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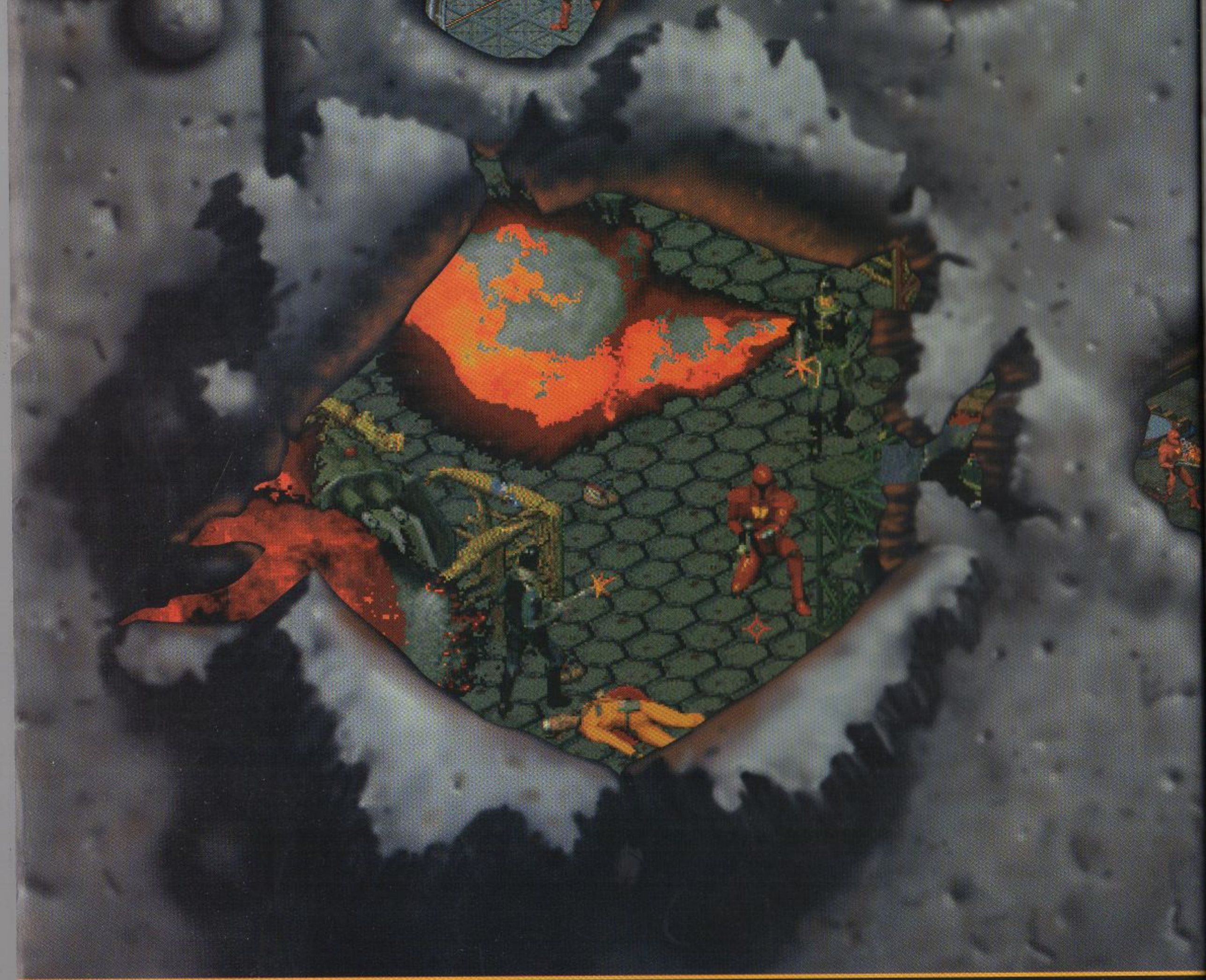

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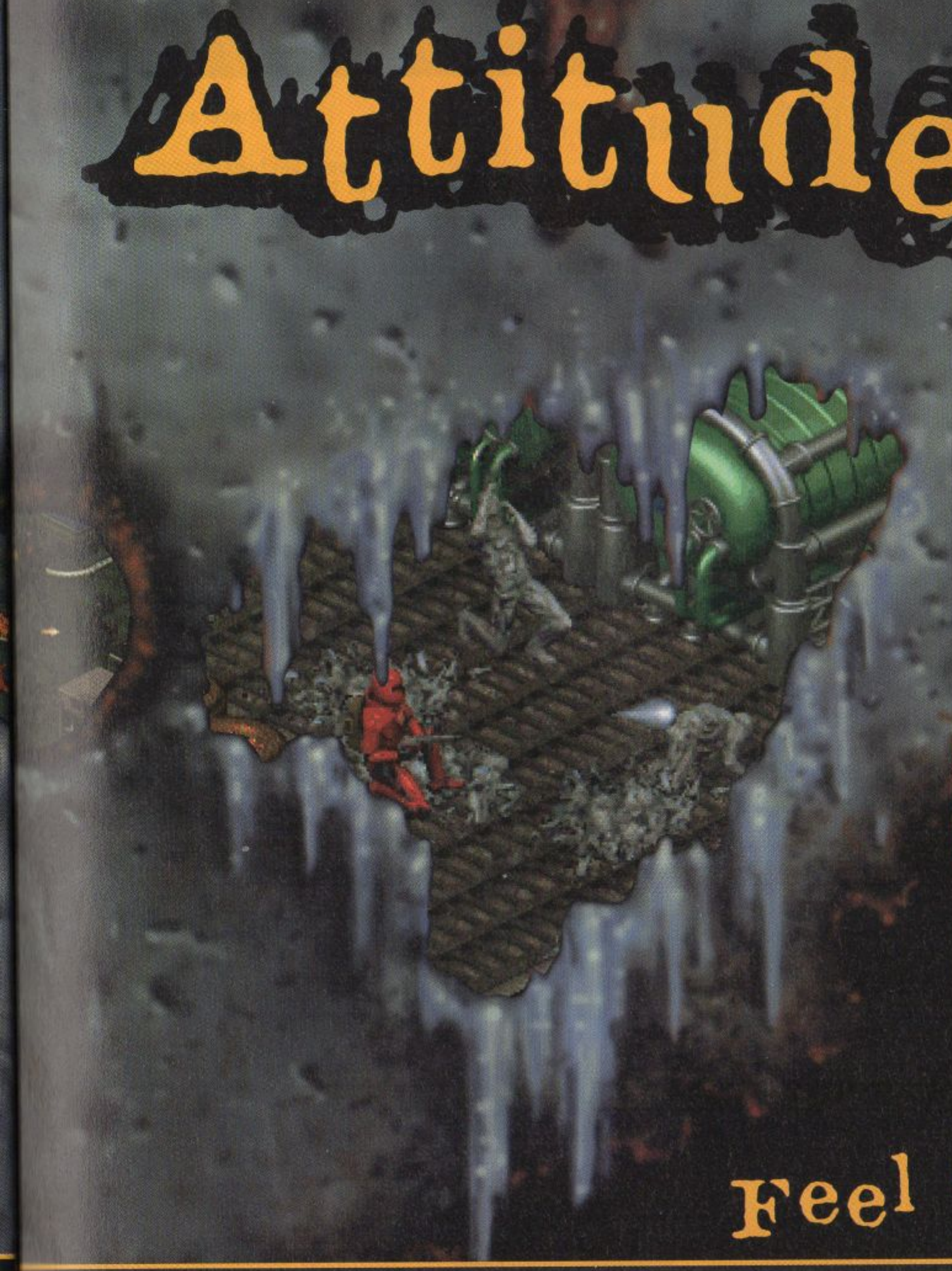

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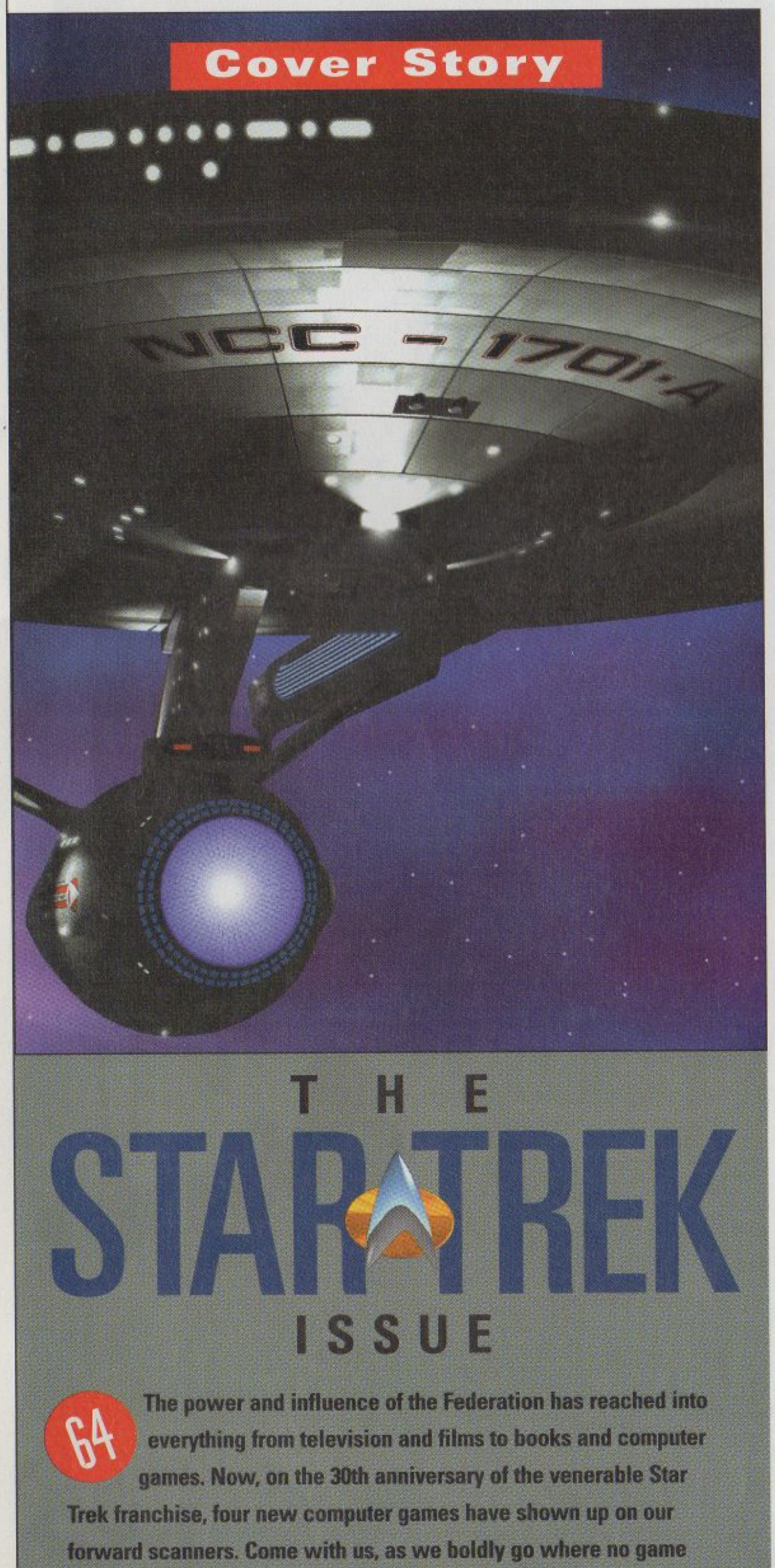

THE STAR TREK ISSUE

64 **The power and influence of the Federation has reached into everything from television and films to books and computer games. Now, on the 30th anniversary of the venerable Star Trek franchise, four new computer games have shown up on our forward scanners. Come with us, as we boldly go where no game magazine has gone before!**

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85 Quake

The earth has opened up, nightmares have come to life, and a horde of weapon-wielding monsters has poured out of the next dimension. Yes, it's *Quake*, id Software's latest triumph.

Scoops!

One small step for man, one giant leap for computer gaming — check out these hot upcoming titles!

28 M1A2 Abrams

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Put out your jack-o-lanterns, a dish of candy, and wait by the door. October's *PC Gamer* will soon be here!

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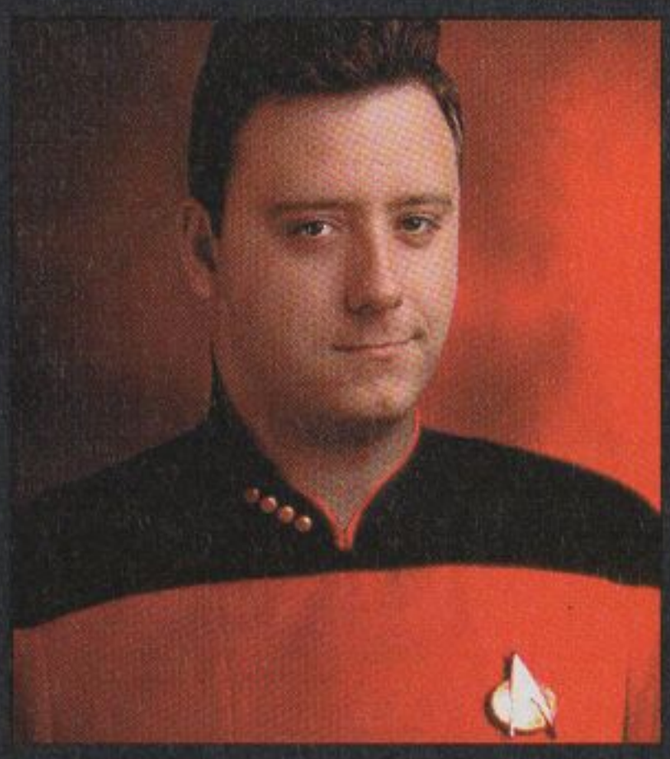
Why are you reading this at a magazine rack? There's an easier way: subscribe!



The Engines Cannae Take Any More, Cap'n!

"Captain on the bridge!" (Or, as in the case of the unfortunate Kirk in *Generations*, "Bridge on the captain.") Yes, somewhat inevitably we've gone suitably Trekky this month as the seminal sci-fi legacy celebrates its 30th anniversary. PC gamers have special cause to celebrate as we preview no less than four new Trek games on the horizon: *Starfleet Academy, Generations, Voyager* and *Borg*. Article 9, sub-section 5, paragraph xx(ii) of the Computer Game Magazine Charter clearly states that any issue carrying Star Trek editorial (and I quote) "must be stuffed full of tired old quotes and clichés from the show," so let's get them all out of the way now so we don't have to worry about them later on. "Let's run a level three diagnostic", "Warp core breach!", "Can we generate an inverse tachyon pulse?", "Beam me up, Scotty" *("But Kirk never said that!" — anal Trekkers everywhere),* "Impulse engines not responding!", "Give me a full spread, maximum yield!", "But what about the Prime Directive?", "Mr. Data, what *is* that?" ...Erm, erm... oh I can't think of any more from the top of my head, which is probably a good thing. Now that we've exhausted all those predictable old Star Trek clichés, you can now dive fearlessly into the issue, safe in the knowledge that you won't see another one anywhere in the magazine. So just go ahead and enjoy this month's issue. Aaaand... Energize! *(Doh!)*

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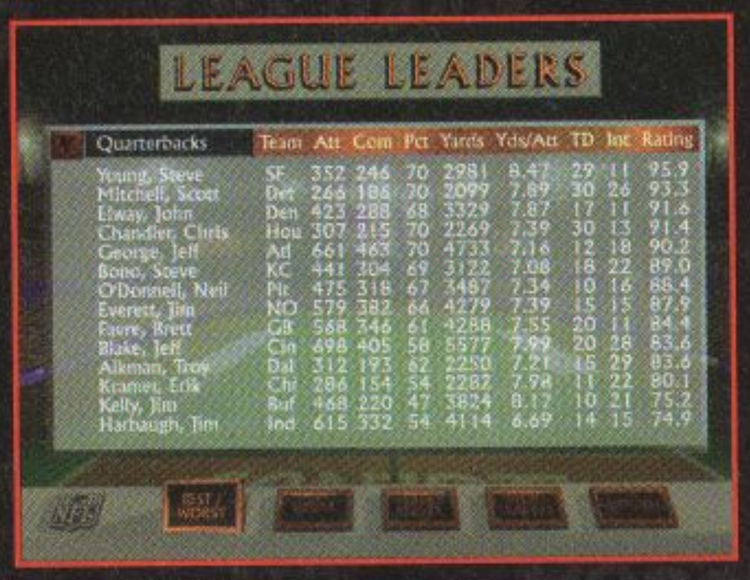

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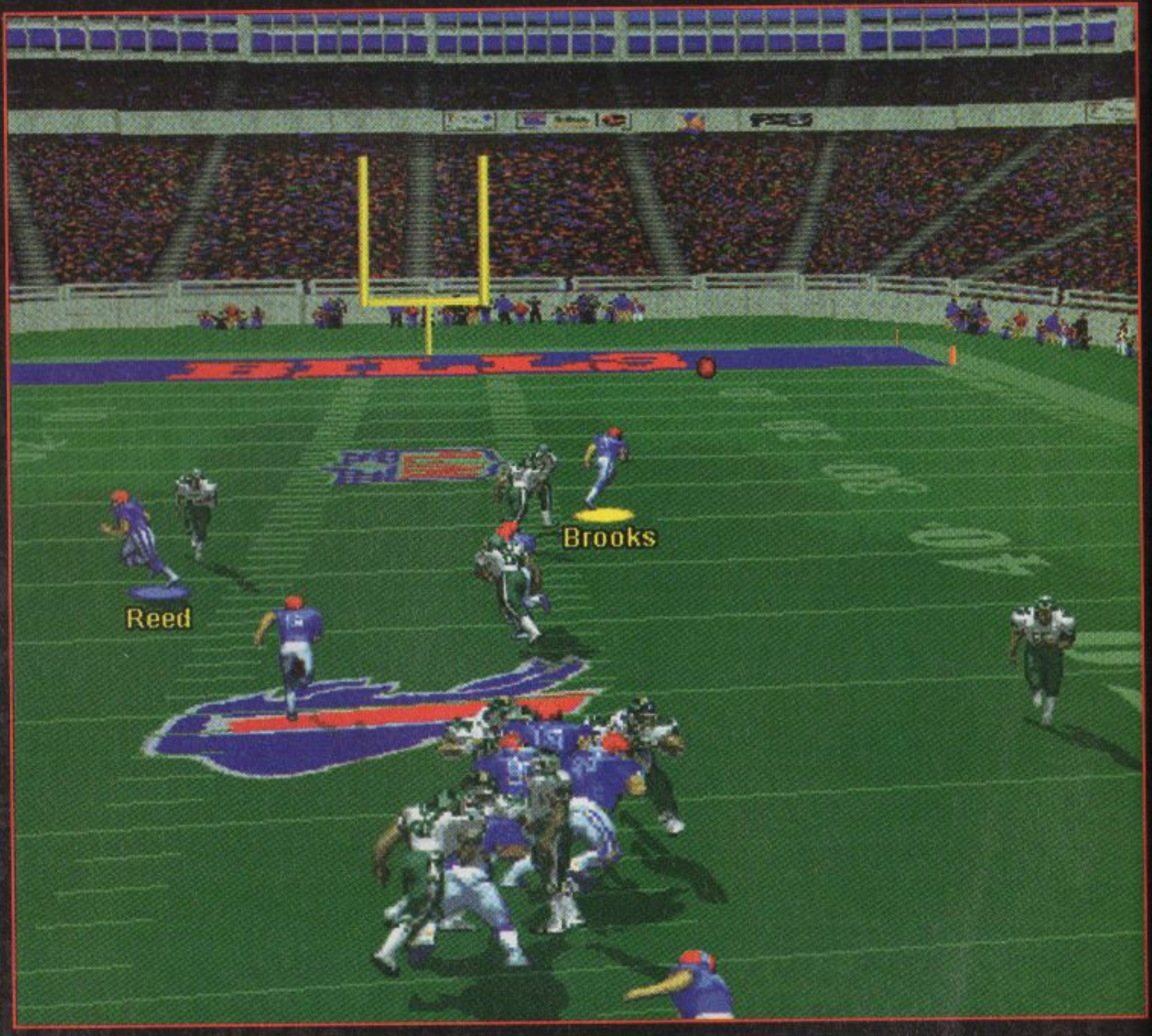

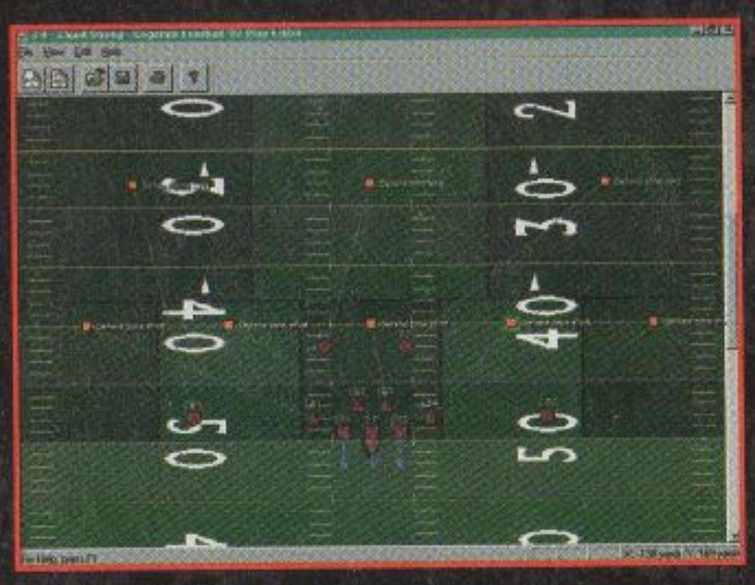

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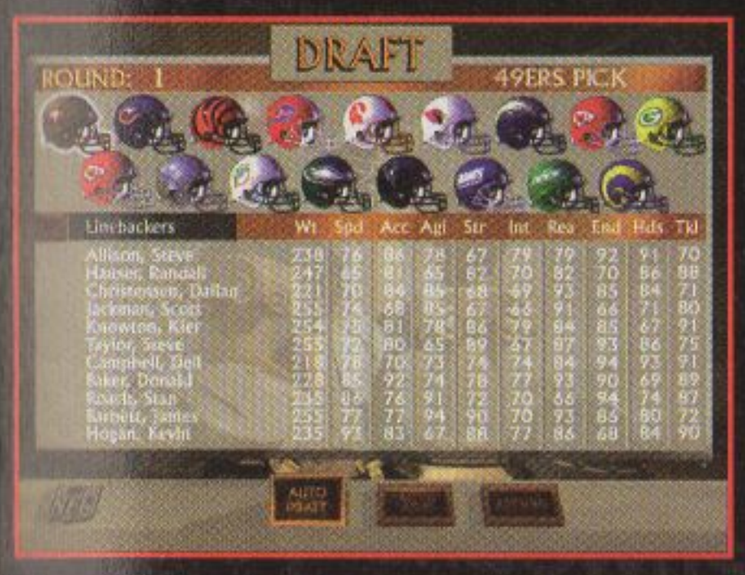
GAME.... ....Meets Three Legendary Eras

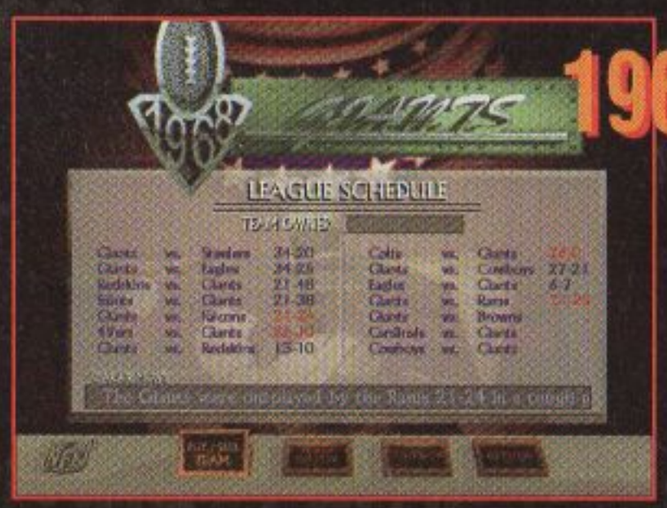
It's not always sunny on the gridiron - battle it out in snow, sleet, and rain. You'll have to adjust your gameplan to win.

- 20 man rosters require most of your players to play both offense and defense. Get ready to use Dan Marino as a defensive back or Junior Seau at running back!
- The football is larger and harder to throw. Do you take a chance on the pass or grind it out with a running attack?

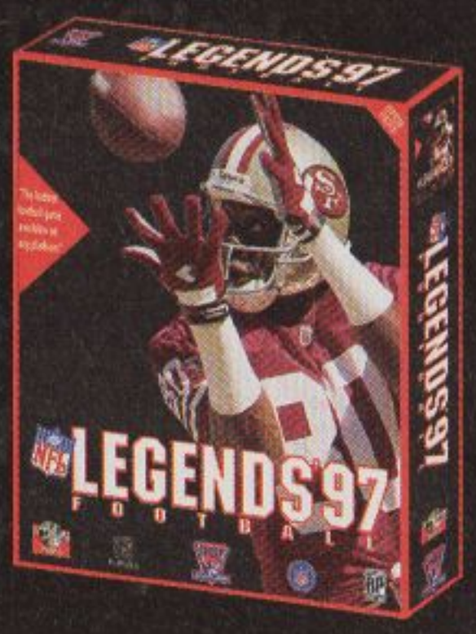
- Rules favor the running game.
- Goal posts were placed in the front of the end zone. The "Post" pattern was commonly used to run defenders into the posts for an easy touchdown reception.



Build a football dynasty like Dallas or San Francisco. Draft, trade, and manage players throughout entire careers!



- Play a little rougher on the receivers. You can hit them anywhere on the field until the ball is thrown... and it's all legal!
- Players like Dick Butkus ruled the gridiron, paving the way for the modern day player.



- All the NFL teams and players from four legendary eras of football: 1996, 1968, 1950, and 1932!
- Incredible 3D graphics
- Advanced A.I. with team specific styles and coaching strategies
- Intense multi-player action using the Gravis Grip Multi-player adapter
- "Time Travel" with teams to create fantasy matchups
- Action and Coach Mode play

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Product Information Number 82

Ass-stompin' aliens have landed

in futuristic Los Angeles, and

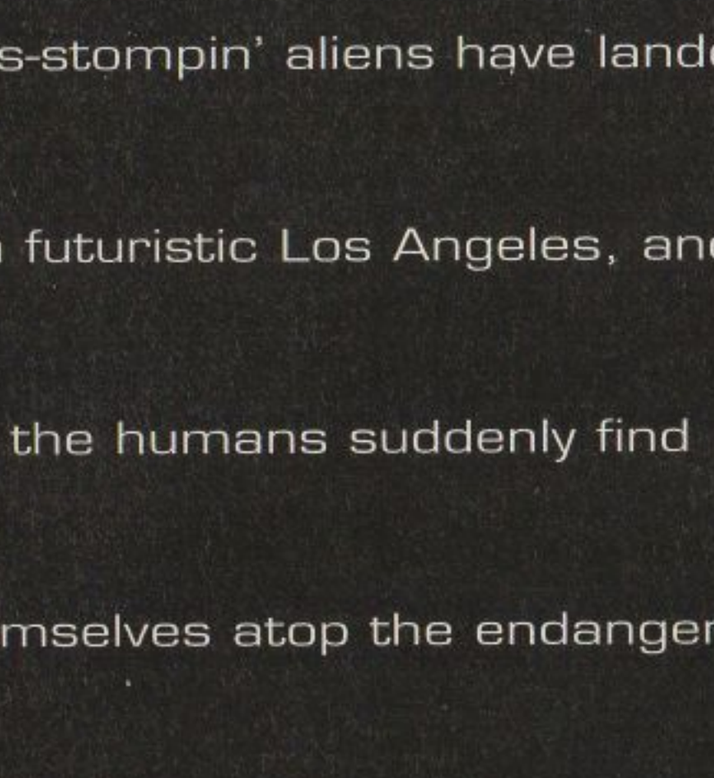
the humans suddenly find

themselves atop the endangered

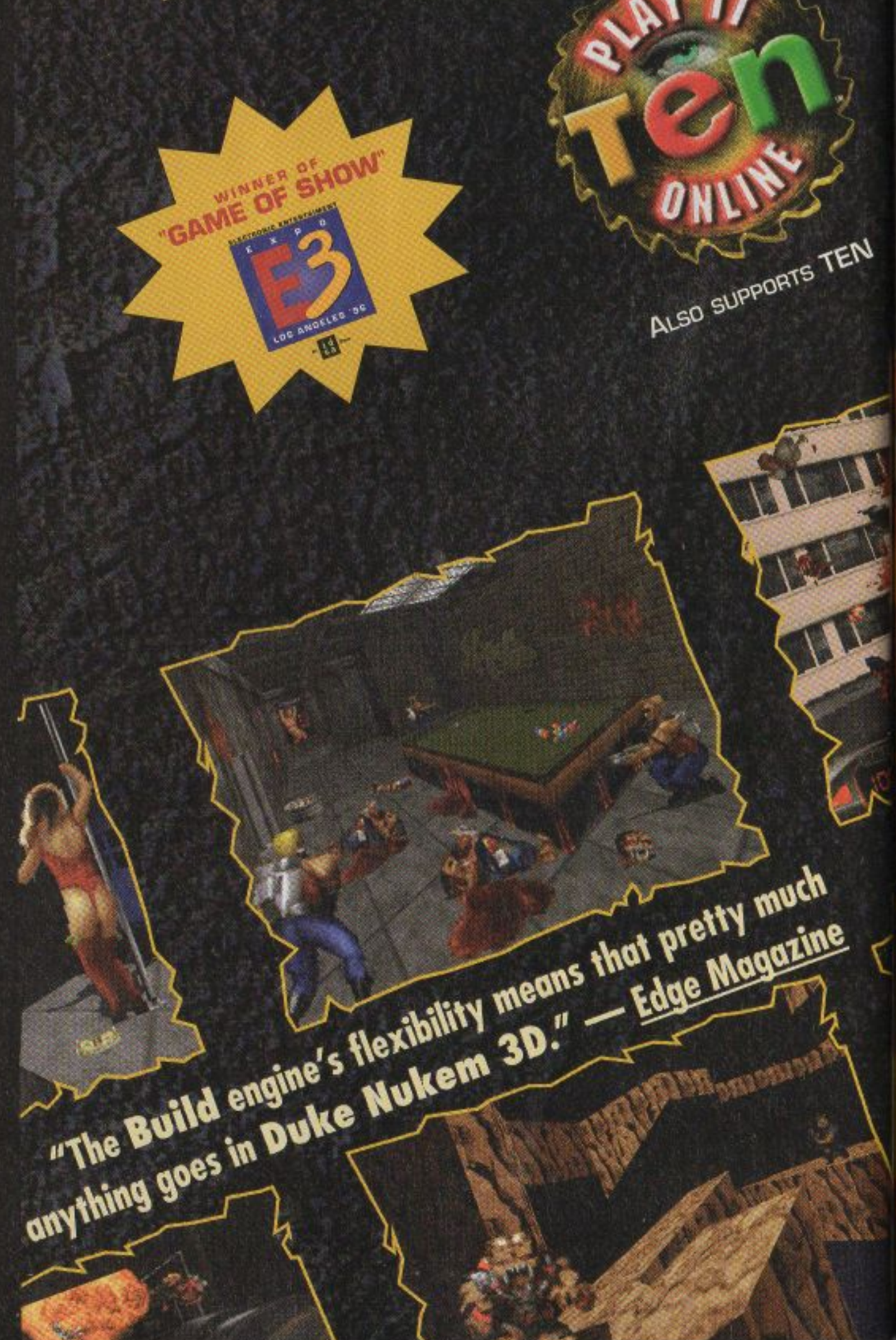
species list. The odds are

a million-to-one, just the way

Duke Nukem likes it!



DUKE NUKEM 3D™



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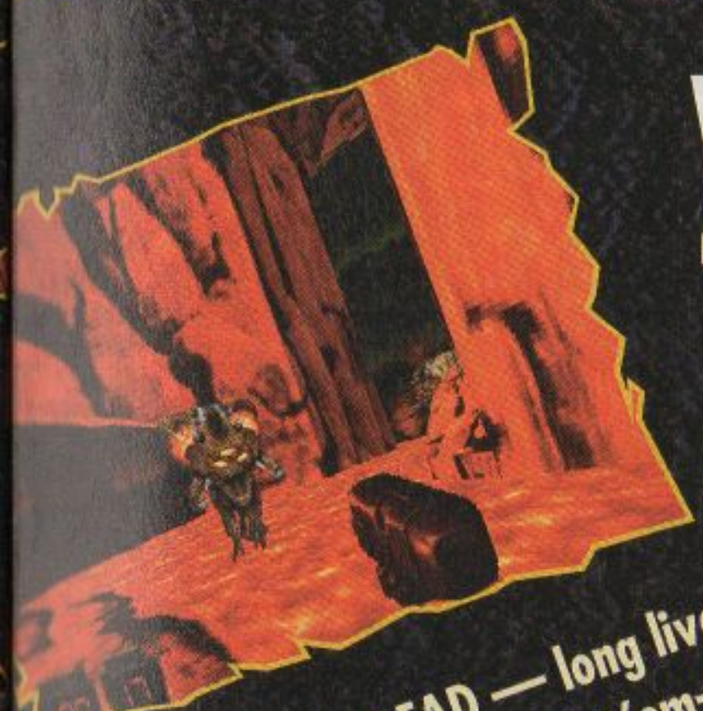
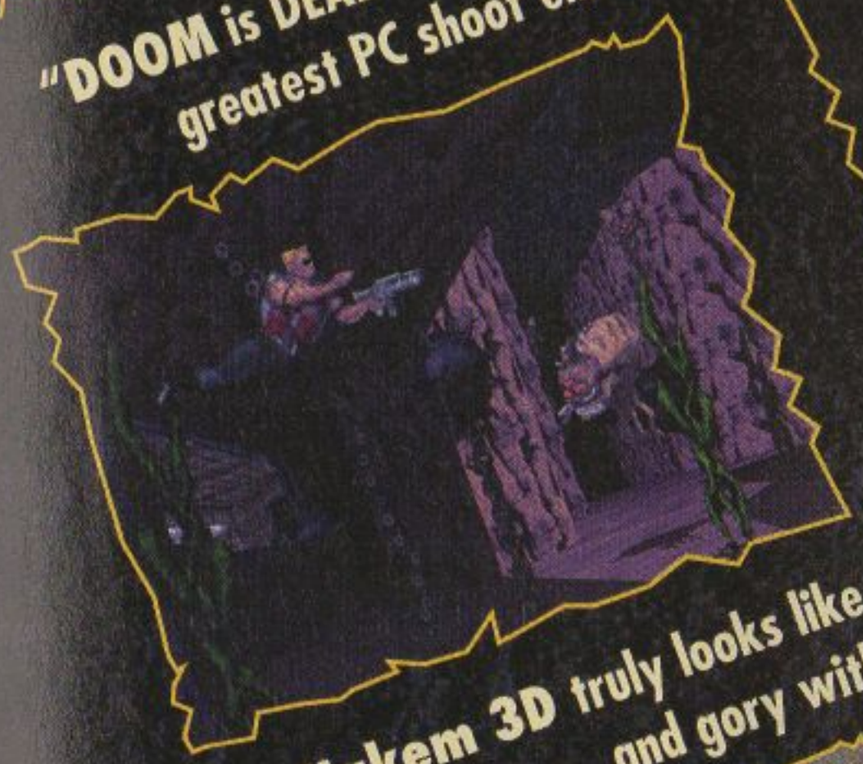
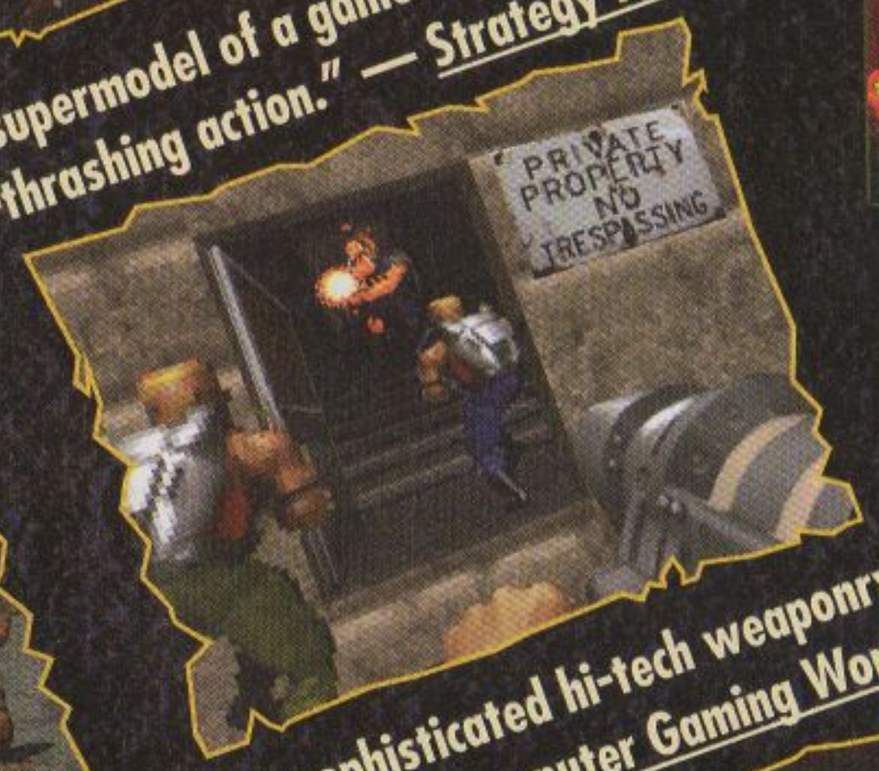
Well, what are you waiting for?

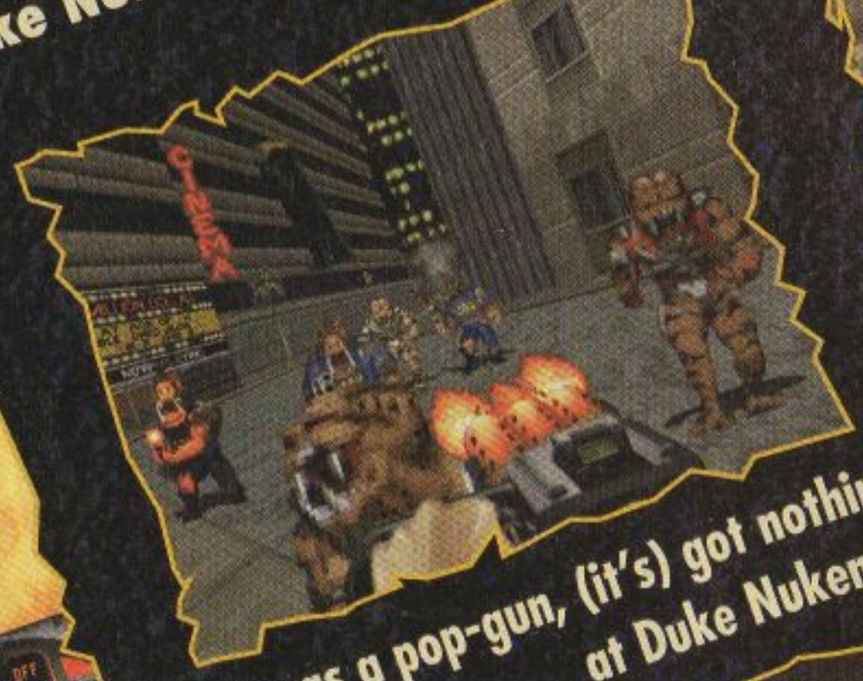


"DOOM is DEAD — long live Duke Nukem 3D, could this be the greatest PC shoot'em-up ever?" — X-GEN / Next Generation



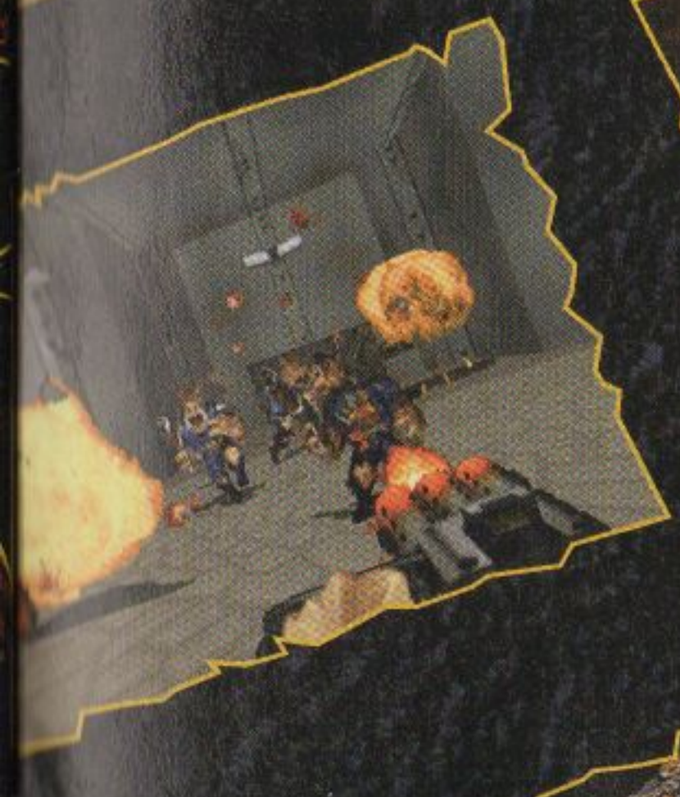
"Duke Nukem 3D truly looks like a 3D supermodel of a game: sleek, sexy, and gory with lead-thrashing action." — Strategy Plus

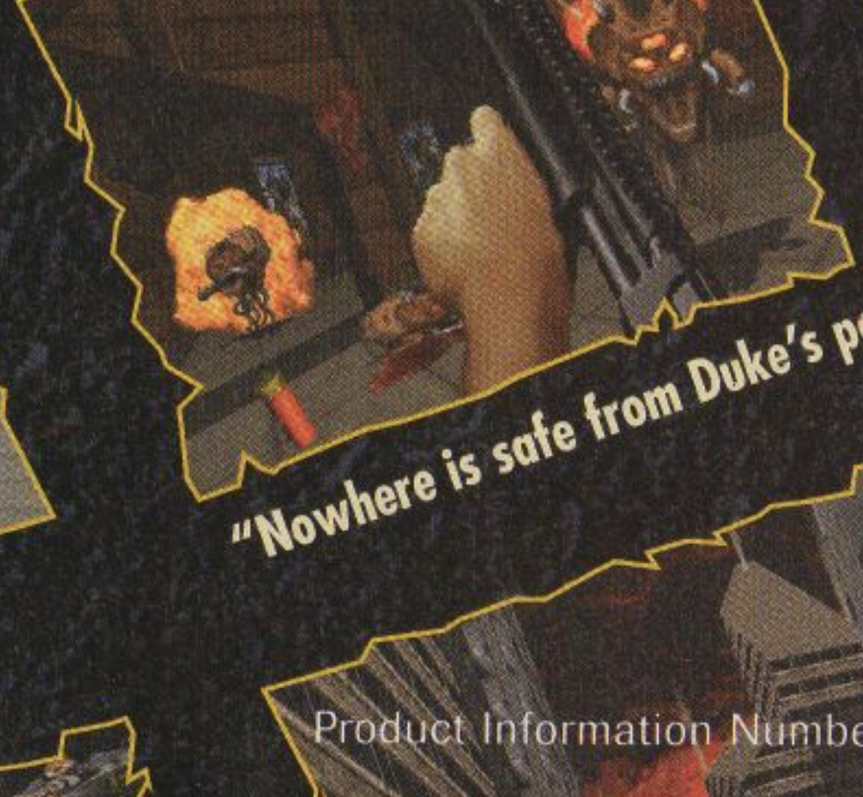


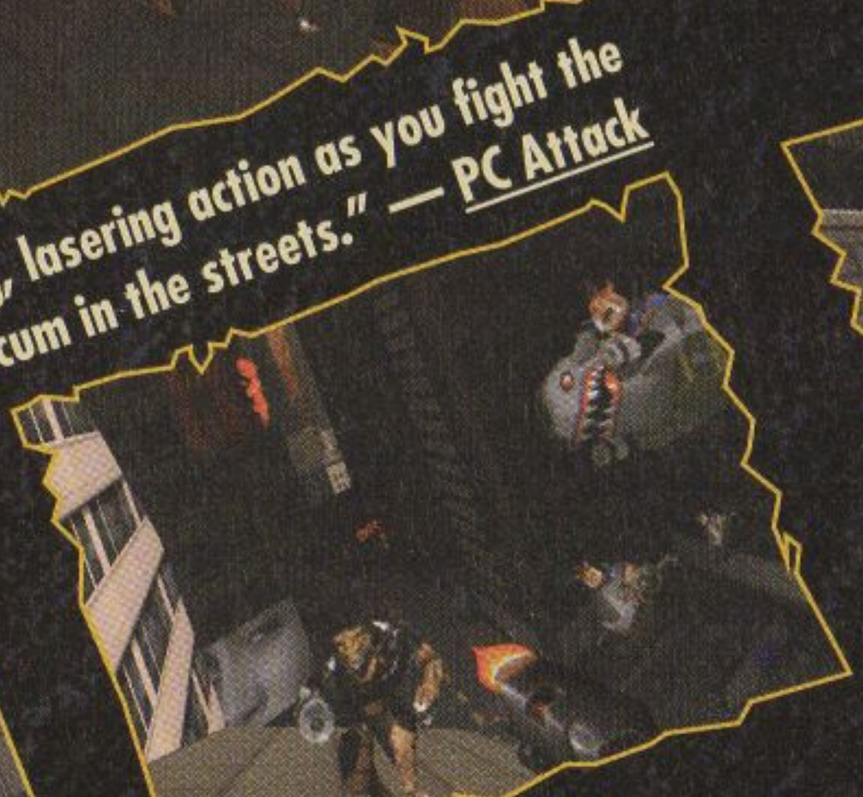


"The BFG was a pop-gun, (it's) got nothing on the sophisticated hi-tech weaponry at Duke Nukem's disposal." — Computer Gaming World

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







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THE CD

INSTALLING • PLAYING • QUICK TIPS

Coconut Reigns Supreme

Welcome once again to the depths of the *PC Gamer* Underground, where our new receptionist, Coconut Monkey, is finally starting to fit in. Instead of falling for our usual game of Poke the New Guy, he's turned the tables on us by dropping out of the office rafters onto our heads like a ripe coconut. A solid blow to the skull usually makes us leave him alone, at least for a while. That's okay, though. His hard coconut shell dulls the point of our Sharpened Stick rather quickly, and after repeated sharpenings, the stick was getting dangerously short. And we need to keep it handy in preparation for any new team members.

We're still waiting to hear the verdict on Coconut Monkey's new game, *Gravy Trader*. That Seamus is a pretty reliable reviewer, but he does have a tendency to be forgetful. Perhaps you could shed some light on the current situation. Lord knows Coconut Monkey has been hard to deal with — he's so nervous, all he can do is sit around and make new games. You can see his most recent work on this month's CD — it's a freeware Windows game called *Death from Above*. You'll love it. Or something.

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 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 *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) 468-4869 (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 Editors' Note

The realm of DOS commands can be tricky, so for our DOS demos, we've added a menu system that will install them for you. Simply switch to the root of the CD-ROM drive, and type "MENU." It's as simple as that. If you have any other suggestions, drop us a line at: PC Gamer CD Editors, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005 or *cdhelp@pcgamer.com*.

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 *Star Fighter PC* demo:

Type **CD\SFDEMO** and press Enter

Type **SFRUNME.BAT** and press Enter

The demo of *Star Fighter PC* will then be installed on your computer.

** on chart at right = Must install through Windows.* Lemmings Paintball, M1A2 Abrams, *and* Return to Arcade *require Windows 95.*

Contents/Manual Installation Commands

Demo	Directory	Installation Command	Disc Page
Quake	\QUAKE	INSTALL.BAT	10
Iron Blood	\IRON	INSTIRON.BAT	13
Star Fighter PC	\SFDEMO	SFRUNME.BAT	13
ATF	\ATFDEMO	DEMO.BAT	14
Lemmings Paintball*	\LEMBALL	SETUP.BAT	14
Catz*	\CATZ	SETUP.EXE	14
M1A2 Abrams*	\ABRAMSDMDISK1	SETUP.EXE	17
Settlers II	\SETTLER2	INSTALL.BAT	17
Shell Shock	\SHELSHOK	INSTSHOK.BAT	19
Shakii the Wolf	\SHAKII	INSTSHAK.BAT	19
Shattered Steel	\SSTEEL	INSTALL.EXE	20
Alien Trilogy	\ALIEN	INSTALL.BAT	20
Return of Arcade*	\ROATRIAL	ROATRIAL.EXE	22
America Online	\	AOL.EXE	22
Patches	\PATCHES		22
Duke Nukem MAPS	\DUKE3D		22
Doom II WADs	\DOOM2		22
Hexen WADs	\HEXEN		22
Descent II HOGs	\DESCENT2		22
Warcraft II PUDs	\WAR2		

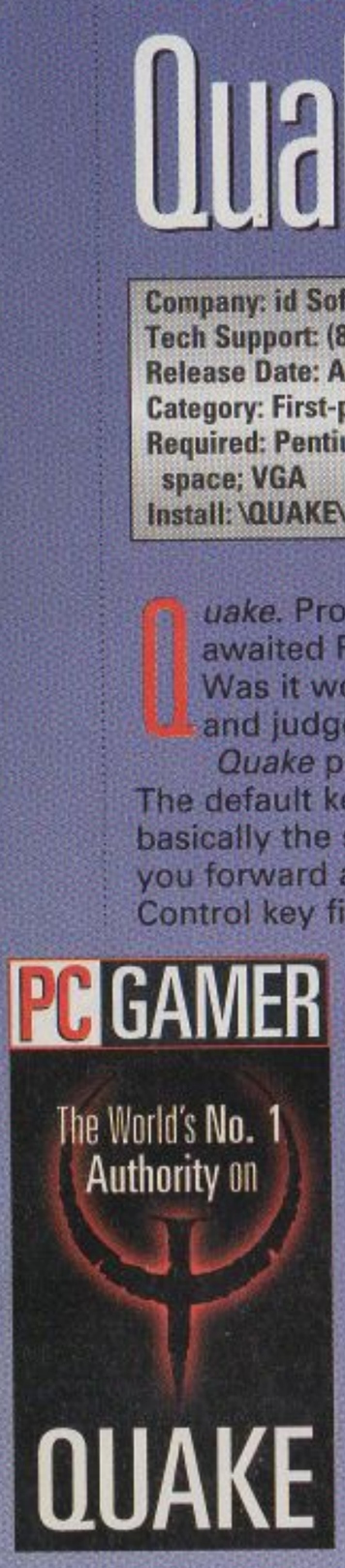
Quake

Company: id Software
Tech Support: (800) 434-2637
Release Date: Available Now
Category: First-person shooter
Required: Pentium, 8MB RAM, 30MB hard-drive space; VGA
Install: \QUAKE\INSTALL.BAT

These ogres like to toss grenades at you from afar and use their chainsaw up close. Keep far enough away to avoid those pineapples, and you can take them out with a few well-placed shotgun blasts.

Quake. Probably the most eagerly awaited PC game since *Doom II*. Was it worth the wait? Try it out, and judge for yourself.

Quake plays very much like *Doom*. The default keyboard configuration is basically the same — arrow keys move you forward and backward and turn; the Control key fires your selected weapon, and holding down the Alt key lets you "strafe" from side to side with the arrow keys. One major difference: the spacebar no longer opens doors — it makes you jump. To push buttons or open a door, you just run into it.



If you've gotten used to using a different keyboard setup than the classic *Doom* layout, you'll find *Quake*'s keys are completely configurable from the Options menu. More advanced control is available through the game's scripting system; just check out the file TECHINFO.TXT for detailed instructions on how to use the game's command console (similar to the one in the *Quake Deathmatch Test*).

Plenty of weapons are available to make short work of the monstrosities you'll encounter. In addition to good, old-fashioned single- and double-barreled shotguns, you'll find a nailgun, super nailgun, rocket launcher, and a grenade launcher that's quite effective at bouncing grenades around corners. To use them, hit the number keys corresponding to the small number next to the weapon in the status bar that runs along the bottom of the screen.

Seven levels exist for you to explore, each chock-full of monster madness, so having plenty of ammunition is vital to your survival. You'll have to deal with grenade-hurling ogres, rabid dogs, and even a few zombies (here's a clue: the only way to kill a zombie is to blow it to bits with either a grenade or the rocket launcher). And beware the lightning-wielding shambler — get in his way, and he's sure to make a pot roast of you (Another clue: if you can, keep a column or post between you and the shambler so you can duck for cover when the lightning's about to fly). Keep an eye out for the hidden, low-gravity level, too. It's called Ziggurat Vertigo, and it'll rock your world. In multi-player games, it's especially fun (or frustrating — you decide).

As you make your way toward the big boss, the game will give you clues about what to do next — such as this tip about a previously darkened hallway.

HINT

There are all sorts of tricks, traps, and secrets hidden throughout *Quake*. For details — including cheat codes — check out this month's Strategy Central, starting on page 167.

Setting up a multi-player game on a LAN is a snap. From the menu, chose one person to be the server. After choosing the number of players and the level to start on, the other players can jump in by choosing "Search for Local Network Games" from the menu. Each person can set up their own name and color. Team play is also supported. In this mode, players with the same colors cannot damage each other, they merely take off armor.

Although the demo will only support four people in a round of *Quake*-Matching mayhem, the full version will allow up to sixteen players to duke it out among the halls of the undead.

The nailgun is a handy weapon to pick up, especially when facing one of these brutes.

Quake has the most interactive level-selection menu yet. You choose your difficulty level by walking down one of three hallways.

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Product Information Number 90

Star Fighter PC

Company: 3DO
Tech Support: (415) 261-3454
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action
Required: 486/33; 6MB RAM; 19MB hard-drive space; VGA
Install: \SFDEMO\SFRUNME.BAT

A conversion from their own videogame platform, 3DO's *Star Fighter* puts you in the cockpit of a futuristic fighter battling the evil of the galaxy. Most notable about this game is the effect your weapons have on the planets you attack — you can create valleys and lakes by simply shooting at the ground, as terra firma gives way to your awesome firepower. And, of course, plenty of huge explosions will mark your path as you take the fight to the enemy.

The game is simple to play — the joystick is supported, but control seems to be better with either the keyboard or a gamepad. For a glimpse at what you can do with your craft, press Control-H for the in-game help menu. Your objective is pretty straightforward — take out the enemy's installations and render them helpless. When the job is done, you'll receive a message telling you to return to the mothership, and you'll have to locate her to get on board.

Enemy fighters abound, as well as ground-based targets that will shoot back at you. Beware the surface-to-air missiles they'll throw your way — a few direct hits, and you'll be flotsam.

There are a lot of colorful explosions to witness in *Star Fighter PC*. We never knew blasting buildings could produce such a rainbow effect!

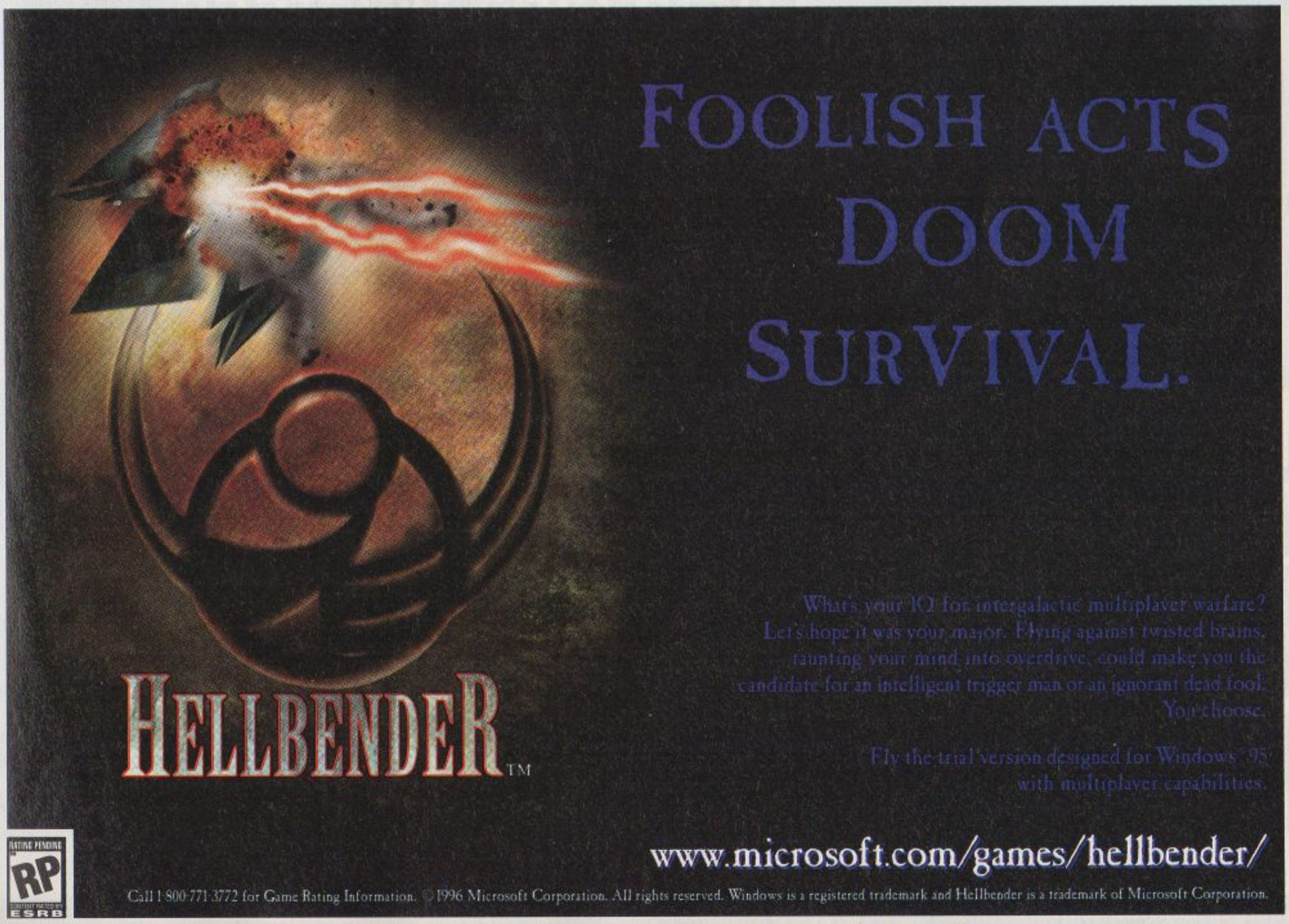
Iron Blood

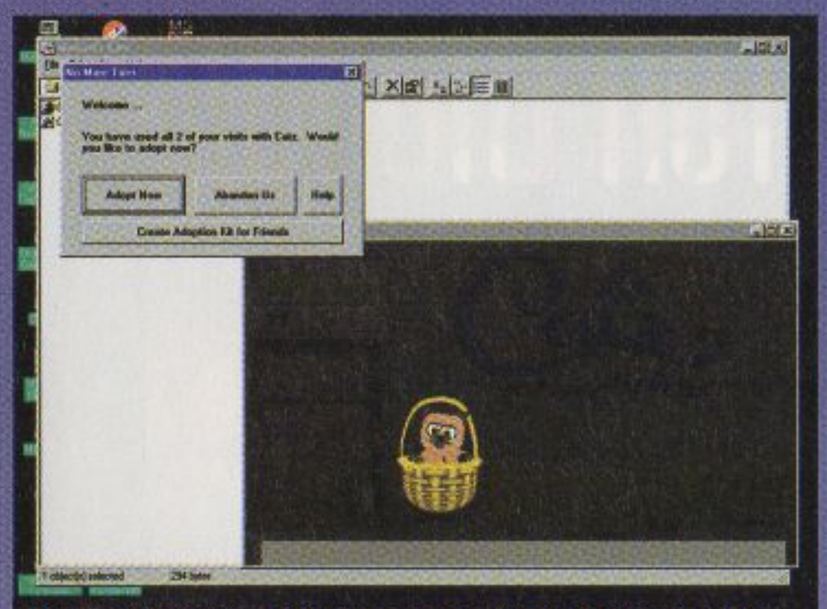
Company: Microforum
Tech Support: (416) 656-6369
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Platform Shooter
Required: 386; 2MB RAM; 2MB hard-drive space; VGA
Install: \IRON\INSTIRON.BAT

When mechanized replacement parts for humans become a reality, it's up to someone to make sure the technology isn't used against the human race. And, of course, that someone is you.

You control your Bunker robot to explore the lair of an evil force that uses technology for its own gain. Use the arrow keys to control movement, the Alt key to jump, and the Control key to throw a punch. To pause the action press F1, press F10 to quit. As you move through the level killing enemy 'bots, you can gain power-ups that will make your punch longer or your jump higher. They'll keep you in one piece long enough to finish the single level of the demo.

Be careful once you get to the outside area. There's a big, mean, nasty robot ready to pounce on you — and you'd better be quick with that jump key if you hope to survive!





The Catz adoption kit gives you a limited time to play with five distinct computerized kittens. Try out the ball of yarn; these cyber-cats are almost as easily amused as the real thing.

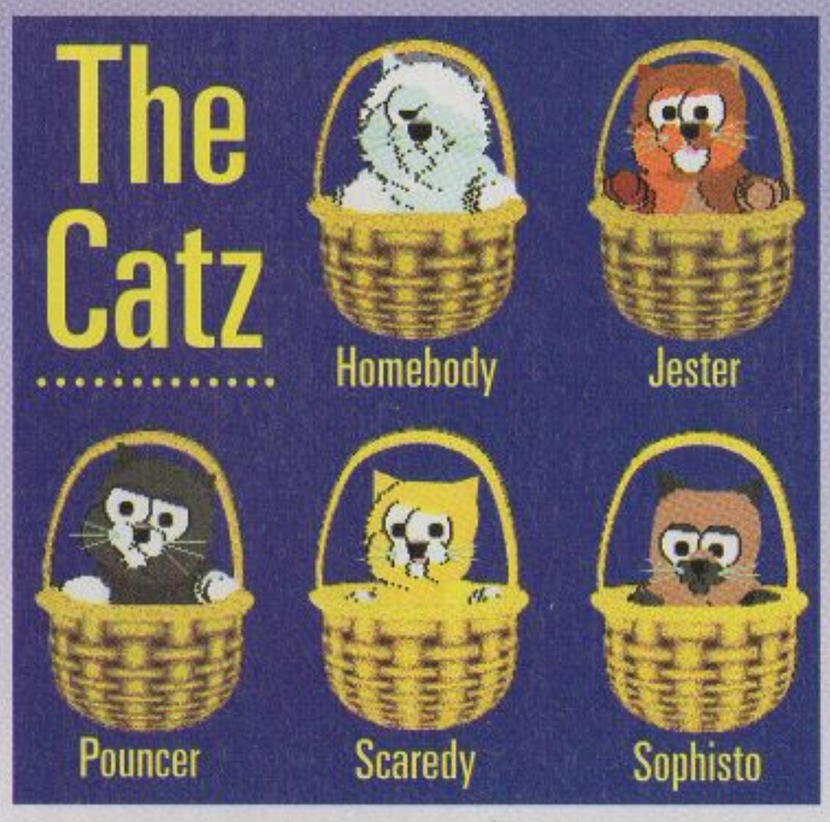
Catz

Company: Virgin
Tech Support: (714) 833-1999
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Pet Simulation
Required: 486DX/50; 4MB RAM; 15MB hard-drive space; VGA; Windows 3.1
Install: \CATZ\SETUP.EXE

P.F. Magic made a fantastic little program called *Dogz* a while back, but left half of the animal-loving public looking forward to the next natural step. Now *Catz* finally follows its canine cousin, letting you adopt a cuddly kitten so it can roam your desktop.

Here's how it works: the *Catz* demo lets you play with five different kittens for two visits of fifteen minutes each. If you find one you want to make your own, you can call a toll-free number to order the full version of *Catz*. You'll receive a code that will unlock new features in the demo to keep you busy until you receive the full product in the mail.

The full version of *Catz* will not only give you unlimited access to your pet, but the kitten you start out with will eventually grow into an adult cat. The full version also includes a screen saver that will give you even more insight into the workings of our feline friends.



ATF

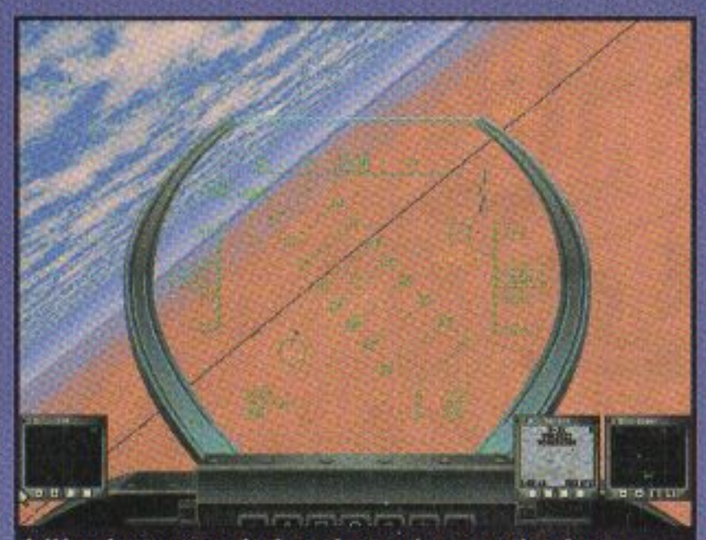
Company: Origin
Tech Support: (512) 434-HELP (4357)
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Flight Sim
Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 8MB hard-drive space; SVGA video with 1MB; Mouse
Install: \ATFDEMO\DEMO.BAT

Origin's new sim group, Jane's Combat Simulations, is dedicated to producing some of the most realistic and entertaining military simulations ever seen on the PC — like *Advanced Tactical Fighters*. In *ATF*, you fly a wide range of high-tech jets against a formidable computerized enemy — or against your buddies in multi-player mode.

The demo gives you two minutes of flight time. Your mission is simple: shoot down as many of the four enemy planes as you can before they get you or time runs out. Your only weapon is the cannon nestled in the nose of your aircraft, so you'll have to get up close and personal.

A detailed keyboard command summary is located in the README.TXT file the demo installs on your hard drive. Print it out and keep it handy when you take to the air. You'll also find instructions on hooking up for a multi-player game. You can battle as many as seven of your friends via local area network, or go one-on-one with a modem or serial connection. Give it a try; destroying a fighter piloted by your buddy is much more satisfying than showing the computer who's boss.

The function keys will shift your view, even to the outside. Here come those enemy fighters!



It'll take a steady hand to take out the four enemy aircraft. Just remember to slow down; if you go in full-throttle, you won't be able to turn tightly enough to shake the bad guys and get on their tails.

Lemmings Paintball

Win95

Company: Psygnosis
Tech Support: (415) 655-5683
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Strategy/Action
Required: Windows 95; 486; 8MB RAM; 8MB hard-drive space; SVGA
Install: \LEMBALL\SETUP.BAT

Oh, those loony lemmings — what will they get into next? This time, it's out-and-out war between two lemmings clans. Their ammo? You guessed it — paint. This strategy/action game will challenge not only your mind but also your reflexes as you send your squad of mopheaded soldiers to capture enemy flags and shoot it out with other lemmings. If one of your lemmings is hit, however, don't fear for the little rodent (they are rodents, right?) — he'll be out of the game, but not out of the war.

As in the other Lemmings games, you control this one with the mouse. To move a lemming, click with the left mouse button. To fire off a shot, click the right button. Your goal is to capture the enemy flags — one flag per lemming. In other words, if there are four flags to be grabbed, you'll need to guide at least four lemmings safely through the scenario to win. The demo contains just a few of the full game's many levels, and it also offers some multi-player action. The head-to-head option is available from the main menu.

Those rascally lemmings have a new mission, but they still have to deal with the usual hazards of their environment — like these fiery pits.

HINT

It's really difficult for the computer to hit a moving lemming. In the scenes where your little guy can be overcome by multiple enemies, it's a good idea to keep him in motion while he fires his own volleys.

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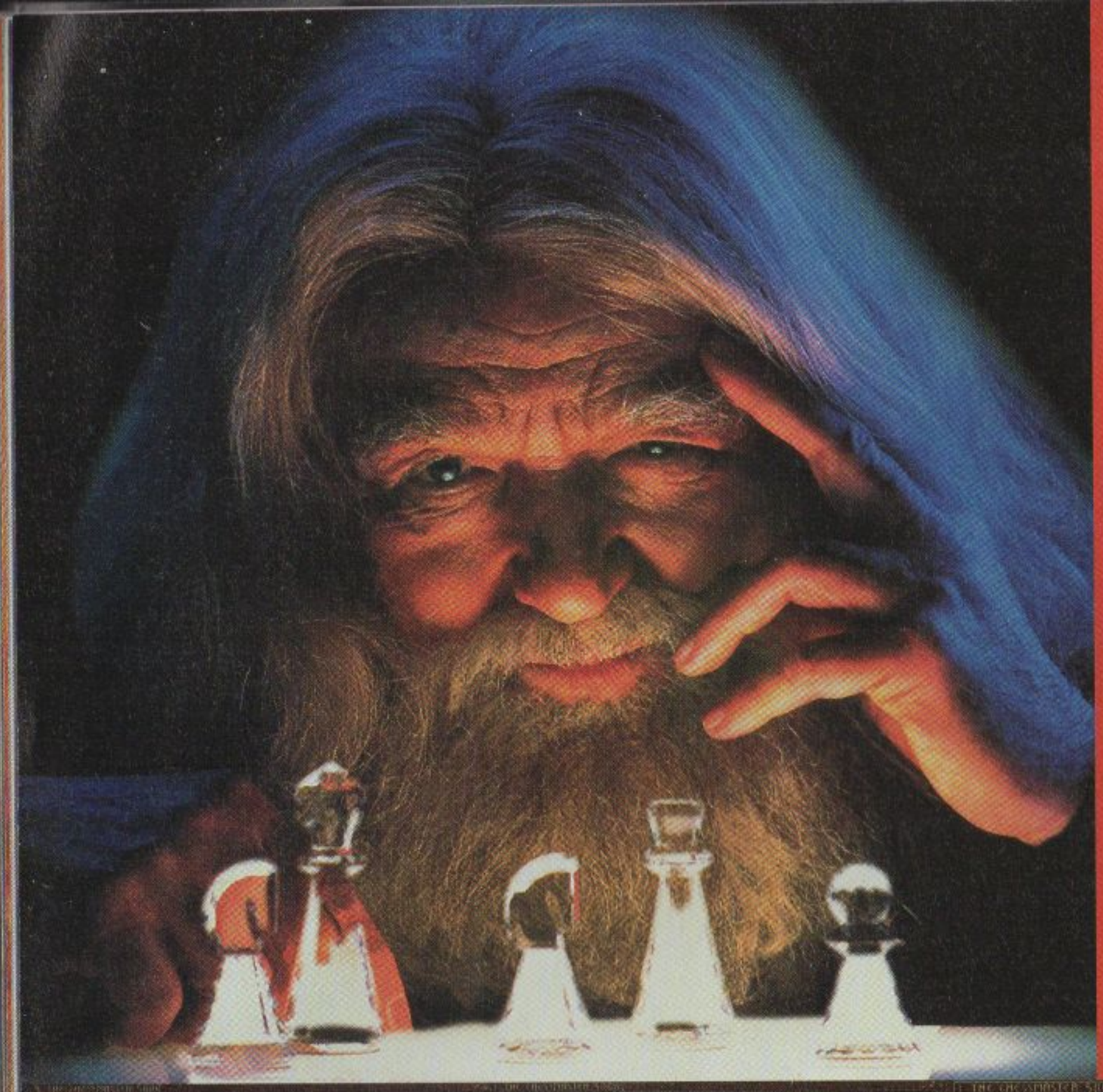

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Product Information Number 135

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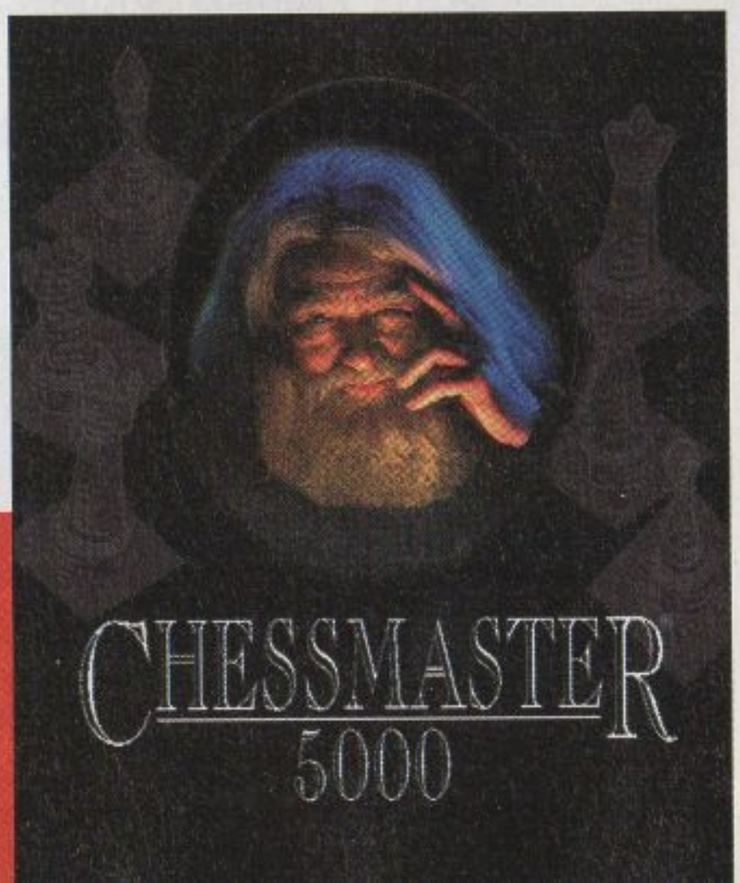

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MINDSCAP

As you build your colony, you can watch your workers as they go about their business. You can even pick one out of the crowd and follow him around.

Settlers II

Company: Blue Byte Software
Tech Support: http://www.bluebyte.com
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Strategy
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 61MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \SETTLERZ\INSTALL.BAT

The premise is simple — after a shipwreck on a strange island, you're in charge of building a colony and seeing that the people under your control survive. There'll be others trying to colonize as well, so be on the lookout for unfriendly neighbors.

The demo includes a tutorial-style scenario you can play, as well as a free-form game. The tutorial gives you suggestions about what you should build, and in what order. If you follow its guidance, you'll do well. In the free-form mode, you can work at your own discretion. Either way, you'll need to pay attention to the needs of your populace to succeed.

You'll notice right away that all of your workers are visible on the screen going about their business. If you wish, you can exert your godly control by watching their every step in a window as they tend to day to day business. The level of detail is even worth watching. For instance, when a worker is between tasks, he may flip open a newspaper and read about your latest technological achievements. You'll be able to see buildings take shape from the ground up as workers chop trees, gather quarry stones, and construct new shelters. Scouts will search the area and geologists will discover new sources of water, such as underground streams, and metal deposits. Rarely does a building simulation give you such a feeling of power.

Although the game uses the mouse as the main source of control, there are several keyboard commands that will come in handy while you're playing. You can either take a look at them when you are in the game itself, or use your favorite text editor to look at (or print out) the file KEYS.ENG located in the \DATA\TXT2 directory the demo installs on your hard drive.

M1A2 Abrams

Win95

Company: Interactive Magic
Tech Support: (919) 461-0948
Release Date: October
Category: Simulation
Required: Windows 95; 486; 8MB RAM; 32MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \ABRAMSDM\DISK1\SETUP.EXE

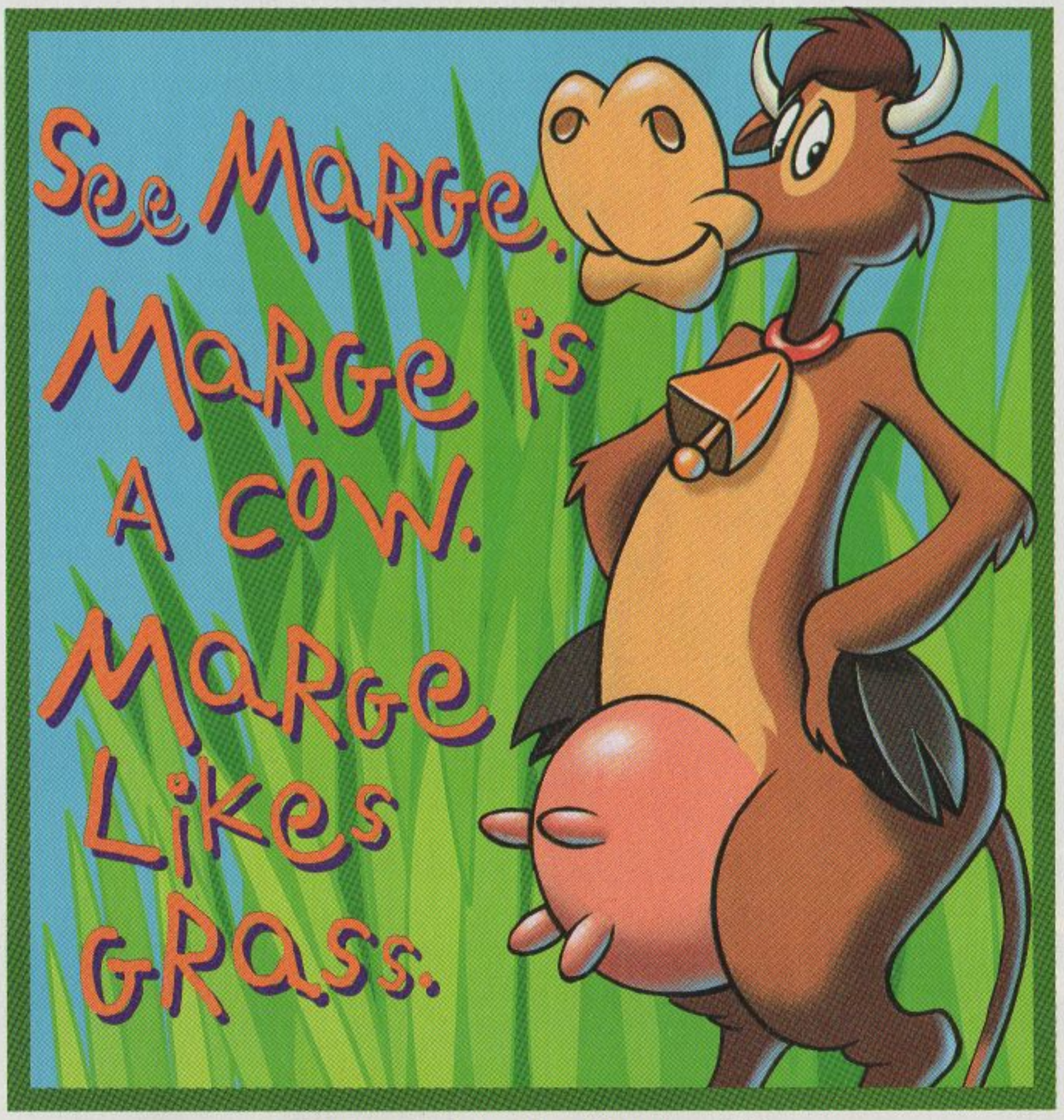
Interactive Magic has been working hard to create one of the most realistic tank simulations yet seen on the PC. As this pre-alpha demo shows, they're doing a pretty good job so far.

There's not much more to do in this demo than drive around and shoot things (on the other hand, what more could you want?), but it shows off the simplicity of the interface that controls all aspects of your tank. To see a complete list of keyboard commands, press Control-H when you start up the game. The keys you'll use most are the function keys — they'll switch your view to the various stations on your tank. You can drive through the countryside, blow up other vehicles, and get a first-hand look at how the game will work. Interactive Magic urges you to remember, though, that this is an early sneak preview, and there will be a lot of improvements in the final version. For more information on this tank sim, check out our Scoop! starting on page 28 of this month's issue.

Take bead on a tank, and a simple click of the joystick will set it ablaze. You can even see its turret go flying!

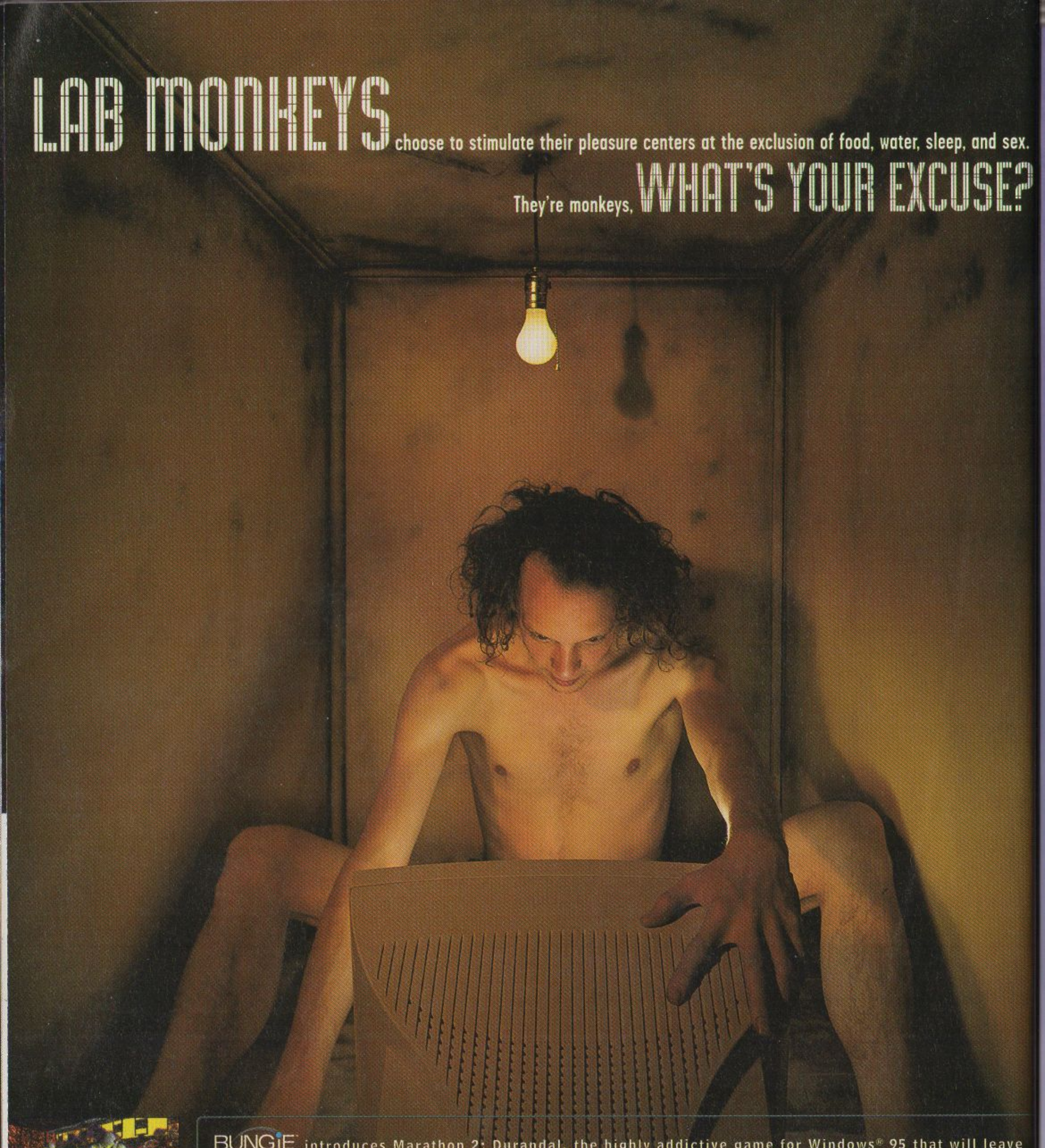
JUST FOR FUN

When you start out in your tank, it's quite possible to hit just about every target on the field without moving the tank. See if you can nail all the visible targets from your starting position. Some of them are pretty far away, but you can use the magnification sight to get a bead on them.



LAB MONKEYS choose to stimulate their pleasure centers at the exclusion of food, water, sleep, and sex.

They're monkeys, WHAT'S YOUR EXCUSE?



BUNGIE introduces Marathon 2: Durandal, the highly addictive game for Windows® 95 that will leave you poor, hungry, naked, and cold. Within the ruins of an ancient civilization, you'll uncover long-buried secrets of a lost clan and use sophisticated weapons to battle nasty aliens. Take pleasure in 28 game levels that will churn your brain into foamy gray froth. The SVGA 3-D graphics and active stereo imaging don't suck either. And 13 levels of intense network play may cause you to wet yourself. Not that you'll care, monkey boy. MARATHON 2: DURANDAL. HOW WILL IT RUIN YOUR LIFE?

To order or for more information, call Bungie Software at (800) 295-0060 or visit our website at www.bungie.com. Marathon 2: Durandal is the 8-player networked, action game with network scenarios like KILL THE MAN WITH THE BALL and KING OF THE HILL.

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MARATHON 2 DURANDAL

Product Information Number 104

The future of the world rests in your hands. Watch out for the tanks in your way — and keep moving, or the ships in the water will take you out of the picture entirely.

ShellShock

Company: Eidos
Tech Support: (415) 217-4111
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 6MB hard-drive space; VGA
Install: \SHELSHOK\INSTSHOK.BAT

In the far future, New York City is the battleground between Da Wardenz, a maniacal gang of tank commandos, and the rest of the world. You play the newest member of this interesting group, and your first job is to prove yourself in battle.

Check out the keyboard commands listed here to get yourself started. The demo includes one level, and will automatically end when you kill ten enemies. You job is to rescue some prisoners of war, but don't let that fool you — you can still blow up just about anything. As a matter of fact, you'll need to run over some fences to spring your buddies. The action is hot and heavy, so move quickly. If you stay still too long, the battleships off the coast will bombard you with enough firepower to take out a small city block!

Control Keys

Forward	Q
Reverse	A
Rotate Left	,
Rotate Right	.
Comtac Mode	K
Select Main Weapon	S
Fire Main Weapon	Spacebar
Select Special Weapon	RIGHT Shift
Fire Special Weapon	Enter
Tactical Map	Tab
Text Mode	T

Shakii the Wolf

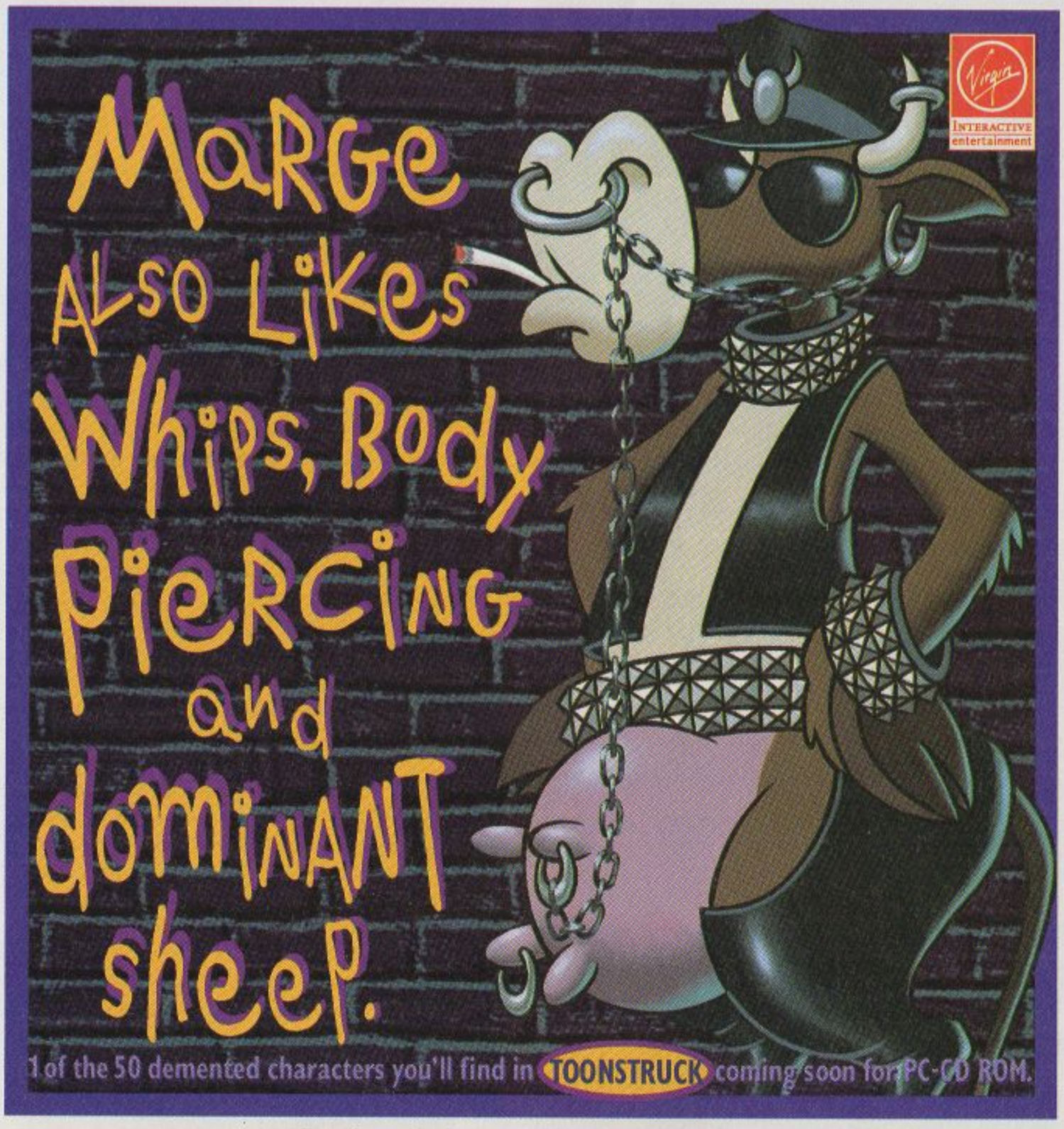
Company: Microforum
Tech Support: (416) 656-6369
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Platform Shooter
Required: 386; 2MB RAM; 2MB hard-drive space; VGA
Install: \SHAKIINNSTSHAK.BAT

Poor Shakii. Thrown out of his own kingdom by the evil Midnight Sword, he now has to fight his way back to the land he rightfully owns. Not only that, but he has to show the Midnight Sword who's boss!

