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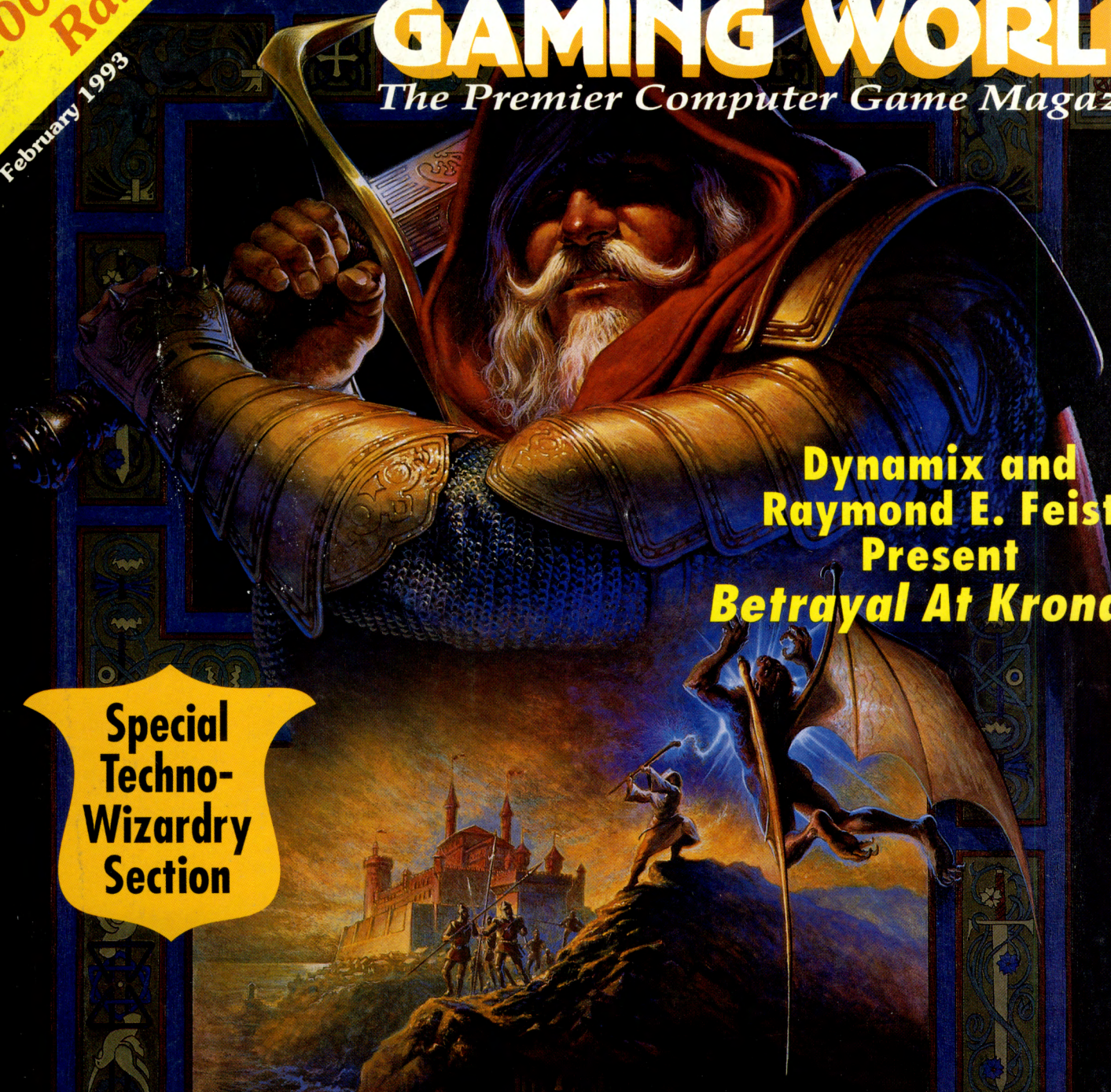
100 Games Rated

February 1993
Number 103

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The Premier Computer Game Magazine



Dynamix and Raymond E. Feist Present *Betrayal At Krondor*

Special Techno-Wizardry Section

Also in this issue:

- Rex Nebular
- Sneak Preview: Caesar
- Conquered Kingdoms Strategy
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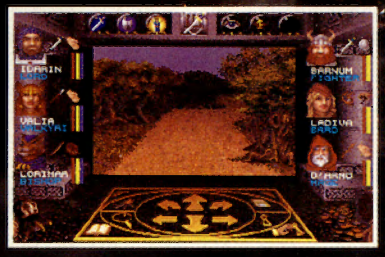
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Magician: Designer

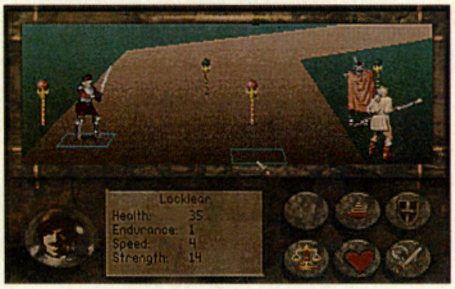


A Sneak Preview of Dynamix' *Betrayal at Krondor*

by Johnny L. Wilson

In Raymond E. Feist's multi-volume "Riftwar Saga," two worlds are joined by a magical corridor: Kelewan, the alien world of the warlike Tsurani, and Midkemia, the world of the protagonists — a Middle Earth-like land of elves, dwarves and dragons. In creating *Betrayal at Krondor*, the new CRPG from **Dynamix**, a corridor exists between three worlds: the world of people-and-paper role-playing where the Friday night gaming group of Feist and his friends created the land of Midkemia, the literary saga of Midkemia's history in the Riftwar novels and, returning almost full circle, the world of computer role-playing where Design Team Leader John Cutter magically transforms the Midkemian mythos into a three-dimensional environment.

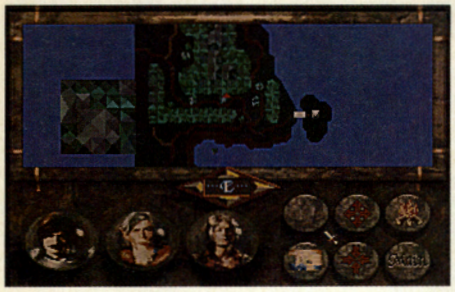
Midkemia is an ideal gaming environment. The world is large and peopled with fantasy races. Though most of the feudal lords pay homage to a central king, the government is practically balkanized enough to be subject to civil war breaking out at any given time. This makes for plenty of intrigue within the ranks of the protagonists' own kingdom. Then, there is the threat from without (whether the Midkemian Empire of Kesh or the Tsuranuanni Empire of Kelewan) and the mysteries of antiquity (the Valheru and the devastation of the Chaos Wars). All add to the "gameability" quotient of the universe.



As *Betrayal at Krondor* reaches the computer screen, Midkemia has become so much a three-dimensional environment that gamers will sometimes wonder if they are playing a flight simulator rather than a CRPG. Indeed, one *CGW* staffer stated that he felt like he was about to take off as he moved quickly down the on-screen road between first-person perspectives of mountains and trees, seashores and buildings. The gamer will simply use the directional arrows and compass at the bottom of the screen and move the party of characters along a step at a time. Then, once the party is in the center of a road, the gamer can toggle an "auto-road" feature and place the cursor over a directional arrow. By holding down the mouse button, the party will simply blitz down the road, affording a movement bonus for being on the road that is visually communicated to the gamer rather than numerically presented. Indeed, if one so desires, it is possible to zoom high above the party in an overhead map view and zip down the road so fast that one has a sense of flying (and that is appropriate because any further releases in the series may well have the option of allowing the gamer's character(s) to fly).

As players encounter on-screen enemies, they occasionally hide behind terrain features such as trees and come out to ambush the party or they scale larger as they come closer and smaller as they flee. When players encounter on-screen objects, they scale as the party closes or broadens range on them. One need only click the right mouse button to determine

what an object is and the left mouse button (once the party is close enough) to examine the object. We also liked the shading and brightening that constantly indicated the cycling of day and night.



Much of the **Dynamix** visualization of Midkemia is stunning, but Cutter's team has established a solid corridor between the technological interpretation of the world and the literary interpretation of the world via a lavish use of text. The entire game is structured according to chapters in a book, a book which would feature events taking place between *A Darkness at Sethanon* and *Prince of the Blood*. As the player solves each portion of the game successfully, another chapter is introduced. The pages of text are presented in a beautiful, illustrated manuscript format and are occasionally enhanced by images of the characters and animated sequences (with the limited movement of some early Japanimation). It is very obvious to even the most casual fan that the writers must have studied Feist very thoroughly or collaborated effectively with him. The tone of the text is just right.

Well Met! (NPC Interaction)

When the player's party encounters a non-player character who is not bent on immediately attacking the party, there is a digitized on-screen photograph of the character displayed on the screen. Much of the conversation is handled via the text pages indicated above, but the program also parses the subject matter of the NPC's conversation into clues for the player. Thus, when the NPC is finished with his/her canned speech, a screen appears with a set of on-screen buttons. Many or, conceivably, all of these buttons will list potential new topics for the NPC to discuss.

All the gamer needs to do is point and click on one of these active topic buttons and the NPC goes on with the conversation. At the end of this new information, there may even be more topic buttons available. In this way, the player can extend or suspend the party's conversations with NPCs by either selecting new topics or not.

It Is Riftwar! (Combat)

Combat is handled very elegantly in *Betrayal at Krondor*. The gamer's party of characters and any bad guys or monsters appear in the 3-D image area at the top of the screen. Then, in a phased movement where the sequence is governed by the character's Speed rating, characters move and/or swing/spellcast in descending order. For tactical movement, the gamer moves the cursor until a green rectangle appears on the 3-Space ground where the character should finish his/her move. If the character is in range to attack, a yellow rectangle will appear around the feet of the enemy as the gamer moves the cursor toward the enemy. If the character can cast magic at the enemy, a blue rectangle will appear around the feet of the enemy.



If the gamer wishes to strike, he/she need only make a mouse-click while the yellow or blue rectangle is in place. Damage, if any, is immediately assessed and the turn progresses to the next fastest character or enemy. Combat continues until one side is destroyed or successfully retreats (the combat AI is smart enough to retreat, often!).

Note: After combat, it is wise to select the campfire icon and "Camp Until Healed." Characters can restore up to 80% of their strength in this way, even without benefit of healing spells.

Magician: Gamer (Spellcasting)

Feist does not elaborate very much on the magical system used in either Kelewan or Midkemia. So, Cutter's team was forced to fill out the references. In the first book of the series (either *Magician* in hardbound or *Magician: Apprentice* in softcover), Kulgan speaks of Pug understanding the logical structures of magic. Later, in softcover's *Magician: Master*, Pug is informed by his alien mentor that Midkemian practitioners only understand part of the structure of their magic.

Once a gamer clicks on the amulet icon, a spellcasting menu appears. The spellcasting menu consists of several spell circles containing geometrical forms with arcane symbols in each area of the diagram. Assuming that the character can cast a certain spell, the gamer need only move the cursor over one of the arcane symbols and the name of the spell will appear, along with the range of damage said spell could cause and the potential cost in energy (Health points) should the character cast it.

With some spells, many of the small dots on the outside of the spell circle will be highlighted. In such a case, the information on damage and energy (Health) cost is dynamic and changes as the gamer moves the cursor along the outside of the spell circle. This is because the different dots on the outside of the circle represent the amount of Health which the spellcaster is willing to put into casting the spell.

Once the spell is selected and the amount of energy to be placed into casting it is determined, the view returns to the combat screen. Then, the gamer need merely ascertain that the blue rectangle is placed around the enemy's feet and click the mouse button. The visual effects are often very striking with enemy's turned into stone and shattering into dust or burned to a crisp and frittering into ash.

Naturally, as characters advance, there are more and more geometrical diagrams to be discovered and, hence, more spells to be cast. In a real sense, the magic system for the computer game seems very much in tune with the spirit of the magic system at which Feist hinted in the books, but did not detail. The magic system will not satisfy gamers who wish to gather spell components or mix potions, but it should satisfy those who have read the Riftwar series of novels.

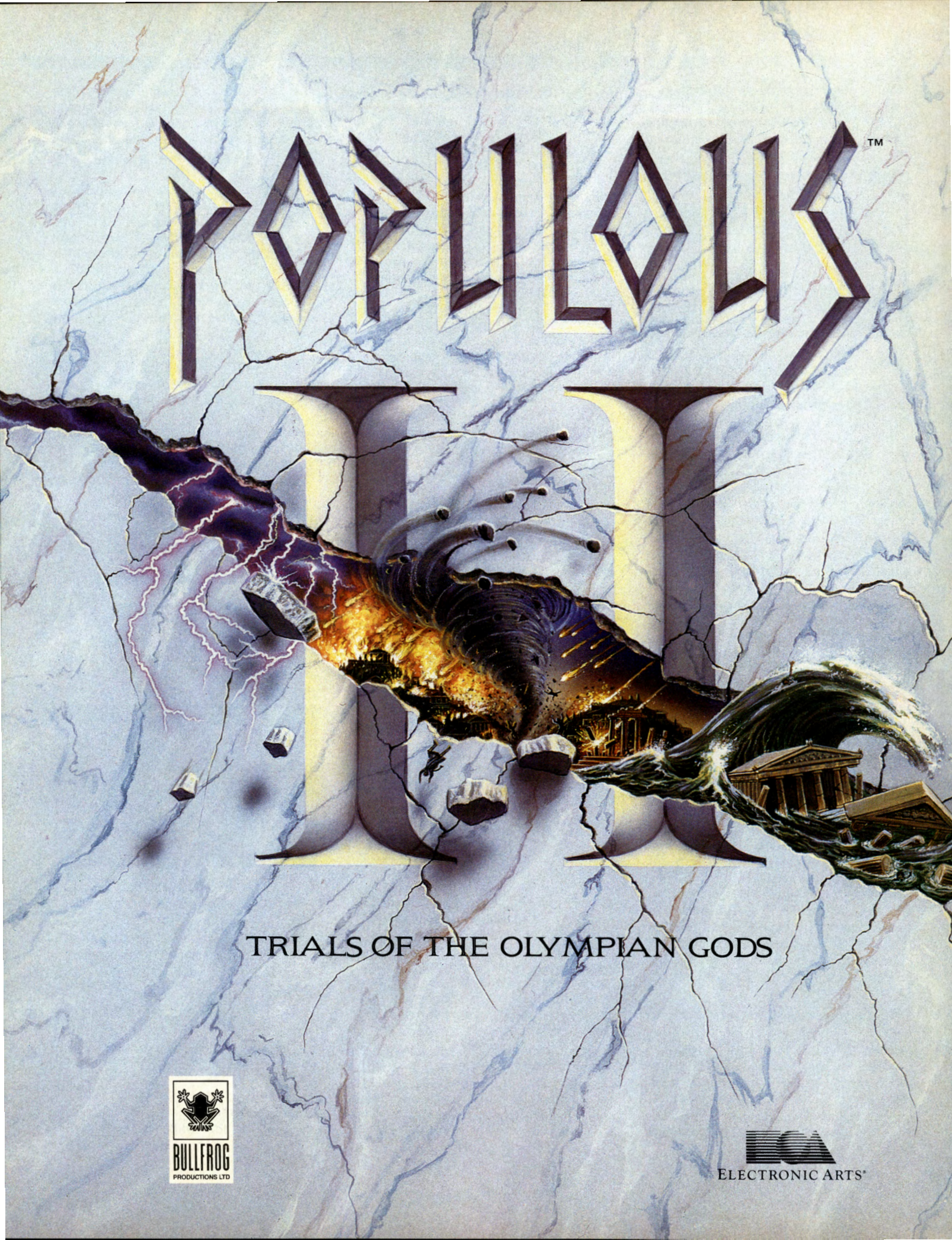


El Krondor Pasa (Conclusion)

Betrayal at Krondor bridges the gulf between three fantasy environments. Some literary purists will insist that it is not possible to transform a novelist's fictional universe into an interactive environment. Some gamers will dislike the digitized images that look almost like paper dolls against the 3-Space world. Yet, we believe that many gamers will believe that it does so successfully due to the excellent implementation of its technology and the obvious collaboration with the novelist who spawned Midkemia. CGW

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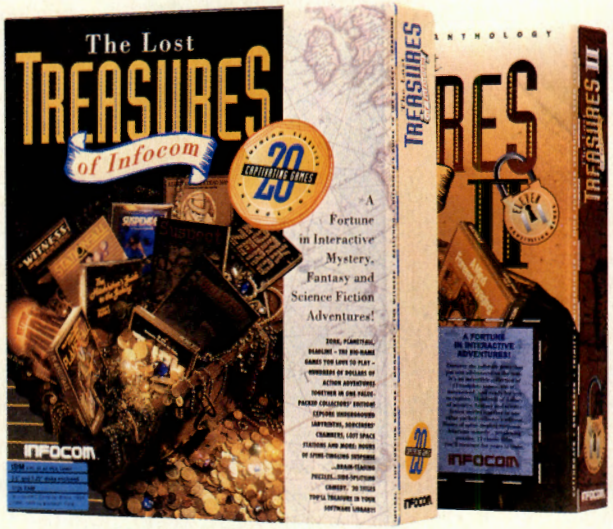


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Special Techno-Wizardry Section



Computers supply more than artificial opponents and playing environments for games and simulations. Computers also provide tools for: personal creativity and entertainment; the blending of media; group interaction; altered perspectives; new environments; faster processing of game/graphics data; and larger images. In this special section:

- Paula Giese unveils new ways to play with data and images on our computers, creating conceptual breakthroughs as we "play" with our world;
- *CGW* Editor Johnny L. Wilson visits Activision's sound stage to observe the blending of live actors and computerized backgrounds for *Return to Zork*;
- Paul C. Schuytema unveils the heart and soul of the techno-wizardry underlying VWE's *BattleTech* Centers;
- Chris Lombardi checks out the angles and technology to be found in I•motion's *Alone in the Dark* Lovecraftian polygon-filled graphic adventure;
- *CGW* looks at the AI and 3-D rendering to be found in Bullfrog's upcoming strategy/adventure set in a dark future;
- *CGW's* editorial staff considers the gaming potential of technologies demonstrated at Fall Comdex; and
- Chuck Miller shows us how to get a large VGA image without HDTV.



Power to the Imagination

Bourbaki's *FracTools*

TITLE:	FracTools
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$35.00
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Hugh Myers (Tools; Zoom);
DISTRIBUTORS:	Bourbaki (Boise, ID); Media Magic (Nicosia, CA)
COMPANION PROGRAMS:	FracTunes; FracZooms

by Paula Giese

Paula Giese is president of Compulex Services, a computer consulting firm that works with lawyers and construction companies. She is a former Professor of Humanities at the University of Minnesota, where she was Editor-in-Chief and writer for the Minnesota Math and Science Teaching Project which developed a hands-on curriculum for grades K through 6 and a teacher education program.

Fractals have generated great scientific excitement in the past decade. They are images from a revolution in human thought, showing aspects of reality (with applications ranging from neurology to stock market cycles) only discoverable by using computer graphics. Many shareware programs exist which enable one to generate them.

FracTools is the centerpiece of a family of slick, professional softwares for those who want to play with (rather than research) the fantastic shapes. With the tools available in this program, one can flow colors through them, merge them with other images, and easily make slide-shows that combine fractal and painted or scanned PCX images. Its easy-to-use graphically-based menu-driven system, support for SuperVGA and comprehensive manual make it the best current low-cost fractal software choice for those whose recreational preference is artistic or creative.

Pretty Shapes and Colors

FracTools generates Mandelbrot and Julia fractals from zooms on the images that come with the program. Images are generated in the proprietary format that allows innumerable interactive changes from Color and Effects menu choices. *FracTools* also saves any image in the industry-standard paint-raster PCX format. It can load any PCX (not just a fractal) for color changes and pseudo-animation. *FracTools* supports control palette settings which prevent selected colors from moving and changing, so images can be meaningfully color-animated (just the eyes move, to show life, say), rather than "all colors flow" which is ideal for most kaleidoscope abstractions.

To illustrate, the three "frog planet" images are part of a one-slide animation in which a complex sky-fractal goes from a few scat-



tered "stars" through a wildly colorful rotating nova, while the colors and lighting of the 256-color foreground scene PaintBrush-collaged over it change appropriately.

"Musicians from Hell" uses the same technique to animate a 16-color standard VGA image. The background and most of the musicians' bodies are set to not "strobe" or color-change. The musicians' cheeks, lips, fingers, and eyes appear to move as they play, while the fractal representing their weird music revolves.

"Musicians" is music-driven by another Bourbaki program, *FracTunes*, which can use AdLib, Soundblaster, or Roland song-files, or can display animated images driven by live play on Roland-MPU-compatible MIDI instruments. A user-scripted series of images responds with colors in rhythmic motion to pitch, tone, volume and velocity. *FracTunes* is a light-and-color instrument that you can jam with visually as well as musically, creating computer-assisted multimedia karaoke.

After playing with fractal images for a while, users can save any version they like as PCX files, which can be reloaded for color palette flows and rotations, or merged with other images using any paint program. Spectacular fractals can form backgrounds, or parts of them can be made into cutouts which can be clipped to painted or scanned images. Fractals make excellent components of images intended to convey a fantastic, futuristic, or spiritual feeling.

"Annie's Dream" (page 16) collages the sleeping girl onto a butterfly-shaped Newtonian fractal from one of the ready-made sets Bourbaki sells. Newtonians are among the other kinds of fractals that a sister program, *FracZoom*, generates. When color-animated, the bands of color flow outward along the wings, so the giant dream butterfly appears to be alive.

Clear, Professional Menuing

"AsEasy as (fingerpainting) only neater..." (page 16) shows *FracTools''* well-designed drop-down menus at work making a palette for animation of a Newtonian fractal. In 16- or 256-color modes, the image's palette can be clicked to select from among millions of colors by moving the sliding bars. (Here they're shown set to vary Hue, Tint, Brightness. A mouse-click changes the method to Red-Green-Blue variation.) The cross-hair cursor will click-select a screen-pixel for color editing by jumping to the palette, so that all instances of that pixel's color can be changed.

In 256-color modes (VGA only), the palette is bigger. Cursor jump-selecting and spectral palette-pans are essential aids to editing that even the "magic-wand" selections of expensive professional raster-edit programs cannot do. The "random" (generate a new palette) and "copy" (ranges of colors from one place to another) operations are useful for creating and trying many combinations quickly. All palettes can be saved as re-usable .PAL files. Any images can be gray-scales automatically or converted to "line art" for B&W printing, using palettes that come with *FracTools*.

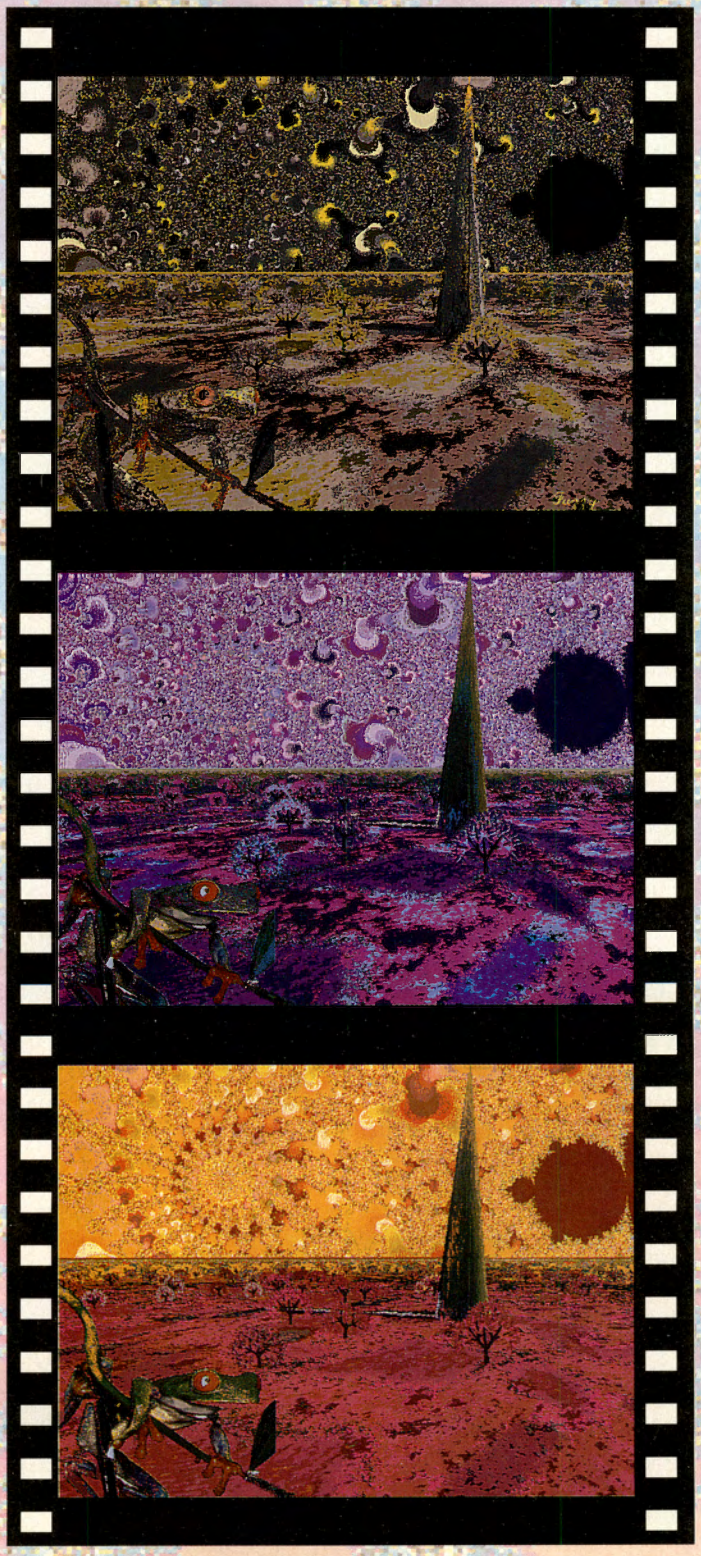
The major omission in *FracTools* is that it does not support any printer drivers. To print spectacular images, they must be loaded into a program that handles PCX file formats. *FracTools* doesn't do real file management — just gets and saves the several file types it uses — but its graphical file access capabilities are well-designed (superior to those of Windows), intuitive for users who wander multiple drives with many subdirectories.

The manual needs layout glitz and it isn't always clear how to use the complete information it crowds in. There should be more examples. Yet, the manual does clearly state a major truth about *FracTools*: the way to learn to use it in 3 words is "play, play, play." The changes that can be run on abstract fractal images are mesmerizing.

After doing that a while, one may wish to get into color-animating non-abstract images where the methods are the same (but the effects controls are limited to picking the moving and fixed colors, flow control and speed settings). The manual has no information on making such slide-shows, because Bourbaki did not see the possibilities of this (I invented it); they thought of *FracTools* as a kaleidoscope. It is much more.

Effects Menu F/X

Simple slide-shows—selecting effects and different palettes to flow or strobe colors, and lining up image files—can be menu-generated from *FracTools*. An easy scripting language makes more complex shows possible. There are no fade transition effects, such

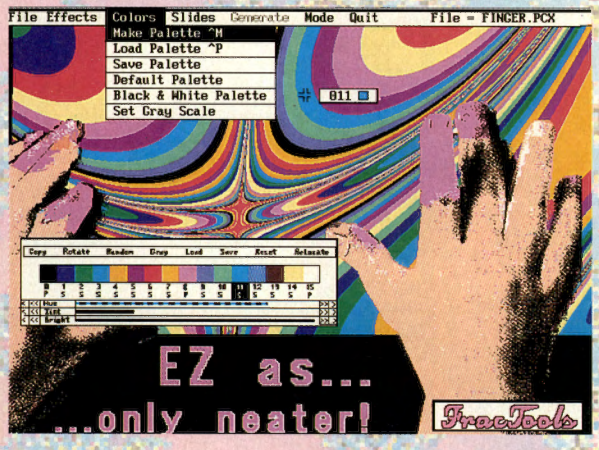


as pro presentation programs offer, but the pseudo-animations of controlled color changes are more fun. PCX files can be assembled from many other programs (including screen-grabbers), so there are story-telling possibilities, including occasional text screens.

For fractal files, there are many more effects than the controllable color flows. From the effects menu, changing the number of iterations (under which the fractal was originally generated) changes its appearance dramatically. Other effects include Stained Glass (dark outlines around each colored area) and the Dust (which reduces a fractal to lacy whorls of multicolor sparkles). The Kaleidoscope effect divides a fractal into four mirrored images, joining them seamlessly.

FracTools' ASCII text "show scripts" can automate the best of one's graphic experiments. Unfortunately, although scripts can loop, pan and mimic some expensive presentation-package transitions, lack of an "IF" in this language and of "STOP, GO BACK, CONTINUE, GOTO" commands means only self-running, non-interactive, shows can be created. Bourbaki wasn't thinking of such shows; they were thinking of fractal kaleidoscopes. Fortunately, shows can be given to friends who don't have the program or uploaded to BBSs without piracy, because there is a very basic giveaway showdriver.





Fascination with fractals' beauty and endless intricacy may inspire one to learn more about them, mathematically and scientifically. The manual begins this with a short, plain-language simplification of what Mandelbrot-type fractals are, and a suggested reading list.

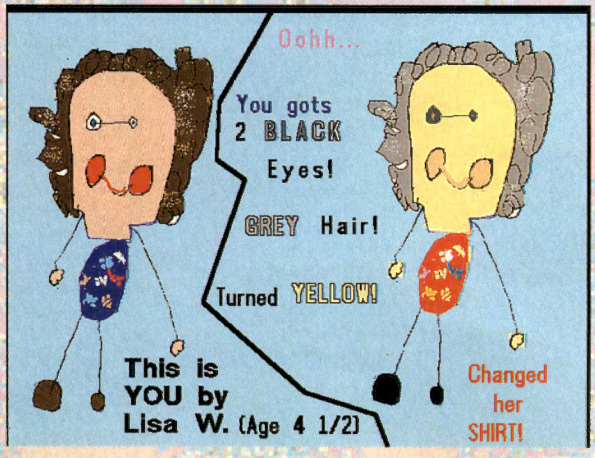
Bourbaki's *FracZooms* can assist further. It generates some types (Newtonians, differential equations, Pickover Biomorphs) that the main program cannot, as well as providing a utility for batch-generation of sets of fractals unattended, which is handy if you have complex ones to regenerate at time-consuming higher resolutions. When *FracZooms* runs on a subdirectory of fractal files, it generates an ASCII file of records containing analytic information, parameters, values or variables, etc., which can be imported to a spreadsheet or database to systematically compare sets of fractal images and study their properties.

The whole Bourbaki "frac family" is highly recommended, as is the only retail source for it: Media Magic (800/882-8284), a catalog dealer for many fascinating books and softwares on the integrative theme of "art, mathematics, science and computers."

Kidshows, Digital Photoshows, Grabbed-Screen Shows

FracTools is a simple, inexpensive show creator that even young kids can use. With grade-schoolers from local school computer clubs, I've collaborated on several shows that have been hits with other kids and parents. Four-year-old Lisa's picture of me (scanned from her drawing, paint-colored by her older cousins) is all too recognizable. I've duplicated it to show one color-change plus comments from young art critics. Youngsters can create palettes for fire flickering across buildings, flow colors to make a sunrise, flash lightening on a stormy ocean…

It isn't necessary to write scripts to get many of these effects, but kids may be motivated to learn how. *FracTools'* menu methods provide immediate yet vividly satisfying results children can realistically achieve. This often leads to experiments with the scripting language. *FracTools* has no real competition. Those with artistic or creative leanings will be inspired and delighted by *FracTools, FracTunes,* and other Fracs.



These tools put what may be the greatest discovery of our age, Benoit Mandelbrot's visual-mathematical work that harnesses the infinite in never-ending exfoliating networks at the service of the power of the imagination. Now *that's* techno-wizardry. CGW

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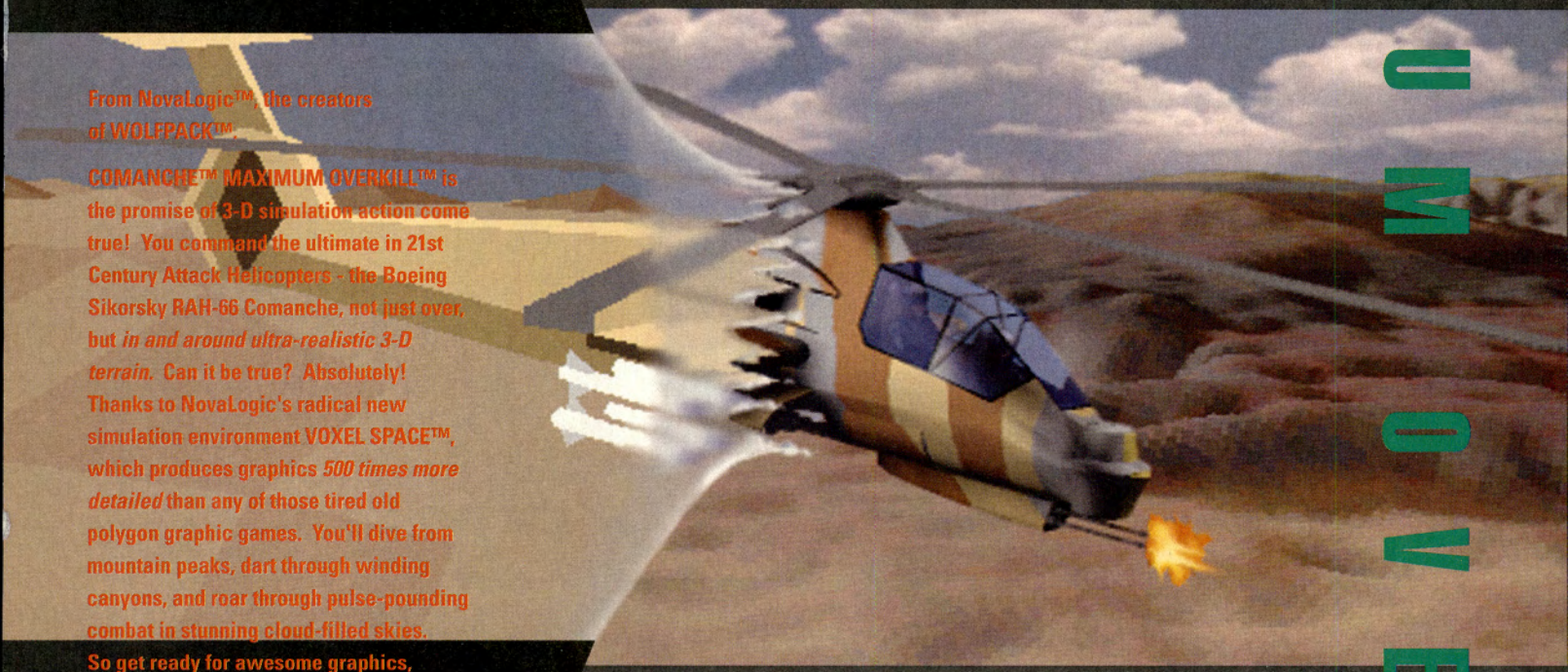
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More About Fractals. . .

Forgotten Monsters, Ferocious Mathematicians

"A reason for relying increasingly on [computer] graphics was that something strange and totally unexpected began to happen with consistency. Our graphics did more than inform. They made people dream. Colleagues flocked to tell us that we had made them see their own work in a different light, and had helped them by unveiling previously unnoticed analogies. For the first time, they felt that what they saw directly affected what they did next. All problems are not resolved, but many problems are deeply changed."— Benoit Mandelbrot

Millennia from now, the creation/discovery of fractals will rank with the invention of writing and numbers in the history of human thought. In a century, IBM may be remembered only as the vast, bumbling computer bureaucracy which sheltered Mandelbrot and provided him tools to develop this revolution. This hasn't come easily. Mandelbrot is a maverick outsider, but his genius is such that the math Establishment has fought, rather than ignored, him. Recognition of the importance of his work has come more through the sciences and the arts.



Moved by the irony of its name conjoined with fractals, Mandelbrot contacted Bourbaki-the-software-company. "What made me laugh," he wrote Bourbaki, "is the juxtaposition of the two words that play central and opposite roles in my life, fractal and Bourbaki… As to Bourbaki, it was the name of a strange cult which reigned in Paris for decades, and which I resisted and fought with a satisfying degree of ultimate success."

In the early years, Mandelbrot (who is French by birth) published his mathematical researches mainly in *Comptes Rendus*, a French academic journal. He was fiercely opposed by "the Bourbaki Group," which began in the 1920s as a handful of French mathematicians who wanted to return true rigor to mathematics, infested with sloppy thinking in their view. They adopted a pseudonym for their aggressive publications, Nicholas Bourbaki, after an obscure statue in a park where they first met.

Lurking behind this name, Bourbaki, the anonymous mathematicians fired off a still-continuing barrage of textbooks and articles which ripped into the iterative methods and what they termed the pathological monsters of Cantor, Peano, and their intellectual descendants—including Mandelbrot and his followers.

No longer young idealists on a quest for purity, they are now antique bastions of rigor mortis whose views dominate American math textbooks and academic teaching. Mandelbrot's work is anathema to them, a revival of ancient "monsters and pathologies" such mathematicians threw in the dungeon, forever, they hoped. It is war. No lasers or swords. Instead, the combatants are savants, the liberated monsters beautiful, the spell-casting formulae arcane, potions only helpful after-hours, and final point scoring is for future generations.

So, Mandelbrot naturally wanted to know if **Bourbaki**'s *FracTools* were some covert ploy by Bourbaki-the-ferocious-math-purists emanating from the unlikely locale of Boise, Idaho, where Bourbaki-the-software-company (who probably didn't understand the history of their name) has been producing the fine DOS shell 1DIR ("Wonder") for more than a decade. Or, as Mandelbrot tactfully put it, "The reason I write is to ask whether the juxtaposition of these two terms (fractal and Bourbaki) was accidental or deliberate."

He was pleased to learn from Bourbaki-the-software-company that *FracTools* was not some mathematicians' war-move; it is actually an homage to his work. This work has entered our culture in a unique way, not by pop simplifications (the way relativity theory did after The Bomb), but via widespread hands-on play with the methods and concepts.

This came about by historical accident: at just the right time, cheap, powerful computers were available to the young in spirit, to future scientists not yet part of The Establishment, and to those who like intricate mental activity, especially using their own hands and eyes, even if no one pays them for it.

Fractals became both a source for dreams of new sciences and an intensely involving recreation for fairly large numbers of people. The intensity of recreational involvement seems to arise from an intuitive perception that "fractal thinking" supplies something vital that is missing from the Western rational tradition, something which isn't supplied by airhead neo-mystic babble.

Historically, defensive rationalists have maintained that "the sleep of reason breeds nightmares" of death, destruction, war, evil. But there are other dreams. Perhaps it is those dreams that fractal thinking taps, aided by computer power, and may yet awaken to life for everyone. "All problems are not resolved, but …"

Illustration: Replicated within the periodicity bulbs of a Mandelbrot fractal generated by FracTools, Benoit Mandelbrot smiles. Behind him is a logarithmic ratios formula for determining fractal dimensions. Lower left, the "dueling fractal" is positioned as on the 1985 Scientific American cover that brought fractals to 50,000 hobbyists' attention.

On Location In The Great Underground Empire



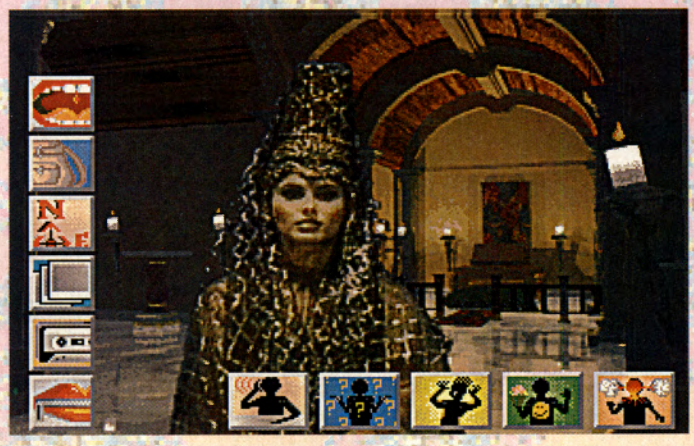
On The Set of *Return to Zork*

by Johnny L. Wilson

The technician calmly says, "Speed." The director, Peter Sprague, calls for "Action!" and Robyn Lively, the youthful red-haired actress dressed as a fairy, pushes an invisible object off of her. The set is relatively bare, except for assorted lights, microphone booms and a large blue screen behind the actress. Yet, the monitor shows Robyn in the midst of a lush, green forest.

Such is the magic of computer graphics and such was the setting when *CGW* invaded the sound stage of **Activision**'s upcoming *Return to Zork* (*Return*). The concepts behind the project had sounded interesting, but we arrived at the set with a ton of skepticism (largely due to our feelings about *Leather Goddesses of Phobos II*) and left with an equivalent amount of expectation. The design team really seems to have learned from the mistakes and built on the strengths of the first attempt to create a full-scale graphic adventure from a classic **Infocom** title.

First of all, *LGOP II* used amateur voice talents. *Return* uses professional actors and actresses, as well as an experienced screenwriter on-set to clean up and refine dialogue on the fly. Second, *LGOP II* was designed to be easy and accessible to entry-level players. *Return* has the most intricate puzzle structure we've seen in quite a while. *LGOP*'s interface could be described as "clunky," at best. *Return*'s interface may be revolutionary. It is certainly an interface that I would have said could not be done. *LGOP*'s art had an unfinished, almost crude, look. *Return*'s art is being integrated

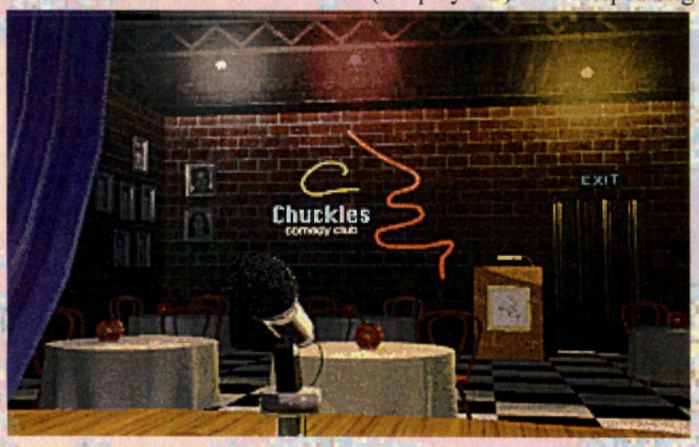




with the live actors from the very beginning. In short, *Return* has the potential of being … well, … a *real* **Infocom** game.

Cast Party

The cast is very interesting. We observed Ernest Lively, perhaps best known for his television role as Cooter on "The Dukes of Hazard" and his recent appearance in the action film "Passenger 57," playing the part of a one-armed adventurer. Between scenes, we asked him about the main difference between film and television acting and his first experience of appearing in a computer game. "The biggest difference is that there's no one to act off of," he stated and went on to explain that, since most of his lines were directed at the player of the game, there was no acting synergy between his character and the one (the player's) he was speaking



to. Although this is often the case when close-ups are being filmed for a series or film, most of his scenes in the game are *strictly* solo performances. Further, the actors often had to film six or seven different responses for each potential action by the player. It is tough to get into an acting rhythm under such circumstances. He did like the fact that the **Media Design West** and **Activision** production crews kept the filming on schedule and "didn't have to stop for half a day because the director didn't like the light."

All of the actors and actresses had to participate in one ritual unique to the requirements of a computer game. In order to use William Volk's technology, which synchronizes phonemes and facial movement, each performer was required to say a standard line in three emotional states. So, at some time during each performer's tenure in front of the camera, a casual observer would observe him or her shouting, "Mad dogs howling at the wind, so let's eat!" The line doesn't make much sense semantically, but it does phonetically, as the line contains all of the phonetic units of which English words are made. Technicians will be able to use the facial movements from the line to create lip-synced dialogue.

Those who used to watch "Twin Peaks" should recognize the game's fairy, Robyn Lively; fans of "The Wonder Years" should enjoy the troll, Jason Hervey (Wayne); and filmgoers who remember the remake of "Flash Gordon" should be familiar with the blind bowman, Sam Jones.

One of the actresses, Lori Lively, serves as a spirit in the woods and will be morphed into a tree. As an additional creative touch, Lori *sings* her part. Tougher yet, she had to sing her part *a capella* on the set and the accompaniment will be scored under her part at a later time. Fortunately, the project's voice coach, Teri Mason, has perfect pitch and was able to cue Lori and assist her in staying in the same key throughout each song segment.



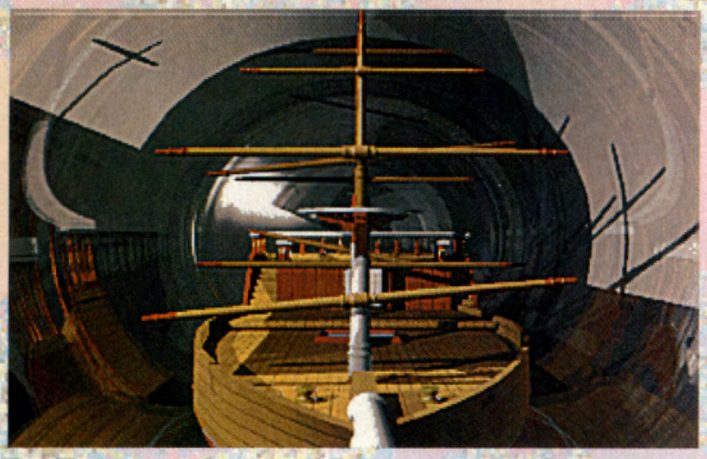
Exit, Stage Right

The blue screen in the background of the sound stage was used as part of a chromakey technique. Film studios often use the blue screen in connection with invisibility and special effects. Much like the weatherman on a local television newscast where the map is processed in, the backgrounds are computerized and processed into the shots during the filming.

According to art director Joe Asperin, use of the chromakey method serves to assist the six computer artists on the project when they have to match cameras and light between the live video and the 3-D rendered backgrounds. Without filming in chromakey, the artists have to match shadows and light sourcing between actors and backgrounds after the fact and it is much tougher to make the scenes look natural.

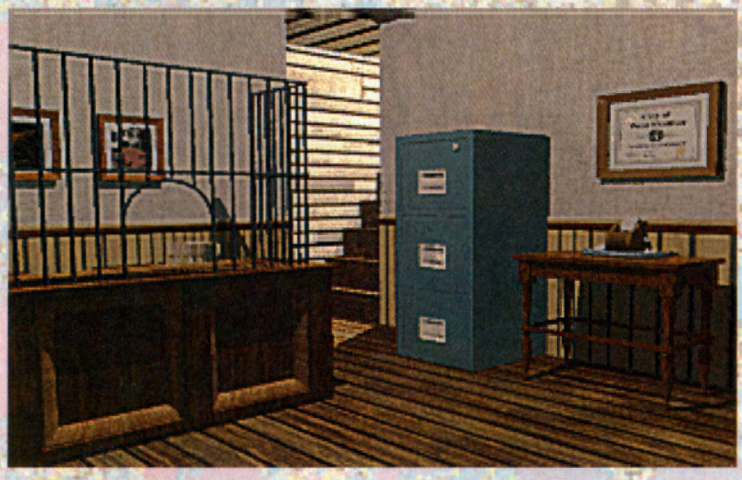
The objects in the backgrounds were modeled in a 3-D program called *Infini-D and the design team plans to do a CD-ROM version where players will be able to walk into locations much like in* **Virgin**'s *The 7th Guest* (but, because of Volk's compression routine, requiring only one compact disc). Further, even the backgrounds are composed such that very few of the shots are "square on." Instead, the artists strove to create new and interesting angles.





That the team has been successful is clear from the fact that Michelle Em, the screenwriter (*Jazz Heart*, written for Robert Redford's Sundance Productions) who rewrote the original dialogue, complimented the artists' approach. That is significant because Michelle is an Art Center College of Design graduate and worked for Robert Abel's special effects group. Indeed, several of her storyboards were used in the spectacular "other-worldly" sections of the original *StarTrek: The Movie*. So, she knows storyboards and she was impressed. (She is also an experienced **Infocom** gamer, dating back to the original *Zork*, so she knows games, too.)

A Maze Of Twisty Icons, None Looking Alike



Perhaps, the most phenomenal improvement we observed in *Return to Zork* is the ambitious new interface. Based on studies conducted at M.I.T., the interface should always be where the user is looking. In *Return*'s case, the two-button interface consists of the mouse plus a pop-up diamond configuration with up to eight icon-based options. Now, the diamond pops up wherever the cursor is located. Presumably, that is where the gamer is going to be looking. The mouse button on the right brings up the player's inventory and the left button conjures the diamond with the options.

Although this editor would have said it couldn't be done, we believe the icon-based interface solves some of the communication problems encountered with other non-text parsers. There is an icon for photographing the creatures, objects and characters encountered, as well as an icon for recording the dialogues in certain encounters and taking notes on clues uncovered. From the data saved via these icons, the gamer can show the "pictures" and "notes" to the NPCs encountered or play the "recordings" for them in order to gain other clues.

In essence, the game has not lost the text capacity of the classic **Infocom** stories, it is simply that one uses images and captured sound bytes to prompt the on-screen characters into telling more and more of the story. Further, the interface allows players to assume one of three body language poses: bored, interested or threatening, when they interrogate an on-screen character/creature. This allows a richness that has been absent heretofore in non-text graphic adventures.

Tell Me A Story

No one should get the impression, however, that *Return to Zork* is all technological fanfare and no story. Designer Doug Barnett (who wrote Cinemaware's *Lords of the Rising Sun*) scripted the original plot, wrote the original dialogue and developed the puzzle structure. Doug had always been an admirer of the **Infocom** classics and was thrilled to have the chance to create this return to the Great Underground Empire.

Once the game was cast, Michelle Em entered the picture and began rewriting the dialogue to fit the characterizations she was seeing emerge from the cast. Michelle really loves working in the game genre. So much so that she often plays **Infocom** adventures before she writes, because they help her start visualizing scenes as a "warm-up" to writing her own material.

Asked about the toughest challenge in switching from screenwriting to writing games, Em suggested that it is tough trying to write funny dialogue from 24 different character perspectives. Asked what was most satisfying about making the switch, she said: "When I see a movie, I get impatient. They're so ossified. There is such a formula. Games are like the beginning of the movie business. People are having so much fun that you don't mind working long hours." She went on to explain that she enjoyed the possibility of breaking the mold in the game business.

Closing Credits

Two consummate professionals serve to put the entire production together. Executive Producer David Mangone of **Media Design West** assembled a film crew which included the Emmy-winning (for ABC 20/20 segments) team of Glenn and Karen Winter and "King of the Teleprompters" Larry Klasen (Larry has worked with everyone from President Reagan to actors in dog food commercials). **Activision** Producer Eddie Dombrower (designer of *Earl Weaver Baseball*) brought in long-time acting buddy Peter Sprague to direct the actors, and artist Joe Asperin to coordinate the look of the production. Both producers were extremely impressed with the other's professionalism and, in observing them, it was difficult to realize that they had never worked with each other prior to the shoot.

In summary, Activision seems to be making all the right moves as they attempt to bring gamers back to the G.U.E. for a *Return to Zork*. After observing the set, we can't wait until the premiere. CGW



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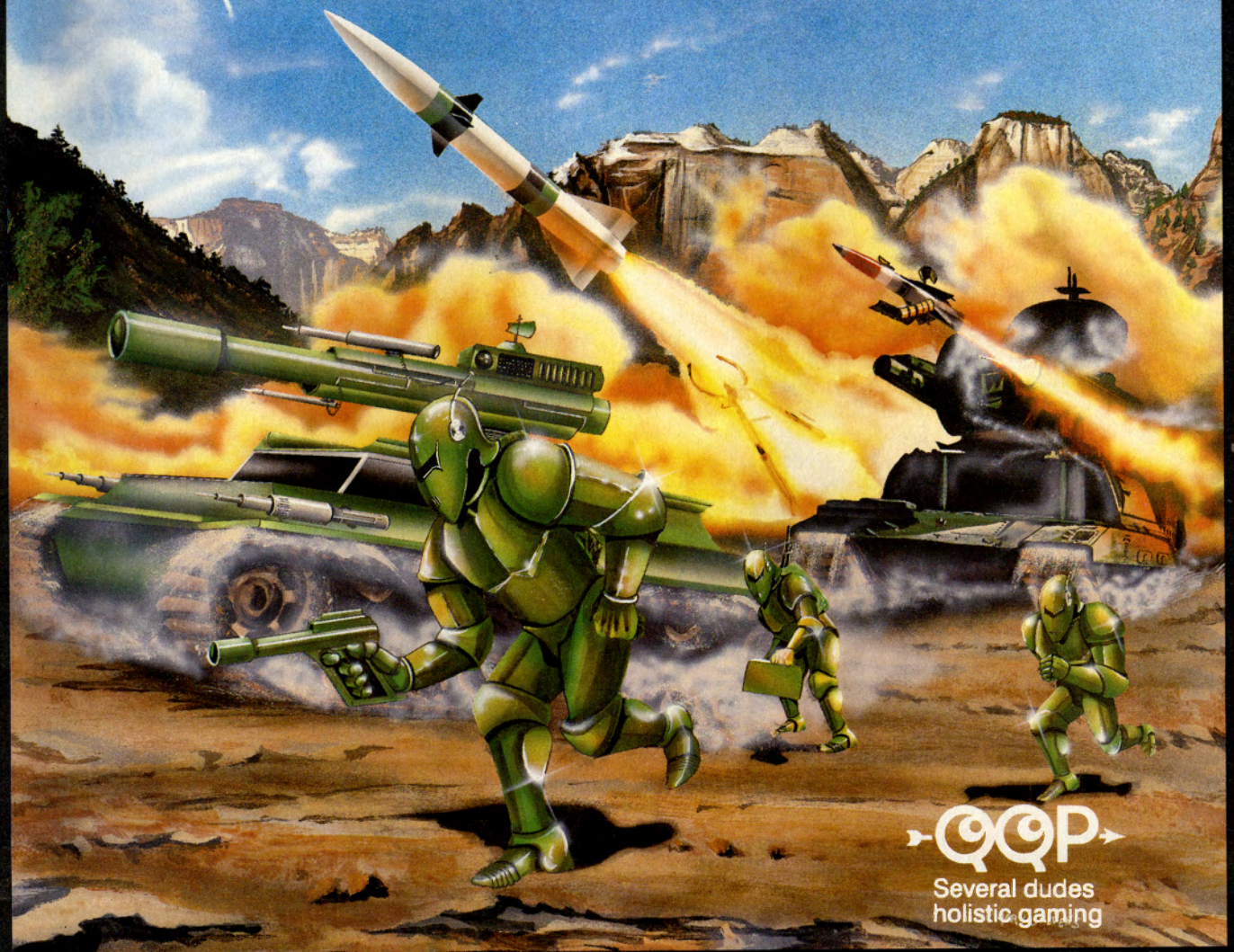
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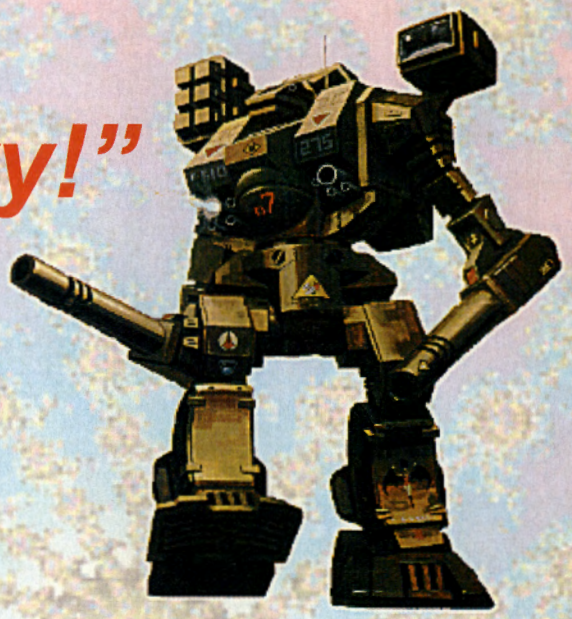
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"No Guts, No Galaxy!"



