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**MDK**

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# PC GAMER

The World's Best-Selling PC Games Magazine

# the 50 best games ever



We present the definitive listing of the greatest PC games of all time — these are the 50 classic titles no self-respecting PC gamer should be without!

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Vol. 4 No. 5 • MAY 1997

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# *It's Here!*

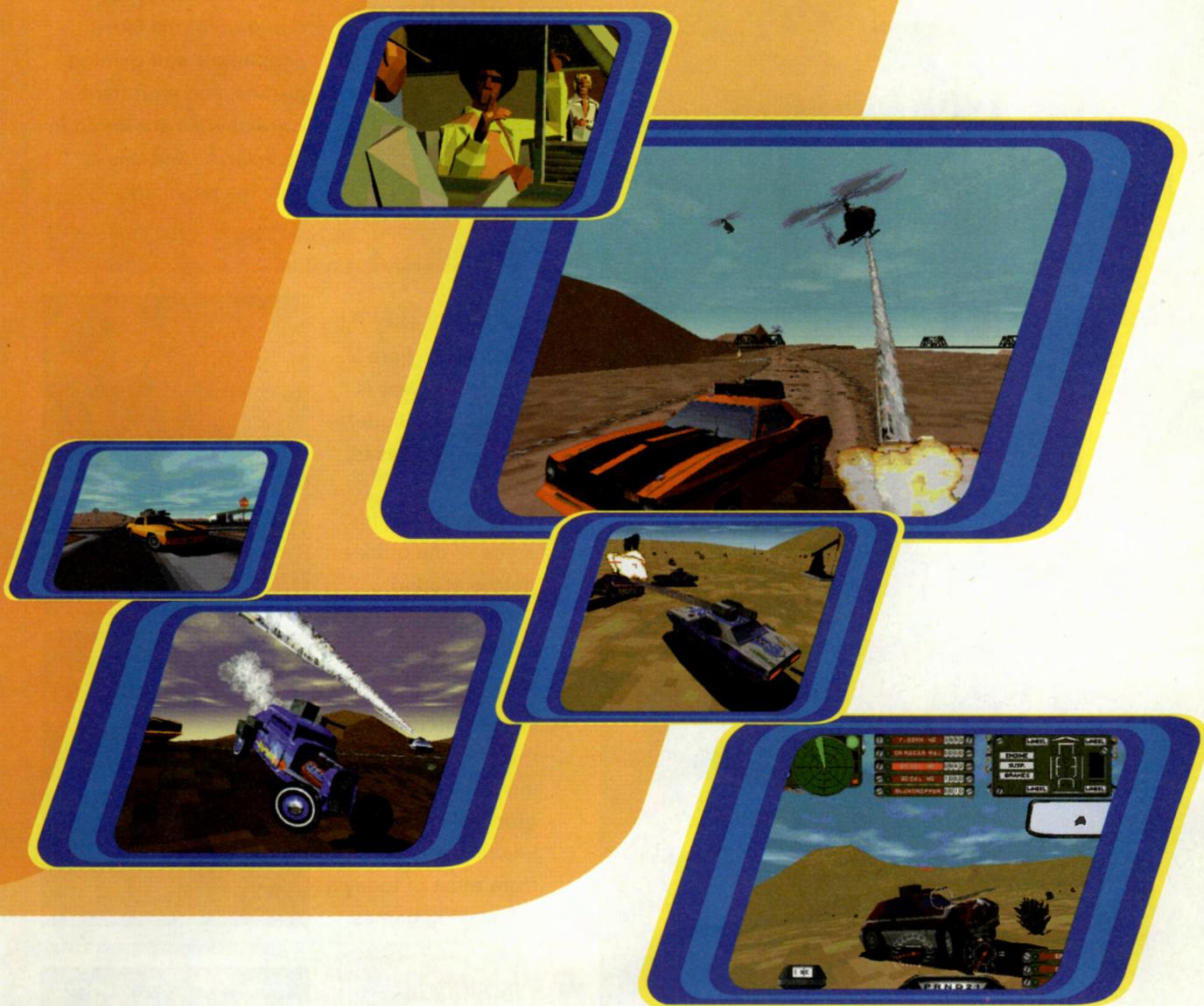
**All New**

**for**

# '76



— Groove Champion, Auto Vigilante



*Drive safely.*

## Cover Story

# the BEST 50 GAMES of ALL TIME

It was a mammoth undertaking, but we did it — we travelled back through the entire history of PC gaming, from the days of CGA (remember *that?*) to the present day, and compiled the definitive, unquestionable (although no doubt you'll try) listing of the greatest PC games ever created. Our special Top 50 countdown starts ticking on **Page 69**. What are you waiting for?

## Hardware

### 145 The Hard Stuff

You asked for it, so here it is — bigger, better, and beefier hardware coverage than ever before. Our all-new section kicks off this month with a look at MMX technology, a round-up of the latest peripherals and gaming gizmos, and your hardware queries answered in Tech Q&A. And this is only the beginning...



## Scoops

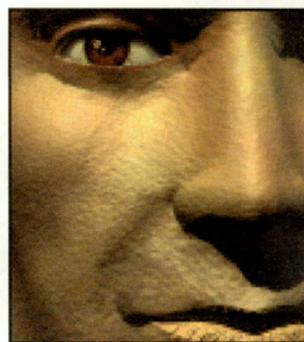
### 26 Twinsen's Odyssey

The lovable hero from *Relentless* is back in this sequel, which promises to show why the French are writing some of the quirkiest games around...



### 30 Fallout

Fans of the classic *Wasteland* will love this re-telling, featuring state-of-the-art graphics and a storyline far removed from most of today's roleplaying games.



### 35 Warlords III

Liked *Heroes of Might & Magic*? Then you'll love this, the latest in the chart-topping series of fantasy strategy games from Broderbund.



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All you need to know about how to explore our game-packed CD-ROM is right here!

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- 169 **The Learning Game** Heidi E. H. Aycock  
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- 173 **Multi-Play** Jason Bates  
Are software publishers shooting themselves in the foot by offering huge, ungainly game "demos" for download over the Internet? Jason offers some thoughts...
- 174 **Alternate Lives** Michael Wolf  
Sierra's newly-released *Robert Williams Anthology* prompts Wolf on a trip down memory lane as he recalls some milestones in adventure game history.
- 176 **The Desktop General** William R. Trotter  
Trotter concludes his profile of Scott Hamilton's HPS Simulations, and shows why small, independent companies can often outshine the industry's big guns.
- 178 **Sim Column** Scott Wolf  
The Wolfmeister turns his attention to the open road with a look at the current crop of racing games and simulations.
- 182 **Strategy Central**  
This month's section positively oozes quality hints and tips, with help for *Red Alert*, *Quake*, *M.A.X.*, *Master of Orion II*, *Discworld II* and — yes! — more!
- 205 **Letters**  
Once again it's your chance to have your say about PC games, the magazine or whatever takes your fancy (not counting that guy who keeps writing to us about Fig Newtons vs. Tootsie Rolls, of course).
- 216 **Next Issue**  
We've got one hell of an exclusive that you're gonna love lined up for you one month from now. Flick to the inside back page to find out what it is...



## The Years Shall Not Age Them ...

The last time that *PC Gamer* compiled an all-time list of the PC's gaming greats was in August 1994, and a hel-luva lot of Gaming Goodness has flown under the bridge since then, so we thought it was high time for an update.

But with some of us still baring the duelling scars left over from deciding the annual *PC Gamer* Awards a few months ago, we knew that selecting the new All-Time Top 50 was going to be no easy task. Nor did it turn out to be. But I believe that what we emerged with at the end of our deliberations is about as definitive as it gets. Perhaps what's most amazing is how many games from the 1994 listing are still there on this 1997 version — a true testament to the timeless appeal of the PC's real gaming classics.

Of course, no list of this type can ever hope to please everybody, and I'm expecting a surge of reader mail once this issue hits the shelves — I'm looking forward to hearing what you think of what we think.

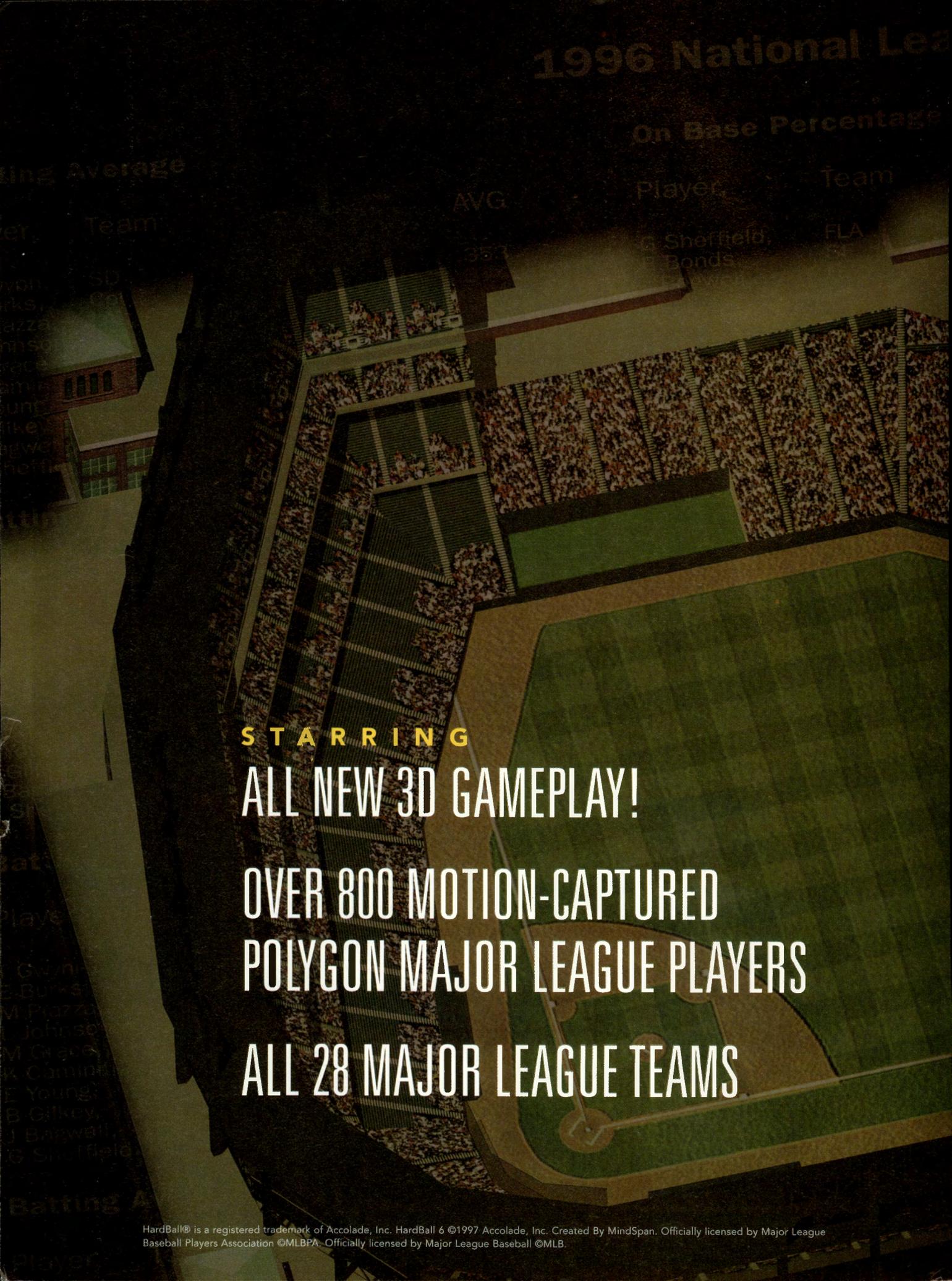
We will, of course, give you ample opportunity to have your say by inviting you to vote in a Reader's All-Time Top 50 next issue, so get your thinking caps on. In the meantime, pop along to our feature, which starts on page 69, and find out how satisfied/outraged (delete as applicable) our choices have made you. I expect our No. 1 choice to spark some controversy at least...

Gary Whitta, Editor-in-Chief

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1996 National League

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batting Average

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Player

Team

Team

3.37

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B. Bonds

FLA

SD



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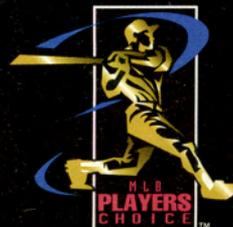
The Draft, minors, free-agents, trading, active and disabled lists

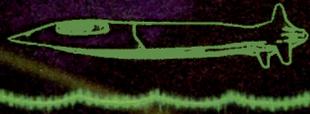
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Product Information Number 85





**HYDROFOIL MODE:**

Approx. height above ocean surface: 5'5"



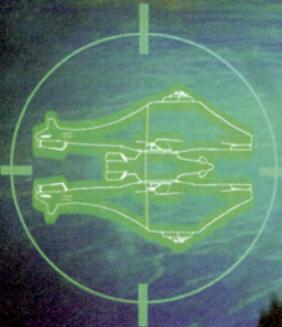
**SURFACE WEAPONS:**

- 2.75' Shrike homing missiles
- 2.75' Blowpipe heavy rockets
- 2.75' F-90 cluster munitions
- 25mm GAU-90 4 barrels rotary cannon
- 1" Stiletto salvo rockets

# A killer submarine. A deadly hydrofoil.

**SUB-SURFACE WEAPONS:**

- 2cm multiheterodyne pulse laser
- 3" EXT Disruptor sonic torpedo
- 6" Piranha heavy swarm torpedo
- 6" Mark-60 Thresher torpedo
- 6" Mark-65 Moray torpedo
- 6" Mark-68 Barracuda homing torpedo



**SUB-SURFACE MODE:**

Hull pressure resistant to 1100 meters





2060 A.D. The Red menace has resurfaced.

The sea boils with submarines and battlecruisers, blood and oil.

The skies are dark with enemy birds.

Tigershark has been deployed.

A fully-loaded subfoil prototype.

Forged for war. Built for speed.

Dead set on destruction.

Underwater. And over it.

Tigershark is hungry.

The feeding frenzy is about to begin.

The ultimate war machine...  
**COME HELL AND HIGH WATER**

# TIGERSHARK™



THE PERFORMANCE OF THIS PRODUCT HAS BEEN OPTIMIZED FOR USE WITH INTEL'S MMX™ TECHNOLOGY

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Product Information Number 155

# It's a Coconut Monkey's Dream

**W**elcome back to Coconut Monkey's island paradise! He's missed having some company, so pop that CD into your drive and say hi! We've made some changes to the front end that should allow for some easier navigation around the island. If you're new to *The CD*, though, take a look at the next couple of pages to get familiar with our revamped interface. Or just hop right in — we've tried to make it as intuitive as possible. There are a few surprises in store for you, so feel free to poke around as much as you like. One of the new features is the ability to go straight to the demos without navigating through a series of screens. Or you can skip the interface entirely and manually run all of the installation commands by using the chart on the next page.



This is the first screen you'll encounter. From here, you can go straight to the demos, the main menu, or click the Start Here button to view the intro.

## Entering Paradise

Your exploration begins with a panoramic view of Coconut Monkey's Island. You can move the mouse around the screen to scroll left or right. When your mouse scrolls over an area that contains information, it will turn into an arrow. Just click on the highlighted site to enter.

There are also control buttons on the bottom of the screen that will take you directly to any one of the many usable sites. The control buttons can be clicked on to enter and exit each site.

## Quick Start for The CD

1. Insert the CD.
2. From the Windows RUN option (found under the File Menu in Windows 3.1 or Start Menu under Windows 95) type X:SETUP31.EXE or X:SETUP95.EXE, depending on your version of Windows (where X is the letter of your CD-ROM drive).
3. This will run *The CD*.

## FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND



### REVIEWS INDEX



The Reviews Index contains info on every review we've ever run, including the Highs, Lows, and Bottom Line. The arrows will scroll through the index, and there's a search button to help you find any review by title.



### PATCHES



The Patches & Updates section shows a description and location for each of the patches on *The CD*, as well as all of the add-on levels we've included for *Quake*, *WarCraft II*, *Duke Nukem 3D*, and *Doom II*.



### TECH SUPPORT



Our Technical Support database includes contact information for many game companies. The arrows will let you scroll through the selections, plus there's a search button so you can find any company by name.



### INTERNET

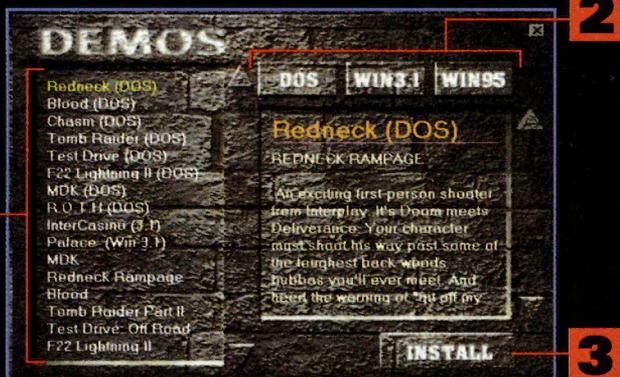


At the Internet Hut, you can install any of the online services on *The CD*. You can also select your web browser to connect to the Internet — very handy for getting online info if you have problems with a demo.



## PLAYING THE DEMOS

This is where you go to install the many demos on *The CD*. When you first enter this screen, a list of all the demos will appear in the left column. **1** Click on the DOS, WIN 3.1, and WIN 95 buttons. **2** This will break the demos down into their respective categories. The INSTALL button **3** will allow you to install a demo and, if applicable, connect to that company's web site (you'll have to first select your browser from the Internet Hut). Occasionally, some of these demos won't install from our front end. In these cases, a message will appear instructing you on how to best install the demo.



### System Requirements

486/33; 4MB RAM; Mouse

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

### Attention Win95 Users

The *PC Gamer* front end should work fine in Windows. To install and run DOS games, you will need to reboot into a DOS session.

## Free Demos!

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

**1.** You can download demos and check out *PC Gamer's* new look at our World Wide Web site at [www.pcgamer.com](http://www.pcgamer.com) on the Internet. Our Web site also features a special Strategy Plus section, links to other hot Web pages, and gaming news.

**2.** You can call our Customer Service department at (415) 468-2500 (between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. PST) to have *The CD* mailed to you for only \$7.95 shipping and handling.

### Disc Editors' Note

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

## CONTENTS / MANUAL INSTALLATION COMMANDS

### Installation Shortcuts

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

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

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

For example, to install the *Blood* demo: At the DOS Prompt, type "CD\BLOOD" from your CD-ROM drive. Then type INSTALL.EXE and press Enter. The demo of *Blood* will then be installed on your computer. If you're running Windows 95 or Windows 3.1, you can instead use the File Manager or Explorer to find the appropriate directory on *The CD*, and then double-click on the installation command for a Windows-based demo.

\* on chart at right = requires Windows 95. The Palace, InterCasino, and America Online will also run under Windows 3.1.

Demo	Directory	Installation Command	Disc Page
MDK	\	INSTALL.BAT (DOS) INST95.BAT (Win95)	10 10
Blood	\BLOOD	INSTALL.EXE	12
Realms of the Haunting	\ROTHDEMO	INSTALL.EXE	12
Redneck Rampage	\REDNECK	INSTALL.BAT	16
Tomb Raider, Part II	\TOMBRAID	Copy directory to hard drive	16
Test Drive: Off Road	\TDORDEMO	INSTALL.EXE	16
F22 Lightning II	\F22DEMO	INSTALL.EXE	17
Chasm	\CHASM95	SETUP.EXE	17
Jack Nicklaus 4*	\JN4DEMO	SETUP.EXE	17
Aaron vs. Ruth*	\AVR95	SETUP.EXE	19
Ultra 3D Mini Golf*	\WGDEMO	SETUP.EXE	19
Emperor of the Fading Suns*	\EFSDEMO	SETUP.EXE	20
Air Warrior II*	\AW2DEMO	AW2DEMO.EXE	20
SimCopter*	\SCDEMO	SIMCOP-8.EXE	20
Tigershark*	\TSDEMO	GO.EXE	21
InterCasino*	\CASINO	CASINO31.EXE (Win3.1) CASINO95NT.EXE (Win95)	21 21
Palace*	\PALACE	PAL-201.EXE	22
Engage*	\ENGAGE	ENGAGE.EXE	22
America Online*	\AOL	SETUP.EXE	22
Patches	\PATCHES		
Doom 2 WADs	\DOOM2		
Quake BSPs	\QUAKE		
Duke Nukem 3D MAPs	\DUKE3D		
C&C: Red Alert MPRs	\C&C		
WarCraft II PUDs	\WAR2		

# MDK

Company: Playmates Interactive Entertainment  
 Tech Support: [www.playmatestoy.com](http://www.playmatestoy.com)  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Action  
 Required: Pentium 60; 16MB RAM 14MB hard-drive space; SVGA  
 Install: \INSTALL.BAT (for DOS) \VNST95.BAT (for Windows 95)

Shiny Entertainment is about to blow the lid off of 3D gaming with its first title developed specifically for the PC. *MDK* throws you into the role of

a one-man army infiltrating an enemy base with more weapons at your command than you can shake a sniper rifle at. Sounds a bit like *Doom* or *Quake*, doesn't it? Well, it actually couldn't be more different.

Load up the demo, and you'll see right away why comparisons to other action games don't work. The third-person perspective sets *MDK* apart from the usual first-person shooter, but so does the game's whole feel and appearance. You won't need a 3D graphics accelerator to

make the game's 3D environment look fantastic, and the items you use, the weapons you fire, and the enemies you destroy all have a unique character.

## HINT

When you start the demo, turn around and look behind you. You'll see a power-up box that tries to run away from you when you approach it. If you manage to catch it, it'll give you an extra 50 points of health.

## CONTROL KEYS

Move Kurt	   
ALSO CONTROLS AIMING IN SNIPER MODE	
Toggle in/out of Sniper mode	
Zoom in/out in Sniper mode	 
IN NORMAL MODE, SHIFTS THE CAMERA TO LOOK UP OR DOWN.	
Fires selected weapon	
Jump	
WHILE IN MID-AIR, PRESS AGAIN TO ACTIVATE RIBBON CHUTE.	
Use/activate selected pickup	
Select specific pickup item	 
Toggle left and right through different ammunition and pickup items	 
Hold for turbo	
Toggle turbo mode	
Sidestep Left and Right	 
Quit	
Help	



See that little speck on the middle platform way up there in the distance?

The keyboard commands are customizable, but you can jump right into the game by using the keys listed here. As you play the demo, you'll occasionally be nudged in the right direction by on-screen prompts. Pay attention to them the first time through, and you'll learn how to proceed. Basically, you want to get to the end of the level, killing any bad guys you meet along the way. That sounds simple because it is — but *MDK* will prove that "simple" doesn't always mean "easy."

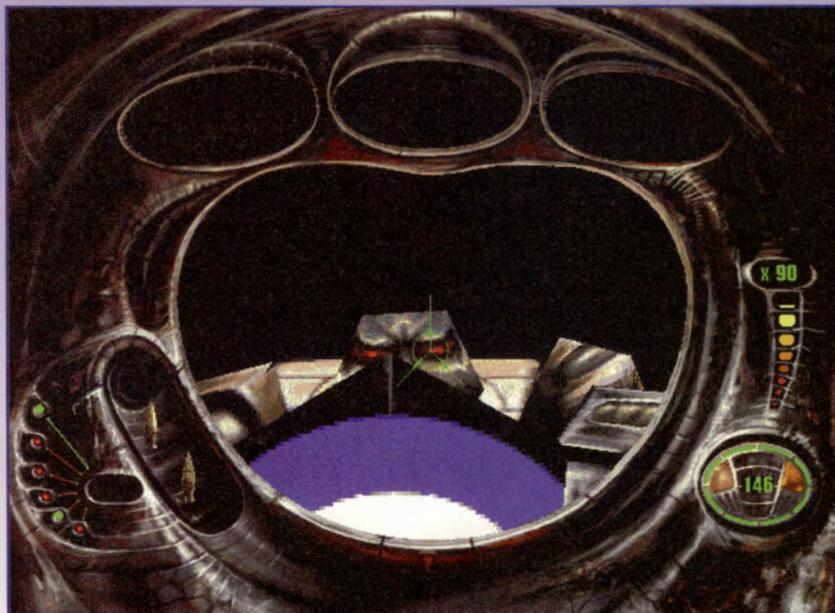


Go into Sniper Mode, and you can put a bullet right in the guy's eye.



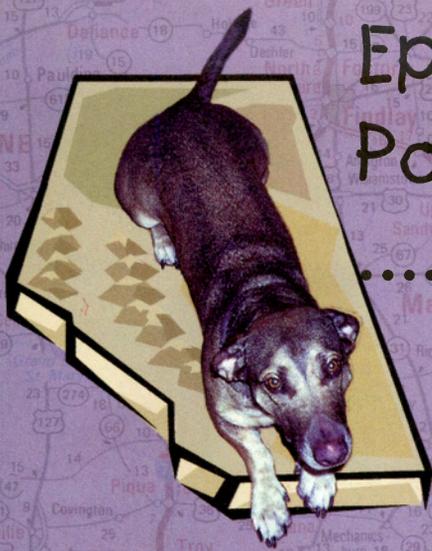
If you play your cards right, you'll get a ride in a bomber. Look out below!

The most amazing weapon at your command is your head-mounted sniper rifle. It fires a variety of rounds, each with its own special use. Switch into sniper mode, and you can use the zoom keys to zero in on your target with perfect precision, even from a huge distance. Check it out for yourself! We've found that aiming really works best with the mouse, with a left-click to fire your weapon.



Work around the shield to get a clear shot at the enemy.

# Epic MegaGames Sparks Pandemic of Canine Neglect!



Fellow Canines,

What word strikes the greatest fear in the collective heart of dogdom? Bath? Kennel?

Veterinarian? Well, here's a new one to add to your list: **multi-player**. It's a primary feature of all the newest releases from Epic MegaGames, and it means big trouble for dogs the world over.



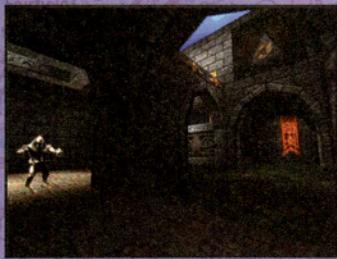
1996  
Arcade Game  
of the Year!

## FIRE FIGHT

Call 1-800-972-7434 to order.

With multi-player capability via network, modem or the Internet, these totally absorbing games will lead to a worldwide linkage of simultaneously preoccupied dog owners.

So while your owner in Ohio leaves you languishing while he blows away the enemy in a multi-player game of Fire Fight™, some Airedale in Alberta is no doubt being ignored by his owner at the same time. We're talking about an international epidemic of canine neglect here!



## UNREAL



## 7TH LEGION

The time to act is now! If you find a game from Epic in your home, chew it to bits immediately. Only together can we stop this menace.



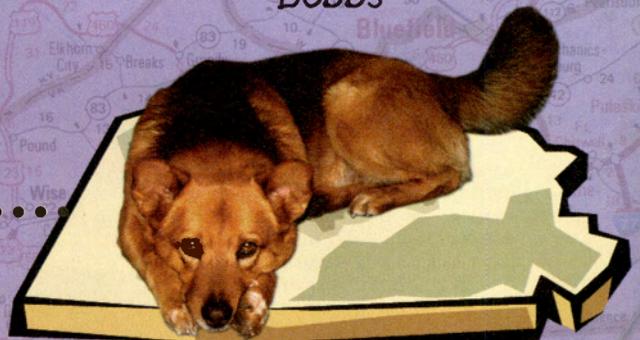
## JAZZ JACKRABBIT 2



Dobbs



## AGE OF WONDERS



Do **NOT** let your owner visit  
[www.epicgames.com/multiplay](http://www.epicgames.com/multiplay)

# Blood

Company: GT Interactive

Tech Support: (716) 871-6646

Release Date: Available Now

Category: Action

Required: Pentium; 16MB RAM; 38MB hard-drive space; VGA

Install: \BLOOD\INSTALL.EXE

It's *Night of the Living Dead* on your PC when you wander around haunted cemeteries and ghoul-infested train stations. *Blood* erupts in a gory firefight when the Build engine (made famous by *Duke Nukem 3D*) puts you in the midst of



Hit the X key with some weapons, and watch all hell break loose!



With the flare gun, you can put a flare in a bad guy and watch him go up in smoke.

evil. The undead and twisted living are rising up to put an end to the world, and only you — equipped with a veritable arsenal — stand in their way.

If you've played *Duke Nukem 3D*, you already know how to play *Blood*. But if the world of the first-person shooter is new to you, take a look at the command box for a quick reference. *Blood* improves on the fantastic Build engine, incorporating newer, more versatile weapons; by pressing X on the default keyboard layout, you activate each weapon's alternate function. For example, the secondary firing method turns the flare gun into a mighty flame-thrower.

Explore the first few levels of *Blood* in the demo, and be sure to try out the multi-player option. For all the weapons —

## CONTROL KEYS

Forward	↑
Back	↓
Turn Left/Right	← →
Fire Weapon	Ctrl
Jump	A
Crouch	Z
Fire Secondary	X
Strafe	Alt
Run	Shift
Select Weapon	1 9
Cycle Through Inventory	1 1
Use Selected Item	Enter
Map	Tab

and tons more enemies to wade through — check out the full version. Prepare to deal with the horrors of hell itself, because once you've risen from the crypt, you certainly don't want to go back!

# Realms of the Haunting

Company: Interplay Productions

Tech Support: (714) 553-6678

Release Date: Available Now

Category: Adventure

Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 38MB hard-drive space; VGA; Mouse

Install: \ROTHDEMO\INSTALL.EXE

It's never fun to be alone in a big, scary house, but it's especially bad when it's infested by all sorts of creepy creatures! When Adam Randall's father dies suddenly and suspiciously, Adam starts on a long, harrowing quest into the depths of evil. You can experience the first portion of his journey in this two-chapter demo of the game.

*Realms of the Haunting* combines first-person action with all the adventure-game elements of inventory and logic puzzles. Don't let first impressions fool you — the game looks great in high-res (highly recommended if your machine's a fast one), and the sheer size of the game will astonish you.

You'll notice two small indicators on the mouse pointer. When the top indicator turns green, it means a left-click will perform an action on the selected item. If it turns red, press the left mouse button to use your weapon on the object. If it turns blue, it's telling



These Borg-wannabes may not look like much, but you'll need firepower to get rid of them.

you that you can interact with the object, but you need to move closer. The bottom indicator tells you if you can look at something for a more detailed description. When it turns into an eye, a right-click will describe what you're looking at.

To access your inventory, press the

I key. All of the inventory items separate into categories — read the README.TXT file copied to your \ROTH directory on the hard drive for more information. To use an inventory item, just double-click on it. Single-clicking will select it to move it to another location.

# TOMB RAIDER

HAVE YOU  
GOT YOURS YET?

If you know **Tomb Raider**, you know why **Lara Croft** is the #1 cover girl in gaming. No other game has won more awards, delivered more action-packed realism, or kicked more ass. Hardcore gamers have made **Tomb Raider** the undisputed megahit of the year. Have your got yours yet?

Action Game of the Year  
Best Graphics of the Year  
95% Rating  
-PC Gamer

Game of the Year  
Rated 5 out of 5 Stars  
-Computer Games Strategy Plus

Game of the Year  
Rated 10 out of 10  
-Computer and Net Player

**EIDOS**  
INTERACTIVE

[www.eidosinteractive.com](http://www.eidosinteractive.com)  
[www.tombraider.com](http://www.tombraider.com)

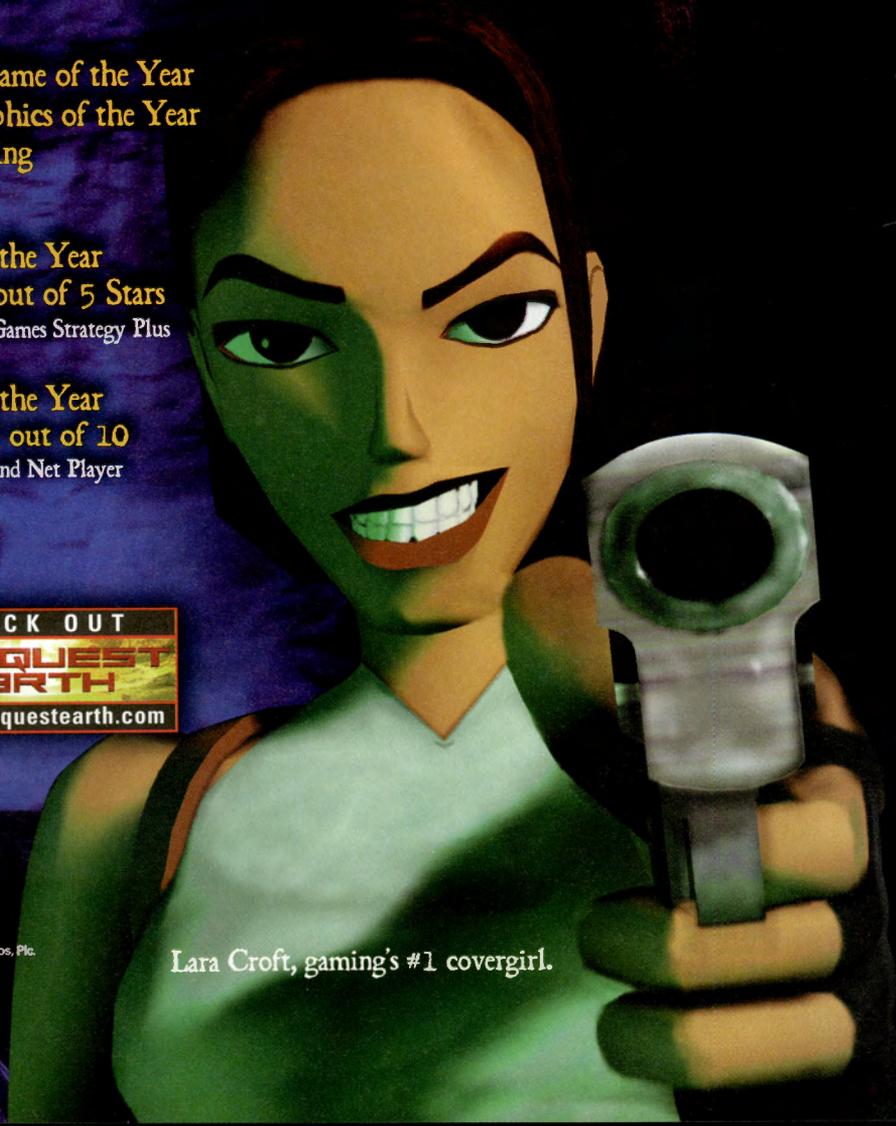
CHECK OUT  
**CONQUEST  
EARTH**  
[www.conquestearth.com](http://www.conquestearth.com)

PC  
CD **CORE**  
DESIGN INC.

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Product Information Number 131

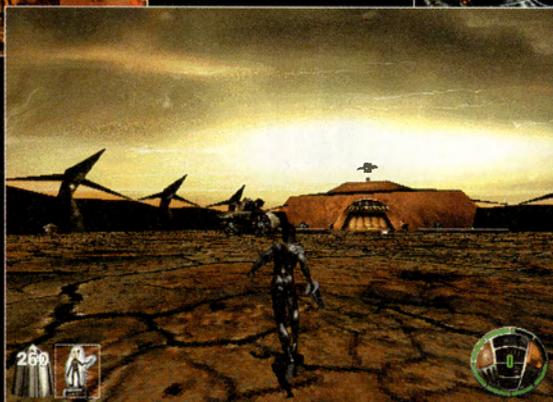
Lara Croft, gaming's #1 covergirl.





*"MDK promises 3-D technology so cool and action so...realistic that it will send everything else running for cover."*

— PC GAMER



*"The ability to zoom in from a mile away within the sniper mode is remarkable."*

— ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY

# THE WORLD WILL END IN 1999. THE

*"One of the most innovative games ever created."*

— GAMEFAN



*"Futuristic 3-D action/adventure that could set a new standard for PC Gaming."*

— PC GAMER

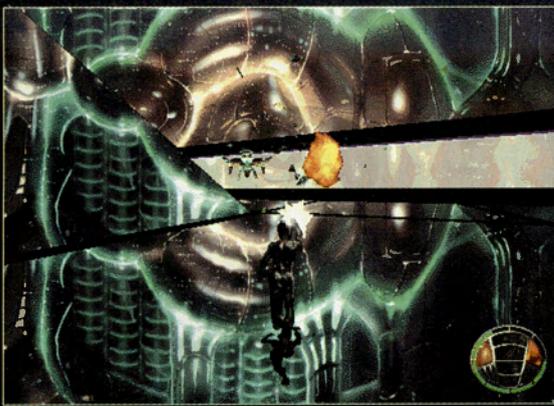


RATING PENDING

**RP**  
ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE  
RATING BOARD

**PC CD-ROM**

Created by Shiny Entertainment, Inc. © 1997 Shiny Entertainment, Inc. MDK is a trademark of Shiny Entertainment, Inc. All rights reserved. Artwork and design © 1997 Playmates Interactive Entertainment Inc. PIE™ is a registered trademark of Playmates Interactive Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved. \*While supplies last.



Your planet is being bulldozed by the ton. Alien controlled mobile mining cities are strip-mining the earth's surface overrunning and crushing anything in their path...Unless you can stop them.

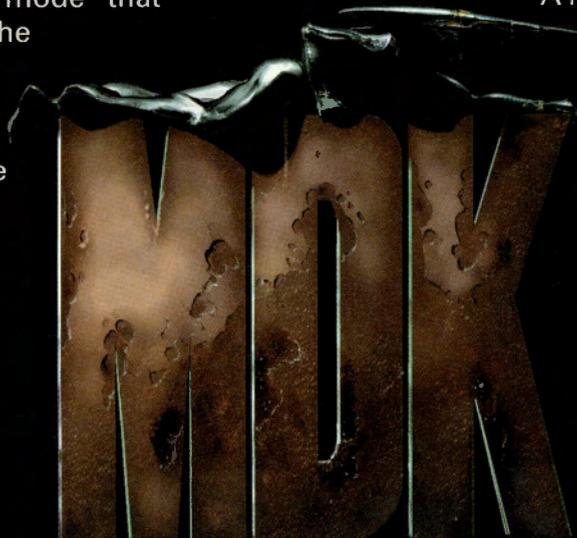
# BATTLE TO SAVE IT WILL BEGIN SOON.

- Fully 3-D rendered graphics unlike anything you have ever before seen.
- Over 60 arenas spread out over 6 cities.
- Never before seen "sniper mode" that allows you to zoom in on the enemy and pick it off with astounding accuracy.
- The most sophisticated enemy artificial intelligence ever created. Fully reactive "smart enemies" think, listen, and communicate in a calculated assault on your life.
- An arsenal of totally innovative weapons

and equipment including:

- A helmet-mounted sniper rifle that targets enemies from over two miles away.
- A living polymer suit that protects from piercing projectiles.
- A high-tech reusable parachute.
- Bombs... decoys... homing sniper grenades... and many more.

- Two styles of adrenaline-pumping game dynamics featuring first and third person point of view.



**IT THINKS. THEREFORE IT KILLS.**

Windows '95 and DOS

Contact [www.playmatestoy.com](http://www.playmatestoy.com) to receive a free playable demo by mail\*

Product Information Number 272

**Shiny**  
ENTERTAINMENT

[www.shiny.com](http://www.shiny.com)

PLAYMATE  
INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT  
**PIE**



Explore the rest of the City of Vilcabamba in the second installment of the *Tomb Raider* demo.

## Tomb Raider (Part II)

**Company:** Eidos Interactive  
**Tech Support:** (415) 217-4111  
**Release Date:** Available Now  
**Category:** Action  
**Required:** Pentium; 8MB RAM; 5MB hard-drive space; SVGA  
**Install:** See Below

Remember when you got to the end of the *Tomb Raider* demo, and it suddenly stopped just as things were really getting interesting? Well, if you haven't gone out and purchased the full version yet, we've got good news for you. Now you can finish the rest of the level (the second in the full game) and see what else Lara has to go through. Whether it's running, jumping, climbing, or shooting, that Lara sure can keep players entertained. If you're not familiar with the world of *Tomb Raider*, check out our February 1997 issue for the first demo and the review.

Use the arrow keys to move Lara around, and press the Alt key to jump. Press the space bar to draw Lara's weapons and press the Control key to fire them. Hold down the Shift key and use the arrow keys to walk. You can perform special moves by pressing Alt and the arrow keys. For more information, take a look at the README.TXT file in the \TOMBRAID directory on your hard drive.

**INSTALLATION NOTE:** To play the second *Tomb Raider* demo with sound, you'll need to copy the \TOMBRAID directory from *The CD* to your hard drive, either using Windows File Manager or Explorer in Win95. Then run the SETUP.EXE file to set up your sound card, and then run TOMB.EXE to run the demo. The directory on your hard drive *must* be named \TOMBRAID in order for the demo to work properly.

## Redneck Rampage

**Company:** Interplay  
**Tech Support:** (716) 871-6646  
**Release Date:** Available Now  
**Category:** Action  
**Required:** Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; 30MB hard-drive space; SVGA  
**Install:** \REDNECK\INSTALL.BAT

When alien abductors make off with Leonard's and Bubba's prize pig, Bessie, you can bet these two good ol' boys from the backroads



Watch out for these big, mean boys — they pack quite a punch with their shotguns.

of Arkansas aren't going to take it lying down. As a matter of fact, only massive amounts of firepower and a few explosives are going to satisfy these Southern gentlemen!

If you're familiar with first-person shooters, we don't need to describe the uses of the arrow keys to move, control key to fire, or A and Z keys to jump and crouch. Nor do we need to go into the processes of changing weapons by pressing the 1 through 9 keys, holding the Shift key to run, or holding Alt to strafe. (But we just did.) As soon as you start the game, you'll recognize the view, and the rest will click into place.

The demo contains about a third of the first level of the full game. It's still in alpha stage, so if you run into glitches, don't expect to see them in the final version of the game.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** *Redneck Rampage* is a colorful game, and as such, it contains language suitable only for adults, so be sure to keep it away from the kids.

## Test Drive: Off Road

**Company:** Accolade  
**Tech Support:** (408) 296-8400  
**Release Date:** Available Now  
**Category:** Arcade  
**Required:** Pentium; 8MB RAM; 50MB hard-drive space; VGA  
**Install:** \TDORDEMO\INSTALL.EXE

If you've ever yearned to get behind the wheel of a monster 4x4 and take it mud racing, here's your chance. Accolade has put some of the best trucks together, including the Hummer, Land Rover, Defender 90, Jeep Wrangler, and Chevy K-

1500 Z-71.

Use the arrow keys to control your truck. The up arrow accelerates, the down arrow brakes, and the left and right arrows steer. You can also hit the Control key to pull the hand-brake for those quick power slides around sharp corners.

The demo includes two tracks in a practice race. The full version contains several more tracks, as well as league competition. For some great tips and descriptions of the vehicles you'll be racing, check out the README.TXT file copied to your computer's hard drive (in the \TDOR directory).



The snowy track in *Test Drive: Off-Road* will challenge you to keep on the track as well as stay ahead of the competition.

# F-22 Lightning II

Company: NovaLogic  
 Tech Support: (818) 878-0325  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Simulation  
 Required: 486DX4/75; 8MB RAM; 12MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse  
 Install: \F22DEMO\INSTALL.EXE

The U.S. Air Force is gearing up to roll out its newest fighter, and NovaLogic lets you get behind the stick and fly it for yourself. The F-22 represents the latest and greatest in computer technology, death-dealing weaponry, and aerodynamic engineering.



The beautiful graphics are only part of what makes *F-22 Lightning II* a fantastic flight sim.

Although you can use the keyboard to control your F-22, we recommend a good joystick to get you where you want to go. The demo contains a single mission to test your dogfighting skills. Your wingman will watch your six, so go ahead and give the enemy something to think about. The full version of *F-22 Lightning II* challenges you with several more missions, a Quick Mission editor, video footage of the F-22 in action, and multi-player support for as many as eight pilots. To learn how to fly this high-tech sim, take a look at the README.TXT file copied to your hard drive (in the \F22DEMO directory).

# Jack Nicklaus 4



Company: Accolade  
 Tech Support: (408) 296-8400  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Sports  
 Required: Windows 95; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; 25MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse  
 Install: \JN4DEMO\SETUP.EXE

For years now, Jack Nicklaus has been known as an excellent golf course designer as well as a legendary player of the game. Accolade's latest golf sim lives up to the Nicklaus name with gameplay that tests your skills, shows you some of the most beautiful golf courses you can get in a computer simulation — and gives you the tools to create your own courses.

This three-hole demo takes place in the Muirfield Village Golf Club. The full version of the game contains five Nicklaus-designed courses, a versatile course editor, and multi-player options that support local area networks, serial, modem, and even Internet play. You can even play against the Golden Bear himself.

Playing the game means more than just clicking the mouse. Set your intensity, aim, and fade or draw by clicking on the screen away from the golfer. By holding the left mouse button

down, you can move your aim and adjust the arc of your trajectory. Once you have things lined up just right, click on the golfer to bring up the swing meter. Click once to start the meter, click again when it reaches the power mark (at the top), and again at the accuracy mark (at the bottom). Unlike in other golf sims, you'll always want to get as close to the power mark as possible, no matter how close you are to the hole; the power of your swing is determined by your intensity setting, and the power mark adjusts accordingly.



With scenery like this, who needs to go out and see the real thing?

# Chasm

Company: MegaMedia Corp.  
 Tech Support: (510) 623-1100  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Action  
 Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 12MB hard-drive space; VGA  
 Install: See Below

TimeStrikers, a villainous band of inter-dimensional monsters, have invaded an important power station, and you've been sent in to clean up the mess. Keep your wits about you and your shotgun loaded — you'll need all the help you can get.

The first-person action of *Chasm* will be familiar to most gamers; if you've played *Doom*, you can guess how the keyboard controls are laid out. Still, you'll want to take a look at the README.TXT file found in the \CHASM directory on *The CD* to get a detailed description. The controls are configurable from the Options menu within the game, so you can customize it to suit your style of play.

**INSTALLATION NOTE:** To install and run *Chasm* under DOS, you need to copy the contents of the \CHASM directory from *The CD* to a directory called \CHASM on your C: drive. You can do this with Windows' File Manager (or Explorer under Windows 95). However, the directory *must* be C:\CHASM or the demo will not run properly. If you're using Windows 95, simply run the file SETUP.EXE in the \CHASM95 directory on *The CD* to install the Win 95 version.



The TimeStrikers will turn you into mincemeat if you don't grab some weapons and do unto them before they do unto you.



You'll get a quick briefing before you head into the power station. Make sure you understand all your objectives.

# STAR TREK™ STARFLEET ACADEMY™



BETWEEN CADETS AND LEGENDS THERE LIES A BRIDGE...  
MASTER IT THIS SPRING

## ARE YOU BOLD ENOUGH?

Coming soon for PC CD-ROM, Macintosh CD-ROM and Sony PlayStation.



<http://www.interplay.com>

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Product Information Number 182

# Aaron vs. Ruth



## BATTLE OF THE BIG BATS

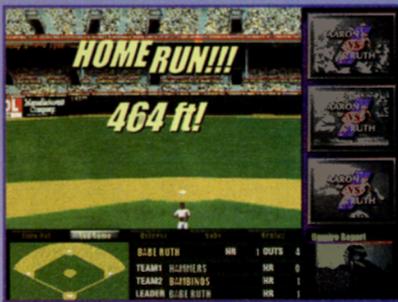
Company: Mindscape Sports Authority  
 Tech Support: [www.mindscapegames.com/customer\\_service/techsupp.htm](http://www.mindscapegames.com/customer_service/techsupp.htm)  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Sports  
 Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 8MB RAM;  
 10MB hard-drive space; SVGA  
 Install: \AVR95\SETUP.EXE

What would happen if the greatest baseball players the world has ever seen were to get together and play a few innings? What would happen if Hank Aaron went up against Babe Ruth in a home-run derby challenge? Mindscape Sports Authority asked those very questions — and the answers are in *Aaron vs. Ruth: Battle of the Big Bats*.

The demo contains a home-run derby pitting the heaviest hitters in history against one another. To play, just select the type of swing by pressing the arrow key corresponding to the direction of the arrow in the choice box, and press the spacebar to swing when the time is right. You can determine the exact placement of the swing by moving the target box up and down with the arrow keys. You'll see the pitcher's target appear just before the throw — try to keep the bat's

target right below it to hit for maximum height and distance. The round ends when both players get five outs. It takes a bit of timing and practice to get the swing down right, and the Babe definitely swings a bit slower than Hammerin' Hank.

The full version has in-depth biographies of all the players, including Jackie Robinson, Ty Cobb, Willie Mays, Pete Rose, Yogi Berra, and Lou Gehrig, to name a few. You can also play single games, or complete a whole season of play in a few seconds to see how your draft picks would have performed.



Time your swing just right, and you can hit the ball out of the park with ease.

# Ultra 3D Mini Golf



Company: Sierra  
 Tech Support: (206) 644-4343  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Sports  
 Required: Windows 95; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM;  
 27MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse  
 Install: \MGDEMO\SETUP.EXE

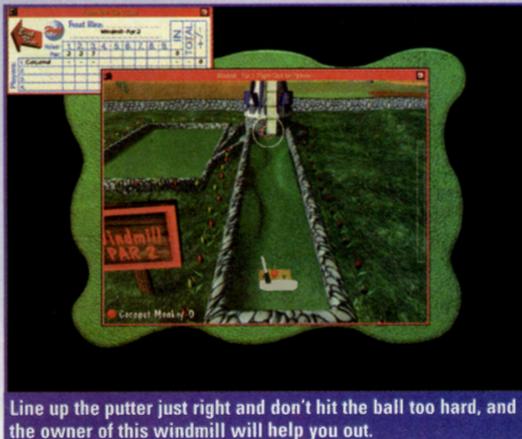
If you're one of the many people in this world who love a round of miniature golf — but won't admit it — we've got the solution to your dilemma.

Sierra presents *Ultra 3D Mini Golf*, a game that combines the versatility of the PC with the fun of miniature golf.

To play the three-hole demo, simply move the mouse until the dotted line points in the direction you want to hit the ball. Then hold down the left mouse button to draw your putter back, and let go to swing. The longer you hold down the button, the harder you'll hit the ball — look at the meter on the right of the screen for a graphic representation of the power behind your swing.

You can also try an alter-

nate method of hitting the ball: right-click on the screen, and select True Putt. Then you simply click and hold the left mouse button and move the mouse in the direction you want to send the ball. The faster you move the mouse forward, the more power you put behind your swing. It takes a bit of practice to master True Putt, but ultimately it gives you more and better control over the power of your swing.



Line up the putter just right and don't hit the ball too hard, and the owner of this windmill will help you out.

**EXTREME** (ik-*strem*) *adj*: exceeding the ordinary, average or expected.

**ASSAULT** (a-*solt*) *n*: a violent physical attack.





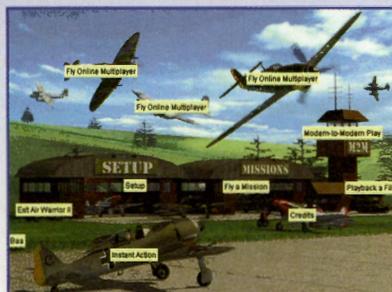
If you ease off on the throttle when approaching the bombers, you can ease in behind them and pick 'em off one by one.

## Win95 Air Warrior II

Company: Interactive Magic  
Tech Support: (919) 461-0948  
Release Date: Available Now  
Category: Simulation  
Required: Windows 95; 486DX4/100; 16MB RAM;  
19MB hard-drive space; SVGA  
Install: \AW2DEMO\AW2DEMO.EXE

For the past ten years, *Air Warrior* has reigned supreme over the online flight sim market. On services like America Online, hundreds of pilots have flown with and against each other in World War Two-era aerial battles, but they didn't have much to do when offline. Now, with *Air Warrior II*, the number of pilots occupying the same airspace online has doubled, and with six campaigns and more than 100 single-player missions, gamers will have plenty of opportunity to hone their skills before they get into the online arena.

The demo contains an Instant Action scenario that puts you in the air quickly and easily. You'll fly a P-51 Mustang against a force of Ju87 Stukas, Ju88 Bombers, and Messerschmitt 109 fighters. For in-flight controls, press F1 while in the air (hit P to pause the game beforehand). To exit the demo, press the Escape key, type E, and hit Enter. The enemy will attempt to take out your airfield, and your job is, of course, to protect it. Watch out for those bombers!



The main screen is where you'll set up your controls and launch into Instant Action.

## Win95 Emperor of the Fading Suns

Company: SegaSoft, Inc.  
Tech Support: (888) 734-2763  
Release Date: Available Now  
Category: Strategy  
Required: Windows 95; 486DX2/66; 16MB RAM;  
30MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse  
Install: \EFSDEMO\SETUP.EXE

When technology ushers mankind into a new Dark Age, five noble houses rise from the chaos to vie for the title of Emperor. You command one of the five houses, and it's up to you to gather up the remnants of mankind and

fuse them into one mighty nation.

Based on the Fading Suns roleplaying system, the game consists of strategy and long-term planning. Even the demo is pretty complex, so we suggest you print out and read the file TUTORIAL.TXT in the \EFSDEMO directory on *The CD*. Also, an online tutorial system will guide you through the rough parts of the game, so be sure to listen carefully. The full game includes many more options, among them the ability to save and load your current game and a Play-By-E-mail (PBEM) option for battling five of your friends for control



Your ability to maneuver your units and wage war will make or break your empire.



Take a look at the archive to see what technologies would be best for you to research.

over the galaxy. To succeed, you'll need to use resources, research new technologies, and pit opposing players against one another. The solo game also contains a story line rich in intrigue and mystery.

## Win95 SimCopter

Company: Maxis  
Tech Support: (510) 927-3905  
Release Date: Available Now  
Category: Simulation  
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM;  
29MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse  
Install: \SCDEMO\SIMCOP-8.EXE

You've spent long, hard hours creating the perfect city in *SimCity 2000*. Wouldn't it be nice to explore your metropolis from the air? Maybe fly over Central Park, or take a look at the traffic for the day? How about getting down and dirty and taking care of some of those riots yourself? Now Maxis gives you the way to interact directly with your city, via helicopter.

The demo of *SimCopter* lets you explore a ready-made city and throws fire, traffic, and even roof-top rescue missions your way. As soon as you run the demo, you'll see instructions on how to play. When you get into the action, press the Escape key, select Controls, then Show All to see a list of the keyboard commands. Keep them in mind while you fly; if you don't solve each crisis quickly enough, they'll start to stack up on each other, and things can get out of hand before you know it.



If the frame rate gets too choppy, the game will automatically switch from high-resolution to standard VGA.



You'll fly just one chopper in the demo, but you can check out some of the other helicopters available in the full game.

# InterCasino

Company: Inter.Tain.Net Inc.  
 Tech Support: (416) 920-3387  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Online Gambling  
 Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 16MB HD space; SVGA;  
 Windows 3.1 or higher; Mouse; Internet connection  
 Install: \CASINO\CASINO31.EXE (Windows 3.1)  
 CASINO95NT.EXE (Windows 95 or NT)

**D**o you yearn for gambling excitement, but don't have the funds or the time to go to Las Vegas?

Inter.Tain.Net has the answer: *Inter-Casino!* From blackjack to roulette, *Inter-Casino* has it all. Of course, there are several casino simulations on the market nowadays. What makes this one so special? In *InterCasino*, you can bet — and win — real money! By establishing an account using a credit card or Western Union, you can connect to the server with other players and gamble to your heart's content over the Internet.

Of course, while the money you win online is real, so is the money you lose. Fortunately, you don't have to play with real money if you don't want to.

You can install the demo and play in a Local Mode without accessing the Internet or using real cash.

To install the demo, you'll first need to go online to the [www.intercasino.com](http://www.intercasino.com) website and get a Serial and PIN number.

If you don't have Internet access, you can still install the software, but you'll be limited to playing in Local Mode. When prompted for the Serial and PIN number, just enter any series of numbers.



Blackjack may be the game of champions, but if you're playing with real money, you'd better know when to hit and when to stay.

# Tigershark



Company: GT Interactive  
 Tech Support: (970) 522-1797  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Action  
 Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM;  
 SVGA  
 Install: \TSDemo\GO.EXE

**A** super-fast, super-powerful submarine/surface vessel under your command means the difference between salvation and failure. Your job in this single-mission demo won't be easy.

You can control the Tigershark with

either the keyboard or joystick. We recommend the joystick for maximum control.

When you first run the demo, you'll need to configure your controller appropriately, so take the opportunity to examine what some of the keyboard commands are. Basically, the arrow keys control your movement, the Ctrl key fires your main weapon, and the space bar fires your torpedoes and missiles. As you complete one mission objective, new ones will be displayed at the bottom of the screen; if you get lost, just keep an eye on your radar and head in the direction of the big arrow on the outermost circle. If the water's deep enough, you can dive beneath the surface by pushing the up cursor key — as a matter of fact, you'll need to go under the waves to reach your first objective. Just watch out for those submarines and turrets — if you get caught in a crossfire, you'll be breathing water before you know it.



You first objective will be to destroy this Russian sonar station.



On the surface, you'll have to deal with tough adversaries like this big cruiser.

Available June 1997 For more information and playable demos call: (800) 933-2983

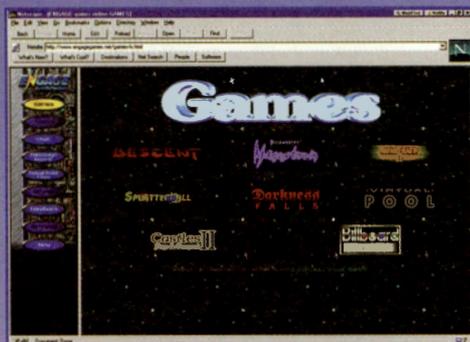
Mention Source Code PCGR597

Product Information Number 107

We definitely got the name right!

EXTREME  
 ASSAULT





You can choose between these great games to play online with Engage.

# Engage



Company: Engage Games Online  
 Tech Support: (714) 930-1539  
 Required: Windows 95; 486; 8MB RAM; SVGA;  
 Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Internet Explorer;  
 Internet connection  
 Install: \ENGAGE\ENGAGE.EXE

You know how much fun computer games are — you're reading this magazine, aren't you? And you probably also know how much more fun they can be when you're playing with — or against — another human gamer. So you already know why Engage should appeal to gamers.

Through Engage, you have the chance to battle human opponents all over the world. Whether it's *WarCraft II*, *Virtual Pool*, or *Splatterball*, Engage connects you to a new universe of gaming grandeur. As of this writing, Engage is in its beta-testing stage, so the service is free for players to try. Once you install the Engage components for Netscape Navigator (or Microsoft Internet Explorer) and the game you want to play, connect to the Engage web site at [www.engagegames.com](http://www.engagegames.com) using your Internet service provider. Once you register as a new user, you can enter the world of online gaming and discover what the multi-player craze is all about. But watch out: playing against other humans is a far cry from battling the computer's artificial intelligence.

## HAVING PROBLEMS?

We cannot provide technical support for problems you may encounter with the demos on *The CD*. Please use the tech support numbers listed with the demos. *The CD* is rigorously tested by the *PC Gamer* staff and certified virus-free. *PC Gamer* cannot be held responsible for any incompatibility problems caused by the use of *The CD*. However, should your copy fail to run, with error messages that indicate your CD drive cannot read the disc, return it to the following address: PC Gamer Customer Service, The May CD 3.2 Replacement, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Please indicate any error message you receive.

# The Palace



Company: The Palace, Inc.  
 Tech Support: (800) 798-6110  
 Release Date: Available Now  
 Category: Online Chat  
 Required: 386; 4MB RAM; 6MB hard-drive space;  
 SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher; Mouse; 16-bit  
 Internet connection  
 Install: \PALACEPAL-201.EXE

Last month, we kicked off the new *PC Gamer* Chat Spot, and now's the time to get in on the action. What is it? It's an opportunity to chat live with *PC Gamer* editors and other hard-core gamers like yourself! How much does it cost? Absolutely nothing! However, if you register your software with The Palace, Inc., you'll be able to give your online alter ego a name, customize it, and play with your props (little graphics that give it personality).

Meanwhile, log on and have a chat. Simply install the software, and when you load up the program, you'll see a Connect window. Where it says "Palace Server Address," type in "[www.pcgamer.com](http://www.pcgamer.com)," and make sure the four numbers following are 9996. Then click on "OK," and you're on your way!

By the time you read this, our pals at the Imagine Games Network (IGN) should have their Palace site up and running, so you'll be able to connect to our sister publications, including *Next Generation*, and IGN itself.



Type in this information when you're ready to connect, and you're on your way to the Chat Spot.



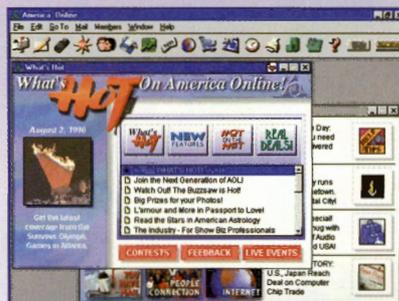
Log on to *PC Gamer's* Chat Spot and hang out with Coconut Monkey — oh, and some other PCG staffers.