Control of *Shakii the Wolf* is similar to that in another of this month's demos, *Iron Blood*: the arrow keys move Shakii around, and the Alt key makes him jump. Press Control for a wolf-swipe of Shakii's powerful claws. F1 will pause the game, and F10 will quit.

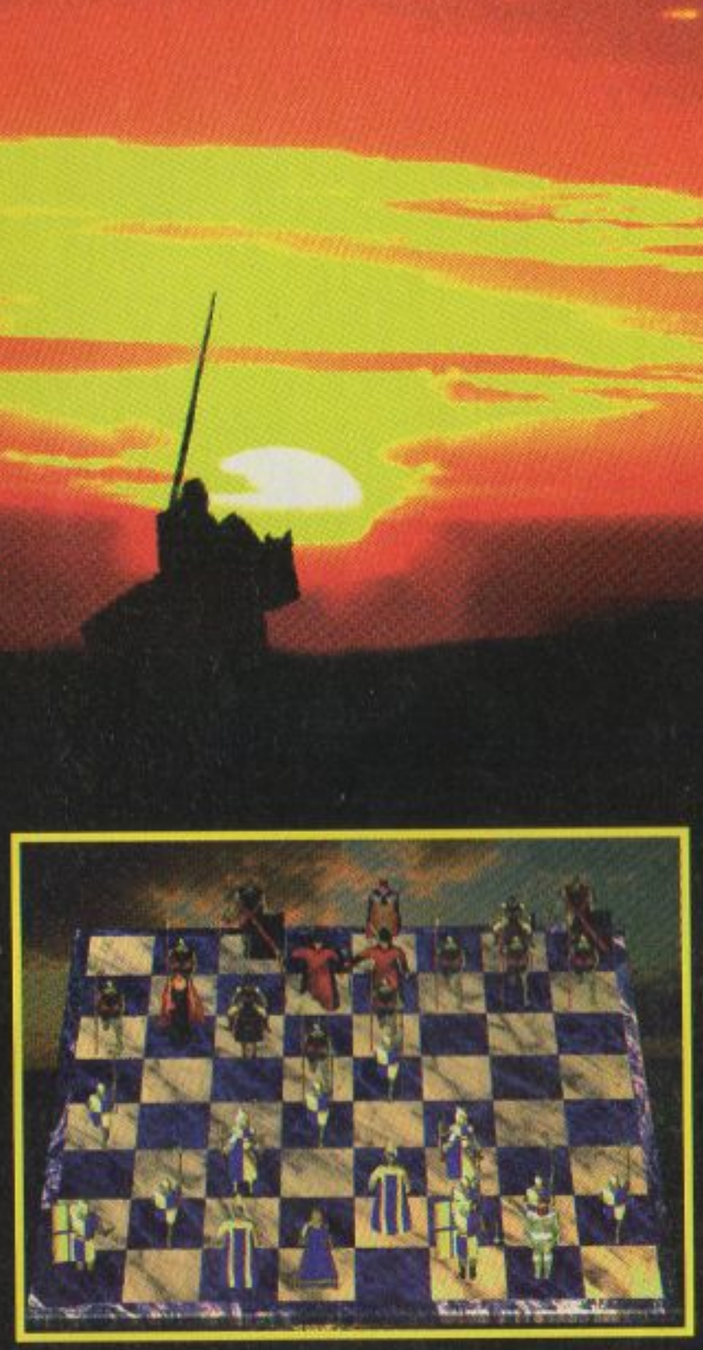
As Shakii makes his way to the Midnight Sword, he'll inevitably encounter creatures that wish to harm him. His health can be restored by eating — if you find some food sitting around, stand over it and press the down arrow key to start munching. The demo will take you through Level Two of the full version. You'll have to time your jumps carefully, and be wary of the bees that pester Shakii. Once you get to the top of the vertical level, you'll have to deal with the God of Water — he's a nasty one, and if you don't watch your step and fall off the clouds, you're history.

Quick taps on the Control key will keep those pesky bees away from you. They're fast, so you need to be even faster.



Product Information Number 172

COMING SOON



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Product Information Number 98

Shattered Steel

Company: Interplay
Tech Support: (714) 553-6678
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action
Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 30MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \SSTEEL\INSTALL.EXE

Planetary warfare has always been a possibility. But when the Ford Toyota Co. and Universal Pharmaceuticals duked it out over the planet Tarnok IV, the military might of the Core Navy put an end to the precedent. As a result, armed personnel is limited in all the major corporations, and it has became necessary to create one-man task forces that could have the firepower and capabilities of a small army. Enter the Planet Runner, a mechanized unit that can accomplish the tasks of a thousand armed men.

Not only are the robots mean, but they make some pretty colors when the explode.

HINT

A lot of players of the MechWarrior or EarthSiege games might automatically try to use the mouse along with the keyboard. We've found, however, that an alternate method may work better — simply use the keyboard. Along with the auto-targetting, you'll be able to make short work of the fiendish enemy.

You are a mercenary hired by a large corporation to be a "troubleshooter." *Shattered Steel* plays out that role in a variety of planet-side missions, from rescue operations to pure out-and-out destruction. Control your planet runner with a mouse-keyboard combination — the arrow keys dictate the direction and speed you travel at, while the mouse controls the cockpit orientation. To fire off a volley of lasers, press the left mouse button. To fire rockets, press the right mouse button.

For even more details and additional keyboard commands, be sure to read the README.TXT file installed to your hard-drive when the demo is installed. The demo will give you several missions to try your hand at, but you'll have to be quick if you want to progress.

Alien Trilogy

Company: Acclaim
Tech Support: (516) 656-3925
Release Date: Available Now
Category: First-person shooter
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 2MB hard-drive space; VESA-compatible VGA
Install: \ALIEN\INSTALL.BAT

In the opening movie sequence, you'll see what it is that got you into this mess. Boy, big guns just aren't much help against a quick alien, are they?

Yep, they're back. Those darn aliens sure can be hard to kill. The Company is up to its old tricks, subjecting innocent colonists with the alien larvae to smuggle them into their own labs. Your job, as you'd guess, is to stop the alien threat to mankind.

The demo contains two levels from the full game. It plays very much like *Doom*, and even has the same controls — i.e., arrow keys to move, Control to fire your weapon, and Space to open doors. You'll notice a radar screen on the bottom right — that will warn you of any aliens nearby. Choose between the different weapons by pressing the number keys. There's no inventory — when you pick something up, you immediately use it.

Look out for the Automap device. It'll automatically lay out the level you're currently on, and your objectives will become clearer. Access the map by pressing Tab. Also, keep a close ear to the sounds you hear around you: full-grown aliens make a slightly different sound than their smaller face-hugging kin. Since the big, ugly variety are so much harder to kill, it's a good idea to know what you're facing before opening any doors.

HINT

When you begin mission one, your objective is to clear out the barrels blocking some of the passages. Since your pistol doesn't do much good against them, you're given the nebulous command to "find alternative means." In other words, find the big, handy shotgun and blow the barrels into next week. Be warned, however — ammo for the shotgun is limited, and you'll want to use it against the bigger aliens. We suggest taking out the face-huggers with the pistol, something that can be accomplished with a single shot.

NORMALITY™

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NYP1 Product Information Number 123

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Return of Arcade

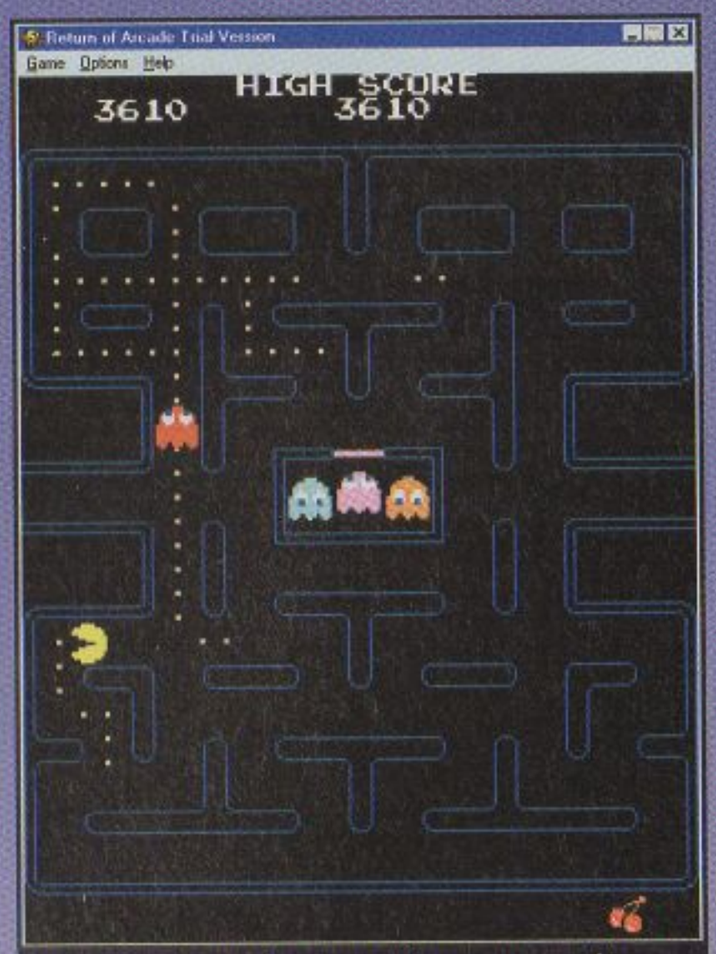
Win95

Company: Microsoft
Tech Support: (206) 637-9308
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Arcade
Required: Windows 95; 486; 8MB RAM; 5MB hard-drive space; SVGA
Install: \ROATRIAL\ROATRIAL.EXE

It's amazing to think that the games that once cost us so many quarters in stuffy, gum-filled, sticky, and deafening arcades when we were younger can now be played in the comfort of our own home, courtesy of Microsoft.

Return of Arcade once again delivers the classics, and in this demo of the product, Pac-Man struts his stuff. Complete with the original sights and sounds, the demo challenges you to guide the hungry little guy around a maze, munching dots while avoiding the ghosts. Don't forget those power dots that let you turn the tables on the ghosts and eat 'em for lunch!

As you'd expect, you control *Pac-Man* with the arrow keys. There's no fire key or jump button to worry about; just avoid the ghosts. The *Pac-Man* demo includes two levels — just enough to remind you of what you've been missing. The full *Return of Arcade* product also includes *Dig Dug*, *Galaxian*, and *Pole Position*. The only difference from the original arcade versions of these games is that if you get the high-score, no one but your own friends and family will get to see it!



It's a blast from the past when you start hearing that wokka-wokka sound. It's like childhood without the wedgies!

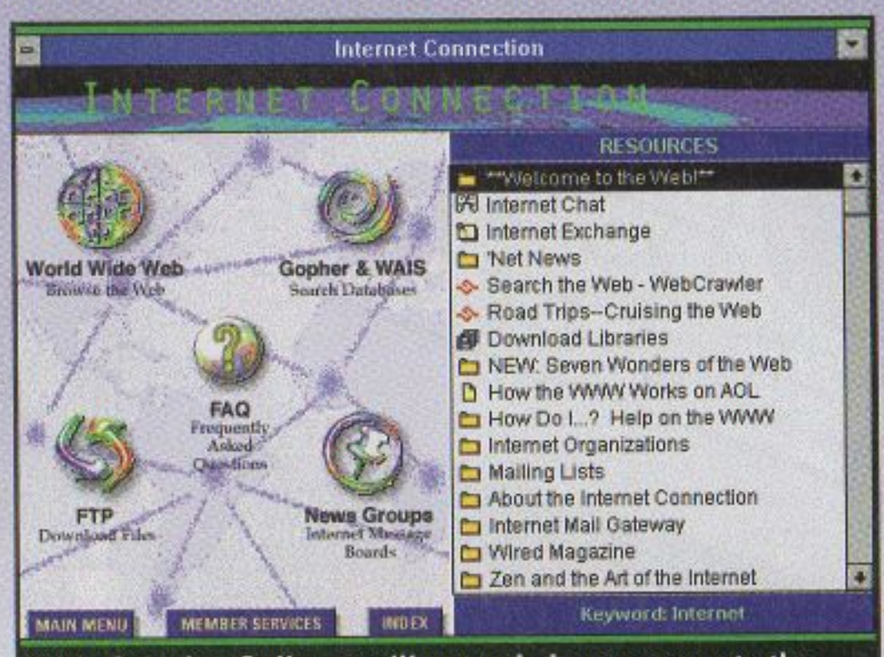
America Online

Tech Support: (800) 827-3338
Required: 386/33; 4MB RAM; 4MB hard-drive space; VGA; Windows 3.1 or higher; Modem
Install: \AOL.EXE

One 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.

Add-Ons and Patches

You say your game's broken? We've got the goods to fix it. Extended Play columnist Tom McDonald has been prowling the online services, looking for the patches you need. The fixes he details in this month's column is are located in the \PATCHES directory on *The CD*. Check 'em out.

As for this month's add-ons, we have some real doozies. Our hunt for only the best *Duke Nukem 3D* levels has finally paid off, and the results are "Bridges," an intense high-altitude multi-player arena, and "Sand," the most fun you could have among the pyramids. Both of these are great Duke-Match levels, so be sure to have some friends handy.

Also included in this month's collection is "Ultra Doom 2X," a specially patched .EXE file and additional levels for *Doom II*. This one will change the chainsaw into a set of Wolverine claws, and the chaingun into the most powerful weapon ever seen in *Doom*. All that and new monsters — we were impressed with it, and you will be, too. Check out the README.TXT file for more background.

Of course, we'd be remiss if we didn't mention Coconut Monkey's contribution this month. The freeware *Death from Above* is his latest masterpiece. Check it out!

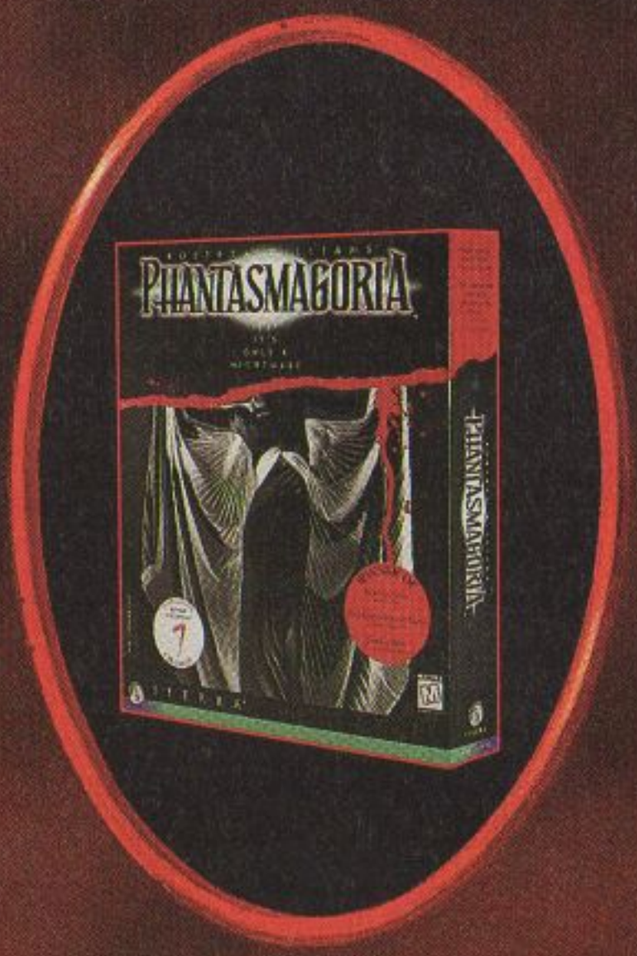
For some of the patches and add-on levels included on our CD, you'll need to use a program called PKUNZIP to unpack archived files (the ones with a .ZIP extension). This is a common shareware utility that can be found most anywhere online, including our own web site at *http://www.pcgamer.com*. For details on using PKUNZIP and loading the patch or add-on level of your choice, please check out the README.TXT files located in the appropriate directory (i.e. \DOOM2 for *Doom 2* .WADS) on *The CD*.

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 Customer Service, The Sept. CD Disc 2.8 Replacement, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Please indicate any error message you receive.

It's been called the most realistic horror CD-ROM game yet.

(that is, so long as your reality includes secret underground torture chambers, a possessed husband, the occasional axe-wielding murderer risen from the dead, and gruesome things like that.)



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-Chicago Tribune

"Editor's Choice"
–PC Gamer

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Phantasmagoria will keep you perched on the edge of your keyboard."
-USA Today

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-San Francisco Chronicle

"Hours and hours of hair-raising high tech."
-CNN

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–Billboard Magazine

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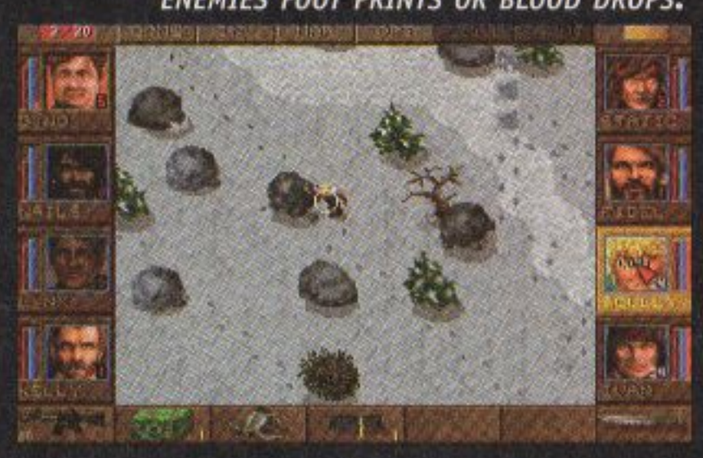

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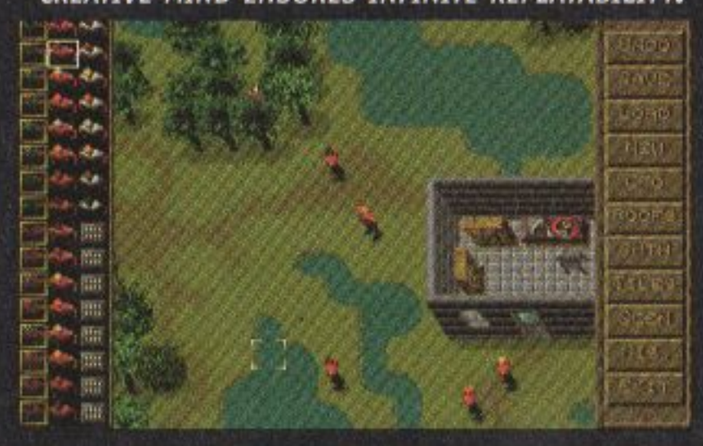

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Product Information Number 158

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M1A2 Abrams

"The Greatest Tank Sim Ever" Spawns a Sequel

This sequel to the 1989 classic tank simulation, *M1 Tank Platoon,* reunites the talents of the MicroProse design team that made it so.

—William R. Trotter

You can use the traditional MicroProse "Quick Start" option to jump into the turret and start blowing stuff to smithereens.

FYI
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: M1A2 Abrams
Developer: Charybdis Enterprises, Inc.
Publisher: Interactive Magic, P.O. Box 13491, Research Triangle Park, NC, (919) 461-0722
Projected Price: TBD
Percentage Complete: 80%

In a nutshell:

Here's a hot simulation of America's Main Battle Tank, featuring down-to-the-rivets authenticity, a slick interface, and all the action any tank-sim fan could ask for.

What's so special?

This project reunites the same designer and publisher who made the original M1 simulation an unsurpassed classic in its field. With a pedigree like that, and state of the art graphics, this product could set a new standard in simulations.

Why should I care?

With its careful blend of shooter-style action and detailed strategic campaign context, this tank sim should have great appeal for gamers who just like to blow stuff up, as well as for gamers who like a solid tactical challenge.

And when's it coming out?

Early 4th quarter, this year

If it ain't broke, don't fix it! That seems to be the philosophy of game designer Arnold Hendrick, who teamed up with the legendary "Wild Bill" Stealey (then CEO of MicroProse) in 1989 to create *M1 Tank Platoon.*

1989... in PC gaming terms, that's ancient history. And yet, that seven-year-old game remains the standard against which all other tank simulations have been measured (and found wanting). It is firmly enshrined in every game magazine's Hall of Fame list. Not even MicroProse itself could top that old design — last year's *Across the Rhine* met with what might charitably be described as a "mixed" reception.

"When the time came to design a sequel," said Hendrick in a recent interview with *PCG,* "we were guided by the concept that total originality is not always the most desirable goal in this business. Why re-invent the wheel? We looked at every product that had come out since 1989, and finally concluded that we'd already created an optimal

The main menu screen is designed very much in the old MicroProse tradition.

design — given the scale of the simulation and what we wanted to do with it. So the next step was to decide how to build on that foundation, taking full advantage of all the technological advancements now available."

Not that the new simulation will be a simple high-tech upgrade of the original. That's because the new model Abrams tank is a significantly different vehicle from the original M1A1. Armor-buffs will instantly spot the most dramatic change: the coffee-can-shaped

Campaign options include Bosnia, the Persian Gulf, and the Ukraine.

Numerous auxiliary vehicles also appear in the simulation, such as this Humvee mounting a rack of stinger missiles.

armored cupola on the left side of the turret. This is called the "CITV," or "Commander's Independent Thermal Viewer." It's a turret-within-a-turret, a freely-rotating device housing ultra-sophisticated infrared sighting gear. This enables the tank commander to search for a new target while the gunner is engaging a previously acquired target. In a pinch, the tank commander can actually take over gun-laying duties from this position. The Army calls this new technique the "hunter/killer system", and it provides the Abrams with a significant battlefield edge — no other tank is known to possess this technology.

Sim fans will also be able to fire two new types of ammunition: the MPAT round, a heat-seeking proximity-fuzed shell that turns the tank's 120mm gun into a helicopter-killer, and the STAFF round, a dual-warhead projectile (details are still highly classified) designed to detonate directly over the top of an otherwise hidden target.

The sim will also feature the very latest Soviet hardware, including the "turretless" T-95, a highly automated, extremely low-profile, weapon still under top secret development. Extrapolating from fragmentary data supplied by Jane's, Interactive Magic has developed a fascinating and highly plausible model of this futuristic vehicle.

For all the authentic high-tech gear packed into its simulated turret, I-Magic's M1A2 is easily controlled with the mouse (abetted by a few keyboard commands); joystick control is optional. I can testify that this sim is a lot easier to control than the 1989 original — so intuitive is the interface, that I managed to shoot down a Hind helicopter the first time I tried my hand at the controls. Most satisfying!

"When time came to design a sequel, we were guided by the concept that total originality is not always the most desirable goal in this business."

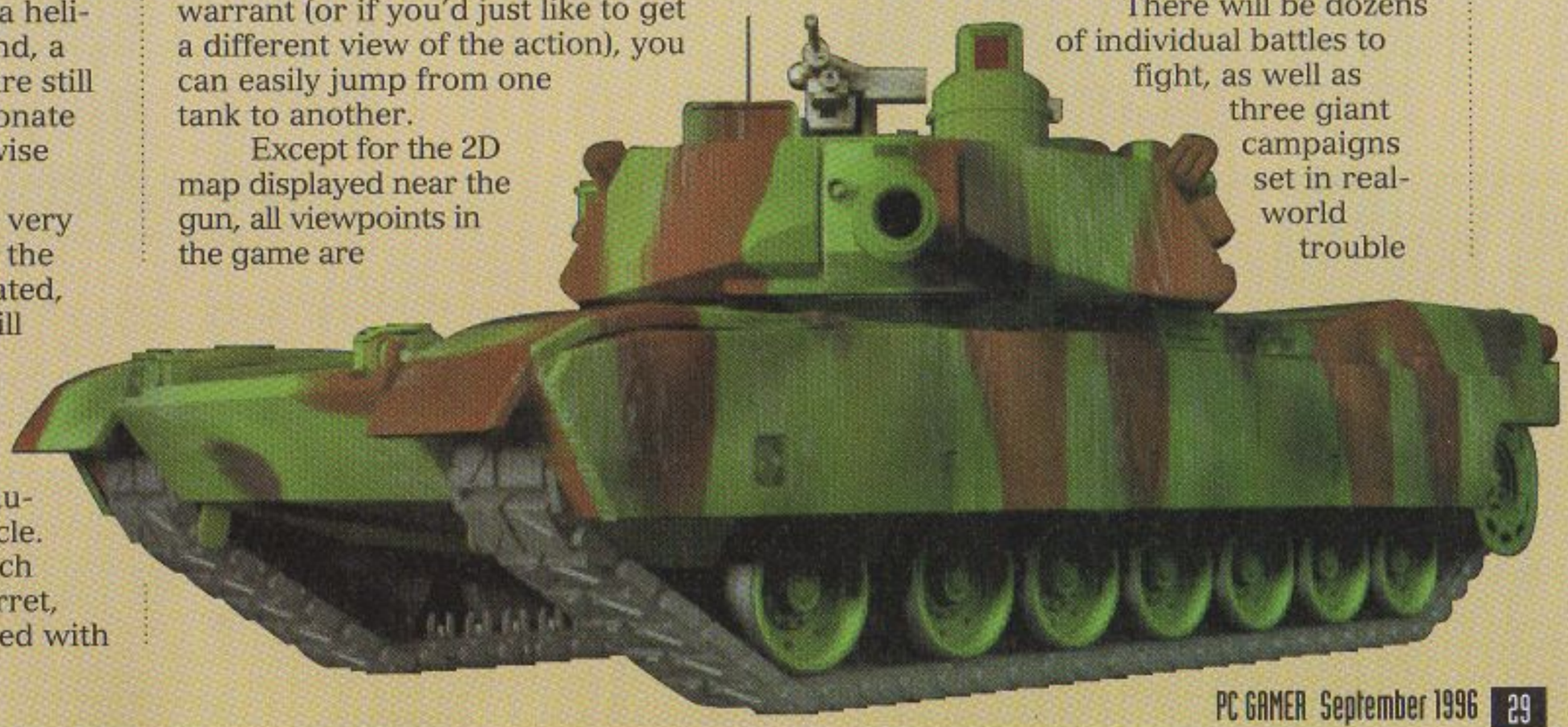
— Arnold Hendrick, game designer, MIA2

In the game, you can elect to command a platoon of four tanks, or a full company. During combat, you can operate the tank from any of its primary positions (driver, gunner, commander), and your computerized crew will follow your orders, even as the remaining tanks in your platoon follow your vehicle's lead. If circumstances warrant (or if you'd just like to get a different view of the action), you can easily jump from one tank to another.

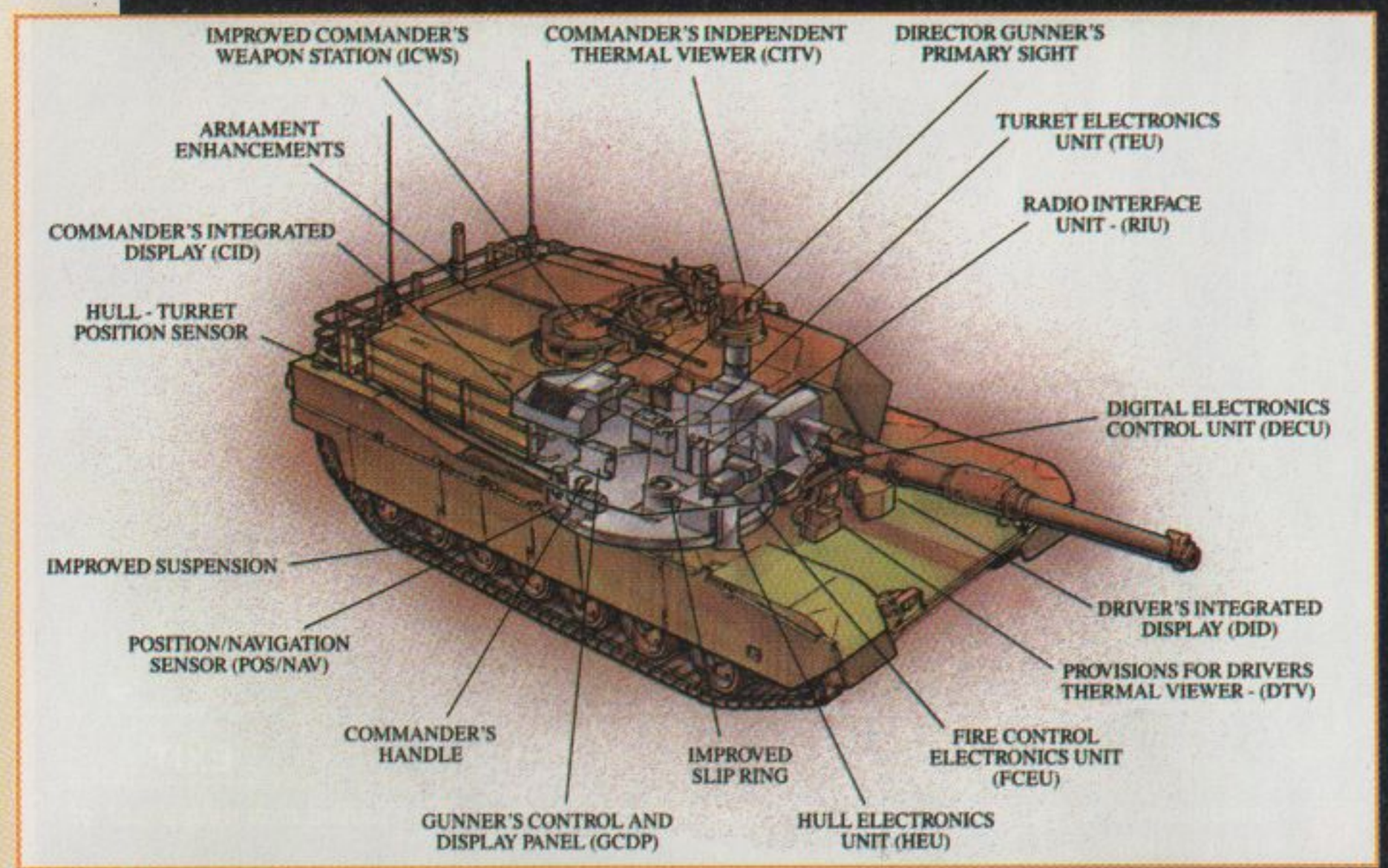
Except for the 2D map displayed near the gun, all viewpoints in the game are rendered in highly detailed 3D format using texture-mapped polygons. Although the graphics were not fully implemented when I took a ride, there was enough on display to convey an almost giddy sensation of hauling-ass across rolling terrain with 70 tons of deadly machinery throbbing beneath you.

Terrain maps will be rendered in sharp relief, making navigation less of a chore than it was in the original M1 simulation.

There will be dozens of individual battles to fight, as well as three giant campaigns set in real-world trouble



INSIDE THE REAL ABRAMS



It's hard to imagine now, but when the first M1 Abrams tanks went into service, in 1979, they were the subject of considerable controversy. The tank debuted at about the same time the public was learning about numerous Pentagon boondoggles (remember the "six-hundred-dollar toilet seat" scandal?) and tax-payer rip-offs by big defense contractors.

Some of the skepticism was directed at this new, radically different, enormously expensive vehicle. It was a gas guzzler that would catch fire on the battlefield, the critics said; it was so high-tech, its systems were bound to fail when subjected to the stress of combat. And the Russians could build five tanks — rugged, powerful, medium-tech weapons — for the price of one Abrams.

Then came the Gulf War, in which the Abrams performed spectacularly, racking up a kill-ratio of more than five-to-one against the best Russian-made tanks in the Iraqi arsenal.

The new design incorporates many lessons learned in the Gulf War, especially in what its designers call the "soldier/machine interface" — in other words, the intent is not to make the soldier fit the system, but the system conform to the soldier's needs.

According to General Dynamics, the most dramatic new feature of the improved Abrams is a system called "core vectronics" — a ground-weapon's equivalent of a jet fighter's "avionics." Instead of separate hard-wiring of components, the M1A2 has all of its controls linked through two electronic buses — one controlling power, the other monitoring data.

The gunner's primary sight employs a dual-axis stabilized head, which enables him to track fast, elusive targets such as helicopters. Algorithms in the core system calculate target motion and trajectory with lightning speed. The gunnery system will work with conventional ammunition, and also with tomorrow's so-called "smart munitions."

All sub-systems critical to the "fightability and survivability" of the tank are redundant. If battle damage interrupts one function, a parallel path kicks in instantly, assuring what the Army calls "minimum operational degradation."

The improved gas turbine engine generates 1500 HP and the tank can accelerate from zero to 20 MPH in only 7.2 seconds — pretty hot performance for a machine weighing 70 tons! With improved armor protection, a startlingly low silhouette (the entire tank is only 94 inches tall), and two different types of thermal imaging sights, the new Abrams is intended to dominate the battlefield, day or night.

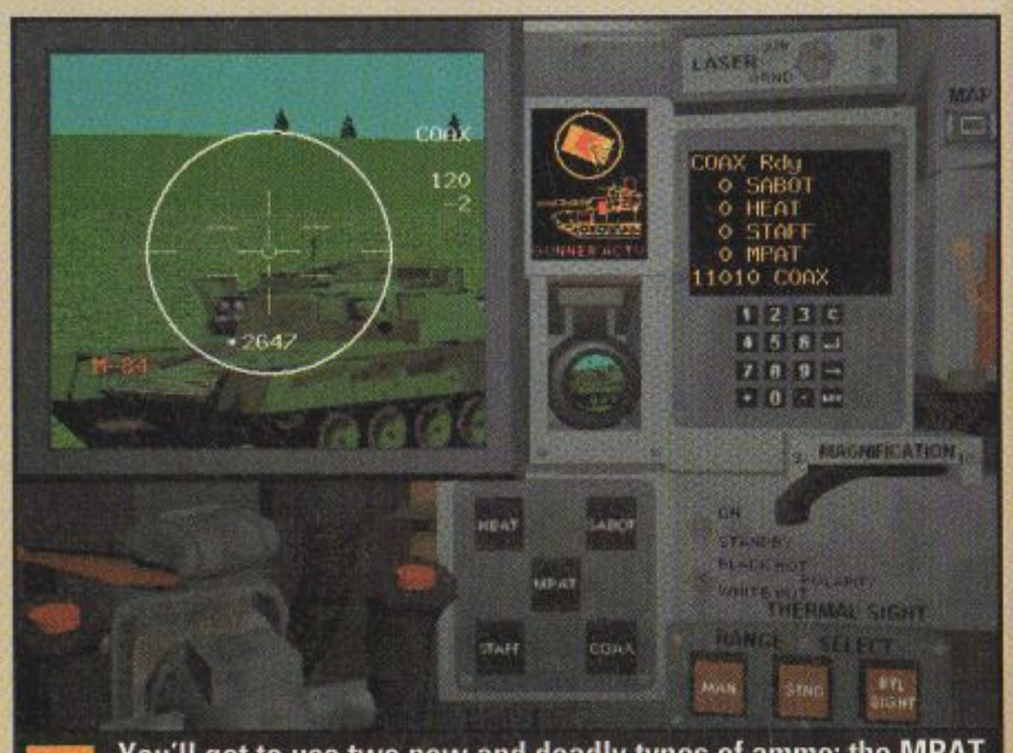
spots: Ukraine, the Balkans, the Persian Gulf. Your success — or failure — in one battle will have an impact on succeeding battles, and a consistently victorious performance will bring promotion and decorations.

One old MicroProse tradition is proudly displayed in Interactive Magic's simulations: the "Quick Start" option. "I'll never publish a simulation without one!" swore "Wild Bill" Stealey, who arrived midway through my visit, dressed in his traditionally flamboyant flight-suit (he had just landed, after a particularly hairy flight through an Appalachian weather front, an adventure he described in vivid detail).

"Quick Start" means "Jump right in and start blasting!", and Stealey loves it. "When I want to unwind," Stealey continued, "I want to blow something up! Don't you? Doesn't everybody who plays with these toys? Put a cannon on a Harley-Davidson, and I'll play it! We're going to have great explosion and smoke graphics in this product!"

When "Wild Bill" Stealey says "great explosions," he's not kidding around!

On a more sober note, Stealey expressed remarkable confidence in his new development crew, Charybdis Enterprises. "We — that is, Arnold and myself — had wanted to do a sequel to *M1 Tank Platoon* even before I left MicroProse," Stealey says. "When Charybdis approached us with a design for a hover-craft sim, we said 'not now, thanks, but we like your work. How about trying an M1A2 tank for us?' And they're doing a great job with it, just great!"



You'll get to use two new and deadly types of ammo: the MPAT round, for swatting down helicopters, and the STAFF round, which detonates just above targets hidden in full defilade.

Indeed, judging from what I saw, *M1A2* promises to be the tank sim of our time — especially given the lackluster quality of the handful of tank games that have appeared in recent years. In any event, *M1A2* has the bloodlines of a champion.

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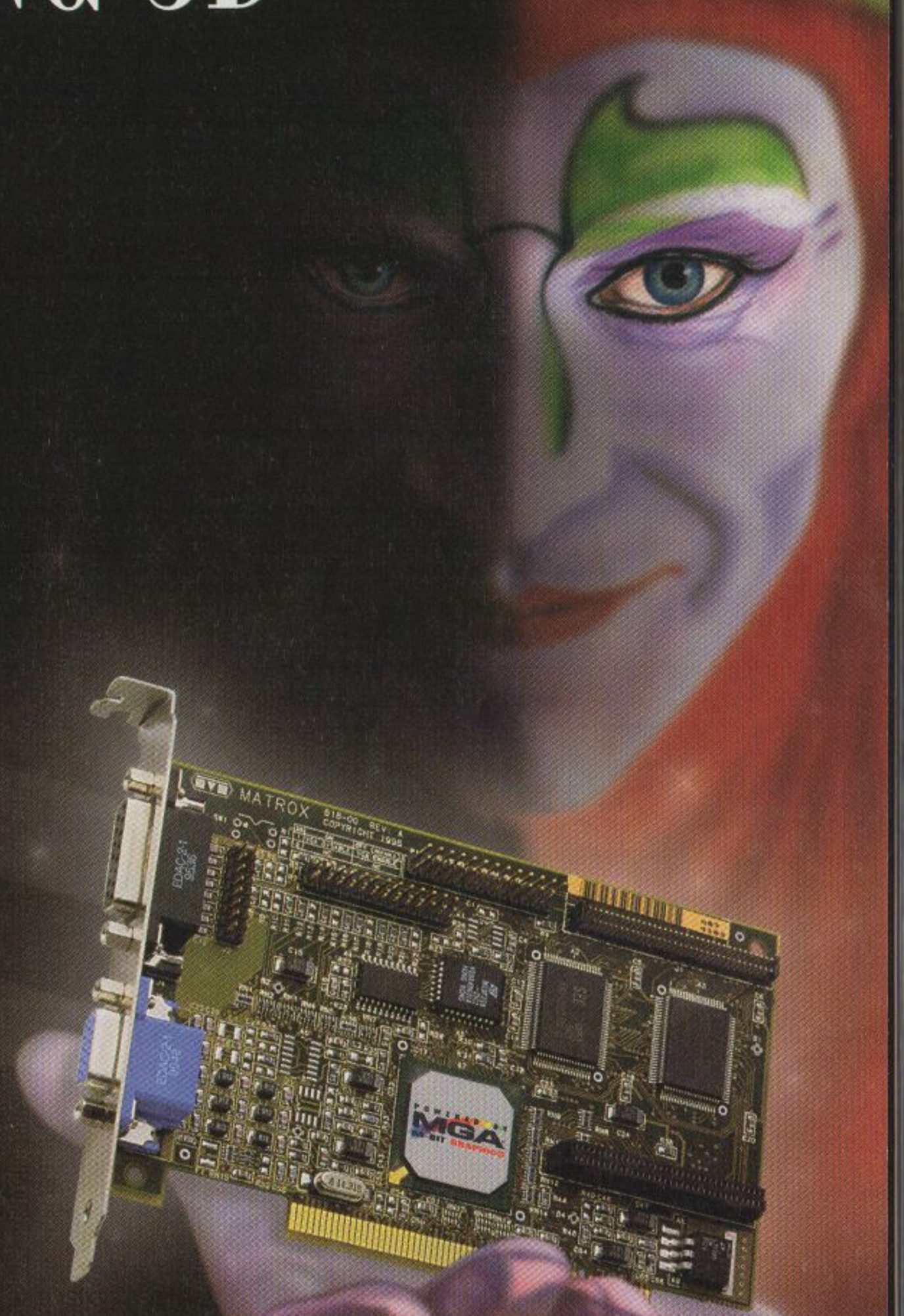

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3D performance tests conducted by Matrox Graphics Inc. on a Gateway P5-166 configured with Intel P5-166MHz, 16MB of EDO RAM with 256K cache. Matrox Mystique, Diamond Stealth 3D 2000 XL and ATI 3D Xpression were configured with 2 MB of memory for the PCI bus using driver release 3.10, 4.02.012 and 2.22 respectively for Windows 95 and driver release 1.00.002, 4.03.00.1096 and 4.03.00.1096 respectively for Direct3D. 3D test run at 640 x 480 resolution for Matrox Mystique and ATI 3D Xpression and at 512 x 384 for Diamond Stealth 3D 2000 XL at 16 bits per pixel based on Gouraud shaded, perspective correct textured, point sampled, 16 bits per pixel color, dithered rendering polygons.

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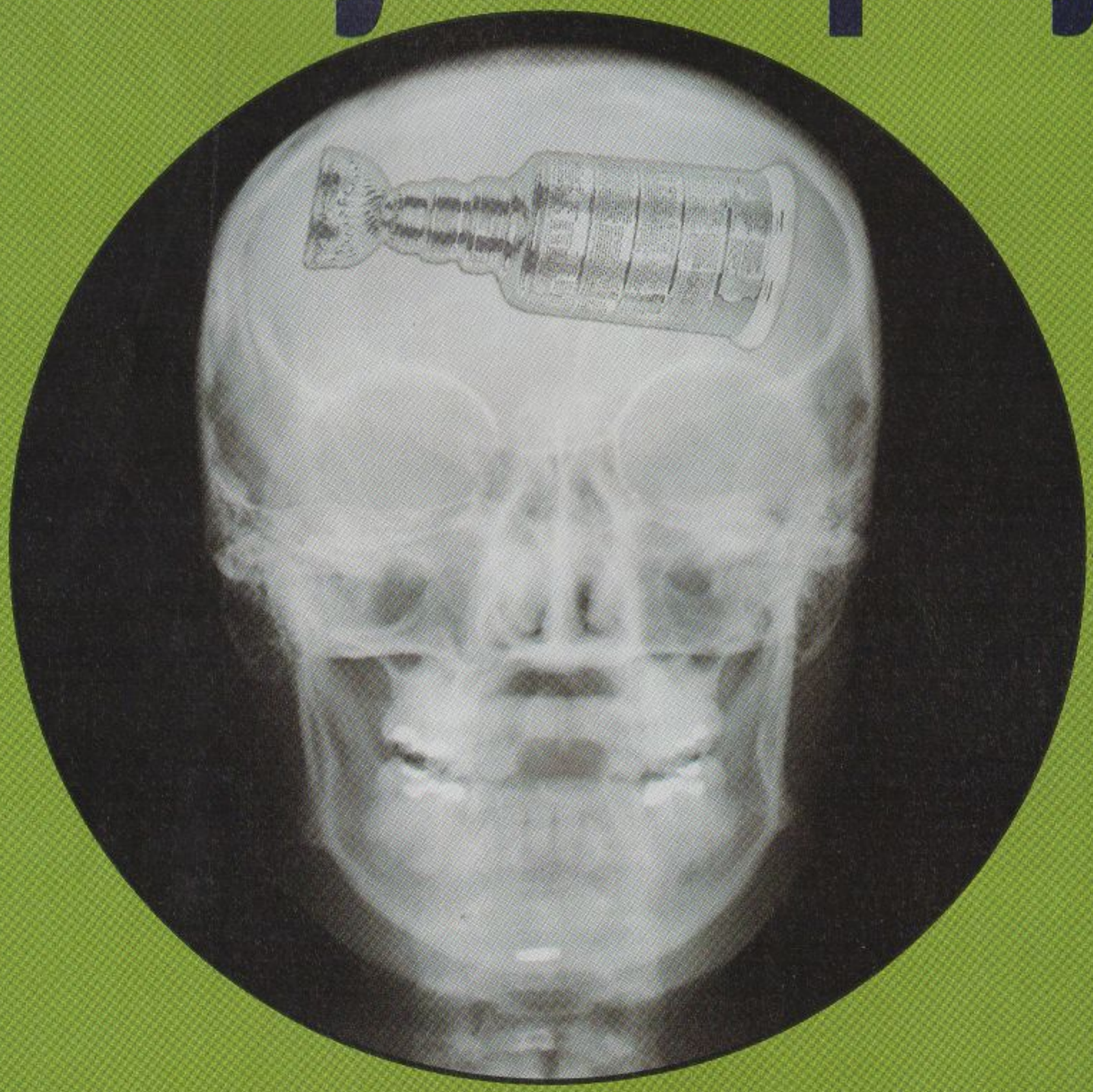

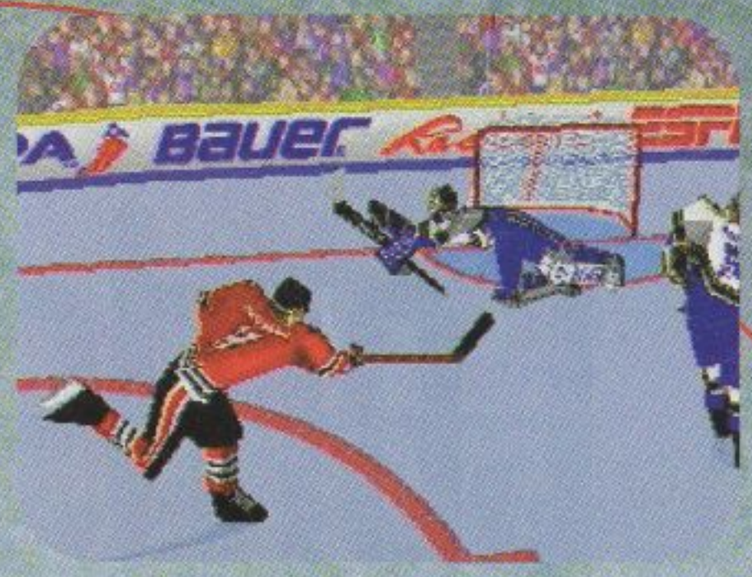

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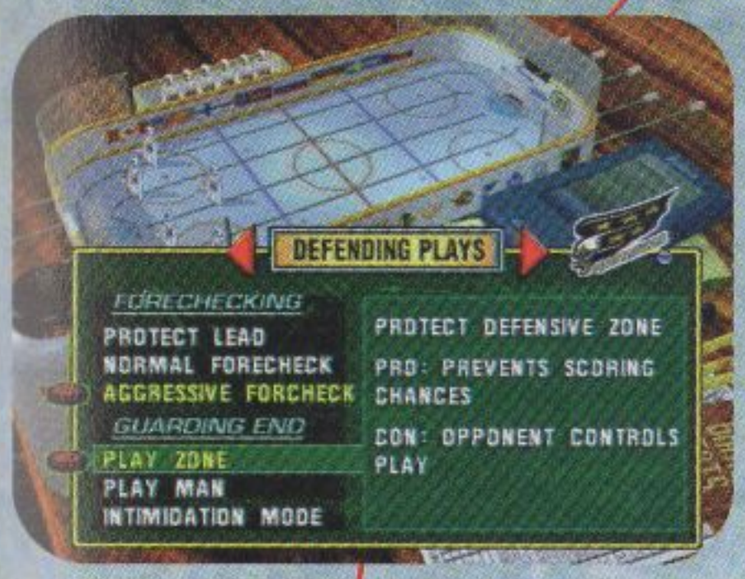

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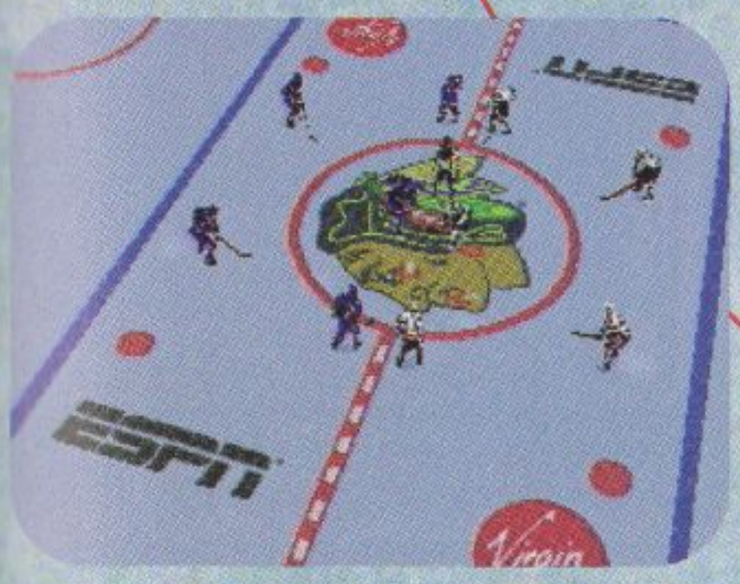

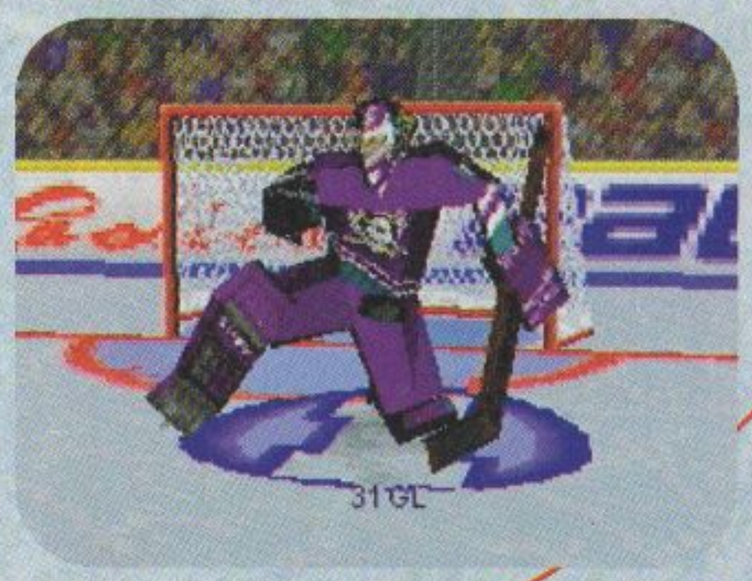

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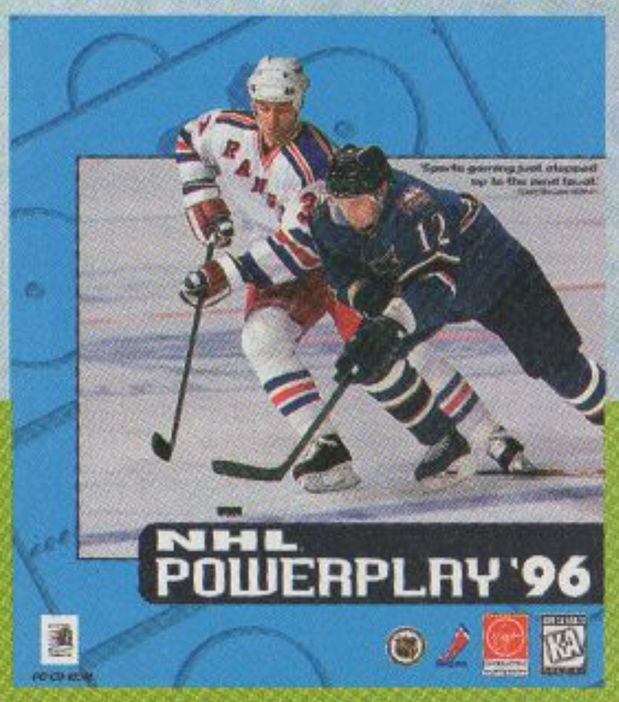

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Product Information Number 173

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Lords of the Realm I

Impressions Stakes a Claim for the Strategy Crown

LOTR II combines the best of two worlds, adding the real-time combat model of a _WarCraft II_ to the turn-based strategic elements of a _Civilization_.

—Jason Bates

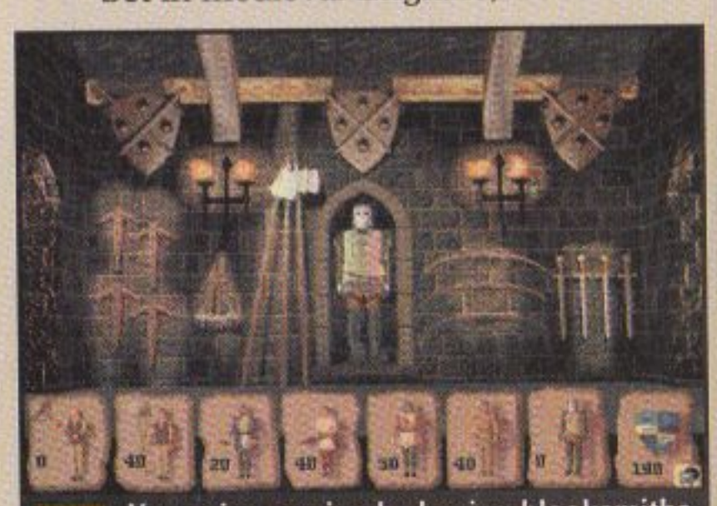
With the overwhelming success of games like *Command & Conquer* and *WarCraft II*, strategy games have been hitting the best-seller lists with unprecedented frequency. And although traditional, turn-based strategy games haven't completely disappeared, they've certainly been overshadowed by their real-time counterparts.

But the relatively simple resource management in a game like *WarCraft II* pales compared to the careful nurturing of an empire in a game like *Civilization*, naturally enough, since obviously you don't have the time you need to manage a complex economy when hordes of Orcs are banging down your door.

So why not have the best of both worlds? That's exactly the route Impressions has taken with *Lords of the Realm II*, their latest strategy game. "We're trying to bridge the gap between a *WarCraft* and a *Civilization* by offering elements of both games," says David Lester, excutive producer on *LOTR II*. "In the one you've got a lot of really awesome, visceral real-time combat, and in the other you've got a very long, in-depth game of conquest." Most of the game is turn-based, where you manage your fuedal economy, and move your armies on the map. But when two armies meet, they are switched to a real-time combat battlefield.

But what sounds like a new idea is really only an extension of what was in the original *Lords of the Realm*. "We had that before," Lester says. "We were the first people who did animated, little toy soldiers. But technology has caught up, and has enabled that to be much cooler than it used to be, and the high-res allows you to put a lot more detail in the game."

Set in medieval England, *LOTR II* is



You raise armies by having blacksmiths produce weapons, and then taking workers out of the fields and into the armies. Keeping large armies in the field is an enormous drain on the economy.

Lords of the Realm II takes place in the medieval Europe of the 13th century.

F.Y.I. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Lords of the Realm II
Developer: Impressions
Publisher: Sierra, 3380 146th Place SE, Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007, (800) 757-7707
Projected Price: $59.95
Percentage Complete: 75%

In a nutshell:

An excellent upgrade of the original title, with the potential to change the image of strategy games.

What's so special?

LOTR II combines sophisticated kingdom management with fast-paced combat into one well-integrated package. You will be able to raise your armies with careful, long-term planning, then send them out into action-packed battles.

Why should I care?

If you were a fan of the original *Lords of the Realm*, or if you're at all enthusiastic about strategy games, you'll want to post some lookouts and prepare your armies for this one.

And when's it coming out?

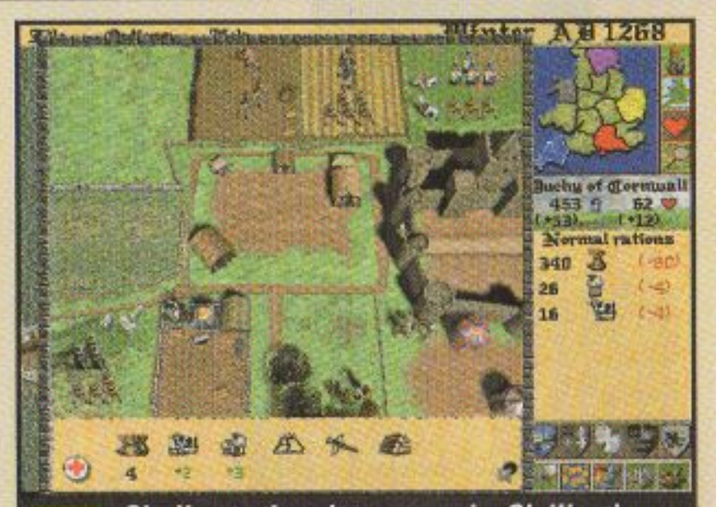
Fall 1996

Once two enemy forces meet head-on, a real-time combat sequence occurs. If your county includes a garrisoned castle, battles will include trebuchets, catapults and battering-rams.

a historical simulation, so there are no elves or magic items. Instead the medieval economy accurately re-creates the challenges of a fuedal ruler. The world map consists of one country comprising up to ten counties, each of which needs quite a bit of micromanagement in order to keep it going. "We've reduced the number of counties in *Lords I* by half," explains Lester. "We've done that to really try to avoid the sagging mid-game that most long-term strategy games get. If you are playing any of these conquest games, there comes a time when you know you're winning, and yet, in order to win you've got to keep going with the same motions for another few hours." At least 15 different world maps will be available, including England, Germany, France, Italy and some made-up maps with tactical interest.

Running a kingdom is challenging, as you are constantly struggling to keep the population fed, and when you fail to do so, famine, disease, and peasant revolts are the result. Meanwhile other rival fuedal states are also raising armies, conquering territories, and threatening your borders. An expanded diplomacy feature will allow you to send money and food to other kingdoms, or even loan them money.

You can and should build a castle in each province, and the game allows you to choose from five different types — from a simple motte-and-bailey keep to an advanced Edwardian castle. And as in history, these castles take years to complete, and are a huge drain on your kingdom's resources. One thing that the team considered, but did not implement, was custom-designed castles. "We had a castle-design section before, but in practice it just didn't make that much of a tactical difference in the game," Lester says. "We found that most players weren't using that."



Similar to the city screen in *Civilization*, the village view is where you allocate a province's workers to various tasks such as farming, shepherding, timber cutting, and mining.

The economics, too, promise to be very accurate. You must let some of your fields lie fallow, or your lands will be overworked; you cannot crowd too much livestock into one pasture, or disease will break out in the herds. When food runs short, the population dies off or emigrates in vast numbers to neighboring provinces, and random events like the Black Plague will keep you on your toes. Fortunately you can sell off stockpiles of wood, wool, iron and other resources to travelling merchants, allowing you to buy desperately needed foodstuffs or hire the occasional band of mercenary warriors. And as in *Civilization* or any good strategy game, there are many paths to victory. You may try to expand quickly, before your enemies have had a chance to build up their forces, or avoid conflict, build up a powerful economy, and build up a powerful war production machine.

And of course there is also the real-time battles, which offer a refreshing break from kingdom management. When a battle begins, the two armies begin on opposite ends of a large map. The units

"We're trying to bridge the gap between a *WarCraft* and a *Civilization* by offering elements of both games."

***— David Lester, executive producer,* LOTR II**

are somewhat larger than those of, say, *Command & Conquer*, and the maps somewhat smaller, so battle happens fairly quickly. But the scale is perfect for a medieval battlefield, and different terrain features such as trees, bridges, and rocky outcroppings lend some tactical advantages. Setting up your units into good formations — pikemen ranked in front of the crossbowmen, flanked by footmen — is also crucial. Each individual unit icon represents a group of four to thirty-two soldiers, depending on the size of you and your opponent's army.

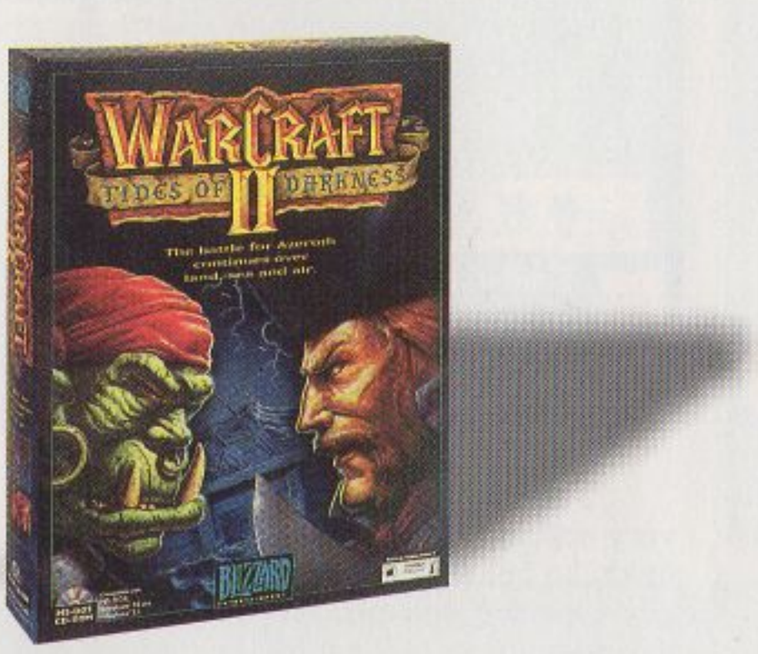
You do have the option to skip the real-time battles if you want — this can actually be useful if you find yourself constantly fighting large numbers of weak peasant armies in a disorderly kingdom. The computer will instantly determine the battle results, and you can continue with the more important tasks. On the other hand, Impressions is aware that a lot of players may not want to micro-manage their medieval economies, and just want to fight the battles. So they've made sure to include a lot of auto functions for the strategic side, so impatient conquerors can concentrate on their military campaigns. "We've tried to streamline those [farming and labor allocations] so that somebody who doesn't want to bother with some of the complexities of that can happily play the game and enjoy the game without getting so involved," says Lester.

LOTR II will have 2-player modem/serial play and 4-player network play, but no word yet on Internet play. "Internet is something we're hoping to get in there, but we're not guaranteeing it or anything," Lester says. "We don't want to compromise playability just to get Internet play." During multi-player games, pre-determined time limits are set for how long each player can take for their turn, speeding gameplay considerably. A host of different starting conditions will allow a wide variety of games.

All in all, *LOTR II* looks to have everything going for it: historical accuracy in a fascinating period, a well-balanced and engaging empire building game, and a fast-paced real-time combat phase. It's definitely one to watch for.

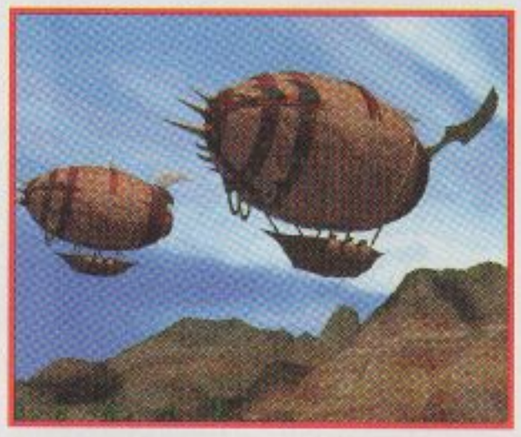
PCG

Game of the Year.



#1 Selling PC Game, Jan-April 1996 PC Data Report • **Game of the Year,** PC Gamer • **Multiplayer Game of the Year,** PC Gamer • **Golden Triad Award,** Computer Game Review• **Game of the Year,** Computer Gaming World Readers' Choice • **Best On-line Game,** C/NET

8 Players Head to Head



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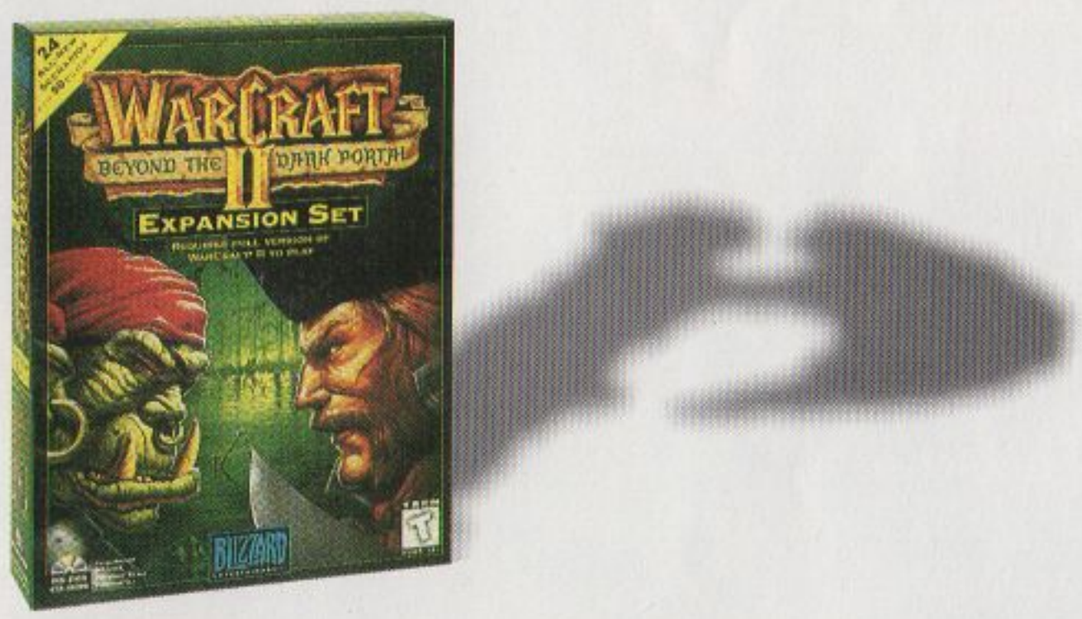

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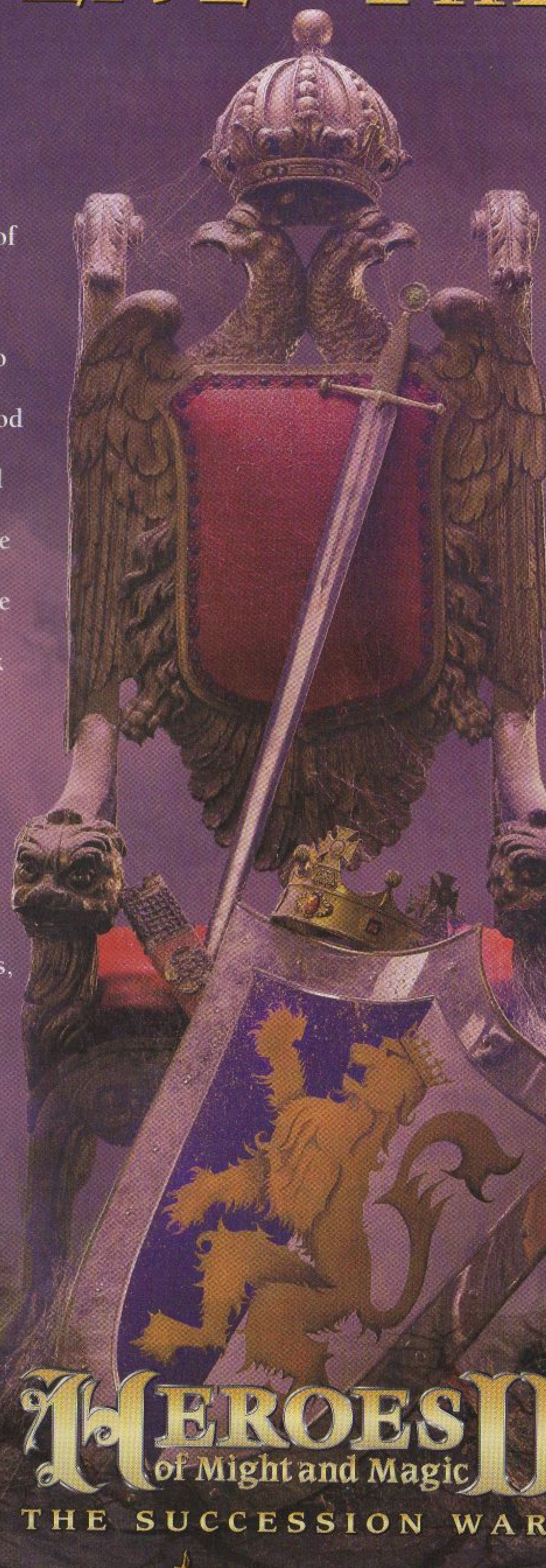

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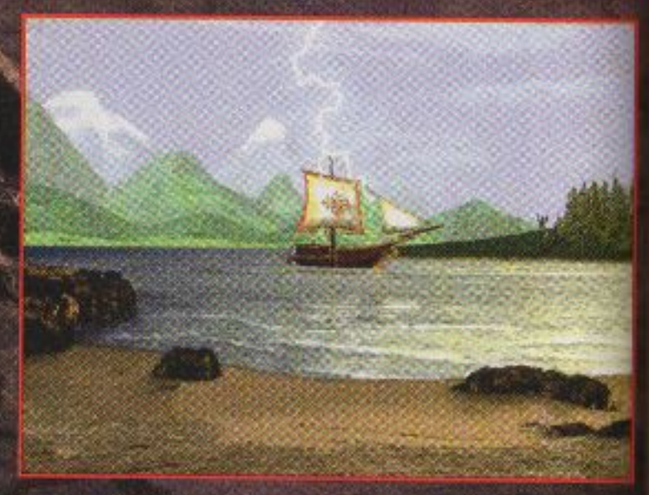

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The Space Bar

Humor and Adventure in the Galaxy's Favorite Watering-hole!

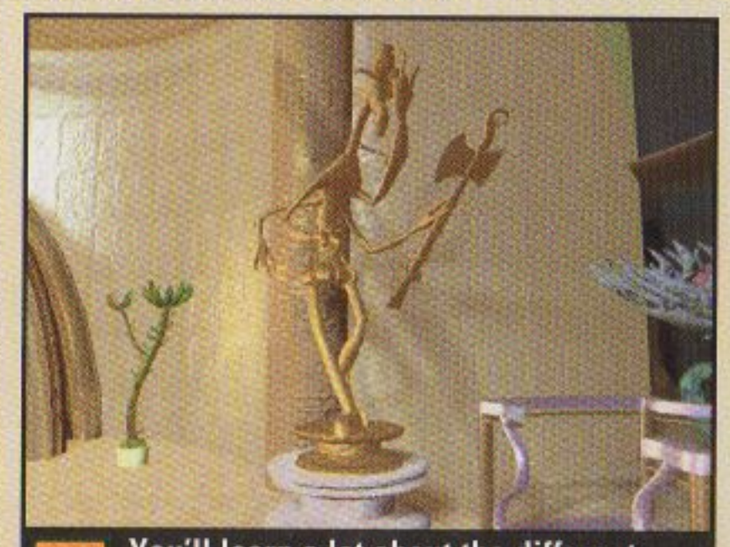
Take a bar full of bug-eyed aliens and stir in lots of laughs, and you'll have *The Space Bar*, a witty and suspenseful adventure from the creator of *Planetfall*.

—Todd Vaughn

After years of tracking down some of the roughest criminals in the galaxy, there's not much that can surprise super-sleuth Alias Node, but then again, he hasn't been to *The Space Bar*. After pulling the none-too-desirable assignment of investigating a murder on a faraway space station, he soon finds himself face-to-puckering orifice with the most unsavory (and funniest) characters in the galaxy as he sets out to catch the killer.

Welcome to *The Space Bar*, better known to the regulars as the The Thirsty Tentacle Bar. Part *Star Wars* Cantina and part Comedy Central, this is the sort of place where patrons can take the form of absolutely everything imaginable, and the jokes flow as freely as the drinks. You'll find bizarre alien races ranging from blue-skinned tri-sexual belly dancers and great lumbering dock workers to giant millipede bartenders and even a race that resembles tropical drinks. Just don't get too cozy with the customers because the murderer is reported to be a shape-shifter — a creature with the ability to take on any form.

With a little help from his trusty (and sassy) PDA and a gift for empathy and telepathy, hard-nosed detective Alias Node will have to interrogate every squishy, tentacled, gooey-faced, multi-eyed one of them in order to find the elusive killer. Now, if this is beginning to sound like the script for a straight-to-video B-movie, let's put it all in perspective. The man behind all this madness is



You'll learn a lot about the different types of aliens from the art they leave behind, and often reveal a few clues about the murderer as well.

FYI
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

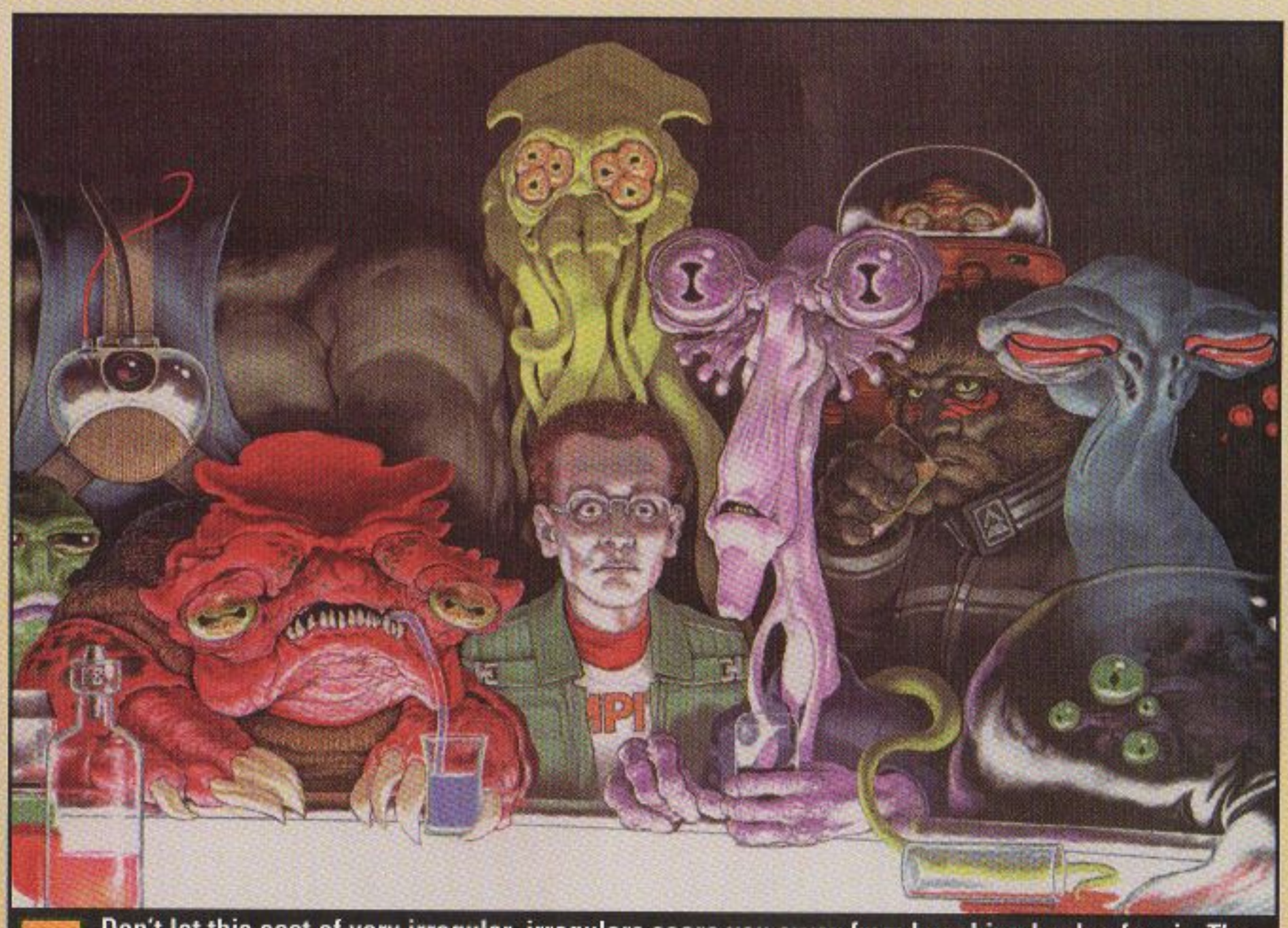
Game: The Space Bar
Category: Adventure
Developer: Boffo Games
Publisher: Rocket Science, 139 Townsend Street, San Francisco, CA 94107, (415) 442-5000
Projected Price: $49.95
Percentage Complete: 75%

In a nutshell:
Science fiction, comedy and traditional adventure sleuthing come together in the latest game by Planetfall creator Steve Meretzky.

What's so special?
Though humor and science fiction parody are a constant theme throughout *The Space Bar*, this is one adventure that doesn't cut any corners in the gameplay department with thoughtfully designed puzzles that keep you busy long after the belly laughs are gone.

Why should I care?
If the current drought of quality adventure games has left you feeling parched, *The Space Bar* should quench that thirst with a potent brew of humor, intrigue and lots of style.

And when's it coming out?
October 1996



Don't let this cast of very irregular, irregulars scare you away from knocking back a few in *The Space Bar*, a sci-fi adventure with a very tongue-in-cheek sense of humor.

"I've had the idea of *The Space Bar* for many, many years, but it wasn't originally a game design; it was a compilation of miscellaneous short stories tied together under the larger umbrella of the bar."

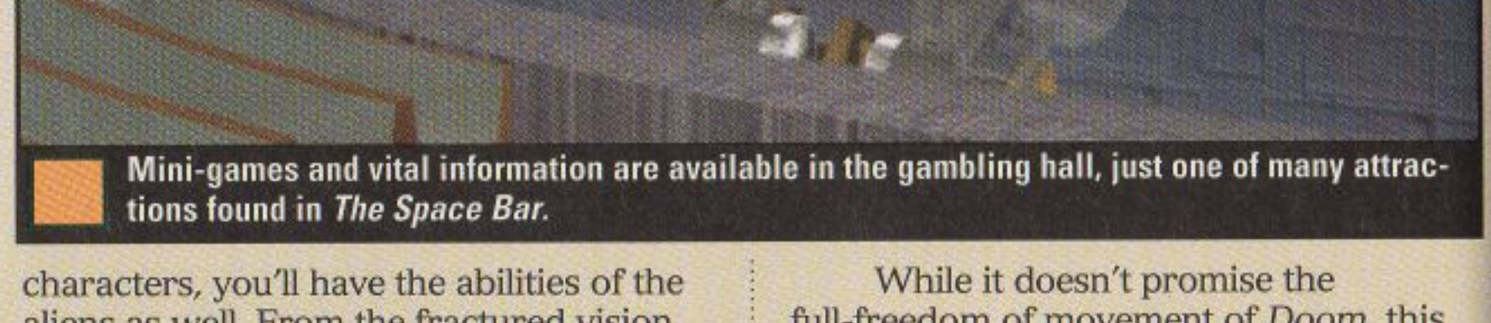
— Steve Meretzky, game designer

game designer Steve Meretzky, the driving force behind such computer game classics as *Planetfall, The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and *Zork Zero*.

Though the setting and science fiction trappings bear more than a passing resemblance to Legend's upcoming *Callahan's Crosstime Saloon* (based on Spider Robinson's popular Callahan books), Meretzky says the resemblance is merely coincidental. "I've had the idea for many, many years but it wasn't originally a game design, it was a compilation of miscellaneous short stories tied together under the larger umbrella of the bar," says Meretzky. "*The Space Bar* was a constant where all the varied stories came together, and when it came time to make a game, the structure seemed like a perfect fit with what I wanted to achieve."

Meretzky uses that short story structure to good effect by allowing the main plot (the murder of the alien) to take place within the confines of the space station and invites the player to visit even more otherworldly destinations and have new experiences through a series of mini-games. Meretzky says, "This structure should also alleviate some of the frustration and tension associated with playing a lengthy one-sided adventure game and give the player a sense of accomplishment from start to finish."

Tying all those different experiences together without losing sight of the end goal is a tricky task, but this isn't any ordinary mystery or detective we're talking about. Alias Node has a highly-developed talent for empathy and telepathy that allows him to see the thoughts and experiences of other characters in a number of flashbacks. During each flashback you'll solve puzzles related to the sequence, and gain clues about the motives of the characters that will help you solve game as a whole. This inventive concept is taken an extra step further since not only will you see events through the eyes of other characters, you'll have the abilities of the aliens as well. From the fractured vision of insectoid races with their multi-lensed eyes, to super-sensitive hearing of bat-like races that can pick up the slightest sound, you'll have to adapt your investigative skills to make the most of your new abilities. The flashbacks can be played in any order, allowing the player to try a particular path, and when they get stuck, move on to a different area of the game.



Mini-games and vital information are available in the gambling hall, just one of many attractions found in *The Space Bar*.

While the story construction and puzzles fit in with Meretzky's vision of a fun playable game, the task of building the game world was another matter entirely. In order to give these bizarre, other-worldly creations and locations a credible look and feel, Meretzky felt that traditional 2D sprite-based animation wasn't suitable for much of what they wanted to accomplish, so Rocket Science and Boffo Games (Meretzky's company) have combined their talents to create the technology for *The Space Bar*.

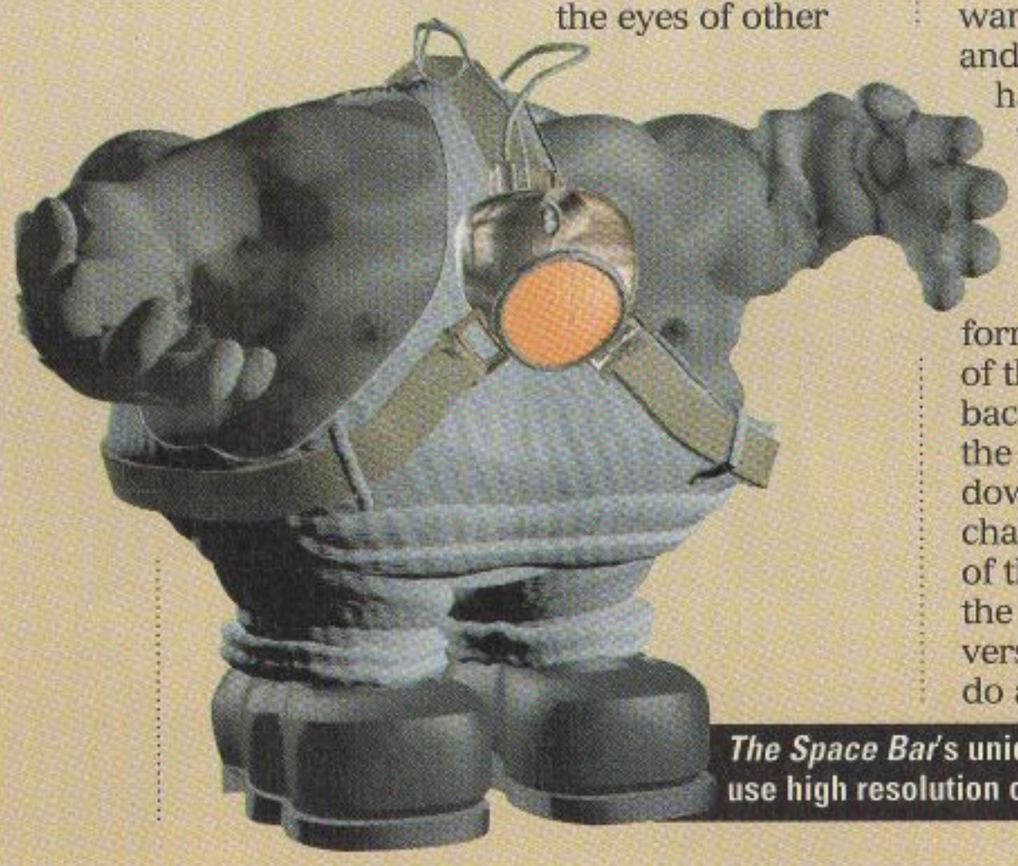
Known affectionately as the bagel-engine, this allows the designers use long strips of pre-rendered art and wrap the ends together to form a panoramic view of each main area of the space station and the various flashback settings. Within each environment the player can turn 360 degrees, look up, down, examine objects and interact with characters. Meretzky is obviously proud of the accomplishment and says, "Within the constraints of a pre-rendered universe, the bagel-engine can pretty much do anything."

While it doesn't promise the full-freedom of movement of *Doom*, this technology gives the player the feeling of a convincing-first person environment without the single-screen fixation and frustration of games like *Myst*. Navigation is simple and effective with a point-and-click interface handling the chore of movement, object manipulation, inventory management, and dialog.

While the main story revolves around a murder, Meretzky keeps the tone light and funny with his trademark sense of dementia. The characters are a constant source of laughs with one-liners and riddles sprinkled liberally through the dialog. But one quick trip around *The Space Bar* is all it takes to get a pretty good idea of the type of humor that awaits. In the back corridors you'll discover distorted and questionable designs of alien toilets and in Winky Howdy's Cowboy Saloon — a wild west style saloon for homesick humans – that touts the great villains of the old west with such criminals as Jesse James, Richard Nixon and Al Capone.

While the humor is sure to keep gamers entertained and coming back for more, it's the classic adventure game sensibilities and sleek technological flair that makes *The Space Bar* such a treat. With adventure game publishers scrambling to create blockbusters filled with full-motion video and lean on gameplay, Meretzky has put together a thoughtful game that uses technology to its fullest without sacrificing the reasons people play adventure games in the first place: fun.

PCG



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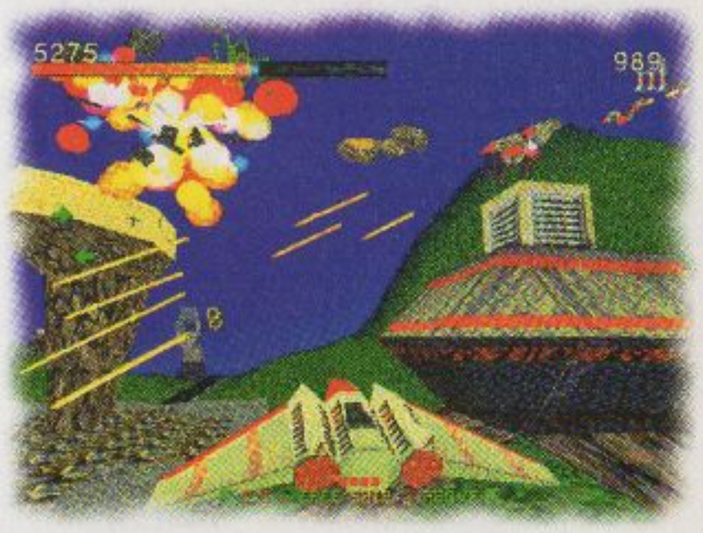

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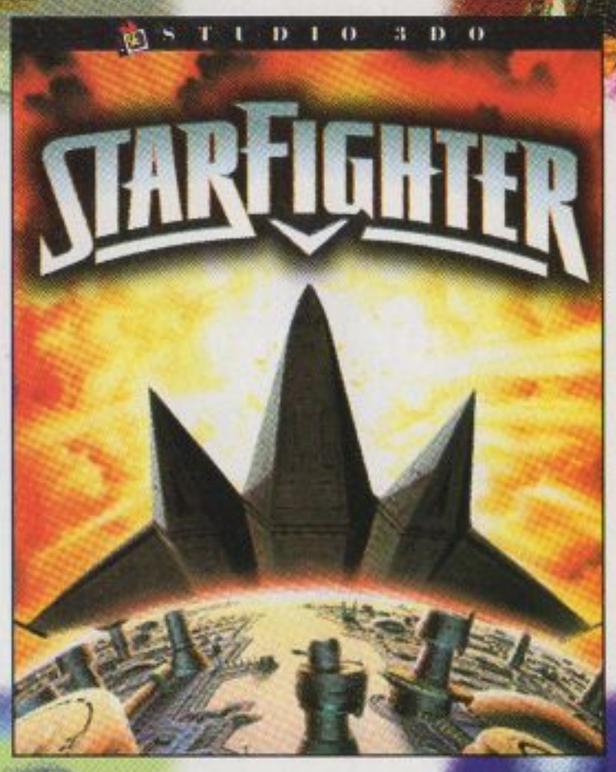

KIDS TO ADULTS
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

"Stellar!"

