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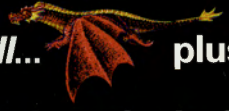
THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO ONLINE GAMING — how to get connected, the best online games, and the fastest, cheapest places to play... **SIERRA'S HOT 1997 LINE-UP:** *Quest for Glory V, King's Quest VIII, Red Baron II,* and (gulp!) *Outpost II*... **28 PAGES OF REVIEWS** with *Football Pro '97, NBA Live 97,*

Discworld II, and *Leisure Suit Larry 7*... the **LATEST GAMING HARDWARE**... unstoppable **STRATEGY GUIDES** for *Archimedean Dynasty, Circle of Blood,* and *Heroes II*...  plus more **GRATUITOUS STUFF** on *Quake*... why roleplaying is **BETTER THAN SEX**... and so much more that it won't all fit on the cov

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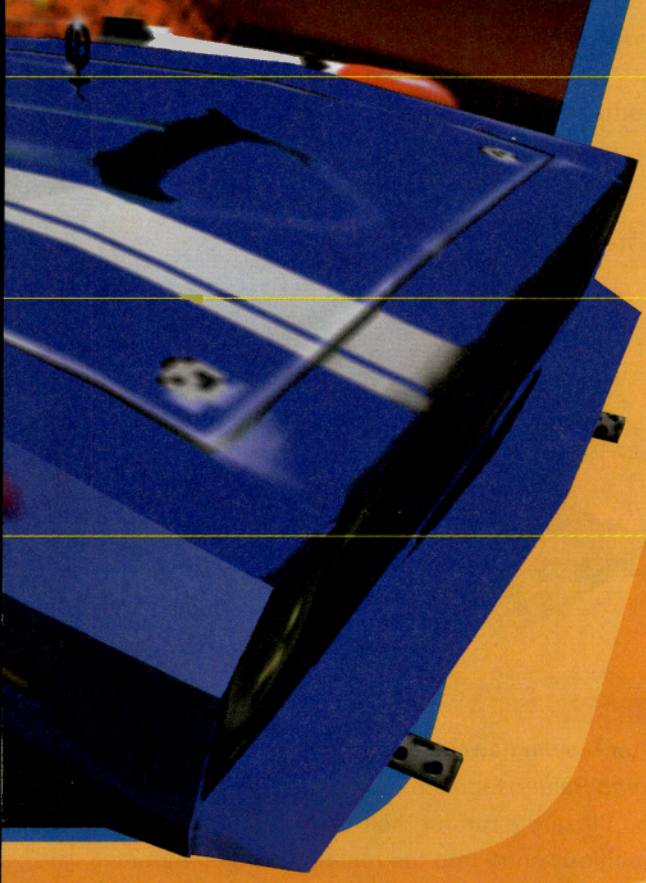

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Product Information Number 84

PC GAMER

VOLUME 4 • NUMBER 4 • APRIL 1997

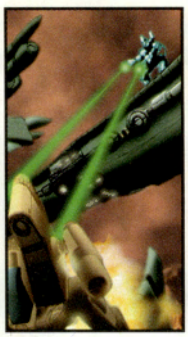
Cover Story

Online Gaming

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE

65 After all the hype and speculation, it's finally happened — Internet gaming has arrived, and in a big way. But getting online, making sense of the jargon and choosing the best games and online services can be a nightmare, so enter *PC Gamer* on its white charger to de-mystify the whole thing, reviewing the most popular online games and services, and showing you how to get the most out of this whole new world of Gaming Goodness.

Feature



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How do you install and play all those games packed onto our CD every month? Read the Disc Pages!

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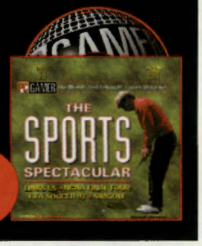

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PC Gamer (ISSN-1080-4471) is published monthly by Imagine Publishing, Inc., 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Periodicals Class postage paid at Brisbane, CA, and additional mailing offices. Newsstand distribution is handled by the Curtis Circulation Company. Subscriptions: One year (12 issues) US: $39.90. Canada: $53.90. Foreign: $63.90. Canadian price includes postage and GST (GST #128220688). Outside US and Canada: Add $2.00 per issue. For customer service, write PC Gamer, Attn: Customer Service, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005, call (415) 468-2500. **Postmaster** please send change of address to *PC Gamer*, P.O. Box 51199, Boulder, CO 80322-1199. Corporate, advertising sales, circulation, editorial and production offices: 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Phone: (415) 468-4684. Fax: (415) 468-4686. Editorial product information should be addressed to Editor, *PC Gamer*, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Overnight delivery parcels should be addressed to *PC Gamer*, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned or acknowledged. Imagine Publishing, Inc., also publishes *Game Players*, *Next Generation*, *Boot*, *MacAddict*, and *The Net*. Entire contents copyright 1996, Imagine Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Game Players, Game Players Guide, and Game Players Encyclopedia are tradenames of Imagine Publishing, Inc. Products named in these pages are tradenames or trademarks of their respective companies. Imagine Publishing, Inc., is not affiliated with the companies or products covered in *PC Gamer*. IPM# 0781118. **Produced in U.S.A.**

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Get Yourself Connected...

Ever since I first linked my PC to another PC to play my first ever DeathMatch game of *Doom*, I knew that one day this whole 'net-gaming deal was going to be big. Back then, in 1993, gaming link-up technology was woefully inadequate, and hardly anybody had even heard of the Internet, but the increased adrenaline and FUN to be had playing a human opponent rather than some faceless computer convinced me that when the technology caught up with the ideal, this was going to be a Very Big Thing Indeed. Now, four years later, it's finally happened. The increased growth, popularity, and user-friendliness of the Internet has made it possible for PC gamers around the world to get online and challenge each other to their favorite games, cheaply and easily. But multi-player gaming is still in its infancy, and with so many games and online services competing for your attention, getting up and running can still be a daunting task. So for this month's Ultimate Guide to Online Gaming, we spent over a month experimenting with all the new Internet games and game services we could lay our hands on. It wasn't all a bed of roses — we had connection problems, crashes, latency, and other tech problems up to our eyeballs — but we had some tremendous fun too. My advice, if you're not sure whether or not to get involved, is to bite the bullet and do the same. You won't regret it.

Gary Whitta, Editor-in-Chief

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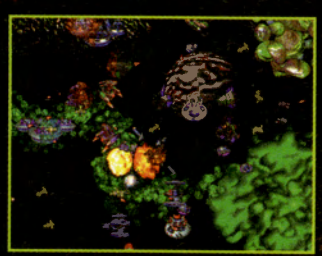
//64 CONTROLLABLE STARSHIPS AND STRUCTURES



//IPX NETWORK SUPPORT FOR UP TO 4 PLAYERS- BATTLE ALONE OR AS A TEAM

//BUILD ALLIANCES WITH ALIEN RACES AND LEARN THEIR TECHNOLOGIES

//HUGE NON-LINEAR CAMPAIGN PITS YOU AGAINST 20 ENEMY BOSSES

Product Information Number 159

Welcome to Paradise

You're about to undertake a new adventure. As you'll see, *The CD* has been totally revamped with an easier-to-use interface, but don't worry; your old friend Coconut Monkey is there to help you along. These pages will explain all the functions of *The CD*, so take a look — or hop right in. We've tried to make things as intuitive as possible.

This is your first look at Coconut Monkey's Island Paradise, a world filled with strange sights and surprises. It answers the age-old question, "where do Coconut Monkeys come from?"

One of the new features is the ability to go straight to the demos without navigating through a series of screens. You can skip the interface entirely and manually run all of the installation commands by using the chart on the next page.

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

Entering Paradise

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

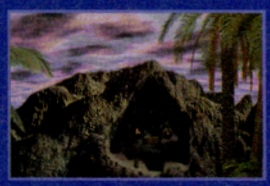
There are also control buttons on the bottom of the screen that will take you directly to any one of the many usable sites. The control buttons can be clicked on to enter and exit each site.

Quick Start for The CD

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

FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND

REVIEWS INDEX



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

PATCHES

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

TECH SUPPORT

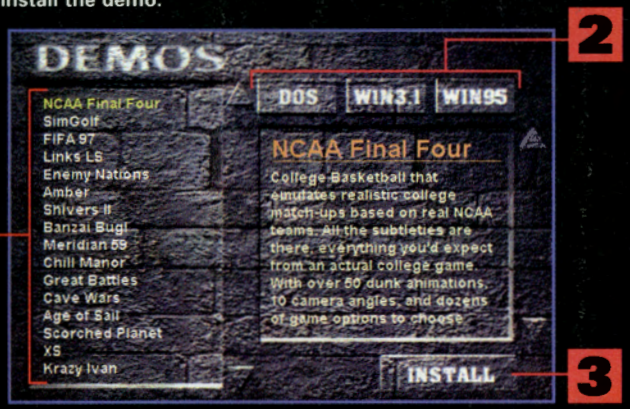
Our Technical Support database includes contact information for many game companies. The arrows will let you scroll through the selections, plus there's a search button so you can find any company by name.

INTERNET

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

PLAYING THE DEMOS

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



System Requirements

486/33; 4MB RAM; Mouse

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

Attention Win95 Users

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

Free Demos!

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

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

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

Disc Editors' Note

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

CONTENTS / MANUAL INSTALLATION COMMANDS

Installation Shortcuts

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

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

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

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

** on chart at right = requires Windows 95.* Age of Sail, Shivers II: Harvest of Souls, The Palace, *and* America Online *will also run under Windows 3.1.*

Demo	Directory	Installation Command	Disc Page
Links LS	\LINKSLS	SETUP.EXE	10
FIFA Soccer 97	\FIFA97	FIFAWIN.EXE (Win95) FIFADOS.EXE (DOS)	13
NCAA Final Four*	\NCAA	SETUP.EXE	14
SimGolf*	\DEMOS	SETUP.EXE	17
Amber: Journeys Beyond*	\AMBER	DEMO.EXE	17
Scorched Planet*	\SPDEMO\INSTALL-\WINDOWS	SETUP.EXE	18
Cave Wars	\CAVEWARS	XCOPY	18
Age of Sail*	\AOS_DEMO	SETUP.EXE	20
Banzai Bug!	\BANZAI	BANZAI.EXE	20
Enemy Nations*	\ENDEMO	SETUPNET.EXE	24
Great Battles of Alexander*	\BOADEMO	SETUP.EXE	24
Surface Tension	\STDEMO	INSTALL.BAT	25
Meridian 59*	\MERIDIAN	SETUP.BAT	25
Krazy Ivan*	\IVANDEMO	KRAZY.EXE	27
XS	\XSDEMO	XCOPY	27
Shivers II: Harvest of Souls*	\SHIVERS2	SETUP.EXE	28
Chill Manor	\CHILL	SETUP.BAT	28
Palace*	\PALACE	PAL-201.EXE	31
Total Entertainment Network*	\TEN	SETUP.EXE	32
Mplayer*	\MPLAYER	SETUP.EXE	32
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Patches	\PATCHES		164
Dark Forces GOBs	\DARKFORC		
Duke Nukem 3D MAPs	\DUKE3D		
Quake BSPs	\QUAKE		
WarCraft II PUDs	\WAR2		

Links LS

Company: Access
Tech Support: (800) 793-8324
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Sports
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 30MB hard-drive space; SVGA
Install: \LINKSLS\SETUP.EXE

When the sun's shining and the birds are singing, what better pastime to partake of than a relaxing game of golf? And with Access' new *Links LS*, golf on the PC never looked better.

Playing the game is simple; mastering it takes a lot more patience and time. But if you hang in there, the birdies will drop like flies in a cloud of Raid. Once you've installed the game, try the practice rounds to learn how to play.

When you take to the course, you might want to change your aim to account for any uneven terrain or wind. To do this, click anywhere in the main window, and you'll see your red and white aiming stick. Place it where you want to aim the ball. To swing the club, click and *hold* the left mouse button on the big golf ball at the bottom of the screen. The meter will start moving up. The further up the meter travels, the harder you'll hit the ball. Let go of the mouse button when the meter goes as far as you want, and watch the red line as it travels back down. Click the mouse button once when the meter is near the bottom (six o'clock). Try and stop the meter as close to the line as possible; if you stop it to the right or left of the mark, you'll slice or hook the ball.

Using these basics, you can play through the game and get a feel for hitting the ball just right. You'll also be able to decide which clubs to use, change your view of the course, and alter display options like turning on tracers to show the path of the ball. To access these functions, move the mouse cursor to the bottom of the screen until a control panel pops up. Rest the mouse cursor over any of the buttons for a few seconds, and a line of text will appear that explains what it does (or you can just study the handy diagram we've worked so hard on). With the control panel, you choose a club, change your stance, and even bring up a top-down map of the field. Also helpful is the hole-finder button, which guides you to the exact location of the pin — a nice feature when the fairway takes a sharp dogleg. For more information on the details of the game, press F1 for a comprehensive online help system.

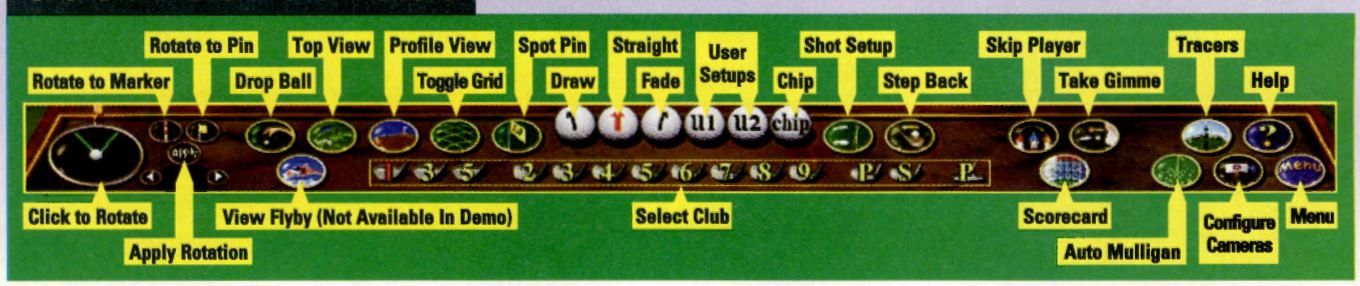
The straight shots are usually the easiest — just give it lots of power and make sure you stop the meter right at the bottom of the swing.

Putting tends to cause greater frustration than initial drives, because there's so much room for error.

With tracers turned on, you can see the trajectory your ball takes. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.

If you're not exactly sure where the green is, go ahead and take a look at the overhead map to get your bearings.

GOLFING GUIDES



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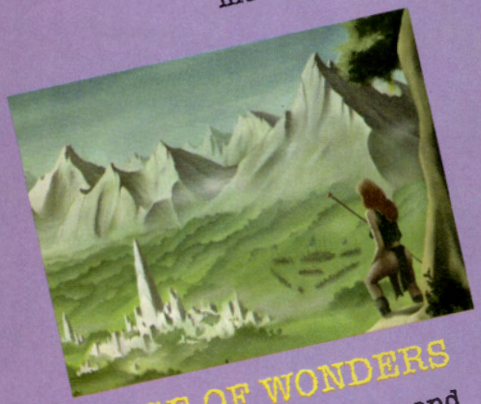

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Fellow Canines,

As you know, life is full of petty annoyances: baths, choke collars, the biscuit-on-the-nose trick, etc. But the new Only-for-Pentium®, Only-for-Windows 95™ games from Epic MegaGames are a greater threat to your quality of life than all these things combined.

Once your owner brings these totally absorbing, technologically ground breaking games into your home, you'll find yourself waiting longer for food, walks, attention, you name it. It's treatment not even fit for a cat!

Believe me, I'm not just talking about the typical attention you lose to ordinary computer games here. If you see an Epic game in your house, dig a nice deep hole and bury it immediately. Once your owner starts playing, it will already be too late.

Dobbs

P.S. Do NOT let your owners visit www.epicgames.com/newgames

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Call toll-free **1-888-SHIVER2** for a free preview or interact with the evil at **http://www.sierra.com/shivers2**

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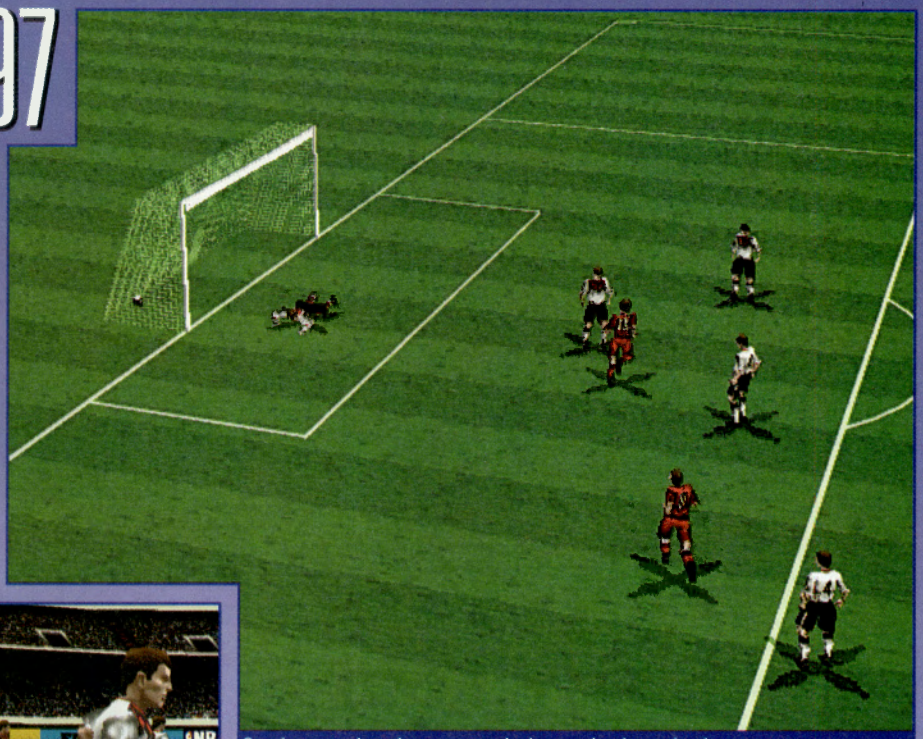
Product Information Number 304

FIFA Soccer 97

Company: EA Sports
Tech Support: (415) 572-2787
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Sports
Required: Pentium 75; 8MB RAM; 13MB hard-drive space; SVGA
Install: \FIFA97\FIFAWIN.EXE (For Windows 95)
\FIFADOS.EXE (for DOS)



Scoring a goal on the computer isn't easy, but it can be done.

EA Sports has already secured a place among the very best publishers of sports simulations, and *FIFA Soccer 97* simply proves once again that no one can compete with their superior technology. Using a similar engine to the one that helped *NHL 97* earn our award as last year's best sports game, *FIFA Soccer 97* puts you on the playing field with 3D players and environments. You can change the camera angles, control every movement of your players, and play soccer like you never have on the PC. Even the game commentary will impress the most cynical of soccer fans.

The graphics and smooth control of *FIFA 97* show once again that EA Sports is a force to be reckoned with.