# America Online

Tech Support: (800) 872-3338  
 Required: 486; 4MB RAM; 6MB hard-drive space;  
 VGA; Windows 3.1 or higher  
 Install: \AOL\SETUP.EXE

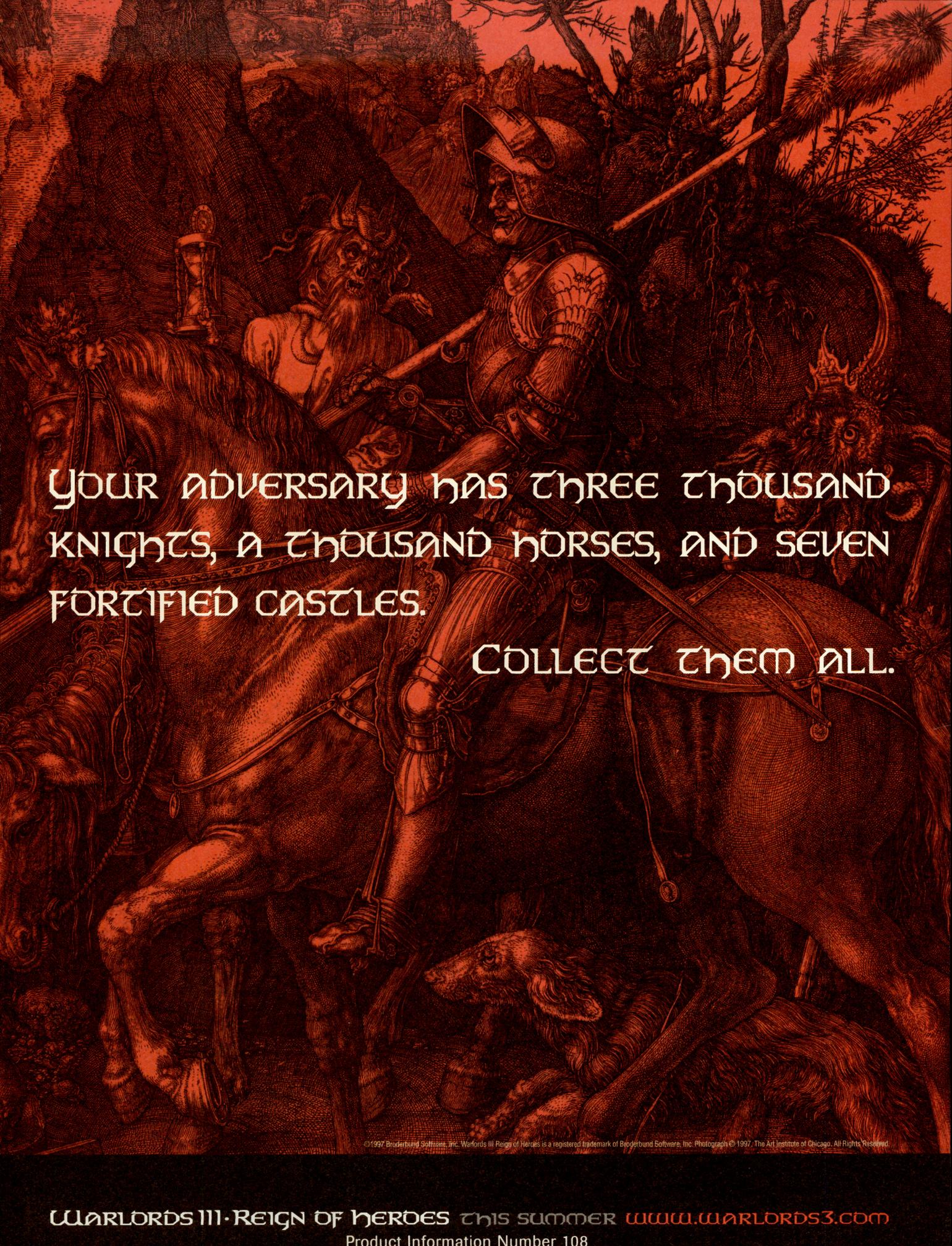
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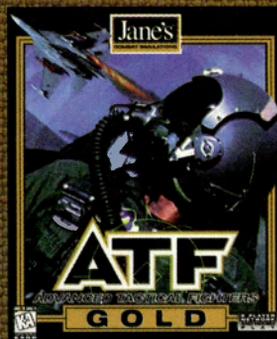


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# Twinsen's Odyssey

**Twinsen is back and ready for action!**

The sequel to the 1995 classic adventure, *Relentless*, promises to deliver plenty of the intense action you've grown to love — especially with its overhauled 3D engine.

— Colin Williamson

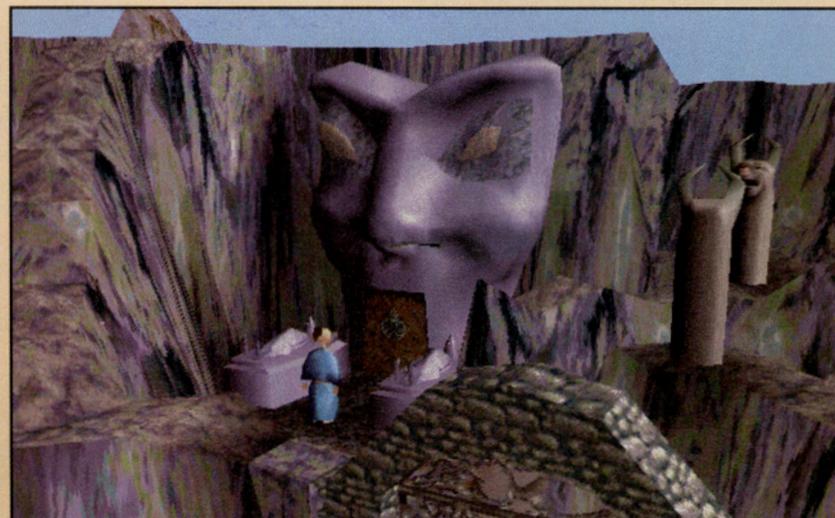
**T**he 1995 title, *Relentless: Little Big Adventure*, was a delightfully weird game. The player took control of Twinsen, a little, bubble-nosed sprite on a quest to escape from his evil oppressors in a colorful, surrealistic world. Part of *Relentless'* bizarreness came from its extreme violence — just because Twinsen was a cute-looking cartoon character, it didn't prevent him from being brutally beaten, smacked around, and placed in increasingly intense situations that might not be appropriate for the wide eyes of children. *Relentless* fans will be pleased to know that Adeline Software and Activision have the sequel lined up for us, entitled *Twinsen's Odyssey*, and judging by what we've seen so far, it's going to be a killer.

*Twinsen's Odyssey* starts out with our little pal Twinsen happily living at home on planet Twinsen with his pregnant (!) wife. The forces of evil come into play when an alien race from the planet Zeelich, led by a character named the Dark Monk, decides to drop by for a visit. Though they claim to

come in friendship, the aliens' seemingly peaceful mission dissolves when villagers start getting abducted. The children are the first to be kidnapped, followed by Twinsen's magicians, who are held hostage on the moon. The Dark Monk's hidden agenda is to attach booster engines to the moon, and send it crashing into Twinsen, releasing the huge amount of energy locked inside the planet. Twinsen's mission is to get to the moon, convince the aliens that the Dark Monk is up to no good, and save the kids, the magicians, and the entire planet from destruction.



Be sure to drop by Temple Park on your travels through Twinsen — you'll encounter some friendly extraterrestrials who won't be shooting at you (for once).



Plenty of dark secrets await you inside this evil-looking tomb. Twinsen will have to conquer many opponents in order to save his planet from destruction by the Dark Monk.

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: *Twinsen's Odyssey*  
 Developer: Adeline Software  
 Publisher: Activision, 11601 Wilshire Boulevard,  
 Suite 1000, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (310) 473-9200  
 Projected Price: \$49.99  
 Percentage Complete: 60%

### In a nutshell:

*Twinsen's Odyssey* is the sequel to the bizarre *Relentless*. Even though the graphics are cutesy, the subject matter is frequently gritty with plenty of violent action, and though it's subtitled *Little Big Adventure 2*, it's certainly not for children.

### What's so special?

*Twinsen's Odyssey* contains a new graphical engine delivering lush visuals, while retaining all of the surrealistic art and super-tight gameplay of the original. Mix *Crusader: No Remorse* with *Alone in the Dark*, and you'll get an idea of *Twinsen's* brain-thumping gameplay.

### Why should I care?

If you're looking for a lengthy, challenging adventure instead of the never-ending stream of *Myst* clones, this one should be at the top of your list.

### And when's it coming out?

July 1997



Twinsen catches a ride on a scaly friend in one of the game's impressive flying sequences. More than 200 different environments are planned for *Twinsen's Odyssey*.

When it comes to the indoor isometric locations, little has changed since the first *Relentless*. Your view is from a SuperVGA, *Crusader*-style three-quarter perspective. However, once you set foot outside, Adeline's new 3D engine shows its colors by delivering environments that use over 10,000 on-screen polygons at once. The world of *Twinsen's Odyssey* is lush and alive — as you walk down main street, you'll see friendly critters walking about, and animals driving hover-vehicles down the road (which will screech to a stop if you jump in front of them). Slick graphical particle effects and transparencies round out the surrealistic visuals. Instead of the engine rendering and animating the scenes in real-time, the locations are generated according to the player's movement, with a split-second pause as each new complex scene is generated. Thanks to this dynamic camera system, the typical *Alone in the Dark*-prevalent frustration of being stuck with a lousy camera angle is easily remedied — with a press of the Enter key, the view automatically shifts to a more advantageous viewpoint from over Twinsen's shoulder.

The control in *Twinsen's Odyssey* will feel natural to anyone accustomed to the control of Adeline's earlier projects, *Alone in the Dark* and *Time Commando*. Different actions can be accessed through a behaviour selection screen, easily pulled up with the Control key. Twinsen can run and jump in *athletic* mode, sneak around in *discreet* mode, and kick some butt with the *aggressive* mode. Each of Twinsen's distinct moods are superbly animated, from his stealthy tiptoeing behind his enemies' backs, to his almost hyperac-

tive shadow-boxing in between fights. Fortunately, *Twinsen's Odyssey* will move just as smoothly as it looks — the game speed on a P200 system frequently topped one hundred frames per second. You can expect the sonic portion to be up to par as well — plenty of appropriate ambient sound and the patented bouncy Twinsen music will be showcased. Activision also reports that voice actors will be portraying all 150 characters throughout the game.

One thing's for sure — you'll be doing plenty of exploring.

*Twinsen's Odyssey* is one massive title — you will find yourself spending hours exploring the towns, villages, and sandy plains. There are more than 200 environments planned, making *Twinsen's Odyssey* much longer than its predecessor. Throughout the game, you'll discover hidden passages leading to subterranean chambers, grates that drop down into dank sewers, and secrets galore. A few scenes near the end of the game will have you sweating bullets, as you narrowly miss projectiles while jumping from platform to platform through an underground complex. Twinsen apparently has been working out since the last game, since his fighting style and repertoire have improved significantly, and opening up those cans of whup-ass is easier than ever.

Another useful addition is the

“Instead of rendering the scenes in real-time, the locations are generated according to the player's movement, with a split-second pause as each new scene is generated.”

holomap — a 3D representation of the planet Twinsun that you can zoom in and out in order to get your bearings. Travel from place to place is made easier with Twinsen's dragon friend, who's always eager to give out free rides.

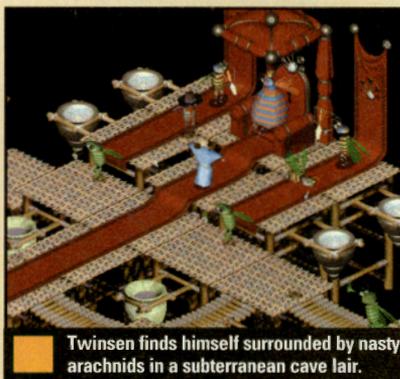
The inventory system has been refined from the first game as well, with gobos of objects and puzzles for you to solve. Also touched up is the save-game system. Though the first game's load/save system was a pain, *Twinsen's Odyssey* thankfully makes saving a one-button affair.

As expected, *Twinsen's Odyssey* will serve up the normal batch of expected weirdness, complete with numerous bizarre characters to help and hinder you in your quest. Walking and talking elephants, foxes, UZI-packing Oscar Mayer Wieners, and extraterrestrials that bear much in common with the aliens from “This Island Earth” make up the strange cast — and, come to think of it, we still haven't figured out what

Twinsen is supposed to be in the first place. The lavishly-rendered

cutscenes of *Relentless* are back and better than ever, with the same style of off-beat humor and unearthly situations (we're clueless about the point of the scene in which the Zeelichians get down and funky in a disco club).

Activision plans on a June or July release date, allowing plenty of time for translating the game from the French language — and it should be worth the wait. If you're looking for a superb adventure bursting with both playability and personality, *Twinsen's Odyssey* will be a voyage worth taking.



Twinsen finds himself surrounded by nasty arachnids in a subterranean cave lair.

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# REDNECK RAMPADE

# Fallout

## A S.P.E.C.I.A.L. kind of roleplaying game

Even without the GURPS engine, Interplay's new post-apocalypse epic will debut with an ambitious new system that will give RPG fans something to sink their teeth into.

—William R. Trotter



Gorgeous rendered graphics like these are all part and parcel of a sumptuous visual style used to portray *Fallout's* vision of a grim post-apocalyptic America.

### F.Y.I. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: *Fallout*  
 Developer: Interplay  
 Publisher: Interplay Productions, 16815 Von Karman Ave., Irvine, CA 92606 (800) 468-3775  
 Projected Price: \$69.95  
 Percentage complete: 80%

#### In a nutshell:

*Fallout* is a rich, complex, real-time roleplaying game set in the dark and dangerous aftermath of a global nuclear war.

#### What's so special?

Interplay has developed a new and comprehensive RPG system called "S.P.E.C.I.A.L.," which it hopes will be the next evolutionary step up from the immensely popular GURPS (Generic Universal RolePlaying System).

#### Why should I care?

Well, RPG fanatics have been kvetching for a long time about wanting something "new and different" and now they'll have it.

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

Early summer 1997

**L**et's get this out of the way first: Yes, this is the game that has long been anticipated as the first GURPS title for the PC. GURPS, for those who don't know, stands for "Generic Universal Role Playing System" — one massive set of rules that works with all genres of roleplaying game, from fantasy to horror. Next to the hoary *Dungeons and Dragons*, it's the most popular pencil-and-paper gaming system in the world, with more than 110 different "world-books" created for its applications, and it has sold well over one million copies worldwide.

But, contrary to long-held expectations, you won't see it in *Fallout*. The reason, according to Kim Cain, the game's director, is simple: "As the project developed, there were some creative differences with Steve Jackson (inventor of GURPS), which could not be ironed out to our mutual satisfaction." Cain would only speak of those "differences" off the record — the matter is obviously a touchy one for

all the parties concerned. These things happen, behind the scenes, more often than consumers might imagine. [Ed. Note: For more on this dilemma, see the Eyewitness story on page 46 of this issue.]

Undaunted by this reversal of fortune, Interplay's development team (veteran RPG players, all), made a bold decision: they removed the GURPS engine altogether and designed their own engine to replace it, one designated by the acronym "S.P.E.C.I.A.L." The initials stand for Strength, Perception, Endurance, Charisma, Intelligence, Agility, and Luck — the basic food



You will be able to choose from many different attributes for your character.



Fans of Interplay's classic RPG *Wasteland* will no doubt embrace *Fallout* as an unofficial sequel, but these swish isometric graphics are a world apart from the top-down views of old.



Traveling around the *Fallout* world will be dangerous, especially since you won't be able to forge a party of friends.

groups of the roleplaying genre.

"I know it sounds like a Herculean task to get under the hood and replace the whole game engine, but it actually didn't take that long, once we came up with the basic concept," says Cain. "The GURPS engine was entirely modular, and so is ours. Everything plugged in smoothly in a matter of a few weeks."

In designing S.P.E.C.I.A.L., the developers looked at every popular RPG system and concluded that the seven character traits listed above were universal. If a player has an idea for the kind of character he or she wants to be in *Fallout*, it's both easy and natural to develop that character through tweaking those seven basic sets of statistics. Each trait is measured in increments of one to ten points, with five being "average". When the game begins, you'll be given a number of free points that you can assign to any of the seven categories, and thereby start the process of defining your character within the context of the game.

Your number of hit points, for example, is a function of your strength plus your endurance, and that figure, in turn, yields what the developers call "derived stats" — how much of a load you can carry, how people react to your character, how resistant you are to radiation or to poison.

"Skills are also evolved from your seven basic stats," explains Cain. "If you change them, you increase or decrease your character's skill levels. As the game progresses, you'll reach new levels, as you do in most RPGs, but instead of locking you into a predetermined change, we'll give you a certain number of points per level, which you can then use to fine-tune your character even further. It's almost as though your character goes through a process of maturing, and we hope it will give the traditional skill-level feature a very personal, individualized feeling."

Another novel feature of the S.P.E.C.I.A.L. engine is that, once you progress to certain levels, the game rewards you with a list of "perks" to choose from. Let's say your basic character was designed with a high intelligence level and basic bartering skills — once you've developed that character to a certain level of experience, you'll have

**"The program actually tries to sense what type of character you're developing, and offers perks accordingly."**

**—KIM CAIN, DIRECTOR, FALLOUT**

a chance to gain the "Master Trader" perk, which enables you to haggle on very favorable terms whenever you enter a trading situation. At more advanced levels, some highly desirable perks are offered only if you have already acquired some prerequisite perks earlier in the adventure.

"The program actually tries to sense what type of character you're developing," says Cain, "and offers perks accordingly. If you're playing a studly combat-type character, you'll eventually be able to



Be prepared to meet all manner of radiation-mutated freaks out in the desert.

hone your fighting skills to an awesome degree; if you've chosen to play a more charismatic, less violent, sort of person, you can evolve into a very persuasive diplomat who's able to sway other characters to his viewpoint."

*Fallout* is a solo adventure — no "party" of rogues, clerics, and mages. But there are many NPCs (Non-Player Characters) to interact with, and many of them will accompany you on some of your adventures. You can even make friends with a stray dog, who will then tag along faithfully and help protect you against ambushes and sneak attacks.

Veteran gamers will be happy to know that *Fallout* is at least a spiritual descendant of the 1987 classic *Wasteland*. Fans of that earlier saga may remember that one of its salient qualities was its realistic depiction of the consequences that follow unwise or brutal actions performed earlier by the player. *Fallout* will have the same flavor, and in one area of actions-vs-consequences, it dares to tackle a subject most game designers wouldn't touch with a pitchfork: drugs.

At some point during the game, you'll be presented with the opportunity to partake of some potent pharmaceuticals that can give your character a tremendous short-term boost. C'mon, now, one little taste won't hurt, and it may help you get out of a real jam. Trouble is, once the high wears off, you'll be worse off than before you took the stuff. Hey, you've got enough left for another hit, right? Before you know it, if you're not careful, your character is

hooked, and has to spend a lot of time and energy finding ways to feed his habit. If you become addicted, and you can't find more drugs, your character's skills and stamina begin to deteriorate.

Although the game as a whole proceeds in real-time, combat is turn-based. Says Cain: "We realize that real-time combat is very trendy at the moment, but we wanted to give the player a real chance to develop his own style of fighting, his own favorite tactics. Success in battle shouldn't be just a matter of how



Whether or not the GURPS engine makes it into *Fallout* (see our update in *Eyewitness*), we can't wait to get our hands on some post-nuclear fun.

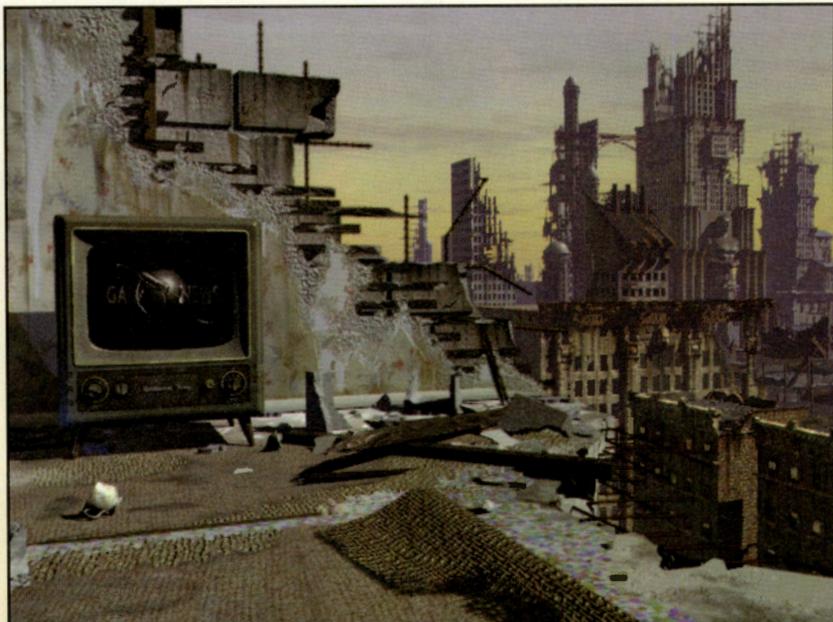
fast you can move your mouse around the screen. Combat is based on movement points, and maneuvers are always elective — i.e., you don't have to move each turn, and any unused points you have are automatically factored in as a bonus to your defense."

Most weapons have two or more modes of attack — a knife, for instance, can be used to "thrust" or "swing", depending on who, or what, you're fighting. You may also expend your points to improve your aim, launch all-out attacks or defensive movements, or reload a pistol. When you activate a ranged weapon, the cursor changes to a targeting bulls-eye; center that over your target, and you'll see a numerical estimate of how good your chance is for a hit. Right-click on a weapon, and you get the option of a "called shot" — more difficult than a snap-shot, but capable of inflicting more damage. In this mode, you can also aim at specific points on your target, such as a shot in the leg or the arm. This seems complicated, but in practice, it works very well and becomes automatic. The system really gives you the feeling of being in control of your character's actions, not just reacting to what the PC does.

Travel is made easy by the inclusion of three map buttons: one performs the traditional auto-mapping function, the second brings up maps of the towns you've visited, and the third shows the entire world (at least, as much of it as you've seen up to that point). For online help and hints, there is a handy Personal Information Processor, which also functions as a game-diary. Inventory management is also a simple matter: just click and drag an object or a weapon from the inventory and place it on your body or in one of your hands. Available weapons include brass knuckles, shotguns, chain-guns, sledgehammers, rocket launchers, and flame-throwers. The effects of each weapon are vividly depicted.

The whole system, in fact, is easy to learn and quite elegant in design; it doesn't take hours of experimentation to learn all the basics, and even a novice RPG-er will automatically be drawn into the deeper levels of play.

*Fallout's* premise is simple and dire: a global nuclear war has turned most of the planet into a radioactive slag heap. Here and there, however, the survivors have constructed "Vaults", underground cities with their own culture. As the game begins, you learn that your Vault's water processing system is failing due to a



Yep, this is what America will look like once the big one finally hits, so be prepared to suit up, grab some heavy weapons, and defend that last can of Chef Boyardee Ravioli to the death.

faulty "water chip". Your task is to venture out of the Vault, reach the surface, and find another Vault where you can (or so you hope) acquire a new chip. Others have gone out before, but no-one has ever returned.

Actually, the water-chip quest is only a hook to get the player into the meat of the game. As you roam around the world and learn more about it, you gradually become aware of something vast and sinister brewing out in the wastelands. Interplay declined to be more specific as to what, exactly, the ultimate objective is in the game, but promised that it will be surprising and very climactic when the player arrives at that point.

Visually, the game has a look all its own: it really captures a mood of darkness and desolation. It also has a slightly screwball quality to its depiction of post-apocalypse technology and artifacts. According to art director Leonard Boyarski, this slightly off-kilter, retro-tech look was inspired by the style of the movie *Brazil*.

"Underneath the whole stylized look of the game," says Boyarski, "is the assumption that on this world, technology took a different turn just after World War Two. I grew up in the Seventies, and I hated the way everything looked, from



Should Origin start worrying now? With graphics like these, maybe they should.

the cars to the leisure suit — things just had no trace of the style you can see in artifacts from the Forties and Fifties. That's why the machines in our game are powered by vacuum tubes, and why everything has that grungy, patched-together-with-duct-tape look. It's still recognizably 'our world', but it's a world where nobody ever invented the transistor."

Having spent some pleasurable hours with a fairly complete Alpha version, I can testify to the high quality of the game's graphics. The isometric perspective provides a good view of the devastation and strangeness of the wastelands, character motion is fluid, and there are many creative touches that enrich and vivify the action. The opening sequence, for example, in which your character attempts to navigate through a cavern to reach the surface, is genuinely creepy. When giant mutant rats come scurrying towards you, they are outlined by a glowing red phosphorescence that not only helps you target them in combat, but adds significantly to their brute nastiness.

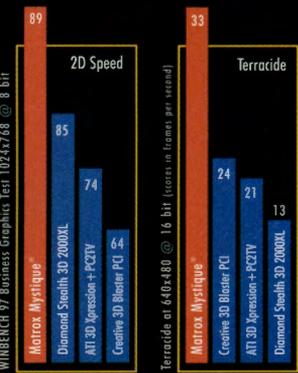
Not that the mood of the game is unremittingly grim: the splash panels and cut-scenes are rendered in a style reminiscent of 1950s advertising, complete with smiling families posing in front of their fallout shelters, and TV ads for radiation-proof robots that take care of routine household chores ("It even walks the family dog!").

Perhaps the key word here is "style". *Fallout* has a unique look and feel, an improbable and very "edgy" blend of gritty realism and keen satire. It's not quite like any other roleplaying adventure you may have played, and I found it quite addictive, even in its rough Alpha format.

Throughout the years, Interplay has specialized in roleplaying adventures of distinction. *Fallout* looks like a first-rate addition to a long list of strong titles, and if it succeeds, we can look forward to more adventures built around its engine. Now, isn't that s.p.e.c.i.a.l.?

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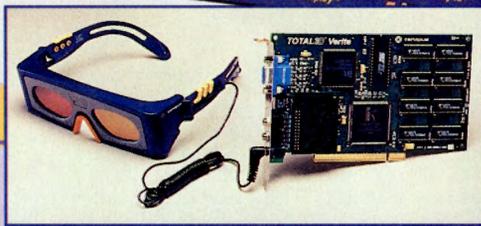
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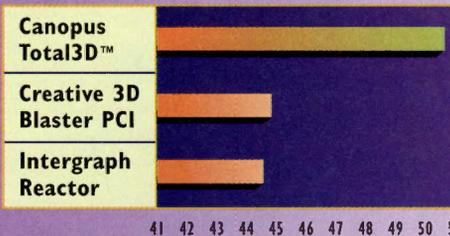
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-Next Generation Magazine

"All in all, the Canopus Total3D card is THE best 3D card that I have seen. The difference it made in game play was striking. When I have to play a non 3D enhanced game, it will be disappointing."

-Win95 Magazine

"The Rendition Vêrité is the current reigning king of combination 2D/3D chips, and the Canopus Total3D is the reigning king among Rendition Vêrité-based cards."

Total3D: 9 out of 10 Stars. 'Kick Ass!' award.

-boot Magazine

"The Top Rated 2-D/3-D combo card, the Canopus Total3D, scored a 90 [out of 100] for its combination of excellent 3-D performance, above-average 2-D performance, and extra features."

-FamilyPC Magazine

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Product Information Number 114

# Warlords III: Reign of Heroes

**For this gaming series, third time's a charm!**

The venerable Warlords series of fantasy strategy games is back with this elaborate third episode — and fans of the originals look to be in for a real treat this time around.

—T. Liam McDonald



Australia's SSG gave us *Warlords* in 1988, and followed it up with 1993's *Warlords II*. It's now four years since *Warlords II* hit, and two since *Warlords II Deluxe*. After a long

stretch where action games ruled the hard drive, the pendulum has swung back to strategy games, and successful titles like *Heroes of Might and Magic* and *Fantasy General*, which owe a debt to *Warlords*, have attracted large followings. The time is perfect for Steve Faulkner, Roger Keating, Ian Trout, and Gregor Whiley to kick some undead hiney with *Warlords III: Reign of Heroes*.

Asked what he feels about the current fantasy competition, Producer and Co-designer Whiley comments, "I feel that *Heroes* is closer to games like *WarCraft* and *C&C* than to *Warlords*. All of those games emphasize the tactical element. *WIII* [*Warlords III*] has new tactical elements, and the option

of simultaneous play, but this is all built on the strategic fundamentals of the *Warlords* games."

When last we left *Warlords*, it was a 16-color world. Not anymore. *Warlords III* comes to us with a bold new look, featuring handsome landscapes and almost 80 hand-drawn units. The flashy new graphics are the first thing old-timers will notice, but there's a lot more going on under the hood. The biggest changes



Heroes lead units into battle with special modifiers, and can also search ruins for magical items and take on quests.

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: *Warlords II: Reign of Heroes*  
Developer: SSG  
Publisher: Broderbund, 500 Redwood Blvd., Novato, CA 94948 (800) 521-6263  
Projected Price: n/a  
Percentage Complete: 75%

### In a nutshell:

*Warlords III* is a clean, straightforward fantasy wargame with diverse units, heroes, magic, simple combat, and lots of replay value.

### What's so special?

SSG has always crafted sharp AI and had a good fundamental design to its games, and *Warlords III* looks to be no exception. Add a solid native internet play mode, with simultaneous movement allowed, and you have a good recipe for success.

### Why should I care?

The previous *Warlords* were popular and influential games that got people playing and kept them playing. Their powerful scenario editors also ensuring a long life on the web through a constant flow of new battles.

### And when's it coming out?

Fall 1997



This heavily guarded city may be a little tougher than most to crack. But you've got to do whatever it takes to be the last city standing.



Heroes stand poised to venture out from their cities and do some damage to the enemy. The heroes in *Warlords III* will be more complex than in the previous *Warlords* games.

include simultaneous-turn network and internet play, more complex heroes, a campaign system, and a wide variety of startup options. Each change has refined a classic system even further.

Like its predecessors, *Warlords III* is set in a fantasy landscape of hills, plains, mountains, rivers, and roads. Spread throughout this land are cities with different levels of fortification: village, city, or citadel. At the beginning of most games, each opponent starts out with a city at a different end of the map. They must then build a force, conquer the other cities, and be the last one standing.

You can create just about any kind of *WIII* game you like. Single games can be played from a number of stand-alone scenarios, which have fixed combatants and goals. Campaign games link numerous scenarios and carry heroes and magical items from one to the next. Or you can generate a custom game by setting the number of combatants, their strengths and starting forces, the world size, number of cities, etc. A random map builder creates worlds based on your specs.

One thing you won't find, however, is the classic *Warlords II* scenario and map builder. Its absence will come as a sore disappointment to the fans who have built and traded levels over the internet for years, but, as Whiley observes, there were a number of reasons for not doing one. "The army graphics are beyond the capacity of all but the best artists to create. Editors also tend to freeze game features, and make backward compatibility a drag on future refinements," he says. "In any case, there are so many different options for starting games that *WIII* will have much greater variety than its predecessors."

That variety will also come from a new batch of combatants and a new emphasis on heroes, quests, and magic. A *Warlords* game unfolds with each side conquering cities and using them to build



new units. These units form traveling stacks, or armies. *WIII* will have 13 sides: Knights, Human Empire, Barbarians, Grey Elves, High Elves, Dark Elves, Dwarves, Dark Dwarves, Undead, Orcs, Giants, Gnolls, and Monsters. For each side, there will be a distinct set of troops, with up to eight regular units, three mercenaries, four potential allied units, a ship, and four heroes. For instance, Undead players get skeletons, zombies, ghouls, wights, wraiths, bats, liches, dragon, demons, fire elements, warriors, and shaman to fight on their side. And, unlike other games, these units tend to have real differences, rather than just being new graphics for the same old stats.

Heroes figure into gameplay even more than they did previously. You usually get one of these super-units at the start of the game, and then can hire more, for a price, as you get further along. Each hero can advance in skill and strength through ten levels as they gain experience points through combat. These levels bring new modifiers, which a hero imparts to the troops he leads, and in some cases gives them new spells. The heroes battle ruin-guardians and wield special items, and may even take on special subquests throughout the game, such as escorting units or searching for lost items. The range and diversity of the heroes in *WIII*

is a major new element that brings a straightforward strategic game into the realm of roleplaying.

Combat itself is conducted by the computer, though you can make tactical decisions, such as setting the order of battle, that affect the outcome. Why didn't *WIII* try a *Heroes*-style tactical combat mode? As Whiley explains, "A tactical combat system isn't appropriate for a number of reasons. There's a lot of fighting in a decent scenario, and dropping into a tactical system for each fight could get tedious. Also, in a simultaneous turn network game, you either have to lock other players out while you resolve combat, or it's open slather on the rest of your forces while you finesse one combat. The first is boring for everyone else, the second could result in you winning one battle, while you lose the rest of the war."

This diplomatic element is also greatly expanded for *WIII*. Each player can now create alliances, which will be more sophisticated than at war/not at war. Players can make alliances and even switch cities with other players, allowing sides to more effectively combine forces against one another.

Most important for SSG is creating a challenging computer player. In the new AI system, says Gregor, they've "concentrated on getting computer players to cooperate much more efficiently. If you antagonize computer players now, they will be much better at combining to drag you down. The computer also has a better idea of how to attack, and how to use its Heroes more effectively. In game-play terms, this means that you will have to pay more attention to diplomacy, in order to promote alliances. You'll also need to be less cavalier about breaking alliances, and have a lot more respect for computer players as opponents."

Paramount among the essential features that give any game like this life is, of course, head-to-head play, and SSG is working to deliver the best possible internet, LAN, and modem play it can. There will be native DirectPlay support for playing over any internet connection, and SSG has also taken pains to make sure the pacing of the game remains strong, so head-to-head play will have a simultaneous play mode. During movement mode, a player can now move any of his units at any time. If defending, for instance, you can wait for the outcome, or move another unit to counter the attack.

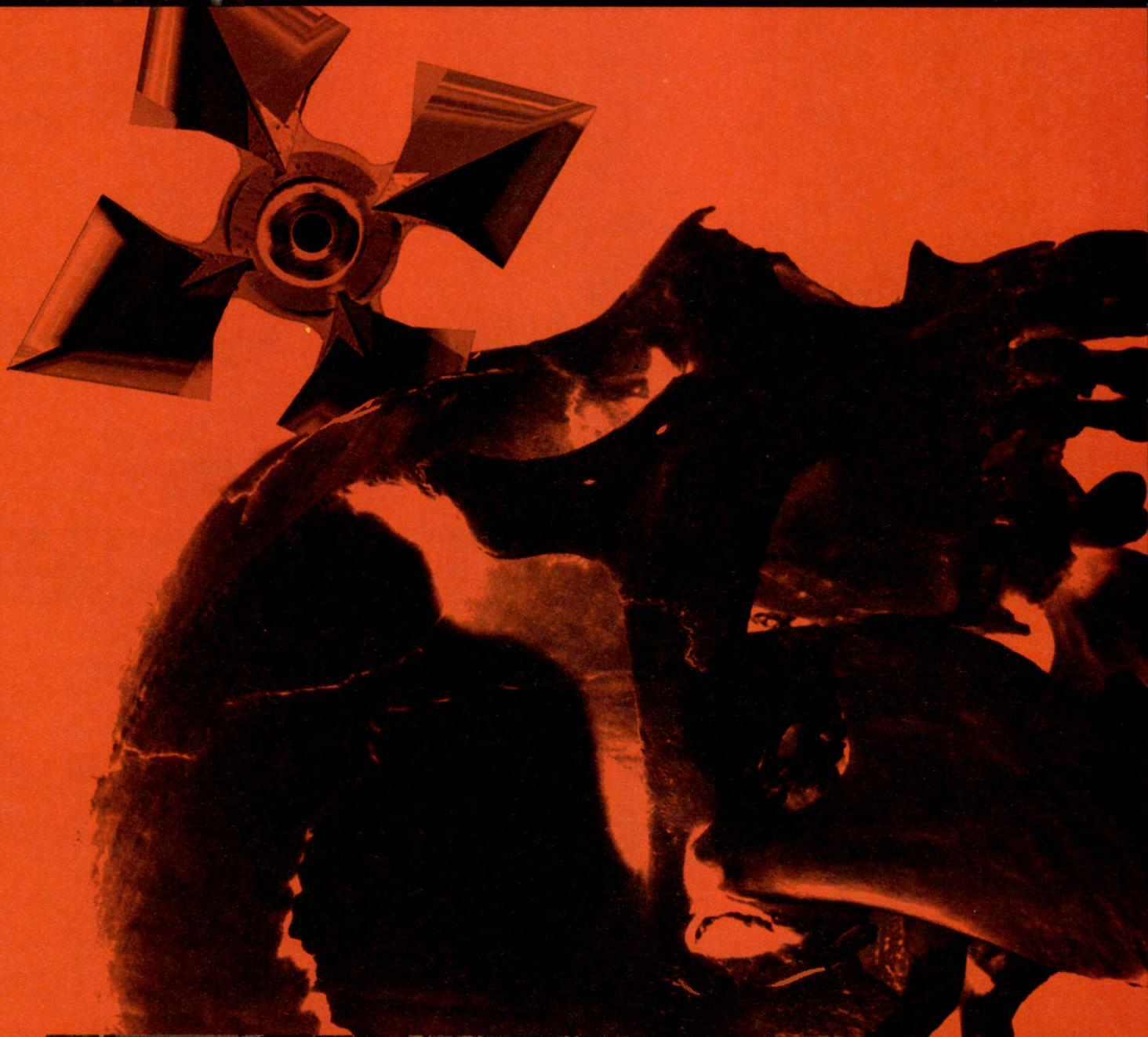
Flexible, pre-set game time limits are available, with victory tooted at the end of the period to keep games from dragging on forever. The whole game will also be saved every turn, and if a player leaves in the middle, the computer automatically takes over and finishes for them. You can even start a save game without anyone else present, and just play the game out against the computer.

"*WII* was a great game," concludes Gregor, "but in *WIII* we've made improvements to all areas of the game, many of these suggested by users. We honestly can't think of anything else that we'd like to add, and we're confident that *WIII* represents a new level of achievement for strategy games."

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# Wing Commander Lands in Seattle

## Microsoft signs Chris Roberts

**M**icrosoft has signed a long-term, exclusive publishing deal with Digital Anvil, the company founded by Chris Roberts of *Wing Commander* fame. The deal covers multiple product development cycles over several years. It's the company's first long-term games deal with an independent publisher, and represents a serious, long-term interest in the games industry.

Electronic Arts bought Origin in 1992, and at the time Roberts had a four-year contract with Origin. When the contract was up in the middle of last year, he departed, seeking a smaller, more closely-knit environment. "To me, it felt like I was getting lost by the way-side where I was," says Roberts, "mainly because of the sheer scale of things. When I left Origin, there were 300 people there, and 2000 people at EA. I don't want to have huge teams with 30 or 40 people working on a project to try to get it out in a year. I'd rather take the time to get a game out and do it right. We've all experienced games where we had to pull a game into a particular deadline to help the company's overall performance out, because someone else slipped out of a quarter." In those situations, Roberts feels games are compromised in terms of the last-minute, quality touches. "In the games business, only the top 20 games really make any money, so you're really shooting yourself in the foot when you do that," he adds.

One thing Roberts is known

for is his effective use of full-motion video to enhance the quality of a title, so it's significant that one of the co-founders of Digital Anvil is Robert Rodriguez, the critically-acclaimed director of films such as *Desperado* and *El Mariachi*.

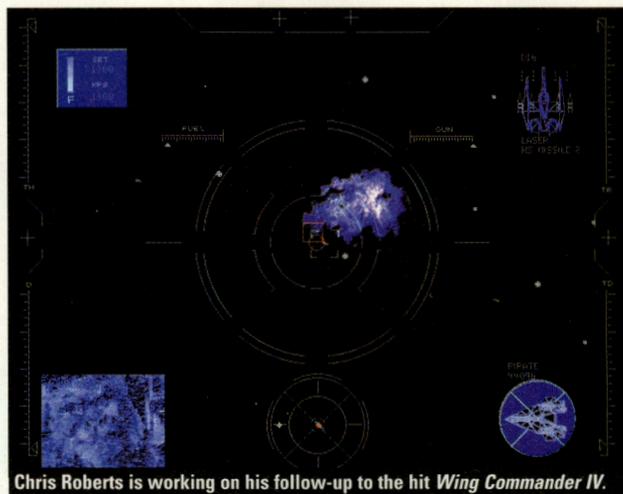
Rodriguez will play a role in upcoming Digital Anvil titles, and he and Roberts are planning to work together on a game and film based on a world the two have created.

"I've known Robert Rodriguez for about four years [they are both based in Austin, TX], and we've always talked about working together," says Roberts, "Now he's a founder of the company and *de facto* film consultant."

Although this project hasn't even begun yet, Roberts has a good idea of the business model he intends to follow. "Digital Anvil and Microsoft will fund the game, and we'll get a film studio to fund the movie side. With Robert's involvement, it's a pretty simple task, because of all his movies have made a good deal of cash and were fairly inexpensive."

But even with such cinematic plans, Roberts doesn't intend to let full motion video (FMV) eclipse gameplay. "I don't think FMV makes a game, I just think it helps me tell a story better. It doesn't replace gameplay, but it's a great addition if it's done right," says Roberts. "I think Robert will help in that regard."

One future technology that may play a significant role in



Chris Roberts is working on his follow-up to the hit *Wing Commander IV*.

games that use FMV is the new DVD-ROM format. Digital Anvil, with Roberts and Rodriguez's unique talents and Microsoft's financial muscle, is uniquely positioned to be the first company to really develop for this powerful new medium. "I definitely think we'll be looking at DVD-ROM," says Roberts, "and we'll probably be one of the first people to be using it because it makes sense for our kind of titles. I hope the acceptance will be pretty strong in a couple years time."

But first, Roberts' will work on *Freelancer* — the working title for a *Privateer*-style game. "It's a 3D space action/exploration game with heavy multi-player, online components," says Roberts. "I want to revisit some of the *Wing Commander/Privateer* territory, but also shake it up, so it's not rehashing old stuff. I felt like *Wing IV* had some great story and great cinematics but technology-wise, when you've got only nine months to do a game, you can't change the engine. So I want to go back to the old days when *Wing Commander* pushed the limit of what

your machine could do. It's difficult to get full-motion and story with multi-player, but we've got some great angles on how to do it." The game probably will not have the amount of FMV that *Wing IV* did, though it will have the same production quality.

Clearly, the match with Microsoft will help Roberts realize his ambitions. "Obviously, the kind of stuff I've done in the past is not inexpensive stuff, and I think Microsoft is really making a statement that they want to be in the entertainment business and that they really want to make a difference and shake it up," says Roberts. "For me, it's important to get out to the traditional gaming audience, and I think Microsoft will be a force to be reckoned with in the future."

However, don't expect to see any Digital Anvil games anytime soon. "The earliest products we'll have will be fall '98," says Roberts. "We're not kidding ourselves, we're not saying we're going to get a game out in nine months. It's going to take us two years to do one."



Chris Roberts' Digital Anvil has signed a major deal with Microsoft.

# Mplayer Goes Free

The online services war heats up

**M**player recently made an announcement that should have wide repercussions in the online gaming community. The majority of the service's features are now free, giving Internet gamers a place to play popular games like *Quake* and *Red Alert* at no charge. Mplayer now has two areas: the Mplayer Free Zone and Mplayer Plus, which is available at \$29.95 for an entire year. We spoke with Paul Matteucci, president and CEO of Mpath Interactive about the changes.

## How has the amount of users changed since the network was launched?

The number of users of Mplayer was rising steadily before we announced our new pricing in February. Since the announcement, the number of users has about doubled.



MATTEUCCI

## What prompted Mplayer to switch to a non-charging network?

First, we saw a number of gamers using the available free alternatives, even

though these were usually lower in performance, often unreliable, and had no community features. So, our most important customers were telling us to make it as cheap as possible. Second, developers were claiming that they needed to offer free Internet play in order to boost retail sales of their products. We heard numbers like 25 percent — 35 percent increased retail sales attributed to free Internet play. Third, we did our homework on companies generating significant advertising revenue on the Internet and determined that our customer-base was a very attractive audience for advertisers. Finally, Mplayer was doing great in all of the reviews, and we wanted to leverage our product lead as fast as possible into a large subscriber base. The more available players, the better it is for our customers and for game developers.

## Will all current and future games be at least in part playable over the free portion of Mplayer?

Our philosophy remains that if an experience is free elsewhere on the Internet, we will make it available in the Mplayer Free Zone. We think most people will prefer Mplayer because it will exceed other free alternatives in terms of quality of game play, reliability of connection, likelihood of a player match, and quality of community and chat features. Now, if a particular company wants offer free Internet play for a game in order to boost its retail potential, but doesn't want to waste time and money setting up an in-house

## TEN's Response

**T**he service most directly impacted by Mplayer's announcement would have to be the Total Entertainment Network. The largest of the new online gaming networks, TEN is, like Mplayer, an Internet-based service with a web front-end, and, until recently, the two had relatively similar pricing plans. Jack Heistand, President and CEO of TEN, gave us TEN's take on Mplayer's announcement.

## How does Mplayer's pricing change impact TEN?

It impacts TEN in a number of ways, most of them positive. First, the pricing change on Mpath's part effectively removes them from the competition for hot new content, as Mpath's bargaining position is weakened by a lack of revenue which they can offer to share with those prospective content partners. To the extent that Mpath can argue that placement of that content on Mplayer will drive incremental retail sales, TEN also represents such an opportunity. But TEN also gives a significant percentage of its subscription fees to content providers as royalties; Mpath doesn't have much to offer in this regard. In addition, TEN pays content providers a "bounty" for any new TEN subscribers that join the service via a given entertainment title, which is the way most of our new subscribers join. This bounty is also a significant additional revenue source for game developers and publishers, and again, Mpath cannot afford such a program. So we don't expect Mpath to compete for hot new games going forward.



HEISTAND

## Does TEN intend to lower its rates or change its pricing model in any way in the near future?

TEN has a business strategy that it has been implementing for the past 18 months, that, among many other things, involves testing various price points for the TEN service. Remember, we're far and away the leader in this market, from a technology standpoint, a content standpoint, and a market-share standpoint. We reached this position by

Continued on page 48:  
See TEN

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Continued on page 48:  
See Mplayer

**UNDER CONSTRUCTION**

**F**antasy gamers, long subjected to a dry spell, can once again take heart, as we've got the head on three new fantasy action and adventure games in the works from Raven Software and Bethesda Softworks, past masters of fantasy.



These Dwarves guard the way in *Mageslayer*, a new fantasy action game being developed by Raven.

**Mageslayer**

*Hexen II* isn't the only game in the works over at Raven Software. *Mageslayer* is a 3D action game with a fantasy setting, reminiscent of *Gauntlet* or *Diablo*. Players are challenged to retrieve five powerful relics in order to defeat the evil overlord Lore Thane and end his reign of terror. Over thirty different levels are planned for the game, with four different character types to choose from: Mageslayer, Arch-Demon, Inquisitor and Earth Lord. Each of the characters has four different attacks and a special ability unique to its class. There are three character traits: Speed, Toughness and Health, and characters will go up in level, earning new skills and better attacks as they gain experience points by slaying monsters and gathering treasure.

**Battlespire**

The elite battlemages have all be slaughtered, slain by the Dædra Prince Mehrunes Dagon, and only you, an untried apprentice, can challenge his might. That's the story behind *Battlespire*, a new fantasy action game from Bethesda Softworks, and set in the fantasy world of Tamriel, scene of its roleplaying epics

..... Continued on page 44

# Activision Gets Quaked

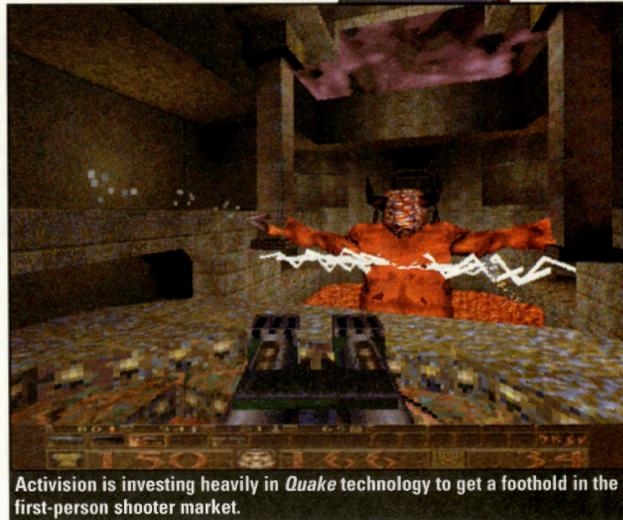


**Big bet on id technology**

**A**ctivision has taken a big step into the action games genre, picking up two upcoming *Quake*-engine games from Hipnotic Interactive and Raven Software. *Hexen II* from Raven and the as-yet untitled game from Hipnotic are both due late 1997 or early in 1998. Activision is also publishing the *Quake* expansion packs from Rogue and Hipnotic.

"We see both the *Quake* technology and the next generation of technology coming from id (*Trinity*) as the key desktop technologies for the future," says Mitch Lasky, VP of business development at Activision. "There's a lot of programmers we've talked to who basically said 'We're not even going to try to beat them, because it's probably not possible.' So we're very high on the *Quake* technology."

But Activision wants to do more than just bring an excellent technology to market, says Lasky. "That's why we've gone out and invested in games that we believe can bring to the table significant design capabilities on top of the *Quake* technology," he says. "Our own feeling is that design is of paramount importance. And I think that's where Hipnotic and Raven come into the equation: they're really contributing significant



Activision is investing heavily in *Quake* technology to get a foothold in the first-person shooter market.

design on top of what is already a phenomenal technological base." So Activision has very quickly made itself a significant player in one of PC gaming's hottest genres. But the company seem committed for the long haul, just as interested in John Carmack's post-*Quake* projects as current work. "In our discussions with id, we've heard what's coming, and when John gets an opportunity to start with a blank slate and shoot for the installed base of PCs for Christmas of '98, you can imagine how cool that's going to be," says Lasky. "He

doesn't have to support a 486 installed base, he can really just start over and go nuts." But is Activision over-extending itself, paying too much for these titles? News reports have surfaced saying that it paid \$4 million for the publishing rights to *Hexen II*. "We know that GT was bidding for *Hexen II*, in fact they've been pretty vocal in retrospect in trying to diss us," counters Lasky. Though he wouldn't discuss financial terms of the deal, Lasky says "It's a really good deal for us, and we expect to make a great deal of money, both for ourselves and for id."

For its part, GT seemed unconcerned about Activision's sudden entrance into what one might consider GT's turf. "I would say that GT Interactive has unanimously cornered the 3D first person shooter market," says Allyne Mills, vice president of Corporate Communications at GT. "We passed on *Hexen II*. We continue to look at opportunities as they come about and make business decisions based on the opportunities that we think are best for us." She also noted that both *Duke Nukem 3D* and *Quake* did well for GT last year, and that it has another of the hotly anticipated titles 3D titles in the works, *Unreal*.

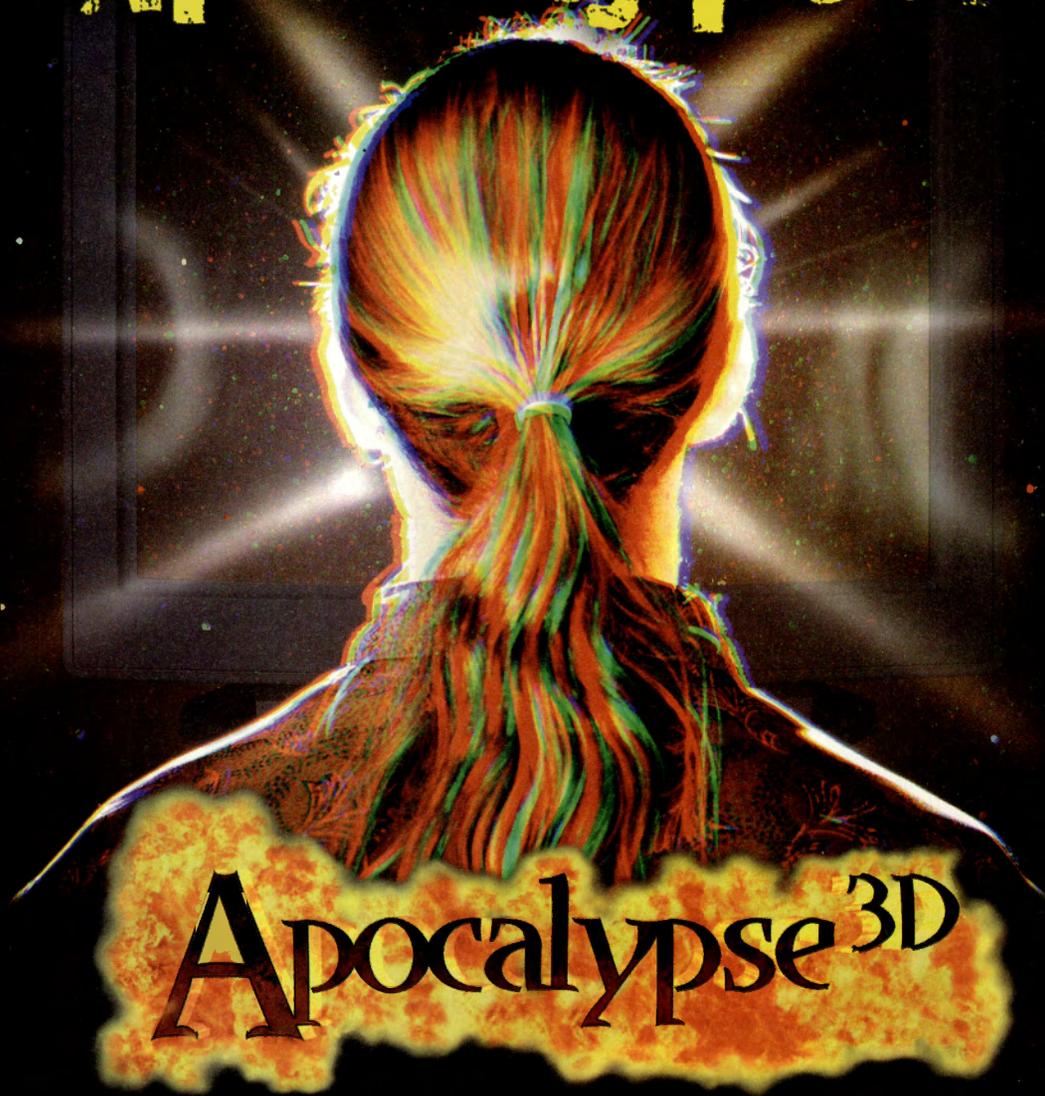
## DeathMatch Maker

**F**or those still struggling to create their first *Quake* level, Virtus has released *DeathMatch Maker*, the first officially-approved retail *Quake* editor. The editor is a fully-featured, Windows program that allows players to quickly and easily design and save new game levels and populate them with monsters, weapons, and other power-ups. Officially sanctioned by id software, the editor requires the registered version of *Quake* to function.



The first commercial *Quake* editor, from Virtus, is now available.

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**Apocalypse?**



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 —PC Format, Dec '96

"Apocalypse 3D from VideoLogic really sets the standard."  
 —PC Advisor, Feb '97

"An awesome card."  
 —PC Home, Jan '97

"...Apocalypse 3D is the most powerful, affordable and downright desirable 3D games technology..."  
 —CGW, Jan '97 (UK)

"The VideoLogic Apocalypse 3D will revolutionize your games playing."  
 —PC Answers, Jan '97

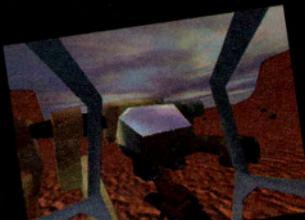
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 —Boot, Mar '97

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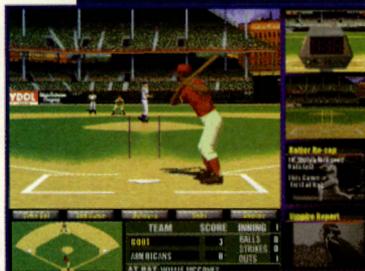
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Continued from page 42 .....

*Elder Scrolls* and *Daggerfall*. Featuring a 3D world and Hi-color graphics, the game will probably play more like *Diablo* than *Daggerfall*, though there will be character-building options and a variety of spells, equipment and monsters.

## Redguard

Bethesda is venturing yet again into the world of Tamriel, but this time there's a new twist. *Redguard* is the first adventure game to be set in the roleplaying universe, but Bethesda promises this will be no ordinary point-and-click puzzler. The action will take place in a third person perspective in the midst of a 3D world with full freedom of movement. Dynamic lighting and animated characters are added treats. The game should be ready by Christmas.



The classic batsmen of yore step up to the plate in Mindscape's *Aaron vs. Ruth*.

## Aaron vs. Ruth

Mindscape is bringing back the greats of old-time baseball in *Aaron vs. Ruth*, a new game featuring motion-captured players and classic names from the past combined into one deluxe baseball package. Authentic mannerisms of classic players will be included in the animations, such as Willie Mays' basket catches, Pete Rose's head-first slides, and Juan Marichal's high leg kick. Classic ballparks such as Ebbetts Field and the Polo Grounds are recaptured in 3D stadiums, while player drafts and home run derbies add extra gameplay options. The game will focus more on arcade-style enjoyment rather than on statistics. Designed for Windows 95, it should be out this April.

..... Continued on page 45

# Apogee vs. Activision

## Who gets credit for Duke?



One would expect some acrimony between Apogee and Hipnotic Interactive, considering that a good part of the latter team is made up of former 3D Realms (a division of Apogee) employees. But the backbiting reached new heights in the wake of Activision's deal with Hipnotic Interactive.

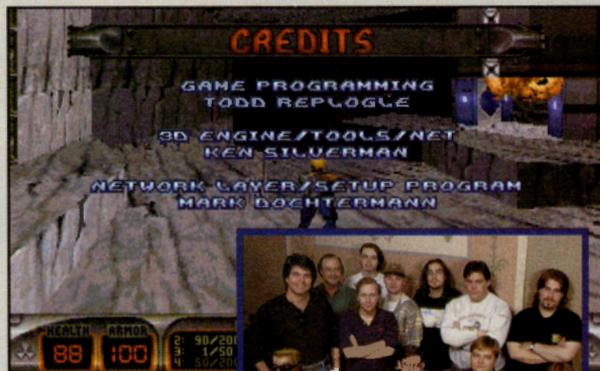
After getting the rights to Hipnotic's new *Quake*-engine game, Activision put out a press release that said in part, "Hipnotic Interactive was founded by a group of programmers, artists, and level designers who formed part of the core creative team responsible for *Duke Nukem 3D*."

According to Apogee president Scott Miller, Activision's release implies that by signing with Hipnotic Interactive, Activision is getting the whole *Duke Nukem* team. Miller vigorously disputes that claim. "It's obvious that both Activision and Hipnotic are both trying to capitalize on the tremendous success of *Duke Nukem 3D* for their own good," says Miller. "It appears that Hipnotic is claiming a much bigger role in *Duke's* success to increase their status, value and clout in the industry. It looks like Activision and some of the news media swallowed the bait whole."

Miller offers some clarification on the Hipnotic team: "Five members left Apogee to found Hipnotic, comprised of a level designer, two programmers, and two non-developers."

Miller points out that only the level designer Richard Grey (known as the "levelord") was a significant member of the *Duke* team. According to Miller, he was "brought on halfway through the project to help our primary level designer, Allen Blum." The two Hipnotic programmers, Jim Dose and Mark Dochtermann, were only marginally involved with *Duke Nukem*, adapting *Rise of the*

## THE DUKE TEAM



### Credits from the Duke menu option:

- Original Concept: Todd Replogle and Allen Blum
- Produced and Directed by: Greg Malone
- Executive Producer: George Broussard
- Build engine: Ken Silverman
- Game programming: Todd Replogle
- 3D Engine/Tools/Net: Ken Silverman
- Network Layer/Setup Program: **Mark Dochtermann**
- Map Design: Allen Blum, **Richard Gray**
- 3D Modelling: Chuck Jones
- Artwork: Dirk Jones, Stephen Hornback, James Storey
- Sound Engine: **Jim Dose**
- Sound and Music: Robert Prince, Lee Jackson
- Voice Talent: Lani Minella, Jon St. John
- Graphic design, packaging, manuals and ads: **Robert Atkins, Michael Hadwin**

(names in bold are now with Hipnotic Interactive)

*Triad* setup, sound utility and device driver modules for *Duke*. The main *Duke* programmers, Ken Silverman and Todd Replogle, are still with Apogee, working on a *Duke* sequel.

"*Prey* was floundering and taking forever while they were here, and it's doing far, far better now that we have new people in here doing the work," says Miller. "It's no wonder they jumped to using the *Quake* engine because they weren't able to make a comparable engine while here at Apogee."

Neither Activision nor Hipnotic Interactive were shy in their response. "Take a look at the full

retail version of *Duke Nukem 3D*. Pictured on the back of it are four of the eight people who work for Hipnotic," says Mitch Lasky, VP of business development at Activision. "I think it's kind of pathetic that Scott's trying to shore up his loss."

Mark Dochtermann of Hipnotic agrees. "As far as Miller's erroneous statement goes, the evidence speaks for itself," says Dochtermann. "Merely open up a *Duke* manual, and the five of us are listed in the credits for *Duke*. Each one of us made significant core contributions to *Duke*, and without us the product would not have been as successful as it is today."

# Scavenger in Limbo

## Into the Shadows programmers gone

**I**nto the Shadows was one of the most talked about games at the last two Electronic Entertainment Expos, but now, nearly a year later, another E3 is approaching, and there's still no sign of a finished game. Unable to contact anyone at Scavenger, we did manage to get a hold of one of the game's developers, Magnus Högdahl, through his attorney.

Högdahl left Scavenger late last year, but he still has a vested interest in the game. "We still own the copyrights to *Into the Shadows*," says Högdahl. "We've always retained those rights. Because of the problems with Scavenger, however, we don't currently expect that it will be published. Instead, we've been focusing on our new game."

Now that they're back in Europe, Högdahl and the rest of the



Scavenger's *Into the Shadows* may never come out.

Triton team (the developers of *Into the Shadows*) have formed a new company, Frozen Moose Entertainment. "We're already working on a new game which will be even better than *ITS*," says Högdahl.

And though certainly disappointed with his first foray into commercial publishing, he is appreciative of the small following that has built up around Triton and the game. "It means a lot to us, some

of the support that's shown up over the Internet in recent weeks," says Högdahl. "We will try to make it up to everyone with our next game."

As far as the rumor that Scavenger has gone out of business, Högdahl had no insight on the matter, having left the company months ago. He also declined to discuss why he has retained an attorney in conjunction with the affair. No one at Scavenger could be reached for comment.

And as for GT Interactive, who signed a big publishing deal with Scavenger and was slated to publish *Into the Shadows*, its relationship with Scavenger may soon be over. "We're evaluating our relationship with Scavenger at this point," said Allyne Mills, Vice President of Corporate Communications at GT. Scavenger is still scheduled to deliver two games to GT: *Into the Shadows* and *Mudkicker*.