— Next Generation, March 1996

PC THAT'S NOT EXACTLY PC
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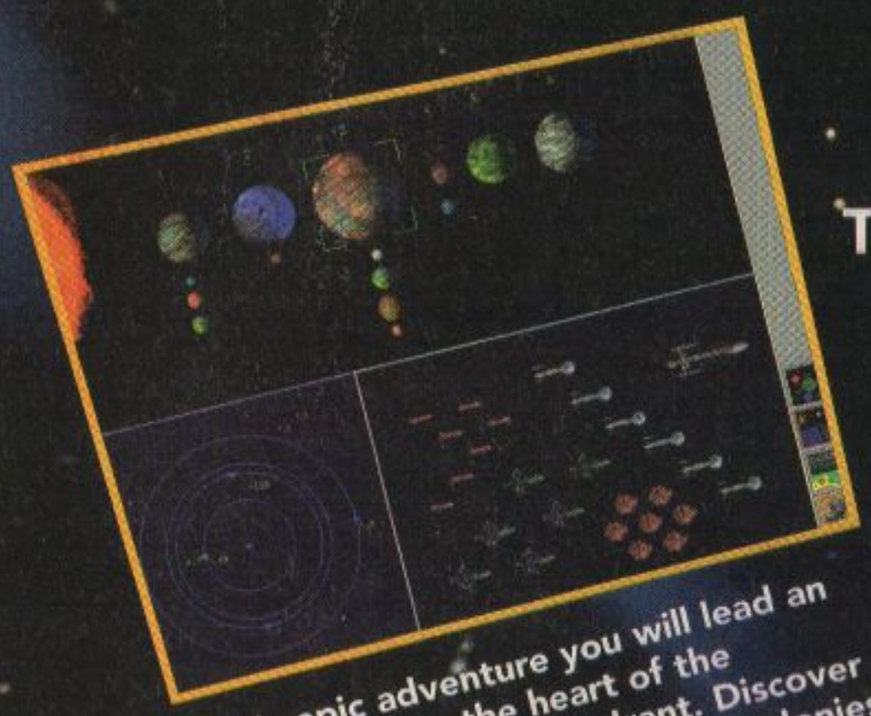

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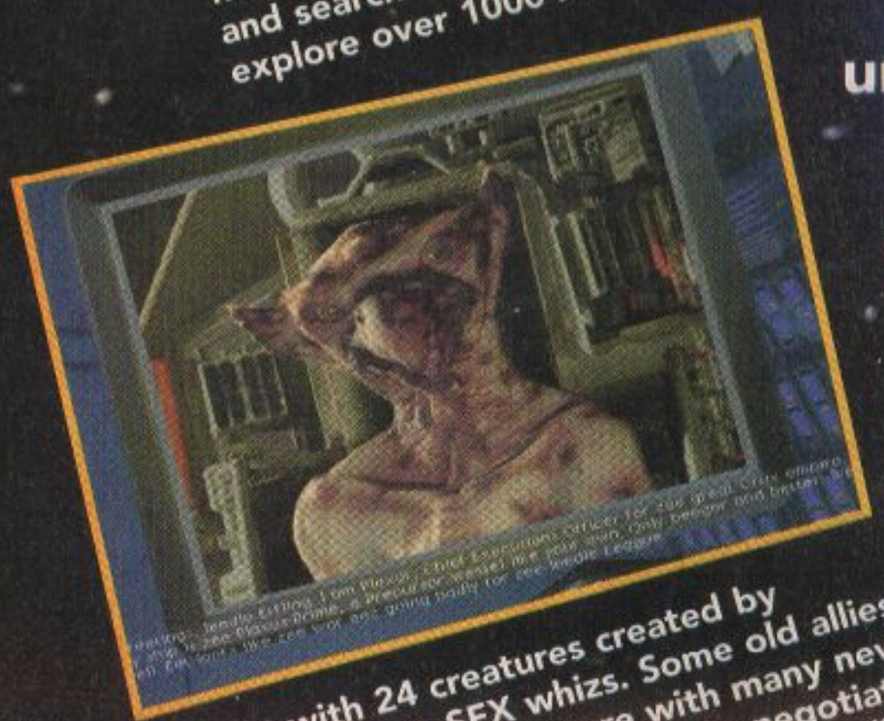
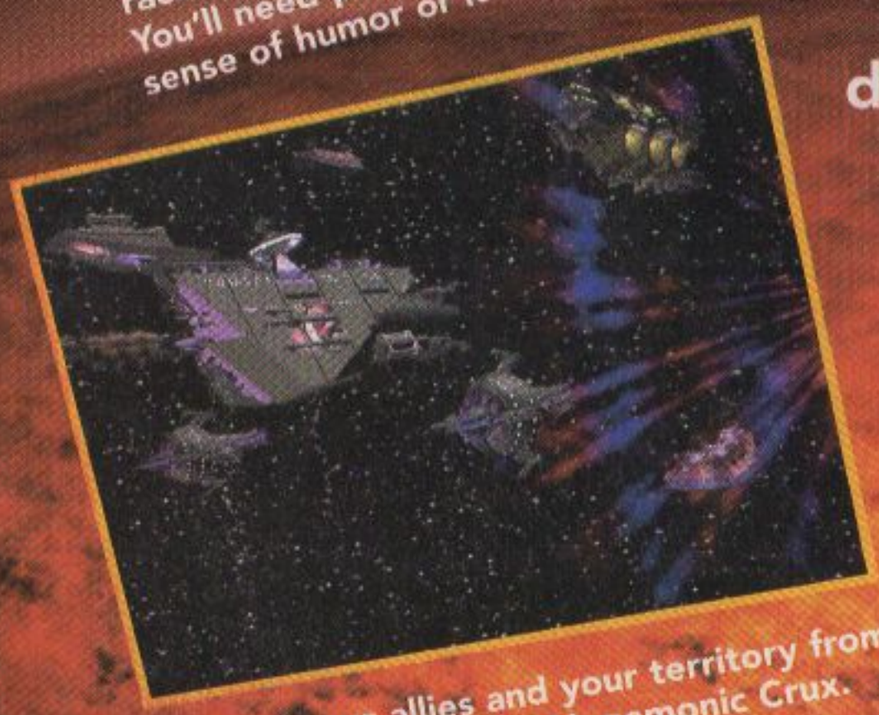


Interact with 24 creatures created by Hollywood's top SFX whizs. Some old allies are along on this adventure with many new races to discover and alliances to negotiate. You'll need puzzle solving skills and an alien sense of humor or it could be war!



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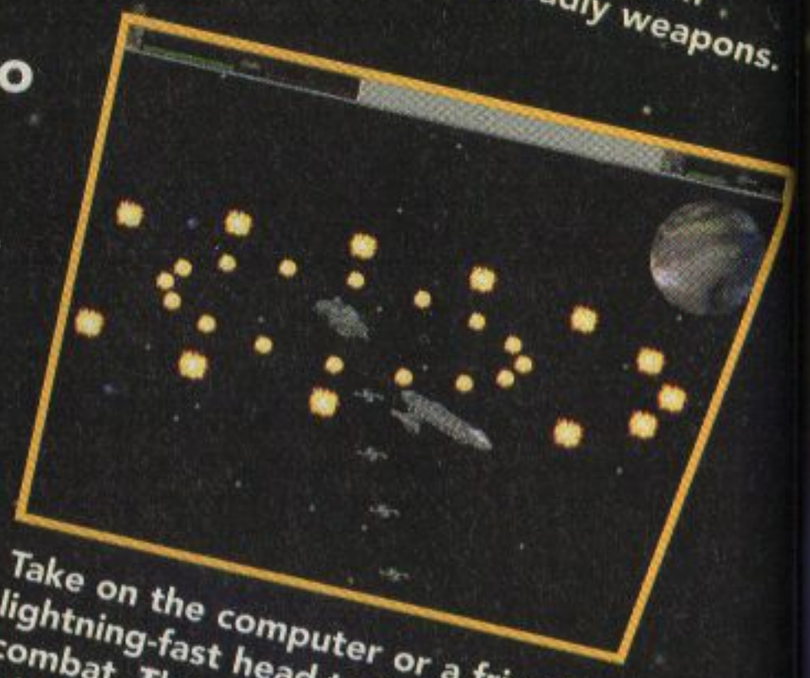

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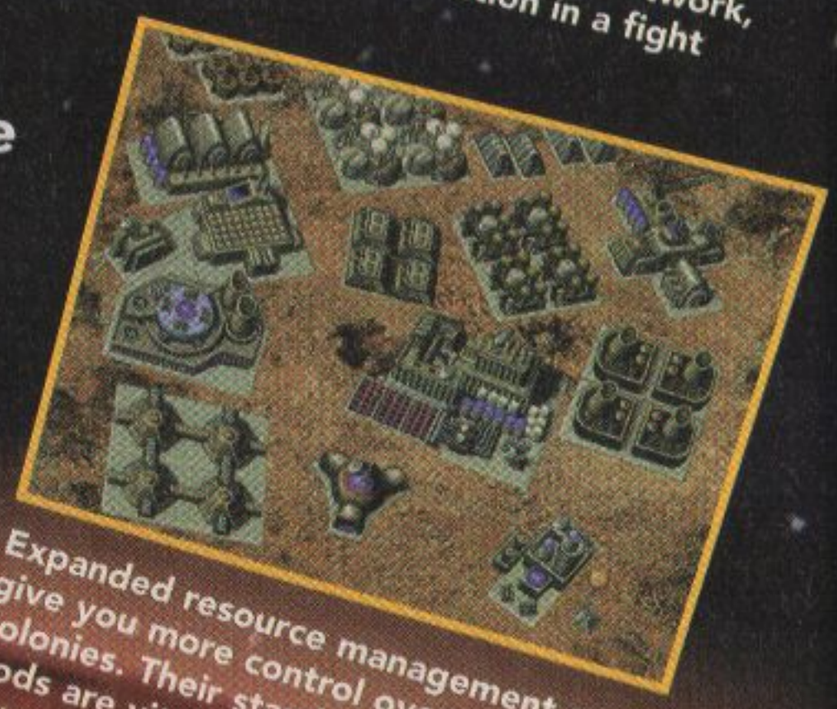

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- Discover more than 40 ancient artifacts from an advanced technology

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Product Information Number 119

EXCLUSIVE!

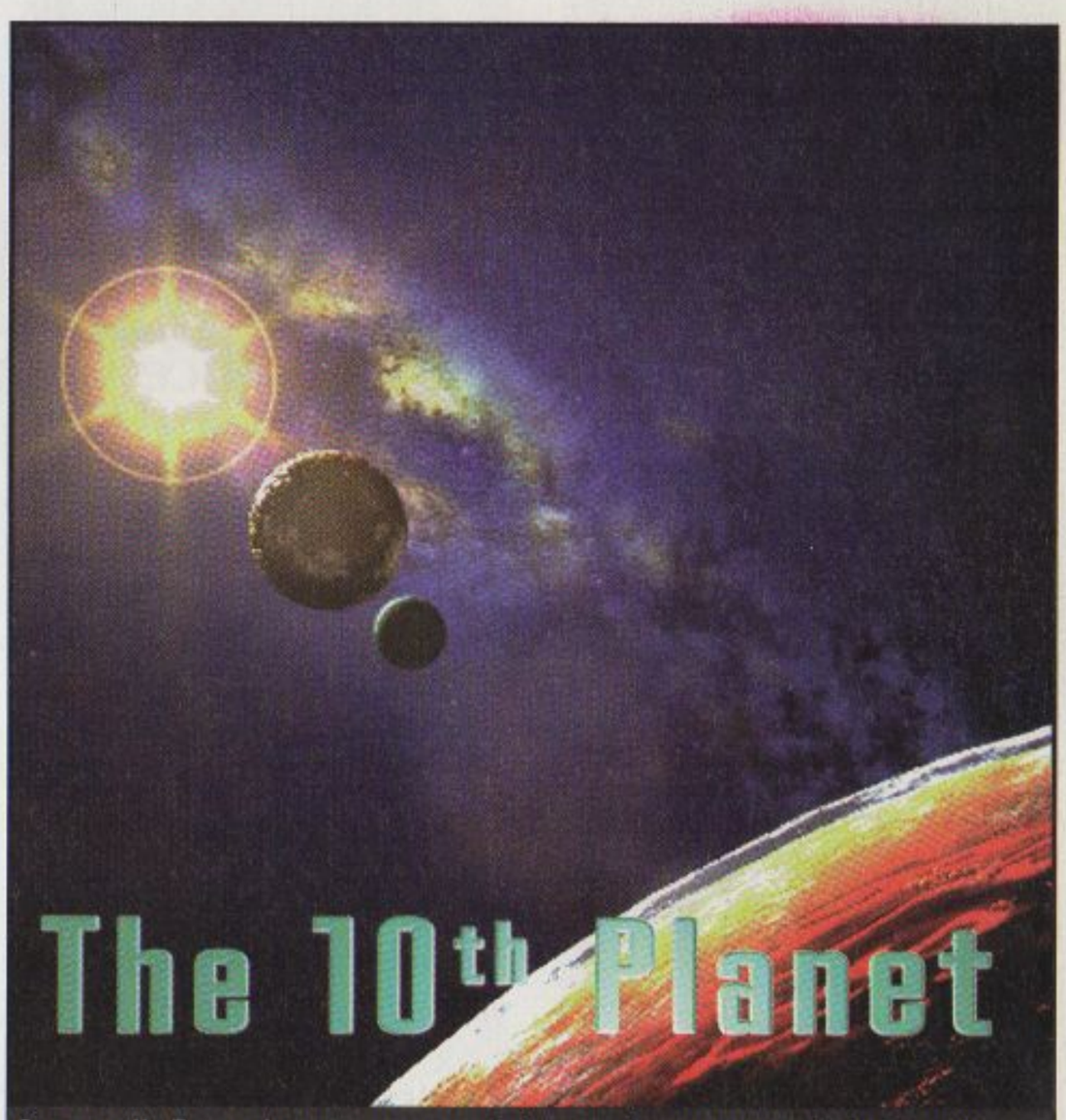
Hollywood Goes PC

Can the creators of *Independence Day* make *The 10th Planet* the first truly cinematic PC game?

The last few years have seen PC games striving to become more cinematic, as full-motion video and astronomic production budgets have combined to produce a whole new genre of "interactive movies." But, as so many people have observed, the problem with these cinematic aspirations is that they need real cinematic talent to pull them off, and while game designers may have the enthusiasm, they lack the artistic experience to really make a game feel like a movie.

All that may change, however, with the first true collaboration of game and movie talent as Bethesda Softworks, producers of *Terminator: Future Shock* and *The Elder Scrolls: Arena* have teamed up with Centropolis Entertainment, the makers of this summer's biggest science fiction movie blockbuster, *Independence Day*. More than just a publicity gimmick, this collaboration involves Bethesda working closely with Centropolis' key talent to produce a genuinely cinematic science fiction game. For example, the game's story and basic design has been written by Dean Devlin, co-writer and producer of *Independence Day*, while the movie's production designer Oliver Scholl is personally overseeing the designs of the game's alien environments and technology. For Devlin and his team, it's an interesting departure from the world of traditional movie-making. "It's a whole non-linear way of telling a story," he says. "It's a much less manipulative experience than when you're writing a movie when you're basically guiding the audience through ups and downs. Now we have to try and manipulate the audience to make the choices they need to make to succeed, and when they make other choices, we have to try to make that just as entertaining. It's a very different experience for us, we're learning as we go; and hopefully we'll get better as it as we do it.

> "This whole world of interactive entertainment is really in its infancy, and we didn't want to miss the boat on it."
> —Dean Devlin, Centropolis Entertainment

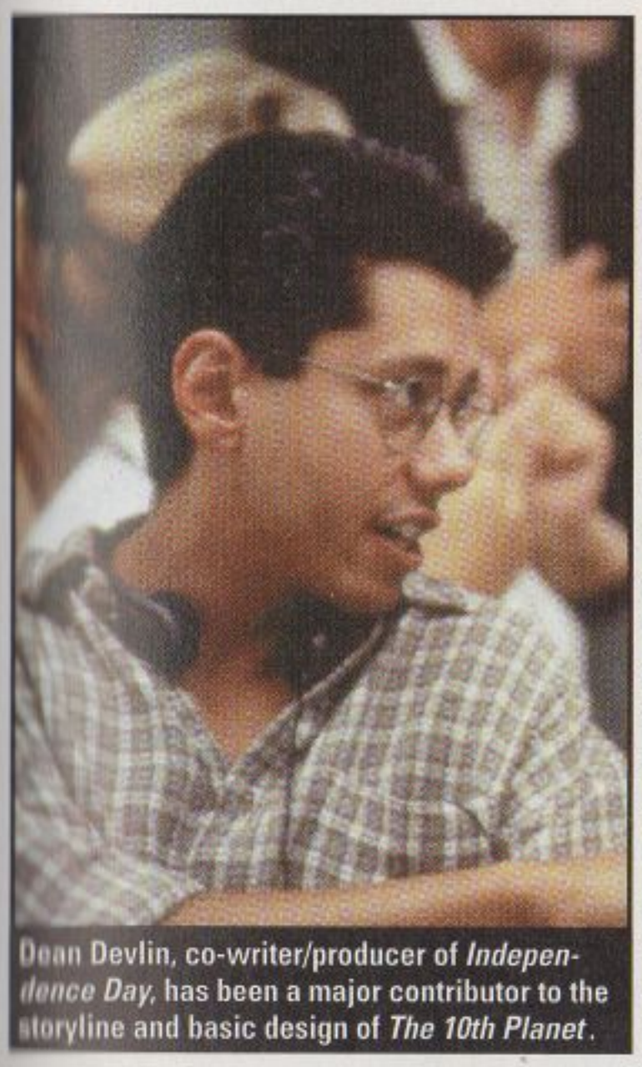


Centropolis Entertainment, creators of the smash summer movie *Independence Day*, have teamed up with Bethesda Softworks to create *The 10th Planet*.

"The idea was this whole world of interactive entertainment is really in its infancy, and we didn't want to miss the boat on it," Devlin continues. "Now is the real time to try and explore the idea of telling a story in an interactive way, something we've never done before. One of the things I don't like in videogames is that for the most part a lot of the designs look like comic books. And I thought if we could get these things to look a lot more like they do in our feature films, it would be a much more exciting experience to play the game."

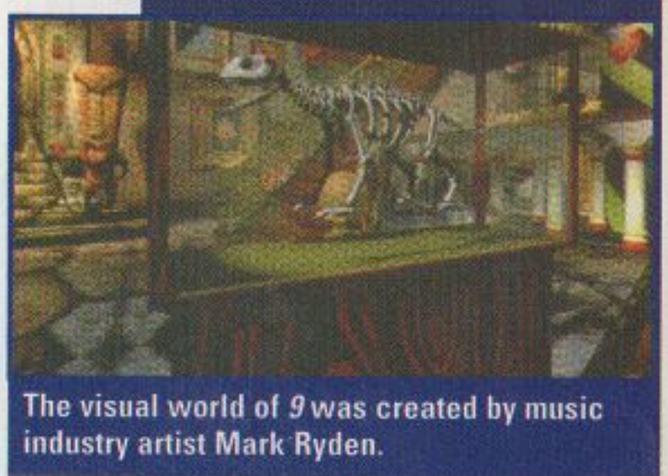
Devlin is currently fine-tuning elements of *10th Planet*'s storyline, which conjures up memories of one of his previous movies, *Stargate*. "The story is part of science fiction mythology, the idea of a planet emerging in our solar system that we didn't previously know existed," he explains. "In the case of our game, it has a very odd elliptical orbit where it only comes within the proximity of our galaxy every thousand years — and on this trip they've brought with them some interesting guests. It's a way for us to explore what happens to us when this planet shows up and how we deal with it."

Such is the closeness of the collaboration between Bethesda and Centropolis that the game had to be temporarily postponed while the Centropolis special effects team concentrated on the completion of *Independence Day*. But, as Devlin explains, "That was a few months ago, and now we've come up with a system where we can keep moving forward because we didn't want to delay it any longer." With *Independence Day* completed, Centropolis is now back working with Bethesda on *10th Planet* full-time, and we should be able to enjoy the fruits of their collaboration next Spring.


Dean Devlin, co-writer/producer of *Independence Day*, has been a major contributor to the storyline and basic design of *The 10th Planet*.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

The much-talked about convergence of music, film and multimedia continues unabated. As we can see, the first two games in this month's Under Construction have their roots in the music industry. It seems everybody wants to make a CD-ROM game these days. But you have to wonder how the ordinary software developers feel about all this? After all, they don't cruise into a recording studio and try to make records do they? Oh well, it's all in the name of progress, we guess.



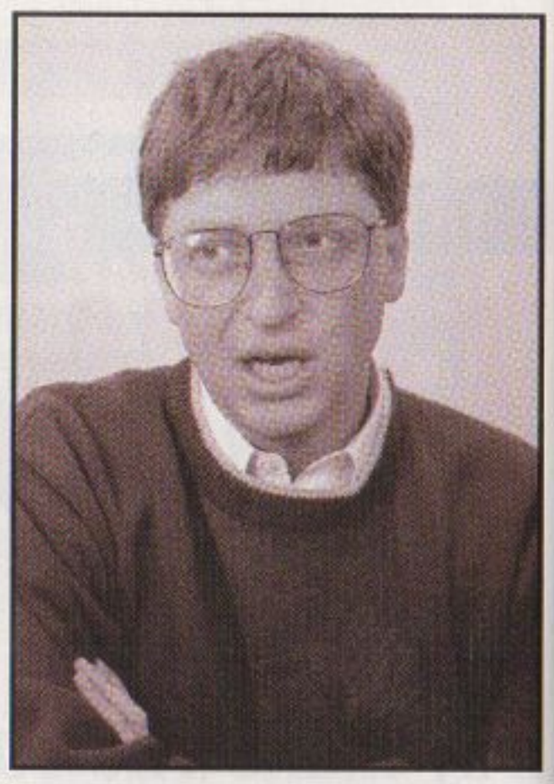
The visual world of *9* was created by music industry artist Mark Ryden.

9

We've seen a lot of games with short names recently, like *Z* and *D*, and now along comes *9*. This one's from Tribeca Interactive, a new game publisher put together by Robert De Niro as part of his Tribeca Productions company. "Digital Media offers an exciting new way to tell stories," De Niro says. "Tribeca will take advantage of this new art form in order to create compelling, character-driven adventures like *9*." Quite a few big name stars will have voiceovers in the game, including James Belushi, Christopher Reeve, Cher, and Steven Tyler and Joe Perry from Aerosmith.

In the game, the player journeys to an abandoned resort house that must be

Continued on page 51



Gates on Games

An audience with Microsoft's Chief

There's no question that Microsoft is the most important software company in the PC world, but their involvement with games — until quite recently — has been somewhat limited. But clearly, that's changing. Bill Gates recently spoke to *PC Gamer*'s sister publication, *Next Generation*, about Microsoft's increased involvement in gaming. "We've always had our hand in it to some degree," says the bespectacled billionaire. "Putting one or two games in with the operating system has always been a good move, and you'll always see us do it."

PC games have long been plagued with installation and configuration problems that have limited its appeal as a gaming platform. So it is only recently, with the introduction of Windows 95 and DirectX, that Microsoft has begun to address the problems created by the PC's open architecture. "We saw the embarrassment of how hard it was to install games, and the conflicts between DOS games and productivity applications after we shipped Windows 3.1," Gates says. "And we saw it as holding back the home computer market. You really shouldn't have to have an expert friend to dig into your configuration file. And games were part of that. So part of our goal was making the PC a more stable platform."

Getting PC games to actually work is in everyone's best interest. "The use of the PC in the home environment is increasing and gaming is a big part of that. People love to play games, and

> "If we're promising to make graphics on the PC better than on a Silicon Graphics workstation, we sure as heck are going to make them better than on a $200 game device."

most of the things you do to make games better are things that apply to other software as well. I mean, enabling the audio to work well and the graphics to be fast. Games are a great way to measure progress there because game writers are just superdemanding, and they've basically ignored Windows. Up until Windows 95, the way you wrote a game was you wrote around the operating system. Even Microsoft's own *Flight Simulator* was a DOS product, and it's only now that we're building the Windows version of that."

But Microsoft's recent innovations do more than simplify installation problems: their long-term goal is to make the PC the best gaming platform available. "The commitment to do the world's best graphics architecture, that started about three years ago, but these things take time. So we brought in the really smart people, and some of the super-advanced elements of this you won't see in the market for a couple of years. Then we'll be able to say, 'Hey, we think we're way beyond even the most expensive Silicon Graphics workstation you can buy today, and at PC price-points.'"

Gates acknowledges that does mean serious competition with dedicated gaming consoles like the Sony PlayStation. "If we're promising to make graphics on the PC better than on a Silicon Graphics workstation, we sure as heck are going to make them better than on a $200 game device. We've lagged behind, but the PCs you're going to start to see, maybe six months from now — certainly in the next 12 months — will be way beyond that. I mean, the big fundamental is, if you use the TV as the display, and you have no local storage, you can get the price way down. But then, as soon as you start to have local storage and decent display, you might as well go all the way and have a PC."

Internet connectivity is another strength of the PC, and Gates sees the standards set by Windows 95 as helping to smooth the transition to Internet gaming. "The latency that you have on the generic Internet is a problem for a lot of games, and you'll see a lot of hacks to deal with this. You know, interpolation hacks, things where you only play with people that you happen to be getting good latency with, or things where you actually disconnect from Internet and make a local call in to a server that you're all connected to, or people who do private networks.

"What we're doing with these direct multi-player game APIs is abstracting the need for the game companies to bet on what type of connectivity comes along. If they just use the DirectPlay API, then the games work on local area networks, they work on the Internet, they work on a local server, dial up — and the user just gets to pick how he or she wants to go out and meet people."

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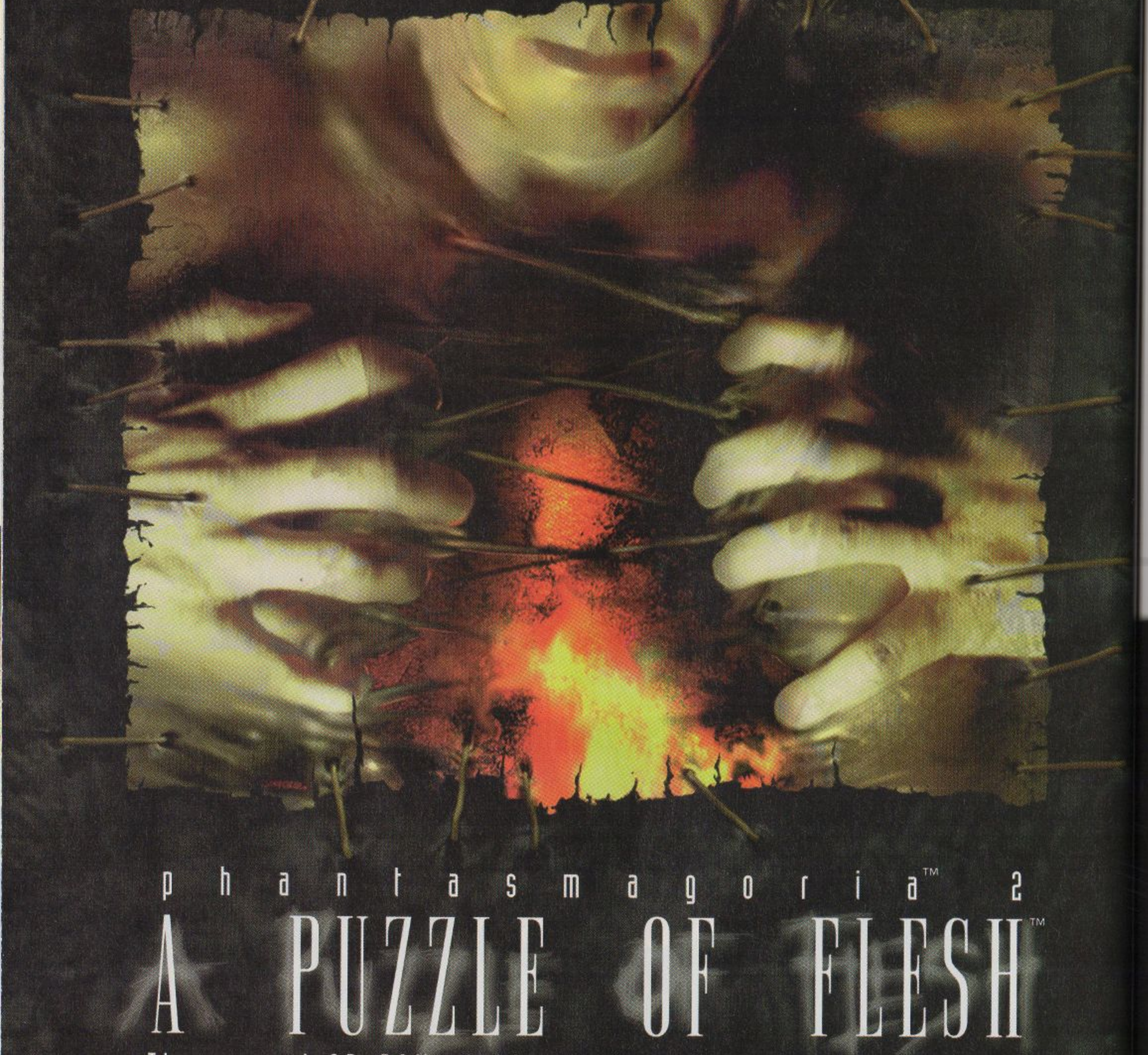

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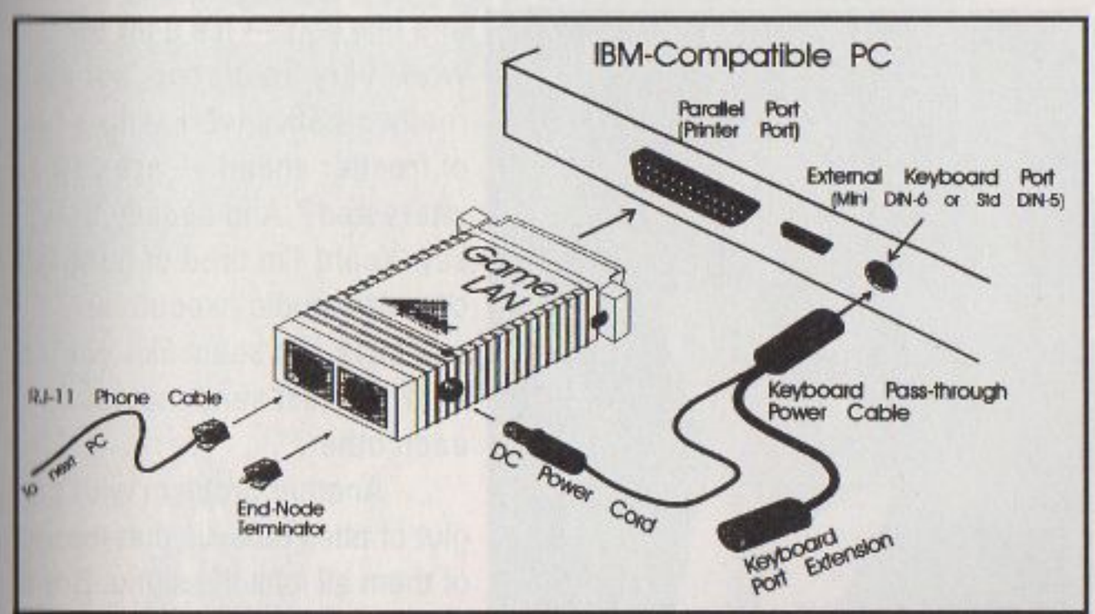
Product Information Number 151

Make Your Own Network

New Product for Multi-Player Gaming



This diagram illustrates how the GameLAN adapter hooks up to your PC.

Network battles are undeniably one of the most enjoyable forms of PC gaming. There's nothing like roasting five or six buddies in a *Quake* fragfest or outsmarting seven friends in a massive *Warcraft II* battle. But the sad truth is that the best multi-player games have been largely confined to offices and other areas where large amounts of networked PCs exist, something that most PC gamers don't have access to.

Until now. Appexx Technologies has put together an inexpensive do-it-yourself network kit for gamers everywhere. Using the GameLAN adapters, gamers can network three, four or more computers together, and find out what they've been missing. You can daisy-chain up to twelve PCs together.

The GameLAN Starter Kit comes with two network adapters, twenty-five feet of RJ-11 phone cable, the network software, and a CD of shareware and demoware network games, including *Warcraft II* and *Duke Nukem 3D*. It has an estimated street price of $150. The GameLAN add-on kit for one user comes with only one adapter, and is expected to sell at around $80. With the cost of the network divided up amongst the many users, that is a fairly reasonable price, comparable to a new CD-ROM drive, a sound card or 3D accelerator.

For more information, contact Apexx at 1-800-767-4858, or visit *http://www.apexxtech.com.*

Continued from page 48

restored, encountering many strange characters who will try to stop them. The game's sharp graphics have been put together by the artist Mark Ryden, who has gained wide acclaim for his art in the music industry. Some of the band members of Aerosmith also had input into the game. "We were able to contribute to the look of *9*— helping design a series of fantasy environments, each with its own imagery and significance," says Aerosmith's Joe Perry. "What most appealed to us was the opportunity to share the creative process."

Adventures of the Smart Patrol

Another game with its roots in

Continued on page 52

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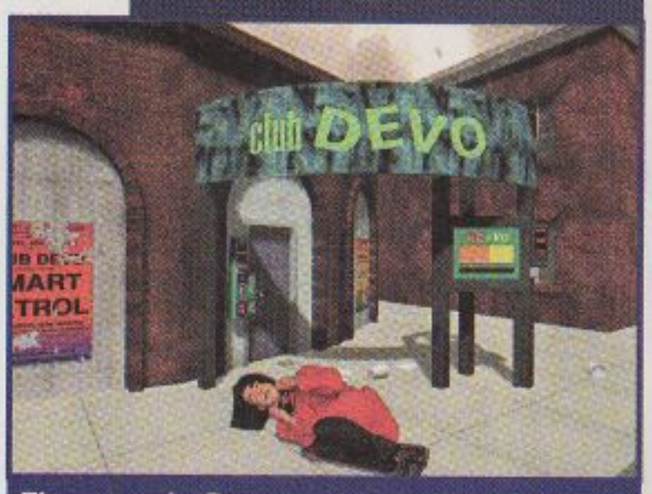
the music industry is *Devo presents: Adventures of the Smart Patrol*. Created by Gerald Casale and Mark Mothersbaugh from the quirky band Devo, the game is billed as a surrealistic social satire, and features several new audio tracks from Devo, the first in years. Players join the "Smart Patrol", a band of hip young revolutionaries inspired by the music of Devo, who must battle against the evil corporate monster. It's from Inscape.

Also coming from Inscape at the end of the year is *Ravage*, a science fiction adventure that pits players against the forces of inter-dimensional evil, and *Squeezils*, a flying squirrel game in 3D animation (yes, we said flying squirrels).



Those wacky Devo guys are at it again, "whippin' it" up on CD-ROM.

M.A.X.

Strategy fans and wargamers will want to take note of *M.A.X.*, or *Mechanized Assault & Exploration*, a new turn-based wargame from Interplay with a top-down perspective and beautiful SVGA graphics. Sophisticated and complex, gamers will be able to customize their armies with literally dozens of different units, even going so far as to allocate extra armor or firepower to individual units as they are being produced. With fighting on air, sea and ground, this impressive wargame has

Continued on page 34

Games and the Man

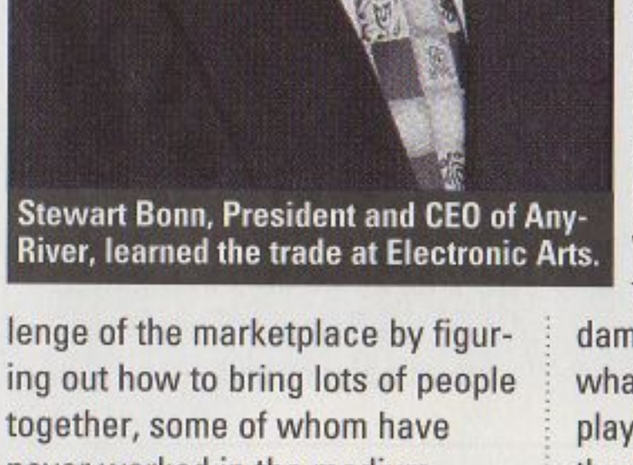
A conversation with Any River's Stewart Bonn

There's a new game company in town. Founded by industry veteran Stewart Bonn, who spent 13 years with Electronic Arts before starting his own company, AnyRiver has set itself the goal of making the best entertainment they can, in any medium. "We should be as interesting to people as movies, books, and television," Bonn says. The name AnyRiver comes from the idea that a lot of different talents — art, music, programming — must converge together in order to make a significant game, the way a number of streams come together to form a large river.

"AnyRiver stems from a belief that the bar is constantly being raised on product quality," Bonn says. "And it's just not innovation in gameplay, or innovation in technology, it's also starting to come in on the content side as well, and if you don't have the balance of those components, it's going to be real obvious. You look at a game like *Duke Nukem 3D* — it's got a funny sort of characterization, and it makes you smile, and the art's interesting. There's going to be plenty of games using approximately the same technology, but you're going to say 'I don't want blow up those things, I want to blow up the L.A.P.D.' So you play *Duke Nukem*.

"So that's really the trick, that the quality of not just the game but the characters and the world you're exploring and the things they say and the way in which they say it — that's all important. That means we've got to start dragging into this a broader set of talent. So the river part of AnyRiver is really a metaphor for combining lots of little streams into a whole river. We're trying to meet the challenge of the marketplace by figuring out how to bring lots of people together, some of whom have never worked in the medium before." One example of this is working with famed cyberpunk author Neal Stephenson to create a new game based on an original work of fiction.

Originality meets the flight sim market in AnyRiver's *Flying Saucer*.



Stewart Bonn, President and CEO of AnyRiver, learned the trade at Electronic Arts.

But bringing in outside talent can often mean increased development costs, considering the outrageous payscales of Hollywood-caliber talent. "Part of the trick is finding the right people," Bonn says. "It's also figuring out how to work with them effectively and efficiently, figuring out who to surround them with so that their participation can be productive. The nice thing about talented and creative people is that, usually, their motivation is not money. You know you've got a problem when you sit down with somebody and say 'We're looking for some cool ideas', and their response is 'Well, what does it pay?' Then you know they're not actually interested. But if you go out and talk to somebody, and say 'Here's the kind of stuff we're doing, we're interested in working with someone like you — it's a lot of work, very frustrating, but it's really creative work with a lot of frontier ahead — are you interested?' And usually they say 'Yeah! I'm tired of hanging out with studio executives, you guys just seem like you do stuff, not just send memos to each other.'"

Using seamless streaming of video, *A Fork in the Tale* is one of the fastest moving adventure games we've seen.

Another problem with the glut of titles today is that many of them all look the same. Bonn offered some insight into why that is the case. "One reason is that an awful lot of people look at this business of games as simple — you get game designers, get some programmers, put some art in, no problem. Put in more levels, more weapons, bigger bad guys.' So they come to it without a fundamental understanding of exactly what it is that people like about playing games, mainly because they haven't been doing it.

"I look at what's wrong today and it's exactly what was wrong in 1982-83. 1982 was the year that the cartridges collapsed — the Atari 2600, Intellivision, Colecovision. It was a holocaust, a debacle. You went into the stores of the time, and there was a lot of product in the store, but undifferentiated. There was a certain amount of contempt on the part of the people making the products. They were underestimating the customer, basically saying, 'They'll buy anything.' But that is completely, absolutely and totally untrue.

"So now, we're in a similar kind of mess. Another thing I think is wrong is that we're just not pushing hard enough on all the things we should be pushing on."

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Waldren "Frog" Joseph as photographed by Lee Crum.

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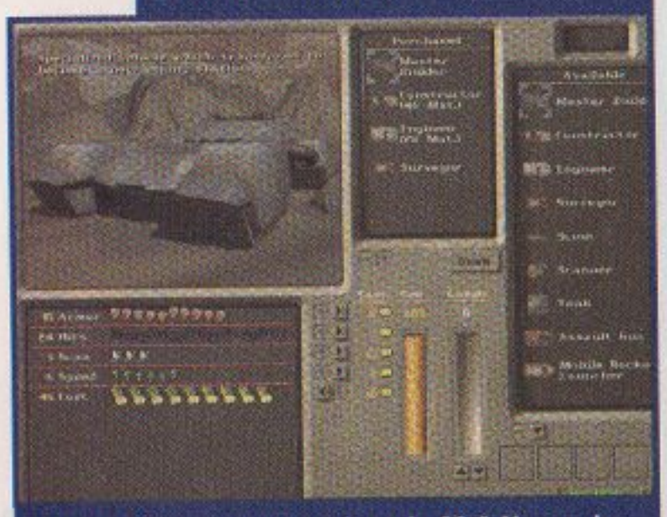


Many of the custom options in M.A.X. can be seen on this build screen.

both depth and looks.

There are 24 different worlds to battle upon, as well as a random map generator, so there is quite a lot of gameplay in the package. Each of the eight different clans have their own specialties in weapons, such as rocketry, ground combat or air strikes, so that each opponent will offer a different

Continued on page 55

Duke Level Design

An audience with the "Levelord"

One of the strongest features of *Duke Nukem 3D* is its excellent level design. With truly interactive environments — shattering mirrors, revolving doors, subways and space shuttles — the levels in *Duke Nukem* simply look and play more like the real world than any other game of its type.

Partially responsible for this is Richard Bailey Gray, better known as the "Levelord", one of Apogee's level designers. He's responsible for levels like "The Abyss", "Incubator", "Warp Factor"and "L.A.Rumble". His level design philosophy can be summed up simply as, "Whatever seems cool, will be cool in a level. Most of my direct inspirations come from movies and pictures. The others come either in those twilight hours between sleep and awakeness, or under the spell of a small dose of Vodka," says Gray.

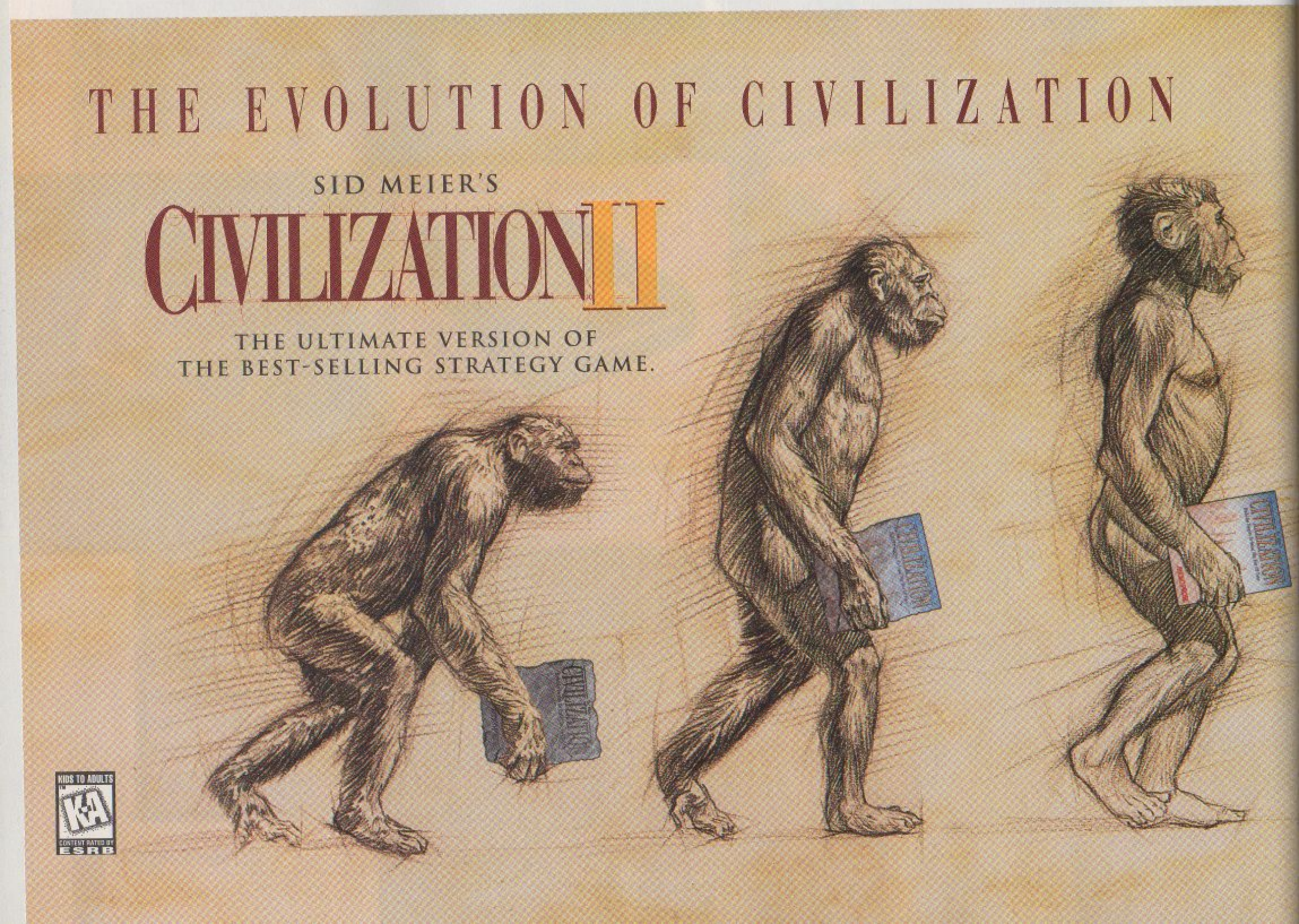
Balancing single player and multi-player action into the levels is a significant challenge, and Gray admits, "The two are diametrically opposed. Single play levels are large and complicated and offer the player lots of intricate areas to explore. Single play levels also have a "critical path" such that the player is lead along a crescendoing build-up of action and reward until being let off at the exit. This critical path is usually linear in order to control the player's access. Multi-play levels are the opposite. They are always much smaller and are best if all areas are close together and immediately accessible by all players all the time. A balance between the two can be done, but usually aspects of each are sacrificed. Bottom line — it's always best to pick your target

L.A. Rumble is one of the great *Duke Nukem 3D* Match levels designed by Richard Gray.

audience and design your level for them particularly."

His personal favorite levels for DukeMatch are Hollywood Holocaust, Red Light District, Movie Set and Fahreneit. "But my ultimate favorite is 'Flood Zone' because it uses all three environments to their utmost (land, air, and water)."

But despite an intimate knowledge of the levels, the Level Lord is not the reigning *Duke* Match champion at Apogee. "I'd say it's a toss up between Allen Blum (the other level designer) and Chuck Jones (artist)."



Digital Warfare

New book offers deathmatch tips

Craig Wessel has obviously spent a good deal of time playing multi-player deathmatch games: "A word here about whining. It is embarrassing to admit, but you will hear all manners of excuses given for bad play. 'I didn't know the level' is not an excuse. If you played a map you didn't know, well, that's your fault. If you play a map you don't know, expect to lose, and don't whine about it."

"Digital Warfare," a new strategy guide by Wessel, offers a comprehensive guide to winning multi-player deathmatch games. He offers a good deal of fundamental advice for the beginning to average player, such as how to properly configure your keyboard and how to do the circle strafe. Other tips include: Keep moving, know your maps, learn all the weapons, and mix up your strategies to keep your opponents off balance.

Can books like these offer a shortcut to success? "Digital Warfare" offers help for the death match cannon fodder of the world.

There is also a good deal of useful technical information on how to set up multi-player games on the Internet, explaining such things as Kali, TCP/IP and a listing of dozens of web and ftp sites dedicated to multi-player gaming.

Also, the book has chapters dedicated to each of the best of the multi-player games: *Doom, Heretic, Hexen, Rise of the Triad, MechWarrior 2* and *Descent.* Unfortunately some of the more recent games, such as *Duke Nukem 3D* and *Quake*, have only scant coverage.

Like most computer books these days, "Digital Warfare" also includes a CD-ROM. On it you will find a number of *Doom* WADs, Kali and iFrag, DWANGO client software, and a number of FAQs and other text files about the games culled from the Internet. Another interesting item is a section on Death Tag, a multi-player *Doom* variant that Wessel helped create, involving two-on-two play in special WAD files.

While of limited value to the experienced player, the book is a thorough primer for those who have been missing out on multi-player mayhem. "Digital Warfare" is priced at $27.95, and is from MIS: Press, 115 West 18th Street, New York, NY 10011.

Continued from page 54

challenge. You can challenge up to three computer opponents at a time, or go head-to-head via modem or network against your friends.

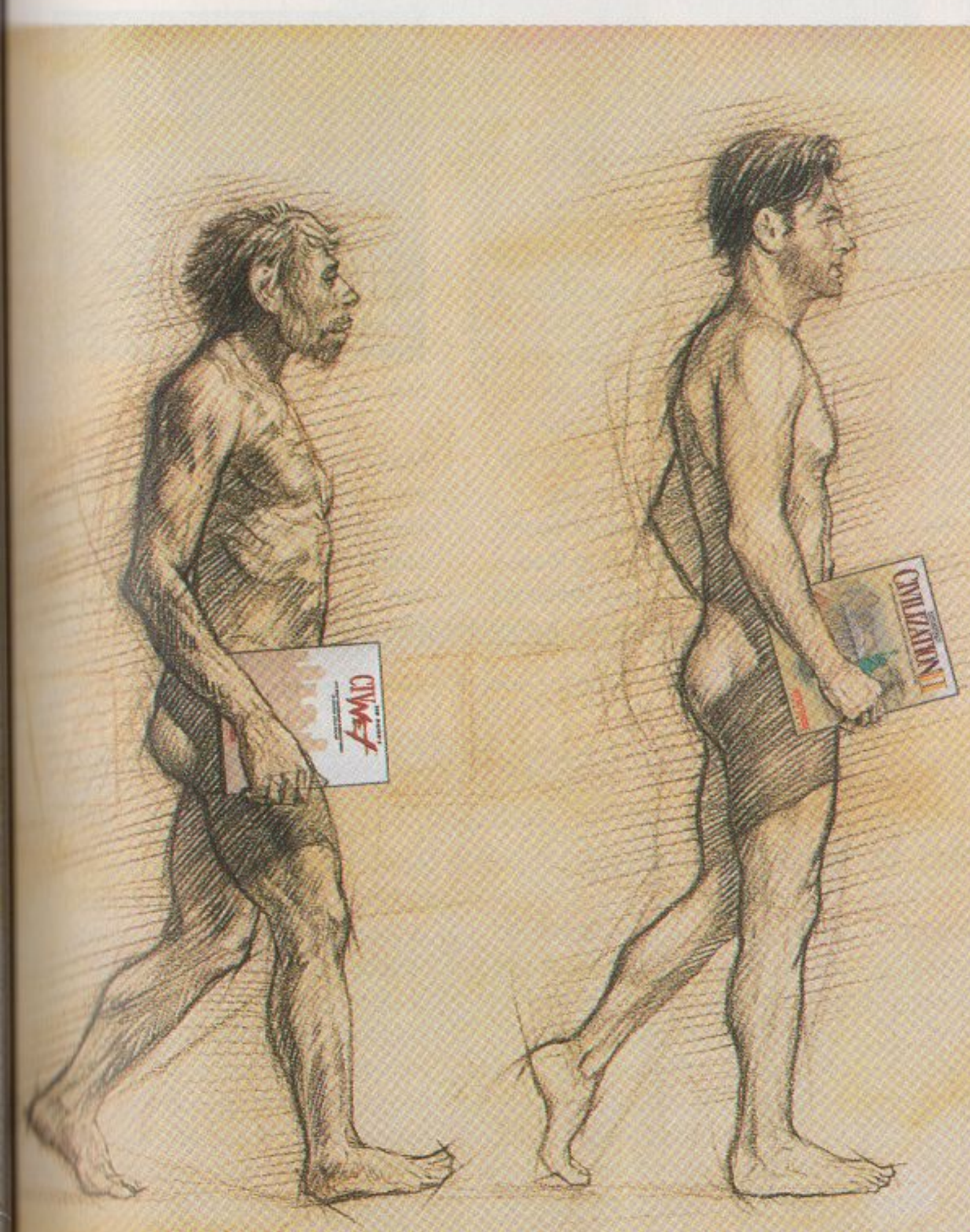
Fragile Alliance

Another upcoming title from Interplay is *Fragile Alliance*, a new real-time strategy combat game in the mold of *C&C*, but like *StarCraft*, it will take place in a science fiction setting. The game features six different alien races, Super VGA graphics, and multi-player options. Developed by Gremlin, it should be out toward the end of the year.

Kofun

From newcomer Enteractive

Continued on page 56



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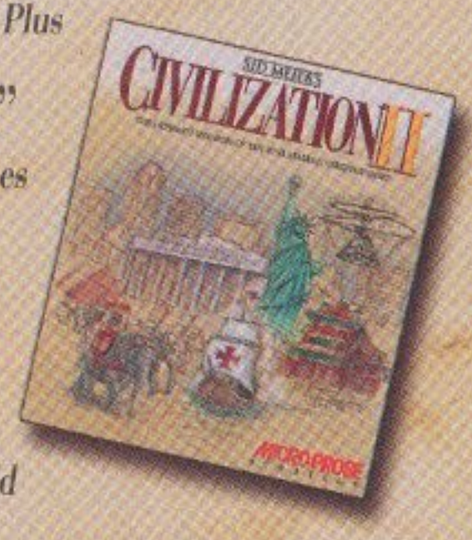

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Product Information Number 132

Continued from page 55

comes *The Sacred Mirror of Kofun*, the world's first underwater mystery adventure game on CD-ROM. The player is cast in the role of an adventurer aboard the futuristic ship Antares, where they are challenged to explore the South Pacific and gather clues into the nature of the mysterious Mirror of Kofun. Replete with puzzles and on-location video, and assembled with the assistance of Jean-Michel Cousteau (son of the famed sea explorer, Jacques Cousteau), the game promises to be an interesting new graphic adventure.

Explore the high seas with the son of diving legend Jacques Cousteau in *The Sacred Mirror of Kofun.*

Surface Tension

New from GameTek is *Surface Tension*, a flight sim where players will take on the role of a spacefighter battling the evil megacorporation LYNX. Your mission is to teleport from planetoid to planetoid, stopping their evil mining operations and battling their defense forces.

Among the game's highlights are SVGA graphics, true 64k colors, and fully-rendered 3D terrain.

Other new titles in the works from GameTek include *Mutant Penguins*, a side-scrolling arcade game, and *Soul Hunt*, a new graphic adventure with a horror plot.

PCG

Return of the Monster Machines

Compaq unveils fall lineup

The new Presario 8000 series will go up to 200 mHz

It seems like only yesterday that that shiny new 90Mhz Pentium was the fastest machine that money could buy. But the times they are a' changing, and yesterday's hot rod is today's junker.

One sign of this is the new machines hitting the market. Compaq has just announced its new lineup of PCs, making using of Pentium processors with clock speeds ranging from 120 Mhz (the new "low end") to high end machines equipped with Intel's newest 200 Mhz Pentium.

This new, expanded Presario line introduces a host of new machines ranging in price from $1,700 to $3,500. While this covers a wide range of products, it's the 8000 series that Compaq is most proud of. Billed as the "Ultimate Multimedia Machine," the 8000 series is aimed at high end power users who want the most bang for their multimedia buck. The most powerful in the series has a 200 Mhz processor, 32 megabytes of EDO RAM, and a 33.6/kbps modem.

And of interest to gamers, the machine's display is powered by a PowerVR graphics card. This card has a total of four megabytes of graphics memory (two megs of EDO video RAM, and two megs of SDRAM 3D texture memory). Along with the accelerator will be two PowerVR-enhanced 3D games.

For sound, the 8000 series features some hefty JBL speakers and a separate subwoofer. It will also use the InterWave wavetable sound card from AMD. (For more information on the new InterWave card, see our August 1996 Eyewitness section).

The 8000 series will vary in cost from $2,500 to $3,500, depending on the exact configuration of your machine. For more information, contact Compaq at *http://www.compaq.com.*

Quake *Rocks the Web*

Mpath to host id's latest game

Mpath is now the place to be for some good *Quake* multi-player action.

Mpath, one of several fledgling online gaming networks, scored a major coup this month by announcing a deal with id Software that will put id's latest hit, *Quake*, on their Internet gaming service. By securing *Quake*, the heir apparent to *Doom*, Mpath feels they will offer gamers the kind of action they've been missing on the Internet.

Now people without access to local area networks will be able to participate in multi-player fun on web-based services such as Mpath.

Additionally, id Software will make use of the Mpath technology. "Mpath was at the right place, at the right time, with the right technology," says Jay Wilbur, "biz guy" at id Software. "As a result, hundreds of thousands of gamers using Windows 95 will enjoy multi-player *Quake* over the Internet."

The deal between id and Mpath is not exclusive, however, and there is a good chance *Quake* will show up on other online game services as well, as well as the numerous free *Quake* servers around the web.

VictorMaxx Abandons VR Gear

Online gaming is top priority

VictorMaxx has announced that it is leaving the virtual reality field, instead making a move to develop online games. "On the hardware end, we were not getting the volume necessary to maintain the overhead," says Richard Currie, president and CEO of VictorMaxx. He explains that the timing of their products' releases was making it difficult to turn a profit. Instead VictorMaxx has turned to Autoduel Online, a multi-player vehicle combat game based on Steve Jackson Games' *Car Wars*. In *Car Wars*, players battled each other in armed automobiles in a post-apocalyptic world.

Although the computer version of *Car Wars* was originally designed for location-based entertainment centers, the availability of 3D accelerator cards and the rise of online gaming networks has prompted VictorMaxx to target the multi-player market. VictorMaxx recently settled a lawsuit with Forte in which VictorMaxx agreed to license proprietary head-tracking technology from Forte.

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Product Information Number 139

Out of the Ashes ...

Advanced Gravis announces Firebird 2

Advanced Gravis makes good joysticks, and the Firebird was no exception. Competitively priced and ergonomically designed, it enjoyed many a hour of gaming with satisfied users. But with the introduction of Windows 95 and advances in ergonomics some changes were in order, and as a result, Gravis has introduced the Firebird 2.

The new Firebird is compatible with Windows 95, and it includes a drag-and-drop Control Console, which allows easy customization of complex keyboard layouts and configuration keys to the joystick. The Firebird 2 is also pre-configured for a number of popular games, allowing users to bypass a lot of setup time.

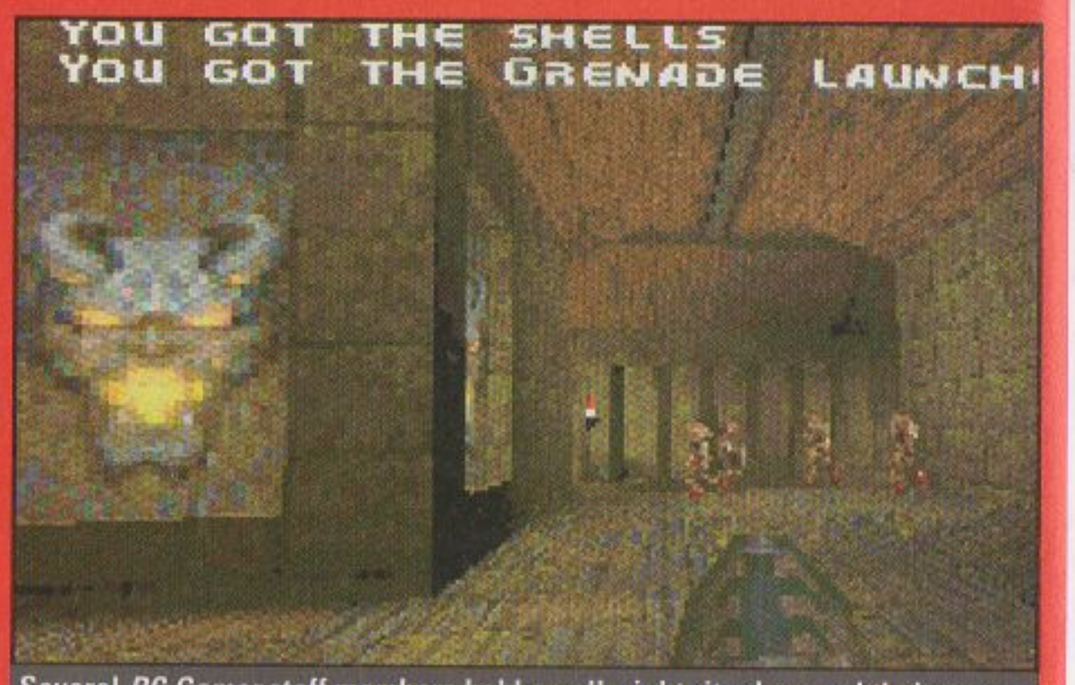
As a joystick, the new Firebird features thirteen buttons, an eight-way directional hat switch, and an ergonomic design. Over one hundred keystrokes can be assigned to different buttons, making it easy to use cheat codes, chat macros and other complex character strings while playing intense action games. Additionally, the Firebird features a redesigned handle for greater comfort.

"The ergonomics of this new handle design provide a much more realistic interaction with the game," says Mike Cooper, President and CEO of Advanced Gravis. The Firebird 2 has a suggested retail price of $89.95. For more information, you can contact Advanced Gravis at (604) 431-5020.

The Gravis Firebird 2 features an ergonomic design.

The PC Gamer Playlist

Like a well-equipped paratrooper, the **properly-prepared network warrior** must be armed with essential battle gear before entering the blood-stained arena of network gaming. Most important are **headphones**, to hide ambient sound cues from your hated rivals; a six-pack of **caffeine**, for mid-game rejuvenation; and an **old-fashioned keyboard** with no macro or Windows keys, to avoid being the clutz-fingered dolt who locks up the game and is punished by being sent to the penalty box and forced to read back issues of *Typing Today*.



Several *PC Gamer* staff members held an all-night ritual around their computers when the *Quake* shareware was first released. They frighten us.

1.	*Quake Shareware*	everyone
2.	*WarCraft II*	Jason, Joe, Robin
3.	*Duke Nukem 3D*	Joe, Dean , Dan, Quintin
4.	*C&C Covert Ops*	Todd, Jason, Joe
5.	*Diablo Beta*	Todd, Mike
6.	*Lemming Paintball*	Todd, Joe, Mike
7.	*Fire Fight*	Mike, Gary
8.	*AH-64D Longbow*	Dan, Mike
9.	*Albion*	Mike, Lisa
10.	*Death From Above*	Mike, Todd

Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On

A new protocol for forced feedback introduced

Immersion Corporation, one of the leaders in the arena of forced feedback peripheral technology, has produced the I-Force protocol, a new standard for forced feedback in joysticks that a number of manufacturers have already adopted.

Forced feedback is an advancement in joystick technology that allows games to send data back to a joystick, causing lurches, rolls and shaking in the stick to simulate effects in the game environment. You can see this type of technology today in videogame arcades, where machines shake and rattle when players are hit.

Immersion's I-Force protocol was presented at the most recent Computer Game Developer's Conference, and the first peripherals equipped with I-Force should be out this summer.

Need for Speed is one of the first games to use forced feedback protocols.

Some of the first products that will be available will be a forced-feedback driving wheel from Interactive IO and joysticks from CH Products and Advanced Gravis.

The CH sticks should be available by Christmas, while the Gravis line will follow in early '97.

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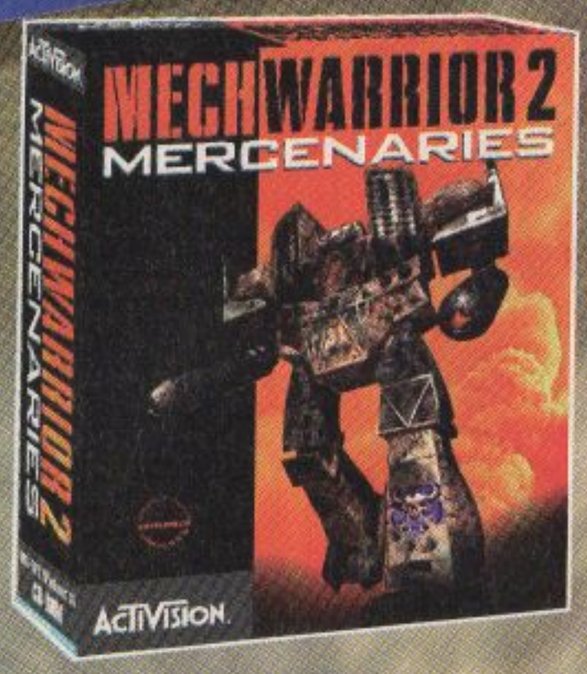

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Product Information Number 93

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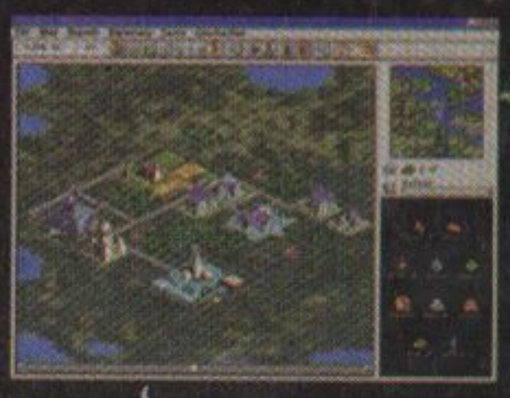

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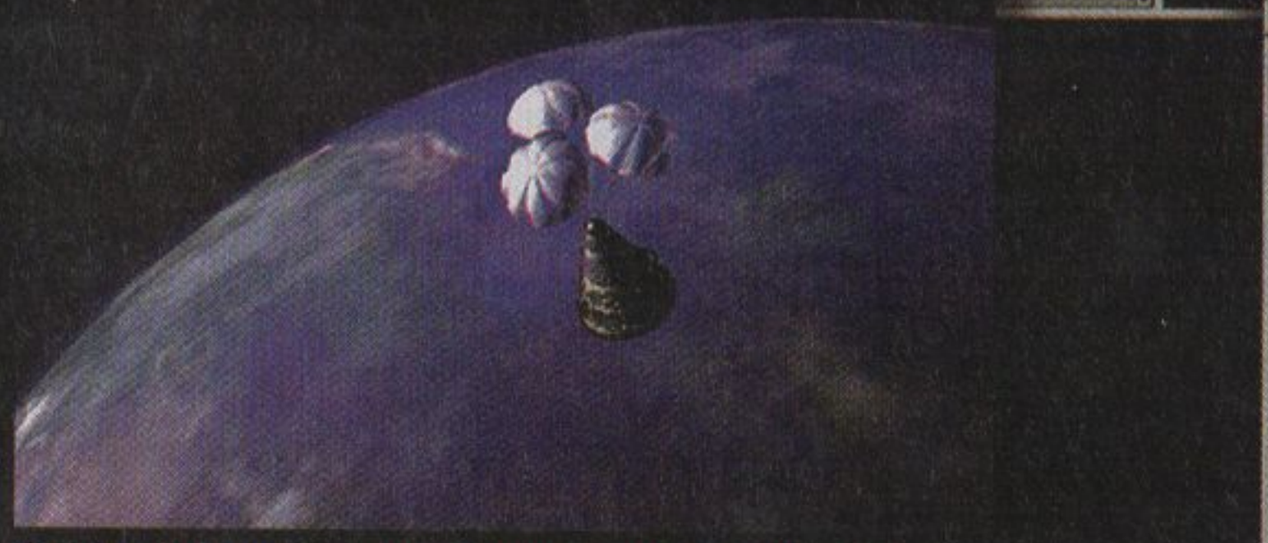

The Struggle Begins. Each species lands their first colony, equally-equipped with basic supplies - and a powerful instinct to survive. Will your drive and abilities extend to total world domination?

Look for the Deadlock playable demo in select magazines or online at http://www.accolade.com

Explore and Expand Your World. Scouting areas to expand is just one of the ways to build an effective empire. Mines work best in rocky regions. Cracked earth is best for producing energy. Ancient ruins and artifacts hold strategically useful technologies.

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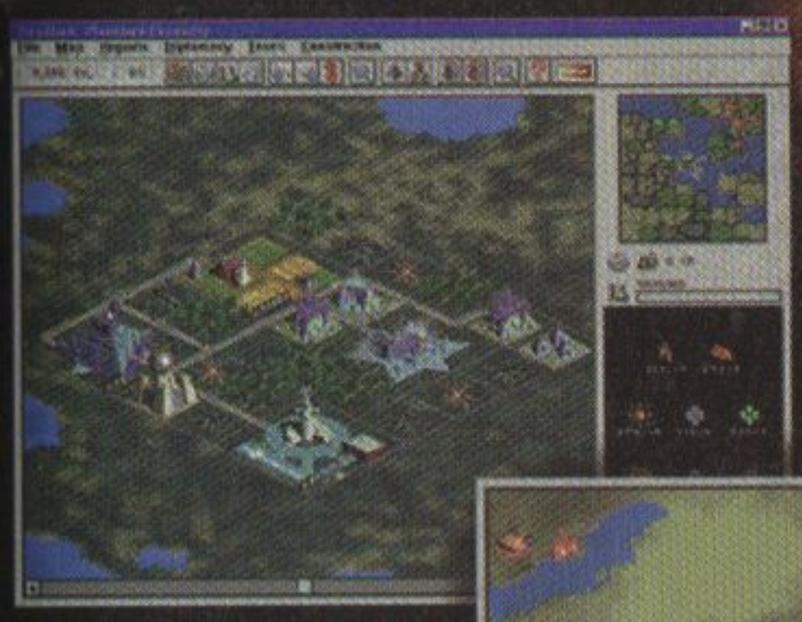

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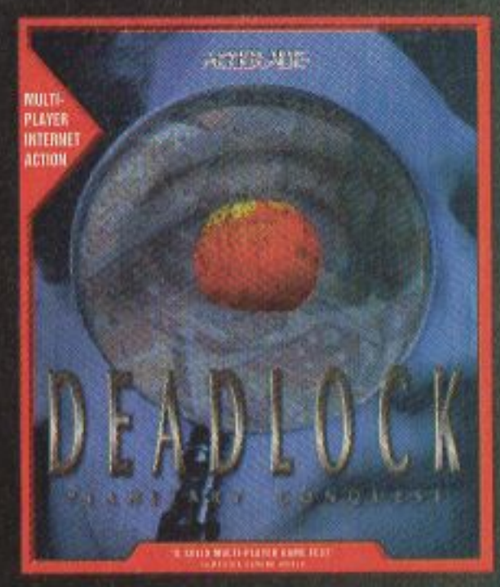

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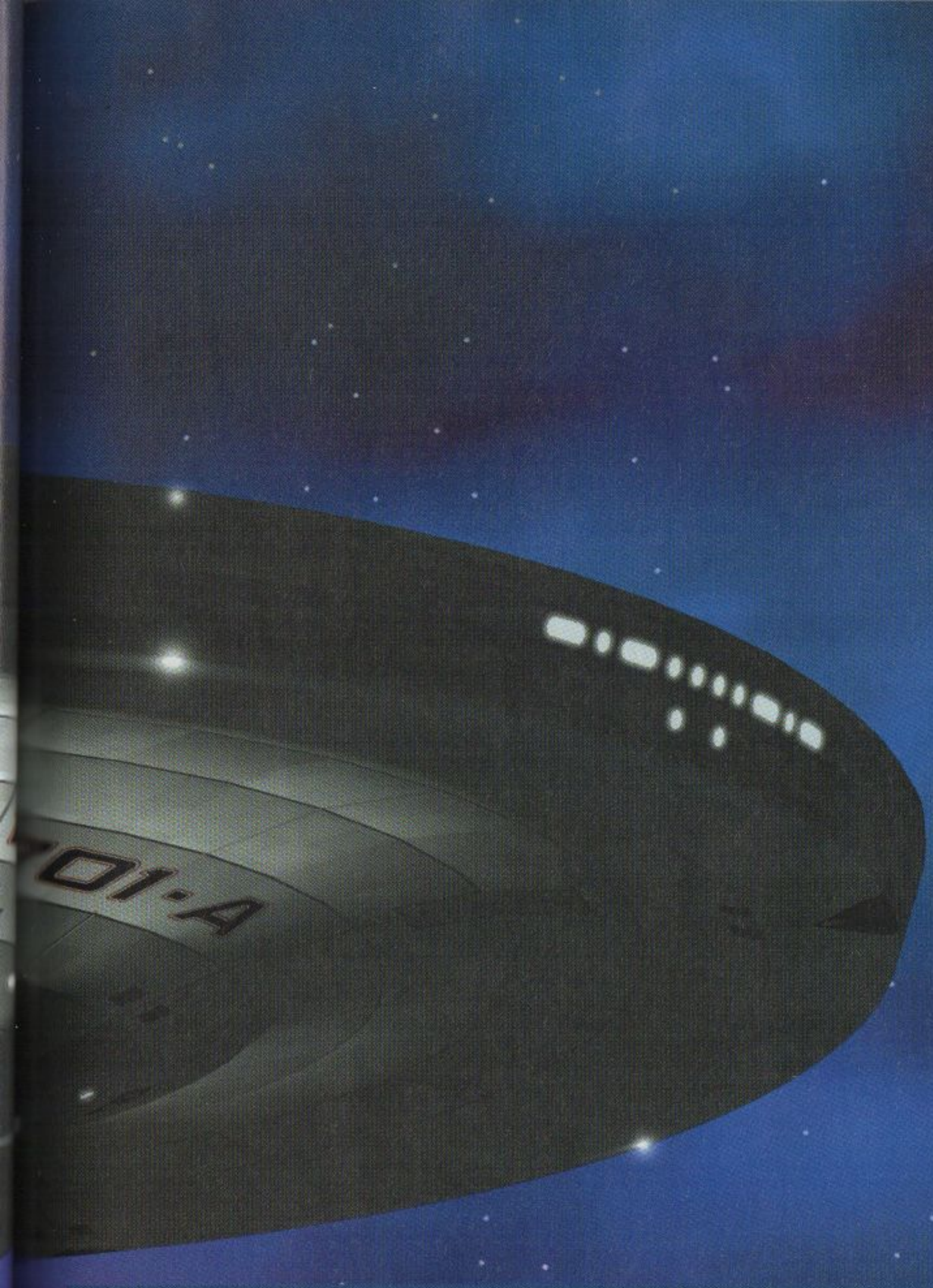

Thirty years after it was born, twenty-seven years after its first death, Star Trek is bigger than ever. It's hard to believe that this initially troubled science-fiction show has risen from the ashes to become one of our most pervasive cultural icons. The exploits of Federation captains, Klingons, Romulans, and the rest of the Trek pantheon have reached mythic proportions, with so many levels and such extensive elaboration that they have taken on their own life. The stories, characters, worlds, races, technologies, religions, and languages related to Trek have each been examined and expanded upon to almost ridiculous levels. There are college courses teaching Klingon, for God's sake.

What about Trek has such a hold on people's imaginations? Some would say modern culture needs new myths, others that the strong moral code or heroic stature of the characters is at the heart of its success. Whatever the answer, Trek endures. A little channel surfing could find the classic "Star Trek," "Star Trek: The Next Generation," "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine," "Star Trek: Voyager," an animated series, or one of the seven feature films on any given day. Novels, comic books, fan fiction, and countless conventions all do their part to keep the faith alive and expand upon the Trek world.

It's only natural, therefore, that Star Trek, in all its incarnations, should be aggressively interactive. As Paramount Vice-President Neil Newman observes, "Star Trek has stood for the ultimate in technology, and technology as a positive force in people's lives, from the beginning. So of course Paramount's has long

ENGAGE!

As Star Trek celebrates its 30th anniversary this month, the software side of science fiction's most durable dynasty looks stronger than ever, with four hot new Trek titles in the works.

BY T. LIAM MCDONALD

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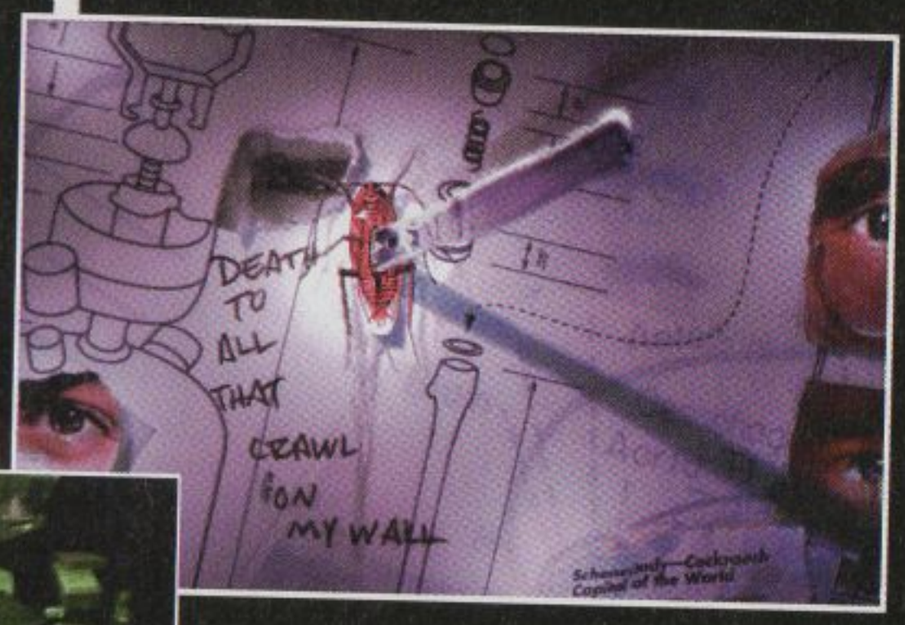

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Interplay's *Starfleet Academy* features dozens of attractively-rendered ship interiors like this one, but it's how accurately the game simulates Star Trek ship-to-ship combat that will decide its fate.

> "Star Trek has always stood for the ultimate in technology, so Paramount has long been interested in helping create interactive titles."
>
> *— Neil Newman, Paramount*

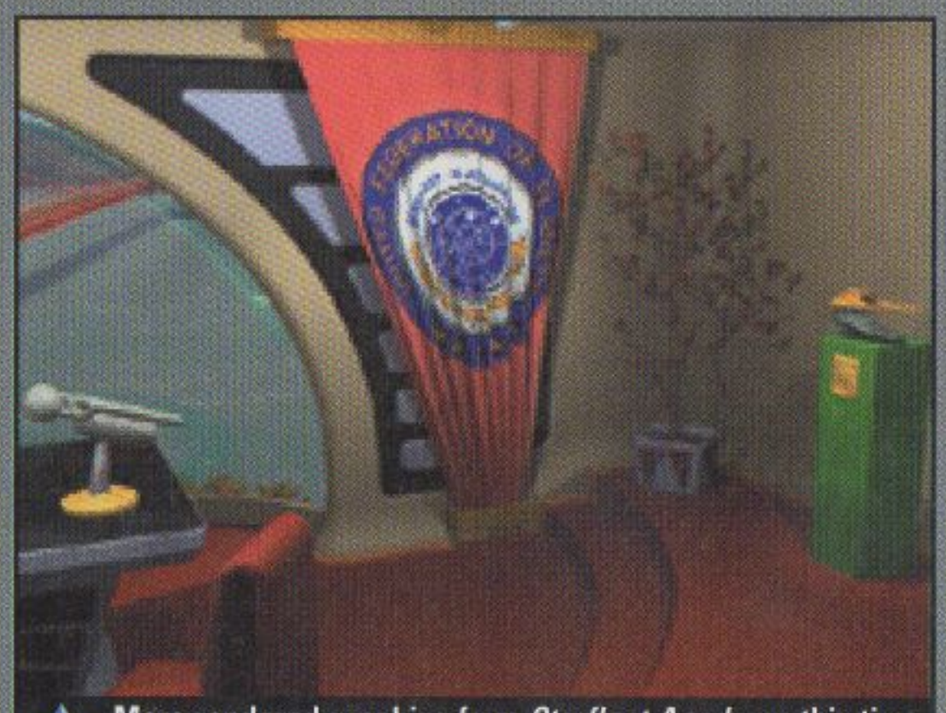
been interested in helping create interactive titles." One of the very first 'multimedia' titles was the Star Trek sound source utility, which packaged audio clips from the show along with a screen saver.

While Paramount has always been eager to expand and market their Trek worlds, they have also kept a very tight reign on their licences. No surprise here, since they happen to be the most profitable film and television licenses in history, racking up about $1 billion. Paramount retains full approval of every element every step of the way, from game concept and character art, right down to what inserts go in the box. A small army of Trek experts is kept aboard to go over all the elements that go into a game. Characters must behave in a consistent way, and there are certain rules to be followed: No major characters can die, no heroic characters can engage in unheroic activity, the timelines and world histories must be accurate. Internal consistency, from book to book, game to game, show to show, is crucial for a franchise with so many elements.

Certain types of gaming were ruled out from the beginning because of the nature of Trek. Action-oriented killing games have always been verboten, so a *Dark Forces*-type Trek game is out. As Newman points out, "One of the interesting things about Star Trek was that it was never a shoot-em-up, and early on that was considered to be a real detriment to the property. People really like the characters, that's why Star Trek is appealing, but it doesn't always make it the most compelling action property. I think this made developers more innovative in coming up with scenarios that were appropriate to Star Trek, which made the whole experience much richer. Ultimately we ended up getting people's best work because of that, and what was at first seen as a detriment has ended up serving the franchise extraordinarily well."

But who gets to make a Trek game? It helps if Paramount has an ownership interest in the company, as they do with Viacom and Simon & Schuster. But quality of the work is always the overriding factor, according to Newman. "We want companies that know how to make a good game. The quality of the programming and the amount of resources which will be devoted to the game were also crucial factors." In the end, licenses went to four companies: Interplay got the classic Trek titles, Spectrum HoloByte (now MicroProse) got the Next Generation feature and TV tie-ins, Simon & Schuster got reference works and "race-based" tie-ins like *Klingon* and *Borg*, and Viacom New Media got Deep Space Nine and Voyager.

Each of these companies has already produced Star Trek titles, and is on the cusp of completing more. As we close in on the 30th Anniversary of the show this September, we can look forward to Kirk, Sulu, Chekov, Picard, Riker, Janeway, and those creepy Borgs popping up on our monitors in a wide-ranging variety of games. One note about each of these games: the cast members have participated across the board in each product where they're needed. Malcolm MacDowell and William Shatner even did voice-overs for their roles in *Star Trek: Generations*.



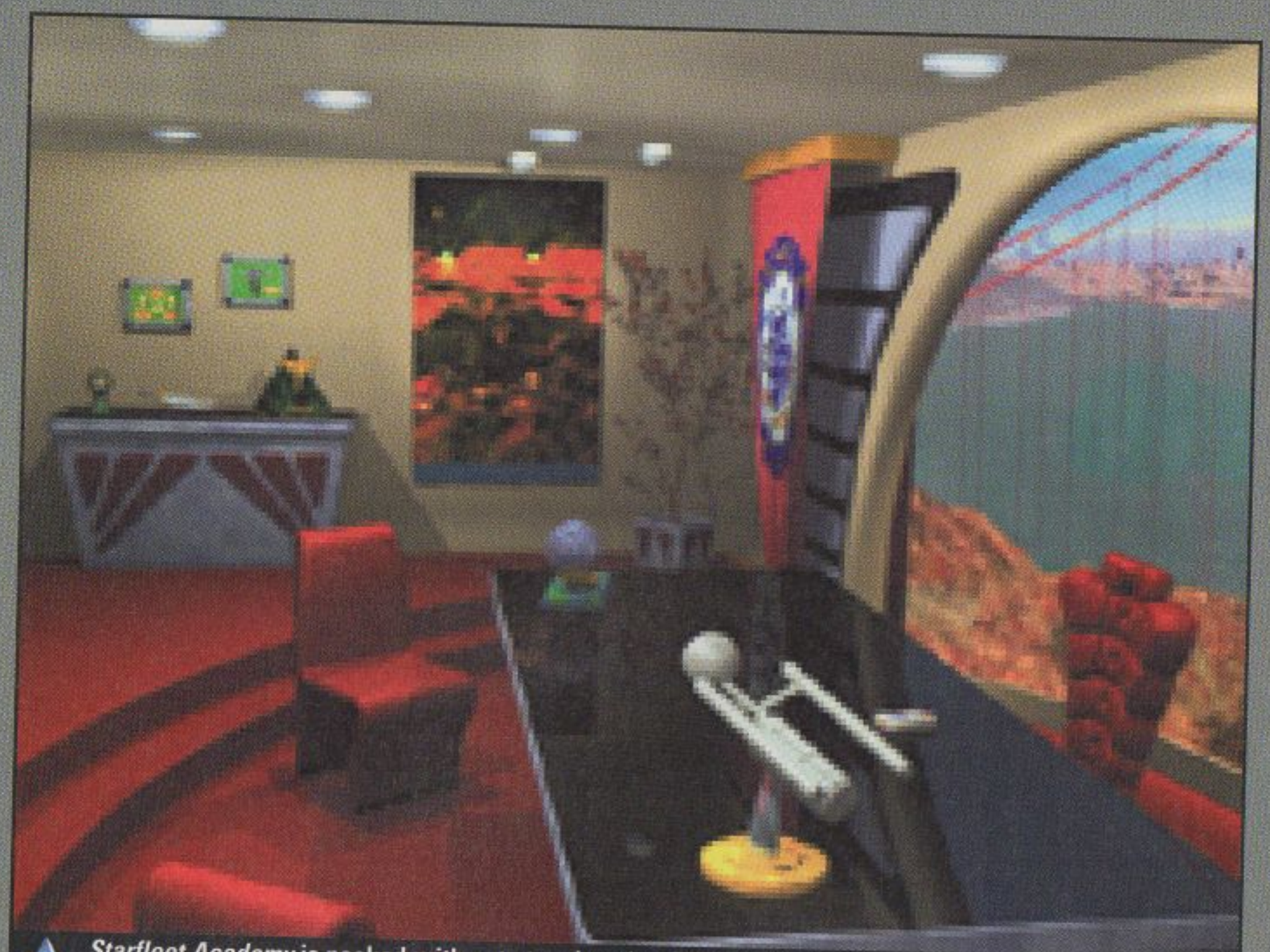
More rendered graphics from *Starfleet Academy*, this time the cadet's quarters where the player's studies are based.

STARFLEET ACADEMY

Rusty Buchert has been working on Interplay's *Starfleet Academy* for three long, difficult years. Sidetracked by his Producer roles in both *Descent* titles and the previous classic Trek adventure, *Judgement Rites*, as well as being slowed by the mammoth technical hurdles, Buchert and his programmers are finally turning their full attention to giving Star Trek fans their first true Starship simulator.

Interplay wants to put you in the captain's chair for over thirty missions, commanding everything from the lowly Oberth class vessels up to Excelsior. What they are offering is something similar to the Kobayashi Maru simulator as seen in Wraith of Kahn. For non-Trekkies, the Kobayashi Maru is the final test simulation for Starfleet Captains (James Kirk is the only person to pass, and he cheated). It's a lose/lose scenario designed to test extreme pressure in futile situations. You'll actually get to play the Kobayashi Maru, but more to the point, you'll be in that big, important captain's chair through numerous engagements. And it hasn't been real easy putting you there, either.

"If you want to do it really right,"



Starfleet Academy is packed with cute touches that Star Trek fans will appreciate, such as the models of vintage Federation ships that decorate many of the locations around the Academy building.

Buchert says, "you wind up doing what I call a 'yellem' interface, where you're just yelling out orders to the crew members, and that gets old real fast. People want to sit down, sidle up, and feel like they're doing something with the ship. We spent 18 months working on the 'yellem' interface and it just didn't work. So we're kind of combining a little bit of the Wing Commander elements in terms of controls. You have to give the gamer control of the ship: let them blast phasers and fire photon torpedoes."

The problem facing the team was the size of the Starship, which is a large, ungainly vehicle in space, and not a nimble TIE Fighter. Gameplay is not going to be fast and furious, but at the same time it has to be paced high enough to keep it interesting and fun. Hitting the right balance has been a chore. The result will be more akin to a submarine simulation like *Silent Hunter*, where you have numerous systems at your controls and must set up attacks. Using a combination of joystick and keyboard, you have access to engineering, damage, control, helm, and so on. Each station is staffed by AI-controlled crewmen with various priorities that you set, such as which damaged areas are fixed first. If you don't care for the way something is being handled, such as rerouting power, you can just jump in and handle it yourself.

The wrap-around story places you in the role of a Starfleet cadet, dealing with various elements of cadet training and life. Various narrative elements crop up, such as a political movement, the possibility of war with the Klingons, and contact with a new alien race that no one quite knows how to deal with. Throughout the game, you get guest lectures and briefings from Kirk, Sulu, and Chekov, complete with video scenes of Shatner, George Takei, and Walter Koenig. If you distinguish yourself, Kirk might even take a special interest in your career.

"People will try to tractor beam whole space stations if they can, and we have to plan for things like that."

— *Rusty Buchert, producer,* Starfleet Academy

You'll find yourself in the tiny Oberth science vessel, the Constitution, and the Excelsior, pitted against several dozen Romulan, Klingon, and other enemy ships. Full modem and head-to-head play is planned as well, and Buchert is working on deathmatch-like modem games that would, for instance, pit four Birds of Prey against an Excelsior. Not everything will be blowing stuff up, though: science and diplomatic missions will make for diverse mission structures. For instance, in one mission you have to terraform a planet, which involves firing a specialized, bacteria-laden warhead into a volcano to help create atmosphere (of course something will go wrong). One tricky scenario to pull off from a development standpoint sounds like the best: a tense, cat-and-mouse chase through a nebula.

Creating a new 3D engine for *Starfleet Academy* was a snap, according to Buchert. The hard parts of the design, and the ones which cause the most headaches and delays, were the unexpected elements of controls and protocols. Federation rules are very specific about who can and can't be fired upon, and a captain who break them brings not only the wrath of Starfleet command down on his head, but also of Paramount. "The problem is that if you give someone an object in an environment, they are going to do everything they can to that object. They'll use their sensors on, their tractor beams, they may even try run into it like a cue ball just to see what happens. In most sims, you have two choices: shoot it, or be shot by it. We have many more, and the tractor beam has been a major headache. People will try to tractor beam whole space stations if they can, and we have to plan for things like that," Buchert says.

With some luck and a lot of hard work, all this planning will finally give us a Star Trek sim worthy of a place beside the Wing Commander and Star Wars games.

GENERATIONS

Last year's *Star Trek: Generations* movie was enough to give even hard-hearted Trekkies a chill. The first feature film for

Generations producer Simon Finch is pleased with the game's direction. "We took aspects from the movie, such as the basic premise, but then deviated from the plot."

Everybody's doing it... *Generations* features sprawling 3D action sequences, but shooting isn't always the answer.

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GT Interactive Software

CD-ROM

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KIDS TO ADULTS K-A CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Product Information Number 114

STAR TREK
INTERACTIVE TIMELINE

The evolution of PC gaming has seen a similar evolution of Star Trek titles, both famous and infamous.

