

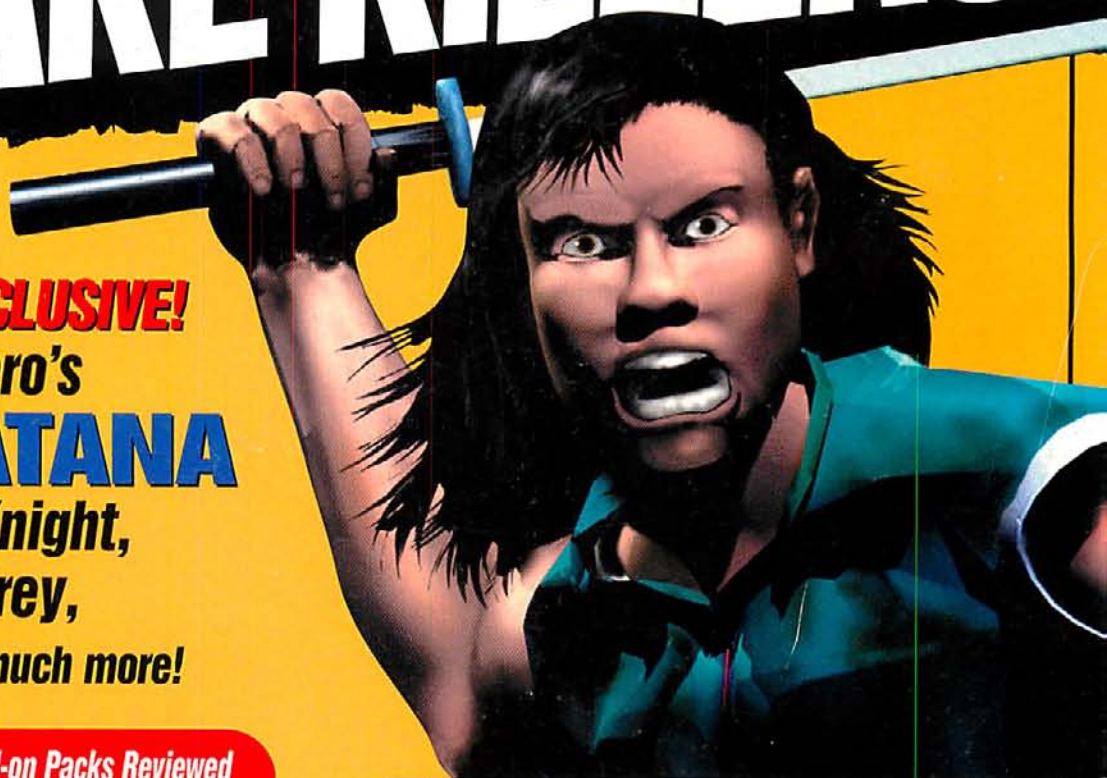
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Interstate '76

Computer Gaming World

JUNE 1997
NO. 155

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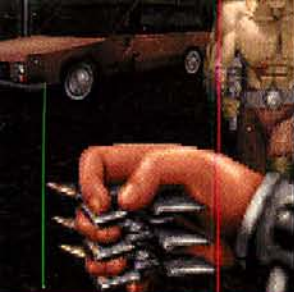


SCOURGE OF ARMAGON

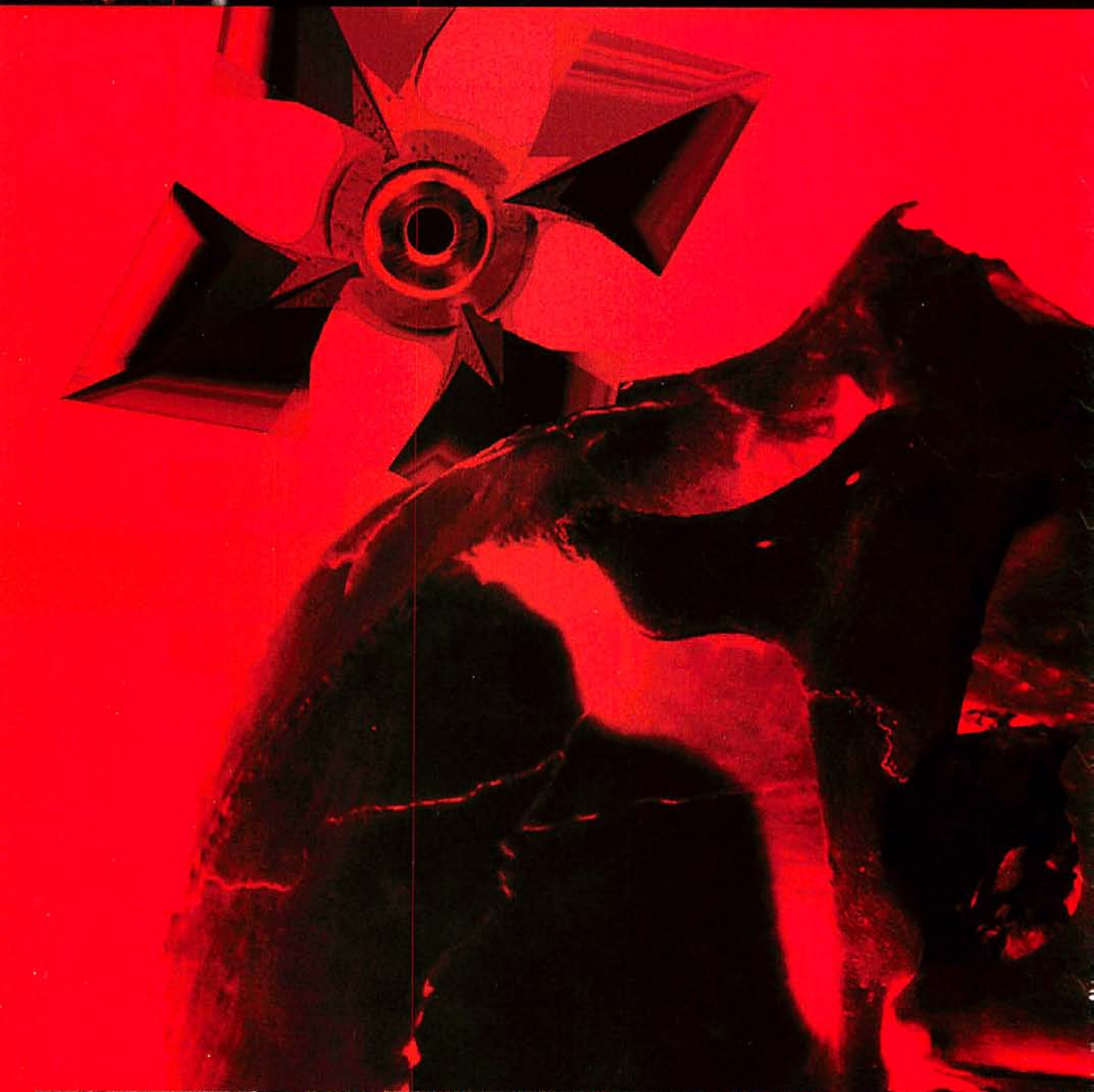


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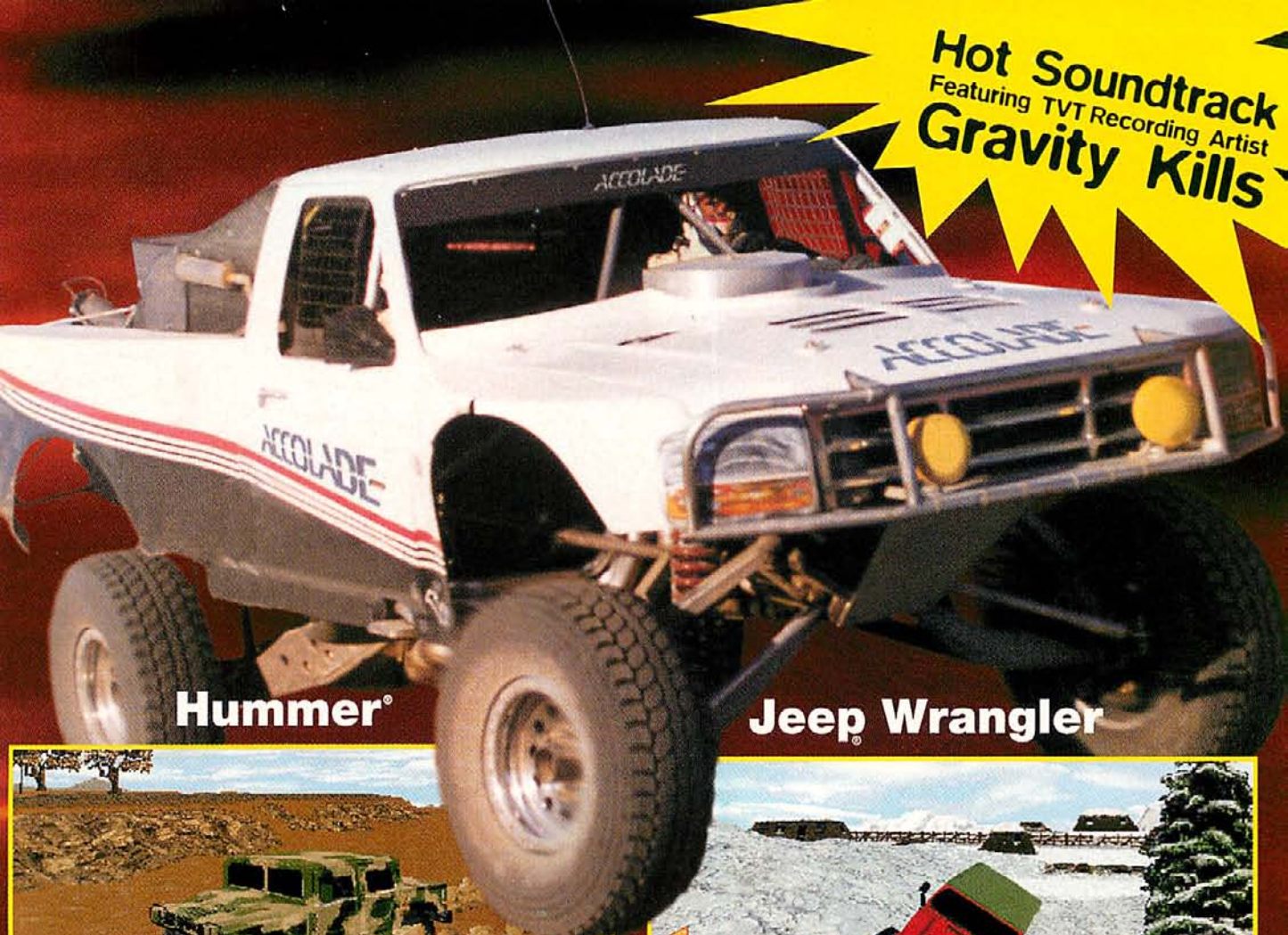
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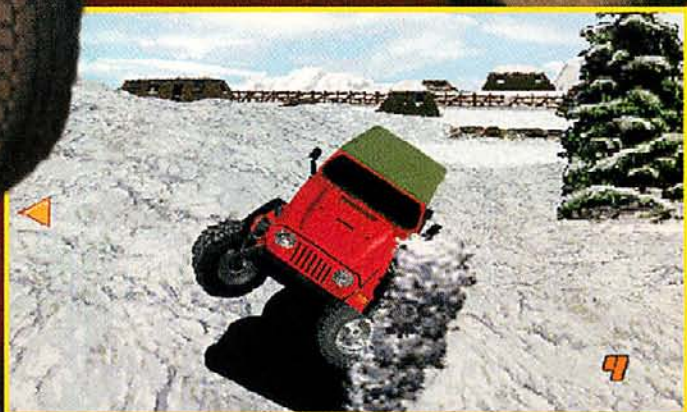
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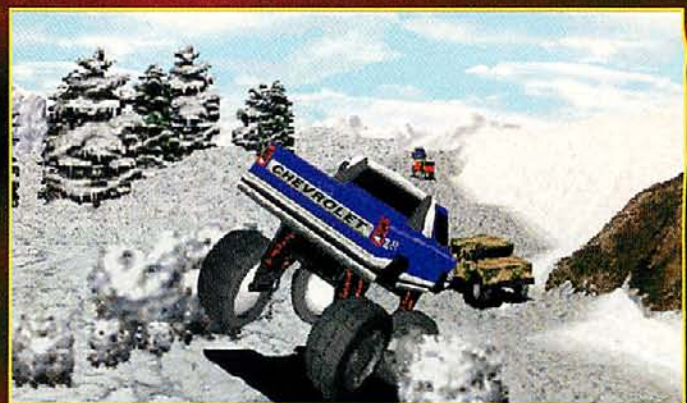


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QUAKE KILLERS

Quake Killers

62 How do you top the awesome 3D action of **QUAKE**? All the gaming heavyweights—including LucasArts, 3D Realms, id Software, and Raven—are working on that very question with the

next generation of first-person shooters, which promises to take the genre even further. This month, we grab our rocket launchers and hunt down the most promising **QUAKE** killers of 1997.

HARDWARE

Speaker Blowout!

88 No gaming experience is complete without a killer sound system to reverberate through your brain. We locked Contributing

Editor Loyd Case in a room with 11 new speaker systems and things got loud. Very loud. Check out the results of his aural orgy inside.



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What's On The CD?

said, "I wanna KILL! I wanna KILL! I wanna eat dead burnt baby's bodies!" And the man looked at me and said, "Son, you're our boy."

—Arlo Guthrie, *Alice's Restaurant*

If you've got a hankerin' for carnage, you've come to the right place. To complement this month's 3D-action theme, the CG-ROM delivers a custom Quake level that lets you blow off opponent's limbs. This CGW-exclusive level can be played either single- or multiplayer, and was created by Richard "Levelord" Gray (renowned for his irreverent Duke NUKEM 3D levels). Special thanks to the Levelord, as well as CGW's own Dave "Shaft" Salvator for bringing all the appendages, er... uh... *pieces* together. Special thanks also to the guys at id Software for their generous permission to use Quake technology, objects and textures. (Quake® is a registered trademark of Id Software, Inc. Quake®, the Enforcer, the Rottweiler, the Grunt and Textures included within this custom level © 1996 Id Software, Inc. All Rights Reserved.)

If, however, you're one of those people who thinks Quake sucks and Duke NUKEM rules,

you'll be happy to play some all-new Duke NUKEM 3D levels, also on this month's CD.

If third-person 3D action's more up your alley, check out Ecstasica 2 by Psygnosis, and Tomb Raider: Part 2 by Eidos. We also have a special sneak preview of the highly anticipated Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II by LucasArts.

This month, CGW Contributing Editor Pat Miller completes his special Vietnam Trilogy with "Blues to the Rescue?," a custom built Steel Panthers 2 scenario based on a battle that took place in November, 1967, in the Khesanh Valley of South Vietnam.

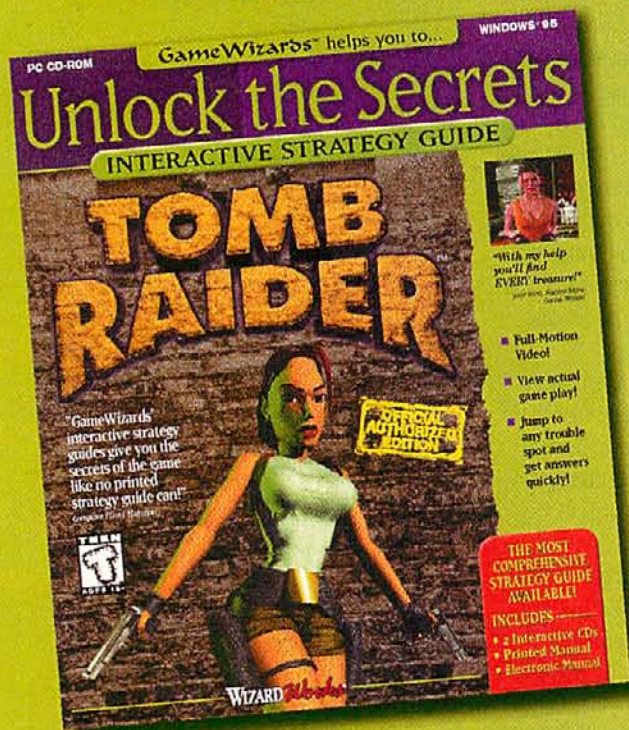
And for sports fans who want more than just baseball this spring, Sierra Online presents its Front Page Sports:



GAMES AND GOODIES ON THE CG-ROM

DEMOS AND STUFF	PLATFORM	DIRECTORY	EXECUTABLE
Acrobat Reader	WIN/95	ACROBAT	AR32E30.EXE
Battle Tech: Solaris	95	BTECH	SETUP.EXE
Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain	95	KAINDEMO	KAINDEMO.EXE
Cave Wars	DOS	CAVEWARS	CAVE.BAT
Custom Quake Level	DOS	QUAKE	N/A
Diablo shareware	95/NT	DIABLO	DIABLOSW.EXE
Duke it Out in D.C.	DOS	DUKEDC	INSTALL.EXE
EarthLink Network (R)	WIN or 95	ERTHLINK	WIN31/SETUP.EXE or WIN95/SETUP.EXE
Ecstasica 2	95	E2DEMO	ECSTATIC.EXE
Football Pro 97	95	FBPRO	SETUP.EXE
Front Page Sports: Golf	95	FPSGOLF	SETUP.EXE
Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II	WIN/95	JEDI	JEDIMOV.AVI
Magic: The Gathering	95	MAGIC	MTGDEMO.EXE
Patches	N/A	PATCHES	N/A
POD	95/MMX	POD	WINPOD.EXE or PODMMX.EXE
Quake Comics: Adventures of Dank & Scud	N/A	COMICS	N/A
Scud: A Shockwave Game	WIN/95	SCUD	via Netscape or Microsoft IE
Shivers 2	WIN/95	S2DEMO	SETUP.EXE
Space Bar	95	SPACEBAR	SPACEBAR.EXE
Steel Panthers 2: Blues to the Rescue? Scenario	N/A	SCEN3	N/A
Test Drive: Off Road	DOS/95	TDORDEMO	INSTALL.EXE
Tomb Raider: Part 2	DOS	TRDEMO	SETUP.EXE
W.A.R. Inc.	DOS	WARDEMO	WARDEMO.EXE
You Don't Know Jack: Sports	WIN/95	JACK	5QDEMO.EXE

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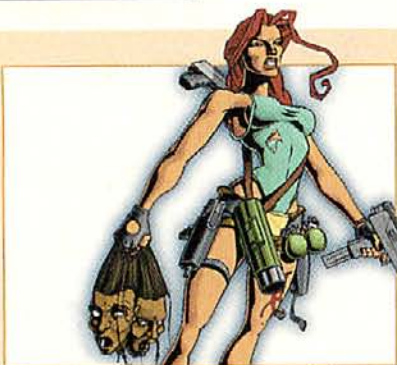
- ◆ Diablo
- ◆ Shadow Warrior
- ◆ Magic The Gathering
- ◆ Generations
- ◆ Star Fleet Academy
- ◆ Blood
- ◆ MDK
- ◆ Redneck Rampage

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Tomb Raider (Eidos)



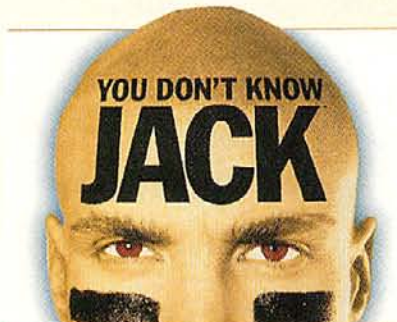
Ecstatica II (Psygnosis)



Test Drive: Off Road (Accolade)



POD (Ubi Soft)



YDKJ: Sports (Berkeley Systems)

GOLF, and FOOTBALL PRO '97 games, while Berkeley Systems takes a lighter approach to the competition with You Don't Know Jack: SPORTS. So load up this month's CG-ROM and get ready to experience the best games available anywhere!

How Do I Use It?

If you have Windows 95, installation is simple: The CD is Autoplay enabled—just lock-n-load. Otherwise, from Windows 3.x, select Run from the Program Manager menu, and type D:\RUNME (where D is the letter of your CD-ROM drive) to run it straight from the CD. Then type D:\INSTALL to create a CGW program group on your Windows desktop. If you have installed previous versions of the CG-ROM, this disc will use the program group already on your desktop.

How Do I Play The Demos?

To view the demos, first click on Editors' Hot Picks, Special Features, or Product Demos. Then click on the title of interest. Each demo has its own instructions for installation.

How Do I Get The Patch Files?

Click on Patches under the CGW Features, and then follow the instructions on copying the files to your hard drive. From a DOS prompt, type D:\PATCHES (where D is the letter of your CD-ROM drive) and copy patches directly to your hard drive. We recommend that you back up previously saved games before installing a patch, as it may overwrite your existing program.

How Can I Get The CG-ROM Delivered Each Month?

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Flunking the Playtest

How Bugs and Flaws Survive Despite Playtest Exterminators

In an industry driven by engineering and technology, you would expect that playtesting would have become a science by now. However, the more I view this industry, the more I am convinced that playtesting is an art, not a science. Every month I get letters from readers who complain about a recent game and say, "How could Way-Late Software have released this game in this condition?"

Naturally, we can't overlook the obvious reasons Way-Late Software may have released the game in that condition. They may have shipped a game that they knew was buggy because it had to ship before the end of the financial quarter, or they may have shipped a buggy product because they were out of development funds and needed immediate cash flow. They might have shipped the product in a buggy form as a last resort to cut their losses.

We also can't overlook obvious hardware incompatibilities. Recent research indicates that up to 20 percent of the installed base of consumer computers may come from screwdriver shops (local computer stores that assemble machines with components *du jour*, often resulting in systems with configuration anomalies). When you consider that even major PC manufacturers such as Dell, Gateway, and Micron mix com-

ponent cocktails every few months, you realize that it's impossible to program for, debug, and test every hardware configuration. Many bugs—even crash bugs—are restricted to a few strange configurations as opposed to being universal.

Some of the flaws our readers complain about are endemic to the playtesting process. Before I was a CGW editor, I participated in beta

“ Gamers are concerned that publishers are skimping on AI in favor of multiplayer gaming. ”

testing, and I learned why playtesting doesn't catch all of the flaws.

First, the playtesting process caters to experienced gamers. Many times, computer game publishers build their playtester lists from the gamers who complain about previous products. They are impressed with how deeply the playtesters have gone into the products and they want that kind of commitment on their next products. Indeed, that's how yours truly got on playtest lists.

Unfortunately, this creates "playtester tunnel vision." Game interfaces, icons, terminology, and structure end up following familiar patterns. As a result, playtesters zip right by flaws and don't even notice. For example, I was playing a WWII naval game which had both strategic and tactical elements. The game had a bug which would not allow you to re-access the strategic map once the tactical map had been activated.

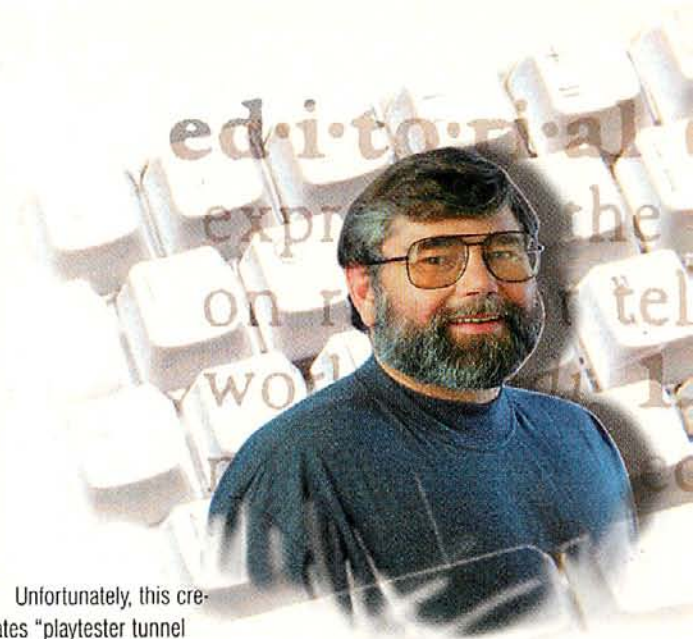
As a veteran player of the *General Quarters* rules for miniatures, I was used to the convention of seeing a strategic map, creating a basic battle plan with the other captains in my squadron, and never getting to view the strategic map or confer with the other captains after the battle began. So, I never tried to re-access the strategic map after I'd entered the tactical engagement. As a result, I thought the game was superb. Gamers who were unaccustomed to the rules convention I had used in the past were frustrated at the bug. Apparently, all of the playtesters missed it because they (many of whom were also miniatures aficionados) never dreamed anyone would try to go back to the strategic set-up once the tactical battle was being waged.

Was it a bug? Yes! Should it have been caught? Definitely! Did the company deliberately try to foist the bug on the general public? Nope. The playtesters missed it. Playtester tunnel vision caused

them to see what they expected to see. Even though every playtester agreement I've ever seen has challenged the playtesters to try unexpected actions, tactics, and sequences, most companies recruit volunteers who love a given game's style and subject matter. As a result, the games aren't tested as thoroughly as they should be.

Another complaint readers have concerns the current level of artificial intelligence in games which have both solitaire and multiplayer capability. Gamers are legitimately concerned that publishers may be skimping on the AI, since the multiplayer game aspect is "where it's at." We don't really believe that publishers are deliberately underfunding AI development and testing, but we have noticed a tendency at some publishers for the playtesters to spend so much time with the multiplayer version of the game that they tend to pay less attention to the solo mode.

As a result of playtesters becoming so enamored with the multiplayer mode, the majority of playbalancing and tweaking suddenly favors the multiplayer game. The worst case is where elements vital to the solitaire mode are stripped out because they weren't used in multiplayer mode. Monitoring the styles of playtesting play is absolutely vital. Development teams are bound to be pleased



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when playtesters get wrapped up in the multiplayer mode and play far longer than designers' original expectations. They are very likely to respond to the playtesters' criticisms concerning multiplayer mode and change the design without reflecting on the cost to the solitaire balance. In order to correct this tendency, playtest departments will have to walk a razor-thin

“Since programmers are always trying to clean up their code, they sometimes restore a bug when they are trying to fix something.”

tightrope in balancing the amount of time the department is spending within each mode of play.

Finally, another reason flaws slide by the playtesting process has to do with the development cycle. Out-of-house playtesters send in their bug reports at odd intervals. Yet, toward the end of the cycle, programmers are providing new “drops” or “builds” daily. When these builds come together, all of the various game systems and functions are recompiled together. Programmers have been coding separate files all over the corporate premises, and sometimes, at home. In many companies, the build or

drop is made by simply freezing work on the network and moving into compile format. Since programmers are always trying to clean up their code and make it more efficient, they sometimes go back and undo a bug fix when they are trying to fix something else. Unfortunately, during some chaotic schedules, it is entirely possible for bugs to be fixed at one point, and then creep back in on a later drop when an old file is recompiled into the new build.

Since the development team believes they have fixed the previous bug and, as a result, isn't looking for the bug in the next build, it ends up sliding through—unless the playtesters find it again. In one baseball game, I personally saw the direction of the ball logic reversed from one build to another. I could direct the pitcher to pitch inside and he would invariably pitch outside, and vice-versa. One typo and an obvious bug showed up. If this can happen with something this obvious, imagine what happens within a complex game where you would have to make a definite series of choices to hit the same bug. In a role-playing game or a huge strategy game, it would be tough to find the bug again.

It's very easy for gamers to ask the question, “Why didn't Way Late Software test this game?” I hope this editorial will shed some light into how bugs can still sneak through, even when publishers *do* test the games. My desire is not to excuse the bugs, but merely to explain some of the ways they can occur and encourage publishers to tighten the playtesting process. I also hope that publishers will hear the questions and take seriously gamers' frustration with “buggy games.” Though playtesting is still more of an art than a science, publishers should try to make the playtesting process more effective. ☺

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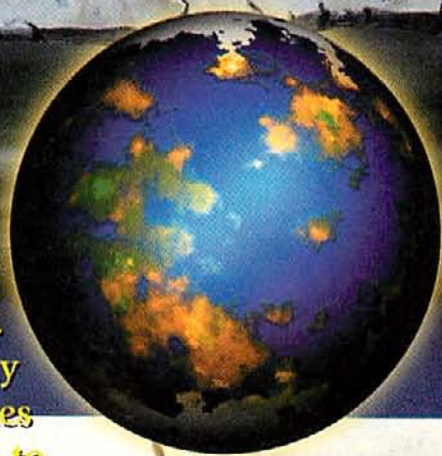
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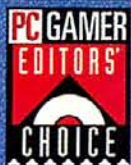


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LETTER OF THE MONTH

THE LADY IS A CHAMP

Being a woman myself, I read with some interest (and some heat) Martin Cirulis' column in April's issue ("How To Play Games with Women," #153). I don't question the demographics he cited, nor do I take exception with the point of the article. I realize that I am a minority among computer users and game players. This is in my face with every computer magazine I read (and they are many), with every tech support person I talk to (and they are more), and I finally stopped dealing with computer salespeople completely. If my husband, the man who firmly believes computers should be used as doorstops, is in the room with me, I am ignored. To add to the issue, I am (gasp!) 43 years old and (double gasp!) a museum professional by trade (how conservative can you get?). The problem here is stereotyping.

I have loved games since my father (a U.S. play-by-mail chess champ) taught me to play chess at the age of six. By 12, I was a poker wiz and discovered Avalon Hill. Thus began wargaming. In my thirties, I participated in a play-by-mail computer space game with 49 other people (all men) from across the country. I hid my identity as a woman for a year and a half before it came out. One of the alliances, without my knowledge, adopted and protected me for the next year and a half. Needless to say, I was one of six remaining players in the end. (Thanks?) I bought a Sega system around then and finally got the first computer that I ever touched in my life six years ago (when I graduated in 1971, there were no PCs).

I started, typically it seems, with RPGs. Then I discovered strate-



gy (my favorite). Then, I tried HEXEN and became hooked on shooters. There's no better stress reliever at the end of a day than to come home and kick some serious butt. I don't use cheat codes, I am pretty dam good, and I have no interest in adventure games at all.

I am on my third computer, brand new last week. She's (note pronoun) a Falcon Northwest Mach V, 166 MMX, loaded. My 11-year-old son and I are currently playing DIABLO, HEROES II, and DAGGERFALL. I use computers heavily at work and, with another woman, am one-half of the tech-support unit there.

I am the one up late at night when my husband goes sighing off to bed. I am trying to get him "friendly" with our computer and am teaching him how to navigate the programs.

Well, back to my problem with the article. (Martin Cirulis) writes from the beginning as if only men will be reading the page. You buy into the stereotype throughout while abhorring it. This is no better than the facts that:

PLAYING GAMES WITH WOMEN

You write a great magazine. I have been a subscriber for about two years, and you guys have never let me down. In your April issue (#153), I found the article, "How to Play Games With Women," just what the doctor ordered in getting my wife to see why I love this thing more than sleep. I got her started on DIABLO and I must say I have created a monster! Now, *she* says, "I'll be in in a minute, honey!" then comes to bed early the next morning. She wants another computer for herself so we don't fight over *my* rig so much. Which is okay 'cause then I can get to kick her butt in some WAR2 or QUAKE. Thanks again for the article, gotta go, promised her I wouldn't take long. Never get this thing anymore.

Greg Glover
Portland Oregon

DIABOLICAL DAGGERFAULT

I wish to write about a disturbing trend I have noticed in computer games. I feel that role-playing games have begun to lose any sense of coherent plot. DAGGERFALL is one of the most notable examples. Here is a game with thousands of towns, temples, and dungeons (even if they are mostly redundant), hundreds of spells, superb graphics...and a plot as thin as tissue paper.

I applaud Bethesda for a noble attempt at an open-endedness and freedom of movement that is unmatched in the genre. However, this game simply has no structure. You're given one lousy little cut-scene in the beginning, and that's it. Your character is an anonymous nobody with no history or background save the few statistics and questions you answer in the character builder, which has far less real effect on the course of the game

than all the commotion and excitement about it would lead us to believe. The point is, there is no character development whatsoever. Yes, some of the open endedness must be sacrificed if true character development is to occur, but I think that it is crucial to an interesting and satisfying story. Anything else is nothing but a series of randomly generated dungeons to fight through.

But DAGGERFALL is not the only culprit. DIABLO, for example, is a superb game. Unfortunately, its plot is nonexistent. Again, your character is faceless, and without reading the manual, you wouldn't even know why you're where you are in the first place. It's almost as if an interesting story line has become irrelevant as long as there are enough monsters, treasure, and towns to visit. If I want endless redundant dungeons to go through on tiresome cookie-cutter

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Lara Croft, gaming's #1 covergirl.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

1. Most people on your staff are men. (The women generally hold marketing positions.) Is there that much of a dearth of women reviewers? (With the possible exception of Scorpia—a pseudonym.)

2. Too many games have women getting killed, maimed, beaten, and naked.

3. There are too many scary articles about creating "women's games," lower violence, moral issues, blah, blah, blah.

I suspect mine will not be the only letter on this subject. The salesman at Falcon told me they had a lot of women clients. (See, when a woman is a gamer, she buys a SERIOUS machine!)

Continue addressing the issue of women gamers, but put your money where your mouth is, too. Watch the sexist tones in the review, create opportunities for women reviewers, let the game companies know they are ignoring, or belittling, 50 percent of their potential market!

Sandra Allison
Del Haven, New Jersey

Sandra, you ignorant slut. Just kidding. As you know, Martin Cirulis was trying to shed

light on the serious gender gap in gaming while encouraging readers to share our hobby with their partners. In fact, he cast men in a rather unflattering light, but by writing to a largely male audience he may have appeared to buy into old stereotypes. If he sounded "sexist," it's maybe because he's blazing territory that the gaming media has largely ignored.

As for our mostly male staff, almost half of the CGW staff is female. Our editorial staff includes three female editors and three contributing editors, and as you know from our telephone conversation we are interested in having you write for us.

This issue is too large to address in a short reply, but there is more to it than just bias. On average, men buy more games and spend more time playing them than women. We are very cognizant of the fact that 97 percent of our 100,000+ subscribers are male. That's our audience, and magazines have to know who their audience is to serve them. But, we appreciate your observation that the gender gap can not be closed by playing to it. Thank you for your perspective and for your passion for gaming, and be sure to read the other letter in this section from the other side's view.

on one of our characters. Ever get hood-winked into smuggling without realizing it? One of our characters did. What you call the paper-thin plot does rely heavily upon the completion of multiple mini-quests, but it's essentially an overlay of Shakespeare's Scottish play with Machiavellian spice from time to time. We learned to savor each new twist in the plot. We would have liked more meaningful conversations and would have enjoyed the plot advancing in some other ways, but we found it to be a fascinating game, nonetheless.

WE'RE NOT DEAD, YET!

It certainly is a testament to the power of your editorials: Your article had an amazing impact on the folks here at Crystal Dynamics. We were quite surprised to see Crystal listed on your obituary list. We're nowhere near the great video game graveyard in the sky. In fact, we've just finished our second profitable quarter!

Specifically, we're currently putting the finishing touches on PANDEMONIUM and LEGACY OF KAIN and will have three brand-spankin'-new products to show at E3 this June. We're going to have a great 1997; the best year in our history! We'd hate for you to miss it, so I'm officially inviting you to come down to our office and kick the tires.

Scott Steinberg,
vice-president of marketing
Crystal Dynamics

Johnny Wilson replies: I usually only dig the graves. This is the first time I've ever hit a company with the shovel. ☺



missions, I'll play DOOM, or some other mindless drivel. I truly hope that I'm not the only one who is concerned, because I really love the RPG genre, and I would like to see it flourish in the future. Perhaps companies like Bethesda and Blizzard should look to games like the ULTIMA series and BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR, which managed to combine an open-endedness and freedom of gameplay with an intriguing and well developed plot. In any case, I hope plot will be taken a little more seriously, and that the RPG companies remember that

quantity of gameplay does not necessarily make a good game.

Jason Rabin
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Since we just voted DAGGERFALL as our Role-Playing Game of the Year, we obviously have to wonder if you played the same game we did. Never before in a CRPG has one of our characters been thrown out of a guild for non-performance, yet we experienced this in DAGGERFALL. Ever have the Brotherhood of Thieves put out a contract on your character? They did

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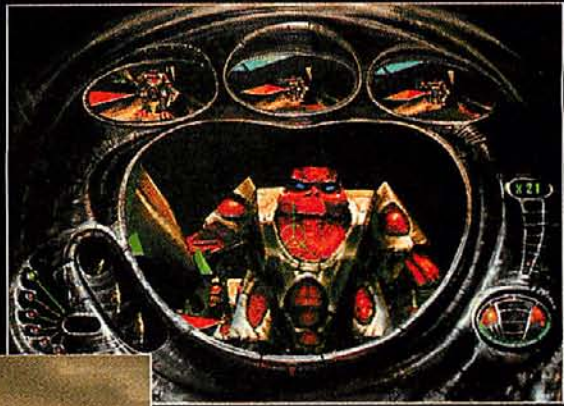
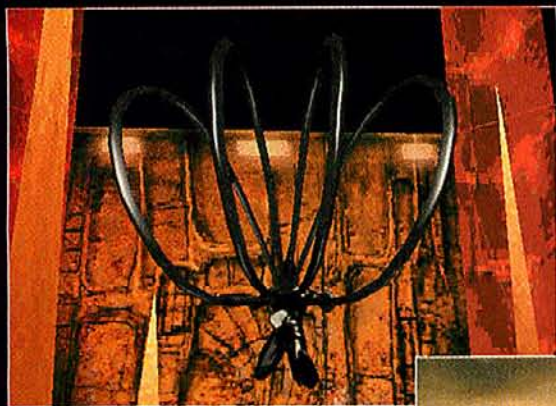
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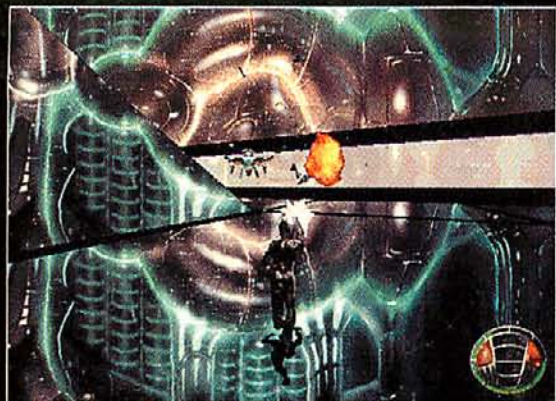
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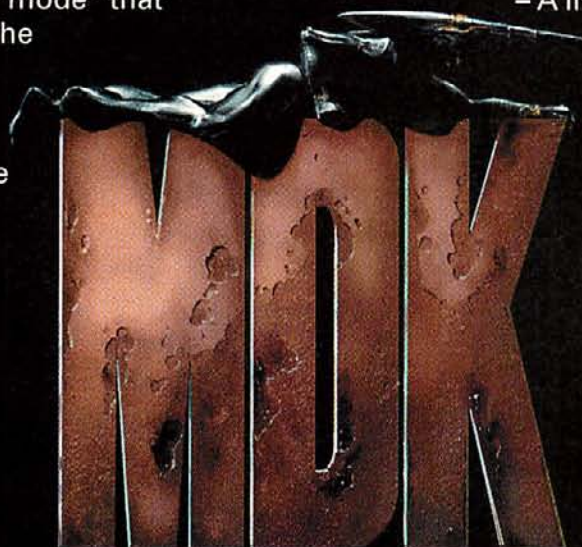
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Edited by Charlotte Panther (CPanther@zd.com)

Escape to L.A.

Activision and Interplay Bare All

Sick of staring out the office window at the fog and the rain, CGW decided it was time to pay our friends in sunny Southern California a visit. Not only did we take in a few rays, we also got the scoop on all the products Activision and Interplay have slated for release over the next year. Here's a whistle-stop tour of what we saw.

INTERPLAY

- **THE SECRET OF VULCAN FURY**, Interplay's new *Star Trek* adventure game (slated to ship at the end of the year) was top of the list. Written by D.C. Fontana, one of the writers of the original *Star Trek* series, **VULCAN FURY** develops ideas that

were conceived, but not written, for the TV show.

- **Interplay's OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS** has an artistic look and feel that accentuate the story, rather than existing parallel to it, as in many post-Myst games.

Millennium fans will be intrigued by the plot, which involves the confluence of conditions at the prophesied moment when the forces of darkness are unleashed.

- Some declare **BOMBERMAN** the greatest multiplayer game in history. We'll reserve such praise until we see the final product, but the beta-PC version of the game, **ATOMIC BOMBERMAN**, is certainly fun.



ATOMIC BOMBERMAN

It's simple to grasp—move a little guy around screen, plant bombs to kill human opponents (up to nine), and evade opponents' bombs—but isn't just brainless arcade action. Power-ups, obstacles, and the crafty intelligence of your human foes serve to make every game chaotic and hellaciously fun. Interplay plans an early summer release.

- **CARMAGGEDON**, developed by SCI for Interplay, is a simple game of drive-by destruction. There are

aces in this driving game, but the point is to run over pedestrians and smash other cars. You gain points for artistic merit if you produce excessively bloody displays of vehicular gore.

- **DIE BY THE SWORD** is a fighting game with medieval, fantasy combatants; unrestricted 3D arenas; and even an adventure game component. The engine is 3D, the blood flows freely, and Interplay hopes you'll be carving into Kobolds with your sword sometime this summer.

»Continued on pg 32



DIE BY THE SWORD



FORGOTTEN REALMS



CARMAGGEDON

THIS JUST IN

Short takes on games released just prior to press time.

TEST DRIVE OFF ROAD

TEST DRIVE does not fulfill its promise of "true to life driving mechanics," nor does it



test your off-road skills as much as your ability to float a fore-aft pendulum through a pinball-like environment that has you rebounding more than driving. The game allows you to drive one of four production 4x4s through twelve tracks. Considering the different vehicles, conditions, and environments, very little variance is actually reflected on the track. This one's anything but a test drive.

—Gordon Goble

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Under every floral print dress lies a lady wearing black garters, carrying a big f*cking gun!

—the slogan of all-girl *QUAKE* clan PMS (Psycho Men Slayers).



Wheels on Fire



The '70s were cool, man. Now, Activision lets you re-visit those halcyon days of platform heels, bell-bottoms, and 'fros in its funky new muscle-car action/sim, *INTERSTATE '76*. Plus, Activision's giving away this sleek set of wheels as the first prize in its I-'76 competition. Just cruise on down to Electronics Boutique and pick up a specially marked I-'76 CD-ROM. A gold key inside the box means you may be the lucky winner of this deathmobile. No key? Fill out the entry form and you could win other hip booty. Even if you don't win the grand prize, you can pretend: Play that funky music, and you'll soon have yourself believing that your own hunk-o'-junk is a mighty muscle car after all. —Charlotte Panther

PANASONIC 10X BIG 5 CD-ROM

For a 10x CD drive, the Big 5 isn't the fastest we've seen: Our WinMark test came in at a so-so 570-kbps. Still, the data transfer rate for 4K records is good at 1497-kbps (more than enough to take advantage of most games), and the average access time is a fast 234 ms.



You don't buy the 10x Big 5 for sheer speed but, rather, flexibility. In a single CD-ROM bay, you get 5 CD slots. These

can be configured as one drive—so that you don't have to change CDs on games like *PHANTASMAGORIA* or *WING COMMANDER IV* (provided the game supports the Panasonic format); or, it can be designated as one CD drive per slot.

While the IDE drive is fairly simple to install, it isn't quite Plug-n-Play (I suggest that you get the updated drivers, especially for DOS), and you do give up some performance versus a faster SCSI drive.

But the street price of \$240 is a steal, especially considering the flexibility of the drive. All in all, one of the best gaming CD-ROM drives on the market. —Terry Coleman

Panasonic, (800) 742-8086, (201) 348-7000
PC CD-ROM drive
Reader Service #: 302

News Flash

▶▶▶ **Accolade** recently signed an exclusive multi-year agreement with **Electronic Arts (EA)**, under which EA will have distribution rights to all new, and certain existing, Accolade titles, including *HARDBALL*, *TEST DRIVE*, and the *JACK NICKLAUS* series. This agreement coincides with EA's announcement that it has made a minority investment in Accolade. Meanwhile, EA and **ASC Games** have signed an agreement whereby EA will distribute ASC's *PERFECT WEAPON* and *TEN PIN ALLEY* throughout Europe, Australia, and New Zealand.

▶▶▶ **Talonsoft** has pulled a real coup by signing AGE OF RIFLES designer Norm Koger, who has designed *THE OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR*, which is planned for a Spring, 1998, release. Meanwhile, Talonsoft has parted ways with **Empire Interactive** and signed a distribution deal with **Broderbund**, who continues to impress with its strategy lineup (see our sneak preview of *WARLORDS III* in this issue).

▶▶▶ **Maxis** recently signed an agreement with **Stormfront Studios** to license the next two titles in the *TONY LA RUSSA BASEBALL* series. The release of *TONY LA RUSSA BASEBALL 4* is scheduled to coincide with this year's baseball season. Maxis has also licensed European developer **Ancho's** *KICK OFF 97 Soccer* game, scheduled for release in the U.S. this summer.

BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD: SCREEN WRECKERS

BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD: SCREEN WRECKERS

includes nine new ways to wreck your screen. Shoot at toilets. Obliterate your wallpaper.



Give Beavis a cappuccino and watch Cornholio bounce off the walls. The sounds are cool, as is the bonus screen saver. Not ground-breaking entertainment, but it doesn't suck. —K. "Pinky" Simonton

Viacom / VIE, (888) VIE-COM1
PC CD-ROM
Reader Service #: 303

Escape to L.A.

Continued from pg 30

ACTIVISION

• **ZORK: THE GRAND INQUISITOR**, due this fall, is the ambitious, epic new installment of the legendary Zork adventure game series. This model consciously embraces the entire Zork history, with the re-appearance of many favorite characters and



SCREAMIN' DEMONS

locations. In the game, you attempt to defeat the Grand Inquisitor and restore magic to the Great Underground Empire.

• **Activision's WWII flight sim** is coming along nicely, but perhaps the oddest development was the decision to change the game's name from **DOG FIGHT** to **SCREAMIN' DEMONS**.

• In **BLOOD OMEN: LEGACY OF KAIN**, a port of the PlayStation action/RPG hit, you play a bloodthirsty, shape-shifting vampire out to avenge your death and rescue the land of Nosgoth from a terrible evil.

• **DARK REIGN**, slated for a June release is sure to be one of Activision's bigger hits of 1997.



LEGACY OF KAIN

A real-time strategy game, this, unlike other C&C and WarCraft clones, has the potential to be just as exciting as those fathers of the genre. **DARK REIGN** sports realistic terrain features, robust multiplayer options (including handicapping and meaningful alliances), and more flexible controls, such as waypoints and toggleable AI, not to mention some very cool units and buildings.

• **HEXEN II**, the third game in the **HERETIC** cycle is another winner (see the full preview in our **QUAKE Killers** cover story).

• The weirdest game we've seen yet, **NETSTORM**, definitely has a new

angle that distinguishes it from other real-time games. The emphasis isn't on control but placement—where you put your units is key, since you can't control them after you place them. The game has a psychedelic look, with many units and creatures that are

seemingly inspired by Dr. Seuss. With more focus on strategic placement than on-the-fly unit management, this game could appeal to those with a more detached, yet strategic, play-style.

Look out for sneak previews and in-depth coverage in **CGW** as we follow these developing games from initial design through final product!



DARK REIGN

THIS JUST IN

SCREAMER 2

The newest incarnation of the **SCREAMER** racing line is nice to look at, but that's about it. **SCREAMER 2** sports a lush, yet non-interactive, PlayStation-type graphics environment, with a choice of available cars, tracks, and types of competition. However, the game has a big problem with controller sensitivity.



Steering is so touchy that at speeds above 60 mph, any attempt at rounding a corner results in a 360-degree spin-out. This is incredibly frustrating, considering that your competition seems to have no problem handling the turns. This one's for masochists only.—*Joe Vallina*

Virgin Interactive, (800) 874-4607

PC CD-ROM

Reader Service #: 304

THE LAST EXPRESS

Broderbund's **THE LAST EXPRESS** is a murder mystery unlike any other. The story isn't particularly original—you become embroiled in a Hitchcockian nightmare while traveling across

Europe on the Orient Express—but the gameplay is. Events take place in real-time on the train, whether you're around or not. The non-linear structure lets you follow different paths. Add to this a



stunningly unique (if oddly distant) rotoscoped animation style, and you have one of the more boldly original adventures to come out in a long while.—*Jeff Green*

Broderbund, (415) 382-4400

PC CD-ROM

Reader Service #: 305

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #106



THE QUEST FOR TRUE



The Price of Loyalty introduces 4 new campaigns and a slew of enhancements to the *Heroes of Might and Magic II* world. Control the course of an expanding empire in *Descendants*, or try your tactics against a horde of

spell crafters in *The Wizards Isle*. Discover new heroes and artifacts as you explore and conquer 24 new campaign maps. Log in and go head-to-head or team up with friends in 20 new stand alone scenarios.

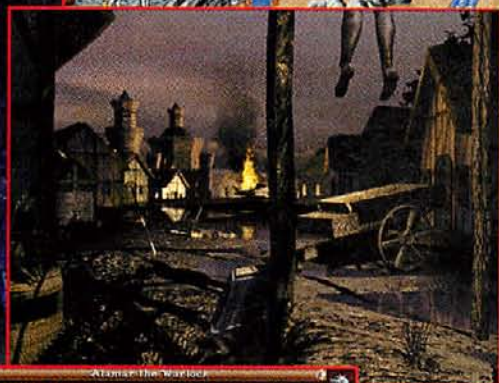
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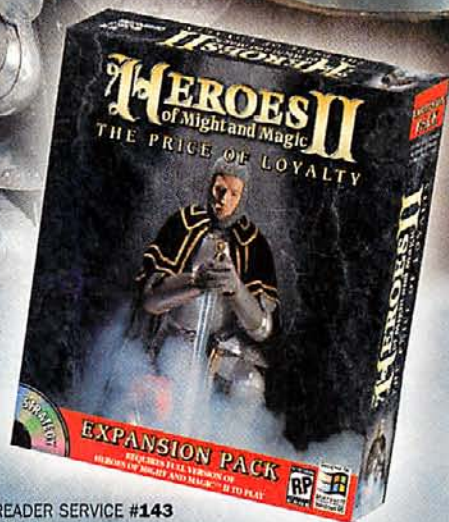
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #143

Reconstruction Zone

In early March, Microsoft unveiled a new incarnation of its Internet Gaming Zone at www.zone.com. The original Zone, in addition to providing matching services for Microsoft games such as CLOSE COMBAT, MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS, and HELLBENDER, also featured a number of card and parlor games.

The revamped Zone will eventually have much more to offer gamers. Currently available is ZoneLAN, a Kali-like utility which allows players to play DOS-based games that support IPX network (and run under Win 95) over the Internet. Microsoft also plans to partner with some third-party developers to allow their games to be played on the Zone as well—Hasbro is the first of these, and will offer free online play for boxed games such as MONOPOLY and Risk.

Another alliance is with the DWANGO multiplayer gaming

service. If you can't stomach Internet latency for your favorite action game, you'll be able to use the Zone to find opponents in your area, and then automatically dial your local DWANGO server and play with much less latency—albeit for a small charge.

Perhaps the most significant announcement, though, is that all of Microsoft's upcoming boxed game titles for 1997 will feature free Internet play using the Zone.

That doesn't mean everything will be free on the Zone, however. Microsoft's first "pay to play" game, FIGHTER ACE, will enter beta-testing on the Zone in June. This updated version of VR-1's AIR ATTACK is a more beginner-oriented cousin to AIR WARRIOR and WARBIRODS. Microsoft doesn't plan to charge by the hour to fly FIGHTER ACE, though. Instead, you can pay by the day or month and fly without watching the clock. —Denny Alkin



FIGHTER ACE

PLAYING LATELY

CGW Survey*

	Last Month	Months on Chart
1. Diablo (Blizzard)	1	2
2. Red Alert (Westwood/Virgin)	2	3
3. Duke Nukem 3D (3D Realms)	7	14
4. Civilization II (MicroProse)	5	13
5. Heroes II (New World Computing)	3	3
6. Quake (id Software)	6	6
7. WarCraft II (Blizzard)	8	16
8. Tomb Raider (Eidos)	-	1
9. Daggerfall (Bethesda)	4	5
10. Warcraft II Expansion Disk (Blizzard)	-	1

* Check your mailbox: We mail a survey to 1,500 randomly-chosen subscribers each month. The results of Playing Lately indicate what games readers are blowing the most time on, as opposed to the reader's overall "quality ranking" in the Top 100.

PC Data Best-Sellers**

1. Diablo (Blizzard)	1
2. Microsoft Flight Simulator (Microsoft)	4
3. Red Alert (Westwood/Virgin)	3
4. Myst (Broderbund)	2
5. NASCAR II (Sierra On-Line)	7
6. Quake (id Software/GT Interactive)	5
7. Tomb Raider (Eidos)	8
8. Duke Nukem 3D Atomic (3D Realms/GT Interactive)	-
9. WarCraft Battle Chest (Blizzard)	6
10. Microsoft Return of Arcade (Microsoft)	-

** This list indicates what the top-selling PC games were, as calculated by PC Data, during February, 1997.

THIS JUST IN

VIRTUAL JIGSAW: WILDLIFE EDITION

If you're a jigsaw-aholic, searching for a similar distraction for your computer, look no further. You won't find anything better than Virtual Jigsaw. The Wildlife addition has fifty gorgeous images to choose from, which can also be set as wallpaper. There are five levels of



difficulty, including a shattered glass level, and you can choose to play one-sided or two-sided games. Virtual Jigsaw does what it does really well, but anyone less than a jigsaw-maniac may find themselves asking "what's the point?" —Charlotte Panther

SouthPeak Interactive, (800) 774-6183

PC CD-ROM

Reader Service #: 306

YODA STORIES

LucasArts' Desktop Adventure series has claimed another victim: this time it's Star Wars. What little play there is consists of directing a miniature Luke Skywalker across a grid-like environment, and having him shoot stormtroopers and monsters, push and pull rocks, and run an



endless series of errands. YODA STORIES generates a new mission with each game, but every game plays out the same. Flaws in the physical construction of worlds make finishing some games impossible. —Robert Coffey

LucasArts, (800) 98-LUCAS

Win 95 CD-ROM

Reader Service #: 307

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tion one Hell of a motocross track.