The Design of Virtual World Entertainments' *Battletech Center*

by Paul C. Schuytema

The 31st century is a dangerous place, especially for a MechWarrior. But ask anyone who's risked their neck for their House's honor and they'll tell you that nothing can compare to the thrill. Sliding into the Mark VII cockpit, wrapping their hands around the targeting stick and transmission slider, pumping their feet on the cool steel pedals and scanning the controls, the MechWarrior becomes a part of something else. Being the eyes and brain of a sixty-ton, thirty-meter Battlemech is no picnic. They must turn a machine of endo-steel and actuators into an athlete, sprinting it across the dusty surface of a mining planet, closing in for the kill and triggering an Alpha strike, all before the thin crescent moon descends over the distant hills. No, nothing can compare.

In **Virtual World Entertainment**'s *Battletech Center* (located at Chicago's North Pier), the experience is far more than just a game, it's a virtual tour de force. Anyone who has played **Activision**'s *MechWarrior* knows the setting: far future battlefields where the standard technology of war is an army of huge, anthropomorphic robots controlled by elite MechWarriors. At the *Battletech Center*, they've created the experience of actually piloting one of these dreadnoughts, from training to the mission briefing to the battle. The player slides into a custom-built virtual cockpit with over 100 working controls and instruments to do battle in real time against real opponents.

The experience plays havoc with one's adrenal systems. A large speaker mounted behind the cockpit chair rumbles and shakes one's bones. Twin screens surrounded by lights and toggles fill and illuminate the dark, womb-like cockpit. The *BattleTech* experience goes a step farther than the "traditional" headgear-based virtual reality systems by creating not a virtual reality, but a virtual experience. When one is sitting in that dark cockpit, waiting for the elevator to deliver the 'mech to the surface, it is possible to almost believe that one has been transported to the 31st century. Nothing in that cockpit betrays the experience and, in the heat of battle, as one's eyes shift from instrument to instrument, processing information, and every limb actively controls the movement and performance of the 'mech, one's awareness is certainly transported to the year 3052.

The game centers around combat between these Battlemechs, from simple scenarios of "shoot everything in sight" for the novices, to urban team warfare and twilight battles where the arcing missiles cast eerie glows across the purple horizon. A battle typically involves up to eight players and the *Battletech Center* has encouraged the development of organized teams to compete in "league" matches several nights a week.

The entire experience lasts approximately one half-hour, with a little over ten minutes devoted to pure cockpit warfare. A player has the option of choosing and configuring one of four 'mechs. During a sortie's briefing, touch-sensitive graphical databases are available to view the design and armament of friendly and opposition 'mechs. After the sortie is fought, the players gather in the debriefing zone to review their performance and discuss tactics.

The *Battletech Center* is a marvel of computer game design in which everything has been created to support the experience: custom-made computer hardware, cutting-edge computer programming, costumed attendants, and futuristic architecture.

The idea for the *Battletech Center* germinated back in 1979. Jordan Weisman and L. Ross Babcock III were two friends who wanted to create the ultimate interactive entertainment experience. Based loosely on the bridge of the first *Alien* movie, their original idea was to pit teams of individuals working on the bridge of a spaceship against other individuals. They attempted to secure funding, but because they were a recent college graduate and a college dropout, the funding just wasn't available and their forward-thinking idea of what computers could do was just "out there". The idea was put on hold.

In the mid-1980's, Weisman and Jordan were attending an industry model show and saw some models that caught their attention. They were figures based on several Japanese animation series featuring robot warriors. These robots were fanciful, semi-sentient creatures empowered with near-mythical abilities. In the cartoons such as *Gundam* and *Robotech*, they battled, along with the help of wide-eyed teenagers, to save the world. Weisman was captivated by the models, and they were being dumped at huge discounts. The two bought a ton of the models, and contacted the Japanese companies about li-

censes to use the anthropomorphic images.

They began to think about these robotic "creatures" and their imagination kicked in. They worked on creating a fictional world which was more Western in influence, based on the history of the Roman successor states and the hordes of raiding Mongols. Weisman was very interested in history and he believed that a few people, brainstorming, could think of a fairly plausible fictional history, but if you used actual history as a template, you then had the actions of millions of individuals to draw upon. They also wanted to demythologize the robots, making them purely machines (albeit very advanced machines) more akin to tanks than superheros. They imagined what would be necessary to keep these machines of war running, from pilots to repair technicians.

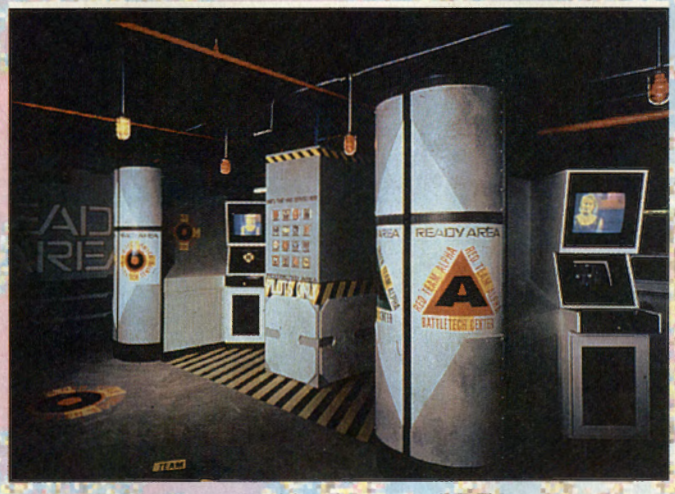
Weisman and Babcock wanted to make the world a declining culture (it's just more interesting, says Weisman), where the technology of the past was superior to the current technology. They created a scavenger society, where an armed forces recruitment slogan could have been: "Join the army and drive the 'mech your father drove."

In 1985, they created FASA corporation (which stands for "Fredonian Aeronautics and Space Administration" after the fictional country from the Marx Brothers' movie, *Duck Soup*) and began publishing the *BattleTech* boardgame (now in its third edition). They thought it would only take a few years to build the capital for their interactive entertainment center, but it turned out to take a lot more time and money than expected ($3.5 million to open the first center).

The boardgame has become immensely popular, spawning an entire series of supplements, technical documentation, and even a popular series of science fiction novels. The game is basically a tactical science fiction wargame in which the players control regiments of BattleMechs in a wide array of scenarios. The game-universe is set in the far future, in a region of space called the Inner Sphere, governed by rival and feuding, feudal houses (a derivation of the Roman successor states). In the evolving history of the game universe, the Inner Sphere has recently been invaded by clans (the historical Mongols) who control new technology Battlemechs called OmniMechs ('mechs which are modular and easily reconfigured). This invasion occurs in the game year 3052, the "current" year of the *Battletech Center*.

It was in 1987 when Weisman and Babcock finally generated enough capital to begin work on their entertainment center. When they first met with programmers to initiate the planning of the first center, they still were not sure what it would be based upon. After talking with the programmers about the feasibility of the project, the BattleTech universe seemed a perfect environment for their interactive entertainment center.

During these early stages of planning, *FASA* licensed its *Battletech* game concepts to software houses, who created such games as *The Crescent Hawk's Revenge* and *MechWarrior*. The multiplayer *Mechwarrior* which is playing now on **GEnie** received much more active input from



The Ready Area of the Chicago BattleTech Center

FASA. The current president of FASA, Sam Lewis, worked closely to design a vast role-playing world and database that fit into the *BattleTech* universe. Eventually, they hope to use this growing database to link all of the *Battletech Centers* together, enabling the victories in one *Center* to effect on the political and historical history of the entire "Inner Sphere."

Conceptual Reality

It was in 1990 when the newly formed company, **Virtual World Entertainments**, opened the first *Battletech Center* in Chicago. Weisman remembers being there on that first day, seeing his dream becoming a reality. "It was wonderful," he said, "but when I came back the next day, I could see all of the things we did wrong, all of the things that needed improvement." So, as soon as the *Center* had begun, it was already involved in the dynamic process of re-creation, which has recently culminated in a completely reworked program and cockpit system called the Mark VII.

In designing the center, Jordan Weisman wanted to create a "live-action role-playing environment for cooperative storytelling." He has always been interested in role-playing games and the imaginative entertainment they offer, but he wanted to make that type of cooperative play available to more people across a wider spectrum. Role-players (pencil and paper) must create the world in their imaginations and are much more willing to suspend disbelief just by talking about it. To make the appeal larger, however, Weisman saw the need to make the experience as real as possible, encompassing every aspect of the *Center*. With this in mind, they envisioned a multi-faceted experience, dividing the Center up into several major "experience" areas: observation platform, briefing, ready area, cockpit and mission review.

Weisman and Babcock considered making the experience "traditional" virtual reality, with the helmets for stereo vision, etc., but they felt that the technology was still in its infancy. In the head-mounted systems, the graphic resolution is low, the lag-time and frame rate for the moving image is choppy and disorientating, and there is the obvious encumbrance of the helmet. Weisman feels that a cockpit-based system is the best current technology for suspension of disbelief.

They wanted to create an experience that went beyond the arcade, and was aimed at an older, more sophisticated audience (18-35). Weisman points out that when coin-op games came into existence, they were indeed played by adults, but since most arcade games are based almost entirely on hand-eye coordination and the learning is by rote, ten to twelve-



Launch Bay 7

year olds are better than adults. And who, as an adult, will stick with something that a kid is better at? That, coupled with the arcades' move to the malls, excluded an older, more sophisticated audience.

In the *BattleTech Center*'s game, success is not based on hand-eye coordination alone. Actually, other things such as resource management, strategy, tactics and communication are much more essential

to success. Adults are better at and more interested in games of this nature. Also, players are grouped by experience level, so a new player will never be laser fodder for the wily *BattleTech*-mogul (though it is a good and humbling experience to play against an expert at least once in your apprenticeship. I played against one of the *Center*'s staffers and was smoked time and time again. However, seeing his robot sprint past me, then swivel back, firing while running beyond my range, only made me hungrier for improvement).

Nuts and Bolts

The cockpit itself is a marvel, boasting over 100 buttons and switches which all work and all contribute to the experience. Weisman points out that this is a simulator, not an arcade game. The cockpit is designed with user-configuration in mind. Any game can be played at any level, selected by the user while in the cockpit. The player can steer and aim with the joystick or elect to steer with the foot pedals. There are also options for weapon configuration, torso rotation, targeting, scanners, transmission and reactor heat. As Jordan says: "Everybody should be able to drive a Lambourghini, but the person who has more experience will be better at it. So anyone might drive it with an automatic, while an enthusiast will shift with a manual."

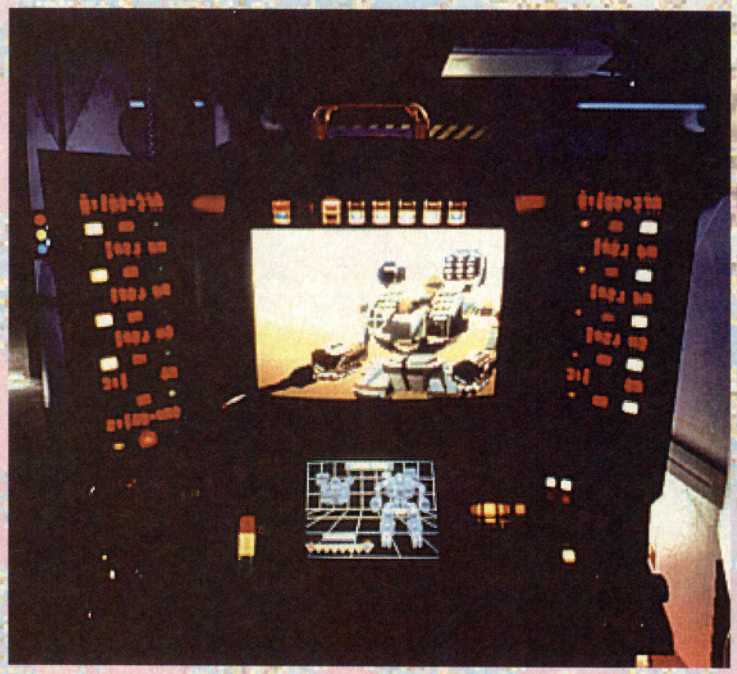
There is no HUD in the simulator, as is utilized in so many computer simulations. Weisman wanted to take advantage of the full cockpit, keeping the player's eyes moving, checking the status of varying systems. Enabling the player to scan the cockpit, eyes always moving, says Weisman, makes the adrenaline pump a lot faster.

Greg Corson is the lead programmer at Virtual World Entertainments. While the first version of the game, which was recently phased out, was contracted out to a programming house, all of the latest programming is done in-house. VWE employs three programmers, two hardware engineers and one "very prolific" computer artist.

Corson explains that the process of making the game begins with a pencil and a pad of paper, sketching the various aspects of the system. It is important to remember that the *BattleTech* experience is multi-faceted, with different areas of experience, and each area (ready area, debriefing, cockpit) designed with the others in mind. Once the basic "look" of the experience has been sketched out, they focused on the logistics (this is a business, remember) of moving people through the experience and setting up the time duration for each segment.

When it came time to actually begin work on the game design, Corson first looked at the *BattleTech* boardgame. The detail and the background come from the original rules, as well as the designs for the robots and the weapons systems. Corson points out that the boardgame was designed for play with dice on a hex board and certain aspects of it had to be modified in order to move the experience into real-time, mostly through trial and error to arrive at the right type of controls.

The programming for the game was written in C on Macintosh *Quadra 700*'s and, when the game is up and running, a *Quadra* which is configured before each session by an operator, sets up the variables for the encounter. Each cockpit houses its own computer, sporting two CPU's, a graphics controller and a secondary computer controlling all of the cockpit instruments. All told, each cockpit contains roughly 12 MB of RAM. At the beginning of each day, the program for the game is downloaded into each cockpit, and when the game is running, each computer controls the events in its own portion of a vast world-database.



View from inside the cockpit

Corson says the most amazing thing, from a technical point of view, is that the whole thing actually works together. The *Center* has sixteen cockpits, each with at least two CPUs, as well as a central computer and other secondary computers all linked together, all controlling such things as graphics, light-rendering, arcs and targeting of missiles, logistical information and radar.

He's Got The Look!

The staff artist at Virtual World Entertainments, David McCoy, entered the world of computer gaming from broadcast animation. McCoy thought he knew nearly everything he needed to know about computer graphics when he joined the *Battletech* team, but he quickly learned that things are perceived much differently in "the heat of battle." No longer is detail the most central issue. How things "feel" is much more important. McCoy said that during the development of the *BattleTech Center*'s graphics, he had to constantly wrestle with the battle of "How nice does it look?" vs. "How fast does it render?"

McCoy also quickly adopted a game designer's philosophy: if someone is moving around in their 'mech, just looking at objects, then they (the game team) haven't done their job very well. As McCoy says: "you can look at things all you want in reality." What they are creating is an active, vibrant world where there is very little time for browsing.

During the design process, the first step was to get the program to work smoothly. In the first play-test, the robots skated rigidly around the world, with no fluid movement. Once the dynamics of the games were solid, then came the animation.

McCoy first starts by rendering the 'mech in a 3-D CAD program, utilizing the *Battletech* boardgame's visual information. He makes the 'mech as detailed and complicated as possible, ready for the "glory shot" of graphic design prowess. He then strips it down, creating six or seven levels of simplified shapes which are drawn at farther and farther distances. The goal, he says, is to optimize the computer horsepower. The system has plenty of memory, he says, but rendering the movement of complex shapes slows the processor down.

After the 'mech is designed, the parts are then stripped apart and entered into the animation program where they are reassembled into the joints and vertices of a dynamic Battlemech. Using a computer program to create a "virtual claymation studio," McCoy is able to move the virtual 'mech in real-time with a custom-made controller box. By working its joints through various movements, he creates "key frames" which the computer fills in

ROME WAS'NT BUILT IN A DAY

How long will it take you...

with the proper smooth motion. McCoy points out that each 'mech has several different gaits animated in, and when the speed of the robot reaches a certain point, the computer changes the animation from a walk to a run.

Corson says that when they were working on animating the 'mechs, a wrong line of code could throw the animation off, making the robot move in some kind of "insane breakdance", with the torso spinning around the waist, the arms coming off and reattaching, etc.

Unlike broadcast animation, says McCoy, where a single frame might take hours and hours of rendering, he can create animations in real-time, seeing the results immediately. The process is much more flexible, allowing for trial-and-error attempts to make the movements as realistic as possible.

The player's cockpit generates the information for his or her own mech, saying, in essence, "here's the position I'm in, here are my vertices," and that information is picked up by the other cockpits where the mech is displayed, lumbering, walking or sprinting.

When the whole system works together, it is a gaming experience like no other, and fortunately, they have spent a good deal of time working on the mission debriefing



BattleMechs in action

area of the center, where you can watch a replay of your entire battle from a bird's-eye view, while another monitor displays each 'mech, the damage it has taken, etc. It's amazing how easily perfect strangers can come together when discussing their battle, pointing to the screen and nodding when a particular tactic seems to work especially well.

Weisman and Babcock envisioned a social gaming atmosphere, and they have certainly delivered. After debriefing, each player receives a printed mission report, which gives a play-by-play account of the mission's highlights as well as scores for the individual players.

Currently, there is only one *Center* in the United States, in Chicago (there are also *Centers* in Tokyo and Yokohama), but Virtual World Entertainments has just announced plans to open up six more *Centers* across the U.S., as well as to expand the game even further.

From the results that they have achieved so far and what they have learned about large-scale interactive game design, the future seems wide open. Weisman sees this form of entertainment as an evolutionary step forward, beyond the banalities of "sit and watch" television. Weisman is a visionary, optimistic that this form of entertainment will grow to the verisimilitude of movies and plays, and as he says: "the whole staff here tends to think years ahead of the technology, so we'll have plenty to do — for quite a while."

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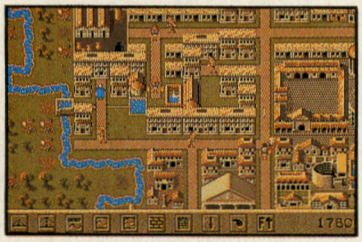
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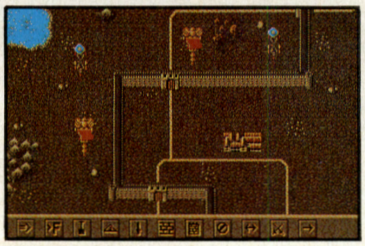
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THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

Polygon Technology in I•Motion's Horror Adventure, *Alone in the Dark*

by Chris Lombardi

It struck me as odd, pulling into the driveway of **Interplay Productions** in Irvine, CA, that the two most interesting horror adventure games of '93 were being produced just a block away from each other. Looking down the winding road of a planned commercial zone in one of the most notorious planned communities in Southern California (a scary thought in itself), I could see the distinctive red and white of the sign that marked the home of **Virgin Games**, where I knew that frantic programmers were working feverishly to finish their long-awaited and much hyped, *7th Guest.*

While the Virgin team worked to stuff their technological behemoth onto two CD-ROM discs, I visited Interplay to discuss the beta version of a horror game that had materialized on my desk earlier that week. This game, entitled *Alone in the Dark* (*Alone*) and designed by the French developers **Infogrammes** and **I•Motion** (a new publishing partnership with **Interplay**), comes nowhere near the visual and technological splendor of the Virgin production, but it does use an old technology in a new way to produce a fresh and engaging 3-D adventure gaming environment. And, while we've yet to see much game-play behind the 3-D visual fireworks of *7th Guest,* the 3-D technology used in *Alone* both creates a convincing 3-D work with visual flair *and* lends itself to complex and rewarding play. And it won't require a CD-ROM in order to enjoy it.

The "old" technology used in *Alone* is our dear friend, the polygon. The player assumes the role of a character whose image is composed of simple geometric shapes. As one will notice from the screenshots showing close-up images of the character, the result is rather rough—resembling the creation of a child and her set of wooden blocks. My immediate reaction to this rough hewn image was a disinterested shrug. Then, I started moving this blockhead around the 3-D environment. After watching the character stroll casually about the room, pushing objects around, and bending over to examine and pick-up 3-D objects, I was beginning to understand what the designers were attempting to accomplish. Then, after my first deadly encounter with a bizarre reptilian duck, wherein my character punched and kicked, with great fluidity and a life-like agility, at the bill of this creature of Lovecraftian inspiration (and died as a result), my cold disposition began to thaw, and I restarted the game intrigued.



Alone in the Dark is set in the classic adventure game locale — the haunted house. Since the very beginning, game designers have loved this setting for its discrete room structure and its limitless potential as a breeding ground for spooks, ghoulies, secret compartments and passages. *Alone* uses these conceptual design tools to good effect, creating a world where one is constantly looking over one's shoulder and searching every shadowed nook for the mechanism that reveals the secret study. Enhancing the effect of these haunted 3-D environs is the extensive use of "camera angles" to continually change the player's perspective. As one's character moves about a room, one's perspective will change many times; from a straight-away side-on pan, to an overhead "closet-set" shot, to an "inferior-view" from floor level, to many other perspectives in the visual grammar of cinema. While many rooms have only two such camera views, some have up to nine! When teamed with some nice sound effects (floors creaking with every step, eerie howlings, fiendish laughs, and growls from monsters), these changing perspectives have the effect of pulling the viewer into the environment in a similar manner as the effect achieved by *Ultima Underworld* and *Wolfenstein 3-D*, and, of course, film.

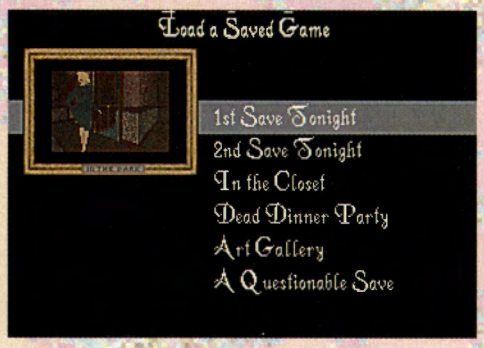
Gamers should be warned, however, that the unique cinematic angles sometimes get too clever. Swift changes in the viewpoint can occasionally be disastrous when the player's character is in combat mode. At the very least, these shifts can be disorienting. Yet, given the option of not having the amazing variety of angles and never having a disorienting moment in combat or having the variety and occasionally being discomfited, most gamers would opt for the latter.


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With the hackneyed haunted mansion setting, comes the hackneyed storyline. The player can choose to play one of two characters: the bespectacled Victorian sleuth, Detective Carnby, or the young Victorian heiress, Miss Emily Hartwood. Both enter the haunted abode of the deceased Jeremy Hartwood to investigate his "suicide." Of course, the player comes to realize that the Hartwood's death was not a suicide at all, but just might be the result of his naughty delvings into the occult. Apparently his clumsy gropings for occult power had opened up a satanic portal, turning his lovely manor into a spiritual bus station at the junction of our reality and of unseen evil. As hinted at earlier, the story and setting owe much to the work of H.P. Lovecraft. While *Alone* does not acknowledge this debt, the Rumor Bag Guy has informed me that I•Motion's/Interplay's next two releases using this game system will bear Lovecraft's name, as they have acquired the official *Call of Cthulhu* license.



Unusual for an adventure in these "point and click" times, *Alone* does not have a mouse interface. Players control the motions of their polygon characters and access their inventories with the keypad. As players scroll through the individual items, a 3-D spinning image of the artifact appears in a window, each item with a few action options associated with it. In the version I played, the keypad controls worked well in controlling the characters motions (the game often requires fine movements which make mouse control inappropriate), though it was rather clumsy when it came to accessing the inventory. Fortunately, I was playing the European version which has just been released overseas. Interplay will be refining the game before releasing it in the U.S. (target date: February), fixing a few glitches and tweaking the interface. These tweaks include adding "hot keys" for common character actions and adding additional functions to the inventory system, and thereby eliminating the sources of my frustration.



While on the subject of game mechanics, I must mention a small, though all too slick, feature of *Alone*'s save game system. When the save game feature is selected, a special screen appears where six save game names are listed, along with a small "screen capture" of the point at which the game was saved. This is a great help for adventurers like myself who can get so involved that they don't have the presence of mind to write clear and understandable descriptions of the save state. In *Alone*, when I come back to the game on a subsequent night, I no longer have to scratch my head over filenames like "SNUFFED THE GHOULIE" or "GOT THE THINGY". I simply look at the save game screens to know exactly where the game state was saved to disk. Nice touch!

Despite the rough edges (literally) of *Alone*'s polygon technology, I think the designers have really accomplished something in this game—something that will cause other established adventure game producers to lift their heads out of their 2-D box blinders and consider another gaming dimension. I look at the rough poly-images in *Alone* and am reminded of the state of tank and flight simulators using the same technology a few years ago. If the use of polys in adventure games progresses the way polygon rendered sims have, adventure gamers can look forward to some exciting 3-D game environments in the near future. For now, one need not bemoan the fact that one hasn't the cash for the CD-ROM upgrade necessary to play an exciting horror game with neat technology. They need only play *Alone in the Dark*, which I've come to call, "*7th Guest* for the rest of us." CGW



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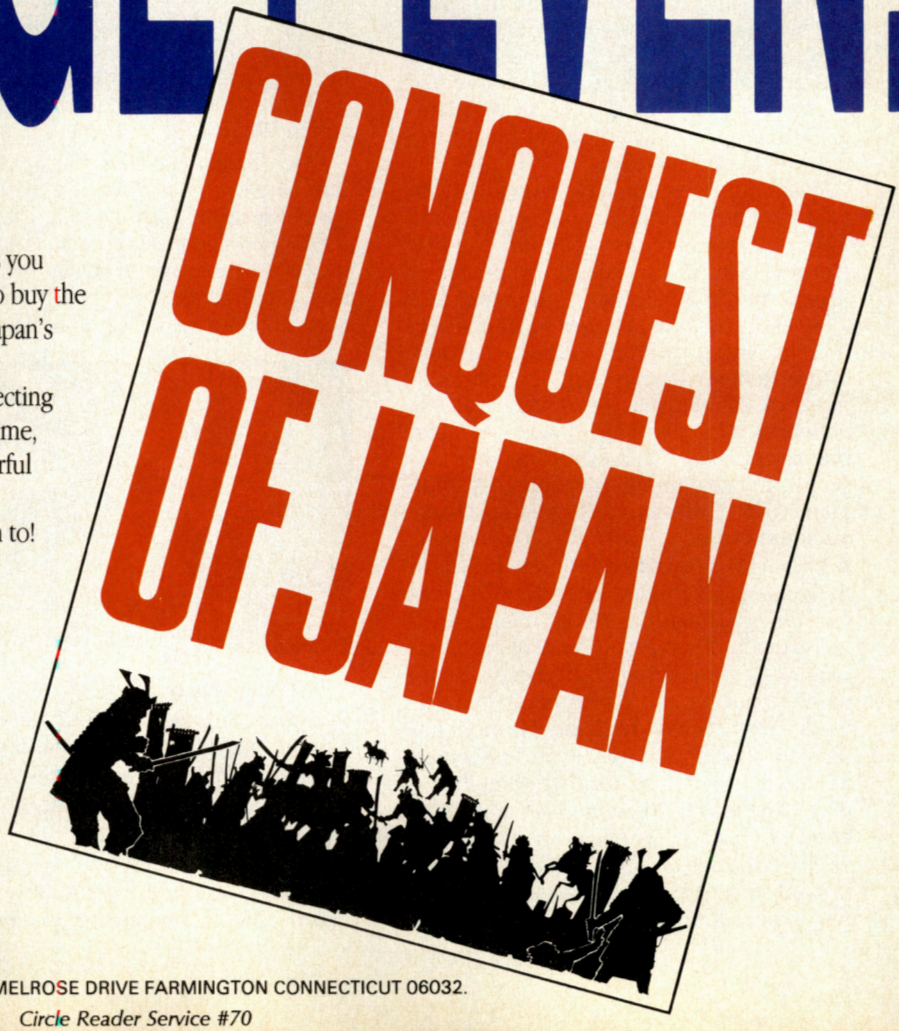


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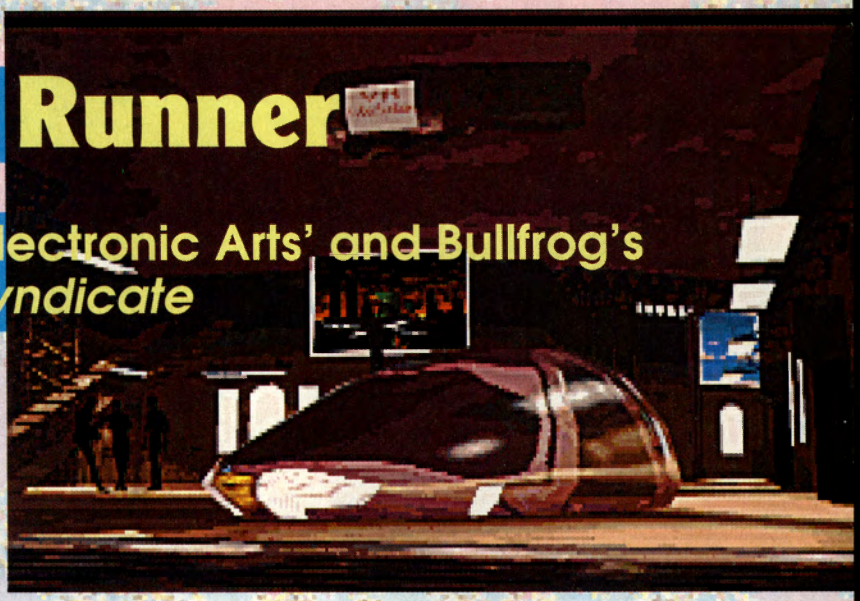
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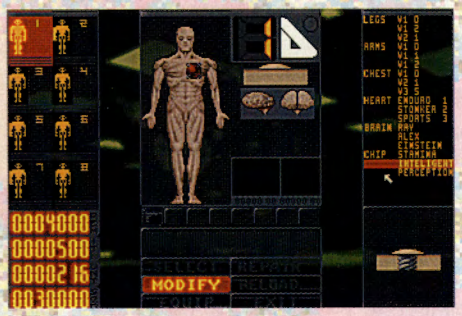
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Brain Runner

A Sneak Preview of Electronic Arts' and Bullfrog's *Syndicate*



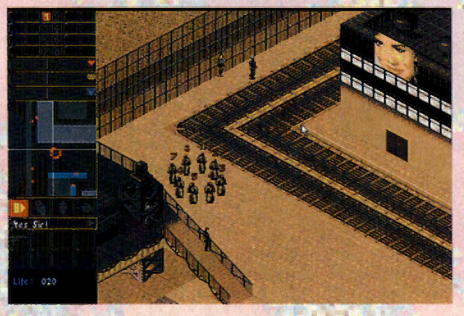


Ridley Scott would be proud. The 3-D rendered urban landscape of Bullfrog's upcoming *Syndicate* (working title) features the film noir look of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*-with an overdose of perpetual acid rain and ominous shadows. It is *Blade Runner* Meets *Neuromancer*, an occidental version of Effinger's Budayeen or a dark shadow city from a Lewis Shiner novella.

Syndicate uses hot new technology to venture into the universe of cyberpunk. Though novelist Norman Spinrad (*Little Heroes*) offered last rites for the genre, by questioning its existence as a genre, in a 1989 essay in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction* magazine (March, 1989), the dark future venue with its prodigious interlocking corporations, massive data processing networks, freebooting hackers and brain/personality enhancement modules seems to be gaining in popularity with gamers. **R. Talsorian**'s *Cyberpunk*, **Steve Jackson Games**' *G.U.R.P.S. Cyberpunk*, **FASA**'s *Shadowrun* (with its blend of magic and cyberpunk) and **GDW**'s *Dark Conspiracy* (blending horror, magic, sci-fi and a touch of cyberpunk) are all successful role-playing games and *Hacker*, a card game about breaking into computer networks from **Steve Jackson Games**, has done very well (and may even be licensed as a computer game). Further, though neither **Interplay**'s *Neuromancer* nor **Infocom**'s *Circuit's Edge* were as successful as hoped, their commercial performance proved there was some market for cyberpunk computer games.

Syndicate features many of the conventions associated with the genre. There is a standard Brobdingnagian corporation, MegaCorp. Further, one's agents can be fitted with "mindcaps," brain enhancement modules that connected directly into the user's neural system, similar to what William Gibson called Micro-Softs, George Alec Effinger called "daddies" (to go with "moddies") and Rudy Rucker called *Wetware*.

Also, the game is being designed to feature network play (sort of a cyburb of its own) for up to eight people. Players will direct their agents (each with computer AI based on three major attributes: Perception, Intelligence and Aggression) to interact with other agents by adjusting their AI.



The goal is to make the AI agents within the game so real, using Eliza-esque algorithms, that players on a network won't know when they are encountering human-controlled agents or AI-controlled agents. Such a design objective is somewhat cyberpunk in and of itself. Finally, **Bullfrog** intends to create 60 incredibly detailed urban cities in which the player will be able to manipulate his/her on-screen agents.



As in **Bullfrog**'s most successful games, *Populous* and *Powermonger*, the game world will continue to update in a simulated real-time mode, and the gamer will react by making real-time decisions via a point and click interface. The agents are roughly equivalent to the military leaders of *Powermonger* and the designers promise that the AI routines for the citizens of the cities are even more detailed than those in that game of world conquest. (Apparently, not everyone realized that every on-screen character in *Powermonger* had a name, occupation and home town.)

As the screenshots on this page should communicate, **Electronic Arts** and **Bullfrog** have created a stunning visual presentation. What remains to be seen is whether gamers are ready, not only for real-time strategy/role-playing in a modern world, but for cyberpunk strategy and role-playing in a very dark future. We suspect they are. CGW

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Veil of Darkness™

IBM 256-color VGA









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COMDEX®

Pentium™ Futures and Computer Game Survival

Fall Comdex is certainly held in the right town. Las Vegas is synonymous with gambling and that is probably the right symbolism for the current state of the entertainment software industry. It seems that the software industry is always waiting to rake in the big chips on the next shooter, but the odds are never what one thought they were going to be.

At this year's Comdex, *CGW* hoped to discover information about **Intel**'s 586 chip and, if possible, more about "Smart T.V." platforms like **Sega**'s CD-ROM drive and **3DO**'s upcoming machine. Unfortunately, the hard data was meagre or non-existent on both. As always, however, the computing industry's major exposition was thought-provoking.

Chip Shots

Intel's new chip will not be called the 586. Instead, the company used a major portion of their exhibit to introduce the *Pentium*™. The chip manufacturer used prototypes from **Compaq**, **Dell**, **IBM**, **NCR** and **NEC** to demonstrate real-time 3-D animation and full-motion video at four times the image area of the maximum image able to be handled by a 486. Since Comdex is predominantly a business/productivity-oriented showcase, the demonstrations featured CAD applications and a 3-D architectural program that let one zip through a fully-rendered house at, figuratively speaking, lightspeed.

Since the demonstrations were not "hands on," we cannot be sure how fast the processor would handle an *Ultima Underworld*, *Betrayal at Krondor* or *F-15 Strike Eagle III*, but we feel confident that the 100 MIPS (million instructions per second) will provide the five times the integer performance and ten times the floating point performance that **Intel** promises. Such speed virtually guarantees more authentic vehicle simulation performance and more effective use of the 3-D rendering technology which is becoming so popular in state-of-the-art games.

Tube Stake

As for 3DO, we attended a panel on "Smart TV: Mass Market Computing" in which Robert Faber, Vice-President of Marketing for the new technology company spoke (along with Bernie Mitchell, National Marketing Manager of **Philips Consumer Electronics** [CD-I], Doug Glen, Director of Marketing for **Sega**'s Multimedia Products, and Howard Elias, Vice-President of **Tandy Corporation**). Whereas the other three panelists had definite products to talk about, Faber outlined a philosophical prospectus for a Smart TV technology. Faber indicated that repackaging technologies (i.e. hiding the computer) is not adequate for a new platform to find acceptance. He insisted that there must be a breakthrough that sets a stake far enough out in the future for consumers to want to be part of the picture. He also hinted at a need for a marketing support plan to assure availability of the new technology and a long-range plan to lower the cost (although he ominously observed, "Few technologies that are really worthwhile start out inexpensive."). Faber was unable to comment on the specifics of the **3DO** machine, but industry wags are now questioning **3DO**'s commitment to the principles originally espoused by Trip Hawkins when he began preaching the virtues of the "black box" some years ago (i.e. connectivity, cable network affiliation and mass market pricing). There were some hints, however, that **3DO** would be releasing some specifics at their presentation on the opening day of the Winter Consumer Electronics Show in January of 1993.



CMC's *WHO KILLED SAM RUPERT?*

With regard to products already on the market, however, Bernie Mitchell impressed the audience with his portable CD-I (with its six-inch color screen) and his assurance that the platform is not only compatible with audio CD formats, CD-ROM, CD-ROM-XA and Kodak's Photo-CD, but would also be compatible with a CD-R (CD-Recordable) technology currently under development.

Howard Elias presented a video tape touting the virtues of **Tandy**'s *VIS* (Video Information System). Again, the system consists of a box that connects to one's television screen and "hides" the computer. The *VIS* is, essentially, a 286-based CD-ROM machine *sans* keyboard.

Doug Glen demonstrated the *NightTrap* video game, which uses actual video footage, on the **Sega** CD platform. He observed that the launch shipment of CDs sold out and pointed out that, as a $299 add-on, the **Sega** CD is the only multimedia platform with mass market pricing.

Glen's vision of the future for entertainment systems includes: 1) movies on demand; 2) games on demand; 3) interactive movie games; and 4) video faxing of business, educational and shopping information. Though the current **Sega** *Genesis* configuration does not feature connectivity (with the original *Tele-Genesis* long since dead), Glen recognized that connectivity is becoming more important in the marketplace and will continue to grow in importance.

With regard to connectivity, neither Glen nor Faber were able to confirm their respective plans for the future, but Elias observed that the *VIS* had provision for modem output, due to their anticipated usage with home shopping options, and Mitchell announced that **Philips** is currently involved in a joint venture with **GTE** (General Telephone and Electronics) to provide a fiber-optic connection to the CD-I some time in the future.

Sound Investment

Multimedia was still a major topic of discussion at Comdex and, as a result, sound card manufacturers had a significant presence. **AdLib** has returned and will be marketing the **AdLib** *Gold* sound card, a move that will be supported by game manufacturers like **Westwood Associates** (*Legend of Kyrandia*, *Dune II*) and **ICOM Simulations** (*Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective*). **Creative**

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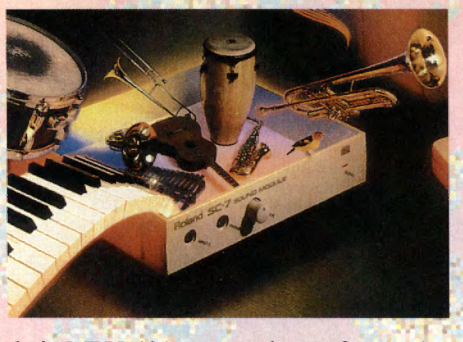
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Labs, Inc. had major booth space in two of the exhibition venues in order to demonstrate the possibilities for *Sound Blaster Pro* applications (though judging from their exhibits, computer games will not play a large part in their 1993 strategy). Further, the *Pro Audio Spectrum* was well-supported by exhibitions from **Origin Systems** (*Ultima VII*, *Wing Commander*) and **MicroProse** (*Mantis*, *F-15 Strike Eagle III*).

In support of sound cards, **QSound** was also getting significant attention with their demonstration booth where attendees could experience "surround-sound" without expensive, additional hardware. **QSound** has software-driven algorithms which enhance the capacity of one's existing system, assuming correct speaker placement.

The newsiest sound presentation was at the **Roland** booth, however. **Roland** presented two new sound systems for use with multimedia. The *SC-7 Sound Module* provides both MIDI and DSP capability (with 128 digital samples of instrument sounds) for IBM and Macintosh users at a suggested retail price of under $400. The module comes complete with all the cables needed to connect directly to the serial port. At the top end, Roland introduced **The Audio Producer**™ (**TAP-10**) sound card, a 16-bit stereo system complete with



their MPU-401 sequencing software (an amazing set of tools), A/D/A converter, MIDI interface and a capability of performing 2-track monaural sampling resolution at 44.1/22.05/11.025 kHz. Both cards are compatible with existing games and feature maximum flexibility for composition and sound sampling.

Give Me A Home Where the CD-ROMs ROM

One general disappointment over the last few years has been the dearth of interesting entertainment software on the CD-ROM platforms. In general, the products have been shovelware, text-intensive or only slight enhancements of previous products. It was encouraging to note a few exceptions at this year's Comdex. Naturally, one was the long-awaited *The 7th Guest* from **Virgin** (as well as promised CD versions of their Conan and Dune titles). Virgin has taken the premium route in product development.

Another approach was presented by **Creative Multimedia Corporation** (**CMC**). **CMC** is publishing low-cost, but high value, CD-products in many areas (education and reference, as well as entertainment). Their $39.99 mystery game for the Macintosh, *Who Killed Sam Rupert?*, features Quick-Time style film clips when suspects are interrogated and for a variety of investigative activities. For traditional gamers, the product probably has too many free-running segments, but it offers plenty for entry-level gamers. Further, their first product in *The Taran Trilogy*, *Beyond the Wall of Stars* ($49.95) has enough decision points to keep matters interesting and presents lots of text with enough animation to encourage further reading/exploration.

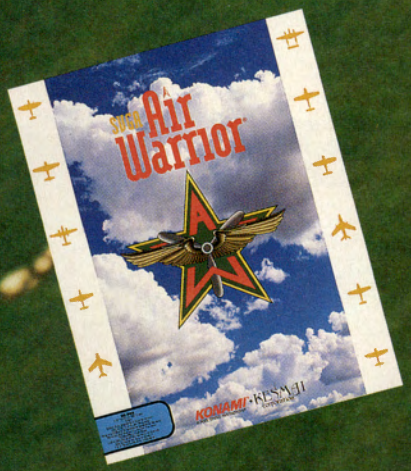
Checking The Map

In short, there are plenty of new developments in the offing that can affect computer gamers. Unfortunately, there is no clear direction as to where technology is taking the computer gaming hobby. This era of expected consolidation and confluence has become just as fragmented as the last era of diverse formats and non-standardization. CGW



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Flight From The Ground Up



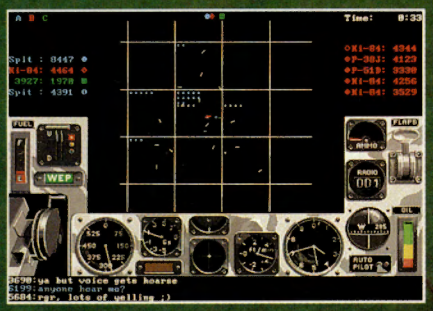
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Don't let him back on top; it's a veteran move. Sight and squeeze to keep a Zero from zeroing in on you.



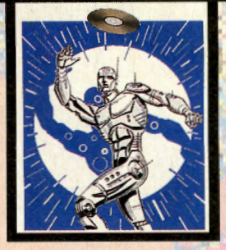
Bring up the radar screen to ID the position of friend, foe, and landing fields, in a 900 sq. mile air theatre.



Bogey #2, 11:00!! Chase him, but save enough fuel to escape from behind enemy lines.

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Gaming on the One-eyed Monster

Aitech's ProPC/TV and ProPC/TV Plus –VGA to NTSC Converters

by Chuck Miller

Sometimes I tire of playing the latest, greatest adventure on a teeny tiny 14" screen. A 17" or 20" Super VGA monitor would be much more appropriate for the task. Unfortunately, my aspirations of playing computer games on a large screen far surpass my budget for doing the same. Large-screen monitors, ranging in price from $900 to $2400, are simply out of my price range.

Do You See What I See?

Now, for a substantial amount less, the gamer can connect his or her computer to a large screen television and bring computer gaming to new visual heights (and widths). **Aitech International** has just released two encoder boxes which allow the user to connect a computer with VGA card to any video device, including TVs, VCRs and video projection systems. NTSC, S-VHS and PAL are all supported by these handy converters designed for multimedia applications, including games.



Crossed Signals

So what are they? The *ProPC/TV* and *ProPC/TV Plus* are external devices that convert VGA text and graphics output into an NTSC, PAL or S-VHS signal. Small enough to fit in a pocket or purse, these devices allow the gamer to get the "big picture" at more affordable costs. Remember, though, affordable varies from person to person. The base version, *ProPC/TV*, retails for $299 with the more capable *ProPC/TV Plus* at $499.

Making a Resolution

The primary difference between these two models is in ease of use and supported resolutions. The *ProPC/TV Plus* allows one to use both a VGA monitor and television simultaneously, while the *ProPC/TV* only supports one output device. Both units provide NTSC, PAL and S-VHS output, a power supply and all necessary cables (the latter are, however, a little on the short side).

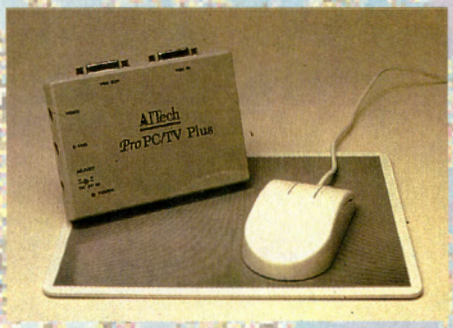
The second major difference involves the level of VGA support provided. Though the *ProPC/TV* can handle VGA up to 640 x 480, it only supports 16 colors in that mode. The *ProPC/TV Plus* supports VGA and SVGA, with up to 16 million colors in 640 x 480 resolution.

How Refreshing!

While both encoders performed well, the *ProPC/TV Plus* is a superior product which is easier to use than its lesser brother. I did, though, experience one somewhat noticeable problem during testing — a light band scrolling from bottom to top across the TV screen. According to **Aitech**'s technical support representative, this is caused by differing refresh rates between television (60Hz) and VGA (which can be either 59, 60 or 72Hz). Solving this problem requires changing the dip switches on the VGA card to match its video refresh rate to that of the TV. I elected *not* to fiddle with my VGA card settings.

Size Makes a Difference

In the end, the buyer must justify an expense. While these devices will enable one to connect a PC to a large screen TV, adding another $100 will allow the purchase of a high quality 16" VGA monitor like the **NEC** *MultiSync 4D*. Yet there is, for example, quite a difference in size between a 16" and 27" screen (I used a **Sony** 27" *Trinitron* color television for my tests). The other major consideration is logistics. If computer and television share the same room or can be brought together easily, playing on a large screen can be quite an attractive option. However, if a great deal of "rearranging" is in order each time one wants to increase the visual size of his game world, this option becomes less appealing.



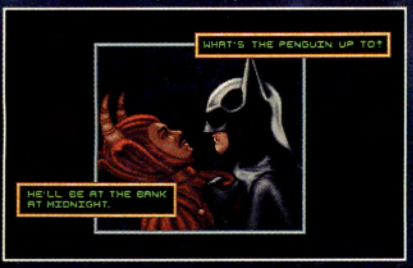
Getting the Picture

If I had to make a choice, I would opt for the *ProPC/TV Plus* over the *ProPC/TV* due to its slightly better image quality, the extended resolutions available and the ability to view both a VGA monitor and television screen simultaneously (it makes running the required TSR software much easier and eliminates the cable swapping required by the less expensive unit). Honestly, though, if it is a chore to bring the computer and television together for use, I would pass on the encoders and go for the 16" **NEC** *MultiSync 4D* monitor. Though the picture is not nearly as large, the image is much sharper and there are no relocation hassles. However, if I had a second PC that I could keep near the television, or better yet a laptop that I could easily connect, I would definitely think long and hard about picking up the **Aitech** converter.

Either way, large screen gaming does make a difference. It heightens the experience, making the game world seem all the more real. Too bad the checkbook looks so anemic!

For more information on these products, contact **Aitech** at Aitech International, 830 Hillview Court, Suite 145, Milpitas, CA 95035 or call (408) 946-3291. CGW



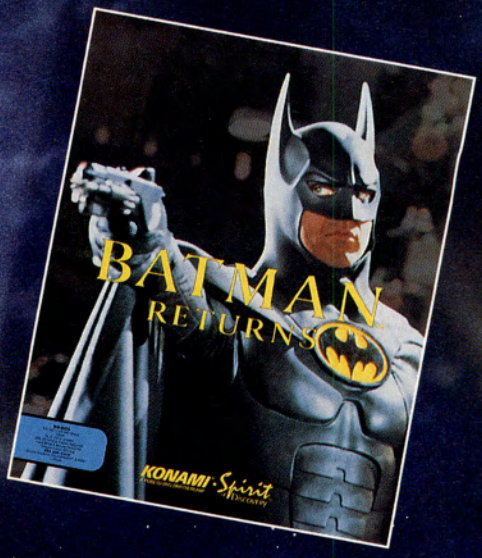




Frigid winter winds swept over an already chilled **Gotham City**. Random street crimes were running at an all-time high, despite the holidays. Down below, in the city's frozen sewers, **Oswald Cobblepot**, known as **The Penguin**, planned *more* mayhem and schemed the takeover of the frightened metropolis. **Gotham City** *is* in trouble. A desperate call to **Batman** goes up.

Partner with **Batman** to salvage **Gotham City** from **The Penguin's** cold-hearted plot. Guide him in swift, life-like moves from dark alleys to rooftops in vivid scenes straight from the hit movie, "**Batman Returns**." Control his combat style, and help conduct relentless interrogations of **The Penguin's** gang. Use the **Batcave** computer to input clues, analyze evidence, and review enemy bios. You're in charge of weapons and utilities, too. Save **Gotham City**... and put **The Penguin** on ice.





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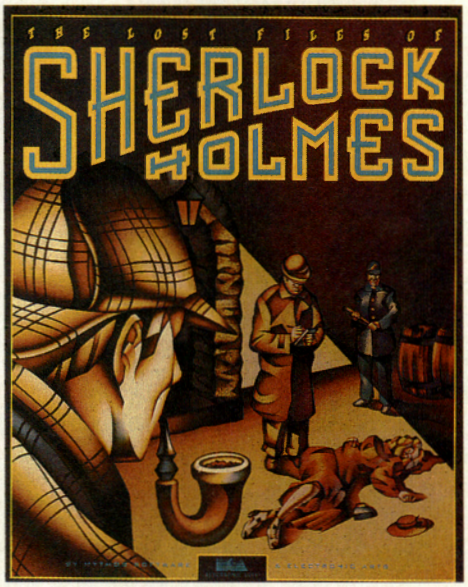
The Game's Afoot, One More Time



Electronic Arts' *The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes*

by Charles Ardai

TITLE:	The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$59.95
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Mythos Software
PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts San Mateo, CA



If there is any character who has appeared in more computer games than **Nintendo**'s plump little goldmine, Mario, it has to be Sherlock Holmes. There have been almost a dozen Holmes-inspired games over the years, one of the best being *Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective*, which is currently available in two different CD-Rom editions from **ICOM**. Other valiant attempts have included **Imagic**'s *Sherlock Holmes In Another Bow*, in which Holmes took a sea voyage with Gertrude Stein, Picasso, Thomas Edison, and Houdini, among others; and **Infocom**'s deadly serious *Sherlock: Riddle of the Crown Jewels*.

The difference between Holmes and Mario games, however, is that new Mario games are always coming out because the old ones sold like gangbusters, while new Sherlock Holmes games come out in spite of the fact that their predecessors sold like space heaters in the Sahara. It is noteworthy that, until **ICOM**, no company had ever released more than one Sherlock Holmes game, while all the Mario games come from the same source. It is also worth noting that the Holmes curse is not limited to games: the last few Holmes movies, such as "Without A Clue" and "Young Sherlock Holmes" were not exactly box office blockbusters.

So, why are new adventures of the Great Detective still hitting store shelves (not to mention movie screens)? Further, what is one to make of the newest of them all, **Electronic Arts**' *Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes* and its Gardner-esque title ("The Case of The Serrated Scalpel") that sounds more like a Perry Mason novel than Holmes mystery?

Let's examine these questions one at a time.

There's No Police Like Holmes

The paradox of Sherlock Holmes can be stated so: while not that many people actually like the original Sherlock Holmes stories, everyone seems to think that everyone else adores them. Like Tarzan and Hawkeye, Holmes is a literary icon, universally known and much beloved as a character in the abstract — not, however, as part of any single work. Finding someone who has actually read and enjoyed the writing of Edgar Rice Burroughs, James Fennimore Cooper or Arthur Conan Doyle requires the patience of Diogenes. Most people know the characters from television and the movies, at best; at worst, from reviews of television shows and movies they never bothered to see.

So, why do new Holmes adaptations surface with such regularity? Because the character is already famous and the material is in the public domain (thereby mitigating the requisite licensing fees associated with famous characters of more recent vintage. Batman or Indiana Jones, for instance). Another answer is that Sherlock Holmes is seen as bridging the gap between entertainment and literature. Game companies presumably hope to cash in on the recognition factor and have some of the character's ponderous respectability rub off on their product. They also figure that they



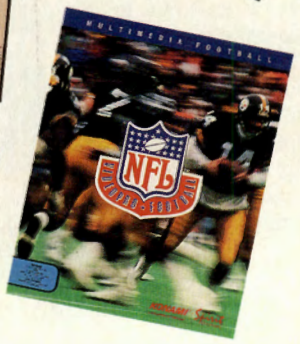
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can't go wrong basing their games on a body of work that has endured for almost a century.

Unfortunately for them, they are wrong. There are only so many copies of a game that one can sell to the members of the Baker Street Irregulars (the world's largest and best-known Sherlock Holmes fan club), and a vogue for Victoriana has never really caught on among the rest of the game-buying population. The result is that while Holmes games have been good, bad, and indifferent, their success has been uniformly mediocre.



Will someone, some day, do a Sherlock Holmes game right? Probably, though I'm not holding my breath. Has **Electronic Arts** done it in "The Case of the Serrated Scalpel"? Scads of good press to the contrary, I'm afraid not. Close, but no pipe.

"Scalpel" tells an unusually good story and it is filled to the brim with audio-visual niceties, but it has one crucial shortcoming: it is *not* a game. It has the appearance of a game, but in reality it is just a series of animated vignettes, strung together in linear sequence, with the player asked to do little other than prod the whole affair into motion every few seconds. It is no more a piece of interactive fiction than a flipbook is an interactive movie.

A Ripping Yarn

To start with the good points, though, the game is gorgeous, clever and surprising. It sets just the right tone with a virtuoso opening sequence in which we see the initial crime committed against a stunning backdrop of busy, rainy, gaslit streets and shadowy back alleys. Details are not neglected, down to the flickering candlelight in the windows of street-front flats. Indeed, there is such an abundance of exquisitely animated detail — a stray cat knocks over a bottle which smashes on the ground, the concealed killer smokes a cigarette — that the game possesses an unprecedented richness of texture.



It loses some of the magic, however, when it cuts to less-than-exquisite close-ups executed in a rather clumsy airbrush style. Throughout the game, the large tableaux are more impressive than the close-up portraits of the various characters. (Holmes, inappropriately, is drawn as a young, handsome chap with a resemblance to Nelson Eddy.) Still, even in close-up, the graphics are striking.

The score, by Ron Hubbard, provides a throbbing, ominous undertone in this first scene. Elsewhere, it is a masterpiece of variety and discretion, offering a unique leitmotif to introduce each location in the game and then, fading out after a few minutes, to give the player quiet in which to think.

