New World’s Might and Magic III

Also in This Issue:
Covert Action
Fireteam 2200
Spirit of Excalibur
Life & Death II: The Brain
Let's go back in time. All the way back to about 275 BC. Civilization exists only in small pockets like Rome, Greece and Egypt. The rest of the world is a vast terra incognita, peopled with strange and dangerous barbarians. You are a young Centurion, sent with your legion to subdue marauding tribes of the Alps.

What would such an adventure be like?

That's the premise of Centurion, Defender of Rome, a new cinematic adventure, where you don't just watch the story unfold, you control the action. You'll race chariots in the Circus Maximus, sail fleets of ancient warships across the Mediterranean, compete in gladiator shows in the Colosseum, seduce the voluptuous Cleopatra and lead Roman legions into battle at the edge of civilization.

In Centurion, rich images of a time long ago are brought to life with cinematic techniques. I began exploring the uses of cinematic techniques in Defender of the Crown and Rocket Ranger. But as great as these early cinematic adventures LOOKED, they lacked the addicting involvement and interactive levels of great computer games. The cinematic part was complete. The adventure part was in its infancy.

The cinematic adventure has finally grown up. We used every last one of our secrets in making Centurion. It's all there: great graphics, cinematic editing, strategy, and depth of gameplay that players now demand.

Take Centurion's chariot racing scene. We planned out every scene the way a filmmaker would shoot it. You see your chariot enter the Circus Maximus and pass in front of a packed grandstand. The "camera" cuts to an aerial shot of the track and zooms in for a close-up of your chariot. Suddenly the race begins. You hold the reins as you charge around the track, whipping your opponent and trying to shatter his chariot.

We even added a fully-orchestrated musical soundtrack. We asked award-winning film composer Jon Newton to work his magic with sound boards. The pounding drums and blaring trumpets bring out the drama of each event.

But we wanted to go beyond cinematic appeal. We wanted to create an environment that's different each time you play, one that doesn't have the usual pre-determined path. Like our land battle. You control the action and create your own winning strategies. You direct the movement of each infantry and cavalry unit. You send your general into the fray to bolster your troops' morale. Retreat. Charge ahead. Outflank. Even form a wedge. But your enemies are "smart" and unpredictable. They'll adapt to outwit your previously successful strategies and present you with new challenges each time you play.

Cinematic graphics and great game play. This is what makes Centurion the first complete cinematic adventure.

It took my group, Bits of Magic and Electronic Arts, three years to bring the epic world of Centurion to life. I sincerely hope you'll enjoy your journey back in time to the world of ancient Rome. (Here's one last secret: Save the Parthians for last. They can tear you to pieces.)

Electronic Arts

2 WAYS TO ORDER. 1) Visit your retailer.
2) Call 1-800-245-4525 with VISA/MC, USA or Canada, Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm Pacific Time. IBM, Tandy and compatibles. $49.95 (3.5" available).
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*Continuum.*
A New Dimension of Gaming
Features

In Search of Depth 10
Three-Sixty's Das Boot / Paul Nielsen

Air of Superiority 12
Tactical Tips for Their Finest Hour / James Lowerre, Jr.

Third Time and Charmed 16
Sneak Preview of Might & Magic III / Johnny L. Wilson

Worlds of Ultima for Everyone! 19
Beating the One-Saved-Game Blues / Aaron Allston

Putting the Bite on JAWS 22
Just Another War in Space / Hosea Battles, Jr.

With II You Get Eggroll 24
Battle Chess II: Chinese Chess / Ken St. Andre

Tanks for the Modem 28
SimSystems' FireTeam 2200 / Jesse W. Cheng

Accolade's Elvira 34
More Than Two Good Things / Leah Wesolowski

Another Stab at Chaos 38
FTL’s Dungeon Master II / Derek Godat

Knightmare in Middlemere 43
Psygnosis' Obitus / Allen L. Greenberg

Baseball Manager Connects 48
A New Game on the PRODIGY® Service

Real Gamers, Meet Real Blackjack 53
Edward O. Thorp's Tutor in a Box / Michael S. Lasky

Mortal Scene 60
Electronic Arts' The Immortal / Matt Laurence

Pac-Man of the 90s 62
Freakin Funky Fuzzballs / G. Marc Clupper

What You Sheath Is What You Get 64
Sierra's Spirit of Excalibur / Todd Threadgill

Move Over, Mr. Bond 76
Sid Meier's Covert Action Takes Aim / Charles Ardai

Departments

Taking A Peek 6
Rumor Bag 14
Scorpion's Tale (Bane of the Cosmic Forge) 36
Game Ratings Chart (Top 100 Games Rated) 40
Opponents Wanted 52
Conversions Received 52
Over There (European Games Report) 56
Inside the Industry 58
Letters from Paradise 70
Reader Input Device 74
Editorial (Color Coding Through Rose-Tinted Glasses) 80

Circle Reader Service #47
## Advertiser Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accolade</td>
<td>63, 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantage Ace</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arcade</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethesda Softworks</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Valley Software</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Cod Connection</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chips &amp; Bits</td>
<td>32-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compsult</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computability</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGW Back Issues</td>
<td>68-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covox, Inc.</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyborg Games</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data East</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disney Software</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamix</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eagle Graphics</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic Arts</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic Arts Distribution</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enchanted Horizons</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game Street U.S.A.</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Quarters</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gosselin Computer Consultants</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interplay</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interstel</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCL Services</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joppa Computer Products</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konami</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lance Haffner Games</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legend</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manta</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maxis Software</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microprose</td>
<td>47, 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindcraft</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Control</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NovaStar Game Company</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin Systems</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper Mayhem</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragon</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psygnosis</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simcap, Inc.</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simcoarum Systems</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulations Canada</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir-Tech Software</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Simulations Inc.</td>
<td>18, 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supremacy Games</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrustmaster, Inc.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twin Engine Gaming</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Gold</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Games Headquarters</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viking Software</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### Accolade

San Jose, CA

**JACK NICKLAUS PRESENTS THE GREAT COURSES OF THE U.S. OPEN:**

There's a title that says it all. This is the fourth in the popular series of add-on disks for those who enjoy puttering around with Jack Nicklaus Golf. This one adds the courses of Pebble Beach, Oakmont and Springfield, New Jersey. IBM ($21.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

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**ROAD & CAR:** The showroom is filling up with new exotics and the road outside is winding toward new locales. The addition of two new cars, the Acura NSX and the Dodge Stealth R/T Turbo, expands on the “feel” of driving the ultimate in hot new cars. Now, there is more to being king of the road than cruising the California coast. This disk offers five New England segments, with lots of eastern architecture and scenery. IBM ($24.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

---

### Cinemaware

Westlake Village, CA

**AIR STRIKE USA:** In this British arcade game with a modicum of realism, players fly an Advanced Tactical Fighter II (ATF II) and experience the entire globe as their "combat arena." Each side has the same number of land units, factories, etc. to attack and to defend, with the balance of power hinging on the player's successes in offensive and defensive arcade missions. Highly diverting. IBM, Amiga ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #3.

### Electronic Arts

San Mateo, CA

**NIGHTBREED:** The British always have had a certain flair for horror, and Nightbreed is no exception. A gruesome story of an undead Shangri-La, the hero must find this retreat, without bringing the police there or being devoured or otherwise subdued in the process. Several clever (yet nasty) arcade sequences punctuate this interactive movie/acc...
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Taking a Peek

THE UNTOUCHABLES: This arcade-style game features more attractive action sequences. This time, they are loosely based on the hit movie. Scroll around six different locations, switching between movie characters, in an attempt to avenge Malone’s death by throwing Nitti (ahistorically) from the courthouse rooftop. Another fine American legend as retold by British programmers. C-64, Amiga, ST ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #5.

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P.O. Box 5223
Englewood, CO 80155

MICROACE BLACKJACK: This game is to blackjack what a Ford pickup is to farmwork; it’s not glitzy but really gets the job done. Although limited by only allowing one player versus the house, the game-aid templates and fantastic documentation makes for a package that is a sure winner. Based on the strategies of renowned blackjack expert Julian H. Braun, M.S., the clear graphics display and instructional methods will benefit the owner of this software where it matters most (at the real blackjack tables). Great statistical analysis and winning strategies. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

Microprose
Hunt Valley, MD

LIGHTSPEED: Designed to be a hybrid between a combat flight simulation and science fiction role-playing game, Lightspeed blends several diverse game elements together. Players must succeed in combat, diplomacy and trade in order to accomplish the overall task of the game, finding a planet fit for colonization. Different weapons must be selected in order to defeat a variety of aliens, since some weapons are not effective against some aliens. Diplomacy and trade are handled via menu-driven conversations, but purist role-players will note that the interaction is limited. Diplomacy is very important in the game, however, since one’s success is dependent on a wise selection of allies. IBM ($54.95). Circle Reader Service #7.

ReadySoft, Inc.
30 Wertheim Court #2
Richmond Hill, Ontario, CANADA

SPACE ACE: Like its predecessor, Dragon’s Lair, this game originally appeared in arcades and gobbled up quarters while featuring laser-disk technology. The original is faithfully represented as Earth’s greatest hero, Ace, must combat the nasty Commander Borf and his Infanto Ray. Naturally, Borf has also made off with space-babe Kimberly in order to set up the requisite rescue sequence. As in the original, quick reflexes are required to meet the challenges of this beautifully illustrated arcade game. IBM. Circle Reader Service #8.

Three Sixty Pacific
Campbell, CA

HARPOON BATTLESET #3, THE MED CONFLICT: A departure from the other "Harporn Battlesets" (don’t start singing "Anchors Aweigh," please), this time it’s down and dirty in the restricted waters of the Mediterranean. Most of the scenarios concentrate on the navies of smaller countries, as opposed to the superpower fleets presented in earlier products. Another interesting fact is that this product features a lot of emphasis on "what ifs." Sixty new platforms are added to the hardware inventory for good measure. The timing on this one couldn’t be much better for Harpoon players. IBM ($29.95). Circle Reader Service #9.

Virgin Mastertronic
Irvine, CA

OVERLORD: Like space, this one is big (really big). The player confronts the computer for galactic control at the strategic level, colonizing planets, mining, farming and raising troops for defense and assault. Beautiful British graphics punctuate what is a fairly easy to learn (yet a challenge to master) strategy game. With no spaceship battles or arcade sequences, this real-time game is like an ideal human companion: pretty and deep. Amiga ($49.99). Circle Reader Service #10. caw

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Page 8
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Long Ride Into Night

Searching the Depths of Das Boot

by Paul Nielsen

Paul Nielsen is a former Data Systems Technician Petty Officer with the U.S. Navy Submarine Service.

While attending the Submarine Track of Data Systems "C" School at Mare Island Naval Base, we were offered the opportunity to view the film Das Boot. Later, the epic film of a sub crew's struggle for survival had a near-cult following at Sub School, New London, Connecticut which this author also attended. So, given an opportunity to review Three-Sixty's Das Boot, I didn't hesitate. While awaiting delivery, I re-read the English translation of an actual German U-Boot commander's tactical handbook.

Initial Inspection, Sir

The hefty Das Boot box shows a WWII German sub stealthily leaving the scene of a freighter's demise. Key words jump from the features list: 256 VGA color, Enigma coding machine, 3-D views, historical realism! Not only that, it includes a copy of the book The Boat by Lother-Gunther Buchheim. Within a minute, this baby was installed. A very impressive opening score was soon resounding through the Sound Blaster board and stereo. Unfortunately, the opening's full animation proved to be incompatible with this reviewer's Orchid Pro-Designer II VGA board. Instead, a 256-color sub appeared with the main menu, the usual options of Preferences, War Diary (read "high scores"), Demo and Action.

Maiden Voyage

Opting for the Baltic training before undertaking a full mission, a menu of four surface and four submerged training sessions appears. Manning the anti-aircraft gun, several fighters and light bombers make runs at the sub. The joystick is not supported and the mouse is strictly used for menu selections. So, aiming the gun is accomplished solely by the arrow keys on the keyboard. Scoring is based on the number of planes hit (they always crash) minus the number of bombs dropped on the sub. Hint: To score high, go for the fighters; they come in close and the large silhouette can't help but be hit. Also, the game is over when the AA shells are used up, so waste a few rounds to shorten the game and avoid extra bombs.

Then, a bad feeling about this game sets in: No sub commander in his right mind would take on a dozen planes. In the slim event that his sub would survive, he would lose his command for breaking orders. Yet, this is only the first part of the Baltic training — maybe it gets better.

Unfortunately, the other training sessions are more of the same. The torpedo runs are turkey shoots reminiscent of an early '80s arcade sub game. The sub versus sub "simulation" (this technology isn't exactly WWII vintage) is an underwater outside view of two subs — giving a new definition to the computer jargon "point and shoot." During WWII, subs only attacked other subs which were on the surface.

An initial try at the depth charge training saw this commander able to dodge the falling charges and completely avoid taking any damage. When the game locked up (on an genuine Intel OEM PC, mind you), it was time to take a closer look at the manual....

Manual Labors

Page one has a disclaimer stating that the software is not intended to recreate the book. The name Das Boot is "for promotional purposes only." Hmm.... Then there's a statement that Das Boot brings some innovations to sub simulators, such as outside 3-D views, improved torpedo set-up and realistic digitized graphics.
Review

Something Rotten Sailing Past Denmark

Das Boot excels as an arcade game involving individual sailors' duty stations on a submarine at general quarters (much like Epyx’s Destroyer, Microplay’s Destroyer Escort or Accolade’s Gunboat). However, it fails (sinks?) as the serious submarine simulation it is positioned to be because it doesn’t permit the player to take on the combined role of the captain and his crew.

Submarine simulators, more so than fighter plane or tank simulators, must provide a balance of strategic and tactical information at all times, letting the sole player assume the roles of the sub captain and duty station officers simultaneously. Das Boot permits control of the sub at several stations, but limits the information available to the player. For example, it is possible from several stations to order a down bubble (increase angle of descent). Unfortunately, the current angle of the dive planes may only be ascertained at the Control Station.

Limited Intelligence on Board

Each station has only a limited view. The anti-aircraft gunner only sees planes directly in front and will often be surprised by a plane attacking from the side. The conn permits viewing in one direction — straight ahead. Now, 688 Attack Sub solves this problem by making the player go to different stations but providing certain key information at all of them. WolfPack, another 256-color U-boat arcade game, puts the player in the command seat of an entire squadron of subs with the player moving from one sub to the next by selecting it on the map. Das Boot suffers by comparison and from several odd program features as well.

Gremlins

To wit, the sub changes heading at a constant rate, regardless of the amount of rudder desired or the speed of the sub. Compounding this, at a dead stop the sub freely pivots! When looking at the outside surface view, one never sees another surfacing sub. Likewise, an underwater view will never show a surfaced sub after it submerges. There are more “features” like these, plus the occasional divide error or lock-up.

There are more serious design flaws at the duty stations. For instance, there is no way to range the deck gun, which fires at a rapid rate and never needs reloading (since it never runs out of ammunition). There is no way to command the sub to come to a specific bearing, either. The player must stay at the helm holding down the arrow key to perform this task.

Also, while Das Boot’s user interface involves the mouse for duty station selection, all the sub commands are executed via the keyboard. To add to the frustration, several of the commands include shift and alt sequences when simple single keystrokes would have sufficed. The situation is made worse by the fact that several of the keys change their function from duty station to duty station, so consistency is lost and the learning curve is made needlessly long.

As an arcade shoot-'em-up, Das Boot might cut the mustard. Be warned, however, that those who liked the movie might want to torpedo the game.

FIFTH ESKADRA, Modern Naval Operations In The Mediterranean Sea.
GREY SEAS, GREY SKIES, Tactical Modern Naval Combat.

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BATTLE TANK: BARBAROSSA TO STALINGRAD, Tactical Armoured Combat In The East, June 1941 – May 1943.

MAIN BATTLE TANK: CENTRAL GERMANY, Modern Tactical Armoured Combat.

ROMMEL AT EL ALAMEIN, Battles For Egypt, 1 July to 6 November, 1942.
MOSCOW CAMPAIGN, Operations Typhoon & White Storm, 30 Aug 1941 to 13 Feb 1942.

TO THE RHINE, The Allied Advance In The West, 29 Aug to 11 Dec, 1944.
ROMMEL AT GAZALA, Battles For Tobruk, 25 May to 27 June 1942.
STALINGRAD CAMPAIGN, The Turning Point In Russia, June 1942 – February 1943.
KURSK CAMPAIGN, Operation Zitadelle, Summer 1943.
OPERATION OVERLORD, The Invasion Of Europe, 6 June – 28 August, 1942.
GOLAN FRONT, The 1973 Arab/Israeli War In The North.
FALL GELL, The Fall Of France, Spring 1940.

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**New*** FLEET MED, Tactical Naval Combat In The Med, 1939-1943. The Italian fleet was battle ready and eager for a fight, as was the navy of England, the long term ruler of the Med. But only one fleet would survive the coming conflict. This is the fourth and final game in our WWII tactical naval series. The full available fleets of England and Italy are provided, as well as those of the United States and France. Prebuilt scenarios & a “build your own” system are included. Amiga, Atari ST, & IBMPC.

MALTA STORM, The Battle For The Mediterranean, December 1941 – August 1942.

KRIEGSMARINE, Tactical Naval Combat In The Atlantic, 1939-1944.
NORTHERN FLEET, Modern Naval Operations In The Atlantic Ocean.
GRAND FLEET, Tactical Naval Combat In The North Sea, 1906-1920.
IN HARM’S WAY, Tactical Naval Combat In The Pacific, 1943-1944.
LONG LANCE, Tactical Naval Combat In The Pacific, 1942.
SEVENTH FLEET, Modern Naval Operations In The Pacific Ocean.
How the Luftwaffe Can Have Hugh Dowding's Drawers or the RAF Can Get Goering's Goat

by James M. Lowerre, Jr.

available as bombers, hit the cross-channel coastal satellite airfields. That way, if any OTPCs are shot down, it will be over the channel, most likely, and they can be rescued by other aircraft as fighters flying close level escort in schwarm formation (don’t assign more than two NPCs to this formation because the last one frequently crashes into the channel shortly after take-off).

Choose the fastest bomber with the heaviest bomb load available. Then, take off from an airfield inland from the fighter airfield and fly under the radar at four to five hundred feet altitude. Follow the escorts to the target (the computer-controlled pilots navigate very well). Bomb the target using the straight-low-slow method (described in "Bomber Operations" below).

With the relatively heavy bomb loads carried in the medium bombers, two or three airfields can be reduced in this manner. Concentrate on the primary airfield first and try to totally destroy it since the results on that target will be reflected in the Luftwaffe’s other targets for that day. Secondary targets hit will be reflected in the overall strategic situation. The RAF’s airfield operability rating will drop quickly toward the victory objective of 35%.

3. Try the multiple bomber alternative. If one desires to employ more than one bomber, it is only possible to fly as a wingman in a bomber formation. In this case, one cannot get the other aircraft to adopt the straight-low-slow bombing method. So, one stands a good chance of losing these other aircraft during the mission (particularly with the vulnerable Ju-87s). Nothing, however, precludes the player from running his own bombing attack separate from his bomber group. Of course, such a lone wolf must beware of the group dropping its bombs from altitude while making one’s own straight-low-slow attack! What’s worse than being bombed by one’s own planes? Remember, even three effective NPC pilots are nowhere near as efficient as a single player-controlled bomber using the straight-low-slow technique.

The RAF

1. Use all available aircraft. Every mission, organize them into two or three groups using the schwarm formation. Start all groups on the corner of the target and assign NPCs to fly supporting missions. Separate each group by altitude (i.e., one at 12, one at 9 and one at 6,000 feet). From each group’s initial point, use a single additional way point in different directions of likely attack at the same altitude as the initial point, but close to the initial point (so that the symbols partially overlap). This way, other groups can be more responsive to the actual threat if a wrong guess is made on the direction of attack. All groups should have a CAP priority with one’s personal group taking the senior position at the highest altitude.

2. Expect to be attacked. At least two groups of enemy bombers escorted by fighters, one group around medium altitude (10,000 feet) and one group around low altitude (3,000 feet), will do so. Both groups will come from approximately the same direction (rarely the one anticipated). When flying Hurricanes, the bombers will most likely be Do-17s. When flying Spitfires, the player is likely to be facing Ju-88s.

3. Attack the enemy at the highest altitude. Interception angles need to be calculated so that one engages the enemy as far away from the target as possible. Once finished with the high-altitude group, go after the lower one(s), but beware of left-over escorts from the earlier group.

4. Protect the RDF system as long as possible. The Luftwaffe will continue to attack it until they are convinced they have put it out of action. Hence, they do not turn to the much more critical airfields until this is accomplished.

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Some Tactical Tips for Campaign Bomber Operations

1. There are three basics: bomb on a straight line, bomb at low altitude and bomb at slow speed.

2. Be sure to select the single bomb release option.

3. When approaching the target area, before the individual buildings of the target become visible, reduce altitude to 50 feet. Do this at engine power sufficient to quickly correct mistakes without stalling. "Trim" the aircraft for perfectly level flight since at reduced speed even the slightest climb will result in a most undesirable stall and crash combination.

When the individual buildings of the target become visible, get on an approach that puts two of the buildings lined up one behind the other. Slowing air speed at this point offers more time to get this delicate approach correct.

If a slower air speed is desired, using flaps, landing gear (not as crazy as it

Since I was twelve years old and saw the movie "The Battle of Britain" I’ve fantasized about being a pilot in that battle. With the release of *Lucasfilm Games’ Their Finest Hour,* that fantasy has come to life. Repeatedly savoring the joy of flying my computer in the autumn skies of Southern England in 1940 has inevitably given me a deal of experience with the game that I’d like to share. In the explanation of these "lessons learned," I will refer to, but not repeat, the hints and tips previously published in CGW by Roger White (#75 and #77) and Russell Sipe (#67).

**Campaigning in Their Finest Hour**

Before conducting any campaign, a commander must know not only the campaign objectives but also the general circumstances that will apply to all battles in the campaign. In this light, it is important to bear in mind that the computer opponents in any campaign scenario will be Top Ace quality with scores of around 2,000 points. The player’s Non-Player Characters (NPCs) will only perform better than novices if their scores are equal to or greater than 1,000 points. When commanding the Luftwaffe, it is important to understand that aircraft (along with their NPC pilots) will be lost to operational hazards as well as enemy opposition. Escorting fighters may crash on take-off and bombers may be brought down by the exploding ordnance of preceding planes.

