

As long as electronic coloring books

don't turn paper and crayons into

some second-class activity, my

objections will probably subside.

according to Patti Saitov, Category Manager of Children's Creativity Products at MicroGraf. Kids can inject their own creativity into the activity pages, but they don't have to start from scratch.

And what they do on the page looks really good; kids may even think it looks better than what they could do on

tant process of coloring on paper? Or does it inhibit the desire to work in the more finicky medium of the real world, where kids can't easily undo what they don't like?

Both Claessens and Saitov insist that children will never abandon crayons for computers. The activities may look alike, but they fulfill different creative and developmental needs. The MicroGraf programs even include a pack of Crayola Crayons in the software box, and parents should follow suit; they shouldn't buy coloring programs at the expense of real-world art tools.

At the heart of my iconoclasm is a love for the process of creativity. As long as electronic coloring books don't turn paper and crayons into some second-class activity, my objections will probably subside. I've even put the preschool Crayola program in the box where I keep my three-year-old's favorite software. He thinks it's fun. But it's not the same as coloring...thank goodness.



In *Crayola Amazing Art Adventure*, the coloring tools work as realistically as possible — for example the markers squeak as you draw — but they still don't feel like the real thing.

Take A Deep Breath

As John Cole, Bounty Hunter, your next gig is to track down and apprehend a criminal madman. The trail leads to Wetlands, an ancient human colony now totally submerged under water.

Tracking the fugitive won't be easy—you'll need all of your smarts and combat skills just to survive. In Wetlands the action is fierce and the stakes high. If you don't succeed, the galaxy as you know it might never be the same.



- Cinematic Action Thriller
- Intense Arcade Game Play
- 3D Rendered Graphic Environment
- Compelling Storyline

Product Information Number 100

Available at your local New World retailer or order direct from New World Computing at 1-800-325-8898 (818-888-5650 outside the U.S.), or by mail: P.O. Box 4302, Hollywood, CA 90078-4302.

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TIE Defender and X-Wing

So just how far did you get in *TIE Fighter*? Did you blow through those missions like a tornado zipping through a Mississippi trailer park? Did you finally secure the kick-ass TIE Defender, only to fly it for a few missions? Desperate for more action?

Well, true to form, LucasArts is only too eager to give you a well-named *TIE Fighter* fix with *TIE Fighter: Defender of the Empire*, the first add-on disk for what we judged to be the best action game of 1994.

Defender picks up right where the original game left off, with the traitorous Admiral Zaarin being a general nuisance to the Empire. Three new campaigns find Zaarin attempting to sabotage the Emperor's manufacturing facilities and hijack the TIE Defender research stations.

Each campaign has three battles, and several more "historical" combat-chamber missions are included as well, bringing the total number of additional missions to 22. *Defender* continues the flow of the story almost seamlessly, following the ending of the original *TIE Fighter* with a logical sequence of events connected by the missions. Best of all is the ability to fly the new TIE Defender in a bevy of out-

ings that really highlight its capabilities. With the heaviest armament loadout, best speed, and highest shield ratings in the fleet, this funky three-winged TIE is some serious hardware. It doesn't seem as nimble as other TIE's, but it makes up for that with speed and strength. Even more innovative is the Defender's tractor beam, which can be used to impair the maneuverability of most locked targets.

Defender seems pretty challenging on the whole, and adds some genuinely interesting mission objectives, such as disabling research and space manufacturing facilities and flying

CD-ROM with so many enhancements and improvements that we decided to give it our Best CD-ROM Enhancement Award here at *PC Gamer*. In a year that included *Fleet Defender Gold*, *Aces of the Deep*, and Dynamix's "Great Warplanes CD-ROM" series, that's really quite an achievement.

X-Wing Collector's CD-ROM not only brings the orig-



B-Wings are easy pickin's in the Defender.

inal *X-Wing* up to the technical quality of *TIE Fighter*, but it packs scads of extras on the disc as well. First off, they've improved the graphics of all the spacecraft by adding the gouraud shading that created such spectacular visuals in *TIE Fighter*. Cut-scenes are still the same graphically, and still feature spoken dialogue. I didn't notice that the sound effects or music were improved that much, but complete voice-support has been added. All mission briefings are now spoken, an effective touch that adds depth to the game world.

The real meat of *X-Wing Collector's CD-ROM*, however, lies in the plethora of missions packed onto the disc. Both the *Imperial Pursuit* and *B-Wing Tour of Duty* disks are included, as well as six new missions, presenting a solid mix of action ranging from scrambles to tricky escort missions. In case you're counting, that brings the total missions for this CD-ROM up to 120! Better yet, about a dozen particularly irksome missions now come in "Classic" and "New" versions, just like Coke! These are the missions that drew the most complaints for being overly difficult, and the new versions make them a bit easier. There's even a "Top Ace" pilot who's flown each mission and risen to the rank of General, so you can access any mission at any time.

This is what an enhanced CD-ROM should be — it takes a great game, and makes it even better. Hell, it even runs from the CD, requiring only 1 meg or so of hard-drive space.

T. Liam McDonald



against Zaarin's traitorous forces. *Defender of the Empire* is an exciting and worthy addition to *TIE Fighter*, and fans should not miss it.

Meanwhile, at Rebel Headquarters....

I didn't think *X-Wing* could hold its own after the phenomenal *TIE Fighter*, but LucasArts may just have proven me wrong. They've brought the original *X-Wing* to

Tom McDonald is justifiably impressed with LucasArts' new *TIE Fighter* add-on disk, and the CD version of *X-Wing*. And speaking of impressions, Impressions is making its move to enhanced CD....



In *Defender of the Empire*, you get to put the TIE Defender through its paces in 22 missions.



Cool! *Unreal Selection* gives us mutants tearing each other apart in some interesting claymation sequences.

New CD-ROMs

Impressions is the newest kid on the CD-ROM block, with a couple of ports to CD that show just how much a company can improve between projects. *The Blue and the Gray* consolidates the initial game with the data disk, giving the final product full modem support and plenty of battles. And another six battles have been created just for the CD. The engine has been significantly overhauled to incorporate many of the improvements made for *D-Day*, such as naming divisions, generals, special replenishment functions, and other solid gameplay enhancements. An interesting and fairly well-done online history is also included, with entries on various

subjects and some limited narration. The speech on this narration is a bit listless, the music is rather blah, and the artwork in the entries is only average. Still, it's a good first step into the wild world of CD enhancement — and Impressions has already surpassed it with an even more effective enhancement of *Lords of the Realm*.

It doesn't hurt, when considering the quality of *Lords of the Realm CD-ROM*,



Gouraud shading has been added to all the space craft for *X-Wing*.

that the initial disk-based game was such a good title. Impressions went a bit further in this CD-ROM than they did

with B&G, creating a lengthy and attractive animated opening. It's pure eye-candy, and though it runs choppy even on a high-end Pentium, it still provides an effective opening sequence. Speech has been added to all character interactions, and this time out the actors performing the lines are quite good, adding an extra level of immersion to gameplay. A new map has been added, too, allowing you to play in Germany as well as in England.

Modem support was also built into the CD — but, sad to say, Impressions shipped the game knowing full well that this feature was defective. They did acknowledge this error in the README file on the disc, directing users to pick up a patch to correct it. But the damage is done; publishers have to remember that late and bug-free is better than early and flawed, no matter what some whining fans (or distributors, or even bill collectors) may say.

Still, this is the version of *Lords* to get if you haven't bought the game already. An online history like the one in *Blue and the Gray* would have been quite welcome, and it's something Impressions should consider for future titles.

Unnatural Selection from Maxis is now out on CD, and it's an odd little title that really didn't get the attention it deserved when first released about a year ago. Its premise — you're a geneticist producing mutant creatures for warfare — doesn't really hint at what this game really is: part mad-scientist-god game, and part wargame. It's a fun (though limited) title, with



With over 100 missions, *X-Wing CD-ROM* should be enough to make even the most ravenous space-sim junkie happy.

some good play in it. The new CD-ROM version doesn't do very much in the way of enhancing, but it does provide some video footage and neat claymation films of animals mutating and fight-



BBC actors provide the voices for *Lords of the Realm CD*.

ing and mutating some more. A personal fave is when a mutant thingie gets its head bitten off: not nearly enough of this happens in computer games for my money. The little films soon begin to repeat, but they're good window dressing and worth a peek.

Bug Patches

Check with game publishers for patch availability — or look for them on the CD in the CD-ROM edition of *PC Gamer*.

Comanche: Fast Machine

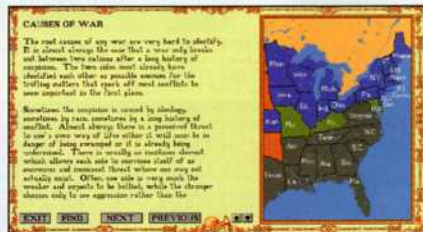
Fix: Includes Speed Lock for fast machines and General Midi support, and contains all previous hardware compatibility updates.

Flight Commander II v.1.01:

fixes PBEM feature and video driver problems.

Nascar Racing v.1.1:

allows the use of IRQ 10 with certain sound cards, solves problems with control functions in joystick calibration, and allows competitive racing after qualifying in pole position.



The Blue and the Gray CD-ROM comes with an online history.



CYBERIA™

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NOW, EXPERIENCE THE FUTURE.

Rebel Assault™ was pretty. *The 7th Guest™* had fun puzzles. ■ But, technology advances. Gamers demand more and more. And the time comes when even the best products are moved aside to make way for the future. ■ That time has come and the future is *Cyberia™*. ■ Featuring full-screen, full motion video, digitized speech, synthetic actors, music and sound effects by Thomas Dolby's *Headspace* and 11 of the most unbelievable arcade sequences your eyes (and your computer screen) have ever seen... it's so stunning that we're even willing to put our money where our mouth is. If you own *Rebel Assault* or *The 7th Guest*, send us the manualcover from either game along with a *Cyberia* sales receipt and we'll send you \$10.00 cash back. If you don't own either of these titles, you've already saved a hundred bucks so stop waiting for a hand out... just go to your local software retailer to buy *Cyberia* or call 1-800-969-GAME to order direct. ■ (offer expires 3-1-95)

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Product Information Number 127



Interplay

CP800

So Long, and Thanks for All the Spells

I'm outta here. Done like dinner. Finito. History. Going, going, gone!

