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Planetary Warfare Strikes
The Net In DEADLOCK

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Ruthless Strategies For:
Wing Commander IV
Chronomaster
MW2: Ghost Bear's Legacy

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“It’s the ultimate game for unleashing all your pent-up aggression.”
— PC Power

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— Strategy Plus

“It makes pretty much every PC game we’ve ever seen - Doom included - look slightly dull. Honestly!”
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“The Build engine’s flexibility means that pretty much anything goes in Duke Nukem 3D.”
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Circle Reader Service #113
58 Cover Story: Accolade's Deadlock

DEADLOCK puts the future of an entire alien race on the player’s shoulders in a high stakes, winner-take-all race for planetary control. Denny Atkin discovers that the new multi-player build, research and conquer game is a combination of M.U.L.E., SimCity, and Civilization.

63 Starcheet Academy

It's open enrollment time for Computer Gaming World's Space Academy, the ideal place to improve your survival skills in the latest science fiction combat arenas and adventures. This year's recruits will be offered seminars and laboratory sessions on the following games:

64 Wing Commander IV: The Price Of Freedom
74 MechWarrior 2: Ghost Bear's Legacy
80 Chronomaster
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You play games like a natural born gamer. Enveloped in digital optical technology, you fire with the accuracy of an eagle packing high powered binoculars. Every minuscule move you make is transmitted quickly down the line of fire. Every handle rotation, a new twisted Sidewinder™ 3D Pro gamer viewpoint. You and the joystick are one. And this is one joystick that never begs for mercy, as its optical tracking system has no moving parts to grind or molest.

Bullets curse when they miss, listen. It's a phenomenon known only by those who choose a joystick that needs no re-calibration and tracks you at the speed of light. This is the jet black void of the gaming experience. This is the Sidewinder 3D Pro joystick, compatible with all MS-DOS®-based and Windows® 95-based games, the elder of the Sidewinder joystick family. All the dexterity of a gaming demigod is yours to call upon, and with one finger you vent retribution on every shiny dark destructive heart.
At the ripe old age of 23, Elliott Chin is the junior member of the CGW staff—but we like it that way. With an abundance of energy and almost unerring gaming instinct, he assists the CGW greybeards by doing what they can't, like playing fighting games and opening door-proof containers. Elliott never thought that the countless hours he spent playing C64 and EMPIRE would have paid off, but now he is CGW's Strategy Wargames Editor and PlayStation specialist. A "gamer-of-all-trades," Elliott relaxes by badgering troops in strategy games, pulverizing enemies in space combat sims, or beating up the reflex-challenged in his favorite fighting games. Of course, all play and no work would make Elliott an extremely happy person, so the senior editorial staff pays close attention to his workload, and then triplets it. His non gaming hobbies include building an impressive Lego armada that will one day rule the New World.

Peter Olafson is a veteran gamer and long-time contribu-tor to CGW. The former games editor of the late Amiga World, Peter secretly harbors five Amigos in hollowed shrines throughout his home. Married to New York Times columnist Evelyn Nieves, he is currently working on two teleplays and is the author of FINAL FANTASY III and THUNDERSCAPE strategy guides. Beginning this month, he takes over as the new action-games columnist, donning the crimson robe of the High Priest of Action. In addition, Peter researched and wrote most of the material for this month's Sony PlayStation supplement.

Gordon Goble, a confessed sports junkie, is also an aficionado of reflex-testing simulations of all kinds. While he's not cruisin' the Net to get scoring updates for his hockey pool, Gordon is busy hot-wiring his Pentium to run the latest racing simulators and sports games. Formerly an agent for a professional auto racing team, he now runs his own one man desktop publishing business in Vancouver, B.C. First turned on to computer racing with IMPERIAL 500, Gordon continues to seek superstature over style in his pursuit of the ultimate digital sports experience. If it weren't for Papyrus, Electronic Arts and MicroProse, he would probably be spending all of his free time at the tennis courts or gym.

Scott A. May has surfed the electronic gaming wave since the early '80s, playing on such diverse platforms as the Intel/Win, Commodore 64, Amiga, Genesis, Nuendo and IBM compatibles. To support his electronic-gaming addiction, Scott resorted to lengthy writing sentences at Commodore, Compute, VideoGames and SMART magazines, and has penned two weekly newspaper columns for nearly 10 years. But despite his efforts in the 12-step rehabilitation program, Scott has been unscathed in breaking his computer habit. Now, determined to help others, Scott works as a computer consultant and a business software instructor. When not working or foraging for tubers, legumes and tolu, Scott enjoys painting, music and serial monogamy.

Petra Schlunk avoided her graduate studies by playing computer games; primarily, role-playing games where she slipped into an alter ego, then blamed that same ego for eating her homework. Petra also enjoys strategy games; which may explain why she attends board, card- and computer game conventions in L.A. She considers herself a hobby author, having written several articles for CGW and The Electronic Roadhouse, as well as authoring strategy guides for KING'S QUEST VII AND MASTER OF MAGIC. Along with her husband, former CGW Wargames Contributing Editor Alan Enrich, Petra is busy raising their daughter, Avalon. But she still seeks that all-immersive magical interlude of a small, intricate game world where she can escape for a time. In other words, the girl just wants to have fun.
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These are answers to questions we frequently hear from our readers. Unfortunately, we are not able to answer the question, "Why doesn't the $#&*!! CD-ROM work on my computer?" because we don't approve of language like $#&*!!"

What's On The CD?
Exclusives, exclusives, exclusives. This month we have three of them, plus the Su-27 mission missing from our March CD. First up, this month's CG-ROM theme is Film Noir. Today, game designers have expanded their gaming venues back to the age of grainy, black-and-white films, which depicted a dark and gritty world, populated with cold truths, hard facts and vile gangsters. Cyberdreams pulled all the stops to give us an early exclusive demo of its game, Noir. The complete, fully-interactive game, filmed at various locations with live actors, is expected to be released by fall. Next, the Not-Ready-For-Multimedia Players (read: CGW staff) bring you our lighthearted parody of the genre in: Primary Blunders.

In addition to our Duke Nukem demo, you'll also find two more Editors' Hot Picks: Sierra's Space Bucks and I-Motion's Virtual Chess. Other demos this month include Allied General, Earthworm Jim, Conquest of the New World, Descent II, Renegade Return and Fantasy General—a CGW nominee for best Strategy Game of the Year.

How Do I Use It?
Our CD is a Windows program. If you have Windows 95, installation is simple—the CD is Autoplay enabled. Just "Lock 'n' load." Otherwise, from Windows 3.x, pop the CD into your drive, select RUN from the Program Manager's menu and type D:RUN-ME (where D is the letter of your CD-ROM drive) to run it straight from the CD, just type D:INSTALL to create a CGW program group on your Windows desktop. If you have installed previous versions of the CG-ROM, this disk will use the program group already on your desktop. You navigate by pointing and clicking just as you would in any other Windows program. You can access any of the "Main Attraction" items (such as Product Demos or Patches) from within the Primary Blunders "Surprise Attraction." And you may exit the "Surprise Attraction" at any time by first clicking on the "Back" button, then clicking on the "Home" button.

How Do I Access The Demos?
To view the demos, click on EDITORS' HOT PICKS or PRODUCT DEMOS to view the selection. Next, click on your favorite genre: Action, Adventure/RPG or Strategy/Wargames, then click on the title of your interest. Each demo has instructions for its installation.

How Do I Get The Patch Files?
Click on PATCHES under the CGW FEATURES, then read the text window with instructions on copying the files to your hard drive. You can also access the patches from your DOS prompt by typing D:PATCHES (where D: is the letter of your CD-ROM drive) and copy them directly from there to your hard drive.

How Do I Get The CG-ROM?
Newsstand issues come in two varieties: some with and some without the CD. Each type is clearly marked if you can't find the version.
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How Do We Classify Games?

**Action/Arcade (AC):** The emphasis is on hand-eye coordination and reflexes, usually emphasizing fast play over story or strategy.

**Adventure (AD):** Games wherein you control an alien or human and move through a storyline or sequence of events, where puzzle solving takes precedence over conversation and combat.

**Classics/Puzzles (CP):** Classics are old standbys and parlor games that appeal to many different types of players. Examples include: backgammon, chess, Monopoly, pachinko, Risk, and Solitaire. Puzzle games are computer games which emphasize spatial relationships, word games and/or problem-solving without requiring players to follow a storyline. Examples include: Shakespeare, Terra and Zie-Zag.

**Role-Playing (RP):** RPGs are a subset of adventure games, but stress character development, often through improving stats or other attributes. Conversations with non-player characters (NPCs) and tactical combat are generally more important than in Adventure games. Finally, the game world tends to be large, and the plot less linear, often with some quests/treasures outside the main storyline.

**Simulations (SI):** Highly realistic games from a first-person perspective: you may drive a realistically simulated race car, fly a military aircraft with a meticulous physics model, or explore a detailed sci-fi environment. Usually polygon-filled technology is used to build the simulated world on the fly.

**Sports (SP):** The sports game category is a broad genre which includes action (NBA Live) and strategy games (Front Page Sports Football Pro) based on sports.

**Strategy (ST):** Problem solving, short- and long-range planning are the keys here. These games almost always emphasize resource and risk management. This genre includes conflict-based sci-fi and fantasy games (X-COM, OUTPOST, MOO), as well as "pure" strategy games and "software toys" such as SimCity.

**Wargames (WG):** A subset of strategy games, these recreate historical conflicts from a command perspective. They may be tactical, operational, or strategic, and stress anything from logistics and firepower to morale and leadership. They may be simple (Panzer General, Empire II) or incredibly detailed and complex (Pacific War).

---

**HOW DO WE RATE?**

**Outstanding:** The rare game that gets it all right. The graphics, sound, and gameplay come together to form a transcendent gaming experience. Our strongest buying recommendation.

**Very Good:** A high-quality game that succeeds in many areas. Maybe has minor problems, but is still worth your time and money, especially if you're interested in the subject matter or genre.

**Average:** A mixed bag. Can be a game that reaches for the stars, but falls short in significant areas. Can also be a game that does what it does well, but lacks flair or originality.

**Weak:** A game with serious problems. Usually buggy, seriously lacking in play value, or just a poorly-conceived game design—and you will want to think long and hard before buying it.

**Abysmal:** The rare game that gets it all wrong. This is reserved for those products so buggy, incomplete or valueless that you wonder why they were ever released.
And on the 8th day, He split to Maui.
Don't forget to feed the fish.
Welcome to Afterlife. The first world-building simulation that lets you manage two prime planes of “unreal estate”—heaven and hell—simultaneously. Possessed of an unearthly sense of humor, it all begins in a God-knows-where galaxy. There, billions of departed souls hunger for you to give them what they deserve.

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

Keep them happy and you flourish.

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

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

Afterlife: Reach the end or die trying.

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Not Just For Kids
More Ammo For Computer Gamers Dealing With Media Misinformation

There it was in black and white. It was featured front-page, second-section in the San Francisco Chronicle, a metropolitan daily that should have known better. They've been following the technology beat long enough to know the difference between a computer game and a video game. Yet, there was the headline indicating that violence would play a major role in a "computer game" for children. Worse, two paragraphs into the article, the author stated that the game's premise was like most computer game design—impossible to comprehend by anyone over the age of 12. Even worse, if a reader bothered to slog through the entire story, move past the page turn and reach the end, he or she would discover that the article was ignorant with their coverage.

One wouldn't have to do much research to find out that there are plenty of people over the age of 12 who understand computer games, since the average game buyer is 30-31 years old. Not only that, but the average subscriber to Computer Gaming World is 35 years old. I'd hate to think that all of you above the age of 12 don't understand what we're talking about. Indeed, since all of us on the editorial staff are above the age of 12, I'd hate to think that we don't know what we're talking about.

No. I know that the San Francisco Chronicle was very, very wrong. We have ample research to disprove this ignorant assertion. However, the Chron's sloppy "journalism" is such an endemic error of faux sophistication, such a tres chic fallacy, that it's once again time for our semiannual sermon on why it's not only okay for adults to play, but necessary. Those of you who've previously attended these Gamers' Liberation Movement rallies via my editorials can be excused. Of course, we could use a few hundred thousand of you in the choir. Play is not childishness. Play is not foolishness. Play is not necessarily frivolous, though it can be. Indeed, play is not even necessarily dangerous, though it can be. Play is preparation for life. The reason play is often considered childish is because children play. This, however, requires one to commit the common fallacy of hasty generalization. Children play. Games

"Live-action sequences part of computer game designed for children"

 wasn't about a computer game at all. It was about a video game. It's hard to believe editors at the San Francisco Chronicle would be

"It was the making of a computer game called 'Steel Harbinger' which, like most computer games, defies explanation to anyone over the age of 12."

Real Actors Star in Fantasy Cyber-World

Live-action sequences part of computer game designed for children

Play is not childishness. Play is not foolishness. Play is not necessarily frivolous, though it can be. Indeed, play is not even necessarily dangerous, though it can be. Play is preparation for life. The reason play is often considered childish is because children play. This, however, requires one to commit the common fallacy of hasty generalization. Children play. Games
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Step aboard Avalon Hill's new Wooden Ships & Iron Men and take command of the mightiest American, British, French and Spanish warships deployed during the American Revolution and Napoleonic Eras.

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Circle Reader Service #167
are play. Therefore, games are for children. That's the equivalent of saying that all Germans are Nazis, all Irishmen are terrorists, and all editors are arrogant.

Children play to try on roles, to imagine possibilities, to experience the exhilaration of competition and its consummate reward of success. The same is true with all of life. Professional writers play with words; professional businessmen play with business plans; professional soldiers play with simulations; and professional artists play with stone, paint, clay and junk. Prior to presidential debates and news conferences, I am told that it is standard procedure to role-play the event. Prior to my one and only network television appearance, I role-played several scenarios with a professional public relations consultant. To repeat—play helps us prepare for life. By playing, all of these professionals prepared better for an upcoming experience.

Of course, someone will suggest that playing DOOM death matches or solving MYST doesn't prepare one for life. This straw someone might even go on to state that the examples above are "reality-based" play and therefore, subject to special case consideration. SimCity is okay by this logic because it reflects real lessons in urban planning, but Accolade's upcoming Deadlock isn't because it reflects a fictitious situation.

Hogwash! Most games require anticipation of obstacles (whether it's Sonic hopping over a monster or Duke Nukem crouching down to peer around a corner), resource management (whether money, armor-piercing shells, or magical spells) and overall strategy (the mental map to get to the goal). In order to be applicable to real-life, the lessons of play must be "interpreted" by the gamer.

Sometimes, this interpretation will be subconscious and the gamer improves his/her perspective/skill set without knowing it. Sometimes, this interpretation takes a conscious leap. Whether one is a Freudian who believes a healthy mind requires "reality-testing" (play is essentially testing possibilities without final consequences) or a Jungian who believes that "phantasy" is required to reach the imagination and inspire interpretation, play is tremendously important—especially for people who are willing to change and grow.

Jung understood why people resist play. According to George B. Hogenson (Jung's Struggle With Freud, p. 138), Jung maintained that: "It is phantasy that makes interpretation possible, and the activity by which phantasy works out its various interpretations is play." Jung want on to suggest that most people, being in the grip of orthodoxy, are not willing to open up their field of experience to the emergence of the opposites from the unconscious. In other words, play is threatening to people who are not mature enough to want to learn more about themselves.

So, the next time someone bashes you about your "childish" hobby, ask them what they're afraid of. Who are afraid to play are people who are afraid to grow, to change, to be— even if they write for the San Francisco Chronicle. Silly writer, games aren't just for kids. Q
In 1981, Zork captivated millions with words that told of a Great Underground Empire.

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

THE MERRY PRANKSTERS

Perhaps it is a comment on the broader, fanciful aspects of our hobby and avocation that it took me all the way to the bottom of the "article" in the README section of the April issue to realize I had been had. We have come to expect so much from the folks that feed our addiction to this sort of escapism entertainment.

Bigger, Better, Faster, More seems to be the catch phrase of this industry so much so that even absurdist parody takes a while to sink in.

Either that or I am more gullible than I thought. But as I sit here pulling the fish hook out of my cheek, saving myself at the last minute from being pulled into your clever boat, I console myself with the idea that April Fools jokes that cannot by reason of a set schedule be delivered on the actual day have a better chance of success.

Enjoy your day and thanks for a great publication that just keeps getting better.

Gerry Palminteri AOL
St. Louis, MO

Apollo Fools You did know that whole business about real spaceships in White Commander V was an April Fools joke, didn't you?

ROBBY DOES WINDOWS

I read with some interest your article on Plug-n-Play, where those who want to play DOS games are going to have problems. Sure made me change my mind about PNP Soundblaster cards. But this is not the end of the story.

After deciding that it might be unwise financially to upgrade my system, I found a buyer for my old computer and ordered a PS/2 from Miron. It arrived and started up into Windows 95 just fine. I began loading my Windows games, and everything worked fine. Then, I loaded Caesar II. I inserted this Autoplay CD ROM game. It said we were going to MS DOS mode. Imagine my surprise when it said it wouldn't find a CD-ROM drive. I went out to DOS, and guess what, neither could MS DOS 7. I tried another CD ROM game in DOS. Then, I called Miron. They were very nice to tell me that the OEM version of Windows 95 new being shipped by Microsoft doesn't have any mouse driver for MS DOS 7, and the CD ROM drivers are hidden. Well, fortunately, I still had my old machine. I copied the MS Mouse drivers, put them into my machine, and put the command in my Autarex.bat (just like the old days, huh?). After a bit of exploration, Miron also helped me get the CD ROM drivers into the CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files. Will most new computer buyers be able to figure this out? What will they do with their new machine if they can't play a DOS game? I wonder if the folks up in the Pacific Northwest told the game developers about this. I wonder if the folks at the Justice Department would consider this restraint of trade (maybe the FTC isn't selling well enough?). In any event, let the buyer beware... MS doesn't want anyone using anything but Windows 95, and they are looking for every angle to make it so.

Robby Robertson
Lakewood CO

We don't know about the conspiracy you suggest, but we're sure that sharing your experience will probably save some new Miron owner some anxious moments. Now, you're an "information provider" for some of that good information you like to see in our magazine. Guess we'll have to send you a "Paradise Club" membership card in the mail.

LOSING AT KENDO

Me and my gaming friends disagree with you (sic) Quote "they though (sic) the software industry (sic) was the same as the toy industry, forgetting the most vital market statistic — Computer games (sic) are adults." I believe that this is an incorrect statistic and should be corrected in your next edition (sic) of Computer Gaming World.

Thars, KENO
via the Internet

An independent survey of game buyers in October of 1995 indicated that the average age of game buyers is 31 years of age. This is in line with other surveys, most notably the annual consumer survey of the Software Publishers Association. You and your friends may "though" otherwise, but it won't change the facts.

THE CASE OF THE MISSING PERFORMANCE

Your magazine is one of the best. Period. I've never been disappointed. I wrote this letter to especially thank Loyd Case for his insightful and extremely helpful tip in your March issue. In his column, he gave a tip on how to make Windows 95's refresh rate and graphics run faster and smoother. His comments hit a bullseye! I thought that my slow refresh rate could be contributed to one of those "Windows 95 things" (you know what I'm talking about), I decided to give his suggestion a try. Boy, did it work! Windows 95 works much better now. Kudos to Mr. Case!

Betty Huey
Ruston, LA

THIS MUST BE MAGIC

I offer this letter as a means of expressing the frustration that MicroProse has placed on us MAGIC: THE GATHERING players, as well as giving your readers a place to find out a lot of information about this game. Ever since I first read your article on this game (June, 1995), I've not only followed this game, but I also started
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The new Pentium OverDrive processor is an easy-to-install, single-chip CPU upgrade that gives you a performance increase of over 50% on a wide range of popular software. Like multimedia and games, or operating systems like Windows® 95.

Pentium OverDrive processors are now available for 60, 66, and 75 MHz Pentium processor-based PCs and, as always, for most Intel486™ processor-based PCs. All affordably priced.

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reading your magazine monthly. Now that your February issue’s Pipeline stated that the game will be pushed back until Summer ’96, I feel that I have to find a way to express my anger and frustration. My questions to MicroProse remain unanswered, and I feel that I must turn to the print media to be recognized.

As you well know, there are hundreds of thousands (maybe millions) of Magic players out there that can do nothing but play this game. When we first heard that a computer version would be released we immediately became excited. After all, now we can play without having to find a bunch of friends at one o’clock in the morning. When I heard that MicroProse was making the game, I thought, “Well, OK. It could be worse.” Well, I’ve been waiting for nearly a year now for this game to be released and they still have nothing to show for it, and I’m disgusted.

I have taken upon myself to sift through various sources of information and rumors to create a webpage containing a lot of information about this game. You can find the page at http://www.wen.com/users/clown/magic2.html. Once MicroProse actually did reply to one of my e-mails, but they would disclose nothing.

I hope that MicroProse realizes that putting this game at the bottom of their priority list after putting so much hope into it is severely hurting their company’s image in the eyes of many Magic players. I, for one, realize the incredible task it would be to program the game to look as if it were a static hot spot to static hot spot as we described it in last year’s Sneak Preview. Further, things have changed considerably since it has been released. The online service where the head-to-head game was to have debuted is no longer available at a cost of this magnitude as it once was, and plans are changing to reflect the changes in the online world. We’ll keep you up to date.

Scream of Consciousness

The “urning Rubber” feature (February, 1996) was great, but I think there was a mistake about Scream. You said that there were only three tracks. If you play the championship, you will see that there are six. And, after you win them all, you will be able to practice with these tracks and you can race them backwards, too.

Luis Eduardo Ribeiro
Sao Paulo, Brazil

For pointing out our error, you’ve won a free trip to our CG News Bar at booth 1-338, which is where we’ve sent all the other letter writers who’ve caught us with our feet down. You’re absolutely right. The feature, which covered several similar games, made this error. Fortunately, the full review of Screamer in our March issue made mention of all six courses.

Interface Improvement

You have done a magnificent job redesigning your magazine! The new format is simply great. I have been a subscriber for several years, and have seen CGW change in many ways to provide a better reader interface. Through all of these changes, CGW has continued to provide the best reviews and information. Keep up the great work. I plan on being a subscriber for a long time. Thanks.

Joe Boza

Corrections

In our April review of the Zephyr Onyx, we compared the machine’s WinBench CPU Mark numbers with Falcon Northwest’s Mach V system.

Hey, Youse Guys!

To write a letter, send e-mail to: CompuServe: 76703,622. Internet: 76703,622@compuserve.com or write us at: Computer Gaming World Letter to The Editor 135 Main Street, 14th Floor San Francisco, CA 94105
You know you want it.
WHAT ARE YOU

Strap yourself in for the ultimate interactive movie, flight simulation, action game of the year. Mark Hamill, Malcolm McDowell, John Rhys-Davies and Tom Wilson star in Wing Commander IV: The Price of Freedom. This is the return of the epic series that has blown the minds of over 5 million gamers nationwide. When you combine the first interactive movie filmed entirely on Hollywood...
WAITING FOR?

sets in Dolby surround

NATION, YOU GET THE BEST GAME

sound™ with

THUMB-BLISTERING

ACTION AND PLOTS

OF '96. Wing Commander

IV: THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

IS NOW AVAILABLE ON

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IF YOU DARE.

ORIGIN Interactive Movie

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WING COMMANDER

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM®
Game of the Year Finalists Named

Premier Awards To Be Announced At The Electronic Entertainment Expo

The following games are finalists for the CGW Premier Awards, the magazine's awards for the best games of the year in each genre. The winners will be announced in May at the Electronic Entertainment Expo, and featured in the June issue of CGW. Due to holiday marketing and inevitable product release delays, our award year spans from March 31 to March 31.

This year, CGW adds two new categories to our list of Premier Awards: Classics/Puzzles and Space Sims. In addition to a winner in each genre, there is an overall Game of the Year and three special awards. The finalists in each category are as follows:

In the Action category the nominees are: CRUSADER: No Remorse (EA/Origin), Dark Forces (LucasArts), HEXEN (id/Raven) and THE NEED FOR SPEED (EA/Bullfrog).

In the Adventure genre, the finalists are: CHRONOMASTER (Capstone), GABRIEL KNIGHT II: THE BEAST WITHIN (Sierra), I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SPEAK (MGM/Cyberdreams), FRODDLE OF MASTER LU (Sanctuary Woods), and STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION (Spectrum).

The following games are finalists for the CGW Premier Award in this genre are: MECHWARRIOR 2 (Activision) and WING COMMANDER IV (EA/Origin).

Sports games were very hotly contested in the '95-'96 product year. Finalists for this Premier Award are: FRONT LINE SPORTS PRO FOOTBALL '96 (Sierra/Dynamix), NBA Live (Electronic Arts), NHL HOCKEY 96 (Electronic Arts), PGA TOUR GOLF (Electronic Arts), TITLE FIGHT PRO BOXING (CompuSports), and TROPHY BASS (Sierra).

Premier finalists in the Strategy genre are: CAESAR II (Sierra/Lographics), COMMAND & CONQUER (Virgin/Westwood), and FANTASY GENERAL (Mindscapes/SSI).

The other new game category this year is SPACE SIMS. Finalists for the Premier Award in this genre are: MIGHT & MAGIC (New World), WARRIORS OF DARKnes (Davidson/Blizzard), and HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC (New World).

Here's a quick look at the hottest products on store shelves, as well as the lukewarm ones that might sit around through the spring.

CIVILIZATION II

Friends, Romans, countrymen: lend me your PCs. Another bid for world conquest has begun anew, and this time, I am determined to see that our glorious empire does not fall. Lo, these many years, other nations have amassed sufficient wealth and prestige to be allowed entry into our esteemed arena.

The Sioux tribe from North America, the Celts from the British Isles, the Japanese from the East Asian shores, and many others have convened on a new battleground for world domination. The scientists are once again at research, and their discoveries put their previous exploits to shame. The builders of yore have returned, bringing with them new...
Intel Packs 'em In

MMX Technology Promises Faster Multimedia Performance

At the recent InterMedia show in San Francisco, Intel unveiled its new MMX technology, a multimedia extension to the x86 instruction set. MMX's 57 new CPU opcodes are designed to accelerate the most commonly performed multimedia operations, including AVI and MPEG decoding, graphics filtering, 3-D graphics and varied audio tasks. Intel claims performance gains ranging from 40 to 400 percent depending on the operation.

Unlike the bungled NSP initiative of a year ago, where Intel postulated that it could bring all the multimedia operations "home" to the host, Intel is positioning the MMX as a "cooperative" technology that works with fixed-function chips like graphics accelerators and audio DSPs (Digital Signal Processors). Creative Labs, Yamaha and S3, among other independent hardware vendors, have rallied behind Intel, which also has received support from many big-name, independent software vendors such as Adobe, Macromedia and Microsoft.

Microsoft plans to tweak its DirectX APIs to use the MMX technology whenever possible by passing any functions a task-specific chip cannot perform directly to the CPU via DirectX's hardware abstraction layer (HAL). Because MMX promises to efficiently handle tasks such as assisting with rendering, filtering, and video decompression, the CPU will be able to focus more on processor-intensive tasks (such as AI), ultimately creating a smoother gaming environment.

MMX uses 64-bit "packed" integer data types, taking 8-, 16- and 32-bit data and putting it, 4 or 2 of these into the MMX registers for processing with a technique called Single Instruction Multiple Data (SIMD). Data packing greatly accelerates such functions as inverse discrete cosine transforms—the key algorithm to smooth MPEG decompression.

Intel expects to introduce its MMX-equipped CPUs later this year and integrate MMX into all of its processors by sometime next year.

—Dave Salvador

PLAYING LATELY?

Wing Commander IV makes a strong debut at number four, while Allied General also cracks the Top 10 most-played list. Three other games return to the chart after a month’s absence, including Panzer General, still going strong after 15 months. Be sure to send in your free feedback card, so we know which companies are responsible for wreaking the most havoc with gamer’s lives.

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<tr>
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<th>Last Month</th>
<th>Months On Chart</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Warcraft II (Blizzard)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Command &amp; Conquer (Westwood)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>3. Steel Panthers (SSI)</td>
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<td>4. Wing Commander IV (Origin)</td>
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<td>5. Heroes of Might and Magic (New World Computing)</td>
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<td>6. Crusader: No Remorse (Origin)</td>
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<td>7. Hexen (Raven)</td>
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<td>8. Duke Nukem 3D (3D Realms)</td>
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<td>9. Allied General (SSI)</td>
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<td>10. Panzer General (SSI)</td>
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TERRA NOVA: STRIKE FORCE CENTAURI

Combining the firepower of a MechWarrior with the feel of military commando actions, Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri is a fast-paced 3-D romp across distant planetary surfaces. Simulation-style combat missions are interlaced with 3-D rendered cut scenes, an unfolding story to motivate gamers to keep playing, and lots of weapons. As you become more proficient in handling one armored warrior, you get to add soldiers to your unit and try your hand at command. Many gamers will welcome Terra Nova because it is fast, challenging and varied. Others will find that it is far too fast for them. The worst news is that the weapon ranges are so long that many of the special effects are wasted because the enemies are small, almost stick figures, and the explosions are smaller than gamers expect. MechWarrior fans will elect to keep their exploding Mechs, while Terra Nova fans will watch from a distance.

—J. Wilson
Looking Glass Technologies (617) 441-6333; http://www.lgglass.com; PC CD-ROM
Reader Service #302
Experience nation

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Trade
Conquer
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Enticed by the lure of exploring the unknown, you cross treacherous seas in search of the New World. But be warned! Europe's other conquering heroes are in pursuit of the same glory.

Conquest of the New World™ is a single or multi-player strategy game where you're in command of the explorers, settlers, and mercenary soldiers destined to survey the land, to build new colonies, and to protect your emerging nation. As you search for new rivers and mountains, you'll come across other colonies and encounter friendly and hostile native tribes. Your growing nation is constantly at the mercy of world events and the endless threat of surprise attacks.

Only through a perfect balance of diplomacy, exploration, trade and warfare can you build the ultimate nation, declare independence, and experience the true power of Conquest.

- Single or Multi-player action for up to 6 over a network & head-to-head with a modem
- Colonies come to life in stunning SVGA graphics and exciting 3D animations
- Combat explodes with the echoing blasts of infantry, cavalry & cannons
- Victory can be achieved by exploration, building, trade or combat

"Conquest of the New World has beauty, brains & depth" — Strategy Plus

Chart your course for the Interplay WEB site (http://www.interplay.com) and download the interactive demo.

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Online Chaos Continues
Where Should Gamers Go For Multiplayer Games?

There are more questions than answers right now in the world of online gaming. Should you go with a service that allows you to connect your existing games with other players, or should you select a service that offers custom multiplayer games? Should you use a service that can be accessed by the Internet or should you choose an established service? What are the advantages of each?

Investors and software publishers are asking themselves the same questions. As the Total Entertainment Network (TEN) and Mpath approach their launch dates (as in any software enterprise, the operative acronym is RSN—Real Soon Now) and industry observers try to figure out The Microsoft Network’s game plan and Interplay’s alleged online strategy, many gamers are wondering where to turn.

Both TEN and Mpath plan to offer multiple-server solutions to reduce latency (the lag time between entering a command on your computer and receiving a response from the server or another computer). With fast-paced action games like multiplayer Duke Nukem 3D or Quake, latency can mean the difference between a frag or a miss. Using regional servers, both services will be able to reduce the average latency—meaning a potentially more satisfying game experience. Gamers will be able to enter these new services by either Internet connection or dial-up nodes.

Traditional networks have relied on packet-switching technology, which is so slow that Cyberstrike players on GEnie may shoot at robots on screen that have actually moved to new positions according to the server. As online gamers know, the more people who enter the arena, the worse the latency becomes. That’s why word of The Microsoft Network’s goal of putting thousands of people in the same gaming arena before opening another server seems unrealistic. Even if they were planning to use TEN (Apogee plans to partner with TEN on several first-person POV games) or Mpath’s (New World will offer Chaos Overlord on this service) distributed server model, this approach is a killer. Right now, the only games of which we’re aware, that can handle thousands of users in the same arena,

ON THE SHELF

DESERT II

Grab the Dramamine and prepare for DESERT II. This 360-degree, 3-D shoot-em-up is nearly identical to the popular original, but it features new textures and environments, 30 new levels, 30 new enemy robots and 10 new weapons. DESERT II also introduces a guidebot that assists you in navigation, a thiefbot that attacks you and steals your weapons, and life-like light source rendering that enhances the effect of movement. The only thing missing is a re-orient button and a barf bag for those new to the joy of twisting aimlessly out of control.—J. Anderson, Parallax Software/Interplay (800) 468-3775; PC CD-ROM Reader Service #903

ADVANCED TACTICAL FIGHTERS

At first glance, ATF looks like another US NAVY FIGHTERS expansion disc, with a few new planes. There’s plenty here to keep even jaded USN/USAF fans engaged, though. The new planes have stealth and thrust-vectoring aspects that let you use entirely new tactics to complete the sim’s missions.

Videos of the real planes in action supplement the sim module, along with information culled from the authoritative Jane’s All the World’s Aircraft. But the real added bonus here is multiplayer support. Go head-to-head over a modern link, or join a swarm of human opponents over a network connection, flying any of the planes
Now on PC CD-ROM

Earthworm Jim 1 & 2
The Whole Can 'O Worms

For those whose appetites for lunacy and danger are never satisfied, there's now a hefty double portion of his Jim-ness-in one convenient, spill-proof serving! So there's twice the adventure, twice the graphics, twice the whacked humor. Making for a combined 17 levels of manicual mayhem.

But open it at your own risk-digesting the whole thing at one sitting may result in some major head-swelling.

http://www.playmatestoys.com
THE WAR
INTRODUCING "THE COVERT OPERATIONS" COMPANION

Westwood Studios
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15 NEW CHALLENGING MISSIONS.
10 NEW MULTIPLAYER MAPS.

1995 GAME OF THE YEAR - Computer Game Review
1995 GAME OF THE YEAR - Strategy Plus
BEST STRATEGY GAME - PC Gamer

You must own Command & Conquer to play this game.
Look Out QuickTime...

Microsoft has developed a new technology called ActiveX that will make MPEG playback easier in Windows 95, and facilitate playback of various media from any source, including the Internet, according to the company. ActiveX is something of a "wrapper" technology that serves as a structure within which all media types, including AVI, QuickTime, WAV, MPEG, and MIDI files, can be synched and played.

Microsoft is positioning ActiveX as a key multimedia title development tool that tightly integrates with DirectX APIs. ActiveX has its own internal time code to which all streamed media can be slaved, which is intended to improve audio-video synchronization during playback. Multiple media types can be placed together as well; for example, an MPEG file with a MIDI sequence added for background music.

The ActiveX playback process has three integral components: source filters, transform filters and render filters. The source filter first reads data in from a medium (hard disk, CD-ROM, network, etc.) and passes it to the filter graph manager. The transform filter decodes the data, and then passes it to the render filter, which in turn renders the data using DirectX APIs where possible (see diagram).