The Kobayashi Alternative (Simon & Schuster)
One of the first officially licensed Trek games, this text-based adventure was designed by top Trek novelist Diane Duane and featured an intriguing "window" interface. RATING: 7

The Promethean Prophecy (Simon & Schuster)
This adventure did away with *Kobayashi*'s unusual interface, going with a more traditional text parser. RATING: 5

The Rebel Universe (Simon & Schuster)
This lackluster adventure is notable only as the first Trek graphic adventure. Its rudimentary graphics were almost as uninspired as its story line. RATING: 3

Star Trek 25th Anniversary (Interplay)
Interplay's adventure game was the first to really capture the spirit of the original TV show, uniting the classic crew (complete with all the actors' voices in the CD version) in several missions presented like TV episodes. RATING: 10

Star Trek: Judgment Rites (Interplay)
Interplay's sequel once again featured the voices of the original cast and was played out in a series of episodes, but this time a common thread connected the missions. RATING: 9

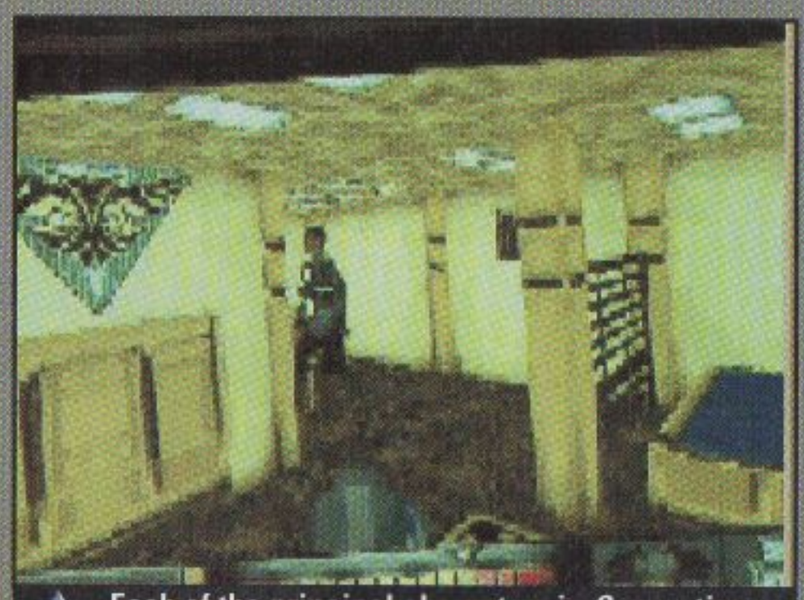
Star Trek Interactive Technical Manual (Simon & Schuster)
What Trek fan wouldn't want a guided tour of the Enterprise? The *Interactive Technical Manual* took us through the corridors and cabins of the 1701-D, the real star of "Star Trek: The Next Generation." Quicktime VR segments shot on the actual sets let virtual visitors pan through 360-degree views of the bridge and other well-known locations. RATING: 7

Star Trek: A Final Unity (Spectrum HoloByte)
Spectrum HoloByte worked long (very long) and hard to create this adventure game based on "Star Trek: The Next Generation." Interface and compatibility problems gave it a rocky start, but it ultimately sold half a million copies. RATING: 6

Star Trek Omnipedia (Simon & Schuster)
An interactive encyclopedia of all things Trek. One of the really creative uses of multimedia technology for an encyclopedic work, the Omnipedia featured extensive speech and video clips, and even responded to limited voice commands. RATING: 8

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine: Harbinger (Viacom)
A murder mystery set aboard the Deep Space Nine station and featuring the voices of the show's cast, this Viacom title offered an intriguing premise but low interactivity. About as interesting as a typical episode of the show's first season. RATING: 4

Star Trek: Klingon (Simon & Schuster)
Part Klingon language trainer, part full-motion-video adventure, Klingon was handsomely filmed and designed. It was directed by Jonathan Frakes and starred Robert O'Reilly, better known as Gowron of "Next Generation" and "Deep Space Nine," but didn't offer a lot of interactivity. The cultural resource and language training disc was good for a few short-term laughs, however. RATING: 3



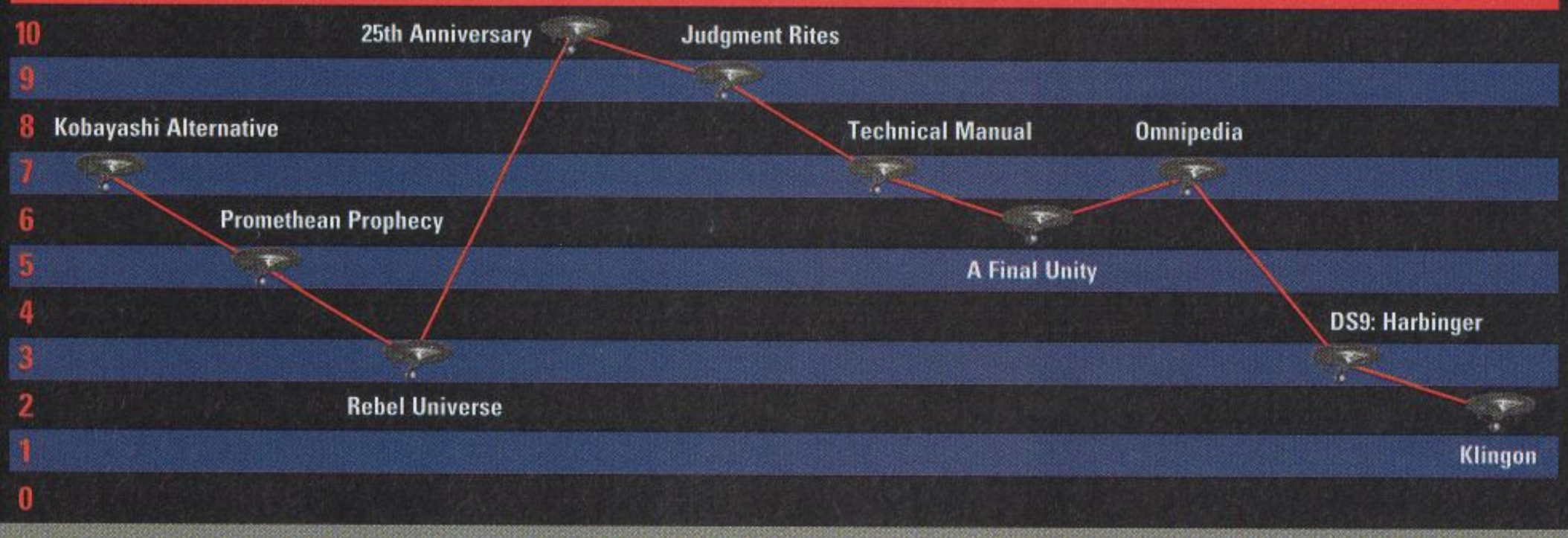
Each of the principal characters in *Generations* gets to go on their own 3D away mission.

the Next Generation crew brought Captain Kirk through a ribbon in time to help Picard stop madman Malcolm MacDowell. Ending with a ripsnorting crash of the Enterprise into the planet surface and the quirky death of Kirk, this feature jump-started the Next Gen crew in a whole new sequence of big-budget features.

In the film, Malcolm MacDowell plays Soran, who once experienced the ecstasy caused by a dimensional rift known as the Nexus. He'll do anything to be swallowed by the ribbon, including blowing up stars to help guide it to him. He must be stopped before he shoots any more trilithium probes into stars to blow them up.

The challenge facing Designer Simon Finch and the team at MicroProse was to turn this film into an interactive game without merely making it a rehash of the film. "If you want to see the movie," Finch says, "go rent the video: it's much better quality. We took aspects from the movie, such as the general premise, but then deviated drastically from the plot. Things can turn out similar in the end, or they can turn out completely differently. The main element that we used was the chase: Soran is racing to destroy the stars, and the crew of the

RATINGS AT A GLANCE



"It will be like the show, where you say, 'Target front shields, Mr. Worf,' and he does it."

— *Simon Finch, producer,* Star Trek: Generations

As Geordi LaForge, the player will be called upon to use all his technical ingenuity. But can you run a level three diagnostic?

Enterprise is trying to stop him. We've expanded that. In the movie he successfully destroys two stars, and in our game it's potentially more than that. There are many worlds you can visit that never appeared in the movie."

Gamers expecting an experience like Spectrum's first Next Gen title, *A Final Unity*, will be surprised to find that nothing has carried over from the previous game. A whole new team of designers and writers are at work on *Generations*, and rather than create a traditional object-oriented adventure game, they are making what Finch calls an "exploration-action game. The movie was more action-oriented than most Star Trek films, so we wanted to convey that level of excitement as well. So there are space combat sequences as well as the exploration paths, and even the exploration paths have some combat. There's always something keeping the pressure very high."

Generations will be played through three primary elements: stellar cartography, first person adventuring, and space combat. The stellar cartography section is the core of the game. It's where you receive most of the clues about different events, and where you give orders to the crew. Based on the elaborate set built for the movie, the cartography screen shows Picard and Data standing on a platform with the map before them. Ten different solar systems are shown on the map, and within any given map you'll find stars, planets, and other ships.

By zooming into these maps and analyzing them in more detail, you try to find where Soran has gone by scanning systems, planets or ships. These scans can be long-range if the planet is in another solar system, and therefore not as accurate. Or you can order the ship to a solar system to scan the planets up close for more detail. Using stellar cartography you can also simulate the destruction of stars to help determine what path the Nexus Ribbon must take. Through these and other means, you try to track down Soran, and then pursue him. If you find him aboard a ship, or if you happen to encounter another ship along the way, a space combat sequence begins. If he turns upon a planet, you go down for an away mission.

Learning their lessons from the sometimes awkward interface of *Final Unity*, the MicroProse team has conglomerated most of the info and commands for space combat into one screen rather than several. Space combat is seen through a first-person window, as if you were standing behind Worf. They're working on creating fully light-sourced, 3D, 360 degree of movement combat sequences with a high level of tension. Since the Enterprise is a starship and can't zip around like a fighter, the result will be more like what Finch calls a "tactical action game. It's far more like a naval tactical battle. The feeling we wanted to get was that tension they captured so wonderfully in *The Wrath of Kahn*: that kind of space battle with maneuvering. So we added things we'd wanted to do in *Unity* and couldn't, like targeting specific areas of the enemy ship. It will be like the show, where you say, 'Target front shields, Mr. Worf,' and he does it."

The game producers were provided with complete blueprints of the movie sets to ensure an accurate feel in the 3D bits.

Where would any self-repecting Star Trek be without mysterious objects like this to intrigue the player?

The final element of the adventure will be away missions on planets. This time out, you have a first person view on the scene, rather than the standard adventure view of the team. The lower half of the screen is inventory, tricorder readings, and other interface elements. There is at least one ground mission for everyone, including Captain Kirk, and each mission is undertaken by the one crew member best-suited to handle that mission. For example, at one point you'll have to infiltrate a Romulan base. The best character for that mission is Troi, who spent an entire episode disguised as a member of Romulan secret police. So Troi goes into the base in disguise and with Romulan equipment on an espionage mission.

These away missions are meant to have more tension than the standard adventure game, and one contributing factor is a combat interface that allows you to use your phaser. You might find yourself in a firefight with Romulans, but, as Finch says, "that's not the key to the game. We put people in situations and let them do what they like. Now, you might be able to go around with your phaser set on vaporize and act like Rambo, but you will soon discover that is not the way to solve the missions. You may vaporize someone who holds some critical clue which is now lost. Destroy some friendly creatures on some planet just for fun, and you may discover that it attracts some unfriendly creatures. Again and again we teach the player: Don't fire first and think later."

Since Paramount as put the kibosh on *Doom*-like action games, the away missions in *Generations* are as close as we're likely to come for the meantime to phaser-blastin' fun. Combined with an elaborate mapping and exploration element, ship-to-ship combat, and a fast-moving story, *Generations* looks poised to capture the feel of a great movie while offering some new twists. Who knows, you may even be able to keep Kirk from dying.

VOYAGER

"Star Trek: Voyager" is the latest entry in the ongoing Trek saga. A riff on the Lost in Space theme, "Voyager" propels Captain Janeway and her crew to the other side of the universe, and follows

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their struggles to return home. The job of turning it interactive fell to Viacom, who brought in Looking Glass, one of the best development houses around. Producers Alan Dickens (of Looking Glass) and Rachel Leventhal (of Viacom) put their heads to creating a different kind of Trek game than those which had come before.

The as-yet-untitled project, set for an early 1997 release, is an episodic game with three main sections. Dickens says of it, "We want to make it a lot like you're watching the TV and yelling at the characters. You're giving them, as a team, guidance and direction on where they should go and how they should address the various problems that come up before them." In doing this, you exercise a very high-level of control of the team as a whole, and don't take on the role of a particular characters, as in Deep Space Nine or the Next Generation games.

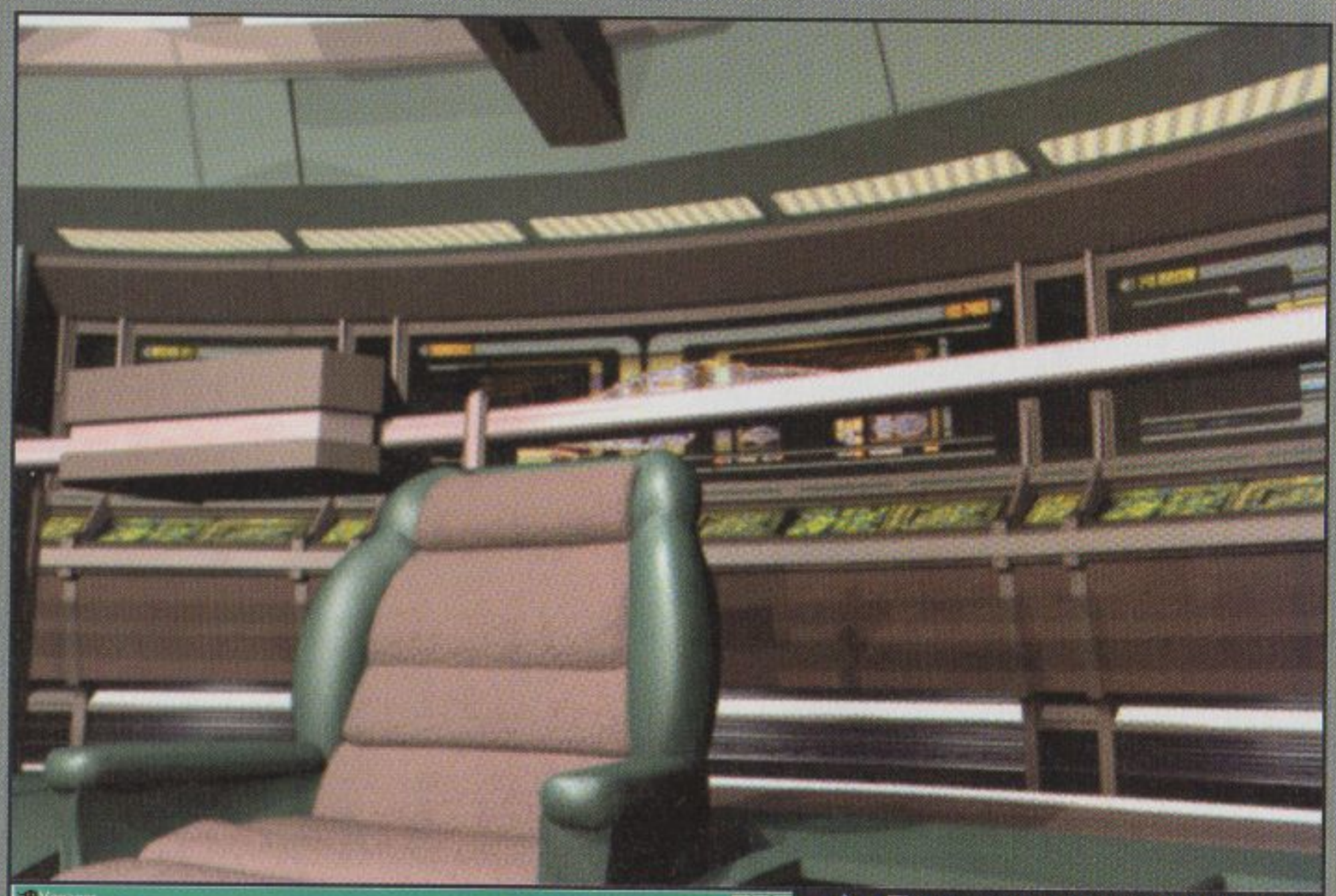
You are in essence a detached party that guides the team. When the team hits a decision point, such as finding an object in space, often they'll have a meeting. Janeway will ask for options on what they should do about this object, and the various team members will offer their opinions about dealing with the situation. It's up to you to pick which of those approaches the team will carry out. Once the team decision has been made, they all go and pursue that option. Sometimes it works for you and the story moves forward, and sometimes it's a dead end. Occasionally it's a disastrous dead end.

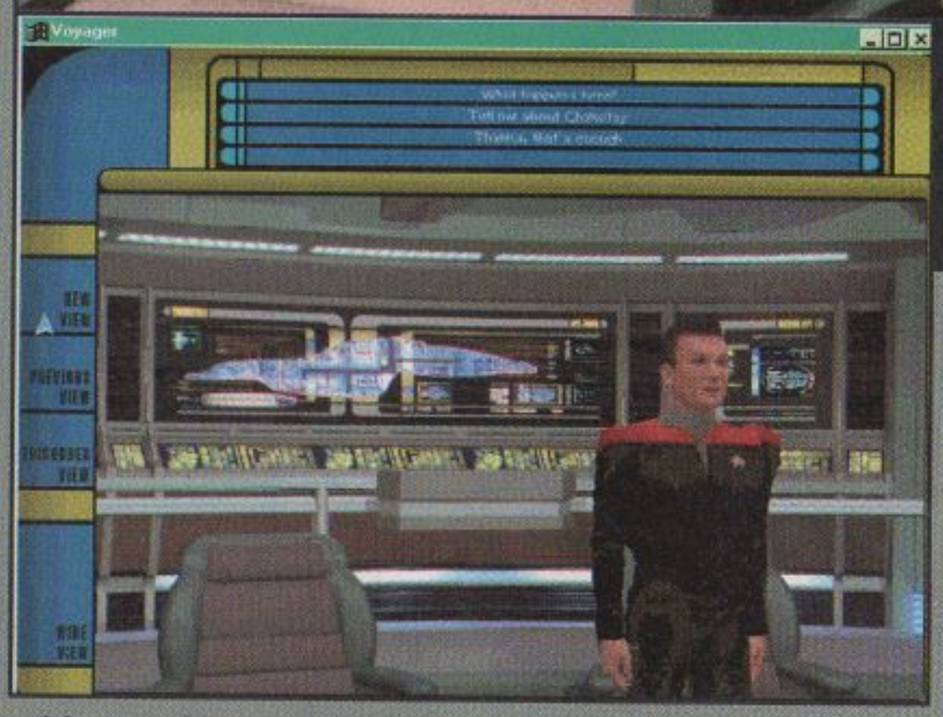
Upon making these decisions, you may be led to another interactive sequence, or just watch the actions performed by the crew. Numerous cinematics and camera angles are being used in combination with Alias and 3D studio rendered sets and characters. Looking Glass went to the set and did exhaustive research, and has recreated Voyager in amazing detail. They've even laser-scanned the actors heads, and these scans will be used to help create the characters in the game. Using elements of their *Terra Nova* technology, particularly the technique of building biped "skeletons" draped with bitmaps, they are able to create characters which move fluidly yet still look fully rendered.

But don't get the impression you'll just make some broad decision and then sit back and watch the drama unfold. Once you choose a method of dealing with a problem, other elements crop up. That may lead to another conversation, an object manipulation, or even a "tech sim." These tech sims are the most unusual element of *Voyager*, and Looking Glass is putting a lot of effort into building them. Dickens likens it to a high-tech Incredible Machine, where you have a toolbox full of parts and must make them work together to solve some problem.

For example, one sim calls for you to reverse the polarity of the ion flux field. The player will be given an elaborate tool box full of parts, emitters, collectors, power sources, Heisenberg compensators, and so on. These are placed on the play field and must be made to perform a particular action that will solve the problem facing the crew. Say some object has attached itself to the hull. You'll have to do a sim to put a charge through the hull to knock it off. "By the time they're done," says Leventhal, "they'll feel as though they really performed that action. It adds a whole new level of experience that a TV show could never offer."

As with *Generations*, both combat and object manipulation round out game play. But Looking Glass is taking a different approach than MicroProse, again emphasizing high-level control and using a different set of metaphors. Inventory objects presented a special dilemma for Dickens: "One of the problems with the metaphor of the inventory when applied to Star Trek is that when you play most adventure games, you wander around and pick up every single thing you find and stuff it into your virtual backpack. You can be carrying around a canoe and five paddles. That's not very realistic for Trek for a couple of reasons. For starters, the characters are very heroic, so they don't walk around stealing everything they find. On top of that, they don't have any pockets, so it's not very clear where they'd put those



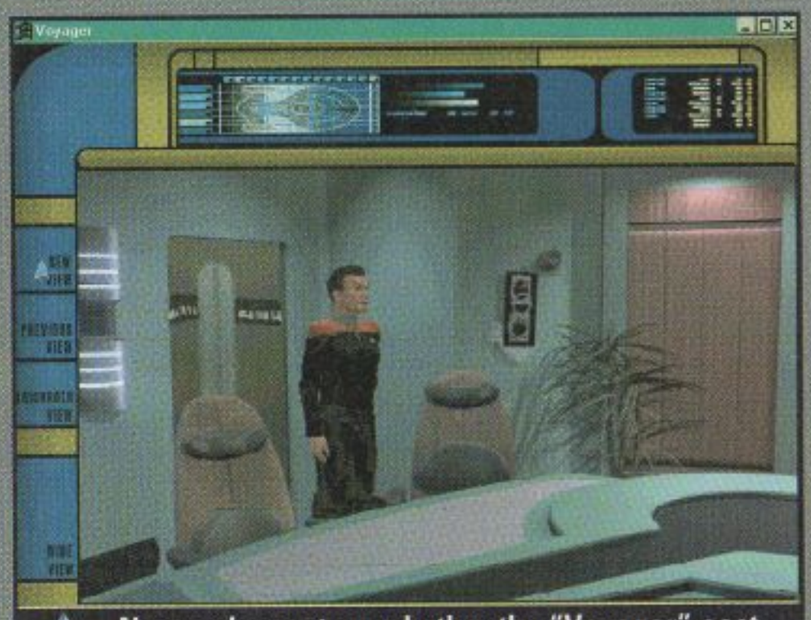


The command bridge of the state-of-the-art U.S.S. Voyager has been accurately rendered by Looking Glass Technologies, although whether the crew will look anything like the real thing remains to be seen...

"We want to make it a lot like you're watching the TV and yelling at the characters."

— *Alan Dickens, producer,* Star Trek: Voyager

Janeway's ready room (seen here in the *Voyager* game) is nicer than Picard's, we feel. It must be the feminine touch.



No word as yet on whether the "Voyager" cast will be doing voice-overs for the game, but it's becoming the norm these days, so we fully expect so.

things even if they did pick them up."

Instead, the *Voyager* game has the crew use tricorders to scan objects and find out information about them. If you find an interesting object, you can have a character wave his scanner at it, getting response such as "This looks like an object that was built by an unknown race and may do replication of food." It goes into a virtual inventory, and can be called up if objects are needed later. You may, for instance, have to build a bomb from scanned objects. Torres will draw up blueprints, with places on them to put casing, explosives, detonators, and other components. You then assemble the bomb. It's a fine distinction from a convention inventory, but it shows a higher attention to the internal logic of the game and game world.

Likewise, ground and ship combat is very different from other games since, as Dickens points out, "Trek is not about firing phasers, and ship combat is not about tactical maneuvers. In the show it's much more stylized, and it's generally there to advance the plot in some way. We see ours operating in a similar way." Therefore, when your team finds itself in ground or space combat, you have the option of ordering several team responses. These will be things like advances, retreat, maneuver, lay down fire, beam out, and so one. Depending on the enemy strengths and numbers, the sequences will then unfold in a variety of ways, possibly prompting further decisions.

As with all "Voyager" episodes, the game is based on the premise that the crew is trying to go home and gets in trouble along the way. In this story, they stop at a food planet to replenish supplies when the Kazon come along and kidnap some crew members. Janeway and company try to chase them down, but they're stopped by a Kazon ship. You eventually track the missing crew to an abandoned planet occupied only by a computer system. After hacking into this system, you're no closer to finding answers about the Kazon or your missing crew, but you do come across some interesting alien races who throw another spin on the plot. You won't help get the Voyager home (that would be like springing Gilligan from the island), but you will get them out of some sticky situations.

"Resistance... is not... futile?" Those lovable cybernetic baddies are back to asssimilate you – yes, *you* – in *Star Trek: Borg*.

STAR TREK
FIRST CONTACT

By the time you read this, the newest *Star Trek: The Next Generation* feature, titled *First Contact*, will have wrapped principal photography under the directorship of Jonathan Frakes (Commander Riker). A plot summary has already leaked out and been widely circulated on the internet, and though we can't vouch 100% for its authenticity, it looks like a swell story nonetheless.

First Contact begins with an attack by the Borg on Starfleet. Picard and the Enterprise have been sent away since Starfleet still isn't sure if they can trust him since he was converted to Locutus the Borg for a brief time. When the odds turn against Star Fleet, however, Picard rushes to the scene and arrives just in time to take command and destroy the Borg cube. A probe breaks loose from the cube and disappears into a temporal vortex. The Enterprise survives the temporal storm, only to learn that the past has been altered: Earth is being assimilated by the Borg.

Arriving in the past, they find Zephram Cochrane, creator of the warp drive, about to embark on his legendary first flight. When the Borg cubes damage Cochrane's ship, the Enterprise must intervene to restore time to its previous path. In a battle spanning time and space, the Enterprise will finds itself fighting the Borg from with the ship, as Picard tries to come to grips with his time spent in the collective as Locutus the Borg. Cool.

BORG

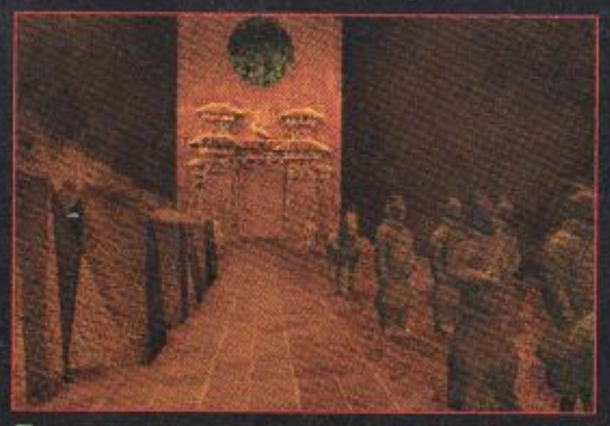
PC Gamer wasn't all that kind to Simon & Schuster's most recent Star Trek title, *Klingon*, though we loved their *Interactive Technical Manual* and *Omnipedia*. The reason is that, as old time gamers, extensive video sequences bring out the worst in us. Like war-scarred soldiers (veterans of the Battle of Digital Pictures), we view "interactive movies" with some skepticism: lots of movie, not much interactive. But we can't deny that to fans of Trek, the idea of an all-new interactive Trek episode is pretty darn appealing, and this is exactly what *Klingon* and *Borg* producer Keith Halper is aiming to create.

"We're making linear branching video-based games. We're trying to create an interactive Star Trek episode, essentially something that is absolutely authentic to Star Trek except that you get to be the hero of the story. In *Klingon* the way we set this up is with a holodeck adventure created by Gowron, so that if you make some mistake you can go back and do it again. With *Borg*, we didn't use the holodeck: it's set in the 'real world.'"

But for gameplay purposes, they still needed some mechanism for moving backward and forward in time. Since the story deals with the Borg, the obvious answer is the time-warping trickster Q (played by John DeLancie), who introduced the Borg in the first place. Not

THE STAR TREK ISSUE THE STAR TREK ISSUE THE STAR TREK ISSUE THE STAR TREK ISSUE

SPIRAL INTO THE SUBTERRANEAN TOMB OF QIN SHI HUANGHDI.



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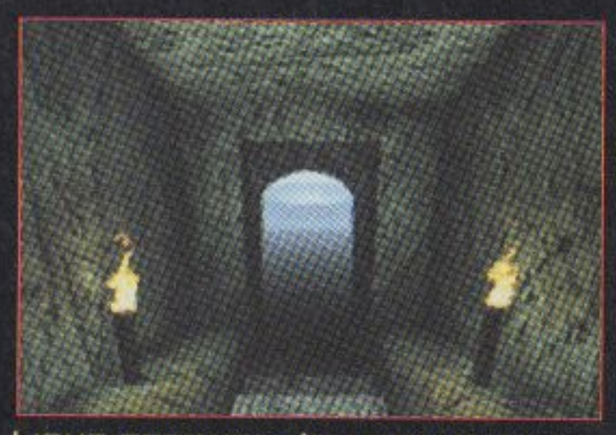

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—STEVEN GREENLEE, COMPUTER GAME REVIEW

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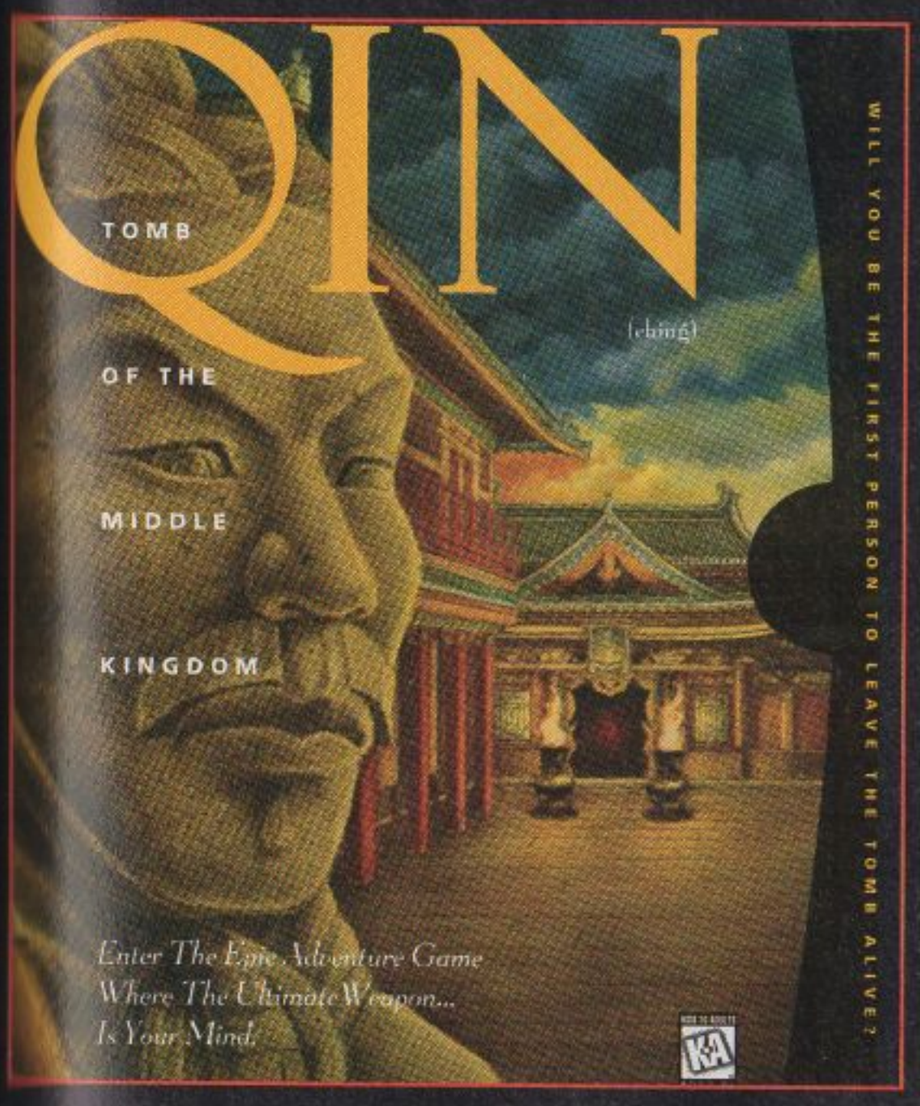

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WINDOWS CD-ROM

Product Information Number 176

THE STAR TREK ISSUE THE STAR TREK ISSUE THE STAR TREK ISSUE THE STAR TREK ISSUE

Starfleet officers find themselves in a pickle on board a Borg vessel in the upcoming *Star Trek: Borg*. Remember to keep those phaser frequencies fluctuating, guys...

"We're trying to create an interactive Star Trek episode, absolutely authentic to Star Trek except that you get to be the hero of the story."

***– Keith Halper, producer,* Borg**

only does he have the ability to step outside of time and influence events in the timeline, but he loves to do it. It's a more complex game than Klingon from an interactive standpoint, in that the number and kinds of decisions and paths, as well as the problems, are more complex.

The story is set ten years after the attack at Wolf 359, and you are a cadet on a ship that is heading back towards Earth to deal with another Borg incursion. The Borg are Next Generation's most popular baddies: collective-thought drones that exist only to expand and destroy. They have no redeeming qualities, and, unlike Klingons, no one could ever imagine co-existing peacefully with the Borg. They are like a virus washing across the universe. Your character is only too willing to join this new battle against the Borg, since your father fell victim to them at Wolf 359. Being a cadet, however, you aren't able to join the battle.

You are devastated at not being allowed to avenge your father's death, but Q soon shows up to provide a remedy. He gives you an opportunity to go back in time to Wolf 359 not only to kill Borgs, but possibly to help save your father. Your character shows up on your father's ship in the past, and Q is also onboard. The two of you go through the adventure together, fighting the Borg, going through the Borg cube, and possibly even being assimilated into the Borg collective.

The game's variable time-line comes courtesy of the omnipotent Q, played as ever with charm by John DeLancie.

The video keeps moving in real time, with dynamic hotspots that allow you to jump in and change the action when it seems appropriate, rather than stopping the video and asking for choices. If you miss the chance to jump in, the opportunity passes by, with an outcome based on your failure to act. "We're trying very hard to make actions seems very intuitive," says Halper, "so that the action never stops. We're very careful to set up the scenes so that the things that are in the frame are the things you need to use."

One thing everyone acknowledged about *Klingon* was the high-quality of the video, which looked and was acted as good as an episode. With veteran Trek director Jim Conway at the helm, *Borg* should have the same quality of video. Using Duck's Truemotion-S, the full-frame video is quite handsomely rendered, and comes fairly close to the feel of a real episode. Along with an upcoming title from Simon and Schuster called *Borg Assimilation Lab*, it will give Trekkies some of their most detailed look at these great bad guys. *Borg* should have a little more going for it than *Klingon*, since the Borg themselves are interesting and somewhat unexplored, and Q is a favorite character well-acted by DeLancie.

Rest assured that where-ever and in whatever forms new episodes are found, Trek fans will snap them up. This is the pull of Trek for the True Believer. They are utterly involved in this elaborately detailed and well-crafted world, with its heros, villains, cultures, technology, and history. Trekkies are techies, and interactive entertainment is second nature to them. Some Trek games in the past have failed, mostly because of inattention to the interactive elements in them. Now we're seeing the second generation of Trek games, and they're learning from the mistakes of their predecessors and working to make better games in this rich world. They may even boldly go (split infinitive and all) where no game has gone before.

PCG

Jonathan Frakes opted not to direct another interactive Star Trek — he's busy on the new movie.

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

Don't forget
to feed the fish.

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TEEN
AGES 13+

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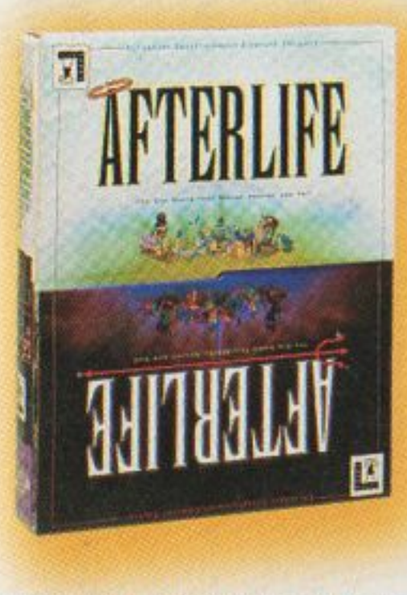

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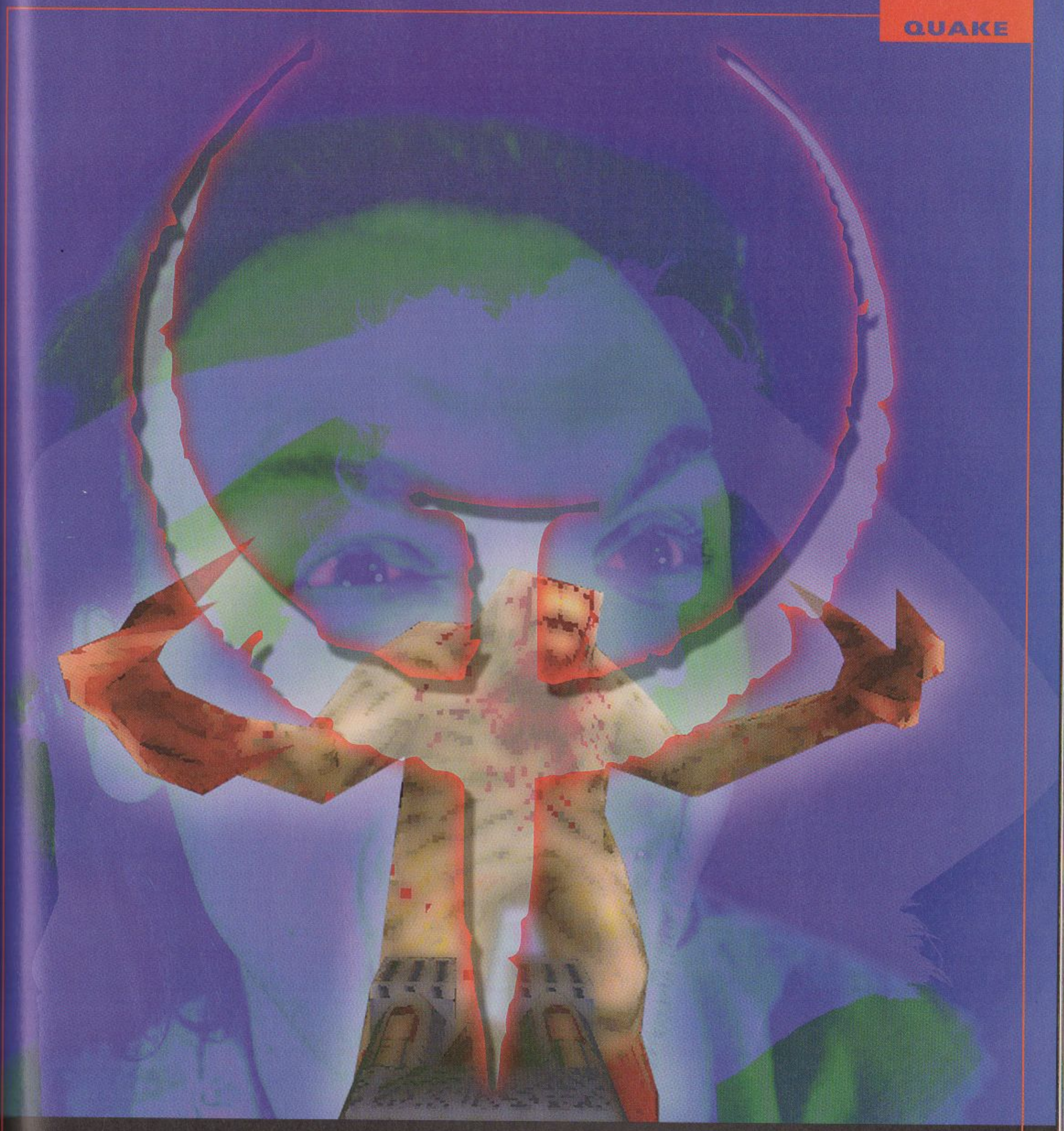
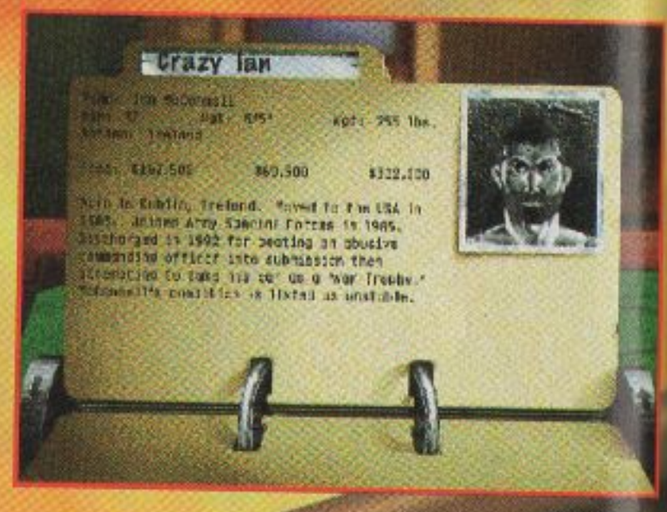


nightmare makers

by gary whitta

From deep in the heart of Texas, **id Software** continues to pump out the greatest 3D action games in the world. In the aftermath of their latest (and goriest) release yet, PC Gamer's **editor in chief** dropped in on the unassuming makers of **Doom** and **Quake** to find them as quietly confident as ever ...

"Listen you BASTARD, all HELL'S breakin' loose! Lord Salvatore and his boys have us pinned down. If I don't get SOME back-up by 03:00, your client will NEVER see his precious little angel AGAIN!!... And Johnson, I don't care WHAT it does to your F@4!*in' bottom line!"



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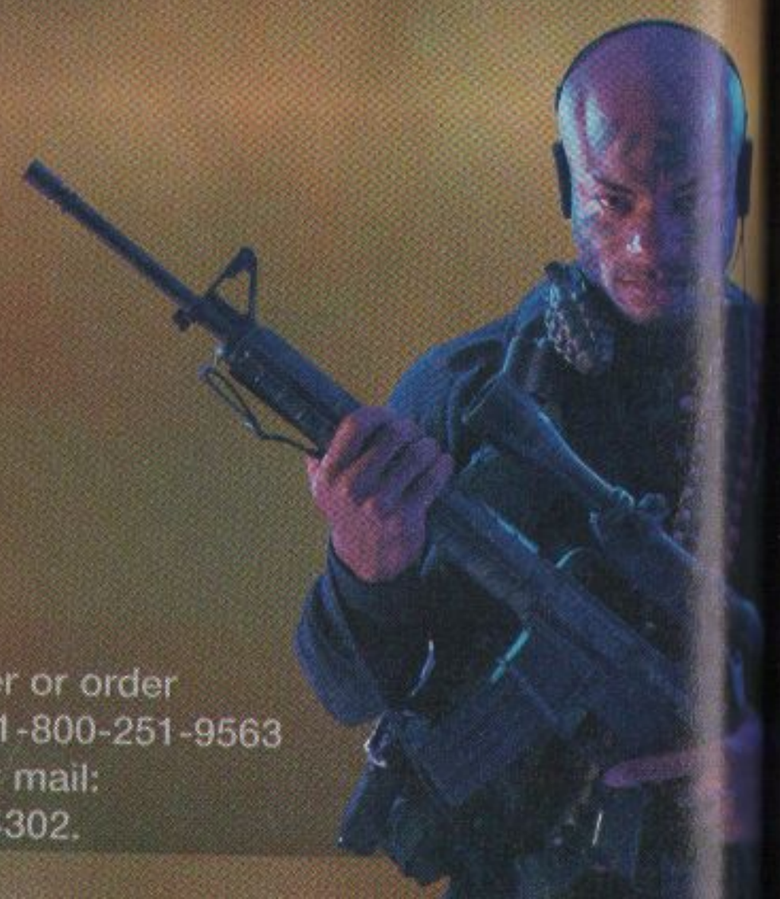

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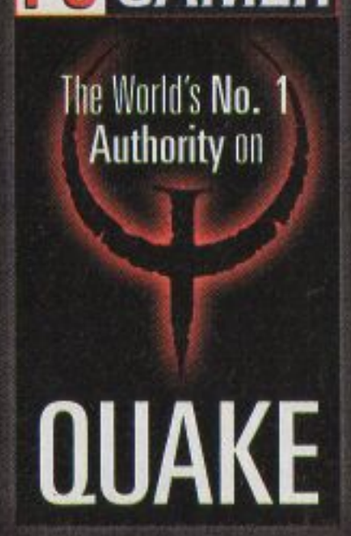
The id Software team has remained largely unchanged since the days of *Doom*, despite efforts by rival companies to poach their talent.

I'm standing in the offices of id Software less than a week before *Quake*, the most eagerly awaited PC game of all time, is due to upload to the Internet, and it's quiet. Too quiet. I was here two years ago on the very day that *Doom II* "went final," and the place was in chaos as the team worked flat-out to complete the game and get it out the door. Today it hardly seems like two years of development on the company's most ambitious game ever are coming to a head. No one running down corridors clutching disks, no one screaming into telephones, no one pulling their hair out.

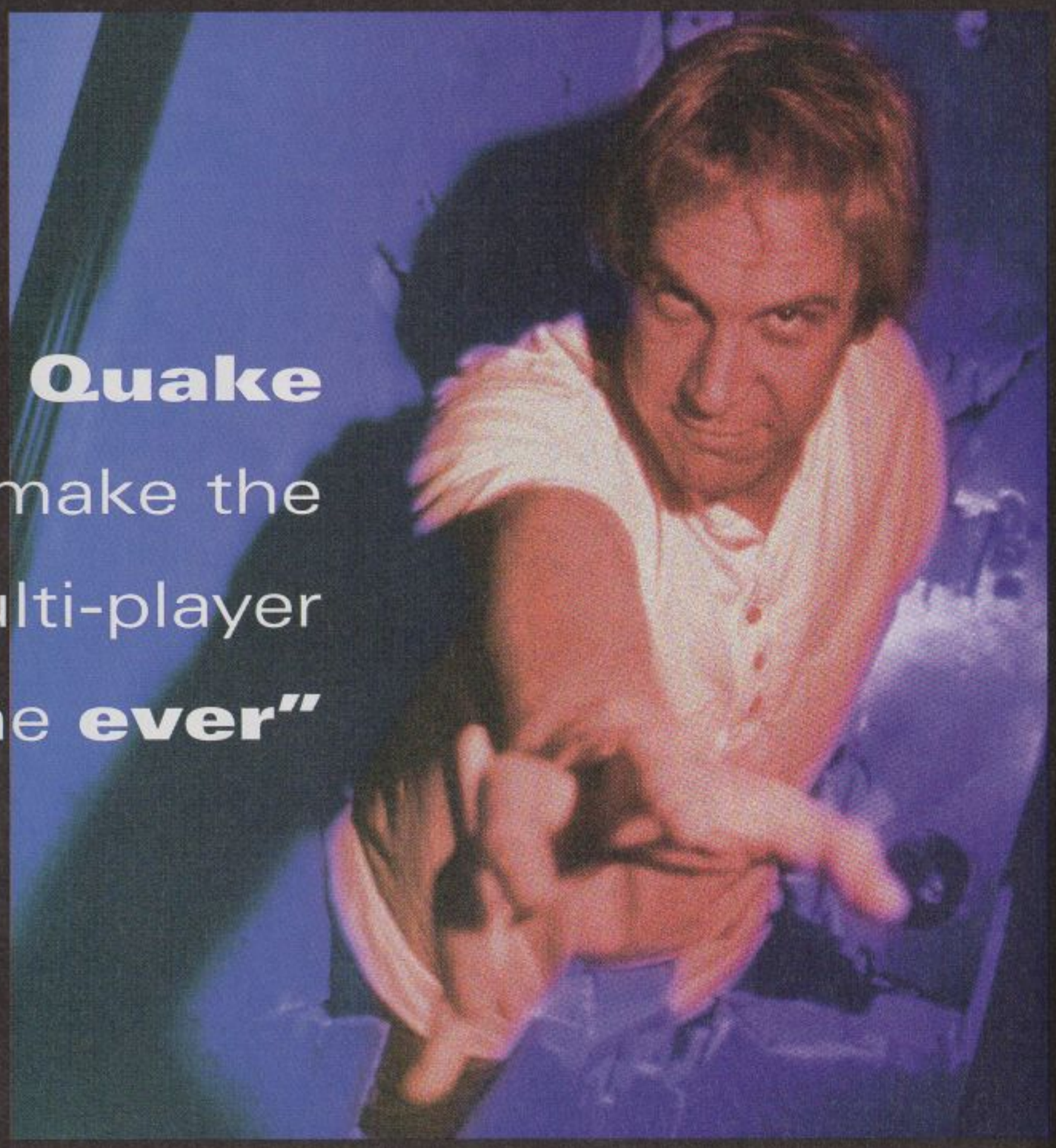


Not on the surface, anyway. As Jay Wilbur, id Software's "biz guy" points out to me, it's only the intense level of concentration that's producing the calm exterior. Theoretically, there is no deadline to work to — notoriously, id always quotes the release date for an upcoming product as "as soon as it is finished," so they have the luxury to continue tweaking it until they're good and ready. But even on the day of my visit, there are problems — id's plan to upload that weekend is put on ice by the discovery of a few minor bugs in the new levels and the tying up of "some legal mumbo-jumbo" (as Jay puts it), but it doesn't dampen the enthusiasm of the team who are keen to show off their new level designs and graphic effects to each other.

A few days later, at precisely 4:23pm PST on Saturday, June 22nd, the shareware version of *Quake* slips quietly onto internet sites around the USA and all hell breaks loose. This is the id way. The way it was with *Doom*. The product doesn't arrive with a glitzy press gathering or even any kind of public forewarning — it just pops up and id lets word of mouth do the rest. It works. Ever since the upload, id's server (which allows 2,000 users to log on simultaneously) has been running at capacity as gamers rush to grab their free copy. Once they're hooked, a call to (800) IDGAMES and a $50 outlay will buy them the rest.

Yes, the response to *Quake* has been phenomenal — not that anyone, least of all id themselves, is too surprised about that. "We've pushed the limit more than we ever have before," boasts *Quake* designer John Romero, who acknowledges that much of *Quake*'s success is because id have wisely not strayed too far from the blockbusting *Doom* formula. "*Quake* and *Doom* are pretty much the same. You go through, you kill stuff, you pick stuff up. *Quake* just looks and plays better."

In the aftermath of the *Quake* release, the atmosphere at id is relaxed and relieved, content that they've done what they were expected to do — deliver a 3D blaster that knocks the stuffing out of every other *Doom* rival on the market. Now all that remains is to see that the likes of 3D Realms and Epic MegaGames can come up with with their own *Quake*-a-likes. Is id worried? Hardly. "We know our competitors are already working on *Quake*-like games, but we still have a competetive edge," says



"With Quake we set out to make the greatest multi-player game ever"

Top: id's "biz guy" and spokesperson Jay Wilbur greets *PC Gamer* in customary fashion.

Above: *Quake* designer John Romero poses for our photographer with one of the smaller Ferraris in his collection.

Wilbur. "We've got to be six to twelve months ahead of all those guys." Romero agrees, citing his opinion that no-one ever really produced a credible rival to *Doom*. "We see all these 3D games out there that people describe as *Doom* copies, but most of them are really *Wolfenstein* copies," he says. "There are hardly any real *Doom* copies. Any game you see that's in a corridor with 90 degree walls and one level of height is a *Wolfenstein* clone, not a *Doom* clone. A lot of people can throw together a 3D engine, but they can't build a game around it. They don't understand what makes a good game. There are very few really good ones, like *Dark Forces* and *Duke 3D*, and the stuff that we do. It's disgusting, the idea of some clueless loser trying to make a 3D game just because it's the hot thing and they think it'll sell like crazy."

"We're hitting a saturation level in the 3D games market," adds Wilbur, "but the cream is always going to rise and the crap is always going to sink. Of all the *Doom* clones that came out there were a couple of good ones like *Duke Nukem 3D* and *Dark Forces* and they did very well. But the crappy ones? I can't even remember their names. They're sunk, forgotten about."

More likely than *Quake* finding a worthy rival in the immediate future is the inevitable tidal wave of home-made *Quake* levels, but Romero, who designed much of *Quake*'s layout, isn't sure what to expect. "I think there'll be a whole lot fewer people who will be able to do anything good because designing the levels is a lot tougher now. It's not like *Doom* where you can throw some line segments and define some sectors and you have a level. In *Quake*, every time we design a level we try to make it not like *Doom*. We ask ourselves, could we have done this level in *Doom*, and if the answer's yes, we think of a way to do it differently. In *Doom* you could build a level pretty quickly, but in *Quake* it takes about five to ten times longer. You have to think a different way. I wish they weren't so hard to do, but it does take a lot of time to do the really good ones."

Further into the future, id is looking at a *Quake* sequel, but, as Romero points out: "We're aiming to not do what we did with *Doom II*. Not just extra levels and extra monsters. It'll still be within the *Quake* story — what little there is of it — but there'll be lots of new monsters and a new setting. It won't look like *Quake* Plus." Gamers can expect graphic routines and landscapes even more impressive than in *Quake*, an advance which Romero puts down in part to the ceaseless progression of PC graphics technology. "As 3D graphics hard-

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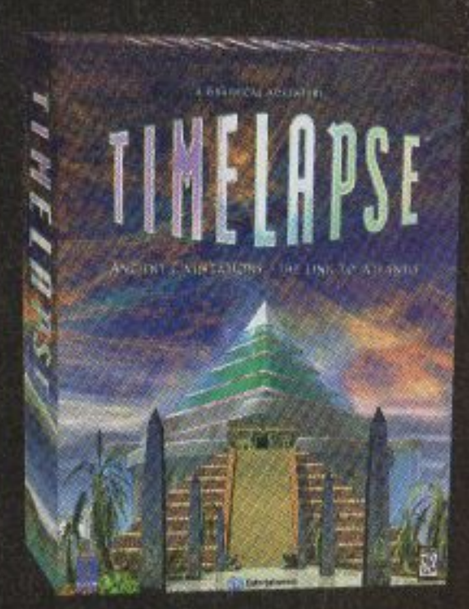

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Product Information Number 116

"The sort of people who are **riled** by the violence in games like **Quake** and **Doom** are the people who need to be riled."

1

2

3

4

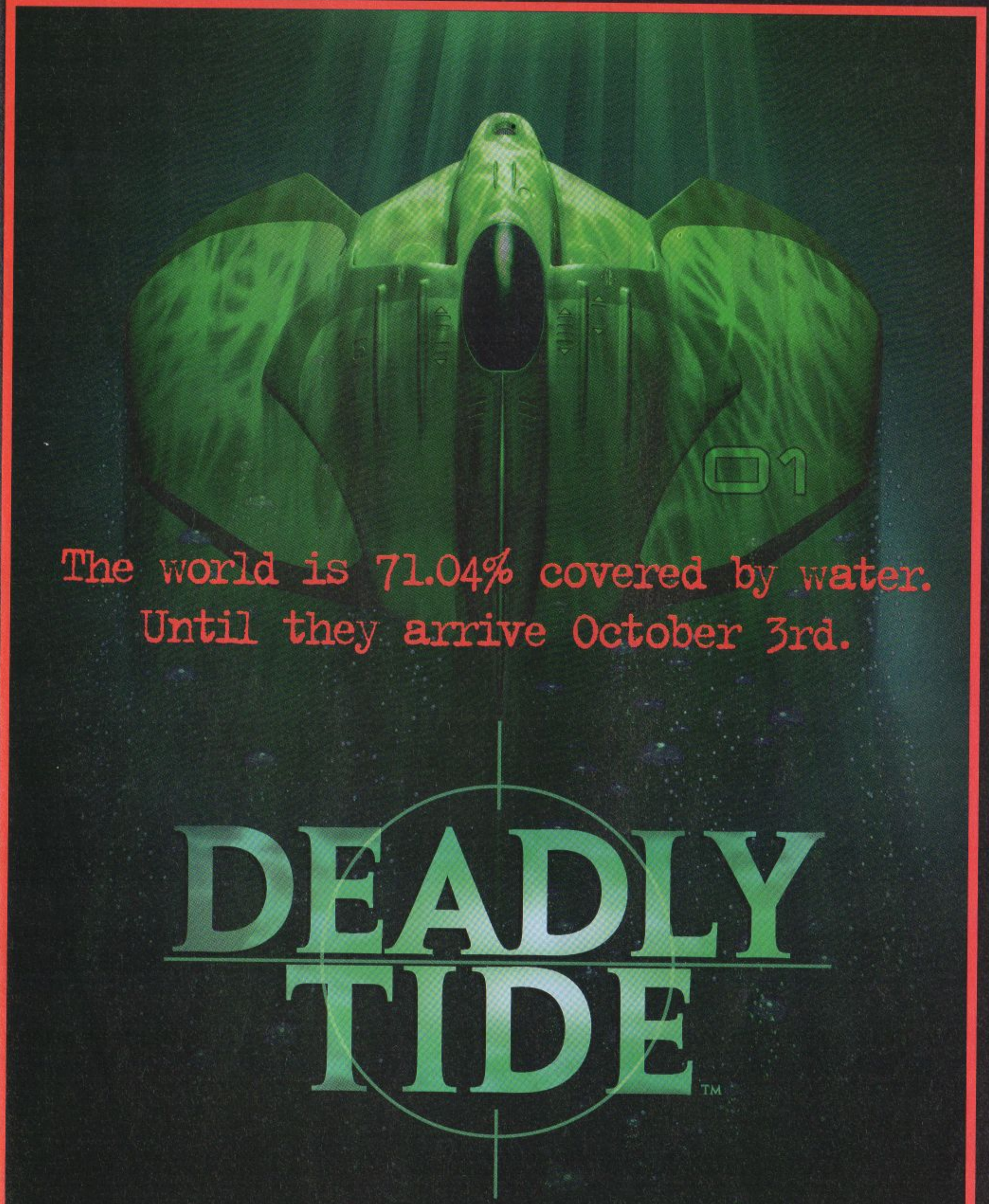
Is it any wonder *Quake* is the most-played game on PC today? A quick tour round these screenshots: 1) Extreme violence as rockets rain down on the player in Deathmatch. 2) Extreme violence as a baddy is wiped out by a double-barrelled shotgun blast. 3) Extreme violence as another baddy eats two loads of buckshot, and 4) Extreme violence as a shambler gets shot full of nails.

quake: the movie

It's true, id Software is already fielding inquiries from **top Hollywood studios** about turning *Quake* into a movie. Of course this is nothing new to the id boys, since *Doom: The Movie* has been stuck in **development limbo** ever since a deal with **Universal Pictures** was signed nearly two years ago. Producer Ivan Reitman (*Ghostbusters, Kindergarten Cop*) is attached to the project, and given that the game-to-movie trend has actually started to **bear financial fruit** (the *Mortal Kombat* movie was a big success), *Doom* would seem to be ideal movie fodder. So where *is* it? "I talked to some of the movie guys this morning, and they have a supposedly **final draft of the script** which I'll be getting a copy of shortly," says Wilbur. "We're going to put together a **director's list** and see if we can't take it forward from there. We're getting lots of encouraging words, but our agent in Hollywood tells me that in that town, you'll **die of encouragement**. If it happens it happens, if not it should have happened because it would have been an awesome movie. But I think eventually, it will happen." In the meantime ***Doom* fans** can continue to indulge in their favorite past-time of catching cameo appearances of id games in movies and on TV — *Doom* has already appeared briefly on **ER**, **Friends**, and in the movie *Sudden Death*; even *Wolfenstein 3D* puts in a brief appearance in that oh-so-realistic movie **The Net**.

ware becomes more important, it makes creating 3D stuff a lot easier," he says. "You won't have to have some insanely optimized engine like *Quake*'s to make the stuff go fast. The PC will always be able to do more than any of the consoles, simply because PC hardware is coming out at a faster pace than any of the console systems. The Nintendo 64 will be the best console when that comes out, but the PC will be able to beat it when the new 3D accelerators come out. By the end of the year you'll be able to buy PCs with really great accelerators. Anyone who buys a Nintendo 64 will probably have that machine for around five years — and over the next five years the graphics industry on the PC side is going to go crazy. There's going to be tons of graphics accelerators that will outrank the Nintendo 64 and all the other systems. So the challenge is not creating the 3D engine, but creating the world, a better game to play in."

And beyond *Quake II*? Id is remaining traditionally tight-lipped. "What's next? I can't tell you," says Jay. "But I can tell you it's going to be awesome..." **PCG**



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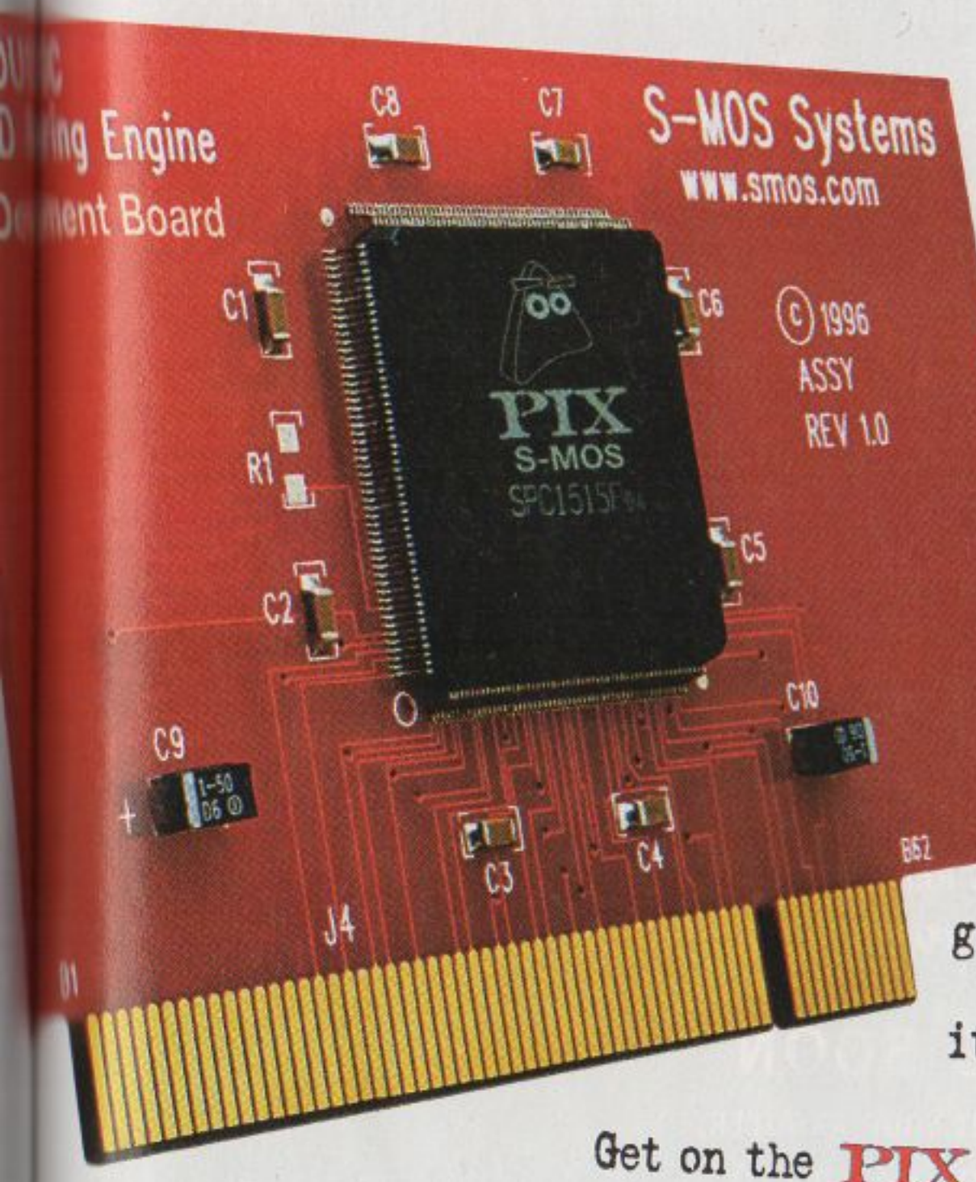

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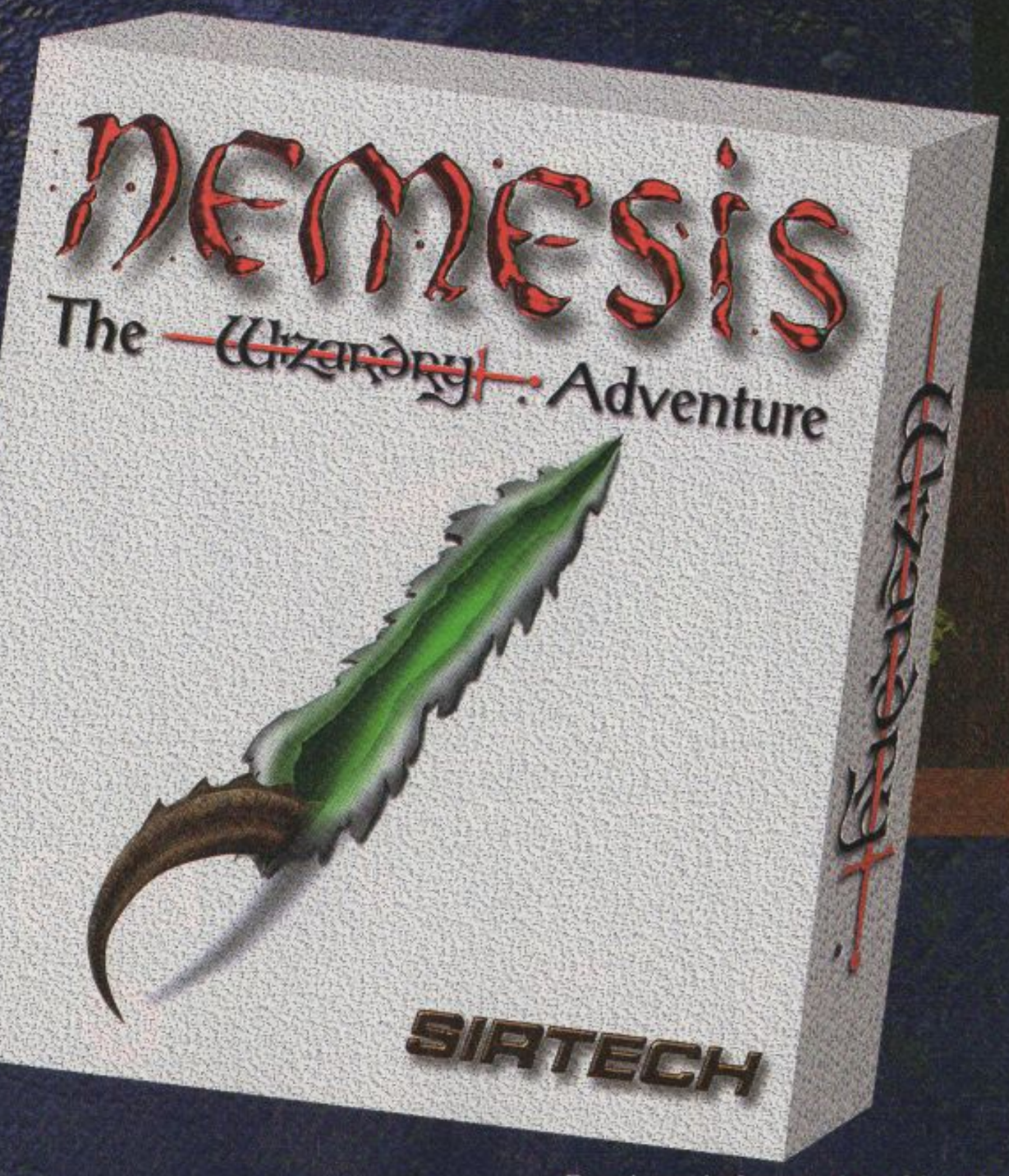

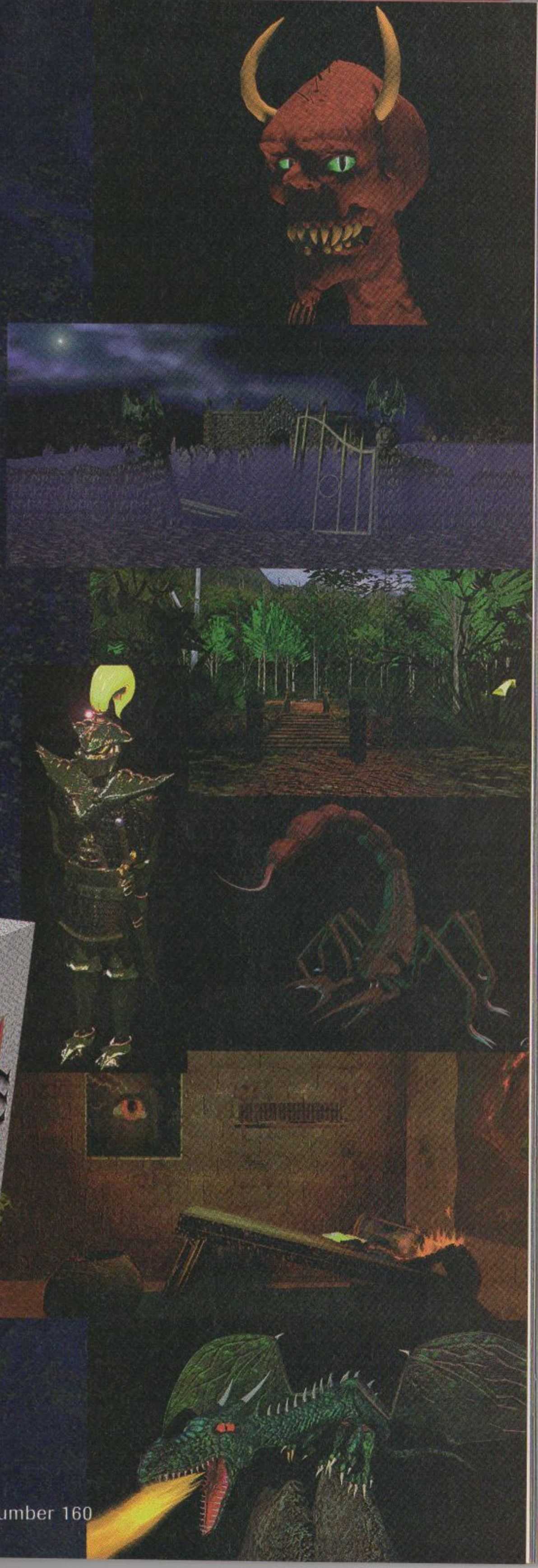

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Staff Trek

We've been in a "boldly going" kinda mood this month with all our Star Trek coverage, and during a particularly quiet spell in the office, we decided to kill some time by figuring out who we'd all be if were Star Trek characters. Here then, is what we came up with...

GARY WHITTA — Editor-in-Chief Gaz's stern leadership skills and strategic savvy make him the only candidate for Captain Jean-Luc Picard. Plus he's the only one that can do a proper English accent.

LISA HOWIE — our Managing Editor is in charge of the day-to-day running of the magazine, ensuring smooth operation of internal systems, much like Commander William Riker. Also excellent at arguing with Picard.

DAN BENNETT — On board the *U.S.S. PC Gamer*, Dan ensures that every word you read is correct, a bit like keeping transporter coils in aligment, or something. And so he beomes Transporter Chief Miles O'Brien.

JASON BATES — Jason runs the *PC Gamer* web site, which has often been likened to the warp core of a Galaxy Class Starship. Hence he is our top candidate for Chief Engineer Geordi LaForge.

TODD VAUGHN — our Deputy Editor's cool demeanor and encyclopedic knowledge are uncannily similar to the qualities displayed by Leiutenant Commander Data. Also excellent on away missions to hostile software houses.

MATT FIRME — *PC Gamer*'s publisher shares a lot with the omnipotent Q — they're both all-powerful, and turn up on random but regular occasions to annoy the crew and taunt them for their own amusement.

MIKE WOLF — We decided that Mike should be Leiutenant Worf. Because, erm, he's tall and his surname is only different by one letter.

JOE NOVICKI — All the best jobs had already gone, so poor Joe gets lumbered with being the anonymous red shirt who always gets shot or squished on away misions. So far, fortunately, Joe has always managed to return safely from his own "away missions" to Taco The Town.

Just to prove that we'd be at home in the Star Trek universe, some of the *PC Gamer* team members have infiltrated the crew of the U.S.S. Enterprise. A software prize goes to the first postcard telling us which members of the real crew are missing. Or, failing that, just tell us why we bothered with this. It beats us.

THE ART STAFF — Dean and Quintin have been likened to the Bajoran as a cultural and artistic people who have been trampled all their lives by more powerful races. Like the Bajorans, they have always fought for independence. But never got it.

THE ADVERTISING STAFF — Undoubtedly the Ferengi, since they're always looking to turn a profit and putting together highly cunning business deals. For page rates and rules of acquisition, call (415) 468-4684, ext. 100 and ask for Robin.

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

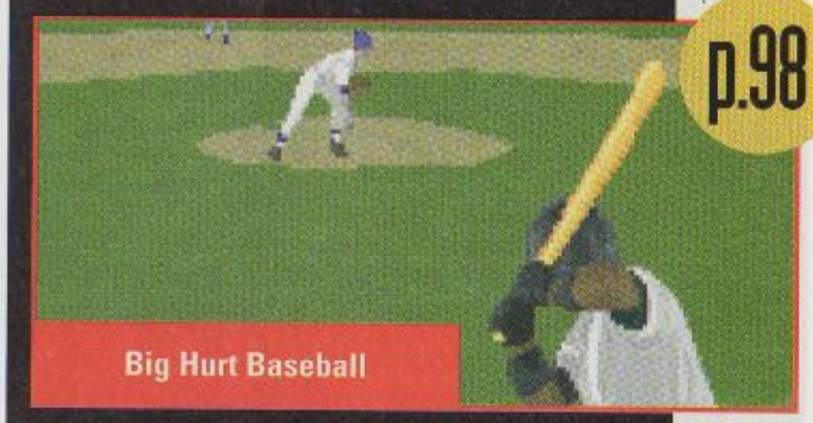
Poor quality. Only a few, slightly redeeming features keep them from falling into the abyss of the next category...

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

Every month, we honor the best games we see — those earning 88% or above — with our Editors' Choice award. It's not easy to earn, and there are a lot of excellent games that fall just short of the honor. So when you see the *PCG* Editors' Choice logo on a game at a local software shop, you can bet it's among the best.



p.98

Big Hurt Baseball

p.125

The Muppets Inside

Frank Thomas Big Hurt Bas

Category: Sports

Developer: Iguana Softworks

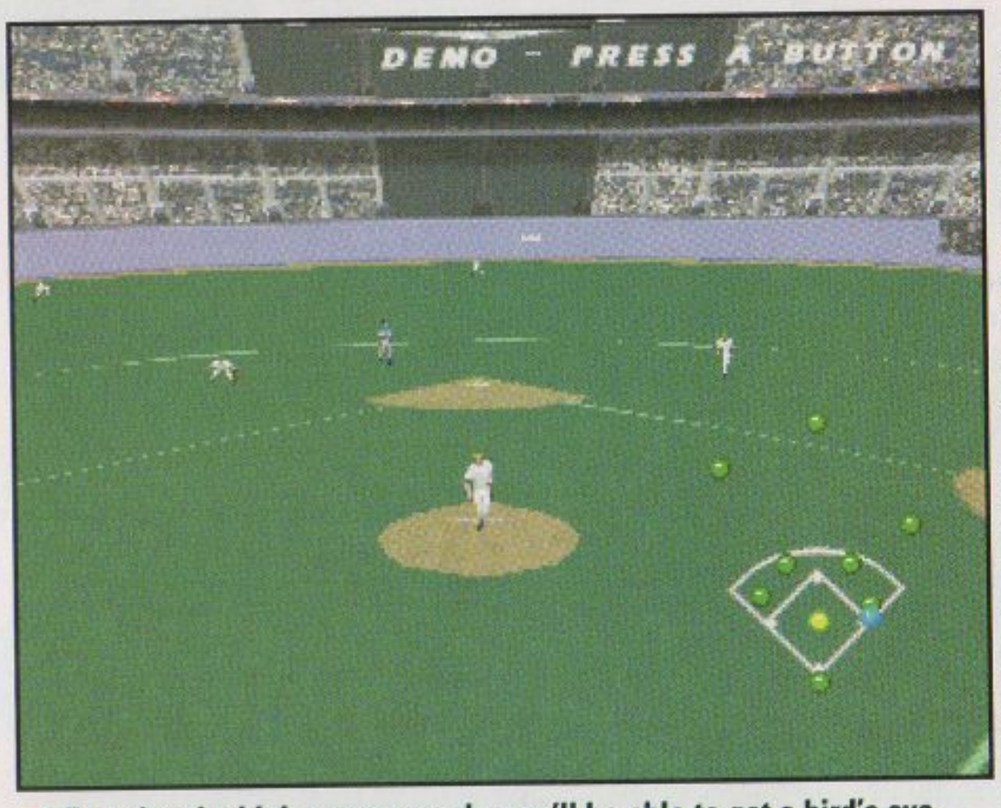
Publisher: Acclaim, One Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542-2777 (516) 759-7800

Required	We Recommend
2x CD-ROM drive; Pentium 75; 8MB RAM (12MB if running through Win 95 DOS shell); 4MB HD space; 1MB local-bus SVGA	Quad-speed CD-ROM; Pentium 90; Supported sound card; Gamepad

Acclaim slams one out of the park with their simulation of America's favorite pastime, and the action's hotter than July in Houston.

I usually avoid arcade-style sports games. It's the simulations nut in me; I like to watch — and manage. But when *Frank Thomas Big Hurt Baseball* hit my desk — watch it, big fella! — I was eager to load it up and step up to the plate. Maybe it's another mid-life crisis, or perhaps I'm adopting a healthier, more active lifestyle. Whatever the reason, I was itching to swing the bat and pop some leather.

The timing was right, because *Big Hurt* scored a hit with me — make that a screaming line drive off the Green Monster at Fenway. This game packs as much punch as the bat of Mr. Thomas himself, mixing furious and realistic arcade play with Major League players and stats to produce a highly entertaining and addictive game.

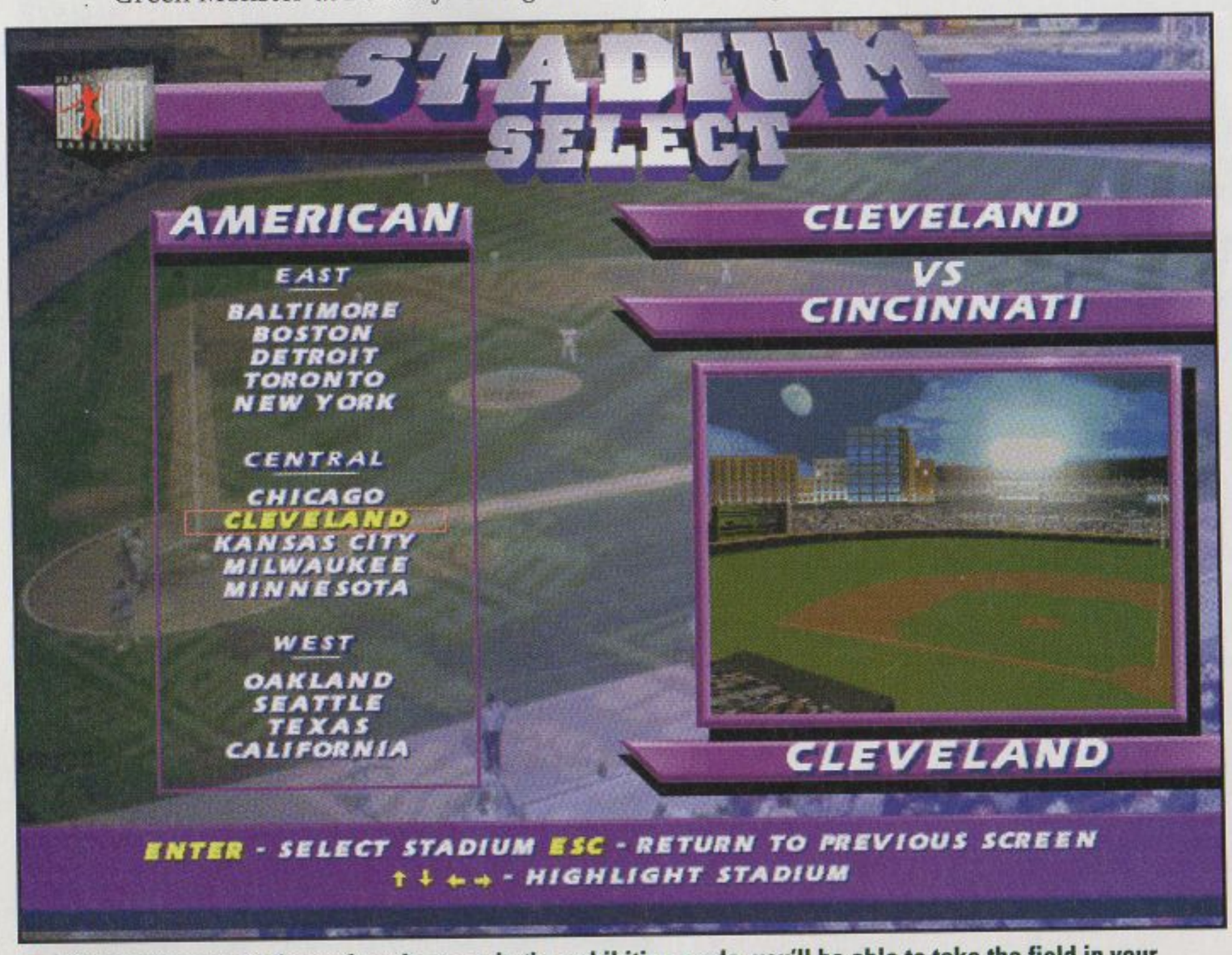


By using the high camera angle, you'll be able to get a bird's eye view of the diamond as you crack one out of the park.

Pitching is handled beautifully; you'll feel like you're in Greg Maddux's shoes, mixing pitches, speed, and location like a master. You pick one of three types of pitches, then choose elevation in the strike zone, speed, and location over the plate.

They've got the details right, too. In real life, Tom Glavine's best pitch is probably the change-up he uses to set up his fastball and slider. And that's just the way it is in this game. You'll also find Hideo Nomo's blazing fastball and baffling fork ball. Hats off to the developers for taking the time to get it right.

After a bit of practice, you'll start mowing down computer-controlled batters (of course, a human opponent isn't as easy to skunk). Walks are almost unheard of, but that's okay — who has time for walks when there are homers to be crushed?



After you've selected your favorite team in the exhibition mode, you'll be able to take the field in your choice of major league ballparks where everything, right down to the billboards, looks the part.

On the downside, the way pitcher fatigue is handled leads to some fairly inconsistent results, with a hurler losing velocity almost from his first pitch.

On the downside, the way pitcher fatigue is handled leads to some fairly inconsistent results, with a hurler losing velocity almost from his first pitch. Pitcher effectiveness is based on a 100-point scale, and that causes problems in the bullpen. Pitchers only get top velocity when they're at 100, and they are rated at 65 when they're cold. That percentage increases as they warm up, then falls off after they reach 100. You have to monitor the bullpen constantly to keep a reliever primed. It's a real pain in the butt and completely unnecessary.

The only other annoyance I ran into was base-running. There are separate

eball

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

controls to give signs to the lead runner and to all runners, and I found myself fumbling through split-second decisions and getting runners gunned down all over the base paths.

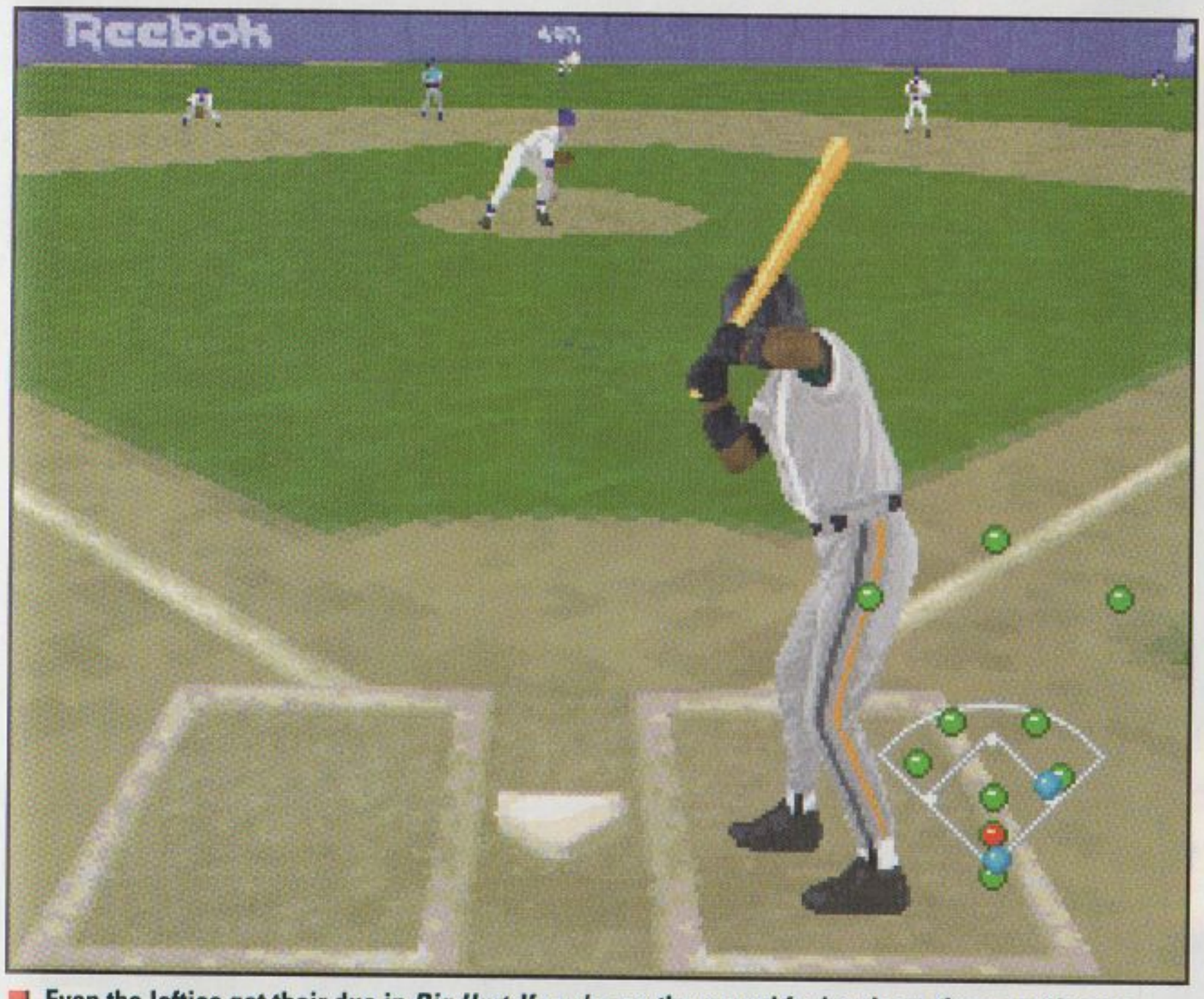
Batting is maybe a bit too simple; all you can do is swing away or bunt. A few more tactical options, like hitting behind the runner and contact hitting, would come in handy. But simple doesn't mean easy, as you'll find out when you try to get around on Randy Johnson's 100 mph fastball. Against a crafty human opponent, a combination of a good fastball and a change-up can be lethal.

The batter/pitcher confrontation is excellent, but you gotta make the plays in the field to win, and that's where I usually get lost in an arcade game.

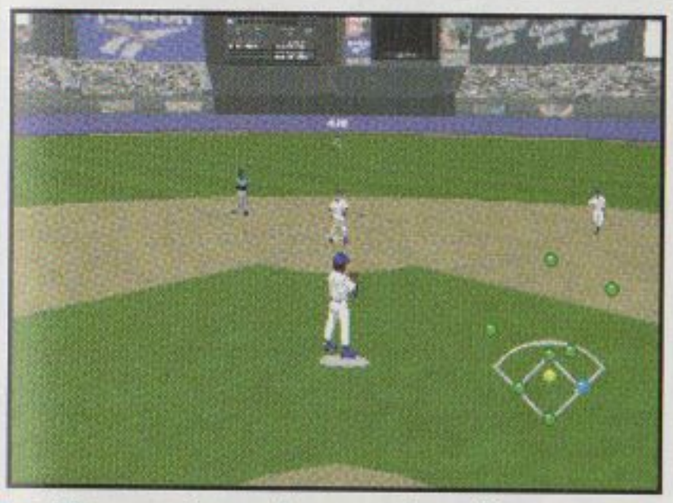
Example: I was playing against John Abernethy when he hit a grounder to short with one out and the bases loaded. Tailor-made double play, right? Only if the shortstop sees fit to throw the ball to second. No, he decides to toss the ball playfully to the pitcher, who then stands with his hands on his hips waiting for me to get it right. Two runs scored. I'm still pissed off.

Despite the occasional control lapse, *Big Hurt* handles itself well in the field. You can dive and jump for balls, and there's an option to have fielders automatically move toward the ball.

While *Big Hurt* definitely stakes its claim with hard-hitting action, the game doesn't stop there. This isn't a simulation, but it sure does feel like one at times. All the players and teams are here, of course, along with the stadiums.



Even the lefties get their due in *Big Hurt*. If you're on the mound facing down these southpaws, you'll have to counter their advantage by ripping 'em across the plate.