In the demo, you'll play either Germany or England for a single half of two minutes and fifteen seconds. Scoring on your opponent within that time isn't easy, but it can be done. When you start the demo, simply choose a Friendly game (you can't choose anything else). You can select an indoor or outdoor game and cycle through all the teams, but the selections you make will have no bearing on the demo itself until you reach the control screen. If you're using a gamepad or joystick, move the directional controller to the left or right to choose Germany or England. You (or a second player) can also use the keyboard; just press the left or right arrow key to choose a team. Hit Enter or press Button 1 to start the game.

The player currently under your control is designated by a yellow circle around his feet. To learn what keys and gamepad buttons perform which actions, take a look at the control box here. The longer you hold down the button to kick the ball, the harder you'll hit it. That means you need to watch both your teammate, and how long the button is pressed—it does no good to kick the ball toward the goal to have it only sail over the top. It'll take some practice to learn all the ins and outs of *FIFA 97*, but you should be able to score at least a couple of goals in the time the demo gives you. But if it doesn't happen immediately, don't give up. Even Pele didn't score consistently when he first stated playing.

The player animations reach a whole new level of detail in *FIFA 97*. If you think they look good standing still, you should see them run!

The Virtual Stadium lets you choose from all sorts of angles on the action.

GOOOOOOOAAAAALLLLLLL!

DEFENSE

ACTION	KEYBOARD	GAMEPAD
Run	Arrow Keys	D-Pad
Tackle	A + Direction	Button 1 + Direction
Switch Player	S	Button 3
Slide	D + Direction	Button 4 + Direction
Speed Up	Q (Rapidly)	Button 2 (Rapidly)
Hard Tackle	E + Direction	Buttons 3&4 + Direction

OFFENSE

ACTION	KEYBOARD	GAMEPAD
Lob	A + Direction	Button 1
Pass	S + Direction	Button 3
Shoot/Clear	D + Direction	Button 4
Speed Up	Q (Rapidly)	Button 2 (Rapidly)

If you time it just right, you can fly through the air for a slam dunk. It's sooo *pretty*!

NCAA Final Four

Win95

Company: Mindscape
Tech Support: (415) 898-5157
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Sports
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 8MB RAM; 29MB hard-drive space; SVGA
Install: \NCAA\SETUP.EXE

What would our sports demo extravaganza be without some good old basketball? Mindscape has put together a package that should thrill any NCAA fan, with tons of teams and all the fast action that makes basketball such a great game.

Look at the controls listed on this page for a quick summary of how to play. Although you can cycle through the teams, the demo defaults to the Kansas Jayhawks and Wake Forest's Demon Deacons. As with any good basketball game, the secret to staying ahead of the computer resides in mastering your defense. The computer is good — give it the chance, and it'll score on you. The trick, of course, is keeping it from shooting the ball. To help you in this task, you can assign different defenses to your players, with the function keys: F1 sets up a quarter-court man-to-man defense; F2 assigns a 2-1-2 zone; F3 switches to full-court man-to-man; and F4 calls a 2-3 zone. These calls will save you a lot of running back and forth; if you can stop your opponent at his own basket, you've nearly won the game.

When you play, you'll know which player you control by the circle underneath his feet. What happens when you press a given action button or key depends on where your players are and what they're doing. For example, if you're at half-court and press the shoot button, your player will throw the ball toward the hoop with all he's got. But if you're running down the middle with an open lane, you'll jump up for a dunk or a lay-up. You won't always know what your player's going to do, so keep your wits about you. Pass often, or you're likely to get stuck with three men covering you and nowhere to go. Although you can play the game with the keyboard or joystick, we recommend using a gamepad.

The spot directly underneath the basket is a bad place to be, unless you're intent on grabbing the ball *after* it swishes through the net.

IN THE KEY

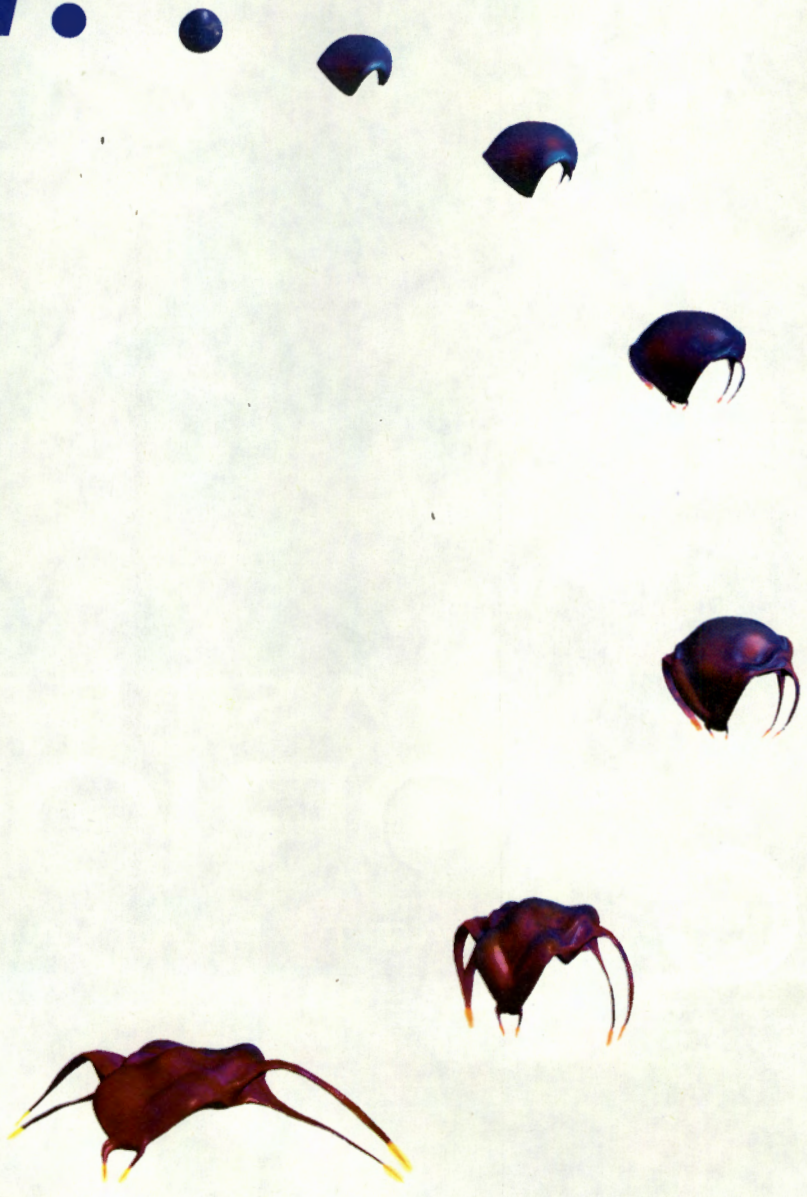
ACTION	KEYBOARD	GAMEPAD
Run	Arrow Keys	D-Pad
Jump/Shoot	Space	Button 2
Pass/Switch	Return	Button 1
Turbo	Left Shift	Button 3
Steal	Right Control	Button 4

HINT

It's tough to do, but if you manage to learn the secret of the steal, life on the hardwood will become much sweeter. The trick is to make sure the opposing player isn't on guard. The best time to try to steal is when the computer brings the ball up court. Use the turbo button to get ahead of him; if you time it just right, you could end up with the ball at half-court. Drive it toward the basket for an easy lay-up or spectacular slam, and you're on your way to the championship!

If you're not careful, the computer could play a blow-out game against you, resulting in a sad score like this one.

www.



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SimGolf

Win95

Company: Maxis
Tech Support: (510) 927-3905
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Sports
Required: Windows 95; 486/66; 12MB RAM; 50MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \DEMOS\SETUP.EXE

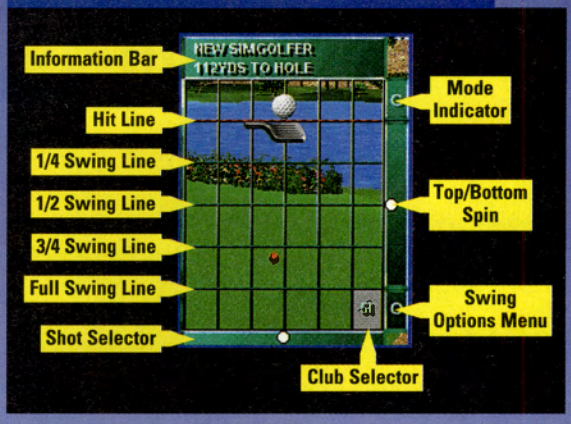
So you've ruled over *SimCity*, learned about nature in *SimEarth*, *SimAnt*, and *SimFarm*, and protected your precious citizens in *SimCopter*. But do you have what it takes to be a champion at *SimGolf*? The demo gives you a chance to find out, with two holes on two different courses. You can also check out the features of the course designer, which lets you create your own dream courses (although you can't save your creations in the demo version).

SimGolf is controlled differently from most golf simulations, which generally have you clicking on some kind of power bar. In *SimGolf*, you move the mouse to directly control the power and angle of your swing. When you get into the demo, you'll see the MouseSwing Indicator in the top right corner. To use it, put the cursor on the club and click the left mouse button. Pull the mouse toward you, and the onscreen golfer will begin his backswing. To hit the ball, move the mouse away from you quickly, making contact with the ball in the swing grid. The faster you move the mouse, the more power you put behind your swing.

If the MouseSwing isn't your cup of tea, try clicking and holding the mouse button on the small "O" in the bottom corner of the window. Drag it up up to the MouseSwing Indicator, and let go. The meter will turn into a PowerSwing meter, similar to those used in other golf games. To initiate a swing, click and hold the button on the club. Let go when the swing reaches its apex (if it goes into the red zone, it's an over-swing). When the club comes back down, click again as it reaches the bottom. Stop too far to the right or left of the six o'clock position, and you'll either slice or hook the ball, respectively.

For more information on playing *SimGolf*, consult the online help available in the demo. You'll receive helpful tips on how to set up your swing, how to override the clubs chosen for you by the auto-caddy, and how to use the various cameras to your benefit.

THE SWING INDICATOR



With the Course Architect, you can modify existing courses or make your own for *SimGolf* from Maxis.

Amber: Journeys Beyond

Win95

Company: Graphic Simulations Corp.
Tech Support: (972) 386-7575
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Puzzle
Required: Windows 95; 486; 8MB RAM; 16-bit Video Card
Install: \AMBER\DEMO.EXE

With its beautiful, high-resolution backgrounds, a haunting story, and some mind-bending puzzles to solve, *Amber* aims to please any adventure fan. A brilliant scientist disappears, and it's up to you to unravel the mysteries she was working on. You're in a haunted house with high-tech paranormal tracking devices, and what doesn't scare you outright will send shivers up and down your spine.

The demo includes the office, where you can locate a draft of the manual for the tracking devices scattered throughout the house, as well as some odds and ends that will clue you in to the personality of the woman you seek. Wander around using the mouse — when the icon changes to an arrow, you'll move in that direction. When it changes to a question mark, you'll take a closer look at something. And when it's a default Windows pointer, a click should perform some action. If it's an empty diamond, then you'll move forward. To exit the game, press Control-Q.

HINT

For a particularly creepy moment, find the stairs that lead up to the loft above the office. Pick up the PeeK device and play with some buttons. Continue adventuring. After a few moments, you'll see the PeeK in your inventory flash. Click on it, and it will tell you activity has been detected and will zoom in on an event. If you're playing alone at night, it might be a good idea to turn on some lights.

This videocassette will clue you in to more of the mystery of *Amber: Journeys Beyond*.

The full version of *Amber: Journeys Beyond* contains more than 250 animations, plenty of full-motion video, and a story line that could creep out Wes Craven. Death is not something to be taken lightly, especially since, in this game, it's not necessarily the end.

Scorched Planet

Company: Virgin Interactive Entertainment
Tech Support: (714) 833-1999
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action/Arcade
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 8MB RAM; 13MB hard-drive space; SVGA
Install: \SPDEMO\INSTALL\WINDOWS\SETUP.EXE

Once again, those marauding aliens have decided to attack helpless humans, and only brave pilots in morphing spaceships can save them. Those Voraxians have really made a mess of things — you need to land your Type 16 Morphing Vehicle at various points on a planet called Dator 5, pick up the humans, and make sure they get beamed up to the relative safety of a cargo ship orbiting the planet.

It may sound simple, but it'll take all your skill to keep the humans from harm. The Voraxians are quick and vicious. To rescue the humans, land near them and press Home to open your hatch. You can carry as many as five at a time, and you beam them to the cargo ship by flying through the floating space gate (it's a line of hoops hanging in the air; you can't miss it).

The most important keyboard commands appear here. For more details, be sure to read the MANUAL.DOC file, accessible through the Start-Programs menu on your Win 95 task bar.

Use the space gate to warp the humans to safety and to escape the planet when your mission is complete.

CONTROL KEYS

Vehicle Direction	ARROW KEYS
Acclerate	Shift
Fire	Ctrl
Vehicle Morph	end
Open/Close Door	home
Cycle Inventory	[ ] ,
Use Inventory	Enter
Rotate Vehicle 180 Degrees	Spacebar
Select Weapon	1 THRU 9

Cave Wars

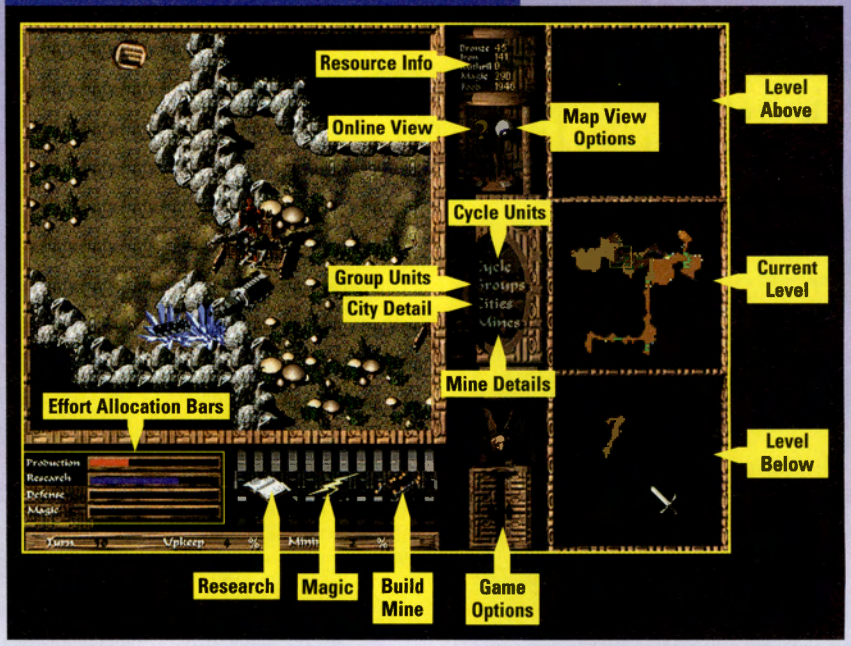
Company: Avalon Hill
Tech Support: (410) 254-9200
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Strategy
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 17MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: See Below

Avalon Hill, long known for its table-top strategy games, brings us a new type of colonization/strategy game. In charge of an army of men deep underground, you must overtake the enemy and reign supreme in the caves. To accomplish this, you must create cities, build troops, mine resources, and battle the opposition.

The demo starts at turn 30 and continues until turn 70. You'll have several units scattered over the map and in different levels, so use the Cycle button to find and move them all. Initially, you'll want to mine some metal, so use the Engineers (the units that look like giant drills) to start digging. If there's a city nearby, (within three squares) it will take over the harvesting of the metal, freeing your Engineer for another task.

Use the diagrams here as a guide to the game's interface. It's a bit complex, but you'll get the hang of it in a few moves. The full version of *Cave Wars* gives you access to multi-player games, difficulty settings, and a whole host of other races to play.

CAVE WARS CONTROLS



INSTALLATION NOTE: To install *Cave Wars*, you'll need to copy the \CAVEDEMO directory on *The CD* onto your hard drive. The easiest way to do this is to open the File Manager in Windows 3.1 or Explorer in Windows 95, locate the \CAVEWARS directory on *The CD*, and drag onto the icon representing your hard drive.

Then run SETUP.EXE to configure your sound card options and CAVE.BAT to run the demo.

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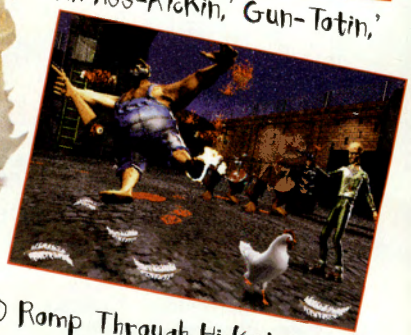

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Age of Sail

Company: TalonSoft
Tech Support: (410) 933-9191
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Strategy
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher; Mouse
Install: \AOS_DEMO\SETUP.EXE

Journey back to the age of high-seas combat in ships that sank or sailed according to a captain's decisions. TalonSoft, creator of the award-winning Battleground series of wargames, has developed a game that brings into play all the strategies of the days when names like *Constitution*, *Constellation*, and *Bonhomme Richard* ruled the waves.

The extensive online help will get you started in the game. The scenario included in the demo — the *Indefatigable* and *Amazon* vs. the *Droits 'homme*, is a simple, all-out battle of two-on-one. But the fact that the English vessels outnumber the French doesn't mean the battle will go easily. The demo gives you 15 minutes of play; if one side doesn't manage to beat the other, it's a draw.

The full version contains much more, including more than 100 scenarios, a scenario editor, and four campaign games covering the American Revolution (1775-1783), the rise of the British Navy (1784-1795), the Napoleonic Wars (1796-1820), and the general Age of Sail (1775-1820).

TalonSoft leaves the Battleground to take to the high seas in *Age of Sail*.

THE TOOLBAR

1. Open New Scenario
2. Open Existing Battle
3. Save Current Battle
4. Pause
5. Speed up Ship
6. Slow Down Ship
7. Synchronize Ship
8. Turn Ship to Port
9. Turn Ship to Starboard
10. Clear Squadron Turn
11. Full Sails
12. Half Sails
13. Furl Sails
14. Toggle Fire At Will
15. Ball Reloads
16. Chain Reloads
17. Grape Reloads
18. Double Ball Reloads
19. Reload Port Side of Ship
20. Reload Both Sides of Ship
21. Reload Starboard Side of Ship
22. Toggle Grape Command
23. Move Hot Spot to Next Ship
24. Toggle Map Range Grid
25. Toggle On-Ship Fire Indicators
26. Toggle Full Screen Display
27. Zoom In
28. Zoom Out
29. Toggle Display of Turning Arrows
30. Toggle Gun Range Indicator
31. Help

Banzai Bug!

Company: Grolier Interactive
Tech Support: 203-796-2536
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action/Arcade
Required: Windows 95; Pentium 90; 8MB RAM; 7MB hard-drive space; SVGA w/ 1MB RAM
Install: \BANZAI\BANZAI.EXE

It's tough being a bug — especially if you live in the home of an exterminator! But Banzai is no ordinary insect, and when he decides to get out of Dodge, you can rest assured he'll succeed (with your help, of course).