Continued from page 44.....

## Yoda Stories

"Try not. Do. Or do not. There is no try." The wise lore of Yoda will be your guide in *Yoda Stories*, the latest installment in LucasArts' Desktop Adventures series. The game chronicles Luke Skywalker's training as he learns the way of the Jedi under Yoda's gentle but probing tutelage. Designed for Windows 95, the game will resemble its predecessor, *Indiana Jones and his Desktop Adventures*, in that it has a unique world generator that can create an endless supply of short, one-hour scenarios.

## VGA Planets 4.0

Programming is well underway with *VGA Planets 4.0*, the latest incarnation of the classic Internet space strategy game. Changes this time around: every race will have three types of fighters and the ship limit has

..... Continued on page 46

ARE STRATEGY GAMES TOO

CIVILIZED?

IMPERIALISM™

COMING THIS FALL



Continued from page 45

been raised to 5,000 at any one time. Other new options include spies, contraband, a Galactic Bank and planet-killer weapons. Being programmed in Visual Basic, the game will be strictly Windows 95 and will ship on CD-ROM.



An Internet classic gets an overhaul, as VGA Planets makes the move to Win95.

## Legacy of Kain

The critically-acclaimed gothic chiller *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain* will make the move from PlayStation to hard drive later this year, courtesy of Activision. In the terrible world of Nosgoth, an innocent noble is murdered by a mob of bandits, then brought back to life through the unholy powers of an evil necromancer. Now a ruthless vampire, Kain must hunt down and destroy his murderers, while continuing to feed his craving for blood by preying on hapless villagers. Look for it this summer.

## Godzilla

Centropolis Interactive is gearing up to start work on *Godzilla*, the PC game adaptation of next year's big summer monster movie. The film, currently in pre-production at the hands of Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin (the duo that produced *Independence Day*) is slated for release on Memorial Day 1998, and the game is scheduled to appear on the same day. Centropolis Interactive, a subsidiary of Emmerich and Devlin's Centropolis Pictures company, is also still hard at work on *10th Planet*, an epic space adventure being co-produced with Bethesda Softworks.

PCG

# Codie Awards Criticized

## Apogee and others knock dubious nominees

The Software Publisher's Association announced the nominees for its annual Codie Awards recently, prompting reactions ranging from puzzlement to disdain from many in the computer entertainment industry. Many critically-acclaimed and popular games were passed over completely, while other titles of dubious merit reaped top honors.

The nominees in the action/arcade category were *Assassin 2015*, *Descent 2*, *Hunter Hunted*, *Rebel Assault II*, and *Shattered Steel*. But some of the biggest games of year in terms of sales and critical praise — *Quake*, *Duke Nukem 3D*, and *MechWarrior II: Mercenaries* for example — were noticeably absent. Another popular action title — *Tomb Raider* — was placed in the Adventure and Role-playing category.

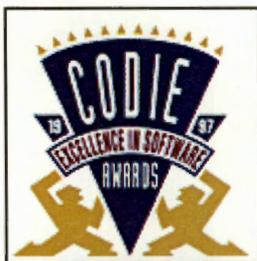
These oversights prompted an angry reaction from Scott Miller, president of Apogee Software. Apogee's own *Duke Nukem 3D* — one of the best-selling and most critically-acclaimed action games of 1996 — was passed over by the Codie nominators. "The SPA is the whole software publishing organization," Miller

commented, "and so these awards might be perceived as being the Oscars for gaming. But how could you put a game like *Assassin 2015* above either *Quake* or *Duke*?"

Those were blockbusters in the minds of players and as far as innovations go."

The remaining nominees also featured many choices that baffled industry watchers. In the category of Simulation, nominees included *A.D.A.M. Practice Practical* (an educational title), *Grand Prix II*, *IndyCar Racing II*, *Links LS* (a sports title), and *MultiPlayer Battle Tech: Solaris*. *Grand Prix II* and *Links LS* also reappeared in the Sports category, along with less distinguished games such as *NBA Full Court Press*, *NHL Powerplay '96*, and *VR Soccer 96*.

The best Strategy game nods went to *Civilization II*, *Close Combat, Z*, *Robert E. Lee* and, inexplicably, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. There was little to dispute in the adventure/roleplay-



The SPA's Codie Awards appear a bit tarnished this year.

ing category with games widely acknowledged as strong titles: *The Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall*, *The Pandora Directive*, *Tomb Raider*, *Spycraft: The Great Game*, and *Zork Nemesis*. But in past years, critically-panned games like *Darkseed* and

*Ascendancy* have beaten out exceptional titles like *Sam and Max Hit the Road* and *Command & Conquer*.

David Phelps, a spokesman for the SPA, described the nominations procedure. A general call for nominations is made to SPA membership, with a mailing to over 3000 companies. Entrants must submit a form nominating their own titles, and send along a copy of the game. This list of as many as 1200 nominees is then reviewed by 120 journalists and educators who decide the final cut.

The SPA is an organization that represents the interests and needs of software publishers. Annual dues are based on revenues, and a large company can easily spend \$15,000 a year to be a member.

# Fallout Dilemma

## GURPS license questionable

Whether or not Interplay will use the GURPS license in its upcoming roleplaying game, *Fallout*, was still being hammered out when we went to press. GURPS is a paper roleplaying game system created by Steve Jackson Games, and *Fallout* was intended to be the first GURPS computer roleplaying game.

Although Interplay recently said that it was dropping the license for that title (see this month's Scoop!), Steve

Jackson, president of Steve Jackson Games, indicated that he was still in negotiations with Interplay over the fate of the title and the GURPS license tied to it. "We are still hoping to sort things out with Interplay and to see *GURPS Fallout* appear as originally planned," said Jackson. "E-mail goes

back and forth with them almost every day. The situation is fluid; cross your fingers. That's really all we want to say until there is some kind of resolution."

Jackson also indi-



Whether Interplay's *Fallout* will use the GURPS license remains to be seen.

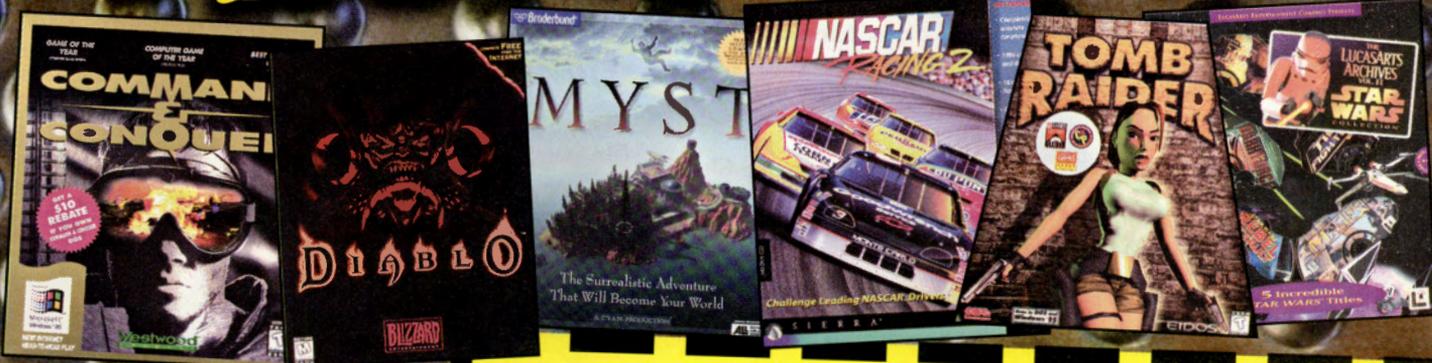
cated that he had other options. "Other computer deals, with other companies on other games, are in the works," he said.

Prior to Jackson's statement, Interplay had released a public statement saying that it had "arrived at a number of creative differences based upon this world and were unable to come to an agreement concerning ongoing approval of this product using the GURPS rule system and name."



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# News Briefs

## Sony Licenses 7th Level Technology

Sony's interactive division has licensed the True 3D technology from 7th Level for use in developing PC games. The technology will be put to use in Sony's upcoming game *BattleGround*, a real-time, multi-player tank battle played across the Internet. True 3D was developed by 7th Level's subsidiary, PyroTechnix.

## Internet Game Developer's Conference

The second annual Internet Game Developer's Conference was held recently in Redwood City, California. Hosted by Mpath Interactive (who runs the Mplayer gaming service), the conference featured industry speakers and panel discussions, covering topics such as "Internet Consumers: Who Are They and What Do They Want?" and "The Power of Online: How It's Affecting Your Retail Business." Among the speakers were science fiction author Ray Bradbury, Mplayer's Brian Apgar, and *PC Gamer's* own Gary Whitta.

## Beam Reopens Melbourne House

Australian developer Beam has relaunched Melbourne House, a fairly well-known publishing label associated with some of gaming's greatest hits. In the 1980s, Melbourne House published *Lord of the Rings* and *Way of the Exploding Fist* for early PCs such as the Sinclair Spectrum and the Com-

modore 64. Melbourne House was later sold to Mastertronic, which in turn became part of Virgin. Now Beam has revived the label, with the real-time strategy game *KKND* as its first title.

## EA Branches Out to Seattle

Electronic Arts has set up a new games studio in Seattle, building on its developer Manley & Associates last year. The new facility will be in downtown Bellevue, WA, with 50 employees and EA plans to add more over the course of the year.

## Tele-Arena for Engage

The Engage Games Online network has added *Tele-Arena*, an online roleplaying game, to its suite of multi-player games. But *Tele-Arena* is no newcomer to the Internet, as the game has been around for nearly six years, having evolved from a text-based, multi-user dungeon to the web-based, graphic-rich world it is now. The game joins other Engage properties such as *Descent Online* and *WarCraft II*.

## Monopoly for Microsoft?

As the world's largest software publisher, Microsoft has often been accused of monopolistic policies, but this time it's all in good fun, as it has announced that its Internet gaming network will carry the online version of *Monopoly*, just one of several Hasbro Interactive CD-ROMs to launch on the service.

## Mplayer

*Continued from page 41*

networking capability, we will work with that developer to make the game available on Mplayer.

TEN says that with your new pricing model, you will not be competitive with them in competing for content, since you will have less money to share with the developers. Do you see that as a problem? That assumes that we will have less revenue under an advertising model than under a subscription model. This is not correct. Because we have reduced the financial barrier to gamers so significantly, we

are already achieving far higher sign-up rates and roughly four times the usage than the previous month. Consequently, with more people on Mplayer for a longer time, we have significantly more opportunities to expose them to advertising. Also, several advertising-centric Internet services will generate between \$20 million and \$40 million this year in ad revenue. Our revenue forecasts suggest that we will generate slightly more revenue in 1997 than we would have under a subscription model, and significantly more in 1998. Consequently, we expect to have more money in place to reward creative game developers.

## The PC Gamer Playlist

What's hot at the magazine's offices this month.

It was time to hit the road, put the pedal to the metal and top off the gas tank with every driving cliché we could think of, as we fired up some early preview copies of Activision's *Interstate '76* and shot it out on the Highway to Hell this month. Bullets flew and tires squealed as we zipped through the deserts at high speeds, gleefully running each other off the road and flinging hot lead into our classic, 1960s-era pony cars. Mike performed admirably behind

the wheel of his muscle Mustang, though he was no match for Jason's and his heavily-armed Plymouth or Dan in his souped-up Chevy. But all fell before the onslaught of Todd "Leadfoot" Vaughn and his General Lee lookalike, who recklessly knocked assailants off the road and then laughed maniacally as he circled the flaming wrecks. "Looks like ol' Todd opened up another can of whup-ass on y'all!" he'd cry out in his West Virginia mountain boy drawl.



Gary uses his "driving on the wrong side of the road" trick again...

1. *Interstate '76* ..... Mike, Jason, Todd
2. *Sega Rally PC* ..... Everybody
3. *Flying Corps* ..... Gary, Joe
4. *Red Alert* ..... Dean, Jason
5. *NASCAR Racing 2* ..... Todd, Dan
6. *NBA Live '97* ..... Gary, Quintin
7. *Callahan's Crosstime Saloon* ..... Mike, Lisa
8. *Privateer 2: The Darkening* ..... Dan, Todd
9. *M.A.X.* ..... Joe, Dan
10. *Diablo* ..... Mike

## TEN

*Continued from page 41*

executing a plan, not by switching strategies every time the wind changes direction. Since the strategy has worked well to this point, we'll continue to employ it. To the extent that we modify the subscription rates, this will likely be an planned phase of our business plan, not a knee-jerk reaction to a competitive announcement or move.

Are you seeing usage drop off, canceled accounts or requests

for a price drop from your users since Mplayer's announcement? We've had our two biggest weekends of new subscriber sign-ups since the Mplayer price change — no kidding. I don't think this would have been different if that announcement had not occurred; I think these record sign-ups are the cumulative result of many efforts on our part: content, marketing, technology, and most importantly, word-of-mouth from our existing customers to their friends and online acquaintances.

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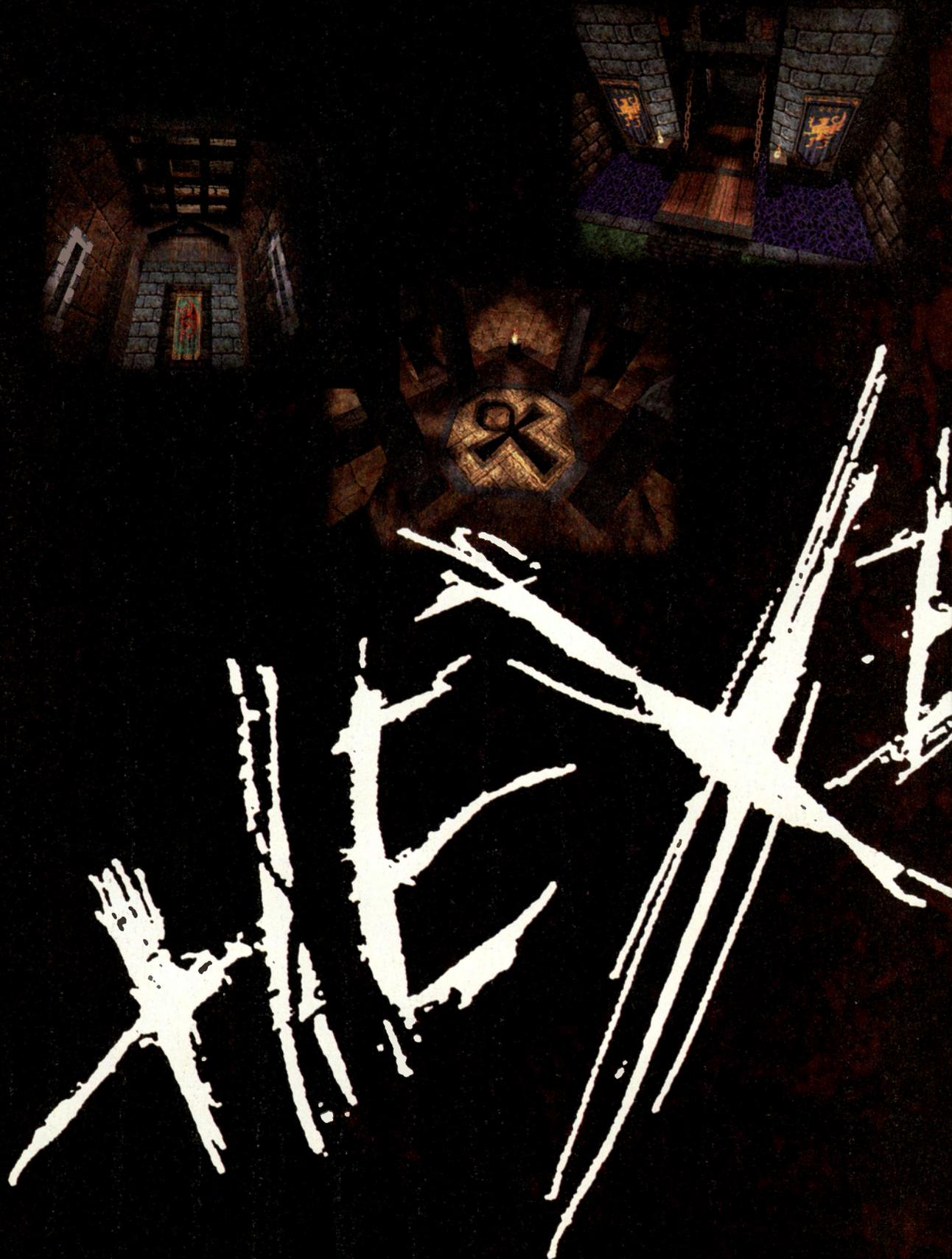
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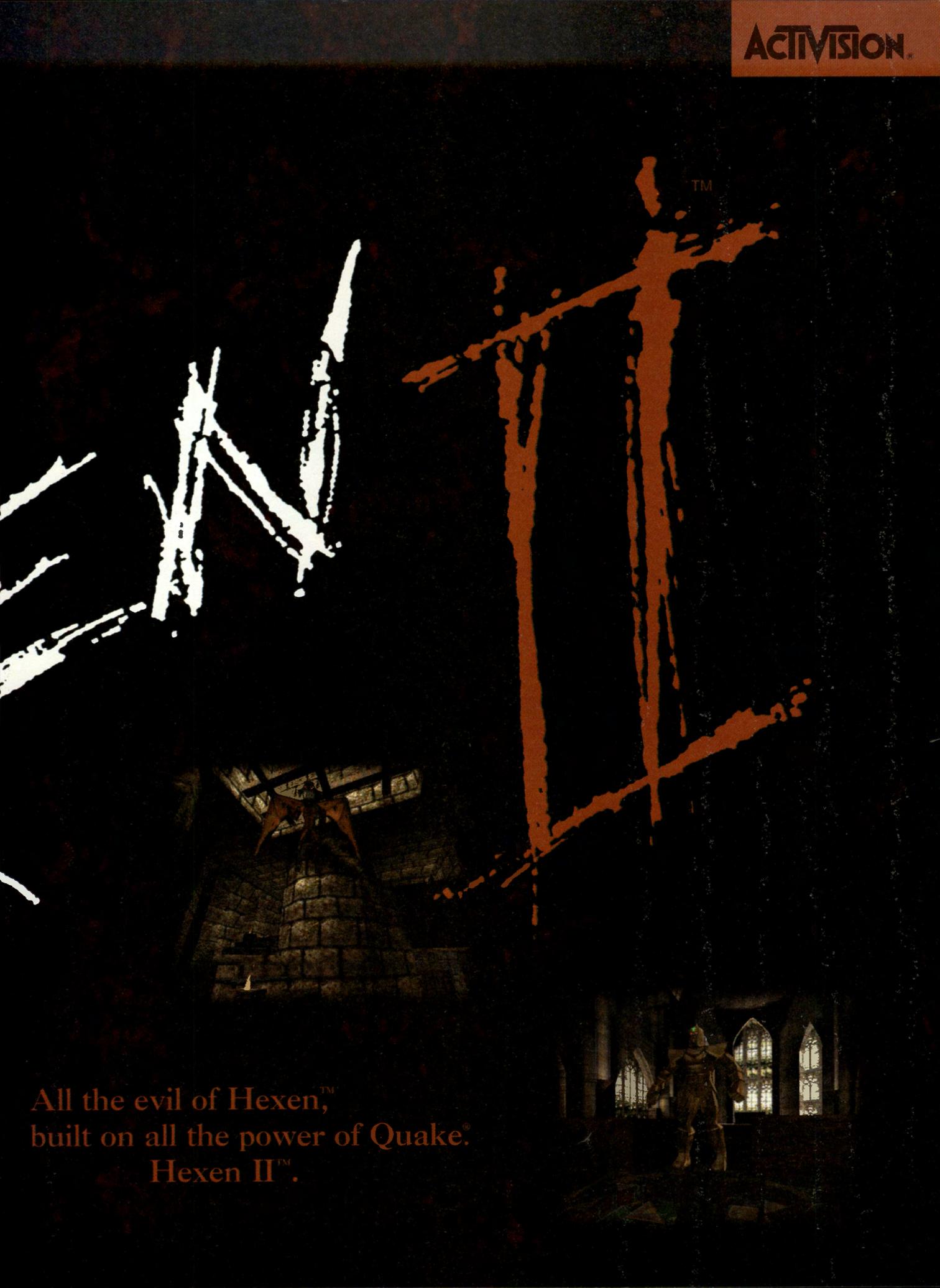
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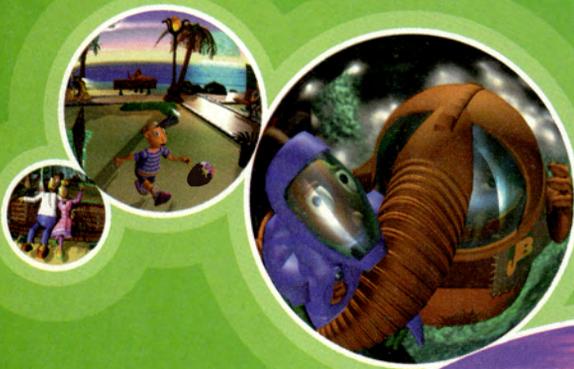
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THE BEST

50

GAMES  
OF ALL TIME

PC games come and go by the dozen every month, but only the true greats endure. Identifying those greats to compile a comprehensive Hall of Fame for PC gaming was no easy task — but we believe the list we've come up with is about as definitive as it gets. **By the Editors of PC Gamer**



"At a push, I'd have to say my all-time favorite game is *Doom*. I don't think I've ever played any other PC game as much — I was glued to it for over a year. *Wolfenstein 3D* had given a tantalizing glimpse of what was to come, but nobody was really prepared for *Doom* — it blew everyone away, and all this time later, it's still great to pick up and play because it's simpler, brighter, and more immediate than *Quake* or *Duke Nukem 3D*. In fact, all this talk about *Doom* has got me in the mood for a game."

★★★

GARY WHITTA  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

## The Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall

BETHESDA SOFTWORKS

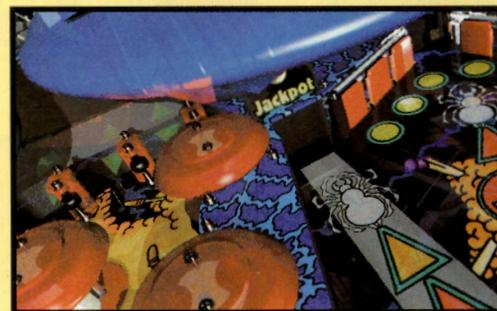
**50** It may come as a shock for some to see our Best Roleplaying Game of 1996 award-winner occupy the last spot in our list. A fantastic game of first-person action and roleplaying, *Daggerfall* contains all the features that make for an excellent RPG — story line, player-controlled statistics, and a huge game world to explore. However, *Daggerfall* also contains rather a lot of irksome bugs — but the game's so great at heart, it rises above these glitches and, with the various downloadable patches applied to fix many of these technical irritations, players will find a superlative RPG filled with enough action to occupy them for months on end.



## Pro Pinball: The Web

EMPIRE/INTERPLAY

**49** A few years ago, pinball simulations were little more than a novelty among computer games, but thanks to a wave of nostalgia for this classic pastime, pinball games have become a hot commodity among computer gamers. One of the finest examples of this delightful trend is Empire's *Pro Pinball: The Web*, which delivers a dead-on accurate representation of those classic coin-operated dinosaurs with stunning graphics and unprecedented control. If you yearn for those carefree days of youth where all you needed was a pocket full of quarters to find happiness, *Pro Pinball: The Web* is your ticket to the past.



## Tony LaRussa Baseball 3

STORM FRONT STUDIOS

**48** What Front Page Sports did for the game of gridiron, the Tony La Russa Baseball series did for baseball. A perennial champion in this competitive field, the game features the kind of in-depth statistical accuracy that true baseball fans demand. Where other games might track basic numbers like players' batting averages or pitchers' ERAs, *Tony La Russa Baseball* tracked dozens of different, in-depth statis-



tics, everything from Ooba (opponent's on-base average) to GIDP (grounded into double play). Custom league options, play editors, season simulations, spring training, stadium packs, and career leagues all put more meat on an already substantial bone, making this the most well-rounded and versatile of all the baseball sims available for PC. First published by SSI way back in 1991 for the Commodore 64 as well as the PC, the series returned to triumph with a sequel in 1993 and again in 1995 as *Tony La Russa Baseball 3*. It's this most recent version that remains our favorite, beating off heavy-hitting competition from major-league publishers two years later. An admirable achievement.

## Star Trail: Realms of Arkania

SIR-TECH

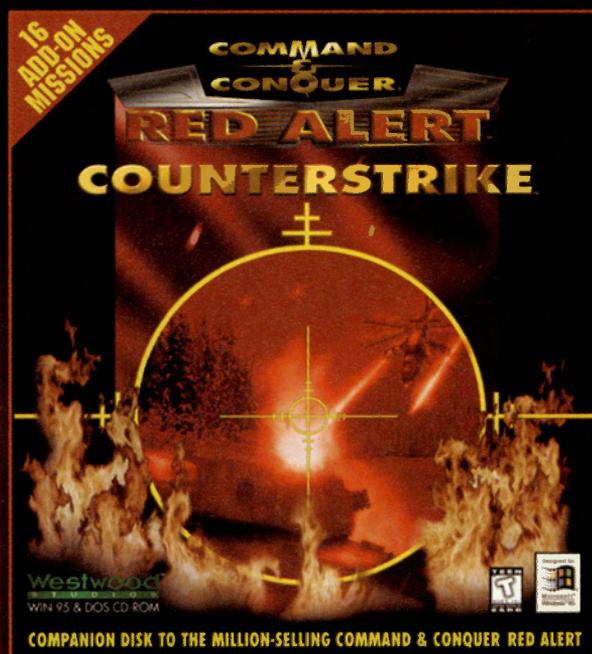
**47** This was the winner of our Best Roleplaying Game of 1994 award, and with good reason — it's one of the best RPGs you can get. The statistics are endless, the combat configurable, and the story intense. Not for the novice, *Star Trail* takes hours of work to get past the first few days, but the payoff is worth it. Never before, nor since, has a RPG contained as much depth or player control as this one, and with an automap, online diary, and printable character sheets, the game makes it as simple as



possible to micromanage your party. Truly an achievement of RPG greatness, *Star Trail* has everything for the hard-core roleplaying gamer.

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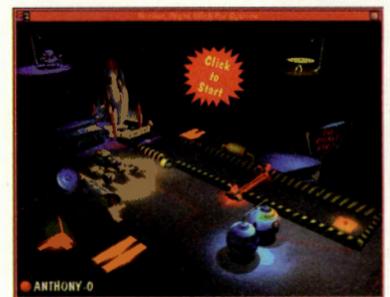
A wild ride through the right side of the brain.

You get two, nine-hole courses. One with classic mini golf holes like the big shoe, the windmill. The other nine holes are totally nutty. There's the space port where you can putt on the moon, the volcano where your ball can be incinerated in molten lava and a prehistoric jungle where the Tyrannosaurus Rex has developed a taste for golf balls.

It's weird, wild and more fun than a whoopee cushion.

3-D Ultra Mini Golf gives you incredibly realistic ball physics that make even the most radical bank-shots possible. You can play it alone or with as many as four players.

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Product Information Number 303

## Close Combat

MICROSOFT

**46** Like a breath of fresh air, *Close Combat* was a radical leap forward for war-games, one of the most predictable and staid of PC game genres. Gone were the hexagons, ungainly unit squares, and the unrealistic "your turn, my turn" style of play drawn straight from boardgames. Instead, each individual soldier is tracked for morale, bullets are counted, units fade in and out of view, and chaos reigns on the battlefield. Nor would these soldiers blindly charge into oncoming fire the way so many games permit. Our Wargame of the Year for 1996, we loved its attention to detail and its quick and easy Internet play. Although the units are small and the game is a little short in length, we believe its innovations will change the way we perceive wargames.



## V for Victory Series

THREE-SIXTY PACIFIC

**45** Wargames have existed since mankind first knew how to argue, and the V for Victory series revolutionized how the wargame was regarded on the PC. There's nothing like an oldie but a goodie to remind us just how great the games of the past have been. The V for Victory games introduced not only the colorful, detailed graphics we've come to expect from the genre, but also a combination of simplistic play and complex strategy that makes a wargame truly great. Rounded off with a variety of units and realistic recreations of World War Two maneuvers, the series showed just how a wargame should be made, and few turn-based strategy games have measured up since.



**"I have more vivid memories of the things I saw and did while playing *System Shock* than I've gotten from any other PC game. The richness of its 3D world and the freedom of movement it provides made *System Shock* the most immersive first-person game I've ever played. I'll love *Doom* 'til the day I die, but when I think back on it, I see images on a PC screen. It just doesn't live in my memory the way *System Shock* does. I recall some of the locations in Citadel Station almost as if I'd really been there. I'm still looking for a game that draws me in the way this one did."**

★ ★ ★

**DAN BENNETT**  
EDITOR

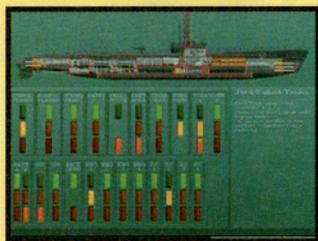
## Silent Hunter

SSI

**44** Even though submarine simulations are one of the most underrepresented sub-genres (excuse the pun), SSI proved that they can be every bit as thorough and detailed as any flight sim with its breathtaking World War Two submarine simulation *Silent Hunter*. Using historical data and input from genuine WWII sub commanders, *Silent*



*Hunter* recreated every aspect of the harsh, unforgiving environment of WWII Pacific Theater naval combat with exquisite detail, delivering countless hours of nail-biting fun. Brought to life by superb graphics and multi-media reference materials, *Silent Hunter* never skimped on detail or challenge yet remained playable for novice gamers. Highly recommended.



## Might & Magic III: The Isles of Terra

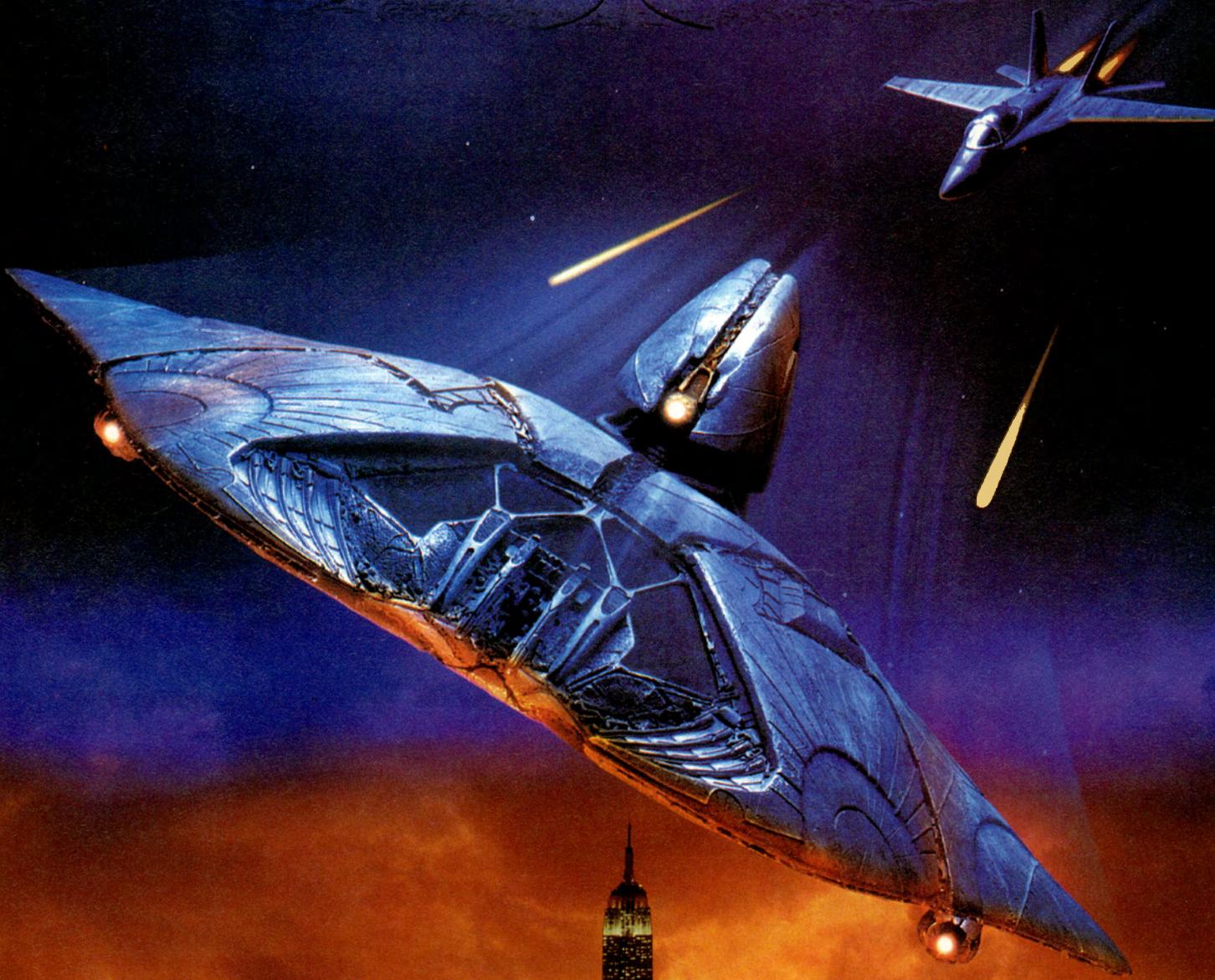
NEW WORLD COMPUTING

**43** When it comes to roleplaying games, few could deny that New World Computing's *Might and Magic III* set a standard for colorful graphics in a richly detailed fantasy realm. The first-person view and variety of weapons, items, and spells improved on ideas already available, but New World Computing did it in such a way that most gamers fondly recall their adventures through the *Might and Magic* universe. Mixed with a story of sweeping proportions and a variety of characters to choose from, the game stands up even today against the best the genre has to offer.



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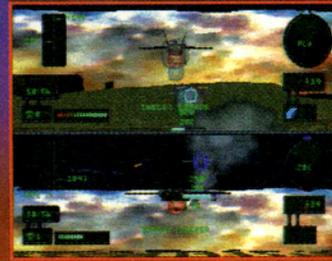
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Blast your way through over a dozen missions that take you from the Grand Canyon, to Tokyo, to Paris.



Multi-player capabilities provide head-to-head combat.



## Front Page Sports: Football Pro

SIERRA

**42** From the wealth of statistical data to its horde of customizable options, *FPS Football Pro* goes beyond the flash and graphics of arcade titles to the depth of strategy underlying the sport. You can design your own plays and place them in your custom playbook, custom league options let you build leagues from virtually any era, and career leagues let you record a lifetime of statistics for all the players in your league, with every season ending with player retirements and a rookie draft. Leagues, plays, and teams are saved as separate files, making them easy to trade on bulletin boards and the Internet, and the multi-



oldest versions of the game.

player league options created a thriving community of online gamers long before it was cool. The series is so popular that Internet leagues today still exist based on some of the



**"Between deadlines, meetings, and reviewing games, there are few occasions when we get to sit back and reflect about our favorite games, so excuse me if I gush a bit about my personal favorite — *Ultima Underworld*. This phenomenal roleplaying game is quite simply one of the best I've ever played. There are countless reasons to appreciate this classic — fluid controls, unprecedented interactivity, and an outstanding story line — but the #1 reason is fun."**

★★★

**TODD VAUGHN**  
DEPUTY EDITOR

## Diablo

BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT

**41** It's not often that a game catches our attention like *Diablo*, but Blizzard's innovative blend of fantasy and action grabbed us like little else last year. Ostensibly simple, continued play reveals a surprising depth and extremely addicting quality, as characters new gain spells and abilities. The interface and game controls are admirably



easy to use. Exceptional graphics and ominous sound effects help create the game's dark and foreboding atmosphere of evil, creating one of the most believable — and frightening — dungeon crawls ever made. And where so many other games have taken the DeathMatch route, *Diablo*'s cooperative play is very refreshing, harking back to the days of the arcade classic, *Gauntlet*. But perhaps its finest features is its free and user-friendly Internet component, which stands as a model to the rest of the industry.

## Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe

THE BITMAP BROTHERS

**40** This aging, British-built game is almost impossibly difficult to track down these days, but if you find a copy, grab it fast. *Speedball 2* is a violent mix of hockey and basketball (played in a steel arena between teams of armor-plated players), and it's one of the best futuresports game for the PC, some five years after it first appeared. Punch, shove, and foul to your heart's content — there are no fair-play rules here.



Only two goalzones, one iron ball, and an abundance of inventive power-ups, traps, and score multipliers are used against the opposing team.



Technically primitive by today's flashy standards, *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe* is nevertheless still one of the most playable sports games ever devised.

## Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis

LUCASARTS

**39** There aren't many games bold enough to center around a man with a whip, but when that man is Indiana Jones, it makes perfect sense. There's been more than one Indiana Jones graphic adventure, but *The Fate of Atlantis* has yet to be surpassed. With a non-linear approach to solving the game, there exists a replay value rarely seen in this genre. If you pick



up this classic, look for the CD-ROM enhanced version that includes digitized speech and some ground-breaking quality in voice acting. As with its tremendous series of Star Wars titles, LucasArts again proves that it has an innate sense of what makes Lucasfilms' movies tick, and how to turn them into great games.

## SimCity 2000

MAXIS

**38** There was a time when everyone was playing *SimCity*, an amazingly detailed and incredibly addictive game from a then unknown company, Maxis. A revolutionary title, it practically invented the simulation genre on PC, and hooked countless gamers with its bulldozers, parks and quintessential inhabitants, the Sims. The game has you build a small town into a sprawling metropolis, complete with crime, budget deficits, pollution and traffic jams. *SimCity 2000* took that wonderful essence and expanded it into a lush, SVGA experience, replete with new options such as underground piping and water tables, adding



greatly to the original while retaining its charm. If you want to play *SimCity* today *SimCity 2000* is the way to go -- at least until we get a look at *SimCity 3000* later this year.

## D/Generation

MINDSCAPE

**37** This is a genuine classic, but probably not a very well-known one. Relatively



unsung at the time of its release, *D/Generation* is a clever arcade game with an absorbing mix of puzzles and action that was one of the first to use a three-quarter top-down isometric perspective. As a courier, you enter the high-tech offices of a shady biological weapons company in downtown Singapore to deliver a top-secret package to the mysteri-

ous Doctor Derrida, but since something sinister has taken over, you're forced to find a way past some devilishly clever security systems -- and the artificially-intelligent genetic weapons (including a morphing T-1000 style boss baddy) that now have the run of the place. The graphics are clean, crisp, and simple, which adds to its charm, and there's a compelling story that unfolds nicely as you progress through the increasingly difficult levels. The end scene is downright trippy. If you're curious about this title, you may be in luck. It's since been re-released on a CD compilation through its original publisher Mindscape (formerly The Software Toolworks), and is well worth tracking down.

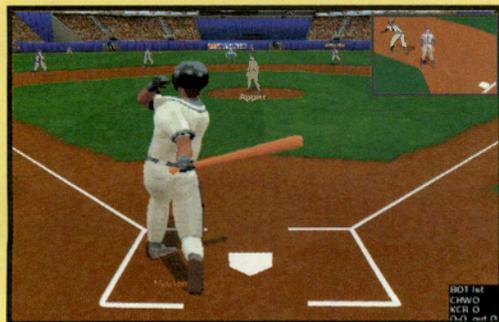
## Triple Play 97

ELECTRONIC ARTS

**36** Responsible for bringing PC Gamer production to a virtual standstill for



weeks on end last summer, EA Sports' big-hitting baseball action game is a triumph, proving that sports sims don't need to be laden with reams of stats to be enjoyable. Arcade fun is the name of the game here, and there's loads of it to be had, with some of the simplest, most instinctive batting, pitching, and fielding controls yet devised and the exemplary aesthetics and broadcast-quality presentation that EA Sports has made its trademark. *Triple Play 97* is best PC baseball game outright, and one of the greatest sports games ever overall.



## Monkey Island II: LeChuck's Revenge

LUCASARTS

**35** The oldest LucasArts game in this Top 50, but still one of the company's best ever, *Monkey Island II* picked up where the original left off and once again confirmed LucasArts as the pre-eminent force in the graphic adventure genre. Expansive, lavish, clever and funny, *LeChuck's Revenge* still looks and plays great by today's high standards and boasts moments of comic genius which have never been topped. The genre may since have been left to stagnate in favor of flaccid *Myst*-style offerings, but milestones like this serve to remind us just how much fun adventuring can be.

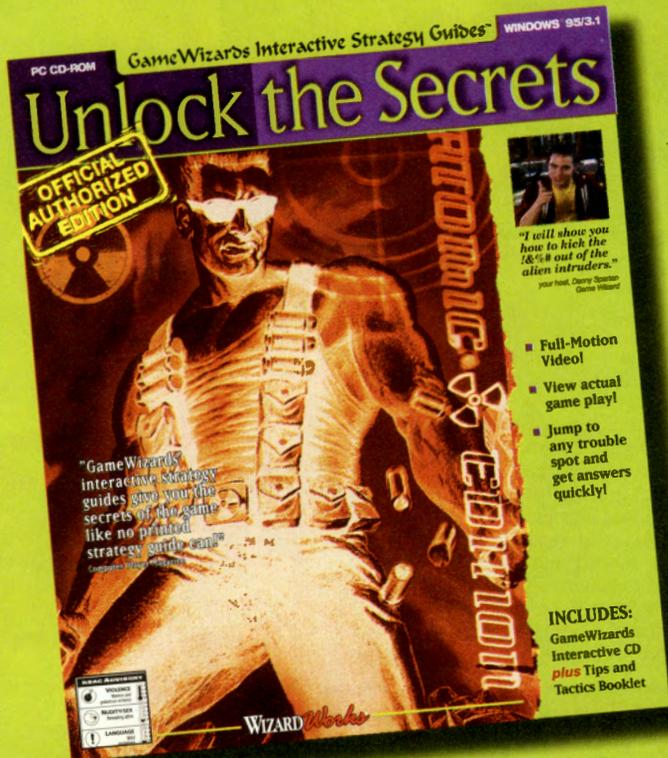


**"There are so many great games in this list, but the game I've most been smitten by this past year was *Heroes of Might & Magic II*. I've lost count of the number of hours I've spent battling on those maps, and there's not a single element of the game I'm unhappy with — a rarity indeed. I was pushing very hard on getting it into the top ten before I realized how much support the game already had, so in the end it was a shoe-in. I was also very vocal about a couple of old favorites of mine, *D/Generation* and *Beat the House*. I was glad one managed to stay on the list this year.**

★ ★ ★

**JOE NOVICKI**  
DISC EDITOR

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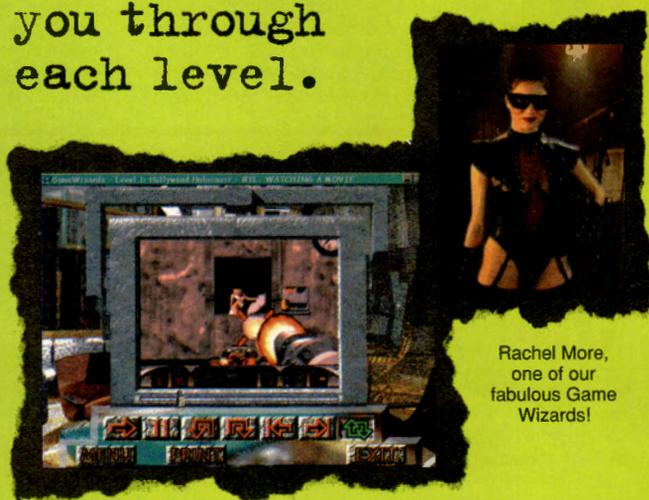
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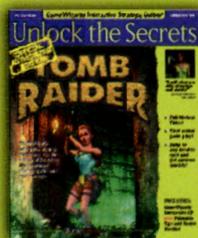
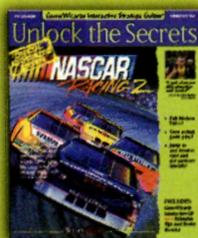
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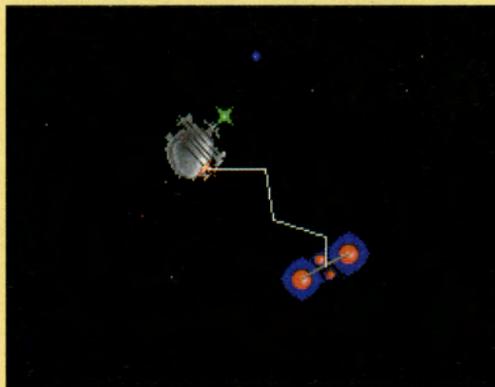
...and many more!

Product Information Number 361

## Master of Orion

MICROPROSE

**34** The first great space conquest strategy game is still one of the best, fending off strong competition over the last couple of years to retain its place in our coveted All-Time Top 50 lineup. Often referred to as *Civilization* in space, *Master of Orion* mixed all the essential elements and decision-making struggles of building a vast empire into a fun, simple and totally addictive package. Managing resources, researching technologies, designing faster and more powerful ships, and developing diplomatic relationships are all performed so simply, it's a game you can jump right into and spend hours, days, weeks playing. And it's because of its simplicity that we give it a slight nod over the recent sequel which, while more flashy and elaborate, lacked the hands-on immediacy of this classic original.



## Star Control II

ACCOLADE

**33** The mix of space exploration and combat in *Star Control II* was groundbreaking at the time, and amazingly, it's as enjoyable now as when it first came out. The space battles, with so many different types of ships, all with unique skills, provide some of the best arcade fun you can have on the PC. It's a quality improvement over the original *Star Control* that doesn't have quite the epic scope; even so, *Star Control II* has a much better storyline than the recent release of *Star Control III*.

Though sharp arcade skills are necessary to win the game, it ties in very nicely with the storyline of this epic adventure.

## Wing Commander: The Kilrathi Saga

ORIGIN

**32** Chris Roberts' groundbreaking trilogy of space combat games come together in this definitive collector's edition. Optimized for Windows 95, the original *Wing Commander* and its sequel hold up surprisingly well today, and the quantum leap forward that was *Wing Commander III: Heart Of The Tiger* is both an eye-popping interactive movie (which set new standards that have still to be bettered) and one of the few spaceflight games that can give *TIE Fighter* a run for its money. Together, this is one formidable package not just for its historical importance but also as a thrilling threesome of balls-to-the-wall action games.



## Harpoon II

THREE-SIXTY PACIFIC

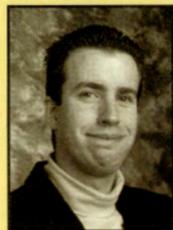
**31** Years after its release, this is still the deepest, most sophisticated treatment of modern naval warfare you can find for your PC. With a windowed interface that mimics a modern war room, *Harpoon II* calls on a vast database of military hardware and geographic information to create an amazingly realistic and absorbing wargame. The enhanced CD-ROM version, *Harpoon II Deluxe*, adds video clips, new battle sets, and an excellent scenario editor. After a series of patches, it's superior in most ways to the original *Harpoon* — it's a crying shame that *Harpoon II* hasn't been reissued in a "classic" edition the way the older game has.



**"From the moment WarCraft II arrived at the PCG offices, I was hooked. It's one of the most playable, addictive, and enduring games ever. The user-friendly interface, engaging characters, and ever-increasing difficulty level are enhanced by the gorgeous Super VGA graphics and stellar sound effects and music. The game is always fresh, even after you finish the pre-set missions, thanks to the scenario editor, random mission generator, and multi-player options. Blizzard listened to player comments about the original WarCraft, and incorporated many of the suggestions into the sequel. This attention to detail really shows."**

★★★

**LISA RENNINGER**  
MANAGING EDITOR



"I should probably be committed. I can't stop playing Westwood's *Command & Conquer* games. When *C&C* first came out, I played it non-stop. Three days, 2 hours, and 15 minutes of pure *C&C*. No food. No sleep. No...well, you know.... I couldn't help myself. I played as the GDI; I played as the Nod. I didn't care — I just wanted to play. If the original *C&C* had included *Red Alert's* skirmish option, I would never have left the computer. Then came *Red Alert...the new units* (awesome!), the skirmish option (beautiful!), and Westwood Chat (Wow!). My life will never be the same."

★ ★ ★

DEAN RENNINGER  
ART DIRECTOR

## Lemmings

PSYGNOSIS

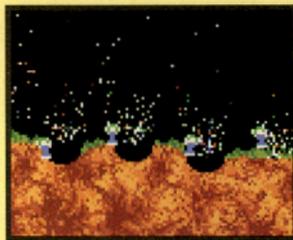
**30** What best-of list would be complete without a showing by the mop-headed nincompoops



known as the Lemmings?

Arguably the best puzzle-game series ever created, the original *Lemmings* started life as an Amiga game and quickly powered its way to success on every gaming platform with its special brand of hair-pulling puzzling and undeniable charm. Your goal is to guide the little lemmings to safety through a level full of hazards using

a few limited tools, but there's a catch — lemmings are incredibly stupid. As you attempt to save their lives you'll watch in horror as they walk off ledges plummeting to their death. It was original, fresh, and funny, and it's a formula that proved so addictive and challenging that the *Lemmings* continue to be seen in numerous sequels.



## Railroad Tycoon

MICROPROSE

**29**

One of the earliest economic empire-building games, this game still holds up incredibly well today. *Railroad Tycoon* places you at the dawn of rail transportation with nothing but a trunk full of capitol from a handful of courageous investors, and it challenges you to create a sprawling railway system and keep it profitable. Train buffs went nuts for this game, and rightly so — but even gamers who thought the subject matter sounded too dry soon found themselves helplessly addicted. *Railroad Tycoon* is a perfect example of what made Sid Meier one of the few household names in computer game design.



## The Complete Ultima VII

ORIGIN

**28**

Available as one of its Classic Collections series, Origin's *Ultima VII* finally nailed down the perfect amount of adventuring, combat, and story line within Lord British's popular land of Britannia. The collection includes *The Black Gate*, *Forge of Virtue*, *Serpent Isle*, and *The Silver Seed*, which is over 200 hours of roleplaying goodness in one package. Although one of the older games on this list, *Ultima VII* will live on in the hearts and minds of gamers everywhere as the quintessential *Ultima* title that finally put together all the pieces that made the series great.

*Black Gate*, *Forge of Virtue*, *Serpent Isle*, and *The Silver Seed*, which is over 200 hours of roleplaying goodness in one package. Although one of the older games on this list, *Ultima VII* will live on in the hearts and minds of gamers everywhere as the quintessential *Ultima* title that finally put together all the pieces that made the series great.



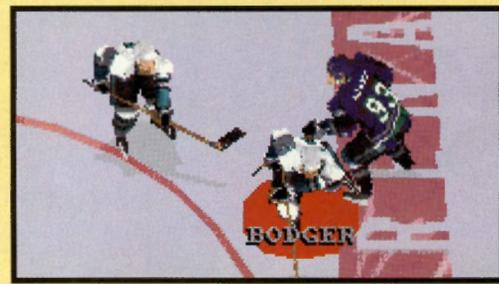
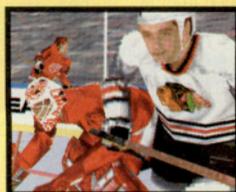
## NHL '97

ELECTRONIC ARTS

**27**

It's no secret that Electronic Arts fields a winning line-up of sports

titles under its EA Sports banner, yet out of all those excellent offerings few have been as consistently satisfying as its series of hockey simulations. Comprised of hands-on action and detailed stats, the *NHL* series has always been a top choice for pure-unadulterated sporting fun. But with *NHL '97* Electronic Arts solidified the essence of the sport like few games before it, delivering crushing blows, powerful animations, and heart-stopping challenge from the first drop of the puck to the final whistle. Top it all off with a healthy portion of multiplayer action and you've got one of the finest sports games around. Period.



Winston is such a girl.  
Always opting for diplomacy when he  
could just bombard his enemy from space  
with orbiting dreadnoughts.

Yeah.  
A big fat girl.



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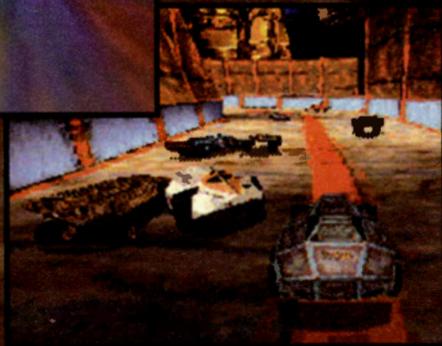
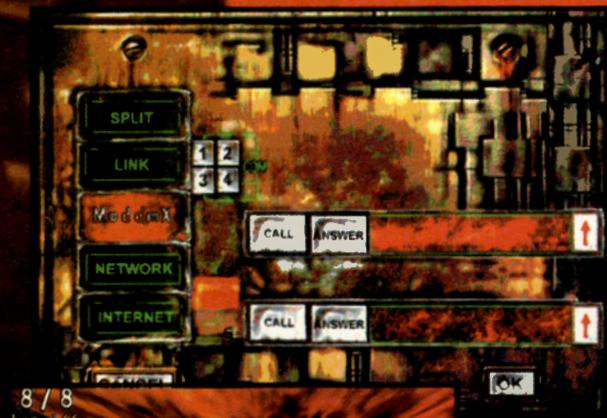
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Product Information Number 333



**"Five games make my all-time great list — *Civilization*, *Doom*, *X-COM*, *War-Craft II*, and *TIE Fighter* — but putting them in some kind of order is excruciating: sometimes I'm in the mood for something mellow, other times some hard-fought action. But if it must be one, than it has to be *Civilization*; I spent more hours with it than any of the others, locked in that 'just one more turn' loop more times than I can recall. Finally, I was using every editor I could find to make new units and new technologies — something that *Civilization II* has made much easier."**

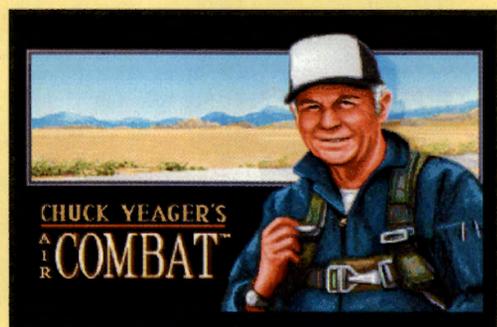
★ ★ ★

**JASON BATES**  
ONLINE/NEWS EDITOR

## Chuck Yeager's Air Combat

ELECTRONIC ARTS

**26** Even though it boasts the input of America's most famous test pilot, *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat* isn't exactly the most realistic flight sim we've ever played, but it certainly qualifies as one of the most fun. Featuring campaigns and missions from three different eras of flight (World War Two, Korea, Vietnam) and highly customizable options, *Air Combat* set itself apart by capturing the seat-of-the-pants flying style of its superstar namesake who always urged players on by saying "Get back up and try it again." Though the graphics are dated by today's standards, the infectious fun of this classic makes it as playable as ever, and is a must-see for fans of flight.



## Syndicate

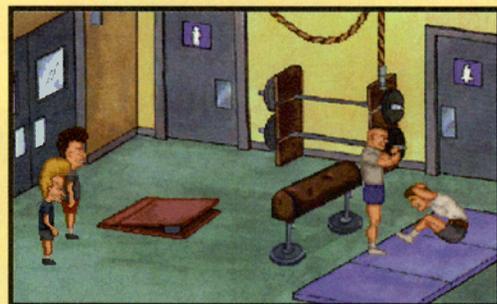
BULLFROG

**25** Imagine a corrupt future society, riddled with crime. Now imagine yourself as a high-tech crime boss intent on ruling the world. With four cybernetically controlled henchmen at your disposal you'll bump off government officials, steal new technologies, slaughter the populace at large, and wage war against the cops as you gain control of the world — one territory at a time. Originality, unabashed violence, and highly addictive gameplay are just some of the reasons we haven't been able to escape the grasp of Bullfrog's sinister *Syndicate*, where your preconceptions about right and wrong are thrown out the window as you blast your way from one level to the next. Whether it's the high-pitched purr of a fully loaded chaingun or the satisfying thunka, thunka, thunka, BOOM! of the Gauss gun there's more than enough destructive power in *Syndicate* to help you sleep easier at night.

## Beavis & Butt-Head in Virtual Stupidity

VIACOM NEW MEDIA

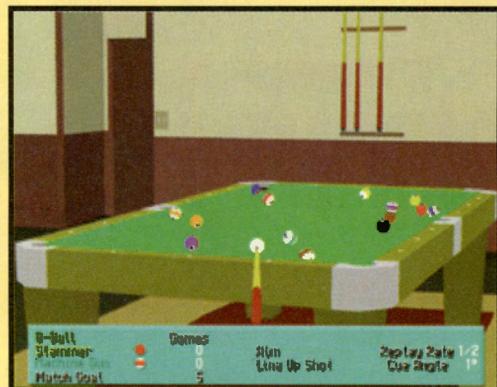
**24** Our decision to give this one the *PC Gamer* Award for Best Adventure of 1995 was met with disbelief by some readers, but it really is an excellent game. It helps if you're a fan of the cartoon series it's based on, but *Beavis & Butt-Head in Virtual Stupidity* should appeal to any gamer who has a sense of humor and enjoys a good graphic adventure. Unlike most adaptations of movie or television licenses, there's real gameplay here — *Virtual Stupidity* would work even without MTV's juvenile delinquents — but it's also very faithful to the series, capturing its unique look at humor flawlessly.



## Virtual Pool

INTERPLAY

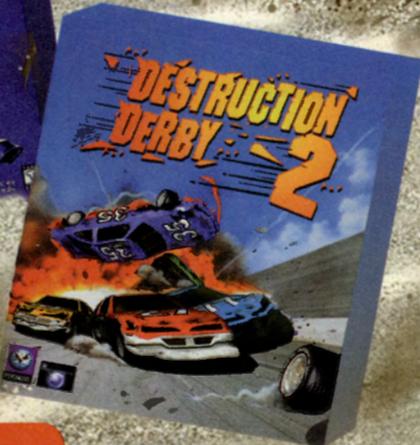
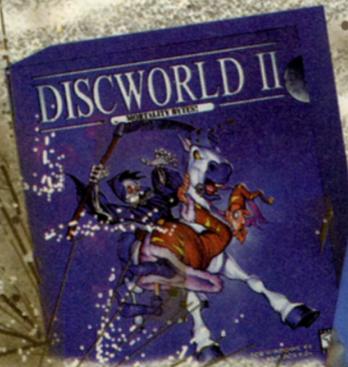
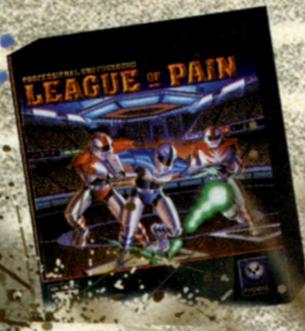
**23** From the physics model to the smooth interface, Interplay's *Virtual Pool* recreates the classic bar game on your PC with perfection. The full-motion instructions and trick-shots by "Machine Gun" Lou Butera notwithstanding, the actual game, which contains four pool variants and some of the toughest computer opponents you could find, has everything an aspiring pool player could want. Guaranteed to improve your actual pool skills, this game delivers on its promises, and with multi-player support in the Windows 95 version, it will continue to deliver for a long time.





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**"As a roleplaying and adventure gamer, it's rather surprising that the best game I've played all year is an action shooter. But *Tomb Raider* grabbed hold of me and refused to let go. The graphics were amazing, and the play control a plus, but what really got to me was the vastness of the levels and the ingenuity of the puzzles. From running and jumping to pulling blocks and diving under the water, *Tomb Raider* forced me to play all the way through, and now that I've finished it, I want more. I'm itching for the release of *Tomb Raider 2* almost more than for *Return to Krondor* or *Shadows Over Riva*. May the RPG community forgive me."**

★ ★ ★

**MICHAEL WOLF**  
ASST. DISC EDITOR

## Alone in the Dark

I-MOTION

**22** Simply put, this is one of the most unique action/adventure games to grace the PC. *Alone in the Dark* places you in a haunted mansion as you guide your character through room after room of pitfalls while looking for clues and picking up necessities. Its novel use of cinematic camera angles and ease of control set a new standard. Whether you're finding secret passages or karate chopping zombies, the eerie atmosphere and ever-present sense of danger combine to keep you playing. There have been two sequels since *AITD*, but none have come as close to the excellent storyline and feel of the original.



## Populous

ELECTRONIC ARTS

**21** This breakthrough game for the now legendary Bullfrog Productions (*Syndicate*, *Magic Carpet*) single-handedly invented the God Game genre way back in 1989, and it's still one of the best. Simply put, you act as the hand of God to direct the little people in your race against your opponent evil deity across a series of isometric battlegrounds. As you instruct your little people to build, fight, and conquer, you can toss around some suitably God-like effects such as earthquakes, floods, and volcanoes. It's a perfect example of the innovation and originality of Bullfrog's approach to gaming.



## Ultima Underworld I & II

ORIGIN SYSTEMS

**20** After establishing the Ultima universe as one of the finest role-playing environments around with the success of *Ultima 1-6*, Origin decided to take the series for a slight detour as it teamed with Blue Sky Software (now known as Looking Glass Technologies) to create two of the most memorable first-person 3D dungeon crawls ever created. Maintaining the moral and



humane qualities of the Ultima brand, the *Underworld* game avoided the typical hack-and-slash themes of the genre and presented strong character interaction, thoughtful puzzles, unprecedented control, and genuine roleplaying in ways that have yet to be duplicated. We highly recommend you try these for yourself.

