

**BONUS!** 148 Games Rated in Our Reviews Roundup

# PC GAMER

**CD-ROM  
Edition**

**ON THE CD**

**Afterlife**

You're in charge of Heaven and Hell in LucasArts' hilarious new simulation!

The World's Best-Selling PC and CD-ROM Games Magazine

# Star Wars

## GOES MULTI-PLAYER

**EXCLUSIVE!** LucasArts gives gamers what they want: head-to-head action in *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* and *Jedi Knight*, the sequel to *Dark Forces*

**20 In-Depth Reviews**

- Advanced Tactical Fighters
- Descent II
- EarthSiege 2
- Silent Hunter

**Plus...** Hints, tips, and cheats for *Descent II*, *Whiplash*, *Ripper*, and more!

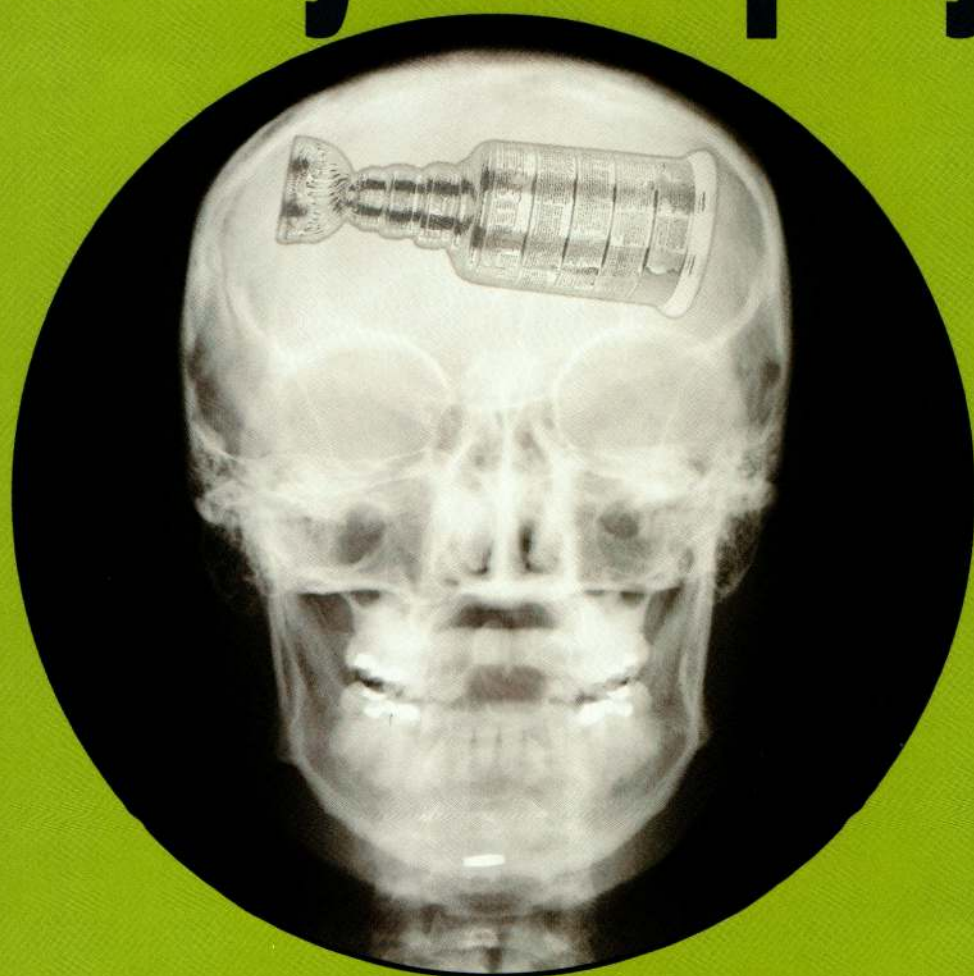
Vol. 3 No. 6 • JUNE 1996

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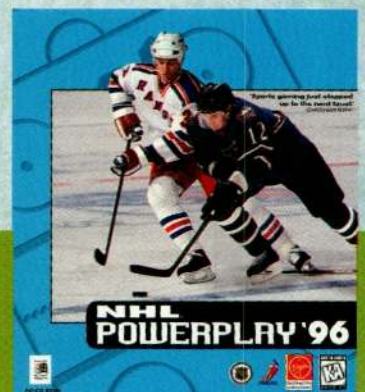
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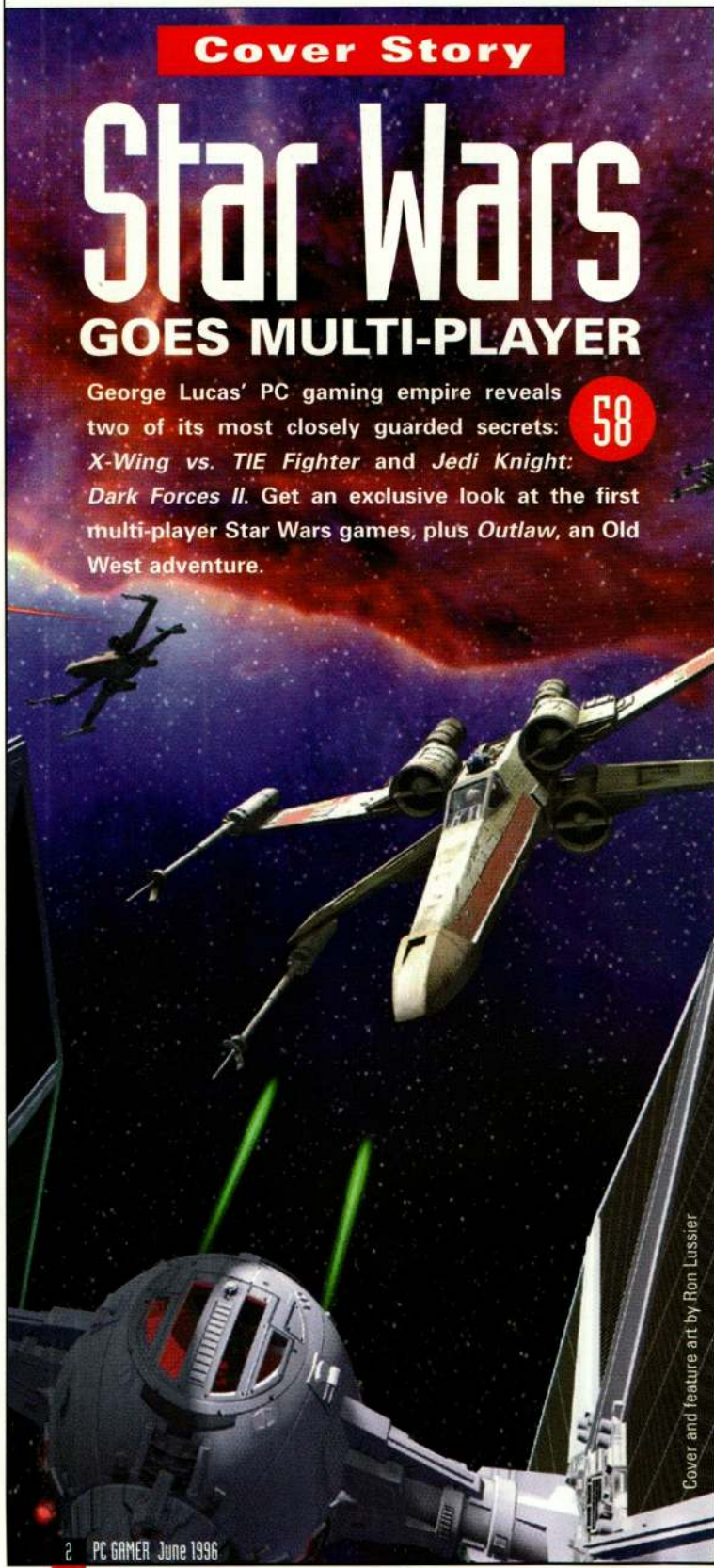
Photo credit: Al Bello/Allsport. Driver photography by J. Giamundo/B. Bennet Studios.

Product Information Number 166

## Cover Story

# Star Wars GOES MULTI-PLAYER

George Lucas' PC gaming empire reveals two of its most closely guarded secrets: **58** *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* and *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II*. Get an exclusive look at the first multi-player Star Wars games, plus *Outlaw*, an Old West adventure.

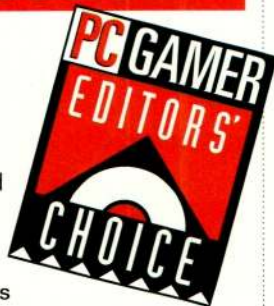


Cover and feature art by Ron Lussier

## Special Section

### 100 Reviews Index

Oh no! Mom tossed out your back issues of *PC Gamer*, and you've forgotten what score we gave *Dip & Twiddle*? Don't fret — our latest reviews index covers every game we've rated since December 1995, and it doesn't cost a penny extra.



### Scoops!

Get the inside story on some of PC gaming's most exciting new titles.

### 28 Back to Baghdad

Reenact the Persian Gulf War, or fight it your way with tactical nukes! Everyone's talking about this amazingly detailed and realistic F-16 air combat simulation.



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# The Force Is Strong This Month

Assuming you can find someone willing to complain about LucasArt's terrific *Star Wars* games, *X-Wing*, *TIE Fighter*, and *Dark Forces* (and let's face it, who complains more than us gamers?) there's one thing you'll hear time and again:

"Where are the multi-player options?"

At a time when head-to-head play via modem or network is practically standard equipment on all PC games, it's been conspicuously absent from LucasArts' otherwise excellent games. But that's about to change.

LucasArts is finally embracing multi-player gaming in the same way they approach all new technology: only after carefully watching from the sidelines, learning what can be done with it, and figuring out a way to do it better.

The first fruits of their labors will be *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* and *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II*, two new *Star Wars* games that promise a lot more than just multi-player action in a familiar universe; imagine all-new game engines and astounding, high-resolution 3D graphics — better yet, stop imagining and turn to page 58 for an exclusive, inside look at some of the most exciting news PC gamers will get this year.

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*"It's the ultimate game for unleashing all your pent-up aggression." — PC Power*

*"The most astonishing game we've laid our eyes on for ages!" — PC Gamer*

*"Duke is armed to the hilt and ready to rumble." — Computer Game Review*

*"The Build engine's flexibility means that pretty much anything goes in Duke Nukem 3D." — Edge Magazine*

# Well, what are you waiting for?

"DOOM is DEAD — long live Duke Nukem 3D, could this be the greatest PC shoot'em-up ever?" — X-GEN / Next Generation

"Duke Nukem 3D truly looks like a 3D supermodel of a game: sleek, sexy, and gory with lead-thrashing action." — Strategy Plus

"The BFG was a pop-gun, (it's) got nothing on the sophisticated hi-tech weaponry at Duke Nukem's disposal." — Computer Gaming World

"Nowhere is safe from Duke's pounding, lasering action as you fight the alien scum in the streets." — PC Attack



Complete Version

For more details, make tracks to your local software retailer!



Shareware Version

## No Monkey Business

It's now Month Five of the Missing Monkey Crisis, and all we have on our side is a trace of greenish mud, an annoying voice, and a disgruntled receptionist. It's a wonder how we here at the *PC Gamer* offices manage to keep our heads about us; if not for the blessed distraction provided by this month's game demos, we'd be in a real mess.

Our new assistant art director, Quintin, just can't understand why we're all so upset — although a few pokes with the official *PC Gamer* Sharpened Stick brought some tears to his eyes, and he began to understand the serious nature of the situation. He says that he's never seen such drastic devotion to an office pet. We guess he's just never been lucky enough to have a pet monkey like Rikits.

Things are coming to a head, now, and we need your help more than ever. Keep gathering those clues, and maybe you can help us find our beloved pet, the monkey who's tops in our book, Rikits. Meanwhile, we'll try to carry on here at the *PC Gamer* offices without our late-night games of Spin-the-Monkey — and we'll have great interactive demos of *Afterlife*, *Seek and Destroy*, and *Virtual Snooker* (all on this month's CD) to keep us company.

### Entering Our World

You begin in the secluded alley that leads to the hidden *PC Gamer* elevator. Move

your mouse pointer around the screen until it turns into an arrow. Click, and you'll move in the direction of the arrow.

Click on the door handle to open the elevator, then click forward to step inside. Turn around until you're facing the front of the elevator and click on the button. Connect the two loose wires.

Once you're in our offices, you can move around using the mouse. To check out the game demos, click on the jukebox. When you're ready to leave, move your mouse to the top of the screen, and a menu will appear with an exit option.

### Quick Start for The CD

Our new front end is Windows-based, so setup couldn't be easier:

1. Insert the CD and load Windows.
2. From the RUN option (found under the File menu in Windows 3.1 or under Windows 95's Start menu) type X:SETUP (where X is the letter of your CD-ROM drive).
3. This will create the *PC Gamer* icon group. Click on the icon, and *The CD* will launch.

After you've visited our offices, this jukebox will appear in the alley. It's a shortcut that'll let you bypass the elevator and go directly to the game demos in future sessions.

This is the elevator. Click on the handle to enter.

# Using the Jukebox

## System Requirements

486/33; 4MB RAM; 8MB hard-drive space; Mouse (Win 3.1 users will need to be sure they've got the SHARE.EXE utility loaded)

These requirements are for loading our front end program only. Each game demo will have its own additional requirements, so be sure to read them carefully.

Click on one of the six category buttons, and the demos in that category will appear on the monitor.



Click on the name of the demo you're interested in, and you'll receive installation info.

## Attention Win95 Users

The new *PC Gamer* front end should work fine with Windows 95. To install and run some DOS game demos, you may need to reboot into a DOS session. If the videos appear as full-screen sequences, you should enter the Control Panel's Multimedia option and set it to View in Window.

## Free Demos

Newsstand buyers now have the choice of purchasing either the CD-ROM Edition of *PC Gamer* for \$7.99, or *PC Gamer* without a CD-ROM for \$3.99. If you purchase the edition without a disc, you can still get free game demos because all *PC Gamer* readers have the opportunity to get demos and other goodies in a couple of different ways:

1. You can download demos and check out *PC Gamer's* new look at our World Wide Web site at <http://www.pcgamer.com> on the Internet. Our Web site also features a special Strategy Plus section, links to other hot Web pages, and gaming news.
2. You can call our Customer Service department at (415) 468-4689 (between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. PST) to have *The CD* mailed to you for only \$7.95 shipping and handling.

## Disc Editor's Note

Those of you who run Windows 95 will be happy to learn that, starting this month, we've incorporated AutoPlay into *The CD*. Just put the disc in your CD-ROM drive, and it'll install *The CD* (if necessary) and run it automatically. It's the feature most often requested by our Win 95-savvy readers, and we're pleased to include it.

## Installation Shortcuts

In the event our front end doesn't load or run properly on your machine, you can still install each demo, bypassing our front end altogether.

To manually install a demo, take a look at the Command Box located to the right. This box contains a list of demos along with their directories and installation commands.

To get up and running using the Command Box, first switch to your CD-ROM drive and change to the appropriate directory by typing CD\DIRECTORY, where DIRECTORY is the one listed in the Command Table next to the game you're trying to install. Once in the appropriate directory, type the Install Command, then press Enter. For example, to install the *Afterlife* demo:

Type **CD\ALFDEMO** and press Enter  
Type **ALFDEMO.EXE** and press Enter  
The demo of *Afterlife* will then be installed on your PC.

## Contents/Manual Installation Commands

Demo	Directory	Installation Command	Disc Page
<b>Afterlife</b>	\ALFDEMO	ALFDEMO.EXE	10
<b>Knight's Chase</b>	\KNIGHTS	INSTALL.BAT	10
<b>Road Warrior</b>	\ROADWAR	INSTALL.EXE	13
<b>Virtual Snooker</b>	\VSNOOKER	INSTVS.BAT	15
<b>Rebel Assault II</b>	\	RBL2DEMO.EXE	16
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<b>Big Red Racing</b>	\BRRDEMO	INSTALL.EXE	20
<b>Rebel Runner</b>	\DIGITAL	INSTALL.EXE	22
<b>Bruce Jenner's Decathlon</b>	\DECATHLN	SETUP.EXE	23
<b>Rise and Rule of Ancient Empires</b>	\AEDEMO	SETUP.EXE	25
<b>S.T.O.R.M.</b>	\STORM	INSTALL.BAT	25
<b>Warbirds</b>	\ICI	SETUP.EXE	26
<b>AOL</b>	\	AOLEXE	26
<b>Patches</b>	\PATCHES		26
<b>Doom 2 WADs</b>	\DOOM2		26
<b>Heretic WADs</b>	\HERETIC		26
<b>Hexen WADs</b>	\HEXEN		26
<b>Descent HOGs</b>	\DESCENT		26
<b>Warcraft 2 PUDs</b>	\WAR2		26

\* on chart at right = Must install through Windows. *Afterlife*, *Bruce Jenner's Decathlon*, and *Warbirds* requires Windows 95.



# Afterlife

Company: LucasArts  
 Tech Support: (415) 507-4545  
 Release Date: Available Now '96  
 Category: Simulation  
 Required: Windows 95; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; SVGA;  
 Install: \ALFDEMO\ALFDEMO.EXE

Move over, *SimCity* — if you thought being mayor of a virtual town was entertainment, how about being a god? That's exactly what you are in LucasArts' *Afterlife*.

You start off with a blank slate of both Heaven and Hell. It'll be your job to



As the population grows, so do the structures in the realm. Make sure you have plenty of roads.

make sure good and evil alike get just what's coming to them. Fail at either task, and your mysterious masters will be displeased (even a god needs a boss, right?).

You earn money (Pennies from Heaven) by bringing in SOULs (Stuff Of Unending Life), so you'll need gates to give them access. Build some roads and zone some areas for spiritual occupation, and pretty soon the deceased will be rolling in. Depending on the belief system of any particular SOUL, it will either go to its deserved damnation or to a blessed reward.

The demo will give you a taste of what gameplay is like. You may want to print out the file TUTORIAL.TXT on *The CD* in the \ALFDEMO subdirectory — it's a good way to learn the basics of the game and get a handle on the tools you'll be using. But *Afterlife* isn't a terribly complex game, so if you want to venture forth on your own, just use the commands listed at the right as a guide. Also, you can get a description of the buttons in the game by right-clicking the mouse.

There are a few things not offered in the demo that will blow you away in the full version, like more disasters, a planet-view that lets you influence the mortal world below, and even two helpers — Aria Goodhalo and Jasper Wormsworth — who will act as advisers. You'll need their guidance, because you'll be dealing with bank loans, managing a spiritual workforce, and building ferry ports. Who says being a god is easy?

## HANDS OF GOD



At first glance, the options in the toolbar could be a bit overwhelming. However, with a bit of experimentation, they'll become second nature.

# Knight's Chase

Company: I•Motion  
 Tech Support: (310) 570-1885  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Graphic Adventure  
 Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 14MB hard-drive space;  
 VGA  
 Install: \KNIGHTS\INSTALL.BAT

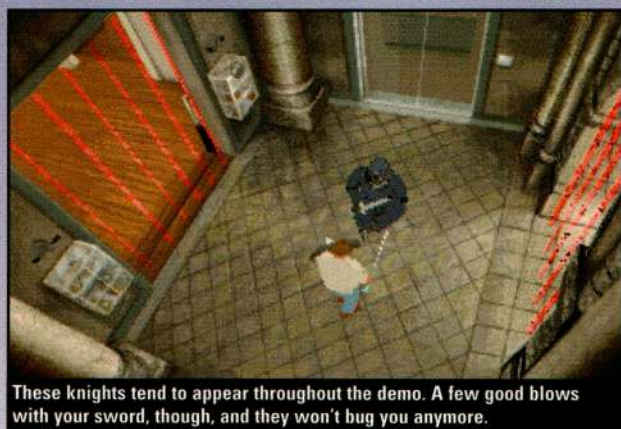
Using the same engine that made the *Alone in the Dark* series of adventure games so popular, *Knight's Chase* is an exciting journey into the dark and mysterious world of the Knights Templar.

You play William Tibbs, a college student who becomes embroiled in sorcery and magic that spans centuries. When your girlfriend is kidnapped and a

strange apparition attempts to remove your head from your body, it's time to go into action. You start the demo in the Museum of Medieval History and Customs. Right from the start, you'll have to do battle with another ghostly knight.

Controlling William is a breeze — to walk forward, turn from side to side, or walk backward, use the arrow keys. You access an inventory of the items you're carrying by hitting the Enter key. You use the left and right keys to cycle through your inventory, and the up and down arrows choose the action you'll perform.

When a portrait of William appears in the circle, you can choose to put him into battle mode, search mode, or push mode. In each of these modes, you'll perform the appropriate action when you hold down the spacebar. For example, when you want to look for an item, press Enter, highlight the Search icon, and press Enter again. Then hold down the spacebar, and William will search the area he's facing. If there's nothing to



These knights tend to appear throughout the demo. A few good blows with your sword, though, and they won't bug you anymore.

find, he'll look up and make an observation about the room he's standing in.

Combat is controlled with a combination of keys. Select the battle mode from the inventory screen, and William will go into a combat stance. While holding the spacebar down, use the arrow keys to attack — the up arrow will make William do a head-butt; the left arrow jabs left; the right arrow is a right punch; and the down arrow makes William kick. The same is true when William is holding a weapon.

The puzzles you'll solve in the demo are a small example of what's in the full game. When you finish the demo, you'll see a short trailer featuring some of the dramatic images and 3D-rendered art in *Knight's Chase*.

## HINT

As the demo begins, you'll have to do battle with a ghostly knight. Once the fight is won, you'll need to shut down the security system around you. If you search for a bit, you'll find a box on the wall that contains ammo for your remote-controlled catapult. To open the case and get the ammo, you'll need to use the magnetic keycard in your inventory. Make sure you're standing directly in front of the case, or it won't work.

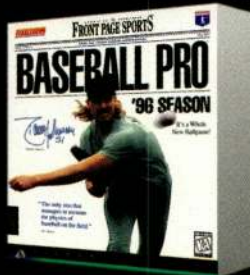
YOU CAN WATCH HIM ON TV.

AN READ ABOUT  
IN THE SPORTS SECTION.

OR YOU CAN SEND HIM IN TO  
PITCH RELIEF IN THE BOTTOM OF THE NINTH.

Product Information Number 148

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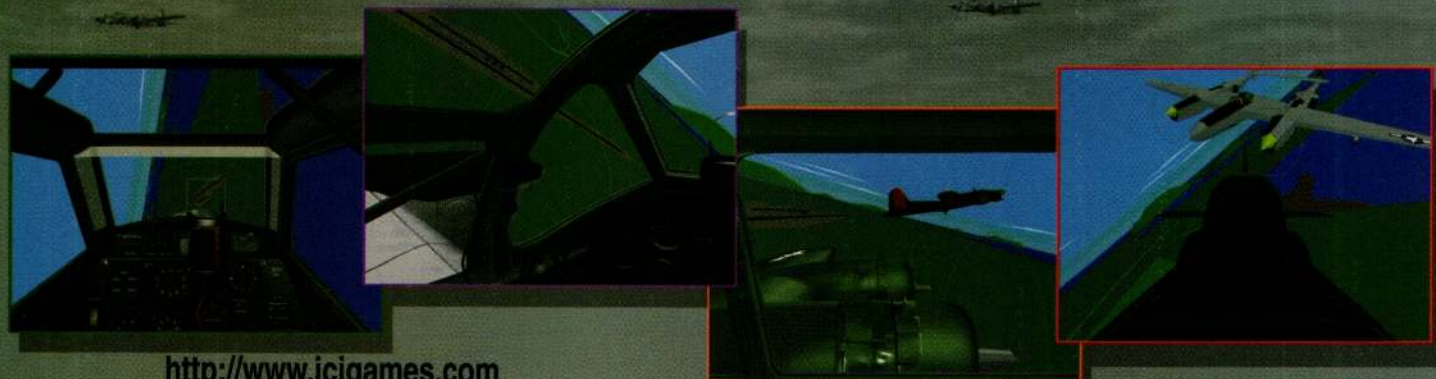
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Voice (817) 424-5638 FAX (817) 251-2228

Product Information Number 120

# Road Warrior

Company: GameTek  
 Tech Support: (800) 439-3995  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Action  
 Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 10MB HD space; VGA  
 Install: \ROADWAR\INSTALLEXE

**R**oad Warrior picks up right where *Quarantine* left off, so if you're familiar with GameTek's original futuristic driving game, we don't need to explain the idea behind this vehicular gore-fest. If you've never played *Quarantine*, here's everything you need to know: You're a cabby, driving a taxi with enough awesome firepower to make Robert DeNiro jealous, and you have to kill everything that moves.

Unlike in *Quarantine*, there's a bit more structure to *Road Warrior*; you have missions with goals that must be fulfilled before you can move on.

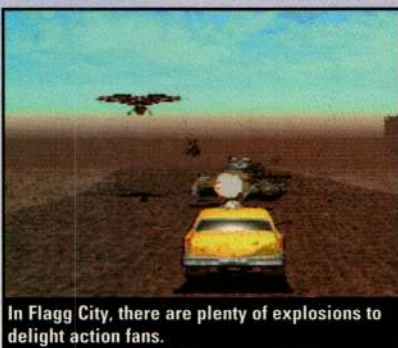
## HINT

Don't be afraid to use your hood guns. They're not as deadly as your other weapons, but if you use up the others too quickly, you won't have anything left to take on the really bad guys.

Rather than finding potential riders to earn money, then purchasing weapons to make your taxi more powerful, you'll get everything you need at the start of each mission. The cut-scenes that propel the story are done in a comic-book style that fits the game's cartoon violence.

To drive your cab, use the arrow keys to accelerate, back up, and turn left or right. Fire your weapon with the Ctrl key, and switch weapons with the Alt key. Your hood-mounted guns are always available; just press the spacebar to let loose with a hail of ammo.

The missions you'll perform vary from assassinating important city officials to blowing up a moving van for a vengeful divorcee. Hit the M key to take a look at your map; and watch the direction finder (the arrows that light up next to your steering wheel) to find the way to your next target. You switch targets in the map view by using the left and right arrow keys, or you can simply hit T while in the game.



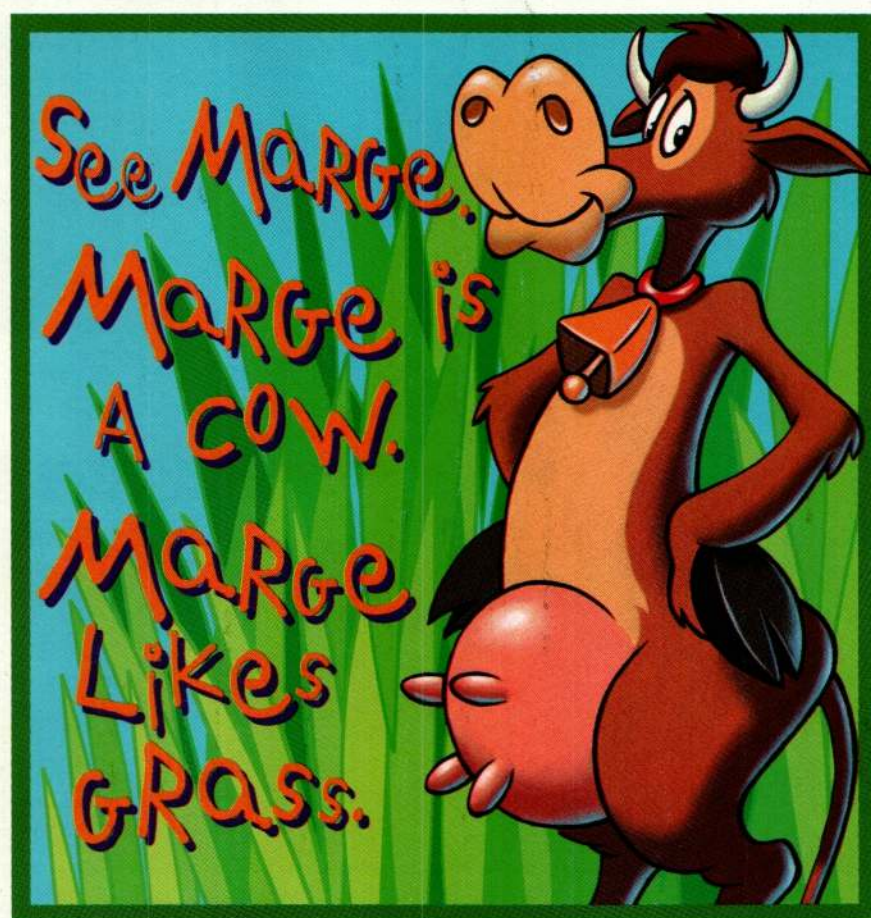
In Flagg City, there are plenty of explosions to delight action fans.



The Lobo, your handy chaingun, is excellent at mowing down unwanted company.

Sometimes you'll want a different angle on the action. You can hit O to toggle between a behind-the-wheel view to an external view. F2 and F3 give you the views out your left and right windows, and F1 returns you to the interior view.

**TECHNICAL NOTE:** *Road Warrior* requires that you have at least 500K base memory and 7.2MB extended memory. You might have to add the NOEMS command to the EMM386.EXE line in the CONFIG.SYS file.



# MARATHON 2

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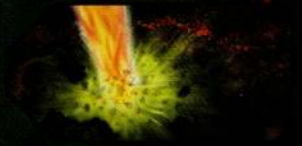
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# Virtual Snooker

Company: Interplay  
 Tech Support: (714) 553-6678  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Sports  
 Required: 486; 4MB RAM; 3MB hard-drive space;  
 VGA; Mouse  
 Install: VSNOOKER\INSTVS.BAT

Interplay amazed us when they came out with *Virtual Pool*. Now they've taken the same game engine and applied it to that elusive English sport, snooker. *Virtual Snooker* will not only help you improve your billiard playing skills, but you'll also learn the intricate ins and outs of a favorite British pastime.

As in regular eight ball, the goal in snooker is to use the cue ball to smack other balls into the table's pockets. In

## COLORS OF SNOOKER

Each ball on the snooker table has its own point value. This is the way they rate, in ascending order:

Red	1
Yellow	2
Green	3
Brown	4
Blue	5
Pink	6
Black	7

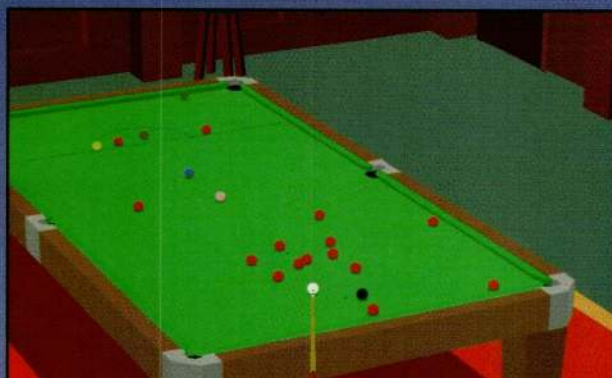
snooker, however, there's always a ball that's "on," which means you have to sink it first. When you start a turn, the "ball on" is always one of the red ones. If you pocket a red ball, you can choose your next ball on from one of the other colored balls. Each color has its own point value, as shown in the chart to the left. Sink one of the colored balls, and your next ball on is a red one, and so on. Red balls that go into a pocket stay there, but the other colors are replaced on the table until all the red balls are gone. Once the last ball drops, the player with the most points wins.

The rules are pretty convoluted, but they become crystal clear as you play the game. The tricky part comes with fouls. You can foul in a few ways: by sinking the cue ball; by hitting a ball first that's not your ball on; or by not hitting any balls at all. Each foul has a point value; if you commit one, those points are added to your opponent's score. This means that you can sometimes come from behind by setting up shots that make it impossible for the next player to do anything but foul. If a player is put in that position, he's been "snookered."

Actually playing *Virtual Snooker* is as simple as learning a few keyboard commands and using the mouse. When it's your turn, you're automatically lined up with the cue ball. You move the mouse to adjust the position of your pool cue. When you're lined up the way you like, press and hold the S key to shoot. With the S key pressed down, pull the mouse back to bring back the cue, then move the mouse forward to hit

the ball. How far you pull back the cue, along with the speed at which you bring the mouse forward, determines the power behind your stroke. You can add other touches by holding down other buttons. To put some English on the cue ball, press and hold E while moving the mouse, and you'll adjust where the tip of your cue hits the ball. To raise or lower the butt of the cue, press and hold B while moving the mouse. If you start to shoot, then decide to change your aim, press A to get back into aiming mode. If you want to get closer or farther way from the action, hold down the left mouse button and move the mouse to zoom in or out. (A complete list of the keyboard commands is available in the game; just right-click the mouse and select "Help" and "Control Keys" from the menu that pops up.)

The demo will let you play a traditional game of snooker to the first eleven points. It also includes modem and network support for multiple players. The full version will include several different



Snooker	Frames	Points	Break	Aim	Replay Rate
Player 1	0	0	0	Line Up Shot	1-2
Player 2	0	0	0	Line Up Shot	Cue Angle 1°
Match Goal	3				

*Virtual Snooker* is so realistic, Interplay says it'll actually improve your skill at billiard — and we can believe it.

## HINT

Learning the ins and outs of billiards can be difficult, especially on a virtual table. To help you out, Interplay included a nice little feature to let you know exactly what's going to happen when you hit the cue ball. Press T to show the tracking lines. They'll move as you move your aim, showing you where each ball will go for that shot.

computerized opponents, as well video sequences starring Steve Davis, the six-time World Snooker Champion.

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 PIERCING  
 and  
 DOMINANT  
 SHEEP.

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# Strife

Company: Velocity  
 Tech Support: (415) 392-4357  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: First-person shooter  
 Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 12MB hard-drive space;  
 VGA  
 Install: \STRIFE\INSTALL.BAT

At first glance, *Strife* looks like just another first-person *Doom* clone. Start playing it, however, and you'll find yourself in the middle of a role-playing adventure with an actual story. You won't just shoot everything that moves; you'll actually meet people to talk with — and the way you deal with them can determine how well you do in



Harris is a trader you meet right at the beginning. He'll get you killed, if you let him.

YOU USED THE MEDICAL KIT.



You'll see these acolytes running around all over the place. It's best not to mess with them unless they come after you.

the game. Rather than finding all the weapons and armor you need strewn across the floor, you may have to buy some of the best equipment.

To get some background on the game's story, just let the intro run. You'll start in a prison area, where your first order of business should be taking out the guards. The controls are the usual first-person shooter stuff — you move with the arrow keys; the spacebar lets you open doors, push buttons, and talk to people; Ctrl fires your selected weapon; and the Alt key — in conjunction with the arrow keys — lets you "strafe" from side to side. Page Up and Page Down let you look up and down,

respectively; press Shift to re-center your view. And, of course, the A key will make you jump.

This shooter has a few things that set it apart from the others: A good trick is to hit F5 to automatically use your medical items. That way, you don't have to worry about how your health is doing — as long as you've got a medical kit or patch, you'll

use it when needed. During your travels, you'll have to think and make judgments that go beyond the simple kill-everything-in-sight policy. You'll talk to many people — some will give you much-needed information or advice; others will lie and try to kill you. Talk to a character by walking up to him or her and pressing the Spacebar. Be careful, though — saying the wrong thing can get you killed quickly.

## HINT

If you fire a weapon out in the open, guards will come from everywhere to hunt you down. If you're quick, you can lead them on a nice chase before they overpower you.

# Rebel Assault II

Company: LucasArts  
 Tech Support: (415) 507-4545  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Arcade  
 Required: 486DX/50; 8MB RAM; VGA  
 Install: \RBL2\DEMO.EXE

As LucasArts has shown us time and time again, in the Star Wars universe it only takes one rookie pilot to save the galaxy from the evil Empire. In *Rebel Assault II*, you play the rookie — again.

*Rebel Assault II* is a rail-shooter, which means all you have to worry about



When you see these arrows flash, it's time to choose where you'll go next.

is blasting the things that are shooting at you; the computer does most of the steering. Use the joystick or mouse to play the game — simply put the crosshairs where you want to fire, and press the left mouse button or button one on the joystick. That's all there is to it; when you see flashing arrow pointing in different directions, it's your chance to do a little navigation; move the mouse or the joystick in the direction you want to go. Different paths mean different challenges, so you can try replaying the scene to see the various possibilities.

This demo lets you try one of the many missions in the full game. The mine you enter is full of sentries, so you'll have to be quick with the trigger if you want to last long. If it's too easy, you can adjust the difficulty settings when you create a new pilot. At the hardest setting, not only do you take more damage, but you don't see those nice green boxes around your targets. This setting is for Jedi knights only!

The most notable thing about the



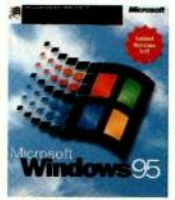
You'll need to shoot straight and sharp to take out the guns that stand in your way.



*Rebel Assault II*'s graphics and video place you right in the middle of a "galaxy far, far away."

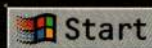
*Rebel Assault* games is the high-quality full-motion video. The special effects and story line are straight from LucasArts, so you know it's going to be a memorable romp through the Star Wars universe.

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WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO TODAY?™

# Assault Rigs

Company: Psygnosis  
 Tech Support: (415) 655-5683  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Action  
 Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 17MB hard-drive space; VGA  
 Install: ARDEMONVNSTALL.EXE

**A**ssault Rigs, the next level in interactive gaming, throws you behind the controls of an armored tank cast into the depths of an intricate maze. You're able to choose from several views of your tank, and you'll need every one of them. Move quickly,

## HINT

You'll quickly find out that *Assault Rigs* is a tough game. In order to get a bead on the enemy, you'll have to use a combination of skillful maneuvering and a variety of views. Use the strafing keys (Z and X) to pop around corners and avoid enemy fire. Pressing F1 will cycle through the different views. The overhead angle is good for getting a bead on turrets hiding on the other side of walls.

because the turrets you encounter will start hammering you with projectiles as



The overhead view will give you a distinct advantage while planning your attack.



Once you get a bead on a target, hit the fire button to create a new pile of rubble.

soon as they see you. It won't be easy, so warm up your gaming fingers.

Your job is to gather a certain number of crystals in the maze before the time allotted expires. Control of your tank can be accomplished with the keyboard or joystick — look at the keyboard layout to see what the controls are. Remember the strafe keys: they'll get you out of a lot of messes. Also, beware of the many ramps that lurk within the labyrinth. If you hit one wrong, you could flip your tank and be in a world of hurt. If you suddenly find yourself upside down, press 0 on the keypad to right yourself.

As you explore the maze, you'll find special weapons hidden in floating crystal cubes. Shoot the crystal, and you can get at

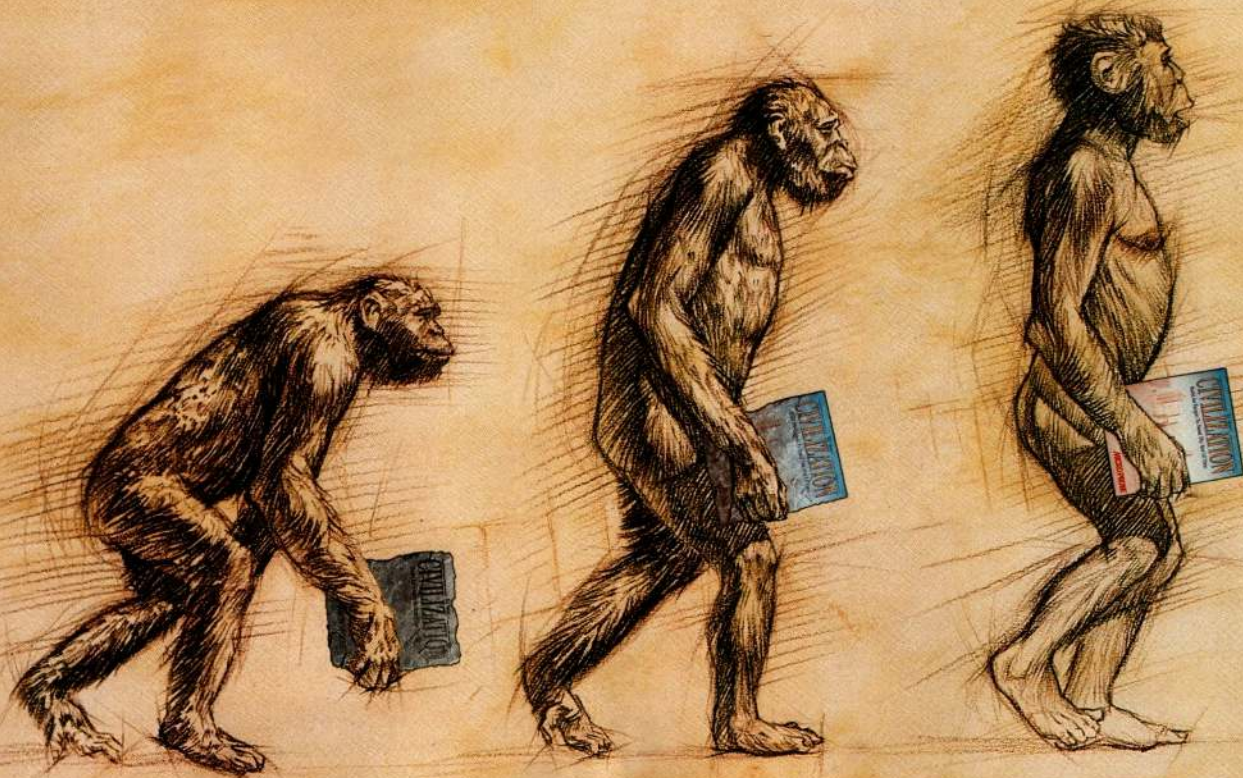
## Control Keys

Move Forward	
Move Backward	
Turn Left	
Turn Right	
Strafe Left	
Strafe Right	
Fire Left	LEFT
Fire Right	RIGHT
Change Left Weapon	LEFT
Change Right Weapon	RIGHT
Cycle Views	

the weapon. One of the first you'll find is the guided missile. Once you fire it, you can steer the missile to its target. Make sure you're in a safe place, though, or your tank could take a beating while you're busy controlling the missile.

Although there's only one maze and one type of tank you can try in the demo, the full version of *Assault Rigs* will let you choose from three vehicles and several tracks, and it'll include a multi-player option.

# THE EVOLUTION OF CIVILIZATION



# Seek and Destroy

Company: Epic Megagames  
 Tech Support: (301) 983-9771  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Arcade  
 Required: 486; 4MB RAM; 13MB hard-drive space;  
 VGA; Mouse  
 Install: \SEEK\NSTSEEK.BAT



Fly deep into enemy territory, and then start tearing up the scenery!

your weapons, and the right button will cycle through them. The same thing is true for the joystick — button one fires, and button two cycles.

In the tradition of pure shoot-'em-up action, *Seek and Destroy* has everything a true arcade fan could want: weapons galore and tons of things to blow up.

You pilot either an attack chopper or tank in the eight missions included in the shareware version. As you destroy buildings, they'll reveal power-ups you can grab to replenish your supplies or earn medals you can trade for additional, more deadly weaponry. Sometimes your missions will require you to stop and rescue a hostage, or possibly drop off a spy to infiltrate an enemy base. In any case, you'll have to work hard to make sure everything the enemy owns is smoldering ash before you leave.

You can control your vehicle in several ways — the keyboard, the mouse, or a joystick. Check out the commands for the keyboard — there are some things you can't do with a standard joystick, such as strafing (only in the chopper) or spinning your turret (only in the tank). If you use a mouse, the left button will fire

## Control Keys

Move Up	
Move Down	
Move Left	
Move Right	
Strafe (helicopter only)	
Turret Left (tank only)	LEFT
Turret Right (tank only)	
Land	
Change Weapon	LEFT
Fire Weapon	LEFT
Autozoom	

## JUST FOR FUN

What would an action game be without cheat codes? Here are some passwords that'll give you an edge in *Seek and Destroy*:

- When you're in the Objective menu, type "GIMME" for the ability to warp to any phase of the mission.
- When in the Store, type "CAPO" to receive items for free.
- During gameplay, holding down certain keys

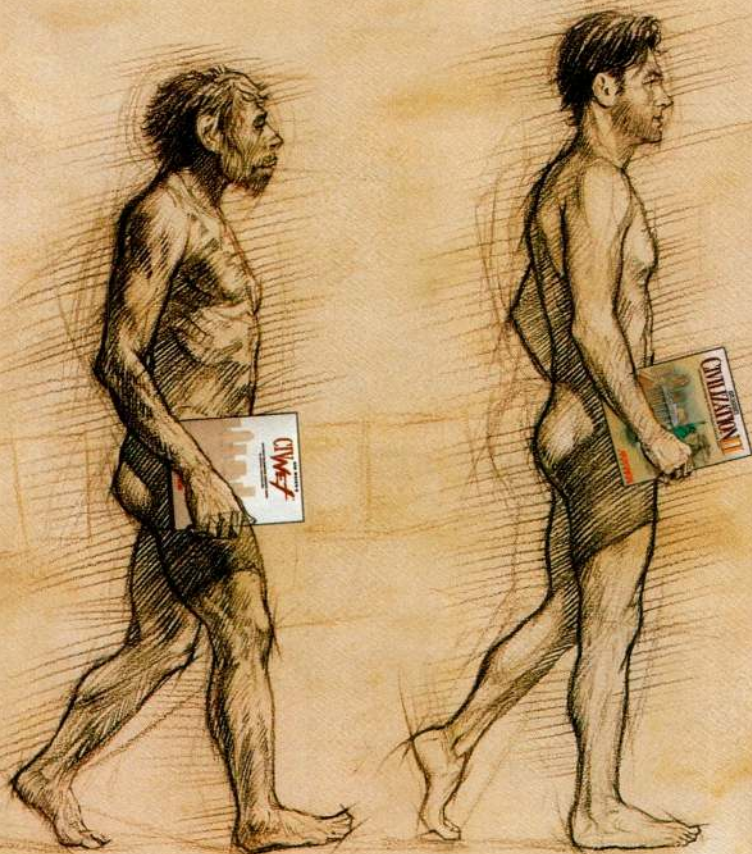
all at the same time will give you more power. Here are three of the best:

AMO — All the ammunition you could ever want!

MEGA — You're equipped with all the best weapons available.

LIFE — Virtual invulnerability.

(Remember, you don't simply type these codes in, you hold all the keys down at the same time.)

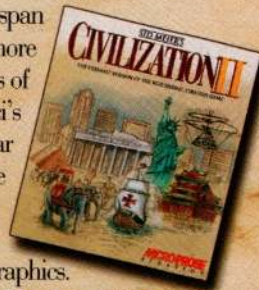


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Product Information Number 133



# Big Red Racing

Company: Domark  
 Tech Support: (415) 513-8933  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Arcade Racing  
 Required: 486DX/66; 8MB RAM; 7.5MB hard-drive space; VGA; Mouse  
 Install: \BRRDEMO\INSTALLEXE

Once upon a time, if you wanted to drive a dump truck in a race through the desert, you were basically out of luck. Not any more; now there's *Big Red Racing*. With tracks that cover all kinds of terrain, and vehicles that run from jeeps to pontoon boats, this could be the most varied arcade racing game ever. You can take to land, sea, and air against computer players or as many as five of your buddies in network play.

## JUST FOR FUN

The physics of *Big Red Racing* are fairly accurate, except in one instance: if you catch some air off a hill or ramp and land on another racer, you'll bounce back up in the air. With some patience and skill, you can bounce from vehicle to vehicle. See how far you can get without touching the ground.

This demo will let you try out the dangerous waterways of the American track and the rough terrain of the Japanese dirt track. On each race course, you'll be able to choose from two different vehicles, each with its own advantages and disadvantages.

When you run the game, you have several options; you can choose to turn damage to your vehicle off, so that no matter how many times you run into the walls, you won't be destroyed. You can also adjust the graphics for slower machines. As in the full version, you can change your driver, your color, and your logo. And don't forget to calibrate your joystick if you want to use one when playing the demo.

Once you choose a track, you can pick your car and do a fly-by to see the layout of the course before starting. Once that's done, just hop behind the wheel and take off. You can adjust your point-of-view with the function keys: F1



During the water course, watch out for this ramp — hit it wrong, and the resulting flip will slow you down.

cycles through views of the other racers; F2 cycles through three different external views of your own vehicle; and F3 gives you the view from behind the wheel. But the most important key may just be the right Ctrl key, which will instantly put you back on course if you get lost or stuck.

The demo supports multi-player action with a network, modem, or serial connection. Try it out — there's nothing better than leaving a pal in the dust.

# Stars!

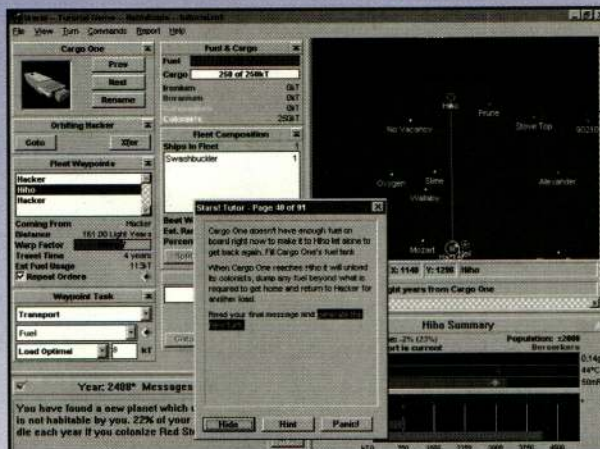
Company: Star Crossed Software  
 Tech Support: (503) 451-1635  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Strategy  
 Required: 486; 4MB RAM; 4MB hard-drive space; VGA; Windows 3.1  
 Install: \STARS\INSTSTAR.BAT

This shareware title is something strategy gamers have been yearning for — a complex, intricate space-strategy game that has an easy-to-use interface.

When you start the game, you should first check out the tutorial, which is more complete than you'll find in most commercial products, let alone shareware. You can play the game in many different resolutions, but we suggest you stick to the recommended 800x600 — there are a lot of buttons and options available, and you'll need to be able to get at every one of them.

The idea of the game is simple — build up your empire, colonize other planets and star systems, wage war with your enemies, and make peace with your allies. Basically, you're out to rule the universe. The game supports all sorts of multi-player options, including modem support, network play, and play-by-E-mail. You can even set it up to play over an electronic bulletin board system (BBS).

In the registered version of *Stars!*, you'll get 26 levels of technology to research, and you can create your own customized alien species. Even in

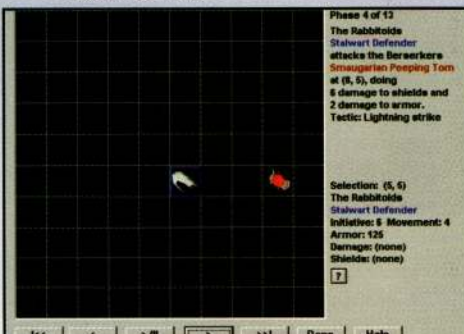


The *Stars!* tutorial is a great way to learn about the interface. Check it out first, or you could end up wandering aimlessly through space.

shareware form, you've got six different categories for research, 35 different races, configurable battle plans, and support for as many as 16 players. If that doesn't get your strategic blood going, nothing will!

## HINT

Not only does *Stars!* contain a fantastic tutorial, it has online help that explains most of its functions. Depending on what you're looking at, you can hold down the left or right mouse button to get a description. Experiment, and soon you'll be ruling the galaxy with the best of 'em.



After a battle, it's possible to go back and watch the action via this VCR feature. You can even change battle strategies, if it's obvious you need a new approach.

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Product Information Number 91

# Rebel Runner

Company: Microforum  
 Tech Support: (800) 465-2323  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Action/Arcade  
 Required: 486; 4MB RAM; 1MB HD space; VGA  
 Install: \DIGITAL\UNSTALL.EXE

It's the usual story: The Maaron Empire has struck hard and fast against the Ranaxian homeworld. As one of the few Ranaxians who are somehow immune to the effects of the mind-altering satellites the Maarons have devised, it's up to you

## Control Keys

Move Left



Move Right



Crouch



Dive Roll



Fire Weapon



Jump



Menu



and a small band of comrades to save your peaceful people. After infiltrating a Maaron base, you and your allies have recovered the code that will shut down the satellites. Now all you have to do is get out alive.

That's the story, but it's the action that drives the game. You'll have to jump, dodge, shoot, and bounce your way past all sorts of alien villainy if you want to survive — and that's only in the first level!

You can use the keyboard or a joystick to control the action. For the most important control keys, take a look at the command box. As usual, we recommend a gamepad for this kind of action.

Tamir (the rebel you control) is a suave character, so of course he has some pretty deadly weaponry. Make sure you gather all the power balls you see to give your weapons the punch they'll need. Also, Tamir's jump has some special properties; experiment a little, and you'll see what we mean.

**TECHNICAL NOTE:** There are two executable files that will run the demo; typing "DC" at the DOS prompt will give you the non-interactive demo. In order to run the playable portion of the demo, use the



Some of the aliens aren't the prettiest of creatures. No wonder they're so bad-tempered!

command "DEMOINT." If you get an error that says "Bad command or file name," you'll need to copy the file from *The CD*. Just type "COPY D:\DIGITAL\DEMOINT.EXE C:\DIGITAL" where D: is the letter of your CD-ROM drive and C:\DIGITAL is the drive and directory where you installed the demo.



Jumping around can keep you out of trouble — especially since it can be deadly to the enemy.

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1200  
RESOLUTION

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UP TO  
16.7  
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COLORS

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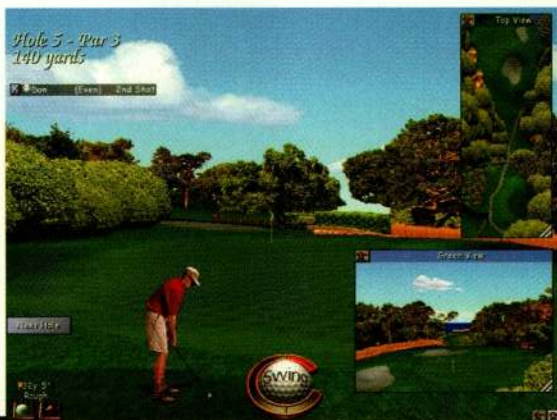
ALL-NEW  
MODES  
OF PLAY

## NEW LINKS LS: TOUR WITH THE LEGENDS IN SPORTS

What's New About Links LS? Every Leaf, Every Contour, Every Chirp...