Yep, this is my last Alternate Lives column. I'm passing the torch along to someone who simply plays more games, and more often, than I do. See, over the past year I've developed another hobby — writing books on the Internet.

As a cheap plug, let me tell you that right now, on the very shelves of your very bookstore, you can find *Teach Yourself the Internet: Around the World in 21 Days*, *The World Wide Web Unleashed*, and *Plug-n-Play Internet*. This year, there will be more, at least by one. And if you really want to keep up with my writing, pick up the new Internet magazine from GP Publications. It's called *the.net*, and we're convinced it's the best Net mag out there.

But all this exciting stuff doesn't stop me from feeling sad about leaving Alternate Lives. The column's been part of me since *PC Gamer's* earliest days, when the magazine was called *Game Player's PC Strategy Guide*. Later on the publication became *PC Entertainment*, and with its massive — and superb — overhaul last year it emerged as the best gaming magazine on the shelves, bar none.

That's quite a while ago. But I've been writing about games in general, and RPGs in particular, ever longer than that. I started in 1984, with a review in the now-defunct *Compute's Gazette for Commodore 64* (remember all those type-in programs, old-timers?), and the whole thing took off from there. Since then I've done literally hundreds of reviews, including many that dealt with the good, the bad, and the ugly of role-playing efforts. I played practically all of them up until recently, and while I certainly didn't solve

all of them, I spent hours on even the worst of them.

These days, I just don't have the time to do that. But while I've lost the time, I haven't lost the interest. I still get excited when an RPG appears on my doorstep, and I continue to love that magic moment when you know the game well enough to use all its resources. You know the feeling: the combat, the spells, the knowledge of the world comes together in one fell swoop, leaving you addicted to solving the overriding quest. There might not be a better feeling in gaming.

That's one reason I'm sad about leaving this column. The other is that,

stories, and I'll show you the moment when role playing games start to fulfill their still-enormous promise.

But the signs are there. Look at *Myst*, *Wing Commander III*, *Star Trail*, *System Shock*. Look at the richness of the world detail, the possibility of interacting with humans rather than drawings, the ability of designers to create atmosphere and realism in a fictional setting. Steven Spielberg said at the Oscars a few years back that the motion picture industry has to turn its gaze to the writers, and the RPG industry is in exactly the same place. Let the writers concentrate on storylines, then make

the game designers figure out how to turn those storylines in to games. As for the programmers, well, have 'em go off into a corner and force the machines to do what the writers and the designers want them to do.

The point is this: Once we have storylines that actually work, and I'm talking about rich and detailed stories with real plots, then everything else starts to work itself out. Suddenly characters become possible — imagine NPCs you actually care about — and just as suddenly the combat and puzzle nature of RPGs take on their true importance.

And another sign. Look at the online world. Yes, this returns me to the Internet (something I just can't get away from these days), but it matters. The original pencil-and-paper RPGs were played by several people gathered in the same room. Their charm wasn't hit points and spell values, but social interaction. No question, it's far too hard to get six people together for anything these days, let alone a game, but it's not too hard if a new generation of RPGs makes its way onto America Online, or Prodigy, or CompuServe, or — best of all — the Internet. Imagine playing a Krondor or a Wizardry or an Ultima with a party of 4-6 characters, each controlled by someone in a different time zone, maybe even on a different continent. And not trying to put together a missing piece of a puzzle, but interacting to get the evil dude knocked off. This, folks, is my idea of RPG heaven.

As soon as I find that piece of RPG heaven, I'll let you know immediately. I'll simply march into the *PC Gamer* offices and demand that I get the next Alternate Lives, then give you my best thousand words on how the RPG world was saved forever. How could a sane and caring editor possibly resist?

Thanks for reading. And thanks to *PC Gamer* for letting me say so long. See you on the Net.

Neil Randall

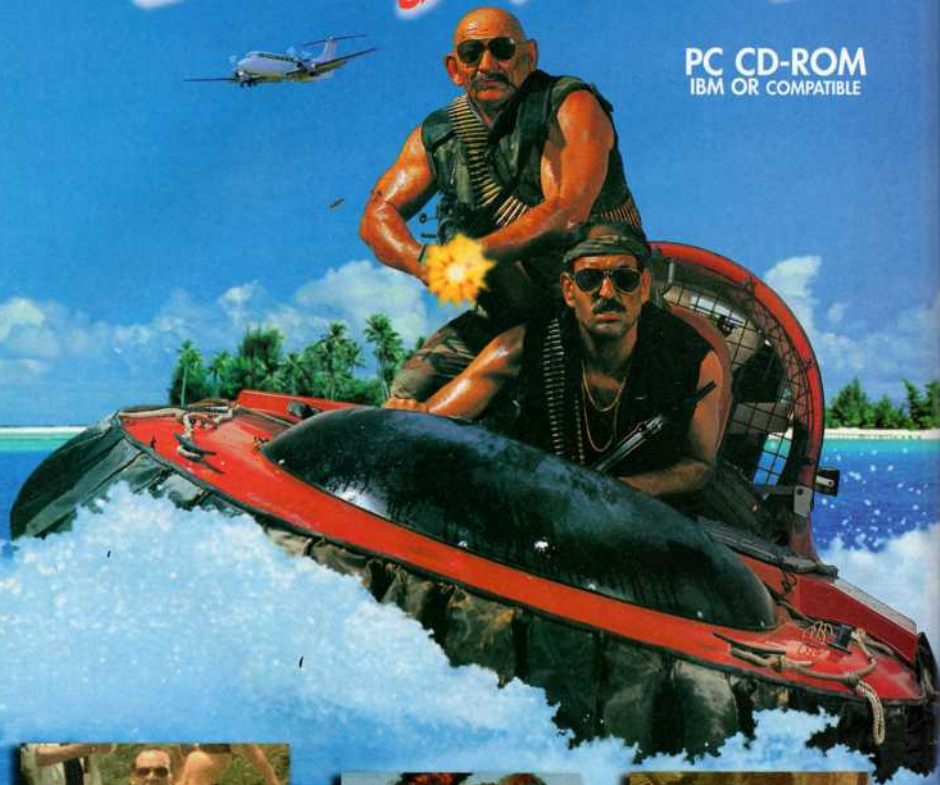


despite a year when not much happened, I honestly believe that RPGs are about to take off. The role-playing genre has always been at the cutting edge of gaming, and in many ways has suffered more than any other genre from the fact that its ideas far outshone the hardware. Not even the fastest 486 with the largest hard drive can possibly compute all the possible storylines in a worthwhile RPG, and that more than anything else has kept RPGs from developing faster than they have. Keep in mind that the computer's role is that of dungeon master, and even the most inept human being has more imagination than these silicon wonders we have on our desks. Forget Pentiums: give me the P6, the P7, the P8, or maybe the PowerPC after 4-5 years of development. Give me a computer that can begin to tell

Our intrepid adventurer bids us a reluctant goodbye as he turns his talents toward exploring the arcane and mysterious expanses of the Internet. See you in cyberspace, Neil...

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The Great Magical Have It Your Way Experiment

ve got an amazing array of shareware for you this month and for the very first time in publishing history, you actually get to choose how it's presented!

Yes, through the magic of wolven wizardry, this column will instantly alter itself to conform with your preference! You can either have A) a few selections with long, detailed descriptions or; B) a whole freakin' mess of titles with brief but adequate descriptions. Ready? OK, now choose....

A wise decision, my friend — more action and less talk! (If you choose fewer titles and longer descriptions but find yourself here with just the opposite, it simply means that, like so many others of your generation, you really don't know what you want. Fate has intervened and decided for you. Don't worry, you'll still have a good time.)

Now, if you're anything like me, you like to start a big meal with some dessert. So let's get a taste of something really sweet....

Heretic

Heretic, the much-anticipated joint effort from id and Raven Software, hit the boards just as I wrapped this month's column. It's a fast-action game set in medieval times, and uses the same engine that made *Doom* and *Doom II* so popular.

As an Elven wizard, you fight your way to the Archmage D'Sparil using six different weapons, each with a "powered-up" state (ok, 12 weapons, then). You can look up and down, detonate Time-Bombs, use Teleport Coins, and even fly!



Heretic's graphics come from id's Doom and judging from this shareware version it plays just as hot!

The first episode of *Heretic*, *Cities of the Damned*, should be widely available — and quite popular, too — by the time you read this.

Rise of the Triad

The Hunt begins in this long-awaited, hot-off-the-net Shareware episode of Apogee's newest first-person action game. You play one of 5 members of HUNT, a UN task force, scouting the island stronghold of the mysterious TRIAD, a para-military, quasi-religious organization run by a major nutball named El Oscuro.

ROIT features more than

Scott Wolf



10 weapons, huge levels, digitized enemies, modem/network play, and sound support for all cards. It's a handsome and worthy competitor for *Doom's* legion of fans, and it looks, sounds, and plays great.

You can find it in CompuServe's Action Games Library as ROTI.ZIP.

Dr. Riptide

This underwater arcade adventure from MindStorm Software and Pack Media puts you in control of a cartoon submarine in search of the evil scientist Dr. Riptide, who's been using his Tuna-Matic machine to turn all living sea creatures into tuna (he's really more weird than evil, I guess).

Dr. Riptide features rich 256-color graphics, smooth scrolling, Boss Monsters (will someone please come up with something more original?), powerups, and a small detachable submersible for those

hard-to-reach places.

America Online is harboring *Dr. Riptide* as DR-RIP-11.ZIP, in it's popular Top Picks Games Library.

Depth Dwellers

Another Doom clone, TriSoft's *Depth Dwellers* plunges you into an alien mine, where you witness the true demonic nature of the RI. Take time out from the slaughter to rescue their captives by transporting them to safety. Version 1.5 also features enhanced enemy logic and a new opening screen.

Once again, go to CompuServe's Action Games Library. Look for DEPTH.ZIP.



In Depth Dwellers there are innocent NPCs and tortured captives mingling among the evil RI warriors.