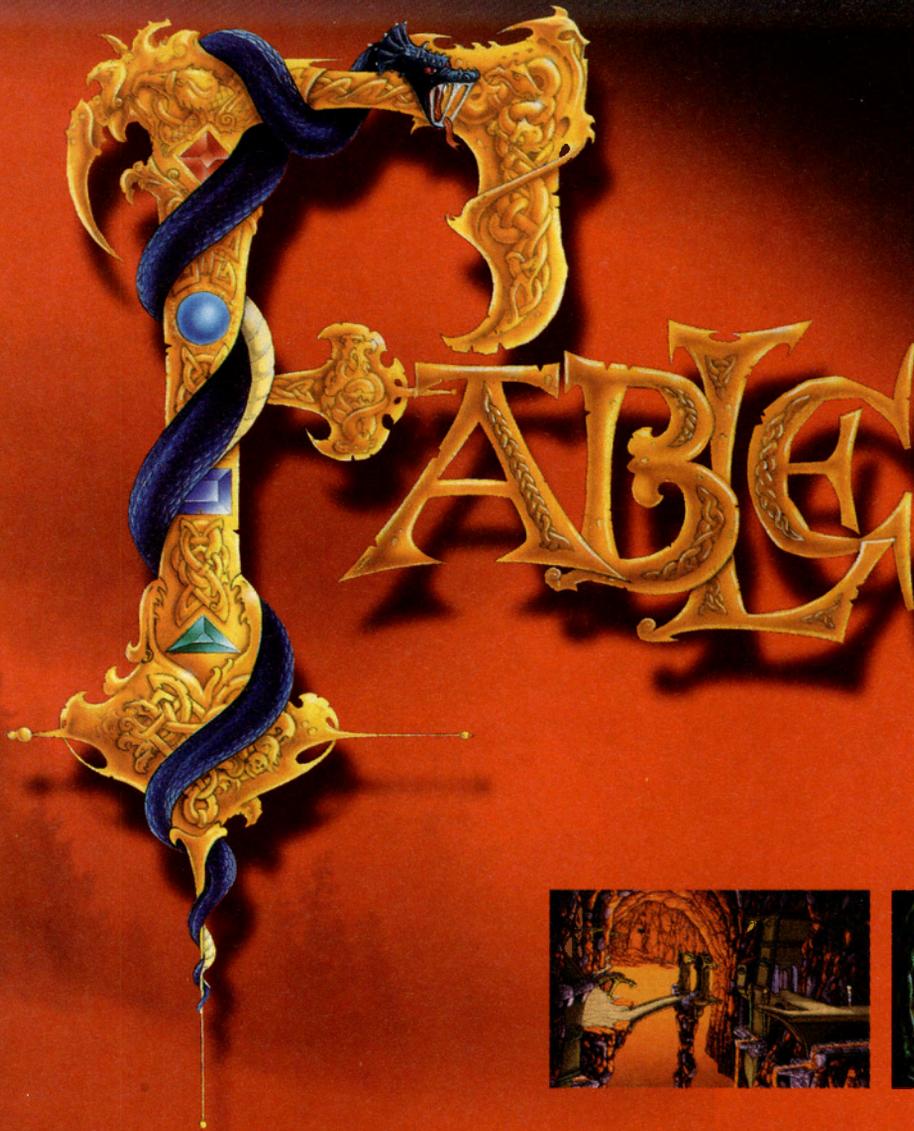
## Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers

SIERRA

**19** Of all of Sierra's excellent graphic adventures, we felt *Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers* truly captured the cinematic scope and excellent play of the best. Set in New Orleans, the voice acting, puzzle play, and supernatural events mixed together to create a game that grabbed players from the moment it began to the final scene. Even the digitized video of Sierra's latest releases doesn't come close to the pure thrill of discovery when all the mysteries come into the light. This is, quite simply, Sierra's best offering yet in the graphic adventure arena.



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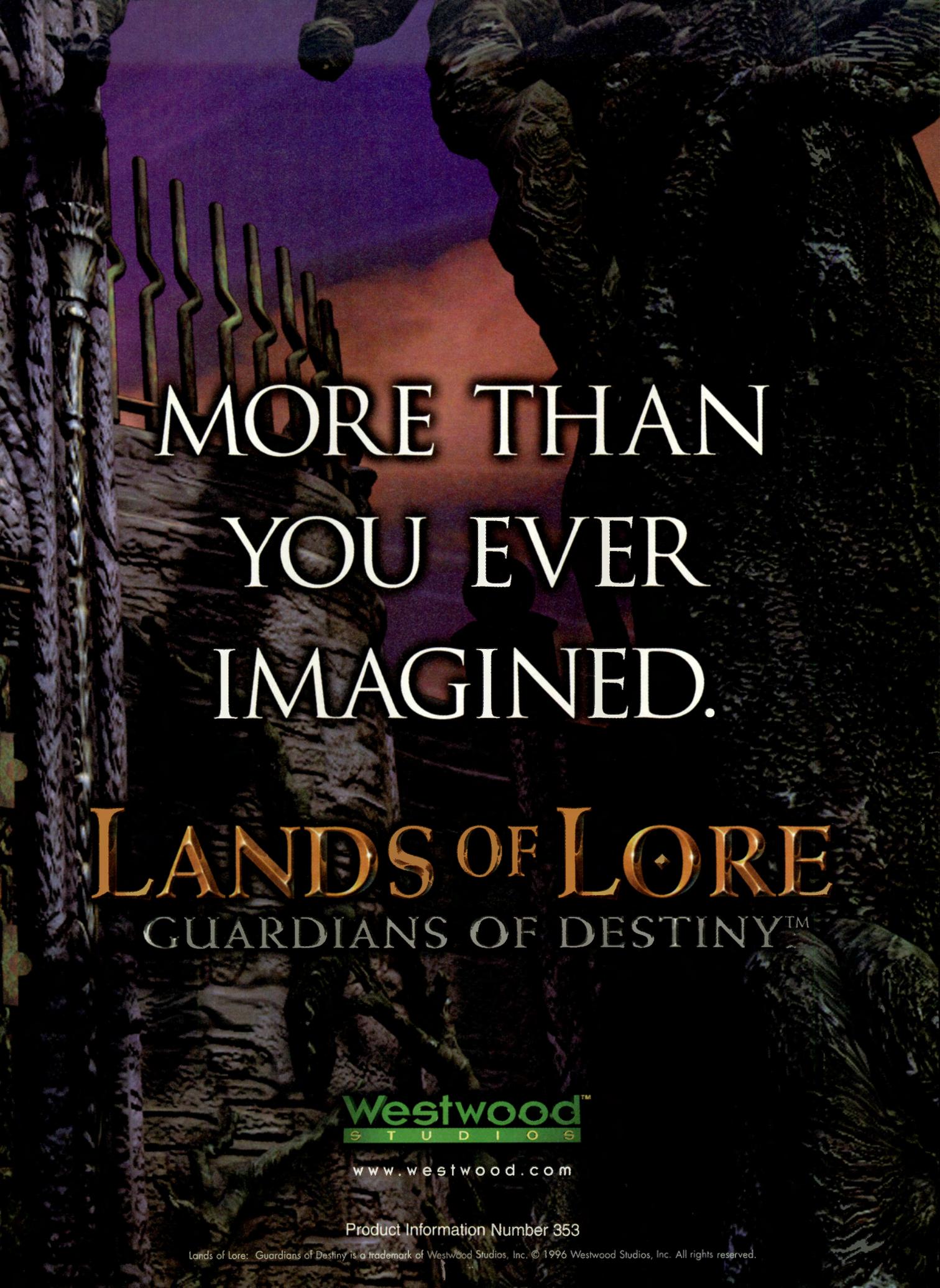
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**"I play sports games a lot. The single game I remember playing the most of on my PC is *Earl Weaver Baseball II*. The graphics and the sound were a bit rudimentary compared to my Amiga at that juncture, but the simulation and play value were unsurpassed. Playing computer 'sloshball' couldn't be more fun! And, to my delight, EA has resurrected my love of the baseball arcade/sim with last year's release of *Triple Play 97*. The game was definitely 'for the fans!'"**

★ ★ ★

**QUINTIN DOROQUEZ**  
ASSOC. ART DIR.



## Descent

INTERPLAY

**18** Shortly after id Software's *Doom II* reaffirmed to the world at large that 3D action games were a force to be reckoned with, Interplay's *Descent* showed there were still new plateaus to be reached in the genre.

Featuring a sickness-inducing level of freedom (360 degrees) and traditional shoot-'em-up action, *Descent* introduced gamers to the hazards and joys of three dimensions as they piloted their space craft through the twisting corridors of abandoned space stations.

After factoring the intense multi-player abilities and attractive graphics, *Descent* revealed itself to be the closest thing to an interactive roller-coaster ride. *Descent* is a true classic, and one that PCG will be playing for years to come.



## EF2000

OCEAN OF AMERICA

**17** DID's move from action-oriented air combat games toward realistic simulations reached its fullest expression in *EF2000*. A painstaking depiction of Europe's hot new tactical fighter, *EF2000* is the most detailed and realistic fighter sim going.

It's also as visually beautiful as any sim on the market, with a high-res depiction of the North Cape that's breathtaking.

And it's as smooth as silk on a reasonably fast machine — something that the other cutting-edge sims can't claim. Its sprawling campaign model really creates a feeling of being a small part of a dynamic, ongoing war.

*EF2000* is enough to make PC jet jockeys forget about *Falcon 4.0*.

## Duke Nukem 3D

3D REALMS

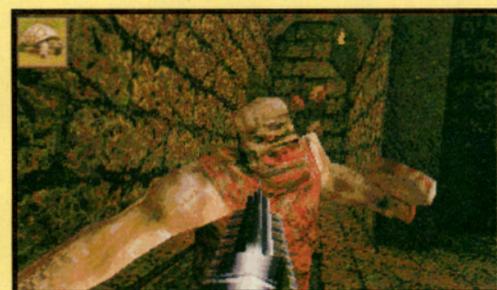
**16** This game would deserve a lot of credit just for being the first *Doom* clone to seriously attempt to be more than a *Doom* clone — but it gets even more credit for succeeding. *Duke Nukem 3D*'s high-res graphics, diabolical levels, and wild variety of weapons helped it step out of *Doom*'s shadow and set a new standard for first-person shooters. It also brought devious new tactics to multi-player mayhem, with wicked gadgets like laser tripwires, remote-detonated pipe bombs, and HoloDukes. Duke has a real attitude problem, and we love him for it. And who can forget the football field level multi-player mahem? *Duke's* a real blast.



## Quake

ID SOFTWARE

**15** Less earth-shattering than its predecessor *Doom* but every bit as giddy and violent, *Quake* is the current standard-bearer for the 3D action genre, and with good reason. Its truly three-dimensional environments, creepy atmosphere, uncompromising multi-play, and unrivalled customizability have helped hook gamers like few games before it — the single-player game will eventually wither and die, but the multi-player mode looks set to become an immortal presence on the Internet. While other would-be 3D games struggle to stand out from the crowd with humor-



ous settings and other quaint gimmicks, *Quake* simply gives us more of what we want — a loud, fast, frenetic killing jar in which to exterminate our friends and enemies.

## Tomb Raider

EIDOS INTERACTIVE

**14** Combining some of the best of adventure gaming's puzzle elements with fast action and an incredibly detailed and interactive world, Eidos Interactive's *Tomb Raider* will forever stand out in the annals of Gaming Goodness. Seldom has an adventure/action game so completely captured the sense of "being there," complete with trickling waterfalls and howling winds. Played on a supported 3D accelerator, the game boasts some of the most stunning visuals the PC has yet seen, with enough action and tricky maneuverability to keep any gamer, young or old, on their toes. When it comes to pure fun, this one's hard to top.



## Panzer General

SSI

**13** If you're an avid fan of the genre, or just curious about wargames and haven't tried one yet, this is the game to pick up. For this World War Two-based epic, SSI came up with what's been considered the best wargame interface yet, and all the attention to detail and accuracy that one could hope for in a wargame. You'll find all significant units, be it land, sea, or air — even those of minor nations — represented. The campaigns and scenarios cover just about every significant event of the war, including some "what if" scenarios. If you haven't tried it yet, you're missing out on a classic.



## Red Baron

SIERRA/DYNAMIX

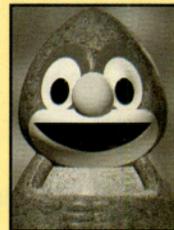
**12** You'd think that after six years, *Red Baron* would have been completely superseded by other World War One air combat games, like *Dawn Patrol* or *Wings of Glory*. But like all great games, this one has a timeless quality about it. *Red Baron* was on the cutting edge when it was first released, and it still holds up surprisingly well against today's best WWI sims. Like the Dynamix sims that followed it (*Aces of the Pacific* and *Aces over Europe*), *Red Baron* struck a neat balance between historical realism and sheer fun that only a few other air combat games have matched since. It'll be interesting to see if the upcoming *Red Baron II* can live up to the legend.



## Sam & Max Hit the Road

LUCASARTS

**11** Most gamers first saw Sam & Max in *The Adventurer*, LucasArts' newsletter. Steve Purcell's hilarious comic creations had a rich and bizarre life before they appeared there, but it's arguable that only LucasArts, the company that brought us the *Monkey Island* games, could have done Sam & Max justice in a graphic adventure. *Sam & Max Hit the Road* captures the skewed humor of the demented duo perfectly. The game's puzzles are as twisted and funny as the story, which involves a search for a bigfoot and a giraffe-necked woman who escaped a carnival sideshow. It's classic Sam & Max, and it's the funniest adventure you can play on your PC.



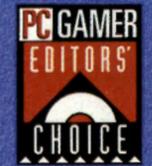
**"I have given this honor many hours of thought, as I am pleased to be having input in this important magazine feature. I am proud to say that my favorite game of all time is Capstone's *The Beverly Hillbillies*, because it was so very, very bad. It taught me much about poor game design!"**

★★★

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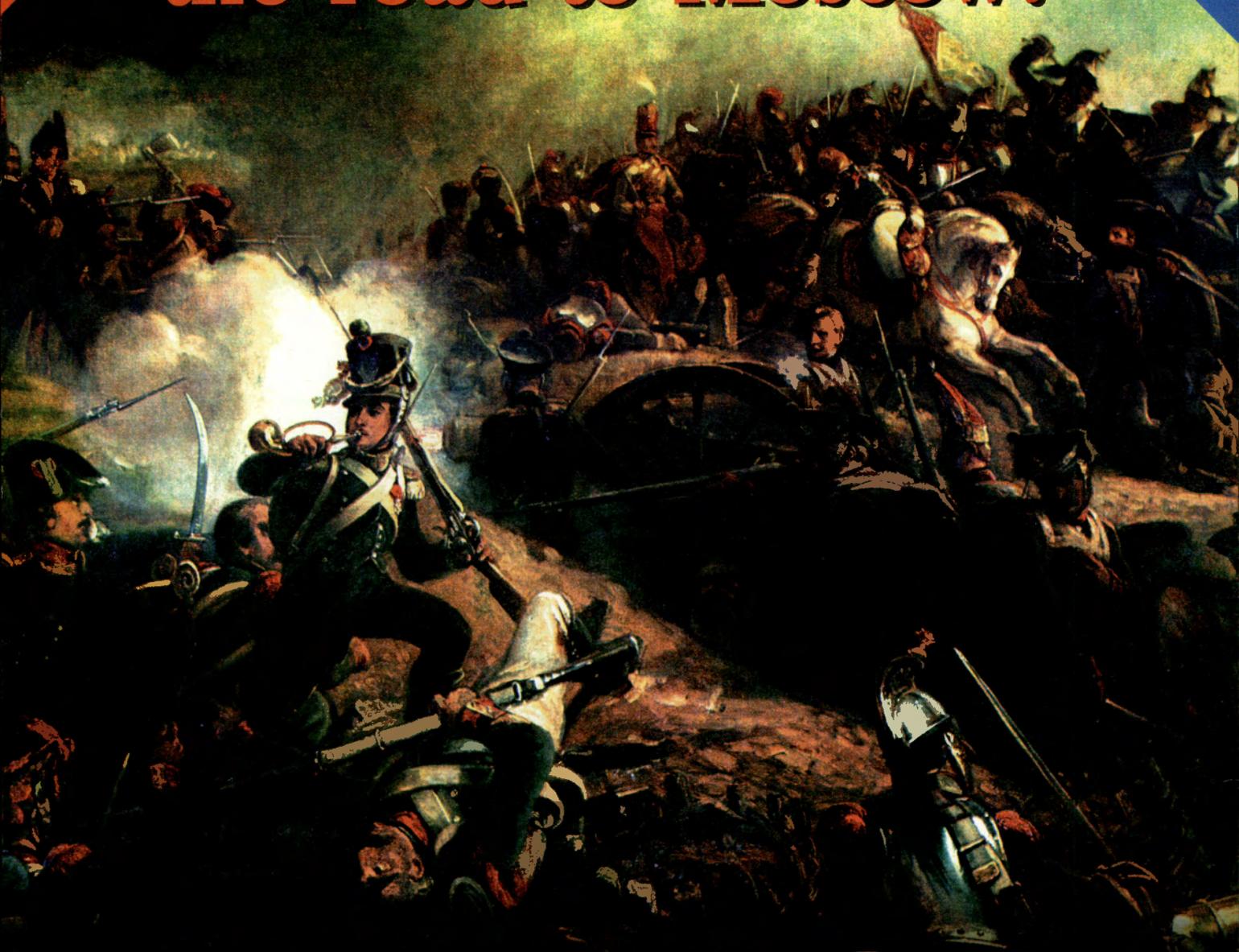
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# The Best 10 of All Time

## GAMES

### AH-64D Longbow

JANE'S COMBAT SIMULATIONS

**10** Only Andy Hollis, the man responsible for MicroProse's legendary *Gunship*, could have guided the creation of this fantastic attack helicopter simulation. Working at the Origin offices in Austin, Texas, Hollis and his "Skunk Works" crew started from scratch, building an entirely new graphics engine and studying reams of military and civilian information about the AH-64D Apache Longbow. They wanted to be sure their simulation of the advanced attack chopper was as deep and realistic as possible, and they succeeded beautifully. *AH-64D Longbow* models the helicopter's state-of-the-art radar and fire control systems so realistically, you'd be hard pressed to find significant differences between the simulation and the McDonnell Douglas video footage provided on the CD. Flight models and terrain are painstaking matches for their real-world counterparts, too. *Longbow* is the most detailed and believable attack chopper sim yet. And that's not the only amazing feat Hollis and Co. pulled off: they also made sure this highly sophisticated simulation was a great game. Using the most impressive tutorial you'll find in any flight sim, *Longbow* takes the player through eight hands-on, interactive lessons, explaining all of the chopper's systems in detail. Add an excellent manual, and even as complex as *Longbow* is, it's accessible to novices and veteran gamers alike. *Longbow* isn't just the best helicopter sim ever — it's also the most enjoyable air combat sim you can get.



### Links LS

ACCESS

**9** From the first swing of the club to the hollow clop of the ball dropping in the cup, no game has come as close to recapturing the grandeur of golf as the awesome *Links LS*. A long-awaited and triumphant return of Access' groundbreaking *Links 386*, *Links LS* adds high resolution graphics and revamped physics. *Links LS* can match any monitor's viewing capacity, with resolutions up to 1600x1200 and 16.7 million colors. But looks are only the beginning — *Links LS* features totally reworked ball dynamics, a new terrain-rendering engine, and fog and shadowing effects that simulate poor visibility and weather conditions. Gameplay options have also been enhanced, and now include stroke play, skins, best ball, and match play as well as new multi-player options. The game comes with four different motion-captured



golfers, including the legendary Arnold Palmer, with the ability to add more golfer animations and brand new courses in add-on discs. Video tours of the courses add to the spectacle. Additionally *Links LS* supports its legacy with the ability to plug in all of the many add-on courses from *Links 386*. Recreating the excellence of *Links 386* was no easy task, but golfers from coast to coast agree that the results were worth it.

### Command & Conquer: Red Alert

VIRGIN/WESTWOOD STUDIOS

**8** Yes, officially it's a prequel rather than a sequel, but this follow-up to the mega-hit *Command & Conquer* is still a massive leap over the classic original. If your preferred tools of war are tanks, helicopters and artillery rather than orcs, knights and magic, there isn't anything better than this. Pitting the might of the Soviet army against a rag-tag Allied force through an extended "what if" war in Europe campaign in which you can play either side, *Red Alert* boasts some ultra-cool quasi-realistic technology and raises the *Command & Conquer* stakes by adding a whole new sea power element — the Allies' cruisers and destroyers fighting against Soviet subs. Whichever side you choose to fight for, the single-player campaign makes for a terrific challenge through a series of increasingly tough missions, but it's in the multi-player modes that *Red Alert* really



comes into its own, with support for up to eight players on a wide variety of custom-built maps. Adding enough cool new stuff to make this a worthy follow-up while retaining everything that made the original a million-seller, *Red Alert* has already surpassed the success of its predecessor. There are plenty of real-time strategy games jumping on the bandwagon, but don't be fooled — this is the genuine article, and it'll be around for years to come.

# BIG GAME HUNTING

**I**F YOU LIKE THE SOUND of some of the games in our definitive All-Time Top 50 but are having trouble tracking them down in the stores, they're probably older titles that have since been "deleted" — the software company just isn't making or selling any more copies. But there's still hope if you're willing to apply yourself and scout around for those hard-to-find games.

Your best bet is to keep an eye out for compilation packs — our No.33 game *Star Control II* is no longer available from the original publisher Accolade, for example, but it can be found on the new Science Fiction collection recently published by Segasoft — along with the even

harder-to-find original. You may have to pay through the nose for some titles this way, but if you really want to track those elusive games down, this is one of your best bets. You could also scour the bargain bins at your local software stores, or check out the second-hand opportunities at computer fairs — just make sure you're being sold a copy with all the disks (yes, many of the games on our list pre-date CD-ROMs) and documentation intact. Last but by no means least, be sure to scour the classified advertisements at the back of *PC Gamer* each month for any nostalgic game-grabbing opportunities.

Good hunting!

## X-COM: UFO Defense

MICROPROSE

7

Long before UFOs became the "in" thing and started making nightly appearances on TV, there was *X-COM: UFO Defense*. A great storyline is one thing,

but a real game lives or dies by its design, and this game is an incredibly detailed tactical exercise unequalled by any of its imitators — though few have



dared imitated it. The game has a good strategic model, putting you in the unenviable position of tracking the entire Earth for UFO encounters, and deciding when to launch interceptors and where to build bases to fend off the threat, all within a budget. But it's the ground-based tactical model that really shines. You guide a squad of ten or so troops off an air transport and into hostile territory. Civilian casualties are always a concern, as is the morale of your own units. You'll soon be ordering your troops to duck for cover as soon as they jump out of the gunship and start leveling anything that even looks like it might be hiding an enemy. *X-COM* boasted individual unit morale long before *Close Combat* did, and multi-level, destroyable buildings,



something no one else has ever done as convincingly. More importantly, its meld of tactical and strategic levels has rarely, if ever, been equaled in computer gaming. *X-COM* is one of the most underrated games on our list; if you can find it, buy it, because this is computer game design at its finest.

## Heroes of Might & Magic II

NEW WORLD COMPUTING

6

Though there's no new concept to this turn-based strategy game, it's put together in such a fun, well-balanced, and easy-to-play manner, that it's hard not to

become addicted. It's based in a medieval-like fantasy realm, and on the surface it all seems very simple; build up your castle(s), send out heroes to explore and gather resources, and raise armies of creatures to defeat your opponents. In each phase though, it becomes deceptively challenging. Deciding on whether to spend



resources improving a castle, raising an army, or improving a hero is no easy task, as your opponents might take advantage of any weakness. Anyone who likes a good strategy game will find *Heroes of Might & Magic II* extremely engrossing. It's easy to get mad at any enemy for taking a castle you've been working on or want revenge when a good hero of yours is defeated, and few games that can inspire this type of involvement. The original *Heroes of Might & Magic* was an excellent game in its own right, but the improvements



made to *Heroes II* add even more, giving it slightly more depth. There is a large number of scenarios to play plus two campaigns, which will give any gamer months of playability. An easy-to-use editor for making custom maps and strong Internet support add still further to this great game's longevity.

# IT LEAVES PARIS WITH PASSENGERS. IT



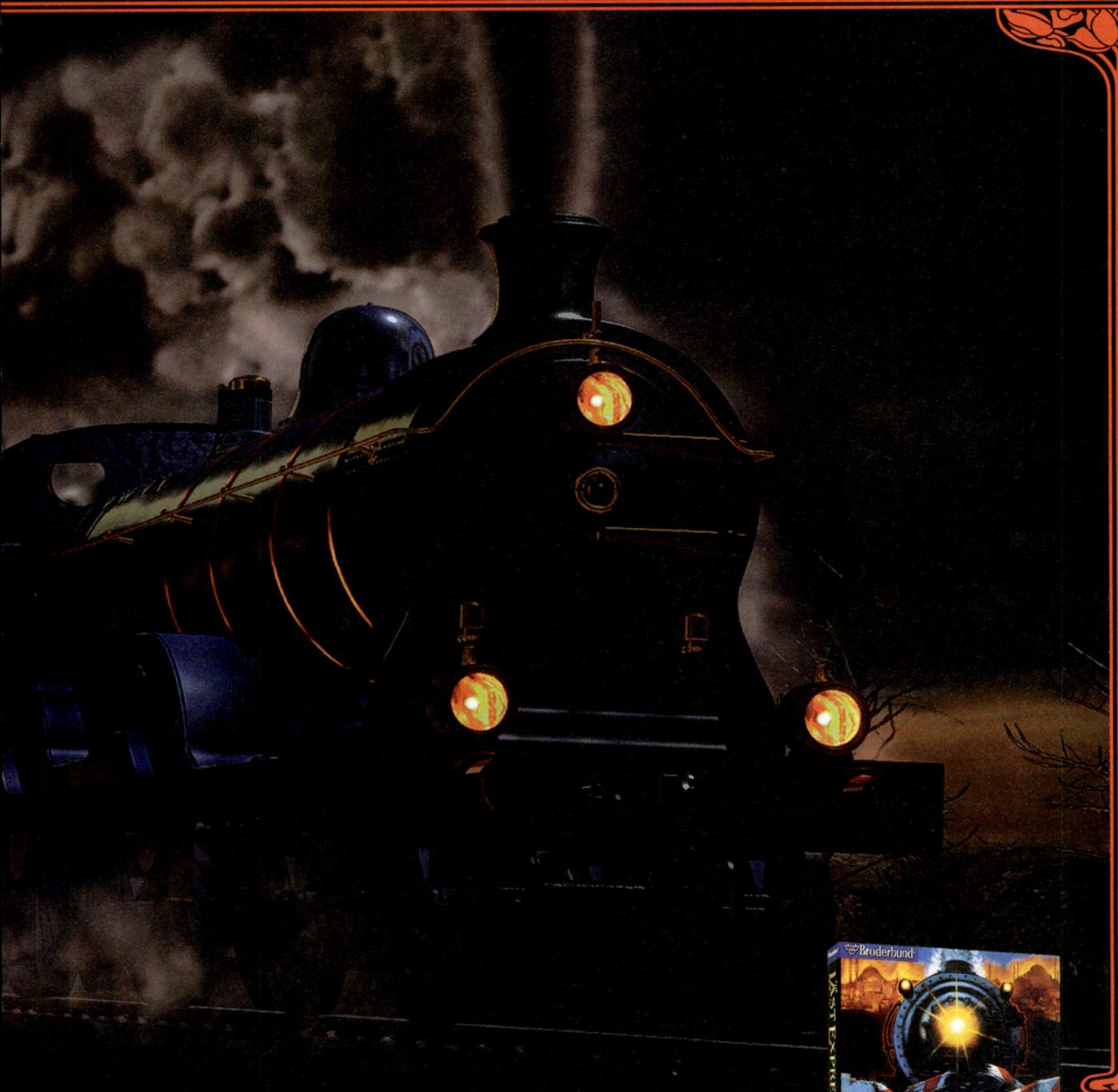
"An abundance of real-time puzzles and challenges awaits."

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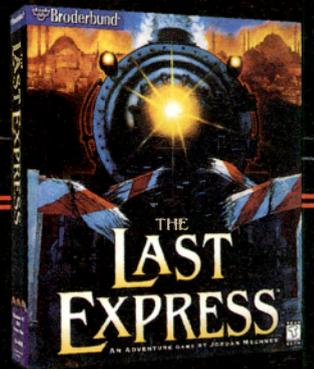
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## System Shock

ORIGIN

**5** This amazing adventure/roleplaying game never got the attention it really deserved. Created by Looking Glass and Origin, *System Shock* was a technological wonder, years ahead of games

that are making headlines today.

While everyone is busy arguing about *Quake*, *Duke*, and what constitutes a "true 3D environment," gamers seem to have forgotten what *System Shock* brought to

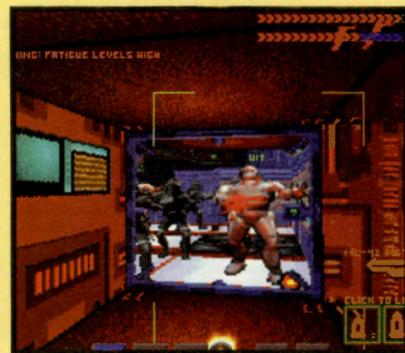
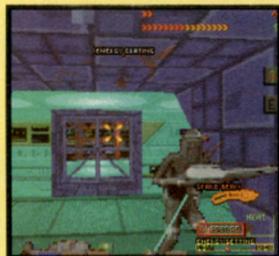
the table back in 1994. *System Shock* had a true 3D environment back when most people considered *Doom II*'s "two-and-a-half-D" graphics to be the state of the art. By the time *Heretic* gave us a first-person environment that allowed the

player to levitate and look up and down at their surroundings, *System Shock* had already done much better, letting us look up and down, fly, crouch, crawl, jump, climb ladders, and even lean around corners.

And it did it all in high resolution! So why wasn't this game hailed as the heir apparent to *Doom*?

Because it was nothing like *Doom*. There were lots of different weapons to pick up and legions of scary beasts to fight, but *System Shock* wasn't a shoot-'em-up. It was an honest-to-God adventure game — it just happened to take place in a world that would've made a great home for a first-person shooter. The combination of a great 3D engine and a truly absorbing sci-fi story line made *System Shock* the most immersive PC adventure ever.

Play it to the finish, and you may find yourself remembering the game's locations as vividly as if you'd really been there.



## Civilization II

MICROPROSE

**4** Truly one of the greatest games of all time, *Civilization II* needs no introduction, as it won our Game of the Year for 1996 award just a couple of issues ago. But

this careful reworking of the *Civilization* design is no mere cash-in, but a marked improvement on an already landmark original. Everything that is true of the original is true of the sequel, but options have been expanded, imbalances removed, and the look and feel of the game modernized. When you begin a game of *Civilization II*, you are not merely guiding a handful of settlers around a map, you are laying the foundations of a new world: decisions you make early in the game can come back to haunt you centuries, even millennia, later. From the primeval spark of iron hitting iron to the first rocket bound for the stars, this is a game of history and of humanity, embracing all of its pageantry and pathos. That *Civilization II* can

condense the whole sweep of human history into a single playable game is a monumental achievement. Expansion and conflict, resources and technology: these are the forces that shape our world, and never before or since has a game so thoroughly entwined computer-created entertainment with reality. Few games have attempted such a broad scope, or entwined so much history, science and culture into a game. And of the few who have attempted it, *Civilization II* was one of the first, and only *Civilization II* manages to make it so much fun.



## WarCraft II

BLIZZARD

**3** From its stirring introduction to the grand finale at the portal gate, *WarCraft II* draws you in the way only a true masterpiece of fantasy can; you might call this the

Lord of the Rings of computer gaming. Every facet of the game is excellent, from the near flawless design and the beautifully detailed graphics to the stirring soundtrack, unparalleled sound effects, and advanced editing capabilities.

Some games are good in multi-player, while others shine in single-play mode, but only *WarCraft II* set new benchmarks in both arenas. Only poor planning kept this game off the major



multi-player Internet services last year; had it had a free battle.net capability, who knows what could have happened? And let's not forget the little touches, like the clickable critters and the pithy dialog of your poor troops. Perhaps these extras don't add greatly to the actual game, but they add so much to that feeling of "being there" — and they demonstrate just how much the people who made this game love their work.

Though things like the surly Orc voices will be imitated time and time again, nothing will ever recapture the magic of *WarCraft II*; it remains the definitive real-time fantasy strategy game, and one of the best games any of us will ever play. That moment when we first lost ourselves in this strange world of Azeroth is something we at PC Gamer will always remember.



# THE 15 MOST SIGNIFICANT GAMES OF ALL TIME

## Civilization

MICROPROSE

Perhaps the finest strategy game ever made, *Civilization* established Sid Meier's reputation as one of the industry's top game designers and helped create MicroProse's reputation as a company that made inimitable strategy games. Having gained innumerable awards over the years, even today it remains a game that other developers are trying to outdo. Though not for every temperament, *Civilization* remains a landmark title, enthroned in greatness, and it looms large over all future endeavors.

## Dune II

WESTWOOD

The current real-time strategy craze was actually born way back in 1992, when Westwood released *Dune II*. Only loosely based on the classic science fiction novel, this game was an addictive monster with gameplay that bears a striking resemblance to Westwood's own *Command & Conquer*.

## Elite

MICROPROSE

Long since "deleted" but by no means diminished, *Elite* (which first appeared on the defunct BBC Microcomputer back in 1983) was the original, pioneering space trading and combat game, marrying complex financial models with groundbreaking 3D vector graphics. Hideously dated now but no less important — *Elite*, we salute you.

## Empire

INTERSTEL

This is the great grandpappy of world-conquest games. Even giants like *Civilization* owe a lot to this incredibly addictive classic, which brought us most of the traditional trappings of these games: capturing cities, manufacturing scads of different military units, and managing a growing army in a quest for planetary domination.

## Gunship

MICROPROSE

One way or another, even the hottest new air combat simulation has its roots in this early attack helicopter sim. *Gunship* was the first one to use polygon-based 3D graphics, and it introduced a lot of the genre's conventions, like mission briefings, evaluations, promotions, and medals.



## Indianapolis 500

PAPYRUS

Long before it took the checkered flag with *IndyCar* and *NASCAR Racing* the small but dedicated team of car freaks at Papyrus was tinkering with the idea of adding "Realism" to the arcade driving games of the day. What it produced was *Indianapolis 500*, one of the first games to actually try and model the physics and controls of these high-powered race cars and it was a smashing success.

## Links

ACCESS

Though golf simulations have always had a place in computer gaming, the original *Links* single-handedly defined how we play golf on the computer today. Incredible graphics uncompromising detail and control were just a few of the innovations that made the *Links* name synonymous with excellent computer golf simulations.

## Maniac Mansion

LUCASARTS

While LucasArts can't claim credit for the making the first graphic adventure (that honor belongs to Sierra's *Mystery House*) it does deserve honorable mention for introducing genuine humor and multi-character play to the otherwise cliched horror games of the day. Who knows if we would have seen such classics as *Sam and Max*, *Day of the Tentacle*, and *Monkey Island* without this influential title?

## SimCity

MAXIS

With an original concept and addictive gameplay Maxis founder Will Wright managed to define an entirely new genre of simulation with the massively popular city-builder *SimCity*. Charging players with building a successful city, *SimCity* gave you the chance to micro-manage every aspect of a bustling metropolis where mundane hazards and complete disaster threatened at every turn. Who knew being mayor could be such fun?

## Tetris

SPECTRUM

HOLOBYTE

Alexey Pajitnov's maddeningly playable game of descending, interlocking blocks inspired a genre all of its own, but it's the original (be it Spectrum's official version or any of the countless shareware clones) that's still

the best, with a truly timeless appeal and an almost dreamlike addictive quality. No one should be without it.

## Wing Commander

ORIGIN SYSTEMS

Not just the first really great space combat game, but the first game to give a glimpse into the brave new world of cinematic presentation and styling. The sequels have advanced the technology and ideas immeasurably, but without this original, none of it would ever have happened.

## Wizardry

SIR-TECH

Before *Wizardry*, the realm of fantasy was confined solely to authors like J.R.R. Tolkien, and the term "roleplaying game" referred only to the paper-and-pencil kind that involved gathering a group of friends around a table with a bunch of die and some graph paper. With its release, *Wizardry* brought new worlds and fantastic journeys to the PC, and computers haven't been the same since.

## Wolfenstein 3D

ID SOFTWARE

The granddaddy of all the 3D blam-blam games (and still mighty fun to play, strangely enough), this is the legendary classic we owe *Doom*, *Quake*, *Duke Nukem*, and just about every other subsequent first-person 3D game to. It's difficult to think of a PC game that has inspired more developers.



## Zork

INFOCOM

No one could forget the grand-daddy of all computer games, and arguably the one that started it all. The text-only adventure introduced a whole new world to computer users, and gave them something to do other than type reports. The first of a long, very distinguished line of text adventures from Infocom, *Zork* is most often remembered as the game that introduced today's PC gamers to their very first PC game.

## Ultima Underworld

ORIGIN

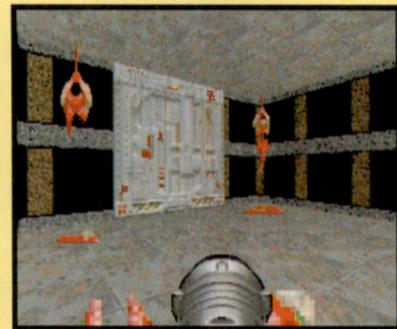
Basically one of the finest dungeon crawls ever made, Origin's high standards were pushed even higher with this massive roleplaying game where you stepped into the shoes of the Avatar in the first of two first-person adventures. Released months before id's *Wolfenstein 3D* sent shockwaves through the action genre, *Ultima Underworld: The Stygian Abyss* is also noteworthy since it introduced gamers to such revolutionary feats as jumping, ducking, flying, and looking up and down within a game world in ways that have rarely been duplicated in a single game.

## Doom

ID SOFTWARE

**2** PC Gamer's last "best ever" list was presented in the August 1994 issue, when id software's *Doom* took the coveted No. 1 spot at a comfortable canter. The fact that nearly three years later it's slipped only one position on our chart is testament to both its significance and its timeless appeal.

This is, to a large extent, the game that changed all the rules, refusing to make any compromises in an unprece-



ented orgy of non-stop violence and bloodletting that provoked outrage from some quarters (its use of religious iconography was one strongly-contested issue) but garnering adulation and addiction from everybody else. *Wolfenstein 3D* opened the door to this kind of first-person, blam-blam gaming, but *Doom* blew the door off its hinges with lavish graphics and testosterone-fueled action on a level never before seen. Making multi-millionaires of its creators and inspiring no end of imitations, add-ons, and re-issues (witness *Doom II*, *Final Doom*, *Ultimate Doom* et al), it's difficult to imagine a game that has had more impact on the landscape of PC entertainment than this. More amazing still is just how playable *Doom*



remains after all this time — dust it off and play it for five minutes, and those five will quickly turn into 60, then two hours, then three. And, of course, it's still available for free thanks to id's unflinching loyalty to the shareware model of game marketing. It's difficult to imagine anyone who hasn't already been hooked by *Doom*, but if you're that person, don't waste another minute.

## Tie-Fighter Collector's CD-ROM

LUCASARTS

**1** No doubt this choice will come as a surprise to some, but for us the result was never seriously in doubt. The reason? Quite simply, this is the best PC game we've ever played — and we've played 'em all.

Bravely flouting convention by giving you the chance to indulge your fantasies and play the bad guys for once, *TIE Fighter* represented a quantum leap over its classic predecessor *X-Wing* and set a new standard for space combat games that has yet to be seriously challenged. This enhanced CD-ROM ver-

sion, adding higher graphics, new campaigns, extra cut-scenes, and "talkie" mission briefings raised the bar still further. Whether you're a simulation or an action fan, the *TIE Fighter* CD-ROM has something for everyone, taking the player through seemingly countless training and historical missions, and prolonged campaigns through galactic trouble-spots.



The progressing storyline rewards the player with newer and better ships and, if you're willing to work extra hard, initiation into a secret Imperial order. It doesn't hurt to be a *Star Wars* fan either (but then, who isn't?) as the game does a tremendous job of conveying the atmosphere of George Lucas' richly-textured universe through authentic graphic styling, effects straight from the Skywalker Sound archives and



John Williams' majestic score. Easy to get into, and growing to an immense challenge on the later campaigns, *TIE Fighter* plots a near-perfect learning and interest curve — once the game's claws dig in, it never lets go, and you can come back to it time and again even after you (eventually) finish it.

LucasArts' upcoming *X-Wing vs TIE Fighter* looks fated to unseat this classic when it arrives in the Spring, but right now, today, there simply isn't a better PC game out there.



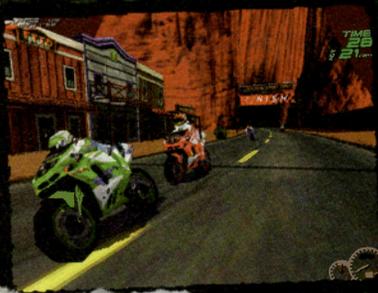
The Great Wall of China.

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greatest architectural  
achievements.

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From The Great Wall of China to Speed Bay and Snow Ride, Moto Racer GP is the one game that tests you on both motocross and Grand Prix tracks. The ultimate goal: win all 8 tracks and snag the Championship Trophy.



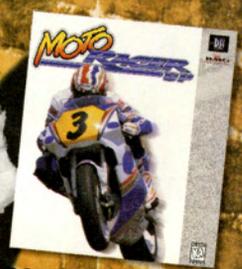
To do it, you'll have to beat 24 of the world's toughest on and off-road racers. You've got 16 different Grand Prix and motocross bikes to choose from. Each accelerates differently. Each turns differently. Each crashes differently.



Race head-to-head with a modem or against up to 7 others with a Local Area Network. Moto Racer GP also supports most 3D accelerator cards which crank the already hot graphics up another notch.



# tion one Hell of a motocross track.



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Product Information Number 106

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### Why We Fly for the Empire

**A**s we eagerly await our copies of *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*, we've had a heated debate as to which side our team will fly when we take on all comers and reduce them to salvage. The consensus is we'll be suiting up for the Galactic Empire — and here's our reasons why. (I've got a bad feeling about this...)

● **Vader is your Co-Pilot:** We think a guy who can strangle people over a videophone is someone who ought to be watching our six.

● **Ship names that don't just rattle off the alphabet** (A-Wing, B-Wing, X-Wing, Y-Wing...).

● **When confronted with bad news**, Imperial Navy Officers don't whine "Nooo!" and then jump down bottomless shafts.

● **Our Bespin Cloud miners** don't pitch Colt 45 on the side.

● **Darth Vader's Imperial announcements** have the same soothing, reassuring tone as that guy from CNN.

● **White armor shows all the dirt**,

making dress inspections a snap.

● **Even after you bump your head on low-hanging shuttle bay doors**, you can still shoot your blasters and miss wildly with the best of them.

● **Solar Panels on TIE Fighters:** Like the good custodians of the galaxy that we are, Imperial craft are equipped with energy-efficient solar panels. Take that, you fossil fuel-burning Rebel scum!

● **No Stinkin' Shields:** Real he-men don't pull nine Gs around the Van Allen Belt all cuddled up in their shields. Those X-Wings probably have seat belts too!

● **"Greedo's Guide to Bounty Hunting"** not in Imperial manual.

● **Check out the Imperial Convenience Store:** Yoda Pops, Chewie Tobacco, and Jawabreakers.

● **'Secret Order of the Emperor' tattoos** impress cantina babes.

● **No Ewoks.**

● **John Williams' "Imperial March"** 'Nuf said!



### Hardware Requirements

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

#### THE PC GAMER RATINGS SYSTEM

##### 100%-90% CLASSIC

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

##### 89%-80% EXCELLENT

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

##### 79%-70% VERY GOOD

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

although it's a safe bet that there are probably better games out there.

##### 69%-60% GOOD

A reasonable, above-average game. It may be worth buying, but probably has a few significant flaws that keep it from earning a higher rating.

##### 59%-50% FAIR

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

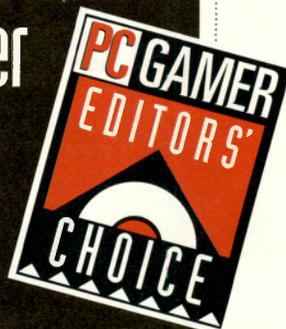
##### 49%-40% BELOW AVERAGE

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

##### 39%-0% DON'T BOTHER

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

### PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards



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

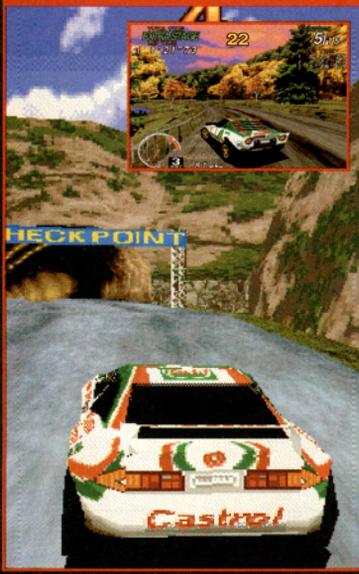
#### FLYING CORPS

p.120



#### SEGA RALLY PC

p.140



# Magic: The Gathering

**Category:** Action

**Developer:** Acclaim

**Publisher:** Acclaim Entertainment, 1 Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542-2708 (516) 759-7900

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 75; 16MB RAM; 90MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 100 or higher; Supported sound card

**We know you're looking forward to the computer version of this popular trading card game, but *BattleMage* is a big disappointment.**

**A**s a fan of the *Magic: The Gathering* trading-card game, I've been waiting for the computer versions to come out for over a year. When I heard Acclaim was working on a real-time version of the card game, I eagerly awaited seeing it in action. I knew that it represented what the game of *Magic: The Gathering* was all about — casting spells in an all-out battle to the death against another magic-wielding mage. Well, the final product has failed to capture even a hint of the glory of the card game, and my hopes for a unique and entertaining real-time computerized version of *Magic* was dashed as soon as I entered my first duel.

Since the game moves in real-time, instead of drawing a new card (oops — the license prohibits Acclaim from using the terms "card" or "deck" in the game, so it's just a "spell"), new spells appear in your hand...er... "spell library," every few

seconds. The game tries to adhere to the rules of the card game when you have more than seven spells, and one of them will flash and disappear unless you get rid of it or another one before it goes. But getting rid of spells isn't nearly as easy as it sounds. If you've ever played the card game, you'll know there are a huge variety of cards, and that each of them has a new and different ability that needs to be carefully considered.

Now imagine having all those spells at your disposal, but no way to peruse their abilities during battle. Sure, you can click on one and see what the spell can do, but the time it takes to read and understand it means you've gained one or two new ones, and maybe lost some precious time in the process, since you can't do anything with the description open.

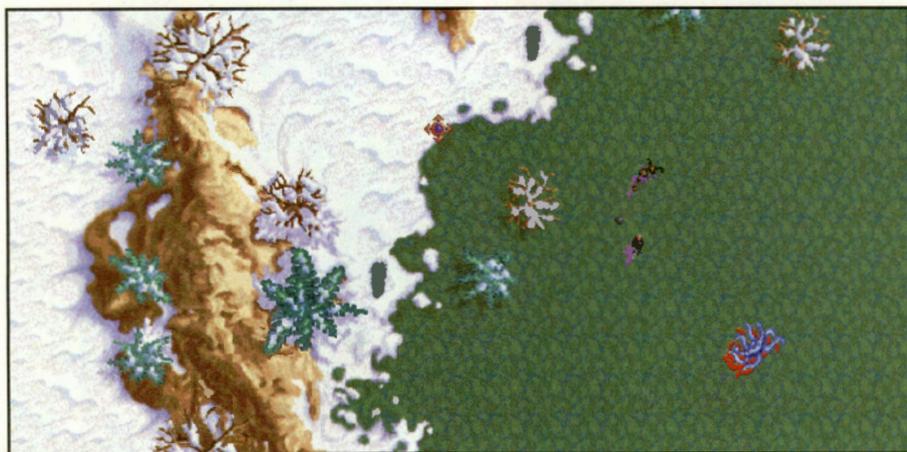
So you're stuck with casting the spells you know you can cast. Even if you've been playing the game for years, and know each of the spells by heart just by looking at the pictures on the front, it's a challenge to use them in any sort of organized way. Not only do you have to know the spells to cast them, but if you summon a creature, for example, you have to select the creature with the mouse, find



**During a battle, you can fan out the cards in your library, but when you do so, you can't control the creatures on the battlefield, so it's not always the best option.**

the enemy mage, and send your creature out to attack. Then you have to forget about the creature, because you've probably already gained a few new spells, and you have to figure out if you can cast any of them and combine them to cause some damage. Then, if the creature you've summoned has any special abilities, you need to remember to use them, find the creature, and use the spell. Meanwhile, the computer opponent constantly sends attacks your way, and will cast spell after spell with no hesitation.

This all happens so quickly, that it's nearly impossible to follow what's going on. The only way to even get close is to play the game so much that you know the spells by heart, and even then it's a trick to keep on top of the computer opponent. The levels of frustration you'll face before getting to the point of adequacy in the game is liable to make even



**The battlefields, though different, have little effect on the fight, unless you take into consideration the barriers that can only be traversed with flying creatures.**



**In the adventure portion of the game, you get to see artwork from the cards and play with dialog trees, which may or may not give you control over a territory.**

# BattleMage



■ The strategy/adventure portion of the game feels a bit like *Risk*, but without the fun or the strategy.

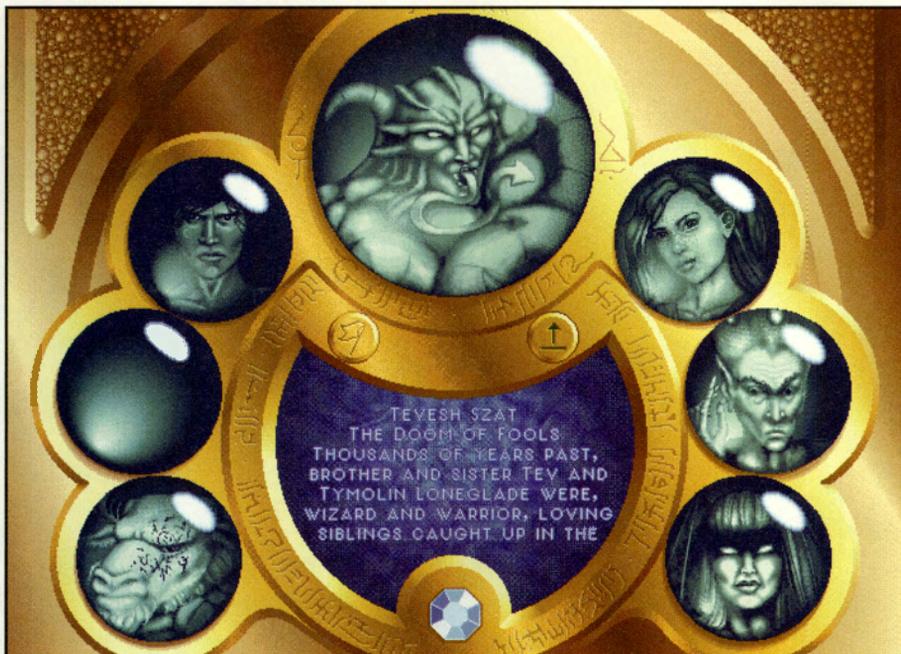
the most stout gamer cringe. Even when you're adequate, the computer is so much faster at casting and combining spells, it's nearly impossible to keep up. And there's no way to slow the game down to gain any sort of breather as the duel continues on. The only way to even stand a chance against another opponent is to use the built-in multi-player options and find someone with as much, or as little, skill as your own. Otherwise, you'll constantly throw yourself against a the rock of the computer, and it will smash you apart every time.

The interface makes playing the game even more difficult. Obviously intended for an easy port to the console systems, you cycle through your spell inventory by using two keys to rotate the cards one way or another (A and D) — you can't just click on it with the mouse and make it active. To cast the spell, you have to press another keyboard key (T), which isn't exactly underneath your finger waiting while you're cycling through the spells. Several times I tried to cast a spell at the last minute, only to discover that I was pressing the wrong key. Even if you hit the right one, though, the controls feel so sluggish that you might have to press the key repeatedly to get it to do what you want. Then, if the spell you cast requires additional colorless mana, you have to click on the color you want to put into it. The whole process takes up far too much time, and is terribly inefficient. In a game that demands split-second decisions, this confusing interface is simply unacceptable.

Graphically, the game is flat and lifeless, and the top-down perspective of the battlefield has little purpose, since it doesn't matter where you are or who you're battling. Trying to find the enemy mage on the battlefield takes even more precious time, and when you cast "summon creature" spells, the



■ Eventually the landscape will become covered with creatures, but only if you live long enough to see it.



■ You choose from six characters to play during both the campaign and duel modes of the game, each with their own set of spells.

creatures are so pixelicious, it's hard to tell what's what. Even the sound doesn't live up to expectations — no resounding booms when you cast a fireball, no spooky trills when a summon skeleton spell is cast, just flat music and a few bells and whistles during the course of the spell-casting.

The artwork for the spells matches the trading cards, so if you're already familiar with them, you'll know the spells by sight in the game. However, even though the box and manual both say no previous experience with *Magic: The Gathering* is required, anyone that isn't knowledgeable in the ways of the card game will experience enough frustration to drive them postal. There isn't even enough instruction in the manual to give



■ The archive is the only place in the game where you can see what the different cards do and match them with their picture. Spend a lot of time here, or it's hopeless during a duel.

a beginning *Magic* player an idea of what the game's about. As a result, any *M:TG* player will be vastly disappointed in the lackluster graphics, disappointing interface, and pathetic sound, and the novice will simply give up after a few minutes of floundering.

—Mike Wolf

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** It tries to capture the feel of playing *Magic: The Gathering* real-time.

**LOWS:** It fails to achieve its goal with any sort of success.

**BOTTOM LINE:** A terrible game. If you want a *Magic: The Gathering* PC game, wait for MicroProse's turn-based version to come out.

30%

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Product Information Number 138

# Pro League Baseball '97

**Category:** Sports Simulation

**Developer:** General Admission Gold

**Publisher:** Micro Sports Inc., 1001 Millersville Road, Lancaster, PA 17604-9975 (800) 334-2722

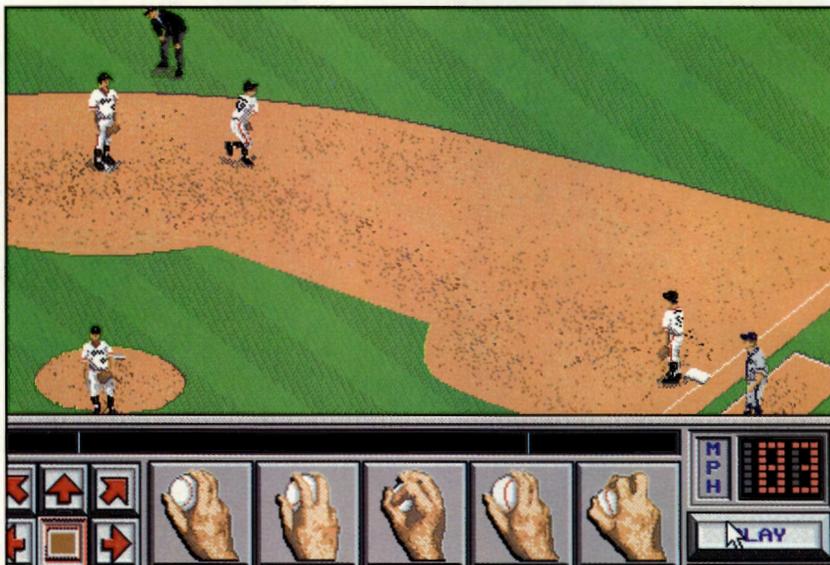
Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 8MB RAM; VGA; Mouse; 32MB hard-drive space; DOS 6.0 or higher	Pentium 120; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card; printer; modem and null modem cable

**Pro League is the first new baseball simulation to swing the bat this season, but it won't make it as a starter in your rotation.**

**P**ro League Baseball '97 is billed as a "comprehensive" sim that allows would-be Earl Weavers to manage their favorite baseball teams both past and present. All of the current team towns are here plus statistics for all players from 1904 to 1995. This allows players to not only stage games between their favorite teams but also to pit the great clubs of history against one another.

For those wanting nuts-and-bolts baseball action, *Pro League Baseball* allows players to guide their team of choice through a full season of play or battle head-to-head against a buddy using a modem or serial link. During each game, players act as the managers of their teams and can adjust everything from batting lineups to pitching rotations. In the season-mode, there are even more options available, including the ability to build teams by drafting rookies or by providing short-term injections of power through trades for veterans.

When the all of the options are added together, one would think *Pro*



**A high bouncer is fielded by the second baseman as the shortstop moves to cover the unprotected base. Too bad others parts of this game are not as intuitive.**

*League* has the tools it needs to be a real threat. But from the first pitch, it is clear that this game is little more than a bat-boy in comparison to the big-league baseball sims from Sierra, Accolade, and Electronic Arts.

One disappointment is the manual. More often than not these days, companies seem to be trying to cut their production costs either by eliminating the manual all-together or by producing a bare-bones work that touches only on the key points of the game. Clearly, Micro Sports chose the latter option. Checking in at just over 30 pages, the manual offers no insight into the game of baseball, no comprehensive game-control description, and no explanation as to how certain game-play options impact the simulation.

But the manual is not the only part of this game that deserves to be benched. The graphics are buggy as action on the screen sometimes leaves graphical "ghosts" behind. These visual burps are not only annoying to see but also interfere with gameplay, as they sometimes make it difficult for players to tell what is happening on screen.

You have to wonder if the graphics,

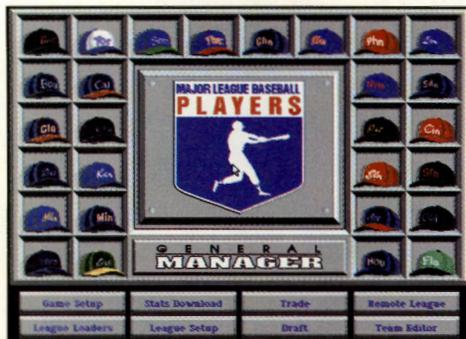


**Underestimating the batter can have your outfielders finding themselves at the warning track all too often.**

and for that matter the sound effects, were added as an afterthought, not because the designer of the game wanted them included but because they were forced to provide them for today's gamers. The bottom line is that they fall miserably.

A bright spot is that the designers provide an Internet site so that gamers can update their players' stats as the '97 season progresses. While that will ensure the sim stays fresh, it's hardly enough to keep players coming back to this frustrating sim. *Pro League '97* — Y'er outta there.

—Brett Jones



**Players can choose to jump into an exhibition game or set up a league for season play. Much of the fun is pitting the classic clubs from 1904-1995 against one another in "what if?" games.**

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** Hands-off general manager feature does an adequate job.

**30%**

**LOWS:** The game is buggy and the control interface is poorly designed. Practically useless manual.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Problem-plagued graphics and an unplayable arcade control system.

# Powerslave

**Category:** Action

**Developer:** Lobotomy

**Publisher:** Playmates Interactive, 611 Anton Blvd, Suite 500, Costa Mesa, CA 92626 (714) 428-2112

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM	Pentium; 16MB RAM; SVGA card

**Gun your way through the musty, demon-haunted corridors of Powerslave. Or go play Duke Nukem instead.**

because the game started life as a 3D Realms project called *Ruins* which was later sold off. Lobotomy may have used a version of the Build engine newer than *Witchaven's*, but it still must be older than *Duke's*. So what back then may have been state-of-the-art now looks and plays like last year's game.

This version of the Build engine can't handle slopes, and the maximum resolution is 640x480. There are no fun inventory items like in *Duke* (Jetpack, steroids, HoloDuke) or even *Doom* (invisibility, infrared goggles), and even *Witchaven II* had a Build level editor — *Powerslave* does not.

But perhaps the most annoying aspect is the peculiar way in which you must save your game. Since at least as far back as *Wolfenstein 3D*, we've been able to save a game anywhere in a level — but not here. To save in *Powerslave*, you must reach certain waypoints marked by golden scarabs. The only reason I can imagine for this was to make it easier to port the game over to consoles. Mouse control is peculiar,



The giant fire worm is an imposing beast.

**B**ack in the 1980s, the heavy metal band Iron Maiden released an album called *Powerslave*. The album had some cool Egyptian-looking cover art, lots of heavy metal riffs, but overall, the tie to Egyptian mythology was pretty thin.

Well, there must be some Iron Maiden fans over at Lobotomy Software, because *Powerslave* has some cool-looking Egyptian art, the occasional heavy gaming riff, but overall the tie to Egyptian mythology — and state-of-the-art action shooters — is pretty thin.

The tenuous shard of a story line involves some alien presence in a reactivated pyramid. As the sole survivor of a commando team (*Doom*, anyone?) your job is to go in and gun down all that badness lurking in the dark.

*Powerslave* is another *Doom*-style shooter, and it uses the Build engine, the same basic technology as used in *Duke Nukem 3D* — but this is no *Duke Nukem*, not by a long shot. There are attempts at *Nukem*-style character interaction on occasions, with loud boasts popping up randomly after a monster is killed, but these fall flat and are largely jarring, because they are so rare.

The history of the internet demos gives away *Powerslave's* major weakness: it's an old game, and it looks it. The first *Powerslave* demo was released more than a year ago, even before the *Duke Nukem 3D* shareware came out. At the time, its water levels and grenades were new and interesting. But that's



Some water regions have strong currents as in *Heretic*, others let you go underwater as in *Duke*.



Different deaths are marked by different graphic scenes. Here, a poor explorer died of first degree burns.

forcing you to play with additional keyboard commands, and there's no joystick support, but the most noticeable absence is modem play, which — and come on, guys — even *Doom* had several years ago. The setup program says it can support up to eight players networked, but the CD sleeve says only up to four. I don't expect to see this on TEN or Mplayer anytime soon.

But for all its negatives, there are some redeeming features. The level design is excellent, being varied, surprising, and clever within the limits of the technology, so aspiring level designers may wish to pick it up for that reason. The designers included the ability to swim in the game, so not every level ends up being the standard corridor shoot-out. Moveable sectors are limited to pushing blocks around, but that's incorporated nicely into gameplay. The music — when it can be heard over the sloppy sound effects — also sets the right mood. Some of the enemies do interesting things like teleport, and there are a few surprises, as when the Magmantis first arises from the fire.

*Powerslave* is far better than *Assassin 2015* or the *Witchaven* games — perhaps it's roughly on par with *Eradicator* — but when all is said and done, there are plenty of better games out now or on their way.

—Jason Bates

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** Good level-design, novel setting, nice music. Well intentioned...

**58%**

**LOWS:** ...But poorly executed, with a dated engine and inadequacies in everything from mouse support to modem play.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Pick up *Duke* or *Quake*, or wait for *Shadow Warrior*, *Blood*, *Jedi Knight*, etc.