Grolier's interesting "flight" sim with a twist is simple to play, and the pretty graphics will impress you with their smoothness. The demo contains the first two levels of the game. In the first, you'll have to find five bits of food while avoiding the nasty bugs trying to chase you down. Once you find all the food, head for the vent near the ceiling in one corner of the room.

There, you'll meet Poolio. He'll tell Banzai he needs to talk to Sluggo to escape. Level two, then, involves flying through the ducts of the house, avoiding other bugs, and outfoxing the sentries the exterminator has set up in his house to fight against insectoid invaders like yourself. When you reach the end of the ducts, you'll encounter a hole in the floor surrounded by four turrets. In order to escape and end the level, you'll have to destroy the turrets by spitting at them.

The colorful graphics and high-resolution objects make *Banzai Bug!* visually pleasing as well as one of the more unusual games we've seen.

CONTROL KEYS

The keyboard commands here will get you started, but keep in mind you can find more details by consulting the online help when you're in the game — just hit Escape and choose Help from the menu. The full version of *Banzai Bug!* contains many more levels filled with all sorts of enemies, puzzles, and hazards. Perhaps by putting us in their shoes, Grolier hopes to teach us compassion for the common insect. Put down that can of Black Flag — can't we all just get along?

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Product Information Number 261

Great Battles of Alexander

Win95

Company: Interactive Magic
Tech Support: (919) 461-0948
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Wargame
Required: Windows 95; 486/66; 8MB RAM; 58MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \BOADEMO\SETUP.EXE

Alexander the Great conquered most of the known world. Here's your chance to recreate his victories in this wargame from Interactive Magic. When you first load up the demo, a quick-start guide will immediately pop up; we recommend you print it out and use it as a guide for your first few turns.

The computer will zoom in on battles so you can see the action in all its bloody glory.

The demo focuses on the Battle of Hydapses, in which Alexander took on the natives of India. Watch out for those elephants — they can plow a trough through your units! The demo contains online help to explain those tricky commands that make all the difference in a battle like this. You control your units with the mouse: when you click on a movable unit, the locations it can move to will be highlighted; simply click in the destination hex you want. You can also change the direction a unit faces, helpful for making lateral moves or moving a Macedonian phalanx into position. When combat takes place, the screen will zoom in on the action, giving you a good view of what's happening. You'll also receive a battle report, which will highlight the area where the fight took place (things get pretty crowed on the field sometimes).

The battlefield can become chaotic after a while; make sure you know which unit is which.

To continue conquering the world as Alexander the Great, you'll have to get the full version of the game. The demo only gives you the one battle to fight, but once you get the hang of the game, you might very well do what Alexander never quite managed — join the empires of Asia and Europe into one mighty whole.

Enemy Nations

Win95

Company: Head Games
Tech Support: www.windward.net/support
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Real-time Strategy
Required: Windows 95; 486/66; 8MB RAM; 31MB HDspace; PCI or VLB SVGA Video; Mouse
Install: \ENDEMO\SETUPNET.EXE

It always ends up this way for advanced societies like the human race. Just when you manage to invent a way to explore the galaxy, you discover that all the other intelligent races in the galaxy have managed to beat you all the best planets. In *Enemy Nations*, however, the few humans who refused to give up managed to find a single uninhabited planet — probably the only one left in the universe — and now it's an all-out battle between races to colonize and claim the last remaining new world.

When you land on the planet, make sure you touch down somewhere near the major natural resources.

The real-time strategy of *Enemy Nations* might remind you of *WarCraft II* or *Command & Conquer*, but most similarities end as soon as you start building your colony. Your first task is to launch your rocket and build an economy. For some really good tips on what to build first and how to beat the other races in creating your colony, read the MANUAL.DOC file the demo copies to your hard drive (in the \WINWARD STUDIOS\ENEMY NATIONS directory). It's the text of the entire game manual, minus the pictures, so it'll tell you everything you need to know to play.

The cranes will build new structures for you. Double-click them to access this window.

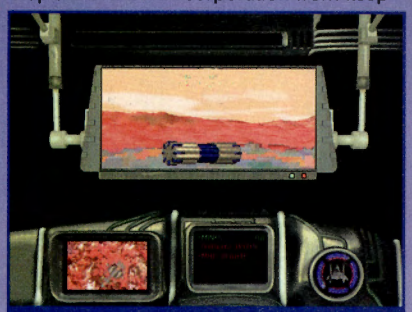
Try out all five levels in the demo to get a good feel for the game. Although you can use the demo to play network games, any player who has the full version can see all of your buildings right from the start — a distinct disadvantage in any strategist's book. The save-game feature works in the demo, but the load-game feature doesn't (of course, you can finish the saved scenario if you buy the game). Also, be aware that the demo has an expiration date — it'll stop working a month after you first install it.

Surface Tension

If you press F to initialize the autopilot, the ship will fly itself while you concentrate on manning a cannon turret that can wreak havoc on the bad guys.

Company: GameTek
Tech Support: (800) 439-3995
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 14MB hard-drive space; SVGA
Install: \STDEMO\INSTALL.BAT

With high-resolution textures and some impressive voxel technology, *Surface Tension* makes a good mark for itself among action shooters. You take the role of Bishop, a man working to stop the evil LYNX corporation from keeping the people of Earth from receiving Glomavine, the only known cure for a planet-wide disease. It may sound contrived, but how much reason do you really need to go around blowing things up?

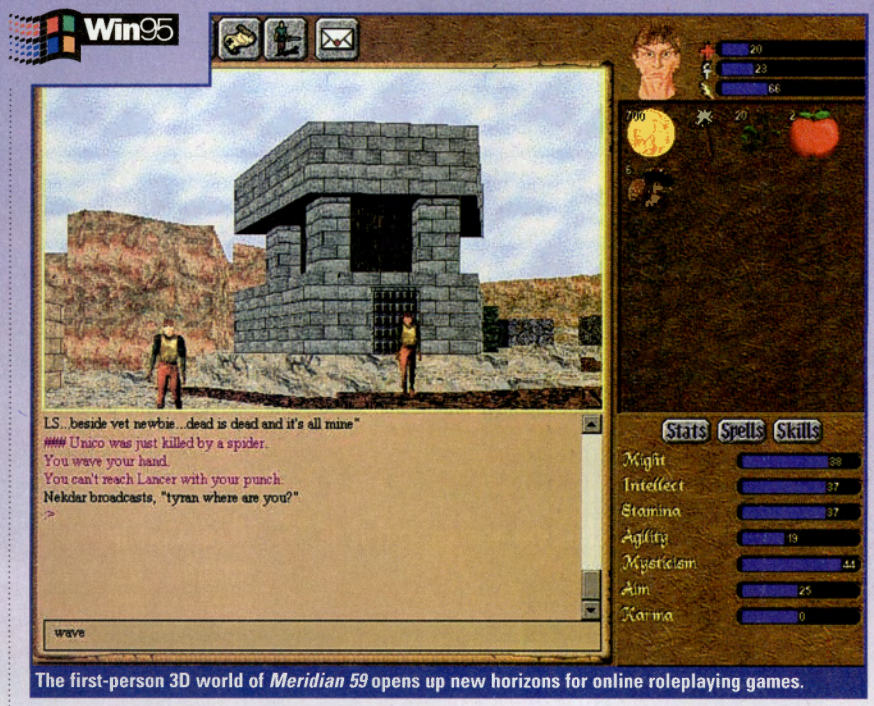


In *Surface Tension*, use the probe to pick up useful items like these missiles.

The demo contains quite a bit of online help — just hit F1 to access it. Your arrow keys control the view of your ship, and A and Z accelerate and decelerate, respectively. To fire your guns, press the spacebar. If you want to launch a missile, lock it onto the enemy with the Alt key, and fire it off with Crtl. Also at your command is a "smart" probe (it's more smart-alecky than anything else). To use it, stop your forward movement and press the + key on the number pad to sink to the ground. When you're as far as you can go, press I to release the probe. You'll see the probe's view of your surroundings. With the probe, you can grab any power-ups laying around and even sneak up on some enemies. To pick up an object with the probe, hit Enter. To bring it back into the ship, drive underneath the ship and press L. You can jump back to your ship's perspective at any time by pressing I. To take off again, press the - key on the number pad.

The demo contains a single flight with three different missions. You'll see some of the full-motion video that goes into the mission briefings and get an idea of what it's like to be chased down by a variety of air- and ground-based enemies. If the game's a little choppy on your machine, try hitting F7 to switch between screen modes.

Meridian 59



The first-person 3D world of *Meridian 59* opens up new horizons for online roleplaying games.

Company: 3DO
Tech Support: *meridian59-support@3do.com*
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Online Roleplaying Game
Required: Windows 95; 486/66; 8MB RAM; 27MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \MERIDIAN\SETUP.EXE

The online world keeps getting bigger and bigger, and online roleplaying games have become a huge part of that. *Meridian 59* came along right at the beginning of the online RPG revolution, and it has time and experience on its side. With its large user base, tested and proven software, and competitive rates, it's a strong contender in the online market. It's worth a look.

Here's the nitty-gritty: Once you sign up, you've got five days to check out *Meridian 59* for free. After that, you can go to the registration web site (*meridian.3do.com/registration*) and register as a paying user. The fees are subject to change, but at press time the charge was $14.95 for a one-time activation fee and $9.95 a month for unlimited playing time.

In order to connect to *Meridian 59*, you'll need to have a SLIP/PPP connection to the Internet — the kind of connection you get through an Internet service provider (ISP). When you set up the program, you'll need to visit *meridian.3do.com/trial/pcgamer* (note that there's no "www" at the beginning of the address) and sign up for the trial. Your account information will be sent to you via E-mail.

Meridian 59 is a land filled with possibilities, with thousands of people logging on every day. The social interaction means just as much as fighting various monsters, so smile, and expect to meet more people than you ever thought you could without leaving your computer desk! [*Ed. Note:* For more on *Meridian 59*, see our Online Gaming feature, starting on page 65.]

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Krazy Ivan

Win95

Company: Psygnosis
Tech Support: (415) 655-5683
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action/Arcade
Required: Windows 95; Pentium 75; 8MB RAM; SVGA
Install: \IVANDEMO\KRAZY.EXE

It's gaming's most ancient plot, but one that often makes for good gaming: Aliens have invaded Earth, and only you, in your trusty mechanized assault vehicle, can stop them from destroying humanity.

All of the controls for your vehicle are configurable from the options menu of the demo. Using a joystick greatly enhances gameplay, but it's not necessary. Choose your input device or follow the keyboard commands listed here to get going immediately.

Your mission in the demo will take a little skill to complete; you've got to destroy three powerful alien robots, then take out the shield generator that's covering the battlefield. You'll need quick reflexes to win — and some self-control; don't go too heavy on that trigger, since you'll need all the firepower you can spare to take out the shield.

If you manage to make it to the shield generator, keep an eye peeled for openings as they appear. The protective barrier will only drop for a few seconds at a time, and only to fire projectiles at you, so keep moving. In addition, plenty of smaller enemy units will use you for target practice — watch your back. Use the side-stepping keys liberally, or you'll find you're the main course at an alien barbecue. Once you destroy one of the three enemies, you'll notice pesky little aliens running around dropping mines and firing at you from the sky. We recommend ignoring them and concentrating your fire on the big bad guys.

The Raptor isn't nearly as big as the other two baddies, but it's lightning fast!

CONTROL KEYS

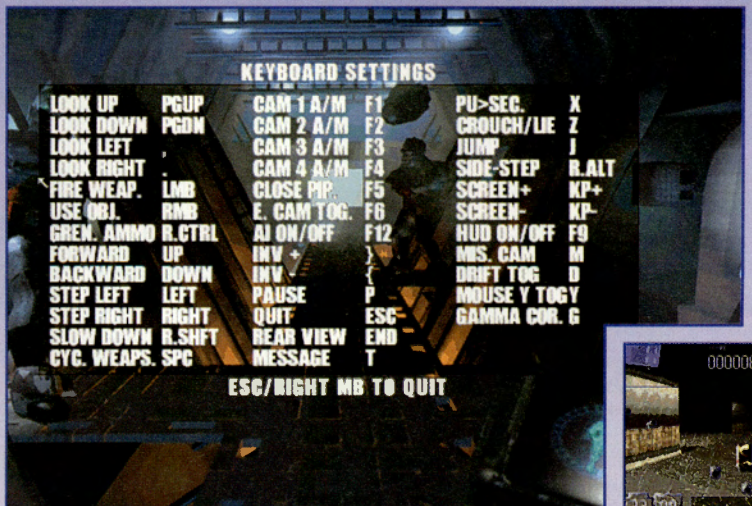
Look Up	A
Look Down	Z
Fire Guns	Ctrl
Fire Missiles	Enter
Fire Special Weapon	Spacebar
Next Weapon	Shift
Move Forward	↑
Move Back	↓
Turn Left	←
Turn Right	→
Sidestep Left	ins
Sidestep Right	del
Strafe Left/Right	Alt

XS

Company: GT Interactive
Tech Support: (716) 871-6646
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action
Required: Pentium; 8MB RAM; 20MB hard drive space; SVGA with 1MB RAM
Install: See Below

In the arena, no one is safe — especially when the tools of the trade include grenades, shotguns, and machine guns. You've got to deal with three opponents in an enclosed area, all of which will shoot on sight and aim to kill. Hesitation can be fatal.

You have several handy devices at your disposal in *XS*. Probably the most useful — besides your weapons, of course — is the radar. Keep an eye on your enemies; if you lose track and end up between two of them, you won't survive for long. Also, the window at the top right of the screen will let you know which enemy you're facing and how close it is. After you've played a bit, you'll become familiar with the icons and what they correspond to. Lots of keyboard commands make fighting easier, so be sure you examine the keyboard layout shown here. The game uses a combination of the mouse and keyboard — use the arrow keys to move forward and backward and step side to side; use the mouse to look around and aim your weapon. The left mouse button fires your weapon, and you throw grenades with the right button.



Make special note of all the keyboard commands at your disposal, or you could be the first to kick the bucket.

The rain and lightning make the arena even more ominous.

INSTALLATION NOTE: To install *XS*, you must copy the contents of the \XSDEMO directory on *The CD* to your hard-drive. To do this, you can either use the Windows 3.1 File Manager, or Explorer in Windows 95. In either case, drag the \XSDEMO directory from *The CD* to your hard drive, then run SETSOUND.EXE from the new directory on your hard drive to configure your sound card. The demo should run under Windows 95, but it's meant for DOS; if you have trouble, try running from a DOS prompt outside of Windows. Consult your Windows documentation for directions on how to reboot to an MS-DOS session.

Chill Manor

Company: Simon & Schuster Interactive
Tech Support: (800) 983-5333
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action/Learning
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 2MB hard drive space; VGA; Mouse
Install: \CHILL\SETUP.BAT

Who said you could only learn by sitting through boring lectures in uncomfortable chairs with tiny desks bolted to them? Simon & Schuster's *Chill Manor* teaches players all about world history, from the creation of the wheel by the Sumerians to Columbus' famous discovery of the New World.

The game plays very much like *Doom*, although it's not quite as bloody. As you explore the two-level demo of *Chill Manor*, you have to find pages from the Book of Ages. Ophelia Chill can change history by rewriting the pages, and your job is to find and correct the changes she's made. When you start the demo, you'll see a page on a pedestal not far from the door. Walk up to it and press the spacebar. For a description of what to do and how to correct the errors in history, click on the large question-mark button.

You'll need to keep your eyes open for secret passages and hidden switches on the walls. The hidden switches aren't too tough to spot, but you do have to look for them. Many of Ophelia's creatures wander around, too, so make sure you find a weapon soon, and don't hesitate to use it on the ghosts and goblins you encounter.

Chill Manor is designed to help the kids learn history painlessly, but even we have to admit there's something addicting about wandering around a haunted castle uncovering the mysteries behind the past. Check it out for yourself!

Chill Manor's graphics keep the mood light, even when you're being hunted by monsters.

CONTROL KEYS

Move Forward — ↑	Pause — P
Move Backward — ↓	Fists — 1
Move Left — ←	Ecto Ray (default weapon) — 2
Move Right — →	Plasma Gaunlet — 3
Fire weapon — Ctrl	Spirit Cannon — 4
Run — Shift	Solar Amulet — 5
Slide Left or Right — Alt	
Open doors, activate buttons, pick up pages and keys on pedestals — Spacebar	MOUSE
Toggle to Map — Tab	Movement — LEFT BUTTON
	Fire weapons, open doors, activate push buttons, pick up pages and keys from pedestals — RIGHT BUTTON

Shivers II: Harvest of Souls

Company: Sierra
Tech Support: (206) 644-4343
Release Date: Spring 1997
Category: Puzzle
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher; Mouse
Install: \SHIVERS2\SETUP.EXE

Sierra's *Shivers* returns in another incarnation, but this time it has nothing to do with haunted houses and high-school kids. All the people in the town of Cyclone have mysteriously vanished, leaving hardly a clue. You have to explore the abandoned town, uncover the mystery of the citizens' disappearance, and link it to a similar disappearance of a tribe of Native Americans centuries before.

Solve this memory puzzle, and you'll have your prayer stick.

As in most adventure games, you use the mouse to control all your movements. But *Shivers II* has a twist: at virtually any point in your exploration, you have the option to rotate your view a full 360 degrees, so you can see everything around you; you can even tilt your view up and down to see the ceiling and the floor. The demo begins in the Cyclone police station. Your task involves finding a Native American prayer stick hidden somewhere in the office. To get it, you'll need to work though a puzzle set in your way by the mastermind behind the disappearances. It's not easy, but if you pay attention and jot down some quick notes, it's not impossible to solve.

To move around, simply move the mouse. The closer the pointer is to the edges of the screen, the faster you'll travel. To move ahead, simply click when the cursor turns into an arrow pointing forward. When the circle in the center of the cursor lights up, you can perform an action on the selected item.

In the full version of *Shivers II*, you need to find all 12 of these prayer sticks if you want to save the world.

Between the new graphics engine and the chilling story line, *Shivers II* looks like it'll make an even bigger impact among horror adventure fans than the first game did. Look for it sometime this Spring.

Losing sucks.

Be cool* and in control as you *challenge* car-crushing tourneys and rallies for the checkered flag, *repel* alien invaders beneath the waves, gain victory "In the hedgerows of Hell," *take to the sky* in a 737, or face relentless space *combat action*. *The Microsoft Press*® Inside Moves *series arms you with hints, strategies, and secrets*—*some straight from the developers*—*that aren't available anywhere else.

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Product Information Number 139.

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Some games not available
on some services.

The Palace

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

What could make a gamer's experience on the Internet even better than the typical web-surfing and newsgroup browsing? Online chat with other gamers, of course! We've promised it for quite a while, and now we've finally delivered. It's chatting at its finest, using The Palace Inc.'s incredible chat program as the client for our very own *PC Gamer* Chat Spot.