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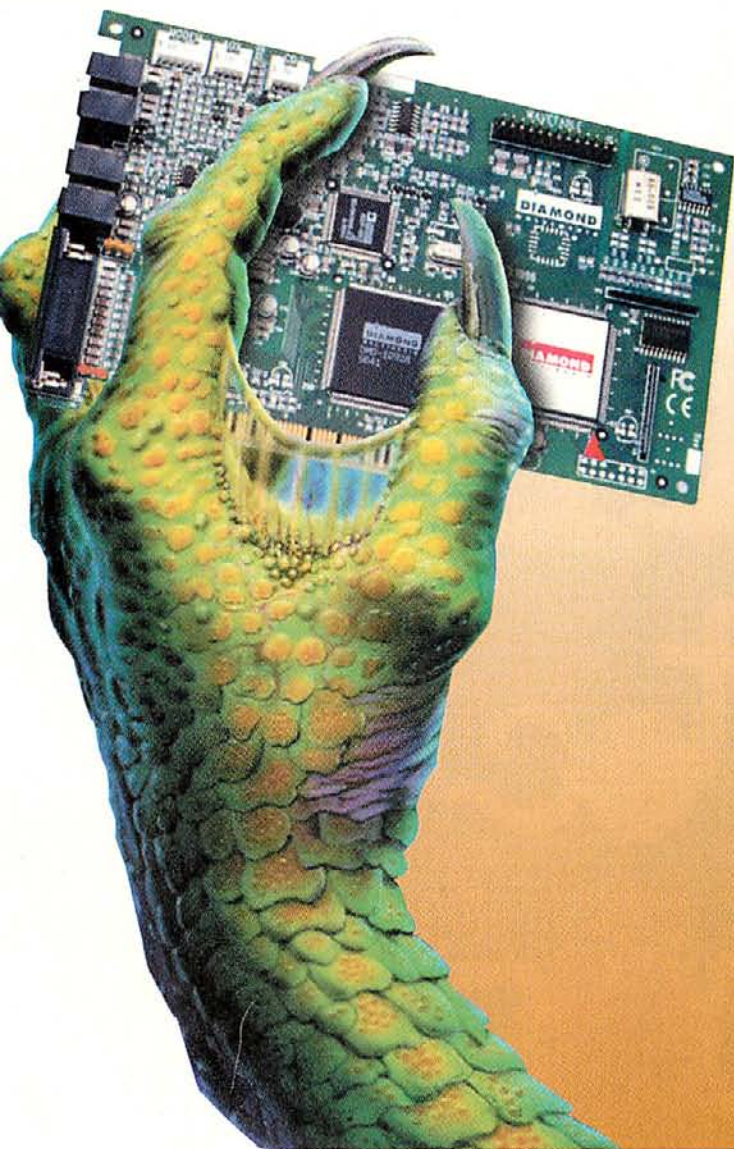
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Diamond Set to Bring the Noise

You've just walked into a not-so-friendly bar looking for some ne'er-do-well. You get five steps in the door when you hear a gun cock behind you. As you whip around and draw your weapon, there's your friend waiting to say to hello in his own special way.

Now, unless you've spent way too much time with a microwave oven, you don't have eyes in the back of your head—so how did you know where your friend was? Your ears told you.

Diamond Multimedia has harnessed real-time 3D-positional technology from Aureal Semiconductor, and forged it into their new Monster Sound card, which should be shipping as you're reading this. We recently got our first earful of the PCI-based Monster Sound audio accelerator, and liked what we heard.

We installed the Monster Sound sans hiccups, and were very impressed with its ability to "put" sounds behind us—one of the hardest sound effects to pull off. Monster Sound also has a digital joystick port, and can handle Soundblaster compatibility for DOS games running in a Win 95 DOS box. But don't pitch your Soundblaster 16 just yet, because Monster Sound can't support Soundblaster compatibility running in pure MS-DOS mode.

Bundled titles will include Activision's MECHWARRIOR 2: MERCENARIES and HYPERBLADE, as well as Maxis' SIMCOPTER, though the list wasn't complete at press time. Priced at around \$199, Monster Sound is a bit on the pricey side, but as more titles ship that take advantage of Microsoft's DirectSound 3D, this will be very desirable iron to have in your box.

Check out our feature next month for the full low-down on Monster Sound and other boards implementing 3D audio technologies, as well as an in-depth look at what 3D positional audio will mean for gaming.—Dave Salvador

THIS JUST IN

VIRTUAL POOL '95

VIRTUAL POOL is back for a rematch, this time with a Win 95 version. The new version features smoother graphics, painless setup, and some slight tweaks to the physics that you probably won't notice. Some of your old trick shots may be affected by the new physics wrinkles, but most saved games will convert easily. And, you can even listen to your own CDs while you play. Even if you don't have Win 95 yet, this is the version to buy, as Interplay includes the older version on the CD, too. Noticeable improvements to a great pool simulator.—Greg Fortune

Interplay, (714) 553-6655

PC CD-ROM

Reader Service #: 308



QUIZ WIZ CYBER TRIVIA

It's tough to find a more original trivia game than Berkeley Systems' You Don't Know Jack. At first glance, Quiz Wiz CYBER TRIVIA looks a little Jack-like, but a couple of minutes play reveals that this game lacks all the elements



that made JACK great. Its Wise Guy character offers neither attitude nor humor; there's no multiplayer option; they don't even reveal the correct answer when you get a question wrong.—Charlotte Panther

Tiger Electronics, (800) TIGR-505

Win/Mac CD-ROM

Reader Service #: 309



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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #124

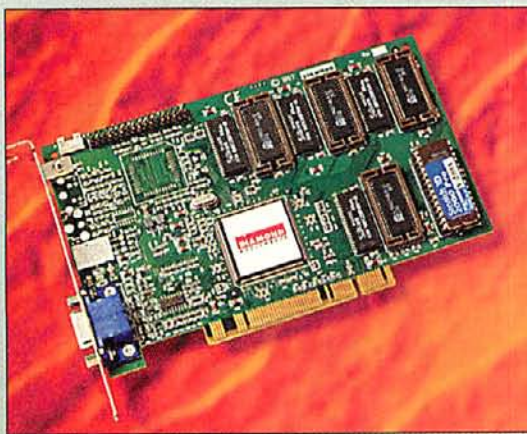


Diamond Stealth 3D 2000 Pro: ViRGE/DX Gets Some Respect

One of the best-selling 3D-accelerator chips on the market today is the S3 ViRGE, and despite its reasonably good 2D performance, its pathetic 3D performance has earned it the moniker "3D decelerator." With the release of the ViRGE/DX, S3 has redeemed itself somewhat, and Diamond has added its usual set of refined tools to make the Stealth 3D 2000 Pro a contender in the crowded 3D accelerator market.

Installation is about as easy as it gets for a graphics card—pop the card into an available PCI slot, boot the system, insert the installation CD, and click "install drivers" on the AutoPlay menu.

As a 2D Win 95 accelerator, this is a fast card. On a Pentium 166



Micron Millennia running at 1024x768 with 65,530 colors, we saw 64.5 WinMarks in Business Graphics tests, and 30.4 WinMarks in High-End Graphics tests in WinBench 97. DOS performance was respectable, with a Cbench score of 35.3 frames per second (fps) in the SVGA-graphics test. *QUAKE* TimeDemo for Demo1 yielded 13.5 fps at 640x480. As a welcome change, Diamond has added VESA 2.0 support in firmware,

meaning no more TSRs are needed to run SVGA-graphics DOS games.

So, how good is the 3D? We took a quick look at two Direct3D titles, *HELLBENDER* and *HYPERBLADE*, both of which certainly got better frame rates on the Pro than the earlier Stealth 3D 2000 running crisply in accelerated mode.

Overall, the Stealth 3D 2000 Pro is a definite improvement over the original. It's faster in Windows and runs DOS SVGA-graphics games without assistance. And while the ViRGE/DX 3D performance doesn't approach 3Dfx or even Rendition, S3 can finally shed the title of the Rodney Dangerfield of 3D accelerators.

Tune in here next month for the full skinny the Stealth Pro, as well as STB's Nitro 3D, based on S3's SGRAM-based ViRGE/GX.

—Lloyd Case

Lara Dresses Up Nice...



Lara Croft has fast become the darling of the gaming world. Packing some serious, er, hardware, and an attitude to match, she and her adventures in Eidos' *TOMB RAIDER* have moved PC action gaming forward with a "chase-camera" action title that dusts the PlayStation port in terms of graphics quality. And that's just running on the CPU. Eidos has also released several patches that let *TOMB RAIDER* take advantage of 3D accelerators. The 3Dfx and Rendition versions came first, and most recently, a version for Matrox's Mystique. All three patches are available at www.tombraider.com/features.html. —Dave Salvador

Virgin: Paradise Regained?

To invoke a hackneyed phrase, the reports of Virgin's demise have been greatly exaggerated. When Spelling Entertainment, the company that holds about 90 percent of Virgin Interactive Entertainment's stock, announced last month that it was discontinuing its operation of the international electronic games division, rumors began circulating that the company was in trouble, and that company leadership was shaky. Not so, says Virgin President and CEO Martin Alper. Spelling Entertainment is in fact preparing to take Virgin public, and part of the process will be to make Virgin a "leaner and meaner" company by shedding weaker titles currently in development. "The industry is not appropriate to



the market size," he said. "We will be appropriate. The indulgences are gone, it's back to basics."

To that end, Brett Sperry, co-founder and president of Westwood Studios, has been named vice president of Worldwide Development for Virgin.

With the exception of the blockbuster *COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT*, Virgin's lineup of PC titles fared poorly during the crucial holiday season, despite the inclusion of critical successes like *CIRCLE OF BLOOD* and *TOONSTRUCK*. Alper admits he's surprised and disappointed. "We put a lot of ourselves into [*TOONSTRUCK*], expecting it to do better."

Virgin's sales are strong in Europe, and the company will focus on making products that appeal to more of an international market. Fully two-thirds of *RED ALERT*'s revenues came from the European market. "You've got to start looking at the global picture. It can't just be an American product," says Alper.

»Continued on pg 44

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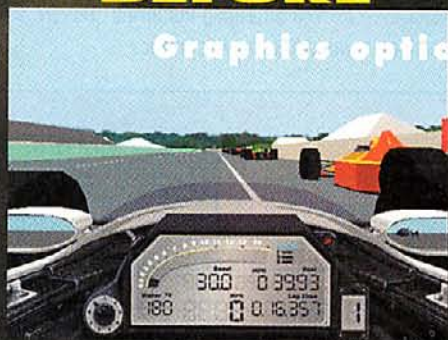
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IndyCar II with SVGA Graphics

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INTERGRAPH

Get Into The Groove

Rockin' Bands Lay Down Cool Tracks for Hot Games

I've been disappointed in the past with the music that accompanies CD-ROM games. Whether it's that monotonous elevator-type muzak that developers insist on adding to puzzle games, or that tinny arcade junk, the only good thing about these soundtracks is that there is usually an option to turn them off.

Thankfully, a new trend is emerging: Developers are realizing just how much a soundtrack can enhance gameplay. Kelly Rogers, director of Music Production at Activision, believes that with the right project, the "cross-pollination" of the music and computer gaming industries can be successfully merged. With *INTERSTATE '76*, Activision's '70s muscle-car game, that indeed seems to be the case. The artists, who include Santana keyboardist and songwriter Tom Coster, and Third Eye Blind's Arion Salazar, were hand-picked to create an original authentic seventies funk soundtrack. The result is an incredibly groovy CD that compliments the '70s feel of the game perfectly and actually works well as a stand-alone entity. In fact, Roger has re-mixed a special audio version

of the soundtrack, which will be used for promotional purposes. Although there are no immediate plans to sell the CD seper-



Brit band The Chemical Brothers help funk up the WipeOut XL Soundtrack

ately, there may be one day. "It's a natural progression for CDs," Rogers says, comparing it to films in the early eighties when only 8 percent of movies had soundtracks available. For upcoming Activision titles, Rogers has enlisted Matt Walker, drummer for The Smashing Pumpkins' '96-'97 world tour, to write music.

Psygnosis went a different route with their *WIPEOUT XL* for the PlayStation soundtrack, licensing previously released material from techno bands, including The Chemical Brothers, Prodigy, and The Future Sound of London. While the marriage of licensed music and gameplay worked particularly well on *WIPEOUT XL*, Psygnosis has plans to produce more material internally.

After experimenting with ambient music (by Nine Inch Nails' Trent Reznor) for *QUAKE*, John Romero admits that, personally, he connects much more with an actual musical piece.

For Romero's new game *DAIKATANNA*, music is provided by Information Society band member Will Loconto.

Action game developers are taking the lead in the soundtrack world. Other stuff to listen for includes the following: Viacom's *SLAMSCAPE*, featuring original

tracks from God Lives Underwater; Accolade's *TEST DRIVE: OFF ROAD*, with three special Gravity Kills re-mixes; EA's *ROAD RASH*, with Soundgarden; and GT Interactive's *BLOOD* featuring gothadelic band Type O Negative's music video "Love You To Death." If the other genres follow suit, Muzak may be dead forever.—Charlotte Panther

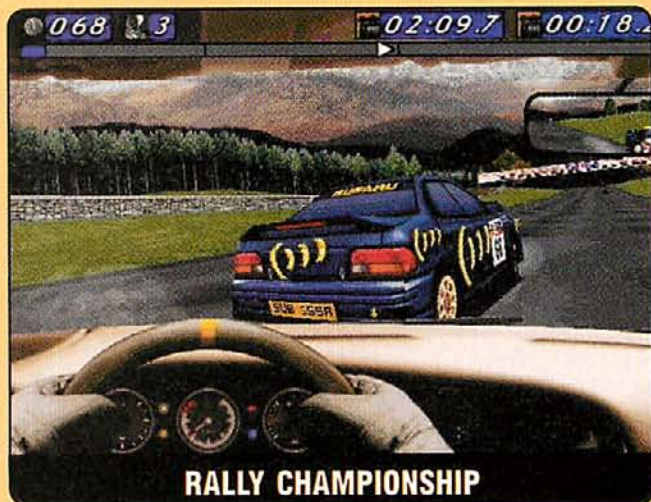
Virgin

Continued from pg 42

Reflecting that global bias, titles in development include *RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP*, a road rally racing title developed in Wales that has sold well in Europe. In adapting it for the U.S. market, Virgin is making a number of cosmetic alterations, such as changing the cars to models Americans recognize. Virgin is also working closely with Professional Sports Car Racing (formerly known as IMSA) to develop racing titles for the PC and PlayStation.

Though Virgin hasn't outlined a strategy for its sports lineup, *GRAND SLAM* is shaping up for a May release, and *NHL POWERPLAY 98*, slated for September, features several improvements over last year's edition, including significantly improved AI; fighting; creates and trades; and season tracking.

Virgin is also casting its hat into the RPG ring with an as-yet-unnamed title by a founder of computer fantasy role-playing. Though the storyline is still coming together, early concepts look promising. The game is scheduled for a 1998 release.—Kate Hedstrom



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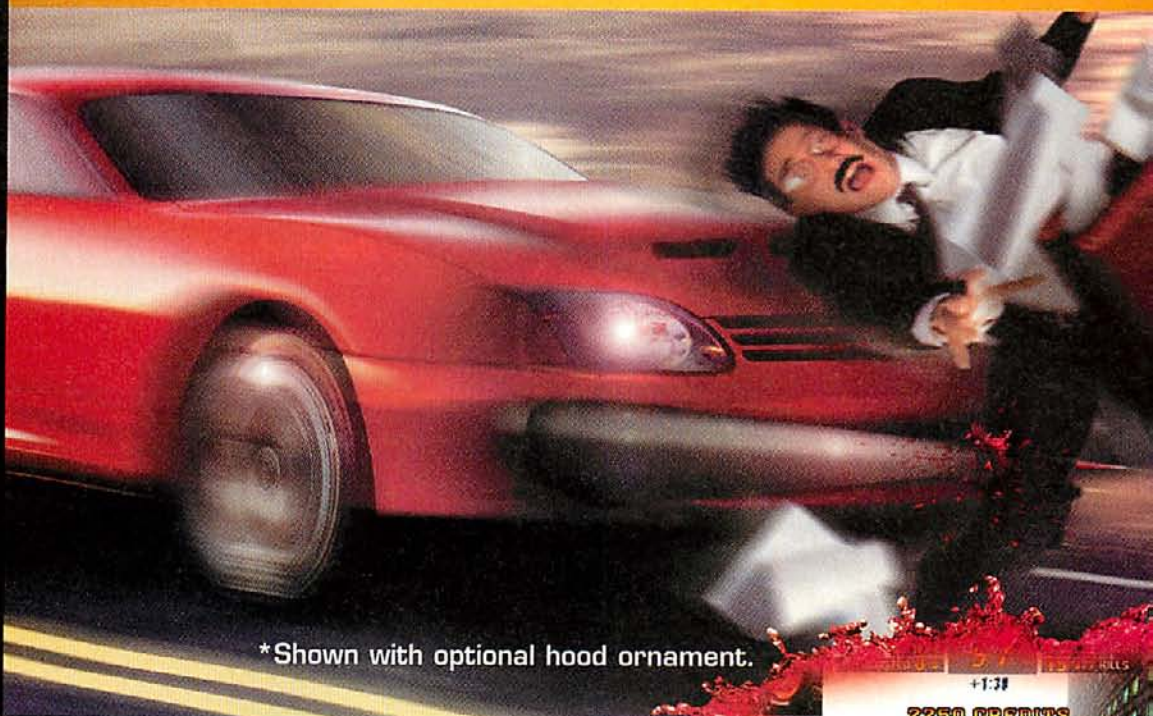
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PIPELINE

10th Planet	Bethesda	11/97
6300 2D/3D Chip Set	Tseng Labs	Summer 97
Achtung: Spitzfire!	Avalon Hill	7/97
Agents of Justice	MicroProse	Summer 97
Alde De Camp 2	HPS Simulations	Summer 97
Atlantis	Cryo	7/97
Battle Spire	Bethesda	9/97
Blade Runner	Virgin/Westwood	10/97
Blood Omen	Activision	7/97
Buccaneer	SSI	9/97
Carnageddon	Interplay	Summer 97
College Football 97	MicroLeague	9/97
Demon Isle	Sierra	10/97
Earthsiege 3	Sierra	late 97
European Air War	MicroProse	late 97
Falcon 4.0	MicroProse	late 97
Fallout	Interplay	Summer 97
FPS Football 98	Sierra	11/97
Front Page Sports Skiing	Sierra	10/97
Flying Nightmares II	Eidos	Summer 97
Flying Saucer	EA/Any River	7/97
Golgotha	crack.com	Fall 97
Hardball 6	Accolade	7/97
Heavy Gear	Activision	Summer 97
Hexen II	Activision	7/97
Imperialism	SSI	9/97
Interactive Gamepad (USB)	Alps	Summer 97
Island of Dr. Moreau	Psychosis	8/97
Journeyman Project III	Broderbund	Fall 97
MicroLeague Baseball 6.0	MicroLeague	6/97
Mig Alley	Empire	Fall 97
Myst 2: Riven	Broderbund	Summer 97
NFL Legends	Accolade	9/97
NHL Powerplay 98	Virgin	9/97
Quarterback Club 98	Acclaim	Fall 97
Pacific General	SSI	7/97
Pacific Tide	Star	Fall 97
Panzer General II	SSI	11/97
Pentium II	Intel	Summer 97
Pictionary	Hasbro Interactive	9/97
Populous III	EA/Bullfrog	Fall 97
Prey	Apogee/3D Realms	Spring 98
Pyramid 3D Accelerator	Tritech	Summer 97
Quake II	id	Xmas 97
Reach for the Stars II	SSG/Microsoft	Summer 97
Rebellion	LucasArts	Summer 97
Red Baron II	Sierra	9/97
Redguard	Bethesda	10/97
Return to Krondor	7th Level	Summer 97
Sabre Ace	Virgin	9/97
Scream'n' Demons	Activision	Fall 97
Semper Fi	Interactive Magic	9/97
Shadows of Riva	Sir-Tech	Summer 97
Sin	Activision	3/98
StarCraft	Blizzard	8/97
Steel Panthers III	SSI	11/97
TFX 3	DID	late 97
Tone Rebellion	Broderbund	Fall 97
Trespasser: Jurassic Park	DreamWorks	Xmas 97
Ultima On-Line	Origin	Summer 97
Unreal	Epic	Fall 97
WarCraft Adventures	Blizzard	12/97
Warlords III	SSG/Broderbund	7/97
Wes Craven... Fear	Cyberdreams	10/97
X-COM: The Apocalypse	MicroProse	Summer 97
X-Fighter	Sierra	late 97
Zork: Grand Inquisitor	Activision	Fall 97

Hi-Val DVD ROM Drive: The Next Generation of Storage Arrives

After much hoopla about DVD and its potential impact on the computing world, units are starting to ship, and DVD must now step up to the plate and deliver. Hi-Val, with its DVD System, has delivered one of the first DVD-ROM upgrade kits, which includes an EIDE Toshiba SD-M1002 DVD drive, as well as Quadrant's Cinemaster PCI MPEG-2 decoder board which also delivers Dolby AC-3 "five-dot-one" audio output.

Setup was essentially painless: After attaching the Toshiba DVD drive to our motherboard's EIDE controller, and plugging in the MPEG-2 board, Win 95 recognized the DVD-ROM as a CD-ROM drive, found the MPEG-2 board on startup and, after feeding driver discs, it was a done deal. Unfortunately, at press time there was a shortage of DVD game titles, though quite a few were in the works.

We did take a quick look at SILENT STEEL, an FMV-based submarine adventure which, despite the uninspiring game-play, looked good. Because of the lack of DVD content, we took an initial look at Hi-Val's performance as a traditional CD-ROM drive, since it will be pulling double-duty playing both media for some time.

We tested this late beta unit on a Gateway P166, and in WinBench 97's CD-ROM WinMark, Hi-Val scored an 828KB/sec on the Overall Test, just shy of 6X overall performance. However, in sequential read tests, Hi-Val fared much better, with transfer rates around 1,200KB/sec, about 8X performance. We expect that these numbers will improve somewhat as drivers are optimized.



Now the not-so-good news: The unit as tested has a list price of \$799, a bit on the steep side given that EIDE 12X and 16X drives are shipping for one-fourth that price, and considering the currently thin herd of DVD game titles shipping. But as DVD drives begin to proliferate, game developers are likely to ship both CD-ROM and DVD versions of their titles. Despite the pricey up-front cost, if you're looking to upgrade your aging CD-ROM drive, you might do well to consider a DVD unit. —Dave Salvador

Snake 'n' Quake

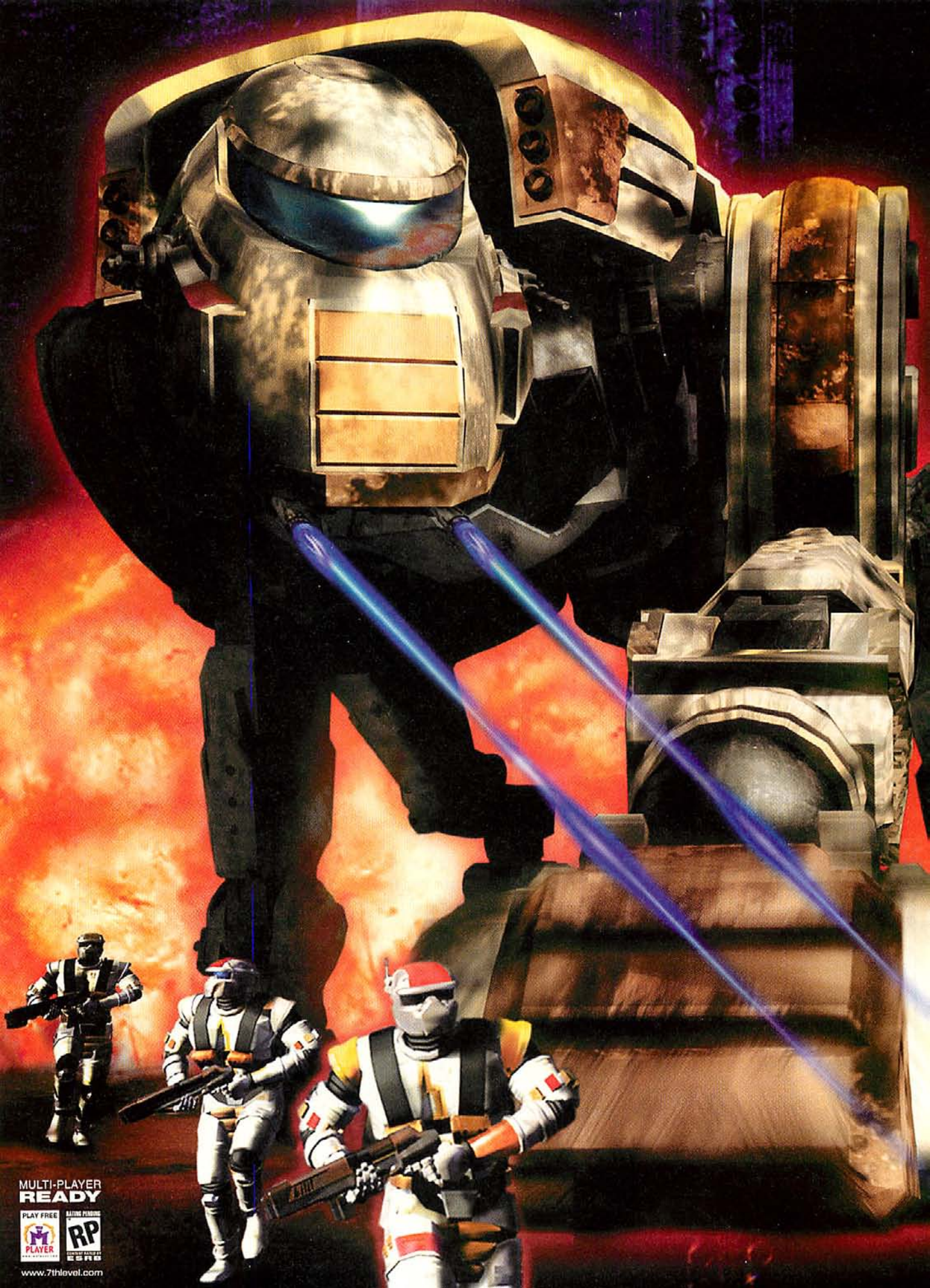
Sony and id have teamed up to create a new level for

QUAKE that ties in with the release of the giant snake

movie *Anaconda*. The Temple of the Mist level has you fighting off all kinds of jungle nasties as you make your way through an ancient temple, searching for the altar with the key to your escape. Just when you think you're home free, the nightmare



begins: A one-on-one battle with the biggest, baddest reptile of all, the Anaconda. For more information, check out Sony's Anaconda Web site at www.spe.sony.com/Pictures/SonyMovies/movies/Anaconda/squake.html —Charlotte Panther



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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #102

Target Release Date: July, 1997

Developer: SSG

Publisher: Broderbund

Droll Troll, Ethereal Elf

All Your Fantasy Friends Are Back in WARLORDS III, This Time With Multiplay

by Terry Coleman

You know, some days you just have to get up and kill something. Maybe it's a careless shaman, a collection of undead whose smell brings unpleasant memories of yesterday's dinner, or even an anal-retentive paladin bragging about his boring virtues that sets you off—then again, you could just be a necromancer who has yet to meet his daily quota of lifeless bodies to be re-animated. Welcome to the wonderful world of WARLORDS III, where warfare is a way of life, and exotic troops are as common—and refreshing—as mint juleps on Derby Day.

Prior to the phenomenal success of WarCraft II, the WARLORDS series was the best-selling and best-loved of fantasy strategy-gaming. Serious wargamers (who'd never admit to *enjoying* a fantasy game) often played WARLORDS as if it were WWII on magical drugs: Giant spiders became

tanks; dragons were *really* tactical aircraft; heroes were John Wayne or Toshiro Mifune. But while they quibbled about "realism," they played—and along with more mainstream gamers—they marveled at the AI and the wondrous play balance.

But even all this acclaim couldn't save WARLORDS from the ravages of time. The most recent iteration, WARLORDS II DELUXE, employed a SVGA-graphics smoke screen that failed to totally hide its 16-color graphic origins. In this age of frantic real-time multiplay, even the WARLORDS II faithful began to question if the turn-based design could still compete in the marketplace.

Enter Broderbund, whose strategy game publishing experience consists of a brief stint with EMPIRE DELUXE and, most recently,

ASCENDANCY—not the most scintillating of track records. Still, the success of

MYST has given Broderbund a lot of retail reach, which is exactly what SSG needs. The result is a happy marriage where both parties hope to see WARLORDS III become a big turn-based hit, akin to CIVILIZATION II. From what I've seen, they have a right to be confident.



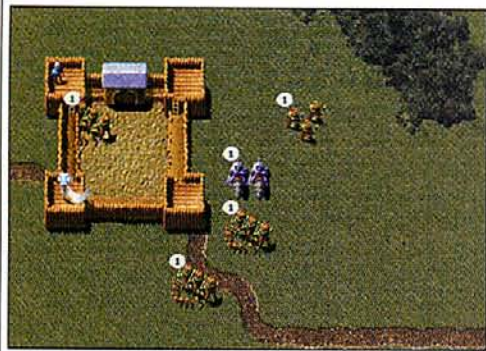
IMPOSING TOWERS Much like the serendipity icons in CIVILIZATION II, towers and ruins can either reward or punish you, so take care when investigating them.

CAST INTERNET SPELL

Over the last decade, Roger Keating has consistently produced some of the best pure AIs of any strategy game, from CARRIERS AT WAR to REACH FOR THE STARS to WARLORDS II, without the luxury that chess programmers have of the universe being limited to 64 spaces. From randomly-shuffling card decks to geographically-based AI and beyond, Keating's AIs are as unpredictable as they come. With that in mind, the scary thing in WARLORDS III is how much better the AI has become. The computer opponent coordinates attacks better than ever before, defends more competently and, at times, can actually fool you into thinking that it has a plan.

In WARLORDS II, for example, if you could disrupt the AI's preferred movement path, the computer would often lose its way, wandering around in a manner reminiscent to Lew Wallace's lost day at Shiloh. The new movement system allows the computer to find the best—





KEATING, NOT CHEATING Warlords III has Roger Keating's best AI ever—which is saying something. Here, the AI coordinates an assault on an enemy citadel.

BURN & PILLAGE

One complaint about Warlords II was that you could defeat the AI by razing every city, and there was little incentive not to do so. In Warlords III, if you want a more challenging solo game, or if you prefer multi-player contests where your enemy can't employ a scorched earth policy, you may toggle the Raze option off. You can still sack cities, of course, for immediate monetary gain, and slowly rebuild them. Alternatively, you may simply occupy a city or village and start producing units on the next turn. But even here, things have changed. If, for example, you conquer an enemy undead city, you can't immediately begin producing undead units—a nice touch.

In addition to producing units from scratch, as your empire grows in fame and fortune, you may be offered the services of mercenaries. Merchants may offer to sell you arms or objects. And, as in other Warlords games, heroes will flock to your banner. As heroes grow in experience, they gain new abilities, which are magical, administrative, or combat-oriented. While the combat

modifiers are mostly straightforward adjustments to attack, defense, or morale, the magic spells are more involved: Invisibility, re-animation, teleport, augury, and phantom steeds all add spice to combat. The spell list (with around 15 spells) is kept deliberately small to make the game more accessible. Right now, the magic system falls somewhere between that of Fantasy General and Heroes of Might & Magic II, but it works well within the game's structure.

DOMINATION

More sophisticated than recent real-time games, Warlords III manages to push the envelope forward for turn-based games—especially for Internet play.

but not necessarily always the shortest—path, and to dynamically adjust each turn according to the changing circumstances. Simply put, Warlords III has the best AI I've seen this year—and maybe in any year.

Of course, even the best AI isn't as challenging as a human, but how do you keep a turn-based system moving fast enough for multiplayer? Warlords III uses a modified simultaneous turn-based system that is similar to CivNet, except that this time it actually works. The ability to set time limits per turn keeps things brisk and less predictable. Currently, Broderbund plans to release the game with both network and Internet support (requiring at least a 28.8-bps modem); the option for traditional sequential turn-based play makes email a breeze.

The diplomatic system is being overhauled as well. Not only is this a boon in solitary play (because the computer players do more than just get offended at human players), but it also expands multiplayer options. You could conceivably ally with a buddy and win a team victory, although it's unclear if scenarios are being specifically designed with cooperative play in mind.

Other amenities include hidden maps and fog of war, both of which work at least as well as in WarCraft II. You can toggle neutral cities to be passive or aggressive, or you can lose them entirely. City setups may be tweaked to handicap scenarios, and you may opt for a "fast start" by placing full armies on the map from the beginning. If the scenarios become too predictable, you can even randomize the location of starting cities.

Finally, if your buddies aren't available for barbarian- or dwarf-bashing, you can stay busy pillaging in the campaign. This offers a new twist for Warlords, right down to the cut-scenes between linked scenarios.



PINUP ART The collectible Warlords card game offers plenty of heroes and heroines—most of them, like Xialla here, more anatomically viable than say, Lara Croft.

Doing The SSG Shuffle

They don't call it REIGN OF HEROES for nothing: Concurrent with the release of Warlords III for Windows 95, SSG plans to launch a collectible card game set in the Warlords world. The game plans to feature orc mobs (as opposed to orcs calmly conducting their business?), gnoll flamethrowers (dog-faced pyromaniacs), the humorless dark elves, and assorted heroes of legend, among other cards.

When asked if they are concerned about the endless glut of collectible card games on the market, SSG replies that "The recent flood of strategy games on the computer hasn't kept us from developing Warlords III, has it? If our card game is good enough, it will sell." No word on the exact on-sale date for the starter decks, but most new collectible card games are released at GenCon. So, if SSG attends GenCon this August, it's a good sign.

When you combine the great AI, the better graphic look, and the other improvements to the tried-and-true Warlords system, it's obvious that SSG and Broderbund should reach their goal: To make Warlords III the most accessible of its storied line—without sacrificing the elements that made the others classics in their own right. **E**



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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #061

Target Release Date: August, 1997

Developer: Eidos

Publisher: Eidos

Harriers, Cobras, and Tanks, Oh My!

This Is Not Your Father's Combat Flight Simulation

by Denny Atkin

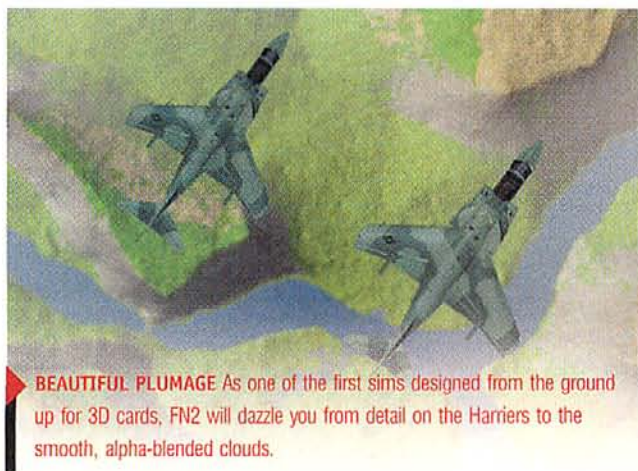
Eidos' *FLYING NIGHTMARES 2* takes a pint of beautifully rendered, realistically modeled flight simulation, adds in six ounces of *COMMAND AND CONQUER*, and shakes in a spritz of *MUZZLE VELOCITY*. The resulting cocktail is an intriguing mix of simulation and strategy game.

FN2 is built on two major modules: a full-blown, state-of-the-art flight simulation and a real-time strategic wargame. In a multiplayer game, two players each take the role of commandant, sending battle instructions to both computer-controlled and human-piloted units. Remaining players take more traditional roles as pilots of AV-8B Harrier II+ jump jets and AH-1W SuperCobra attack helicopters.

Instead of just choosing a mission and following preassigned waypoints, pilots follow the directions of the commandant, with real-time orders coming in throughout the flight. Multiplayer FN2 supports both LAN and the Internet. Although it appears FN2 will be at its strongest as a multiplayer game, there are solo options as well. You can play the commandant-strategic mode against the computer, and there's also a solo flying campaign set in Cuba (see sidebar).

JAWOHL, HERR KOMMANDANT

In the team-play mode, one player creates a game and chooses the winning conditions, game setup, and location. An opposing player joins as



BEAUTIFUL PLUMAGE As one of the first sims designed from the ground up for 3D cards, FN2 will dazzle you from detail on the Harriers to the smooth, alpha-blended clouds.

commandant for the second team. The remaining players then take pilot slots on each side. Up to 16 players are supported in a game.

Each side is equipped with the same types of units—Harriers, SuperCobras, and a variety of AI-controlled air and ground units; they differ only in whether they have Green (blue team) or Brown (red team) camouflage. (Eidos may eventually do an expansion disc with Russian equipment such as the Yak-141 jet and Mi-28 Havoc helicopter.)

The commandant views an overhead view of the battlefield from any of three magnification levels. Friendly and known enemy units are represented by icons. An icon may represent more than one physical vehicle—tank units, for instance, are actually composed of four individual tanks. There's a full fog of war in effect, so you'll only see enemy units when they're in view of your own units or your reconnaissance assets. And even then, spotting them can be difficult, as terrain plays a part as well. Infantry in the woods are next to invisible.

"All the major considerations of real warfare are in the game," says FN2 Producer Bryan Walker, "but they're in there such that the player doesn't have to worry about them."

Facing is modeled, so a rear attack on tanks, for example, should be more effective. Numerical strength is also taken into account. "Two weak units can beat one very strong unit, just due to the rules of flanking," Walker says.

A dozen maps are included, with a variety of terrain types;

among these are woods, desert, and snow. Terrain ranges from 100–230 km on a side. Because combat takes place in *real* real time (as opposed to the accelerated time used in games like *COMMAND AND CONQUER*), scenarios can take quite a while to play out. An acceleration mode will be available, which will, for instance, increase the maximum speed of an M1-A1 unit from 60 to 90 kph.

Computer-controlled units include M1A1 tanks, LAV-25 armored personnel carriers, artillery batteries, Avenger and Hawk air-defense assets, EH-60 jamming helicopters, E-2C Hawkeye AWACS, LCAC hovercraft, utility helicopters, infantry, engineers, and special forces units. You will also be able to assign the computer to pilot Harriers and SuperCobras.

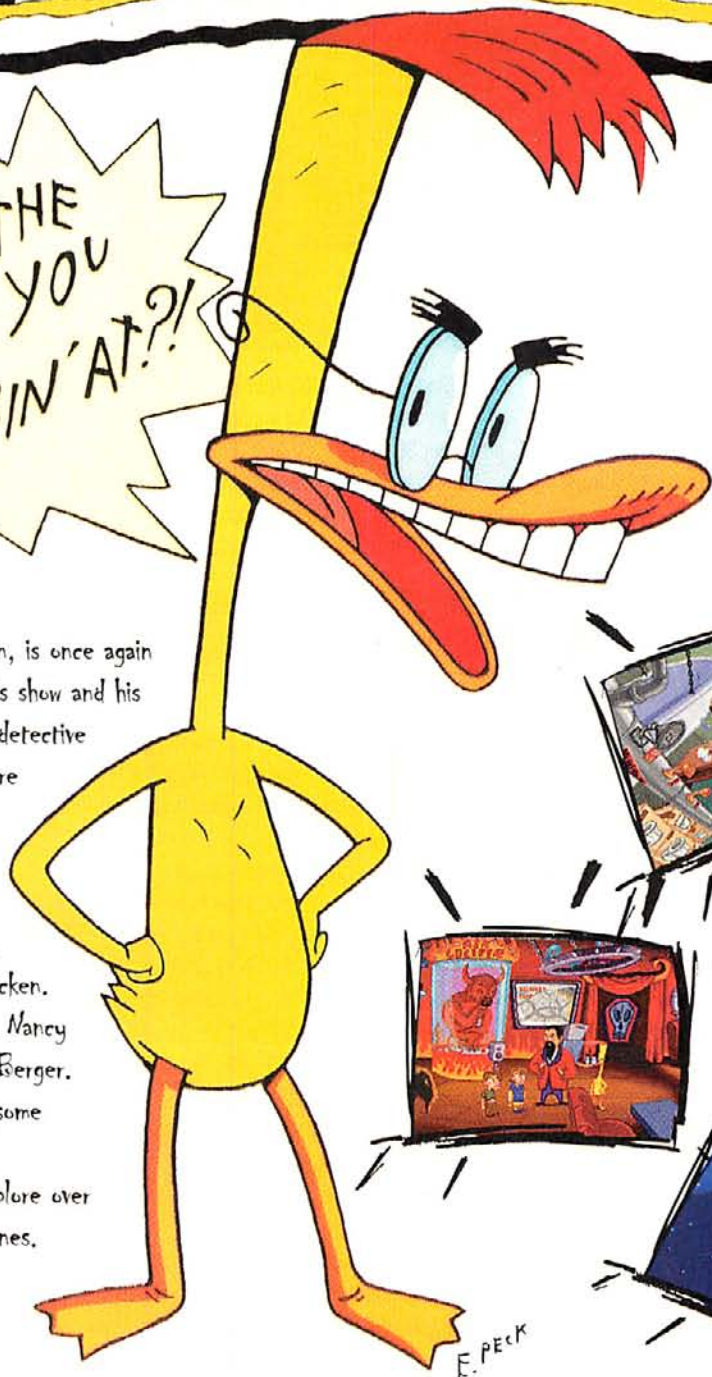
Among the most useful assets included in the game will be RPVs (remotely piloted vehicles), which can loiter over an area and provide recon information for up to 90 minutes. "If you

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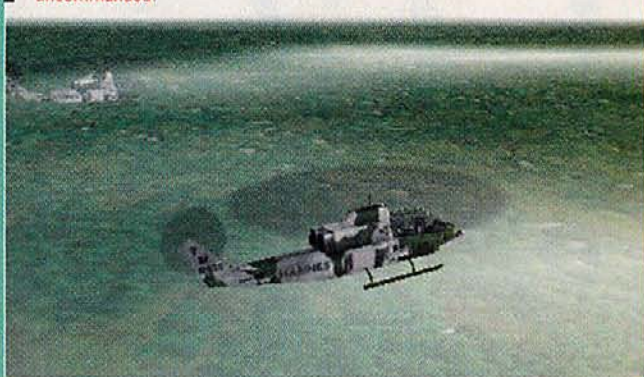


CIRCLE READER SERVICE #137



TWO FACED In the great tradition of combination desert toppings and floor waxes, FN2 is both a 3D flight sim and a detailed real-time wargame.

COBRA VENOM As commandant, you can jump into the cockpit of a SuperCobra and fly an attack mission, but that will leave your troops uncommanded.



want to be evil, you can assign one to an artillery unit," says Walker.

These units are powerful by themselves, but they can also be grouped, adding to their capabilities. For instance, assigning an engineering unit to a tank battalion allows it to dig in and entrench in a much shorter time; assigning an anti-aircraft unit to a group increases the air defense rating of all the vehicles in the group.

Orders you can give to units include Attack, Entrench, Join, Escort, Defend, Bypass, and Retreat. You can also set waypoints and have units notify you when they've reached the desired position.

Assigning orders to human pilots works similarly, except the orders are simply transmitted to the pilot to carry out—updated waypoints and mission orders are transmitted to the aircraft's mission computers.

The commandant can choose to click on an aircraft and jump in to fly it himself, but at that point the remaining units are left uncommanded, and will stop in place once they've exhausted their orders.

AIR GRUNTS

While the commandant mode abstracts the battlefield, the human pilots see everything—air and ground units, buildings, and terrain—in glorious 3D. FN2's flight engine renders a detailed combat arena in 65,000 vivid colors if you have a 3D card (a mere 256 if you don't). The product will have native support for 3Dfx, Rendition,

Virge, Rage, and probably Mystique video chips, as well as Direct3D support for PowerVR and other 3D chips.

Objects are fully light-source shaded, with bilinear filtering, antialiasing, alpha blending, and other effects when appropriate. The team

impressive doppler effects as you zoom past other vehicles, and even echos of your own engines as you pass close to large buildings.

This doesn't mean the aerial combat will be all flash and dazzle. Look for both basic and a very realistic flight model.

The Cuban Campaign

While FN2 focuses on multiplayer action, there is also a Cuban campaign designed for solo play. The campaign should involve about 25 missions focusing on a hard-line Cuban threat against Guantanamo Bay.

Depending on your performance, the game will be split evenly between the Harrier and SuperCobra.

The campaign will stress real-world rules of engagement, air-space management, and doctrine. You'll have to match a time-on-target of plus-or-minus 60 seconds—get there too early and the enemy will be gone; arrive too late and the good guys may be there.

The campaign will include a full complement of Russian hardware, including the MIG-19, 21, 23, 27, and 29. Ground units include T-54, T-62, and T-72 tanks; ZSU, 2S6, and SA-3, 6, 9, and 11 anti-aircraft assets; and Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters.

Expect a busy combat environment, with 500 to 1,500 units operating throughout Cuba at all times. Your performance is of the utmost importance—screw up, and expect to see SCUD missiles headed to Miami.

has gone almost overboard with object details—not only do you see the nozzles on the Harriers rotate, but 3Dfx and Rendition card owners will actually see a working HUD display from *outside* the aircraft. You'll even see the fins pop out of laser-guided bombs as they're launched.

The graphics aren't all that's 3D—Qsound is used to great effect to provide positional audio, which increases your situational awareness with

visual cues to help make up for the situational awareness restrictions of a computer monitor.

In only two pages it's difficult to preview a product that's essentially two tightly integrated but very different games, especially when it has the potential to redefine the two genres. Suffice it to say that there are dozens of features not covered here. For more information on Internet play in FN2, see this issue's "Simulations/Space" column. **E**

Win 95 is cool, but sucks with DOS games!



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QUAKE

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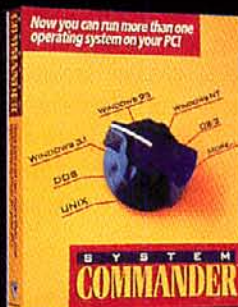
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #384

Target Release Date: June, 1997

Developer: Adeline Software

Publisher: Activision

Super Twinsen 64

TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY, the Sequel to RELENTLESS, Is a Genre-Busting 3D Extravaganza

by Jeff Green

The first thing to know about Activision's upcoming *TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY* is that no matter how many gamers you add to the discussion, you're never going to get a consensus on exactly what kind of game it is. Is it an adventure game with action elements? Or is it an action game with a plot? A smart console game for the PC, maybe?

After talking with the designers and making my way through a good chunk of the alpha, I can tell you that you might as well forget genre classifications altogether: You'll never be right. Take elements of *TOMB RAIDER*, *PRINCE OF PERSIA*, and

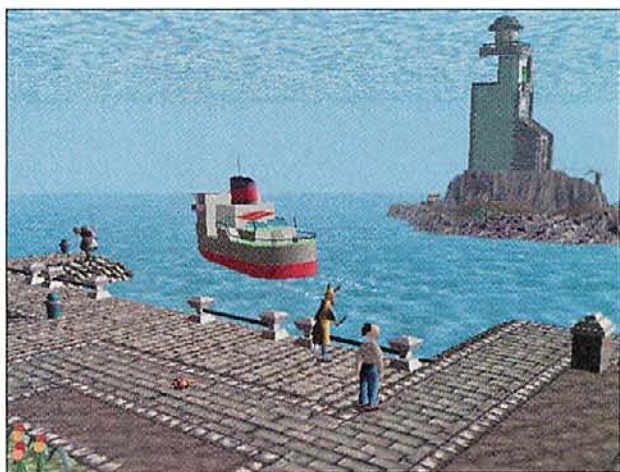
of the past decade, *ALONE IN THE DARK*, along with the more recent *TIME COMMANDO*. *TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY* is the sequel to Raynal's *RELENTLESS*. Although *RELENTLESS* was lauded by critics (receiving CGW's 1995 Adventure Game of the Year award), it was never the hit it deserved to be, partly because Electronic Arts didn't bother (or know how) to market it properly; and partly because it was a couple years ahead of its time.

TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY returns us to the animated, surreal 3D world of Twinsen. As the game opens, our man Twinsen is called upon to help rid the town of an oppressive rainstorm, and, after he does so, the real plot of the game is revealed: The clear skies open the way for a group of aliens to land on Twinsen with the assurance that they've "come in peace," but actually mean no such thing.

PLATFORM ISSUES

Raynal and his company, Adeline Software, have written a brand-new graphics engine for this sequel, and the results are beautiful. Amazingly-lifelike 3D-polygonal characters walk and talk in stunning, pre-rendered, texture-mapped environments. All the animation's state-of-the-art, and the game is full of life forms that move about and follow their own agenda, even when you're not interacting with them.

You control Twinsen from a third-person isometric perspective, and you navigate him through the game's many puzzles by switching between four different behaviors: normal, athletic, aggres-



BAY VIEW Twinsen's world is a colorful, 3D wonderland. Look out for that crab, though—he bites.



HARD RAIN Twinsen's first job is to stop the alien rain that's pelting the land. But wait until he sees what happens when it clears up.

Super Mario 64, blend in some *CRUSADER: NO REGRET* and even some role-playing elements, and you're just beginning to scratch the surface of Twinsen's *Odyssey*—a game that is surely destined to be one of the freshest games of the year.

THE NAME OF THE GAME

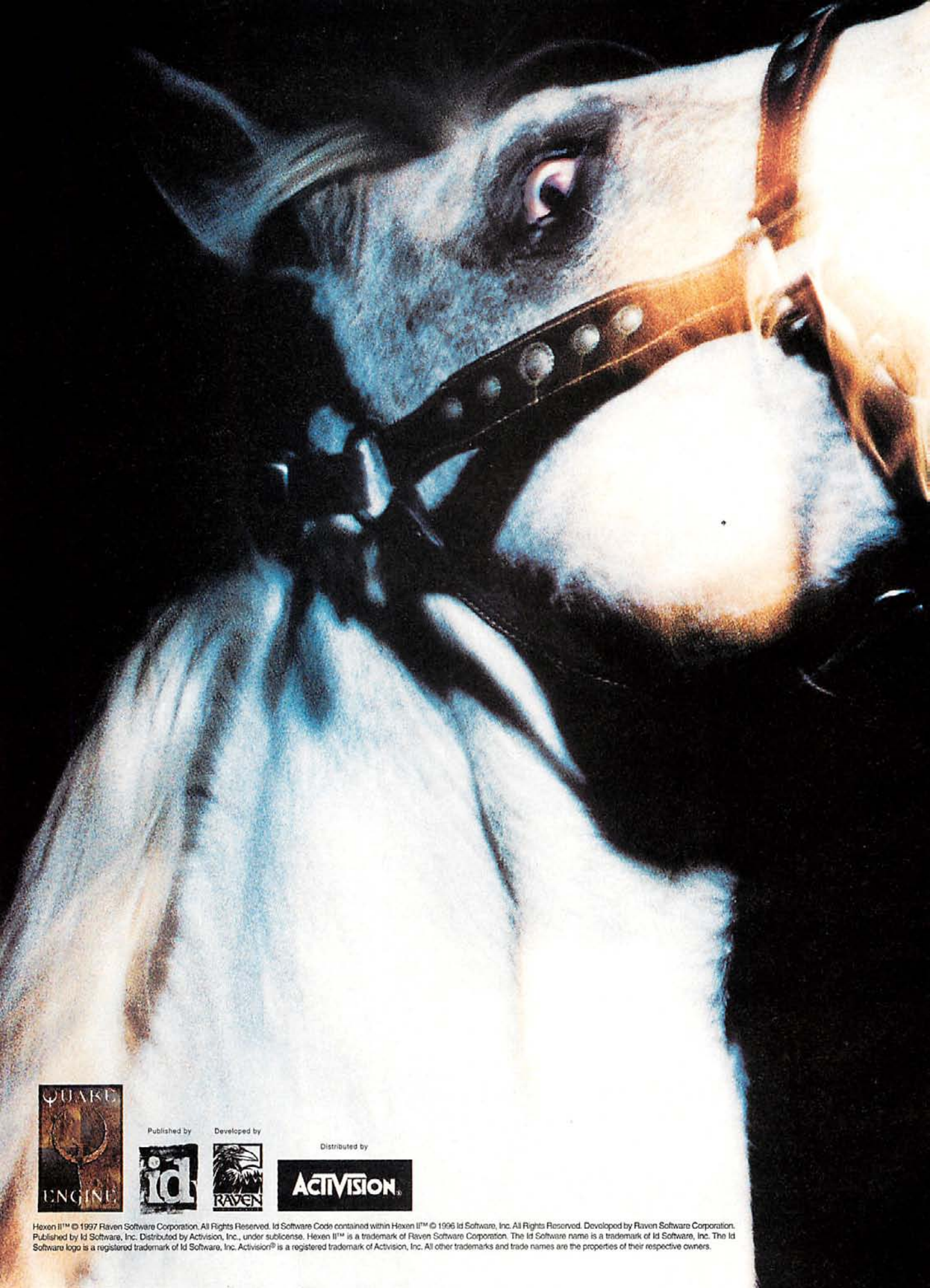
Due this summer, *TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY* is designed by Frederick Raynal, the man responsible for one of the most original adventure games

sive, and discreet. Switching behaviors is a snap (all are assigned hot keys), as is switching between camera views to get your bearings. While the game is very story driven—you'll spend a lot of time talking to other characters—action and console gamers should also be right at home, as many of the puzzles are twitch- and platform-based—with actions like timing jumps, manipulating levers, knocking out bad guys, and so on.

TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY reminds me most of *Super Mario 64*, which some computer gamers (especially those who have never played it) might mean as an insult—but I mean it as a compliment. You can be put off by the "kiddie" aspect of both games if you want to, but by doing so you're missing out on some truly fun, charming, and challenging gameplay (anyone still scoffing should know that Raynal has acknowledged *Mario* designer Shigeru Miyamoto as an influence). Those who've enjoyed *Mario*, or anyone who was tantalized by the genre-bending *TOMB RAIDER*, should keep their eyes open for *TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY* this summer. It has the potential to be one of the year's sleeper hits—in whatever category you want to put it. **S**

10 DECEMBER

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HER RIDER WITH SPEED AND GRACE COULD
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IN THE FRESH MUD, PINNING THE NOW
LIFELESS CARCASS OF HELL'S FIRSTBORN
DEEP IN HER SOCKETS, AND SHE WAS NO
LONGER THE OBEYANT SERVANT. HER HOOPS
FLAILED WILDLY, SPLATTERING BLOOD FROM
AN OPEN WOUND ACROSS HER THICK PALE
COAT, BUT IT WAS NOT ENOUGH TO WARD
OFF THE DARKNESS THAT CAME SO QUICKLY.
IT WAS THEN THAT I REALIZED THIS WAS
ONLY THE BEGINNING OF THE END. IT WAS
THEN THAT I WIPED DEATH'S REMAINS FROM
MY SWORD ONTO HER MINE AND TURNED
AWAY. THE FIRST HORSEMAN WAS FINALLY DEAD.
ONE DOWN. THREE TO GO.



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QUAKE KILLERS

BY V. LONG AND ELLIOTT "GUNBOY" CHIN

Run-and-Gun Is Dead—the Best New 3D-Action Games Have RPG Elements, Real Stories, and More Interactive Environments



Actual 640 x 480 Gameplay Screenshot From TRESPASSER: JURASSIC PARK

The New Games Are Still Bloody, but Now They've Got More Meat

Whatever you think of QUAKE,

one thing is certain: It raised our expectations for 3D-action gaming.

Now, it's almost impossible to go back to anything less than true 3D. The immersive realism of 3D levels, monsters that seem to be "in the flesh"—and a full six degrees of freedom has propelled us to a new level of experience. But if QUAKE showed us the wonders of 3D, it also exposed the weaknesses in current first-person



Role-playing and character advancement will make games like *Jedi Knight* even more compelling.

shooters. Simple run-and-gun, find-the-key gameplay can get boring after a while. We need more meat in action games. Now that the technology has been brought up to speed, it's time for the gameplay to be as well.

The next generation of first-person action games—the QUAKE killers—are doing just that by introducing real stories and innovative game design. Not surprisingly, many of the games featured here share the same innovations and elements—elements that will finally bring action gaming to the next level.

Role-playing Elements That Make You Care About Your Character

Most of these QUAKE killers, like *Jedi Knight*, *Hexen 2*, and *Daikatana*, will give you the chance to improve your character and customize his



Real stories will bring the game to life and even affect gameplay.

growing abilities. In *Jedi*, you'll be able to increase Kyle's Force powers, while in *Hexen 2*, your success in battle will directly translate into more power for your paladin. By letting you invest in your character, these games will make you care for his welfare.

Real Stories That Bring the Game to Life

Hand-in-hand with the role-playing elements are engrossing stories that give both your character and the environment life. In *Jedi*, live-



Environments will be even more interactive and believable.

action movies will tell your story as you learn to become a Jedi and save, or subvert, a secret Jedi valley. In *Daikatana*, your supporting cast of characters will travel along beside you, revealing

secrets of the world around you, unveiling more of the story, and giving you a glimpse at the relationship between your characters and the NPCs of the game.

Interactive and Functional Environments for Increased Realism and Immersion

Being able to affect your environment, and being in recognizable, functional places will become as important as technology for creating a believable and immersive environment. In the best example, *Hexen II*, you'll be in levels that



More innovative gameplay will definitely become the rule.

look so much like real cathedrals that you would swear they could be used for communion. You'll also be able to shatter glass windows, break apart barrels, and destroy furniture; all the better to leave your mark and make you feel like you are in a real-life environment.

Better Game Design That Goes Beyond Key-hunting and Shooting

Action gamers are tired of the same old thing. In games like *Jedi* and *Hexen 2*, you'll have to master new abilities, like Force powers and magic, that will affect how you fight. Puzzles are also playing a larger part in game design, especially in *Daikatana* and *Jedi*, meaning that you'll have to have a quick mind, as well as quick reflexes, for victory. Also, with stories playing a larger role, mission-based games with real goals, rather than level-based games with no point but violence, will become the norm.

QUAKE II AND QUAKE WORLD

id Software Works to Improve Its Benchmark Shooter

by V. Long

What better place to start this roundup than with the founder of the genre: id Software. Work proceeds apace on QUAKE II and QUAKEWORLD, the latter of which is id's online multiplayer fragfest. The latest version of QUAKEWORLD increases support to 32 players per game and reduces client-side latency by better handling bandwidth hogs such as nailgun

fire. QUAKEWORLD will also include Capture the Flag, a phenomenally popular QUAKE mod (see *CGW* March, 1997, p. 221). The QUAKEWORLD plug-in for Netscape Navigator is also nearing completion, which will allow even easier access to Internet QUAKE.

All this work on QUAKEWORLD will form the foundation for multiplayer QUAKE II.

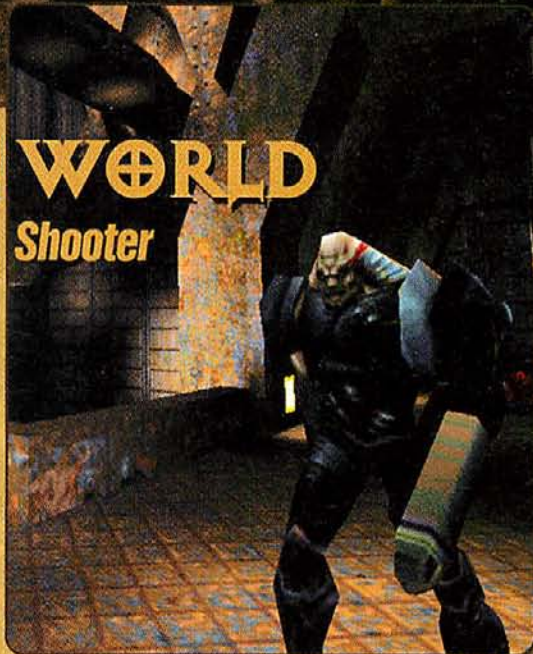
Developer: id Software
Publisher: id Software
Target Release Date: December, '97



DARK AND SPARTAN This is just one room from QUAKE II, which id is now busy working on. For more QUAKE II images, turn to our Web site at www.computergaming.com.

Among the other improvements in QUAKE II will be the ability to merge demos into the game itself. This will allow for immersive "cut-scenes" that actually take place in the game world itself. Another change will be the merged streaming of demo and audio tracks, which allows id to include highly compressed soundtracks and score them to specific points in a demo, as if it were a movie.

For QUAKE II, Programmer John Carmack says that he is "strongly considering dropping QUAKEC in favor of exporting most of the game logic to a separate .DLL file." The switch will not only boost overall speed, but also allow for an increasingly sophisticated AI and more monsters. Carmack plans to release the source code, but you'll still need a compiler to hack the game.



A MORE CIVILIZED OGRE Here is one enemy from QUAKE II. Id is accomplishing some cool effects with this guy; when you shoot him, he'll start to become transparent as his image fades and wavers.

John Cash and Tim Willits tell us of various QUAKE II improvements. There will be true rotating objects, such as spinning tunnels, conveyor belts, and leaf doors. In fact, the rotating objects are so realistic that you can shoot between the spokes of a wheel as it turns. Two-way exits that let you go back to a previous level are also new. American McGee, level designer for id, pointed out that levels will be more closely tied together, both in terms of story and interactivity: What you do on one level will affect the scenarios on successive levels.

UNREAL

Can It Beat QUAKE at Its Own Game?

by V. Long and Elliott Chin

UNREAL is currently very much a work-in-progress. *CGW* saw the development tools, and received a sneak peek at the first level (in 512x384 resolution) running on a P166 MMX with 32 megs of RAM. The textures and environment look convincingly grim and befit the prisoner transport ship that comprises the first level. 16-bit color and dynamic lighting add to the visuals. However, neither the monsters nor weapons are fully implemented yet.

Developer: Epic Megagames
Publisher: GT Interactive
Target Release Date: September, '97

You play one of four characters (two male, two female), and explore such diverse locales as skycities, alien derelicts, and mines. Some proposed weapons include a flamethrower and the Stinger—a weapon that makes targets living bombs by firing a mine into them (the mine detonates if shot a second time).

Steve Polge, creator of the QUAKE Reaper Bot, is on the UNREAL team working on the monster AI. Some of the beasts will be smart enough to hunt in packs, to run away if outgunned, and even to compete with humans for artifacts such as health.

GT Interactive claims that UNREAL shareware will be available in early September of this year, with the final product following later that month



BRUTE FORCE Monsters in the game include the Brute, which is hiding in this gloomy room.

(the editor will come with the game). Though the game is still early in its development, we should have something that's definitely worth playing pretty soon—if Epic can meet its shipdate, that is.

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #368

DAIKATANA

Samurai Game Designer John Romero Slices Action With RPG Elements In Ion Storm's Premiere Game

by V. Long

John Romero is one of a small number of "stars" in the world of computer gaming. He helped found id Software with John Carmack and two others in 1991, designed DOOM, and played a key role in the development of Quake. Six months ago he left id in a much publicized break to form his own game company. Today, Romero's Ion Storm is located in the penthouse of a Dallas office building, has about 40 employees, and is developing three titles using id's Quake engine.

Developer: Ion Storm
Publisher: Eidos Interactive
Target Release Date: December, '97

Those familiar with Romero know that he has always wanted more complex challenge in his action games. He hopes Ion's first title, DAIKATANA,

will do just that, by adding different characters, time periods, and role-playing elements to the



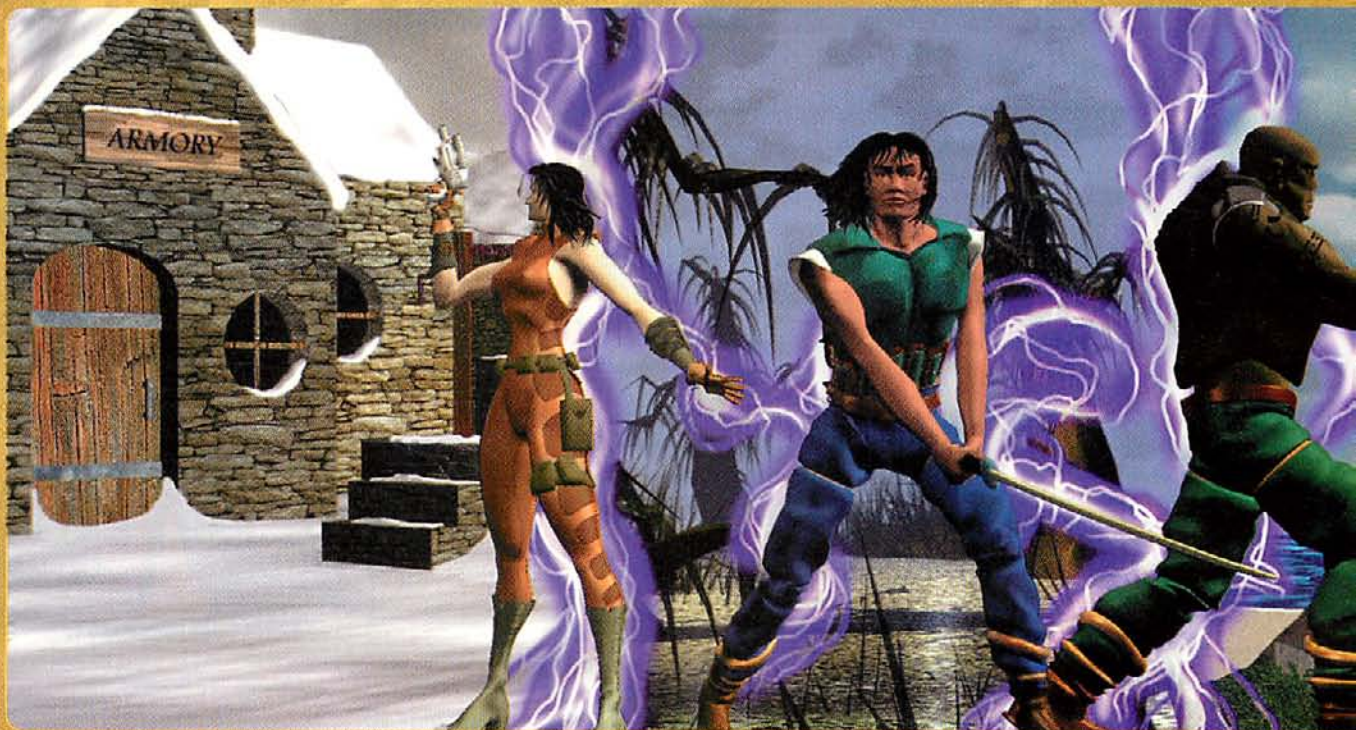
CREEPY CRAWLEY This is the church level in the third episode (Dark Abyss).

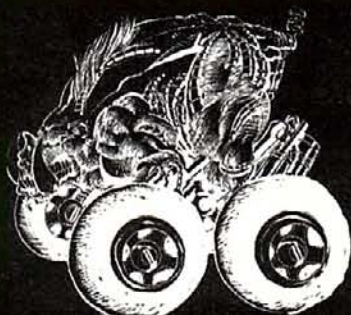
action formula. The game also blends in some compelling features from console games such as SquareSoft's CHRONO TRIGGER, FINAL FANTASY III, SECRET OF MANA, and SECRET OF EVERMORE.

Consequently, DAIKATANA will depart from the stereotypical lone-hero-versus-the-world paradigm of the current slew of 3D first-person games. Despite whatever awesome skills you possess as the main character, Hiro Miyamoto, the game is nearly impossible to complete without your two companions, Mikiko Ebihara and Superfly Johnson. It reflects real life: You and your buddies have to work together as a team to solve puzzles—as well as to survive some very hairy situations.

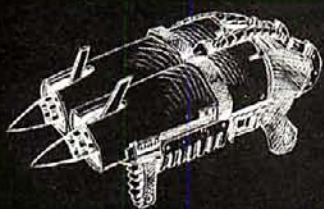
Daikatana: the Movie

"Full 3D, six degrees of freedom of movement is cool, and gameplay is important, but





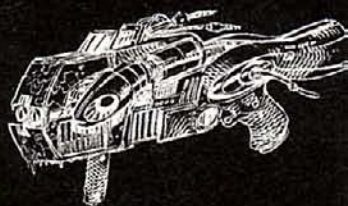
Battle Boar



**Sidewinder With
Rocket Launcher**



Ragemaster 5000



Kineticore

the story is a huge part of the experience," explains Romero. "I want you to become so emotionally attached to the characters that certain events in the game will make you break down and cry, just like in the opera scene from *FINAL FANTASY III*." Romero intends to forge such relationships between you and the characters through a variety of interactions, such as having you come to each other's rescue and engage in wisecracking banter. The heartbreak you will feel only indicates how much you've bonded with the characters. This is a novel departure from today's 3D shooters, where the only

pain you feel comes from receiving two loads of buckshot at point-blank range.

Among some of the ideas Romero has for heightening the sentimental immersion in *DAIKATANA*'s world are integrated voice-overs throughout the game to provide more of a movie-like experience. Indeed, Romero made high-quality dialog a priority, and has commissioned a Hollywood scriptwriter, Christian Divine, to craft the lines. Plus, a powerful soundtrack scored by Will Loconto (of Information Society fame) will complement the game as well.

Unearthing the Plot

Though yet to be finalized, the plot currently revolves around the quest for the mythical Daikatana, an ancient Japanese sword possessing magical powers, including the capacity for time travel. In 2455AD, Dr. Toshiro Ebihara unearthed the Daikatana after a massive and expensive archaeological search financed by his family fortune. This wherewithal came courtesy of his grandfather, Dr. Tetsuo Ebihara, who discovered the cure for AIDS in 2030AD. Unfortunately, Dr. Ebihara's evil assistant coveted the relic for himself, beheaded Dr. Ebihara, and travelled back to 2030AD to steal credit for discovering the AIDS cure—and to enjoy the resulting fortune.

You play Hiro Miyamoto, Dr. Ebihara's brightest student, and an expert in Japanese martial arts. Mikiko, Dr. Toshiro Ebihara's daughter, tearfully tells you of the tragic murder and the impending alteration of history. In return for

setting events right, you will be rewarded with immense riches. In order to recapture the Daikatana, you must break into an impenetrable fortress built to safeguard the relic. The action starts when you are air-dropped into the swamp surrounding the fortress.

Let the Games Begin

DAIKATANA is much like *CHRONO TRIGGER* in that the hero and his trusty companions are sent hurtling through time again and again. In *DAIKATANA*, each of the four episodes corresponds to a distinct period in Earth's history. You start out in the future, 2455AD. However, in order to save the future, you must travel to the near present, 2030AD. Unfortunately, because of an inadvertent oversight, you and your pals are blown back to 2030BC instead. After some time, you manage to collect enough power to escape 2030BC, but only to emerge in 560AD, the Dark Ages. By the final episode, you make it to the intended destination, 2030AD, where events can then finally be corrected.

The episodes will be completely different worlds onto themselves, with unique non-player characters, monsters, resources, weapons, and technologies. In fact, weapons and items brought from one episode into another may be rendered useless simply due to a lack of ammo or energy. Each episode will also have distinctly different art and color palettes.

One of the most eagerly anticipated aspects of playing the hero is the prospect of wielding a mighty



Japanese sword. Although such a melee weapon is nothing new in first-person games, it's certainly one weapon that many fans of the *Highlander* series and Akira Kurosawa movies want to see done right. What also makes the Daikatana special is the bond you will develop for it: As you gain experience in its use, its powers will grow tremendously—to the point of it almost becoming a sentient being.

Like any good RPG, DAIKATANA will give experience points to players who accomplish specific tasks, such as finding artifacts or killing monsters. Such experience can be allocated to the enhancement of a character's attributes such as speed, strength, and attack delay.

One innovation Romero is contemplating for DAIKATANA is the ability to play from the perspective

of either of the two companions. Not only will your abilities be determined by that character's unique combination of attributes, but you'll see the story in a remarkably different light. For example, the exact same scene may have different dialog to reflect what that character understood.

Another idea that Romero is considering that would add even more play-value to DAIKATANA is the inclusion of various challenges that aren't necessary to the story-line, but are fun as a change of pace. Romero cited examples including the Reaper Bot contests on sCary's now-defunct Quakehole Web site, and the fastest-to-complete-the-level contests on ION Storm's Web site, all of which have been enormously popular among Quake fans.

Despite the focus on the plot, the action gaming aspects of DAIKATANA will not be neglected.

Romero talked excitedly of incorporating elements from Doom DeathMatches, such as the "use" key, BFG-type weapons, balanced weapons capabilities, and "Doom-speed." It's safe to say that many gamers will relish the opportunity to use the Daikatana to take a few heads à la *Highlander*.

As with any game so early in its development cycle, expect some things to change. Look for more details in follow-up articles by CGW. Romero projects that DAIKATANA will ship in November, 1997, and that the shareware and commercial versions will be released simultaneously. Eidos will publish this and the other Ion Storm games. However, Romero assures CGW that he won't release DAIKATANA unless it's perfect; "If it's late, it's late because of me!"

THE STORY BEHIND ION STORM

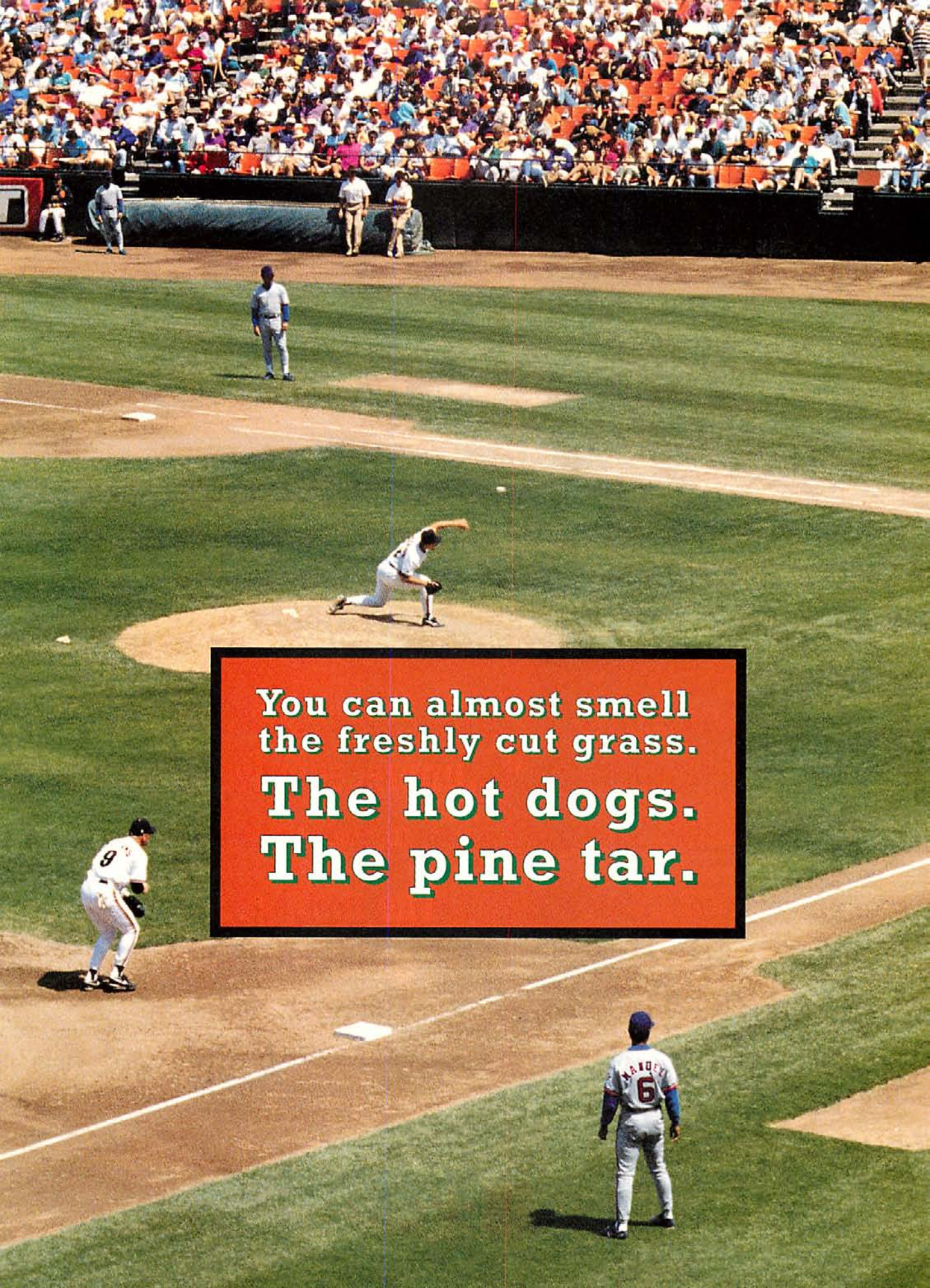


PHOTO: SCOTT HARBEN

Design is law," proclaim John, Romero and Tom Hall, two of the biggest names in PC game design. In fact, game design is so important to them that these long-time friends left high profile companies, namely id Software and 3D Realms, to start Ion Storm. They founded the company with Todd Porter and Jerry O'Flaherty, both from 7th Level.

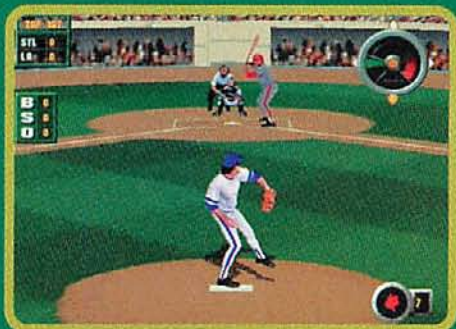
The four founders have since added Bob Wright, far left, and Mike Wilson, at bottom. The founders are left to right: Porter, Hall, Romero, and O'Flaherty.

As first reported in the January, 1997, *CGW* (#150), Tom Hall leads the 3D RPG currently titled *ANACHRONOX*, while Todd Porter leads the unnamed 3D real-time strategy, first-person action project.

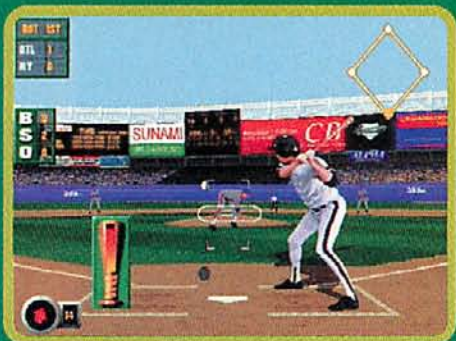
A wide-angle photograph of a baseball game. The pitcher's mound is in the center, with a pitcher in a white uniform with the number 44 in the middle of a throwing motion. To the left, a player in a white uniform with the number 9 is in a ready position. In the foreground, a player in a grey uniform with the number 6 and "MAYERS" on the back is standing. The infield is dirt, and the outfield is grass. A large crowd of spectators fills the stands in the background.

**You can almost smell
the freshly cut grass.**

**The hot dogs.
The pine tar.**



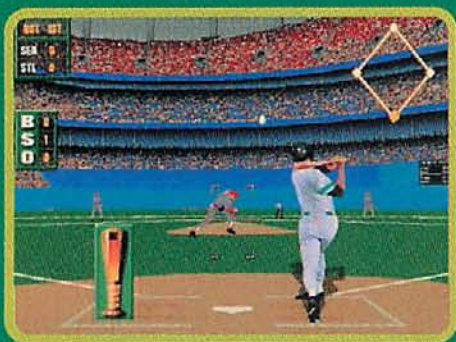
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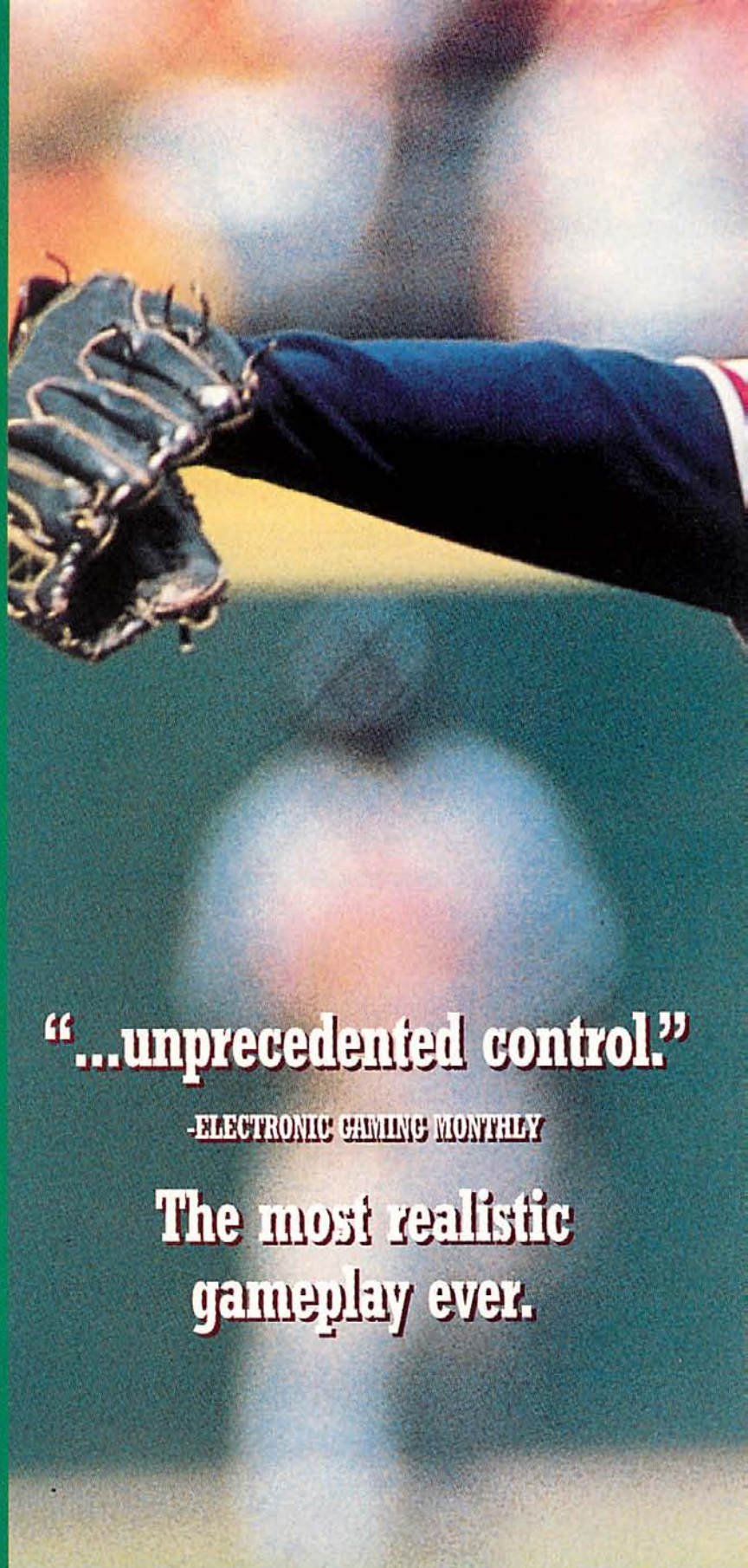
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JEDI KNIGHT

Finally, a Chance to Duel with Light Sabers and Ride Speederbikes In LucasArts' Forceful Jedi Knight

by Elliott Chin

Perhaps the most anticipated *QUAKE* killer is LucasArts' *JEDI KNIGHT*. Yet, in a perfect example of what this second generation of games accomplishes, it's not the 3D action that people are waiting for, it's the story and the role-playing: the chance to become that which the *Star Wars* universe is all about—a Jedi.

You play Kyle Katarn as he strives to become a Light or Dark Jedi. The story unfolds in cut-scenes as the game progresses, and the better you do, the better Kyle becomes. Unlike every other action game, *JEDI KNIGHT* isn't counting on giblets or graphics to seduce you, but role-playing.

JEDI KNIGHT's gameplay is completely story-driven, and the FMV cut-scenes integrate perfectly with the game. In the intro, an evil droid leaves you



LUKE BEFORE LEAPING Here's one of the puzzles in *Jedi*. You have to dash across conveyor belts that are moving in different directions and make your way up the moving ramps at left, all the while avoiding boxes that impede movement.

installations and landing pads will sit atop installation rooftops.

Enemies are a realistic part of the environment. In *DARK FORCES*, stormtroopers shouted at

you to halt and drop weapons. In *JEDI*, if you sneak up behind the stormtroopers you'll hear them talking casually as if waiting for their shift to end. When they see you, they'll swivel around and tell you to halt in their trademark scrambled voice.

Level design looks great, and takes full advantage of 3D. You'll be able to swim through sewer ducts, jump down onto precarious girders, and run across catwalks that look down on stormtrooper squads. LucasArts promises numerous secrets (and hidden enemies) on each level. The levels will also hold puzzles of various difficulty.

Aside from the puzzles and smart level design, enemies—including Tusken Raiders, AT-ST walkers, pig-headed Gamorrans, stormtroopers, and assassin droids—will provide you with ample action.

Developer: LucasArts
Publisher: LucasArts
Target Release Date: June, '97

to the mercy of two bounty hunters. You see Kyle reach over his shoulder, dispatch the bounty hunter behind him and get up to face the other. At this point the cut-scene ends and you find yourself in the bar-room where this altercation took place, with the second bounty hunter's 3D form standing in front of you, weapon raised. The game is afoot.

The World of *Star Wars*

The *Jedi* team is striving to create realistic and functional environments. When you land in a level, you'll immediately be able to tell where you are. An engine room will look like an engine room, and it will be in a logical location on the ship. Similarly, sewers will run under

JEDI VERSUS JEDI



MINE'S BIGGER Imagine dueling your friends with light sabers in multiplayer melees. When you add in the additional Force powers, it should be a belligerent combination.

Multiplayer support is one of many areas where *Jedi* will stand out. There will be team play and Capture the Flag play, but the most impressive aspect of multiplayer *Jedi* will be Internet play. It's very easy to start a *Jedi* server. You just select multiplayer game, click on Internet, set the parameters (number of players, map, and the like), hit OK, and wait for others to join. LucasArts doesn't plan to have their own gaming service (like Blizzard's battle.net), and is talking to online gaming services like Ten and Mplayer, but with the ability to host your own Internet servers, this won't really be an issue.

MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU

You have a selection of 10 weapons for blasting the Imperials, from pistols to stormtrooper rifles to repeater rifles to lightsabers, all with different abilities. The Tusken Prod can shoot single bolts or multiple shots; the repeater rifle fires rapid laser blasts; the rail gun shoots charges that stick to targets and then explode—great for deathmatches.

The developers say that you'll even be able to pilot a speederbike or Crow ship in some of the levels. These won't be REBEL ASSAULT-style sequences; you'll have full control over these vehicles.

"Obi-wan Has Taught You Well"

The lightsaber will be the most powerful weapon in that it deals great damage and can block lasers. For saber blocking, just hold down one key to block all laser blasts in a cone in front of you. Attackers from above and behind you will still be able to hit you. However, as you increase in level, you'll have the option of improving your saber blocking, which extends the range of your cone. You won't be able to fire while holding down the block key, but you could make your opponent exhaust his ammo and then rush in with the saber. In addition to saber fighting, there will be a dozen individual Force powers.

LucasArts says you will be able to use Force powers and a weapon concurrently, such as striking down an enemy with your saber while you are

side from saber fighting and well regeneration (the rate of replenishing your Force points), there are 12 other Force powers. There are 4 basic Force powers, plus 4 each for the Light and Dark side. Among the four basic powers are Force jump and Force speed. Justin Chin, lead designer for JEDI KNIGHT, says that rather than being able to choose which power you gain at level advancement, you'll be given one power at a time (thus restricting the more powerful Force abilities to later in the game). Your choice lies in how you divvy up your experience points among your Force powers, saber fighting, and well regeneration.

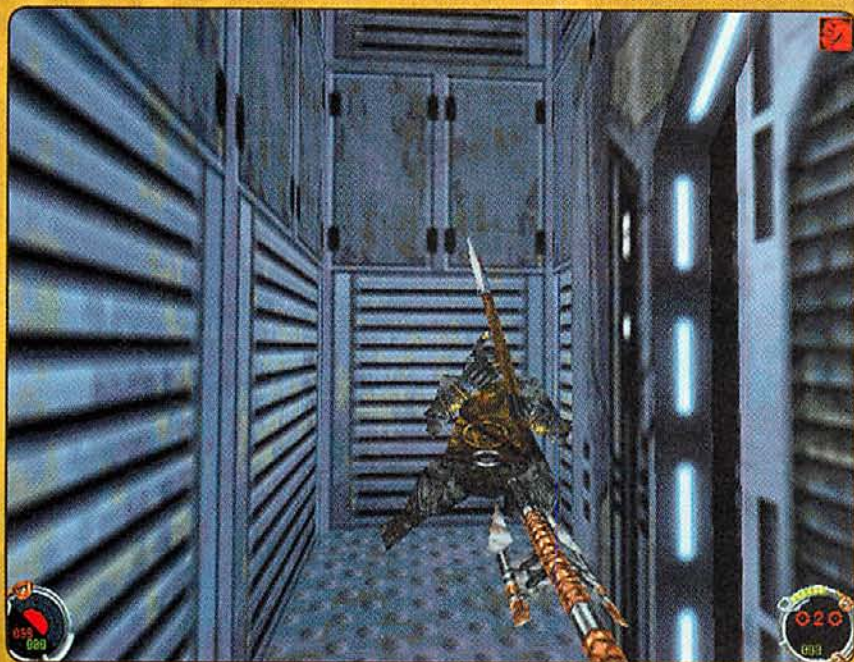
Before your Light side/Dark side choice, though, there will be an experimentation phase where you can try powers from both sides. In those cases, when you advance a level, you can pick either a Light or Dark power. Once you make your choice, though, you will lose the powers of the other side. Light side powers include persuasion (which translates into invisibility), life increase, shield, and repulsion. Dark side powers include the ability to hurl lightning bolts,



ALL CHOKED UP Here's the Dark Force power of choking at work. This Gamorrean guard is having his life sucked away, but be careful he doesn't shoot you before croaking.

Darth Vader's choke, and saber throwing (the only ranged attack possible with the saber). The maximum number of Force powers you can learn is 10, but even then you won't be done with your studies, because all powers can continue to be improved.

All Force powers will have a cost, which is subtracted from your Force well; duration powers will continually drain Force points. You can add experience points to well regeneration if you plan on using an over-abundance of Force powers.



STUCK PIG A Gamorrean guard is about to be fed a load of laser shot from this Tusken Prod.

invisible. In other cases, you won't want to do that; if you are choking someone, for example, shooting him will release your grip. Force powers will be executed by pressing a single key. You will, of course, be able to customize all of your controls.

We saw nearly all of the Force powers in action and ran through some of the levels in the game. Graphically, the levels looked great, with transparencies and dynamic lighting. Kyle was carefully animated for every movement, from backstroking in the water to crouching down in order to lay down proximity mines. Jedi uses Direct3D for its 3D accelerated graphics, so all 3D cards will have the same, gorgeous look. However, because LucasArts isn't using OpenGL, the graphics aren't quite as opulent as GLQUAKE. Of course, the team is still tweaking the graphics engine.

With all the innovations and twists in gameplay that JEDI KNIGHT is adding, I definitely see much promise in this game to lead first-person shooters into the next generation.

HEXEN II

Astonishingly Beautiful HEXEN II Boasts Major Improvements Over QUAKE

by V. Long and Elliott Chin

Far, far away from the commotion of central Texas, somewhere in bucolic Wisconsin, Raven Software is brewing up the latest incarnation of the Heretic Cycle, using the powerful QUAKE engine, some QUAKE II technology, and lots of wicked imagination, all warped by large quantities of *Dungeons & Dragons*.

Developer: Raven Software
Publisher: Activision
Target Release: Summer, '97

As with the other games in its generation, HEXEN II is bringing us something beyond retread gameplay. Come summer, it will provide us with a beautiful game courtesy of a drastically improved QUAKE engine and Raven's talented artists, but it will also give us role-playing elements and character growth; hub-based levels; environments that look like functioning, real-world places; and interactive environments.

Class Begins

HEXEN II picks up where HERETIC and HEXEN, both also by Raven, left off. Although you've defeated the first two Serpent Riders, D'Sparil and Korax, you must now face a third, Eidolos.

Like HEXEN, HEXEN II provides several distinct character classes from which you and your buddies can



RABBIT EARS Don't underestimate the goofy-looking paladin. He is probably the strongest fighter, wielding the most damaging of weapons. Subterfuge and magic are left to the other classes: the necromancer, assassin and crusader.



WALK LIKE AN... Here's an example of an Egyptian level, with an authentic look and feel, and almost life-like wall murals.

choose. Of these, two are evil and two are good. The necromancer is the master of black magic. His motivation for destroying Eidolos is obvious: He wants the power for himself. The assassin is the hands-on agent of evil, also known as the Taker of Lives. Although her intentions are not as dark as the necromancer's, she still warrants caution.

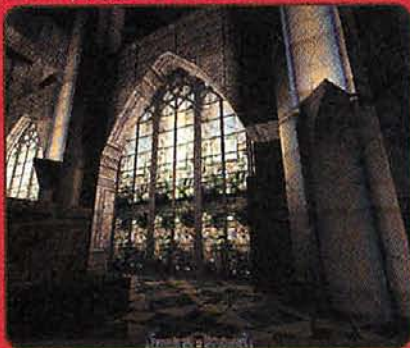
The crusader is a just, balanced character, skilled with both magic and arms, and is particularly adept at healing. The paladin is the polar

opposite of the necromancer. He relies on strength and weaponry to rid the world of the Serpent Rider's evil.

Each of the four classes will have its own set of four unique weapons. The Tome of Power, which returns from Heretic, gives each of those weapons two functions, powered and regular. In essence, this gives each character a set of eight

weapons. The basic archaic weapon idea remains from HEXEN (swords, axes, maces) and there will also be spells, wands, and staves. Although Raven won't be resurrecting the Morph Ovum from HERETIC (which turned foes into chickens) or the Porkelator from HEXEN (which turns them into pigs), it plans to include a polymorph artifact that promises to elevate deathmatch to newfound degrees of destruction, humiliation, and glee.

BREAKING WINDOWS



DESTRUCTION CAN BE FUN On the left you'll see the intact stained glass window. On the right are shards of glass as you shatter it. Note that the clouds behind the glass are placeholder art.

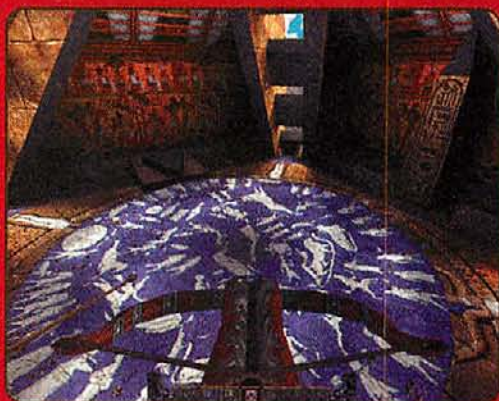
TRAVEL + THE WORLD

What particularly distinguishes *HEXEN II* from the other *QUAKE* killers is the RPG element: Your character increases in skill and power as he gains experience and completes certain levels. For example, the crusader develops immunity to poison, while the necromancer gains the ability to revive (as undead servants) the creatures he has killed.

The Magic of Immersion

The sorcery Raven added to the *QUAKE* engine comes in two forms: magical attacks for the game and an almost magical heightened immersion in the environment. Raven made sure to create the impression of habitation. You'll see levels complete with living quarters, chapels, stables, and outdoor areas. As in the original *HEXEN*, you'll see leaves swirling in the wind and be able to interact with your environment. *HEXEN II* also adds new effects such as falling rain.

Fans of wanton destruction will enjoy the ability to smash open wooden chests to grab the goodies held



WHAT A TRIP! Here are some more breathtaking looks at *HEXEN II* environments. Notice the brilliant, azure floor painting and murals in the Egyptian level. Just as nice are the water and paintings in the Roman bath house.

within, or to crash through doors to make a grand entrance. We smashed open a few barrels and turned a wooden cart into a shower of splinters. Players can also put the environment to productive use. For example, you can push around barrels, chairs, chests, and carts to help solve puzzles and circumvent traps.

Raven even improved the sensation of flying by implementing a soaring flight model that banks when you turn. The attention to detail in *HEXEN II* is sublime. Observant gamers will notice that as the Fallen Angel and Skull Wizard (two aerial enemies) fly, their robes will ripple and flutter convincingly.

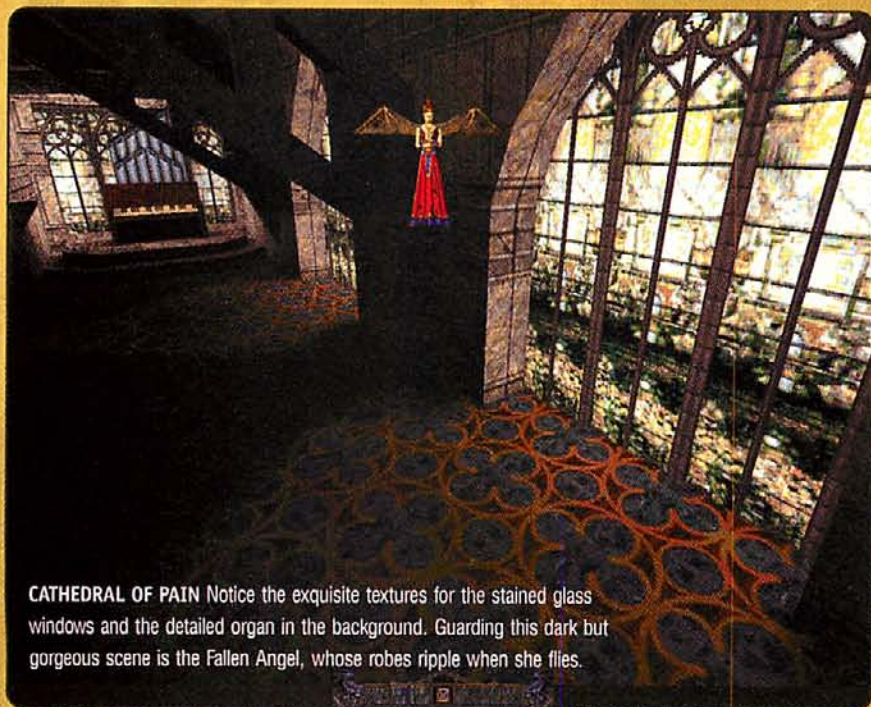
We'll see the first implementations of *QUAKE II* technology in *Hexen II*. The magnificent lighting effects, especially from the stained glass in the spectacular cathedrals, are courtesy of QRAD, a new tool that adds light radiosity to the environment. The true rotating objects, such as swinging doors, complex traps, and even functional drawbridges are probably more obvious to the casual observer.

Four Play

HEXEN II consists of 30 levels, divided into four distinct time periods (rather than episodes): medieval European, Egyptian, Meso-American, and Roman. Each era will have a distinct look. In one Egyptian level, you run through a catacomb filled with sphinxes, pharaoh statues, and beautifully textured murals of hieroglyphs that truly look like they are etched into the walls. The medieval level is set in a cathedral that features huge, stained-glass windows; a courtyard with destructible barrels and pull carts; and cobble-stone floors.

The artwork and attention to detail in the environment is simply stunning. Not only does each era look historically accurate, but the textures used are simply gorgeous. The fact that the environments are interactive will also draw gamers into the game. You can shoot at the stained glass windows in the cathedrals, and they'll shatter with a resounding crash as the shards cascade around you.

Like *HEXEN*, *HEXEN II* connects the levels and episodes with hubs. Raven plans to include approximately four specially-designed death-match levels as well. Raven and Activision hope to release the game sometime in June, 1997.



CATHEDRAL OF PAIN Notice the exquisite textures for the stained glass windows and the detailed organ in the background. Guarding this dark but gorgeous scene is the Fallen Angel, whose robes ripple when she flies.

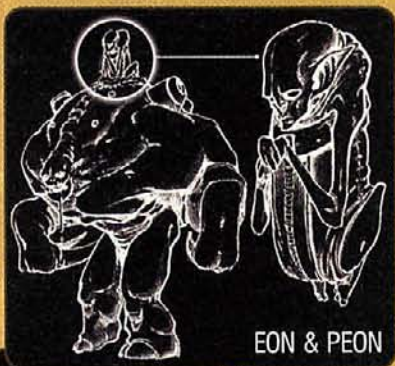
SIN

Hipnotic Plans to up the Ante on 3D Action With More Interactivity and Story Lines

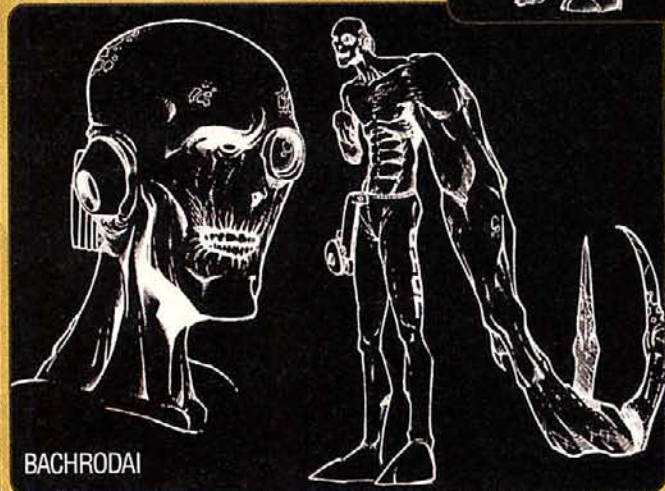
by V. Long

Hipnotic Interactive made a quick name for itself thanks to its much-publicized breakup with 3D Realms. With the release of its incredible *QUAKE* Mission Pack No. 1: *SCOURGE OF ARMAGON*, they have firmly established themselves as a start-up worthy of considerable notice.

Not content to rest on its laurels, Hipnotic is proceeding full steam ahead with its next original game, *SIN*, which will be based on the



EON & PEON



BACHRODAI

Indeed, mission objectives may encompass several levels, and will often require the player to refrain from killing everything in sight. To help accomplish these missions, you'll have at your disposal an arsenal of stealth weapons, such as sniper rifles and explosives.

Michael Hadwin, co-founder and art director, points out,

"We want this to be a great single player experience." You can expect lots of rotating objects; masked transparent textures for realistic chain-link fences and grilled catwalks; operable vehicles, such as subways and construction cranes; realistic sparks for metalworks and; of course, big explosions. Hadwin adds that the environment will look completely different from *QUAKE*'s and be more interactive than *DUKE NUKEM 3D*'s.

No doubt those special effects will boost the fun factor for deathmatch as well. Hipnotic plans to include several special deathmatch levels to feed the need to slaughter fellow gamers. If these levels are anything like the *Edge of Oblivion* level in the *SCOURGE OF ARMAGON*, the deathmatch levels alone will be worth the price of admission! *SIN* will be published by Activision, and is currently scheduled for release by mid-1998.

Developer: Hipnotic
Publisher: Activision
Target Release: Spring, '98

leader of a strike force, you uncover a diabolical plot by the evil biochemist, Alexis Sinclair, to transform the population into mutant criminals so she can ultimately take over the world. As in Ion Storm's *DAIKATANA*, you'll be accompanied by a genius hacker sidekick.

The number of levels and episodes has yet to be finalized, but the Hipnotic team says that the game will be mission-, rather than level-based.

TUROK: DINOSAUR HUNTER

Acclaim's Dinosaur-Stomping *QUAKE* Killer Is Coming to the PC

TUROK: DINOSAUR HUNTER, a gorgeous-looking first-person shooter on the Nintendo 64, will soon be ported to the PC. As a Native-American warrior trapped in the past, you must employ ancient and futuristic weapons

Developer: Sculptured
Publisher: Acclaim
Target Release: Spring '98

against a tide of ravenous dinosaurs. Most of the levels are outdoors, and there are quite a few platform conventions in the game; both these aspects alone suggest



DINO-MIGHT Acclaim hopes to bring a *TUROK* port to the PC in 1998 that's on par with this N64 version. However, it remains to be seen whether there will be any enhancements to elevate it beyond simple shooting gameplay.

that computer enthusiasts might have something different in this dino-killer. Graphically, *TUROK* offers some of the most grizzly death animations ever. Expect Acclaim's in-house conversion team, Sculptured, to take advantage of 3D accelerators for this title—they'll have to if they expect it to look equal to, or better than, the N64 version.



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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #071

PREY

by V. Long

What's happened to 3D Realms' PREY, the game that was supposed to be the ultimate QUAKE killer? Well, it turns out that 3D Realms is content to let the "rabble" fight it out for second generation supremacy. PREY will come in and pick off the winner.

Developer: 3D Realms
Publisher: Apogee
Target Release: Mid-'98

Paul Schuytema, the lead designer for PREY, explains that although the engine had reached QUAKE-level functionality by mid-1996, it wasn't what 3D Realms wanted. "We wanted PREY to be more than just a QUAKE clone," says Schuytema.

So they boldly started over. William Scarsboro, the lead programmer, developed a fresh approach to 3D engine design that Schuytema terms "Portal Technology." Portal Technology treats the world not as BSP trees (as QUAKE does) but as a collection of rooms, which allows for dynamic environments. For example, you can tear down a wall and walk through the hole to the other side.

IS +HIS MYS+?



The graphics quality for PREY already looks stunning. Of course, the environments are still unpopulated, and much of the game isn't even in the production stages yet.

3D Realms Waits for the Generation After the Other QUAKE Killers to Unleash Its Revolutionary Shooter

Other intriguing implications include the placing of portals anywhere in the level, so that a door in the wall of one room might connect to a trapdoor in the ceiling of another; thereby creating a nightmarishly topsy-turvy world.

Preditor, the PREY editor, seems quick and easy to use. The partially-completed test levels, complete with realistically blended 16-bit colored lighting effects, run very smoothly. Soon to be incorporated into Predator will be the entity module for creating new classes of monsters and programming their AI via a simple point-and-click scheme.

PREY's storyline also underwent changes. Although PREY remains a violent, frightening science-fiction game, it now revolves around a modern-era Apache named Talon Brave. Armed with his wits, brawn, and plenty of attitude (as well as some hellacious weapons), he faces a trinity of alien species known as the Trocara, and a fourth species known as the Keepers.

While we wish we could see more than just tools and a preliminary work-in-progress, what we did see was encouraging. PREY is currently scheduled for release in mid-1998, and will require at least a Pentium 133 with a 3D-graphics accelerator.

TRESPASSER: JURASSIC PARK

Return to Jurassic Park for Innovative Gameplay and Prehistoric Action

Dreamworks is charging ahead with TRESPASSER, a 3D first-person action/adventure dubbed the "Anti-QUAKE" by the design team. TRESPASSER will be an entirely physics-based world where all

Developer: Dreamworks
Publisher: Dreamworks
Target Release: December, '97

objects are interactive and can be manipulated. Most of the environment is also outdoors in an island jungle, and the game is goal-oriented, rather than level-based. Gameplay is also miles apart from QUAKE's simplicity.