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Product Information Number 273

# Hardline

**Category:** Action

**Developer:** Cryo

**Publisher:** Virgin Interactive, 1861 Fitch Avenue, Irvine, CA 92614 (800) 874-4607

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; Supported sound card

**Cryo's latest offering dishes out more full-motion video than a human being can possibly stomach.**

"The Deck." By teaming up with the rebels, Ted has become the only person with the power to save the world from those zany Sectoids and their wacky New World Order.

The acting, production values, and writing aren't bad, and *Hardline* might have made a decent TV movie. It's too bad that the video sequences are linked together by a game that's

cheesier than a deluxe order of nachos. Here's what the action amounts to: Ted enters a warehouse, and finds a locked door. Ted turns down a hallway, and bad guys jump out at him. Ted proceeds to mow down around a dozen of 'em. Ted enters a room, and picks up a new weapon and a key. Ted turns around, walks back down the same hallway, and blows away another bunch of bad guys. Ted opens the locked door with the key, and — surprisingly enough — a dozen more bad guys jump out! You know what happens next.

It might not be as bad if your enemies were actually *convincing* to begin with. But instead of creepy-looking cult members, your foes look like poorly digitized long-haired programmers — though it's difficult to tell due to the nasty pixelization. When you shoot them, cartoony blobs of blood spurt out (earning the treasured "Realistic blood" warning on the back of the box), and they crumple to the ground and vanish.

Yesirreebob, *Hardline* is the epitome of the "Sit-back-and-watch-then-click-like-crazy" genre. Cryo has also upped the challenge by giving you inadequate, floaty mouse control, and ridiculously tough bosses that are nearly impossible to kill without a cheat code.

Fortunately, you won't need any hints when it comes to the puzzles, which are on a third-grade level — "Use the flashlight on the dark



■ Cross *Area 51* with a bad *Klik&Play* game, and you get the shooting sequences in *Hardline*.

hallway" is as tough as it gets. Around a quarter into the game, we discover that Ted has been spontaneously gifted with psychic powers, opening up a frustrating plot hole (if Ted can "blow up enemies just by thinking about it," why does he bother shooting them with pistols?).

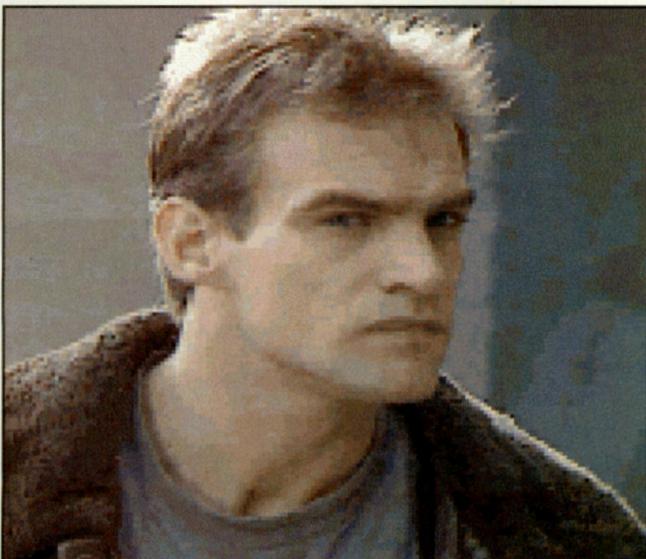
Does *Hardline* have any redeeming values? Well, the video quality is decent, and there's a sophomorically shot nude scene between Ted and his rebel girlfriend (also earning the coveted "Strong Sexual Content" warning on the back of the box). The semi-engrossing plot may push you to finish the game if you can stomach the shooting sequences, but it's nothing you haven't seen before on UPN or Fox, back before they went and got "mainstream" on us.

One of Cryo's first CD-ROM games, *MegaRace*, was similar in its approach: bog the user down with video, then let them play a quick-and-dirty arcade sequence. However, in *Hardline*, they forgot to make the game sequences good to begin with, and the result is something you should take a hard line on staying far away from.

—Colin Willaimson

There's nothing wrong with the concept of full-motion video. When acted, directed, and produced well, it can be used to augment an enjoyable gaming experience along the lines of *Gabriel Knight 2* or *The Pandora Directive*. However, when you film a B-Movie and combine it with a shooter that makes *Area 51* look like genius in comparison, you get something that falls way short of Editors' Choice material.

In *Hardline*, you play Ted Irvin, an iron-jawed, freelance helicopter pilot trying to make a living in a futuristic Detroit. Ted has somehow gotten on the bad side of the evil Sectoids, a bunch of firearm-packing hooligans in leather jackets who worship something called



■ Here's our fearless hero Ted, wearing one of those patented teenage sneers. This guy really needs to talk to his agent about doing TV movies.

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** Video quality is good; the graphic sex scene is sure to tick off the busy-bodies in Washington.

**LOWS:** Held together by the worst arcade sequences in recent memory.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Go watch a Troma movie instead.

**24%**

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# Krush Kill 'N Destroy

**Category:** Strategy

**Developer:** Beam Software

**Publisher:** Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94403 (415) 513-7171

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

**Command & Conquer meets the Road Warrior in this Australian-developed real-time strategy game.**

**A**fter the tremendous success of *Command & Conquer* and *WarCraft II* propelled real-time strategy into the forefront of gaming, we knew it wouldn't take long for companies across the globe to latch onto the trend with real-time games of their own.

Thanks to Electronic Arts and Australia's Beam Software, we now have one of the first genuine clones of the real-time explosion. The good news for all involved is that *Krush Kill 'N Destroy* doesn't stray too far from the formula that made *WarCraft II* and *Command & Conquer* successful; it walks a thin line between loving homage and carbon-copy knockoff.

All the elements of *C&C* receive some sort of treatment here: There are two warring sides; full-motion video and animations are sandwiched between missions; and you build structures and units like crazy to pound the other guy into a pulp, all while managing diminishing natural resources.

The two combatants in *Krush Kill 'N Destroy* are cut from the same narrative cloth that brought us such great Aussie films as *Mad Max* and *The Road Warrior*, where wild-eyed mutants, motorcycle madmen, and gas-guzzling four-wheelers battle it out in a post-apocalyptic world.

While the similarities to *C&C*'s GDI and NOD are far from subtle, each side lives up to the apocalyptic plot sufficiently. The Survivors are human soldiers who have come out of their bunkers and bomb shelters to reclaim and rebuild society, and the Evolvers are mutant surface dwellers desperate to maintain control of the desolate wastelands. Graphically, the game is polished and refined (although the little soldier characters are a bit stick-like), and the various units match well with each side's theme (the humans roll around in bouncy six-wheeled vehicles, while the mutants field



**A mutant attack on a Survivor base usually begins with an assault on the oil derricks. Keep these defended, and you're on your way to victory.**



**Varied terrain and unit types give *KKND* a rich, hearty aroma of panda stew with condor meat.**

crab-like creatures with huge guns).

Regardless of which side you choose, the gameplay is immediately familiar to any *C&C* fan. You have to locate natural resources (in this case, it's oil), build military units, and lead attacks, *C&C*-style, to achieve each mission's goals. The missions are a diverse lot — build-and-destroy, defend, rescue, etc. — and the learning curve for each side gives you enough time to get accustomed to the differences in units and tactics before you're thrown to the wolves.

While the bulk of the gameplay is *C&C*-like to the hilt, with victory going to the side with the most units and the best firepower, there's a subtle difference in terms of unit building: when selecting units to build, you can set the number of units you'd like to produce — as funds become available, the units will be produced accordingly. For instance, you can set your machine shop to produce an infinite number of jeeps throughout the

course of the mission, so you'll always have backups on hand when things get tough.

This hands-off method of unit creation means you can spend more time directing your units in the field and less time micromanaging the production of your army. That, in turn, allowed the designers to make *KKND*'s later missions even more demanding, requiring your complete attention on all your available units. Unfortunately, the weak Artificial Intelligence leaves a lot to be desired during these massive battles.

This problem is most apparent when your tanker trucks (cousins to *C&C*'s harvesters) become hung up in tight formations or simply get stuck behind another unit because they can't figure out how to go around it. There's nothing worse than returning from a drawn-out battle only to find your tanker trucks stuck in a clump behind a few defensive units. Worse still, your attacking units can suffer the same sort of motivational dilemmas when moving in large groups or between buildings. The only solution to the problem is to carefully manage your units and your home base — which defeats the purpose of automated production.

*KKND* is enjoyable despite these flaws. But, to all intents and purposes, it really is just more of the same *C&C*-style strategy with less panache or originality. If you're expecting a revolution in real-time gaming, this ain't it, but if you've wrung all the fun out of *Red Alert* and you still need that strategy fix, *KKND* will fill in admirably.

—Todd Vaughn

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** Polished graphics, nice variety, decent multi-player options.

**LOWS:** Weak artificial intelligence. Extremely difficult missions.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Like most me-too games, some of the touches that made the originals great aren't here, but *KKND* is still worth trying.

**82%**

# Soultrap



**Category:** Action/Puzzle

**Developer:** Microforum

**Publisher:** Microforum, 1 Woodborough Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada (800) 685-3863

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 8MB RAM; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; Supported sound card; Gamepad

**With an inventive 3D-styled puzzler and a clever dreamlike hook, Microforum delivers more than just a pretty-looking box for a change.**

When book publishers want to boost sales of a bad book, they occasionally put cool 3D holograms of, say, a snake biting the head off a rat on the cover. While it doesn't make the book any better, it does account for better sales. Our Canadian friends at Microforum have been doing the same type of thing starting with *Expect No Mercy*, which up until now claimed my personal award for "Coolest box in the history of PC gaming." Unfortunately, that game didn't deliver much in the way of fun. So imagine my surprise when I first saw Microforum's latest game/packaging marvel — *Soultrap*. Featuring one of the most inventive box designs in recent memory, *Soultrap* screams to be purchased. The upper one-third of it is constructed of transparent plastic, con-

taining a little cardboard guy apparently screaming for release from his cellophane prison. You can't miss it, and it's very memorable. Yet after my experience with *Expect No Mercy*, I expected the worst.

Fortunately, I was pleasantly surprised with *Soultrap*. Attempting to mix elements from first-person shooters like *Doom* with 3D platformers like *Tomb Raider*, it's definitely in a different genre than most of the other action games out there. Instead of guiding a typical mascot-type character "with an attitude," you take control of Malcolm, a normal-looking guy in a dress shirt and slacks. Thrust into the world of his dreams, Malcolm has to deal with his inner fears and end the string of nightmares he's been suffering from. As an added bonus, Malcolm has a jetboard strapped to his feet, so he can jump and coast with ease through his funkadelic dreamscapes.

As one of the first 3D platform games on the PC, *Soultrap* contains a lot of running and jumping to and fro over floating platforms, while shooting the occasional monster. Though it's possible to play from a disorienting *Doom*-style perspective, *Soultrap* is best played from the external camera mode. The keyboard controls Malcolm's movement, while the mouse controls his current direction and the camera view. Overshooting jumps isn't a problem, since a tap of the return key will stop your forward velocity and drop you straight down onto the platform below.

One of the frustration factors in *Soultrap* is its skinny levels. While *Bug!* was "on rails" and prevented you from falling off the sides of its floating platforms, *Soultrap* offers no such protection. When an enemy starts shooting at you, you may find yourself strafing out of the way, and accidentally plummeting to your death off the side of the platform. It takes a good bit of practice to get used to this unfortunate



That's you in the normal-looking pants and shirt — with a jetboard strapped to your feet.

limitation, and you'll want to use the quicksave option for the added security. Be sure to save plenty of times throughout the level, too — if you mess up, it's very possible to get "stuck" with no hopes for redemption. One more thing — the clock is constantly ticking, and you only have around twenty minutes to complete each level.

*Soultrap*'s graphics are well-defined. There aren't any over-the-top special effects, but the clean visuals and slightly psychedelic art design are more than satisfactory. *Soultrap* is also quite adept at inducing vertigo with its dizzying jumps and skyrocketing platforms.

New players may be put off by the stale first and second levels — but those who stick with it will be rewarded with some uncommonly slick level designs later on in the game. Your hard work never really pays off, though, since *Soultrap*'s almost nonexistent ending will make you moan "That's it?"

All in all, *Soultrap* is a game that will undoubtedly appeal to the *Bug!* and *Mario 64* fans in the crowd, though the frustration level may be too high for some. If it sounds like it's up your alley, give it a glance the next time you drop by the software store — you sure as hell can't miss the box.

—Collin Williamson



Plummeting to your death off of *Soultrap*'s floating platforms is always a possibility, so be sure you're saving your game often.

## PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Funky graphics and a unique play system.

**LOWS:** Frustratingly narrow levels cause you to die more often than not; a stinker of an ending.

**BOTTOM LINE:** 3D platformer fans may dig it, but the rest of us may find it too frustrating.

# 69%

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SHALL  
BEAR  
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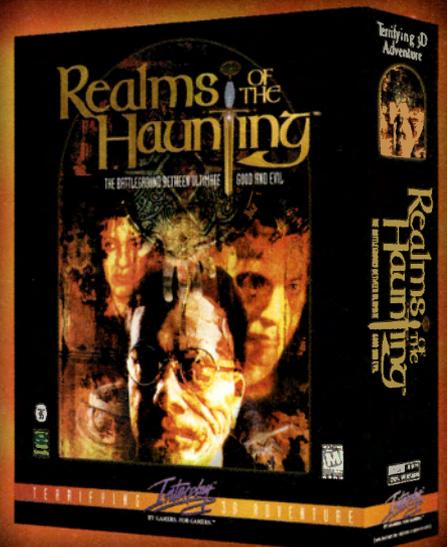


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# Agile Warrior F-111X



**Category:** Shooter

**Developer:** Black Ops

**Publisher:** Virgin Interactive, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92614 (714) 883-8710

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 8MB RAM	Pentium 120; Supported sound card; Joystick

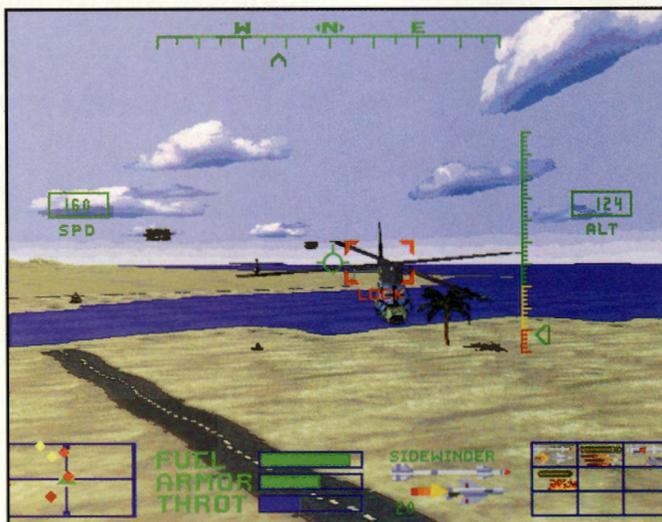
Porting console videogames to PC is a sticky business. The PC is one of the few platforms that can support (and welcomes) a broad spectrum of genres and sub-genres, but all that diversity makes PC gamers a very shrewd and discerning audience — and companies that blindly shovel their lackluster console content onto our favorite gaming machine are learning this the hard way. You may not have to exceed PC gamers' expectations within a given genre, but you certainly have to meet them. Virgin's port of *Agile Warrior F-111X* strikes out on both of those counts.

*Agile Warrior* was unimpressive in its original form on the Sony PlayStation, with most critics citing dismal control and lackluster graphics as its major pitfalls. To release it on the PC is like trying to pit Roger Corman's science-fiction quickie *Battle Beyond The Stars* against *Star Wars*. There's just too much competition.

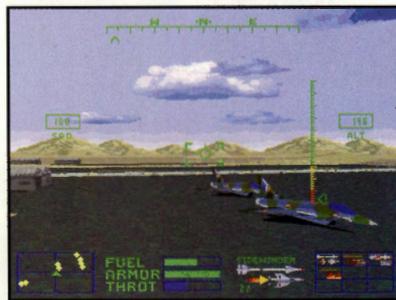
If you've read this far, you may as well know the premise: You take to the skies in the most advanced plane known to man in an effort to wipe out any threat to the free world's sense of security. Numerous, multi-targeted missions take you from the palm tree-strewn beaches of French Guyana, to the drug-smuggling jungles of Burma, to the frozen, vodka-soaked wastes of northern Russia — wherever terrorists threaten our Democratic way of life, you will be there to shoot things.

And shoot things, you will: helicopters, tanks, enemy aircraft, ships, you name it. At your disposal is a veritable plethora of weapons — rockets, bullets, napalm — you'll use to dish out your own brand of ass-whoopin'. And, unlike other shooters that threaten to curtail your fun with far too few

**Sporting one of the biggest misnomers ever attached to a game, *Agile Warrior* is anything but.**



**Corny clouds and uninspired terrain are some of the reasons *Agile Warrior* fails to make the grade, but bad gameplay takes number one with a bullet.**



**Stay low and nobody gets hurt. By smashing into targets, you'll earn points without firing a shot.**

missiles, *Agile Warrior* loads up your F-111X with no less than 20 Sidewinders. That is, unfortunately, one of the only good things that can be said for this game.

Control is jerky, at best, belying the title. About as agile as a major appliance, this warrior tends to respond in nauseating jerks when rolling left or right. Coupled with the lack of ground-collision detection, however, this can be put to your advantage. Because the 3D terrain isn't rendered very far ahead of your fighter, it's often difficult to actually find your primary target until you're just about on top of it. We recommend crashing into the target from above — the target will be destroyed, and you won't suffer a scratch. We're willing to do a little reality suspension

when it comes to arcade shooters, but this is too much.

Another major problem with *Agile Warrior* is the reliance on floating power-ups to replenish your weapons, armor, and fuel. You probably won't need the weapons and armor boosts — you're given more than enough ammo at the start, and the armor is pretty strong — but your fuel does dry up

quickly. In fact, about the only thing that will bring your F-111X down is a lack of fuel. But whether it was the end result of some cruel Black Ops joke, or was intended as a way to make the game more challenging, the fuel boosts are vastly outnumbered by the other power-ups. And even if you find a fuel boost, it's doubtful you could retrieve it, since passing through the floating power-ups is extremely tough.

For all the criticism Microsoft's *Hellbender* got last year, it at least showed off the graphics potential of the PC. *Agile Warrior F-111X* refuses to do even that. The clouds are laughably two-dimensional, the enemies are uninspired, and the landscape is barren and hardly textured at all. There are far better arcade shooters on the market than *Agile Warrior*. Avoid this clumsy waste of time.

—Adam Douglas

## PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Numerous missions to accomplish; lots of ammunition to play with.

**LOWS:** Bland landscapes; jerky control; targets difficult to find.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Even die-hard shooter fans will find this insipid and uninspired.

# 40%

# G-Nome



**Category:** Action

**Developer:** 7th Level

**Publisher:** 7th Level, P.O. 832190, Richardson, TX 75083-2190 (800) 884-8863 Ext.77

**7th Level's entry into the giant robot wars is attractive, but it's no match for MechWarrior 2.**

Required	We Recommend
Quad-Speed CD-ROM Drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; 30MB hard-drive space; Windows-compatible sound card; Mouse	Pentium 133; Modem, network, or Internet account for multi-player

using that code to pass as a friendly long enough to reach the bad guys' headquarters.

The ability to eject is a major part of *G-Nome's* multi-player action, too. When you're going head-to-head against human opponents, you won't be killed when your HAWC is destroyed. Instead, you'll automatically eject. Outside your HAWC, you're extremely vulnerable — one well-placed stomp from an enemy HAWC will reduce you to jelly — but you have a secret weapon. A direct hit from your Gas Assault Shock Rifle (GASHR, for short) can force the other guy to eject from a perfectly good HAWC, freeing you to jump into the driver's seat and turn the tables on him.

If that great idea had been backed up by a decent game, *G-Nome* could have been terrific fun — especially in multi-player mode, which supports modem, local-area network, and Internet play. But *G-Nome* has problems that one original twist just can't overcome.

The biggest problem lies in the game's choppy animation. *G-Nome* runs smoothly enough when you're just admiring the scenery, but as the action heats up and enemy HAWCs close in, the frame rate takes a severe dive — and so does the control you have over your HAWC. Even on a fast Pentium, there will be times when all you can do is keep firing and hope the bad guys stumble into your sights. The game supposedly uses MMX technology, but switching from a 166MHz Pentium to a 200MHz MMX brought no significant improvement in frame rate — and no improvement at all in graphics quality. And you can forget about using the mouse to tilt and swivel your HAWC's turret, *Mech2*-style — mouse control is far too sluggish and imprecise to be of any use.

*G-Nome's* documentation is sadly inadequate, too; it doesn't even explain the GASHR, for example, which is the key to stealing enemy HAWCs and has to be the most important weapon in the game. And there are other game elements the manual doesn't touch on, like when/how/why you use the "Sabotage Target" and "Send Signal" options in the communications menu. Some of these things are explained in mission briefings as the game unfolds, but those explana-



**G-Nome's graphics look pretty great at first glance, but the pixels loom large when you get too close.**



**Those mountains are pretty, but your HAWC is restricted to level ground; even this shrub will stop you dead.**

**W**e've already got *EarthSiege 2* from Sierra. Interplay gave us *Shattered Steel*. We've got *MechWarrior 2* and *Mercenaries* from Activision, and MicroProse is working with FASA on *MechWarrior 3*. So do we really need another giant-robot game?

Well, sure we do, if it's a good one. There's always room for excellence, right? If a game adds something new — and does it well — it doesn't matter how many times we've seen the basic premise.

Unfortunately, this isn't that game. *G-Nome* has at least one intriguing twist, but when it comes to execution, this game falls short.

The graphics are very pretty, with highly detailed texture maps over polygon-based robots. The mountains in the background are gorgeous, too. But everything goes blocky at close range, and texture warping is a real problem. And those beautiful mountains are little more than set-dressing. Unlike *MechWarrior 2* and *EarthSiege 2*, *G-Nome* restricts your movement to the flat ground. Even a bush or a dead tree will stop your huge, armored robot instantly, so taking a strategic shortcut over the mountains is out of the question.

*G-Nome's* most intriguing feature is the ability to eject from your HAWC (Heavy Armor Weapons Chassis) and go on foot. And the game is designed to make good use of this twist. Some single-player missions have you starting out on foot; you'll have to commandeer a nearby HAWC before you can accomplish your objective. You'll also enter enemy buildings, sabotaging them or stealing information. One early mission has you swiping an abandoned HAWC, breaking into the enemy motor pool to steal their IFF code, and then

tions aren't always clear, and they're no substitute for a good manual.

*G-Nome* proves that one great idea doesn't necessarily make for a great game. It's a shame, because if this game had taken just a few different turns in development, it could've given the best games in the genre a run for their money.

— Dan Bennett

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

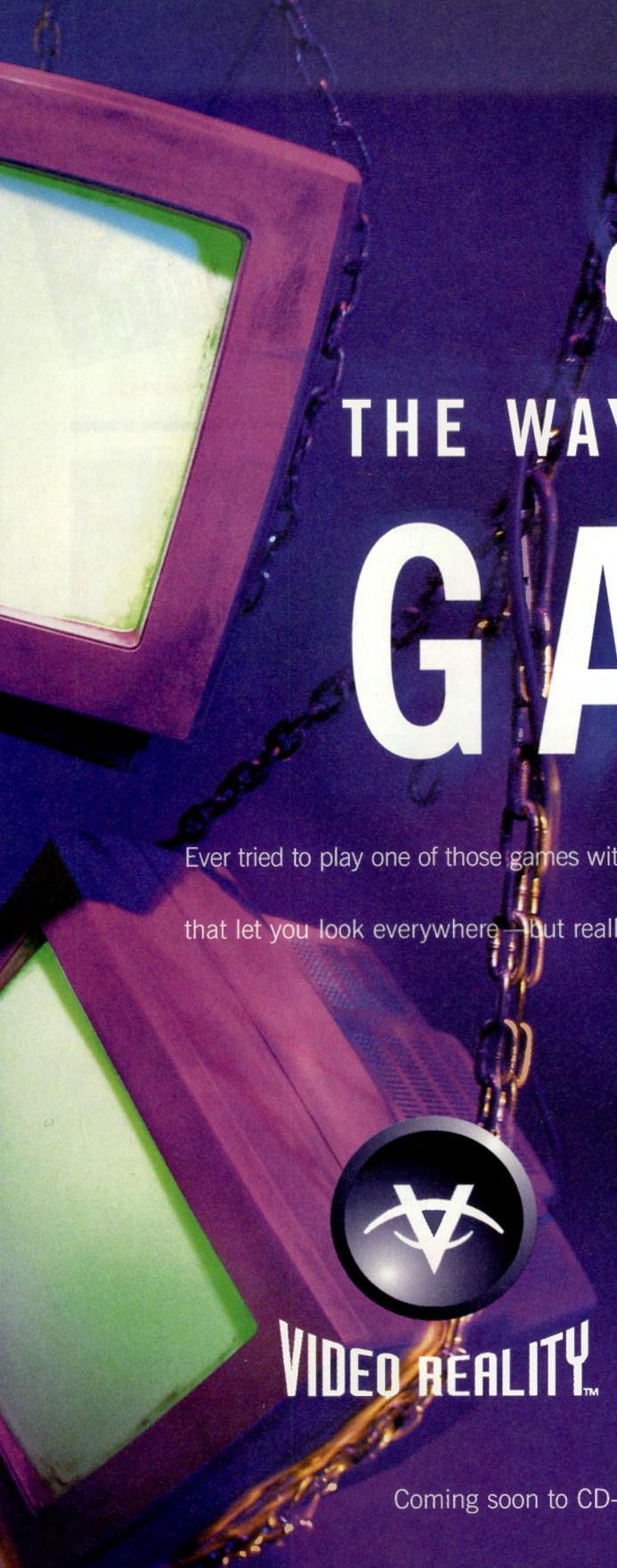
**HIGHS:** Pretty graphics; the ability to eject and enter enemy 'bots and buildings adds variety.

**68%**

**LOWS:** Choppy animation; sluggish control; inadequate manual.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *G-Nome* had the goods to be a hit, but poor execution makes it a disappointment.





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# Flying Corps

PC GAMER  
EDITORS'  
CHOICE

**Category:** Flight Simulation

**Developer:** Rowan Software

**Publisher:** Empire, 13220 Wisteria Dr.,  
Bay N-2, Germantown,  
MD 20874 (310) 916-9303

Required	We Recommend
Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; DOS 5.0 or higher; 5MB hard-drive space; Mouse	Pentium 200; 2MB video card; 20MB hard-drive space; Joystick and rudder pedals

.....

Shortly after Rowan's *Flight of the Intruder* hit the simulation scene back in the early 1990s, it looked as if this would be the new sim developer to watch. Not only was *Intruder* a superb simulation — still the best Vietnam-era sim around — but it also included an important innovation: both human and AI wingmen. Even though *Intruder* was crippled by countless bugs, many never fixed, it remains important in the history of flight simulation.

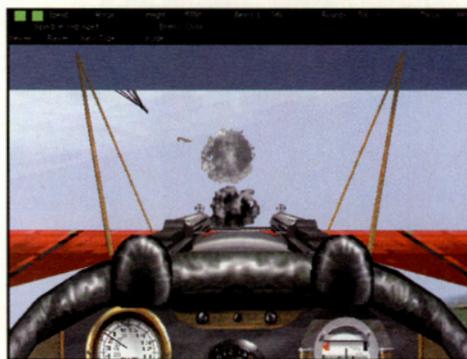
But something went awry after

**After a long drought, Rowan is back close to the mark with the strongest World War I sim since *Red Baron*.**

*Intruder*. Rowan went to seed, releasing a string of sims that were as beautiful as a supermodel but completely devoid of soul or depth: *Fighter Duel*, *Air Power*, *Navy Strike*, and *Operation: Overlord* were hardly sims at all. Indeed, in reviewing these titles, we treated them as arcade games, since their flight elements bore only a passing resemblance to true principals of flight.

So, the hard core flight sim community looked with a dubious eye when *Flying Corps* was announced, wondering if Rowan could find that old magic or if the British company would continue to coast. Despite some bumps along the way — the familiar Rowan keyboard, joystick, and viewing sins are still present — it is a pleasure to be able say that this is the best World War I-era sim since *Red Baron*, and in many ways, it surpasses even that venerable classic.

*Flying Corps* offers six planes in both instant and campaign-based missions: the German Fokker Tri-plane and Albatross DIII, and the Allied Nieuport 28, Sopwith Camel, Spad, and SE5a. Flight models are strong across the



An allied fighter feels the wrath of the Fokker ... and hits the silk moments later. You can flame the pilots once they bail out, if you want to be a cad.



board (see sidebar for more details), and go into areas rarely modeled in sims of this area. The planes just feel *right*, and flying them on full realism is a true challenge. One thing I didn't care for was the planes being set to full throttle when you entered a new mission: I found this disorienting.

Gamers used to waypoint carats on their HUD will be shocked to find navigation is pretty much by dead reckoning, unless you call up the information panel along the top of the screen. This panel has all relevant information on speed, altitude, heading, required heading, situational awareness, and so on. In one corner, there are even two little bars representing the lift of each wing in terms of color: green is good, red means that wing is stalled.

The one thing that doesn't feel right is the touchy, sensitive controls, which can be attributed to Rowan's poor joystick coding routines. There is little to no stick dead zone (and stick support and calibration is poor), so some planes feel "twitchy." Rowan needs to work on this.

Because of *Flying Corps*' sensitive controls, rudder pedals are almost essential. The controls are so well modeled that they almost feel "wrong" to modern sensibilities. The rudder really threw me the first time I flew, but after some maneuvers, I realized that someone had finally gotten it right, or at least tried to approximate the feel.

Graphically, *Flying Corps* is outstanding, with super-detailed planes, gorgeous colors, wonderful landscapes, and



The furballs get pretty furious in some squadron encounters, and can quickly turn into a confusing jumble of smoke and shattered planes.



Some different views of a favorite past-time: balloon busting! Balloon-men don't wait around; they jump out the minute the lead starts flying.

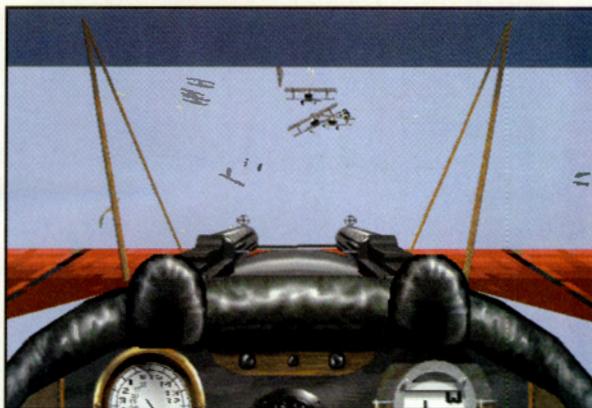
high resolutions. In the campaign game, you can even custom paint your planes and provide nose art. The trade-off is in processor speed. You'll need a monster to run it, and forget about the Win95 mode until some form of 3D card support becomes available in a patch: the game is hopelessly jerky in native Win95. But in DOS, it runs well on a P200, even on higher resolutions and with full details.

Missions run the gamut: ground strikes, patrols, escort runs, balloon busting. But the most prominent is straight-forward dogfighting, with enemies that we found mostly very challenging on harder settings. All planes can drop bombs (an acceptable realism concession made for the sake of gameplay), but I found ground strafing unrealistically effective: guns don't usually blow up large houses.

The viewing modes in the initial release offered a bewildering variety of padlock and external views, and I was never very comfortable with the glitchy padlock. (I'm not a fan of padlock in general, however.) You can smooth-scan around the cockpit, but this is processor intensive, so Rowan has already issued a patch with quick-look features so you can glance around rapidly. We highly recommend downloading the patch; it's a big help.

In campaign mode, you have a choice of four semi-narrative campaigns: leading the Flying Circus in May 1917, a German pilot in the battle of Cambrai, a British pilot in 54 Squadron in February 1918, and as American ace Eddie Rickenbacker. You usually get a couple of different planes in the campaigns, and get to plan missions and set-up your squadron. The campaign is the weak link in *Flying Corps*: it's nicely done, with animations and good squadron control, but it feels canned rather than dynamic.

The packaging — one of the most elegant since the old Dynamix boxes — even includes a paperback copy of *Practical Flying: Complete Course of*



Leading your wing into a thick hail of enemy gunfire takes a special kind of chutzpah.



Both computer and paper maps are part of the *Flying Corps* experience. Navigation can be tricky, but there are various accelerate and autonav modes that make it easier.

*Flying Instruction*, by Flight-Commander W.G. McMinnies: a 200+ page volume from 1918 on the ins and outs of flying and combat. This book is a lot of fun and has many useful tips. Also in the box are six double-sided color maps, so you can navigate the way the pilots did, if you choose: with a map in your lap. (Believe it or not, we've actually heard people complain that these delightful — and pertinent — items were included.) The manual is good but not great, with a lot of material on the campaigns but not enough on flight and controls. Plus, the rudder keys, as well as other important keys, were left off the key map in the back!

*Flying Corps* has its problems, but that it can weather these flaws and still leave such a favorable impression speaks volumes for its quality. Rowan seems to be supporting it well, with one patch already out and another due out soon that will feature 3D support and modem play. This is not just something to play while waiting for *Red Baron II*: it's serious competition. Flaws and all, it is a superb piece of work.

—T. Liam McDonald

## How Real Do You Want It?

You can often tell just how much attention developers pay to details and realism when you play with the difficulty options. In the case of *Flying Corps*, there are plenty of realism settings, but what do they all mean?

**BOMB WEIGHT:** Bombs are dead weight, and in these underpowered aircraft, the effect of this weight results in drag, slowing the aircraft, affecting performance, and consuming more fuel.

**COMPASS SPINNING:** In heavy maneuvers, the compass would tend to spin wildly and not give an accurate reading until returned to level flight.

**COORDINATED RUDDER:** With the coordinated rudder option switched off, you get a feel for the true interrelation of stick and rudder in turns. In flight, when you roll into a turn, one wing provides more lift and creates more drag than the other. In a roll right, for instance, the left wing is lifted and creates drag. Because of the aerodynamic properties of these old planes, you are pushed in the opposite direction of the roll (ie, the opposite direction you want to fly). You need careful rudder work to fix this, and without rudder pedals, it's pretty hard to do.

**GYROSCOPIC EFFECTS:** Rotary engines (found in the Fokker Triplane, Nieuport 28, and

Sopwith Camel) produced a gyroscopic effect from the heavy rotation of the engine itself. The result caused the aircraft to nose up in left turns and down in right turns. This greatly affects maneuverability.

**POWER:** These were primitive, underpowered aircraft, less response and harder to fly than later models. You can give the engine a boost in the realism options if you like, but set to normal you'll get a feel for what these pilots had under the hoods.

**SLIPSTREAM:** The wash of air from the prop effects the flow of air over the wings, which in turn effects lift.

**SPINS:** Various things can cause a spin, such as pulling back all the way on the stick in a turn without proper rudder input. Spins can be tough to get out of, and we found the *Flying Corps* model a little too forgiving in this area.

**TORQUE:** A rotating propeller creates a certain amount of torque in the aircraft itself, effecting flight.

### PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Visually gorgeous and full game world. Detailed flight model; strong gameplay.

**LOWS:** Useless Win95 mode; screwy keyboard layout and viewing options; joystick problems.

**BOTTOM LINE:** A flawed gem, but a gem nonetheless. A wonderful sim with an authentic feel.

# 90%

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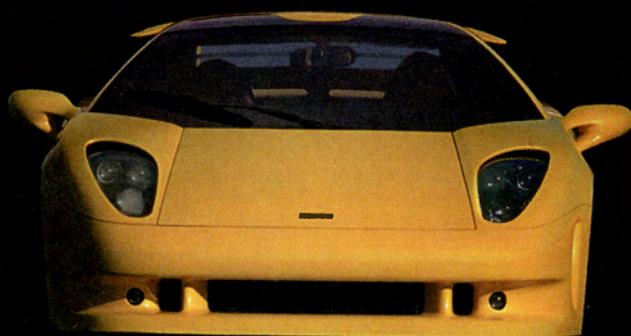


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Product Information Number 130

# Obsidian



**Category:** Puzzle/Graphic Adventure

**Developer:** Rocket Science Games

**Publisher:** SegaSoft, 150 Shoreline Drive, Redwood City, CA 94065 (415) 802-4400

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; 2MB VRAM	Six-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; Supported sound card

There's nothing quite like a good old-fashioned rampaging supercomputer, right folks? H.A.L., SkyNet, and the Milliard Gargantubrain have all gone down in our fictional history as a warning to all that the machine should only be given limited powers. *Obsidian* picks up this frayed theme and twists it beautifully into new and surreal shapes, allowing a different perspective to bring fresh light to the subject.

In 2066, the earth has become so polluted that the drastic step of using experimental Nanotechnology has been taken to correct the problem. Nanotechnology is a very real emerging science where cellular-sized robots are created to interact with organic molecules, creating a machine that works at the cellular level. You, as your character Lila Kremlin, and your partner Max have released a pollution-destroying nanobot cloud into the atmosphere, where it has functioned perfectly for one hundred days... seemingly.

Taking advantage of the environment you and Max have saved, you've gone on a camping holiday together. However, you notice a shimmering black "obsidian" rock near your camp. Your scientific minds can't help but notice it's growing — not very rock-like behavior — at an alarming rate. While you're checking out your PDA at the campsite for information on the strange rock, you hear Max's blood-curdling screams. He has disappeared at the rock face.

As you look at your reflection in the shiny black surface, wondering what your next move should be, the *Obsidian* opens before you and drags you inside.

Up until this point *Obsidian* has been set in reality. Upon entering the *Obsidian*, you enter a dream world. The graphics are spectacular. Each of the four realms within *Obsidian* have unique

**Put away your preconceived notions about *Myst*-style puzzlers and alternate realities. You're not going to need them for this one.**



■ Fantastically detailed graphics create this transparent glass cubicle maze. But is all as clear as it seems?



■ This dramatic puzzle requires excellent timing. Catch the waving branches to correct their timing until you uncover the right pattern.

perspectives, gravities, and atmospheres. The scientific world has been left behind, and open before you is a place where surrealism rules supreme.

Finding Max is your first priority. As you begin looking for clues, you quickly discover that this is no run of the mill clue-equals-solution kind of game. Indeed, there are no clues. Just half-machine/half-human robots who may or may not be giving you important information, a file system that seems intent on playing ridiculous games, and room after room of benches to wait on and cubicle mazes. Yes, you've entered a bureaucracy.

This first realm teaches the player the importance of an illogical mind. Most of the puzzles are solved by gut instinct which, depending on your instincts, makes them staggeringly difficult or walk-through simple. With none of the traditional gathering of facts that computer games use to lead the player to solutions, you are left to your own capacity for linear thought. Should it prove to be too drastic a shift in perspective, this first realm is

spelled out in the manual.

*Obsidian* is notable for many reasons. The graphics — of an awe-inspiringly high standard — get more phenomenal as the game goes on, encouraging you to push through the most frustrating puzzle if only to look around the next corner. The music and sound are beautifully atmospheric, and are an integral part of several of the puzzles. The game sticks doggedly to its

original themes: the out-of-control A.I.; the resolution of problems with unusual, sometimes illogical solutions; the manipulation of the environment in order to create a solution; playing God. Unlike other treatments of this subject, however, playing God is not condemned. Rather we are left with the impression that our grasp on technology is becoming such that we will be forced into this role in the future, and we had better decide how to handle it.

—Angela Bennett

## PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Great graphics and sound, engaging story line.

**LOWS:** Lots of CD swapping. Brief gameplay for experienced adventure fans.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *Obsidian* manages to distinguish itself as a truly different adventure, where traditional puzzling melds with abstract thought.

# 83%

# Amok

**Category:** Shooter

**Developer:** Scavenger Inc.

**Publisher:** GT Interactive, 16 East 40th St., New York, New York 10016 (212) 679-6850

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/50; DOS 6.0; 8MB RAM	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

Upon entering *Amok*, you're told that the great war lasted for nearly 47 years, before a cease-fire agreement between the two largest warring corporations finally brought peace to the planet and... well... yadda yadda yawn. Like most of the action tripe we're subjected to, the well-worn introduction only serves to inform you that the political climate on the planet Amok is such that, fortunately, peace is not an option.

But before you become too disinterested, here's a quick summary of what you'll find *after* the introduction. *Amok* is one of those straightforward Amiga-esque games that grow more enjoyable even as more ambitious PC titles keep tripping over their own pretensions. It's an action-strategy shooter that puts you in command of a versatile, all-terrain vehicle called a Slambird, and you blast

**Gather round all ye Amiga fans, as action runs amok and occasionally far afield in this fast-paced and entertaining 3D shooter.**

the crap out of everything that moves, collecting power-ups before moving on to the next level.

You play mercenary pilot Gert Staun, who's been hired by The Bureau to stir things up between the N.O.N.L.U.N. and A.Z.T.K. corporations (I warned you about the backstory) and, hopefully, get them back to their profitable (for The Bureau) warring ways. You do this by wreak-

ing havoc in ten Mission Phases in four different environments; barren wastelands, the ocean floor, the City of Loso, and subterranean tunnels. While the wasteland and ocean floor look remarkably similar (the only real clues that you're underwater are the sharks, enemy Scuba Grunts, and the twin screws your Slambird sprouts for propulsion), the underwater bits do validate my theory that space ain't the gamer's final frontier any more — it's the oceans now, matey (submitted for your approval: *Deadly Tide*, *Archimedean Dynasty*, *Tigershark*, etc.).

Default control of your Slambird is by the familiar *Doom*-defined keystrokes and while you're free to redefine them, *Deathmatch MouseMasters* will be chagrined to learn that *Amok* only supports the keyboard — no joystick or rodents allowed. After a cursory briefing, complete with area map and recon video of your objectives, you're left at the drop zone and off you go.

As you trudge through each level, all manner of biomechanical beasts



■ A flurry of CC3 Dragonflies guard a Restore Health Pick-Up and a 5-bomb Pick-Up.

are out to stop you — Grunts, Missile Tanks, Droids, and minefields, to name a few. They're all relatively slow and stupid (especially the minefields), but there sure are a lot of 'em, and they're very persistent within their defined patrol areas. Power-ups found along the way do wonders for your health, well-being, and firepower.

Once every couple of missions, you'll receive a password that will allow you to restart the game at one of five midpoints. This is as close to a save feature as *Amok* gets, and once you're dead, you'll probably have to slog through a level you've already completed just to reach the level you died on. It's downright ridiculous and probably the game's biggest flaw.

On the other hand, *Amok* requires virtually no hard-drive space — it plays directly from the CD, installing a single temporary file at startup and removing it upon exit. And there are also enough graphics modes, from 320x200 to 800x600, to insure optimal performance on even the minimum required system.

Despite its deceptive simplicity, *Amok* offers a significant strategic challenge as well; the full-speed-ahead, guns-blazing approach will acquaint you all too well with the accursed Mr. Password, and you'll put survival over all else in order to snag these elusive codes.

—Scott Wolf



■ No doubt about it — things blow up real good in *Amok*! Too bad the game ain't that good.

## PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

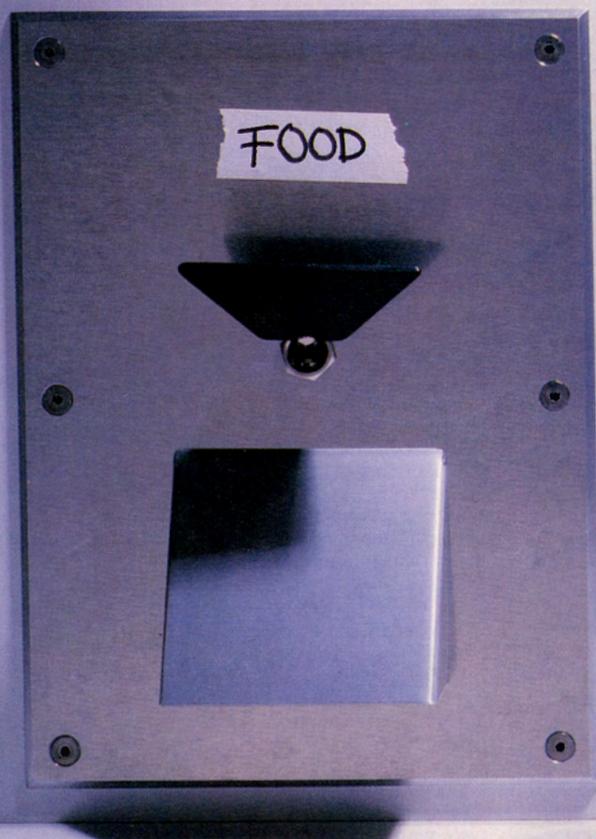
**HIGHS:** Fast, frenetic action; it runs from the CD!

**LOWS:** Frustratingly difficult; stingy password allotment; no mouse or joystick support.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Although it won't win any prizes, *Amok* is a decent, but somewhat dated and repetitious, shooter.

# 65%

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# Golden Gate



**Category:** Puzzle

**Developer:** ix Interactive

**Publisher:** Panasonic Interactive Media,  
4701 Patrick Henry Dr., Santa  
Clara, CA 95054 (408) 653-1898

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

Were it not for a few quality titles such as *Circle of Blood*, I'd be convinced that the PC adventure genre has gone the way of the dodo, only to be replaced with tiresome post-Myst puzzlers like *Golden Gate*. Like the rest of the continuing stream of never-ending *Myst* clones, *Golden Gate* replaces character interaction and thoughtful gameplay with full-motion video, still pictures, and irksome puzzles.

*Golden Gate* is a "360-degree Non-Linear Graphical Treasure Hunt" (just count them buzzwords!) that takes place in San Francisco — everyone's favorite city by the Bay. Judging by the skeletal plot presented to you at the beginning of the game, your quest is to find the lost treasure of King William. To advance the storyline, you have to scour San Francisco for artifacts and diary pages, which are obtained by solving — you guessed it — silly point-and-click puzzles!

Your quest begins outside a ruined house once owned by a famous treasure



It's a lonely life here in the big city of San Francisco. Your only interaction with people is limited to Jake, a rival treasure hunter.

**The sights and sounds of San Francisco aren't enough to ward off frustration in this *Myst*-style adventure.**

seeker, and you're given a few clues by Jake, a rival treasure hunter and proud graduate of the William Shatner School of Drama. While Jake pops up every now and then to babble on meaninglessly like a college professor, he's fortunately the only person you'll meet in *Golden Gate*'s ultimately lonely depiction of San Francisco.

The game is played from a first-person perspective, opting for the "slideshow approach" of dissolving from picture to picture as you move around. Interestingly enough, you can pan 360 degrees around your environment, adding a good deal of depth to your surroundings. *Golden Gate*'s images are photographs of the Bay Area that have been cleverly manipulated to resemble watercolors, and they work well in establishing a dreamlike mood.

From the get-go, *Golden Gate* gives you free run over most of its gaming world. While this allows the player plenty of exploration, it also serves up plenty of frustration when it comes to figuring out what in the hell to do next. If a special necklace is in your inventory, certain locations will trigger standard low-budget video sequences, which may give you a boost in the right direction — plus, they'll give you an opportunity to marvel at what some people believe to be "acting."

Likewise, *Golden Gate* serves up the recommended daily allowance of unrelated puzzles, complete with those infernal trick puzzle boxes that any human being with common sense would whack open with a sledgehammer. One of the more bizarre plot twists comes into play if you solve a certain puzzle the wrong way — your character goes insane and enters "Beast Mode," where the color palette gets all wacky (and you may think that your Windows 95 graphic driver has crashed).

If you manage to finish the game, you'll be treated to one of the biggest let-down endings you'll ever witness: Jake bounces in, congratulates you, and then you lose the treasure. Great, now I'm drooling for the sequel.

Is *Golden Gate* something that's new, exciting, and innovative? No. Is it



The graphics of *Golden Gate* are photographs that have been manipulated to resemble watercolors — pretty, ain't it?



Most of the puzzles are completely unrelated to the storyline of the game.

frequently tiresome and instantly forgettable? Yes. For those of us in the gaming community who still have a penchant for the dip-n-twiddling antics of *Myst*, *Golden Gate* might be an adequate time waster — but if you're as sick of the genre as I am, you'd best move on. Publishers, please show some originality.

—Colin Williamson

## PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Nicely done watercolor-style graphics.

**LOWS:** Really bad acting; tedious puzzles; complete lack of originality; one of the worst endings in gaming history.

**BOTTOM LINE:** If you've played *Myst*, you don't need to play it again in San Francisco.

# 31%

# A Fork in the Tale



**Category:** Interactive Movie

**Developer:** Advance Reality Interactive

**Publisher:** AnyRiver Entertainment, 280 Utah Ave., South San Francisco, CA 94080 (415) 742-7932

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 8MB RAM; 35MB hard-disk space	Pentium 90; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; 16MB RAM

**AnyRiver's debut game tries to raise the credibility of FMV games, but stumbles at all the same old hurdles.**

confusing, it's because it is — with virtually no introduction and the plot slowly spoon-fed over the course of five discs, you'll spend much of the game in the dark as to why you're here, what you must do — and why everyone is always trying to kill you or lock you up in a dungeon.

*A Fork In The Tale* is entirely full-motion video, played in first-person perspective with your voice provided by former "Saturday Night Live" comedian Rob Schneider. Schneider's input is the best thing about this game — his relentless barrage of wisecracks, comedy observations and general "why me?" whining (anyone who's seen his character in "Men Behaving Badly" will get the idea) makes for plenty of laughs, and it's testament to the quality of Schneider's script that there's incentive to keep playing even when the gameplay itself is constantly conspiring to put you off.

The gameplay mainly consists of clicking on the right hot-spot at the right time. As you come to a point in the constantly-moving video requiring a decision (Which way to run? Should you block or punch? Up the stairs or through the door?) you're given a second or so to click on the right highlighted hotspot. Since these windows of opportunity can be as short as a second or two, and sometimes those hotspots are moving, this isn't always easy. One wrong click (or lack of a click) and you could find yourself frustratingly sent back to where you were ten minutes ago. There's a lot of extraneous clicking in the name of comedy, too — most situations allow for a random remark or gag from Schneider if you click on the appropriate thought bubble. There are some adventure elements, too — you can "remember" certain people and items, and ask other people about them later to gain



**In fight sequences like this one, you select from the flashing hotspots on screen (such as block, turn, punch etc.). Failure to pick the right one quickly enough equals bad news for you.**

clues, but since you can only do this when you're prompted by the program, you get the sense the game is leading you by the nose through these puzzles.

*A Fork In The Tale* is a big game, set over five CD-ROMs and with masses of dialog from Schneider — and really, he's the game's saving grace. Schneider is funny and aloof, and if it wasn't for his flippant take on things, this whole game would have been just too dull to endure. But, just like those early FMV games we saw from opportunistic companies looking to cash in on the start of the CD-ROM revolution a few years ago, the production values look cheap, there's not enough gameplay to hold your interest, and too much impenetrable repetition and frustrating setbacks for all but the most tolerant of gamers. If there's such a thing as an FMV devotee, they could do worse than this, but anyone in search of an honest-to-goodness game won't find one here.

— Gary Whitta

**T**hink FMV Sucks? Think Again" is the bold statement made by the press advertisements for AnyRiver Entertainment's *A Fork In The Tale*, but the truth is, full-motion video cynics are likely to come away from this game with their opinions reinforced rather than changed. This muddled title deserves points for attempting to do something original with the much-maligned medium, but history will more likely record this as a failed experiment than the ushering in of a new era.

The indeterminate storyline casts you as an ordinary Joe who is spirited away to the fantastical isle of Eseveron after a mysterious shooting incident — a magical bracelet allows you to explore and interact with this parallel world while your mortal body lies on an operating table back on Earth. If this sounds



**The local amateur dramatics society decides to give you a hard time — the quality of the acting, dialog and costuming is typically below-average.**

## PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Lots of great comedy from Rob Schneider; fast-moving, lag-free video.

**LOWS:** Tedious, uninteresting story; banal gameplay; frustrating repetition.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Think FMV sucks? You'll think it again.

# 34%



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DOS/PC  
CD-ROM



Product Information Number 160

# Golden Nugget



**Category:** Casino

**Developer:** Abalone

**Publisher:** Virgin, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (800) 874-4607

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 16MB RAM; 27MB hard-drive space; Mouse	Pentium 200; 32MB RAM; 2MB VRAM SVGA card; Supported card

**Even the thespian genius of Batman himself, Adam West, can't keep this casino game from being a golden turkey.**

far so good. The casino screens are nicely done, with all the games clearly accessible as you turn around a large main room. It's not the best navigation interface, but it'll do in a pinch. Then things go horribly, horribly awry.

Let's look at the casino portion first. The games you can play are Roulette, Baccarat, Keno, Blackjack, Craps, 7-card stud, Texas hold-'em, Pai Gow poker, Video Poker, Big Six, and slots. They are, to an item, the worst recreations of casino games this side of shareware, and I can name some shareware programs that are better. First, the graphics are ugly, and in the selection of card games the cards themselves are blurry and unrefined! "Hand animations" for dealing and card/chip manipulation are dark, badly composited, and jerky. Worse, they run with jaw-dropping sluggishness. It is staggering that a casino game running on a Pentium 200 with 32MB of RAM can run so poorly, especially with such execrable graphics. Things can be speeded up a bit by turning off the hand animations, but this leaves you with no visual cues as to what's happening in the game!

Even the mechanics of play are confusing. Setting bets is done with a pop-up "purse" screen that is a model of shoddy layout and control. It doesn't even come into play in many of the games: I couldn't access it during a Blackjack game no matter how many times I hit the button. The games themselves are never explained online, only in the manual. And the way they unfold — draws, bets, and so on — is very unclear because most cues are audio, and they're largely unintelligible. You are able to set the number of players at a table, however, which can speed things up when set to the minimum number.

Things really get cooking when you enter the tournament mode. Perhaps sensing that the casino portion of their product was garbage, Virgin/Abalone grafted a AVI-based "interactive mystery" onto *Golden Nugget*. This is some largely gibberish bit of blatherskite concerning a beautiful female scientist who has had her revolutionary "Chaos Chip" stolen. To get it back, she



**The poor mechanics of playing *Golden Nugget* make placing bets difficult.**

calls on you. The only clue, left in the empty box that held the chip, is an entry form for a poker tournament. To enter, you must turn \$1000 worth of chips into \$20,000 in two hours. (If I could do that, I wouldn't be playing this game.)

Once in the game, you're treated to AVIs of a cast of boring and irritating characters, and must make a decision at the end naming the thief. (Are we excited yet?) The only saving grace is — seriously — Adam West, who shamelessly mugs for the camera and hams it up enough to at least generate a smirk. Hey, it's a better gig than *Maxim Xul*.

If you want to skip the interminable three-round tournament, you can call up Explorer and just watch the AVIs to get the complete West experience. Or you can always rent *Night of the Kickfighters*. At least that ends in ninety minutes: which is about how long a few hands of poker will take with *Golden Nugget's* shoddy programming.

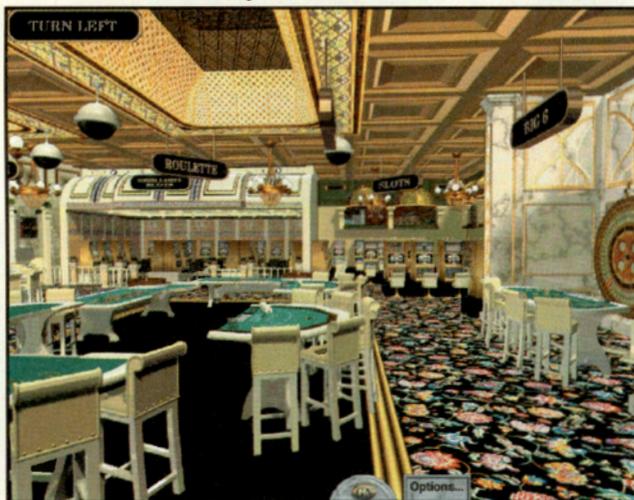
There was one good thing about *Golden Nugget*: it made me really appreciate how good *Hoyle's Casino* and *Casino Deluxe 2* are. They're fast, tutorial, challenging, and look good enough for the task. *Golden Nugget*, on the other hand, is just a busted flush.

—T. Liam McDonald

**W**hen Adam West is the best thing in your game, it's time to start looking for a job parking cars.

*Golden Nugget* is... is... where does one begin? This is the *Robot Monster* of casino games. It would seem hard to take something as benign and simplistic as slots and poker and make a terrible game out of it, but Abalone has

shown themselves up to the task. The best part of *Golden Nugget* is the opening: a flashy animation of a white stretch limo driving past the neon glow of Las Vegas. The limo deposits you in a very handsome reproduction of the Golden Nugget casino. You walk over to the desk and sign in, get \$1000 worth of cash and some markers, and then have the option of going straight to the casino or entering the tournament. So



**The graphics of the *Golden Nugget* casino are well done, but that can't make up for the awful gameplay and shoddy control.**

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** Adam West! Pure West!  
**LOWS:** Pitifully slow, even on a fast computer; no instructions; bad controls; poor recreation of casino games.

**18%**

**BOTTOM LINE:** *Golden Nugget* makes you appreciate shareware casino games.

# Amber

**Category:** Puzzle Game

**Developer:** Graphic Simulations Corp.

**Publisher:** Changeling, 2507 Albata Ave., Austin, TX 78757-2102 (512) 419-7085

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; Super VGA; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

**Somewhat spooky ghosts — and horrifyingly nonsensical puzzles — make this a game to avoid at all costs.**



Unfortunately, your car is not an amphibious vehicle, so it looks like you're stuck here for a while.

Computer gaming old-timers will fondly remember an aging graphic adventure called *Uninvited*, in which the player was thrust into the original Spooky Old House, just bristling with paranormal activity. Like a good Hitchcock flick, there was more emphasis on psychological horror than on Wes Craven-style jump-out-and-getcha scares. *Amber: Journeys into the Beyond* pays plenty of homage to this old classic, and it manages to avoid being a cookie-cutter *Myst*-clone — at least, until halfway into the game.

As an employee of a supernatural research company, you're sent to check on the research of Roxy, a fellow paranormal scientist. Unfortunately, a ghostly apparition makes an impromptu appearance in front of your car as you make your way to your destination, and you swerve into a lake. Things get worse when you find Roxy, who appears to be dead as a doornail. With no hope of getting back to town, your sole purpose is to find out who — or what — killed Roxy, while unlocking the mysteries of the spookhouse and its previous inhabitants.

Once you set up your paranormal surveillance equipment, a hand-held ghost-tracker device called the Peek will occasionally flash at the bottom of the screen, indicating that poltergeist activity is going on in the house. The ghostly activity can consist of anything from floating knives and moving furniture to rooms filling with blood, a la Stanley Kubrick. *Amber's* 3D-rendered environments look great, even though they're completely static. The audio design is also above average, with non-intrusive ambient sound and appropriately evocative music.

*Amber* has a lot of potential, which it lives up to at the beginning of the game. The lack of dippy puzzles at the beginning and the presence of an actual inventory system may lead you to believe *Amber* is a true-blue adventure game. But once you set up the supernatural research hardware and don your trusty paranormal-tracking VR helmet, *Amber* undergoes a metamorphosis into yet another abstract exercise in trial-and-error frustration.

In these supernatural sequences, you're transported back in time to witness the grisly deaths of the house's previous damned denizens. The inventory system mysteriously disappears, and your goal is to progress from room to room, saving the souls of the spirits contained within. Most of the puzzles are solved through trial-and-error, rather than logic



Slip this device over your cranium, and you'll be swept off to the spirit world — where the souls of the undead will undoubtedly laugh at your silly-looking headgear.

or reason. In one puzzle, you have to set a clock to read 7:00 — fair enough, but the only way to do adjust the clock is to open the room's doors multiple times (well, isn't that how you set a clock?). In a similar puzzler, you have to put a torn-up telegram together; you do that by playing one of those tedious tile-sliding puzzles that appear in all inferior games. The accompanying sounds and visuals are great, but who wants to play the same old puzzles over and over? Fortunately, you won't be subjected to too much of this torture — *Amber* is a very short game.

*Amber* manages to dish out a few genuinely creepy moments before turning into *Myst* with spooks. If you're hungry for a few good scares, go buy *Harvester* — at least the puzzles actually make sense. I have a feeling that if the real afterlife is anything like the puzzle-strewn hell of *Amber*, we're all in big trouble.

—Colin Williamson



Roxy's office contains several clues about your supernatural search-and-click puzzles.

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** A promising opening; nice rendered graphics.

**LOWS:** Illogical puzzles; mostly static backgrounds; very small amount of gameplay.

**BOTTOM LINE:** *Amber* falls more than a few steps short of achieving its potential.

**53%**

# Banzai Bug



**Category:** Action

**Developer:** Gravity Inc.

**Publisher:** Grolier Interactive Inc,  
Sherman Turnpike, Danbury,  
CT 06816 (800) 356-5590

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 8MB RAM	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 100 or higher; 16MB RAM

**Banzai Bug offers a novel take on flight-based action games, putting you in the six shoes of an heroic insect.**

**T**here's so much banality, repetitiveness, and copycat formulaic design in the game industry these days that we're always encouraged to see something genuinely different and inventive come along, even if it's not that great a game. *Banzai Bug* certainly falls into that category, a near-miss experiment that nevertheless hints at having strong potential.

*Banzai Bug's* novel premise casts you as a winged insect that, through sheer bad luck, finds himself inside the trap-laden home of a hard-nosed bug exterminator. Through a series of increasingly complex missions, the game's objective is to escape from the house and liberate some of the other luckless insects stuck there too. What this boils down to is a colorful, stylish, slightly surrealistic arcade flight sim viewed from behind Banzai Bug as you guide him around the a house that resembles something from the Dire Straits "Money For Nothing" video — all straight edges and vivid colors.

Each level has its own specific objective — find five pieces of food, navigate the caverns, collect certain objects and return them to the start point, etc. Regardless, the same basic skills will be called on in each scenario — skillful navigation of the environment, and avoiding the multitude of traps set for you by the over-zealous exterminator. Rotating gun turrets spit globules of stuff at you, and mechanical guard bugs are on your tail. Fortunately, you have the ability to fight back through a limited number of "zaps," and you can also pull off some pretty nifty evasive maneuvers by combining fast spins and changes in direction. But this is

an arcade game at heart, and so there really isn't very much to this once you've got the basics figured out.