The ActiveX technology is intended to be transparent to end-users, and should ship to developers in June, with ActiveXware titles to ship late this summer.—Dave Salvator

MISSION CONTROL: ActiveX will be an extensible structure for playing most media types, past, present and future.

in the simulation, from the F-4 Phantom to the X-32 ASTOVOL. The variety of planes available in multiplayer mode promises long-lasting fun—it's like having an entire air force at your command.—D. Atkin

Electronic Arts, (415) 571-7171;
PC CD-ROM
Reader Service #304

EARTHSIEGE 2

With detailed textures atop the polygon-based robots, new robot types, better controls, a robot to be flown in air combat, and a host of new missions, Sierra's Dynamix division once again takes aim at MechWarrior.

Though this series suffers from not having the rich universe and back story of the FASA property and Activision design, the action is faster and, at times, more furious than in its competitor. Pure action gamers may actually prefer this game to the more simulation-esque design of MechWarrior 2. Regardless, Earthsiege 2 features a planet under attack by the Cybrids, those AI-controlled enemies that turned on their masters in the original Earthsiege. This time, it's an all-out battle and the missions get hairier and hairier as the game moves toward its climax.—J. Wilson

Sierra (800-757-7707); http://www.sierra.com;
PC CD-ROM
Reader Service #305

SPYCRAFT: THE GREAT GAME

If you thought espionage was all about hanging out in Monte Carlo and sipping martinis, think again. Developed with input from intelligence experts William Colby and Oleg Kalugin, SPYCRAFT: THE GREAT GAME is low on the cloak-and-dagger stuff, but nevertheless provides a high level of suspense. As CIA case officer Thorn, you must sift through and analyze piles of information...
Most battle lines are drawn over distance. Yours spans time... and the distance between two hearts.

From present-day Paris, your past beckons you to a journey through the depths of time. As William Tibbs, you must decipher the secret language of the Knight's Templar, discover the mysteries hidden in your past, confront your mortal nemesis Wolfram, and rescue your fiancée from the shackles of time.

You'll need keen deductive skills and expert swordsmanship to bring your beloved back with you to the present. Chivalry and cunning will be your guides on this incredible adventure.
SPA Focuses On The Pipe

Publishers Discuss Internet Potential At Spring Symposium

Software publishers once gathered to talk about packaged products and "the channel," marketing lingo for the distribution system. Today, they are gathering to talk about not only the "channel," but the "pipe," or the Internet and its potential for online appetites, games, services and distribution. At SPA's Spring Symposium in March, the subject on everyone's mind was the Internet and the potential it presents for the future.

SPA Executive Director Ken Wasch announced that Microsoft Corporation has expressed its intent to place the Recreational Software Advisory Council's (RSAC) Internet Ratings setup on the next build of its browser—the Microsoft Internet Explorer. This plan will allow parents and consumers to set their browsers to filter such material as Violence, Sex/Naughtiness and Language based on threshold ratings. The ratings, 1 indicating mild content and 4 denoting extreme material, are currently used to rate many existing computer games, and could be preset as an Internet filter via software. The criteria used to rate Internet material will be the same as that used to rate over 350 titles from over 90 companies in the packaged-software market.

In other items of interest to gamers, Computer Gaming World hosted a panel on "Issues In Online Game Development" which brought representatives of new online services and existing game developers together to speak about technological, game design, and economic issues surrounding the burgeoning multiplayer-game market. Other panels dealt with using the Internet for advertisements and customer service.

On the more traditional level, the SPA's Software Packaging Group continued to develop guidelines for using standardized wording and package placement for systems requirements, making shopping easier for everyone. Also in evidence at the symposium were new materials for the ongoing Anti-Piracy Campaign. This year, the battle will focus on consumer software piracy and international piracy.

Robert Wuhi (Cobb, Good Morning, Vietnam) hosted the black-tie Codie Awards Ceremony where the following game-related awards were presented. For Best Action/Arcade Software, the winner was LucasArts' Star Wars. In a surprise victory, the winner of Best Adventure/Role Playing Software was a consumer version of one of the oldest educational games in the country, Oregon Trail II from MECC. The Best Sports Software award went to Papyrus Design Group's NASCAR II. In what was the most controversial victory of the night for us, The Logic Factory's Ascendancy was awarded Best Strategy Software. The game has abominable AI, and we were amazed at the number of judges and SPA voters who felt the AI had given them a tough run for their money.

Finally, since an educational title won the Adventure/Role Playing award, we felt turn-about was fair play when a game won the Best Home Learning Program for Adolescents: The Lost Mind of Dr. Brain from Sierra On-Line, Inc.

— Johnny Wilson

Using high-tech gadgets and tools just like the guys at Langley, And you'd better be quick about it; a Russian presidential candidate has just been assassinated, and the U.S. president could be next. Worse, there seems to be a mole in the organization, so you'd better watch your back. Suffering only from occasionally nonsensical dialogue trees, and a relatively short length, SpyCraft should provide a few hours of intense, if brief, entertainment until the next Tom Clancy novel comes out. — K. Hedstrom

Activision (310) 473-9200; PC CD-ROM
Reader Service #305

CH PRO THROTTLE

If finding the right key on the keyboard to activate your ECM pod usually takes so long that you end up with an AMRAAM stuck up your tail, check out the CH Pro Throttle. This comfortable throttle features four buttons and four four-way hat switches, all programmable, as well as a throttle that can send both analog and keyboard commands. The DOS program used to program the throttle could use an interface makeover, but it beats writing a script in a text editor. Multiple characters can be assigned to each button/hat press and release. The buttons and hat of a CH-compatible joystick attached to the throttle can also be programmed. A great throttle choice for those who find the Thrustmaster TOS overkill. Our only major complaint is the lack of a d閐閚e to mark the afterburner portion of the throttle movement.

— D. Atkin

CH Products, (619) 598-2518; PC
Reader Service #307
Your Image Of A Brutal Sport Is About To Be Shattered

Prepare For The Ultimate Body-Check Of The Future

HyperBlade. The ultimate sport. Fueled by the blistering intensity of sports from the past: hockey, lacrosse and speed-skating – to deliver the mega-sport of the 2000’s. Battling ruthless players and vicious teams in a world where brutality leads to victory.

face-off into the future at http://ww...
THE CHAOS HAS JUST BEGUN

NEW WORLD COMPUTING, INC.
Check out our new Web site at: http://www.nwcomputing.com
2050: The city lies before you ripe for the taking. Your forces are ready to rip through it—killing, intimidating, bribing or extorting anyone who gets in their way.

Victory is assured ... until this guy shows up.

- A strategic challenge for gamers of all skill levels
- Hire and deploy 70 different gangs as you conquer the future
- Multiplayer compatibility for up to 6 players over network, modem, or internet connection
- Over 50 new technologies to research from Kevlar Armor to Plasma Launchers
- Multiple difficulty settings and scenarios

Available for Windows 95 and Macintosh
Contests For Heroes, Spies

New World Computing is sponsoring a World Building Contest for the Heroes of Might and Magic game. The contest, which began March 1, 1996, and runs until midnight June 29, 1996, will judge the maps created with the enclosed editor in the Windows 95 version of the game (multiple, separate entries are welcome). If your scenario passes the crash test—two crashes and you’re out—it will be judged on its playability and originality. The grand prize winner will receive a complete multimedia computer system, with other prizes including, software gift certificates, and complete libraries of New World Computing games. See the New World Computing Web site at http://www.nwcomputing.com for entry forms and rules.

Or, if you prefer covert operations, how about an "espionage vacation" in the Bahamas courtesy of Activision’s Spy Craft contest. Five grand prize winners will be trained in "spy" activities such as surveillance, self-defense, the use of night-vision equipment, and the ever-popular action movie sequence—jet skiing. All winners will be chosen by random drawing, but you better hurry—the contest runs through May 13, 1996. For details on how to register, visit Activision’s Web page at http://www.activision.com. —Jill Anderson

HIZONE

While playing Hexen, do you miss your old Doom WAD files? Looking for new worlds to conquer? Well, I have good news and bad news for you. The good news: HIZONE is a superb utility that allows you to convert and manage WAD files for Hexen, Heretic, Doom II and Doom. It has many features and levels you will not find anywhere else. The bad news: It has the worst interface we’ve seen. Not only is it coded in ANSI, it’s bad ANSI. The buttons are cryptic and the operation clumsy. You will need to read the book on this one. They did a good job on the program, but perhaps the designers should take some art classes.

—C. Fortune

Wizard Works (612) 559-5301
PC CD-ROM
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Heroes of Might & Magic for Windows 95

One of the best fantasy strategy games of 1995 has returned to the PC with all new bells and whistles, improvements, and for a new platform. Heroes of Might & Magic was a stellar DOS-based strategy game, and now the Windows 95 version has appeared on the shelves. However, the change of platform isn’t the only new feature of this product. Heroes for Win 95 also comes with a scenario editor for creating your own maps and scenarios. This is wonderful, as it allows replayability to an already excellent game. You can draw your own maps, or call up random ones and populate it with your own mix of treasures and monsters. But the fun doesn’t stop there; New World has included 16 new scenarios, and they’re not just more of the same. And to top it all off, the Win 95 version even includes a copy of King’s Bounty, the predecessor to Heroes. All in all, a value-added upgrade to a five star game.—E. Chin

New World Computing (800) 251-9563
(818-734-7316 outside US)
PC CD-ROM, Windows
Reader Service #309

FOXHUNT

What do you get when you cross James Bond with Jim Carey? How about Jack Fremont, the anti-hero of Capcom’s new title Foxhunt. In this interactive comedy spy thriller, you become Jack, a self-confessed TV trivia addict, who fancies himself as a bit of a smooth guy, but is really a penniless slub. The basic plot of this point-and-click game is predictable: Regular Guy becomes a spy for a day. You have 24 hours to sniff out the bad guys, turn them in, get the girl, and grab the cash, while picking up clues, navigating through mazes and avoiding an untimely and gruesome death. More entertaining are the lengthy non-interactive scenes, which allow you to enjoy the farcical movie, and hear Jack deliver such classic lines as, “Don’t shoot me, I’m afraid of loud noises!” An abundance of bodily-function humor combined with the geezy Jack’s disgusting habits raise this to the “It’s so bad it’s good” category! Not for everybody’s taste, but worth a look if only to see the excellent video graphics and the notable cast, including Rob Lowe and the ex-James Bond himself, George Lazenby.

—C. Panther

Capcom (408) 774-0500;
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BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT
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Here's an early look at the space invaders that will be vying for room on your hard drive. Some of these games are still months away, and they aren't even playable yet, but at least you can see what they look like, and get an idea what their intentions are.

The next installment in the love life of Larry Leifer could well be called "The Lust Boat." The Baron of Bawld, Al Lowe, has placed Larry on-board a cruise ship full of enough buxom babes to get Sierra arrested for balloon smuggling (ask an old frat rat, if you don't get it). The caricatures of such pulchritudinous femmes as Dawni Moore and Drew Baremone are sure to build one Sierra artist's reputation. Memo is Sierra's answer to Playboy's Vargas.

More importantly for game play, Al says that this Larry will feature richer, user-directed communication between Larry and the "babes," using a context-sensitive list of key words. The next Larry is expected to ship in time for this holiday season.

Betrayal at Antara
Sierra is attempting to undo the damage caused by its Dynamix division when it cancelled the sequel to the Hall of Fame-winning Betrayal at Krondor, the role-playing classic based on Raymond E. Feist's universe. With Betrayal at Antara, a new team is using new technology to develop a new mythos. Antara will offer some of the 3-D feel of the Hall of Fame game, but will offer different cultures and different creatures than either Feist or standard-fantasy fare. Antara will be a skill-based game where players can improve one to five skills at a time through "practice." Perhaps most interesting will be Antara's new tactical combat, featuring a "disguised" hex-style tactical combat and new combat options. We also think role-players will be fascinated by the way characters can research spells by combining different areas of knowledge. There are lots of fresh ideas in Antara and we hope gamers will give it a chance.

Over the Reich
Designer Charlie Moylan enjoys breaking with tradition. His Flight Commander 2 was a flight combat strategy game, making its mark in gaming skies filled with first-person flight simulators. Now, Moylan teams with Avalon Hill to bring one of J.D. Webster's most acclaimed board game designs to the IBM. Over the Reich—due this Summer—attempts to tackle the incredibly complex modeling of WWII aircraft and make them manageable, while still retaining the high degree of realism for which both designers are noted. The operational scale of the game is perfect to show the grand sweep of the Battle of Britain: radar, close escort fighters, "hunter" tactics, strafing, even night bombing, are all scheduled for inclusion. All in all, a grand undertaking which lacks to leave even the ground-breaking (air-breaking?) Flight Commander 2 behind.

No, it's not a John Lennon song, it's the first game to be released by Robert De Niro's soon-to-be-announced company, Tribeca Interactive. You've just inherited a Fantasy Resort for Rock 'n' Roll stars in this sinister and bizarre 3-D adventure world. With a brochure and a postcard in hand, you find yourself at the front door of the dilapidated resort. The caretaker—an odd little fellow with an ingenuous mode of transport—isn't particularly friendly, but you should keep him on your side as he'll help you combat the miscievous deeds of the toxic twins who continue to thwart your efforts. It's up to you to fix up the old place and rebuild the Muse Machine that pumps energy back into the resort and the visiting, ailing rock stars. If you need more guidance, consult the soothsayer, played by Cher. 9 will be simultaneously released for the Mac and PC in early summer.
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These are the products in development we’ve actually spent some time with. They represent some of the most interesting titles in the Pipeline, and they are complete enough to actually tell how they’re going to play. Most should be released soon.

**Quake Death Match**

I say, you’re it. id Software recently unleashed a peek at its latest horrific brainchild, Quake. Perhaps feeling some heat from Duke: Nukem 3D’s buzz, the Doominators have released a death match version of Quake where you and several close friends can blow each other into tiny pieces. The so-called “technology demo” allows null-modem and modem-based head-to-head matches, and up to eight players for a full-on LAN-based splatterfest.

Quake is a true 3-D polygon-based world where everything, including the players, has much more depth and realism than any of id’s previous games. Though some of the graphics are still pretty raw, the overall effect is enough to keep you coming back for more. Highlights include new weapons like a nail gun and its bigger, uglier cousin, the super nail gun. For more direct results, the grenade thrower and rocket-propelled grenade weapons will leave opponents speechless (and probably headless). As a match progresses, the level becomes littered with carcasses and assorted body parts from previous meaningful rendezvous. Another highlight is the collection of sounds, ranging from deep explosions to wrenching screams of anguish.

Because the death match is basically an early beta of the forthcoming final version, there are some rough edges, though its rough-hewn state leaves it much more configurable. The entire game is driven from a command prompt where you can tweak a lot of different game attributes ranging from the color of your player’s clothes (can you say “camouflage?”) to the amount of gravity the level has.

Getting a LAN-based frag-a-thon to work, with one system acting as the “server” to the other systems, took some doing. However, having additional players makes for enhanced mayhem.—D. Salvator

id Software (214) 613 3589


**EXCLUSIVE!**

**Diamond Stealth**

Diamond will be shipping its Stealth 3D 2000 by late June, but we got hold of a beta unit with beta drivers and were pretty impressed. We checked out the Stealth running an early build of Descent II that takes advantage of some of the Stealth’s rendering features, and under Windows 95 we ran MechWarrior 2—DirectDraw drivers and all.

The Stealth is based on S3’s Virge 3D chip, and has hardware support for Z-buffering, MIP mapping, bi-linear filtering, texture mapping with perspective correction, alpha blending and fogging. The Stealth will support titles using Direct3D when they ship; meanwhile, the planned software bundle will include Descent II, Destruction Derby, and Terminal Velocity.

The estimated street price is $249 with 2MB of EDO DRAM. In our preview tests, the “enhanced” version of Descent II was expectedly shaky in overall performance, but the rendering quality was very impressive. Especially striking were the detailed texture maps on the walls, and the anti-aliasing of all vertices kept the “jaggies” to a minimum.
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XENOPHAGE

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Distributed by FormGen

Software Creations Web BBS (http://www.swcchbs.com)
WWW Box (http://www.apogee1.com)
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HANDS ON

The frame rate was jittery and somewhat slow, but not surprising considering it was an early beta build. And as we flew the ship close to walls, the Stealth's MIP-mapping helped maintain image integrity of the texture maps. (MIP mapping stores multiple texture maps of varying detail that the game's rendering engine can switch to as you move close to an object. So rather than using the wall's pixels progressively blocking out, the rendering engine switches to another texture map for better image quality.)

In Windows 95, MECHWARRIOR 2 ran well even with a desktop resolution of 1024 x 768. Once again, the frame rate wasn't altogether up to speed, but the Stealth's beta drivers still let us wreak some mech havoc without a crash.

When Diamond has final hardware and drivers ready for prime time, we'll put them through their paces, and tell you what we found.—D. Salvador

S3 Incorporated, (408) 980-5400 PC

Microsoft Return of the Arcade

they're back! Microsoft is bringing back four of the old arcade-style games from a decade

gaps of time. Now, you can guide PAC-MAN around the maze, avoiding the ghosts and gobbling the buttons, while waiting for that meeting to start. Or, test your reflexes by shooting aliens out of the sky and avoiding the falling bombs in GALAXIANS whenever that receptionist puts you on hold. And the beauty of it is, once the games are installed on your hard drive, and opened like any other application, they can be minimized into the Microsoft task bar at the bottom of your screen for quick, easy access and escapes. The problem is, the games are as addictive as ever. RETURN OF THE ARCADE should be gobbled up space on retailers' shelves by the time you read this.

—J. Anderson

Microsoft (206) 682-8080 PC CD-ROM Windows 95

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Construct & Conquer - SimCity Meets Civilization In A Cosmic Battle Over A Newfound Planet

by Denny Atkin

With few habitable planets in known space, and all spacefaring races desperate for room to grow, Gallius IV was a rare prize indeed. The newly discovered planet seemed ready to ignite a war of previously unseen proportions. As the anti-matter beams began flying, it became evident that the battle would have no victor—the mass of firepower gathered over Gallius IV would only burn away the planet's atmosphere if unleashed. It was a no-win situation. A deadlock.

A treaty was hastily crafted—the Compact of Gallius IV—as none of the races wished to see their potential price incurred. Each alien race would send a group of colonists down to the planet, equipped with only the bare essentials. The race that first proved capable of building five cities—or the race that could first wipe out all the other colonists—would gain possession of Gallius IV to exploit or colonize as it pleased.

SWORDS OR PLOWSHARES?
That's the situation in Deadlock, Accolade's game of planetary conquest. As an alien commander, you'll work to obtain Gallius IV for your people, either peacefully or forcefully. Your opponents will be one to six alien races with decidedly different strengths and methods, driven by artificial intelligences or networked human players. Although it may seem somewhat derivative, at first, the richly developed backgrounds of the alien races and the thoroughly refined technology tree give this game a personality all its own.

You'll start out with only 400 colonists, a city center, a colonizer unit, and 500 monetary credits to your name. Settlers have a starter supply of food, wood, energy and iron. That's it. From there, it's a matter of using those resources to build a self-sufficient, expanding colony. Whether your planetary conquest plans are honorable or hastily, you'll still need to build a heavy infrastructure.

After settling in, you'll zoom in on your home territory, where you'll build your initial colony SimCity-style. Drop down farms, mines, factories, power plants, universities, cultural centers, and other buildings as you construct your colony. These structures won't build and run themselves, though. You'll need personnel for the construction and operation of each building, as well as the raw materials to build them. Personnel are the vital resource in this game. The more workers you drop on a building square, the faster it will be built, the more it will produce, and the faster it will be upgraded when new technologies become available. You'll start with simple structures such as apartments and farms, but eventually shipyards, missile bases, tech labs, defense cannons, and other high-tech structures come into play.

Which structures to build is only part of the game; where you build them is just as important. Mines work best in rocky regions, while the cracked earth squares are best for producing energy. Some squares have bonus markers, and will produce above-normal quantities of a given resource. When you expand into multiple territories, you'll need to consider in which territory you want to build a particular structure. While you can transport resources between colonized areas, it costs money to do so, and takes time to move them. Occasionally, when exploring a new territory, you'll come...
across native shrines or precursor artifacts, which will provide you with advanced technologies.

Once your basic infrastructure is in place, expansion is the name of the game. You’re initially equipped with a colonizer, the most basic of the military units. The colonizer can scout around for acceptable territories, but your best bet is to colonize nearby in order to keep your supply lines open. If you choose to attempt a peaceful win, you’ll concentrate on defense and building your economy to the point where you’ll have the cash and resources needed to build city centers in five territories. Military success also depends on a strong economy, but you’ll spend the cash on the research needed to build the really big guns.

**RACE FOR CONQUEST**

Although all of the aliens start with the same equipment, each possesses certain special abilities which will affect their strategies for planetary conquest. The insectoid ChGh-i grow population extremely quickly. The Vordon-like Cyth have psionic abilities they can use to devastate their opponents. Also, since they’re always depressed, they aren’t affected by low morale like the other races.

Humans, not surprisingly, have an income advantage due to their talent for profit and trade. The horned, chronically ill Maug are superb at technological research, while the warlike Tarth build incredibly strong armies. The naturalist Uva Mosk are brilliant at extracting resources from the planet, while the telepathic Re’Lu always know what’s going on with the other races.

Unlike the animatronic-like computer animated aliens you may have encountered in other games, the DEADLOCK aliens actually manage to exhibit personality. The warlike Tarth are convincingly portrayed as simple, doglike creatures, while the Re’Lu come across so smarmy and self-satisfied that you just want to reach up to the screen and slap them.

Braggs, insults, threats, and complaints are among your psychological arsenal. Usually they’re at least amusing, and occasionally laugh-out-loud funny. The slow, militaristic Tarth may send a message along the lines of “Now not good time to be Tarth; maybe yesterday, but not today,” when things are down for them. On the other hand, the Re’Lu are almost always snitty, with comments like “Look over your map, notice the flourishing Re’Lu cities, and please be jealous.” The alien personalities carry into their architecture as well, and the included novella gives thorough details on each race’s history.

One race refused to participate in the Gallius IV experiment—the Skirineen. While they consider themselves above equal competition with “inferior” races, they still condescend to take their money. The Skirineen serve as DEADLOCK’s black market, selling resources, information, technology, and arms to any race willing to risk the repercussions of being caught dealing with them.

**STAR TECH**

Research is the key to ensuring that your alien race takes Gallius IV. Building masses of basic troops and attempting to crush your enemies without developing advanced technologies is ineffective. Defensive technologies, often ignored in games of DEADLOCK’s ilk, are heavily stressed here. Build all the Laser Troopers you want—chances are the enemy’s Defense Cannons will take them out before they can scratch anything. Neuron beams allow you to create Anti-Matter defense systems.

Not all the technologies are military in nature. Advanced technologies are also needed if you’re going to remain economically competitive, and they aid in keeping your people happy. Metallurgy lets you convert iron into steel. Matter synthesis allows you to build replicators, and a well-fed populace generally has a better demeanor. Interlink computers eliminate transport costs, and allow units to move a greater distance. Some technologies have crossover utility: automation
speeds the conversion of ore and the production of military units, and cheers computers not only speed research, but also let you build Starflare Bomber units.

Striking a balance is the key here. Economic and material infrastructure is vital, but don’t let your defensive capabilities fall behind. All the money in the world won’t help if you get caught with your pants down (assuming the race you’re playing wears pants).

**BATTLE CRIES**

In the Alpha version of Deadlock, the actual battle sequences were the weakest elements, particularly when compared with the strong resource management and exploration elements. You can confound forces to concentrate on eliminating buildings or populace, or take a defensive strategy; you can also set a damage level where the unit will try to retreat. You get a report on how the battle played out at the beginning of the next turn, and you can optionally replay a video of the fight.

Basically, you end up with only a little more control over the battle than in games like Civilization. The Deadlock team is considering other combat options that allow you to pinpoint specific buildings to attack, so you could, say, take out a threatening missile silo. The dilemma is balancing the desire for the user some strategic control over the fighting while not making all the other players in a multiplayer game sit around and wait on the battle’s resolution.

**FRIENDS AND ALIENS**

Although Deadlock should fare well as a single-player game, it truly shines as a multiplayer experience. Up to seven human players can participate. The game’s Taunt feature is enjoyable even in single-player mode, but it’s particularly enjoyable when friends and enemies are the targets of the computer’s ruthless jibes. You can create custom taunts, but you’ll have more fun listening to the computer’s. Choose to send an Insult, Threat, Brag, or Complaint, and a beautifully animated 3-D alien will pop up in a window on your opponents’ screen and annoy them with a randomly chosen witty dig.

Deadlock’s designers have taken into account the time limitations inherent in multiplayer games and included a number of fine-tuning options that will allow you to tailor the game’s length. An optional Fast Production feature speeds the building of cities and industrial output. You can set victory to require 3 (the default) cities, or bump it to 7, 10, or 15 if you’re looking for a marathon-length game. Custom planet sizes can increase—or reduce—the chances of bumping up against an unfriendly neighbor.

Finding opponents shouldn’t be too difficult. Deadlock supports LAN, Internet, modem, and even e-mail play.

**LOCK AND LOAD**

This is definitely a hybrid game—not only will you be in the mind of SimCity 2000 and Civilization, but the economics and exploration elements may remind long-time gamers of the other classic. If all the elements continue to come together as well as they have so far, this could very well be the M.U.L.E. of the 1990s. Ask any long-time gamer and you’ll discover that’s high praise indeed.

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**AI Corumba**

The weakest part of the alpha version of Deadlock that we examined was the artificial intelligence. Of course, at this point in development, the AI was still a bit confused about some of the rules. Thus, much of our play so far has been in network mode. We quizzed Deadlock’s programming team about the AI that would drive the final game. It seems that the alien AIs will function more or less like the government bureaucracies, only they’ll be efficient.

At the core of the organizational chart of each alien race’s AI structure is the president. It’s a randomly chosen character who will determine the overall tactics of a race in a particular game—economic or military. The president chooses AI ministers of technology, defense, war, government, commerce, and labor, each of whom is responsible for managing certain sectors of the colony’s infrastructure. The labor minister, for instance, attempts to provide as many happy workers as possible. To accomplish this, he requests the necessary resources to provide enough food, culture, and housing to create a happy and growing populace. Similarly, the defense minister does what’s necessary to keep from losing territory, by requesting the resources needed to build defensive weaponry and the military forces needed to protect each territory.

Each minister is assigned a priority by the president, and a well-run government is more likely to favor the technology, defense, and war ministers’ requests. All of this goes on behind the scenes, invisible to the player. Accolade is considering implementing an extra set of AI ministers who could offer the player advice upon request, informing you of the tactics they would choose if playing at the behalf of an AI president.

These techniques should result in computer players who play with rich, involved strategies that involve building a complete infrastructure, instead of simpleton routines that concentrate only on the resources that are absolutely necessary to win the game.
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If your aptitude tests have shown that your prowess is in the Galactic Accountancy Corps rather than in the cockpit of a StarFury, don't despair. Point your web browser to www.zdnet.com/gaming and follow the lessons in our guide to Space Bucks.
STRATEGY — WING COMMANDER IV

DOGFIGHTING WITH HELLCATS
Tactics To Keep Torpedoes Out Of Your Tailpipe In WING IV

by Scott A. May

The price of freedom is eternal vigilance. This is a phrase you'll hear repeated often in WING COMMANDER IV, Cadet, and it's your key to success in Origin's latest and greatest space combat adventure. You'll find this is no ordinary pilot training, here you'll learn that sometimes you'll have to make some hard choices that aren't covered by the reg books.

No longer confronted by one conspicuous source of aggression, the game continually blurs the line between good and evil. This is a superb blend of character study, plot twists and white-knuckle action, where survival depends as much on logic skills as tactical prowess.

BACK IN ACTION
Forty years of interstellar war with the Kilrathi have come to an end. Your alter ego, war hero Christopher Blair, has retired from the Confederate Navy to become a simple farmer. Yet all is far from serene in this corner of the universe. Renegade troopers from the Border Worlds, who fought so bravely alongside Terran forces in the Kilrathi wars, have begun attacking non-military Confederate ships. Admiral Tolwyn, now commander of the Strategic Readiness Agency, vows to eradicate the rebels, ending speculation of civil war.

Blair soon finds himself recalled to active duty, a message gleefully delivered by the abrasive Maniac, his former star wingman. The pair report immediately to Tolwyn aboard Confed's new supercarrier Lexington, commanded by their trusted old friend, captain Eisen. Blair soon notices something odd about Eisen's behavior, as if he's hiding something. Not long into the initial missions, Eisen is unceremoniously removed from command. He's replaced by the arrogant captain Paulsen, who comes aboard armed with a brazen attitude that smacks of Tolwyn's influence.

Otherwise faithful crew members begin to question Paulsen's presence and Confed's harsh directives. Is this conflict with the Border Worlds a setup? The rebels' declaration of independence seems oddly pleasing to Tolwyn, who uses the announcement to escalate the Confed offensive. What could be his hidden agenda? As tensions mount, a fateful decision must be made: Do you back the system, like any dutiful soldier, or do you trust the instincts that tell you something is horribly wrong?

HIDE AND SEEK Pillar's cloaking device will get you out of many jams, and is your best defense in some of the game's tough covert missions.

MISSIONS CRITICAL
Nuances: most missions in WC4 are full of them. Sometimes it's best to ignore your instincts and read between the lines of your mission objectives. For example, in one of the earliest missions, you're ordered to follow a group of pirate ships to their home base. Your natural tendency may be to ride their tails, an itchy finger poised on the fire button. Get too close, however, and they'll jump, leaving you high and dry. Instead, stay about 20,000 clicks behind until they approach their base, then press T to target the carrier. When the computer announces "mission complete," stop immediately and return to base before you're spotted.

On the first ground mission (B3, see the mission chart sidebar),
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incoming missiles. Afterburn ahead of them (toward the transports), reverse direction and use Stormfire cannons to take out the torpedoes. Don't waste time! The longer it takes to destroy the frigates, the more missiles and Hellicats you'll have to face.

One of the game's first truly difficult missions requires you to infiltrate a Comm station by depositing and retrieving two Manned Insertion Pods while fending off wave after wave of fierce Hellicat attacks. Your first objective should be to destroy the nearby radar buoy, which will limit the total number of Hellicat attacks. This is the first mission in which you'll use Plier's cloaking device. Cleak to avoid immediate detection and take out the radar buoy. Next, launch the two MIPs and turn your attention to the Hellicats. As this mission nears completion, prepare for a stunning blow: success requires that one of your close friends must die. When the MIP signals a launch from the Comm station, drop shields to 75 percent, switch to the Avenger's rear turret and turn on tractor beams. Make sure your ship remains aimed directly at the target MIP, but not too close, then hold down the fire button to draw it into your bay. Turn off cloaking before retrieving the MIP, even if you're under fire, because it's next to impossible to locate the MIP signal on the black-and-white cloaked display.

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and Leech Missile. Rather than releasing energy, they absorb it, overloading the target's power system and often rendering it totally disabled. One missile should disable even an Ace-level fighter. Hound their trail and fire quickly before they drop a decoy, otherwise you'll waste a missile. After one hit, your opponent's ship will begin to lose power and slow considerably. Press the Y key to match your target's speed, otherwise you run the risk of overshooting them, or worse, ramming them.

Leech Guns are also highly effective against Cap ships. As you make your run, take note of the percentage counter that appears next to your weapons readout. Usually two or three runs will be enough to bring it up to 100 percent, leaving the behemoth drifting helplessly in space.

Scatterguns, found on the Banshee light fighter, prove especially effective against heavy fighters and bombers. Described as an "ion shotgun," Scatterguns have a much wider spread than most other weapons and are nearly twice as powerful as the Banshee's primary laser cannons. The refine rate may be slower, but because of the wide spread of its five ion blasts, you're more likely to score hits even if your aim is a bit off. The Scattergun is also an excellent choice for taking out Cap ship turrets, as well as the rear turrets of enemy fighters and bombers.

Taking a pounding from enemy fighters? Reduce power allocations to your engine and damage repair to fortify your shields and weapons, then call for wingman assistance (if available). You may lose speed, but your shields and guns will recharge much faster, at least giving you a fighting chance. When the incoming barrage lessens, switch all power to damage repair, but keep a close eye on your radar for more fighters. Remember that you can also lock individual power systems to keep them from draining completely.

An effective tactic when attacking Cap ships with the Banshee or Dragon is to Autoside (initiated by pressing the Caps Lock key). This lets you turn to face your targets while maintaining a steady forward course. The downside to

---

**Mission Branches**

The game world of WC4 is a vast, unfriendly universe, governed by a complex branching storyline. The path you follow is indirectly affected by the remarks you make during cinematic encounters, but mostly by your in-flight performance during combat, covert and recon missions. Game flow is divided into 13 mission series of various length, each containing between 1 and 7 total assignments. Not all missions are essential for completion of the game. In fact, many are dead ends, accessible only if you've followed the wrong course of logic or failed to complete the objectives described in the preliminary briefings. The following chart outlines each series (coded A-G and J-O), the total number of missions available, and how many are crucial to fly a straight path through the game. To view your current location in the game, press Alt-V at any time during spaceflight. For example, B5 indicates you are on the fifth mission of series B.

The game features 48 missions. If you were to chart a direct course from beginning to end, no fewer than 37 of these must be completed. There are two different losing endgame sequences, spread among 19 critical junctures in your overall adventure.

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Trample a War Mammoth with your little white mouse.

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**OFFICE POLITICS**

Character interaction in key cinematic sequences won't directly affect your ability to win the game. Your reactions to dialogue prompts—negative or positive, cool or hot-headed—will, however, sometimes raise or lower morale among individual crew members. Keep in mind that some responses are merely red herrings, adding spice to the dialogue with no effect on temperament or loyalty. In fact, not all characters have variable morals, particularly new recruits from the Border Worlds. Wingmen suffering from low morale—such as Catscratch, Panther and Hawk—are less likely to jump at your command or give it their all during combat. You can ascertain a wingman's morale during in-flight chatter. If their response is exuberant, they're flying high; if they seem indifferent, they've got the deep space blues.

Often the outcome of your actions won't be felt until much later in the game. Because the game constantly blurs the line between allies and villains, a pilot or commander you upset in conversation may one day prove to be your mortal enemy. Choose to confront Seether during the opening bar fight, for example, and he'll be extra aggressive in your final meeting. Ignore him, on the other hand, and he'll taunt your willingness to stand up for your beliefs.

Though this may seem rather vague, the best advice is to follow your heart—or in this case, the true nature of the lead character, Blair. Remember that loyalty isn't always defined by duty, but by the person. Perhaps more than any previous game in the series, you have to be a good judge of human nature and character motivation. Reward admiration with quiet compassion, yet learn to temper your aggression when confronted with a potentially volatile encounter.

**Space Chicken**

Many WC4 missions saddled you with seemingly impossible objectives, outnumbered and overwhelmed by enemy forces. What's a red-blooded, resourceful spacfighter to do? Cheat, of course. Just don't tell anyone—especially Maniac.

The most radical alteration you can make is apply called Chicken Mode. At the DOS command prompt, type: WC4 -chicken. You'll know you're in business if the program loads with the line, "Chicken Mode [ON] Bae Boot!" Now during space and ground combat, you can press Ctrl-V to instantly destroy a targeted ship. Pressing Ctrl-Alt-W will destroy all enemies on your radar. Uncorruptible pilots can use this to virtually walk through the game, although you must still work through the non-combat sequences as normal. A more ethical use of Chicken Mode would be a fast-ditch attempt to surmount some of the game's more frustrating missions.