Throughout the game, packs of velociraptors will be hunting you down, and tyrannosaurs and other dinosaurs will meet you for the occasional scary encounter, so action will be a major part of the game. However, equally important will be puzzle-solving, as you will have to climb fences without being electrocuted, fix and turn on damaged

power generators, and find your way from the bottom of the island to a radio beacon at the top of the mountain. The puzzle-solving even extends to how you fight off the theropods, because since they will be thinking animals, and not unthinking monsters, you might be able to outsmart them rather than wading into them with guns blazing. Alternatively, because Dreamworks is striving to create a near-perfect ecological simulation, you could climb up a tree and just watch the ecosystem at work. For more on this innovative title, read Johnny Wilson's cover story in our March, 1997, issue. Also check out the TRESPASSER Web site at www.trespasser.com, created by members of the TRESPASSER team. ☞



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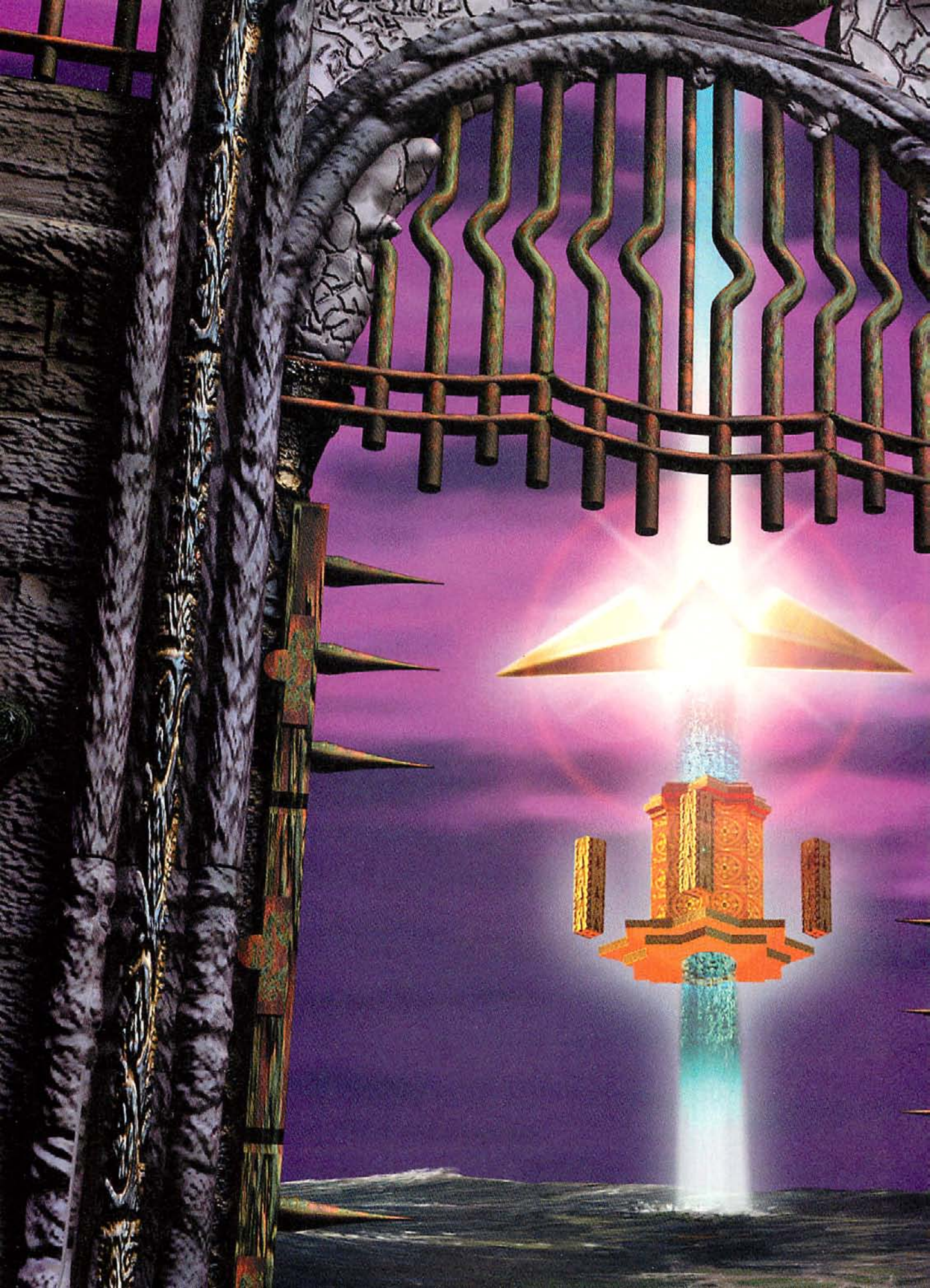


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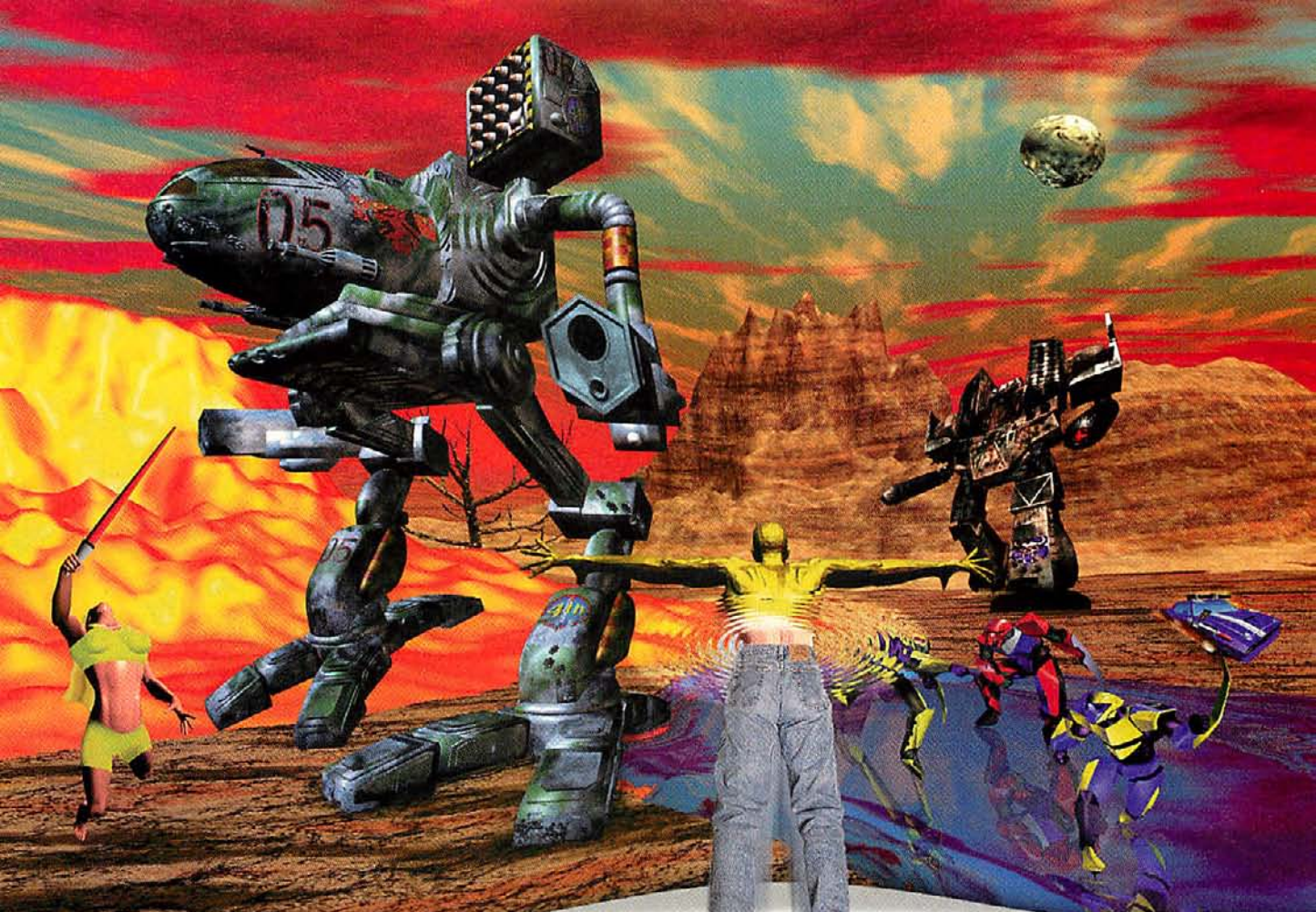
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Houston, We Have a Problem

A Method to Hardware Troubleshooting Madness

By Loyd Case

I probably get one or two email messages a day that begin something like this: "Dear Mr. Case: My system refuses to boot properly ever since I installed Xyzzy II. I've enclosed my CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files. Can you please tell me what the heck is going on?"

While I really enjoy helping people, the thought of troubleshooting an unfamiliar system with unknown hardware and software from a distance is only slightly less troubling than the thought of getting a root canal. Unless I'm sitting in front of a system, or at least communicating directly by voice in real-time with someone sitting in front of the problem computer, there's often very little I can do.

On the other hand, I'm pretty good at solving computer problems when I'm sitting there pounding on the keyboard. After reading the 3,547th message like the one above (okay, so I'm exaggerating—but only slightly), I had to pause and think: What is it that I do when I have a problem with my own system?

Certainly some of it is simply experience. I've been delving into the innards of computers for nigh on 15 years now, and mileage over the terrain of varied problems is a very good teacher. It usually works like this: "Oh yeah, I ran into that on the Brandywine 3400 back in '89, or at least something similar. All you need to do is move the third ISA card to slot four and reset the cache jumper."

I have at times felt a little like the crusty old geezer down the street remembering how he fixed his '49 Plymouth when he was a kid. There really isn't any substitute for experience, and as the saying goes, good judgement is the result of experience, and experience is the result of bad judgement.

Having said that, there is a specific process I use when I encounter a weird problem of unknown origin. Here then is the Loyd Case PC troubleshooting technique. I can't guarantee it will work every time, but it makes the job much easier.

Rules of Thumb

PRINCIPLE 1: Patience Is a Virtue

When you run into weird behavior, especially if it seems serious, stop what you're doing. This is especially true when

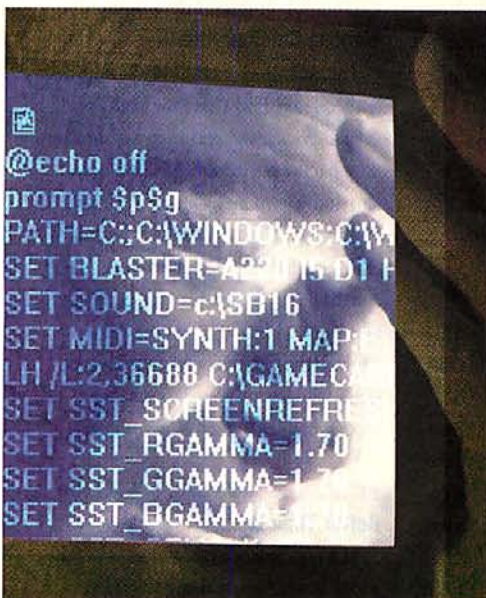
the system appears to freeze. Sometimes a locked system is really one that's merely navel-gazing for an extended period of time. Not long ago, I installed a third hard disk in my system and rebooted. When the Windows 95 splash screen came up, the system seemed to stop there. I resisted the impulse to hit the reset button, and went to get coffee instead. A good three minutes later (cons in computer time), a window popped up, telling me that "Windows is building a new driver database." After the computer completed the action, the system booted and all was well.

Several years ago, ATI graphics cards in some systems would give you a blank screen for more than 60 seconds when booting Windows 3.1. When I first installed the card, I hit the reset button numerous times before I finally got up in disgust and left the room.

When I came back, Windows was up. Go figure. So when a system seems to lock, resist the impulse to hit reset and, instead, wait a bit.

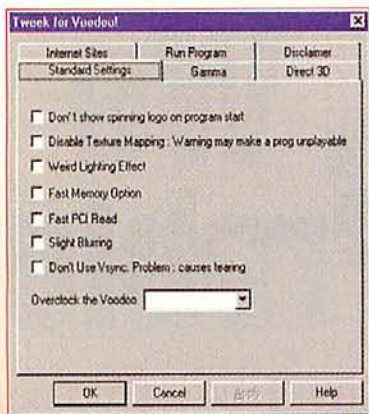
Of course, if something more obvious happens—say, you get the big blue screen of death in Windows 95 or the dreaded "page fault error" some games generate, the problem seems more straightforward. Even then, resist the urge to restart and, instead, write down the contents of the message. At the very least, it will help tech support if you need to call them.

“ There is a specific process I use when I encounter a weird problem of unknown origin. ”



TIPS!

► If setting all the variables to make your Orchid Righteous 3D or Diamond Monster 3D card work well has you baffled, check out a utility called Tweek. Written by Benedict Walmisley, Tweek is available at www.crunge.com/voodoo/html/tweek.html. It lets you set a lot of parameters that you previously had to insert by hand into your AUTOEXEC.BAT file.



PRINCIPLE 2: Ask Yourself, "What's Changed Recently?"

This is the most common question I ask other people when they ask my advice about a problem they're having. The usual answer is "nothing, it was working fine" — but that answer is often wrong. Ask yourself again: What's changed? More than once, I've run into a problem that was caused by something I did several weeks ago — and the reason I didn't notice it before was I didn't perform the action that generated the problem for some time.

PRINCIPLE 3: Make Only One Change at a Time.

Let me repeat that: Make only one change at a time. Many moons ago when I was studying physical chemistry in graduate school, we learned that one of the cornerstones of the scientific method was to vary only one condition at a time during an experiment, then record the results. Programmers call this "Error-Trapping." This may seem time-consuming, but I guarantee that if you make multiple changes, you'll either dig yourself into a deeper hole — or the problem will be fixed, but you won't know quite why — and understanding why is the first step to preventing it in the future.

Case in point: a couple of years ago, I installed a BIOS upgrade in my wife's system. When I booted, I got the dreaded "ROM BASIC not found error." I immediately violated two of the principles I've discussed: I didn't stop and think, and I immediately began changing all kinds of things without stopping: drive jumpers, BIOS settings, and so on. When I would run FDISK

worked. As I was just about to give up, I realized what was happening: I had installed a new BIOS — not just a flash upgrade, but a whole new chip — so none of the old settings would have been remembered. Sure enough, the BIOS wasn't set for large disk support ("LBA" or "logical block addressing" was disabled, for all you BIOS tweekers out there).

So make one change at a time, test the change, and if it doesn't work, change it back to the original setting. I know, the original didn't work, either — but good troubleshooting is much like running a scientific experiment. You want only one variable to change at a time. If you make a change, and the problem still exists, change it back before trying something else. It seems to take longer, but believe me, it saves time in the long run.

PRINCIPLE 4: Return to a Known Working Configuration.

This isn't always easy, though a boot disk is a good step. If you have the luxury of extra disposable income, keep a spare disk drive handy with a copy of a working system. If you've made a change like installing a new set of drivers for your graphics card, nuke 'em and go back to the old ones if you can. If you've just installed new hardware, take it out, reinstall the old stuff and see if it works. If the former configuration works, step more slowly through the change process and see if you made a mistake.

PRINCIPLE 5: Two Sets of Eyes Are Better Than One.

Having someone come along and take a look at what you're doing is often very

from the boot floppy, it showed the drive as a 528MB drive. Nothing worked — but because I'd been trying everything under the sun, I had no clear idea of what hadn't

useful. In fact, the second person doesn't even have to be technically inclined. Once, when I thought the system had hung, I asked my six year old daughter (who is getting to be quite a game player) to look at it. "Daddy, the monitor is turned off," was her reply. Boy, was I embarrassed. My other daughter, who is only three, had pushed the power toggle on the front of my monitor. Often a second person can help you question your assumptions — never a bad thing in this game.

PRINCIPLE 6: If the Problem Persists, Take a Break.

Get some sleep. Read a book. Watch TV. Come back to the problem fresh; often, you'll have a breakthrough idea. When you're hacking away at a problem, it's easy to get into a rut. One time, I couldn't figure out why the system kept locking up when running Windows. I even reinstalled Windows and all the drivers. I finally gave up and went to sleep. The next morning, when booting the system, I noticed it reported only 24MB instead of the 32MB I had installed. One of the memory SIMMs had come just a bit loose — it still looked like it made contact, and in fact, made just enough contact so the computer thought it was there — but when it tried to use it, BOOM! But I had been too tired to notice it the night before, and who ever watches that RAM test anyway?

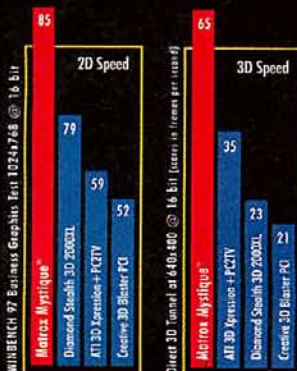
PRINCIPLE 7: If It Persists for More Than 48 Hours, Call in the Pros From Dover.

No matter how long you've been at the computer game, there's always someone who knows more than you do. Tech support isn't always helpful, unless you can get a really experienced support rep, but if you don't have to pay for it, it's worth a try. I've found online services and the Internet to be much more useful, though. Posting a plea for help, along with a detailed description, can often elicit useful suggestions.

These are by no means the only steps in the troubleshooting process, but they should be enough to get you going. Next month, I'll talk about specific tools I use during the process of solving technical problems. Stay tuned. ☺

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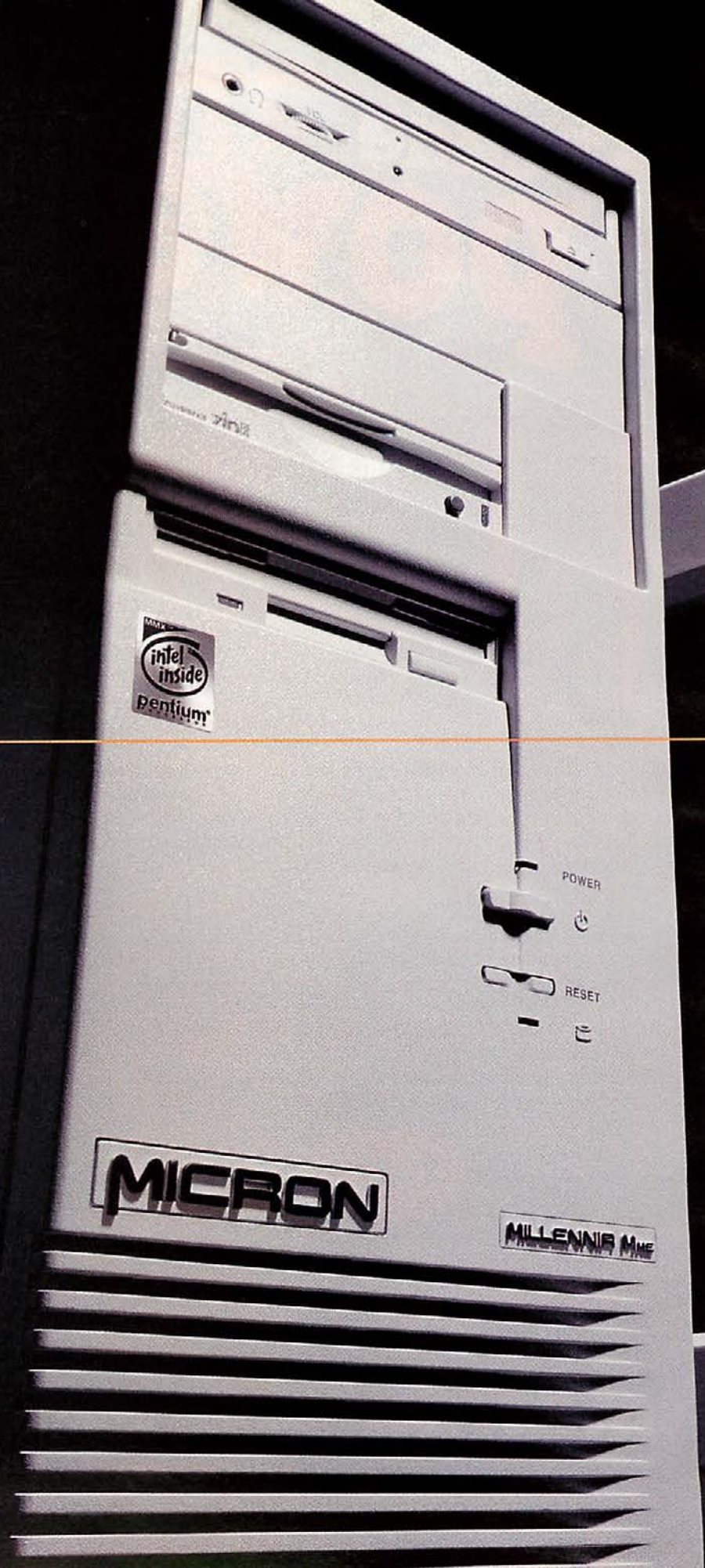
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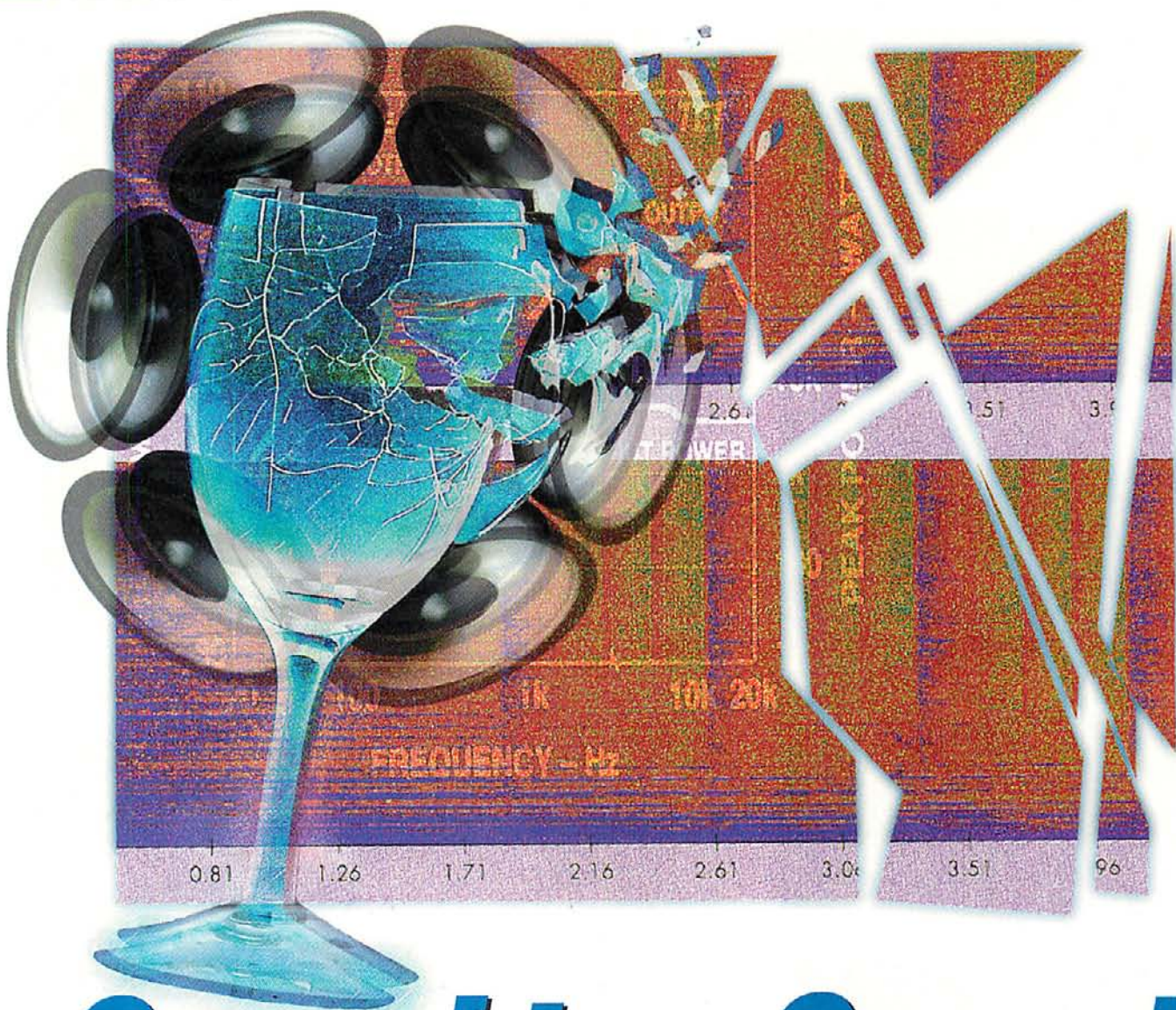
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Smashing Sound

Surround Yourself in Crushing Walls of Stereo Sound

by Loyd Case

WE'VE COME A LONG WAY from the days of silent movies, silent games, and nearly-silent built-in PC speakers. Still, many gamers don't realize just how good the music and sound effects have become, because they

can't hear it with their tinny speakers. Today's sound cards have cleaner digital audio sections and more carefully crafted MIDI patch sets. To really appreciate the audio quality of today's games, you need good speakers.

LIKE SOUND CARDS AND WAVETABLE SYNTHESIZERS, computer speakers have improved over the past couple of years, though there's still a lot more chaff than wheat in retail land. We gathered a variety of new speaker offerings to test with games and music CDs, and we were fairly impressed. These speakers are all "multimedia" speakers, which generally means each has its own built-in amplifier and is more compact than many home stereo speakers. There are, however, alternatives to these types of speakers, which you'll find in the Aural Alternatives sidebar at the end of this article.

Many of the newer speakers are configured as a pair of satellite speakers with a powered woofer. Although labeled "sub-woofer," the bass units are really woofers, since the satellites only handle midrange and treble; true sub-woofers augment an existing bass speaker set. Another trend has been the packaging of the powered woofer as a stand-alone item, but I tested most bass units with the company's equivalent stand-alone satellites.

Enough of the preliminaries: Let's pop a CD into the PC and pump up the volume. It's time to rock.

MIDI Land MLI S35



The S35s are fairly typical of the current crop of satellite/powered bass combinations. Housed in beige plastic, the sound quality is fairly average, but a definite cut



MIDI Land

above the 3700s from the same company. Transients are crisp, if a bit subdued, and the overall mid-range and treble sound pretty good. Despite the separate bass unit, the bass still lacked any "oomph," but it is fairly compact.

The real problem with the S35s is the horrendously complicated setup. The entire setup is controlled from a single box, to which a confusing array of wires and connectors run. Plus, the satellite speakers have their own set of controls, since they can be bought separately. Connecting everything properly proves to be an interesting exercise in puzzle solving, and operating them is equally confusing. I'd save the puzzle-solving for adventure games and take a bye on this one.

MIDI Land MLI S35.

List Price: \$199; (909) 592-1168; www.midi-land.com

Sound Blaster SBS 380 and SBW500



Although sold separately, the SBS380 and SBW500 make a nice, relatively-inexpensive combination. They illustrate something that's often little understood: Powered bass units help the satellite speakers sound better. Tested by themselves, the SBS380s demonstrate flaccid, weak transient response and are completely lacking in any bass presence. When you throw in the SBW500 into the mix, you'd expect the bass to sound more robust, but the transients also become a lot crisper. The opening



Sound Blaster

movie from DESCENT 2 goes from being ho-hum to hair-raising. One test track has a heavy, synthesized bass, which the SBW500s have no trouble reproducing, albeit with a significant mid-bass emphasis.

Overall, the Sound Blaster speakers are solid, middle-of-the-road units with decent sound, a good price, and easy setup.

Sound Blaster SBS 380 and SBW500. List Prices: SBS 380, \$89; SBW500, \$99; (800) 998-1000; www.soundblaster.com

Advent AV370



The AV370 is a simple, three-way system, with a powered bass unit and two satellites. The satellites sport Advent's signature wedge

shape. Setup is quite easy: Three wires plug into the woofer and you're live. The front panel controls are simple and straightforward, though there's no provision for headphones. The bass unit is quite heavy, suggesting a strong amplifier,

How We Tested

Speaker testing is something of a black art, but I've always maintained that anechoic chamber tests or close mike tests for speakers is a somewhat futile pastime. There is probably greater variance in the accuracy of speakers than in all other parts of the audio system combined. In fact, seemingly identical speakers can have significantly different responses over the typical 20Hz to 20KHz audio spectrum.

Given that, my choice is to always pick a wide variety of music to test speakers, along with games that deliver great sound effects. In addition, we used a test CD that delivers both a 15KHz and 50 Hz tone, handy for uncovering how speakers perform at the margins.

The five audio CDs I used vary greatly, ranging from delicate classical tracks to serious rock-'n'-roll. For game titles, we used WING COMMANDER IV,

which uses Dolby Prologic, has 16-bit audio, and also delivers a great musical score. I also used DESCENT 2's intro, as well as the game itself. The sound in this game definitely rocks the room with the right sound setup.

I listened for accurate stereo imaging and overall tonal quality across the spectrum. I also listened at lower and higher volume levels, paying attention to where speakers began to distort, or started to sound strained. I also tested for clarity in reproduction of transient sounds, which are percussive sounds such as a piano key being struck.

The test system was a 200MHz MMX Pentium with an AWE-32 sound card and Roland SCD-15 MIDI daughter-card. The Windows 95 mixer was set at the midpoint for all settings, except for maximum volume tests. The test area was a typical office desk set in the corner of a room—pretty typical for most gamers.





Advent AV370

but the 370s don't seem to deliver the kind of sound pressure that the Diamond S2s pump out. On the other hand, the sound is uncolored, if a bit subdued. Transients are crisp, but not particularly strong. Acoustic music, in particular, sounds clean, but playing *DESCENT 2* on this system didn't rattle the rafters like some of the other units. Overall, if you like clean, uncolored sound and have a small room or office, the 370s are worth a listen.

Advent AV370. List Price: \$299; (847) 317-3700; www.recoton.com

Advent AV570 Powered Partners



I have a confession: I have coveted these speakers for years now. Before Acoustic Research was acquired by Advent, these speakers were the AR570s, and were the original multimedia speakers.

The 570s come as a pair of fairly large, wedge-shaped cabinets with a 5-inch woofer and 1-inch dome tweeter. The first thing you notice when you unpack them is that each speaker is oddly heavy. That's because each speaker is a discrete unit, complete with individual power supply and amplifier. Connecting them to a sound card is a bit of a chore—you have to split the sound card cable,



Advent AV570

because each speaker needs its own RCA jack. Each unit also has a separate bass, treble, and volume control. You adjust the balance by adjusting the volume on the individual speaker. They can be mounted on stands (sold separately) or wall mounts.

These speakers sound very clean, and can generate very high sound pressure levels. The bass, while good for a two-speaker system, lacks the visceral punch of a separate bass unit. Transients and voice sound very good. At very

high volumes, you can detect some strain, but overall, these sound very nice, indeed. Definitely worth a listen, though your wallet might protest.

Advent AV570 Powered Partners. List Price: \$399; (847) 317-3700; www.recoton.com

Jazz JS-300 Satellite Speakers and JS-900 Powered Woofer



Together, these speakers comprise a fairly compact, full-featured setup, with enough power for smaller home offices. The sound quality of the JS-300s is really nothing to write home about. Transients are somewhat weak and the stereo imaging seems vague, but the overall effect is reasonably good. The bass response from the JS-900 isn't the strongest I've ever heard, but it's still pretty good from such a compact unit.



Jazz JS-300, JS-900

The front panel controls on the JS-300 are among the most complete of any of the speakers I've seen, and include bass, treble, balance, 3D audio, and jacks for headphones and microphone.

Setup is straightforward, with no surprises. Overall, if you have a smaller office and budget, but want fairly good sound, Jazz's offerings warrant consideration.

Jazz JS-300 Satellite Speakers, JS-900 Powered Woofer. List Prices: JS-300, \$125; JS-900, \$110; (818) 336-2689; www.jazzspeakers.com

Roland MA-8



Roland has long manufactured portable, powered monitors for musicians. The MA-8s, released some time ago, are quite similar to Roland's monitor line, and are even referred to as "stereo micro-monitors" on the package.

The overall impression when listening to the Rolands is one of brightness—not necessarily a bad thing for computer games. The transient response is excellent and the reproduction of sibilants is quite realistic and unexaggerated. The bass drivers of these two-way speakers measure only four inches across. Factor in the 8 watts per channel (real RMS power, though), and you begin to notice that bass response is lacking. Just for fun, I

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Roland MA-8

wired up the Sound Blaster SBW500 powered woofer. The end result was pretty darned impressive, proving that mixing and matching can indeed work.

Seemingly underpowered, the overall sound quality of the MA-8s is pretty impressive. If you really don't have room for a powered woofer, you might want to check these out.

Roland MA-8. List Price: \$99; (213) 685-5141 x289; www.rolandus.com

Platinum Sound SWS1600W



Platinum Sound claims to "develop twice the product at half the price." I'm here to report that they haven't really violated any laws of physics: you get what you pay for. At first blush, the SWS1600W appears to be quite similar to the original Cambridge Soundworks,

with a couple of positive modifications, such as a volume control on the front of the powered woofer. They are easy to set up, but the first clue as to the real quality of these babies is the speaker wire, which looks like 24 gauge aluminum—not exactly a confidence builder. The next clue is the mammoth power brick.

This is easily the largest power brick I've seen in awhile, though at least it's the pass-through type where the wall plug isn't part of the brick itself.



Platinum Sound

The sound quality is fairly good, though the SWS1600W won't win any awards for accuracy. The transient response seems okay, but the stereo imaging is quite vague. I first thought that these speakers put out a lot of sound, but when you feed in a track with a high bass content, you can hear the speakers straining on the high end.

Overall, these might be worth looking at—the price is right, the

sound quality okay—but there are better alternatives.

Platinum Sound SWS1600W.

List Price: \$90; (602) 470-1334; www.platinumsound.com

Altec Lansing ACS-55



The ACS-55s are unique to this roundup in offering Dolby Multimedia Surround Sound out of two micro-tower satellites and a powered bass unit. The largish satellites, which look like they came right out of "Star Trek: The Next Generation," each have a front-firing and sideways firing driver. The front speaker is the main mid-range/treble unit, while the sideways-facing drivers handle the surround sound chores. The ACS-55 woofer is a compact black box that looks vaguely like it was left in the sun a little too long. Setup is easy, and Altec Lansing has definitely improved the user interface. There's only a single power cord (no brick!) that is attached to the bass unit.

The sound quality of the ACS-55s is a little on the bright side, but they deliver pretty good sound levels. Transients are crisp and the human voices are realistic. The bass driver has a clear, mid-bass boost, but delivers room rattling sound effects on the DESCENT 2 intro. Stereo imaging is robust, but the Surround Sound capabilities



Altec Lansing

are less impressive, sounding a little muddy, even with Pro Logic encoded tracks. But at \$199, these are a great buy.

Altec Lansing ACS-55.

List Price: \$199; (800) 648-6663; www.altecomm.com/altec.html

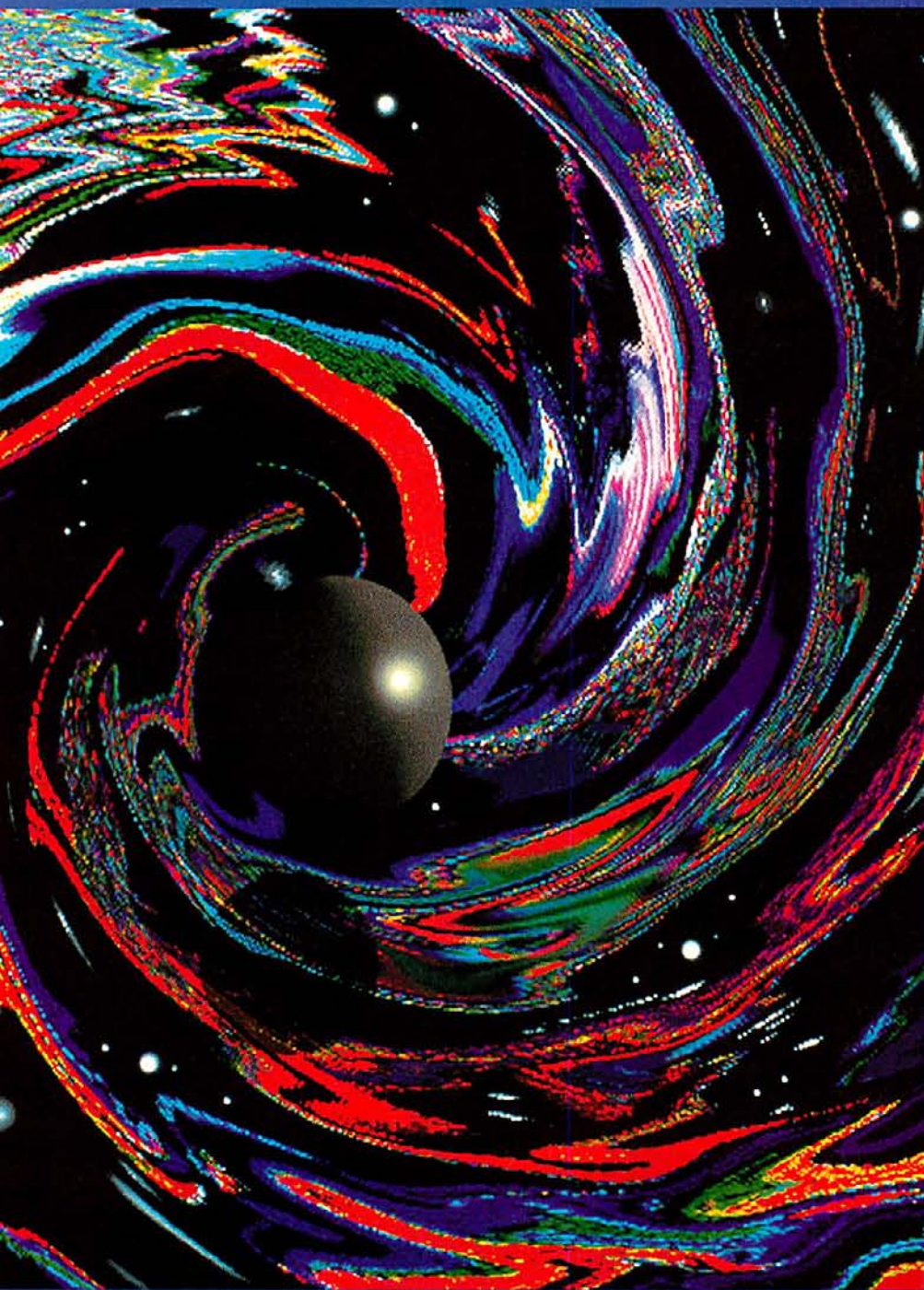
JBL Media 2, Media 4 and Media Sub



JBL has long enjoyed a reputation as one of the better manufacturers of mainstream home audio and studio monitors. Now they've turned their attention to multimedia speakers, and the experience shows. I looked at the Media 2 and Media 4 satellite speakers and the Media Sub powered bass unit. Although you can buy the parts separately, Media 2 and Media 4 are both available bundled with the Media Sub.

The Media 2 is a small rectangular unit with two small drivers.

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JBL Media 2 and Sub

The hinged stand allows you to vary the vertical angle of the drivers a bit. Setup in all cases is pretty straightforward, though each requires its own power connection. The overall sound of the Media 2 is very clean, though there's almost no mid- or low-bass content. Stereo imaging is exceptional, as is transient response.

The Media 4 ups the ante with a 5-inch woofer and 1-inch dome tweeter in a more traditional box shape. Like the Media 2, stereo imaging is very good. Because of the 5-inch bass driver, there's more bass content, making the intro to *DESCENT 2* satisfyingly loud and thumping.

Throwing the Media Sub into the works really demonstrates the value of separating the bass unit. Without the Media Sub, it is easy to crank up the volume to the point of distortion. But with the Media Sub added, high volumes sound much less strained.

Although the sound doesn't seem as uncolored as the Cambridge Soundworks, nor quite as loud as the Diamond Sound S2s, the overall effect is very impressive, and JBL's offerings deserve serious consideration.

JBL Media 2, Media 4 and Media Sub. List Prices: \$99, \$99, \$149; (516) 496-3400; www.jbl.com

Cambridge Soundworks Microworks



The original Soundworks burst onto the scene a couple of years ago, delivering reasonable sound quality, but lacking the "oomph" factor when compared to some of the competition. Cambridge's answer to the critics is the Microworks, and they've clearly been paying attention. The first thing you notice is the size of the



Cambridge Soundworks

powered woofer. The wood case houses a 6-1/2" long throw woofer—finally, a real bass driver! The satellites are very similar to the original Soundworks: They consist of miniature cubes, each roughly four inches square.

Controls take a minimalist approach, with just a power switch and bass and volume controls. The volume control can be easily attached to your monitor with the supplied adhesive-backed velcro. The setup procedures are reminiscent of setting up a small home stereo system, which is a comparison not too much off the mark.

The sound quality is nothing short of stunning. To my ear, the Microworks is probably the most accurate set of multimedia speakers I've heard: They are smooth, transparent, and lack any kind of audio coloration. The transients are sharp, the voices balanced, and the bass is satisfyingly solid. You can crank up the volume, even on demanding passages, and there is absolutely no sign of strain on the speakers.

These are really great-sounding units, but at \$349 for the set, they are the second most expensive speakers in the roundup. However...I wouldn't mind having them grace my office.

Cambridge Soundworks Microworks. List Price: \$349; (617) 332-5936; www.hifi.com

Diamond Sound S2 Powered Speakers



Diamond Sound (no relation to Diamond Multimedia), sent us one of their first of the S2 line of multimedia speakers. If the Cambridge Microworks is a computer speaker designed by audio-philosophers, the Diamond Sound S2s must have been designed by a computer hardware designer.



Diamond Sound

The S2s are a geek's dream, complete with a control unit that can be mounted in an empty drive bay. The cable from the control box even looks like a 9-pin serial cable. If you don't install the control box in your computer, setup is pretty easy.

But, at a cool \$450 smackers, these are also for rich geeks. However, the \$450 is a good investment, given the overall audio

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quality. The S2s aren't quite as accurate as the Microworks, but sound very good indeed, and the massive bass unit delivers much stronger bass punch than that sported by Microworks. The small, two-way satellite units deliver crisp sounding transients and realistic voices. The horn solo in one of my test tracks sounded particularly good on this system.

If we ignore price for the moment, the differences between the S2 and the Microworks become a matter of taste. Given the nature of game audio, most folks might prefer the somewhat boomer S2s (DESCENT 2 certainly sounds glorious on these speakers). It's a difficult choice, really. If I had to choose between these two great systems, though, I'd have to lean toward the Microworks, but, then again, my tastes tend to be hardwired that way.

You should give these speakers a listen if you can, but be prepared to pony up.

Diamond S2 Powered Speakers. List Price: \$450; (310) 582-1121; www.diamondaudio.com

Coda

It's clear from this list of speakers that PC audio has come a long way. Given differences in taste and budgetary constraints, most of the speakers here might find a home in someone's office. My recommendation, though, lies with either the Cambridge Microworks or the Diamond Sound S2 speakers, if your wallet can handle it. If you're on a somewhat tighter budget,

check out Altec Lansing's ACS-55s, which are a great value for the dollar.

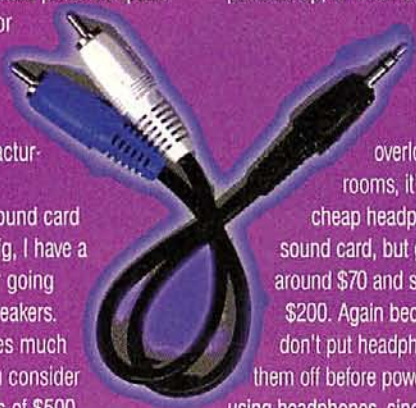
If all you need to do is add a powered bass unit, the Sound Blaster SWB500 would be a good choice, though the Jazz JS900 could work well in a smaller office. On the other hand, if spending several hundred dollars on speakers is a real strain, then the Roland MA-8s are a solid choice.



Aural Alternatives

Whenver you read computer magazines, you might get the impression that the computer guys invented powered speakers. In fact, musicians have used monitor speakers with built-in amplifiers for many years. Generally, they sound good and deliver a lot of sound pressure. They tend to be pretty pricey, though, except at the very low end. Typical manufacturers include Roland and Yamaha.

Another interesting alternative is to have your sound card wired into a small stereo system. In my personal rig, I have a 160-watt Dolby Pro Logic surround sound receiver going through a set of Cambridge Ensemble III home speakers. This entire setup cost me less than \$600, and gives much more flexibility than most powered speakers. If you consider that some multimedia speakers now cost in excess of \$500, this is not a bad alternative.



Even the best sound cards often send out a "spike" when they're first powered up, or when they are powered down. So to avoid sending this spike through your speakers, be sure to turn your rig on *first*, then turn on the receiver. When powering down, turn the receiver off first, then your PC. Finally, there are headphones. This solution is often overlooked, but in some small apartments or dorm rooms, it's the only way to avoid eviction. Sure, you can get cheap headphones for twenty bucks that will plug into your sound card, but get serious. Higher-quality headphones start at around \$70 and some professional models can cost upwards of \$200. Again because of the signal spike that sound cards put out, don't put headphones on before powering your rig up, and take them off before powering down. Be careful of mixer settings when using headphones, since sound levels can be surprisingly loud from sound cards. A great sound card doesn't do jack for you if you're deaf.

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #073

MANIFESTO OF THE NEW 3D REALITY

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CG Choice Games This Month

DISSOLUTION OF ETERNITY



p. 114

JACK NICKLAUS 4



p. 152

INTERSTATE '76



p. 130

READER QUOTES

MYST:

"In a letter in the reviews section last issue (April '97), a reader asked why you bash Myst so much. Although his sarcastic remark about why you might hate them (sleeping with spouses) may have been inappropriate, your curt, rude answer I found to be equally offensive. Myst may not be my favorite game, but I admire the artwork and beauty of it, and enjoy playing it from time to time. I do not care if you absolutely hate this game. What I would like (as well as many others I believe) is a straight-forward explanation as to why you dislike it so, and why you feel you have to put it down on such a regular basis. Thank you."

—Timothy Kirkland, via the Net

Drat, you've cornered us. The truth is, like any stupid prejudice, we've

COASTER OF THE MONTH



p. 144

hated Myst for so long now we don't remember why we hate it so much. Part of it has to do with the game's unbelievable popularity despite the fact that most people just bought it to show off their computers. Although the 3D-rendered graphics were gorgeous and incredibly sophisticated for 1993, panning and motion were painstakingly slow. But the main reason we bash it is

because the game continues to be a top-seller despite having illogical puzzles, no characters to interact with, and an emphasis on pretty, empty graphics rather than game design. To make matters worse, the designers slept with our spouses. (Just kidding.)

But for those who think we're just a bunch of yahoos, we did nominate Myst for Premier Adventure Game of the Year in issue #119. So put that in your observatory and sit on it.

Review Quote Of the Month

"The design team was able to simulate perfectly the effect of putting a moron in a giant robot." —Greg Fortune, reviewing G-Name

HOW DO WE RATE?

We only review finished products, not pre-release versions. The ratings are as follows:

<p>★ Outstanding:</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>★★ Very Good:</p> <p>A high-quality game that succeeds in many areas. It may have minor problems, but is still worth your money, especially if you're interested in the subject matter or genre.</p>	<p>★★★ Average:</p> <p>A mixed bag. It can be a game that reaches for the stars, but falls short in several ways. It can also be a game that does what it does well, but lacks flair or originality.</p>	<p>★★★★ Weak:</p> <p>A game with serious problems. Usually buggy, seriously lacking in play value, or just a poorly-conceived game design—you should think long and hard before buying it.</p>	<p>★★★★★ Abysmal:</p> <p>The rare game that gets it all wrong. This is reserved for those products so buggy, ill-conceived, or valueless that you wonder why they were ever released in the first place.</p>
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Forking Awful

Think FMV Sucks? A FORK IN THE TALE Will Confirm Your Opinion

by Charles Ardai

Remember the Bill Murray movie *Groundhog Day*? That's the one in which he wakes up one morning to discover that he is trapped in a time loop,

forced to relive the events of a single day over and over again. Even at their best, the events of the day take on a hellish cast because of the inescapable, numbing repetition.

This is what playing AnyRiver's A FORK IN THE TALE is like. At its best, it's reasonably funny; at its worst, the comedy is abysmal. But since the gameplay involves going through the same FMV scenes over and over and over, even the best comedy in the world couldn't stave off a creeping sense that you have been damned to some sort of Sisyphean penance.

Speaking of a hellish cast, your character in this grim little adventure is played (or, rather, voiced, since you never see yourself onscreen) by Rob Schneider, the occasionally funny, but more often annoying, stand-up comic who rocketed to what fame he now has doing the "copy guy" sketch on "Saturday Night Live." Being trapped in a time loop is bad enough. Being trapped in a time loop with Rob Schneider is punishment indeed.



PLEASE, KILL ME If only you could die in A FORK IN THE TALE, the misery would end sooner.



WILL OVERACT FOR FOOD Two more Hollywood rejects, forced to preen for the amusement of desperate gamers.

DUNGEONS, SAND, DRAGGIN'

As the story opens, you are shot and hospitalized. Delirious, you awaken on a strange beach with men on horseback chasing you. If you successfully evade them, you are led through a forest by a beautiful woman who insists that you are in an alternate universe where a generically evil ruler has set about effecting some generically nefarious scheme. Eventually you are captured and have to hunt around a castle and its dungeons for the secrets underlying your odd predicament.

The trouble is the usual one with FMV games: You don't really get to move your character around or decide what he does. Instead, you watch scenes play out and, at certain key junctures, decide which fork the tale should take. Turn left or turn right? Open the door or peep through the keyhole? Respond to a question with a wisecrack or a sincere remark? Icons representing these choices appear superimposed on the video; which scene plays next depends on which icon you select (or which one the computer chooses, if you don't move quickly enough).

If you choose the wrong fork, you don't die, but instead find yourself back at the start of the sequence and are forced to replay it. But after facing down the horsemen on the beach about fifty times

(selecting left, then right, then right, then being kicked back to the beginning because I was supposed to make a different choice), I realized that I'd have preferred death.

THE BEACH? PLEASE GOD, NOT AGAIN!

The comedy is sprinkled throughout the game, with Schneider making arch comments on everything he sees, in

the manner of *Mystery Science Theater 3000*. One-liners are randomly selected and, mostly, thrown away. You hear the jokes out of a corner of your ear, but you don't get to enjoy them because you're racing through action sequences, concentrating on the timing-based interface, and trying desperately not to get thrown back onto the damn beach.

But thrown back you will be, and back, and back once more, until finally the only fork you want to take is a big old barbecue two-time and the tail you want it in belongs to the game's designer. The jokes aren't good enough nor the story interesting enough to hold your interest even through the first rendition of each scene. When asked to sit through a dozen replays of every scene, my only answer is, "Fork off." ☹

APPEAL: People who feel that Rob Schneider was the best thing in *Judge Dredd*; masochists.

PROS: The sets, costumes, and acting, though generic, are serviceable.

CONS: Frenetically paced and poorly scripted; the gameplay is primitive and painfully repetitive.



Price: \$49.95

Minimum System

Requirements: P90, 8MB RAM, 1MB video card, 35MB hard drive space, Windows 95, 2x CD-ROM, mouse; Win 95-compatible sound card.

Multiplayer Support: None.

Designers: Advance Reality Interactive

Publisher: AnyRiver Entertainment

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Reader Service #: 317

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #354



Mediocre Marsupial

This Karmic Cartoon Comedy Is Sometimes More Annoying Than Adventurous

By Dawn Jepsen

While seeking a cure for a terrible stomach ache, Koala Lumpur, a mystical marsupial and cartoon guru in training, accidentally triggers a chain reaction of cosmic proportions.

In order to prevent the now imminent comedy apocalypse, the cartoon universe's supreme being, Ella Mental, tasks Koala with finding the pieces of the Lost Scroll of Cartoon Prophecies.

Koala conjures you up as his spirit guide, Fly. Before embarking into lands unknown, Koala looks up his oldest friend and adventure loving dog, Dr. Dingo 'Tii-Far.' 'Tii-Far' is a gun-toting, fast-talking scientist and inventor with the social graces of, well, a dog. Poor Dingo is really the backbone of the adventure, and he endures being blown up, psychoanalyzed, and sniffed in all of the usual dog places—often while Koala sits comfortably on his glorified flying carpet spouting all the wisdom of a fortune cookie.

LAB ANIMALS

You, as Fly, determine where the group travels. Travel is non-linear, with three different worlds to explore. In the Land of Lost Things, the trio navigates through a maze of pipes ruled by the vexing ventriloquist's dummy, Woody Knot.

In the Eye in the Sky sequence, Koala and Dingo become the newest playmates for the world's smartest girl, Annie Body. Annie subjects the duo to playing dress-up and attending a tea party from Hell. After you help them escape, your emasculated trio must find their way out



KILLER TEA Dingo and Fly must rescue Koala from Annie Body's truly twisted tea party.



WORD TO THE WISE While the humor seems strained, the puzzles, such as this word-association challenge, are nicely done and well integrated with the storyline.

of this psychotic romper room by solving some rather challenging visual puzzles and using quick reflexes to avoid being fried by the tractor beam.

In the Stream of Consciousness, Dingo faces his greatest fear—his ex-girlfriend Tuff Luv. Fly helps Dingo decode Tuff's embittered psychobabble in this boot camp for commitment-phobes.

In an innovative bit of design, Fly acts as your mouse pointer—an easy and effective way to control the game. Koala and Dingo follow Fly's every move (after all, he is their spirit guide). You will need to solve puzzles, play word association, learn a new language, and—unfortunately—get lost in a maze or two. If you get stuck, Broderbund offers hints, and even a full walk-through, on its Web page.

Graphically, KOALA LUMPUR is beautiful. The artists did a great job of animating

and shading the main characters and background screens with a look that gives them a real sense of depth. The end result is a richly textured, unique look that outshines the rest of this rather mediocre game. Sound effects and character voices are also well done.

SAY WHAT?

While the content of the game is certainly original, the bizarre storyline isn't engaging or interconnected enough to make me want to get through the most frustrating puzzles. The dialogue often comes across as more annoying than amusing, and the

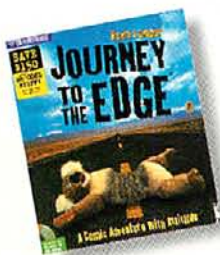
gameplay is sometimes more troublesome than adventurous.