Highway Hunter

Safari Software and Omega Integral Systems present this beautiful, vertically scrolling arcade shooter. Guide your advanced assault vehicle,

"The Master," through roads of destruction and carnage. 256-color parallax-scrolling graphics, end-level bosses (gag) and hot powerups make this one a real treat. *Highway Hunter* is in CompuServe's Action Games Library as HIGHWA.ZIP

Battlestar

A variation on *Asteroids* from Vivid Technologies, but with an interesting twist — you can zoom down to recharge your weapons by skimming the surface of a Voxel-looking 3D terrain display. This 256-color shareware title includes save and restore, as well as full original music and digitized sound effects for Sound Blaster and compatibles: It's in CompuServe's Action Games Library as BSTAR2.ZIP.

XATAK

XATAK, from Pixel Painters Corp., is an awesome horizontal space shooter with ultra-smooth, full-screen scrolling landscapes and dazzling 256 color graphics. You battle wave after wave of aerial assault craft, and two major Boss Mutants (Arggh!), while entering the depths of *XATAK*. CompuServe and America Online have this one as XATAK.ZIP, in the same libraries as the other stuff on this page.

I don't know about you, but I'm (burppp) pretty full....

PCG

Imagine a very special column filled with the latest from the shareware frontier — a column that will morph to suit the tastes of every reader. That's Scott's dream in this month's Lupine Online.

The Falcon And The Sim Man

Listen up, flight-sim fanatics. The guys and gals at Spectrum Holobyte are hard at work on *Falcon 4.0*, and this sim promises to push the envelope way beyond anything we've seen before.

Projected for release sometime in the second half of 1995, *Falcon 4.0* is shaping up to be a truly ground-breaking sim. And with more than 400,000 *Falcon 3.0* units sold, the potential audience for the next-generation Falcon looks pretty solid. Still, the same fanatical commitment to realism that endears the Falcon series to that audience of hardcore flyers can leave less experienced gamers grounded. For some, playing *Falcon 3.0* can seem to be more of a chore than a pleasure.

So that's the challenge facing Spectrum Holobyte: to make *Falcon 4.0* more enjoyable for novices and easier to learn, yet maintain the devotion to realism that has marked the series since its beginning. "We're trying to eliminate all the things that made *Falcon 3* tedious for some players," says Neil Johnston, product marketing manager for simulations at Spectrum Holobyte.

To make the simulation

friendlier, the designers are working on a graphics-oriented interface that will tailor itself to the experience level of the player. "We're creating a 3D simulation of an operating air base," Johnston says, "populated with artificially intelligent personalities — the people at the squadron, the officers who lead the squadron, and the wingmen. They will guide you through the experience of the game."

"If you're new to Falcon, you'd probably register as a lieutenant," Johnston continues. "When you start the game, you'd appear in the squad operations center. After a short interval, the AI will generate a 3D personality who

you just didn't have the patience to learn how to make a proper bombing run. *Falcon 4.0* will let you concentrate on dog-fighting. "The type of squadron you join will dictate the kind of gaming you'll experience," Johnston says. "You can sign up for a squadron that's known for dog-fighting, or you can go to the other extreme and join one that's strictly bombing. Or you can choose a mix of missions."

Training, too, will be ultra-realistic — and, Johnston promises, truly helpful to the novice pilot. You might fly with an instructor in a two-seat ver-



The truly photorealistic graphics will put you in the cockpit of an F-16.

sion of the F-16, or fly as a wingman with an instructor as he monitors your progress and gives you detailed instructions over the radio.

While all this will help new players, it's the campaign structure of 4.0 that'll hook the Falcon veterans. "In a *Falcon 4.0* campaign, the clock is always ticking," Johnston says. "When you're at the base waiting for the next mission, the campaign is running. Maps in the squadron operations center will change to reflect the current state of the campaign. If you fly over a column of tanks, then come back an hour later, those tanks will be an hour down the road."

And thanks to its amazing multi-player capabilities, you don't have to fly the campaign alone. As many as 65 people can play in a single campaign via network!

The graphics, at 640x480 and 256 colors, are astonishingly realistic. "The texture maps are all photo-imaged, not painted," Johnston says. "The airplanes and vehicles look photo-realistic, even though that's an overused and abused word."

As you would expect with such a cutting-edge sim, the hardware requirements will be tough. The minimum: 486/33, local-bus video, and double-speed CD-ROM. But there'll be enough graphics options to get a decent frame rate out of that lowly (!) minimum machine. "If there's one thing we've learned, it's to give players the frame rates they want," Johnston says. "They want the frame rate fast, so they can fight. If it looks good at the same time, that's great."

Lee Buchanan



will approach you, introduce himself, and then take you on a guided tour of the squadron operations center. At the end of the tour, he might say, "Well, lieutenant, I see you have a mission in two hours. Better get over to the briefing room."

"If you're one of our core players, you'll probably see a tour of duty desk, with a map behind the desk, and you'll have to check for yourself what your next assignment is. And if you give yourself a top rank and don't know what you're doing, a CO might be generated and show up to chew your ass out. We want the player to really experience squadron operations."

Your airborne adventures, too, can be tailored to your liking. For example, if you gave up on *Falcon 3.0* because

Attention, all you jet jocks: Lee is getting pretty excited about *Falcon 4.0*, the next title in Spectrum Holobyte's Falcon series. When you read this month's column, you'll see why.



Falcon 4.0 promises to set new standards in realism — both in gameplay and in graphics.

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[TOUCH THE FUTURE]

Back Issues

PC GAMER



Volume 1, Number 1 (May/June 1994)
"The Future is Here"
On the disk: *Theme Park*

In our first issue, we took a trip down to Austin for a close-up look at Origin's *Bialorge*, and Matt began his 12-step program by confessing his hidden addiction to *Doom*. Scoops! on *Noctropolis*, *System Shock*, *Front Page Sports: Baseball*, and

Volume 1, Number 2 (July 1994)
"Eat lead, Fritz!"

On the disk: *Pinball Fantasies* and *Sink or Swim*
We celebrated the 50th anniversary of D-Day with an extensive behind-the-scenes report on MicroProse's stunning WWII tank sim *Across the Rhine*, as well as reviews of *Tanks!*, *M-4 Sherman Tank Simulator*, and two pages of Tom McDonald's expert strategic tips on *V for Victory: Gold*Juno*Sword*. Looking to buy a multimedia upgrade kit? Our CD-ROM buyer's guide in this issue is just what you need!



Volume 1, Number 3 (August 1994)
"The Top 40 Games of All Time"
On the disk: *Detroit*

This is it — the list of the Top 40 games of all times that generated so much mail, so much controversy, so much outrage that we can hardly wait to do it again! Check out our story on Virtual Reality gaming and Forte Technology's incredible VFX-1 VR Helmet; pick up some killer tips for *Master of Orion*, *Quest for Glory I: Ultima VII*, and *Mortal Kombat*; and read the best *Wing Commander III* story until the December 1994 issue came along!



Volume 1, Number 4 (September 1994)
"The Year of the PC"
On the disk: *CyCiones*

Not everyone gets to go to the Consumer Electronics Show, but thanks to our stunning 18-page report you don't need to. We also detail what hardware you need to run these high-end juggernauts — and reveals that a great PC gaming system isn't as expensive as you might think. Great Scoops! on *NASCAR Racing*, *Wolf*, and *The Fortress of Dr. Radikal*, plus two pages of *X-COM* strategy make this one a collector's item!



Volume 1, Number 5 (October 1994)
"Dark Forces"
On the disk: *Master of Magic*

Here's the definitive story on *Dark Forces*, a first-person shooter with a new Star Wars story, plus the first Scoop! on the biker adventure *Full Throttle*. And don't forget the review of *TIE Fighter*, which earned our highest rating ever! You want *real* previews? How about Scoops! on *Zephyr*, *Menzoberranzan*, *Dust*, and *Warcraft: Humans and Orcs*? Come on, order it — you know you wanna!



Volume 1, Number 6
"Cyberia"
On the disk: *Blackthorne*

We journeyed to Interplay's offices to preview the multimedia action-adventure *Cyberia*, and came back convinced that it has the potential to challenge *Babel Assault* as one of the best-selling CD-ROM games ever. Strategy fans will love Bill Trotter's roundup of wargaming magazines, and once again we beat everyone to the punch with Scoops! on *King's Quest VII: Hell*, and *Dragon's Lore*. The Software Toolworks' groundbreaking FRP. Oh, and let's not forget the first of many bi-annual review indexes.



Volume 1, Number 7
"Wing Commander III"
On the disk: *Star Crusader*
On the CD-ROM: *Wing Commander III*, *Down Patrol*, *Relentless*, *Quarantine*, *Ultimate Football*, *Rise of the Robots...*, and *many, many more!*

Say you're a *Wing Commander* fan? Then this is an issue you'll treasure forever! Bill Trotter went to Austin and took Chris Roberts' newest game for a test drive, and came back with a five-page feature. Tom McDonald assesses Spectrum Holobyte's plans for '95 and beyond, and explores the rapidly growing world of modem gaming. One of our best ever!