Note that although Chicken Mode has no effect on game flow or final outcome, any enemies destroyed by this secret weapon do not count on your kill board. Be aware that cheating can also backfire on you, destroying enemy installations whose capture or infiltration is critical to completing your mission objective.

Orin has stated that "unofficial" command line cheats and hacked TSRs could cause the program to crash and worse, possibly damage data files, forcing you to reinstall the product and start from scratch.
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CLAW AND FANG

A Tale of Ghost Bear Vengeance

by Martin E. Cirulis

Mech training. Where your mind must become one with your machine. Experience can impart more wisdom than 1,000 instruction manuals. So, Cadet, read through the transcript below, from a matrix discovered by a Scavenger unit circa 3058. Many entries were lost, but you'll discover that it not only contains tactical references to pre-charge technology Mech combat, but also valuable insights into the social state of Humanity during the Clan Era, directly before the coming of The Fury. You'll find it a worthy reference for the MECHWARRIOR 2 expansion module, GHOST BEAR'S LEGACY.

Entry 23 (Mission 1): I won my Right of Position with ease. My choice of a Timber Wolf with a double LRM load was perfect, and not only did I shatter the Horned Owl that first came at me across the frozen trial arena, but I was able to put down the Grizzly that waited behind the hills as well.

Entry 24 (Mission 2—Defend on Mennendorf): If I were one of the Inner Sphere rabble who pilot Mechs, I would be foolish to get intoxicated somewhere. I have fought my first actual field combat and brought honor to my Clan. We were told that there were renegade MechWarriors, little more than pirates, in the area, and that guarding the new HPG array was important duty. In my arrogance, I considered this mere talk to help the untried save face. I was wrong.

Just after dawn, HPG security reported two Mercenary Mechs approaching from the south, a 35-ton Raven scouting for an Atlas, a formidable assault-class Mech despite inferior Inner Sphere technology. My Starmates raced to engage but something held me back in my Timber Wolf, studying my readouts. They had to see that they were outnumbered and outgunned—and yet they loitered, a kilometer away from the HPG, drawing my Starmates into a close-quarter fight. As much as I wanted my share of the glory, the situation stank of Strang, trickery, and so I maintained station, using my LRM's in the support fire mode.

Just as I watched the Merc Atlas shudder with an internal explosion, my proximity sensors went off. From the top of the cliffs behind the HPG Array jumped four Ravens. They had used ECM to get close and then powered up to full attack mode once they thought their feint had drawn off our Mechs. As they fell upon the base, firing at will, I was upon them like a bear roused early from his sleep. Their light armor was no match for my high-energy claws, and before their relief force could fight through my distant Starmates, I had reduced the four back-stabbers to so much burning metal. With the base safe I was free to switch back to my LRM racks and rage the distant heavy Mechs.

Entry 27 (Mission 3—Trial of Position): The Draconis Combine has torn the heart from The Bear. We may be the strongest Clan now, but with our genetic heritage stolen there is no future for the Ghost Bear. There will be no Terra for our Clan, there will be no survival, unless we can retrieve the genes of our ancestors. All non-garrison units have been recalled to Alshain to compete in a Trial of Combat to determine who will receive the honor of Alshain. After a week of nearly constant combat, it is down to us and Zherinov's Star. I have been told that Zherinov will lead a Marauder, a Warhawk and command from his Naga. Through careful study of simulations I have decided that come tomorrow, I will vector my Starmates to engage the Naga at close range while I destroy the WarHawk at long range. I have earned the right to use a Kodiak and will be taking the LRM 20 rack and...
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Computer Gaming Review

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ScaryJerry—CompuServe

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Clan weaponry and armor helped carry me through the ambushes. But, no sooner had I given my word to the Draconis General that he would not be killed if I told him where the Mechs that had stolen our gene banks had come from, when my commander called and ordered me to declare vengeance on the man. Seeing that the general's violent death now would serve no purpose other than dooming the entire Ghost Bear Clan, I refused. The information was given to me and the Khan herself has blessed my actions, but I must nonetheless face my own commander in a Trial of Grievance.

As much as it pains me, I know him now to be a fool. He chooses a heavy Mech while I stay with my familiar TimberWolf. As he charges straight in, hoping to overwhelm my armor, I retrograde at full speed on a tangent course while pouring rack after rack of LRM fire into him.

Entry 46 (Mission 14—Underwater Strike): Immediately after touching down on the murky seabed, I turned left and climbed the short ridge in front of me. From the top, closest to the cliff face I spotted an enemy Linebacker on a 345 bearing. It was shut down, and though I could barely resist the urge to call the pilot out for honorable battle, I knew that the underwater modifications had left my Mech unable to take even one unnecessary hit. Instead of behaving like a Ristar, I acted like the lowest Dezgra and maneuvered slowly to expose the Linebacker without leaving the safety of my ridge. Then, with a Saurai on my lips I fired four PPC's straight into his cockpit. The comm didn't even carry a scream.

Anti-missile system modifications, May Kerensky grant me the skill I need to win victory, and the right to save my Clan from Inner Sphere treachery.

Entry 28 (Mission 4—Defend Dropship): No sooner had my Star won the Right of Combat than our Dropship was beset by Draconis Forces. The cowards chose to drop from the skies, but this time they had the firepower of a lance of Victors led by an Atlas. Thank Ursa, I retained the modified Kodiak for this mission. The fighting was so fierce we nearly failed to notice a group of solitary soldiers in primitive battle-suits as they carried Nuclear Demolition charges toward our Dropship's hull. Without waiting for a lock, I sprayed the ground around our ship with LRM fire, eradicating the battle-suits before they could arm the bombs.

Nuclear Weapons! I could barely believe it as the Techs decontaminated our Mechs. No wonder the Inner Sphere is in chaos. They are like mad beasts, not warriors. The Kurultai was right to withdraw Batchall for the duration of this quest. These monsters are too dangerous to afford them honor.

Entry 31 (Mission 7, 8—Raid on Wolcott, Circle of Equals): The raid on Wolcott went bad from the start. I ordered my Starmate in her Kodiak to destroy the Draconis Atlas on guard, while my faster TimberWolf searched for the Draconis General's Mech—but before I could get a lock, I was beset by pairs of Ravens that failed to show up on my scanners. Somehow the Draconis techs had discovered a way to confuse our lock-on computers, and I was forced to dodge through the trees, aiming with my eyes alone.

BIRD HUNTING Hunting Ravens amidst the trees of Wolcott. You can't get a target lock on them, so you'd better get close and brutal with them before they pick you apart.
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HONOR FIRST No matter what your leader says, don’t bust into this base and shoot up the Draconis General’s Mech. Make an honorable deal with him instead, as he’s worth far more alive than dead.

I charged forward, planning to use the explosion and steam as cover, but when I reached the wreckage, two more heavy Mechs activated at 90 degrees relative and I was forced to take cover there behind an upward slope in the cliff. As the enemy fire exploded uselessly against the cliff from below, I edged forward and waited for them to pull back before I let fly with my torpedoes over the lip of the cliff. Once they were both crippled I leapt down and finished them off quickly with PPC fire.

Twice, on the way to find the stolen Draconis Mechs, I found myself having to take cover from wings of attack subs. Though capable of deadly PPC fire, the subs were large and vulnerable to partially armed barrage from my weapons. I would charge to the top of a hill, unleash two or three fusillades, and then back down the shielding side before I could be incinerated.

Once in the cave complex I switched to enhanced imaging to help me gauge the winding passages, and used the satellite map to precisely plan my ambushes of the Mechs responsible for the theft of our precious birthright. Thanks to my raid we finally came to the end of this chasse. The mad Crusader splinter of the Wolf Clan is responsible; their dreams of conquest require genes for future warriors. Their Khan banished them and denied them children, so the Stravag took ours.

Entry 65 (Mission 17—Destroy Orbital Platform): I retrieved the cells of our ancestors successfully, but still it was not enough.

My Kodiak was modified for the space assault by adding jump jets of four rating, and refitted with PPCs and barrage-class medium pulse lasers. No missiles, as the action promised to be too fast for lock-ons to be achieved.

I emerged from the airlock to an incredible storm of fire from four of the Wolf Platform’s turrets. The only way to find cover was to jet straight up against the platform’s hull above me, switch to group fire and quickly destroy the two turrets on my rear flanks. Falling back to my dropship I ran and engaged the forward turret while keeping the platform’s belly

between me and the last turret until I was ready to destroy it at my leisure.

I switched to enhanced imaging to see where the hull breach was, and jetted carefully up through it, emerging to face four Wolf heavy mechs at close range. Three bursts of group fire were enough to destroy the charging TimberWolf; then I backed into a shielded corner, destroying each enemy Mech as they came at me. My sensor revealed a Rhino waiting in the reactor room itself, but my concept of honor has changed so much that I decided to allow the pilot to meet his fate with the station. Knowing I would have less than a minute to get free, I sighted on the reactor wall unit from the cargo bay, using the connecting corridor. A few short bursts ruptured the core, and I spun and raced for the hull breach. As tempting as it was to go at flank speed, I resisted, knowing that the zero G conditions would send me careening over the exit instead of down it.

As I drifted downwards I triggered the autopilot and set the thrusters at four, so the moment I touched down on my Dropship’s hull, the computer would take me to the airlock most efficiently. The lock doors were almost safely closed when everything went bright white, and the dream of the mad Wolves died forever.

(Garbled matrix.) ...oward my genes will be preserved for future generations; but would the Khan so ordered if she knew of my dou... another way? Are we better off being again as we...

...sions of the warriors of the Inner Sphere. Love, hate, birth... Stravag all but...wonder?

It is not known if this warrior survived to fight the Long Retreat. The last fragments of the journal are intriguing. Could he have sensed what was coming?

I am probably mistaken. How could they have continued their useless little wars amongst themselves if ever one knew The Fury was coming out of the dark for them all?

New Mechs In Town

Hort Bear’s Legacy provides a slew of new (and old) Mechs to fight with, as well a couple of nasty vehicular surprises. Mech-jocks would do well to bummel the Schrek PPC tanks at very long range while moving at a tangent, and you will only make the mistake of coming too close to an SRM-Carrier once.

The Inner Sphere designs are nice to see, especially Old-timers like the Atlas and Victor, but as far as the new Clan jobs, the only one that competes with the TimberWolf is the Kodiak assault Mech. The standard config is all right, but I prefer to downgrade the Auto-cannon to a 10 and slap in a large LRMS rack and an Anti-missile battery.
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THE BURBS OF URBS

First came the call from Earth. I networked with my fellow designers to find out more, but everyone was in the dark. Two worlds had been shut down, and the designer of five others had died mysteriously. I picked at random: I'd deal with Urbs first, Aurans after.

The job of restarting a frozen world is a tricky one. First you have to set up a resonance tracer at magnetic north and then you follow its signal to the hidden World Key. Only then can you untangle the problem causing the stasis and get the gears moving again.

TIME FOR A CHAT
In the time-twisted pocket universes of Chronomaster, it never hurts to ask questions of anyone—even parrots squawk out the truth occasionally.

THE WARRENS OF AURANS

Magnetic North on Aurans, like everything else on this desert world, was buried under the sand. When I tried to place my machinery, I dislodged a bottle and woke the six angry jinn imprisoned inside. They demanded to be fed the "Dates of Fasting" and flew me to a fruit-rich oasis. But which fruit was I to pick? Fortunately, my ship has detailed files on Earth religions, and I was able to choose the right meal.

A trip to the canyons brought me face-to-face with a rockslide, quicksand sinkholes, and a cavernous Kittel beast, all frozen in mid-movement. Fancy footwork got me past the first two, but I had to feed the beast a carcass from the oasis (along with some bottled time) to get it to leave the scene. Once it was gone, I took some tiles and a turban from the nomad it had mauled. The turban would come in handy.

On Urbs, a huge statue was blocking magnetic north. Exposure to the bottled time I carried animated the statue, but I couldn't convince it to move until I faced it wearing the uniform and insignia of the Urbs army. A uniform was easy to acquire: dead soldiers lay strewn about the battlefield at a nearby fort. A general's insignia was on display in the museum, but a laser security system made that harder to nab. After I uncrated an antique shield and found a rag, though, I was able to polish it off.

After raising the flag of Urbs' enemies in the park, I woke the statue again and it moved. The resonance tracer pointed me back toward the fort, where my insignia got me past a scanner and into an armory. A bound prisoner stood before the frozen beams of a robotic firing squad, and I knew that if I passed too close the beams would emerge from stasis and complete their deadly path. Fortunately, I found a way to shield the prisoner from them. In gratitude, he gave me a tip I could use on Aurans.

Checking my Direction Finder, I found my way to an elevator and from there to a nuclear reactor guarded by one loyal guard and one faltering guard. I knew that on a world like Urbs, it was the loyal guard I had to back. Sure enough, the Key appeared, taking the form of a sliding tile puzzle. Piece of cake. Facing down the ruling council after stasis was lifted was harder, but a combination of bluffing and discreet respect did the trick. My sentence of execution was commuted.
I'm rebuilding City Hall using the tools in my kitchen.

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TIPS & HINTS — CHRONOMASTER

when confronting harsh desert weather, though I had to mend it first.

On a plateau near a lake, I found Arabou the Trader, whom the prisoner on Urbs had spoken of. Talking with him proved fruitful; he gave me a magic flute and magic sandals. The sandals got me across the spiderwebs in the cavern, and a bit more elbow grease got me out of the maze that lay past them. Then the flute helped me go mano a mano with the giant spider in the nomad camp. Facing down the nomad chief required a more conventional weapon—fortunately, as long as I was dressed like one of them, their guard was willing to lend me a sword.

Generous people, nomads. Another lent me her veil, and after I fortified it with my Universal Tool it got me past the mirages that blocked my way to the palace. Once inside, I visited the bathing pool (where my tiles came in handy, since I used the flute to get rid of another bather) and the treasury (where I heeded the warning not to take too much). The harem was my next stop, but first I had to pass a guard and another Kefteri beast. What would satisfy each? Well, I didn’t need the sword any more, and no beast could refuse a nap after lapping up some of the pool’s calming waters.

The World Key was in the harem, waiting only for me to give up the bottle before it revealed itself. The crest of Aurans needed to be rebuilt; fortunately, I’d seen it often enough, and jigsaw puzzles have never held me up for long.

VIVA FORTUNA!

But the crisis wasn’t over. The saboteur had made it to Fortuna, planet of a thousand games of chance. I got there and found the enemy’s ship right out in the open—but it was impossible to enter even after I’d tricked the ship into eliminating the service droid that blocked my path.

The casino, on the other hand, was simple to enter. I tried my hand at a few games, first using my Universal Tool and a lucky rabbit’s foot I bought at the bar to improve my chances. I also talked to the bartender about the race Fortuna’s ruler intended to participate in later in the day, and to the band, which told me it would help me out if I found them a new glimmold. Fortunately, one of the ugly musical instruments was for sale at the security counter. I played it like a pro, and the band gave me a tip in return.

Next, after using the camera I’d found in the bar to duplicate a guard’s badge, I used the fake badge to bum a ride on the subway. Speaking of burns, a ragged guy in the subway gave me a tip I parlayed into a nice gambling win, and helped me find the extra ace that came in so handy (when paired with the other ace I’d found in the casino) during the Wild West poker game I wound up in at the end of the subway line. Magnetic north happened to be in the saloon, and my tools told me once again that the World Key was back where I’d come from.

When I arrived at the casino, I found one guard knocked out and, after hunting through the maze of ducts and corridors she’d been guarding, the rest of the security staff tied up next to a live bomb. Showing one of them my badge quieted their fears, and covering the bomb deadened the explosion. We reactivated the monitors in time to catch the saboteur using his password to open his ship. (My Universal Tool, bless it, helped me make out what he said.)

The ship opened just as easily when I said it, revealing a partially constructed stasis bomb and a lockpick I was able to hammer into just the right shape to get me past the one locked door in the tunnels. I walked in on the saboteur—Milo was his name—but he won me over by just in time to prevent me from interfering. A grave injustice had been done, it seemed, and he was just righting powerful wrongs. I made a quick decision: I agreed to join him.

I unraveled Fortuna’s glimmold-like World Key puzzle, then joined forces with Milo to beat Fortuna’s ruler in his race. (Milo’s stasis bomb helped, once I finished it with a piece of hardware I’d found under a floor panel near the security room.) Then we split up, Milo heading to Junger and I to the magical world of Cabal.

THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC

There were four planets in the Cabal system: Glitter, Glass, Gem, and Forge. Glitter looked pleasant enough, until a local witch challenged me to a deadly game of “Hangman.” The winning phrase told me something about this universe’s ruler, Avalon Greer; but that aside, I was glad to escape with my life.

I also left with an “Animate” spell, which proved useful when I had to move the witch’s cat off her bookshelf so that I could learn more of her spells. There was plenty more to take, too: a knife, a club, a waterer, and a bucketful of tasty clam chowder. The chowder hit the spot when I traveled to Forge and had to convince a hungry dwarf to let me into his mines.

In the mines, I had my second chance to set up my resonance tracer, and again I was rewarded with a puzzling line of prose in lieu of directions to Cabal’s World Key. The same thing happened on Glass, when I set up my machinery in the Temple of the Phoenix (after teaching its
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TIPS & HINTS — CHRONOMASTER

GIVE UP THE BOTTLE The World Key is in the harem—where else would the maker of a pocket universe keep his most private possession?

Guardians what they wanted to know and making the necessary obelisks (and again on Gem once I'd used the frozen harp to move the unicorn statue out of the way. Four puzzling lines, no directions. Or were they the directions? I recited them and found my machinery working normally once again.

Two new locations were open to me. Before tangling with Avalon Greer, I decided to investigate Cabal’s glorious volcano. A strange tableau greeted me: floating bubbles, sturdy and huge, one with a bedroom set inside. I returned to Forge to borrow the dwarf king’s bubble wand and then used it to transport myself to the largest bubble. A young woman lay in the bed; when she rose she turned out to be Greer’s daughter, and was eager to help me rescue her father from the evil spell he’d cast on himself. Her tips helped me capture Greer’s floating spy, the “crystal eye,” and then her kiss turned it into a tool I could use to defeat him. When I confronted him in his tower, he surrendered.

All that was left, after I sent Milto some warnings that would help him on Jungen, was to solve Cabal’s World Key puzzle. This time it was a potion rather than a spell I had to cook up. First, I planted the flower from the bubble in the witch’s garden, then I watered it and collected its seed and planted that. When it magically burgeoned, I entered it and used the cauldron I found inside to mix water, fire, wind, and earth, plus some powder I’d made from one of the crystals I’d picked from the wall.

I drank, and was done with Cabal. But neither the worst nor the strangest was behind me.

WELL, HELLO DALI

At least Cabal had been internally consistent, had made sense once you accepted the rules of its magic. Verdry was a mess. It looked ordinary enough at first, but soon you found that it was mad: no two locations fit together sensibly, no one behaved rationally. It was like a dream.

I started out in a garden, where my Universal Tool enabled me to talk to the plants. I collected bits of each plant while I was at it, just in case. After a series of conversations pointing me towards a magnetic north I was otherwise unable to locate, I returned to my ship. (Easier said than done: I had to grow another plant just so that I could move a block of stone into position to facilitate my escape.)

Following the plants’ advice, I navigated to the asteroid located at the

“Last night I was so preoccupied in finishing Shivers that I was shocked to receive a phone call from my neighbor telling me that my lawn was on fire!! The fire was RIGHT outside the window of the computer room. Maybe you should put some warning stickers on the box:-)

73304,2767@CompuServe.com

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intersection of two celestial patterns. There was able to take a reading that pointed me toward the location of the World Key.

A strange monster blocked my path when I returned to Verdry's gardens, but I was able to communicate with it by pounding away on a makeshift drum I fashioned out of a hollow stump and some plant bits. Through the gates the beast had guarded, I found a maze of rooms containing odd, incongruous objects: refrigerators and eyes on long stalks, a mailbox and upside-down metal mountains, funhouse mirrors and a boy in knee-pants. In each room I had to collect a wooden stair. In the mailbox room, I had a stair sent to me by rearranging the letters in a note I received. In the refrigerator room, I traded a table leaf I'd gotten in the waterfall room for the stair that was wedged in its place. And so on, until I had all but one of the stairs I needed.

DARK & DEADLY Cabal is internally consistent, ethereally beautiful, and utterly dangerous.

The last one required me to capture the ruler of Verdry, which I did using a corkscrew of a trick I'd learned watching the jinn on Aurans, and then to catch a moving picture show, after a fashion. (That puzzle looked to be difficult, but I nailed it.) The stairs brought me to the World Key, which took the shape of a collection of timepieces. Here at last I was in my element. I synchronized the clocks and then stopped time.

ROLLING THE DYCE

Milo rejoined me for our attack on our foes' sanctuary, a violent world hidden inside an enormous Dyson Sphere. I did a little mechanical tinkering with the sphere's main entrance, and then used my powers of recall to foil the computerized security system.

The ruler of Ursos greeted us with gunfire as soon as we were inside, but a bit of tampering with his mechanized biosuit (which I carried out while Milo kept him distracted) put him out of commission.

We explored the city, turning up a seedy "shop shop" where people could buy bio-mechanical body modifications. I honed up on the surgical techniques until I knew enough to help the chief surgeon. In return for the help and our pointing him toward the biosuit we'd just liberated, he paid me $50,000.

Next, we went to the city's largest estate, a high-security mansion outfitted with a room for the ruler of each of the worlds I'd been to. The Fortuna room featured giant dice, half a lottery ticket, and a coin lost between the sofa cushions; I also took a circuit board from the large-screen TV. The

---

"I just picked up Shivers as an exchange for 11th Hour and I'm delighted with the replacement."

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COMING IN MAY.

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NATURE'S HANGOVER: Bees that talk and eyes on stalks are but a few examples of Verdry's esoteric world structure. Keep your head, talk calmly to the plants, and remember what the jinn taught you.

Cabal room featured wooden torches on a banquet table, as well as a locked chest. The key was under the chest, and a door key was inside it. I took the door key along with some food for the road.

The key opened the Verdry room, which held more of the world's concentrated lunacy than I could stand to look at. I smashed all the glass I could find (including the funny glasses on the jack-in-the-box), and used the coin to get an eyeball out of the gumball machine in the corner. A mushroom appeared, and I used a surgical clamp to pull it out of the ground. Another key was revealed, along with a flute that looked like Arabou's.

This key opened the Urbs room, where a spare biosuit waited to be activated. Once I fixed it with the panel I'd pulled out of Fortuna's TV set, it helped me smash open the door to the Aurans room. Milo, who'd been captured when we reached the estate, was tied up inside and guarded by both a Ketter beast and the nomad chief from Aurans. The flute got me through this tense standoff, and the food I'd grabbed from Avalon Greer's banquet got me past the beast. I collected Milo and the other half of the Fortuna lottery ticket, and we flew off for our final showdown.

Before we could buy passage to the center of Dyce, we needed to cash in the winning lottery ticket; fortunately, a one-eyed robot was at the head of the winners' line and waved his place to us in return for the eye I'd gotten in the Verdry room. We flew to the final hideout of the final villain, where I used my resonance tracer and Universal Tool to solve the World Key puzzle and throw Dyce into stasis. But the villain himself was harder to catch, since he carried bottled time. When I grappled with him, he had the upper hand— but he forgot about my foot. I kicked, and his time ran out.

IF I HAD WORLD ENOUGH, AND TIME...

So, you see, Jester, retirement isn't all rest and relaxation.

But it all worked out in the end, sweetie. Look at what they gave you as a reward.

I suppose.

Not every man has his own universe.

True. But at what cost? So many lives lost, so many ruined...

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Windows 95 Performance
Using The Right Video Card Drivers Makes A Big Difference

If you read one of my tech tips from several months ago (you do read them, don't you?), I mentioned that when you install Windows 95, it doesn't always install an optimized 32-bit driver for your graphics card. Depending on the chip used by your graphics adapter, a generic, 16-bit video driver may be installed which won't take advantage of Win 95's graphics enhancements.

The latest 32-bit graphics accelerator drivers can make all the difference for overall Windows 95 performance. Since these drivers will probably also be DirectDraw-aware, they can make a world of difference for Windows 95-native games.

I popped the hood on my PC and replaced my existing graphics adapter with the Diamond Stealth 64 3200 board, based on SST's 968 chip. To get a better idea how graphics performance will affect the average game system, I also reset my motherboard so that the 165 MHz Pentium chip would run at 100 MHz. When I powered up, Windows 95 detected that I had a new graphics card and loaded a generic 32 968 driver.

Normally, I'm running Windows 95 at a resolution of 1024x768 with 256 colors (I prefer speed over color depth unless I'm doing serious graphics work.) When I reset the graphics driver to my preferred resolution, the first thing I noticed is that my eyes hurt. The visible flicker on the screen was intense. As it turns out, the generic driver doesn't support the standard Windows 95 monitor tables, so even though I'd told the system I had a Sony 17SC, it acted as if I had a cheap 14" monitor.

Tiring not to look at my screen, I inserted the Windows 95 upgrade CD and loaded the 32-bit driver. After a reboot, the refresh rate returned to its normal high rate and my eyes thanked me profusely.

Next, I installed two Windows 95 games that use DirectDraw: MECHWARRIOR 2 for Windows 95 and WARHAMMER: SHADOW OF THE HORSEMAN. MECHWARRIOR 2 runs at a maximum resolution of 640x480 (unlike the DOS version, which can run at 1024x768). In a busy battle, the frame rate went south dramatically. The DOS version of
LOYD CASE

MECHWARRIOR 2 could handle almost any combat at 640×480. WASHINGTON was even worse, particularly in a 3D battle scene with more than a couple of units. Clearly, Microsoft and the game companies must be rethinking Windows 95 game performance. Well, not exactly.

"I'M SORRY, DAVE..."

Let's digress for a moment, and talk about the inner workings of DirectDraw. One of the key internal features of DirectDraw is its Hardware Abstraction Layer, or HAL, for short (you know, like the elemental computer from 2001). When a DirectDraw-aware game access the graphics card, it must go through the HAL. The program calls the DirectDraw Application Programming Interface (API), which in turn queries the DirectDraw HAL, which then reports back to the program what features the graphics card has, like hardware acceleration, the kind of memory it has, the chipset features, whether it has a hardware cursor, and so on. DirectDraw’s HAL is a key technology to making hardware-independent game titles, since a DirectDraw-aware game calls DirectDraw rather than going straight to the metal.

The problem here is that the HAL must be supplied by the graphics card vendor. In other words, only the most recent graphics drivers for a particular card may have DirectDraw support. Contact your vendor to be sure. If you’re running an older Windows 95 graphics driver, it may know nothing about DirectDraw.

Currently, DirectDraw drivers ship with titles that use DirectDraw, and are installed along with the title itself. If the title’s DirectDraw driver goes to query the DirectDraw HAL and doesn’t find one, you have a less than optimal situation. All is not lost though, since DirectDraw also has a HAL emulator. The emulator “fools” the DirectDraw driver into thinking that there’s a DirectDraw HAL, and passes most of DirectDraw’s calls to your rig’s CPU. But there’s a pretty nasty performance hit in going this route.

TO HAL AND BACK

The adverse affect of the HAL emulator cannot be overstated. The HAL emulator knows nothing of the underlying graphics hardware, so DirectDraw (and hence, the game), can’t use any of those nifty features, such as graphics acceleration, on the card. Instead it uses standard Windows graphics routines (known as the Graphics Device Interface, or GDI) to handle all the screen graphics. GDI can, and does, make use of some accelerator features, but the GDI is a very high level abstraction. Trying to use the CDI for game graphics is like trying to get a Chevy Nova to "emulate" a Dodge Viper. You can do it, sort of, but don’t expect to go 160 MPH.

Next, I loaded the latest and greatest graphics drivers from Diamond, which are DirectDraw-aware. Out of curiosity, I ran Ziff-Davis’ Winbench 96 Graphics Winmark, before and after installing the drivers, I saw almost no performance gain for standard Windows graphics.

However, WASHINGTON ran much better than before. Next, I started up MECHWARRIOR 2...and got a black screen. A quick perusal of the readme file for Diamond’s new drivers uncovered the fact that they do not work with MECHWARRIOR 2 for Windows 95. This is a bug, not a feature. Diamond is trying to fix the problem, and may have it fixed by the time you read this. Check their BBS or web site for an updated driver.

STAYING UP TO SPEED

Next, I popped in a Matrox Millennium card, another fairly common graphics card (it ships with certain systems from Gateway, Micron, HP, IBM and NEC.) The version 1.0 Windows 95 drivers also exhibited relatively poor performance with the two test games. Loading up the new 2.2 drivers made a world of difference in both WASHINGTON and MECHWARRIOR 2 for Windows 95. In fact, MECHWARRIOR 2 ran better than the DOS version, which was gratifying.

The moral of the story is simple. If you’re planning on running Windows 95 games, particularly games that use DirectDraw, then make sure you have the most current drivers for your graphics hardware, and be sure they are DirectDraw enabled. Without the right set of drivers, it almost won’t matter if you have a 166-MHz Pentium, you’ll still have performance problems. However, once you install DirectDraw-aware drivers, you will be amazed at the difference in performance. If you have access to the World Wide Web (and you should!), you’ll usually find that the manufacturer of your graphics card has the latest versions of the driver for your card on its web site. C

CTIPS!

These days, hard disks are getting bigger and bigger. However, even Windows 95 still uses the old DOS file system, based on the increasingly crude File Allocation Table (FAT), which is basically a table which contains information about where the files and file fragments live on the hard disk. The maximum number of FAT entries is 65536. The biggest cluster size (also called an allocation unit) is 32,768 bytes (or 32 kilobytes.) If you do the math, you’ll see that the biggest single DOS partition you can have is 65,536 clusters of 32,768 bytes each, or a little over 2.1 gigabytes.

Consider this: if you get a 1.2 gigabyte disk drive, and create one big partition, each cluster will be 32 kilobytes. This means that a one byte file will take up 32 KB of disk space. However, if you partition the drive into two volumes, say a 1 GB volume and a 200 MB volume, then the cluster size shrinks to 16 KB. Since there are lots of small files in computer games, it’s much more space efficient to have smaller partitions. The tradeoff is having more drive letters. The choice is up to you.

Some of you may realize that compression schemes, such as Stacker or Microsoft’s DriveSpace, are very space efficient, since they look like one big file to the computer. However, because of the unique nature of computer game graphics, compressed volumes may actually be less efficient than uncompressed drives. Most game graphics are already compressed, and so the file will seemingly take up twice as much room on the compressed drive, which reports an amount of space based on a theoretical compression ratio. For those of you who are curious: since I have six gigabytes of disk space (one 2 GB drive and one 4 GB drive), I just bit the bullet and stopped worrying about cluster size. I have three 2 gigabyte partitions.
Online Design Diary

IF {Compromise Design} Now
THEN > {Compromise Programming} Later
= Limits {Unnecessary}

by Alan Lenton

In a hotel room near AOL headquarters, I've just fired Nick, my chief programmer, off the laptop. He claims he was "testing" TIEFCELL, a bundled freecell on Windows 95. It's been a hectic month. The first part was devoted to getting everything ready for a game milestone. When people give money for a product, they expect to see evidence of activity at regular intervals. We cleaned up the design document, wrote the storyboards and designed the front end. It was quite chaotic, but everything got there on time.

In the process a number of design issues were resolved--including that of game time. We decided to allocate a set amount of game time for each expedition. The game will keep track of simultaneous sub-expeditions, and figure out how much they overlapped. Players will need to organize themselves in such a way that a minimum of time is spent tracking things down. In this way, parties of players won't be able to start out on a quest and then, simply vanish. We also decided to put a real-time limit on the completion of each quest.

At present, I'm not precisely sure how we are going to implement this time feature. I know some designers start to take account of programming limitations at this stage, but I disagree with that approach. Anything can be programmed, the question is whether it will run fast enough and fit into the target machine's memory limitation. When we actually program this bit of code, we will make any necessary compromises and I'll tell you the outcome. I know the way programmers' minds work. If I make compromises now, I will have to make more compromises at programming time!

While I cleaned up the design, we continued work on the storyboards. I'm not going to tell you much about them, because that would give away the answers. However, I can tell you that everyone's favorite is the search for the mummified remains of Cleopatra's Asp.

One thing that became obvious was that we needed a proper combat system. We had intended to have just an abstract combat system, but eventually settled for a turn-based system with a maximum time for giving orders. We would rather have a real-time combat system, but with network delays looming, we opted for a turn-based system.

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Circle Reader Service #230
Build It, And They Will Come

Apogee’s 3D Build Engine Blends Eye Candy With Blazing Speed

If there’s ever been a holy grail in PC games, it was defined the moment DOOM burst onto the scene. Sure, we had first-person 3-D before, but DOOM defined the visceral experience. For the last few years, everybody, including ourselves, have tried to take a chunk out of that market, often falling far short of the mark.

Apogee’s 3D Realms isn’t just another wannabe in the 3-D market. They started the folks at id on their way with a $3,000 check and had to deal with the pain as id broke free and set DOOM loose on the world, forcing Apogee into a two-year sprint to catch up.

With DUK: NUKEM 3D, no one can argue that they haven’t made up the distance, and they are, for the moment at least, in the lead.

START YOUR ENGINES

A 3-D shooter like DOOM or Duke is comprised of equal parts design and technology. The design can be distilled into the nuances and challenges of the individual levels. The technology is the 3-D engine which makes the game go. In the most simple of explanations, an “engine” is a bunch of program code that handles the core operations of a game. DUK: NUKEM uses the Build Engine, which consists of the code that turns raw data into visual 3-D environments, draws them on the screen and handles all of the little details like drawing and animating slavering monsters and streaking missiles. Strictly speaking, things like artificial intelligence aren’t part of the Build Engine.

Apogee’s Build Engine, written by Ken Silverman, a young self-taught programmer wunderkind (see sidebar), is unique for two primary reasons. First, it is a very fast, very flexible tool to draw complex 3-D environments on the PC. It can create things that DOOM (and its progeny) BBSes stocked for months, Apogee is releasing that very same editor on the commercial CD-ROM of DUK: NUKEM 3D.

TECHNOLOGICAL PROWESS

The Build Engine is a speed demon. Apogee, while designing the DUK: NUKEM levels, would not accept any less than 20 frames per second on a 486-66, and even with that restriction, the visual content of the levels is far richer than what found in any of the other 3-D games out there. Not that Apogee is ever happy about designing for 486s, however.

“A 486-66 is an ancient piece of junk,” laments Alan Blum, one of the DUK: 3D level designer. “We wish they’d all get Pentiums.”

Games like DOOM and HERETIC rely on a binary search partition (BSP) system to precalculate the views you can see from nearly every point and angle within the level. This large data tree is then used by the drawing routines to quickly paint a frame on the screen. Precaclulating leads to a significant restriction, however; the
“lay of the land” cannot change as the game is being played. Buildings can’t topple; walls can’t blow open and doors can’t rotate or swing open. Essentially, the bird’s eye view of a level can’t change at all, since those boundaries are all precalculated.