When you're on the mound, you'll want to keep your eye on the "radar" in the lower left corner to guard against stolen bases.

And again, the developers get it right, with batting orders and pitching rotations as accurate as any I've seen in a stats-based simulation.

That attention to realistic detail is surprising in an arcade game, and it shows that the folks at Iguana are baseball fans. But they must have been working too late when they wrote instructions for scoring pitching, because it's pure madness. My starting pitcher never gets the win; that distinction always seems to go to the closer, no matter the score. I know that's a small gripe to make about an action game, but I can't help it.

Big Hurt delivers season play up to

In a nod to simulation nuts, *Big Hurt Baseball* supplies you with all the stats and scores of your favorite players.

162 games, conference standings, and the playoffs. You also get an all-star game and an excellent home-run derby. The game even tracks statistics for every player. The stats are pretty limited, but they're still more than I expected from an action game.

In high-res mode, the graphics are good, but not exceptional. Still what they lack in texture — especially the players — they make up for in smooth and lifelike player animations.

The play-by-play commentary — which includes each player's name — is smooth and seamless. More importantly, it doesn't slow down the on-field action. The announcer is obviously blind to the action on the field — "low and outside, that's strike one" — but he adds a nice touch without getting in the way.

Despite the occasional control lapse, *Big Hurt* handles itself well in the field. You can dive and jump for balls, and there's an option to have fielders automatically move toward the ball.

Take it from a guy who usually scoffs at action-oriented sports games: this one is a can't-miss prospect and it's likely to put a *Big Hurt* on the competition for some time to come.

— Lee Buchanon

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

89%

HIGHS: Realistic pitching highlights excellent action play; and there are enough stats to keep purists interested.

LOWS: Awkward keyboard controls.

BOTTOM LINE: One of the best action-oriented baseball games available for the PC.

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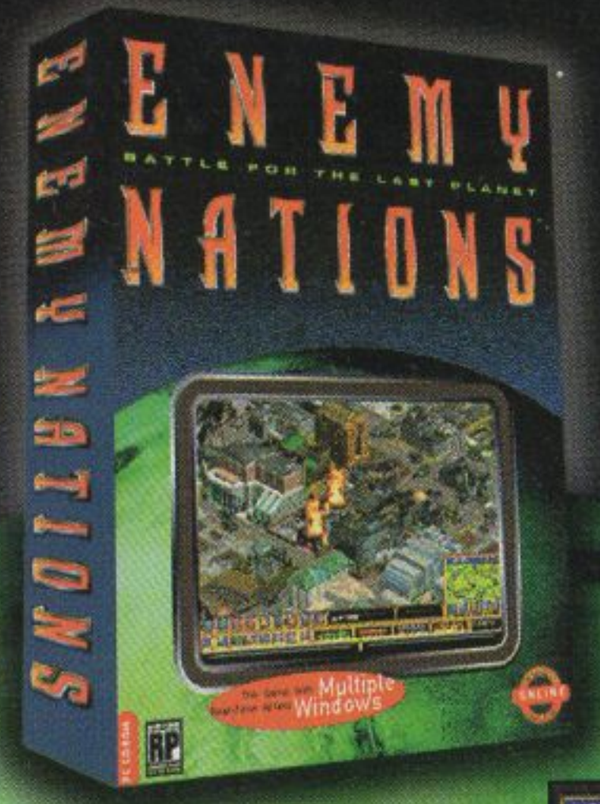

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Product Information Number 167

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Battle Arena Toshinden

Category: Arcade

Developer: Digital Dialect

Publisher: Playmates Interactive Ent., 16200 S. Trojan Way, LaMirada, CA 90638 (310) 407-1490

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM	Pentium 100; 16MB RAM; supported 3D graphics accelerator; Gamepad

The blockbuster console beat-'em-up tries to tackle the PC arena, but unless you've got a fast machine, you'll find it's a losing battle.

The impact of the original *Battle Arena Toshinden* on the world of console gaming can't be underestimated. In the early days of the Sony PlayStation, *Toshinden* was largely responsible for the system's success. It caught the attention of jaded gamers everywhere and made a smashing showcase for the system's hardware: not only was it in glorious 3D, but it had the most dead-on control you could ask for, and it boasted a wide range of flashy special effects. It was, simply put, a great game.

Trouble is, that was almost two years ago, and some of the afterglow has started to fade. Now, thanks to Playmates, you can get a version of *Toshinden* up and running on your PC, but unless you're willing to spend a lot more than the price of the disc itself, you're not likely to appreciate it much.

All the pieces are here, and for what it's worth, the game is almost identical to the console version. You can choose from ten characters (eight are immediately available, and two boss characters become playable after you've beaten the game) that run the expected gamut from the slow but powerful Rungo to the small but fast Ellis — and don't forget mocking, whip-wielding Sophia. Each character comes with his or her own repertoire of special moves, and the PC version even includes the "Secret Special Moves" and desperation attacks.

So what's the problem? Simple: the game is incredibly demanding on the hardware, and if your system isn't up to snuff, you're just going to wind up with a sluggish, barely passable brawler. This makes reviewing the game a bit of a problem. Although the box doesn't mention it, Toshinden supports a couple of 3D accelerator cards, namely Creative's 3D Blaster and Diamond's Edge. If you've got an accelerator, or can afford to pick one up, the experience is roughly comparable to the PlayStation original, if a tad fuzzy-looking (here's the one thing a TV has over a computer monitor — a TV makes individual pixels blend into one another slightly, yielding a kind of low-tech anti-aliasing. A computer monitor shows clearly how low-res the game is). Without an accelerator, even a Pentium 166 has trouble keeping pace, and unless you want to turn the detail levels all the way down, the experience is sluggish and unexciting.

How often do you get to see a buxom Russian woman with a whip beating up on a six-foot giant with a steel club?

All the special moves of the original characters (and even a few new ones) make the translation from PlayStation to PC.

The documentation leaves something to be desired, too. It doesn't mention a lot of things, like how to interpret each character's move list. It lists the keyboard commands for each fighter, but not the directions and attack buttons you'd use with a gamepad. If you're using a gamepad (which is of course, the controller of choice) you'll have to sit down with the manual and work out each move you want to perform. The documentation also doesn't mention that, in addition to supporting "generic" gamepads like the Gravis, there's also support for a Saturn Gamepad that can be used with an Nvidia-based 3D accelerator like the Diamond Edge.

One advantage Toshinden can boast is that (assuming it's running to your satisfaction) it's fully networkable, although even here the game falls down a little. With two players taking up one screen (a legacy from the game's console beginnings — that's the only way two players can compete on the PlayStation, naturally), the game's camera has to find some happy medium between the two combatants, and this is rarely optimal for either. You'd think with separate machines running a match for each player, the game would simply find the best angle for each, but it doesn't.

So what's the bottom line? Well, if you've got the right hardware, Battle Arena Toshinden is a modern classic you'll enjoy. But without a 3D accelerator and a fast machine, you're better off borrowing a PlayStation.

–Jeff Lundrigan

Without a killer PC or a 3D accelerator to get it up to speed, *Battle Arena Toshinden* is a mixed bag of sluggish gameplay and under-powered graphics.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

55%

HIGHS: Fast, colorful fighting action — if you have the right hardware to run it.

LOWS: Choppy animation and sluggish control if you don't.

BOTTOM LINE: Stay away unless you've got confidence in your machine.

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Product Information Number 106

Space Hulk: Vengeance of the Blood Angels

Win95

Category: Action/Strategy

Developer: Key Games

Publisher: Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404 (415) 513-7171

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

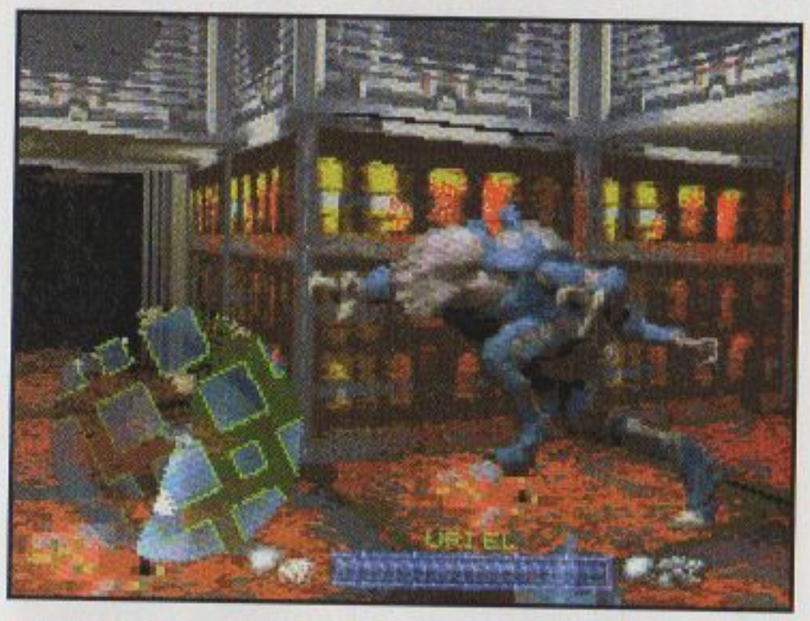
Electronic Arts bucks the trends in first-person games with a squad-level blood-fest that will have you on the edge of your seat.

As we all know, the arrival of *Doom* in late 1993 turned the limited realm of first-person action games into a deluge of near-biblical proportions. Publishers hastily shoveled out titles with bizarre science fiction themes, terrorist plots, and even oddball educational shoot-'em-ups that promised more *Doom*, or *Doom* with a difference, etc. While most of these titles are best forgotten, one game that managed to stand apart from the competition and actually offer something unique was Electronic Arts' futuristic squad-based combat game *Space Hulk*.

Based on Games Workshops' Warhammer 40,000 miniatures game of the same name, *Space Hulk* combined the rules of the roleplaying system and the thrills of the first-person perspective to create a real-time strategy game that delivered the creepiness and chills of the Alien films with unequaled style. On the surface, it was a complete reversal from *Doom*'s frenzied in-your-face action, but as those who dared challenge *Space Hulk*'s incredibly difficult missions discovered, the experience was every bit as intense.

Now, as the fervor surrounding *Quake* and *Duke Nukem 3D* has reached the boiling point, EA is jumping back into the ring with the sequel to *Space Hulk* — and with any luck, *Space Hulk: Vengeance of the Blood Angels* won't be overlooked quite as easily as its predecessor was.

True to the far-future setting of the Warhammer 40,000 games, *Space Hulk* casts you as the commander of a squad of Terminator Space Marines — a pseudo-religious sect that makes up the Emperor's top-tier fighting force — leading the charge against the genetic abominations known as genestealers. Genestealers are the by-products of centuries of travel through warp-space that has perverted their genetic code into something far from human. Incredibly strong and well armored with insectile exoskeletons, the genestealers inhabit warp-space in huge derelict spacecraft known as hulks, waiting to trap unsuspecting travelers and steal their genetic material for procreation. As the threat of the genesteal-



The relentless onslaught of genestealers doesn't stop until they've broken your defenses. Do not underestimate your enemy.

Even when you think you've planned your mission to perfection, chances are you'll watch in horror as your squad-mates' powerful armor gets ripped to shreds by the genestealers.

ers becomes too great to ignore, the Emperor orders the Space Marines to cleanse the galaxy once and for all. As the setup for an action/strategy game, it's pretty intense stuff, and once you've suited up for a mission you'll find out just how intense it gets.

The game is played with a combination of first-person viewpoints and a strategic planning phase that allows you plan the movements, actions, and positioning of up to ten marines as you try to outwit and overpower the superior numbers of genestealers. Instead of the traditional *Doom* style of play (running around and blasting everything in sight) you'll need to take a much more thoughtful approach when carrying out your deadly missions in *Space Hulk*. The missions take place in tight, restrictive corridors (often little wider than your unit) and although your space marines are outfitted with powerful motorized armor, their mobility is very restricted and sluggish. While it's possible (and fun) to control a unit individually, one mission against a hulk full of fast, agile killing machines is more than enough to tell you it probably isn't such a good idea to go it alone.

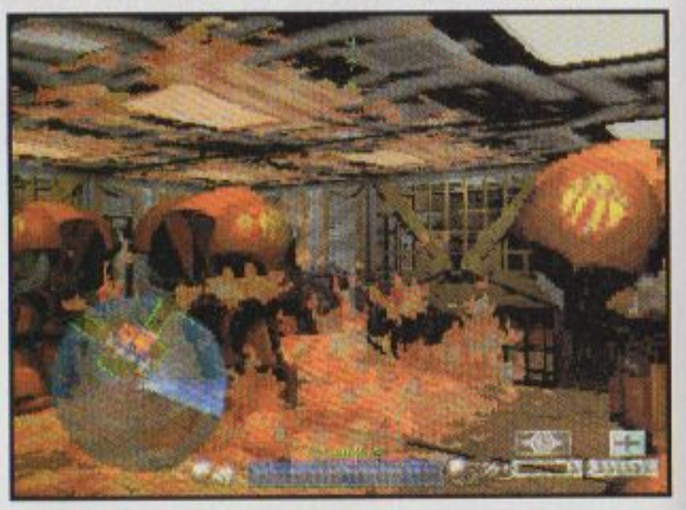
The map screen serves as the master control center for your marines, letting you plot their course through labyrinthine corridors or use special weapons at given moments.

That's where the strategy element comes in. You'll go to the planning screen, where you'll use precious freeze-time to order your troops into position. Freeze-time is like a quarterback's time-out, a pause in the action that allows you a few seconds to issue orders and make last-minute adjustments. The planning screen's interface is comprised of a map of the level and a few vague icons representing the various functions for movement, actions, etc. While the icons could've been more intuitive, every conceivable order is represented, and with a little practice and fiddling it all begins to fall into place. After completing your orders, you'll jump back into the head of your selected marine and watch the game unfold in real-time.

It's here where Vengeance really begins to show its stuff, with action that is as moody as anything out there. Bulkheads creak and groan; water drips from burst pipes; and the ever-present growl of nearby genestealers rolls through darkened corridors like a chilling wind. To add to the tension, your only indication of the danger around you is a dim, helmet-mounted light that struggles to illuminate the darkness, and a small radar display that tracks the movement of your troops and nearby genestealers. As the enemy grows closer, you'll hear battle cries from your marines as they rush into battle — or watch in horror as they're ripped apart.

Then there's the all-too-real frustration and confusion when weapons jam, troops get separated from the team, and genestealers erupt from innocent-looking bulkheads in terrifying ambushes. It's like being on a big, rumbling roller-coaster and suddenly realizing you've run out of track. This is one of the few action games that has actually made me jump in my seat.

The missions build on that tension with scenarios that are deceptively difficult, forcing you to play in stages — move into position, evaluate the situation, then move into another position, etc. — giving ample opportunity for anything and everything to go wrong. Make the wrong decision or fail to react quickly, and the entire team is doomed.



Flame units can stop an enemy advance, but the fire can also destroy the squad.

If things get really rough, there are even options for multi-player outings, but you might have a hard time convincing somebody to join in the madness. *Space Hulk*'s calm-before-the-storm-meets-hurricane pace certainly won't be everybody's cup of tea, and at times it can make the game seem tedious and overly difficult, but if you've grown tired of first-person games that rely on quick reflexes rather than cunning and strategy — and don't mind watching your squad-mates getting shredded — *Space Hulk* is definitely a winner.

—Todd Vaughn

MY FIST . . . IN YOUR FACE

If a genestealer gets in close enough to your space marine, you won't be able to fend off the attack with the prized stormbolter rifle. Instead, you'll have to pray you're quick enough with your trusty power-glove to squash their heads like melons.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

87%

HIGHS: Sharp graphics, menacing atmosphere, and challenging squad-level excitement.

LOWS: Demanding system requirements; occasionally tricky planning interface.

BOTTOM LINE: If you're a *Doom* fan looking for something with a lot more depth, look no further than Space Hulk.

Product Information Number 144

American Civil War: From Sumter to Appomatox

Category: Strategy Game

Developer: Adanac Command Systems

Publisher: Interactive Magic, P.O. Box 13491, Research Triangle Park, NC, 27709 (919) 451-0722

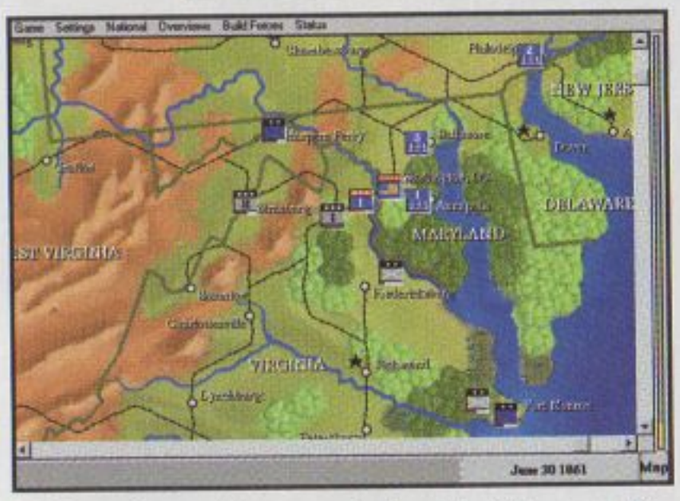
Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486SX/33; 8MB RAM; Windows 3.1 or higher; SVGA; Mouse	Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM

The ideal Civil War game remains elusive, but this strategic-level simulation merits great respect.

Every Civil War game — played on a board or a computer — represents a compromise between conflicting design needs. Do you include tactical control over battles, and if so, how do you handle it? Do you include the vital but hard-to-quantify political aspects of the conflict? Do you assign historically authentic values to the commanders, or do you include random variations?

While *American Civil War* would not, and could not, satisfy every Civil War gamer, it meets these tough design questions head-on, stakes out its own territory, and offers a solid, satisfying recreation of this vast conflict.

One compromise is the lack of a tactical module; the designers tried numerous options and finally concluded that there was no way, with existing technology, to give gamers hands-on control of individual battles without utterly swamping the strategic-level concept that is the heart of the game. Still, battle resolution doesn't simply compare behind-the-scenes dice rolls; computer-resolved battles achieve a remarkable degree of plausibility, and every battle displays an "analysis" screen on which you can read all the details of the engagement. As far as which engagements you'll be able to play, *American Civil War* presents you with one scenario each for the years 1861-1863; you can play from June to December, or play for an entire year. Alternatively, you can refight the entire war, starting in June, 1861.



Smooth graphics, yes indeed, but the game's scale takes some getting used to.

You can choose historically accurate profiles for the 125 leaders depicted in the game, or you can set that aspect to "random" and do what Lincoln and Jeff Davis had to do: discover your best leaders by virtue of their performance on the battlefield. Victory can be attained through military success or through political gains (conquering state capitals or, for the Confederacy, achieving foreign recognition and aid), and the balance between these elements is excellent.

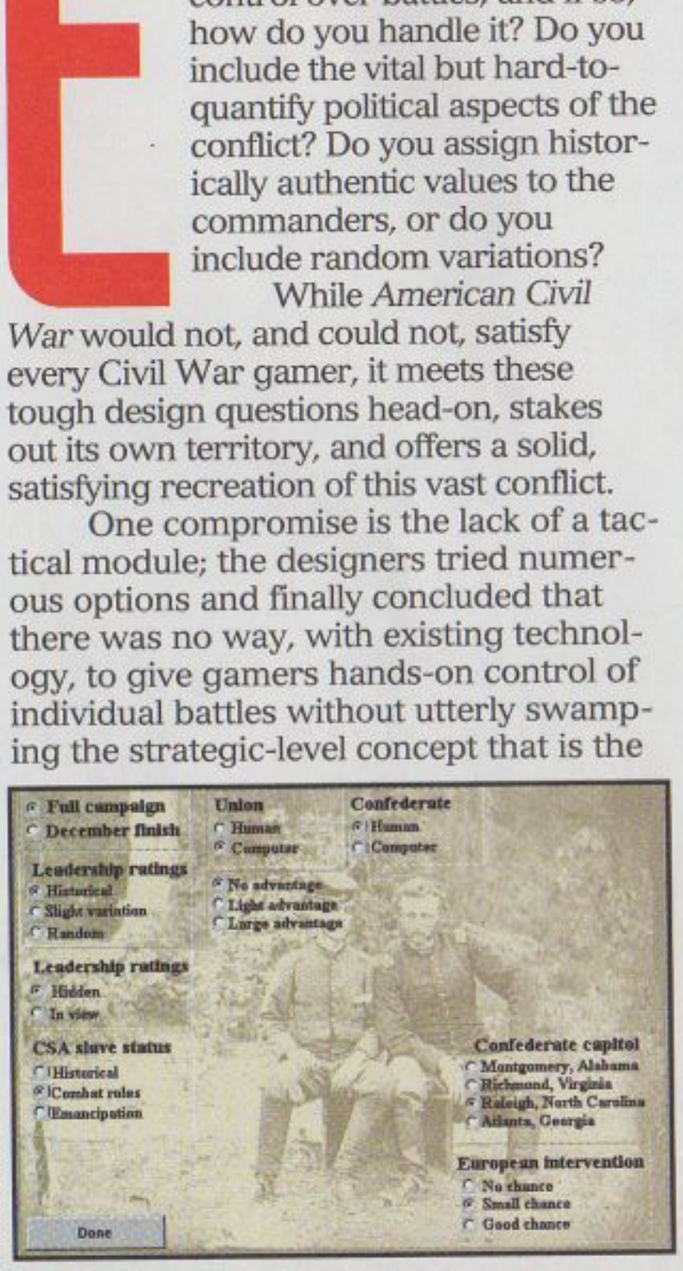
The more unwieldy aspects of the Civil War (the economic infrastructures, movement by rail, recruiting and organizing corps, transferring commands, naval operations, etc.) have been rigorously analyzed and simplified, at least in terms of the interface, to an admirable degree. Graphically, the game is handsome and clean (but *do* run it at the suggested resolution of 640 X 460, or it will only appear on one-third of your monitor screen!).

However, this is one of those games that you'll have to meet more than half-way if you're going to get the most out of the product. Certain aspects of the system require careful study and thought and some don't become clear until you've put in quite a few (possibly frustrating) hours of play. The manual could be better: it describes in detail how to assign independent brigades to garrison cities and coastal forts, for example, but it fails to mention that (if you're playing the CSA side, at any rate) you won't even see any such brigades unless you crank up the "enlistment bounty" to maximum.

And the strategic-level only scale sometimes causes frustration. I often had individual corps attacked by superior forces even though I had substantial troop resources, located in the same hex, which could not be ordered to the rescue of their comrades. Most gamers will inevitably regret not being able to jump in and "take command", despite the overall excellence of the combat resolution system.

However, the game's design does what it is intended to do: turn an incredibly complicated military/political event into a clean, playable simulation that reflects real history while still offering numerous opportunities to try out "what if?" alternatives. As an added bonus, the game ships with a well-produced reference CD entitled *Fateful Lightning*. If it is not the elusive and millennial "perfect Civil War game", it is a handsome, praiseworthy effort that displays remarkable insight and intelligence. If you're interested in the subject, and willing to invest a lot of time becoming comfortable with the game-system, *ACW* should give you your money's worth.

—William R. Trotter



Setup options allow you to fight historically accurate campaigns or compelling alternatives.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

80%

HIGHS: Excellent balance between political and military aspects; clean interface.

LOWS: Some aspects of *ACW* become clear only after many hours of play; manual could be better.

BOTTOM LINE: An admirable but somewhat recondite game with a steep learning curve.

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Product Information Number 145

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18 to 3[illegible]

a potential psychotic killer.

Lemmings Paintball

Win95

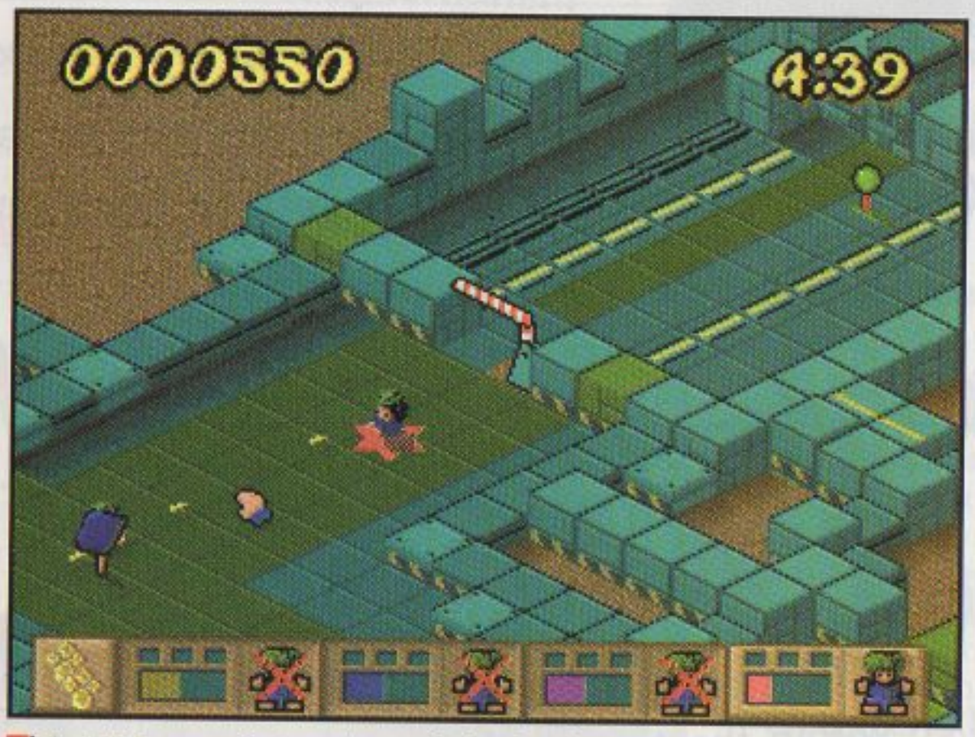
Category: Action/Strategy

Developer: Visual Sciences

Publisher: Psygnosis, 919 E. Hillsdale Blvd., 2nd Floor, Foster City, CA 94404 (800) 438-7794

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/50; 8MB RAM; Mouse	Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card; Modem

Psygnosis gives their popular Lemmings line a new lease on life by arming their furry little maniacs for battle.

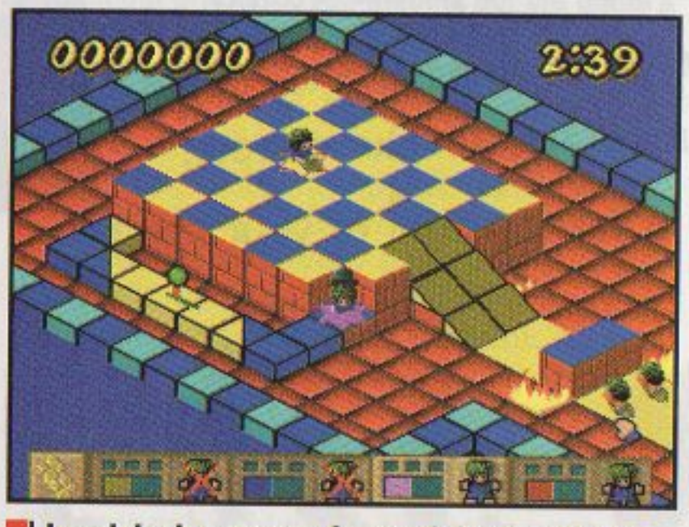


Splat! Psygnosis transforms their classic cute and cuddly Lemmings into the dogs of war in this inventive squad-based puzzler.

Psygnosis' lineup of classic Lemmings titles just got a little bigger and bolder with the latest addition to the family — *Lemmings Paintball*. Don't expect to find another round of their legendary side-scrolling puzzle madness — you don't have to save the little dunderheads from themselves by using special skills to escape danger-filled levels — instead, *Lemmings Paintball* moves away from the classic puzzle theme by taking a dash of *Syndicate* and a dose of capture-the-flag and cramming it all into one fun and addictive package.

Like *Syndicate, Lemmings Paintball* uses a three-quarter, top-down perspective and level design that incorporates dizzying maze-like maps and shoot-'em-up frenzy, and of course, it's all done in the classic Lemmings style. You begin each level with one or more lemmings armed only with paintball guns, and you attempt to guide them through maps filled with enemy lemmings to collect the opposing team's flag without getting splattered.

While the change from 2D (and 3D) puzzler might sound a little risky, Psygnosis makes the most of this new theme and keeps the learning curve extremely low with an interface that allows you to hop right into the action and start spraying some paint. You'll use the mouse to select a lemming, and point-and-click with the left mouse button to use items and move around the map. Once you've got an enemy lemming in your sights just click the right mouse button to fire. It's quick, efficient and simple. Even with a team of four lemmings strewn across a map, the interface handles the problem of jumping from one to the other with a menu bar that lets you click on the one you want to control, or you can select all the units to control your units en masse. One minor hitch is the fact you can't scroll the map independently — you can only view the action surrounding the lemming currently selected.



Level design ranges from subdued outdoor settings to this cheerful cornucopia of primary colors.

Keeping your team in a tight group isn't always the best strategy when facing down the enemy lemmings, since it exposes all your units to incoming fire.

Once you've learned the controls and begin exploring the levels, you'll realize there's enough residual Lemmings influence to give *Paintball* a familiar and casual feel. There's little in the way of violence (other than mistakenly directing your lemmings into pits of lava), and the design reflects the wonderful cartoonish quality of previous Lemmings games. The levels are very puzzle oriented — you can't just storm around with your troop of lemmings and expect to finish the level. You'll have to learn to use each lemming where needed in order to capture the other team's flag/flags. On some maps it's necessary to use one lemming to activate a switch while another lemming rides a lift or enters a room, and in the more difficult levels you'll have to divide your units to the four corners of the map to succeed, avoiding hazards and enemy lemmings along the way.

And once you get into solving those little mysteries, you're hooked. Cuteness and novelty factors aside, *Lemmings Paintball* is a nice mixture of action and puzzling that never seems forced or stale. The puzzles are deviously designed and require the same sort of single-minded approach as the 2D puzzlers.

As an added bonus, Psygnosis has even included a Windows 95 version of the original *Lemmings*. But even without the addition of the classic *Lemmings, Lemmings Paintball* stands on its own as a nice addition to fans of the series and a must-have for fans of puzzle games everywhere.

—Todd Vaughn

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

80%

HIGHS: Colorful graphics, easy to use interface and addictive gameplay.

LOWS: Difficult puzzles in later levels. Half-realized multi-player games.

BOTTOM LINE: Psygnosis creates a wonderful new dimension of Lemmings fun that's every bit as challenging as the original games.

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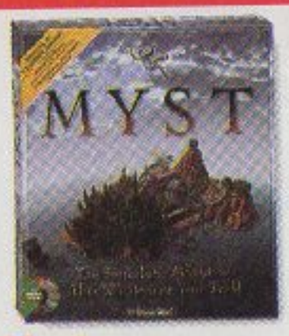

Myst
Interact. Game 5004304
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	Illustrative Talking Encyclopedia For Children WIN3.1 386, 4mb, M	Children's Ed. For ages 8-14	5045802
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Adventure 5060405
WIN3.1 486/33, 8mb, M

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Strategy Game 5050208
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Arcade Style 5043609
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	7th Guest DOS 386/33 or MAC LCIII, 4mb, M	Interact. Game	5004700
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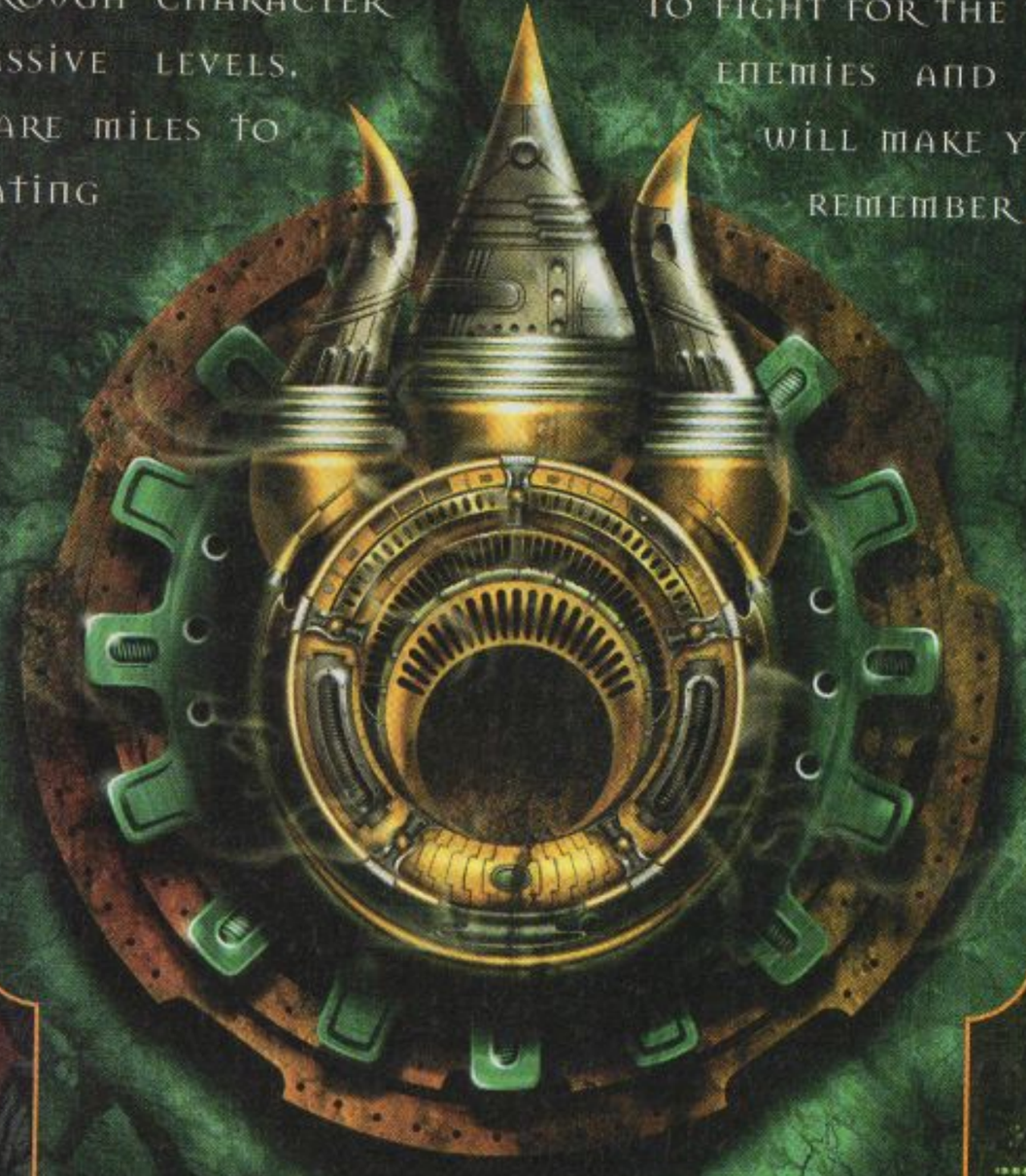

"Strife makes the story integral to the gameplay."

–Peter Olafson,
Computer Gaming World, May 1996

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Product Information Number 165

Normality

Category: Adventure

Developer: Gremlin

Publisher: Interplay, 17922 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (714) 553-6678

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

Gremlin's hipper-than-thou adventure game may be a little hard to take at times, but it's good gaming.

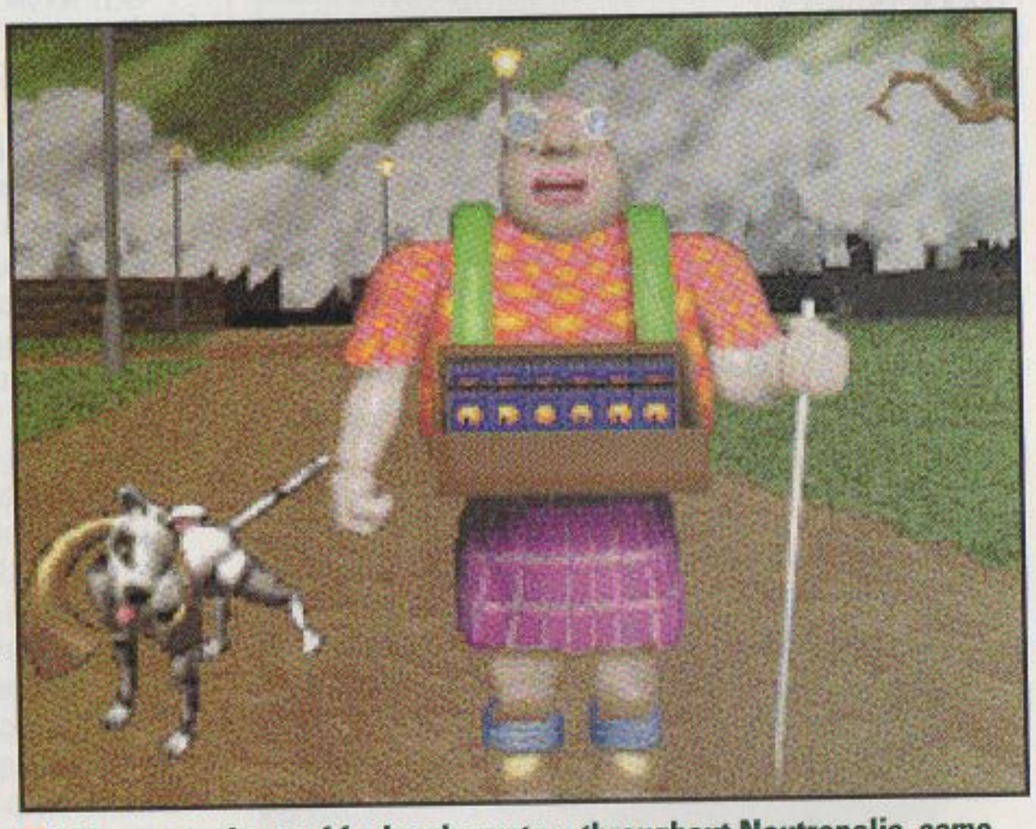
Hard as it is to believe, I must admit that I am a member of what Yuppie jerks like to call "Generation X." I feel okay admitting this, because I pretty much loathe my generation, who seem, as a whole, to be even bigger simpering New Age ninnies than the Baby Boomers. I'm not sure I like being part of a group whose most memorable contribution to culture has been nipple piercing, but such is the price of being born in 1968.

This whole GenX thing is especially cringe-worthy when it pops up in entertainment. Apparently, the powers that be believe everyone in their twenties is jobless, wears knee-length shorts and raybans, has a goatee, rides a skateboard, eschews bathing, sports a funky hair-do, and speaks faux-hacker. Kent, the sporadically annoying hero of Interplay's *Normality*, is a composite caricature of all these elements, with a dash of Bill 'n Ted brain-death thrown in to dumb things down a bit. He lopes through an otherwise entertaining game like the lovechild of Moe Howard and Alice in Chains singer Layne Stanley.

But despite my initial distaste for the main character, *Normality* is an adventure game with a lot going for it.

Kent's voodoo doll is the central interface for all commands, including use, talk, take, look, and open.

First, it uses a slick, first-person interface in a traditionally-styled adventure game, and it's a real treat after endless *Myst*-type games. The story revolves around Kent, an aimless loser living in Neutropolis, a city renowned for its mind-rending boredom. Thrown in jail for a week for whistling a happy tune, Kent emerges determined to undo Neutropolis's government enforced malaise. First, he must get to the bottom of the mystery surrounding dictator Paul Nystalux. Strangely, this mystery can be traced back to the Plush Rest furniture factory, where Kent goes to work busting couches as a furniture tester.



There are plenty of funky characters throughout Neutropolis, some of whom want to see the boredom shattered as much as Kent.

Kent navigates Neutropolis with a free-motion interface reminiscent of *Under a Killing Moon*: hold the left mouse button to freely move through the environment, both buttons to look up or down, and the right button to access Kent's "voodoo doll interface." Movement is pretty smooth and exceptionally well done, with eye-catching artwork and a full environment to explore. Cool little motion-captured micro-movies play when Kent performs some action. The interface is easy to use, and gives you look, open, touch/use, pick up, and talk commands. The floating backpack up in the corner opens the inventory, and objects are combined and used on other objects to solve puzzles.

None of this will be too unfamiliar or difficult for experienced gamers. Dialog trees are one-path click-fests, and object combinations arise semi-logically from the environment and situation. For example, Kent has to escape his grungy apartment, but he has to keep the broken TV on by occasionally switching the remote, or his captors will realize he's gone. Answer? Put a little pecking bird toy on the remote. One character wants cream with his coffee, but a little paste will do. Kent needs to be fat to get a job at Plush Rest, but an "I'm fat" T-shirt does the trick. No great stretch.

If this all sounds a bit loopy, it's supposed to. *Normality* is trying hard for a madcap *Sam & Max* style of cartoonish adventure, and sometimes it even pulls it off. Some situations are funny, as is some of the dialog. A lot of it falls flat, however, simply through bad writing. And it doesn't help that you'd like to steer the hero over a ledge. It's a hit-and-miss affair, but *Normality* is helped along by some decent adventure gaming and a spiffy interface. Think of it as *Sam & Max* Lite.

As one might expect from a grungy GenerationX dude like Kent, his apartment is suitably disgusting.

— T. Liam McDonald

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

80%

HIGHS: Slick navigation interface and generally good puzzles.

LOWS: Dialog falls flat at times; may be too easy for some gamers; annoying hero.

BOTTOM LINE: Some good fun in the "I want to be Sam & Max when I grow up" vein.

Zapitalism

Category: Business Sim

Developer: LavaMind

Publisher: LavaMind, *http://www.lavamind.com*

Required	We Recommend
2X CD-ROM drive; 486DX/33; 8MB RAM; Win3.1; Mouse	486/66; Supported sound card

This succeeds in giving economics a cute and clever face, but there's not enough here to entertain the experienced entrepreneur.

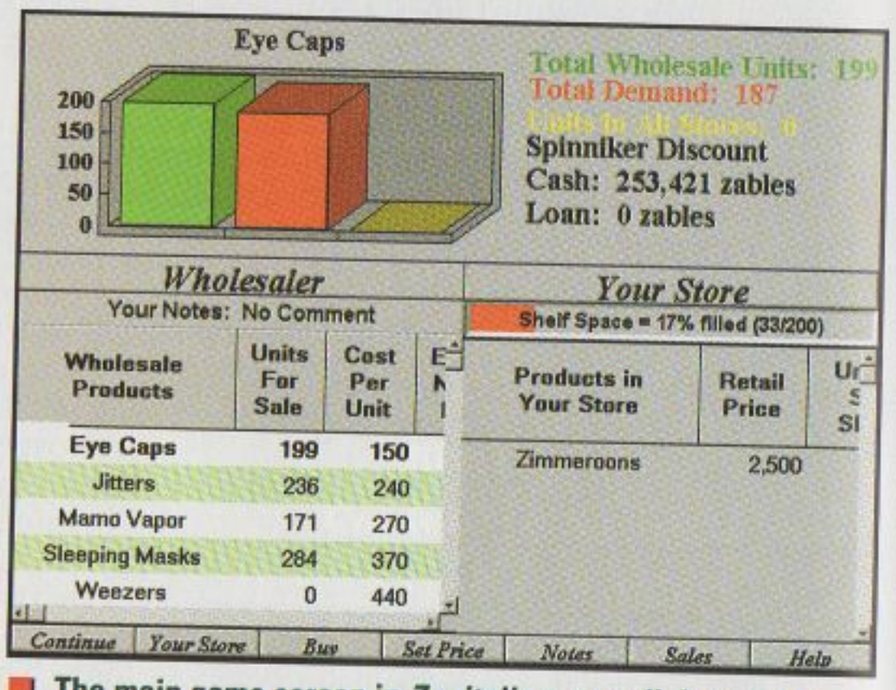
Zapitalism is a light-hearted business sim that challenges you to take on the role of a fledgling entrepreneur on the peculiar island of Zapinalia. Created by the team that did *Gazillionaire*, this game exhibits the same creativity and care that went into its predecessor. Unfortunately, it suffers from the same bland graphics and limitations in gameplay.

The idea is that you are hired to run one of six competing import shops, each selling such oddball items as heppers, jazz lumps, and weezers (jazz lumps, for example, are magical glops of clay that record and play back catchy tunes) to the strange people of Zapinalia. These items may be more colorful than your usual timber stocks or VCRs, but at the end of the day you still have to sell enough of them to stay in business.

You begin with just enough shelf space for one hundred product units. The Queen of Zapinalia will issue new permits for a hundred new shelves only periodically, so outbidding your competitors for those permits is crucial, since it is the only way to expand your business. You must also keep your workers happy, maintain your firm's reputation, and advertise your products.

But the elements of the business model are overly simple; you only have one store, and things such as transportation costs, product-specific advertising, and suppliers are not accounted for. Supply and demand is random, and your options in the stock market are extremely limited — you can't issue your own stocks, for example, or buy out a competitor.

To counter the lack of real business



The main game screen in *Zapitalism*; you click on these unlabelled buildings to access the loan shark, the wholesaler's, the insurance office, and so on.

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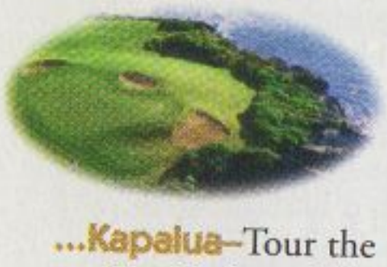

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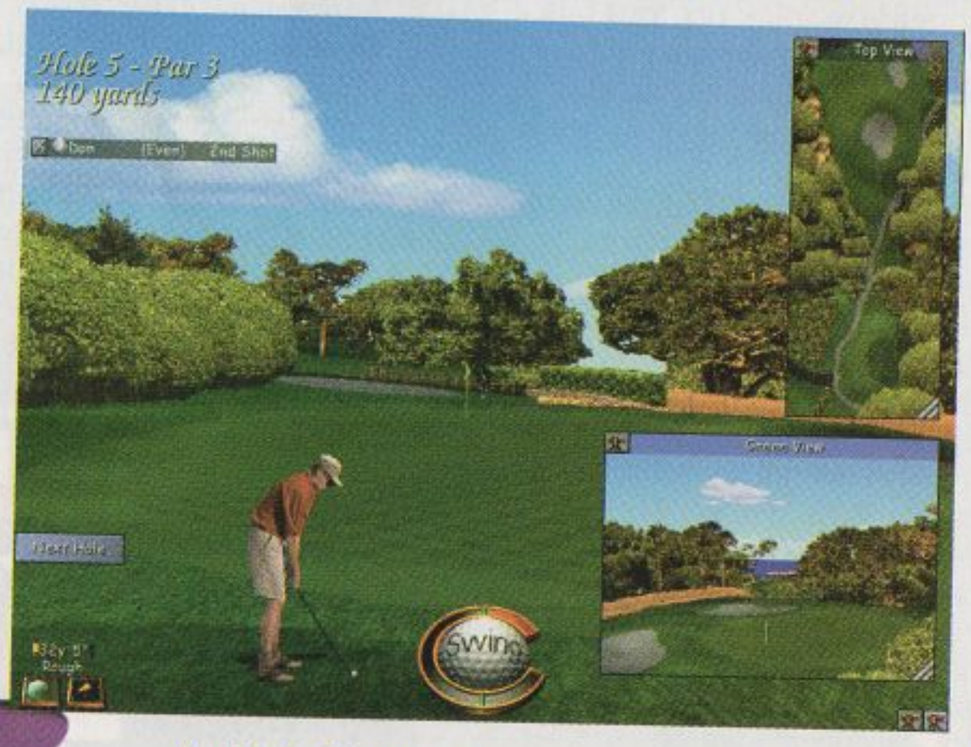

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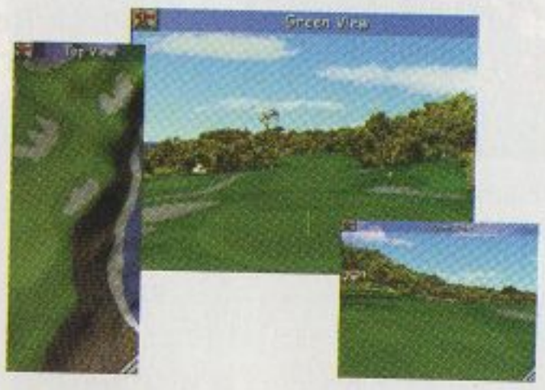

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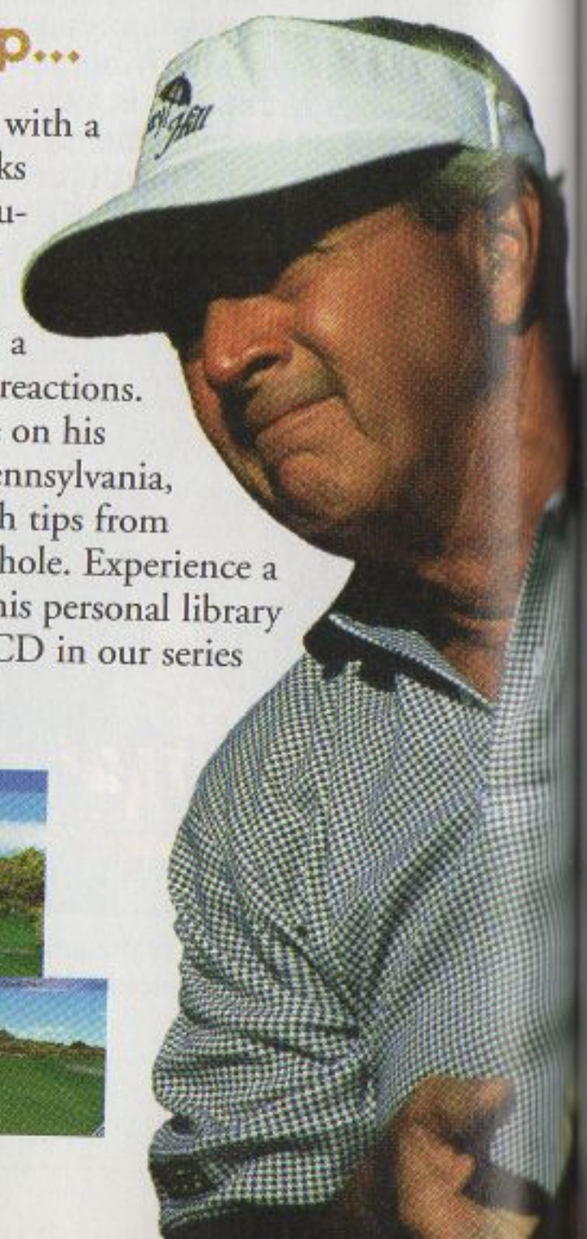
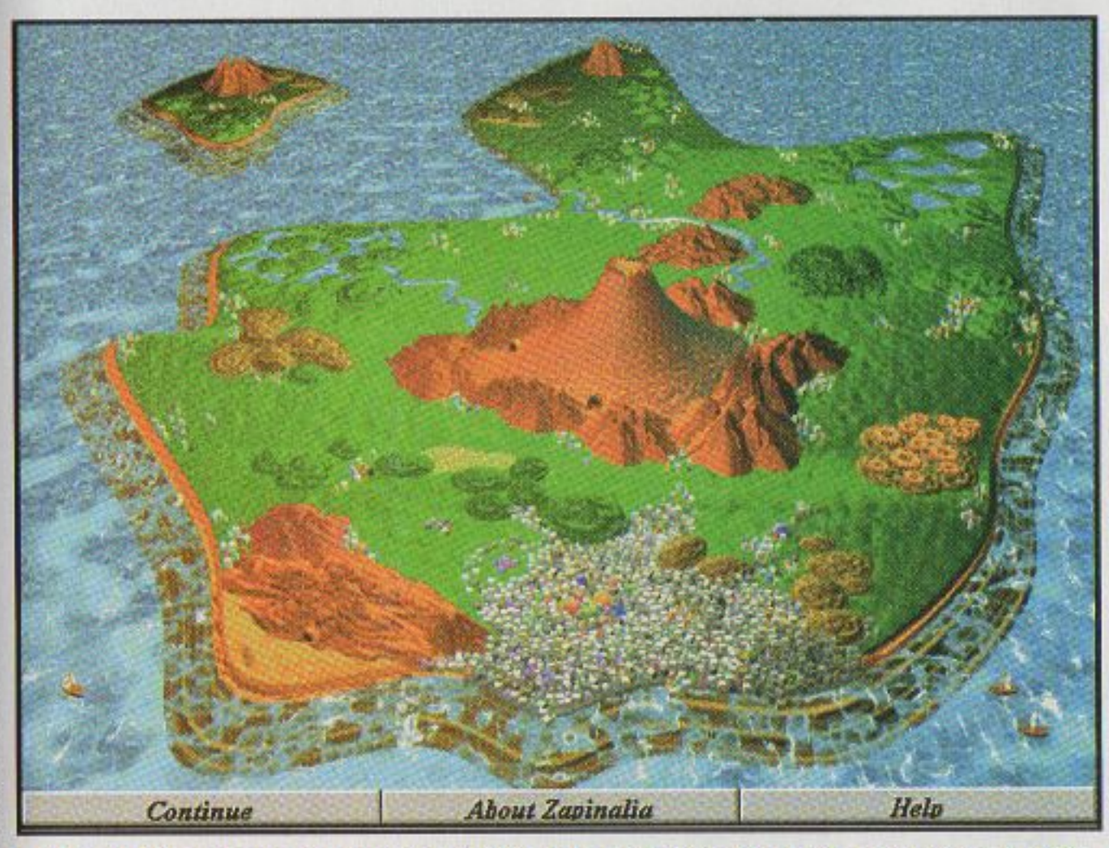




From this map you can explore the isle of Zapinalia. In the caves and cliffs you may find treasure or other helpful random events, so it pays to check.

strategies and tactics, there are things like the exploration menu, which lets you send your owner out to the various other islands around Zapinalia. Sometimes he'll find valuable items that bring in more money; other times, he'll gamble away your profits.

Occasionally he will do something truly useful, such as persuade the hive people to release a kind of pollen in the air that will make customers buy products in droves. But these jaunts do not have a great deal to do with your day-to-day business operations.

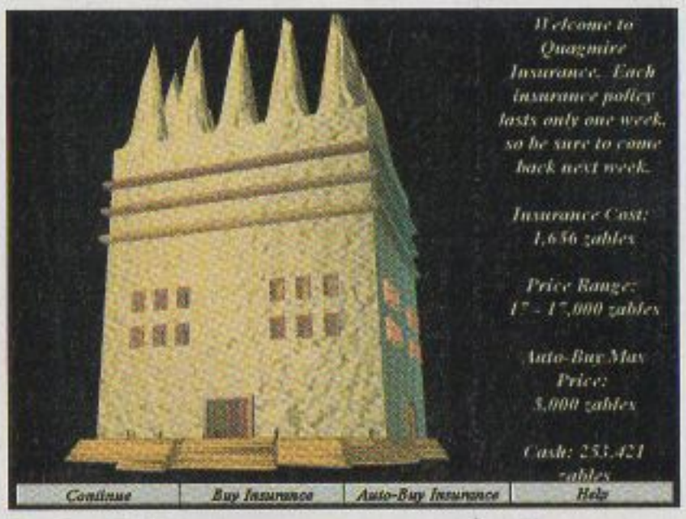
There is also another exploration option that involves you exploring the main island of Zapinalia each turn. But since it amounts to little more than clicking on the caves and seeing if you find random treasure or not, it gets old quick.

Most of the game screens are presented in decent, ray-traced graphics, but the business decision screens use a menu system that looks like pie charts made with off-the-shelf business software. While it serves to convey the information, it's rather uninspiring and dull.

There are a few bright and cheerful graphics of the islands and other locations, but it's a bit of a disappointment that you never get to see or interact directly with any of the strange characters referenced in the game.

Zapitalism, with its humorous game world and relatively simple economic system, is a sincere effort at demystifying the genres of empire building and economic sims — but the lack of a detailed, credible economic model and the relatively primitive appearance of the game will probably disappoint most gamers.

— *Jason Bates*



At this insurance agency you can insure your business, which is a must for survival.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

60%

HIGHS: Highly original and creative game world; E-Mail Internet play.

LOWS: Too many random factors and a lack of detail derail the economic gameplay.

BOTTOM LINE: Although amusing, it lacks the depth and sophistication of other buinsess sims.

UP TO 1600 X 1200 RESOLUTION | ARNOLD PALMER AT LATROBE | UP TO 16.7 MILLION COLORS | LINKS LS | ALL-NEW MULTIPLE VIEWS | KAPALUA RESORT COURSES | ALL-NEW MODES OF PLAY

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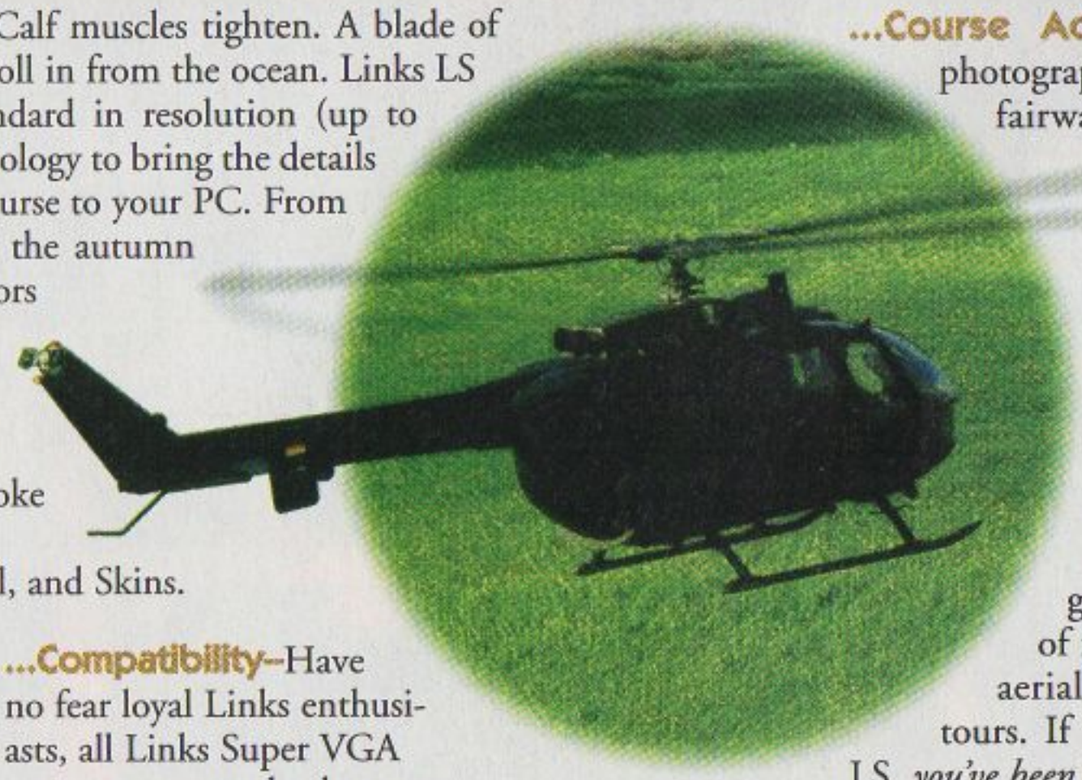
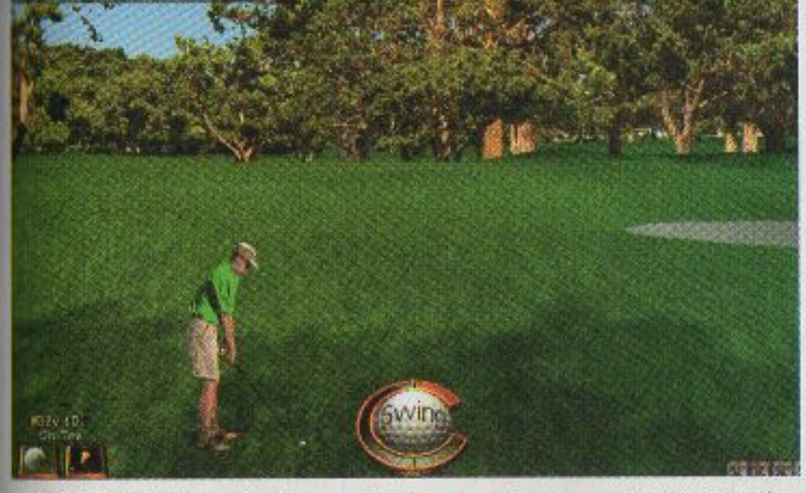


...Course Accuracy–Access Software's photographic team soars over greens, fairways and hazards in their helicopter of choice, capturing every square inch of terrain on film for each Links LS course. This, combined with commissioned aerial topographical mapping, assures the accuracy of each tree along the fairway and every contour on the green. Access also films hours of footage to be converted into aerial fly-bys and multimedia tours. If you've been there on Links LS, *you've been there.*



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Product Information Number 81

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Play as one of three distinct characters, each with their own battle style, special weapons, unique abilities, and special levels only they can traverse.

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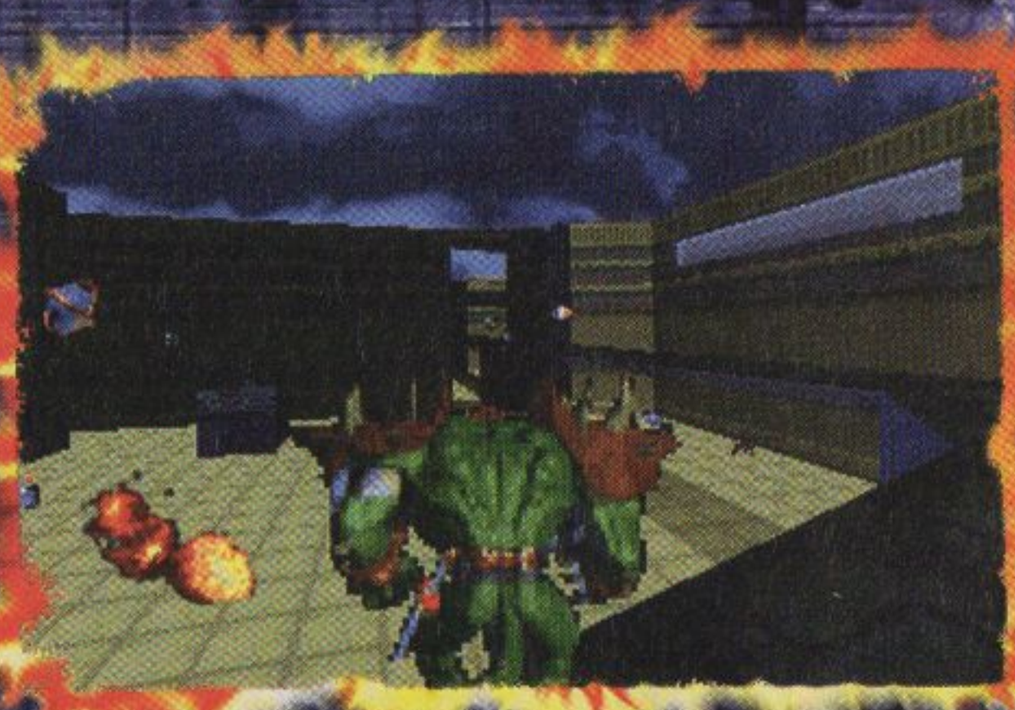
— PC Gamer, July 1996



Jump, crouch, and rip through the many worlds of Eradicator. Choose from 1st- and 3rd-person player perspectives for maximum control of the action.

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Includes full level editor

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Fast, maneuverable, and deadly; this insect-like weapon can give you the edge

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Wipe out whole groups with this bouncing, bounding launch weapon

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An "over-your-shoulder friend-for-life" who serves, protects, and kills

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Plus over 15 other killer weapons for you to pick up and use!

Feel the force of reality as you jump, bounce, and slide through a deadly 3D world where the laws of physics *really* apply!

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Product Information Number 166

Indiana Jones and His Desktop Adventures

Category: Adventure

Developer: LucasArts

Publisher: LucasArts, P.O. Box 10307, San Rafael, CA 94402 (800) 943-3664

Required	We Recommend
486/33; Windows 3.1 or Windows 95; 8MB RAM; 4MB hard-drive space; VGA	Supported sound card

It's not nearly as sophisticated as the usual LucasArts fare, but this little adventure game is a nice diversion.

Think of LucasArts, and you probably get images of TIE Fighters and X-Wings blasting away at each other in the latest spectacular Star Wars sim, or a certain dog-and-rabbit team wisecracking their way through a side-splitting graphic adventure. At the very least, you probably think of great sights, sounds, and gameplay.

LucasArts' latest offering doesn't have the top-notch production values of *TIE Fighter* or *Dark Forces*, but it's still a nifty little game. *Indiana Jones and his Desktop Adventures* starts with a different philosophy than most LucasArts titles; the focus here is on simplicity and quick gratification rather than depth and sophistication, but it works well.

Desktop Adventures is a point-and-click adventure game played from a top-down perspective that may put you in mind of Nintendo cartridge adventures. The graphics are reminiscent of videogames past, too; all the characters look a little squashed, like relatives of the Mario Brothers. Not a big problem, but it's hard for Indiana Jones to cut a dashing figure when he's as wide as he is tall. There's very little in the way of sound effects or music, and there's no digitized speech — in fact, the whole game fits on a single floppy disk.

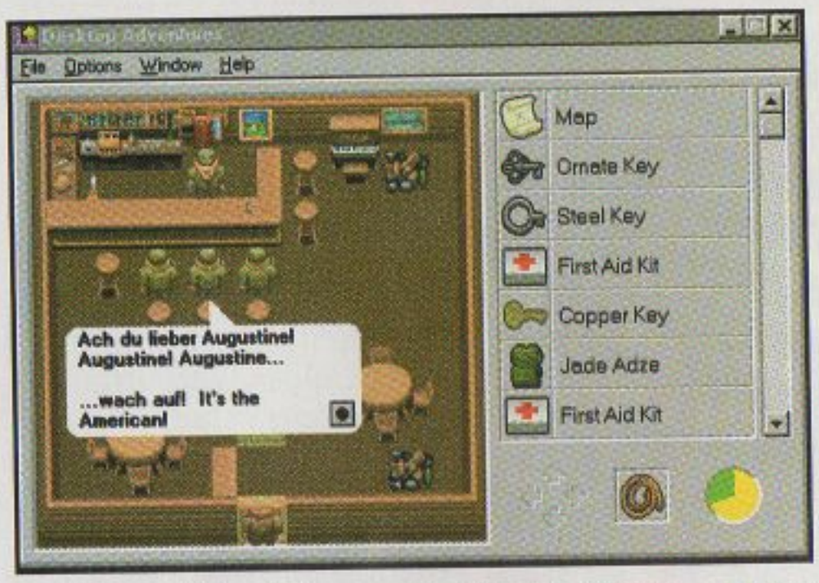
Since *Desktop Adventures* is intended as a light diversion that you can start and finish in one sitting, the structure in each session is necessarily simple: something (or someone) has been nabbed, and you've got to recover the item in question. Of course, you're Indiana Jones, so it's not going to be easy. As you search the game's 1930s Mexico setting, you'll run into the usual adventure game problems: if there's a locked door you've got to open, you can be sure someone else has the key, and he won't hand it over until you find his lost guitar, etc. Then there are the more dangerous obstacles, like scorpions, Nazis, jaguars, and — of course — snakes.

The game's packaging promises "literally billions" of different adventures, but that should be a warning sign to anyone who's played computer adventures for a while. Any time a game claims to offer a new adventure every time you play, it's only because it strings together a plot from a pool of randomly selected elements. And since there are considerably fewer than a billion such elements in *Desktop Adventures*, things quickly get repetitive. The valuable item you're searching for might change from a jade mask to an obsidian sword to Indy's old buddy, Marcus Brody — but the game plays out in the same basic way every time.

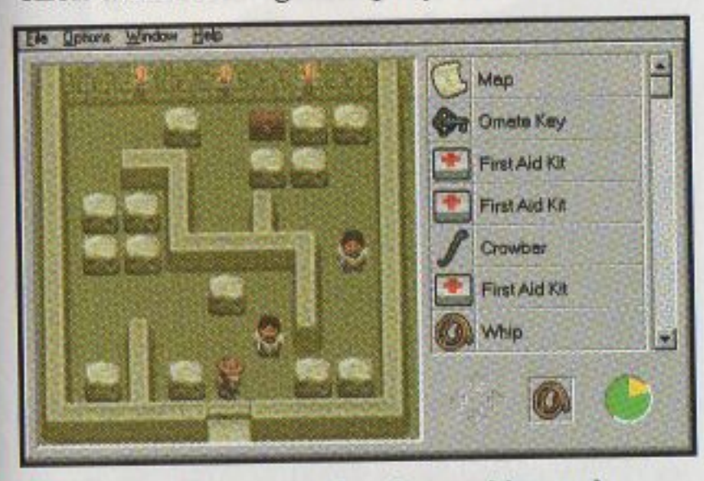
There is some small potential for variation; you can tell *Desktop Adventures* to create a smaller or larger game world, and you can adjust the difficulty of combat. You'll probably want to keep combat pretty easy, because the computer-controlled enemies have a distinct advantage over you — they can attack diagonally, where (with most weapons) you can only attack in the four basic compass directions. This makes combat frustrating enough that the last thing you'll want to do is make it harder.

So what does *Desktop Adventures* have going for it? The same qualities that all those Windows solitaire games have. If you're chatting on the telephone, you don't want to fire up *Quake*; and if you're just trying to kill a few minutes, you're not going to jump into *Civilization II*. Sometimes the only thing that'll conquer your gaming cravings is a quick, mindless diversion. *Desktop Adventures* serves that up with class and a little humor. And since it's bargain-priced, it's hard to go wrong.

—Dan Bennett



Indy stumbles into an unfriendly pub. "Nazis — I hate these guys."



Some of the puzzles involve pushing and pulling objects. If you can find a way past the stones and bandits, the treasure chest is yours.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

72%

HIGHS: Simple to play; low hardware requirements; and the price is right.

LOWS: Repetitive structure means limited play life; poor graphics.

BOTTOM LINE: *Desktop Adventures* isn't spectacular, but it doesn't pretend to be. As time-killers go, it's a refreshing change from Solitaire.

Expect No Mercy

Category: Arcade

Developer: Microforum

Publisher: Microforum, 1 Woodborough Ave., Toronto, Canada M6M 5A1 (416) 656-6406

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/50; 8MB RAM; Windows 3.1 or higher	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card; Gamepad

What happens when you combine a B-movie with a fighting game? Look no further for the answer — but enter at your own risk.

Most of us know what to expect from a movie or TV tie-in game — more often than not, it's a mediocre, slapped-together piece of multimedia gloss with little redeeming value. Typically, the only saving grace is the fact that you're controlling an identifiable hero, be it Batman, Zorro, or even Jed Clampett in *The Beverly Hillbillies* (shudder). But what happens when you take an obscure B-movie, such as *Expect No Mercy*, and transform it into a *Mortal Kombat* clone? The result isn't pretty.

Not that the box doesn't seem promising — when a sticker warns you about the offensiveness of not only the game, but the packaging, you know not to expect *Putt-Putt Joins the Parade*. The fold-out box features a steel-clawed woman in leather, about to finish off a blood-caked opponent with a slashed throat and battered mouth. Now if only the game could live up to the gory glory suggested by the package.

Khan fricassees his opponent with that down-home cookin' style.

Expect No Mercy's plot deals with a lone agent of the "Federal Security Bureau" on a mission to infiltrate the "Virtual Arts Training Academy," a front concealing a school for assassins. Granted, it's a more interesting setup than *Street Fighter* or *Mortal Kombat*, but it still leads back to the same old path — two fighters beating the bejeezus out of each other in a two-dimensional ring.

When you start the game, you'll see a non-interactive video transmission from a fellow agent and be prompted to select a "Virtual Opponent" to fight in the "Virtual Arena." The opponents themselves are an odd bunch, ranging from an evil clown to a scantily-clad dominatrix, while your character is a generic male in a karate outfit. An information screen pops up, and the round — and your headaches — begin.

Expect No Mercy's control is atrocious. Whether you use a keyboard, joystick, or gamepad, your character punches and kicks in random spurts. Special moves are difficult — if not impossible — to pull off, and your character often simply wonít respond to the controls. To add to your misery, you can't vault over your opponent's head and fight him from the other side — if you're pushed into a corner, you're stuck.

The graphics aren't quite as bad; the crisp, digitized fighters spew blood with every hit. The music is a mixed bag, ranging from suspenseful to downright silly, and the audio contains the expected quota of splatters and screams.

If you're patient and lucky enough to finish off your opponent in three out of five rounds, you'll be treated to a shareware-quality bonus round. You click your mouse on little eyeballs that float across the screen in a truly asinine mini-game. If you have the Herculean determination to work your way up through the training levels, you get to solve a puzzle involving the disarming of a bomb, but by then most players will have packed away their gamepads in frustration.

Expect No Mercy's only saving graces are the outrageous, often hilarious finishing moves. The brutal ways of sending your opponent to the Choir Invisible range from decapitation to castration — and they're gross. The player's character has a pleasant way of spin-kicking his opponents, resulting in their hearts ripping out of their torsos and splattering against the screen, leaving a bloody smear. Nice touch.

But finishing moves do not a fighting game make. While there was plenty of red stuff in the *Mortal Kombat* trilogy, there was an actual, enjoyable game lying beneath the coating of blood and guts. Not so with *Expect No Mercy*; any gamer looking for bloody fighting action should leave this button-masher on the shelf...after checking out the cover art, of course.

— Colin Williamson

A bit of black magic from the Evil Clown, and your head does a creditable impression of a potato in a microwave.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

30%

HIGHS: Gory finishing moves; plenty of blood-and-guts; neat box art.

LOWS: Ludicrous controls; lame puzzles; tie-in with a grade B movie doesn't help it any.

BOTTOM LINE: Further evidence that movies should be seen and not played.

One False Move and His Tomb Becomes Yours

Chaos grips an Egyptian mining site. After unearthing an ancient hieroglyphic chest, the workers are paralyzed by fear. They've tread upon hallowed grounds. Or so they believe. You are sent to learn the truth.

Beneath the site, you discover the 3,000 year-old tombs of Pharaoh Natanuka, the ancient spirits dwelling within, and murderous intruders. Now you must guard the tombs, their secret treasures and your life.

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If you think getting out is easy, you're dead wrong.

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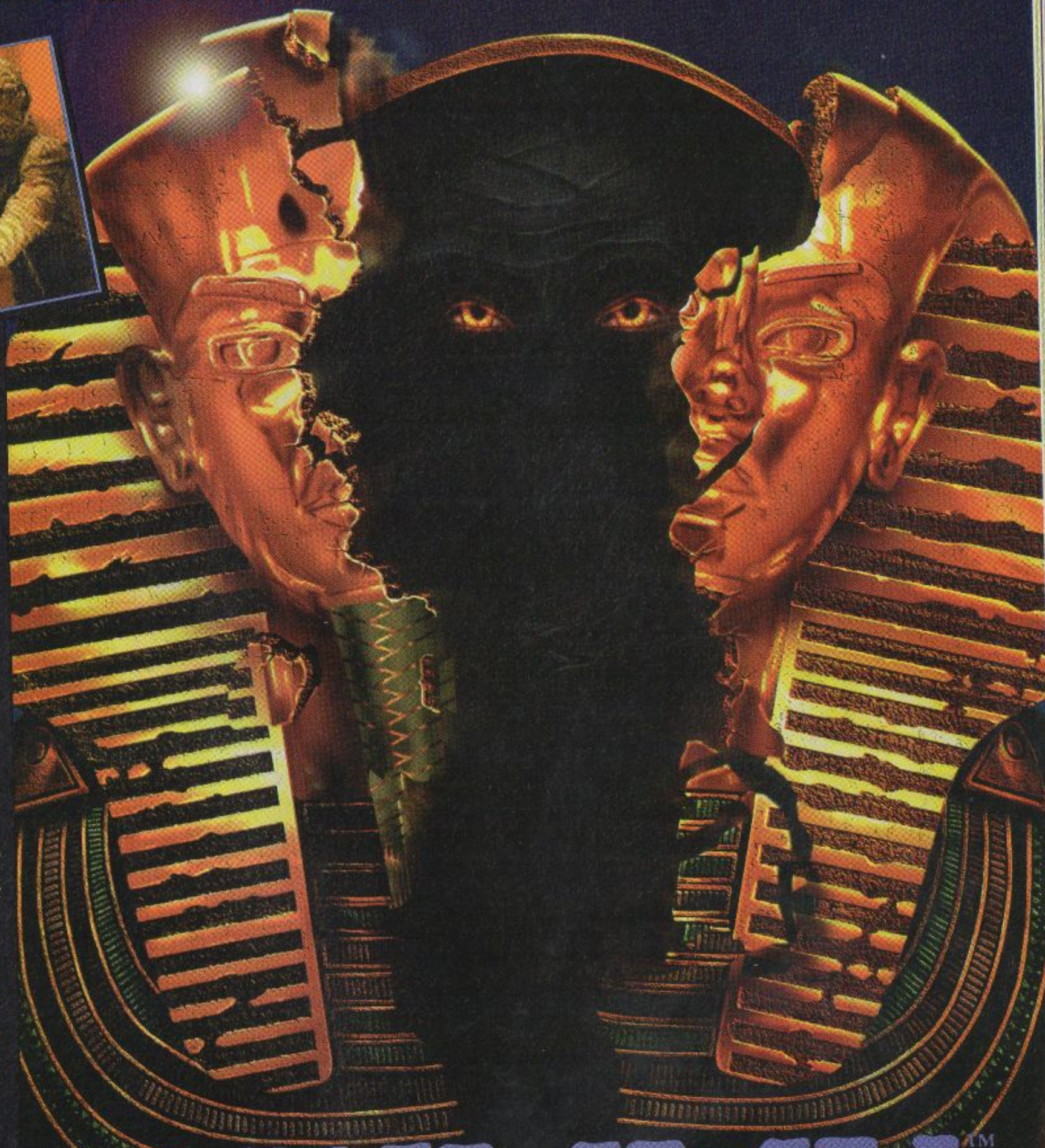

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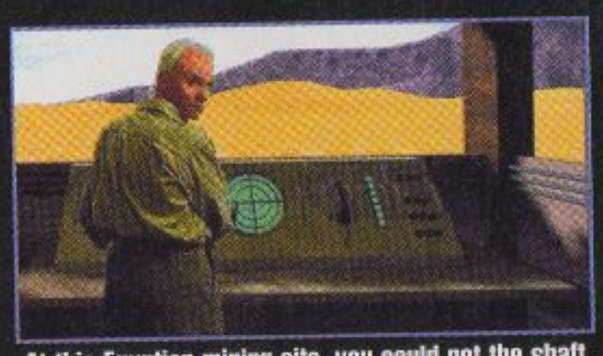

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Trespassing is a capital offense

One wrong move becomes a grave mistake

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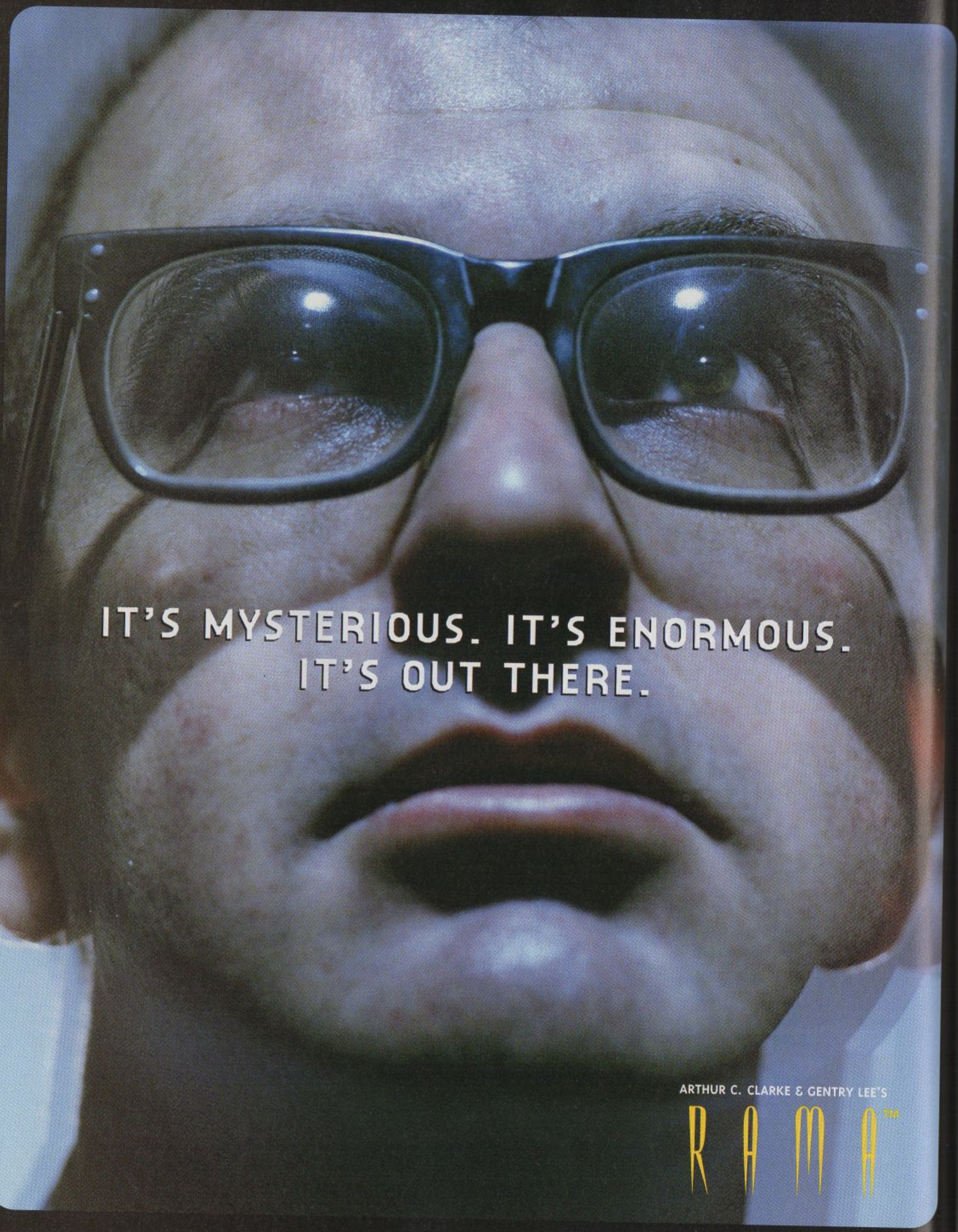

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Product Information Number 152

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Back to Baghdad

Category: Flight Simulation

Developer: Military Simulations Inc.

Publisher: Military Simulations Inc., 5 Tannery Drive, Medfield, MA 02052 (360) 254-2000

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; 75MB HD space; DOS 6.2 or higher; SVGA; SoundBlaster or 100% compatible; Mouse	Pentium 166; FLCS-16 and TQS

The desert erupts in a firestorm as Iraq threatens the West with nuclear retaliation, and it's up to you and your F-16 to stop them.

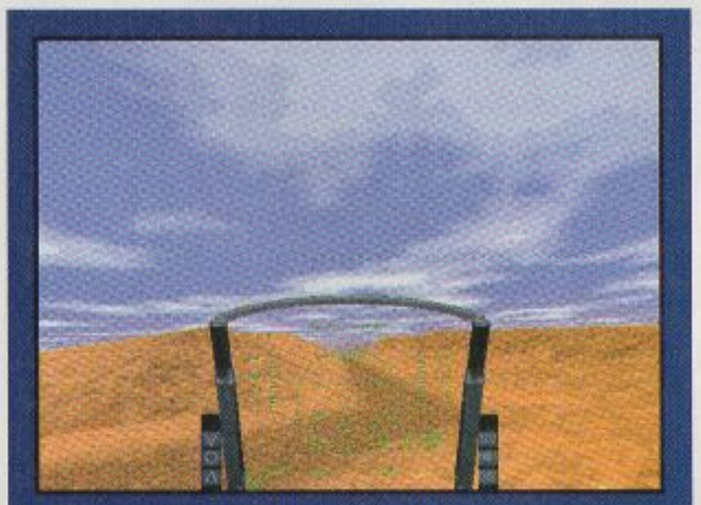
While the world community continues to pat itself on the back for the victory over Saddam Hussein's forces, the Iraqi dictator quietly rebuilds his army to pre-Gulf War strength. No longer content with just seizing the world's oil supply, Hussein uses his newfound power to acquire nuclear weapons technology and attempts to hold the world hostage by threatening to destroy major cities around the world. The coalition forces quickly regroup on the Iraqi border and launch a second attack against Hussein, with you and your F-16 leading the charge.

That's the setup for Military Simulations' first F-16 sim, *Back to Baghdad*. And while the plot is sure to raise a few eyebrows, there's no denying that these newcomers are on the right track when it comes to creating convincing simulations.

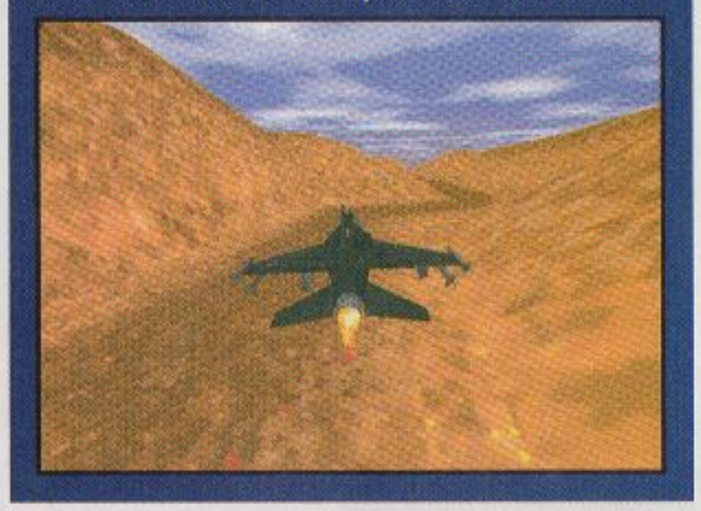
For the game's terrain, they've used actual satellite data of all the major Persian Gulf cities to recreate the Gulf War environment, with everything from major road systems and buildings to rivers and streams accurately detailed. Declassified data on the radar and weapon systems of the F-16 has been used to give the cockpit an authentic look and feel and to complement a flight model that Military Simulations says is the most accurate this side of a multi-million dollar military simulator.

All this attention to detail does make *Back To Baghdad* a very believable experience, at least in the cockpit. Throughout the game's 40 missions and instant action modes, your performance will be affected by every conceivable factor, from the strain of heavy weapons loads to the violent shock waves of anti-aircraft fire; you'll have to get to know your plane inside-out if you hope to survive. Each mission attempts to recreate actual Gulf War scenarios, including Scud hunts, support of massive ground attacks, and defensive scrambles against the new and improved Iraqi air force. For the most part, the scenarios are well constructed and believable, giving you just enough time to prepare for the inevitable before you're thrown to the wolves.

But like all good things, this atten-



Just beyond Baghdad, you'll find terrain with rolling hills and deep valleys — a welcome break from the flat expanse of the desert.



Most of the operations against hostile aircraft are long-range missile exchanges, and this is where the F-16 proves to be deadliest.

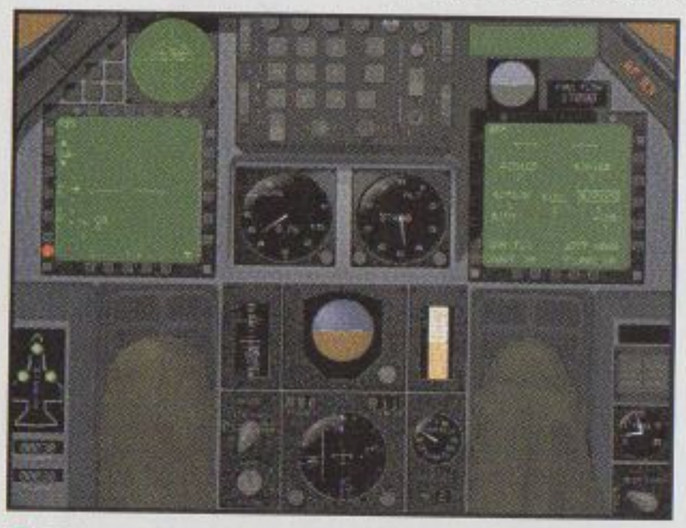
The cities have been recreated with the help of satellite maps, but the number of actual buildings and structures is limited to targets and threats.

During nighttime approaches to the Gulf War cities, you'll have to watch your altitude and speed to avoid the barrages of anti-aircraft fire.

tion to detail can be a double-edged sword at times. Just like in the actual F-16, the cockpit in *Back to Baghdad* is a monster of complex readouts, numbers, and displays; unless you've actually flown an F-16 or memorized the manuals of every simulation from the past ten years, you'll certainly find yourself at a loss to figure out even the simplest displays before carefully studying the manual. There are a number of training exercises that let you test different techniques and systems in low-threat environments, but the lack of a proper tutorial that leads you through each function is disappointing. Still, the manual is well written and to the point, giving you quick, informative descriptions of each function — and a large keystroke reference card is included to jog your memory during flight.

Unless you have the FLCS-16 and TQS, you'll need to keep that reference card handy, because that's the only joystick-throttle combination that *Back to Baghdad* supports directly. If you want to use another stick and throttle, you're going to have to deal with programming it yourself. Normally, that's not a huge task, but for a sim this complex, it represents some real work.

Outside the cockpit, your environment doesn't prove quite as convincing. It's a mixed bag; each time you load a mission, you'll wait and watch for a couple of minutes (literally) as the textures and maps of the cities, roadways, etc. are loaded into memory, but there's really not much going on in each mission space. For the bulk of the missions, you'll see mostly standard desert textures with the occasional roll of a hill and valley; when you finally do encounter one of the major cities, it's just a flat texture like the rest of the terrain. There are a few texture-mapped polygon buildings strewn about to represent key targets and installations, but the effect is underwhelming. If you were spoiled by the graphic beauty of *EF2000* or *AH-64D Longbow*, you'll be unimpressed with *Back to Baghdad*.