To use the Palace software, you'll need a SLIP/PPP connection to the Internet. Most Internet service providers (ISPs) provide connections of this type. When you install and run the program, you connect to the *PC Gamer* Chat Spot by following these steps: Go to the File menu, and choose Connect. In the box where it says "Palace Server Address," type in "*www.pcgamer.com.*" In the box directly to the right, change the number to 9996. Then click "OK," and you'll arrive at the *PC Gamer* Chat Spot. It will take a few minutes to download the initial image, but you'll only have to download each background once.

There's a whole world of action available to you on our Chat Spot. Type a message and hit Enter to see what you typed appear near your avatar (the icon that represents your presence in Palace). You can change your expression, make sounds, and change the shape of the word balloon. By registering the software (a one-time $25 fee, payable by credit card to The Palace, Inc.; call 800-PALACE2 [725-2232]), you can change your name, run scripts (automated actions), and configure the "look" of your avatar by creating custom props. To find out what else you can do on The Palace, go to the web site *www.thepalace.com*, where you'll find a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and online manuals for using the client software. Many other Palace sites exist, as well, and you'll find a list of most of them at the site.

You can dress up your avatar with props from the suitcase. You can even make bad jokes!

On *PC Gamer*'s Chat Spot, you'll have the pulse-pounding opportunity to talk live to *PC Gamer* staffers. In this picture, Michael and Dan are hanging out with Coconut Monkey.

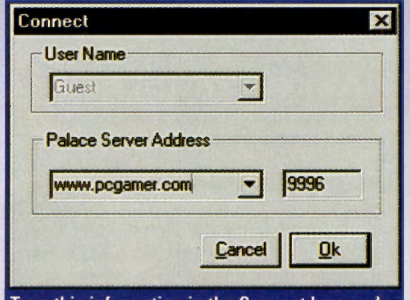
HINT

Here's another trick to using The Palace: You navigate through various rooms on any Palace site by clicking on doorways, but not all doors are immediately obvious. Press and hold the Shift and Crtl keys to reveal the hidden rectangles that form doorways into other rooms. If you know exactly where you want to go, try pressing Crtl-G to select from a list of all the rooms available.

The default avatar in The Palace is the classic smiley-face, but you can change its color and expression.

We recommend you use a few tricks to make your stay on The Palace more pleasurable. First of all, go to the Options menu and select Log Window (or press Crtl-L). The window that opens will keep a record of all conversation, so when there are a lot of people talking at once, it's easier to keep track of what's going on. Also, when using the log window on The Palace, we recommend that you change your screen resolution to 800x600 or higher, so you can see both the log window and all of the chat window.

The *PC Gamer* Chat Spot is designed to be a place where you talk to other gamers about games. New titles, old titles, hints, and tips — anything you can think of. And you might just find a *PC Gamer* staffer hanging out there, too. In addition, we'll be hosting special events, such as scheduled online conferences with staff members and important figures in the gaming industry. Log on periodically to see if anything is scheduled; we'd love to chat with you!



Type this information in the Connect box, and you're on your way to online chat in the *PC Gamer* Palace!

Once you sign on, this box will lead to more Gaming Goodness than you might be ready for.

TEN

Win95

Tech Support: (800) 8040-TEN
Required: Windows 95; SVGA; 14.4 baud Modem
Install: \TEN\SETUP.EXE

The Total Entertainment Network is just that: Total Entertainment. Hook up to this service via modem or direct TCP/IP connection, and you'll go head-to-head with people all across the country in games like *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Command & Conquer*, and *Dark Sun Online*, a multi-user roleplaying game from SSI.

All you need to hook up is a computer that runs the game you want to play, a 14.4Kbps modem, and Windows 95. You can reach TEN through your current Internet provider (as long as it runs the Windows 95 32-bit Winsock program), or you can connect directly to a local TEN access number. If you're one of the lucky few with a direct Internet connection through work or school, then you can simply hop on and start gaming.

TEN's price structure works on either an hourly or flat-rate plan. Hourly charges are $9.95 a month for five hours and $1.95 for each additional hour. The flat-rate plan is $29.95 a month for unlimited access. Under either plan, you'll be charged an additional 95 cents per hour if you connect through a local TEN access number, provided by the Concentric Network.

HAVING PROBLEMS?

We cannot provide technical support for problems you may encounter with the demos on *The CD*. Please use the tech support numbers listed with the demos. *The CD* is rigorously tested by the *PC Gamer* staff and certified virus-free. *PC Gamer* cannot be held responsible for any incompatibility problems caused by the use of *The CD*. However, should your copy fail to run, with error messages that indicate your CD drive cannot read the disc, return it to the following address: PC Gamer Customer Service, The April CD Disc 3.1 Replacement, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Please indicate any error message you receive.

Mpath Mplayer

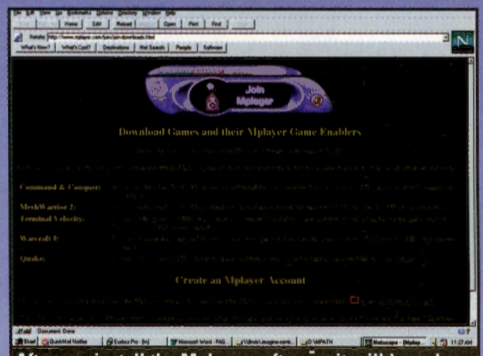
Win95

Tech Support: (408) 342-8844
Required: Windows 95; 486/100MHz; 8MB RAM; 3MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse; 14.4Kbps or higher modem; Internet service provider account
Install: \MPLAYER\SETUP.EXE

Mpath's Mplayer (*www.mplayer.com*) promises online gaming at its best. With features like real voice transmission between players in chat rooms and some of today's hottest games, like *Warcraft, MechWarrior 2, Quake*, and *Command & Conquer: Red Alert*, it'll blow your modem apart if you're not careful.

To connect to the service, you'll have to have an existing Internet provider; because of the way they access the Internet, providers such as America Online, GNN, and Prodigy will not work with Mplayer. If you don't have a direct Internet service provider (ISP), you might choose to sign up with PSINet — the introductory software is provided with Mplayer on *The CD*. When you install the Mplayer software, it will also install the programs that will make your games compatible with Mplayer.

Three pay rates exist (as of press time). The Welcome service is $7.95 for five hours a month, and each additional hour is $.99. The Value plan is $19.95 a month for unlimited time, or you can go the Super Value route at $199.95 prepaid for a year of unlimited time. Mplayer may be planning to change their rates, so check out their web site for the latest info.



After you install the Mplayer software, it will launch your web browser and surf to the Mpath site, where you can complete your sign-up.

America Online

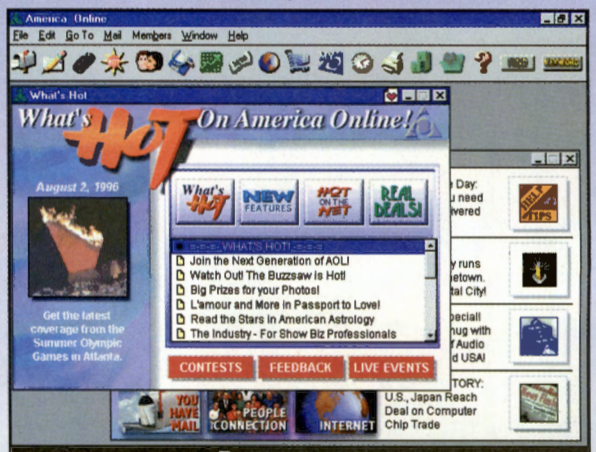
Tech Support: (800) 827-3338
Required: 486; 4MB RAM; 6MB hard-drive space; VGA; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: \AOL\SETUP.EXE

America Online, one of the most popular online services, is now even better. With version 3.0 of the AOL software, you'll have even more resources to access, and it's even easier to use!

To get started, execute the WELCOME.EXE file in the root directory of *The CD*, and follow the prompts to install it. Once installed, you can simply tell it you're a new user, and you'll receive your first 15 hours completely free. After that, the standard service fee is only $19.95 a month for unlimited use.

You can use America Online for a variety of tasks, from making airline reservations to checking out the latest sports scores.

And with its Internet capabilities, you can browse the World Wide Web, download files via FTP (file transfer protocol), and scan the libraries of hundreds of universities. If for some reason you don't like the default web browser, you can always configure it to use the latest version of Netscape Navigator — just use the keyword "Netscape" to learn how.



A new graphical interface and loads of information make America Online version 3.0 a must-have for anyone wanting to connect to the Information Superhighway known as the Internet.

Once upon a time, in an enchanted kingdom, there lived a big bosomed lady and some gerbils.

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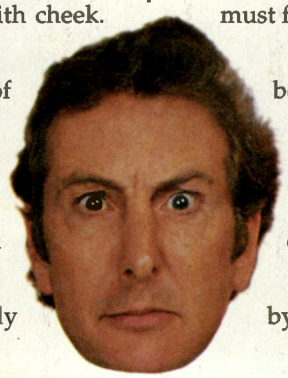
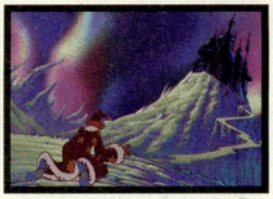
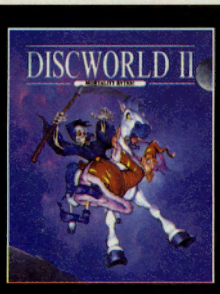




[Discworld II features the voice of Eric Idle, former star of Monty-something-or-other.]



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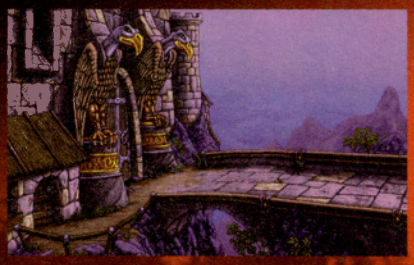

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Product Information Number 307

Conquest Earth

You've played *Red Alert*, now battle the Red Planet!

You'll get your chance to defend our planet from Jupiter's gaseous invaders in Eidos Interactive's sentry into the increasingly competetive real-time strategy field.

— Steve Poole

Multi-player battles will pit the aliens verses the humans. The two sides are so evenly matched that humans-verses-humans or aliens-verses-aliens battles aren't being planned.

FYI
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: *Conquest Earth*
Developer: Data Design
Publisher: Eidos Interactive, 303 Sacramento Street, San Francisco, CA 94111 (415) 616-2022
Projected price: $49.95
Percentage complete: 75%

In a nutshell:

Conquest Earth is a real-time strategy game that pits the denizens of Earth against invading Jovians (that means they're from Jupiter, in case you didn't know).

What's so special?

It would be easy to dismiss *Conquest Earth* as simply another entry in the crowded real-time strategy genre, but several key features could make this one stand out: 65,000 color graphics, a strong emphasis on research, extensive control over units, zoomable maps, day and night missions, and FMV sequences integrated into gameplay, to name just a few.

Why should I care?

If you can't stomach real-time strategy games, then you probably won't — but judging from the sales of such games and the huge array of similar titles forthcoming, there are plenty of people eager to play them.

And when's it coming out?

Late April or early May 1997

It wasn't that long ago that Eidos Interactive was essentially Domark Software — a name that didn't exactly inspire enthusiasm amongst computer gamers. While Domark titles such as *Tank Commander*, *Absolute Zero*, and *The Orion Conspiracy* weren't quite awful, they weren't quite good, either. And when Domark released the dismal roleplaying game *Lords of Midnight* — a product that had been maniacally hyped for at least a year before it shipped — it appeared that things couldn't get much worse for the company: *LOM* was received with as much disbelief as derision because it looked and played as if it were four or five years old.

But when Eidos Technologies — a company specializing in video technology — acquired Domark, U.S. Gold, Simis, Core Design, and Silicon Dreams and merged them to form Eidos Interactive, things began to change for the better almost overnight. The first sign was *Big Red Racing*, a wacky but addictive racing game with great multi-player action. And with the release of *Tomb Raider*, *PC Gamer*'s Action Game of the Year, Eidos Interactive sent a message to the computer gaming community: we're here, and we're going to make the best games we can.

The interfaces for controlling the humans and aliens will be radically different.

Now, Eidos Interactive is set to make a foray into one of the hottest and most competitive markets in PC gaming: real-time strategy. After the phenomenal success of games such as *WarCraft II* and *Command & Conquer*, there are no fewer than seven such

titles scheduled to arrive over the next year — but *Conquest Earth* has the kind of unique qualities and excellent production values that could put it right up there with the frontrunners.

The story behind *Conquest Earth* is classic space opera, but grounded on a very ironic premise based on actual history. In 1995, Earth sent the Galileo probe into Jupiter's atmosphere — and in so doing unwittingly awoke a sleeping giant (or should I say gas giant?). Until our little calling card dropped onto their planet, the Jovians hadn't given a second thought to the notion of life on Earth for the simple reason that our atmosphere couldn't support their gaseous life-forms. That all changed with the arrival of the Galileo probe, of course, but unlike the ET-loving people of Earth, the Jovians didn't view this as a sign of a friendly but inquiring race: instead, they took it as an act of war.

The game opens 200 years after our inadvertent "invasion." Earth has been at peace for the past 150 years, a period during which there's been almost no development of military technology. We've begun mining asteroid belts near Jupiter, an incursion the Jovians take a little more seriously than the time we dropped in: with a savage first strike they destroy all of Earth's satellites and space-based defenses. This opens the way for their forces to set up shop on the planet surface and begin the process of converting our atmosphere to sulphur, making it habitable for the gaseous Jovians. Fighting with land, sea, and naval units, the humans' goal is to smash the atmosphere conversion stations and repel the Jovians from their beachhead.

There's no doubt that *Conquest Earth* will be compared to *Red Alert*, *WarCraft II*, and other real-time strategy affairs. But Matthew Miller, the game's producer, is quick to point out that while these games do have some common features, Eidos Interactive's entry is definitely unique.

"Between battles you're not just shown a video briefing for your next mission," Miller says. "Instead, you have an *X-COM*-style interface that lets you decide what to research and what to build in the various combat sectors. When the next battle rolls around, you only have what you built in that area as a resource. Say that on the west coast of North America you've only developed 50 tanks up to a certain point in the game. Once a battle begins there, that's all the tanks you'll being able to throw into the fight."

You can put your units in the Hunt mode, and they will track down the selected enemy and destroy it. Your units will also defend themselves while in this mode.

In fact, research and development play just as vital a role in your success as brilliant tactics and strategy — and because we're talking about two vastly different adversaries, it also gives the game a healthy replay value even in single-player mode (more on multi-player modes later). "Reasearch on the Jovian side is kind of fun," says Miller, "because they start the game with no real abilities; you have to spend silicon units — their equivalent of money — researching various types of powers.

"There's a *Predator*-style invisibility you can create for your troops, but it takes a lot of silicon to use and you also have to research it in the first place. Then there's a force field you can develop that in its first incarnation just protects your units from harm — they can't move or fire out of it, but they can't get hurt, either. Research it again, and you'll develop a higher-level force field that you can fire out of; do it again, and he's able to move and fire out of it — at the cost of a lot of the unit's energy, though."

One of the side screens is a full-motion video view of what's happening out on the battlefield.

One of the coolest features on the Jovian side is their ability to develop morphing techniques: initially they'll be able to morph into rocks and terrain features, then they'll acquire the ability to morph into human soldiers and even fighting vehicles that look just like human units. To detect this Fifth Column, the humans have to research and develop spies who can pick the real humans and friendly units from the impostors.

While the interface for controlling human forces will be familiar to most players, Miller says, "the alien interface is radically different. Instead of seeing a bunch of buttons in a Technology screen, you see a picture of the alien 'hive mind' with five aliens standing in front of it. Those are the alien advisors, and you just select the advisor you want to work with — one will be involved with research, another helps you spot silicon to be mined on the battlefield, and so forth."

"You've never seen a game look as good as this. All the explosions use transparencies, and when something explodes on the battlefield, it just looks beautiful."

—MATTHEW MILLER, U.S. PRODUCER

Another exciting aspect is the high degree of control you have over the units you build. "When it comes to the AI, you have four options for controlling your units," Miller says. "If you basically leave them alone, they'll defend themselves the best they can. Put them in Hunt mode and select an enemy unit, and they'll hunt down the unit and attempt to destroy it — but they'll also defend themselves if they find themselves in trouble along the

Building It Right From the Ground Up

Conquest Earth's U.S. Producer Matthew Miller describes Scottish development team Data Design Interactive as "a bunch of go-getters with access to a special effects studio," but even though they've been around for only 18 months, one look at these shots reveals that they realize a product is only as strong as its weakest link. Here's a look at two examples at the attention to detail this new company has committed to its debut product.

You have peace for 150 years, and what do you get for it? A bunch of humans trying to defend earth in the year 2115 with Harrier jets, for crying out loud!

The gaseous life-forms invading earth can't just flit about without some sort of protection from our atmosphere's deadly mix of oxygen and carbon dioxide, so they don these impressive suits before hunting for humans. Of course, they don't construct themselves from wire-frames first....

way. Then there's the Seek and Destroy mode, which is similar to Hunt mode except your units won't try to defend themselves: they'll just try to destroy the unit you've sent them to destroy without any regard to their own safety. And in Protect mode they'll try to destroy any enemies who come near the unit they've been told to protect."

But sometimes a situation demands that you take matters into your own hands — and *Conquest Earth* lets you do just that. "One of the cool things you can do is take full and direct control of a unit," says Miller. "Let's say I'm playing as the humans and I've got a Harrier I want to strike an enemy target. Using the keyboard for movement, I can have him do his air strike anywhere I want him to. I can move him around just like in a little arcade game within the game, dropping bombs and avoiding enemy fire." If that type of control doesn't sound like your cup of tea but you still want a unit to follow a specific path, you can set waypoints for your units to help them avoid detection and counterfire.

Realizing that managing many units spread over a large area can be troublesome, Data Design built in a couple of nifty features to help you stay on top of much of the action as possible. "During actual gameplay, one of the little monitors at the side of the screen will display a full-motion video — not a green-and-black video, but a full-motion, full-color video of representing something that's happening in the battle," Miller says. "Let's say you're fighting a skirmish and your barracks on the other side of the battlefield are destroyed. When that happens, you'd see a full-motion video of the aliens destroying the barracks and a human running out of them. Right now we're working on FMV sequences to let you know when a unit first comes under attack."

It's fine to know that a unit's being attacked, but since these are pre-rendered sequences they wouldn't in and of themselves tell you which unit's in trouble. That's no problem, though, because not only can you view the entire battlefield at any time from one of four zoom levels, you can also place two "cameras" anywhere you wish on the battlefield to keep an eye on critical locations. Two monitors at the side of the screen will show you what's happening in those spots, and you can jump there simply by clicking on the appropriate monitor.

If you're a serious gamer, you know that visuals take a backseat to gameplay, but that doesn't mean you can't have both — and *Conquest Earth* does. "You've never seen a game look as good as this," Miller says. "All the explosions use transparencies, and when something explodes on the battlefield, it just looks beautiful."