When playing either side, clone the top two or three scoring pilots in each category by using the DOS copy command and different character names. Then, save all the original characters in a single sub-subdirectory in the BOB1940 subdirectory. For those who consider this cheating, go ahead and assign NPCs to fly supporting missions and watch as hundreds of player hours go down in flames or crash into the channel very early in the campaign. Suddenly, there is nothing left but novice pilots to continue the campaign!

For those who want to protect the player time invested in each character’s score, fly Original Top Pilot Characters (OTPCs), saving their files to the sub-subdirectory every two or three missions. Use these files to replace losses in the campaign by copying them out of the sub-subdirectory and back into the BOB1940 subdirectory.

**The Luftwaffe**

1. Target the RAF airfields. The game accurately mirrors history and this is the fastest means of attriting the RAF’s fighter strength. Initially, when only the Ju-87s are available as bombers, hit the cross-channel coastal satellite airfields. That way, if any OTPCs are shot down, it will be over the channel, most likely, and they can be rescued by other aircraft as fighters flying close level escort in schwarm formation (don’t assign more than two NPCs to this formation because the last one frequently crashes into the channel shortly after take-off).

Choose the fastest bomber with the heaviest bomb load available. Then, take off from an airfield inland from the fighter airfield and fly under the radar at four to five hundred feet altitude. Follow the escorts to the target (the computer-controlled pilots navigate very well). Bomb the target using the straight-low-slow method (described in "Bomber Operations" below).

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Strategy

sounds considering your altitude, throttle and especially dive brakes is more efficient than simply using the throttle.

Release each bomb as the base of the target building reaches the center-bottom of the cockpit window (use the camera replay until this is mastered). As soon as the bombing run is complete, retract flaps, landing gear and dive brakes and go to full throttle. Come back around at fifty feet to repeat the process as necessary.

Once the bombing is completed, retract all surfaces and climb back to five hundred feet (thus, if shot down, there will be enough altitude to bail out), head for home, turn on the autopilot and man the guns to defend your aircraft on the long journey to safety.

Some Tactical Tips for Campaign Fighters Operations

1. Again, there are thee basics that should be adhered to whenever possible: dive from superior altitude, get on the enemy’s tail fast and get close when firing.

2. When approaching enemy fighters while possessing an altitude advantage, use the scan view to watch the enemy climb. They tend to turn onto the player’s heading as they gain altitude, enabling one to dive easily onto their tails.

3. If an enemy fighter attempts to turn into one’s plane, a single burst fired in front of him will frequently turn him away, presenting a very vulnerable six o’clock.

4. When coming head-on against an opposing fighter, one should go into a steep dive as soon as the enemy begins to fire. When the opponent’s firing is no longer audible, one can stop the dive and loop up behind him.

5. Use designer Larry Holland’s technique of attacking bombers from above and in front. Then, loop onto their rear, firing continuously while rolling and pitching, side to side, up and down, and keeping the bomber in the gun sights. This puts all available fire into the bomber and keeps the player a moving target for the bomber’s gunners.

6. Long-range gunnery can be very effective against both fighters and bombers.

Straight-Low-Slow Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aircraft</th>
<th>Engine Power</th>
<th>Flaps</th>
<th>Landing Gear</th>
<th>Dive Brakes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ju-87B</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Down</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bf-110C</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>Down</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Do-17Z</td>
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<td>Down</td>
<td>Down</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ju-88A</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Down</td>
<td>Down</td>
<td>Down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He-111H</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>Down</td>
<td>Down</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Airspeed should be 150 and altitude should be 50 feet for all planes shown above.

British fighters have an edge in this category as they can successfully engage Ju-87s, Bf-109s, Bf-110s and even the Do-17s as soon as the target wing span reaches the edges of the gunsight ring.

7. When flying RAF fighters, remember to roll upside down before an unopposed steep dive. This uses the centrifugal force to feed the carburetor to avoid the embarrassing hesitation and engine cough of performing a steep dive in the upright position.

8. It is possible to regain altitude quickly by doing a series of half-loops, each time rolling upright and diving from the top of the half-loop just enough to get airspeed up for the next loop.

9. When attacking from the rear and being in jeopardy of overshooting your opponent, drop flaps and landing gear to quickly bleed off excess airspeed. Alternatively, go into a steep climb and, just before stalling, dive back onto the target.

Conclusions

Once this author had mastered the straight-low-slow bombing technique, it was clear that fighting a successful RAF Campaign was much more difficult than a Luftwaffe Campaign. Playing either side still yields a tremendous amount of enjoyment, however, which is a testament to the quality of Their Finest Hour’s lasting value. “Gut’ bomber” or “Tally ho.”

TWIN ENGINE GAMING PRESENTS:

Out Time Days

a game of Time Travel in an alternate dimension

THE EXPERIENCE: OTD is a game of life on a strange world. Although populated by a variety of semi-humanoid races, it is nothing like the Earth that your character left behind. Gone is the industrial might of large nations. The multi-talented worker is a thing of the past. Even your famed Time Jumping skills have been checked to a certain degree. However, you do happen to be one of the few Time Jumper’s on this world, and that in itself is a major strength.

You’ll choose one of several sects to work with, or attempt to create your own from scratch, which will help set your general method of operation. As each new time opens, there are new discoveries to make, new lands to chart, and new people to meet. The world awaits change, and you are the catalyst.

OUT TIME DAYS is a highly interactive role-playing Play-By-Mail game with turns processed weekly. It has received excellent reviews, notably from Flagship and Paper Mayhem. Turn cost is $5.00. The game is open ended and 99% computer moderated. The rulebook may be obtained for $5.00 (refundable with startup). A special startup is available, which gives you the rulebook, the startup turn, and five turns for only $15.00.

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Space Combat

a game of pure tactical combat... in a rather unique environment

You’ll be fighting in an edgeless contest zone aboard living creatures. Space Combat is almost all combat, with some room for diplomacy. Offensive actions include the creature’s Psychic Scream to mentally disrupt others, launching Inverse Mines that will impede your enemy, freeing Spores to destroy internals, using Nerve Pulses to paralyze psky scouts, and Virally Infecting your opponent in the hopes of taking over their alien. Each turn comes with a special full-page graphic printout of your ending position to aid you in planning.

Space Combat was designed to be easy to learn, but difficult to master. Every game starts with ten players, and as each is eliminated, the chances of the game ending will increase. Turn sheets are custom made on a laser printer to aid you in filling out your next turn. The game runs about 12-18 turns. Cost is $3.50 per turn. A rulebook (required before you can join) is $1.00 (free if you mention this ad!)

May 1991

Circle Reader Service #55

Page 13
It was definitely the “A” party. Luminaries in software design added more soft refractions of light than the “Monet At Givenchy” print on the wall. The conversational palette had been pre-mixed with a gouache of California chardonnay and Coca-Cola Classic, single-malt scotch and Seven-Up. Lord British held court as he recounted the history and philosophy of Ultima with a circle of a half-dozen less experienced designers surrounding him like a bard around a tavern fire. “Iron Dan” Bunten anchored a group that framed the doorway and regaled them with stories of earlier days, punctuated with his folksy mountain humor. It was, after all, a secret conclave of CGW’s “informed sources.”

Against one wall, Sid Ember lamented the impracticality of his research expedition to the Tigris-Euphrates Valley in preparation for his Civilization game. Participants in the group chuckled nervously, knowing Sid’s penchant for doing acting research on a project and not being sure if he was taking an opportunity for topical humor or was genuinely disappointed. I stood behind a tall designer and hoped they wouldn’t notice the bag I wear over my head for all formal occasions.

Bingo.

A Lucasfilm designer answered Sid’s complaint about not being able to research an ancient location prior to designing a game by noting that he was working on the most famous location since Plato wrote the Timaeus. Corey Cole had a similar problem with regard to Quest For Glory III. They have a story that could potentially take place in either a legendary Transylvania or darkest Africa. Both plot lines have something to commend them, but both locales are famous enough that it would be difficult to maintain the suspension of disbelief. Maybe that’s why Lori is currently working on a game based on the Mixed-Up Fairy Tale concept (and designed for primary grade children) and Corey is working on a puzzle-based learning game, tentatively called The Mad Scientist’s Assistant (and designed for junior high school and up).

Steve Meretzky broke away from the group and wandered toward the bar. I followed him as inconspicuously as possible in hopes that I might hear him describe the contemporary adobe and seafoam green furnishings of the hospitality suite in his inimitable prose. He is, after all, a master at room descriptions. I think he said the “vomit and vegetable” color combination might be the right effect for the color scheme in the fraternity house for Spellcasting 201: The Sorcerer’s Appliance. Maybe I was wrong. One thing is for sure, you won’t see that color scheme adorning any CGW covers.

Before I could hear the end of that conversation, I overheard one of Beyond Software’s programmers insist that their baseball game (originally designed to be TV Sports: Baseball for Cinemaware) was definitely going to be shipped by SSI before the summer is too far along. Since the game has not been officially named, as yet, I jokingly asked her if the game was going to be Jim Palmer Baseball. Her fiery glare almost burned my bag as if to say that was about as likely as Palmer being the starter for the first game of this year’s World Series.

Two successful sports programmers were sitting at the table in the corner and perked up when the conversation shifted to baseball. They said the guys at Park Place Software are producing a sports game on a new platform for Electronic Arts. I could only find out that it wasn’t a football game (Park Place has nearly cornered the market on football games by doing so much work on so many different games). I suggested it might be on the 16-bit Nintendo and couldn’t get a response. Still, I told them that if it was another baseball game, they would have to contend with a new entry from Virgin Mastertronic. Virgin is about to complete 3-D Simulation Baseball in cooperation with Ed Ringler of Sport-Time Ice Hockey and Omni-Play Horse Racing fame.

Unfortunately I had to leave the party rather abruptly. It seems that someone wanted to have some fun at my expense. They told Brian Moriarty and Dave Albert that I was really Scorpia in disguise. My entire career flashed before my eyes as every designer in the room began to converge upon me. To be continued?
A CRASH-LANDING, GLOBE-SPANNING ADVENTURE.

CHINA

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Once, *Might & Magic* meant massive maps, detailed dungeon drawings, and catastrophic combat.

**Now, New World Computing's**

**Might & Magic III: Isles of Terra**

**Makes Gamers Face the Music**

by Johnny L. Wilson

Actually, *Might & Magic III: Isles of Terra* (*M&M3*) puts faces on characters and monsters alike with dynamic graphics that colorfully depict the progress of the battle or condition of the player's characters. *M&M3* also features wild sound effects and audible clues amidst an atmospherically effective soundtrack.

Indeed, the game thrusts even the most novice role-playing character straight into the thick of the game's fictional atmosphere. This is because the initial stages of the game do not force the player to fool around with such mundane activities as creating a party of player characters. *M&M3* is large enough and challenging enough that there will be time to accomplish such tasks later in the adventure. Instead, the player finds his/her characters dropped into a mini-scenario where it is possible to familiarize oneself with what is important in combat, how to use the interface and where to discover on-screen help features. The opening scenario is fairly short, features very low level monsters (rabid mice, beetles that cannot play '60s hits, etc.) and is designed to be non-lethal.

**Visual Cues**

In *M&M3*, players do not have to decipher long (or even short) lists of numbers to determine how their on-screen personas are faring. Reminiscent of a birthstone, each character has an on-screen gem (lifestone?) that flashes one of three colors to indicate how the character is surviving. Analogous to a traffic light, green means there is no problem while yellow means the character is experiencing significant damage and red means that the situation is reaching potentially fatal dimensions. Since the label given to a type of monster will be presented on the screen in the same changing colors (with the same meanings), this visual cue will be readily perceived.

At the same time, one is likely to see his characters' faces transformed from normal through sick and on to death. This, combined with facial expressions which indicate being asleep, sad, insane, turned to stone and even obliterated, gives a texture to the game which emphasizes the character as a person rather than as a primitive military unit.
During combat, each attack is resolved with a visual cue. Different representations appear for physical, magical, electrical, poisonous, energy, cold and fire damage and the size of the representation indicates how effective the attack was. This seems much more expressive of actual combat than messages which indicate points allotted.

The visual cues for non-combat activities offer an exponential increase in verisimilitude, as well. Instead of text messages that pop up and tell the party that a hidden door or passageway has been detected, the stone lizard on one side of the action window waves his arm. Players may or may not spot the action, just as adventurers and explorers might or might not spot the tell-tale hints of a secret door. In the same way, the bat at the top of the action window shrieks and animates its mouth to magically warn the party when danger is imminent. Of course, the warning may not always be in time to allow the party the luxury of avoiding the combat, but it sure can help if a monster is sneaking up behind them. Finally, a gargoyle hugs the "door facing" on the left side of the action window so that players who need to make a quick escape can click on him as though he were a magical artifact. In this way, the party makes use of a handy "levitate" spell that can get many a character out of mortal danger.

To round out the visual assistance options, the screen always offers an auto-mapping option (de rigeur in today's role-playing market), an icon to display mini-quests which have been revealed to the party (a fait not complete?) but not acted upon and a quick reference icon to display only the most succinct and salient statistical data.

**Sound Bytes**

Atmospheric sound is one of the important design points of Might & Magic III: Isles of Terra. Weapons make distinctive sounds reflective of their motion and effect, magical explosions offer percussive punctuation to battle sequences and digitized voices shout occasional battle cries and, more frequently, groan after telling blows. A full range of sound card support (AdLib, Sound Blaster, Tandy DAC and Roland) is planned and CGW was certainly impressed with the full range of Roland sound support.

**Tradition**

Of course, the Might & Magic series already has tens of thousands of dedicated fans who expect to see the same types of detailed statistics and character data that was available in the earlier games, as well as others in the genre. For those players in particular, New World has provided a background screen which provides masses of data, including a list of all the awards and honors the character may have won. In addition, there is a choice of ten relatively standard character classes with no surprises, five traditional fantasy races, three obvious moral alignments and, of course, the biologically requisite two sexes.

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To round out the visual assistance options, the screen always offers an auto-mapping option (de rigeur in today's role-playing market), an icon to display mini-quests which have been revealed to the party (a fait not complete?) but not acted upon and a quick reference icon to display only the most succinct and salient statistical data.

**Sound Bytes**

Atmospheric sound is one of the important design points of Might & Magic III: Isles of Terra. Weapons make distinctive sounds reflective of their motion and effect, magical explosions offer percussive punctuation to battle sequences and digitized voices shout occasional battle cries and, more frequently, groan after telling blows. A full range of sound card support (AdLib, Sound Blaster, Tandy DAC and Roland) is planned and CGW was certainly impressed with the full range of Roland sound support.

**Tradition**

Of course, the Might & Magic series already has tens of thousands of dedicated fans who expect to see the same types of detailed statistics and character data that was available in the earlier games, as well as others in the genre. For those players in particular, New World has provided a background screen which provides masses of data, including a list of all the awards and honors the character may have won. In addition, there is a choice of ten relatively standard character classes with no surprises, five traditional fantasy races, three obvious moral alignments and, of course, the biologically requisite two sexes.

**Deus Ex Machina**

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STRAategic SIMulations, INC.
One Saved-Game Blues

by Aaron Allston

While co-writing and playtesting *The Savage Empire*, a game driven by the same "engine" as *Ultima VI*, I ran into a problem common to both games. That is, each can only support one saved game at a time.

This is probably fine for players who live alone, bite at anyone who comes near their computers and play their games straight through from start to finish, but that isn’t the way things work in my household or in many others. In my place, for instance, the game is installed on one computer and as many as six different people may want to play it. When one roommate or friend staggers, exhausted, away from the machine, the next slides in to take his place. Each, reasonably, wants his own saved game.

There is, fortunately, a way around the one-saved-game restriction. It’s a little convoluted, but by picking up the proper utility and writing a series of simple batch files, you can set up *Ultima VI* and *The Savage Empire* to accommodate as many different players and saved games as the available room on your hard drive will permit.

**Step One: Find a Directory-Renaming Utility**

DOS doesn't allow you to rename directories. You can create them, fill them, empty them and delete them, but you can’t rename them under DOS. Fortunately, several programmers have provided us with helpful utilities that rename directories.

The first step, then, is to find one of these programs — and to find one that can be run from the command line (so it will be suitable for inclusion in batch files).

I use RENDIR.COM, which is available in many bulletin boards' file areas. If you're on Compuserve, GO PCMAGNET and download RENDIR.COM and RENDIR.DOC. Any similar directory renamer will do. Put the utility in any directory on your hard drive, and download RENDIR.COM and RENDIR.DOC. Any similar directory renamer will do. Put the utility in any directory on your hard drive, and download RENDIR.COM and RENDIR.DOC. Any similar directory renamer will do. Put the utility in any directory on your hard drive. In my place, I put it in the root directory. In your place, put it in the directory you want to be the root directory.

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Likewise, I will assume in all future examples that you're installing *Ultima VI*. If you're installing *The Savage Empire* instead, substitute the subdirectory \SAVAGE wherever \ULTIMA6 is mentioned, and the command "savage" wherever the command "ultim6" is indicated.

**Step Two: Install the Game**

Now, install the game on your hard drive. You may already have the game installed, but if you've played it even once, you'll need to re-install it (trust me). You don't need to destroy your saved game, though. You can copy everything that's in your current \SAVEGAME subdirectory into another, empty, directory first. Once you've installed or re-installed the game, you'll have the main game files in the \ULTIMA6 game directory and the pristine saved-game in the \SAVEGAME subdirectory.

**Step Three: Copy the Fresh Savegame Files**

First, rename the \SAVEGAME subdirectory as \MASTER. Issue this command: "rendir savegame master [ENTER]. This renames the subdirectory containing the pristine saved-game files as \ULTIMA6\MASTER. Next, make a new subdirectory for every different saved game you want to have. These have to be in the same directory where your \MASTER subdirectory is. For instance, if you want to start out with saved games for people named Tom, Dick and Harry, issue these commands:

"md tom [ENTER] md dick [ENTER] md harry [ENTER]"

Finally, copy everything in the \MASTER subdirectory to each of the new directories, and then return to your \ULTIMA6 directory. To continue our example above, type:

"cd master [ENTER] copy ** c:\ultima6\tom [ENTER] copy ** c:\ultima6\dick [ENTER] copy ** c:\ultima6\harry [ENTER] cd .. [ENTER]"

This assumes that c: is your hard drive and that your game directory is named \ULTIMA6. If either assumption is incorrect, substitute the correct information.

**Step Four: Write Your Batch Files**

Now, you need to write a series of small, simple batch files and place them within your \ULTIMA6 or \SAVAGE directory. If you don't have a word processor (it needs to be able to save in ASCII format) or a text editor to write the batch files, familiarize yourself with the COPY CON command in the chapter on Batch Processing in your DOS manual.

The batch files follow this format:

"rendir (dirname) savegame [ENTER] ultima6 [ENTER] rendir savegame (dirname) [ENTER]"

...where "(dirname)" is the name of one of the saved-game directories.

Since each batch file corresponds to one directory, you name each after one directory: (dirname).bat. If one saved-game subdirectory is named TOM, the corresponding batch file would be named TOM.BAT.

Example: You've created three directories named \TOM, \DICK and \HARRY for your *Ultima VI* game. You'd write the three batch files in this manner:

**Batch File #1, Saved as TOM.BAT**

"rendir tom savegame [ENTER] ultima6 [ENTER] rendir savegame tom [ENTER]"

Then repeat this procedure for Batch Files #2 and 3, saved as DICK.BAT and HARRY.BAT, respectively.

**Step Five: Ready to Play**

You're now ready to play.

When Tom wants to play his saved game, he'll move to the \ULTIMA6 directory and just type his name: "tom[ENTER]"

The batch file changes the name of the TOM directory to \SAVEGAME and launches the game. When Tom quits, the batch file finishes by changing the name of the \SAVEGAME directory back to \TOM. The process works the same for all the other players.

Unfortunately, this approach won’t let you change from one saved game to another in the course of a single player session; it’s not that sophisticated. You’ll have to exit the game and start it again by invoking a different batch file.

You can always add new saved games. For instance, if Tom wants to start a second game, you can make a new subdirectory (call it \ULTIMA6\TOM2). Copy everything from \ULTIMA6\MASTER into...
Designer's Notes

it. (The files in \MASTER, since they're never called up as a saved game, always remain pristine.) Write a new batch file (called TOM2.BAT) which looks like this:

"rendir tom2 savegame
ultima6
rendir savegame tom2"

In a matter of minutes, you have a new saved game.

Batch Files and Troubleshooting

There is one problem, though not a major one, with this approach. If your computer crashes during the course of a game, then the next time you reboot you will find that you already have an existing \SAVEGAME subdirectory.

For instance, if Tom were playing when the game crashed and Harry happens to be the next one to play, the batch files won't work quite right. Instead, the REN-DIR program will abort and Harry will find himself playing Tom's game. (Other directory renamers might have other results, but this is what will happen with most of them.)

You can get around this difficulty by making your batch files a little more sophisticated. Instead of the very simple batch files described earlier, you can write slightly more complex ones. Using TOM.BAT above as an example, we instead write the following:

"ECHO OFF
IF EXIST C:\ULTIMA6\SAVEGAME\*.*
GOTO PROBLEM
RENDIR TOM SAVEGAME
ULTIMA6
RENDIR SAVEGAME TOM
GOTO END

:PROBLEM
ECHO Problem! \SAVEGAME Directory Already Exists!
ECHO Return to DOS, find out which saved-game directory is ECHO still called \SAVEGAME, and return it to its proper ECHO name. Then you can try again.
GOTO END

:END"

With this new approach, the batch file checks for the presence of any files in the \SAVEGAME directory. If files exist in a \SAVEGAME directory, it means that the \SAVEGAME subdirectory was not changed back to its proper name, and that something has gone a little wrong... and that's when the batch file notifies you of the problem.

(Unfortunately, DOS's "if exist" batch programming command — at least in the DOS 3.2 I use — can check for files in directories, but not for the directories themselves. If there's a C:\SAVEGAME directory with nothing in it, things can still be fouled up, but that eventually is not likely to occur.)

Naturally, if your game resides in some directory other than C:\ULTIMA6, you'd have to edit the command shown above. For example, if you installed your Ultima VI game in C:\GAMES\ULTIMA, the second line of the batch file above would need to read:

"IF EXIST C:GAMES\ULTIMA\SAVEGAME\*.*
GOTO PROBLEM"

So, if you use this sort of batch file, the next time you have a system crash during play, regardless of who next launches the game, the error message will come up and you'll know to fix your directory.