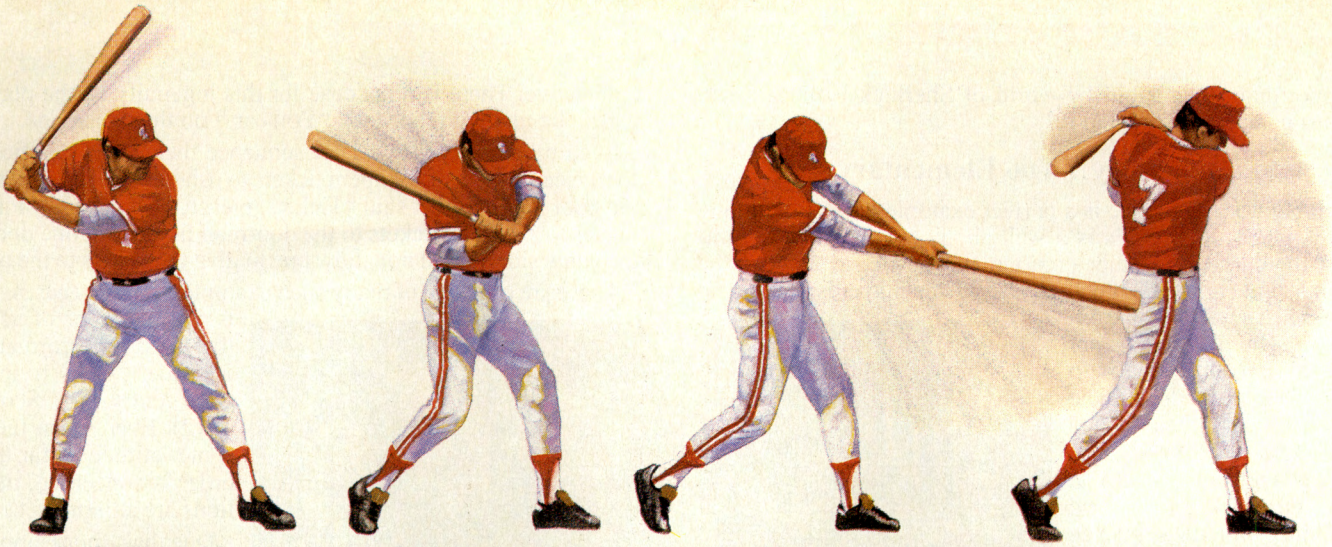
The story, so often the last and least of the elements put into a game, is surprisingly exciting and well-constructed. Jack the Ripper has struck again — or so it seems. Some lurking devil has slaughtered a young actress on her way out of the theater where she performs nightly, ripping off two articles of jewelry and spilling her entrails on the cobblestones before stealing away into the London fog. Sherlock Holmes agrees to come when he is called in by a desperate Inspector Lestrade, though he cautions Lestrade that serial killers are somewhat out of his purview; after all, motiveless or random crimes are impervious to deductive reasoning. (Holmes, of course, never had the opportunity to read *The Silence of the Lambs*.)

As soon as Holmes starts investigating, odd facets of the crime catch his attention. What, for instance, is that strange white powder at the edges of the fatal wound? If the killer is the Ripper, why has he wandered so far afield from his customary Whitechapel stalking grounds? Why is a love letter to the victim written in a woman's hand? What is the meaning of the curious hair-oil stain above the door?

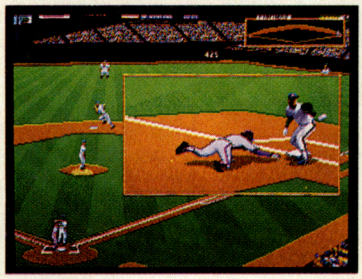
Holmes spies these clues and more like them; Watson, never more than two steps behind, jots them down in his Journal, to which the player has access throughout the game. (The journal is a point-by-point record of everything the player does, written in convincing pseudo-Doyle prose.) Holmes and Watson also share conversation, which is sometimes mere banter but which often provides useful information. For instance, Watson, being a doctor, is able to tell Holmes that it is unheard of for a scalpel to have a serrated edge, as the murder weapon apparently did.

In addition to Watson, a number of familiar figures do their best to help the investigation, including Wiggins, the head of the street urchin pack from which the real-life Baker Street Irregulars draw their name; Mycroft Holmes, Sherlock's older and smarter brother who offers tips; Mrs. Hudson, Holmes' indefatigable landlady; and the wretched Lestrade, who hates to ask for Holmes's help but who knows he needs it. Many new faces populate the game as well.

The world of 19th Century England is brought to life through attire, dialect, and props, all carefully selected. Holmes' room at 221B Baker Street is filled with details lifted straight from the stories, showing that the authors have done their homework well. I noticed no anachronisms (though I hadn't realized that Victorian police drew chalk outlines around corpses, just as we do today) and I am pleased to report that nothing that the characters say or do is out of character. Such Holmes aficionados as there are among the computer gaming public will love the game's atmosphere and



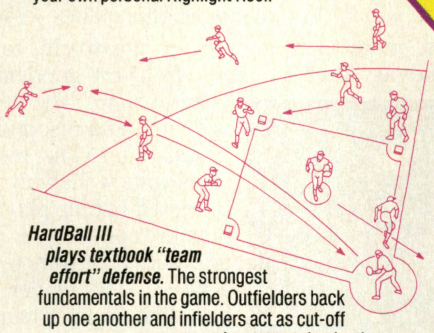
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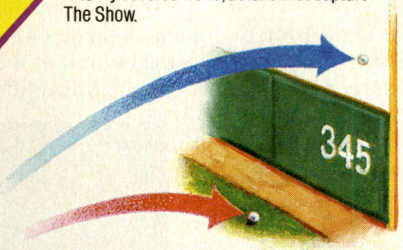
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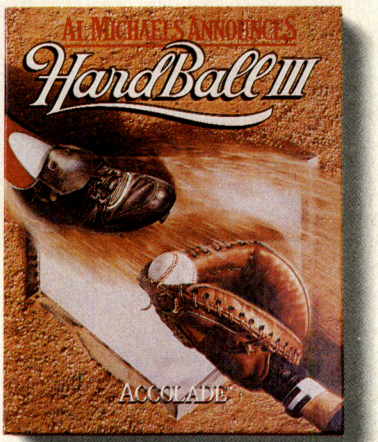
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the opportunity to inhabit the world of Sherlock Holmes as no previous game has presented it.

Elementary...Too Elementary

The laboratory sequence is a perfect example of what is wrong with the game. Sherlock's is a well-appointed laboratory, complete with burner, test tube, mortar and pestle, a table of the elements, and eight jars of chemicals; yet the player is granted no freedom in carrying out the experiment. The player does not choose *which* chemicals to mix — Holmes does. The player does not choose which tools to use — Holmes does. All the player does is look at the screen, click on this and that blindly until the sequence is set in motion, and watch the results.



Now, this may be a good thing under the circumstances. Most players would be unable to do as good a job of carrying out the experiment as Holmes does (though perhaps the game could have had the player select an experiment from one of Holmes' books and then follow instructions to carry it out). The problem is that the game leads the player by the nose in exactly the same way in all the game's sequences. The player's job is never to decide what to do; it is to figure out what the right next move is (the computer already knows, always) and then, to make it.

There is an illusion of choice. A menu of the usual action verbs (Look, Open, Talk, etc.) fills the bottom of the screen and one has complete freedom in terms of which location one wants to visit next, selecting "hot spots" from a detailed map of London. However, the freedom is just an illusion. If one goes to the wrong location one is simply unable to do anything there. If one chooses the wrong action, one is told either "You can't do that" or "Nothing of interest here."



It is the computer that decides what things are of interest and what are not. While this does ensure that the story unfolds more quickly and smoothly than it might otherwise, speed and smoothness are not what a *game* should aim for. Events unfold smoothly and speedily in a movie; a game is a different animal. A game must give the player the freedom not only to do things wrong, but to do things right in a variety of ways. The goal should be to simulate the results of all possible actions, not to allow only one set of actions to take place.

So, when Holmes finds an iron bar and, shortly afterward, comes across a locked dresser which, one is told, has frequently been forced open, the player should be allowed to use the bar to force the drawer. At the very least, if this must be prevented, the player should get a stern reproof from Watson for behavior unbecoming a detective. There is no excuse for this ingenuity on the player's part to be met with the stock "You can't do that" message.

Even more absurd, in a later sequence there is no justification for the command "Give opera tickets to usher" to be ignored when the poor man has just said "Tickets, please." The game wants the player to show the tickets to the doorman first. Until one does so, the game simply will not allow one to give the tickets to the usher.

These are only two of many such examples. In many cases, there is a strict order of actions that must be performed (for instance, when trying to gain entry to Scotland Yard). Even when there is some latitude as far as the order is concerned, the actions are still pre-set.

One has more apparent freedom in dialogue, because one is often presented with three or four choices of what to say. However, it is precisely here that one has the least freedom, since usually there is either a right choice (as when a clerk asks Holmes, "Was the man tall, short, or of average height?") or one has to go through *all* the choices before progressing to the next scene.

Don't get me wrong: the dialogue is well-written, the choices are entertaining, and in most cases the actions the game requires the player to perform are very interesting. The story is good and the game is a pleasure to watch. Yet, that is what one does — watch.

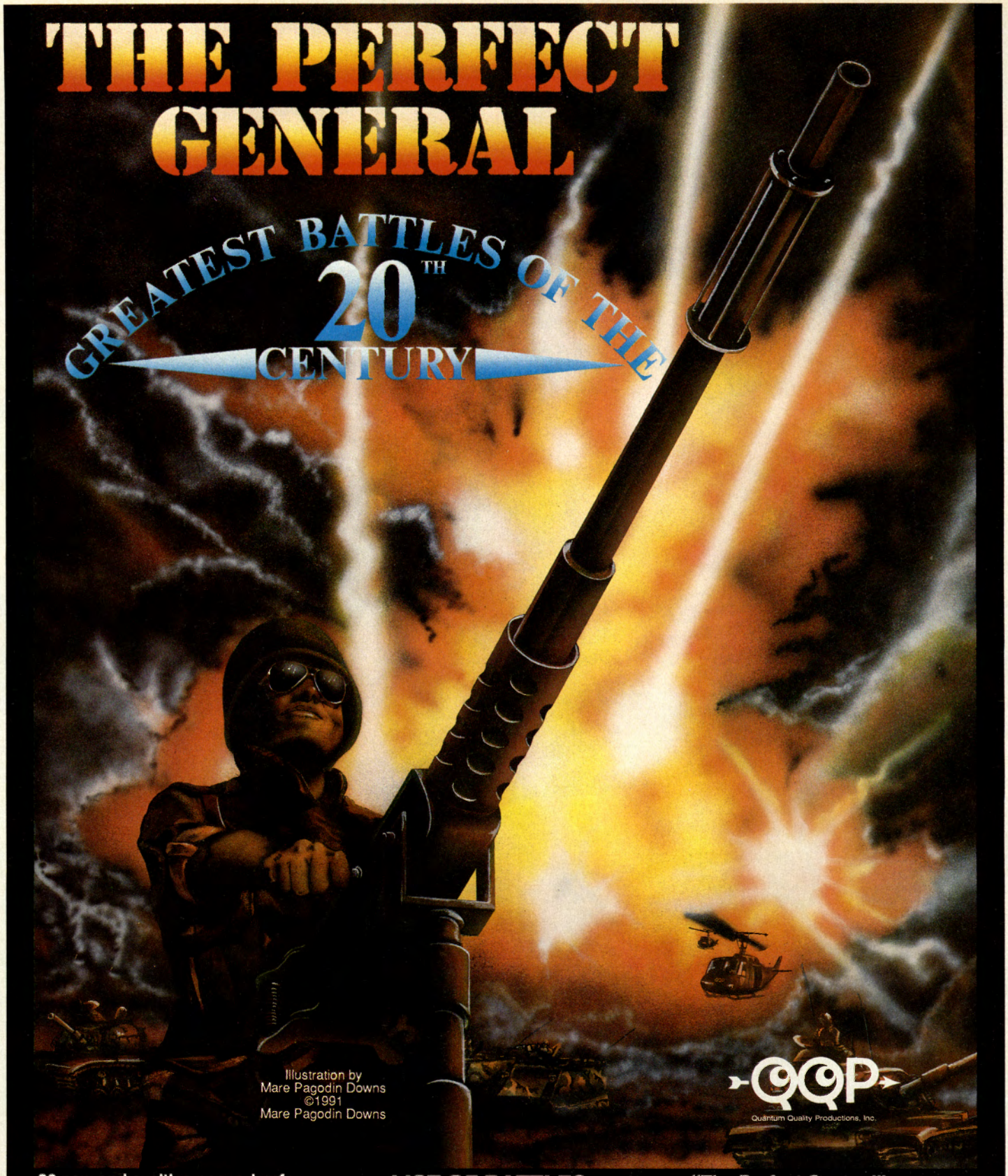
This game wants, more than anything in the world, to be a Sherlock Holmes movie. Though it would be a very good one if it were, it is not. Therefore, it is deeply and resoundingly unsatisfying. The plot unfolds quite well, with plenty of twists, but the player has no more control over it than he would if he were reading a novel. The player is, at best, like an actor in a play. Unfortunately, said player has not been given a copy of the script. He has to hit his marks and say his lines by figuring out the cues given by the other characters and reading his lines off the computer equivalent of cue cards.

If this is what one wants — a fine Sherlock Holmes pastiche played out on the computer screen, with the player nominally putting the lead character through his paces — fine. "The Case of the Serrated Scalpel" delivers all that one could hope for in that vein. If one wants a game — an interactive experience in which one's decisions have an affect on what happens — this piece of software is likely to disappoint.

"The Case of the Serrated Scalpel" is one step closer to the ideal, but it is not there yet. It's a great treat for the eyes and the ears...but as a game it is simply, regrettably, another misfire in the Sherlock Holmes canon. **CGW**



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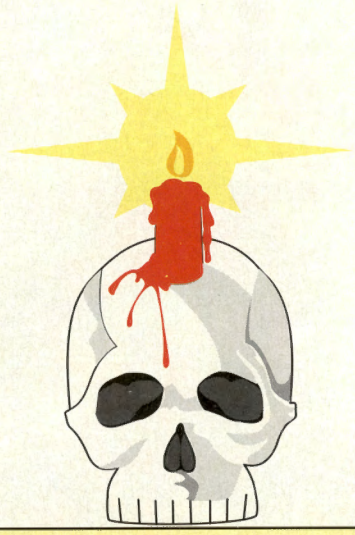
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HORROR ON EXHIBIT

Accolade's *Waxworks*



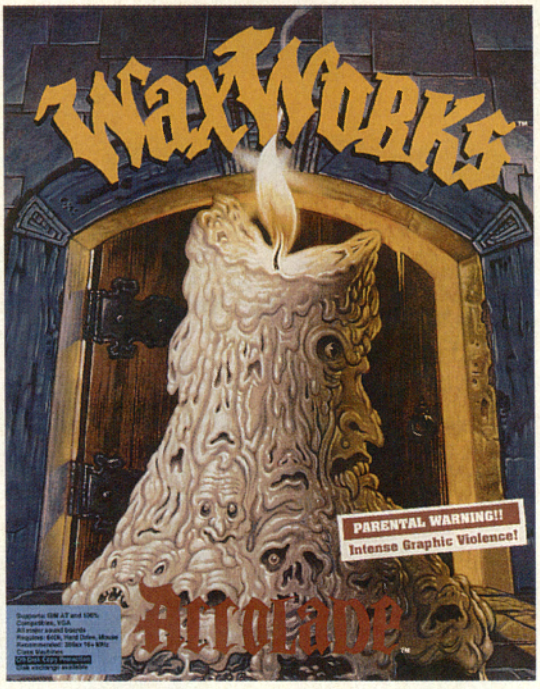


by Chuck Miller

TITLE:	Waxworks
SYSTEM:	IBM, 386sx 16MHz or Better Recommended, Mouse Required
PRICE:	$59.95
GRAPHICS:	VGA
SOUND:	All Major Sound Cards
PROTECTION:	Codewheel
DESIGNERS:	Horror Soft
PUBLISHER:	Accolade San Jose, CA

Halloween came and departed as usual, with nary a touch of excitement. Just a bout of melancholy memories of the good (or is that bad) old days of trick or treating, a time when All Hallow Even provided a requisite dose of "safe," haunting fun and festive pranks. Well, as concerns the state of our society, those days are sadly no more.

This Halloween, however, was a little more disappointing than most. The long anticipated arrival of two particular adventures failed to occur in time for the witching hour. Of course, I speak of *The 7th Guest* from **Virgin** and *Waxworks* from the **Accolade** and **Horror Soft** duo. *Waxworks*, the subject of this review, made a limited debut for the appointed day, reaching a few gamers in time for a Halloween treat. Nevertheless, for most, the holiday passed away quietly as most retailers did not have copies of *Waxworks* on their shelves until the following week.



If Boris Weren't Bad Enough

In *Waxworks*, the player assumes the role of nephew to Uncle Boris, a ghoulish relative who has recently died. Worse still, Uncle Boris bequeathed his entire estate, including the Waxworks, to said nephew. Unfortunately, that is not the sum of his legacy either, as an ancient curse placed on the family 500 years prior (whenever twins were born, one would serve the forces of evil) now envelopes the player in a life and death struggle to reverse the curse and rescue his malevolent twin brother from the evil within.

To accomplish the task ahead, the player must venture into five different dimensions — ancient Egypt, 19th Century London, an underground mine, a graveyard and the Waxworks itself — combating and defeating the evil twin from each time period. The story culminates when the player finally faces his own twin brother, Alex. In traditional **HorrorSoft** fashion, this is no job for the squeamish as indicated by the customary "Intense Graphic Violence" warning on the box.

A New Coat of Wax

Those familiar with the *Elvira* series, previous bestsellers from **Horror Soft** and **Accolade**, will feel strangely at home with this

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latest offering, as little has changed in game design from *Elvira II: The Jaws of Cerberus*. This is both the game's boon and bane.

Waxworks remains virtually unchanged from its predecessor with regard to its interface; the layout is basically identical to that of *Elvira II*. The Player Character is represented on the top left with Navigational Device, Ascend/Descend Icons and Character Hits Indicator below. The right-hand portion of the screen displays the Function Icons (a Crystal Ball replaces the Spellbook, providing a magical link with Uncle Boris), Object Actions List and Enemy Hits Indicator. Center screen displays the Exhibit Window, Inventory Display Box and Status Line.

The only noticeable change is in navigation. The player can now switch freely between direction arrows and a compass, the latter being an addition for this game. A less visible change is the way damage is calculated with regards to hit points. Rather than damage being divided among specific body parts as in *Elvira II*, hit points are now subtracted from an overall total as in the original *Elvira*.



Waxing and Waning

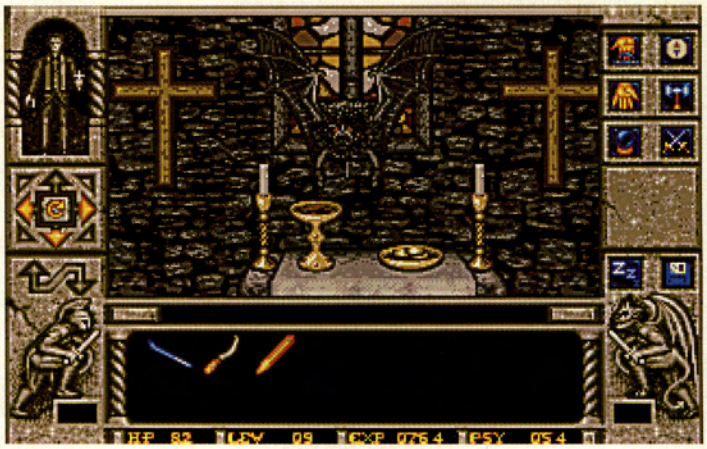
Graphics in *Waxworks* are on par with previous **HorrorSoft** offerings, which means that they are adequate. At a time when most designers are making full use of 256-color graphics, *Waxworks*' images appear more like those of Amiga 32-color graphics (quite probable since an Amiga version is also planned). While this means that little graphic conversion is necessary for the Amiga version, it does not speak all that highly of what the MS-DOS gamer has come to expect. Keep in mind, the images are not bad, just not as colorful and detailed as they could be.

Audio is another story. Background music is very atmospheric and contributes immensely to drawing the player into the game world. It adds greatly to the suspense, lending that "creepy" feel expected of a good horror story. My only wish is that there were more musical selections provided during play (each dimension has basically one background selection with variations).

Hot Wax and the Masochist

Those who like to tough it out against all odds will find combat in *Waxworks* challenging, to say the least, as many of the creatures encountered pack quite a wallop. Unless the player learns a few combat tricks early on, only masochists will really enjoy this part of the game. In fact, after completing Egypt and the graveyard, I actually came close to calling it quits with *Waxworks* while in the underground mine. Fortunately, I learned the proper method of dispensing with its denizens.

As such, it is vital to understand that each dimension requires a slightly different offensive approach. Egypt and the graveyard require hand-to-hand combat. The mine and London, however, call for a different tactic: avoidance of physical contact with the enemy. Even knowing this, though, will not make completing the game an easy matter. I am still struggling with an extremely difficult and frustrating sequence in 19th Century London.



Earwax Removal

Waxworks does have several weaknesses, the chief being the lack of an automapping feature, an amenity which has become standard fare for CRPGs of recent origin. Most role-playing games have become complex enough that it is simply too distracting and time consuming for the player to map each step as he or she goes. The time has arrived to lay pencil and graph paper to rest.

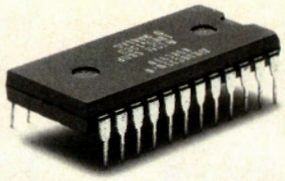
One possible reason for the absence of automapping is that too much of the game play in *Waxworks* revolves around exploring relatively small locations in search of a few items necessary for solving the game's puzzles, while under frequent attack by opponents. If automapping were provided, overall length of play would be significantly reduced. The game needs more areas to explore and puzzles to solve, without the additional combat (most of the combat in the game is not excessively tough, though the player is advised to save often, as death is an ever-present companion).

In addition to the above concerns, the game engine needs some modification with regard to game save and restore functions. Once the player has several pages of saved games to contend with, saving and restoring becomes a management nightmare as the earliest pages are always displayed first, rather than the page containing the most recent save. Also, only the direction arrows have keyboard equivalents. All other activity requires mouse control. At the very least, save and restore functions should have assigned hotkeys.



Burning the Candle...

So, when all is said and done, when the candle has burned down to a mass of melted paraffin, how does *Waxworks* fare as a CRPG?



THIS OPPONENT IS PROGRAMMED TO BE CHALLENGING.

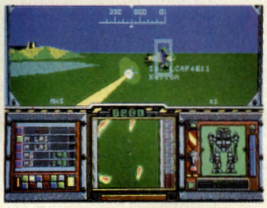


this one wants to rip your lungs out.

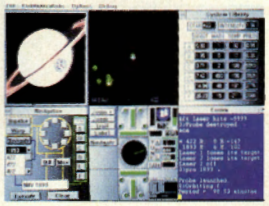
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Well, better than most, but lacking in relation to some. Graphics are a little disappointing, as is the lack of automapping. Puzzle solving and combat seem unbalanced, weighted a bit too heavily toward the latter. In addition, while most puzzles are relatively simple, some are overly trying.



However, *Waxworks* does manage to scare up some enjoyable (though often frustrating) relief for the terror-starved gamer. Quality adventures with a horror theme have been lacking for much too long a time. With a little more attention to detail and the elimination of the above weaknesses, a sequel to *Waxworks* could truly send chills down one's spine. As it currently stands, while *Waxworks* may not appeal to some fantasy role-players, it will certainly fill the void for those who revel in the macabre. For anyone who enjoyed the *Elvira* series, *Waxworks* continues to satisfy the bent toward the supernatural.

Wax Attacks

Only those who want some playing hints should read on. Otherwise, bypass the following. Remember, Uncle Boris can often provide essential help when progress seems impeded.

In Egypt, find the weak spot for each opponent and hack away. Also, make sure to search thoroughly and carefully. Some necessary items are well hidden. It is also essential to knock down all the support beams (one on each level). This opens up passages on the levels above.

When in the graveyard, use the same plan of attack on all zombies. First, aim low on their arms to cut them off. Then, decapitate their head. This way they cannot continue to claw as they are being dispatched. While exploring, be sure to locate the family tomb and check its state of disrepair.

The underground mine calls for chemical and flame attacks, as the creatures are too strong to take on hand-to-hand. When the chemical sprayer runs out of chemicals, locate the generator and fill the sprayer with fuel in order to create a flame thrower. Work quickly so as not to lose any fuel. If careful, the player will be able to fill the sprayer and two empty bottles from the generator tank. Use one of these bottles to refill the sprayer when it runs empty and the other to fill up the drill.

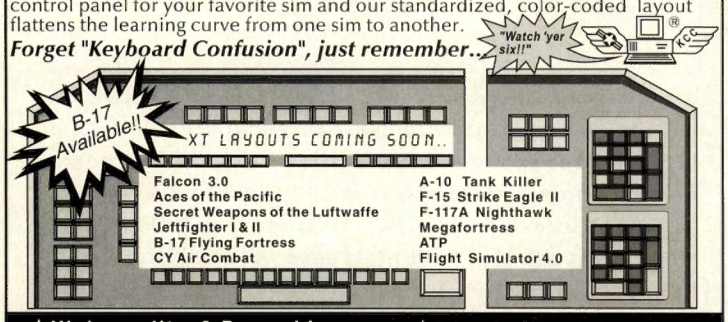
In London, make the primary effort to locate some rope and a plank. Checking the alley behind each store is always a good idea. However, avoid everyone until gaining access into the Tailor Shop and acquiring a disguise. Said disguise should enable the player to move about more freely. CGW

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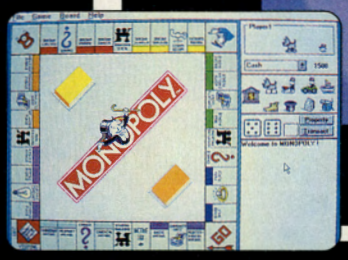
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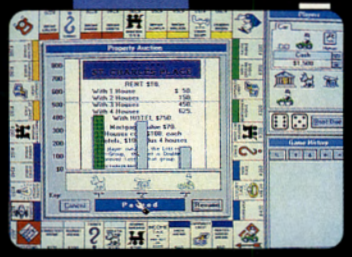
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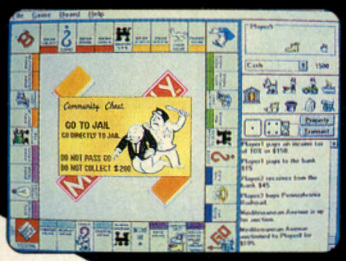
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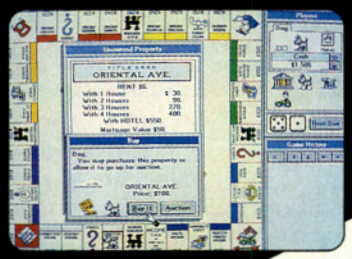
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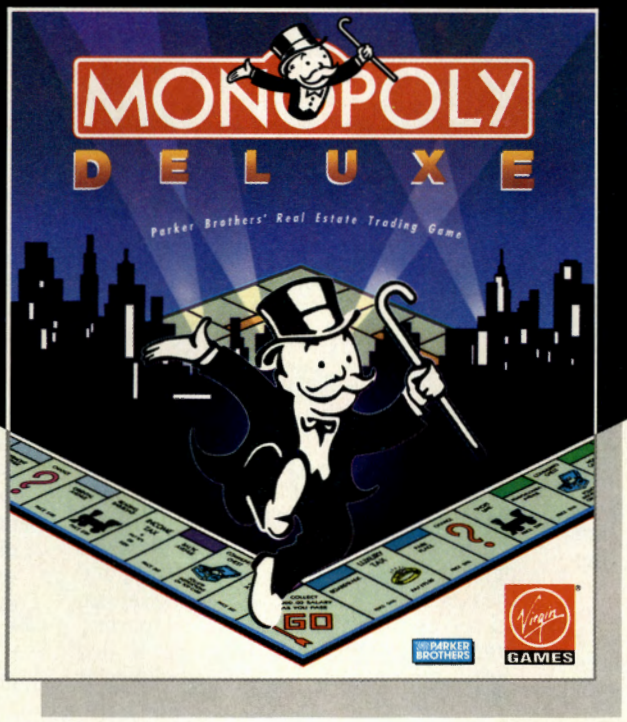
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Does It Play Better If It Looks Better?

Creating Graphics for the Jack Nicklaus Golf Design Module

by Mark Allen Willett

For the past two issues, we've had our electronic hard hats out as we paced golf courses in the *Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition* (JNSE) design module. Beyond the construction of the course itself, however, the surrounding environs *definitely* affect the extent to which a golfer, or computer golfer, enjoys the game. Who can imagine Pebble Beach without its oceans, the shaded loveliness of Augusta without its flowers and trees, or the ruggedness of the British linksland courses without heather and gorse?

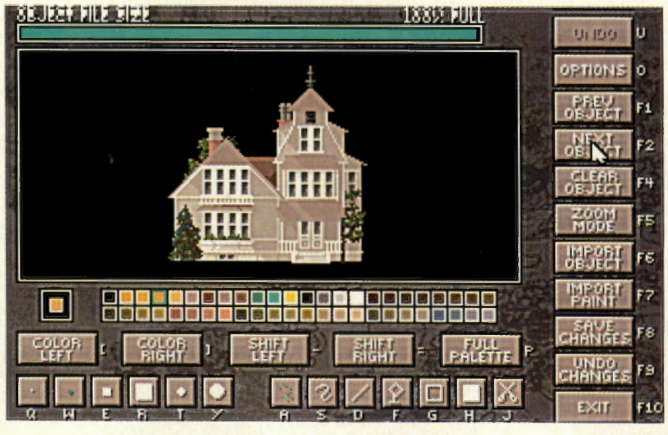
With the *JNSE* design module, one can set a course in any parkland setting, the South Seas, the desert, or wherever the imagination leads. With some 200 plus *JNSE* courses available for the cost of a phone call to a JNSE BBS, it is no surprise to find that courses have been set virtually across the planet.

Beyond the form and finish of the course itself, there are four other basic components that the designer can control in *JNSE*: objects (like trees and buildings), backgrounds, the drawing of adjacent holes and color. These can work simply to fill out a course or to assist the designer in developing a course into the most marvelously complex endurance test that is possible.

In addition to the object and background editors contained in JNSE, the designer can import work from graphics packages which store images in PCX or LBM format. Given that capability, those designers with graphics packages that support scanned images can use black-and-white, grayscale and color scans for additional results.

Designing Persons

I tend to divide designers into three categories: the "artistically handicapped" (AH) group, those who love to work on courses but don't seem to have the knack for drawing a straight line with a ruler; the general hobbyists (JUST FOLKS) who are more than happy to use the ample tools provided by the *JNSE* software itself; and the rest of us JNSE-FREAKS who launch ourselves into our favorite supporting graphics technology. Here are a few tips…some for each group and some for all of them.



A typical building object from The Victorian. Designed by the author.

Objects

AH-ERs: Learn to borrow. JNSE's "Import Object" function allows one to "steal" objects from any of the 200+ courses available on-line. In this way, a fine collection of trees, buildings, shrubs, and so on, can be built quickly. Beautiful courses have been created with objects that were all borrowed from other designers. Here is further food for thought: the best hobbyist-designers also borrow objects in *addition* to creating new ones. Why spend a half-a-night, a full night or, even, several nights creating a terrific silver maple tree when a terrific silver maple is already available? Further, instead of being offended, designers *like* to have their objects borrowed. Though small, it is still an honor to have someone think enough of an object to borrow it for their own course. Trust me on this…

JUST-FOLKS: Here's a trick for trees. Learn to use the "straight-line" feature in the JNSE object editor to sketch in trunks and branches. Don't worry if they look a bit too straight because 90% of those lines are going to be covered with foliage, anyway. Then, when it is time to add the foliage, try this one: using the cut-and-paste tool, cut out a good-size slice of leaves from another tree object. It is possible to cut and paste and recut and repaste that slice over and over

again to create all the foliage needed for any given tree.

FREAKS: One should use the "arc" tool from a commercial graphics package to create branches, but it is better to experiment with the package's "spray gun" tool to build multi-colored, in-depth groupings of leaves for foliage. Finally, if the commercial package has a screen-capture program, one can use that program to "steal" favorite screen images from other programs and use those images as a guideline or template for custom JNSE objects.



A sampler of the author's background works, each showing a combination of "hand drawn," cut-and-paste, and Deluxe Paint II Enhanced techniques.

Backgrounds

AH-ERs: Again, there is nothing wrong with borrowing. Those 200+ courses out there should provide a designer with almost any earthly setting imaginable. As with objects, backgrounds can be imported from one course to another. Remember, too, that once they are in the design module, they can be modified to suit. Want to borrow one of my pine trees? Neat! Want to make it better? Neater, still!

JUST-FOLKS: Cut-and-paste is as effective for backgrounds as for objects. The background for my first JNSE course, Scorpion, has an entire forest that was created from...one little pine! Five pixels wide and seven high, I cut-and-pasted that one tree into a row of trees. Then, I cut-and-pasted that row into entire hillsides of trees. Yeah, it really pays back a lot for a little effort on this count. I did the same thing with some of the rock-outcroppings and rolling hills there.

Sooner or later, the average designer is likely to find a need for a little workspace in which to draw something. The "sky" will work just fine. It is a great place to work and it is possible to cut-and-paste the drawing down on the course as soon as it is completed. This would mean that the creation of clouds and other sky effects would be best left until last.

FREAKS: JNSE hobbyist, John Kunyik, has created two freeware utilities which allow gamers to transfer PCX background files from their graphics packages to JNSE and vice versa. Called IMPORTBG and EXPORTBG, both may be found on BBSs which support JNSE. Factoid: to save some tedious counting, background graphics files are 1200 pixels long by 47 pixels high.

Learn to explore and exploit *all* of the techniques in whatever graphics package is chosen. I use *Deluxe Paint II Enhanced* from **Electronic Arts**. Its SMOOTH, SMEAR, and TRANSLUCENCE techniques have allowed me to create some stunning cloud-filled sky effects that I could never have done otherwise. Another *Deluxe Paint* device makes the shrinking of objects a snap so that one can easily fill the background with little pictures of the same objects which have already been created/borrowed for use on the course. Why draw little trees when I can shrink the big objects I've already drawn or borrowed?

Adjacent Holes

EVERYONE: JNSE only puts one hole in each hole-edit window. By looking at the course route, however, one might notice that the holes tend to lie alongside each other. Is it possible to design a hole so that the golfer can see one hole in the distance from the one that's being played?

Yes, it's easy! Draw it in on the hole overhead. Drawing in the adjacent holes not only makes for exciting views that seem to extend across a real golf course, but causes the hole overheads that are seen when playing to be more vibrant to look at as well.

One can use mylar or acetate (I use el-cheapo sheet protectors) to draw outlines of each hole. Then, it is a simple task to tape them to the monitor and use them as a guide for drawing the adjacent holes. Also, don't forget to create a pin-and-flag object to put on that adjacent green.



A section of The Victorian background as viewed in Deluxe Paint II Enhanced. A commercial graphics package allows for even greater techniques to be employed for JNSE artwork.

Colors

Hands down, the best accessory to use in JNSE design is still another freeware utility created by John Kunyik. Called PALEDIT, it allows the designer to change any or all of the 256-colors in the JNSE palette. If the designer wants a brighter ocean, darker sand, bluer sky, PALEDIT makes it possible with just a little effort. This is a utility for everyone.

Course Overhead

EVERYONE: When done, it is possible to "dress up" the course overhead. Go to EDIT PLOT. Fill the land with heavy rough. Choose ADD HOLES, and a miniature copy of the course will be added to the plot. Go to ROUTING and select OPTIONS. Make all the terrain features "transparent." In doing so, JNSE will not redraw over the holes that you just added to the plot. Return to EDIT PLOT, and touch up those miniature holes. Then, add a title and nameplate to the course. The gamer's first introduction to the course can be a very attractive graphic.



A hole overhead from The Victorian showing the placement of the adjacent 10th Hole. Drawn in by hand, adjacent holes add visual interest to the display.

I Have Finished My Course

Once one has finished course, background, objects and overhead, it is time to share the new course and enjoy the courses of others. Here are the telephone numbers for my three favorite BBSs which support JNSE. All three can be trusted, and all three are free.

ACCOLADE (CA) Paul Conrad, JNSE lib-op: (408) 296-8800

DOUBLE EAGLE (FL) Ted Maiden, sy-sop: (407) 259-9771

THE 19TH HOLE (MD) Keith Holzapfel, sy-sop: (301) 869-2389

What's been written here barely scratches the graphics potential in the JNSE design module. If it has been enough to spark interest or create new questions, the invitation is wide open to join me and many other JNSE hobbyists on the PRODIGY Interactive Service. We can be found on the Game Center bulletin board or in the Prodigy Network Golf Tour Clubhouse.

Does it play better if it looks better? You betcha! CGW



The world of shareware

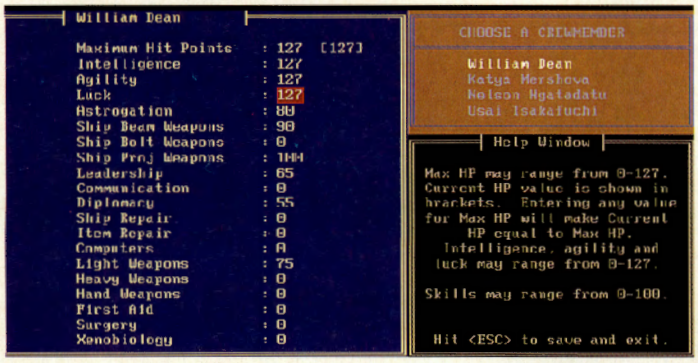
Out of the Doldrums & Out of This World

by Chuck Miller

Unless living somewhere out West or in the sunny South, most gamers reading this column are probably in the midst of the winter doldrums, with cold winds howling outside and a blanket of mostly-white snow covering the ground below their computer room window. Whatever the case, now is as good a time as any to pull out that unfinished game and dive in once again, or begin a new one for that matter. In this installment, I will focus on several game editors that will breathe new life into some unfinished quests and a scenario-based wargame for *Windows* guaranteed to keep the gamer busy for a good while.

New to Our Editorial Staff ...

Okay, it is a given that some adventures, especially those of the role-playing variety, can be just a bit daunting, even to the point of wearing the player out before the quest is completed. I know that I have placed several such adventures on the shelf because I simply lack the time to develop my characters to the point where they might survive the constant onslaught of the devious denizens of these digital dungeons.



Well, if this is the case with *Eye of the Beholder II* or *Planet's Edge*, some much needed assistance is available from Jack Hartman of **Hartman Game Utilities**, who has written two very useful and downright affordable shareware game editors for the above-mentioned CRPGs (with more on the way early next year). Both are well-designed and offer all the basic functions for editing save game files.

Hartman's editor for *Eye of the Beholder II* is a full-featured program allowing all six save game files to be accessed at one time for instant editing of character aspects, including saved game name, character name, ability scores, hit points, race, sex, class, alignment, levels and experience. In addition, not only can existing characters be edited, but new characters can be created to fill the two open NPC slots. All these editing features are available in the freely redistributable shareware version of the editor. So, as with most shareware products, you can try before you buy. However, in addition to the above, registered users have access to several extended features: access to the spellbook, backpack and character portraits (this is the only editor to my knowledge that allows the player to select a different portrait for each of his characters).

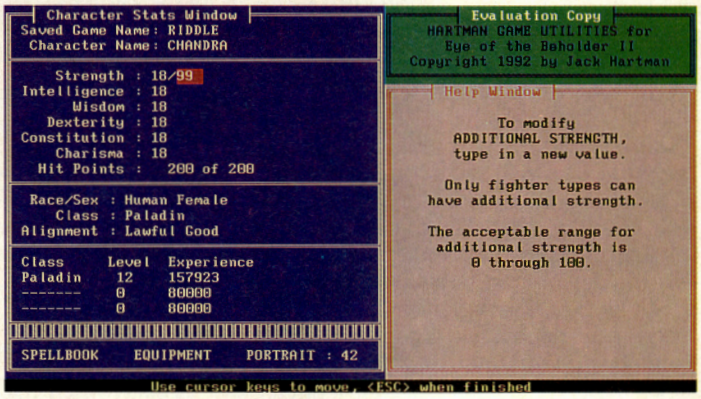
Role-players still struggling through the deadly levels of *Darkmoon* will find this game editor a welcome relief, its only drawback being the need to enter hex codes for items found in character backpacks. Selection by item name would have been much more user-friendly. Nonetheless, $10 buys the player a very capable program.

The editor for *Planet's Edge*, Hartman's other offering, operates in a similar fashion. Upon loading the program, the player is presented with a menu offering three selections: Edit Crew Stats, Edit Raw Materials and Edit Crew Backpacks.

When editing crew stats, selecting a crew member will enable the player to edit many of that member's characteristics, including hit points, intelligence, agility, luck and skills. In fact, many of the game's restrictions are removed. So, even though characters are limited to only six skills each, they can be assigned up to 100 percent in all sixteen skills. Editing raw materials is also available in the freely redistributable version of the editor. Thus, making rare materials easy to procure.

As with the editor for *Eye of the Beholder*, becoming a registered user opens up an extended feature — in this case, the ability to edit crew backpacks. This allows the player to add, delete or recharge any item carried in the crew members' backpacks, including items such as ship plans and technical plans.

If you would like to receive a registered copy of either of these editors, just send a check or money order in U.S. funds in the amount of $10, for each editor requested, to Hartman Game Utilities, P.O. Box 73706, Houston, TX 77273. Both character editors are an exceptional value.



It's Very Cold in Space

Picking up on our look at *Windows* shareware from last issue is a game that arrived too late for inclusion, *Stardate 2140.2: Battles on Distant Planets* by **Glacier Edge Technology Associates**.

DUNE™ II

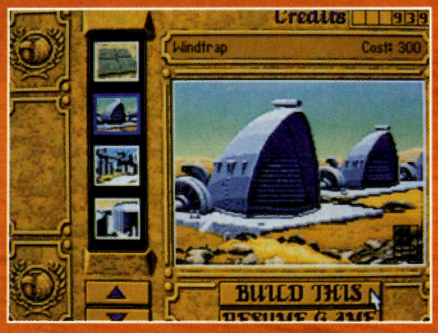
The Building of A Dynasty



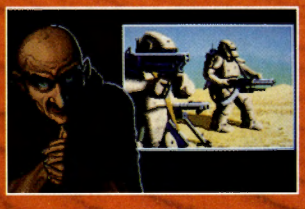
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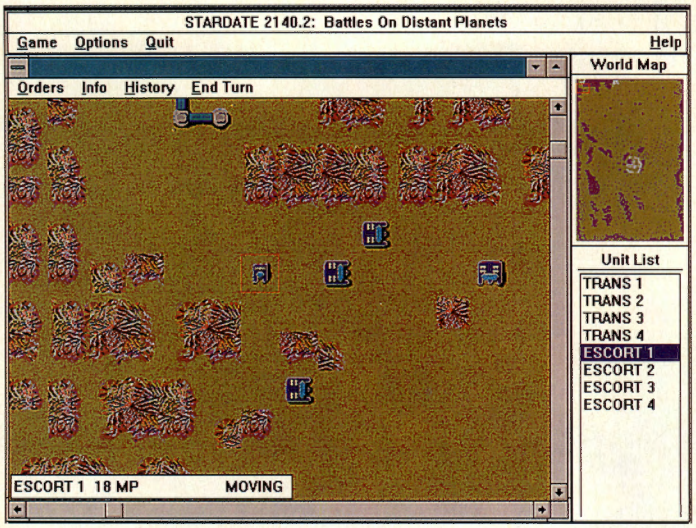
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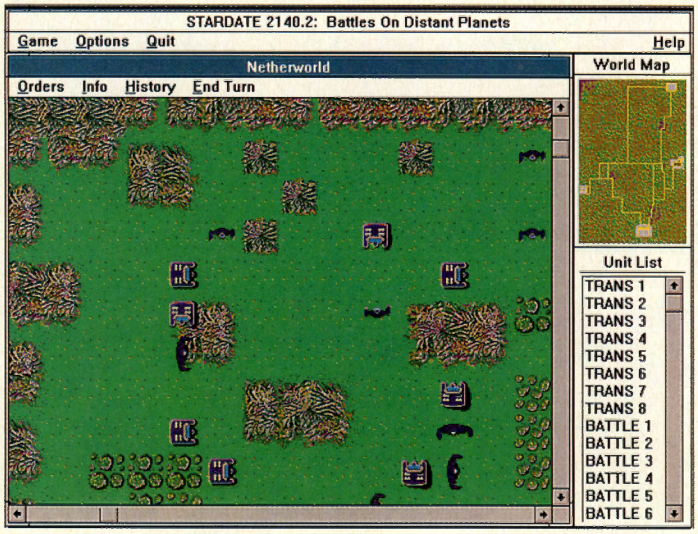
Battles is a scenario-based wargame similar in many respects to **UBI Soft**'s *Battle Isle*, pitting the player against an opponent (either human vs. human, human vs. computer or computer vs. computer) in a tactical conflict for military supremacy.

Each scenario presents the keyboard kaiser with a new tactical problem to overcome in futuristic warfare. Included in the shareware version are two such scenarios, "First Battle" and "A Night on Rangor." The licensed version contains these scenarios, plus adds three more — "Desert Counter Attack, "The Princess" and "Netherworld" — for a total of five separate conflicts.

Combat, as in most games of this genre, is turn-based, the player making all offensive and defensive moves prior to ending his or her turn and allowing the opponent to counter. Several unique units, weapons and lifeforms are available for deployment, each being directed individually.

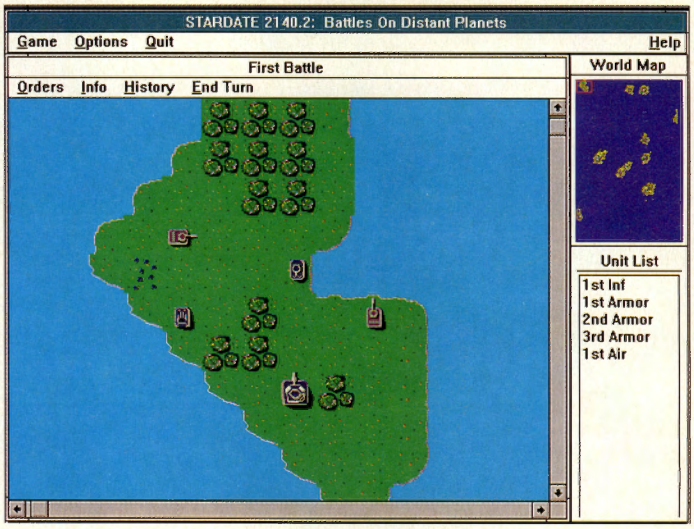
Battles supports *Windows*-compatible audio cards to supply the sounds of war, providing requisite explosions and gun fire. Unfortunately, this is about the limits of the digitized audio supplied. A few more sounds would have enhanced play, offering some additional "*Windows*" dressing.

Battles on Distant Planets allows the player to save games in progress, which is good as some games can be quite long. On-line help is also provided for each scenario. In fact, all documentation is of the on-line variety through *Windows* help files. Additional scenarios are also planned, including a linkable game — *Stardate 2140.2: Crusade in Space* — which will allow battle linking



similar to **Omnitrend**'s *Rules of Engagement/Breach 2* interlocking game system.

Stardate 2140.2: Battles on Distant Planets is $15 shareware (including the first two scenarios), with the licensed version requiring a payment of $43 (for all five scenarios). Those who derive their enjoyment from tactical diversions will find a good value in *Battles*, though I believe that a few more scenarios should be included in each version in light of the requested payments. For example, *Battle Isle*, a commercial release, contains 16 one-player and 16 two-player scenarios for a retail price of $49.95. I will admit, however, that the mouse-based interface in *Battles on Distant Planets* is much better than the joystick-driven one employed in *Battle Isle*. For more information or to place an order, contact Glacier Edge Technology Associates, 4820-E East Kentucky Avenue, Glendale, CO 80222 or call (303) 782-9252.



Well, it looks as if I have run out of space once again. Unfortunately, there is simply too numerous a collection of notable shareware games on too many platforms to include everything I would like in each column. Only the most exceptional entertainment products can be reviewed each month. So, until next time, great gaming to one and all!

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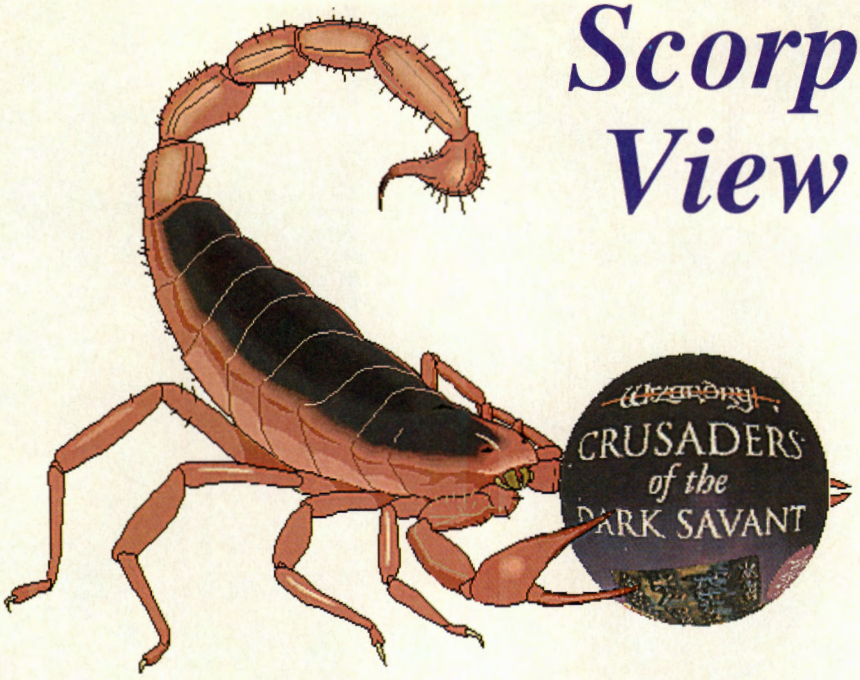
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Scorpion's View



as told by Scorpia

Scorpia is an experienced and respected adventure game expert. CGW is pleased to provide this forum for her distinctive and often controversial prespective.

Crusaders Of The Dark Savant is the direct sequel to *Bane of The Cosmic Forge*, picking up at the exact point where *Bane* left off. That point varies based on which of the *Bane* endings you completed, so the start of the game will not quite be the same for everyone. Regardless of starting point, you will have to do pretty much the same things and solve the same puzzles. It just may be necessary to approach some situations differently.

Those who did not play *Bane*, or who played it but no longer have a save file for transferring characters, can create a brand-new party of adventurers. These new characters enter the game at level 1 and come with some basic equipment, so they aren't exactly defenseless.

Imports from *Bane* will have their levels reduced rather drastically — down to about level 5. Their attributes and skills will likewise suffer a reduction, although their inventory remains mostly intact. I was pleasantly surprised to see that the mighty Muramasa Blade, the Spear of Death, and the Holy Basher made the transfer, along with many potions and other items my team had picked up in the previous game. It is definitely better to bring characters over from *Bane*.

Whichever beginning you get, your merry crew is not on its home world, but on the planet Guardia. As you quickly learn from the introduction, there is an artifact even mightier than the Cosmic Forge (the pen that, whatever it writes, causes the events written about to come to pass)—the Astral Dominae. Your task is to find the Dominae and keep it safe until the emissary of the Cosmic Lords comes by to pick it up.



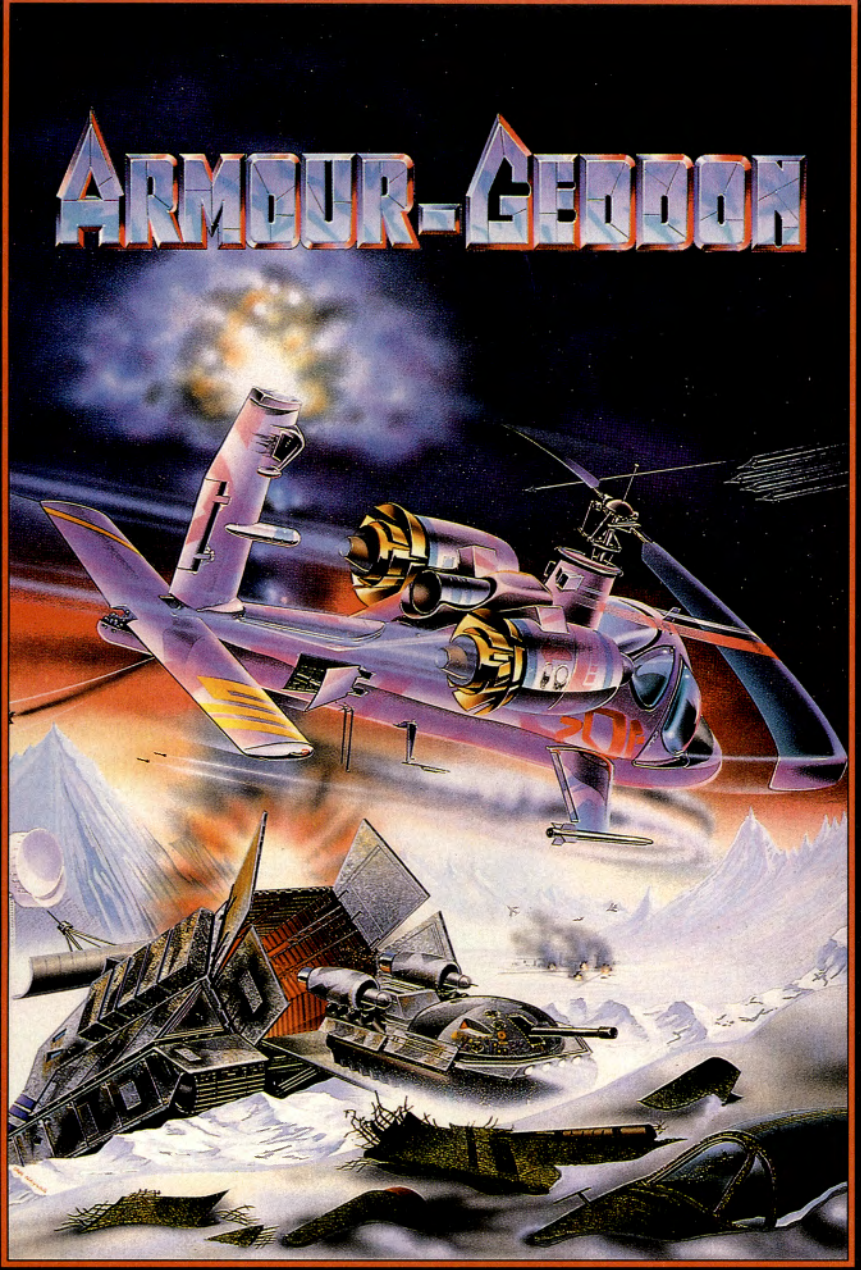
That in itself is quite a job and it's made tougher by the fact that you aren't the only one after the "Astral Doodad." Others want to get their hands on this item and chief among the competitors is the Dark Savant, whose legions have already taken over the town of New City. While you don't see very much of the Savant for most of the game, he is still the main force to be reckoned with when all is said and done.

In the meantime, you have to deal with the T'rang (a nasty spider-like race), the Dane (tall blue humanoids), the Rattkin (rodents, of course), the Umpani (along the lines of a bipedal rhinoceros), the Gorn (something like Orcs), the Munk, and the Helazoids (these last two being the most human-appearing of the inhabitants).

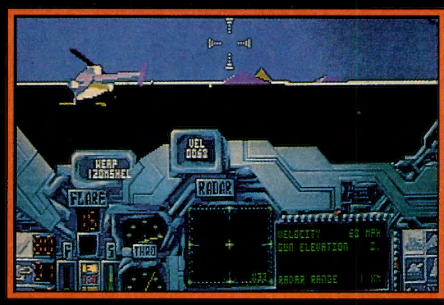
Naturally, there are also hosts of non-sentients eager to gnaw on your bones, including moths, vultures, slimes, tyrannosaurs, piranhas, jelly stingers, giant worms, dragons, weevils, and a few other critters besides. Guardia isn't exactly a friendly place.

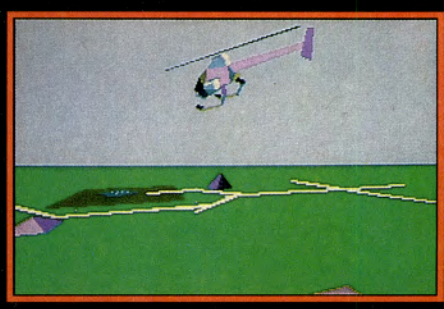
However, that doesn't mean you kill everything in sight. There are many important NPCs you need to talk to for information or from whom you can buy crucial items. A little diplomacy and tact, as well as hack and slash, are necessary to get through the game. Lying through your teeth, on occasion, also works well.