A glance at the screen shots here will confirm what Miller says, but there's more to them than meets the eye. "The map of each battle is one bitmap image," Miller says, "and as explosions happen and tanks roll along we alter the bitmap on the fly so the battlefield stays scarred throughout the entire battle. Vehicles will leave tracks as they move, and as soldiers die they stay on the ground dead — and if tanks roll over the casualties they'll be squished and you'll see that, too." The recommended machine specs for what Miller calls the "full bells and whistles mode" will be a Pentium 133, but he says that by tweaking display options you can play on a Pentium 75.

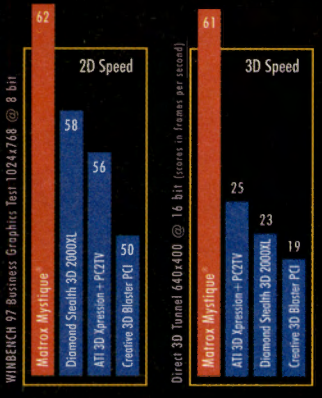
But probably the most important element in any real-time strategy game is its multi-player options — and some players might be slightly disappointed to learn that there's no way to set up matches pitting the same race against each other. "Multi-player games are always humans versus the aliens," says Miller. "Data Design didn't want to allow humans versus humans or aliens versus aliens simply because the two sides are so well-balanced in terms of their abilities and units."

With support for up to eight players — up to four on each team — *Conquest Earth* will be playable over a local-area network, and there'll also be modem-play as well. But the big question for multi-player fans is whether or not the game will be playable over the Internet, and if so how: will it be free a la *Red Alert* and *Diablo*, or featured on a pay-to-play service such as Mplayer or TEN? As we go to press, Eidos Interactive is currently mulling over the various options for Internet play and have yet to decide which route to take. (Of course, the chances are good that the game will be playable over a Kali server, since Kali software makes just about any game that supports play over a LAN playable over the 'net — see this month's online gaming feature for more details).

Regardless of what decision is made regarding Internet play, a total of 60 missions and around 40 different unit types comprising naval, land, and aerial forces give *Conquest Earth* all the makings of a winner. But the proof is in the pudding, as they say — and come May we'll know for sure if this game marks another defining step in Eidos Interactive's quest for excellence. PCG

Conquest Earth's graphics look really good, even in this night mode.

Arcade 3D power



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Product Information Number 239

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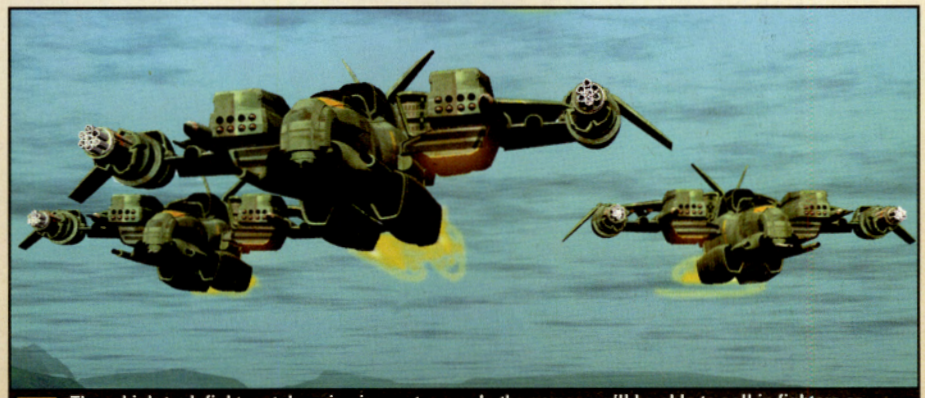
Product Information Number 99

Uprising

Battlefield command was never like this!

Take the frantic, personal combat of *MechWarrior 2* and mix it with the base warfare of *Command & Conquer*, and you'll get a taste of *Uprising*, from Cyclone Studios.

— Jason Bates



Three high-tech fighters take wing in a cutscene. In the game, you'll be able to call in fighters or bombers to attack targets in your HUD. Between missions, you can upgrade your different units.

FYI
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Category: Action/Strategy
Developer: Cyclone Studios
Publisher: Studio 3DO, 600 Galveston Drive, Redwood City, CA 94063 (800) 336-3506
Projected Price: TBA
Percentage Complete: 50%

In a nutshell:
An innovative blend of action and strategy wrapped up in a first-person point-of-view.

What's so special?
One of the more original game designs we've seen in a long while, *Uprising* closes the gap between trigger-happy gamers and the strategy gurus. Its solid 3D terrain engine and unique campaign modes are also intriguing.

Why should I care?
The overhead perspective in strategy games may ultimately become as stale as the first-person view in *Doom*-style games, but *Uprising* offers a new twist on both.

And when's it coming out?
Fall 1997

Even though *Uprising* isn't going to be out for another six to nine months, the game's been in playable form for quite a while — almost since the project's inception. And for those who drop by Cyclone Studios in San Mateo, CA, the designers are more than happy to let you sit down and see how well it plays, crashes and all, in its very early, pre-alpha stage.

This unique approach to game development — build the game first, than tweak, balance, and experiment for months afterwards — is pretty rare in an industry dominated by a reliance on drawing boards, planning meetings, focus groups, and rigid design documents. But it's this method of working that Helmut Kobler, President of Cyclone, has kept from his early days as a developer, when he had to have a working model to sell to publishers before he could afford to put more resources into a game.

He's kept this model because knowing how a game plays is critical to a developer. "I've noticed that with big teams at big companies, they can work on a game for a year, and still not grasp fundamentally what the game is," Kobler says, "because they've never seen the game running."

In *Uprising*, you'll be able to lead your troops into battle from your own command tank, or direct the action from high up in your base's central turret.

At first glance, the game looks like a bit like *Terra Nova*, though the design itself is radically different. When you first start a game, you begin in a command tank that you use to rove around the landscape. You'll move immediately to the nearest empty Citadel (there are about half a dozen on each map), and begin laying down base structures.

Your base structures are of two basic types: unit production factories and defensive turrets. Turrets quite naturally shoot at enemy units (some are anti-tank, some are anti-air), while factories crank out infantry, tanks, fighters or bombers, depending on the type of installation you have.

Although this sounds like *Command & Conquer*, there are two fundamental differences. Your base cannot just be anywhere, it must be on an

This is the external view of your command tank on the attack. You can play from either this outside perspective or the more natural cockpit view.

empty citadel site. And it cannot continue to grow and sprawl, since each citadel location can only fit a handful of turrets and factories in pre-determined slots, forcing you to make decisions about what kind of base you want.

The importance of the citadel sites makes capturing these areas a priority, dictating the tactics of the game. As you clear out an enemy base, you can use his now empty Citadel site to build a new base of your own. You'll win your mission when you clear out the last enemy installation. So in this regard, the Citadel locations have a strategic value similar to the Mystic Sites of *Blood & Magic*.

Besides base-building, the other fundamental difference between *Uprising* and *C&C* is that this is all taking place in a first-person perspective. You don't switch to an overhead perspective when you're laying out your base, you're doing it all from the first-person perspective of your command tank or your base's command tower (you can switch between these POVs at the touch of a key).

Your tank can take a lot of damage, but it's not invulnerable — if it gets destroyed, you'll be forced to restart in a new tank near your home base. Much of your fighting will be carried out by the troops you build in your various production factories.

There is no resource-gathering in *Uprising*, no Tiberium to harvest or gold to mine. Instead, you'll receive reinforcements at different intervals, whom you call in to your current location with one keystroke. The interval between reinforcements starts fairly high, but decreases as you acquire more bases and build more factories.

That's the basic game design in a nutshell, but keep in mind that none of this is set in stone — facility types, unit strengths, and defensive structures may well be changed as the game continues to be developed and changed even as the engine is refined and the bugs are smoothed out. But the basic game design — its base management and first-person perspective — are the core of the game, and unlikely to change.

Action is almost non-stop in *Uprising*, with troops running everywhere and fighters and bombers dogfighting in the sky.

Another feature worth pointing out is the TerraTech engine. It can display multiple sets of textures within the same level, allowing a great deal of terrain variety, and it can show, in real-time, the effects of a raging battle upon the landscape — scorching, scarring, tread marks and even actual 3D craters caused by explosions. The engine is also very fast and detailed, allowing you to see a good deal of what is going on — which is crucial in *Uprising*, since there is so much happening all at once. Among the terrain types are water and lava, which will affect your movement; the lava causes damage as well. Steep cliffs and ravines form natural tank barriers, and hills and rises obscure your view but offer protection from turrets.

You can still switch quickly to an overhead map, since you won't be able to see the whole level at once. From here you can see all the Citadel locations, and plan your tactics accordingly. But don't spend too long on the overhead view, as the game doesn't stop while you're accessing your map.

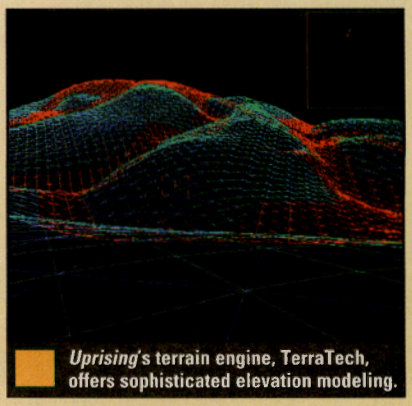
As far as the multi-player options go, these are still being hammered out, and whether the game will support four or eight players is still to be decided. The team also intends to try something unique and innovative with its campaign mode. There are pre-determined scenarios, but you're not bound by specific paths, nor will you be forced to play the same missions over and over. The details are still being worked, but it seems with the right mix of random elements (Citadel sites, terrain type, geography) worked into a larger scheme of progressively more difficult missions, the game will have a high degree of replayability.

By taking risks and devising a new style of gameplay, Cyclone obviously has no design to fall back on if all else fails. Gamers may not take to specific play elements — such as units teleporting into battles instead of moving across the landscape, or the rapid rate at which reinforcements can be called upon. Still, however the game turns out, no one will call *Uprising* a clone — but it might inspire a few clones of its own.

PCG

"I've noticed that at big companies, they can work on a game for a year, and not grasp fundamentally what it is, because they've never seen the game running."

—HELMUT KOBLER, PRESIDENT, CYCLONE STUDIOS



Uprising's terrain engine, TerraTech, offers sophisticated elevation modeling.

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Product Information Number 279

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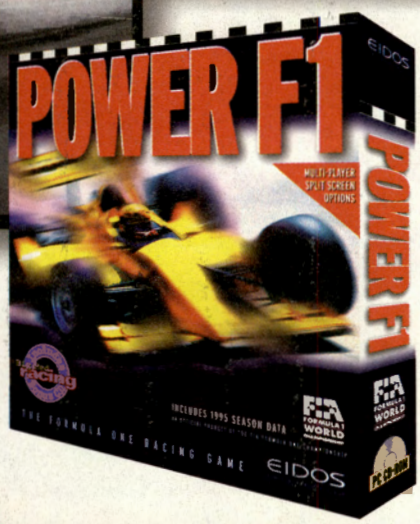

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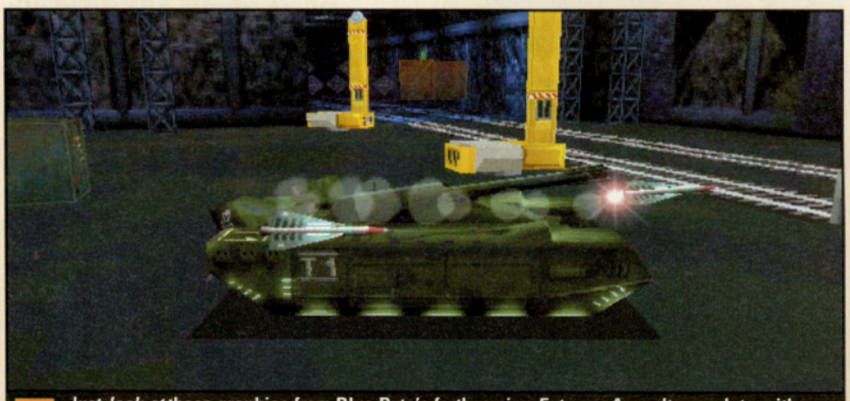
Product Information Number 135

Extreme Assault

Take in the gorgeous scenery while you're kickin' alien butt

Blue Byte unleashes one of the most beautiful graphic engines ever to hit the PC in an enormous 3D shooter that's sure to be a big hit.

—Colin Williamson



Just *look at* these graphics from Blue Byte's forthcoming *Extreme Assault*, complete with gorgous lens flare effects and texture-mapped polygons aplenty. Wahoo!

FYI
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Extreme Assault
Developer: Blue Byte
Publisher: Blue Byte, 870 E. Higgins Road, Suite 143, Schaumberg, IL 60173 (847) 995-9951
Projected Price: TBA
Percentage Complete: 80%

In a nutshell:
Extreme Assault is a fast-paced action shooter, featuring helicopters and tanks as the destruction-dealing vehicles of choice.

What's so special?
The graphic engine of *Extreme Assault* is one of the best we've seen, and the attention to detail by the folks at Blue Byte is nothing short of astounding.

Why should I care?
Extreme Assault's huge and detailed levels offer plenty of exploration, action, and alien-nuking fun.

And when's it coming out?
Summer '97

Even though the gaming market has been seemingly flooded with too many 3D flying-based shooters to count, Blue Byte believes that it has something up its sleeves with *Extreme Assault*, a title that brings PC graphics to the next level.

Those nasty alien critters are up to their old tricks again, and have a plan to convert Earth's atmosphere to some extraterrestrial, homo sapien-hostile gas. Since the human race would be wiped out in the process, it's up to you to deal the death blows to their industrial bases and underground headquarters, while rescuing human scientists aiding the resistance.

The story may be ordinary, but the visuals and gameplay are anything but. Blue Byte let us check out an early technology demo, which showed off *Extreme Assault*'s engine. We were treated to a slew of impressive 3D effects, including perspective-correct texture mapping, smoke, fogging, real-time lighting, and transparencies. The ability to run in high color gives *Extreme Assault* its stunning color depth and lighting effects — and best of all, it can run in SVGA without losing the smooth frame rate. At this point, Blue Byte has opted not to support the next wave of 3D accelerator cards, though the team plans on utilizing Intel's MMX technology in the coming months.

This screenshot is a good example of the game's lovely landscape textures.

Could this turn out to be the best-looking PC game ever? It could happen...

Extreme Assault's attention to detail will definitely be turning a few heads. Like many other titles in its genre, the game manages to create a huge gaming world — but by including so many little details and tons of graphical diversity, the visuals will never grow stale. Each level has a distinct graphical style, and uses plenty of custom textures — no two stages look alike. Little touches are everywhere —

laser blasts leave blackened scorch marks on buildings, which can be set on fire, demolished, and then demolished *again*. Trees and bushes can be blown up and knocked over, and when you take off, be sure to check out the control tower — you can see through the transparent glass into the control room. Probably most impressive of all are the external camera modes — judging by the high-resolution textures and the real-time lighting, you'll be hard-pressed to differentiate between a cutscene and an in-game shot in this game. You may be tempted to play most of the game from an external view, just to admire the amazing details Blue Byte has put into its vehicles.

Though there weren't any actual enemies in the demo, there will be plenty of air and ground-based villains in the actual game. Blue Byte reports that some alien varmint-swamped stages may look virtually impossible to begin with — but continues to reassure us that anyone with a quick trigger finger can exterminate those critters with a little practice. That's not to say that your foes will be pushovers — they'll need plenty of laser fire pumped into them before they join the choir invisible.

Intense shadowing and light-sourcing effects make *Extreme Assault* look like one of the most sumptuous PC games ever. Those console-owning freaks will be slavering with envy when this baby arrives!

Blue Byte is aiming to make *Extreme Assault*'s action fast-paced, while clearly directing the player where he should go — but still provide plenty of exploration and replay value. Most missions are flown through long, wide valleys, with a few caves and tunnels imbedded in the terrain along the way. You can either kill your extraterrestrial adversaries and proceed as quickly as possible, or adapt a more leisurely approach, and just go exploring and tour the virtual countryside, visiting tiny houses and barns (and blowing them up). Some missions will have time restrictions, though, so it would be best to carefully bide your time.

Completion of the game will also require mastering both a helicopter and a tank. Your chopper's control has an arcadey, *Descent*-type feel, and is perfectly adequate when flying through claustrophobic tunnels. Likewise, the tank is a bulky but nimble vehicle that can take on most types of terrain, but doesn't fare well when it comes to 20-story drops off mountain faces. Both helicopter and tank share the same kind of laser-type weapons, though there's a mysterious, darkened "mushroom cloud" icon on the side of the heads-up-display, that may deal out some major damage.

In one of the tasty sample missions we got to try out, the player comes to a dead-end in a valley, but sharp-eyed gamers will notice a small hole leading into a tiny cave. Just carefully fly through, land on the helipad, and control is transferred over to the tank. From there, you'll drive along a canyon ridge, and cruise into an alien-inhabited subterranean Incan temple with graphical details that puts *Tomb Raider* to shame. Delving deeper into the level, you'll even get to lay waste to freaky-lookin' chicken-embryo-type aliens in cryogenic chambers.

Cool explosions add to the game's sense of hard-nosed graphic realism.

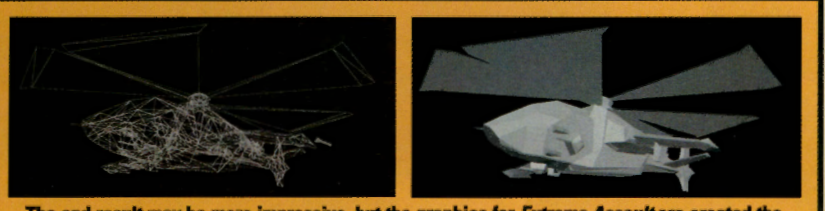
Though tunnels were included in the similar title, *Terminal Velocity*, they were linear, quickly completed, and offered little room for exploration. *Hellbender* offered complex tunnels, but flopped, since navigation and getting oriented was damn near impossible. *Extreme Assault* manages to avoid both of these limitations by giving you a ground-based tank for most of the underground exploration — and not making you deal with the aspect of hovering upside-down in a dark cave where lord knows which way is up. In fact, the tunnel and tank sections resemble a 3D shooter more than anything else, and offer a welcome break from the fast-paced flying sequences.

At this point, *Extreme Assault*'s sensational engine is 100 percent complete, but the level design has only just begun. The Germany-based team is planning on including a total of 50 levels — and if each of them is up to the standards of the two sample stages we got a mouthwatering taste of, this game is going to be *massive*, spanning icy glaciers, mountain ranges, and lost cities.