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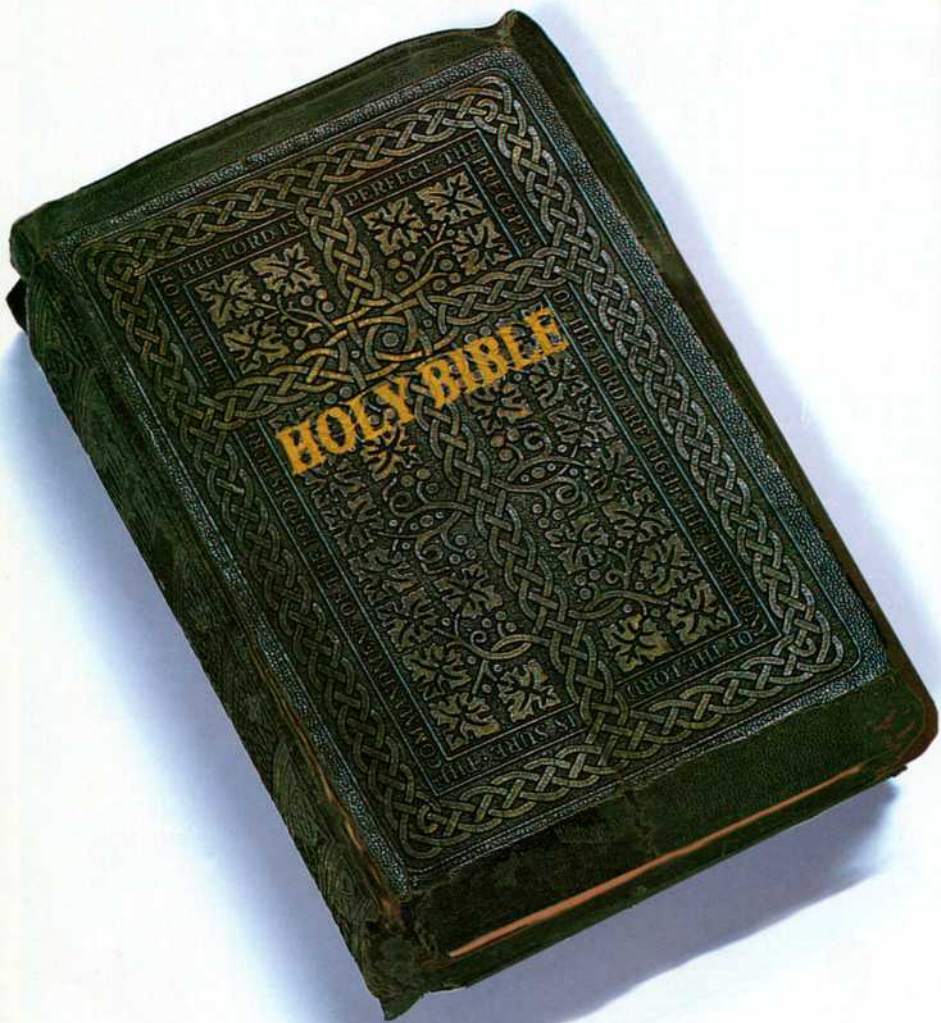
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*NOTE: Rise of the Triad: The Hunt Begins is available as shareware. The retail (registered) version is titled Rise of the Triad: Dark War, and contains all new levels and advanced features. Call today to order Rise of the Triad: Dark War. 1-800-APOGEE1

Or download for free, Rise of the Triad: The Hunt Begins from Software Creations, the officially sponsored Home BBS of Apogee. (508) 365-2359 @ 2400 baud • (508) 368-7036 @ 9600-14.4k v.32bis • (508) 365-4035 @ 28.8k v.fast class (v.fc)

Product Information Number 88

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Knocking Out Those Gnarly Norwegians

As I predicted in this column six months ago, SSI's *Panzer General* has proven to be the wargame hit of the year. New PC owners and veteran players alike have discovered that this game devours great chunks of your time the way flesh-eating bacteria gobble up fatty tissue. My own dear wife, usually very understanding in these matters, has lately been dropping subtle hints about leaving home with the children unless I restrict my *Panzer General* playing to a reasonable 2-3 hours a night....

To judge from the comments we've been hearing and reading, one aspect of the game that has agreeably surprised nearly everyone is the tough, resilient, and unpredictable enemy AI.

Even on the easiest setting, with the AI hobbled and the enemy's prestige and experience points artificially limited, none of the campaign games (except for the Poland tutorial) is a walk in the country. Seemingly beaten garrisons suddenly rally for a rugged defense, and a city that looked like a sitting duck swallows one of your core units like it was an M & M. "War is the province of Chance," wrote von Clausewitz, and *Panzer General* injects just enough wild-card randomness to underscore the truth of that.

From the general to the specific: A lot of the players who choose to start the 1939 campaign track, and who have achieved sterling victories in the Polish campaign, suddenly run into a brick wall when it comes to the Norway invasion. I myself had to refigure that battle more than twenty times before I eked out the Major Victory result that enables you to continue the campaign track with a reasonable hope of future success.

The problem is one of

time versus geography. The time allotted for successful completion of the invasion is, to say the least, challenging. Norway is a long, rugged country whose terrain consists of little but natural obstacles to military operations. Not only are the Norwegians doughty fighters, but, as the campaign opens, there is a massive British expeditionary force lurking off the northern coast at Lamsos and Narvik, including a battleship, a carrier, and sufficient escorts to neutralize your potent U-boat fleet.

It's not so hard for the Germans to drive up the Oslo-Lillehammer valley with sufficient ground forces to capture Trondheim, but if the Royal

JU-88s to distract and hammer the British surface units. It takes finesse, timing, and luck to pull it off, but when you do, it's enormously satisfying.

The second thing you'll notice about the scenario as opposed to the campaign version of the Norway operation, is that—although the time limit is still just this side of demented—the High Command has allocated sufficient forces (just barely) for you to make it work: 10 infantry units (most of them one or two-star veterans), two tank units, one mobile flak unit, one self-propelled gun unit, three squadrons of BF-109s, and two veteran squadrons of Stukas. You also get more

than 1000 prestige points—enough for you to buy two units of JU-88s with plenty of "elite replacement" points left over. Only a total noncompoop could fail to achieve victory, sooner or later, with such lavish military assets at his command.

On the other hand, in the "campaign" version of Norway, no matter how good your performance in Poland has been, you never seem to start with more than six or seven ground units of any kind (and none of them two-star in quality!) plus two or three air units. Personally, I believe that anyone who can pull off even a Minor Victory with such inferior resources deserves full prestige points.

What's going on here? Should you play the Poland campaign in such a way as to anticipate your needs for Norway? Not only is that a risky dispersion of prestige points, but it doesn't seem to work very well. You still don't get quite enough resources for the job, and you invariably compromise your performance in Poland by trying to fight today's battle while simultaneously plotting for one you will fight six months later.

After pondering the matter for many days and playing this battle from every angle I could think of, I have my own theories about how to gird your loins properly for the "campaign" version of Norway, but because this strategic conundrum seems to be bugging so many other gamers, I hereby solicit our readers to submit to us their solutions for the Norwegian Problem (remember: campaign context only; we already know how to win the scenario version), using screen shots or sketch maps if you wish.

The best solutions will be published in our Strategy Central section, with a fanfare of martial trumpets and a tip of the field marshal's baton to their creators.

Address all entries to: The Desktop General - Pesky Norwegians Department, PC Gamer Magazine, 300-A S. Westgate Drive, Greensboro, NC, 27407

PCG

William R. Trotter



Navy contingent hasn't either been neutralized or lured away, its heavy guns will put down an impenetrable curtain of steel around both of the Germans' last two objectives, and the best the German player can hope to achieve is a worthless Minor Victory decision — and that only at the cost of several core units.

Now, if you go from the campaign track to the Norway single-battle scenario, you'll quickly see, from the initial map display, that the proper strategy for conquering Norway is pretty much what the Germans actually used: a quick airborne strike to capture the airfields at Oslo; a second-wave airborne attack, spearheading a northward mechanized thrust, combined with a sizable amphibious landing on the coast, all converging on Trondheim; and aggressive use of Stukas and

This month, our own Desktop General finds grief and glory in the snows of Norway, and ponders the existential questions posed by SSI's *Panzer General*.

Divide and Falter

Unless you've spent the past couple months on a desert island, you probably know that Pentium CPUs have a little problem doing math. Last November, Intel admitted that every Pentium processor chip shipped prior to that time gives incorrect results when dividing certain pairs of floating-point numbers, and the public reaction was like nothing the computer industry had ever seen.

Buggy CPUs are nothing new. Every major CPU maker has had at least one bug disaster, and early versions of Intel's 386 and 486 chips had math problems that were much worse than the Pentium malady. According to president Andrew Grove, the folks at Intel "breathed a sigh of relief" when they found out how limited the Pentium's math bug was. But what Intel called "a minor flaw" created a major furor, partly because leading-edge CPU chips have suddenly become common consumer goods, and partly because of the way Intel handed the whole incident.

Intel admitted finding the bug in its own tests early last summer, but it had planned on quietly introducing an improved CPU without any public announcement. That plan might have worked if Dr. Thomas Nicely, professor of mathematics at Lynchburg College, hadn't found the bug on his own and gone public with his findings. Intel's response raised the hackles of computer users even further: Individuals could call Intel and say which programs they used, and Intel would replace the chip if they felt that a user did enough floating point math to be at risk.

Judging from comments that appeared in the press

and online, some of Intel's angriest critics weren't entirely clear about what floating-point math is or what the effects of this bug are. But who wants to admit — or even worse, be told — that he isn't enough of a power-user to get his buggy CPU replaced? After a couple weeks of being publicly vilified over this policy, Intel announced that it would replace Pentiums for anyone who asked, so you don't have to convince Intel that you need a replacement chip anymore. But it still might be worthwhile to go over floating-point math, how it's used, and what the nature of the Pentium's problem is.

Tim Victor



Floating-point arithmetic is the computer equivalent of scientific notation, a way of handling fractions and very large numbers more conveniently than simple integers — ordinary counting numbers — allow. Most computer programs use integers to do their arithmetic. But programs that need to handle a wide range of numeric values, like spreadsheets, or CAD and 3D modeling software, often rely on floating-point math.

Any CPU can be programmed to do floating-point math in software. But it's faster to use a processor that does floating-point directly in hardware, and 486DX and Pentium processor chips have floating-point hardware built right in.

And that's where you'll find the Pentium's bug. It uses the "SRT" algorithm for floating-point division, a

technique that works about the way that people do long division on paper, except that it guesses two digits of the result in each step to double the speed of the operation. It reads the next two bits of the quotient from a table burned into the chip itself, a table that's indexed by both the divisor and the current value of the remainder.

The problem is that five of the entries in this table are wrong — they're set to a value of zero, when they should contain two. So if the Pentium tries to use one of these incorrect entries, several digits of the quotient will be wrong.

As it happens, those

five bad table entries aren't used much. They correspond to certain values of the remainder that almost never show up in the SRT division algorithm, which is why the bug happens so rarely, and why even Intel didn't find the problem until it had shipped millions of Pentium chips. Also, those table entries will never be used in computing the first few digits of the quotient, which puts a limit on how big the error can be. In the worst case, the fourth decimal digit from the left of the result might be wrong.