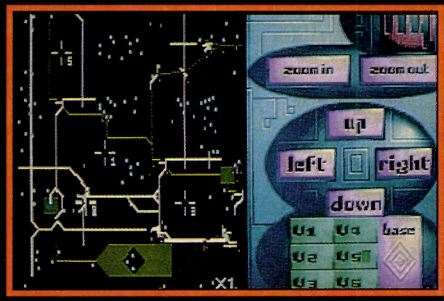
This brings up an important aspect of *Dark Savant*: it is the first Wizardry that has a real-world feel to it. Previous entries were mainly along the lines of











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"find the ultimate item" quests, underground rambles through hordes of hostiles until you finally won out and acquired whatever it was you were supposed to grab. The claustrophobic confines of the dungeons seemed to exist in some mysterious limbo, complete in themselves and with no relation to anything else.

While *Dark Savant* has its dungeons, enough (more than enough) combat, and an Artifact as its ultimate objective, the action takes place in an actual world. There are towns, ruins, wilderness, mountains and even a small sea. These areas are inhabited by the different races who are plotting, scheming, allying, and warring with each other, and who, one way or another, embroil the adventurers in their machinations.

It is certainly possible to become entangled with hardly any effort at all. At one time, I had agreed with the Rattkin Mafia to find out when the next T'rang shuttle would land (so the Rattkins could hijack it and expand their operations to other worlds), while promising a T'rang assassin that the party would murder an Umpani Scout, at the same time we had joined the Umpani Scouts to track down T'rang spies, and those very same spies (when found) offered a nice chunk of cash for the location of the orbiting Umpani mother ship. It was about then that I decided that matters were becoming just a trifle *too* complicated, and returned to an earlier save position.

Still, this illustrates the types of situations you can become caught up in if you aren't careful about what you agree (or don't agree) to do for someone. It is also necessary to be careful about "trading lore" with NPCs. Aside from the Dominae itself, you are also looking for *MAPS*. These items,with names always displayed in upper case and bracketed by asterisks (i.e., *CRYSTAL MAP*), are not diagrams but text paragraphs that contain, in a roundabout way, clues to solving certain puzzles.

Without these clues, some puzzles are almost unsolvable. Since the chain of puzzles will eventually lead to the Astral Dominae, the *MAPS* are valuable items, and those competitors are looking for them, too. When you "trade lore" with an NPC, you learn all he knows, but he learns all *you* know at the same time. Trade information with the wrong person, and someone else might get to a *MAP* before you do. It's been known to happen.

Sprinkled throughout the game are what can be described as "cosmological philosophical observations," ponderings about this odd world in which your party finds itself. After all, while you, the player, live in a sophisticated high-tech world, your characters come from a far different environment, where magic, not machinery, is the technology.

So every once in a while, the game breaks out with musings on the strange devices the party comes across, the marvel of the great silver birds that cross the empty regions of space, or the wonderment of an unending universe filled with perhaps thousands or even millions of inhabited worlds.



While at times this is laid on a bit thick, it adds an extra dimension to *Dark Savant* and reinforces the feeling that the party is operating in reality rather than some isolated dungeon. This is a rare and unusually good touch for a CRPG.

The graphics are an improvement over *Bane* and have been sped up in combat. Now, when a group of monsters moves to the front, it no longer takes slightly less than forever. The outdoors are done well, although with all the forest around, sometimes it becomes a little monotonous. The sun moves across the sky during the day, and the moon during the night (the moon even has phases).

One of the biggest complaints about *Cosmic Forge* was the inability to drop something when you found treasure and everyone's inventory was full. This created a situation where you had to reboot the game if you came across a critical item, as the game wouldn't let you leave such an object behind.

That has been rectified in *Crusaders*. Now any item can be dropped, including those necessary for completing the game. Fortunately, objects you drop usually stay where they are and can be picked up again later. There was one exception to this: items dropped on the same square as the chest tended to vanish later. A couple of times the party returned to a location where goodies had been left on the chest square and everything was gone. So leave your stuff in a different location (the chest itself vanishes after it's opened).

The interface is designed primarily for the mouse, although the keyboard can be used, and operates smoothly. The main icons for Camping, Spellcasting, Using an item, Opening a locked door or chest, Searching a location, and Disk Options (save, restore, etc.) are arranged in a circle under the main window and are easily available at all times.

However, as with most games, *Crusaders* also has its drawbacks. One of these is the auto-map feature, which is only barely adequate. The quality of the display is tied to a new mapping skill; the higher the skill, the more detail you see. That's fine, but even at the highest level of skill, the area displayed is far too small, showing little more than the party's immediate vicinity.

Further, since the map can't be scrolled, you have to call it up frequently, and this can be a tiresome process, as you have to wade through the character's inventory, then click on the map, and finally on the "use" command before you see the display. A hot key for bringing up the map would have been welcome, and the ability to scroll the map even more so.

While the game did not crash or show any major aberrations, there is a minor but irritating technical problem involved with carrying around a lot of maps. From time to time, the program will freeze, often for as long as fifteen seconds, during which time commands and actions are locked out. You just have to sit there and wait until the game "comes back" before you can go on.

The easiest way around this is to carry only maps you really need and dump the ones you no longer require. Or you can set up a cache in some convenient location and leave extra maps there; dropped items don't disappear when you let go of them. **Sir-Tech** is aware of this problem, and a patch for it is available on many online networks and local bulletin boards. If you

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don't have a modem, call **Sir-Tech**'s hotline and ask about getting the patch.

The main problem with *Dark Savant*, though, is its apparently open design, which is very deceptive. While you can, for awhile, go almost anywhere, sooner or later you run into a dead end, as the items and information you need to solve puzzles or enter certain areas have been tucked away somewhere else. And it is not always obvious where to find them.

Few things are more frustrating than getting almost to the end of a sequence or dungeon only to learn that you have to backtrack and go halfway across the countryside to obtain what you need to finish -- and that's when you know where to go, which you often don't. You could easily spend hours in a fruitless search of the vicinity, scouring the place top to bottom, for something that isn't there.

It certainly wasn't fun to reach the top of Dane Tower only to discover that a crucial item was back at Orkogre Castle. It was no more pleasing to learn that the solution to the Six Swords puzzle in the Rattkin Funhouse happened to be in Nyctalinth. Instances like these are common throughout the game.



The worst of the lot is the Isle of Crypts, which is essentially the end game. You will have to go in and out of this place one, two, or possibly even three times before finishing it. This is just plain silly. The game should have been designed such that all necessary items are obtained before you enter, especially considering the complicated teleport maze you have to go through further down in the dungeon.

On the whole, *Crusaders of the Dark Savant* is certainly an improvement over the last couple of games. The feuding races, some after the Dominae, others with different agendas, and the party's interactions with them, mark the beginning of the maturation of the Wizardry series, and this is a good thing to see.

Puzzle design needs tightening up, and much of the excessive running back and forth (to no real advantage) eliminated; this game is big enough without all that extra travel time. Combat for beginning teams needs to be easier; all too typical for a Wizardry game, low-level parties will have a difficult time getting a foothold in the game.

This is, indeed, a large, tough adventure and not recommended for the novice CRPG'er. However, *Wizardry* fans and experienced gamers (who are willing to put up with some of the frustrations) will get more than their money's worth from *Crusaders*. CGW

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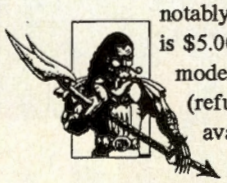
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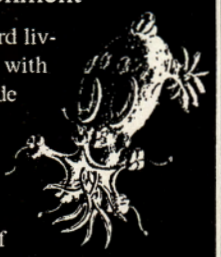
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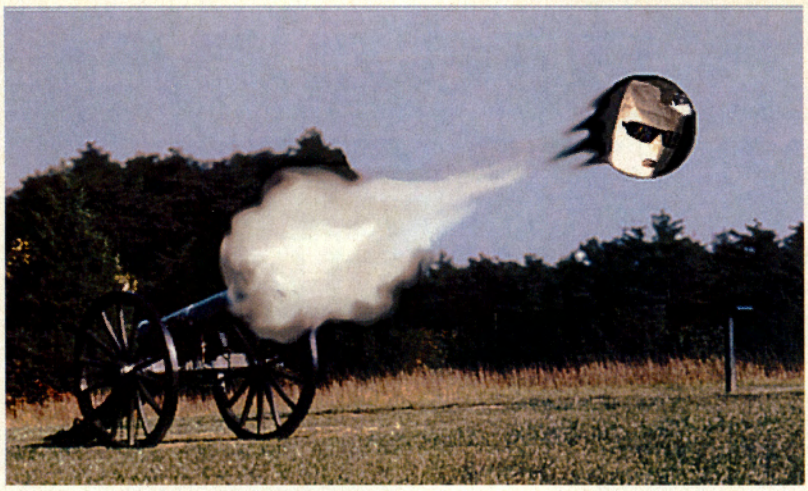


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The Rumor Bag

By Eustace Lee Savanarola Beauregard III

It was a crisp, autumn day in northern Virginia. I stood atop Henry Hill, not far from where a commander with the same surname had stood some 130 years before. I stood beside a Confederate cannon and remembered First Manassas. I was supposed to meet a contact who had promised to give me the scoop on Sid Meier's next game. I looked at my watch impatiently and realized the misadventures that had brought me thus far.

I had been wandering past the statue of Stonewall Jackson and heard a muted, "Pssst!" Such a verbal cue is SOP in my business, so I backtracked around the base of the statue. I needn't have bothered. It was merely a trenchcoated fellow with stubble showing a video game magazine to one of the park rangers. He was showing some pictures of **Electronic Arts**' *Tony La Russa Baseball* on the **Sega** *Genesis*, but he didn't seem to know much about it. It seems the ranger played the IBM version of the game and wanted to know how one could draft a team on a cartridge. The guy didn't know that the game would have a battery save and that one can save an "All-Star" team to play through a 162 game schedule. He didn't seem to know that there will only be four stadiums in the product (Wrigley Field, Camden Yards, Dodger Stadium and, probably, the Astrodome).

Of course, I wasn't about to fill him in. He read that *other* magazine. Let him find about from that *other* magazine about *Haunting* (working title), **EA**'s cartridge game where the player is a ghost who has to scare the family out of several different houses. In fact, let him find out from them about what EA is temporarily calling *Blood & Guts Football* (sort of a *Blood Bowl* meets an undead John Madden). It would serve him right not to find out until next spring.

I was going to let both the ranger and the stranger rest in their ignorance until the ranger said, "I mostly play computer games. That's why I read *Computer Gaming World*." I couldn't leave a loyal reader without a rumor, could I? I told them both that **Interplay** is working on a CD-ROM version of their *Lord of the Rings* games that will include animation from Ralph Bakshi's classic film.

Yet, they couldn't be satisfied. They pestered me from the statue to Henry House and back to Henry Hill trying to find out about Sid's new game. I was getting ready to turn some of the antique artillery on them.

I told them that I had heard that **Steve Jackson Games** was getting ready to license their *G.U.R.P.S.* (Generic Universal Role-Playing System) series to a major software publisher and that I thought it would be great to transfer characters from the era of *G.U.R.P.S Scarlet Pimpernel* to *G.U.R.P.S. Cyberpunk* and back to *G.U.R.P.S. Robin Hood* or *G.U.R.P.S. Wild Cards*. Of course, it will probably take the *G.U.R.P.S. Illuminati* to decide which *G.U.R.P.S.* environment will appear first.

They kept backing me toward the Confederate artillery and my foot slipped on the wet grass. My head, protected only by its plain brown wrapper, smacked against the mouth of the cannon and I blacked out momentarily like one of those endless access times on a low-grade CD-ROM product. When I opened my eyes, both the ranger and the stranger looked like they were made out of polygons. Maybe I had been playing too much of *Alone in the Dark* or had spent too much time anticipating the *Call of Cthulhu* sequel that is supposed to be released through **Imotion**, but it looked like both of my antagonists/admirers had turned into 3-D polyfilled characters. I thought for a second that they might be contestants in **Electronic Arts**' upcoming *ATP Tour Tennis* (**Distinctive Software**'s 3-D tennis game that was originally going to be published by **Broderbund**). In addition to the fluid 3-D action, gamers are supposed to be able to assume the attributes of 96 ATP Tour professionals, plus have the capacity to create a player.

Since I seemed so disoriented, my "friends" elected to leave and I managed to stand up by grabbing the wheel of the cannon's undercarriage. It was then that I checked my watch. My contact was late. Perhaps, she had seen the two pestering me and elected to bail out. I paced beside the cannon like an officer of old, but soon grew tired of the charade. I leaned on the cannon's muzzle and, improbably, it moved toward the ground. I straightened up and examined the muzzle. There was a paper inside.

The paper told me what I needed to know. Sid's next project is a Civil War game. It will be a wargame that telescopes in scale from strategic through operational and on to tactical battles. The paper hinted that the game would have a "miniatures" feel, complete with: formations, terrain effects and animated figures. Of course, there will also be a "Quick Combat" system for those who don't want to fight out the tactical battles.

There were even some scribbles that indicated that the game would be accelerated real-time with point-to-point movement and covering the entire war (with scenarios for those who don't wish to play the entire campaign). The anonymous source wasn't sure how much of the political aspects would be reflected in the game (i.e. Emancipation Proclamation and foreign intervention), but seemed certain that Sid would cover all the "interesting" aspects of the war.

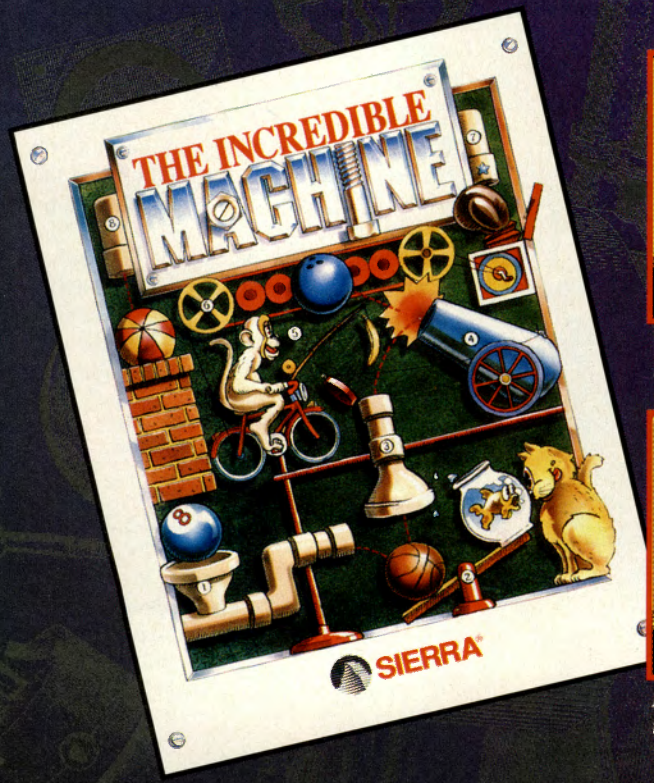
"Hummph!" I said to myself as I rubbed my head through the bag, "he hasn't even programmed the game yet and he's already had one casualty on the battlefield." Ah, well! Such are the perils of being The Rumor Guy. CGW

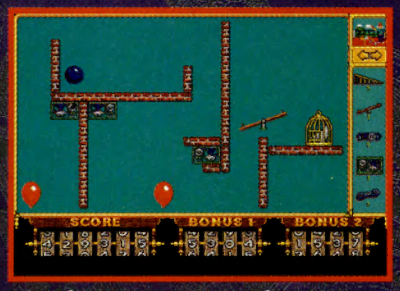
T.I.M.

A puzzle-solving, inventor's workshop for the mind...

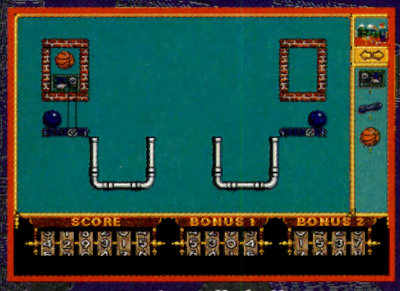
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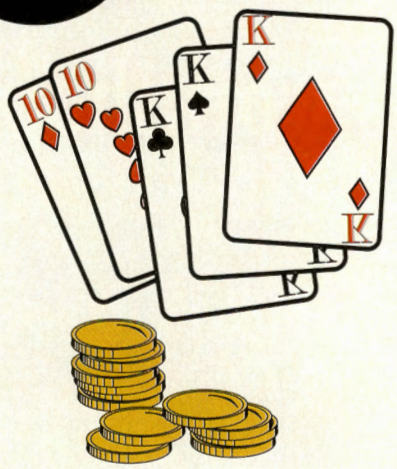
Introducing *The Incredible Machine*, a wacky electronic workshop from the mind of designer, Jeff Tunnell. Using parts and gadgets from the electronic toolbox, you construct machines to solve one of 80 different puzzles or create your own incredible masterpiece in Free-Form mode. There are gears, pulleys, cats, balloons, dynamite and about 40 other animating tools for use in your creation. It's all new, slightly demented fun that you won't be able to put down. It's *The Incredible Machine* and it's in stores now!

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A Full House of Video Poker Games

Computer Gambling with Less at Stake

by Michael S. Lasky

While it is theoretically possible to take the computer out of the casino, it is apparently impossible to take the casino out of the computer. Video poker and other games of chance seem to be having a renaissance these days and that just might have something to do with our worries about the economy and our personal fantasies to strike it rich.

Whatever the reason, the solitaire games do supply hours of fun and, best of all, even when one makes the wrong bets, there is no real money lost. This reminds me of W. C. Fields' great line in the classic comedy, "My Little Chickadee": when asked at a card game, "Is this a game of chance?", he rejoindered, "Not the way I play it!" That, of course, is both the joy of computer casino games and the reason they can get boring quite fast. With no money on the line, there really is no suspense. If one wins, that's nice — if one loses, it's no big deal.

Most of the games allow the gamer to customize the odds — to either match true casino action or to actually win frequently for a change. While we don't lose any cash, we don't make any either. We do pick up some sound strategies, however, that could possibly be put to use for our profit in real casino machine play.

Dr. Wong's Jacks+ Video Poker is an abridged version of **Villa Crespo**'s *Stanford Wong Video Poker* (reviewed in *CGW* #92, p. 33). While this $12.95 version does not contain the elaborate utilities and strategies its full size $49.95 version does, it nevertheless packs a generous portion of that exhaustive video poker simulation and strategy workhorse. For under $13, this is a great bargain.

TITLE:	Dr. Wong's Jacks + Video Poker
PLAYERS:	1
SYSTEM:	IBM
PROTECTION:	None
PRICE:	$12.95
DESIGNER:	Stanford Wong
PUBLISHER:	Villa Crespo Software Highland Park, IL



What makes it truly clever is its "What if?" scenario that lets a gamer find out just what would have happened if the hand were played differently. I drew a hand with an Ace, Two, Three, Four, and Queen. I wanted to get a Five for a straight. So I held the Ace through Four cards. In the second deal, I bought a Seven. The odds weren't in my favor. Yet, I couldn't help but wonder what would have happened if I had just kept the Ace and asked for four more cards? In the casino, one never finds out what would happen.

Here, one does. A replay option let's the gamer see if it would have been any better if the deal had been played differently. Holding just the Ace, I got a Seven, a Queen, a King, and another Ace in the draw. That would have been the way to go.

The interface of *Dr. Wong's Jacks+* is a tad arcane, relying totally on the function keys. With limited mouse support and the intricate F-key requirements, it takes some time to get used to Dr. Wong's setup. Expert advice can be adjusted to either requested or always supplied. The graphic screens emulate actual video poker displays. Sound can mercifully be left off. When on, we are treated to the din of a casino on a Saturday night. That's not particularly pleasant in reality and much less so as generated through the tinny PC speaker.

Dr. Wong's Jacks+ Video Poker cannot be played from *Windows* and, in fact, will crash a system completely. It is truly one of the only programs I have ever encountered that is so *Windows* unfriendly, but video poker fans are urged not to let this stop them from purchasing this bargain package.

For Addicts Only

Video poker machines are addictive. They now comprise the single most popular gambling game of not only any slot machine, but of any legalized casino game in America. While people pop coins in the video poker and blackjack one-armed bandits, hoping to win the progressive jackpots, they also play because it's just plain fun. They are the only slot machines that are truly interactive. The gamer gets to choose which cards to hold; the machine's

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computer randomly deals the second round to fill in what is not held.

TITLE:	Strategic Video Poker
#PLAYERS:	1
SYSTEM:	IBM
PROTECTION:	None
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Louis Sinoff
PUBLISHER:	LWS Software Broomall, PA



LWS Software's *Stategic Video Poker* lets players learn strategies for their real ventures into the casinos while they play on their own computer. Payouts from slot machines are based on preset mathematic odds. This package lets gamers manipulate them and select even the type of machine (i.e. Jacks or better, two pairs or better, Jokers wild, etc.) and the payoff odds. A running tally can be kept to see just how the plays went. The player's mistakes can be tallied as well by a simple click on the well-designed pull-down menus.

Fortunately, the documentation is thorough and clear, since there is no on-line help facility. Like other video poker games, *Strategic Video Poker* offers simple, unspectacular graphics that simply and straightforwardly simulate actual slot machine displays, complete with the option to insert one to five coins. I found it best to select Maximum play to speed up each round and avoid having to click five times to pretend I was inserting five coins. That gets tiring very quickly.

Vegas Games Entertainment Pack offers more than just video poker. This integrated package for *Windows* from **New World Computing** includes five popular video games: regular slot machines, keno, blackjack, roulette, and, of course, video poker. What sets them apart from the other games evaluated here is that they are boring. This lackluster set runs in five separate modules installed in Windows. Other than some simple user customizations such as card back designs, chip denominations, and maximum bets, there are no controls for playing odds.

TITLE:	Vegas Games Entertainment Pack for Windows
PLAYERS:	1
SYSTEM:	IBM w/ Windows 3.0 or higher
PROTECTION:	None
PRICE:	$29.95
DESIGNER:	Nanosoft
PUBLISHER:	New World Computing Woodland Hills, CA



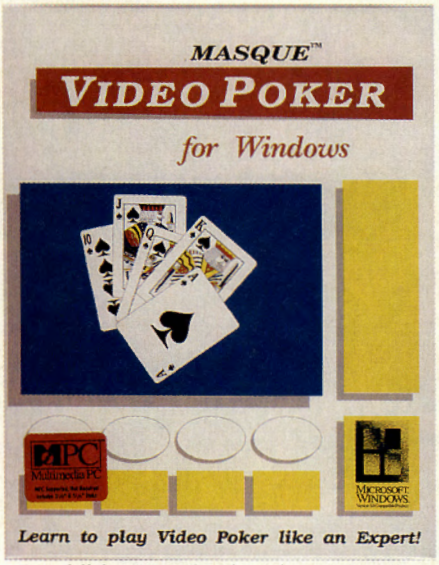
Further, the preset odds are not in the player's favor. If a real casino were to carry these odds, they would have no customers. Whether it was regular slot machine play, roulette, video poker, or video poker, the computer was the winner almost every time. When the player wins, the returns aren't enough for cab fare. The package contains no documentation. Instead there is a card with the rather brusque statement: "New World Computing Customer Support will not provide instructions on how to play each game, or strategies and hints. Please press the F1 key for online help." Well, I tried that and pressing F1 got me zilch. The player must click on the Help bar at the top of the screen. Then, the information provided is rudimentary and actually reveals how uninvolving this quintet of games are. For my money, I am going to another casino.

Luckily there is a fabulous one in **Masque**'s *Video Poker for Windows*, one of the best video poker games around.

Odds on Winner

With complete game strategies that match machines which could easily be found in Las Vegas and Atlantic City gambling rooms, *Video Poker for Windows* (*VPW*) is an intricate, even enlightening, game about how to play the odds. There are so many different ways a player can customize the program that there is little chance of it getting boring or predictable too quickly (as noted earlier, one of the liabilities of computer versions of video poker).

TITLE:	Video Poker for Windows
PLAYERS:	1
SYSTEMS:	IBM w/Windows 3.0 or higher
PROTECTION:	None
PRICE:	$54.95
DESIGNER:	Lenny Frome
PUBLISHER:	Masque Publishing Englewood, CO



In addition to selecting the multitude of game strategies (Jacks or Better for Las Vegas, Jacks or Better for Atlantic City, Deuces Wild or Joker's Wild Las Vegas, and Two Pairs or Better Atlantic City), Expert Play recommendations are always available from Lenny Frome, a video poker columnist and strategy maven.

Gamers can have their play evaluated statistically and errors pointed out. Expert Strategy Tables are provided in pop-up windows to reveal which current play options will most likely produce the best payoff. A hand evaluation option lets players see how a hand can be played based on the cards they select from a complete on-screen deck. There is even a tournament round and more statistical screens and reports than anyone might care to ever see.

Masque's *VPW*, like the earlier *Blackjack for Windows* is one of the best reasons to install *Windows* on a computer. Now, if my computer would only spit out some quarters, I'd never have to travel to Nevada or Atlantic City. At least now I'm ready for those trips when it's time. CGW

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Over There

CGW's British Agent Reports on European Military (Game) Build-up

by Robin Matthews

A departure this month from the usual 'light and frothy' news and gossip, for a more in depth look at some of the best recent releases from Europe. The Over There column will occasionally provide such an approach, especially when some products are worth a more detailed look. Recently the column has had a very French flavor, but this month, British products come under the spotlight.

Breach Too

The first title is the excellent *Laser Squad* from **Krisalis Software** of Rotherham. This is a squad-level tactical sci-fi wargame in which you control individual troopers. It can be played as a one or two player game. Each unit has its own name, characteristics and abilities — each is equipped from a choice of weapons and armor, the cost of these being deducted from a general pool. This allows you to design your own squad, having to weigh up the pros and cons of rocket launchers, sniper rifles, grenades, etc.

Laser Squad consists of five missions which get progressively longer and more difficult. Mission One, sub-titled The Assassins, is an attempted hit against the arch baddie Sterner Regnix; Mission Two is Moonbase Assault; Mission Three is Rescue from the Mines, etc. Each scenario requires its own techniques and tactics, but in the end the objective is always the destruction of the computer opponent (rather than the accomplishment of a special objective). Where *Laser Squad* really comes into its own, however, is in the two player option. This gives almost unlimited variety, and provides the best game of its type available on IBM compatibles.



Laser Squad

The graphics are of good quality, sound board support is high, and the interface takes a little getting used to, but is then very smooth. All is icon-driven with smooth scrolling screens. Some missions are better achieved by splitting your party, and the system easily allows you to flick from one unit to another, even if they are on the other side of the map.

Laser Squad also features line-of-sight and infra-red viewers in combat, the targeting being particularly effective. The weaponry is suitably impressive and of good variety — the rocket launchers being particularly devastating. Armor is also included, but the product does not become bogged down with hundreds of items, most of which you do not use.

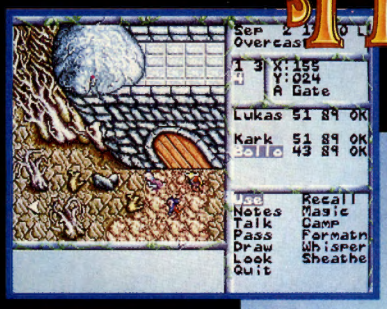
This one is particularly good fun with lots to commend it. On the technical side, it's not bad either. It is currently available on IBM compatibles with VGA only, 520K free memory (+128K EMS for SoundBlaster), will only run on hard disk, and needs more than 9 MB of space.

The London Blitz

Virgin is busy at the moment, at work on a new historical flight simulator set in World War II. Its release title is *Reach for the Sky* (title is borrowed from a well known book by Paul Brickhill, based on the life of the famous British fighter ace Douglas Bader—the fellow with no legs). *Reach for the Sky*, the software, is set around the time of the Battle of Britain in the 1940's, and allows the player to take on the role of either the RAF or the Luftwaffe.

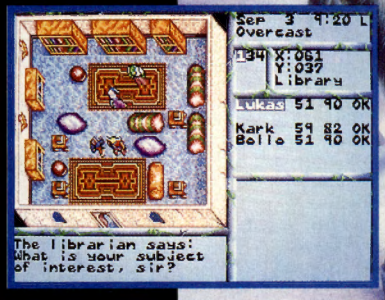
In the RAF you can pilot Spitfires or Hurricanes, in the Luftwaffe you are able to pilot the Ju87 Stuka, Messerschmitt 109's and 110's, or as a gunner in a Junkers 88, Heinkel He 111 or Dornier Do 17 (this is a first for any flight sim putting you inside these medium German bombers including the famous 'Flying Pencil'). The individ-

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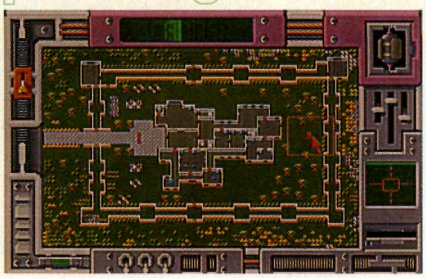
Delightful 256-color graphics, glorious music and digitized sound effects, and a compelling story with fascinating characters make *The Magic Candle III* your key to many hours of enjoyment.

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(Actual screens may vary.)

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Laser Squad

ual flight models are not bad, but occasionally you need to take an external view just to remind you which plane you're in.

Play is possible at "practice," "pilot" and "controller" level, the first giving a welcome learning curve, the latter a full-blown campaign game. Select which air force you wish to enlist in, then the phase of the battle (it covers the actual stages of the real Battle of Britain from July to September of 1940 and stretches from the attack on convoys, through raids on the radar stations, then direct assault on the RAF airfields, to the Blitz on London).

The phase selected will govern the aircraft and missions available, and also the general tactical considerations. The controller mode takes this to another dimension as you initially plan the RAF/Luftwaffes tactics on a daily basis and then fly missions.

The RAF Controller will be concerned with moving planes from factory to airfield, airfield to airfield, and also decide which squadrons to commit to the fray, and which to defend the airfields, cities, and factories — and then pilot the missions before it all goes around again …



Reach For The Sky

The Luftwaffe Controller will decide what to attack, with which squadrons, how many, at what time, and, like his counterpart, pilot the aircraft. Note that if you can reverse the course of history and guide the Luftwaffe to victory, you will be rewarded with a graphic of British Prime Minister Churchill boarding a plane to leave for Canada. Never in the field of human conflict …

The graphics are probably better than



Reach For The Sky

SWOTL standard, but not quite up to those in *Aces of the Pacific*. The flight controls are very responsive and, although it has all been done before, (most noticeably by **LucasArts** in their three superb products: *Battlehawks 1942*, *Their Finest Hour* and *SWOTL*), *Reach for the Sky* has its own charm and its own appeal. One nice touch involves radio messages broadcast via the sound card, such as "Spitfeurs on your tail!!!" and the "all clear" klaxon sounded at the end of a dogfight.

The IBM graphics are in both 16 color EGA and 256 color VGA and the game features full sound board support, including a Roland/SoundBlaster combination. *Reach for the Sky* is initially planned for IBM clones, but it is anticipated on both the Amiga and Atari ST (1 MB only) in the near future.

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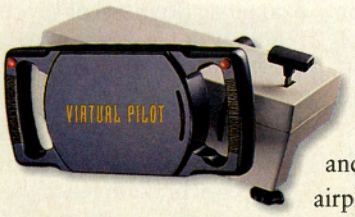
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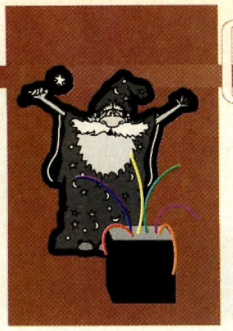
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Scorpion's Mail



■ **Monkey Island II** ■ **Legend of Kyrandia**
■ **Ultima Underworld** ■ **Darkseed** ■ **Ultima VII**
■ **Spellcasting 301** ■ **Clouds of Xeen** ■ **The Summoning**

Here we are in the depths of winter, and the depths of the mail room, too. You may notice the place seems a little larger. Fred and I decided it was easier to make the room bigger than to haul out all those mail sacks (and laziness had absolutely nothing to do with it! Honest!). So settle in and we'll peruse some of the correspondence.

However, before we get to the letters, there are a couple of things to be gone over. First, **Origin** has related to me that, because of a misunderstanding in my *Ultima VII* article a few months back, people have been sending in disks to be "fixed" when it wasn't necessary. So I'm going to clear that up right now.

The problem shows up in the final dungeon on Avatar Isle. *Beyond* the throne room, in the tunnels by the jail cells, are two doors. The first is retracted into the ground, the second one isn't. As you approach the second door, it should slide down while the first one slides up (effectively "trapping" the party).

This is the trouble spot, as the doors work properly *only* if you went into the Codex shrine and read the scroll there before entering the dungeon. So don't send your disks to Origin for "fixing" unless you are stuck at these sliding doors by the cells. The doors in the throne room are not a problem, as there is a switch hidden behind a secret wall that opens them.

Another correction needs to be made to something I said about *Clouds of Xeen* (Might & Magic IV). The game is not (ahem) quite as bug-free as I mentioned. It turns out there is a problem with the "Save As" feature not properly recording your progress in the game. So you could, for instance, complete a quest, only to find on a later restore that the program has forgotten all about it (and thereby forcing you to do it over).

This didn't happen to me because the memory patch **New World** sent me also included a fix for the "Save As" problem, which I didn't know at the time my article went to press. It was only later that I found out about this particular bug. Sigh. So if you've been having trouble with "Save As" not saving your position correctly, you can obtain the patch from most on-line networks or local bulletin boards, or you can call NWC's tech line to ask about obtaining one direct from them. Okay, on to the good stuff!

Monkey Island II: This one has proved popular, and folks are still having a little trouble with that drinking contest. Ya can't win if ya play (drink?) honestly. Now, a little near-grog, that would help. Of course, Kate isn't going to cooperate, so you have to be sneaky here. Ever looked closely at those flyers she hands out? Such a nice picture of her on them. Far too nice to keep hidden away; you ought to show it to the world.

Legend of Kyrandia: Some people are having a hard time getting through the dark caves. Alas, there is no quick and easy way to do it. First, map as you go, or you'll have an even harder time of it. Then proceed along as far as possible with the fireberries, save the game, and guess which way is safe to go next (ie, leads to another bush). Expect to restore a lot during this part of the game, but with careful mapping, you should be able to make it through.

Ultima Underworld: A few complaints have shown up from folks who have been unable to make the big leap across the chasm on level 7 (the one where magic doesn't work). This one is a puzzler, and I don't have a solution, sorry to say. It is a difficult jump, but by far the majority of players (myself included) have been able to get across, sometimes after many tries, but we certainly made it over. My own technique was to use the "running broad jump" method, and leap at the very last possible moment (with the ring of jumping equipped, of course). Eventually, this succeeded and I was past the chasm. If no manner of jumping will get you across, the only thing I can suggest is a call to Origin; they may be able to provide some tips, or possibly an alternate means of getting over.

Darkseed: Some adventurous souls have found themselves stymied by the monster dog guarding the bridge on the dark side. There isn't much you can do about it until you've had your little get-together with the lawyer. After that, you just might be able to stick it to that annoying mutt.

Ultima VII: Several Avatars are having a hard time getting through their own dungeon, hehe. In particular, the throne room (no relation to the first one at the beginning of the dungeon) has them stumped. They sit in the throne and nothing seems to happen. Seems is the key word here. So don't just sit there, go out and explore. Look around. Things may not be the way they appear.

Spellcasting 301: Flopping at the Belly Flop contest? Maybe what you need is a little roc and roll (or was that roc and blow?). Whatever you call it, just make sure that you do, hehe.

Clouds of Xeen: There *is* a cure for those who become old before their time. It's just not easy to obtain. Investigate the outdoors and turn the seasons. That will fix up anyone who is suffering from early gray.

The Summoning: On End Level 5, there are a number of magic mouths that ask for items. It is *not* necessary to "feed" all of them. Only a couple are really important, and the items they request can be found as you make your way through the fortress in the center of the level. The rest of the mouths are optional, and you don't have to give them items if you don't want to.

And that's about it for this look into the mailbag. Remember if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: Stop by the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu).

On GEnie: Visit the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT).

By US Mail (enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the United States): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York NY 10028.

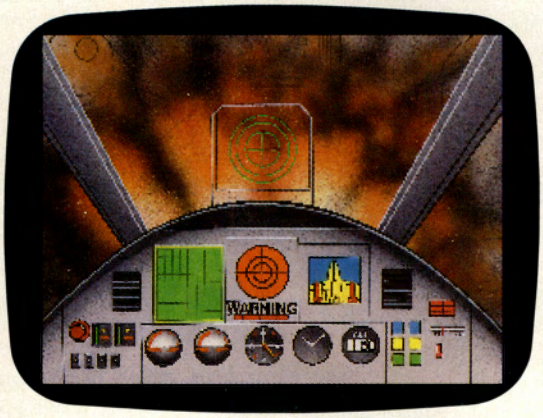
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CHAUVINIST PIGS IN SPACE

Rex Nebular and the Cosmic Gender Bender from MicroProse

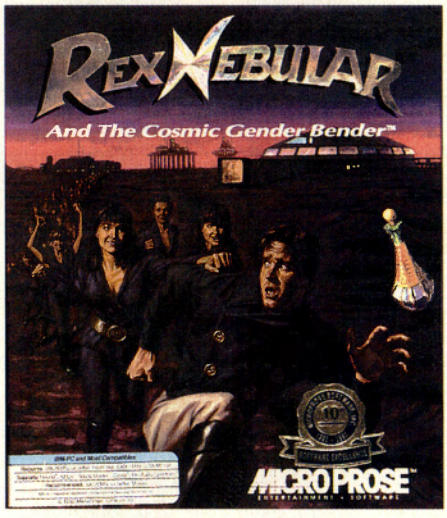
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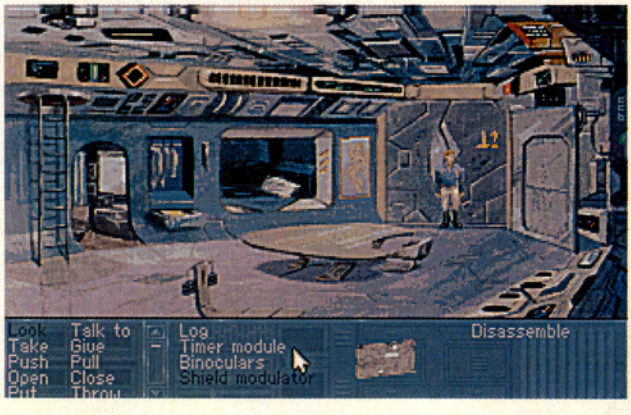
Title:	Rex Nebular and the Cosmic Gender Bender
System:	IBM
Price:	$59.95
Protection:	Documentation look-up
Designer:	MPS Labs graphic adventure group
Publisher:	MicroProse Hunt Valley, MD

The year 1992 will be remembered by some computer gamers as the year that **MicroProse** ventured forth from its staple product line — military simulations — into new gaming territory. With the introduction of *Darklands*, MicroProse sought to shed some new light on the often hackneyed CRPG world of dragons and hobgoblins, dropping the mythical pseudo-medieval setting found in most CRPGs and opting instead for an exhaustively researched background of medieval Germany. Now, MicroProse continues this offensive into new markets with the introduction of *Rex Nebular and the Cosmic Gender Benders* (*Rex*), an adventure game which takes aim squarely at the market dominance of its competitors, **Sierra On-Line** and **LucasArts**.

The plot in *Rex* is nothing new; indeed, the setting is roughly similar to **Free Spirit Software**'s Brad Stallion adventures, wherein a promiscuous space-hopping hero journeys across the universe, surmounting obstacles presented both by hostile xenoforms and beautiful space-vixens. *Rex* also shares some similarities with **Sierra**'s *Space Quest* series, with Rex Nebular behaving much like a bumbling, over-sexed Roger Wilco.

To get things started, a lengthy animated introduction provides the background information to help players understand Rex's plight. The story begins with Rex piloting his redoubtable star-faring vessel, the Slippery Pig, to an enigmatic planet known as Terra Androgena in search of a priceless vase. Upon assuming orbit around the planet, a vessel crewed by wrathful Amazon women slips out of hiding and nearly blasts the intrepid Rex into space dust, forcing him to make a crash landing on the surface of Terra Androgena. Now, the player enters the scene, guiding Rex about the Slippery Pig in search of equipment to help him escape his damaged vessel, explore the planet and find the vase.





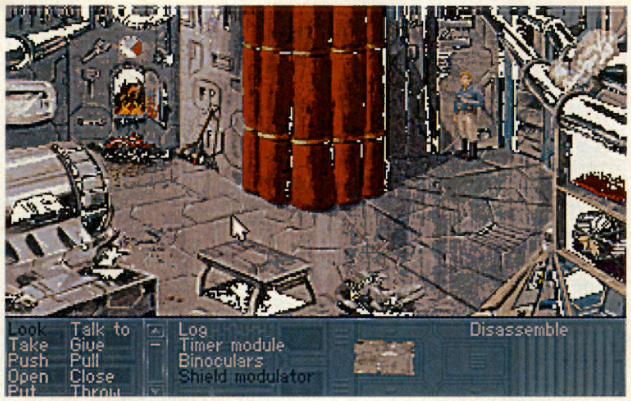
Outer Space Interface

Central to this endeavor is MicroProse's new adventure game interface, generated with the help of the MicroProse Adventure Development System (MADS). A no-typing interface along the lines of those used by Sierra and LucasArts, this interface supplies a small list of actions which the player can utilize to give Rex commands. A unique feature of *Rex* is that every object placed in inventory has it's own special list of custom verbs. For example, a tape player found in the game may have the custom actions "eject tape," "play tape," and "disassemble" associated with it. This specific treatment of special objects makes manipulating puzzles much easier to deal with.

Indeed, much of the game is easier to deal with than most other adventures. The player can set the difficulty level of the game (novice, advanced or expert), but even the expert level isn't that challenging. Another feature which makes *Rex* less arduous to play is the "auto-resurrection" that occurs every time Rex meets an untimely end. Instead of having to restore a saved game or restart, the game will simply place Rex in the position immediately preceding his death. This makes attempting risky actions less of a hassle than the "experiment, die, restore" formula that some adventure games fall victim to. All in all, Rex should be well received by novice and intermediate adventurers.

Part of *Rex*'s biggest appeal is the impressive treatment of sound and graphics. The impressive introductory animation (nearly ten minutes in length) is loaded with digit-

ized speech, and doesn't take up 10 MBs of hard drive space to do so. The bulk of game is filled with nicely done sound effects and music, with lavish VGA graphics providing the "Leisure Suit Larry: Lost in Space" feel that MicroProse was seeking. Indeed, the treatment of graphics and animation in *Rex* is where MicroProse is thumbing its nose at its competitors, with a robust use of 3-D objects and rotoscoped animation. This translates into an inventory control screen with spinning, 3-D objects and smoothly walking, life-like characters. Even the text window at the bottom of the screen is filled with animation; depending upon where Rex is in the game, animation will be there as well. An animation of birds flying through trees will appear when Rex is in the jungle; fish will be swimming en masse when he is underwater, et cetera, all in the background of the text window.



Funny You Should Program It

The game abounds with inside jokes and jabs at Sierra and their adventuring products. In the abandoned city, the player can guide Rex to "Macho-prose" software, where a slow-selling brand of entertainment software called "Sahara Off-Line" is priced to sell at 90% off retail. MicroProse reportedly consulted with a professional comic writer for the dialogue, and for the most part, it shows. At times, however, it feels as if the game is trying too hard to get a laugh. MicroProse should look to the acerbic wit and dead-on comedic timing displayed in LucasArts' *Monkey Island* series for a guide on how to make computer dialogue a little more humorous.

While it's not the funniest adventure game yet, *Rex* isn't bad. The combination of self-deprecating humor and gender-bending double entendre serves the game well, making it good for a few chuckles here and there. Parents should be warned, however, that *Rex* does feature a considerable amount of sexual innuendo and gruesome violence. MicroProse has thoughtfully added two levels of gameplay: Naughty and Nice. Naughty is roughly comparable to a modern R-rated movie, while Nice falls somewhere in the PG-13 camp. There is even an option to install the game in "Locked Nice" mode for nervous parents. From sex to violence, everything in *Rex* is treated with a tongue firmly planted in cheek; only very sensitive gamers should be offended by the adult content of Rex.

XY, Because We Like You

Infrequent appearances of bland dialogue aside, *Rex* is a solid move into the adventure gaming genre by MicroProse. *Rex* displays the same attention to detail that has won MicroProse raves in other products, with an emphasis on impressive graphics and sound. MicroProse is far from being an old hand at adventure games; *Rex* doesn't quite attain the state of the adventuring game art as evinced in LucasArt's *Monkey Island II* or Virgin's *Legend of Kyrandia*, but it's close. If MicroProse can follow up *Rex* with another MADS-created product that features more challenging puzzles and another solid plot, Sierra and LucasArts may find themselves looking over their shoulders more often than they would like. CGW

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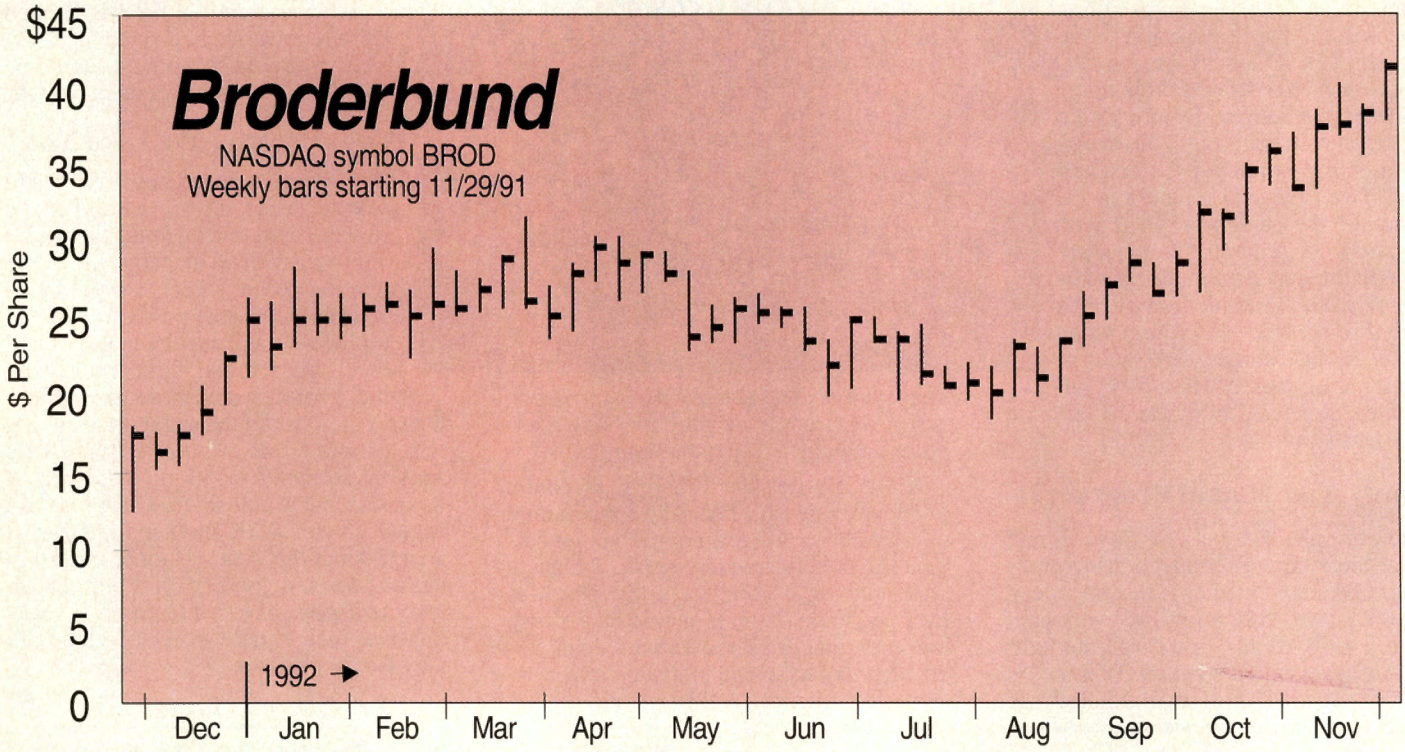
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A monthly look at the Computer Entertainment Stock Market

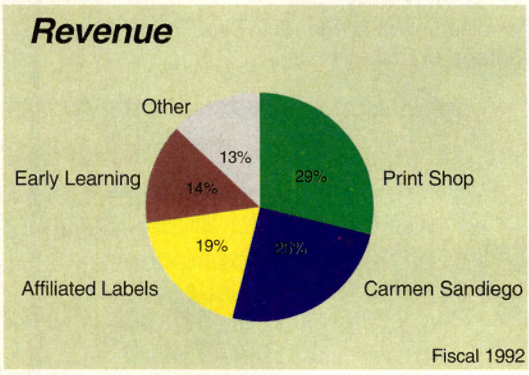


The Print Shop Still Prints Money At Broderbund Software

Like many NASDAQ stocks, Broderbund continues to do well.

Although Broderbund (NASDAQ: BROD) continues to publish very few pure entertainment software products, its strong edutainment base and distribution of entertainment titles continues to impact the computer gaming hobby. Though the company and its primary affiliated label, Maxis, mutually agreed to end their long-term distribution agreement (much like the amicable parting of Origin and Broderbund a few years before), the distribution arm recruited New World Software as their new flagship affiliate.

Broderbund's core business, however, continues to depend upon non-entertainment titles. The Print Shop series continued to contribute 29% of net corporate revenues (compared with 33% at the time of the Initial Public Offering) and the popular Where [Is] Carmen Sandiego? series provides 25% of the corporate income (down 1% since the company went public). To no one's surprise, the company's early learning products (Kid Pix, The Playhouse and The Treehouse, among others) has contributed 14% to net income and should increase in the coming year.



Investors seemed to be happy with Broderbund's fiscal year results. Net income per share increased from $.75 at the end of August, 1991 to $.99 at the end of August, 1992. For comparison purposes, we offer the year-end results of the previous three years (all at the end of August): 1990 ($.34), 1989 ($.36) and 1988 ($.62). Obviously, a quick glance at the stock performance chart indicates that Broderbund is selling (at press time) at almost three times the per share value of the Initial Public Offering (which hit the market at the high end of the projected range - ca. $11.00).

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Games

01. Wing Commander II (Origin)
02. Castle Wolfenstein 3-D (Id Software)
03. Lemmings (Psygnosis)
04. Super Tetris (Spectrum Holobyte)
05. Conan the Cimmerian (Virgin)
06. Out of this World (Interplay)
07. Indiana Jones/Atlantis (LucasArts)
08. Monkey Island II (LucasArts)
09. Legend of Kyrandia (Virgin)
10. Quest For Glory III (Sierra)
11. The Dagger of Amon Ra (Sierra)
12. Ultima Underworld (Origin)
13. Might & Magic: Xeen (New World)
14. Eye of the Beholder I (SSI)
15. Wizardry VII: Crusaders (Sir-Tech)
16. Elvira II (Accolade)
17. Red Baron (Dynamix)
18. Falcon 3.01 (Spectrum Holobyte)
19. Gunship 2000 (Microprose)
20. Chuck Yeager's Air Combat (EA)
21. Civilization (Microprose)
22. Chessmaster 3000 (Software Toolworks)
23. Siege (Mindcraft)
24. Populous II (EA)
25. Rules of Engagement (Mindcraft)
26. The Perfect General (QQP)
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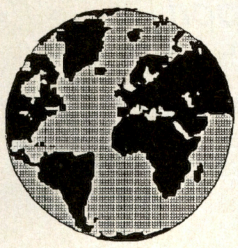
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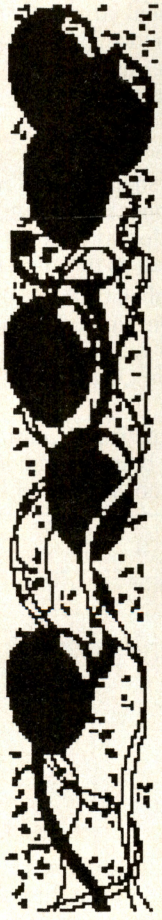
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A Day in the Pit

or

Do Android Gladiators Sweat Electric Bullets?

A replay of Maxis' *RoboSport*

by Martin E. Cirulis

"Rifle One slowly advanced in a half crouch, barely a 'bong' coming from his bouncing legs as he crossed the debris strewn remains of the lawn. His receptors itched; at any moment the scream of an incoming missile could come or a piercing burp of auto fire. But he was a soldier and he had his orders...."

Recently, the *Metro Seattle Gamers* (MSG) held a computer gaming day; I decided to check in and see how **Maxis**' *RoboSport* held up under the intense scrutiny and play of a roomful of shouting wargamers—a notoriously critical crowd. Since *RoboSport(RS)* has an intentionally "light" feel to it, I was concerned that I might have trouble finding three willing opponents among these hard-nosed wargamers.

I need not have worried. As it turned out, I had about as much problem finding players as I would finding unemployed Republicans. A couple of Mac owners had already set up their machines back-to-back, so we decided this would become the blood(oil?)-pit.

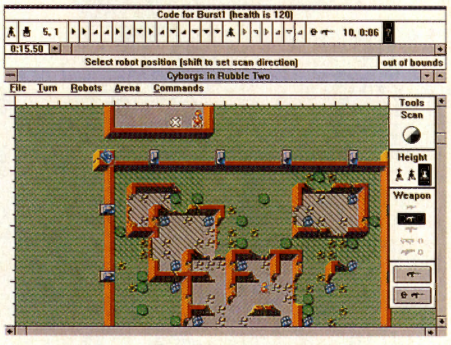
With the connection of a few cables and the rise of *AppleTalk*, the network was established and, with the odd file-sharing command to set the stage, *RoboSport's* elegant communication routines had us up and running in moments. The ease of this set-up impressed most of us who are acquainted with the slightly more arcane multi-computer games we've tried to set up before, with varying degrees of success. Maxis has made it as simple as possible to play this game in a multi-user environment; it seems to handle different machine speeds without a hitch. We used a Quadra 700 as the master unit with a standard Mac+ as the other terminal and, later, we added an SEII and a PowerBook to maximize speed and player privacy. It ran with nary a hiccup. Enough of this technical jargon, though, there is a grudge match to analyze and robot parts to sweep up. Let us meet our four antagonists and examine the playing field.

The Players

Marshalling the Red team and starting in the upper right corner is Immanuel Gambiel, fondly known as Izzy. He is renowned as the child of the Blitzkrieg.

Stephen Graham, plays the Greens in the bottom right. He is an experienced *RS* player and the man kind enough to let us use his Quadra for the brains of our network.

Mike Firman commands the Purple team in the bottom left corner. He is a dyed-in-the-wool wargamer but an *RS* novice.



Finally, hunched up in the top left corner and admiring his shiny Blue troops is yours truly. I've never faced three human opponents in *RS* and but I'm looking forward to it.

The Pit

The name of the game is Survival and the level is Standard Battle. The field will be Rubble3, a bombed out ruin of a suburb with the blasted shells of buildings as our cover. Six 'bots and a five minute time limit per turn should keep us sharp but not make any of the less experienced players too tense. The game will run eight turns, two game minutes at fifteen seconds per turn. And so, after each player programs their clever opening plays, there is the ominous hum of the transporters and...

LET THE GAME BEGIN!!!!

Turn 1 begins, as most games of *RS* seem to do, with the almost constant roar of gunfire and explosions. The Blue team launches a furious storm of grenades at every opening in the rubble of the Red home area; unfortunately, not a single red robot shows an antenna to the east. Meanwhile, it seems that both the Green and Purple teams have decided to rush the center and try to gain control of the board. Unfortunately they slam into each other in the clearing below the central building and the massive firefight blows Purple Auto1 and the Green Missleman to 'bot heaven. Tough break for Green. Purple guards his right flank with a lone Missleman and succeeds in blasting Blue Auto2 out of his own guard position. Range and accuracy make all the difference here. Green loses his Auto1 to Red in a similar manner.