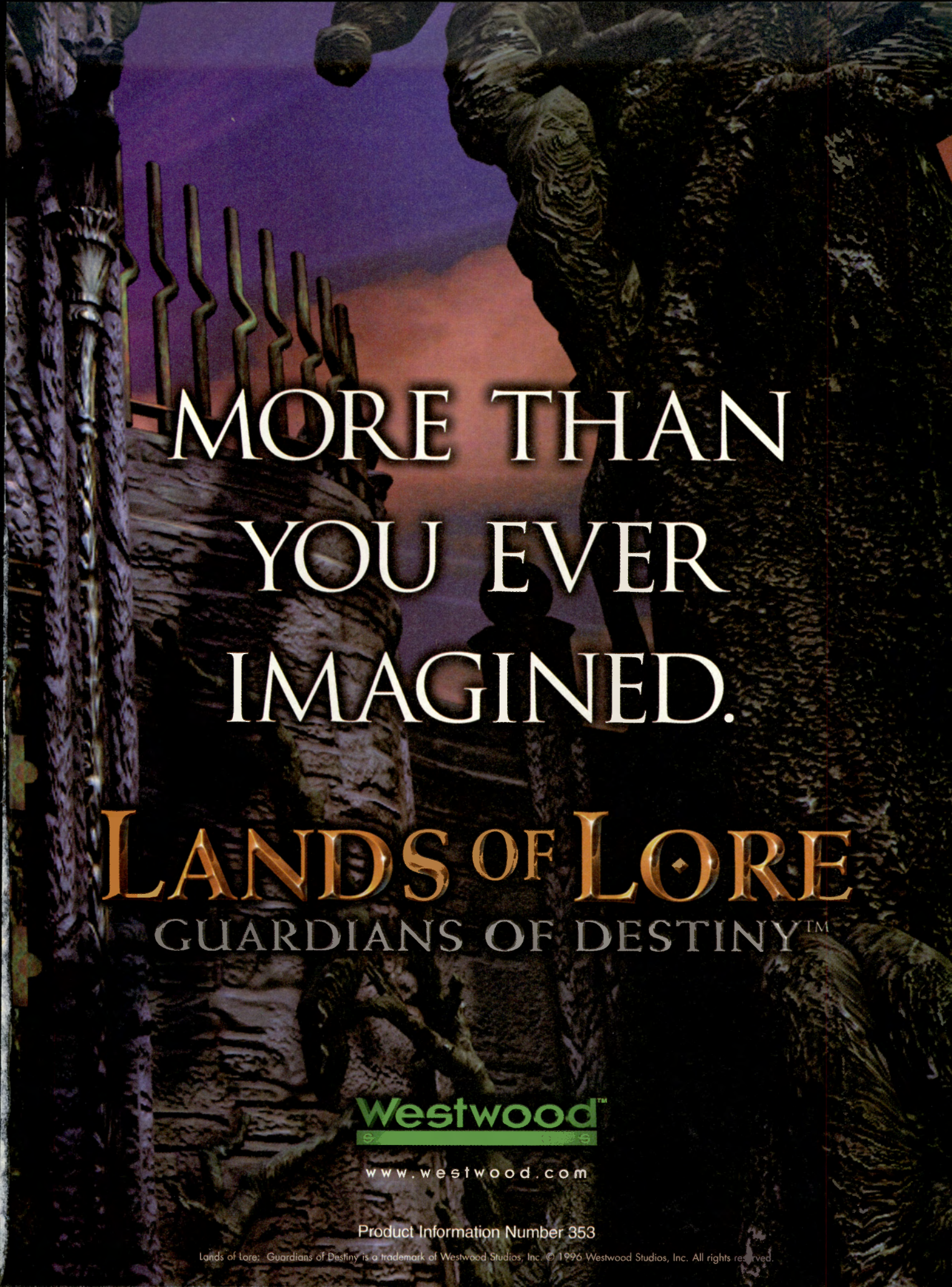
Extreme Assault's fast-paced action will require a 486/DX4 100 at this point, though Blue Byte recommends a Pentium 133 and a fast PCI bus video card to really get things moving. For users of lower-ended systems, variable fogging effects can "haze out" terrain in the distance, making the game run faster. High-res high color mode on my Pentium 200 was smooth as silk, graphically rivaling some games that use 3D hardware acceleration. The final game will support DOS, but will also be stable under Windows 95.

The creators of *Extreme Assault* are quick to remind us that "This is not a simulation — this is pure action at its best." And darn it, they're *right* — *Extreme Assault* may be the biggest hit from Blue Byte yet. Keep your eyes peeled for this one.

PCG



The end result may be more impressive, but the graphics for *Extreme Assault* are created the old-fasioned way — a wireframe model is built first, then it's filled in and layered with textures.



Product Information Number 353

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Online Marches On

Even as we put the finishing touches on this month's cover story on online gaming, new stories continued to break. Here are the latest exciting dispatches from the world of online gaming.

Gemstone III Top Online Game

Kesmai also scores

Simutronics has announced that its roleplaying game, *Gemstone III*, is the top online game in the nation. With 700,000 paid hours logged by users on America Online, Prodigy, and CompuServe throughout the month of December, Simutronics has become one of the industry's top online content providers, and *Gemstone III* has become AOL's most popular game.

AOL's second most popular title was the *Gemstone III* spin-off, *DragonRealms*, which logged more than 500,000 paid hours in December, while the number of individual users for Simutronics' games was more than 200,000. This success has helped increase the company's revenues by more than 300 percent over the past year.

Kesmai's ARIES Online Games network also announced huge numbers, recording more than a million paid hours of game usage throughout December. ARIES claims a core base of 100,000 paying customers playing such long-established titles as *Air Warrior, Multiplayer Battletech, Solaris*, and *Online Casino*. Kesmai's games can be found on GEnie, America Online, and other online services.

According to Simutronics Executive Vice President Neil Harris, "While all the buzz is focused on the Internet and game services like TEN, we see all the traffic coming to the commercial online services, and to companies like ours who are creating titles for the online medium." He adds, "Our games are like a cross between *Dungeons & Dragons* and 'Cheers.' They're social places where people go to meet their friends and slay dragons together."

Simutronics roleplaying game, *Gemstone III*, is possibly the most popular of all the online RPGs.

Kesmai's President John Taylor was equally pleased. "We've heard a lot of hype about how many customers online gaming companies expect to attract," Taylor says. "Well, we've quietly blown their projections out of the water, and we're producing a growing revenue stream. For us, it's not hype, it's real results." Numbers for both companies dwarf the 10,000 to 20,000 estimated to be playing on either TEN or Mplayer.

Air Warrior and Kesmai's other multi-player games have been racking up big numbers on the commercial online services.

Interactive Magic, ICI merge

Interactive Creations, the maker of *WarBirds* and the upcoming *Planetary Raiders*, has merged with Interactive Magic, creator of such award-winning military simulations as *Apache* and *Hind*. Under the agreement, ICI will be renamed I-Magic Online and will become a wholly-owned subsidiary of Interactive Magic.

"By combining our two companies, we will become a dominant force in the online/Internet gaming industry," notes I-Magic Chairman "Wild Bill" Stealey. "By this time next year, we intend to have at least six games on the Internet."

Free Servers Take Off

Westwood, Blizzard find success on the 'net

Since its introduction, *Diablo* has been a runaway success on Blizzard's free Internet service, battle.net. According to a Blizzard spokesperson, more than 117,000 different users tried the game on battle.net in January, with an average of 40,000 playing each day. In the first three weeks of the game's release, more than 1.6 million games of *Diablo* were been hosted on the service, with users spending an average of three hours online at a time. Blizzard declined to discuss specific costs related to operating battle.net, but according to their spokesperson, costs were "minimal" and easily offset by retail sales of the game.

Gamers are flocking to battle.net.

"Our customers' response to battle.net has completely surpassed all of our expectations," says Allen Adham, Blizzard president. He adds "Internet gaming is hugely popular, and we are committed to offering our players as many online options as possible." He notes that besides being available on the free service, *Diablo* is also available on the pay services TEN, Mplayer, and Engage.

Westwood Chat has been equally successful, with more than 300,000 games of *Red Alert* played on the service in its first six weeks of operation.

New Multi-player Network to Launch

Psygnosis backs Gamers Online

Another newcomer is poised to jump into the online gaming fray: Gamers Online, a national dial-up gaming network (*www.gamers-online.com*). The service, still in its infancy, should be ready for a public beta test within the next month or so. And although TEN and Mplayer may have more than a year's lead on Gamers Online, co-founder and CEO James Riskin isn't worried.

"The online gaming market is huge, and it's only going to get bigger," Riskin says, noting that the market is projected to grow to more than a billion dollars by the year 2000. "Between TEN and Mplayer, they've barely scratched the surface of what is out there," he says.

Riskin also says Gamers Online will be faster than its Internet rivals because they're using a dial-up network instead of transmitting game data across the Internet.

"There are some things we can do that you just can't do over the Internet," says Riskin. "We're building a dial-up network, which is literally a voice network, not a traditional network. We get the optimum route, because we're not sharing bandwidth with anyone," explains Riskin.

Nonetheless, he said Gamers Online will connect to the Internet — but only when the 'net has improved in terms of bandwidth and latency.

Psygnosis has already shown early support for the company, as several Psygnosis titles, including *WipeOut*, *Assault Rigs*, and *Destruction Derby 2* will be among the first titles to be offered on Gamers Online. The programmers are modifying the game code themselves, adding multi-player support to *WipeOut* and expanding *Destruction Derby 2* to support as many as 20 players in a single game.

The service is also talking to other companies, including Activision; the MechWarrior series is obviously a desirable license, and some of Gamers Online's programming team are former Activision employees.

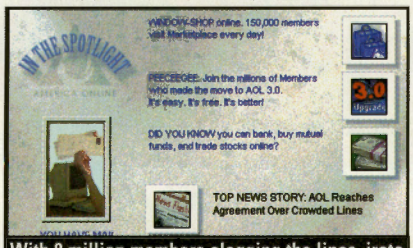
Wipeout will be available at Gamers Online.

AOL Passes 8 Million Mark

Busy signals, lawsuit trouble America Online

The world's largest online service has just grown a bit larger, surpassing the 8 million-member mark and continuing to grow. Having gained a record 1.2 million new members during the last quarter of 1996, America Online intends to retrench, retooling its network, broadening its content base and working to retain current membership. As part of these efforts, the service is investing an additional $100 million in resources, adding 600 customer service reps. and more than 100,000 new modems.

Along the same lines, AOL reduced its marketing push in late January. Television promotions will go on hold, and in cities where existing users are receiving busy signals, promotional mailings of trial disks will be halted.



With 8 million members clogging the lines, irate AOL users in California filed a lawsuit against the service.

"Due to the extraordinary surge in demand for AOL, the problems with busies are far greater than we anticipated," says AOL's Steve Case. "Our highest priority right now is adding system capacity so we can improve the AOL experience, and we're doing everything possible to expedite these efforts."

Despite these efforts, the flood of new customers brought in by the service's new flat-rate pricing plan (See *PCG*, January 1997) has resulted in many customers getting repeated busy signals. This prompted a class action lawsuit filed against AOL in California.

"To the extent that AOL has recently made vague promises to add more dial-in access capacity by June, customers are still at risk of grossly inadequate capacity, and, further, AOL will still be wrongfully reaping tens of millions of dollars of subscriber's money," says Lionel Glancy, one of the plaintiffs' attorneys. So, AOL agreed to offer a refund of $40 or a free month's service to subscribers who've been getting busy signals.

Digging,

chewing,

shedding,

and drooling.

Not included.

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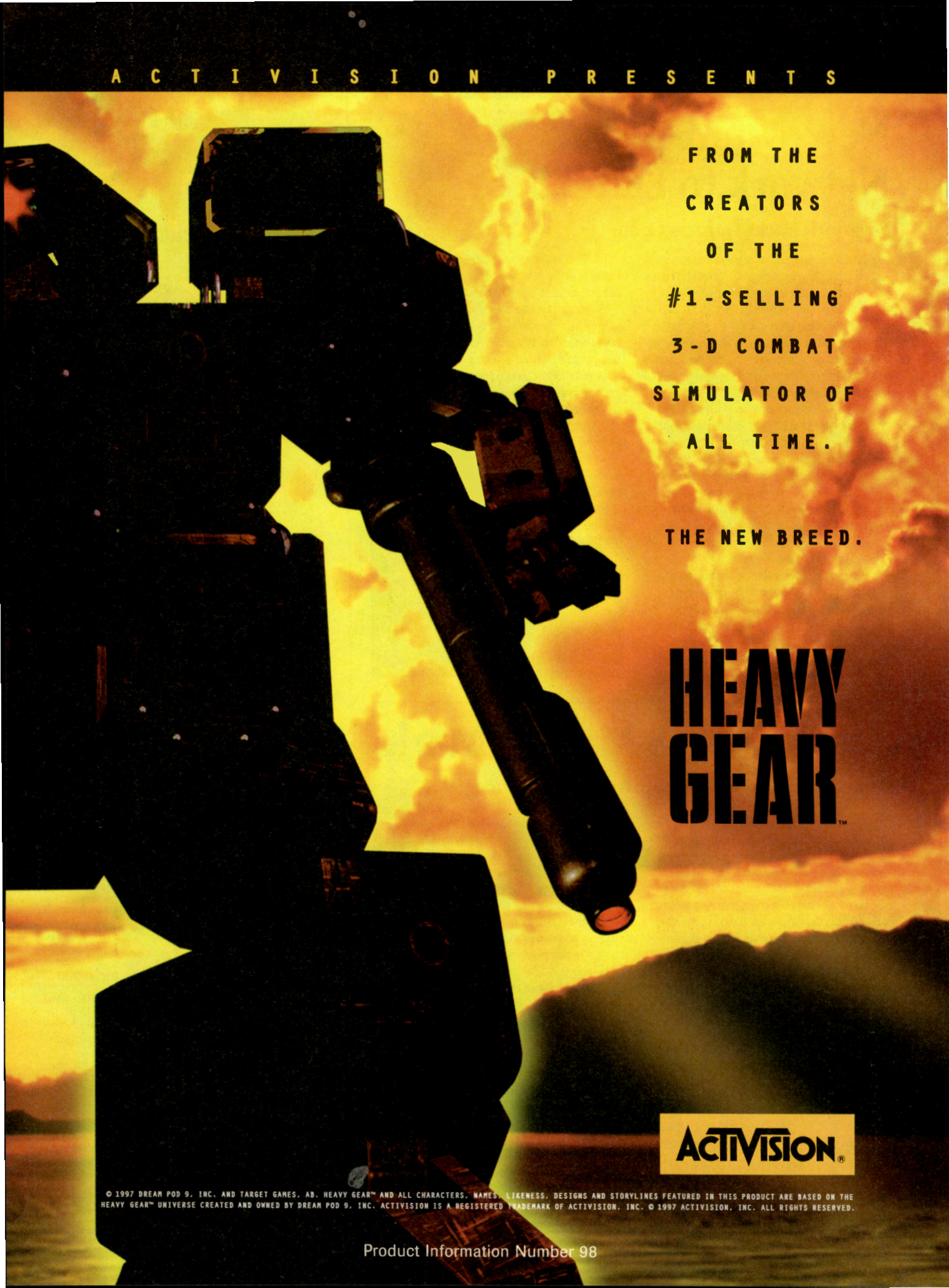


Product Information Number 98

Where is Enemy Nations?

Ready by Christmas, but no release

After Virgin Interactive absorbed Viacom New Media, many of Viacom's planned PC projects were scrapped. One game Virgin declined to publish was *Enemy Nations*, a real-time strategy game developed by Windward Studios. This cancellation ended months of tension and suspicion between the game's developer, Windward Studios, and its intended publisher, Viacom New Media.

During the summer months, while the game was going through its final development stages at Windward Studios, bug testing began at Viacom. Apparently, no-one in the testing department could get the game to run, a fact never reported to Windward Studios. After a number of miscommunications, frantic phone calls, and technical gaffes, bug testing got under way, with bug reports slowly trickling back to the developers at the rate of one report a week.

Yet despite this hurdle, the Windward team met its deadline, and was ready to turn the game over on September 13th, well in time for the big Christmas buying season. But although the game was ready, Viacom was not. At this point it hadn't completed the manual, box art or finished testing network protocols, probably assuming that the development cycle would slip a couple of months. Another factor that may have added to the confusion was that at about this time Virgin and Viacom were going through the process of merging their game publishing units.

Enemy Nations was dropped by Viacom, but will turn up in the stores anyway.

Another consideration may have been Virgin's imminent release of *Red Alert*. Since both titles are real-time strategy games, *Enemy Nations* may have been viewed as a rival. *Enemy Nations* combines elements of *SimCity*-style city building and *Transport Tycoon*-style economics with the real-time combat of *Red Alert*, and an Internet demo had generated some strong, positive feedback.

At any rate, Viacom extended the *Enemy Nations* deadline until November 1st, and then on that date rejected the game due to a number of new bugs found in the product. At that point, the relationship between Viacom and Windward was terminated, leaving Windward little time to find another publisher before the Christmas season.

For David Thielen, head of Windward Studios, bringing this game to market has been frustrating, to say the least. But he has at least found a publisher, Head Games, which has booked preorders of 100,000 copies, and should have the game in stores by the time you read this.

GTE Entertainment Bites The Dust

Bad management and heavy losses lead to shutdown

GTE is shutting down its interactive media division, laying off 85 employees in the process. GTE says that it no longer needs to be developing computer entertainment products, and will instead focus on its primary business, the telephone market.

"GTE has made a strategic decision that it does not need to be a primary participant in the creation and management of content," says Richard Scott, VP of new ventures at GTE. "At its inception, GTE Interactive Media was viewed as a complementary adjunct to GTE's plans to develop broadband video services networks."

GTE's *NCAA Basketball* was supposed to ship in March last year, but it didn't emerge until October.

But sources at GTE's corporate division tell us that the company was shut down because it was losing millions of dollars, largely as a result of bad management within the entertainment division. Products were shipped late after huge sums were spent on marketing, large cash advances were spent on expensive licenses like the Rolling Stones, and the executives in charge of the division had little to no experience in computer games, being forced to have their playtesters demo their games to potential investors.

For example, the company's *NCAA Championship Basketball* was set to ship in March of '96, and nearly half a million dollars were spent on marketing the game at that time. But the game ended up slipping until October, a costly internal miscommunication.

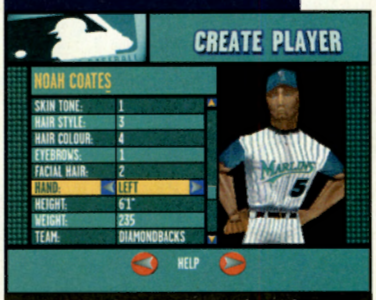
GTE published a number of games in its short history, including *FX Fighter*, *EF 2000*, *Dust*, *Timelapse* and its most recent title *Titanic: Adventures out of Time*. *Titanic* was reportedly selling well until news of GTE's impending demise panicked retailers into returning the game in large numbers.

For *EF 2000*, the English developer DID is looking for another publisher. An add-on, mission builder disk for the game, *Tactcom*, is out in Europe, but with the demise of the Ocean/GTE distribution channel, DID is still looking for a U.S. publisher. Other GTE games under development, such as *Siege*, may still be sold to other publishers.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Triple Play 98

EA Sports is hard at work on *Triple Play 98*, the next installment in its long-lived and popular arcade baseball series. This time around the game will boast an entirely new engine with polygonal players, 3D rendering, improved statistical accuracy and better AI, plus — for the first time in a computer baseball game — a two-man play-by-play and color commentary provided by two of the league's top commentators, Jim Hughson and Buck Martinez.



An early peek at a polygon player from EA's upcoming *Triple Play 98*.