WOLFENSTEIN 3D, id’s earlier game, which was hand-drawn by Apogee, doesn’t have those restrictions, because it used a technique known as ray casting. This approach essentially traces imaginary rays of light to see what they bounce off of, such as walls and doors. This worked well in the rather simple geometry of WOLFENSTEIN’s castles, but when the environment becomes complex, the time it takes to calculate the light rays increases logarithmically.

The Build Engine uses a technique similar to that used in calculating sector intersections when a DOOM BSP is built, but does it on the fly. By optimizing the code which calculates what can or can’t be seen, and coupling that with high-speed assembly language routines which actually draw that data into the video buffers, the Build Engine can successfully juggle complexity and speed, without the “sectors can’t change” rule imposed by DOOM’s BSP reliance.

ANY SECTOR IN A STORM

The chief atom for the Build Engine is the sector. A sector is most easily defined as a closed polygon. A rectangle for a room is a quick and dirty example. Yet once you dive into the Build Editor, you quickly discover that the sector equals-room metaphor breaks down almost immediately. A sector is more like a “region of interest” than a room, such as a pool of light on the floor, an ATM machine or a desk.

A level in DOOM II is simply a large combination of sectors, each with unique properties, along with myriad placed items (such as guns, monsters and eye-candy).

Sectors may either define the walls of a room, or they may define something else, like a lighting effect or solid object. If you consider the adult bookstore in the shareware version of the game, the magazine
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shelves are sectors that look like objects, while the strange and severe shadows near the bathroom, are lighting effect sectors. Both types of sectors are exactly the same, they’ve just had different properties applied to them in the editor.

In a way, a level map is like a database of individuals. The sectors have unique positions in the level, and each side of a sector, as well as its floor and ceiling, point to a record of unique information, such as the shade of the wall, the texture map which is applied, the slope, the height, as well as any action tags, such as information that tells the engine that this sector is a door which will open under certain conditions, and so on.

When the Build Engine is up to begin a DUK NUKEM 3D gaming session, it initially combs through the level data to remove any “invisible” sprites and then places the sector data in memory. As you play the game, the graphics routines use the sector information, both the boundaries of the sectors and the attached information, to determine which sectors you can see and how to draw them.

**INTO THE EDITOR**

Creating levels using Silverman’s Build Engine is at once a simple and a highly involved art. To simply create a “generic” room, you can just place the points for a rectangle in the 2-D, CAD-like portion of the program.

A simple key tap brings you into the 3-D portion of the editor, which is just like the game itself, except that you may now effect changes on the environment you see. Initially, the room is low-ceilinged and all surfaces are covered with the generic “dirty bricks” texture. A few keystrokes is all it takes to raise the ceiling, change the wall texture, add a parquet floor and dim the lighting to a more subdued tone.

If you jump back into the 2-D editor and draw another rectangular sector within your room, it will turn red, showing that it isn’t a “walled” sector, but an interior sector. Back into the 3-D mode, you won’t see any changes, but you can modify that sector on its own.

A few keystrokes, and you can recess the rectangle into the ceiling, apply fluorescent light texture to it, and turn the brightness up to maximum. Another few keystrokes and you can illuminate the floor rectangle to create the illusion that light from above is shining on the floor. You can even raise the sector out of the floor and apply a desk texture to the top of it.

When designing a level, you need to think ahead, since sectors are not the equivalent of rooms. Generally, a level starts out a one or just a few huge sectors, with everything else added on after that. To create stairs, for example, you must create a sector for each step and then “extrude” them out of the floor.

When you apply a texture to a surface, a 64x64 bitmap texture tile is applied to the entire face of the surface. Often, your wall or floor won’t mesh perfectly with the tiles, so the editor allows you to slide the tiles around on the surface, as well as to stretch or expand the image, to get just the right fit.

Once you have your room the way you want it, you can add details, like a potted plant or a pig coop, simply by returning to the 2-D view and placing a sprite. Back in the 3-D editor, you can then change your
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think like the Build Engine, not like a commonsensical human being.

Beyond the visual, though, the Build Editor is the tool used to create all of the event linkages in your level. Sprites and walls all have an attribute called a "low-tag" which is a numerical value that allows an object, such as a sprite or a switch, to be associated with an action, such as opening a door or raising a platform.

In addition, several "special purpose" sprites, which are called out in the pre-game read of the level, can be placed anywhere on the level. These sprites can allow the designer to create realistic actions such as triggering a horde of enemies to charge the player who steps through one of these invisible objects.

MANY MONTHS OF DUKE

Even with the Build Engine and the powerful editor in hand, Apogee has spent close to 20 months creating the levels for Duke Nukem 3D. A level's design often evolved from one of the Apogee crew discovering some cool sector effect, such as the ability to create subway trains, for example.

While it may take weeks to craft a particular level map, it takes even more time to work through that level and tweak it for gameplay (both single and multiplayer) and frame rate.

"Since the Build Editor is so easy to use, said Blum, "you can instantly create something that's dog-slow."

Using the editor, which can display the current frame rate, designers Allan Blum and Richard Gray can call particular regions, simplifying and modifying to make sure that the game performs as promised.

As mentioned above, creating stairs requires you to create and raise a sector for each step. When the Build Engine is calculating a view that contains steps, it must deal with each and every sector of
the steps each time it calculates a frame. Because of that, nothing boggs down frame rate like steps. Halfway through the project, the team was frustrated with this limitation and turned to Silverman for a solution. He modified the engine to allow it to handle slopes, so that a single sector could be used instead of many. While steps are crucial in some levels, slopes have been used in other places to keep the frame rate manageable.

Many of the spectacular effects in **Duke 3D** came about as the designers forced the Build Engine to its limits. In level two of the shareware version, when the building blows up, allowing you access to the yellow key, Blum discovered that if you placed a canister of C-9 explosive on the ground, and then shrink it to its thinnest proportions, it is visible in the editor while invisible in the game. This allowed him the opportunity to “pre-orchestrate” a massive explosion by placing dozens of these emaciated canisters in front of the building.

Blum and Gray have also logged many hours improving certain levels of the game to enhance the multiplayer experience. Generally, the smaller, more compact levels favor multiplayer, while the sprawling levels are ideal for solo outings.

“We may give net players a great place to hide and snipe from,” admitted Blum, “but there’s always a way to get there. Most of the time, you can also hear them creeping around. That’s because I don’t like waiting... I like to kill waiters.”

**GIVE ‘EM WHAT THEY WANT**

“Some people think that we’re nuts, just giving our tools away,” said George Broussard, president of 3D Realms. “The way we look at it is that we spent two years developing this thing, and we’re not going to use it anymore. We’re moving on to newer technology. All that’s happening here is that people are going to have fun and enjoy a product for a change.”

“With the Build Editor, you can basically experiment to your heart’s delight, and you can break anything... you’ve seen all those **DOOM** editors out there — this just kicks their ass.”

“I used to play **DOOM** all the time,” confessed Blum, “but, ugh, I can’t take it anymore — I can’t ever go back to **DOOM**.”

What you fear, you will covet.
What you loathe, you will worship.
What you ravage, you will rule.
What you are, you will abandon.
You traveled across the galaxy to attack us. You claim our parents freely chose to colonize this world for you! No, this is our world! You drew first blood. Now you must die!

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Hey, is it spring already? Seems like just the other day we were getting into autumn, and now the winter's already over! Where does the time go? I guess you can lose track of it when you're with a good computer. You can also lose track of it when you're in a computer, and not a good one, at that.

**I Have No Mouth But I Must Scream** is based on Harlan Ellison's short story of the same name, but you don't have to have read it to play the game. It wouldn't help you anyway, since while the game deals with the same characters and same evil computer, the action here is pretty different from the story. (It may not be of much help in the game, but you're missing a treat if you don't read the story—Ed.)

Five people—Gorrister, Ellen, Benny, Nnamok, and Ted—are captives inside AM, a sentient computer that has wiped all life off the earth. AM hates everyone, and has kept these "lucky" folks alive to torture them endlessly, both physically and mentally. Not exactly a cheery situation.

Now AM is playing a new game with them, and that's what this one is about. Each character goes through a custom scenario created by AM, designed to exploit that person's weaknesses. Naturally, the computer hopes they will foul up. Your job is to see that they don't. You do this by making the right choices, and keeping an eye on the Spiritual Barometer (SB), which is the background color of the character's portrait. It starts as black, turning brighter green as you perform the right actions.

Perfect play will bring the SB up to white, although that isn't absolutely necessary to "win" the scenario. However, it is vital that the color be at least very bright green for each character to ensure success in the endgame. The order of play doesn't matter; each scenario is self-contained, so you can start with any of the five and continue in whatever sequence you like.

**Gorrister**
The first task here is to land the airship safely. Make a tour of the vessel, being sure to pick up all possible items (look especially carefully around the kitchen). One door is locked, and can't be opened until later on. Once you've got everything in your hot little hands (if they're a bit messy, wipe them off), it's time to foul up the works a bit. As long as the engine is running, safe landing isn't possible, so you'll want to do something about that. Then...
Jackal is waiting out back. You do have to give him what he wants. That will get you in to see Edna and Clynis, although you may want to hop back to the airship first for another look at the dining room.

There’s not much you can do for Clynis right now. As for Edna, I wouldn’t trust her too far, but taking her down is a good thing. It’s best not to be violent here, no matter what. And you’ll finally get the key to the locked door on the zeppelin, too.

Before leaving the meat locker, you’ll want to take a really close look at the beef carcass, as well.

After you’ve read Edna’s diary, Cerrist should be in pretty good shape. Now he can do something for Clynis, and after that, it’s time to take off. If you remember what powered the ship before, you should have an idea of what (who?) to use to start things up. And you can end things with a real bang by going out the rip for a final chat with the Jackal before leaving.

ELLEN

Ellen gets to play around in an Egyptian-motif pyramid, tastefully decorated in mainly yellow, a color that gives her panic attacks. The monitors are important; be sure to see both scenes on them, and don’t be afraid to do a little repair work. That will get you down below, where the fun begins.

First we have the Anubis room, where Ellen can’t do much except talk to the statue for now. Beyond is a room with a couple of items, including some yellow cloth that she has trouble picking up.

That should give you some ideas about Anubis. Following through on that means going back upstairs and grabbing the cup, which ought to be easy enough now, and I don’t have to tell you what to do with it.

Once Anubis is more cooperative, Ellen can enter the sarcophagus to relieve the event that caused her fear of yellow. All I’ll say about this is you can’t run, you can’t hide, and you better not give up.

After this little interlude, Ellen passes through a room she saw on the monitor, then the heavy yellow room she couldn’t walk into before, which brings her back, eventually, to the terminal room, and the right-hand terminal, now usable. This part is pretty obvious, and before long, Ellen is chatting with a computer that isn’t AM (how interesting; looks like AM doesn’t know quite everything).

It mentions something she overlooked, which is likely back in the gold statue room. There’s only one thing to do: go back, get it, and use it, dangerous though that may be. Then it’s just a matter of leaving this delightful place, and Anubis has...
"The trail was colder than an icebox in an igloo. I had a list of shady suspects longer than my bar bill at the Dew Drop Inn. But I was on to something. She was 5 feet 4 inches of trouble and I was just an inch away from being 6 feet under."

*The Dame Was Loaded* is about lust, danger, diamonds, deceit. And it's about time. Finally, 40's *film noir* and full-screen video make their debut on PC and Mac CD-ROM. You're Scott Anger - a skirt-chasing, wise-cracking, piece-packing LA P.I. - here to unravel a plot with more curves than the enticing young widow. The trick is to gamble for clues and work to one of 9 gripping climaxes. Remember, this dame could make you filthy rich. Or just make you dead.
some advice on that.

**BENNY**

Benny's been deformed by AM; he can't speak beyond a few mumbled sounds, walks crunched over, and doesn't have much use of his hands. Don't feel too sorry for him, however; there's a dirty secret in his past that he'll have to confront and overcome in this scenario.

He's been dropped in a sort of jungle/primitive native type of place. After a quick check of the area (that altar looks ominous, and so does the graveyard, for that matter), it's time to visit the inhabitants. Don't worry too much about the left-most cave; you'll be able to get in there when it matters.

The village elder doesn't have much to say, and it's really the mother and child who are important here. Benny will have to get on good terms with them before much happens; perhaps a little gift would do the trick. Then a close look at the video screen is in order.

It won't be long before we find out AM gets some jollies by demanding sacrifices from the natives. Good old AM, Benny's probably all tied out by now, but he can't sleep while he's hungry. Tired some of the fruit yet? Not too nice, is it? Maybe his new friends can help him.

Morning comes along, and mom isn't around the cave. Well, this is sacrifice day, after all. Maybe we should look in on this. Yep, everyone is gathered around the altar, and guess who pulls the black stone? Of course, the kid's mom. Unfortunately, there's nothing you can do here except watch what happens, and then tell the boy the bad news. A dismal day, and the sooner it ends, the better.

On the next morning, a look at the elder's video screen shows AM wants another sacrifice tomorrow. He (it?) is really becoming insatiable; I wonder if there's a way to stop this craziness? Wonder while taking a walk to the cemetery. This is a good place to save, as the wrong conversation line will cost Benny some SB, and we don't want that.

Back at the village, it looks like the elder has gone out food gathering, and left a little something behind. How convenient! Help yourself, and chat with the boy afterwards. He won't hide unless he has a doll for company, so it's time to make the rounds to find the parts. The head and body are easy enough; for the connecting material, you'll want to visit the left-most cave.

Now you have to do something about the bag; it wouldn't be wise to be seen running around with it, although there is someone who might be interested in knowing what Benny's logging around. Remember to bring a little gift for Brinkman, too.

So the final comes around, and surprise! The kid is gone. I wonder where he could be? Where else but the altar? Need I say what must be done here? Of course not, so just do it.

**NIMDOK**

Of the five, Nimdok probably has the worst sins in his past, but even he can make amends of sorts and find a little redemption. He starts out in a camp, and it won't take long to discover it's a Nazi experimental station. Yeah, Nimdok has some sins to account for, all right.

After a quick chat with the prisoner, look in on the hospital. I wouldn't recommend performing the operation, but you might want to do something about the other doctor. A nasty exit is then called for, and not the way you came in.

Nasty little Recovery Room, isn't it? You can't stay here right now, though, so find the other way out, into the oven room. There's a couple of things to pick up here, and something to read (happily, you don't have to do anything with those ovens). By then the excitement should be over, and you can exit to the yard and return to the hospital (security around here doesn't seem to be very good).

A new patient has replaced the boy, but skip him for the moment and talk to the kid (fortunately untouched) in the other room first. Back in the operating room, you may want to ease the patient's pain, and then go back outside to see what's what there. Another prisoner has turned up, caught on barbed wire and slowly dying. There's probably a couple of things you can do for him, before talking to the original inmate again.

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man in the operating room. This is a good
time to honor his original request. Step
into the anteroom for a moment (some-
things you need is there), then make tracks
for the oven room exit, because the pris-
soners just broke out of confinement (gee,
I wonder how that happened?). Either
conversation line will get you through the
gate and off to the bunker.

What Nimdok needs to do here is get
the golem operational. First though,
check out the vat very carefully, for an
important item, and be sure Nimdok
looks at it. After examining both the blue-
prints and the golem, what comes next
will be obvious. You do have to be careful
about what you say here; though, being
honest is important.

On the way out, you'll run into
Mengele. It's tempting to kill him (after
pumping him for all he has to say), but
there's a better way of dealing with him.
Outside, Nimdok finds the prisoners have
captured him. He only has to do one
more thing with the golem, and the sce-
nario will end.

TED

Ted's not so
bad as some;
his main prob-
lem is shallown-
ness more than
anything else.
He starts in a
room with sev-
eral monitors;
choosing the castle is the right move.

Once inside the castle, he soon comes
across Ellen (his girlfriend, apparently; no
relation to the other Ellen above), who
isn't long for this world. She tells him
about her magic mirror that protects her
from her evil stepmother. Too bad the
mirror is missing; now we'll have to find it.

As you check out the various rooms, be
sure to read all the books you come
across, and, as usual, pick up anything you
can. In the kitchen is a maid who might
be helpful; I don't advise accepting her
offer of a cozy bed, though.

Okay, so she wasn't much help; at least
Ted is keeping himself pure for the
moment. You may be wondering about
that little icon from the chapel; while
nothing important hinges on this, it will
raise Ted's SB a little if you figure out
where to use it.

You may want to look in briefly on
Ellen, where a Devil has appeared, wait-
ing to grab her soul when she dies. This is
also a good time to check
those bookcases again, in case you missed
something the first time
around. Then you can go
looking for the secret pas-
sage in the chapel (you
knew there had to be one,
right?).

This brings you to a
confrontation with the
witch. By all means, find
out what she's up to, but
don't accept any offers. If you read the right
book, you'll know how to deal
with her, and then you
can summon up the demon yourself.

Surgat can open anything, and there's
likely a room you haven't been able to
enter yet. No, the mirror isn't there; all
you can do is look around, but one item
should give you a pretty good idea as to
who nabbed the mirror. I have a chat with
the culprit to obtain a clue to the mirror's
location. This is tricky, because it's not in
the chapel. Try the lord of the manor's
room.

After Ellen pops off, you have to decide
whether the angel or the devil gets her
soul. We'll hope you make the right
choice here, and then follow the winner's
dadvice to bring the scenario to a success-
ful conclusion.

END GAME

This is a little disappoin-
ting. The only one to
send over, really, is
Nimdok, because only he
can operate the pit station
to open the bridge. You
can also ignore the five
power nodes, as the game
can be finished without
touching them at all.

So Nimdok goes over,
arriving on what looks like the surface of a
brain. He carries five totems; these items
come from the successful completion of
each of the five scenarios, and all have
their uses here. Look at them to see what
they represent in this segment.

Once across the bridge, the first to use

Good can't exist without evil. It's hard to believe.
but the chapel is the route to the devil Surgat, whom
you need to win the game.

is obvious, and our friend Surgat shows
up. Don't trust him too far. Eventually, the
other two computers appear, and they
have some instructions for you. I wouldn't
trust them too far, either.

Three computers, three faces. I'll bet
there's a connection here (huh). I'll bet
there's also a connection with three of
those totems, too. What to use where will
be obvious after some conversation. That
leaves only one item, and where to use
that should also be obvious. Amazingly,
the game comes to a happy ending, of
sorts.

Where? That's about it for now. Until
next time, happy adventuring! 5

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Despite Clichés, Legend Scores A Critical Sci-Fi Hit

by Martin Cirulis

I must admit to a dark secret: I have a problem with Adventure Games. Namely, I usually don't find them to be very adventurous. I grew up on the escapades of heroes, both real and literary, and, while they were all quick of mind and had to deal with occasional mazes, I don't remember any of them having to endure all the endless, insane, and unrealistic puzzles disguised as problems that infest every square inch of the average computer adventure game. So it was with more than a little trepidation that I booted up Mission Critical, the new SF title from Legend. Fortunately, Mission Critical is a pleasant surprise, a rare game that can serve as an example of how to do a good, straightforward SF adventure.

MILITIA FANTASIES

Mission Critical sports an extremely well fleshed-out story and background, except for the clichéd premise so common to SF adventure games: the evil UN is spoiling everything, and only clever Americans can lead the way back to freedom. In this case, all those crazy foreigners take over the world and preside over certain technologies, specifically nano-bot AI lifeforms, as being harmful to mankind. Eventually, a group of countries rebel against this motherly yoke and break away to form The Alliance, which fights in the name of uncheked scientific advancement, eating cake for breakfast and running with scissors. Of course, knowing how hotheaded those UN types are, a long war of secession immediately breaks out; and attrition being what it is, the Alliance finds itself slowly losing ground and in desperate need of an unbeat able tactical advantage such as the accidental discovery of an Alien outpost on the distant hell planet Persephone. This is where you come in.

You are an Alliance Naval officer and basic Good Guy, and while it isn't stated overtly which country leads the Alliance, your starship is the USS Lexington—leaving little doubt which way your apple pie is buttered. Your starship Battlecruiser is escorting a science ship into orbit around Persephone, when suddenly a UN Battleship pops out from around the far side of the planet and ravages both Alliance vessels so badly that your captain (played in near-subsonic fashion by Star Trek TNG's Michael Dorn) must surrender. Fortunately, all is not lost, and in a kamikaze maneuver, your Captain knocks you out to fool the enemy scanners and transports the crew of both vessels to the victorious UN Battleship. But much to everybody's chagrin, he also brings along a thermonuclear warhead that goes boom at the moment of docking.

This renders you both friendless and enemy-less in a single white flash, and incidentally leaves you with the almost impossible task of continuing the mission alone... but I guess Worf figured that a slim chance is better than no chance at all, and preferred to die rather than let the UN take the prize. Contrived? Yes, but you have little time to ponder this as you are greeted by the scream of escaping air, followed by the polite computer pointing out the deck you are on will soon blow out into space, unless somebody gets his act together and patches the hull breach.

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video frame for the story, which consists of some pretty fair acting for 20-old minutes at the beginning and another 10 or so at the end, you are faced with an SVGA first-person perspective game that initially looks like a well-done version of ALIEN versus. Only after you begin moving about the Lexington do you realize that this is more like an SF version of THE 11th HOUR, with that same high resolution moving-through-sympathy feeling as you mouse-click your way down halls. While the SVGA look is modern, the actual game mechanics are classic tried-and-true adventure game stuff.

While I'm sure none of this sounds revolutionary to most of you out there, the real strength of this game is not in the mechanics, but what you are expected to do with them. MC strives, and usually succeeds, in giving you realistic problems to solve, some of them lethal but most not. There is no game-playing security program or pointless maze in this game. Your task for the first half of the game is to get the Lexington functioning again so you can figure out exactly what is going on and then decide what you are going to do about it, but the beauty of this game is how much credit they give the player. Instead of insulting your intelligence with time-consuming "puzzle" tasks, MC gives you "real" tasks like figuring out how to re-route coolant into the reactor or fixing the antenna so you can get orders from the high command. Things are almost as easy as they first appear, but the obstacles are organic to the story. Rarely do you feel the obtrusive monkey wrench of fate which designers use to stretch out adventure games or make them "more challenging."

Players should be warned that there is a major combat sequence in the middle of this game, but it is more tactical than arcade in execution. Players unwilling to mix strategy with their adventure can set the difficulty to its lowest level, and the game will run through it for you like another video sequence. Also, those expecting another DOG will be surprised that the exploration of the Alien base only comprises the last third of the game, and the resolution is probably far more philosophically complex than most players are used to.

MISSION: ENJOYABLE

MISSION CRITICAL has its problems, and for all the obvious work put into it, there is still a "first product" feel to the game that may put off the experienced gamer despite the good graphics and excellent sound. On the other hand, this game is both extremely stable and its system requirements are wonderfully low in this age of muscle machines and sloppy programming.

The story is good, recovering well from a weak start, with the wonderful fleshing out of the sets and backgrounds carrying most of the game. There is a small lack in the drama department, most of the climatic moments being well-conceived but a little too flat or cerebral to deliver a lot of excitement. On the other hand, the ending is probably one of the deeper ones I have seen lately.

While far different in execution, MISSION CRITICAL shares many sensibilities with Origin's SYSTEM SHOCK, another great SF adventure game, and I heartily recommend this game to anybody who isn't wearing a "I'm so clever I finished THE 11th HOUR in 90 minutes" T-shirt. Even more importantly, I find myself eagerly awaiting the next adventure from these designers.
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Psychedelic Carny

The Residents Will Make You Think Twice About Those Carnival Hot Dogs

by Mark Clarkson

In the most broad sense, Inscribe's Bad Day on the Midway is an adventure game. It plays out in a dark landscape that's equal parts had dream and good mushroom trip, complete with off-center camera angles, blurry transitions, and carnival-esque attractions that defy description. One "ride" whisks you through a gallery of emotional scoring (Consumed by Unseen Self, Paralyzed by Mob Inertia, Brain Buried by Lihido ...); another features graphic paintings of atrocities from the Spanish Civil War. There's even a spasm whale giving birth to an electric eel right across the midway from the Three-Headed Abominable Snowman.

Then there are the aptly-named characters ... a collection of ecclesiastically pathetic souls that you don't just talk to, you become, seeing the world through their eyes, privy to their innermost thoughts.

There's Ike, the owner of the Midway, who feels a certain kinship with Hitler. His previous venture—a fascist miniature golf course where every Monday was "Master Race Day"—went under. Now that he's laid up with a bad cold following some unspecified accident involving acid, the Midway's in trouble, too.

Ike's none-too-bright bride, is gamely trying to fill his shoes while pursuing her life-long dream of becoming an enchanted singing cowgirl, like the one in the stories her daddy used to tell. Her motley work force includes Otto, the whimsy operator whose only friend is Oscar the Racing Rat; Dagmar, whose relationships with dogs and men are intertwined throughout her life and tattooed across her body; and Lottie the Human Log, who dances and sings a happy little song about the time her legs were mangled in an automobile accident.

PAUSE BRIEFLY FOR PLOT DEVELOPMENT

There's also a deranged psycho on the loose, working to rid the earth of ugliness by killing everyone and everything that offends his personal sense of aesthetics; even kittens aren't exempt. He collects scraps of this and that from his victims and fashions them into lovely "butterflies."

This is a dark game, populated with profoundly disturbed people sporting twisted world views. The only vaguely happy camper is Timmy, an innocent little boy given to Freudian dreams and wistful memories of his departed hamster, and even he's known to shoot people. Everybody's got a story to tell, from Ike on down to the Racing Rat, and hearing as many of them as you can is a big part of the game.

I sat mesmerized by Bad Day on the Midway for nearly an hour, neither knowing nor caring what the plot was. As William Hurt says to Tom Berenger in The Big Chill, "Sometimes you just have to let art flow over you."

But it turns out there actually is a plot of sorts. Ike Is desperate to find tax papers with which to fend off the tenacious IRS agent, some money to pay the bills, or at least some more ammo for the Kill A Commie Shooting Gallery. ("Why don'tcha come on in and knock off a few Commies?") Luckily, there's rumored to be a fortune in gold hidden somewhere on the Midway.

Meanwhile, the man who may be responsible for Ike's accident—that weren't no accident is back, in disguise. As you play, time keeps ticking away; come nine o'clock, the Midway shuts down and the game is over, if you survive that long. There are many ways to die in Bad Day on the Midway as there are characters to play. You can be shot, murdered by the psycho killer or crushed beneath the skeleton of the three-headed abominable snowman. And, oh, did I mention the plague? By nightfall, peo-

THE EYES HAVE IT Bizarre as it looks, the game's interface is sheer simplicity; take your time, because the clues you need are often a mere mouse click away.

Price: $49.95
System Requirements:
IBM compatible 486-33DX or better
Windows 3.1 or better
8 MB RAM (16 MB recommended), 256-color Graphics, 2x CD-ROM, 16-bit sound card
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Design: Jim Ludinke and Lain Lamb with The Residents
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pie are dropping like flies.

Playing the game through won't take you long: an hour or two. But with Bad Day's many characters, choices and surprising helpings of pure randomness, it's never the same two hours twice.

**TILT-A-WORLD**

The characters are played by stiff-jointed puppets with actors' faces projected onto their heads, composited into Bad Day's tilted, 3D-rendered world. The result is decidedly funky and not very realistic, but it fits well with the look and feel of the rest of this demented game.

The introductory sequence flies you over the midway then swoops down and punches straight through the back of cute little Timmy's head, leaving you looking out through his eyes. After that, any time another character stops to talk, you have the chance to "jump" to that character, trading one set of eyes and inner voices for another.

The characters' interior monologues play out in broken fragments across the bottom of the screen. It's a mistake to ignore them and go clicking your way frantically about the midway, looking for clues; most of your clues are right in front of you.

Rather than the typical, linear game where we follow a single character down a long, narrow path — find the key, enter the city, find the balcony, find the balloon, fly to the balloon with Bad Day offers a shorter, wider, more convoluted plot path which you experience over and over from different perspectives. No single pair of eyes sees everything; no one person knows the whole story. The point of the game is to play it through again and again, to explore the inner worlds of all the characters, to experience every possible ending, including all the death scenes.

While there is as much multimedia as game here, BAD DAY nonetheless manages to tell several good stories, when most adventure games can't even one good take. Jim Laidl in The

Residents have given the genre a much-needed spike of health — a dark glimpse into people's souls, exploring alienation and deformity and insanity and death, with a big dash of macabre humor. If this virtual drug trip isn't for you, fine. On the other hand, if you want to try something truly different, BAD DAY may just be your ticket.

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Deep In The Keep

A Traveler’s Aid For Unlocking STONEKEEP’s Toughest Puzzles

by Petra Schlunk

Do you ever stare at walls, unsure if they are real or imaginary? Tired of mystic symbols and unfailing orbs that leave you cold? Will the purple mists around your head never clear? If so, you aren’t alone — Interplay’s STONEKEEP is filled with puzzles that can stump even experienced players. The following guide will take you to healing fountains, show you where keys are hidden, and what dangers to avoid. Be careful, however, lest you spoil the game for yourself by reading too far ahead of your current position.

FROM RUINS TO SEWERS

First, find your way downstairs from the tower and head east. Go up the stairs in the southeast corner to find the nearest healing fountain. Mark this location; Drake will return here many times to recuperate from his battles. After you defeat the Sharga in the central room, you get Afris’s Orb. Placed on the ground in front of Drake, this orb reveals hidden rooms and nearby unexplored areas.

On level two, find the illusionary walls by: 1) trying to walk through the walls — somewhat difficult; or, 2) wait until you have freed Earl the dwarf — let him detect the walls for you. Make sure to go down both stairwells from the first to the second level, or you may not find everything. The Ivory Key is on the second level in a room with two sacks of grain; this room is opened with an Iron Key dropped by three Shargas after a battle.

Two exits lead from the Ruins to the Sewers, and you must fully explore both routes. The Sewers can only be drained, however, with two cylinders hidden under the brackish water. Step back, literally, and you will find a cylinder in each of the two Sewer sections. Place these cylinders in the mounted drain cylinder switch control devices on the previous level, then press each device. This drains the Sewers and opens the two walls there that Earl commented on.

In the center of the Sewers lives a huge tentacled beast. Kill the beast, brave adventurer, and get the small marble statue that it drops. In the area surrounding the beast’s lair, listen for the sound of the whistling winds. When you hear them, go through the illusionary wall to your east, so that you can exit the Sewers. You find that you have re-entered the Ruins, but are in an undiscovered area. Once you find the pedestal, place the statue on it to open a passageway to the Sharga Mines.

THE SHARGA MINES AND THE TEMPLE OF THROGGI

In one area of the mines, Drake falls into a pit — it’s inevitable, don’t fight it. Be prepared to back up quickly, though, or a giant will smash your character with a huge boulder. Elsewhere, you find this giant sleeping by a chest. He can’t be killed, but you really must get to that chest — how? Once again, retreat, then smash the barrels near the chest with a ranged attack — firebombs work well for this. Afterwards, the Giant will have fled the premises, so you are free to recover the Throggish Key and Aquila’s Orb from the chest. By using Aquila’s Orb on the party, Drake can heal everyone two times on each level. The Throggish Key unlocks the western exit of the second level of the Mines, leading to the Temple Entrance.

Beware! A section of the Entrance is full of arrow traps. Make sure you’ve explored everywhere else that you can
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ELVEN FROZEN TREAT Cast a low level firebolt spell or use Helion’s Orb to thaw out this frosty elf.

reach beforehand. Among the items you should find is a scroll on a dwarf's body. The scroll has a list of directions (right, forward, left) for getting through the arrow zone intact.

Now, take the stairs beyond the traps to reach the Temple of Throggi. While the Temple has a lot of puzzles, your main goal is to enter the temple proper (door with frizzly face at the top), get an orb from a statue of Throggi, and exit the level. There are two ways into the inner temple. One is a secret passage that leads from a prison cell to the temple. The other is through the main entrance if you have fought Gorda Kam and recovered the Throg Pendant from him.

Inside the inner temple is a statue of Throggi. Steal one of his eyes: this is Azrael's Orb. Used on Drake, it endows him with Quickness, and you must have Azrael's Orb to pass the gate of spears near the entrance to this level in any case. Beyond the spear gate is the next level, the Feeding Grounds.

THE FEEDING GROUNDS AND DWARVEN FORTRESS

'To reach the Feeding Grounds' second level, you must find one of two copper-colored Throggi Keys. There are two doors on level one with glowing green glyphs that damage Drake if he tries to pass them. Until Drake has been to Feeding Grounds level two, he won't be able to pass these glyphs safely.

Once you've reached level two of the Feeding Grounds, you find some red feathers. These allow your party to pass the glyphs on the doors upstairs. When you meet the chained dragon, you free her by finding two halves of a sturdy key.

Also on this level, you encounter the infamous purple wisps. Even if they irritate you (as they do the Dwarf), keep in mind that these wisps are fairies and therefore friendly! Where the fairies disappear is the entrance to the Faerie Realm; keep this in mind for later. Meanwhile, you should check out another item on this level: a huge stone, made of magic flint, something you will definitely need later on.

After you've explored the accessible areas of level two of the Feeding Grounds, return to the first level and go through the glyphed doors, one of which leads to the Dwarven Fortress. Here you meet a blacksmith whose forge must be re-lit before he can help you. Take the magic chisel he gives you, and return to Feeding Grounds level two. Use the magic chisel on the large stone to get a piece of flint. Return to the fortress, re-light the forge and get the key fixed. With the new-whole key, first unlock the chains binding the dragon's legs and then the ones around her neck. After she leaves, you can explore the corridors that her body had previously blocked.

FAERIE REALM

Plant a primrose on the second level of the Feeding Grounds where fairies keep disappearing; this opens a small room to the east that leads to the Faerie Realm. Three things must be done here. First, find what each faerie is missing and get items or advice in exchange. Second, you must visit the Queen — the fairies are more than willing to offer advice, and give you some key items needed to see her. Third, you must explore the troll area. Do this only after you get the four-leafed clover from Sweetie. The clover lets you see the trolls, making it easier to kill these tough monsters.
qlm tera’ngan!
(Attention Earthers!)

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To see the Queen, you need two keys (from Giggles and Sully) and some primroses. Use the two large keys on a keyhole near the ground to the right of the spear gate. Go through the gate. Drop five primroses at the Queen's door (you may need to step back before dropping the primroses) and go twice around the square walkway in front of her door. Then you can enter and see the Queen in all her glory. Finally, be sure you kill all the trolls! You must find Yothi's Staff of Orbs (which can recharge your muncasters) in the troll area.

ICE Caverns

Be sure that you complete the Faerie Realm before heading to the Ice Caverns. Here you must find a special weapon to show to Kandor, leader of the local tribe. A hint: use Afris orb often. When you see a "secret" area, try hitting the wall that blocks your way.

There are two such breakable walls; behind one is the weapon, a blue ball of fire.

After you show Kandor the blue fire, he leads you to a secret passageway. Go through the passage and kill the Ice Queen. She drops Helion's Orb, which is a warning orb. It thaws out any frozen characters and keeps your party from taking further damage in the Caverns. A new exit, south of the Ice Queen, opens after you kill her. This leads to the Gate of the Ancients.