However, there's plenty of challenge and some lovely art here—if you can stomach the moments that try to be much funnier than they really are. **C**

APPEAL: Adventure gamers who don't mind putting up with strained and scatological humor.

PROS: Unusual concepts; challenging puzzles; unique and lovely animation.

CONS: Game premise is weak; humor is novel at first but quickly grows annoying; yet another adventure with an annoying maze.



Price: \$44.95

Minimum System

Requirements:

486/66, Windows 3.1 or 8MB RAM, 4MB disk space, 2X CD-ROM, SVGA graphics; Windows-compatible sound card.

Multiplayer Support:

None.

Designers:

Colossal Pictures

Publisher: Broderbund

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Reader Service #: 318

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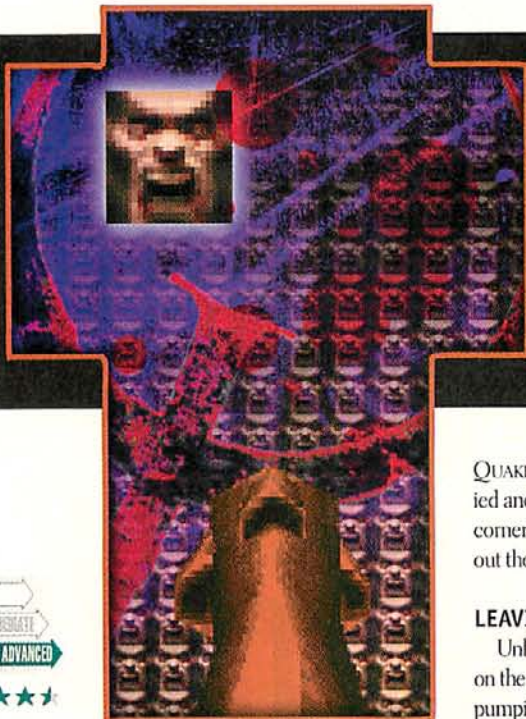
Quake, Rattle, and Roll

These QUAKE Add-on Packs Will Keep You Knee-Deep in Gibs

by Robert Coffey

Have you memorized the location of all the secrets in QUAKE? Crown tired of blasting your buddies' guts out over the same old

DeathMatch maps again and again? Well, my blood-lusting



friends, relief is in sight in the form of a slew of QUAKE add-on packs. But like a convention of Elvis impersonators, it's a mixed bag—for every performer that can capture the raw power of Elvis in his prime, there's another guy living in his parents' basement that's only mastered the King's cholesterol addiction. Let's sort out the pretenders from the contenders.

Scourge of Armagon

It seems QUAKE's pesky evil minions are back, led by the menace Armagon, and it's



up to you to stop them and save Earth. Okay, nothing groundbreaking in the plot department, but Hipnotic Interactive's reluctance to totally overhaul a great game is to be commended. Instead, a little tweaking and tinkering has produced an even more terrifying experience that's certain to gladden the cold heart of any frag-meister.

SCOURGE OF ARMAGON ups the ante on just about every aspect of QUAKE, particularly with its outstanding level design. Maps are huge and packed with menace; action takes place in a variety of environments, from military installations to twisting catacombs. The levels themselves are as hazardous to your health as any shambler—boulders crush you in the mines; walls blow out to kill you; and floors collapse, dumping you into simmering lava pools. Unlike the wall-mounted nailguns that dominate

QUAKE, traps in ARMAGON are more varied and harder to dodge. Lots of blind corners and savage ambush zones round out the lethal nature of the levels.

LEAVING YOUR MARK

Unlike QUAKE, bullets leave their mark on the walls in ARMAGON, but if you're pumping lead into the walls and not the



Price: \$26.95

Minimum System

Requirements: MS-DOS 5.0 or Windows 95, Pentium 75 (must have math coprocessor), 16MB RAM, 40MB hard disk space, VGA and SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM drive, registered version of QUAKE, mouse and joystick, Sound Blaster-compatible sound card.

Multiplayer Support:

Modem (1-2 players), LAN, Internet (1-16 players).

Designer: Hipnotic

Interactive

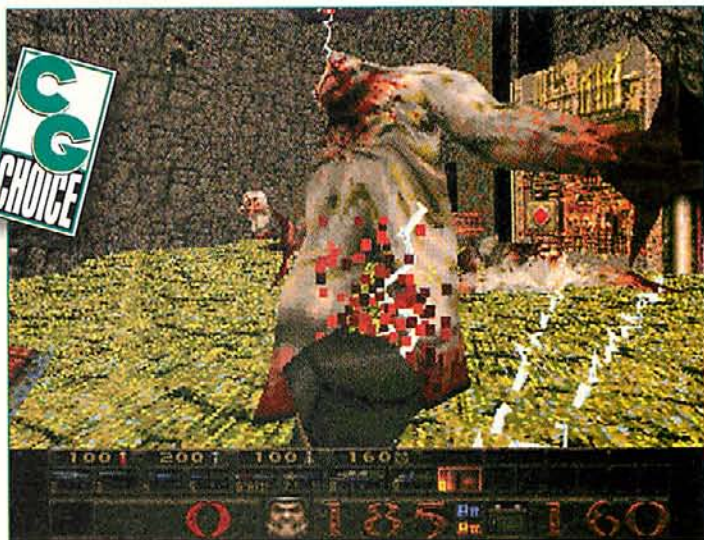
Publisher: id Software

Crawfordsville, IN

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www.idsoftware.com

Reader Service #: 320



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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #120

www.7thlevel.com





THE GANG'S ALL HERE SCOURGE OF ARMAGON is so packed with monsters some areas look more like convention centers than rooms.

monsters, you'll spend a lot of time restoring saved games. There are tons of monsters in ARMAGON, and they're going to kill you. At normal difficulty, most levels are stocked with about eighty to a hundred of the critters and, just for good measure,

they like to come in packs. Grab that key and *whoosh*, five scraggy teleport in to meet you. Most ambushes cut off all escape routes, and rooms boasting a pleasant mix of shamblers, vores, ogres, and grunts aren't uncommon.

Two new monsters add to the chaos: centroids, giant scorpions with twin nailguns instead of claws and a tough AI that dodges your attacks, as well as roving bands of

weapon-thieving gremlins.

New weapons include a fast, high-powered laser cannon and Thor's Mjolnir, a deliciously lethal, lightning-spewing war hammer. Power-ups include a Horn of Conjurung that sum-

mons a random monster to fight by your side and Empathy Shields that make attackers truly feel your pain.

ARMAGON supports GLQUAKE, but unfortunately, it occasionally crashes in Windows 95 (it runs fine in DOS). If there's any other drawback to ARMAGON, it's that some may simply find it too difficult. But if you're up to the challenge, ARMAGON is a savage good time.

APPEAL: Quake veterans looking for frantic, challenging mayhem.

PROS: Top notch level design with environments that provide part of the action; inventive new weapons, power-ups, and monsters; tons of great, bruising action.

CONS: Sporadic instability in Windows 95; some may find it too punishing to be fun.



Shrak for Quake

Billing itself as the "first total conversion of QUAKE," SHRAK is less



an add-on than it is a whole new game. Stocked with entirely new monsters, weapons, and special items, SHRAK is an enjoyable take on id's masterpiece, providing its own brand of carefree, gore-filled bloodletting.

About the only things remaining from QUAKE are the game engine and the double barreled shotgun. Nine new monsters stock SHRAK's 19 levels. They may not be the most fearsome looking bunch, but the fireball-spitting worms, grenade-hurling spiders, electric eyeballs, and one totally lethal bastard called Ruckus Riot provide plenty of challenge to newbies and experts alike.

Fortunately, SHRAK's arsenal is more than up to the task of dealing with these threats. The default weapon, a laser pistol, is slow and fairly ineffective; gamers are better off with the uzi or rocket launcher. Two new weapons exemplify the game's lighthearted take on QUAKE: a foe-to-friend converter that turns monsters into allies, and an inflator dartgun that pumps humanoid up into bobbing



PURPLE MONSTER EATER The foe-to-friend converter not only turns monsters to your side, but renders them an irreverent lilac as well.

balloons that burst like piñatas. A utility belt also comes stocked with flares, explosive plastique, and grappling hooks (which are actually a necessity for completing some levels).

SHRAK's maps are pretty well-designed, if a little routine, with a stronger emphasis on platform jumping than shooting. The biggest knocks against the level design are that there are too many monsters hidden in well-concealed areas and that the levels are frequently too dark. On the plus side, SHRAK does support GLQUAKE, all the better to see those monsters with when they do come out.

SHRAK's idea of fun is significantly less grim than other add-ons. Chipper music plays in the background while you wait for a subway car, monsters progressively show damage before dying, and multiplayer choices include a two-team game of Capture the

Flag and an option for squaring off in teams of grenade-spiders and lightning-spewing scorpions.

APPEAL: Gamers looking for a fresh perspective on QUAKE.

PROS: Fun new weapons and items; tough new monsters; nifty multiplayer options.

CONS: Level design could be stronger; some will see too little action, too much platform jumping.



Price: \$19.95

Minimum System Requirements: MS-DOS 5.0 or Windows 95, Pentium 75 (must have math coprocessor), 16MB RAM, 40MB hard disk space, VGA and SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM drive, registered version of QUAKE, mouse and joystick; Sound Blaster-compatible sound card.

Multiplayer Support: Modem (1-2 players), LAN, Internet (1-16 players).

Designer: Quantum Access

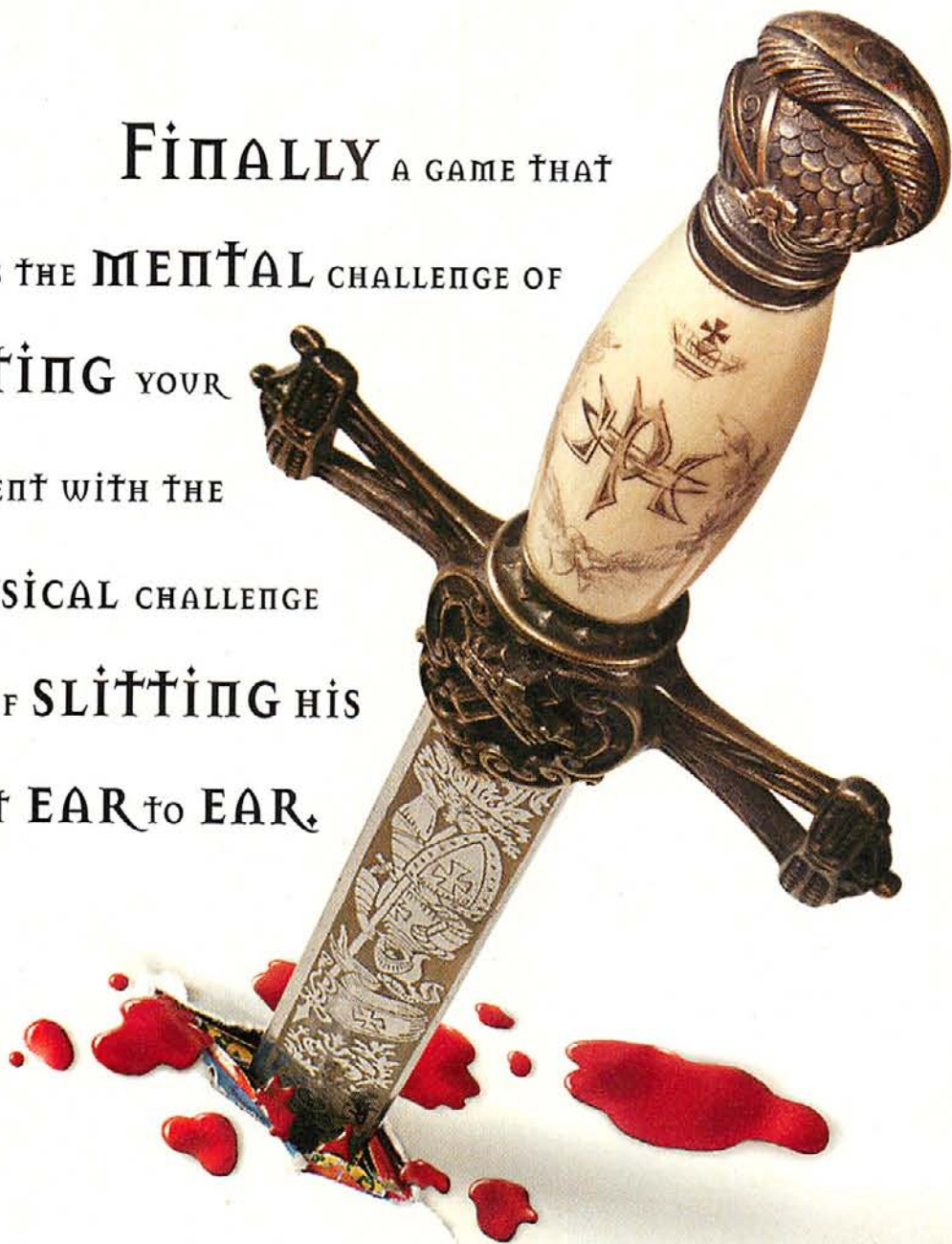
Publisher: Quantum Access

Columbus, OH

Fax: (614) 228-5284
www.shrak.com

Reader Service #: 321

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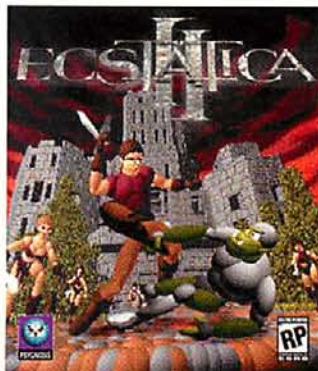


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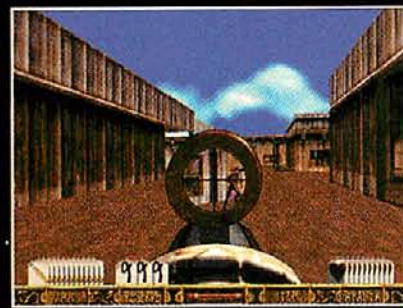


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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #117

www.lucasarts.com



Dissolution of Eternity: Mission Pack #2



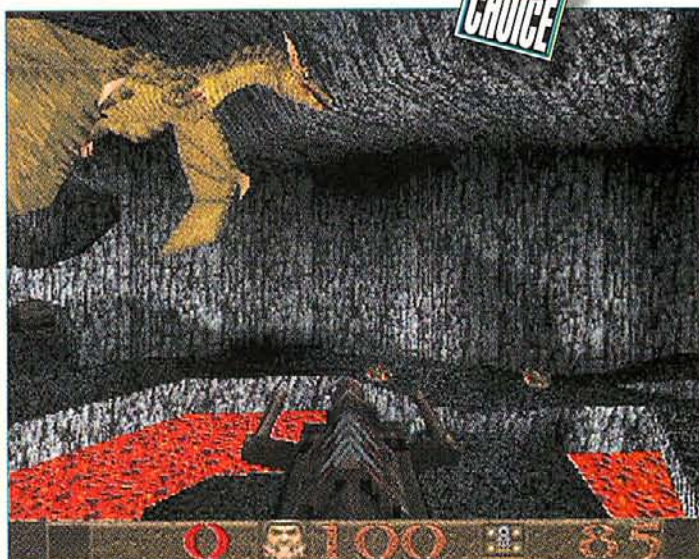
If you plan to pick up only one **QUAKE** add-on, **DISSOLUTION OF ETERNITY** is



the one you should get. With bruising, nonstop action; sprawling levels that are lovingly designed; and a number of gameplay-enhancing additions, DOE is a space marine's dream.

Like **ARMAGON**, DOE's levels are chockfull of menacing creatures, with some maps boasting as many as 133 monsters. However, DOE, for the most part, doesn't bombard you with huge numbers of monsters, opting instead for a relentless, battering assault that will keep you reeling. In addition to **QUAKE**'s usual bestiary, you'll blast animated statues; electric eels; muscle-bound guardians; and a teleporting, multi-armed flying horror called an overlord.

Fortunately, you're well-equipped to deal with these monstrosities. Instead of introducing entirely new weapons, DOE has instead modified many of them. Grenade and rocket launchers can now fire multiple bombs, very useful when facing a cluster of monsters. The thunderbolt can now shoot sizzling plasma balls while nailguns can blast devastating lava nails that hiss angrily into walls. All weapon modifications can be easily toggled on with an additional tap of each weapon's keyboard number. The new powerups come up a little short in com-



PUFF THE DEADLY DRAGON Make it to the final level and this fire-belching dragon will kill you—if the huge lava pools don't.

parison, and are limited to an anti-gravity belt that makes high jumping easier and a power shield that reduces damage.

LEVELS TO DIE FOR

The map design in DOE is outstanding, sporting a degree of graphic detail not present in the original game. Rooms lined with books; brooding temples; and an Egyptian level that has to be seen to be believed create a beautiful, albeit grim, gaming world. As nice as this eye candy is, the intricate layout of the gigantic levels is the real high point.

Challengingly complex without being Byzantine, DOE's levels make the gameworld as much of a threat as the monsters. You'll have to deal with bladed pendulums, bone-grinding buzzsaws, wind tunnels, and other traps as you search for keys and sligates.

Particularly impressive are the earthquake effects that rock everything on the screen—aiming

becomes more difficult and routine jumps are transformed into desperate, true leaps of faith. Live long enough and you'll face the end boss, a seemingly invulnerable dragon that pulverizes you from the air as you try not to fall into the pools of lava carving up the floor.

Multiplayer options include Tag, Capture the Flag, and standard DeathMatch. Capture the Flag can be played with up to *three* teams with a further option for anarchic, single flag play. DeathMatch players will be happy to learn that DOE features random powerup respawn, which eliminates opportunities for those annoying, cheap-fragging "campers."

With a great soundtrack and support for GL **QUAKE**, DOE simply can't be beat. It's hard, it's brutal, it's fiercely unforgiving—it's the kind of violent nightmare you're going to love.

APPEAL: Any **QUAKE** fan worth his weight in shotgun shells.

PROS: Wonderfully designed, incredibly detailed levels; formidable new monsters; lethal new weapon modifications; game environment as menacing as monsters.

CONS: Play may be too hard for some players.



Price: \$26.95

Minimum System

Requirements: MS-DOS

5.0 or Windows 95,

Pentium 75 (must have

math coprocessor), 16MB

RAM, 40MB hard disk

space, VGA and SVGA

graphics, 2x CD-ROM

drive, registered version of

QUAKE, mouse and joy-

stick; Sound Blaster-com-

patible sound card.

Multiplayer Support:

Modem (1-2 players),

LAN, Internet

(1-16 players).

Designer: Rogue

Entertainment

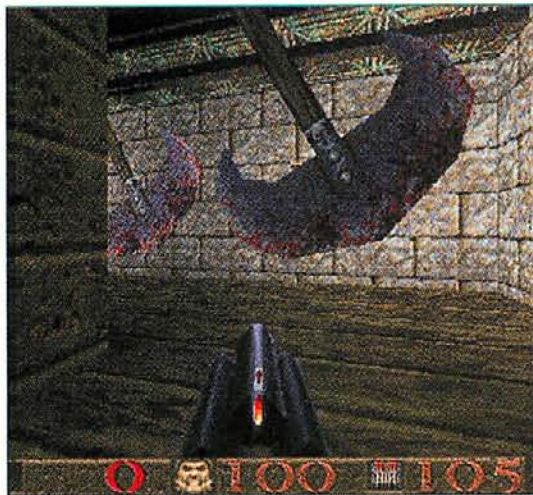
Publisher: id Software

Crawfordsville, IN

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Reader Service #: 322



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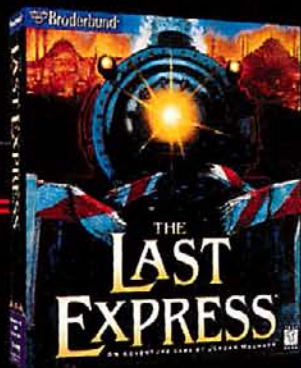
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Qzone for Quake

One look at QZONE's box and you know you're in trouble—



ble—the system requirements claim the game will run on a 486DX/100. But considering that QUAKE won't even run on anything less than a Pentium, this deception betrays a persistent lack of

attention to details, exposing QZONE as nothing more than a naked attempt to cash in on the popularity of QUAKE.

QZONE is a wonderful example of what *not* to do to a game. The sound is distorted and tinny. Clipping problems, such as scrag tails that stick through walls and the ability to shoot monsters through walls, abound. Huge frame rate drops occur with horrific frequency, accompanied by RAM warnings, even on a P150 with 32MB of RAM.

There are four new amateurishly drawn monsters, highlighted by a green, arm-waving, shrieking thing. Just as ridiculous is QZONE's lone new weapon, the "slicer" that shoots icy shurikens. It looks ugly, the game always calls it a "nailgun," and the weak "ping, ping, ping" sound it makes when fired sounds like someone flinging quarters. Scary it isn't.

Level design is the absolute pits. Most of the 35 levels have less than twenty monsters, no secrets, and are linear affairs that don't take advantage of QUAKE's 3D engine. Too many levels are just big rooms where monsters stand around at a distance, ignoring you so you can have a thrilling exercise in sniping. Excessive stocks of weaponry rob the game of challenge. New textures do little to enhance play and, yeah, the DeathMatch levels suck, too.

About all QZONE understands about QUAKE is that its name on the box will help sales. Gamers know better and would do well to avoid QZONE. ☹

Price: \$19.99
Minimum System Requirements: MS-DOS 5.0 or Windows 95, Pentium 75 (must have math coprocessor), 16MB RAM, 40MB hard disk space, VGA and SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM drive, registered version of QUAKE, mouse and joystick; Sound Blaster-compatible sound card.
Multiplayer Support: Modem (1-2 players), LAN, Internet (1-16 players).
Designer: Wizard Works
Publisher: Wizard Works
 Plymouth, MN
 (612) 559-5301
www.wizworks.com
Reader Service #: 323



FISH IN A BARREL The horrendous level design and the tendency for monsters to keep their backs turned to you ruin gameplay.

APPEAL: Collectors of anything with the name QUAKE on it.

PROS: None.

CONS: Levels with little to no gameplay; laughable new monsters; pointless new weapon; a host of nagging oversights and technical problems.



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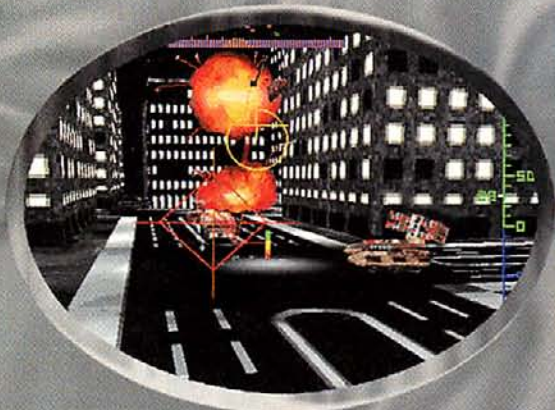
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Gentlemen, Start Your Engines

Sega's Arcade Port, SEGA RALLY, Delivers a Short, but Sweet, Performance

by Mark Clarkson

SEGA RALLY, Sega's second racing port from the arcades, strives to give you that arcade feeling—from the pounding soundtrack to the dirt-kicking off-road tracks. True, silly moments such as the ludicrous lounge singer crooning "Fiiiiinsh!" come along for the ride; but, most importantly, you get the pure and fast action of its arcade cousin, complete with jumps, bumps, and power slides.

YOUR CHARIOT AWAITS

You can choose between two cars: The Toyota Celica and the Lancia Delta. The Delta felt a little easier to control but seemed to be a tad slower than the Celica. Sega allows you to tune a car to your preferences by adjusting handling, tires, and suspension.

Unlike DAYTONA USA, cars take no damage. Plus, there are only two views: first person looking forward, and an outside view from above and behind. You can't look to the side or backwards.

In first-person perspective, the scenery fills the screen, submerging you in the game world. You really get the feeling that you're careening through town at 130 mph. Those who get motion sick playing DOOM and QUAKE might want to steer clear of this game.

There are three courses: desert, forest, and mountain. The desert, with its jumps



KICK IT Sega Rally is pretty faithful to the arcade experience, with fast racing action and real-world physics such as different surface friction when driving on dirt, gravel, or grass. Here, it's smooth sailing on this dirt track.



HERE'S A SECRET Initially, you'll only be able to choose between two cars. However, if you beat the game, you'll be granted this third bonus car: the faster and fancier Lancia Stratos.

and gravel and dirt surfaces, is the most fun. If you actually win the rally (good luck!) you can race at the bonus lakeside course. The rally racing is fast and fun, but SEGA RALLY's neatest feature is the ghost car. As you run practice laps, the computer saves your car's position. The next time you practice on that track, you'll race against a ghost of your car's previous run. Beat your old time and this new best run

becomes the ghost. It's like racing head-to-head against yourself.

FUN BUT FLAWED

SEGA RALLY plays head-to-head across a LAN, TCP/IP, modem, or serial connection, but each player needs his or her own copy of the program. The game also goes head-to-head on a single PC via split-screen.

SEGA RALLY has some fairly nasty clipping; polygon edges and slivers of background color are constantly showing through the foreground graphics. Luckily, the action happens so fast when you're racing that it's annoying but not actively distracting. In replay mode, however, the flaws are downright comical, leaving trees and people floating in mid-air.

The controls are set up for a gamepad or keyboard. Forget about subtle steering corrections or giving it half throttle—it's all or nothing.

But SEGA RALLY's biggest problem is that it's over too damned quickly, and there's not much replay value. After four courses you're done. Game over. The whole thing takes less than five minutes. That may be fine in an arcade, but it just doesn't cut it on the PC. **C**

APPEAL: Fans of arcade racing games looking for a quickie.

PROS: Fast and fun. Ghost car is a feature I'd like to see in all my racing games.

CONS: Clipping, poor support for analog controls, too few tracks.



Price: \$39.95
Minimum System Requirements: P75 (P133 recommended), 16MB RAM, 20MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, 256 SVGA graphics, Windows 95; Sound Blaster-compatible sound card.
Multiplayer Support: Hotseat (1-2 players); Modem, Serial link, LAN, Internet (1-2 players, 1 CD per player).
Designer: AM3
Publisher: Sega Entertainment
 Redwood City, CA
 (888) SEGASALES
 www.sega.com
Reader Service #: 324

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #355



Tedious Survival

by Thierry Nguyen

In most cases, realism is a welcome addition to gameplay, even in action games, as it immerses you further in the experience—whether you're flying over Korea or spending a night at an inn in DAGGERFALL. But there are times when too much realism can get in the way of gameplay. Such is the case with DEUS.

IT'S FRIDAY AGAIN...

DEUS is the sequel to the 1994 game ROBINSON'S REQUIEM. As in that title, you are dropped into a foreign world and forced to play a game of survival. In DEUS, though, you have an added purpose: to hunt down a renegade group called the New Crusaders.

On the plus side, DEUS has nice-looking outdoor terrain and SVGA graphics, as well as large areas to explore and a decent enemy AI (some enemies will re-orient



HUNTING THE HUNTED Deus is a mixed bag that ultimately gets bogged down by excessive realism. Most of the game is focused on hunting down people (like this New Crusaders renegade).

themselves for a better shot and slip away from you). The game's major fault, though, is its realism, especially in how the game models your body condition. Everything is micromanaged, from your body temperature to the hours of sleep you get. The manual lists no less than 22 ways to die, including hyperalgesia, hypothermia, and

high blood pressure. You can play the game in action mode (which takes away all character simulation functions), but then it gets pretty dull.

OVERDOSE OF REALITY

DEUS' excessive realism comes at a price to gameplay. It reaches the point where getting a cut could mean contracting tetanus. If I wanted that much reality, I wouldn't be playing a computer game. **C**

PROS: Decent enemy AI; nice high-resolution graphics; large areas to explore.

CONS: Realism leads to tedium; roaming around gets boring after a while.



Price: \$69.98

Requirements: 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 6.x or Win 95.

Multiplayer Support: None.

Publisher: ReadySoft

Incorporated

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www.readyssoft.com

Reader Service #:325



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**WINDOWS 95
CD-ROM**



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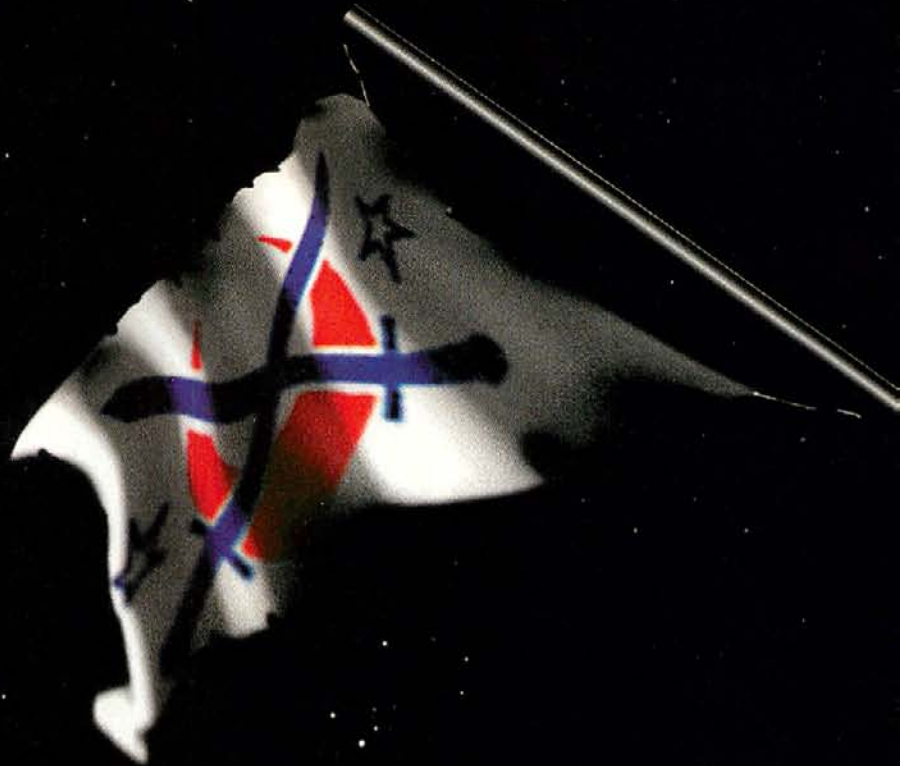
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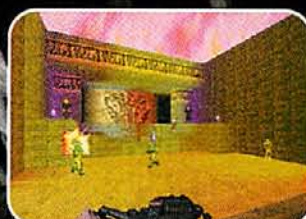
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Super Groovalistic!

Get Down Tonight With INTERSTATE '76, Activision's Kick-ass Auto-combat Game

by Jeff Green

Anyone who says that the '70s were cool probably wasn't there at the time. Being old, I can testify that really, the kids today are a lot better off. For example: Green Day...or Peter Frampton? *The X-Files*...or *Battlestar Galactica*? In-line skating...or roller boogie? I rest my case.

But while the '70s themselves may not have been cool, '70s revisionism is way cool. *The Brady Bunch Movie* is much funnier than the TV show was. Likewise, *INTERSTATE '76*, Activision's '70s-era automobile-combat simulation, is far better than the bad TV cop shows it affectionately parodies. But *INTERSTATE '76* is not just a one-joke game. It's deep, challenging, and monstrously entertaining — and one of the

Production), is a 17-mission adventure set in 1976, when the evil villain Antonio Malochio has assembled a group of "auto mercenaries" in the American Southwest with plans to destroy the largest oil reserve in the U.S. Opposing Malochio is a *Mod Squad*-like group of auto vigilantes who have taken to the road in souped-up, weapon-laden muscle cars. You play the role of Groove Champion, an auto racer who joins forces with the



DO THE HUSTLE In one of the tougher early missions, you have two minutes to hightail it over this windy, mountain road, or Skeeter is a goner.

LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

INTERSTATE '76's automobile physics, while not up to NASCAR's standards, are far more sophisticated than in your standard arcade bang-ups. As you maneuver through the open Southwestern landscape, the changing terrain will seriously affect your control, as will your speed (be careful on those windy mountaintop roads). The game's 3D environment is filled with real objects — cacti, gas stations, abandoned buildings, even cross-traffic — that take and cause damage should you collide with them. The car feels amazingly realistic throughout. The sensation, and even the sound, of hobbling along on a blown tire or spinning out on a sharp turn, is first-rate.

Should you lose a tire or brakes, you'll have to maneuver the car in that condition from that point forward in the mission. Between missions, you'll rendezvous with Skeeter, the vigilantes' repairman, who will offer you salvaged parts from your most recent skirmish.

"This is one of the best games released so far this year. Only a lousy save-game feature knocked it back a half star."

best games released so far this year. Were it not for one glaring problem, this would be a five-star game.

WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS

INTERSTATE '76 was designed by Activision's *MECHWARRIOR 2* team, and the pedigree shows. The designers have ripped the guts out of the *MECH* engine, given it a major graphics overhaul, and used it to fashion a rich single- and multi-player game that should appeal to both action and simulation fans alike.

The single-user game, or "TRIP" (Total Recreational Interactive

vigilantes after learning (in the outstanding opening cut-scene) that Malochio gunned down his sister — another member of the team — in cold blood.

As in *MECHWARRIOR 2*, *INTERSTATE '76*'s missions are varied, challenging, and long. After learning to control your vehicle under the tutelage of the super-suave, poetry-reciting Taurus, you'll face a series of increasingly difficult tasks — such as escort missions, a night-time search-and-destroy raid, and straight-up road races — that will challenge both your driving and combat skills.



Price: \$49.95

Minimum System Requirements: P90, Windows 95, 16MB RAM, 80MB hard drive space, 256-color SVGA graphics, VESA Local Bus or PCI video w/1MB RAM, 4x CD-ROM, Windows 95, mouse, Sound Blaster-compatible sound card; joystick recommended.

Multiplayer Support: Internet or LAN (1-8 players), Modem or serial connection (1-2 players).

Designers: Sean Vesce, Zachary Norman, Dan Stanfill

Publisher: Activision
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Reader Service #: 337

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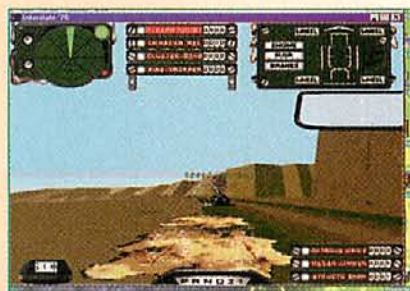
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Let's Get It On

INTERSTATE '76's multiplayer mode is a righteous, well-designed gaming experience in its own right. "Multi-meets" allow up to eight people to battle it out over a LAN or the Internet (via Activision's servers), or two players to go at it via modem or serial connection.

Players choose from 23 car models (from little speed bugs to a school bus); configure the vehicle; and then choose a terrain (mostly variations on the single-player game locales). Not documented, but on the CD nevertheless, is a mission editor for designing your own multiplayer scenarios—another cool touch.

INTERSTATE '76's multiplayer technology surpasses *QUAKE*'s in a few ways. First, the host can drop out at any time without killing the game for everyone else. Second, Activision foresaw the Weasel Factor of just picking the biggest trucks and most powerful missiles, and assigned points to kills. The easier you make it on yourself, the less points you'll get. Finally, through the "instant melee," users can play on the multiplayer



STAYIN' ALIVE Waste your opponents big-time with rear-mounted weapons like the firedropper.

levels by themselves with a configurable number of computer opponents for practice.

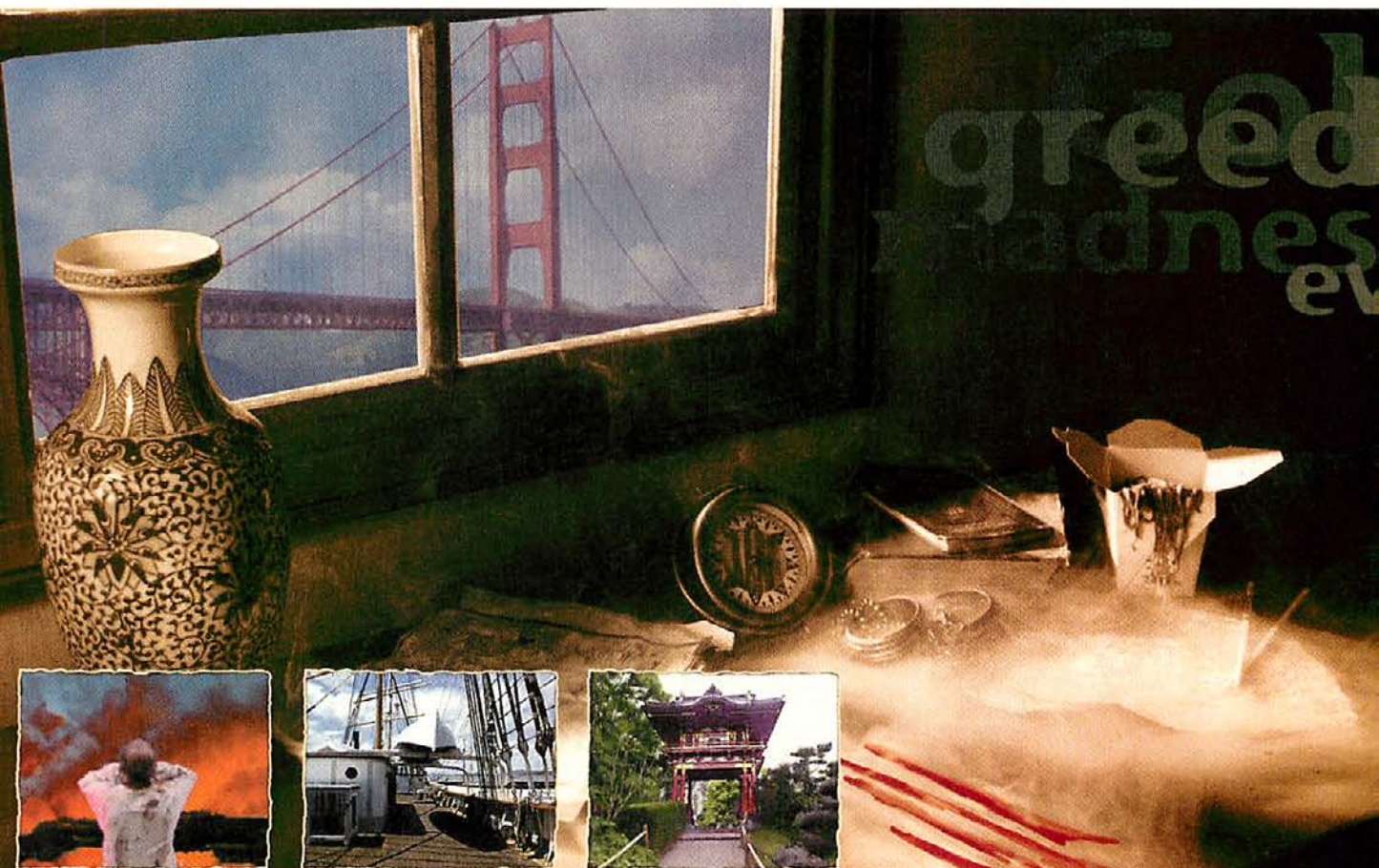
There are signs that the multiplayer game was a bit rushed. In the 1.0 release, gamers were randomly dropped back to Win 95 without warning. However, the game's first patch seemed to fix these crashes.

INTERSTATE '76 now has the dubious distinction of replacing *QUAKE* as that most-played game that gets the *CGW* editors in trouble. What better recommendation is there?

Just about everything in your vehicle is customizable: the engine, suspension, brakes, tires, weapons, armor, and chassis reinforcement. It's up to you to decide how to accessorize and upgrade the car, while keeping in mind the need to be both powerful and quick.

INTERSTATE '76's combat system is also outstanding. Depending on the model, cars are equipped with top, front, side, and rear short- and long-range weapons. Radar missiles cause a lot of damage, but they're useless in bumper-to-bumper dogfights. Turreted guns are particularly deadly up close, as they'll lock on to enemies regardless of which way your vehicle is facing. Again, it's up to you to decide the ideal mix of artillery. Be prepared for some serious fighting. The computer opponents, for once, seem unusually smart and agile—they won't just stand there, à la *QUAKE*, and take your punishment.

Aesthetically, the game is stylish and beautiful. The 3D graphics are a generation above *MECHWARRIOR 2*s, and the forthcoming Direct 3D patch (not available as of this writing) should improve





BOOGIE NIGHTS A few of the missions take place at night, where the loss of headlights can be a real bummer.

things even more. The numerous cut-scenes are brilliantly animated and scripted, and the way they're seamlessly integrated into the game action is a work of art. The voiceover is also uniformly excellent, but special kudos must go to Greg Eagles, the voice of Taurus, who provides a steady stream of laughs throughout the game.

LESS THAN ZERO

INTERSTATE '76 has just one flaw, but it's a doozy: the lack of incremental saves. Some of the missions are very long, multi-part affairs that are divided by cut-scenes, but the only place you

can save is at the end of the entire mission. This means you'll be playing parts of the game that you've already completed over and over and over again, just to get back to the part that you're trying to beat. Adding insult to injury, you can't change the difficulty level to make it easier on yourself, nor

use cheat codes to warp to the next level if you just can't deal anymore. This is an incredibly annoying omission and a serious miscalculation on the part of the game's designers. We don't necessarily need a "save anywhere" feature, but if the game is stopping in mid-mission anyway (for another cut-scene and new directives), why not provide an auto-save right there? I suspect that many gamers are going to get stuck in the middle of a level, get pissed off about having to repeatedly start over from the beginning, and just give up on the game entirely.

But still, at a time when many games can't even do one thing right, INTERSTATE '76 is a rare joy—a game positively overflowing with solid ideas and great gameplay. This is a superlative game in almost every respect, with nearly everything you could hope for in one package: adrenaline-inducing single- and multiplayer action; a solid, original plot that actually affects gameplay; a beautiful 3D environment; and even a great written manual. If you want to experience the '70s the way they should have been, get INTERSTATE '76—and have a nice day. **C**

APPEAL: Combat and simulation fans looking for the Next Great Game.

PROS: Killer story; awesome graphics and gameplay; robust multiplayer action.

CONS: Lack of incremental saves bogs down single-user game. Some buggy multiplayer code.



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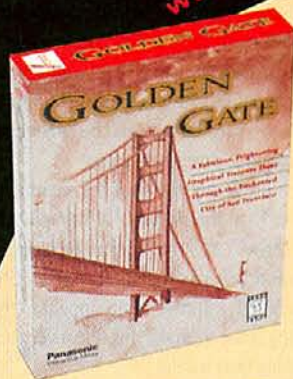
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #115





Abrams Triumphant

M1A2 Is Short on Looks, Long on Realism

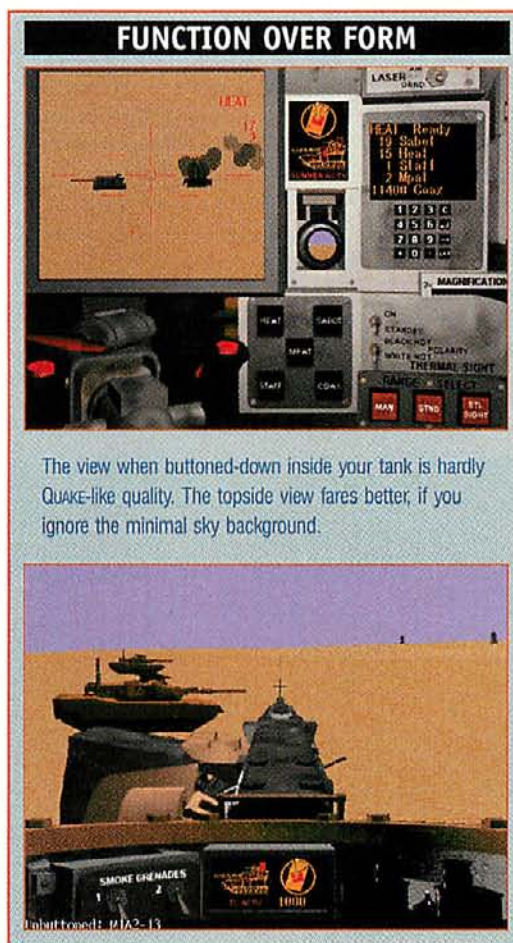
by Jim Cobb

We live in an age of sequels. Some revisions, such as *CIVILIZATION II*, represent significant improvements, while some, such as *X-COM II*, are cosmetic refreshes, and others, such as *STEEL PANTHERS II*, deserve more original titles. MicroProse's benchmark-setting *MI TANK PLATOON* has long needed an update. Yet, MicroProse evidently lost sight of gamers' desires for a straight-forward armor simulation. With the battlefield wide open, so to speak, Arnold Hendrick pounced on the chance to out-do his original *M1TP* design. The resulting product, Interactive Magic's *iMIA2 ABRAMS* is one of those rare cases where the progeny, in many ways, surpasses the parent game.

DOING THE TIME WARP AGAIN

Gamers familiar with *MI TANK PLATOON* will feel very much at home with *iMIA2*. The scalable tactical map is where commands are given (in third person as company commander) to the combat team, platoons and sections, off-board assets, and individual vehicles; all of which operate at real-time speed. If you are willing to give up some control of your other units, you can button down into a specific tank and be either commander, driver, or gunner.

Certainly, the graphics are much better than the old pre-VGA-graphics *MI TANK PLATOON*, but they pale next to more recent simulation engines. Still, enough improvements appear in the interface to make this title a very accessible tank model.



The view when buttoned-down inside your tank is hardly *Quake*-like quality. The topside view fares better, if you ignore the minimal sky background.

field, into a computer which can graphically display the information. Combined with audio and visual messages from other units, the player does not feel torn between handling his vehicle, platoon, or company; he can command all of them through one click. In game terms, art has imitated life.

The old standards are updated; internal and external tank views are functional and even, at times, attractive (although the sky was better rendered in *LINKS* half a decade ago). The magnified view from the Commander's

Cone are the myriad hot-keys which mired the play of *MI TANK PLATOON*. Now, all commands are given from keyboard, mouse, or joystick via on-screen buttons or the auto-hide menu. You can oversee the action from either the tactical map or from the tank commander's position (through the multifunction display, which replicates the actual *MIA2*'s Intra-Vehicular Information System). This recent innovation channels information from all units, ranging from the commander's tank to the entire battle-

Independent Thermal Viewer allows the commander to direct fire to any point on the exquisitely detailed structures and enemy vehicles by keeping the crosshairs steady while you aim. The *MIA2*'s computers will do the rest, regardless of movement.

If damage should disable the electronics or smoke obscure targets from the ranging laser, you can simply go manual and do it the old-fashioned way by selecting range and ammunition (HEAT, sabot, MPAT, or



Price: \$49.95

Minimum

Requirements: P90, 16MB RAM, 256-color VGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM, Win 95.

Multiplayer: LAN (1-8 players), modem (1-2 players).

Designer: Arnold Hendrick, Charybdis Enterprises

Publisher: Interactive Magic Research Triangle Park, NC

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Reader Service #: 330

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Understanding the thermal imaging capabilities of the Abrams is a key to successful gameplay.

As well-made as the Abrams is, it isn't invincible. You can flourish and increase your score with the following tactics:

On attack, hold scouts back until you arrange all forces into avenues of attack.

Air assets are invaluable—albeit vulnerable, especially helicopters. Don't commit them all to one objective, and suppress enemy AA immediately.

Enemy forces can be demoralized, yours can't. Many kills will send the enemy running.

If you get cocky, you can set the enemy quality to Elite. Just be aware that you'll probably be attacked by T-95s. Good luck!

machine-gun) yourself. The driver's mess of gauges have been replaced by graphs representing engine conditions. These positions, and views from them, are accessed from a small window with side and top-down views of the vehicle. Hull-down positions can be ascertained quickly from the external view. Hot-keys are used only to switch tanks and to slave turrets and hulls to particular views. Damage results can range from destruction of the firing mechanism to throwing a tread to "brewing up" a tank.

FORM AND FUNCTION

The tactical map also combines function with style. At the highest scale, 12x12 km, units are seen as silhouettes on a grid that shows ranges (or a topographical map that shows elevation) by color and contour lines, along with the speed the ground will allow. At the lowest scale, 1x1 km, individual vehicles are shown within 50 meters of each other. Commands are given by either clicking on the symbol or clicking on the list near the map. You then pick the desired combat (fire at will, group fire, cease fire), formation (wedge, line, echelon),

and speed (top, fast, slow, halt,) from the menu. These commands are given to vehicles (split from their units by the player), sections, platoons or the entire company. A context sensitive control menu on the screen is where you set paths and tactics for units. Tactics include the head-long (attack), the safer (engage) and the circumspect (defend). Off-board air (A-10s) and artillery (rockets, mortars, or 155 howitzers) assets are also employed from this menu.

This play is handled on three levels of battle. The Quickstart mode teaches mechanics by immediately placing you into a brawl in the Iranian desert, where you either sink or swim in the sea of sand. But the heart of MIA2 becomes apparent with the Single Missions mode. First, you create a persona and then you choose from Iranian, Bosnian, or Ukrainian theaters. A mission appears and your choices begin to multiply. Each mission has a default battle plan, either offensive or defensive, which gives unit specific roles (lead, recon, and the like) used to obtain objectives. You choose from 13 mission types, ranging from rapid advance to withdrawal. You score points according

SIMULATION/SPACE

EXTREME (ik- 'strēm) adj: exceeding the ordinary, average or expected.

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

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #116



SIMULATION/SPACE

SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES Generate smoke only as a last defense. It will hinder your fire as well as the enemy's.

to kill ratios, defending objectives, taking objectives, and so forth.

It's actually possible for both sides to gain a victory by fulfilling different objectives. This reduces the effectiveness of a typical zero-sum strategy, and is a real boost in multi-player games. To maximize your victory chances, especially against well-equipped elite forces, you must carefully tailor the forces that accompany your core platoon from the units (limited by resource points) available for that mission.

By using terrain and qualitative superiority, you can maximize kills, minimize losses, and carry out tasks—despite usually being outnumbered in the unscripted and infinitely replayable battles. The rewards for your success are the usual medals and “atta-boy”s from HQ, but given the lame reward sequences of many games lately, they're still welcome.

THE GRAND SWEEP

With Arnold Hendrick's resumé, it's reasonable to expect a robust campaign. iMIA2 doesn't disappoint: The campaign missions are among the most realistic and dynamic available in any game, much less a tank simulation. The connected battles start with a defensive or offensive posture. If you do well, you come closer to the enemy main base (its capture signals victory). Conversely, a loss will throw your forces back towards their own base and make your posture less aggressive.

A campaign has no set limit, and has a number of possible ebbs and flows. Best of all, you feel as though the out-

come of the campaign really does hinge on your actions. High kill ratios, for example, give your units more experience, while low ones decrease their skill as you move through the campaign. The AI is reasonable, but is handcuffed in that it must employ standard, heavy-handed Soviet doctrine, easily defeated with finesse, but punishing for reckless players. It's a tribute to Interactive Magic that they didn't go through the motions on the AI, as so many companies are doing when a game has modem and network play.

The main limitation for iMIA2 exists in its narrow scope, which fails to encompass the whole of modern ground warfare. Even so, it's an excellent game about armored operations. It is simply rich with data on weapons, vehicles, organization, and tactics. Moreover, iMIA2 actually rewards you for using real tactics on the battlefield. As veteran simmers know, walking the tightrope between realism and accessibility is a real struggle for any sim to conquer. iMIA2 ABRAMS manages to do it with style. **E**

APPEAL: Anyone interested in a realistic tank simulation.

PROS: The real sequel to M1 TANK PLATOON; packed with realism; decent AI; modem/LAN play; nice campaigns.

CONS: Narrow scope and less than state-of-the-art engine and graphics just keep this from the top echelon of sims.



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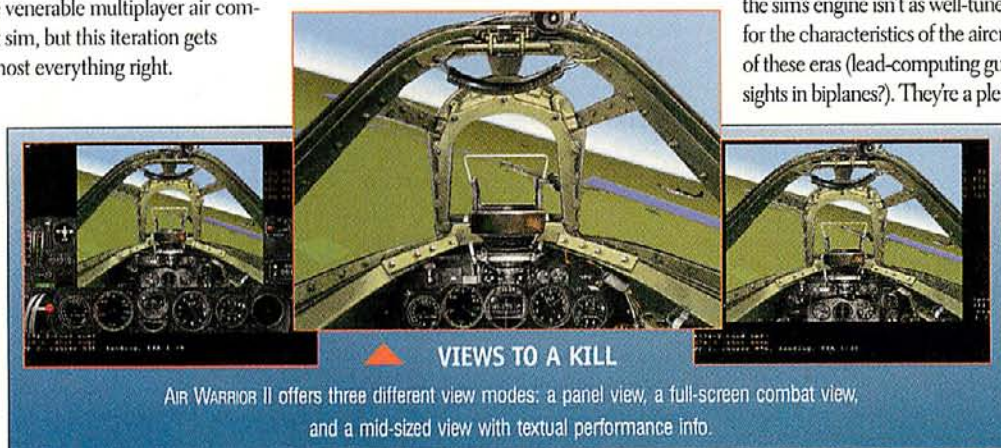
by Denny Atkin

Given the excitement of World War II air combat, it seems amazing that the last new stand-alone WWII sim for the PC was released way back in 1995. The drought has ended, though, with the release of **AIR WARRIOR II**, the new combat simulation from Interactive Magic and Kesmai. This isn't the first stand-alone version of the venerable multiplayer air combat sim, but this iteration gets almost everything right.

The vast majority of these take place in World War II Europe. Here you'll find three campaigns for the Axis forces: a Battle of Britain series on offense, and two defensive campaigns which begin in 1943. On the Allied side, you'll fly Hurricanes defending England during the Battle of Britain, attack strategic targets in Europe flying B-17 Flying Fortresses, and fly with the 8th Air Force's 4th Fighter Group from September, 1942, through April, 1945.

to shoot down Japanese Admiral Yamamoto. Other interesting scenarios include flying with the American Volunteer Group (the Flying Tigers) in China, flying defense against Kamikaze attacks, and flying A-26 Invader tank-busting sorties.