MS Baseball

If EA Sports is keeping *Triple Play 98* a bit hush-hush, Microsoft is be even more tight-lipped about its upcoming baseball game. We do know the game's been developed by a group called Wizbang, and the game intends to go head-to-head with the top baseball titles, including EA's game and the upcoming *Tony La Russa 4*, being developed by Stormfront Studios to be published by Maxis. And fans of the side-scrolling lizard *Gex* can look for a sequel, too.

The Condemned

A new baseball game is not the only thing in the works from the Wizard of Redmond. *The Condemned* is Microsoft's

Continued on page 54

Continued from page 53

first foray into the hard-hitting, heavy-slugging arena of giant-robot fighting games. Your 'mech (or SCAR, as the game calls them) can be outfitted with gatling guns, particle beams, and even nuclear weapons. The game will feature more than 40 missions, including ten multi-player levels, and will offer support for LAN and modem play.

These are the giant robots in *The Condemned* from Microsoft.

Heavy Gear

Speaking of giant robot games: With the demise of its MechWarrior license, Activision has acquired the license to the *Heavy Gear* franchise, another giant-robot roleplaying game similar to the BattleTech world that *MechWarrior 2* was based on. The license deal gives Activision the exclusive, world-wide interactive rights to the titles on any platform for the next ten years, with two five-year options after that; they've learned a lesson, it would appear, about expiring licenses. The company will use its *MechWarrior 2* 3D engine and technology to develop the Heavy Gear games. The first Heavy Gear product should be available this fall. This pretty much spells the end of Activision's involvement in the MechWarrior universe, although the company has indicated it will continue to add technical and

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Eidos on the Move

Hot deals for newcomer

There was certainly no better way for the newly formed Eidos Interactive to launch than with *Tomb Raider*, a breath-taking action game with incredible graphics that handily won *PC Gamer's* Action Game of the Year for 1996. But instead of resting on its laurels, the company has aggressively sought out new publishing relationships with some of the gaming industry's top design talent.

Although its constituent companies have been around for some time, Eidos Interactive is a relative newcomer on the scene. Created by U.K. technology company Eidos Technologies, Eidos Interactive acquired Domark, Simis, Big Red, U.S. Gold and Core Design, all former publishing and development partners.

Now Eidos has signed up John Romero's new company, ION Storm, to a long-term publishing deal. The exclusive deal covers multiple titles and should give strength to Eidos Interactive' upcoming line-up.

"Eidos shares ION Storm's vision and offers us everything we are looking for in a publisher from strong worldwide distribution to creative control over our games," says Romero, chairman of ION Storm.

But the deal won't affect any of his games under development. "We don't have any definite plans right now to license the *Tomb Raider* engine," says Romero, noting he will still be using the *Quake* technology for two of his upcoming games.

Eidos has also signed an exclusive, four-year publishing deal with Looking Glass Technologies, the developer of *Flight Unlimited* and *Terra Nova*. Prior to that, Looking Glass programmers worked at Origin, where they created *System Shock* and both *Ultima Underworlds*. Among the first titles that will be published under the new agreement are *British Open Championship Golf, The Dark Project* and *Flight Unlimited 2*.

Quake Code Stolen

Hackers hit Crack dot Com

A computer hacker broke into Crack dot Com's web site and stole the source code to *Quake* and two Crack projects, including its upcoming strategy game, *Golgotha*. The hackers then modified the Crack web site to allow visitors to download the code directly from the web page.

The *Quake* code was on Crack's network because Dave Taylor, a Crack founder and former id employee, is working on the Linux port of *Quake*. Taylor notes that he's subsequently tightened security at his site, and that the people at id Software were not upset with him. id experienced a similar break-in this summer, with the full version of *Quake* being stolen and released onto the Internet a week before the game was released as shareware.

"They (id) sympathized with what happened to us," says Crack dot Com founder Dave Taylor. "Crack was clearly targeted." He also doesn't think the theft of *Golgotha* will affect the game's chances of being published. "It's too hot a title," he says. The hacker, Taylor suspects, stole the code not to sell it but merely as a trophy. "It's the same thing that motivates me to make games," he says. "I'm good at it and like to show off."

After the break-in, the hackers went onto the IRC channel #quake (an Internet chat room) and bragged about their crime. Crack dot Com contacted the FBI as soon as the crime was discovered, and the FBI's Computer Emergency Response Team is on the case.

Although the *Quake* code was stolen, id isn't overly concerned. No other company could use the code in a commercial product and get away with it, and by the time a rival could reverse engineer it and bring something similar to market, id will have moved onto its next project, code-named "Trinity."

More id Departures

The theft of Quake source code has not been id's only woes of late. Mike Wilson and Shawn Green have both left id to join their former colleague John Romero at ION Storm. Wilson leaves his position as 'biz guy' for id and joins ION as the new CEO. Green, a product manager at id, joins him as a programmer.

"I am psyched that Mike and Shawn are joining us at ION, as they will be an incredible asset to our team," says Romero. Shortly after the two departed, John Carmack was quoted on a web page devoted to *Quake* news as saying "Romero was pushed out of id because he wasn't working hard enough." But Romero played down the feud aspect.

"We aren't feuding," he says. "I think Carmack was a little pissed, and decided to vent a little. I resigned from id; the last six months of work had been the hardest six months I've ever worked in my life because *Quake* had to get finished on time."

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–Computer Gaming World, UK / Five Stars

TEEN T AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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Continued from page 54

visual innovations to its MechWarrior games, including support for new 3D cards as they come out.

Back to Zork

Another Activision game in the works is the eighth installment in the venerable Zork series, *Zork Grand Inquisitor*. The player must restore the power of magic to a Great Underground Empire caught in the throes of the Dark Ages. To accomplish this, the hero must travel back in time to three classic Zork eras in order to retrieve the mystic artifacts that will bring the magic back to the land. A full-blown graphic adventure, the game is being built on the same technology used in *Zork Nemesis*, and is scheduled to ship this Fall. The original Zork series was born in the late 1970s; Infocom released the first commercial Zork game in 1981.

Dark Vengeance

On the 3D action front, *Dark Vengeance* is a new game being developed for Windows 95 with support for MMX processors. It's a fantasy combat game with polygonal characters, and it features different character classes and races. The developer, Reality Bytes, is also hoping to include support for 32-player network games, with cross-platform support for Windows 95 and Macintosh. The game will also support TCP/IP Internet play, and the developer has been talking to Mplayer about bringing the game online there.

Shrak for Quake

More 3D action news: the first "total conversion" for *Quake* should be on the shelves as

Continued on page 57

A Levitating Mouse

The GyroPoint is mobile

Just when you think you've seen everything possible in PC pointing devices, along comes the GyroPoint from Gyration, Inc. What's unique about this particular rodent is its ability to double as a free-floating clicker as well as a standard desktop mouse.

Kick back and relax during your next session of *Red Alert*, thanks to the GyroPoint mouse.

Compatible with DOS, Windows 3.1, and Windows 95, the GyroPoint plugs into a standard serial port and replaces your desktop mouse. During normal working hours, when you've got a lot of typing to do, you'll keep the GyroPoint flat on your mouse pad and use it as you would a normal mouse. But when you're ready to kick up your heels, stretch out your legs and do some carefree web-surfing, the mouse's free-floating nature really comes into to play.

In hand-held mode, the mouse ball locks in; as you move your hand, the cursor on the screen tracks your movements, allowing you to keep on clicking while reclining in a more comfortable posture.

This hand-held mouse doesn't need any special hardware or software; it's completely compatible with ordinary serial ports and the standard Microsoft mouse driver. It may the perfect thing for the Gateway Destination or other up-and-coming living room PCs. A cordless version is also in the works.

The GyroPoint has a suggested manufacturer's retail price of $69.99 and comes with a one-year warranty. For more information, call (800) 316-5432, and look for a review of the GyroPoint next month, in our new, expanded hardware section.

Pilot Takes Flight

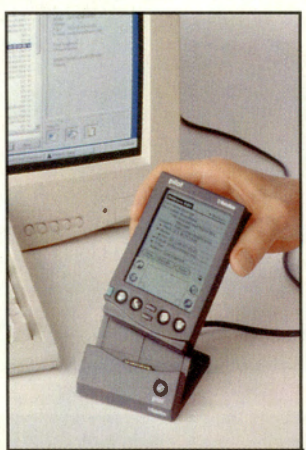
New computer fits in the palm of your hand

Ever since Apple's Newton personal digital assistant (PDA) hit the market, technophiles have desired the best electronic gadgetry around to keep track of day-to-day details. US Robotics' recently released its own PDA, a product called the Pilot.

The Pilot comes pre-loaded with a variety of personal information management (PIM) software, including a Daily Planner, Address List, To Do List, and Memo Pad. It also has software that lets it share information with your via a standard serial connection. The Pilot Desktop software used on your PC is structured similarly to the software in the Pilot, and a single-button "HotSync" function synchronizes data in the computer and on the Pilot. Whether you jot down notes on the Pilot or on your PC, you won't lose any information.

The Pilot has no keyboard; instead, it uses a plastic stylus and a form of handwriting recognition. You enter text on the Pilot's screen using a system called Graffiti. Each letter, number, and symbol has a corresponding pen-stroke that Pilot recognizes; since the Graffiti alphabet is very similar to most handwriting, it's fairly easy to learn. Should the Graffiti system prove too daunting, though, there's also an onscreen keyboard you can use to input letters and numbers with a tap of the stylus.

The handiest aspect of the Pilot is its size. Not much bigger than a pack of cards, and weighing about 5.7 oz. with its two AAA batteries (which, incidentally, last about two months with regular use), it fits just about anywhere.



The Pilot is small enough to fit in the palm of your hand.

US Robotics has released development software for creating programs for the Pilot, and a host of programs are already available on the Internet for download directly into the Pilot. And yes, there are free games out there, including versions of the simple titles like Solitaire, Chess, and Reversi, and even a program that lets you play classic text adventures like *Zork* or *Adventure* (check out *www.concentric.net/~rbram/zip.shtml* for details and a demo of this nifty program).

The Pilot comes in two configurations, the 1000 or the 5000. The 1000 contains 128K of RAM; without additional programs taking up memory, it can hold about 500 addresses, 600 appointments, 100 to-do list items, and 50 memos. The 5000, which has 512K of RAM, can hold 2500 addresses, 2400 appointments, 500 to-do items, and 500 memos. At press time, the 1000 sold for about $300, while the 5000 cost around $370. A 1MB memory upgrade is available for about $150. For more information, check out US Robotics' Pilot web page at *www.usr.com/palm/500.html*.

Get on the Bus

ThrustMaster unveils USB stick

One of the first Universal Serial Bus (USB) peripherals aimed at the PC market is ThrustMaster's Top Gun USB Joystick. USB is a new connectivity standard meant to completely change the way peripherals are connected to your PC.

The Top Gun USB joystick features a four-way hat switch, three buttons, and a trigger. It uses the same classic ThrustMaster Flight Control System setup supported in virtually every PC game that uses a joystick. It also features a weighted base and is fully programmable, making it the cheapest programmable joystick ThrustMaster has ever released.

The USB standard was developed by Microsoft, Intel, IBM, and a number of other PC manufacturers. It has approximately the same throughput as an Ethernet connection (12MB per second) and will support "hot attach," which will allow systems to automatically detect and setup new hardware as soon as it is plugged in. Most new PCs that ship in 1997 will feature one or more USB ports, and PCI add-on cards with USB ports will also become available for older PCs.

ThrustMaster's Top Gun USB will be one of the first joysticks ready for the new Universal Serial Bus ports.

Gravis and EA Team Up

Advanced Gravis has signed a deal with Electronic Arts to use the EA Sports logo on some of their gaming hardware. Existing versions of the Gravis GamePad Pro and GrIP Game System are being re-released with the EA Sports logo. This is the first time the EA Sports logo has been licensed to a third-party developer.

The EA/Gravis GamePad Pro is being bundled in boxes with *Madden NFL '97* and will be sold in stores separately at $49.95. The EA Sports version of the GrIP system will include a full version of *Triple Play '97*. It has a suggested retail price of $119.95.

Continued from page 56

you read this. *Shrak for Quake* functions much like a sequel to *Quake* and features all-new levels, monsters, textures, music, and weapons. More than just a level-pack, the game has its own story line and a progression of levels created with QuakeC and a variety of other tools. It requires the registered version of *Quake*. The project is not an officially sanctioned level pack, although GT Interactive is considering picking up the rights to publish the project outside the U.S.

New monsters, weapons, and levels for *Quake* arrive in *Shrak for Quake* from Quantun Axcess.

Blade

Another interesting 3D game from Europe is *Blade*, being developed by Rebel Act studios. Set in a fantasy world, it features texture-mapped polygon characters who can run, jump, crawl, fly and swim. Four character types will confront 15 different enemies with dozens of different weapons. Screen resolutions will run from 320x200 with 256 colors to a full-blown 1024x768 with 16-bit color. The game is being published by Spanish publisher Friendware, which distributes products in Spain and Latin America. Although no publisher has been found yet for the Unites States, the game is due out sometime this year.

Montezuma's Return

Continuing the 3D theme, Mon-

Continued on page 58

SpaceOrb 360 Fares Poorly

Oddball controller seeks acceptance

Spacetec IMC's revolutionary controller, the SpaceOrb 360, didn't sell well over the holiday season, adversely affecting the company's earnings. The controller, a hand-held device with a rubber orb used to control six degrees of movement, is unlike any other controller on the market and requires special software to run with existing games.

Spacetec attributes the low sales numbers to a lack of penetration in the retail games market, although the company notes that sales to the early-adopter and hard-core segments of the market were successful. Spacetec will continue to support and market the SpaceOrb, although the company plans to shift the focus of its marketing away from the general computer user and more toward to the hard-core gamer community. A discontinued advertising campaign on MTV cost as much as the SpaceOrb garnered in revenues.

Although the SpaceOrb has yet to take off, Spacetec is still promoting the product. The company's team of traveling product demonstrators is still moving from town to town, challenging local deathmatch champions at *Quake*, *Duke*, and *Descent*, and thereby hoping to demonstrate the SpaceOrb's effectiveness. Recently, this team, known as the Spacetec GameMasters, put out a call for female gamers to join the all-male team.

Although the SpaceOrb 360 hasn't completely caught on, the product's manufacturer, Spacetec IMC, still believes in the product and will continue to back it.

Continued from page 57

tezuma returns in — well, *Montezuma's Return*, a new 3D action game from Utopia Technologies. The game takes place in a *Lost Ark/Pitfall/Tomb Raider*-type environment, with 65,000 colors, six degrees of freedom, and real physics. The game is actually a revival of the early 1980's Apple II and IBM PC game, *Montezuma's Revenge*, which was a big hit in the early days of the gaming industry.

Utopia Technologies revives a long lost hit, *Montezuma's Return*.

Time Warriors

ReadySoft is readying *Time Warriors*, a new 3D fighting game featuring warriors drawn from throughout history for the ultimate showdown. You'll face off against Samurai, Vikings, Pharoahs, and Djinnis with a variety of swords and magical powers. The game is shipping for DOS and will run comfortably under Windows 95, and the publisher intends to support all the major 3D accelerators cards. *Time Warriors* is set for a May release.

DVD *C&C*

Westwood Studios is embracing the DVD-ROM format, with plans to port its best-selling game titles over to the new technology, starting with its hit *Command & Conquer*.

PCG

WarCraft Designer Bails

Ron Millar working with Activision

Ron Millar, one of Blizzard Entertainment's senior game designers, has been lured away from Blizzard to work on Activision's upcoming real-time strategy game, *Dark Reign*. Millar will jump right in, working on game design, character development, and mission building for the title. Among his many credits are game design for *WarCraft II* and *Diablo*, as well as some work on Blizzard's next major release, *StarCraft*.

"I felt it was time," says Millar, commenting on his decision to leave Blizzard. "I've done a lot of great stuff with them." And though he is gone, it was not because of any dissatisfaction with current Blizzard projects. "The reason I left was not because I was bored with *StarCraft*," he says. "*StarCraft* has some awesome things in it. It's just that I personally wanted to do something fresh."

So Millar has struck out on his own, forming his own corporation, Redline Games, with James Anhalt, a programming friend and another former Blizzard employee. Initially they will do consulting, first with Activision and then possibly other companies. Further on down the road, they plan on getting back into developing their own games.

Ron Millar (kneeling) teams up with Dark Reign's Greg Borrud (left) and Josh Resnick.

Activision's upcoming real-time strategy game, *Dark Reign*.

Of all the real-time games in the works, the one that attracted his attention the most was *Dark Reign*. "It has some of the best qualities," says Millar. "The guys here are really cool, and then the game itself has a lot of great stuff in it. The engine's good, the map editor's excellent, and their new features are above and beyond what everyone else is trying to do out there." Like *WarCraft II*, *Dark Reign* is a real-time strategy game, though set in a more of a futuristic setting.

As a consultant, Millar has a solid background in art and especially game design. "I love all games," says Millar. "I've been into games since I was five. My dad used to fix arcade games, so I used to play *Pong* and all those old games."

His most obvious success was with *WarCraft II*. "My inspiration in *WarCraft* was that I really liked the real-time strategy genre. I saw a lot of stuff that could be done in that area and just wasn't being done. I like to make games that I want to play, and that are missing from the marketplace. I like to make classics and hits in general too, and not just make copies. The genre itself has a lot to be done in it."

Dark Reign should be available sometime in May or June. Activision also plans to create a free server similar to battle.net or Westwood Chat, called Active Net, which will let people play *Dark Reign* across the Internet for free.

GT Signs Up 5D Games

Ex-Papyrus employees at work on sci-fi title

GT Interactive will publish 5D Games' new title *Millennium Four: The Right*, an upcoming networked space combat simulation. The agreement gives GT the worldwide publishing rights to the game on all platforms, as well as a sequel and three future titles from 5D Games.

"There is no doubting the publishing and distribution strength of GT Interactive," said Todd Farrington, president of 5D Games, commenting on his decision to sign up with GT. 5D Games was founded by Farrington and a number of former Papyrus employees, who left the Sierra-owned company and a highly successful series of auto-racing simulations in order to strike out on their own.

GT has made a name for itself over the last six months, acquiring several companies and signing some of the industry's top 3D developers. Companies it's signed with include id Software, 3D Realms, Hipnotic and Scavenger.

5D Games' first title will be *Millenium Four: The Right*, a new deep space combat game.

News Briefs...

Lawyers: The Gathering

Spectrum Holobyte is suing Acclaim over its release of *Magic: The Gathering — Battlemage*. According to Spectrum, Acclaim has broken an agreement the two companies reached in November, improperly releasing the game without meeting all of the conditions that both parties had agreed to (see the February 97 Eyewitness for details). So even though Acclaim released its game by the agreed-to date of January 10th, it apparently still violated some undisclosed terms of the agreement, prompting Spectrum's lawsuit. Spectrum declines to comment on what specific, undisclosed contractual terms were agreed upon, as the lawsuit is still pending, and is seeking "unspecified monetary damages" from Acclaim. Acclaim responded with a press release that said, in effect, that it had no comment on the matter.