At the end of the fifteen seconds both Blue And Purple are down a 'bot, while Green has lost his best two weapons in his gambit for the center. Red has come through with only a few minor dents. Izzy has surprised us all by playing defensively and coming out the big winner for the turn. Green has solid control of the center building shell but it has cost him, after the first turn, the health of his team totals only 391. Purple's not much better. I'm not thrilled with Blue team's performance, but neither am I heartbroken. We are in a solid number two position.

Turn 2 is one of defense and debacle.

Red, sensing a combined attack from both the Green and Blue teams pulls back into even tighter defensive positions within the building in his home zone, minimizing possible grenade and missile attack while maximizing his own effectiveness. It works well. Green, deciding he has taken too much collateral damage to survive a prolonged firefight, rushes the Red home zone and is annihilated in a storm of burst and auto fire before the robots can cross the open ground; Izzy the Red has successfully guessed which side the main rush would come from. The Blue feint succeeds in slipping a lone rifleman into Red's defenses but, out of grenades, his rifle is too weak to be more than an inconvenience.



In the now far less crowded center, Blue and Purple scouts encounter each other from opposite sides of a room and annihilate each other. Another purple scout trying to slide up the right side of the arena is picked off by the Blue Missleman. The remaining Purple robots consolidate their position in the center building. Red is a little more chewed up but still holding a full compliment of 'bots, while the Green team is reduced to one cowering rifleman with a health of eighteen.

Witnessing the virtual destruction of the Green team, I realize that I am far too spread out over my corner to resist the attack from the left that is sure to come. For the next turn I will attempt a desperate consolidation while maintaining some sort of guerrilla offense against Red.

Turn 3 is the first turn of relatively subtle tactics. The only excitement is when Red cautiously blasts the intruding Blue rifleman into atoms with a massed grenade attack. A Blue burster takes advantage and slips behind Red lines but his final position only allows him to slag Red Auto1, the first Red loss of the game.

Meanwhile Green retreats its lone 'bot quickly back to its own home zone and holes up in the best corner to be found. Purple moves up screen very cautiously and in force.

Red must come to me now and I hope to move up my Missleman to take advantage of the confusion my infiltration is causing amongst his ranks. And yet, I cringe trying to figure out when Purple will arrive.

Turn 4 is a study in frustration. The Blue Missleman *does* catch the Red team in the open but its missiles veer wide and do little damage. The Red return fire does not suffer from this little curse of bad luck and the Blue 'bot goes up in flames. The rest of the Red team continues to play hide and seek with the Blue infiltrator behind his lines.

Green still hides and will do so for the rest of the game. Purple, expecting some

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sort of Blue attack, has held it's defensive position for the entire turn.

I can feel the end coming at the hands of the Red juggernaut; the only issue is how high a price I will force him to pay.

Turn 5 is the Blue swan song. The Blue auto1 blazes away at the approaching Red team from the relative safety of the Blue home zone, but the grenade conservation of the Reds has worked well and the autogun is silenced with a round of explosions and no Red losses. Back in the Red home zone, the last remaining Blue 'bot cautiously scans for enemies in all directions, eases through a blasted wall and is ignominiously cut to pieces. Blue is out at the minute and fifteen second mark. Purple moves it's last three 'bots up slowly and positions itself for an assault on the top of the arena.

With my last robot gladiator in fragments, my only satisfaction is in the realization that I have reduced many of the Red team to rolling junk. With five robots left, Red's total health is only 319. I begin to cheer for the Purples who have caused me less grief.

Turn 6, surprisingly, becomes the blazing finale for all intents and purposes. With Blue gone, Purple realizes that there is now an uninhabited home zone to defend from, and rushes up to snatch this important tactical objective. Unfortunately, the Red horde has decided the same thing. The two remaining powers slam into each other in a cataclysm of firepower. When the smoke clears, two Red 'bots have yelled their last 'Arrrrgh!', but of the Purple team, there is no trace.

Meanwhile, down in the forgotten bottom left of the arena, Green still hides.

Turns 7 and 8 are a study in stealth as Green continues to hide from the Red team, and much to everyone's surprise, succeeds in running out the clock and survives.

And the winner is... RED! With an overwhelming 2250 points. Izzy has beaten us all by cleverly contradicting our expectations. Next is the glad-just-to-be-alive Greens with 950 points. The overconfident Blues and cautious Purples are tied for last with 600.

Coach's Corner

After viewing the movie using *RoboPlay* and after hearing numerous 'should have's and 'if only's, many people who had never heard of *RoboSport* were commenting on how well the game reflected small arms and combined arms tactics. It simulated arms tactics much better, in fact, than many computer wargames dedicated to the subject. Both the Green Captain, Stephen Graham, and I agreed we had ignored these tactics to our own peril. Mike Firman just groused about his luck; he never dreamed he'd be facing a nearly complete Red team when he finally made his way to the top of the arena.

Many IBM users were also surprised they had never heard of the game and it was decided this was due mainly to the fact most stores sell it in the *Windows* section instead of the Entertainment Software racks. *RoboSport* vets expressed an interest in an update disk for the game, which would contain such features as a robot and terrain editor and terrain that is affected by explosions and gunfire.

Before we were kicked off the network by impatient *Spectre* players, more than a few people had been introduced to the game and mastered the simple interface in the course of a short melee. A game that kept a whole roomful of wargamers entertained just playing the basic scenario is definitely one that deserves more exposure in the multi-user environment. Next computer-gaming day, the MSG is planning a "Capture the Flag" tourney. Me, I think I'll dig up a few old Sgt. Rock comics and see if I can pick up a few pointers.

I would like to thank the Metro Seattle Gamers for making this article so enjoyable to research. CGW

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To Be Continued...

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Virgin's New Graphic Adventure, *KGB*

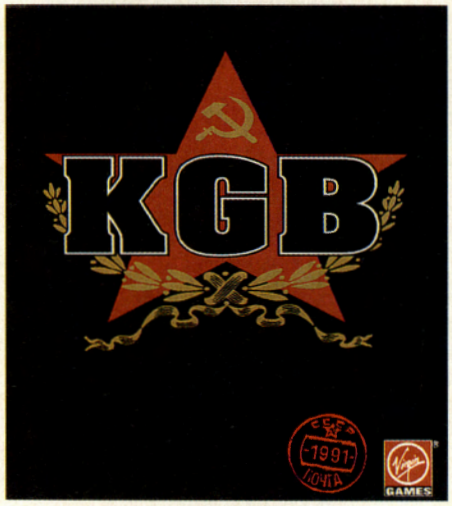
by Robin Matthews

TITLE:	KGB
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, IBM
REVIEWED ON:	IBM (runs fine on 12Mhz)
PRICE:	$29.99
GRAPHICS:	VGA
SOUND:	AdLib, Soundblaster, Roland
DESIGNER:	Cryo
PUBLISHER:	Virgin Games Irvine, CA

With all the recent changes in the Soviet Bloc it is possible that this latest release from **Virgin** could become a nostalgic piece of software, dealing as it does with all the scheming and machinations of the old state intelligence organization that made the CIA look like a 'mother and monsters' coffee morning club. In serious terms the KGB was the most effective and feared instrument of terror, state control and of course corruption in the old Soviet System, but at least it got the trains running on time (as they say in old Petrograd).

Virgin has used the same French software house which coded the graphically stunning *Dune*, **Cryo**, and they have produced an unusual variant of the graphic adventure/whodunnit genre. The plot involves the player, as Maksim Rukov, joining the KGB's Department P and being employed to investigate decadent Western style corruption and avarice within the Soviet State. This is achieved by a series of mini-quests, which eventually add details to the main plotline which involves... *[Ed: deleted due to inadequate security clearance on the part of* CGW *readers].*

The trail starts with Maksim's first case; to investigate the murder of a former KGB agent called Golitsin. *KGB* is set in the summer of 1991 against the backdrop of the creaking Communist system and the flavor is well captured, with Golitsin apparently being involved in all sorts of shady shenanigans such as murder, drug

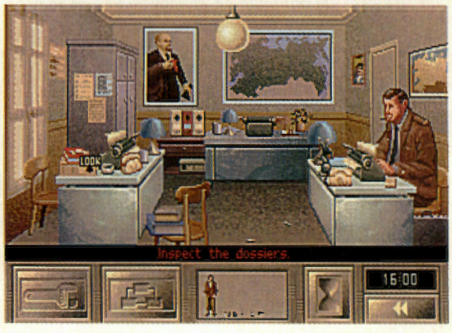


dealing, moon shining, computer hacking, etc. The wider picture, however, is more sinister, with plots against good 'ole Gorbie, coups with military hardliners, etc.

The gaming system is simple, but well presented. The core interface consists of a series of static screens full of items and characters, accessed by means of an 'intelligent' cursor. When one moves over a door, the cursor automatically changes to "Open." When one moves over a non-playing character, it alters to "Talk." When the player decides to interrogate, eh, sorry, chat to NPCs, he is presented with a series of menus. These allow one to engage in general tittle-tattle, to ask about important Soviet matters (like Soccer or the role of women in the Soviet higher echelons) or to question them on specific topics relating to Maksim's investigation.

This is the main method used in *KGB* to gather facts and question witnesses. Then, when a new piece of information is uncovered, it resets a series of flags in the code which allow the player to progress further and ask additional questions or to access new areas. As a result locations are re-visited and NPCs re-interviewed as the facts are revealed. This is classic adventuring that does sound a bit linear, but the general interface and presentation is so good that it successfully avoids the feeling of being cramped or of being forced down a one-way street.

Each of the locations is full of objects and scenery (this must be where all those old pictures and statues of Lenin have been sent!) and much of the game is spent examining each item and almost every square centimeter of the screen. This may prove tedious to those used to 'lighter' products, but adds enormously to the sense of depth and to the general atmosphere; so much so that when one leaves certain areas one almost gives a sigh of relief as Maksim breathes the fresh Moscow air again.



The external locations are superbly drawn, especially the views of the Kremlin and Red Square at night, and these screens also allow movement around the suburbs of Moscow. The internal locations are also well crafted, giving a sense of the austerity of day-to-day life within the failing ideological system (times are tough — neither a Sega nor a Nintendo in sight).

KGB also has a simple but effective



auto-mapping facility which shows the currently available locations and an option to automatically restore back to a position inhabited just before entering the current location. This is a very welcome feature which all products could benefit from; in how many games does the phone ring, pen run out, cup of tea arrive, or the roof blow off just as a 'one-off,' never-to-be-repeated conversation or event takes place? Well in *KGB* there is no need to restore a save from three days ago, one just goes back to when the scene began and hope for no further interruptions (it's quite fresh and breezy without the roof anyway!).

This quick restore function also encourages the player to try out different approaches and tactics, knowing that if they are unsuccessful, it is painless to jump back a couple of minutes and try another tack. The storyline is quite tight, so the right approach will become self evident, and it seems that most problems and puzzles have only a single solution, but these can mostly be completed in any order.

KGB is set in four 'chapters' and the book style is also reflected in the feel of *KGB* - i.e. very much in the John Le Carre mold, with lots of hidden intrigue, deep subterfuge and criss-crossing plot lines. One almost expects George Smiley to turn up hiding in a doorway somewhere on one of the screens. Bearing in mind the limitations imposed by mostly static screens, the graphics are of a high standard, with some excellently sketched gritty Muscovites and shadowy characters penned in almost a caricature style. These wonderful characters react as the gamer talks to them and *some* of them are almost hypnotic — I must go back and see the unfortunate widow Golitsin someday.

KGB also has some very useful features, including a video recorder which allows the player to fast forward through long waits or to rewind back to earlier conversations or events. This reduces the amount of note taking required and continues the book similarities of popping back to Page 202 to re-read that chapter about the Russian air force general and the new car. (They were going to deliver his new car on July 20th, 1995, but the plumber was due to call that day…)



The main plot line appears to be event-triggered, so that the player cannot stray too far from the correct course, and one is given the occasional signpost by being killed! (Please note that if this does occur one has done something wrong — one should go back a step or two, drink two large Wodkas and try again!). As per recent adventures the player cannot proceed to the next chapter unless he has completed all the current tasks -- at least giving one some confirmation that he's on the right track.



So, with nice graphics, a pretty good gaming system, and an unusual feel that packs more impact than a Kalashnikov, *KGB* may not be likely to appeal to all, but if one wants an engrossing and atmospheric product with more depth and attention to detail than offered by most of the latest graphic adventures, *KGB* is not likely to make one see *red*! CGW

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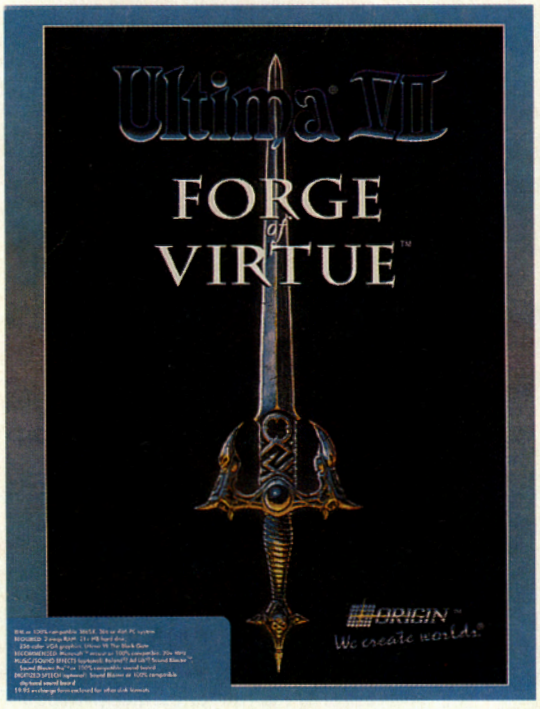
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A NEW PIECE OF REAL ESTATE FOR BRITANNIA

Origin's Forge of Virtue

by C. J. Suddarth

TITLE:	Forge of Virtue
SYSTEM:	IBM (386SX or better, 2 MB RAM, VGA, and 21+ MB hard disk)
PRICE:	$24.95
PROTECTION:	Requires Ultima VII The Black Gate be installed
PUBLISHER:	Origin Systems Austin, TX



If Lord British were to open a health club strictly for the purposes of pumping up the "average" Avatar in Britannia, *Forge of Virtue* (the first add-in disk for a computer game from **Origin Systems, Inc.**) would be a good start at accomplishing precisely that. *Forge of Virtue* is a set of four quests that are added to the *Ultima VII* world. The Avatar and his party can complete any or all of the quests any time. With the assistance of these Hans and Franz quests, the Avatar can trade his/her fleshy, flabby muscles for a magnificent Strength of 60 and "pump up" all other attributes to 30. No more girly Avatars!

Of course, the *Forge of Virtue* isn't designed simply to smith improved attributes; it also serves to fashion and edge a powerful new weapon. The Avatar can now wield the most potent sword to ever appear in the entire *Ultima* saga, but he or she must forge it, as well. The Shade Blade cuts a double-edge swath of magic. It is powerful enough to kill an otherwise unslayable dragon, but bears the same insatiable thirst for blood, impossibility of separation from its wielder and ability to communicate with its possessor as Stormbringer, that dark blade wielded by Michael Moorcock's Corum.

The first three quests deal with the virtues of Avatarhood: truth, love and courage (sort of an *Ultima IV* re-run.) The Avatar can complete the quests in any order. I suggest saving the test of Courage till last, as I felt it was definitely the most fun. The quests themselves are easily completed in a gaming session. The fourth is where all the loose ends are tied together.

Forging A Plot

The first time the party is loaded after installation of the *Forge of Virtue*, they experience an earthquake. This sets up a visit to Lord British to find out the cause of the disturbance. Lord British tells the party that the Isle of Fire has risen from the sea. This is the same island that Exodus emerged from (aka *Ultima III*) before it sank beneath the waves.

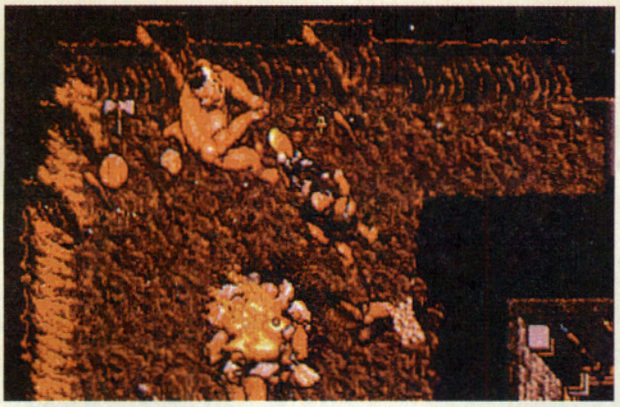
Lord British instructs the party to travel to the Isle of Fire and offers them a ship as transportation. Once there, the true Avatar is expected to visit the three Shrines of Virtue and pass the tests necessary to secure an amulet from each one. After getting each amulet, the party is returned to the shrine's location; the oracle within the shrine speaks to the Avatar; and an attribute increase is bestowed upon the Avatar.

The test of Truth begins by talking to the shrine's statue. The party is then teleported to the test's location. The testing area consists of a large network of caverns and rooms. Once the amulet is recovered, the party is transported back to the starting point. The Avatar is then given the reward of having intelligence maxed to 30.

This quest produced the only major criticism I had for the entire project. My party went through the caverns, then ended up stymied with no clue on what to do next. Unfortunately, there were no clues within the game itself. A quick call to an acquaintance at Origin solved the mystery of acquiring the amulet, but made me groan at what I considered an example of poor puzzle design. I felt that finding the amulet required blind luck rather than any kind of skill. I abhor those kinds of puzzles, and I imagine most players feel the way I do.

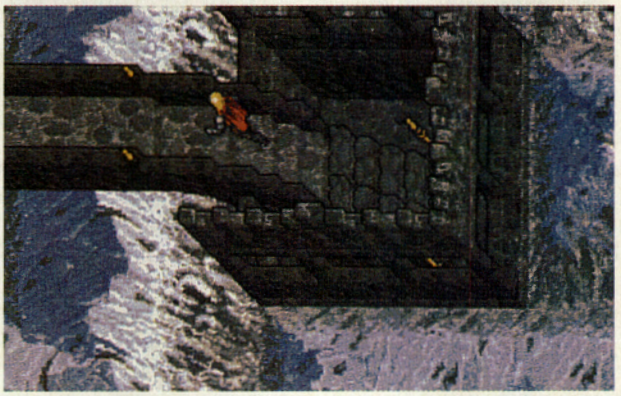
The next Shrine, Love, instructs the party to enter a teleportal to begin the test. The party is transported to another part of the island. There, they meet a stone golem standing watch over a broken comrade. He implores the party to save his brother. This quest is a "do this, then do that" sort, but its unique nature made it one of

my favorites. Successful completion gains the amulet of Love, and the reward is the Avatar's attribute of dexterity being raised to 30.



The Shrine of Courage also sends the party to a teleportal. After getting through a locked gate, the Avatar and his party go head-to-head with an enemy mage, assorted headless denizens and skeletons. After this fight, which can be tough for lower level parties, there is more combat and a few puzzles to be solved. Here is where the party learns of a powerful weapon needed to complete the test and acquires an item to help complete it.

After heading back, and talking to the resident blind mage, the Avatar completes another task. Then, begins the crafting of the Shade Blade. The process is not complicated, but can be time-consuming. One final detail completes the process, and the Avatar ends up with a real live(?) talking sword. The party finishes the job started in the Courage test and acquires the amulet. The Avatar is then rewarded with strength rising to 30.



Once the fourth and final quest is completed, the party is ready to head back to Lord British. He is so pleased with the job the Avatar has done that he raises the Avatar's strength to 60. Successful completion of the four quests leaves the party with a complete set of magical armor, a couple of glass swords, some miscellaneous weapons and armor and, of course, the newly forged Shade Blade. Also, the Avatar's attributes are raised to the game's maximum (even though everybody else helped, they only gain in experience). In addition, the Avatar has headed off a possible future problem for Britannia and has shown that he or she is made of the "right stuff."

Forging An Installation

Installation of *Forge of Virtue* is simple. It installs directly into the *Ultima VII* directory, and requires 1 MB of hard disk space. However, 4 MB will be required *during* installation for unpacking archived files. Hardware requirements are the same as for *Ultima VII*.

There are two options for installation. The first will update a gamer's version of Ultima VII totally. A note of caution is warranted, however. If the game's .EXE file is updated, all previous saved games are deleted. This may not appeal to a player who has spent two months playing the current party. Origin recommends changing executable file's (.EXEs) if a player has had problems in the past.

The other option is to have *Forge of Virtue* install itself but not upgrade the

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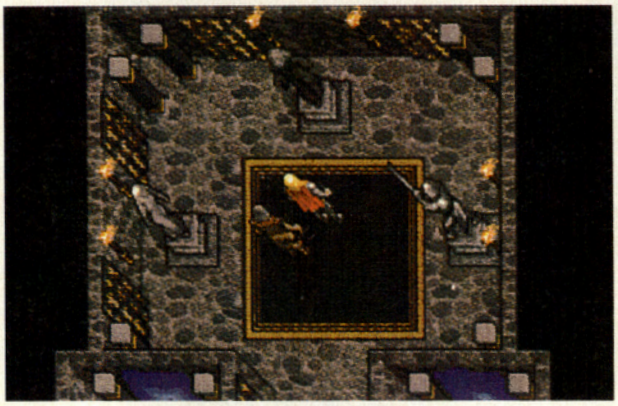
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executable. Once *Forge of Virtue* is installed, all saved games are converted. This means they will not work with the regular *Ultima VII* game unless *Forge of Virtue* is also installed. They both also need to be loaded if reinstallation is ever required.

Documentation is minimal, but adequate. Truthfully, not much is needed. A four page "Guide To The Isle of Fire" is included to provide some background for the newly risen island and ties it to the *Ultima* universe nicely. A quickstart list tells the steps to take to get to the Isle of Fire. Play is the same as in the standard version of Ultima VII. The view is identical, as well as the way characters interact. The Isle itself looks like any other part of Britannia and fits seamlessly in its new location south of Vesper.



Forging Into Game Play

There did seem to be several improvements in game play. The first big difference I noticed was combat. The Avatar doesn't seem to stand around as much and takes a much more active role. His or her combat role can be set the same as the other characters, so he or she will attack the most powerful or weakest monster first, etc... There also seemed a decrease in the frequency of characters inadvertently creaming other characters with their weapons. While it still happened occasionally, especially with thrown weapons, characters went down more from monsters than from friendly fire. Movement also looked quicker, with the characters following along a lot smoother. In addition, they could all sit down on their very first try whenever using vehicles.

One thing *Forge of Virtue* does not provide is a major addition in game time. *Forge of Virtue* will add only an estimated three to ten hours of playing time (depending on the gamer) to **Ultima VII**'s estimated 200+ hours. There is no significant increase in territory to explore, nor huge quests to undertake. This in no way denigrates the product, but gamers should be aware of what *Forge of Virtue* was designed to be.

Indeed, *Forge of Virtue* is sort of a "cheat" program that enables the main quest of *Ultima VII* to be accomplished easier by boosting the Avatar's attributes and giving him or her the most powerful weapon in the *Ultima* world. It was designed to be an add-in to *Ultima VII* and to provide gamers with a side quest. It was also designed to be completed at any stage of the game. So, if *Ultima* fans are looking for a significant amount of additional playing time, they will have to wait for the upcoming release of *Serpent Isle*.

Forge of Value?

Forge of Virtue is for gamers looking to maximize the Avatar and gain a powerful weapon for use against the Guardian. It will also fix several bugs in older versions of *Ultima VII*. *Forge of Virtue* makes a great game even better. At least, it was worth the "club membership" to know that my Avatar will be facing the Guardian with the Shade Blade firmly ensconced in my gauntlet. **CGW**

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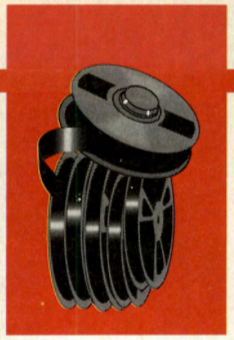
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Polishing The Diamond

with Microleague Baseball's *Microleague Baseball 4*

by Joe Sherfy

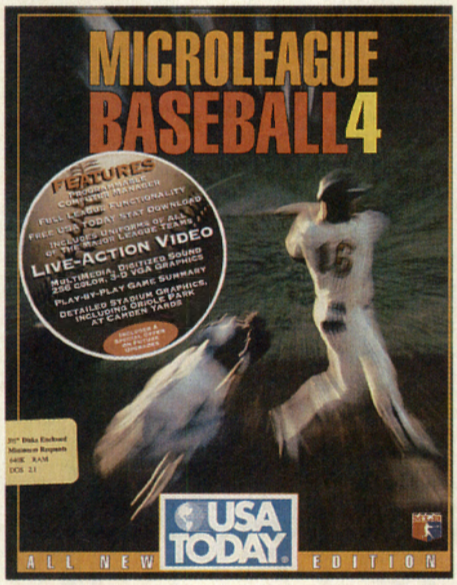
Toward the end of any baseball season, those heartless thugs in the press *[Ed: Hey, now!]* begin to speculate about which managers are unlikely to have a job at the end of the season and those who are unlikely to have their contracts renewed. If a manager is fortunate, these opinion-makers in the media may excuse his performance on the basis of bad trades initiated by his general manager, but this is rare. Most fans recognize that the easiest way for general managers to cover up their mistakes is to fire the manager.

In *Microleague Baseball 4* (*MLB4*), firing the manager is not likely to cover up any mistakes, since the simulation puts the player in the position of both general manager and on-field manager. Gamers get to make all of the front office moves and call all the shots on the field, but unlike other games, have to watch from the computer "dugout" (*sans* chewing tobacco) when play actually commences. When the action starts, it is the job of the on-screen players to execute, not the human player. Of course, if it sounds too easy, we might just have to poll all of those out-of-work managers in the unemployment lines of major league baseball.



They've Got The Look!

The first thing the gamer is liable to notice about the game is that Microleague Sports has not spared on the graphics. One could almost swear that they really were playing at Wrigley Field. The game comes with the choice of four ballparks (others are, naturally, available for purchase on a separate data disk) and they are incredibly detailed, right down to the ivy on the walls or the checkerboard patterns in the grass.



TITLE:	Microleague Baseball 4
SYSTEM:	IBM compatible
# PLAYERS:	1-2
PRICE:	$49.95
PROTECTION:	Document Look-Up
DESIGNER:	Jim Nangano Ed Daniels and Skip Haughay
PUBLISHER:	Microleague Sports Newark, DE

In addition to the enhanced ballpark graphics, the game includes digitized videos which pop up during the course of play in order to give one a close-up feel of the action. Unfortunately, diskettes can only hold so much data and, while the videos are quite impressive when one first gets the game, the lack of variety (due to space considerations) is such that gamers will probably elect to turn them off after only a few games.

Front Office Funhouse

For those familiar with the *Microleague Baseball* system, *MLB4* has come a long way, particularly with regard to allowing the gamer to fill the shoes of the general manager. There are routines to set up leagues with one, two or four divisions; for scheduling; and to assist the gamer with tracking the statistics from all of the games played. Would-be general managers may develop an expanded roster, just in case one of their original rostered players looks like he needs some seasoning in Triple A ball or the gamer needs some extra help in the bullpen.

One of the best additions to the gaming system is the ability to generate unique computer coaches. With this feature, one can replay a series realistically, even in solitaire mode. One simply creates a coach that uses running aggressively to handle teams like the St. Louis Cardinals of 1985 or a conservative, cigar-chewing coach of a home run oriented team like the 1970 Baltimore Orioles. The routine lets gamers dictate when a team will have the green light to steal a base or hit and run. It also allows one to define the circumstances in which a pinch hitter would be brought in, a pitcher given the hook and much more.

Expanded Playbook

Since some gamers felt that the original *MLB* featured limited decision points, it will be welcome news to most that the generic playbook has been expanded. Gamers have more control over defensive positioning and play. Best of all, gamers can put their preferences together in a number of different combinations to create a unique set of "signs" or playbook to use during the game. For instance, assume it is the bottom of the ninth with the game tied, no outs and the bases loaded. One can now choose to play the infield in and outfield shallow and aggressive with one simple entry. On offense, players can choose how aggressive to be on the basepaths based on the field to which the ball is hit. In this way, one can easily take advantage of those fielders with weak arms.

Another nice *MLB4* features is the capacity for gamers to access the USA Today on-line network's statistical database and download the latest (they are updated weekly on the service) straight into one's game. Now, one need not wait for those "year-end" data disks of entire seasons, but can play games based on *current* statistics.



Minor League Seasoning

Even with all of these solid advances over the previous releases in the series, there is still room for improvement. This reviewer owns both *MLB1* and *MLB2* and has logged many an enjoyable game on both. Unfortunately, except for the stadium backgrounds and the videos, the actual graphic depiction of the game in *MLB4* has not improved significantly since *MLB1* and *2*. In fact, the actual plays during the game seem less varied than in those earlier versions. This tends to cause the game to go stale after repeated play. Gone are the occasional infield hits in the earlier version, so one automatically knows that any ball hit in the infield will result in either an error or an out. Also missing are the quirky injuries and ejections which took place in *MLB2*, even if yours truly was once treated to the highly improbable scenario where Cal Ripken, Jr. was ejected for arguing with the umpire. This reviewer would love to see these random events brought back to the game.

Further, even with all the detail crafted into the ballpark views, the program does not really take advantage of the uniqueness to be found in the different ballparks. There are no strange caroms off the walls at Fenway or balls stuck in the ivy at Wrigley. It certainly would have enhanced the enjoyment of the game to make the effects of different ballparks more evident, even if it was necessary to do so at the expense of the digitized videos.

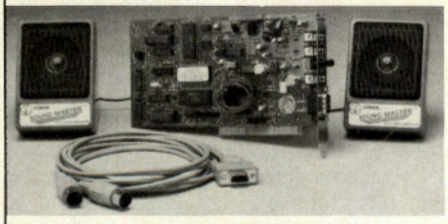
Finally, one cannot resist noting a bug related to an extra inning game. With the bases loaded in the bottom of the 10th, the home team got a base hit and the program allowed *two* runs to score for a final score of 7- 5. It seems such a minor incident, but it is frustrating in that it undermines the suspended disbelief necessary to enjoy a computer game.



Late Box Score

In summary, *Microleague Baseball 4* has come a long way. From a stand-alone game which required an additional program in order to generate a box score to a complete system which includes the ability to not only generate boxscores, but which provides play-by-play descriptions of a game at the touch of a key. From the use of very basic statistical data in the original to the much expanded statistical database of *MLB4*, the game has definitely come of age. From just a few basic offensive and defensive options to a greatly expanded menu of options, **Microleague Sports** has shown a commitment to providing a truly outstanding product. CGW

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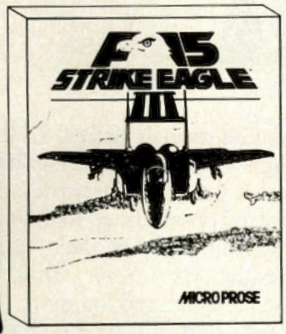
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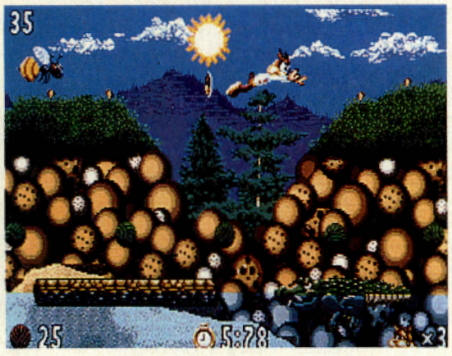


Sega Petitions for Rehearing of Accolade Case

ACCOLADE™ vs. SEGA®

On October 21st, **Sega of America**'s corporate counsel, Riley Russell, announced that **Sega** had filed a petition for rehearing in the case against **Accolade**. Sega had won a ruling in a lower court which stated that Accolade's reverse-engineering of Sega cartridges in order to produce and market competitive (and unlicensed) cartridges was a case of infringement upon proprietary technology. The lower court ruling had significant financial repercussions on Accolade, as they were restrained from shipping either existing or new titles. Retailers were permitted to sell their existing stock, but could not reorder.

The U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals recently ruled in Accolade's favor, effectively reversing the lower court's ruling and allowing Accolade to start shipping their Sega compatible cartridges once again. Sega would like to stop such unlicensed merchandising before it spreads to other publishers, so they have asked for a rehearing.



Accolade's "Bubsy" — *Sonic* killer?

Interestingly enough, however, the appeals court ruling suggested that Sega's proprietary use of the Trademark Security System (TMSS) violated the objectives of free competition. Since Sega's primary contention in petitioning for further court action is predicated on the idea that Accolade deliberately copied Sega's copyrighted code (the TMSS) as a preliminary step in the development of a competing product, it seems highly unlikely that the court will look favorably on further action. Sega is pinning their hopes for further action on the section of the appeals court ruling which stated that regulation with regard to reverse-engineering for the purpose of developing software is a "relatively unexplored area in the world of copyright law."



The Bubsy design team.

Whether Accolade's reprieve from potentially heavy damage assessments and exclusion from the Sega marketplace will continue is highly dependent on whether a higher court agrees with Sega's contention (that the TMSS protects consumers from shoddy products and Sega from unscrupulous competitors) or not. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the purpose of the TMSS was "the discouraging of other competitors from manufacturing Genesis-compatible games." The appeals court claimed that the lock-out characteristic of the TMSS would be clearly unlawful, assuming that "locking out" was its purpose.

If a higher court does not step in, the Spring of 1993 could feature an interesting showdown of products that may determine whether there is anything "shoddy" about unlicensed product or not. In March, Accolade is scheduled to release both a SNES and Sega product featuring their new animated action character, Bubsy. Bubsy, as he appears in *Claws Encounters of the Furred Kind*, is an animated bobcat with sort of a Top Cat meets Garfield style of animation (he's smooth and fast, with unexpected moves, but his facial expressions run the gamut of possibilities like a Garfield out of control). Accolade hasn't billed this product as a *Sonic*-killer, but one would be hard-pressed to ignore both the similarities and differences. Since Bubsy should go head-to-head with *Sonic 2*, it will be interesting to observe what gamers feel about the relative merits of the two games.

More Pirates Sunk in SPA Broadside

On September 28th, the Software Publishers Association (SPA) initiated legal action against TrendTec BBS, a bulletin board system in Bollingbrook, IL, which distributed pirated software. More than 250 subscribers would pay $50 per year in order to be given access to a special section of the bulletin board which had copies of about 200 copyrighted programs. Allegedly, part of the sysop's promotion of the board was the fact that more than $100,000 worth of programs were available to those who accessed the pirate section of the BBS.

Estimating that the TrendTec BBS was responsible for the loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars to the software industry, SPA Executive Director Ken Wasch reiterated the SPA's intent to actively pursue pirate bulletin boards and continue to lobby for felonization of such copyright infringement. If the SPA's recommendations are heeded, the penalty would be raised to up to five years imprisonment and a $250,000 fine. Such felonization would also allow prosecutors to let some pirates "plea-bargain" their sentence down by revealing where the software was coming from. This could enable companies to tighten their own security and ensure that no further unauthorized software was leaving via in-house leaks. CGW

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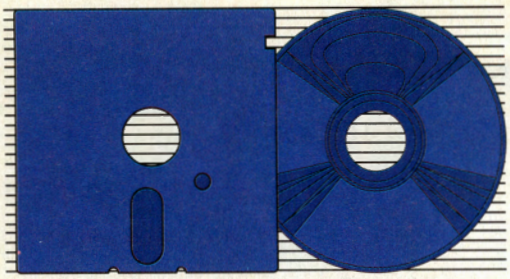
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COMPANY REPORT



No "Impressions" Of Lion Tamers

For U.K. Expatriate David Lester

Although his adult career was begun as an A.C.A. (Associate of the Institute of Chartered Accountants), that bland and colorless species often satirized by the Pythons, **Impressions** President and Managing Director David Lester insists that "I do not want to be, nor have I ever wanted to be, a lion tamer." By bringing British software into the U.S. market, however, Lester may have chosen a profession which is as hazardous to one's mental health as lion taming could be to one's physical health.

Yet, **Impressions** was not founded to import British software into the U.S. On the contrary, David Lester and Edward Grabowski established their company because they were unhappy with the European games scene. They felt like their entire market was saturated with lousy arcade action games which only sold because of film licenses. To be sure, the two principals had been working together since 1984 when Lester coded his first game, *Just Imagine ...!* (a strategy game about managing a software house), and Grabowski designed the graphics for the game.

Although he had been playing games since the days of the Commodore Vic 20 and Clive Sinclair's Spectrum (the Timex computer in the U.S.), Lester was currently serving as a chartered account with the giant accounting firm, Arthur Young. Since he was working with fast-growing businesses, it wasn't long before Lester *imagined* he was an entrepreneur and running his own software house. Grabowski was working as a systems analyst/data processing manager at the time and, between the two would-be entrepreneurs, they knew several struggling developers (known as **Black Knight**) who were trying to find a publisher willing to invest in their ideas. Unfortunately, the existing publishers didn't want to publish much of anything that didn't have a high-profile license.

So, Lester suggested putting up some cash to publish a few titles independently. He set up a deal with **Zeppelin Games** to distribute the new titles for a fee. Unfortunately, in spite of a huge hit and a number one sales position during the summer of 1989, the relationship foundered. Hence, **Impressions** rose from the ashes of an aborted affiliation and emerged as a distinct brand name. Yet, the line was beginning to emerge as a strategy game publisher rather than the arcade game publishers that were most successful in Europe at the time.

Rorke's Drift, the first product in **Impressions**' line of miniatures style games, turned out to be a phenomenal success. Indeed, it was enough of a success to encourage the two partners to decide in late 1990 to specialize in strategy games. Such specialization, of course, alienated the publisher from the mainstream of European computer games, but they attracted a very dedicated following and started to grow. At the same time, the MS-DOS world began to make great strides in Europe and the company decided that they should support the MS-DOS environment to the hilt. Of course, the strategic aspects of the design and the availability of the games on the strongest U.S. platform brought **Impressions** to the attention of U.S. publishers and distributors.

Several U.S. publishers attempted to interest Lester and Grabowski in licensing deals but, as a former accountant with no desire to put his head into the mouth of lion without first surveying the size of the incisors, Lester elected to investigate the North American market thoroughly. He attended several Consumer Electronics Shows, had several interviews with *CGW*'s editors and others, as well as weighing the offers from U.S. publishers. As a result, Impressions decided to transform "The British are coming!" from a negative into a positive and establish their headquarters in the United States.

Ironically, they elected to settle in New *England*. Their interest in strategy games and consideration of U.S. software talent led them into an association with Tom Carbone of **Omnitrend Games**. Since **Omnitrend** is a Connecticut-based publisher (*Universe*, *Breach 2*, *Paladin 2* and *Rules of Engagement*) that has gone both the independent and affiliate routes (but never actually reached the sales plateau for which they were striving), **Impressions** elected to enter into a publishing partnership with the U.S. company and located their corporate headquarters near **Omni-**

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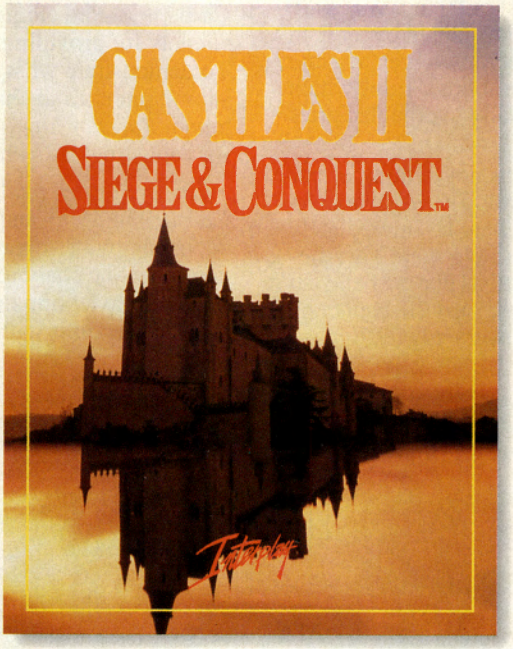
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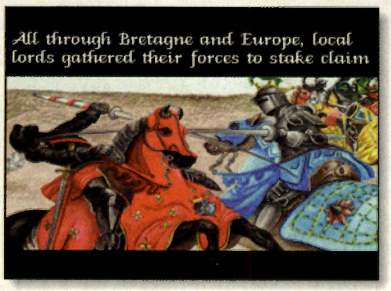
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Circle Reader Service #123

trend's offices. Now the company maintains a small staff in the U.K. and is planning on producing about three-fourths of their upcoming products in the U.S.

We talked to David Lester in his Farmington, CT office about the lessons that they were learning from their U.S. venture and he noted that U.S. gamers are less forgiving than European gamers when it comes to historicity, presentation and inadequate hardware support. For example, many European games do not even have mouse support for MS-DOS titles (since most of the machines are keyboard only), so clunky mouse support is considered better than none. In the U.S., inadequate mouse support will get a game clobbered. Nonetheless, *Air Bucks* and several other titles which did reasonably well in Europe were substantially overhauled prior to the U.S. release.

"Our goal," stated Lester, "is for Americans not to think of our products as European games. We want to develop games that meet North American standards in every way." Then, he immediately demonstrated their upcoming *Caesar* for us. We were very impressed, but made a certain number of suggestions that we believed would improve the game. By the time we received the beta copy for the sneak preview (p. 140 of this issue), every suggestion had been implemented (and implemented well!).

Lester did express some frustration, however, "It seems the case that our good points are ignored and our bad points exaggerated, but that's probably life." He did pledge, however, that the future of his company would be built on quality strategy games, "Games which players can enjoy without having to fight to get to the good parts and games that don't crash or give stupid results. It also means games which are good-looking and easy-to-use."

Further, Lester underscored the company's commitment to **Omnitrend**'s *Interlocking Game System*. He showed us the new offices where *Breach 3* would be coded and allowed Carbone to demonstrate *Paladin 2* and the editor for *Rules of Engagement 2*. Carbone waxed eloquently about the importance of artificial personality for providing satisfaction in future role-playing products. To demonstrate what he meant, Carbone invited *CGW* readers to submit photos and character resumes for consideration as characters in *Rules of Engagement 2*. The sidebar describes the process for "enlisting" as a character in the upcoming game.

Finally, Lester pledged a unique set of strong titles (including *Caesar*) in 1993 and acknowledged that development work is occurring with regard to CD-ROM. As for the future of the company, the chartered accountant portion of Lester's make-up is not likely to let him miss hedging a bet. So, one can almost wager that **Impressions** will have solid distribution into Japan by the end of 1993.

Yes, David Lester may not want to be a lion tamer, but he sure doesn't mind placing his head in the maw of a brave new world. **CGW**

FWAF

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FM: Admiral V. Bresheliah, Marine Operations, HQ Axia
MG:

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Personal Information:
Name: Christophe De Cour
Sex (if any): Male
Age: 57
Race: Human
Home Planet: Ivilose

Personality Profile:
Aggressiveness: 89
Ingenuity: 44
Bravery: 87
Leadership: 69
Diplomacy: 34
Loyalty: 23
Experience: 43
Stamina: 27
Humility: 89
Temperament: 81
Admires Most: Guile
Admires Least: Wealth
Political Leaning: Republic
Conviction: 84
Religious Belief: Monotheism
Conviction: 80



Experience: (Experience listed in chronological order)

Qualifications: (Description of unique characteristics that are beneficial to command of a starship. 15 sentences or less)

Note: The numerical ratings in the personality profile are from zero to 99 with higher meaning that the individual has *more* in the category.

Applications must be postmarked by February 28, 2372. In the event that this transmission were to fall through a time warp, entries must be postmarked by February 28, 1993. Fifteen winning entries will be selected.

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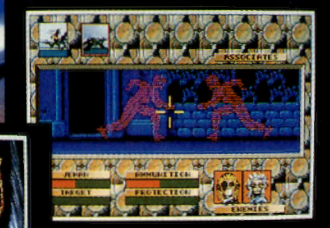
Entries must be postmarked by February 28, 1993 and include a completed resume and a color head shot (passport-style) of the entrant's face. 15 winners will be selected on the basis of originality and realism of the character portrayed in the resume. There, resumes of "ideal" or "perfect" captains are considered equally with those of "insubordinate" or "incompetent" captains. Winners will have their photograph digitized into *Rules of Engagement 2* along with their name and resume information. When released in the Spring of 1993, a complimentary copy of the game will be sent to all winners. Winners will be notified by return mail. All decisions are final and will be made by the staff of **Omnitrend Software, Inc.** and **Impressions Software, Inc.**, Omnitrend Software, Inc. reserves the right to use all entries in future campaign disks. Entries should be sent to: Impressions Software, Inc., 7 Melrose Drive, Farmington, CT 06032. **CGW**

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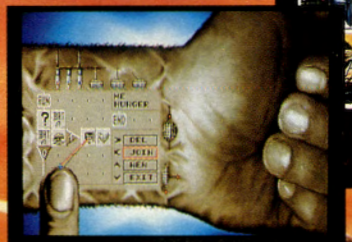






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Amazon: Guardians Of Eden from Access

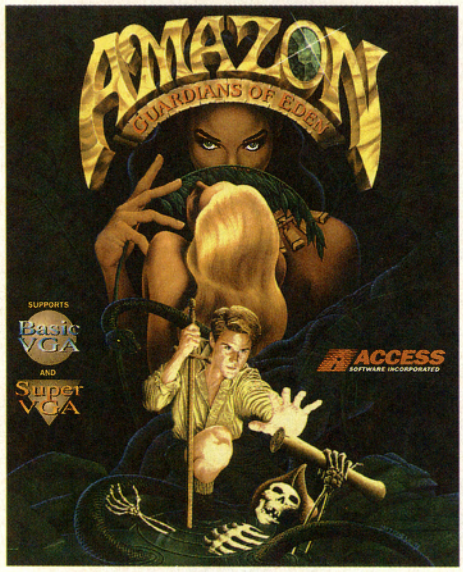
by Allen L. Greenberg

TITLE:	Amazon: Guardians Of Eden
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$69.95
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Chris Jones and Doug Vandegrift
PUBLISHER:	Access Salt Lake City, UT

In the year 1541, the Spanish explorer Francisco de Orellana proved to the world that insanity, even when temporary, can be used as a viable marketing technique. He did so by naming a South American river the "Amazon" after, he insisted, he had been attacked by an army of female warriors resembling those of Greek mythology. The notion that this river's incredible rain forest actually concealed some supernatural force which *could*, if provoked, intrude on modern, industrialized society, became extremely popular during the early part of this century: first, in literature and later, on film. The latest entertainment to draw inspiration from these alleged Greek fighters from South America is *Amazon: Guardians of Eden*, an action-adventure game from **Access Software**. Presented in the multi-chapter format of the 1940's movie serials — most often associated with Republic Pictures — it boasts a good, solid story and an outstanding presentation.



Amazon challenges the player to peel back the layers of subterfuge and mysticism which protect a powerful secret, hidden in the Amazonian River Basin, from those who would use it in the service of evil, wealth and power. To its credit, despite the obvious sexuality of the characters who share the game's title, *Amazon*



manages to avoid the insulting, often embarrassingly sophomoric fashion in which women are reduced to objects of bestial lust, as is commonly the case in this genre. When the female warriors appear, they manage to do so with as much dignity as an appearance in a movie serial will allow. Although there are moments of graphic gore, parents who are only concerned with a game's sexual content need have no concerns over *Amazon*.

The resemblance between *Amazon* and the serials by Republic or Columbia Pictures is only a superficial one. At times, the story's complexity and elaborate settings more resemble the mega-budget wonders presented in Paramount's *Indiana Jones* films than the old serials. The serials were often characterized by endless stretches of California desert interspersed with the cheapest of movie sets and props. Furthermore, although *Amazon* is divided by chapter headings, the trademark "cliffhanger" junctions — in which a leading character appeared to have been seriously killed until the next chapter — are conspicuously absent. However, **Access** has clearly carried their excellent story far beyond anything produced by Hollywood in its naive years.

The player controls the actions of Jason Roberts, a recent college graduate whose older brother, Allen, has been lost during an expedition in South America. Although the story unfolds from this masculine perspective, there are several sequences in which the player is able to control the actions of Maya, Jason's mysterious leading lady. The story does include several recognizable plot devices including a mysterious package in Jason's mail, for which his apartment is ritually searched and ransacked at precisely the moment the package is not there. There is also a villain whose taste for foul play is exceeded only by the amount of sweat and oil he secretes, as well as a local town-lord whose brain might best be described as several beans short of a burrito.

Amazon is a moderately difficult game to complete — at times approaching the complexity of some of the later releases from **Infocom**. Novice-level players may take advantage of on-line hints. These are "purchased" with "hint points," 170 of which are available as the game begins. The most explicit hints are also the most costly. Players who complete the game with less than 100 points remaining will be rewarded with a slightly less gratifying conclusion to the adventure.



Amazon is also a very time-sensitive game which often requires the player to complete certain tasks with only seconds to spare. In addition, there are several sequences in which Jason is required to pilot a canoe down the game's title river. This low-key arcade exercise may prove frus-

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trating for more literary-minded adventurers and, once again, raises the question as to whether the presence of an action sequence serves to enhance or detract from the entertainment value of a non-arcade program.

The mouse-driven interface works quite well in *Amazon*, although a combination of both mouse and keyboard input is highly recommended. Either device may be used to guide Jason or Maya across the screen. Other commands are constructed by first clicking on an "action" icon such as "take" or "talk to," and then on the object or person involved. As with many programs containing highly detailed graphics, players are often forced to search the screen for pixel-sized objects, without which Jason will fail in his quest. Similarly, the crowded and convoluted terrain often makes simple movement of the characters a frustrating ordeal, particularly during the time-dependent sequences.



The graphics may be challenging, yet there is no denying that they are masterfully produced. Painted pictures and digitized photographs are combined seamlessly. Clever animations are liberally incorporated into the story-telling for eye-popping effect. Finally, digitized music, sound effects and human voices are scattered throughout the program, making for a presentation which will prove difficult to surpass, by any standard.

In addition to increased resolution, users of super-vga systems will enjoy several benefits, including "chapter summary" icons. These will trigger a replay of specific events from earlier in the drama. SVGA users will also enjoy more rapid access to items being carried in Jason's inventory. For no apparent reason, players are able to switch back and fourth between normal and SVGA modes at any time during the game. Even without the advantages of SVGA, *Amazon* loses none of its playability or entertainment value.

Amazon will run on a 286 CPU at 12 MHz, although a 386 at 20 MHz is recommended. Likewise, while many sound boards are supported, a SoundBlaster or compatible board is also recommended. SVGA users must be sure to have a VESA driver available. About 10 megabytes of hard drive space are required for the program. An unlimited number of games in progress may be saved to disk, and these rapidly occupy additional room.

Greek, female, mythological warriors from South America as well as movie serials from several decades ago and the already highly-tribuatried Amazon River have all been uniquely honored by this outstanding piece of work from Access. It's refreshingly challenging story, matched only by its top-of-the-line presentation, make *Amazon* easily recommendable. CGW

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Lurking Deep Within The Shadowlands

A Detailed Look At Domark's Role-Playing Release

by Robin Matthews



TITLE:	Shadowlands
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, IBM
GRAPHICS:	EGA, VGA
SOUND:	AdLib, Sound Blaster, Roland
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Dean Lester
PUBLISHER:	Domark San Jose, CA

It's been available in Europe for some months now, but *Shadowlands* has just been officially released in the US. Since the IBM platform has been around for quite a while, it should be no surprise that most of the ground rules have been established for the major game genres; aircraft simulators, golf games, football software, graphic adventures and role playing all have their own similar basic concepts. Once in a while, a release like **Origin**'s *Ultima Underworld* or **Imotion**'s *Alone in the Dark* breaks the mold, but the rest all share common ground.

Shadowlands is a role-playing game that doesn't exactly break new ground, but it does have an *approach* that is unique and features that set it apart from the rest. First, though, we must introduce the plot. The main baddie, the Overlord, i.e. Cthul Tol Anuin, decides to release a horde of nasties from his dungeon domain, eponymously known as the *Shadowlands.* As a result, amidst the rape, pillaging and burning of the Sapphire of Kuranos, Vashnar was slain. Nevertheless, his spirit lives on and, if the gamer can reach the dark temple with the Altar of Regeneration and place Vashnar's bones on said altar (in the middle of the Shadowlands, past the dungeons and temples, the undead and the dogs of hell, beyond the mazes and pyramids), Vashnar can be restored and, of course, everyone will live happily ever after...

A party of four adventurers become guided by the spirit of Vashnar and undertake the mammoth task. This is all fairly standard CRPG stuff, but it is the *Shadowlands* system that is out of the ordinary. The actual approach is that of an off-set isometric view from above, and looks very similar to the combat and exploration system subsequently used in **MicroProse**'s controversial *Darklands*, but is much simpler and far more playable.

Each of the four party members can be individually controlled and sent off on their own or in parties with other party members. This totally flexible approach means that several quests can be under-



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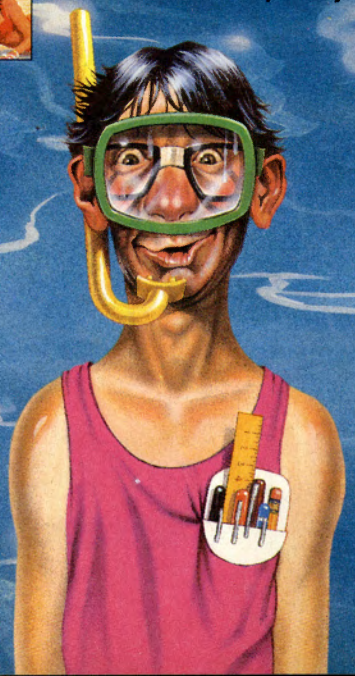


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taken at any one time, or several different solutions applied to one puzzle at the same time. Combat also becomes very varied, as one can attack multiple enemies, attack from completely different angles or, even set complicated ambushes. This multi-player approach sounds terribly complicated, but this is not the case. The *Shadowlands* interface revolves around the main screen and the four character portraits in a very simple manner.

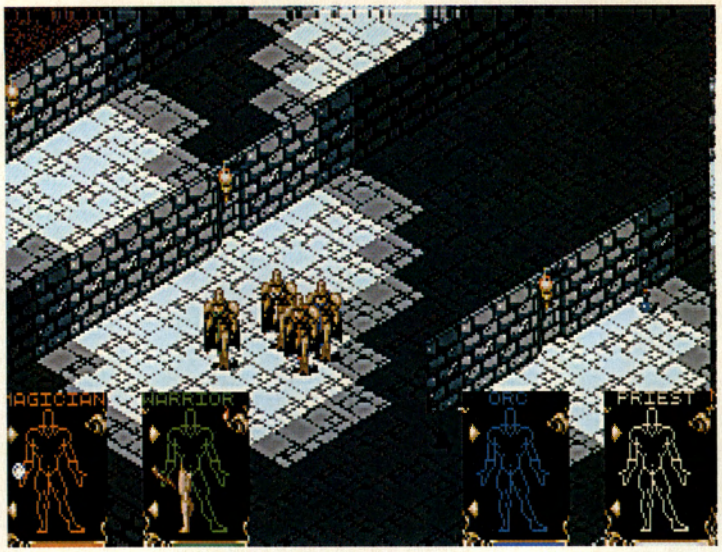
The standard portrait is the Action Portrait, which shows the full outline of the character split into arms, legs and head. Each of the arms and heads has a specific function — as one examines the portrait, the left hand is the Action Hand, the right hand is the Transit Hand. Similarly the left leg is the Lead Leg, the right leg is the Walk leg.