If you have some batch programming
experience, you can instead write your batch files to correct such problems automatically. (You don't have to have much batch programming experience. I don't.) For instance, in a setup where Tom, Dick and Harry have saved games, each would have a batch file like the following, which is written for Tom:

```
ECHO OFF
IF EXIST C:\ULTIMA6\SAVEGAME\*.*
GOTO PROBLEM
RENDIR TOM SAVEGAME
ULTIMA6
RENDIR SAVEGAME TOM
GOTO END
:PROBLEM
ECHO One moment, correcting directory problem...
GOTO TOM
:SHORTCUT
IF EXIST C:\ULTIMA6\\HARRY\*.*
GOTO WHOA
RENDIR SAVEGAME
ULTIMA6
RENDIR SAVEGAME TOM
GOTO END
:WHOA
ECHO
ECHO — We have a slight problem here.
ECHO
ECHO All three saved games (TOM, \DICK and \HARRY) exist in this directory, and so does the \SAVEGAME subdirectory. Something has gone wrong, and it's ECHO beyond the abilities of this batch file to fix things.
ECHO You'll need to figure it out yourself. Best of luck....
ECHO
GOTO END
:END
```

This approach would fix most problems resulting from a \SAVEGAME\ directory existing where it shouldn't. It would have to be edited for each new saved game added to your setup, however.

As with the last batch file, this file would still fail if an empty \SAVEGAME subdirectory were inserted in your Ultima VI directory. However, the opening screen would come up without the "Journey Onward" option, just as when you first started playing and hadn't yet created a character. So, you would never find yourself playing someone else's game — you would know right away something had gone wrong.

**Last Note**

There is such a thing as being too successful. Remember that the saved game files of Ultima VI and The Savage Empire start off comparatively small but get larger as the games progress. Just keep an eye on the amount of room they're taking up (that amount will gradually increase) and you should have no problems. But if you pay no attention to this, you may find the games eating all your available disk space at the same rate they eat up all your available time. caw
A Different Set of "Jaws"

Azeroth's Just Another War in Space

by Hosea Battles, Jr.

The Imperial ship Avenger warped out of space near Lovigir, ready for battle. Scouting reports indicated only an Orion class Federation ship in the area, easy prey for an Epsilon class from a superior civilization. When the inevitable fog of war cleared and the Avenger crawled at a pace slower than light, her commander discovered that he faced, not one, but three Orions! As missiles exploded around his ship, the Imperial Commander wondered about his empress' claim that this would be "Just Another War in Space!"

Newton Kids On The Block

Just Another War in Space (JAWS) is a strategic- and tactical-level space combat game for one player, in which one can owe allegiance to either the Empire or the Federation. It is not an arcade game by any means. One must think out strategic and tactical operations in order to successfully complete a scenario. Spacecraft and missiles strictly follow Newtonian laws of physics. For example, if one accelerates to 17,000 meters per second (m/s) on a heading of 90 degrees, then opposite force must be applied by accelerating to 17,000 (m/s) on a heading of 270 degrees in order to come to a complete stop. Planetary bodies also exert gravitational pull on ships and missiles, so the risk of crashing into one when passing too close is emphatically real. These spacecraft are not equipped for atmospheric operations.

Meaty Rules

The documentation is excellent and thoroughly covers all aspects of gameplay in 136 pages. It not only includes the requisite index and charts, but even the mathematical equations used for specific functions (such as fuel consumption and missile hit probability). Spiral-bound with a blue cover displaying the Imperial crest, the manual also includes an insert with a detailed (Continued on page 46)
Imagine the shock of American B-17 pilots when the first German jet fighters whistled past. The lumbering bombers seemed to be standing still, sitting ducks for radical aircraft years ahead of their time.

The twin-jet Me 262 unleashed a volley of 24 air-to-air missiles in less than a tenth of a second. It's resemblance to today's Stealth bomber.

Were the Allies saved by Hitler's blunder? As you'll read in the 224-page historical manual, Hitler's demand for a blitz bomber delayed deployment of the Me 262s as fighters.

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Fly in the face of danger. Desperate to stop the massive daylight bombing raids of the Allies, the Germans rushed their experimental aircraft into service in late 1944. You'll experience the nail-biting terror of piloting aircraft that were as dangerous to fly as they were to the enemy.

You'll rock with the impact of a direct hit. Struggle for visibility through oil smeared, bullet shattered canopies. Watch in horror as your engine burns. And wrestle for control against G-forces and rough wind conditions. All with the vivid realism of bit-mapped 256-color VGA graphics and room-rattling sound effects.

In *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe*, you'll do more than relive the air combat over Germany from 1943 to 1945. You'll decide for yourself whether these exotic superweapons could have changed the outcome of the war.

Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe is available for IBM and IBM-compatible computers. Visit your retailer or order directly with Visa/MC by calling 1-800-STARNWARS. (In Canada 1-800-828-7927) © 1990 LucasFilm Games. All rights reserved. IBM is a trademark of International Business Machines, Inc.
Battle Chess II: Chinese Chess

With II You Get Eggroll

by Ken St. Andre

Chinese chess is to chess as Chinese checkers is to checkers — more complicated. The mind-set needed for success simply isn't the same. No matter how good one might be in our own, western chess variant — the chess of the "Mad Queen" — he is often reduced to the novice level when trying to play Chinese chess. The two games are very different.

Honorable Ancestor

Interplay had a well-deserved hit in 1988 and 1989 with Battle Chess, a strong chess program featuring detailed and humorous animation of the chess pieces in action. Now, there is Battle Chess II: Chinese Chess, featuring even more beautiful and humorous animations of chess armies in action.

First, the chess board itself is not the familiar grid of black and white squares. Instead it is a green field divided vertically by nine straight lines and horizontally by ten. In the center is a river dividing the two "kingdoms." The pieces are not placed inside the squares, but on the points where lines intersect.

Second, the pieces are different. Instead of King, Queen, Bishop, Knight, Rook and Pawn, Chinese chess uses King, Counsellor, Minister, Knight, Rook, Cannon and Pawn. Both chess variants have 16 pieces per side, but there the similarity ends.

The only piece in the lot that moves exactly the same as in western chess is the Rook. There are strange differences, too, such as the Cannon. The Cannon can move like a Rook, but must use a screening piece in between to enable the Cannon to jump and land on the other unit. Ministers and Counsellors move diagonally like weak Bishops. Ministers move two spaces and cannot cross the river. Counsellors only move one, and must remain within the Palace.

Then there are the "Palace" areas of the board, areas centered upon the King and including one point to both left and right of him and two points in front (forming its own little square). Chinese Kings and Counsellors have to stay inside the Palace.

There are several other key differences in movement and placement of the pieces, but all that can be obtained from the manual. The important point is that because the pieces move more slowly, and the board is actually larger, the game is slower than chess. To master the fine points requires patience.

Players can play against the program from either side of the board, play face-to-face by taking turns or play long-distance via modem. So, there should never be a shortage of opponents.

Like Battle Chess, the real fun of this game comes in watching...
These pirates have tongues as sharp as their swords.

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Being the easy-going types they are, your new pirate pals invite you into the club. Just as soon as you've completed three tiny trials.

Among other things, you'll need to sedate some piranha poodles, burglarize the governor's mansion, and do business with the scum of the earth. And if that's not enough, you'll have to figure out whether the 300-pound voodoo priestess covets your rubber chicken, fed fish, pack of breath mints, or...

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Lucasfilm Games set today's graphic standards with games like Loom and Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade. Now The Secret of Monkey Island ups the standards a few more notches with stunning 256-color VGA graphics (16-color EGA version also available), proportionally scaled animated characters, and cinematic pans and camera angles.

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Or send a self-addressed, stamped disk mailer to: Monkey Demo, PO Box 10228, San Rafael, CA 94912.

So act fast, think fast, and enter fast. Because while playing The Secret of Monkey Island is an adventure, winning the Treasure Hunt is a real trip.

The Secret of Monkey Island is available for IBM and IBM-compatible in 16-color EGA and 256-color VGA versions. Visit your retailer or order directly with Visa MC by calling 1-800-856-7979. © 1990 LucasArts Entertainment Company. All rights reserved. IBM is a trademark of International Business Machines. 3M is a trademark of 3M Company. AdLib is a trademark of AdLib Inc. Cruise price arranged with the "Fun Ships" of Carnival Cruise Lines. The Most Popular Cruise Line In the World: ship's registry: Bahamas and Liberia.
Review

the animated combat when one piece takes another. There is swordplay, spearplay, fisticuffs and magic aplenty. Rooks usually look like warriors in chariots, but transform into fire-breathing dragons for combat. Portly Ministers deflate amusingly when pricked by the spear of a Pawn. King vs. Cannon is a real surprise package. Scott Bieser, Greg Christensen and Bryan Carson tried to follow one basic rule in designing all these animations: K.I.F.S. (Keep It Funny, Scott). The animations always made this reviewer smile and sometimes made him laugh.

Pictographic Notation?

The chess notation was a problem. I don’t know if the designers adapted an original Chinese notation or made up their own, but it is a difficult notation to follow. It works okay as a copy protection scheme (input red move 3 from game 4), but as a way of describing how pieces move on the board, it is too confusing. (This reviewer tried to play out the sample games. Even the shortest one, Morphy vs. Ching Ti, did not work properly.) It would have helped if they had limited themselves to a single orientation and used a simple algebraic notation such as (piece on) e3-e4 instead of P3F1 (i.e. pawn on line 3 from the right moves forward 1).

In keeping with the general slowness of the Chinese game, the animations on a Tandy take a long time to load. One finds himself waiting around a lot while disk drives whir. It will no doubt work better with faster machines or on a hard drive.

BattleChess II: Chinese Chess supports EGA, CGA, and Tandy graphics along with Tandy sound. The player can use mouse, keyboard, or joystick to indicate moves. All legal moves are shown as ghost images of the cursor box onscreen. Some very nice musical riffs also accompany the movement of each piece.

Checkered Observations

After stating all this, this reviewer must admit that he did not like Battle Chess II as much as Battle Chess I. The animations on the first game were funnier overall than those on the second, and nothing in the second game even remotely approaches the slinky sex appeal of the queens in the original. The chess notation did not work as well for transcribing games and the nature of play is such that only a few pieces, such as the Cannons and the Rooks, get most of the action, and many amusing faceups will never occur. The slow pace of the game gives the game a “draggy” feeling. The manual, while fairly clear, isn’t quite as easy to grasp as the first one was (probably because most people already have a little background in western chess, but none in Chinese chess — Ed). These are all little things, but they work together to decrease satisfaction with the game. Technically excellent in many ways, Battle Chess II simply isn’t as much fun as its predecessor. Of course, someone in China might totally disagree.

A NATIONAL WILL

“Grand Alliance” is a fully computer moderated play-by-mail game which involves the battle of survival between human and alien races. Players represent either a member of the human race or of the alien race with the universe as a setting. The game is played on a map of three parallel levels where each level is composed of 240 planetary systems. Each player must solve military and political problems within their own camp before war can be waged effectively against the opposing race. Each side is faced with the same situations and problems to overcome.

To order the rule book and take your first turn, please send $5.00 or $2.00 for book only with your name and address to

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P.O. Box 520861 • Salt Lake City, Utah 84152
Turn fees are $3.50

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<th>IBM ST</th>
<th>AMIGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BON Scenario Disk 1</td>
<td>25 25 25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BON Scenario Disk 2</td>
<td>25 25 25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Disks 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>45 45 45</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battles of Napoleon</td>
<td>32 32 32</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scenario Disks 1 & 2 for Battles of Napoleon**
1. Mads, Austerlitz, Utica, Marengo, Redoubt
2. Abercrombie, Modestine, Santon, New Orleans, Bridge

### GAME SELECTION

#### Strategic Simulations:
- Death Knights of Krynn
- Medieval Lords
- Countdown to Doomsday
- Renegade Legion Interceptor
- Eye of the Beholder
- Champions of Krynn
- Curse of Azure Bonds
- Peel of Radiance
- War of the Lance
- Secret Silver Blades
- High Druid
- Dragon Strike
- Sword of Aragon
- DM Assatt, Vol. 1
- DM Assatt, Vol. 2
- Wargame Construction Set
- Battles of Napoleon
- Storm Across Europe
- Second Front
- Gettysburg
- Waterloo
- Kampfgruppe
- Overrun
- Typhoon of Steel
- Civil War

#### Strategic Studies Group:
- American Civil War I
- American Civil War II
- American Civil War III
- Hall of Montezuma
- MacArthur's War
- Panzer Battles
- Reach for the Stars
- Rommel's Battles
- Axis, the Great War
- Gold of the Americas
- Fire King
- Battalion
- Starlight
- Century at War
- Europe Ablaze
- Warlords

#### Electronic Arts:
- Andretti's Racing Challenge
- Bard's Tale I
- Bard's Tale II
- Escape from Hell
- F-16 Flight Pilot
- Populous
- Populous Data Disk
- Powerdrome
- Starlight
- Yeager's Advanced Flight
- X-68 Attack Sub
- Badman
- Centurion Defender Rome
- Lluch Attack Chopper
- Hard Nova
- Fountain of Dreams
- Stormkov: Su 25 Soviet Att.
- Madden Football

**Microprose:**
- Railroad Tycoon
- Starbase Service II
- Sword of the Samurai
- Mt. Tank Platoon
- F-15 Strike Eagle I
- Red Storm Rising
- F-19 Stealth Fighter
- Airborne Ranger
- Pirates
- Gunship
- Carrier Command
- Space 1889
- X-MEN
- Knights of the Sky
- Lightspeed
- Swift Action
- Command HQ
- UMS II
- Speccasting 101
- Starlifter II
- Destroyer Escort
- Midwinter
- Harpoon
- Harpoon Battle Set 2
- Harpoon Battle Set 3
- Harpoon Scenario Editor
- Blue Max
- Das Boot Submarine
- Mega Fortress
- Armory Aley
- Sands of Fire

**Origin:**
- Ultima IV
- Ultima VI
- Ultima Trilogy
- Knights of Legend
- Wing Commander
- Wing Commander:
- Savage Empire
- Space Rogue

**Sierra:**
- Codename: Iscmar
- Colonel's Bequest
- Quest of Camelot
- Quest for Glory II
- Hero of the Lance
- Red Lightning
- First Over Germany
- Kampfgruppe

#### Microprose:
- Silent Service I
- F-15 Strike Eagle I

#### New World Computing:
- King's Bounty
- Might and Magic II
- Nuclear War
- Tunnels and Trolls

#### Lucasfilm:
- Battlehawks 1942
- Loom
- Their Finest Hour
- Ind. Jones Last Crusade
- Action Game
- Graphic Adventure
- Night Stalker
- Secret Monkey Island
- Secret Weapons U-boat

#### Intersoft:
- D.R.A.G.O.N. Force
- Empire Stalkers
- Star Fleet II
- Earthrise

#### Koel:
- Nobunaga's Ambition
- Nobunaga's Ambition II
- Romance of 3 Kingdoms
- Romance of 3 Kingdoms II
- Genghis Khan
- Bandit Kings

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GAME SELECTION</th>
<th>APPLE C64</th>
<th>IBM ST</th>
<th>AMIGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSI</td>
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<td>Eternal Dagger</td>
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<tr>
<td>President Elect</td>
<td>12 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shiloh's Grant's Trail</td>
<td>12 12</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sons of Liberty</td>
<td>16 16</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question III</td>
<td>16 16 16 16 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phantasm III</td>
<td>16 16 16 16 16 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stellar Crusade</td>
<td>16 16 16 16 16 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Panzer Strike</td>
<td>16 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAM Assatt Vol. 2</td>
<td>16 16 16 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dragons of Flame</td>
<td>16 16 16 16 16 16</td>
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<td>Heroes of the Lance</td>
<td>16 16 16 16 16 16</td>
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<td>Red Lightning</td>
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<td>Kampfgruppe</td>
<td>16 16 16 16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Environment:
- Bard's Tale I
- Bard's Tale II
- Bard's Tale III
- Might and Magic 1
- Legacy of Ancients
- Mahalla's Magic
- PHM Pegasus
- Strike Fleet
- Wasteland
- Mudtown Construction Set
- Demon Stalkers
- Patton vs. Rommel
- Skyfox
- Skyfox II
- Zany Golf
- Skate or Die
- Ski or Die
- Mania Mansion
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Circle Reader Service #44
FireTeam 2200 is a game of ground combat...23rd century style. FireTeam 2200 can be played as a solo game versus the computer, as a two-player game via null modem cable or head-to-head via modem play. The scenarios chart the campaigns of a mercenary FireTeam under the employment of the Lumina Faction through three different planets: Hubble's World, Valvna and Akilos. Each campaign is composed of three to six missions where one's "FireTeam" battles those of rival corporations for control of planetary resources. The game takes place at the tactical level where forces consist of platoon- to squad-sized infantry units and individual, pre-made vehicles. The scale of the game is equally tactical at 15 seconds per turn and 100 meters per square. Although a square grid delineates movement, there is a penalty for diagonal moves so that the distortions inherent in so many other square movement systems are not present. Role-playing wargamers (if that's not an oxymoron) will want to take a careful look at this game, as it plays similarly to the board games Car Wars and the old SPI game Tank!

Gather the Forces

The heart of FireTeam 2200 is the concept of the FireTeam. One assembles up to eight "units" to make a FireTeam, of which one unit (the command vehicle) represents the player. Depending on the mission, up to eight additional units may be attached to the FireTeam. One has 300 kilocredits to purchase a wide array of land, air and infantry units as well as recruit mercenary officers to command them.

To assist in deciding which units to purchase, there is a nice unit summary review where one can pull up the specs on each type of unit à la Jane's Fighting Vehicles. Information includes a silhouette of the vehicle; data on primary, secondary, and tertiary armament; armor protection for front, rear, and sides of the vehicle; and a summary of vehicle performance. There is a large variety of units to choose from, including heavy, medium, light, laser and missile tanks; attack or recon choppers; hovercraft; armored personnel carriers; trucks; jeeps and self-propelled artillery, to name a few. Infantry squads/sections/platoons with varying levels of experience ranging from militia to elite status are also available.

Looking for a Few Good Leaders

In the 23rd century, battle technology has evolved to the point that all vehicular combat functions are controlled by a single pilot (like MechWarrior in the BattleTech universe). So, as one purchases vehicles, one must also carefully hire pilots to command them. Higher-ranking pilots will have better driving and gunnery skills but will charge more for their services per mission. Conversely, lower-ranking pilots won't be as adept in combat but will charge very little to join your FireTeam.
Review

FireTeam members who distinguish themselves may receive commendations and advances in rank for successful completion of missions. Advances in rank are based on: 1) glory points for destroying units; 2) honor for performing a mission successfully; 3) wealth points for performing the mission successfully and recovering various artifacts/resources; and 4) an efficiency rating based on winning percentage. As rank advances so does combat skill. It is also possible to change the composition of the FireTeam by adding units (up to eight) or by scrapping units for money (after depreciation, of course) to buy new units.

The Planning Stages

The missions are quite varied and include all types of combat situations, including meeting engagements between two opposing FireTeams; garrison duty to protect valuable company assets; convoy escort of company vehicles through hostile territory; patrol/recon missions to disrupt enemy positions; rear guard actions; kidnapping missions and city combat. Different missions will pay the mercenaries based on the degree of difficulty and destroyed enemy units.

Each mission starts with a pre-mission briefing that includes a satellite uplink which displays the strategic situation map of eight by twelve kilometers. For additional information on the mission, one can pull up the Mission Objectives Report which outlines via blinking dots the objectives to fulfill and the Intelligence Report that provides information on enemy intentions and suspected positions. After a mission is completed, the element of surprise is lost when replayed, so there is plenty of incentive to “do it right the first time.” It is disappointing that FireTeam 2200 doesn’t have a scenario builder, as many tools seem to be provided for just such a feature.

Boot Camp, Keyboard Style

FireTeam 2200 is a complicated game. It is not the type of game one can just fire up and start playing without reading through the first part of the manual. There is no mouse interface and all movement and fire commands are input via the keyboard, which can be cumbersome at times. Fortunately, the documentation is excellent, with a nice manual/tip sheet, and the first few missions are tutorials to help familiarize players with basic commands/keystrokes to move units, fire weapons, scan enemy units, etc. Moreover, most commands can be accessed within three keystrokes.

What You See Is What You Shoot

As the FireTeam embarks on a mission, the vehicle system display (where all of the command control and tactical monitoring occurs) is activated. The main battle display takes up most of the left two-thirds of the screen and shows all the local terrain within a 1.5-kilometer-square grid surrounding the currently controlled vehicle. Vehicles are represented by icons and the direction of the turret indicates facing. Areas not within the line of sight of the controlled unit are blacked out, giving a nice fog-of-war feel reminiscent of the game Empire.

The hi-res EGA graphics are fair with a wide assortment of terrain including woods, urban, water, road and hills that affect...
movement and cover. However, the vehicle icons are disappointing and appear as small blips on the screen. The right one-third of the screen (from top to bottom) has: 1) Target Tracking display which gives a list of all the vehicles that are within line of sight of the command vehicle; 2) System Status display where one can toggle between a top-down view of the remaining armor and ammo of a vehicle, critical systems status report and a Fire-Team status roll call of remaining members still available to fight; and 3) running summary of battlefield events like destroyed units and target hit chance.

FireTeam 2200 uses simultaneous movement/fire and can be set to automatic updates every 3, 6, 9 or 12 seconds for a realtime game or updates only when the player selects the F9 key for a more leisurely strategy game. Unit tasks that can be assigned include assault, probe, defend, convoy and cover, to name a few. Players can also data-link to another vehicle in order to see what the other vehicle is seeing and reassign targeting priority. Unfortunately, there is no provision for a composite view of what all units see and one cannot data-link directly from vehicle to vehicle but must always go back to the command vehicle, which wastes two turns where no orders can be given.

Armor and Hammer

The armor system is handled nicely with specialized sheaths of composite armor that must be blown away piece by piece to penetrate the critical systems in the interior (the power plant, computer, propulsion systems, pilot, etc.) of the vehicle. In this respect, the game plays a lot like Car Wars with armor damage from weapons fire accruing as "hit points" on the sides of the vehicle. The ordnance is also impressive with powerful particle beam weapons; self-propelled artillery (SPA) with either high explosive (HE), armor piercing (AP) or smoke shells; machine guns; missiles and mortars, to name a few. However, the game goes one step further in sophistication, with different types of ordnance having a characteristic damage pattern based on penetration, hit points and anti-personnel effectiveness. So an HE shell fired from a 105mm autocannon may have a higher hit point damage rating than a pulse laser, but only peels the vehicular armor away layer by layer while the laser beam penetrates the armor more deeply in a straight line. The AdLib sound effects of the ordnance firing are superb, from the whoosh of a wire-guided missile to the staccato rounds of machine gun fire. One may wonder how any person could survive such an environment for long. In actuality, very few of the officers perish, but are able to eject out of their vehicles to fight another day. Thus, a battle frequently resembles a rerun of the A-Team where a lot of damage is done but no one is actually killed. A nice touch for the pacifists in the audience.