GATE OF THE ANCIENTS AND THE PITS

Your main objectives here are to find: 1) the exit in a secret area in the middle of the Gate of the Ancients; and 2) Safirim's Orb. Explore this area carefully for illusionary walls, buttons and teleporters. Descend all pits and ladders you find to get to the Pits. Make sure you search all of them. It helps to mark explored ones on your map so you know where you've been.

In one of the first areas of the Pits are three rooms and a plaque that warns not to be greedy. Enter the middle room to get the Wolf Key, and use it to open a door in the Gate. In the area behind this door you find the Eagle Key, which in turn opens another area, where you find a Very Sturdy Key. This key opens the last door on this level.

To get to the center area (and the exit) of the Gate, go to the Pits, where you read a plaque about "rising above your station." Use Safirim's Orb to float up through the hole in the ceiling at the end of this hallway, then try to walk through the walls you find. This may take a few tries until you find the right wall. When you manage to pass through to the center area, explore it carefully and be sure you have six orbs before you leave.

THE PALACE OF SHADOWS

The Palace has left and right sides that are mirror images of one another. So, when you find a button or illusionary wall during your explorations, understand that there will be one just like it on the other side of the dungeon.

In the Palace, you find two mystic symbols. Placing both symbols together in the places where you find them reveals the entrance to the central halls of the palace. Down the center, Maris's giant orb blocks your way. So shrink and collect it. This orb gives great strength and allows you to pass formerly impervious barriers. Past one of these barriers is a floating skull called Scounge; near him is the exit to Klull.

KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF MY ORBS In the final confrontation, bravery and strength will get you nowhere. Try trapping Khull Khumm instead.
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Khuun's Tower. The exit is obscured by a magical barrier; break it by casting Specterspell or Murphy's Rune.

**KHULL KHUUM'S TOWER**

The Tower has four levels in addition to the Lair of the Dark Dwarves that you can reach from the first level of the tower. Don't go straight up the stairs as suggested by the gargoyles at the beginning of level one! Most of the tower levels have many illusionary walls and buttons that open secret passages; so be extra careful exploring. Before your final confrontation with Khull Khuum, there are a few things you must do.

Retrieve a scroll with strange markings from the Dark Dwarves. Use these markings (ignore spacing, lines, and capitalization) to solve the puzzle behind a loose brick in the hallway opposite the door that damages Drake when he tries to open it.

On level one, recover the silver ankhl and find the shimmering cross on a wall. There are several places in the tower where you will find such ghostly markings. You must have the corresponding silver item to pass through these walls, to be teleported elsewhere.

On the next two levels find the remaining three silver items and use them to go through any walls that bear shimmering symbols. On the third level you will find a wall with all four symbols. Passing this wall takes you to the fourth level of the tower.

Khull Khuum is on the fourth level, in the very center. You must step into the center square to meet him. You cannot kill him; you must trap him instead. Use the four silver items on the plates around the center to trap Khull Khuum and destroy him.

With the orbs you get from Khull Khuum, you are ready for the last challenge. Head south through a newly appeared wall with four markings to get to Ther'a Temple.

**THER'A'S TEMPLE**

Of the nine pillars in the Temple, only one at a time will be highlighted. You must put the correct orb on each pillar to restore the temple. The orbs represent planets and they go in planetary order, according to the table below. As soon as you place the last orb correctly you will hit the epilogue. Congratulations!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orb Of...</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helion</td>
<td>gold with red stippling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquila</td>
<td>golden, healing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thera</td>
<td>Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azrael</td>
<td>red, quickness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marif</td>
<td>red and gold swirl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afri</td>
<td>gold with ring, mapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salrinni</td>
<td>green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoth-Soggoth</td>
<td>medium blue with horizontal dark blue swirls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kor-Soggoth</td>
<td>blue-gray</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Solve The Master’s Riddle
A Speed Learning Course In Ancient Chinese Secrets

by Arinn Dembo

It isn’t easy following in the footsteps of a master — especially a canny old genius like Master Lu. If you’ve run into some obstacles while guiding Robert Ripley through the twists and turns of this game, I’ve got just the clue for you.

Po-Ping, first visit: Having trouble getting rid of that pesky peasant? Tired of seeing the charming snapshot of Ripley’s grave? The key to handling this guy is what he does for a living: collecting salvage metal. The only way to get him off your back is to arrange a distraction with a valuable piece of metal — say, by putting it where he can’t immediately reach it.

Pomerania: Finding the entrance to the Baron’s secret laboratory is difficult, unless you’re a real ace. It’s in the billiards room, naturally — but where? There was a clue for you when you opened the drawer of the gaming cabinet — something was missing. But it’s hanging around here somewhere!

Once you escape from the Baron’s lab, of course, there’s still the problem of breaking into his tomb. You’re going to have to go back to New York and get someone to help you on this caper — don’t forget to bring refreshments for the trip.

Puzzled in Peru
There are three important locations in Peru, and you should thoroughly search all of them, including the one you’re standing in — the Posh Express office.

Mocha Moche: Here’s your chance to get rid of that cursed Emerald, but I’m sure you’ve already figured out who you can palm it off on. The main challenge here is keeping Ripley alive while he hangs over the side of the tower, trying to recover a gleaming artifact from the skeleton niche. The key to solving this dilemma is a simple formula: two vines equal one rope, so long as Ripley doesn’t have to trust his full weight to them.

Easter Island: It takes an odd combination of engineering, navigation and arts and crafts skills to get through this part of the adventure. Ripley will have to do quite a bit of extra leg work. Here’re a few suggestions to move things along:

The first thing to do is get the Watching God back on his feet; it’s going to take some leverage to accomplish this. The fulcrum (base) of your lever is lying on the beach. I’m sure you can put together the rest of simple campsite materials. As for the Watching God’s missing eye, it has been broken into two parts, the pupil’s location is as plain as the nose on your face, but the white of the eye has been taken from the island.

Dr. ‘Twoheaded’’s shed is awfully useful. Ripley should search the place at least once before exploring the quarry, and he may find something in there to get himself and ‘Twoheaded’ out of a jam. He just has to be careful not to blow his own horn until the trap is set.

Sikkim: The Temple of the Hidden

Scaling The Wall

Near the Hall of Classics, go behind the blacksmith’s shop to collect the pitons from the wheel.

In the alley, take a look at the beggar’s pile of junk, and buy the stone amulet with your yuan.

To get rid of the beggar, you must first trade your photo for her WWII helmet. Then scale the wall to the Hall.
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Way presents an interesting series of problems. The monks here are cryptic, deliberate creatures; virtually every word spoken, both at the gate and at the Temple, has two meanings. Of course, you won't get through the gate at all unless you figure out how to pass as one of the brothers. The monk of the temple is the ring that the gatekeeper wears on his forefinger. Look through your inventory; the Baron may have given you more than one key.

The challenge of the Temple is three-fold. The gatekeeper has told Ripley that five of the Brothers have been given the wrong prayer wheels. Ripley must rearrange these five prayer wheels until each monk has the correct wheel. To be brief, the monks with the incorrect prayer wheels are in cells #4, #6, #9, #12, and #13.

Keep in mind that a monk who knows a certain prayer does not need the prayer wheel for that virtue. It took me some time to realize that Ripley was also supposed to be looking for the Brother who had been studying in the Temple longest. Why? Well, because Ripley is seeking the Hidden Way—and, as the gatekeeper said, “Only he who studies longest knows the Hidden Way!” The problem of the prayer wheels is actually an elaborate logic problem, a test to see whether supplicants are intelligent enough to be allowed into the Temple.

Here's the solution. USE the prayer wheel brochure to identify the wheels, and give each to the appropriate monk:

Monk #4 Knows Prayer of Insight Has Wheel for Serenity Needs Wheel for Wisdom
Monk #6 Knows Prayer of Wisdom Has Wheel for Peace Needs Wheel for Serenity
Monk #9 Knows Prayer of Truth Has Wheel for Insight Needs Wheel for Peace
Monk #12 Knows Prayer of Peace Has Wheel for Truth Needs Wheel for Insight
Monk #15 Knows Prayer of Serenity Has Wheel for Wisdom Needs Wheel for Truth

When all the prayer wheels have been put in place, talk to Monk #9, the senior monk who can open the Hidden Way. The Hidden Way is in cell #14, and consists of a maze beneath the temple (see “The Amazing Maze”).

When you reach the exit from the maze (it has a rather complicated ladder apparatus instead of four ropes hanging in the center) PULL the rope in the upper left corner to lower the ladder. Climb the ladder into the cupola, look at and sketch the copy of Master Lu's writings, then climb back down the ladder. Finally, at the Sikkimese Post Express Office, send the bone chisel and the incense burner to Peng Li, and buy a ticket to Pei-Ping.

Pei-Ping, second trip: This episode can be frustrating, since Ripley has so little control over the unfolding of events.

There is no way to remove the gun from the brazier. The only way to protect Ripley from the exploding bullets is to shield him—or to use an object shaped like a shield. Once our heroes are no longer in danger of imminent death, and Ripley has his journal back, there’s still the problem of recovering the solution to Master Lu’s puzzle. Kuoang ripped out the vital page of Ripley’s notes, and there’s no way of getting it back—or is there? Take another look at the journal, and consider that Ripley has to press awfully hard to make those bold, thick lines when he’s sketching.

The Emperor’s Tomb: The farmer has everything you need to break into the tomb; don’t be afraid to ask him for equipment. Once you’re in, the solution to Master Lu’s Riddle will become immediately clear. The last hurdle in the tomb is one of the most difficult; a lake of mercury bars Ripley from the entrance to the Emperor’s mausoleum. Keep in mind, however, that mercury is much denser than water (and thus has a higher surface tension), and a somewhat silly solution may present itself. I hope you didn’t forget anything at the jade door.

If these clues aren’t enough to help you bag the Seal of the Emperor Shih Huang-di, all is not lost. A complete walk-through is available on the Net. See “Following in the Footsteps of the Master” on CGW’s web page: http://www.zd.com/~gaming

The Amazing Maze

A
as mazes go, The Hidden Way isn’t the worst you’ll see; at least it contains no deadly surprises or traps. Since the maze is rectangular, consisting of square rooms connected by paths of light, the best way to get through it is to create an old-fashioned map on graph paper. The Hidden Way is 11 rooms in length (I would suggest making this a height measurement) and nine rooms in width. Counting from the top and left, Ripley enters the maze in the fifth room of the second column. There are artifacts to be collected in the maze: an incense burner in the bottom room of the eighth column, and a bone chisel in the ninth room of the first column. You can collect these if you wish, but Ripley doesn’t need them to solve any puzzles. The exit to the maze is in the sixth room of the fifth column. If you have absolutely no luck mapping the maze yourself, you can try to follow this sequence of directions: it should take you to the exit. (R = door to the right side of the screen, L = door left side of the screen, D = door to bottom of the screen, U = door top of the screen, D = door to bottom of screen)

DRDLDLDLDRRRURRRDRRRURRRUUURRRRRURRRRDDDDLDUUUUULULULLULULLULLULLUL (EXIT)

Building Your Collection Of Exotics

Location Oddities to be Collected

Pei-Ping
Rebus Amulet, Silver Butterfly

Pomerania
50,000,000 mark note, World’s Cheapest Stamp

Mocha Mochi
Shrunken Head, Wheeled Toy, Crystal Skull

Easter Island
Whalebone Horn, Stick-and-Shell map

Sikkim
Bone Chisel, Incense Burner

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DRDLDLDLDRRRURRRDRRRURRRUUURRRRRURRRRDDDDLDUUUUULULULLULULLULLULULLUL (EXIT)

Building Your Collection Of Exotics

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Mocha Mochi
Shrunken Head, Wheeled Toy, Crystal Skull

Easter Island
Whalebone Horn, Stick-and-Shell map

Sikkim
Bone Chisel, Incense Burner
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A Break In The Action

Mixing RPG Elements With Action Could Lead To STRIFE

The bloom came off the rose early: WOLFENSTEIN IN 3-D changed forever the way gamers thought about action and the IBM, but it also suffered from a basic limitation: You went around killing people. That was pretty much it. And, five years later, that's still pretty much it.

STRIFE, scheduled to be published in May by Velocity, takes this evolution another step. This 29-level action-adventure, developed by Rogue Entertainment, finally pushes the Doom II engine into RPG territory. It has potential, and a first look suggests you'll want to take another.

The story so far: A comet struck your home planet. It released a virus, and millions perished. Others were not so lucky: they mutated, and the mutants, responding to the voice of an evil God in their heads, formed a ruling class called 'The Order.' (Yes, as you've probably gathered, there's some larger force at work here.)

Meanwhile, you're just trying to stay alive. If you manage that, you'll eventually find yourself working for the resistance movement as a "problem-solver."

Why do I even bother setting the scene? After all, the stories that accompany action games are usually irrelevant. They take up a couple of pages in the manual and an end-of-episode screen, but enjoy no real in-game existence.

CYBERMACE began to change that, and STRIFE makes the story integral to the gameplay. If you like, you can race through the game, shooting, grabbing and filling up your inventory. (Nice touch: You can drop stuff.) It's an action game, after all, and you can't be everybody's friend. You'll especially enjoy wreaking havoc with the flame-thrower, which reduces all corners to a burning crisp.

But perhaps you're better off talking and thinking and maybe their shooting. After all, there are non-player characters to be questioned. Sometimes you'll get the '96 equivalent of "Ugh, me tough," but other times you'll be able to extract a useful nugget (after extracting a useful nugget from your own purse)—for instance, that it's gameplay that sets off the alarms in town. You can even question the acolytes you encounter when the game...
begins. At least, they're honest in saying: "We're going to kill you!" And so they arc, unless you set about using that little dagger in your right hand.

Consider: early in the game, you'll run into a fellow named Harris, who'll set you on a mission. His voice is shy, his forehead is high and his eyes don't quite look in the same direction. You wouldn't buy a used personnel carrier from this man. And, sure enough, you may discover in the course of your mission that Harris is a rat. Take the key he offers when you return from your sojourn, and you're setting yourself up for a deadly trap in the governor's office. Kill him, as he so richly deserves, and you're on your way to finding the hidden rebel headquarters.

Descent II has been out for over a month now, and it's 360-degree, 3-D action has been commanding the attention of action gamers everywhere. Here are some cheats to alleviate frustration and mortality. To use these cheats, simply type them in while playing. You don't need to type anything to initialize the cheats. But you can try typing garbagegabbergley, the old Descent cheat-enabling code, for a little surprise. The cheats are not case sensitive and will work with the Descent II demo on the CG-ROM.

Descent II Cheat Codes

BITTERSWEET—Creates a warping effect on screen.
ERICAANNE—All weapons bounce off walls and doors, though they still do damage to enemies.
MOTHERLODE—Gives you all weapons and full ammunition.
CURRYGOAT—Immediately gives you all keys.
EATANGELOS—All weapons automatically home-in on targets.
JOSHAUKIRA—Automatically provides you with a complete map of the current level.
WHAMMAZOOM—Warp's you to any level.
ALIFALAFE—Immediately gives you all accessories.
ZINGERMANS—Bestows invulnerability.

You'll find money along the way (a nod to CYBERMAGE here), and can use it to buy weapons and armor in shops, and treatment at the hospital. You'll find trainers who will improve your skills, whose lessons will ensure that you shoot straighter as the game progresses. And you have allies. You can't command them, but, in the fashion of the armed "Bob's" of MARATHON II, can use their presence to good effect.

The concept of levels has changed as well. You know how it usually works: walk in one end, kill everything that gets in your way and walk out the other. Here, they're not so much levels as pieces of an environment that flow into and out of one another, which you will cross and re-cross through many avenues. (In the demo, the town connects with the Oder's sanctuary in three separate places.)

Saving is also handled differently. In DOOM, you could save anywhere — on the crest of every crisis — and that shortened the life of the game. Here, you can still try to save anywhere, but STRIFE records your progress only if you've reached certain benchmarks. Unlike the MARATHONs, which used this concept to fine, game-lengthening effect, STRIFE handles it invisibly. (After all, having a game-saving device on a wall is rather unrealistic, isn't it?) This should at least make players more cautious. Dead isn't dead here, but dying invariably means you'll have to replay some portion of the game. It's a good idea; the action game in which death isn't a threat isn't much of a game.

Not to say that everything was just hunky-dory in the teaser. Some wall tiles and certain items and character graphics were rather muddy and broadly-drawn. The designers didn't seem to have done much with spot lighting effects — the whole place is lit up like a basketball court — or more general ones that might reflect the passage of time (a useful tool in an RPG). The single saved position per character may not sit well with DOOMers accustomed to saving at every dark corner, and would seem to invite the player to paint himself into corners. After all, if you saved after a crucial mistake, you'll have to restart the game, since recovering from your saved point won't do you any good; you already saved after the fact, remember? This can be a real problem if you've played for dozens of hours and are suddenly forced to restart the game.

Playing from the beginning can be frustrating, but this approach definitely makes you think, and can lead to more intelligent gameplay.

But while I have trouble with some of the details, STRIFE looks like a solid game. It seems the DOOM engines are going to be with us for a while yet. The action-RPG is here. And the bloom is back on the rose.
YOU'RE GOING DOWN.
AGAIN.

Introducing Descent II.
10 new weapons, 30 new levels.
Toggle beam floodlights.
Afterburner speed doubler.
Twice the 360-degree insanity.
You're going down.
Again.

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Computer Game Review

DESSENT II
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Visual Computing

“A multimedia accelerator... breathes new life into entertainment & business applications.”

Building The Ultimate Visual System

With the recent boom in multimedia, everybody wants brilliant graphics that display instantly. But to get the ultimate visual quality, you need to build a visual system. The best tool to boost your computer’s visualization is an add-in board called a graphics accelerator that dramatically improves graphics through greater resolution, color and speed. The result is better overall system performance. Applications run faster, and shifts between applications and pages are quicker. Games, CD-ROMs and spread sheets perform better and video playback is more vivid. Within the accelerator category, a range of solutions are available.

See more, do more

Let’s say you have a computer and a 15-inch monitor that offers 800 X 600 resolution. For running applications like Microsoft Excel, Word, and (when no one is looking) some games, the best strategy is to find a 64-bit accelerator.

Check the bus

Make sure the accelerator is compatible with your computer’s bus; the pathway connecting the new card to the computer’s microprocessor. If your computer is a Pentium, it probably uses a PCI bus. A VL-bus is usually found on a 486, while older computers are likely to have an ISA bus. 64-bit accelerators in this category include the Stealth64 Graphics 2000 Series (VLB and PCI), and the SpeedStar 64 Series (ISA), both between $100 and $150.

Get started today without a big expense

To take advantage of applications with video, like multimedia encyclopedias, opt for a multimedia accelerator with 2MB DRAM. On top of improved 2D graphics performance (such as a Stealth64 or SpeedStar), a multimedia accelerator adds full-screen digital video playback, including software MPEG, to your visual system. Be sure a multimedia accelerator supports your operating systems and includes software to customize your desktop with features like resolution switching on-the-fly. Diamond Multimedia’s Stealth64 Video 2001 Series incorporates all these features, at a starting price of just $150 and includes Diamond’s InControl Tools desktop productivity software, and supports most operating systems, including Windows 95.

Select the performance level you need

If you are using more graphically intensive programs or are using a larger monitor with high resolution, such as 1280 X 1024, you should consider a multimedia accelerator with faster memory, such as VRAM, for more visual horsepower. The more video memory, the higher color depth, the greater resolution your system can achieve, and the faster your screen displays will move. Look at the Diamond Stealth64 3000 Series, at a starting price of $299.
Video On My PC

Some of the hottest computer systems today are those equipped with MPEG playback. MPEG technology compresses and decompresses digital video and audio to deliver full-motion, full-screen digital video playback with realistic clarity, color, resolution, and sound. Diamond offers a video playback board, the Stealth64 Video 2001 which enables these types of capabilities.

Video adds a new association

Using video to educate and train via computer allows people to learn through actually seeing the lesson, providing detail and intimacy that text alone cannot provide. In the realm of entertainment, the Internet and commercial online services are loaded with video clips of favorite actors, musicians and politicians. With MPEG, these video clips can be viewed at full-screen, full-motion.

There’s MPEG and then there’s MPEG!

One point of distinction within MPEG is hardware versus software. MPEG software is the more common. But for higher resolution, higher quality video applications, with lip-sync, smooth motion and interactivity, as well as maximum playback speed (referred to as “frame rate”), hardware MPEG is the preferred solution. Because hardware MPEG ensures a consistent rate of playback at 30 frames per second while delivering remarkably clear playback of video clips, movies, and games, it can offer improved performance on older slower systems, and add the ability to listen to CD-quality MPEG audio.

Diamond’s MPEG Video Player 1100 Series daughtercard, at $129, offers the additional performance of hardware MPEG technology, with the Stealth64 Video 2001 Series multimedia accelerators. This Stealth product utilizes the Scenic/MX2 MPEG decoder from S3, a leading supplier of MPEG solutions.

I want my PC TV

New TV tuner technology takes the marriage of video and computers even further. This technology allows a broadcast, cable TV, or a VCR signal to be displayed on your monitor, either in a window or full-screen. You can even capture single frame or video clips with this new capability. Imagine having part of your screen dedicated to a stock quote broadcast while working on a PowerPoint presentation. Imagine putting that image in your PowerPoint presentation! You can get that capability with Diamond’s DTV 1100 TV tuner, at $129. It’s another upgrade option for the Stealth64 Video 2001 Series of multimedia accelerators.

Business and Entertainment Graphics Supported by S3’s ViRGE

S3 Inc., the leader in multimedia acceleration for PCs, has introduced 3D technology to its complete line of award-winning 2D graphics and video accelerators. Called ViRGE, this single-chip solution delivers for the first time, powerful 3D rendering, fast 2D graphics, full-screen digital video and optional support for hardware MPEG and TV tuner/video capture to the mainstream PC market. The flexibility of its design provides for a variety of 3D multimedia accelerator configurations that improve the performance of multiple operating systems as well as business, professional and entertainment applications. Shaping the future of 3D, the S3 ViRGE can be found on the Diamond Stealth 3D 2000 series. Contact S3 through the Internet at http://www.s3.com

New Dimensions In 3D

3D technology goes one step beyond standard multimedia accelerators and brings a completely new experience to computing. Multimedia presentations incorporating 3D deliver more impact than 2D graphics. With 3D accelerators, graphics arts, action games, and 3D on the Internet are more realistic. For gamers, 3D signifies a new level of immersion and interactivity. The technology allows for crisper graphics at resolutions as high as 1024 X 768. Better 3D accelerators also support the special effects used in the newest 3D games, including texture mapping and perspective correction. Many are designed specifically for Windows 95, so be sure the one you choose supports the new Microsoft DirectX APIs that game developers will be supporting. Many 3D multimedia accelerators are multi-function, and have features like real-time 3D and 2D photo-realistic graphics, full-screen, full-motion digital video and hardware.

Diamond offers a family of choices in 3D

Diamond’s EDGE™ 3D multimedia accelerators incorporate all of these features and come with Sega Saturn compatible control pads*. Starting at $249 for 1MB of DRAM, it is bundled with the Sega titles: Virtua Fighter® Remix, Panzer Dragoon® and NASARR Racing from Papyrus. Diamond’s Stealth 3D multimedia accelerator (available June ‘96) delivers high-performance 3D animation, fast 2D graphics and digital video playback acceleration, providing advanced performance for multimedia, games and business applications. Starting under $249 for a 2MB EDO DRAM version, it is bundled with professional software (Asymetrix’s 3DFX® and Digital Video Producer®) as well as cool games (Interplay’s Descent™ II and Sony’s Destruction Derby”).

For more information on visual systems contact Diamond at http://www.diamondmm.com/visad-cgw

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Communications
Are you up to speed?

Integrated Multimedia Communications — Changing The Way We Work

Communications are not what they used to be. Sophisticated communication tools were the spoils of big business only. Small business struggled using multiple phone lines and a desk cluttered with specialized devices — out of the office meant out of touch. Last year, 9.2 million Americans called themselves telecommuters, and today blank stares go to those without an e-mail address. Advanced communication is here... as long as you know how to get connected.

The answer for many telecommuters and home-based businesses lies in a powerful, integrated communications system. A comprehensive product delivers complete Internet access, file transfer, fax, voice messaging and e-mail, as well as transfer rates 28.8 Kbps and beyond. Such a solution can also distinguish between incoming fax, data and voice calls on the same line. Conveniences important to small business such as: remote network access, Caller ID, alpha-numeric LCD display, and pager notification of messages are also available. Now anyone can add a full-spectrum digital switchboard to their computer. Big business no longer has the communication advantage!

The development of modems that handle voicemail and fax means cutting the costs associated with additional equipment, services, personnel and phone lines. At higher speeds, the cost of long distance calls, Internet access fees and time spent online drop significantly. Being wired to the broad base of the World Wide Web provides extraordinary information collection capabilities, as well as exceptional promotional opportunities for small business. For example, an interactive magazine combining text, graphics, sound and video can be produced at a reasonable price. The Supra Communications Division of Diamond Multimedia, Inc. offers all these capabilities in the SupraSonic 288V+, a fully integrated communications solution priced as low as $299.

Rules for the road
Don't access the Internet at less than 28,800 bps unless you're ready for a nap.
The higher your transfer rates, the lower your access fees and long distance charges.
The better the compression technology, the faster your transfer rate.
Look for features such as headset support, Caller ID, and message notification by pager, fax or phone.
Remote access to fax and voice messages will help you keep in touch while you're out of the office.
The details count! A solution which includes all the cables you need in a single package saves you time and money.
What to do on the Internet

Promote your business
Look for a job
Visit new countries
Play video games
Send mail around the world
Visit the Smithsonian

Chat with friends in Europe
Browse libraries
Listen to new music
Read encyclopedias online
Publish your artwork or writing
Read product reviews

"What does it take to surf the Net, send and receive e-mail, and download that Web page everyone is talking about?"

Jumping On The Internet — Without Falling

The Internet is leading the remote connectivity charge. But with all the buzz about the Internet, many people are still relatively confused about what it all means and how to take advantage of it properly. Although the Internet is growing rapidly due to soaring business demand, an estimated 90% of American homes are yet to be connected. Lively discussions about the hottest Web sites, who is the best Internet provider, and how to get online without headaches fill the business press as well as popular news magazines and even Ladies Home Journal.

What does it take to surf the Net, send and receive e-mail, and download that Web page everyone is talking about? One of the simplest solutions is to get a comprehensive Internet kit that offers everything needed to get wired quickly and painlessly. Now you don’t have to be a technician to enjoy this new realm of communication!

But buyer beware. There are many kits available that offer partial or non-integrated solutions. For example, some kits contain software only. Others provide a lower speed 14.4 Kbps modem along with off-the-shelf software (or shareware) and an Internet book — none of which is specifically integrated to work together. A complete solution will have you surfing quickly and simply because the modem, software, Internet service provider and manuals are designed to work together seamlessly and are supported by an established leader in communications. To reduce Internet access fees and prevent watching your screen download a single file for 15 minutes, choose a state-of-the-art, high-speed, 28.8 Kbps modem. To take full advantage of the speed, you’ll also want to connect with an Internet service provider that can be accessed at 28.8 Kbps (not all of them can). Your provider should also have local access numbers in your area (so you’re not paying a long distance fee each time you call), and enough ports to handle a large number of customers (so you don’t get a busy signal when you want access). You’ll also want to ensure that your kit comes with one integrated software program that encompasses all the primary services the Internet offers: e-mail, the World Wide Web, Gopher, USENET and FTP. Finally, while it will be simple to hop on the Internet with a good kit, make sure the included documentation and manuals specifically address all the items in the kit. All the features required for easy Internet access are available in the Supra Simple Internet 288. This comprehensive solution, over a $300 value, is priced well under $300 and includes a CD-ROM tutorial as well as an Internet Directory.

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BEHIND THE SCREENS • APOC/pre/3D REALMS

Duking It Out
3D Realms Heats Up The Fight For Action Game King
With DUKE NUKEM 3D And Three Other New Games

by Ken Brown

For 40 years, the Corvette was the unchallenged king of American sports cars. There were the “Goats”, and the Hemis, the Mustang and the Zs, but these brutes couldn’t match the Corvette’s combination of speed, handling and shimmering good looks. The Dodge Viper is the first serious contender to the Corvette’s throne, crank- ing up the competition for premier American power trip into a real two-way battle.

But what took 40 years in the auto world only takes three on the PC. Doom’s reign over 3D-style action games has suddenly been challenged by a univer-badass named Duke Nukem. Duke plays the star role in 3D Realms’ new action game which has created a big stir on the Internet in shareware version with its richly detailed environment, challenging gameplay and controversial content.

So, the battle for the hearts and synapses of action gamers has suddenly turned into a real heat. And since id Software is already a household word for gamers, we wanted to get a closer look at the upstarts, who not so long ago were merely considered “ab- rons” in 3D gaming, but who now, among other things, drive Dodge Vipers.

ID’S IN THERE

If you’ve down- loaded the shareware version of WOLFENSTEIN 3D, DUKE NUKEM 3D, you know about “The Apogee Model.” The founder of Apogee, Scott Miller, invented the idea of selling the later episodes of shareware in 1987, with a text-based adventure called the KINGDOM OF KROZ (Zork spelled backwards). It was a huge success, earning up to $200 a week by 1990. At that point Miller decided to chuck his day job and become a game tycoon.

In his search for game programmers, he discovered a young designer/programmer named John Romero. Miller enjoyed Romero’s monthly games for Softdisk magazine, so he sent fan mail to get the programmer’s attention. The strategy backfired when Romero, after tacking up his fan mail, discovered a common return address. He fired off a heated letter suggesting prudential uses of the address’s pen.

“So I wrote back,” says Miller, “and said, ‘No no no, you’ve got it wrong, I want to distribute one of your games. And they were interested, but John [Romero] wanted some money up front. So I said, ‘How much?’. And he thought about it and said, ‘Three thou- sand dollars’. So I said, ‘Okay, you got a deal.’ It was almost all the money I had — I only had $5,000 in the bank.”

It was an exceptional investment. Romero and some friends wrote COMMANDER KEEN, which began raising in $500 a day. Since the programmers’ take was 40 percent, they decided to form a company: id Software.

In May of 1992, after two COMMANDER KEEN games, the young jellings (Romero, John Carmack, Tom Hall and Adrian Carmack) delivered WOLFENSTEIN 3D. Wolf’s bloody, first-person action single-handedly propelled id and Apogee into the big leagues. It was, in the words of id’s “Biz Guy,” Jay Wilbur, “a hit like the shareware world on the PC had never seen before. Some people think that the shareware version of WOLF 3D was the most installed piece of software in the world, period. Even bigger than MS-DOS, because, back then, there were several versions of DOS.”

Following the success of WOLFENSTEIN, id went on to develop DOOM and discontinued its partnership with Apogee. Miller and company suddenly found themselves without a game; a develop-
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ment team or an engine, a predicament which Miller vows will never happen again. Scrambling, Apogee licensed the WOLFENSTEIN 3D engine from id and produced BLAKE STONE, which looked and played like a hasty WOLF knock-off. The seeds of Apogee’s “copy cat” reputation were sprinkled upon BLAKE STONE’s grave.

Then came DOOM. While id basked in the glory, Apogee released RISE OF THE TRITIAD, ROTT, while not quite DOOM, had several aspects which elevated it above most DOOM-alikes. It could be played over network or modem, allowed flight, enabled destruction of various objects, and featured copious amounts of blood and gore. These and other features formed a prelude to DUKE NUKEM 3D, including flying body parts and large splatters of bloodied wall.

After ROT'I, Miller and company intensified their efforts in 3D-style games by creating their 3D Realms division. Their first game was 1995’s TERMINAL VELOCITY, a graphically appealing shooting star which burned up soon after entering earth’s atmosphere. Despite its later release as Microsoft’s Project TV did little to dispel the notion that Apogee’s games still weren’t “A” caliber.

DUKE KICKS DOWN THE DOOR

Then, DUKE NUKEM came to town. Begin in late ’94, DUKE uses a powerful game creation tool called the Build engine (see Paul Schuytema’s column on page 103). It also owes some of its design and detail to id’s former Tom Hall. In the rich detail and high level of interactivity of DUKE 3D, players not only run and fly, but swim. Bullets leave recoil marks on walls, blood can be tracked in footprints, and large buildings can be brought crashing to the ground. (This effect even seemed to take id’s John Romero by surprise. According to Miller, when Romero saw it he was stunned, saying only, “Oh shit, that’s cool.”) It’s all a real treat in 640x480 or 800x600.

In addition, the character of Duke has a distinctive attitude, thanks to audio clips triggered throughout the game. Grabbing a shotgun, Duke says, “Groovy.” Picking up the rocket launcher, “Who wants some?” Vaporize three pig-faced LAPD guards with a well-placed RPG, and Duke blurt, “Holy shit!”

In addition to an occasional expletive, Apogee decided to introduce more mature content into a computer game. So, the nightclub scene in the shareware version has dancing strippers expose their breasts. Though Duke’s ability to shoot them sustains the game’s atmosphere, it is sure to remain controversial.

There is even more sexual content in Episodes 2 and 3. Women have been abducted for use as Alien-style hosts and are found tied and dangling in positions suggestive of erotic bondage. It’s enough to make you wonder who they made this game for—adults?

“We got tired of making games for 12-year-olds,” explains Apogee’s pres-
How many degrees of punishment can your PC subject you to?

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Battle Arena Toshinden

Remember those G-Force carnival rides that whirled so violently someone’s little brother inevitably spewed? And that movie where the girl’s head spun totally around? Kid Stuff. Because in Battle Arena Toshinden, your PC now hurl’s abuse at you from all angles, all at once, for as long as you can take it. A 3-D thrashathon reeling off the coolest graphics, nastiest street-fighting moves and sexiest characters this side of the 4th dimension, Battle Arena Toshinden puts a whole new spin on gaming. And a whole new warp on your perspective. Because here, the most brutal torture of all isn’t getting clubbed, slammed or bludgeoned. It’s walking away from the next fight.

http://www.playmates.com
ident Miller: "When I go see a movie, most of the movies I'm interested in are R-rated. I don't want to see a PG-rated movie, so why should we make PG-rated games?"

What's interesting is that sexual imagery is a recent addition in Duke's development. The game was in development over a year before the company got the idea.

Level designer Richard Gray proposed adding a topless woman somewhere in the game. The team liked the concept enough to "flesh it out." "We asked ourselves: How can we get sexual content into this game?" says 3D Realms president George Broussard. Broussard and Miller say the response to Duke's sexual content has been so overwhelming, they're even considering an X-rated commercial version. Miller quickly adds, "We don't care if Walmart bans it. Other places will carry it, and we'll say 'Banned In Walmart' right on the ads."

GOING 'EM A NEW ONE
Of course, the real charm in any networkable action game is a healthy arsenal with which to dismember friends. In addition to the 9mm semi-automatic, double-barreled shotgun, chainsaw cannon, and rocket-propelled grenade launcher, there are pipe bombs which can be thrown and detonated by remote control. Shareware players already know how fun it is to drop a pipe bomb near a "Holoduke" decoy and set the thing off when an opponent draws near.