Here's how to see an example of the bug: In the Windows calculator, try dividing 4195835 by 3145727. If your PC has a Pentium CPU, you'll get an answer that starts with "1.333739"; the correct answer begins with "1.333820." That's the worst known error, off by a bit less than one one-hundredth of a percent. Floating-point math really speeds up some games, particularly games that use polygonal 3D graphics like flight-simulators. Still, the chance of a game being affected by the Pentium divide bug are extremely small, even if Intel rates games like *X-Wing* and *Falcon 3.0* among the programs most likely to encounter the Pentium bug.

They estimate that these games have a 50/50 chance of getting one erroneous result sometime within the next 270 years. (Intel's analysts didn't say how many hours they play each day.) And even if an error does occur, all that you're likely to see is a stray polygon flashing on the screen for a fraction of a second. According to a spokesperson for Falcon publisher Spectrum Holobyte, "it doesn't affect us at all."

So if you want a new Pentium chip, you can call Intel at (800) 628-8686, or (916) 356-3551 outside the US, and they'll put you on the list. But you don't need to worry about the bug affecting your game playing.

Everyone is talking about the Pentium bug, a math error that affects just about every Pentium chip out there. Tim explains the situation — and whether or not gamers need worry.

ALIEN VIRUS

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As you set down on the docking pad in the station hangar, you are a little puzzled. You remember that on Station Zeus there must be at least a hundred crew members, and not one is here. And while the mystery begins to unfold, the clues like the smoldering remains of some poor souls, may not be very easy to digest. In the meantime, an unimaginable terror stalks the few colleagues that you have left aboard Station Zeus.



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PC CD-ROM

Product Information Number 144

Mouse Fishing

I've been putting around a lot lately with something I suspect most of us just take for granted: mice. No, not the cuddly vermin type, but that thing we all use to do our pointing and clicking. See, my computer desk at home is one of those vertical kinds, where the keyboard and mouse sit on a shelf that slides back into the thing to save space. It works great most of the time, but lately I've been playing the

hell out of this new Amtek game called *Gone Fishin'*. It's a fishing simulation (I'll review it next month), and I just can't seem to quit playing with it.

Which brings us back to the part about my mouse. To cast in *Gone Fishin'*, you have to hold the mouse button down to activate your angler's reel, then swing his arm forward by scooting your mouse forward and letting go of the button at the right time. Most of the time I want to cast out as far as I can, so I hold down that button, scoot the mouse back and forth a few times, and then let her rip. And inevitably, I slam my knuckles into the computer desk.



The RemotePoint might not look like a mouse, but trust me — it works just fine.

And then there's reeling in your lure, involving holding both the left and right mouse buttons down for long stretches as you try to trick those walleye into taking the hook. A few hours of this, and you'll begin to take all that carpal tunnel stuff seriously!

So after a few too many of these painful but irresistible

fishing trips, I decided it was time to find a better control device. Fortunately, I had two to look at: Interlink's RemotePoint (805 484-8855), and CH Products' Trackball Pro (619 598-2518). And both, it seemed to me, held great angling potential.

The RemotePoint is wireless, a one-handed thing you hold something like a fishing rod, with the left mouse button mounted on the underside like a trigger, and the right one on top. Then, just in front — ah, hell, just look at the picture. The round disk is the thing you use to move the cursor. The infrared remote system works really well, too, and I could stand back several yards from

to the trigger-and-thumb setup. All in all, I'd say this is one of the better non-standard mice — but it's no Ugly Stick.

I didn't approach the Trackball Pro with quite as much enthusiasm as the RemotePoint, mainly because I've never liked trackballs. Their main claim to fame is that they don't require as much desk space as a regular mouse, although I don't buy that. I'm a slob, with boxes and empty CD-ROM boxes everywhere — but I still manage to scoot a mouse around in a little clearing that's actually smaller than the base of the Trackball Pro.

But with its huge ball poking up out of the base, reminding me of those halcyon



The Trackball Pro's best feature is its lock-down mouse buttons.

days of *Birdie King* and *Ten Yard Fight*, it did seem that the Trackball Pro might make for some very effective casting. I could picture myself stroking the thing fast and to the left, perfectly placing my lure over that trench I just knew was hiding a big old catfish. I hadn't counted on that holding the left-button-down-then-letting-go-at-just-the-right-time, though. And to do this right, I had to use two hands on the T-Ball Pro — one on the left button, and the other on the ball.

It took some practice, but it worked! I soon felt like I could hit a waterbug 30 feet out. And one of the T-Ball Pro's neatest features — an extra right and left button that, when pressed, lock the buttons in the "down" position — came in handy, too. I could cast out, then press the left and right locking buttons to start reeling in the line, and sit back. No more holding both buttons down until my fingers went numb!

The T-Ball Pro acquitted itself well in Windows, too. The locking buttons are terrific there, for apps like drawing and paint programs, and moving icons around couldn't be easier. I didn't like it as well as the RemotePoint in Windows, though. It never felt as precise, and moving the cursor seemed to take more effort than even with a standard mouse. And in fact, neither the T-Ball Pro or the RemotePoint was as useable as my faithful old mouse.

The Trackball Pro is still hooked up to my machine at home. My knuckles have healed, I've caught a couple of record Muskies, and I'm not even sure where my mousepad is anymore. Which sucks, because it was a pretty nice one.

Matt Firme



my computer and still enjoy accurate mouse response.

But how did it do as a fishing pole? Well, I'm sorry to report that it wasn't too hot. I found that holding that little trigger to cast was nicely reminiscent of my first Zebco, but simultaneously holding the trigger, then trying to thumb the directional pad back and forth was pretty nearly impossible. I couldn't do much more than flop my bait out a few feet.

Part of this is due to the way the directional pad works: As you hold in a given direction, your cursor moves slowly at first to allow for finer control, then zips across the screen at a good clip if you keep holding down. And while this makes quick casting tough, it's great for the kinds of windowing stuff most normal people will use: Double-clicking is a snap, and dragging icons is easy once you get used

A sudden desire to catch fish has Matt scrambling for new pointing devices. Will they live up to expectations? Can Matt land The Big One, and prove his angling ability once and for all? Read on...



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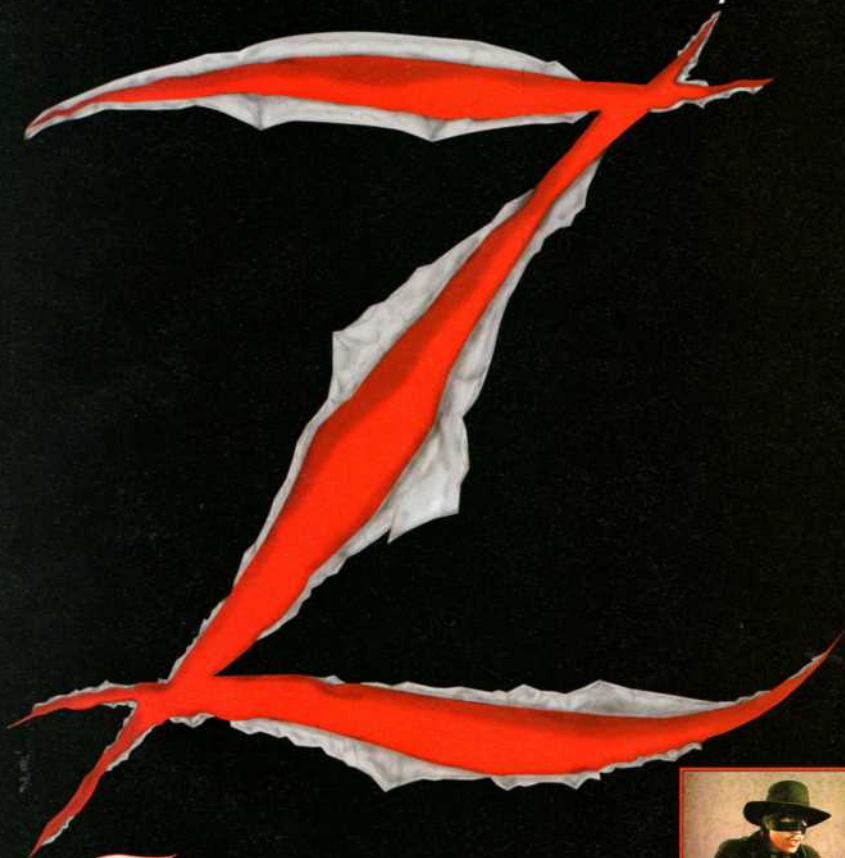


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Product Information Number 123

IBM  ROM

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Of you're stumped by the mechanized mayhem of *MetalTech: EarthSeige* or the comic-book carnage of *Noctropolis*, this month's Strategy Central

will get you back on track. First up, though, we've got some strategy tips for Origin's *Privateer* from one of our helpful and dedicated readers.... Send in *your* hints today!

Write to us at:
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 300-A South Westgate Drive
 Greensboro, NC 27410
 or Email:
 peeceegee@aol.com
 74431.3433@compuserve.com
 djee52a@prodigy.com

.....

Privateer

Space Travel For Fun and Profit

Dear Strategy Central,

I'd like to share three tips with all you fans of Origin's *Privateer*.

1. Armament: Get twin missile launchers as soon as you can; two missiles fired simultaneously (and hitting at about the same time) do far more damage than two fired in succession, because the



According to Peter, you'll want to skip this single missile launcher and go straight to a double as soon as you can afford it.

enemy craft's shields don't have time to regenerate. One dual hit will take out small ships such as the Talon.

2. Dogfighting among the asteroids: Get on your opponent's tail and increase your speed to afterburner — the enemy will also increase speed and try to get away from you. By staying on his tail (but not too close) you'll not hit any asteroids, but eventually he will! Just be sure to avoid the resultant debris, and slow down afterwards.

3. Be a buddy to the Pirates: Some missions, such as Taryn Cross #4 (the Steltek Derelict) are almost impossible to complete if the pirates — in addition to the Kilrathi and the ubiquitous Retros — are gunning for you. One way to avoid their anger is, of course, to become a pirate yourself. But this can be (a) unpleasant when you have to kill friendly merchants, and (b) get the militia and Confeds after you. I've found an easier way: Since you have to complete the Lynn Murphy missions in order to get Monkhouse off Palan, you'll be placed on the "enemy list" of the mercenaries, and they'll always attack you. After getting a



If only we had listened to Peter and bought those twin missile launchers....

kill on a mercenary ship, the pilot will often eject. Tractor-beam him (or her) into your cargo bay. If you check your cargo manifest, you will see that you now have a slave on board. Sell the slave at the next space port, and the pirates will treat you as a buddy, but you

will not be in trouble with the militia or Confeds. Instead of the pirates shooting at you, they will now exchange banter such as "you didn't see me, and I'm blind" and "let's pretend this meeting didn't happen." Another advantage is that you can now land on any of the hidden pirate bases (Capella, Sherwood, etc). This will continue unless you take on any jobs that involve eliminating pirates (none are required to complete the game).