Parting Shots, Future Missions

In summary, FireTeam 2200 was able to combine wargaming "realism," role-playing, solid EGA graphics and excellent AdLib sounds into a nice package. Despite the game's weaknesses (no scenario builder, lack of mouse support and a bit of complexity), this game would be a worthy addition to any wargame grognard's collection. Plus, Simsystems plans a release of a scenario builder later this year. Stay tuned....
> ENEMY DETECTED...
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> CLASS : UNKNOWN
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IBM WARGAMES</th>
<th>IBM STRATEGY</th>
<th>IBM SIMULATION</th>
<th>IBM SIMULATION</th>
<th>IBM SPORTS</th>
<th>IBM AD &amp; D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action North Atlantic $28</td>
<td>Ancient Art of War $31</td>
<td>686 Attack Sub $24</td>
<td>Stunts $34</td>
<td>Microleague Basketball $28</td>
<td>Champions of Krynn $32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action off River Plate $28</td>
<td>Ancient Art at Sea $31</td>
<td>A10 Angvenger $43</td>
<td>Tank $34</td>
<td>ML Personal Pro Golf $26</td>
<td>Curse of Azure Bonds $32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action on the Rhine $28</td>
<td>Archipelago $28</td>
<td>A10 Tatl Killer $34</td>
<td>Team Yankee $30</td>
<td>ML Wrestling 1990 $26</td>
<td>Deadliest Kings of Krynn $32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am Civil War 1, 2, or 3 $28</td>
<td>Armada 2525 $34</td>
<td>ATR $36</td>
<td>Test Drive II $30</td>
<td>Microleague Football $26</td>
<td>Dragon Strike $32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banzai $28</td>
<td>Balance of Power 1990 $34</td>
<td>Abrams Battle Tank $19</td>
<td>Test Drive II Data Discs $15</td>
<td>MSFL Preliminary Faith $34</td>
<td>Dragons of Flame $12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle of Austerlitz $30</td>
<td>Balance of the Planet $34</td>
<td>Armor Alley $28</td>
<td>Test Drive III $30</td>
<td>MSFL Pro Draft $34</td>
<td>Eye of the Beholder $32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle Tank Barbarossa $36</td>
<td>Bandits of China $40</td>
<td>Battle Command $34</td>
<td>Road &amp; Car Disc $19</td>
<td>NFL Challenge $69</td>
<td>Heroes of the Lance $12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle Tank Kursku $34</td>
<td>Black Gold $39</td>
<td>Battlehawks 1942 $32</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pergamon $18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battles of Napoleon $34</td>
<td>Blue Angels $33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Secret of Silver Blades $32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battleship Bismarck $28</td>
<td>Blue Max Aces WW I $29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>War of the Lance $32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blitzkrieg Ardennes $39</td>
<td>Castles $39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Border Wars $35</td>
<td>Centurians $39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil War $39</td>
<td>Command HO $34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conflict in Vietnam $12</td>
<td>DRAGON Force $34</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision at Gettysburg $32</td>
<td>Empire $39</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall Gelb $36</td>
<td>FireTeam 2000 $34</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Eskadra $36</td>
<td>Elite Air $34</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Brigade $36</td>
<td>F14 Tomcat $34</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold of the Americans $35</td>
<td>F15 Strike Eagle I $12</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleet Med $36</td>
<td>F15 Strike Eagle II $34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frostline $34</td>
<td>F16 Combat Pilot $34</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>German Raider Atlantis $35</td>
<td>F16 Stealth Fighter $34</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gettysburg Turning Point $39</td>
<td>F29 Rotorator $34</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golon Front $34</td>
<td>F117A Stealth Fighter $45</td>
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| Moscow Campaign $36 | SimCity Graphics 1 or 2 $25 | | NFL Pro Wrestling $20 | |
| Napoleon Russia 1812 $12 | SimCity Terrain Editor $15 | | NFL Pro Wrestling $20 | |
| North & South $28 | SimEarth $45 | | NFL Pro Wrestling $20 | |
| Northern Fleet $36 | | | | |
| Operation Overlord $36 | | | | |
| Pacific Storm $36 | | | | |
| Panzer Battles $36 | | | | |
| Patton v Rommel $12 | | | | |
| Prelude to Judith $20 | | | | |
| Red Lightning $12 | | | | |
| Rommel at El Alamein $39 | | | | |
| Rommel at Gazala $39 | | | | |
| Rommel North Africa $29 | | | | |
| Rorke's Drift $39 | | | | |
| Second Front $39 | | | | |
| Shiloh's Trial $12 | | | | |
| Strike Fleet $16 | | | | |
| Stalingrad Campaign $36 | | | | |
| Storm Across Europe $39 | | | | |
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHIPS &amp; BITS • IBM &amp; AMIGA GAMES</th>
<th>IBM AD &amp; D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IBM ROLE PLAYING</td>
<td>Champions of Krynn $32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autoduel $28</td>
<td>Curse of Azure Bonds $32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad Blood $31</td>
<td>Deadliest Kings of Krynn $32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bard's Tale I $16</td>
<td>Dragon Strike $32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bard's Tale II $19</td>
<td>Dragons of Flame $12</td>
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<td>Bard's Tale III $32</td>
<td>Eye of the Beholder $32</td>
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<td>Battletech I $34</td>
<td>Heroes of the Lance $12</td>
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<td>Battletech III $34</td>
<td>Secret of Silver Blades $32</td>
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<td>Battletech IV $34</td>
<td>War of the Lance $32</td>
</tr>
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<td>Battletech V $34</td>
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<td>Battletech VI $34</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Battletech VII $34</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Battletech VIII $34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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System: IBM, Amiga
Price: $59.95
Designers: Mike Woodroffe, Alan Bridgman, Keith Wadhams, Simon Woodroffe
Publisher: Accolade
San Jose, CA 95128

Isn't It Magic?

In Elvira, magic can be used to create light, heal the old "aching body," and fight the hordes of monsters which will be encountered (there are even one or two that must be defeated solely with magic). Unlike the average fantasy adventure, the character does not cast his own spells. Instead, gathering certain ingredients, bringing them to Elvira and having her "mix" the spells so they can be used is the player's task. These spells take the form of potions, cakes, balls and scrolls. In a way, this is a nice twist on magic using, but if one can't figure out how to get the "Lard Ass" (yes, that's correct) out of the kitchen the game might never be finished (Hint: she hates salt). There are very limited resources as far as ingredients go, so players will have to use foresight to ensure that they will have enough to create much needed spells later on in the game. This reviewer spent a lot of time in Elvira's kitchen (not unlike at her own home, but thank goodness she didn't have Elvira's dishes to do).

Hack and Slash

The combat in Elvira is very similar to the combat in Dungeon Master in that there are gadgets which are used to designate one of two choices, block/parry for defense or lunge/hack for offense. One can also click on the screen to accomplish the same maneuvers (which is somewhat easier during the defensive portions of combat). For offense, one is seemingly able to strike...
more often when alternating choices of "lunge" and "hack." While hacking away at foes, their sustained damage appears in a window just below the combat gadgets and, as they hack back, the player's sustained damage is displayed in a window above the combat gadgets. This is an excellent little feature and worth mentioning since players don't have to keep checking their stats on the status line, away from combat.

Elvira's "Looks"

The graphics and animations in this game are excellent, provided one enjoys blood and guts galore. When first playing Elvira, this reviewer was shocked at how detailed these gory graphics were. As play progressed the thought of seeing one's character's head surface in a bubbling cauldron for the umpteenth time could cause some queasiness.

In some circumstances, actively participating with some very disturbing images cannot be avoided. For instance, to have Elvira cook up certain spells, one must have a maggot or two in the inventory (yecch!). Of course, to get the maggots, one must click on the gardener's corpse and pick up the maggots that are writhing within his decaying husk (this is pretty gross stuff!).

There are other unavoidable animated gore-fests which one is forced to watch. These include having the player's eyes scratched out by a falcon, pounding a wooden stake into a vampire and the all-too-common decapitations. These cannot be avoided as they involve either a victory or, worse, the player's demise (in which case, while waiting for the game to reload from the last save, the gruesome image remains on screen). For this reason, it was impossible to play Elvira while the children were awake, as these images are simply not acceptable for two-year-olds!

While there are lots of sick sequences in Elvira, there are also some very funny animations, too. One favorite is watching Elvira squeeze down a small dumbwaiter and then crawl back out. (This reviewer wanted to tell her that she shouldn't be doing that sort of thing in such a skimpy dress...).

Another outstanding feature about Elvira is the music. The music serves well to tighten nerves and cause skin to crawl, in the best horror traditions. There is even a different, somehow appropriate tune for each area of the castle.

Rounding Out Elvira

Overall, Elvira: Mistress of the Dark is a noteworthy game. While this reviewer would like to have seen more useful spell ingredients (especially dogwood bark) or more spells which increase lifepoints, the puzzles are, at least, logical in that no grasping at straws is required to solve them. Also, while the combat requires some skill (one must get the timing just right to do well in this area), it is a surmountable problem and a learnable skill. However, the weak points of the scavenger-hunt spells, the limited availability of ingredients and the subject matter of the graphics (good art, bad taste) could make this one for the vaults of some adventure game players. Still, with strong points like detailed graphics (five disks full of them), genuine "mood" music and, of course, Elvira's beautiful body, this game is, like its namesake, something to notice for many of us.
Well, spring is here. The days are getting longer and Fred, as usual, is grumbling again. You can hardly blame him, though. After all, he's part Grue, and we all know that light is the bane of any Grue's existence. And speaking of banes...

Bane Of The Cosmic Forge was reviewed in a previous issue, so this article is devoted mainly to tips and hints to help you get through the game with a minimum of fuss and frustration.

Your first consideration, and a very important one, is the team you put together. Naturally, you want a solid group that can survive the rigors of the dungeons, and believe me, it does get rigorous. This is especially true in the latter stages of the game, where combat tends to become rather unbalanced and you need really powerful characters to stand up to the critters waiting for you.

For that reason, you should concentrate on having "specials" in your party: samurai, ninja, bishops, lords, etc. It is better to have these from the start, rather than convert characters to another class later. Examine the chart in the manual to see which races have the best chances to become specials and keep trying during roll-up until you get what you want. Patience is necessary here, but eventually your efforts will be rewarded.

My own party consisted of two samurai, a ninja, two bishops and a mage, and it was a very successful group. None of them, by the way, was human. Two were Draco (a samurai and ninja) one Felpur (samurai), one Gnome (bishop), one Rawulf (bishop) and one Faerie (mage).

That doesn't mean your own should be exactly the same, of course; a different mix might work better for you. However, I do recommend the samurai and ninja in particular, for these reasons: they receive multiple attacks sooner than other fighting classes, they have the ability to do an "instant kill," and they learn magic spells as they increase in level. Ninja also have thieving abilities, making them handy when it comes to disarming traps on chests.

The one drawback to having samurai is that it won't be until fairly late in the game that they can obtain really decent armor; most of the equipment is more for the fighters, lords, and valkyries (who can wear/use most anything). The ninja get no special armor at all (outside of the ninja garb they begin with), but as their armor class goes down "naturally" as they achieve higher levels, that is not too much of a problem, and ninja can wear a number of miscellaneous items that lower armor class, as well.

Veteran Wizardry players know that bishops learn both mage and priest spells, and that still holds true here, even though the magic system is quite different from previous Wizardries. Also as before, bishops will advance slower in spells, but their ability to have both sets of spells, and that still holds true here, even though the magic system is quite different from previous Wizardries. Also as before, bishops will advance slower in spells, but their ability to have both sets outweights that disadvantage.

The most important thing with any spellcaster is raising his/her magic skill and Oratory as quickly as possible. Experimentation showed me that the spells offered on level gain were not tied to the level of the mage, but rather to how high the relevant magic skill was: Thaumaturgy for mages, Theology for priests, and so on. The higher these skills, the better the spells offered when a spellcaster went up a level.

Oratory should not be overlooked; the higher this skill, the less chance there is of a spell failing, or worse, backfiring onto the party (usually with very nasty results). Some monsters have magic resistance, and spells may not work against them in any case. Quite a few have no resistance, however, and you don't want your spells fizzling in those instances. Consequently, add points to Oratory whenever possible.

One of the nicer features of the game is that characters' weapon abilities increase with use, apart from any points you put into them at level gain. This means you can use your precious points (spellcasters tend not to get many) to increase spell-related skills most of the time, and have the spellcasters increase weapon ability mainly from combat.

Of course, with actual fighting types such as samurai or lords, you would be putting most of the points into a weapon skill. Don't disperse points here; choose a particular weapon class and stick with it until maxxed out, unless you come across a really neat weapon (say, the Spear of Death) in which case, go ahead and start adding points to that weapon type. Ninja, by the way, do really well bare-handed; my boy Yoshi went through the entire game using just his hands and feet, and was quite devastating by the end of the scenario.

Save often! I cannot stress that too much. There is no way to replace a dead party member, short of resurrection potions or amulets, so one or more deaths means restoring the game — unless you want to run around short-handed, a practice I do not recommend. Furthermore, there is no truly safe place to camp out, and your rest is subject to interruptions at any time. Hostile critters can really do a number on a weakened party (or a weekend party), so always save before camping out.

There are a lot of doors and grates in the dungeons. All doors can be opened sooner or later, using keys, special objects, spells or lockpicking. Grates are a different matter, however. The pesky thing about grates is that you can never be sure what, if anything, will open one. This is especially annoying as some grates can't be opened at all, and there's no way to tell which is which. You just have to go with trial and error, using keys or inventory items on various grates to see what will work.

Save before going through a door or grate, because you can expect some-
thing hostile is waiting for you on the other side. Then make certain you walk all over the room and examine each wall carefully. Sometimes there are buttons you can push that will open secret passageways or reveal a treasure chest, but if you don't check the walls, you won't find the buttons. A high skill in scouting or having the Detect Secret spell active can alert you to something special (usually a nearby button), but early in the game you must often rely on doing a thorough look-see on your own. In particular, make note of any writing or graffiti on the walls.

Always keep a couple of inventory slots open so you can pick up vital items. Fortunately, the game won't let you leave one behind, but if you don't have room for it, you'll be forced to re-boot since you can't get out of the treasure screen until you've taken the necessary object.

Unfortunately, many of these special items stick around in your inventory long after they've served their purpose, leading to inventory clutter. You can't drop them (even when they are no longer needed), so try to carry around with you only what you really need. Sell excess equipment, armor and the like to keep some room open in the backpacks.

There's no auto-mapping, alas, so you'll have to do your own cartography. Fortunately, most areas are simple to map out; the only places likely to give you any trouble are the pyramid and the River Styx. The pyramid is a problem because there is much up and down, along with a lot of walking around the edges, not to mention hostile Amazons (and other critters) popping up here and there. All you can do is take your time, go slowly and map with extreme care.

The Styx is another matter. It is overflowing (heh heh) with set encounters, and you'll have to do a lot of fighting to clear the place out. Once you've done that, however, you can move along the river with very few random encounters and do a thorough job of mapping. The river, while long, wraps around itself, so you can't really get lost (confused, maybe, but not lost).

Speaking of combat, one thing to be careful of is the lingering spell. Conditions such as madness, silence, nausea and so on do not end when the fighting stops. They can hang on for a long time, making subsequent encounters rather unpleasant for your party.

Some of them can be cured by the appropriate spell, if you have it. If not, you can always try camping out. Usually, a "full night's rest" will take care of these conditions. However, resting won't do anything for petrified members, and sleeping while poisoned is a good way to die.

Bane has several sections and is not especially linear. Expect to do some running around back and forth between different areas for much of the game. Here are some things to keep in mind.

Castle: There are a lot of grates here, and not all can be opened. The iron, chrome, copper and spade keys work only on doors. The RAMM key will open two particular grates. A couple of other grates can be opened only much later in the game, when you've been out to other places and obtained the necessary objects.

What you especially need to do in the castle is find your way under the altar of RAMM, as well as picking up several RAMM articles. This will help with the top level of the belfry, as well as getting into the Captain's Den (an absolute must). Don't overlook L'Montes, who has something you need. Beware of the Northwest tower; don't go up the stairs until your party has gone up a few levels in experience.

Mines (across the chasm): The important things here are defeating the rubber beasts, freeing the face in the crystal (note: four entries to the crystal), repairing the catapult and obtaining a certain gem. Make sure "Detect Secret" is up when you walk through dark areas (not many of these and they are simple, really). Special note: even if you get the drawbridge down, you will not be able to take the pirate's treasure (this is an optional part of the game and you can skip it).

Pyramid (home of the Amazon women): Your main object is to obtain the second gem. To do this, you will have to find a bone key and an idol.
**Chaos Strikes Back**

Another Brick in the Wall

by Derek Godat

With a hand that was the veteran of a thousand duels, the warrior loosed his blade in its scabbard and surveyed the dim interior of the software shop. A full two score of battle-hardened computer nerds glared unblinkingly from their positions across a bleak expanse of carpet. Ignoring the menace of their bespectacled eyes, the stalwart warrior marched onward, a myriad of weapons, ornaments and trophies jangling with each forward stride.

Wordlessly, the sea of brigands, cutthroats and swaggering joystick-wagglers parted, allowing the warrior to confront a diminutive figure cowering in their midst. As the shadow of the warrior fell across him, the dwarfish salesman jittered in fear. The precise instant the warrior's fiery eyes fell upon him, the shopkeeper raised a battered cardboard box to ward off the impending confrontation.

"D-D-Dungeon Master T-Two?" the dwarf whined. "Last copy, oh great and honored m-m-master. S-Special discount t-t-today..."

With unnerving swiftness, a gloved fist shot out and tore the box from the shopkeeper, sending shreds of cellophane wrapper into the air. Breathless minutes passed as the warrior sounded out the words embossed upon the package, using a tiny stiletto to point out each letter.

The warrior had crossed vast oceans, battled ghous innumerable and trekked for leagues overland to reach this spot and to open this very box. His nigh-impossible quest was tantalizingly close to completion. A rumbling voice of steel spoke the title with grave finality.

"Expansion Set Number One?"

A gale of foul air was released as the congregated nerds gasped for breath. The dwarven software salesman strained out a smile and, with a trembling demeanor, was about to recommend a hint booklet when, without warning, the warrior exploded in a blood-mad whirlwind of fury!

"By Grak the Heavy-Handed! By Yurt the Demonic Scourge!! By N'rgka and Xitl and Tst'K'Mo'Cad'Lth the Unpronounceable!!! This cannot be! I have crossed vast oceans! Battled ghouls innumerable! Trekked leagues overland! And for what? A mere expansion disk! By Ballab the Unreasonably Upset, heads will roll for this!"

"Heads Will Roll!"—Playing

While this reviewer's reaction was slightly less wrathful than the fictional warrior's, the trials undergone were greater, by far. Likewise, to the seasoned adventurer, Dungeon Master II
provides more in the same vein. Chaos Strikes Back is no better and no worse than the original game, so there will be few surprises in store for Dungeon Master veterans.

After nearly three years of production, Chaos Strikes Back, the heralded sequel to the original Dungeon Master, is but an Expansion Set (i.e., more of the same repackaged). Although not a totally disappointing product, Chaos Strikes Back fails to inject any improvement or innovation into the Dungeon Master system. It is indeed a continuation of the tale spun in the original Dungeon Master, though much is similar to the first game. One of these similarities, the title character, Chaos, is once again responsible for the gamer's dungeoneering trials and tribulations.

**Chaos and the Ultimate Bad Guy**

It seems that this malicious magician was farsighted enough to have predicted his own demise at the conclusion of the first adventure. He has taken steps to ensure his revivification, however, by means of four nasty pieces of Corbum Ore. Unstopped, these Corbum bricquettes will drain enough magical Manna from the universe to free old Chaos and his not-very-nice cronies. If the heroes of Dungeon Master are unable to prevent this catastrophe, their lives, the universe... and everything are all for naught. To paraphrase, it is the well-worn tale of the really, really bad wizard versus the really, really good adventurers, with the entire world hanging in the balance, as always.

This finely crafted original scenario aside, Chaos Strikes Back is nought but another set of mazes, monsters, and magical items coupled with some nifty utilities. Chief among these utilities is the portrait editor, which allows any player to repaint his or her champion's portraits. While it is certainly not DeluxePaint III, the portrait editor gets the job done swiftly and painlessly, and features convenient fill and undo options.

**Get A Clue!**

Another handy utility comes in the form of a Hint Oracle. Should the situation arise, and it undoubtedly will, when the gamer has exhausted all options and is hopelessly beating his or her overtaxed skull against the dungeon walls, help is close at hand. The Hint Oracle provides salvation in the form of helpful verses, carefully sculpted to give the gamer a shove in the right direction while salvaging the intimate secrets of the dungeon.

Rounding out the Utility Disk included in Dungeon Master II is a lengthy animated introduction. While this graphic preface is perfectly lovely where it sits, this gamer cannot help but to chastise Psygnosis Software for this long awaited rehash of the original Dungeon Master. The "living dungeon" approach to RPGs is fast becoming commonplace, with titles like Bane of the Cosmic Forge, Captive, Bloodwych and Eye of the Beholder improving upon the Dungeon Master system, or at least presenting the same concept with new trappings (forgive the pun). One wonders how long Dungeon Master and its chaotic sequel will survive before sinking into the mists of software history.

With the release of Chaos Strikes Back, FTL still has one foot resting in the winner's circle. Sadly, the other is resting on its laurels.

**First Level Characters Need Not Apply**

This adventurer does not recommend Chaos Strikes Back to inexperienced or amateur role-playing gamers. Indeed, the game itself gives little assistance to the first-time dungeon explorer. Though the packaging states that the original Dungeon Master is required, this is untrue. What Chaos lacks which the original provides is a reprinting of the first game's storyline and magical runes, along with a few easy labyrinth levels for dungeon-masters-in-training. Unfortunately, the monsters, traps, and puzzles presented within are all of the most heinous, unforgiving sort, and will surely crush the bones and spirits of all but the dungeoneering elite. Chaos Strikes Back is a game which allows for only two types of players, the "quick" and the "dead."

**M.O.T.S. (More of the Same)**

For the beginner, this reviewer wholeheartedly recommends the first Dungeon Master, a game which has won acclaim from legions of fans and is still taking all comers to this day. Once Chaos has been crushed and the original game has ended, Chaos Strikes Back will be ready to sate any further bloodlust.