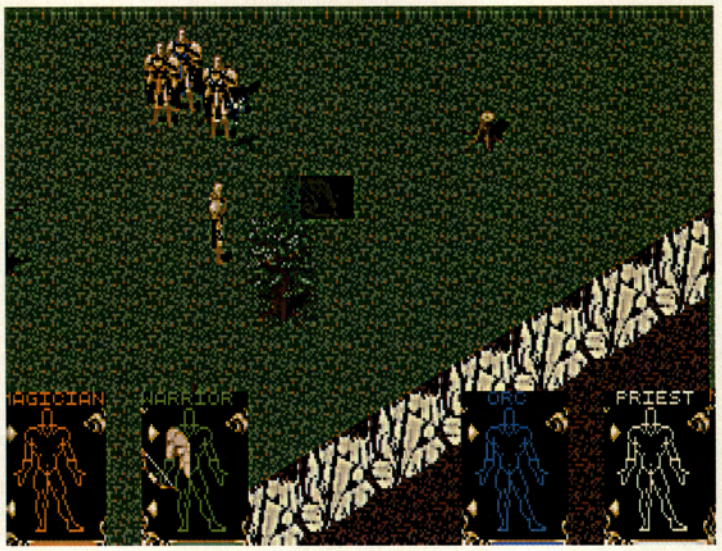
Selecting the Action Hand allows one to engage in hand-to-hand combat or allows one to use an item in that hand. The Transit hand is always free of items, but is used to collect, drop, throw or operate. Any item picked up is collected by the Transit hand and transferred automatically to the Action hand and/or inventory.

Selecting the Walk leg puts the character into walk mode, and he will follow the cursor. The Lead leg performs a similar function, but when invoked it causes ALL other party members within the character's line of vision to follow (i.e. puts those members into squad mode).

The portraits also provide other information, changing when appropriate from Action Portraits to Facial, Reversed or Skull Portraits. In the Facial, the body outline changes to a full face; this means that the party of four has become split for some reason, and that this character is not within the visible range of the active character. When they do come within range it will change to an Action Portrait. This range is relevant as it is only then that the squad mode can be used. The Reversed mode is a further development, meaning that not only is the character out of range, it is also on another level of the game. Skull Mode, as one might expect, means that the character has died and joined the great game master in the sky... The Head mode has two functions, reading and eating, both of which are essential.

Character statistics are well presented, with levels for Health, armor, food, water and force, as well as growing experience levels for Combat and Magic. The magic system requires the use of scrolls, and there is a wide choice of spells as the game progresses. Combat is kept relatively short and sweet; *Shadowlands* does not have the repetitive hordes of monsters found in the **SSI** games, but there are enough regular punch-ups to keep gamers on their toes.





One of the hallmarks of *Shadowlands* is the innovative use of *Photoscape*, a real-time system that realistically lights all areas of the game world, casting shadows...and light. This results in light playing a major role in the game, with areas becoming illuminated (and plunged back into darkness) as one explores. Many items, monsters and traps cannot be seen without illumination, and light will even affect the behavior of foes and traps (rats for example are attracted to light). Torches, magic and explosions all provide light. Hence, the ebb and flow of darkness during the game gives meaning to the name *Shadowlands*.

Within the dungeons, some walls might obstruct the view of the party or of essential items. Fortunately, this is dealt with in a novel way, by removing the wall and replacing it with a red line. For all intents and purposes, it acts as a wall, but its removal allows greater use of the gaming world and very little lost space.

The puzzles are not that difficult and sometimes the characters' artificial intelligence is a bit dim. For example, to get from A to B the party must walk around a corner. If one tries the straight line method, they just plough into a wall and stay there until re-directed. Also, when opening doors it is possible to trap a character behind the door as it opens!

These are minor grumbles and really the only ones that can be levelled against *Shadowlands*. Frankly, its approach and gaming system offer a nice mixture of the familiar and the original. That, in itself, is no mean achievement nowadays. **CGW**



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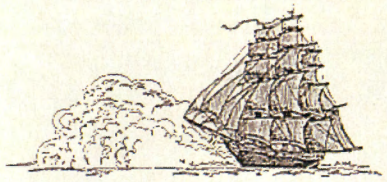
Broadsides & Gripeshot



Art by Rodger MacGowan; Copyright 1993 RBM Graphics

The Parable of the Prodigy Son

by Alan Emrich



Let me begin by hoping that the holidays were filled with love and joy for everyone. I've said repeatedly (and will die saying it, I suppose) that wargamers, more than any other computer gaming niche, need to strengthen their gaming and friendship bonds by being connected to each other via modem. Fortunately for all our readers, I do not have to preach this sermon today. Allow me, instead, to cite an example that may hit every wargamer reading this a little closer to home. Our own writer, Richard Savage, posted the following note up on the **Prodigy** network to the wargamers there on December 5th:

"Guys;

Christmas just came three weeks early for me today. I came home from work and there, sitting on my kitchen table, was a package for me sent by Dan Thielen. I was puzzled, as I hadn't 'talked' with Dan for a while on Prodigy. In fact, I thought Dan might harbor a little ill-will for me....

Curious, I opened up the package and there, in all its resplendent glory, was *Guderian's Blitzkrieg* by **The Gamers** — the *one* board wargame I wanted for Christmas! There was also a nice Christmas card and a note wishing me a happy holiday from Dan.

I'll tell ya, I was choked up. No lie. My wife had asked me what I wanted for Christmas and it came down to either *Conquered Kingdoms* or *Guderian's Blitzkrieg*. Finances being what they are nowadays, having both just wasn't in the cards. I just wanted to use this board to publicly thank Dan and let you all know what kind of guy he is....

I guess what I'm trying to say is that this [on-line bulletin] board is really a lot more than a few guys just gabbing about the latest products on the market. I consider a lot of you my friends, if you know what I mean. Every time I read a note from Arthur [Kimes], or 'the Major' or JEB [Joe Bellerose], it's like hearing from an old friend. We may not always agree on everything, but we sure do have a good time and a lot of lively discussions. Every night after my daughter is tucked into bed, I make a beeline to see what's up with 'the gang' and get the latest scoop on what is happening in our hobby....

I appreciate the friendships I've made on this board and lively discussions we've had. Let's never let this camaraderie end. And thank you from the bottom of my heart, Dan T."

What did Dan Thielen reply?

"... If you will, please allow me to fill in the rest of the story.

A few months ago, while the Honorable Mr. Savage and I were discussing various topics of interest, he discovered that I have a particularly fond interest in the period of the "Great War." And from the kindness of his heart, the Honorable Mr. Savage sent to me an unplayed, unpunched copy of an aged AH game, *1914*. For doing this he asked nothing in return — no dollars, no next-of-kin — only that I enjoy the gift he presented.

So, even though I am greatly touched by the honors you all have given me, it is my humble opinion that the one who deserves the honors is Richard. I was merely returning the favor he bestowed to me...."

See? I'm not just talking here about the on-line wargaming community and what you're missing (besides unexpected gifts) if you're not a part of it. Let me end with one final and very personal experience of what had recently happened to me through computer networking.

Even as I write this column, two weeks before Christmas, I know that I'll be receiving a very special gift this year thanks to **The Sierra Network**, a bride! Julie and I are to be married on December 27th, 1992. She lived in Michigan and I live in Southern California and, through our messages, we found true love and will both be getting married (for the first time) at age 33.

Granted, that is a fairly rare example of what a dedicated wargamer can do when he's connected via modem to a computer network, but the friends, feelings and fellowship *are* real.

If you've finally decided to connect up, check our Opponents Wanted section on page 126. That will help you get into the first *CGW* Inter-network computer gaming tournament which, I'm happy to report, got a tremendous response from our readers. I'll be busy organizing the event and will announce what game will be played, along with the tournament rules, a couple of issues from now. CGW

COMPUTER WARGAMING WORLD

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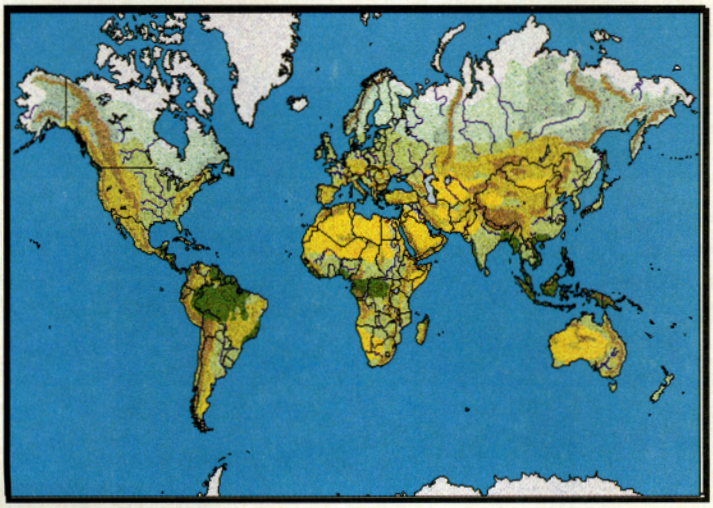
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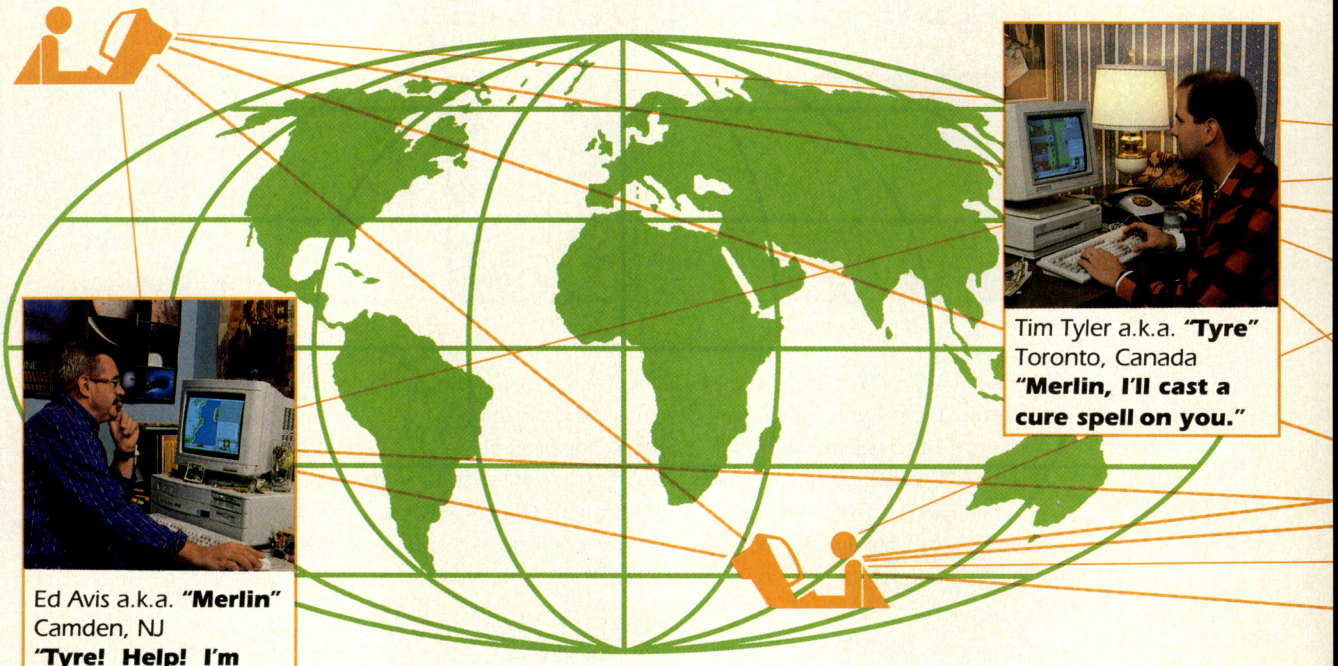
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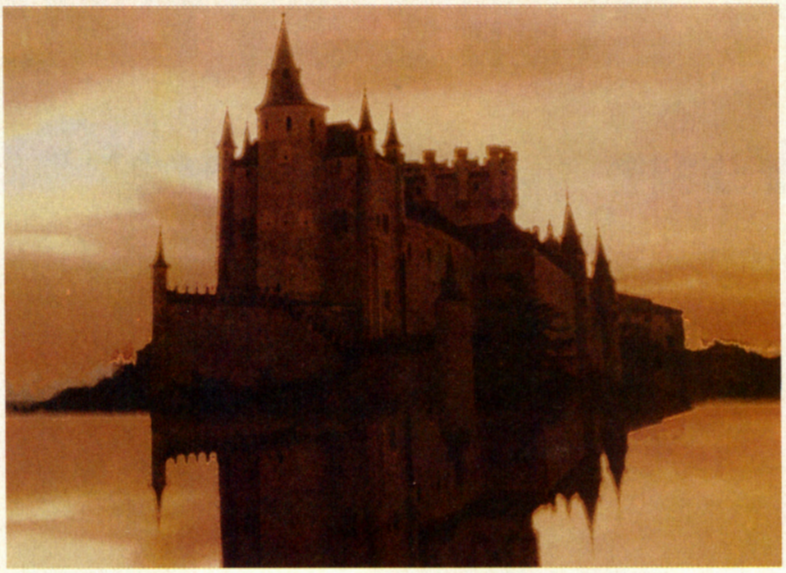
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The Armchair Strategist's Guide To Interplay's Castles II: Siege & Conquest

by Vince DeNardo, Interplay Productions, Inc.
William C. Fisher, Quicksilver Software, Inc.

Becoming King in *Castles II* demands careful planning and resource management. It also requires a clear understanding of the rules of the game. In this article, *CGW* has granted us the space to publish an expanded version of the Armchair Strategist's Guide that appears in the *Castles II* manual.

WARNING: This guide offers specific hints and playing techniques for Castles II. Players who prefer to learn the subtleties of the game on their own should not read beyond the Artificial Intelligence section of this document.

General Playing Hints

Some subtle aspects of *Castles II* may be lost in a first reading of the manual. Here are some pointers to underscore these aspects.

1. Use the right-hand mouse button to speed up the clock while waiting for an event to occur. This works in both the Strategic and Tactical modes.

2. Defending military forces are always approximately one-half the size of a player's total military force. The number of soldiers that a territory can muster in its defense is based on the total size of the army owned by the controlling player. To be precise, the number of each type of unit is equal to one-half of the number of such units in the player's army, rounding up. For example, a player with three infantry and five archers would defend with two infantry and three archers.

The defender still has an edge, however. The strength of each individual defensive unit is adjusted upward slightly to account for the defender's superior knowledge of the terrain. The defender also gets to choose where the battle will be fought. This offers a significant advantage to the clever player. The attacker will have a very difficult time winning unless the odds are greater than 2:1 in its favor (this includes morale, which is not immediately measurable, just as in real life).

The battle system works both ways: when the player is attacked, the player defends with half of the total force allotment. Should the battle be lost, the player may launch a retaliatory attack on the computer player, who will defend, in turn, with half of whatever forces remain after the first attack. Also, remember that every unit lost to either player removes one unit of that type from the player's forces. However, since the defender only fields an army half the size of its total force, it can never be wiped out in a single battle. The attacker, however, can be completely eliminated by a solid defender. A counter-attack after such a rout is usually devastating to the once-proud aggressor.

The intent of this design is to encourage back-and-forth skirmishing. It also places the greatest risk of loss on the player who has the most to gain — the attacker. This design applies to both the computer players and the human players; they abide by exactly the same rules. This includes the rule which provides at least one Infantry and one Archer to a player with no military forces. We assume that any territory, human or computer, is capable of offering some defense to an attacker, however meager.

3. An army's morale is based on the Happiness of the kingdom's population. Battles may be won and lost solely on morale. It has a very strong effect on the outcome. The wise leader keeps the Happiness of his or her people at least as high as that of any neighboring kingdom.

Artificial Intelligence

Castles II employs two multi-level artificial intelligence engines for the computer players; one for Strategic mode, another for Tactical mode. Only the Strategic AI is discussed in this analysis.

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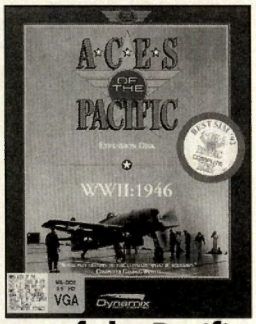
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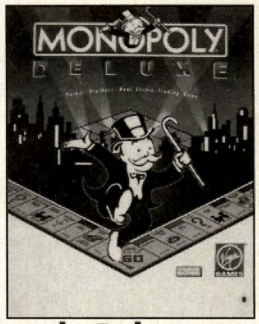
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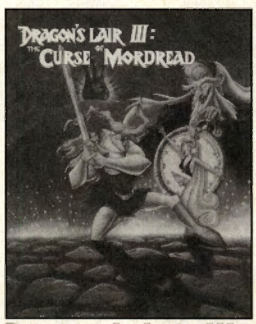
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The Strategic AI consists of medium-level and high-level portions. Actions are initiated through the same task mechanism used by the human players. In fact, the AI players were tested by letting one of them run the game in place of the human, even displaying results on the same user interface.

During the six months of playtesting for *Castles II*, many of the AI algorithms were rewritten several times until they had the versimilitude desired by the designers. Fortunately, the computer players use the same tasks as the humans. The tuning factors were based on empirical adjustments derived from human playtesters. The result is a series of opponents who play at a level equivalent to that of an expert human player. The Easy and Impossible difficulty levels in the game were created by adjusting more than a dozen factors in the playing style of each opponent.

The medium-level AI maintains appropriate levels of commodities and military forces, and ensures the safety and security of the kingdom. It issues Gather and Recruit tasks whenever it decides to increase the level of a commodity or increase its military strength. The medium-level AI can send Merchants. (This is a good way to find out if a computer player is experiencing a shortage of a given resource, by the way). The medium-level AI also starts a Happiness task when the morale of the population drops, sends Scouts to neighboring territories and Polices the realm if it is being Sabotaged or Spied upon.

The medium-level AI does not think very often. During playtesting, this AI was found to be extremely agile in its response to changing conditions in the game — unfortunately, more agile than one could expect a reasonable human opponent to be. Hence, the frequency of its thinking was reduced to compensate for this. One other adjustment was made. Since the computer players do not get the benefit of plots or random events, which often give "freebies" to the human player, the AIs were given the ability to obtain *one* unit of a given resource, provided that no units are available in their stockpiles and the computer wants to run a task that *requires* that item. This also compensates partially for problems which arise due to their reduced frequency of thinking. This only applies, however, if they are completely out of that commodity. The computer players cannot pile up large stocks of goods in this manner. Also, they do not possess this special ability at the Easy difficulty level.

The high-level AIs handle the more complex thinking in the game. They use a modified version of a traditional AI approach to prioritization of their various options. This keeps them from becoming locked into simple patterns of action. Attack, Build Castle, Saboteur, Spy and Diplomat are high-level AI tasks. The computer evaluates each task based on a large number of variables. It may decide to attack a particular territory because it contains a commodity that is in short supply, or it may back off if it finds a castle there. It weighs all of the possibilities and chooses the one which best achieves its goals.

Starting the Game

At the beginning of the game, the player's focus should be on grabbing territory. This cannot be done in a haphazard manner, though. The most important goals should be:

- 1. Building a solid, defensible perimeter;
- 2. Ensuring a supply of all four types of resources; and
- 3. Cranking the kingdom's economy up to top speed as soon as possible.

Most of the players begin in one corner or another of the map. The best strategy for these players is to aim for an initial size of five or six territories. It is advisable to conquer a few immediately, building a "wall" of player-controlled territories, behind which may be a few that have not yet been conquered, but are inaccessible to the other players (the other players cannot "leapfrog" and get to them). Then, these other territories may be conquered at one's leisure.

Territories will revolt if not subjugated by a show of force. One must therefore begin building castles once control of four or five territories. It is good to try to build just one castle, preferably in a territory which borders every other territory owned. If one is very fortunate, or has planned well, the territory in which the castle is built will have Gold as a resource. Said castle should be, at least, 100 points strong, so that it will prevent revolts in all neighboring territories. The castle will not prevent revolts until it reaches an appropriate level of completion, though. So, the wise player will start construction early enough to ensure that the serfs will not be up (in arms) before the castle reaches this critical size. One good way to speed up the construction process is to skip the moat: it slows the construction process significantly.

Politics also plays a critical role in the game, even at this early stage. Solid leaders keep their people are happy; make sure that the Pope likes them; and try to keep their enemies at bay by buying them off occasionally (at least, until their own ar-

QQP's **Strategies of the Month** Vol. 17

A monthly column to improve the quality of play

BATTLES OF DESTINY: Drones (missiles) are powerful defensive weapons. You must build a radar station before you can build missiles in that city. Once missiles have been built, you can fire them by manually addressing that city. You might find it convenient to leave one active unit in each missile city, pressing the space bar each turn that you don't want to fire a drone. Also, the higher your industrial level in the production center where your missiles are located, the wider the range for the missiles. A great challenge - Play the scenario Andropoli without the use of air transport.

CONQUERED KINGDOMS: Use those exotic units such as dragons and wizards. They add a tremendous amount of depth and richness to the game play. If you are shying away from using these units, try picking only one type per game. Learn all the intricate uses of that one piece before you try the next one. I can't emphasize enough the value of these units. Wizards (through teleporting) can jump with a small force to far off castles (neutral or enemy) and render that surprise attack. Dragons can double attack each combat (both units in a square) and fly over anything. Phantoms, with their scare thing can virtually double a small army. Etc. Etc.

SOLITAIRE"S JOURNEY and **THE LOST ADMIRAL**: These games continue to get awards and award nominations (Electronic Gamer). They are great. If you haven't tried them yet, go for it, we don't think you will be disappointed.

Quantum Quality Productions
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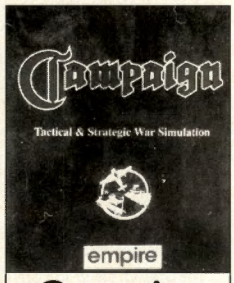
Viking Software, Inc.

Key: I=IBM PC and compatibles; M=Macintosh; A=Amiga

Adventure/Role-Playing

Past

	I	M	A
AD&D Starter Kit	43	-	-
AD&D Collector's Edition	39	-	-
AD&D Collector's Edit. 2	43	-	-
Betrayal at Krondor	42	-	-
Black Crypt	32	-	34
Castles	36	2Q	36
Northern Camp.	19	-	-
Castles II	37	-	-
Challenge of Five Realms	42	-	-
Champions of Krynn	19	-	-
Conquests of the Longbow	42	-	37
Curse of the Azure Bonds	34	-	34
Darklands	39	-	-
Art Disk w/HB	15	-	-
Dark Queen of Krynn	34	-	34
Darkside of Xeen	2Q	-	-
Dark Sun	49	-	-
Daughter of Serpents	32		
Death Knights of Krynn	19	-	-
DragonLance Collec. Ed.	43	-	-
Eye of the Beholder	19	-	34
Eye of the Beholder 2	38	-	38
Eye of the Beholder 3	3/'93	-	-
Four Crystals of Trazere	34	-	34
Gateway Savage Frontier	31	-	34
Heimdall	32	-	32
Inindo	3/'93	-	-
King's Quest I Enhanced	34	-	-
King's Quest IV	39	-	-
King's Quest V (VGA)	42	-	39
King's Quest VI	42	-	-
King's Ransom	2/'93	-	2/'93
Legacy	1Q	-	-
Legacy of Necromancer	TBA	-	-
Legend of Kyrandia	37	-	-
Legends of Valor	37	-	-
Lord of the Rings	36	-	36
Lord of the Rings 2	36	-	-
Lost Vikings	1Q	-	-
Magic Candle 2	38	-	-
Magic Candle 3	38	-	-
Might & Magic III	39	37	39
Might & Magic IV	39	-	-
M&M Clouds of Xeen	39	-	-
Merchant Colony	32	-	-
Pirates Gold	6/'93	-	-
Pool of Darkness	38	-	38
Prophecy of the Shadow	38	-	38
Quest for Glory I (VGA)	22	-	-



Campaign

This tactical and strategic war simulation allows you to take command of 3,000 vehicles on over 20 historically accurate maps in size ranges of 625 to 10 million square kilometers. Locations range from the Sahara and Russian steppes to the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes. Includes a map editor, over 150 vehicle types, and covers all aspects of combat (land, air, and sea). Control either Allied or Axis forces.

IBM $37

	I	M	A
Quest for Flory II	39	-	-
Quest for Glory III	42	-	-
Ragnarok	35	-	-
Realms	20	-	20
Secret of Monkey Island	37	-	37
Secret of Monkey Island 2	39	39	39
Secret of the Silver Blades	15	-	34
Shadowlands	33	-	33
Shadow Sorcerer	34	-	-
Spoils of War	37	-	37
The Summoning	38	-	-
Tales of Magic	39	-	-
Treasures Savage Frontier	31	-	31
Ultima VI	42	-	42
Ultima VII	47	-	-
Forge of Virtue	16	-	-
Ultima VII Part 2	47	-	-
Ultima Trilogy 2	47	-	-
Ultima Underworld	47	-	-
Ultima Underworld 2	1Q	-	-
Uncharted Waters	43	-	-
Veil of Darkness	37	-	-
Warriors of Legend	2/'93	-	-
Wizardry Trilogy	34	-	-
Wizardry 6 (Bane)	39	-	39
Wizardry 7 (Crusaders)	42	-	-

Present

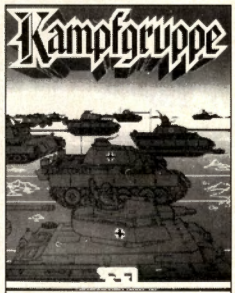
Amazon	38	-	-
Castle of Dr. Brain	33	-	-
Classic Adv. Pak (LucasArts)	37	-	-
Creepers	1/'93	-	-
D/generation	34	-	-
Dagger of Amon Ra	42	-	-
Elvira 1	43	-	43
Elvira 2	43	-	43



Mercenaries

You've just graduated from the marine academy and are offered the position of commander of your own group of mercenaries. You'll take your grup on top-secret interplanetary missions that even the military doesn't know about. Experience a tour of duty on your home planet or other world locales. Create your own squad members. Also includes scenario builder.

IBM $37



Kampfgruppe

A classic platoon-level tactical game of combat on the eastern front from 1941 to 1945. Historical scenarios: Stalingrad, Berlin, Kiev, and Bryansk, or make your own. "Kampfgruppe is the tactical wargamer's dream." (CGW #98)

IBM $19

	I	M	A
Freddy Pharkas	3/'93	-	-
Heart of China	37	-	37
Indy Jones/Fate of Atlantis	39	39	39
Jaws of Cerberus	43	-	43
Leisure Suit Larry Trilogy	53	-	-
Leisure Suit Larry 5	42	-	38
Lost Files Sherlock Holmes	42	-	-
Lost Treasures of Infocom	42	-	42
Les Manley/Lost in L.A.	38	-	-
The Manhole	32	-	-
Maniac Mansion 2	2Q	-	-
Oh No! More Lemmings!	22	-	22
Out of this World	37	-	37
Police Quest 2	40	-	-
Police Quest 3	42	-	37
Rocketeer w/Sound Source	42	-	-
Savage Empire	39	-	-
Sea Rogue	28	-	-
Waxworks	37	-	-
Willy Beamish	42	-	-

Future

ArmourGeddon	37	-	-
Battletech 2	19	-	-
Buck Rogers	15	-	33
Buck Rogers 2	34	-	-
Breach 2	21	-	33
Cyberspace	1/'93	-	1/'93
Dune	37	-	37
Dune II	37	-	12/1
Epic	42	-	42
Elite Plus	32	-	-
Free D.C.	40	-	-
Gateway	38	-	-
Hard Nova	34	-	34
Jonny Crash	Fall	-	-
Leather Goddesses Phobos 2	46	-	-
Legions of Krella/Star Legions	37	-	-
"M"	3Q	-	-
Mantis	38	-	38
Martian Memorandum	30	-	-
Megatraveller 1	15	-	-
Megatraveller 2	39	-	37
Megatraveller 3	3/'93	-	-
Nova 9	25	-	-
Out of this World	37	37	37
Planet's Edge	38	-	-
Powerhits: Sci-Fi	32	-	-
Privateer	1Q	-	-
Rex Nebular	38	-	-
Rise of the Dragon (VGA)	39	-	39
Space Quest III	40	-	-
Space Quest IV	42	-	37
Space Quest V	42	-	-
Spelljammer	37	-	-
Star Control 2	37	-	-
StarFlight 1	17	-	34
StarFlight 2	19	-	34
Star Trek 25th Anniversary	36	-	-
Star Trek: Next Generation	3Q	-	-
Strike Commander	1Q	-	-
Twilight: 2000	32	-	Fall
Twilight: 2001	1/'93	-	-



X-Wing

Fly an X-wing, A-wing, or Y-wing for the Rebel Alliance against the Imperial Empire. Includes combat training and tours of duty, pilot promotions, decorations, replay camera. Digitized speech, dialogue and music directly from the film, 3-D polygon, 256-color graphics.

IBM $37

	I	M	A
Ultrabots	37	-	-
Wing Commander II	47	-	-
Special Operations 1	19	-	-
Special Operations 2	19	-	-
Speech Pack	15	-	-
X-Wing	37	-	-

Hint Books

AD&D Clue Books	10-12	-	-
Chuck Yeager Handbook	16	-	-
Civilization	17	-	-
Darklands HB w/Art Disk	15	-	-
Eye of the Beholder 2	12	-	-
Falcon Air Combat	12	-	-
Lord of the Rings	10	-	-
Lucasfilm Air Combat	16	-	-
Harpoon Battlebook	19	-	-
Magic Candle 2	10	-	-
Might & Magic III	15	-	-
Planet's Edge	15	-	-
Railroad Tycoon	12	-	-
Rex Nebular	10	-	-
Run 5 Magazine 1-17	5	-	-
Sierra Hint Books	8	-	-
Star Trek 25th Anniversary	10	-	-
Ultima VII	10	-	-
Ultima Underworld	12	-	-
Wing Commander	15	-	-
Wizardry 6 (Bane)	12	-	-

Hardware

AdLib	49	-	-
CH-Flightstick	49	-	-
Gravis Eliminator Gamecard	29	-	-
Gravis Joystick	39	-	34
Gravis UltraSound	130	-	-
Pro Audio Spectrum-16	239	-	-
SoundBlaster Pro	180	-	-
SoundBlaster Pro Basic	150	-	-
SoundBlaster Microchannel	269	-	-
Thunderboard	99	-	-
ThrustMaster flight stick	69	-	-
ThrustMaster throttle	79	-	-

January Specials

	IBM	Ami
Breach 2	19	-
Buck Rogers 2	19	-
Centurion	16	-
Champions of Krynn	19	-
Conflict: Korea	19	-
Death Knights of Krynn	19	-
Eye of the Beholder	19	-
Kampfgruppe	19	-
Keyboard Templates	10	-
M1 Tank Platoon	27	-
Tony LaRussa Ult. Baseball	19	-
Yeager Air Combat	27	-

Viking Ratings

Battles of Destiny	**A**
Conquered Kingdoms	**A**
Front Page Sports: Football	**A**
Pacific War	**A**
Stunt Island	**A**
Shadow President	**A–**
Comanche: Max. Overkill	**B+**
King's Quest VI	**B+**
Ragnarok	**B+**
Star Control II	**B+**
Air Bucks	**B**
Spaceward HO! (Windows)	**B**
Summoning	**B**
Spelljammer	**C–**

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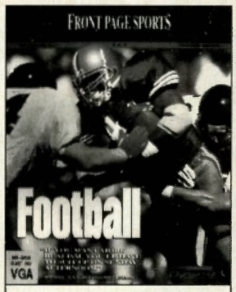
Strategy

Pre-WWII

	I	M	A
Ancient Art of War Skies	37	-	-
Battles of Napoleon	36	-	-
Blue and the Grey	4/'93	-	-
Caesar	37	-	-
Civil War Vol. 1, 2 or 3	27	-	-
Conquered Kingdoms	37	-	-
Conquest of Japan	37	-	-
Discovery of Columbus	37	-	-
Genghis Khan	37	-	37
Gettysburg	39	-	-
Gold of the Americas	26	-	-
L'Empereur	36	-	-
Liberty or Death	37	-	-
Merchant Colony	32	-	-
No Greater Glory	43	-	43
Nobunaga's Ambition 2	39	-	-
Paladin II	37	-	-
P.T.O.	3/'93	-	-
Red Baron (VGA)	42	-	37
Mission Builder	20	-	
Romance of 3 Kingdoms	43	-	-
Romance of 3 Kingdoms 2	42	-	42
Siege	30	-	-
Dogs of War	19	-	-
Warlords/Enhanced	32	-	32

World War II

Aces of the Pacific	42	-	-
WWII: 1946!	25	-	-
RAF in the Pacific	1Q	-	-
Aces Over Europe	1Q	-	-
Campaign Disk 1	2Q	-	-
Action Stations v3.2	32	-	32
Data Disk	17	-	17
B-17 Flying Fortress	38	-	-
Battletank Barbarossa	39	-	39
Bismarck	29	-	-
Campaign	37	-	37
Carriers at War	42	-	-
Carrier Strike	42	-	-
Fire Brigade	34	-	-
Fleet Commander	6/'93	-	-
Fleet Med	39	-	39
Grand Fleet	39	-	-
Great Naval Battles	42	-	-
Expansion Disks	19	-	-
In Harm's Way	39	-	39
Malta Storm	39	-	39
MBT Central Germany	39	-	-
MBT Kursk	39	-	39
New World Order	2/'93	-	-
Pacific War	42	-	-
Panzer Battles	26	-	34
Patton Strikes Back	17	-	-
Prelude to Jutland	29	-	-
Second Front	37	-	37
Secret Weapons Luftwaffe	44	-	-
DO-335 plane disk	20	-	-
HE 162	20	-	-
P-38	20	-	-
P-80	20	-	-
Seventh Fleet	39	-	-
Silent Service 2	34	-	34
Silent Service 2 Classic	22	-	-
Task Force 1942	39	-	-
Their Finest Hour	44	-	19
Third Reich	28	-	28
V for Victory: Utah Beach	43	-	-
V for Victory: Velikiye Luki	42	42	-



Front Page Sports: Football

Already receiving an "A" rating is this superior football game from Dynamix. Excellent animation and sound effects, control leagues with up to 28 teams and 1400 players. One and two player modes. Instant replays, 47 man roster with injured reserve, drafting, trading, training camp, free agents and more. Best action football game yet!

IBM $42

	I	M	A
V for Victory: Market Garden	3/'93		-
V for Victory: Casserine Pass	2Q	2Q	-
V for Victory: Stalingrad	3Q	3Q	-
Victory at Sea	1993	-	-
Western Front	37	-	-

Modern

7th Fleet	39	-	39
A-10 Warthog	12/'93	-	-
A Line in the Sand	27	-	-
ATAC	34	-	-
Air Force Commander	37	-	-
Comanche: Max. Overkill	43	-	-
Expansion Disk 1	19	-	-
Conflict: Korea	16	-	37
Conflict: Middle East	39	-	39
Crisis in the Kremlin	42	-	-
F-117A Nighthawk (VGA)	43	-	-
F-15 II Classic	22		
F-15 III	42	-	-
F-15 III "Ace Pack"	47	-	-
Falcon 3.0	45	-	-
Operation: Fighting Tiger	25	-	-
Falcon MC	-	42	-
Global Effect	34	-	34
Gunship 2000	38	-	-
Campaign Disk 1	22	-	-
Harpoon v1.3	27	-	33
Battleset 2 or 3	20	-	20
Battleset 4	22	-	22
Harpoon Designer Series	32	-	-
Harpoon Scenario Editor	28	-	28
Harpoon Challenger Pak	43	-	52
Harpoon Challenger Pak S.E.	50	-	-
Harpoon II	1993	-	-
Harrier Assault	37	-	-
Jump Jet	42	-	-

	I	M	A
Jump Jet "Ace Pack"	12/9	-	-
KGB	22	-	-
M1 Tank Platoon	36	-	36
Megafortress	28	-	39
Mission Disk 1 or 2	24	-	-
Megafortress Megapack	37	-	-
Pacific Islands II	2/'93	-	-
Patriot	12/15	-	-
Shadow President	42	-	-
Special Forces	32	-	-
Utopia	32	-	-

Sci-Fi

Armada 2525	34	-	-
Battlefield 2000	37	-	-
Breach 2	21	-	34
Cyber Empires	33	-	-
Fireteam 2200	34	-	-
Imperium	28	-	28
Mantis	41	-	-
Speech Pack	18	-	-
Reach for the Stars	28	-	28
Robosport (Windows)	38	-	38
Rules of Engagement	39	-	39
Rules of Engagement 2	4/'93	-	-
Second Conflict (Windows)	34	-	-
Space Inc.	6/'93	-	-
Spaceward HO! (Windows)	37	-	-
Spaceward HO! (DOS)	'93	-	-
Star Legions	37	-	-
Tegel's Mercenaries	37	-	-
When Two Worlds War	2/'93	-	-

General

A-Train	42	-	-
Construction Set	24	-	-
Air Bucks	37	-	-
Battles of Destiny	37	-	-



V for Victory: Velikiye Luki

Second game in the V for Victory series is even better than the original. Divisional and regimental strategy wargame on the Russian front. Reviews of this product are excellent. If you liked the first V for Victory, you'll love this one.

IBM $43



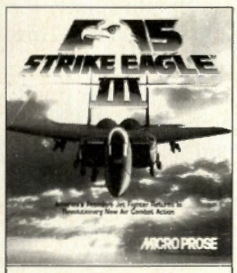
Patriot

Land-based tactical combat from the creators of Harpoon. Incorporates logistics, engineering, air transport, artillery, and tactical air support. Command 2,500 military units down to the batallion level with SVGA graphics and polygon-based topographical maps. First BattleSet covers the Gulf War with multiple "what-if" configurations. Modem-play.

IBM $42

	I	M	A
BattleChess 4000 (VGA)	12/1	-	-
BattleChess 4000 (SVGA)	37	-	-
Buzz Aldrin's Race to Space	12/'92	-	-
Civilization	38	42	38
Civilization Master Edition	45	-	-
Classic 5	1Q	2Q	-
Classic 5 (Windows)	2Q	-	-
Command HQ Classic	22	-	-
Dominant Species	1/'93	-	-
El-Fish	1Q	-	-
Empire Deluxe	37	-	-
Eric The Unready	1/'93	-	-
Global Conquest	39	-	-
Heaven and Earth	32	-	-
Hong Kong Mahjong	33	-	-
Incredible Machine	32	-	-
Lemmings 2	2/'93	-	2/'93
Lost Admiral	38	-	-
Lost Admiral Enhanced	12/'92	-	-
Monopoly	28	-	-
Monopoly Deluxe DOS/Win	37	-	-
Perfect General	38	-	38
WWII Scenario Disk	22		-22
Great Battles 20th Cen.	25	-	-
Populous 2	37	-	39
World Editor	-	-	15
Powermonger	34	-	34
WWI Scenario Disk	-	-	22
Power Politics	32	-	-
PowerHits: Movies	32	-	-
Risk	26	-	-
Risk (Windows)	32	-	-
Sargon V	-	32	-
Sharif On Bridge	32	2Q	-
Sharif On Bridge (Windows)	32	-	-
Shuttle	38	-	-
SimAnt	38	-	38
SimCity	34	-	34
Sim City (Windows)	38	-	-

	I	M	A
SimCity 2000	3Q	-	-
SimFarm	3Q	-	-
SimEarth	44	-	44
Sim Earth (Windows)	45	-	-
SimLife	42	42	-
SimLife (Windows)	47	-	-
Solitaire (Windows)	12/1	-	-
Solitaires Journey	38	-	-
Spoils of War	36	-	-
Stunt Island	37	-	-
Super Tetris	32	-	-
Theatre of War	33	-	-
Tristan	32	-	-
Virtual Reality Studio 2	1/'93	-	-



F-15 III

Using a revolutionary new visual system, F-15 III will create the most realistic dogfighting so far. 2-player ability via modem or direct link will allow formation flying, head to head combat or pilot/RIO teams.

IBM $47/42

Sports

	I	M	A
All-Amer. College Ftbll 92	37	-	-
Car and Driver	37	-	-
Front Pg. Sports: Football	42	-	-
Front Pg. Sports: Baseball	3/'93	-	-
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mies are strong enough to fight the enemy troops effectively).

Tough Choices

Once those initial territories are under control, players may choose any one of several approaches to the game. The game can be won through military conquest, administrative power or political expertise, although the obvious military approach is the easiest. It is best to make a decision at the very beginning as to which overall strategy to use and stick to it as long as possible.

The game will place far more demands on one's resources than they can support. Thus, one must decide whether to make the general populace happy, build alliances with one's neighbors, build castles, or build a dominant military force. The overall strategic choice will determine the player's appropriate emphasis.

There are a few general pointers that apply to any strategy. The player who doubts their importance should simply remember that the computer opponents *are* using them.

1. Use every available ability point. Even if one is not engaged in a Military task, for example, it is possible to apply the otherwise unused Military ability points to another task, such as a Gather. This serves the dual purpose of increasing the speed of the gather task and giving one the extra push toward raising your ability rating. The player's Military ability will not increase as quickly as if he/she were running Military tasks, but any contribution in the right direction is helpful.
2. One should stay friendly with the Pope, regularly monitoring relations between church and state. Remember that attacking a friend of the Pope (noted by the word "Blessed" next to that player's name in the Council display) causes one's own relations with the Pope to decrease by one point. It is very easy, therefore, to become excommunicated through carelessness.
3. It is wise to stay friendly, or at least on neutral terms (Relations of 4 to 6), with one's neighbors. The better one's relations with one's potential enemies, the less likely they are to unilaterally commit aggression or sabotage. Also, Merchants are likely to get better deals if they are dealing with friendly parties.
4. Unless one Maintains a reasonable army size, one may discover that neighboring powers are attacking because they presume they have found an easy mark. Also, note that the maintenance costs will drag down one's economy, should the army become too large.
5. Diplomats are useful for "buying off" hostile enemies. They remember friendly actions and are less likely to attack if they have reached a diplomatic agreement recently. Unfortunately, they cannot recall armies who are already in the process of attacking, so it is possible to send a Diplomat too late to be effective. Also, enemies remember hostile acts much longer than they remember the nice ones.
6. Think in terms of small campaigns. Before launching attacks, pick a small number of territories to capture, build up a good-sized army and go! Also, after grabbing a couple of provinces, it is wise to consolidate gains, rebuild the army and erect castles for defense. Never get greedy; an over-extended empire crumbles very quickly!
7. Always harvest the available resources. They tend to dissipate rapidly since everything the player does inevitably costs money and/or goods. Try to resist building a castle until one's Administrative Rating hits 5, allowing a second task in that category. Then, keep harvesting as the building proceeds apace.
8. Even without a good mix of commodities in the territories owned, one can still have a good economy. One should try to harvest the commodity most in surplus, then trade them for the commodity needed.



Military Might

Many players initially try to win the game through brute military force. The following hints should assist the determined militarist:

1. Obtain Knights as soon as possible. Build up to a Military Ability Rating of 6 by recruiting and attacking. Don't Police the realm unless it's essential. Take a risk in order to build up forces more rapidly.
2. Build just enough castles to prevent revolts. One can build them without moats if necessary to facilitate construction.
3. It is absolutely vital to have plenty of Iron and Wood initially, in order to build a big army. Then, make sure there is plenty of Food and Gold to pay for these forces. If forces are lost due to failure to pay, it can cost one the game.
4. Choose enemies carefully. Only attack one at a time. Trying to conquer two at once will almost certainly end in disaster. Send plenty of Diplomats to the other players to keep them off balance.
5. Ambush a weak opponent. Call a Council and see who is at war with whom. Then, attack a neighbor who is busy fighting someone else.
6. Don't attack Blessed players unless there is no other choice. The Pope will cause such ignominious attackers a great deal of grief.

Administrative Prowess

In addition, a player with six well-chosen territories and many castles can pros-

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per and win without spending enormous amounts of effort on military campaigns.

1. The key to an administrative victory is maintaining the happiness of one's people and becoming allies with the other players. Run Happiness tasks and send plenty of Diplomats to the neighboring powers.
2. Focus on obtaining Gold territories. This is because it takes gold to buy off one's neighbors, much less the Pope.
3. Build a moderate-sized standing army. If a neighboring power should suspect that one only has a small army, they are more likely to attack. Related to this, remember that losses affect the attacker more than the defender (since the defender will never lose more than half of his army in any given battle), so one can do a great deal of damage to someone who dares to attack.
4. When attacked, send Diplomats. If relations improve, the enemy will temporarily be less willing to attack again. Keep up a steady stream of Diplomats and it just may avert a second attack from ever occurring.
5. Send lots of Merchants and Diplomats. Political Ability points are the most difficult to achieve, but there will be plenty of time to acquire them later, since the kingdom will be spending fewer resources on military actions.
6. When enjoying the advantage of other ruler's friendship (Relations of 8 or 9), trade becomes much more advantageous. It is possible to make a profit on trade if one works hard enough at it. Every unit in one's stockpile brings one closer to victory.
7. Don't forget that friends turn against anyone who Claims. Relations will drop by one point with every other player. This makes the human player suddenly serve as the target of numerous Saboteurs and Attacks. Be prepared. Just before claiming, build up a substantial army with plenty of Knights and Archers.

Long-Live The King! (Long Term Strategy)

The goal of *Castles II*, ultimately, is to survive long enough to become King. Once one's initial fiefdom is established, it is time to put one's overall strategy to the test. Regardless of the strategy chosen, a few general pointers may be relevant for the latter portion of the game.

First, Build a buffer of extra points before Claiming. Once the other players get wind of the pending coronation, they will become increasingly aggressive toward the "pretender." Claiming reduces relations with *all* other players. This can rapidly force one into warfare. Make sure that the loss of points due to the drop in relations, plus the drops due to the inevitable attacks to be repulsed, will not be so severe that the Pope rejects the claim entirely.

Second, note that deciding *when* to Claim is a tricky decision. If the gamer is the first to try, everyone will take their shot at knocking you down. Waiting for someone else to claim first is also a tricky path to follow, because the human player might not have enough time or power to knock him down and, if more players claim in the meantime, it'll turn into a free-for-all. (Actually that becomes quite a fun endgame to be involved in. So, maybe that's not such a bad idea after all!)

Ten Sure Ways to Lose at *Castles II*

1. Attack two or three other players at once. Yeah, the more, the merrier. It's *fun* to send troops in every direction, grabbing territory as quickly as possible. It's fun to lose troops faster than replacements can be recruited. It's fun to beat back counterattacks every two weeks. It's fun to restart the game every ten minutes!
2. Ignore the Pope. Attack Blessed players. Get Excommunicated. So what? Human players are too tough to expect their people to be happy. Besides, no iron-fisted ruler worth his garde-robe worries about those Holy Romers. And don't worry about the precipitous drop in the army's morale because the populace is unhappy. Who needs a big army? Who needs those stinkin' Merchants?
3. Never send Diplomats. Diplomats are pansies. They can be killed when they arrive in the player's kingdom, why bother wasting resources on sending them to neighbors where Relations are always so bad anyway? Who needs any stinkin' friends? A scorched earth policy — that's more manly. Take no prisoners. Just build an army and kill everyone at once. No problem. They'll never have time to mount a counterattack. Who cares if they're attacked by everyone?
4. Trade inefficiently. Rely on the Black Market for scarce goods. Trade with hostile neighbors. What's so bad about an occasional 2:1 or 3:1 swap for something that's really needed? Losing one or two units per trade doesn't really add up to much over thirty or forty trades, anyway. Besides, how could anyone possibly plan ahead in this game?
5. Let the army starve or go without paychecks. Why, a *real* military man ought to go six, seven years without eating. Yeah, and they ought to be able to eat rocks, too. And be paid in sticks! Yeah, wet sticks! After all, one only loses one military unit on the first delay. Why should a real ruler care? Even if it happens to be the best unit? After all, real rulers have more Knights than they can use. Further, real rulers don't worry about losing double the units after every further delay. There are more important considerations than maintaining an army.
6. Ignore a commodity because it's not important. Who needs Food, except to feed the army, recruit Knights, and make people happy? Who needs Timber, except to build castles, recruit Archers, and make people happy? Who needs Iron, except to build castles and recruit Infantry? Nobody needs Gold, right? Right? Well, Gold maybe...
7. Don't build castles. The name of the game is *Castles II*, but that has nothing to do with it. Real rulers are too busy conquering neighboring territories to worry about those pesky revolts. And who needs double commodities anyway? (see above) One can always *reconquer* any lost territories. Those neighboring powers would never even think about trying to capture a neutral territory that was once under someone else's control, would they? And how much protection can one really get from a pile of stone? Ten archers posted on the walls can't possibly be very useful. Why would anyone ever imagine that they might be safer up there or able to shoot arrows further?
8. Never, ever Claim the throne. Better yet, Claim early, immediately after reaching a score of 7001. Yeah, that'll show everyone! Those sniveling, wimps.
9. Change strategies every year or so. Yeah, keep duckin' and weavin'. Move slowly and in different directions all the time. Those computer players won't know what to do. Who needs to focus on a consistent strategy? Planning never worked for Wile E. Coyote.
10. Never send Scouts and Spies. Never call a Council. Why bother looking at one's neighbors? They aren't planning any hostile actions. Just ignore them. Real gamers always win on Impossible level, anyway. CGW

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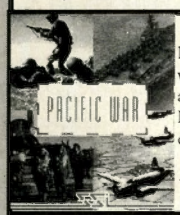
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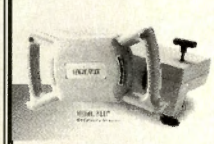
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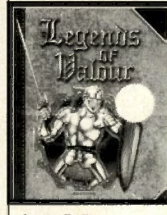
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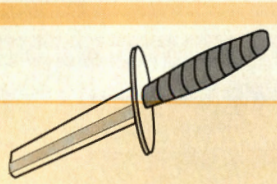


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Conquering Kingdoms: Tactics 101

An Examination of QQP's Fantasy Strategy Game



by Alan "Playing the Long Game" Emrich

In the world of magazine publishing, there is something known as "lead time" for a story. Here at *Computer Gaming World*, that lead time is about three months. Shortly after I did a sneak preview of *Conquered Kingdoms*, **QQP** released it in its finished form. So, I would like to take just a few paragraphs and flesh out the preview to call attention to the game's evolution since it appeared in issue #102, before launching into some important rule clarifications, tips, and tactics for this absorbing strategy game.

Hearing is Believing

Perhaps the thing that struck me first and foremost in the finished version of *Conquered Kingdoms* was the music. While the introduction was a fine "to battle" kind of march, the tunes which came up at the beginning of player turns and to announced messages when playing by modem threw me for a loop. After all, songs such as "Ain't She Sweet" and "I'm In The Mood For Love" seem a bit out of place in what is, essentially, a wargame.

While the sound effects weren't anything to write home about, the battle maps included in the game box were. Drawn in an artistic abstract, I only noticed a couple of minor errors (such as the town of Cornerstone on map 7 being worth 1000 points per turn, rather than its crucial 1400 points), but they're still useful in the heat of battle. I was also pleased to see so many ways to access unit information during set-up and play.

A Medic for the Docs

The documentation is the weakest component of *Conquered Kingdoms*. Done in passable, low-cost black and white, there was an abundance of typographical errors and poor grammar. What problems I had with the content of the rules themselves I've noted below with clarifications included.

Finally, I'm sure that I was not the only one disappointed by the lack of the promised play-by-email feature for *Conquered Kingdoms*. While I know the play-by-modem element works very well, long campaigns might be best played by exchanging files via electronic mail. QQP indicated that they sacrificed the feature in the initial release in order to get the product out in time for Christmas, but they have said that the feature will be included in a forthcoming patch. (Maybe they can put the song "Patches" in the next version of the game). It will be made available free to all registered owners and posted up on some of the computer networks and bulletin boards (certainly on CompuServe).

Compass-Like Clarifications

From what I've gathered on the bulletin boards (from my vantage point as *CGW*'s on-line editor), there are some questions floating around which I may be able to answer. My organization in addressing them may seem a bit chaotic, but try to follow along.

When playing a Cascatia campaign, the object is to control 60% of the provinces when playing without "thrones." One player selects an area to be contested adjacent to any of his controlled areas. On that area is a number or the letter 'R' which indicates the map number to be fought over ('R' being random) and a second symbol indicating any special bonus awarded that area's owner for all future battles in that campaign — note that an ampersand (@) indicates a throne area.

If the person who picked the area wins, they get that area plus any *non-enemy-owned* bonus areas which the winner might receive for a decisive victory. If the person who didn't pick the area wins, they receive a territory adjacent to one which they already own (thus, not revealing exactly where the enemy is), plus any bonus territories for a decisive win.

In a Cascatia Campaign, leaders are also introduced, including one's King (who, in actuality, begins as a Cavalier). Other leaders are awarded by conquering territories with a pound sign (#) in them. If one's leader pieces survive, they will earn points toward becoming bigger and badder. What this means in practical game terms is that their command radius and damage points grow, although their combat and healing effects remain unchanged.

The Nuances of Notches

The tougher the opponent beaten (and the more soundly they are trounced), the more "notches" will be awarded the victor and lost by the vanquished. While I don't have the formula for awarding and losing notches, a table of one's stature and the notches required to achieve it is given below. Note that "going over the top" on

the highest level and earning extra notches past it will only give that player a "notch cushion" which can be absorbed before losing that greatest of all titles.

Level	Notches	Required
1.	Serf	0 - 10
2.	Sheriff	11 - 22
3.	Nobleman	23 - 35
4.	Grand Duchy	36 - 50
5.	Marquis	51 - 66
6.	Chief Magistrate	67 - 84
7.	Arch Duke	85 - 102
8.	Regional Magistrate	103 - 122
9.	Emperor	123 - 142
10.	Overlord	143 - 164
11.	Master of the Realm	165 - 189

The Cryptic Symbology Revealed!

Many have wondered what some of those tiny symbols mean that occasionally appear on the large unit icons in the lower-right portion of the screen. Some may be obvious, but here they all are:

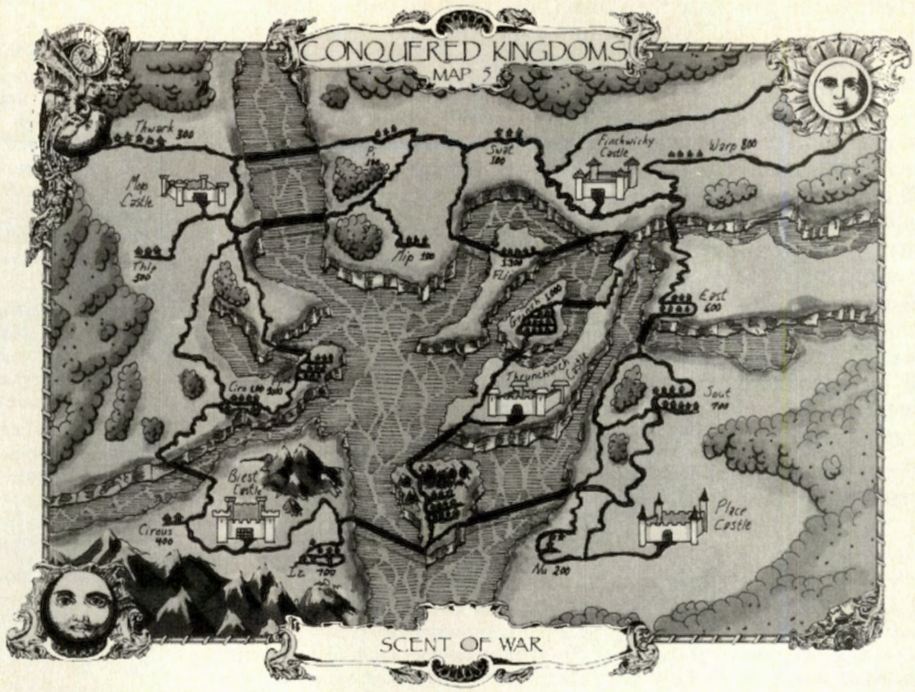
- A ship means the unit is embarked on a boat. (Pretty clever, eh?)
- A wall means the unit is safely behind the castle walls and is enjoying its combat benefit of -2 damage when attacked.
- A spiral shows that the unit is under the influence (within 3 spaces) of an enemy phantom and, thus, is only inflicting 1/2 damage when it attacks.
- A banner indicates the unit is under an officer's command. If human, it will be healed at the rate of 2 points per turn.

Note that being under the command of multiple officers (or under the spell of multiple enemy phantoms, for that matter) causes no additional effect. A unit will never be healed more than 2 points per turn nor have its combat effectiveness dropped below 1/2.

Finally, among my notes, no terrain has any effect on combat, except for castle walls and keeps, and the rules regarding sieges and the prevention of unit production in enemy cities are not correct. I don't know if this is a bug or a misstated rule, but having units inside an enemy castle isn't always enough to prevent it from producing new units!