Four new weapons appear in the registered version. After blasting off in the last

THE EVOLUTION OF CIVILIZATION
behind the screens • apogee/3d realms

booby trapped trip mines can be placed high or low on the walls, and they detonate when their beam is broken. you'd use trip mines, too, if earthwomen were abducted as breeders.

underfoot. the freeze ray immobilizes enemies long enough to squeeze off a bullet or kick them, shattering the aliens in a glittering t2-style display. for more traditional fare, the pulverizer fires exploding rockets, and trip mines can be stuck on walls to detonate whenever their beams are broken.

level of the shareware version, duke finds himself on a spaceship orbiting earth. the aliens on the ship are packing chain-gun cannons, so it will take some new goodies to waste 'em. the shrink ray weapon casts a potent orb that reduces enemies to an ideal size for crushing.

is texas big enough for both of them?

duke's rise to glory has led a lot of people to speculate about a rivalry between apogee/3d realms and id. some cite the doom marine's severed torso in duke nukem as evidence that 3d realms is out for blood. there are even heated messages on the internet with headers like "id is in fear of duke nukem."

sources at both companies insist there is no enmity. then they'll proceed to tell you how much better they are than the other. says 3d realms president george bousard, "there's no rivalry between us. we think id's great, as long as they understand their place."

id doesn't seem too concerned. big guy wilbur comments, "imitation is a serious form of flattery. we've flattered each other often through the years. duke seems pretty cool, but we tend to set the mark not just for apogee, but for the industry. we're generally a couple of years out in front of everyone."

will the corvette fall to the the viper challenge? we'll have to see. in the meantime, the guys at id don't seem to be concerned. they're driving ferraris.

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Road Kill
Duel To The Death In A Crazed Cabbie's Dream Come True

by Mark Clarkson

For years, your only dream was to get the hell out of Kemo City, the giant, brutal metropolis turned prison maintained by the faceless Omnicorp. You were a cabbie, driving a hovercab, and in between your job and sleepless nights in the back seat, you managed to run down more than your fair share of crazed psychos, gun-toting lunatics, and "innocent" pedestrians. It made you a perfect recruit when a member of the guerilla underground came looking for a hitman to take down the Omnicorp. It was a crazy idea, but hey, the Omnicorp started the craziness when they began pumping the city's water supply full of psychosis-inducing hydorgen, right?

In no time at all, you smashed the administration center, killed all the scientists, blown up the hydrogen factory and the TV station, and with the right combination of guns, guns and secret passwords, finally escaped from Kemo City... only to find nothing beyond the city walls but sand, sand, and more sand. Blinded and parched, you crash your hovercab into a boulder and are soon found by a band of handy-toothed mutant things who want you to participate in something violently dubbed the Kilduck. Seems you've only escaped from the frying pan into the fire.

WELCOME BACK

ROAD WARRIOR is a new first-person shooter from Gametek, the sequel to last year's violently daffy QUARANTINE. Think of it as DOOM from a car. Once again, you are Duke Edgewater, mercenary cabbie, and you see the world from behind the wheel of your Checkered hovercab. If QUARANTINE was trying to evoke the look and feel of Escape from New York, then ROAD WARRIOR is trying to evoke the look and feel of... well, The Road Warrior. You're a long, macho dude, cruising through a post-apocalyptic desert in a hot car.

Although your ride is a taxi, it's armed to the teeth. When the bad guys get in your way, you can hose them down with hot lead from your roof-mounted chain gun, or chuck exploding "Blackjack" mines at them out the back end. It sometimes helps to crash into your victims once or twice to disorient them. That way they hold still longer, giving you time to aim and let loose a few missiles, or a few hundred rounds of armor-piercing ammo.

ROAD WARRIOR's plot is advanced with a nicely done comic book which rolls between levels. After you finish off one level, you charge across the desert, dodging tanks, missile-spewing dune buggies, falling rocks and tumbleweeds on your way to the next city, town, airport or rebel base.

"Things are bad all over and it won't surprise you one bit to find that Omnicorp is behind most of it. Even in the verdant Mutton Valley, things are amiss. Here, the roads are clogged with giant squash, mutant crack-smoking pigs run amuck in the fields, and babies are being born with two rows of teeth and arms growing right out of their backs.

YOUR MISSION, SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT IT

ROAD WARRIOR is much more mission-oriented than its predecessor. In

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QUARANTINE, you spent the majority of your time and energy taxing passengers from location to location, collecting fares so you could pay for repairs, weapons, and ammo.

In ROAD WARRIOR, performing missions for the underground is pretty much all you do. You'll track down and kill lawyers, blow up trains, run over joggers, shoot down crop dusters, put out fires with water balloons, and herd mutant pigs back into their pens.

Your missions usually operate under a time constraint. If you take too long to complete the objective, you fail and are doomed to repeat that mission again and again until you finally get it right. As you tick off missions, you'll progress through Omnicorp-controlled cities, rebel bases, a twisted Disneyland knock-off (home of Stickey Mouse) and, eventually, back to Kemo City.

WHAT'S NEW, MUTANT CAT

In QUARANTINE, you chose and purchased your own weaponry out of your hard-earned fare money, and it was your responsibility to keep it full of ammo. By contrast, you begin each mission in ROAD WARRIOR fully repaired and automatically equipped with whatever weaponry is deemed necessary to complete the objective. One mission you've got missiles and torpedoes, and the next you've got nothing but retractable spikes on the front bumper or a gun that shoots water-filled condoms.

In QUARANTINE, there was a grid of power broadcast posts and if you left the grid, your batteries began to run down. In ROAD WARRIOR, energy is not a consideration. You start every mission with your battery fully charged, and it never drains, no matter where you drive.

In addition to the view through your four windows, ROAD WARRIOR allows you to see things from your enemy's point of view, as well as from above and behind your car. The latter comes in especially handy when your view is blocked by the giant mutant pig impaled on your bumper spikes (don't ask.)

The graphics are improved from QUARANTINE, offering a wide-aspect ratio SVGA mode, and the music is still a cut above average, featuring an eclectic mix of punk rock and hillbilly swing. But, despite being quite explicit in some ways, ROAD WARRIOR isn't big on realism. It doesn't feel very much like you're driving a vehicle (although, I can't say I know what driving a hovercab feels like).

The levels feel really big, but the environment isn't very interactive—glass doesn't shatter, exploding vehicles leave no debris, and so forth. You can blow through trees like so many puffs of smoke, but bounce off of a tent. Most fences will stop you as dead as a concrete wall, while you can run through others with nary a bump or scratch. For some unexplained reason, every pedestrian on the receiving end of your punishment looks like they're wearing a softball uniform, whether you're running them over in the alleys ways of Flagg City or impaling them on your bumper spikes in the cornfields of Mutton County.

Game play took many of my favorite elements—looking for faxes, managing money, deciding what weapons lead to the future—out of the game. Also, you can no longer change tracks on the CD, or plug in your own music CD and jam to Nine Inch Nails while running down giant mutant pigs. Still, if you liked QUARANTINE, you'll probably get a kick out of ROAD WARRIOR. Like its predecessor, ROAD WARRIOR is juvenile, low-brow and wacky, cheek full of blood, severed limbs and toilet humor. But how can you not like a game that includes cow tipping?

• APPEAL: Anyone who likes QUARANTINE and BEARS & BUTTHEAD.
• PROS: This game will make you laugh with its juvenile humor, and it boasts really big, detailed levels.
• CONS: The humor is profane, and many of QUARANTINE's finer elements—those that made you think about weapons and money management—are gone.
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Paddle To Paddle

HYPER 3-D PINBALL Racks Up A High Score, While PINBALL WORLD Goes Down The Chute

by Arinn Dembo

You may have noticed a flood of new pinball computer games. Digital pinball is becoming more interesting and more refined, developing into a peculiar little sub-genre of its own. Buy any recent title and you can try new innovations such as campaign games, strategy elements, event animations, waving from table to table, and all sorts of other stuff, most of which isn’t possible on real pinball machines.

The primary audience for digital pinball are people who love the mechanics of old. These fans have certain standards which are rarely met by computerized simulations. Even in the best pinball games, there’s usually something that keeps the experience from being less than perfect: you can’t jolt or “grunch” the table, or control the launch of the ball, and the control keys are often awkward. Suffice it to say that the search for the perfect pinball game continues.

Two new contenders, each trying to pull the proverbial sword from the stone, are: HYPER 3D PINBALL, by Virgin Interactive, and PINBALL WORLD, by Spidersoft and released by 21st Century Entertainment. Other than the word “pinball” in the title, these two games have nothing in common, yet both have something to offer digital wizards.

PINBALL WORLD: VOLUME, VOLUME, VOLUME

First, let’s talk quantity. PINBALL WORLD is a “low-end” pinball that touts its world travel motif. The player warps through tables with themes like United Kingdom, Germany, Hollywood, etc. It has lots of gameplay, with nine main tables, another 10-plus bonus tables, and five or six sub-games connecting the tables. For example, the Hollywood table has a Las Vegas bonus table attached, and there’s a “Baja Roadrace” sub-game that gets you from the Hollywood table to the South America table below it.

Is there a problem here? Well, yes and no: it really depends on what you want. The tables in PINBALL WORLD, although plentiful, are not satisfying to an experienced pinball player. The arrangement of paddles and drains is unconventional, which could be a plus, except the environment isn’t very rich in targets or excitement. There’s not much need for advanced pinball skills like catches, passing or aimed shots, and saving the ball is simple, while losing it is depressingly anticlimactic. A lost ball goes into a “ball trap” that automatically kicks the ball back into play. The ball traps have a limited number of saves, so you don’t actually “lose” a ball until the trap is down to zero.

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>APPEAL: Casual action gamers who don't care about traditional pinball design.
>PROS: Lots of tables and gameplay
>CONS: Primitive graphics, cranky program, low excitement level.

People who love the real thing probably won't enjoy this game.

see in a pinball simulation — full-table view, jolting the table in two or three directions, controlling the ball launch; a good mix of targets; and multiball play — are not here. Forget about controlled launch; in PINBALL WORLD you don't get to launch the ball. It just appears in the middle of the table and starts falling. The screen scrolls around the tables, each of which has a maximum of 10 or 11 shots to make, not counting combinations. There's no multiball play, and you get only one key with which to jolt, then, ridiculously, the computer decides how to jolt the table.

Instead of the standard pleasures of real pinball, what you get are odd little bonus games, where you use an awkward interface to direct cars, boats, submarines or wagons through a maze in order to warp to another table. It's OK, but hardly compensates for what's missing.

I had some technical problems with PINBALL WORLD. The game was too cranky to run with the older of my two SVGA cards. And despite the implementation of the enclosed patch, the bottom half of the screen still flickered on my 486x66 machine with an older video card. The graphics are fairly primitive, but still serviceable. The sound and music are acceptable. The modeling of the ball isn't terrible, but I've seen better.

Although PINBALL WORLD gives you 20 tables, while more extravagant pinball games usually offer only four or five, in overall appearance this game just can't compete with the more sophisticated titles. So, unless you've exhausted the other options, you might want to pass on it.

HYPER 3D PINBALL: THE CREAM OF THE CROP

Did I say that the search for the perfect pinball simulator was still going? I lied. It's loaded onto my hard drive now, where it will probably remain. Of course, it's too early to say that no one could do better, but to this point, HYPER 3-D PINBALL is the best pinball simulator I've seen.

I'd like to find fault with this game, but I can't. HYPER 3-D PINBALL has six beautiful tables, totaling 50 percent more gameplay than most other pinball simulators. The tables are not only beautiful, they are target-rich, with an excellent selection of challenges, skill shots, loops and ramps, drop holes, bumpers and roll-over targets. And the table themes are very cool: Frankenstein's Monster, Roadkill USA, Conga, and exceptional sci-fi, sword n' sorcery and circus themes. You get multiball and 3-D event animations when locking the ball and making various shots. All very cool stuff that also is nicely unobtrusive, since the game is smart enough not to run them every time you make a shot — after the first time, play goes on uninterrupted.

The greatest thing about this game, is its versatility and freedom. You can control...
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A GRAVEYARD SMASH! A monster of a machine, this table sports trains, a guillotine and a cat screaming.

ease they do, HYPER 3-D PINBALL offers three views of the table. There's a 3-D scrolling playfield, a 2-D plan view, or my favorite, the 3-D full-screen view, which displays the whole table while still providing some 3-D effects on the ramps. You can easily adjust sound, music, and the contrast of the graphics. And you can play with 1-4 players. Who could ask for more?

Well, if you're really ungrateful soul, you could also ask for a complete and informative manual for the game — and you'd get one. Complete with a step-by-step discussion of the targets and challenges on each table, the manual also provides some tips for improving your game. If you know your pinball tables and you're looking for a simulator that isn't a disappointment, HYPER 3-D PINBALL is a good bet.

There is one possible downside. HYPER 3-D PINBALL does not really transcend the capabilities of a genuine pinball machine, nor does it incorporate elements of strategy or table-warping, both of which are nice features that I've enjoyed in other games. The otherwise cool animations are really just window dressing for standard shot-making and challenges. It's very well done, but it's still pinball, with no other goal than racking up the highest possible score before you lose your last ball. If you need more than that, then even the cream of the crop probably won't do.

\[ \text{RATED} \]

- **APPEAL:** Real pinball players, arcade game fans and anybody who appreciates a highly polished action game on the PC.
- **PROS:** Everything is done right; this is the best pinball simulator on the market.
- **CONS:** No table-warping, sub-games or strategy elements. This is for the pinball purist.

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Chess Moves

MAURICE ASHLEY Opens Up The Game Of Kings, While VIRTUAL CHESS Slams The Door Shut

Chess is an old game. It has no luck, other than perhaps your opponent missing an obvious move. It isn't really a sport, but Bobby Fischer used to train for big matches at Crossings, the same gym Ali used to prepare for heavyweight bouts. Chess has been called the ultimate tactical game, yet it has strategies so subtle that a human can still beat a computer calculating billions of potential moves ahead. Chess is somewhat of an art form, a symphony, even a religion. What it has rarely been is entertaining. With the exception of the Fischer-Spassky and Kasparov-Karpov matches, most people couldn't name two world-class chess masters if they ran into them on the street.

CHESS MADE EASY

Things might be changing, however. The best teaching tool for chess has always been the CHESSMASTER series from Mindscape, with its powerful stable of opponents and chess problems. BOBBY FISCHER TEACHES CHESS gets brownie points for bringing a sense of fun to the party, but its chess engine is really pretty weak. Neither of these programs; good as they are, can really prepare you for MAURICE ASHLEY TEACHES CHESS.

Maurice Ashley is not only the first African-American International chess master, he is also a fabulous coach, whose two teams win top honors constantly in the National Junior High Team Chess Championship. Having lost in the state team finals twice, trust me; it's a tremendous achievement to get there, much less win the nationals year after year.

Ashley inspires his charges to treat chess like any other sports competition, complete with slam dunks. The CD treats you to the master's style of coaching with video, audio and chess diagrams interspersed with animated illustrations of technique. These aren't just the typical "Rook to C-7" moves, either. Pawns become Ninja Assassins, while Rooks on open files are depicted as charging rhinos. To promote a Pawn to a Queen, you are instructed to move supporting pieces to cover the 8th rank, like a lineman in football blocking for a running back — it's the first time I've ever heard "touchdown" when playing chess.

From the basics of how to move pieces to the subtleties of weak squares and the sharp tactics of sacrificing pieces for checkmate, MAURICE ASHLEY TEACHES CHESS has all the answers. The quick drill format even works as a refresher course for intermediate players, and the whole process is invariably enjoyable as well as informative. And while the chess engine will never challenge CHESSMASTER, the top level of Ashley is more than competitive enough for the average chess player.

If you want to turn a friend on to chess, or start learning how to do more than just push pieces yourself, this is the best program you can buy. MAURICE ASHLEY TEACHES CHESS, Davidson/Simon & Schuster, 800-457-8337.

CHESS MADE UNNECESSARILY DIFFICULT

When VIRTUAL CHESS scored the best of any program at a recent event against human Grandmasters, I figured it would jump like a Knight to the top of the heap. Problem is, we don't have a new chess engine here — we got VIRTUAL CHESS Plus instead. I'm no Grandmaster, but I still get more of a challenge out of CHESSMASTER 4000 than VIRTUAL CHESS, especially on
medium levels. When you toss in the great variety of simulated opponents, CHESSMASTER is a far more robust chess program.

What's worse, the tutorials of VIRTUAL CHESS are boring in the extreme. KASPAROV'S CANDID, released three years ago, did a better job with multimedia, not to mention rating your overall play. Let's be honest here: almost any top chess program can beat 90 percent of the chess players in the U.S. 90 percent of the time when set to the highest AI levels. When you put programs like Virtual Chess on a mainframe, they can even be competitive with Masters. That doesn't make them the best program for the average chess player. If Titus and i-Motion want to put some effort into making the program more accessible, from the tutorials to the types of simulated opponents and even the graphics and interface, then they might have a winner. In the meantime, buy MAURICE ASHLEY TEACHES CHESS and wait for CHESSMASTER 5000 to finally release. VIRTUAL CHESS, i-Motion, 800-493-3386.

WHAT THE PROS PLAY

Is the Sicilian Defense too tame for your chess repertoire? Do you lie awake nights in fear of new developments in the Coob opening? If so, BOOKUP is your Holy Grail! This small company out of Columbus, Ohio has the most comprehensive, up-to-date software for the serious chess player--entire chess books by prominent International Masters and writers are available on disk. Unlike other game databases such as ChessBase, BOOKUP stores chess positions in an "analysis tree" containing anything relevant to the position you are studying, whether it's from a grandmaster tournament or your weekly game at the local Chess club. In addition, you can load these positions into several chess programs, such as ZARCOV, and the program will analyze the position beyond the moves you've input.

This is a product for serious chess players, but it is easy to use, and the analysis sheets can be printed in a format similar to that of the Encyclopedia of Chess Openings. Available on Mac, IBM, and Windows, BOOKUP is still the cream of the chess crop, with prices ranging from $99 to $179; books on disk are $29 each. BOOKUP, 800-949-5445.
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Pondering The Intangibles
Adding Realism To Computer Sports Games

One thing constantly burns me out about computer sports games: their lack of depth. I know that sounds a little weird—how much deeper can you get (or do you want to get) in a game that features a full season replay with player personnel decisions, et cetera? My problem is that very few sports titles have taken the genre much farther. The Front Page Sports titles and Tony La Russa 3 are the only games I can think of where the challenge has greater scope than merely trying to win the season title. Maybe designers are afraid that if they inject a game with too much replay value, sales will go the way of Major League Baseball Attendance. Or maybe it’s just too much effort. But imagine an NCAA college basketball game where you have to recruit players, deal with their myriad off-the-court problems, and possibly, even face an NCAA investigation. What would happen to your computerized pro basketball team if, in addition to calculating statistics and ratings, you had to deal with intangibles such as how salary negotiations or suspensions over failing to stand for the national anthem could affect a given player’s performance. It could be fascinating!

Speaking of Front Page Sports
Here’s one great wish that Front Page Sports Baseball 96, when (and if) it ships in July, delivers on its exceptional potential. One thing’s for sure: the time it takes to play games within the season where human players aren’t involved had better take a lot less time than they did in FPSB 94, or even in Front Page Sports Football 96 for that matter.

Where The Action Is
I hope John Madden Football ’96 from Electronic Arts will also find a new level in sports play. I haven’t seen a quality action-oriented football title yet on the PC, but Madden could fill the bill. While some may legitimately argue that playing John Madden Football isn’t playing real football (the quarterback has longer than three seconds to get off a pass and the defenses don’t read plays as quickly as...)

Imagine an NCAA basketball game where you have to recruit players, deal with their off-court problems, and even face an investigation.

ON DECK
Interactive Magic’s Decathlon is having trouble making the Olympic squad. The extra development time will be worth it, though, if it gives us the first good action-oriented track-and-field simulation since, oh, the days of the C-64.
Overtime Sports, the joint venture between Spectrum HoloByte and ABC Sports, will be bringing out a version of ABC Monday Night Football with digitized versions of all the regular announcers. The 3-D football game will offer direct play connectivity and is expected to support league play on a major, but as yet unannounced, online service.

By next year, the company hopes to add to their line with ABC CFA College Football, complete with Keith Jackson’s announcing and 32 of the best college teams.
IBM Publishing plans to continue their foray into sports publishing with Pro League Baseball, a stat-based game which will support players from 1904-1995 in its database. IBM also plans a strange version of a classic sports game. They will also publish a game called Pandemonium Golf which is supposed to allow gamers to tee off in the middle of New York, New Orleans and other bizarre settings.

May 1996
CG
the real players do), it's still a blast. Finally, it looks like there will be a football game on the PC where you can pick a hole to run through or actually complete a pass by clicking on a downfield receiver and letting the ball fly.

**MULTIPLAYER MATCH-UPS**

Besides the Imagination Network's version of *Front Page Sports Football*, where can gamers turn for multiplayer sports gaming? Uh, that would be Absolutely Nowhere, Alex. I swear, the first company to take a quality sports game on-line will clean up. I get weak thinking of playing basketball or baseball over an on-line service. I understand that latency is a problem, but the possibilities are incredible.

Soccer fans will get their chance with *VR Sports Soccer* on the PC. Interplay's new sports division plans a network version of the soccer game that will let up to 20 players take control of one on-screen player (except the goalie). Players may have that sense of playing a team sport for the first time ever when that happens. Now, if someone would only do that for hockey.

**DOOM MEETS HOCKEY**

With the current emphasis on first person 3-D action, I'm surprised no sports designers have made a stab at DOOM-meets-hockey. The only first-person attempt at a sports game I can recall is a long-lost Commodore 64 game by Gamestar called *GFL Championship Football* with its "in-the-helmet" view. Unfortunately, while it was kind of neat having to perfectly run wide receiver routes (seven steps forward, two steps left, turn to the ball), it was also more than a little frustrating.

Speaking of Gamestar, old-time gamers might remember their gem of a basketball title: *CBA Championship Basketball*. A two-on-two full court hoops game, this title had everything—three pointers, dunks, league play, statistics, you name it. The AI was way too easy, of course (what game back then had a good AI?), but talk about being ahead of your time.

**GET A GRIP**

I think that Graves GrIP is great—playing games with four people at a time, each with their own multi-button gamepad is awesome. But while playing around with NHL '96 and NBA Live '96 with some friends, I noticed that the action got more than a little confusing at times. Gameplay, in both cases, became quizzical contests of "Who has the ball?... Who has the puck?... Why do you keep boosting the rocks?" Here's why: in most sports games, when you pass the ball/puck, you immediately gain control of the recipient of your pass. The same is true of multiplayer NHL '96 and NBA Live. Therein lies the problem. Whenever I passed to another player, I expected my GrIP-enabled teammate to be given control of the new ball-handler. But that doesn't happen—if you don't pass to your teammate specifically (the other guy on the floor with a colored star around his feet), you just keep passing to yourself.

It's not the Graves GrIP's fault. This is a game design flaw that is present in all EA Sports games. But it does indicate that before we plunge into the realm of multiplayer play, game designers are going to have to occasionally rethink gameplay. Maybe that's the real reason online sports games haven't happened yet.

Next Month: George Jones passes the baton to Dennis McCauley, his first pick in the draft as new sports columnist.
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Hot new user interface gives you instant access to any feature. View and manage your team from the field, from the dugout, and from the General Manager's office!

This "fifth generation" fielding simulation has additional play animations, baseball plays, and graphics realism, resulting in true-life baseball gameplay.

It's all here: pick-off plays, hit-and-run, suicide squeeze, towering pop-ups, and more. The ultimate simulation of baseball, for everyone who loves the game!
Victory On Ice
A New Challenger Makes A Run For Computer Hockey's Cup

by Gordon Goble

Many have tried, but few have succeeded. In the end, it must be concluded that the hockey environment is not easy to depict on the PC. Sure, EA's NHL Hockey line has towered over the market for these many years, and rightfully so.

Anyone who's joystick-handled their way through some of the truly frightful alternatives out there knows why; there just isn't anything else.

One near-exception was Accelade's 1995 release, Brett Hull Hockey. While Brett was no cup contender, and certainly couldn't touch the EA juggernaut, there were hints that the people putting this thing together knew a little about the sport.

The design house responsible for that promising, but seemingly incomplete, project was Vancouver's Radical Entertainment, and now, like a stubborn bulldog, they're at it again. Distributed by Virgin, NHL POWERPLAY '96 is the name of this game, and if the final days of beta testing and refinement can solve a few nagging little details, it will have winner written all over it.

FROM THE LOOKS OF IT

Graphic hounds be forewarned — this won't be the pixelated 3-D masterpiece of NHL Hockey '96. There won't be a full field of free-floating cameras, unearthly zoomable replays or atmospheric extras such as shattering plexiglass, reflecting ice, dislodged nets and feats of "fistic" fury.

Furthermore, gameplay will feature just a single panning, 70-degree above-ice view of the proceedings — with no other viewing options.

But if it's accurate gameplay you're after, with an AI that you'll continue to respect halfway through a long season, POWERPLAY may be your ticket to hockey bliss. Even in the beta version, POWERPLAY's skaters seem to be thinking out there, making choices that are both intelligent, diverse, and rarely repetitive — unique in this genre.

During a game, proper positional play is usually observed and only deviated from when opportunity arises. Yes, Islander's scoring machine Ziggy Palffy managed to zip through my defense and home in on my net, but the whole damn team didn't come with him. Instead, the other winger hung toward the left boards, and the defensemen, while certainly pinching, kept an appropriate distance back.

This time, a deft kick save preserved a 2-1 game, and as my skater started up ice, he was hounded by a pair of forecheckers while the others slowly retreated. Perfect!

Defenders might tie up puck carriers for several seconds, rendering them unable to pass or shoot — a lovely mimicry of the real thing. When they do get a chance to launch one, a slap shot takes longer to set up than a wrist shot, and a backhand carries less momentum than a forehand. Goals aren't dependent on "hot spots," coming from anywhere within reason (I potted a couple from my own end of the ice, but Radical assures that won't be the case in the final version), and you simply don't get the feeling that events are...
It’s that moment just after you rip it off, when the circuits are still pumping ‘cause they don’t know what hit ‘em, and they’ve got that expression on their face like “Hey that’s my arm!”...the first gush of oil from the open socket...the lights in their eyes going dim...yeah, that’s when I know...I’m alive.
pre-programmed. But they're not random either. Penalties seem to be a reflection of contact severity and grab a function of pressure and quality of chance. Outplay and "out chance" the other guys and you should walk away victorious. Since players behave in accordance with their real life characteristics, pick a strong team with star players and it should be pretty easy to trounce the Senators or Sharks.

As of this writing, the program plays too fast for my liking, and there are dead spots where computer players will leave my puck carrier untouched for minutes at a time, but Radical says these issues will be addressed prior to release. Even so, I found myself growing to appreciate the game the more I played — usually the mark of a long-term contender.

Sure, I missed some of the gloss I'd grown accustomed to with NHL Hockey '96, but it mattered less and less with each game under the belt. I found I was using just a single camera during most of my NHL Hockey forays anyway, and although some extraneous stuff would have been appreciated, it isn't a necessity in the long run when the gameplay is this good.

**SUMO HOCKEY PLAYERS**

Graphically, PowerPlay is just a 2-D environment, with action far less intense than Brett Hull. And although players are once again fairly short and squat, with bodies too small for numbers, logos, and a thorough design scheme, numbers and/or names are displayed under the puck carrier, and uniforms do carry basic colors. But it's what they do and the way they move as individuals that really sells the experience.

It's a snappy frame rate to be sure (no doubt due in part to the game's VGA nature), and player animation is strong and smooth. Rocket-like goalie blockers snuck out from the body, shooting and skating motions almost transcend a computer game, and reactions to bodies checks are authentic. Even the referee acts the part.

Player actions are further enhanced for owners of six button game pads. For them, nifty little moves such as backward skating, flip passes, hooks, and fast-skating with the puck will become second nature, as will manual goalie control for anyone with the desire to don the mask. If you're a joystick-using hockey fan, it's definitely time to try something new.

Off the ice, there's some good and some not-so-good news. On the downside, player trades will not be permitted (although I hear they will be in future products). On a more positive note, PowerPlay does breathe new life into the oft-ignored realm of team coaching.

Offensively and defensively, your team's general style of play can be customized before and during each contest. Depending on your instructions, they'll "dump and chase" or carry the puck in when attacking, and set up zone or man-to-man coverage when defending.

Feeling a little silly? If so, the intimidation mode works nicely, but beware of the penalties that come with forceful play. Protecting a lead late in the game? Then tell your crew to hang back. The difference between a quick break offense and a more cautious approach is quite evident and, unlike the real world, PowerPlay teams always listen to their coach.

**NHL & INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS**

The high-resolution rendering system features nice background shots of cityscapes and locker rooms, and, in beta, at least, is concise and very fast. All 26 NHL teams are represented, as are their full rosters with player statistics and crisp photos of each player. For those who seek global domination, PowerPlay also offers international squads for play, staffed by the best players, NHL caliber or otherwise, that hail from each country. Game audio is pleasant enough at this stage, highlighted with Vancouver Canucks' ink announcer John AshtonBridge doing his own digital hockey sidekick.

For better or worse, Virgin has opted to release only a Win 95 version of PowerPlay '96, a move that will undoubtedly eliminate some prospective users. But for those who've bowed to the latest Cutes-concorded platform, PowerPlay '96 may be the best-playing hockey product ever. State-of-the-art graphics won't be found here, but if everything goes according to plan, an authentic and intelligent hockey experience will be, and that's compensation enough for me.
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CLOSE & PLAY

Leave it to the makers of the Walkman to make the near-perfect gaming machine. With an estimated 700,000 units already sold, upstart Sony has broken the Nintendo/Sega headlock on the console industry with their first entry into the gaming maelstrom. When the Playstation debuted in September 1995, it arrived with a deep line-up of first-party and third-party software that showcased the power of this revolutionary gaming machine. Gamers took one look at the 3-D, 360 degree roving camera in games like BATTLE ARENA: Toshinden and Ridge Racer, and were amazed at the graphics power of the 32-bit console. Even more compelling was the long list of titles in development from established computer game companies like Origin, SSI, Interplay and LucasArts.

When we discovered that Origin was porting WING COMMANDER III to the PC, or that DESCENT was being developed for the Playstation, we were pleasantly surprised. And when we saw that X-COM, CGW’s Game of The Year, and PANZER GENERAL were making their way into the PSX line-up, we knew it was time to take a closer look. What we found was no typical gaming console. With top-notch graphics hardware and unprecedented support from PC vendors, the Playstation can attract even the most hard-core computer gamers.
Sony has packed a lot of hardware processing power into its new PlayStation. In certain sub-systems—most notably 3D graphics—it smokes even the most high-end gaming PC. Its other sub-systems are no slouches, either, but designing a gaming platform with a $300 base price requires some compromises. One of the ways Sony kept unit cost down was by using small amounts of RAM, with only 2 MB for system, 1 MB for graphics, and 512 KB for audio. While an equipped PlayStation costs around $400, a PC gaming rig can easily range from $2,500 to $4,000. The PC obviously has many applications beyond gaming, and is much more expandable, pulling multiple duties as gaming rig, home office workhorse, Internet surfboard, etc. With a PC, you're getting a lot more memory and persistent storage (hard-disk space), and several different options for communicating with the outside world.

Because of its dedicated hardware, the PlayStation excels at rendering-intensive sports and action games, whereas the PC with its ample RAM, has been the preferred platform for more complex genres like war/strategy, role-playing, and simulations. But both platforms are making inroads into the other's territory. For example, PANZER GENERAL was recently ported to the Sony, while recent PC titles like DUKE NUKEM 3D and EF 2000 deliver graphics quality that beat the PlayStation's.

If you're debating between a PC or a PlayStation, you should first consider what kinds of games you like to play, and how much versatility you need. A PlayStation will deliver a lot of action-packed fun and maybe even some war/strategy titles, but not much else. PCs, on the other hand, are close to delivering equal or superior performance in all game categories, but you'll have to pay a lot more for the extra versatility and horsepower.

Let's take a look at the sub-systems of these two platforms to see how they compare.

**BRAINS & STORAGE**

The PlayStation uses a Sony CPU, a 32-bit processor that runs at 33 MHz. The R3000A has an internal Level 1 cache with 4 KB for instructions, and 1 KB for data. In addition to performing CPU duties, this chip has some of the graphics sub-system embedded in it. For the sake of simplifying a comparison, we'll consider a Pentium 100 MHz, a 64-bit chip. The Pentium has an internal 16 KB Level 1 cache, and many PCs also ship with a 256 KB level 2 (external) SRAM cache for increased performance. A key difference between the two platforms is the amount of system memory: PlayStation has only 2 MB of system RAM, whereas a PC usually has about 16 MB, and more can be added easily. The PlayStation currently has no provision for adding more RAM.

Direct CPU comparisons are always tricky, because what makes one chip “better” than another doesn't correlate directly to faster clock speed, higher bit-width, or architecture. While the Pentium is probably the faster chip, the PlayStation still has a superior graphics sub-system that does more of the rendering work, so its CPU is free to execute other game code.
Currently, rendering-intensive games on the PC require a great deal of the CPU for rendering before passing the task to the graphics accelerator. Most PC action games are “graphics-bound” meaning that while they have ample CPU horsepower to run the game code itself, they’re additionally saddled with a lot of the 3D rendering work. There’s a phalanx of 3D chips that’ll soon be appearing on a PC graphics board near you, but they’re not quite here yet. Also, Microsoft’s Direct3D API is still pretty much a work in progress, meaning that game writers still have to optimize their titles for specific chips.

GRAPHIC PERFORMANCE

What makes the PlayStation’s graphics sub-system superior to the PC’s? PlayStation has three components that make it happen: the Geometry Tranform Engine (GTE), the Graphics Processing Unit (GPU), and the Data Decompression Engine (MDEC). The GTE and MDEC are embedded in the PlayStation’s CPU, while the GPU is a separate chip. Working together, the GTE and GPU join forces to enable a maximum resolution of 640x480x24-bit (16.7 million colors), though according to Sony most titles are written using a 16-bit color depth (65,536 colors).

PCs have 64-bit graphics accelerators that are designed to accelerate 2D graphics most frequently used by DOS and Windows, and help decode digital video. PC video cards have gotten very good at these two tasks, but their 3D performance is still lacking. Diamond, Matrox and Creative Labs are all shipping 3D accelerator boards, though none of them can match the PlayStation’s performance bit for bit.

For 3D rendering, the GPU can pump out about 90,000 texture mapped, Z-sorted, perspective-corrected, Gouraud shaded polygons per second, while the GTE can set up 1.5 million flat-shaded polygons per second. The end result is rendering on action games that PC titles have only recently been able to match, because PCs have not had dedicated hardware for 3D rendering. But given the number of 3D accelerator boards slated for release this year, PlayStation won’t hold the advantage much longer.

The PlayStation does have a downside here, though. Using your television as its display, image quality is compromised by the TV’s lower resolution, interlaced display. The visible result is aliasing, or “jaggies” which are noticeable on diagonal and curved lines. Most PC monitors are non-interlaced, so well-rendered graphics images aren’t distorted.