Unfortunately, despite the optimism which this viewpoint affords, this gamer cannot help but to chastise Software Heaven and FTL Games for this long awaited rehash of the original Dungeon Master. The "living dungeon" approach to RPGs is fast becoming commonplace, with titles like Bane of the Cosmic Forge, Captive, Bloodwych and Eye of the Beholder improving upon the Dungeon Master system, or at least presenting the same concept with new trappings (forgive the pun). One wonders how long Dungeon Master and its chaotic sequel will survive before sinking into the mists of software history.
The Categories

Strategy (ST): Games that emphasize strategic planning and problem-solving.

Simulation (SI): Games based on first-person perspectives of real-world environments.

Adventure (AD): Games that allow you to take an alter ego through a storyline or series of events.

Role-Playing Adventure (RP): Adventure games that are based on character development (usually involving attributes).

Wargames (WG): Simulations of historical or futuristic warfare from a command perspective.

Action/Arcade (AC): Computer games that emphasize hand-eye coordination and reflexes.

Games are often listed in more than one category. In this case, the first listed category is considered primary. In order to be recognized as the "Top Game" in a given category, a game must be listed as being primarily of that specific type.

The Top Ten Games

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Avg. # Resp.</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Wing Commander</td>
<td>Origin</td>
<td>AC</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>10.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Railroad Tycoon</td>
<td>Microprose</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>10.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Their Finest Hour</td>
<td>Lucasfilm</td>
<td>AC,SI</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>10.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Red Baron</td>
<td>Dynamix</td>
<td>SI</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>10.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>SimCity</td>
<td>Maxis</td>
<td>ST,SI</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>9.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Harpoon</td>
<td>Three-Sixty</td>
<td>WG</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>9.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>M-1 Tank Platoon</td>
<td>MicProse</td>
<td>SI,WG</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>9.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Ultima VI</td>
<td>Origin</td>
<td>RP</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>9.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Bane of the Cosmic Forge</td>
<td>Sir-Tech</td>
<td>RP</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Silent Service II</td>
<td>MicProse</td>
<td>SI</td>
<td>45</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top Role-Playing

Ultima VI

Top Simulation

Red Baron

See Reader Input Device on page 74
THE HALL OF FAME

The Games in CGW's Hall of Fame Have Been Highly Rated by our Readers over Time. They are Worthy of Play by All.

Bard's Tale I
Chessmaster
Dungeon Master
Earl Weaver Baseball
Empire
F19 Stealth Fighter
Gettysburg
Gunship
Kampfgruppe
Mech Brigade
Might & Magic
M.U.L.E.
Pirates
Starflight
Ultima III
Ultima IV
War in Russia
Wizardry

No.  Name

Curse of the Azure Bonds
Sword of the Samurai
Ishido
Chessmaster 2100
Indiana Jones/Graphic Adventure Ballistyx
Zany Golf
Wayne Gretzky Hockey
Pool of Radiance
Champions of Krynn
Shanghi II
King's Quest IV
Buck Rogers
It Came From Desert
Genghis Khan
Future Wars
Panzer Strike
Carrier Command
DeathTrack
Savage Empire
Manhunter 2
Nobunaga's Ambition II
TV Sports Football
Wings of Fury
Strike Fleet
Fire Brigade
BattleTech II: Revenge
Rocket Ranger
Police Quest II
TV Sports Basketball
Modern Wars
Drakkhen
688 Attack Sub
Flight of Intruder
Manhunter
Centurion
Police Quest
Starglider II
Jack Nick 18 Holes Three Stooges
Search for the King
Leisure Suit Ly II
Loom
Abrams Battle Tank
Colonel's Bequest

Source
SSI
MicroProse
Accolade
Software Toolworks
Lucasfilm
Psygnosis
Electronic Arts
Bethesda
SSI
SSI
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Activision
Sierra
SSI
Cinemaware
Koei
Interplay
SSI
MicroPro
Actvision
Origin
Sierra
Koei
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Broderbund
Electronic Arts
Panther
Infocom
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Lucasfilm
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The cosmic rules that govern our reality insist that death be a part of life. The rules that govern computer-simulated reality are even harsher, inflicting death over and over again as necessary stumbling blocks on the way to victory and honor in "life." The strictest enforcement of this edict is handed down by Psygnosis, a company whose action games often place such maniacal demands on players that death frequently occurs within several seconds of the opening credits. With Obitus, an action-oriented Fantasy Role-Playing game (FRPG), that company has finally seen fit to offer mere (simulated) mortals a fighting chance at survival.

Troll Roads

Obitus challenges the player to escape from a colorful medieval kingdom. There are mazes in the form of forests and underground mines. There are also castles and churches to be explored, as well as treacherous open roads filled with rogues from the shoot-now-ask-questions-later school of banditry. There is a large cast of characters in the game, some of whom have objects to offer the player and most of whom are more than willing to offer advice. Other characters are busy aiming their weapons at one's hero, even as they come into view. It is up to the player to decide which characters merit a conversation. Some are better left alone while others clearly deserve perforation via arrows.

Success in the game will depend, in part, on the player's ability to map and thoroughly explore the mazes and various buildings. The mazes are beautifully depicted in three dimensions and scroll in whichever direction the player moves. Objects, characters and passages shrouded in shadows become visible gradually as the player moves toward them. In dim lighting, arrows from hidden foes may unnervingly pour from the shadows.

The interiors of various buildings also appear in intricate detail. These are filled with more strange objects and populated by another variety of personalities. Neither the buildings nor the mazes are particularly difficult to map, and the presence of an on-screen compass makes the process even easier.

Ubiquitous Arcade Action

Separating many of the locations in the game are what the package notes call "parallax sections." These are more traditional arcade sequences in which the player must move from one side of the screen to the other, and survive. This type of action, which has come to be known in some circles as the "Psygnosis Shuffle" or, perhaps, the "Barbarian Two-Step," is greatly simplified in Obitus. Villains can be seen hiding before they spring up to attack, and it is actually possible for the hero to leap out of the path of flying weapons. Mercifully, one need not be an arcade wizard to complete these action sequences.

The interface used in Obitus is simple and requires no typing. The player points to and clicks on icons, objects held in inventory and pieces of the surrounding graphics. In this way, two and three word commands may be constructed such as "Eat apple" or "Use dagger on distasteful person." Windows are used to deliver messages from other characters, display the hero's health status and provide general information. Movement about the screen is performed easily, either with the joystick or by clicking on a compass direction with the mouse pointer.

Purple Prose

One sure way to succeed in Obitus is to avoid reading the directions. Most of the space in this confusing documentation is taken up by a story which may or may not have anything to do with the program it accompanies. Perhaps it describes some other game which this reviewer has yet to come across. Fortunately,
Review

the game's interface is easy to decipher without instruction and no intelligent player should have trouble doing so. But for those looking for an even greater challenge, go ahead — read the directions!

The Looks and Sounds of Psygnosis

It is difficult not to be impressed by the sounds and graphics programmed into almost any release from Psygnosis, and Obitus is no exception. The realistic sound effects are well distributed throughout its various encounters. Graphically, the game is rich in detail, imaginative in its scope of settings and makes good use of shading to enhance the game's already suspenseful atmosphere. The backgrounds, which flow and scroll in three dimensions, are particularly well executed.

Obitus' major flaw is that it lacks depth. The game would be far more satisfying were there a few mysteries or surprises lying beneath its glittering exterior. A bit of intrigue or some deeper interaction with the non-player characters (preferably at the expense of some arcade-style combat) would go a long way toward making Obitus first-rate entertainment (consider this a voice from the American market, crying out in the wilderness).

Inside the "Goodie Basket"

Obitus is another Psygnosis release which comes packaged with a T-shirt. Considering the purchase price of most quality computer games, this is a welcome gesture on the part of that company. In this spirit of charity, perhaps there will one day be other items of clothing included with such games. Food would also be appreciated, or perhaps a small scholarship to help the kids prepare for their education. Thanks, Psygnosis!

Obitus is provided on three copy-protected disks. A fourth, blank disk is required to save games in progress. The program allows the use of two disk drives during play, but disk swapping is required far too often. The use of a hard drive is really what the program needs but, unfortunately, does not allow.

Still and All...

Even with its lack of depth and without an adequate (or even useful) instruction manual, Obitus can be a satisfying experience. The fact that the arcade sections are relatively low-pressure enhances the game's playability as well as the chances that the player will survive. The program offers many hours of exploration and danger, and plenty to see.

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Page 44

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IBM from CCC's Best Seller List</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A10 Tank Killer</strong> 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Stations V.3.0</strong> 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ATP</strong> 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AVENGER A10</strong> AUG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B.A.T.</strong> 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Battle of Napoleon</strong> 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blitz Ardennes</strong> 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASTLES</strong> MAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHECKMATE</strong> MAY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CIVIL WAR</strong> MAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMAND HQ</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONFED</strong> 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COVERT ACTION</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DRAGON FORCE</strong> 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ELITE PLUS</strong> MAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F1 17A</strong> SEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F14 TOMCAT</strong> MAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F29 RETAILIATOR</strong> MAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FALCON 3.0</strong> MAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fire Brigade</strong> 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FIREFIGHTER 2000-W/NEW</strong> 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fleet Med</strong> 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flight of the Intruder</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Garrysdub</strong> 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GUNSHIP 2000</strong> MAY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harpoon</strong> 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harp Scenario Editor</strong> 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BATTLESET #3</strong> 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IMPERIUM</strong> 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JEFIGHTER II ANYTIME KNIGHTS OF THE SKY 36</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LIFE OR DEATH 1991</strong> 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LIFEFIGHTER</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MIVINGHAM</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOBUNAGA'S AMB II</strong> 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OVERLORD</strong> 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PACIFIC STORM (SOL)</strong> 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Panzer Battles</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Populus</strong> 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POWERMONGER</strong> NOV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Railroad Tycoon</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RED BARON 256</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RENEGADE LEGION</strong> 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ROM 3 KINGDOM II</strong> MAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second Front</strong> 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEC. WEAPONS LUF MAFR</strong> 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Silent Service II</strong> 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SIM EDG</strong> 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sim City</strong> 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sim City City Set #1/2</strong> 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEAM YANK</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Their Finest Hour</strong> 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TYPHOON OF STEEL</strong> 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UMS</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UMS II Persian Gulf Sc. 23</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IBM Adventure & Role-Playing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IBM Adventure &amp; Role-Playing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALIEN DRUG LORDS CALL</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALT WORLDS CALL</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BANE COSMIC FORGE</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BARD'S TALE III</strong> 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Battlespace II</strong> 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breath II enhanced</strong> 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buck Rogers</strong> 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Centurian</strong> 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Countdown</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEATH KNIGHTS KRYMAR</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DRAGON LURK</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DRAKKHEN</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ELVIRA</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EYE OF BEHOLDER</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDDINGTON</strong> MAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GRAIL QUEST</strong> MAY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HARD NOVA</strong> 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEART OF CHINA</strong> MAY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HERO QUEST II</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOUND OF SHADOW MAR</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IT CAME/DESERT</strong> 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KQ V (HI DENSITY 5or3) 44</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KQ V (LOW DENSITY 38 38)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEMMINGS</strong> MAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LIFE &amp; DEATH II</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LORD OF THE RINGS</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MAGIC CANDLE II JUNE</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MARTIAN DREAMS APRIL</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MEDIEVAL LORDS</strong> MAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RISE OF THE DRAGON</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPACE QUEST IV MAR</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAVAGE EMPIRE</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SECRET OF SAILAIS</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPACE 1889</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPELLECASTING 101</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPIRIT EXCALIBUR</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TIME QUEST</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TUNNELS &amp; TROLLS</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**TV SPORTS BASE ** 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TWILIGHT 2000</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ULTIMA VI</strong> 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ULTIMA VII</strong> 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ULTIMA VII SEP</strong> 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WING COMMANDER</strong> II JUN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WING C. DATA II MAR</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WING COMMANDER II</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WONDERLAND</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MODEM SALE II</strong> Cardinal 2400 Ext 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cardinal 2400 Ext</strong> 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Card. 2400 Int Vitcom 86</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Card. 2400 MNP Ext</strong> 158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Card. 9600 Ext.</strong> 479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUPERCOM</strong> 2400 Internal 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2400 External 96</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ZOOM 2400 SEND/FA</strong> 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MODEM INTERNAL</strong> 94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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- Dead of Winter 34
- Empire Builder 28
- Fire in the East 48
- First Strike 36
- Harpoon 90-91 ed. 20
- Modern Naval Batt #2 21
- NEW WORLD 20
- Operation Shoestring 32
- ROMEL in the Desert 28
- Scorched Earth 32
- Shattered States 28
- Siege of Jerusalem 28
- Supremacy 36
- The Longest Day 69
- World War II 31
- GULF RELATED GAMES 32
- DESERT SIEGE MOD 9
- GULF STRIKE 3RD ED 32
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- THE WARROOM 24

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- COMPUTER TEST PREP 33
- SAT 33
- MATH BLASTER + (NEW) 33
- RANDOM HOUSE ENCYCLOPEDIA 75
- ANCIENT EMPIRES 33
- Mickey's ABC w/Sound 46
- MIDNIGHT RESCUE 33
- OUTNUMBERED 33
- TREASURE MTN. 33
- PUBLISH IT 130
- THE NEW PRINT SHOP 39
- WHERE WORLD C.S.(DEL) 51

JOYSTICK/ACCESSORIES
- CH Flightstick 54
- Conviron Flight Yoke 60
- Gravis Analog Joystick 38
- Max Yoke 70
- IController (Suncom) 49

HARD DRIVES
- Fujitsu 45 MEG 249
- Fuj 90 MEG 20ms 409
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- ROLAND LAP-1 410
- AD LIB CARD 99
- SOUND BLASTER 159
- SOUND B MICROC MAR 59
- BOUND VOICE ED 59
- MAC
- CI AZURE BONDS 34
- FIRE BRIGADE 38
- GOLDBERG 31
- HARPOON 42
- ISHIDO 38
- RAILROAD TYCOON MAR 46
- SIM EARTH 39
- STRATEGIC CONG 3 33
- STRATEGIO 33

HARDWARE
- Magnavox 300 AT 1005
- Mag. 300 AT CROM 1670
- Mag. 500 386SX 1399
- Mag. 500 486DX 2149
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A Different Set of "Jaws"
(Continued from page 22)

screen layout, hull designs of the spacecraft, a star sector guide, abbreviations and an explanation of the copy protection (look-up-the-word type).

Colorful Battles In Black & White

The graphics are 3-D in an overhead or side view. The battle area is shown on the left half of the screen, a ship control panel on the right. One can select any object to be center of the battle and zoom into or out of the area. The friendly ship is white in color and enemy ships are black, with missiles the same color as the firing ship. Neutral objects, such as space stations, star bases and planets are orange. On the right side of the screen is all the information pertaining to the spacecraft controlled and the control menus.

Into JAWS’ Teeth

JAWS is strictly mouse-controlled and menu-driven. This works very well in actual game play. There are four command menus available to the player: Command, Displays, Control and Objects. There are over 29 commands available and each is explained in detail in the manual. Commands are also available for individual control of guided missiles and battlecraft (drones). Some of the many commands available include electronic warfare, force shields, automatic fire and tractor beams.

There are seven scenarios in the game. Five use pre-designed ships and all have time limits. In scenarios six and seven, one can customize the number of credits available to each side for the purchase of an initial fleet, as well as for the total campaign. The computer outfits the other side using the credits available. Other than this option (basically two campaign-style games), there is no provision for designing your own scenarios. Fortunately, this does not seem to detract from the game.

Dockyard Blueprint Blues

Ship design begins with the empty hulls. Equipment pods are added to complete the ship, using two detailed charts of hull types and pods which effectively describe equipment and fuel capacity. All pods contain various weapons and defensive systems, including electronic warfare equipment. There are three types of jump pods. These are necessary to move from system to system. They differ in cost and in time necessary to charge up prior to a jump. Charging time is particularly critical when trying to escape a battle, so the longer the charge time, the greater the exposure to danger.

Armed To The Teeth

A variety of weapons is available: laser guns; plasma guns; guided, intelligent, unguided and cluster missiles; battlecraft and tractor beams. Laser guns are effective from long range, while plasma guns are effective close in. Unguided missiles will seek the nearest object including planets, starbases and other missiles, but will not target friendly vessels. Cluster missiles are standard unguided missiles which include three MIRV warheads that can be manually released by players at a certain range. Battlecraft are essentially drones with laser guns, which can be controlled by the player or set on automatic fire at a specific target.

Any neutral object that is hit by a missile will immediately open fire on that side’s ships. This can turn the tide of battle to the enemy’s advantage at a critical moment, so one must be selective in opening up on targets of opportunity that may, in reality, be neutral. If one can maneuver so that the enemy opens up and accidentally hits a neutral starbase, however, one can have the joy of observing that starbase spending the remainder of the battle firing on all enemy ships.

A.I. — The Computer Bites Back

The computer opponent is highly intelligent, even in scenarios where officers are not included. The computer accurately keeps track of all missiles it has fired and will effectively use objects as shields. If the engagement is near a planet, the computer will take advantage of the cover offered by the planet, circling around and firing at the player’s ship, then retreating again behind the planet.

The player has the option of controlling all or just one of the ships in a multi-ship engagement. The computer will control the others and uses “artificial” officers, taking into account their skill levels when executing tactics. Officers are only available in scenarios five and seven. Their skill level and rank determines their efficiency in battle. The officer file can be edited so you can add your favorite heroes from science-fiction (“Analysis, Spock?”).

In any engagement, one also has the option of giving individual orders or general orders. If opting for general orders, ships can only be told to attack, defend, withdraw and disengage. The individual ship commanders decide what targets to attack, how fast to maneuver and other pertinent battle tactics.

Worse Than Its Bite

There are a few minor problems in JAWS. First, the Quit command can be accidentally chosen. Obviously, in the heat of battle, such an experience can be most annoying. Second, it is possible to accidentally hit the return key during ship construction and commission that ship, ready or not. One has little chance for reconsideration of ship construction aspects while "at the old drawing board." This temperamental feature has been a promised “fix” in an upcoming revision. [Ed. We're informed that this revision is currently available from the manufacturer.]

Overall, however, this is an excellent tactical level combat game with a few strategic decisions (sort of an "opposite twin brother" to Star Control). It will appeal to those who like strategic wargaming with plenty of on-screen action. Caw
Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon

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*Game Player's PC Strategy Guide*, August 1990

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*Chicago Tribune*, June 8, 1990

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*Game Player's*, September 1990

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Sneak Preview

Hotter Than Rotisserie Leagues

PRODIGY®'s Baseball Manager

I

If one believes the bad publicity generated by the censorship issue with regard to electronic mail on the PRODIGY® Interactive Personal Service, users of the service may often feel as frustrated as the late Billy Martin kicking dirt on an umpire or Pete Rose showing an official after allegedly being poked in the face. In vivid contrast, however, gamers need to take note of a scouting report on a particularly bright new talent for the PRODIGY® service.

Billed as a "custom choice," handled as an additional charge and licensed by the Major League Baseball Player's Association, PRODIGY® has created what appears to be the most ambitious fantasy baseball system in existence. Gamers will not only simulate general managers via drafting, balancing salaries and trading, but will be able to take on the role of manager on a daily basis by setting lineups, pitching rotations and relief priorities. Other fantasy (or "rotisserie") leagues offer weekly updates based on rankings in various statistical categories. Baseball Manager, on the other hand, allows actual games to be played. Each day you set your lineups. That night your game is played against one of the other nine teams in your league. Your game on

PRODIGY is played using the actual stats from that day in baseball. If Alan Trammel got two hits the night before, those two hits would be factored into his PRODIGY team's performance.

When PRODIGY first told us about Baseball Manager, we were perplexed.

How can you play actual games using last night's stats? How do you resolve a game in which Dwight Gooden, pitching for the Tehachapi Steamers, throws a shutout against the Diablo Canyon Reactors (but Darryl Strawberry hit two home runs for the Reactors)? The designers of Baseball Manager have developed an elegant set of algorithms that resolves such seeming conundrums. Simply put, the program factors the various performances to get an averaged result. In the Gooden versus Strawberry example, Gooden would not end up getting a shutout as he did in real life but Strawberry would not get both home runs either. Probably Gooden would be charged with one home run (and an accompanying earned run) and Strawberry would get credit for one home run, not two. If Gooden had given up two or more earned runs in real baseball, Strawberry might well have gotten credit for two homers on his PRODIGY team.

Gamers can reserve a league for themselves and nine of their friends so that everyone can participate in the league and no one gets stuck with all the bookkeeping.

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MEGATRAVELLER 2™
Quest For The Ancients

Both featuring scenarios written by Marc Miller, Adventure Gaming Hall of Famer and creator of the Traveller role-playing system.

Twilight: 2000 places you in the aftermath of World War III, travelling through terrain devastated by high-tech weaponry and nuclear radiation.

- Create your character with the skills and abilities you want
- Command three other party members who respond to your orders based on their personalities and objectives
- State-of-the-art graphics include 3-D simulation and 2-D scaled overhead sequences
- Hundreds of weapons and vehicles make each encounter unique

Your mission: rebuild and defend the city of Krakow, Poland against an onslaught of marauders and military madmen determined to win a war the world lost.

Based on the role-playing classic from Game Designers' Workshop, MegaTraveller 2: Quest For The Ancients contains state-of-the-art innovations, including a completely re-designed, icon-driven interface, combat system and role-playing engine.

- The sequel to the hit MegaTraveller 1: The Zhodani Conspiracy with over 100 of named, detailed worlds to explore
- New PAL role-playing engine lets you control one character while commanding four others; advanced character generator guarantees variety with each game
- Weapons and starship classes of all kinds; a dazzling array of characters with whom to interact

Your mission: save a world threatened by a mysterious artifact built by the Ancients, a legendary super-race thought dead for 300,000 years.

PARAGON SOFTWARE
Marketed by MicroProse Software, Inc.

For IBM-PC/Tandy/compatibles. Can't find these games? Call 1-800-879-PLAY for prices and ordering information.
© 1991 Paragon Software and Game Designers' Workshop.
Winner Meeting (Getting Started)

The Baseball Manager experience begins, naturally enough, with pre-season maneuvering. Gamers can choose to manage in either an American or National League simulation. There will be a separate league for every ten players enrolled. If one has other "PRODIGY"es ready to sign up for a league, one can "reserve" a league. In such a case, it is possible to opt for the first opening in the big league of your choice, American or National. In any case, the pre-season only begins when all ten players are signed on.