Some nifty presentation helps to move things along — the obligatory cutscenes are here, of course, advancing the story between the levels, but they're pulled off with a little more flair than most. They're not great technically, but the creature designs and voice characterizations are better than most we've seen. Add to that a very bouncy soundtrack and the aforementioned stylistic graphic feel, and you've got a package that, on the surface at least, seems to promise one of those rare unexpected treats, a "sleeper" hit that's much better than its quiet arrival in the *PC Gamer* office might suggest. Unfortunately, while the gameplay holds up well for a few levels, extended play demonstrates that *Banzai Bug's* inventive mood and styling is really its most impressive aspect — it doesn't take long for the play dynamic to become repeti-



**Level Two challenges you to navigate this perilous network of air vents and ducts.**

tive and boring, and, at many points, just plain frustrating.

Technically, the game is pretty spartan, best enjoyed with some kind of compromise in effect — either play in a small window or crank down the resolution and texture effects. Though the game seems visually plain, trying to play at maximum size and detail slowed even a Pentium 166 down to an intolerable crawl. There is support for DirectX-compatible accelerator cards, but even the online documentation doesn't seem too confident about its chances of working correctly with whatever 3D card you may have. Be warned.

All in all, *Banzai Bug* deserves kudos for trying to do something different in the world of PC gaming — the scenario is original, the aesthetic styling is different and appealing, and there's no end of cute touches. But without a robust, playable game at the core of it all, so much of the talent and good intentions directed at developing *Banzai Bug* have been wasted. It's a shame, because with a little more attention paid to control and environment design, we could have had a miniature classic on our hands here. As it is, we're left to wonder what might have been.

— Gary Whitta



**Keep away from the marauding enemy bugs, and don't get stuck with the sticky stuff!**



**You'll need to carefully search every inch of this garage to find the five pieces of food you've got to collect.**

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** Lots of originality; good graphics and sound; cute touches throughout game.

**56%**

**LOWS:** Flawed basic design; often frustrating to play; technically spartan.

**BOTTOM LINE:** A promising title that didn't quite live up to its potential.

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-*Computer Gaming World*

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[www.lucasarts.com](http://www.lucasarts.com)

Product Information Number 222



# Emperor of the Fading Suns

**Category:** Strategy

**Developer:** Holistic Design

**Publisher:** Segasoft, Inc., 150 Shoreline Dr., Redwood City, CA 94065 (415) 802-4400

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 16MB RAM; DirectX compatible video card; 40MB hard-drive space; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; Supported sound card

**A conquer-the-galaxy epic with a special twist, this has all the strategic features you could want (and some you'd just as soon do without).**

**T**he time is 4956 AD. It's been four centuries since the murder of Grand Emperor Vladimir, who united all the human worlds into a mighty imperium. The elective Regency has been vacant during all that time, however, because no contender has shown the skill and power necessary to declare himself Emperor. It is a dark age, quite literally: not only has detailed knowledge of the Known Worlds all but vanished, but the stars themselves are dying.

In this atmosphere of pre-apocalyptic dread, *Emperor of the Fading Suns* invites you to ascend to the Regency and the throne. You belong to one of the five Noble Houses, each of which controls five Sceptors (representing five votes in the election for Regent); the Church and the Guilds also control five votes and



**When diplomacy fails to yield results, you can employ more subversive means of persuasion on your adversaries, such as assassinating them.**

each group has its own agenda. To succeed, you must explore and develop forgotten worlds, strike diplomatic deals, and either crush the rival Houses by force, or suborn them to your cause.

Based on a popular series of role-playing games and novels, *EOFS* blends all the classic ingredients of a good conquer-the-galaxy game: exploration, research, fleet-building, invasions, and lots of Machiavellian skullduggery, yet has a distinct atmosphere all its own. The mood of historical context is well-sustained (thanks in part to a dynamite opening sequence), the details are fine-grained and meticulously consistent, and there is admirable depth to the game-

play. And unlike some other genre classics, this game offers a satisfying model of planetary combat, complete with an amazing variety of units.

Research, of course, yields advanced weaponry and technology, but *EOFS* adds a very intriguing twist: some of the most useful research subjects are banned by the Church. You can go ahead and develop them anyway, but there is a fairly good chance that your heretical activities will be spotted by the Inquisition, and you do not want a visit from those gentlemen!

Diplomatic inter-

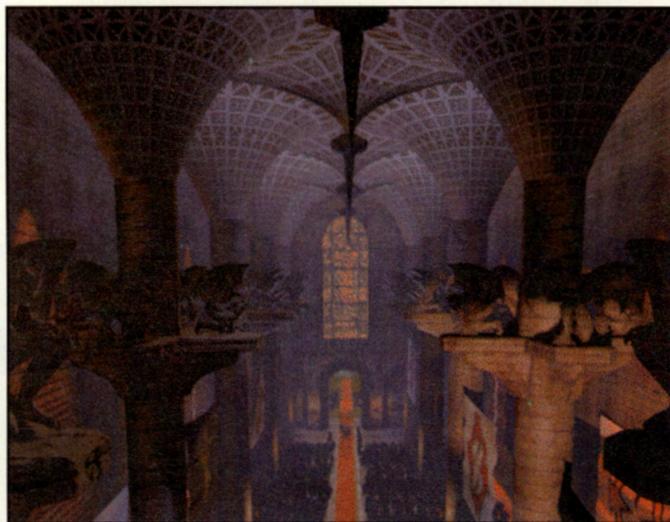
action is unusually varied and plausible, not the usual cut-and-dried dialogues found in many games, although this aspect of the game flourishes best in the multi-player play-by-E-mail mode (as does the rest of the game).

So far so good. But given the tremendous amount of detailed actions you can, or must, perform, the interface just clanks along; unless you engage the "Universal Warehouse" option, you'll spend much of your time micro-managing cargo pods, and manipulating big stacks of units can be confusing. The manual is inadequate, too: you only get a basic run-through of the mechanics, at the end of which you'll scratch your head and probably mutter: "Okay, I understand; Now what do I do?"

What I ended up doing was blundering around for about six hours before I began to get a *glimmer* of what a decent opening strategy might be. And after a while, solo play against the PC started to be a chore: the AI cranked out humongous numbers of units, but was otherwise almost totally inert unless directly attacked. After 60 turns or so, the PC began to take up to 15 minutes to complete its turns. I also encountered a *major* bug in the research routine (although it doesn't show up in every game), and a number of bizarre occurrences that may or may not also be bugs — the game's complexities are so daunting that I honestly couldn't tell.

*EOFS* certainly is ambitious and grand in scope. I venture to guess that it will become a cult favorite. I also venture to guess that half the people who buy it will be utterly bewildered (unless they've played the non-PC games). My advice: Read the pro and con postings on the 'net ([comp.sys.ibm.games.strategic](http://comp.sys.ibm.games.strategic)) before buying — you may love it, or you may find it, as I eventually did, quite tedious.

—William R. Trotter



**If you can hold off your adversaries and unite the various houses, you'll take the crown in the grand Cathedral where Emperor Vladimir met his doom.**

**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** It's epic in scale, atmospheric, and full of extremely deep gameplay.

**LOWS:** Inadequate manual; stratospheric learning curve; solo play becomes a real trudge.

**BOTTOM LINE:** A lot of people are going to love this game; I didn't — but I respect it greatly.

**75%**

# Callahan's Crosstime Saloon

**Category:** Adventure

**Developer:** Legend

**Publisher:** Take 2 Interactive, 1004 Ligonier St, Latrobe, PA 15650 (412) 474-2000

## Required

Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; 25MB hard-drive space; Mouse

## We Recommend

Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 100; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

**The writer of *Freddy Pharkas* turns *Spider Robinson's* popular science fiction series into a game, with some decent laughs along the way.**

lated adventures, with the Saloon as the jumping off point for each.

Think of *Callahan's* like the cantina in *Star Wars*: a general assemblage of space beings, time travelers, outcasts, and miscellaneous creatures from around the universe located on Long Island. Three small adventures, played in any order, kick off the game.

In the first episode I played, Jake and a time cop named Josie must make sure a pencil company doesn't destroy the last cacao tree, the source for a rare chocolate bar.

Once that problem is solved, Jake can then help an alien named Squish who has a change of heart after releasing a testosterone-inhibiting satellite into the atmosphere. Or maybe he'd rather help the bar's "designated driver", a vampire name Pyotr, cure his broken heart by getting him back together with his lost love. After finishing these three adventures, two more open up. One involves a talking dog who must be rescued from evil government vivisectionists, and the other sends Jake time-traveling again to help a reluctant psychic named Al Phee.

The sixth story brings us back to the "save the universe" theme of the opening, and draws on elements from the previous adventures for a final puzzle in which Jake proves the value of Earth to the gods. All six adventures are fun and feature an engaging assortment of offbeat

characters. Gameplay itself is pretty satisfying, with conventional, object-oriented manipulation puzzles providing a medium challenge (neither too easy nor too hard). For example, in the first adventure, the main puzzle involves getting into a hidden South American temple, finding rare cacao beans, grinding them, boiling them, and turning them into a candy bar to convince the president of a mega-corporation not to turn the rain forest into pencils.

Back at the bar,



**Josie, a time cop, wants you, playing as folk musician Jake Stonebender, to help convince a mega-corporation not to turn the rainforest into pencils.**

**C**allahan's *Crosstime Saloon* is a breath of fresh air, blowing away all those stale *Myst*-style puzzle games with some solid, old-fashioned use-the-mayonnaise-on-the-totem-pole gaming. Though the writing and even the puzzles are sometimes uneven, it is still one of the best classic-style adventure games we've seen in quite some time. God bless Legend, one of the few companies that remembers what good gaming is all about, and knows full well that nothing good could ever come of an adventure created with Macromedia Director.

*Callahan's* is based on a series of stories by science-fiction author Spider Robinson. The game, and the stories, use the bar as a nexus point for the tales of different patrons from throughout the universe, who often come to share painful experiences. In 1992, Steve Jackson used his GURPS (Generic Universal Role-Playing System) to make a *Callahan's Crosstime Saloon* game, and now Legend takes a stab at bringing the stories to the computer.

The setup has the gods deciding that the high expense of maintaining an ever-expanding universe is outstripping any real benefit, so they've decided to shut the project down. As folk musician Jake Stonebender, you have to help save the universe through a series of five unre-



**Guzman, your pilot from hell in one of the adventures, will get pretty upset when he finds out you're not who you say you are.**

there are a series of tough bar games to play as well. The first of these involves finding similes for strings of words to turn them into real names: "irritate, occupied to capacity, and lifeless" becomes "The Grateful Dead." The only disappointment is that some single screen puzzles, of the "arrange the beans in a line" variety, have been needlessly grafted on to lengthen gameplay. Fortunately, an option allows these to be skipped.

Josh Mandel, the game's designer, is a funny guy, but he's not consistently funny. (But then again, who is?) Large swathes of dialog go on that are about as sharply written as a high-school drama class skit. Then, out of nowhere, comes a really funny bit, like the demented pilot Guzman. This unevenness is a slight disappointment, but in the final tally the funny and unfunny are balanced enough to keep things entertaining. There is also a vast amount of punning (as in the stories) that requires a strong stomach. Add good ol' fashioned gameplay, and you have a winner.

—T. Liam McDonald

## PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

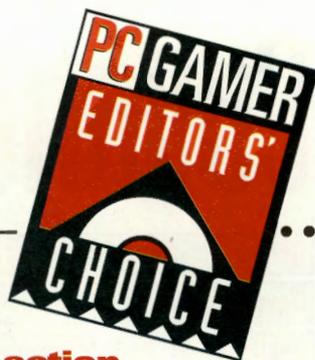
**HIGHS:** There are some genuinely funny jokes. Gameplay is just right: not too easy or hard.

**LOWS:** There are some genuinely unfunny jokes. Some puzzles were pointless.

**BOTTOM LINE:** A traditional adventure game with a good story, funny bits, and decent puzzles.

# 86%

# Sega Rally PC



**Category:** Arcade Racing

**Developer:** Sega of Japan/AM3

**Publisher:** Sega, 150 Shoreline Drive, Redwood City, CA 94065 (415) 802-4400

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 75; 16MB RAM	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; Supported sound card; Gamepad

**Sega's top-scoring arcade game proves you don't need quarters to experience great action.**

Ever since Sega met success in the PC market with its star arcade attraction *Virtua Fighter*, it's been hard at work porting more of its top-selling coin-ops to the PC side of town. Though *Daytona USA*'s debut left a lot to be desired, one of the best titles from the arcade division — *Sega Rally* — has been ported flawlessly, keeping all of the superb control and smooth visuals of its console and arcade counterparts.

*Sega Rally* is an off-road, arcade-style racer. Instead of dealing with a normal pavement road surface, you'll have to battle with tracks constructed of uncooperative sand, dirt, and mud. There are four tracks, including everything from one placed in a desert that harbors zebras and elephants to a serene, yet dangerously narrow, lake-side track. Three authentically modeled rally cars are included, with choices for automatic or manual transmissions — a Lancia Delta, a Toyota Celica, and a hidden Lancia Stratos, accessed with a secret code.



The Lancia Stratos powerslides through a tricky turn on the Lakeside track. The variety of tracks in *Sega Rally PC* makes for good replay value.

*Sega Rally*'s control is dead-on, with surprisingly intuitive control using an analog gamepad. The powerslides and tricky skids required to win pose a steep learning curve — but nothing beats the feeling of smoothly fishtailing right through a hairpin turn without smacking into a barrier. Also worth mentioning is the lack of spectacular crashes — *Sega Rally* concentrates on precision driving, and a bit of slowdown is the only result from a head-on collision into a wall.

Accompanying the exceptional play are the wonderfully polished graphics, with plenty of little details — birds take off as you round corners, and the cars realistically bounce up and down as they hit bumps. The standard low-res mode runs just as smoothly as the arcade version, and the high-res frame rate is more than acceptable on a Pentium 166. Unfortunately, a few polygon glitches remain here and there, especially when driving through the tunnel on the forest track, but it's nothing that detracts from the gameplay. It's a pity there's no Direct3D support — if *Sega Rally* took advantage of a Rendition or 3DFX card, the resulting visuals would probably be equal to or surpass the original arcade version.

To give you hints about the upcoming track, *Sega Rally* provides a computer navigator who shouts bizarre-sounding directions such as "Very-long-easy-right-baby!". While the voice is relatively helpful to beginners, it's annoying as the dickens to anyone who's memorized the course, and it's a pity you can't turn him off. The rest of *Sega Rally*'s sound is clear and crisp, with just catchy jazz and rock instrumentals, and none of those indescribably cheesy *Daytona* vocals.

Though the tracks and cars are rather limited, a few options boost the replay value of this title. The Championship Mode pits you against 15 computer opponents who drive extremely well,



You can cruise on through the checkpoint to reset the clock in one of your authentically modeled rally cars.

while the "Time Attack" mode lets you practice your runs solo, without the pressure of a ticking clock. And if you want to mess with the inner workings of your car, there's a customization screen that will let you tinker to your heart's content.

*Sega Rally* also delivers solid multiplayer gaming. A two-player split-screen mode is present for those without access to a network. Fortunately, there is also support for not only an IPX network, but also Internet play over TCP/IP, and runs as smooth as can be — just enter your friend's IP address, and away you go.

*Sega Rally* is a first-class arcade racer. Though the four tracks and cars may seem limiting at first, Sega's appropriate hop onto the Internet gaming bandwagon guarantees plenty of multiplayer replay value. Anyone ready for a change of pace from the hyper-realism of *NASCAR* should give this a serious look.

—Colin Williamson

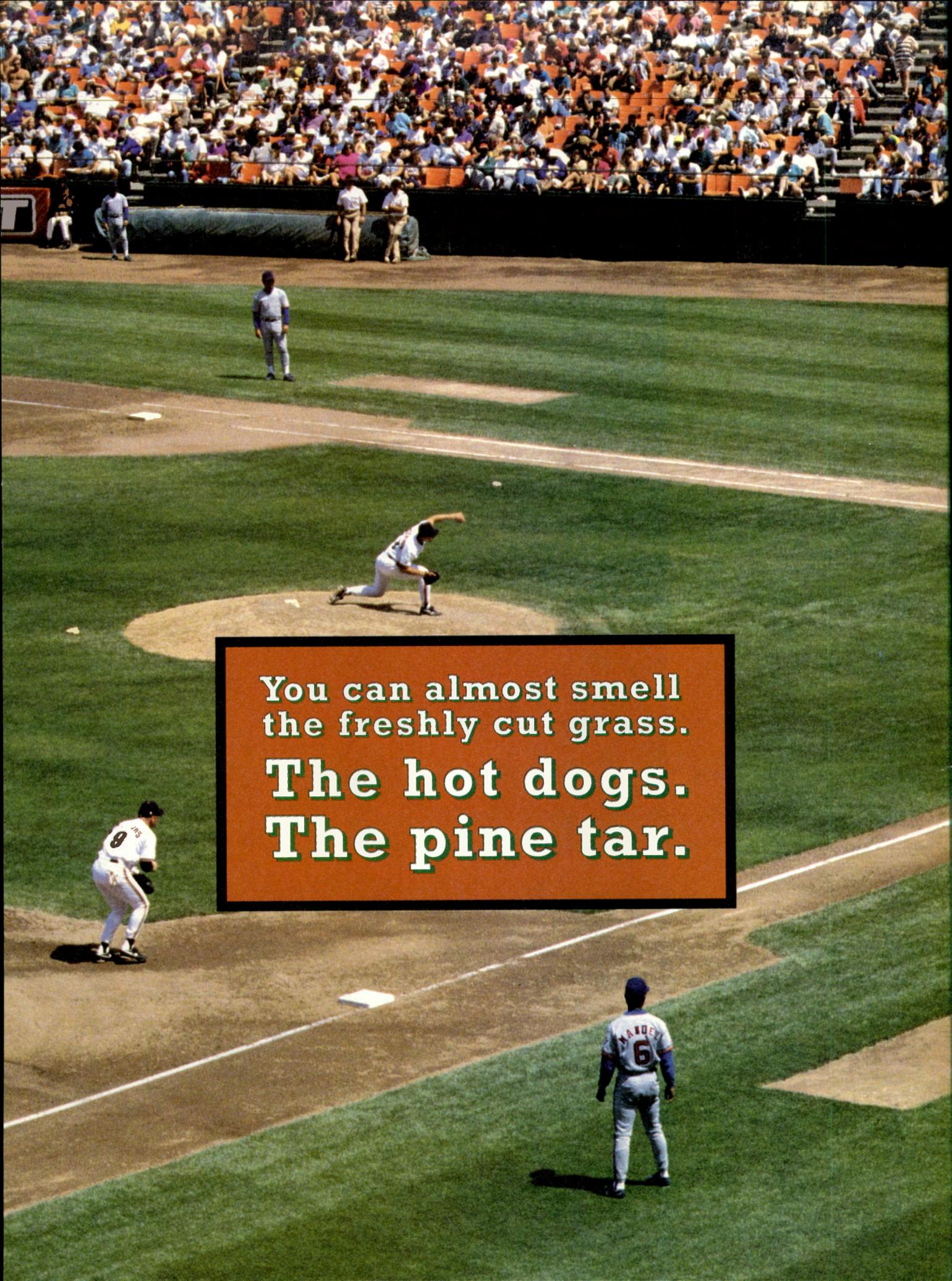
**PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHS:** Great graphics, smooth control; excellent Internet play.

**LOWS:** May leave you craving more tracks and cars; some pretty high system requirements.

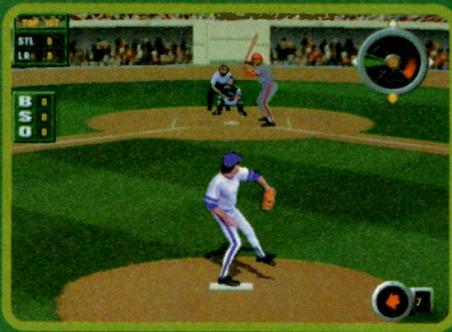
**BOTTOM LINE:** This great conversion is a must-have for arcade racing fans.

**88%**

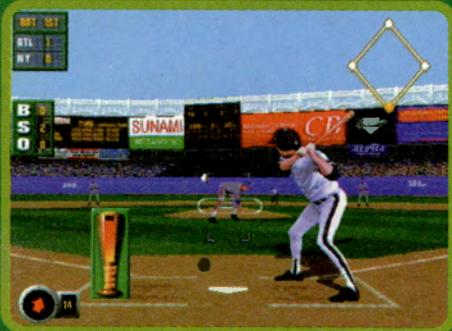


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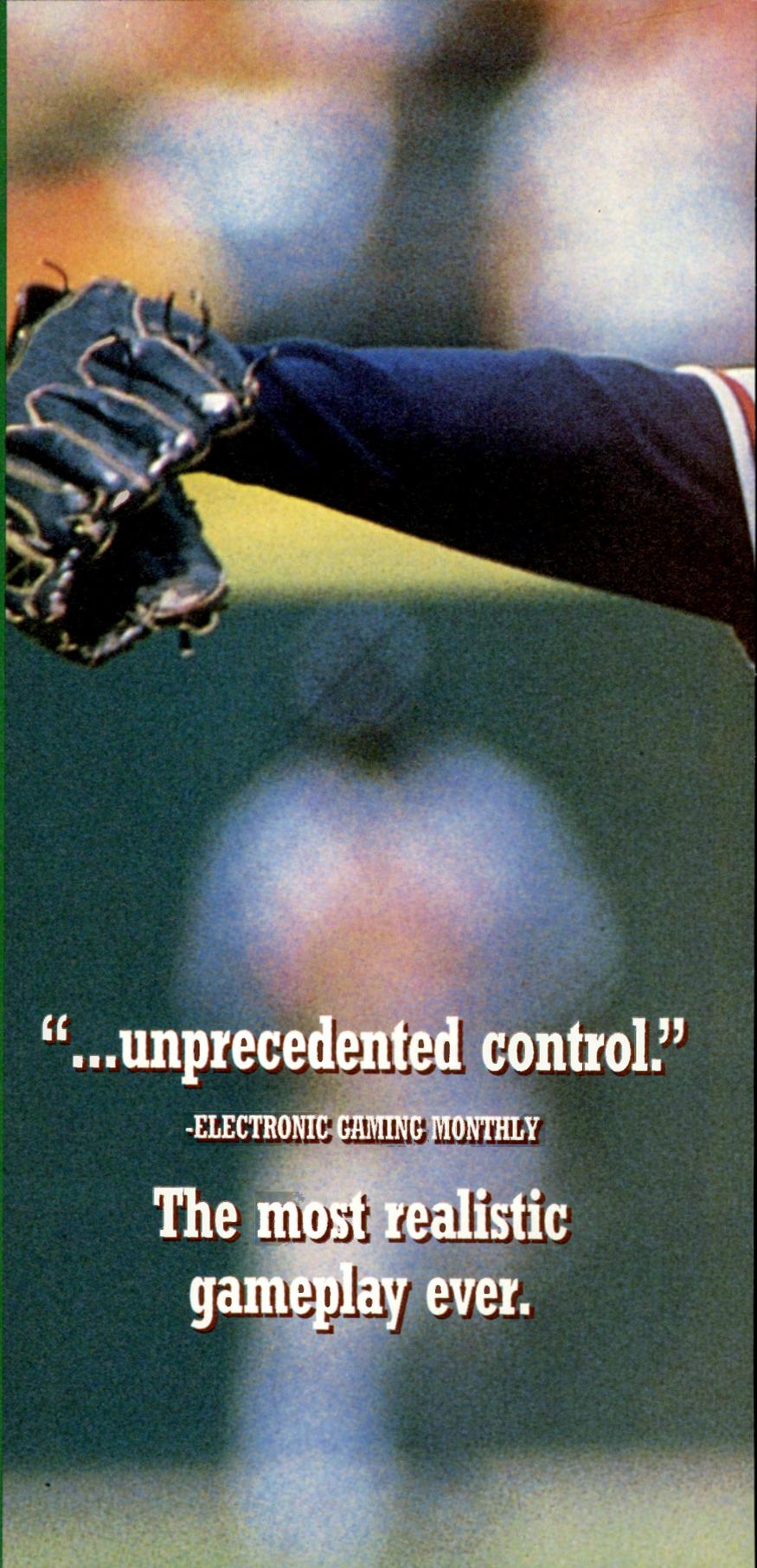
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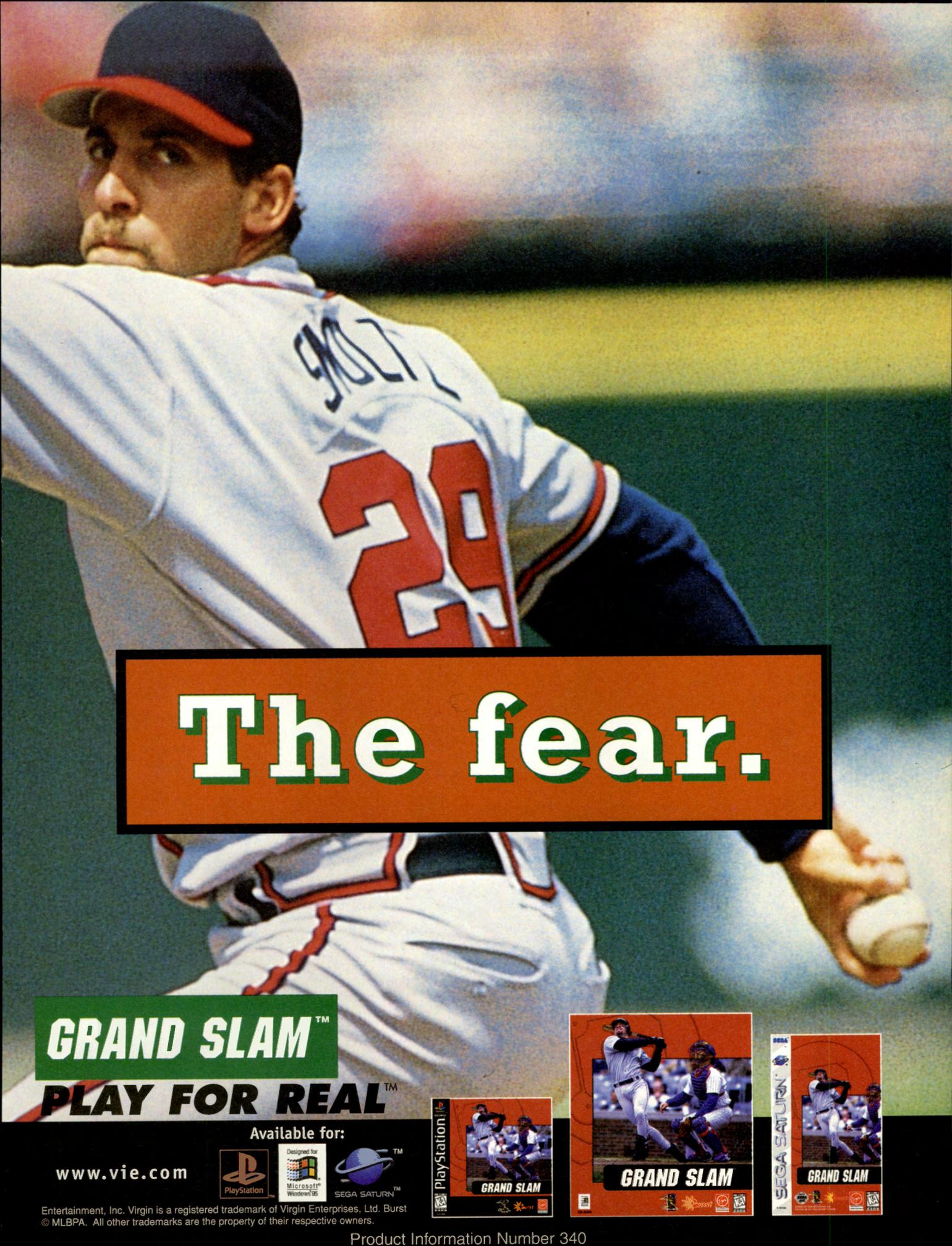
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# The fear.

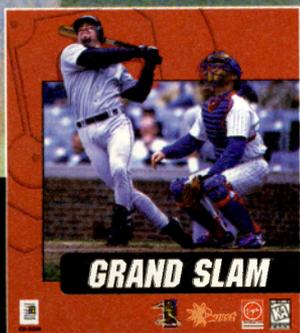
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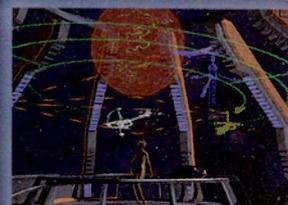


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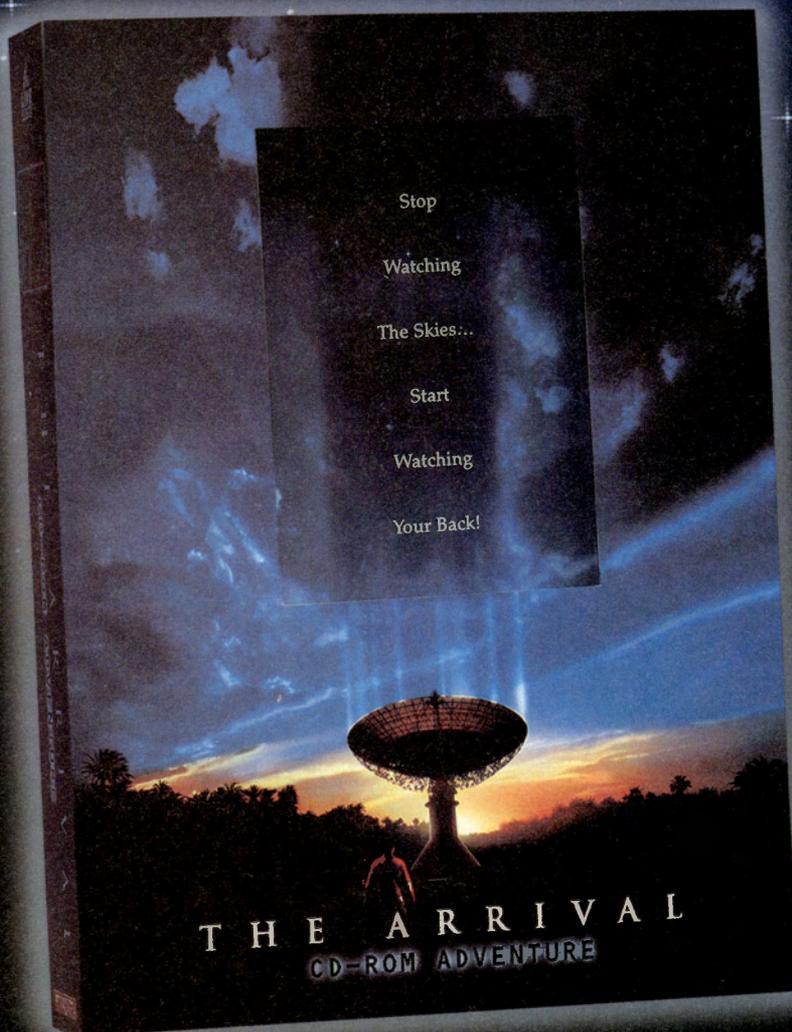
Product Information Number 340

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Product Information Number 221



You started with a nice, businesslike PC.  
You added a joystick, then a sound card, then speakers —  
but it wasn't enough. Now you're ready for...

# The Hard Stuff

Once upon a time, home computers weren't very expandable. You bought your Apple II or Commodore 64, you added a cassette tape drive — or a floppy disc drive, if you were really serious — and that was about it. Even hard-core computer gamers ran into the limits of their chosen machines in short order.

Gradually, though, the PC made its way out of our offices and into our living rooms. It was more easily upgraded, modified, and customized than any other home computer. Even back in the 1980s, you could trick out your PC with better graphics, bigger hard drives, more memory, and sweeter sound — and you could do it one step at a time, as your budget allowed it. Suddenly, a two-year-old computer was good for more than just tossing off a building into oncoming traffic. And that's still true today; there are countless ways to breathe new life into an aging system.

That flexibility is what eventually took the PC to the top of the computer gaming heap. As new standards of graphics and sound arrived on the scene, software publishers rushed to take advantage of the new technology. The results were increasingly impressive games; the PC soon left every other computer gaming platform in the dust.

But the times, they are a-changin'. Today, the tables have turned, and it's gaming that drives the hardware market. Think about it — nobody buys a faster motherboard or a 3D graphics accelerator to make their word processors or checkbook programs run better. When sophisticated hardware like that finds its way into your home, it's there for one reason: to make gaming more fun.

No one is more interested in new PC hardware than a gamer. And that's what The Hard Stuff section is all about — keeping you up-to-date on the latest and best hardware you can buy.

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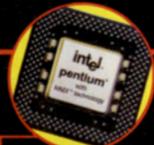
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## How We Rate The Hard Stuff

You've been around long enough to know the latest and greatest technology doesn't mean a thing unless it can improve the games you love to play. That's why we skip the scientific calculators and algebraic equations to put every peripheral, utility, and technology through the rigorous demands of real-world testing, to give you the lowdown on which devices deliver lightning fast performance, and which ones fizzle from the start.

### PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards



Every month, we honor the best peripherals, utilities, and hardware we test with our Editors' Choice award. So when you see the PCG Editors' Choice logo on hardware at a local computer store, you can be sure it's among the best.

# MMX



Building on the success of Intel's Pentium line, MMX capabilities are intended to give developers even more power to play with.

## Inside Intel's high-powered response to multimedia

Unless you've been hiding in a proverbial cave, you've probably already heard something about the latest industry buzzword from Intel — MMX. After a multi-million-dollar media blitz that kicked off during the Super Bowl, Intel's latest processor technology has become one of the hottest selling points for retailers across the country. And while MMX-equipped machines began shipping in mid-January from Compaq, Dell, Gateway, and IBM-clone manufacturers, many computer users are still wondering what all the fuss is all about. We've put our tech hounds on the case to give you the lowdown on this new technology, and we've come up with a few points you'll want to consider when making the move to MMX.

### WHAT IS IT?

In short, MMX technology is a new way to handle the chunks of repetitive data in multimedia applications that tend to over-burden the processor and make programs slow to a near-standstill. Typically, it's not the underlying program itself that chokes your computer; it's all of those little bits of video and audio that have to be broken down into chunks and processed individually. The more individual parts your CPU has to process, the slower things move.

While these elements are necessary for creating compelling multimedia applications and — more importantly — PC games, Intel noticed some commonalities in the types of data that were causing the bottlenecks. Small integer data types, like 8-bit (256-color) graphics pixels and 16-bit audio samples; repetitive loops; and compute-intensive algorithms were all offending operations that



UbiSoft's *POD* is one of the first titles to make use of the MMX instructions, delivering high-resolution graphics, enhanced sound, and extreme color depth without the typical drain on processor performance.

could be dealt with more efficiently by a better-designed processor. MMX technology can handle these operations in large, manageable clumps, processing video, audio, and communications faster and more efficiently.

MMX support must be written into a program before benefits will be seen, but once the support is in place, these multimedia-related data streams are anticipated and processed at regular intervals, freeing up the rest of the processor to crunch away at the underlying program. MMX processors include 57 general-purpose integer instructions that can be applied across a wide range of multimedia applications to increase performance. More importantly, Intel says it intends to continue support of MMX, incorporating the new instructions into all future processors.

To date, not many games make use of the MMX instruction set (*Pod*, *Unreal*, and *Rebel Moon Rising* are the most prominent MMX titles so far), but that will change as MMX systems achieve a satisfactory user base.



Is this the future of gaming? Epic is banking on its upcoming shooter — *Unreal* — to push the boundaries of first-person gaming, and is using Intel's MMX technology to achieve that goal.

### THE GOOD NEWS

If you're in the market for a new Pentium-based computer, MMX is extremely affordable and painless — by most accounts, a MMX machine only costs about \$100 more than an equivalent system with a standard Pentium processor. More importantly, despite the lack of MMX-enabled titles, the subtle changes made to the standard Pentium architecture should make the MMX more robust in everyday applications; most users can expect to see as much as a seven percent increase, even in programs that don't make use of the MMX tech-

nology. Intel assures us that, if the new processor doesn't enhance our older, non-MMX games, it certainly won't slow them down or create any compatibility problems.

### THE BAD NEWS

If you're taking the wait-and-see approach on this new technology, prepare to be confused when Intel enters the second phase of MMX technology. The MMX-enabled Pentium Pro — known to insiders as Klamath — will begin to appear in systems around the middle of 1997. The Klamath processor will most likely premier with a 233MHz clock speed, with faster releases later in the year (a planned Pro-variant known as Deschutes could be as fast as at 300MHz).

But these high-performance chips will also bring another Intel innovation to the table: an entirely new form factor. The standard zero-insertion-force socket will disappear from motherboards, and the traditional CPU will be replaced by the Single Edge Contact (SEC) Cartridge.

The reason for the switch? Speed. This new proprietary configuration allows Intel's CPU designers to connect a system's outboard (Level 2) cache memory to the processor via a special bus that runs at the CPU's own internal speed, delivering improved performance over traditional motherboard design without substantially increasing the cost.

But this innovation also means Pentium Pro users eager for MMX capabilities will probably need to purchase new motherboards to keep up with the technology, rather than just dropping a new CPU into their existing machine's socket.

# Back from the Brink

## Suncom Technologies overcomes bankruptcy

Even after making an impressive splash in the high-end PC controller market with its excellent F-15 Strike Fighter series of joysticks, hardware veteran Suncom Technologies seemed doomed to extinction following a lawsuit filed by ThrustMaster over the F-15 Eagle's programmable design and parent company Wico Distribution Corporation's 1996 bankruptcy filing.

Rumors of Suncom's resurrection began circulating over the winter — rumors that, happily, turned out to be true. Suncom Vice President of Sales David Fahrner explains:

"Suncom used to be a part of Wico Distribution Corporation, who went bankrupt on March 21, 1996 and took Suncom into bankruptcy with them," Fahrner says. "Throughout the summer months, we operated in bankruptcy, and by October 10th, Suncom was purchased out of bankruptcy — away from Wico — by the Hong Kong-based supplier of our joysticks, a company called Panint Electric Limited."

Fahrner says Suncom's relationship with Panint goes back for the last nine years. Panint operated pretty much as a contract manufacturer for Suncom. The Hong Kong company manufactures other kinds of products — specifically, small household appliances — but it supplied joysticks only to Suncom, based on Suncom's original designs.

"Panint Electric bought Suncom out of bankruptcy," Fahrner says, "and we've been up and running since October 21st, as a fully independent joystick company again. What we've done over the last

few months is to re-establish Suncom as an important supplier in the joystick market."

Suncom has also re-established its web site ([www.suncom-inc.com](http://www.suncom-inc.com)), where customers can find information about Suncom products, get technical support, and download drivers for Windows 95.

"It's a fully operational web site, much the same as it was prior to the bankruptcy," Fahrner says.

"Everything that was sold prior to the bankruptcy is 100 percent supported out of our facility here (in Wheeling, IL); we do warranty work here for both the old products and any new products that we're shipping today.

"We've solidified relationships with retailers again and continued OEM relationships, so that we're back on the retail shelf," he says.

"CompUSA has us, Electronics Boutique has us, Fred Meyer has us — and we're gaining distribution very rapidly for all of our products. All of these things have transpired since the takeover by Panint Electric. In addition, there's the re-startup of the full R&D and Engineering cycle for future products."

The Suncom line now consists of the F-15 Hawk, Raptor,



Fans of the hard-to-find SFX gamepad will be happy to hear Suncom is ready to release the SFX Plus later in the year.



Now that Suncom is past the ugly business of bankruptcy, fighter jocks can once again enjoy the ultra-sturdy and programmable Talon joystick and its siblings in the F-15 Strike Eagle line.



and Talon joysticks, (Fahrner says the decision to drop the top-of-the-line Eagle model had already been made when ThrustMaster filed the lawsuit pertaining to it). Also available are the FX 3000 and the programmable SFX gamepad — but only until Suncom's current inventory is exhausted.

"From that base, we will now begin to add new products," Fahrner says.

The first new Suncom products were introduced at the Consumer Electronics Show in January: the low-cost FX 1000, a basic joystick for the first-time computer user, and the G-Force Plus, a flight/driving yoke based on Suncom's once-successful G-Force yoke.

Suncom also plans to support Macintosh gamers, starting with a Mac version of the FX 3000.

June's Electronic Entertainment Expo in Atlanta will bring the next big introduction of a number of products slated to appear around Christmas. The first product will be a companion controller for the Hawk, Raptor, and Talon: an authentic replica of the F-15 throttle controller that will have 28 programmable buttons, including four-way hat switches and a five-way switch. The throttle will be designed to work with joysticks from any manufacturer. Fahrner says the plan is to have it utilize the Talon technology — in other words, a keyboard emulator programmed on-the-fly from the keyboard.

One of the Talon's drawbacks is the inability to program series of keystrokes into a given button — you can only store one keystroke for each button. But Fahrner says the new F-15 throttle will let you program macros.

"We've also got a surprise feature coming, which we think that programmers are going to like," Fahrner says. "A split throttle, allowing you to control the right and left engines separately (provided software developers write to that particular function). You can also lock the throttle so that both sides move together. You will certainly have to make a very conscious decision to go to afterburner — there will be a very definite tactile feedback

Continued on Page 148  
Please See **SUNCOM**

# Turn it Up!

## Diamond readies Monster Sound

**A**fter scoring big with gamers thanks to a value-priced lineup of 2D and 3D graphics cards, Diamond Multimedia has announced it will be venturing into the sound card arena with a product intended to change the way we think about PC audio. The first offering on this new frontier will be the Monster Sound, slated for an April release.

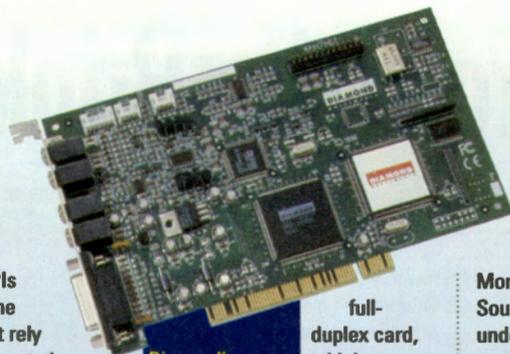
Unlike the ISA-based cards we've become accustomed to (such as Creative Labs' ubiquitous Sound Blaster family and their imitators), this Plug and Play, PCI-based card based on Diamond's proprietary Freedom 5600 ASIC chip represents a dramatic shift from traditional sound



The Monster Sound, based on the proprietary Freedom 5600 chip, will let users download upgrades to new audio technology like VRML 3.0 and Dolby's AC-3 surround standard.

card development. Designed to be in full compliance with the Microsoft DirectX APIs under Windows 95, the Monster Sound won't rely on being directly supported within a game. Instead, it simply uses the instructions from DirectSound to process music, sound effects, and positional effects.

But Diamond says the real bonus to the Monster Sound is the increased performance and quality you'll be able to achieve. The Monster can handle as many as 24 independent, monaural streams of digital sound at 48KHz — each directed through four independent speakers. It sports a signal-to-noise ratio (S/N) of >85db and a total harmonic distortion (THD) of <0.5%. It's a



Diamond's Monster Sound challenges Sound Blaster by moving the audio party onto the PCI bus, where higher bandwidth and Windows 95 support allow for superior quality and performance.

full-duplex card, which means you can simultaneously record and play back digital sound (or talk and listen at the same time, in the case of an Internet telephone application).

To help curb obsolescence, the Monster's Digital Signal Processor (DSP) chip is fully programmable via downloadable patches. One benefit of this design is that users can upgrade the card to new audio standards (such as VRML 3D, streaming audio, and Dolby's AC-3) by simply downloading the latest patch. Aureal's positional sound technology is already incorporated into the card, creating a "sur-

round" effect with only two speakers.

One important note: the Monster Sound will not have Sound Blaster compatibility under DOS (DOS Sound Blaster support requires an IRQ address unavailable on the PCI bus), although it will be SB-compatible in an DOS box under Windows 95. But even in native DOS mode, the Monster can supplement your SB-compatible card, providing enhanced stereo effects and improving aural quality via a low-pass filter.

The Monster uses very little CPU overhead; we tested the card playing eight audio channels at 100KHz (mixing it on the fly from 44KHz recordings) and the CPU barely went above 5 percent. Diamond says this will help games run faster, since the typical ISA-based card can grab as much as 20-30 percent of the CPU's time. The Monster Sound should be available as you read this; at press time, Diamond said it would be priced at less than \$180.

## SUNCOM

Continued From Page 147

prior to entering afterburner. It will *not* be a slider type throttle — it will very definitely travel through an arc.

"In addition, there will be a follow-up on the SFX," he says, "which was a great pad from a sales standpoint and from a consumer acceptance standpoint. We continue to fill orders for people still looking for it, and there will be an upgrade to it, the SFX Plus, more than likely. It will come in a new case and will take advantage of that macro capability that hasn't been there up until this date — through the keyboard, with no 'programming,' no software, no downloading to do."

"As for the future of the F-15 line," Fahrner says, "I can tell you that the Hawk will not change — it's a simple four-button joystick, ideal for the casual

flight sim enthusiast. We will be reviewing the Talon, in light of the new technology, and I believe we'll upgrade that, but it's not on the drawing board just yet. And there's a plan to show an entirely new joystick to replace our existing FX series at E3."

Fahrner says force feedback technology isn't on the Suncom drawing board at the moment.

"We have some thoughts of executing it in a different way, but I will tell you that we won't be introducing it in 1997," he says. "It's still in the R&D stage at this point. We'll also be addressing USB — probably not this year, but certainly next year."

"Ideally, what we're gonna do is address the needs of those consumers who supported us in the F-15 line, and to go back to

the SFX pad, which was hugely successful," Fahrner says. "We know that need is still there, and it's not being addressed very well today. So let's take care of the

customers we have, attract new customers with the products we have, and then go forward with the breakthrough things we were once known for."



Suncom plans to reintroduce gamers to its popular low-cost flight yoke with the G-Force Plus, which features additional buttons and functionality.

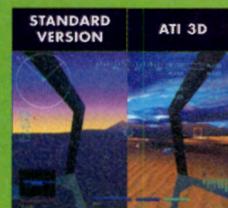
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Product Information Number 90

## Now You See It.™



# MANIFESTO OF THE NEW

## 3D REALITY



A movement is brewing. And with its birth, the PowerVR architecture begins the awesome struggle against conventional 3D; and against the technobourgeoisie who attempt to enslave the gamer masses. These ~~manipulative~~ technologists are turning their machines of propaganda against GAMERS, desperately trying to make them believe that their 3D performance is good enough.

Well, it is not! This naked, ~~shameless~~ exploitation of gamers has gone on far too long. Rise up! For we have created the ultimate instrument of change: the PowerVR technology. And we declare that the true console game experience on the PC will be our domain.



pieces of  
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leche known as PowerVR

March

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The age of conventional 3D graphics is  
coming to a close. Withering, decaying and  
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An incredible technology has  
emerged from the ruins.

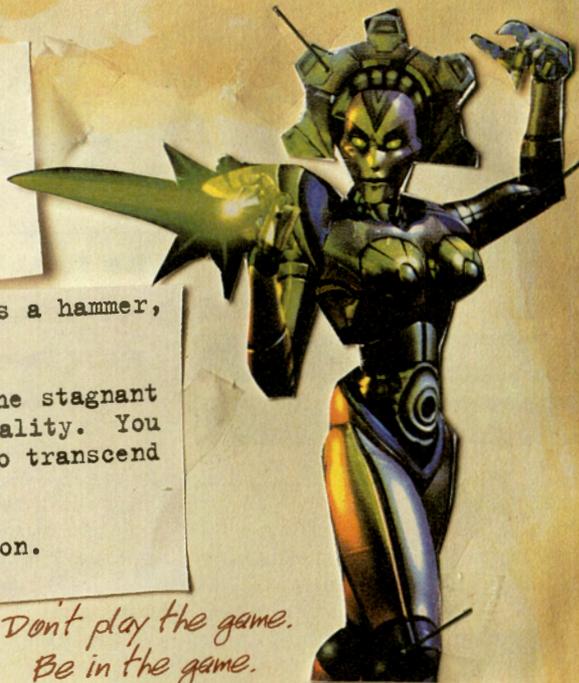
PowerVR™ is more than a new 3D solution. It is a hammer,  
ready to smash the stale PC game experience.

Gamers, hoist up your joystick. Rage against the stagnant  
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We are pouring gasoline on the fires of creation.

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*Don't play the game.  
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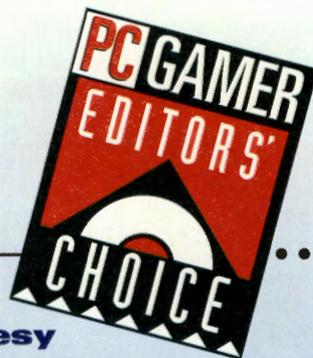
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# Force FX Joystick



**Company:** CH Products  
www.chproducts.com

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**Prices:** \$249.95 (M.S.R.P.)

**The first force-feedback joystick is finally here, courtesy of CH Products — and it really works!**

If you're like us, you were probably skeptical when you read the first news of force-feedback controllers. It sounded pretty far out, after all: a game controller with little electric motors that move the joystick (or steering wheel) in response to the action in a game — the idea being to create realistic resistance, vibrations, and jolts that matched what was happening on the screen.

Force feedback seemed like an idea that could easily turn out the way virtual reality headgear did; great on paper, but impossible to implement cheaply enough for the home market. We fully expected to see the usual compromise between quality and price, resulting in a product that was both unimpressive and too expensive for most gamers' budgets.

Okay — maybe we were too skeptical. The Force FX joystick from CH Products certainly isn't cheap, but it really does deliver on the promise of force feedback technology.

The Force FX looks just like one of CH's F-16 joysticks, with just a few differences: the FX has a considerably larger, heavier base than its F-16 siblings, and it has connectors for a serial cable and power supply. Installation's a little trickier than with a standard joystick, but it's still no chore. You just plug it into the joystick port, connect it to an

external serial port (probably COM1 if you're using a PS/2-style bus mouse; COM2 if you're using a serial mouse), plug in the power supply, and install the diagnostic software and Windows 95 drivers.

The FX's software also includes patches that add force-feedback support to *Descent II* and *Fighter Duel*. Herein lies one of the few drawbacks to the Force FX: at press-time, those two titles represented half of the available games with support for the new joystick. Of the other two, Electronic Arts' *The Need for Speed SE* has built-in support for the stick, and Mission Studios' *JetFighter III* gets Force FX support through a downloadable patch.

The quality of the force-feedback support varies from one game to the next, but it all hints at what can be done with the technology. *JetFighter III* had the most rudimentary support for the Force FX, but it still produced some nice

effects: the stick bucks a little as you go supersonic, jumps a bit when you fire a missile, shakes impressively when you trigger your fighter's 20mm cannon, and jerks when you're hit by flak. The stick's resistance doesn't increase or decrease as your air-speed and energy state change — but those effects probably wouldn't

be realistic in a simulation of a fly-by-wire plane, anyway.

Variable resistance is more suited to driving games, as EA's *The Need for Speed SE* shows. The effect of feeling the steering tighten up as you ease into a turn is pretty impressive. Less subtle effects are modeled, too, like the shimmy of the wheels as you swerve onto the shoulder, or the sudden jolt of slamming into the back of a

minivan going around 160mph.

*Descent II* had the most impressive force-feedback support of the bunch. You feel everything in this one: the recoil of your missiles, the impact of incoming fire, the thud of running head-on into one of those marauding robots, and the total loss of control that means your fighter has just been destroyed. Best of all is the effect created by that pesky thief-bot; when it steals a missile or component from you, you really get a sense of being dragged off course as it rips something off of your fighter. It can actually be startling when you don't see it coming.

Future games, designed with force-feedback in mind from the start, will no doubt make even more effective use of the technology. And since the Force FX uses Immersion's popular I-Force protocol, it's likely there will soon be plenty of new games with built-in support for the stick.

Until then, the Force FX is a pleasure to use, even in games that don't support force-feedback. It is, after all, a CH Products stick, which means it's extremely sturdy and has a very good feel. And since its handle is the same as the one used on CH's F-16 Combat Stick, you get two four-way hat switches and six buttons. Oddly, the Force FX lacks the built-in throttle found on almost all other CH sticks — and it takes up a lot more desktop real estate — but when those force-feedback effects kick in, it's easy to overlook this stick's few shortcomings.

The good news is that force-feedback technology is finally here, and it's not just a gimmick. It really does work, and it has the potential to add a lot to the gaming experience. CH's Force FX is a bit on the pricey side, but it's a very cool gadget.



The Force FX is a close cousin to CH's excellent F-16 line of joysticks, and it features the same attractive lines, comfortable control, and unmatched durability.

## PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** With the right software, the Force FX really can add to your immersion in a game's world — and it has the usual CH Products high quality.

**LOWS:** At the moment, it doesn't have a lot of software support; it's also pretty expensive.

**BOTTOM LINE:** The Force FX proves that force-feedback can be done, and done well. It's not a must-have, but it's a great addition to the system that has everything.





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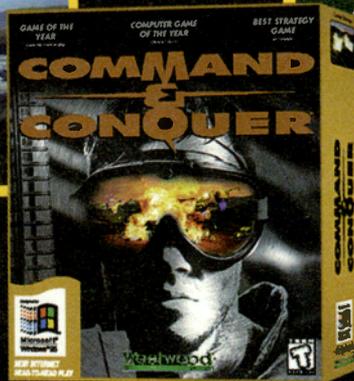
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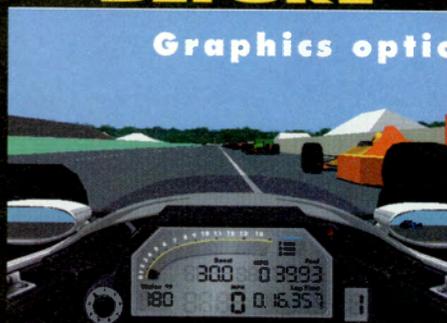
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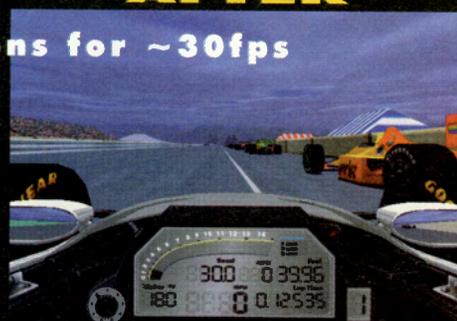
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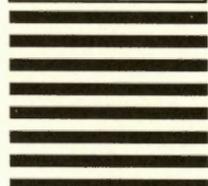
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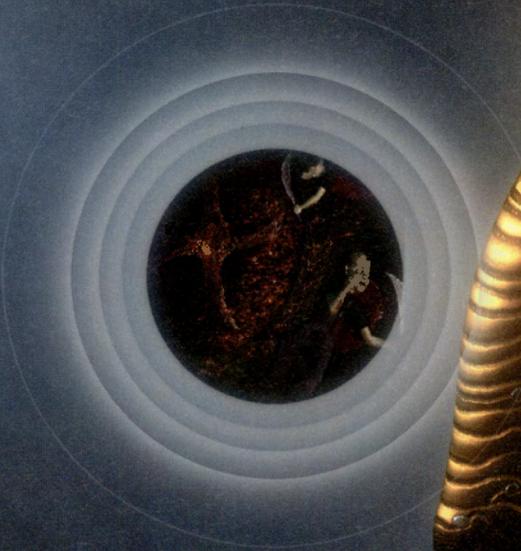
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# Valhalla: Abode of the Gods

**S**itting down to write this, the first review of the new batch of add-on disks for *Links LS*, I got to thinking that I've probably written more about the Links series than Proust wrote about lying in bed. I've covered more than a dozen course disks for *Links 386* and

a bunch more for *Links* — and now comes *Valhalla Golf Club*, the first of a new breed of golf course for *Links LS*, the most visually stunning game on the market. I got tired of digging into my bag of superlatives to describe how perfectly executed these courses are (with the one notable exception of *Devil's Island* for *Links 386*), and now I'm about to start again. *Valhalla* kicks off the new line with a gorgeous rendition of a show-stopping, tournament-quality course.

Valhalla made the news last year as the site of the 1996 PGA Championship, which ended in a tense, sudden-death playoff on the 18th hole. Most people remember it best for Kenny Perry's fatal error in going to the booth to comment on the other players instead of practicing for the coming playoff against Mark Brooks, who won the playoff and the tournament.



Hole #13 is the most dramatic at Valhalla, featuring a peninsular green that tempts powerful hitters to go for the pin in one.

The PGA Championship is already planning to return to Valhalla in 2000, and PGA executive Jim Awtrey said the course "provided one of the most successful settings ever for major championship golf. The condition of the golf course was superb, and Valhalla proved itself as a championship-caliber test for the world's greatest players."

What makes this Nicklaus-designed course so strong? The view from the Gold tees shows a 7,144 yard par 72, with four par fives, ten fours, and four threes. The front nine begins and ends with medium par fours, while the back nine begins and ends with long par fives. Evenly

spaced along the middle are some short threes, resulting in a course that makes good use of every club in the bag and tends to swerve from favoring those long off the tee to those with good iron control — just like all the best courses. There's no doubt, however, that Valhalla does favor the long hitters.

T. Liam McDonald



The first course disc for *Links LS* has arrived, taking PC golfers straight to Valhalla — and it has all the beauty, challenge, and class of the real course.

Although there are some fabulous holes at Valhalla, the power of the course comes more from a cumulative effect. What you come away remembering are some vicious rollercoaster greens, elevated greens with steep drops leading to blind uphill chip shots, and some serious course management chal-

enges. The long game starts off modestly, with a par four dogleg left that's crowded on the left by a stand of trees. You really don't sense the dark edge of the course until you get to those greens, where meticulous placement is the only thing between you and a three-putt.

On the par-five second hole, the drama of Valhalla kicks in: a drive over water with a stream tight to the left



Several of the early holes in the new *Links LS Valhalla* course are styled after Scottish links, so expect some inextricable shots from the heavy grass.

and a fairway bunker to the right, requiring a solid centerline drive. The Golden Bear starts playing with your head on the third hole, a par-three that's a short iron shot over a watery chasm to an elevated, heavily guarded green: the kind of hole that's almost a leitmotif running beneath the whole design.

At #4 (par four), the style switches dramatically to classic Scottish links features: flat, open spaces and heavy, wild grass in the roughs. This style continues until hole #10, with holes #8 and #9 featuring a blend of elements and heavy foliage. You'll have several heavily bunkered holes in between, with #6 featuring a tiny fairway and a carry over a water-filled valley, culminating in a spacious green. Hole #7 gives you a reason to pause and ponder strategy, since the main fairway curves right (the safe route) and a smaller fairway sits smack in the middle of a sandy quarry (higher risk, better payoff). Visual flair meets strategic challenge.

The back nine kicks off with a long, par-five double dogleg, featuring a fairway heavily crowded by trees. Holes #11 and #12 give us tee shots over valleys, but things really heat up at Valhalla's centerpiece: #13. This is a par four downhill drive over water to a rock-encompassed peninsular green. More than just visually dramatic, it's also a serious challenge: go for the green and eagle, or play it safe and place it short for a lay-up and birdie. Number 15 vies with #13 for best of the course, with its long par four



At Hole #18, you can relive the final moments of the 1996 PGA tournament. Pin placement right in the middle of the kidney-shaped green makes the approach shot especially tricky.

crowded by trees, and a stream to the right demanding pinpoint placement. Long tee shots are needed for the final three, with the split green of #18 (complete with an optional, though rewarding, carry over water). It makes for a dramatic finish.

As usual, the rendering of the course is top notch, with the mixture of rock, sand, wild grass, maple trees, and winding, water-filled valleys making for a visually pleasing experience. A series of videos featuring PGA history and tournament info, as well as a virtual clubhouse tour and narrated flybys, round out this opening salvo in Access' new line of add-on disks. Two disks are included in the package itself, with one for *Links LS* and the other for use with older versions of *Links*, including *Microsoft Golf* and *Links* for Macintosh.

**Settlers, Etc.**

*Settlers II* was more of a hit in Europe than in America, but it's still a cute, fun game in the *Populous* vein. (If you don't remember the original *Settlers*, that's because it was called *Serf City* when SSI published it for the U.S. market). Blue Byte has prepared an add-on *Mission CD* to satisfy those hoards of *Settlers II* fans, and they've made a



One element added to *Settlers II* is the ability to play a campaign game on a map of the world.

pretty good show of it. The biggest deal here is the map editor, which is — well, a map editor. You can edit maps. *Settlers II* maps. Complete with mountains, valleys, different kinds of terrain, several types of trees, rocks, headquarters, and other useful map-making items. It's not the smoothest-working map editor I've ever used, but it'll get you where you need to go with minimal fuss. A better interface would've helped get there a little faster, though.

Also on the *Mission CD* is a patch for the game itself, which adds a couple of new gameplay options. The interface has been changed a bit to accommodate new maps, and some new lands have been added to make things interesting. You can also now choose to settle the Earth itself, with a campaign based around a map of the world. Cynics would say this is all well and good, but these features should have been in the initial release. Oh, well — you can't have it all and eat it, too. Or something.

*Virtual Pool* was a popular and innovative game from Interplay, so it's good to see it ported to a native Windows 95 format for those new computer users who live in fear



The new editor that comes with the *Settlers 2 Mission Disk* is a good way to make custom worlds without a lot of fuss.

of the DOS prompt. The DOS and Win 3.1 versions are also included on the disk. The Win 95 version has been overhauled to make the most of the operating system; it even allows for a scalable window, and it can play at the highest resolution your Windows 95 setup can handle.

A final set of items to cross the desk this month aren't games, but they're certainly worth checking out if you're a flight sim fan: Discovery Multimedia is doing a series of *Wings* informa-

tional CDs, including *London Blitz* to *Pearl Harbor*, *Over Europe*, *Midway to Hiroshima*, *Korea to Vietnam*, and *Saigon to Persian Gulf*. A *World War One* disk is also planned. These reference titles are full of history, statistics, specs, photos, animations, videos, and all manner of good stuff on the planes and battles of this half of the twentieth century. They make an excellent companion to any flight sim.