As for digital video, PlayStation’s MDEC can decode full-screen video streams smoothly from the CD-ROM. PlayStation uses a video compression scheme somewhat similar to Motion-JPEG, a close cousin to the more versatile MPEG. PCs for their part don’t have dedicated hardware to accelerate the compression algorithms, but newer graphics boards can smoothly “stretch” smaller video frame sizes to full-screen, and also perform color space conversion.

All in all, the PlayStation does hold the upper hand in graphics performance, but for how much longer is debatable. PC hardware (and software) is making great strides in 3D rendering that may yield higher graphics performance than the PlayStation. But here again price is a major factor: the whole PlayStation system costs about the same as some of the upcoming 3D graphics boards.

THE AUDIO FILE

Sony’s audio production happens in its Sound Processor Unit (SPU), which has 512 KB of dedicated RAM. The SPU is designed to produce 24 channels of audio, and its maximum sampling rate is the same as CD-quality audio. The SPU can also add real-time effects like reverber to sounds to simulate what a hockey slapshot would sound like in a large arena, for example. The overall sound quality on the titles we’ve heard is very good.

PC sound cards are capable of CD-quality audio, but many PC games opt instead for lower-quality 11 kHz 8-bit audio, sounding something like an AM radio. New titles use more 16-bit audio, dramatically improving overall sound quality. Only a few sound cards have dedicated hardware for real-time effects, and the death of effects-capable boards means few PC game titles try to take advantage of those features. Most sound cards only have wave-table synthesizers to add background music, and a few sound effects. PlayStation’s SPU can be programmed to work like a synthesizer, but uses too much of that precious 512 KB of audio memory. As an alternative, PlayStation usually plays audio CD cuts direct from the CD as background music.

STORAGE AND CONNECTIVITY

The PlayStation is equipped with a 2x CD-ROM drive which loads a game when the unit is turned on. Once data for a level or scene is loaded, some titles play audio CD tracks during game play, or the drive sits idle, waiting for the next disc call from the game. A PC’s 6x CD-ROM data rate is triple that of the PlayStation’s, allowing new levels and scenes to be loaded into RAM much faster. And the PC has plenty of storage on its hard drive for saving games and configurations. It takes a 128K SRAM card (ca. $25) to save on the PlayStation.

When the urge strikes to find some off-site opponents, the PlayStation doesn’t bring a lot to the party. There is a serial cable connector (about $20) that allows point-to-point gaming between two machines, but there’s no networking capability yet. PCs in contrast have several ready ways of communicating with one another: direct connect via serial port, modems and network cards.
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HOT BUTTONS

The PlayStation controller features four buttons topside in addition to four buttons on its front side (facing away from you). The controller is generally very good for action games, though few games make use of all eight buttons, probably to avoid confusion. Playstations ship with one controller, and a second will run about $25.

Additionally, Sony makes a multi-tap that allows eight controllers to be connected to a single PlayStation, handy for sports 4-on-4 games, though eight can be a crowd around a single TV. Sony also makes a mouse (about $35) that, while not crucial, makes for easier menu navigation. The company is also developing a twin-joystick controller to drive vehicles in games like MegaWarrior 2, though they don’t yet have a release date for it.

On the PC side, a wide variety of controllers can make PC titles easier to navigate and control. Prices vary widely, as does controller quality, but several vendors offer solid controllers. For multiplayer support, Advanced Gravis recently shipped the GRIP, which allows four Gravis GamePads to be connected to a PC for four-player sports games.

AND THE WINNER IS...

In the big picture, these two platforms were designed for markedly different uses. The PlayStation is a box for lovers of sports and action games who don’t need the unit to fulfill any other role. For its price, PlayStation packs a wallop. A PC gaming rig will put a considerably larger dent in your cash flow, but it’s much more versatile.

Looking at different sub-systems, the PlayStation wins out for graphics and has real-time audio effects that give it a slight edge in this area. But the advantage in graphics performance will probably be short-lived, and the PC wins out in amount of RAM, storage, connectivity and variety of available input devices. The PlayStation still maintains one important advantage for rendering-intensive 3-D games: game developers know exactly what hardware the system has, whereas PC title developers have to use a least-common-denominator approach so that their title will run sufficiently fast on slower systems. Microsoft’s DirectX APIs will address the problem of varying hardware, but that improvement isn’t quite here yet.
OPEN THE FLOOD GATES
Fast Cars, Furious Fighters and Psychotic Russians

by Peter Olafson

Action is what the Playstation is all about. It is its meat and potatoes, the largest beneficiary of the machine's power, and the source of much of its popularity. The best Playstation games are action: driving, fighting, flying, platform and shooting games. Load 'em up, and hang on.

3-D ACTION

Doom started this genre, and if it weren't for that demon splattering bloodfest, we'd never have the trio here. Alien Trilogy (Acclaim), the only decent "Alien"-based game available, pays homage to the trilogy with a mission-based stroll through a giant deserted spaceship, a cocooned colony and a prison. The graphics are inconsistent and the game's not exactly scary, but it's fun enough that you won't notice.

Space Griffon VT-9 (Atlus) is one of the earliest, and most underrated, Doom-style games for the Playstation. It has a pseudo RPG feel as you explore a moonbase with teammates, talking via comlink. Some graphics are sloppy, though, and the controls are elusive and sometimes unnecessary.

Kleak: The DNA Imperative (Sony) is a game with uninspired levels and stupid enemies, but it does have some nice architectural touches, basic but well-integrated puzzles and a rich, polished veneer.

RACING GAMES

There's no shortage of racing games on the Playstation. One of the first, Ridge Racer (Namco), was mobbed in the arcades, and has been effectively translated. The resolution's been knocked down a bit but the play, the elaborate background graphics and the slippery handling are all in place. Too bad you're only racing on expanded versions of a single track.

DESTRUCTION DERBY For flying into cars, smashing up doors, flipping hapless drivers over and end, there's no better game than this.

TWISTED METAL If you want undiluted mayhem and violence, drive down to the arena for car-blasting fun.

The need for Speed (EA) has come a long way from the 3DO original, with better scenery, new tracks, a deepened view and a full-field racing game to supplement the grudge match. However, adopting the racing-game format sacrifices some of the game's individuality. The ribbon of road is too narrow, and crashes aren't as exciting in this version.

DESTRUCTION DERBY (Psygnosis) is a must-have game, not simply for the frenetic action, but for its marvelous use of progressive damage. It's a great visual effect, and also a measure of the car's deteriorating handling and road-worthiness. There are also a half-dozen small tracks, where demolition rules still apply, but the idea is to get to the finish line first. The problem is that the game's just not...destructive enough.

For more straight-forward destruction, steer toward Twisted Metal (Sony). This is car wars plain and simple: arena combat against opponents ranging from armed ice-cream trucks to 18-wheeler cabs to military vehicles. If you're not a flaming hulk when it's over, it's on to the next arena.

Automotive violence isn't restricted to arenas. The Playstation translation of Bullfrog's race-and-shoot hovercraft game, Hi-Octane (EA), takes it out on the tracks, with baguellingly easy controls that create a true hovering experience.

Road Rash (EA) is identical to the 3DO version, but don't let that deter you. This motorcycle racing game was a classic in its first 32-bit rendition due to its manic speed and violence, and both are preserved here.
If the suspense doesn’t kill you, something else will.
Your team should not be misled by the neat and orderly appearance of this isolated mansion. A major corporation's been conducting questionable research here. You'll soon discover the results of some very, very careless experiments.

From hyper-realistic 3D lighting and an ominous CD quality soundtrack and special effects, to unique action perspectives, this intense drama unfolds, building terror and suspense with every new room you wander through.

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This twisted 32-bit polygon-based bloodbath isn't limited to gleaming dining rooms and endless polished hallways. Answers are found in darkest corners of the estate, cemetery, crumbling guest houses, and a mysterious tower.

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**Wipeout**

_Wipeout_ (Sony) is smoothness personified. It's a totally immersive hovercraft racing game, but even "immersive" doesn't quite say enough. This one gets under your skin, even without a VR headset. Wipeout never reminds you it's running on a machine subject to constraints of CD access and loading times. It just envelops you. You pop it in, strap it on, and race in a sort of cockpit hush. The looping track speeds by as if seen from a car. The power-ups start to seem like second nature. The jumps are just long enough to make you want to look down. And the track is just wide enough that you don't feel like a captive.

But you are.

**Fighting Games**

Fighting games on the PlayStation are among the best in the industry to offer. _Street Fighter Alpha_ (Capcom), an animated 2-D fighter, is a good example. It's fast and responsive; the enemies are varied and smart, and none of them just kissed the canvas; they always put up a good fight even as I moved in for the kill. I especially liked this because I could win by playing conservatively without having to memorize special moves first (or rather, by picking them up as I played).

_Battle Arena Toshinden_ (Sony), is also a top-notch game, ranking a close second to _Tekken_ among 3-D fighters. Here, more than the character is 3-D: you can dodge right and left and call upon magic. The only reason I give it second ranking is that it's not quite as hands-on as _Tekken_. You use weapons to fight—and doesn't have the same sense of impact.

On the other hand, I'm of two minds about _Crusin' (Vic Tokai). _On the surface, it's a hybrid of the two great Playstation fighters, with the look of _Tekken_ and the sophisticated moves of _Toshinden_. But it isn't exactly fun. The characters are too mannequin-like and you end up not caring for your fighter. _Zero Divide_ (Time-Warner) also owes much to _Tekken_, but comes off a bit wild and muddied—both in its complex polygonal figures and hard-to-execute special moves.

Nor can I bring myself to get too excited over _Mortal Kombat 3_ (Sony). The excessive blood no longer distinguishes it from other beat-ups, and it's sometimes downright silly. What's left is an average, nicely animated fighter.

Of course, sometimes silliness works great. I don't like _Primal Rage_ (Time-Warner) because it's a good lighting game. I like it because it's downright goofy. Imagine a bunch of Godzilla stand-ins, battling it out with snout gouges and tail whips amid torrential outpourings of blood as human worshippers look on.

**Doom**

The venerable father of 3-D is an incontrovertible classic of this genre, and it is no less a classic on the PlayStation. For sheer, lusty abandon, blood & guts, treachery and unalloyed terror, it knows few equals.

_Doom_ (Williams) for the PlayStation is a one-stop shop: you can toggle between Ultimate Doom and Doom II at the main menu. The speed is superb in the near-full-screen mode. The music is wonderfully brooding, and the deathmatch and cooperative multiplayer modes—the meat of Doom—are included, though you'll need a linking cable to use them.

Though better than the Jaguar and 3DO versions, PlayStation _Doom_ isn't a straight PC translation. The graphics have been knocked down a peg. Devotees of the original game will notice a reduction in colors, lighting effects, subtle simplifications in level architecture and the odd missing texture. But the feel is entirely intact, and the feel is what counts.
Tekken

Tekken (Namco) is simply unrivaled among PlayStation beat-'em-ups. It's the game that feels most like what it's all about: fighting. Indeed, the only comparable games are Virtua Fighter Remix and Virtua Fighter 2 on the Saturn. When these big, richly drawn characters go down, in a flurry of fists and feet, they really go down. You feel as though you've been beaten up yourself. No wonder the winner does a victory dance.

It's in 3-D, and that makes all the difference. These '90s rock-'em sock-'em characters seem to genuinely occupy space and carry weight. In fact, could you excuse me for a sec? I need a cold compress. I just got my ass kicked by the marine...again.

Then there are the atrocious fighters. Street Fighter: The Movie (Capcom) uses still digitized characters for the fighters, and some of the fights are just ridiculous. Sharing the bottom of the barrel is Rise 2: Resurrection (Acclaim), which made me long for its poor ancestor, Rise Or The Robots. The sequel uses small, graphically muddy creations and dispenses with story entirely.

Flying Games

Agile Warrior (Virgin) is one of several good flying games for the PlayStation. It's a pure arcade game—you collect floating powerups when you destroy certain buildings—but it brings ground detail to a whole new level. It's great fun to literally blow the roofs off radar buildings, and watch guard towers keel over.

Thunderstrike 2 (U.S. Gold) is from the same general school—except with a helicopter. You're running from the frying pan to the fire in 26 substantial missions, and you're in Agile Warrior territory from the start. Great terrain, incredible explosions and tasks whose completion will fill your heart.

There's one more arcade flyer, and it's good. Warhawk (Sony) is more of a fantasy campaign than a military sim. You're piloting the experimental WarHawk to stop the forces of a leader known only as Kree. The missions are memorable, the graphics are often spectacular and

Air Combat

The things I've seen in Air Combat (Namco). I've followed oil pipelines to refineries and sent them up in smoke. I've come in over enemy cities at night—so low I could see the neon signs atop high rises—and blown installations right out the side of office buildings. I've hit their industry on land, and their Navy at sea, and left them smoking. After all, this is war.

This is a system-seller. In this arcade flight sim, you're a mercenary running an air campaign against an aggressive enemy, and it doesn't just mean shutting paper. You'll fly missions of all description in all manner of planes, and you can use the money you earn to buy more, hire wingmen of varying experience and assign them orders.

The game looks fantastic. I've seen such beautiful textures and surface structures only in the most elaborate computer games, and even there I've rarely seen smoke that looked more real. Even the planes—a whole raft of them, from B-52s and C-5 transports—look good, and you'll get to see them up close. My only complaint is the size of the game. Sixteen missions is about eight too few for my blood. Sequel, please.
Treacherous multilevel terrain. But the one-player game lacks sufficient challenge. It's better on two machines than one.

Cybersledd itself, however, turns out to be Namco's only PlayStation miss so far. This coin-op conversion is unadorned arena combat where two polygonal tanks square off against each other until one of them gives up in a gas-fired explosion. The arenas aren't especially large or complex, and the battles often turn into Old West quick draws.

Krazy Ivan (Psygnosis) is the closest thing to a MechWarrior-style game for the PlayStation. You're a paranoid schizophrenic Russian soldier in a 40-foot-high Steel Cossack power suit with orders to defend the earth from aliens. So off you go, rolling in smooth 3-D over sculpted gray-green hills, blowing up everything in sight, collecting the tiny human hostages that appear afterward and destroying the generators that produce the alien's expanding energy shields. You're in for a good time here.

For some action in space, Jupiter Strike (Acclaim) wouldn't be a bad choice. The graphics are hardly cutting edge, but I enjoyed its mix of shooting and targeting. Then there's Viewpoint (EA), an isometric blaster from the Neo Geo. It's one of the prettiest shooters, with luscious rendered scenery, but it's also infuriatingly difficult. Try Philosoma (Sony) for something different. Its gimmick is a merciful view. Stand in one place for too long and it switches styles on you: horizontal shooter, 3-D, front-to-rear perspective 3-D, Zaxxon-style isometrics— you name it, it's in here. Despite the mess, it manages to achieve a certain consistency of tone. Unfortunately, it's too easy to beat.

Cyberia (Interplay) also tries for multistyle play, but in a more creative way: It uses 11 distinct action sequences as punctuation in a strong graphic adventure. Like the PC version, you'll solve puzzles and explore places, but the action is solid, too, right from the first-level gun tunnels.

For a sideways-scroller, you can't do better than In the Hunt (THQ) — a sumptuous blaster in which virtually everything can be blown to bits. Torpedoes fired from your little submarine lay waste to everything in your horizontal path, while missiles wreak glorious havoc on the elaborate structures above. The only problem is that the sub sometimes has only a small amount of room to maneuver.

Assault Rigs This 3-D tank shooter is fun alone, but an absolute riot when played competitively between two machines.

For more earthbound action, try OffWorld Interceptor Extreme (Crystal Dynamics). A monster-truck rally gone awry, it lacks Total Eclipse's variety — no tunnels here — but because you have more control of your craft, you can experience the game more fully.

Old games can be fun, too. Raiden Project (Sony) is a charming blast from the past. A descendant of great vertical shooters like 1942, this rich top-down vertical shooter offers loads of large, aggressive sprites for you to detonate.

Fast-flying shooting isn't all good, though. NovaStorm (Psygnosis) and Total Eclipse Turbo (Crystal Dynamics) are both disappointing. The first is like Microcosm without the blood vessels and is rather old-hat, while the latter, for all its fast 3-D shooting in tunnels and skylines, just comes off dated. Shockwave Assault (EA), a bundle of two 3-D shooters, Shockwave and its add on Operation Jumpgate, likewise suffers from old age. A good game on the 3DO a few years ago, Shockwave's gameplay is too restrictive these days.

And at the bottom of the barrel we have the "to avoid" list. Loaded (Interplay), a top-down maze shooter, is the bloodiest game on the PlayStation. When you kill an enemy it makes a very wet "SPLAT!" and you'll see a red silhouette on the floor. I made many red silhouettes, laughed a bit, and then looked around for the game. Unhappily, Loaded came up empty. The same goes for Revolution X (Acclaim), the only gun game for the PlayStation. We didn't waste any time on this game, and you shouldn't either.
Sports on the Playstation? Stay tuned. There aren’t a lot of games out, but a whole locker-room full of stuff is headed your way. However, a few of the games released to date are exquisite.

Take, for example, NFL GAME DAY. This smoothly animated football game reminds me of the games in EA’s MADDEN line—with rational, Madden-like controls on screen—but with a greater sense of intimacy and closeness. It got me caring about football games again—something I haven’t done in a long time.

But it’s April now, and you’re probably looking for a baseball game. Unfortunately, as we went to press, there was only one, and it was bad. BASES LOADED ’96 DOUBLEHEADER (Jaleco) has mediocre graphics, including a skewed pitcher-batter perspective, and suffers difficult batting and pitching that results in pathetically low-scoring games.

You’re in luck if you like basketball, though. IN THE ZONE (Konami) offers a more realistic turn on 3-D basketball games like SLAM N JAM. The large size of the players helps bring the game home, and their smooth movement and realistic execution of dunks and jumpers sells it. You should note, however, that it is strictly an action game, without substitutions or even a full-season mode. NBA JAM TOURNAMENT EDITION (Acclaim) is something a little different: a hybrid of basketball and shoot-em-up in which power-ups hold court—like slamming the ball home from anywhere on the court and levitating above the backboard. COLLEGE SLAM (Acclaim), an amateurish NBA JAM, is worse. It has a ridiculous roster of power-ups, like reversing the direction of balls in flight, firing your rim with lightning to prevent your opponent from scoring, and making a teammate invisible. It also has an ugly introduction and some bad graphics.

Soccer is well-represented on the Playstation, and FIFA 96: VIRTUAL STADIUM SOCCER (EA) unequivocally rules the roost. I’ve never played a game that so accurately and excitingly reflects what takes place on the field, or one that makes this hard-to-embrace sport more accessible. Nothing of consequence is missing, and virtually anything you’re uncomfortable with in the default settings can be adjusted to your liking. GOAL STORM (Konami) is another strong contender. It’s not quite up to FIFA’s realism or depth, but it has big, clearly-drawn polygonal characters and, most importantly, it’s fun to play. On the other hand, I never could quite get a handle on STRIKER 96 (Acclaim). It was all I could do to get my feet on the ball and understand the thick accent of the English announcer. The moment I liked best is when the players walked off the field at the end of the game.

WORLD CUP GOLF (U.S. Gold) is merely an average golf game. It’s amusing at times, but the game is graphically muddy. Feature for feature, it can’t compare to PGA TOUR 96 (Electronic Arts), which looks great, plays intuitive-ly, and, best of all, is challenging. It’s definitely a keeper. We’re also looking forward to VR Sports Golf (Interplay), a game that promises more camera angles and faster play than anything currently available.

The real are odds and ends. The first-person tennis premise behind POWER SERVE 3D TENNIS (Ocean) is a fine one, but the game is frustrating. It doesn’t even have a practice mode to learn how to hit the ball. WWF WRESTLEMANIA: THE ARCADE GAME (Acclaim) captures nicely the flavor of this silly, theatrical “sport,” and can be played for some good laughs.

NFL Face Off

In hockey, though, we have greatness. NFL Face Off (Sony) has the “feel” of professional ice hockey down to a science. It has the game’s running-water fluidity. It has great game sounds. It has the checks (but not the fights), and the penalties. It has the gleam of the ice, but not the skate marks. It has the real NHL players, exhibition and full-season play (including the playoffs), and the ability to create, draft, trade, and release players (but not argue over salaries). You can edit your lines or assign the computer to take over as goalie. You can also change the view to suit your taste.

Most importantly, NFL Face Off has the moves. Complaints? Not a one.
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WINNING STRATEGIES
Wargames March Into A New Front

by Peter Olafson

A

h, strategy. Without this section, where would we fit war games, puzzles, strategy games and other miscellaneous titles that challenge you to think? These games clinched the decision to cover the PlayStation, and their debut on this platform is definitely a sign of good things to come.

Hard core wargamers will find a pleasant surprise on the PlayStation: PANZER GENERAL (SSF). For those who don’t know, this is a delightful, hassle-free World War II campaign from the German side. But don’t think for a moment that, because it’s simple to play, it’s easy to win. Germany may have rolled over Poland in 1939, but its defenders will go out fighting. Descent 5 (Data East) is a mixed bag of strategy, exploration and action that finds you defending an outpost. It’s not a bad idea, but the components, especially the Wolfenstein 3-D segments, are of inconsistent quality, and the game never quite coalesces into a whole. The PlayStation also boasts RETURN FIRE (Time-Warner Interactive), the sequel to the venerable Amiga classic, FIREPOWER. It’s a splendid game of capture-the-flag, with notable improvements over the original. Now you command tanks, choppers, jeeps and missile launchers in a series of island scenarios against a much more challenging enemy.

A-TRAIN (Maxxis) and THEME PARK (Electronic Arts) are games in the SimCity vein, and both perform very much like the originals. In THEME PARK, you build an amusement park, while in A-TRAIN you construct railroads. In both, as a bonus, you can literally enter the world you create. THEME PARK’s 3-D world isn’t implemented very well, as the first-person, polygonal park is rough in appearance, deserted, noninteractive, and hard to navigate. A-TRAIN is a better success, where you can ride any of your buses or train routes and watch the scenery roll by in the four cardinal directions. You can even switch the view between them at will. In each case, it’s immensely satisfying being able to wander through the very parks or trains you built yourself. I certainly hope this is a trend that other games will follow.

THE CHESSMASTER 3-D (Mindscape) also makes it to the PlayStation. It’s a more than respectable opponent, using the CHESSMASTER 4000 engines, and should keep your hand firmly attached to your chin.

There are also several games on the puzzle front. 3D LEMMINGS (Psygnosis) is the natural extension of the LEMMINGS universe into another dimension, with new 3-D Lemmings—like Turners—that may take a while to get used to. Once achieved, it’s as playable, as charming, as maddening as ever. For simple diversion without addiction, there is ZOOP (Viscicom), which is more or less TEMPEST, where you shoot down approaching colored squares from within a central grid. Another is GEOM CUBE (American Technos), which is competitive WELLTRIS.

PANZER GENERAL: The best of wargames has come to the PlayStation, and is a very faithful port.

X-COM UFO Defense

X-COM, CGW’s 1994 Game of the Year, has been ported to the PlayStation, seeming proof that the world has indeed been taken over by aliens. Hihi! We X-Com veterans must expose this UFO wannabe for the monthly supermarket checkout line fodder that it is.

X-COM is hardly a fast-paced game on the PC, but I could have fixed a sandwich between CD load times here. A bigger problem was the gamepad, so unsuitable for this game that I had to replace it with a PlayStation mouse. Otherwise, the game mechanics are the same.

The aliens can’t see your hidden units, just as in the PC. But the more aliens the AI had to move, the less likely it showed in patrolling, maximizing fields of fire and so forth—probably a memory limitation. To offset this, the aliens were "tweaked" to fire much more accurately than in the PC version. Interception of UFOs is also tougher here, because the AI runs away faster, and your fire is curiously less accurate.

Do these cheats hurt? Not that much, really, because the core of the game is intact in all its strategic and research-heavy glory. Tactically, the AI still pounces on weak human moves with those nasty Alien Grenades, and Mind Control is as effectively creepy as ever. But it is not quite an equitable substitute for the PC version.

—Terry Coleman
Introducing Silent Thunder: A10 Tank Killer II. 24 action-packed missions take you through Central America, the Middle East and Korea in one of the most devastating ground attack planes ever created. Huge explosions and texture-mapped terrain reduce other flight sims to twisted wreckage. See why PC Gamer Magazine says "The terrain graphics are unquestionably some of the the best ever seen in a flight sim." And yes, they are real screen shots. Even the big one!

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Flying flight sims is just like dating. (Who?) Let me explain the analogy— I’m not that much of a game geek.) Surely you’ve started going out with someone (bought a new sim) and been truly impressed with that person’s (sim’s) looks, personality, and, um, handling. But as you get deeper into the relationship, strange quirks pop up. You find unexpected behaviors (bugs) and redundant conversations (missions), and sometimes the person (sim) wants to do different things than you do (exhibits poor control response). Eventually the peculiarities get so annoying that you say it’s been fun and head on to the next relationship (sim).

The nice thing about flight sims, though, is that unlike ex-girlfriends, they can be patched. (I’m not bitter—I just dated a few too many. Release 1.0s before I married.) Three of last year’s best have recently been the subject of extensive patches. You’ll find two of the patches on this month’s CD-ROM; the EF2000 patch wasn’t final when the CD went to press.

**EF2000.1**

EF2000, in its unpatched form, is a dazzling game. A rich visual and tactical environment, detailed systems control, and a wide variety of missions make it one of the hottest sims of recent memory. However, once you delve deep into the simulation, you’ll discover some rough edges. The lack of ground fire and antiaarial missions in the campaign disappoints, but the biggest crime is that your actions have little or no effect on the campaign’s outcome.

That’s not the case at all with the patched version. Campaigns are fleshed-out, with numerous anti-ship missions, more enemy CAP flights, strong target defenses, and dangerous neutrals who attack if you enter their territory. You can customize your weapon load before each mission, and post-mission debriefs are more thorough. Many details have been attended to—lose your AWACS early in the fighting and be prepared to do without any JHIDS target data for the rest of the campaign.

Pilot AI has been improved—no more planes flying into the ground on approach or ineffective Wild Weasel aircraft. Your own flying habits will have to change as

---

**SLEEK ZEKE** The Fighter Duel patch adds the agile A6M2 Zero to the fray.

---

**ON THE RADAR**

**FIGHTER DUEL** currently supports only two players over a modem or direct serial connection. Soon you’ll be able to take on the whole office with the release of the Net Duel update. This patch will add support for playing **FIGHTER DUEL** over an IPX-compatible network, using either DOS or Win 95 network drivers. Up to nine players will be able to enter the fray in a free-for-all air battle. The first player will establish the basic rules and setup; then Players will be able to come and go as they please, switch planes after being shot down, and more.

In our March flight sim roundup, we mentioned that **JET FIGHTER III** wouldn’t have network or modem support. That’s true for the first release, but Mission Studios plans an add-on module later this year that will add extensive multiplayer support.
Denny Atkin

Well, weight and drag of stores now affects low-speed performance, the odd high-speed stalls have been eliminated, and a voice and "break X" will warn you of an imminent ground collision.

Multiples mode has seen the most dramatic improvement. Previously, it was more or less a gun-only face-off. Gun hits were so difficult that four players could fly around in circles for half an hour mirrors (superbly implemented) have been added. Happily, you'll no longer be surprised by SAMs or AAMs when flying in formation. Better external view options let you pinpoint enemy or friendly aircraft and watch dogfights in progress.

Radar is better modeled, with target aspect angle affecting radar return. Keymaps have been adjusted to better support programmable controllers such as the Thrustmaster TFRS.

This is just an interim patch – the planned 1.1 release will hopefully add additional features, such as cloud cover. If you have features you'd like to see in 1.1, you can send them to the developers at Nsone@minescape.com.

FLANKER HANKE

Like EF2000, Su-27 Flanker was rushed out for Christmas. Some features didn't work properly, while others were omitted entirely. Now a series of patches (up to 1.06 at press time) have the Flanker ready for the front lines.

You'll find survival much easier now that the ECM light works, the field of view has been increased to a more realistic 210 degrees, and the missing rear-view key, the view returns to the front. Similarly, a toggleable alternate view set is available for joystick view hats, giving side views off the wings instead of angle views behind the tail. A partial panel view shows you the most important instruments while keeping none of the action visible.

Additional controllers are supported, and the second view hat on sticks such as the CH F-16 Combat Stick now trims the aircraft (the function such hats serve on real aircraft). A config file lets you redefine any button or view hat function.

Armament has been split into two banks. You can now fire cannons, machine guns, or both. Bullet lethality is toned down, so kills are a bit harder to get. The flight model has been tweaked, with more realistic roll rates and the addition of prop drag.

In realistic flight modes, you'll now have to catch the wires at the rear of the aircraft carrier to land successfully. Finally, when you die, you'll now get to see your plane explode or splash into the ocean, rather than being unceremoniously dumped back to the results screen.

BETTER LATE THAN...

I'm overjoyed to see these patches. All of these updated games are eminently more playable, and the companies are to be commended for improving their products. Still, it's a shame that business pressures force these companies to release games before their time. It would be nice to be confident that you're buying a finished product.

You'll find the ED2000 patch at [www.dld.com/patch.html], the So-27 patch at [www.minescape.com], and the Fuerza Dura patch at [www.philipmedia.com/media/games/games.html].
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Great Balls Of Fire

Spectrum HoloByte's Action Flight Sim Is A License That Thrills

by Robin G. Kim

Check any flight sim fan's videotape collection and more likely than not you'll find a copy of Top Gun. What the action flick lacked in accuracy it made up for in enthraling action and fantastic jet footage. That formula, which made the movie a huge success, has been carried into Spectrum HoloByte's latest flight simulation. Top Gun: Fire at Will isn't the most realistic sim you'll fly, but its non-stop action should keep you glued to the screen.

Top Gun attempts to capture the excitement, the camaraderie, and even the attitude of the movie and its characters. This time it's you, not Tom Cruise, playing the role of Maverick, a hot-shot F-14 Tomcat pilot with a chip on his shoulder. You'll start at Miramar NAS, where you and your wise-cracking RIO, Merlin, compete for the Top Gun trophy. From there, events take you and your comrades on a series of missions spanning three theaters.

THE NEED FOR SPEED

Missions are tied together using full-motion video clips which are mostly well done—the few cheesy background sets are more than made up for by the great footage of real carrier operations. The acting is generally good; the characters may seem larger than life, but they fit the cocky fighter pilot theme perfectly, and are always entertaining. That's fortunate, because they're with you all the time as you play the game, from voice-overs during briefings and debriefings to the ubiquitous radio chatter during missions. The wealth of video and digitized speech allow you to get to know the characters quickly and immerse yourself in the compelling, but mostly linear, story line. Some may be put off by all this chatter, but turning off speech is ill-advised, as some radio messages are vital.

A good story is fine, but air combat is the heart of the game. Almost all missions involve air-to-air work, with only the occasional recon or surface-staging assignment. The 30-plus missions (including a set of standalone practice missions) are varied and unpredictable enough to remain fresh and exciting till the end. As an added bonus, Spectrum promises to post a new mission file each month on the company's web page.

TERRAIN BY MONET

With all options maxed out, Top Gun's graphics look truly impressive at 640x480 resolution, and not bad at all at 320x200. Detail levels and resolution can be changed on the fly. (You may want to turn down the detail when your mission has you flying low to the ground, to increase the game's frame rate.) The stunningly detailed aircraft graphics are the best around, and the sea and translucent cloud renderings are also state of the art. Unfortunately, the terrain graphics don't live up to the same standards—they have a blocky look reminiscent of an impressionistic oil painting. Because most of the sim's action takes place over 10,000 feet, the poor terrain graphics rarely detract from the gaming experience. (To get sharper terrain renderings, start the game by typing 'TOPGUN SUPERHL, but expect an extreme frame rate hit.) Though indistinct, the landscape is far from boring, featuring rolling hills, rivers, and cities.

BALANCING ACT

If you're expecting a hard-core F-14 simulation like F-14 Fleet Defender with better graphics and a plot grafted on, stop right here. Top Gun makes no attempt at total realism—if most of your enjoyment of the namesake movie came
You'll have to search the galaxy to find a more realistic multimedia experience than this.

There's not much doubt that intelligent life forms exist somewhere else in the universe. The question is: Are their multimedia systems as advanced as ours?

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FALCON 3.0's Hi-Fi model) is fairly good, with a nice fluid feel. Although the plane's low speed handling is better than it should be—making landings pretty easy—buffering and stalls will bite you if you're careless. The model is accurate enough to reward realistic tactics and energy management—yanking all the way back on the stick all the time will get you nowhere.

Missile modeling is simplified, but the weapons exhibit the proper performance differences. Dodging enemy missiles can be difficult; the key is to lean toward radar-guided missiles, turn toward heat-seekers, and drop plenty of countermeasures when they get close. Gun kills are far too easy, however—just getting the gunsight in the same area code as the target is often enough to ensure a hit.

Solo missions are rare—you'll usually be accompanied by one or more wingmen. They can't be issued orders, but they at least keep you informed of what they're up to. In fact, sometimes they actually tell you what to do, such as perform a bracket or drag maneuver. The AI of both your wingmen and your opponents is very good, though they do tend to get target fixation. Protecting your wingmen is vital not only for tactical reasons, but because the death of any primary character will end the game.

**RADAR RIDERS**

Like US NAVY FIGHTERS, TOP GUN features easy-to-use pop-up information windows overlaid on a HUD-only view, though a full cockpit with instrumentation can also be selected for those who prefer the added realism. The apparent goal was to maximize the player's situational awareness, so the radar shows a 360-degree view of all objects around the aircraft. An optional arrow symbol points toward the greatest threat, be it a nearby bandit or an incoming missile. The virtual cockpit panning view mode is among the best around; it's fast and provides good visual cues to keep you oriented. From this mode you can also lock-on targets, though sometimes it won't lock onto a target in plain sight.

**LOST THAT LOVIN' FEELING**

TOP GUN has one serious compatibility problem affecting a significant number of players (this reviewer included)—on some systems, the game often crashes at the completion of a mission. (The story can be continued after a crash by rebooting and reloading the LAST MISSION file, a workable but annoying solution.) Spectrum Holobyte is working on a patch to address this. If this bug doesn't affect you, though, you should find the program rock-solid.

**SOPHY, SIR** If you screw up in training, you can count on Honda to chew you out.

TOP GUN offers an intriguing blend of Hollywood-style dogfighting action, a decent dose of flight sim realism, and a story that keeps you coming back for more. The atmosphere is so engrossing that you do feel like you're part of a story. Add a variety of smooth performing multiplayer options into the mix for long term play value, and you come up with a package that you'll want to head to when you—as Maverick said—"feel the need."
"I can’t shake him!" Cries your wing man as the MiG matches his every move.

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Le Grande Struggle
Can Napoleon Make It In The Multimedia Age?

When it's done well and kept in perspective, multimedia can actually enhance historical wargames, whether it's the voice-over of the German General Staff adjutant in Panzer General, or the more visual cues from BattleGrounds Gettysburg. Certainly, the gorgeous graphics of those two games didn't hurt them at the box office, either. But their success is inspiring others—for all the wrong reasons. I'm reminded of movie executives, who saw Star Wars as a formula for success: “See, J.D., all we need is to have some cute robots, nasty-looking aliens, and a lotta special effects, and we got us a sure hit!” Just think for a minute how many bad sci-fi films this approach spawned—you probably can't even remember them all—and imagine how many game producers out there are saying: “Well, J.D., all we need to do is have some tanks running around blasting stuff, some big-name actors, or had voice-over talent by people who've never played a game; toss in some SVGA graphics and some multimedia from the historical conflict, and we've got ourselves a winner!”