The real action begins with the pre-draft phase. Over the course of four days in accelerated mode or eight days in a more leisurely mode, gamers will find complete lists of players by position and must rate them in order of draft preference. This is not a pro forma proposition where one simply lists the best players in one-two-three order. One must also consider the fact that the number of other general managers who select the same first-round draft choice could cause the salary to skyrocket.

Salaries are determined by multiplying the dollar value established for a position times the number of managers who select the players in the first draft position with dollar values descending with each draft position. For example, a starting pitcher is worth $250,000 times the number of managers who selected the pitcher in the first round plus $240,000 times the number of managers who selected the pitcher in the second round and so forth.

Since there is a salary cap, one cannot simply go for the best players for every position. Compromises enter into the planning stage during this period of "scouting" the talent. Many gamers will want to consider the fan proclivity of their competitors during this phase. If one is playing against Silicon Valley gamers, for example, one may want to ignore San Francisco Giant players. Since SF Giant players would, presumably, go for a premium in a San Francisco Bay area league, you might want to avoid the artificially inflated salaries such players might get. In such a case, it might be cogent to select a comparable player from the eastern division rather than truly emulating major league owners by joining the "bidding war" on the majority's favorite. At other times, one may be willing enough to pay the high price that it is worth rating a player high enough that any manager who gets the player will have to pay a high salary.

Of course, the most exciting part of this phase is logging onto the PRODIGY® network every night and getting the draft results. Unlike many network games, Baseball Manager presents the daily draft results with a little extra showbiz. As soon as the player gets past the introductory screen, he is rewarded with a newspaper mock-up featuring a headline highlighting a major draft pick from his league and a dynamic headline selected especially to reflect his team's most impressive draft pick. From there, he can access the details on the complete draft for both the league and his team.

Fun in the Sum (Spring Training)

There is one more period of activity before the season starts. In the "Pre-Season" phase, gamers not only get the chance to standardize line-ups (versus right-handed and left-handed pitchers), starting rotations and relief priorities, but initiate trades, as well. The trading procedure works off an on-screen worksheet and requires no third party intervention. After, presumably, discussing the potential trade by electronic mail, one manager initiates the trade by filling out a trade offer worksheet. Next, the person who is receiving the trade offer has up to three days to access the trade offer. If the recipient of the trade offer wishes to deal, the program handles the acceptance, decline or counteroffer. Of course, since the trade offer only lasts three days, the recipient of the offer can simply "pocket veto" the deal by ignoring it. Once the deal is accepted by both parties, the program handles the roster adjustments overnight.

Naturally, once the season starts, gamers will be anxious to get involved with the day-to-day management of their team. However, it is still a good idea to standardize the line-ups and rotation during the pre-season. If the gamer has taken the time to set standardized line-ups, the computer program will follow the gamer's instructions on those rare occasions when the gamer cannot access PRODIGY®. If there is no standardized line-up or rotation, the computer selects its own idea of a good line-up. Anyone who has ever had the computer take over his company in a game of CEO knows how traumatic that can be.

Opening Play

When play begins, players continue to update line-ups and pitching rotation and handle trade offers. However, the exciting aspect is logging onto the service and getting that updated newspaper screen with the "hometown" bias toward the gamer's team. Then, each manager can check his team's overnight performance just like the box scores in a real daily paper. It's pretty heady stuff for statistics fanatics and baseball is the right game for statistics buffs.

Once the league is underway, it only takes a few minutes a day to handle all the managerial decision-making, check the latest box score and make a couple of trade offers. Then, if the gamer is still
ready to talk baseball, there is a special bulletin board specifically for Baseball Manager leagues (that can only be accessed by PRODIGY® users signed up for the leagues). This should build community among the managers and provide a nice forum for interleague propaganda.

Line Score

PRODIGY®'s Baseball Manager may be a fantasy manager's dream come true. It allows gamers to create their own leagues without having to worry about all that paperwork; it offers the ultimate advantage of a daily update; and it provides for individual games in a full season of "simulated" games. Baseball Manager is available only to PRODIGY service customers. It will cost $119 per person per year.

CGW's editorial staff is anxious for the new season to begin. Throw out the first ball, Mr. President! now

Reach Out and Crush Someone

Those addressing their own (free) ad need only send us a postcard (or use the Notice section of the RIB card), letter, fax or E-mail, etc. The ads themselves should serve as reasonable examples as to how to write your own. However,

- Include a brief description of the types of opponents and games you are interested in playing. Games being played other than "direct by modem" can be listed (trading saves, game disks, meeting on a BBS service or even face-to-face).
- At least one (possibly more) telephone number(s) must be included. Do not forget the area code and mention whether they are Home, Work or Modem numbers.
- Include your city and state so that people who call will have both a clue as to what time zone you are in, and b) recognize it when they see it on their phone bill.
- We reserve the right to edit all Operators Wanted ads to our standards of taste.

Networks

Microprose: CHQ & KDTS tournament: (301) 771-1151.
Attention Compuserve users - Check out the Modern Games Forum for forums, roundtables and tournaments. New features added! Contact "Turk" at Compuserve address: [76576,1323], or type GO MODERN

A computer modem club is forming in the Nassau County area of Long Island, NY. Organized competitions in strategy and simulation modern games will be arranged. Interested parties should contact South Shore Computer Modern Club, PO Box 817, Baldwin, NY 11510.

By Area Code

Seeking COMMAND HQ players in Southern California area. Call Alan Enrich at Home: (213) 420-7800 (Long Beach, CA). Be careful, I'm very experienced at this game!

Would be willing to seek out others by modem for COMMAND HQ. Strongly prefer 7777 scenario, but will play others. Wash-Ball area codes 301, 703 and 202 preferred. Long distance; answers only (sorry, guys). Contact Kevin McEve (Chevy Chase, MD) to arrange playing times. H:(301) 855-5369, W:(301) 586-2650. No calls after 8pm EST, please.


I am interested in playing COMMAND HQ with others in the Bay Area. Will play any scenario. Chris Niles (617) 262-4301.

Experienced sub captain/light head seeks any opponent for 688 ATTACK SUBS, PORPOISES or HELICOPTER SIMULATOR in 703, 202 or 301 area codes. Call me first at Home: (703) 451-0360 (Woodbridge, VA, ask for Sab). Also on Prodigy at: HVR287A; PC Link: Sab3.

Serious computer wargamer seeks opponents for EMPIRE or MODERN WARS or both. Also willing to consider on-line multi-player strategy games. Prefer S.E. players to reduce phone charges. Can be reached at (704) 774-9267, Compuserve: 78717,1162 or HG Mike Pfeifer (PC/Week). Veteran MODERN WARS player seeks new blood, er, players. I've played over 500 games and will even share some strategies and tips. I prefer to play the Full War scenario, but am flexible. Long distance calls welcomed, as long as we split the phone bill. Contact Marc Dalto at Home: (714) 465-3962 after 8 PM, or E-Mail me on Quantum Links: MarC0. PS, bring a fire extinguisher for your Con3Com.

Wargamer seeks opponents by modem for SECOND FRONT v1.1, campaign scenario, either side, any area code. Proven system reduces phone charges to nominal amount (details on request, but basically each player pays against the computer in alternate months and transmits save files after each game month). Contact Ed Morris (Amesville, TX at Work: (806) 374-9551 to arrange details.

COMMAND HQ opponent sought in 815 area code. Call Dennis at (815) 455-7034 (Crystal Lake, IL).

Opponent Wanted for COMMAND HQ: FALCON AT or any game using a modem (if I don't have it, I will get it). Call Steve Van Doorne (Chatsworth, CA) at Home: (818) 802-3136.

BANZAI

Death Sorte of the IJN Yamato

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Conversions Received

Jack Nicklaus Course Disc Vo. 4 (Accolade) Macintosh, Apple IIGS
SimCity Graphic Sets 1 & 2 (Maxis) Amiga
Ultima VI (Origin) C-64/128
Code Name: Iceman (Sierra) Atari ST
Faces: Tris III (Spectrum HoloByte) IBM PS/1
Typhoon of Steel (SSI) IBM
Blue Max (Three-Sixty) Amiga
B.A.T. (Ubi Soft) IBM, Amiga, Atari ST

Computer Gaming World
Real Blackjack is deceptively simple to play, but equally complex to master. Therein lies its brilliance. For all its clunky programming, Real Blackjack truly mirrors the '21' game as played in casinos around the world and actually teaches players how to master the game for the day when real money is bet, not just easy-to-spend "computer bucks."

**Private Lessons**

For beginners who are thinking of eventually playing blackjack in Las Vegas or Atlantic City, this has to be one of the most informative and least expensive tutors available. It doesn't hurt that the way Real Blackjack has been designed, it is also extremely fun, even addicting, to play.

The default settings for Real Blackjack are based on the standard Las Vegas game rules. The best hand is a two-card 21 or "Blackjack." Players may continue to draw cards without going over the score of 21, as doing that is an automatic loss. That's where the gambling comes in: one has to figure out what are the odds that asking for another card that will bring you to or close to 21 without going over. Alternately, a player must consider not taking another card because it looks like the dealer will be forced to go over 21 and, therefore, 'bust.' Standard casino rules are that the dealer must hit with 16 points showing and stand when 17 points are showing. If the dealer has the same score as the player, it's called a 'push' and nobody wins or loses.

The dealer or 'house' gives two cards to each computer-set or player-set bettor at the table. The dealer always takes one card down and one card showing. If the up card is an ace, then "insurance" is offered to players. The insurance offer is another bet entirely.

**Your Own "House Rules"**

What sets this package apart from other computer blackjack games is that it allows the user to customize playing strategies for all players and create tables of player actions that encompass all gambling circumstances. These include such decisions as when the player does or does not ask for another card or increase the bet. With blackjack expert Edward O. Thorp as the guide (the man who later went on to invent stock market "programmed trading") and the statistics for each hand tallied by the computer, Real Blackjack gives the serious gambler and novice alike a computer game that is also a potentially profitable educator.

**Money Management 101**

Setting up the individual styles and dollar management profiles of each player is a bit mind-boggling at first. The manual offers little immediate assistance, but the powerful on-line help facility provides clear information to handle all the preliminary housekeeping before play. (For those users who want to have an actual manual, a print option in the help menu reproduces the 61-page manual. Once the print process is started, however, there is no turning back short of rebooting the system.) The manual, whether read on-line or printed, is a virtual textbook study for beginners and experienced players alike. It makes it clear that blackjack is more than just a card game — it is a math puzzle and a psychological strategy.
Virtually every aspect of blackjack has been covered by Real Blackjack. For those players who want to learn how to count cards, something casinos discourage by using more than one deck or reshuffling often, there is a count system that will maintain individual tallies of cards.

Tutor Dynasty

By far, one of the most enjoyable features is the Tutor key. Push the Tutor key and the player will be told (based on the computer's or player's pre-set style tables) whether to take another card, to stand, to double down or to split the hand. Sometimes, the advice will seem positively ridiculous based on the eventual outcome. Of course, advice is based on statistical probabilities and not on definites. There are no definites in a game of chance except, perhaps, that the odds favor the house.

Real Blackjack is menu-driven and uses the ten function keys exclusively. While this makes the user interface extremely simple, it remains fairly unsophisticated. The game cries out for mouse control or mnemonic key controls such as S for stand and H for hit. Actual programming was done, amazingly enough, in BASIC. Colors are vivid no matter what the graphics capability of the computer — CGA, EGA or VGA. That's because the game was designed in IBM text mode, according to publisher Dan Sejzer.

Sound features basic IBM toots and whistles (which might be the reason that silence is the default). The speed of deals can be adjusted from a stupefyingly slow pace to a "now-you-see-it-now-you-don't" card shark's blur. The default setting is in the middle.

A bug in the program turns off the tutor key when speed is set at maximum.

Blackjack in the Information Age

Since it takes some effort to set up player styles, games can be saved for replay with favorite settings. Be warned, however, that they do take up considerable disk space and are slow to load when recalled. Once loaded, they provide an information screen with player setups and the time and date of the saved version. That is typical for Real Blackjack. This is truly a game for the information age. Screen after screen documents player actions and designs. Any screen can be dumped to the printer for more deliberate study.

Edward O. Thorp's Real Blackjack is not perfect, however. It does come with a seemingly clever (albeit user-unfriendly) copy protection scheme. The disk can be copied but the game only begins after a random five-digit password code is input. The codes are listed in the documentation but are printed on the infamous non-reproducible dark red paper. One must tilt the code sheet in bright light to get the number. Villa Crespo publisher, Dan Sejzer, says he has not received any complaints about this protection scheme. Well, he has now. Fortunately, he also receives enough praise for the game that it turns out to be worth the eyestrain to move past the protection. It is singularly one of the best casino game/tutorials available today.
Knights of the Sky

THE BEST OF THE PAST

Step into the past, and into the cockpit of a World War I biplane for thrilling dogfights against the greatest aces of all time. The masters of combat flight simulation present the masters of aerial dogfighting in Knights of the Sky.

Play against the computer, or challenge a friend via direct link or modem. Dazzling Super 3-D Graphics and realistic sound deliver the action in unprecedented detail. Infantry units, trench lines and natural terrain features below are crystal clear — they'd better be: you have to navigate by them.

Flying without radar and at slightly less than the speed of sound, your dogfighting skills are more important than ever. Your opponents aren't just specks in the sky — you'll see them close-up, shake your fists at them, perhaps even salute their skill.

But there's more at stake than just reputation. When you're not dueling you'll help the Allies win World War I. Lend support to ground forces during the war's major offensives; take part in legendary bombing raids; penetrate Axis territory on aggressive patrols.

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Journey to the far future, to a time when Earth is uninhabitable, and you must find a new home for Mankind. The company that revolutionized combat flight simulation has taken another bold step, in graphics technology, sound and role-playing sophistication.

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A Techno-Thriller From the Case Files of Max Remington.

THE BEST OF THE PRESENT

Experience the present world of international espionage by stepping into the shoes of special agent Max Remington. The first company to successfully merge simulation, role-playing and adventure now delivers espionage as it really is, with the scenarios and methods of operation you demand in an authentic spy thriller.

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MicroProse
THE BEST OF TIMES
ALL THE TIME.
So You Want To Be a Gremlin?

by Paul Rigby

As a board game it was voted "Best Selling New Game of 1989" (source: Neilson Retail Audit, by value). It was also the reason Sierra had to change the name of one of their top selling titles to Quest for Glory. HeroQuest: The Computer Game by UK software house, Gremlin Graphics, is based upon the successful fantasy role-playing board game.

Enter the underground realm of Morcar, the (all together now) evil wizard, where treasures lie in wait — along with the rather dangerous guardians. The dark caverns contain many dangers and traps. Taking an isometric viewpoint, each game level is, apparently, a new, unique adventure set in a different underground stronghold. Explore the tunnels and rooms while on the lookout for nasties. Every completed adventure takes you one step nearer to becoming a Hero. There are four adventurers: Barbarian, Elf, Wizard and Dwarf. Release is expected around Easter of this year for all major formats.

Cortizone is a text/graphic adventure currently available on the ST from British publisher Zenobi Software. Created using the STOS adventure utility from Incentive Software, the plot surrounds a building called the Zone, a hospital which was converted after The Great War to hold both human and robotic criminals at little expense to the weakened government. Conditions are barbaric as the inner building is mainly unguarded, leaving prisoners to fight over the limited resources that are periodically dropped into the building via a supply chute. Your aim is to gain entry into the Zone by any means and find the mad doctor thought to be responsible for the creation of the Adrenal Bomb (containing bacterial poisons), while obtaining information to find and defuse this lethal weapon.

The adventure arrives on two disks, with one whole disk given over to the introduction. This is a novel method of offering the player the plot in an interesting format. Created with STOS, it informs the player on all aspects of the background story via a continuous printout. Occasionally small, digitized graphics illustrate the text. Once this is finished the game is loaded from disk two. The game itself is divided into two windows. The upper window displays color digitized pictures. Below this graphic window is the text area. Priced at £4.99 from Zenobi Software, 26 Spotland Tops, Cutgate, Rochdale, Lancashire, England, OL12 7NX.

Remember the Dungeon-Master-in-space type game, Corporation? The game was mentioned in these pages and is subject to imminent release in the USA. Well, Corporation is back. In the original mission, as a top agent for Zodiac, you infiltrated the headquarters of the Universal Cybernetic Corporation and destroyed their laboratories and the vile mutants within them. Now, a new threat has risen. The Government's sources on the street have sent word that strange things are going down at UCC's North American headquarters. With your valuable experience, you're the obvious man for the job. There are 16 complete new levels to penetrate in your search for UCC's secret laboratory. On this mission you will encounter even stranger and
The unthinkable has happened — a renegade from the Temporal Corps has stolen a time travel machine and gone into the past to alter critical events in human history. Only you can prevent this madman from rewriting history and destroying current civilization.

A high speed chase through time, TIMEQUEST is a classic adventure game that features pageantry, danger, and puzzle-oriented adventure. The game is epic in scope, spanning four continents and three thousand years — from Stonehenge to Hitler.

Criss-crossing time and space, you will travel to England, Rome, Peking, Cairo, Babylon/Baghdad, and Mexico from 1361 BC to 1940 AD, meeting Caesar, Hitler, Napoleon, Genghis Khan, Attila the Hun, Cleopatra, Michaelangelo, and many others.

Written by Bob Bates, author of Sherlock: The Riddle of the Crown Jewels and Arthur: The Quest for Excalibur, TIMEQUEST is the latest from Legend Entertainment, the company that brought you the hit game Spellcasting 101: Sorcerers Get All the Girls. A treat for science-fiction fans and adventure enthusiasts alike, the game features:

- high resolution EGA graphics
- superb musical score featuring RealSound as well as Roland and AdLib support
- unique Legend screen design with pushbutton options
- menu driven parser

For IBM-PC/Tandy/compatibles.

"Legend is the company that finally got the adventure game interface right." — Computer Gaming World
Foreign Correspondence

more dangerous creations. Amiga and
ST owners, who will need the original Cor-
poration game disk to play the mission
disk, can obtain the data disk for £14.99.

Will it never lay down and die? That
space combat and trading game, Elite, is
back. Via the Microprose UK label, Rain-
bird, and renamed Elite Plus, the
playgame is promised to remain the
same. However, there have been many
updates and bolted-on features. The
most noticeable feature is the solid 3-D
graphics in VGA (and other, lesser,
modes). A re-designed, icon-driven inter-
face speeds the game along. Rainbird
promises new "information gathering" and
"map reading" sequences plus sound
board support (Roland and AdLib). Elite
Plus is a PC release retailing at £34.99.

By the same development team that
produced Microprose's Midwinter is
Midwinter 2: Flames of Freedom, to be
published on PC, Amiga and ST. As the
best field agent the Atlantic Federation
has, you are charged with the execution
of highly dangerous clandestine missions
on each of the 41 islands. Each island
has its own political, administrative and
cultural perspectives, so each mission
will require different aspects of your
chosen physical, mental and psychologi-
cal skills.

The plot goes something like this.
Maestro? Music please....."In the more
temperate equatorial reaches of the Atlan-
tic, only one of forty-two islands held out
a hand, welcoming the survivors into the
Atlantic Federation, a force for peace,
prosperity and democracy. But the new
home is threatened by the evil Saharan
Empire, a mighty military dictatorship
based on the African mainland, already
enslaving the other island communities,
and ultimately intent on conflict with the
Federation." So you must help aid the
individual island's indigenous freedom
fighters, and thus encourage the libera-
tion of as many islands as possible
before the big push by the evil empire.

Features of Midwinter II include a
sophisticated character profile generator
allowing you to choose your own looks,
sex, psychology and physical charac-
teristics; different games modes includ-
ing training to practice any aspect of the
game before the campaign section is
tackled; a 250,000-square-mile, 3-D, light-
sourced terrain area; auto route options
allowing you to plan and execute within
the 3-D environment immediately; and in-
teraction with around 4,000 characters,
each with his or her own personal profile.

Note: The above games, and any of
the other games mentioned in "Over
There" in past issues, can be obtained from:

Computer Adventure World, 318 Ken-
sington, Liverpool, England, L7 0EY.

Miles Better Software, 219/221 Canna-
cock Road, Chadsmoor, Cannock, Staff-
dordshire, England, WS11 2DD.
Telephone: 01144-543-466-577/8/80;
Fax: 01144-543-466-579.

Premier Mail Order, Trybridge Ltd., 8
Buckwins Square, Burnt Mills, Basildon,
Essex, England, SS13 1BJ. Telephone:
01144-268-590-766; Fax: 01144-268-590-
076.

All of the above telephone numbers
assume you can dial direct. If you
have any trouble contact the interna-
tional operator.

Inside the Industry

Sierra/Broderbund Merger Intent Announced

On March 8, 1991, publicly-held
Sierra On-Line and privately-
held Broderbund Software an-
nounced the signing of a letter of intent
to merge. The new company formed is
expected to be called Sierra-Brode-
bund, Inc.. Under this arrangement, Sierr-
a CEO Ken Williams would become the
CEO of the consolidated company, while
Broderbund CEO Doug Carlston will take
over the reins as Broderbund President.
Broderbund's current president, Ed Auer,
will serve as president of a newly-formed
manufacturing and sales unit.

Sierra stock jumped more than two
points on the next day of trading after
the announcement that it would acquire
Broderbund in a stock swap estimated by
the Wall Street Journal at a value of over
$88 million. Though the letter of in-
tent indicates that Broderbund would, in
effect, become a wholly-owned subsidiary
of Sierra, the primary impact of the
merger can be summarized in CEO
Williams' observation that, "This really is
a 'merger of equals' in that, post-con-
solidation, Broderbund and Sierra will
exist as sister companies sharing a com-
mon distribution mechanism." Those
who have observed the relationships in
the rapidly expanding Sierra family since
the Dynamix acquisition can affirm the
desire of Sierra's leadership to allow its
subsidiary companies to continue in their
creative and technological expertise while
establishing more solid financial and
marketing foundations.

The joint statements of the two com-
pany executives indicated their mutual
belief that the consolidated company had
a beneficial impact in both product lines
and fiscal resources. No specific details
were provided, but Carlston's expectation
that "...we should enjoy substantial syner-
gies in our publishing efforts, primarily
through technology sharing and market-
ing efficiencies" delineates the initial
cooperation to be seen under the new
agreement.

Finally, the financial stability gained
from the merger poises the consolidated
corporation to exploit its fiscal and tech-
nological resources so as to compete on
a worldwide basis. This not only provides
for expansion, but also creates a de
facto defense against potentially hostile
maneuvers by firms which specialize in
takeovers and liquidation.