In addition to the European and Pacific WWII missions, AWII also includes World War I and Korean theaters. However, there are only 2-4 missions for each side in these scenarios, and the sim's engine isn't as well-tuned for the characteristics of the aircraft of these eras (lead-computing gunsights in biplanes?). They're a pleas-



RICH HISTORY

AIR WARRIOR began life nearly a decade ago as the first online, multiplayer flight simulation. This new version still has all the elements that convinced many of us to pay up to \$12 an hour to play it on GEnie in the late 1980s, but now it's tailored to solo play as well. Unlike the boxed version of AIR WARRIOR Konami released a few years ago, which was geared mainly towards online play, and had only a few brain-dead drone aircraft to shoot at, AWII is worth picking up even if you don't own a modem.

The most engaging feature of AWII is the inclusion of over 360 solo missions.

Although the campaign is composed of predefined missions, each mission can have random elements, such as exactly where enemy aircraft will appear. Also, the campaigns offer branched mission trees, and your performance will which determine assignments you will receive later in the war.

There are also a variety of single missions in each combat theater. Many of these are set in major battles or during highly-publicized events. For example, you can fly P-40s to protect Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941; pilot Jimmy Doolittle's B-25 on a carrier raid against Tokyo; or fly P-38s in an attempt

ant diversion, but not worth buying the sim for, if that's your primary interest.

THE PLANE TRUTH

AWII includes the largest variety of flyable aircraft of any historical combat sim. There are 45 aircraft in all, 37 of which are WWII types. All the major fighters of the European theater are represented, as well as a good variety of the planes used in the Pacific air war. In addition, you'll find five WWI aircraft, as well as the Korean War F-86 Sabre and MiG-15 Fagot. There are even four ground vehicles, which are really useful only in multiplayer combat.

Price: \$54.95

Minimum System

Requirements:

486DX/100, 16MB RAM, 62MB hard drive space, SCGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM, Windows 95, mouse, sound card; joystick recommended.

Multiplayer Support:

TCP/IP, LAN, or Modem (2 players, 1 CD per player); online service arena play supports over 100 players.

Designer: Kesmai

Publisher:

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Dueling in the Skies

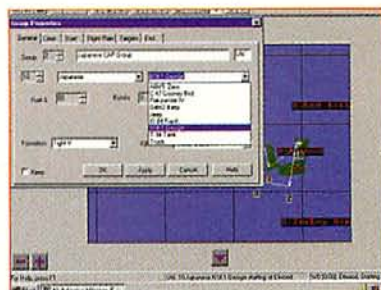
A one-on-one combat mode is new to AIR WARRIOR II. It uses Microsoft's DirectPlay technology, so you can connect over a local network, via modem, or via the Internet—but not using a null-modem cable. Any two vehicles can face each other in a duel, so you can pit a SabreJet against an Me-262, or a tank against a FlakPanzer. This is a simple head-to-head mode, with no mission parameters or cooperative options.

Of course, AWII supports the classic multiplayer arenas as well. The gameplay here is more or less a free-for-all war between three virtual countries, but the real fun comes from joining an online squadron and coordinating attacks with a group. AWII is currently available on CompuServe, Delphi Internet, and Earthlink. (America Online still hosts only the original AIR WARRIOR for Windows. The service is apparently holding back on adding new games while it addresses capacity problems.) See www.kesmai.com for more information.

Give AWII a try against human opponents for the real challenge. While the sim's AI is very good—probably the best seen so far in a WWII sim—it often ignores vital tactics such as boom-and-zoom attacks. Nothing's more challenging than a cunning human opponent.

Authentic cockpit interiors are included for each aircraft type, with canopy frames, seat backs, and other obstructions realistically blocking your view (these can be disabled). With over 12 directional views from within the cockpit, AWII offers terrific situational awareness; unfortunately, there's no pad-lock view.

AWII puts the 3D action in an inset window, with a standard wrap-around instrument panel. Two new display modes can be toggled on the fly, one with a larger action window and textual performance information and another with a full-screen cockpit and working instruments. Unfortunately, only the inset-view mode gives you full access to both instruments and radio messages.



MORE TO COME If 360 missions aren't enough, the included editor lets you create missions (but not campaigns) of your own.

the multiplayer arena. Unfortunately, these important communications can't be seen when you're flying in full-screen cockpit mode.

There are other carryovers from the online world, such as the ground radar screen (which substitutes for the vectors pilots were given by ground controllers) and the icon system for tracking enemy aircraft. While this will make AWII accessible to old-time AW players, it's likely to confuse newcomers.

BUSY SKIES

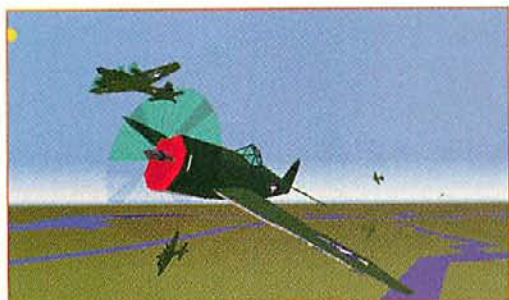
Among the simulation's other features are superb flak effects, including air bursts and turbulence; an instant-action mode; a flight recorder; and fully adjustable graphics detail. AWII includes both thorough online help and a nicely done 140-page manual.

AIR WARRIOR II's online roots make it a bit quirky as a single-player game, but the wealth of immersive, historically inspired missions makes the learning curve well worth climbing.

If you enjoy World War II air combat simulations, you'll definitely find lots to like in AIR WARRIOR II. **C**



Learn more about online play by checking out the CG Guide to AIR WARRIOR at www.computergaming.com.



SIMPLE BUT DEADLY While AWII supports resolutions up to 1024x768, the graphic detail is state-of-the-art 1992.

The flight models, for the most part, are very well done. Performance is right on for the various planes, and quirks such as the Zero's inability to maneuver at high speeds are properly represented. However, the planes are a bit too stable to be really convincing, especially if you've spent much time playing FIGHTER DUEL or WARBIRDS. New fliers will appreciate the three levels of flight model realism, as the accelerated stalls in the full realism mode will frustrate those used to being able to jerk their joysticks around.

GREAT PERSONALITY...

Graphics have seen only incremental improvements in this version. The terrain is tabletop-flat, with occasional polygon mountains popping up here and there. Aircraft exteriors are more detailed than in previous versions of AW, but, for the most part, they don't even match the detail of the old Dynamix ACES series. This graphic simplicity does make for a smooth frame rate, even on the slowest Pentium systems (a frame-rate problem in the Pacific terrain was addressed by a patch within a week of the game's release).

AWII's top-notch sounds do much for keeping you immersed, despite the retro graphics. Your engine makes realistic spin-up sounds, you hear a telltale drone as you approach a bomber formation, and your airframe creaks when pulling heavy G forces.

One area where sound is missing is wingman communication. Instead, AWII displays textual messages onscreen, in an eerie simulation of the chat window you see when you play in

APPEAL: World War II air combat fans looking for a chance to relive hundreds of historical battles.

PROS: Amazing variety of historical missions, good flight modeling, wonderful sound environment, plays smoothly, both online and off-line.

CONS: Low graphic detail, computer AI doesn't always take advantage of the strengths of the plane it's flying, interface can be confusing to newcomers.

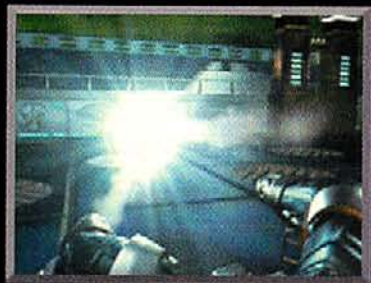


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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #151



More Dove Than HAWC

This Giant Robot Sim Can Barely Stand up Straight

by Greg Fortune

G-NOME, 7th Level's attempt at a giant robot sim, is mostly notable for its single-minded focus on a single new feature—the ability to exit your HAWC (yet another moniker for a giant robot) and steal other vehicles or enter enemy buildings. Unfortunately, little attention was paid to anything else.

mission zone from the start, regardless of blocking terrain or distance, which eliminates the possibility of any surprises. You can't get a range on a target unless you select it and put your crosshairs near it, and there is no way to tell if a target is within a weapon's range. Even when targeted, enemy infantry is harder to kill from your HAWC than on foot.

I was also sorely disappointed in the environment, as it is composed of tex-

turning around or firing a single shot. And this was on the hardest difficulty setting!

Sadly, being independent of your vehicle is the most prominent multi-player feature as well. After the novelty of ejecting someone from their HAWC and stepping on them wears off, you find yourself playing "musical bots." It's a disturbing blend of boredom and annoyance that, if nothing else, should be useful for psychology studies.



STIFF NECK "Relax your grip on that gun, soldier!"
"I can't sir, this rifle seems to be bolted to my rib cage!"

SHINY NEW LEMON

Vehicle independence is a great concept, but it is so poorly implemented here that it detracts from the game rather than enhancing it. There is no defense against enemies "bot-jacking" you, and you'll find yourself getting ejected a lot. Oddly, as a foot soldier, you lack the ability to aim your weapon off-center from your body, so you must act like your neck is in a brace when aiming your rifle.

The HAWC cockpit designs and instrumentation are poorly thought out, leave out vital tactical information, and are not configurable in any way. Your radar is able to see every enemy in the

tured walls that only look like terrain. The only areas your four-story walking Edsel can maneuver are the perfectly flat spaces between the canyon walls—walls which become horribly pixelated as you approach them. This all adds up to a look and feel which utterly ruins the possibility of becoming immersed in the game.

REMEDIAL COMBAT

The design team was able to perfectly simulate the effects of putting a moron in a giant robot. For example, I could walk up behind an enemy (who was busy trying to walk through a wall to get to a place I had been five minutes earlier) and completely destroy its vehicle—without it



GOING PIXEL SWIMMING Here I've stolen a tank and I'm driving across a mass of giant pixels in an effort to capture an equally pixelated guard tower.

This could have been a great game, but apparently nobody cared enough to take it that far. Ejection is cool, but it can't carry the game. What we're left with is a product that mostly feels incomplete and falls short of the first goal of gaming: having fun. **C**

APPEAL: Gamers that have every giant robot game.

PROS: Ejection feature is a good concept.

CONS: Poor game design, interface, and graphics. AI is AWOL.



Price: \$45.00

Minimum System

Requirements:

Pentium 90, 16MB

RAM, 30MB hard drive

space, SVGA graphics,

4x CD-ROM, Windows

95, mouse, sound

card; joystick

recommended.

Multiplayer Support:

Internet, LAN, or

Modem (2-7 players,

1 CD per player).

Designers: Bill Fahle,

Dan Donahue, and

Todd Porter

Publisher: 7th Level

Richardson, TX

(800) 884-8863

www.7thlevel.com

Reader Service #: 331

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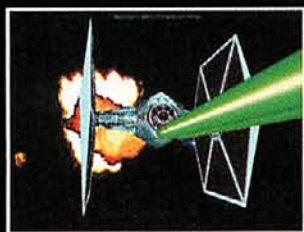
Advanced
Dungeons & Dragons

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(Floyd from Accounting.)

engine is phenomenal. The new missions are masterstrokes of space mayhem. There's even single player campaigns for an all-new explosive experience. No wonder *Computer Gaming World* proclaims **X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter** "number one on every space sim-er's wish list." And if you don't believe them, just ask Floyd. <http://www.lucasarts.com>



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Lose Your Marbles



by Charlotte Panther

If you're fascinated by those machines which, at the flick of a switch, will set a ball rolling to trigger off an entire series of events, you'll be delighted to discover the amazing collection of lifts, pulleys, springs, and gadgets that make up your basic puzzle apparatus in **MARBLE DROP**.

Designed according to imagined instructions left by Leonardo da Vinci, **MARBLE DROP** is a visual treat. The idea is to drop marbles into a mechanical structure, aiming for corresponding color slots, while losing as few balls as possible. You'll gain points for hitting certain gadgets, but lost marbles can cost you dearly in the long run.

MARBLE DROP has fifty levels, (including five bonus games), ranging from relatively simple puzzles to teasers that would have Einstein scratching his head (unfortunately, hints etched onto the



CRAZY PULLEYS Pulleys, flames, and flying marbles might even have caused ol' Leonardo's face to crack a smile.

beautiful backgrounds are frustratingly difficult to read, and appear to be mainly for show). Regular puzzles can be tackled in any order, while bonus levels will only be revealed if you accurately complete the preceding level.

Once you get the hang of the puzzles, you can move through the levels pretty quickly. Unlike some games

where the main objective is to improve upon your high scores, the fun in **MARBLE DROP** comes from solving the puzzle, which could actually limit the replay value. Once I'd completed a level successfully, I felt little desire to go back and do it again. Nonetheless, **MARBLE DROP** is certainly worth a look. And since Maxis is also including **FULL TILT PINBALL** on the CD, you can enjoy two games for the price of one. **E**

APPEAL: Puzzle-lovers with an eye for detail.

PROS: Fifty levels playable in any order; great interface.

CONS: Limited replay value; backgrounds difficult to discern.



Price: \$29.95
Format: Windows CD-ROM.
Multiplayer Support: None.
Publisher: Maxis
 Walnut Creek, CA
 (800) 33-MAXIS
www.maxis.com
Reader Service #: 326



Hands Solo



by Terry Coleman

Somewhat awkwardly positioned between "real" gambling games such as poker (which require thought and nerves of steel) and games of blind luck such as slot machines (which require no skill other than being able to consistently pull a handle), lies video poker. Even given the endless procession of tame casino-type games of the past few years, there have been few attempts to bring video poker to the computer.

So, what a pleasant surprise to find that **POKER CHALLENGE** is essentially a fast-playing, addictive version of video poker for the PC, with a few twists that improve on the old favorite. First, instead of the tame five-card hand you are normally dealt in video poker, you play from a 56-card tableau, reminiscent of some of the



NEED A HAND? Selecting hands in the right order takes puzzle-solving skill and poker savvy.

simpler games found in the classic **SOLITAIRE'S JOURNEY**. Basically, you select adjacent cards to form poker hands like Four of a Kind, Two Pair, Flush, and so forth. As in real poker, scoring a Straight Flush or Royal Flush gives you a huge payoff—this is very important, since you must ante up \$112 for each hand you play.

Poker knowledge is helpful, but not required to play the game. There are plenty of tutorial "puzzles" to train you to find the different poker combinations, plus Jokers that let you get rid of unwanted cards when you need to.

It's challenging enough to keep you coming back for more, and the only real drawback is that, unlike most solitaire games, there isn't enough variety. Even so, it's well worth the \$15 fee for the fully registered version. **E**

APPEAL: Poker and solitaire enthusiasts.

PROS: It's video poker with a plot.

CONS: Clever, but repetitive.



Price: \$15.00 (Registered)
Format: Windows Shareware.
Multiplayer Support: None.
Publisher: John Cutter
http://ourworld.compuServe.com/homepages/john_c/Pokerch1.htm
 CompuServe [74151,1445]
Reader Service #: 327

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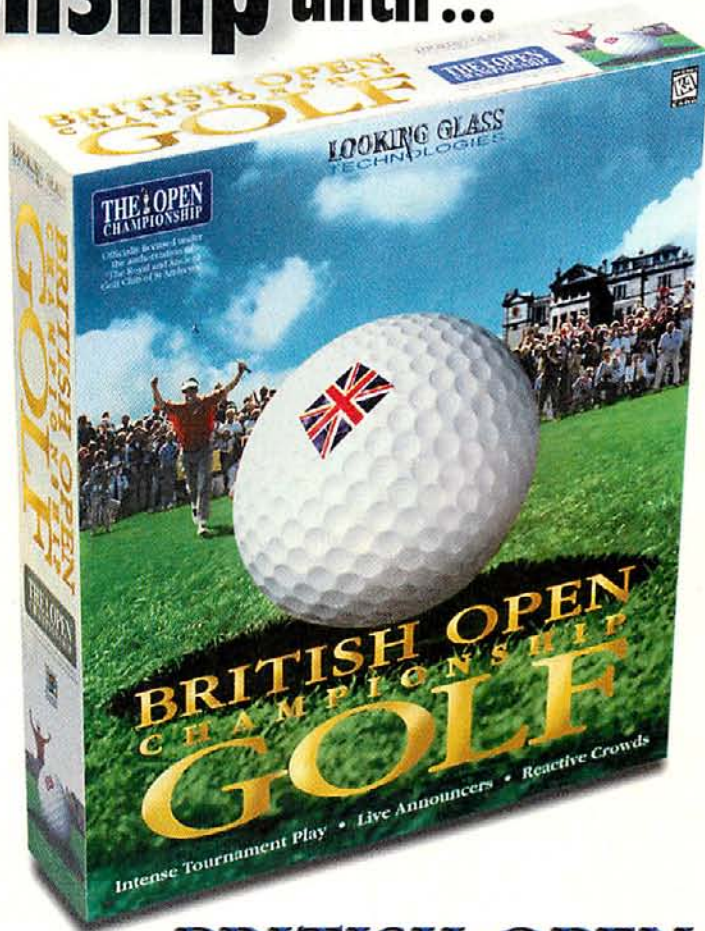
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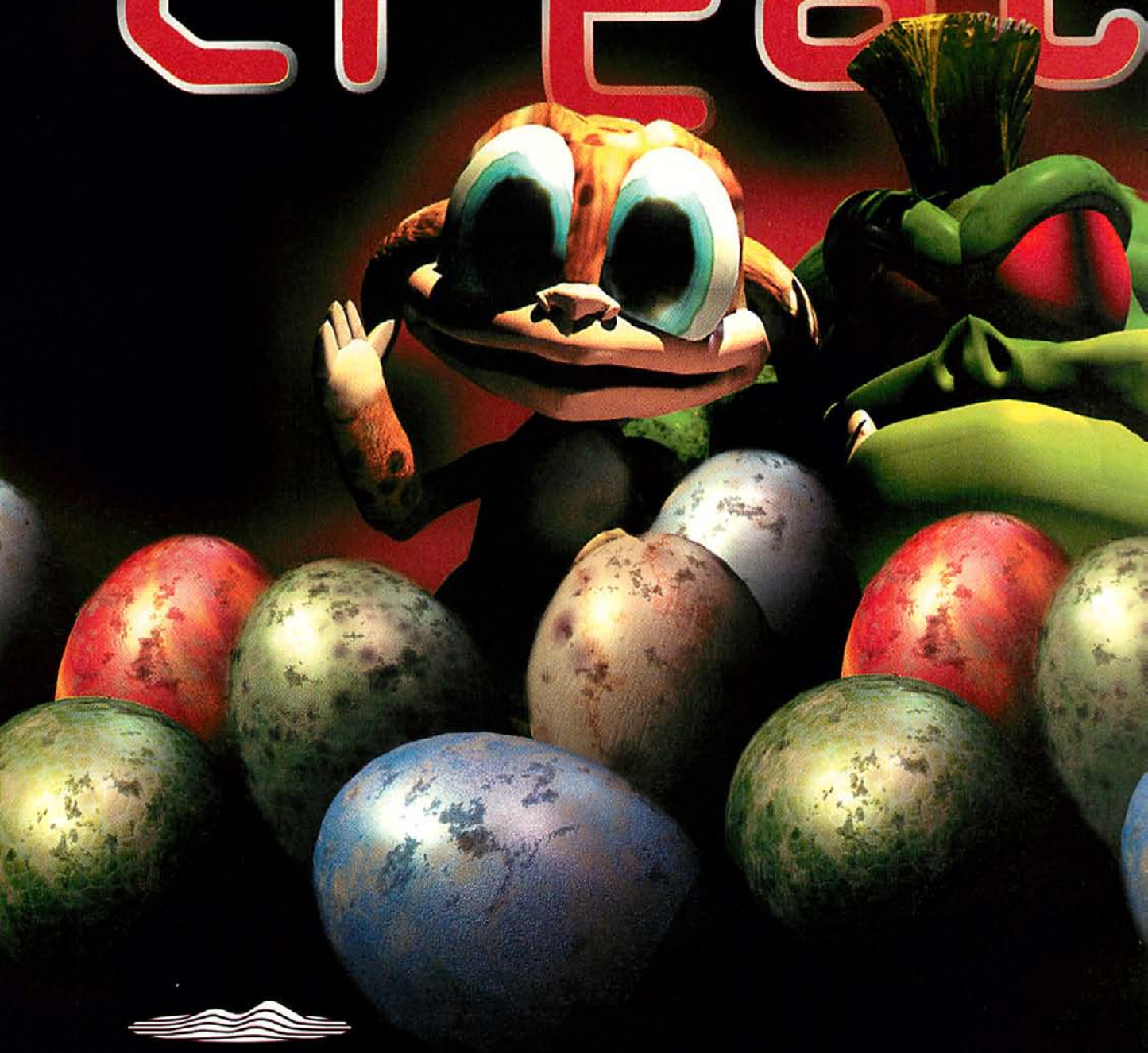
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Richard Dawkins, Oxford University zoologist and author

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Douglas Adams, Author of Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

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Double Eagle

Accolade Drives to Perfection With the Stunning, Deep JACK NICKLAUS 4

By Scott A. May

Dubbed by many as the "golfer of the century," Jack Nicklaus is truly a legend in his own time. So it's only fitting that the latest computer game to bear his name, Accolade's JACK NICKLAUS 4, should be the preeminent golf simulation of our time. Nearly everything you could ever hope for in a golf game is included in this comprehensive package. It's an absolute model of perfection.

PRO SHOP

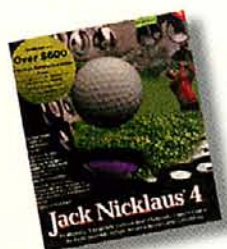
Here's what you get in JN4 (take a deep breath): five 18-hole courses (Colleton

River Plantation, Country Club of the South, Muirfield Village, Cabo del Sol, and the fictional Winding Springs), eight play styles, a full-blown course designer, a course converter (for importing JNSE courses), and a choice of four multiplayer modes (serial, modem, LAN, and Internet). The only thing missing is post-game cocktails at the clubhouse.

Pre-game options include course, game length, golfing buddies (with updated stats), a choice of caddies, gimmies, mulligans, and weather conditions (rain, fog, or clear). Three of these options can be further defined: clearing fog, maximum distance for gimmies, and total number of mulligans allowed per round.

The real kicker is the variety of available game styles, the most of any golf sim on the market. These include Best Score Championship, Best Score Handicap, Stroke Play, Match Play, Sudden Death, \$1 Million Skins Challenge, Bingo Bango Bongo, and Certified Game (recorded Stroke Play for deferred mail or email matchups).

Graphically, JN4 meets or exceeds anything on the market, including Access Software's LINKS L.S. Accolade uses a proprietary height-mapping engine to achieve incredible terrain realism. For the real-world courses, aerial fly-bys enabled the designers to accurately detect land elevations within six



Price: \$49.95
Minimum System Requirements: P90 (P133 required for multiplayer games), Windows 95, 16MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 171MB free hard drive space (typical installation), keyboard or mouse; supports Sound Blaster-compatible sound cards.
Multiplayer Support: Internet (1-8 players, 1 CD per player), LAN (1-8 players, 1 CD per player), modem and serial connection (1-2 players, 1 CD per player).
Designer: Cinematronics
Publisher: Accolade
 San Jose, CA
 (800) 245-7744
www.accolade.com
Reader Service #: 328

Roll Your Own



PACKIN' THE TOOLS Everything you need to design new links—or modify existing ones—is at your disposal in JN4's unsurpassed course architect.

In real life, Jack Nicklaus is in semi-retirement, playing only select senior tournaments. Far from inactive, however, St. Nick devotes much of his energy to course designs. To this end, I can't think of a better testament to his architectural prowess than JACK NICKLAUS 4's superb course designer. Modeled after Nicklaus Productions' own CAD system, the course architect is amazingly robust.

It can also be daunting, particularly for first-time designers eager to duplicate their favorite links. For this

reason, Accolade devotes about two-thirds of the game manual to course design, including tips, tricks, and a step-by-step tutorial. There's also a built-in design wizard, which automates many of the tedious tasks for beginners.

Starting with a flat piece of land, you build your course from the inside out, applying fairway shapes and greens, setting pars and handicaps, and arranging your overall layout with an eye for natural continuity. Next, fine-tune each hole with variations in shape, elevation and terrain type. From there, a plethora of tool palettes are available to customize your basic design: trees, bushes, rocks, bunkers, lakes, streams, cart paths, objects, sky, and horizon. Using CAD-style boundary points, everything on the screen can be moved or resized using simple drag-and-drop mouse commands.

Auto-rendering lets you see in precise detail how your designs will appear during play. Not only that, but every change is instantly updated in the rendering window. Every square foot of your course can be viewed from virtually any distance or angle.

A few faults are readily apparent: There's no option for importing user-created objects or sounds, and no way to automatically tile view windows on the screen. Finally, there's no provision for testing your design as you go, except to save, exit, and load the unfinished course into the game. These detractors aside, however, the course designer is a powerful, versatile tool guaranteed to give this product long legs in the marketplace.



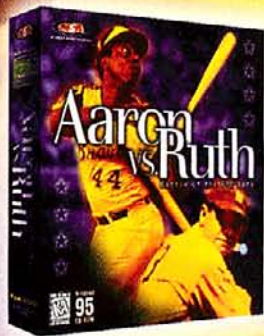
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inches of sea level at 1 x 1 foot intervals. The underlying engine then calculates variables such as light source shading, shadows, and reflections, resulting in the most organic-looking terrain I've ever seen. In fact, look closely and you'll see that the terrain even shades itself—proof positive of the game's subtle but utterly mind-blowing attention to detail.

Because golf is such a fast-paced sport—OK, I'm being sarcastic—JN4's screen redraws are markedly quick. Technically, it's incredible, considering that nearly two-thirds of what you see is 3D-rendered terrain, unlike LINKS LS, which relies much more on a 2D painting horizon to fill the screen. Of course, overall speed is still reliant on hardware factors, such as processor speed, system and video RAM, graphic detail, and screen resolution. JN4 rewards gamers with more than 20MB system RAM, and will run at whatever maximum resolution and color depth your video card supports. Those with less-

than-optimal hardware can decrease graphic detail, and run the game in a window using 16- or 8-bit color.

ON THE GREEN

Gameplay offers maximum control with minimum interference. Each stroke consists of three easy steps: Click once for the onscreen aiming arrow; click again to set; and again to start the swing meter in motion. The designers use an overlaid swing meter with visual "sweet spots" for both power (backswing) and accuracy (contact point). Player stance is automatically calculated in the aiming process, which allows you to manually adjust for distance, trajectory, and swing intensity. The swing meter also reflects whether the shot is a drive, chip, or putt.

The game's physics model is incredibly flexible, automatically adjusts to atmospheric conditions for the flight path, and realistically reacts to objects and terrain upon landing. For example, a ball striking the trunk of a tree will react differently than one hitting the branches. For a dramatic demonstration of the game's physics model, try designing a hole using cart path as the primary surface, then watch as a 100-yard drive bounces clear into the next county.

Although JN4 doesn't utilize DirectDraw for graphics, it employs both DirectPlay for its multiplayer modes, and DirectSound for its rich aural ambiance. The sound is so detailed (about 32MB worth) that the designers are able to assign the correct bird calls to each region.

Other goodies include the ability to best your low score by playing against previously recorded rounds. Adjustable views also let you see the course from any angle, down to one meter above the ball, which is helpful for lining up difficult putts.

HOOK SHOT

Unfettered kudos aside, there's a few dark clouds on JN4's horizon. Talk about system shock: Typical installation requires a whopping 171MB chunk of your hard drive. As if anticipating consumer resistance, Accolade makes absolutely no



SWING TIME Unlike other golf sims, JN4's controls are unobtrusive and easy to learn.



ALL NATURAL, NO FILLER JN4's proprietary height-mapping engine yields unparalleled realism.

Course Conversions and Web Sites

Talk about getting your money's worth! If you're an avid golfer, JACK NICKLAUS 4 may well be the deal of your dreams. Not only do you get five courses and a built-in designer, but you'll also inherit what amounts to an instant library of thousands of custom-designed links. JN4 has the ability to import and convert courses created with its predecessor, JACK NICKLAUS SIGNATURE EDITION.

All you need is a modem and access to the Internet or other major online services, including America Online, Compuserve, and Delphi. There you'll find enough courses to make your putter flutter indefinitely. The conversion process only transfers terrain shapes and elevations, so you'll have to add objects such as trees and bushes. But that's a minor chore and a heck of a lot easier than starting from scratch.

Below is a list of only a few top Web sites offering hundreds of JNSE courses, available as free downloads. Each site was confirmed as active at the time of this writing:

- JNSE Fantasyland
<http://users.aol.com/td4729/jnse.htm>
- The Linkland
<http://quancon.com/~brent.blackburn/jnse.htm>
- The Wild Onion
<http://www.onion.com/jnse.htm>
- Golf Paradise
<http://www.geocities.com/TheTropics/1113/>
- Steve Opfer's JNSE Golf Page
<http://www.infi.net/~opfer/golf.htm>
- Chris Furgerson's JNSE Courses
<http://www2.netquest.com/~reolakes/cfjnse.html>
- Brian Silvermail's Golf Course Designs
<http://members.aol.com/bsilvermail/index.htm>

mention of this fact on the box or in the manual. Also, each 18-hole course you create zaps an additional 10MB or more.

Minor quibbles also include the animated grid overlay used to gauge terrain grades. The grid turns off between shots—an annoying oversight. And “animated”? Slowly draping over the ground isn't a feature worth bragging about.

Still, from play mechanics and graphics rendering to course design and multiplayer capabilities, JACK NICKLAUS 4 is one of the most well-crafted games—of any genre—that I've seen in years. **C**

APPEAL: Computer golfers of all experience levels.

PROS: The best graphics of any golf sim to date; the user interface and course editor are models of perfection; excellent choice of multiplayer modes; free custom courses galore.

CONS: High system requirements; typical installation eats 171MB from your hard drive.





WARNING: Proper attire is recommended during enhanced multimedia adventures.





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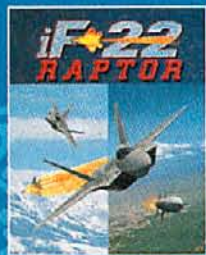
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you gain a minimum of two cards. To build a collection, you can win cards, find them for free, buy them in villages, and earn them as rewards for quests. The ultimate goal is to defeat five powerful wizards (one for each color) and then beat Arzakon, the "Big Foozle."

It's a long, hard fight—with literally hundreds of duels. Decks that were effective against opponents with 6 or 8 lives lose steam against monsters with 22 or more. Your strategy will have to be flexible and make use of the spells and special abilities (called World Magics) that come your way. You can concentrate on a single deck or build several, but to cope with changing conditions and opponents, you'll need to tune and retune your decks. It's the heart and soul of MAGIC.

THE VILLAGE IDIOT

The AI occasionally makes some of the stupidest plays you're ever going to see—like tapping Land for no reason and taking Mana Burn. I expect to see several Web sites devoted to "MAGIC'S Funniest Flubs." The errors are due to

Deck Construction Rules

This is what makes the computer game different from any version of the card game. Until expansions add more cards, there are fewer to choose from than even the most restrictive MTG tournament format. You have 360 cards from the fourth edition, 20 out-of-print "power cards" from the first edition, and



THE MAGIC'S IN THE CARDS Before venturing into dungeons in the adventure game, stock up on life-increasing spells if you know life loss will ensue in the duels.

12 Astral cards invented especially for this game. The game uses up-to-the-minute fifth edition rules and the older card text has been revised to read correctly under these rules.

While game play follows the very latest rules, deck building is a throwback

to the earliest days of MTG. Minimum size is 40 cards and there are no banned or restricted cards; just the original limit of four of any one card in a deck (basic lands excepted). You want to try a deck with four Mind Twists? Go right ahead, and throw in

▶▶Continued on pg 163

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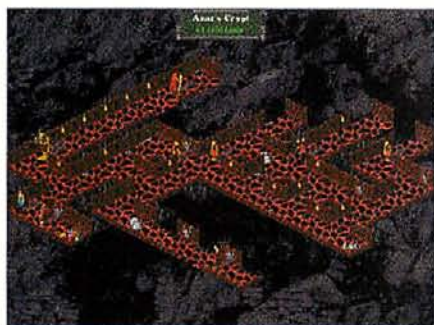
Deck Construction Rules

Continued from pg 161

four Black Lotus and four Mox Jet while you're at it.

Shandalar adds a few more twists. The minimum deck size can be even smaller depending on your level of difficulty; from 40 for wizards down to a mere 25 for apprentices. Remember, smaller decks are more powerful when given the same cards. If you have only one Fireball or one Serra Angel, you will draw it much more often from a 30-card deck than from a 60-card deck. With such small decks, finding a single powerful spell can make a big difference. To avoid degenerate decks, the rule for duplicate cards has changed too. The smallest decks are limited to one copy of

each spell. When your deck gets to 20 cards, you can have two copies; and at 40 cards, three. Only 60-card decks can have the normal 4 copies of a given spell. There is also a world magic called "Tome of Enlightenment" that increases this limit by one at each of the lower levels and removes it for decks over 60 cards. You heard right, no limits! Ever wonder what a deck with 10 Mishra's Factories, 8 Wrath of God, and 7 Swords to Plowshares would be like? It would be awesome, no doubt. And before you head into a dungeon that has cumulative life loss over all duels, be sure you add extra copies of spells that increase your life points—like Stream of Life, Healing Salve, or Drain Life.



DUNGEON HACK This is a dungeon scenario in the Shandalar adventure portion of the game. Treasures can be picked up in these areas, provided you defeat the creatures within.

the way the various cards interact, and the AI is better on a faster computer because the program can look further ahead within the self-imposed time limit. If less than perfect play upsets you, then wait for the patches that will fix the problems—but also realize that the next batch of cards will bring more. Most players will find that the AI has a better deck, and plays well enough to consistently beat them. In Shandalar, where your deck is weaker in the beginning, the errors somehow seem more natural and less objectionable—just another welcome windfall in a hard-fought campaign.

Another very upsetting problem with the game was the tendency to

crash during the Shandalar adventures. This bug is being fixed with a patch, but for now, it is highly disruptive to gameplay.

With a faithful translation of the card game and a challenging, fun adventure element, MicroProse's MAGIC game definitely beats out Acclaim's real-time pre-tender, even without the much-anticipated multiplayer support.

Veteran *Magic* players will enjoy the adventure and the opportunity to play some

very rare cards, while beginners, thanks to the Tutorial, will at last be able to find out why this game is so addictive. **C**

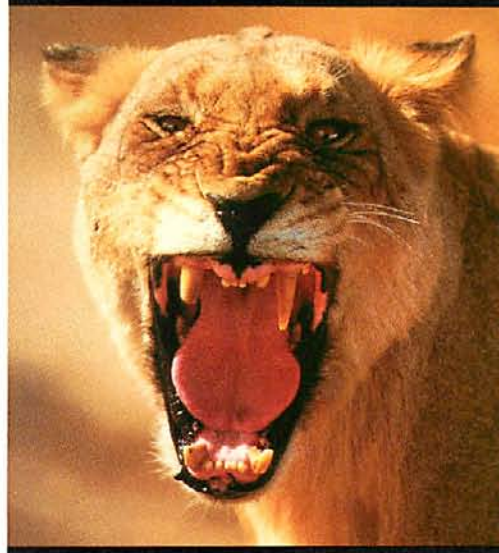
APPEAL: MTG veterans looking for something new and different. Anyone wanting to learn the card game or learn to play better.

PROS: Recreates the game completely; excellent graphics and interface; weeks to months of gameplay.

CONS: No human opponents yet; the AI can be stupid; minor rules-infraction bugs; adventure game prone to crash in later stages.



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Keep It in the Void

In a Genre of Classics, Playmates' Space Strategy Game Isn't Even Worthy of Mention

by Tim Carter

The life of a galactic overlord is hard. And lately, many software designers seem to have conspired to depict your interstellar lot as downright boring.

A case in point is INTO THE VOID, a lightweight entry into a heavyweight genre that just doesn't cut it against the classic games.

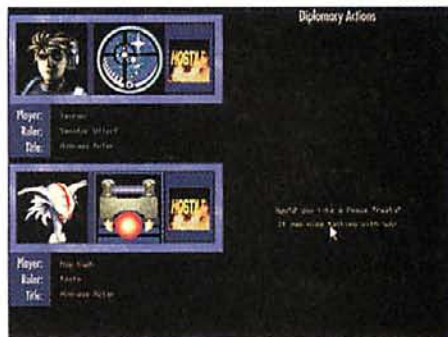
INTO THE VOID is your standard space strategy game, complete with a research tree, colonies to build, ships to design, and planets to conquer and develop. Your empire is divided into the usual categories: food, mining, production, research, ship-building, land-based military, and espionage. You manage each planet's workers by assigning them to the various facilities within each category. Most of your progress is technology driven, as new discoveries allow you to build more impressive ships, facilities, and military equipment.

LET THE DEBACLE BEGIN

There are a number of races, each with its own characteristics, skills, and weaknesses. There is a militaristic race, a fast-growing race, a technologically-focused race, and an espionage-focused race.



CITY LIFE Here is an individual planet management screen...I think. Though Playmates touts an intuitive interface, it isn't. In fact, it's clumsy even when compared to the three-year-old MASTER OF ORION.



WATCH FOR THE KNIFE, PAL Though I'm being friendly rather than sneaky here, INTO THE VOID does have above par espionage options. Of course, this doesn't make up for the rest of the game.

Who thought that this was original? Or, that gamers would want to shell out hard-earned money to buy yet another space game that really offers nothing new? The only interesting feature this game offers is the somewhat more diverse range of espionage options, but they can't compensate for an otherwise dull and extremely repetitive product.

On top of the well-worn subject matter, the interface for ITV is clumsy and involves far too many commands that achieve far too little. Controlling planets and resources isn't intuitive, and some menus, such as ship design, are in strange and unrelated areas of the overall menu.

The manual is also very, very weak; although this is compensated in part by an online tutorial. As a gamer who actually likes to read the manual, though, I can't help but feel ripped off when information crucial to playing the game can't be found in print.

INTO THE VOID runs in DOS, but it functioned relatively well in the DOS window of Windows 95. No matter where I loaded the game, though, I couldn't get the sound to work.

THROW IT BACK INTO THE...

I can't think of any time when this product would have been a success on the market. It was surpassed by MASTER OF ORION three years ago, and may even suffer in comparison to MOO's predecessors. When comparing INTO THE VOID to the current state-of-the-art space games, I can find no reason to recommend buying it. ☹

APPEAL: Only for those who need to have the complete space strategy game collection.

PROS: Some interesting espionage options; my copy didn't irreparably crash my hard drive; I got paid to play it.

CONS: It's been done before. It's been done better.



Price: \$49.95
Minimum System Requirements: 486DX (Pentium recommended), 8MB RAM (16MB recommended), SVGA graphics, 30MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM drive, DOS 5.0.
Multiplayer Support: Modem (1-2 players); LAN, PBEM (1-10 players, 1 CD per player).
Designers: Adrenalin Entertainment
Publisher: Playmates Interactive
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Reader Service #: 333

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Preemptive Cloning

The First Launch in the Real-time Space Race Is Not a Winner

by Martin E. Cirulis

At the time of this writing, MASTER OF ORION II is in the midst of a third, disastrous patch, and most spaceploitation fans are pinning their hopes on Blizzard's STARCRAFT, a game that promises to bring all of WARCRAFT's speed and playability to the sci-fi wargame arena. But while we're all waiting for STARCRAFT, someone else has managed to sneak their own WARCRAFT-in-space clone off to market. GT Interactive may have beaten Blizzard to the punch by a few months with STAR COMMAND REVOLUTION, but considering the quality of the game, I don't think anybody will remember it by the time STARCRAFT ships.

SPACE REEFS?

The biggest problem I have with SCR is that it isn't just *like* WARCRAFT-in-space, it *is* WARCRAFT-in-space. The designers haven't done anything to make this feel like a space game, except to have stars in the background instead of dirt. Call me a little anal retentive, but I have major problems with impassable "terrain" in space. I am not talking about planets or moons, but ridiculous walls of "solid" asteroids, gas, and crystal that force your ships to wind along idiotic paths and face utterly artificial bottlenecks. I can accept the premise of space terrain, but to make it impassable to ships, yet open to a weapon's fire, is just sloppy game design.

The rest of the game is your basic real-time, resource-gathering wargame, with nothing very original to recommend it. There are four different races, but their only distinctions are in equipment and raw material needed to build their vessels.

Research in this game is just parking your mothership next to a research station until you "learn" how to build each race's ships.

The campaign game is a series of battles that take you through a very basic rebellion story. What is different in this game is a somewhat non-linear campaign that lets you go on to the next mission even if you don't finish the current one. Each map is connected to at least one other map by a travel gate, so if you can't find what you need to win one battle, you can go through a gate and try your luck in the next battle. Unfortunately, only your construction ship and your stored resources travel with you. There is no gathering an unstoppable armada in this game.

LOOKS: 1, SUBSTANCE: 0

While there are some cool bits in SCR, most of the game is just too poorly thought out and badly balanced for me to recommend it. I could consider it a quick-'n'-dirty treat if not for the stupid space reefs dragging out the scenarios, and the very European save-game feature, which only allows you to save when you enter a new map. Considering that some battles can take an hour to complete, having to restart from the beginning in the case of an intrusion or screw-up is just unacceptable.

STAR COMMAND REVOLUTION distinguishes itself in only three ways: It looks very pretty, it is bug-free, and it beat STARCRAFT to market. While it does have a nice network/Internet suite, there just isn't enough effort put into the rest of the game for that to matter. ☹



SPACE BOULDERS One ridiculous aspect of the spacewar is these impenetrable rocks. You can't fly over them, instead you have to wind around them in maze-like fashion. Who ever heard of such silliness in space?



MOMMY Here is the mothership, the basic unit for building structures, harvesting resources, and learning technology in STAR COMMAND REVOLUTION.



Price: \$44.95

Minimum System

Requirements: 486/66 (Pentium recommended), 16MB RAM, 50MB hard drive, 2x CD-ROM drive, 2x CD-ROM drive, SVGA graphics, DOS 5.0; supports Sound Blaster-compatible sound cards.

Multiplayer Support:

IPX, TCP/IP

(1-4 players)

Designer: Metropolis

Publisher: GT

Interactive

New York, NY

(212) 726-6500

www.gtinteractive.com

Reader Service #: 334

APPEAL: Only for the real-time fanatics who need that early STARCRAFT fix.

PROS: Nice graphics and multi-player options; some cool ships; non-linear scenarios.


CONS: Idiotic sacrifices of reality to dubious gameplay; uninspired treatment of space-war; lousy save-game system.





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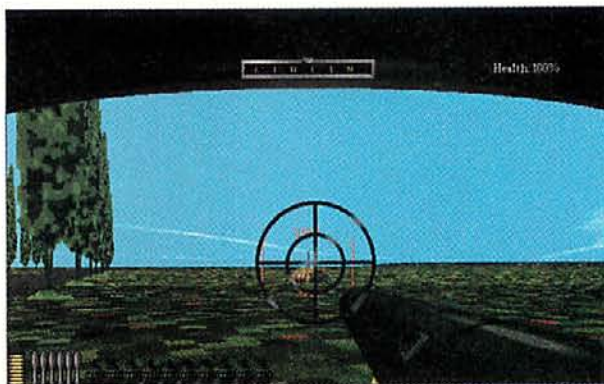
3D Gunsight

MUZZLE VELOCITY Turns Wargaming on Its Tread

Gamers suffer from wanting to be both officers and grunts simultaneously. Most strategy games that attempt to address both aspects fail to properly balance the two points of view. Yet the latest entry in this genre, **MUZZLE VELOCITY**, is so enthusiastic that it largely succeeds despite some flaws.

MV features real-time gameplay, and begins at the combat level on a large strategic map with flags for goals and abstract shapes for other terrain. Smaller, customizable screens that can be seen with a left click provide unit, terrain, and tactical information; as well as a recon map. A detail screen allows the deployment of squads and the creation of mixed-type units. Units represent soldiers, aircraft, and every major vehicle type from jeeps to tanks, along with all major variants. Artillery isn't ignored either, and includes everything from mortars and AT to anti-aircraft and long-range pieces.

You select units and they roll toward objectives containing hidden enemies. The range of orders you can give is limited by which rank you choose. Sergeant mode allows only movement orders, while General mode allows the entire



IN MY SIGHTS Here's the 3D view, complete with handy targeting reticule.

array: you can follow a unit, attack, deploy transported infantry, and choose between four different bombardments

FIRST PERSON DEADLY

When you command a vehicle or soldier from a 3D first-person perspective, MV really comes to life. Keyboard controls make movement and combat simple. A blinking arrow is a guide to nearby enemies, which your soldier can engage with a submachine gun or grenades.

The computer opponent is more skilled and vicious than the typical 3D shooter; fortunately, the AI for your fellow soldiers is good enough that they help you out. The many kinds of trees and buildings serve as both obstacles to be side-stepped and valuable cover. When driving a vehicle, not only can the speed and direction be easily controlled, but the various guns can be fired via a reticule that also shows the range.

Those who assume that the 3D first-person aspect reduces this to arcade will miss out on MV's simulation of combined arms tactics. Vehicle models are very accurate, and armor and weaponry function properly, for the most part. Sherman tanks stand no chance against the front of

a Tiger but, with careful maneuvering a short range side shot may work. Infantry can be squashed under treads if Panzerfausts are not present.

CHINKS IN THE ARMOR

There are some discrepancies however. The unit scale seems too small for the combat area, soldiers move

at the same speed all the time and cannot fall prone, smoke grenades and shells are not modeled, vehicles cannot go hull-down, and field fortifications aren't shown. The winding nature of European cities is missing, and buildings can't be entered or used by snipers. Oddly, the inhabitants seem to go about their business as if their homes weren't being reduced to rubble. Large scenarios tend to be too busy, making the combat/first-person dichotomy tedious. There is no explanation of morale, although units do surrender. Vocal reports on the overall situation can be distracting during a tense first-person encounter. And where is the multi-player support?

Still, nice touches, such as the variable time compression and the visceral nature of the 3D play, will keep gamers coming back to this after they've tired of many other real-time wargames. **C**



Price: \$44.95 + \$4.95 S&H

Minimum System

Requirements: 486DX2/66 (Pentium 90 or better recommended), 12MB RAM, 30MB RAM, SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM, mouse; supports Ensoniq, Sound Blaster 16 and AWE32 sound cards.

Multiplayer Support: None

Designer: Marc Bjorg, Digi4Fun Corp.

Distributor:

ColdFusion

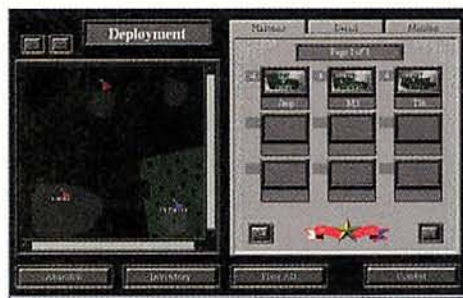
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Reader Service #: 335



HOLE IN ONE The combat strategic map resembles PERFECT GENERAL, or maybe JACK NICKLAUS 2, but it works.

APPEAL: For 3D shooter and real-time strategy fans.

PROS: A neat hybrid of two genres; fast and fun, with better AI than most real-time games; good tutorials; over 140 missions!

CONS: Often too busy, with scale discrepancies; no multi-player support.



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3D or Not 3D?

The Big Three of PC Sports Discuss the New Dimension of Their '97 Lineups

If you're a hard-core gamer, you enjoy life on the cutting edge. From rudder pedals to ISDN, if there's a hot new hardware trend, you're there, and you have the credit card bills to prove it. You'd rather end up as wall pizza in a DOOM DeathMatch than spend life on the wrong side of the tech curve, right? So, with seemingly everyone from Bill Gates to Leisure Suit Larry going gaga over the gaming potential of accelerated 3D graphics, you naturally don't want to be left out. You feel the urge to splurge on a new 3D video card. It's okay, we understand.

The question is, once you've sunk your car payment or your root canal money into that jazzy new 3D board, what are you going to do with it? At press time, it wasn't easy to find software that knew how to make your new toy jump, especially if it's sports games that punch your ticket. The titles that have been available so far have, in fact, displayed distinctly unsportsmanlike conduct. Sure, you've blasted your way through the stunningly enhanced bad guys in *QUAKE GL*, or perhaps you've felt the bottom drop from your stomach as you rolled your A-10 into a bombing run in Sierra's Rendition-capable version of *SILENT THUNDER*. But what you're really longing to do is blindside a halfback in glorious 3D, or jack a hanging slider over the ivy at Wrigley. Perhaps it's a graphically enhanced corner kick in a soccer sim, or a chance to uncork a rising slap

shot in *NHL 97* that fuels your sports fantasy. Don't sweat it. Go ahead and add that 3D card to your system. To steal a phrase from one of the all-time great sports movies, if you buy it, they will come (the 3D sports titles, that is).

To bring you the inside scoop on the future of sports 3D, *CGW* tracked down the movers and shakers at several major sports game publishers. We found that the companies were edging cautiously toward 3D, hindered more than a little by market

fragmented between the S3 and Rendition chip sets. On the pricey side, everyone loved the 3Dfx boards, and the Power VR received high praise as well.

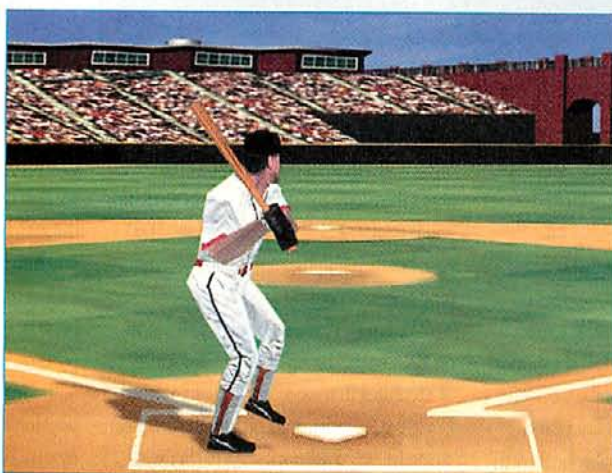
YOU DON'T KNOW JACK

David Grenewetzki, Accolade's executive vice-president for Product Development, has good and bad news about the just-released *JACK NICKLAUS 4* (see review this issue).

"It doesn't offer support for any of the 3D cards," says Grenewetzki. "That was for a couple reasons. One is that we have a really fast rendering engine in JN4 already. Golf is the kind of sport where we might get some benefit, but it's not as noticeable as it might be in other products. Given the schedule and the competitiveness of this market, we decided to just go ahead." The good news for golf fans is that Accolade has JN5 projected to

appear in early 1998 with full 3D support.

While JN4's lack of 3D support was a bit of a sand trap, Accolade expects big things from the upcoming *HARDBALL 6*. In addition to the game's jump to Windows 95, it will finally add Major League Baseball licensing and 3D. HB6 is expected in stores by early summer and supports Microsoft's Direct 3D standard, it also offers hardware support for what Grenewetzki terms "the important cards." While exact 3D card specs are subject to change, the Accolade



PLAYOFF BOUND After coasting last season, Accolade should be back among the heavy hitters this year with the 3D-enhanced and fully-licensed *HARDBALL 6*.

forces and long lead times in game development. Some top sports titles were too far along in production to incorporate substantial 3D acceleration. Others were still on the bubble as to whether 3D hardware support would find its way into the mix this year or next. Still another pressing question involves chip support. With S3 ViRGE, Rendition Verite, 3Dfx Voodoo and others all competing for market share, support is a critical issue in any purchasing decision. Here too, was a lack of industry consensus. Opinions on the low end cards

“Companies are edging cautiously toward 3D, hindered by market forces and long lead times.”

STROKE ME

Sierra's upcoming FPS: GOLF eschews the standard motion-captured golfers for 3D players—but 3D acceleration will only be available via a downloadable patch after the game ships.

**GOLDEN GLOVE**

EA Sports' TRIPLE PLAY 98 will be the last of the company's major sports releases to make the conversion to 3D. The PC version will follow the PlayStation release this summer.



executive mentions Power VR, 3Dfx, and S3 VIRGE as likely candidates. And support is a key issue that's being kicked around at all of the game companies.

After a football vapor-lock last year, Accolade is pinning its gridiron hopes on NFL LEGENDS 98. Grenewetzi can't commit himself on accelerated 3D support for LEGENDS, since much of the work on the game was completed for last year's planned release. "It will probably be a card-specific solution," he says. "My guess is that we'll pick two cards, probably the S3 and one or the other of 3Dfx or Power VR."

FRONT PAGE NEWS

Of course you can't talk sports gaming without calling on Sierra. The publisher of the FRONT PAGE SPORTS games has its own peculiar stake in the hardware side of the 3D market, since it markets the Screamin' 3-D, a Rendition-based accelerator. Scott Fasser, product manager of the Screamin' 3-D, fields questions on his firm's move into 3D gaming. The big news is that FPS: BASKETBALL will debut in 1998, and will feature full 3D support. Sierra's upcoming FPS: GOLF will not ship in accelerated

form, but a downloadable 3D patch will be offered shortly after publication. What about the Sierra mainstays, FPS: FOOTBALL and BASEBALL? Both will appear later this year, but their graphics are still in the planning stages, according to Fasser.

"We haven't talked about acceleration on BASEBALL," he says. "There are some 3D features that we're looking at." With FOOTBALL, "It depends on which direction we go in '98," Fasser says. "Whether we make the big jump into 3D, or polish it up and do some feature-rich stuff."

Fans of TROPHY BASS 2 will be disappointed to learn that no 3D support is upcoming, but Fasser mentions plans for a force feedback system for joysticks, and an add-on for TB2 that will include new lakes and new species. Hey, an upgrade runs through it! Fasser is unequivocal in expressing Sierra's corporate enthusiasm for 3D acceleration.