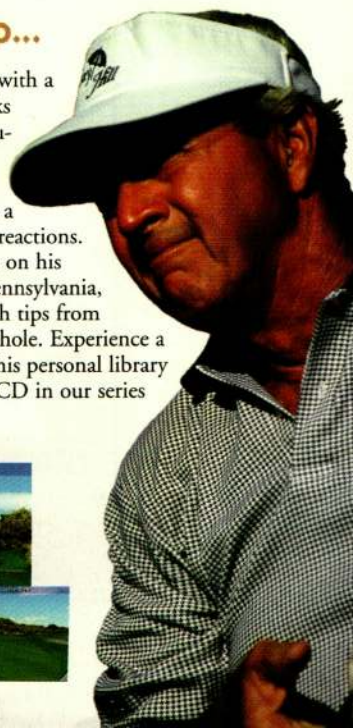
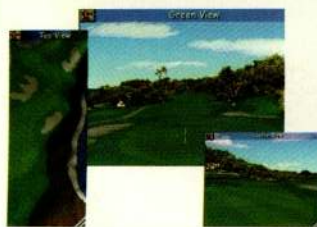


...**Kapalua**—Tour the Ritz Carlton, The Kapalua Bay Hotel, and the Plantation Clubhouse between rounds at the Kapalua Plantation & Village Courses on the first CD in our series of *Resort Courses*.



...**Multiple Views**—Keeping your eye on the ball has never been easier with the unlimited Links LS combination of on-screen multiple views. As your golfer exalts in a championship drive, shift your eyes to the Green View and watch the ball roll precariously close to the hole. Includes Top View, Side View, Green View, Custom View and Profile View.

...**Arnold Palmer**—Tee off with a Legend in Sports. The Links design team has taken exclusive footage of Mr. Palmer and meticulously digitized his famous swing as well as a variety of post-shot 'Arnie' reactions. Play as Arnie or with Arnie on his home course in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, featuring course fly-bys with tips from Arnie on how to play each hole. Experience a multi-media tour through his personal library and workshop on the first CD in our series of *Tour Players*.



# Bruce Jenner's Decathlon



Company: Interactive Magic  
 Tech Support: (919) 461-0948  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Sports  
 Required: Windows 95; 486; 8MB RAM; 48MB  
 hard-drive space; SVGA  
 Install: \DECATHLMSETUP.EXE

Whether it's pole-vaulting, the shot put, or the high jump, the Olympic Games take training, hard work, and huge amounts of concentration — and that's just to watch 'em. Now you can experience the thrill of competing for the gold in Interactive Magic's *Decathlon* in the comfort of your own home. Bruce Jenner, the last American to win the gold medal in the Olympic decathlon, hosts the game, which lets



Clicking at just the right time to end forward momentum in the shot put can be tricky.

you create your own world-class athlete and train him or her for the Games.

The demo will let you try your skill at both the long jump and the shot put. The interface is completely mouse driven, but each event has variations. For the long jump, you decide where your athlete should start his run down the strip, as well as where he'll start his jump. Just drag him to where you want to start, then begin the run by clicking Start. When the athlete hits the point where you want him to start his jump, click the mouse button. When he's in the air, click again to throw his legs out (if you don't, he'll lose his balance and fault on the jump by falling backwards).

The shot put interface is similar: Click and drag to move the athlete closer to (or farther from) the edge of the ring; the farther you are from the line, the

## CHALLENGE

Using the default athlete, we were able to score a long jump of 580 centimeters and a shot put of 1,450 centimeters. Top that!



Take off at just the right moment and throw your leg out shortly before landing, and you'll nail an Olympic-quality leap.

more power behind the throw — but you also run the risk of faulting. When you click Start, be ready to click again to stop the forward momentum of the athlete, or he'll go over the line.

You can practice each event as much as you like. If you try other events in the demo, you'll get to see some still shots of athletes in action. Be sure to check out the Bruce Jenner interview, too (it's accessed through Windows 95's Start Menu); you'll hear a few words on competing in the Olympics from the man himself.

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Product Information Number 82

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# Rise and Rule of Ancient Empires

Company: Sierra  
 Tech Support: (206) 644-4343  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Strategy  
 Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 16MB hard-drive space;  
 SVGA; Windows 3.1  
 Install: \AEDEMO\SETUP.EXE

**B**ack in the days of old, great empires were created from nothing more than a few settlers gathering in one place. From these few, towns, and then cities, arose and grew — and from the cities came conquerors that would extend their grasps to neighboring realms and beyond. Sierra lets you play one of these powerful rulers, and the world is yours for the taking.

The *Rise and Rule of Ancient Empires* demo will not only let you try out your skills against the computer; it

also supports network play for head-to-head action. Although the demo will only let you play against one buddy, the full version will allow as many as four players and six different cultures.

Your mouse will be the iron hand with which you rule your empire. The game has extensive "balloon" help — just leave your cursor over an item, and a short description will pop up to explain the item's use in the game. In addition, *Rise and Rule* has some of the best online help we've seen — just go to the Help menu for the answers to your questions. You'll want to try out the tutorial, also; it may not be the most exciting way to play, but you'll get a great education in the workings of your ancient civilization, and how to build an even bigger one.

While building your empire, you'll need to make vital decisions that affect your civilization's growth — such as how much time to spend mining or gathering food. To make things easier, everything is measured by sliding scales. As you move the sliders, you'll be able to see



In the beginning, you'll spend a lot of time at the city view, modifying the mechanisms that control growth.

exactly how any change you make affects other elements of the game. By building a larger population, you'll be able to accomplish more in one turn. However, if you don't spend enough time on some vital activities, you'll find yourself lacking resources when you're ready to expand your realm. In the demo, you've got 100 turns to create the largest civilization possible.

## HINT

Each unit you build has a certain relationship to the type of land it's created on. Try to build cities on every type of terrain, so you won't be limited later in the types of terrain you can explore.

# S.T.O.R.M.

Company: American Softworks  
 Tech Support: (800) 474-7595  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Action  
 Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 8MB HD space; SVGA  
 Install: \STORM\INSTALL.BAT

**S**everal miles beneath the sea, you'll have to go up against killer ex-marines, toxic barrels, and magnetic mines — all while keeping yourself alive in American Softworks' underwater

action thriller. As a former Navy SEAL and an operative for the Bureau of Advanced Energy Research, your job is to investigate the mysterious fate of a new drilling platform built to dig up an alternative form of energy called praxilium. Piloting your Submersible Tactical Operational Reconnaissance Module (hence S.T.O.R.M.), you can pick up various power modules along the way, fire a variety of weapons, and even dive out of the submersible to get through a tight squeeze while avoiding the enemy (thugs hired by the Nuclear Energy Office).

You can use the keyboard or a joystick to play *S.T.O.R.M.* — but we recommend a gamepad. Check out the keyboard controls for details on keeping your sub intact. Keep your wits about you — the mines you'll encounter are magnetic, and will be attracted to your hull if you get too close. Also, depth-charge barrels have the nasty habit of suddenly appearing above you, so be ready to back out in a hurry. If your sub is destroyed, you'll have to



Watch out for the agents of NEO (Nuclear Energy Office) — they don't like the idea of alternative energy sources.

## Control Keys

Move Left	
Move Right	
Move Down	
Move Up	
Fire Weapon	
Select Weapon	
Information Toggle	
Extend/Retract Mech. Arm	
Send Out Diver	

start all over, so the further you progress, the more attention you'll want to pay to your surroundings.

There are a couple of things you can do to get yourself out of a tight situation: You can turn your ship around quickly; simply hold down the Alt key and hit the right or left arrow keys. That can come in handy when the enemy starts coming at you from both sides. It's also possible to send out a diver from your sub — press the F3 key to start swimming. You control the diver in the same way you control *S.T.O.R.M.*; to return to the sub, simply swim up underneath it.

# Warbirds



Win95

you up with a dial-up connection of this kind — you're sure to find one in your area.

If you want to try out *Warbirds* just to see how it flies, it's possible to take to the air without hopping onto the Net. Once the program is installed, just double-click on "Warbirds Offline." You will be all alone in a huge world, but you'll be able to get familiar with the flight controls and the feel of the aircraft (which, according to die-hard WWII flight fans, is very realistic).

The price of *Warbirds* is \$10 a month for five hours of flight time. After that, it's \$2 for each hour — although if your provider is the *Concentric Network*, it's only \$1.75 an hour. Remember, these fees are for *Warbirds* only; they don't include whatever regular fees your Internet provider charges.

Company: ICI

Tech Support: <http://www.icigames.com>

Release Date: Available Now

Category: Flight Sim

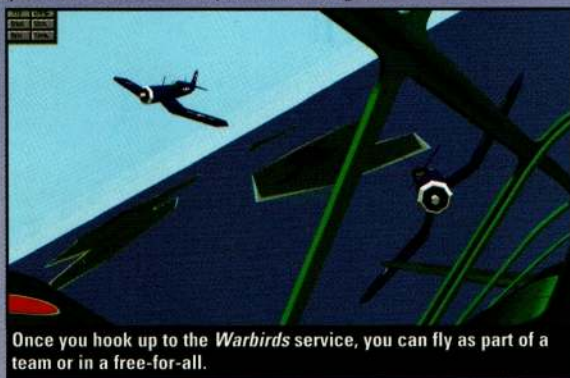
Required: Windows 95; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 18MB

hard-drive space; SVGA; Modem (for online play)

Install: \WARBIRD\SETUP.EXE

**W**arbirds is the hot new World War Two flight sim that's taking the online community by storm. Using a direct connection to the Internet, *Warbirds* will let you fly against hundreds of other joystick jockeys. You can form teams, or have battles where it's every man for himself.

The only trick to playing *Warbirds* is that it won't work with just any online service. For example, you won't be able to use your normal *America Online* or *CompuServe* account to do battle. You'll need to have a full-fledged connection to the Internet, using either a SLIP or PPP connection. There are countless Internet providers who can set



Once you hook up to the *Warbirds* service, you can fly as part of a team or in a free-for-all.



Prepare for a tough fight in WORSHIP.WAD, an add-on level for *Hexen: Beyond Heretic*.

## Add-Ons and Patches

**B**etween playing god in *Afterlife* and nailing trick shots in *Virtual Snooker* — not to mention blowing up the bad guys in *Seek and Destroy*, it's hard to justify going back to older games and playing them again. Unless, of course, we manage to find something special online that breathes new life into those old titles.

This month, we've got choice new levels for *Doom II*, *Heretic*, *Hexen*, *Descent*, and, of course, *Warcraft II*. To load these levels, check out the README.TXT file in each respective subdirectory on *The CD* (use your Windows Notepad or any ASCII text editor to read them or print them out). You'll need to use a program called PKUNZIP to decompress many of them into usable form; this shareware program is available virtually anywhere online, or from many software retailers. Read the documentation for directions on how to use it.

And if you're looking for the bug patches and updates mentioned in Tom McDonald's *Extended Play* column, you'll find them in the PATCHES directory on *The CD* (once again, you may have to use PKUNZIP to unpack files that end with a .ZIP extension).

## America Online

Tech Support: (800) 827-3338

Required: 386/33; 4MB RAM; 4MB hard-drive space; VGA; Windows 3.1 or higher; Modem

Install: \AOL\EXE

**O**ne of the leaders of online services, *America Online* offers a complete array of utilities for cruising down the Information Superhighway. You'll be able to send E-mail all over the world; participate in live conferences with celebrities and leaders of the scientific community; and get access to a world of files to download, people to chat with, and information to enrich your life, from the latest football scores to stock market reports.

Packaged along with *The CD*, you'll find an account number and password that'll let you try out AOL. By simply installing the software and typing in the account number and password, you'll get ten hours and your first month of service free. After that,

your rate will be only \$9.95 a month, which includes five hours (each additional hour costs \$2.95). Check it out — you'll be amazed at what you find.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** You can now use the Netscape Navigator web browser through America Online. Once you sign up, you can get it installed and running by selecting Keyword from the Go To menu, and typing "Netscape."

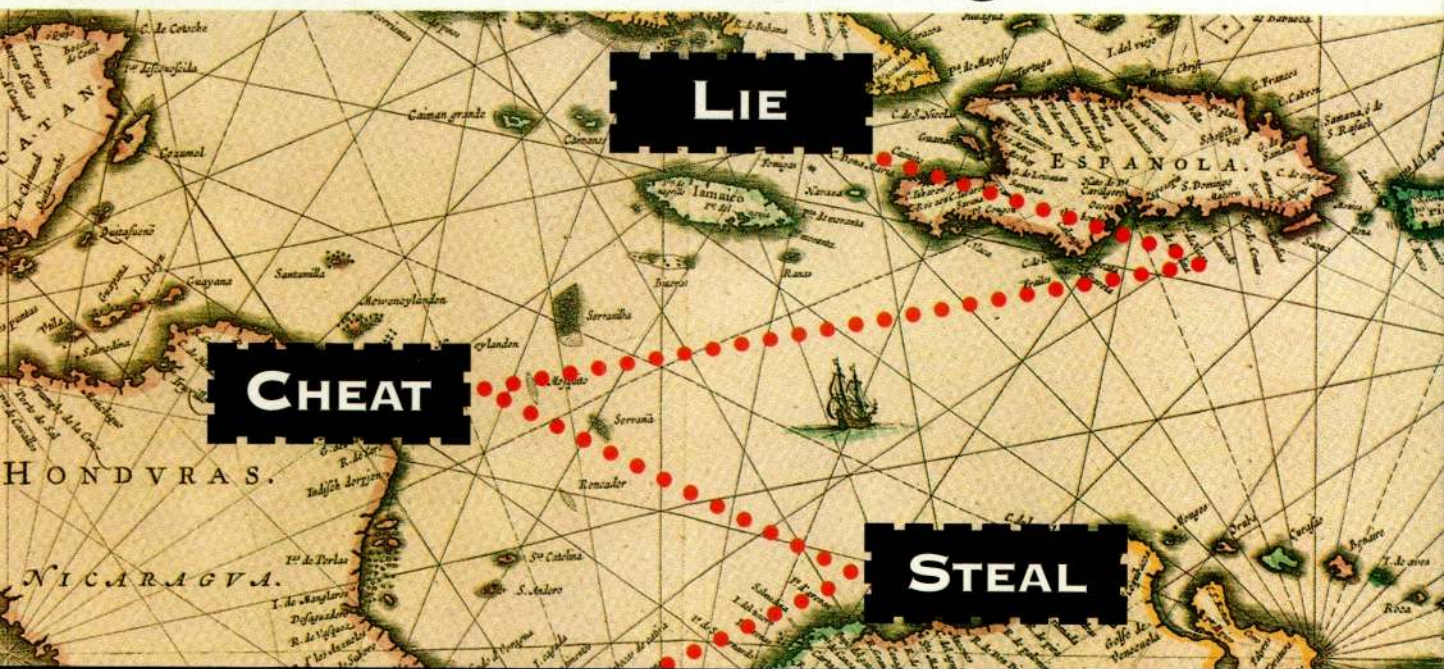


With *America Online*, you'll not only have access to the Internet, but a host of features that only AOL can give you.

### If Nothing Works...

We cannot provide technical support for problems you may encounter with the demos on *The CD*. Please use the tech support numbers listed with the demos. *The CD* is rigorously tested by the *PC Gamer* staff and certified virus-free. *PC Gamer* cannot be held responsible for any incompatibility problems caused by the use of *The CD*. However, should your copy fail to run, with error messages that indicate your CD drive cannot read the disc, return it to the following address: *PC Gamer*, The June CD Disc 2.5 Replacement, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Please indicate any error message you receive.

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# Back to Baghdad

Desert Storm rages again in a new F-16 sim!

Can television's favorite war translate into a super-realistic flight simulation? The newcomers at Military Simulations think so, and they're ready to prove it.

—Todd Vaughn

**D**uring the crisis in the Gulf, all of America sat glued to their televisions, watching and wondering what would happen next as the conflict unfolded before their eyes. From the tense days after Iraq first invaded Kuwait, to the decisive victory of coalition forces led by U.S. air power, Operation Desert Storm has forever been burned into the minds of the nation. While it seems hard to believe that such a lopsided conflict could result in a thrilling computer simulation, Military Simulations is putting the final touches on a game that does exactly that, placing you in the cockpit of a U.S. Air Force F-16 as you cross the burning sands to put down another reign of terror.

Co-founded in mid-1994 by ThrustMaster founder and former chairman Bob Carter and George Keverian, owner of a consulting firm that advises companies on graphic simulation solutions, Military Simulations Inc. isn't sim-

ply trying to cash in on the controversial war; instead, they've set their sights on designing the most realistic F-16 combat simulation to date, titled *Back to Baghdad*.

Using declassified data of the F-16 from sources like NASA and the Defense Department, *Back to Baghdad* wasn't designed from the ground up like most games, with sexy terrain graphics and impressive visuals taking



The F-16 Fighting Falcon is one of the deadliest fighters in service today, and in *Back to Baghdad* it's the basis for an amazing simulation.

## F.Y.I. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: *Back to Baghdad*  
 Developer: Military Simulations Inc.  
 Publisher: Military Simulations Inc., 5 Tannery Drive,  
 Medfield, MA 02052 <http://www.military-sim.com>  
 Projected Price: \$99  
 Percentage Complete: 90%

### In a nutshell:

In the post-Desert Storm Persian Gulf, Iraq rebuilds its crushed army into a formidable fighting force, spreading terror throughout the world — and it's up to you and your F-16 to ensure world peace.

### What's so special?

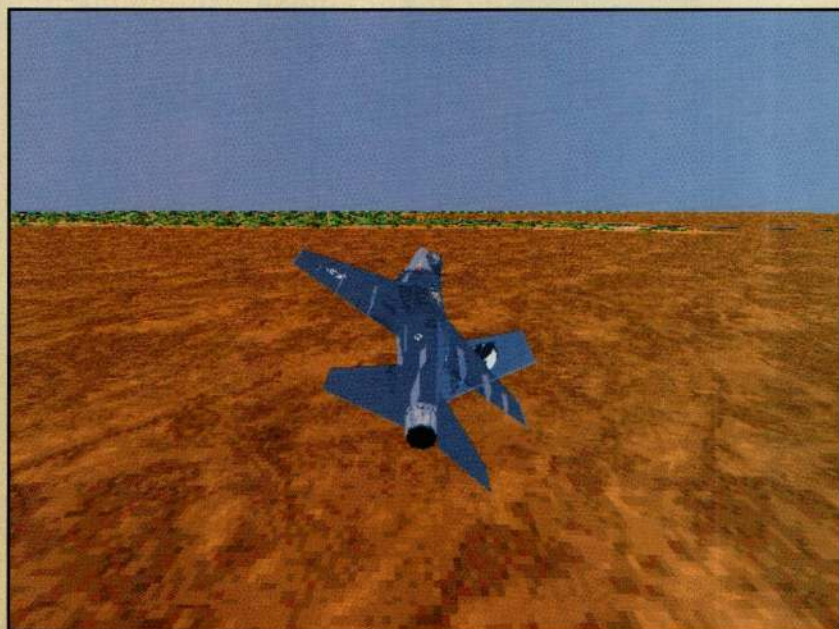
As the new kid on the block, Military Simulations has gone to extraordinary lengths to make *Back to Baghdad* more than just a point-and-shoot sim. From the detailed satellite images of Iraq to its realistic flight model, they're hoping this is one sim you'll drool over.

### Why should I care?

If you're a *Falcon 3.0* addict who's been waiting for a simulation that could rival that game's realism, *Back to Baghdad* might just be the sim that nails you to your ejection seat.

### And when's it coming out?

Summer 1996



The graphics are still in a very early stage, but *Back to Baghdad* has a sharp, clean look to match its realistic gameplay.

the bulk of the effort. As Military Simulations' George Keverian likes to say, they've built their sim from the cockpit out, concentrating their energies on providing simulation fans with almost every conceivable item on their air combat wish-list.

In the early versions of the game we've seen, it's obvious Military Simulations isn't far from achieving that goal. The cockpit in *Back to Baghdad* captures the look and feel of the real-world F-16, with its feature-rich suite of radars, infrared sensors, and electronic counter-measures. Instead of simply relying on a graphic depiction of a cockpit, then relegating the important readouts to pop-up windows or the Heads-Up Display, *Back to Baghdad* puts every instrument exactly where it should be. And in contrast to the compromises made in many sims, the radar and weapons in *Back to Baghdad* have been programmed to closely mimic the real-world systems they simulate.

The results are thoroughly impressive. There are no fewer than five radar modes for air-to-air combat, and five for air-to-ground attacks, all accurately depicted and — more importantly — easily legible during those high-speed close encounters. For the fighter jock who demands the utmost in situational awareness, Military Simulations has even built in support for a second video monitor that can act as your radar display, no matter what's happening on the main screen.

To go along with the impressive look and feel of the cockpit, the flight model of the F-16 has been painstakingly recreated for *Back to Baghdad* — warts and all.

"The physical model of the plane should be 100% accurate," Keverian said. "We've used the drag data from NASA to get the right flight dynamics in there. If you pull back on the stick, you'll bleed speed like crazy, because your angle of attack only goes from 26 to 35 degrees. If you have ordnance on the plane, you'll feel how heavy it is, and your reaction times will be much slower."

Moving outside of the cockpit and into the real-world environment they've created, you'll not only have to contend with incoming surface-to-air missiles and MiGs, but subtle weather effects such as crosswinds or thermals.

In keeping with Military Simulations' total devotion to realism,



Keeping track of friendly forces is a high priority during large, coordinated attacks. Here, a U.S. B-1 bomber gets a little too close for comfort.



Wherever possible, the game uses digitized photographs to depict the Falcon's interior.

the mission space in *Back to Baghdad* has been painstakingly recreated using pre-Desert Storm satellite imagery of key Gulf War cities, including Baghdad, Kuwait City, Nasariah, Um Quasar, Tikrit, and Basra. All surrounding terrain, road systems, and mountains have been carefully modeled as well, giving the game an authentic and familiar feel. Keverian says the reason they've gone to such extraordinary lengths in recreating Baghdad was due in part to the extensive television coverage.

"Anyone who remembers the footage of anti-aircraft fire rising out of the darkened city won't be disappointed in *Back to Baghdad*," he said. Three dimensional objects will be placed over the maps to create fully realized cities, complete with SAM sites, anti-aircraft batteries, and radar installations.

But getting all that detailed information into the game wasn't an easy task. After exhausting every possible resource domestically, going to such sources as the Library of Congress and the Defense Department, Keverian says the *Back to Baghdad* team finally found a French company that had all the pre-war satellite imagery they needed.

As luck would have it, these images were the same satellite pictures turned over to General Schwarzkopf shortly before hostilities began. Keverian says translat-

ing those files for use in the game was a mammoth task, but they've managed to retain the same accuracy (down to ten meters) of the original images without seriously degrading the game's performance.

"If you hover over Baghdad at about 5,000 feet, you can pick out the Al-Rashid Hotel where Peter Arnett did most of his reporting," Keverian said.

But despite all the emphasis on realism inside the cockpit and out, Keverian says the designers haven't forgotten the real reason people play air combat simulations; to shoot down the bad guys. Not only will your plane react the way it should, but each of the computer-controlled opponents will face the same sort of advantages and disadvantages, based on their various flight models. Keverian explains the system

**“Anyone who remembers the footage of anti-aircraft fire rising out of the darkened city won’t be disappointed in *Back to Baghdad*.”**

**— George Keverian, co-founder of Military Simulations**



like this: “The artificial intelligence is what we call a digital adversary. They won’t just stay in a horizontal plane; they’ll go vertical, they’ll jink like crazy. They know where the ground is, they know what their weapons load is, they know what

their fuel state is, and they will behave appropriately based on those factors and the type of aircraft they’re flying. On the highest difficulty setting, there are some of these artificially intelligent enemies that you simply cannot shake.”

Like *Falcon 3.0*, *Back to Baghdad* is being designed with the human player in mind, and if it doesn’t have multi-player support in its initial release, Keverian says an add-on package will be released shortly after.

“What we’re going to do is provide normal local-area network (LAN) support that uses a TCP/IP base, and allow those networks that have routers to the Internet to connect with other networks using tunneling technology,” Keverian said. “So, in effect, you can have a wing’s worth of players on one LAN and connect with up to 100 players on LANs across the country.”

Multi-player pilots will initially be limited to flying F-16s exclusively, but

Keverian is confident that more planes will be available in a number of expansion modules.

“The problem isn’t modeling the planes or flight models,” he said. “We’ve done that. The problem is putting in the electronic data for the radar systems. You’re not just shooting bullets or missiles anymore, you’re shooting electronic emissions, and even though I know what a Russian plane can do electronically, I’m not sure I can tell the player that just yet.”

So when and where are gamers going to be able to get their hands on *Back to Baghdad*? Keverian says the project is about 90 percent complete and expects no more than a couple of months of final testing before the game goes to market. And although Military Simulations is new to delivering software to market, Keverian says they’ll have a nationwide presence through online sales and a number of distributors.

“We talked about doing something with a few big companies,” he said, “but we’re going to do it ourselves. Our business model is set up so we can handle it on our own. We’ve already taken 50,000 pre-orders through our web site, and more are coming in every day.”

With its photorealistic environments, complex cockpit, and exacting attention to detail, *Back to Baghdad* has all the makings for a top-notch simulation for hard-core PC pilots. There’s some heavy-duty competition on the horizon, with Spectrum HoloByte’s long-awaited *Falcon 4.0* and Interactive Magic’s *F-16 Fighting Falcon* due out before the end of the year, but Military Simulations is confident their flight sim has the right balance or realism and playability to hold its own with the big guys. And since there’s always room for another good sim, they may just be right.



Though many of the missions take place over flat, lifeless desert, you’ll find some visual variety as you fly over the mountains to the north.

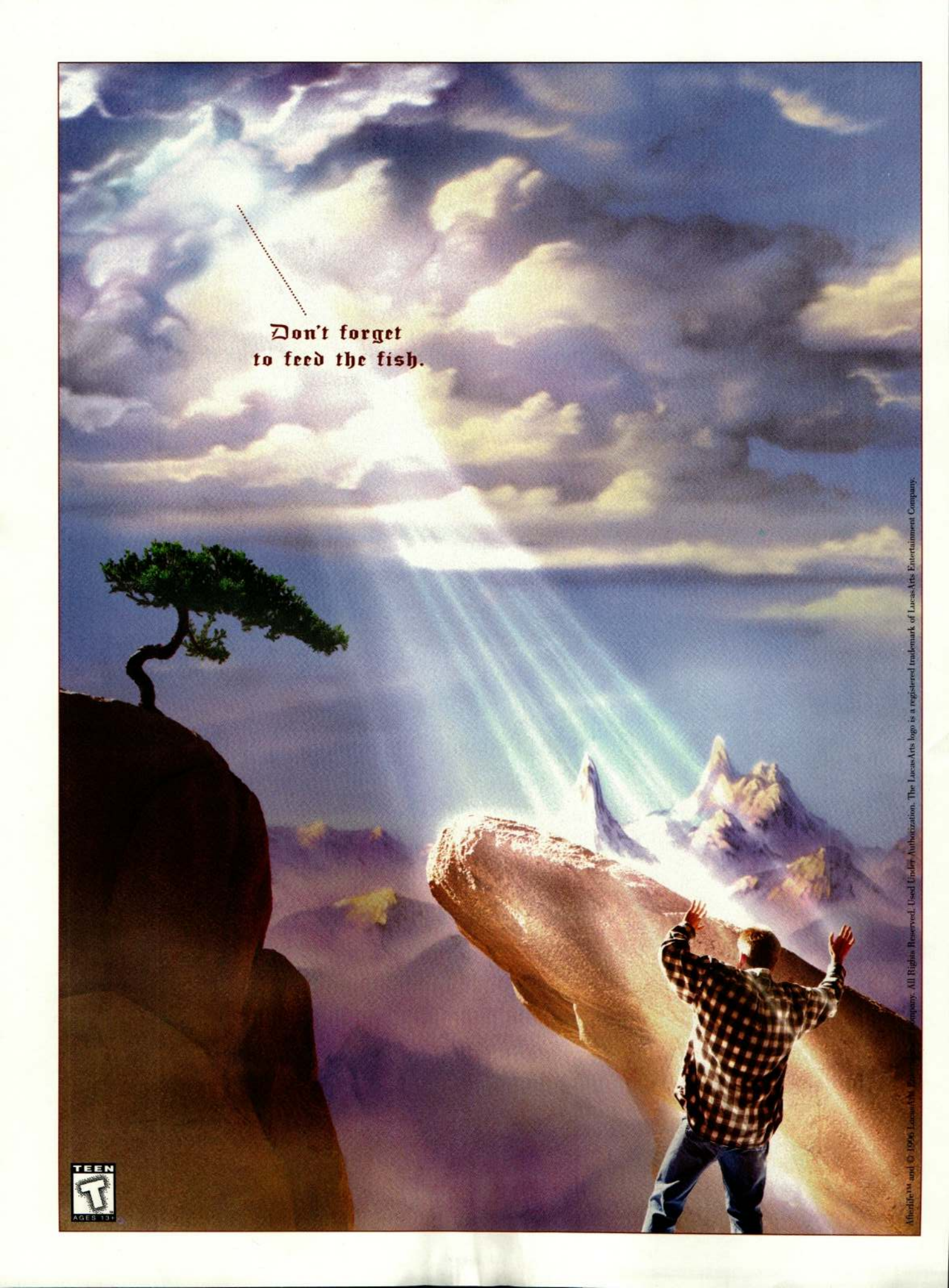


One interesting feature that mimics the real-life F-16 is the gunsight funnel, which displays the predicted path of your cannon’s shells during close-in combat.



nd on the 8th day,  
He split to Maui.





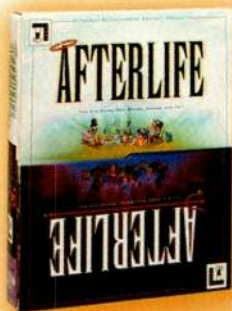
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to feed the fish.**

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Start with the Pearly Gates of Heaven or the Fiery Gates of Hell, zone in blocks of deadly Sins or goodly Virtues and build some roads. Soon, the dearly departed arrive in droves.

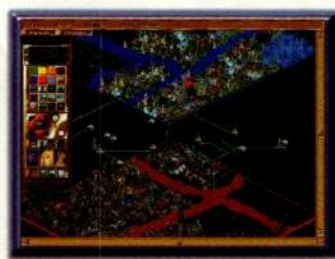
Keep them happy and you flourish. Lose too many along the way and it's a visit from the Four Surfers of the Apocalypso (not a good time). Factor in a half-dozen or so disasters (not including total annihilation), money problems, lost souls, headaches on the planet below, and things get complicated in a hurry.

With over 200 artistically rendered rewards, nearly 300 detailed tiles and buildings, more maps, graphs and charts than you can shake a pitchfork at, plus the most sophisticated engine of any sim game beginning with the letter “A,” you've got infinite hours of game-play.

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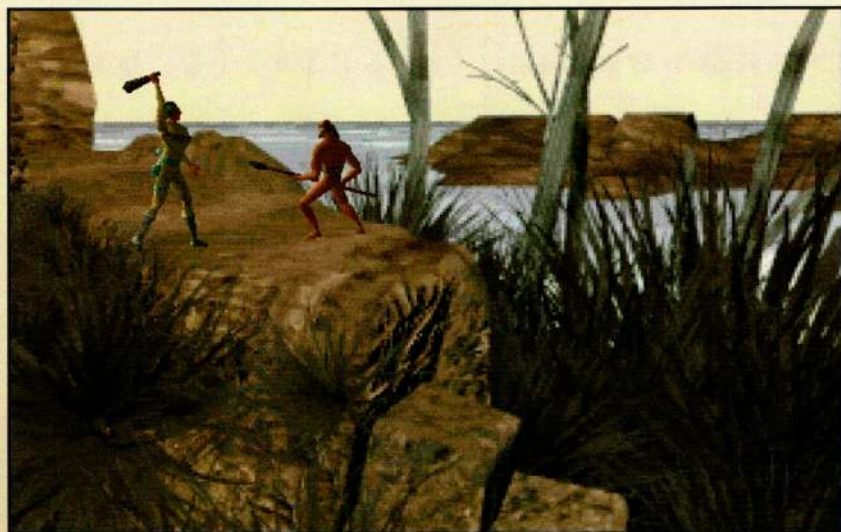
FOLLOW THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF INDIVIDUAL SOULS THROUGH THE SOULVIEW FEATURE.

# Time Commando

The creators of *Alone in the Dark* do the Time Warp!

Adeline Software, creators of the original *Alone in the Dark* game and *Relentless*, are set to take us on a 3D adventure through the history of the world.

—T. Liam McDonald



Stanley is a computer repairman sucked into a prehistoric world through bizarre circumstances. In the first level, he has to get by cavemen and other threats using only rocks and clubs.

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Time Commando  
 Developer Adeline  
 Publisher: Activision; 11601 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1000,  
 Los Angeles, CA 90025 (800) 477-3650  
 Projected Price: n/a  
 Percentage Done: 70%

### In a nutshell:

The original *Alone in the Dark* team brings their distinctive talents to a new action/adventure game.

### What's so special?

The fluid, polygon-based animations that graced *Alone in the Dark* and *Relentless* now look better than ever. The technology being used is pretty impressive, and the game world itself is quite imaginative.

### Why should I care?

The creative team behind *Alone in the Dark* and *Relentless* is designing *Time Commando*, and it promises to be a strange and wonderful adventure game with a bit of *Mortal Kombat*-style fighting thrown in just to keep things interesting.

### And when's it coming out?

Summer 1996

When France's Infogrames released *Alone in the Dark* back in 1992, it was like no game anyone had ever seen. The technology, created by Frederick

Raynal, used shaded polygons rather than bitmaps, to create fluidly moving characters and monsters. Until then, few games had tried to use polygons to create anything other than flight simulators, mainly because they were too angular to be used for human figures. As Raynal and his team proved, however, they could be smoothed and shaded a bit, and the result was animation that was far more realistic than that provided by any other means. The slightly boxy look of the characters was a small tradeoff for such impressive results.

After *Alone*, Raynal, along with partners Didier Chanfray, Serge Plagnol, and other members of the original team, left to form Adeline Software and work on their own projects. *Alone in the Dark 2* & 3 were done without them, while they

created the bizarre action-adventure, *Relentless*. Now they've joined forces with Activision to bring their latest game, *Time Commando*, to America.

*Time Commando* is as strange and unique a game you'd expect from this team. The main design is the work of Chanfray, with Plagnol serving as producer and Raynal, creator of the core technology, overseeing the entire project. The look is every bit as distinctive as *Alone in the Dark's*, and the story is, if possible, even wilder:

At some time in the future, the European Community decides it needs a new computer system for training soldiers. Bids are taken from all the mega-corporations, and one is chosen for the task, much to the displeasure of the competitors. In order to create their super-fast computer, the company has found a way to twist time around the CPU to overcome the speed restraints of the hardware. With this accomplished, they set about creating their training system by building a large database with information on warfare and weapons throughout the ages.

But before soldiers can start their virtual training, the disgruntled competi-



In Feudal Japan, Stanley takes on Judo experts, stick-wielding vixens, and scary sumo wrestlers. Stanley has to battle his way through nine different historical epochs. His final confrontation will be with the computer that sent him on this wild ride through time.

tion introduces a virus into the system, causing it to crash. The result is a temporal breakdown around the computer's core, which spreads to the surrounding area and sucks everyone into the computer, including Stanley, the computer repairman in charge of the system. Swallowed up by system, Stanley finds himself in a prehistoric world.

In order to escape, Stanley has to battle his way through nine different historical epochs: prehistory, ancient Rome, medieval Europe, feudal Japan, the Spanish Conquistadors in the New World, the wild west, the 20th century, the far future, and a final confrontation in the world of the computer itself. Each era has several different areas and two

main levels, with 18 levels altogether. In the wild west, for example, you'll have to survive a ghost town and a network of mines, then face an Indian attack in the Grand Canyon.

There are six distinct weapons for each era, with about forty-five weapons altogether. In the prehistoric period, for example, Stanley will fight with rocks and clubs, graduating to swords and halberds for the medieval levels, six-shooters and shotguns for the wild west, lasers for the future, and so on. The final showdown in the computer will feature a synthetic environment, as in the movie *Tron*, and Plagnol says they're trying to create suitably strange weapons for these sequences.

While *Alone in the Dark* succeeded at capturing a perfect balance of combat and puzzles, with *Time Commando* Adeline has decided to concentrate more on combat. That doesn't mean there won't be other things to do, though. Each level begins with Stanley reduced to only his fists to defend himself. By defeating enemies and searching carefully, he'll pick up the weapons needed to get to the next level, find secret doors and passages, and so on. Each set of levels ends with a "big-boss" confrontation, with the final blowout being against the computer virus itself.

The animation engine uses many of the same techniques as its predecessors, only now it's optimized and refined to take advantage of the added processing power of new computers.

"I did a new rewrite of the engine for *Time Commando*," comments Plagnol, "and now it's much better. We've added Gouraud shading, texture mapping, perspective correction, and all these are implemented in the game. Every character will be made of about five hundred Gouraud-shaded, texture mapped polygons." The result is much better motion-ren-

dering, with the higher polygon count and the more sophisticated use of shading making for a sharp-looking game with realistic character movements. Another factor that made their first projects stand out was the extensive use of cinematic "camera" angles. Instead of using the familiar first-person viewpoint, the main character of *Alone of the Dark* is seen as if in a movie, with wide shots, over-the-shoulder shots, low angles, and even close-ups. The camera changes position as the player moves his character through the environment. The result is an evocative, cinematic style, although it led to a few minor control problems in the earlier games, as players were forced to engage in combat without a clear view of their character.

With the more sophisticated system developed for *Time Commando*, most of these problems have been removed. Camera angles now not only move, but they track along with the character. Over-the-shoulder shots predominate, but side views and even a few backtracking reverse angles promise to keep the experience as cinematic as possible. Characters are animated and "filmed" against slick, pre-rendered 3D backgrounds, creating some beautiful scenes throughout the different ages.

Though *Time Commando* eschews the logic puzzles of Raynal's earlier titles, the folks at Adeline still think it'll capture a larger audience than just the fighting-game crowd.

"I don't think of it as a fighting game," Plagnol observes, "but more as an action game. We don't think we could play in the league of *Mortal Kombat* or that kind of game; that's not our type of gaming. The idea was not to make a pure fighting game where you fight one-to-one in an arena, but to have it very open, and have you move through an environment. So we wanted to keep the control very simple."

Plagnol is candid about what sets Adeline's games apart: "I think many games have beautifully rendered environments, but they're not very interactive. What we hope to create is something that is graphically very rich, while still being interactive." Add to this a legion of loyal followers hooked on the unusual perspectives and off-beat gameplay of their games, and it seems clear that *Time Commando* could be a hit.

PCG



What could be more exciting than playing a computer repairman? How about one who gets to battle all manner of humans and animals?



Adeline's gorgeous 3D-rendered backgrounds are merged seamlessly with sophisticated character-animation technology.

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"A solid multi-player game fest."

-Computer Gaming World

"Multi-player, city building, land exploring, alien busting fun"

-Strategy Plus

"Absorbing gameplay... the best visuals and sound effects that today's technology offers."

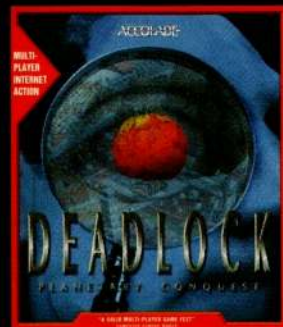
-Next Generation



Interactive Enemy A.I. Your incredible 3D-rendered opponents possess unique attributes that will tilt the balance of power. Intimidation is key as they hurl insults and carry out strategies that can mean your doom.

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For Windows 95 and Windows 3.1 CD-ROM.

ACCOLADE™

# Blood & Magic

**Fantasy and strategy in the Forgotten Realms**

This wargame set in the distant Utter East makes up and follows its own set of rules as Interplay flexes its *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* muscles for the first time.

—Jason Bates

**B**lood & Magic invites you into a strange, mythic world where powerful magic-users duel for control of fantastic kingdoms. It is a real-time strategy game, like *Warcraft* or *Command & Conquer*, but *Blood & Magic* plays much differently from those games, with its own look and feel and its own charm.

*Blood & Magic* is the first title from Interplay using their new Forgotten Realms license, but if you are looking for familiar places like Elminster, Waterdeep and the other well-known figures from TSR's game world, you might be disappointed. *Blood & Magic* takes place in a new part of the Forgotten Realms altogether, in a land called the Utter East — and far enough away so that its unusual rules and game design won't clash with the larger AD&D universe.

And the rules are unfamiliar, neither following AD&D nor any of its computer strategy rivals. Whereas other games of this sort — *C&C*, *Warcraft*, *Dune II*, and the like — have all involved gathering resources to create more units, *Blood & Magic* takes a different approach.

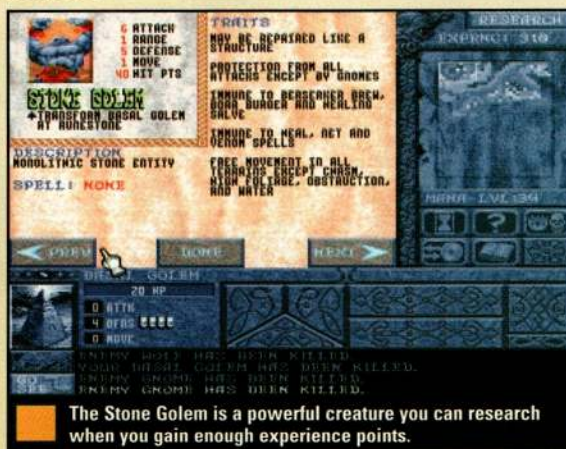
Gameplay revolves around gathering mana, the mystical energy used to fashion your army. You gain mana from your Basal Golems: strange, alchemical creatures who relapse into an elemental pyramid-shape when not moving or attacking, slowly accumulating mana for you no matter where they are. Obviously, the more Golems you have, the faster you can gather mana, and you can position your mana-gatherers to optimize your defense.

With your accumulated mana, you can build more Golems on your Bloodforge, which looks like a glowing, marble slab, radiating strange magical energy. You also use mana to create new creatures and have them use their special powers.

Golems can fight, explore the map,



These Basal Golems are headed towards an abandoned Mystical Site, perhaps to create a Crypt or Temple. In their natural, resting state, they revert to pyramids.



The Stone Golem is a powerful creature you can research when you gain enough experience points.

or sit in their pyramidal form, collecting mana for you. But you won't want to use your Golems much for exploring or fighting; for that, you need to build more advanced creatures. This is accomplished by sending a Basal Golem to an existing structure — for example, a barracks, temple, or crypt — and then using mana to transform the Golem into one of several dozen advanced creatures: a wraith, ranger, or dragon, for instance.

The creature-transforming structures are strategically important, and they are located only on certain sites within each scenario. Your enemy will aggressively go after these sites, and you should, too. If you destroy an enemy structure on one of the magical sites, you can then build your own structure on that same site by trans-



Game: *Blood & Magic*  
 Developer: Tachyon  
 Publisher: Interplay, 17922 Fitch Avenue, Irvine, CA 92714; (714) 553-6655  
 Projected Price: TBA  
 Percentage Complete: 80%

**In a nutshell:**

*Blood & Magic* boasts beautiful graphics tailored to each of its varied scenarios and an original and addictive game design.

**What's so special?**

*Blood & Magic* takes a different approach to strategy games that should prove to be exciting. Instead of following the traditional route of resource gathering, *Blood & Magic* has a whole new set of rules. Rich and varied maps, magic items, and innovative military units make this a strong challenger to *Warcraft II*.

**Why should I care?**

If you enjoy real-time strategy games — particularly those in a fantasy setting — you'll love Interplay's *Blood & Magic*.

**And when's it coming out?**

August 1996



Attractive, detailed graphics make up *Blood & Magic's* maps. The different terrain types affect movement rates and combat bonuses.

forming four of your useful, ubiquitous Golems into a building. But the enemy will also be attacking your magical sites — as well as your Bloodforge — so you'll need to guard key intersections with strong units.

All the different creatures in *Blood & Magic* have different attack and defense ratings, as well as some special abilities — for example, clerics can heal wounded creatures, while the wraith can instill fear in enemy units, causing them to flee. Both sides can select from the same range of creatures — more than two dozen in all — but you can build only those creatures that you have researched. You must also control the right kind of site: for example, wraiths can only be built at crypts.

In order to research a new creature type, you must have gained sufficient experience points. Experience is gained by finding magical items, defeating enemies, destroying buildings, making Golems, and winning scenarios.

Your research carries over from one battle to another, giving you more creatures to choose from, even as the scenarios in each campaign become more challenging. Neutral creatures can also be encountered, such as Snapping Turtles and Trolls, who will attack both you and the computer player alike if they are not carefully avoided.



Surrounding the enemy's Bloodforge means the end is near. These troops will be able to handle any new Golems that appear, cutting off all reinforcements.



After completing all the scenarios, you can create a customized character to play in the random campaigns.

Magical items can also be discovered on the game map, which provide additional bonuses and powers to the creature carrying them. To keep things simple, creatures can only carry one magic item at a time. Particularly useful is the Teleport Tome — the creature who's using it can teleport to any explored area on the map. This is a great way to send in a powerful creature for a quick attack, and then withdraw. Other items give attack and defense bonuses, or offer healing. The inclusion of magic items gives players more of an incentive to explore the map, as the items can be quite handy — and, at times, vital.

Terrain features are more than just obstacles; brambles and lava beds cause damage to characters moving across them, while much of the other terrain is impassable, but can be destroyed by fire or attacks. Certain magic items will also allow a character to cross otherwise impassable terrain, such as the Drift Disc, which lets units move freely across water. Other obstacles — the monuments and buildings — conceal magic items which can only be found by breaking them open. Flying

creatures, although generally weaker than their land-based counterparts, are unhindered by most obstacles, and make good scouts.

The game features a handy tutorial, in case all of this stuff about Golems and mana seems confusing — and it is puzzling at first — but it is very easy to grasp the fundamentals in a short time.

The graphics are exceptionally lush — *Blood & Magic* uses far more different tile sets to represent terrain than any other comparable game. The seventeen different terrain types — such as obstacles, foliage, and walls — are represented by many different graphics on every level, and the levels are wildly different and quite creative.

The reason for this variety was to avoid some of the sameness of the graphics seen in similar games. "It gives each map an individual look," said the game's producer, Bill Church. "We tried to match the artwork with the stories."

Some of the scenarios occur

indoors, within large palaces replete with fountains, tables, grand stairwells, and balconies, while others occur in swamps, burning cities, forests, and mountains, complete with Roc's nests, graveyards, and the like. There is tremendous variety on the game maps — both in their look and in the way they play.

In fact, each map is a unique tile set, making a map editor unlikely.

"The way our tile-system works," said Church, "we can't do an editor." Each of the five stories has five

scenarios each, and Church estimates 40 to 60 hours of gameplay there. Each story can be replayed from the opposing side, and there is also a random campaign generator.

This is Interplay's first game using the Forgotten Realms license, probably the most popular of the TSR worlds; Interplay also has the rights to the Planescape world. Beyond *Blood & Magic*, the Utter East setting is open for other TSR or Interplay products, although no new games were planned at press time.

After *Blood & Magic* will come *Descent to Undermountain*, a 3D roleplaying game using the *Descent* engine that is still being readied for this fall, and *Dragon Dice*, based on the the Forgotten Realms dice game.

Current system requirements for *Blood & Magic* are a double-speed CD-ROM drive, a 486/33 (though a 486/66 is recommended) with a 256-color display, and 8MB of RAM. The game will be available for either DOS or Win 95. There will also be support for modem, serial and two-player network games.

PCG



**ANDERSON,  
I NEED A VOLUNTEER.**



**THAT TANK UP THE  
ROAD? SOMEONE'S GOTTA  
TAKE IT OUT.**

**I NEED SOMEONE I CAN  
COUNT ON. SOMEONE WHO'S  
MAN ENOUGH TO RUN  
THROUGH MACHINE-GUN FIRE  
TO GET THE JOB DONE.**

**AND ANDERSON,  
THERE COULD BE A MEDAL  
IN IT FOR YA.**



Anderson, Chuck. Sergeant. Leads 2nd Platoon's Recon team. Probably gotta wife back home. Damn good soldier. You give him an order and he figures out the best way to get the job done. So what's he doing cowering behind that bombed-out farmhouse?

Saving his own butt.

That's what you should expect if you order him to do something crazy. In



Close Combat everything reacts like it does on the battlefield, from the ripping canvas hiss of the German MG42 machine gun to the screams of the men it hits. It all goes down right in front of you. In real time.

So there's no time to thumb through the manual. You work your mouse like a weapon. Point and click and boom, the shooting starts the second your

men step off Omaha Beach and it don't let up 'til they've taken Saint-Lô. Troops, terrain, situations – if you want to get any more accurate, you'll have to shave your head.

Wanna go head to head with other military geniuses? All you need is a TCP/IP connection. And guts.

So look alive soldier; D-Day happens this July.

Which means you don't have much time to kill.

Americans vs. Germans:  
Which side you  
gonna take?

Mac™ vs. Windows® 95:  
Which side you  
gonna take?

**Microsoft**

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## Online Update

Last month, we told you how online services were set to change the face of PC gaming; now here's the latest exciting news from four

major contenders on the Information Highway: America Online, XBAND, CompuServe, and the Total Entertainment Network.

### Exclusive Duke!

TEN makes a big deal with Apogee

The Total Entertainment Network announced an important agreement with Apogee games, giving TEN the exclusive online rights to all Apogee/3D Realms titles for the next five years. That means their great multi-player games, including *Duke Nukem 3D*, won't be playable on any other online service. It's an excellent coup for the startup network.

Other 3D Realms titles included in the deal with TEN are *Shadow Warriors* and *Blood*, which will both use the same engine found in *Duke Nukem 3D*, and *Prey*, a new true 3D game similar to *Quake*, which we previewed in last month's Scoops! section (the deal didn't include *Terminal Velocity*, although it will be available on TEN).

Other titles available on

TEN will include the strategy classics *SimCity* and *Civilization*, as well as *Falcon 4.0*, the sequel to the wildly popular air combat simulator from Spectrum HoloByte. *SimCity* of course will be modified to allow multiple players on the same map, while *Civilization* will appear as *CivNet*, the recently released multi-player version of the strategy classic from MicroProse.



### Five Million PC Gamers?

New games coming to AOL

It's certainly big news to gamers if the world's largest online service begins to offer serious games online. With several million customers, a good percentage of whom are certainly gamers, the established online services are definitely a ripe market for online gaming.

Although America Online currently has some games, such as the text-based *Federation* or the venerable *Neverwinter Nights*, they're not up to par with the games coming online on XBAND, MPath, and TEN, since traffic problems and other issues



Expect AOL to offer games soon.

prevent the kind of fast action and quality graphics hard-core gamers expect. Rather they've been sort of an afterthought, leaving serious gamers to DWANGO, Kali or their modems.

But now AOL has announced that *Air Warrior*, *Har-*

*poon Online*, and *Casino Poker* will be available to their subscribers. Six other titles from the online gaming experts at Kesmai Software are also in the works — AOL plans to announce the rest of the lineup at the Electronic Entertainment Expo, the computer gaming industry's giant trade show.

Kesmai, for its part, has had a good deal of experience in the online arena — their *Air Warrior* is currently available on GEnie, and they're working with Interactive Magic on an update of that hugely popular game.

#### WHAT ARE THE OTHER GUYS UP TO?

The Microsoft Network has just passed the million-member mark, but they've also overhauled their interface. The new, web-based service debuted on April 1, marking a major shift away from proprietary, dial-up networks. And although MSN software will still appear on every Windows 95 disc that ships, America Online has cut a deal with Microsoft that will include AOL software with new copies of the operating system. If you can't beat 'em ...

Meanwhile, the Prodigy network has announced a new Internet access plan at the low rate of \$1 per hour. Called Access Net Direct, the service is open to all customers, not just those who have Prodigy accounts.

# WOW!

## CompuServe announces a new service

**P**ushed out of the headlines by Netscape-AOL-Microsoft deals and the new online gaming networks like TEN and MPath, CompuServe stepped back into the spotlight by offering a new online service with a new look. The new service is called WOW!, and one of its best features is its price.

At less than twenty dollars a month, WOW! offers unlimited hours and access times, including Internet usage, making it hands-down the cheapest service yet for

people who spend a lot of time online. Each account can have six names with their own E-mail addresses, and Internet access is provided through a version of the Microsoft Internet Explorer.

The service features two distinct interfaces: one for kids and one for adults, all part of the drive to make WOW! friendlier and more accessible to families and consumers who recently purchased computers.

For their safety, kids are prevented from accessing the chat rooms, and their E-mail is routed through their parents' accounts first. Kids are also unable to shop online, preventing unexpected purchases from showing up at the door.

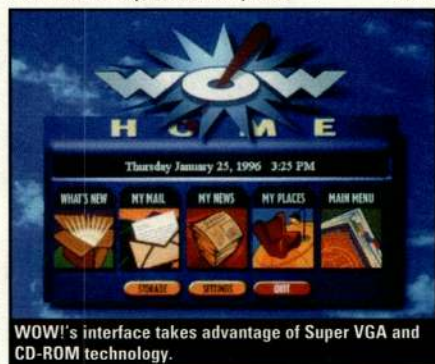
While most of the current online services have rela-

tively light system requirements, WOW! needs 8 MB of RAM (16 MB is recommended) and Windows 95. Potential users will also need at least a 486 with a CD-ROM drive, sound card, Super VGA, and a 9600 baud or better modem. This is a significant increase over current standards for major online services.

CompuServe has worked out deals to provide quality family content to WOW! subscribers. Specific content providers include Lycos, whose "cyberguide" is an Internet search engine accessible through the World Wide Web.