The merger agreement sends positive
signals of a "coming of age" of the larger
publicly-held entertainment software pub-
lishers, but underlines the doubt and con-
fusion surrounding Mediagenic's current
status as producer of disk-based soft-
ware. The merger decision testifies to the
entertainment software industry's greater
awareness of a need for increased capital
in order to publish continually more
sophisticated projects in the future and
the knowledge that other entertainment
industries may want a future stake in in-
teractive entertainment.
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**THE MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE SOURCE IN THE INDUSTRY**

---

**WARLORDS**

 Basically described as EMPIRE gone medieval or SWORD OF ARAGON meets REACH FOR THE STARS. Either way, this game will keep you and your friends up until 6 in the morning. Different races fight over a continent capturing castles which produce a variety of armies. Dragons, the undead, and magical items add spice to the game. Up to eight players may participate at once as the game is divided into separate turns. Gorgeous graphics depict mountains, rivers and woods. Each country's armies have their own distinct uniforms, color and qualities. Races include elves, humans, dwarves, etc. EGA or VGA only. Mouse and hard drive supported. 40K.

**NOT TANDY COMPATIBLE.**

**IBM & AMIGA $32.**

---

**COMING SOON!**

- Elite + (IBM) **AUGUST**
- Secret Weapons Luft (IBM) **APRIL**
- Medieval Lords (IBM) **APRIL**
- Death Knights Krynn (IBM) **APRIL**
- Civil War (SSD) (IBM) **APRIL**
- Falcon 3.0 (IBM) **APRIL**
- Road to Rhine (IBM) **MAY**
- Avenger A-10 (IBM) **MAY**
- Gunship 2000 (IBM) **MAY**
- Carriers at War (IBM) **JUNE**
- Flight of Intruder (AMIGA) **JULY**
- F-117 (IBM) **AUGUST**
- Darkland (IBM) **SEPTEMBER**
- Civilization (IBM) **OCTOBER**
- Armada 2525 (IBM) **(?)**

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**WARLORDS**

**PRE WW II**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game</th>
<th>IBM</th>
<th>AMIGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ancient Art War (BROD)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancient Wars (BROD)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandit Kings China (KOEL)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battles of Napoleon (SSD)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil War Vol. 1 (SSG)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil War Vol. 2 (SSG)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil War Vol. 3 (SSG)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centurian Def. Rome (E.A.)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision at Gettysburg (TIGL)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genghis Khan (KOEL)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gettysburg (KOE)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold of America (SSG)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Fleet (SIMCAN)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knights of Sky (MICROPR)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebuchadnezzar (1 &amp; 2 KOE)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude to Iliad (GQ)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Baron VGA (DYNAMIX)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Baron EGA (DYNAMIX)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance 3 Kingdoms (KOE)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revolution 76 (BRITT)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sons of Liberty (SSD)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warlords (SSG)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterloo (SSS)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WORLD WAR II**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game</th>
<th>IBM</th>
<th>AMIGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Stations V. 3.0</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action N. Atlantic (GQ)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ger. Raider Atlantis (GQ)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banzai (GQ)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Tank Barbarossa (S.C.)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battlehawks '42 (LUCAS)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bismarck (GQ)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe Ablaze (SSG)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Brigade (PANTHER)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleet Med (SIM CAN)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halls Montezuma (SSG)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Harms Way (SIM CAN)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kreigsmarine (SIM CAN)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Lance (SIM CAN)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta Storm (SIM CAN)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marianas Turkey Shoot (GQ)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kursk (GQ)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panzer Battalions (SSG)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panzer Strike (SSG)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Plate (GQ)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rommel N. Africa (SSG)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia (SSG)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secret Front (SSG)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherman Tank (EURO)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silent Service 2 (MICROPR)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storm Across Europe (SSG)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their Finest Hour (LUCAS)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typhoon of Steel (SSG)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**STRATEGY**

**MODERN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game</th>
<th>IBM</th>
<th>AMIGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.T.P. (SUB LOGIC)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle Chess 2</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Command Hood (MICROPR)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-14 Tomcat (ACTIVIS)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-16 Combat Pilot (E.A.)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-19 Stealth Fighter (MICROPR)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flight Simulator (S.HOLONY)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flight Sim4.0 (E.A.)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Eskaela (SIM CAN)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunship (MICROFROSE)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harpoon v. 1.2 (KOE)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harpoon #2 N. Atlantic (360)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harpoon #3 Med. (360)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harpoon Sht. Ed. (360)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHX Attack Chopper (E.A.)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-1 Tank Plut. (MICROPR)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main B. Tank Germany (C6)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear War (NEWWORLD)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Storm Risin (MICROPR)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links (MICROPR)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stormovik SU-25 (E.A.)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Yankee (EURO)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SCI-FI**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game</th>
<th>IBM</th>
<th>AMIGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperium (E.A.)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach for the Stars (SSG)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starfleet 2 (SSI)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GENERAL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game</th>
<th>IBM</th>
<th>AMIGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PowderMonger (E.A.)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RailRoad Tycoon</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sim City (MAXIS)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sim City: Terr. Edit.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sim City: Set #1 Ancient Space</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sim City: Set #2 Future</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sim Earth</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMS 2 (MICROPR)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMS 2: Desert Storm</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SPORTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game</th>
<th>IBM</th>
<th>AMIGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Battle Chess</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chess Master 2100</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey League Sim.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indy 500</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Nicklaus Unltd.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGA Tour Golf</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanghai 2</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test Drive 3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV Sports Basketball</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV Sports Football</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV &quot;89 Teams</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne Gretsky</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne Gretsky 2</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**SOUND CARDS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game</th>
<th>IBM</th>
<th>AMIGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ad Lib</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soundblaster</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

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Fantasy games have come a very long way over the last ten years. From the textual charm and linearity of Zork to the massive graphic worlds presented in the Ultima series, gamers have been exposed to ever more breathtaking graphics and interactive storylines. Some of the most recent offerings are so fluid and flexible that one easily forgets the interface and gets sucked right in to the alternate universe in question. The best of the breed allow users to see the world in graphic detail while still keeping the imagination alive and involved, blending action with strategy, brawn with brain. Electronic Arts is making a bid at this ultimate action/adventure game market with their newest offering, The Immortal.

**Pass the Torch, Please**

With very little pomp or circumstance, players find their on-screen persona standing in the dark, damp corner of a small stone antechamber above the seething depths of the dungeon of Erinoch. Seething is the right word, too, as it is filled with such obstacles as giant worms, invisible shades, trolls, pit traps, slimes, rooms of death, goblins, irritable dwarves, massive puzzles and unconventional locking systems that would give the best thieves pause. The player’s mission, should he choose to accept it (although buying the game usually entails acceptance), is to send his on-screen character in search of the player’s wizardly mentor, Mordamir, by following the trail said wizard had left behind on his final expedition in search of the great dragon. His journal and one’s own keen wits are all there are to go on and it is a long and harrowing journey to the bottom of the pits.

While some adventure games hurl characters right into the story, leaving them entirely on their own to discover the mysteries and dangers that await, The Immortal comes with a fairly detailed manual that lends guidance through some of the strategies and techniques usable throughout the game. It even includes a guide that takes players step-by-step through the first level (which is a good thing, since even the first level contains some tricks that might take players days to figure out on their own).

**Tome It May Concern**

Donning a wizard’s robes is no easy task, but the excellent manual includes very complete directions on how to move, fight and vanquish foes with (relative) ease. It also includes excerpts from Mordamir’s personal journal of his exploits in the caverns, with tips on combat, biographies of characters that will be encountered, hints and clues for later levels and a very welcome off-disk copy protection scheme.

Regardless of the somewhat time-worn plot (which is conveyed with a sense of somber firmness that pushes it just over the edge into taking-itself-just-a-hair-too-seriously-land), the game’s selling point must be its graphics. They are quite impressive and lavish in detail, while not breaking any truly new ground. The most miniscule renderings are marvelous, from the swishing of wizardly robes as the character saunters down the evil corridors-o’-doom, to the extraordinarily natural way in which the torches and candles flicker and flare.

**Eight Million Ways to Die?**

There are, of course, lots of lovely, graphic ways to die. Players can have the flesh stripped from their bones by sentient pools of creeping, acidic slime; they can be hacked to ribbons by goblins or trolls, dissolving into a bloody puddle of organic muck; they can be blown to bits by having hundreds of explosive spores driven into their character’s quivering body (a personal favorite); they can be skewered, roasted, smashed, dropped, poisoned or executed by any of a large number of other exciting methods that will aid players in shuffling off this immortal coil.
Though The Immortal tries to position itself as a computer role-playing game, it is not completely successful. The action sequences, particularly combat scenarios, are fairly well-executed and the puzzles/traps are clever enough to require a good bit of brain twisting to solve. However, the big problem with The Immortal is in the very structure of the game. While trying to be action-oriented, the game manages to keep an adventuring flavor but tends to be excessively linear in its approach. There is little room for creative experimentation in the game, since one's path is more or less clear, and attributes/skills are not improved. The Immortal is basically an intensely graphic action-adventure masquerading as a CRPG. While one can move his wizard wherever he likes within a level, almost all tasks must be completed in a specific order to move on. Most CRPGs allow room for error, but one misplaced fire button in The Immortal can send characters whimpering back to the very beginning.

Wishing You Could Save Yourself

Another problem with The Immortal's linear setup is the fact that one can only begin games from certain specific points. The player is given a certificate number at the end of each level, which can later be used to begin the game from that level rather than starting at the top of the dungeon every time. Some of the levels, however, are quite large and time-consuming; thus, if the last remaining fireball is accidentally lobbed into a wall or misses the target, it will be time to begin the level over. Don't miss any vital objects along the way, either, or there may be an exceptionally sticky situation several levels later on.

If games could be saved from any point within a level, it would be far less annoying to have to restart. But when confronted with sudden death within inches of the goal, it is frustrating (and not a little tedious) to have to retrace steps covered fifty times before. Finding oneself quickly mangled is extremely easy even for veteran players, given the tricky nature of some of the maneuvers.

Losing Controls

The controls are another place where The Immortal falls a bit flat. The joystick control is somewhat spotty, not always responding smoothly or accurately to commands (this reviewer tried the game with two different brands of joystick and both suffered from the same difficulties). This control problem, combined with the three-dimensional perspective, makes it difficult to move deftly as is required in certain circumstances. It is far too easy, for example, to move the wizard right back out a door he just entered, often exposing him to the ravages of some slathering creature he was trying to escape. Choosing items and spells is also accomplished with the joystick, and this arrangement can lead to some unfortunate mishaps, such as using a vital or dangerous item at the wrong time, inadvertently blowing one's own face off in some circumstances, thereby rendering oneself useable for smitherens.

The Immortal, while "gamely" attempting to forge to the front of the CRPG market, misses the target. The game is stylish and atmospheric with superb audiovisual frills, but in spite of its positioning, it is better suited to clever adventurers with an accurate wrist and a lot of patience than the traditional CRPG market.
What's In a Name?

Freakin' Funky Fuzzballs

by G. Marc Clupper

In a world of ever-increasing numbers of arcade games, one must wonder if the concepts behind these products will ever become stale. As game designers pawn off new versions of old products, the appeal of such games dwindles. However, on rare occasions, a publisher will earnestly submit an original twist on old arcade inspirations. Sir-Tech Software has done just that in their latest release, Freakin' Funky Fuzzballs.

Shake The Dust Off Your Shoes

Fuzzballs is based upon the adventures of fictional creatures known as "Fuzzballs." These diminutive creatures bear a strong resemblance to household dust bunnies. Hiding behind those hard-to-reach places, they appear only occasionally and, when one does make a public appearance, they are unjustly swept away or trampled under foot. Now, in Freakin' Funky Fuzzballs, the player commands one of these little guys in a bid to end the eternal prospects of future mistreatment.

The player moves, via numeric keypad, throughout a series of fifteen levels of floors and mazes in an effort to gain access to a subsequent level. Each of the five "worlds" is unique in the items that can be found. Food is a necessary element to survival as it replaces lost vitality caused by the enemy. Keys may also be found in these worlds and are required to enter the next level. Other items include rings (which increase the fuzzball's vitality), scrolls and potions. Potions restore a fuzzball's vitality to or near its maximum. Scrolls are another story. Once a scroll is evoked, one of six events will occur, only two of which are useful. Other than invisibility and enlightenment, a fuzzball will usually be better off not making use of scrolls.

What a Fuzzball Might Call "Home"

As the fuzzball searches an area, doors, food, armor or special items will randomly appear. Keys to a door may also be found in these worlds and are required to enter the next level. Other items include rings (which increase the fuzzball's vitality), scrolls and potions. Potions restore a fuzzball's vitality to or near its maximum. Scrolls are another story. Once a scroll is evoked, one of six events will occur, only two of which are useful. Other than invisibility and enlightenment, a fuzzball will usually be better off not making use of scrolls.

Freakin' Funky Fuzzballs has two difficulty levels, one- or two-player modes allowing up to ten individuals to compete for the highest score and level, and a high score screen. The colorful screens are pleasant to watch and are clearly designed. The accompanying manual is concise and provides many useful tips and strategies to players. The only minus would have to be the separate black-on-red number check used for copy protection. The color combination is tricky enough on the eyes without the print being so small.

Call the Fuzz

Overall, the concept of the game is fascinatingly simple, but the true nature of strategy quickly becomes evident as the player must learn to maneuver around the enemy and avoid being stranded on an island of his own creation. While some may find Fuzzballs only mildly amusing, it does provide for some intriguing facets of arcade action combined with a bit of the strategy planning of adventure games. Freakin' Funky Fuzzballs is an addictive pursuit reminiscent of Tetris and other arcade adventures and provides a sometime distraction from the seriousness of daily life. Why, there's even an infamous "Boss Key" [F4].

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Computer Gaming World

Page 62
HOVERFORCE™

TOP GUN MEETS BLADE RUNNER

STORY
The year: 2050. Biotechnology has irrevocably changed our lives, and the world now faces a new breed of criminal called Alterants. These mutant slimelords have gained control of all streetlife via distribution and sale of a contraband biotech serum known as "Aftershock." To stop them, public officials have created an elite battalion of genetically-enhanced public enforcers: the Red Wasp Unit. You are the best of the best. Strapped into your hard-firing, hyper-fast HoverKill 1000 urban assault skimmer, you are the ultimate bio-warrior. Your mission is clear: Interdict supply runs. Terminate Alterants. To order, visit your favorite retailer or call 800-245-7744.

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Arthur, regal leader of the Knights of the Round Table, is dead and his realm is rapidly falling into disarray. Sir Lancelot du Lac, the Round Table's most valiant knight, has retreated to parts unknown, taking many of Arthur's best fighters with him. Hostile forces threaten what remains of the realm and, as Lord Constantine, Arthur's successor to the throne, the player must stand firm against the invaders and preserve the realm's integrity and glory. To fail would bring about a Dark Age that would last a thousand years. What's a new king to do?

Spirit of Excalibur represents Virgin Mastertronic's most impressive foray yet into what it terms a "new genre in interactive computer entertainment" — the "Fantasy Epic." Combining lush graphics and strategic decision-making with elements of role-playing, Spirit of Excalibur picks up where War in Middle Earth left off in presenting an attractive mix of gaming elements. However, it also features some flaws that may subdue a player's overall enjoyment.

Entering the Court of Camelot

The game's 256-color VGA mode offers such colorful, visually delectable screens that many players will feel they have chanced upon an open window to the glory of Camelot. This reviewer was absolutely bowled over by the festive beauty of scenes depicting the various locations visited by one's character throughout the course of the game. The artists responsible for the graphics deserve special recognition for their work. Would that this reviewer were king in order to "knight" Rob Landeros, Robert Stein III, Jonathan Sposato and Curt Toumanian.

Unfortunately, the second observation that new players will make is that the documentation seems appropriate in terms of recreating an era when most of the population was illiterate. It utterly fails to adequately provide a sense of "what to do" (i.e., what is expected of the player in order to complete the game). There is a thorough description of how to do things (via the game's icon-driven interface), as well as an interesting historical background and account of the myths of King Arthur. Once one has mastered the simplest mechanics of the game, all this material proves of little use in enlightening a player as to what to do.

Game Play

The manual divides the plot of the game into five "episodes," starting with Constantine's journey from York to Camelot to claim the throne as Arthur's successor and ending with the final confrontation between Constantine's forces and the evil sorceress Morgan le Fay. This first episode is virtually automatic, requiring a bare minimum of player input. It provides a useful tutorial for new users, allowing them to familiarize themselves with the mechanics of conversation and combat.

As the player makes his or her way to Camelot, viewing Constantine's progress on a gorgeous map of the English countryside, one will encounter various villages and towns, as well as travellers on the roads. It is a good idea to have Constantine speak with everyone he encounters, since many of the people he meets may offer important information. Treating people well is encouraged, since Constantine and the rest of the party members have Nobility levels which rise and fall depending on the fair and just behavior of the characters.

While each town and village features a guard, priest or villager to talk to, many of them allow Constantine to delve deeper into the town itself by entering a building, such as an abbey or keep. These buildings also feature characters who are more than willing to aid Constantine, and wise players will enter every building they find and entertain all offers of help.

When the player's party encounters a town, village or traveller along their journey, the player is offered a choice of entering the location/speaking with the traveller or continuing on without stopping. Entering a location switches the screen to a magnificent close-up view of the town or road. The player's party enters the screen from the left, and conversation (or, in some instances, combat) will ensue. The close-up scenes are rendered in wonder-
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ful 3-D detail and, although the on-screen characters cannot move any "deeper" into the scene, the effect is impressive. Additionally, many of the scenes have "hot zones" (for example, the sturdy wooden door in Camelot) that will move the party to other locations simply by clicking on them with the cursor.

Before arriving at Camelot, Constantine will encounter some hostile individuals who can only be dealt with via combat. When a battle begins, the screen switches into a "combat mode" that allows the player several options, such as "Attack," "Defend" and "Withdraw." Combat is of the real-time variety, so players will initially find themselves scrambling to issue commands as the computer hacks away at its own intrepid pace. The battles during the first episode aren't difficult at all, so the player may easily defeat his or her adversaries simply by clicking on "Attack" over and over. Using these easy battles to familiarize oneself with the commands is definitely recommended.

The real-time aspect of combat adds a degree of difficulty that this reviewer found displeasing. Until one becomes familiar with the various commands on the menu (which appears above the screen showing the battle), considerable time is spent searching through the menus for the appropriate commands. Meanwhile, the computer-controlled opponent is slashing and/or casting spells with great abandon and the character all too often suffers.
serious damage in the meantime. While many enjoy the challenge of this type of combat scheme, this reviewer found it needlessly frustrating in *Spirit of Excalibur*.

Once Constantine reaches Camelot and presides over the Round Table, the easy part is over and events are dropped into the player's hands. From the manual and from conversations with the local populace, the player will discover that a Scottish army, led by one of the late Sir Mordred's sons, is threatening the realm to the north. Thus, the player is encouraged to send some men northward in order to obtain information about the hostile force. Yet, the computer does not display the Scottish army on the map. Worse, the player has no idea how far north to venture, nor how many men to send.

A more pressing (and local) threat after Constantine arrives in Camelot is the army of Saxons who are attacking London. Constantine must defeat them; he has enough forces in the area to do so, if only he can join together with the London garrison. How to do this, however, is a mystery and the player must figure this one out on his or her own (if it is indeed possible). There is no logical reason that Constantine's forces cannot join with the London garrison, but for some inexplicable reason the computer forbids such an alliance. Thus, Constantine must face the opposing forces alone and he will be killed. Of course, the death of Constantine ends the game.

This kind of information should have been included somewhere in the documentation, but its absence simply adds confusion to an already complex game. The information provided for the search for Lancelot is equally vague and ultimately frustrating.

Another general problem with the game is that the computer does not inform the player when one episode has been completed and the next begins. This leads to more ambiguity in the sense that the player is never really notified when he or she has completed all of the given tasks for a specific episode. At the very least, a message informing players of their progress would have been extremely helpful.

So the activities in *Spirit of Excalibur* basically revolve around wandering the countryside, talking to anyone and everyone, making attempts at achieving the goals laid down by the storyline and battling hostile factions in order to muster support for the realm. Eventually, Constantine will need to call upon the services of magic-users, especially when battling dragons, demons and the dreaded Morgan Le Fay herself.

**Final Words**

While many of the comments above may seem negative, they should be taken as observations with regard to *Spirit of Excalibur's* style of gameplay. The designers have taken a relaxed, "let the players figure things out for themselves" approach, which is commendable (as this reviewer is sure that there are many gamers out there who would appreciate this product). There is a good deal of play value here for gamers who are willing to struggle past the game's considerable hurdles.

However, this reviewer found *Spirit of Excalibur* to be far too vague. This is unfortunate, since the game is a technical wonder and has great potential for success in both action and storytelling. Perhaps improved documentation (both in printed form and from the game itself) would help propel *Spirit of Excalibur* into the ranks of today's greatest fantasy games. As it stands at the present, however, *Spirit of Excalibur* will be considered as confusing to most players as Merlin's lessons (whereby he caused Arthur to metamorphose into common animals) must have been to the boy king.
Computer Gaming World

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Copy Infection

As a first-time reader of your magazine, I was pleased by the quality of your publication and the depth of your articles. You have obviously spent a great deal of time thinking out the format of the publication as well as playing the games and listening to the readers.

I must say that I find your reviews informative but lacking. There's no question you've spent time playing the games and talking to the creators, but to ignore the issues of copy protection and, specifically, the type of copy protection, is completely negligent of your responsibility to your readers.

Since I am a first-time reader, I admit to not knowing what your policy is regarding copy protection. However, as a consumer, I would like it known that there are certain copy protection schemes I can live with and there are others that would negatively influence my decision to buy the product. I will not, for example, buy any game that alters the formatting on the hard disk. Key disks might be acceptable, but any scheme which I feel may in any way interfere with my hard disk backup or defragmentation routines has already imposed a price that I am unwilling to pay.

I can live with documentation checks where those checks are not too obtrusive. Those that ask for the third word in the fourth paragraph of the twenty-seventh page are really imposing a penalty on legitimate owners. Why should I have to go on a password quest even before my game quest begins?

Some documentation checks pose more of a challenge than the game itself.

Also, high on my list of not-to-buys are those schemes which require identification of some pattern on a separate sheet of paper. Worse yet, if that page cannot be photocopied. While I understand the distributors' desire not to have the key page photocopied, I admit being able to recall at least once or twice in my life where I have lost a single sheet of paper (especially when the kids play the game too). I'm sure the distributors don't think it is possible to lose a single sheet of paper since they will duly ignore requests for a new key page, even from registered owners.