"We're interested in doing as many accelerated games as possible," he says. "Especially as sports games move toward true 3D. You'll see a lot more sports titles come out accelerated because it helps the frame rate and the look quite a bit."

Not surprisingly, Sierra titles will support the Rendition chip either directly or via Direct 3D. Fasser is yet another member of the 3Dfx fan club, and indicates that Sierra will also support the high-end chip. While the FPS titles have migrated over to native Win 95 mode, Fasser notes that DOS-based games require direct chip support, since they don't access Direct 3D. This is an important consideration for Sierra, whose Papyrus subsidiary still favors DOS for its racing simulations like NASCAR 2.

IT'S IN THE 3D GAME

Ric Neil, one of the producers of MADDEN 97, tells me that EA Sports hopes to support as many chip sets as possible, while at the same time avoiding turning off potential customers who don't have an accelerated 3D board under the hood.

"If you have a 3Dfx or VIRGE chip set you'll get extra eye candy that doesn't really matter for gameplay," says Neil. "Maybe you'll get sideline people or cheerleaders, or a better rendered stadium. But gameplay will still be good on lower-end machines. Until they become a standard, we don't want to be packaged with something that says our product only works if you have this particular card."

Just to show how fluid the whole 3D issue is, Neil indicates that his counterparts on the NHL side of the house may actually release both accelerated and non-accelerated versions of their leading hockey sim. Neil also says that the '98 versions will see all EA Sports titles not only support 3D acceleration, but also move to Win 95-native status. And, just to make it more interesting, Ric whispers that previously arcade-oriented MADDEN 98 would be making a move onto Sierra's turf.

"We're going to start trying to compete with FRONT PAGE for the first time," the producer says. "It will be our first experiment in a strategic sports game. We'll have the action game stronger than ever with upgraded graphics, GrIP support, and four- and eight-button joystick support, but you won't have to use the joystick to play the game." While Neil remains mum on specifics, all signs point to a fascinating year for sports gamers. **E**

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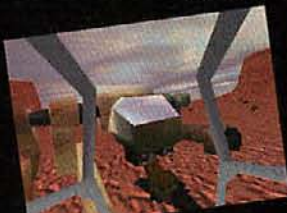
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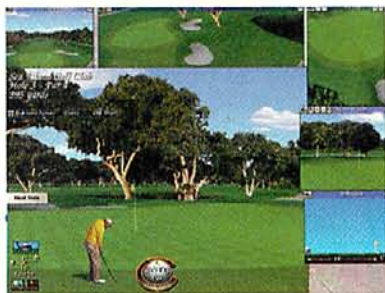


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The Coming Sim Renaissance

Multiplayer Air Combat Won't Be a Niche Hobby Much Longer



Most of the barriers to multiplayer air combat are set to fall over the course of the next year.

Once the major obstacles are out of the way and more gamers get the chance to experience what it's like to fly with—and against—a team of human players, playing against the computer will just be considered practice mode.

LOGGING ON

One of the biggest hassles facing potential online pilots is simply connecting successfully with a game. When playing boxed games online, you often have to deal with esoteric minutia such as determining your IP address, or you're forced to install and figure out a third-party utility such as Kali to add Net support (arena sims such as AIR WARRIOR II



Hawker Hurricane

NO PRESSURE Microsoft's FIGHTER ACE will feature an option to pay by the day or by the month, so you won't have to watch the clock ticking as you play.

and WARBIRDS already make getting online a fairly easy process).

One solution is the "lobby" approach, where a Web page is used to match-make multiple copies of a stand-alone sim. At that point the Web page hands off control to the host player and gets out of the way. Lobbies such as Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone (www.zone.com) will also act as one-click entry points for online sims, such as Microsoft's upcoming FIGHTER ACE. Some games, such as

MicroProse's FALCON 4.0 and Eidos' CONFIRMED KILL, will take advantage of the front-ends of gaming services such as Ten to allow for easy matchmaking and setup. And look for Interactive Magic to use I-Magic

“By the turn of the century, you'll only play off-line to practice for the real challenge.”

Online (formerly ICI, creators of WARBIRDS) as a central point for hosting its boxed sims, such as IF-22 RAPTOR, online.

Many of the sims slated for the latter half of 1997 will give you one-click access to Internet games without need for any outside help. For example, Eidos' FLYING NIGHTMARES 2 (see the preview this issue), works much like the QSPY utility designed for QUAKE.

"It goes onto your TCP/IP link and begins looking for the unique IP address that the FN2 executable generates when you start a game," says producer Bryan Walker. "Every game that's active on the Internet will be shown here. It will color-code those games green, yellow, and red, showing what the average connection time is to the machines on the Net." It doesn't get much easier than that.

Another obstacle for many potential online gamers has been price, with the hourly charge clock's constant ticking in the background putting a big damper on the fun. Like Eidos, many producers of boxed sims are planning free online play for their

ON THE RADAR

Eidos is re-entering the simulations market with an all-encompassing strike force. In addition to FLYING NIGHTMARES 2, the online CONFIRMED KILL, and TEAM APACHE, the company is also working on JSF (JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER), a simulation of the new attack aircraft being developed for the USAF, USN, USMC, and UK Royal Navy. While the other sims in the line-

up are targeted across the range from beginner to expert, JSF is aimed more at the action sim crowd, and should feature play similar to NovaLogic's F-22 LIGHTNING II, but with an even more advanced graphics engine. Oddly, the development team has chosen the McDonnell-Douglas entrant in the JSF competition—the plane that lost out before the prototype phase began.



boxed sims. Microsoft's *FIGHTER ACE* won't charge by the hour, but by the month. While *Engage* is charging by the hour, Ten offers a flat fee, and the advertiser-supported free games available on Mplayer are sure to cause pressure for new pricing models.

GAMEPLAY ISSUES

Lack of structure has been another obstacle to multiplayer simming. Most sims just drop you in a head-to-head free-for-all. The death-match approach is certainly fun for a while, but eventually you begin to crave variety. Certainly, the most fun I've had in *WARBIRDS* and *AIR WARRIOR* wasn't during solo combat runs, but rather those times I got together with another group of pilots to fly a squadron-level attack on an enemy airfield. However, for the most part, it's been up to individual gamers to take the initiative to create scenarios and plan group events.

Look for the upcoming crop of multiplayer sims to give you far more significant goals in the skies besides "blowing up everyone else." Perhaps the most significant of these is *FALCON 4.0*. Designed as a multiplayer game, when you play solo it's actually playing the same game as multiplayer mode, but with the computer flying all the other aircraft. Players can even plan missions together.

Other sims, such as *IF-22 RAPTOR* and *DID'S TIF-22*, will offer Capture the Flag scenarios, where pilots will work as teams to capture enemy airbases. Some games will offer even more elaborate scenarios. *FLYING NIGHTMARES 2*, for instance, offers not only a complete real-time, human-commanded strategic battle, but

also a variety of victory conditions that will allow games of varying length and difficulty. For a short game, you can play King of the Hill, where the team that has the most units in an objective area for the longest time wins. Another option confers victory on the first team to destroy the enemy's headquarters. If you're really in it for the long haul, you can play until the last unit is dead. (If all your aircraft are destroyed, you can still try to defend your base using 20mm AA guns—essentially like trying to shoot down Harriers and Cobras with a *QUAKE* nail gun.)

FN2 also includes units with capabilities tailored to making the multiplayer experience more exciting. The Quick-Fix is an EH-60 electronic warfare helicopter which jams FM and VHF transmissions.



SMART SEARCHING *FLYING NIGHTMARES 2* will automatically search the Internet for other FN2 games, making it easy to find other players to battle.

Placing it near enemy units will prevent the commandant from issuing them updated orders. Expect EH-60s to be primary targets of enemy Harriers.

Next up on the target list will be the F-2C Hawkeye AWACS aircraft. Knock these out and the enemy will have to rely on Harrier radars and unit lines-of-sight to detect your aircraft. And to really customize the environment, the game's creator can choose to make some unit types—such as AA guns or Harriers—rare or unavailable.

THE WEENIE FACTOR

One of the most frustrating problems currently plaguing multiplayer games is

what to do about the weenies who get their kicks ruining games for others. It's annoying in a fantasy game like *DIABLO*; it's infuriating when you're trying to immerse yourself in a combat simulation.

WARBIRDS has a simple solution for taking care of the player who'd try to shoot down his own countrymen—any shots on friendly aircraft damage your own instead. In *AIR WARRIOR 2*, shooting down two friendly planes means no ammo for you for 24 hours.

FLYING NIGHTMARES 2 will be one of the first boxed sims to address the weenie factor. "If you're the commandant and you've got a player who's acting like a moron, you can reprimand the guy," says Walker. "Basically, that guy takes two minutes in the penalty box, and gets a screen of the commander chewing his pilot out." If the pilot's being a total jerk, you can expel the pilot from the game, as long as one other player also votes for the expulsion. Each copy of FN2 will generate a unique ID for itself, so an expelled player won't be able to sneak back in under a new name—the commandant will have to give approval before he's unbarred.

TUNE IN, LOCK ON

Stay tuned for many more improvements in multiplayer sims. For instance, in *WARBIRDS* it's too easy to take off and shoot down the pilot who just shot you down. Look for game design changes to encourage players to try to keep their pilots alive. If a downed pilot is captured in FN2, for instance, the enemy learns where your HQ and airfields are. There's the incentive to rescue him.

The two biggest restrictions are still latency and Internet delays, both of which can result in warping aircraft and untimely disconnects. But, as we speak, there are plenty of new hardware technologies in the works to address these problems. So now is the time to start budgeting for the installation of that second phone line—once you're bitten by the multiplayer sim bug, there's not going to be any going back. ☺

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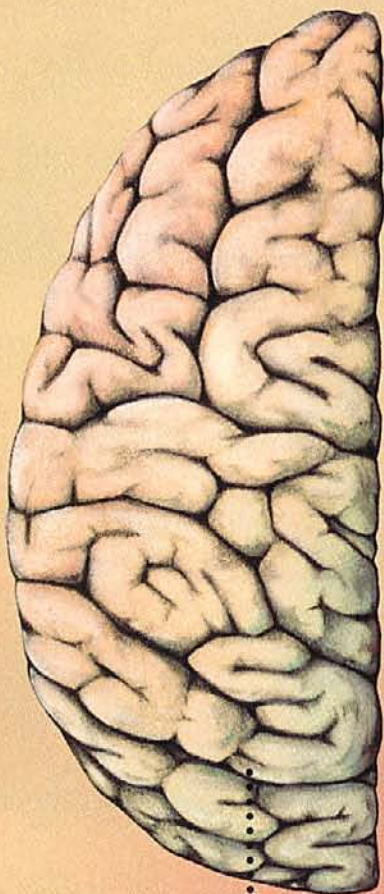
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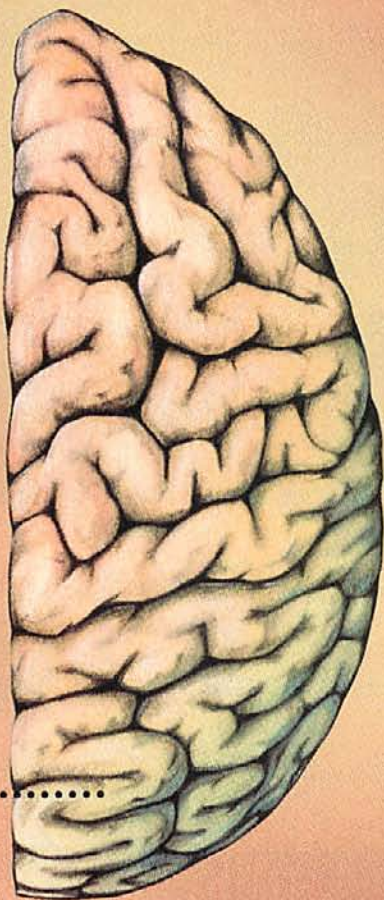
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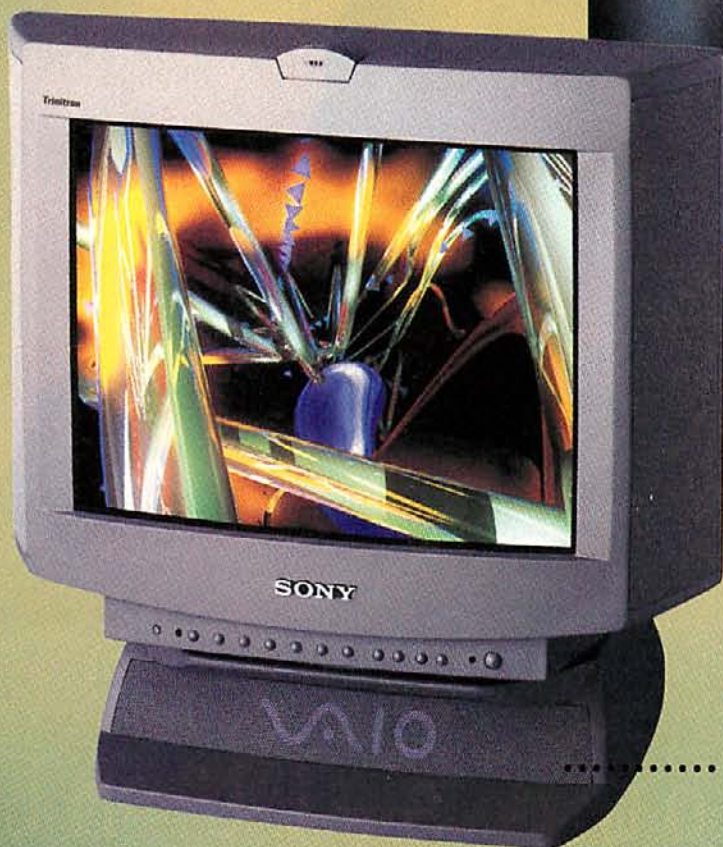
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Extended Action

Updates, Add-ons and Hacks for the Top Action Games

If you've been thumbing through these pages the past couple of months, you have probably noticed that the action column has been MIA. Well, that's about to end. Having soundly and consistently destroyed every other CGW editor in *QUAKE*, I've won the right, as action editor, to start a column that will bring you the latest news and thoughts on the action genre. This month, our cover story is giving you a sneak peek at the new wave of *QUAKE* killers that will take action gaming to a whole new level in the months to come. But what do we do until then?

With the exception of *INTERSTATE '76* and the *QUAKE* MISSION PACKS, the hot games are still going to be *TOMB RAIDER*, *QUAKE*, and *DUKE NUKEM 3D* (we're still playing *QUAKE* every day here at the CGW offices). But odds are that you've already finished the game that came in the box. Fear not though; there is more to these hot games than meets the eye.

QUAKE ON

QUAKE is the king of extensibility. There are dozens of hacks, mods, levels, monsters, and entire new games for *QUAKE* players to experience. The best, most complete rundown on all of them exists at the Slipgate Central Web site at www.slipgatecentral.com. This is the comprehensive *QUAKE* site, the one that id swears by, and the one that American McGee, *QUAKE* level designer, calls the "Yahoo! for *QUAKE*."

The site is well organized and all-inclusive, with listings for every new level, monster, weapon, or other hack ever created for *QUAKE*, as well as detailed infor-



A SECOND DATE *TOMB RAIDER* fans can expect an enhanced version in late June that picks up where TR left off. The pack will feature several new, and more difficult, levels set in Atlantis.



QUESS This is *QUAKE* chess, with *QUAKE* monsters substituting for the regular pieces. There are other games out there as well, including *QUAKE RALLY*, a driving game, and *Q!SOCCER*, a soccer game.

mation on how to actually use the stuff. The site also has a search engine for hunting down specific *QUAKE* hacks. Among the cooler items available are Threewave Capture the Flag, and the Severed pak file (a way of playing *QUAKE* where you can dismember your friends—one extremity at a time. You can sample it at your own peril on this month's CG-ROM).

Aside from the cool hacks, there are also entirely new games to play using the *QUAKE* engine. Take, for instance, *QUAKE RALLY*, a *QUAKE* driving game where you can race around tracks or load weapons onto your cars and start some vehicular DeathMatching. Something more cerebral

is *QUESS*, a chess game with *QUAKE* monsters in place of classic chess pieces. Instructions for how to play these and other games are located at Slipgate Central.

Combine this new *QUAKE* material with the MISSION PACKS (reviewed in the *QUAKE* add-on roundup in this issue), and you should have plenty of gaming to occupy you until the next wave of great action games hits us.

BEYOND TOMB RAIDER

TOMB RAIDER, unfortunately, doesn't have anything in the way of editors or source code for you to tinker with to extend the life of the game. Right now, all you can do is surf the Web for seedy pictures of Lara Croft. However, *TOMB RAIDER* fans can rejoice, because soon we'll be seeing *TOMB RAIDER: UNFINISHED BUSINESS*, an expansion pack with additional levels and maybe some TR2 teasers.

DUKIN' IT OUT

Like *QUAKE*, *DUKE* is still pretty high on the playing lately list. However, it doesn't have nearly as much in the way of new levels and hacks. However, there are diligent *DUKE* fans churning out some good *DUKE*-related material. Check out Adrenalin Vault's *DUKE* page at www.elitegames.com/duke3d/, which is one of the most comprehensive sites for *DUKE*.

So, while you're waiting for the next generation of great action games, you can still go back to your favorites and have a great time, thanks to add-ons for TR and *QUAKE*, and great hacks for *QUAKE* and *DUKE*. Until next month, I'll be playing some *QUESS* and burning rubber in I-76. ☿

“ With the exception of *INTERSTATE '76*, the hot games are still *QUAKE*, *TOMB RAIDER*, and *DUKE NUKEM 3D*. ”



Many of the *QUAKE* and *DUKE* items discussed here can be found online. You can start at our Web site at www.computergaming.com. Also, the Severed pak file in *QUAKE* is featured in our custom *QUAKE* level on the CG-ROM.

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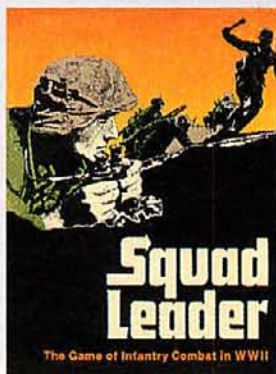
Silicon Leader

COMPUTER SQUAD LEADER Is Finally Marching on



Squad Leader. The very name conjures images of hard-fought battles, where mapboards studied with arcane hexagonal overlays magically transform into French villages, bridges over the Ruhr, or Russian streets reduced to rubble. John Hills' 70s masterpiece emphasized morale, training, and clan in a way that makes games such as CLOSE COMBAT pale by comparison. It was difficult to learn, more so to master; yet the flexibility and depth of the game made it the system for simulating squad-level combat.

Despite its daunting complexity, *Squad Leader* became hugely popular outside the small circle of hard-core wargamers, a tribute to its unique style and focus. Building on this cross-genre popularity (even adventure gamers found the role-playing elements fascinating), allowed *Squad Leader* to sire a number of sequels. These in turn became more abstruse and complex with each new release, to the point where the system threatened to col-



lapse under its own weight. So, led by Bob McNamara (now at Talonsoft), and development guru Don Greenwood, Avalon Hill's in-house staff redesigned *Squad Leader* from the ground up. *Advanced Squad Leader* (ASL) was an immediate success. To date, the series (including the original *Squad Leader*) has sold over one million units, with new add-on modules appearing annually.

ENDLESS LOOP

Squad Leader would seem an obvious choice for a computer game, since even its boardgame unit sales rival those of the SIMCITY or WING COMMANDER series. But when the Avalon Hill computer line was jump-started by Jim Rose four years

ago, tackling a project as huge as ASL seemed too daunting for their initial line of releases. Ironically enough, one of the first designs commissioned was THIRD REICH—a similarly complex project that took three-and-a-half years to release—so, in retrospect, AH may have made the correct decision.

Buoyed by the success of the WORLD AT WAR series, Atomic Games contracted with Avalon Hill in 1994 to develop BEYOND SQUAD LEADER. Atomic's concept was that all of the data in *Squad Leader* could be translated to the computer, with the added tactical considerations of real-time play. While the final product did sport a psychological model, it had little, if anything, to do with that of *Squad Leader*. The morale system over-emphasized the negative aspects of combat without really allowing for the positive aspects, such as heroism in the line of fire.

Of course, everyone knows by now that BEYOND SQUAD LEADER metamorphosed into CLOSE COMBAT and was published by Microsoft, not Avalon Hill. Rather than go into all the legal ramifications and recriminations between the parties involved (which would make a

“ Forget
CLOSE COMBAT—
this is the
real SQUAD
LEADER. ”

BRIEFINGS



BLITZKRIEG (AVALON HILL)

Evidently, when Atomic split from Avalon Hill, AH retained the rights to WORLD AT WAR. The next in the series will be BLITZKRIEG—no relation to the old AH boardgame—developed by the appropriately-named Grogard Simulations. SSI is increasingly moving into the fast and furious real-time strategy genre. Following the success of their own WAR WIND, SSI will be distributing Gametek's DARK COLONY. SSI insists, however, that they will still develop turn-based games as well.

▶▶▶Continued on pg 193

column in and of itself), suffice it to say that by the time it was published, CLOSE COMBAT had about as much to do with *Squad Leader* as the WORLD AT WAR version of STALINGRAD did to the 1964 *Stalingrad* boardgame (at least both of those were turn-based).

Now, cynics will say that Keith Zabaloui, Eric Young, and company at Atomic never intended to do a real *Squad Leader* for the computer, and were simply using the ASL license to further the commercial success of their own design. If so, they had only moderate success. While CLOSE COMBAT did respectably, it fell well short of HARPOON's sales, much less those of a runaway hit such as PANZER GENERAL; and, it came nowhere close to the numbers sold by the *Squad Leader* boardgame series. What we've seen so far of CLOSE COMBAT II addresses a lot of the failings of the first game, and Atomic seems to enjoy working with Microsoft. But there's little question that as the series

continues to develop, it will have less and less to do with *Squad Leader*.

AS THE ASL TURNS

It comes as a breath of fresh air, then, that Avalon Hill is planning once again to convert *Squad Leader* to silicon. With speculation running rampant, we checked in with Charlie Moylan on the unique challenges of designing COMPUTER SQUAD LEADER.

The Squad Leader Series

Squad Leader	A Tactical, Enjoyable Masterwork
Cross of Iron	More Tanks, More Fun
Crescendo of Doom	Impressive, but Often Tedious
G.I.: Anvil of Victory	Over the Top
Advanced Squad Leader	More Realistic Than SL, Still Playable
Yanks	Grunts and Shermans, a Blast
Kampfgruppe Peiper I-II	SS vs. Yanks in Belgium
Beyond Valor	Full Russian & German Orders of Battle
Code of Bushido	Japanese and Jungle Fighting
Croix de Guerre	Fall of France, Plus Vichy French
Gung Ho!	U.S. Marines and Nationalistic Chinese
Hollow Legions	Italians (No Snickering, Please)
The Last Hurrah	Allies vs. Blitz in 1939-40
Partisan!	Very Different From Normal ASL
West of Alamein	Brits in North Africa; Dust Rules
Deluxe ASL	Larger Hexes, More Miniatures Feel
Solitaire ASL	Draw Your Own Conclusions



Moylan understands the challenges of bringing a complex game such as ASL to the computer. His most recent game, OVER THE REICH, is filled with the same clever combat system and realism found in J.D. Webster's original boardgame, but the mechanics are far simpler, thanks to the elegant interface. Moylan believes that ASL can be brought to the computer in similar fashion. The simplest levels of the game would be very accessible, even to a player only familiar with say, PANZER GENERAL. At the most difficult level, all of the complexity and depth found in ASL would be available, but would still be simpler than the boardgame, because the processor can handle the complex calculations.

Moylan is determined to capture the magic of the original, but is quick to add that anyone "who insists on six-sided dice rolling on the computer screen" should stick to their paper shrines. According to Moylan, "A lot of the complexity of the boardgame comes from this detailed tactical simulation being forced to fit into a hex-grid format. Because of this, there are exceptions piled on exceptions. For example, there are nearly two pages of rules on how to move a vehicle between two buildings that coexist in the same hex, and all the line-of-sight and fire-combat-modifier nightmares that result from performing what should be a simple action: moving a

Sitzkrieg

Scenario 10 HITDORF ON THE RHINE



Rules Introduced: Sections 57-59

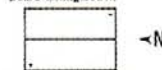
VICTORY CONDITIONS

To win, the American must destroy the German tank force.

TURN RECORD CHART

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	END
American Victory										
German Victory										

Board Configuration



SPECIAL RULES

1. German armor is limited to one tank per hex.

2. American armor is limited to one tank per hex.

3. American armor is limited to one tank per hex.

One of the hundreds of scenarios considered for inclusion in COMPUTER SQUAD LEADER.

There's no way that COMPUTER SQUAD LEADER will appear before 1998, if only because Charlie Moylan must first finish ACHTUNG! SPITFIRE. We've also discovered that he and J.D. Webster are hard at work on a Pacific version of OVER THE REICH, as well. When I ask Moylan how he could possibly work on two projects at once, he replies that, "A lot of ASL will be hard and fast coding, since the design is so complete, with a number of excellent scenarios already in existence. With the Pacific air game, I get to actually design some scenarios, so it will be a breath of fresh air."

>>>Continued from pg. 191



ROAD TO MOSCOW (ARSENAL)

ROAD TO MOSCOW is one of the most ambitious designs ever for a wargame, which might be why it isn't shipping anytime soon. The scale is primarily to blame: the entire WWII conflict in Russia is simulated on a strategic level, all the way down to each *company*! Even when the code is optimized, it's unlikely that even a P200 MMX chip could crunch this vast amount of calculations in any reasonable length of time (and we won't even speculate on how well the AI might perform given these restrictions). While it may disappoint ARSENAL's loyal fans, we believe that president Jim DeGoey is taking the right step in attempting to revamp the product before release. Among the many

solutions being discussed is to convert the game to a more manageable battalion-level scale.

NEW SSG TITLES

SSG is back with a vengeance! In addition to their upcoming WARLORDS III with Broderbund (see the sneak preview this issue), they are also well into designing REACH FOR THE STARS II for Microsoft. But, the big news is that THE LAST BLITZKRIEG will be distributed by SSI as DECISIVE BATTLES OF WWII, planned as the first release in an ongoing series.

SID MEIER OUT OF THE CIV GAME?

If you're wondering why AGENTS OF JUSTICE is delayed, it might not be just because of MASTER OF ORION II. Steve Barcia is being asked to carry the creative torch for a lot of MicroProse's franchises. Scheduled projects for SimTex include MASTER OF MAGIC II and, evidently, CIVILIZATION III. The latter may not have Sid Meier's name above the title, because, according to Sid and his lawyer, "I have my name back," for which Firaxis is undoubtedly grateful. Even Avalon Hill has a sci-fi strategy game in development, TANKWARS 2020, which combines turn-based strategy with arcade-action Virtual Reality.

tank between two buildings. We'll replace a lot of this with more 'real-world' algorithms, and all of these complex computations will be handled by the computer. So it's more realism with less hassle for the gamer."

BUILDING A CARDBOARD BRIDGE

COMPUTER SQUAD LEADER will be turn-based. While Moylan isn't averse to an initiative-based system, as in OVER THE REICH, he wants a different feel than in STEEL PANTHERS. "You want the information in the game to be accurate, but if the flow of play feels too frantic, you are going to lose a lot of gamers. Also, we've had a lot of people asking for email play, which doesn't work well in a phased- or initiative-based system." ASL is a complex game; you can't frantically throw units around as you would in COMMAND AND CONQUER, because your squads aren't cannon fodder. So, the decision to go strictly turn-based makes good sense. And there are those hundreds of thousands of boardgame owners to consider, many of whom assuredly own computers and who will be expecting turn-based play. ...

ASL was one of the first board wargames to offer a good campaign game with *Red Barricades*. The computer game will carry on this tradition, with all of the tedious record-keeping chores (promotions, experience, recruits, wounded soldiers, and so forth) once again handled by the computer. It's unlikely, with the number of top-notch scenarios published by Avalon Hill (with more appearing every few months in AH's magazine *The General*), that COMPUTER SQUAD LEADER will consist of only one product. Rather it would seem to have the potential for a franchise line, with games covering each theater of war, much as the boardgame series does now. This would still mean that each game would have dozens of scenarios and multiple campaigns, all tied to a central theme.

In addition to the strong AI for which Moylan's games are known, the current plan is to support both email and Internet play. Far from being intimidated by such a daunting project, Moylan is enthused about the opportunity to breathe new life into a classic game: "The enduring success of ASL is that

no other game shows quite so well the differences in doctrine, training, and equipment between the various armies of WWII. A Wehrmacht squad is differently equipped than a U.S. or British squad, and each nationality requires that you master different tactics. Our goal is to capture those dynamic differences in a playable fashion." This means a welcome lack of arguments over line-of-sight, or questions concerning the appropriate defense modifier for a tank with open turret in a ravine after a medium rain on a Tuesday when the moon is full.

While it's true that he doesn't see the unit sales that he likely would with a bigger company, Moylan says that he enjoys working with Avalon Hill: "If I were elsewhere, I'd likely be forced into doing real-time games. Avalon Hill allows me to do the type of games I enjoy doing. If big sales come from COMPUTER SQUAD LEADER, fine. If not, I'm still making a living doing what I want to do, and how many people can say that?"

Those of us who enjoy playing Moylan's games hope that he continues to follow his turn-based muse as far as it will take him. ☞

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STRATEGY & TIPS

Flying Corps

*Tired of Yelling "Curse You, Red Baron!"?
Here's How to Shoot the Bugger Down*

by Robin G. Kim

The relentless pace of the aerial battles fought during the Great War exacted a terrible toll on both sides. Yet, despite horrendous casualty rates (the life expectancy of an RFC pilot in the "Bloody April" of 1917 was less than two weeks), the best flyers not only survived, but they racked up many kills in the process. The styles these top aces used to achieve their success varied considerably, but generally boiled down to excellence in some combination of marksmanship, situational awareness, and raw flying ability—all leveraged by a solid understanding of tactics. To conquer the diverse challenges *FLYING CORPS* presents, you too must master all these skills. Fortunately, basic survival requires a working knowledge of just two of them: situational awareness and tactics.

The High Ground

Among today's fighter pilots, there is a commonly held axiom that "speed is life." While this idea was still applicable to the early days of air combat, in that time period it was superseded by an even more fundamental principal: "Altitude is everything." WWI planes climbed slowly and lacked the speed to rise any great distance in a zoom. As a result, a position even 800 feet above an opponent could render you virtually

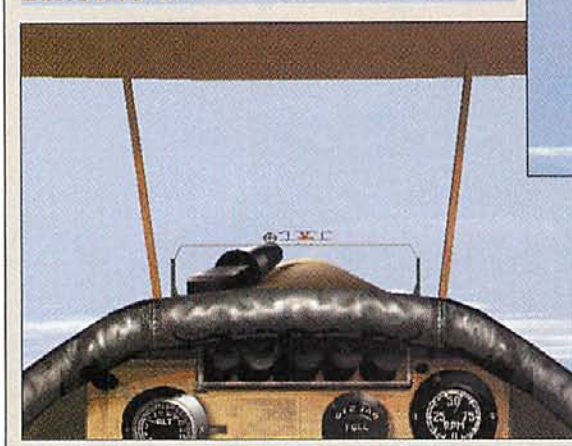
immune from attack, and could grant you the freedom to engage on your own terms—as well as give you the advantage of surprise.

To maximize your chances of success in a dogfight, always strive to secure a significant height advantage before approaching any enemy formation that may contain scouts (single-seat fighters). Obviously, you must keep a sharp eye out (or use the padlock views) to spot them from as far away as possible. Climb at right angles to the bogies, or 135 degrees away if they are higher up, to buy yourself enough time and space to seize the higher position. This is most important if you are leading a flight. With altitude on their side, your

wingmen are deadly killers, but they will fall from the sky like rain if you allow the enemy to bounce them from above. Keep your distance until you are ready to attack; once your wingmen decide that they are close enough to break formation and engage, you will lose all control over them.

Avoid hostile flights detected at much higher altitudes, though this can be unfeasible if the enemy pursues. One tactic that may get you out of trouble, if the enemy has not yet committed to the attack, is simply to dive away. Bogies are often loath to blow their altitude by diving down to your level. Even when they do try it, AI pilots frequently rip their planes apart due to excessive speed.

ZEROING IN



The SE5a's tracer pattern makes it difficult to see your aim point. Toggling to and from the full-screen view's crosshairs will give you a better feel for the correct lineup.

When you do finally decide to mix it up, always go after the high bandits first—conserve your altitude religiously! It's easy to dive after the rest once you've downed the first target. It's much tougher when you find yourself thousands of feet below the fight and facing the prospect of a five-minute climb back up to where the action is. Use high speed hit-and-run passes for your first few attacks to milk any initial energy advantage for all it is worth, especially when your opponents are flying more maneuverable planes. Avoid steep dives, however, since the rapid acceleration makes control and accurate aiming difficult.

At times, you will probably be forced to fight on even terms, or at a slight disadvantage. These scenarios usually begin with a dangerous head-on pass. The danger comes from both the risk of collision—computer pilots just love to play chicken—and the AI's aptitude for making such zero-deflection shots count. Evade enemy fire by diving a bit and jinking just before you come into range. Though this will save you from taking damage, expect immediate casualties on both sides as your wingmen and the enemy blast each other to bits on the first pass. This gives you all the more reason to work for the upper hand before engaging—when circumstances permit.

The End Game

Eventually, most encounters degenerate into relatively low-speed turning battles, so it is necessary to know how to handle yourself in one. Turn continuously in a furlball to present an elusive target for any bandits trying to line up on you. Constant maneuvering actually makes spotting them easier because of the way a turn tends to move pursuing aircraft out of your blind spot directly astern. However, that will do you no good if you neglect to look back there periodically. Shoot enemies off the tails of your wingmen when you can, but don't



STRAFING RUN A slow, shallow dive will maximize the time available for you to line up and hose down your ground targets.

The Planes! The Planes!

Each of the six aircraft you can fly has a different character. Knowing how the strengths and weaknesses of your plane compare to the enemy's can make all the difference in a dogfight, and it's important for squadron commanders to pick the right plane when given a choice.

Thanks to their rotary engines, the Nieuport, Camel, and Fokker Dri are easily the most maneuverable planes—at least when turning towards the right. This nimbleness comes at the expense of stability, however, making them tricky to fly, especially at low speeds. These planes, while most at home in tight turning fights, must be handled with great care.

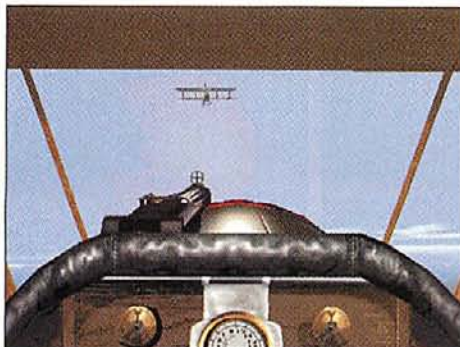
Both the Nieuport and Fokker share the dubious distinction of being the poorest divers of the bunch, shedding their wings at just over 160 mph. Although the Fokker has an outstanding rate of turn, it's balanced by the Nieuport's relatively high speed. The



THE NEED FOR SPEED The Spad XIII and SE5a both excel at hit and run tactics. Their unsurpassed dive speeds of almost 300 mph mean escape is always an option as long as you have altitude to play with.

Camel falls between the two, but is unique in that it will hang together even in a prolonged vertical power dive.

The stationary-engine Spad, Albatros, and SE5a don't come close to the agility of the rotary-engined planes, but their predictable handling make them excellent gun platforms. They are the planes of choice for ground attack sorties and, except for the Albatros, they're fast enough to maintain the initiative in air-to-air combat. Compared to its Fokker-designed stablemate, the Albatros' only real advantage is its stability, rendering it a poor choice for most mission types.



EASY PICKINGS The typical tail gunner in a two-seater isn't very accurate, but it's prudent to play it safe and attack from his blind area behind and below.

ease off on your turn for too long unless you're sure no one is sneaking up behind you.

If you get locked into a tight turning fight with a bandit, use an occasional low yo-yo (entering a shallow diving turn to gain some speed and temporarily improve your turn rate before climbing back up toward your opponent) to pull lead, and try to pepper him with a deflection shot. A few hits usually degrade the target aircraft's performance

The Battle of Cambrai

Unlike the other campaigns, winning the Tank Battle scenario demands more than just good piloting skills; an effective strategy is also essential. As Jasta leader, your goal is simple: Slow the British advance until reinforcements can arrive. To accomplish this, you must strike a balance between offense and defense while maintaining the health and morale of your squadron.

Artillery is your most potent weapon against the enemy's marauding tanks, but it is susceptible to aerial attacks. Disrupt such operations whenever possible. Enemy ground attack planes operate individually, all along the front lines. Just getting close will make one jettison its bombs and can often cause a novice pilot to panic and spin right into the ground. You'll need to shoot down those who don't crash on their own to prevent them from strafing your field guns.

Once you have diminished the threat to your artillery, you will probably want to go after the British tanks. (Airfields and depots are also valid targets, but they are so heavily defended that such missions are virtually suicidal.) Strafing can kill a tank, but it takes a lot of bullets, so use bombs. Don't count on your wingmen's bombs for this, since they will be thrown away on your first encounter with any enemy plane. If bombing is to be done, you will have to do it. Attacking ground targets leaves you vulnerable to enemy patrols (formations of three or more scouts), so remain vigilant.



HORNET'S NEST Be ready for the fight of your life if you decide to attack an enemy depot or airfield during the Tank Battle campaign: They are extremely well defended.

Repulsing the enemy's ground assault is for naught if you end up losing the campaign due to excessive casualties in your squadron. To keep your wingmen alive, clear the skies of enemy patrols before taking on the bombers and tanks or, if you're really hot stuff, fly some missions solo.

enough for you to gain a decisive positional advantage. Just be ready to throttle back when you are administering the *coup de grâce* since the target will decelerate rapidly as its engine loses power. A rear-end collision is a particularly inefficient way to score a kill!

Maintaining a hard low-speed turn without exceeding the envelope and stalling or snap rolling takes practice, especially in touchy rotary-engine planes. The trick is to use smooth, gradual stick and rudder motions. Although visible buffeting and flapping noises will often presage a stall, you can only benefit from this feedback if you approach the stall slowly enough to back off as soon as warning signs appear.



THE MERGE Always make your opponents pass to your right when you're flying a rotary-engine plane in order to exploit your superior maneuverability in that direction. Conversely, pass such planes on the left if your aircraft has a stationary engine.

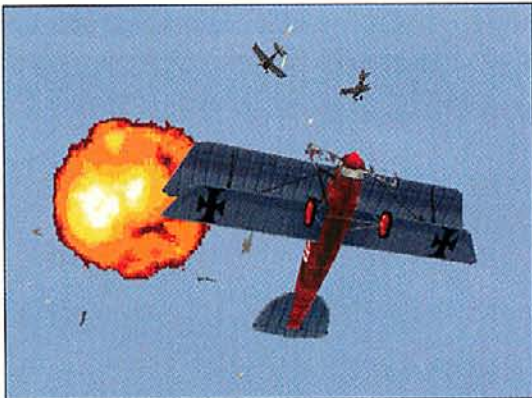
Cross the threshold too quickly, and by the time you realize anything is amiss it will be too late to do anything except attempt a recovery.

It's a Snap

Intentional snap rolls can actually be extremely useful for shaking an enemy who has latched onto your tail. Aileron rolls in a WWI scout can best be described as glacial, but by pulling back on the stick until you are at the edge of a stall and kicking full rudder, it is possible to stall one wing completely while the other continues to generate near maximum lift. The resulting snap roll is quick indeed. Once mastered, it can be used to per-

form a lightning fast turn reversal that is nearly impossible to follow.

The importance of good dogfighting skills cannot be understated. Nevertheless, it is only when sound tactics and good leadership help tip the odds in your favor that you can hope to match the accomplishments of the great aces in FLYING CORPS. With a little practice, these hints and recommendations should give you a good start down the road to virtual fame and glory. ☸

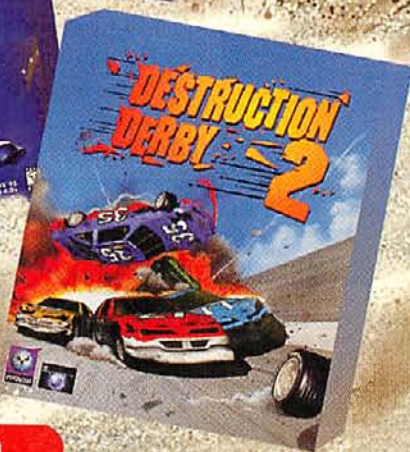
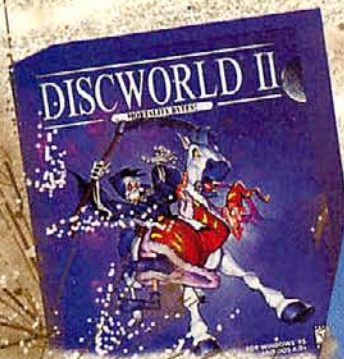


DEATH FROM ABOVE The AI loves steep diving attacks from above; expect an immediate attack if you chance to fly directly under an enemy formation.



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STRATEGY & TIPS

MOO II

*Ridding the Galaxy of Silicoids
(or Mecklars, or Bulrathi, or Even—Ugh!—Humans)*

by Tim Carter

Galactic conquerors hate to be interrupted, so in this second installment on MOO II strategy, I'll vent my spleen by going into combat mode. There's nothing like a little fricasseed Antaren to put me into a better mood. Last month, I explained how to build a stable and economically viable empire. While peace is essential to achieving stability and strength, war is essential to winning the game. At some point you will have to begin constructing a fleet and conducting offensive operations. You can expect your enemies to respond in kind, thus requiring defensive action on your part.

Generally, it's a good idea to have at least two main fleets—one for offense and (at least) one for defense. Begin to build up command



PEACE AT ANY PRICE You can usually demand at least one or two technological advances from an alien race before they will declare war, and sometimes you can also get a weak system or two. Also, if they declare war on you, your diplomatic penalty will be considerably less, and other races will be less likely to turn on you.

points as you approach the point at which you want to begin a major shipbuilding effort. Communications technology and star bases are crucial to economically maintaining a significant military force. For defensive purposes, consider researching warp interdictors and star gates as well. Star gates will allow you to defend your entire empire with a single defensive fleet, which can shuttle rapidly between threatened systems. Also, owning star gate technology makes it much easier to hold newly conquered planets. For one thing, you can reinforce your main battle fleet—particularly with military transports—every time you take an

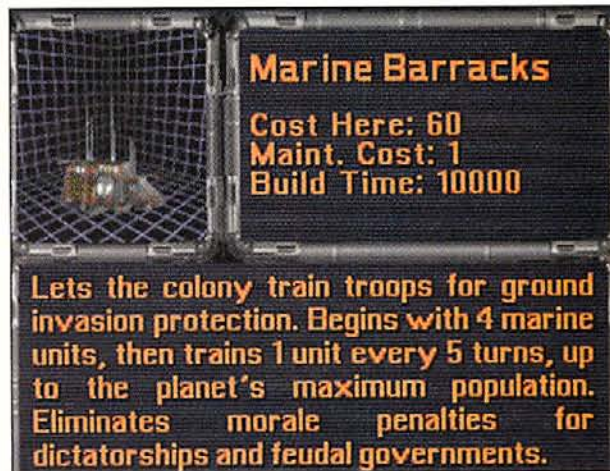
enemy planet. Also, you needn't leave your main battle fleet protecting a weak system after it falls to your troops. As soon as you control the system it falls within the protection of your defensive fleet.

Obviously, you will want to pick your first opponent carefully: You want an enemy who is not too strong, but has enough decent systems to make it worth conquering. If you're not sure, do a little scouting of your prospective enemies' systems before making your decision. Once you've decided on your first victim, leverage as many goodies out of him through peaceful means before declaring war.

Build an Espionage Network

Plan your attack well in advance. You should have enough spies built and waiting to simultaneously wage a serious espionage campaign along with widespread combat, and you should have enough marines in transports that your first space victory will also be your first planetary conquest.

If your technological research is moving at high speed, there's a good chance that large ships will be halfway obsolete even as they roll off the production lines. If you think this is likely to be the case, you may want to build 3/4 ships initially, with the engines, hull, and specials intact, but with space left to upgrade key weapons or ancillary systems through a quick refit immediately after your initial production is completed. Of course, the downside to this approach is that you could be forced to defend a key



MARTIAL LAW Defense is tough enough. Make it easier on yourself by building marine barracks for ground defense, especially if you have a feudal or dictatorial government.

Our Favorite Killer Ships



GALACTIC COMBINED ARMS

Use a combination of missile and beam weapons to penetrate enemy ships' multiple defenses. Augment your missile ships with fast missile racks and cloaking devices (so they can sit in the back-field), fire as many missiles as possible, and then get out. If you don't expect them to live for long, only equip these ships with two- or five-shot missiles, but maximize the size of the first salvo.

Weapon Loadouts

Tactical Notes

Configuration 1

1. Plasma Cannon	Quick 'N' Dirty
2. Plasma Cannon	Quick 'N' Dirty
3. Plasma Cannon	Quick 'N' Dirty

Configuration 2

1. Neutron Blaster	Great Anti-Shield
2. Ion Pulse Cannon	Always Use This After Dropping Your Enemy's Shields

Configuration 3

1. Neutron Blasters	Great Anti-Shield
2. Disruptor/Plasma Cannon/Mauler Device	Finish Off Those Shields!
3. Armor-Piercing Laser Cannon	The Best Closer

planet with an incomplete fleet. Generally, however, if you keep your diplomacy on track you should have as much time as you need. Make sure you don't waste valuable production time building obsolete weapons that you know will be replaced as soon as the ship is completed. It's better to leave a few empty slots and then add in the latest weapons during the initial refit.

Tactical combat is actually quite simple in MOO II. Although there are a tremendous number of options available, most of your key decisions will be made at the ship design stage. Once you get into battle, play to the strengths of your fleet, and don't be afraid to run away if things look hopeless.

It's generally a good idea to take a look at your enemy's larger ships at the start of combat to identify which ships have leaders on board. Many leaders' bonuses will affect the entire fleet, so taking them out early will make the rest of the battle that much easier.

Still, most tactical battles are won through having superior ships.

Ship Design: Specialization Is Key

Multipurpose ships just won't cut it in a large scale battle. This is not to say that you can't have multipurpose fleets, just that it's much more efficient to have different types of ships to perform each

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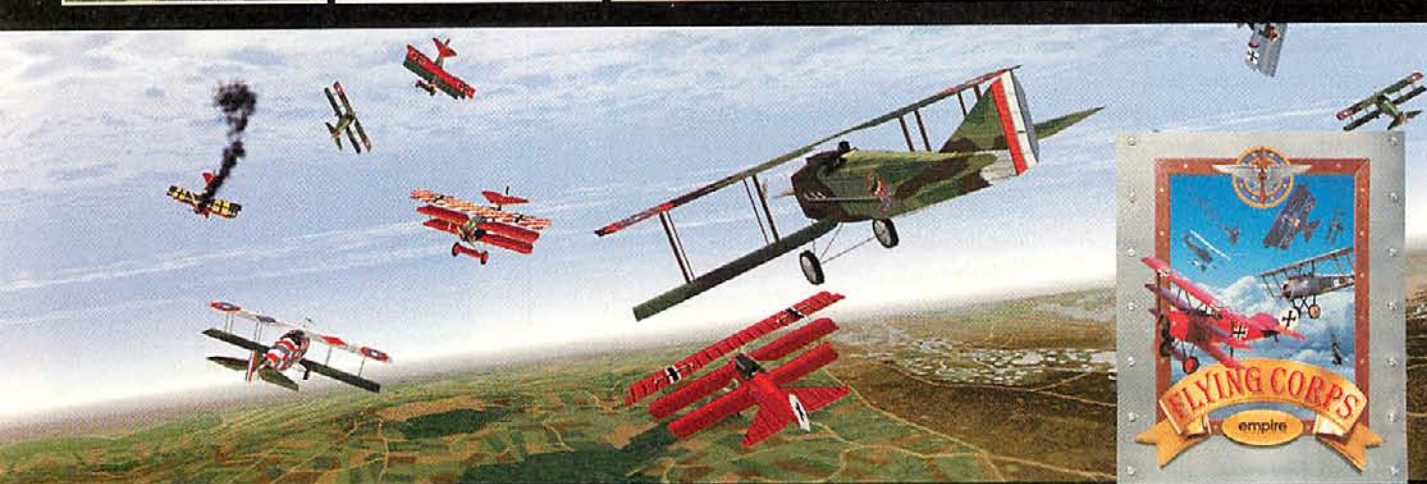
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task, rather than a single ship configured to do everything.

For the most part, bombs are a complete waste of time and effort, at least until your enemies have strong planetary shields. Your beam weapons and missiles should be more than sufficient for destroying defensive systems—and for planetary bombardment, if that's to your taste.

In MOO II, support systems on your ships make a big difference to the effectiveness of your main weapons systems. For instance, there is no point in building beam weapon ships until you have a decent targeting computer available. Even ships equipped with the dreaded plasma cannons will be ineffectual if they can't aim well enough to hit anything. If you feel you must go with beam



weapons, try researching the battle scanner, which can go a long way towards boosting your weapons' accuracy early in the game.

The same goes for missiles, as optional guidance systems will greatly boost their effectiveness. Also, use the weapon modifications whenever you can afford the extra space—most provide cost-effective augmentations to the primary weapons systems. For instance, suppose you have not committed any research to upgrade missiles, and suddenly find yourself facing an enemy fleet that you feel will be susceptible to this kind of attack. By MIRVing nuclear missiles you will get a cheap, high-impact system that can be built immediately. MIRVed nuclear missiles do 32 points of damage, while the much more advanced

SHIP DESIGN						
Barrocuda						
Small Medium Large Huge Titan Doom Star	Hyper Drive	8 parsecs/turn	16 combat speed	Class X Shield	10 dmg pts blocked	
	Adamantium Armor	500 structure points	1000 damage absorption	Molecular Ironic Computer	+150 beam attack	
	Beam Attack			Beam Defense	160	
	Missile Evasion			Missile Evasion	0%	
Space 1562	Weapon Name	Dmg	Arc	Cost	Space	Modifications
	2 Gyro Destabilizer	6-15	360	25	60	no mods
	3 Black Hole Generator	6-15	360	25	320	no mods
	24 Disrupter	15	F	13	13	no mods
	12 Bio-Terminator	20	360	6	12	no mods

SECRET WEAPON Laser cannons won't get by most shields, but if you expect to have many shield-less ships to finish off, armor-piercing lasers are cheap, small, and effective.

Fireblade	WAR		
	ESPIONAGE	SABOTAGE	HIDE
Everal	ALLIANCE		
	RESEARCH TREATY: 198P TRADE TREATY: 198C		
	ESPIONAGE	SABOTAGE	HIDE

CONCEALED WEAPON While sabotaging your enemies is obvious, don't neglect to spy on, and even sabotage, your allies—especially if they have technology you require.

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Monster Killers

Early in the game, long before you should be thinking about attacking any of your opponents, you may wish to build a fleet just strong enough to take out one or more of those pesky space monsters that guard the really valuable systems. The computer is usually quite slow in attacking them, but it will get around to it eventually, so don't wait too long.

The trick to low-tech monster bashing is using weapons that will have at

least some effect: Forget about beam weapons altogether, as they will generally just waste your time. Buy hoards of missiles, and—if you have the technology—gyro destabilizers. Both will automatically hit their targets, a crucial factor before you have advanced computer technology.

Build cheap, very expendable ships with the maximum weapons and minimum defenses. Most monsters will kill one ship per turn while defending, but don't have the versatility to take on a 10-ship fleet.

Living With the 1.3 Patch

SimTex recently released a version 1.3 patch for MOO II that has some problems with the diplomatic system; this may make winning so easy as to make the game pointless. Other than this defect, however, the patch greatly balances some of the more one-sided elements of the game. For instance, plasma cannons will cost more, ion cannons will be less effective, and the attacking fleet will always move first during space combat. These changes

should make for a better game, without significantly changing most strategies outlined in this article. The attacker-moves-first rule, however, means that your systems *must* be defended by a strong fleet. Planetary defense, already pretty weak, will be completely ineffectual against the huge attack fleets the computer likes to send against your home systems. It goes without saying that you should attack as much as possible in order to take advantage of this new rule.

Another key factor to keep in mind when designing ships is that your weapons will fire in the order that they are placed on the ship. This can have important ramifications for the overall effectiveness of your ships in combat. During tactical combat, for instance, it's not unusual to drop an enemy ship's shields with one attack, then use a second ship to inflict damage to the hull by firing into the area formerly protected by the now-down shield. However, if you have gyro destabilizers as your first weapon system, you will spin the enemy ship, more often than not leaving it with a fully functional shield facing your beam weapons.

Also, most beam weapons have special characteristics which can be used in combination to inflict extra damage on defending ships—if they are used in the

correct order. For instance, neutron blasters damage shields directly, thus making them a good initial firing weapon. When neutron blasters are combined with ion pulse cannon, which passes directly through armor and the hull to target internal systems, they can make a devastating one-two attack. On the other hand, if you start with, say, plasma cannon or mauler devices, both carrying significant brute force type attacks likely to decimate enemy shields, there is no point in following up with neutron blasters—unless you want to kill off enemy marines.

When you order your weapons properly and combine this with modifications—such as shield piercing and armor piercing—you can boost the overall attack capability of your ships considerably. ☿

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STRATEGY & TIPS

Diablo

A Beginner's Guide to Multiplayer Gaming in the Depths of Hell

by Thierry Nguyen

DIABLO is one of those games that simulates real life. You might ask how venturing down into a dungeon to fight off the Lord of Terror and his many minions is a simulation of real life, but the realism springs up when the word battle.net comes into play. When you step into the world of multiplayer DIABLO, you enter a world filled with bargains, con men, patron saints, avengers, and murderers. This guide will give you a few pointers on multiplayer games in general. You'll also learn about play styles, how to fight the creatures of Hell without getting snagged by friendly fire, and get a listing of the hottest items for trade on battle.net. So, strap on that armor and polish that sword, it's time to take on Diablo with a buddy.