Also, *Sports Illustrated For Kids* will provide sports-related material for youngsters, and National Geographic will let users read a digital version of the magazine, including visiting with mummies and exploring the Andes.

To reserve a copy of CompuServe's WOW!, call (800) 9GET-WOW. A Macintosh version is due out this fall.



WOW!'s interface takes advantage of Super VGA and CD-ROM technology.

# Internet Gaming ...

## XBAND signs with id and begins beta testing

**X**BAND, one of the three major players in Internet gaming for the PC, has moved into beta-testing, the final stage before officially going online. They have also reached an agreement with id Software to license *Doom II*, *Hexen*, and *The Ultimate Doom*. A shareware of the original *Doom* will also ship with the XBAND beta CD (which is great news for those three PC gamers who don't already have *Doom*).

One of the key components to XBAND's ability to provide fast, reliable game connections over the notoriously sluggish Internet is their RAPID system, which stands for Reduced-latency And Predictable Internet Delivery. RAPID's proprietary technology provides high-speed connections between XBAND's game servers and the local Internet providers their sub-

scribers log onto.

A rapid connection is essential if gamers are going to be able to play action titles like *Doom II* or *Mech-Warrior 2* through XBAND. The XBAND service is owned and operated by Catapult Entertainment, which has already made a mark providing dial-up, multi-player gaming for owners of the Sega Genesis and Super Nintendo videogame systems, which gives them the advantage of having more customer service and billing experience than the other new services. The XBAND PC network is a collaboration between Intel and Catapult.

The id connection is also important, although it is hardly an exclusive agreement — *Doom*



*Doom II* from id software — in its all gory glory — will be one of the first games to invade the XBAND multiplayer network.

and its kin have been available online via the DWANGO network for some time, as well as independently through the use of shareware programs like Kali. And news of the deal makes no mention of *Quake*, id's most eagerly awaited title.

At press time, it was still possible to register for a beta-test account on the XBAND web site at <http://www.xband.com>.

## UNDER CONSTRUCTION

**N**othing says Spring like the leathery feel of a worn-out mitt, the crack of the bat, and a cheering, beery crowd sitting in the warm Sunday sun. Yes, we're talking about baseball, the apple pie of sports — and just in time for Opening Day, a pair of new computer baseball games are ready to take the field.



Using a special motion-capture technique, Acclaim has recorded the moves of White Sox star Frank Thomas to create realistic gameplay.

## Frank Thomas 'Big Hurt' Baseball

Frank Thomas earned the nickname 'Big Hurt' because he really hurts the opposition with his home run power, and Acclaim Entertainment has prepared *Frank Thomas 'Big Hurt' Baseball* in honor of the White Sox star. Features of the game include 3D-rendered graphics of the stadiums and a complete roster of 1995 players and stats, tracked in twenty-seven categories.

## Tony LaRussa Baseball 3: 1996 Edition

Another contender for the pennant is the latest edition of Stormfront's venerable *Tony LaRussa Baseball*. Although LaRussa himself may have left the Oakland A's, he's still on Stormfront's team, and this installment features both 1995 and 1996 stats and players.

Other improvements over earlier designs include an

..... Continued on page 47

# Run fast. Run smart. Stop and you're dead.

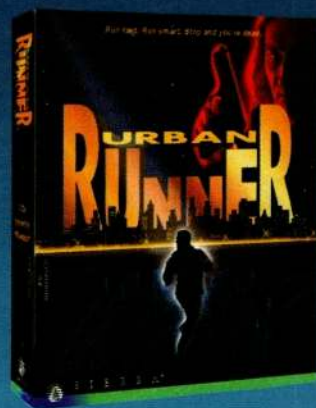
## 5 CDs of interactive suspense.

## Real actors. Real time. Real tough!

A sheriff's deputy is **murdered**. You didn't see anything, but the bad guys **shoot** first and ask questions later. The cops want you for the murder, and at this point they seem like a better option than...

Your legs feel like lead. Your heart feels like it's going to **pound** right out of your chest. Your lungs are **screaming** for air. If you could just get to the...

Truth. **Innocence**. They don't mean a thing if you're **dead!**



See your software dealer,  
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# SIERRA®

Product Information Number 149

# Sticks in Space

## ThrustMaster works on shuttle stick for NASA

**J**ust how close to the real thing are the joysticks used by gamers on their home PCs? Is it anything like being in a real aircraft? Really?

Actually, the joysticks and throttles used by flight sim enthusiasts can be quite sophisticated, as the companies who manufacture them have often also worked in developing similar controller technology for military and commercial flight simulators.

A case in point is ThrustMaster; not only are they a well-known maker of over-the-counter controllers for home gaming, they have also worked with such companies as General Dynamics, McDonnell Douglas, Northrop-Grumman, and other defense firms.



ThrustMaster's latest controller won't be available in stores — it's for NASA.

But ThrustMaster's latest venture is literally out of this world — they've been tapped by Lockheed Martin to reproduce the Rotational Hand Controller (RHC) used in the space shuttle, for training purposes.

The RHC features a three-axis rotational grip for yaw, pitch,

and roll control. It also features a trigger switch, one button, and a four-way "hat" switch similar to those found on many high-end PC joysticks.

"The enthusiasm we have received from NASA has been overwhelming," said Bob Martin, ThrustMaster's vice president of strategic planning.

"With the completion of this contract, we have been asked to participate in supplying additional products in support of Lockheed's prime contract for NASA."

ThrustMaster's version of the RHC will be used for ground training, as well as aboard actual shuttles in space — not to control the craft, but for simulating landings while in orbit.

# More Warcraft!

## Blizzard to ship expansion set

**T**here's no question that *Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness* is one of the best PC games ever, having sold 500,000 copies and garnered *PC Gamer's* Game of the Year Award in its first three months — so it's hardly surprising they've announced a new expansion disc.

"We've been overwhelmed by the tremendous success of *Warcraft II*, and since the game's release, we've been flooded with requests for an add-on disk," said Allen Adham, Blizzard Entertainment's president and founder.

Titled *Warcraft II: Beyond the Dark Portal*, the new disc will feature two campaigns of twelve missions each; one for the Humans and one for the Orcs, plus brand-new animated sequences. In addition, there are



*Warcraft II's* popularity has driven Blizzard to release a scenario disk, *Beyond the Dark Portal*.

fifty new single-level maps, or "PUDs," to play, all developed by the Blizzard team.

The new campaigns take place after the successful destruction of the Orcish Dark Portal in *Tides of Darkness*. The Humans discover that destroying the Portal hasn't destroyed the Rift between the two worlds, and there's nothing to prevent the war-mongering Orcs from

rebuilding their strength and creating a new Portal. So, determined to put a stop to the Orcish menace once and for all, the Humans invade Azeroth, determined to eliminate every last Orc, Goblin, and Troll.

The expansion disc will feature a brand new tile set that will represent the swamps of the Orcish world.

Priced at around \$30, it's great news for gamers who finished *Tides of Darkness* and are hungering for more single-player action. *Beyond the Dark Portal* should be available as you read this; for more information, you can contact Blizzard at

(800) 953-SNOW.

In other news, Blizzard has finalized its acquisition of Condor, the developer currently creating *Diablo* for them. Renamed Blizzard North, the Redwood City, California studio will continue to operate independently from Blizzard.

Condor's previous work includes *Justice League* and *NFL Quarterback Club*, both published by Acclaim.

Continued from page 45.....

enhanced interface, head-to-head stats for pitchers versus batters, and situational batting statistics that track how well players perform with runners in scoring position, pinch-hitting, and in the late innings. Veteran announcers Mel Allan, Hank Greenwald, and Lon Simmons are back, and their announcing has been enhanced to refer to each player by name while commenting.



Stormfront Studios has called Tony La Russa back in to manage the latest installment of *Tony La Russa Baseball*.

## Ironclads

Civil War buffs take note: due out in July is Grolier's *Ironclads*, which puts you on the bridge of the *Merrimack* or the *Monitor*. Gameplay begins with an "interactive introduction" to the Civil War, with the use of full-motion video and actors in historical costumes, set against pre-rendered backgrounds. Then you choose which side to fight on, and once battle is joined, you give orders from the bridge, from a first-person perspective.

## Banzai Bugs!

A unique idea is behind *Banzai Bugs!*, which is perhaps the world's first flight sim/graphic adventure. In *Bugs!*, you are an agile insect, winging through a pre-rendered cartoon house with as much freedom of movement as you'd have an aircraft in a flight sim. The controls are

.....Continued on page 48

Continued from page 47.....  
 simple, and you will have to solve some simple puzzles, as well as avoid such hazards as bug spray, spider webs, and fly-swatters. From Grolier Interactive, it's due out in September.



Surf and Destroy takes you on a whimsical trip through Cyberspace.

### Surf and Destroy

For those who've found web-surfing a bore and long to take a chaingun to the next graphics-heavy, "interactive" web page, Grolier offers *Surf and Destroy*.

.....Continued on page 49

# Build Your Own Arcade

PC pinball wizards can conjure their own tables

**T**here are enough PC pinball programs out there to fill an entire arcade, but true connoisseurs of the game are still on a quest to find that perfect table. Well, search no more, says 21st Century Entertainment — now you can design your own with their new *Pinball Construction Kit*.

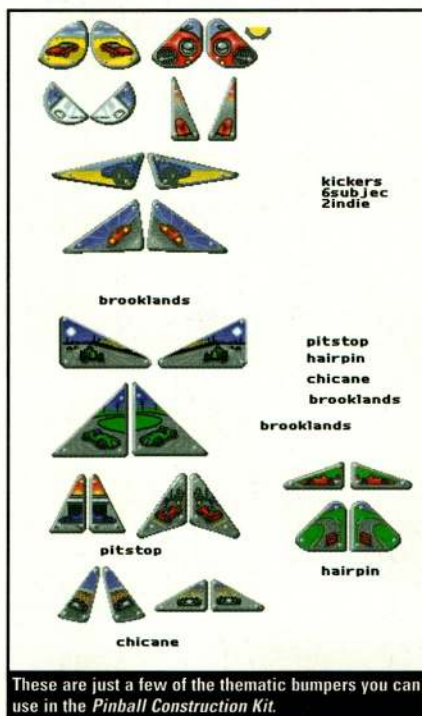
It's not surprising, in this heyday of PC pinball games, that one of the leading pinball developers would create a kit harkening back to *Stuart Smith's Pinball Construction Set*, an early eighties classic on the Apple II. But 21st Century may have the best track-record to tackle it; among their games are the excellent *Pinball Fantasies*; its sequel, *Pinball Illusions*; and the recent *Pinball World*.

To use the Kit, you choose one of 64 basic layouts that contain nothing but ramps, side guards, and flippers. Then you use the Table Editor to put in

bumpers, ball traps, and all the other traditional bells and whistles wherever you want 'em.

Finally, you become a multimedia designer, choosing background art, sound effects, and music files to give your new table its theme. 21st Century even plans to let you import your own graphics.

With this much freedom, you'll be able to play as many different tables as you want, and your finest creations can easily be traded on disc or over the Internet to anyone else who owns the *Construction Kit*.



These are just a few of the thematic bumpers you can use in the *Pinball Construction Kit*.

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# Web Wagers

The next big controversy: Gambling on the Net

**T**he idea that the Internet will revolutionize business is hardly new; in fact it's been beaten half to death. It will certainly impact gamers of all types, including those who play where business and gaming really come together — gamblers, that is.

Yes, you can gamble on the Internet, although its legality is dubious and its security shaky; we're betting it'll be taken up as the next big target for quick-fix politicians who thrive on attacking the Internet. The technology

exists — and more is being developed — that'll let you set up an account on your credit card and wager on any number of casino games, from roulette to blackjack to bingo.

Already, a number of web sites exist where you enter your credit card number, set up an account, and begin gambling.

On many of these sites, the legal issue is left up to the end user — some pages suggest you contact your local law enforcement agency to determine if Internet betting is permissible in your area.

One such service that's getting ready to launch is the AGN Players Club, which will primarily feature bingo, tying users directly into American Indian



bingo parlors through the Internet. Subscribers can set up their own debit accounts with AGN, then a proxy service plays the bingo cards, which the user can watch on his or her screen as each number is called.

AGN projects as many as 100,000 subscribers will sign up within their first twelve months of operation. For more information, you can visit their web page at <http://www.betnet.com>.



Gambling online is bound to become controversial, once politicians and the mainstream media get wind of it.

Continued from page 48.....

A comical graphic adventure that sports a real-time 3D engine, *S&D* challenges you to adventure through a loose interpretation of Cyberspace. The *Doom*-style combat will be handled with a light touch, as you battle slime monsters, chattering teeth, and dogbots.



In *Collision*, computer technology is getting one step closer to the dream of *Doom*-style movement in photorealistic settings.

## Collision

The first live-action arcade game using FastLANE technology will be *Collision*, from Pow-

.....Continued on page 50

What you fear, you will covet.  
 What you loathe, you will worship.  
 What you ravage, you will rule.  
 What you are, you will abandon.

# INTO THE VOID

The first net-capable, intergalactic, PC CD-ROM game of ultimate strategy.

You've been warned.

Product Information Number 143

Continued from page 49

erhouse Entertainment. These games, called "Moviegames," speed up video sequences and let the player move seamlessly from one video clip to the next (most games that use full motion video pause for long loading times).



A very early look at *Gnarl Covet*, a multi-player roleplaying game being built specifically for the Internet.

### Gnarl Covet

One of the most promising games being developed for the Internet is *Gnarl Covet*, from newcomer Arckosian Entertainment. First pre-viewed at a European exposition earlier this year, it will be one of the first of the vast, multi-player roleplaying games that we expect to hit the Internet in 1997.

The game environment of *Gnarl Covet* will be a dynamic, real-time 3D world, with rendered polygon actors and interactive 3D objects.

Each player will create a customized character, then visit different worlds — each world being a different server on the Internet. There, you'll be able to interact with the hundreds of other players on the server — fighting, exploring, or simply socializing.

A public beta-test should be available in the fall, but don't expect to play the full retail version until early in the second quarter of 1997. An early preview will be seen at E3, the annual trade show.



# Hang On!

## Force feedback is coming!

Your typical joystick is a fairly passive input device; you move it, and it sends commands to the computer. While it is certainly more game-friendly than a keyboard, some gamers have felt something was missing. But big changes are in the works, just another of the improvements to PC gaming coming about as a result of the new game-developer interfaces from Microsoft.

The DirectInput API for Windows 95 lets the computer send data back to an input device, allowing for something known as force feedback (it's also possible under DOS, but there's no established DOS stan-

dard for force feedback).

Force feedback means a program can move and shake a specially designed joystick or other controller in response to whatever's happening in the game. You've probably already seen something similar in the arcade, where a machine moves or shakes as a player takes damage.

For game developers, force feedback is another tool for creating even more immersive, realistic gaming experiences. For



That's one mean-looking joystick!

gamers, it just means more fun. Picture yourself playing *NASCAR Racing* with a force-feedback steering controller; you run off the track and across the dirt, and the wheel shakes, becoming more difficult to control — later in the race, it develops a wicked shimmy as your front-end gets bashed out of alignment. In a game like *Duke Nukem 3D*, the effect could be even more visceral; imagine feeling the kick of your shotgun through the joystick.

One of the leaders in bringing force feedback to the PC is Immersion Corporation. Having recently signed a deal with CH Products, one of the leading manufacturers of PC game controllers, Immersion is hoping to see products using their force-feedback technology in the stores by Christmas. As these products come out, we'll keep you informed.

# Duke Takes the Gold

## Interactive Magic sponsors *Capitalism* contest

*Capitalism* is the most realistic, detailed business sim on the market today, and one of the best economic games of all time, so it was natural that it would attract interest at some of the nation's top business schools. Much as the military is learning to use PC games as training tools (see our April 1996 story on gaming and the military), business schools are increasingly becoming aware of

the benefits of a low-cost computer simulation of business activities and principles.

So *Capitalism's* publisher, North Carolina-based Interactive Magic, had no trouble arranging their first "Business Bowl," pitting Duke University's School of Business and the University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler Business School. In this huge, four-hour *Capitalism* battle, teams of students from both schools



The sim title *Capitalism* has been put to work in business schools.

competed to rack up the highest score. When the smoke cleared and the balance-sheets were checked, Duke won the day.

The Duke students were awarded a \$500 check towards their education and were given the opportunity to donate \$1,000 to their favorite charity. Now Interactive Magic is hoping to get Stanford involved.

Interactive Magic has also been working with people in the business education community on ways to improve *Capitalism* in anticipation of an eventual updated version of the game. Not surprisingly, one of the features the students and professors most requested was a network version of the game.



Duke students won the price wars in I-Magic's first Business Bowl. Are these Blue Devils the best *Capitalism* players in the world?

SCREAM AT  
EACH OTHER AT  
THE TOP OF  
YOUR LUNGS  
AND RUN YOUR  
BEST BUDDY  
INTO THE WALL  
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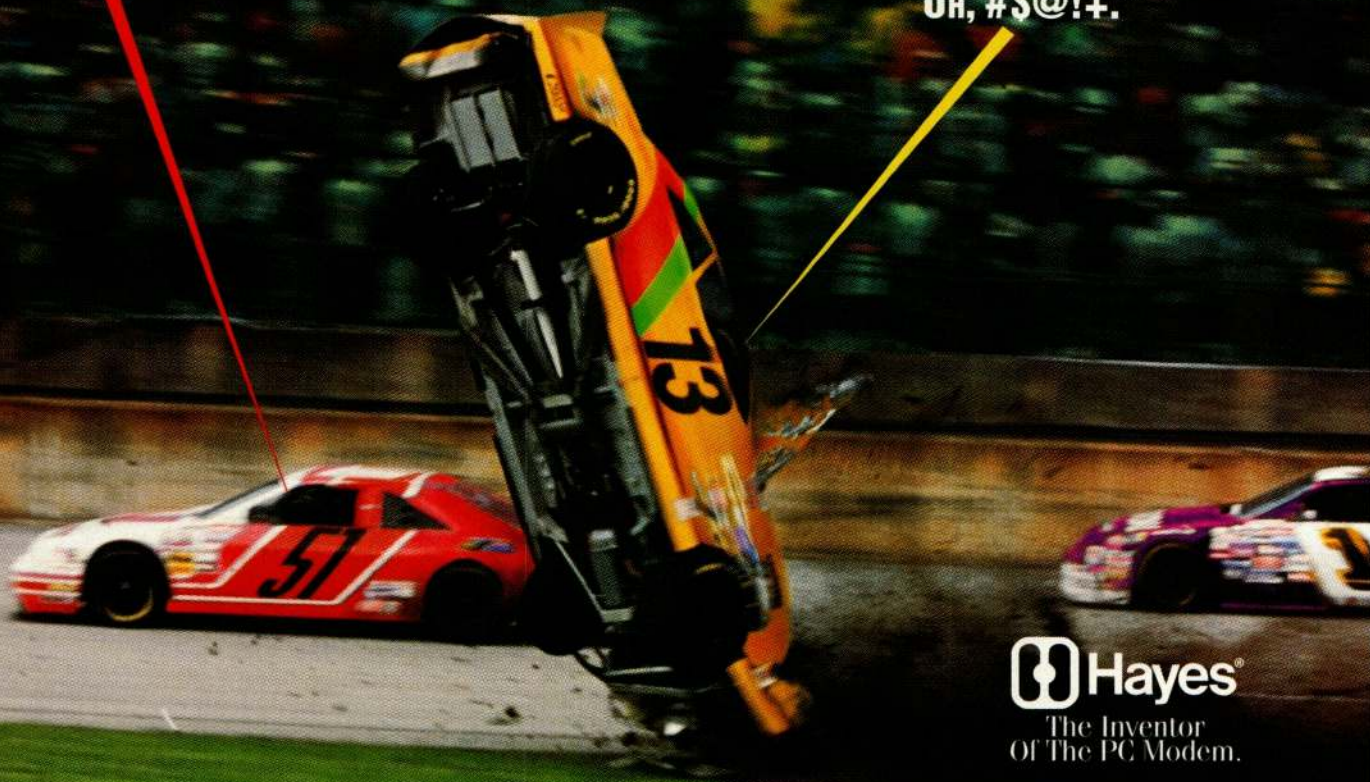


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"SEE YOU NEXT  
WEEK, SUCKER."

"OH, # \$ @ ! + ."



**Hayes**  
The Inventor  
OF THE PC MODEM.

# The Fantastic Four

## New CD changers handle four discs

**W**hat will they think of next? How about a CD-ROM drive that can hold more than one CD at a time in the space of a normal drive? It's not a new idea; after all, audio CD players have handled multiple discs for years now.

No sooner said than done: the latest trend in multimedia is

yielding CD-ROM drives that can handle four CDs at a time without taking up the extra space that earlier CD changers required.

Alps Electric has introduced their Alps 4X Internal CD-ROM Changer. The Changer fits in any standard 5.25" PC drive bay, but it has an extra-large tray that accepts a cartridge designed for four CDs.

You can choose to have your system treat the Changer as a single drive; a button on the drive makes it simple to switch manually from one CD to the next. Alternately, you can map the

Changer as four separate drives — D:, E:, F:, and G:, for example.

Installation is relatively simple, and the drive's manual is concise but thorough. The Changer will work under DOS, Windows 3.1, and Windows 95, and it can be mounted horizontally or vertically.

Another entrant into the multi-disc CD-ROM market comes from Addonics. Their PCD4x4 CD-ROM drive is portable, designed primarily for notebook computers. It connects to any standard or enhanced parallel printer port, and it allows transparent printer pass-through, so you can use your printer even when the CD-ROM drive is in use.

The PCD4x4 comes with its



The PCD4x4 from Addonics lets you access four CDs from a notebook PC.

own power supply, and it doesn't use caddies or a cartridge.

Although most games don't really require you to change CDs often enough to make a multi-disc drive a necessity, they're a nifty convenience. It's also a nice way to load several audio CDs at a time, so you'll have plenty of music for those marathon sessions with your word processor or spreadsheet.

The Alps Changer is expected to retail for around \$300. For more information on the Changer, contact Alps Electric at (408) 432-6000. The 4x4 has a suggested retail price of \$450, and its manufacturer can be reached at (800) 787-8580.



Using technology developed for Alpine car stereos, the Alps Changer quadruples your CD-ROM drives without taking any extra space.

## Lock On!

### British magazine targets PC pilots

**A**s PC gaming has become big business, a whole slew of specialized newsletters and magazines have appeared. One of the best of these is a little bimonthly magazine from England.

*Enemy Lock On!* concentrates exclusively on military flight simulations, catering to a small but fanatical audience of hard-core air warriors who will gladly spend hundreds of dollars for the newest and best air combat games and hardware.

The issues are relatively brief — under 20 pages — but there are virtually no advertisements, and *ELO's* articles cover nothing but combat flight sims, with tips, reviews, previews, interviews, and comprehensive strategies every two months.

Recent issues of the magazine included articles on how to land and refuel your jet in *EF2000*, a preview of *Advanced Tactical Fighters* and *Back to Baghdad*,



*Enemy Lock On!* magazine is geared toward fans of hard-core combat flight sims like *ATF*, *Back to Baghdad*, and *EF2000*.

and articles on *Silent Thunder*, *Red Baron II*, and others.

It's definitely worth a look for the serious flight sim fan. Six issues of *Enemy Lock On!* cost \$32.50. For more information, visit <http://www.elo.com/elomag/> on the World Wide Web, or give them a call at (800) 477-SIMS.

## The PC Gamer Playlist

**T**he full version of *Descent II* showed up at the *PC Gamer* offices recently, at about the same time as a new 21" monitor. Now there's a recipe for Gaming Goodness! Unfortunately, we didn't get much use out of it, thanks to an experiment Dan called "homemade Virtual Reality." Throwing a blanket over himself and the mighty monitor, he descended into a 3D hell, enduring 48 straight hours of *Descent II*. When he emerged, he informed us that he was no longer our editor, but Danbot R49, a robotic overmind bent on world domination. Oh, well — it's nothing that hasn't happened before around here.

1. *Descent II*/Interplay — Every-

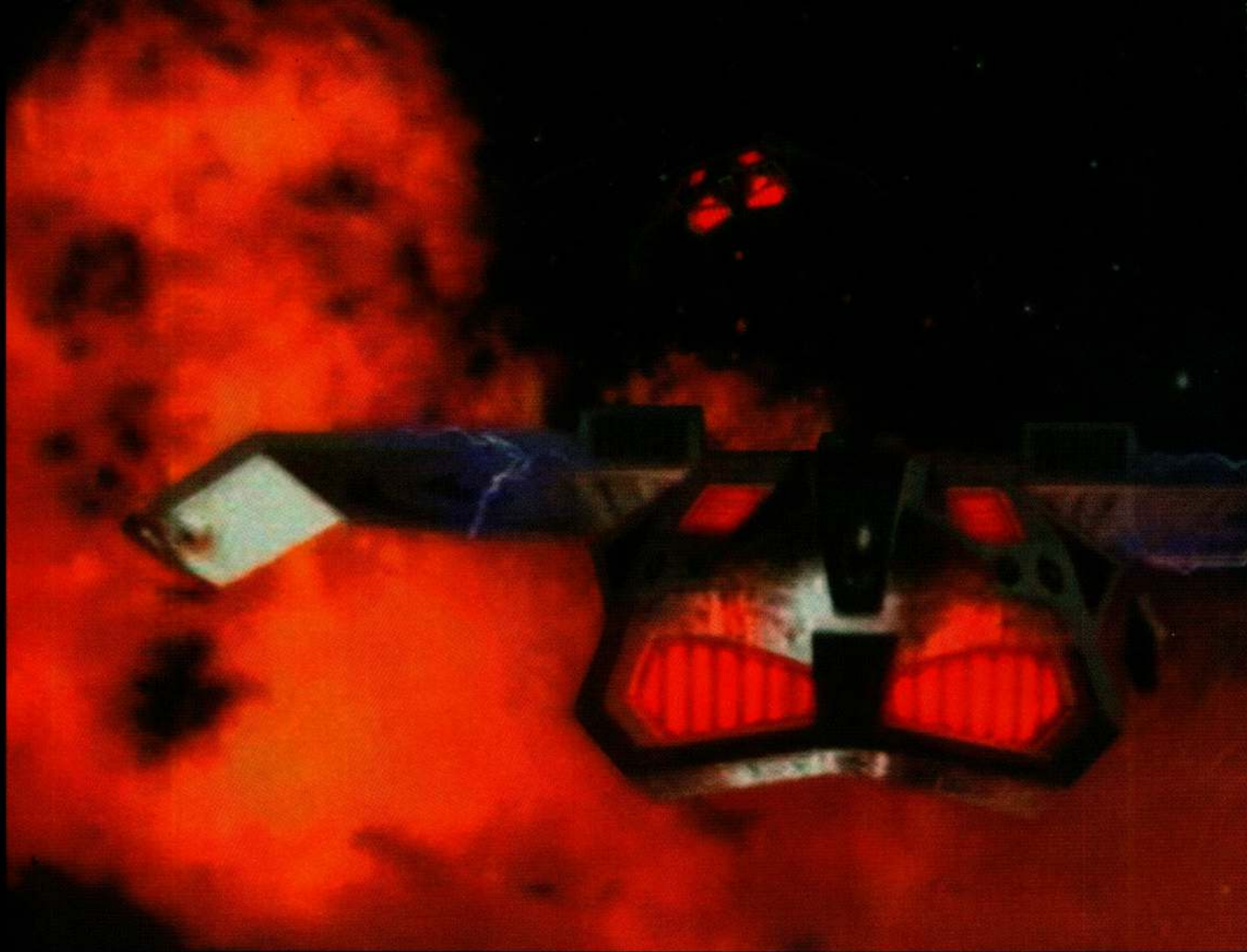
body (especially Dan)

2. *Duke Nukem 3D/3D Realms* — Everybody
3. *Warcraft III/Blizzard* — Joe, Lisa, Jason
4. *Terra Nova/Looking Glass* — Todd, Dan, Mike
5. *Earth Siege 2/Sierra* — Dan, Joe, Todd
6. *NBA Live '96/EA Sports* — Joe, Mike
7. *NFL Quarterback Club '96/Acclaim* — Mike, Robin
8. *C&C: The Covert Operations/Westwood Studios* — Dean, Mike
9. *The Beast Within/Sierra* — Dan, Mike
10. *Dip & Twiddle III: The Final Dip/DipCo* — Dean, Lisa



*Descent II* has taken everybody at *PC Gamer* headquarters by storm.

YOU KNOW  
YOU  
WANT IT.



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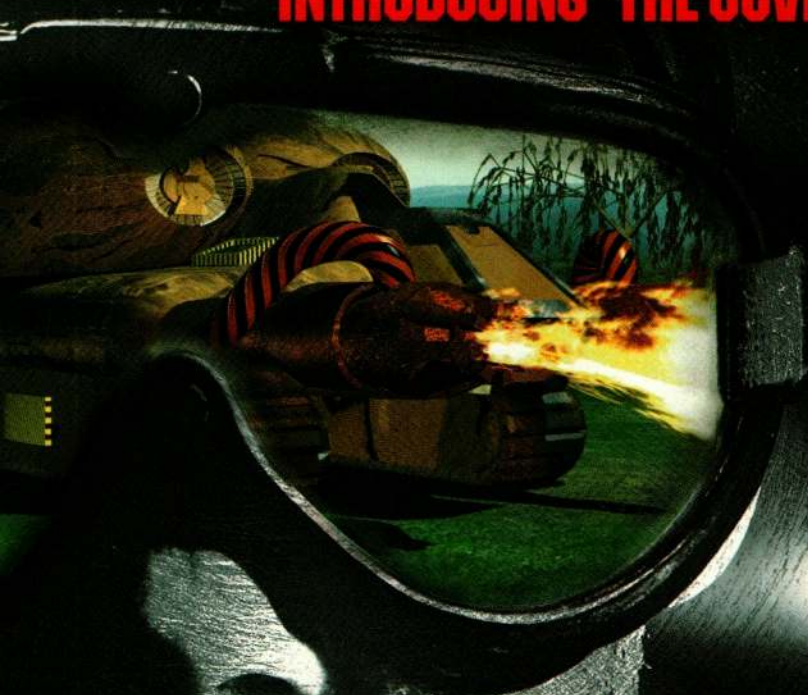
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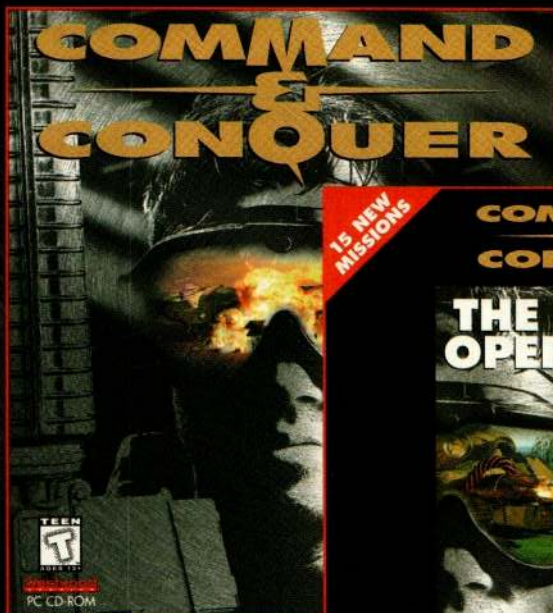
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# RAGES ON.

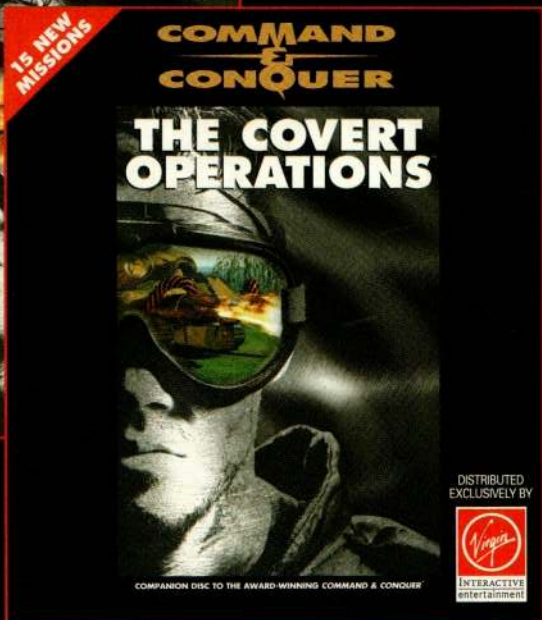
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# A New Hope

## STAR WARS GOES MULTI-PLAYER

By Jason Bates

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***X-Wing*, *TIE Fighter*, and *Dark Forces* were three of the most popular games of the last few years — and not just because of their ties to the Star Wars legend. Now, *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* and *Jedi Knight* are set to pit good against evil — and gamer against gamer.**

---

It's hard to think of a bad game that bears the LucasArts name. Even the Rebel Assault titles — lightweight, flashy twitch-games at heart — are among the best of their kind. And the other Star Wars titles, *X-Wing*, *TIE Fighter*, and *Dark Forces*, are three of the best games ever made for the PC.

The few complaints gamers could muster about those three hits had one common denominator: Where's the multi-player support? When *Dark Forces* came out, it was easily the best *Doom*-style game since *Doom* itself, but it lacked one key ingredient that helped make *Doom* so popular —

deathmatch play. And as for *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter* — well, who wouldn't want to take part in a head-to-head battle between the Rebellion and the evil Empire?

Strangely, LucasArts has done no multi-player games before now. That's partially because of LucasArts' biggest secret: the mega-successful game company has never really been on the cutting edge of computer gaming technology. Instead, they've generally been content to let other companies show what *can* be done in a game — then they come along and show everyone how it *should* be done.

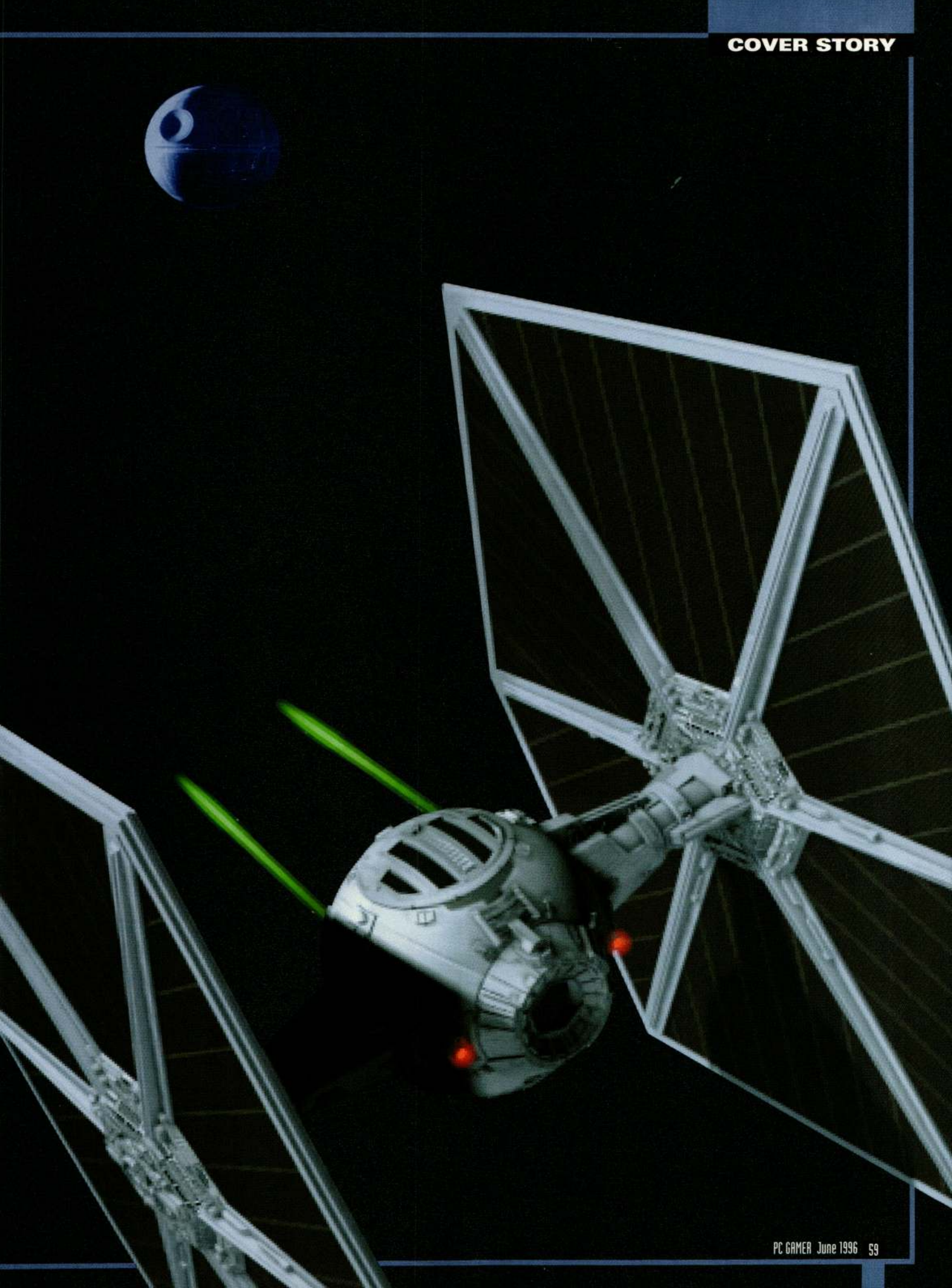
"We've never taken the stance

that we have to be the first to be the best," said Steve Dauterman, LucasArts' director of production. "Our feeling is that once the market is there, let's take the good aspects of that market and make them even better. We feel like we've certainly done that with games like *Dark Forces*, *X-Wing*, and *TIE Fighter*."

But good things come to those who wait. LucasArts has two new Star Wars titles in the works, giving us the biggest news since, well, back when a few Rebels took out the Death Star.

The first is *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*. Savor that title for a moment.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 60



Now picture completely revamped, high-resolution graphics. See yourself playing as either the Rebels or the Imperials, then choose to play alone or with friends across a modem or on a network. Imagine not just individual missions, but whole campaigns designed specifically for multi-player teams.

And if you were head-honcho-for-a-day at LucasArts, just what would you do to improve on *Dark Forces*? Add a true 3D engine and multi-player mode, maybe? Throw in special powers with the Force, and add light sabers? LucasArts is doing all that, as Kyle Katarn returns in *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II*.

No, you're not dreaming.

## X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter

No one knows more about the flight mechanics of the Star Wars spacecraft than Larry Holland and his team of designers at Totally Games. Now a separate company from LucasArts, Holland and his crew have worked very closely with LucasArts for years, going all the way back to *Battlehawks 1942* in 1988.

After three very successful World War Two air combat titles, they turned around and did *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter*. Their experience simulating World War Two fighter combat was a natural asset for working in the Star Wars universe, since George Lucas used World War Two fighter movies like *Battle of Britain* as a model for the exciting dogfights he wanted to depict in Star Wars.

Although *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* will be Holland's first multi-player design, head-to-head play has always been a dream of his.

"We game developers are core game players," he said. "We've always wanted to create the ultimate game for ourselves, and we always felt that a multi-player game would be the most exciting."

"Personally, I've been thinking about it probably since *Battlehawks 1942*," Holland said, "and started thinking about it more seriously when I did *Their Finest Hour*. It's kind of the obvious expression of what a great game could be."

Unfortunately, back in those days, multi-player gaming was an idea ahead of its time — and ahead of the technology available to most gamers. Since then, though, the evolution of computer technology has made possible many things designers have been itching to do for years. Fast modems, Pentium processors, and office networks have created a cauldron of gaming potential that developers have only begun to explore.

## Imperial Light and Magic

In terms of gameplay and graphic quality, *TIE Fighter* was significantly better

than *X-Wing*. But Holland says the changes we'll see in *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* will represent an even bigger leap forward.

"What we call our flight engine, the combat experience, is going through a really cool evolution," Holland said. "We're going to do high-res, texture maps, awesome lighting effects — sort of another generation of visual technology."

In addition to the amazing detail you can see in the screen shots we managed to get our hands on, the exciting visuals will include explosions and lasers that cast light and shadows on the ships and light up the inside of your cockpit.

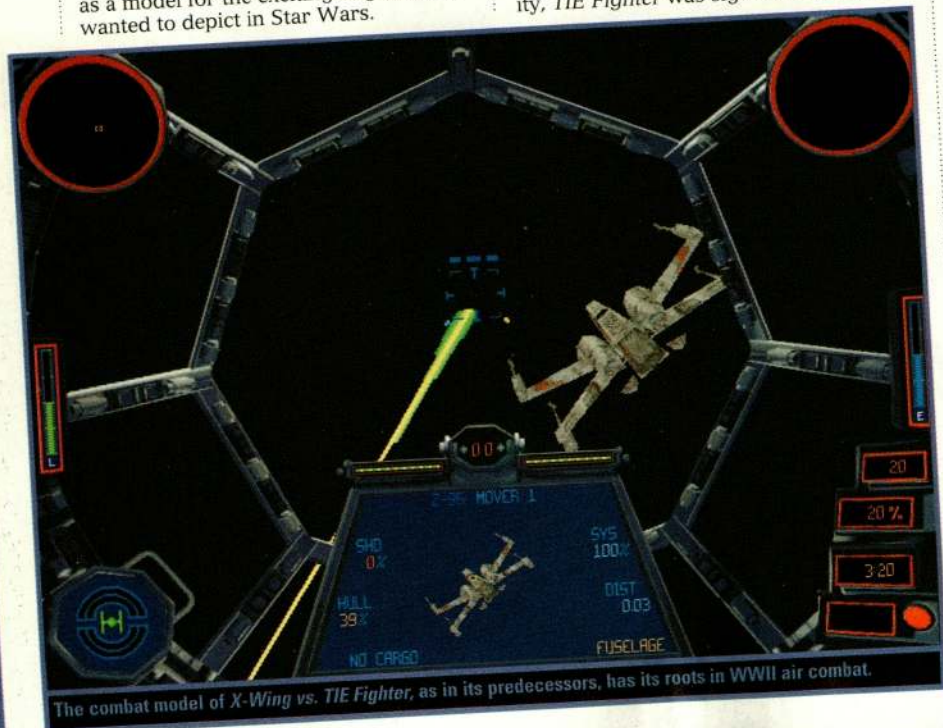
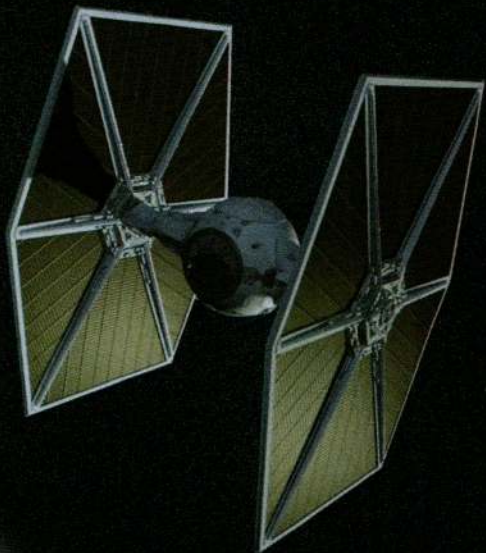
And you won't have to pause the game to access your in-flight map, damage control system, or message log — unlike in *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter*, these features will be available right there on your cockpit display. High-resolution graphics make this possible, but multi-player action makes it a necessity, Holland said.

"We can't cause one player to stop time to look at his stuff, and force everyone else to pause," he explained.

But the most impressive graphics will be seen in the ships themselves. "There will be no doubt that you're looking at an X-Wing," said Holland. "The TIE Fighters had such a unique silhouette that they were instantly recognizable, and the players could use their imaginations, sort of filling in the details, textures and such. In this one, the imagination will be helped a lot more by the actual images."

"To me, [the fighters] look like physical models," said Wayne Cline, the product manager for *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*. "Most people will look at them and say 'Oh, this must be from a cut-scene or something,' but it's not. It's what you will see in flight."

Another possibility is live chatter between players; using a standard



The combat model of *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*, as in its predecessors, has its roots in WWII air combat.

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Product Information Number 150

# JEDI KNIGHT

## THE LIGHT SIDE OF DARK FORCES

sound card and microphone, players would be able to communicate with their teammates and rivals.

"We're exploring voice communications over the network. When most people play network games in the office, they've got the speaker phones on in a conference call — which is a great use of company resources," Holland said, laughing.

But most gamers don't have easy access to an office network, so what about voice support over the modem? Holland said some kind of low-grade communication might be feasible with the fastest, 28.8Kbps modems.

"That's obviously the hardest technology hurdle," he said. "We'll try it on network first, and then go into modems."

With dozens of complex, texture-mapped spacecraft zooming around, the question of 3D graphic accelerators is bound to come up. But the new game is being optimized to run without them.

"We've been somewhat disappointed by the slowness with which they have entered the marketplace," said Holland. He'd like to see a 3D card in every gamer's home machine, but they won't be necessary for *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*.

"We believe our current technology is going to work really well on almost all the machines out there," Holland said. "The only ones that might have some problems would be the 486s, but certainly by next Christmas the Pentium is going to have the lion's share of the market."

"And our technology is always tuned to be really fast," he said. "We always go for speed and fluidity of graphics over lots of colors or lots of polygons or textures, because we always felt that how fast the game moved was the most important thing."

"Certainly on a Pentium it will run very smoothly," Holland said. "Right now, the product is geared to use DirectDraw under Win 95, and we hope that Win 95 will have taken over completely by then, so we can be a Win 95 product only. It's a good platform to run on."

Holland and company aren't spending a lot of time or resources on cut-scenes or full-motion video for *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*. Instead, the story will be told the way it was in the first two games, through mission briefings, radio chatter during missions, and the occasional, brief animation or video.

"We're not trying to compete with the Origin bunch, who do wonderful movies and make great products in the Wing Commander series," Holland said. "We have certain resources and energy, and we'd rather put them into the actual game combat, rather than doing

**X**-Wing vs. TIE Fighter isn't the only great multi-player news coming out of California's Marin County. There's also *Jedi Knight*, the sequel to *Dark Forces*. We spoke with LucasArts's Steve Dauterman to get the details.

The first thing Dauterman made clear was that LucasArts intends to keep pace with the competitive, cutting-edge world of the first-person shooters.

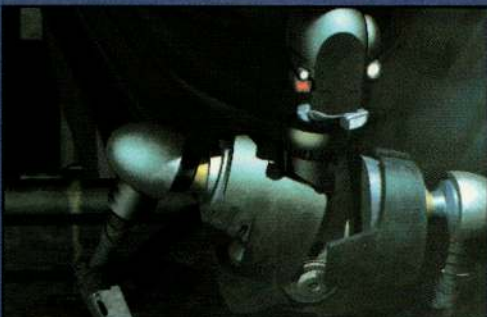
"We didn't want to do just *Dark Forces II*, even though it's carrying the story through," he said. "We're not just cobbling together some new missions and throwing in full-motion video. Basically, the guys are starting over, to have a true 3D engine. We wanted to take a big step forward."

They designers of *Jedi Knight* are certainly aware of the advances made by other games in the genre: true 3D environments, reflective surfaces, dynamic lighting effects, and such.

"We knew we were going to have competition from other companies, like *Quake* and others," Dauterman said. "We want to be not only as good, but better."

All the elements of an advanced, true 3D environment are being worked out for *Jedi Knight* — arches, spiral staircases, reflective surfaces — things we would expect to see in any new first-person title will be possible with the new game engine. And those flat bitmaps of stormtroopers and other enemies in *Dark Forces* will be replaced with 3D characters similar to those in *Quake*, Dauterman said.

The new game's title clues you in to what the game is about: Kyle Katarn, the hero of *Dark Forces*, returns as a Jedi-in-training. Along the way, he'll learn to use the Force and take on several Dark Jedi, the toughest opponents in the game. At some point, of course, Kyle will have to make the same decision Luke Skywalker faced in the *Star Wars* movies: whether to follow the



Like *Dark Forces*, *Jedi Knight* will be distinguished from similar action titles because of its rich use of story.

Light or give in to the Dark Side of the Force. The game will have a different outcome depending on your choice, but choosing the Dark Side doesn't necessarily mean losing the game.

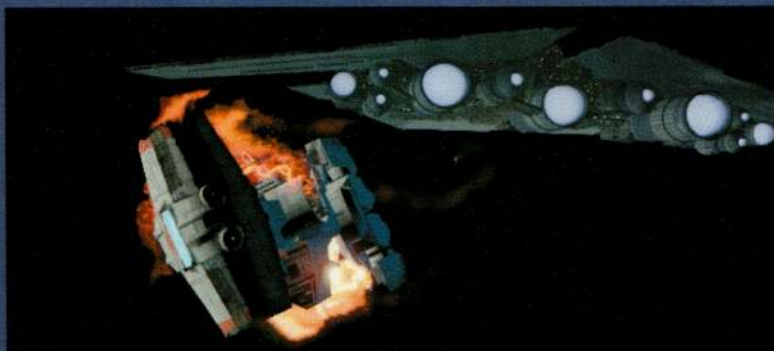
And what would a *Jedi Knight* be without a lightsaber?

"We wanted it in the first game," said Dauterman, "but, practically, it came down to waiting another two years to ship *Dark Forces* [with lightsabers], or going without."

The two different kinds of Jedi — Dark and Light — should fit nicely into the game's multi-player mode, as each type of Jedi may have special abilities the other side lacks. While the *Jedi Knight* designers are still working on the specifics, it's clear the Force will manifest itself in the game as special abilities you'll use as you learn them — things like becoming invisible or seeing hidden areas of the map.

The game has a tentative shipping date in the first quarter of 1997, and it is almost certainly going to be a Windows 95 title, optimized for Pentiums — although LucasArts' current plan does include support for 486/66s.

*Jedi Knight* is still in the very early stages of development, so a lot of the details are still being worked out. But, as Dauterman says, "from all indications, it will be the next step forward."



Because the game is still in the very early stages of development, there aren't any actual game screens available yet. The cutscene shown here gives a sense of the game's scope.

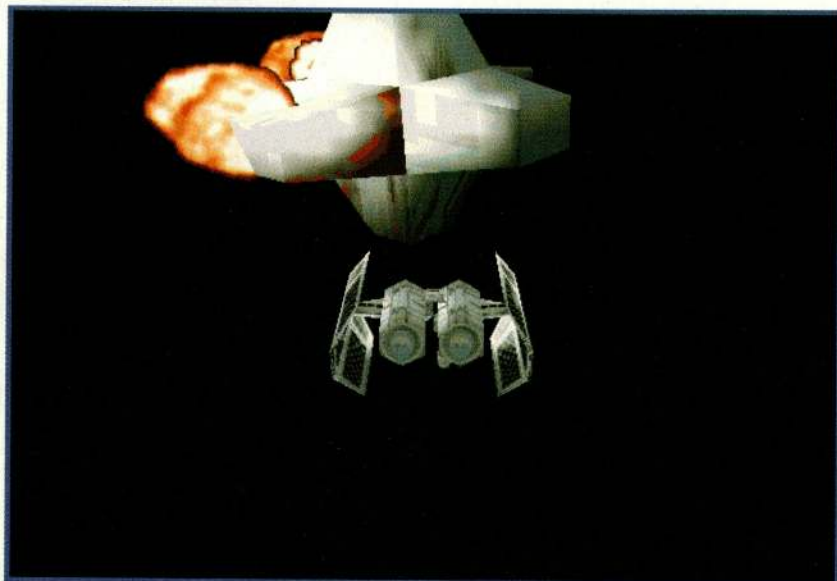


The keyboard commands and cockpit views in *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* will be familiar to veteran pilots.

a lot of film production and all that sort of stuff."

But if the new game lacks Hollywood-style video sequences, it'll certainly have film-quality sound. LucasArts' games have always had top-notch sound effects, and that's one area of *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* that won't need much tinkering.

"It's kind of hard to top what we have," said Holland, "and we'll probably be using that as a base. We obviously don't want to change the sound of a TIE Fighter flying by, or a laser; those are sort of classic sounds everybody



High-resolution Super VGA graphics and dynamic lighting effects will grace *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*.

knows. But we'll be adding a few cool, little things."

## Multi-Player Now!

Even if it were just another single-player game, *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* would be something to look forward to. And if the designers just tacked on the usual head-to-head support, they'd probably be in the running for Game of the Year. But this is LucasArts we're talking about; this company doesn't do anything halfway. And what Holland

and his team have planned for fans of multi-player games is truly exciting.

For starters, there will be a host of options to choose from. If you just want to get in and have a free-for-all, you'll be able to. Or you could opt to fly with one or more wingmen against a bunch of computer-controlled ships. But head-to-head and cooperative action are just the tip of the asteroid.

"I think we do need to offer a real variety of quick, short, very simple battles, everyone against each other," Holland said. "They're just continuous experiences, kind of like *Descent*, where you just get in there, get killed, come back with another ship, and go at it again."

But that kind of play is an almost an afterthought in *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*; where the game will really shine, Holland said, is in team-vs.-team mode, with missions and plots specifically designed for multiple players.

"We want to offer some real story as to what's happening, some real reason for being in the action," he said. Like the single-player missions in the previous Star Wars sims, multi-player battles can have boarding actions, capture operations, and escort duties going on around you, and victory will depend not on destroying the opponent, but on actually completing the mission.

"One of the things that we're really trying to emphasize is that we're not just facing everybody off to see who gets the most kills, but that they are actually team members who are trying to accomplish something together," said Holland.