My Better Bashing Basis Bias

In, perhaps, the same way as a Jedi feels the force flowing through him when holding a light saber, I feel that I have a particular penchant for playing *Conquered Kingdoms*. Being fortunate enough to play it many times during its development, I've learned my way around the board well



enough to hold my own against the highest AI levels and even the designer, Bruce Williams Zaccagnino. Here are a few of my secrets:

Why Spy?

Spies not only make good scouts, they also make great assassins. Trading off a spy to kill an officer, phantom, or to finish off a damaged enemy wizard, is usually a good ploy. Also, they're great for negating an enemy's ability to score points for controlling a multi-square town. Finally, spies are great for running around behind enemy lines and upsetting their permanently controlled resources. Of course, an enemy player might also use these devilish tactics. The antidote? Have your wizards cast the occasional "far sight" spell. It reveals enemy units, *including enemy spies*, within 15 spaces.

The Navy's Case

The best thing a fleet can do is to load up at least half of its ships with archers. They'll provide anti-dragon and anti-rog firepower, plus give a credible "shore bombardment" strength to ships. Enemy archers and ogres will have little effect shooting back, but beware of rogs, catapults and wizards when cruising the waters.

Teleport, Teleport, Teleport!

Wizards in close proximity to each other can make multiple teleports together in a single turn (one at a time, of course). Thus, for long range sneak attacks (or the quick grabbing of a distant objective early in the game), consider making multiple wizard teleports by having each one "do his teleport thing" on the same turn. It's a lightning maneuver that, when backed with even a tiny amount of supporting strength, can often prove decisive.

"Go Away or We Will Taunt You a Second Time!"

Finally, it is plain that sieges are no picnic, particularly for the computer player. To undo the game's artificial opponent (or to stymie a human one), hole up in a castle and let him come after you. The computer opponent has a tendency to go for defending units rather than bombarding the keep, so leave some cannon fodder on the walls to distract the enemy dragons, wizards and catapults. In that manner, by holding the keep and adding reinforcements, a castle can hold out almost indefinitely. Also, whenever possible, leave a couple of missile units (archer, wizard, catapult or dragon) in the castle keep spaces. Having the ability to fire at the enemy units from the safety of a castle keep is a tremendous advantage.

Points on Winning

Finally, be aware of the time remaining and where you stand in points. Sometimes it is better to sacrifice a loss of productivity (i.e., a "resource grab") late in the game to go for desperately needed points. If you can't get 'em, at least try to deny them to the enemy by contesting important towns with cheap units wherever possible.

Good luck, and may you raise your score many notches! CGW

Opponents Wanted

Those wishing to place their own (free) ads need only send us a postcard (or use the *Notes* section of the RID card), letter, FAX [714-283-3444] or E-Mail (Prodigy [EXPT40B], CompuServe [76703,622], GEnie and America On-Line [CGW]). Generally, we run them only once, so send another each time if you want to keep your name listed! The ads themselves should serve as reasonable examples as to how to write your own. However,

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Strategy Notes on V For Victory: Utah Beach 1944

Or, Touring the Cotentin Peninsula on 3000 tons a day with the VII Corps Jayhawkers

by James Lowerre

Utah Beach is, by doctrinal definition, a tactical game with an operational scope. The game replicates, at the battalion and company levels, the American VII Corps' campaign to secure the Cotentin Peninsula and the opposing efforts of the German 7th Army during June and early July 1944. The two sides plan their operations in four hour turns using limited intelligence and then, combat and movement are executed simultaneously. After playing the scenario several times and having a go at the campaign game, some key points for success quickly highlight themselves. Here are some tactical pointers to sharpen gamers' *schwerpunkts*.

The Sharp End of Combat (Offensive Operations)

Priority of Engagement: Enemy HQs, artillery, maneuver units (infantry, armor and engineers) should be priority targets. Wherever and whenever possible, one should attack to destroy the enemy's division HQs. The effect of cut supply lines on the eliminated HQ's subordinate units is a dramatic lowering of combat effectiveness. The lowered enemy strength and morale are worth the effort every time, not to mention the bonus of capturing and using enemy supplies (even though the eliminated HQ automatically regenerates at the beginning of the next day's first daylight turn).

Fire Support: Artillery is the most flexible and reliable system one has as the ground commander in influencing combat. To maximize an artillery unit's combat effectiveness, position it in the available bunkers and build field fortifications for them. This raises the artillery's morale and thus combat effectiveness (especially useful in getting anything worthwhile out of the "Nasty Ninetieth's" Div Arty).

Generally, confine pure artillery, naval or air strikes to those targets that get a green light on the 'quality of intell' indicator. In these strikes, always try to achieve at least 1:1 odds to attrite the enemy unit (the target will still be fatigued even at less than 1:1 odds and may have its activity slowed or movement interdicted).

Note: When attacking, start with the artillery as far forward as possible. Avoid having more than half of any division's/regiment's supporting artillery in non-ready mode.

Managing Morale: When committing units and fire support to an attack, watch the odds window closely. Occasionally, a unit with low morale will actually decrease the odds due to its low morale. Obviously, one does not want to commit those units to that attack.

Beating the Bocage: Achieve, at least, 6:1 final odds against a hex in the weakest section of the enemy defensive line (not necessarily the weakest enemy unit) using high morale units and as many odds column benefits as possible (armor, engineer, regimental integrity). Achieve, at least, 1:1 odds on any adjacent enemy units (to reduce their Zone of Control [ZOC] effects on the soon to be vacated enemy position). Plan tactical movement for exploiting units (those with greatest mobility in the given terrain (not necessarily those units with the highest movement allowance) through the primary attack hex into the rear of the adjacent enemy units. Attack the surrounded units next turn and continue to widen the gap in either direction. Sophisticated tacticians will recognize such activity as Liddell Hart's 'Expanding Torrent' theory of attack.

The Big Thump: On particularly crucial battles, the Americans' ability to mass artillery, air and naval firepower can be particularly effective. This overwhelming concentration of firepower should be used whenever friendly ground units are attacking an enemy HQ.

Bunker Busting: First, fatigue enemy units occupying bunkers with extended bombardment. Fire on the targeted hex *every* turn, but don't use the same firing unit(s) every turn. When the enemy's fatigue exceeds 12, attack with at least three engineer battalions in separate hexes with average to high morale infantry and artillery in support (as the VII Corps commander one will probably want to form a semi-permanent task force to deal with German units by-passed in their concrete holes during the U.S. breakout).

A Friendly Reminder: Generally, only two battalions (or their equivalent in individual companies and batteries) can attack or defend from one hex. If one is not stacking exploiting and attacking units in the same hex, don't stack with more than is needed. Obviously, there is no combat benefit to having more units stacked together than can participate in combat (all they do is make a better artillery, air or naval target).

The Blunt End of Combat (Defensive Operations)

Look to the Future: Try to plan and prepare defensive lines in advance of need (like around Carentan for the Americans), since one cannot dig in an enemy ZOC. If one must, defend forward while positions are prepared further to the rear. Then, fall back into them.

Terrain — Use it and Improve it: Plan to defend behind and between the flooded swampy ground along the rivers. Make the enemy wade through the mess before he's even in a position to attack friendly forces. Dig-in right at the edge of the swamps. Where there's little terrain advantage, defend in depth in lines of prepared positions two or three deep (the bunker positions east and west of Cherbourg [not south] are fair examples of defense in depth).

Spade Work: Whenever a unit is idle, rested and not in an enemy ZOC, it should be digging. Engineers are particularly useful for their ability to fortify positions. Keep a close eye on the digging unit's fatigue and rest them whenever the fatigue level dips below 6. Otherwise, keep them turnin' dirt. Use low morale units (remember the "Nasty Ninetieth?") to dig prepared positions for artillery and future higher morale defenders.

Always try to keep occupied field fortifications (dug-in and fortified positions) with another unit when they are vacated by a previous tenant (why waste all that work?).

Best Defense is no Offense: Sometimes, the best defense (against the AI, at least) is to keep the potential attacking odds at less than 2:1 (the AI won't knowingly attack at odds lower than this).

The Sucker Punch: The defender should deliberately set up a situation that encourages the enemy to attack a certain hex in a given turn *after* he has positioned units immediately behind the vulnerable unit(s) (the units positioned behind need to be of mobility equal to or greater than the attacker's units) and given them orders to move into the threatened hex that turn. In this way, the enemy will plan his assault at favorable odds, but friendly unit(s) will move in *before* combat, making the odds turn drastically away from the attacker (ruining his plan and disrupting his assaulting units). Note that this technique does require some luck, so it should not be used as one's main defense.

CPU CRT

The Missing Link: The only important element of documentation missing in *Utah Beach* is a basic combat odds chart (the ol' CRT in boardgamer parlance). A CRT is useful in estimating the chances of success for any single attack (this is especially important to the Ger-

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man who must be a risk taker to win big). Keith Zabalaoui, one of the designers, readily agreed to provide the basic probabilities for the simplest potential outcomes given pure integer odds. The results are listed below.

Table A — Combat Result Table

Odds:	1:5	1:4	1:3	1:2	1:1	2:1	3:1	4:1	5:1	6:1	7:1	8:1	9:1
Result:													
D>A	0	8	16	25	33	42	50	58	67	75	84	92	100
A>D	100	92	84	75	67	58	50	42	33	25	16	8	0

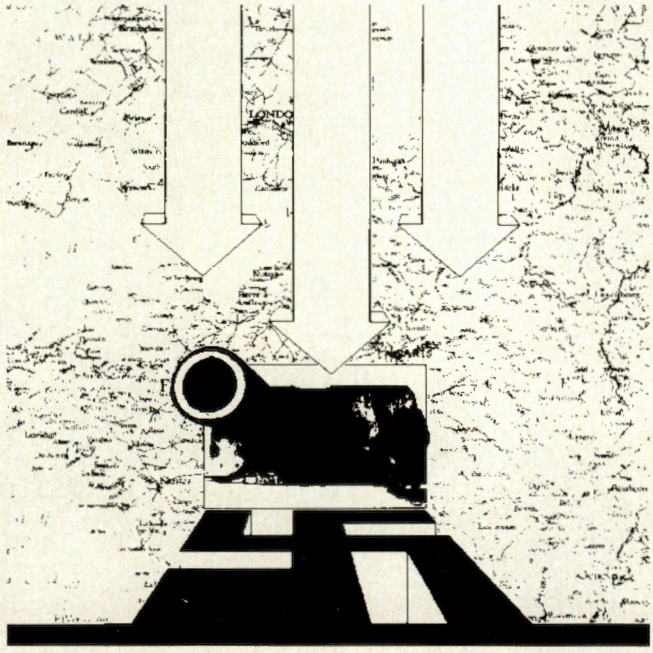
Notes:

1. Results are in terms of the probability that the defender's loss factor (not actual losses) will be greater than the attacker's (DA) and vice-versa (AD) at the given integer odds.

2. The probability of retreating is the same as having a higher (or lower) loss factor. Retreats are generally one hex, except at odds of 7:1 or greater.

3. The 50/50 point for assault-mode attacks (as illustrated above) is at 3:1 odds. The 50/50 point for probe attacks (generally, lower loss factors than for assaults) is at 4.8:1 odds. The 50/50 point for All-Out Assaults (generally higher loss factors) is at 1.2:1 odds.

4. Remember that these numbers represent the probability of the event occurring in some magnitude (i.e. Def retrt - the probability at those odds that the defender is forced to retreat. The actual distance could be one, two or three hexes). More than one result is possible in a given combat and so the column totals normally exceed 100%.



The Big Picture (Logistics)

Like Patton said, "I don't know what logistics is, but if Bradley's got it, I want some too." Believe this gamer, so do you! Everyone knows that unit combat effectiveness drives the final odds in individual combats and ultimately, the collective campaign results, but not enough realize that there are two major contributors to this performance: supply and morale.

Utah Beach quite realistically (to Three Sixty's credit) makes the player/commander very conscious of logistics, just as the real Corps and Army Commanders were then and the successful ones are today. Plan on *personally* managing supplies. Confirm or reallocate supply levels each 6:00 AM turn for each Div HQ depending on the division's mission and the over-all supply tonnage available. Know the effects of supply on individual unit attack and defense strengths when deciding what supply level to allocate to an HQ.

Table B - Supply Effects on Combat Strength

TYPE OF SUPPLY	Attack	General	Defensive	Minimal	None
ATTACK STRENGTH EFFECT	1.5	1	.5	.25*	.25@
DEFENSE STRENGTH EFFECT	1.5+	1	1*	.5+	.5+@@

**x.5 for armored units (tank, TD, mech recon)*
+x1 vs pure artillery, air or naval strikes
@x.25 for artillery

Inevitably, in the generation of combat power at the critical point, Peter gets robbed to pay Paul (Sorry Bub, we all wish we could be in attack supply all the time, but that ain't the way it works, in peace or war). In order to achieve a given supply state for a certain HQ, some battalions which are deemed non-essential to accomplishing the division's mission for that day (i.e. artillery, especially towed, in a pursuit situation) might have to be detached to an HQ at a lower supply state. Each type of battalion requires a different amount of supply for each different supply state. Although the requirements vary with unit strength, some general information is useful in determining the number of battalions that can be supported at a higher supply state (i.e. 90 Div HQ in phases 2 and 3 of the campaign plan below) given a total available tonnage.

Table C - Daily U.S. Tonnage Requirements by Supply State and Type of Battalion. *(for full strength units, plus or minus a few tons)*

TYPE BATTALION:	SUPPLY STATE:			
	Attack	General	Defensive	Minimal
Airborne Infantry	41	28	15	4
Glider Infantry	47	32	18	5
Regular Infantry	47	32	18	5
Armor (Tnk, TD)	87	55	30	9
Reconnaissance	107	67	37	10
SP Artillery	131	70	35	10
Motorized Artillery	88	47	23	6
(data for 105mm, values greater for larger caliber guns/howitzers)				
Semi-Motorized Engineers	52	36	21	7

"Laudace, Laudace, Tojours Laudace" (Morale)

Let the Good Times Roll: Morale is a weighted average of all units involved in a combat, including artillery. The benefits of having a superior composite morale are applied directly to the odds ratio. It's important to know what's good for morale (bring in those dancing girls!) and bad for morale (Jeez, I haven't had a break from this digging for 48 hours!). Field fortifications and bunkers have the greatest positive impact on a unit's morale while fatigue and disruption have potentially the greatest negative effect on how the boys are feeling about themselves and things in general.

Table D - Morale Modifications

MODIFIER	Dug-in	Forti-fied	In Bunker /Fortress	Fatigue /Disrup-tion >6	Fatigue /Disrup-tion >12	Attack Supply	No Supply
AFFECT ON MORALE	+1	+2	+3	-1	-2	+1	-1

Steady Boys: Naval and air morale remain constant throughout the game. Naval morale is 7, while Fighter Bomber morale is 6 and Light Bomber morale is 4.

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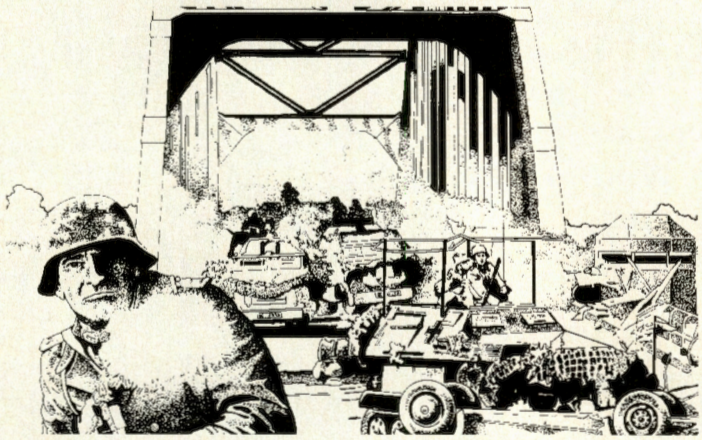
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units move out of a stack first (but maybe not as far, watch an HQ and infantry mix). The stacking limit, for units using strategic movement, is one unit per hex and all units using the same path move only as fast as the slowest unit ahead of them. So, be certain that slower units (those which do not go as far in one turn) don't delay the faster ones, particularly along heavily traveled roads. Traffic management and congestion avoidance are staff functions which the gamer has to pay careful personal attention to.

Note: Don't use strategic movement into enemy ZOCs, even when occupied by friendly units, unless the U.S. forces develop a penchant for being ambushed.



Within the same turn, clear enemy controlled terrain with units by using tactical movement and follow them with units in strategic movement. This will save the units using strategic movement the fatigue of moving through "Indian Country" in long, vulnerable, indefensible, administrative, fear-inducing columns.

Between the Hedgegrows: Plan tactical moves by uncommitted units in second echelons to exploit anticipated retreats by enemy units in nearby combats. Leapfrog attacking and exploiting units, alternating the roles of each to maintain the momentum of the attack (a single defending unit "rolled" like this over several turns loses all its vinegar).

The Poor Bloody Infantry: Remember that infantry movement is unaffected by the division's supply status and thus, infantry units in low supply states are ideal for "liberating" uncontested enemy-controlled real estate (one of the few things the "Nasty Ninetieth" units can handle).

What about those Caissons anyway?: Plan artillery movement carefully so as not to waste ready time. The best time to move is during the first night turn when artillery effectiveness is reduced and one can reserve the second night turn as time to rest and reestablish the fire support net.

In General

No Rest for the Weary: Use every turn for unit activities *except* the second night turn. During the second night turn is the only time one should plan to rest the majority of units, though individual units may need to be rested or undisrupted over several turns (like armored units involved in night attacks against stiff resistance, in the bocage, on a cloudy, moonless night).

Dem Bleepin' Hexes: Try to use the hex grid to advantage. Surround enemy units in three non-adjacent hexes before attacking, that way if he only retreats a single hex, two units will still have him surrounded. Defend in line with the grain of the hex pattern to concentrate defenses and avoid dispersion.

Ya Gotta 'Ave A Plan

The VII Corps commander has three objectives: Capture Cherbourg, clear the rest of the peninsula, and kill Germans, in that order. Not surprisingly, the indirect approach works well, here. The best way to accomplish the first objective is to rapidly achieve the latter two. Below is a broad outline for a multi-phased campaign plan that does just that.

Air Forces — 9th Air Force: Assign the unit to moderate interdiction and tactical ground support against located enemy Div HQs whenever practical. Generally, concentrate ground support into eight hours of the best weather each day.

Naval Forces — All ships: Initially, interdict movement of enemy units moving S out of Carentan and along the coast toward the beachhead. Once enemy units have closed from the N, battleships and cruisers should monitor and support friendly ground forces in close fighting (i.e. adjacent hex combat and independent strikes where odds of 1:1 are assured). Light cruisers and destroyers should concentrate on bombardment of enemy units in bunkers (odds 1:1) to fatigue those units for eventual assault by friendly ground units, assist in the close fight as necessary.



Ground Forces:

Phase 1

101st — Take Carentan, screen/isolate 6FJ (clear the village 5km W-NW of Carentan and use the resulting clear road net to move units behind 6th Fallschirmjaeger into Carentan).

82nd — Defend along river line (Merderet River) SW, W and NW of St. Mere Eglise.

4th — Defend from 82nd's flank to the coast.

VII Corps — Defend beaches from enemy air attack.

Phase 2

101st — Eliminate resistance via Carentan. Extend southern Corps defensive line out to La Haye du Puits.

90th — Detach organic infantry and artillery battalions to VII Corps and 101st Div, attach Corps armor/TD, artillery and engineer battalions, 101st AT batteries and two regiments (strengthened by replacements) of airborne infantry (notice how all these units are mobile or elite parachute infantry), cross N over the Douve River (coming up between St. Saveur le Vicompte and St. Mere Eglise) immediately W of the Merderet. Envelop enemy from the rear attacking Division HQs and artillery in that order. End with all but Cherbourg German forces cut off and pinned against the defending 82nd and 4th Divisions.

82nd — Defend (Merderet) river line. Assist 90th Div where possible. Be prepared to detach two airborne infantry regiments (strengthened with replacements) to 90th Div.

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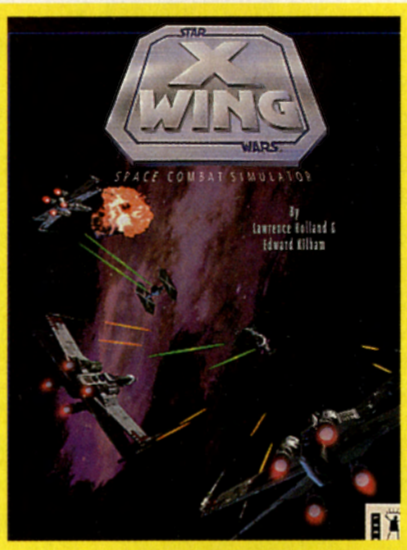
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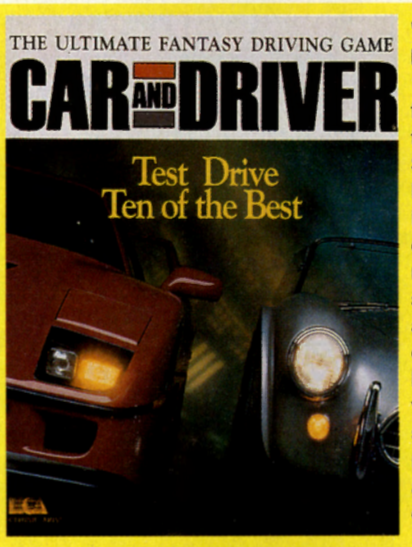
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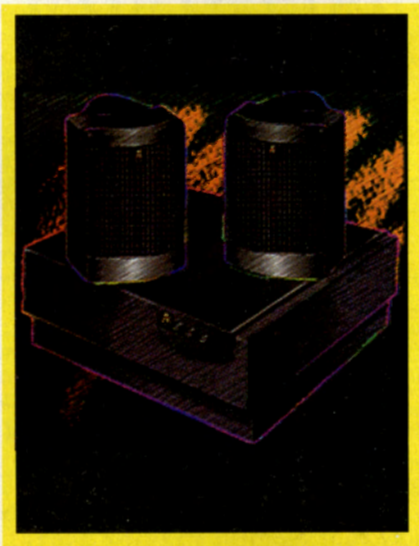
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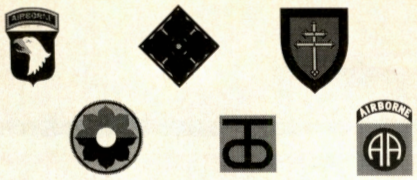
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4th — Defend from 82nd's flank to the coast. Assist 90th Div where possible.

VII Corps — Defend beaches from enemy air attack.

Phase 3

9th — Relieve 101st of defense of Carentan. Orient S, defend from S of Carentan W to (Douve tributary) river line and 101st flank (use attached 90th Div battalions to dig defensive positions).

101st — Orient S. Defend from La Haye du Puits E to 9th Div.

90th — Pursue N along coast and destroy or isolate any elements not entrapped.

82nd — Detach units to 4th Div as necessary. Clear enemy terrain out to Carteret.

79th — Move to area W Cherbourg.

4th — Reduce and destroy remaining resistance.

VII Corps — Defend beaches from enemy air attack.

Phase 4

9th — Defend S of Carentan to 101st.

101st — Defend W from 9th Div to 82nd Div. Hold La Haye du Puits.

82nd — Move S and defend from flank 101st to W coast of peninsula.

79th — Close on Cherbourg from the W. Take W Cherbourg.

4th — Close on Cherbourg from the S. Take S Cherbourg.

90th — Close on Cherbourg from the E. Take E Cherbourg.

VII Corps — Defend beaches from enemy air attack. Begin the elimination of isolated enemy units holding out in bunkers.

Phase 5

9th — Defend S of Carentan to 101st.

101st — Defend W from 9th Div to 82nd Div. Hold La Haye du Puits.

82nd — Defend from flank 101st to W coast of peninsula. Envelop enemy flank.

4th — Redeploy from Cherbourg to vic 82nd. Be prepared to detach Div Arty to 79th for not more than a day. Be prepared to attach airborne infantry from 90th for next phase.

90th — Eliminate resistance E of Cherbourg.

79th — Complete capture of Cherbourg. Eliminate resistance W of Cherbourg.

VII Corps — Defend beaches from enemy air attack.

Phase 6

All units — Clear the peninsula of enemy units.

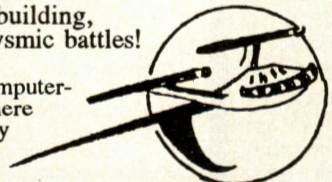
Who knows? The campaign might even be over by 27 June!

Of course there are any number of alternatives and variations that might work just as well. Experiment and see. Try waiting and building up the bridgehead and then break out. Try using all air power for ground support or vice versa. CGW

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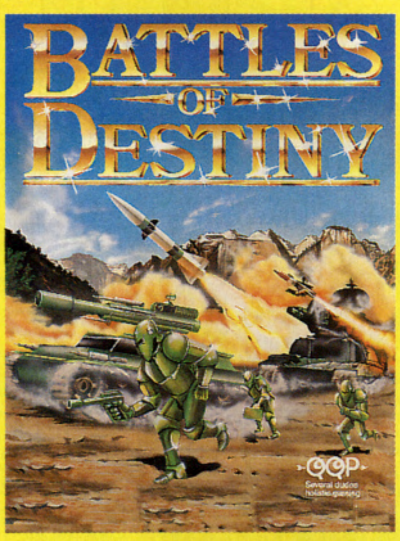
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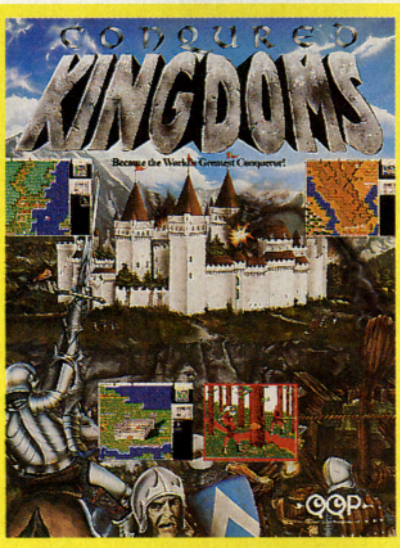
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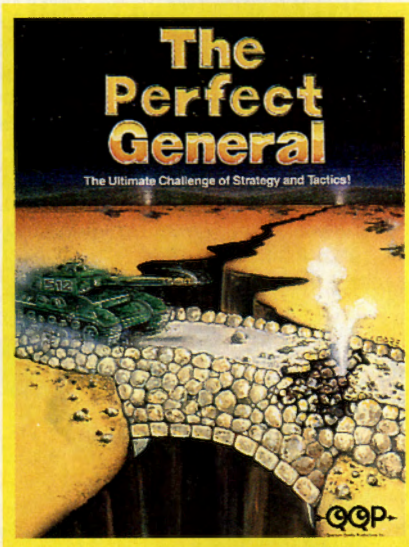
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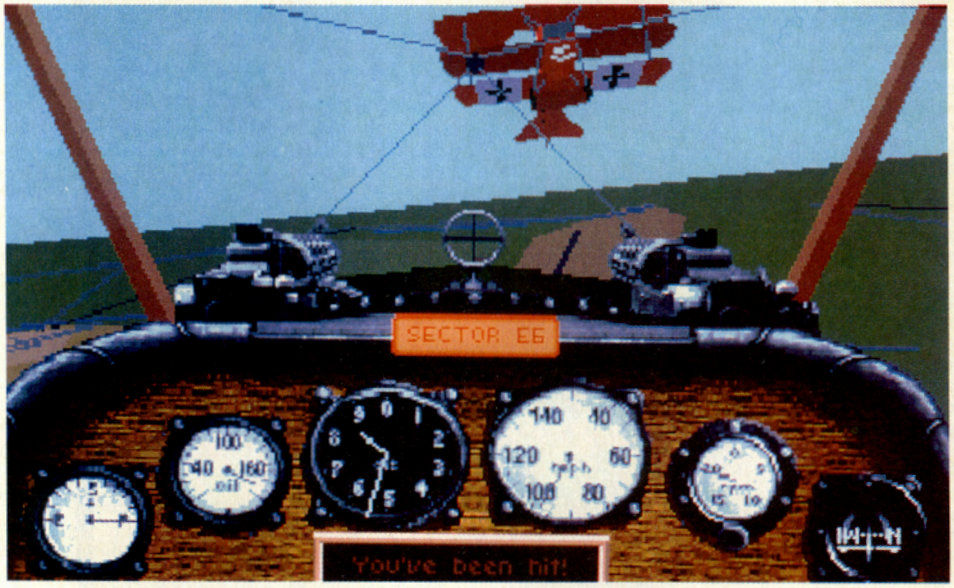
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Multi-Player Red Baron

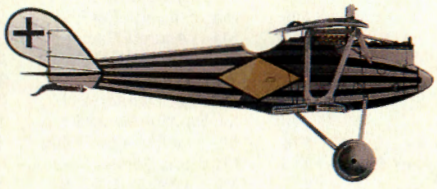
Red Baron on TSN

by Timothy L. Trimble



This one's for every gamer that finds out that the artificial *Red Baron* does not like to do inside loops — for every gamer that feels like he has what it takes to shoot down the packaged version of *Red Baron* in every confrontation. In fact, this one's for those who feel so confident in their flying and combat skills that they think they are ready to go up against "real" pilots! Well, this is what I thought also, until I flew against real, living, breathing, *Red Baron* players on *TSN* (*The Sierra Network*).

TSN from **Sierra On-Line, Inc.**, is the provider of a multi-player version of their popular WWI flight combat product—**Dynamix**' *Red Baron*. **Sierra** has taken the graphics, flight dynamics, and thrills of their stand-alone *Red Baron* product and incorporated it into their high-quality gaming network. Two to four players can dogfight each other in bouts of 10 minutes or three crashes/kills, whichever comes first.



Exotically decorated Pfalz D.III

Climbing Into The Cockpit

Getting into the networked *Red Baron* is very intuitive. Players gain access to the game from the *Sierra Land* section of TSN (which is presented as a landscape with various buildings and gaming areas). With a mouse-controlled icon in the shape of feet the player selects the Arcade building and the next screen will show the inside of a coin-op arcade, replete with various game machines.

Other players within the arcade are displayed as featureless shadows hovering around their favorite machine. Naturally, it is not uncommon to find a large group of shadows prancing around the *Red Baron* game machine and, just as naturally, clicking on said game machine gives access to the game's waiting room.

From within the waiting room the player can talk to other would-be pilots who are awaiting their chance to enter the fray or join an open game of *Red Baron*. Three levels of difficulty are available: novice, normal and expert. At the novice level, flight characteristics make handling the aircraft fairly easy. Inside loops, steep turns and split-s turns can be performed without a significant reduction in altitude and loss of airspeed. Target aircraft have a larger hit area for damage as well. At the normal level, flight becomes a little more realistic and the hit area for target aircraft is a little smaller. Finally, at the expert level, handling of the aircraft is very realistic. Steep turns can result in a loss of altitude and airspeed, sun blindness and gun jams can occur and, as one would expect, the hit area for the target aircraft becomes more realistic.

In The Air

All players start their flight in a randomly assigned aircraft at the local airfield. There is a 30 second safety timer for giving pilots a chance to get off the ground and into the air. This usually results in a lot of low-level dogfighting that rarely gets higher than two thousand feet, which means that one really needs to keep an eye on your altitude. As noted above, each flight session lasts for ten minutes or until the player dies three times (three times a charm?). At the end of the flight session, the score and total number of kills is displayed.

There are also some constraints due to the technicalities of playing across a large multi-player network. One strange permutation relates to phantom bullets resulting from the time delay between each player's computer trying to talk to the other's. I encountered this on several occasions and was actually shot down after passing the target aircraft on a head-to-head run. ("Where did those bullets come from?") Another feature of the networking time delay is "warping" of the aircraft. This can be seen by watching the flight path of the aircraft as it is flying along smoothly and



The Fokker D.VII was the best overall fighter

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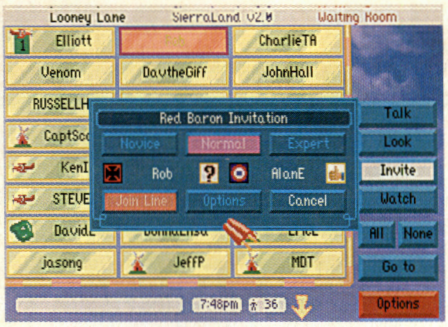
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then "warps" ahead all of a sudden. (Hiccup hyperdrive?) A **Sierra** representative informed me that part of the problem is due to the fact that the current speed of 2400 baud modems is not enough to keep up with the processing speed of the on-line computers used for the actual infrastructure of the network. 9600 baud modems will help to reduce the problem in the future, and some new programming for version2.0 of the TSN software has helped to reduce the problem as well.

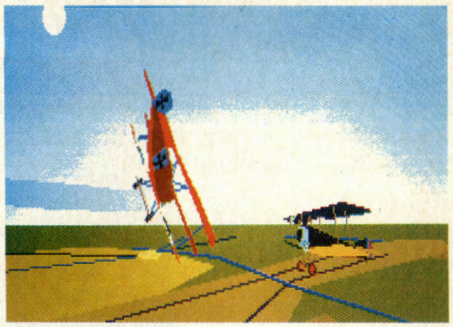
Speaking of *TSN Version 2.0*, it should be out by the time this column hits the newstand and will provide many new features to on-line *Red Baron*. Instead of being randomly *assigned* a plane, the player will be able to choose from a broader assortment of aircraft. The starting position can also be selected as a takeoff from the airport or start in the air (which means taking advantage of the extra altitude for some tricky maneuvers). Time of the flight can be set to the actual time, or the player can select the time of the flight, enabling one to have night or day flights regardless of when the network is actually accessed. Realistic weather will also be provided, allowing for some peek-a-boo action in the clouds. Finally, the menacing presence of zeppelins and spotter balloons will be available for shooting practice. The 2.0 software will still only support two to four players per session, but anyone who has tried the on-line game will find that this can be quite enough to handle in an intense dog fight.

Meanwhile, Back at the Aerodrome

The only problems that I encountered with the program was the loss of engine



Spad 13, the best French scout during the war.



sound after being hit by a bullet and some problems with calibration of the **Advanced Gravis** joystick. (The **Thrustmaster FCS** worked fine.) These problems should be resolved with the 2.0 version of the software. Overall, *Red Baron* on *TSN* is a real pleasure and a great opportunity for some sweaty palms. One of the best on-line gaming values yet.

Once again, this is Timothy L. Trimble, From the Cockpit, flying the skies high over *Sierra Land*. So, here's a warning for all gamers to keep their eyes open on your "six" for the "Timinator!"

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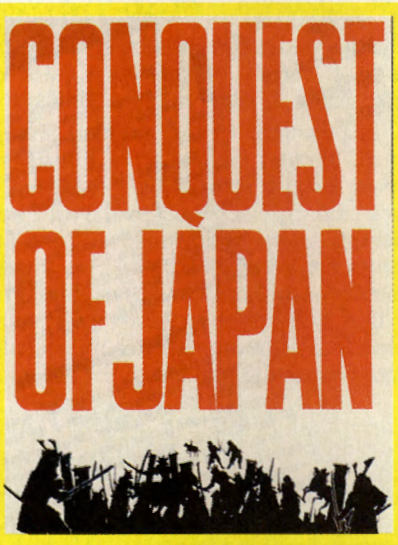
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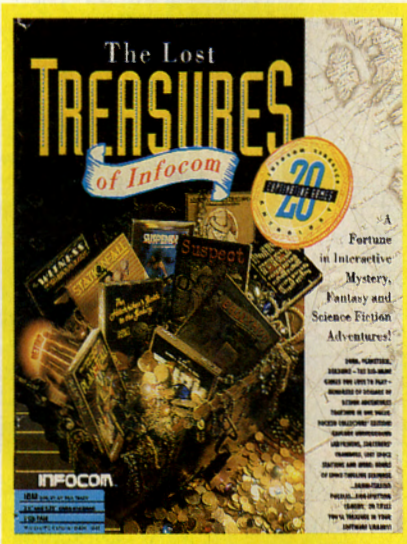
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Athens Wasn't Built In A Day, Either

(But in Caesar, Players Can Column as They See 'Em)

Sneak Previews are not designed to be reviews. They are feature articles based on "works in progress" that CGW's editors have deemed worthy of early coverage. These articles are not intended to provide the final word on a product, since we expect to publish appropriate review coverage when the game is finished.

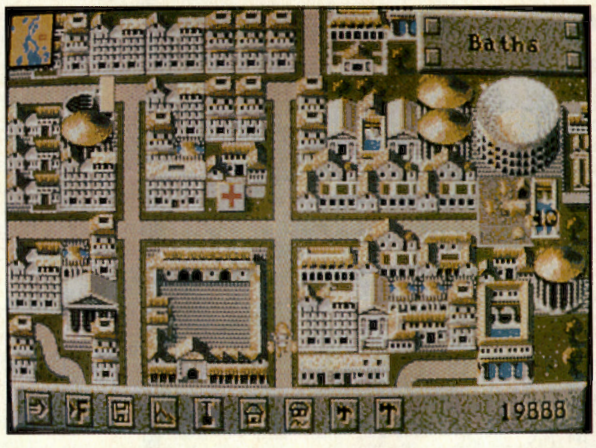
A Sneak Preview by
Alan "Pax my Gluteus Maximus!" Emrich

It appears that the saying "impressions of ancient Rome" is about to become a sly, double entendre. Software publisher **Impressions**, having settled over here in the States after several years in the UK, is about to erect a gaming monument as a tribute to the glory of the ancients. Their forum will be a computer game (of course), this one entitled *Caesar*.

The time is around the birth of Christ. The place is the entire Roman empire, in all its vast, expansive glory. In Impressions' *Caesar*, one does not earn their way up the ladder of imperium through conquest by adding new provinces to the empire. Rather, it is the player's task to consolidate Rome's vast territorial holdings and "civilize" the foreign provinces by improving their land and building fine capital cities, second in grandeur only to Rome itself.

The Ancient Art of *SimCity*

About 80% of a player's time, while attempting to rise to the rank of Caesar, will be spent covering a huge map full of undeveloped land with the civilizing architecture of Imperial Rome. In this regard, most of the game is played much like *SimCity* — in real time with annual announcements marking an advance in the calendar. Frankly, I found Impressions' graphic look (evolving from their *Merchant* and *Discovery* games) to work much better in practice in *Caesar*. In this game, having "little men moving around a dynamically changing map" was both pleasing and appropriate.



The urban graphics palette, to be sure, is quite dazzling, if for nothing else than its sheer variety. Not only do houses evolve from tents to shacks to apartments to luxury villas, but the "factories" stockpile goods to show their prosperity, marketplaces animate with considerable hubbub and the amphitheater occasionally fills with huge throngs (although I didn't notice if the Christians were playing the Lions that afternoon). While many of these building "tiles" can be translated directly to *SimCity*'s residential, industrial and commercial zones, *Caesar* scores well with me for the wide variety of sites from which players can choose for construction. It is definitely a builder's banquet.

While the temples (anachronistically bearing a cross icon on the "select" button), hospitals, prefectures and amphitheaters translate almost directly to *SimCity*'s churches, hospitals, police stations and stadiums, *Caesar* offers the urban planner of yesteryear considerably more options. Schools, oracles, theaters and hippodromes are all considerations for the Imperial Governor as city planner for, not only must one's urban dwellers be kept content (or they will literally take to the streets and riot — I love these animations!), they must also be educated. The player's task is, after all, to *civilize* the provinces.

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Prosperity

One of the most interesting features that affects property values (yes, there are little mini-maps a la *SimCity* for crime, prosperity, et al) is the proximity of residents to a forum. These social centers come in a wide variety of sizes and costs, each offering a wider range influence over its adjoining neighborhoods. It is the essential center to every major city and suburb thereof. No ancient urban planner would open up a new sub-division without first carefully considering where its forum will go, and making sure that all roads lead to it. As an added feature, road squares can become their own little mini-forums when a player opts to convert them to plaza squares. Frankly, I'm not sure of the exact impact of this conversion yet (or of a lot of these different tiles which one can build, truth to tell), but I'm having a great time building them and trying to sort it all out!

What struck me is the historical feel of ancient urban sprawl. Ancient cities seemed to be built willy-nilly when one studies their ruins, apparently without a lot of thought to such bureaucratic

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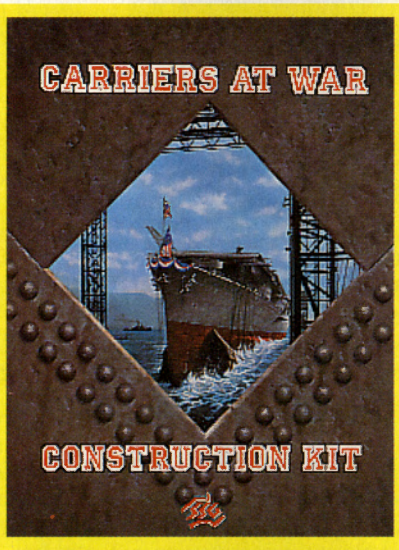
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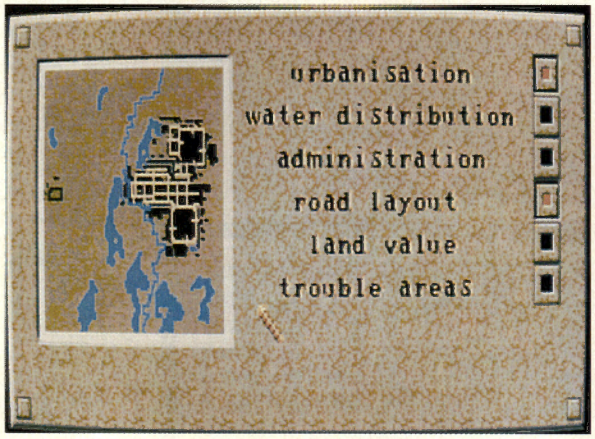
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confinements as zoning. In *Caesar*, because of the widely varying sizes of the building tiles and their needed access to roads, cities will be difficult to build neatly. Anal retentive types (like yours truly) will have to live without perfectly gridded city blocks and nice cross-shaped intersections. "Trivia" (literally, three roads meeting or, in game terms, a "T" intersection) is the builder's word for the day.

Water is Power

Where *SimCity* forced players to maintain a power grid, *Caesar* concentrates on the importance of the urban water supply for its prosperity and growth. Players create reservoirs on rivers or lakes, run pipes in (like *SimCity*'s power lines) and connect them to public fountains. This creates a radius around both the reservoir and fountains for urban growth. One can also dig wells where no water supply is handy, but their supply radius is very small.

Not only is having a nearby fountain important to urban dwellers, but one must also build public baths to keep the population content and the laboring backs of society well scrubbed. In *Caesar*, infrastructure is the name of the game.



There is one other source of power in the provincial capitals which players will design: military power. Cities can also provide barracks from which soldiers will begin to patrol the streets, suppressing riots and engaging any rampaging barbarians that might be walking through the plaza (Oh, did I forget to mention the barbarians? Silly me!). To help ward off outside attack, cities can also erect walls, gates and towers. As each new section of the town goes up, it may be wise to delineate its perimeter with these fortifications so that construction can be undertaken in relative security.

Those Industrious Ancients

Behind all the city building, a complex economic engine is running in the background. In order to keep the marketplaces flourishing and the people employed, one must build from a myriad of manufacturing centers. These ancient factories deal in either glass, tin, copper, wine or a variety of other such industries. Different provinces offer different inherent economic opportunities. For example, a province might be in excellent wine country, so the player should build a winery in the city. However, build too many of them, and the market becomes "saturated" (hic), which could lead to economic ruin (and rising public drunkenness). Balance in one's factory construction, therefore, is another key to prosperity.

These factories, however, need their own special area built nearby to "supply" them, and that is a heavy industry site. These huge tiles exist to supply the raw materials which the various industries convert to marketable goods. It is a simple arrangement for the players to deal with, but the depth of the economic model adds a remarkable game play element to *Caesar* and is a fascinating sub-game in its own right.

Beyond The City Walls

When one isn't dealing with the exciting elements of urban planning (presumably while waiting for next year's tax harvest to come in), *Caesar* telescopes up to a larger map on which players must continue to build. This is the provincial map, where the player's capital city, being so meticulously labored over, takes up two glorious squares. There will also be a sprinkling of other small towns in the province and a mix of various untamed terrain features as well. It is here where more strategic planning can be made and greater prosperity and security obtained.

For example, one would do well to build a Roman highway from their provincial capital to the map edge and, thus, connect it with the rest of the empire. Provincial roads can also be built which will connect the capital to the towns (at which time prosperity through increased trade really begins to take off).

It is at the provincial level, however, where the barbarians should be met and the battles fought. Yes, players can recruit legions by constructing provincial outposts at which to station said legions, then march the soldiers off to face the barbarians in the plains and forest in an attempt to defeat them. If barbarians are left alone, it seems that word has a way of getting back to their tribal lands that the player's province is easy pickings, for they seem to have a nasty tendency to multiply unless they are engaged swiftly and defeated soundly in battle.

Where *SimCity* had earthquakes, floods, plane crashes and the Havana Gila (monster), the barbarians in *Caesar* can easily match them and, if unchecked, surpass them, disaster for disaster. While battles are resolved in *Caesar* using an abstract "chit pick" method for simulated battlefield tactics, I am told that any battles generated in *Caesar* may be fought out in Impressions' upcoming *Cohort II*, with a tactical miniatures feel to them. Thus, *Caesar* will be something of a scenario building engine for that game.

When the barbarians penetrate one's strategic defenses on the provincial map, they will come home to roost on the city map. Here, the barracks one had the foresight to build near the outskirts of the city will provide the soldiers necessary to greet the unwelcome guests before they pillage and sack too much of the city.

Grander Designs

Caesar is a grand campaign game in every sense. There are many, many provinces in the Roman Empire and players will have to placate and develop a good number of them on their way up through the Imperial ranks in order to rise to the top. Every city built and province developed by the player is rated on four different levels: prosperity, security, culture, and "Empire" (tribute to the Imperial treasury — good old tax farming, which is a constant drain on a city's budget). Players have their own personal salary and prestige levels which they must also be concerned with, in addition to tweaking slave and soldier recruitment levels and incentives.

Although inputting one's decisions is easy via the mouse (would that be the Via Rodentia?), making those decisions can border on mind-boggling when first learning *Caesar*. Information can be obtained by moving to the forum screen, where a room full of advisors are perpetually on duty to offer counsel and receive orders. Clicking on the political advisor, for example, will show a graph of four rising columns representing each of the player's four goals of development. The centurion, if asked, will give the status of the troops, their pay and current conscription levels. Other advisors will give reports on the treasury, economy, business, administration and slaves.

Ah, yes, slaves! They must be thought of as the generic labor pool which supports the entire infrastructure. They are assigned to such things as fire prevention, road maintenance and keeping up the provincial improvements. Because of the economic model, however, one is required to recruit "slaves" through higher wages

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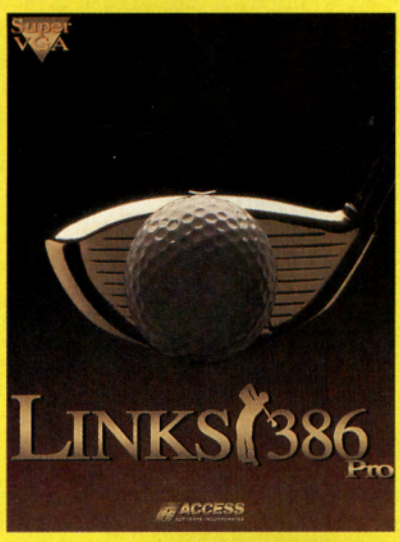
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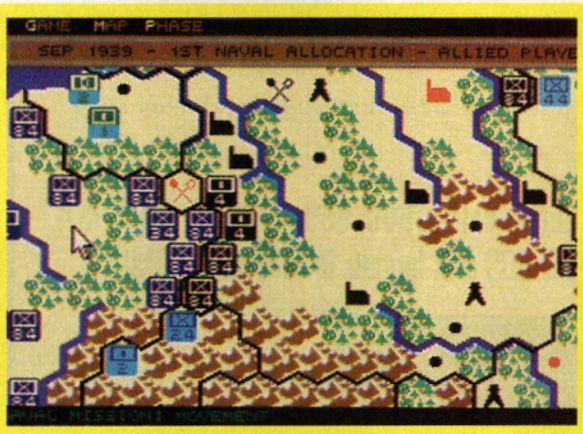
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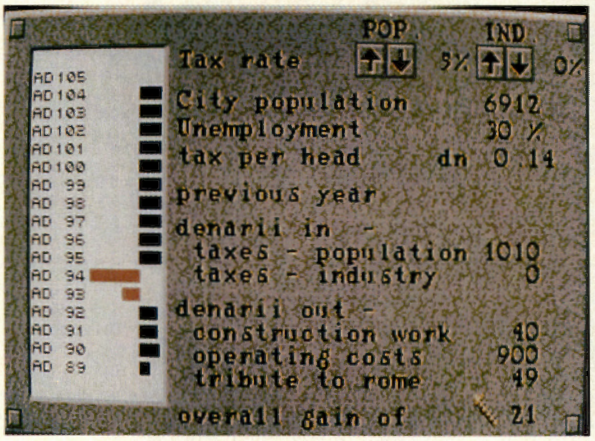
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rather than capture them through conquest. So, they would probably be better thought of as a labor pool rather than slaves in the historical sense.

Taxing Matters

As in *SimCity*, solvency can become quite a tightrope act. Every year, one has a lot of fixed expenses to pay. The most important one, of course, is the player's own personal salary (which, like Congress, one can set for themselves). Then, there is the annual tribute to those parasites in Rome. Gee, for all the money they get, it would only seem fair that they support the legions — but NOOOOOO! Therefore, the soldiers are lined up with their hands out (just ahead of the slaves) before the privy purse each January.



Taxing was a little different in ancient times. Generally, the taxes were around five percent in those days (which is probably why the Roman Empire lasted so long) and players can set separate tax levels for the people and for industry. While the tax/prosperity ratio doesn't seem as sensitive in its interrelation as it is in *SimCity*, players trained on that game will be reticent to raise taxes very much by sheer force of habit.

Et Tu, Brutus?

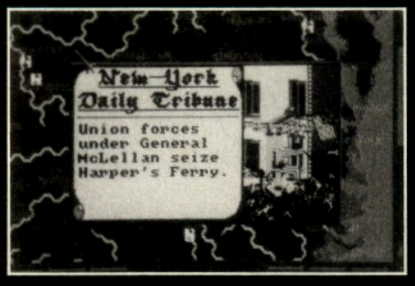
I found that *Caesar's* greatest strength, its fast paced play and amazing diversity in "building tiles" to choose from, to be its biggest handicap. Being initially overwhelmed with choices (and the vagaries in the early pre-documentation provided), it took quite a few trial-and-error attempts to erect a city worth its salt (and my salary, salary coming from the Latin 'salari,' meaning salt). The "mini-maps" to check property values are one thing, but knowing which buildings are really modifying what factors (and to what degree, within what radius, what is modifying that new building, etc., etc.) in the equation will take considerably more play from this previewer to figure out. *Caesar*'s easily learned mechanics provides a simple, flat learning curve but I, for one, rapidly hit an information ceiling that could only be moved past through a lot of experimentation.

Final Counsel

The thing I always wished of *SimCity* was that it had more "game" to it, an overall goal as part of a larger world. *Caesar* has that "campaign game" element to it as players build up one province and get promoted to the next (although one will find that they have an amazingly long life span and may obtain the rank of Caesar when they are well over 100 years old). It is with this campaign game element that *Caesar* particularly earns laurels with me.

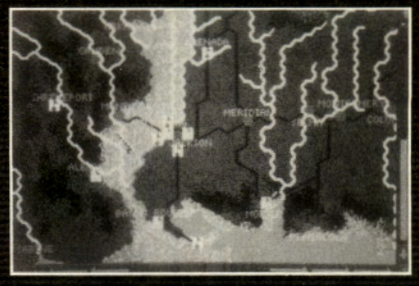
Finally, just as the Romans borrowed much of their "intellectual property" from the Greeks, so *Caesar* borrows many of its clever elements from other games, most notably *SimCity*. Like the Romans, too, I believe that *Caesar* will find a way of making a lasting tribute — this time to "Sim"-type games. Who knows? *Caesar* just might become **Impressions**' Circus Maximus, the huge accomplishment that looms over all their games. We'll be in our box seats watching with great interest. CGW

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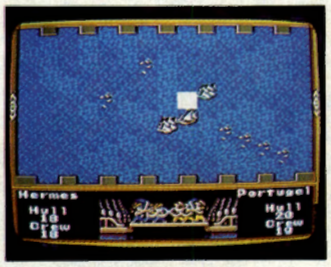
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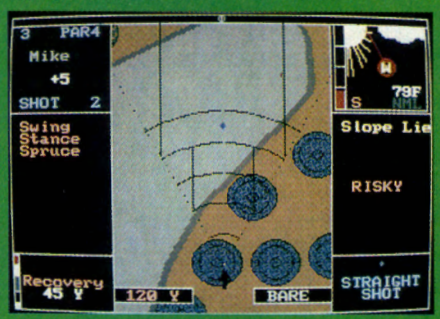
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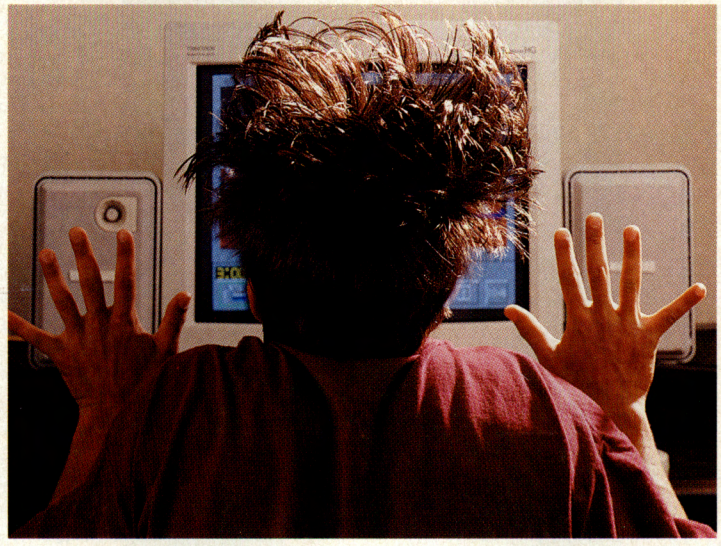
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PALADIN II: Omnitrend's tactical combat/adventuring system that had its start with *Breach* has found new life under a new publishing partnership. The player takes on the role of Brandon, a young would-be paladin who must succeed in 20 adventure scenarios to prove himself worthy of knighthood. As in *Breach* and the first *Paladin*, players command a band of characters that must fight over a wide variety of terrain and against a mixed assortment of villains. This time, as in the original *Paladin*, the action takes place in a fantasy environment. The best thing about the Omnitrend games in the *Breach* thread is their inclusion of a scenario builder that allows players to design their own adventures and share them with others. If this game follows the pattern of its predecessors, one can expect custom scenarios to start popping up on the major networks — providing the enthusiast with a huge supply of scenarios created by fellow hobbyists. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #4.

Konami
Buffalo Grove, IL
(708) 215-5111

NFL VIDEO PRO FOOTBALL: Anyone who has ever envied those sportscasters who sit at their desks at Sports Central, preparing for their half time reports while surrounded by monitor after monitor of constant football action, should love this game. Not only can one simultaneously view digitized footage of all 14 NFL games in progress on any given weekend, but one can jump in and coach any of those games, at will. Each of the 28 teams has its own playbook that is supposed to reflect the actual playing style of that team. The game is loaded with flash—good play-calling is rewarded with film footage of intense gridiron action and sound— and it has a

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Circle Reader Service #53

decent statistical package. The only drawback is that the size of the product did not allow for all the footage to be consistent with every possible formation (i.e. no shotgun formation). While this may not be the game for the most serious of football strategist, it is certainly tailor-made for the most fanatical. IBM ($79.95). Circle Reader Service #5.