Three Times the Carnage

One large, fundamental difference between single-player and multiplayer DIABLO is the fact that multiplayer DIABLO has various difficulty levels, some of which are restricted to higher level characters.

What does a change in difficulty yield? The main difference between difficulty levels is stronger monsters. For example, a balrog has an average of about 200 hit points on Normal difficulty. Step up to Nightmare level and that average jumps up to about 350 hitpoints. Try to knock them around in Hell difficulty, and they swell to around 550 hitpoints. If blood

knights at 200 were bad, how about a blood knight with 700? Easier creatures simply take a bit longer to kill (a skeleton is still a skeleton, no matter how pumped up it is). It's when the advocates and hellspawn have hit points in the multiple hundreds that adventuring gets troublesome.

With the increased hit points come additional experience and cash...and resistances. It's nice to be able to fight skeletons on Hell difficulty and get 4,000 experience points and 300 gold. Thanks to Hell difficulty, it is pretty hard for DIABLO players to go broke. The extra gold isn't worth it when fighting Hell advocates though; they become resistant to fire and immune to every type of spell. So, with the added boost of more money and experience, you also get more headaches in terms of monsters' outrageous hit point levels and new immunities.



HOOK, LINE, AND SINKER Here is the "lure." While the balrog and three gold vipers concentrate on the level 32 rogue, my level 31 rogue safely picks them off from a distance.

Tag-team Tactics

You might suddenly be a bit apprehensive about taking on the elevated monsters, but don't worry too much. In multiplayer DIABLO, your friends can come along for some added muscle. We'll address the issue of whom to trust later, but for now, let's assume you can go around a corner and not get nailed in the back by these people.

There are essentially two styles of fighting: short- and long range. Of course, coordinating these two styles of attack is difficult. In general, the warrior will do all the short-range fighting, while the sorcerer and the rogue will hang back and shoot at their leisure. Of course, this lends itself to the danger of friendly-fire, as arrows and spells can still hurt friends. This delicate balance of long and short is at the crux of multiplayer DIABLO.

One simple solution is to have the different characters split up and face opposite directions when entering a room. This way, the fighter

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #078

1. Kaboom!
2. Grenades.
3. Deafening Silence.
4. 64mm Shells.
5. The Crackle Of Uzi Fire
6. "Incoming!"
7. "That Was A Close One."
8. Random Gunfire.
9. "Private Curtis Jones, 51st Airborne"
10. Anti-Tank Guns.
11. The Clink Of An Aluminum Mess Kit.
12. Dangling Dog Tags.
13. Ricocheting Bullets.
14. Sigh Of Relief.
15. A Harmonica Playing Yankee Doodle.
16. Give peace a chance.
17. Flight of the Valkyrie.
18. Shovels Diggin Trenches.
19. Prayer.
20. Dirty Jokes.
21. "Sniffle."
22. Nervous Laughter.
23. Letters From Children.
24. Bombs bursting in air.
25. Battle Plans.
26. "Over The Top, Boys!"
27. The Battle Hymn Of The Republic.
28. Bullets Whizzing Past Your Helmet.
29. Random Snipers.
30. Surface To Air Missiles.
31. Anti-Aircraft Fire.
32. The Doors Playing "The End."
33. The Whistle Of Tracers
34. "Medic! Medic!"
35. The Star Spangled Banner.
36. The Thunder Of An Air Strike.
37. "Hit The Dirt."
38. A Rain Of Debris Landing All Around You.
39. Taps.
40. "Uurrrpp!"
41. Low Flying Sidewinders.
42. Strafing From The Air.
43. Ak-47 Assault Rifles.
44. Standard Issue M-16's.
45. The Sharpening Of Bayonets.
46. The Hiss Of Mustard Gas.
47. A Declaration Of Peace.
48. Rain.
49. Howitzers.
50. The Cheer Of Victory.
51. Quiet.
52. The Low Rumble Of Bombs In The Distance.
53. The Squawk Of A Radio Call For Help.
54. Coin chatter.
55. "Surrender Now!"
56. Troops Marching.
57. Jungle Animals.
58. "The Biscuits In The Army, They Say Are Mighty Fine."
59. The Angry Croak Of Your Commander.
60. A Tropical Storm.
61. A Blazing Oil Well Fire.
62. Unrolling Adhesive Bandages.
63. "Ugh!"
64. "I Wanna Go Home."

could go and hack the stone clan on one side, while the mage can face the other side and light up the black deaths with fireball. This is the safest way to go.

Another tactic is to let the shooter into the room first to clear the way while the short-ranger covers the shooter's back. However, this style can be boring for the short-ranger, who has to hang back.

The best way for the two to play together is to try the lure method. In **DIABLO**, monsters have a hierarchy of attack. That means that monsters will generally attack the closest player to them. If all players are equidistant from the monster, then it will fight the higher level characters first. So, the best combo would be someone who is high-level, has a good armor class, decent resistances, and is a short-range player. This player will be the lure, getting into the thick of it and letting the monsters surround him. While this player hacks away at the surrounding monsters, the long-rangers can use *careful* shots to pick off monsters that are occupied with attacking the short-range player. Alternatively, spellcasters can cast stone curses on the monsters surrounding the short-ranger.

This tactic is good, but it requires a measure of trust and skill. The most valuable skill needed in this situation is control. For this tactic to be successful, you simply cannot have a trigger-happy sorcerer or rogue. That would needlessly endanger the fighter, who is assaulted by both his allies' spells and arrows as well as the monsters. Careful two-shot bursts that hurt or kill monsters are much more valuable than a stream of wild shots that hit everyone involved.

I'll Trade My KSOH for Your GPOW...

Let's touch on a multiplayer-only aspect of **DIABLO**: trading items. The hottest non-unique items are King's weapons and Godly armor. The King moniker adds 70–100 percent chance to hit and 151–175 percent damage, while the Godly prefix adds 170–200 percent to armor class. The most coveted suffixes for items are Haste (for weapons) and Whale (for armor). The Haste suffix gives you the fastest attack rate, while the Whale bestows 81–100 bonus hit points. So a King's Sword of Haste (KSOH) is the fastest and deadliest sword, while the Godly Plate of Whales (GPOW) affords you the most hit points and armor. Other suffixes to get for helmets, amulets, or rings are



A THREESOME Here, the party encounters monsters on all sides, so facing off in different directions maximizes firepower and enables the party to quickly mow down the hordes.



GO YOUR OWN WAY The easiest way to avoid getting in each other's way is to split up and take different positions in the dungeon. That way, you don't have to worry about friendly fire.



Mucking Around Online

This guide is only an introduction to multiplayer fighting. For more strategy, check the online world. There's another guide that covers social aspects of **DIABLO** on the CGW Web site (www.computergaming.com), and there are many other sites and forums where users swap **DIABLO** tips. The best guide out there is Desslock's **DIABLO** FAQ, a great source for all types of information on **DIABLO**. You can find it at Gamespot's Web site (www.gamespot.com).

Obsidian (adds 31–40 percent to all resistances), Zodiac (adds 16–20 to all attributes), and Dragon (adds 51–60 to mana).

The best magical bows are either Strange (which adds 100–120 percent chance to hit) or Merciless (adds 164–166 percent). All rogues should try to get one of the two unique bows (Eaglehorn or Windforce).

A popular staff is the Arch-Angel's Staff of Apocalypse. The Arch-Angel attribute adds two levels to every spell you know. Natural staves have about 8–14 charges, while hacked versions have 255 charges. Another nice attribute for staves is Wizardry, which adds 21–30 points to your magic stat.

Uniquely Yours

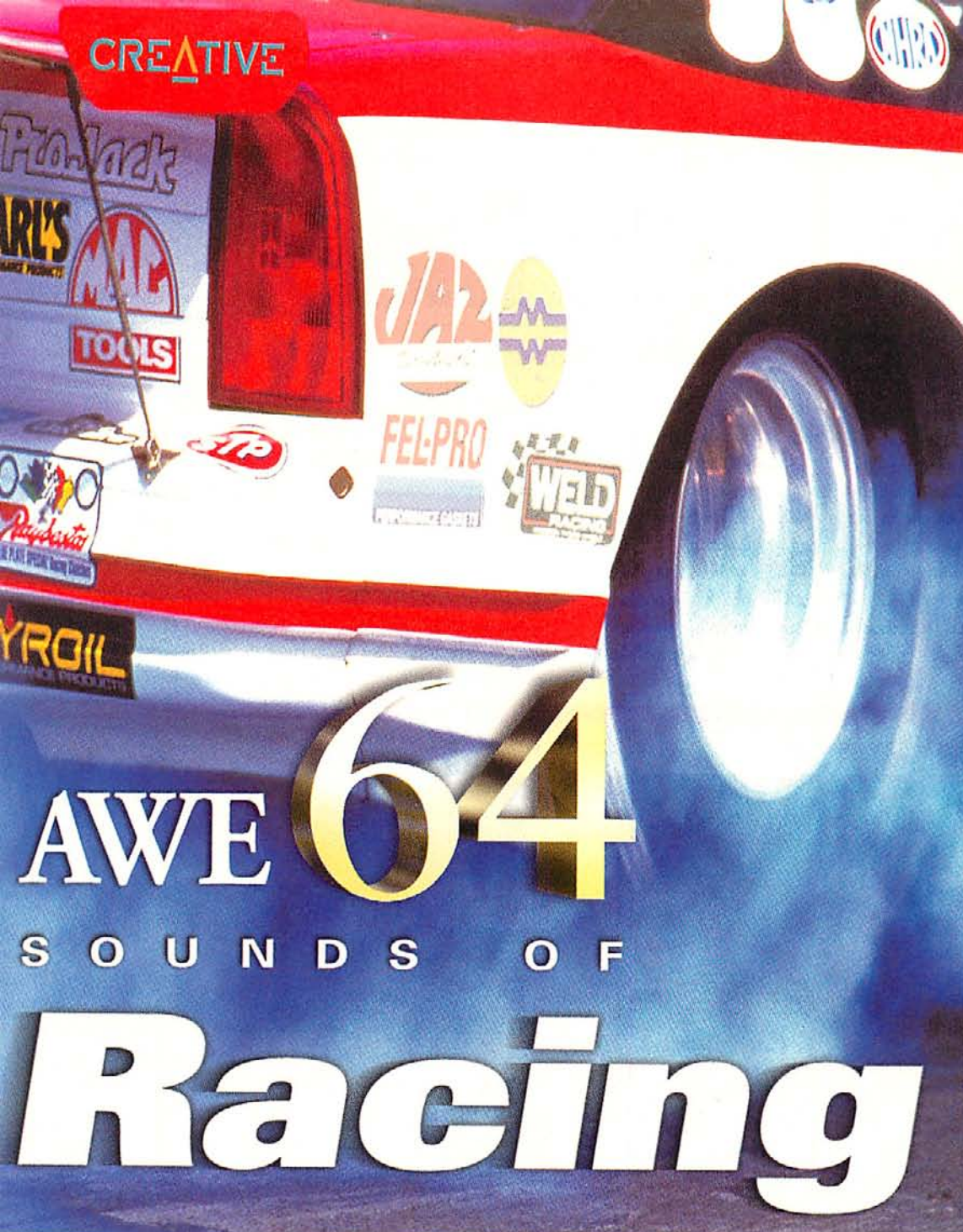
Though the most powerful magic items (like KSOH and GPOW) match up well against unique items, there are still a great many unique items that cannot be equaled by ordinary magic.

Rogues should acquire either Eaglehorn or Windforce. Windforce is the more damaging of the two, though Eaglehorn is indestructible. The two notable unique armor coats, Demon-spoke Coat and Naj's Light Plate, are good, but a Godly plate still affords better protection. Unique shields and helmets definitely beat out their non-unique counterparts. The best shield is Storm Shield, while the best helmet is either the Royal Circlet or Cotten-damering. Unique staves aren't a good alternative when you could be holding an Arch-Angel's Staff of Apocalypse or Wizardry. Actually, a mace called Dreamflange might be the best tool for the sorcerer. It has spell level-enhancing ability and bonus magic and mana. For pure killing power, Messerschmidt's Reaver is the ax of choice.

Lord of Terror? He's Not So Terrible...

Now you are somewhat prepared to step into the world of multiplayer **DIABLO**. You know how to be efficient in the heat of battle when using mages and warriors, and you know what nice items you should watch out for. Now walk into the Red Portal with your comrades at arms, and show **Diablo** that you can fight him without killing your friends in the process...by accident, of course. ☺

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1. Cars Taking Off.
2. Breaks Screeching.
3. Hubcaps Scraping.
4. Crowd Cheering.
5. "Place Your Bets!"
6. Engine Seizing.
7. Hearts Pounding.
8. Refueling.
9. Wheels Peeling.
10. Breaths Of Anticipation.
11. "That Was A Close Shave."
12. Cars Colliding.
13. Backfires.
14. Engines Revving.
15. The Roar Of A Crowd.
16. Fiery Explosions.
17. Skidding Into The Pit.
18. Engine Problems.
19. Shrieks Of Excitement.
20. Vrrrrroooooom.
21. "Low Fuel."
22. Jamming On The Brakes.
23. Gears Shifting.
24. Ambulance Siren.
25. Sighs Of Relief.
26. Engines Restarting.
27. Traction Of Bald Tires.
28. Crowd Going Wild.
29. "Last Lap!"
30. Starting Gun Firing.
31. Hubcaps Flying Across The Track.
32. Tires Blowing.
33. "Hurry! Fill 'Er Up!"
34. Engines Choking.
35. Tires Being Changed.
36. Nuts And Bolts Flying.
37. Grandstand Cheering.
38. Gears Grinding.
39. Slamming On The Brakes.
40. Turning Swiftly.
41. Pile-Ups.
42. Tires Rolling Off.
43. Skidding Uncontrollably.
44. Loud Screams.
45. Crowds Falling Silent.
46. Collision.
47. Thunderous Booms.
48. Deafening Cries.
49. Quick Turns.
50. Sudden Stops.
51. Reflex Braking.
52. "Gentlemen, Start Your Engines!"
53. Engines Sputtering.
54. Drop Of The Checkered Flag.
55. Head Gasket Exploding.
56. Hitting The Wall On Turn 3.
57. Chanting A Winner's Name.
58. Creaking Of The Chassis.
59. Radio Static.
60. Loosing Your Hood.
61. Accelerating Past The Finish Line.
62. Champagne Cork Popping.
63. Congratulatory Slaps.
64. Wizzing Past.

STRATEGY & TIPS

Scorpia's Mail

You've Got Questions? Scorpia Has Answers

Well, here we are in the mailroom again. Something's creeping around outside the door, and it's spring, so we'll just keep the door shut. Not that spring is a bad time of year, but if spring is here, can summer be far behind? And summer, as you all know, is always the worst time of year for game releases.

Of course, there hasn't been a whole lot of new stuff around since Christmas, either. The post-Christmas season period has been a bit dull, and I'm hoping we'll see some good games show up before the mid-year doldrums set in. Meanwhile, we'll have to make do with what we've got, and what we've got is some mail to check.

Discworld II

Having a spot of bother getting into that Novelties Shop? You can't do it until Act II (so if you're still at the start, leave it for now). And even then you need a couple of things from the Hollywood set to get in the Shop. Heavy, man! But maybe not heavy enough? Well, just stick to it, and you'll come up a perfect 10. Really!

Wizardry Nemesis

You can spend a lot of time in the Nithera library wondering what's going on. The answer: not much. There are some interesting books to read, but the only thing of real interest here is an optional (read: not nec-

The Pandora Directive



Some gamers are having a little trouble finding a certain box in a certain sewer. Even with the handy tracking device, it isn't easy. The thing to keep in mind is that you want to check the walls, and not merely at eye-level (hey, that would be too easy! Heh!). Also, take your time moving the cursor around, because what you're looking for is small, and can be overlooked if you're not careful.

Fable



While not the toughest game around, this one does have its moments. One of them is in the Engulfed Fortress. Before hitting the briny deep, you may want to save the game. You only meet the seahorses once, and after the conversation, one of them should hand you an item. This object is crucial to success down here. If you don't get it, you'll have to do the conversation over again until you do (which means, of course, restoring the game). So take your chances and hope for the best.

Daggerfall

DAGGERFALL is still the most popular topic on the mail list. Considering the complexity of the game, that's not surprising. One circumstance that gives people trouble is when you become a vampire or werebeast. First, once you've made the change, there's not much you can do except go on and wait for the werehunters to catch up to you. They will offer a quest to cure the condition. In the meantime, as a werebeast or vampire, you *do* have to go hunting to keep up your strength. The game will let you know when that's necessary. You will need to be patient, as the werehunters will show up at a random moment sometime in the first year after you become afflicted; there's no telling when that might happen.

essary for winning) weapon, tucked away behind a secret wall up above. Keep an eye on the light if you want to find it. You also want to be careful if you read any books, as there's a cursed one that shows up from time to time among the volumes. You can, of course, skip the reading if you prefer.

That's about it for this look into the mailbag. So, until next time, happy adventuring! &

Reach Scorpia at

AOL: Scorpia's Lair (keyword: scorpia)

Internet: scorpia@aol.com

U.S. Mail: (enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the U.S.)

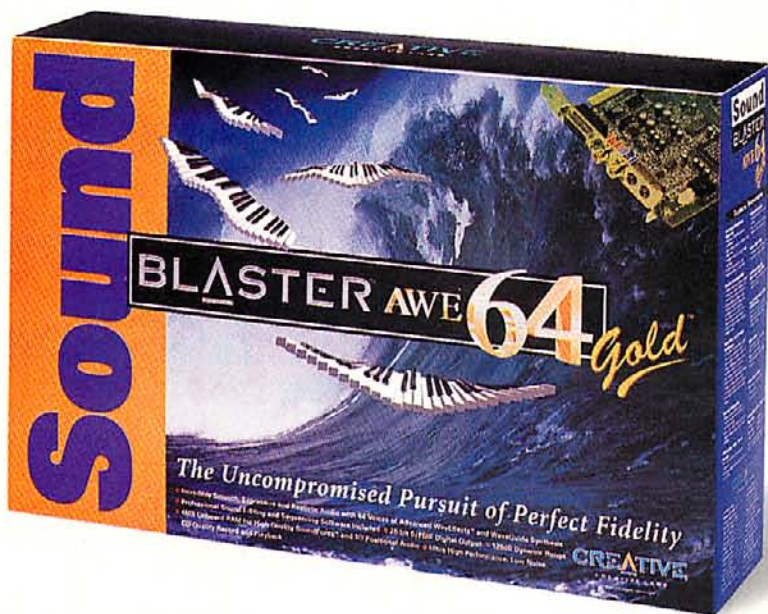
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Strategy/Wargames

MAGIC THE GATHERING: BATTLEMAGE

Though many of you will opt for MicroProse's title over Acclaim's, some others might still be trying to best this real-time adaptation of the card game. Here are more tips for winning in BATTLEMAGE, so you can move on to more MAGIC.

AVOID CARDS THAT HAVE CONSTANT ACTIVATION COSTS

You can't afford many high maintenance spells that require constant re-activation. Spells like Circle of Protection and Lifeforce are especially bad because they must be used in reaction to something, and the timing is very tricky. They will distract you when you should be using your time and mana to cast new spells. Note that this applies to pumpable creatures too. For example, Killer Bees can be powerful in the card game but are next to worthless here. Keeping them at moderate strength would take all your time every turn! A Shivan Dragon is better since it is a strong creature without pumping, but I still wouldn't spend time pumping him unless I were pretty certain he



was not going to be blocked. A Sengir Vampire, which can grow without your assistance, is usually better than the Dragon.

USE BIG CREATURES

The wisdom you learned playing the card game must be rethought. Use more big monsters and fewer little ones. Along with Vampires and Dragons; Serra Angels, Mahamoti Djinn, and Craw Wurms should be staples in your deck. Nightmare and Force of Nature are very playable, but watch out for the Lord of the Pit—it's hard to keep enough creatures in play to satisfy his appetite!

Action



QUAKE MISSION PACK NO. 1: SCOURGE OF ARMAGON

If, like us, you think Hard difficulty in *QUAKE* is for wusses, then follow us to the Nightmare difficulty level in MISSION PACK NO. 1: SCOURGE OF ARMAGON.

To enter the Nightmare sliggate, follow the corridor to the Easy sliggate and then make a right at the Easy doorway. Then, continue left down the corridor. As the corridor opens into a room, you'll see a railing on your left with stacks of crates

behind it. Run up the railing and onto the crates—but be careful not to drop off the crates to the floor below.

Look to your left and you'll see a red arrow pointing up inside a small room hidden to the left behind the crates (see the screenshot). Run in, and an elevator will take you up. Make two sharp rights and you'll see the Nightmare sliggate. Good luck and happy hunting.

Adventure/RPG

REALMS OF THE HAUNTING

Interplay's *REALMS OF THE HAUNTING* (see review in last month's issue) will challenge your brain and your twitch reflexes for many satisfying hours. Here's a few tips to keep you alive and running. (Scorpia will provide a complete walkthrough of the game in the next issue.)



1. Be sure to look around in all directions (*QUAKE* fans should be used to this.) You'll often find ammo or other goodies hidden below (or above) your direct line of vision. Look out for enemies hiding above.
2. The shotgun is your friend. It is a rapid-fire weapon with plenty of available ammo. Don't waste your
3. time with the slower, more powerful weapons when you're in deep trouble. The time you wait to recharge may be your final moments alive.
4. When in doubt—run. Sometimes you can advance in the game without killing everything in sight.
4. Three words: save, save, save.

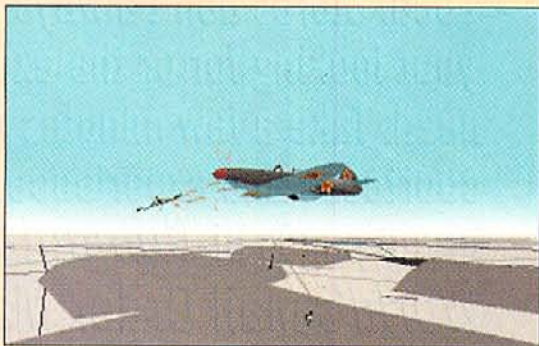
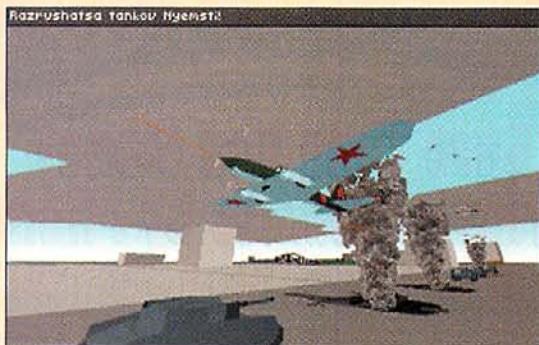
Simulation/Space

ACES OVER EUROPE

A few issues back, we listed some new aircraft and scenarios for ACES OVER EUROPE, but at the time we were only able to locate the proper patch files on the CompuServe online service.

We've since discovered that ACES fans can now access a wealth of patches and new aircraft for RED BARON, ACES OF THE PACIFIC, and ACES OVER EUROPE on Timoleon Ravazoulas' Aces Page.

The current project in the works by Timoleon and his cohorts is the Eastern Front, 1943 scenario, featuring new Russian and German aircraft. This is a team effort, so whether you're interested in helping out or just checking out some of the new aircraft, head over to http://www0.netor.gr/user_pages/timoleon/aces.htm.



G-NOME



One way to take advantage of the computer opponent is to attract its attention while separated from it by a large obstacle, such as a stone wall. Once you have its attention, step back at least 120 meters from the obstacle and your enemy. Circle around behind the AI, maintaining your distance. The AI will keep trying to reach your previous position, despite the obstacle remaining in its path. Meanwhile, you may pummel it at your leisure. Only after its vehicle is destroyed will the AI turn to attack you.

Puzzles/Classics

POKER CHALLENGE



The key in POKER CHALLENGE is to recognize that as long as you make over your \$112 ante, you are actually better off getting a mix of hands. The difference between the final score and your \$112 ante (minus your remaining unplayed cards) is multiplied by each type of hand scored. So, if you finished with a score of 123 (after remaining cards were deducted), and you had a Pair, Two Pair, Three of a Kind, Straight, and Flush, the final score would be: $123 - 112 \times 5$ [types of hands] = $11 \times 5 = 55$ or, $123 + 55 = 178$.

In this sample game, it's tempting to go for the Full House, but you're actually better going for the lower-paying Flushes and Straights. We barely managed to top \$112 in this round, but ended up with over \$200 paid out, because we had several types of hands.

Also, you should always strive to get your jokers to the bottom of a row. Note in our sample game here how much flexibility the joker at the bottom of the row provides, allowing us to get rid of any unwanted card. In fact, if it weren't for the three jokers here, there's no way we could reach the \$112 threshold.

Sports



LINKS LS

LINKS LS fans have a plethora of online resources at their disposal, but one Web site that's way above (or would that be below?) par is The Hackers Corner at: www.emperor.com/www/gulley/ls/links.html.

This elegantly designed site is a huge repository of useful information and files, including the latest patches, sound files, tournament utilities,

and links to other LINKS sites. Best of all is a listing of every course available for the game with a description, numerical rating (based on Championship player and tee settings), and screen shot of the course.

If you're a serious LINKS-head, grab your bag and spikes and cruise on over to the 'The Hacker's Corner' clubhouse.

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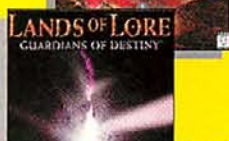
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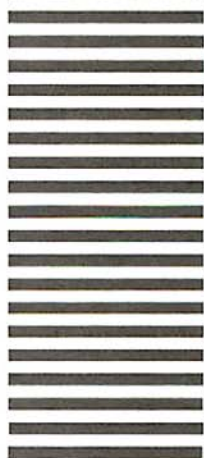
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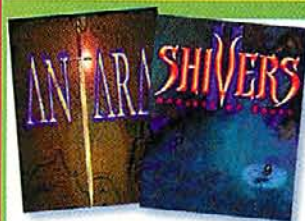
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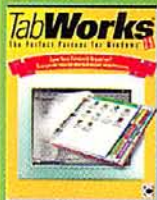
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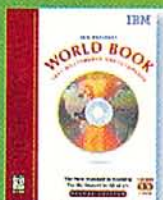
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by IBM
Written to be concurrent with school curricula & designed to be easily understood, it is the reference of choice for students grades 4 - 12.

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by Hopkins Technology
Information on basic principles of Herbalism, human systems, actions of herbs & medical details on 100 herbs.

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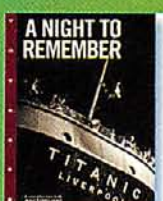
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by Ionos
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the records, established the benchmarks, and held gamers in delighted trances for hours untold.

HIGHLIGHTS

LEMMINGS

PSYGNOSIS, 1991

The romanticized image of lemmings migrating blindly to their watery demise has become a well-worn metaphor for the mindless followers of any leader. In its initial release some six years ago, **LEMMINGS** placed gamers in the role of such a leader, but added an intriguing twist. Instead of leading the cute little creatures to their demise, the gamer was expected to save them from their peregrinating selves. While much of the game's appeal is due to the endemic cuteness of these diminutive furry creatures, it is also apparent that **LEMMINGS** is a "god game," at least in a broad sense. Cast in the role of the Lemmings' savior, you must remove barriers, yank the lovable Lilliputians from dangerous precipices, and save them from all sorts of aquatic, fiery, and otherwise calamitous ends—primarily by assigning various lemmings to certain tasks. Much like **TETRIS**, this game gave a new twist to the puzzle game genre. The game was successful on many levels. **LEMMINGS** transcended the gender barrier and appealed to women as much as it appealed to men. For most of us, the bottom line is that there always seemed to be time for *just one more level* of this insidiously addicting game. Now that **LEMMINGS** has migrated to the hard drives of every major platform, we'll probably never know how many hours have been and are being spent watching **LEMMINGS** shinny up cliffs, bash through mountains, or float to safety with umbrellas. Judging from the success **LEMMINGS**' sequels have enjoyed, though, it was "non-productive time" well-spent.



LINKS 386

ACCESS SOFTWARE, 1992

While the original **LINKS** was a fine game in its own right, **LINKS 386** was a revelation for PC owners. The photo-realistic SVGA-graphics vistas of famous courses could entice even the most casual of armchair golfers—and for a lot less money than playing at the real Pebble Beach or Firestone. The physics modeling was improved, so that the game played more like true golf than its predecessor, and the putting—too easy in **LINKS**—was made tough enough to be challenging, even for veteran golfers. It's fair to say that the game's wide appeal, combined with the high demands the program placed on hardware, caused several users to upgrade to a 486. Even five years after the release of **LINKS 386**, the animation of the club swing, the quiet ripples of the lakes, even the sound of an errant iron shot crashing through tree branches all capture the essence of golf on a computer screen in a manner surpassed only by the latest Access endeavor, **LINKS LS**. In fact, the only major flaw of the game, a lack of computer opponents, was addressed by **LINKS LS**, as it allowed you to play with, or against, a computer simulation of golf legend Arnold Palmer. With the recent deal between rivals Accolade and Electronic Arts, it's likely that the dominance of the **Links** line will be challenged by **JACK NICKLAUS GOLF 4** and others. Still, the Access folks have read the marketing greens of computer golf better than anyone else, so we're not betting against Bruce Carver and crew.



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, 1986)
M.U.L.E. (Electronic Arts, 1983)
PIRATES (MicroProse, 1987)
SIMCITY (Maxis, 1987)
STARFLIGHT (Electronic Arts, 1986)
THE BARD'S TALE (Electronic Arts, 1985)
ULTIMA III (Origin Systems, 1983)
ULTIMA IV (Origin Systems, 1985)
WAR IN RUSSIA (Strategic Simulations, 1984)
WASTELAND (Interplay Productions, 1986)
WIZARDRY (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
ZORK (Infocom, 1981)

Modern Inductees

ALONE IN THE DARK (I-Motion, 1992)
BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR (Dynamix, 1993)
DAY OF THE TENTACLE (LucasArts, 1993)
DOOM (id Software, 1993)
FALCON 3.0 (Spectrum HoloByte, 1991)
FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO (Dynamix, 1993)
GUNSHIP (MicroProse, 1989)
HARPOON (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)
MASTER OF MAGIC (MicroProse, 1994)
MASTER OF ORION (MicroProse, 1993)
RAILROAD TYCOON (MicroProse, 1990)
RED BARON (Dynamix, 1990)
SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION (MicroProse, 1991)
THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND (LucasArts, 1990)
THEIR FINEST HOUR (LucasArts, 1989)
TIE FIGHTER (LucasArts, 1994)
ULTIMA VI (Origin Systems, 1990)
ULTIMA UNDERWORLD (Origin Systems, 1992)
WING COMMANDER I, II, & III (Origin Systems, 1990-91)
WOLFENSTEIN 3-D (id Software, 1992)
X-COM (MicroProse, 1994)

Computer game programs have grown so massive and the number of hardware configurations has become so huge that incompatibilities and glitches are frustratingly common.

1830 V1.4: Your rail empire will build more smoothly with enhanced AI (plus a truly "easy" option). The lesser memory requirements allow would-be Vanderbilts to run the program with a mere 4MB of RAM. Several new toggles enhance gameplay.

A-10 Cuba!: Latest upgrade allows you to reverse the rudder settings, press Enter or ESC without problems, and even center your joystick. What's more, the original A-10 CUBA! serial numbers now work.

Advanced Civilization V1.01: You'll find that installing this patch limits natural disasters to the ones intended by the game design, among other fixes.

Age of Rifles V1.3: Commanders will find campaigning much facilitated by the variety of command control tweaks, scenario enhancements, and casualty rate adjustments, among other fixes. Be sure to reconnoiter the exhaustive READ.ME file.

Age of Sail V1.02: A host of improvements for Talonsoft's real-time wargame. This patch should not overwrite your saved games.

Battleship V1.1: Hasbro's ship finally sails as it should have, with many of the multiplayer and timing issues solved by this patch.

Blood & Magic V1.01: As Aleric the Avenger on Level 3, you should no longer have the problem when the Brigand is attacked after the game is saved. Modem and Direct Link performance is improved.

Capitalism For Mac V1.1: Both Mac and Power PC users will find the road to capitalistic riches a smoother ride with this archive.

Cave Wars V1.11: Godmode bugs are banished, and you may now select the number of levels to play—a boon for shorter games.

Daggerfall V1.06.200: Installing a patch for Bethesda's acclaimed, but buggy, RPG is an

adventure in itself, but this patch does correct many of the game's most significant flaws.

Flying Corps V1.00a: The acclaimed WWI flight sim becomes even more viscerally beautiful with these adjustments to padlock and other views.

Harpoon Classic 97 V1.62c: From clearer Caribbean-blue water to database additions, this patch fights hard to make a complex game more accessible.

JetFighter III Update 1: New wings for Mission Studios' flight sim, including better throttle/rudder/joystick calibration, support for sound in Windows 95, sound board autodetect, programmable joystick buttons, and more.

MechWarrior 2 For Mac: Mac 'Mech-meisters now enjoy support for 603e and 604e processors and additional joysticks.

MechWarrior Mercenaries V1.06: Regardless of clan affiliation, all will benefit from this latest upgrade, which repairs more 'mech deficiencies.

MOO II V 1.3: This latest in galactic technology offers even more fixes.

Over the Reich V1.01: Gameplay hits a higher ceiling with several adjustments to bomber defensive fire, frequency of reinforcements, angle of interceptions, high-G maneuvers, and banking.

Phantasmagoria 2: If you insist on finishing the game—and avoiding video lockups and other crashes—you'll need this patch. Be warned, however: This fix is only for DOS versions.

Risk: Finally...playable hotseat!

Star General V1.01: Patches for both DOS and Win 95 are out, featuring a number of multiplayer and AI fixes.

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. New patches are in red.

Steel Panthers II V1.1: Many clarifications, modifications, and bug fixes for SSI's popular modern warfare game. Make sure to type SP2V101.EXE -D -O or your game will not update properly. If you install the Campaign Disc after the patch, you will need to reinstall the update.

Third Reich V1.37: New orders from the front have repaired inaccuracies introduced in V1.36, such as France refusing to fall.

Tomb Raider: The 3Dfx support patch is now final, and shows off Lara Croft's attributes in stunning high-resolution, complete with mip-mapping and more hotkeys.

Wages of War 1.28: Several minor fixes for New World's mercenary strategy game.

War Wind V1.2: KALI-compatible, LAN and Internet-enhanced version of SSI's strategy game.



► Check for new patches on the demo disc.

ZDNet

Patches can usually be downloaded from online networks (such as CompuServe and ZDNet), from CGW's Web site (www.computergaming.com), or from the individual software publisher's Web site (see listing below).

Publisher Web Sites

Many patches are available from the publishers at the following sites:

Accolade: www.accolade.com
Activision: www.activision.com
Apogee/3d Realms: www.apogee1.com
Avalon Hill: www.avalonhill.com
Bethesda: www.bethsoft.com
Big Time Software: www.bigtimesoftware.com
Blizzard: www.blizzard.com
Eidos: www.eidos.com
EA: www.ea.com
Epic MegaGames: www.epicgames.com
id Software: www.idsoftware.com
Interactive Magic: www.imagicgames.com
Interplay: www.interplay.com
Jane's Combat Simulations: www.janes.ea.com
LucasArts: www.lucasarts.com
MicroProse/Spectrum HoloByte: www.microprose.com
Microsoft: www.microsoft.com
New World Computing: www.nwcomputing.com
Origin: www.origin.ea.com
Papyrus: www.sierra.com/papyrus
Sierra On-Line: www.sierra.com
SSI: www.ssonline.com
Talonsoft: www.talonsoft.com
Virgin: www.vie.com

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TOP ACTION GAMES

GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1 Tomb Raider	Eidos	8.54
2 Duke Nukem 3D	3DRealms	8.50
3 Crusader: No Remorse	EA/Origin	8.21
4 The Need For Speed SE	EA	8.10
5 Quake	id Software	8.05
6 Crusader: No Regret	EA/Origin	7.93
7 The Need For Speed	EA	7.60
8 Syndicate Wars	EA/Bullfrog	7.37
9 Descent II	Interplay	7.33
10 Pro Pinball	Empire	7.32

TOP ADVENTURE GAMES

GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1 Gabriel Knight 2	Sierra	8.37
2 Pandora Directive	Access	8.28
3 The Neverhood	Dreamworks	7.98
4 Rama	Sierra	7.93
5 Leisure Suit Larry 7	Sierra	7.83
6 Circle Of Blood	Virgin	7.71
7 Spycraft	Activision	7.66
8 Lighthouse	Sierra	7.56
9 Full Throttle	LucasArts	7.54
10 Under A Killing Moon	Access	7.30

TOP CLASSIC/PUZZLE GAMES

GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1 You Don't Know Jack	Berkeley Systems	8.20
2 Incredible Toons	Sierra	7.23
3 Incredible Machine 2	Sierra	7.06
4 Monopoly	Virgin/Westwood	6.89
5 Mind Grind	Microforum	6.88
6 Baku Baku	Sega	6.10
7 Clue	Hasbro	5.96
8 —	—	—
9 —	—	—
10 —	—	—

TOP SIMULATION/SPACE COMBAT GAMES

GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1 Wing Commander IV	EA/Origin	8.47
2 MechWarrior 2	Activision	8.27
3 AH-64 Longbow	EA/Origin	8.14
4 Privateer 2	EA/Origin	8.02
5 Silent Hunter	SSI	7.92
6 U.S. Marine Fighters	EA	7.90
7 EF2000	Ocean	7.85
8 U.S. Navy Fighters	EA	7.62
9 F-22 Lightning	NovaLogic	7.60
10 Advanced Tactical Fighters	EA	7.59

TOP SPORTS GAMES

GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1 Links LS	Access	8.71
2 NASCAR 2	Sierra	8.49
3 NHL Hockey '97	EA Sports	8.39
4 Grand Prix 2	MicroProse	8.25
5 FPS Football Pro '97	Sierra	7.76
6 NASCAR Racing	Sierra	7.69
7 FIFA '97	EA Sports	7.68
8 FPS Football Pro '96	Sierra	7.65
9 Triple Play '97	EA Sports	7.61
10 NHL Hockey '96	EA Sports	7.60

TOP STRATEGY GAMES

GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1 Warcraft II Expansion Disk	Blizzard	9.01
2 Red Alert	Virgin/Westwood	8.91
3 Warcraft II	Blizzard	8.90
4 Heroes II	New World Computing	8.85
5 Civilization II	MicroProse	8.80
6 C&C: Covert Operations	Virgin/Westwood	8.43
7 Command & Conquer	Virgin/Westwood	8.36
8 Civilization II: Scenarios	MicroProse	8.22
9 Heroes Of Might & Magic	New World Computing	7.97
10 Jagged Alliance: Deadly Games	Sir-Tech	7.92

TOP ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1 Diablo	Blizzard	8.82
2 Daggerfall	Bethesda	7.54
3 Anvil Of Dawn	New World Computing	7.31
4 Stonekeep	Interplay	6.90
5 Albion	Blue Byte	6.13
6 —	—	—
7 —	—	—
8 —	—	—
9 —	—	—
10 —	—	—

TOP WARGAMES

GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1 Steel Panthers Campaign Disk	SSI	8.73
2 Steel Panthers II	SSI	8.69
3 Steel Panthers	SSI	8.47
4 Panzer General	SSI	8.29
5 Battleground: Shiloh	TalonSoft	8.12
6 Battleground: Antietam	TalonSoft	8.11
7 Tigers On The Prowl 2.0	HPS	7.83
8 Battleground: Waterloo	TalonSoft	7.70
9 Battleground: Gettysburg	TalonSoft	7.49
10 Robert E. Lee: Civil War General	Sierra	7.47

	GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
★	1	WarCraft II Expansion Disk	Blizzard	ST 9.01
	2	Red Alert	Virgin/Westwood	ST 8.91
	3	WarCraft II	Blizzard	ST 8.90
	4	Heroes II	New World Computing	ST 8.85
★	5	Diablo	Blizzard	RP 8.82
	6	Civilization II	MicroProse	ST 8.80
★	7	Steel Panthers Campaign Disk	SSI	WG 8.73
★	8	Links LS	Access	SP 8.71
	9	Steel Panthers II	SSI	WG 8.69
★	10	Tomb Raider	Eidos	AC 8.54
	11	Duke Nukem 3D	3DRealms	AC 8.50
	12	NASCAR 2	Sierra	SP 8.49
	13	Steel Panthers	SSI	WG 8.47
★		Wing Commander IV	EA/Origin	SI 8.47
	15	C&C: Covert Operations	Virgin/Westwood	ST 8.43
	16	NHL '97	EA Sports	SP 8.39
★	17	Gabriel Knight 2	Sierra	AD 8.37
	18	Command & Conquer	Virgin/Westwood	ST 8.36
	19	Panzer General	SSI	WG 8.29
	20	Pandora Directive	Access	AD 8.28
	21	MechWarrior 2	Activision	SI 8.27
	22	Grand Prix 2	MicroProse	SP 8.25
	23	Civilization II: Scenarios	MicroProse	ST 8.22
	24	Crusader: No Remorse	EA/Origin	AC 8.21
★	25	You Don't Know Jack	Berkeley Systems	CP 8.20
	26	AH-64 Longbow	EA/Origin	SI 8.14
	27	Battleground: Shiloh	TalonSoft	WG 8.12
	28	Battleground: Antietam	TalonSoft	WG 8.11
	29	The Need For Speed SE	EA	AC 8.10
	30	Quake	id Software	AC 8.05
	31	Privateer 2	EA/Origin	SI 8.02
	32	The Neverhood	Dreamworks	AD 7.98
	33	Heroes Of Might & Magic	New World Computing	ST 7.97
	34	Crusader: No Regret	EA/Origin	AC 7.93
		Rama	Sierra	AD 7.93
	36	Jagged Alliance: Deadly Games	Sir-Tech	ST 7.92
		Silent Hunter	SSI	SI 7.92
	38	U.S. Marine Fighters	EA	SI 7.90
	39	EF2000	Ocean	SI 7.85
	40	Tigers On The Prowl 2.0	HPS	WG 7.83
		Leisure Suit Larry 7	Sierra	AD 7.83
	42	Lords Of The Realm II	Sierra	ST 7.82
	43	FPS Football Pro '97	Sierra	SP 7.76
	44	WarCraft	Blizzard	ST 7.74
	45	Warlords II Deluxe	SSG	ST 7.71
		Circle Of Blood	Virgin	AD 7.71
	47	Battleground: Waterloo	TalonSoft	WG 7.70
	48	NASCAR Racing	Sierra	SP 7.69
	49	Jagged Alliance	Sir-Tech	ST 7.68
		FIFA '97	EA Sports	SP 7.68

	GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
	51	Spycraft	Activision	AD 7.66
	52	FPS Football Pro '96	Sierra	SP 7.65
	53	U.S. Navy Fighters	EA	SI 7.62
	54	Triple Play '97	EA Sports	SP 7.61
	55	NHL Hockey '96	EA Sports	SP 7.60
		NBA Live '96	EA Sports	SP 7.60
		F-22 Lightning	NovaLogic	SI 7.60
	58	The Need For Speed	EA	AC 7.60
	59	Advanced Tactical Fighters	EA	SI 7.59
	60	Lighthouse	Sierra	AD 7.56
	61	Fantasy General	SSI	ST 7.54
		Full Throttle	LucasArts	AD 7.54
		Daggerfall	Bethesda	RP 7.54
	64	CivNet	MicroProse	ST 7.50
	65	Battleground: Gettysburg	TalonSoft	WG 7.49
	66	NBA Live '95	EA Sports	SP 7.48
	67	Robert E. Lee: Civil War General	Sierra	WG 7.47
	68	PGA Tour Golf 486	EA Sports	SP 7.45
	69	Tony LaRossa 3 '96	Stormfront Studios	SP 7.40
	70	Syndicate Wars	EA/Bullfrog	AC 7.37
		M.A.X.	Interplay	ST 7.37
	72	FPS Football '95	Sierra	SP 7.34
	73	Descent II	Interplay	AC 7.33
	74	Pro Pinball	Empire	AC 7.32
	75	SimCity CD-ROM	Maxis	ST 7.31
		Anvil Of Dawn	New World Computing	RP 7.31
	77	Stars!	Empire	ST 7.30
		Under A Killing Moon	Access	AD 7.30
		JetFighter III	Mission Studios	SI 7.30
	80	MissionForce Cyberstorm	Sierra	ST 7.28
	81	Zork Nemesis	Activision	AD 7.27
	82	Virtual Pool	Interplay	SP 7.24
	83	Incredible Toons	Sierra	CP 7.23
	84	Age Of Sail	TalonSoft	WG 7.18
		Hexen	Raven/Id	AC 7.18
	86	Magic Carpet 2	EA/Bullfrog	AC 7.17
	87	Relentless	EA	AD 7.16
	88	Legends Of Kyrandia 3	Virgin/Westwood	AD 7.14
		Terra Nova: Strike Force	Looking Glass	AC 7.14
		Phantasmagoria 2	Sierra	AD 7.14
	91	Phantasmagoria	Sierra	AD 7.13
	92	Titanic	GTE Entertainment	AD 7.12
		Flight Unlimited	Looking Glass	SI 7.12
	94	System Shock	EA/Origin	AC 7.11
	95	Road Rash	EA	AC 7.10
	96	NHL Powerplay	Virgin	SP 7.09
	97	Hyper 3D Pinball	Virgin	AC 7.07
	98	Over The Reich	Avalon Hill	WG 7.06
		Incredible Machine 2	Sierra	CP 7.06
	100	Harpoon 97	Interactive Magic	WG 7.05

Games on unnumbered lines are tied with game on line above. ★ = Top game of type. Red = 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... Psycho-Geeks?

Part Duh!

Last month, I identified the new species of psycho-geek that has emerged to prey upon online gamers. These new game-wreckers come in three stultifyingly dysfunctional flavors: Crashers, Cheats, and Killers. This month I'd like to cover their effects on Internet gaming, and see what should be done about them. While the initial, elementary school logic is just to ignore them and they will go away—unfortunately, I am a realist. And so, even while I detest the thought, I am forced to acknowledge them, as you would a backed-up toilet: unpleasant, but something somebody has to look at and do something about.

The Crasher is very hard for individual gamers to combat. We can only heap utter abuse on these wee-nie hacker-wannabes and make them pariahs for their anti-social behavior. Some of them will go so far as to gloat about being able to send players viruses along with game-turn files, which is about as funny as telling the stewardess that your laptop has two kilos of plastique inside it. By their nature, online services have to remain accessible, and thus vulnerable, but game server companies should try and have more folks

watching the controls at any given moment. That way, even if there is no way of stopping all of these goofs, every once in a while one of them would have his scrawny ass nailed to

“Every once in a while, one of these geeks should have his scrawny ass nailed to the wall.”

the wall. Any gamers out there who have sworn to battle injustice with their hacker abilities should keep an eye out for these idiots, and deliver unto them the silicon Armageddon they so richly deserve.

Handling the Cheaters, on the other hand, should be almost completely in the hands of the gaming community, and I really wish designers would stop worrying about it. Your code shouldn't be hanging out all over the place if you're thinking of the online arena—but neither should you be obsessing about trying to

outwit every geek with a cheating hack. If even an hour of coding that could have been better spent on gameplay or debugging goes into security routines, then a victory has been handed to the forces of weeniness...and game companies' loyal customers suffer needlessly.

While I am thrilled with the various competition “ladders” to be found for most Net-capable games, I don't think we should be taking this so seriously that we demand that companies waste resources designing iron-clad games. If designers want to help, they can give Net games the ability to flag IP addresses and inform the player if they are about to get into it with a computer on the cheater list. Let's make social pressure do the work for us, and exclude people whose behavior is unacceptable.

The most serious threat to the graphic multi-user dungeon games, which are trying to catch on as viable social and economic entities, are the Killer types, or PKer's (Player Killers), as they have come to be known. I am sure the suits at Studio 3DO and BattleNet think it's great that players are spending money hunting each other; unfortunately, for every hour spent at the game by the sociopathic murderer, or those who let themselves get caught up in useless revenge, 10 hours are lost to the game from newbies who sign on, are

pointlessly butchered, and depart—never again to return.

Even experienced gamers can grow tired of having to keep an eye out for virtual serial killers instead of actually getting into the game world. ULTIMA ONLINE Director Starr Long promises there will be dire consequences in his game for killing other players, and that the online staff will frown on the practice. But I wonder if this will change anything, unless someone in charge is prepared to lose the patronage of a few losers for the sake of a more viable community?

To all you MUDers out there who defend PKing as “part of the game,” why don't you haul your passive-aggressive little butts over to a game where killing other players is the point, like *QUAKE*, *NETMECH*, or *AIRWARRIOR*, and face players who actually expect you to come at them? Is that too much like a fair fight?

When it comes down to it, the only real way for online gaming to defend itself against these pathetic new vermin is to add a little responsibility to all the anonymous power that the Net provides. Game servers should start looking into setting player's names/personas into stone, so that some sort of record of your behavior can follow you around in a game. After all, a place “where everyone knows your name” can be a real deterrent to being a psycho-geek. ☺



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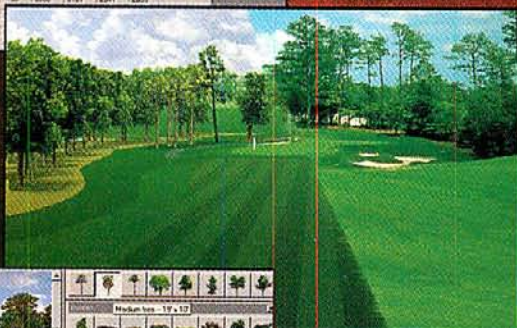
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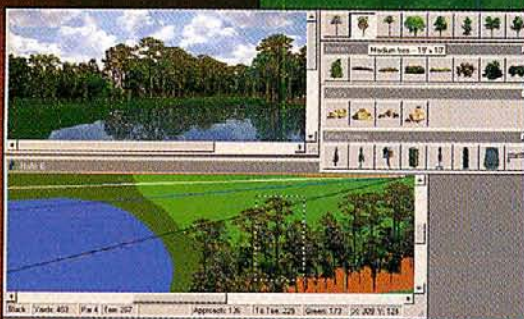


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Click and drag on its shape

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The Hole View of the new bunker.

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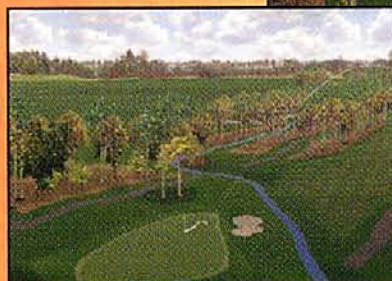


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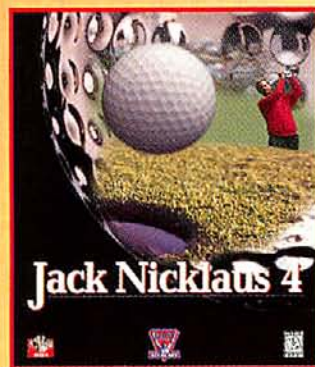


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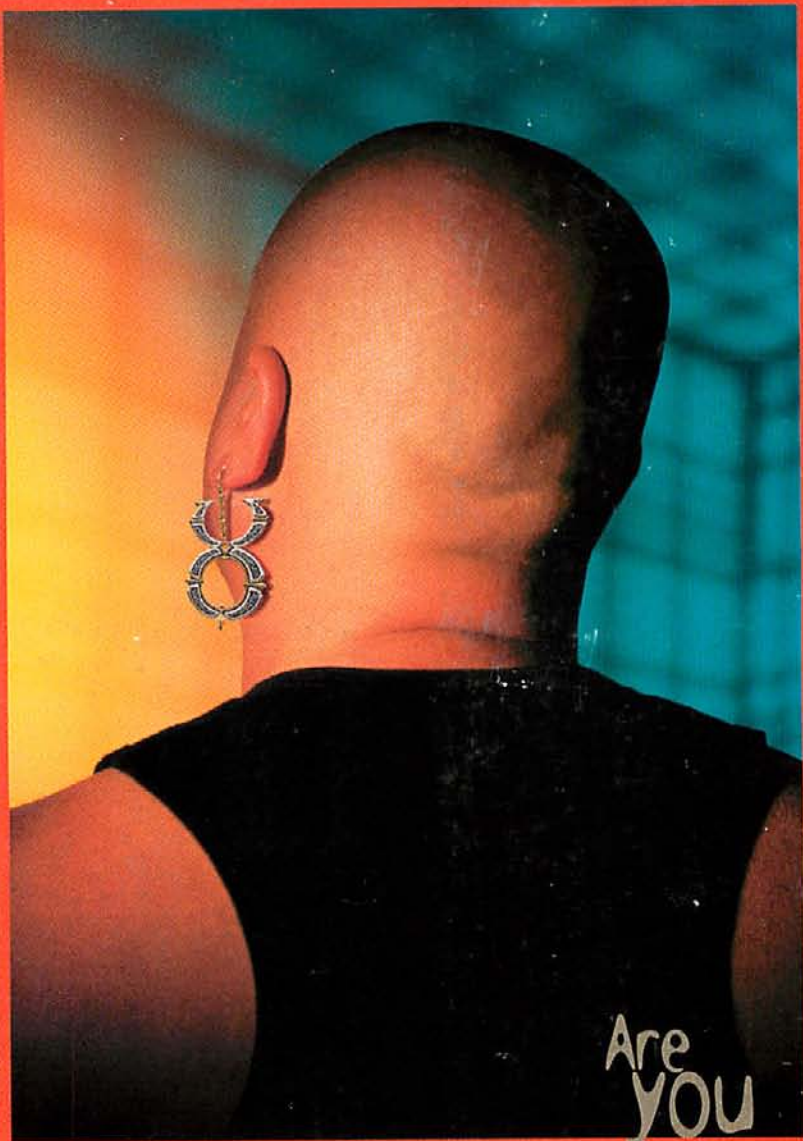
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