An example of how such a mission could work: If there were three players on the Rebel side, one player in an A-Wing might have to go out first and identify a key enemy freighter, then another player in a Y-Wing would have to go in and disable the freighter while a third player in an X-Wing covered the other guys. Meanwhile, the Imperial

# THEN AND NOW

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X-Wing: 1996



TIE Fighter: 1994



TIE Fighter: 1996



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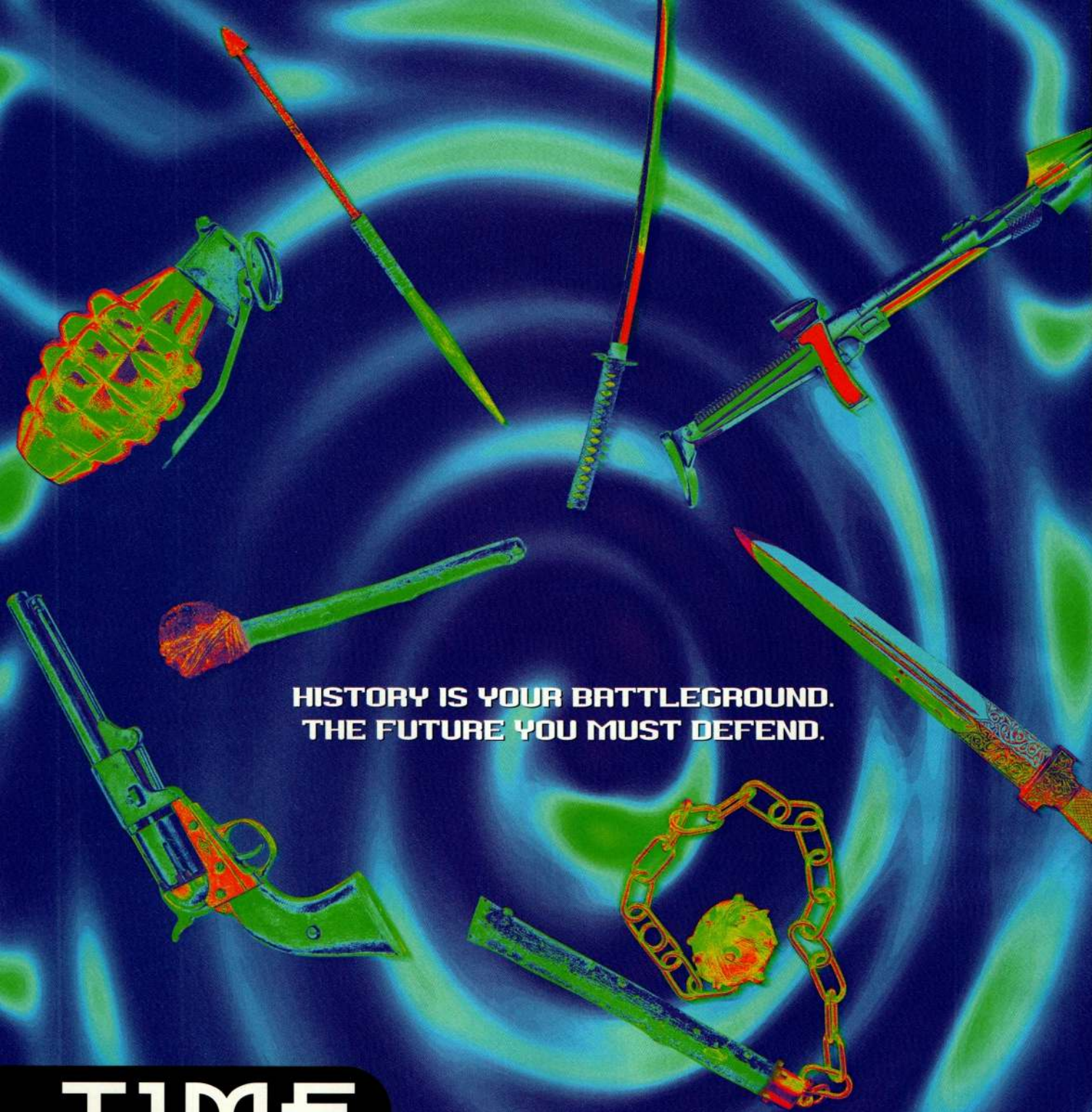
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# OUTLAW

## DEATHMATCH IN THE OLD WEST



*Outlaw* is a tribute to spaghetti westerns and Clint Eastwood movies — it is one of a rare breed of computer games set in the Old West, and the first with a true 3D engine.

One thing the people at LucasArts keep proving is that their talents aren't limited to bringing Star Wars to life on the PC. Many of their completely original games, like *The Secret of Monkey Island*, *Full Throttle*, and *The Dig*, are excellent examples of computer game design.

Another original, due out this Christmas, is *Outlaw*. A tribute to classic "spaghetti westerns" like *A Fistful of Dollars*, *Outlaw's* gameplay is best described as a cross between *Dark Forces* and *Full Throttle*. The game is built on the *Dark Forces* engine, and it is primarily a first-person shooter, but *Full Throttle*-style animation will appear throughout.

A first-person shooter in a Hollywood-style Old West setting is a natural, since gunplay is such a key element in that genre. But *Outlaw* won't be merely a *Doom*-style gore-fest; instead, the player will have to think strategically. As you make your way through the game's levels (all classic Old West settings like ghost towns and mines) you'll be fighting far fewer enemies than in most shoot-'em-ups, as you search for clues to your enemy's whereabouts. When a gunfight does come, you'll have to keep your wits about you, conserving ammo and aiming carefully. And while this isn't written in stone yet, it's possible *Outlaw* won't use the kind of auto-aiming feature found in most *Doom*-style games, where pointing your gun in the bad guy's general direction is enough; instead, you may have to use the mouse to aim and fire with accuracy.



*Outlaw*, a new first-person shooter using the original *Dark Forces* engine, will make generous use of *Full Throttle*-style animation to advance the plot.

Animation will be used in the game to dramatize major story points like an opponent's death. Also a possibility are animated action sequences, similar to the motorcycle chase *Full Throttle*; the *Outlaw* team is still working out the details.

As *Outlaw's* story opens, the player will take on the role of an Old West sheriff, tracking down the villain who murdered his wife and kidnapped his daughter — classic Clint Eastwood stuff.

"With *Outlaw*, we're trying to get the flavor and feel of a spaghetti western," said Steve Deuterian, LucasArts' director of production. "So it's somewhat clichéd in parts, but an original story. Spaghetti westerns in themselves are clichés, so a lot of those things are going to be in there, as a tribute."

The game will probably ship for both DOS and Windows 95, Deuterian said.

players are trying to stop the Rebels.

"Each of the players in the mission has a different role to play," Cline said, "and if they fail in their roles — if they decide they just want to go out and get the most kills — they may lose the mission because they left their post."

But Holland and his team at Totally Games aren't just talking about designing individual missions for multi-player mode; they plan to create entire multi-player campaigns.

"There's a couple ways we're doing that," said Holland. "One is what I would call a series or match play: You choose the Rebel Alliance or the Imperials, and you stay on that side through the entire series. It's sort of like a hockey series or a basketball series, where it's the best out of seven or the best out of five. Each of the games or engagements in that series is different, but they're tied together by a story and some consequences following from one to the other."

The advantage to this design, besides giving added depth to multi-player games, is that if one side's pilots lose the first engagement, they'll have several more chances to regroup and retake the lead, rather than getting hopelessly behind in some mammoth, two-hour deathmatch. In other words, you could lose a couple of battles and still win the war.

"I personally enjoy it more, playing cooperatively against other people, whether it's two-on-two, or three-on-three," said Holland. In network play, *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* will support at least eight players, and possibly as many as sixteen.

"It's just a great game experience and social experience," he said, "the type of activity we grew up with, whether it's playing baseball together or playing army men together — it's got that kind of group dynamic. It's sort of the Holy Grail for us, and it's just wonderful to finally get to that point where it's feasible and possible."

## So Who Gets Stuck With The TIE Fighter?

Obviously, developing a multi-player game this complex — while being faithful to the design of the earlier titles, is quite a challenge. For starters, the ships on the two sides are not evenly matched: many of the Imperial ships lack the defensive shields found on all Rebel fighters, and the TIE Fighter is notoriously fragile.

"We're actually trying to balance it by putting some of the earlier [Rebel] craft in there, like the Z-95 Headhunter, which shows up in *TIE Fighter*," Hol-

land said. The T-Wing and the R-41 Starchaser, which also appeared in *TIE Fighter*, will be added to the Rebel side as well, as counterparts to the Empire's weaker ships.

The fact that *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter* were originally designed for a single player against a number of computer-controlled ships also creates difficulties for the designers.

"A player wants to be able to survive when he's flying," Holland said. "He doesn't want to get out there and die in five seconds. But he also likes to get a lot of kills."

In the original games, a good player could rack up twenty or more kills in one mission, because the computer opponents could only do so much. But if you're flying against other human

pilots, scoring kills becomes much more difficult, and simply surviving will be an achievement.

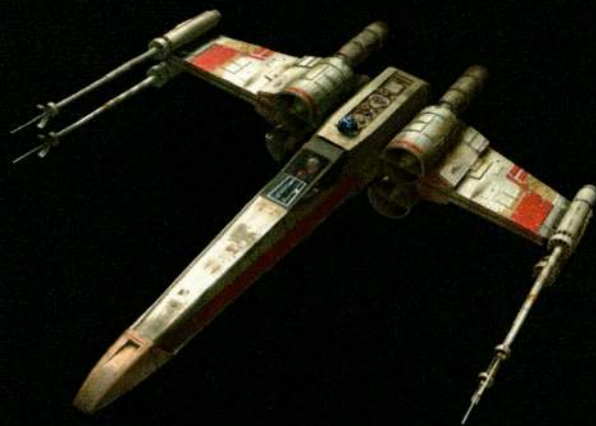
"It's really tricky," said Holland, "balancing the survivability quotient and the kill-ability quotient. But we have to balance this right to make the game satisfying.

"Ultimately, the game's experience, at a very core level, is flying around and shooting ships, blowing TIE fighters apart and seeing the pieces blow up. We can't take that away by making it utterly impossible to shoot anybody down. But with human players in those craft, you don't want to shoot them down with one shot."

One possible solution is to have multiple craft under the control of one player. You'd be able to give them orders, just like you did with your wingmen in the earlier games, and if your main ship was destroyed, you'd be transferred to your number two ship, and so on.

Gamers partial to the Dark Side should note that the missile boat and TIE Defender will not make an appearance, although the TIE Advanced probably will.

"The TIE Advanced is a good balance for the other side's high end — the



A-Wing — so that craft will probably be there," Holland explained. "But the TIE Defender and missile boat, we'll keep in the storehouse for another version down the road."

## A Gameplay Tune-up

LucasArts first experimented with multi-player concepts a year ago, using the *TIE Fighter* game as a foundation. What they found was that gameplay became vastly different when it was humans dogfighting each other, and that subtle changes in flight dynamics, shield recharging levels, and laser strengths were in order. But none of the changes will be really dramatic.

"We don't want to change any of the basic systems and have things act differently, because we believe our core audience will be *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter* players," Holland said. "But we're looking at adjusting them in appropriate ways to make the game more balanced."

One example of this subtle tweaking is the way they've changed the turn rates of the various fighters. In *TIE Fighter* and *X-Wing*, the turn rates vary from one fighter to the next, but each ship's rate remains the same no matter what speed it's traveling at. This leads to a situation where stopping dead in space, then rotating and firing, is actually a good tactic. In multi-player mode, this would discourage fast-moving dogfights; everyone could put their backs against the big, orbiting containers and lie in wait for the enemy. So the *X-Wing* vs. *TIE Fighter* team has made the turn rate a function of speed; the faster you go, the faster you can turn, while fighters that aren't moving won't be able to turn much at all.

LucasArts hopes to have *X-Wing* vs. *TIE Fighter* ready by this Christmas, but anyone familiar with LucasArts' development cycles knows that's hardly set in stone; this is one game publisher that never rushes a product out the door. Still, no matter when it comes out, this one will be worth the wait.



Network play will appeal to both novices and veterans. The number of network players has not yet been decided.



No it's not a cutscene — these are actual ships flying in an early version of *X-Wing Vs. TIE Fighter*.

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\* Arnold Hendrick, now chief game designer of Interactive Magic, was the game designer of the award winning products M1 Tank Platoon®, Gunship®, F-19 Stealth Fighter® and more. MicroProse Software, M1 Tank Platoon, Gunship, and F-19 Stealth Fighter are registered trademarks of MicroProse Software, Inc. and Spectrum Holobyte, Inc. Interactive Magic is not affiliated with MicroProse Software, Inc. or Spectrum Holobyte, Inc.

Product Information Number 121

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### Computer Game Survivor's Guide

**W**e all know that PCs aren't the easiest computers in the world to use. They require a certain level of know-how, so roll up your sleeves and let's get gaming! But, wait, before you do, it will help to familiarize yourself with this useful glossary of common computer terms.

**alpha:** An early, working copy of a program, prone to crashes. See "beta."

**autoexec.bat:** Hell in a very small file.

**beta:** An early, working copy of a program, prone to crashes, and shrink-wrapped for retail. See "bug patch."

**boot disk:** The virus-laden floppy you just left in someone's disk drive. "Oh don't worry, it's only my boot disk."

**bug patch:** Modifies existing programs by changing current bugs into new ones. See "upgrade."

**config.sys:** See autoexec.bat.

**CD-ROM:** A high-tech drink coaster.

**edutainment:** Games that are neither entertaining nor educational, sold to guilty parents.

**end user:** Someone less computer literate than you are.

**hard drive:** Getting from Fairbanks to Portland in December.

**general protection fault:** When your Trojan lets you down.

**hardware manual:** 24 pages of Korean limericks printed upside down.

**interactive movie:** Although a lot like television, you actually must sit much closer to the screen in order for it to work.

**jumpers:** Impossibly small pieces of plastic that end-users are supposed to use as manually configured circuit-breakers.

**Macintosh:** Expensive computers lacking both good games and disk-eject buttons.

**platform shooter:** A window-washer with a high-powered rifle.

**Plug and Play:** Plug it in and start playing right away. Also known as Nintendo.

**printer:** An evil leech that hooks onto your PC and demands a constant supply of fresh ink and paper. *Never* try to feed one an envelope.

**RAM:** Like money, there's never enough to go around.

**roleplaying game:** A group of people gather together, create their own characters, and share adventures. In computer terms, a lone user playing a premade character in a predetermined storyline through a cumbersome interface.

**shareware:** When Mom makes you share your games with your little brother. Yuck!

**simulation:** Too boring to be called a game, but too inaccurate to be educational, hence it "simulates" both.

**tech support number:** A direct line to a company's voice mail system.

**upgrade:** A shrink-wrapped bug patch, often an early working version. See "alpha."

### 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

These are pretty good games, which we would recommend to fans of the particular genre —

although it's a safe bet that 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 that keep it from earning a higher rating.

##### 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 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 Editors' Choice award. It's not easy to earn the Editors' Choice, and there are a lot of excellent games that fall just short of the honor. So when you see the *PC Gamer* Editors' Choice logo on a game at your local software shop, you can bet it's among the best of the best.

#### ADVANCED TACTICAL FIGHTERS



p.74

#### DESCENT II



p.82

#### DINOTOPIA



p.109

#### EARTHSIEGE 2



p.90

#### SILENT HUNTER



p.106

#### SPYCRAFT: THE GREAT GAME



p.125

# Advanced Tactical Fighters

**Category:** Simulation

**Developer:** Jane's Combat Simulations

**Publisher:** Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404 (415) 571-7171

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 29MB hard-drive space; Super VGA; supported sound card.	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 61MB hard-drive space; local-bus Super VGA; Joystick; Modem

**With its ultra-modern jets, the debut title from Jane's Combat Simulations is a missile-head's dream.**

**PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE**

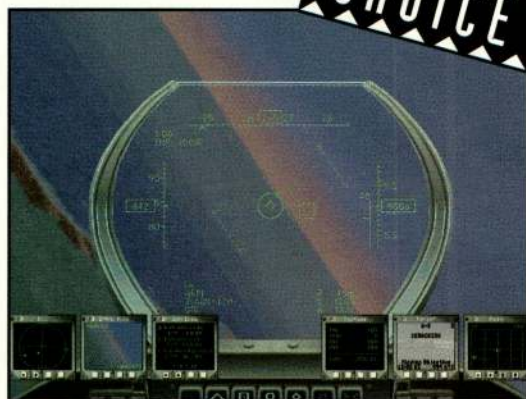
If you can't get enough of TV shows like The Discovery Channel's "Wings," if you drool over those oversized books with titles like *Modern Combat Aircraft*, then the first title in Electronic Arts' new line of hard-core combat simulations was made for you.

Created with the assistance of Jane's Information Group, the legendary British publisher responsible for *Jane's All the World's Aircraft* and *Jane's Defence Weekly*, *Advanced Tactical Fighters* focuses on seven of the hottest high-tech jets in the world, all simulated with beautiful, high-resolution graphics and painstaking flight models.

Some of them, like the F-117A stealth fighter, have seen real-world service; others, like the incredibly maneuverable XF-31 EFM, are experimental jets barely off the drawing boards — and the XF-32 ASTOVL is purely hypothetical, a combination of a few different designs for the Advanced Short Take-Off/Vertical Landing fighter that could replace the F/A-18 Hornet early next century. It's pretty heady stuff for aficionados of cutting-edge war machines.

Air combat sim veterans will immediately see similarities between *ATF* and *U.S. Navy Fighters*, EA's big sim from 1994. That's because *ATF* was built on the *USNF* engine, and the designers made no major effort to hide that fact. The graphic style is the same, the menu system is the same — you'll even see some familiar faces when it comes time to choose your pilot's portrait.

That's not a bad thing. It would've been nice if *ATF* didn't have such a familiar feel to it, especially since it's the first offering from the new Jane's line, and it



**Information Central:** In the cockpit of an F-22, you track a Chinese Fantan while keeping an eye on your tail, your engines, your radar cross-section, and more.

deals with such cutting-edge aircraft, but it hardly feels dated. *USNF* was a very good sim, and the biggest complaint gamers made about it — that its detailed, high-res graphics meant it required a really fast machine to run smoothly — is not quite the drawback it used to be, with Pentium chips so much more common in gamers' systems. Plus, the use of *U.S. Navy Fighters* as a foundation means you also get to fly some old friends from *USNF* and its *Marine Fighters* add-on, like the AC-130 Spectre; the Tomcat; the Hornet; the Sea Harrier and Harrier II Plus; the Russian Freestyle; and the Su-33 Flanker. That's a grand total of 14 very different planes you can take for a spin.

## Jane's Incredible Planes

*Advanced Tactical Fighters* has a lot going for it, but the best thing about this sim is the variety of incredible jets it lets you fly. And these aren't just different graphics slapped on the same flight model; each plane has its own unique qualities that come into play in the game. Check 'em out:



**B-2 SPIRIT:** The amazingly expensive and controversial stealth bomber. If its performance in *ATF* is any indication of its real-world capabilities, it's worth the money. A new cockpit instrument in the game tracks your radar cross-section, providing ample proof that the big bomber is less visible to enemy radar than much smaller fighters.



**F-117A:** The legendary stealth fighter still doesn't have an official name, although it's known unofficially as the Night Hawk. One attack run over a heavily defended enemy installation, leaving confused interceptors and missile crews in your wake, and you'll see why it was so popular in the opening days of the Gulf War.



**F-22A:** The USAF's new air-superiority fighter is capable of "supercruise," which means it can do Mach 1.58 without afterburners (and just under Mach 2 with afterburners), giving it amazing range and speed. Nozzles that direct engine thrust up and down greatly increase its maneuverability, and a stealthy design makes it hard to spot on radar.



**RAFALE C:** France may not be known as a technological hotbed, but the French military's hottest fighter is nothing to sneeze at; it's fast and highly maneuverable. It's also versatile; it comes in interceptor, multi-role, and reconnaissance flavors, and it's capable of carrier operations.



**X-29 FSW:** The FSW stands for the X-29's Forward Swept Wing, a design that sometimes makes it look like it's flying backwards — and gives it incredible agility and stability. The jet's radical shape makes it much easier to control stalls, which means it's much more responsive in low-speed and high angle-of-attack maneuvers.



Advanced Tactical Fighters has the same high-res, texture-mapped 3D graphics that made U.S. Navy Fighters so attractive.

And *ATF* has the same full-featured mission builders that gave its predecessor so much replay value.

And in all fairness, *ATF* isn't just *U.S. Navy Fighters* with seven new planes. For starters, the flight models seem more realistic in *ATF*. Of course, only a handful of test-pilots could tell you just how realistically the planes respond — and if they did, they might have to kill you — but they *feel* right. At the very least, each of the planes definitely handles differently from all the others. The X-29, with its rigid, forward-swept wing, is almost dangerously responsive; the F-22 breaks the sound barrier (beats the hell out of it, in fact) *without* afterburners; and the XF-31 EFM can make some amazing moves in what's known as post-stall maneuvering.

Multi-player nuts will be happy to know *ATF* has network, modem, and serial-link options that'll come in handy if you want to fly against — or in cooperation with — other living, breathing pilots. And the computerized opponents are no slouches, either; they're pretty

sharp, and when they're in the more advanced fighters, they actually appear to use their planes' special abilities.

There's some nifty multimedia content, too, and it's not just random stuff the designers happened to get their hands on. For each of the seven featured planes, there are several sharp photos; cockpit and cutaway views; a detailed description; and quality, full-screen video clips detailing the plane's production history, control surfaces, and special maneuvers — all of it drawn from the extensive Jane's database. Also included are pictures and descriptions of all the other planes, weapons, ships, and ground targets that appear in the game. It's a missile-head's dream; take away the excellent flight simulation, and it would still put some multimedia air-combat references to shame.

There's just one significant problem with *ATF*: it's hard. At times, frustratingly hard. *ATF* has the same problem that *USNF* and *Marine Fighters* had: in many missions, it's not enough to take the recommended plane and the recommended weapons and follow the recommended waypoints; instead, the missions often feel like puzzles, challenging you to figure out what you're *really* supposed to do, and in what order. Are the enemy F-5s mentioned in the mission briefing the real threat, or should you concentrate your fire on the F-16s no one told you about?

The result is that, with many of the missions, you go through a cycle of trial-and-error: You fly the



Decisions, decisions — *U.S. Navy Fighters* veterans will be in familiar territory with *ATF*'s clean, friendly interface.

mission and fail once (or twice, or three times, etc.) to figure out what's really expected of you, then you fly it again to win. This damages the illusion that you're a real pilot fighting a real war.

And even when it's perfectly clear what your mission is, *ATF* can be amazingly tough. It's one thing for this kind of game to be hard for realism's sake — it is a simulation, after all — but *ATF* seems unrealistically difficult. For instance, would two F-22s really be expected to go out by themselves and destroy a pair of cargo ships defended by two guided missile cruisers and several top fighters?

Of course, there are ways to lower the difficulty of the game; a "Cheat" menu lets you select from 14 different options at any time. But most of those options are designed to make it easier for you to fly the plane and kill the enemy — the only way to make it harder for the enemy to kill you is to become completely invulnerable, which is more



Mission accomplished. On the ground, the visual detail is as impressive as in the air.

help than most experienced PC pilots are going to want. There really should be an option to make the enemy pilots just a little less aggressive, or to reduce the effectiveness of their weapons a bit.

Still, the difficulty problem is just about the only flaw in *ATF*, and the game has far too much going for it to be ruined by that. It's a solid, good-looking sim with a lot of variety and some really nice trimmings. If this debut product is any indication, the Jane's Combat Simulations line is something sim fans can really be excited about.

— Dan Bennett



**XF-31 EFM:** The XF-31 has "paddles" that can divert the thrust from its single engine in any direction, making it almost absurdly maneuverable. An experimental plane, the EFM can also break the "stall barrier," which means it's capable of maneuvering even after going below stall speed and losing lift.



**XF-32 ASTOVL:** *ATF*'s XF-32 is actually a hypothetical plane, a combination of several designs competing for the chance to replace the Navy's and Marines' Hornets in 2015. With its short takeoff and vertical landing capability, coupled with speed and agility, it would be ideal for 21st-century carrier operations.

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** Beautiful graphics; lots of high-tech planes to fly; high replay value.

**90%**

**LOWS:** Frequently too tough; hardware requirements are still pretty steep.

**BOTTOM LINE:** With its good looks, variety, and playability, *ATF* belongs in every air combat fan's collection.

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**PC CD-ROM**

# Renegade 2

**Category:** Action

**Developer:** Midnight Software

**Publisher:** SSI, 675 Almanor Ave., Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901 (408) 737-6800

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX50; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; Modem; Supported sound card; Joystick

A little more than a year ago, SSI threw their hats into the space combat ring with *Renegade: The Battle for Jacob's Star*, hoping to take on such heavy hitters as Origin's classic Wing Commander series and LucasArts' Star Wars-inspired simulations. While it had a lot going for it — it was based on the FASA Renegade Legions series of pen-and-paper strategy games and featured incredible Super VGA graphics — *Renegade* fell short of the mark, hampered by a number of oversights, design flaws, and disastrously long load times. The graphics were superb and the combat furious, but there were just too many flaws to recommend it to all but the most dedicated science fiction fan.

With their follow-up title, *Renegade 2: The Return to Jacob's Star*, SSI has remedied some of these problems and added a number of attractive new features, like a built-in mission editor and multi-player options. But *Renegade 2* still gets derailed by prob-



True to the rules of the Renegade Legions pen-and-paper games, you'll need to watch your wingmen's statistics regarding important combat abilities.

**SSI's troubled space combat simulation returns with some exciting new features, but it still has problems.**

lems that detract from the overall experience in a big way.

You start the game shortly after the events of *Renegade* (you can even import your character from the original game, if you happened to save it), and the action begins with you commanding a small force in hot pursuit of the enemy. Your job will be to select wingmen based on their experience, match them with the appropriate fighter craft for each mission's objectives, then lead your wing into battle.

After being briefed on the current mission, you'll wade through no fewer than eleven screens in order to match pilots and ships to the mission. You'll need to repeat the process after difficult missions, replacing damaged ships with operational ones and inexperienced or fatigued pilots with new ones. While I appreciate the variety of wingmen and the ability to choose which fighters to send on a mission, the process is cumbersome at best.

In the cockpit, getting your bearings takes a lot of getting used to, due in no small part to the confusing radar display. The radar is comprised of a three-dimensional grid which represents the mission area and uses colored indicators to highlight enemy fighters, friendly units, and waypoints. Vertical lines that connect targets to the grid indicate whether they're above or below your own fighter. To say the least, it's not the sort of at-a-glance targeting system you'd expect in a state-of-the-art, futuristic fighter craft.

Another problem left over from *Renegade* lies in the poorly implemented wingman controls. In order to give the game a strategic feel, your wingmen typically don't act on their own, leaving you to order them to attack. But even when you've managed to issue orders to each pilot, they rarely respond properly to specific commands (attack my target, go here, etc.) and only half-heartedly obey more general ones.



Once you're in the heat of combat, you'll be treated to spectacular SVGA graphics. Unfortunately, the confusing radar and unreliable wingman controls hamper the enjoyment.

On the positive side, however, *Renegade 2* is a visual treat, with tons of painstakingly rendered ships, explosions and nebulae. And fortunately, the notoriously long load times that accompanied the start of every mission in *Renegade* have been shortened, with CD-ROM access times down to a brisk 20 seconds or less.

More pluses in *Renegade 2* are the built-in mission editor and multi-player features, which offer a way to bypass the confusion of the regular missions and computer-controlled wingmen and enjoy some gorgeous space combat with your friends. But if you're limited to playing *Renegade 2* as a single-player game and don't care to take the time to create your own missions, you'll want to stick with *TIE Fighter* or the Wing Commander games.

—Todd Vaughn

## PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Attractive SVGA graphics, multi-player features.

**LOWS:** Confusing interface, poor wingman control, and not enough mission variety.

**BOTTOM LINE:** A nice game if you're looking for some multi-player space combat action, but a forgettable single-player experience.

# 77%

# Virtual Snooker

**Category:** Sports

**Developer:** Celeris

**Publisher:** Interplay, 17922 Fitch Ave.,  
Irvine, CA 92714  
(800) 969-4263

## Required

Double-speed  
CD-ROM drive;  
486/33; 8MB RAM;  
Mouse

## We Recommend

486/66; Super VGA;  
Supported sound  
card

When Interplay's *Virtual Pool* was released, it was immediately touted as one of the most realistic simulations ever made (never mind that it was about pool). It wasn't because of flashy graphics, amazing sound effects, or any of the trappings that get so many other games noticed; *Virtual Pool* was, quite simply, a really good simulation of what it was like to pick up a cue and play pool.

Now the folks at Interplay have taken that same game engine and turned their attention to another great billiards game, snooker. While it may not be familiar to most U.S. players, snooker offers enough challenge to make it an instant winner with any pool fan who takes the time to learn its quirks.

But it will take some time. To say U.S. audiences are unfamiliar with snooker is a bit of an understatement; a quick poll of the office revealed that only about ten percent

knew how the game was played — and 80 percent of them came here from England. Like most English pastimes, snooker is a game that has a boatload of rules, many of which seem arbitrary, and most of which you don't need to learn before you play the game.

Unlike the standard 15-ball game most pool players recognize, snooker populates the table with 21 balls, 15 of



The tutorial will walk you through basic, advanced, and professional techniques for clearing the table at the pub.

which are red. These 15 are set up in the familiar triangle pattern at one end of the table. The other six balls are each a different color (yellow, green, brown, blue, pink, and black), and each has its own specific location on the table (fortunately, the computer handles all the setup work).

Like many things from across the pond, snooker is a bit odd — but this new sim makes it accessible and entertaining.



Although it's a little confusing at first, snooker isn't as tricky as you might think, and it's a nice variation for pool buffs.

During a turn, the player must sink a red ball, then one of the colored balls, then another red, and so on. Each time one of the colored balls is knocked in, it is returned to its original location until all of the red balls have been removed from play. For each one of the reds you pocket, you get one point; each of the other colors has its own specific value (2 for yellow, 3 for green, 4 for brown, 5 for blue, 6 for pink, and 7 for black). The object of the game is to outscore your opponent before all of the balls go in. It sounds confusing (and I'm only giving the basics here), but *Virtual Snooker* makes the actual gameplay simple.

And once you've got the basics down, *Virtual Snooker* is as impressive and intuitive as *Virtual Pool*. From the satisfying *crack!* of that first break, to the *thunk* when you pocket a ball, *Virtual Snooker* is a blast. The controls use the same simple mouse and keyboard combinations that were used in *Virtual Pool*, and you'll find that everything from positioning the cue to zooming and panning the view is just a click away. Graphics

and sound both follow the same less-is-more philosophy of *Virtual Pool*, and while they are certainly satisfactory, it would've been nice to see some improvement. There's a tutorial that leads you through the basics of the game, from the break to the proper order in which the final balls must be dropped. There are also a few video clips of snooker techniques, but nothing that really makes much of a difference; in the end, it's the gameplay that shines.

Thanks to the strangeness of the game it simulates, *Virtual Snooker* probably isn't going to appeal to the same wide audience that *Virtual Pool* did — not here in the States, anyhow. But dedicated pool aficionados and *Virtual Pool* fans will want to add this excellent game to their collection.

—Trent C. Ward

**PC GAMER** FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** A great simulation of a fantastic pool challenge.

**82%**

**LOWS:** Getting down the basics takes a while; minimalist sounds and music.

**BOTTOM LINE:** A ball-breaking good time for pool fans everywhere.

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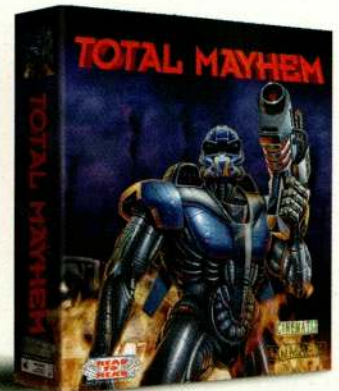
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# Descent II

**Category:** Action

**Developer:** Parallax

**Publisher:** Interplay Productions, 17922 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (800) 969-4263

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX/50; 8MB RAM; 25MB hard-drive space; Super VGA	Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card; Joystick

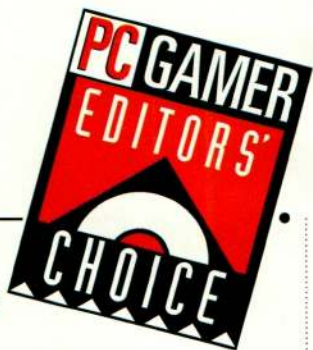
There are a couple of things you can generally count on when dealing with sequels: 1) The title usually has a number following it, and 2) It's little more than a remodeled version of the original product (take *X-COM: Terror From the Deep*, for example). But in the case of *Descent II*, only one of these examples hold true, since it boasts such an impressive range of improvements that it's almost like a new game.

Even though it was marketed as a *Doom*-killer, *Descent* was much more than a first-person shooter in a new environment; it was a whole new way of looking at the genre, providing gamers with an unprecedented 360 degrees of control, fast-paced action, and truly innovative level design. *Descent II* delivers those same thrills, but in exciting — and sometimes subtle — new ways.



With so many more deadly robots, you'll probably see this death scene more often than you like.

**This sequel explodes onto the scene with more new features than you can shake a stick at.**



Along with the game's new SVGA graphics, you'll find spectacular animated cutscenes in between missions. The scenes are a great improvement over *Descent*'s chunky animated sequences.

Let's start with the most obvious improvements. For *Descent II*, Parallax has enhanced the graphics with three gorgeous, high-resolution Super VGA modes, and they've replaced *Descent*'s chunky animated sequences with beautiful, 3D-rendered cutscenes that are actually worth watching. You'll need a little more hardware muscle to get the new graphics running smoothly, but on a Pentium, the 640x480 mode runs quite smoothly and looks great. Other options include the top-of-the-line 800x600 mode and support for 3D accelerator cards using the S3 Virge chip. The robots are more lifelike, the environments are rich with color and detail — and while great graphics still don't have much to do with gameplay, you can't help but grin a little when you get your

## NEW IN TWO

The sheer number of new features and enhancements in *Descent II* are enough to bring a smile to any committed *Descent* fan, with the expected improvements in weapons and graphics well at the top of the list. But a few new features are genuine surprises. Here's one we especially like, and another we'd like to see toasted.

### GUIDEBOT

This angular little fellow is the perfect companion for those who found *Descent*'s convoluted mazes a little too disorienting. The guidebot will lead you to the nearest key or help you find your way to the exit after roasting the central power core. But what's really cool is that you can order the guidebot to do more than that; when times get rough, you can send the guide-bot to find power-ups.

### THIEF-BOT

The thief-bot is the guidebot's evil twin. These annoying little critters catch you when you're least expecting it and steal weapons and power-ups, then scurry away in a burst of speed.

The best defense against a thief-bot is a good, stealthy offense. By luring the thief-bot into a dead end (a room without secret passages or access doors to other rooms), you'll be able to corner the little rascal and blast him to bits. They're very tough to kill, but if you can manage to put an end to them, you'll be able to recover the goodies they stole.



Keeping out of sight is your best defense; sideslip around a corner, squeeze off a few shots, then slip back behind cover.

first glimpse at the improvement.

While some designers would've been happy to stop at improving the graphics, Parallax didn't leave any stone unturned in making *Descent II* a sequel worth playing. Gamers who found the more diabolical levels of *Descent* a little too disorienting will be happy to know that the new game features a clever little robot who can lend a helping hand if you get hopelessly lost. This little guy, called a guidebot, helps you find your way around, leading you through corridors to the nearest power-up or inventory item, locating keys and enemy robots, and pointing you towards the exit when the mine you're in is about to blow. If you'd rather take your chances and explore on your own, the guidebot will even leave you alone.

There are more new robots than we've got room to mention here; most are variations on *Descent's* original cast of baddies, but there are a few truly unique and frightening ones as well. There are missile-firing juggernauts that, when destroyed, break apart into smaller, deadlier, missile-launching shards; and a flying power-plant that tries to cook your ship from the inside out with a jolt of high-voltage energy. There are countless others, in all shapes and sizes — so many, in fact, that after a few levels, you'll find that



*Descent II* is a lot tougher than its predecessor; most of the regular robots in the new game could probably whip the end-level 'bots in the original *Descent*.



This bad boy may resemble a teddy bear, but those razor-sharp claws can rip through your ship like Yogi through a picnic basket.

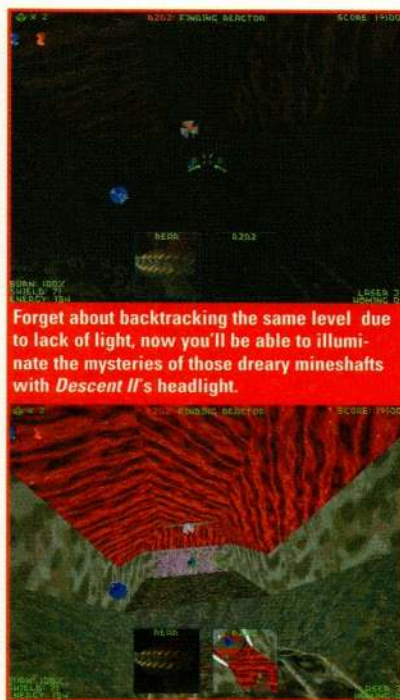
just keeping track of the ones you really need to watch out for can become a full-time occupation.

If those badass 'bots start to get you down, you can always take on a friend or two. *Descent II's* multi-player features are another improvement over the original; now you can disallow certain weapon types, let additional players to join a game in progress, and even monitor your opponents by placing map markers throughout the level. These little additions, don't mean much if you stick to the single-player missions, but if you haven't experienced a truly thrilling multi-player experience, you haven't tried multi-player *Descent II*.

Like *Doom II*, *Descent II* is substantially harder than its predecessor — too hard, in fact, on all but the easiest difficulty settings. For example, you'll have to face a monstrous boss robot on the fourth level, usually before you've discovered any of the really effective weapons. As much as I enjoyed the game, having to resort to saves every other minute was a little frustrating. (For a little help with *Descent II* from your friends at PC Gamer, check out this month's Strategy Central.)

As a whole, though, these are just minor flaws in an otherwise enjoyable package. *Descent II* is a great new experience, with superb graphics, helpful new features, and improved multi-player features that will no doubt keep it in the spotlight for a while.

—Todd Vaughn



Forget about backtracking the same level due to lack of light, now you'll be able to illuminate the mysteries of those dreary mineshafts with *Descent II's* headlight.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

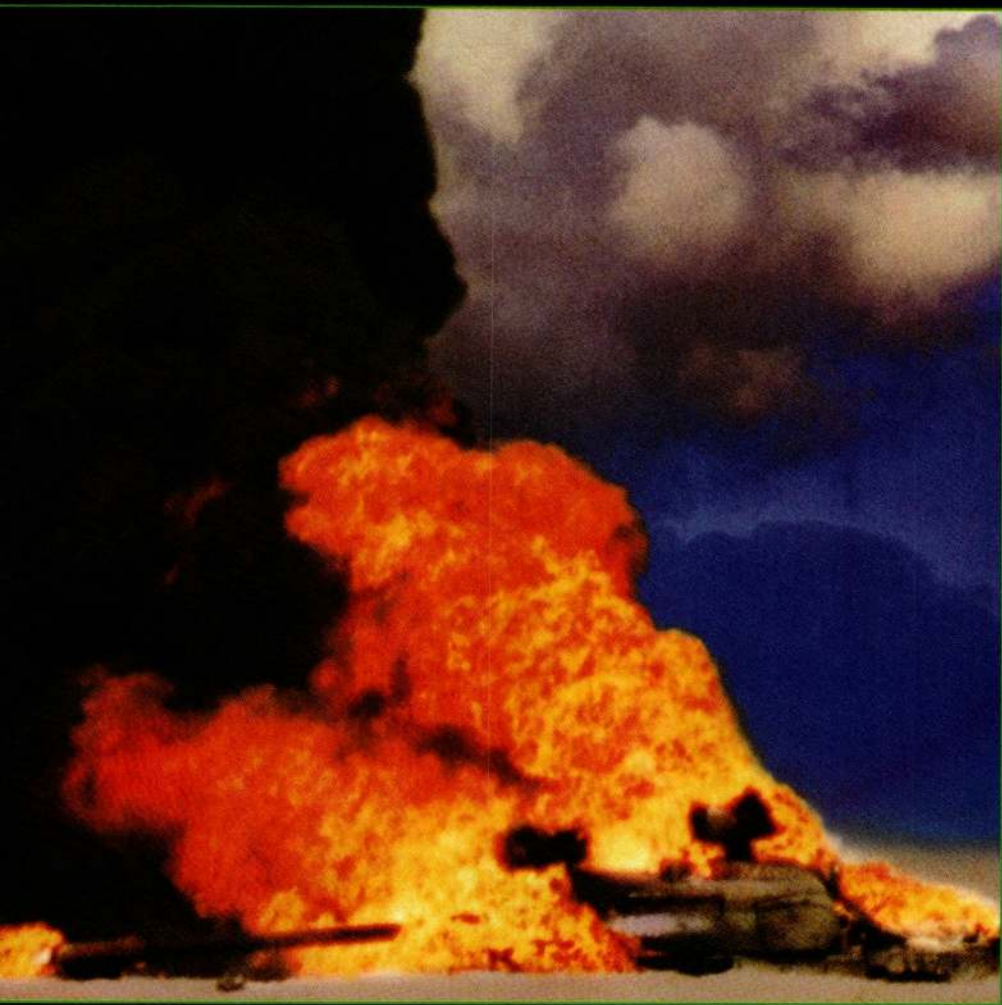
**HIGHS:** Great new weapons, features, and graphics.

**LOWS:** Too many labyrinthine and claustrophobic levels; very, very tough.

**BOTTOM LINE:** If you thought the original *Descent* was a walk in the park, you'll meet your match in *Descent II* — but stick with it, and you'll enjoy the ride.

88%





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Product Information Number 152

# ShellShock

**Category:** Arcade Action

**Developer:** Core Design

**Publisher:** U.S. Gold, 303 Sacramento Street, San Francisco, CA 94111 (415) 693-0297

## Required

Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; Super VGA; Mouse

## We Recommend

Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; Supported sound card; Joystick

**In a nice twist on the first-person craze, ShellShock delivers a gut-wrenching shoot-'em-up wrapped in 100 tons of armor.**

tribal war in Muwanda. Regardless of location, though, you'll be incredibly outnumbered and out-gunned as various tanks, helicopters, and gunboats pepper you with fire.

Fortunately, your enemies like to leave boxes lying around that you can pick up and bring back to the Pen (Da Wardenz' headquarters), which will earn you cash to buy vehicle upgrades like extra armor, chain-gun coolant, a targeting computer, an improved reloading mechanism, better engine and tracks, and even surface-to-air missiles.

Despite the sometimes blurry quality of the VGA graphics, gameplay is pretty intense: The first time an enemy shell headed straight at my tank, I actually swayed in my seat, trying to dodge it — that kind of involuntary reaction is always a good sign. The feeling of being there extends to the game's environment, too; you can take advantage of obstacles, hiding behind buildings and swinging your turret around on an enemy before darting out and opening fire. And while buying equipment for your tank with the loot you've picked up on the battleground seems a little out of synch with the story line, it does add a little strategic element to the action.

But like most things in life, *ShellShock* has a few flaws. The first drawback is the crude joystick support. I appreciate being able to use a four-button gamepad to drive, fire, change weapons, and call up a tactical map, but amazingly, there's no way to rotate the turret if you choose a joystick or gamepad as the control method — an oversight that could have been easily remedied by letting you use a keyboard/joystick combo, or by supporting rudder pedals or the hat switch on higher-end flight sticks.

But the troubles don't end there. There are only four save-game slots, none of which can be named — and each one contains specific info on stuff like the control devices and background music you've chosen. That means if you change your input method and load a game you've saved, and you'll have to go back and change all your settings again. Another annoyance is the voice-over dialog you hear during combat; your teammate, D-Tour, chat-



**Don't be tempted to slow down and take out these gunboats. They're armed only with chain-guns, but as you line up to take your shot, you'll be a sitting duck for the enemy's more powerful ground forces.**



**Payback time! ShellShock may not boast the world's greatest graphics, but who cares when you're busy pulverizing everything in sight with high-explosive fire?**

ters away with warnings and congratulations, but there's no way to shut him up after you've heard "Eat that, sucker!" for the 25th time.

In spite of these problems, though, I find myself coming back to *ShellShock* — partly because the missions are tough and I want to prove I can beat 'em, but mainly because things in the game blow up so well. If that sounds up your alley, give this one a try.

— Steve Poole

**S**hellShock is proof that a game doesn't have to be groundbreaking to be fun. Liberally borrowing ideas from the arcade classic *Battlezone*, Origin's *Privateer* and *Wing Commander* games, and the old PC game *Stellar 7*, *ShellShock* serves up a familiar mix of action-oriented gaming. And, for the most part, the results are good.

You begin the game as a brand-new member of Da Wardenz, five guys who formed an elite tank commando unit after being abandoned by the U.S. government during a peacekeeping mission in eastern Europe. Apparently, you've done something to impress these guys, since they've put you in control of an M-13 Predator battle tank outfitted with an armor-piercing cannon, a chain gun, and depleted uranium armor (which actually sounds like a bad idea, but what the hell).

The missions you're given are very loosely based on real-world events. In the first, for instance, you have to destroy a host of tanks that have encircled a city in a hot-spot called Mostvia Vatska and are preventing the delivery of humanitarian aid; the second time out, you must intervene in a bloody inter-



**The Pen, home to Da Wardenz. From here, you can outfit your tank, ask your buddies for advice, or head into the briefing room for the next mission.**

## PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Plenty of stuff to destroy; network support gives it good replay value.

**LOWS:** Poor joystick support; limited weaponry; too few save-game slots; and annoying in-game chatter.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Not the slickest game, but it has enough strategy and action to make it worth a look.

# 74%

# Fantasy General

**Category:** Strategy

**Developer:** SSI

**Publisher:** SSI, 675 Almanor Avenue, Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA, 94086 (408) 737-6800

## Required

Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 386/40MHz; 8MB RAM; Super VGA; DOS 5.0 or higher; Mouse

## We Recommend

Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/50MHz; Supported sound card

What you get in *Fantasy General* is exactly what you might expect from looking at the box: the *Panzer General* engine decked out in full Tolkien-esque regalia. I know there are probably some die-hard grognards out there who look upon this sort of thing as heresy, but it's their loss (*Warlords*, which is basically the same kind of game, encountered considerable resistance when it first appeared, until wargamers realized how much fun it was).

The game's premise is a cliché, of course (what work of high fantasy isn't, these days?): the evil Shadowlord has conquered the world of Aer, and the gamer, assuming the role of would-be liberator, must raise an army, complete with powerful heroes and spell-casters, to overthrow this evil empire by winning control of Aer's five continents.

As was the case in *Panzer General*, your starting units become core forces which can, with upgrades in equipment and magical powers, become elite legions. As you win strategic locations from the Shadowlord's hosts, you'll uncover caches



Each of the leaders has special attributes; Mordra the Sorceress can summon two random magical units before each battle.

Looking for something different? Try waging war with Skeleton Slingers, Steam-Guns, and Flying Snakes — you might just like it.



Remember to withdraw your hard-hit units for rest and replacements (move them back to within one hex of a friendly city), or they may be destroyed before they can gain experience points.

of treasure, which can be allocated toward research and development.

Winning control of the first continent is not difficult: you have the advantage of surprise, and the forces of evil are disorganized. Thereafter, you'll encounter increasingly powerful and numerous enemy forces. Each continent has differing terrain and objectives, so you'll need to adapt your tactics accordingly.

Occasionally, mighty heroes will appear and join your ranks, as will bodies of local militia, grateful to be liberated (and initially good for little but cannon-fodder); and eventually you'll discover an engineer who'll give you the ability to develop mechanized units. SSI's designers have come up with a marvelous array of unit types, including some Jules Verne-inspired flying devices and siege engines that can hurl plague germs into enemy cities.

Though it doesn't have network or modem support for multiple players, there's a customized battle generator called the Arena, where you can create your own character, choose the number of turns, build whatever kind of exotic army takes your fancy, and play by E-mail against human opponents.

Call it "wargaming lite" if you want

to; in truth, that's probably right on the money. *Fantasy General* doesn't have the strategic depth of *Warlords II*, nor does it come close to the sheer cut-throat exuberance of the *Warcraft* games; but even so, it's easy to learn and great fun to play.

Overall, *Fantasy General* is a nice indication that SSI is actively pursuing the notion of expanding their wargame line to include more than just historical battles. It may not please every grognard on the block, but then again, with a little nudge in the right direction, they just might find themselves having fun. I know I did.

— William R. Trotter

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** Slick, colorful; easy to sink into; lots of exotic units and spells.

**LOWS:** It lacks the depth of *Warlords II*; occasional lock-ups necessitate frequent saves.

**BOTTOM LINE:** It's not the best fantasy wargame out there, but it's still a terrific diversion.

**78%**

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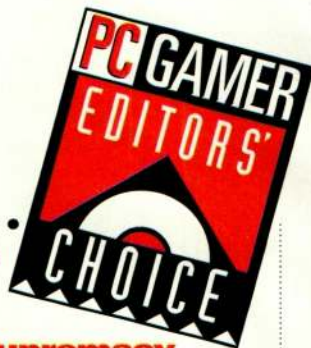
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# EarthSiege 2



**Category:** Action  
**Developer:** Sierra  
**Publisher:** Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; Windows 95; SVGA; Mouse	Pentium; 16MB RAM; Joystick; Supported sound card

**Sierra puts a new face on an old favorite to go toe-to-toe with MechWarrior 2 in the battle for supremacy.**

In late 1994, Sierra released their first-ever battling-robot game, *Metaltech: EarthSiege*, giving *MechWarrior* fans an unexpected break during the long wait for a sequel to the Activision game. Although it was just one of many similar titles on the market at the time, (*Iron Assault*, *Ultrabots*), *EarthSiege* didn't dilute the experience with arcade action or simplified gameplay; instead, it delivered a thrilling and demanding simulation that managed to create a believable look and feel for far-future battle in massive, manned robots.

Set in a post-apocalyptic future, *EarthSiege* drew on some dark science-fiction tropes for its plot. As in the Terminator films (and many other works of science fiction), the basic theme of *EarthSiege* was the emergence of intelligent machines and their desire to wipe out humanity. Known as cybrids (a name apparently lifted from Dan Simmons' Hyperion novels), these massive war machines were originally developed by humans for defense and combat, and they ultimately turned on their masters with predictably deadly results. The cybrids were supposedly destroyed at the end of the original game, but in



Most missions are down-and-dirty firefights with the cybrid forces. Here, you're teaching one of these evil 'bots a lesson in humanity.

*EarthSiege 2*, they have regrouped on a secret lunar base under the watchful eye of Prometheus — the thinking machine that began the war on mankind — and have begun launching a final, huge offensive to wipe the remaining human resistance of the face of the Earth.

That's the story, and while it's little more than an excuse to stomp around in a really big robot and blow things up, *EarthSiege 2* manages to carry its dark, moody feel throughout the game while still providing kick-in-the-teeth action at every turn.

You begin as a new squad leader in charge of three wingmen, with only a handful of weapons, a few types of HERCs (the manned version of the cybrid), and limited resources at your disposal. After receiving a quick mission briefing, you'll outfit your team, strap yourself into a 100-ton walking arsenal, and jump into defense and strike missions against the cybrid forces in a series of five campaigns.

As soon as you reach the first mission, you'll notice there's a striking difference between the original *EarthSiege* and the sequel. In the high-resolution, Super VGA mode, you'll see detailed, texture-mapped terrain and structures, replacing the flat-shaded landscapes and



You'll have a bird's-eye view of the battlefield when you take control of the Razor, the first flying 'HERC in the resistance arsenal.

polygon mountains of *EarthSiege*. And, unlike the original, in *EarthSiege 2* those mountains aren't just obstacles to plot a course around; you'll actually be able to bound over hills and down into valleys, using the terrain to your advantage. Each of the five campaign settings has its own distinct look: stark, lifeless plains; cracked earth oozing molten lava; lunar landscapes; and a bleak, nuclear-winter setting.

The HERCs and cybrids have received some sharp texture-maps as well, giving them a menacing new look,



Matching the right pilot with the right HERC is tricky, so do what any good commander would do — keep the good stuff for yourself.



The most obvious improvement over the original *EarthSiege* is the incredible texture-mapping on the terrain and HERCs.

## Giving the Razor an edge

In *EarthSiege 2*, you'll soon encounter the Razor Class HERC, which takes the role of recon aircraft and fast-attack vehicle for the human resistance forces. Since these flying HERCs aren't as heavily armored as their earth-borne counterparts and can't carry as many weapons, it takes a little extra planning before and during the missions to get the best results. Here are a few tried-and-true tips to help you deal death from above.

### Arming for success

Unlike the slow-and-steady weapons platform of an Apocalypse or Ogre HERC, the Razor is a fast-moving craft, which means getting a direct hit on your target can be quite a challenge. Novice pilots will find that chainguns are good for hosing down enemy 'bots at nearly any distance, while active-radar homing missiles pack a deadly punch at close range. Stay away from energy weapons, since their slow recharge time means multiple passes to score a kill.

### Slow 'em down

Since striking a deadly blow to enemy forces takes quite a bit of practice from the air, order your wingmen to attack troublesome cybrid units to keep them from advancing onto critical mission points or taking potshots at your fragile flying machine. Once they're softened up sufficiently, you'll have little trouble finishing them off.

### Vectored thrusters on!

In keeping with its cutting-edge technology, the Razor comes equipped with vectored thrust engine ports that allow the craft to maneuver left and right while remaining level with the horizon. By using these thrusters, you can avoid the last-minute overcompensation that throws you off target; just line up on the target vertically, then use the thrusters to position the crosshairs on the enemy.



The resistance commander doesn't like to mince words; you'll get the briefings for your missions short and sweet and like it, mister!

with insignia, weapons, and battle-damage rendered in loving detail. But these gorgeous graphics do come at a price. In order to get the most out of those SVGA graphics, you'll need at least a Pentium 90 with 16MB RAM.

On the battlefield, though, you probably won't have time to enjoy the scenery; the action is fast and furious, and short, dramatic firefights with the cybrids punctuate every mission. Fortunately, mission difficulty — a sore spot in the original *EarthSiege* — has been toned down just a touch, giving players of just about any skill level a chance at success. It would've been nice to see more variety in the types of missions *EarthSiege 2* offers, but *MechWarrior 2* fans who were disappointed with the small number of missions in that game's initial release will find there are nearly twice as many in *EarthSiege 2*.