Regards,
 Peter J. Hradilek

Thanks for the tips, Peter! And by the way, that asteroid trick is a lot of fun — especially if you use an external view when chasing down your enemies.

NovaStorm

Attack of The Killer Tomatoes



No, it's not a salad shooter. It's the weird and wonderful *NovaStorm* tomato gun!

There are codes that make you stronger and codes that let you walk through walls, but it's pretty rare that a code will bring a smile to your face. This one for *NovaStorm* certainly falls into that category. We first heard about it from one of our reviewer friends who'd been "surfing the net," as the hip cyber-folk say, and happened to find it amongst the chatter.

During the first level of *NovaStorm* (full version) if you type the word "tomatoes" you'll be treated to a few new levels, enemies, bosses, sounds — and some very unusual music. We didn't have any trouble finding someone to



Once you get past the cute and fuzzy level, you'll be thrown out into the cold, cruel darkness of this asteroid field.

confirm this one, since most of us keep a copy of *NovaStorm* close at hand. And we know you'll definitely tell your friends about it.

MetalTech: EarthSiege

We've heard from some very reliable sources at Dynamix that the campaign missions for *MetalTech: EarthSiege* were designed to be *brutal* — and after getting our butts kicked several times we just knew we had to contribute a little strategy on the subject. We'll save the mission walkthroughs for later, but here's enough to get you started.

Turret Control

The controls of *MetalTech: EarthSiege* are some of the most complex and difficult to master among current action games, especially if you're trying to operate everything with one joystick. So to give fresh pilots a fighting chance, Dynamix included the track mode. It automatically controls turret movement to follow a selected Cybrid, allowing



Sure, those exploding turrets and smoldering metal stumps are satisfying to see, but they don't add much to the scrap bin.

players to concentrate more on driving their Herc and managing their weapons. But this track mode has a serious drawback: Since the tracking merely centers the turret on your selected target and doesn't compensate for a moving Cybrid by "leading" the target, you'll find that in nearly every mission against moving targets, the track mode is often a futile waste of ammo.

So what do you do? Well, we advise that you disable the track mode, and take total control. We've found the best hope for success in the field is a combination of keyboard commands (L,J,K,M) for turret control, and a joystick for Herc movement. You can also reverse this, if you like.

It takes several missions to get used to these controls, but the benefits far outweigh the hassle of switching between modes on a single joystick. And for those of you who've got an extra joystick lying around (or maybe even a pair of those nifty rudder pedals) you may want to give two controllers a try; this system works even better, and take less time to learn.

I'm in control, but where do I aim?

One underlying, and for the most part

unspoken, goal of every campaign mission is to gain scrap. Basically, if you're not getting the materials to make new Hercs and repair damaged ones, the war will soon be lost. Your only hope of surviving the campaign is to think of the Big Picture.

With that in mind, target the *legs* of attacking Cybrids to bring them down with the head intact; that way, you'll be able to get a lot more useful salvage than if you destroy the turret. Remember: If there's no scrap, there'll be no more humanity.

Blow their guns off

Once you start making your way through the campaign missions, you realize that those cybrids are packing some hot, powerful weapons. If you want to acquire this new technology for yourself, you'll need to target the hard-points/weapons on the Cybrids in order to bring them in for evaluation. So get out there and knock those fancy weapons off before you bring 'em crashing down!

Why don't you go see what's beyond that ridge?

When engaging multiple targets or a heavily defended installation, don't forget to give marching orders to others in your unit. When they're acting on their own AI, your wingmen tend to get in the way during a firefight, often cutting you off from your target or putting you in a deadly crossfire. So any guidance you give them beforehand will certainly be a benefit to you.

Keep in mind that many missions simply can't be completed unless you send an advance force to "soften 'em up" at the next waypoint while you deal with more immediate con-



Show your mechanic how much you care and bring him back an ELF or a PBW, he might even like it more than a basket of ribs.

cerns. Shrewd command decisions are everything when your foe has you outnumbered and outgunned.

Tag — you're it!

Here's where being in command really pays off. Order one or all of your units to move ahead and scan for targets. More often than not, they'll begin drawing fire. Then, use flanking maneuvers to position yourself *behind* the Cybrids and take them out while they're busy with the rest of your crew.

Build for your future

Immediately following your first successful mission in the campaigns, you'll want to start building new and more powerful Hercs if you expect to keep the Cybrids from overwhelming you with superior forces. As soon as one is completed, keep up the pressure and build more. Also, keep all of your unit's Hercs in the best condition possible.

The Cybrids will always be one step ahead with their technology and weapons — but, with luck and some early victories, maybe those metal monstrosities can be put down for good.

There are other missions to fight

MetalTech: EarthSiege has 60 possible missions, in five main and three alternate campaigns. But since you'll probably be returning to saved games, you might easily miss the three alternate campaigns. You can get to them by quitting the last mission of the first, second, or third campaign. Just don't lose two campaigns in a row, or you lose the game. Happy hunting!



Send your wingmen out to take care of those nasty Cybrids. Let your buddies take the heat — that's why you brought them along in the first place.

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Product Information Number 130

Noctropolis

The best thing about Electronic Arts' *Noctropolis* is that it doesn't have a lot of unreasonably hard puzzles. In most cases, if you click the LOOK icon over everything on the screen and try to use everything in your inventory, a solution will eventually present itself. But there are a few points that might frustrate even the most experienced gamer. So here's our official Visitor's Guide to the City of Eternal Night ...

The Cathedral

This is the first puzzle that might give you trouble. You need to speak to Father Desmond, but how do you get past that gargoyles without getting fried? Everything you need is in this screen — you just pick up the coil of wire and open the access panel at the base of the statue on the right. You'll find one of the spiked rungs in the iron fence is loose enough to pull out, and you're in business. Use the wire, then use the spike, and the gargoyles is toast.

Cygnus Building, Maintenance Room

So you say you've tried every possible conversation path with Leon, and he still won't get off his duff and fix the air conditioning? That's because you can't make him do it, no matter what you say. A real costumed avenger would



There's that pesky screwdriver! Now that you know where to look, it just jumps right out, doesn't it?

kick Leon's butt into submission, but you'll have to settle for coming back when you've got Stiletto with you.

Then you just talk to Leon (any conversation choice will do), then talk to Stiletto. She'll use her "feminine wiles" to get Leon moving (she's not too subtle, but then Leon's not too bright).

The Observatory

Getting past the security camera is a snap — just use the Noctroglyph to become invisible. But how do you get into the building? You'll need the sack of seeds and the Quickgrow solution from the greenhouse truck. Just plant a seed and watch that crack in the Observatory wall grow into a door.

Now that you're inside, you'll encounter the only truly aggravating puzzle in this game. It takes timing and luck to get to the lift platform without being tagged by the guards' flashlights, so you'll want to save your game before you try. You'll never make it if you try to go straight across the floor, so move first to the base of the telescope (where you'll pick up the

screwdriver). Now you only have two flashlights to worry about. Watch the pattern, and cross to the base of the platform when the time is right. Get the oil can lying there, then go to the platform.

The Opera House

When you return to the Opera House with the lens, Tophat will capture you and leave you hanging — literally. Just talk to the old man; when he frees you, travel straight to the Shadowlair and heal yourself in the Liquidark pool. Then head back to the Opera House.

Where do you go from here? Grab a brick from the pile by the curtains. Stand on the trap door in the stage — it's just in front of Tophat's wheel — and use the brick to flip the switch that operates it. Down you go.

But now what? There's makeup and jewelry in the dressing room, but the only way out leads back up to the stage. Move the costumes hanging on the rack and go through the little door behind them. Now you're in the set room, which means you're almost out — but this is where everyone seems to get stuck. Look very closely at the big boiler, and you'll find a screwdriver (man, they can *really* make things tiny in these SVGA games). Use the screwdriver to take the door off of its hinges, then turn the valve and use the fire hose to blast the bricks away.



A coil of wire, a wrought-iron fence rung, and a handy power supply make a perfect trap for a bothersome gargoyle.

Master Macabre's Puzzle Door

This is a tough one, especially if you hate Rubik's Cube or those puzzles where you have to slide squares around to make a picture. The idea, of course, is to move the colored pegs until they're all lined up — white in the upper left, red in the upper right and blue at the bottom



Getting around the observatory without being spotted by the guards is tricky, but it can be done. All you need are good eyes, good timing, and a little good luck.

— but if you've been wandering around the maze for very long, you probably only have a few minutes left to live. So here's what you do — using the diagram below as a reference, move the pegs in this order: 9 2 6 3 8 5 2 8 4 1 9 10.



The door puzzle could have you tearing your hair out, especially when your time is limited. So we've numbered the pegs and provided the quickest solution.

Reader's Request

Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis

Dear Strategy Central,

Help! I recently got *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis* on CD-ROM, and now I'm hopelessly stuck. I chose the "team" path (the one with Sophia) and have made it to the German submarine, but now I just can't seem to get anything done. What do I do now? Any tips you can give me would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks,
Douglas Bernham
Sioux Falls, SD



Whoops... Looks like you'll need to do something about those sailors.



We bet this poor guy's gonna have a hell of a time explaining this to his superiors....

We're happy to help you get past those meddling Nazis — especially since it means we get to take another loving look at one of our all-time favorites. Here's what you need to do:

Conning Tower (level one)

Those Nazi crewmen on the second level just won't give Indy a break. To clear the way, use the intercom to order them to the bow. While Indy may not sound very convincing as a U-boat commander, he gets the job done. With the guards out of the way, head down to the next level.

Level Two

From this level, you'll notice that Sophia is being held captive below by a machine-gun wielding guard. Even Indy's fits of fury and wry smile won't do much in this situation, so you'll need to enlist Sophia's help to get rid of the guard.