Maxis
Orinda, CA
(510) 254-9700

A-TRAIN CONSTRUCTION SET: Rail entrepreneurs tired of being railroaded by the constraints of the original program can re-create the world of *A-Train* in their own image, placing hills, fields, houses, water, apartments, stadiums, skyscrapers, trains and track. It will not, however, let players edit or redesign trains, though it does allow more flexibility in scheduling their routes. A new creative accounting feature will enable one to add 900 million dollars to his or her development budget, allowing unlimited development, though the basic economic model is off limits as far as player tinkering is concerned. IBM ($34.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

MicroProse
Hunt Valley, MD
(410) 771-0440

ANCIENT ART OF WAR IN THE SKIES: Though designed in the spirit of the strategy-intensive *Ancient Art of War* line, this game is definitely the most action-oriented game to bear the AAW name. Players direct fighters and bombers in the air war over the battlelines of WWI. As players make successful bomber attacks on critical enemy structures and lines, the war on the ground will advance or collapse to reflect their efforts; the object being to advance the line such that enemy airfields and plane factories are captured. Dogfights are hot and fast action sequences, and the bombing runs are exercises in strategy and timing, viewed from the bomb bay door. As in the previous AAW games, *Skies* offers dozens of scenarios to challenge the gamer's action gaming savvy and, to a lesser extent, strategic guile, and features a scenario editor which allows one to create their own airborne madness. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #7.

Microsoft
Redmond, WA
(206) 454-2030

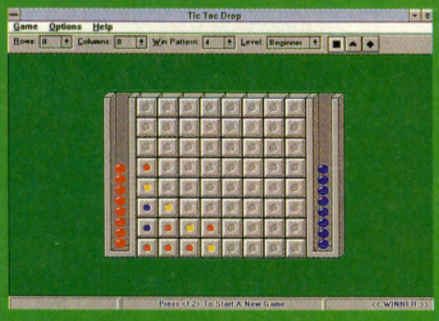
ENTERTAINMENT PACK 4: The score should probably read: "Pack 4, Games 7." This latest *Entertainment Pack* includes decent *Chess* and *Blackjack* games (with the usual tutorials, tips and analysis — although most of these features has been better presented in



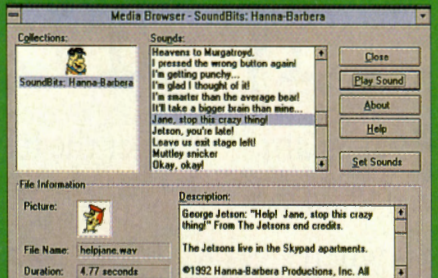
A-Train Construction Set



Ancient Art of War in the Skies



Entertainment Pack 4



Soundbits



Star Legions

games dealing exclusively with the subject. Four challenging mind game/puzzles include *Chip's Challenge* (formerly published by **Epyx**), *Go Figure!* (a math mind bender where the numbers and math symbols must be properly arranged to get the desired result), *JezzBell* (where moving balls must be trapped in ever smaller confines before they strike the player's unfinished walls) and *Maxwell's Maniac* (where trying to get the bouncing balls to one side of the maze by manipulating a single gate would try the patience of Job). Finally, the old English sea game, *Tic Tac Drop* makes a computer gaming appearance. IBM with Windows. Circle Reader Service #8.

SOUNDBITS: Three glorious sets have found their way into being installed at our offices, much to the amusement (and annoyance) of the staff. *SoundBits* adds an audio touch to the operation of Windows applications. For example, when first beginning a Windows session, one might hear Fred Flintstone yell "Yabba dabba doo!" When the window is enlarged to full screen size, Humphrey Bogart will utter "This won't do any good" (from *The Maltese Falcon*). The three different sets (each sold separately) include musical sounds from around the world, classic cartoons from Hanna-Barbera and classic Hollywood movies (including, among others, *The Wizard of Oz, A Day at the Races* and *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*). While not the great distraction in time that games are, adding a little spice to one's ears is sure to cause some spontaneous smiles. IBM with Windows 3.1 ($39.95 each). Circle Reader Service #9.

Mindcraft
Torrance, CA
(800) 525-4933

STAR LEGIONS: Once upon a time in a galaxy far too similar to ours, there was a popular sequel (*Star Fleet II*) to a best selling game (*Star Fleet I*). The best-selling game featured starship-to-starship combat in outer space and the sequel was supposed to allow captains to those very same starships to be able to conquer planets with surface invasions. Unfortunately, gamers who played the sequel never seemed to be able to reach the point in the program where those battles could take place. The program for the invasion sequence was in the game, but a bug prevented gamers from accessing it. Now, the never-played-program has been revived, revamped and released as a game in its own right. Players will lead groups of Krellan shock troops against enemy cities, fighting in up to 8 different battle zones at one time. From their command

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post in the sky, players view the battles, direct their troops, order bombardment from orbiting battleships, and crush the pansy fighters for democracy, the United Galactic Alliance. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #10.

New World Computing
Hollywood, CA
(818) 999-0607

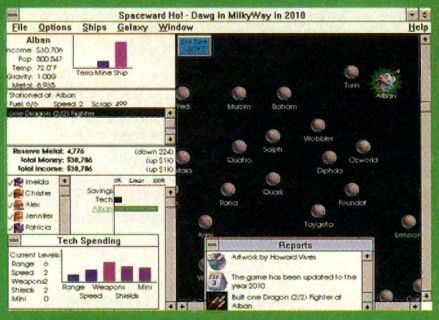
SPACEWARD, HO!: If ya'll be lookin' fer a multi-player shootout, then it jus might be time fer a Ho! down. This cute cowboys-in-space game of strategic conquest has made its way to the Windows environment by way of the Macintosh and designers **Delta Tao**. The game's style is adequately captured in calling it a tongue-in-cheek *Reach For The Stars* (the classic SSG space-strategy game). Games can be played by several people over a network, or by several people on the same computer ('hot-seating'), or less interestingly, by one human player against a group of simulated opponents. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #11.

Nova Logic
Tarzana, CA
(818) 774-0812

COMANCHE MAXIMUM OVERKILL: The early buzz on this advanced tactical combat helicopter simulation is that its graphics are overwhelming, but the flight model is far too easy. Our veteran helicopter pilot tells us that the new advanced helicopter (the RAH-66) should be very easy to fly and should actually end up being even more agile than the fllight model in this product. It may be the first time that "realism" has actually taken complexity away from game play. Missions take place in beautiful 3-D terrain calculated from U.S. Geological Survey maps. IBM ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #12.

Philips Interactive Media
Los Angeles, CA
(800) 845-7301

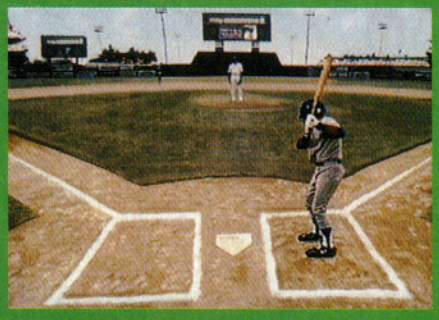
POWER HITTER: This is the first of two products for the Philips CD-I that might be of interest to gamers. Players choose a line-up of generic baseball players to go to bat against Dave Stewart, the stolid fastballer for the Oakland A's, in what is basically an interactive batting practice. Choosing basic baseball plays (swing away, bunt, steal, h & r) and the type of pitch to look for (fastball, curve, fork), players swing away at Stewart's in-coming heaters. Each event is illustrated with choppy video clips and commentary from a pair of announcers. For the seasoned sports gamer, the mass market approach may prove to be a bit too simplistic to please, but this sort of product may provide a gentle introduction to interactivity for unenlightened boob-tubers. CD-I ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #13.



Spaceward Ho!



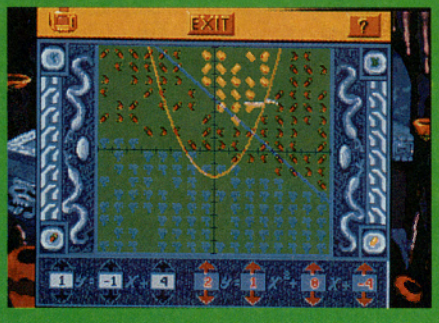
Comanche Maximum Overkill



Power Hitter



Tetris



The Island of Dr. Brain

TETRIS: The now classic abstract strategy game of Russian design has made the full circuit of gaming platforms, and has now landed on the Philips CD-I. The game remains the same—groups of blocks fall from the sky and the player turns and positions them to create "lines" across the screen—but the setting has not. Now, as players struggle to manage their ever increasing inventory of blocks, they will be treated to beautiful, partially animated natural scenery and the dreamy, placid music that is called "New Age" by some ("post-modern elevator" by others). The game options are nearly identical to the original, and the Philips hand held controller is a bit more awkward than keyboard input, but this is the same old addictive game, set in prettier surroundings. CD-I ($24.98). Circle Reader Service #14.

Sierra On-Line
Oakhurst, CA
(209) 683-4468

THE ISLAND OF DR. BRAIN: Young gamers who passed the initiation ordeal of Dr. Brain to become his full-fledge lab assistant in *Castle of Dr. Brain* will now have the chance to face new intellectual challenges in their first assignment on Dr. Brain's island. While searching for Dr. Brain's battery, gamers age 12 and up will be introduced to topics in math, science, art, and language. Though the original Brain Quest was rather lopsided in its content, stressing logic and computer topics, *Island* will exercise both cerebral hemispheres with its puzzles involving identifying famous works of art and classic literature in addition to those involving chemistry, math, and computer topics. The colorful, bizarre, and pun-filled setting of the game and its fun-oriented approach to typically dry academic subject matter raise Dr. Brain a 'head' above its competition in the edutainment market. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #15.

Sound Source Unlimited
2985 E. Hillcrest Dr. #A
Westlake Village, CA 91362
(805) 494-9996

AUDIOCLIPS: Not unlike the aforementioned *SoundBits*, these packages add amusing sounds to one's work in Windows. With a science fiction theme, the three packages we lent our ears to included *Star Trek* (from the original television series), *Star Trek the Next Generation: Encounter at Farpoint* (the pilot episode) and *2001: A Space Odys-*



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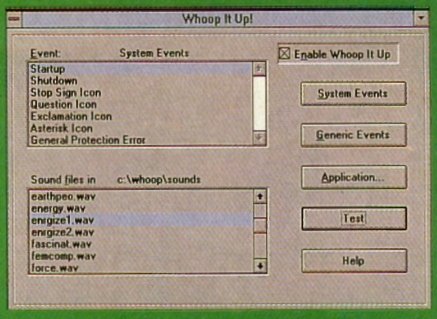
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Circle Reader Service #82

sey. Now, instead of that annoying old "beep," one's computer will speak with the voice of HAL and say "I'm sorry, Dave. I can't let you do that." Did someone just open up the Windows Control Panel? (Mr. Spock just said "Fascinating," which is how we know.) Opening a file might be greeted with the famous "woosh" of doors opening and closing on the original *Star Trek*. With plenty of sounds in each and every one user assignable to a specific Windows function, it's only *logical* that computer users who are fans of science fiction send a probe out for these. IBM with Windows 3.1, Mac ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #16.

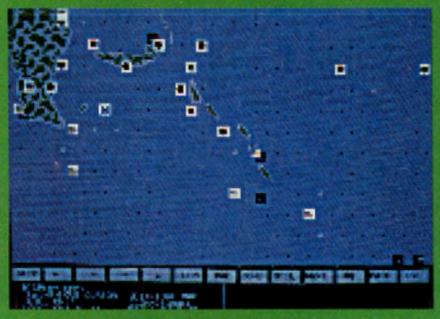
Strategic Simulations Inc.
Sunnyvale, CA
(408) 737-6800

GARY GRIGSBY'S PACIFIC WAR: It's about time that prolific wargame designer Gary Grigsby received title billing on one of his games. As implied by the title, this game is Gary's magnum opus, covering all of the WWII in the Pacific Theatre of Operations. It used a modified *Secont Front* system (which has undergone a major overhaul) with each turn representing a week of real time. Players order forces on an operational level from base to base. In addition, economics and logistics are all factored into the combat and movement results in a detailed but manageable fashion. The game even includes a special play-by-email feature for serious wargamers who want to campaign against other humans, turn by turn, via electronic messaging. Undoubtedly, this is the "biggest" wargame ever put on a single disk and hallmark game on the subject. IBM ($79.95). Circle Reader Service #17.

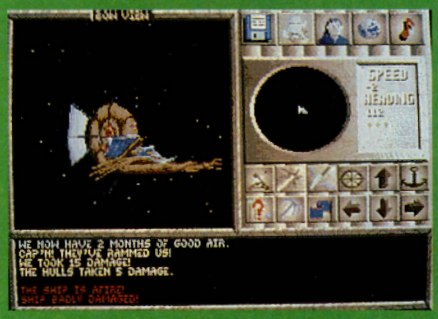
SPELLJAMMER: Argh, maties! Grab yer sabres, we be going planet-side. The first product in SSI's new *Spelljammer* series combines the atmospheric sailing vessels of Edgar Rice Burrough's *John Carter of Mars* with its romantic view of Age of Sail combat and melds it with the AD&D system to create an unusual setting for an RPG. Players command a mercenary crew of 12 in their planet by planet quest to find the slave base where the evil Neogi keeps his human cargo. While piloting through space, players will battle other ships broadsides to broadsides in a rough simulator-like environment, and may end up grappling with the enemy to engage in boarding combat using SSI's adaptation of the AD&D combat system. If players succeed in dethroning the evil slave king and destroying his flagship, they'll be in good stead for the upcoming gaming in the *Spelljammer* line. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #18.



Audio Clips



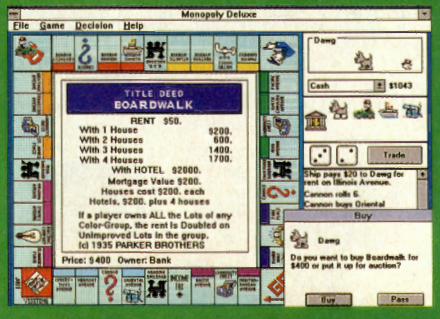
Gary Grigsby's Pacific War



Spelljammer



Megafortress Mega Pak



Monopoly Deluxe

Three-Sixty Pacific
Campbell, CA
(409) 776-2187

MEGAFORTRESS MEGA PAK: Despite folk wisdom, this package claims that you *can* teach an "Old Dog" new tricks. The package includes the original *Megafortress*, a simulation of an upgraded B-52 advanced bomber (the "I" variant, from Dale Brown's best-selling book, *Flight of the Old Dog*), the first add-on scenario, *Operation Sledgehammer,* and a brand new mission editor. After reading Dale Brown's book (included in the rather large box) players can play all the crew roles in this "be-all, do-all" game and fly the mission described in the book, in addition to several others. If the player masters all of the scenarios, he can then edit or create new scenarios with the mission editor, which is comprehensive in the editing function it supports. Set flight path, enemy radar, enemy guns, position of refueling tankers, and ordnance load-out. In what appears to be a rather poor marketing move, Three-Sixty will only be offering the editor as part of this new package — forcing owners of the original game to buy it again. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #19.

Virgin Games
Irvine, CA
(714) 833-8710

MONOPOLY DELUXE: Translations of boardgames into the computer gaming genre have ranged in quality from poor to excellent. Fortunately, *Monopoly Deluxe* is much closer to the latter. By adding clever animations and sounds, the solid computer players can really challenge the best player in the house. Allowing for multiple human and computer player combinations, the real "deluxe" element is are the many "home" rules that have been grafted on to the game over the generations. Each can be toggled on or off, including putting all the fines and taxes into Free Parking, adding the "maximum penalty" (i.e., no real estate dealings) while in jail and a host of others. Better than a ride on the Reading, *Monopoly Deluxe* is a hotel on The Boardwalk. *IBM both DOS & Windows ($49.99).* Circle Reader Service #20. CGW



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Letters from Paradise











Moebius Writes

Congratulations on your 100th Issue Anniversary! And what an issue. Though I recall spending many hours poring over the details of past issues, this 100th one has topped them all in terms of scope and content. The retrospective elements were filled with misty-eyed significance for me and your editorial views to the future were inspiring. My kudos to each member of your staff for what must have been a Herculean effort to put together this landmark publication.

I want to personally acknowledge the significant contribution which *CGW* has made to the computer gaming industry over the years. Your tireless efforts to bring timely and succinct news and views to the community of computer game users and developers is to be commended. As the industry has grown, so has your de facto role as a leading voice of reason, direction and conscience in an arena where the line between genuine creative expression and market exploitation is easily blurred. Meanwhile, you have allowed *CGW* to remain a medium of diverse opinions and positions, a sign of honorable journalistic ethic and tolerance.

New members in the computer gaming family soon discover that *CGW* is the magazine that everyone in the home, office or lab fights over when it arrives each month. I think the reasons are clear. Timely information, stimulating and often controversial product reviews, heavy focus on industry trends and developments and, of course, the first page to become tattered from wear — The Rumor Bag.

From all of us at **Softdisk Publishing** and from all around the ever-growing computer gaming community — THANKS!

Greg Malone
Vice President, Games Division
Softdisk Publishing
Designer of Origin's Moebius

We can't begin to express our appreciation for all the people inside the industry and within the gaming community in general who have congratulated us on the 100th issue. Your well-written missive is expressly welcome, however, since it clearly describes what we have always attempted to accomplish with CGW. *We're glad that a lot of readers believe we are succeeding. That we have been experiencing growing pains should be obvious to most of our regular readers, but we hope that the "final" product (and we have to use that term loosely in the magazine business, since we start all over every month) will be worth it. Computer gaming is a great hobby and we keep trying to cover it more and more effectively. The effort won't stop at 100, 200 or (should we live so long) 500.*

Platinum Plateau

I read your magazine religiously and find it the most informative of any gaming magazine I read. I'm in the midst of a little dispute here and am hoping you can help me resolve it. I was recently touting to my brother the great potential I saw for the game, *Lemmings*. As he was playing, I mentioned that a game like it must sell millions of copies. He said, "No way, there aren't even millions of computer gaming players." Being the competitive types that we are, we set out to find the answer to our little question, but managed to reach dead end after dead end. People either have had no clue or have been leery of us working for the CIA or something.

Anyhow, do you have any idea of how many copies a hot computer game such as *Lemmings* or *Tetris* might sell? Just curious.

Rob Peloquin
Enfield, CT

The highest official designation of unit sales is the SPA's Platinum certification. It is granted when a company's records are audited by an independent auditor and indicates that 250,000 units have been sold. King's Quest III, King's Quest V *and* Battle Chess *were the most recent certifications. Neither* Tetris *nor* Lemmings *has been officially certified as Platinum, but we expect both to finish their life-cycle at more than 250,000. Most excellent titles only sell about 100,000 units and even an above average title may only sell about 50,000 units. By the way, are you in the pulpit or on your knees when you read* CGW *religiously?*

The Fuller RUSH Man

I must say I was startled with your response to Mr. Morris' letter (RUSH to Judgment) in the December issue. I, too, read your magazine faithfully, almost fanatically, every month. I would also be considered a "PC right-winger" by your terms.

As journalists, you must report industry news, review games and other equipment and give hints as to what we can expect in the future of our hobby. Additionally, these tasks should be performed without bias, liberal or conservative, to faithfully serve your readers. Allusions to art, music and politics must and should be made, but these comparisons should be comparisons of fact, not opinion.

If a computer game based on the teachings of Rush Limbaugh were to be released, I would assume the reviewer would give me the straight scoop on the game, whether he is a liberal or a conservative. Opinions belong in the editorial column, not in reviews.

Steve Phallen
Mansfield, OH

We can assure you that our reviewers always give readers the straight scoop on a game, regardless of the reviewer's individual political persuasion. We would do so, even if the game were a Rush Limbaugh simulator (perish the thought). The issue in question was a reader's offense taken to the fact that we used the term "politically correct" to suggest that something was stylishly *dealing with the subject matter which the game was simulating as opposed to* substantively *dealing with the subject matter. Style over substance is most definitely a relevant issue, whatever the political perspective.*

Several other readers have correctly

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taken umbrage at the hyperbole which stated that both our editor and Mr. Brooks were unlikely to listen to Rush Limbaugh without being dead. One reader suggested that a "true liberal" would listen to all perspectives. Dr. Wilson has since confessed that he had, indeed, listened to Rush without being dead, but had received no edification from the experience. Lt. Col. Brooks listened to Rush immediately after reading the remark that said he wouldn't. His conclusion was that Rush was humorous in an acerbic way, but presented repugnant political views. Ironically, the original letter castigated both Mr. Brooks and CGW's editorial staff for being right wingers who were imposing their political viewpoints on the readers.

The real issue is whether a review can be informed by the reviewer's perspective of reality. We believe that it can be, as long as any bias is clear. We think we present the most complete and objective reviews possible with just enough subjective spice to keep the controversies brewing. Apparently, some readers agree. Consider the following letter.

This letter is in response to the letter in your December issue from Jeffrey Morris. Although I DO watch Rush Limbaugh (and to paraphrase a famous debate, "You, Mr. Brooks are no Rush Limbaugh!"), I thought you gave a very good answer to his letter. I guess you will now have to put a reviewer's "Political Correctness Quotient" in the review box so we know whether we want to be "corrupted" by them.

My views on the use of nuclear energy are totally opposite Johnny Wilson's, but that did not stop me from buying and enjoying his and Alan Emrich's excellent *Civilization* book. The point I wish to make is this — to decide that you will no longer read a certain reviewer's article because he does not support your political agenda is totally asinine. Lighten up, people! We're talking games here! Check your politics at the door — we're here to play! Maybe I got an overdose of politics from the election (or maybe I should cut back on Rush), but I play games to take a break from the world at large. Please, let me have my "quality" time.

Ray Stickler
Paris, IL

Yes, games are games and sometimes used for "escape," but that doesn't mean we cannot learn from them. Dr. Wilson acknowledges that most people are not as anti-nuclear as he is, but feels that he would not have been true to himself if he had let the unrealistically positive use of nuclear power in SimCity *and* Sid Meier's Civilization *go unquestioned. As you have noted, however, the question did not get in the way of your enjoying the book (especially the parts where Mr. Emrich elucidated some of his right-wing stances, we dare say, wink, wink, nudge, nudge).*

This Is A Test

I have a problem and was hoping that you could help. I'm interested in playtesting for any of the software publishers, but I don't have any idea how to get started. I have a 486/DX2-66 computer with 8 MB of RAM and an NEC-84 CD—ROM drive, as well as an Amiga 500 computer. Is there any advice, help or information you could give me?

Jonathan Kimrey
PRODIGY User

Actually, the best way to become a playtester is to write letters to the various publishers describing experiences you have encountered in playing their existing games. The companies which use outside playtesters often draw from their most vocal supporters and critics. Carefully documented gaming experiences with existing games will demonstrate to the publishers that you are likely to be thorough in working with their upcoming games. Do not be discouraged if nothing happens right away, however. The piracy problem has been perplexing to those companies who use outside testers and has reduced the rosters of playtesters at a time when the hobby needs them more than ever. CGW



COMPUTER GAMING WORLD HALL OF FAME

The games in *Computer Gaming World's Hall of Fame* have been highly rated by our readers over time. They have been rated for their impact on the computer gaming hobby during their peak period of influence and acceptance by our readership. Note that the dates listed for each game are the copyright dates and may precede the actual release dates. Specific formats listed are those which *CGW* has in its possession. This month we welcome a new member to these illustrious halls, **Electronic Arts'** classic CRPG — **Interplay**'s *Wasteland.*

The Bard's Tale **(Electronic Arts,** 1985)
Many formats

Chessmaster **(Software Toolworks,** 1986)
Many formats

Dungeon Master **(FTL Software,** 1987)
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM

Earl Weaver Baseball **(Electronic Arts**, 1986)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh

Empire **(Interstel,** 1978)
Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64, IBM

F-19 Stealth Fighter **(MicroProse**, 1988)
IBM

Gettysburg: The Turning Point **(Strategic Simulations, Inc.**, 1986)
Amiga, Apple, C-64, IBM

Gunship **(MicroProse**, 1989)
Amiga, C-64, IBM

Harpoon **(Three-Sixty Pacific,** 1989)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh

Kampfgruppe **(Strategic Simulations, Inc.**, 1985)
Many formats

King's Quest V **(Sierra**, 1990)
Amiga, IBM

M-1 Tank Platoon **(MicroProse**, 1989)
Amiga, IBM

Mech Brigade **(Strategic Simulations, Inc.**, 1985)
Many formats

Might & Magic **(New World Computing**, 1986)
Apple, C-64, IBM, Mac

M.U.L.E. **(Electronic Arts**, 1983)
Atari 8-bit, C-64

Pirates **(MicroProse**, 1987)
Many formats

Railroad Tycoon **(MicroProse**, 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh

SimCity **(Maxis**, 1987)
Many formats

Starflight **(Electronic Arts**, 1986)
Amiga, C-64, IBM, Sega

Their Finest Hour **(LucasArts**, 1989)
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM

Ultima III **(Origin**, 1983)
Apple, Atari ST, C-64, IBM

Ultima IV **(Origin**, 1985)
Amiga, Apple, Atari ST, IBM

Ultima VI **(Origin**, 1990)
Amiga, IBM

War in Russia **(Strategic Simulations, Inc.**, 1984)
Apple

Wasteland **(Interplay,** 1986)
Apple, C64, IBM

Wing Commander **(Origin**, 1991)
IBM, Sega

Wizardry **(Sir-Tech Software**, 1981)
Many formats

Zork **(Infocom**, 1981)
Many formats

Induction Ceremony!

Wasteland
(Electronic Arts/Interplay, 1986)
Apple, C64, IBM



It is difficult to speak of CRPGs without invoking the venerable title, *Wasteland.* The game proved the value of a skill-based role-playing system and created interesting algorithms for handling the non-player characters. One couldn't simply strip the NPCs of their items, as in other games, the NPCs had "minds" of their own. Further, although the game was combat-intensive and used a computerized form of Michael Stackpole's *Mercenaries, Spies and Private Eyes* game system, it was replete with ethical dilemmas and non-combat puzzle-solving of the most devious sort. The story was written by Mike Stackpole and many of the maps were fleshed out by veteran game designers like Liz Danforth and Ken St. Andre.

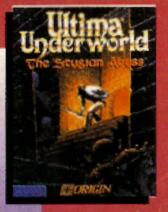
The delay in inducting Wasteland into the CGW Hall of Fame was precipitated by an odd series of events. First, the game rested atop all other CRPGs in the Top 100 for several months. Then, as an Apple II game, the game suffered from the decline of the Apple II's popularity and certain IBM format games eclipsed it. It could have rebounded with our readers when the IBM conversion was released, but a strange marketing decision caused **EA** to make *Wasteland* one of their budget games in a special sales blow-out. Many gamers wondered what was wrong with the game since it was selling at a bargain basement price. The game disappeared and some gamers felt that **EA** had deliberately undermarketed the IBM version because **Interplay Productions**, the developer of the program, had joined a rival affiliate program.

Now, years later, *Wasteland* is still held with great esteem by CGW's readers. We are regularly asked if there will ever be a genuine sequel (most readers discounted **EA**'s *Fountain of Dreams*, developed by a different creative team, as being related to the original) and the good news is that there might yet be such a product. We welcome *Wasteland* to the hallowed presence of other benchmark titles in the computer gaming world and trust that this long-awaited recognition will alert new readers to a classic product and rectify a long-overdue omission by highlighting a watershed design.



Top Adventure Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Indiana Jones/Atlantis	LucasArts	10.12
2	Monkey Island 2	LucasArts	10.05
3	The Secret of Monkey Island	LucasArts	9.72
4	Legend of Kyrandia	Virgin	9.31
5	The Dagger of Amon Ra	Sierra	9.16
6	T he Castle of Dr. Brain	Sierra	9.11
7	Conquests of the Longbow	Sierra	9.04
8	Quest for Glory II	Sierra	9.02
9	Space Quest IV	Sierra	8.98
10	Police Quest 3	Sierra	8.97



Top Role Playing Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Ultima Underworld	Origin	10.53
2	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	10.35
3	Eye of the Beholder II	SSI	9.66
4	Might & Magic III	New World Computing	9.49
5	Ultima VII	Origin	9.39
6	Eye of the Beholder	SSI	9.12
7	Bane of the Cosmic Forge	Sir Tech	9.05
8	Ultima V	Origin	9.00
9	Pools of Darkness	SSI	8.94
10	Elvira Accolade	Accolade	8.82



Top Simulation Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Red Baron	Dynamix	9.86
2	Falcon 3.0	Spectrum HoloByte	9.57
3	Aces of the Pacific	Dynamix	9.49
4	Secret Weapons	LucasArts	9.33
5	Gunship 2000	MicroProse	9.12
6	Silent Service II	MicroProse	9.08
7	Chuck Yeager's Air Combat	Electonic Arts	9.08
8	Red Storm Rising	MicroProse	9.04
9	F-117A	MicroProse	8.91
10	F-15 Strike Eagle II	MicroProse	8.69



Top Strategy Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Civilization	MicroProse	10.72
2	Solitaire's Journey	QQP	10.25
3	Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	Electronic Arts	9.72
4	Chessmaster 3000	Software Toolworks	9.42
5	Siege	Mindcraft	9.10
6	Populous II	Electronic Arts	9.05
7	The Lost Admiral	QQP	8.99
8	Mech Warrior	Activision	8.95
9	Rules of Engagement	Mindcraft	8.81
10	Hoyle Book of Games, Vol.3	Sierra	8.78

Reader Poll 101
COMPUTER GAMING WORLD
The Premier Computer Game Magazine

Top 100 Games

		Company	Type	Score
1	Civilization	MicroProse	ST	10.72
2	Links 386 Pro	Access	SP	10.56
3	Ultima Underworld	Origin	RP	10.53
4	Wing Commander II	Origin	AC	10.38
5	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	RP	10.35
6	Solitaire's Journey	QQP	ST	10.25
7	Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis	LucasArts	AD	10.12
8	Monkey Island 2: Le Chuck's Revenge	LucasArts	AD	10.05
9	Red Baron	Dynamix	SI	9.86
10	The Perfect General	QQP	WG	9.74
11	The Secret of Monkey Island	LucasArts	AD	9.72
	Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	Electonic Arts	ST	9.72
13	Great Naval Battles	SSI	WG,ST	9.67
	Hardball III	Accolade	SP	9.67
15	Eye of the Beholder II	SSI	RP	9.66
	Wolfenstein 3-D	Id Software	AC	9.66
17	V for Victory: Utah Beach	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.58
18	Falcon 3.0	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	9.57
19	Carriers At War	SSG	WG	9.49
	Might & Magic III	New World Computing	RP	9.49
	Aces of the Pacific	Dynamix	SI	9.49
22	Warlords	SSG	WG,ST	9.47
23	Chessmaster 3000	Software Toolworks	ST	9.42
24	Ultima VII	Origin	RP	9.39
25	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	LucasArts	SI	9.33
26	Legend of Kyrandia	Virgin	AD	9.31
27	Lemmings	Psygnosis	AC	9.30
28	Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf	Accolade	SP	9.27
29	Conflict: Korea	SSI	WG	9.21
30	Second Front	SSI	WG	9.18
31	The Dagger of Amon Ra	Sierra	AD	9.16
32	Tetris Classic	Spectrum HoloByte	ST	9.12
	Gunship 2000	Microprose	SI	9.12
35	The Castle of Dr. Brain	Sierra	AD	9.11
36	Siege	Mindcraft	ST	9.10
37	Chuck Yeager's Air Combat	Electronic Arts	SI	9.08
	Silent Service II	MicroProse	SI	9.08
39	Bane of the Cosmic Forge	Sir-Tech	RP	9.05
	Populous II	Electronic Arts	ST	9.05
41	Red Storm Rising	MicroProse	SI	9.04
	Conquests of the Longbow	Sierra	AD	9.04
43	Quest for Glory II	Sierra	AD,RP	9.02
44	High Command	Colorado Comp.	WG	9.01
45	Ultima V	Origin	RP	9.00
46	The Lost Admiral	QQP	ST	8.99
47	Space Quest IV	Sierra	AD	8.98
	Western Front	SSI	WG	8.98
49	Police Quest 3	Sierra	AD	8.97
50	The Adventures of Willy Beamish	Dynamix	AD	8.96

Top Wargames



	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	The Perfect General	QQP	9.74
2	Great Naval Battles	SSI	9.67
3	V for Victory: Utah Beach	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.58
4	Carriers At War	SSG	9.49
5	Warlords	SSG	9.47
6	Conflict: Korea	SSI	9.21
7	Second Front	SSI	9.18
8	High Command	Colorado Comp.	9.01
9	Western Front	SSI	8.98
10	Command HQ	MicroPlay	8.81

Top Action Games



	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Wing Commander II	Origin	10.38
2	Wolfenstein 3-D	Id Software	9.66
3	Lemmings	Psygnosis	9.30
4	Tetris Classic	Spectrum Holobyte	9.14
5	Oh, No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis	8.92
6	Super Tetris	Spectrum HoloByte	8.85
7	Conan the Cimmerian	Virgin	8.56
8	Out of this World	Interplay	8.43
9	Speedball 2	Konami	7.92
10	Battle Isle	Ubi Soft	7.69

Top Sports Games



	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Links 386 Pro	Access	10.56
2	Hardball III	Accolade	9.67
3	Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf	Accolade	9.27
4	Indianapolis 500	Electronic Arts	8.85
5	4-D Boxing	Electronic Arts	8.71
6	Tony LaRussa's Ult. Baseball	Electronic Arts	8.60
7	PGA Tour Golf	Electronic Arts	8.54
8	NFL Pro League Football	Micro Sports	8.54
9	The Games: Winter Challenge	Accolade	8.50
10	Wayne Gretzky Hockey II	Bethesda Softworks	8.43

51	Mech Warrior	Activision	ST,SI	8.95
52	Pools of Darkness	SSI	RP	8.94
53	Oh, No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis	AC	8.92
54	F-117A	MicroProse	SI	8.90
55	Rise of the Dragon	Dynamix	AD	8.89
	Martian Memorandum	Access	AD	8.89
57	Indianapolis 500	Electronic Arts	SP	8.85
	Super Tetris	Spectrum HoloByte	AC,ST	8.85
59	Elvira	Accolade	RP	8.82
60	Command HQ	MicroPlay	WG,ST	8.81
	Rules of Engagement	Mindcraft	ST	8.81
62	Gateway to the Savage Frontier	SSI	RP	8.79
63	Hoyle Book of Games, Vol. 3	Sierra	ST	8.78
64	Heart of China	Dynamix	AD	8.75
65	Battles of Napoleon	SSI	WG	8.72
	Battlechess	Interplay	ST	8.72
	Gateway	Legend	AD	8.72
68	Starflight II	Electronic Arts	RP	8.71
	4-D Boxing	Electronic Arts	SP	8.71
70	F-15 Strike Eagle II	MicroProse	SI	8.69
71	Action Stations	RAW Entertainment	WG	8.68
72	Typhoon of Steel	SSI	WG	8.67
73	Armada 2525	Interstel	ST	8.63
74	Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball	SSI	SP	8.60
75	Buck Rogers	SSI	RP	8.57
	Carrier Strike	SSI	WG	8.57
77	Conan the Cimmerian	Virgin	AC,RP	8.56
78	Megafortress	Three-Sixty Pacific	SI,ST	8.55
79	PGA Tour Golf	Electronic Arts	SP	8.54
	NFL Pro League Football	M icro Sports	SP	8.54
81	Star Trek: 25th Aniversary	Interplay	AD	8.53
82	The Games: Winter Challenge	Accolade	SP	8.50
	Martian Dreams	Origin	RP	8.50
	Shuttle	Virgin	SI	8.50
85	Bandit Kings	Koei	ST,RP	8.48
	Savage Empire	Origin	RP	8.48
87	Global Conquest	MicroProse	ST	8.47
	Jetfighter II	Velocity	SI	8.45
89	Wayne Gretzky Hockey II	Bethesda Softworks	SP	8.43
	Out of this World	Interplay	AC	8.43
91	Nobunaga's Ambition II	Koei	ST,RP	8.40
92	Lord of the Rings	Interplay	RP	8.26
93	Ishido	Accolade	ST	8.25
94	Powermonger	Electronic Arts	ST	8.24
	Sim Earth	Maxis	ST	8.24
96	Dune	Virgin Games	AD,ST	8.20
97	Flight Simulator 4.0	Microsoft	SI	8.18
	Loom	LucasArts	AD	8.18
	Utopia	Konami	ST	8.18
100	Darklands	MicroProse	RP	8.15

AD=Adventure, RP=Role Playing, SI=Simulation, ST=Strategy, WG=Wargame, AC=Action, SP=Sports

The Computer Gaming World Poll

A monthly survey of the readers of Computer Gaming World Magazine.

PC Research Hits List of Top-Selling Software

October, 1992

PC Games (MS-DOS)

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Kings Quest VI (Sierra On-Line)
2.	Wizardry VII: Crusaders (Sir-Tech)
3.	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen (New World)
4.	Quest for Glory III (Sierra On-Line)
5.	Great Naval Battles (Strategic Simulations)
6.	Hard Ball III (Accolade)
7.	Links 386 Pro (Access)
8.	Wing Commander (Origin)
9.	Aces of the Pacific (Sierra On-Line)
10.	Civilization (MicroProse)
11.	Falcon 3.0: Operation Fighting Tiger (Spectrum Holobyte)
12.	Microsoft Flight Simulator (Microsoft)
13.	Red Baron Scenario Builder (Sierra On-Line)
14.	V For Victory: Utah Beach (Three-Sixty)
15.	Monopoly (Virgin Games)
16.	Sim City (Maxis)
17.	Star Trek 25th Anniversary (Interplay)
18.	Quest For Glory I (Sierra On-Line)
19.	Falcon 3.0 (Spectrum Holobyte)
20.	Powermonger (Electronic Arts)

Amiga Games

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Civilization (MicroProse)
2.	688 Attack Sub (Electronic Arts)
3.	Leisure Suit Larry V (Sierra On-Line)
4.	Kings Quest V (Sierra On-Line)
5.	Police Quest III (Sierra On-Line)

Macintosh Games

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Prince of Persia (Broderbund)
2.	Award Winners: KQ V & Red Baron (Sierra On-Line)
3.	Microsoft Flight Simulator (Microsoft)
4.	SimLife (Maxis)
5.	SimCity Supreme (Maxis)

CD-ROM Products

Rank	Title and Source
1.	BattleChess (Interplay)
2.	Cinemania (Microsoft)
3.	Wing Commander/Secret Missions I & II (Origin)
4.	Sherlock Holmes, CD (ICOM)
5.	World View (Britannica)
6.	Street Atlas U.S.A. (Delorme)
7.	Kings Quest V (Sierra On-Line)
8.	Murmers of the Earth (Warner New Media)
9.	Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego (Broderbund)
10.	CD Game Pack (Software Toolworks)

This list is based on units sold by Software Etc., Babbages, Waldensoftware and Electronics Boutique. For more information, please contact PC Research at (703) 435-1025.

What You've Been Playing Lately

The Reader's Feedback Forum

Every month our mailbox fills to capacity with hundreds of Reader Input Cards from our most loyal and outspoken readers. Over the years we've found these cards to be an invaluable source of feedback. Within 10 days of the release of our latest issue we can expect to see dozens of cards begin pouring in with comments, suggestions, encouragements, tirades and many good laughs, in addition to the data for our Top 100 game poll. Through your efforts, we know which articles were hits, which flopped, how many tyypos an grammatical errors we've let slip through — in addition to the many well-articulated opinions on anything and everything related to gaming.

This column is set aside to give our readers a voice, and to display the results of our "Playing Lately?" field on the Reader Input Card. Thanks for taking the time to fill them out — and keep 'em coming!

Playing Lately? Results For CGW #101, December 1992:

1. Civilization (MicroProse)
2. Wolfenstein 3-D (id Software)
3. Wizardry VII: Crusaders of the Dark Savant (Sir-Tech)
4. Aces of the Pacific (Dynamix)
5. Darklands (MicroProse)
6. V For Victory: Utah Beach (Three-Sixty)
7. Wing Commander II (Origin)
8. Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen (New World)
9. Falcon 3.0 (Spectrum Holobyte)
10. Ultima VII (Origin)

Games You'd Like To See

"Killer Klowns From Outer Space: Guide your clown from birth as a piece of popcorn through life, cocooning unsuspecting co-eds in cotton candy. Must have weird synthesized calliope music from hell."

- Midland, TX

"Great Navel Battles: A port of Japan's best-selling Sumo Wrestling Sim."

- Jon King, St. Paul, MN

"CPA Quest I: Attack of the Mutated W-4s."

- Zach Pennington, Anchorage, AK

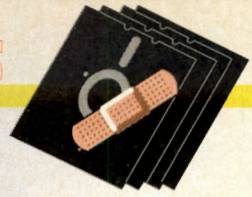
"Dr. Strangelove (or How to Stop Worrying, and Spend the Kids' Inheritance): From the gleam in Daddy's eye to eviction from the nest. Follow the exploits of your baby from birth to 1st date. From changing diapers, learning to walk and talk, guide your child through it all. Important decisions must be made—to buy the newest CRPG or shoes for the kid. You make the call."

- Nicholas Peters, Wichita, KS

[*And now for the work of a tardy poet…*]

"Computer game companies are playing tricks
Getting this gamer into a fix
Each new gaming treat
Tries to make obsolete
My poor old 16Mhz 386!

- Micheal Lavore, Nashua, NH



The Patch File

Computer game programs have grown so massive and the number of possible configurations has become so huge that incompatibilities and glitches seem to be breeding at an exponential rate. Consumers and publishers are both frustrated at the need for adding patches into "buggy" programs, but they seem to be an interim solution that is going to be with the hobby for a while (presumably, until a standard platform configuration is agreed upon). So, until the golden age of standardized platforms and bug-free programs, *Computer Gaming World* will publish a regular list of the latest updates of which we are aware.

These patches can usually be downloaded from either **Compuserve** or **GEnie**, but can also be obtained from individual software publisher's own BBSs and direct from the publisher (with proof of purchase). We continue to urge publishers to keep us updated on the latest versions/patches to their games.

Air Force Commander Slowdown Patch: Makes the game playable on high-powered machines. 11/24/92

B-17 Flying Fortress Version 2 Update: Adds many new features and tweaks some of the existing ones. 11/17/92

Civilization Update (Amiga): Latest version for the Amiga. 09/12/92

Crisis in the Kremlin Version 1.01: Fixes problems reported by users since its original release. 09/26/92

Crusaders of the Dark Savant Patch #2: Fixes the "Don Barlone" bug. 11/16/92

Darklands Version 06: New features added, fixes various machine compatibility problems, corrects problems in earlier versions, and includes new/revised artwork for certain areas of the game. 09/24/92

Darkseed Version 1.5 Update: Latest version of CyberDreams' adventure. 11/24/92

Earl Weaver 2.0 Tandy Lockup Patch: For Tandy users having keyboard and loading lockups. 03/20/92

Falcon: Operation Fighting Tiger V3.01.1 Update: Contains new installer, a fix for blank screen lockup, escort mission failures, Reg Flag buildings, PC Speaker sounds, ROE conflicts, B-52 crashes, ships in allied comm mode in Kurile Theatre, and others. 10/13/92

Full Count Baseball V5.1 Upgrade: Expands play-by-play and offers a new screen layout. For owners of V5.0 only. 12/06/92

Greens Version 02 Update: Addresses the problems reported with scoring, Sound Blasters, etc. 11/22/92

Gunship 2000 Islands and Ice Version .08: Lastest version of the I&I scenario disk. 10/10/92

Harpoon Version 1.32 Upgrade: Latest IBM version of the game. 11/14/92

Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition Rev 1.4 Fix: Fixes "memory allocation" error when using large brushes in the designer. All other fixes to date are included. 07/21/92

Lightspeed Version 02 Update: Fixes the trade problem that some players have experienced. 11/17/92

Links 386 Pro Update Version 1.08: Allows game to run under OS/2 and other DPMI operating systems and software. 11/14/92

Out of this World Upgrade: Includes a new WORLD.EXE file that fixes all known bugs and a README file that was accidently left off the 1.0 release. 05/06/92

Quest For Glory III "B" Patch: Corrects all known game play errors. 12/03/92

Railroad Tycoon Version 1.01 Update (Mac): The latest version for the Mac. 09/25/92

Rex Nebular Update 8.49 (IBM/VGA): Corrects the chicken-bomb and poly-cement problems. 11/13/92

Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe Ver. 2.1: If you have the P-80, Do335, or He162 expansion disks, you DO NOT need this file. 02/27/92

Spelljammer Update V1.1: Latest version of the game. 11/21/92

Stunt Island Update: Fixes a minor bug in the Install program that was causing some system lockups after the hardware autodetect sequence. 11/27/92

Stunt Island Beta-Test Patch: Beta version of the patch to fix the palette shift problem some users were experiencing. (Note: Some companies release beta versions of their patches so that interested users can help test them before official release.) 12/09/92

Tom Landry Football V. 1.02 Update: Corrects problems with modem play, excessive penalities, Sound Blaster problems, and improved animation choreography. 12/03/92

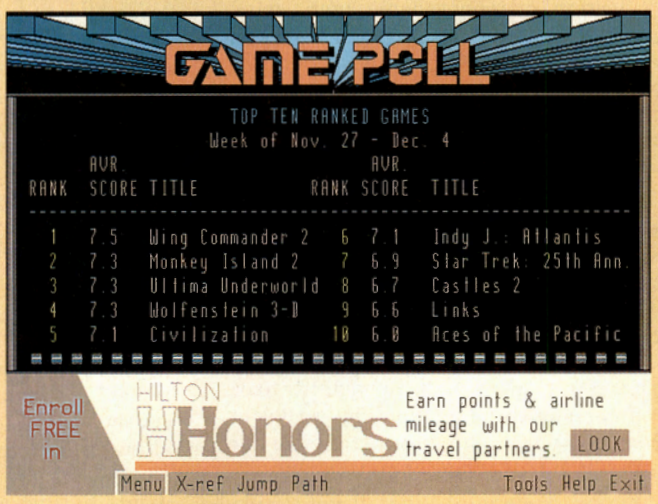
Ultima Underworld Upgrade Bug Fix: Fixes disappearing item problems. 07/04/92

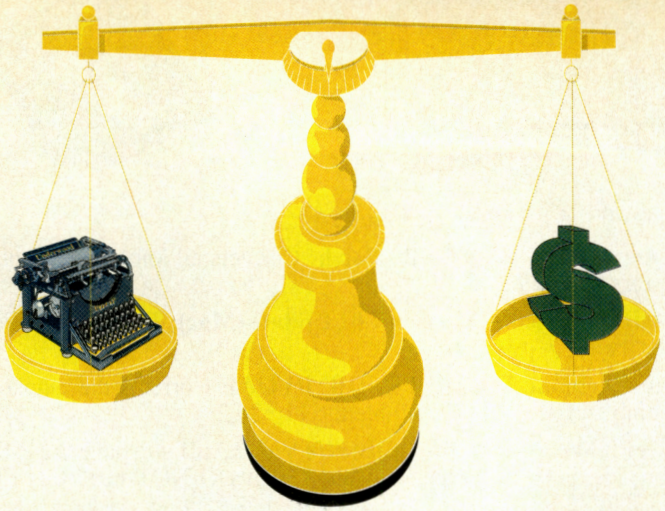
Ultima VII Keys Fix Patch: The fix for disappearing keys in Ultima VII. 06/01/92

Wayne Gretzky Hockey 3 Version 1.10: Fixes many bugs, including the Canadien.VOC file, the computer scoring problem, CH FlightStick problem, penalities, referees, coach's clipboard and others. 11/24/92

The PRODIGY Weekly Top Ten

The Game Center section of the PRODIGY network offers its users the chance to rate their favorite games on a weekly basis. CGW provides this data as yet another indicator of what's hot in gaming, as determined by the player's votes. Please note that a PRODIGY rating is not a cumulative rating, as in the CGW Top 100 Poll, and is based upon a straight 1-10 scale.





Marketing As Editorial

by Johnny Wilson

State of the Magazine: It isn't easy for an editorial staff to be objective and balanced. In fact, it is so difficult that it is probably safe to say that no editorial staff, including ours, actually achieves the ideal. *Nevertheless*, there is no excuse for reputable journalists *not* to try and present as balanced a presentation as possible. In a consumer magazine, a responsible editorial staff neither parrots the position of the industry which it covers nor simply jumps on the bandwagon of the majority. To do either, particularly on an exclusive basis, negates the function of an independent press.

Apparently, *CGW* must be doing something right. All too often, it seems that we face the displeasure (wrath?) of either the software publishers, the gaming public or, interestingly enough, sometimes both. Why? We simply try to present both sides of the issues that confront the hobby *as we see them*. At times, our stands have cost us advertising. At others, it has cost us readers. Yet, in spite of the criticism, both circulation and page count are continuing to increase as readers vote their confidence with their dollars. It is our desire not to disappoint them.

With the computer gaming press, in particular, there seems to be a feeling among many gamers that on any occasion that a publication does not agree with many gamers, said magazine has "sold out" and bedded down with the software publishers. Since we consider ourselves to be the most independent voice in computer gaming, we often run that risk.

We do not necessarily say that a game is hot because everyone else does and we do not necessarily lambast a game as being horrible because one segment of the gaming public thinks it is awful. Instead, we try to weigh each game on its own artistic, gaming and technological merit. Our goal is not to give a "thumbs up, thumbs down" to lead our readers by the hand either to or from their software retailer. Our goal is to provide enough solid information that our readers can make their own decisions.

One fact is certain! We will *not* simply download marketing documents or type up feature lists and present them as editorial copy. We know of at least one magazine that published a design document for an upcoming game without even putting the phrases into complete sentences. The same publication had a recent issue where it had six different articles written by employees of the software companies that were *publishing* the games covered in the articles. To be sure, some of those employees were identified as such, but *all* of the articles touted their content as the *magazine*'s exclusive coverage of the games.

In *CGW*, we will occasionally publish strategy articles and design notes which are written by designers, producers or playtesters, but the articles will be clearly identified as such. We have always identified the authors of these articles in the past and we are making an effort to identify these contributors in the by-lines from this point forward. However, reviews and sneak previews are *not* written by the designers, they are written by editorial staffers or freelancers who have had "hands on" experience with at least some working code (the amount of code varies according to the way some companies put games together from discrete modules and others put them together incrementally on their networks).

We also want to make it clear that our cover decisions are not made on the basis of advertisers. We look at the game first and the cover art second. We try to select games that will have an impact in either technology or genre. We do not check the advertiser's list prior to selecting a cover and, even though almost everyone in the industry advertises with us, we have had several covers in the last 15 months that depicted products which were never advertised with us.

In addition, we do not allow publishers to pre-approve editorial. At times, we have fielded complaints from software publishers who wanted to know why we didn't allow them to review our articles for "accuracy" prior to publication. Frankly, that would be fine with some publishers, but there are some who would not stop at "accuracy" and would want to change the writer's thrust. We believe readers would rather hear from the publishers at a later date (in the case of an inaccuracy) and be assured of an independent press than to believe there is pre-editing. The surprise of some of these publishers when we refused pre-editing for "accuracy" leads us to believe that some publications follow this highly questionable procedure.

Finally, let me assure our readers that, with rare and often unavoidable exceptions, we try to match the reviewer/previewer to the game. We try to select individuals who have exhaustively played the games in a given genre or design style when we give them an assignment. We expect our adventure game and CRPG reviewers to finish the games (although previewers seldom can do so, since the entire game isn't usually there to finish) and our action/strategy gamers to win at the games. There is no sense pretending to be an expert if one cannot offer some sound advice to the readers.

In summary, *CGW* does not consider itself to be either the public relations patsy of the industry or the shop steward of the consumer. Rather, because of our unique position, we get to see products and processes from both sides. As such, it would be irresponsible for us to totally identify with either side of the computer game sales transaction. We offer information and analysis. Hopefully, we offer enough of both for our readers to make informed purchasing decisions and to get enhanced value out of their gaming experiences, as well as enough comments from the perspective of the gamer to encourage software publishers to make changes in design (and, on occasion, marketing) and continue doing the things gamers feel they are already doing right. If so, we will have succeeded in our goals. If we make our readers, whether gamers or publishers, think a little, we will have exceeded them.

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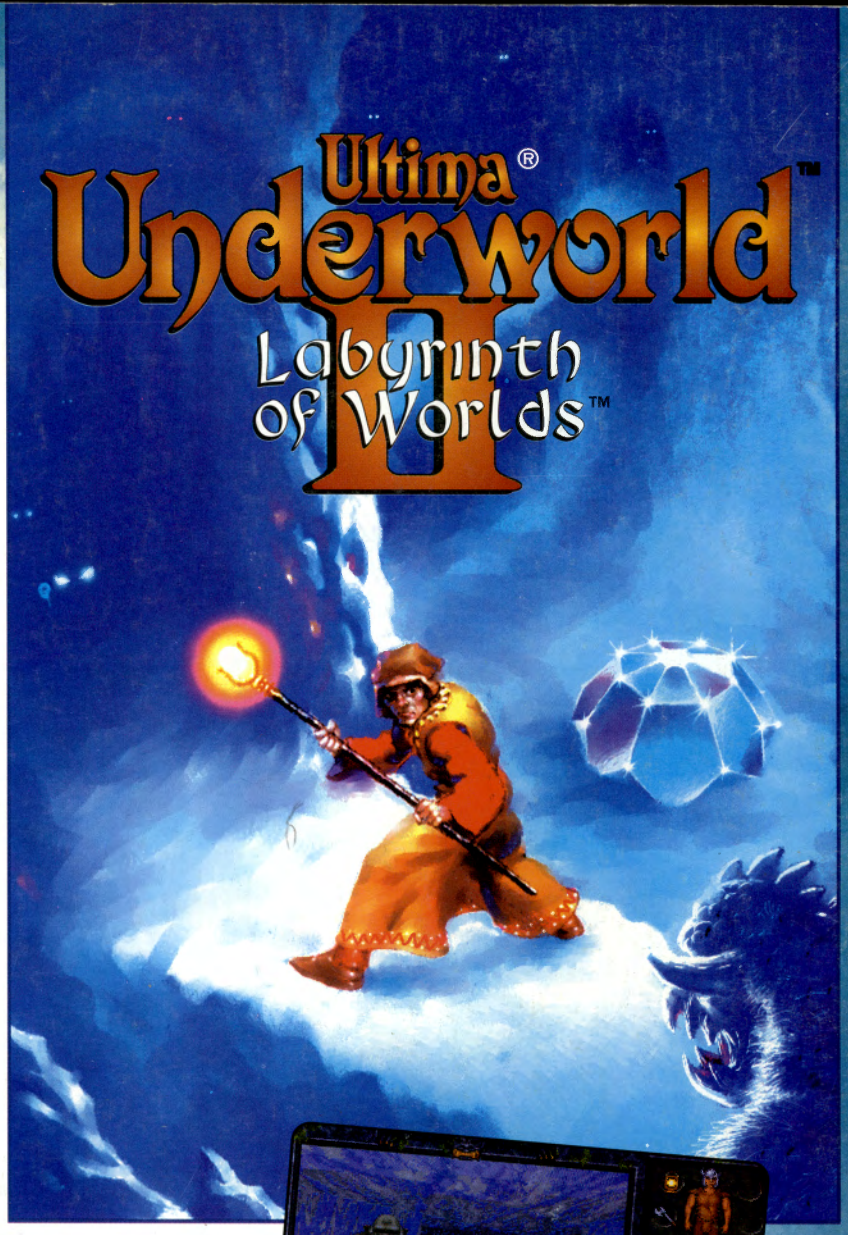
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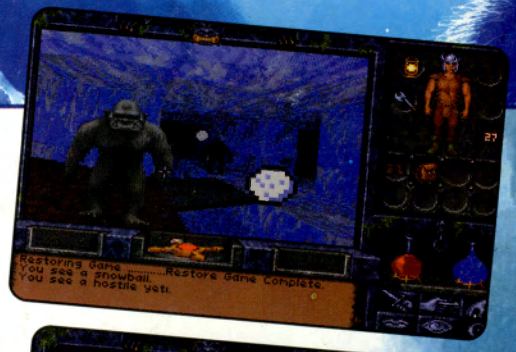
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