There's also a lot more to the game than just blindly shooting at cybrids and watching them explode. Each time you're sent on a mission, you'll use precious resources from the human resistance. In order to keep a steady flow of weapons and resources coming in, you'll need to be subtle about how you take down those cybrid forces. By focusing your fire on the legs of a cybrid rather than its body, for example, you'll leave behind a lot more scrap to salvage (which translates into more raw materials for the resistance), and enough weapons to make up for those you lost in battle. On the other hand, if you con-

tinually hammer those 'bots until they're nothing but ashes, you'll soon find you don't even have enough scrap to repair your existing HERCs.

*EarthSiege 2* demands a fine balance between action, tactical finesse, and skill, and it's a welcome change from simply blowing things up. You'll also need to make crucial decisions about what to build. As the game progresses, you'll be able to build newer and better HERCs, but will you risk your surplus of scrap by building a HERC that provides only marginally better performance, or do you hold out, repairing what you have until significantly bigger and better HERCs can be brought on line?

The control interface for these big 'bots hasn't changed much from the original game, but it already worked well enough. The sheer number of controls is daunting at first; you'll need to control the direction and speed of your HERC; rotate and elevate the turret; manage your weapons systems and shields; and communicate with your wingmen. But the combination of keyboard and joystick controls shouldn't take more than a training mission to get a handle on.

While the improvements in graphics are wonderful, one disappointment is the lack of new HERC types. You'll find a couple of new ground-based units that provide only modest improvements over the old ones, and a new flying craft called the Razor. While an air attack craft would seem like a great way to add a little variety to the limited mission types, the potential is only half realized. The Razor is crippled by sluggish, unresponsive controls and a limited weapons payload. After flying the Razor in a training mission and one regular mission, I never bothered with it again.

Still, despite a few lingering problems from the first game, (your wingmen still wander into your line of fire, for instance) and a few missed opportunities (like the Razor), *EarthSiege 2* packs enough punch to put it within shooting distance of *MechWarrior 2*. And with big guns like these, you basically can't lose.

— Todd Vaughn

**PC GAMER** FINAL VERDICT

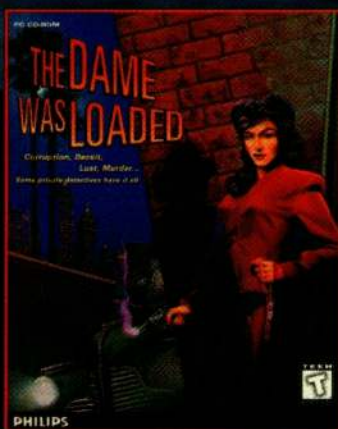
**HIGHS:** Superb SVGA graphics and music, lots of missions, and a sleek interface.

**90%**

**LOWS:** Complex controls, steep system requirements, and a lack of variety in missions.

**BOTTOM LINE:** No matter how you look at it, *EarthSiege 2* is an all-around good time.

““ The trail was colder than an icebox in an igloo. I had a list of shady suspects longer than my bar bill at the Dew Drop Inn. But I was on to something. She was 5 feet 4 inches of trouble and I was just an inch away from being 6 feet under.””



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# Fast Attack

**Category:** Simulation

**Developer:** Software Sorcery

**Publisher:** Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707

**Although it's still not perfect, *Fast Attack* emerges as the best modern-day submarine simulation in recent memory.**

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card.

ments into a working game of substantial depth. *Fast Attack* puts you inside a Los Angeles class nuclear attack sub, with all its systems for waging war at your fingertips. The backbone of the U.S. submarine fleet, the LA is the best the Navy has to offer short of the \$1 billion Seawolf. It handles a variety of roles deftly, and it packs one helluva punch (and some LA boats you'll command are later, refitted models, which means they come with vertical launch tubes stocked with various Tomahawk models).

*Fast Attack* gives you just about everything you need to assess your environment and locate your target. From a central screen designed to look like a command center, you have access to numerous sensors and war stations. For example, you'll have access to the sonar screen, the heart of any attack sub, and a minor gem of programming genius: incredibly complex, yet easy to grasp and operate. Since submarines can't rely on visual identification or radar when submerged, they must gather information on targets by sound, and these sounds are captured by sonar arrays. These are converted into a graphic depiction on a display in the sonar suite. Contacts can then be tagged and identified for type, bearing, direction, and speed.

The sonar section gives readouts for SVP Mode (Sonar



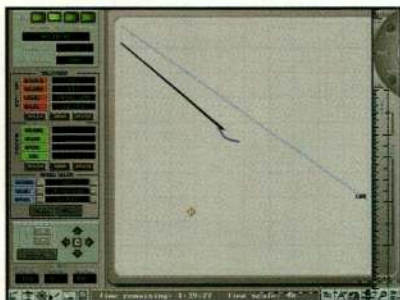
**The sonar velocity profile takes readings of surrounding water temperature, allowing you to hide beneath the thermal layers.**

**O**f all the tools of war, the nuclear attack submarine is the most sophisticated killing machine ever devised. It lurks unseen beneath the surface of the ocean, ready to unleash a deadly payload of nuclear weapons at an instant's notice. Its power lies in its stealth: it can sneak into an enemy battle group, do its damage, and vanish without a trace. You'd have to look all the way back to MicroProse's *Red Storm*

*Rising* to find a modern sub game with any level of depth and complexity, but now there's *Fast Attack*, designed by the *Sea Rogue* creators at Software Sorcery. When it was first released, *Sea Rogue* showed promise, but their follow-up products, both

*Jutland* and *Aegis: Guardian of the Fleet*, missed the mark. Both games delivered a great feel and many promising elements, but were ultimately dragged down by lots of little mistakes. This, to a much lesser degree, is the case with *Fast Attack*.

In overall design, I can't think of another game that so smoothly integrates so many complex ele-



**Using the sophisticated controls of the plotting panel, you can refine the fire control solution to pinpoint accuracy.**



**The passive Sonar Waterfall Display shows sonar contacts and lets you tag and designate each.**

Velocity Profile), which gauges the variations in water temperature, also known as thermals, that help hide a sub. Mine tracking and active sonar round out a beautifully designed set of tools for finding and classifying contacts. Once the sonar operator tags contacts, you can go to the war book to read up on its properties.



A Harpoon anti-ship missile closes in on its target...and scores a hit. Super animations highlight every action in *Fast Attack*.



■ All important functions are linked through the central command center, but they can also be accessed through the icon bar on the bottom of the screen.

This information is fed into the other central part of *Fast Attack*: fire control. By using knobs to adjust range, bearing, and speed on the fire control computer, you can calculate the fire solution to feed into the torpedoes. Switching modes, you can track torpedoes once fired, and, if they're still attached to the guidance wire, feed new target data to them. Another tool, the plotting table, performs a similar function in a different way, and with a higher degree of refinement. Like the sonar displays, fire control is also superbly handled, although I couldn't help thinking new users might have benefited from an auto-plotting feature that would let the game's artificial intelligence handle arming the torpedoes. Doing it manually can be very tricky and very challenging.

Once a fire solution is set, you go over to the launch console and load up either the standard Mark 48 torpedo or the UGM-84 Harpoon anti-ship missile. Again, in a bid for realism, loading a torpedo takes real time — and then you have to designate a target, warm it up,



■ Some Los Angeles-class subs have vertical launch tubes for deploying Tomahawk missiles against surface targets.

flood the torpedo tubes, open the tubes, arm the torp, and then you can fire. If there is a flaw in the handling of torpedoes, it lies in the inability to set running depth: an often important factor in scoring a kill, and a curious omission for

## The Los Angeles Class Submarine

With 62 subs built or under construction, the Los Angeles Class is the world's largest series of nuclear submarines. The first came off the line at Newport News back in 1974, and was intended as an answer to the Soviet's Victor class attack subs.

The LA runs 360 feet in length overall, displacing almost 7 tons when submerged. It features one nuclear reactor that drives two steam turbines, providing speeds over 30 knots submerged. The standard weapon is the Mark 48 torpedo, launched from one of four 21-inch tubes. Harpoon anti-ship missiles and

Tomahawk cruise-missiles can also be launched from these tubes. In models introduced in 1986, known as the Improved Los Angeles Class, 12 vertical launch tubes have been installed in the space previously used for ballast tanks, to handle additional Tomahawks.

The LA boats feature a wide array of sonar sensors, including bow-mounted, towed, and mine detection, as well as surface-search radar. While it's second only to the Seawolf among U.S. subs, it is believed to still fall behind Russian designs in terms of speed and quietness.



■ Gather detailed information about your surface contacts from your sub's database.

such an otherwise accurate sim.

A radio room (complete with towed antenna); area of operations maps; navigational helm; and periscope round out the engine, and all are extremely well designed. One small gripe with navigation is the lack of waypoints that would let you set a path and just have the helmsman automatically follow it. These elements are all very realistic and very well-integrated into a smoothly working game.

Now we come to the problems. The first is easily fixable: there is no in-game save feature. This is a real pain in a game where missions can take two hours, and the reason given (so gamers won't cheat) is nonsense. Second, there is an artificially imposed time limit on each mission, usually two hours. Trust me, when your TLAMs are on the way to their objectives and you're kicked out because of the time limit, you'll wanna kill someone.

A more serious problem, however, is the artificial intelligence. The enemy ships and subs seem to be commanded by cooks who suddenly found themselves in charge of a ship. And unless you wander into certain dangerous areas, you may find that it's smooth sailing throughout much of *Fast Attack*. This isn't an AI that actively hunts you down.

Still, there's simply too much that was done well here to discount *Fast Attack*. Numerous missions in a variety of LA-Class subs spread all over the globe, make for some terrific gameplay. Right out of the box, after an hour of play, *Fast Attack* had me believing it was the best sub game ever. Further play changed my opinion, but it's still a damned fine piece of work in many respects.

— T. Liam McDonald

**PC GAMER** FINAL VERDICT

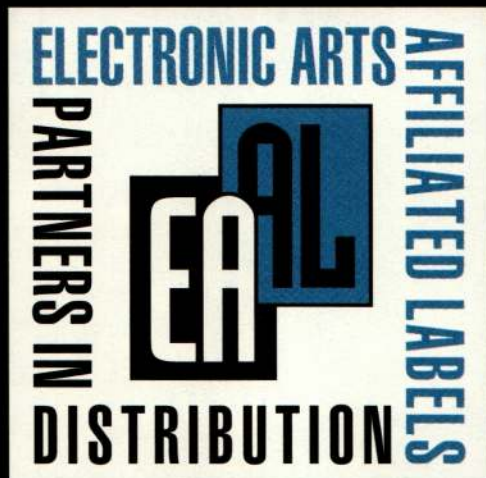
**HIGHS:** Excellent design provides a you-are-there feeling; smoothly integrates the numerous complex elements into a working game of substantial depth.

**79%**

**LOWS:** Milquetoast enemies; no way to save a game in progress; mission time limit.

**BOTTOM LINE:** It's flawed, but *Fast Attack* is still the best nuclear sub game in many moons.

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Product Information Number 145



FROM POWERHOUSE ENTERTAINMENT

# Silent Thunder

**Category:** Action

**Developer:** Sierra

**Publisher:** Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E.,  
Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007  
(800) 757-7707

## Required

Windows 95;  
Double-speed  
CD-ROM drive;  
486DX/66; 8MB  
RAM; SVGA; Mouse

## We Recommend

Pentium; 16MB  
RAM; Supported  
sound card;  
Joystick

**The long-awaited sequel to *A-10 Tank Killer* comes in low and slow with marginal realism and sluggish flight controls.**

est simulation in Dynamix's critically acclaimed Aces Series. Unfortunately, that's not what *Silent Thunder* delivers; this is more of an arcade game masquerading as a sim. If you know that going in, you might enjoy it; but hard-core sim fans are bound to find it frustratingly condescending.

As pilot Jack "Loud-mouth" Haggart, the hero of *Silent Thunder*, you hold the fate of the free world in your hands as you pilot your A-10 through three of the world's potential hot spots: Colombia, the Persian Gulf, and Korea. You can fight individual battles, or sign up for a campaign that will have you dealing destruction around the globe.

Since the A-10 is designed to fly low and slow, you'll spend the bulk of your missions supporting friendly forces by knocking out tanks and other armor. That can be fun, but because you

have to fly low, you're an easy target for anti-aircraft missiles. To survive, you'll have to destroy threats quickly, or duck behind mountains and use chaff and flares to dodge enemy missiles. The A-10 is tough, with a titanium tub surrounding the pilot and heavy armor

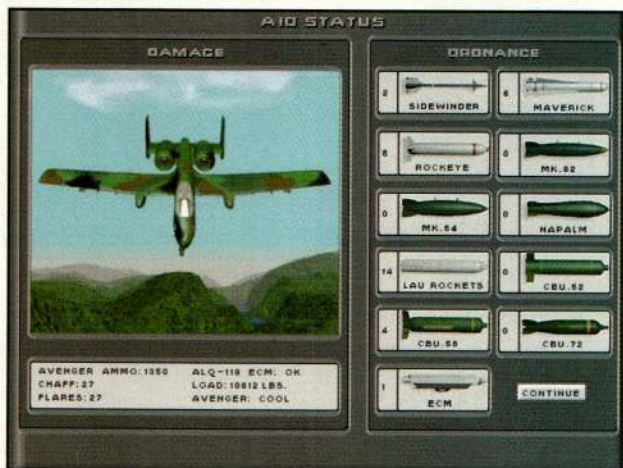
**D**espite the leaps and bounds made in air combat simulations over the years, it seems that honest-to-goodness shoot-'em-ups are falling by the wayside. It's not that games like *ATF* or *EF2000* aren't impressive or realistic — or even fun — it's simply that they're dominated by jets, usually top-of-the-line fighters and interceptors. The action is dramatic enough, but it's long-range drama. More often than not, you won't even see your adversary close-up; instead, you'll target a blip on the radar, lock in your missiles, and wait and watch as the smoke trail connects with the target. That's part of the reason the A-10 is so intriguing.

The A-10 Thunderbolt II isn't a long-range interceptor or fighter; hell, it doesn't even break the sound barrier. Instead, the Thunderbolt was designed for in-your-face attacks — knocking out armor and leveling buildings at close range. This is one of the most feared and lethal aircraft in the world, and it could be the basis for a great computer simulation.

And that's what Sierra says *Silent Thunder: A-10 Tank Killer II* is — the lat-



**The map makes it easy to find your target and identify any threats in the area. Reconnaissance info is updated during the mission.**



**The damage and ordnance screen gives you a quick picture of your jet's status. The A-10 can carry an enormous number and variety of weapons.**



**While on the hunt for drug-laden gunboats on a Colombian river, you'll notice that the terrain graphics are the some of the best you'll find in a flight sim.**



An enemy missile finds its target. The A-10 can take a lot of punishment, but you don't want to have to bail out at 200 feet.

protecting the twin turbofan engines, but if you get careless, you're going down. And since you're flying at 200 feet, bailing out is not an option.

It would be a real challenge if *Silent Thunder* were the least bit realistic, but it isn't. The high-resolution, Super VGA graphics are outstanding, to be sure — but apparently they left no room for the details gamers have come to expect from a simulation. For a start, the flight model is a joke. In *Silent Thunder*, the big, lumbering attack jet is suddenly a wonder of aviation; it can sustain an inverted climb

with ease; kick the rudders, and it spins around like a top on a turntable; bank hard to the left or right, and you'll see no loss of lift or altitude. *Silent Thunder* defies all the laws of physics (and of good simulations) — until you get to the game's effective altitude ceiling, that is; then you'll suddenly stall out and fall for a second or two before nimbly recovering.

On top of all that, control in *Silent Thunder* is sluggish; whether it's a problem with the game's code, or the sim's only concession to realism, it can be really frustrating. Even the most

## Warthog Warrior

First designed and built in the late 1970s, the A-10 Thunderbolt II filled the much-needed role of close air support attack aircraft, giving ground troops increased protection by destroying enemy tanks and other armor. The plane's massive weapons loadout also makes it effective against large land targets such as buildings and bridges.

Known affectionately as the Warthog by its pilots, the A-10 earned the nickname "silent thunder" from Iraqi troops, who often didn't hear the plane's quiet turbofan engines until it was too late.

The jet's primary weapon is the Avenger, a seven-barrel 30mm cannon that fires depleted-uranium armor-piercing shells at a rate of 70 rounds per second. The Avenger —



Though it was designed nearly 20 years ago, the A-10 is unmatched in its ability to provide close ground support with deadly accuracy.

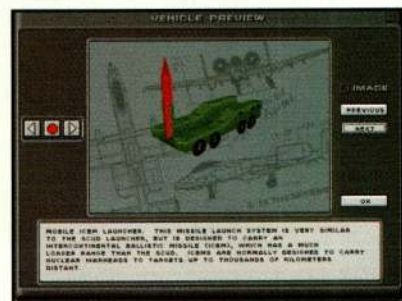
roughly the size and weight of a 1970 Cadillac — is capable of destroying main battle tanks with a single burst.

The plane is outfitted with nine ordnance stations under its wings, capable of carrying 17,000 pounds of weaponry, including Maverick air-to-ground missiles and Sidewinder air-to-air missiles. In addition, the A-10 can carry an assortment of unguided weapons, including Hydra rockets, cluster bombs, and napalm bombs.

Built with redundant structural parts, the A-10 is as tough as it is lethal. It's designed to fly with one engine and half a wing blown off. The pilot is protected by a bathtub of titanium armor around the cockpit.



When enter a mission you'll be able to choose your weapons loadout from four presets or create a customized configuration.



With the vehicle preview feature, you'll be able to get information potential targets as well as potential hazards.

experienced PC pilots will probably find themselves weaving uncontrollably until they get accustomed to the bizarre delay between input from the joystick and the jet's response.

Still, if you can live with the mushy controls and lack of realism, you might find some entertainment value in *Silent Thunder*. The missions are tactically interesting and varied. On one sortie, you'll be gunning for tanks as you support an assault on an enemy air base. Next, you'll be ordered to take out a bridge with heavy bombs. And the threats are non-stop; you'll be continuously dodging anti-aircraft fire and dealing with an occasional surprise, such as a deadly helicopter gunship.

As an action game in the same category as *Descent* or *Terminal Velocity*, *Silent Thunder* isn't too bad. But crowds of simulation fans who expect more from Dynamix are bound to buy this game with the belief that they're getting another excellent sim in the tradition of *Red Baron*, *Aces of the Pacific*, and *Aces Over Europe* — and they're going to be sorely disappointed.

— Lee Buchanan

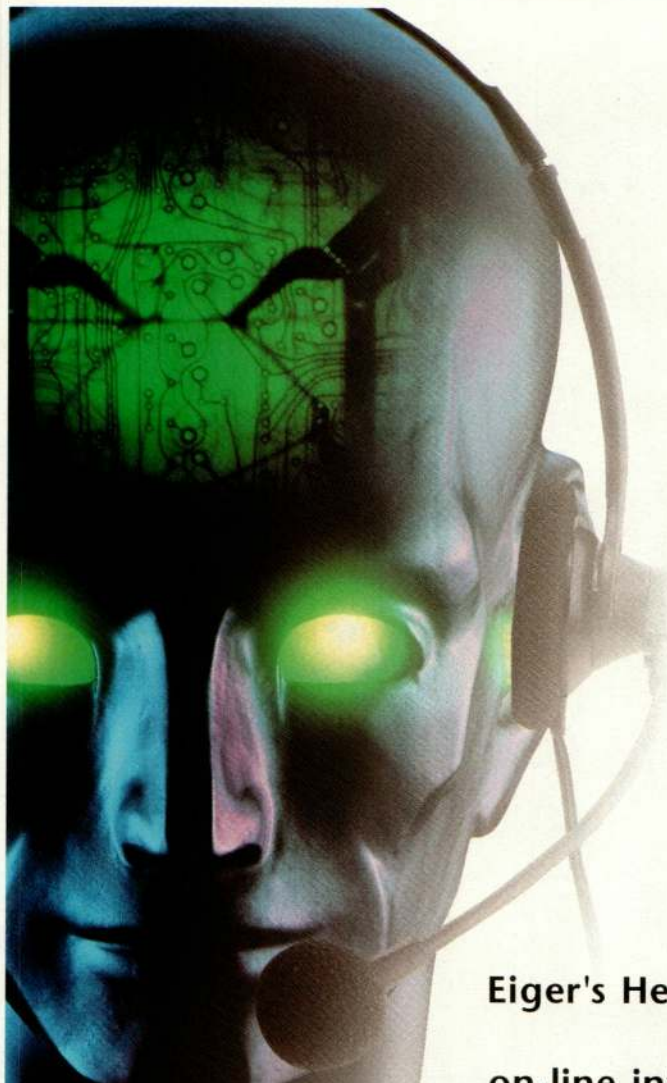
### PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Gorgeous terrain graphics; lots of action.

**LOWS:** Grossly inaccurate flight model; sluggish controls; and no printed manual. Ground-based targets can be very difficult to locate in some terrain.

**BOTTOM LINE:** As an action game, *Silent Thunder's* all right; as a simulation, it's a bust.

70%



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Product Information Number 136

# Pool Champion

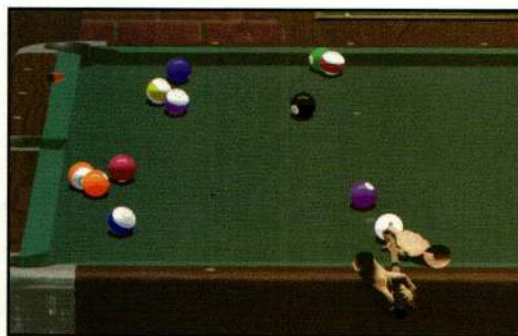
**Category:** Sports

**Developer:** Bitmasters

**Publisher:** Mindscape, 88 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945 (415) 897-9900

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66MHz; 8MB RAM; 1MB HD space; Win 3.1; SVGA Mouse	486/75 or faster; 16MB RAM; 27MB HD space; Win 95; Supported sound card

aiming lines turned on. Still, if you set aside those shortcomings for a moment and take *Pool Champion* at face value, it's actually pretty entertaining. For starters, there's a good variety of billiard games — Eight Ball, Nine Ball, Ten Ball, Fifteen Ball, 14.1 Continuous, and Rotation — and as you play through the adventure mode, you'll need to become skilled at all of them.



You can only aim your shots from this overhead perspective, making it necessary to turn on the aiming lines for all but the simplest shots.

Starting with only 50 bucks, you've got to hustle up enough dough to get to Las Vegas for the National Nine Ball tourney. That means playing — and betting against — a slew of opponents in places like Dave's Chopper Club and Matt's Billiard Hall, as well as choosing when to pay for lessons or a better cue to improve your game. As you make your way through the game, your opponents get tougher, the games more diverse and specialized. You'll need a lot of practice if you're going to win the cash.

Once you get used to the quirks of the interface, the gameplay is fairly realistic and challenging, but what really gives *Pool Champion* a flavor all its own is the need to learn new games and beat a series of increasingly skilled opponents.

*Pool Champion* certainly doesn't

have what it takes to challenge *Virtual Pool*, but if you'd like something a little less demanding than a simulation and little more thoughtful than the average arcade game, it's worth checking out.

— Steve Poole

Gamers who buy *Pool Champion* expecting to find a rival to Interplay's award-winning billiards simulation, *Virtual Pool*, are setting themselves up for a disappointment. This isn't a next-generation pool sim; instead, *Pool Champion* is an adventure game that just happens to be about pool. There are no modem or network options for multiple players, and unlike *Virtual Pool's* free-floating views for aiming and shooting, the only perspective available when positioning the pool cue and lining up a shot in *Pool Champion* is a fixed overhead view that is almost worthless without the game's

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** A unique adventure mode keeps it interesting.

**LOWS:** Stilted dialogue; an arcade-style interface.

**BOTTOM LINE:** It's no *Virtual Pool*, but it's well worth a look.

**67%**

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# D

**Category:** Graphic Adventure  
**Developer:** Warp  
**Publisher:** Acclaim Entertainment,  
 1 Acclaim Plaza, Glencove,  
 NY 11542 (516) 656-5000

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 4MB hard drive space; DOS 5.0+; 1MB VESA SVGA	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Supported sound card

While the promise of true interactive movies is finally beginning to bear fruit, there's no denying that even the best of them still leave a lot to be desired in the game-play department.

*D*, an unsettling new adventure from Acclaim, tries to strike a balance between movie and game and succeeds — partially — despite being almost totally linear and brief beyond belief. It's got the alluring atmosphere of *Myst*, the macabre mise-en-scene of *The 7th Guest*, and the captivating creepiness of the first *Alone in the Dark*.

The game begins shortly after the well-respected Dr. Richter Harris has slaughtered a number of innocent people and taken several others hostage at the Los Angeles hospital where he



The 3D rendered characters of *D* can display a startling range of emotions. Here Laura steadies herself as she explores the darkness.

**As a short and engaging interactive movie, *D* serves up some pretty good scares, but this adventure is as brief as its name.**

serves as director. His daughter Laura arrives, a shocked witness to a scene of carnage ripped from the pages of a Clive Barker novel. As she passes through the corpse-laden corridors, a weird, liquid portal appears and pulls her through to the grotesque other-world of her mad father's mind.

Using only six keys (the four cursor keys for movement, the I key for inventory and the spacebar for action), you guide Laura through this twisted mind-castle with only two hours to solve the riddle of your father's madness before the portal back to reality closes forever.

Fortunately, *D* isn't filled with the bloated, full-motion video porridge of *Ripper* or the inert, abstract puzzles of *The 11th Hour*. Everything has been modeled and rendered in 3D, including Laura, and these characters are full of surprising nuance, displaying a range of facial expressions that are unheard of in this form. The music and sound effects are moody and effective, and while the graphics aren't as sharp as you might like, the storytelling and direction are truly impressive.

But there's a downside: Those two hours I mentioned — that's real time; the clock is ticking. And — incredibly — there's no way to save a game so you can second-guess sticky situations. On one hand, this helps the gameplay play itself out as a seamless story. On the other, it's aggravating to run out of time and have to start all over again.

Then again, there aren't any really sticky situations. The puzzles are rudimentary, to say the least. Whenever you find a locked door, you can be sure the key is only a room or two away. And despite some pretty good scares, you're never in danger of losing your life until the very end.

Although there will probably be a thing or two you didn't see your first time through, the only real reason to play *D* a second time (aside from wallow-



Like any good horror movie, *D* makes the most of tension-filled moments. You can expect potential danger behind every door.



In *D*, keeping your head about you is harder than you might think, as you'll encounter all manner of blood-thirsty villains.

ing in its weirdness) is to see the ending you didn't select. However, since everything up to the ending will play almost exactly the way it did the first time, you probably won't want to; what was gripping the first time through becomes tedious the second.

*D* is a nice blend of interaction and storytelling, creepy and weird to be sure, and a good example of what the phrase "interactive movie" can mean. But the brief gameplay and linear nature only serve to point out that we've still got a long way to go before the those two words combine into something enjoyable.

— Scott Wolf

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** Well-paced, compelling, and genuinely creepy.

**LOWS:** The game is too linear, too simple, too short; there's very little replay value.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *D* is fair entertainment — for about two hours.

**69%**

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Designers - *Star Control* and  
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Product Information Number 84



# ADVENTURE GAME OF THE YEAR

- COMPUTER GAME REVIEW, 1996

"LEGEND HAS PULLED OFF A STUNNING ACHIEVEMENT THAT WILL SET THE STANDARD IN ADVENTURE GAMING FOR YEARS TO COME."

- COMPUTER GAME REVIEW, 1996



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# GAME OF THE YEAR

— JERRY POURNELLE, BYTE MAGAZINE, 1996

**"OUTSTANDING AND SUSPENSEFUL!...  
BEAUTIFUL VISUALS AND  
THOUGHT-PROVOKING PLOT."**

— PC GAMER, 1996

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— STRATEGY PLUS, 1996

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— COMPUTER GAME REVIEW, 1996

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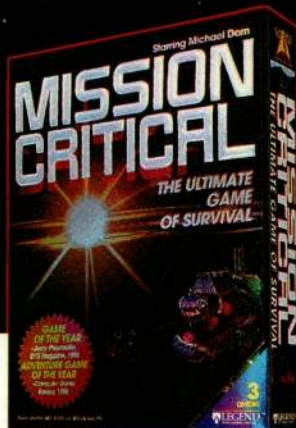
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# Silent Hunter



**Category:** Simulation

**Developer:** Aeon Electronic Entertainment

**Publisher:** SSI, 675 Almanor Ave.,  
Suite 201, Sunnyvale,  
CA 94086-2901 (408) 737-3800

**SSI finally surfaces with the best WWII submarine sim yet and scores a direct hit for sub fans.**

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; DOS 5.0 or higher; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

Since their earliest implementations, submarines have always been the quiet killers, lurking just beneath the surface of the sea and unleashing a devastating attack. But the way they deal destruction has changed vastly in the past fifty years. Modern nuclear attack subs stay submerged for long periods of time — up to several months — almost never cruise on the surface, attack without visual contact, and can fire accurately from great depths at surface

targets hundreds of miles away.

In World War Two, however, the submariner cruised on the surface due to the limited range of their subs' electric batteries, and submerged to periscope depth only to attack. Visual contact was essential, and the crude radar and sonar equipment meant plain old eyeball sighting and some quick math was required to guide a torpedo to its target. Submarines rarely hunted other subs as they do now. It was a whole different ball game.

The seat-of-the-pants style of naval operations necessary in WWII has translated into some great games: *Wolfpack*, *Aces of the Deep*, and *Silent Service II* all managed to capture the look and feel of manning one of these WWII subs. Now, Aeon and SSI have given us *Silent Hunter*, the best WWII sub sim yet. With careful attention to detail, super graphics, and a complex, yet easily understood, set of controls, *Silent Hunter* is a blast to play whether you're a hard-core sub buff, or just an action gaming fan looking for something out of the norm.

*Silent Hunter* puts you in the role



**Score a hit on your target, and you're rewarded with a glorious view of it going down.**

of an American submariner in the Pacific theater, from December of 1941 to the end of the war in 1945. A wide range of boat types are available, from the primitive S-Class with five torpedo tubes, 12 torpedoes, and a poky surface speed of 14 knots, to the ubiquitous Gato family (10 tubes, 24 torpedoes, 20 knots). You captain these boats in a variety of missions, including customized warship, convoy, and patrol missions, or over an entire career. A large selection of historical missions puts you in some of the most famous submarine encounters of the war.

You command your sub with a variety of tools, the most important being the Torpedo Data Computer. This device takes the estimated speed and course of the target ship (either entered automatically or by you if set to manual), compares it to the sub's course and bearing, and sends this data to the torpedo's gyroscope. When a good firing solution is ready, a press of a button sends the torpedo on its way.

These controls — as well as helm controls for depth, speed, and steering — are always a mouse-click away from the bridge, periscope, or command center. The whole design is very well-integrated, and leaves you free to concentrate on setting up a good approach to your target. Crude surface and air-search radar are available in some later versions of the subs, but most contacts will be made by sight and called down to you by the spotter.

A map system similar to that in *Great Naval Battles* makes setting waypoints for long hauls or setting up attacks a breeze. You can zoom from the widest angle, where vessels appear as dots, down to a tight view that displays small representations of individual ships. The name of the game is tonnage, and it's your duty to send as many ships



**WWII hero "Bud" Gruner, who was an adviser to the game's developers, narrates a tour of a sub and a multimedia history of his encounters with Japanese warships.**

# Fighting Fish

**D**uring the early days of WWII, American sub commanders faced down overwhelming odds as they began their push against enemy naval forces. But it's a little-known fact that one of the biggest problems these commanders would face wasn't enemy destroyers, it was the flawed design of U.S.-made torpedoes (called "fish" by the men of the Silent Service). Edward Beach (author of *Run Silent, Run Deep*) called the failure to produce adequate torpedoes scandalous, and blamed it on poor prewar testing and bad manufacturing. When *Silent Hunter* is set for full realism, these problems will be yours, too, particularly in 1942 and 1943.

World War Two-era torpedoes were, in many ways, quite advanced for their day. When setting up an attack, the Torpedo Data Computer officer was constantly making adjustments on the TDC for the range, speed, and bearing of the target. Wires led straight from the TDC to the torpedo in the tube, feeding a constant stream of directional data into the fish's gyroscope. The torpedo was fed this data until it was launched, when the wires disconnected, leaving the gyroscope at its final setting. The fish would go straight for a short run, then the gyroscope would force it to turn to the heading it was set for (and, hopefully, toward a ship).

Two types of detonators were tried in the war: impact and magnetic. Impact detonation is self-explanatory, but magnetic detonation is more complex. It's based on the principle that a moving ship gives off a magnetic field. When the magnetic detonators detected this field, they would set off the torpedo. In practice, it didn't work very well. The detonators either fired too soon, or not at all. Add other problems, like inaccurate depth running, and a disproportionate number of premature detonations and outright duds, and you have a sticky situation.

Not until the electrically powered Mark 18 torpedo was introduced did submariners have a reliable weapon. It was slower than its predecessors (topping out at about 30 knots), but it had better depth stability and left no telltale wake to alert ships of its presence or its source. You won't see these babies until late 1943, though, so you stand a risk of serious firing problems early in gameplay. The best bet is to fire at ranges between 500 and 1500 yards, and pray.

**MARK 10**

RANGE: 3500 yards  
 SPEED: 38 knots  
 WARHEAD: 485 lbs  
 MOTOR: Steam

**MARK 14**

RANGE: 3000/4500 yards  
 SPEED: 31/46 knots  
 WARHEAD: 683 lbs  
 MOTOR: Steam

**MARK 18-1**

RANGE: 3500 yards  
 SPEED: 33 knots  
 WARHEAD: 500 lbs  
 MOTOR: Electric

In keeping with the realistic feel of *Silent Hunter*, you'll have to deal with the flaws and disadvantages of World War Two-era torpedoes.



■ The deck gun can often finish off a weakened ship, but this can prove risky since many merchant ships have deck guns too.

flying the *Rising Sun* to the bottom as possible. Freighters, troop carriers, destroyers, battleships, and even aircraft carriers are your targets, and they fight back with a vengeance. The combination of aircraft and destroyers make for some tough runs, and they'll swarm around you the instant you start to attack. More mission variations (such as reconnaissance and rescue operations) would be welcome, but these are being promised for an add-on disk.

SSI has rounded out this package with a superb documentary section featuring video, narration, and a sub tour from consultant and American sub ace William Gruner. Gruner is the backbone of this title, lending accuracy and authenticity to the whole package. His comments are the highlight of the game's manual, and make for great reading.

SSI, Aeon, and Gruner have crafted a completely entertaining simulation, with enough difficulty and realism settings to attract everyone from novices to the hard-core crowd. *Silent Hunter* brings



■ The primitive air and surface search radar systems often provide only bearing or distance data for contacts.

to life one of the most exciting and dangerous aspects of the war, and although a chance to play as the Japanese (and use those Long Lance torpedoes) would have been nice, this is still the best submarine game in town.

—T. Liam McDonald

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** Slick graphics, great gameplay, realistic control.

**91%**

**LOWS:** You can't play from the other side. Not enough diversity in the missions.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Simply a blast for anyone, from the dabbler to the true submarine buff.

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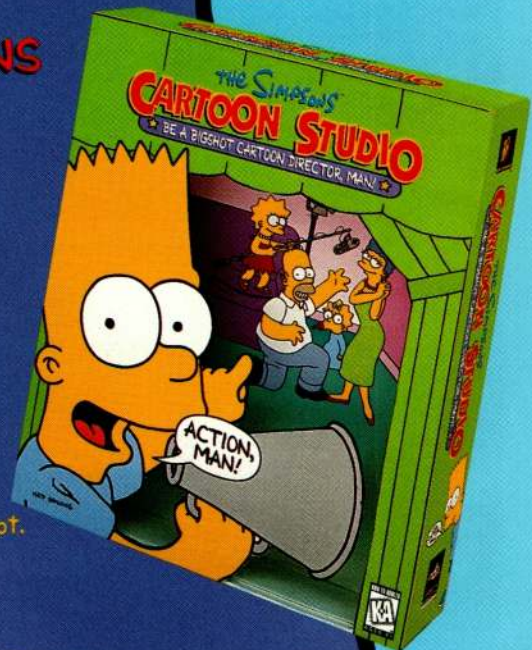
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Product Information Number 81



MATT GROEDING

# Dinotopia

**Category:** Roleplaying Adventure

**Developer:** Dreamers Guild

**Publisher:** Turner Interactive, 1050 Techwood Drive NW, Atlanta, GA 30318 (404) 885-7972

**PC GAMER  
EDITORS'  
CHOICE**

**This best-selling fantasy survives the translation to PC game with its beauty and sense of wonder intact.**

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66MHz; 8MB RAM; DOS 5.0 or higher; SVGA; Mouse; Sound Blaster or compatible	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM

separated from his twin sister Constance during a storm that sank their ship. Rescued by some friendly porpoises (human newcomers to Dinotopia are often called "Dolphinbacks"), he wakes up on a beach in an unknown land.

After poking around the shipwreck for some useful inventory items (there's a big oyster shell down the beach — use the crowbar on it, and take a pearl while you're at it), you'll set off to explore this exotic land of talking reptiles and Tolkienesque humans in hopes of finding Constance, who might also have washed up safely on its shores.

After first visiting the hatchery, where a kindly granny-lady will give you a grammar book that lets you speak and read Dinotopian (the saurian alphabet is fascinating — cuneiform letters made from stylized claw-marks); and you'll meet Kurfut and Zooker, two squabbling stegosaurus whose wagon will serve to transport you around Dinotopia until you pass the Aerial Challenge and bond with your own "skybax."

A clean, mostly transparent, interface makes the adventure easy to play. A hand icon and a claw-print icon govern object-handling and movement; left-click on the screen, and Nathan will move where you indicate (unless something's in his way). There's a scrolling inventory window, a small strategic map of Dinotopia, a save/load button, and a few specialized icons whose purpose will become clear in context. That's it; easy as pie.

Full-screen reproductions of Gurney's original art set the graphic standard for the game, which is lush and richly textured. There's some very charming and appropriate background music, and the human actors are quite good in their small character roles.

But it's the dinosaurs that steal the show. Combining 3D animations with animatronic puppets, the game presents a truly marvelous array of saurian characters, each with its own distinct personality and quirks. Your companion throughout most of the quest is a garrulous little parrot-like Dimorphodon named Atrik, who faithfully tags along, occasionally giving useful advice, but



**Theona, the granny-lady who lives in the hatchery, will give you a grammar book, enabling you to speak Dinotopian. Do not lose or trade this book, or you'll be unable to understand anything said to you!**



**Treetown is one of the prettiest locations in the game. To find Maggie, just keep following the catwalks until you find a ladder going down.**

**B**ack in 1992, I was Christmas-shopping for my youngest nephew (a very bright kid of ten who had just developed an interest in science fiction and fantasy), when my attention was caught by an oversized book called *Dinotopia*. Intrigued by its premise of a land where humans and dinosaurs lived side by side, I opened it at random and beheld Waterfall City for the first time.

My jaw dropped: it was a fantasy city so magnificent, so dramatic in its concept, so vividly rendered by artist James Gurney's technique, that I could almost feel the mist, almost hear the leathery creak of flying saurians' wings as they wheeled above the thundering cascades.

I bought the book for my nephew (who loved it), and bought one for myself as well. Gurney's artwork, simultaneously powerful and whimsical, kicked my sense of wonder into high gear and, like more than a million readers, I became a confirmed Dinotopian.

Now, with a little help from Turner Interactive, this intriguing world makes the transition to the PC, where the gamer assumes the role of 17-year-old Nathan,



**To complete the gramophone, you'll need to play just the right tune on the thumb piano. The correct sequence of notes is 1,3,4,5,5,6,7,8.**

mostly just chattering away boastfully. I grew quite fond of him as we explored the ten distinct environments that comprise the main story line.

While the game is basically linear — wherever you go, it seems Constance is only a step or two ahead of you — you can explore freely. If you choose a certain course of action and happen to overlook some location or character you need to visit in order to succeed, you'll sooner or later encounter a character who'll tip you off to what you've missed.

Much of *Dinotopia's* delight lies in its myriad colorful details, not all of which must be examined in order to finish the game, but most are interesting enough in and of themselves to warrant

## Tips from the TROTTERS SAURUS

### Pick a Card!

In Pumice Town (the only city you can visit at the start of your quest), you'll encounter Onno, a card-shark who runs a deceptively simple game called Treble. She has two items to wager that you *must* win: Constance's locket and a metal hinge. To play a game, you must stake something from your own inventory. The order of the cards is supposedly randomized, but the initial deal usually favors Onno. It's very easy to lose your whole inventory and only win one of the two objects you need.

It is *absolutely imperative* that you save your game before trying your luck at Treble. You must win both the locket and the hinge and *still* have something to trade with Bracho the mastodon when you reach his shop in the Alpine region: he has a watch that you must have to finish the game.

By saving and replaying — it may take you two dozen tries to win two hands against your canny opponent — you'll eventually win the items you need and still have a few items in your inventory.

### Curing Maggie's Sore Throat

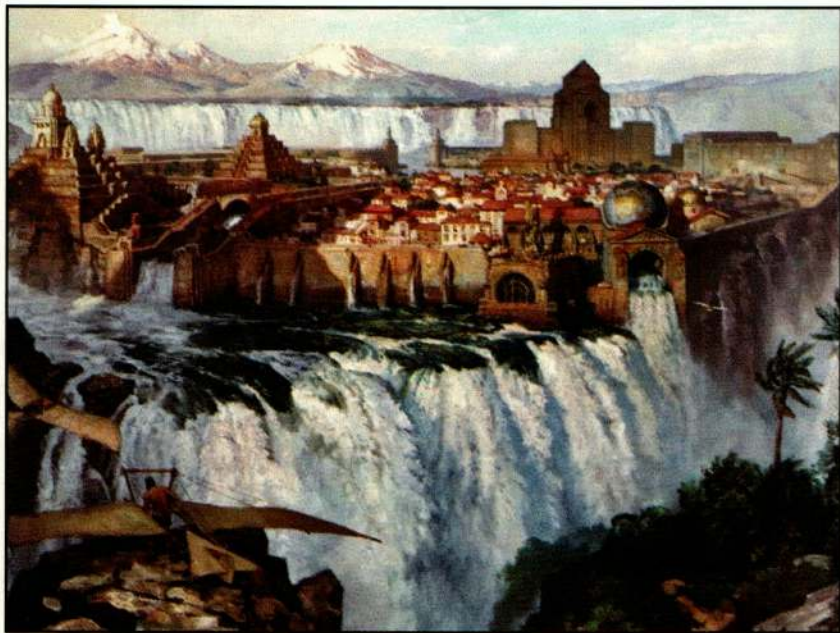
In beautiful Treetown, you'll find a giant Brachiosaur who needs some medicine. The first ingredient, fireweed, is found on the shore of a lake due south of the spot where you parked Thundra, your skybox; it looks like a red oak leaf. While you're there, look for a bucket just lying on the ground (picking it up is, apparently, the event-trigger that makes a tree-tap appear on a tree just above Thundra). The other ingredient, Noolu moss, is unfortunately protected by a horde of hornets. Locate the tree-tap, click on it, and it will fill with sap. The hornets will swarm to the sap. Follow their path and you'll find the moss, which is a green splotch easily visible on the tree trunk.

Take the ingredients to Maggie's location, where you'll find a beaker. Put the fireweed on the beaker first, followed by the moss. The beaker will turn purple. Click on it and use it on Atrik, who'll fly down Maggie's throat with the soothing elixir.

In gratitude, Maggie will then give you a prism, which you'll need to solve the sundial puzzle in Taron's house in the desert.

your attention. In Waterfall City, for example, you'll see street musicians, cavorting clowns, game-playing children, and all manner of ordinary citizens (human and saurian) just going about their business; and once you've accomplished the required puzzle-solving in the Savannah region, you'll want to spend some time watching the antics of the Dragonfly Troubadours. Every location has its share of imaginative little extras, added for the sake of atmosphere or simply for the sake of fun.

The puzzles and challenges all lie within the easy-to-moderate range; together with the game's essential gentle spirit and lack of violence, they make for a game that adults and kids can play together. Veteran players may find



Waterfall City in all its splendor. *Dinotopia's* lush graphics do a good job of complementing Gurney's original paintings.



Spend some time in Waterfall City, even after you've visited the Hall of Knowledge, the Musicians Inn, and the Greenhouse: the streets teem with colorful and interesting diversions.

*Dinotopia* a bit *too* breezy, in fact, and those looking for chop-the-orcs blood-sport will not find it here. This is, after all, a utopia, and — while not every critter you meet is as friendly as Atrik or Aunt Maggie — you'll never find yourself in one of those sudden-bloody-death situations.

Mostly, the game is well-paced; whatever path you take in wandering from place to place, you'll make slow but steady progress toward the climactic reunion with Constance in the fabled World Beneath.

There are some episodes that don't hold up to the level of the others. Nathan's trek up Blackshear mountain to visit the Tibetan mystic, Levko Gambo, becomes very tedious, even if you avoid the chutes-and-ladders hazard of the slippery ice crevasses (step into one, and you'll slide back almost to your starting place). And there are several places in the game where mouse-control of Nathan's movements is annoyingly twitchy. Watch out, in particular, for the tunnel entrance at the end of the maze-like jungle path near

the Temple Ruins: if you don't position the claw-shaped cursor on just the right stepping stone, the game kicks Nathan back outside, and finding the right stone is a fairly irritating business of trial and error.

A few such minor blemishes, however, do not detract from the game's overall appeal. The designers have obviously worked very hard to capture the look and feel of Gurney's fantasy world, and for the most part they have succeeded.

*Dinotopia* is a family game in the best sense: challenging enough for all but the most jaded adult players, refreshingly non-violent, and sure to appeal to pre-teen kids of both sexes, even those who

prefer to spend their hours playing the latest punch-and-kick videogames.

*Dinotopia* beautifully presents a vast and exotic world and invites us to immerse ourselves in its wonders. Except for occasional periods of tedium (and what adventure of this scale doesn't have its slack moments?), I thoroughly enjoyed my visit.

— William R. Trotter

### PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Lush graphics; delightful, creative details; compelling, non-violent, story.

**LOWS:** Some episodes out-stay their welcome; occasionally tricky movement controls may cause frustration.

**BOTTOM LINE:** A handsome CD-ROM adaptation of a fantasy classic, and definitely a game for the whole family to share and enjoy.

# 89%

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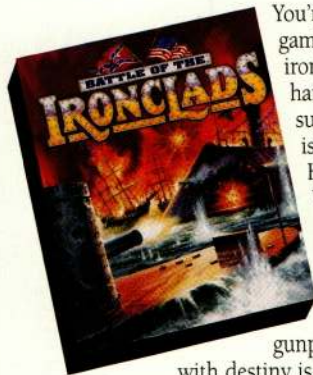
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# Batman Forever

**Category:** Arcade

**Developer:** Probe Entertainment

**Publisher:** Acclaim Entertainment,  
1 Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove,  
NY 11542-2777 (516) 656-5000

## Required

Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX/33MHz; 8MB RAM; 35MB hard-drive space

## We Recommend

Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66MHz; Supported sound card; Gamepad

Whether you're a fan of the Batman movies or not, when it comes to Acclaim's *Batman Forever* it won't really matter: Even the most rabid follower of the Dark Knight's escapades won't be able to stomach the pointless, frustrating gameplay and ho-hum graphics in this tired beat-'em-up.

For a game that boasts a blockbuster title, the action here is about as yawn-inducing as it gets. Playing as either Batman or Robin (or both, in two-player mode), you move from screen to screen, mopping up baddies with the usual assort-

ment of punches, kicks, and special weapons of your choosing. Throughout the eight excruciating levels, you'll find power-ups, uncover secret passages, and stumble across traps. To make things more interesting, you'll have to figure out which special tools to use to advance past certain obstacles.

Now, there's no problem with the basic concept; most of us have played and enjoyed plenty of platform games, like *Blackthorne* or *Flashback*. It's just that *Batman Forever* doesn't even come close to being half as satisfying. It looks as if it were made about three or four years ago, and it doesn't play much better. Just like in age-old videogames like *Double Dragon*, once you've beaten the villains, they fall to the ground, begin blinking, then simply vanish. Worse still are the controls. You can't make Batman or Robin run; the best they can hustle up is a steady (and unintentionally funny) power-walk. The character animations are the product of motion-capture technology, but they're jerky and unconvincing, and the interface is a downright clumsy affair, forcing you to execute special moves just to use a weapon, rather than simply letting you choose one and press a punch or kick button. It took me



There are plenty of cool weapons to use in *Batman Forever*, but pulling off the special moves necessary to activate them in the heat of battle can be pretty frustrating.

five minutes just to figure out the grappling hook!

Avid Batman fans *might* want to pick up this game to make sure their collection is complete, but if it's fighting action you're after — or even mindless diversion — you're better off looking somewhere else.

— Steve Poole

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** Lots of different gadgets to use.

**LOWS:** Clumsy interface makes using those gadgets a real pain; gameplay is stupefyingly unoriginal.

**BOTTOM LINE:** It's all been done before, and done much better. For Batman completists only.

**40%**

# Gearheads

**Category:** Arcade

**Developer:** R/GA Interactive

**Publisher:** Philips Media, Inc., 10960  
Wilshire Blvd., 7th Fl., Los Angeles,  
CA 90024 (310) 444-6500

## Required

Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB

## We Recommend

486/66; Supported sound card

Remember those plastic wind-up toys you had as a kid — the kind that would hobble around for a few seconds, then fall apart? Oddly enough, they've found a home in *Gearheads*, a computer game from Philips Media that brings fast action and strategy together in one entertaining package.

The concept for *Gearheads* is deceptively simple — and at first glance, a little bewildering. You begin the game with a toybox full of wind-up critters that you must send across a playing field. Each toy that successfully crosses

to the other side scores you a point, and twenty-one points wins the game. As you send your pieces across the screen, the computer does the same, trying to block your movement and score before you do.

But it's not as simple as it sounds. Each of the twelve toys in your box has its own unique abilities, and this is the basis for the game's subtle strategy element. Some toys, like Ziggy the Bug, can dart across the screen quickly, yet are easily stopped by any obstacle; others, like the dreaded Bulldozer, can plow through anything, but require a lot of winding to get up and going. Choosing just the right mix of toys to fill your toybox, and deciding when and how to deploy them, can be a real challenge. For example, if your opponent leaves several rows open, you could wind up a bunch of fast bugs really quickly and send them across for easy



The battlefields of *Gearheads* can quickly become crowded with toys. Here is a classic situation — a dove of dozers trying to muscle past a wall of immobile hens.

scores. But if he's got a huge wall of bulldozers and robots plodding towards you, you'll want to set up a wall of long-lasting, nearly immobile hens to block your side of the screen. It's all a matter of timing and good strategy.

The game is cute, fun, and really easy to learn. And even though it might seem to be geared just toward kids, the perceptive

gamer will find some real gaming goodness hidden in *Gearheads*.

— Jason Bates

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** It's a fun and catchy game built around a unique idea.

**LOWS:** It can get old quickly, so it's best taken in small doses.

**BOTTOM LINE:** It's a simple little game that doesn't take itself too seriously.

**75%**

# Kingdom O' Magic

**Category:** Adventure

**Developer:** Sales Curve Interactive

**Publisher:** Philips Media Inc., 10960 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90024 (800) 340-7888

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

**Here's a Pythonesque adventure that blends traditional puzzling and roleplaying into one bizarre good time.**

Not since Monty Python spoofed themselves in the off-kilter *Monty Python's Complete Waste of Time* has there been a computer program with such a twisted and distinctively British sense of humor. *Kingdom O' Magic* is a quirky graphic adventure that simply oozes dark humor and takes players on a wild ride through a mystical, and often nonsensical, journey through a strange fantasy world.

At the start of the game, players cast themselves as either the male lizard hero, Thidney, or the buxom vixen, Shah-ron, then choose from one of three different quests in the Kingdom. Trying to complete the quests means traveling throughout the land, visiting 105 different locations and meeting dozens of demented characters, including a sadistic granny, an unforgiving, stone-faced Gorgon, and same pretty unhappy gingerbread men.

Your choice of character determines how you'll solve the puzzles you



Thidney the lizard hero is one of two characters you can control in *Kingdom*.



The interface is almost as strange as the game itself; the odd-looking wheel at the right gives you control over who your character talks with or fights.

encounter; Thidney may solve a particular problem by beating some poor sod's head into the dirt, while Shah-ron might distract that same person by offering him a quick assignation in the alley. Even if you repeatedly choose the same character, the game promises never to be the same adventure twice, as characters interact with one another, get into fights, and offer a wealth of different responses based on how you approach them.

What really makes *Kingdom* work are the odd settings and witty dialogue. Fans of British humor will get more than a few chuckles as the infectious humor starts to work its magic. Insult the granny's dye-job, and she'll wither you with threats that would put the Marquis DeSade off his feed. Tempt an unfriendly cop with a box of donuts, and

you can watch as his ponderous weight causes the pier under him to collapse. The puzzles range from easy to moderately hard, and they reflect the game's twisted sense of humor.

Still, as funny as it is, *Kingdom* does have its failings. The graphics aren't too impressive,

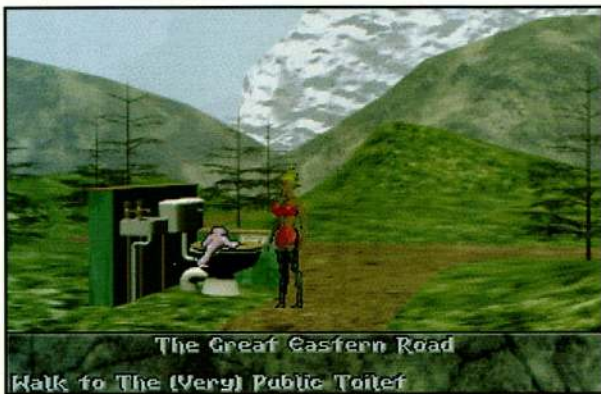
with blocky edges and unsubtle colors for many of the backgrounds and characters. Basically, if you're looking for a more twisted version of LucasArts' *Full Throttle*, this is not it. The wit is here, but the visual quality isn't.