With data and specifications straight from the Department of Defense, the instrument displays house a wealth of information, but you'll have to spend quite a bit of time with the manual to make sense of it all.

For hard-core simulation fans, the lack of believable terrain graphics won't be a major hitch, since most missions against the Gulf War cities take place at altitudes above 10,000 feet, where everything looks shapeless and dull. But a few other problems mar the experience. For starters, most missions start in-flight, with the plane approaching the first mission objective rather than on the tarmac. For a sim that puts realism above all else, this is sure to upset fans who want to feel like they're in control of the whole mission, including takeoffs and landings. There are no multi-player options (although a promised expansion pack will offer Internet play), and while there's rarely been a good implementation of the padlock view, *Back To Baghdad* doesn't even bother.

These gripes don't add up to much when you consider what you're gaining in realism and detail — until you realize that Military Simulations has set the retail price for *Back to Baghdad* at $99. For almost a hundred bucks' investment, you should expect options, not omissions.

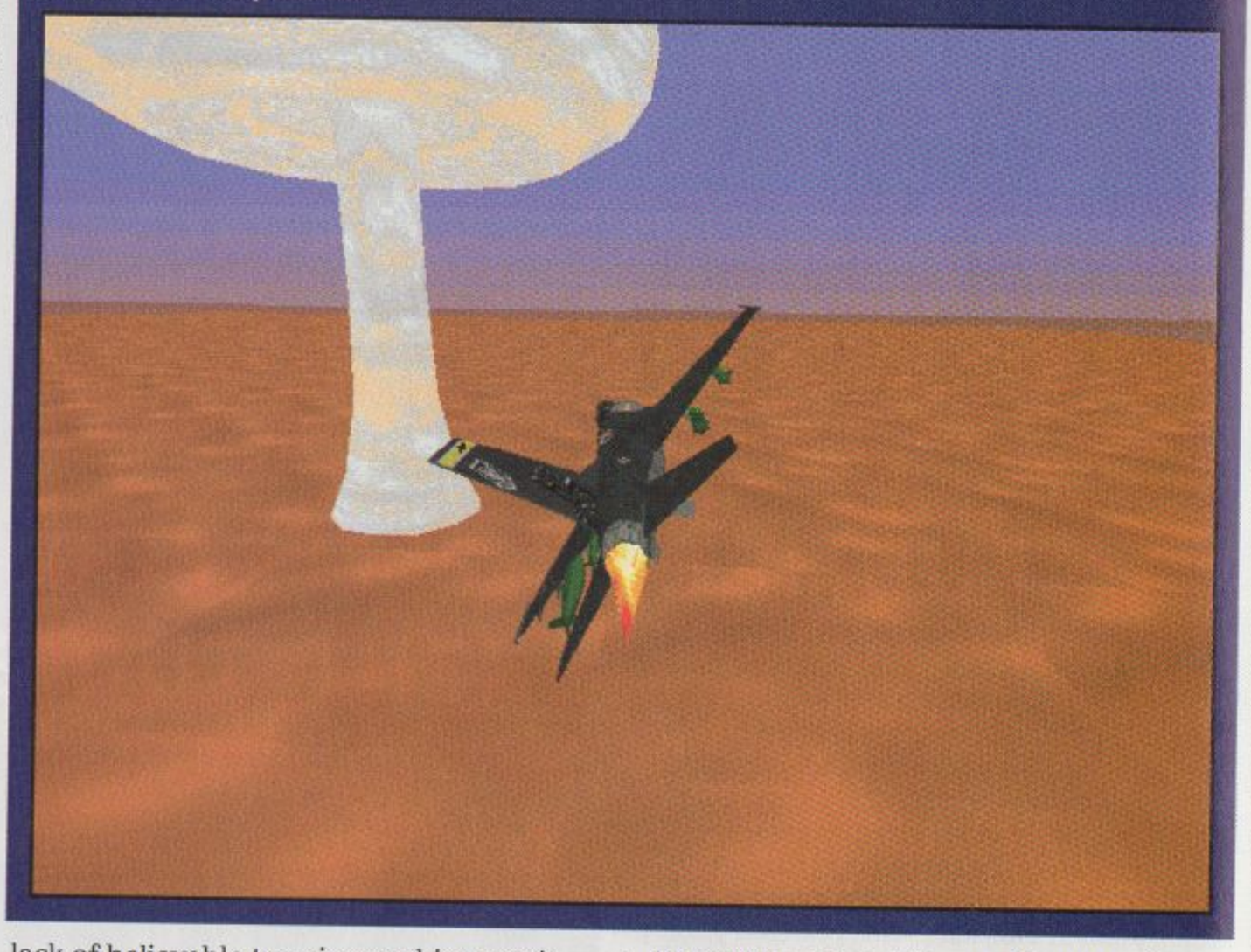
While it lacks the polish and sophisticated production values of *EF2000* and *Advanced Tactical Fighters, Back to Baghdad* is still a worthwhile, if expensive, offering. Military Simulations has lovingly crafted the most realistic simulation of the F-16, and they've created missions that'll keep you on your toes for quite some time.

—Todd Vaughn

The Nuclear Question

While it's sure to stir up a lot of debate about nuclear weapons as a viable alternative to a prolonged confrontation, Military Simulations didn't shy away from the reality of tactical nukes when putting together the loadout list for *Back to Baghdad*. While the nuclear weapon is only available in the final campaign missions, you can witness the devestating effects of the nuke in the bomb-training exercise.

Surviving the aftermath of the blast with the realism settings at maximum takes a great deal of skill, so you'll want to climb to at least 20,000 feet and crank up the engines for maximum speed. Once you've dropped the bomb, there's no turning back — just keep your nose on the horizon and race as far away from the mushroom cloud as possible.



PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

78%

HIGHS: Lots of options; extremely thorough recreation of instruments, radar modes, etc.

LOWS: Very expensive; demanding system requirements; unimpressive terrain.

BOTTOM LINE: While the system demands and price are a bit hard to swallow, *Back to Baghdad* delivers an exciting F-16 simulation that's a great addition to your flight sim arsenal.

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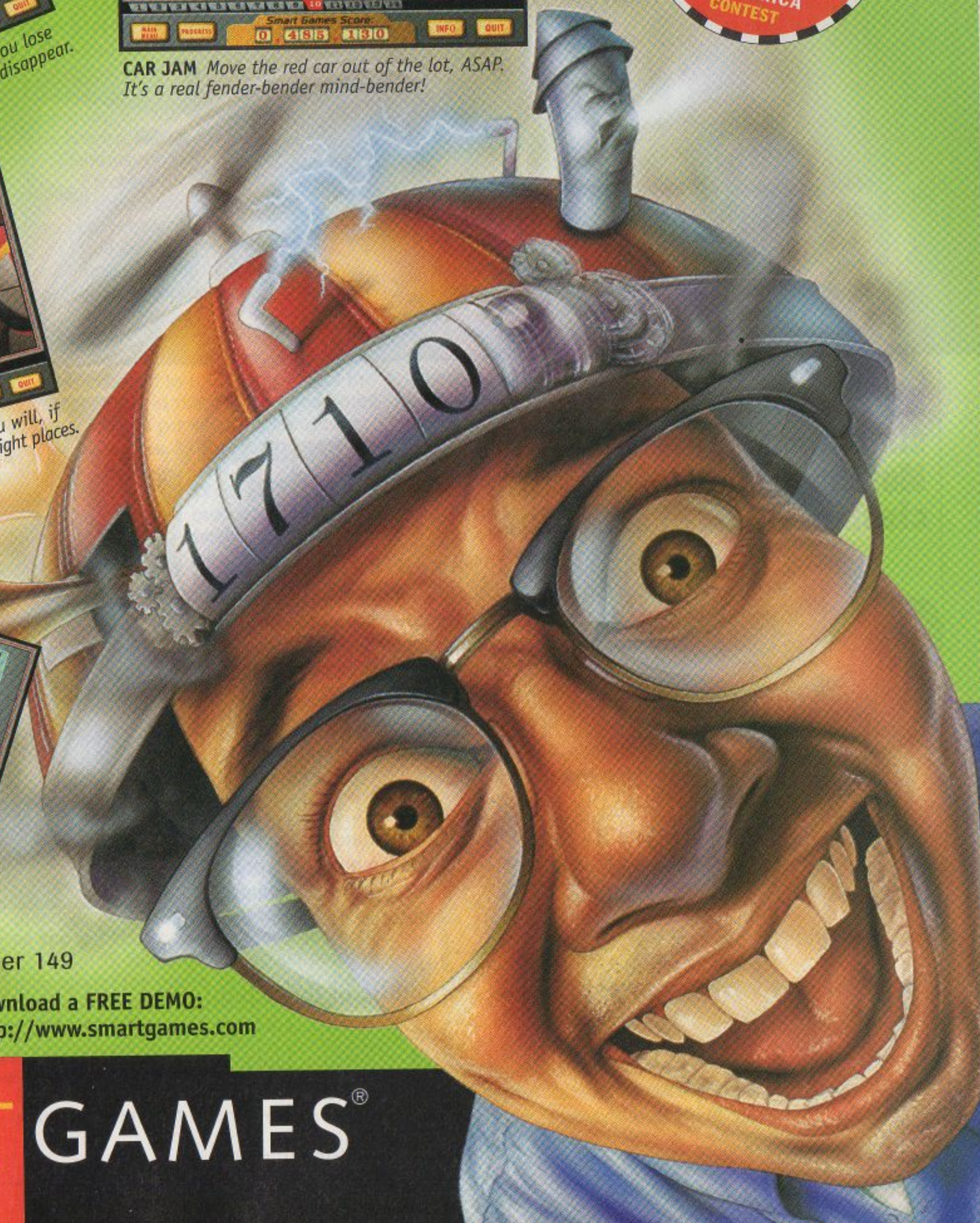

Product Information Number 149

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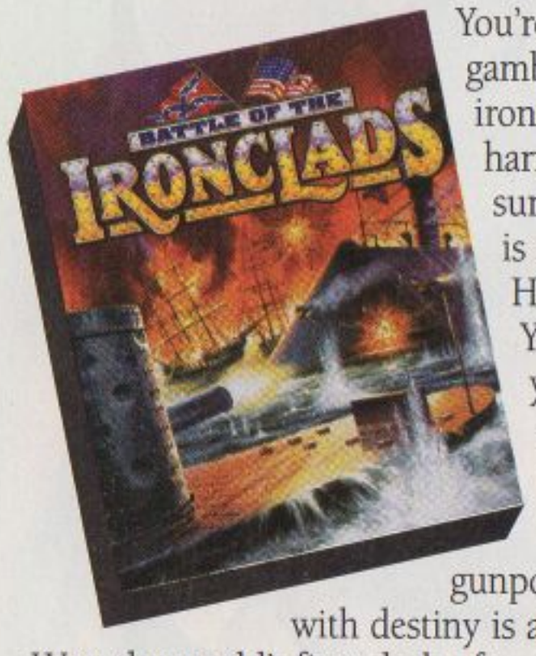

You're captain of the Merrimack, the Confederacy's gamble on future technology: a seemingly indestructible ironclad warship. Union gunfire bounces harmlessly off your metal sides. You've rammed and sunk the wooden warship Cumberland; the Congress is scorching the late afternoon sky. The waters of Hampton Roads are littered with bodies and debris. You're bearing down on the ailing Minnesota for your third kill of the day.

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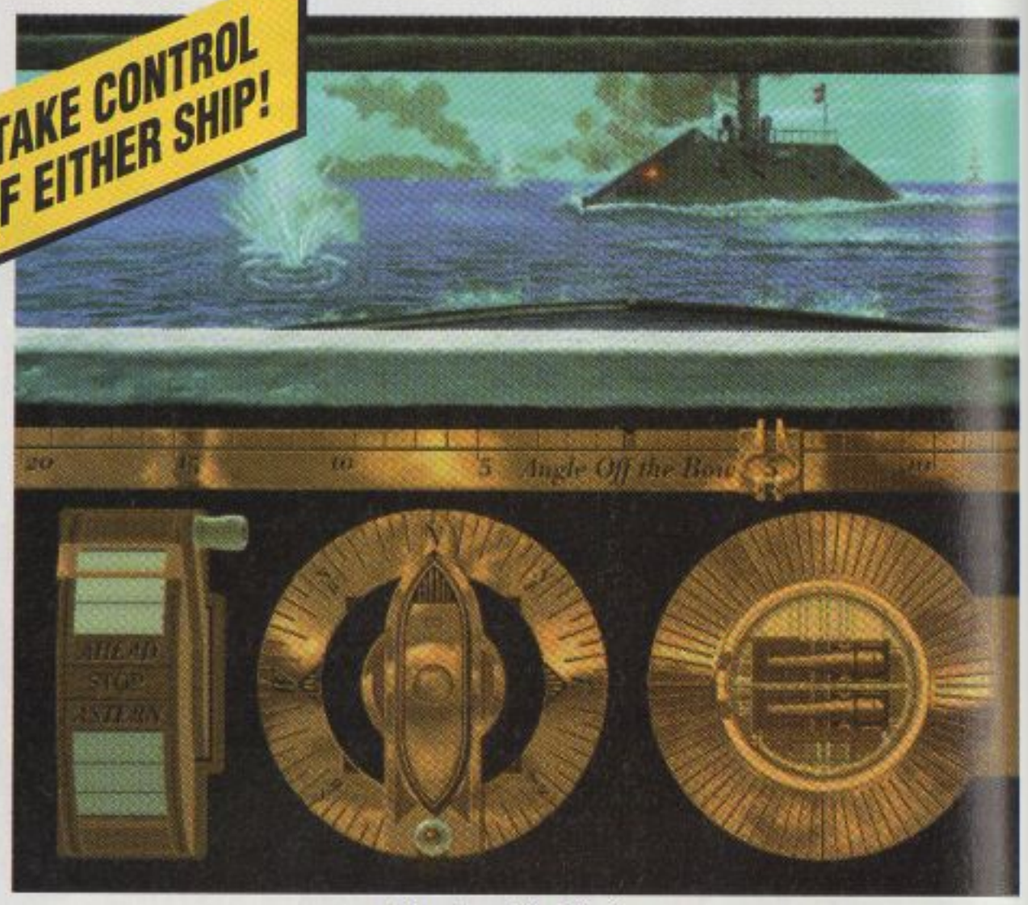

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The Muppets Inside

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Adventure

Developer: Jim Henson Interactive

Publisher: Starwave Corporation, 13810 SE Eastgate Way, Bellvue, WA 98005 (206) 957-2000

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; 16-bit sound card; 26MB hard-drive space; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM

Join the Muppets as they take over your computer and send you on wild and zany adventures.

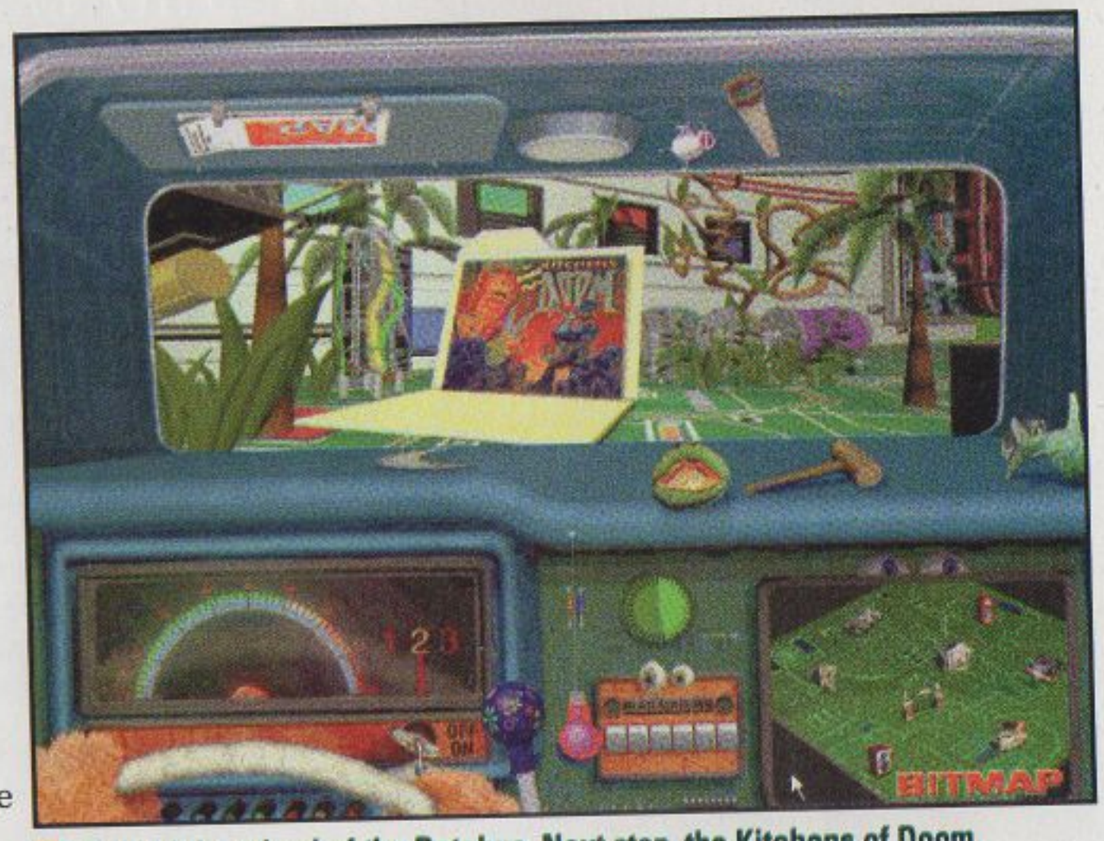
It's time to boot the disk up. It's time to turn things on. It's time to get things started on the Muppet CD-ROM!" You can just hear the familiar strains of "The Muppet Show" theme song can't you? Well, that and almost every other element of Muppet culture has been cut, infused with a 1990s, computer-literate sensibility, and lovingly pasted back into one of the most entertaining products I've seen in years.

The Muppets Inside is the latest CD-ROM product in an already impressive lineup from the fledgling Starwave Corporation. Their *Eastwood*, a profile of Clint Eastwood's life and career, and *All This Time*, a mystical journey through Sting's musical world, are unmatched in quality, content, and presentation. And Jim Henson's beloved puppets are given no less consideration.

The program starts off like any other Windows game. The titles and introduction appear in a happy window on your desktop; there's singing and dancing and the expected puppety production values; and then something goes terribly wrong. The music starts skipping, the picture disappears and it seems as though your entire system has locked up. Damn that Windows 95!

But wait — there's the voice of Kermit the Frog emanating from somewhere inside your computer, ordering, with his usual eye-of-the-storm calm, the predictably panicked Fozzie Bear out front to reassure you that the situation is, or will soon be, well in hand.

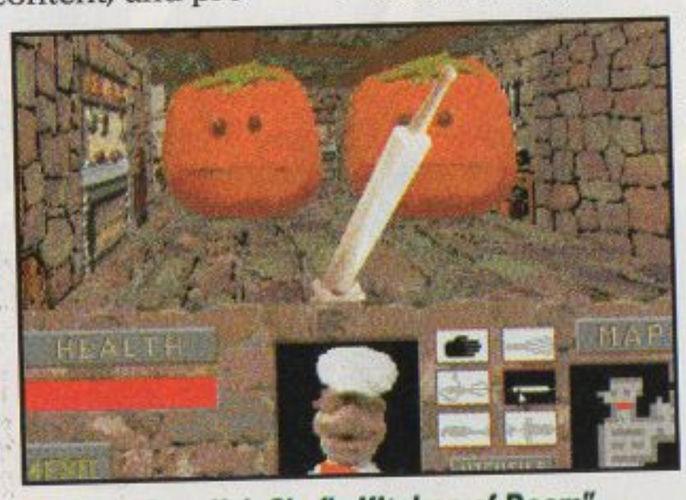
Two pairs of hands — one green, the other brown and fuzzy — pry apart the desktop curtain just wide enough for Dr. Bunsen Honeydew to explain that your copy of the CD-ROM has shattered into teensy little pieces and corrupted your system. But fear not — using his Muppet Labs Molecular Digitizer, he's going to send his frazzled friend Beaker inside to set things right. Naturally, the thing goes berserk and zaps most of the Muppet cast into your computer. And that's where you come in.



Behind the wheel of the Databus. Next stop, the Kitchens of Doom.

Joining Kermit and Fozzie aboard the psychedelic Databus (one of dozens of techno-jokes, like "Why did the cursor have to leave the restaurant? It couldn't pull down the menu."), you head off to collect the shattered CD pieces, scattered program portions, and marooned Muppet characters.

By selecting manila folders on the Bitmap, you take off on a wild ride across the motherboard to uncover the data in each, inevitably in the form of seven mini-games based on popular TV, computer, and board games. "The Fozzie Bear Show — A Wocka on the Wild Side," for instance, has you protecting the clueless comic, Missile Command-style, as he shuffles across the stage under a barrage of audience-powered projectiles; "Trivial...but True" is Hollywood Squares-style tic-tac-toe; "The Swedish Chef's Kitchens of Doom" has you battling colossal carrots, titanic tomatoes, and other gargantuan groceries in, well...the Swedish Chef's *Doom*-style kitchens. Each completed game uncovers another folder or two, and the games get harder as you get closer to completing your task.



"The Swedish Chef's Kitchen of Doom" — one of *Muppets Inside*'s seven mini-games.

The 16-bit graphics are astounding throughout the game, particularly the first-person-perspective bus trips down gloriously rendered data paths, and the sound effects, music and humor are never disappointing. It's got a singularly cohesive look and feel that expertly blends entertainment and interactivity — this is not a sit-and-watch experience — with a selection of difficulty levels that should satisfy kids from six years old to crabby old bastards like me.

All of your favorite Muppet characters, comedy bits, and celebrity guest stars are here, and once you reclaim the missing program pieces containing them, you can replay them at any time by visiting the Cache Machine (ouch!). You don't even have to worry about saving and loading games — the game automatically keeps track of as many as 16 players' progress.

Like Berkeley Systems' *You Don't Know Jack* or 7th Level's *Monty Python's Complete Waste of Time*, *Muppets Inside* takes over your system and turns it into a completely convincing entertainment arena, an extended episode of "The Muppet Show" that consistently breaks the "fourth wall" and draws you into the action. It also does a fine job of showing off Win95's multimedia capabilities. I'll be playing this one long past deadline.

— Scott Wolf

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

88%

HIGHS: Colorful, entertaining, and extremely user-friendly.

LOWS: It's the same old song: the better your system, the better the game performs.

BOTTOM LINE: You'd have to be either Statler or Waldorf not to enjoy this game.

Chronicles of the Sword

Category: Adventure

Developer: Synthetic Dimensions

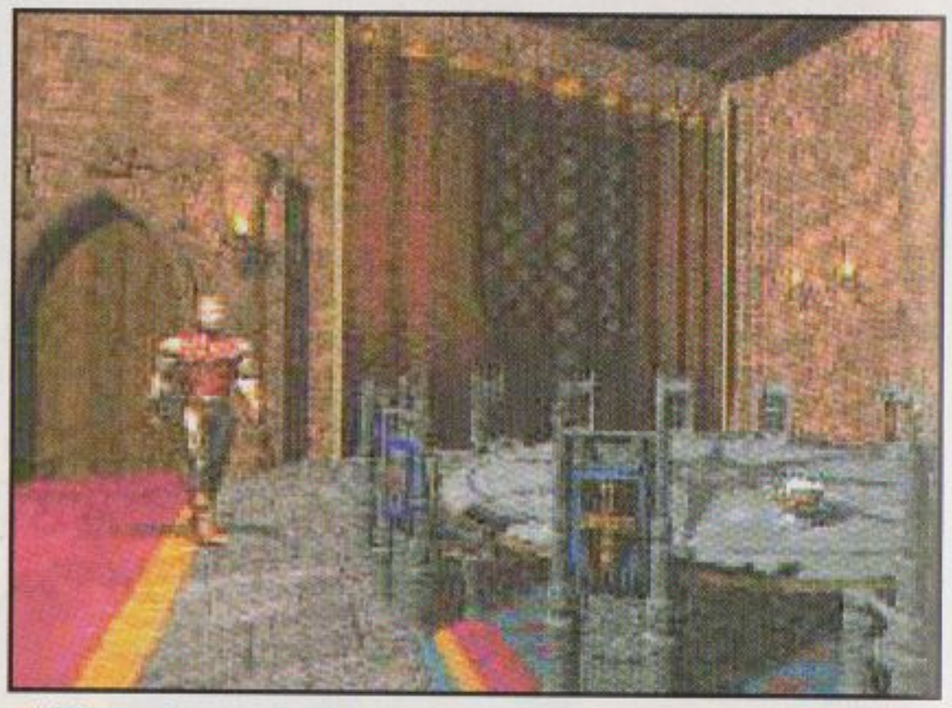
Publisher: Psygnosis, 919 E. Hillsdale Blvd., 2nd Floor, Foster City, CA 94404 (800) 438-7794

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX/33; 4MB of RAM; Mouse; Sound Blaster or compatible sound card	Pentium 60, 16MB RAM

King Arthur's Camelot never comes to life in this anti-climatic adventure filled with troubled puzzles and pointless quests.

After a somewhat successful outing with Sir-tech's *Druid*, game developers Synthetic Dimensions have proven they can successfully mesh innovative visuals and a sleek user-friendly interface with the standard adventure game format. Now, with Psygnosis' new *Chronicles of the Sword*, they've refined their engine to a razor's edge to tackle the legend of King Arthur. Featuring nice high-res graphics and a fairly simple movement interface, there's no doubt they've created an attractive game world. And this time around, minor annoyances like the touchy movement interface have been noticeably refined since *Druid*. But while control is improved and the visuals are suitably rich and vivid, the gameplay is overburdened by a half-realized story line.

Chronicles of the Sword tries to tap one of the richest veins of myth in history, and the premise certainly sets the stage for a thrilling adventure in Camelot. You take the role of Gawain, a young knight asked to thwart the witch Morgana, the half-sister of King Arthur. Morgana is trying everything she can to do away with Arthur and take his place, and only you stand in her way. Unfortunately, this is the total of the Arthurian myth used in *Chronicles;* while the legend is loaded with rich characters, tales of romance, and a web of subplots, none of them is used here.



The real strength of *Chronicles* is in its detailed and beautifully rendered backgrounds that capture the look and feel of the Arthurian legend.

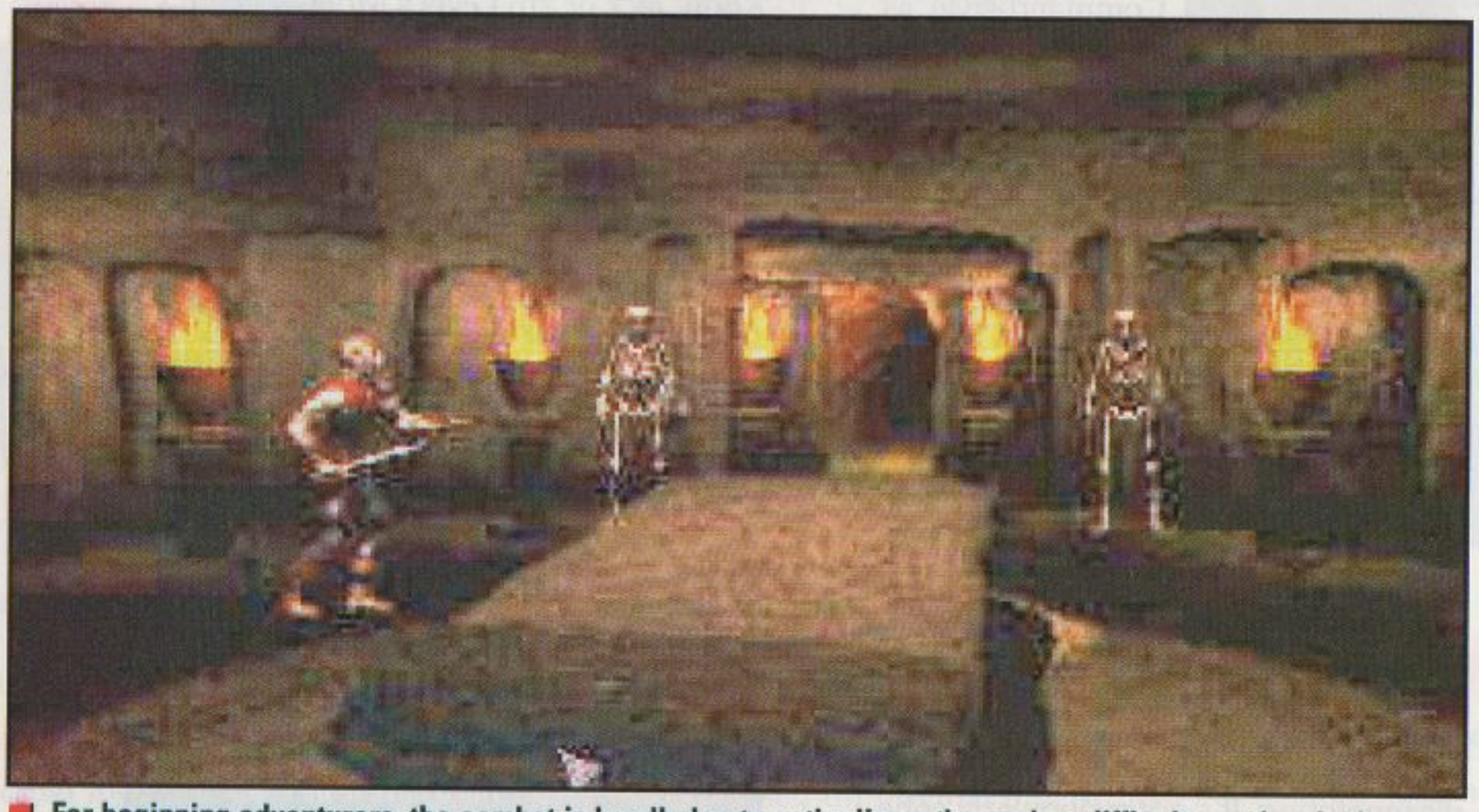
Instead, we're offered a by-the-numbers series of quests to undo a generic baddie. Gawain becomes a mere lackey for a succession of people he meets along the way, who send him hither and yon on endless (and pointless) sub-quests. Much of the game is spent chasing around the countryside looking for objects people have requested.

This is made all the more disappointing by the fact that the game becomes a maddening pixel hunt for objects. While each of the location screens is gorgeously rendered and highly evocative, objects within them are so hidden that you have to run mouse tracks back and forth over every inch of every screen to make sure nothing is missed. When you finally do come across something and juggle it into your inventory, you'll find using it even more of a chore. Puzzles and object manipulation are fairly scarce, and puzzles that seem to have perfectly logical solutions are usually solved by the least logical means.

During the numerous dialog exchanges, the characters tend to drone endlessly. Worse, these exchanges seem irrelevant to much of what is going on. If the dialog was used to tell an interesting story, it might be worth sitting through, but as it is, I found myself clicking through most of the conversations and quickly skimming the on-screen text for useful information.

Synthetic Dimensions has created some of the best-looking visuals yet seen in a traditional adventure game, but they forget to put a meaningful story and game into them. Visually and aurally, it's top-notch, but it doesn't measure up where it counts: content.

— T. Liam McDonald



For beginning adventurers, the combat is handled automatically on the easiest difficulty setting; in the standard mode, you have to use your mouse to attack your opponent.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

65%

HIGHS: Nice, high-res graphics and a decent game engine.

LOWS: Not enough story; gameplay dissolves into a series of pixel hunts.

BOTTOM LINE: Synthetic Dimensions draws on neither the strength of their game engine nor of the subject matter for this lackluster title.

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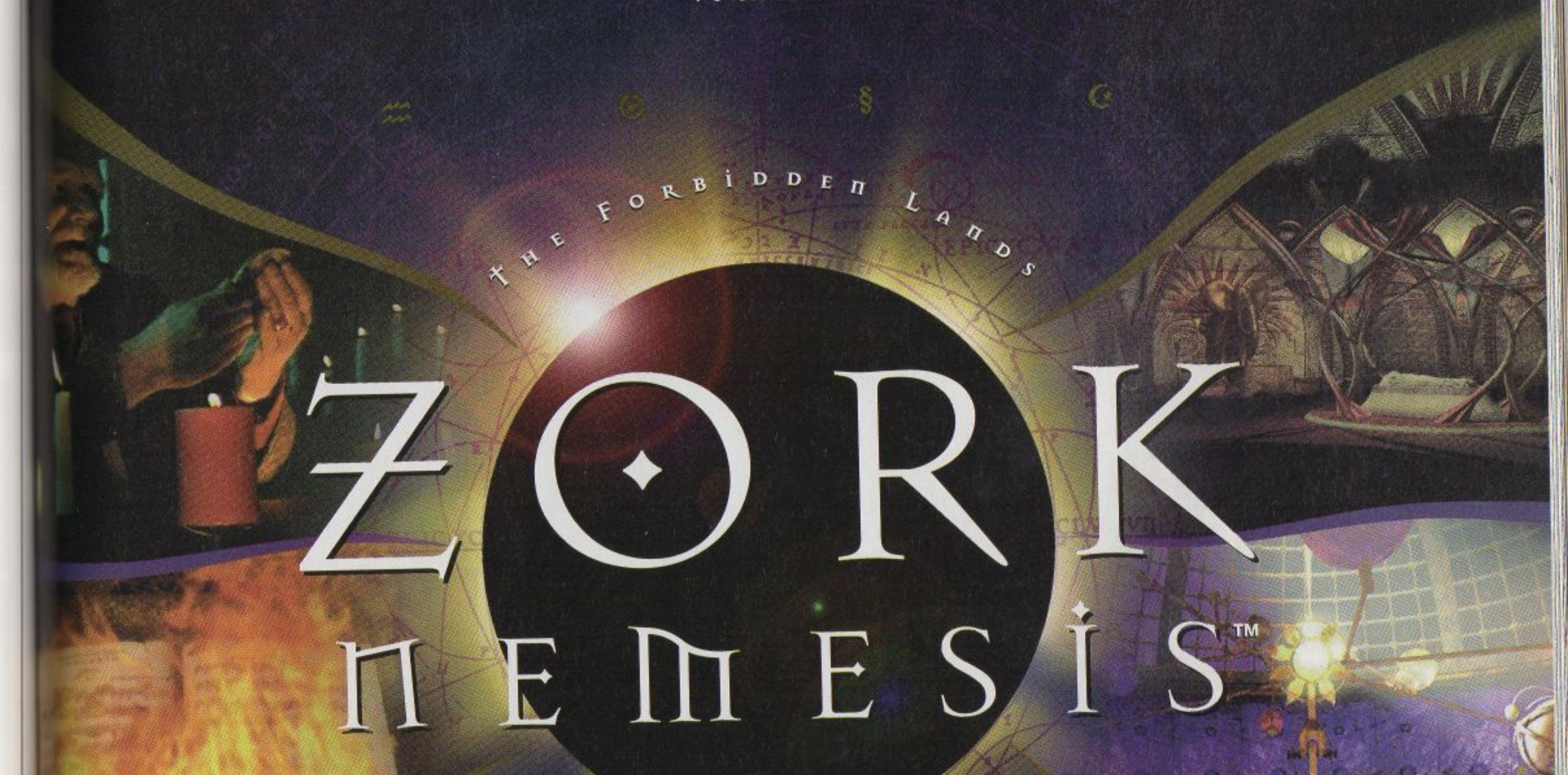

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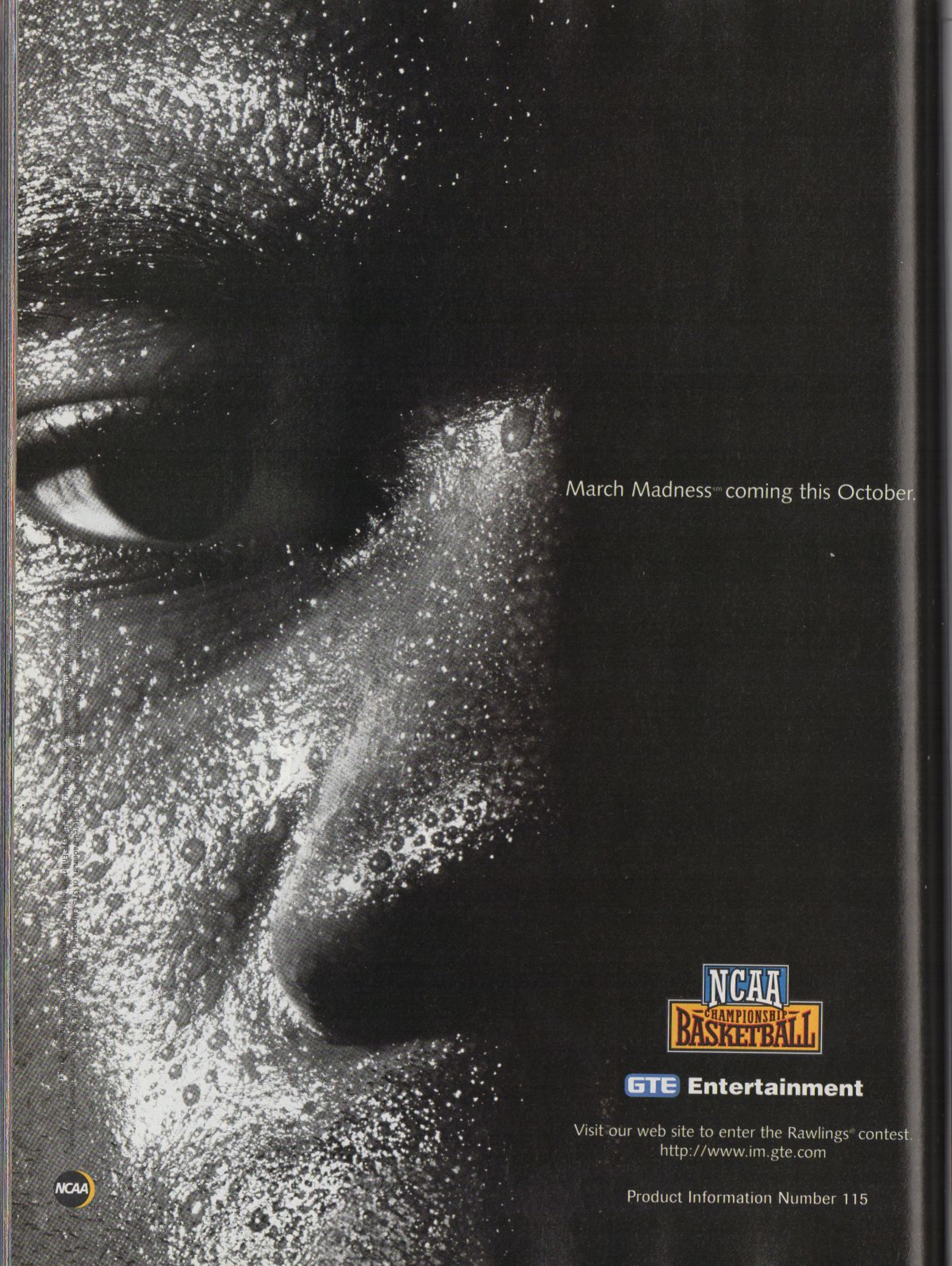
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Product Information Number 115
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Knight's Chase

Category: Graphic Adventure

Developer: Infogrames

Publisher: I-Motion, 1632 Fifth Street, Suite 220, Santa Monica, CA 90401 (800) 443-3386

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 3MB hard-drive space; SVGA	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

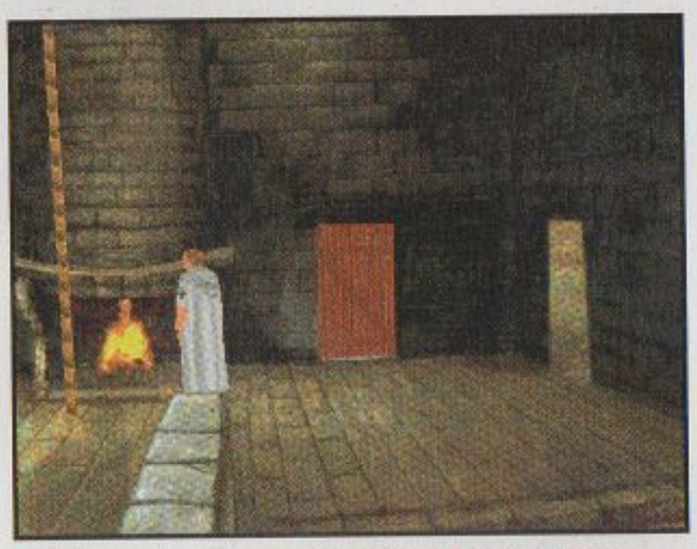
In an attempt to recreate the success of their classic Alone in the Dark games, I-Motion sends you on a desperate journey through time.

A couple of years ago, I-Motion raised eyebrows in the gaming community with their innovative three-dimensional adventure game, *Alone in the Dark*. The technology was new, the action was intense, and the sheer creepiness of it all earned *Alone in the Dark* a seat among the classics.

Now I-Motion is back with *Knight's Chase*, the first of a new series of adventures (dubbed the Time Gate series) using the same sort of technology as the Alone in the Dark titles. This time around, the game gets an attractive overhaul with high-resolution Super VGA graphics, and a relatively fresh, fairly intriguing story line.

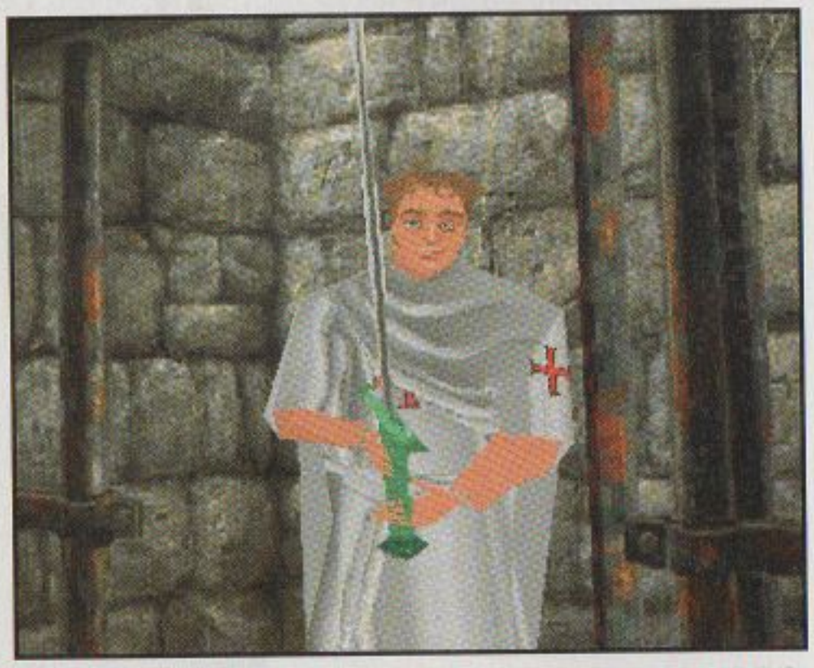
You play the game as William Tibbs, a law student studying in Paris, whose fiancee mysteriously disappears. He hasn't been long on the case when an apparition suddenly appears and tries to remove William's head from his body. After defeating the sword-wielding fiend, he learns through a magical icon that his beloved Juliette is being held by an evil man named Wolfram. In hopes of finding his fiancee, William rushes to a nearby museum. That's where you come in; after negotiating a few puzzles involving a remote control catapult and fire extinguishers, you're dropped down a well for your trouble, and suddenly you're in the 14th century.

As the story unfolds, you find out that William is a reincarnation of one of the Knights Templar, a secret society of knights who were wiped out by accusations of devil worship and witchcraft in the 14th century. Throughout the game, you'll bounce from the past to the future as William searches for the items that will reunite him with Juliette.

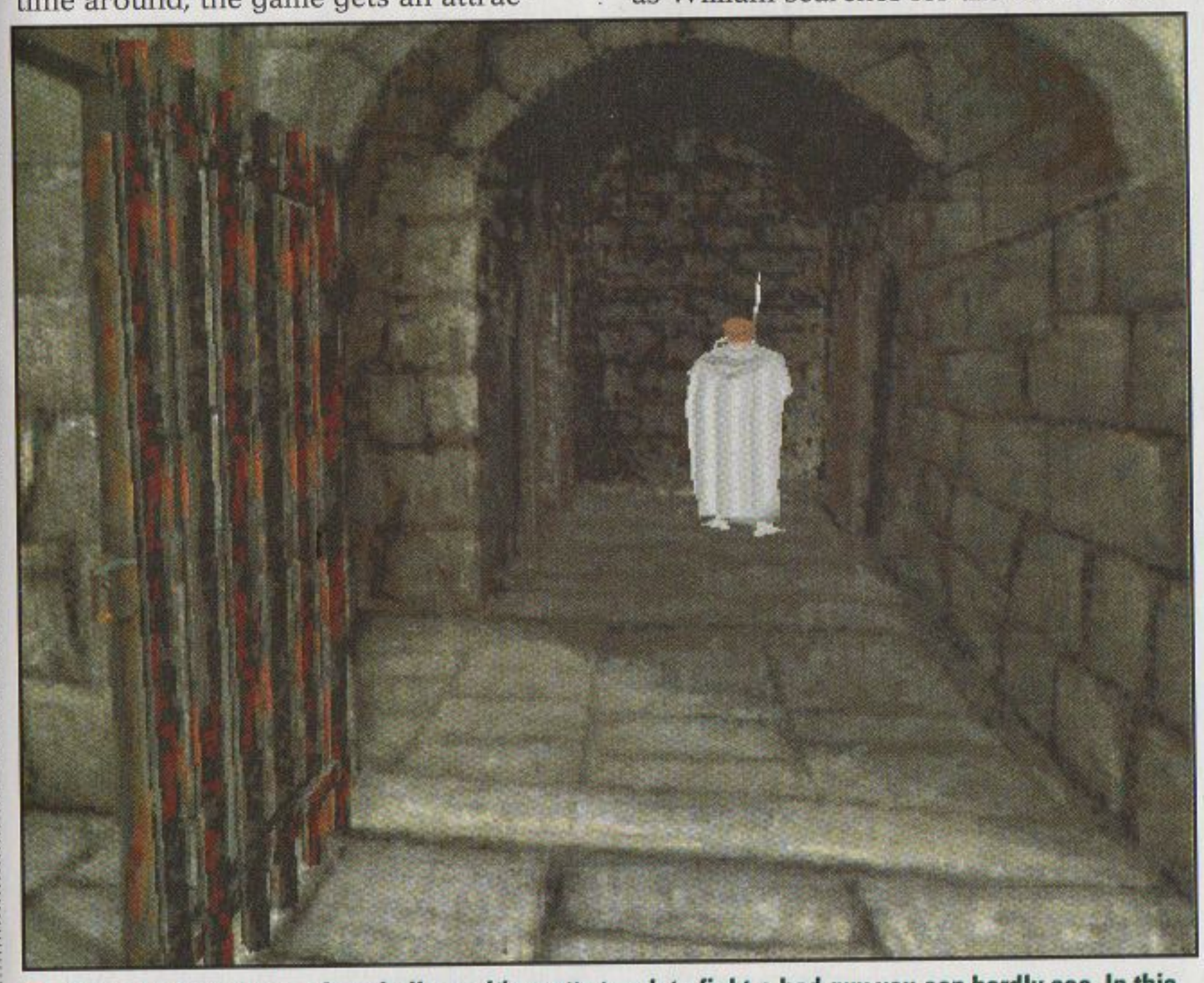


You probably wouldn't think to stick your hand into this roaring fireplace, but it hides a key you'll need.

It's an interesting story. The material dealing with the Knights Templar is relatively accurate; you might actually learn something by playing. Unfortunately, as fascinating as it is, the story can't carry the game.



William and the characters he encounters in *Knight's Chase* look fantastic.



When looking down a long hallway, it's pretty tough to fight a bad guy you can hardly see. In this case, it'd be a good idea to turn around for a better angle.

The most important elements for any adventure game are control and puzzles. In *Knight's Chase*, both are disappointingly lackluster. Like the Alone in the Dark games, *Knight's Chase* uses different perspectives within a given scene, altering the view to supposedly give you the best angle possible. But just like the AITD series, these perspectives can add a very frustrating element to certain puzzles. When confronted by a puzzle that has you crawling under laser beams to escape a security system, for example, you'll have to carefully inch your way through a maze of thin beams without being able to judge the height or angle of the threat. The per-

spective problem becomes even more frustrating later in the game, when you'll need to spray a fire extinguisher over a control box to short out the security system. The fire extinguisher is found in the next room, but it's virtually impossible to even *see* the extinguisher in the first place, much less figure out that there are two of them. Pick the wrong one, and you're setting yourself up for an electric shock. Even more frustrating is the location of a key you'll need soon after you zoom back to the year 1329. It's in a fireplace — a *lighted* fireplace. That wouldn't be so bad if there were some sort of hint that it's there — a written note, a visual clue, *something* — but as it is, the only way you'll find it is by randomly searching the room.

Combat suffers from the perspective problems, too, especially when there's a sword fight. There's nothing worse than trying to get a bead on a bad guy with a pillar, bookcase, or even your own body obscuring your view of the action. There are situations when the camera is at an intentionally advantageous angle, such as when you're maneuvering a catapult at the beginning of the game. Unfortunately, those good camera angles appear only inconsistently throughout the game.

Control is at least simple: you use the arrow keys to control movement and the spacebar to perform various actions based on the mode William is in — fighting, searching, or pushing. In order to move from mode to mode, however, you must first press the Enter key to access the inventory screen, then choose the mode you wish and hit Enter again. A single hot-key for each mode would have been welcome, at least. It's no big problem when you want to use an item, but all the keystrokes needed to switch into a fighting stance as a black knight bears down on you detract from the excitement of the pending battle.

The voice acting is on par with most other adventure games nowadays — not bad, but certainly not great.

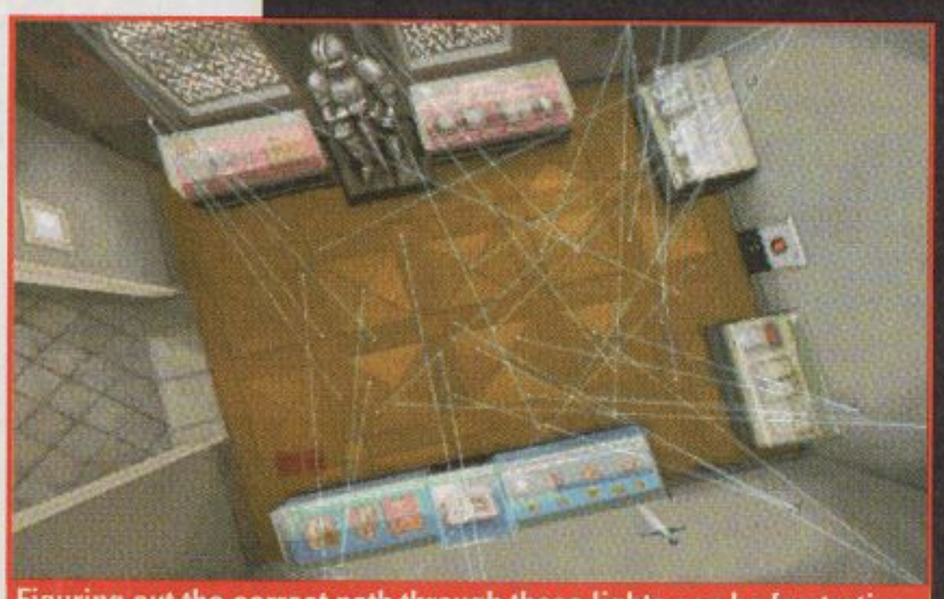
Graphically, the game is vastly superior to the Alone in the Dark games in nearly every way. The hand-painted backgrounds are beautifully done, matching the atmosphere of each far-flung location with rich colors and amazing detail. The polygon-based characters are now in SVGA, and movement is much improved.

Despite its flaws in gameplay, *Knight's Chase* has huge potential. If the puzzles were better thought out, it'd be one of the best adventure games to come out in a long time. Unfortunately, too many of the puzzles are just too obscure; you may need a hint book to get through them. This is just the first installment of the new Time Gate series, however, so there's plenty of reason to hope that the next offering will be better.

– Michael Wolf

These punks push you into the well at the museum when you're searching for your fiancee; that's when you travel back to the year 1329. Isn't technology wonderful?

Getting Back in Time



Figuring out the correct path through these lights can be frustrating, so we thought we would give you a few clues.

Getting started as William Tibbs can be a bit daunting, so here are a few clues to get you back to the 14th century where you belong.

After you enter the museum, go through the door on the right and take the headphones you'll find there. Then go into the room across the entryway and walk to the far right corner — you can't see them easily, but there's a sword and shield you can grab. Examine the picture on the wall, and you'll hear some brief narration.

Go through the door on the right. Grab the remote-controlled catapult and the CD. You can use the CD on the machine in the room, but before you do, you'll need to plug it in. After listening to the CD, go into the room at the back. Search through the drawers on both sides of the desk, and you'll find a magnetic keycard, a normal key, and a magazine that'll give you clues about fire extinguishers. Once you leave here, the museum's alarm system will be tripped, and you'll have to carefully navigate the lasers to get back to the entry room.

In the entry hall, get the screwdriver from the toolbox and use it to open the door on the right, where you got the headphones. Walk to the rear left corner to get the hidden carbon dioxide fire extinguisher (not the one that uses water). Use the key from the desk on the circuit box, and short the system with the fire extinguisher.

Once you leave the room, you'll face an angry black knight — dispose of him with the sword and shield, then use the magnetic keycard on the display case on the left to get ammo for the catapult. You can then send the catapult into the next room and position it to throw a rock at the alarm switch (the game will tell you when you're positioned correctly).

Once that's accomplished, you can grab the sword in the next room and enter the museum square. There's a hologram you can find here, but the only real objective is to find the door where two bad guys are waiting for you. Let them catch you, and after they toss you in the well, you'll show up in the year 1329.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

60%

HIGHS: Graphically stunning; detailed and historical story line; simple interface.

LOWS: Obscure puzzles require a lot of luck; bad camera angles; occasionally poor voice acting.

BOTTOM LINE: If the puzzles weren't so poorly done, it would be a fantastic adventure. As it is, it's probably best to wait for the next Time Gate game.

Product Information Number 133

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Product Information Number 137

Settlers II

Category: Strategy

Developer: Blue Byte

Publisher: Blue Byte Software, 33 S. Roselle Rd., Ste 210,Schaumburg, IL 60193 (708) 539-7950

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX/66; 8 MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM; Pentium; 16MB RAM

The sequel to the quirky cult hit *Serf City* hits U.S. shores, ushering in a new era of micro-management on a global scale.

Like the game that precedes it — *Serf City* — the premise of this odd little strategy game is nothing new: you take command of a shipwrecked crew and try to build a thriving civilization from the resources you discover as you fend off or conquer any rival colonies in the neighborhood.

But, also like *Serf City*, Blue Byte puts its own peculiar spin on this popular theme. While there's the expected military element of conquest and plunder, the real heart of the game is its fiendishly complex and obsessively detailed system of resource management. There are 32 types of professions that the player can exploit and command, 19 types of buildings, and 31 products to manufacture, grow, or mine.

You begin with only the most basic resources: a woodcutter and a sawmill for making boards. This eventually allows you to build shipyards, palaces, and elaborate castles. The technology depicted is roughly that of the late Roman Empire. Rather than just build cities and watch them grow, you'll have to take careful notice of the slightest details. Each site must be carefully placed in relation to other sites that perform related functions — i.e., put the pig farm close to the slaughterhouse if you want a steady, abundant supply of bacon.

Managing resources makes up the bulk of *Settlers II* with combat taking the back seat.

The suitability of each site for a given activity is shown by golden icons: a pickaxe for mines, small-to-large buildings, and simple flags for pasturage or roadways. Frustration sets in early when you try to lay out logical road systems only to find that the computer won't let you build roads on certain hexes, sometimes for no apparent reason other than perversity.

Once you have a settlement up and running, however, it's quite a sight to behold: hundreds, maybe thousands, of little guys bustling along from site to site (oddly, there are no women depicted, which would seem to limit the possibilities of a long-term civilization...), carrying stuff, building things, patrolling the borders. I especially liked the bearded prospector who shouts "Yippee!" every time he finds a potential mine site.

Management of the whole elaborate operation is accomplished through numerous menu windows (so numerous that you'll probably be overwhelmed for the first hour or two) and equally numerous graphs. Distribution of resources is handled by default settings (which seem to be logical and consistent throughout), but can be tweaked whenever an unusual situation arises.

In endlessly overlapping cycles, the game challenges you to perform an extraordinary balancing act. You need iron and gold, of course, but you can't extract them unless your miners are well fed, and that means you have to build farms to grow grain, mills to grind flour, and bakeries to make bread. But the bakeries don't run efficiently unless there are enough rolling pins, and the ore is useless unless you build a smelter for the iron and a mint for the gold, so you can make coins to pay your soldiers, so you can protect your borders or annex your opponents' settlements, etc., etc., etc. You get the idea.

That said, I enjoyed *Settlers II* quite a bit...for about ten hours. The graphics are lovely, and it's fun to watch all your minions hewing wood and drawing water. But it takes many hours and lots of frustration to reach the stage where serious military activity kicks in and things start to get lively. (You have the option of playing without warfare, but that takes much of the fun out of the game.) A lot of players will probably succumb to sheer complexity of the initial building phase before they even get a healthy colony going.

The customizable interface gives you the ability to manage everything — from large scale operations to the smallest details — with ease.

Eventually, I reached a point of no return, where all that micro-management suddenly turned into (shudder) work. The game functions splendidly as a resource-management challenge, but it lacks the lively pace and the depth of Sid Meier's unsurpassed Civilization games. And the chatty, sometimes hard-to-fathom manual is more obnoxious than helpful.

Still, control freaks will probably love *Settlers II*, and it has a certain zany charm that makes it lovable, even after tedium sets in. How many hours it takes for that to happen will, of course, vary from gamer to gamer.

—William R. Trotter

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

65%

HIGHS: Charming graphics; some clever variations on a classic theme.

LOWS: One-dimensional micro-management invites fatigue, frustration.

BOTTOM LINE: If you've got a passion for resource-management, you could do worse; you could also do a lot better.

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Terror T.R.A.X.: Track Of The Vampire

Category: Adventure

Developer: Ground Zero Productions

Publisher: Grolier Ent., Inc., 90 Sherman Turnpike, Danbury CT 06816 (203) 797-3530

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; 5MB HD; SVGA; Sound cards	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX66; 16MB RAM

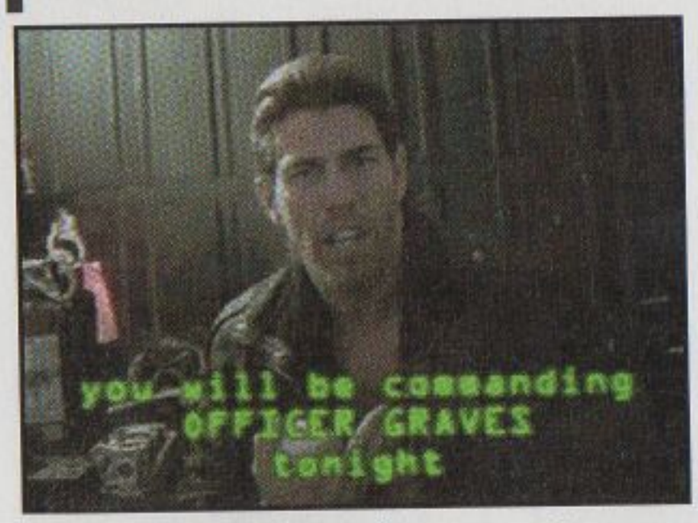
If you've ever wondered who catches all those supernatural emergency calls when agents Scully and Mulder are busy sorting their X-files, *Terror T.R.A.X.* seems ready to answer all those questions and more.

T.R.A.X. (Trace/Research/Analyze/eXterminate) is a covert agency that handles Fang Jobs, Hairballs, Biteheads, and Rotters, or — as we know them — vampires, werewolves, ghouls, and zombies. In Track of the Vampire, the baddies are a Fang Job named Vitus Hemos, his trio of Succubi, and Otis Lee Suggs, an executed felon reanimated by Hemos — and you're in charge of the team.

Unfortunately, despite their specialized training, decision-making apparently doesn't rate very highly on the T.R.A.X. officers' list of skills; they seem to require your input for the simplest of choices — stay here or go there; turn left or turn right; use the fire extinguisher on the Electric Dead Guy or follow him to his recharging station. It's all utterly pointless, since you have no more information on the situation than they do. Hell, it's not even you out there — your life is never in danger, so who gives a damn?

You alternately "control" two T.R.A.X. officers, Graves and Walkin, as they wander through maybe an hour's worth of muddy video (yes, even in the recommended 65,536-color setting). Control consists of pressing the A or B keys on your keyboard at a couple of dozen decision points. Take too long to decide, and the officers will be forced to make up their own minds, an eventuality that even your online digital guide, Ether, advises against. Now, That's Interaction!

Terror T.R.A.X. makes no bones about ripping off the feel of "The X-Files", and it does have a few effectively creepy moments, but the writing is awful and the acting is even worse (even from Jessica Hecht of TV's "The Single Guy"). This stuff isn't even good enough for a



This is Officer Graves. I've never met a man whose life I cared less about.

crappy console game, let alone network television, so it should be interesting to see how director Renny Harlin (who did not direct the game video) tries to salvage it for the upcoming two-hour TV movie. Smithers, release the hounds.

—Scott Wolf

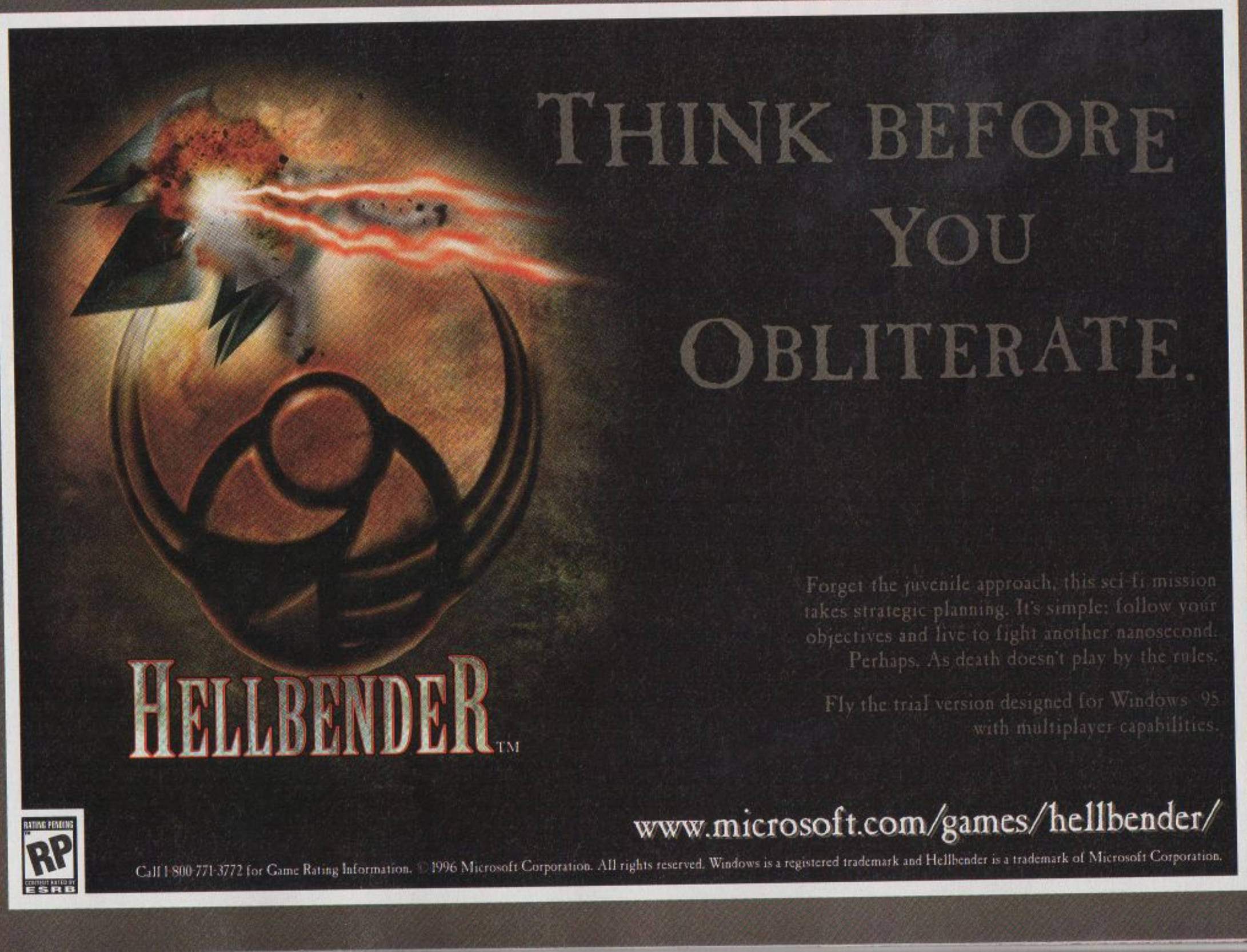
PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

38%

HIGHS: There's some genuinely creepy material here..

LOWS: ...but it's far too brief, with little interaction and even less replay value.

BOTTOM LINE: Wait for the TV movie and spare your A and B keys.



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Product Information Number 127

Smart Games Challenge 1

Category: Puzzle

Developer: Know Ware

Publisher: Smart Games, Inc., 49 Atlantic Ave., Marblehead, MA 01945 (617) 639-4768

Required	We Recommend
386; CD-ROM drive; Windows 3.1+; 4MB RAM; 2MB free hard-drive space	Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66

Brainiac. Geek. Smarty-pants. Know-it-all. If you're used to hearing these expressions and think there just might be an ounce of truth to those comments, *Smart Games Challenge #1* is the game for you.

Packed to the brim with variations on classic brain-teasers that test your intelligence and expand your mind, *Smart Games Challenge* tackles everything from arithmetic puzzles to word games. There are 20 categories to choose from, and each category features 20 different puzzles. You won't have to complete the puzzles in any specific order, so if a given puzzle is too easy, you can move on up until you find a challenge. The higher the number you attempt, the more points you get for solving the puzzle, but heed this warning: Once you're past the tenth puzzle in any given game, the going gets pretty tough.

While there's a lot of variety and any number of recognizable games to choose from, the more creative puzzles don't always seem to fit in with the game's overall theme of brain-teasing fun. In "Cash Crop," you drive your tractor around a field filled with several crops, all priced differently. The goal is to earn the most money in a pre-set number of turns by harvesting the crops. After about three goes around the field, you'll either be addicted or bored to death.

But, then again, that pretty much describes the feel of the entire game. The puzzles get really old really fast, and have only limited appeal. After a long day at work, who wants to come home and do some more work under the guise of playing a game? *Smart Games Challenge* really needs something to help liven it up. Better sounds and graphics could've helped, but as it is, even the bells and whistles are second rate and rather repetitive.

Still, if you've been looking for the computer game equivalent of an SAT test, the puzzles are challenging, and

"Car Jam" challenges you to move the blue and black cars out of the way so the red car can get to the exit. Yes, it's just like those tile-sliding games you played when you were a kid.

you'll feel pretty darn good about yourself after conquering all 20 puzzles for a given category. After all, being a brainy, know-it-all computer geek does have its advantages.

—Lisa M. Howie

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

68%

HIGHS: Plenty of variety; good puzzles.

LOWS: Not everyone's cup of tea; limited replay value; no multi-player options; some puzzles are real stinkers.

BOTTOM LINE: Only brainiacs with time on their hands need apply.

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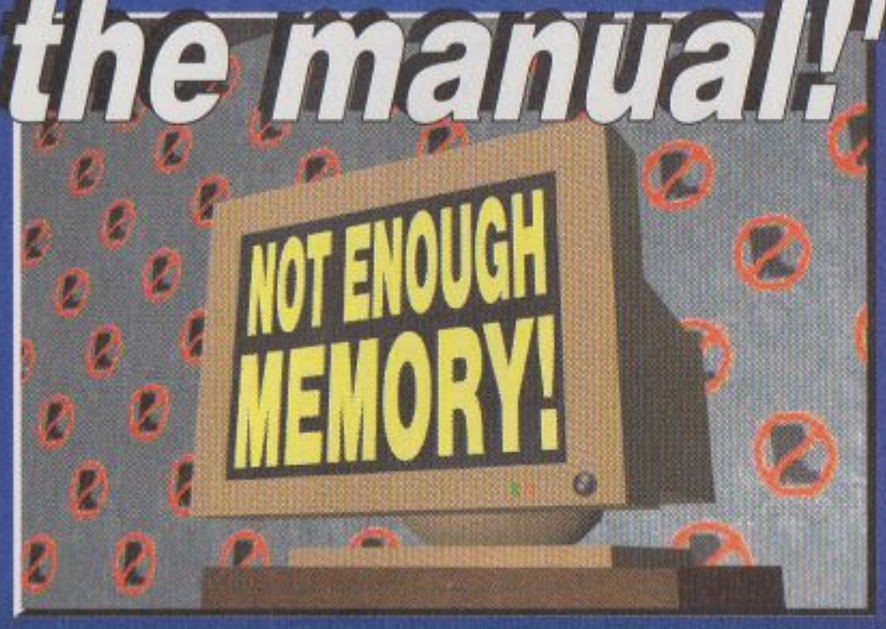

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Product Information Number 112

Chaos Overlords

Category: Strategy

Developer: Stick Man Games

Publisher: New World Computing, Inc., P.O. Box 4302, Hollywood, CA 90078 (800)-251-9563

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX; 8MB RAM; 15MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse	Supported sound card

Forget the promise of high-energy battles with mutant thugs and crime bosses; this is a tragically uninspired strategy game.

The year is 2050 A.D., and world peace has been achieved after all the old governments joined to form a global mega-corporation called World United Solidarity.

Naturally, peace proves to have a downside as the W.U.S. becomes utterly corrupt and the world's great cities are turned into decaying urban jungles where the real power resides in powerful organized crime syndicates. In *Chaos Overlords*, the player takes the role of a would-be crime czar bent on domination of the world.

You begin with a single band of loyal henchmen called "The Right Hands," and you recruit other gangs (as many as 80) based on their varying talents and abilities. Once your crime family is in place, you attempt to fulfill the requirements of the scenario you have chosen. In some scenarios, the goal is to acquire more wealth than your rivals (human or computer); in others, the objective is power; and in a couple of really lethal ones, you simply try to exterminate your rivals before they can do the same to you.

You gain income by offering "protection" services to important areas under your control, and you develop firepower through research projects designed to yield new forms of weaponry and armor.

This screen is the only place where you get to interact with the citizens of the city.

Not a bad premise, really (though not a very original one). *Chaos Overlords* might very well have been a good idea for a pen-and-paper game, and with the included multi-player options, I can see how it might prove entertaining as a multi-player pastime on the Net.

But as a stand-alone game, just you playing against the computer, it's a dog's breakfast.

First of all, it looks and plays like a paper game. There's no sense of atmosphere, not even any gritty urban sets, a la Tex Murphy — just a dim, flat, generic, urban landscape divided into monotonous squares. There's very little animation. In fact, the game is so devoid of graphics it looks like something that could've been done almost ten years ago.

Here's the game board...er, make that the main screen. An unimaginative port of a boardgame to the PC just won't cut it any more.

Technical flash isn't exactly a necessity if the game is good, but the gameplay is ultimately unsatisfying as well. There is no roleplaying element whatsoever. Neither you nor your opponents have any personality; hell, you can't even name yourself! Sure, you can choose a face for your character, but even that is compromised by a lack of variety (only a handful of faces to choose from, and half of them look as though they've been taken over by the Borg) and poor graphics (the faces are so blurred and pixelated as to be all-but-featureless).

The variety of scenarios is fairly wide, but whether your goal is to achieve territorial control or simply to kill every other ganglord in the game, the gameplay always turns into a lock-step routine that quickly becomes mind-numbingly repetitive. The game never comes to life; it just lies there inertly on your screen, like a lox on a plate.

The sheer number of problems that arise during the gameplay rob the remainder of the game of any hope of being fun. The computer opponent cheats even on the easiest setting; there's rarely enough money to cultivate any ambitious strategies; and there's no interaction with any of your computer opponents or any of the abstract authorities whom you are supposedly bribing, extorting, and influencing.

To add insult to injury, New World has not even included a manual; if you want one (to refer to while you're learning the game), you have to print it out from the online help guide. This deplorable practice may save the game publisher a few bucks, but it's a damned rude inconvenience to inflict on the consumer.

The hard-breathing box copy shouts: "If you think you can't handle it, you're probably right," and the rating sticker on the cover proudly proclaims "three out of four" on the "violence" scale. What a crock. The violence consists of little animated figures shooting or punching at each other beneath quivering "strength bars" and is about on par with an 8-bit Nintendo fighting game.

I installed this game with high hopes, yet, the more I played it, the more I disliked and resented it.

Who would've thought that living a life of violent crime could be so dull?

—William R. Trotter

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

46%

HIGHS: Could be mildly diverting when played on the Internet.

LOWS: Mediocre graphics and dull, monotonous gameplay.

BOTTOM LINE: A good idea executed without a trace of wit, energy, or style. About as dull as dish-water.

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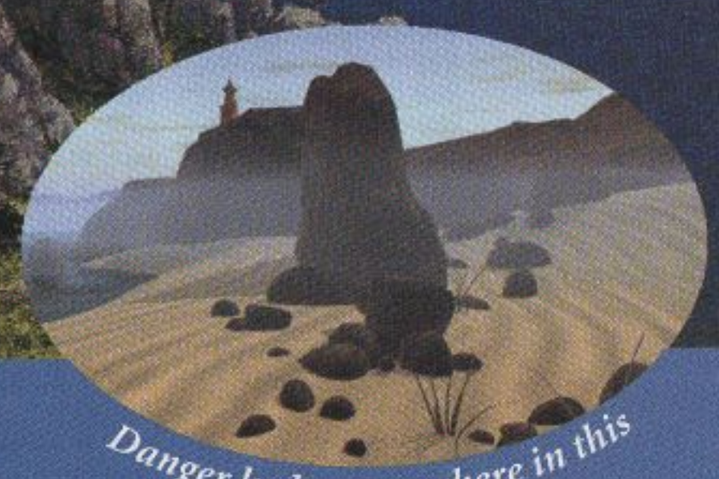

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The Birdman. Automated servant or ruthless obstacle?

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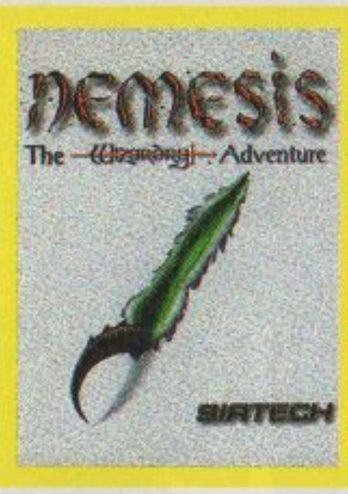

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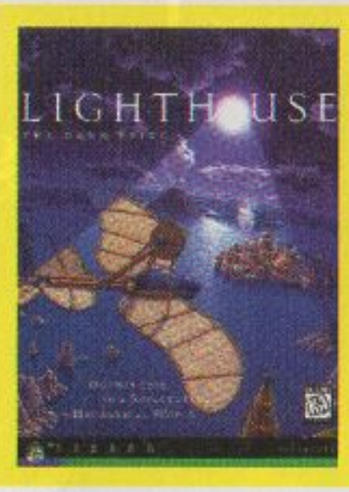

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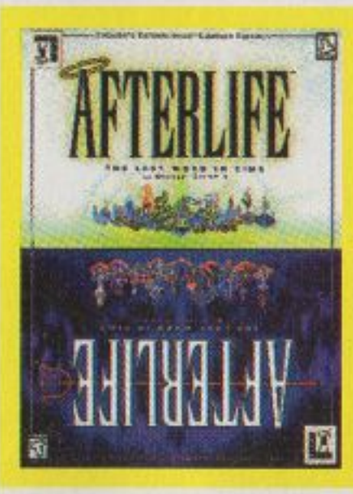

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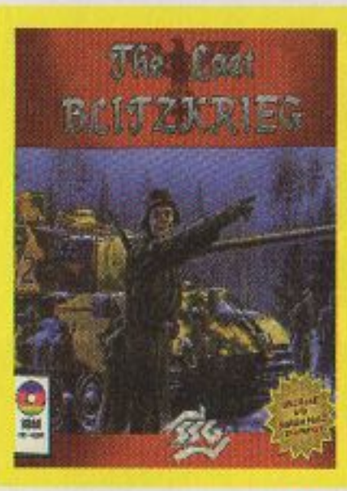

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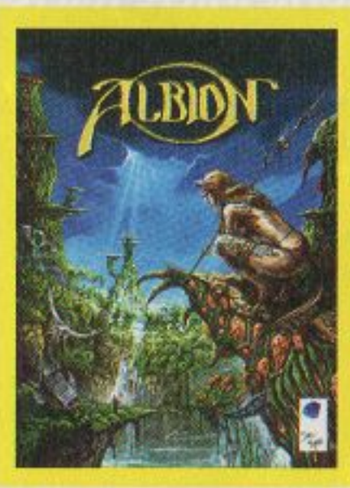

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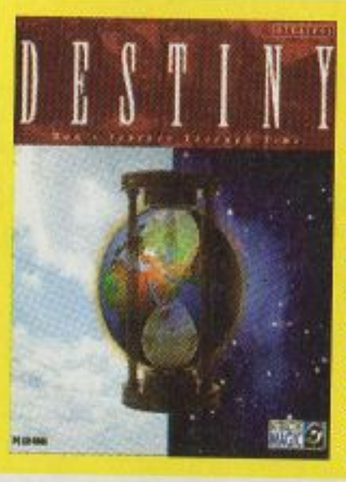

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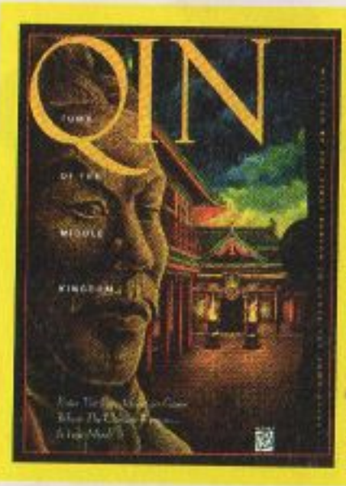

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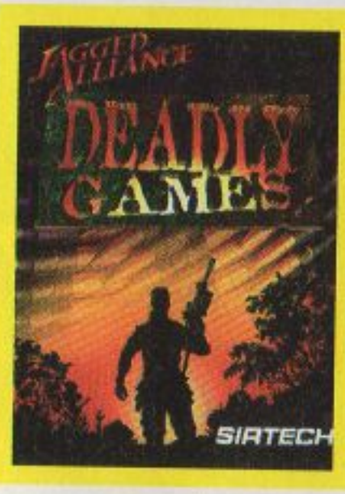

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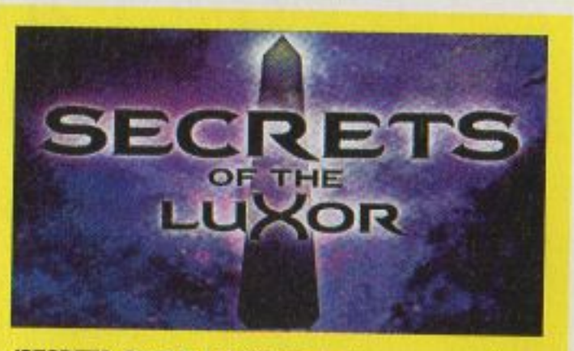

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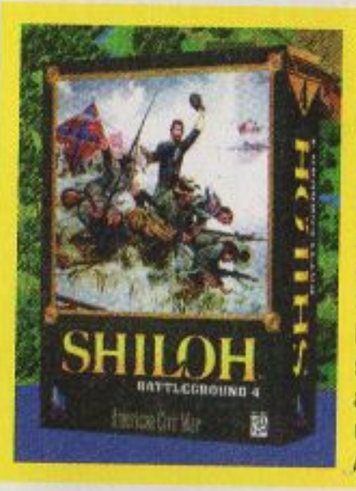

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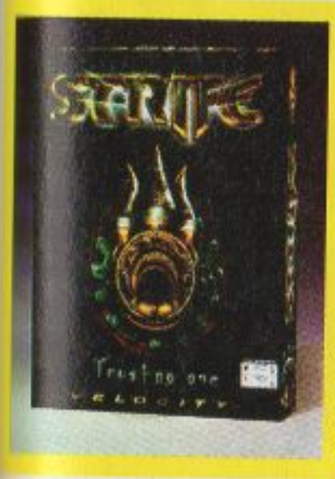

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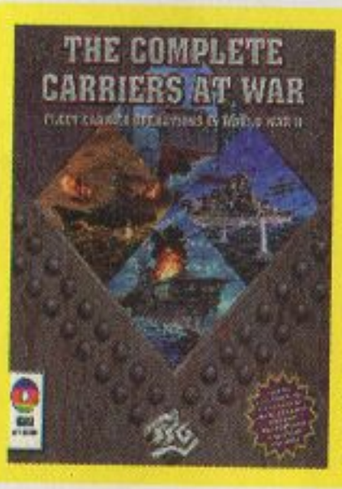

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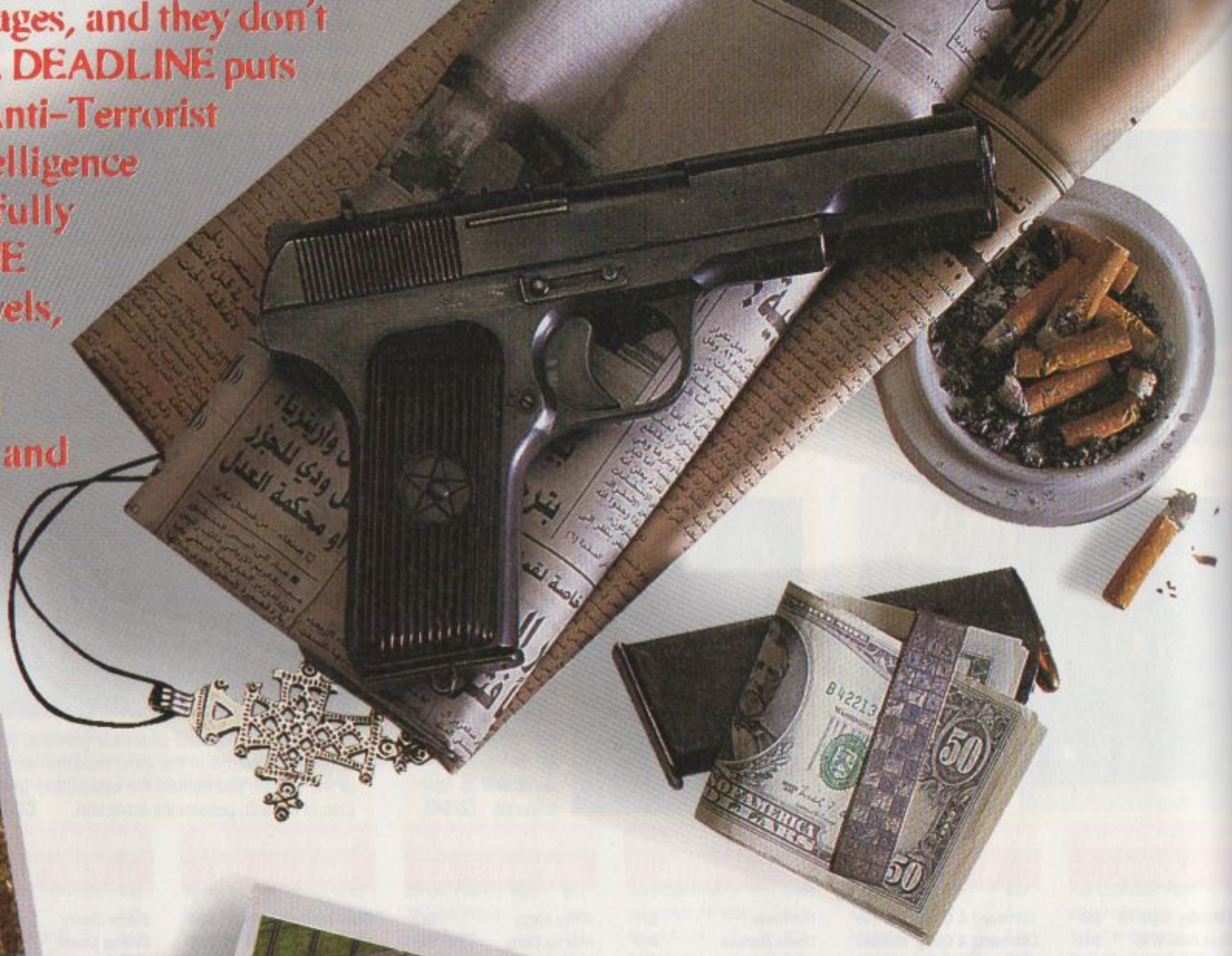

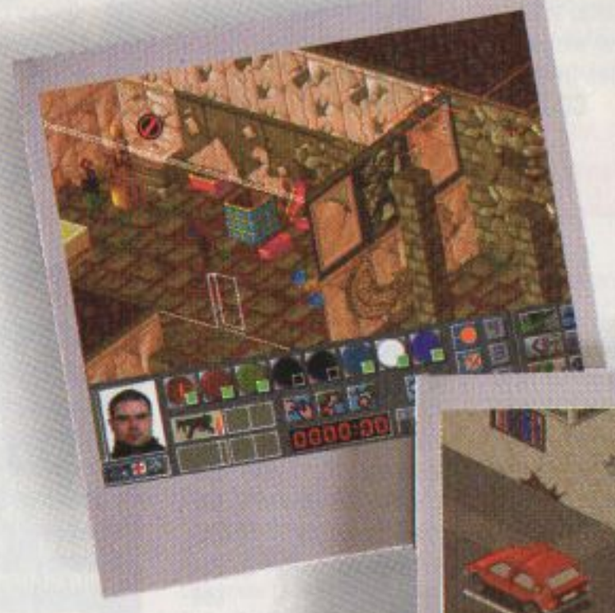

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Product Information Number 170

Sexy Speakers

If your next-door neighbors aren't complaining about the noise, it may be time for an upgrade.

by Dan Bennett

Back in the Dark Ages of PC gaming, it didn't much matter how good your PC speakers were; at best, you had an 8-bit mono sound card with FM synthesis, so a pair of cat-food cans that vibrated enough to make noise was enough. But now that virtually every PC has a 16-bit stereo sound card and a CD-ROM drive that doubles as a compact disc player, good speakers can add as much to your gaming setup as they can to a stereo or home theater. And as you've no doubt heard before, the speakers you got when you bought your system probably don't cut it.

Fortunately, the PC hardware industry has never been slow to jump on a trend, so there's a huge variety of low-, middle-, and high-end PC speaker systems to choose from. This month, we'll look at some of the best and the newest.

Labtec 2612

Labtec 2612

Labtec's three-piece system wins the award for cleverest design; an adjustable bracket hangs the two satellite speakers on either side of your monitor without the need for screws (or Velcro, or double-stick tape, or suction cups — gravity does all the work), freeing up desk space while putting the sound source at perfect ear-level. Since low bass frequencies are non-directional, the sub-woofer can go anywhere you like — although, since the controls for the whole system are mounted on it, you probably won't want to put it in the optimal position for a sub-woofer (under your desk and near the wall).

The 2612 system is susceptible to a problem that plagues nearly all computer speakers: positioned on either side of your monitor, they sit too close together to give you the full stereo image you should be hearing. A phenomenon called crosstalk (basically, it's what you get when stereo speakers are so close together that your left ear hears sounds meant for your right ear, and vice versa) cancels out a lot of the depth — but that's where the 2612's built-in Spatializer circuit comes in. Like most of the new "3D sound" systems, the Spatializer feature eliminates crosstalk and creates a much wider-sounding stereo field. Multiple attempts to explain this stuff to us have failed, but the Spatializer system definitely works — sometimes to startling effect — and without a noticeable loss of sound quality.

Speaking of which, the 2612 system sounds quite good; among the complete systems reviewed here, it takes a back seat only to the amazing Cambridge Soundworks. These speakers were designed and built by the *new* Labtec, remember — this company has changed considerably since it made its name as a maker of speakers that emphasized low price over quality, and the 2612 system is powerful testimony to that.

specs

SPEAKER: Labtec 2612
COMPANY: Labtec (360) 896-2000
PRICE: $119.99 (est. street price)
BOTTOM LINE: Smart lines and a monitor-hugging design make this system attractive, but it's the combination of sound and price that make them worth checking out.

Labtec 3210

Narrow and not too tall, these are the real space-savers of the crowd. Put 'em next to your monitor (they're magnetically shielded, of course), and you'll be surprised at the big sound you get. Just like the 2612, the 3210 system has Spatializer circuitry to give you a much wider sound field than you'd expect from such compact speakers — but it's the clever design of each speaker's housing that really makes this system stand out. Specially molded baffles inside the speakers give them surprising low-end response — this system doesn't come with a sub-woofer, but unless you're a freak for bass, you won't miss it.

Labtec 3210

The 3210 system spearheaded Labtec's new image as a maker of quality speakers, but their sub-$100 price is like a leftover from the company's bargain-basement days. If you're looking for quality sound, and money is an object, give these speakers a serious listen.

specs

SPEAKER: Labtec 3210
COMPANY: Labtec (360) 896-2000
PRICE: $99.99 (est. street price)
BOTTOM LINE: The 3210 system sounds very good, with surprising bass response — and the price is right.