But since she's not going anywhere, there's no reason you can't pick up a few important items to help you out later. Go left into the kitchen and get the porcelain mug from among the cold-cuts and bread. Continue left until you

find a trap door leading to the lowest level, go down the ladder then to the right, where you'll find the sub's batteries are leaking acid. Fill the mug with acid, then continue to the right.

Talk to Sophia and tell her you have a plan, then ask her to distract the guard. Make your way back up to the second level and continue right until you're behind the guard, then move close enough until he sees you. Pick one of the first three "pun-derful" dialogue choices, and watch Sophia pound the guard with the bucket.

Now you'll need to find the stone disks that Kerner took from you, and something to unlock that important-lock-



The mug full of battery acid is just the right thing to open up that box.

ing wheel. So head back up the ladder and take a right until you find a trap door, open it up and go down the ladder, and you'll find a metal strong box. Here's where that acid comes in handy. Use the acid on the metal box and you'll get the disks and a small key. Use the key on the locked wheel, and then push the wheel. You should see a small control panel with the wheel on it, and an external view of the sub. You'll need three other controls to pilot the sub, but they're pretty easy to find and we wouldn't want to spoil your fun....

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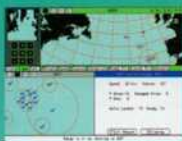
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If you've never written us before, go ahead and put pen to paper now. See, we're particularly keen to hear from you on two issues. Most importantly, there's the First Annual PC Gamer Reader's Choice Awards. This will be your chance to speak to the PC gaming industry, to tell

them which products you feel were the best of 1994.

We're already compiling the nominations you've sent us, but there's still time for you to send us your picks. We'll put them all together, and print up a ballot sheet to run in next month's PCG. So watch for the March issue, and don't miss your chance to make your voice heard!

We'll have all the results for you in June.

So Let's Hear From You!

Write to:

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or e-mail at:
peeceegee@aol.com
74431.3433@compuserve.com
djee52a@prodigy.com

The Joy of RAM

Dear PC Gamer,

Re: Your solution to the "BLAST THAT MEMORY" letter from the December 1994 issue. In the screen shot in column three, page 188, the end of the EMM386.EXE line of the CONFIG.SYS file was cut off, but those of us with eagle eyes who scanned the pic could spot something pretty nifty which you neglected to mention: a way to squeeze out an extra bit of memory!

There's an upper-memory region reserved for monochrome monitors which, if you have a color monitor, is not being used. This is a useful 32k for cramping an extra driver or two into the upper memory, and freeing up a little conventional memory. To take advantage of this 32k of space, add this inclusion switch to the EMM386 line in your CONFIG.SYS file: I=B000-B7FF

Alternatively, use DOS 6.x's MEMMAKER in Custom Setup and answer yes to the question, "Use monochrome region for running programs?" to achieve the same thing. If you have an EGA or VGA this should work fine as is, but if you're using Super VGA you'll first need to go to your Windows directory and add the line `device=C:\DOS\MONOUMB.386 to the [386Enh] section of your SYSTEM.INI file. This will prevent Windows from locking up. Hope this helps someone.`

Michelle Agnew
Lake City, FL

Thanks, Michelle! We've mentioned the monochrome trick before, and it really can help out a lot — as our next letter shows.

Adding that line to the Windows SYSTEM.INI file is a big help, too — and one that should come as welcome news to those who've tried the monochrome thing, only to lose access to Windows!

More Joy of RAM

Dear PC Gamer,

After reading "DOS for Gamers" in issue 8, I've been hooked on your great magazine. The tip in this article about how to create an upper-memory block in an area reserved for monochrome monitors allowed me to open up more than 30K of base memory. Without the extremely valuable advice given by Tim Victor, I wouldn't be able to enjoy Police Quest IV. Even though it only requires 560K of base memory, I'm just barely able to get that much right now — and I wouldn't have been able to get that much if not for the article.

Yet I know you can

do better than that. As it is, there are still programs stagnating in the bowels of my computer's hard drive, awaiting the day I can use them. My ultimate goal is to free up 600K of base memory, but I still need help to do this. Also, are there any special requirements for creating boot disks to be used with a Stacker compressed drive? Any help would be greatly appreciated, and articles such as "DOS for Gamers" are what net subscriptions. Thanks for listening!

Sincerely,
Todd Stull

We're glad Tim's article helped you! This whole memory management thing can be a royal pain,

and it takes plenty of practice to sort it all out. The other thing it takes — and this is where helping you get that 600K free can be tricky — is knowledge of your specific system, and the different device drivers you might be running. See, without knowing how you're using your system and getting a look at your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT, it's pretty tough to free up all the base memory possible.

We'll definitely take a look at the whole memory issue, though, and see if we can't put together a few more tips. Until then, try rearranging the order of the drivers in your CONFIG and AUTOEXEC, sometimes you can get more to load high if you load the largest drivers first. Don't forget the MEM/C command to see exactly where the drivers are loading, and how big each of them actually is. Good luck!

Send in the Orcs

Dear PC Gamer,

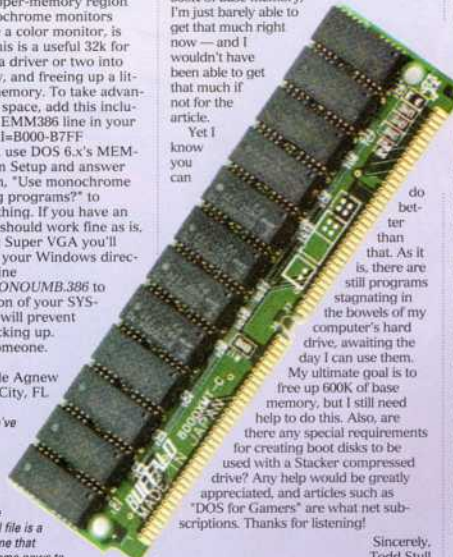
Great magazine, great disk (and CD-ROM), great price. I've bought several games based on your recommendations, and have found that I love two of the three I purchased. Since I really like the magazine, I've got a couple of things that I wanted to point out, and a comment that might make the magazine even better.

First of all, I'm a big fantasy/adventure RPG fan. Looking through past and current issues, I found that the number of RPG games you review has kind of shrunk. What's up? Is it just not a very popular type of game? In your December 1994 issue, I don't think I saw a single RPG review! It would also be nice to see a couple more RPG strategies and hints.

Second, I think it would be great if you would not only sell past issues of PC Gamer (which was a great idea), you also past demo disks and CD-ROM's. I missed the first CD-ROM in the December '94 issue and really regret it. There were a lot of games on that disc that I wanted to get a first-hand look at. I'm sure there are many people out there who agree with me, and would jump at the opportunity to purchase past demos.

I would also love to see a section on great software deals and dealers.

Unsigned



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Thanks for the letter — and you can bet you're not the only one who's been wondering about the drought in roleplaying games. Judging by the mail we've been getting on the subject, it certainly seems that the roleplaying genre is still very popular. Still, hard-core RPGs can be pretty tough for new gamers to get into — and newcomers are an increasingly important part of the market. A lot of designers seem to be focusing on graphics-heavy, CD-ROM extravaganzas, mostly because PCs are selling into the home in record numbers, and the machines folks are buying are usually high-end MPC2 systems.

Don't worry, though.SSI, Sir-tech, Bethesda, Virgin, and others have plenty of RPG plans in the works, and roleplaying will continue to be an important part of PC gaming. Yeah, it's been a slow year for the genre. But we're betting the small quantities will bring higher quality.

As for making demos available, consider it done. When you order back issues, just specify whether you want the floppy or the CD edition.

And finally, rating the software sellers might be a pretty tall order. In fact, since software sellers vary so much from region to region, you can probably do a better job of rating them yourself by calling the software stores in your area for the best prices, and checking them against the mail-order companies in PC Gamer. From what we've heard, the major mail-order companies stack up pretty well — just make sure you take shipping and handling into account when comparing prices.

BBS Q&A

Dear PC Gamer,

First of all, I'd like to thank you for putting out such a great magazine. Your rating system is fair and quite accurate, and you've already saved me countless dollars! This alone makes your magazine a great value, and The CD full of patches and demos is just more icing on

the cake. I would gladly pay much more than you guys are asking (did I say that?)!

I also have a couple of questions for you. I run a BBS as a hobby. When I find something as great as your magazine and CD, I want to share it with my friends. I was considering putting the patches and some of the demos online for my users to download (with a little note saying they can get them every month by subscribing to your mag). Can I legally do this?

A lifetime subscriber,
Steven E. Parker
Dickinson, ND

Steve, we can't really give you permission to post the demos on The CD. Although we're happy to include them each month, they are still the property of their respective publishers. It'd probably be best if you contact them directly and get their permission. And then, just like Dad used to say, it's all right with us if it's OK with them!

Upgrade Blues

Hello, PC Gamer!

I have a question on upgrading. I've heard lately that if you buy a 486 computer that's upgradable (by letting you replace the CPU chip) and you choose to upgrade to a Pentium by adding the OverDrive chip, your system still won't run as fast as a new Pentium machine. Right now I have a 486-DX2 66MHz with 8MB of RAM. It plays all my favorite games (like DOOM and Indy Car Racing) great, but the time will come when a faster machine is in order, and I'd like to think that I won't have to pay a lot of money for a new machine or a motherboard. Could you please tell me if I should start saving for a new system?

OK, first things first. Yeah, it's true that many 486 machines were designed to take the Intel OverDrive chips, providing a less expensive means of getting better performance from your system. But as of yet, the Pentium OverDrive chip isn't ready — and yes again, it's true that an OverDrive pentium probably won't be as fast as a whole new system. The main reason for this is that the motherboard in your 486 — even your 66MHz — really only runs at 33MHz. So whatever the speed of the Pentium upgrade chip, it can't match the 60, 66, 90, or 100MHz of a real Pentium system with its Pentium-compatible motherboard. And then there's the question of faster videocards, the benefits of the 64-bit PCI local bus, and so on. In the end, while you may well end up with a system that's better than what you have now, the OverDrive route won't give you the performance leap of a real Pentium system.