Another shortcoming lies in the game's roleplaying element. Most of the time, you'll progress as you would in a graphic adventure — but you'll also have to watch your health level, build up spell-casting points, and accumulate gold. These touches of micromanagement feel tacked-on, they detract from the game's otherwise simple entertainment.

Then there's the combat system, a frustrating real-time affair. Players will find themselves reliving fight scenes repeatedly because they didn't right-click the mouse at the proper moment and the enemy was able to deal a fatal blow. And be warned, fights are not something you can plan for. Enemies will jump you at any time, any place. So save early, and save often.

Despite its weak points, though, there are plenty of reasons to recommend *Kingdom O' Magic*. This is not some cookie-cutter game; this is the dark comedy of graphic adventures — weird, wacky and a bottom-line good time.

—Brett Jones



One look at this screen is worth a thousand words, and a chuckle or two if you've got the least bit of appreciation for British humor.

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** Funny dialogue; the unexpected is the only thing you can count on.

**71%**

**LOWS:** Non-linear gameplay can leave you lost; the need for lots of backtracking makes it tedious at times.

**BOTTOM LINE:** This quirky adventure has comedic flair. If you like off-beat games, pick it up.

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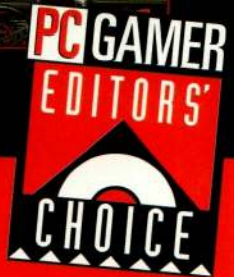
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# Star Trek: DS9 - Harbinger

**Category:** Graphic Adventure

**Developer:** Stormfront Studios

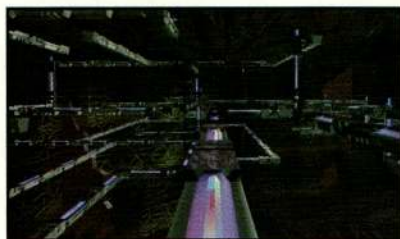
**Publisher:** Viacom New Media,  
1515 Broadway, New York,  
NY 10036 (800) 469-2539

Required	We Recommend
486/66; 8MB RAM; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 10MB free hard disk space; DOS 5.0+; Compatible sound card; Mouse	Pentium; 16MB RAM; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive



It's no secret that "Deep Space Nine" didn't quite live up to expectations when it debuted on television. "DS9" didn't "boldly go where no one has gone before," because it was a set on a stationary space station. There weren't many exciting explorations or meetings with strange life forms; for the most part, you were left watching the comings and goings of the crew, who seemed familiar and, at times, wooden. Still, Trek fans stuck it out, hoping that it would get better as it went along.

That's pretty much the same feeling *Deep Space Nine - Harbinger* inspires. You start out full of hope that it'll be good,



**This maze on the Citadel is very exasperating. Not only are you lost, but the pesky drones keep taking pot shots at you.**



**The Citadel's leaders don't take kindly to strangers.**

**Not even a good story line and a little help from the Bajoran Prophets can save Sisko and Co. from the wormhole of bad gaming.**

and end up not even wanting to finish it. Set in the familiar world of the series, *DS9* holds the promise of interacting with characters from the show and puzzling your way through the mysteries of the galaxy. But, right from the start, you're bound to be disappointed, thanks to a sloppy mix of abstract puzzles and uninspired arcade sequences.

The game casts you as a Tirrion delegate named Bannik, who barely survived an attack by unmanned alien drones just before arriving on the nearly empty station (DS9 has been evacuated due to a plasma storm — a contrived excuse for the sterile, deserted feel of your surroundings). Before you can catch your breath, the drones attack DS9, and you're unceremoniously dumped into the first of many tedious and pointless arcade sequences. As in *Rebel Assault II* or *The Hive*, you'll merely point and click your mouse-driven crosshairs as the drones float in and out of your field of view. Like all rail-shooters, these sequences get pretty old pretty fast, and they're a real pain in the wrist.

Once the drones are taken care of, the game takes on some semblance of a traditional adventure as Capt. Sisko orders you to find Ambassador Karrig, the man you're assisting in talks with the Scythian race. Incredibly, Sisko doesn't offer you directions to Karrig's quarters, and when you access the station's computer for help, it politely tells you,

"Ambassador Karrig is located in the Habitat Ring." So there you are, stuck without a map in an unfamiliar space station filled with labyrinthine corridors, and you can't contact the crew for help.

Needless to say, wandering around takes up a healthy portion of the game. After a lot of trial and error, you'll eventually run into Quark, DS9's profiteering Ferengi bartender, and Rasmus, a Bajoran who has some interesting ideas about the cause of the plasma storm. She thinks it's a sign from the Prophets of bad things to come — and, lo and behold, when you finally find the



**After Ambassador Karrig is murdered, you go on the hunt for the killer. It's a good thing you had a phaser handy when you happened upon this Blue Lykorian trying to kill Odo.**

ambassador, he's been murdered.

With a murder to solve, you'd think that the game would begin to show some direction, but you'd be disappointed. You'll wander around to talk with the Scythians, Odo and other characters, then find yourself engaged in more arcade-style phaser shoot-outs. You'll go through the wormhole to destroy the Citadel, the alien factory where the killer drones are being produced, and endure even more irritating arcade sequences. You'll solve a few *7th Guest*-style puzzles that consist of pushing buttons and aligning puzzle pieces; it's none too challenging, and none too interesting.

With a little thought, *DS9 - Harbinger* could have been an entertaining graphic adventure or shooter — just replace the pointless puzzles with challenges that actually make sense in the game world, or replace the mindless arcade sequences with some more interactive action. Instead, *DS9 - Harbinger* seems to rely on the Star Trek name to pull it through — and that just doesn't cut it.

—Lisa M. Howie

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** Good story line, sharp graphics; full-speed from TV cast.

**66%**

**LOWS:** There's not much gaming going on; annoying arcade sequences and un inventive puzzles add nothing to experience.

**BOTTOM LINE:** A good license only counts for so much; if a game isn't fun to play, what's the point?

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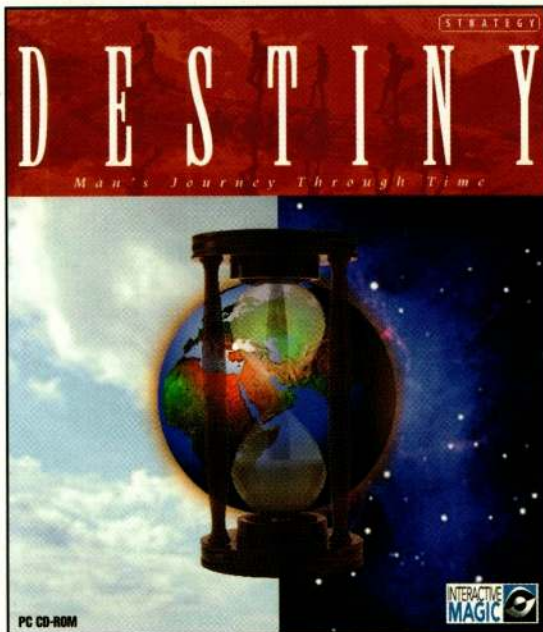
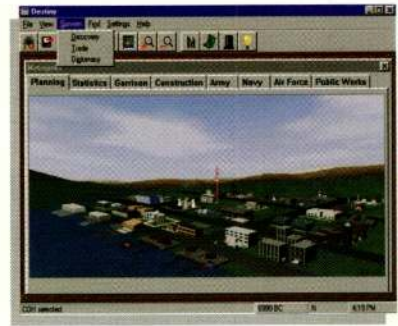
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# Rayman

**Category:** Arcade

**Developer:** Ubi Soft Entertainment

**Publisher:** Ubi Soft Ltd., Bridge House, 11 Creek Rd., Hampton Court, Surrey KT8 9BE

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 4MB RAM; VGA	486/66; 8MB RAM; Supported sound card; Gamepad

Betilla the Fairy and stolen the Great Protoon from a peaceful world. As a result, the small electroons that used to happily circle the Great Protoon are scattered over the world, captured by the minions of Mr. Dark. Your job? You guessed it: free the electroons and make your way to Mr. Dark's lair to rescue the Great Protoon and restore universal harmony. It may sound like a quantum physicist's nightmare, but it's entertaining stuff.

If you're the least bit familiar with the console videogame market, you may already know about Ubi Soft's *Rayman*. This side-scrolling action game falls into the same category populated by Nintendo's Mario, Sega's Sonic the Hedgehog, and Shiny Entertainment's Earthworm Jim; it puts a cute (and marketable) action hero in the middle of intensive shooting, bashing, and jumping action. And it looks like this little guy can hold his own with the best of them.

Like most games of its type, *Rayman* is a little thin on story, but in this case, the plot's worth a mention. The mysterious Mr. Dark has defeated

There are a lot of nice touches throughout, from the variety of Rayman's powers and the ability to choose which level you'll visit next, to cartoon-quality animations that bring it all to life. Each level is unique, ranging from traditional side-scrolling scenes to vertical climbs. And unlike other games that force you to try countless times to finish the same level, *Rayman* lets you choose your path from a variety of options. Helpful, since you often have to go back with powers you receive later in the game to recover all of the lost electroons, which means more challenge in a familiar setting.

On the surface, *Rayman* looks a little like a children's game, but the colorful, cartoonish style of the animation will please players of any age. And, unlike many recent games of this type, there's no violence. The enemies are



With its colorful characters and arcade action, *Rayman* will be a hit with kids of all ages.

simply booted off the screen, not destroyed, and Rayman always has a happy grin on his face, even when facing overwhelming odds.

If you're an adult who's fond of platform arcade titles, or if you have a kid you need to wean off of *Doom*, this is definitely the game to get.

—Michael Wolf

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** Great animation; lots of variety; precise play control.

**LOWES:** Could be too challenging at high levels; chances to save can be few and far between.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *Rayman* is undoubtedly one of the best arcade-style games for the PC.

**83%**

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# Whiplash

**Category:** Arcade

**Developer:** Gremlin Interactive

**Publisher:** Interplay Productions,  
17922 Fitch Ave., Irvine,  
CA 92714 (800) 969-4263

## Required

Double-speed  
CD-ROM drive;  
486DX2/66; 8MB  
RAM; 28MB hard-  
drive space; VGA

## We Recommend

Quad-speed  
CD-ROM drive;  
Pentium; 16MB  
RAM;  
Joystick/Steering  
Wheel; Supported  
sound card



In the past year, we've seen the number of arcade-style driving games for the PC go from a modest trickle to an outright flood. From the motorsports madness of *Need for Speed* and *Screamer* to the futuristic shoot-'em-up action of *Hi-Octane* and *WipeOut*, there's been a little something to satisfy just about every lead-footed gamer. But how can a new game stand out from this crowd? Interplay's *Whiplash* tries to carve itself a new niche by providing more than the usual foot-to-the-floor driving.

*Whiplash* offers you eight different cars and a total of sixteen tracks to test your racer's edge, but the big difference between *Whiplash* and its rivals is in the tracks' design. Instead of the (relatively) safe and sane courses you'll find in *Need for Speed*, the tracks in *Whiplash* are filled with stomach-churning loops, ramps that hurl you into the sky or send

**If other arcade racing games have been putting you to sleep, this game may be your wake-up call.**

you into a mid-air barrel roll, and corkscrews that challenge you to keep your tires on the road.

These tracks are just plain fun. They deliver a convincing edge-of-your-seat feeling; it's like being inside the tiny car on one of those crazy Hot Wheels tracks you played with as a kid. But jumps and loops aren't the only things you'll have to watch out for. Crash into a wall, or get "nudged" too hard by another car, and your own vehicle won't run quite as fast. Take enough damage, and you'll go up in a ball of flame. You can damage other cars, too — ram them when they're smoking, and you're likely to take 'em out of the race. This can make a big difference in your strategy — do you keep going and hope to keep your position, or stop by the pits for a precious few seconds to repair damage and gain the speed you'll need to pass the opposition? Of course, if your car gets destroyed, it's not the end of the race — true to arcade form, you've got three cars to trash before you're tossed out of the race.



**In high-res mode, this game is certainly a looker. However, for the best feeling of speed and control, low-res is the way to go.**

Naturally, this kind of competition is even more fun with your buddies, and *Whiplash* supports network play with as many as 16 gamers. Any spots not filled by other players are computer controlled, so you'll always have a full cast.

In its high-resolution Super VGA mode, *Whiplash* is beautiful, but with all the textures and details turned on, the game slows almost to a standstill. Even on a Pentium 133, you might find yourself gearing down to standard VGA to get the kind of control you'll need on the tougher tracks. In a game clearly designed to be played in SVGA — and where the illusion of speed counts for everything — it's a big disappointment.

Still, the challenging racing, death-defying stunts, and multi-player action go a long way toward making up for that. If you're searching for a good arcade racer, and *Need for Speed* or *Screamer* don't give you the death-defying thrills they used to, look no further. Even if you own those games, this one's a keeper.

— Michael Wolf



**This typical scene proves that *Whiplash* is certainly not a game for players who get airsick.**

## PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Varied, challenging, fun tracks; beautiful high-res graphics; network play.

**LOWS:** Too slow in high-res; control is sometimes jumpy.

**BOTTOM LINE:** If you're a fan of arcade racing, you definitely want to pick up *Whiplash*.

# 81%

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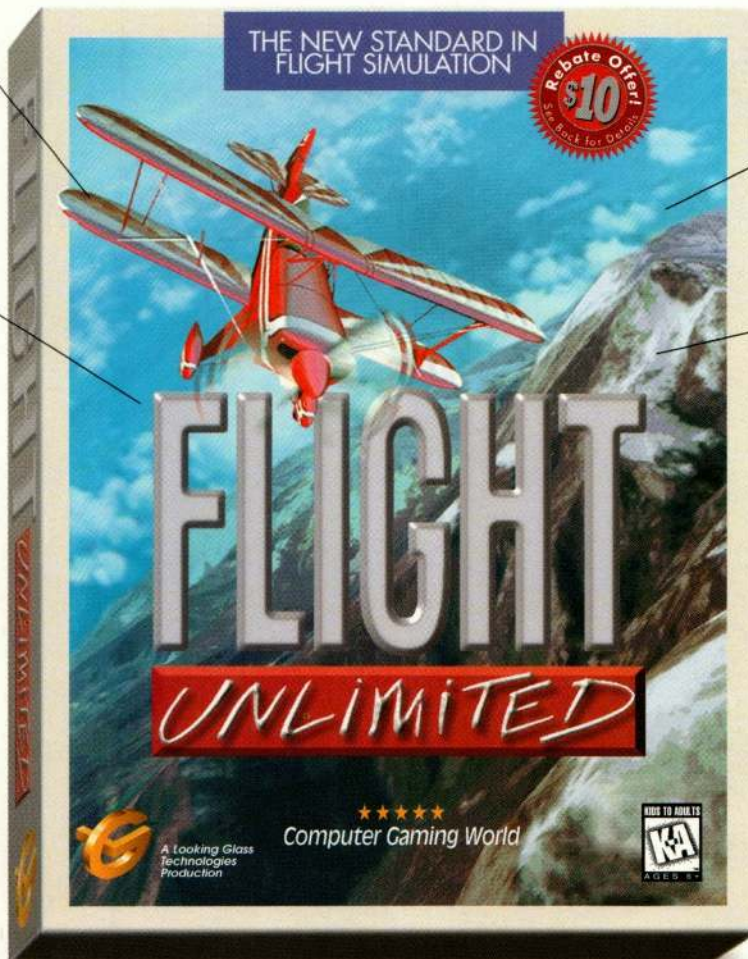
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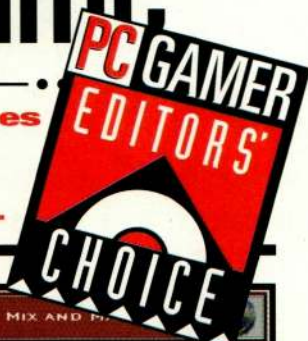
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# Spycraft: The Great Game

**Category:** Adventure  
**Developer:** Activision  
**Publisher:** Activision; 11601 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1000, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (310) 473-9200

**This big-budget adventure weaves a thrilling story of international intrigue with you in the hot-seat.**



Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; 30MB hard-drive space; 16-bit SVGA; Mouse; Sound Blaster or compatible	Pentium; 16 MB RAM; Internet access and World Wide Web browser

actors. Spread over three CD-ROMs, the video sequences give you a first-person view of the dangerous world your character lives and works in. Some of them are interactive, with dialog trees that let you choose the direction a conversation will take. And, best of all, the video is not the main point of the game.

*Spycraft's* gameplay revolves around the investigation of several interrelated plots. You take on the role of CIA agent Thorne, faced with investigating a rogue CIA agent's murder of a Russian presidential candidate. There's much more to this story, which winds its way through international politics, the Russian mob, stolen nuclear weapons, and...well, best to let you discover. It's enough to say this is one of the best-executed stories I've come across in a game — due in no small part, I'm sure, to the fact that a professional writer was involved in its creation.

As you get deeper, *Spycraft* really shines, although it may not seem like much at first. A tepid, *Mad Dog MacCree*-style video shooting gallery is one of the first interactive sequences you'll encounter, and doesn't exactly inspire confidence that you're playing a complex, sophisticated adventure game.

But if you take your lumps in the field, you'll eventually get access to a number of investigative tools that will help you beat some very interesting puzzles. These include the Kennedy Assassination tools for plotting bullet trajectories; an identikit for creating composite portraits of suspect; image enhancement; sound analysis; code analysis; and more. Hell, there's even an interrogation room where you can torture a suspect to get information, if you've got the stomach for it. You use these tools to analyze evidence and uncover the path of the suspect.

Unlike the lame puzzles that get sprinkled about most FMV adventures (slide the tiles to unscramble a picture; unlock a door by rolling a ball through a maze), *Spycraft's* puzzles are actually related to the game's story, and they give you a great sense of accomplishment. Gathering and reporting on this data is done with a palmtop computer that lets



Using the mix-and-match tools in the identikit to identify your target, you'll learn the assassin is a former CIA operative.

Assassination, murder, investigation, interrogation, torture: they're all part of the "great game" of espionage. But juggling all those elements — all while developing a good story — is a tall order, especially in a PC game that offers a decent amount of interaction. So Activision invested more than \$4 million and enlisted an impressive array of advisers (like former CIA director William Colby, KGB Major General Oleg Kalugin, and spy novelist James Adams) to lend *Spycraft: The Great Game* a realistic and compelling background and an air of authenticity. The result is an unusual, intriguing offering that — once it hooks you — won't let you go.

*Spycraft* combines some very impressive production values with unusual puzzles to create a completely original gaming experience. Although the entire game depends heavily on full-motion video, *Spycraft* is a cut above what you've come to expect from most FMV games. Every scene has been professionally shot and features a cast of recognizable and talented character

you send and receive E-mail and call up information from an extensive database. One further innovation is an online component that connects you to the Internet to download news stories daily and take part in Web-based discussions — it's not a requirement for solving the game, but it adds an intriguing new element.

Although the puzzles are well-balanced, *Spycraft* probably isn't going to be a huge challenge for experienced gamers, but don't let that stop you. There's certainly enough in it to keep you busy for at least fifteen hours of gameplay — even more, if you go back to pursue some of the subplots. Sure, there are a lot of moments where you sit back and watch video, but there's enough interactivity to keep it fresh. Most telling is the fact that the story hooked me so completely that I kept playing just to see where it went. And that's exactly what a good adventure game should do.

— T. Liam McDonald



James Karen (*Poltergeist* and *Nixon*) plays Warhurst, your boss at the CIA, and often contacts you through video E-mail.

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** Innovative puzzles and top-notch video put *Spycraft* ahead of the pack.

**89%**

**LOWS:** A few of the puzzles fall flat; Internet-based content could be better.

**BOTTOM LINE:** An engrossing, unique adventure with top-flight production values.

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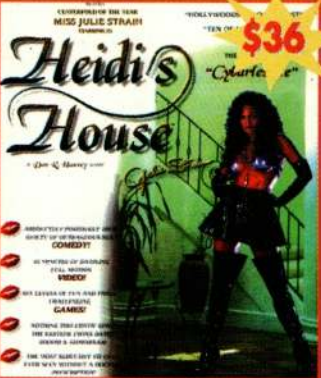
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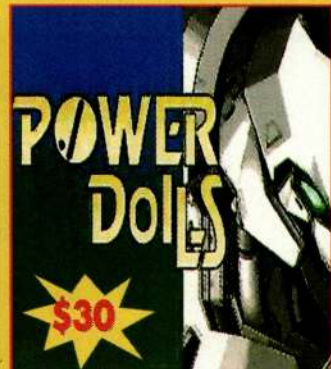
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# Red Ghost

**Category:** Strategy/Simulation

**Developer:** Maelstrom Games Ltd.

**Publisher:** Empire Interactive, 13220 Wisteria Dr., Bay N-2 Germantown, MD 20874 (301) 916-9302

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX/33; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse	486/66; Joystick

**With strategy games and simulations more popular than ever, *Red Ghost* tries to cash in with a little of both.**

**R**ecently, I began to notice posts online asking if anyone was playing *Red Ghost* from Empire Interactive. A handful of replies asked, "No, what is it?" The truth is few gamers — including myself — had heard about *Red Ghost* until they saw it on the retail shelf.

This is one of those middle-of-the-road titles that seem to be released with little or no press fanfare in the hope that word-of-mouth alone can help carry them to success. Usually, these games slip away unnoticed and unwanted, but *Red Ghost* may just keep you interested.

It's part strategy game and part action game, but *Red Ghost* doesn't have much in common with *Warcraft II* or *Command & Conquer*; still, you'll find some familiar gameplay inside. In fact, when I first fired up *Red Ghost*, I was overwhelmed by the number of other games it brought to mind — most notably one of my old faves, *Midwinter*. This isn't so surprising, since *Red Ghost* was created by Maelstrom Games, who also developed *Midwinter* (and its sequels, *Flames of Freedom* and *Ashes of Empire*).

If you're familiar with any of those games, you have a pretty good picture of *Red Ghost*. In *Red Ghost*, you and your



■ One place the where graphics don't skimp is on the Mission Map.



■ The 3D landscape may not look that great in *Red Ghost*, but it blows up real good.



■ Beautiful cutscenes punctuate the action, but they get old fast.

team of soldiers are all that stand between evil enemy forces (the Red Ghost) and their drive for world domination. You plan strategies and move your vehicles using detailed maps, then jump into a variety of ground vehicles and helicopters to do battle firsthand in a 3D landscape.

There are 18 controllable characters to choose from, each with his own special skills. You won't really get the chance to know these freedom fighters — there are no pictures or extensive dossiers of your crew — but you'll at least get the name, nationality, branch of service, and a list of mission specialties for each member.

Each of the characters actually represents a team of operatives, and you can have as many as three teams active at a time. Using the overhead map, you decide where to land them, then start giving orders. You can auto-route them to waypoints and ride along as gunner, or drive the vehicles yourself. If action is your thing, you also have close-quarters control

of individual team members, so it's a good idea to remember what each member's specialty is and what items he's carrying.

The missions unfold any way you like; a mission map displays the various Red Ghost defense networks, so you can plan your routes to avoid detection or get into as much trouble as you like. Keyboard commands are minimal, and vehicle control by mouse, joystick, or keyboard is easy, although it's obvious these weren't designed for the veteran combat simulator fan. There's little in the way of realistic physics, but if you'd like something to do other than deploy your troops, it can be good fun.

Unfortunately, *Red Ghost* has no modem or network option — an omission that could limit its appeal in a market where multi-player games are fast becoming the norm. But if you don't mind playing solo, *Red Ghost* is good for short, enjoyable sessions.

—Scott Wolf

## PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Diverse gameplay; many options; the chance to step in when things get tough.

**LOWS:** Coarse terrain graphics. Limited to single-player action.

**BOTTOM LINE:** A competent, enjoyable game, especially if you liked *Midwinter* and its sequels.

# 71%

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Best Soundtrack"**  
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Strategy Plus, May 1996

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November 17, 1995

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Gamefan, January 1996

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Product Information Number 161

## Command & Conquer Gets Tough

Is there someone out there who found *Command & Conquer's* battles too easy? If there is, you're a better man than I. By the end, I was playing scenarios repeatedly just to get them right. I certainly don't recall thinking, "Gee, I wish this was a lot tougher."

Well, judging by the new *Command & Conquer* scenario disk, someone must have thought this. *Command & Conquer: The Covert Operations* is one

tough set of battles. There are seven new GDI and eight new NOD missions in this set, as well as 10 new multi-player maps, and I found them devilishly difficult. Action is nicely mixed in *Covert Ops*, with a number of unusual missions with very specific goals. Several Commando raids (one featuring only a single Commando!) point up the strength of this high-value unit, and require careful approaches and stealth.

Large villages and civilian "informants" give several of the scenarios a new twist. In one, for example, you must save the wife of an informant, who will then lead you to a NOD installation to retrieve some valuable Tiberium research material. Another has a nuclear missile en route for a conference of important politicians, and you must evacuate them before the missile strikes. In a particularly tough mission, the

enemy has infiltrated your base and is attacking you from the inside.

Some new cutscenes have been added, as well as a few new songs. To round things out, ten new multi-player maps, some featuring villages and civvies, will breathe fresh life into your head-to-head play. Film-like trailers for *Red Alert*, the upcoming, stand-alone follow-up to C&C, are also included, and manage to be flashy and impressive without really showing any of the gameplay.

I have to tell you, I do this for a living, and I found several of these new missions so hard as to be unplayable.

T. Liam McDonald



Call me a wimp, but *Covert Ops* kicked my ass and came back for more. If that's the kind of challenge you want, *Covert Ops* will give it to you in spades.

### Steel Panthers Scenarios

David Landry and his war-game hounds at Novastar

are busy doing for *Steel Panthers* what they did for *Tanks!* That is, they're turning out boatloads of new scenarios. The first few *Steel Panthers* disks are out, and as expected, they're top-notch.

The first disk is *Dnepr Nacht: Twilight of the German Army*, and features 11 complete scenarios based on the Russian pursuit of the shattered German Army across the Dnepr River. These all take place in



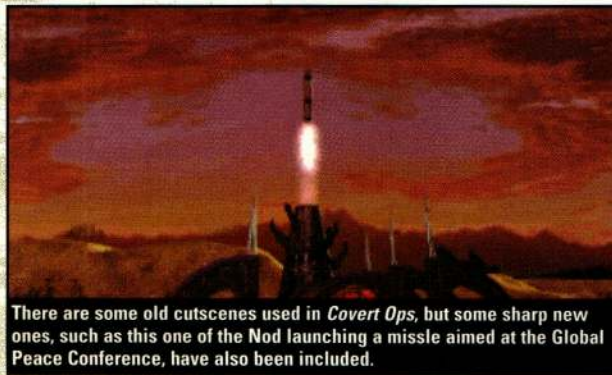
September 1943 and feature several quick-moving bridge-head scenarios and variants. Bloodied but not beaten, the Germans must struggle for their objectives against a vengeful Russian foe.

The tumultuous fighting for Okinawa is the focus of the ten scenarios of disk #3, *Okinawa: The Final Island*. These pit the 10th U.S. Army (a combination of Marines and regular infantry) against about 100,000 Japanese defenders. Characterized by amphibious landings, tenacious Japanese counter-attacks, and massive artillery barrages, these battles add some great moments to *Steel Panthers*, and fatten out the thin coverage of the Pacific Theater in the original game.

The last disk released at press time was #11, *The North Africa Campaign: 1942*. Wargamers just can't seem to stay away from Gazala, Benghazi, Tobruk, El Alamein, and the other fast-moving desert battles between Rommel and the British Empire. These 11 campaign scenarios won't disappoint. Future scenarios will have further North African campaigns (focusing on Patton), as well as several D-Day disks.

All the Novastar releases are accompanied by painfully thorough documentation featuring full Orders of Battle and historical essays. Another original idea from Novastar is their monthly *Steel Panthers Newsletter*. Each issue comes with a disk featuring several new scenarios, as well as supporting documentation and original essays. The few issues I've seen contained good pieces

If you were one of the few gamers who thought the original *Command & Conquer* was too easy, you'll want to get your hands on *The Covert Operations*.



There are some old cutscenes used in *Covert Ops*, but some sharp new ones, such as this one of the Nod launching a missile aimed at the Global Peace Conference, have also been included.

on Utah Beach, the use of infantry, and the Pacific Theater. At \$28 for 12 issues (\$15 for 6), it really can't be beat, and comes highly recommended to *Steel Panthers* fans. Give Novastar a call at (916) 624-7113, or E-mail them at [Novastar@vfr.net](mailto:Novastar@vfr.net).



Thick villages make for house-to-house fighting in several missions in *Covert Ops*.

## Bug Patches

**P**atches and cheat programs are available on the CD-ROM edition of *PC Gamer* in the X:\PATCHES directory, in online sources such as The Internet, CompuServe, and America OnLine, and through game publishers. Once good source is The Games Domain on the Internet: <http://www.gamesdomain.co.uk/>. Be warned: it can be slow at times, since it gets a lot of traffic. (The patch's file name on the *PC Gamer* CD is listed at the end of each entry.)

**Aide De Camp v.1.16b (HPS):** Adds printouts, the ability to import from spreadsheets/databases, a map "fill" feature, and new symbol editing tools. *ADC-116B.EXE*

**Aliens v.1.0.3 (Mindscape):** Addresses various crashes and bugs. *ALIEN103.EXE*

**Allied General v.1.1 (SSI):** Fixes E-mail bugs and makes it more stable. *AGWIN11.EXE*

**Angel Devoid Sony CDU-33A Update (Mindscape):** This update fixes a problem with the SONY CDU 33A CD-ROM Player accessing Disk 2 of *Angel Devoid*. *ANGEL.ZIP*

**Anvil of Dawn v.1.1 (New World Entertainment):** General maintenance patch. *ANVUP11.EXE*

**Battleground: Ardennes (TalonSoft):** General maintenance patch. *BGA11.ZIP*

**Civilization II Sound Update (MicroProse):** This update will fix the problems encountered by people with no sound cards. *CIV2106.ZIP*

**CivNet v.1.03 (MicroProse):** Fixes the "Cannot write to AUX" error that some people have encountered. *CIVNETP3.ZIP*

**Descent (Registered) v.1.5 (Interplay):** Adds new command line switches and fixes minor bugs. *DREG14A5.ZIP*

**Entomorph v.1.1 Update (SSI):** Fixes various bugs. *ENTOV11.EXE*

**Great Naval Battles Vol. 4 v.1.1 (SSI):** General maintenance patch. *GNB4V11.EXE*

**HardBall 5 Roster Update (Accolade):** Updates stats for *HardBall 5* to the end of the 1995 season. Rosters updated to the end of January 1996. *HB5LGD96.EXE*

**Harpoon Classic for Windows 1.58 (Alliance):** This version fixes all known program

problems, such as General Protection Faults, and adds several user-requested enhancements. *HAR158.ZIP*

**PBA Bowling v.1.13 Update (Bethesda Softworks):** General maintenance patch. *PBA113.EXE*

**Power Dolls 1.2 (Megatech):** This features faster gameplay, compatibility with all sound cards, full voice, improved sound effects, and so on. *PDPATCH.ZIP*

**Ripper (Take 2):** Adds a patch for video problems associated with Matrox Millennium cards, and fixes filled notebook problems, corrupted *SETTINGS.DEF* and *TAKE2.INI* files, and other minor bugs. *RIPPAT1A.ZIP*

**Solitaire Deluxe for Windows Update (Interplay):** Fixes a "General Protection Fault" error message seen when you select a tour, and it adds the game "Double or Quits." *SOL-WIN11.ZIP*

**Terminator: Future Shock v.1.20 (Bethesda Softworks):** This fixes problems with the Virtual i-O i-glasses!, frame rate for fast PCs, the Goliath's hit points, and random crashes. *P120\_US.EXE*

**Terra Nova v.1.09 (Looking Glass):** Fixes the problem with the Random Scenario Builder that causes the game to hang if it was used four times consecutively. *TNV109.EXE*

**Unnecessary Roughness '95 Update (Accolade):** Corrects ATI Mach 64 support and fixes play clock. *UR95CLOK.EXE*

**Wing Commander IV Alternate Joystick Routine (Origin):** This changes the way the joystick data is acquired in the game, and will allow some systems to work properly with the joystick routines in the game. *WC4JOY.EXE*

**Wing Commander IV Notebook Gameport Update (Origin):** Adds support for notebook gameports. *WC4JOYNG.EXE*

**Wizzard Pinball Controls Update (Thrustmaster):** Adds support for *Extreme Pinball*. *EXTWIZ.ZIP*

**World Series of Poker Deluxe Casino Pak Update (Masque):** Fixes known bugs in Caribbean Stud, Let it Ride, Video Poker, Baccarat, Satellites, WSOP Main Event. *WSD\_107.ZIP*

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# Electronic Construction Sets

**A** box of simple wooden blocks harbors about as many secrets as a presidential candidate. Although most of the secrets aren't nearly so shady, blocks slyly disguise profound characteristics behind smoothly polished, brightly colored surfaces.

When kids stack blocks, they build the foundations of math and physics. When they sort them, arrange them in special orders, and recite the sequences out loud, they build foundations of language, reading, and writing. And, of course, when they start telling stories with the blocks — "This big, round block is the giant and he's going to stomp on the bothersome little brother, which is that little cube over there" — you can guess what's going on. Imagination, social skills, and a little emotional venting go a long way in developing a capable, healthy child.

Add a little spin, and you have a memory game, bargaining chips, and measuring tools. Add a little too much spin, though, and the fun becomes as contrived as Steve Forbes blasting the Rolling Stones from his campaign bus.

Software companies manufacture their own versions of wooden blocks. These clever little electronic construction sets bring great possibilities to home computers, but they also carry great risks. Some work better than others; the best offer apparently endless possibilities; the worst make that same promise, but spin the tools so tightly that their infinite possibilities end up about as varied as a closet full of pin-striped suits. Even the worst, though, offer something that wooden blocks can't.

Electronic construction

sets let you build with interesting materials — music, cartoon sequences, comic book frames, and so on. They support many of the same concepts as wooden blocks do, but they are reinforced by the different perspectives that abstract materials offer. And if those learning experiences pack a double punch — music and math, for example, or language and art — they pack at least a double value as well.

Look for these construction packages when you're shopping for a new piece of software for your kids. Even the worst of these is better than the best drill package for long-term, creative value.

Heidi E. H. Aycock



You'll feel the way you do when a politician actually comes through on a campaign promise — amazed.

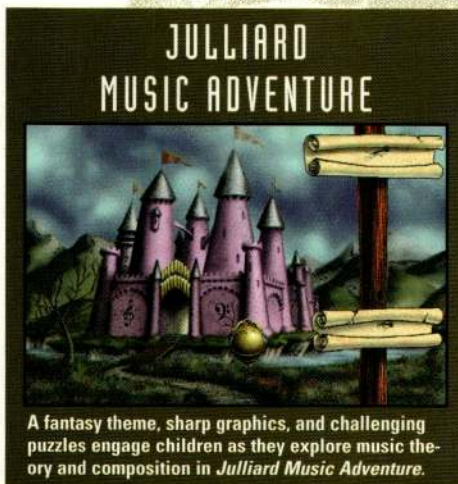
## Stacking Notes

You can buy a baby grand piano, set the metronome on stun, and hire Mr. Holland (or Opus the Penguin, if you prefer), and your kids will probably learn something about music. You could also look for one of the new music packages at your local software store. Spend a little less money getting started, and you can buy the full-sized grand when you're ready.

Theatrix's *Julliard Music Adventure*, for kids 9 and older, and Crystal Vision's *Mr. Drumstix Music Studio*, for kids 3 and older, offer two different settings in which to learn music theory

and composition. But they both offer a visual approach that sets them apart from other music tutorials.

*Julliard Music Adventure* weaves a medieval fantasy around its lessons, so kids feel like they're playing an adventure game. Gnoise the gnome has sealed Queen Chantre inside a magic amulet while he wreaks havoc on music throughout her Queendom. Children free the queen by composing musical solutions to a series of 15 puzzles. Conquering such



A fantasy theme, sharp graphics, and challenging puzzles engage children as they explore music theory and composition in *Julliard Music Adventure*.

topics as sequence, imitation, meter, and syncopation, triumphant players win musical keys the queen's prison.

*Mr. Drumstix Music Studio* forgoes the adventure-game packaging used by *Julliard*. Instead, the program features a nice assortment of music tools, from electronic instruments to composition grids. The instrument modules sparkle with personality. The drums, for example, are pounded with howling glee by Mr. Drumstix himself, a hound dog with enough charisma to rival most any mascot. For the richest tool, though, try the deceptively bland-looking guitar. Kids can experiment by choosing conventional chords from a menu or by manipulating the fingers on the screen one at a time. They can also play the chord four different ways: they can strum the chord as a whole sound, strum slowly in different directions and combinations, pick strings, and even bend strings to raise a note's pitch.

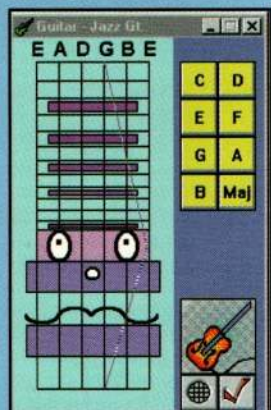
Set apart by their backdrops, *Mr. Drumstix* and *Julliard* share most of the elements that will make these packages soar in the polls. Both feature a visual approach to composing, and this element adds an extra dimension to both programs. Instead of the traditional music staff, both programs represent music as a kind of chart upon which kids can place dots. The position of the dots denotes the pitch. In *Mr. Drumstix*, the resolution

Software packages that help kids unleash their creativity as young Bernsteins or Hitchcocks offer obvious educational benefits — but they're not all created equal.

## MR. DRUMSTIX MUSIC STUDIO



With band members like Mr. Drumstix and Ms. Florida Keys, blossoming composers can turn mouse clicks into musical masterpieces.



The simply-drawn guitar offers at least four ways to tinker with chords and experiment with melody in Mr. Drumstix Music Studio.

of the chart squares indicates the length of the note. In *Julliard*, the size of the dot indicates the length of the note. Both programs teach children to compose music units, called tiles in *Julliard* and broken up by heavy lines in *Mr. Drumstix's* grid.

Of the two programs, I preferred *Mr. Drumstix* for its ability to compose multi-voiced melodies. Its help feature also won points. Kids can choose spoken help as a kind of online tutorial or text-based help for incidental problems. I couldn't remember where I put the manual to this program, so my 5-year-old and I learned the whole program using Help alone.

*Julliard Music Adventure* worked just as well as *Mr. Drumstix*. Its fantasy theme may engage some children more readily than the less organized backdrop in *Mr. Drumstix*. And the music theory lessons offer ideas for new tunes as well as insight into great classics, including some examples from jazz and spirituals.

For all its romantic set-

ting and respect for music, however, I found *Julliard's* composing tools less graceful than those in *Mr. Drumstix*. There was no visual association between the dots on the tiles and the names of the notes, so it was hard to predict what melody would result — there would be an unexpected hint of minor in a primarily major tune, for example. Also, the melody tool offered only one voice in *Julliard*, compared with several voices in *Mr. Drumstix*.

Either program would be an excellent value, though, so don't be disappointed if only one is available at your local software dealer. In fact, if you only find one on the shelf, it should make your decision easier.

## Making Movies

If music translates so beautifully to the electronic construction set paradigm, can movies fit the bill as well? Two cartoon-construction programs try hard. *Theatrix's Hollywood*, for kids 9 and older, and *Knowledge Adventure's Marvel Comics' X-Men Cartoon Maker*, for kids 5 and older, have similar goals. Both programs tempt kids with the promise of their own production studios.

Each program offers a stable of characters. *Hollywood's* casting call summons about 10 little critters, from Artie the hypochondriac alligator to Tiffanie the money-hungry artist (talk about a conflict of interests). *X-Men Cartoon Maker* rallies a host of superheroes, including Wolverine, Cyclops, and The Beast. Villains rear their ugly heads on cue as well.

Each program offers a variety of backgrounds appropriate to their casts, as well as animated sequences, sounds, and props. In *Hollywood*, kids type their own scripts and choose characters' emotions and expressions. As the movie plays, the characters recite their lines according to the young

## X-MEN CARTOON MAKER



Using canned animation and backgrounds, kids can send Wolverine and his super cohorts on a heroic adventure in *X-Men Cartoon Maker*.

director's instructions. *X-Men Cartoon Maker* features a way to record dialogue through a microphone. Without a microphone, kids can still type dialogue into speech balloons and read as they go.

Both programs will surely engage kids. My 5-year-old couldn't pry himself away from *X-Men Cartoon Maker* long enough to eat lunch. Both programs offer plenty of opportunities to discuss cause and effect, sequencing, communication, and a host of other topics. Both programs give kids a chance to do something they couldn't easily do away from the computer, so they make excellent use of the technology. However, both programs have one major drawback.

They both feel canned; they're about as open-ended as a box of Colorforms. There's a place for such restricted creativity; it can be restful not to have to choose

from so many options, and it can be satisfying to produce such a slick-looking project with so little effort. It can be fun to manipulate, however superficially, characters that had always been out of reach before. But this kind of package shouldn't be the mainstay of your collection. First, buy the more creative, richer, more open programs like *Julliard* and *Mr. Drumstix*. These packages have hidden talents that will develop your child's mind. And think of the cartoon construction kits as a luxury.

## Coming Attractions

What you haven't seen yet are further variations on these themes, the candidates yet to throw their hats into the ring.

On the horizon, watch for a low-priced piano tutor from Jump! Software, reportedly with a retail price of \$199, including software and a four-octave keyboard with full-size keys. Think about music long enough, and you'll see how valuable it can be to a child's education. Packages like *Julliard* and *Mr. Drumstix* teach the workings of music. This new package promises to teach the practice.

Also coming soon, a look at *Microsoft 3D Movie Maker*, a loudly hailed animation tool directed at the same kids *Hollywood* and *X-Men Cartoon Maker* aim for. I'm hoping for more flexibility with little — if any — more complexity.



*Theatrix's Hollywood* features many of the same tools as *X-Men Cartoon Maker*, but kids can write scripts and give simple stage directions to their characters.

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Product Information Number 163



# The Big Upgrade, Part II

In last month's episode of "This Old Computer," we got the basics out of the way, so let's pretend a few things are given: 1) You agree that upgrading your PC by replacing the motherboard yourself is a good way to save money; 2) You've got a screwdriver or two, and you're not afraid to open your computer's case and fiddle about inside; and 3) You've got a cool head and plenty of patience (or the pharmaceutical equivalent thereof).

Now let's see if I can talk you out of it. Here are some of the lessons I learned during my own upgrade, plus the problems I ran into, and how I solved them.

First off, back up any important files on your hard drive. I know, I know — people are always telling you to do this before you even look sideways at your computer, but this time it's really important. This time, you're going to be fiddling directly with your hard drive — if only to disconnect it from your old disk controller and hook it up to the new motherboard.

Be sure you've got a clean, static-free work environment. Don't just plop down on the living room rug and dig in; if you absolutely have to watch "The X-Files" while you work, at least set newspapers down.

Now it's time to start ripping that old PC apart. Once you've got your computer's case open, you'll have to remove all the cards plugged into the motherboard (the sound card, video card, modem, etc.). If your case is one of those compact jobs, you may also have to take out one or more of your disk drives to get enough clearance to remove the old motherboard. You're into the meat of the job, now; swap the old motherboard for the new, then put everything else back in its place.

Which leads us to the most important advice I can offer: before you begin dismantling your system, make a note of how everything is con-

nected. Each of the grey ribbon cables that run from your disk drives to their controller card(s) should have a red wire at one edge; this edge should be matched up with Pin #1 in the sockets you plug either end of the cable into. Most of the time, your disk drives and cards will have Pin #1 labeled (or at least indicated with an arrow), but don't rely on that.

Hooking up a hard-drive or floppy drive incorrectly is one of the few things you can do to cause yourself a headache. That goes double for the wires that carry juice from the power supply to the motherboard — hook them up wrong, and you could fry a very expensive piece of hardware.

Dan Bennett



Finally, you should probably be prepared to spend a little more money before your upgrade is done — even if you think you've bought everything you need.

That's been my experience, at least. When I upgraded a few years ago from a 386 to a 486, I found my old VGA card and hard-drive controller couldn't handle the new motherboard's faster bus speed. I had hoped to save a little money by using my old 16-bit cards for a while and upgrading later to VESA local-bus cards, but I ended up having to go ahead and spring for the faster cards.

This time around, going from a 486 to a Pentium 166, I ran into another video-card problem. As I mentioned last month, my plan had been to save cash by using a Matrox Impression card that had been lying around, unused, at the office. It seemed like a really

nice graphics board — PCI local bus, and 4MB of fast video RAM. Unfortunately, it turned out to be terribly inappropriate for gaming.

For starters, while it was very fast in Windows, it had really poor DOS performance — and DOS is still where most games are played. Worse than that, the Matrox board didn't have built-in extensions for Super VGA, which meant I had to run a little program any time I wanted to play an SVGA game — and that program was incompatible with a lot of the games I tried.

So I needed a new video card, and soon. I didn't have a lot of cash left after buying the motherboard and memory, so

I went for one of the best buys in PC video: the Diamond Stealth 64 Graphics 2001. For about \$100, I got a PCI video card that's plenty fast in Windows and works with every DOS game I've tried. It's nothing fancy, but it'll be all the video I need for a while.

Before it was all over, I ran into one other significant problem: the Intel motherboard's built-in Sound Blaster 16 sound card. Normally, a built-in sound card would be pretty neat — but I already had an SB16, and I needed to use that one, because it was home to my wavetable daughterboard and the SCSI controller that ran my CD-ROM drive.

I thought I could avoid the conflicts inherent in having two sound cards by disabling the built-in card in the motherboard's BIOS settings. That was fine for DOS, but it wasn't enough for Windows 95, which is occasionally too smart for its own good; it insisted on detecting both sound cards and trying to configure them. What I ended up with were two basically unusable sound systems.

After a bit of fiddling (and a little cursing, which seldom helps, but never hurts), I found the solution to the problem: I gave in and let Win 95 detect both sound cards, then used the Win 95 Device Manager to disable the built-in card. Basically, I was telling the system "OK, OK — I admit I've got two sound cards, but I don't want to use this one." I was then able to set the other SB16 to its traditional default configuration, and I haven't had any trouble since.

The lesson, though, is that a motherboard with a lot of built-in goodies can cause as many problems as it solves. Keep that in mind when you're shopping for an upgrade.

And that's about it. No doubt you'll learn your own hard lessons in doing your own upgrade. But as any shade-tree mechanic will tell you, the fiddling and cursing can be half the fun. And when you're finished, you'll know you've done something that most people are afraid to try — and you'll have saved a bundle of money, too. **PCG**

So, you've bought a new motherboard for your PC, and you're ready to upgrade? Here are some tips that can make the experience as painless as possible.

# All Play and No Work Makes Wolf a Dull Boy

**I** just got back from a week's vacation in Cozumel, Mexico, and I'm finding it harder than ever to get back into the mind-numbing tedium of life in the Midwest. The memory of warm turquoise waters, the sweet smell of sun-tan oil sizzling on my girlfriend's third degree sunburn, the complete absence of idiotic gambling-crazed tourists — I've even dragged out my old copy of Mindscape's *Oceans* Below in a desperate attempt to relive those peaceful underwater moments.

In other words, I'm just too relaxed to work myself into a lather over anything, so if this month's column seems a little, well, light, you'll have to forgive me. I'm seriously thinking of packing up los lobos and Senor Chuki Ardilla and moving down to the radiant reefs of Quintana Roo's primitive island paradise. Or, at the very least, Key West, Florida.

And speaking of Key West (ooh — what a smooth segue!), remember that hellish Guide to Online Gaming feature I wrote way back in the February 95 issue of *PCG*? One of the coolest gaming networks, Key West-based MPG-Net, now has a World Wide Web site where you can check out their beautiful new System Access Software — a 256-color SVGA graphic interface that makes your virtual visit to MPG-Net's games (*The Kingdom of Drakkar*, *Operation Market Garden*, *Empire Builder* and many more), chat rooms, forums, and libraries a pure pleasure.

MPG-Net is available through most national communications networks, the Internet, and the Microsoft Network. If you like what you see at <http://www.mpgn.com>, you can sign up right there.

And speaking of hellish projects (ooh — two in a row!), I may have written the Official Strategy Guide for

Spectrum HoloByte's *Top Gun: Fire at Will*, but you'd be amazed at how much information Spectrum withheld from me — including plans for a Mission of the Month at their web site, <http://www.holobyte.com>. Assuming that they can get them done on time, you'll be able to download a new Instant Mission for the game every month.

The Delphi Internet beta I mentioned several months ago became MCI News Corp. briefly before the beta test ended. It was a nice package, but they decided to go with a World Wide Web site instead. Now called iGuide, the service provides cutting-edge info on Internet sites,

DJs that even Howard Stern was unable to beat. Forget about that weenwapper Mancow — find out what's happening with The Stever now at <http://www.dahl.com>.

And speaking of faded 1980s icons, (ooh — that was low) M-M-Max Headroom may be yesterday's snotrag to most people, but not to the folks at The Dominion over at the Sci-Fi Channel (or to me, either, to be honest). You can play a demented version of "Hollywood Squares" (or Max Headroom Squares, as it's called there) at <http://www.scifi.com/headroom>.

Blonde women and Saab jet fighters aren't the only pretty things to come

out of Sweden. Shareware author Anders Wihlborg has created a simple but beautiful Windows (regular or 95) game called *SinkSub Pro*. You control a customized Swedish patrol boat equipped with depth charge throwers at the bow and stern. Working like *Missile Command* in reverse, you must time and launch charges to hit a variety of submarines and other enemies as they pass silently beneath you, releasing mines. Snag 10 levels of intense gameplay (50 when you register the software) by downloading *SSPRO101.ZIP* at <http://www.wihlborg.se>.

And speaking of games (*Ed Note*: Okay, Wolf — that's enough), don't miss Epic Megagames' and Safari Software's new *Seek and Destroy* — a fast paced, top-down, 360-degree scrolling helicopter game that brings to mind Broderbund's C-64 classic *Raid on Bungeling Bay* (not to mention Gremlin's *Desert Strike*). It's at <http://www.epicgames.com> and all major online services.

OK, OK — one quick rant before I go: Am I the only one who thinks it's absurd for the Coca-Cola Company to advertise those frosty glass bottles of their nectar when in most parts of the country you can't get the Real Thing in a glass bottle to save your life?

Oh sure, they've tried hiding the fact by putting a picture of the familiar glass bottle on cans of Coke; they've made those putrid plastic bottles in the vague shape of the old glass ones; and they're even planning to test-market a curvy new steel can at the end of the year. Cut it out, you beetleheads — just give us our glass bottles back! (Drop by <http://www.cocacola.com> and let 'em know if you agree with me).

P.S. Thanks to Cardinal Technologies, Inc. I am now squandering my time online at a blazing 28.8 bps! Now, what was that Gateway to Cozumel address again?

## Scott Wolf



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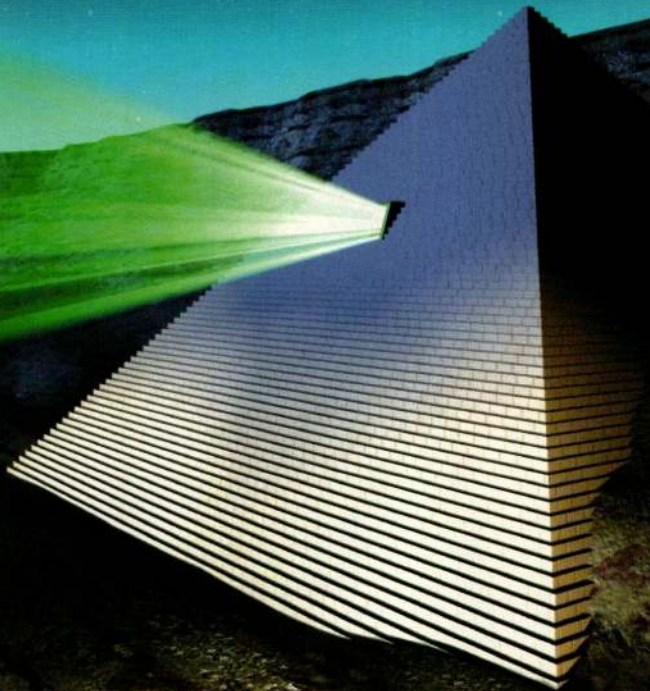
Roger Ebert's movie reviews are now showing on the Net, courtesy of the *Chicago Sun-Times*. New reviews will be posted the same day they appear in the newspaper, and archives of Ebert's work dating back ten years will be searchable as well. To find Mr. Bigshot Movie Boy, go directly to <http://www.suntimes.com/ebert/ebert.html>.

And speaking of Chicago (ooh — a segue hat trick!) notorious local radio personality Steve Dahl has left yet another station in the wake of declining ratings since his unfortunate split with partner Garry Meier. Steve's been a mainstay in Chicago radio for 18 years, and one of the few morning

It seems the warm, calm waters south of the border have sapped Scott's will to gripe — but it's left him with even more time to track down some web sites you'll want to visit.

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Product Information Number 102

# Is Online the End?

**T**here's been a lot of talk lately about one of the most important elements in any role-playing game — interaction. Most think the salvation of the genre lies in the Internet. Origin is working on an online version of *Ultima*; they're ironing out the wrinkles even now. SSI, creator of the popular *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* RPGs, has also made known their intent to bring their *Dark Sun* engine to the online scene. These titles, along with a host of others that are sure to follow, could be the solution to one of the greatest challenges a programmer faces: putting intelligent, thoughtful, lifelike characters into RPGs. As pen-and-paper roleplaying games have shown, interaction is crucial to making any form of roleplaying fun. But at what expense will come the human element?

The great thing about playing with other people is that it's completely unpredictable. Is the traveler you're about to meet going to be nice and friendly before shoving a dagger straight in to your back, or will you end up teaming together and forming a lasting, honorable friendship? Conversations are intelligent and productive, as opposed to multiple-choice tests where you pick predetermined questions from a basic list and get predetermined responses.