Cambridge SoundWorks

The hi-fi specialists at Cambridge SoundWorks are so proud of this sweet little speaker system, they named it after the company — and rightly so. Designed by audio legend Henry Kloss, the SoundWorks speakers have very few bells and whistles, but their sound is unbeatable; they're easily the best of this bunch.

The SoundWorks' satellite speakers are tiny cubes, but they have shockingly good range and accuracy. Even without the sub-woofer, they sound better than many cheaper

PC speakers. And with that compact bass unit filling out the low end, there's no contest; they can turn a portable CD player into a room-filling stereo that may just outclass your home hi-fi, and they're more than enough speaker for your PC needs.

The SoundWorks' controls are elegant simplicity; a set-and-forget knob on the subwoofer determines the low-bass intensity, and you set the overall volume with an in-line control you can hide on your computer desk or attach to your monitor. There's no 3D sound circuitry, but SoundWorks doesn't really need it. Since the satellite speakers are so compact and inconspicuous, you can place them anywhere you like; the crosstalk that 3D circuits are designed to eliminate shouldn't be a problem. An optional 12-volt adapter makes these speakers ideal for boats or campers — and who could resist the temptation to try them out in the car?

Emphasizing simplicity and quality over flash, the SoundWorks system is unquestionably the choice for gamers who also happen to be audiophiles. And it's even available in black.

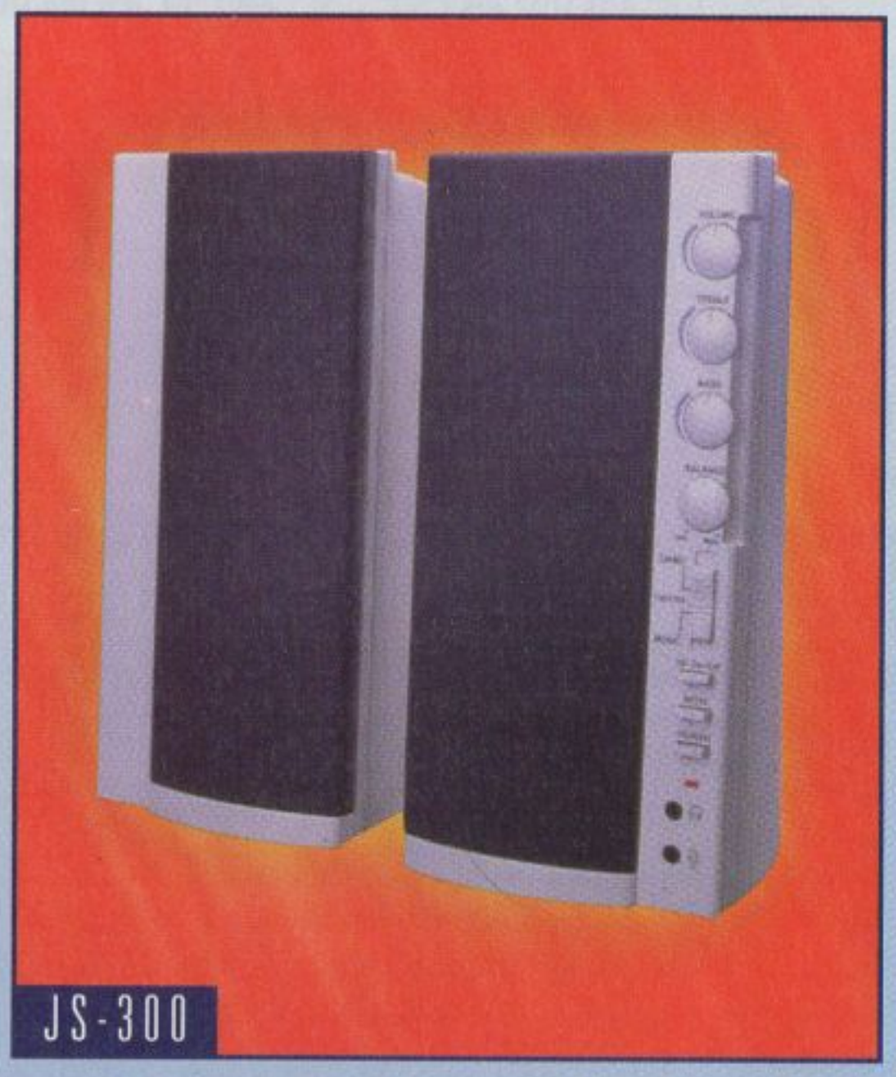
Cambridge SoundWorks

specs

SPEAKER: Cambridge SoundWorks
COMPANY: Cambridge SoundWorks
(800) 367-4434 In Canada, (800) 525-4434)
PRICE: $219.00 direct
BOTTOM LINE: Don't be fooled by the SoundWorks' relatively high price; compare their sound quality to any other PC speaker system, and you'll find they're a bargain.

Jazz JS-300

Like Labtec, Jazz Inc. is another small-speaker specialist that seems to be getting more serious about creating quality products. Last year's capable J-902 system featured decidedly average satellite speakers backed up by a very nice little subwoofer. Now Jazz is poised to introduce a new line of speakers, starting with the JS-300.



JS-300

The prototype JS-300 system we looked at was pretty impressive. These are big speakers. They don't come with a subwoofer, but they use three drivers to provide respectable output and range (two 3" cones handle the bass and midrange, while a 1" tweeter cranks out the highs).

The JS-300's 3D sound circuitry goes a step beyond that of the Labtecs, letting you choose from three levels of expanded sound: Music, Game, and Theatre. Music, the lowest setting, provides a very subtle 3D effect; and the Game effect is slightly wider, nearly as pronouced as the Labtecs' preset Spatializer effect. The Theater effect is the most intense, but (at least in the prototype) it added a great deal of high end to the speakers' output, resulting in a shrill tone that prompted a quick reduction of the treble control. In general, the Jazz speakers' 3D effect wasn't as impressive or as clean-sounding as the Labtecs'.

Several nice convenience features round out the JS-300 package, including a balance control (almost unheard of in PC speakers); mute button; front-panel headphone and microphone jacks; and an auxiliary input in the back for a CD player or portable tape player. Jazz also promises a new, 18-watt subwoofer. It'll be available separately, or with the JS-300 speakers as the JS-930 subwoofer system.

specs

SPEAKER: Jazz JS-300
COMPANY: Jazz Inc. (818) 336-2689
PRICE: $124.95; $224.95 with subwoofer (retail)
BOTTOM LINE: The variable 3D effect and convenience features make these worth a look — especially if you can find them at a street price considerably lower than retail.

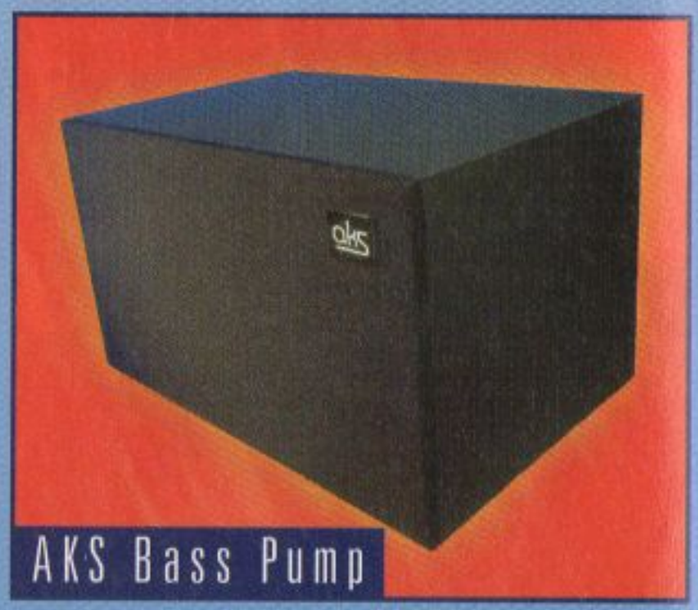
AKS Bass Pump

You may already know how a good subwoofer can make decent speakers sound good — and make good speakers sound great. And the Bass Pump is one terrific subwoofer designed to work with any PC speaker system.

With its own 30-watt amplifier (loads of power in PC speaker terms), this AKS subwoofer isn't so much a speaker as an artillery piece. Fire this baby up for a session of *Quake*, and your neighbors may think there's a gunfight going on over at your place — especially when you come to the door with your ears bleeding.

In fact, if you're looking for a little extra bass to give your PC sound a subtle kick at low volume levels, the aptly named Bass Pump may just be *too* powerful for your needs. It takes some careful adjustments to your sound card output, your satellite speakers' volume, and the subwoofer's own control to get the levels just right. Even then, you may find the bass overpowering except at the subwoofer's lowest settings.

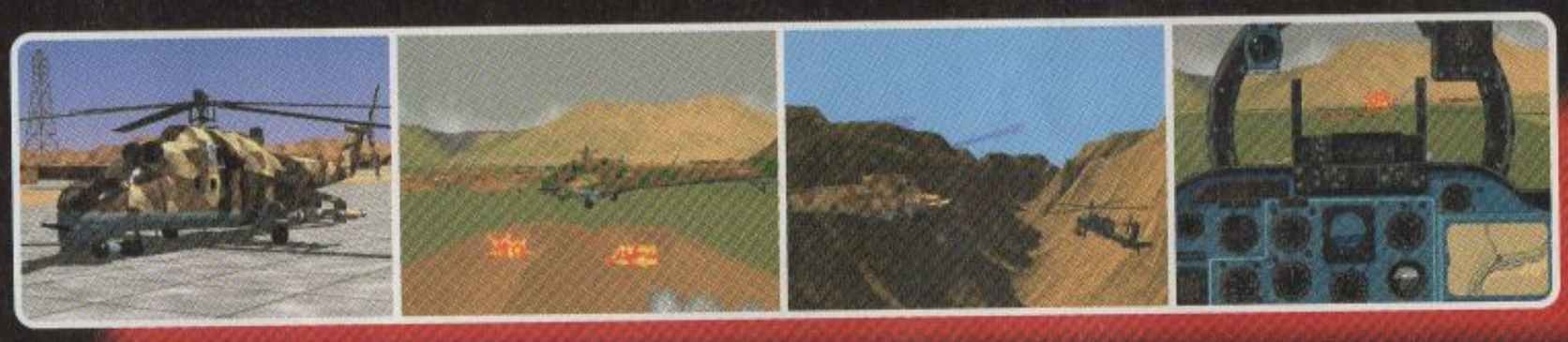
On the other hand, if you're the kind of gamer who thinks there's no such thing as too much power (you know who you are), the Bass Pump is right up your alley. It has more than enough punch to rattle your walls, not to mention your teeth. As long as your satellite speakers have enough juice to keep up with it, you'll never find yourself wishing the Bass Pump was just a little louder.



AKS Bass Pump

specs

SPEAKER: AKS Bass Pump
COMPANY: AKS Acoustics, Ltd.
(603) 654-5388
PRICE: $179.00
BOTTOM LINE: If you prefer a swift kick to a subtle thump — if you want to *feel* the sound coming out of your PC — this is your subwoofer. It has power to spare.



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Product Information Number 163

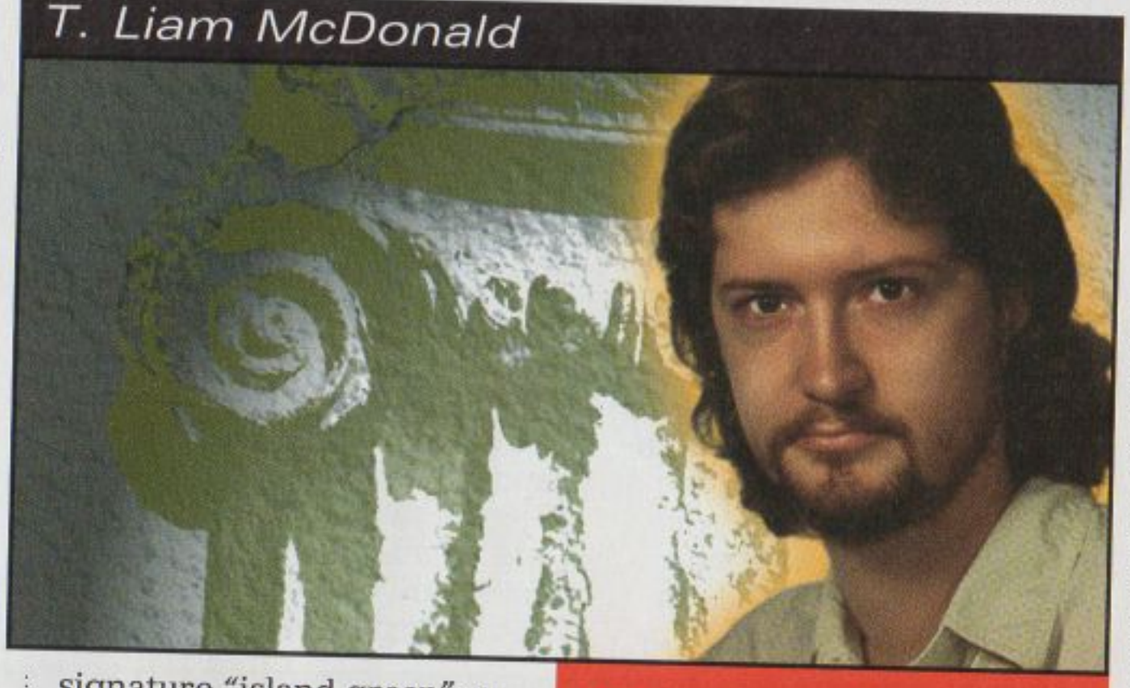
A New Stop on the PGA Tour

Sawgrass is master course designer Pete Dye's most famous course, now available for *PGA Tour*.

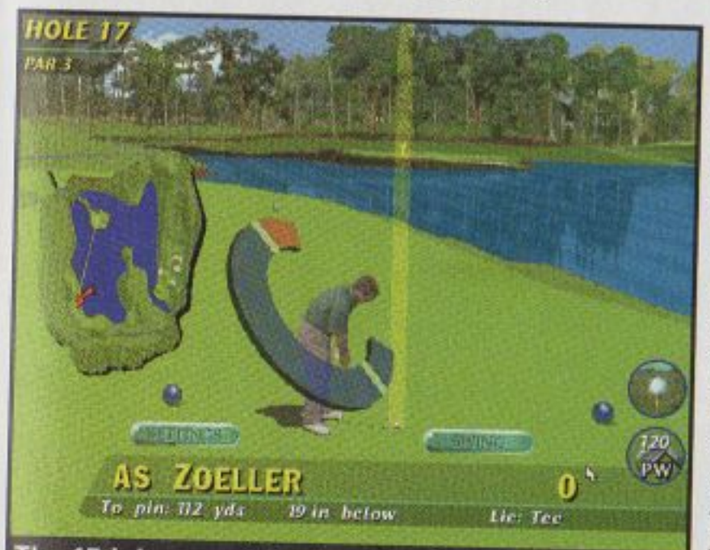
Pete Dye: you either respect him or you hate him. If you're a golfer playing one of his courses, sometimes it's both simultaneously. Dye is probably the best known course designer working today, with the qualified exception of veteran golfer Jack Nicklaus (whose courses are often drafted by others). There's something very American about Dye: everything he does is big. The courses are long, the holes dramatic, the signature tricks very pervasive. Massive amounts of earth are often moved for a Dye course, as the landscape is bullied into shape to fit the design.

Dye is dismissed by some for over-use of his signature gimmicks, but one can't deny the quality of the courses. Most Dye courses are characterized by vast sand traps, pot bunkers, railway sleepers, and island greens, but he's also created sublime natural courses like Kiawah, Hawaii. The course he's most remembered for, though, is Sawgrass at Ponte Verda, Florida. Dramatic courses like Sawgrass are the ones that translate best to computer, and Electronic Arts has done a good job of bringing this one to their PGA Tour line as the *TPC at Sawgrass Championship Course* add-on.

The TPC at Sawgrass course was designed as a "stadium" course, meaning that provisions were made for audiences to watch championship tournaments. The tournament it was designed to host is The Players Championship, one of the top stops on the PGA Tour. In the new disk, you can compete in the Players alongside pros like Tom Kite, Fuzzy Zoeller, and many others, taking on Sawgrass's unique challenges of long holes, narrow fairways, and gigantic bunkers. One of the most dramatic penal shots in golf is here at the 17th, with Dye's signature "island green": a short iron shot to a small green smack in the middle of a lake. This is a top-notch course, well-rendered by EA, and although the new *Links LS* looks better visually, PGA Tour's tourney mode carries a lot of weight.



T. Liam McDonald



The 17th is one of the best known holes in the world: a short iron shot to an island green.

Everybody's Doin' It

Windows 95, that is. In order to really make true believers of Windows 95 users, native applications — programs written specifically for the operating system — are essential. Most publishers are bringing some of their games over to Win 95, with varying degrees of success. The interesting thing is that it's more of a trickle than a flood; some game companies are making a nod at AutoPlay functions and Win 95 front ends, but titles actually developed for and in Win 95 are not coming in astounding numbers. Three new titles have been ported to Bill Gates' dream of a better world, and for the most part they work just fine.

The most extensive overhaul is seen in *Flight Unlimited for Windows 95* from Looking Glass. Five new airport locations have been added: Glacier, Alaska; New Hampshire; California; Front Royal, Virginia; and Bordeaux, France. The new scenery is as handsome as the old, and brings the number of flying locations up to 11. Joystick calibration works fine here, unlike in many Win 95 ports that are undermined by the lousy Microsoft joystick drivers. Running at 640x480, the frame rates seem to be a bit better than they were in DOS.

Some tasty extras make New World Computing's *Heroes of Might and Magic for Win 95* an attractive package even for those who have the original DOS version. An online strategy and hint guide is included, and provides some helpful play tips. Sixteen new scenarios are included, featuring a mixed bag of challenges and game types. Scenarios range from small and easy to large and challenging, with a wide range of terrain types and opponents to keep things interesting. The biggest addition is a fairly well-designed scenario- and world-builder. Custom maps are pretty easy to build using a variety of terrain tiles, and monster, town, and object placement allows for a pretty wide range of scenarios. If you missed *HMM* the first time around, don't miss it now: it's a little gem of a game.

Wizardry Gold (SirTech) is somewhat less successful. It's a pretty wide-ranging overhaul of *Crusaders of the Dark Savant* for Mac and Windows users. New animated intros and

Electronic Arts' top-notch golf sim gets a boost from what may be the best work of the sport's most famous course designer.

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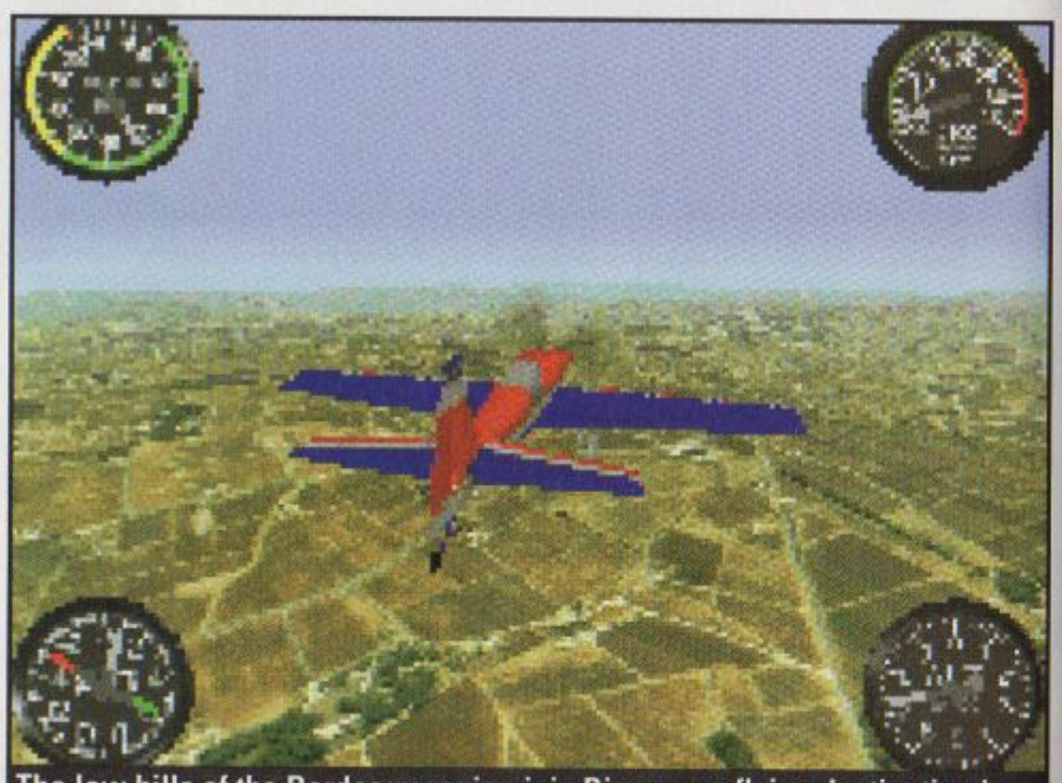
cut-scenes have been included, full voice support has been added, and game graphics have been considerably improved. A few extras are included, such as desktop themes, a screen saver, wall paper, and an online hint book. It's a pretty nice facelift for a classic game, but there's one problem with classic games: they're old. Technology and game design have moved on since *Crusaders*, and the stepped, rather than smooth-scrolling, navigation just doesn't cut it any more. Plus, a more complete package, featuring several of the older Wizardry games, would have felt like a better value.

Each of these packages comes with many of the benefits of Windows 95. Installation is easy and relatively conflict-free, AutoPlay functions mean people who are frightened by command lines have a nice, friendly button to push to install and run, and they can be minimized on the desktop when you need to multitask between operations. What the two best, *Flight Unlimited* and *Heroes of Might and Magic*, provide are extra features to make the port worthwhile to existing fans of the games, while luring in Win 95 users with smooth-running native apps. If DOS-to-Win 95 ports are going to be successful, these are the features that are essential.



The low hills of the Bordeaux region join Dinan as a flying destination in the Win 95 version of *Flight Unlimited*.

On the Horizon

- *Deadly Games*, the head-to-head version of Sir-Tech's *Jagged Alliance*, has just arrived, so expect a full report next issue.
- SSI is putting together an official *Steel Panthers* disk with the help of wargame scenario masters Novastar.
- Also coming from SSI will be two new sets of missions and extras for *Silent Hunter*. They're talking about doing special missions such as rescuing downed airmen and putting strike teams ashore, as well as moving to new waters.
- Intracorp will be publishing a full-blown "gold" edition of *Harpoon II*, featuring all the previous missions, some new missions, the editor, and more.
- There's early talk about new scenarios for *TerraNova* as well. No clear word on just what or when this will be, but the game is hot right now, so expect something soon.
- There's a deluxe version of *Carriers at War* (SSG) floating around out there, but I haven't been able to get my hands on it. Expect it to include both games in the series along with the extra disks and editor.

PCG

Bug Patches

Conquest of the New World v.1.06 (Interplay)— Fixes various gameplay bugs and lockups. *cnw106.zip*

M4 v.1.07 (Deadly Software)— Fixes all known problems for Windows version. *m4v107.exe*

Monopoly CD-ROM Patch 1.3 (Virgin)— Fixes lockup problems caused by some videos; newest version of FAQ file also included. *monpch13.exe*

Panthers in the Shadows v.1.17 (HPS)— Corrects a few small problems and adds eight-way facing. *ps-117.exe*

Power Dolls v.1.3 (Megatech)— Corrects the video lockup problem. *pd12to13.zip*

Silent Hunter V.1.01 Interim Patch (SSI)— Temporary patch fixing "Phantom Ship" contact generation bug, compressed air usage bug, crew quality updates, limits depth charge to 200 feet in historic models, lowers merchant crew gunnery effectiveness, and other problems. *sh-v101.exe*

Silent Steel MPEG Patch (Trimark)— Expands support to include many other MPEG cards and MPEG software drivers, including Ace MPEG cards. *steel.exe*

Stonekeep v.1.2 (Interplay)— Fixes various bugs. *sk_p12.zip*

TacOps v.1.0.3 (Arsenal)— Contains 11 new user-requested enhancements, more U.S., Canadian, and OPFOR units; bug fixes. *tacop103.zip*

Terminator: Future Shock v.1.30 (Bethesda)— General maintenance patch. *tfs130.exe*

Total Mayhem v.1.02 (Domark)— Fixes various lockups and other problems. *tm102.zip*

Wizardry: Bane of the Cosmic Forge Pentium Patch (Sir-Tech)— This corrects the divide overflow problem in Wizardry: Bane of the Cosmic Forge experienced by some users with 486 and Pentiums up to 90Mhz. This updated version should work for all Pentiums, including 133s. *wroot.exe*

Wizardry Gold Patch (Sir-Tech)— Addresses the text speed problems found on some systems; also makes the game run smoother under Windows 3.x. *goldfix.zip*

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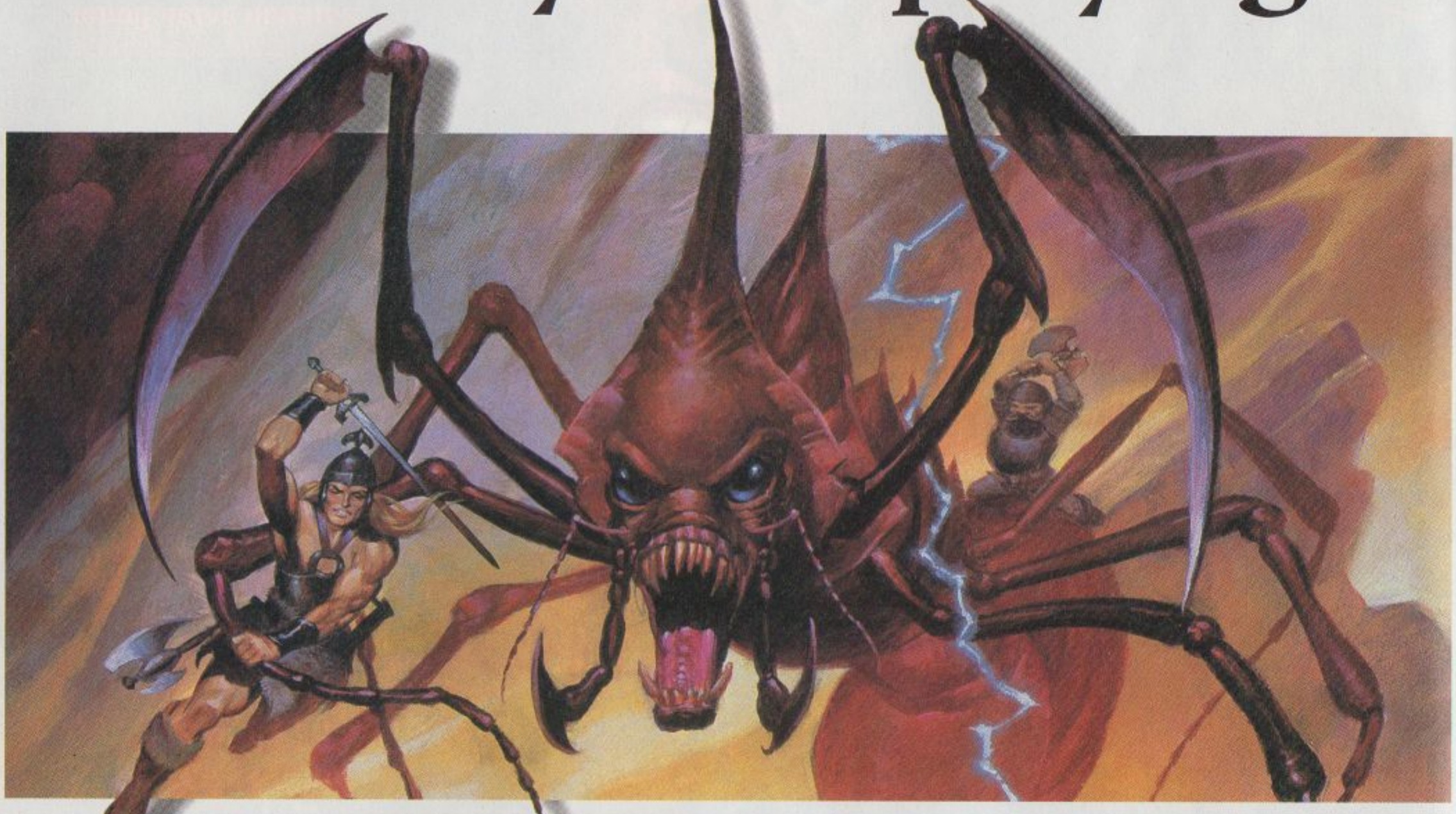

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HyperMedia Comes of Age — Almost

By the time I discovered hypermedia, it had been all but discarded by its creator, Ted Nelson. It was too text-based and too programmer-directed for him. But for me, it was miraculous — at first. I foresaw great things coming from this new technology. Classic novels on computer with dramatic renditions of pivotal scenes, critical essays linked to various passages, casts of characters accessible from a single mouse click, and even authors' notes embedded in the text.

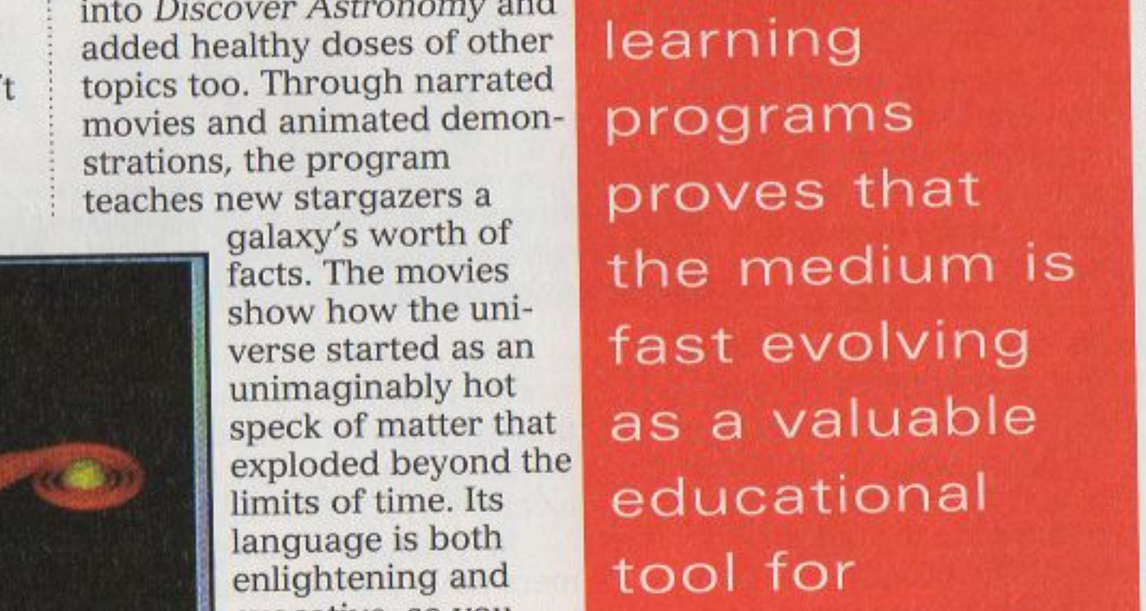
The reality was less spectacular, though. Nelson was correct. Back in the middle to late 1980s, hypermedia was mostly black and white text with a few poorly integrated graphics and perhaps a sound clip or two. Only a child-oriented program, *The Manhole*, hinted at what hypermedia could do with its non-linear approach to information, and still it was far too limited to be anything more than novel.

Fortunately, hypermedia's shortcomings couldn't pull the trigger on itself and the technique has evolved over the years. With better presentation technology, programmers have put the "media" into "hypermedia." With higher capacity storage strategies, programmers have energized the "hyper" part of the technique as well. A few 1996 releases show quite clearly how nicely hypermedia has come along.

Discover Astronomy

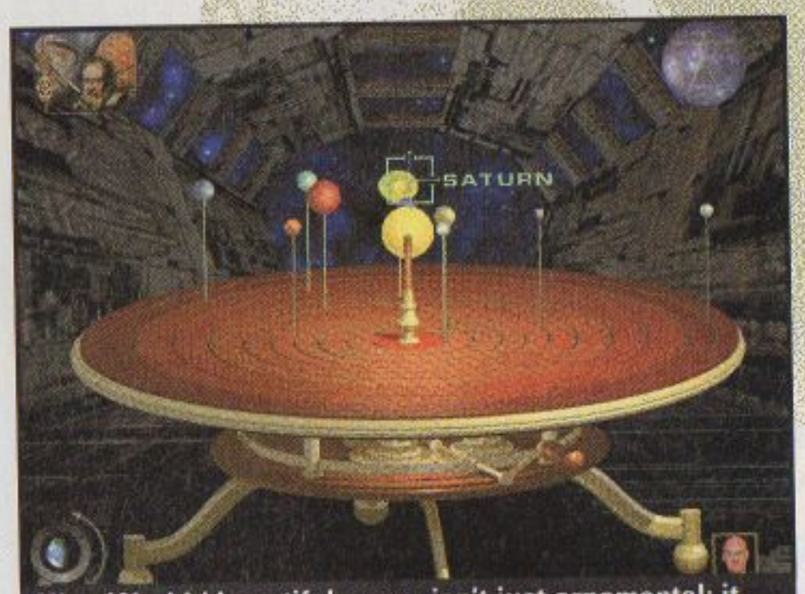
No one has made astronomy more palatable than Maris Multimedia has. These are the folks who publish *Red Shift 2*, a computer driven planetarium for your desktop. From *Red Shift*, Maris gleaned a series of lectures on the evolution of the universe, big bang to the future. They packed this information into *Discover Astronomy* and added healthy doses of other topics too. Through narrated movies and animated demonstrations, the program teaches new stargazers a galaxy's worth of facts. The movies show how the universe started as an unimaginably hot speck of matter that exploded beyond the limits of time. Its language is both enlightening and evocative, so you exit the program with a sense of wonder as well as new understanding.

While the language is part of the program's beautiful presentation, it is also part of the excellent educational design. *Discover Astronomy* is clearly written, and its animated sequences add to the program's clarity. Never dawdling over the facts, rarely piling technical jargon on top of more technical jargon, the program addresses you with respect — respect for what you don't know and respect for what you can learn. It doles out the information at a good pace; and if the pace moves too quickly at times, you can easily replay the information from any point.



In *Discover Astronomy*, the double stars lecture combines evocative language, dramatic narration, and colorful animation to show how one star wraps itself around another.

A trio of new hypermedia learning programs proves that the medium is fast evolving as a valuable educational tool for children and their parents, too.



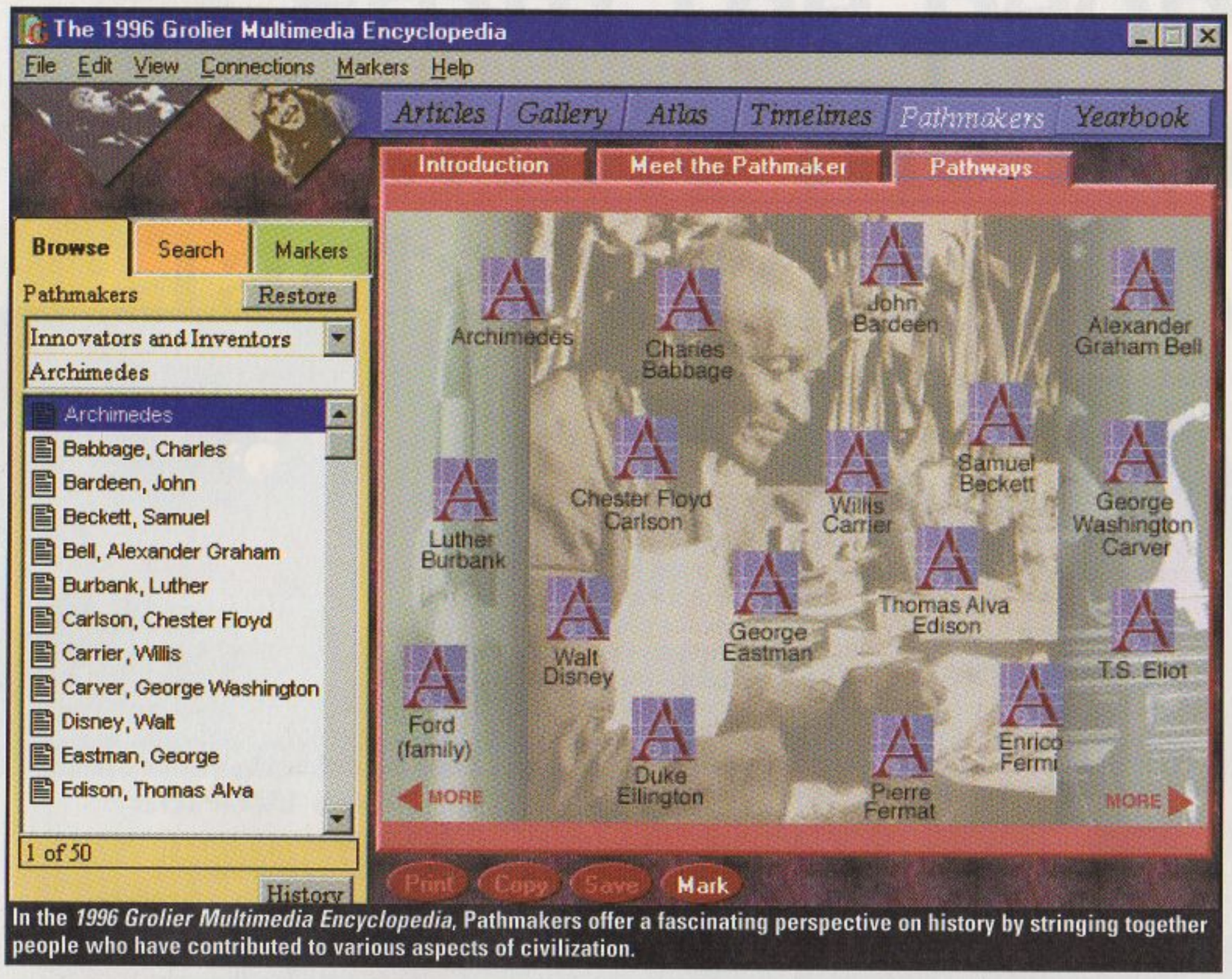
***Nine Worlds'* beautiful orrery isn't just ornamental; it serves as the program's interface.**

Nine Worlds

Equally as beautiful as *Discover Astronomy*, *Nine Worlds* features a familiar voice and strikingly vivid graphics. The program opens with a medieval orrery, a mechanical model of the entire solar system driven by cranks and gears. This opening image conveys the aesthetic of astronomy.

Adding depth and familiarity to the program, Patrick Stewart narrates *Nine Worlds*. Indeed, *Nine Worlds* boldly goes where no software has gone before. From its own rich storehouse of information, it reaches out to the Internet, building a World Wide Web page based on items you have selected on your desktop. The link from your local CPU to the vast expanse of cyber-space is a simple button on your screen. The program knows how to start up your Web browser and access your Internet provider. *Nine Worlds'* Web page looks a lot like the program, so the shift to the Internet is smooth. However, once you're out of *Nine Worlds'* online domain, the change in interface may be a bit abrupt. Patrick Stewart is gone and the graphics may not be as easy to access as they were on your desktop. You also start moving through the information at a different pace – something like pudding at times. But that's the nature of the Internet, not *Nine Worlds*.

This astronomy program begs to be compared with Maris' *Discover Astronomy*, and, for the content, *Discover*



In the *1996 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Pathmakers offer a fascinating perspective on history by stringing together people who have contributed to various aspects of civilization.

Astronomy wins out. On presentation, the programs are tied, with *Nine Worlds* gaining a slight edge by virtue of Stewart's role and the attractive interface. With its link to the Internet, though, *Nine Worlds* levels the scale, striking a balance between the two products. For a narrative on the universe, rich with technical information and the poetry of science, choose *Discover Astronomy*. For more accessible, bite-sized portions of information delivered with style, choose *Nine Worlds*.

1996 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia

For the third musketeer in the hypermedia ranks, consider the latest volume of *Grolier's Multimedia Encyclopedia*. Of the three packages I evaluated this month, Grolier's features the best writing. Sure, its graphics are sharp and its sound is clear. But it's the text that really shines in this program.

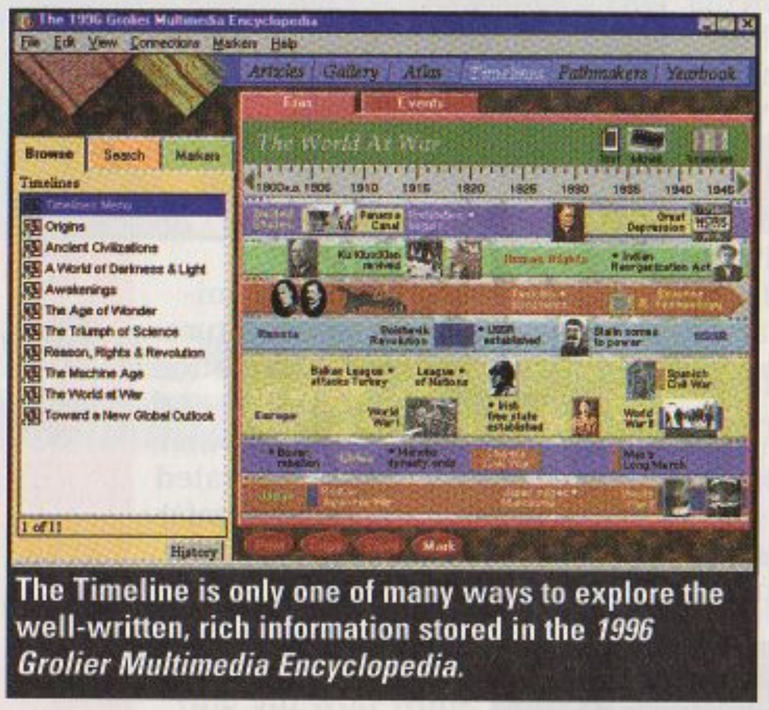
You can tell that experienced writers were involved. They get to the heart of each topic quickly with direct language. They peel away the surface of many topics and plunge into the deeper issues. They digest large bodies of information into dense handfuls of narrative. I'd forgotten the pleasure of thumbing through an encyclopedia until I tried out Grolier's latest reference package.

Another gem in the program is the Pathways feature. Pathways are collections of articles that follow a common thread. One Pathway, for example, follows inventors and innovators through history. Next to George Washington Carver, you can find Samuel Beckett. Had you thought of him? His innovative perspective on reality contributed to a new style of literature as well as a new way to understand the human self. While the program's pre-built Pathways are fascinating in themselves, the technique of constructing them is more interesting. Using Grolier's Markers you and your kids can build your own pathways, discussing why one item is linked to another.

Like *Nine Worlds*, *Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia* offers a gateway to the outside world. The program features an Online button for many articles. Look up Anne Frank, for example, click on the Online button, and the program lists various Compuserve forums that relate to her. If you are a member of Compuserve, you can move directly to the forum you've selected.

The State of the Hyper-Union

Singly, each of these three programs offers great value to families with excellent electronic activities as well as many bridges to the real world. Together, though, they reveal much about the health of the hypermedia technology in the 1990s.



The Timeline is only one of many ways to explore the well-written, rich information stored in the *1996 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*.

Hypermedia programmers have learned many tricks over the years. From the beginning, they have linked hypermedia with multimedia. Now they can add more movies, sound clips, and graphics to the text. By mixing media, they have improved the look of programs, but they have also appealed to various learning styles. While multimedia is a strength of hypermedia, it is also weakness. The media can be poorly integrated like a collection of scraps that have been tossed into a shoe box. In these newest packages, the programmers did a better job of weaving the film clips with the sound bytes, the still photos with the animation, and so on. But there are still times when I couldn't figure out why one passage was delivered as narration while another was delivered as text. It felt patchy to me, and I wondered if the programmers had just given up halfway through the programs. Even those less spectacular segments were well-executed, though.

Besides mixing media, hypermedia authors have been stretching the limits of storage technology. Subsequently, they have packed more media on each disk, and they have provided more links between topics. Because the links are the star players in these programs, more links make a better package. Unfortunately, programmers still apply brute force to create these links. The more links there are, the more dynamic the program appears to be. But, truly, these packages are just as static as ever. I'm looking forward to the day when I can create my own links, assisted by the, program.

In the meantime, however, links to the Internet and CompuServe have made *Nine Worlds* and *1996 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia* more dynamic than before. In fact, these links build an infinite web of ever-changing information within what had been a very limited genre. However, the information online is no longer as reliable as it was when you were limited to the CD-ROM drive on your desktop.

What makes a hypermedia package work is a good interface, interesting content, many different kinds of data, more links than anyone could access in a lifetime, and an attractive presentation. Each of the hypermedia products I evaluated offer these qualities in mass quantities. Most notably, they speak well of the future with their links to the world outside the computer. PCG

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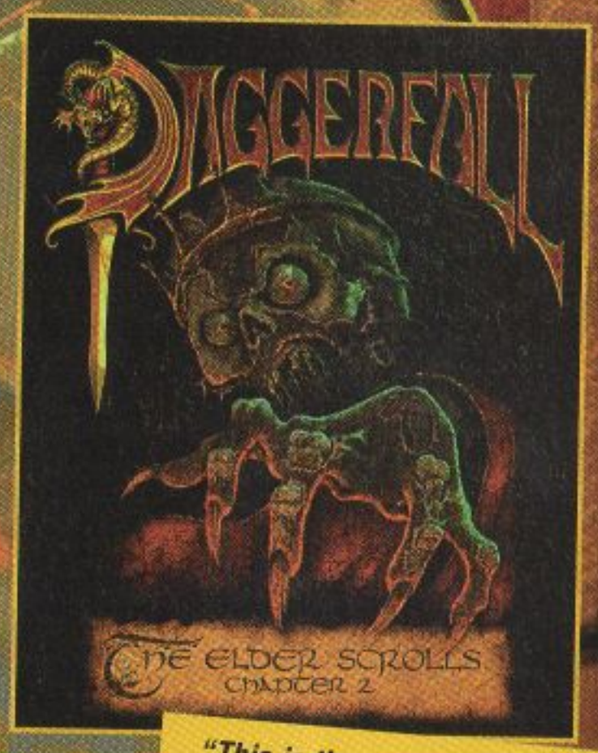

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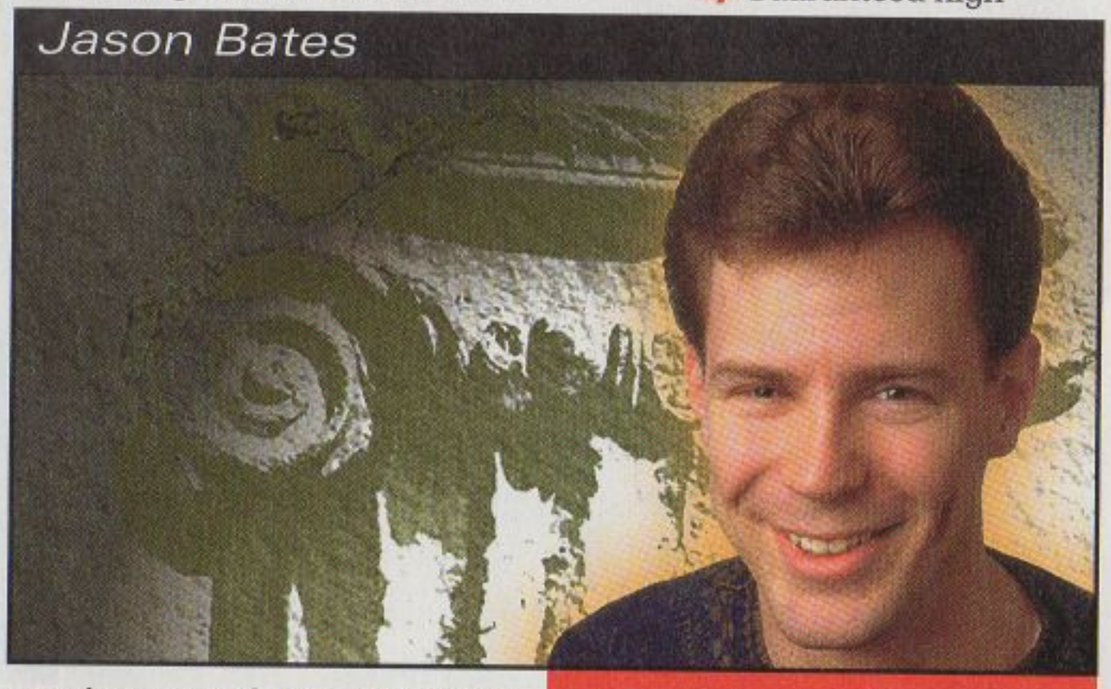
You Say You Want a Revolution?

Jason Bates



Imagine a star system caught in the pincers of war. An Imperial attack fleet of star cruisers, troop ships, and TIE fighters slowly approaches a Rebel base on an icy moon.

Hundreds of X-Wings, A-Wings, and B-Wings launch to intercept, while a ragtag band of frigates, destroyers, and Corellian freighters forms a loose shield around the planet. Here and there, free traders and smugglers race towards escape velocity, eager to warp out of the coming storm, while on the surface, rebel troops dig in and grit their teeth, grimly awaiting the inevitable onslaught of stormtroopers and AT-ATs.

And every ship and soldier is a human player.

That game hasn't been written yet, but I expect to see it — or something like it — in three years. During that time, the computer game will undergo a radical revolution unlike any seen before, emerging from its static, single-player model into the multi-player, Internet-based game of the future.

There a lot of good reasons why this will happen. Look at TSR and the phenomenal success of Advanced Dungeons & Dragons. Take that level of intense personal interaction, but add to it high-res graphics and fast-paced, visually-oriented combat — something impossible with paper roleplaying games — and you'll draw in not only dedicated roleplayers, but all the people turned off by the prolonged dice-throwing and bookkeeping involved with old-fashioned RPGs. (After all, fighting is not an intellectual exercise, it's split-second decisions and adrenaline.)

Now throw in the human factor. Real human opponents are unpredictable, challenging antagonists, far better than any AI can be. Is playing chess against a computer anything at all like playing against real opponents? The same holds true for multi-player games like *Quake, Duke Nukem 3D,* or *WarCraft II,* where the challenge to think smart and act fast has created the most intense form of gaming yet devised.

And then there's the social factor. Five million people are signed up on AOL, and the most popular activity is text-based chatting. Clearly, a significant number of people prefer an interactive medium like an online service, however young the technology, to passive forms of entertainment like television.

Programmers know this; they all want to do multi-player games, and they're going to come up with dozens of innovative ways of doing it. When the day comes that there is no noticeable difference in the speed of a game running on one machine and a game using many computers linked across the Internet, multi-player gaming will have truly arrived. And from that point on, there'll be no turning back.

Still, we're a long way from ideal Internet games. The problem with the current crop of online mainstays — *WarCraft, Doom, Duke Nukem 3D* — is that they are trying to simulate network play over the Internet, even though these games were not written for the Internet. The communication quality just isn't there — and neither is the camaraderie. In real network play, you know everyone who's playing, and you can hear them yelling at you — it's a social activity, like a game of pick-up basketball.

So we're really talking about games that are two generations away — and what we want them to be able to do. I'm not a games programmer, but I've seen enough computer games and enough of the Internet to have some idea of what we'll need to make it all possible:

1) Games with graphics and sounds sold on CD-ROM, just as they are today. All the effects have to be in the players' machines before they even connect to the Internet. Only positional data should be transferred over the Net — the stuff that tells where and when to draw a given graphic, play a particular sound effect, or tell you you're dead.

2) Guaranteed high-bandwidth, low-latency connections. The amount of incoming information will be immense, stripped as it is, and hopefully we'll all be on ISDN or cable modems by then.

3) About ten thousand man-hours of programming. Getting some kind of AOL-sized God program coordinating all these clients with different programs running is going to be a nightmare. But I have faith in game programmers; they're probably the best in the world, and certainly smarter than the rest of us.

4) Popular support. If we want to see something like this, we have to support it, even if it means supporting online services with only a fraction of what we want to see. Stop buying bad retail games with no Internet or multi-player support. Get on Usenet and demand net play. The game companies can only do something new when they get venture capital, and they can only get that when they can show some kind of marketplace demand. Right now, the Internet is hot in venture-capital circles — which means game companies are getting money to "go Internet" even though the technology is not there to support their ambitions. But if Internet gaming fizzles — if TEN, MPath, and others go belly-up — we may have to wait an extra five years to play the kind of games we're dreaming about.

5) Vision. Whoever eventually puts together that first killer Internet gaming application has the potential to make millions, but they'll need the kind of vision that makes millionaires in this industry.

There's a lot to be done. I hope to cover as much as possible in this column, from technical difficulties to game design issues. We'll look at the online gaming revolution as it unfolds; the promise and the perils, the potential and the pitfalls — everything from the up-and-coming dedicated gaming services to user-driven phenomena such as Kali, *Quake* servers, and *VGA Planets,* and the problems of latency and finance. But it'll be fun.

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The gaming revolution won't be televised (not even on cable) — it'll be broadcast across the Internet, and we'll all be a big part of it.

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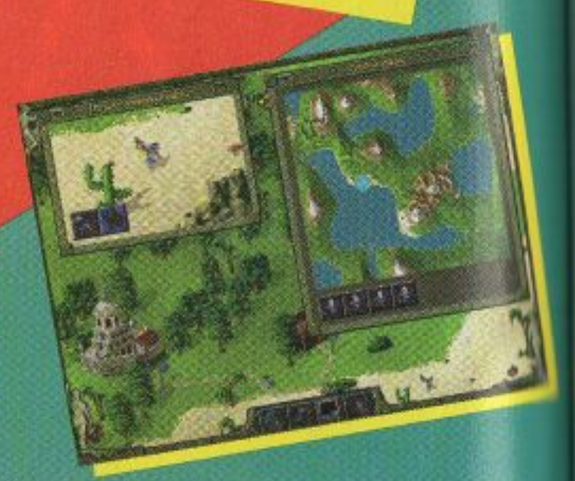

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Product Information Number 103

Adventure's Changing Faces

The only really noticeable differences between *Kings Quest V* (left) and *The Beast Within* (right) are the graphics. We're certainly due for some big changes in graphic adventures soon, don't you think?

As I sat down to gather my thoughts and write this month's column, I suddenly found my mind blank. What big changes, what big news, what trends are shaping the world of adventure and roleplaying gaming? Quite a bit, actually — but that doesn't mean I have to write about it. Instead, I thought I'd ask for a few answers from you, the reader.

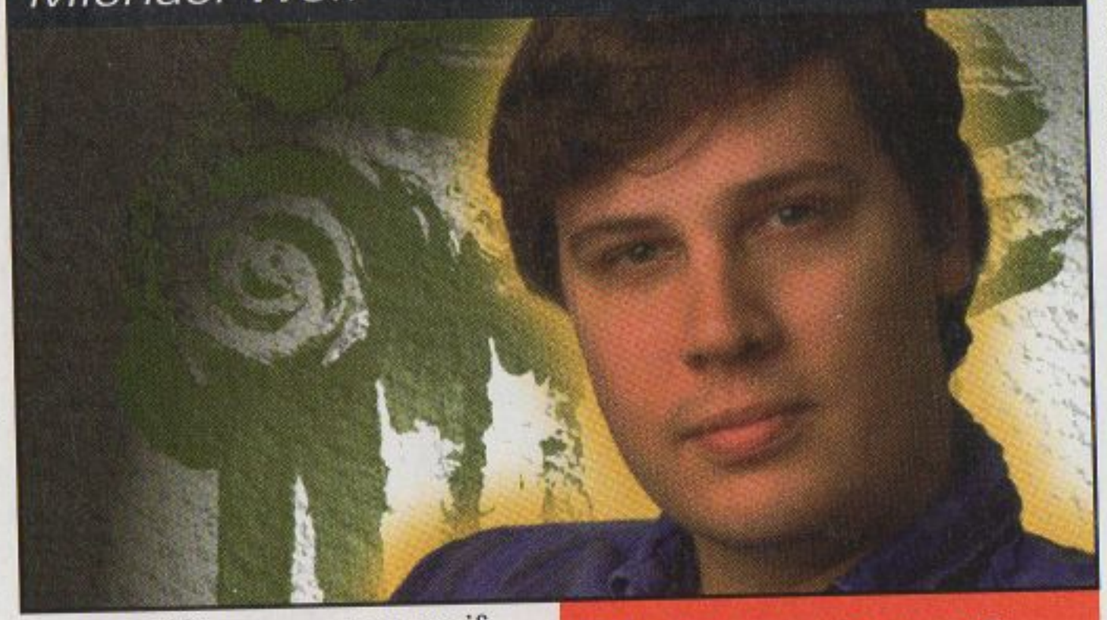
Many of you have no doubt noticed how graphic adventure games tend to change in leaps and bounds. Not so long ago, most adventure games were very similar to the old Sierra titles — *Space Quest*, *Leisure Suit Larry*, etc. They were text-heavy and required the player to actually *type* commands.

Then, about five years ago, Sierra threw a curve at gamers with *King's Quest V*'s icon-based gameplay. Using the mouse alone, players could point and click to their hearts' content, without fear of misspelling a word or phrasing a command the wrong way.

Not long after that came the emphasis on detailed, sophisticated, almost photo-realistic graphics and one of the first serious uses of CD-ROM as a gaming medium — *Myst*. Sure, it's easy to trash it today for its lack of interaction, but when *Myst* first came out, it was pretty impressive, and simplicity itself to play.

Where are we now? Despite the advent of flashy graphics and full-motion video, are games like *The Beast Within* so different from *Space Quest V*? Not really.

So what comes next? Are graphic adventures poised for another leap, this time to a new playing style? How do *you* think the world of adventure gaming will change in the next few years? More importantly, how would you *like* adventure gaming to change? Let's hear it: I welcome gripes about the way things are as well as ideas for making them better. I'll bring the subject up again in a few months, and we'll look at your comments. You can do the hip E-Mail thing by sending your comments to



Michael Wolf

mwolf@pcgamer.com, or, if you prefer, send snail-mail to: Michael Wolf, *PC Gamer*, Imagine Publishing, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005.

Now that that's over with, on with the show... .

May's Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles left me with a lot to look forward to — and not just in the way of stuff to write about in this column. A lot of upcoming games looked good, and some looked great.

Blizzard's *Diablo*, for example. I've had a chance to play an early version of this one, so I can assure you it's addicting, and from what I saw at the show, they've added tons more spells and monsters. For those of you who haven't been following its development, it's a skewed, top-down perspective dungeon crawl that creates a new dungeon, complete with its own quests, every time you start a new adventure. It's also going to work on a network and the Internet, for some amazing multi-player interaction.

The realm of graphic adventure games receives so little attention these days, it's about time that someone addressed the issue.

Blizzard isn't giving a specific release date, but they're hoping to have *Diablo* on the shelves before Christmas. At least we can hope.

I also got a much closer look at Bethesda's *Daggerfall*. Yeah, I know, you're probably sick of everyone talking about it when it's taken so long to come out, so I'll be brief. The interface used in the early demo that was released several months ago is gone — instead, it works a lot more like Bethesda's own *Terminator: Future Shock*. And if you didn't like that game's interface, you'll be pleased to know that the controls will be completely configurable, so you can customize it to your liking.

Among the upcoming graphic adventures was a tasty-looking morsel called *Phantasmagoria 2: A Puzzle of Flesh*. Now, here's a game that will give you serious nightmares; it looks like something that would keep John Carpenter awake at night. You'll probably have to be a little bit twisted to enjoy the gore-fest, but there's definitely a market for this stuff. I have to admit I'm looking forward to getting a copy, if only out of curiosity.

Here's an interesting tidbit for the fans of New World Computing's *Might and Magic* series: they've announced plans to create the next in the line, *Might and Magic VI*. There's no word yet on what the plot will be, or even how the engine will work, since production hasn't begun. Still, it's reassuring to know it's on its way, even if it's a *long* way off.

PCG

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Becalmed in the Horse Latitudes

The PC gaming industry keeps time like the rest of Western Civilization, using the Gregorian Calendar and measuring "a year" from January 1 to December 31.

Game reviewers, however, tend to measure the year in three temporal lumps: the Busy Season (September-December, when the game developers ship their "A" list titles, hoping to recoup their year-long expenses during the holiday shopping frenzy), the Spring Season (when the tempo of releases slows a bit and the better "B" list titles appear), and the Slack Season (June-August), when we have to scramble desperately to find enough new releases to fill this magazine.

One tries to be timely; even ahead of the curve if possible. But not so much as a press release for a war game has come across my desk in the past six weeks, so here I am facing a deadline for a 750-word column with nothing new to write about.

Not to worry; a true professional always had something to spout off about. Here, then, are my ruminations about the highs and lows of the wargame genre since the start of 1996:

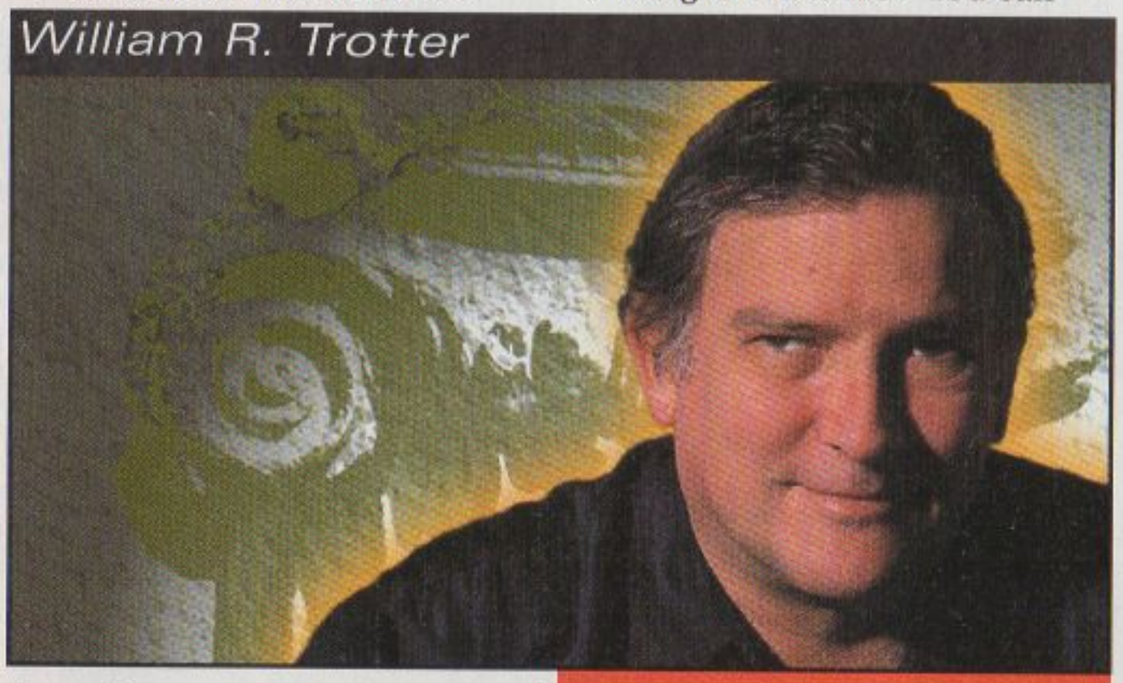
Most Impressive New Company:

It's a tie between Interactive Magic and Talon Soft. The latter company has come on very strong, starting with the January release of *Battleground: Ardennes* and culminating in the soon-to-be-released *Battleground: Shiloh*. Talon Soft has single-handedly rejuvenated the hex-grid system, combining it with thrilling miniatures-style graphics and beautiful video. There's not a weak game in their line up.

Interactive Magic has spread its releases across several genres, but both its *Apache Longbow* simulation and its new Civil War game show the same kind of committed excellence as the military games and sims developed by its founder, Wild Bill Stealy, during his tenure at MicroProse. I look forward to the new Abrams tank sim.

Most Interesting New System:

Intergalactic's *The War College* contemptuously turns its back on the entire hex-grid system and replaces it with authentic animated formations and richly detailed terrain maps derived from satellite data. The system strikes me as richly adaptable to any period, and the first four scenarios combined vivid history lessons with absorbing game-play.


William R. Trotter

Most Egregious Act of Corporate Cruelty:

The decision by American Laser Games to pull the plug from QQP, one of the doughtiest and most creative little companies in the world. The press releases announcing this barbaric action were masterpieces of bland, evasive, Corporation-Speak; one still cannot fathom the reasoning behind the decision. I guess now ALG can concentrate on the coarse, crude, video shooting games that have made so much money for them and on their highly-touted new line of Games for Girls.

Most Unintentionally Funny Online "Strategy Guide"

From a clueless outfit called The Joint Chiefs, comes a "strategy guide" for *Allied General* that includes such gems as the following: "Well, the Allied dogs are planning to take everything. However, you can throw a big bug into their soup by holding Berlin", not to mention the following insightful advice: "You can hold back the onslaught if you do not stand around looking dumb for too long." (Patton could not have said it better, guys!)

From the depths of the summer doldrums, Gen. Trotter casts a beady eye on the highs and lows of the wargaming year thus far.

Most Fascinating New Development in the Genre:

The remarkable new liaison between the American armed forces and the commercial war gaming industry. Games' technology has reached such a level of sophistication that off-the-shelf wargames are being adopted as training aids by the professional military. The U.S. Marine Corps, in keeping with its tradition of innovation, was the first service to reach out and embrace the genre, and the other service are rapidly following. This trend will, I predict, change the face of wargaming-as-we've-known-it.

Most Delightful Surprise of the Year:

SSI's *Fantasy General*, which, despite (or perhaps because of) its Tolkeinian trappings, managed to be a better, more compelling sequel to *Panzer General* than the game which was its "official" sequel. The more I play this colorful and engrossing game, the better I like it.

Most Delayed Vaporware of the Year (or is it the decade?):

Avalon Hill's *Over the Third Reich* (which I first saw demonstrated at the summer CES in 1989!). How long, O Lord, how long...?

Most Fun This Reviewer Has Had All Year:

Playing *Marine Doom* with a bunch of raving Leathernecks up at Quantico military base, back in January.

All in all, it's been a colorful year so far. PCG

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Commander Zod is waiting http://www.vie.com

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Product Information Number 174

Lupine Flight Line

Scott Wolf

Boy, it sure is good to be back in the old Thunder-Seat, surrounded by dials, gauges, and levers rather than the hyperkinetic HTML of the Internet. Some pretty interesting stuff has happened since I last skippered this tub, and some pretty fantastic stuff lingers on the horizon, so let's not waste any more time. No, on second thought, let's waste just a little more time.

Okay, that's enough. Here, then, is the SITREP on flight sims, present and future:

AIR WARRIOR II: The grandfather of online flight sims finally comes to CompuServe, America Online, and the World Wide Web, thanks in large part to Windows 95 and some Fancy-Dan programming from Kesmai. Dazzling new cockpit and terrain graphics, faithful flight modeling, an additional eight aircraft (bringing the total to 40, including model variants) and some groovy new offline features (including mission editors and a Finnish Air Force campaign) breathe new life into this seminal sim. The boxed version of *Air Warrior II* will be released by Interactive Magic later this year.

CONFIRMED KILL: In the wake of confusion following their split with ICI, Domark (now Eidos) says they're still on track with their own multiplayer combat flight sim. They've secured an exclusive agreement with the Total Entertainment Network to offer *CK* online. TEN's promise of high-end games and higher-end bandwidth should showcase this killer Win 95 app quite nicely. Three versions of *CK* are currently under development: "Phase 1" is the version that will initially appear on the Total Entertainment Network this summer; "Phase 2," the larger client/server application, should show up this winter; and the boxed game, which will include all the features of 1 and 2, plus network and head-to-head modem play. Great pains are being taken to ensure that *CK* will be as much fun for rookies as it is for veterans.

FALCON 4.0: Wild speculation, much of it negative and unfounded, has surrounded Spectrum HoloByte's long-awaited sequel to one of the most popular air combat sims of all time, but fear not — the people at Spectrum (or is it MicroProse?) have a few aces up their sleeves that they didn't show at May's Electronic Entertainment Expo — most notably a graphics and campaign engine that will even impress the *Back to Baghdad* camp. *Falcon 4.0* (Windows 95) puts you in the seat of an F-16C smack dab in the middle of a real-time war on the Korean peninsula. Providing highly detailed models of avionics and weapons systems, threat environments and artificial intelligence, *F4*'s terrain, aircraft, air bases, weapons, and other objects are rendered in detailed texture-mapped 3D using digitized aerial photography. The complex Campaign Manager creates a living, evolving land/air/sea battle within which pilots can make or break their careers.

FLIGHT SIMULATOR FOR WINDOWS 95: Microsoft's classic of civilian aviation makes the inevitable jump to Windows 95 with two new aircraft (the Extra 300 and Boeing 737) and more new cities and airports than you can shake a joystick at. Enhanced graphics, a friendlier interface, flying lessons, and multimedia demonstrations leave you with no excuse for not getting up there and earning your wings.

FLIGHT UNLIMITED WIN 95: Looking Glass' award-winning ode to aerobatics also leaps onto the Win 95 bandwagon with the addition of five new photo-realistic landscapes and their incomparable real-world physics. A fully comprehensive feature set lets you choose from more than 12 different cockpit and external camera views, 50 aerial obstacle courses, and more than 30 interactive flight lessons where the instructor isn't just "online," he's there in the cockpit with you! It doesn't get more real than this.

SIMCOPTER: I've always said that you can never have too many helicopter sims (or, at least, I've just started saying it) and Maxis, of all people, have come up with an interesting twist on the subject. *SimCopter* tasks you with chasing down criminals, fighting fires, and rescuing sims (you know, those hapless dopes who live in *SimCity 2000*) from all manner of disasters. The twist is that you can generate missions in cities you've created with *SimCity 2000* in a first-person 3D view never before seen in the Sim series. There are plenty of pre-built cities and missions, so you don't need *SimCity 2000* to play.

SUPER EF2000 FOR WIN 95: Rounding out the DOS defection is DID's phenomenally popular *EF2000*, the Win 95 version of which will include a host of enhancements like easy installation, automatic configuration, and simpler setup and maintenance of multi-player games on network, serial, and modem links. *Super EF2000* also incorporates features not found in the DOS version, most notably a Tactical Mission Planner (available for *EF2000* as the TACTCOM upgrade disk) and advanced online help. This version incorporates all previous *EF2000* fixes and enhancements.

SU-27 FLANKER FOR DOS: Yes, the much-anticipated DOS version of SSI's SovSim (that's *my* word — like it?) is finally here; unfortunately, so is the mysterious "Pentium Pause" that seems to plague some superfast machines. On the other hand, all of the enhancements from version 1.1 of the Win 95 *Su-27* are here, including clouds, a new sun, working mirrors, head-to-head network play, wingman messages, and missiles that no longer ghost through targets.

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After a brief sojourn on the Internet, Scott catches the three wire and ends up back where he belongs — tracking sims of all kinds.

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Maximizing Multimedia

Intel revealed its MMX technology in March, so the new multimedia enhancements for its CPUs aren't quite the latest news in the PC world anymore. But it's still big news because of the boost games will get when the first MMX-equipped Pentiums, the "P55C" chips, go into full-scale production early next year.

Intel's engineers looked at a lot of compute-intensive multimedia software over the last couple of years, analyzing the types of data that were used and the calculations needed. Their goal was to make an enhanced Pentium that could handle multimedia processing in fewer CPU clock cycles than a regular Pentium. They wanted a chip fast enough at multimedia processing to replace many special-purpose chips, and one that would have more "headroom" available for other processing.

The MMX enhancements add eight new 64-bit data registers to the Pentium architecture and 57 new CPU instructions to execute on them. The new instructions perform "single instruction, multiple data" processing, a type of parallel processing that lets one instruction do as many as eight additions, subtractions, multiplications or comparisons at a time. On average, an MMX Pentium only has to execute about a third as many instructions for multimedia operations as an unenhanced Pentium.

One of the cleverest new MMX features is having the choice of either wrap-around or saturating math operations. To get a better idea of why this matters, think about how you'd render an image of a flashlight beam shining on a wall. Say the pixels in the wall have already been colored according to the texture of the wall and how bright the other lights in the room are. To add in the effect of the flashlight's beam, you'll need to add extra brightness to each pixel.

Here's the catch: if a pixel on the wall is brightly-colored to begin with, then its color components are already very close to the maximum value a field can hold, and the result of the addition might be greater than the maximum value. Standard PC arithmetic just throws away the leftmost bit of the result, so it "wraps around" to a very small value. In regular math, that'd be like adding 7 to 98 and coming away with a result of 5.

With saturating arithmetic, the result of an overflow is always the maximum value of the field. Now it's like adding 7 to 98 and getting 99, and that's the result you'd choose most of the time. After all, what could be more white than white? It saves programmers from having to test the result of each addition and correct the result if an overflow occurred.

But MMX really wins by eliminating conditional branching operations, the instructions that tell the CPU, "if an overflow didn't occur, skip ahead of the instructions that would load the maximum pixel value." The Pentium is always trying to look ahead and execute several instructions at the same time. But since a conditional branch instruction might send it off on either of two different paths, the CPU has to freeze until it knows which branch to take. Because the MMX technology helps to keep the CPU's pipeline flowing along, cutting out those conditional branches turns out to be a big advantage.

Another clever new MMX feature is the parallel comparison instructions, which help to speed up video operations that combine two different image sources, like overlaying and chroma-keying effects. These instructions directly convert pixel values into binary bitmasks, which can be used to select between the two image sources through standard logical operations like "AND" and "OR." Once again, MMX processing wins in two ways: by handling as many as eight pixels with a single instruction, and by eliminating the need for conditional branch instructions that would stall the CPU's processing pipeline.

Tim Victor

You've probably already heard a lot about Intel's new Pentium chip that promises to make games and multimedia work better than ever, but exactly what does MMX do?

For the sake of compatibility, MMX-enhanced Pentiums are expected to go in the same kind of socket as the current generation of Pentiums, so they won't require new motherboards or chipsets. And they'll power up with the MMX extensions disabled, so they won't need a new BIOS either.

Intel also chose to "alias" the MMX registers with the floating-point registers of a Pentium's built-in math coprocessor, so the standard floating-point "FSAV" and "FRSTR" operations will save and restore whichever register set is currently active. A multitasking operating system like Windows or OS/2 has to save a copy of all the data in the CPU's registers when switching from one task to another, then restore the register data for the task it's switching to. Aliasing the two register sets means a program can use either MMX or floating point operations. It also means operating systems don't have to be specifically rewritten to let MMX-aware programs multitask with each other.

Of course, Intel's MMX extensions aren't the only cool new processor technology around. Video cards based on the second generation of consumer 3D graphics chips should be out any day now, including the Matrox Mystique and a whole raft of boards that use S3's hot new ViRGE chip. And companies like Cyrix and Sun Microsystems have also developed multimedia-enhanced CPUs. But the MMX-enhanced CPUs are coming from Intel, and in this industry, that carries a lot of weight.

Microsoft, Macromedia, Adobe, and IBM have already pledged to support the new extensions in their software, and hardware companies like ATI, Creative Labs, Yamaha, S3, and Cirrus Logic are planning to leverage MMX technology to improve the performance of their hardware products. Nothing's ever a sure bet in the PC world, but MMX technology might be as close to a sure thing as it ever gets.

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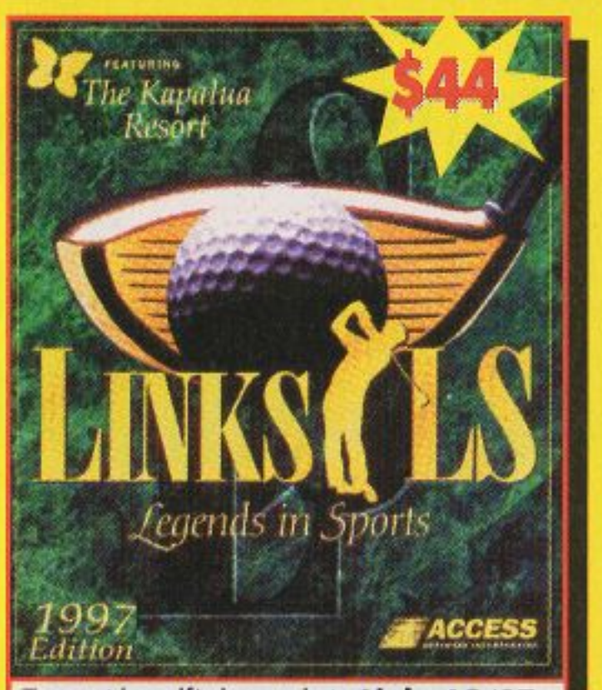

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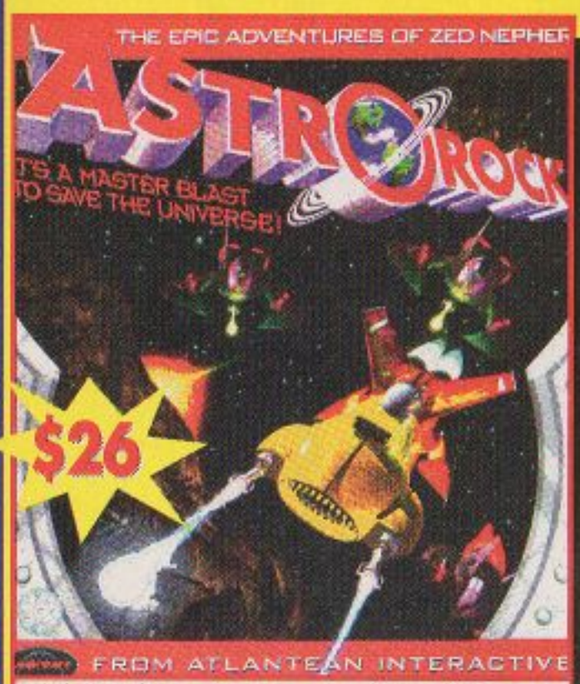

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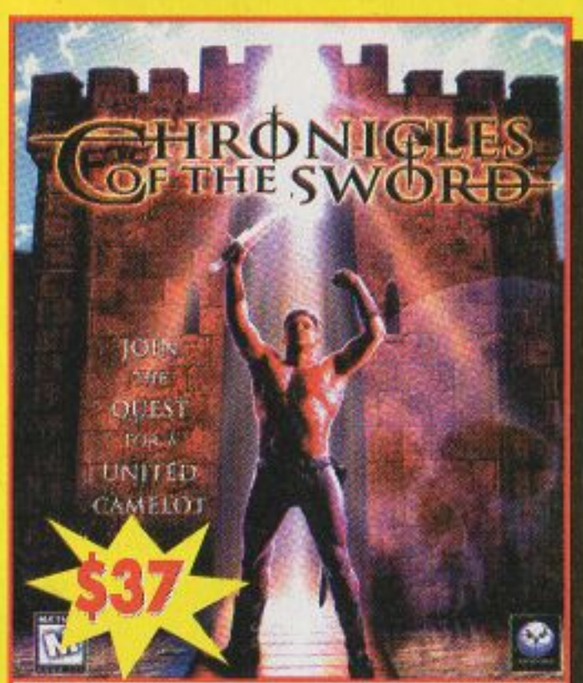

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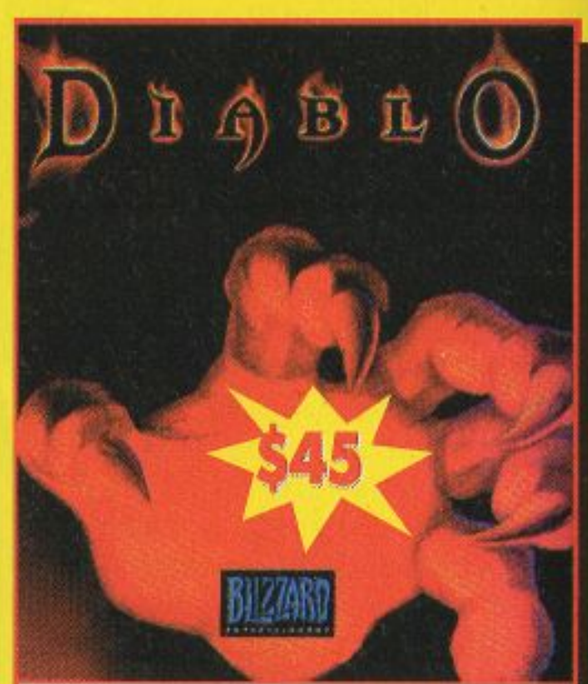

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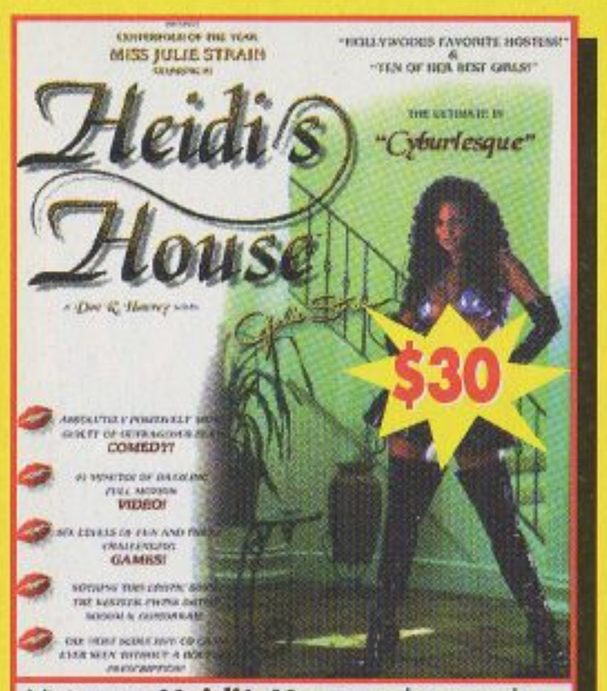

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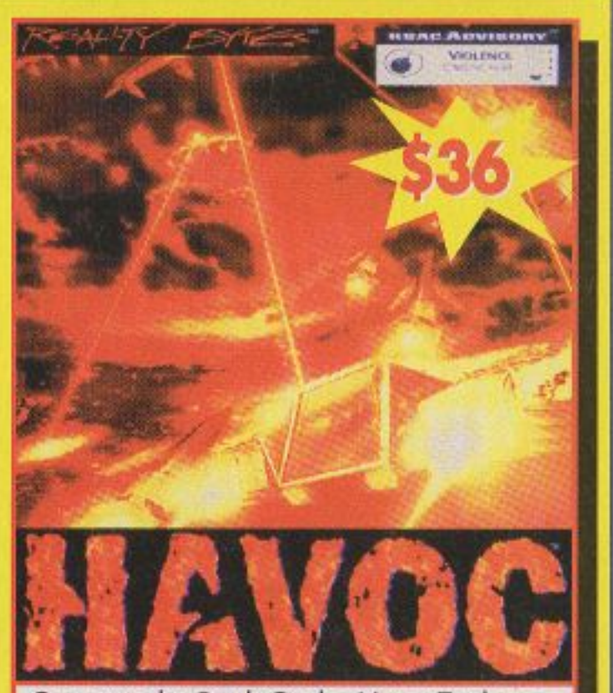

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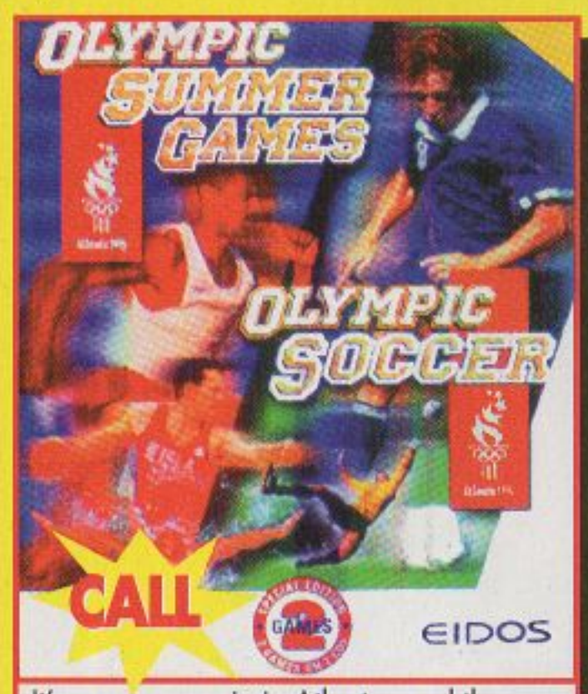

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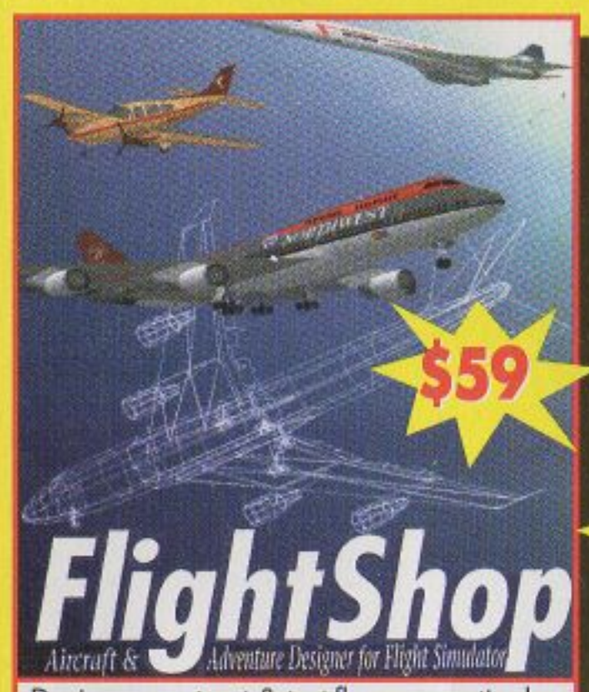

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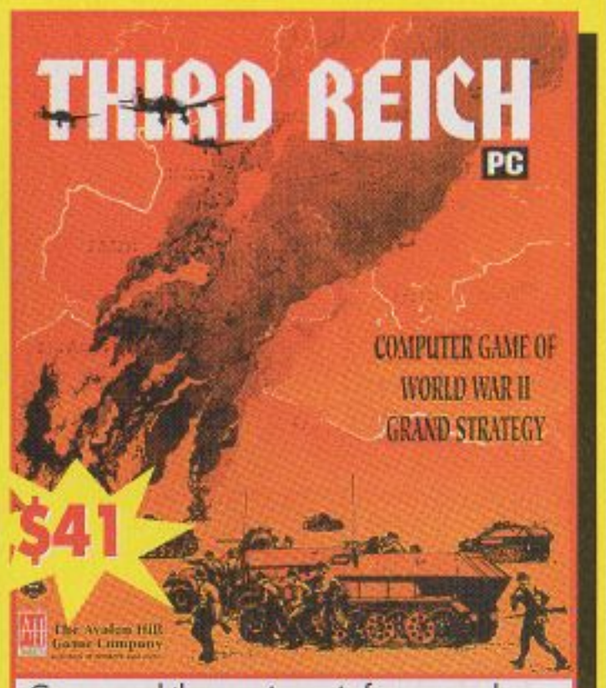

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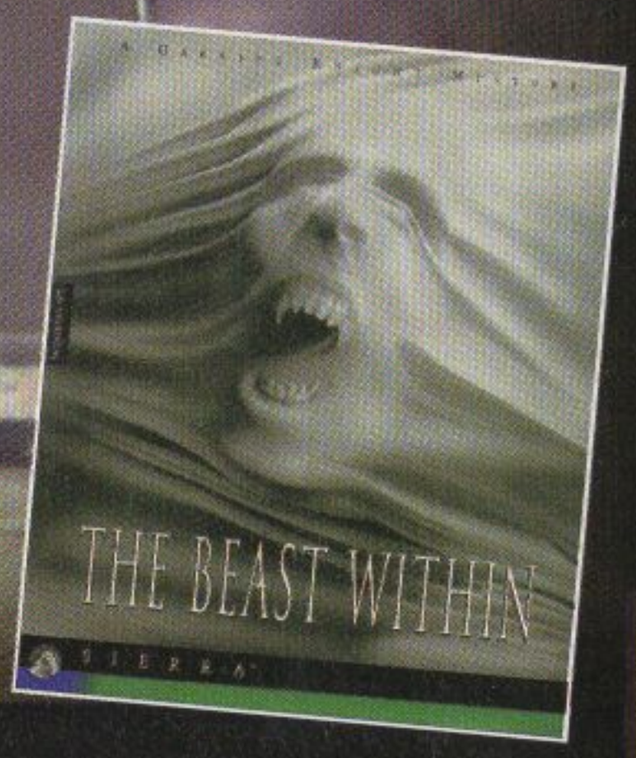

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Quake

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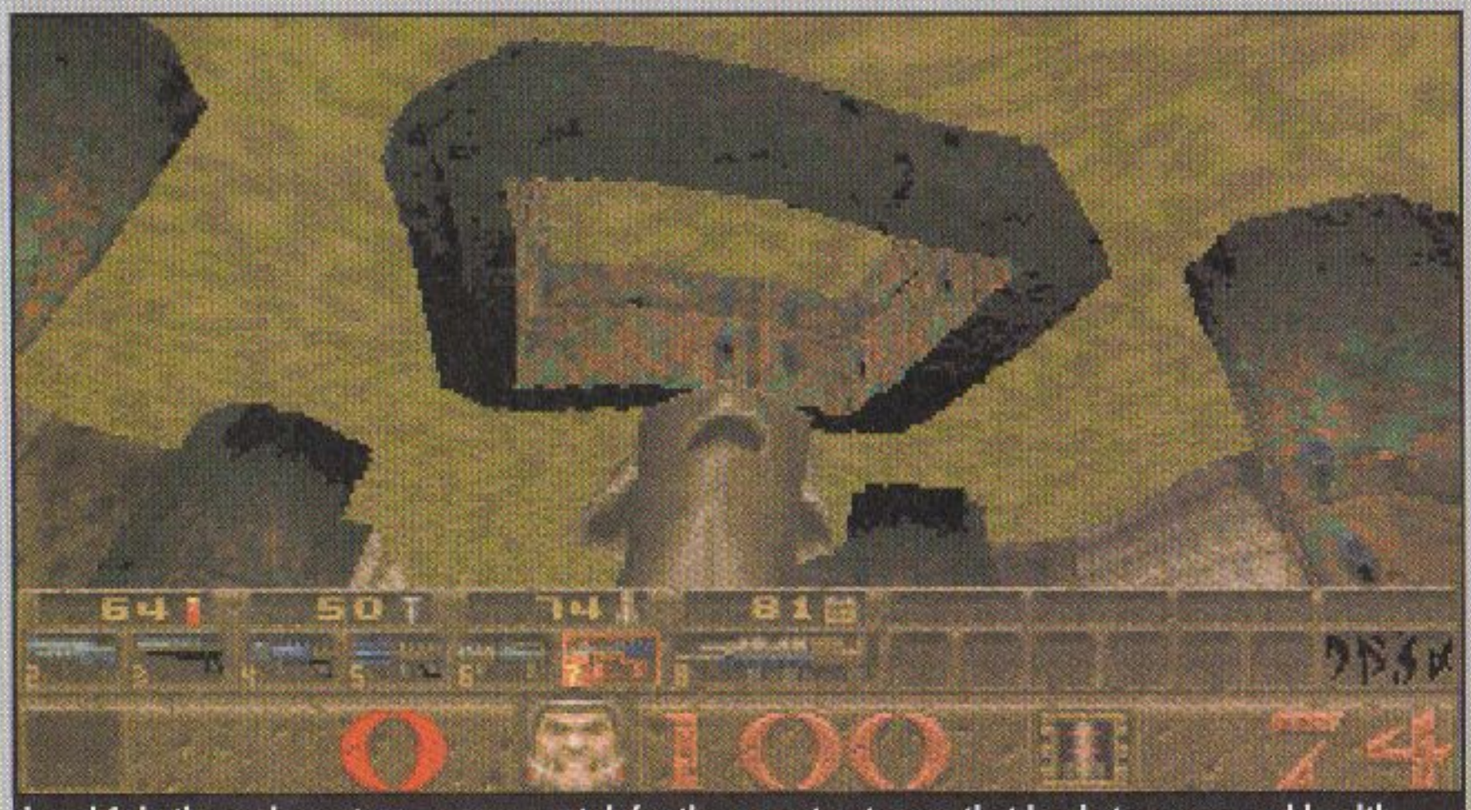
Get in there and shoot some mutts!