Discovery also produces the *Beer Hunter* and *World Beer Hunter* reference guides, which — depending on your game playing habits — may also be relevant to this column.

PCG

**BUG PATCHES**

**Battlecruiser 3000AD v.1.01c (Release 4)** (Take 2): Fixes the tractor beam lock problem and one or two minor bugs. Now aren't you sorry you bought from a store without a software return policy? *bcr4cfix.zip*

**Broken Alliance v.1.01 (HPS)**: This patch fixes a large number of minor bugs and adds a few user-requested features. *ba\_101.zip*

**Deadlock v.1.31 (Accolade)**: New features include multi-player spawning from a single CD, an increase in the maximum number of buildings, a limit to AI chat messages, a fix to 100% difficulty in seven-player games, "Alt-drag" units, "Alt-double-click" unit orders, limited re-sync pop-up box, and fixes to the CTL3D32.DLL and dialog box palette bugs. *dlock131.zip*

**Europe1 and Europe2 Scenery for FS95 (Apollo)**: Installation programs and FEPAT.EXE bug fix from Microsoft for *Flight Simulator for Windows 95* to get European ILS frequencies back again. *e1e2fs95.zip*

**FLIGHTADVENTURE1 FS95 (Apollo)**: Upgrade for original *FS* to *FS95*, with new voice files. *adv1.exe*

**Flying Corps v.1.00A (Empire/Rowan)**: Essential quick-look views added. *fly100a.zip*

**Jetfighter III (Missions Studios)**: Includes better throttle, rudder, and joystick calibration, support for sound in Windows 95, sound board autodetect, pro-

grammable joystick buttons, and more. *jf3updt1.zip*

**MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries v.1.06 (Activision)**. *merc106p.zip*

**Panthers in the Shadows v.1.20 (HPS)**: Fixes about 60 minor errors and implements several user-requested changes. *ps\_120.zip*

**RESCUEAIR911 Flight Adventure for FS95 (Apollo)**: Upgrade for original *FS* to *FS95*, with new voice files. *rescue.exe*

**Third Reich v.1.37 (Avalon Hill)**: The latest of several patches from the past month, 1.37 fixes a problem introduced in 1.36 in which France did not fall. Version 1.35 fixes most remaining bugs and enhances AI. *3r1\_37.zip*

**Tigers on the Prowl v.2.04 (HPS)**: This patch fixes a lot of small problems and adds some user-requested features. *top\_204.zip*

**Wages of War v.1.2.8 (New World Computing)**: Many fixes, including bugs from mercenaries carrying other mercenaries, elimination of a dark square around a merc or NPC who moves after a merc with night-vision goggles, automatic de-selection of target button when switching to hand-to-hand weapon, dead mercs no longer remain standing, and numerous other error fixes and play enhancements. *wow1\_28.zip*

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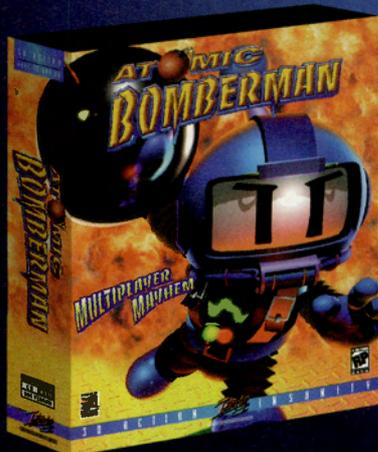
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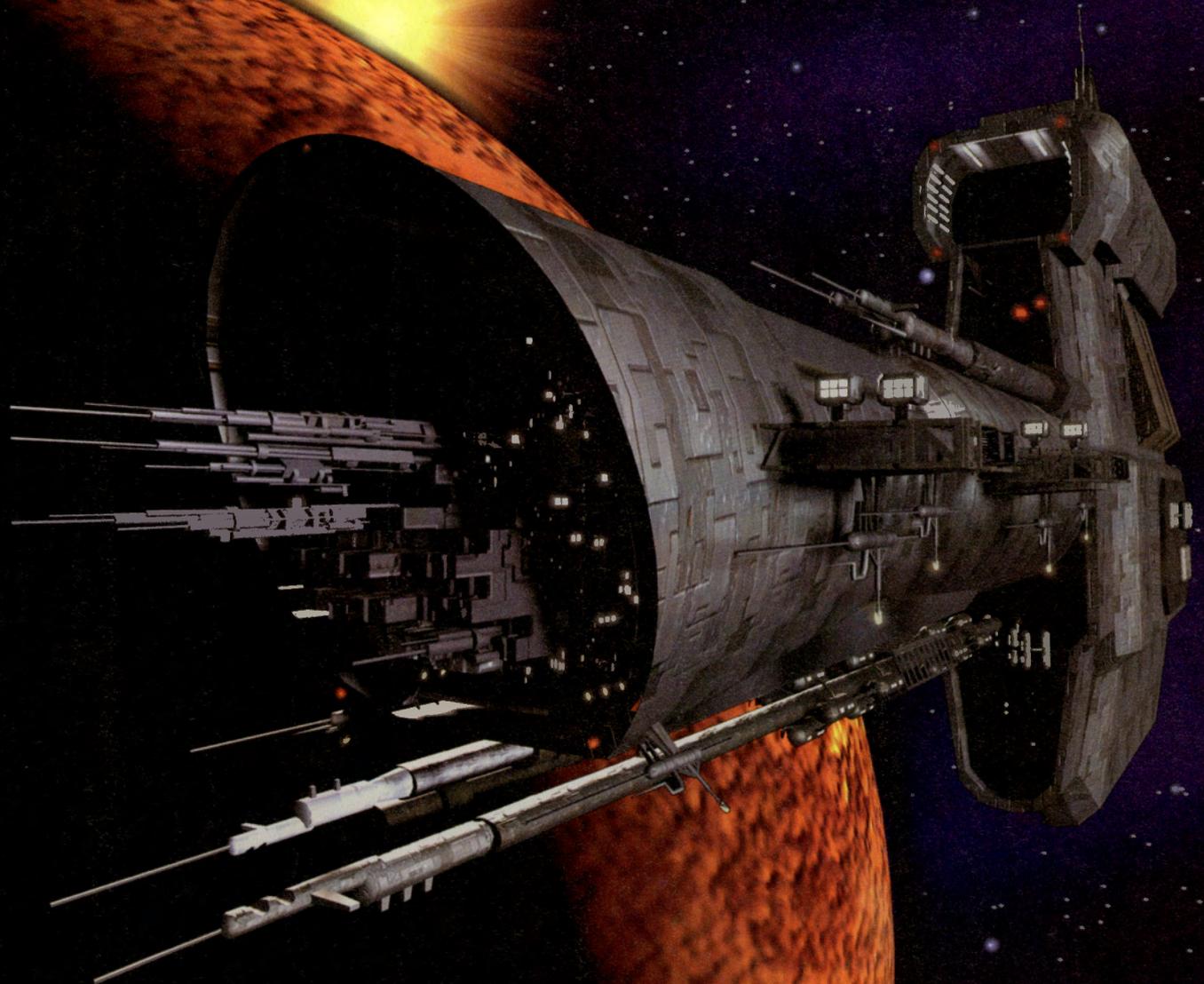
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# A New Angle on Geometry

**G**eometry is such a civilized science. Nothing's subjective; everything's precise. But the dependable relationships still appeal to our intuitive side; to remember that vertical angles are congruent, you only need to observe a pair of vertical angles. They look congruent. You can see these rules, so you can believe them. This intuitive element must make geometry a treat to teach, and its visual character must make it a dream to digitize.

Two software companies offer new angles on geometry: Edmark has released *Cosmic Geometry* for middle school-aged children (7th, 8th, and 9th grades), and Davidson has released *Geometry Blaster* for high school students.

In *Cosmic Geometry*, children fly through the galaxy to an eerie, abandoned planet where animated polyhedrons guide them through five geometry laboratories. For example, in *Robot Studio*, Octa teaches kids how to build wacky automatons and choreograph their movements. Although they'd never suspect it, children also build an understanding of coordinate grids and transformations. Other activities include a Tessellation Generation Machine, a GeoMovie

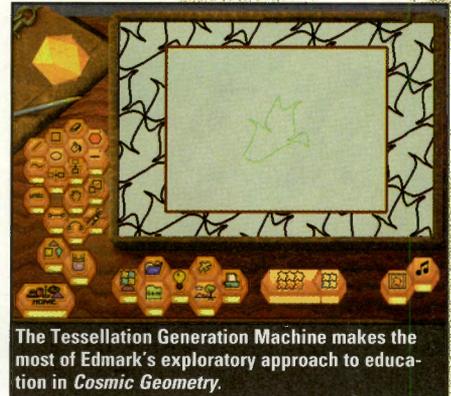
maker, and two question-and-answer exercises.

In *Geometry Blaster*, children fly through the galaxy to an eerie, not-so-abandoned planet. Our hero, Andi, helps her new friend Zoid rescue his beloved homeland, Dimensia, from the evil Geometrons. The villains have turned Dimensia into a two-dimensional wasteland, but Andi has brought her trusty geometry book, and Zoid adds a few reference books of his own.

Geometry activities include *The Capitol*, in which children play a new kind of Concentration-style game. In *The Capitol*, children match definitions with geometric figures, unfolded solids with

*Cosmic Geometry* is more exploratory than Davidson's *Geometry Blaster*. Children can experiment with shapes, relationships, and measurements; and they can manipulate the components of a figure to see how other components change to maintain proportion and area.

From *Cosmic Geometry*, children learn the magic of geometry, and they'll probably develop a natural curiosity as well as an intuitive under-



The Tessellation Generation Machine makes the most of Edmark's exploratory approach to education in *Cosmic Geometry*.

standing of the topic. These benefits will serve them well when they finally get their hands on those protractors and compasses in school.

But *Cosmic Geometry* will not teach a child to solve a proof, and, therefore, probably won't produce immediate academic improvements. For a child who is wrestling with theorems and axioms, ifs and thens, givens and transitive properties, *Geometry Blaster* is the better choice. It features a rich tutorial with short lessons, step-by-step exercises, and practical examples. Besides the tutorial, it features one activity devoted solely to proofs, a core element of geometry and a great activity for developing logic skills.

Fortunately, *Geometry Blaster's* academic character is supported by an entertaining setting and interesting quiz designs. *Geometry Blaster* is every bit as entertaining as *Cosmic Geometry*; it just aims at academic performance more than experimental exploration.

Each program nods at the other's strength. *Cosmic Geometry* offers a reference library with tutorials and quizzes, but it's not as strong in that area as *Geometry Blaster*. On the other hand, *Geometry Blaster* offers Tangrams and a Geoboard for experimenting with shapes and angles, but these are not nearly as interesting as the Tessellation Generation Machine or the *Robot Studio*.

Think about what you need for your child. To generate interest and introduce ideas, buy Edmark's *Cosmic Geometry*. To support your child's work in geometry class, buy *Geometry Blaster*.

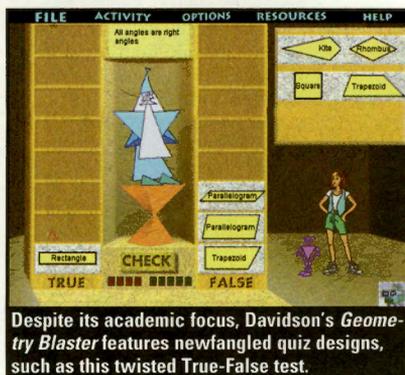
Heidi E. H. Ayccock



their three-dimensional counterparts, and names with shapes. Using memory, logic, and association, kids may develop a more durable understanding of the concepts. Other activities include *The Building of Truth*, which spins True-False quizzes in an equally creative way; *The Pit of Despair*, which has more in common with a videogame than a protractor; and *N-Gon Mountains*, which is a plain vanilla drill-and-practice module with a nice motivational strategy.

Both *Cosmic Geometry* and *Geometry Blaster* offer excellent tools for learning about angles, lines, grids, and other geometry topics. But Edmark's

The visual nature of geometry lends itself well to computerized education, as two new software packages readily prove. Also: The best games for your kids.



Despite its academic focus, Davidson's *Geometry Blaster* features newfangled quiz designs, such as this twisted True-False test.



Although it's not as handy as the paper-based version, *Peterson's Multimedia Guide: North American Birds* will thrill most any bird watcher.

### Alfred Hitchcock, Eat Your Heart Out

I'm sitting at my computer, working on my column. Another motley crew of about 1,500 words is due soon. Suddenly, an unfamiliar bird perches on my window feeder. It looks like...it may be...the rare Pickle-Scented Smithwing! The only way to be sure is to launch my *Peterson's Multimedia Guides: North American Birds*, a nifty CD-ROM from Houghton Mifflin Interactive.

Whirr, beep, buzz. Click here, click there. It looks like...I'd better check the window feeder again. By this time, the bird is gone. It could have been a once-in-a-lifetime sighting, or it could have been a crow with an attitude. I'll never know.

Peterson's paper-based guides to birds are well-respected, beautiful references. On CD-ROM, the reference offers a lot of what the paper-based version offers, but it lacks the one thing that all digital references lack: it's not handy enough.

With that caveat in mind, though, consider this package for people who really love birds. It's packed with photos, data, bird calls, a way to document observed birds, an identification game, and a quick connection to Peterson's web site. With its friendly approach and technical strength, the program is ideal for computer novices. They will be rewarded with rich content, both visual and aural.

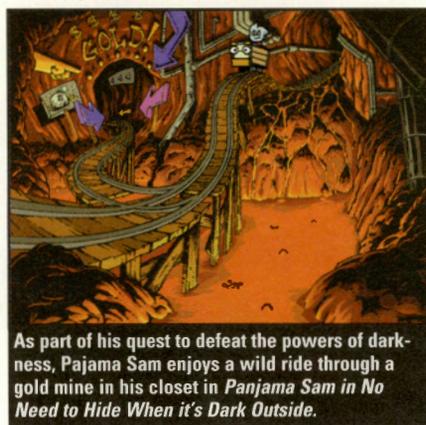
Its navigation tools are sufficient, but I wish they were a little more powerful. At times, clicking on the



backtrack button takes you back to where the programmers think you want to go, rather than back to where you really were. For this reason, *Peterson's* on CD-ROM is more of a treat for bird fans than computer fans. But anyone with suet and sunflower seeds on his or her brain should appreciate this cyber-guide to our feathered friends. Just don't forget the paperback version for those surprise visitors that won't wait for the program to launch.

### Games for Young Brains

Never underestimate the power of fun. Fun can motivate reluctant math chickens to tackle fractions. Fun can make many hours of work seem like a few hours of play. Fun can loosen up your logic joints and stretch your memory muscles.



As part of his quest to defeat the powers of darkness, Pajama Sam enjoys a wild ride through a gold mine in his closet in *Pajama Sam in No Need to Hide When it's Dark Outside*.

And although it's possible for an educational game to be too pedantic, it can really never be too much fun.

With that in mind, consider buying a game for your young child's software library. I'm not talking about one of Davidson's *Blaster* programs, which incorporate games into the educational design. I'm not talking about one of the Living Books programs, which include games in their electronic storybooks. I'm talking about a real game, one that's devoted to pure fun. And if kids get smarter in the process — as they undoubtedly will — just smile, and keep it a secret.

What makes a good game for preschoolers and young elementary school-aged kids? The same things that make a good game for you and me, but the values are different. As with educational programs, you should aim for humor that takes the high road as much as possible, and the heroes should represent qualities you want your child to develop. The action should move at a pace that encourages experimentation. The riddles should encourage exploration. There should be early opportunities for success, and plenty of opportunities to just hang out instead of pushing onward.

Try just about any game from Humongous Entertainment, and you'll see these qualities in the digital flesh. In particular, try the company's newest adventure game, *Pajama Sam in No Need to Hide When it's Dark Outside*. Designed for children three to eight years old, *Pajama Sam* features challenging riddles, attractive graphics, and engaging characters.

As the curtain rises on *Pajama Sam*, our hero is preparing to sleep in the dark for the first time. Seconds after

his mother turns out the light, Sam leaps up, searches for his super-hero paraphernalia, and plunges into the unknown territory inside his closet. Sam faces his quest like any other kid, with a little fear and a lot of curiosity. But he's also an excellent role model for children; he's brave, courteous, and sensible. As he thinks aloud, he not only gives kids



To pass through this dapper duo of doors, Pajama Sam must sharpen his wit and remember what he has seen on his adventure so far.

clues, but he also teaches them the skill of self-talk for figuring out solutions to problems.

Because of all he imparts to kids through his ordinary, bright, and good-natured personality, he is the best main character in a kids' program so far, rivaling Arthur from the Living Books series (another fine role model for kids). *Pajama Sam in No Need to Hide When it's Dark Outside* is a great choice for any family software library.

### If Your Kids Like . . .

If your kids like electronic storybooks or Arthur, the friendly aardvark, check out Living Books' latest release. In *Arthur's Reading Race*, big brother Arthur challenges little sister D.W. to read ten words as they walk through town. If she wins, he'll buy her an ice cream cone. Watch your kids as they realize how many words they can read, too.

If your older kids like puzzles, Sierra's Dr. Brain series should win raves. Newest in the series, *The Time Warp of Dr. Brain* mixes speed drills with pure logic puzzles, offering a rich package that will entertain kids eight years old and older for months. They'll leave the computer with their brain muscles pumped and their funny bones tweaked.

If your kids like Humongous Entertainment's characters, check out the company's line of Junior Arcade Games. These programs combine adorable heroes with time-tested arcade designs. Putt Putt the car plays the old Break-Out game in *Balloon-O-Rama*, for example; and Freddi the Fish plays the old Defender game in *Water Worries*. Watch for Pajama Sam's entries in the Junior Arcade Game series later this year.



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# A Plea for Smaller File Sizes

**T**here are two sides to the Internet: the glitz and the guts. The glitz is all that non-sense you see on TV: the Tibetan monks dancing around their IBMs, the dopey school kids doing their homework on the Web, a URL in every commercial, and the ceaseless streaming of audio and video across a vaguely hypnotic Microsoft logo.

But the guts of the 'net are its reality — things like "404-not-found" errors, 30 bytes/second transfer rates, and overloaded web servers slowly burning their brains out. It's what we here at *PC Gamer* like to call the World Wide Wait, and if you've spent any time downloading game demos from the Internet lately, you've probably been doing a lot of waiting.

There's been a trend among game companies to release just any old demo via the Internet, with little regard to its quality or size. This probably happens because developers are rushing to meet some artificial deadline and don't have the hours to fine-tune and economize the file size, while at the same time the bosses want demos as part of a phase in some elaborate marketing plan. The result: a whole stream of twenty-meg demos that just don't play very well and aren't worth downloading.

So consider this an open letter to game publishers: Please, if your company is considering releasing a demo over the Internet, keep the file sizes realistic!

That means it absolutely has to be under ten megabytes, and ideally under five. Bear in mind, a 10MB demo will take almost three hours to download on a 28.8Kbps modem, which is what a lot of your potential customers are using to access

the Internet. Many will be using 14.4Kbps modems, which means it could take those people six hours or more. And all of them will be *furious* with you if they invest all this time downloading something only to find out it's nothing but a bunch of flash — or, even worse, a completely non-interactive flash.

A recent demo (I'm not saying which) had a 7MB Windows video file in it! I don't care if Steven Spielberg himself directed it; nobody with a modem should be forced to download a bunch of useless cutscenes. This same demo

stranger to me is why more companies that are releasing demos aren't releasing them as full-blown shareware games. Some of these demos

## Jason Bates



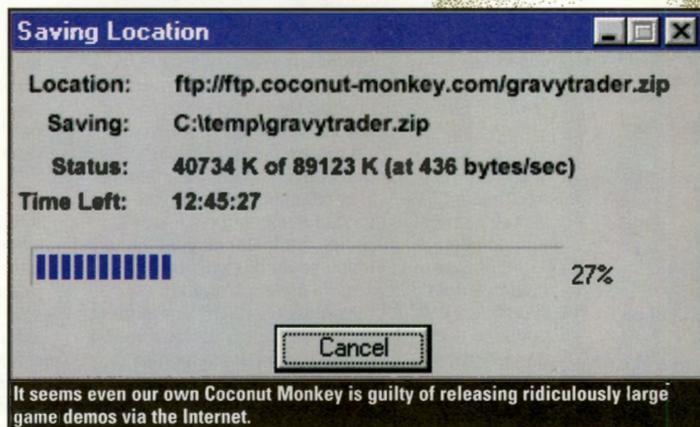
had even more megabytes tied up in 200K sound files!

Look at all the old shareware games that were under 1MB in size, but packed with gameplay. Of course, those games were made by people who make a living off of downloads, and who know the online market.

One reader E-mailed me about how he spent almost 20 hours over several days trying and trying to download a huge demo of a popular game he wanted to try. Finally, he got the whole thing, only to discover it had hardly any gameplay in it. He was so upset that he spent the whole next week E-mailing old id Software, Epic, and Apogee shareware games to that company, with notes recommending that they study the "ratio of gameplay-to-download time" very carefully.

(And what seems even

Apparently unaware that most gamers don't have ISDN lines, game companies are releasing bigger and bigger "Internet demos."



offer no way to order the full version — not even a contact number for ordering. Talk about missing your customers! Here you have people interested in your product, they've bothered to download it, and now they can't order it?)

What game companies arriving late to the Internet party must realize is that it's simply not realistic to release 20MB of bloat onto an already overloaded Internet and expect it to reach a large audience. It makes you look sloppy and uncaring, not even thinking about the little guy with an old modem who just wants to play a game. And what does that say about the final product?

So use some common sense: Keep making those chunky, multi-megabyte demos — we'll put 'em on *The CD* — but create a separate, leaner version for the Internet. It may be require more time and effort, but people used to write entire games in less than 100K.

Another annoyance for many are web ad banners that are over 20k in size. By the time they load, the visitor is probably long gone. Frankly, I doubt this trend will change any time soon. The 20, 30, and 40MB "Internet demos" are still coming.

So your best bet will continue to be to download a few of the best new games every month, while getting (if you can forgive some incidental plugging) the CD-ROM edition of *PC Gamer* every month for all the stuff your modem couldn't handle.

PCGG

# Finger Clickin' Good

**R**emember *Mystery House*? How about *The Wizard and the Princess*, or *Time Zone*? Surely you'll recognize the name *King's Quest*. These are just some of the games present in Sierra's new release, *The Roberta Williams Anthology*, a collection that brings together nearly all of Williams' games.

I remember these games well — they were some of the first to consume my time in front of a computer monitor. Not only is this collection a great trip down memory lane, it also includes some just-plain-great games. If you haven't had a chance to play any of these, you're missing out on some of the games that made adventure gaming the big-time industry it's become. Be warned, though: the graphics in the earliest games are really dated — but what do you expect from titles that originated on the Apple II? The package hearkens to a time when gaming was simpler, unfettered by the trappings of full-motion video and 3D-rendered graphics. The purpose of these games was simply to entertain, not make tons of money. As the creator of these games, Roberta Williams secured her place as one of the founders of true gaming goodness.

## A Plea to Sierra

While waxing nostalgic over the games in the *Roberta Williams Anthology*, I couldn't help but recall two more great Sierra games that took up vast quantities of my time when I first started gaming. *Manhunter: New York* and *Manhunter: San Francisco*. Remember them? The first took place in the Big Apple, the second right here in the San

Francisco area, each using a single icon that you moved around the screen with the cursor keys (strangely, there was no mouse support in either game, even though the second was released well after the mouse became a popular PC peripheral). The puzzles usually involved a combination of arcade-style action and thoughtful deductive reasoning.

The games took place in a future in which aliens had invaded Earth and turned humans into slaves. You played a manhunter — a human forced to track other humans who broke the aliens' laws. The first game introduced a killer who narrowly escaped you in New York; the sequel picked up

in. Usually, this means trekking through level after level of moist, mossy dungeons and battling who-knows-how-many hideous beasts.

But what about the unexplored territories of space? What about a sci-fi RPG that not only meant the character had to fly from planet to planet, or galaxy to galaxy, but also had to increase personal skill, communication ability, reaction times, and accuracy during fighting, as well as technological advancements? Sure, we have games like Origin's *Privateer 2: The Darkening*, which comes close to that description, but it's an action game at heart.

In pen-and-paper gam-

ing, there's certainly no lack of sci-fi RPGs; *Car Wars*, *Shadowrun*, *Traveller*, and *Twilight 2000* are just a few. These RPGs have put players in post-apocalyptic landscapes, in worlds where magic and technology have fused, and in situations you simply can't reach in your run-of-the-mill CRPG nowadays. Some of them have even been the subjects of computer RPGs, but those games are ancient history in PC gaming terms, and they didn't really capture the feel of their pen-and-paper counterparts, anyway.

Fortunately, Interplay has taken steps to fill the void — they're working on a futuristic RPG called *Fallout*, which takes place after a nuclear holocaust (see this issue's feature, beginning on page 92). Some people have said the computer RPG is a dying breed, but I think the only thing that's dying is the originality. Ever since the first computer RPGs, the *Wizardry* and *Ultima* series, every game that's considered an RPG has dealt with the same themes — save the world from an evil, magic-using, and nearly all-powerful entity, and restore nature to its course, usually through the use of some magical gadget you've recovered at great risk of life and limb.

Even RPGs that start in space often end up on the ground and under it, with spells and magic galore (example: *Blue Byte's Albion*). Don't get me wrong — I know the stories by heart, and I still enjoy them, but c'mon, enough is enough. Even the online RPG scene knows when to branch out — *Phoenix Armada* is one of the new ones that take place in space, rather than in a world that could just as easily be populated by hobbits.

If the genre is going to live on and take advantage of the fantastic new technology developing every day of the week, it'll have to take some turns for diversity. *Fallout* is a start, and it looks like a good one, although only time will tell. But let's hope that there will be more, and that these adventures will include more than the usual hack-and-slash.

PCG

## Michael Wolf



his trail in San Francisco. But, if I remember correctly, the second game never resolved the mystery. So where's part three, Sierra? *Manhunter* fans want to know!

## Sci-fi RPGs

I've noticed something recently: While discussing the ups and downs of adventure gaming with PCG webmaster and fellow gamer Jason Bates, I came to the realization that there are very few pure science fiction roleplaying games available for the PC. When most gamers think of a computer roleplaying game (CRPG), the immediate vision is one of trolls, swords, magic, and armor. Most often, the threat of some dark entity looms over the game's world, while gamers try frantically to build up their characters with enough weaponry, armor, and spell points to do the bad guy

A retrospective of some of Sierra's best games is a history of adventure gaming in a box — and it prompts some nostalgia.

<b>Ultimate Doom:</b>	Arcade Style	5044409
<b>Thy Flesh Consumed</b>	DOS 386/33, 4mb, J	
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<b>Hoyle Casino</b>	Strategy Game	5093109
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<b>Final Doom</b>	Arcade Style	5083209
DOS/WC 486/33, 4mb or MAC 68040, 8mb, J		
<b>Toonstruck</b>	Adventure	5104708
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<b>NHL Powerplay '96 Hockey</b>	Sports	5089701
WIN '95 486/66, 8mb, J		
<b>First Aid 97 Deluxe</b>	Utilities	5098306
WIN '95 486, 8mb		
<b>WinDelete</b>	Utilities	5084504
WIN3.1/WC 386, 8mb		
<b>Circle Of Blood</b>	Adventure	5098009
DOS/WC 486/66, 8mb		
<b>Shivers</b>	Adventure	5058102
WIN3.1 486/33, 8mb		
<b>Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia '97</b>	General Ref.	5090501
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<b>Timelapse</b>	Adventure	5095005
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<b>Resume Maker Deluxe CD</b>	Home/Personal	5050703
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Each selection includes the following important information: minimum system required, minimum CPU required, minimum amount of RAM required, and required peripherals in addition to a mouse and keyboard (J=joystick, P=printer).

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<b>Caesar II</b>	Strategy Game	5068606
DOS 486 or MAC 68040, 8mb		
<b>TerraNova: Strike Force Centauri</b>	Arcade Style	5066600
DOS Pentium, 8mb		
<b>Zork Nemesis</b>	Adventure	5065602
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# Tigers, Panthers, and Dragons

**L**ast month, we visited with Scott Hamilton and learned the early history of his wargame company, HPS Simulations, and its first products, Point of Attack and Aide de Camp. This month the discussion continues, with Tigers on the Prowl and Panthers in the Shadows, and a look at what HPS has in store for the future.

HPS really hit its stride with *Tigers on the Prowl* (a Russian-front tactical game) and *Panthers in the Shadows* (a post-D-Day game, similar to *Tigers* but featuring a much-improved interface).

"By the time I was finished with *Tigers*," Scott muses, "I had much more of the technical skills needed to make the game playable as well as authentic. And with *Panthers*, I introduced the concept of the 'staff menu,' which takes care of the routine administrative chores just like a flesh-and-blood staff does in real warfare."

Praised for their extraordinary detail and realism (each round fired during a game is tracked by the computer according to projectile velocity, adjusted for wind drag, size, mass, hardness, and density, against the target's armor strength, angle, and density at point of impact!), *Tigers* and *Panthers* have also acquired a reputation for fearsome complexity — and graphics which might charitably be described as "utilitarian."

"I have people ask me, all the time, why I can't use our programming meat and combine it with graphics on the order of those found in *Steel Panthers*," Hamilton says. "Well, sure, I'd love to do that, but I just don't have a spare \$100,000 lying around to spend on the games' appearance! I simply could not sell enough units to justify that

kind of production budget."

As for the games' complexity, they're not quite as overwhelming as they're reputed to be — you can grasp the basics and start playing on an elementary level after a few hours of study. Deeper expertise comes later, as you gradually investigate the games' many options and features. In terms of mass market appeal and user-friendliness, HPS's games are really just a next-step-up from *Steel Panthers*.

"Yes, I think *Steel Panthers* hurt our sales at first," Hamilton says. "But now I'm starting to attract people who got hooked on the subject of armored warfare because of that game, and are

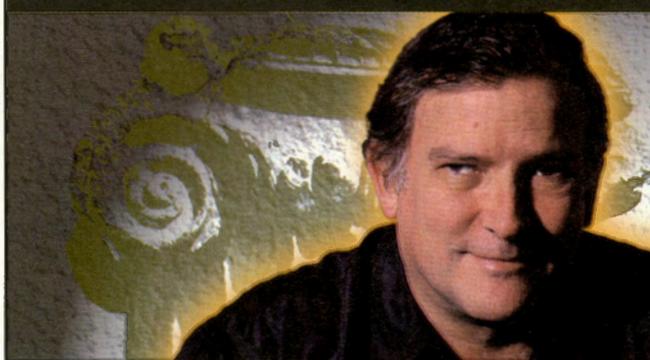
Against all the odds, then, HPS continues to hold its own, firmly entrenched in its market niche and absolutely devoted to its customers. In fact, the company's very success may be working against it, to a certain degree.

"Things have reached the point



While it lacks the graphic flash of games like SSI's *Steel Panthers*, HPS's *Panthers in the Shadows* is a step up in terms of complexity and depth.

## William R. Trotter



just naturally ready to advance to another level of realism and detail."

In 1996, HPS hired its first paid staff member: Greg Smith (known by his online moniker "Sturmer," or "Stormtrooper"), a fanatical researcher and game fan who recently retired, with the rank of major, from the armor branch of the Army. Sales have slowly but steadily improved over the past year, and the plucky little company is preparing its next major release: *Dragons in the Mist*.

*Dragons* will cover the entire Pacific land war, from the initial invasion of China in 1936 to Hiroshima. Huge in scope and almost quixotic in ambition, the game will contain not only the Japanese, Chinese, and American forces, but also the British, Australian, and Dutch units. And sometime this year, Scott hopes to publish a new, vastly improved version of *Aide de Camp*.

Scott Hamilton is happy to be at the top of a two-man wargame company — but the success of HPS Simulations means it can't stay small forever.

now where I have to decide if I can continue to do things the way I have," Hamilton says, gazing into a very cloudy crystal ball. "Production values are now so high in this genre that I'm reaching the limit of what I can do. I simply don't have the margin to work with that the bigger companies have. And I am *not* anti-big-company; some of them do a great job, and I have no philosophical objection to forging a strategic relationship with a bigger partner.

"But," he says, "I will not do that without retaining full control of the things that go out under my name. You know as well as I do that some corporations have forced their programmers to 'dumb down' their concepts in order to appeal to a mass market, and I simply won't submit to that. Offer a simplified version if you must, but make it an option, not your primary design objective."

One final word from the formidable Mr. Hamilton: "I could not have done it without the understanding of my wife. A lot of spouses would never understand my passion for this genre — or be willing to support me during the lean years. Oh, and some of the credit goes to the family dog, too, for providing those little morale-boosts that get you through a hard day at the keyboard." (HPS games can be ordered direct from HPS Simulations, P.O. Box 3245, Santa Clara, CA 95055)

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# Playing the Race Card

**W**ith PC graphic hardware rapidly catching up to the dedicated power of arcade machines, home computer auto racing is enjoying a resplendent resurgence, with a much-needed kick in the pants from accelerated 3D technology.

Most of the games featured here will actually be out by the time you read this, but I'm hoping their appearance here will help you decide how to allocate your driving dollars.

*Power F1*, like *Tomb Raider*, is another pleasant surprise from Eidos. This arcade-style Formula One racer outperforms *Grand Prix 2* visually and has nearly as many options. You can customize settings for difficulty, realism, race length, and driving assists in Single Race, Championship, and Shoot-Out modes.

Based on actual Formula One data, *PF1* includes all 17 1995 tracks and 24 force-modeled cars and drivers. In-car, chase, and TV-camera views are available in single and multi-player modes, including two-player split-screen or serial link, and six-player network support. Control is very forgiving, and sound effects are top-notch. Sadly, driving against traffic incurs a time penalty and eventual disqualification.

*Formula 1* from Psygnosis looks like a virtual clone of *Power F1* at first, but on closer examination this PlayStation conversion has some significant advantages — most notably Direct3D support and optimization for most of the top 3D accelerators. The game pols your system and delivers the best possible performance for whatever hardware you have installed.

*Formula 1* offers Arcade and Grand Prix (advanced)

modes for one or two players. It has many of the same options and configurations as *Power F1*, including the 1995 circuits, 13 teams, 26 cars, and 36 drivers. The accelerated graphics are awesome, generating flashy effects like water spraying off of tires in wet weather and an overall speed and smoothness that has to be seen to be believed. Tasty CD tracks are provided by Joe Satriani and Steve Vai.

*XCar Experimental Racing* from Bethesda Softworks offers unprecedented freedom of choice in a racing environment, from pure arcade action to precision-tuned championship competition. Bethesda has applied its proprietary XnGine to an "unlimited class"

Rover's \$30,000 Defender 90 — and they all look great.

Thunder across twelve tracks in Forest, Desert, and Snow scenarios in Single Race Practice, Six-Race Mixed and Six-Race Class Leagues, with the usual complement of sound, graphics, and difficulty settings. Gain access to four secret 4x4 vehicles by winning their respective Class Leagues. *TDOR* supports split screen head-to-head and four-player network mode, and it'll be playable via DWANGO and Kali, too. The soundtrack is by Gravity Kills.

*Screamer 2* from Virgin Interactive is something of a disappointment, at least to me. The new 3D engine is impressive, but the game is surpris-

ingly dreary. Where the original *Screamer* had brilliant, sparkling neon colors, *S2*'s six international rally-style courses are unremarkable (although I did like Finland, Colombia, and a *MegaRace*-style bonus track).

*S2* offers four driving teams, each with four front-, rear-, and four-wheel-drive vehicles (with some bonus cars for good measure). Tire pressure, transmission, suspension, steering, and braking are all adjustable, and you will need to tinker a bit if you expect to do well in the championship. Variable weather, four-player free-for-all or team network play, and a two-player split-screen mode are welcome additions, as is the \$20 price tag that makes it well worth considering.

*Need for Speed 2* from Electronic Arts was still in its earliest stages as I wrapped up this column, so all EA had to send me was a brief videotape of pre-alpha gameplay and a list of features: An all-new, 50 percent faster 3D engine, eight machines (McLaren F1, Lotus GT1, Lotus Esprit V8, Ford GT90, Ford Indigo, Jaguar XJ220, Italdesign Cala, and Isdera Commendatore 112i), and all-new tracks in Norway, Vancouver, Mexico, Europe, Nepal, Greece, and Australia. Also, car physics that emphasize excitement without sacrificing fidelity, new setup options, split-screen two-player action, eleven opponents, and two difficulty settings.

*Sega Rally*, the long-awaited PC conversion of the arcade smash, is finally here and, well — what can I say? You're either gonna love it or hate it. On the plus side, it looks pretty good and performs better than *Daytona USA*, there are four courses, four cars (well, two, actually, each with an automatic or manual transmission), a Car Edit feature, Internet, network, and modem play. On the minus side, it doesn't perform that much better than *Daytona*, it's almost ridiculously easy, and loading times will have you thinking you're back on an old Commodore 64. Try before you buy.

PCG

## Scott Wolf



racing game where you get to customize, test drive, and race 16 exotic prototype cars, with frame rates that should surprise you on the most modest of systems.

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*Test Drive Off-Road* from Accolade. Look out, *Monster Truck Madness!* *TDOR* uses a 3D engine that accurately evokes the actual physics of the game's four feisty vehicles — the tough-as-nails Hummer, the redesigned 1997 Jeep Wrangler, Chevy's K-1500 Z-71 pickup, and Land

Relax — it's not another tired reference to the O.J. Simpson trial. It's something much more interesting: the latest news on upcoming racing games.

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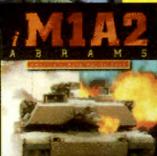
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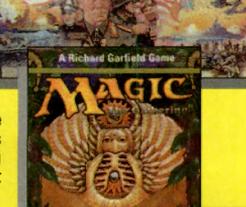
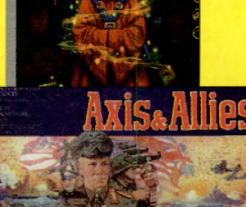
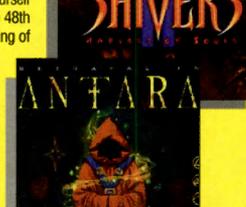
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## Multi-Player Red Alert, Part One

We've distilled the wisdom of the ages into one fine pint with this, the first part of the *definitive* multi-player *Red Alert* strategy guide.

Whether you're playing on a modem, TEN, Mplayer, or your friendly neighborhood LAN, multi-player *Red Alert* is the current real-time strategy game of choice. So if you've fallen behind the times, these clandestine briefings from our think tank of experts will restore your edge.

Ever since we got our hands on it, we've been playing networked games of *Red Alert* on a nightly basis. It's kept its allure because there are so many strategic and tactical decisions to be made, and these decisions are dependent upon so many changing conditions, and yet you must start making these same decisions within seconds of the game's beginning.

Even before the game starts, you should be thinking. How many people are playing? What size map are you on?

Are crates on or off? How much cash? How many units? A three player game with no alliances is quite different from a six player game with three pre-designated teams of two. A water map is different from an all-land map. A game with a No-Tanya treaty is very different compared to one without one. A game that starts with 12 units is different from one that starts with six, because the bad guys start with two APCs and an engineer, and they're that much more likely to come red-wrenching your base with engineers a minute or two later.

The map size is also crucial, affecting your building choices, though most players will always choose large maps when there are more than two players in the game. Also be sure to know the max. tech level and starting credits; in our opinion, true *Red Alert* games will start with maximum tech, lots of credits, from six to twelve starting units, and no Tanya or ore truck treaties.

### Allies or Soviets?

We give the nod to the Allies for several reasons: superior



Build your first base in the most protected position possible.

naval power, Gap Generators, Tanya-filled APCs, and medium tanks that are just as good as the Soviet heavy tanks. It's our belief that it takes a superior player to play the Soviets and win consistently against the Allies. So unless you have a death wish or something to prove, play the Allies.

### Keep Moving, Soldier!

This is key to *Red Alert*: keep moving, keep looking, keep thinking. Always be moving the mouse, always clicking, and keep your other hand on the keyboard. If you have money in the bank, build something. If you can't see an area, send a foot soldier in. When paratroopers are ready, drop them. When a building's ready, deploy it. This ain't no love-in, so get proactive out there! And we don't have time here to explain the CTRL and ALT unit grouping commands: they're in the manual, so go memorize them now. You're handicapped if you don't.

### Base-building

The first thing you do when the game connects is figure out if you are in a corner, and which one. Quickly lay your Construction Yard down in as tight a corner as you can, and surround it with structures — from the second the game begins, you must defend against Tanya and Engineer attacks.

After your Con Yard is laid down, build a Power Plant. We're assuming you've already sent your fast-moving jeeps and APCs to your perpendicular extremes, since you must find your nearest neighbors as soon as possible and keep an eye on what they are doing



Keep those trucks moving! The more ore trucks you've got, the more money you'll get.



Cranking out tanks right from the start is always a good idea, because even a well-defended base can't stand up to a tank rush.

— are they building Engineers or cranking out tanks?

But if you find you're on a map ringed with water, then you'll want to build inland, out of potential cruiser range. Nothing is worse than a cruiser sitting off your coast, out of range of everything you own, slowly reducing your base to scrap metal.

After the Con Yard and first Power Plant, your next building is a Barracks. Now crank out rocket infantry while you wait for the next big building, the Ore Refinery. Lay the Ore Refinery down as close as possible to the ore fields, and give it some breathing room, as those incompetent ore trucks need a lot of room to maneuver. After that, build a War Factory (so you can get a second harvester going), and start cranking out tanks, then the Radar Dome. After the Radar Dome comes the Tech Center, which opens up a good deal of alternate paths, or a second Refinery and War Factory if you're going for the Tank Blitz. Along the way, you'll be building up more Power Stations, both the advanced and simple kind. The advanced are cheaper and take up less space, but the simple plants, being more dispersed, are less vulnerable to nuclear strikes and Tanya raids. And that second Ore

Refinery is another must; if a Tanya or air raid takes out your first one and you don't have enough money to build another, you've already lost.

### What to Build

If you're the Allied player, the first thing you should build after a Tech Center is the Gap Generator. Blacking out your base before the other side scouts the layout is the best thing you can do, and gap generators are the number one reason to play as the Allies. Some of us here at *PCG* also like to build at least a couple of mobile gap generator trucks and scatter them around the base, so that even if the power goes down, the mobile units offer some blackout shielding. Mobile gaps are also good for those tank battles in the middle of the battlefield, where their presence will disconcert inexperienced opponents.

Generally, the fast-Tanya buildup is the most devastating weapon to use against neophyte players, and for that you'll also need to get the Tech Center ASAP; although skilled opponents quickly learn to build up riflemen, guard dogs, camouflaged MG nests and/or walls to fend off the inevitable.

Don't get distracted in an anti-Tanya defense: a flight of six or eight helicopters will utterly destroy an oppo-

nent with inadequate anti-air defense. That's why rocket troops are among the best buys in the game; they're effective against both helicopters and tanks. Always build a rocket man when you don't need to build a Tanya or some other infantry unit — never let your barracks sit idle. But rockets are almost useless against Tanya, so make every fourth rocket man a rifleman, or save those bucks for camouflaged pillboxes, and you'll have some firepower against Tanya/Engineer incursions. Artillery units are also excellent against Tanys.

### The Quick Kill

It's only a minute into the game, and you've laid down a Barracks and are working on the Ore Refinery. Your roving jeep has wandered into a neighbor's base and has been shot up by his starting heavy units. Is there a quick kill option on this guy who's crowding you? Yes, there is. You've saved one APC, right? Now build four or five engineers as your first infantry units, make them a CTRL-key group, pack them into the APC, and pay a visit to your newly discovered friend. Four engineers on a Con Yard are as deadly as a Tanya raid, but you'd better do it in the first two minutes of the game, before he's got Tesla coils or MG nests ringing his base. With no Construction Yard, he can build no more, and if he hasn't finished his Ore Refinery, War Factory, or Barracks, he's almost out of the game.

Almost? He is, unless he has an ally. If you find yourself in this position, make friends real quick, sell all your remaining buildings, and rush your remaining units towards your ally's base. When you have no buildings, the odds of finding a new MCV in a crate increase exponentially. Under the guns of your ally's base, you can rebuild, and turn a crippling blow into a minor setback, and swiftly build yourself back into the menace you should have been.

### A Dozen Ways to Win

Once the Tech Center is built, the game really opens up into a number of paths to victory. Which path you choose will depend upon a number of variables, which is why it's hard to offer specific advice, since everything depends on the number of players, their skill level, your

## The Quick Kill



Load five engineers into an APC.



Drive on over to your neighbor's and unload.



Anyone want to buy Gary's used base?



The most consistently successful strategy in *Red Alert* is wave after wave of war iron. Keep cranking out those tanks until you're ready to roll.

skill level, the proximity of your enemies, and how much water is on the map you're playing.

The different general attack plans you can develop include: the oh-so-common tank rush; the air offensive (immediately building helicopter and/or jet pads as soon as possible, to go for a quick, jugular slash at the enemy's construction yard, before he's built up AA defenses); the Admiral path: building a naval base and cranking out destroyers and cruisers as soon as possible to dominate the sea; or the Tanya route, a quick and stealthy buildup of Tanyas and APCs to devastate unsuspecting and unprepared neighbors.

### The Tank Rush

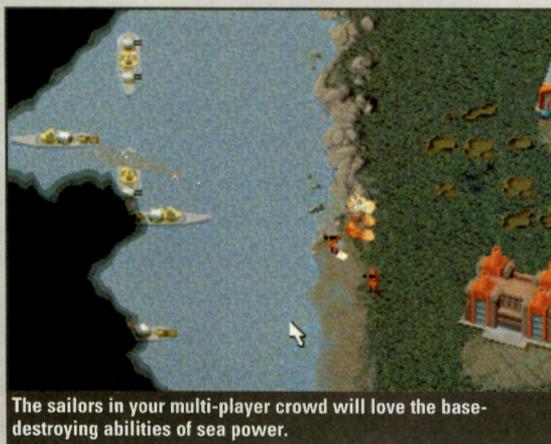
The quickest and most reliable path to victory is the beloved tank rush, wherein you do nothing but crank out tanks, harvesters, War Factories, and refineries, so you can build more and more tanks faster than anyone. Each new War Factory means you can build tanks that much faster, and each new refinery means that much more money coming in. On most maps, this is the way to go, particularly the maps that come with the game. For those who tire of this Eastern Front kind of game, you'll need to edit your own *Red Alert* maps with the editor, creating battlefields that are not so wide-open and have solid defensive positions and numerous ridges, oceans, and rivers, re-balancing the game. In fact, among veteran players,

the Tank Rush is used almost to the point of exclusion, forcing us to play with new maps or modified *redalert.ini* files if we wish to keep the game fresh.

### The Admiral

On maps with a ring of water around them, building up a navy can be the difference between life and death. And even on the maps that feature nothing more than lakes, building cruisers and destroyers on a lake near your base gives you that much more defensive firepower. Plus, with a Chronosphere, you can teleport a cruiser on to a lake near an enemy's base and wreak long-range havoc where he least expects it.

Never send out cruisers without destroyers and gunboats, as the small ships are much better at picking out subs and choppers than the sluggish cruisers. And if no one else is building ships, one speedy destroyer can pick up all those water crates, giving you a huge



The sailors in your multi-player crowd will love the base-destroying abilities of sea power.

advantage in cash.

The only true defense against a powerful navy is a more powerful navy or flight after flight of aircraft.

### Death From Above

An excellent strategy for the air warrior player with a lot of MiGs or helicopters is the nuke/airstrike tandem. You want to take out a critical enemy building, but he's got dozens of rocket men around it. Hit that area with a nuke, which will clear out the rocket infantry. Then swoop in and finish the job with your air wing. Alternately, if he's built lots of AA Guns but few rocket men, nuke his power plants instead. Many players don't build enough power stations to withstand a nuclear attack, and once their power goes into the yellow or red, you can air raid his base with impunity, targeting critical installations like the Con Yard, Tech Center and Radar Dome.



Rule the air with swarms of choppers.

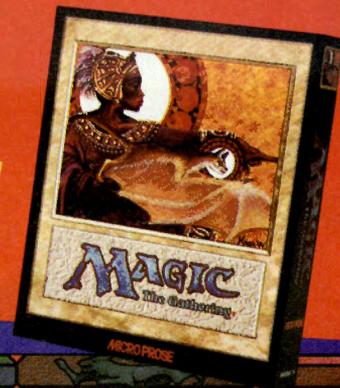
But say you're attacking an allied player with gap generators, and you can't see his base? Send in spies if you can; otherwise, throw a tank or APC in. Guide it carefully, not worrying about damage — drive into the heart of the base. Once you find the installations you want, nuke them, then follow up with the air raid strike. It doesn't matter if the area goes black after the tank is dead, as long as you got your attack orders off first. You *have* bound your air team to one hot key, right? If not, select all your air units, then hit CTRL and a number key. Now when your tank penetrates the Gap Generator area and you see a likely target, hit the number for your air team and then target that structure. Air teams will attack under the gap if you tell them what to hit first.

Obviously, these paths to victory are not all-inclusive, and you'll frequently mix and match strategies from all camps, depending on how close your enemy is and the land/water ratio of the map you're playing.

### Next Month...

The mysteries of SimBase... What to build, and when... Treaties... Alliances... the End Game... Computer Opponents... and a Unit Report Card. Hold onto your flamethrowers, it's all coming in June!

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Product Information Number 315

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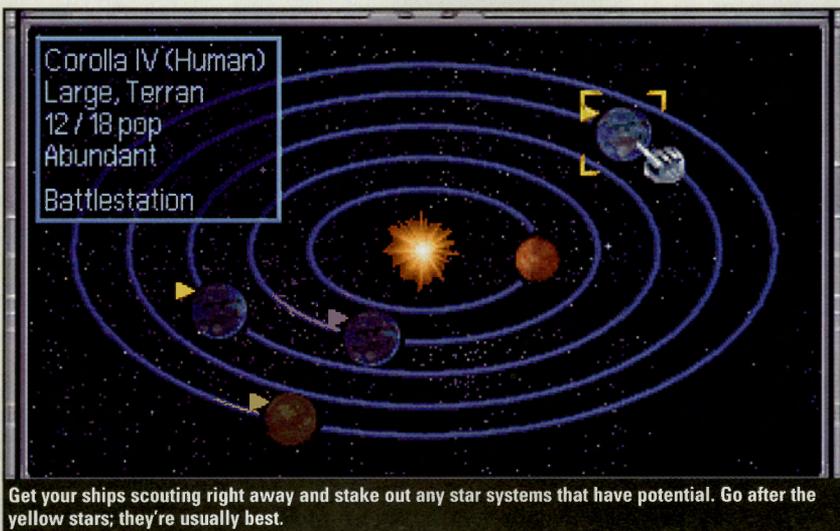
Available in the Weird-Looking Green Box at Major Computer and Game Retailers Everywhere.

Product Information Number 312

# Master of Orion II

## Rule the universe with these stellar tips!

Build, research, or attack? It's the most difficult balancing act of any strategy game, and with *Master of Orion II*'s management of the smallest of details, getting the proper balance becomes a constant struggle. Check out these tips for much-needed guidance.



Get your ships scouting right away and stake out any star systems that have potential. Go after the yellow stars; they're usually best.

Generally, research is the key to games of conquest where new technologies are of great importance. This provides the more powerful weapons, tougher armor, and specialty items that overwhelm a less developed opponent. So, the decision of how much of your resources to spend in research versus how much to spend protecting your planets while developing industry and new star systems becomes critical. Starting off on the right foot can make all the difference.

### What To Do First

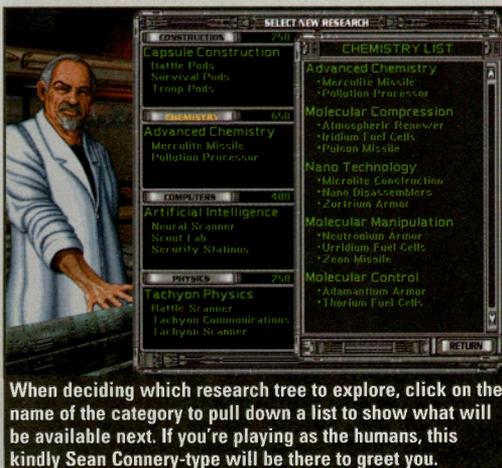
In the beginning, you'll start with a single planet with two scout ships and one colonization ship. Send all three ships out to the nearest planets using your colonizing ship as a scout. Immediately get the colonizer to the first star system that looks decent, and land on the best-looking planet available. If you have to choose between a system with one great planet or a system with several decent planets, go with the latter. Keep an eye out for Worm Holes. They might take you to a very good star system across the galaxy, and only take one turn to get there.

Select Hydroponic Farming as the first research item (it's under Biology). This will free up your workers early in the game from farming to industry or research. The next thing you should consider is Chemistry, so you can get Deuterium Fuel Cells, which will allow your scouts to venture further and find better star systems.

If there are other planets in a star system that look good, build Colonizing Bases right away and get these planets producing for you. These are much cheaper than using Colonizing Ships. Don't be concerned with poor planets early in the game. These poorly rated planets are of little use until you develop Terraforming and other technologies to improve them.

### Customization

If you want a little extra help getting started, you have the option of creating your own race. To do this, you must choose between a number of attributes using a set number of points. The better the attribute, the more it costs. There are



When deciding which research tree to explore, click on the name of the category to pull down a list to show what will be available next. If you're playing as the humans, this kindly Sean Connery-type will be there to greet you.



When choosing attributes for your race, Creativity is one of the best. If you have a couple of bucks left over, check out Large or Rich Homeworlds. They're cheap and can get you off to a good start.

even bad attributes you can select, like having a negative 10 percent in spying, in order to gain more points to spend on other things.

One of the most powerful attributes you can select is Creativity. This little baby can more than double the amount of items you can research. Generally, when you research, you must choose an item from a small list of technologies and upon completion get just that one item. Creativity will give you everything on the list, not just the one item.

Other attributes that are worth getting are technology and industrial bonuses, and Unification. Unification is a government type. Later in your research tree, you will be able to research Galactic Unification, which doubles all food and industrial production of all workers.

### Population Management

Getting workers doing the right thing at the right time is crucial. Put as few workers on farming as possible — just enough to keep your population from starving. Divide the others between industry and research. This may sound simple, but if you have a planet with a Research Lab and no Automated Factory (two very important structures, by the way), you may want to put the bulk of workers on research or vice versa.

If you have multiple planets within a star system and one of them is maxed out in population, you'll generally want to transport some workers to other planets, especially those just starting out. Your maxed-out planet will quickly max out again.

### Production

We've already mentioned some of the important first structures to go after. Generally, you'll want to key on research, but you can't ignore industrial production, especially when the planet is starting out. One of the early planetary improvements needed is defense. A Star Base is mandatory and must be installed ASAP. Most planetary improvements should eventually be made on all

planets if you really want to crank out the resources. Definitely hold off on building Biospheres until your planet's population is almost maxed out. Biospheres will increase the number of inhabitants a planet can have, but if you build too soon, you'll just be paying a maintenance fee during each turn for no good reason.

The computer is very adept at invading a planet right before Star Bases or Battlestations are in place. Because of this, it's usually good to have a big fat wad of cash in reserve. This way, if an enemy tries a quick strike on a newly developing planet, you can quickly purchase the defensive structure you're working on. Keep this in mind: Whenever you spot a new planet to colonize, make sure you have the resources to quickly protect it. Battlestations are among the best defenses. Warships are also a good protection, but they're expensive and can quickly become outdated and outgunned.

When money becomes tight, research the Spaceport and Planetary Stock Exchange. These two should get you generating enough cash to take care of any needs.

### Cool Rides

What all this planet building and research is leading to is the ability to build the biggest, best, and most warships. It's the only way to destroy the Antarans — they don't negotiate. Armor and Construction are important for building thick-skinned, huge ships. A couple of specialty items you should include on every ship are Battle Pods, which increase a ship's space, and Automated Repair units, which repair the damage a ship takes each turn and can make them nearly invincible to many enemy ships and Battlestations.

Some of the key offensive weapons are the Gyro Destabilizer, Gauss Cannon, and the aptly named Mauler Device. A Doom Star armed with all this will devastate an enemy — no Luke Skywalkers around to stop you.

When you engage the enemy in combat, don't click on AUTO to let the computer handle it for you if you're up against more than one ship. The computer has a nasty habit of pounding on an enemy ship until it's almost destroyed, then turning to fire on other enemy ships without finishing off the



One of the most enjoyable parts of the game is outfitting your ship with just the right weapons and specialty items you think will help you in ruling the galaxy.

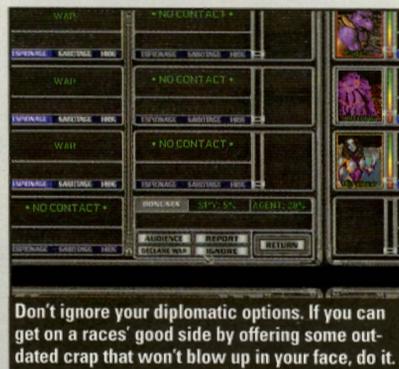


Divide your workers carefully. If the planet has research potential, put as few into industry as you can get away with, as long as the structures they're building won't take an inordinate amount of time to construct.

first one. This allows the first ship to continue attacking at full strength. Once you get down to a single enemy ship, it's okay to use AUTO — the computer will now throw everything at it.

### Diplomacy

One of the other tricks to keeping your empire intact is making friends with other races. Offering treaties and outdated technologies are good ways to



Don't ignore your diplomatic options. If you can get on a race's good side by offering some outdated crap that won't blow up in your face, do it.

keep 'em smiling, thus keeping them from raiding your star systems. They won't always be receptive, but having fewer enemies, at least until you unleash your Doom Stars, will allow you to spend more on research and less on defense. And if you can intimidate the other races, they might pay you a tribute each turn.

Another little trick is planting spies and framing other races for acts of sabotage and espionage. If you can start a war between a couple of races, you'll get them wasting their resources fighting each other rather than on research.

### Mercenary Leaders

One of the new features of MOO II is the possibility of a Leader offering to join your race. These leaders can offer bonuses in just about any area. Some will help increase morale, research, farming, and tactical experience, just to name a few. Look at them closely; occasionally, they'll also give you negative values for some areas.

It's usually good to grab any Leader that won't cause a negative effect. They'll have an initial cost, depending on what they offer, and will also cost a maintenance fee each turn. This maintenance fee will often more than offset itself with the benefits the Leader provides. One type of Leader you should always be on the lookout for is a Megawealthy Leader. These guys won't cost you any maintenance fee, and they'll contribute money each turn. Always make sure you have some cash in reserve, you never know when a good Leader will come along.



These ugly goons can greatly enhance just about any attribute in the game. Choose them wisely, and watch out for the unpopular ones — they can force you to spend more to keep other leaders.

# Win 95 is cool, but sucks with DOS games!



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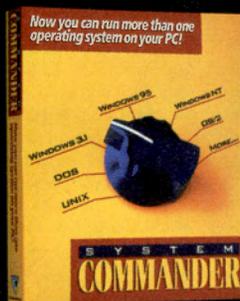
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Product Information Number 357

# Discworld II, Part One

**Yes, it's the complete solution!**

Psygnosis' new Discworld game is even bigger and tougher than the original, which is why we're lending more than just a helping hand with this complete solution for the first half of the game. The concluding part will be published next month, so hang in there!



To gain the three sticks of equal length needed for the Rite of Ashk'Ente, Rincewind must find three objects to substitute for the croquet sticks being used by the wizards in the Unseen University gardens.

## ACT I: The Rite Stuff

Once you have been given your task, head out of the main hall and into the High Energy facility in the Unseen University (UU) grounds. Take the bellows, magnet, and test tube; then leave. Head towards the plaza and buy the dubious popcorn from Dibbler. At the Fool's Guild, head down the hole in the ground to the sewers. When you see the grate the milkmaid is standing on, use the bellows on her to loosen some sequins (glitter dust for Ashk'Ente).

Travel to the Shades and walk past the Troll's Head to the Mortuary (look for the sign of the shrouded corpse). At the bottom, right-click on the resting witch to identify her and then pick up the knife. Head back up and enter the Troll's Head. Find the Vampire and talk to him. Go on, he won't bite. Let him show you his

lovely teeth. Talk to Casanunda, asking him about ladders and witches so that he gives you his ladder. Take the matches on the bar and order a drink, leave the inn and head right (past the beggars) and up the street to Gimlet's. Talk to Gimlet, then ask him about candy-rock. Go to the table, take the chili



The spaced-out junior wizards in the High Energy Magic facility, and their computer HEX, can be put to good use.



You'll need to get rid of the beekeeper and then find suitable protection from the bees before you can obtain the wax and honey you'll need later.

and use the menu. Talk to Gimlet again to order a "mouse in a bun". Now leave the Shades.

## MRS. CAKE

Head for the wandering shop and talk to the old woman. It doesn't give you any clues, but should give you a laugh. Take the incense, stuffed fish, and flamingo, then go to the docks and throw the fish into the water. Pick up the stunned bird, use the knife to cut the fish net and pick up the hammerhead shark. Go back to Unseen University and go into the Garden. The objective here is to swipe the croquet sticks from the Bursar, the Dean, and the Librarian by using the Shark, Flamingo, and Wading bird (respectively) on them. Having done this, walk over to the vertical maze where you have to catch the rooster. Use the tankard on the popcorn and then use the combined brew on the rooster. Now head back to the Shades and locate the residence of Mrs. Cake. Walk into her shop and head past her to the tailor's dummy. Double-click the petticoat to get a strip off it. Now head back to Mrs. Cake and talk to her. Once you have initiated the conversation, use the talk options in the correct order of topics, making sure to leave out the first one (the mouth). Look at the genie bottle and then talk to her about it.

## ROOSTERS AND VAMPIRES

Now head out and return to the beggars. You need to get the rooster to crow, but as it is drunk, you need to sober it up by using it on the beggar's coffee pot first. Why? So that the Vampire heads back to his crypt, of course, allowing you to steal his teeth. Now head into the Troll's Head and use the Rooster on the Vampire. After he flies off, go to the Shades to the cemetery and look for his tomb. Enter the tomb and use the ladder on the crypt so you can climb up. Steal the teeth and use them on the mouse (you heartless fiend) and then introduce the bloodied teeth to the test tube to store the blood. This gives you another component for the rite.