Not only that, but the lives of the characters will take on new meaning. Imagine playing a character that will eventually grow old and die. Or even creating relationships that last not only your character's lifetime, but your own. People have been roleplaying in this way for years on various MUDs (Multi-User Dungeon) and

MOOs (MUD Object Oriented) on the Internet. Bring to this environment detailed graphics, inventory systems, and currency, and the only need gamers will have from the real world is cold pizza and beer.

But what happens when someone in your online adventuring party has to leave for work, and they aren't there in the middle of an important battle? Or if they simply don't want to play anymore? And of course, there are always going to be the jerks who simply don't care about the game, and exist only to make life difficult for other players (the Net is already full

angry, or just plain hungry. If a lone goblin hears an adventuring party approach, he might just take off, rather than wait for certain doom. I have yet to see how well the system works in actual gameplay, but it could be a big step toward good artificial intelligence. If this technology were to be incorporated into the "traditional" RPG, we could see party members with phobias, enemies that can be reasoned

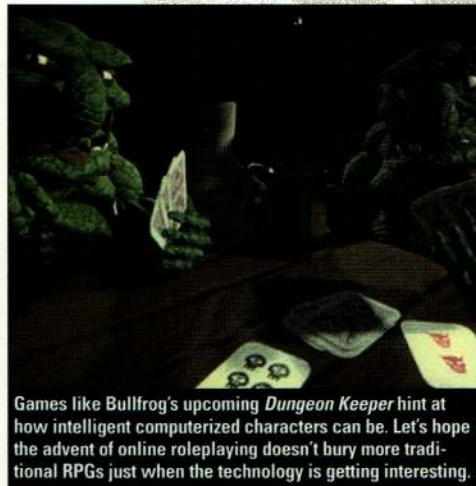
Michael Wolf



of such annoying folks).

Computerized players, however, never get tired. They'll always follow the rules, and they'll always be willing to play, even at 3:00 in the morning when you just can't sleep. Unfortunately, artificial intelligence has a long way to go before these artificial characters can even approach the intelligent interaction of human players. But there might be hope.

Bullfrog Productions is about to come out with *Dungeon Keeper*, a game that casts the player in the role of the evil overlord that heroic adventurers are out to destroy. During the game's production, Bullfrog has made huge bounds in the artificial intelligence arena, supplying their characters with the sense of smell, sight, and sound. Creatures can be frightened,



Games like Bullfrog's upcoming *Dungeon Keeper* hint at how intelligent computerized characters can be. Let's hope the advent of online roleplaying doesn't bury more traditional RPGs just when the technology is getting interesting.

with rather than continually fought, and villains that can actually adapt to whatever strategies you choose to fight them with.

The question is this: would you prefer a world where the creatures you encounter act human, and do lifelike things, or would you rather simply deal with humans themselves?

There's no doubt that online RPGs will revolutionize the genre; if they're done right, they'll offer an experience limited only by the imagination of the players. But there'll always be people who don't have a modem, can't afford the cost of hours of online time, or who simply want to enjoy an adventure at their own leisurely pace rather than dealing with impatient comrades. I'm as anxious as anyone to get online and truly immerse myself in an alter ego surrounded by other, living, breathing players — but at the same time, I sincerely hope that the debut of online RPGs won't signal the end of traditional computer roleplaying. It sure would be a shame if games like *Dungeon Keeper*, *Daggerfall*, *Return to Krondor*, and *Shadows Over Riva* were among the last of the thoughtful, complex, and well-designed solo computer roleplaying games to hit the market, just when the technology seems to be advancing so far.

PCG

Multi-player online gaming promises to revolutionize computer roleplaying with unprecedented interaction, but there will always be room for good single-player RPGs.

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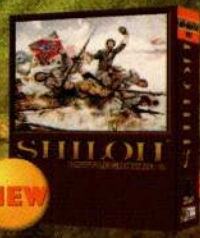
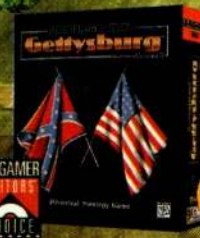
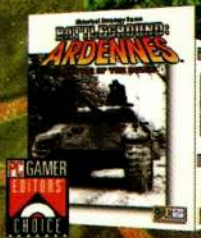
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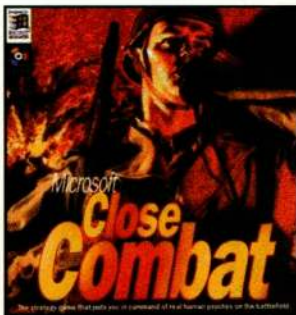
Product Information Number 159

# Beyond Squad Leader: A New Lease on Life

**T**his is one of those very rare times when a writer is justified in quoting himself. Back in April 1995, I began my Scoop! on Atomic Games' *Beyond Squad Leader* like this:

"A few years ago, I went to a wargames convention at which one entire breakout room was devoted solely to *Advanced Squad Leader* games...over the years, I've seen lots of wargamers doing their thing — but I'd never witnessed anything quite like this.

"The room was full, but it was quiet enough to hear a bat ovulate. Everyone was bent over their maps, counting hexes, measuring lines of sight, and speaking — when they spoke at all — in sacerdotal whispers. At the players' feet were enormous briefcases and milk-crates full of carefully stored unit counters, laminated tables of arcane data, game-module boxes, and rule-books the size of the Tokyo phone directory. The periodic rattle of dice was loud and ominous with portent. These people were true S.S.L.A.s — *Serious Squad Leader*



The game's new logo proudly displays the Microsoft trademark. The new partnership between Atomic and the PC industry's 800-lb. Gorilla should prove advantageous to both parties.

Addicts — and there was something undeniably fanatical and cult-like about their devotion to this classic board game."

That very passion, that loyalty to the board game, was one of the hurdles Atomic Games had to pass before their PC version could be counted a success. As Atomic Games' Keith Zabalaoui put it: "We asked the die-hard fans which aspects of the game they wanted to see in the PC version, and their initial reply was "All of it." Then we brought them up short by asking: 'Okay, then, should we put a piece of string in the box so you can physically

points: this is an accurate model of real combat's cumulative effects on ordinary men.

In the campaign version, some men do indeed become more proficient and deadly; others just burn out, physically and emotionally, and become less stable, less eager to carry out orders. Stress and fatigue take their toll. Reliable veterans die and are replaced by green, terrified

*William R. Trotter*



measure lines-of-sight?"

Well, er, no. Guess not. So what Atomic tried mightily to do was to preserve the *essence* of the game experience: its intense, minutely detailed evocation of platoon-level combat, and its uniquely personal approach to roleplaying, in the sense that the player's "men" all have their own unique psychological profiles and attributes, which change as their combat experience deepens.

After detailed consultations with an expert in the field of combat psychology, Atomic created a two-tiered artificial intelligence program, one level of which keeps track of *unit* performance while the other program tracks each individual soldier. This is not a typical roleplaying system, wherein the characters keep developing ever-greater skills and hit

It's been in development for years; it's been controversial from the get-go; and for a while it looked like it would never come out. But *Beyond Squad Leader* is finally here.



Up close and personal: a dead GI lies sprawled in front of a Sherman tank equipped with hedge-cutting prongs.

novices. Based on what I've seen of the game's advanced beta version, it does a very good job of validating the great historian General S.L.A. Marshall's dictum that "The battlefield is cold. It is the loneliest place which men can share together."

Since the much-publicized divorce between Atomic Games and Avalon Hill (which retains copyright to the *Advanced Squad Leader* trademark), the game has been renamed *Close Combat* and has been adopted by Microsoft, which intends to use the product as the opening wedge of its formidable plan to become a major game publisher. With Microsoft's legendary marketing clout behind it, Atomic Games' trials and tribulations may be over.

While not every feature of the finished product has yet been implemented, the version I've been playing does contain about 30 stand-alone battles as well as the linked campaign option, covering the operations of the American 29th Division from D-Day-plus-one (June 7, 1944) through the capture of St. Lo, which enabled the American forces to finally stage their dramatic breakout from the terrible hedgerow zone and begin their armored rampage into central France.

Here are some preliminary impressions:

- The game's scale takes some getting used to. Men, vehicles, and terrain are exquisitely rendered, but at high resolution, the individual soldiers are, well, *tiny*.



St. Lo is the key to victory, for both sides, in the Campaign version. Here, the German player sets up a defense in depth.

Even the guys at Atomic have started calling the game "Ants at War." You'll get used to it, though; I have, and I'd gladly trade a little eye-strain for the kind of realism portrayed on the screen.

- Initially, I had the same problem with this game as I usually do with real-time wargames: I was too busy jumping from unit to unit, micro-managing tactics, to relax and enjoy all the pretty bang-bang. After hours of play, however, I realized that part of the fault was mine: I was trying to take my objectives too quickly. Go with the flow, and you'll soon get used to the game's pace (tempo will be adjustable in the final version).

- The combat scenes are every bit as intense and realistic as promised. Sprites representing mortar rounds are different from those depicting field artillery or tank fire. Every shell that hits the ground leaves a crater; every shell that hits a building spews out stone and wood. When your men melee inside a structure, you can almost see the grenades flying from room to room. Tracers lash across the screen. Tank fire is so realistic you can almost feel the recoil.

- Battlefield performance seems very convincingly modeled. Fatigued, pinned-down troops will cower or become separated from their units. Pumped-up soldiers may suddenly perform acts of great bravery. In the after-action briefing, you'll see a chart showing which of your men were killed or wounded and what effect the engagement had on the survivors' stamina, morale, and experience levels. Some of your guys will gradually wear out and become battle-fatigue statistics; others will become



Assault in the hedgerows: smashed German foxholes, a burning half-track, and a fresh American rifle team assaulting behind a smokescreen. Sure, the scale is itty-bitty, but just look at all that detail!

cooler, deadlier, steadier.

- I haven't quite figured out the reasoning behind the time limit the computer imposes on each battle. The theory is that the computer calls "Time out!" when the side you're commanding has become too demoralized, or too decimated by casualties, to keep fighting effectively, but sometimes this struck me as too arbitrary — i.e., the computer pulled the plug just as my men were converging on their main objective, tired and shaken, to be sure, but still with enough steam to make that one final effort that can be decisive in battle.

- As far as the interface goes, it strikes me as being well designed and largely self-explanatory. Only one of the specified half-dozen tutorial missions was working in my version, but in the finished product, you should have no trouble becoming comfortable with the



The Americans attack through a ruined church. Although the zoomed-in view is a bit chunky, it does provide dramatic details and is useful for delicate house-to-house maneuvering of your units.

mechanics of the game.

- Importantly, this game does an even better job than *America Invades!* (Atomic's last Avalon Hill-published game, for which AH rather incredibly forgot to include an install program!) at recreating the dreadful hardships and claustrophobic nature of *bocage* fighting in the French countryside, where victories were measured in gains of a half-acre, and a typical American company could

count itself lucky if it finished a day's fighting with less than 20 percent casualties. *Close Combat* vividly reminds us that the Battle for Normandy was not as one-sided as it has come to seem.

There remains, of course, the original question: will this game satisfy the legion of *Advanced Squad Leader* fans who've been waiting for it so long? Not all of them, it won't; the board-game has acquired too much of a mystique. And, of course, the element of socializing with other fans, in the same room, hovered intently over the same board, is missing, even if you're set up to play *Close Combat* over a network.

But, even though it's been at least twelve years since I last played the boardgame, it seems to me that Zabalaoui & Co. have captured the heart and soul of the game commendably.

And with Microsoft pushing the product, its potential audience should be much broader than the hardcore grognards it was originally intended for.

Any way you slice it, it's going to be very interesting to see how *Close Combat* is received. I predict a lot of controversy, but also a lot of enthusiasm. It is at least unique, and in an industry where me-too products have become discouragingly common, that alone is no small virtue.

PCG

## TAKING THE FIELD

The American assault begins — note the finely detailed rubble, craters, and sandbagged emplacements.



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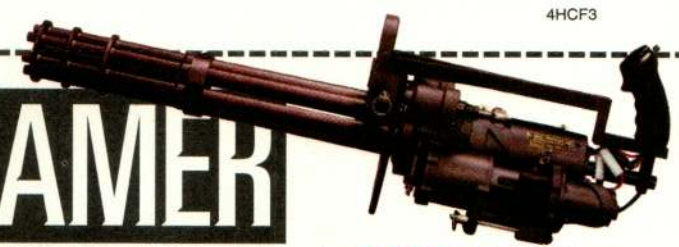
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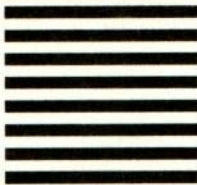
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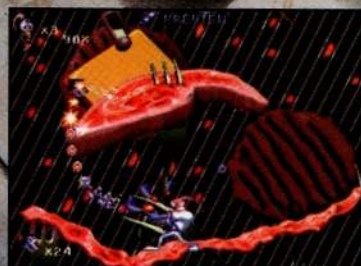
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# The Monitor Chronicles

**M**ost of the parts in my main desktop PC get replaced every year or two by something newer and cooler, but I've been staring at the same 17" Nanao video monitor since 1991. Only the case, the keyboard

and the floppy drives have survived longer. Good monitors aren't cheap, but if recent history is any guide, that might be the one part of your computer that you can think of as a long-term investment. VGA and SVGA monitors have used the same cables and connectors for a decade now, and a top-notch monitor from the early 90's, with a .28mm dot pitch and a 64kHz maximum horizontal scan rate, still looks great by today's standards.

About those numbers: we all know that computer images are composed of small blocks called "pixels," but the screen of a color monitor is also a composite. It's made up of many small red, green, and blue phosphor dots, and the distance from dot to dot is known as the "dot pitch," usually measured in millimeters.

Most PCs are set up to display about 80 to 90 pixels per inch. If you're handy with the metric system, you'll see that each pixel covers a bit more than a quarter of a millimeter, which is equal to a dot pitch of .25mm. That dot pitch is found on some monitors, but .28mm is considered acceptable. The smaller and more closely-spaced the dots are, the sharper the picture will be — and the more the monitor will cost.

Like movies and television, computer video is drawn a sequence of frames, one after another. The number of frames drawn each second is the vertical scan rate. The horizontal scan rate counts rows of

pixels, or "scan lines," per second. These scan rates are controlled by the computer's video card, but the monitor still has to be able to keep up with the signal it receives. A monitor's scan rates are listed as upper and lower limits. If it's fed video outside of this range, the monitor won't be able to stay in sync, and the picture will appear to roll on the screen.

The vertical scanning rate is rarely a problem. Video cards usually operate between 60 and 75Hz (Hertz, or frames per second), well within the range of most monitors. But that frame rate also affects the horizontal scan rate, which you can compute by multiply-

change we've seen in monitors has been in prices, particularly in the larger-sized tubes. A big monitor's extra display area really helps when you're displaying 800x600 pixels or more on the screen. Microsoft Windows has made it easier to use a video card's high-resolution display modes, making larger monitors much more popular. Economy of scale has pushed prices down to the point where 17" monitors now start in the low \$600's.

That's not bad, but it isn't exactly cheap, either — especially when you can get a name-brand 25" television set for less than \$250. But there are a couple of reasons why

televisions cost so much less: so many of them are built, and so little is expected of them. No matter how big a TV screen is, it only has to display a standard 525-line, 60-frames-per-second video signal. PC monitor designers assume that you'll want 90-or-so-pixels-per-inch resolution on any monitor, so a bigger screen means more pixels.

The typical 21" monitor has to support resolutions as high as 1,600x1,280 pixels, which boosts the horizontal scanning frequency up to around 90kHz. The markets that need a monitor like that — CAD, publishing, and professional graphics — are very small compared to the PC market in general, it isn't so surprising that 21" monitors sell for close to \$2,000.

But there are some signs that we might be seeing large monitors in the future that aren't targeted toward such narrow markets. Toshiba offers a 20" television that also functions as an SVGA monitor for around \$700. Its maximum resolution of 640x480 pixels isn't much of a problem for game playing, but it could be limiting for general use. Also, Gateway 2000 has announced that it plans to offer a VCR-sized system called the Destination, complete with a 31" monitor and built-in TV tuner. Expect to pay about \$4,000 late this fall.

And then there's High-Definition Television. The Digital HDTV Grand Alliance proposal, recommended by the FCC's Advisory Committee on Advanced Television Service last November, still awaits final approval by the FCC. But the system's highest resolution is 1920x1080, with a cinematic 16:9 width-to-height ratio instead of the now standard 4:3. If HDTV catches on, we'll all have television sets that put most current PC video monitors to shame. By the most optimistic estimates, HDTV should really take off sometime early in the next century. Maybe then I'll finally be able to put this old monitor out to pasture.

Tim Victor



ing the number of frames per second by the vertical resolution (adding in about 30 invisible lines scanned between video frames. If a program runs at 1,024x768 resolution, the video card is feeding the monitor 768 lines of video per frame. At a frame rate of 72Hz, that means the monitor has to scan more than 57,000 lines per second, or 57kHz. High-resolution monitors usually have maximum horizontal rates of 64kHz or more.

A few features are found on newer monitors which didn't exist at the beginning of the decade. Most support VESA's Display Data Channel (DDC), which lets the PC tell the monitor to enter a low-power, energy-saving sleep mode.

The latest designs are also Plug-n-Play compatible, allowing the operating system to detect the type of monitor that's connected. The biggest

On a clear screen, you can see forever — but at a time when all other PC components are getting cheaper, why are monitors still so expensive?

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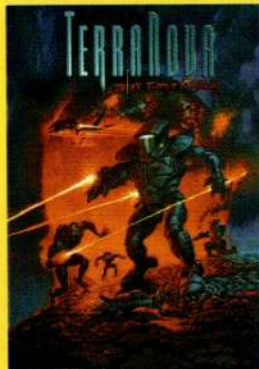
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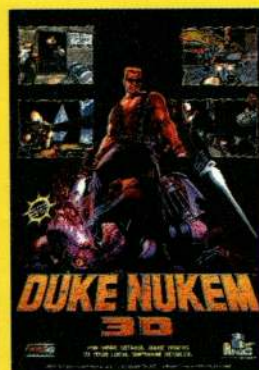
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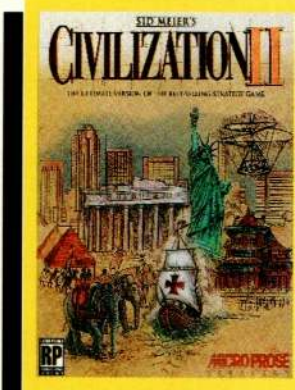
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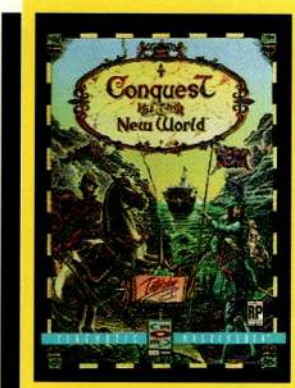
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# STRATEGY CENTRAL

SOLUTIONS • TECHNIQUES • QUICK TIPS

It's another action-packed installment of Strategy Central, the column that asks the musical question, why lose when you can cheat? We've got some handy cheat codes for

you this month, for *Wing Commander IV*, *Screamer*, *Descent II*, and more — plus some help for *Ripper*, one of the toughest graphic adventures we've encountered.

Write to us at:

**PC GAMER**

150 North Hill Dr.,  
Brisbane, CA 94005

or  
E-mail:  
peecegee@aol.com  
74431,3433@compuserve.com

## Ripper, Act One

Staying ahead of the stalker

Dear PC Gamer:

I purchased *Ripper* for my PC, and I'm enjoying it very much, but it's hard to get past the virtual library call numbers; the puzzles in the old man's house; and the crystal puzzle. I would appreciate a step-by-step walk-through of Act One.

Sincerely,  
Chris Paniewski  
Coral Gables, FL

*Well, Chris, the extremely tough puzzles in Ripper are for neither the faint of heart nor the easily frustrated — but to help you get started, we've provided the solutions to most of Act One. You'll run into tougher puzzles later in the game, but knowing how the early ones work will arm you for the challenges ahead.*

**Virtual Public Library Well**

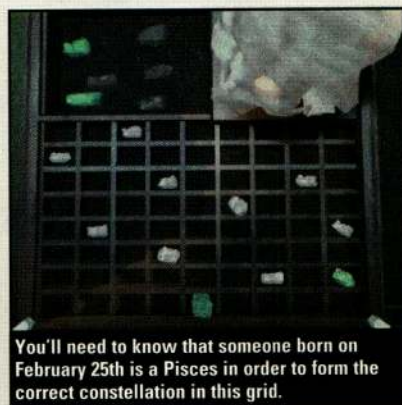
When you get to the Library well, you'll

find a list of book call-numbers, but Renee Stein's is scrambled. To find the book she was reading, you'll need to unscramble the code, *AB[no\_aid+1]18*. Although it looks like gibberish, there is a solution.

Comparing it to the other call numbers, you realize the solution should have two letters, four numbers, and one more letter. You know Stein was looking in the Victorian section (check the computer monitor at the murder scene), and there's another Victorian book on the list, so you know the first two letters must be HC.

The four numbers are contained in the square brackets of the encrypted code. In order to figure it out, you have to make sense of the gibberish. You can read the code like this: *At no eye aid plus one*. "No eye aid" is perfect eyesight, or 20/20 vision. "Plus one" means add 1 to 20/20, for 2021.

The last letter is at the end of the code, outside the square brackets.



You'll need to know that someone born on February 25th is a Pisces in order to form the correct constellation in this grid.

The number 18 simply stands for the 18th letter of the alphabet, R. So, putting it all together, the call letters for the missing book are *HC2021R*. Type that in, and you'll see that Renee Stein was reading up on Jack the Ripper when she was killed.

**Catherine's Apartment**

One of the toughest puzzles in Act One involves some crystals and a birth sign. You'll find a birthday card addressed to Catherine underneath an abstract fish painting. The card is dated February 25th, which means her birth sign is a Pisces. Exploring further, you'll find a poster that contains a list of all the birth signs, and Pisces is the twelfth sign. Using that diagram, you can place the crystals from the box into the grid below it, duplicating the constellation's shape. Once you do so, the eyes of the crystal skull will light up, highlighting the spine of a book, which is also the password to her well — Horoscope.

**Wofford's Cottage**

Hamilton Wofford's cottage can really be a gateway to hell for the impatient. After speaking to his brother, Covington, you'll learn that you have to find three vacuum tubes hidden throughout the house to uncover the password to his well. Of course, to find the tubes, you'll have to solve the puzzles that protect them. Each puzzle is extremely difficult; without any clues, they're almost impossible.

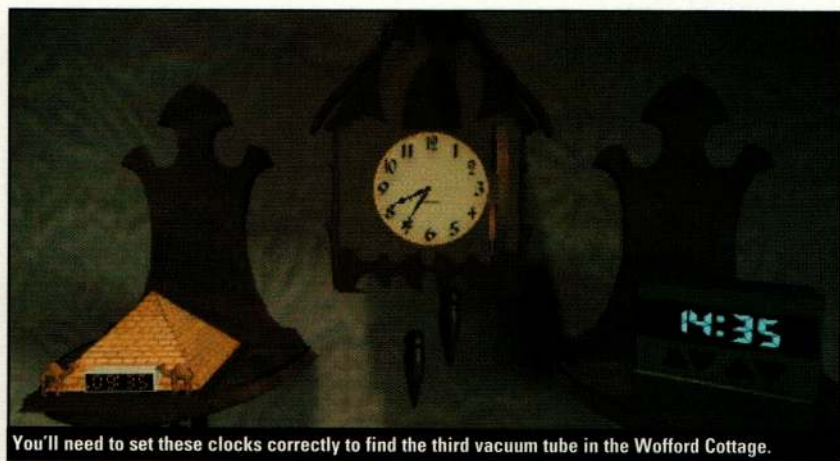
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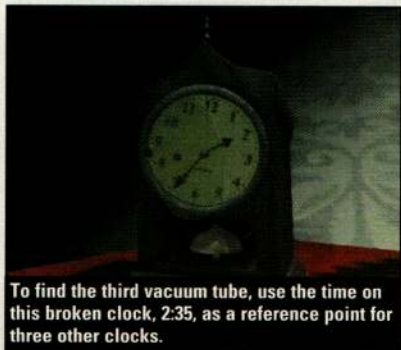
Address	Call#	Distributed Title
Seremet@MCog.111	HC2049J	Gettysburg: The Battle
RStein@Trigger.4202	AB[no_aid+1]18	
Schust@T2.39	HE4573T	The Human Brain
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Bird@cyq.@92	HC2011M	2000: My Year!
White@T2.35	HC4993X	The Market Crash of 1996
Sparks@Trigger.4202	HC5558N	Victorian Costumes

H C 2 0 2 1 R

When you get to the library well, you'll have to unscramble some call numbers to figure out what book Renee Stein was reading when she was murdered.



You'll need to set these clocks correctly to find the third vacuum tube in the Wofford Cottage.



To find the third vacuum tube, use the time on this broken clock, 2:35, as a reference point for three other clocks.

### Marble and Maze

The first puzzle you're likely to find is the marble maze. There are five buttons to the right of a maze. Each button adjusts the angles of the gates in the maze, and you have to line those gates up so the marble will roll straight through to the marked end. After three presses, the marble starts rolling.

This is one of the few puzzles where the game's difficulty setting makes a big difference. If you have the difficulty set to Easy, you simply have to press the fourth button, followed by any other two. If the setting is Medium, then the first and fourth buttons should be the only ones you press. At the Hard level, there are two series of buttons you can use (numbered from top to bottom): 5, 1, 3, then 4, 1, 5, then 3, 4, 5; or 1, 2, 5, then 1, 3, 5, then 2, 3, 5. The best thing to do, however, is change the difficulty setting to Easy.



This patent number is a clue to the series of coins you need to put into the cash register for the second vacuum tube.

### Cash Register

On your way up to the bedroom, you'll pass a small plaque on the stairway with a patent number on it (P2X255127.5A). Once you reach the bedroom, you'll find a cash register along with some other knickknacks on a table. When you click one of four buttons on a box in the upper left, a coin will slide down the chute, and its value will be displayed on the cash register. To get the second vacuum tube, you have to choose the right coins in the right order. You figure out the series using the patent number. Multiply 2 times 255127.5, and you end up with 510255. That represents the series of coins — a nickel, a dime, a quarter, and then another nickel — you need to choose to get the tube.

### Clocks

While up in the Wofford bedroom, check out the broken clock on the dresser and make note of the time: 2:35. When you go down to the living room, you'll see three clocks on one wall — an Egyptian clock, a German cuckoo clock, and a US Army clock. You'll also see a time-zone map on another wall. Using the broken clock time as a starting point (remember you're in New York, so it's Eastern Standard Time), you should set the other clocks to the correct time for Egypt, Germany, and US Military time. When you put in 9:35 p.m. (make sure the little dot is lit on the face), 8:35, and 14:35, respectively, you'll receive the third and final vacuum tube.

Those are the toughest puzzles in Act One, but certainly not the most difficult in the game. Think slyly, and treat everything you find as a clue. You'll need to sweat it out to get to the end of this one and discover the identity of the Ripper. Good luck, and don't say we didn't warn you!

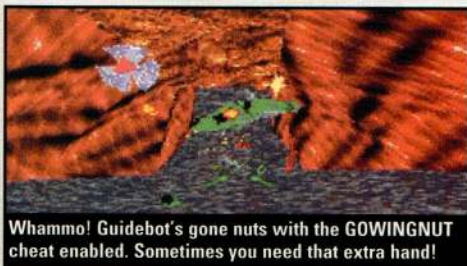
# Descent II

## An army of guidebots

Dear PC Gamer,

I am playing *Descent II*, and I'm really good at it. But my little brother is maybe not so good, so how about some cheat codes?

Thank you,  
Eric "Guidebot" Marks  
Irvine, CA



Whammo! Guidebot's gone nuts with the GOWINGNUT cheat enabled. Sometimes you need that extra hand!

Ah, it's the old "I'm really good at this game, but my 'little brother' needs help" ploy. I guess we've all pulled that one at least once.

Seriously, though, Parallax threw a whole raft of great cheat codes into *Descent II*, and we've got 'em. Here are the best of them:

**GODZILLA** — Monster Mode: kill robots by ramming into them!

**ROCKGRL** — Full autopilot, showing all those places you haven't seen.

**ALIFALAFEL** — This one gives you all the power-ups.

**HELPVISHNU** — Type this, and you'll get a new guidebot every time.

**GOWINGNUT** — This one makes your Guidebot into a lean, mean killing machine! Watch out though, or he'll do you some damage, too.

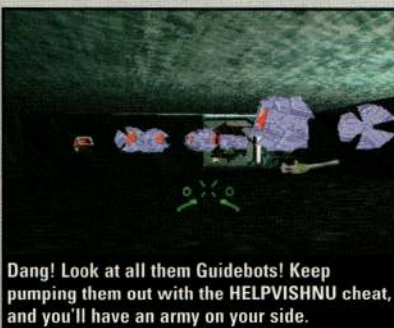
**LPNLIZARD** — Adds Homing Weapons.

**SPANIARD** — Kills all the Robots.

**FREESPACE** — Level Warp.

**BITTERSWEET** — Makes the floor really groovy, man.

To access the highest resolutions, from the command line type in:  
**descent2 -superhires**  
and you can run in 1024x768 and 1280x1024 modes.



Dang! Look at all them Guidebots! Keep pumping them out with the HELPVISHNU cheat, and you'll have an army on your side.

# Readers' Requests

If you can't beat 'em, cheat 'em

Dear PC Gamer,

Hey guys! I just had to write and say that I think *Wing Commander IV* is the greatest game I've ever played! The stunning combat sequences are the most intense I've ever flown in, and the cinema sequences make me feel like I'm in an exciting movie! By the way, though, I was wondering if there was a way to finish the missions more quickly, so I can see what happens in the next movie!

Thanks,  
John Woolsey  
Santa Monica, CA

Well John, we certainly agree. The incredible video sequences are on a par with Hollywood action movies, and the combat experiences can be pretty intense. Yes, there certainly is a way to get through the missions quicker: when you start *Wing IV*, type **wc4 chicken** when you start the game, to enable the cheat modes. Then while in the game, hit **ctrl+alt+w** to destroy all the the enemies on radar. It's a very powerful cheat, so use it only as a last resort!



The "chicken" cheat built into *Wing Commander IV* can make you an unstoppable force in the toughest missions.

Dear PC Gamer,

I've been having a jolly good time with the car-racing game called *Screamer*, which received a favorable review in a recent issue of *PCG*. But I wonder if you might have any particularly useful strategy or tips that might help me beat those darn machines. I have also heard that there was something called a "Bullet Car" in the game, and I was wondering if there were some cheat code that would let me get at it. I was also somewhat concerned that there was no Jaguar in the game — perhaps the "Bullet Car" is a Jaguar?

Cheerio,  
Edward Miles  
Leeds, UK

As a matter of fact, Ed, there is a cheat



code that will get you the Bullet Car, but unfortunately it's not a Jaguar. Since you asked, though, here are some of the cheat codes that we've come across while screaming along the Autobahn:

- VTELO** — Makes all the tracks available.
- INVER** — Adds the old tracks as new ones — in reverse!
- MONTY** — Changes the orange cones into rabbits, dolls, and baby carriages.
- CLOCK** — Turns off the annoying clock.
- TAZOR** — This one gets you the Bullet Car ...
- ABURN** — ... But this one puts the bad guys in Bullets. Warning — once you invoke this cheat code, you can't turn it off without restarting the game.

Dear PC Gamer,

First of all let me say yours is the best

## Whiplash

Sometimes a lead foot isn't enough

*Whiplash* is an exciting new stunt-racing game from Interplay. But unless you're an L.A. cabbie working the rush-hour shift, you're probably not too experienced with this kind of dangerous driving. If you're finding yourself puttering through those loops and corkscrews only to plummet to a fiery death on the pavement below, here are some codes that'll give you a helping hand — or make the game a little more interesting.

- SUPERMAN** — Makes your car invulnerable
- CUPWON** — Takes you to the championship sequence
- CINEMA** — Plays in widescreen
- FORMULA1** — Gives you access to an alternate set of cars

gaming magazine — your excellent reviews and demo games are great. Now for my tip, a little secret for *Warcraft II: The Tides of Darkness*. You know those little animals, called critters, in each mission? Well, if you click on them repeatedly, they'll explode like a demolition squad. I hope you like my tip.

Sincerely,  
Steven Treanor  
The Bronx, NY

Right you are, Steven! We've blown up so many of those innocent critters, the SPCA is now monitoring our games of *Warcraft II*. This trick won't be much use in battle, even as a last resort, since no one next to the exploding critters will take damage. Still, it's lots of fun. Incidentally, the folks at Blizzard tell us the sheep's cryptic complaint, "Baa Ram Ewe," is a little tribute to the Oscar-nominated talking-critter movie, *Babe*.



- MREPRISE** — Access Bonus Cup, the third set of tracks
- MRFROSTY** — Watch out for those icy roads!
- WARGATE** — The Cars warp from place to place on the track!

PCG

You blasted your way  
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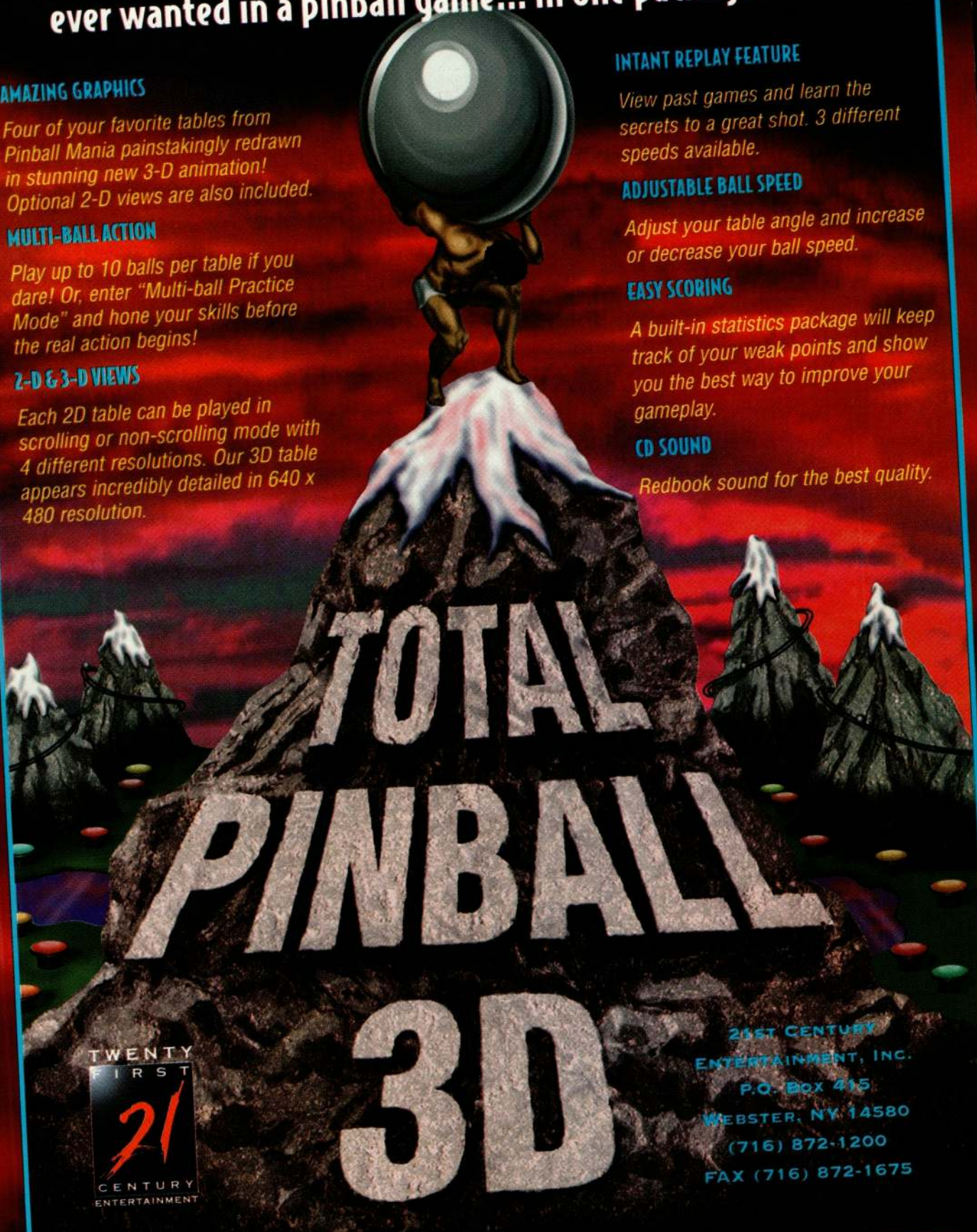
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**S**o here's this month's question: What's the most addictive PC game you've ever played, and just how late did you stay up with it on your worst night? Come on, don't be afraid to 'fess

up — you're among friends here, and we all know the seductive charm of a *SimCity* or a *Civilization II*. Drop us a line, and you could win the pulse-pounding honor of seeing your name in these pages!

## Let's Hear From You!

Write to:

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150 North Hill Dr.,  
Brisbane, CA 94005

or E-mail to:

peeceegee@aol.com  
74431,3433@compuserve.com  
http://www.pcgamer.com

## Rating Shock

Dear PC Gamer,

OK. It's official. Some of your reviewers are smoking crack. Only 84% for Bethesda's excellent *Terminator: Future Shock*, being beaten out by (of all things!) *CyberMage* and *Zone Raiders*? Those two dull games will quickly be forgotten, while *Terminator: Future Shock* is a real winner. Yet it garners only a mediocre score. Why?

I know you'll stand by your reviewer's score (as you should, of course), but I just wanted to get this off my chest. I was left slack-jawed when I saw *Future Shock*'s low score. I was just wondering why.

Sincerely,  
Chris Kintz  
Salt Lake, Hawaii

*Well, Chris, it looks like we're running into a problem that's very common here at PCG. See, our readers are all so brilliant and well-read that they most likely made straight As in high school — so naturally, when they see a score lower than 90%, they figure it's like getting a bad grade.*

*But we C students know an 84% is a pretty darn good score. We agree that *Future Shock* is a great game — that's why we ranked it in the top 16 percent, firmly in our "Excellent" category (see the ratings explanation at the beginning of every reviews section).*

## Searching for Glory

Dear PC Gamer,

The other day, I was looking through my stack of games when I came across *Quest for Glory 4: Shadows of Darkness*. I enjoyed the series very much and I wondered if Sierra planned to make a fifth one, so I went investigating.

I have access to Prodigy and AOL. This is what I found out: On Prodigy, I discovered that Sierra doesn't plan to

make *Quest for Glory 5*. I was not sure about that, so I continued to look.

Then, on AOL, in the message boards, it said that some people bugged Sierra so much that Ken Williams said he was going to start making it within fifteen months.

This raised a few questions: Is Sierra going to make a fifth installment? If not, why? I would appreciate it very much if you could find some answers for me and all those other *Quest for Glory* fans out there.

Sincerely,  
Brian Robinson  
Rochester, MI

*Well, Brian, as much as we hate to be the bearers of bad news, we'd rather you hear it from your friends than from some stranger on the street. So we got in touch with the good people at Sierra, and they told us there are no plans for a fifth *Quest for Glory* game.*

*Still, game publishers aren't deaf to requests from their customers; if they received enough requests for a new game, they might just reconsider their position. (That's what we're hoping, anyway; we still haven't stopped asking LucasArts for another *Sam & Max* adventure.)*



We thought *Terminator: Future Shock* was an excellent game — but at least one reader thinks it deserves an even higher score than 84%, especially when compared to other games in the same genre.

## The Future of Gaming

Dear PC Gamer,

A story reported on National Public Radio recently indicated that the sales of CD-ROM games are declining. The reasons cited were that games cost too much (\$19.95 or \$24.95 is apparently the upper price limit that consumers are willing to pay) and that CD-ROMs are now competing with the time people are devoting to browsing the Internet. High quality CD-ROM games cost between \$300,000 and \$800,000 to produce and market, but only several thousand copies of most titles are actually ever sold; sales need to reach into the tens of thousands before the production costs could be recovered. Wildly popular games like *Doom* or *Myst* are the exceptions. Consequently, many game companies are either merging or folding. How does *PC Gamer* feel about these statements? What is the future of games?

Sincerely,  
Barry Hindin  
via AOL

# The Play's the Thing

When we asked what should come first in game design — the story line or the technology — we got more thought-provoking responses than we expected.

"I think that the story line should come first, because it's what draws most gamers in. The game might not be as realistic if the story comes last, because the designers will try to make the story fit the gameplay, instead of vice versa."

Mark Pimentel  
via the Internet

"Why the hell should the story line come before the game type? *Doom* would have been just as great a game if you were blowing away Energizer Bunnies armed with shotguns. The most important aspect of a game is the genre, then gameplay, followed by graphics and finally story line! I never thought you guys would ask such an obvious question."

Destroy Jr.  
via AOL

"Storytelling should definitely come first. Most of the time it is a good story that attracts people to a game. Also, by creating a good story and environment, you ease the job of the game designers (since they'll know where they're going). Personally, I'm a strategy game fan (*Civilization*, *Master of Orion*, etc.), and if those games had lacked a good story or environment, they would've stayed on the shelves."

Eric Robitaille  
via AOL



Even the best strategy games, like *Civilization II*, have a kind of story line that unfolds as you progress toward victory.

"It's a good idea for the designers of action games and some other genres not to worry about the story line so much and concentrate on the gameplay and graphics. Story isn't always the best thing to build a game on — for example, a lot of games based on movie story lines really stink."

Anthony Maraschi  
via AOL

Don't believe everything you hear, Barry — even on NPR. We've seen more than a few mergers in recent years, but nothing to make us believe CD-ROM gaming is in trouble. Most of the game publishers that were making good games (and good money) a few years back are still going strong. What we believe you will see in the near future (and what the doom-sayers are probably talking about) is the kind of shakeout that follows every industry boom. You can expect the disappearance of many of the new companies that got into PC gaming very recently because they saw it as a huge money-maker — and soon learned that creating good, playable games was harder than they thought.

## Not a Newbie

Dear PCG,

I think the reason that game companies are producing all-flash, no-substance games is because that's what they think newbies want. I'm not a newbie, but if I were, I'm certain I'd still want quality. They need to stop focusing on whether they should make games for newbies or experienced gamers and start focusing on quality. Anyone can enjoy a game if it's good.

Subscriber for over a year,  
Paul Gazzoli  
via AOL

We couldn't agree more, Paul. A lot of PC game companies have become so concerned with attracting an imaginary audience — so-called "mainstream" gamers who are new to the field and want to spend their \$40-\$60 on simple, flashy games — that they've begun to alienate longtime gamers who aren't impressed by pretty graphics alone. The fact is, a really great game will appeal to newcomers and veteran gamers alike. And as well as *Myst* and *The 7th Guest* have sold, we're betting they haven't done nearly as much to bring new gamers into the fold — and keep them here — than games like *Doom* or *Civilization*.

## The Scoop on Scoops

Dear PC Gamer,

Do me a favor, and please stop hyping a game in your Scoops! section and being so darn positive about it, if only later it is going to be trashed by your writers in your reviews section.

Thanks,  
Bo  
via the Internet

Looking back at the past year or so of PC Gamer, we can only find two or three games we featured in our Scoops! section that didn't get very good reviews — and we hardly trashed those. Still, you're right, it's true that not every game we do a Scoop! on gets a really high rating. Here's why:

SCOOP!  
EXCLUSIVE! BEHIND-THE-SCENES OF THE HOTTEST GAMES

## Prey

Could this be the Quake-killer?

You are the hunter and the hunted, you are Prey — here's an early look at a hot new game from the makers of Duke Nukem 3D.

—Jason Bates



The Prey player shows you world information, such as the other players and the total of remaining enemy game characters, all in the upper right corner.

**In a nutshell**  
Prey is a first-person shooter that's a lot like Duke Nukem 3D, but with a more complex story line and a more sophisticated AI.

**What's so special?**  
Prey is a lot of interesting new elements. It's a first-person shooter that's a lot like Duke Nukem 3D, but with a more complex story line and a more sophisticated AI.

**Who should I care?**  
Prey is a first-person shooter that's a lot like Duke Nukem 3D, but with a more complex story line and a more sophisticated AI.

**Did I cheat? I mean, no?**  
Prey is a first-person shooter that's a lot like Duke Nukem 3D, but with a more complex story line and a more sophisticated AI.

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When we do Scoops!, we try to preview games that promise greatness (like *Prey*) but we're not always right.

When we preview a game, it's always a calculated risk. The games we choose to write scoops on are titles we believe will be great — but since they're previews, we're looking at early, unfinished versions, and we can never be 100 percent sure the finished product will turn out to be as good as it promises to be (which is also why we never review early versions of games). We have to go on a hunch, fueled by years of gaming experience. Most of the time, we're right — every once in a while, we're wrong.

When we finally get the finished product and review it, we could give the game a really good rating just to make sure the review matches the preview, but that wouldn't be fair to our readers. We'd rather give a bad game the review it deserves — and appear to contradict our preview of it — than give it a good review it doesn't deserve, and have our readers lose faith in us.

## The Last Word on Video (We Mean it This Time)

Dear PC Gamer,

I for one tire of the arguments about full-motion video in games. Let's end this right now. Video in games need follow only three rules:

1. Be significant to the plot.
2. Be significant in quality.
3. Let users bypass any video with a simply key press — or have an option to disable video sequences entirely.

'Nuff said!

Sincerely,  
Frank Decandia  
via AOL

We couldn't have said it better ourselves, Frank. Game publishers finally seem to be figuring out that full-motion video should be handled as just another tool, no more important than story or sound effects — but they sometimes seem to be the last ones to spot a trend.

PCG

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and it ain't gonna be me.

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and you look like a sucker.

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Product Information Number 158








# T H E



# PC GAMER

# REVIEWS INDEX

If you find you don't have time to commit every issue of *PC Gamer* to memory, you probably catch yourself wondering how we rated a game that came out a few months ago — did we put it on a

pedestal, or rake it over the coals? That's where the semi-annual PCG Reviews Index comes in. The latest installment includes every game we've reviewed since December 1995 — and mister, that's a lot of games.