After years of violent rumbling, the shareware version of id's most anticipated title has burst onto the scene! If you're in the middle of an aftershock and can't find your way, here are the latest and greatest tips, cheats, and secrets for id's latest masterpiece as only *PCG* can do it.

Mission 1: The Slipgate Complex

1) From your starting location, you can see a flashing panel on your left. Jump onto the shelf, then shoot the panel at the end where you'll find shotgun shells.
2) Once you've made it outside and found the bridge, jump into the water just to the right of the bridge, and you'll find a tunnel with a health pack and a lift that leads to armor.
3) After extending the bridge across the trench of radioactive waste, you'll find a red icon inset along the left-hand wall. Shoot this icon to open a secret room that holds a double-barreled shotgun.
4) Before you enter the darkened path that slopes downward in a spiral, take note of the oddly textured wall along the entrance. Shoot this wall and pick up a Quad-damage power-up.
5) As you descend the sloping spiral,

Level 1: After extending the bridge over the radioactive sludge, shoot the icon to open a door.



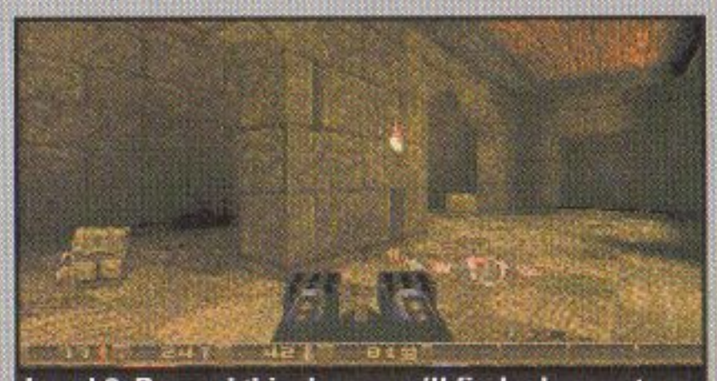
Level 1: In the underwater passage, watch for the secret entrance that leads to ammo and health.

Level 1: At the third switch on the sloping path, you'll be able to spot another secret room.

stop at the third switch and look at the central column. You'll see a secret room with three stairs leading to it. Jump on top of the ledge, then on top of the pyramid light, then on to the switch itself. You'll have to position yourself just right, so take your time. Now leap to the lowest step. The room contains a 100 percent health bonus.
6) Grab the biosuit hidden behind the column at the lowest landing of the sloping spiral and leap into the water. You'll find a tunnel that leads you to this levels final secret.

Mission 2: Castle of the Damned

1) From the start location, you'll see a bridge. Jump into the water at the right side, and you'll see a block wall. Shoot the wall, and you'll find the level's first secret.
2) Follow the elevated path until you reach a U-shaped intersection. You'll see an armor power-up on a raised platform. Shoot the red icon to activate steps that lead to the platform.
3) Once you've opened the door with the silver key, examine the room for an odd-looking texture on the back of a column that opens a passage to reveal a Quad-damage power-up.



Level 2: Beyond this door, you'll find a loose stone in a column revealing a quad-damage power-up.

Level 3: Head to the very back of this room and feel along the walls to discover a hidden underground cave.

Mission 3: The Necropolis

1) At the first bridge, jump off the left side and go through the small entrance. Shoot the wall to reveal a new passage with rockets and health pack.
2) In the water-filled area surrounding the gold key, there's a wall with an underwater hole beneath it. To reach it, move from the entrance forward to the other side of the cavern and feel along the flat walls until your body dips slightly.

Level 4: Shooting these glowing icons will reveal a secret platform filled with armor.

move into the lava on the right side of the platform. As you begin to sink in the lava, you'll notice a small opening that contains a Quad-damage power-up.
2) Shoot the odd-looking walls near the exit teleporter to reveal a secret room with nailgun ammo.

Level 5: At the start of the level, you can hop into the water on the right side of the bridge to reveal this passage.

Mission 4: The Grisly Grotto

1) At the circular staircase, you'll see two circular markings high on the walls. Shoot these to lower a secret area.
2) When you reach the water, slip below the surface and turn toward the wall on the right. Here you'll find a small opening containing a rocket pack.
3) Deeper into the level, you'll reach a large room with panels set into the floor. Trigger all of these panels and passages on either side will open. Enter each opening and trigger both switches (you'll receive a message after the second switch). Return to the first water-filled room you encountered to enter an underwater cave leading to the secret level portal.

Mission 8: (Secret Level) Ziggurat Vertigo

1) After picking up the Pentagram of Protection, face the small pyramid and jump to the narrow wall directly across from you. Run along the narrow wall and jump to reach the raised platform where the ogre was standing guard.
3) From the main entrance, go right and enter the room with a small torch on a pillar. Stand under the pillar and jump straight up. A wall will open for access to an armor power-up.
4) Enter the first teleport portal from the rear to receive a valuable Quad-damage power-up.
5) As you reach the end-level archway, watch for an odd-looking wall. Shoot the wall to score an armor power-up.

Level 5: Jump into the water and aim for the wall just to the left of the door. You'll find an underwater tunnel that leads to a mega-health.

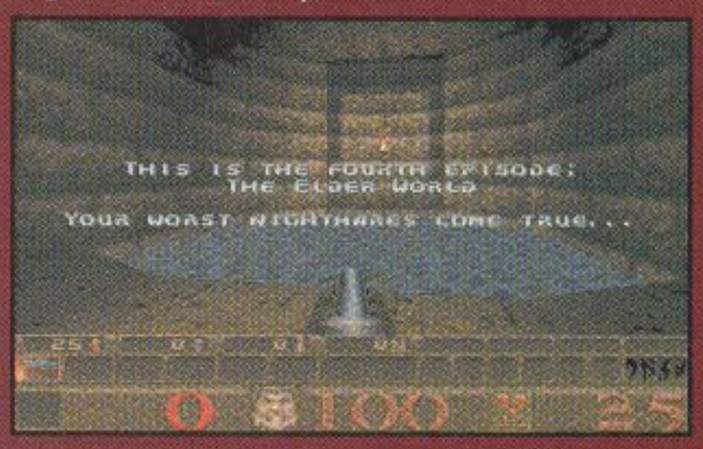
CHEATS AND TIPS
FOR THE CONSOLE

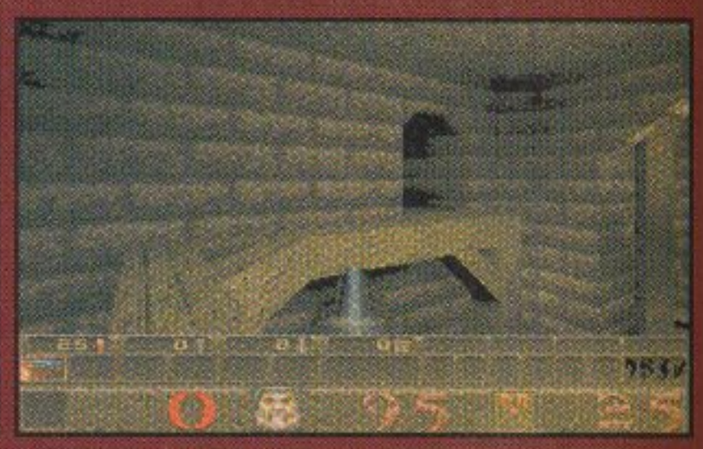
Though id claims the shareware version of *Quake* doesn't have any cheats codes to make life easier for unsuspecting warriors, we've uncovered a mountain of codes that can enhance the experience, or just give you a little help when needed. To use the codes, go to the options menu and select the console mode. Then type in the code you need and return to playing the game.

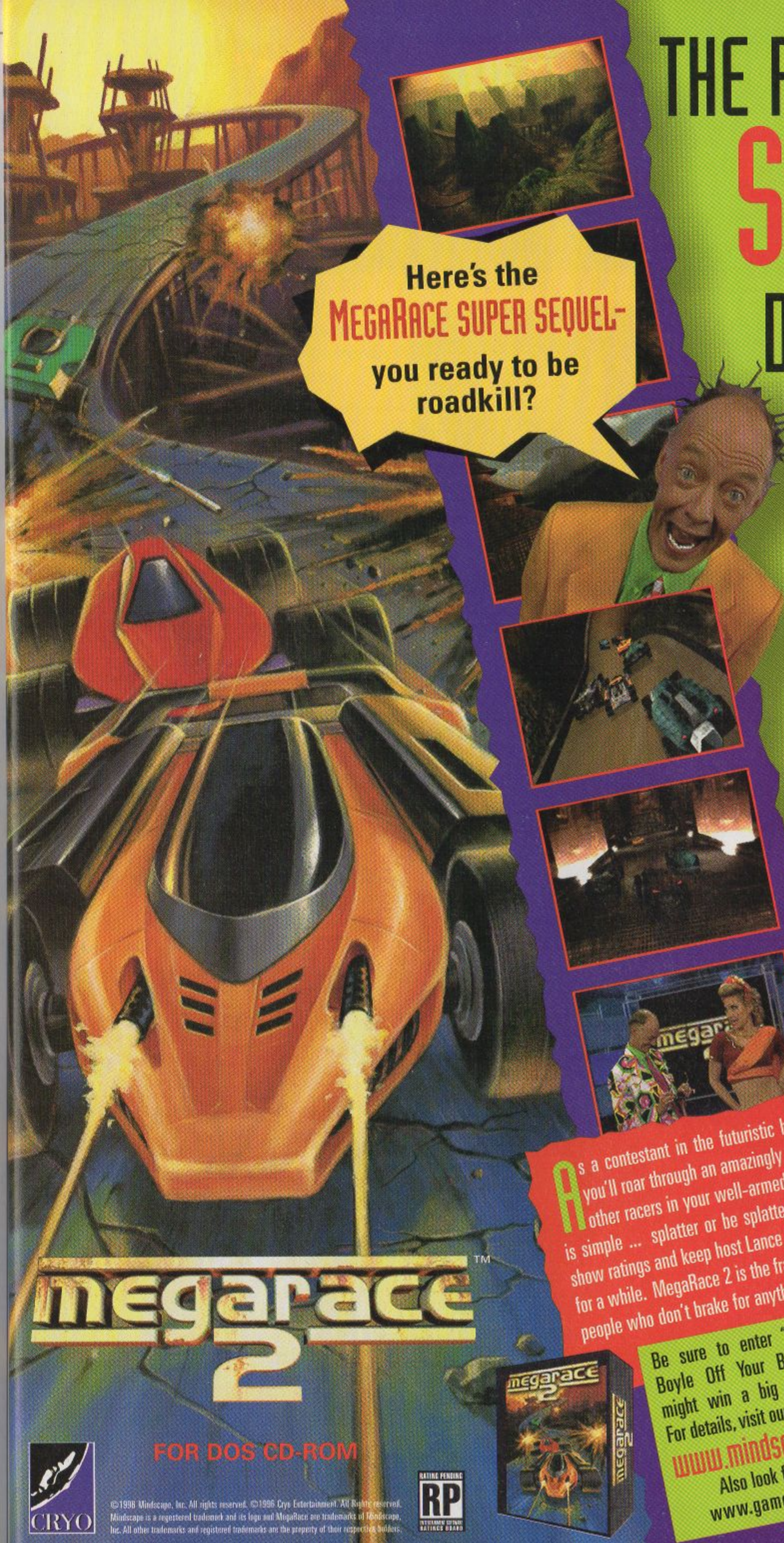
God – God mode
Impulse 1 – Shotgun
Impulse 2 – Super shotgun
Impulse 3 – Nailgun
Impulse 4 – Super nailgun (Perferator)
Impulse 5 – Grenade launcher
Impulse 6 – Rocket launcher
Impulse 7 – Lightning gun
Impulse 9 – Add all weapons, full ammo
Fly – Allows you to defy gravity
Noclip – No clipping mode

NIGHTMATE LEVEL SELECTION

After stepping through any of the portals, you'll have your choice of episode selection. To access the nightmare difficulty setting, step through the final episode staircase, "The Elder Worlds", and jump into the water using the spacebar to buoy yourself for a moment. Move backwards until you're against the wall and descend into the water. You'll drop onto a beam that leads to the nightmare level warp.







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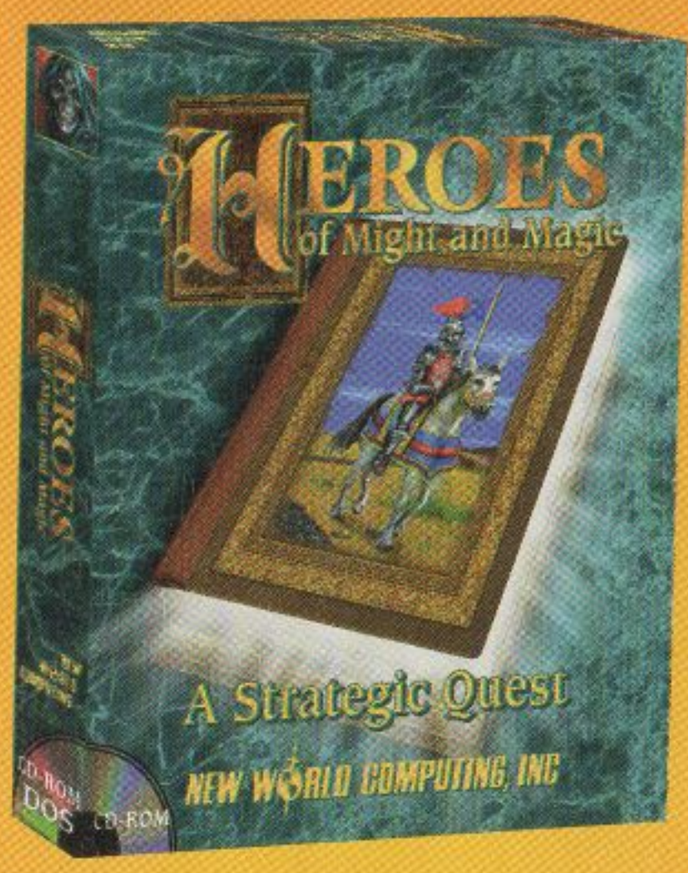

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CG RATED

WarCraft II: Beyond the Dark Portal

Who summoned me?

Like a lot of recent add-on discs, the missions in *WarCraft II: Beyond the Dark Portal* are much tougher than those in the original. So here's some hints, straight from Blizzard headquarters, to help you regain the Dark Portal and lay waste to those dastardly humans. But don't worry; next month, we help out the humans!

Slayer of the Shadowmoon

Guard the Death Knight — you will need him later in the mission. Rescue everyone on the map in order to have more forces in the final battle. Upgrade axes as much as possible after capturing the lumber mill. Send the weakest troops into battle first, so the Death Knights in the pen will use all of their magic on Death Coils. Send in the rest of your troops as soon as possible to finish the battle. You don't have to wipe out all the enemies, so avoid as many skeleton packs as possible.

The Skull of Gul'dan

Rescue Korgath Bladefist and the Axethrowers to the south. Gain control of the town to the East and upgrade to towers as quickly as possible. Next, use a catapult and a crew of Ogre Magi to work your way to the North end of the Bonechewer's town. Use firetraps on the land bridges — this will take out a lot of enemies. Then use catapults on those towers.

Thunderlord and Bonechewer

Build up forces to secure the Northeast and Southeast gold mines, building your town in a circle to protect from attacks. Take the Northeast gold mine first. Upgrade your Blacksmith all the way and build up units. Position troops to attack the Bonechewers to the south. Then move troops to take out Thunderlords in the Northwest corner from the Southwest.

The Rift Awakened

You must move quickly in this mission. Build and upgrade Teron's buildings first — his hits points are stronger than other Death Knights. Destroy Green in the Northwest corner. Quickly wipe them out and take over the town. As soon as possible, move south and attack Violet. Build up your forces as much as possible to attack Blue — the mission's most difficult enemy. Blue has lots of units and towers.

The humans make their first appearance in "The Rift Awakened," the fourth orcish mission.

You'll have to circle the wagons early in the third orcish mission, but once you hold off the initial attacks, it's time to take the offensive.

Clearing the passes will buy you some valuable breathing time in "The Dragons of Blackrock Spire."

The Dragons of Blackrock Spire

First, destroy the encampment to the North. Build as many archer towers as possible to defend against Gryphons. Take fully upgraded Ogres to the top right corner of the map. Go North past the rocks, then towards right corner of the map. Move as quickly as possible until you find the Dragon roost. Ogre Magi work well in this mission.

Towers and archers are the keys to fending off the gryphons in "New Stormwind."

New Stormwind

In this level, it is important to build archer towers to defend against Gryphons. You also should capture the gold mine directly to the North. Destroy Green to the West. Be prepared to take out air units, because Green has a lot of Gryphons. The town is surrounded by rocks, so use Sappers for an air attack on the town. If you need more gold, mine at Green. Then move North to attack Blue.

The Seas of Azeroth

Although there is no need to destroy Blue, you will need to defend against their invasions from the South. Build five shipyards as soon as possible. You will need to capture the gold mines on the

In the "Seas of Azeroth," you must build up your troops so they can capture the gold mines.

island. Destroy the Green navy, but watch out for subs.

Assault on Kul Tiras

Put guards in a transport and move units West towards the farms on the island. Make sure to have battleships escort your transport. Be on the look out for a sub hiding near an oil patch. Unload your units and build a town. Upgrade as many units as possible. Take battleships to sea and let them be destroyed. Battleships are no longer needed in this mission, so they are just using up food. Finish destroying Kul Tiras naval shipyards and ships. Settle the landing area *quickly*. Put towers on either side of the bridge to protect your town. Move your troops to destroy the town to the north. Be aggressive as possible the entire level. Don't go slow!

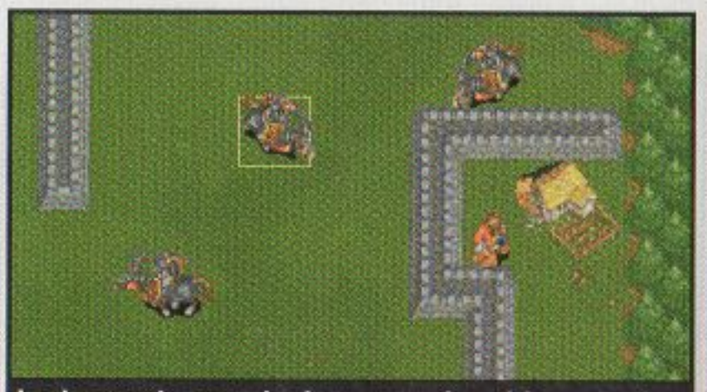
The Tomb of Sargeras

In this mission it is important to protect your Death Knight and rescue the Axethrowers — you can't win the level without them. Explore the entire Northeast and every encampment — farms, shipyards and foundries. Build a boat and transport your units North. Explore islands for rescuable units, especially more Axethrowers. The Daemon is located in the Northwest. Use Death Knights and Axethrowers to destroy the Daemon.

In the ninth mission, "The Tomb of Sargeras," you must recover the Jeweled Scepter. From this dock, construct a transport to continue your progress.

Alterac

Capture the gold mine to the North of White, and then move in to destroy the town. Capture all remaining gold mines. Make Red your next target, and then rescue the Mage. Be sure to kill all the Green troops on Alterac island.



In the tenth orc mission, rescuing this mage is the key to victory.

The Eye of Dalaran

You start on an island in the West and are attacked almost immediately by air and sea. Maneuver all your destroyers and battleships north and destroy all enemy towers. Once the towers have been destroyed, transport troops inland to attack ground units. Head East to capture White's Northern gold mine. Once White is contained, then destroy Dalaran's town. Use catapults and Death Knights to attack the Northeast mage tower.

In the eleventh mission, don't lose your peon, or it's all over.

The Dark Portal

The key to surviving this mission is being quick. When the mission begins, capture the gold mine to South. Use Bloodlust and Haste with Deathwing (800 hit points). Build your town to the South of the starting point. First attack Green, and then Purple and White. Move out on to the sea to take out Blue.

The Dark Portal awaits those few orcish warlords who can survive to the 12th mission.

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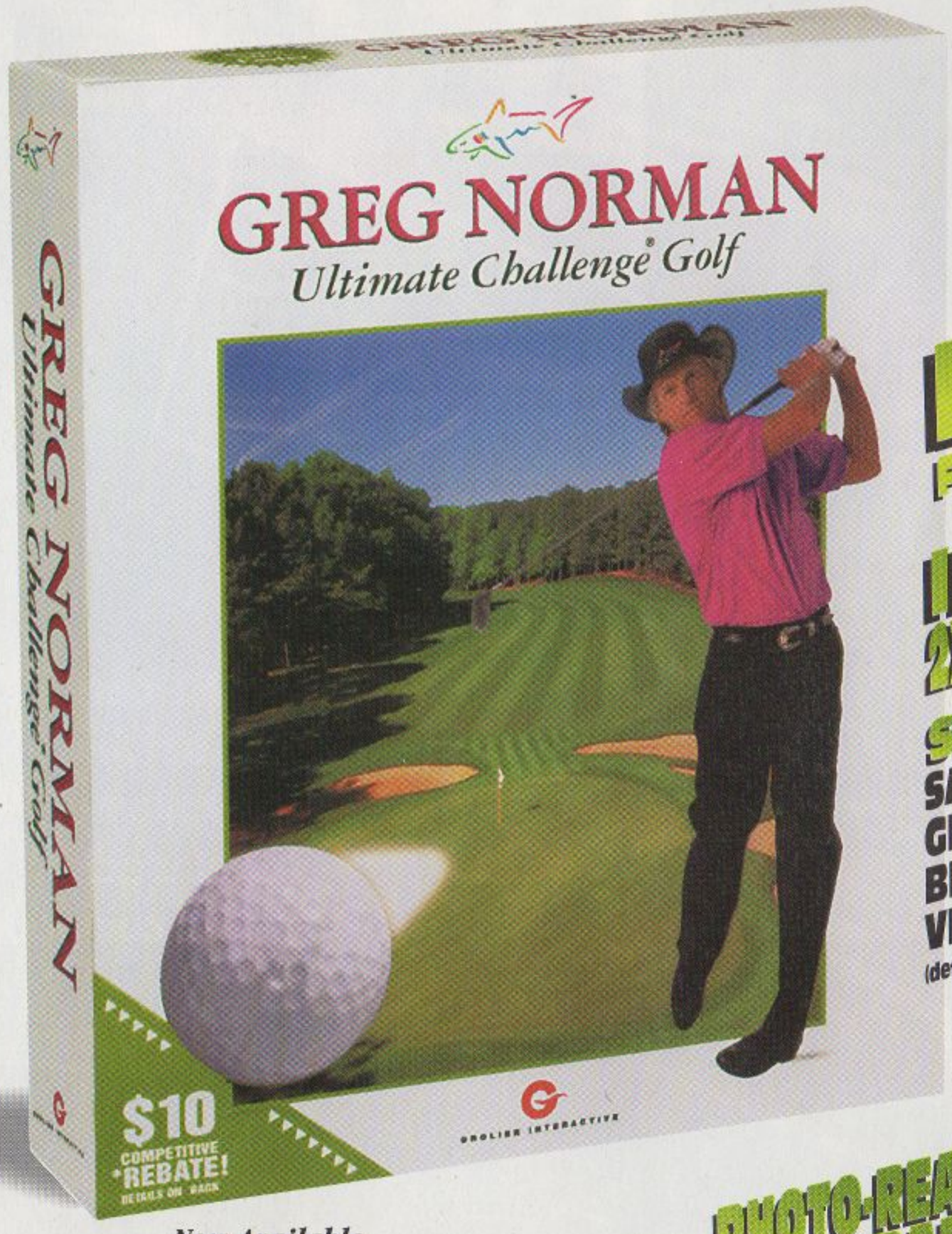

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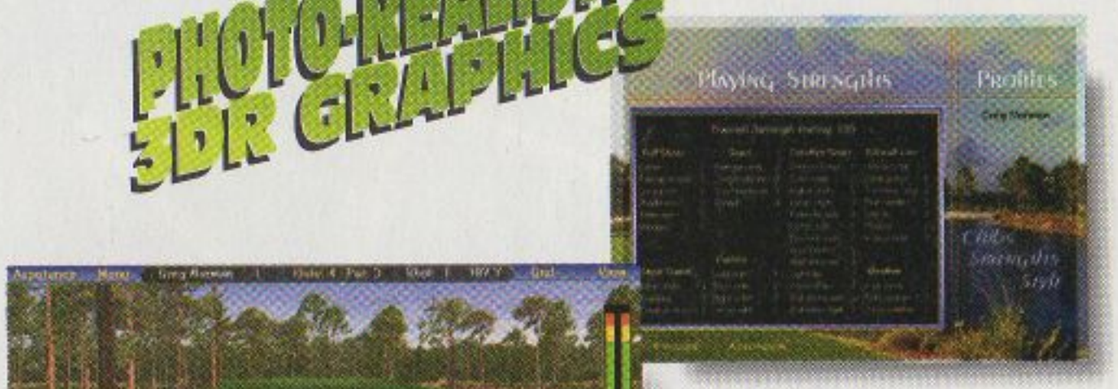

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PC CD-ROM

Product Information Number 133

Terra Nova, Part Two

Helpful hints for pirate-pounding.

Here's the second installment of mission guides for you who are desperately striving to save New Earth from the pirates and the Terrans. Because there's so many missions, look for the rest next month, or visit our website at *http://www.pcgamer.com* to get the whole story now.

Mission 12

There is nothing you can do to prevent Gags from being injured. You are not penalized in any way for this mission. Head to the pickup point when the dropship pilot instructs you to do so. Press * to return to the main menu.

Mission 13

As soon as you drop down, go straight in to the compound and give Gags the command to fix the telescope. When he's done, give your entire squad the Stay in Location command, and let the five groups of enemies come to you.

Mission 13: Once the scope is rewired, ready the team for a heavy assault from Hog forces.

The group coming from the southeast is the most dangerous, since that is the Hegemony demolitions squad. Don't get distracted if another group arrives while you're still fighting the demolitions squad. Make sure all Hegemony demolitions are dead before attacking a new group of enemies. Don't worry about giving your squadmates grenades, since the telescope is tough enough to survive the explosions.

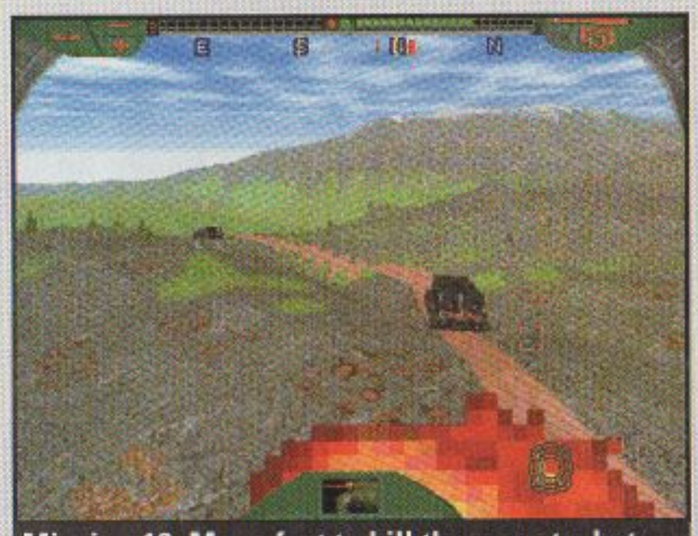
Mission 14

After the drop, head northwest, avoiding the road. Go to a location about 100 meters south of the southeast platform. Snipe at the fuel tanks with a particle beam from the maximum distance possible. Proceed clockwise around the fuel tank platforms, staying at maximum particle beam range, and keeping your squadmates with you to deal with any enemies that run up the hills at you. When you have destroyed 16 of the fuel tanks, head to the pickup, staying far to the north of the platforms.

Mission 15

Select a squad with at least one recon specialist, and don't give any of your squadmates grenade launchers. Your squadmates will spot enemies directly to the west as you land, but ignore them and move south. Keep your squad with you and move around in a clockwise direction, moving south from the drop, then west, then across the village. Starting at the corner of the map and moving around will lessen your chances of being flanked. Keep your squad close, and the recon specialist will be especially handy to inform you of incoming enemies. Press * to return to the main menu.

Mission 15: To keep the town from becoming an inferno, don't arm your team with grenades.



Mission 16: Move fast to kill the escorts, but avoid using grenades to keep the trucks intact.

Mission 16

To win this mission, move and move fast from the moment you drop down. If you can, take along weapon specialists in scout suits. Don't give them grenade launchers, since they might accidentally destroy the trucks during the fight. As soon as you drop, head south down the road and try to get to the trucks as fast as possible. Don't keep them in formation, as they will have to shoot around you at an already cluttered target. Set them to Aggressive Attack mode. After you have destroyed the guards and the trucks have turned around, be wary of a patrol that may hit the pickup point just as you return. They are not tough, but you need to be careful, or you'll lose the trucks in the crossfire.

Mission 17

As soon as you drop down, head south down the road. Kill the pair of fleeing enemy soldiers as quickly as possible, and take the right fork in the road, moving as fast as possible. If you can reach the truck before it gets to the hills to the south, there will be fewer enemies

Mission 14: Taking out those Hegemony fuel tanks is a tall order, but if you strike at the base closest to your landing site and move through the following bases in a clockwise order, you'll take them out.

to deal with. Don't take any heavy suits, as they will guarantee that the truck will reach the hills, and the reinforcements there. Once you have rescued the truck and it has turned around, give two of your squadmates orders to follow the truck. Take the third squadmate and head back up the road ahead of the truck, killing any enemies before they have a chance to attack and damage the truck. Press * to return to the main menu.

Mission 18

Take the Mine Layer as your ASF during Outfitting, and take at least one Particle Beam. When you drop, station your squadmates at the pickup point, or some other area about 300m from the scope. Give them a Stay in Location order, and then go looking for the bad guys. Watch out for the heavy turret on the near corner of the platform. It will start firing missiles from long range and you will need to keep moving to avoid them. As soon as you are spotted by the enemies, turn tail and lead them back to your squadmates. Drop mines if you've got them. Run behind your squadmates, turn and take the enemies on from behind your own lines. Rest, recharge your armor, get repairs if you need them, and go out again. There are 4 groups in the area (besides those on the scope itself). Two of them may come together to chase you, so be ready. If the heavy turrets are posing too much of a problem, use your particle beam on them, as its range will let you stand far enough away to evade missiles while still killing the turret. Do not attempt to move straight to the scope, as you will be surrounded on at least three sides. Once you have disposed of the four moving patrols, move to the platform, take out the base guards and any remaining turrets, and have your demolitions expert destroy the telescope.

Mission 17: By forcing a firefight before the Hogs can reach the valley, you might be able to save the truck.

Mission 19

The accident with the dropship is pre-scripted, and the mission for which you are briefed never happens. Also, during the escape from the prison, there is no way to prevent Schuyler's death. This is also pre-scripted, and you will not be penalized for it in any way.The pickup point is 480 meters directly to the north of where you start. As soon as the mission begins, call for the dropship and run as fast as you can directly north. Do *not* stop to fight the prison guards. Give your squadmates continuous commands to go to the pickup point using ALT-P, since they may get drawn into combats. Press * to return to the main menu.

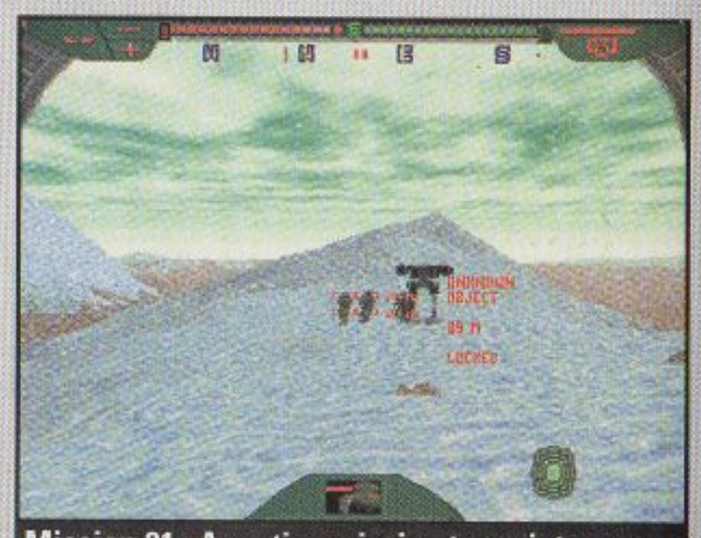
Mission 19: Escaping the Hegemony clones is your only concern in this mission — there's no hope of saving Schuler. As soon as you're in your PBA, make a run for the dropship and don't look back.

Mission 20

The keys to winning this mission are extreme stealth, and shooting the station from its unpatrolled west side. Despite the troop deployment depicted in the briefing, there are no patrols to the west of the base. If you take a scout suit, armed with a particle beam, EM Emitters and an EM Dampener, you should be able to sneak westward. Start by moving south for a few seconds, then go west until you pass the western edge of the circle marked Patrol Area on your map. Then move north until you are due west of the enclosure. Change your view to the highest zoom level, and move eastward until you are within 180 meters of the sensor station. Target lock on it, and take it out with the particle beam. This will alert the base sentries and drones to your presence, but you are out of range of the base turrets and if you move south immediately, the guards will not be able to catch you in your scout suit. The drones will follow, but they can be taken down later, at a safe distance. Summon the dropship, head south for about 15 seconds and then cut across to the pickup point.

Mission 21

Because this mission is an ambush, the best way to survive is to forgo the EM Emitters and Scout Suits, and load up with missile launchers, particle beams and grenades. Give some to your squadmates too. After the drop head cautiously north. As you crest the first hill, start to be on the lookout for enemies. As soon as you spot any of the forces to the east or west, or the PBAs to the north, open fire with the missile launcher at the closest group. Then, when you hear the ambush message, give the squad a Go to Pickup order and run for it. Using this technique will get you out, with your squad intact. Press * to return to the main menu.



Mission 21: A routine mission turns into an ambush! Flee to the dropship!

Mission 22

First, take a Mine Layer as your ASF. The downed ship is located in a valley about 150 meters north of the small lake, directly on the search area line. Get your squad to it as fast as you can, taking out any the drones you encounter on the way. When you get to the ship, place a ring of mines around it at a distance about 50 meters. Deploy each squadmate separately to the north or south of the ship, but at least 25 meters away. This will ensure that shots that miss them won't take out the ship. Wait for the enemies from this position, and give your squadmates the Stay At Location command. There is one squad coming in from the north, one from the south, and one from south/southeast. Use missile launchers and distance weapons whenever possible. Do not let a firefight happen within 30-50 meters of the ship, as the cross fire will kill the Clansman as surely as any deliberate enemy attack.

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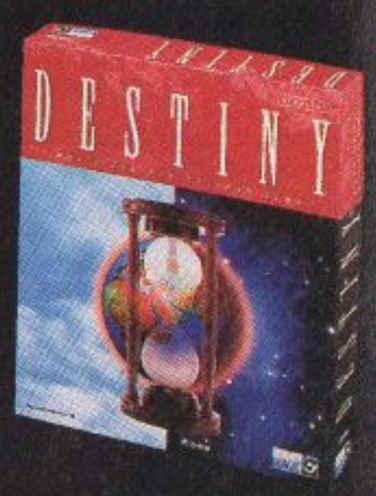

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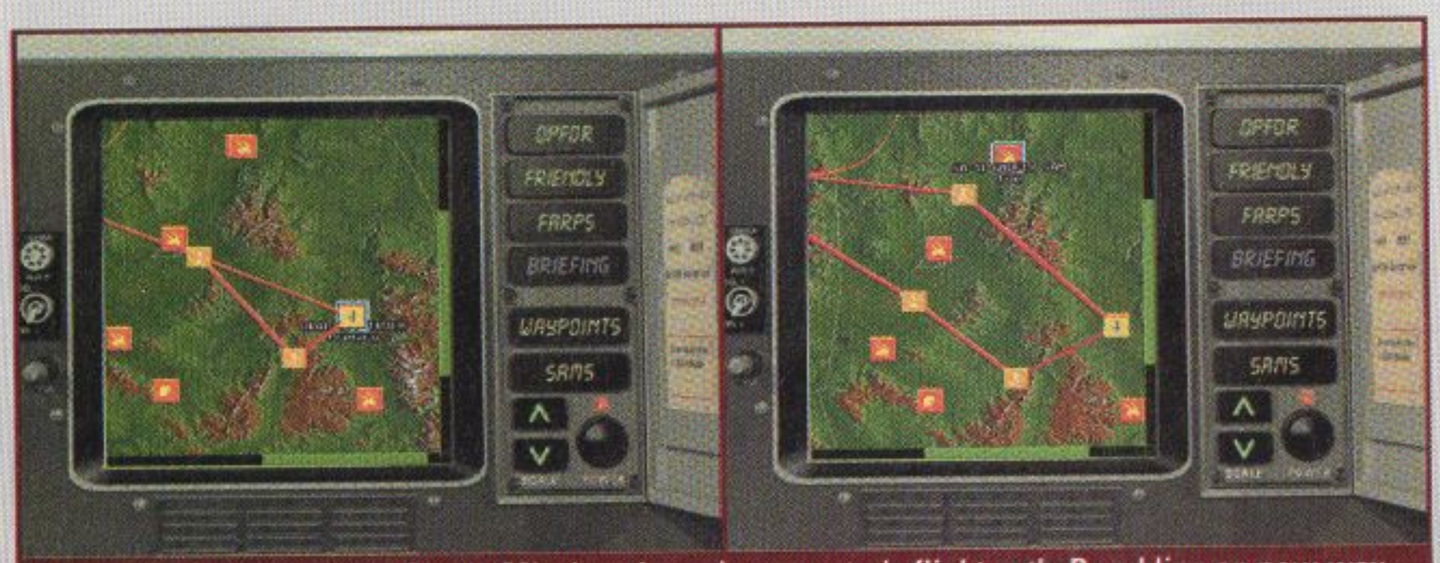
Product Information Number 178

AH-64D Longbow

Give 'em Hellfires

This amazing new chopper sim from Jane's Combat Simulations is painstakingly realistic, which means you're in control of the most sophisticated weapon on the battlefield. Unfortunately, it also means you're vastly outnumbered by forces that really want to ruin your day, so victory isn't exactly guaranteed. If you've seen that wicked death-scene one time too many, check out these tips.

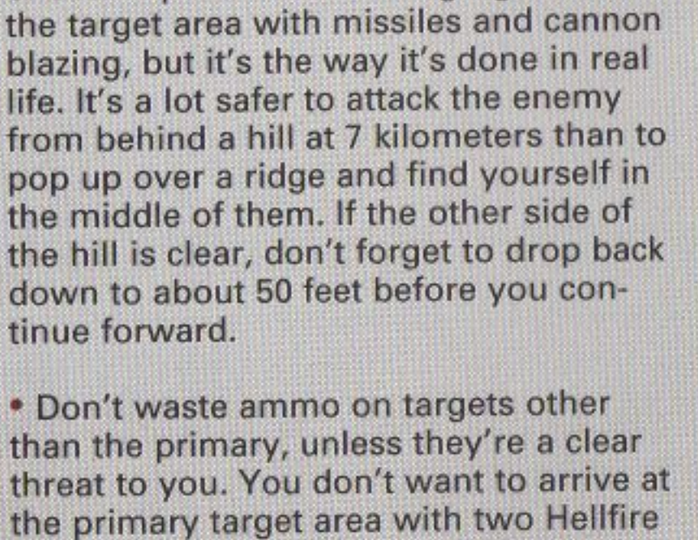


In this randomly generated Single Mission, the computer hands you a flight path that takes you directly over an enemy airfield and three SA-11 SAM launchers — twice. Not exactly the optimal route, eh? You don't have to use the computer's flight path. By adding on new waypoint and moving the others, you can create a path that takes you between the SAM sites. Hug the ground and go slow, and they won't even spot you, much less shoot you down.

The Longbow's greatest advantage is its ability to take advantage of terrain, dipping into valleys and hiding behind hills and ridges. Don't count on the computer to give you the best route to the target; if you always use the flight plan handed to you, you're eventually going to run into trouble you could've avoided. Spend a little time studying the map you get before the mission; if you see a way to take better advantage of the terrain, add your own waypoints and drag them where you want 'em. For example, if the suggested waypoints have you flying directly toward the target over half a dozen SAM and AAA sites, you'd be crazy not to alter the flight plan. You may find there's a long ridge line near your flight path that will let you travel most of the way toward the target under some serious cover.

• Taking advantage of the terrain also means flying low and slow (keep your speed at an unexciting 70 knots, and maintain an altitude of about 50 feet). The Longbow isn't a fighter, so you're not going to be able to outrun or outmaneuver enemy missiles. The idea is not to be spotted by the enemy in the first place. In most missions, you'll be able to take your time, so creep up on your target. As you approach the primary target area, slow to a stop (or nearly so) just behind each hill crest, then "bob up," increasing your altitude just enough to give the radar dome atop the Longbow a good look at what's in front of you. Take a slow, cautious approach, and you'll get the primary target on your radar screen at the longest possible range. This may not seem as glamorous or action-packed as blowing right over the target area with missiles and cannon blazing, but it's the way it's done in real life. It's a lot safer to attack the enemy from behind a hill at 7 kilometers than to pop up over a ridge and find yourself in the middle of them. If the other side of the hill is clear, don't forget to drop back down to about 50 feet before you continue forward.

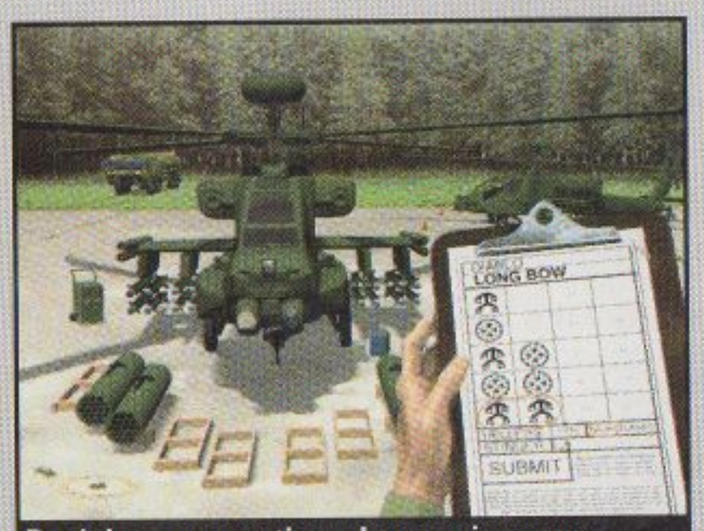
• Don't waste ammo on targets other than the primary, unless they're a clear threat to you. You don't want to arrive at the primary target area with two Hellfire missiles left and find four tanks and two hardened bunkers you have to take out in order to succeed in the mission. On the way to the primary, don't shoot at anything other than SAM and AAA sites you're sure you can't avoid. If you absolutely can't resist the temptation of a lone tank sitting right in your path, have your wingman take it out. Once you've completed the mission, you can use whatever ordnance you have left to take out those juicy T-72s you spotted on the way in — in fact, it's a good idea to make sure you and your wingman have used everything you've got before you go home; you get points for everything you and he destroy.



When you're presented with a target-rich environment, don't forget you've got a pretty sharp wingman with missiles of his own.

• On a related note, don't forget to use your wingman; he carries the same load you've got, but he won't use it unless you tell him to with a "Weapons Free" or "Attack My Target" command. It's the difference between having 16 Hellfires and 32. If you've got "detailed helicopters" turned on in the graphics options, you'll be able to check the external view and see how many missiles your wingman has left.

Always take the maximum load of Hellfires. There's no bonus in the game for completing a mission with less than the best ordnance you can get, and since Uncle Sugar is footing the bill, you might as well load up on those babies. There's no point in taking rockets unless you just want to prove what a stud you are (or unless you want to see the cool effect you get when you ripple off a big salvo of 'em).



Don't be conservative when arming your chopper. There aren't any extra points for taking wimpy weapons, so always max out with Stingers and 16 Hellfire missiles.

• If you spot airborne enemy helicopters, assume they've also spotted you, and that they'll come after you. It's best to drop what you're doing and take care of them, rather than hoping they won't spot you and having 'em creep up from behind while you're attacking the primary target. If you do decide to take your chances, be sure to switch your radar into air-to-air mode frequently to be sure they're not on your tail. If an enemy helo appears on your radar, then seems to disappear, there's a chance he's directly above or below you, out of your radar's sight. Yank back on the cyclic to slow down rapidly, and the bandit will probably end up directly in your sights.

Unless they're your primary targets, you can generally ignore airborne enemy jets until you've taken care of all other threats; they're probably not hunting choppers, and you'll have almost as much trouble shooting them down as they have hitting you. If you're worried, you can always check your tactical view to see if a jet you've targeted is headed in your direction.

Readers' Requests

Invasion of the Gaming Geniuses

Well, the Tip of the Month Club has been a roaring success. We've been overwhelmed by your flood of great tips and hints for games — you guys just don't know how smart you are! Many we've seen before, especially the C&C hints, but some were new even to us. So we've picked out a few of your best tips and run them here. To see who won this month's contest, read on!

SimCity 2000

I just stumbled onto an undocumented construction option in *SimCity 2000*. If you want a highway bridge to cross a river and have ships pass underneath it, just place a highway tile in the water where nothing is blocking it on the other side and you will get a second option for a bridge. Instead of choosing the ordinary causeway type of bridge, choose the reinforced bridge to let ships pass through. The downside is that it is quite expensive.

– **Nick N,** *Sudbury, Ontario*

Who said you can't fight City Hall?

Whiplash

To get the Whiplash code FORMULA1 to work, you have to select the second set of cars... here's how you do it. Go to the configure/names menu, and type in FORMULA1 as your name. Go to the main menu, and then the game type menu. There will be a car set option. This will allow you to pick the advanced set of cars. I haven't really noticed too much difference, but it is a second set of cars, with different colors and slightly better performance.

– **Eagle TG,** *via the Internet*

Zork Nemesis

For a really funny and weird easter egg in *Zork Nemesis* all you have to do is type *309newdorma*. You will see a screen with an E-mail address. Exit from that screen, type *309newdorma* again and click on the guy's head, and his head will be your inventory. But I've got a question.... what the heck do you do with that head???!!!

– **Aaron Bushman,** *via the Internet*

Don't forget Aaron, two heads are better than one!

The Marquand Line offers solid defense against Orcish incursions in WarCraft II.

WarCraft II

For those of us having trouble with defense lines in *Warcraft II*, I am sending you one of my favorite defense lines (see above picture). This particular line-up proves very useful in human mission 8 at Tyr's Hand.

– **Zach Marquand,** *Age 10, Knoxville, TN*

I have a question for the wonderful people who write the strategy section of your magazine. How do I get rid of the name "Cheater" from the final mission screen in *WarCraft II*?

– **darknite,** *via the Internet*

Been cheating have you? For shame! Seriously "Dark", there's no way around it — if you use a cheat code, you're gonna be reminded of at the end of the scenario. On the other hand, you could save your game, use the reveal map cheat and take a quick look around, and then reload the saved game. It's especially useful for finding that one last Orc on a big map.

ARE YOU A GAMING GENIUS?

Do you know the secrets to every PC game ever made? Want to share your love of gaming with the world? Then Strategy Central wants you.

We're pleased to announce a new monthly contest — The Tip of the Month Club. Every month we'll select a letter that gives the best advice or puzzle solution to a current game, and the lucky winner will receive a slew of prizes, including a *PC Gamer* T-shirt, a free strategy guide to inspire you, and a PC game pulled randomly from our mysterious and sinister Box O' Prizes. Send letters to:

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Dark Forces

Having trouble with Boba Fett in *Dark Forces*? You know, that pesky little guy at the end of the Imperial City? Here's a few tips to make his Mandalorian armor shed in no time.

At the very beginning of the mission, turn around and back up. Switch to your concussion rifle and start firing. The blasts will go through the wall and hit him in his hiding place. You'll know he's dead when Jan comes in on the intercom. Although he is dead, you will still have to do the other objectives in the mission.

– **J. Henne,** *via AOL*

And the Winner Is...

Have I got a tip for you!

Have you ever wondered if you could see what the other player in *Duke Nukem 3D* was doing during a DukeMatch? To do so, you need to go to the options screen after launching and turn on record. Then, while playing the Duke Match, press "K" (Don't press "T" first!) and you will be able to see what the other player is seeing, holding, using, you name it. I have done this many times, and I am now the reigning King of Duke Match.

READER'S TIP WINNER OF THE MONTH

– **Mike Koss,** *via the Internet*

That's some cheat Mike! Congratulations, you're this month's winner in the Tip of the Month Club! We'll be shipping you off some fun games, a handy strategy manual and a PC Gamer *T-shirt pronto. But there's a few people around this office who might dispute your title of "King of Duke Match"!*

PCG

Cheater's Corner

Super Stardust

If you can't beat 'em, cheat 'em!

Super Stardust **is GameTek's exciting shoot-'em-up game. Last week, a mysterious cloaked figure dropped by the offices and passed these secret codes to us. These codes should be entered as the password on the title screen.**

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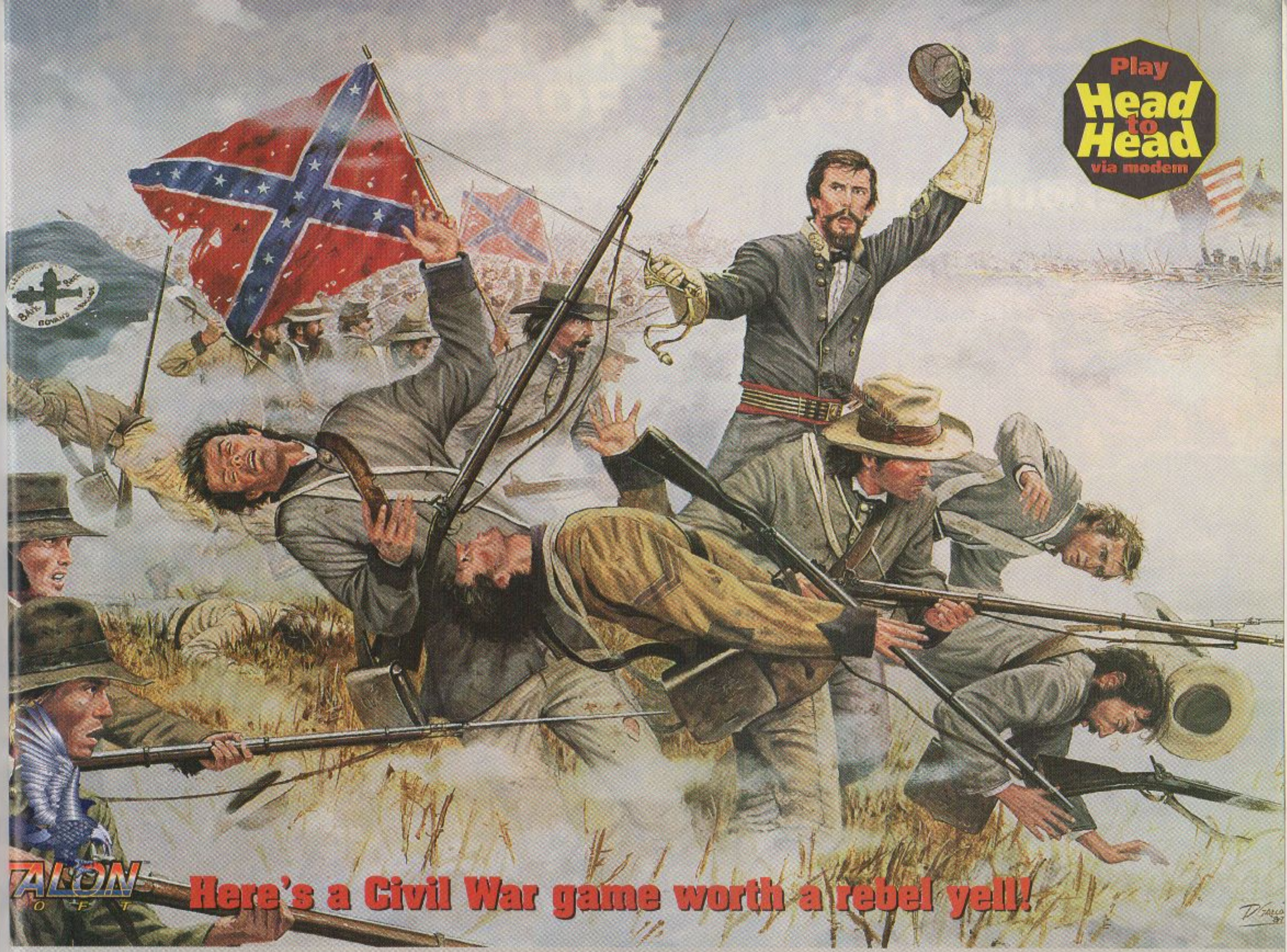

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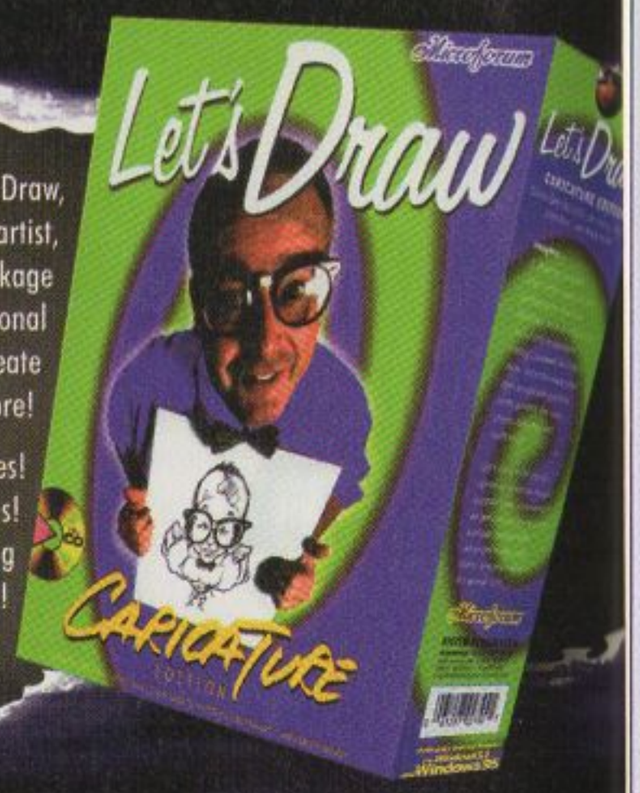

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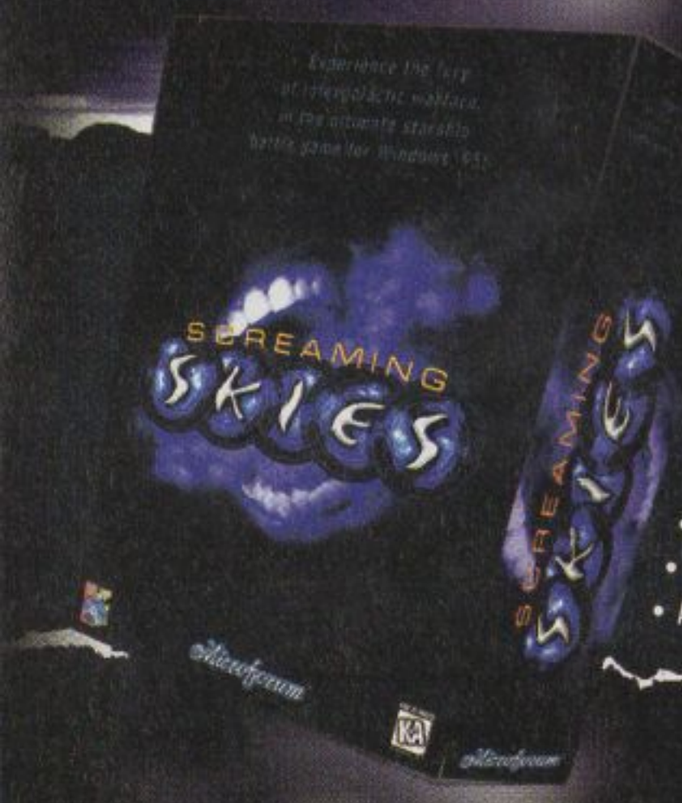

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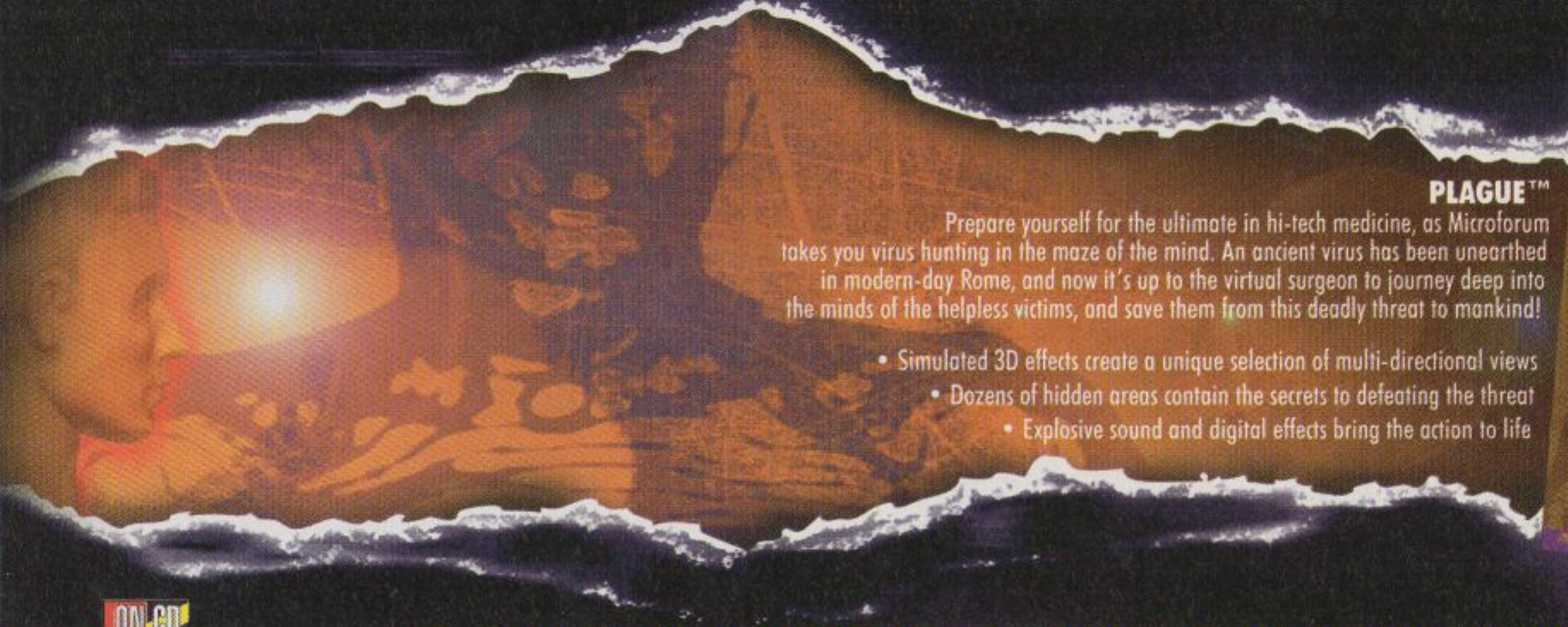

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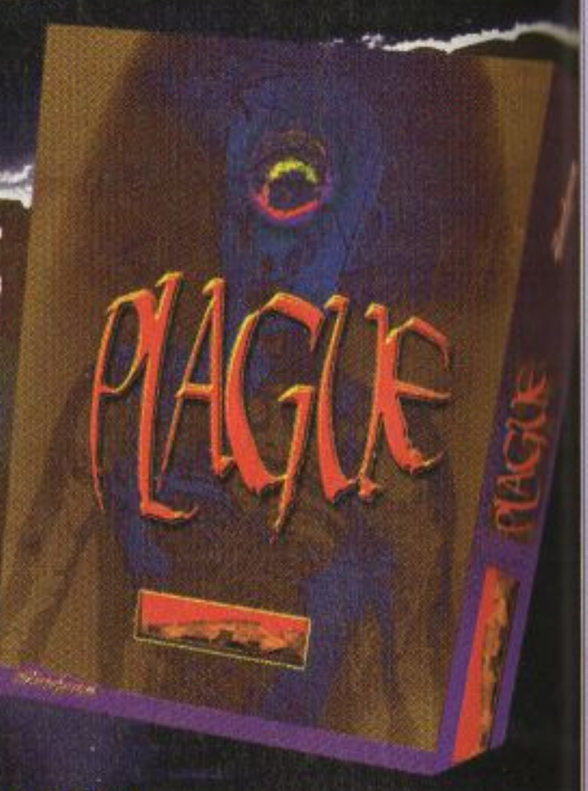

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LETTERS

We usually have a witty or thought-provoking introduction for this page; unfortunately, all our witty and thought-provoking people are busy playing *Quake*, now that we've got our hands on the finished version. Those Shamblers and Zombies just won't wait. (Speaking of which, the *Quake* shareware is on *The CD* this month, so go ahead and check it out, then meet us back here. We don't mind waiting.)

Let's Hear From You!

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or E-mail to:

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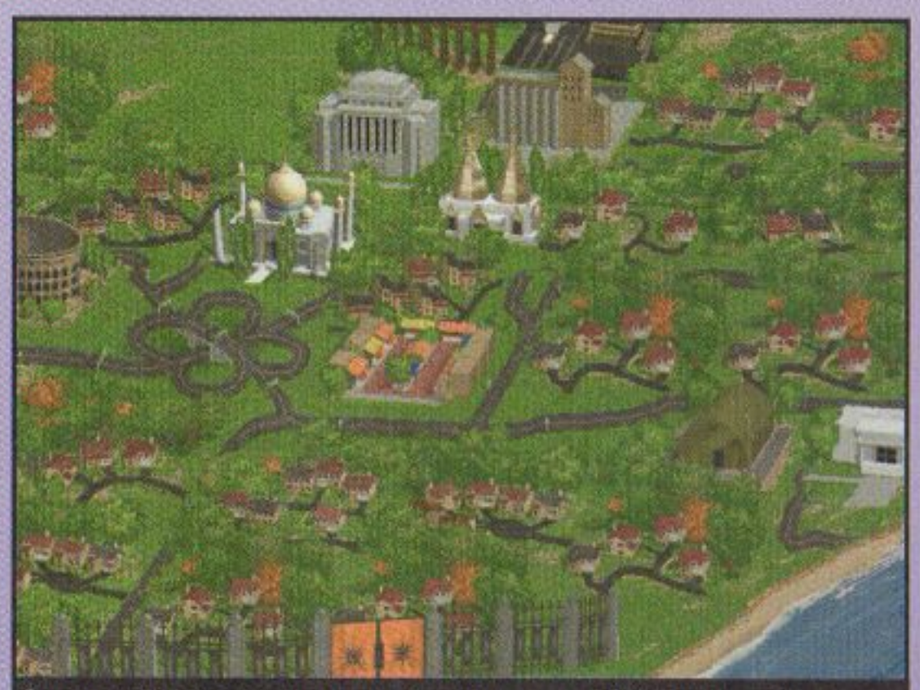
The Best of the Best?

As an avid reader of your magazine, I'm always interested to know your opinions on games and what "grade" you end up giving them. And for the most part, I tend to agree with your reviews. Many of the top-notch games out there garner a prized 96% rating. And until a recent issue, I thought 96% was the highest ranking you ever gave a game. But in the July 1996 issue, you gave *Civilization II* a 97%. I'm not one to go out and buy those types of games (that's not to say that they're not addictive), but is this really such a great game? It seems to me that, in essence, by giving *Civ II* a 97%, you are saying that this game is the best game ever to be reviewed by your magazine; better all around than, say, *System Shock* or *Wing Commander III*.

— Marius, *via AOL*



Sooner or later, some game had to earn a 97%; is it really any surprise that *Civilization II* was the one?

It's a fair question, Marius, and you can imagine how much debate went into the rating we gave Civilization II; *we don't award a 90% lightly, much less a 97%. But we've always considered the original* Civilization *to be one of the two or three best games ever made for the PC — a classic in every sense of the word. And we thought* Civ II *was significantly better than its predecessor, so what could we do but give it our highest rating ever?*

Never Too Old to Be New

I am almost 70 and a brigadier general in the Air Force while my grandson, Sumner, is just 16. He recently introduced me to gaming and to *PC Gamer*. I saw a letter about "newbies" in your magazine and thought perhaps my input might be called for. As one of those newbies (who has been taken firmly in hand by his not-so-newbie grandson), I find that of all the games my grandson and I play, we tend to play the older ones more than the new ones. While I do enjoy some new games from a few select, established companies (such as LucasArts, MicroProse, Sierra, etc.), the old classics really hold my attention. The newer games are all flash and no substance, and it seems like there are so many game companies out there now that it's hard to separate the wheat from the chaff. It seems to me that computer gaming's glory days are over. Now, this is just the opinion of a newbie, half-deranged old man, so what would I know any way, eh?

— R.E. Brofft, *via the Internet*

Far be it from us to argue with a general, General. But if we were going to, we'd say PC gaming's glory days are far from over. Look at Duke Nukem 3D, Quake, Civilization II, AH-64D Longbow, Warcraft II, Daggerfall *— no matter what category of gaming you love best, there's a great new game on the shelves (or lurking in the near future) that's right up your alley.*

Time Well Spent

In the July letters, you asked: "What would you be doing if you didn't spend so much time playing games on your PC?"

That's an interesting question, but I need some clarification. Are you referring to the time we spend when we're not playing a computer game, or do you really mean the time we're not playing computer games plus the time we're not scouring over PC gaming magazines, or out shopping for new games, or talking to our fellow gamers on a number of online services, or downloading hints from the Internet, or upgrading or "tweaking" our systems so we are able to play the latest releases?

Just curious.

— Gina Barber, *via AOL*

Good Lord, Gina — you're right! This is an even more serious problem than we thought. We suggest you cut out all of those activities except reading PC gaming magazines.

Hysterical Accuracy

I have just read a World War Two strategy guide published in another PC games magazine that made reference to "Her Majesty's" armed forces. I have read countless times in PC wargame reviews and strategy guides, including those in *PC Gamer*, about the exploits and achievements of Her Majesty's forces during World War Two. I have even been decorated by Her Majesty for my naval prowess while playing SSI's *Great Naval Battles*.

I can hold my silence no longer: The reigning monarch during WWII was His Majesty, King George VI, the father of the currently reigning Queen Elizabeth II, who was but a princess at the time.

— Mike Marunchak, *Mountain View, CA*

To Brain Or Not To Brain

I have noticed that among my friends there seem to be two distinct gameplayer groups. One is made up of the No-Brainers, who like to play games such as *Doom* or *NASCAR Racing*. The others are the Intellects, who play games such as *Shivers* or *7th Guest*.

When I've made attempts to convert No-Brainers, they just get bored with my games. So, as any good friends would do, they try to convert me; need-

less to say, I found *Doom* to be, well — humbug. Didn't use my brain at all.

Another observation I made about No-Brainers and Intellects is that No-Brainers are aggressive and Intellects are assertive. No-Brainers work hard and play hard; Intellects work smart and play smart. I also observed that No-Brainers are usually men, and Intellects are usually women. Interesting, huh?

— Barb Hartman, *Bear, DE*

Hey, watch it with the sexist stereotype, Barb — we know plenty of women who are No-Brainers, too! Seriously, we've found that most long-time game players don't fit into either category; to them, a good game is a good game, regardless of whether it's a No-Brainer or an intellectual exercise. Lots of games are hard to categorize, too; for instance, I doubt most fans of NASCAR Racing, *with its options for adjusting tire pressure, gear ratios, spoiler angles, and more, would agree that it's a No-Brainer.*

I'm Your Booger Man

Hey, I just wanted to tell you that I love the magazine. The reviews and demos are great. But most of all, I love those little "boogers" that you use to stick the CD to the magazine. There things are the best! I can now gross out my friends, entertain guests, and most of all, insure that my food in the fridge does not get touched (by strategically placing the "boogers" on top of the food containers).

You all are the best! Keep up the good work (and give the guy who supplies those "boogers" a raise).

— Colin McMillan, *St. Catharine's, Ontario, Canada*

We're glad you liked the new addition to The CD, *Colin, but we have a confession to make: Those aren't real boogers. Now that the cold season has passed, we use uncannily realistic synthetic boogers — they work just as well as the real thing, and they're economical, too!*

Stealing The Thunder

The usually trustworthy *PC Gamer* deserves a Maverick missile in the nether regions for the undeserved pot-shots it took at *Silent Thunder: A-10 Tank Killer II.*

The reason for the "unrealistic" flight model your reviewer found so objectionable is simple: *Silent Thunder* is no more a flight simulation than *Doom* is a course in combat shooting. Butt-kicking soundtrack, white-knuckle flights down beautifully-rendered canyons, and, best of all, a variety of targets that blow up real good — this one has "first-person-aerial-shooter" written all over it. Even Sierra's ads should have been a clue. Which part of the ad featuring a blown-up Colombian coffee-picker and his surviving burro led you to expect the latest in excruciatingly-detailed military flight simulations? *Silent Thunder* is drop-dead gorgeous and more fun than I've ever had with my joystick. If Sierra includes the *PC Gamer* offices as a target in the next mission add-on, I wouldn't blame them.

— Tim Capps, *via AOL*

Yes, Silent Thunder *has action written all over it, but it has something else written on it, too: the words "Dynamix Aces Series." We felt it was important to warn fans of* Aces of the Pacific, Aces over Europe, *and* Aces of the Deep *that* Silent Thunder *was most definitely not the serious simulation they'd come to expect from the other games in the Aces series. Like we said, if you know from the start you're getting a simple action game, you may have fun with* Silent Thunder, *but anyone who expects an Aces-quality sim is going to be disappointed.*

READERS **RESPOND...**

...To The Ultimate Gaming Machine feature we ran in our July 1996 issue.

"Your upgrade article included wonderful, mouth-watering goodies for us serious-but-poor gamers...but, please! How about those of us who just can't keep up financially? We rant, grate our teeth, and foam at the mouth when we read in your otherwise-great reviews: 'We recommend a Pentium 100 or up...' Aggggghhh! This is where they call security in the Mall ('Attention: Poor frustrated computer gamer shopper throwing a tantrum at *name of your PC gaming store*...')."

— Nelson Lopez, via the Internet

"I have been a gamer since the days of my Commodore 64 computer, and I have always been in the rat race about keeping one step ahead of the market when my gaming is concerned, but I usually ended up with an empty wallet. Currently I work for a computer mail-order company, and I took your article to work to find out exactly how much money a gamer has to spend to get your 'Serious Game Machine' and the 'Ultimate Game Machine.' The result was very surprising. The average price I got for the former was around $1600 and the latter was around $2200.

That took me back to the days when I almost dished out $3000 for a 486 DX/33 with 8 megs of RAM and a single-speed CD-ROM drive; I thought to myself, with a grin on my face, this is a great time to be alive. With the price of computer hardware being as low as it has ever been for this level of technology, I don't see why anyone who considers gaming a serious hobby or pastime would not want to upgrade.

I know your article will get those gamers out there to take the plunge and make gaming more enjoyable without leaving them with an empty wallet."

— Kevin Tavalli, Akron, Ohio

"When deciding on the hard drive to purchase, I'd have to agree with you on buying a gig or larger. But one thing you failed to mention is the emergence of optical drives. I purchased my computer in January with a 1.2 gig drive, but it's almost full. I work at a local nation-wide chain of a computer super-stores, and one of the least-understood items is the optical drive. For a mere $200-$300, you can get an Iomega Zip drive with 100MB disk size, or an EZ drive with 135MB disk size. The beauty of these little devices is that you can store whole programs on one disk and access them directly from the drive — some drives even connect through the parallel port, so they're portable. The access speeds of these drives are not much slower than an actual hard drive, and a new disk can be purchased for $20. Unlimited storage for a low price!"

— Brian Weeks, Norman, OK

Attention Game Developers

One of the most popular and entertaining humorous/fantasy series has been the "Myth Adventures" by Robert Asprin. With the success of Pratchett's *Discworld* game and the (potential) success of *Callahan's Crosstime Saloon,* why doesn't someone do a game based on these books? (They are by far my favorite series, and with their no-holds-barred, slapstick adventure, it seems that they would translate very well to a CD-ROM game.)

— Rich, *via the Internet*

I have heard rumors about a *Braveheart* game. I loved the movie, and a game based on the same premise would be awesome. Imagine slitting that lord's throat or bashing that Scottish traitor's head in, and having the entire screen covered in blood. I can see it now. Ahhhhh, violence.

— Satchel, *via AOL*

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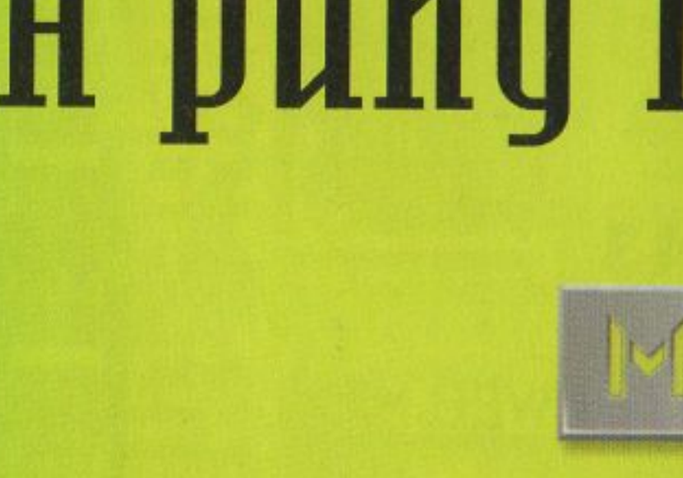

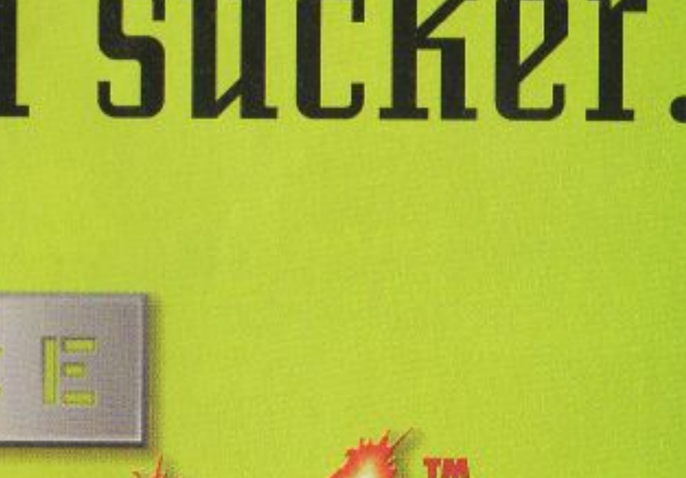

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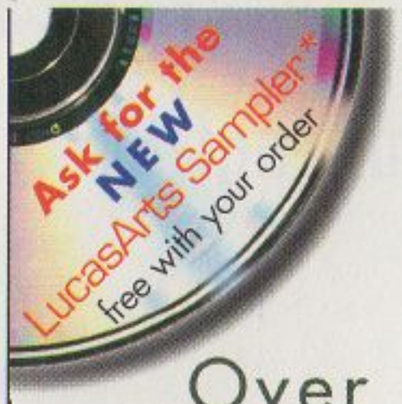

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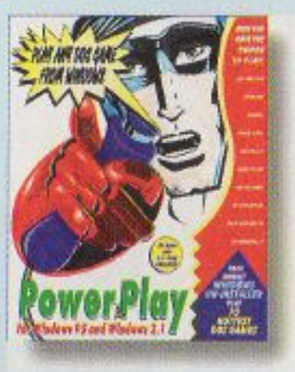

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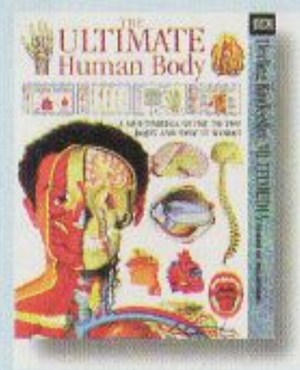

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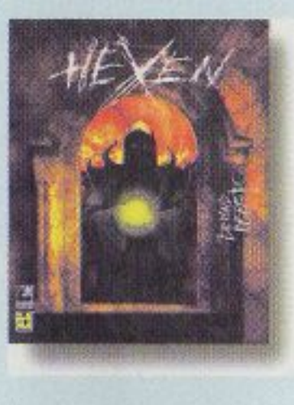

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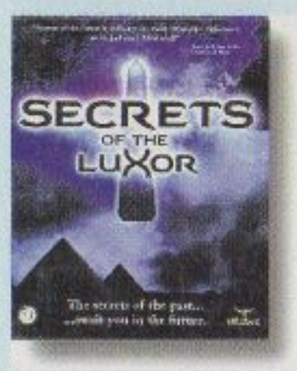

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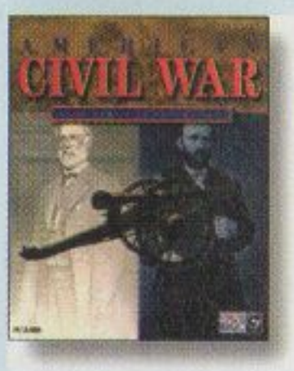

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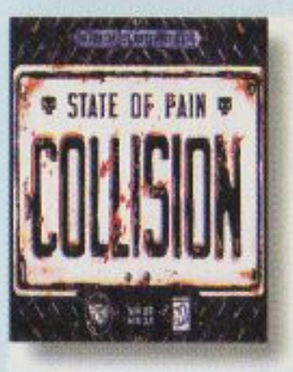

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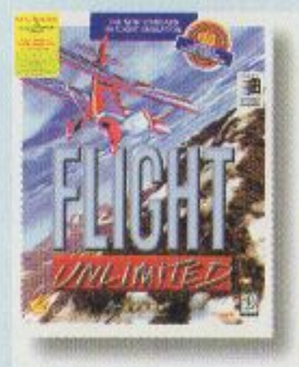

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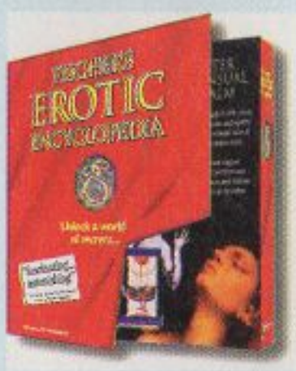

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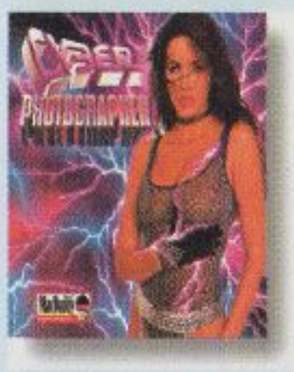

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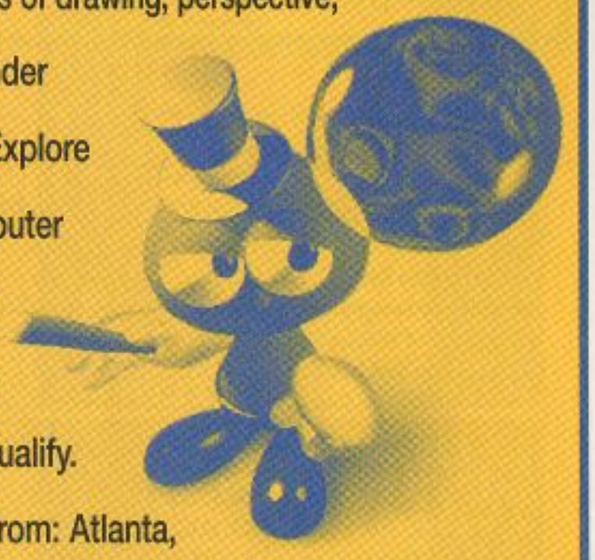

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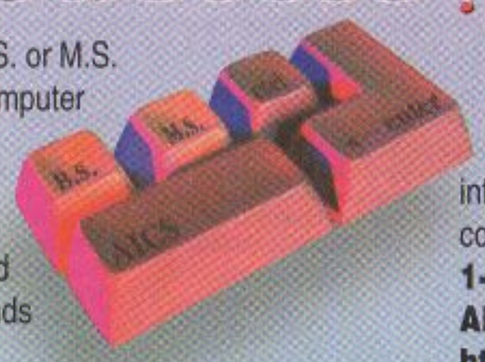

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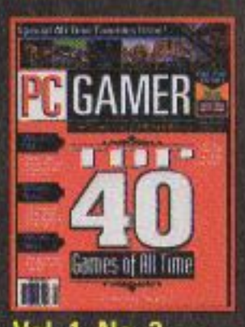

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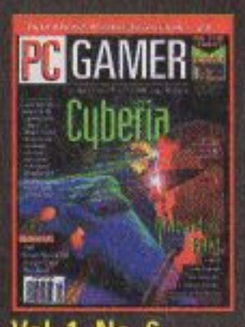

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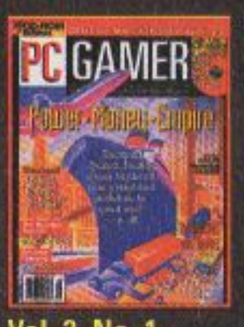

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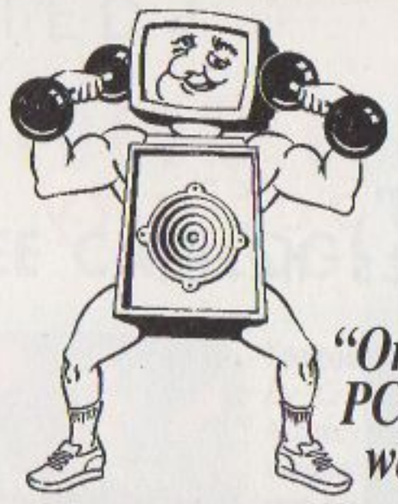

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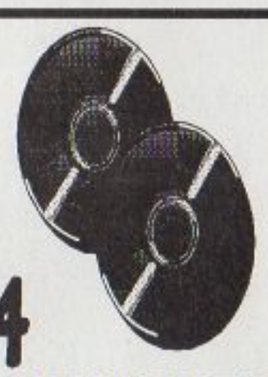

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NEXT TIME...

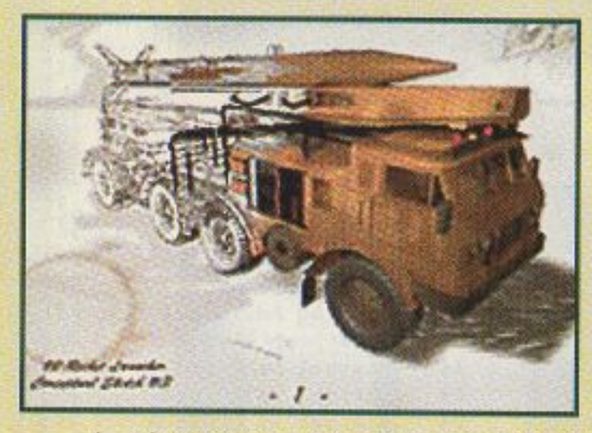
It's alright for you, the reader. You've got it easy. You're probably reading this with your feet up and a nice cup of tea. But chances are that at this very moment we're working like Japanese beavers on *PC Gamer*'s next riveting installment, which is shaping up to look something like this...

Vol. 3 No. 10 Goes On Sale **Sept. 10** Don't Miss It!

Origin's New Wave

In an exclusive *PC Gamer* report, we go behind the scenes at the offices of the PC's most ambitious software house — Origin Systems. We've got a no-holds-barred interview with head honcho Richard "Lord British" Garriott and in-depth looks at three of the company's biggest new titles — *Privateer: The Darkening* (above), *Ultima Online*, and *Ultima IX*. Plus, a few surprises...

Red Alert!



The follow-up to the awesome *Command & Conquer* is almost here, and next month we'll bring you an unrivaled look at the making of this potential classic, including exclusive news direct from Westwood Studios!

Strategy Central

Our crack regiment of game-busters are back on patrol this time next month with more vital hints and tips for *Quake, Terra Nova, WarCraft II* and many more in our unbeatable strategy section.

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...and many more, barring tidal waves or alien invasion

PC GAMER

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Scottie gulped. He never expected his first undercover mission for Hoop Squad to be anything like this...

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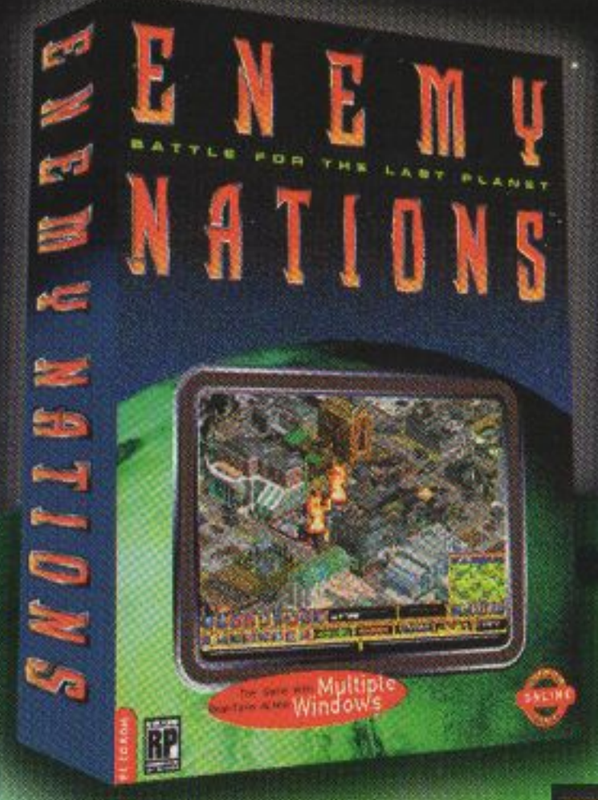

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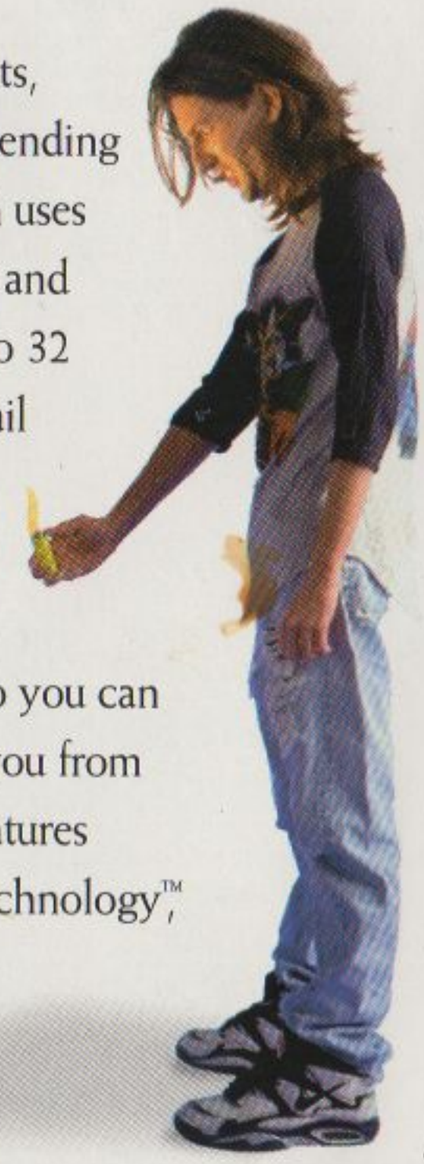

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