Gold in the Bargain Bins

Dear PC Gamer,

I'd like to draw your attention to one of the most innovative games I have ever played — one that I bought at a local Wal-Mart for just \$5.00 about a week ago. The game is 4-D Boxing, by Electronic Arts, and it really kicks — despite the fact that it's almost 4 years old.

Not since Red Baron has a game this old fascinated me so much. The polygon graphics, which may have been unappreciated in the 286-386 era when the game was released, much resemble a cross between Virtua Fighter and DOOM, even if they are a little simplistic at times. It runs smooth as silk even on a 486/25, and the sound is more than ample. I've been playing the thing for hours, and I continually find



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Product Information Number 110

myself just three inches from the monitor, grunting ever time the screen flashes white as the computer opponent lands a jab-hook combo. I particularly enjoy the many customizable camera angles, which you can use as you play or review a fight.

I'm no expert on the aesthetics of boxing, but I've yet to see any boxing game that surpasses it for realism. I'm not aware if you reviewed this game while compiling your Top 40 list or not, but in my book it ranks right beside *Stunts* for pure entertainment. Any ideas what it would take to convince Electronic Arts to make a sequel, what with the first-person perspective craze raging? Throw in some mid-90s texture mapping, high resolution graphics, and modem support, and we'd really have one heck of a game. Tell your readers to go to Wal-Mart now and rummage through their bargain software stack till they find this one. It's too good to pass up for that price!

Matt "I can go another round" Williams
Dowelltown, TN

Our old buddy Steve Poole, now GP Publications' online guru, lobbied hard for 4D Boxing when we were putting together that Top 40 list. And it just about made the cut, too. You're right about this one: It's kick-ass boxing action, and really the best (and one of the only) boxing sims around. Only five bucks, you say? That's definitely the bargain-bin deal!

Oh, and we called the folks at EA to tell 'em how much you liked the game, and to see if we couldn't learn something about the possibility of a sequel. You'll be sorry to hear that they're not working on a sequel any time soon.

Blackthorne and the GamePad

Dear PC Gamer,

I really loved the *Blackthorne* demo in *PC Gamer*. Even dedicated wargamers like myself crave the occasional bit of mindless blood-letting, and this game certainly seemed to offer that and more. The demo certainly did its job, because I couldn't wait to buy the finished product!

Well, now that I have the finished game, I'm pretty disappointed. Despite the fact that the demo had some wonderful joystick support — including the four-button Graves GamePad — the finished version of *Blackthorne* I bought doesn't even recognize a joystick! Don't get me wrong, because I like what I've been able to see. But who wants to play an arcade game with key-board control?

What's the deal? What has happened to the joystick support I just assumed would be included with the final version?

Thanks,
Gerhard Bohn
via e-mail

You're not the only reader who's brought this little matter to our attention. And plenty of gamers have complained to Interplay, too — enough that Interplay has taken steps to fix the problem. They've issued a patch that puts the joystick support back in the game, and you can download it from America Online, GEnie, Prodigy, and CompuServe. Or if you'd rather, you can get it directly from Interplay's BBS at (714) 252-2822.

Oh, and the patch works well, too. All of us here are using it!

Controller Help

Dear PC Gamer,

Would it be possible if you could review and rate some of the controllers out on the market? I know you did the piece in the November issue on the Gravis Phoenix, and I'd like to get your opinion on a few more. I am particularly interested in the driving setups available, what with *IndyCar* and the new *NASCAR Racing* out. I had seen a couple listed in the mag, but no one in my area carries them. And at \$110 and up, I'd hate to send off and be disappointed. Any help would be appreciated!

Thanks,
Gary Calhoun
Kinsport, TN

*Funny you should ask, Gary. Matt's lining up some pretty cool driving setups right now, and plans to feature them in *Peripheral Visions* soon!*

Where's The CD?

Dear PC Gamer,

I sent in a card to change my subscription to the CD edition but for the past two issues, I received the floppy edition. What gives? Also, when will I get my free game that was offered when I subscribed to *PC Gamer*?

Thanks,
Robbie Lewis
via email

Glad you asked! Our subscription house had some technical problems with their database causing some of our subscribers to receive the wrong edition of the magazine in January and February. To remedy the problem, you can call NeoData at (800) 264-9717 and they will correct the problem.

*Typically, it takes 6-10 weeks to receive the free game you get by subscribing to *PC Gamer*. We experienced some delays in getting the games from the publishers, but have just received a large shipment. If you've waited more than 10 weeks and still don't have your game, call our customer service department at (800) 899-7159 (from the US) or (415) 696-1661 (outside the US). See page 112 for more details on contacting customer service or our editorial offices.*

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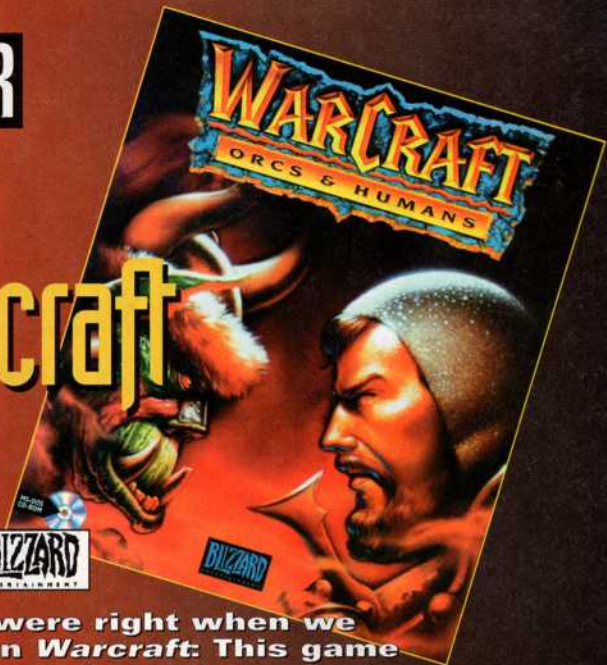
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It looks like we were right when we did our Scoop! on *Warcraft*. This game is hot. But with your help, the sequel can be even better!

When you think about it, *Warcraft* just couldn't miss: tiny orcs, wee little humans, all well-armed and ready to obey your every command. This strategy title packs all the challenge and charm you could ask for — so you just know there'll be a sequel! And thanks to Blizzard and *PC Gamer*, you can be part of the design process!

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tainment Expo — May 11, 12, and 13, 1995. You'll get the chance to see some of the year's hottest games — months before they'll be shown to the general public! And best of all, you'll have a special meeting with the designers of *Warcraft*, to discuss the sequel in person. Talk about clout!

So come on, let's hear those ideas!

Entering the *Warcraft* contest couldn't be easier — and it'll give you the chance to tell the folks at Blizzard what kind of things you'd like to see in the next *Warcraft*. Just jot down your ideas and suggestions for the sequel (try to keep it brief!), include your address and a daytime phone number, and mail it off to:

**The PC Gamer
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Product Information Number 102

DreamWeb

~~Sunday April~~

Monday April 9

The clock keeps going
round.

It won't ~~not~~ tell me
the time.

Santa Claus gave a
gun to me.

Let loose the puppies
of war.

I died. Last night.



"...AWESOME...!"

"...BREATH TAKING...!"

"...HEART STOPPING...!"

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**WARNING: THIS GAME
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Next Time in PC Gamer...

Volume 2 No. 4
Goes On Sale
Mar. 3
Don't Miss It!

It's our Celebration of Spring, as the bacchanalian staff of *PC Gamer* bids farewell to winter with plenty of new blossoms, sweet wines, and dancing. Then we'll start on the April issue, with stuff like....



Las Vegas: Some of us here think it should be our nation's capitol, since it embodies all that makes America great....

The Las Vegas Report: Winter CES

It's that time of year again, when game publishers, designers, and the press all gather in Vegas to take a look at the games that'll be making news in the year to come. We'll bring you the best, the worst, and the biggest news of the show. It'll be so real, you'll swear you can hear the slot machines!

OS Wars: Windows 95 vs. OS/2 Warp



You already know that PC gaming can be an exercise in frustration, what with memory woes, IRQ conflicts, and all the other technical questions you face each time you install a new game. All that may be changing, though, thanks to Microsoft's Windows 95

and IBM's OS/2 Warp. Both are all-new operating systems with the potential to alleviate a lot of those DOS woes. But which is the best system for gamers? We'll take a close-up look next month!

Your Review Connection

Some things never change, thank goodness — like the honest, reliable reviews in *PC Gamer*. And April will be no exception, with a whole new crop of the latest titles, all reviewed and rated for your gaming enjoyment. So far, we're planning to cover:

- *Dark Forces*
- *Knights of Xentar*



- *Live Action Football*
- *Heretic*
- *Wings of Glory*
- ...and plenty more!

Toss in a big batch of Scoops!, all those friendly *PC Gamer* columnists, and more Eyewitness than two strong men can carry, and you've got the makings of a real Springtime Extravaganza!

Don't miss the party —
only in the April
PC Gamer!

PC GAMER

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The huge mothership blotted out the sun as it dove to hover above the White House. In the Rose Garden, it was black as night.

The aliens had arrived, and nothing would ever be the same.

The gargantuan saucer's engines thundered, shattering the windows of the Oval Office. All over the world, windows rattled in sympathy as a hundred news microphones took in the terrifying sound and spewed them out of a million radios.

Women screamed. Men wept openly. Young children trembled. Dogs howled, without knowing why. Cats darted madly.

In the unassuming shade, General Nat "War Monkey" Henderson's grin went ratty out.

"Battery Boy!" he general boomed. "Where is that degenerate freak?" For the Battery Boy stomped out from behind a lamp-post, having just absorbed enough electrical energy to light up the Big Apple for 20 years.

"Eat dinner," Pip exclaimed. "Bring those Nats on, General! I had the 1 credit fry the whole Third Reich!"

"They aren't Nats, you blithering droid!" General Henderson's face turned from his usual crimson to a dangerous-looking shade of purple. "For the umpteenth time, Battery Boy, they're lithe green men, and they've come here to conquer the world!"

"Aw, heck," Pip said, "they sound like Nats to me."

"Wait a minute," said a confused Chip Elio. "What the hell does this have to do with Chubb?"

CONTINUED NEXT MONTH



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- Directs the pacing and tempo so that the plot flows swiftly but smoothly, fueled by your decisions.



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