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
 <p>11th Hour, The</p>	April '96 p. 141	Adventure	Virgin Interactive Ent., 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (714) 833-8710	Looks and sounds great (with the proper hardware).	Puzzles seem unrelated to story; limited innovations are not worth the performance penalty.	A good puzzle game; lots of patience and a nitro-fuel burning PC recommended.	76%	
 <p>3D Lemmings</p>	January '96 p. 179	Puzzle	Sony Interactive, 919 E. Hillsdale Blvd., 2nd Floor, Foster City, CA 94404 (800) 438-7794	A great new look, plenty of control options, and lots of levels that'll keep you busy for weeks.	The controls may be a little awkward, even for die-hard Lemmings fans.	3D Lemmings is an addictive puzzler that's a bit out of the norm.	91%	
 <p>3-D Ultra Pinball for Windows</p>	December '95 p. 237	Pinball	Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Great graphics; innovative table design gives more bang for the buck.	3-D Ultra Pinball's physics model may be too forgiving for pinball purists.	A fun alternative to traditional pinball simulations, and a great way to spend an afternoon.	86%	
 <p>Absolute Zero</p>	March '96 p. 114	Action	Domark Software, 1900 S. Norfolk St., Suite 110, San Mateo, CA 94403 (415) 513-8929	Playing as a variety of characters gives AZ depth; the story is well-written.	Only persistent gamers will be able to deal with the linear gameplay.	An exercise in frustration that will put off all but the most patient gamers.	61%	
 <p>Abuse</p>	January '96 p. 202	Action	Crack Dot Com, Austin, TX (800) 810-0022	Great design, lots of hidden goodies, and built-in level editor.	The interface takes some getting used to, so you won't be hooked right at first.	One of the most enjoyable shooters of the year.	88%	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
 <p>Across the Rhine</p>	November '95 p. 129	Wargame	MicroProse Software, Inc., 180 Lakefront Dr., Hunt Valley, MD 21030 (410) 771-1151	Operational level feels authentic; "alternate history" campaign mode can be fascinating.	Interface is all but impenetrable; learning curve is steep; even the shoot-'em-up mode fails.	What works in <i>ATR</i> works impressively; be prepared to invest frustrating hours for the payoff.	76%	
 <p>Air Power</p>	March '96 p. 144	Flight Simulation	Mindscape, 88 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945 (415) 897-9900	Imaginative concept and strategy elements; beautifully executed graphics.	Control feels unresponsive; unusual keyboard commands.	So close to being a classic, but misses it by just an inch.	82%	
 <p>Alien Odyssey</p>	February '96 p. 124	Action Adventure	Philips Media Inc., 10960 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90024 (800) 340-7888	Nice graphics and environments; good sound effects.	Enemies are weak and uninspired. The gameplay is confusing, and only moderately challenging.	The game would be a winner if it stuck with one style.	70%	
 <p>Aliens</p>	February '96 p. 120	Adventure	Mindscape, 88 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945 (415) 897-9900	Great graphics and cut scenes.	Extremely weak voice acting and dialog; timed puzzles make most of the game unnecessarily frustrating.	A troubled and disappointing adventure for only the most patient gamer.	59%	
 <p>Allied General</p>	April '96 p. 138	Wargame	SSI, 675 Almanor Ave; Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901 (408) 737-6800	Many of the same qualities that made <i>Panzer General</i> a winner, plus multiple-window interface.	Not enough new here, and some desirable features are missing.	A good beer-n-pretzels wargame for Windows, but it could have been a bit better.	89%	
 <p>Angel Devoid</p>	May '96 p. 144	Adventure	Mindscape, 88 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945 (415) 897-9900	Good use of video technology and a good story line.	Compatibility problems; less patient gamers may have a hard time sticking with it.	It isn't perfect, but it's encouraging proof that "interactive movies" can be enjoyable games.	78%	
 <p>Anvil of Dawn</p>	March '96 p. 113	Roleplaying	New World Computing, P.O. Box 4302, Hollywood, CA 90078 (818) 889-5650	An easy-to-learn interface and some solid, if mindless, RPG action.	Mediocre graphics and sound effects; an almost complete lack of innovation.	An attractive and enjoyable RPG that doesn't stretch the boundaries very far.	73%	
 <p>Ascendancy</p>	November '95 p. 160	Strategy	Broderbund Software Inc., 17 Paul Dr., San Rafael, CA 94948 (415) 883-5889	What's not to like?	It can be tricky to make your way through all the info that accumulates as your empire expands.	<i>Ascendancy</i> is the best game of its kind, period.	93%	
 <p>Bad Mojo</p>	February '96 p. 140	Adventure	Pulse Ent., 246 First St., 402, San Francisco, CA 94105 (310) 264-5579	Absolutely unique; well-conceived and executed; intense and disturbing.	May be too intense and disturbing (and possibly too easy) for some players.	Until they make a game out of the movie <i>Eraserhead</i> , this is as weird as it gets.	84%	
 <p>Battle Beast</p>	December '95 p. 270	Fighting	7th Level Inc., P.O. Box 832190, Richardson, TX 75083-2190 (214) 437-5531	Wonderful graphics, inventive story, and a whole lot of silly humor.	Controls are sluggish; lack of a "tournament" structure makes for repetitive battles.	It's a decent fighting game, but one with significant flaws.	69%	
 <p>Battle Isle 2220</p>	May '96 p. 129	Wargame	Blue Byte Software, 33 S. Roselle Rd., Ste. 210, Schaumburg, IL, 60193 (708) 539-7950	A truly unique strategy game packed with fascinating details and subtleties.	Steep learning curve; oddball rules are turn-off to those who find the details overwhelming.	One of the most eccentric games of its genre, but also one of the most imaginative. Can be addictive.	80%	



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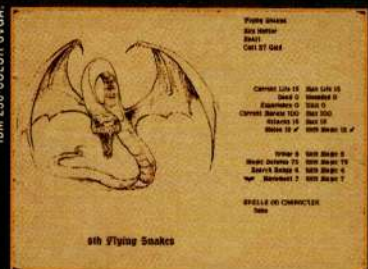
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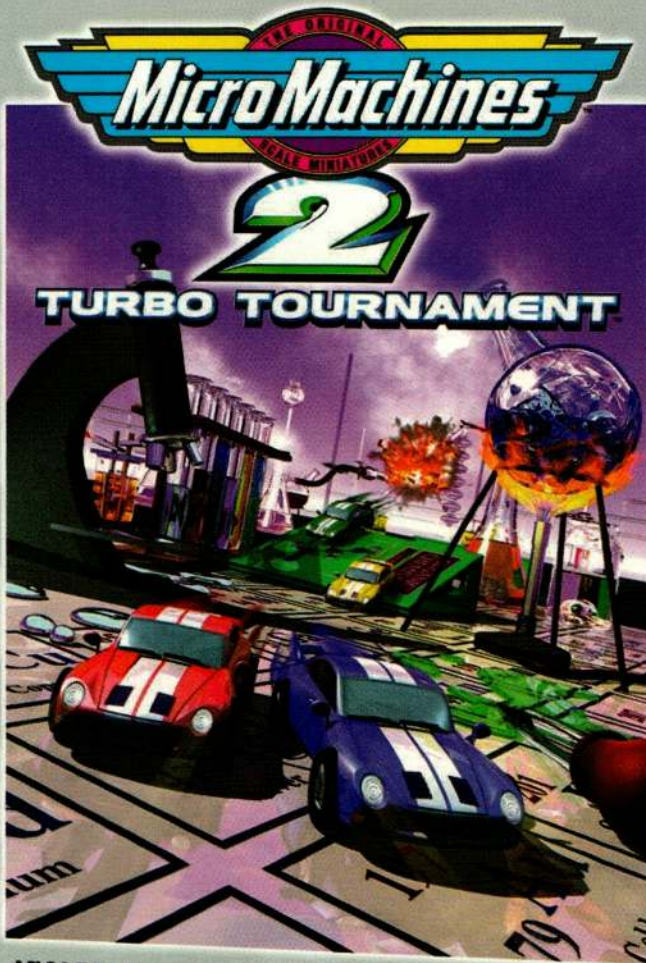


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TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
<b>Battleground: Ardennes</b> 	January '96 p. 205	Wargame	TalonSoft, P.O. Box 632, Forest Hill, MD 21050-0632 (800) 211-6504	Colorful and dynamic gameplay, first-rate interface, excellent use of video enhancements.	Some players simply won't want another Battle of the Bulge game, no matter how well done.	A remarkably fresh and original design, executed with real flair.	91%	
<b>Battleground: Gettysburg</b> 	March '96 p. 146	Wargame	TalonSoft, P.O. Box 632, Forest Hill, MD 21050-0632 (800) 211-6504	Magnificent graphics, near-perfect interface; dramatic and creative use of video clips.	A few might-have-been scenarios would have been nice.	This is a classic wargame in every respect.	89%	
<b>Battles in Time</b> 	January '96 p. 193	Wargame	QQP, 495 Hwy. 202, Flemington, NJ 08822 (908) 788-2799	Good strategic-tactical game with lots of unique twists; thorough head-to-head support.	Larger armies tend to move woefully slowly in the strategic section.	Lots of replay value and an innovative design make this a truly entertaining wargame.	89%	
<b>The Beast Within: A Gabriel Knight Mystery</b> 	April '96 p. 92	Adventure	Sierra, 3380 146th Place SE, Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Superb script, excellent videos, a fresh "take" on the traditional werewolf theme.	Extreme system demands; if you get hooked, you may have to invest in a quad-speed CD drive.	A great horror adventure, driven by a script that puts the competition to shame.	96%	
<b>Beavis &amp; Butt-Head in Virtual Stupidity</b> 	February '96 p. 114	Adventure	Viacom New Media, 1515 Broadway, New York, NY, 10036 (800) 469-2539	A real, no-foolin' graphic adventure with all the funny elements of the MTV show.	You'll want a fairly fast machine, and gamers who don't have Win 95 are out of luck.	Fans will adore it, but people who miss the point of the show won't understand the game, either.	90%	
<b>Breach 3</b> 	January '96 p. 222	Strategy	Impressions, 222 Third St., Suite 234, Cambridge, MA 02142 (800) 757-7707	Entertaining squad-level combat. Good mission builder.	Retro graphics, lack of narrative thrust.	An entertaining squad-level game that doesn't quite measure up to the current crop.	77%	
<b>Brutal: Paws of Fury</b> 	November '95 p. 139	Fighting	GameTek, 2999 Northeast 191st St., Suite 500, North Miami Beach, FL 33180 (305) 935-3995	Nice cartoon-style characters, a variety of special moves, and some genuine humor.	Limited in gameplay; fast animation can be hard to follow.	The non-demanding gameplay keeps it from standing out in the growing fighting game field.	75%	
<b>Burn Cycle</b> 	January '96 p. 214	Action Adventure	Philips Media, Inc., 10960 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90024 (800) 340-7888	Cool cyberpunk atmosphere, great soundtrack, complex story line.	Graphics are sometimes chunky; the plot is too linear.	The blend of puzzles, arcade action, mysteries and cyberspace won't be too interesting.	71%	
<b>Caesar II</b> 	January '96 p. 172	Strategy	Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Magnificent graphics; well balanced strategy elements; highly addictive; rewarding.	Some may find routine city-building monotonous; the frustration level may be a bit too high.	<i>Caesar II</i> provides a colorful, rich, absorbing, game-experience and should delight a diverse audience.	93%	
<b>Capitalism</b> 	December '95 p. 238	Strategy	Interactive Magic, P.O. Box 13491, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709 (919) 461-0722	Broad and deep business simulation, helped along by an excellent tutorial.	Too complex for some gamers; too tedious for others.	If you're the least bit interested in the subject, give this one a try.	89%	
<b>Chaos Control</b> 	December '95 p. 220	Action	I-Motion, 1341 Ocean Ave., Box 417, Santa Monica, CA 90401 (800) 443-3386	The graphics and animation are as good as they get.	It's a tough game, and it could have used a bit more variety.	The graphics and story elements help raise this monotonous shooter into a tale of adventure.	82%	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
 <p>Chronomaster</p>	April '96 p. 105	Adventure	Capstone, 501 Brickell Key Dr. 6th Floor, Miami, FL 33131 (800) 468-7226	Excellent graphics, variety of puzzles; good plot and lots of interaction keeps things interesting.	Too much time is spent traveling; newcomers may find the options overwhelming.	It doesn't break any new ground, but it is a big dose of puzzle-solving fun, even for experienced gamers.	84%	
 <p>Command &amp; Conquer</p>	November '95 p. 108	Strategy	Virgin Interactive Entertainment, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (714) 833-9710	A great real-time wargame set against a well-executed cinematic backdrop.	More could have been done to upgrade the <i>Dune II</i> Engine, such as an additional zoom level.	If you like strategy games, get <i>Command &amp; Conquer</i> .	91%	
 <p>Congo: Descent Into Zinj</p>	April '96 p. 137	Adventure	Viacom New Media, 1515 Broadway, New York, NY 10036 (800) 469-2539	Simple interface, above-average acting.	The solutions to puzzles are far-fetched; inability to examine items; steep system requirements.	Die-hard adventurers may like it, but most folks will toss up their hands in confusion.	57%	
 <p>Conqueror, A.D. 1086</p>	March '96 p. 141	Strategy	Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Looks great, sounds great, and the field battles are good, bloody fun.	Big logic-holes in the economic system, numerous skimped details that could easily be corrected.	A beautiful but half-baked game from a company that should know better.	60%	
 <p>Crusader: No Remorse</p>	December '95 p. 202	Action	Origin 5918 W. Courtyard Dr., Austin, TX 78730 (512) 434-4263	Incredible graphics, sound and gameplay.	Graphic violence, unsuitable for youngsters; no joystick support.	A great alternative to first-person shoot-'em-ups, and a definite must-play for action fans.	93%	
 <p>Custer's Last Command</p>	November '95 p. 168	Wargame	HPS Simulations, P.O. Box 3245, Santa Clara, CA 95055 (408) 554-8381	Does exactly what it sets out to do, and does it with real style.	The interface is annoyingly sluggish for some functions.	For anyone interested in Custer and the Battle of Little Big Horn subject, this game is a must.	86%	
 <p>CyberBykes: Shadow Racer VR</p>	January '96 p. 213	Arcade	GameTek, 2999 Northeast 191st St., Suite 500 Aventura, FL 33180 (800) 439-3995	Supports head-to-head play via modem or network; built-in editor for creating custom levels.	Unconvincing graphics, irritating soundtrack, frustrating gameplay.	The single-player game is a bust.	57%	
 <p>CyberMage</p>	April '96 p. 95	First-person Shooter	Origin, 5918 Courtyard Dr., Austin TX 78730 (512) 434-4263	Gorgeous graphics, excellent sound effects; a very effective blend of action and adventure.	Not a lot of interaction with other characters; pretty steep hardware requirements.	A fantastic mix of all the best elements from several gaming genres.	92%	
 <p>Dagger's Rage</p>	December '95 p. 253	Arcade	Microforum, 1 Woodborough Ave., Toronto, Canada M6M5A1 (800) 465-2323	Excellent graphics; more than just an arcade game.	Action is repetitive and simple; strategic elements are frustrating; clunky interface.	It's all been done — and done better — before. Worth a look if you're tired of <i>Raptor</i> or <i>Tyrian</i> .	55%	
 <p>Darkseed II</p>	May '96 p. 141	Adventure	CyberDreams/MGM Interactive, 2500 Broadway, Santa Monica, CA 90404 (310) 449-3000	Giger's artwork and backgrounds provide a menacing atmosphere.	Bad dialog, bad animation, bad puzzles.	It's not as troubled as the original, but it's certainly not a good way to spend your gaming dollar.	45%	
 <p>Destruction Derby</p>	March '96 p. 99	Arcade Action	Sony Interactive, 919 E. Hillsdale Blvd., 2nd Floor, Foster City, CA 94404 (800) 438-7794	Great slam-bang action; modem and network play.	The computer opponents are pretty wimpy.	<i>Destruction Derby</i> is a blast, and a welcome change of pace from high-end driving simulations.	88%	

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Product Information Number 135

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
<b>Dig, The</b> 	February '96 p. 110	Adventure	LucasArts, P.O. Box 10307, San Rafael, CA 94912 (800) 782-7927	Good story line, challenging puzzles and satisfying gameplay.	It's a slow starter. Some puzzles are too vague at the beginning.	<i>The Dig</i> is yet another fun and rewarding adventure game from the masters of the genre.	<b>88%</b>	
<b>Druid: Daemons of the Mind</b> 	March '96 p. 123	Roleplaying	Sir-tech, P.O. Box 245, Ogdensburg, NY 13669 (800) 447-1230	Inventive story and game content; simple magic system.	Fussy interface, repetitive combat sequences.	An engaging adventure/RPG that purists may hate but newbies and adventure gamers will enjoy.	<b>81%</b>	
<b>Dungeon Master II</b> 	November '95 p. 154	Roleplaying	Interplay, 17922 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 94086 (800) 969-GAME	Good character development, nice magic system, and a nostalgic feel.	There's nothing new here; graphics and sound are extremely dated.	A return to the classic Dungeon Master universe; but is it really necessary?	<b>65%</b>	
<b>Dust: A Tale of the Wired West</b> 	December '95 p. 231	Adventure	Cyberflix, Inc., 4 Market Square, Knoxville, TN 37902 (615) 546-7846	Realistic 3D environment; highly interactive characters; intuitive interface.	Lots of dialogue trees; slow story line; and bad voice acting.	If you're in the mood for a conversation with your PC, check it out. Otherwise, you'll get bored quick.	<b>68%</b>	
<b>Eastern Mind: The Lost Souls of Tong Nou</b> 	November '95 p. 135	Adventure	Sony Imagesoft, 2400 Broadway Ave., Suite 550, Santa Monica, CA 90404 (310) 449-2999	Highly stylized, with a unique flavor and a metaphysical slant.	May be too obscure for many gamers; inspires the use of words like "metaphysical."	Pretty pictures, plenty of puzzles, but its very strangeness may be off-putting.	<b>58%</b>	
<b>Ecco the Dolphin</b> 	January '96 p. 197	Arcade	Sega of America, 255 Shoreline Dr., Redwood City, CA 94065 (800) USA-SEGA	A welcome departure from the usual platform game.	The controls can take some getting used to, and the graphics aren't great.	A solid, unusual bit of video-gaming.	<b>75%</b>	
<b>EF2000</b> 	March '96 p. 124	Flight Simulation	Ocean of America, 1870 Little Orchard St., San Jose, CA 95125 (408) 298-1411	Cutting edge graphics; good flight engine; network play.	Very steep hardware requirements; a few bugs hamper the realism of the game.	A must-buy for hard-core flight simmers and a great game for novices.	<b>88%</b>	
<b>Empire II: The Art of War</b> 	December '95 p. 249	Wargame	New World Computing, P.O. Box 4302, Hollywood, CA 90078 (818) 899-5650	The most powerful, flexible, wargame construction set ever published.	Some preset scenarios are pathetic; scenario builder is complex and <i>not</i> explained.	One of the biggest disappointments in years.	<b>63%</b>	
<b>Endorfun</b> 	December '95 p. 267	Puzzle	Time Warner Interactive, 2210 West Olive Ave., Burbank, CA 91506 (800) 482-3766	If you like no-brainers, <i>Endorfun</i> is as fluffy as they come. It's the Lite 1990's version of <i>Tetris</i> .	Excruciating color combinations, annoying New Age music, boring gameplay.	<i>Endorfun</i> just isn't fun. There are much better puzzle games out there.	<b>59%</b>	
<b>Entomorph</b> 	January '96 p. 187	Adventure	SSI, 675 Almanor Ave., Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901 (408) 737-6800	Both the cutscene animations and gameplay graphics look great. Puzzles are also terrific.	The plot tends toward chaos, and leads to confusion. Combat is more frustrating than rewarding.	<i>Entomorph</i> is an attractive, innovative break from the usual RPG fare.	<b>81%</b>	
<b>Extreme Sports</b> 	May '96 p. 117	Sports	Sony Interactive, 919 E. Hillsdale Blvd., 2nd Floor, Foster City, CA 94404 (800) 438-7794	Unique idea; varied gameplay; good controls.	Limited replay value, too few courses, and less-than-stellar graphics.	A limited diversion from the usual sports game. Just don't expect more than a few hours of fun.	<b>62%</b>	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
<b>Fade to Black</b> 	November '95 p. 126	Adventure	Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404 (415) 571-7171	Nice animation, exciting combat; adventure-style puzzles.	Commands are pretty complex; control is choppy on a 486.	A strong balance of battles and brain-teasers that should be a nice break from shooters and adventures.	<b>82%</b>	
<b>FIFA Soccer '96</b> 	December '95 p. 207	Sports	Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404-2064 (415) 571-7171	Multiplayer/modem options; brilliant graphics; realistic play; good league and tournament play.	You'll need a Pentium 90 or better to really enjoy the high resolution graphics.	If you're in the market for a top-notch sports sim, look no further.	<b>92%</b>	
<b>Fighter Duel</b> 	January '96 p. 209	Flight Simulation	Philips Media, Inc. 10960 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90024 (800) 340-7888	Outstanding two-player dogfighting, excellent frame rate on modest systems.	Weak single-player game; no real campaign mode.	Modem dogfighters are in for a treat, but solo players should stick to in-depth sims.	<b>84%</b>	
<b>Foxhunt</b> 	May '96 p. 113	Adventure	Capcom, 475 Oakmead, Sunnyvale, CA 94086 (408) 774-0400	Slapstick comedy and antics make the non-interactive sequences worth watching.	Bad video; long load times; little interaction.	If you want low-brow entertainment, <i>Foxhunt</i> will do, but if you want gameplay, you'll be disappointed.	<b>57%</b>	
<b>Frankenstein</b> 	February '96 p. 136	Adventure	Interplay, 17922 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (800) 969-4263	Looks great; the sinister mood is well done.	Exploration is unnecessarily frustrating, game's solitary nature can get boring.	Folks who loved <i>Myst</i> might like it, but if you want depth, you'd be better off reading Shelley's book.	<b>75%</b>	
<b>Front Page Sports: Football Pro '96</b> 	March '96 p. 138	Sports	Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Gorgeous and realistic-looking SVGA graphics; still the best football sim around.	Steep hardware requirements; few reasons to upgrade.	A minor upgrade, but still the champ of football sims.	<b>86%</b>	
<b>Full Tilt Pinball</b> 	March '96 p. 108	Pinball	Maxis, 2121 N. California Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94596-3572 (800) 336-2947	Good sound effects; slick graphics and nice table design.	Only three different tables; not enough graphic options for some.	As pinball simulations go, <i>Full Tilt Pinball</i> is hard to beat, but there are still better ones out there.	<b>86%</b>	
<b>Fury<sup>3</sup></b> 	December '95 p. 260	Action	Microsoft, 1 Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA (206) 882-8080	3D action fans will love the non-stop flyin' and shootin'; excellent terrain graphics.	High system requirements; gameplay gets old; where's the modem-play option?	This is a first-rate 3D game that proves Microsoft is serious about gaming.	<b>84%</b>	
<b>Grand Prix Manager</b> 	April '96 p. 103	Sports Strategy	Spectrum HoloByte, 2490 Mariner Square Loop, Alameda, CA 94501 (510) 522-1164	An exhaustive and intriguing simulation of a big-league racing operation; user-friendly interface.	Not enough action for some gamers.	If the subject of big-time racing interests you, you'll love <i>GPM</i> .	<b>86%</b>	
<b>Great Naval Battles Vol. IV</b> 	February '96 p. 159	Wargame	SSI, 675 Almanor Ave., Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901 (800) 601-7529	Great graphics, sound; a fascinating range of historical might-have-beens.	It's still a very complicated sim, especially if you haven't played the previous installments.	If you're really into the subject, you'll have a great time changing history.	<b>79%</b>	
<b>HardBall 5</b> 	January '96 p. 217	Sports	Accolade, 5300 Stevens Creek Blvd., #500, San Jose, CA 95129 (408) 985-1700	Excellent arcade play; improved league play and modem options make this the best HardBall yet.	Unrealistic replay statistics.	It's still weak on realism, but <i>HardBall 5</i> 's the best action baseball game available.	<b>86%</b>	



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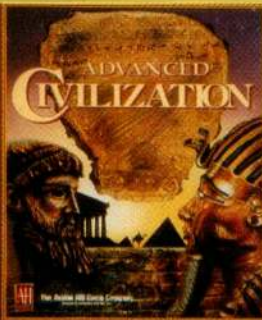
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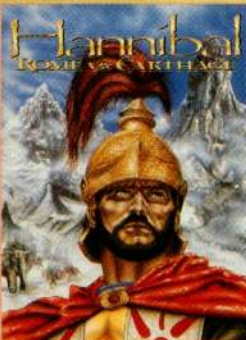


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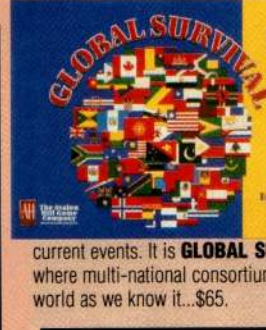
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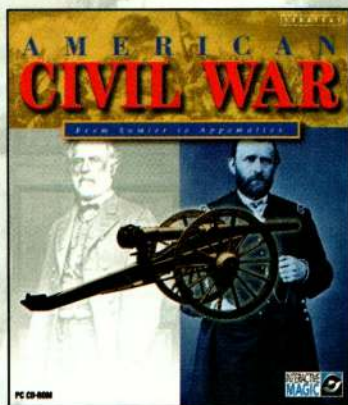
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Product Information Number 123

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
<b>Heroes of Might and Magic</b> 	November '95 p. 153	Strategy	New World Computing, P.O. Box 4302, Hollywood, CA 90078 (818) 889-5650	Remarkably strong, simple strategy gaming. You won't stop playing!	It ain't flashy — but that doesn't hurt the gameplay any.	One of the most enjoyable games of the year. This one will have a long life on your hard drive.	<b>88%</b>	
<b>Hexen: Beyond Heretic</b> 	February '96 p. 143	First-person Shooter	id Software/ GT Interactive, 16 East 40th St. New York, NY 10016 (800) 434-2637	Beautifully executed, with a wide variety of weapons and non-stop action. Many novel twists.	Gameplay is limited to the mindless slaughter. Not many secrets or puzzles.	A solid action game with terrific fantasy trappings, but ultimately familiar gameplay.	<b>85%</b>	
<b>Hive, The</b> 	May '96 p. 133	Action	Trimark Interactive, 2644 30th St., Santa Monica, CA 90405 (310) 310-2000	Gorgeous visuals and lots of button-pushing action.	Thin gameplay, rail-shooter design restricts interaction.	Pretty to look at, occasionally fun, but ultimately repetitive.	<b>66%</b>	
<b>Hooves of Thunder</b> 	April '96 p. 129	Sports	MicroLeague, 750 Dawson Dr., Newark, DE 19713 (717) 872-6576	Exhaustive simulation of a horse racing operation.	Not enough action for some gamers; better sound effects would help the track ambiance.	If the subject of world-class horse racing interests you, you'll love this game.	<b>82%</b>	
<b>Hyper 3-D Pinball</b> 	April '96 p. 138	Pinball	Virgin Interactive Ent., 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (714) 833-8710	Photo-realistic graphics; fantastic sound; plenty of great tables.	Steep system requirements; 3D perspective takes getting used to.	If you're a pinball fan with a fast computer, this one's a keeper.	<b>90%</b>	
<b>I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream</b> 	January '96 p. 218	Adventure	CyberDreams, 23586 Calabasas Rd., Ste 102, Calabasas, CA 91302 (818) 223-9990	Narrative elements that go deeper than any previous adventure game.	Extremely grim subject matter means the game isn't exactly fun.	An intriguing adult game that definitely won't be everyone's cup of entertainment.	<b>87%</b>	
<b>In the First Degree</b> 	December '95 p. 255	Adventure	Broderbund, 500 Redwood Blvd., Novato, CA 94948 (800) 521-6263	A great idea; quality video segments; good acting and story line.	It would be more fun if there were other cases; slow access times; excessive sit-and-watch segments.	A quality game. If you don't mind lots of video clips and some repetition, you'll like it.	<b>82%</b>	
<b>IndyCar Racing II</b> 	February '96 p. 127	Sports	Papyrus, 1 Arsenal Marketplace, Watertown, MA 02172 (617) 926-7575	Stunning graphics and sound; very detailed car physics. The replay mode is really excellent.	You'll still need a fast Pentium to enjoy the SVGA graphics mode.	Racing simulations don't get any better than this.	<b>95%</b>	
<b>Jack the Ripper</b> 	April '96 p. 133	Strategy	GameTek Inc., 2999 N.E. 191st St., Suite 500, Aventura, FL 33180 (305) 935-3995	Good, traditional, Sherlock Holmesian detective game.	May seem humdrum to players weaned on high-velocity, graphics intensive adventure games.	Nothin' fancy, but a solid addition to the ever-growing Ripper canon.	<b>78%</b>	
<b>Knight Moves</b> 	March '96 p. 108	Puzzle	Spectrum HoloByte, 2490 Mariner Square Loop, Alameda, CA 94501 (800) 695-4263	Interesting concept that mixes chess-style thinking with arcade reflexes.	The 3D interface is awkward; the no-frills manual and lack of features make this a pretty slim game.	More fun than <i>Under Pressure</i> or <i>Endorfun</i> , but it's not <i>Tetris</i> .	<b>65%</b>	
<b>Last Bounty Hunter, The</b> 	November '95 p. 145	Arcade	American Laser Games Inc., 4801 Lincoln Road NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109 (800) 880-1718	Fun arcade action, plenty of challenge, and lots of bad guys to shoot.	Some scenes are ridiculously difficult; the acting occasionally gets too cheesy.	If you're a fan of ALG shooters, or looking for some mindless arcade action, check it out.	<b>72%</b>	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
 <p>Last Dynasty, The</p>	November '95 p. 162	Action/Adventure	Sierra, 3380 146th Place SE, Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	It tries really, really hard to do something different and stylish.	Play is confusing, uneventful; sound, video are below par.	The story is just a mess; the action is nothing special; and the adventure game is a muddle.	60%	
 <p>Lion</p>	March '96 p. 129	Action Strategy	Sanctuary Woods, 1825 S. Grant St., San Mateo, CA 94402 (415) 286-6000	Another fine and intriguing simulation of predators in the wild.	There's still not much to do between meals.	As <i>Doom II</i> is to <i>Doom</i> , <i>Lion</i> is to <i>Wolf</i> . It's more of the same, but well worth playing.	86%	
 <p>Lords of Midnight</p>	February '96 p. 132	Adventure	Domark, 1900 South Norfolk St., Ste. 110, San Mateo, CA 94403 (415) 513-8929	<i>Lords of Midnight</i> does have an interesting idea or two.	Bad sound, bad graphics, bad interface, impenetrable gameplay.	An absolute mess.	40%	
 <p>Magic Carpet 2</p>	December '95 p. 217	Action	Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404-2064 (415) 571-7171	A great game made better with new visual effects and loads of new spells.	Some of the visual effects get tiresome. The game doesn't forge as much new ground as it might have.	More of what you liked in the original — and then some.	88%	
 <p>Martian Chronicles, The</p>	February '96 p. 160	Adventure	Simon & Schuster Interactive, 175 Fifth Ave., Suite 2122, New York, NY 10010 (970) 339-7137	The Ray Bradbury interviews are interesting and provide some appeal.	Stunningly boring, cliched, lifeless, and bland.	A tragic waste of brilliant source material.	49%	
 <p>Millennia: Altered Destinies</p>	January '96 p. 225	Strategy	Take 2 Interactive, 1004 Ligonier St., Latrobe, PA 15650 (412) 539-3077	Innovative approach combining time-travel, strategy, and narrative elements.	Sense of frustration over how to deal with problems. Awkward and unnecessary combat sequences.	A refreshingly different type of narrative science-fiction game.	88%	
 <p>Mission Critical</p>	February '96 p. 155	Adventure	Legend Ent., P.O. Box 10810, 14200 Park Meadow Dr., Chantilly, VA 22021 (703) 222-8500	Fine graphics and sound, silky interface, good acting, exceptional script.	Inadequate online help, too much corridor-prowling between intense sequences, anticlimatic ending.	A mature and thought-provoking adventure that plays the way a good sci-fi novel reads.	85%	
 <p>Monopoly CD-ROM</p>	December '95 p. 275	Strategy	Virgin Interactive Ent., 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (714) 833-9710	Super smooth animations, Internet play, slick interface and plenty of options.	It is, after all, still a board game conversion, and so ultimately has a flat feel.	We bet that even <i>Monopoly</i> -haters will be charmed by this clever and well-executed game.	90%	
 <p>Mordor</p>	November '95 p. 150	Roleplaying	TDA, 720 132nd St. SW, Suite 202, Everett, WA 98204	Plenty of stats-heavy roleplaying for gamers who miss the classics.	Almost no graphics or sound to speak of; very little gameplay apart from combat.	This is a dungeon crawl from the old school, but it's worth a look from the uninitiated.	68%	
 <p>Navy Strike</p>	February '96 p. 119	Flight Simulation	Empire Interactive, 4 Professional Drive., Ste 123, Gaithersburg, MD 20879 (301) 216-9707	Good graphics, campaign mode adds new dimension.	Bewildering keystrokes, menus; unrealistic flight models.	With its emphasis on fun air combat and the intriguing Command Module, it's a good introductory sim.	80%	
 <p>NBA Live 96</p>	May '96 p. 97	Sports	Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404 (415) 571-7171	Adds expansion teams, a player-creation feature, on-the-fly play-calling, and multiple camera angles.	Tricky to find a good camera angle; steep hardware requirements.	A great simulation that can be enjoyed on a variety of levels.	88%	

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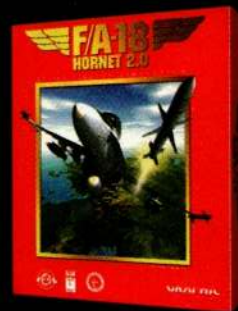
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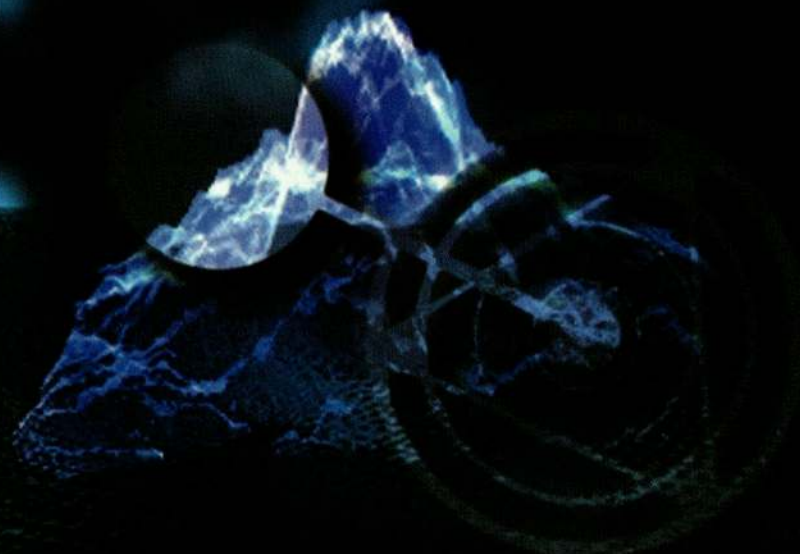
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TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
 <p>Need for Speed</p>	November '95 p. 112	Arcade Racing	Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404 (415) 571-7171	Great hi-res graphics; cool videos of the cars.	Limited number of tracks; no crashes; the sin- gle-player mode gets old.	If you've been look- ing for an action game with the right mix of realism and arcade gameplay, look no further.	84%	
 <p>NFL Quarterback Club '96</p>	May '96 p. 112	Sports	Acclaim Entertainment, 1 Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542-2777 (516) 656-5000	Unprecedented degree of control on the field; great animations; an extensive play- book.	Lack of trades or a draft; simula- tions of historic games only sup- port one player.	The best action- oriented football sim yet.	90%	
 <p>NHL '96</p>	December '95 p. 227	Sports	Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404-2064 (415) 571-7171	Knockout graph- ics; thrilling sound effects; moderm options and the best hockey action around.	Some camera angles don't give the optimum view of the rink; steep system require- ments.	If you love hockey or sports games in general, be sure and add this one to your collection.	90%	
 <p>Old Time Baseball</p>	February '96 p. 139	Sports	Stormfront Studios, P.O. Box 11686, San Rafael, CA 94912 (800) 245-4525	Beautiful graph- ics, especially the stadiums.	A few bugs and some question- able statistical results.	A couple of errors keep this from being a per- fect game.	82%	
 <p>Panthers in the Shadows</p>	December '95 p. 265	Wargame	HPS Simulations, P.O. Box 3245, Santa Clara, CA 95055-2345 (408) 554-8381	Unexcelled real- ism and detail. A serious tool for study and a for- midable game.	Drab graphics, wretched sound effects; demands a high level of commitment.	Overwhelming for casual wargamers; hard- core gamers will love its complex- ities.	78%	
 <p>Panzer Dragoon</p>	May '96 p. 114	Action	Sega of America, 255 Shoreline Dr., Redwood City, CA 94065 (800) USA-SEGA	Great looking graphics (at a distance); more interaction than most rail-shooter games.	Graphics get blocky at close range; frustrating delays on all but the fastest PCs.	If you've already got the Edge 3D, <i>Panzer Dragoon</i> is a good addition to the lineup.	70%	
 <p>PBA Bowling</p>	May '96 p. 125	Sports	Bethesda Softworks, 15235 Shady Grove Rd., Ste. 100, Rockville, MD 20850 (301) 926-8300	Great bowling action; intuitive interface, nice graphics.	Lack of multi- player options or computerized opponents.	<i>PBA</i> is a one-of- a-kind sim, and great fun for bowling fans — but you may tire of the solo action.	70%	
 <p>PGA Tour '96</p>	December '95 p. 241	Sports	Electronic Arts 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94403-7578 (800) 245-4525	Spectacular graphics, sound, gameplay. Good difficulty levels.	You'll need a Pentium to over- come the slow load times. More courses would be a welcome addition.	If you love the game of golf, this is a duffer's delight.	90%	
 <p>Phantasmagoria</p>	November '95 p. 156	Adventure	Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Amazing graph- ics, a genuinely suspenseful end- ing, and a cat named Spazz.	Generally poor acting, a little too easy for veteran adventurers.	<i>Phantasmagoria</i> proves that a full- motion video extravaganza can be a good game.	88%	
 <p>Pinball Illusions</p>	January '96 p. 221	Pinball	21st Century Entertainment Inc., P.O. Box 415 Webster, NY 14580 (716) 872-1200	New display options, great pinball action and controls; authentic sights and sounds.	Can't change display options during gameplay; four tables may not be enough for some.	If pinball is your thing, you can't go wrong with <i>Pinball Illusions</i> .	87%	
 <p>Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure</p>	November '95 p. 136	Arcade	Activision, 11601 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1000, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (310) 473-9200	A solid arcade game that runs well under Windows 95.	Jerky animation on slower machines; there are simply better games in this genre.	A promising first outing for Windows 95 arcade games.	75%	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
<p>Police Quest: S.W.A.T.</p> 	March '96 p. 100	Adventure	Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Good graphics, interface; the ability to choose multiple careers.	Finishing a given scenario is tough.	The emphasis on procedure brings an intriguing idea to a halt. Only wannabe police officers need apply.	70%	
<p>Primal Rage</p> 	December '95 p. 281	Fighting	Time Warner Interactive, 674 Sycamore Dr., Milpitas, CA 95035-0782 (408) 433-3999	Killer graphics, animation, soundtrack; enough hidden moves and goodies to satisfy hard-core arcade fans.	You need 16MB RAM and a 486/66 to see game at its best; pulling off some of the special moves is tough.	If you like fighting games, buy this one.	90%	
<p>Prisoner of Ice</p> 	November '95 p. 120	Adventure	I-Motion, 1333 Ocean Ave., Suite J, Santa Monica, CA 90401 (310) 576-1888	A good mix of challenging puzzles; some of the cinematic sequences are nice.	Poor voice-acting; timed puzzles are unnecessarily frustrating.	A quirky adventure game that's only for the die-hard Lovecraft fan.	73%	
<p>Psychic Detective</p> 	April '96 p. 113	Adventure	Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd, San Mateo, CA 94402 (415) 571-7171	This is an effective interactive movie, with good acting and an intriguing plot.	With its repetitive nature and low interactivity quotient, it's not much of a game.	As PC games go, <i>Psychic Detective</i> is one heck of a movie.	77%	
<p>Quarterback Attack</p> 	March '96 p. 104	Arcade Sports	Digital Pictures, 1825 South Grant St., San Mateo, CA 94402 (415) 345-5300	Decent video and a straightforward interface; learning to play provides a challenge.	It doesn't take long to start seeing the same clips over and over; things get old fast.	<i>QBA</i> provides a few kicks, but the video-based format kills any replay value.	60%	
<p>Qwirks</p> 	November '95 p. 117	Puzzle	Spectrum HoloByte, 2490 Mariner Square Loop, Alameda, CA 94501 (800) 695-4263	A good no-brainer; surprisingly addictive; cute little pieces will amuse youngsters.	Useless story line; gameplay challenging only to young players; there's nothing new here.	If you're looking for a good game for young kids, or a brainless time-killer for yourself, pick up a copy.	73%	
<p>Rebel Assault II</p> 	February '96 p. 131	Action	LucasArts, P.O. Box 10307, San Rafael, CA 94912 (800) 782-7927	Great cutscenes, sound-track, effects; entertaining story.	Almost no interactive fun; ridiculously short gameplay.	If you want Star Wars, get <i>X-Wing</i> or <i>TIE Fighter</i> . This isn't even a challenging arcade game.	65%	
<p>Return of Arcade</p> 	May '96 p. 119	Arcade	Microsoft, 1 Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399 (206) 637-9309	Dead-on representations of classic arcade games.	Four classics just aren't enough; these games don't stand up to today's best titles.	If you just want a quick break in between printing spreadsheets, <i>ROA</i> is great.	69%	
<p>Riddle of Master Lu, The</p> 	December '95 p. 244	Adventure	Sanctuary Woods, 1825 S. Grant Street, San Mateo, CA 94402 (800) 943-3664	Great graphics, great puzzles, and a fantastic story that most gamers will love to spend time with.	No real deviation from standard graphic adventure format.	If you love graphic adventure, you'll find your heart's desire here.	91%	
<p>Ripper</p> 	May '96 p. 109	Adventure	Take 2 Interactive, 1004 Ligonier St., Latrobe, PA 15650 (412) 472-2000	Great graphics, a challenging variety of puzzles, and a simple interface.	Puzzles can be too tough; a lot of over-acting, even from the professionals; it takes forever to get around.	If you've got tons of patience and love tough puzzles, you might have fun. Just be sure to pick up a hint book.	72%	
<p>Road Warrior</p> 	March '96 p. 133	Action	GameTek, 2999 Northeast 191st St., Suite 500, Aventura, FL 33180 (305) 935-3995	Superior graphics and sound plus a great story line set this one apart from the crowd.	Vehicle control can be awkward; too many missions end too early; inaccurate manual.	Mile-a-minute action with a snot-nosed attitude (I like it!).	89%	

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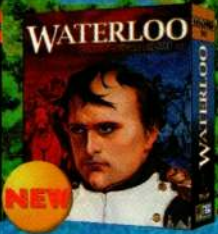
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Product Information Number 160

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
 <p>Robot City</p>	November '95 p. 165	Adventure	Byron Preiss Multimedia Co., 24 West 25th St., NY, NY 10010 (212) 989-6252	Straight-forward and intensely atmospheric; wall-to-wall sound.	Sometimes slow; no way to skip conversations or animations you've already seen.	An original and entertaining adventure, but not for puzzle fanatics.	<b>82%</b>	
 <p>ROTTK IV: Wall of Fire</p>	May '96 p. 143	Strategy	Koei Corp., 1350 Old Bayshore Hwy, Suite 540, Burlingame, CA 94010 (415) 348-0500	The best graphics yet in the series; sieges are beau- tifully rendered.	Confusing inter- face; sad air of ennui hangs over the whole thing.	Koei should have stopped while they were ahead; this new version adds no luster to a classic series.	<b>60%</b>	
 <p>Screamer</p>	April '96 p. 121	Arcade Racing	Virgin, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (714) 833-8710	Fast-paced action that never gets bogged down; rocketing around the gorgeous SVGA tracks is a blast.	There's little realism, few cus- tom options, and no modem play; some veterans may find it easy.	If you just want to drive fast and not worry about the details, this is for you.	<b>83%</b>	
 <p>Shannara</p>	April '96 p. 125	Adventure	Legend Ent., P.O. Box 10810, 14200 Park Meadow Dr., Chantilly, VA 22021 (703) 222-8500	Sharp, hi-res graphics; a few challenging puz- zles; solid inter- face and inven- tory system.	Frustrating com- bat interface, far too many easy puzzles.	Fans of the books won't like the simplified story, and gamers will find it too easy.	<b>72%</b>	
 <p>Shivers</p>	March '96 p. 118	Adventure	Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Stunning graph- ics; good sound; well-conceived plot; a good vari- ety of puzzles.	Doesn't deliver any real horror; lots of backtrack- ing; not much character inter- action.	Puzzle fans who enjoyed <i>Myst</i> have a new one to add to their collection.	<b>84%</b>	
 <p>Silent Steel</p>	December '95 p. 284	Strategy	Sigma Realmagic Interactive, 46501 Landing Parkway, Fremont, CA 94538 (800) 494-8848	Excellent video (with MPEG hard- ware), acting, and writing make drama work well.	Wafer-thin game elements and very little replayability.	A surprisingly entertaining game, despite its lack of sub- stance.	<b>75%</b>	
 <p>SimIsle</p>	January '96 p. 199	Strategy	Maxis, 2 Theatre Square, Orinda, CA 94563-335 (510) 254-9700	Challenging mix of economic and environmental concerns.	Graphics and animations are dated; not enough action to keep the game engaging.	If you're a fan of Maxis sims, this is worth adding to your collection.	<b>82%</b>	
 <p>Skins Game at Bighorn, The</p>	December '95 p. 225	Wargame	Interplay, 17922 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (800) 969-GAME	Simple interface; decent sound effects.	Limited perspec- tives; incredibly easy to shoot low scores.	Unless you demand unrealis- tic scores from your golf games, don't bother with <i>The Skins Game</i> .	<b>45%</b>	
 <p>Solitaire Deluxe for Windows</p>	December '95 p. 243	Card Game	Interplay 17922 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (800) 969-GAME	It's an easy-to- use adaption of the classic card game.	If you've never cared for soli- taire, there's nothing here that'll change your mind.	If you want to play a whole slew of varia- tions on solitaire, this is for you.	<b>75%</b>	
 <p>Space Bucks</p>	May '96 p. 126	Strategy	Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Good concept; clean, high-res graphics.	Economics model too basic for seri- ous fans; puzzling interface takes getting used to.	Sim fans who demand detail, customizable options, and realis- tic economics will be disappointed.	<b>59%</b>	
 <p>Star Rangers</p>	January '96 p. 176	Space Combat	Interactive Magic, P.O. Box 13491 Research Triangle Park, NC 27709 (800) 789-1534	An exciting mix of strategy and combat keeps things cooking.	The linear nature of the campaign game robs the game of realism, as does the lack of character development.	If you're into space-combat games, check this one out.	<b>85%</b>	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
 <p>Steel Panthers</p>	December '96 p. 257	Wargame	SSI, 675 Almanor Ave., Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901 (408) 737-6800	Beautiful to behold, easy to learn, and full of drama.	Inadequate manual; artillery support system can be a little tricky to master.	One of the best tactical-level wargames ever designed for the PC.	90%	
 <p>Stonekeep</p>	February '96 p. 147	Roleplaying	Interplay, 17922 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (800) 969-4263	Fantastic sound effects, nice graphics, intuitive and simple interface.	It's just not fun in the long term, and the graphics and sound can't carry it.	It's certainly not the best RPG out there, but if you're a roleplaying fanatic, it might be worth your while.	77%	
 <p>Su-27 Flanker</p>	February '96 p. 163	Flight Simulation	SSI, 675 Almanor Ave., Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901 (800) 601-7529	Dynamic flight model, excellent missions and mission builder, challenging opponents, deep play.	Bugs, confusing interface, zero chrome.	If SSI does the proper patches for it, <i>Su-27</i> might just be the next classic air combat sim.	78%	
 <p>TekWar</p>	February '96 p. 151	First-person Shooter	Capstone, 501 Brickell Key Drive, 6th Floor, Miami, FL 33131 (305) 373-7700	Sharp, living game world with moving vehicles and innocent civilians.	Unsophisticated combat, inaccurate manual, tedious searches, and flat special effects.	It's a fun game to play on a high-end machine (at least for a little while), but it's no <i>Doom</i> -killer.	74%	
 <p>Tempest 2000</p>	April '96 p. 138	Arcade	Atari Interactive, 1196 Borregas Ave., Sunnyvale, CA 94089 (800) 462-8274	It's still <i>Tempest</i> — a classic.	The graphics are dated, and it's no fun to control.	If you're looking for something to take <i>Tempest</i> to the next level, keep waiting.	59%	
 <p>Terminator: Future Shock</p>	April '96 p. 99	First-person Shooter	Bethesda Softworks, 1370 Piccard Dr., Rockville, MD 20850 (301) 926-8300	Lots of action and a large environment to explore; killer sound effects.	Occasionally clumsy controls when driving. Poor automapping. No multi-player mode.	A solid action game with sharp graphics and an exciting and familiar world that gamers will love.	84%	
 <p>Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri</p>	May '96 p. 104	Action Adventure	Looking Glass Technologies, 100 Cambridge Park Dr., Cambridge, MA 02140 (617) 441-6333	Multi-faceted gameplay, slick interface, and built-in mission builder.	Occasionally chunky graphics; some missions are extremely tough.	If you've got a thirst for first-person combat in a different vein, <i>Terra Nova</i> really delivers.	90%	
 <p>Thexder</p>	April '96 p. 115	Arcade	Sierra, 3380 146th Place SE, Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Good weapons variety; network and multi-player options.	Slow graphics, lackluster gameplay, confusing multiple windows.	If you're a side-scrolling fan, stick to <i>Earthworm Jim</i> or <i>Pitfall</i> .	55%	
 <p>This Means War!</p>	April '96 p. 142	Strategy	MicroProse Software, Inc., 180 Lakefront Dr., Hunt Valley, MD 21030-22454 (401) 771-1151	Some of the explosion graphics are kinda neat...	Manual omits necessary information; interface is a muddle, graphics are primitive.	Go buy yourself a copy of <i>Command &amp; Conquer</i> instead. You'll thank us.	49%	
 <p>Thunderscape</p>	November '95 p. 146	Roleplaying	SSI, 675 Almanor Ave., Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086 (408) 737-6800	A new, innovative design with engaging gameplay.	Sound and graphics could have used a little more polish.	A fresh approach and a good start to SSI's new line. With the shortage of good RPGs, don't pass this one up.	84%	
 <p>Title Fight Pro Boxing for Windows</p>	February '96 p. 135	Sports	Comp-U-Sports, 317 Stewart St., Saltsburg, PA 15681 (412) 845-7843	Lots of boxers; historically accurate; runs on just about any PC.	Canned commentary seems random and often inappropriate.	A realistic and comprehensive sim for boxing fans who can live without flashy graphics.	79%	

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## Mystery Word Grid

	H					M Y S T E R Y  W O R D
		E				
P	I	N	C	H	W	
	R					
S						

### WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

- PINCH .....W
- BREAK .....Z
- STOMP .....T
- CRUSH .....I
- PRESS .....K
- PUNCH .....S
- STAND .....R
- SCORE .....H
- BLAST .....A
- SPRAY .....C
- PRESS .....E
- SLANT .....L
- WRECK .....D
- TURBO .....V
- DREAM ....O
- CHASE .....P

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TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
<b>Top Gun: Fire at Will</b> 	May '96 p. 101	Flight Simulation	Spectrum HoloByte, 2490 Mariner Square Loop, Alameda, CA 94501 (510) 522-1164	Nice full-motion videos; slick tutorial missions; novice-friendly manual.	Steep hardware requirements; pixelicious terrain graphics.	A gentle introduction to flight sims that can still provide some punch for veteran flight jocks.	<b>87%</b>	
<b>Torin's Passage</b> 	April '96 p. 116	Adventure	Sierra, 3380 146th Place SE, Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Wonderful graphics; simple control; hint button for tough puzzles.	Only a few tough puzzles. Seasoned players will finish it quickly.	It's great if you're looking for a game to share with your kid, but not for experienced gamers.	<b>79%</b>	
<b>Total Distortion</b> 	March '96 p. 130	Adventure	Pop Rocket, 1320 7th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94122 (415) 731-9112	Nice graphics, outstanding sound, and an off-beat sense of humor.	Some long loading time; bizarre premise and humor won't appeal to everyone.	<i>Total Distortion</i> is an entertaining and unusual rock-and-roll adventure.	<b>80%</b>	
<b>Touché</b> 	April '96 p. 119	Adventure	U.S. Gold, 303 Sacramento St., San Francisco, CA 94111 (415) 693-2097	Nice graphics, good voice-acting, and a humorous story line.	Long-winded dialog, a few obscure puzzles, and a finicky interface.	<i>Touché</i> is a satisfying adventure game that doesn't take itself too seriously.	<b>77%</b>	
<b>TriTryst</b> 	April '96 p. 134	Puzzle	Virgin Interactive Ent., 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (714) 833-8710	Good variety and challenging puzzle gameplay.	Replay value depends on what you want; puzzle games just don't have a lot of depth.	<i>TriTryst</i> is a fun little puzzle game that's every bit as addictive as <i>Tetris</i> .	<b>83%</b>	
<b>Trophy Bass</b> 	February '96 p. 123	Sports	Sierra, 3380 146th S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707	Great graphics, plenty of options, and good fish AI.	The odd, "omnipotent fisherman" perspective isn't very realistic.	A great simulation, and a hell of a lot of fun.	<b>90%</b>	
<b>TV Guide Multimedia Crosswords</b> 	April '96 p. 134	Puzzle	InterMedia, 3624 Market St., Suite 302, Philadelphia, PA 19104 (215) 387-0448	170 crosswords; handy hint features.	Confusing clues; lack of difficulty levels; poor use of multimedia; little challenge.	If you want to do a good crossword puzzle, why not pick up a newspaper?	<b>53%</b>	
<b>Ultimate Challenge Golf</b> 	March '96 p. 137	Sports	Grolier Electronic Publishing, 90 Sherman Turnpike, Danbury, CT 06816 (203) 797-3530	Unique golfer profiles and great graphics.	Not enough features to make it competitive; loong load times.	An interesting new take on golf simulations, but one that needs more to make it work.	<b>78%</b>	
<b>Ultimate Football 95</b> 	November '95 p. 166	Sports	MicroProse Software, 180 Lakefront Dr., Hunt Valley, MD 21010 (410) 771-1151	Modem play; fairly low hardware requirements.	Dated-looking menus; it's too easy to beat the computer coach.	Perhaps the most complete package among football sims. You won't be disappointed.	<b>84%</b>	
<b>Under Pressure</b> 	December '95 p. 279	Puzzle	Starhill Productions, 139 Townsend St., San Francisco, CA 94107 (415) 442-5000	Intriguing puzzles, super graphics.	Slow and unwieldy, unless you have some considerable horsepower in your computer.	Only high-end Windows 95 users who love puzzles need apply.	<b>68%</b>	
<b>Unnecessary Roughness '96</b> 	March '96 p. 134	Sports	Accolade, 5300 Stevens Creek Blvd., San Jose, CA 95129 (800) 245-7744	Excellent arcade action and play design; good sound effects and graphics.	Steep hardware requirements.	Definitely a Super Bowl contender; a nice alternative for gamers who want to do more than coach.	<b>84%</b>	

TITLE	ISSUE / PAGE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	HIGHS	LOWS	BOTTOM LINE	RATING	EDITORS' CHOICE
<b>Virtual Karts</b> 	March '96 p. 116	Racing Simulation	MicroProse, 180 Lakefront Dr., Hunt Valley, MD 21030-2245 (800) 879-7529	Menus are straightforward, network play can be fun.	Dodgy controls, high system requirements, oddball physics.	Even if you're a fan of go-cart racing, you'll probably be dis- appointed with <i>Virtual Karts</i> .	<b>59%</b>	
<b>Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness</b> 	March '96 p. 96	Strategy	Blizzard, 19840 Pioneer Ave., Torrance, CA 90503 (310) 793-0600	Diverse and chal- lenging play; excellent mission editor; technically superb head-to- head play.	There are the usual occasional holes in AI, but nothing serious.	Engrossing strat- egy fun for the whole family.	<b>96%</b>	
<b>Werewolf vs. Comanche</b> 	December '95 p. 268	Flight Simulation	NovaLogic, 26010 Mureau, Suite 200, Calabasas, CA 91302 (818) 878-0325	Network and modern game- play, challenging if unrealistic mis- sions.	Flight model and missions are sim- plistic, games a little too similar.	An excellent value for people looking to play a helicopter game head-to-head.	<b>78%</b>	
<b>Wetlands</b> 	January '96 p. 185	Action	New World Computing, P.O. Box 4302, Hollywood, CA 90078 (818) 889-5650	Gritty animation and graphic novel-style story- telling.	Touchy controls and action sequences that could've used some work.	If you really want arcade action with a story line, wait for <i>Rebel Assault II</i> .	<b>73%</b>	
<b>Wing Commander IV: The Price of Freedom</b> 	May '96 p. 92	Space Combat	Origin Systems, 5918 W. Courtyard Dr., Austin, TX 78730 (800) 245-4525	Incredible video sequences with Hollywood produc- tion values; greater variety in combat sequences.	Not much new in terms of game- play; very demanding hard- ware require- ments.	<i>WCIV</i> is a great science fiction movie that also happens to be fun to play.	<b>90%</b>	
<b>Wingnuts</b> 	December 95 p. 213	Arcade	Rocket Science Games, 139 Townsend St., San Francisco, CA 94107 (415) 442-5000	Wonderfully goofy Easter eggs; a decent shooter with some interesting features.	Needs meat in gameplay; fuzzy controls.	If you're looking for the ultimate shooter, pass on <i>Wingnuts</i> , but if you enjoy fun sur- prises, pick it up.	<b>77%</b>	
<b>Witchaven</b> 	November '95 p. 149	First-person Shooter	Capstone, 501 Brickell Key Dr., 6th Floor, Miami, FL 33131 (305) 373-7700	A good engine at work here; multi- player options greatly extend gameplay.	Limited character animations; close-quarters combat gets old pretty quickly.	Not a bad entry into the shooter arena, but it could've been better.	<b>82%</b>	
<b>Worms</b> 	March '96 p. 107	Arcade Strategy	Ocean of America, 1870 Little Orchard St., San Jose, CA 95125 (408) 298-1411	Clever design, cute graphics, and loads of fun with more than one player.	Turn-based action is a bit slow against computer oppo- nents.	<i>Worms</i> is a humorous and enjoyable take on strategy games, and fun for the whole family.	<b>82%</b>	
<b>WWF Wrestlemania</b> 	February '96 p. 135	Sports	Acclaim, 1 Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542-2777 (516) 656-5000	Big characters, lots of moves, and nice control.	Two-dimensional feel, and no new characters to face in tourna- ment mode.	Plenty of mat- slamming fun for the whole family.	<b>80%</b>	
<b>You Don't Know Jack</b> 	March '96 p. 116	Trivia	Berkeley Systems, 2095 Rose St., Berkeley, CA 94709 (510) 549-2300	Clever trivia questions; clean, thoughtful design; hilarious categories.	There's not much replay value.	Trivia buffs will really dig it, and will find them- selves coming back to it again and again.	<b>84%</b>	
<b>Zone Raiders</b> 	April '96 p. 130	Arcade Racing	Virgin Interactive Ent., 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (714) 833-8710	Excellent con- cept with fast and nimble vehi- cle physics.	Occasional graphics glitches. No modem play.	Fun, fun, fun 'til your daddy takes the T-Bird away.	<b>89%</b>	

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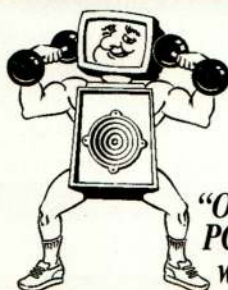
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# NEXT TIME...

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# PC GAMER

JUNE 1996

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Stearns never listened to his mother, though. Not about the grapefruit spoon, not about putting water on his cornflakes, and definitely not about joining the military.

At the military, it was there he first showed a man to the ground and made him... Stearns quickly shook off the memory, suddenly realizing that flashbacks aren't always pleasant. So he sharpened his focus on the remaining terrorist guard and moved in for the kill.

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Stearns thinks of this as he approaches the last guard with his favorite grapefruit spoon. He pauses, but he can't stop himself. He must use the spoon!

He walks slowly toward the last guard as he tosses his spoon from one hand to the other. Which hand shall it be this time? After toying with the idea of using his foot, he grips it gently in his right hand...

TO BE CONTINUED...

# The Ultimate Game Machine

If money was no object, what would your PC look like? In July, we'll tell you how to build the hottest system going — and, more importantly, we'll have plenty of shopping advice to

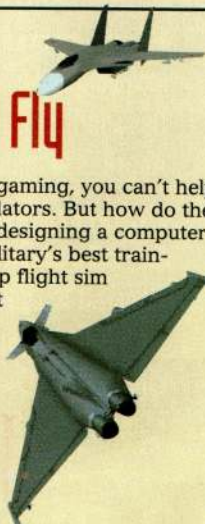
fit every gamer's budget. So before you throw down \$4,000 for a name-brand company's idea of the ultimate gaming machine, check in with us next month.



Next month, we'll tell you how to put together a butt-kicking game system without blowing the kids' college fund.

## Learning to Fly

When you think of PC gaming, you can't help but think of flight simulators. But how do they work? What goes into designing a computer game that rivals the military's best trainers? We'll talk to the top flight sim developers and find out how they do their voodoo, and we'll have a look at some of tomorrow's most exciting simulations.



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## Reviews

Civilization II • War College

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