## HIGH ENERGY FACILITY

Go back to the plaza and talk to Dibbler until he gives you a brochure. Armed with this, go back to the UU garden. Walk left to the beekeeper and talk to him, then use the brochure on him. Take the chili and use it on the flowers. This will make the bees hot, which will cause them to produce dribbly wax. Use the



The old woman in the Wandering Shop knows how to make the candles you need, but first you'll have to provide her with the raw material — dribbly wax. Grab whatever objects you can while you're here.

petticoat strip on yourself. Now light the incense with the matches and use them on the bee-hive. Click on the bee-hive to get the wax. Head back out and find the wandering shop. Go there and look at the candles. Now talk to the old woman about candles and give her the dribbly wax so she can make some candles for you. Another component for the rite is yours! Head to the Fool's Guild and talk to the ghostly fool. Pick up the brick and use it on the ghost to catch it. Return to the UU and go into the High Energy Facility again. Use the haunted brick on the Thaum accelerator to make the ghost dizzy. This will give you the ectoplasm Mrs. Cake wants. Head back into the Shades (because you enjoy it so much) and go into Mrs. Cake's shop. Give her the ectoplasm and she will give you the genie bottle.

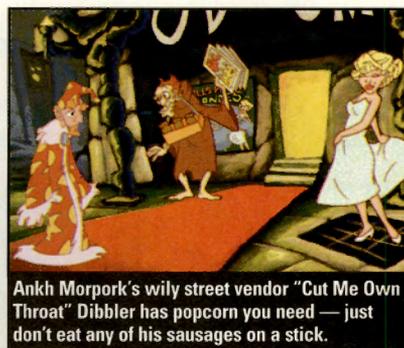
#### THE CEREMONY

Now you have to collect the insubstantial Foul Ole Ron's vile smell (which is partial to a nice pair of boots). Head back to the UU Garden and walk past the maze to the dove-cote where the imp is sitting. Use the magnet on his lovely iron-shod boots to steal them and then head back to the Shades. Use the boots on the genie bottle (to put them in there) and then use the bottle on the vile smell to catch it. Congratulations, you have all the components for the Rite of AshkEnte. Go to the UU Great Hall and give the mallets, mouse blood, candles, glitter-dust, and vile smell to the Archchancellor. Now sit back and enjoy the scene and try not to think too much about what you have done to that poor mouse.

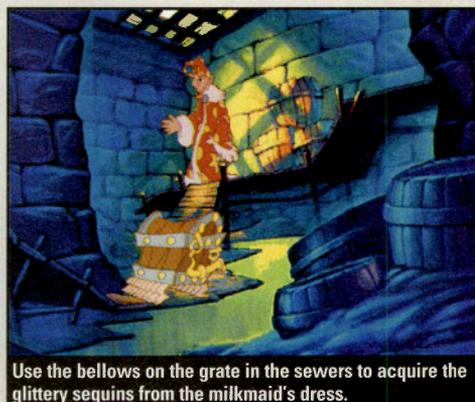
#### ACT II : Come Die With Me

To travel on board the ship, you need to

speak to the Dead Collector in the Shades. To be proclaimed dead, you need a death certificate, so it's off the Mortuary to speak to the mortician about death certificates. To pass his tests, you'll need to steal the saw and the pot from the beggars. Then head to Mrs. Cake's shop and use the saw on the dummy to take its arm and then onto the cemetery to collect the pick. Go to the Fool's Guild and head down into the sewers again. Walk past the grate and into the Pork



Ankh Morpark's wily street vendor "Cut Me Own Throat" Dibbler has popcorn you need — just don't eat any of his sausages on a stick.



Use the bellows on the grate in the sewers to acquire the glittery sequins from the milkmaid's dress.

Futures warehouse. Use the pick on the ice to get some — but this will melt, so you now have only a finite amount of time to complete the next part. Return to the mortuary and use the mirror on the Bunsen burner to heat it up (so your breath will not mist it). Lie down on the slab. Staying on the slab, use the arm and then the ice on Rincewind. Now talk to the mortician. He will give you a death certificate. Leave and use the certificate on the dead collector.



To gain 4ccs of mouse blood, you'll need to obtain this vampire's false teeth — but getting them can be a real problem. You need a ladder, and a rooster, which you have to catch and then make crow on cue.



Foul Ole Ron's vile smell must be captured and put in a bottle for storage, and you need the imp's metal boots to make it happen. Grab the Duck Man's pot while you're here, too.

#### UP ANCHOR!

Once you have control of the ship, head to Holy Wood. Get the weight. Then take the "10" sticker from the mail box and use it on the weight. Walk past the trainer and the barrier to talk to Dibbler. He will tell you what you need to make a clickie (movie). Go back to the troll and try to go through the door. Talk to the troll about the key and use this on the door when he gives it to you. Go through and talk to the milk-maid. To get her a diamond, you have to travel by ship to Djelibeybi. Once there, go to the rock-seller. Look at the candy-rock and talk to him about it. Go north to the stoning area and take the stake. Now return to Ankh-Morpork. Go to the docks and use the weight on the hook. Now use this to smash a hole in the nearby building and take the gimmick (snow-storm) that falls out. Head to the UU Garden and go to the dove-cote. Use the stake on the compost and then take the suffrajester. Take the croquet hoops as you leave and then return to Djelibeybi.

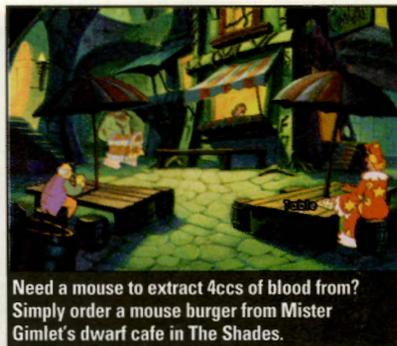
#### ANIMAL MAGIC

Having just set foot back in Djelibeybi, you now need to use the suffrajester on the hole in the stoning ground. Take the candy-rock and the rope. Once you've done this, go back and talk to Uri Djeller about jingles. Give him the hoops to straighten out (to make wire) then enter the Architect's shop and talk to him. Take the poster from his wall and leave. Talk to the camel seller about (guess what?) camels. Now ride to the cartwheel in the desert and talk to S.T. Ungulant. He will give you a jingle in return for the answer to the question "Why?". To do this, you need to repair the machine (Hex) in the UU High Energy facility. Return to Holy Wood and give the candy-rock to the

troll. Use the rope on the troll to get his diamond tooth, and give this to the milk-maid. In return, she will agree to star in your clickie.

#### MYSTIC SKAZZ

Sail to the open sea at the top-left corner of the map. Look at Point-Me-Own-Bone



Need a mouse to extract 4ccs of blood from? Simply order a mouse burger from Mister Gimlet's dwarf cafe in The Shades.

Dibjla's baskets and talk to him. Take the stick (boomerang) and talk to him about baskets, then travel back to the UU dining room and use the basket on the food. Use the hamper on the ant-hill to get the ants. To get them into the machine, you'll need some honey — you can obtain this from the bee-hives in the UU garden. Use the petticoat on Rincewind again, then use the matches on the incense and use them on the hive. Now use the pot on the hive to collect some honey. Enter the High Energy Facility and talk to Skazz. Then talk to him about mystical questions (the cloud option). Use the basket on Hex, then use the honey-pot on the basket. Talk to Skazz again about asking mystical questions. As you need a temporal accelerator to speed up the answer, take the wire and use it on the pyramid plans to make a pyramid. This is now getting pretty obscure. Now use this on Hex and talk to Skazz about mystical questions again.

More on this next month in the final part of this solution to *Discworld II* in June's Strategy Central.



Uri Djeller may seem like more of a faker than a fakir, but he does have mystic powers — you'll need his assistance in bending metal wires into a pyramid shape if you're to speed up HEX's thinking.

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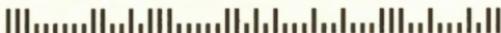
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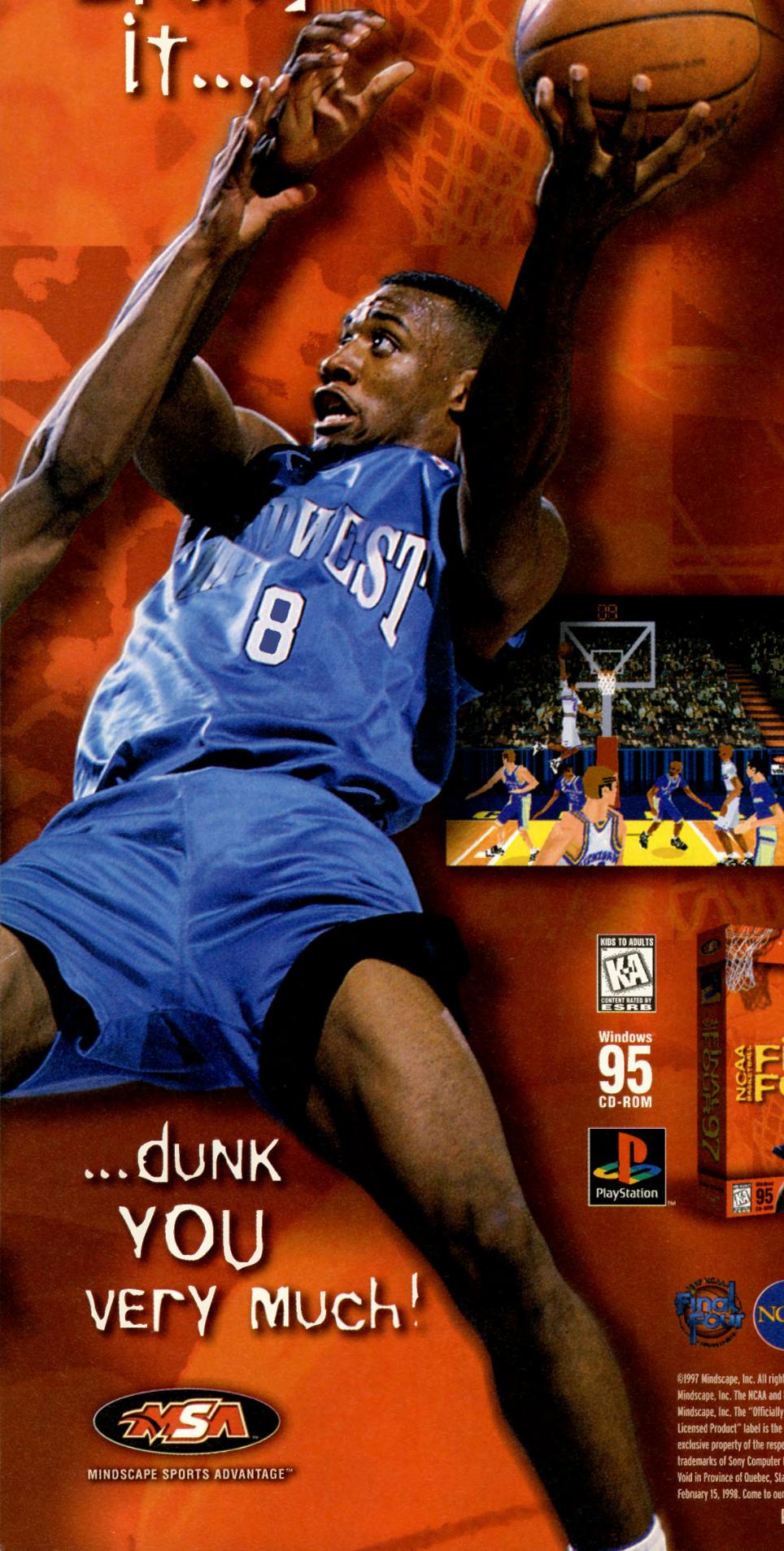
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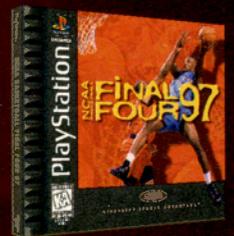
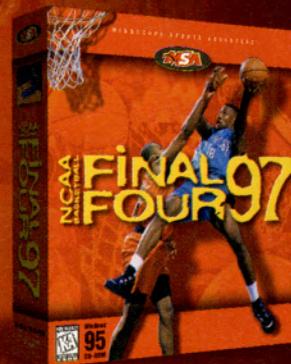
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Product Information Number 233

# Quake: Capture the Flag

We've got what it takes to rack up the kills and nab that flag!

Beginning as a relatively obscure add-on, *Capture the Flag's* popularity has skyrocketed in the world of multi-player *Quake*, and *CTF* now features custom maps, animated flags, and new character skins for better gaming.



On the McKinley Base level, your best bet is to grab the flag, hop on the platform to the left, and dive to safety.

## CTF 101: The Rules

Players are broken up into two teams — red and blue, with one flag each. Your goal is to snatch your opponent's flag and get it back to your base. Stopping a flag-thief is as easy as fragging him and touching the dropped flag, automatically returning it to your side. Scoring requires that your team's flag must be present at your base when you return with your opponent's flag — or you'll be up a creek without a paddle. A successful capture will give you 15 points, and everyone else on your team 10 points. Most games are set to move to another level once someone gains 120 points.

## General Play Tips

- Just like in regular Deathmatch *Quake*, it's beneficial to turn on the "Always Run" option in the options menu.
- Everyone has a grappling hook — and most levels require decent skill with it before you can start scoring. Simply shoot the hook into enemies to hook 'em, then whip out a big weapon and fry 'em.
- Campers are *everywhere*. Anything goes in *Capture the Flag*, from camping to sniping to circling. Playing dirty is legit.
- Don't be concerned about harming team members — friendly fire is nothing to worry about, and you can shoot a rocket into your teammate's face without damage.
- Use the grappling hook to boost your momentum — ready the hook, line yourself up with the wall, and whack the fire key. When the ball of the hook connects to the opposite wall, you'll be flung toward it at warp speed.
- Defense, defense, defense! Just about every *CTF* map has a ton of sniper spots in the flag room, so make sure that somebody is always on guard duty.
- The grappling hook is your key to mobility. Use it to hang from shadowy ceilings and snipe off the competition.
- When you carry the flag, you give off a bright glow, so don't expect to sneak around undetected with a flag.

## McKinley Base

The first map on our agenda contains two main routes that lead to a successful capture. The first straightforward route is through the two long, colored hallways, and up the stairs into the flag room. The second path to the flag is via a long, underwater tunnel accessed by diving off the catwalk into the mid-level pool. The underwater tunnel you have to traverse is a lengthy one, and you may be visiting Davy Jones' locker if you don't use the grappling hook to speed up the swimming process. Once you've emerged at the top of the tunnel, just hop to the left to grab your opponent's flag (and pray that there aren't any campers with their sights on you).

In the middle of the board, there's a floating platform with lightning gun, health and cells, while a nearby ledge provides a standard grenade launcher. In the flag room, a small side door leads down a flight of stairs into a sniper room, with armor and a missile launcher. Also in the flag room, there's a secret door hidden underneath the flag platform, stocked with nails and shells — just shoot it, and it opens. Yet another shootable hidden door awaits you on the left side of the room, hiding an elevator leading to the super nailgun.



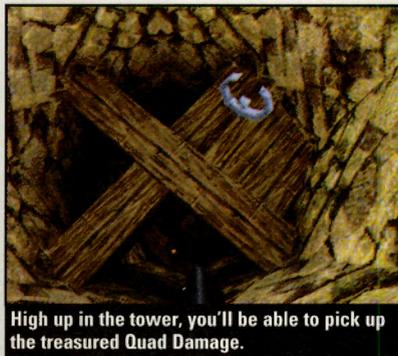
The center room of McKinley Base yields a lightning gun and a grenade launcher.

## The Forgotten Mines

This is one beast of a level. A successful capture requires superhuman reflexes and plenty of luck, since crossing from the red to the blue side will require some aquatic skills in navigating a narrow, half-submerged tunnel. Each flag room entrance contains four ledges for snipers, containing convenient holes for grenade-dropping. Flag protectors should remember that a hole in the ceiling, directly above the flag, may provide a backdoor for intruders.

The middle of this level contains a *lot* of water. Look for a small underwater door with a button next to it — hit the button, hop onto the elevator it lowers, and push the button again. You'll be lifted into an often-ignored side structure that contains a less-than-advantageous sniper spot and

connects to a tall tower with the elusive Quad Damage at its summit. However, this area of the level is infrequently used, and by the time you get back to any *real* action, your Quad power will probably be sapped. In actuality, this spot of the level is quite useful when you have your opponent's flag, and want to prevent your enemies from scoring — just hide up in the rafters in the tower, and it's unlikely they'll be able to find you for a good while.



High up in the tower, you'll be able to pick up the treasured Quad Damage.

## Da Ancient War Grounds

In this map, you'll battle through two full-sized Gothic castles, with a cave network in the center. There are plenty of hidden goodies for medieval madness in this level, starting with a rocket and grenade launcher located on the castle ramparts, and a 100 health kit hiding on top of the castle. Take a dip in the moat, swim to the left of the castle, and you can pick up a lightning gun and some cells.

There are power-ups galore in the central caves. You can obtain a Quad Damage, a missile launcher, and 100 health by carefully and quickly dropping into the middle of the lava pool adjacent to the nailgun, nails, and yellow armor. If you make your way to the upper level of the caves, you'll discover two wind tunnels that will blow you right into the courtyard of the castle of your choice. An even sneakier path into your enemies' castle is through the room above the dual wind tunnels, which contains two teleporters.

## The Strongbox

This level contains a constantly moving platform that travels from one end of the level to the other, plus two extremely convenient wind tunnels that can drop you right into the heat of the action. Each flag room contains a nailgun, double-barrel shotgun, a large cache of nails and shells, and yellow armor. The moving platform is useful — use the grappling hook to attach to its bottom, and snipe away.

Bloody firefights are sure to erupt in the center room, which contains plenty of ammo and power-ups, including the fabled Quad Damage lurking in a dark corner. The center room also contains two wind tunnels that will blow you through a long tunnel into your enemies' flag room. Facing the red side, the left tunnel leads to the blue side, and the right tunnel will take you to the red side. Note that the tunnels are one-way — you can't just zip back the way you came, and you'll need to fend off any defenses that may be waiting for you.

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# M.A.X.

## Prepare for battle with these authoritative tips!

Interplay's *M.A.X.: Mechanized Assault & Exploration* is a fantastic strategy game, but it can be really tough. That's why we went straight to the source for advice on beating those rival clans. The game's head writer, Steve Perrin, compiled these handy tips for winning long-term Custom games — the meat and potatoes of *M.A.X.*

### How It Works

The first thing to keep firmly in mind with *M.A.X.* is that it was purposely designed to emulate a chess game, with a lot more variety in playing pieces. It doesn't look much like a chess game, but certain elements stand out. For instance, attacks and their results are constants. In chess, if a unit moves into a square, the piece already in that square is taken. In *M.A.X.*, if a unit is in range of another unit and shoots at it, the target will be hit. Unlike in chess, the target may not be instantly eliminated, but it will be hit for a fixed amount of damage than remains the same for any given unit — only upgrades can change the damage a unit does. So if you're used to games where a frontal assault by a few units might succeed because there's a chance the opposition will miss or do minimal damage, erase that mindset now.

### The Right Unit for the Job

There's no such thing as the ultimate unit available to a *M.A.X.* Commander. Each unit has its uses and liabilities and can be upgraded far beyond its base levels. Tanks and assault guns, with their ability to fire even at the end of a partial move, are

excellent for open-field battles with lots of movement. On the other hand, put them up against stationary missile launchers that are well supplied and informed, and they'll become so much debris. Likewise, ground attack planes are devastating against undefended ground and sea units, but they drop like flies when anti-air units are present and prepared. Entrenched mobile anti-air units are virtually invincible against a reasonable number of ground



As you begin building your colony, your plan should usually include a light vehicle plant and storage units for resources. Extra constructors can build habitats and eco-spheres, and any free engineers should be put to work building defenses.

attack planes, but they can't fight back if they're caught moving. Some units' weaknesses are obvious; some are not so obvious. Here are some hard-learned lessons we can pass on so you don't have to learn them in the heat of battle:

- Keep mobile radar scanners or scouts with your long-range units, so they can make the best use of their range.
- Protect moving groups against ground attack planes with fighters, not mobile anti-air units.
- Don't put tanks in the first line of a beachhead defense force unless you're interested in providing enemy ships with easy targets. Pull your tanks back and keep them as a reaction force against breakthroughs. If you're defending a small area, don't build tanks; build gun turrets and mobile units that have long-range weapons.
- If you're facing a foe without much of an air force, you can use scouts instead of escorts to provide information for gunboats and missile cruisers.
- Submarines can be devastating to a sea-based power. Corvettes, ground attack planes, and sea mines dedicated to protecting shipyards and docks may seem like a needless expense — until these facilities start blowing up in your backyard.

Land mines are always useful as a protection. Your units are not affected by them, and the only enemy units that can find them are very fragile. The best use of minefields is in front of a position that can be protected by infantry and scouts who can take care of enemy surveyors and mine layers.

Infiltrators are always useful. Even if they just keep an enemy from using an eco-sphere for a few turns, their contribution can make all the difference. Remember that armored personnel carriers are amphibious and virtually invisible in the water. The only real failing of the infiltrators is that their abilities are linked to the game's one and only concession to random chance: there's always the possibility an infiltrator will fail when trying to steal or disable an enemy unit, and there's a chance that failure will bring discovery and disaster.

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### Strategic Upgrading

Choosing the right upgrades for your units can make all the difference in a long-term game — and in some of the tactical scenarios. But what should you be putting research and upgrade time into buying?

Attack adds to the damage done by a combat vehicle's weapon. It can make a definite difference, especially if multiple upgrades are purchased. Enemy units designed to be able to absorb two or more hits suddenly start blowing up early. This can throw the opponent's strategy off — and, of course, it's absolutely necessary if the enemy has invested in armor upgrades.

Range is a costly upgrade, but it's also vital. For tanks, remember to upgrade the scan (also costly) as well as the range; having tanks with a range and scan of 5

High speed scouring vehicle for exploration and spearing enemy units. Can cross water without a bridge, but is faster on land.

Very fast and good scan range, but much weaker than most combat units.

12 Attack  
1 Shots  
3 Range  
10 Ammo  
4 Armor  
16 Hits  
9 Scan  
12 Speed  
9 Cost

Purchased

- Scout 18
- Scout 19
- Scout 20
- Scout 21
- Scout 22

Purchase Menu

Available	Cost
Constructor	24
Engineer	18
Surveyor	9
Scout	9
Scanner	12
Tank	12
Assault Gun	24
Rocket Launcher	24
Missile Crawler	36

Cost Credit Cargo

720

Cancel Buy Bug Unit Upgrades

In purchasing your starting units, you can go with a traditional mix, or bet the farm on an unusual strategy like the Scout Horde.

when everyone else is at 4 can turn the tide of a battle.

- Small increases in Armor and Hit Points are not very significant, but neither is their cost. Go for a second upgrade in these attributes; they can be the difference between being destroyed in two shots or taking two hits and getting back to a repair unit to fight again.

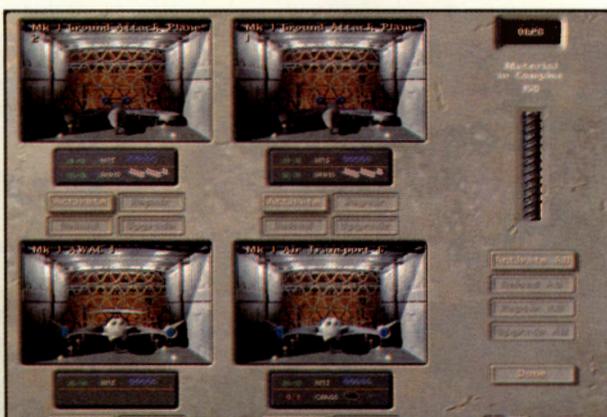
- Shots are the most expensive upgrades for a combat vehicle, but they can make all the difference. A missile crawler with two shots can suddenly both move and fire. Buying an extra shot for a vehicle is always worthwhile, if you can afford it.

### What to Build First?

A M.A.X. Commander who has just landed on a planet has two immediate goals: Build a successful colony and defend the colony. The opposition is likely to find you early, and you have to be ready to defend your colonists — but it's pointless to build up your defenses if you have no colonists to defend. The classic tactic is to put your constructor to work on a Light Vehicle plant while the Engineer works on storage units for the mining station and connectors between the plant and the mine. Extra constructors (which generally don't have supplies at the start of a game) need to be put to work on the habitats and other colonial buildings (eco-spheres, training halls, habitats, and research centers).

Extra engineers can set up some fixed defenses, like anti-air, radar, and missile installations. Early on, you also need a heavy unit plant to build the major fighting vehicles, and an air unit factory. Eventually, you'll want to build depots, hangars, and — where appropriate — shipyards and docks; they're all necessary, except in special circumstances.

Once you have these facilities working, you're left to decide which units to build in them. Early on, scouts are always useful. Extra surveyors can be good if there is a lot of land to check for



Choosing the right upgrades can make all the difference in a close battle. Bring your ground attack planes into the hangar for a range upgrade, and they'll be hell on the enemy's anti-air units.

vital resources. Engineers and supply trucks will always find work, too. If you get into a fight early on, bulldozers should be built as soon as possible to take advantage of the debris; sometimes the debris you salvage can keep a colony alive until the second and third mining stations are up and running.

Which air units to build is always a good question. Air units are fragile; anti-air units are very powerful. Sometimes, the best airborne investments are air transports that can haul your units around the map and drop them in out-of-the-way places for unexpected attacks on the enemy. An AWACS plane is an excellent investment, especially if protected by a flock of fighters. Upgrading the scan of an AWACS might be very important in the later stages of a game; it'll protect it from being brought down by anti-air units with extended range. And ground attack planes can be devastating.

Since airplanes never have to land except to rearm and be repaired, they're best used at the fringes of a conflict, taking out enemy constructors and engineers, moving columns without fighter support, and wayward surveyors and scouts. They don't have a lot of use in straight conflict, unless the enemy has somehow been deprived of anti-air units through an active ground offense or gunboat bombardment. In such cases, they can range throughout the enemy position and destroy his strategic facilities. Ground attack planes with upgraded range are probably the best answer to the anti-air problem. Anti-air is often only as good as its supporting radar; take out enemy radar, and your ground attack planes have a longer lifetime on a battlefield.

### Interesting Initial Deployments

The training scenarios give you a pretty good idea of the standard units you'll want to start with: Constructor,

engineer, a couple of scouts, a surveyor, and perhaps a couple of tanks and an assault gun. It's a balanced group meant to handle threats from similarly balanced groups. But there are a few other possibilities you might want to try.

- The Scout Horde is a deployment that fills up with scouts, perhaps a bit upgraded in Attack and Speed. A new colony group can have as many as eight of these vehicles. If you think you're going to land near an enemy colony, this is an ideal force for swarming his defenses and destroying his mining station, power generator, and construction vehicles before he knows what hit him. You are, however, betting everything on the chance that you'll begin close to the opposition. If he's far enough away to have time to build more scouts and other heavier units, you'll be easily destroyed when you finally make contact.

- The Defender option calls for extra construction vehicles, very few scouts (maybe just one), a scanner, and a couple of missile crawlers and/or rocket launchers. The plan is to sit tight, call very little attention to yourself, and destroy anything that gets close. It'll probably work best on an island off to one side of a planetary map. A player taking the Defender route will probably lose to a Scout Horde, unless he has had time

to build up his forces.

- The Heavy Metal option does away with scouts entirely in order to add another couple of tanks or an assault gun. Use tanks in pairs to do your exploring, and hit anything you find as hard as you can. It's a reconnaissance-in-force tactic, and it's risky, but it might mean destroying an enemy before he can get started. Obviously, this will work best on a world with lots of connected land masses, although it might also work when your landing area is a large island. And, of course, if you build a light vehicle plant early, you'll soon have scouts to explore a wider area once you've secured your immediate surroundings.

### Passive Defenses

In a game with a lot of units running around, it's easy to lose track of the fixed and passive defenses. Stationary artillery, missiles, radar, and anti-air have obvious uses. Other elements, like concrete blocks and mines, can seem like afterthoughts, but they're handy for channeling and delaying the approach of an enemy force.

As the online tips state, it's not necessary to place a mine in every square of the map grid in order to create anxiety in your opponent. If the enemy loses one unit to a mine, the whole area is suspect until it has been swept — a laborious process. Use a few scattered mines to divert attacking forces into an area covered by every defensive weapon you've got.

Concrete blocks are less subtle than mines, but they're harder to eliminate. An enemy trying for a quick knockout can be frustrated by the blocks — particularly if he doesn't have long-range detection gear to spot them until he's begun his attack.



When you're buying your initial units, you may want to stray from the usual setup, going for a Scout Horde or the Defender strategy.

“Can I challenge Arnold Palmer and my buddy in Tibet to a skins game on Maui in heavy fog at 3AM?”

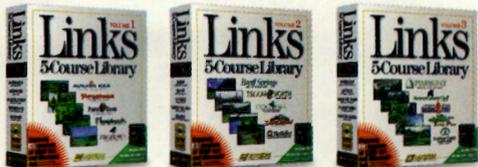


Can I golf in 16.7 million colors? Can I play against Arnold Palmer at Latrobe? Can I play against my friend in Tibet? Can either of them beat me? Can I take a 3-D tour of the Kapalua Plantation Clubhouse? Can I play match play? Best ball? Skins? Can I add in my own sounds? Can I position a camera over the ocean? Can I place a camera right in front of the ball? Won't that break the camera lens? Can I still play all the Links Championship Courses? Can I add fog? Can I play with WIN 95? Can I get 1600X1200 resolution? Can I make a high-arching wedge shot back up on the green? Can I watch Arnie react to a good shot? A bad shot? Can I resize the viewing windows? Can I see the tees break off? Can I choose from different golfers? Both male and female? Can I use the mowing stripes to read the contour of the green? Can I take a Virtual Reality tour of Arnie's workshop? Can I golf in Hawaii, Pennsylvania and Chicago on the same day? Can I get a 3AM tee time? Can I hear the birds and waves in 3-D stereo? Can I hit my ball 1/2 mile out of bounds? Can I play from there? Can I watch aerial fly-bys of every hole? Can I choose from more than 15 add-on courses? Can I watch an instant replay of my swing? Are there multiple camera views? Can I challenge an artificially-intelligent computer opponent? Can I retract the control panel? Can I call toll-free for support? Can I take multimedia tours of Kapalua and Latrobe? Can I save a round in progress, go to dinner, and finish it later? Can I send and receive text messages during a round on the modem? If I lived on the course could I find my house? **Is Links LS the most realistic golf simulation ever?**

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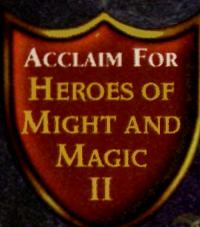
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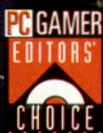
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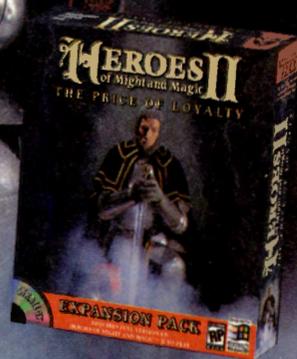
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Product Information Number 251

# Readers' Requests

Those tough games got you down? We can help!

You asked for it, you got it! This month, Readers' Requests is packed with cheats for *Tomb Raider*, reader tips for *Red Alert*, *Lords of the Realm II*, *Duke Nukem 3D*, and more!



**Capitalism** challenges would-be millionaires to increase their holdings. And Ted Turner makes it look so easy!

## Capitalism

In the game *Capitalism*, there's a way you can have a good head start among all other competitors. This is how I do it. Start a new game where you only own 2.5 percent of the company's stock, and the company starts with about \$200 million. First, pause the game. Then start issuing stocks at \$0 and 100,000 shares at a time. Repeat that step until the company's stocks plummet to about \$1 or less per share and when it finally decides that you can no longer issue any more stock at the time. Then, using the company's money, go into the stock menu and start buying up all of the stock that the general public owns. If done correctly, you will end up with 100% ownership of the company and also about over \$175 million in the company's bank account left to spend. This will give you an advantage in the long run in terms of paying dividends and profit sharing. All the profits of the company and dividends from the company will go directly to you.

— Rick Lam, via Internet

That's a good tip, Rick, though Interactive Magic assures us that such financial shenanigans won't work in *Capitalism Plus* or the upcoming sequel.

Too bad it isn't that easy to make money in the real world! Of course, maybe it would be if we all started with \$200,000,000....

## Lords of the Realm II

If you ever bite off more than you can chew and become enemies with someone more powerful than you, you'd think that you are in a jam. Well here's a handy way to defeat armies that are superior to your own while only losing 10 to 50 of your men. Remember to use the environment to your advantage. Archers and crossbow men can't shoot arrows through trees all that well so hide behind them until you have your forces arranged. If there are bridges or small paths through the trees, use them. Two men can stand abreast on a bridge, yet four can stand just outside. You will have four men fighting two of theirs this way. Also, remember to keep your archers and crossbow men in the rear because when they are attacked, they stop shooting arrows. My favorite tactic is to put your army in the small paths through the trees. If you have many archers or crossbow men, they can attack and usually kill the enemy before they even reach you. My record for using this technique is quite impressive. I have used this tactic many times, and I

## Cheater's Corner

### TOMB RAIDER

The adventures of Lara Croft are fraught with danger, and not for the meek. Use these cheats when you get into a jam.

#### ALL WEAPONS AND AMMO:

Walk one step forward  
Walk one step back  
Turn around in any direction three times  
Jump backward

#### SKIP TO THE NEXT LEVEL:

Walk one step forward  
Walk one step back  
Turn around in any direction three times  
Jump forward

In both cases, "walk" means hold down the walk key — if you don't, the cheats won't work.

have yet to lose a battle. One memorable time was when my force of only 124 archers defeated an army of 154 peasants, ten pike men, 100 archers, and ten knights for a total of 274 men. I killed all 274 of them and lost only 10 archers! That is a 1:27 death ratio!

— Jon Thorp, via Internet

Well done, Jon! Those handy archers wreak havoc against the oncoming enemy with a setup like that. It must hurt to feel like a pincushion!

## Duke Nukem 3D

I have a cool trick for the amazing game *Duke Nukem 3D*. First shrink a random enemy, then follow it around (don't step on it!). After a while, when it starts to grow, hit it with the freeze gun. He will be frozen in the size he was when growing (somewhere between totally shrunk and normal size), and when he thaws, he will stay that size for ever, wandering around and blasting unwary gamers. I don't know if this works on other players while playing in a DukeMatch, but could well be the ultimate advantage, because you'd be too small to notice but still pack the same deadly punch.

— Sean Stobo, Ontario, Canada

Way to go, Sean. We tried this trick in a multi-player session, but it didn't work on other Dukes. But those Assault Troopers sure are funny when they're tiny!



Freeze an enemy just as it's growing from the shrink-ray, and you'll have a mini-monster on your hands!

YOU GO GRRRL!



1 Chronosphere an MCV into his base...



2 ...Slap down the almost-done barracks and finish up the on-hold Tanya...



3 ...Right in his base! Ouch! that's gotta hurt!

Command & Conquer: Red Alert

Have you ever wondered how to get Tanya into the enemy base? Well do I have a tip for you. In a multi-player game be the Allies. First you need a construction yard, barracks, war factory, service depot, tech center, lots of power plants, and a chronosphere. Build a MCV, and an extra advanced power plant. Now train Tanya till when she's about one second to being finished. When that's done build a barracks but don't deploy it just yet. When the chronoshift is ready send a decoy of about 15 tanks up to the enemy base. Now is the fun part; chronoshift



the MCV to an unprotected part of the enemy base and deploy it right away. Deploy the barracks right beside it and select it as the primary. Now just click on Tanya and you have her right in the enemy base. It worked great on many, many unsuspecting Internet victims, hope it works for you too.

—Cory Fletcher, via Internet

*Excellent tip, Cory! That particular little trick has taken quite a few of the PC Gamer team members off guard. There's nothing nastier than discovering a Tanya lurking around your encampment, especially when she comes from a newly-built barracks right next to your construction yard! And congratulations — you've won the PC Gamer Tip of the Month this time around. Expect a box full of Coconut Monkey hand-picked Gaming Goodness to chronoshift its way to you soon!*

SkyNET

So you read our in-depth strategy on *Terminator: SkyNET* in the February 1997 issue of *PC Gamer*, and you still can't make it past those annoying mechanized servants of SkyNET? Use these cheats to destroy the computerized evil forever!

- GARBLE** — Toggle cheat codes on/off
- WILLNOTSTOP** — Invincibility
- ARNOLD** — All weapons
- SLUGS** — Full ammo
- SURGERY** — Full health
- SUPERUZI** — Get the super uzi
- ILLBEBACK** — Skips to the next scene
- NITROUS** — Speeds up the game
- ICANTSEE** — Shows viewscreen
- WHOAMI** — Shows your name
- COUNTERS** — Shows your current coordinates
- VERSION** — Shows version
- HELLO** — Shows message: Hello?

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Keep in mind, we've seen plenty of cheat codes and old tricks (anything related to *WarCraft II*, for example), so keep your ideas novel and fresh.



Need a little help to blow away the baddies in *Terminator: SkyNET*? Just use the cheats listed above to get all weapons, full ammo, full health, and more!

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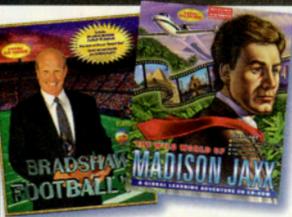


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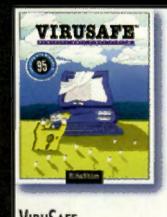
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CODE P05

**Y**ou hate us, you love us, you hate us, you love us.... This relationship is driving us crazy! Gamers are the most opinionated people in the world, and we love it when you sound off.

This month, you've got opinions on everything from politics to our columnists to the Third Annual PC Gamer Awards announced in our March issue. Whatever the subject, we read *all* your letters, so keep 'em comin'!

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## Joe vs. The First Amendment



Could violence in games turn our children into slaving, homicidal mutants? Senator Joseph Lieberman thinks so. Better lock up that copy of *MechWarrior 2*, or little Junior may go on a bloody rampage in the family's giant robot.

There's nothing like a little wrongheaded political rhetoric to stir up the PC gaming community. After we published a story about a news conference held by Connecticut Senator Joseph Lieberman, in which he attacked violence and sexual content in games like *Daggerfall* and *MechWarrior 2*, the response from readers came fast and furious. Some comments:

What a joke! I doubt that Sen. Lieberman has even played a PC game in all his life. If he did, he would know that these games are used as an escape; that they are imaginary places with imaginary situations. Hey, Senator, they're just games! They're not real!

— Karen Gazek, *El Paso, TX*

I think it's time for us in the computer gaming community to stand up to these attacks. It would be different if Bethesda Softworks hadn't put a rating on the *Daggerfall* box, but it did. Also, Bethesda went the extra mile to put in a child guard feature. What else does this joker want?

— Joel McCoy, *via the Internet*

What in the world is Sen. Lieberman talking about? And why did he bring up *MechWarrior*

*2* when he was mentioning violent games? Does it have blood? No. Does it have nudity? No. It has robots blowing each other up. "Star Wars" has more violence than that. Now, what's with that? It's okay for movies to have mild violence, but when it comes to games, they should only be "Barney and Friends"? I'd like to see Sen. Lieberman stomach ten minutes of that kind of game!

— Chris Walker, *via the Internet*

I agree with Sen. Lieberman that some games are violent and/or contain sexual content. But, as a parent, it's *my* job to stay informed about such things and regulate what my children have access to. I don't need him telling me how to run my family.

— Terry Campbell, *Denver, CO*

## Columnists Under Fire

I just need to comment on Jason Bates' silly statements about the 'net Computer in his Multi-Play column (March 1997). He refers to it as "this thing" in the same manner that the ignorant refer to some new technology they don't understand.

As a system administrator and programmer for a large multi-state network of PCs running Windows NT, UNIX, Windows 95, OS/2, and DOS, I am very familiar with the network computer and its advantages and disadvantages. I have read most of the industry articles and trade rags' reviews of the 'net computer, and I must say that Bates' column is the very first where I've read of it being mass marketed to gamers.

As I sit and watch people use \$3,000 machines to keep a list of things to do and crunch a few simple calculations on their spreadsheets, I cannot help but wonder why people like Bates offer so much resistance. Don't worry, Jason; no one is going to come take away your toy. But to system administrators worldwide, the 'net computer has the potential to save hundreds of hours of headache, and hundreds of thousands of dollars. The network PC can easily coexist with the PC. Lets not keep fueling these religious "your machine is stupid" fires.

— Jerry Foster, *via the Internet*

Jason Bates replies: *The points you make about the 'net computer are fair, and I don't doubt its utility as a cost-effective tool in business or education (even Microsoft plans its own version of the 'net computer for those markets).*

*But Oracle seems to think there's a big home market for such a device, and that's what I take issue with. Their home page for the 'net computer (www.nc.com) says that the NC is an "ideal device for corporations, homes and schools, and governments," and that it will "change the way we communicate from home."*

*But if every time I wanted to use my word processor I had to dial into a network and wait for my word processing program to download via modem, I think I'd go back to an electronic*

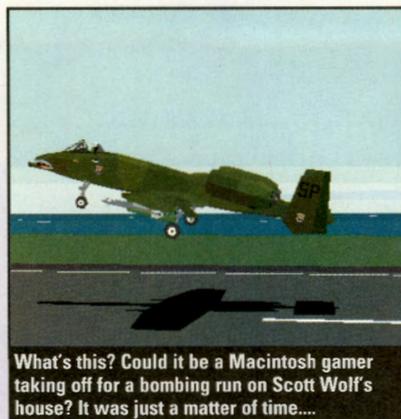
typewriter. And the idea of storing personal data like tax records and correspondence on a remote computer raises questions of security and privacy. Current and foreseeable bandwidth limitations make the "fat client" model far more attractive for home computing, and with the convergence of computer and TV/VCR technology, you'll want mass local storage, quality video hardware, and a powerful CPU in your living room. Granted, that's not for everyone, and being a home computing enthusiast can be expensive, but most of us aren't going to be satisfied with just a dumb terminal. The NC may find a place in homes that want a cheap machine just for E-mail and some web browsing, but you can buy used 386s and 486s that do the same thing for less cash. The consumer-hobbyist market is just not the same as the business market; it's very much driven by entertainment, and I don't think we'll be seeing an "NC Gamer" anytime soon.

PC Gamer is the finest PC games magazine there is. But I have to disagree with Scott Wolf's review of *A-10 Cuba!* I've never seen such an arrogant display of lies in my life! "The whining of deluded Mac enthusiasts.... A 'meager legacy of titles...'"

Might I remind Mr. Wolf that without Macintosh, there would be no *Myst*? Or Bungie's upcoming *Myth*, or *Close Combat* (which was developed on Power Macintosh), or *Dust* or *Titanic* (DreamFactory was developed on Macintosh). While I'm glad that *A-10 Cuba!* earned an acceptable place in the PC market, I'm appalled at how Mr. Wolf makes Mac gamers out to be whining, deluded people with no taste. Mac gamers are every bit as aggressive and involved in games as PC users.

— Aaron Saunders, via the Internet

This seems as good a place as any to let go with a time-honored disclaimer: The opinions of our columnists are not necessarily those of PC Gamer. Besides, Scotty's always like that — he's getting on in years, you know, so he's earned the right to be a curmudgeon. Having said that, we have to point out that we



What's this? Could it be a Macintosh gamer taking off for a bombing run on Scott Wolf's house? It was just a matter of time....

weren't terribly impressed with *Myst* or *Dust* — the jury's still out on *Titanic*. And it seems unlikely that *Close Combat* wouldn't have existed without the Power Mac — if that platform had not been around, the guys at Atomic certainly would've used another to develop their excellent PC wargames.

## A Friend in Need

I got *Normality* for my 11-year-old nephew, who had played it for maybe ten hours and could not get past the mattress factory. I looked through my copies of *PC Gamer* and found a hint that was exactly what he needed to get past that spot.

My point is that most of the hints and tips you publish in *PC Gamer* are exactly for those places in games where typical gamers might get stuck. It's obvious you guys play and enjoy the games you write about, and understand the mind of the typical gamer that your advice is usually very insightful. Keep up the good work!

— Steve Ahola, via the Internet

Thanks, Steve. Letters like yours make all our late-night hint-hunts worthwhile.

PCG



Did a well-timed *Normality* hint save a reader's 11-year-old nephew from a life of crime? Well, probably not, but it helped him finish the game, didn't it?

## READERS RESPOND

### "DID YOU AGREE WITH THIS YEAR'S PC GAMER AWARDS?"

"I agree with most of your picks — especially *Civilization II* for Game of the Year — but I just can't agree with *Daggerfall* as Best Role-playing Game. Sure, it was huge and very ambitious, but I found it nearly unplayable. *Diablo*, on the other hand, is nearly bug free, is very easy to control, and has those beautiful 3D-modeled graphics. True, it is a bit simple, but the large variety of magical items and spells can make it interesting for even the most hard-core roleplayer, especially when you join with people of other classes. And with battle.net for free...well, you can't go wrong."

— Julian Brooke, via the Internet

"I would like to know what all the fuss over *Tomb Raider*, *Civilization II*, and *Quake* is about. I've played all of them, and I think they all suck. Although *Tomb Raider* is a good concept, I thought all the moving camera angles were way too confusing. With regard to *Civilization II*, as addicting as it may be, nothing can be better than a good real-time strategy game like *Red Alert*. And finally, would you guys please stop kissing id's ass? *Quake* is one of the worst games I've ever played. *Duke Nukem* is ten times the fun than *Quake*."

— Chris Curly, via the Internet

"*Diablo* is by far the greatest game of the year (it's the greatest game of the decade, if you ask me!). It includes multi-player, real-time action, randomly generated levels, battle.net, tons of monsters, and no bugs!"

— Shahn Hogan, via the Internet

"Oh boy, did you guys blow it with picking *NHL 97* as the best sports game of 1996! If anything, this game should've been considered under the Best Arcade category. I'm one of those 'zealots' who think a sports game should try to incorporate some of the actual sport into the gameplay. The only thing *NHL 97* has over the competition is — admittedly — beautifully rendered players with fluid animation that accurately depicts how a player moves. Aside from that, this game is a flop. The AI is still horrible, and the gameplay is simply not hockey. *Links LS* should've won hands-down."

— Rick Perry, via AOL

"You guys are wimps! That's the only possible explanation for giving the Best Action Game award to *Tomb Raider*. Just admit it — you didn't want to chose between *Duke Nukem 3D* and *Quake*. 'Lush graphics'? Come on! 'Addictive gameplay'? You guys sure must be bored."

— Andrew Cyr, via the Internet

[Editor's note: Actually, we chose between *Duke Nukem 3D* and *Quake* way back in the October 1996 issue.]

"*Duke Nukem 3D* gets a Special Achievement award for trash talk? Damn, you're good!"

— Steph McArthur, Pensacola, FL

"Thanks for giving *Civilization II* the Game of the Year award. Finally, credit is given where credit is due."

— Jason Feber, Warrensburg, MO

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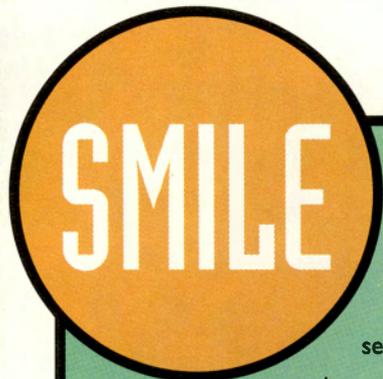
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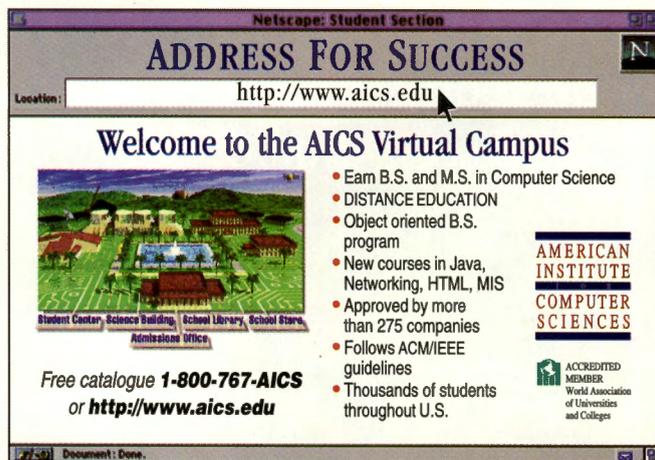
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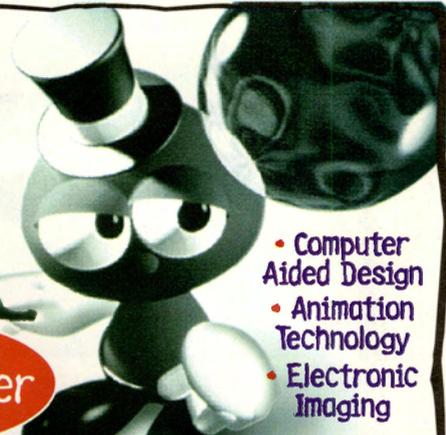
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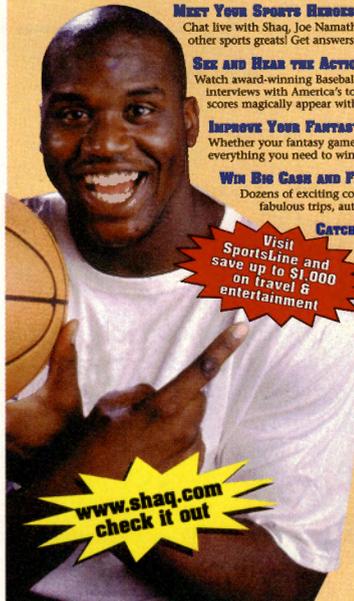
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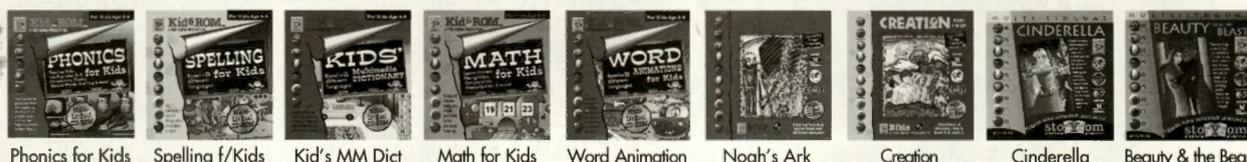
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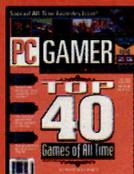
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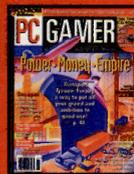
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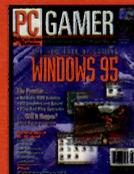
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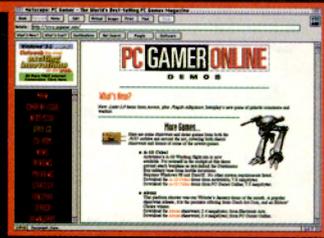
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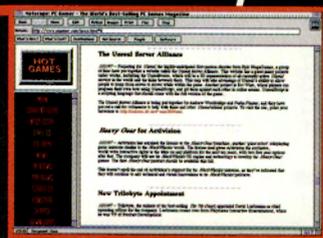
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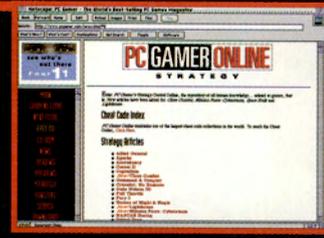
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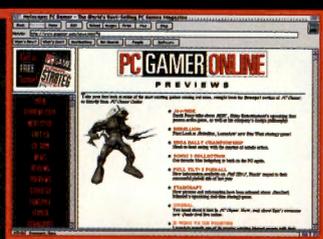
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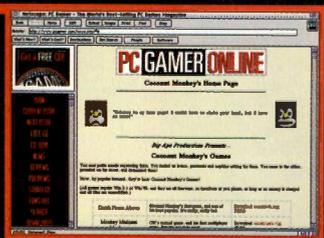
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## The New WarCraft Game!

No, we're not kidding. Blizzard Entertainment, makers of the *WarCraft* games and *Diablo*, is releasing an ALL-NEW *WarCraft* game this holiday season — and we've got the full, exclusive story and pictures in the June issue of *PC Gamer*!

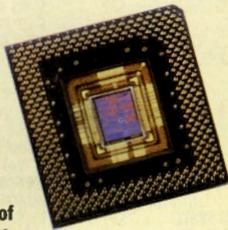
In fact, when we looked inside the official *PCG* crystal ball, what should appear but the first ever published picture from the new game! That's all we can show you for now, but just wait until you see what we have next month.

In the meantime, we can tell you that it's *not* a real-time strategy game but a whole new genre for Blizzard — and it's going to blow your socks off. Next month, *PC Gamer* is the **ONLY** place in the world where you'll be able to read about the new *WarCraft* game, so be sure not to miss it!



## PLUS ...

Liked your new-look hardware coverage this month? Wait until you check out June, when we'll have a great batch of system reviews and a look at the hottest new 3D accelerator and sound cards. Our all-new systems section is only going to get bigger and better, so keep your eyes peeled!



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It was a cold, rainy night. Jake sat sheltered inside The Brazilian Monkey and thanked whatever god watched over him that he didn't have to be out there. Tonight he just had to sit and wait.

And watch. Tonight he would finally see this woman Marcus nicknamed The Ice Princess. At 7:15 — right on schedule — Susan came running around a corner and into The Monkey. Susan swept the rain off her raincoat and threw back the hood to reveal perfectly styled brunette hair that looked golden in The Monkey's light. Even with all his years of detective experience, Jake found it hard not to stare. She was beautiful! Susan quickly moved around the hostess station to sit at the table with Marcus. And she gave him the most gorgeous smile Jake had ever seen.

Jake finally turned away. He gulped the last of his malt liquor and turned around for one more look. She certainly is beautiful, he thought. This job wasn't going to be easy money.

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*"...gives Links LS a run for its money."*

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*"A truly revolutionary product. Links finally has some stiff competition. A Course Designer so easy to use, that you'll quickly find yourself addicted. 16.7 million colors with one major improvement: virtually no redraw wait!"*

*Computer and Net Player*

*"...promises to be among the greatest achievements yet on the electronic links."*

*PC Games*

*"...impressive..."*

*GOLF WEEK*



## The Course Designer

## From Tee to Green



This is the Course Designer that created all 5 Nicklaus-designed courses in the game!

Use the Designer to re-create your favorite course! Import, modify, and play courses from previous Nicklaus games!



Challenge golfing legend Jack Nicklaus – The Golfer of the Century – on one of his own signature courses!

Play with friends across the room or around the world via serial, modem, LAN, and the Internet!

# From Tee to Green

## The Tee Shot



Pop-up displays are optional—leave them off for the purest golfing experience.



New "Intensity Control™" reproduces the dynamics that shape the shot. "Club up and swing easy" for control or a low trajectory; "swing hard" when you want spin and distance.



The fastest screen redraw times on the PC allow the camera to automatically switch to the landing in full-screen, from varying viewpoints!

Every shot flies, bounces, and rolls true to the game, with the best ball physics model in existence. Courses are accurate to within 6 inches!

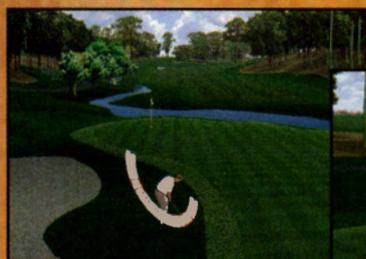


Multiplayer play is fully supported, including recorded rounds, shared keyboard, serial, modem, LAN and Internet play.



Weather can change in the middle of the round, and natural wind variations and every possible turf condition add to the challenge!

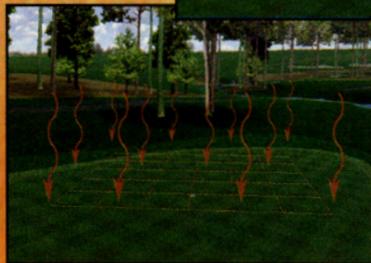
## Around The Green



Separate chipping and putting meters maximize control around the green.



Our new approach makes putting more realistic. Mow lines on the green help you read the contour.

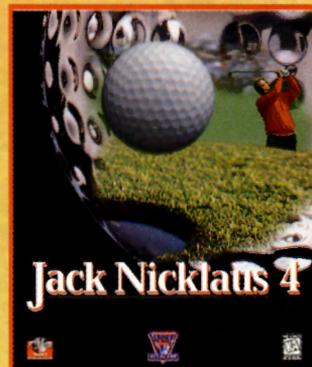


For enhanced gameplay, this optional grid floats down and drapes itself over the green, clearly showing all high and low spots.

Look for the Jack Nicklaus 4 playable demos in select magazines, online at <http://www.accolade.com> or at your local retailer.

For hints and tips on Accolade products, call Accolade Direct 1-900-454-HINT. \$0.99/minute. If you are under 18, please get your parents' permission before making this call.

Call 1-800-245-7744 to order direct



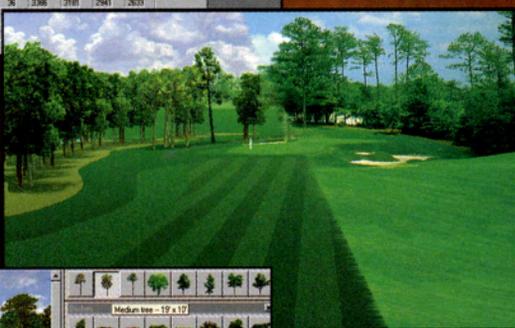
ACCOLADE

Featuring Colleton River Plantation,  
Country Club of the South, Muirfield Village,  
Cabo del Sol, and Winding Springs.

## The Course Designer



Input the basic details of a course from a real scorecard—the “Wizard” automatically routes each hole.

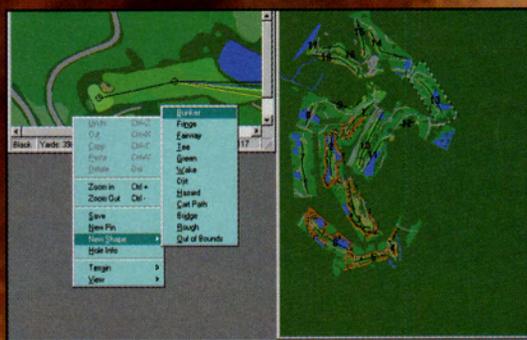


“Is it live or is it...?” Our Course Designer is so true-to-life, it’s hard to tell the difference!

This image is of the 3rd Green at Country Club of the South. The left half of the image is from the Course Designer; the right half is an actual photo.



Choose from over 100 different types of trees, bushes, rocks, and other objects!



Click and drag on its shape

Choose from a variety of templates, or create your own shapes. Changing terrain is as easy as click-and-drag.

The result: a new bunker



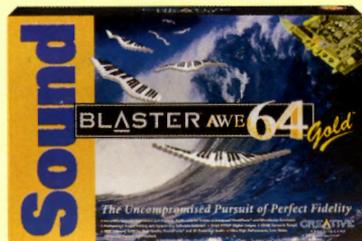
The Hole View of the new bunker.

# AWE 64

## SOUNDS OF

# WAR

1. Kaboom!
2. Grenades.
3. Deafening Silence.
4. 64mm Shells.
5. The Crackle Of Uzi Fire
6. "Incoming!"
7. "That Was A Close One."
8. Random Gunfire.
9. "Private Curtis Jones, 51st Airborne"
10. Anti-Tank Guns.
11. The Clink Of An Aluminum Mess Kit.
12. Dangling Dog Tags.
13. Ricocheting Bullets.
14. Sigh Of Relief.
15. A Harmonica Playing Yankee Doodle.
16. Give peace a chance.
17. Flight of the Valkyrie.
18. Shovels Diggin Trenches.
19. Prayer.
20. Dirty Jokes.
21. "Sniffle."
22. Nervous Laughter.
23. Letters From Children.
24. Bombs bursting in air.
25. Battle Plans.
26. "Over The Top, Boys!"
27. The Battle Hymn Of The Republic.
28. Bullets Whizzing Past Your Helmet.
29. Random Snipers.
30. Surface To Air Missiles.
31. Anti-Aircraft Fire.
32. The Doors Playing "The End."
33. The Whistle Of Tracers
34. "Medic! Medic!"
35. The Star Spangled Banner.
36. The Thunder Of An Air Strike.
37. "Hit The Dirt."
38. A Rain Of Debris Landing All Around You.
39. Taps.
40. "Uurrrrrpp!"
41. Low Flying Sidewinders.
42. Strafing From The Air.
43. Ak-47 Assault Rifles.
44. Standard Issue M-16's.
45. The Sharpening Of Bayonets.
46. The Hiss Of Mustard Gas.
47. A Declaration Of Peace.
48. Rain.
49. Howitzers.
50. The Cheer Of Victory.
51. Quiet.
52. The Low Rumble Of Bombs In The Distance.
53. The Squawk Of A Radio Call For Help.
54. Com chatter.
55. "Surrender Now!"
56. Troops Marching.
57. Jungle Animals.
58. "The Biscuits In The Army, They Say Are Mighty Fine."
59. The Angry Croak Of Your Commander.
60. A Tropical Storm.
61. A Blazing Oil Well Fire.
62. Unrolling Adhesive Bandages.
63. "Ugh!"
64. "I Wanna Go Home."



At war with your PC? Take command, with the new Sound Blaster® AWE64 Gold™, the only advanced audio card designed to upgrade your Pentium PC. Awesome audio—with up to 64 unique sounds all playing simultaneously. It's the best sounding Sound Blaster ever, thanks to our unique WaveGuide and WaveSynth™ technology. It also offers full duplex support and

CD quality recording and playback, an explosive 4MB of memory for SoundFonts, true 3D Positional Audio™ and even a selection of the hottest Internet software. To learn more about the Sound Blaster AWE64 Gold contact us at: [www.SoundBlaster.com/sound/AWE64Gold](http://www.SoundBlaster.com/sound/AWE64Gold).

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