This leads to the next problem with documentation checks. It used to be you had to back up your software so as not to damage the master disk. This was and is considered prudent behavior. Now one must also back up the documentation as well since the loss or destruction of any portion of the manuals will also prevent the usage of the software. What good is the software if you can't get into it or use it? Will the publisher replace the key documentation to the registered users if it's lost? If not, what good is registration? Is registration useful for something other than junk mail from the distributor?

I understand the publishers' need to protect their rights, but not everyone who has a copy of their software is a pirate. It is the height of arrogance to treat the legitimate owners of the software as though they have acquired the product illegally. While I respect the rights of the authors and distributors, I resent the presumption of guilt placed upon the legal owners. I will therefore continue to limit my buying decisions to those games which are both amusing to play as well as unobtrusive to get started. I find your omission as to the type of copy protection scheme employed in a game to be a serious flaw in an otherwise excellent review.

Since my buying decisions are influenced by the protection scheme employed, I find I am unable to make an informed decision based solely on your review. To this extent, you have failed in your efforts to fully inform me, in an otherwise excellent publication.

Charles Silbergleith
(No city given)

I maintain that computer companies have the responsibility to find a balance in their use of copy protection. If they don't, they'll alienate the honest majority of supporters.

An example, to me, of bad copy protection: I just bought the new game Midwinter from Microprobe. Even though they removed (finally) their on-disk copy protection, they still have a pretty paranoid document check; you have to search through a 200-page manual for the name of the person whose picture comes on the screen. That takes a long time. So, okay, but here's the kicker... Once you've done it, they ask you to do it again! I mean, come on! You've already proven beyond a reasonable doubt that you own the game—they just want to hit you one more time for the hell of it! Then, on top of that, they tell you that if you own the game—they just want to hit you one more time for the hell of it! Then, on top of that, they tell you that if you won't be able to play the game without in-depth use and understanding of the manual. So, why not just drop the document check and consider anyone playing the game without the manual a demo player? If the game is good, they'll get hooked and want to own it, right? And the game is good. But, it's still going back to where I bought it tomorrow because I will not be made to feel so mistrusted in my own home.

To me it's really pretty simple. Be good to people. Do good work. They'll show you they appreciate it. If some rip you off, you still have the support of the great many. A lot of great software has been sold this way and it's the way every other entertainment medium operates.

Charles Carr
PRODIGY user

Thanks, Charles and Charles. We are concerned about copy protection, as well, but do not believe it should be a major purchasing criterion. We do men-
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tion copy protection when we find it particularly offensive or particularly interesting in terms of how it blends into the game. As noted in the April 1991 editorial (CGW #81), our readers despise both "key disk" and "look up" protection that uses "non-reproducible" paper. We have urged the publishers to move away from that type of copy protection. If we can, at least, succeed in this area, we believe that it will no longer be necessary to mention the protection in a review.

Long Time Passing

I enjoy reading your magazine a great deal. The articles in it provide information on many computer games as well as making interesting reading, even if I’ll never buy the product. There are a few problems with the magazine, which is why I’m writing.

The primary problem is the fact that the articles don’t always cover cutting-edge products. For example, in your December issue, the game Final Fantasy was reviewed. This game was admitted to be several years out of date because it is from Japan. When at all possible, articles should be about products that are liable to be extremely popular and/or contain totally new concepts. Examples of this include Ultima VI, Summitry and Populous. There are probably wargames and simulations that would be examples of this, too. Obviously, not all articles can be about cutting-edge products and makers of games that aren’t perfect shouldn’t be discouraged, but out-of-date games like Final Fantasy just don’t need reviews.

My second problem is with the layout of the pages that contain game ratings by the readers. The games in the hall of fame don’t have any information about them listed. This means that the games that people are most likely to buy have no information about them listed. Also, I think some of the games listed may no longer be produced. I don’t think M.U.L.E. is still made (if it is, I’d like to know where to get a copy for the Atari ST). Finally, I think the games rated should be put in separate categories, like they used to be. A flight simulator should not be compared to a role-playing game. With the current method it is possible for the top game in a particular category to not be in the top ten, just because the sort of people who play that type of game tend to give lower ratings. Game players are going to be discouraged from playing a particular category of game if none of them were well-rated.

I hope you make some of the changes I have suggested. If, due to cost, difficulty or a decrease in the quality of the magazine that would be caused by a change, you don’t make them, I will understand.

Paul Dickinson
Tucson, AZ

We try to be as topical as possible. If companies get the games to us promptly, it still takes, logistically, two to three months in order to get coverage in the magazine. If companies get the games to us before they are released, we often write sneak previews that indicate what the games should be like (they are not always finished when we look at them in advance).

The "Hall of Fame" is placed on the Top 100 Games page as a frame of reference for those who have been around computer games for a time. They reflect games which were/are great and have been so rated by our readers over a significant period of time. Many of them cannot be purchased because they are out of print.

As for splitting the games into categories, that is a "no win" proposition. We would have at least six different categories and some games would not really fit into any of the six. Since so many games in the present market are hybrids of two or more categories, we feel such a separation would be less, not more useful.

Kilobyte Was Here

I would like to suggest an M. Evan Brooks-type rating article for WWII and newer eras. Brooks’ October 1990 article was one that was/is the most useful to me. Keep up the good work.

Bob Koestler
Hasbrouck Heights, NJ

I have bought your magazine off the newsstand for years. The October 1990 issue of CGW was the issue that finally convinced me to subscribe. I thought that your "Hits and Misses for Strategy Gamers" was an excellent article. One question: have you, or will you in the future do the same for 20th-century strategy games?

Also, the "Over There" report is well done. I spent three years in the UK, which has a large selection of good software (it’s just hard to get in the US).

The icing on the cake was Mr. Sipe’s article on Red Baron. I’ve thought for years that the WWI era has been neglected for too long by the computer strategy companies.

Keep up the excellent work!!!
Brent A DeBorbander
Scott AFB, IL

Although the World War II paleography, "Kilobyte Was Here" (CGW #37), is slightly dated, it is still the best resource for that era. Newer games like SSI’s Panzer Strike, Typhoon of Steel and Second Front, as well as SSG’s Panzer Battles have added to the mix, but there are many more older titles than there are new titles.

Good R.I.D. dance

Some of the best — no — the best arcade action games around are being made by Psygnosis (specifically Shadow of the Beast I & II and Awesome). Yet, I haven’t even had a chance to rate them on the R.I.D. cards. Might this have something to do with the fact that they make games exclusively for the Amiga? Please set me straight.

Weyland Walton
Draper, UT

When rated, games must reach a certain number of responses to be included in the Top 100 list. We have not tried to rate any Psygnosis games since May of 1990 because they were not getting sufficient responses. However, now that they are no longer solely publishing Amiga and Atari ST games, we are sure the responses will increase and we expect to try again.

Gospel According to CGW

I read with interest the Bible reference on your editorial page of your 2/91 issue (Psalms 9:1-2).

Is this a Christian witness, a religious mole in your organization or something else entirely? Please satisfy my curiosity.

Larry P. Stiegitz
Medford, OR

Nothing as insidious as a religious conspiracy is involved here. Basically, the senior editorial staff places the scripture reference in every issue as an unobtrusive way to share our personal goals of glorifying God in everything that we do. The scripture is a poetic song of praise in both the Judaic and Christian tradition and suggests what we believe is a very positive perspective on life. Readers should not worry, however; we don’t intend to sell shares in a CGW theme park/resort.
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On the R.I.D. card provided towards the front of the magazine, please rate the following games (only if you have played them!) and articles (if you have read them) by using a letter grade scale (i.e., A to F). Just rate the games as if you were an educator. With the world of education, the scale will translate to:

A = Excellent
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F = Failure

If you wish you may assign pluses (+) or minuses (-) to your letter grade (i.e., B+, B-, C+, C- etc.). As always, rate only those games that you have played.

Demographics
(List the appropriate number.)

1. What is your age?
   1 = Under 14 years old
   2 = 14-17 years old
   3 = 18-20 years old
   4 = 21-30 years old
   5 = 31-35 years old
   6 = 36-40 years old
   7 = 41-50 years old
   8 = 51+ years old

2. What machine do you play games on?
   (List all numbers that apply. List the machine you use most often first, the others in descending order of use.)
   1 = IBM, clones, Tandy
   2 = Amiga
   3 = Apple 8 bit
   4 = Apple lgs

5. What is your favorite game?
   1 = Atari ST
   2 = Atari 8 bit
   7 = C-64/128
   8 = Macintosh
   9 = Commodore (specify)

3. How much time do you typically spend playing computer games each week?
   1 = Less than 2 hours
   2 = 2-5 hours
   3 = 6-10 hours
   4 = 11-20 hours
   5 = 21-30 hours
   6 = 31+ hours

4. Do you regularly read the editorial in Computer Gaming World? (Y/N)

Games
5. Obstus (Psygnosis)
6. Silent Service II (Microprose)
7. Universal Military Simulator II (Microplay)
8. Bill Elliott's NASCAR Challenge (Konami)
9. Knights of the Sky (Microprose)
10. Wings of Velosia
11. Air Strike USA (Spotlight)
12. Eye of the Beholder (SSI)
13. The Lord of the Rings (Interplay)
14. Ultima V (Origin)
15. Hard Nova (Electronic Arts)
16. Quest for Glory II: Trials by Fire (Sierra)
17. Red Baron (Dark Realms)
18. The Immortal (Electronic Arts)
19. Red Storm Rising (Microprose)
20. Fleet Med (Simulations Canada)
21. Wizardry: Beene of Cosmic Forge (Sir-Tech)
22. Lemmings (Psygnosis)
23. Railroad Tycoon (Microprose)
24. Nighthive (Ocean)
25. Powermonger (Electronic Arts)

26. The Untouchables (Ocean)
27. F-19 Stealth Fighter (Microprose)
28. Second Front (Strategic Studies, Inc.)
29. Populous (Electronic Arts)
30. The Secret of Monkey Island (Lucasfilm)
31. Railroad Tycoon (Microprose)
32. SimCity (Maxis)
33. Ultima VI (Origin)
34. Harpoon (Three-Sixty)
35. M-1 Tank Platoon (Microprose)
36. Warlords (Strategic Studies Group)
37. Hoops (Rising Sun Inc.)
38. Wing Commander (Origin)

Articles
39. Das Boot Review
40. Their Finest Hour Strategy
41. Might and Magic III Preview
42. One Saved Game Blues
43. Just Another War in Space Review
44. Battle Chess II Review
45. Fireteam 2200 Review
46. Edtra Review
47. Scorpion's Tale (Bane Hints)
48. Obstus Review
49. Dungeon Master II Review
50. Baseball Manager Review
51. Real BlackJack Review
52. The Immortal Review
53. Spirit of Excellence Review
54. Covert Action Review
55. Freakin' Funky Fuzzballs Review
56. Taking A Peak
57. This Issue Overall
58. How many pre-school age (3-5 years old) children do you have?
59. How many grade school age (6-10 years old) children do you have?
60. How many teenage children do you have?

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Page 74 Circle Reader Service #16 Computer Gaming World
In The Magic Candle, 1989's role-playing game of the year, you saved the lands of Deruvia from the foul archdemon Dreax! But that triumph is past!

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**The Magic Candle II**

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A spy would be fortunate to work for Sid Meier's CIA. Imagine: an almost endless stream of interesting assignments; an opportunity to work with the world’s most sophisticated espionage technology; bureau heads who are cooperative and who willingly stay out of an agent’s hair; a legal system which convicts international criminals even when their arrests are tantamount to kidnapping (can you say ‘Noriega’?); free travel to fifty cities around the world; and, best of all, never having to kill anyone. Who could ask for anything more?

Sid Meier’s latest creation, Covert Action, is a complex and detailed espionage simulation, encompassing many of the subtleties of cross-cultural criminology. It is remarkable that Meier and his crew (notably co-designer Bruce Shelley) have managed to cram so much onto four disks, since the game contains more hidden facets than many six- or eight-disk games. Covert Action is like a Ringling Brothers clown car: surprises keep coming out and one wonders how so many could fit in such a small space.

Indeed, if the game has one flaw it is this, that so much comes at the player so quickly. It is possible for one to overload on information at several points, not least of which is when one opens the ninety-six page instruction manual. However, one can hardly criticize a game for offering players too much, especially at a time when so many games offer so little.

Covert Action is ambitious. Indeed, it is more than ambitious, it is successful. It may not be to everyone’s taste — gamers cut from the 007 mold may prefer a more exotic, less fact-based spy story — but for intelligent gamers looking for a real challenge, Covert Action will be a treat.

Overt Action

Using words like “intelligent” and “challenge,” one runs the risk of scaring away gamers who are primarily looking for action in a spy game, especially from one whose name includes the word ‘action.’ Such gamers need not fear. Covert Action has as much action as the average Clint Eastwood movie — it’s just that it also has plenty of mind-twisting brainwork for the player to do when all the pulse-pounding legwork brings results.

So a player will go, within minutes, from a breakneck car chase or shootout to infiltrating a terrorist’s lair incognito. Then, move swiftly to the very different (but no less vital) work of the CIA’s cryptography lab. Running around like a juggler with a dozen balls in the air, the player has to deal with unforeseen events and changing variables under tight deadlines. It is this endless variety that makes Covert Action so enjoyable. There is always something new to be done.
Technically, there are only four elements to the game: breaking and entering, wiretapping, cryptography and car chases. Each of these, however, encompasses a wide range of activities, objectives and obstacles, and the four elements are combined in a variety of ways. Adding complexity to the equation, assignments are available at four difficulty levels ranging from "Local Disturbance" to "Global Crisis." Adding further variety to the equation, one nice touch is that the player's character, Max Remington, can be either "Maximilian" or "Maxine" and another is that the character has player-adjusted skills in all four activities. Then, too, there are twenty-six different criminal masterminds opposing Max, each with dozens of distinct plots for the player to unravel. It should be easy to see why the game never becomes boring.

*Covert Action* will probably outlast most players. Only a dedicated few will plug away at it until all its secrets are revealed. Yet for all this complexity, gameplay within any one sequence is fairly simple. Car chases involve maneuvering on a pair of strategic maps while maintaining line-of-sight contact in a first-person window. Breaking and entering involves suiting up with high-tech weapons and surveillance devices and then exploring a building in the manner of *The Punisher*. Function keys access Max's Uzi, his camera, his grenades, his bugs and whatever else the player has decided to carry.

The intelligence portions of the game are similarly well-designed. Cryptography, for instance, consists of decoding substitution ciphers. The procedure, though difficult to describe, is wonderfully compact: one keys in a letter in the cipher and then the letter one thinks it represents. The computer does all the substitution and, bit by bit, a message in English is constructed out of gibberish. This is much more entertaining than it sounds.

Planting wiretaps involves switching chips on a circuit board to reroute the flow of current so that one gains access to telephone lines without tripping any alarms. (Here, the gameplay most closely resembles one of the last games ever released for the ColecoVision, *Thomas Fulton's 2010, The Graphic Action Game*.) This is also more fun than it sounds.

Indeed, Sid Meier's genius lies in dreaming up stylized, out-of-the-ordinary play mechanics which are hard to describe and are more fun than they sound and combining them with fascinating storytelling, as he does here. *Covert Action* is fun to play at first just to get used to the odd gameplay and the complicated interplay of game elements; but it remains fun to play after one has mastered the gameplay because the crimes one has to solve are, without exception, interesting.

It is indicative of the care put into the game that even in the practice mode, the coded messages one decodes are interesting messages. There are no two-bit capers for Max Remington. Each plot is carefully conceived, involves at least half a dozen participants and centers around such important topics as assassination, theft of national secrets and world war. Meier and Shelley keep players on their toes down to the wire; and when, at the end of each case, they recount the plot in detail, even the best players will often be caught by surprise.

Individual cases take at least half an hour to solve, but they are addictive. Like potato chips, one session with *Covert Action*...
makes a player hungry for more. After a few dozen cases this effect may wear off, but if so, this reviewer hasn't found out yet.

**Meier's Mires**

For all this, however, the game does have problems, and it would not be fair not to prepare players for them. None is substantial enough to interfere seriously with one's enjoyment of the game, but all are irritating and should really have been fixed before release.

First, the instruction manual is such a substantial tome that almost no one is likely to have the stamina to read it before starting play. Unfortunately, the text is so poorly organized and written that it is hard to find what one is looking for even when one knows what that is, much less when one is not certain of what is being sought. Compounding the problem is the fact that the text has been inadequately proofread. Worst of all, the book is peppered with tiresome narrative passages in italics which purport to tell Max's story as though in excerpts from a novel. These are best skipped. Wading through this morass of prose to find specific instructions will seem more than a little frustrating. Happily, the game's mechanics are natural enough that a little trial and error (plus the game's self-explanatory menus and a handy reference card) pretty much solve the problem.

A more serious problem is that when information is acquired during a break-in (generally through photographs of a desk's or safe's contents), the game stops short to display the information in clue-file form. The game's clue files are thoroughly cross-referenced, which is very useful when one needs to find a particular bit of information in a desperate moment; but the middle of a break-in is no time for the game to interrupt itself with a complete run-down. One might take a photo of a desk drawer and then spend the next three minutes pressing 'Enter' as the game cycles through all the permutations involved in cross-referencing the clue with previously obtained information. Of course, the player doesn't bother to read the torrent of information being displayed — he wants to get on with the break-in — but he is still forced to sit through this entire display each time he takes a photo or listens in on a conversation. A much better system would have been for the game to announce the content of each clue in one or two sentences, and to save the cross-referencing for later.

Also under the heading of "Too Much All at Once" is the overabundance of choices. As noted above, this is an unusual complaint, but there is no denying that it can be frustrating to have dozens of choices on a half-dozen menus and not know what to do first. For the most part, one does the same things over and over, and this leaves one gazing longingly at the many actions one hasn't had a chance to perform: work with the Israeli Mossad, travel to Hungary, plant a car tracer and so forth. Until the choices actually come into play in one or another of the cases, one is left in the position of a hungry man at a buffet, not knowing what to take and what, respectfully, to leave untouched.

On an entirely different level, there is the dicey problem of realism and topicality. Meier wants to make Covert Action both realistic and topical, but he keeps pulling back, apparently as a sop to the "Games Ruin Young Minds Brigade" and various Anti-Defamation Leagues. On one hand, for instance, one gets to use real-world weapons; but on the other one is told that "the rounds [they] fire...are a recent, secret development that stun the target rather than penetrate." Nonsense! Uzis kill people and spies kill people. To dance around this fact (the graphics certainly seem to indicate killing) is condescending and insulting.

Another example is that while the Mafia is called the Mafia in the game (possible offense to Italian Americans being ignored), the PLO is here known as the the "PFO" (Palestinian Freedom Organization) and the PIRA is known as the "PIFA" (Provisional Irish Freedom Army). Who do the designers think they are fooling? Instead of this disingenuous game of peekaboo, Meier should have given some attention to the fact that out of twenty-six villains, eighteen are black, hispanic or Middle-Eastern. This may correlate with real CIA "most wanted" profiles, but it may also strengthen or lend credence to a player's own prejudicial stereotypes. Normally, one wouldn't mention this in a review at all, but it is strange to find a game that is hypersensitive on some points and strikingly insensitive on others.

**Covert Convert**

None of the observations just cited alters the fact that Covert Action is entertaining in the extreme. There are very few games that offer as much as this one does or which so completely cover their subject. Rarer still are games which do so without becoming crushing bores or requiring all sorts of specialized knowledge. Covert Action belongs on a short list of games along with such inspired work as The Fool's Errand and Starflight. In each case the designers combined excellence with diversity to create a top-notch game.

Covert Action could be better, but not much. It is no exaggeration to say that Microprose has released the richest treatment of espionage ever put in a computer game. Only the real thing could be more rigorous, and one imagines that it wouldn't be nearly so much fun. caw
Inside the human body, a constant war rages between invading virus cells and the body's own defence mechanisms. Day after day the body repels the marauding bacteria until, once in a while a stronger, mutant viral strain penetrates the outer protective membranes and threatens to overwhelm the life-giving organs of your very being.

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State of the Industry: Many software publishers have performed a positive service for retailers, consumers and busy editors by color-coding the appropriate system supported on their packages. IBM products are easy to find on nearly any shelf because nearly 90% of the industry use some form of sky-blue label on their MS-DOS packages (presumably a tribute to IBM's identity as "Big Blue"), even if it is only a blue strip at the top of a predominantly gray label. Other formats are not identified with quite such a significant consensus.

There is also something of a de facto standardization with Amiga products among many publishers using a brown or beige label or strip on those products. Likewise, Macintosh products see a significant number of publishers using a pure gray label. However, if the industry were to standardize color-coding for all consumer platforms, it could feasibly lead to improved inventory handling in the retail channel.

We readily admit that the larger chains utilize electronic inventory programs to check their stock, but we think there would be a definite advantage for sales personnel to be able to glance quickly at a shelf and note whether all of the formats were available or not. It has been our experience that once a product is "out of sight" with many retailers, it is "out of mind." Color-coding would serve as a constant mnemonic device as to stock on hand in each format, particularly in smaller stores where products are in limited enough supply that they must be displayed spine outward. This might even help some retailers to understand that a conversion is usually something new, even though the title has been out on another platform for a long time.

In the same way, consumers would be able to ascertain the relative support for their machines in a given store without having to undergo a detailed perusal. For example, an Amiga gamer drops into a software store to pick up the new golf game, Debased Fore. Waiting in line at the check-out stand, he glances at an adjacent shelf where a flight simulator (C-5A Transport Pilot) that went gold on the MS-DOS format is displayed. This time, however, he notes the brown label that indicates the program has been converted to Amiga. Having already mentally "crossed the Rubicon" and committed to spending some money on computer games today, he immediately walks over to the shelf and picks up the Amiga version of C-5A and purchases it along with the golf program. This does happen, but it is more likely to happen with standardized color-coding.

In fact, if we may be so bold, we even have a suggested color scheme for the industry, based on labels already in use (but not standardized). We would like to see Apple II (8-bit) programs with red labels (red is for apple), IIGS programs with violet labels (think of it as off-red), Amiga in light brown (tan, beige), Atari ST in dark green, Commodore 64/128 in orange, MS-DOS in blue and Macintosh in gray (after all, they were originally black and white).

We feel that the small amount of effort and resources it would cost manufacturers in future products would help everyone touched by computer games. From the clerks in the warehouses, through the distribution chain, across the editorial plain and right down to the eager clutches of consumers, system/color standardization is an idea whose time is here. The question is, are software publishers visionary marketers or colorblind reactionaries? We're just waiting for the light to turn green.
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