When the question is raised, usually by some concerned programmer or designer, why the game as designed has nothing to do with the real-life battle, one of the following responses is given:

1. “Well, let's make it science-fiction. That way, they can't call us for being non-historical.”
2. “This game is in real-time. Those old boardgame guys just don't get it. If they complain, we'll tell 'em their reflexes aren't good enough to be a real general.”
3. “Tell them we didn't want to be restricted by hindsight, so we're exploring historically viable alternatives.”
4. “What are you talking about? Nobody cares about that historical stuff except a few old greybeards; most people just want to blow things up. Don't you know anything about this market?”

This mentality rears its ugly head most prominently whenever the subject of pre-twentieth century wargames comes up—no tanks, no jet planes, no cool explosions, a lot of worried marketing people. Sure, the American Civil War is suddenly

"If marketers had their way, Napoleon games would only be insipid sci-fi rip-offs."
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Association strives to position itself as an oasis of ethics in a turbulent industry, as evidenced by their strong stand against software piracy. But those lofty aspirations don't help the average gamer to understand where SPA is coming from when it hands out the annual "Codies" awards (check out the SPA winners in our Read Me section).

In a year with Warcraft II, Steel Panthers, Battleground: Gettysburg, Heroes of Might & Magic, and Command & Conquer, among other strong candidates, the Best Strategy Game Award from SPA went to the pretty, but agonizingly incomplete design of Ascendancy. Maybe the judges should actually play some of the games in the category before voting next year?

Maxis has a lot of interesting projects in the works. SimCity 2000 is going online, with real-time action that lets you play cooperatively or competitively.

SimPark lets you design a national park, place it anywhere in North America, and fill it with the animals you want. No word yet on how this game reconciles the Contract With America and the Birch Society.

Pax Imperia II has been delayed until late Summer, possibly as late as September. For those of you who've never had the pleasure of playing the original Pax (only on the Mac), Pax II looks every bit as grand in scope as the venerable Master of Orion, but differently-flavored, with the option of playing either real-time or turn-based.

Incredible Simulations next "last stand" game, Zulwar!, will probably be their biggest hit yet. Jeff Lapkoft has secured the services of Dennis Bishop, who brings both a knowledge of history and a background of clean, enjoyable wargame designs (Dennis' board wargame Like Lions They Fought, published in Command magazine, is an enjoyable romp through Zululand).

---

SHINY NEW NAPPY

So it comes as somewhat of a surprise that a few companies are actually bringing new campaigns of Napoleon to market—albeit with a little caution. The most prominent of these is Talonsoft's Battleground: Waterloo, and the obvious question is whether the game system can make the transition from the American Civil War to Europe in 1815, while retaining enough historical flavor and play balance.

Bob McNamara of Talonsoft thinks so. Boardgamers will recognize Bob as "Mr. Advanced Squad Leader" from his design years at Avalon Hill, and it was Bob's input that resulted in many of the positive changes to the Battleground system between Ardennes and Gettysburg. From what I've seen so far, Bob and the other folks at Talonsoft have good reason to be excited about their new war child.

Waterloo's most obvious difference from Gettysburg is the range of the smoothbore musket, much shorter than the rifled musket more common in the Civil War. This has immediate effects on tactics, which are accentuated by the formation options available. In addition to forming in line or column, units may also be "unformed." An unformed group of units won't suffer the negative effects of disruption, but they neither move as effectively as a column nor fight as well as units in line. An example of how a unit
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Circle Reader Service #111
Terry Coleman

Warcraft II—Tired of waiting for your peons to finish work on your much-needed Gryphon Aviary or other buildings? Assign one peon to build the structure, and then assign other peons to go to the construction site and begin "repairing" it. The more peons you assign to repair duty, the faster the structure will be built. Soon, as your army of peons hammer away at the construction site, your anticipated Gryphon Aviary will spring to life.

Derrick Chin, Fremont, CA

Allied General—Can't seem to get major victories in the North African Campaign? You don't have the time to be as deliberate as Monty was historically, so just build better units. Matilda IIs are the best way to keep the desert sand out of your shoes; buy at least two, preferably three, and expect to take a few losses along the way.—Terry Coleman

might become uniformed would be infantry trying to move through a village while remaining in line—it simply isn't going to happen. Thus, the "uniformed" rule is a good way of simulating the practical realities of a given situation—making us googly happy—while keeping the game's mechanics relatively simple.

Similar methods are used to model cavalry charges, a must in any Napoleonic game. In the movement phase, cavalry first declares charges. Then the infantry in its path desperately tries to form into square or line formation; its success or failure is based on the unit's troop quality, already a cornerstone of the BATTLEGROUND system. Then there is the customary defensive fire phase, any enemy cavalry counter-charge attempts, and then the charge is resolved during the melee phase. The design team is also considering letting a cavalry unit charge a target more than one turn's ride away, provided it makes all troop quality and morale checks. Skirmishers likewise depend on troop quality in order to attempt withdrawal before melee.

WARWICK has a number of cosmetic changes to keep the marketing folks happy as well. The sprites are 50 percent larger than in GETTYSBURG, and the Battleview cutaway hexagon view has never looked better. More importantly, though, the scenarios have a great deal of variety and "what-if" scenarios. What if Grouchy had been shown to help Napoleon? What if Blucher's Prussians had arrived later, earlier, or not at all? How would Wellington's reverse-slope defense have fared if the French had attacked the dry field in the morning, instead of a morass of mud in the afternoon?

BG: WARWICK's competition comes mainly from the Old Guard of Avalon Hill, whose WATERLOO board game is being converted—1960s rules intact—to a 90s PC pallete (see last month's "19th Century Warfare" feature for details). While you're waiting for A1 for Talonsoft to meet their WATERLOO, how might check out NAPOLEON THE EMPEROR, a Windows turn-based game by Reality Engine Computer Games. It looks a lot like BATTLES OF NAPOLEON, but is even simpler to play. Essentially, you choose a formation, give it an order, do the same with your other units, and execute your grand strategy by ending the turn. Since the AI has a limited amount of things to keep up with, it isn't hard. All in all, the game is a lot like SWIFT'S GETTYSBURG game, without the arcade-ish artillery of that game. The shareware version of NAPOLEON THE EMPEROR is available on CGW's ZiffNet forum, or you can order the registered version by calling 800-242-1907, or 733-52-4694, or by PAX to 733-52-4698 or by CompuServe e-mail to 73355,470.

If this "Napoleonic system" becomes a trend in this industry, I'll be among the first to cheer. For now, though, I'll be satisfied if the games just get released with no cute robots, arcade curiosities, or bad voice-overs acting in Pidgin French. Until next time, Happy Hour-mont.
A Universe of Possibilities

The Spacelanes Will Soon Be Overrun With Bioderms and HERCs

by Scott May

Hybrid games can be a curious, adventurous experience, sort of like ordering food at a strange Chinese restaurant: take one item from column A, another from column B, and so on. The result can be either delightfully delicious or completely unpalatable.

Happily, Sierra's MISSION FORCE: CYBERSTORM falls squarely into the first category—a tasty blend of strategy, role-playing, arcade and miniature board gaming.

Viewed from a distance, this Windows 95 game is far from original, borrowing elements of titles both past (Infogame's 1990 sleeper, FULL METAL PLANET) and present (Activision's MEC WARRIOR 2). The key difference is style and delivery:

HYBRID STORM has in abundance: loss in some cutting-edge bells and whistles—in the form of modern, network and Internet multiplayer options—and the game stands tall on its own merits.

You begin the game as a lowly ensign, fresh out of the training academy, assigned to an off-world military command post. Your employer, a faceless and no-nonsense corporation called UNItech, doesn't pull punches when it comes to your chances for survival. In the opening sequence, the company is brutally frank to new recruits: "UNItech doesn't give a damn about you," the directive reads. "If you screw up, we'll stand you on a barren moon somewhere with a beacon strapped around your neck guaranteed to attract every Cybird in the sector." Kanda gives you a warm, fuzzy feeling, doesn't it?

Cybirds, as you may have gathered, are the enemy—a hostile race of mechanized warriors whose territorial aggression is matched only by their ingenuity in battle. UNItech's weapons against the Cybirds are a fleet of more than 25 HERCs (massive, building-sized robot tanks), fully adaptable to each mission's terrain type, offensive goals and defensive requirements. Because human physiology has failed to keep pace with machine technology, UNItech created artificial beings, called Bioderms, which are directly linked to the HERCs, yet remain under your control.

Your task is to create unique Bioderms from the genetic ingredients available to you at the HERC command center, integrate them with the machines, and oversee each mission's operations. First, visit the BioVat to cook up a suitable Bioderm, rated in attributes such as piloting, weapons skills, health, age, genetic stability, leadership and tech level. These biomechanical marvels are created from a Base Genetic Matrix (BCM) pool, cloned from the DNA of history's greatest leaders. The further you advance in the game, the more powerful BCM models you can access.

Next, stop by the VR training facility to enhance your Bioderm's initial qualities. The more powerful and experienced a Bioderm becomes, the higher up the genetic ladder it climbs. Advanced Bioderm classifications, each containing a five-tier sub-ranking, include Protoderm, Cytoderm, Plastoderm, Genoderm and Metaderm.

Finally, you must link Bioderm pilots with the HERCs, which in turn can be customized for the mission at hand. Care for wounded Bioderms at the MedVat, where you can regenerate, stabilize or...
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Biodems, which further limits your abilities. Take heart, however, the early missions are relatively easy, allowing you to quickly advance in rank, build resources and expand your military reach. As expected, when you progress further, the difficulty of your tasks and the rewards increase proportionally. When you’re not blasting Cybrids, most missions allow you to earn credits mining ore, a task that harkens back to the HERCs' non-military origins.

**Cyberstorm** defaults to a one-player, single mission mode with four possible skill levels. Drop by the HERC center's Centre facility to choose from available missions at your present level of command. Tutorials provide hands-on training in managing resources, selecting missions and controlling battlefield forces. You can also embark on a career, whose the goal is to rise through the ranks, build a fleet of sophisticated HERCs and a roster of experienced Biodems.

Missions unfold on a four-way scrolling planetary map, its surface patterned by a traditional hexagonal grid. Though viewed primarily from an overhead perspective, the varied terrain, outposts, ships and HERCs are rendered in vivid, animated 3-D, like a miniature game brought to life. Map controls let you rotate the playing field, zoom in for tactical battles, and zoom out for a broad strategic overview. Unless otherwise specified (in the game's extensive preference menu), the game plays in turn-based combat. A HERC's movement per turn is limited to the energy generated by its reactor. Simply plot a path with one mouse click, note the potential drain on your energy resources, and click again to set the HERC in motion. Direct your forces toward a common goal, or split them up to perform different tasks simultaneously.

Both movement and combat can take place in the same turn. The fire menu lets you individually select which weapon systems are active during combat. Some weapons, such as lasers and missiles, require reloading after each firing, which calls into play important tactical decisions. The game features a massive number of weapon upgrades, incrementally offered as you rise higher in rank. The probability of a hit is displayed before firing, based on your pilot's skill level, distance, line of fire and selected weapon. Another fascinating aspect of combat is precise control of each HERC's defensive shields. You begin with equal deployment along the six-sided hex outline, but can quickly redistribute power to the side from which you're currently taking a pounding. Damage reports and internal systems monitoring is available throughout the mission.

Overall, battlefield controls are straightforward and easily mastered, thanks to onscreen help and an intuitive screen layout. This is a dark and moody game, filled with sparse but ambient sound effects, voice-overs and a dramatic cinematic music. Arcade lovers may initially dislike the game's slow, deliberate pace or its lack of in-your-face action. But once the strategic and tactical nuances take hold, they'll discover a game that offers much deeper rewards.

The beta preview copy ran slow as cybernails, even on a PCI-equipped Pentium 90 system with 16 MB of RAM and a quad-speed CD-ROM drive (excessive overhead for what is essentially a strategy game). At the time of this writing, minimum hardware requirements were not yet available, but judging by the game's pre-release performance, it's safe to say that anyone at the low end of the system scale—486/DX2 66 MHz with 8 MB of RAM—will face constant frustration. The product's multiplayer options—modern, network and Internet connections—could not be tested, but seem almost certain to cause further performance degradation, even on high-end gaming systems. Hopefully, Sierra will iron out these problems in the final release. Anyone remember "Outpost?" "Nuff said. But if the designers stay on track, and fix some nagging system requirement problems, then Mission Force: Cyberstorm has the potential to become a major crossover hit, appealing to both veteran strategy gamers and today's much-obsessed action crowd.
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Space Bust?
A Galactic Enterprise That Doesn’t Quite Lift Off

by Martin E. Cirulis

Call me a hopeless optimist, or just a geek who hasn’t accepted the fact that humanity’s reach for the stars stalled nearly 30 years ago on the moon’s pocked face, but for me, a future in space means endless opportunities and surprises. This feeling pervades most of what I write, and even colors my thoughts on game design to the point that when I pick up a game with a science fiction twist, I hope to find a little more between the bits than I normally would from an analogous modern or historical game. Unfortunately, my high hopes for SF titles have brought me disappointment more than once, and I’m afraid this newest outing into the depths of space is less than stellar. What we have is another “Buck” tycoon game from Impressions/Sierra—and, while SPACE BUCKS has the look and feel of a top-notch SF game, it takes very little scratching to find a simulation simple and repetitive enough to make TRANSPORT TYCOON seem like CAPITALISM.

SPACE MERCHANT PRINCE

Although nowhere in the game is there an acknowledgment to The Old Master, the initial premise of SPACE BUCKS (SB) is reminiscent of the Merchant Prince section of Isaac Asimov’s Foundation saga. Here you are, a young entrepreneur from a culture just clawing its way back from an interstellar Dark Age, and commerce seems like just the thing to get the lost colonies of the galaxy back on speaking terms. The twist here is that you are not alone in this galaxy, as the good of humans must compete against the companies of four alien neighbors.

Each game starts in a random galaxy of over a hundred stars. SB assumes each star consists of a single planet, inhabited by one of the five galactic races and offering at least two of the four basic trade commodities of the Galaxy: Passengers, Food, Ore and Fuel. The amount of these trade commodities is low on undeveloped worlds and gets higher as you ascend the six levels of the socio-economic scale.

You begin the game with a single starport on your homeworld and a single tiny starship. In order to expand, you must negotiate with neighboring worlds for exclusive rights to build a starport. The prices vary. Less developed worlds will gladly take a small quarterly fee, while well-developed worlds will often demand big payments to get at their impressive output, as well as costly favors like restaurants or even sport arenas. And if it wasn’t difficult enough to balance the cost of landing rights against possible income, there is also the danger of becoming involved in an expensive bidding war if you bid on a world near a competitor’s trade lanes.

Luckily, you can create industries on these worlds that will produce more valuable cargoes. Fuel becomes chemicals, one can be processed into metals, and each race has a special Good it can produce that really rakes in the profit if you can find another world interested in it.
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USELESS GADGETS The ship customization is cool but not very useful; you don’t really need weapons or shields because pirates hardly ever attack.

And this brings us to the whole money-making process of SB: moving cargoes from supply worlds to consumer worlds by creating trade routes for your ships to follow. A few clicks of the mouse produces a loop for a ship to travel; a few more give precise commands for what to pick up and deliver at each world.

Of course, what would a transport empire stretching across the stars be without the starships to do the work? In SPACE BUCKS, players get to choose ready-made ships or design their own based on six hulls of varying cargo capacity and three other components: Engines, Shields and Weapons. All ships require an engine; but shields and weapons are optional and useful only in the (rare) event of a pirate attack. While all hull sizes are available from the outset, the three additional components slide slowly up a six-tiered technology scale whose development is outside the player’s control. Since this is basically a transportation game, engine improvements that increase a ship’s speed and range should be coveted; the more worlds a ship can serve in one fiscal quarter, the more profits it can reap.

Amidst the trade routes, there are the usual assortment of random mishaps to plague you. Also, if the player chooses, the spaceways can be enlivened by espionage attacks, which range from making a rival’s world break its charter, to inducing pirates to attack competitors. The traditional pals of the Tycoon genre, the dreaded banks and the lovable stock market, also make an appearance in SB, though in pretty basic forms.

With all this, you’d think that all SB needed was a little style to put the components together to create a game the equal of AIR BUCKS. Well...

“WHERE’S THE CONGEALED-PROTEIN-SUBSTITUTE?”

What bothers me the most about SPACE BUCKS is the fact that it will probably get a number of glowing reviews based on how good it looks and feels for the first couple of hours: the SVGA graphics are sharp and imaginative; the alien races are interesting; the random map and large numbers of worlds seem to offer extensive replayability; the ship building system appears to have all the traits you’d find in a fancy spacepolitik strategy game; and most importantly, SPACE BUCKS is a child of the very successful AIR BUCKS.

Despite all this, if you play further into the game, you find it devoid of the quality you’d expect from a sci-fi Tycoon game. The alien races have very little impact on the game and I would hazard that it makes no difference at all which one you choose to play. The ship designs are interesting, but, except for cargo size and engine speed, the variations are irrelevant (even the computer rarely arms or shields its ships). SPACE BUCKS also displays either a gameplay “bug” or the worst AI cheating I have seen in recent years. It is so blatant, that in a game where your profits are supposedly proportional to your fleet, a computer player can lose every ship and still somehow gain money.

Even worse, though, is the game design itself. It seems to me that a game about building a Galactic shipping empire should be more interesting than terrestrial commerce, not less — SPACE BUCKS is so basic that each planet is less interesting than the smallest towns in RailRoad TYCOON. Even the sense of direct competition with your computerized companies is mostly lost by the fact that only one company may operate from a planet at a time. With no real contact between the companies, there is no need to worry about such important business concepts as advertising, service quality or even ticket prices. And what about taking advantage of the galactic venue? Instead of predictable random events like meteor swarms or earthquakes, why didn’t the designers think about the subject matter and plague our companies with outbreaks of war or strange alien viruses? I’m afraid SB has very little to do with its fine Airline predecessor, and far more to do with the same mediocrity that created the lamentable POWER HOUSE.

If you love to create intricate moving sculptures that generate endless money but do very little else interesting, then SPACE BUCKS will have some appeal for you. Set at its hardest level, the game offers two or three hours of challenge before your empire grows to the point that nothing can really harm it and you simply sit around absorbing planets from your competitors and doing more and more unwieldy upgrades to your entire fleet. Other than that, it is pretty to look at, but definitely no AIR BUCKS in Space.

APPEAL: Gamers looking for a great-looking first few hours will have fun, but not those desiring extended gameplay.

PROS: Good-looking introductory Tycoon game.

CONS: Uninspired design, simplistic modeling, dubious AI “advantages” and very short-term challenge make this game an “also ran” in the space race.
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**1. What is the highest level of education that you completed?**
- 01. Some high school or less
- 02. Graduated High School
- 03. Some College or Technical school
- 04. Graduated College
- 05. Post Graduate school

**2. Computer currently owned is:**
- 01. IBM compatible (Intel standard)
- 02. Macintosh
- 03. Amiga
- 04. Dedicated game machine
- 05. None

**3. If Intel, what level?**
- 01. Power PC
- 02. Pentium (866)
- 03. 486
- 04. 386
- 05. 286

**4. Do you own (or plan to buy in next 6 months) a CD-ROM?**
- 01. Own
- 02. Plan to buy (6 months)

**5. How often do you usually buy computer games?**
- 01. Once a week
- 02. Once every two to three weeks
- 03. Once a month
- 04. Once every two to three months
- 05. Once every four to six months
- 06. Once a year

**6. Where are you most likely to purchase games?**
- 01. Independent computer store
- 02. Consumer electronics store
- 03. Direct from vendor
- 04. Mass merchandising store
- 05. Mail order

**7. What is your (and others in household) favorite type of game?**
- 01. Strategy
- 02. War/Military
- 03. Role Playing
- 04. Brain Teasers
- 05. Card
- 06. Sport
- 07. Action/Arcade
- 08. Educational
- 09. Adventure

**Name**

**Title**

**Company Name**

**Address**

**City**

**State**

**Zip**

**Telephone**

**In a Hurry? Fax This Card To:** 609-829-0692

---

**4. Please send me a one-year (12-issue) subscription to Computer Gaming World for $27.94 (U.S. price); all other countries add $16.00 for additional postage.**

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**CGW 5/96-4**
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*Please see advertisement for contact information.
SIEGEL V. SYNCRONYNS, et al.
Case No. 95 CH 12257
SUMMARY NOTICE OF
CLASS ACTION AND
PROPOSED SETTLEMENT
TO: ALL PERSONS WHO PURCHASED
SOFTWARE OR SOFTWARE95

The purpose of this summary notice is to inform all Class Members of the proposed settlement of the lawsuit brought against Syncronys Softcorp. in the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois. As explained in detail in a notice of class action and proposed settlement which will be distributed by mail (the “Mailed Notice”), if you purchased SoftRAM or SoftRAM95 on or before March 15, 1996, you are a member of the Settlement Class and your rights will be affected by the legal proceedings in this action. You are encouraged to read this Notice and the Mailed Notice in their entitiles. You have a right to request exclusion from the Settlement Class but you must do so by June 15, 1996 by following the procedures outlined in the Mailed Notice. If you do not request exclusion from the Settlement Class, the terms of the settlement and judgment will be binding as to you.

Generally, the proposed settlement, which has been preliminarily approved by the Court, provides that in exchange for releasing all claims against Syncronys Softcorp. and its distributors and retailers in connection with SoftRAM or SoftRAM95, Class Members may be entitled to (1) a full refund or a free software upgrade or free software, at the Class Member’s election, and (2) coupons which may be used in connection with the purchase of other Syncronys products. A hearing will be held on June 24, 1996 at 10:30 a.m. before the Honorable Aaron Jaffe in Courtroom #2405, Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois to determine whether the proposed settlement, including payment of attorneys’ fees, is fair, reasonable and adequate, and whether a final judgment should be entered approving it and dismissing the lawsuit against Syncronys. You may appear personally or by counsel; if you do not appear you will be represented by Class Counsel. To object, you must file a written objection, received by the Court by June 15, 1996.

IF YOU BELIEVE YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE SETTLEMENT CLASS AND HAVE NOT RECEIVED THE MAILED NOTICE, YOU SHOULD REQUEST A COPY BY TELEPHONE (1-800-335-4059). PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT THE COURT FOR INFORMATION. ALL QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE PROPOSED SetTLEMENT SHOULD BE DIRECTED IN WRITING TO THE PLAINTIFFS’ CLASS COUNSEL.

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**Highlights**

**WAR IN RUSSIA**
Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1984

Prior to *War in Russia*, gamers who wanted to play strategic-level games that covered the entire Eastern Front were restricted to massive boardgame designs which covered two or three cafeteria-sized tables at a game convention. Computer games were by and large limited to smaller actions where tactics were all-important and a strategic perspective either non-existent or so abstracted that strategic-level gamers felt the computer format was unsuited to the depiction of large actions. With *War in Russia*, the first "monster" game on the computer, Gary Grigsby was able to present theater-wide action on a wide-scale and give individual gamers the thrill of being the theater commander for the first time. Experienced gamers came to discover that the AI could be faked out easily in an early move of subtlety, but the game continued to have popularity because of its scale, subject matter and suitability for playing by mail (i.e. the save positions were in the right spot for players to be able to save their move, send a disk and wait for the return of the disk for their next move) or e-mail (sending saved game files at a rapid 300 baud per second). It was popular among wargamers for as long as the Apple II remained alive, and it provided some of the initial research for Grigsby's later *Second Front* and *War in Russia* on the IBM, though neither had the same game mechanics.

**WASTELAND**
Interplay Productions, Inc., 1986

It is difficult to speak of computer role-playing games without invoking the venerable title, Wasteland. This post-holocaust adventure was set in the Mojave Desert regions of California, Nevada and Arizona where the players were "rangers," the last remnants of law and order, trying to solve a mystery involving both massive atomic mutations and an incursion of aliens circa 1950 "B" drive-in movies. The game proved the value of a skill-based role-playing system and created interesting algorithms for handling the non-player characters. One couldn't simply strip the NPCs of their items as in other games; the NPCs had "minds" of their own. Further, although the game was combat-intensive and used a computerized form of Michael Stackpole's combat-rich MERCENARIES, SPIES AND PRIVATE EYES game system (still available in boxed form from Flying Buffalo, Inc.), it was replete with ethical dilemmas and non-combat puzzle-solving of the most devious sort. The story was written by Mike Stackpole, and many of the maps were fleshed out by veteran game designers like Liz Danforth and Ken St. Andre. Now, years later, Wasteland is still held with great esteem by CGW's readers and was most recently available on Interplay's 10th Anniversary CD-ROM.

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**Inductees Prior To 1989**

- **Battle Chess** (Interplay Productions, 1988)
- **Chessmaster** (The Software Toolworks, 1986)
- **Dungeon Master** (FTL Software, 1987)
- **Earl Weaver Baseball** (Electronic Arts, 1986)
- **Empire** (Interstel, 1978)
- **F-19 Stealth Fighter** (MicroProse, 1988)
- **Gettysburg: The Turning Point** (SSI, 1986)
- **Kampfgruppe** (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
- **Mech Brigade** (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
- **Might & Magic** (New World Computing, 1988)
- **M.U.L.E.** (Electronic Arts, 1983)
- **Pirates** (MicroProse, 1987)
- **SimCity** (Maxis, 1987)
- **Starflight** (Electronic Arts, 1985)
- **The Bard's Tale** (Electronic Arts, 1985)
- **Ultima III** (Origin Systems, 1983)
- **Ultima IV** (Origin Systems, 1986)
- **War in Russia** (Strategic Simulations, 1984)
- **Wasteland** (Interplay Productions, 1986)
- **Wizardry** (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
- **Zork** (Infocom, 1981)

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**Modern Inductees**

- **Falcon 3.0** (Spectrum HoloByte, 1991)
- **Gunship** (MicroProse, 1989)
- **Harpone** (Three-Sixty Pacific, 1989)
- **King's Quest V** (Sierra On-Line, 1990)
- **Lemmings** (Psygnosis, 1991)
- **Links 386 Pro** (Access Software, 1992)
- **M-1 Tank Platoon** (MicroProse, 1989)
- **Railroad Tycoon** (MicroProse, 1990)
- **Red Baron** (Dynamix, 1990)
- **Sid Meier's Civilization** (MicroProse, 1991)
- **Their Finest Hour** (LucasArts, 1989)
- **The Secret of Monkey Island** (LucasArts, 1990)
- **Ultima VI** (Origin Systems, 1990)
- **Ultima Underworld** (Origin Systems, 1992)
- **Wing Commander I & II** (Origin Systems, 1990-91)
- **Wolfenstein 3-D** (id Software, 1992)
Computer game programs have grown so massive and the number of hardware configurations has become so huge that incompatibilities and glitches are frustratingly common.

Software fixes, or “patches,” for buggy programs have become a necessary evil until we reach the golden age of standardized platforms and bug-free programs. Red indicates new files.

**Absolute Zero Upgrade:** Final revision corrects a nasty crash bug in the Hammer and Anvil scenarios. 1/6/96

**Allied General V1.01 Upgrade:** Upgrades AG to version 1.01. Contains several bug fixes. 2/8/95

**Battleground: Gettysburg V1.01 Upgrade:** Fixes reported bugs and gameplay issues. 1/18/96

**Capitalism Update:** Fixes a problem with the presidents and another rare item bug. 1/11/96

**CivNet Update:** Fixes several reported problems. 12/8/95.

**Command & Conquer V1.19P Patch:** Includes fixes for all known bugs and some game balance changes. Works with V1.07 or V1.18p. 1/19/96

**Crusader: No Remorse V1.21 Update:** Includes several new features and fixes. 12/22/95

**First Encounters V1.06 Update (English CD Version):** Fixes reported bugs. 12/6/95

**Flight Unlimited V2.45 Upgrade:** Upgrades Flight to version 2.45. Contains many bug fixes. 2/7/96

**Front Page Sports Football Pro 96:** Fixes several technical issues. 1/4/96

**Gabriel Knight 2:** Fixes all known problems with Gabriel Knight CD and speeds up restore of save games. 1/5/96

**Hardball 5 Update:** Updated stats for the end of the 1995 season. Rosters updated to end of January 1996. 2/16/96

**Harpoon Classic Mac V1.57j Update:** Fixes several user reported bugs and adds air-to-air to the HDS9 BattleSet. 1/11/96

**Harpoon Classic Windows V1.55c Update:** Fixes several user reported GPFs and adds the Windows Scenario Editor. 1/11/96

**Hive Update:** Makes the game easier. 12/4/95

**MechWarrior 2 DOS Version V1.1 Update:** Fixes several things, including the right side taking more damage on mechs, increased joystick support and Windows 95 crash problems. 11/20/95

**NHL 96 Update:** Fixes a variety of technical problems, including save game lock-ups on the Windows 95 crash problems. 12/2/95

**PBA Bowling for Windows V1.10:** Incorporates several fixes and improvements. 12/27/95

**Riddle of Master Lu V2.05 Update:** Fixes more known problems within the original release, including jumpy mouse movement, switch problems in the billiard room. 1/8/96

**Steel Panthers V1.12 Update (Unofficial):** Lots of fixes by Gary Grigsby himself. Note: SSI does not support this patch. 1/15/96

**Stonekeep V1.2 Update:** Fixes reported bugs. 1/19/96

**SU-27 Flanker V1.03:** Contains files needed to update SU-27 to version 1.03. Includes several new features and some fixes. 2/14/96

**Wing Commander IV Joystick Upgrade:** Alternate joystick data acquisition routines that allow some systems to work properly with WC4. 2/25/96

**Thunderscape V1.1 Update:** Incorporates numerous changes and fixes. 1/3/96

**TIE Fighter CD Joystick Update:** Should cure problems with Microsoft Sidewinder 3D Pro, Suncom Raptor or other joysticks incorporating axes from joystick 2. 1/23/96

**Unnecessary Roughness '96 Update:** Fixes sound and video problems. 1/5/96

**Publisher BBS Numbers**

Many of these patches are available directly from the publishers’ bulletin board systems. Call with your modem party settings at N-8-1.

- **Accolade** (408) 296-8800
- **Apogee** (509) 368-7036
- **Bethesda** (301) 990-7552
- **Blizzard** (714) 556-4002
- **Broderbund** (415) 883-5889
- **Capstone** (305) 374-6872
- **Creative Labs** (405) 742-6660
- **Id Software** (508) 368-4137
- **Impressions** (617) 225-2042
- **InterPlay** (714) 252-2822
- **Legend** (703) 272-3434
- **LucasArts** (415) 257-3070
- **Maxis** (510) 254-3859
- **MicroProse** (410) 785-1841
- **Microsoft** (206) 936-6735
- **NovaLogic** (818) 774-9628
- **Origin** (512) 328-8402
- **Papyrus** (617) 576-7472
- **Sierra Online** (208) 644-0112
- **Spectrum HoloByte** (510) 522-8609
- **SSI** (408) 739-6137 or (408) 739 6623
- **Virgin Interactive** (714) 833-3305
### TOP ACTION GAMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Score</th>
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### TOP ADVENTURE GAMES

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### TOP CLASSIC/PUZZLE GAMES

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### TOP SIMULATION/SPACE COMBAT GAMES

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<td>Flight Unlimited</td>
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### TOP SPORTS GAMES

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<td>FPS Football Pro 96</td>
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<td>Front Page Sports Baseball</td>
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### TOP STRATEGY GAMES

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<td>Heroes of Might &amp; Magic</td>
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<td>Sir-Tech</td>
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### TOP ROLE PLAYING GAMES

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<td>Wolf</td>
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### TOP WARGAMES

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<td>RAW</td>
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Games on unnumbered lines have scores equal to the line above. ★ = Top game of type. ◆ = New Game. AD = Adventure, RP = Role Playing, SI = Simulation/Space Combat, ST = Strategy, WG = Wargame, AC = Action, SP = Sports, CP = Classic/Puzzle. Games are retired after two years and become eligible for the Hall of Fame.
What's The Deal With... Science Fiction?

Can somebody please explain to me why, in an industry where at least half the titles on the shelves at any given moment involve some kind of SF or Speculative bent, and a stable percentage of consumers would probably consider themselves "fans" of SF, the games themselves so very rarely do a good job with what should be an infinity of possibilities? I have a few ideas to explain this state of affairs, but most of them involve dark Cabals and Entropic conspiracies, and my shrink told me not to talk about this stuff in public.

Seriously though, it's unfortunate for us that gaming is relatively new-born, compared to SF (which I believe is worlds away through late adolescence) and is more vulnerable to "it doesn't matter" syndrome. All the problems of a fledgling art form are exacerbated when you believe that the mechanics of a game are the only issue that matters; and that premise or even a story is something to be hung loosely about the graphics at the end of the production run. While it's certainly true that for action or most strategy games, the gameplay accounts for 80 percent of the success of the product, I think it's a mistake to ignore the fact that a clever and well-thought-out premise can be the added magic that will take a good game over the top into the realm of "Great."

For me, part of the appeal of DOOM was its heroic, twisted premise, which harkened back to the great Humanist SF stories of the '50s and early '60s—when there was no humanity-crushing force, be it alien or magical, that couldn't be defeated by a smart monkey with a big enough gun. It was genuinely satisfying to take on those demons, they may have been torturing helpless sinners for the first half of eternity, but they looked a little less cocky staring down the steel depths of a double-barreled Remington in the hands of an angry primate.

Strat titles like Sim-Tek's Mastron or Orion and the upcoming sequel MOO 2: BATTLE OF AVANTUS have also benefited greatly by having a convincing premise, whose implications were woven into the game itself. Certainly this can partially explain their success versus the uninspired fare from impressions (like Space Bucks or When Two Worlds War).

Of course, nowhere is the battle between good writing and knee-jerk cliché mining more obvious than in the realm of the venerable Adventure game, the sub-genre where you can find every Hollywood investor with extra pocket change furrowing nowadays—all looking to bankroll story ideas so weak that they couldn't thrive even in the hyperbaric chamber of the straight-to-video market. While the failures and the thinking behind them are dreadfully apparent (witness Byron Preiss's Martian Chronicles and Riddler recent titles are giving me something akin to hope that computer games may someday complement SF, instead of just propagating its worst qualities. While The Dis actually had the wit to think an adventure game might benefit from dialogue written by a real writer, (the stodgy Orson Scott Card), the surprising Mission Critical went even further in improving the sub-genre by making the game serve the "reality" of the story. I didn't have to play Reversi or fetch a part of a guy in another village once while repairing my ripped Battlecruiser. It was wonderful.

To be honest, though, my optimism has been given its greatest lift by such recent titles as I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM and Psychic Detective, where the writers were allowed to disturb and provoke the player, instead of just shock and puzzle them.

If adventure games are going to evolve into a valid form of mature entertainment on a par with movies (as is the hope of all the suits investing in game companies), then it's time to leave behind the '50s Drive-in "Good Enough" thinking, and start treating SF like a game that has been read and written by some of humanity's brightest lights for over 150 years.
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