Maxis Takes the Field

Maxis is definitely serious about getting into the sports simulation market, with two new sports deals in the works. The company has signed an agreement with Stormfront Studios to publish the fourth installment in the Tony LaRussa Baseball series. A separate licensing agreement with European developer Anco was also announced: Maxis will publish the next two titles in Anco's Kick Off series of soccer games. *Kick Off 97* will be released this summer, while *Tony La Russa Baseball 4* should be out early next spring, just in time for baseball season.

EA Sports Hits the Beach

Electronic Arts has signed a five-year deal with the Pebble Beach Golf Links to use the famous golf course in EA's PGA Tour Golf game. Pebble Beach is one of the world's most well-known golf courses, and one of the most sought-after licenses for computer golf developers. Other famous golf courses EA holds the license to includes Spyglass Hill Golf Course, The Links at Spanish Bay, Poppy Hills Golf Course, Colonial Country Club, and Bay Hill Club and Lodge. The company also recently made a minority investment in Stormfront Studios, a six year-old developer of sports games for consoles and the PC. The investment does not give EA exclusive rights to Stormfront games, as the recent Stormfront-Maxis deal (above) demonstrates.

3D Realms Sells Blood

Monolith Productions has bought the rights to *Blood*, an upcoming 3D action game from 3D Realms. The game takes place in a gothic, nightmarish setting filled with zombies and the Undead, and it makes use of the Build engine, the same technology used in *Duke Nukem 3D*. The game will be published by GT Interactive and a shareware version is expected in March. Monolith also acquired Q Studios, the *Blood* development studio.

The PC Gamer Playlist

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

Oh those wacky Brits! Our namesake from across the pond, the UK edition of *PC Gamer*, has insulted the gaming community and trampled the good name of *Red Alert* into the mud. What did they do, you ask? Why, they have proudly declared, right in the front of their magazine, that they've banned Tanyas from their network games of *Red Alert* — for shame! What next, shall we agree not to use the big, scary Mammoth tanks too? Are the MiGs too much for their delicate constitutions? Perhaps they would like to have a general ceasefire and play SimBase — "Look at all the pretty buildings we can make if we all declare as allies!" — currently a popular trend amongst the *Red Alert* "players" on our own advertising team.

We guess that us Yanks will once again have to show those Red Coats a thing or two about winning a war.

1.	*C&C: Red Alert*	Everyone
2.	*Diablo*	Everyone
3.	*Tomb Raider*	Mike, Todd
4.	*NBA Live 97*	Quintin, Gary
5.	*Civilization II*	Jason, Joe
6.	*Jetfighter III*	Todd, Dan
7.	*M.A.X.*	Dan, Mike
8.	*Extreme Chess*	Joe, Gary
9.	*NASCAR Racing 2*	Todd, Joe
10.	*Privateer 2: The Darkening*	Mike, Dan

The Money-Go-Round

Spectrum up, GT down

At the end of the Christmas buying season, a good many computer game companies reported strong earnings for the holiday quarter in a flurry of public announcements. Perhaps the biggest success story of the holidays was Spectrum HoloByte, who moved from a net loss of $9.9 million in the third quarter last year to a net profit of $5.6 million during this year's third quarter.

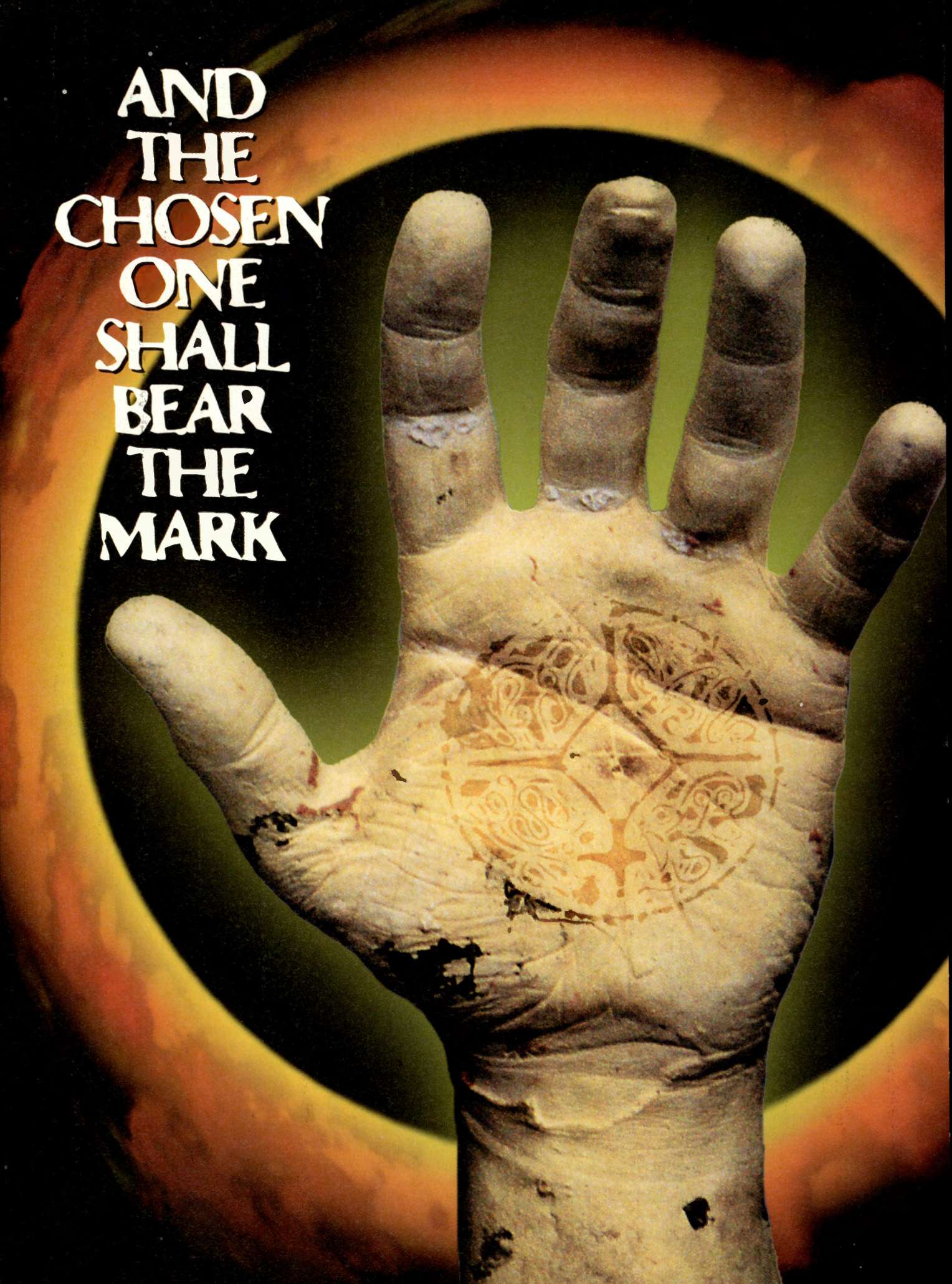
The company launched seven PC titles in 1996, and out of those four (*Grand Prix II, Civilization II, Top Gun*, and *Master of Orion II*) sold a combined total of over two million units.

Activision also is on the upswing, reporting a net income of $4.1 million for the third quarter, up from the $1.9 million reported last year. Strong sales on the PC side were reported for *MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries*, with *Zork Nemesis, Muppet Treasure Island* and *Time Commando* also doing well. The company sees its 1998 prospects as equally bright, with *Quake* Mission Packs, *Dark Reign*, more *Mech 2* enhancements, and *Zork Grand Inquisitor* all in the pipeline.

Electronic Arts reported even greater profits, with a net income of $36.7 million in the quarter, up from $29.3 million last year. Maxis was not as fortunate, though it still made a tidy profit. It reported a quarterly net income of $2 million, down from the $3.5 million it achieved in the third quarter of 1995.

Although these profits bode well for the PC gaming industry, companies are still hurt by high development costs and a crowded marketplace, creating much smaller profits than when compared to the computer industry as a whole. For comparison, computer maker Compaq netted $436 million in the quarter ending December 31st, 1996, while Microsoft reported a net income of $741 million during the same period.

Other publishers struggled. Enteractive reported net losses of $1.8 million for the quarter ending November 30th, while GT Interactive, who went on a late-'96 acquisition spree, issued a caution to investors that its third quarter profits may not be as high as investors had hoped. The stock market responded by bruising GT's stock. It lost 35 percent of its value on Dec. 4, 1996.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CHOSEN
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SHALL
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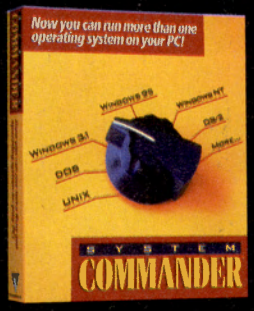

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Online gaming

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE

You've seen the ads, heard the hype, and had your mind boggled by the amazing number of multi-player games cropping up all over the Internet. There's no doubt about it — online gaming has arrived, and it's here to stay. But getting started in 'net gaming and finding the best and cheapest ways to play can be baffling... so we did all the hard work for you, and now present everything you need to know about the PC gaming phenomenon of the decade...

BY COLIN WILLIAMSON

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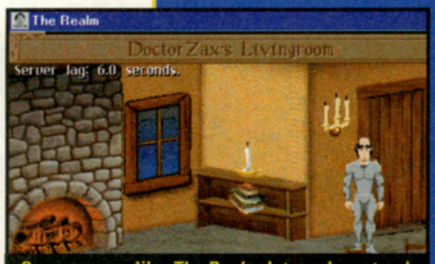
The last few months have been something of a whirlwind for the entire PC gaming industry. In a blink of an eye, multi-player gaming became red-hot with games like *Quake, WarCraft II,* and *Command & Conquer* leading the charge, while online gaming services have been popping up like toaster pastries, and begging for beta testers. Meanwhile, exclusivity contracts were being frantically signed between game companies and service providers in order to offer exclusive online hit titles. Take a trip to the software store, and you'll see that a myriad of new strategy and action titles contain Internet-ready support — and some include idiot-proof software on the disc, so anyone can get up and running within a few hours. Never before have there been more people online and ready to play with *you* — and with everyone and his brother getting on the 'net, the level of competition is getting to be mighty fierce.

Up until recently, multi-player gaming was more of a luxury — but games like *Doom* changed all that, transforming many networked workplaces into DeathMatch battlegrounds. People started realizing that it was more *fun* to play against your friends and relatives than faceless computer AI, so more multi-player network games became available. Total Entertainment Network bigwig and hard-core gamer Greg Stewart agrees — "There's a visceral experience in terms of knowing that there's another human that you just killed, and there's a real sense of fulfillment for a gamer when he's not just beating a machine."

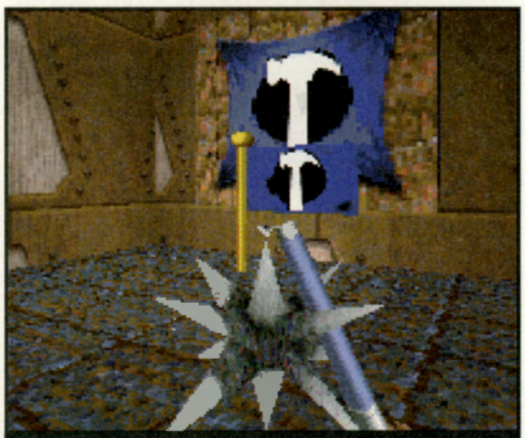
The first multi-player games were originally developed for play over a modem, or a Local Area Network. While modem games were usually just one-on-one, network games could support many, many players at once — but the only people with networks were usually big corporations, who didn't appreciate their employees wasting productivity time on afternoon fragfests.

Enter the Internet. This sprawling global system with near-infinite possibilities became incredibly faddish with everyone — and it didn't take a genius to realize "hey, we could run our flashy commercial games off of this thing." id Software's *Quake,* powered by software from Mpath Interactive (the people behind Mplayer), was the first big-name title to include standard TCP/IP Internet play. Meanwhile, big-name networks were working on modifying older games to play over their specific networks.

Another interesting aspect of the online gaming craze is the new type of social interaction. Kristin Asleson of Mplayer agrees. "This is really the next



Some games, like *The Realm,* let you keep track of how bad the lag is at any given time.


ThreeWave's delightful *Capture the Flag* patch is available for your playing pleasure on TEN.

Using the Telechat feature of *Quake,* even deadly DeathMatches can turn social.

Latency and You

When it comes to running games that require split-second control (such as *Quake* and *Duke3D*), the Internet starts running into problems. Getting a message to a computer halfway across the world and back again in under a second is a bit of a challenge, and nobody wants to play a 3D shooter where actions happen five seconds *after* you press a button. Many of the big-name gaming networks have offered a workaround by putting multiple servers (big fast computers that cost more than most of us make annually) in different parts of the country, to streamline the process. No matter how speedy your connection is, you'll probably still run into a bit of this unavoidable delayed-reaction that's called latency, or lag. Just like Death and Taxes, lag is a fact of life, and you'll have to live with it until the day that all of us get fiber-optic connections.

Lag is determined by a "ping time" in programs like Kali — the lower the ping time, the faster the connection. Ping times are measured in milliseconds, and anywhere below 200ms is a pretty good connection. Try to avoid anything over 300, which will have you bashing the keyboard and swearing up a storm. Unfortunately, there's no real secret to a fast connection; it's mostly the luck of the draw, depending on the quality of your ISP.

Netiquette

The Internet is a big and scary place, but if you behave yourself, you have little chance of being shunned and humiliated in front of elder gamers. Here are a few tips to keep you from being booted, dissed, or otherwise looked down upon by your gaming comrades.

1. If you're in a specified chat room, attempt to stay on topic. Very few people go into a *Monster Truck Madness* chat room in hopes of cybersex.

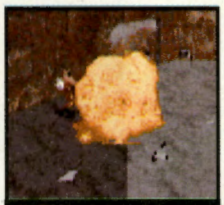
2. Don't camp. "Camping" is the immature and ultimately annoying art of hiding in dark spots, and/or near weapons caches in games like *Duke* and *Quake*. If you keep this up, you will probably make plenty of enemies, who will group together to blow your ass away. Don't do it.

3. Be committed. If you're starting a game of *WarCraft II*, make sure that you'll have the time to finish it. Dropping out in the middle of complex resource-management titles ruins a perfectly good game, and is one of the biggest gripes amongst gamers. Just when I was about to send around 50 rocket soldiers in to squash an opponent in *Red Alert*, the thankless bastard dropped his connection. Arrgh.

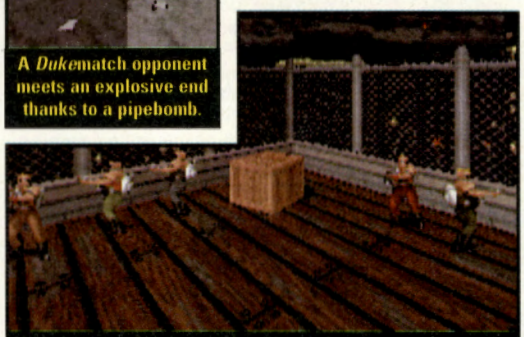
4. Take it easy on beginners. If you're an advanced *Red Alert* god, don't hop into a newbie game and start nuking everyone with A-bombs — nothing scares off beginners worse than some cocky SOB making a mess of things.

5. Surrender in advance if you ever encounter a *PC Gamer* editor online, 'cause we're the best. Really.

The final boss in *Duke3D* is not so bad when you have seven other people on your side.



A *Duke*match opponent meets an explosive end thanks to a pipebomb.



A squadron of six lies ready for the daunting task of cleaning out some alien scum. Cooperative play is always a hit on TEN.

wave in entertainment and socialization," she says. "Why call your parents on Sunday and talk about the weather, when you can play *Scrabble* — or *Quake*, if you have that kind of parents? In the future, this is going to be as important to society and our culture as television and the telephone — it's a way to entertain yourself and socialize at the same time."

If there's ever been a good time to get on the 'net, it's now. The industry-wide boost towards multiplayer gaming is no fluke, according to Greg Harper at TEN — "The top developers and game designers are gravitating towards multi-player — it's more interesting, more challenging, and the best games are being created for multi-player."

He's right. It's time to log on and start playing.

Getting Started

To join in on the worldwide multi-player madness, you're obviously going to need a modem. For a fast connection and maximum enjoyment, a modem that can manage at least 28.8Kbps is highly recommended, and a 33.6Kbps modem is fast becoming the standard [*Ed. Note:* For more detailed information on some of the newest modems on the market, see the Peripheral Visions column on page 158.]. You'll also need to get yourself a connection to the Internet via an Internet Service Provider (ISP). While national services such as CompuServe and America Online offer basic Internet service, you'd be better off with an ISP that's local to your community — not only will your connection be faster, but your pocketbook probably won't take as large a hit (many ISPs charge as little as $19.95 per month with unlimited access, while most big-name networks charge by the hour). And regardless of how you feel about Bill Gates, you'll also need a copy of Windows 95 — not only has it become the industry standard for most new titles, but its relative ease of use also makes getting on the Internet quick and easy.

WB, LEET, NEWBIE

THAT HIP NETSPEAK IN FULL

AVATAR: A graphical persona that represents you. This can be anything from a picture to a British flag.
BRB: Anagram for Be Right Back. Usually said before someone leaves a chat room.
CAMPER: One who hides out near weapons caches and ambushes players in *Quake* games. Campers are the most detested people of all.

If you camp, you'll most likely be on the receiving end of a missile.

CLAN: Advanced *Quake* players who DeathMatch in packs of four or more.
FS: *Red Alert* terminology for "First Sight," meaning you must ally with the first person you encounter in a four or more player game.
IRC: Internet Relay Chat. A system where folks get together to type messages to each other in real-time. Westwood Chat is one of these.
ISP: Internet Service Provider. The folks who you dial in order to connect to the Internet.
LAMER: One who is lame. If someone calls you this during a DeathMatch, hunt 'em down and make 'em pay.
LATENCY: Also known as lag, latency is the slowdown that's always popping up on the Internet.
LEET (A.K.A. ELITE): The best of the best. Many of the top-ranking *Quake* clans consider themselves leet.
MOOCH KILL: In *Quake* or *Duke*, taking someone down with one shot after another player's done most of the work.
NEWBIE: Someone who is new to a game, and may lack experience.
NVS: *Red Alert* terminology for "North vs. South." Players must ally with other players who are on either the upper or lower half of the game map.
OTT: *Red Alert* terminology for "Ore Truck Treaty," meaning opponent's ore trucks may not be attacked during the game.
WB: Welcome back. Folks will tell you this if you used a BRB.

BE AFRAID...

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Your mission, destroy a host of time-channels that are flooding the earth with creatures from the past and the future. Beware, the invaders want to stay...

- First-Person Perspective Action like you've never seen before.
- Full 3D-Polygon Characters with body parts that separate as you lay into them. The enemy keeps coming at you though, if it is able.
- Lightning-Quick 3D gameplay, even on slower systems.
- Incredible Transparency Effects, as heads roll on the floor they kick up dust. Invisibility Power-Ups really look the part.
- Multiplayer via LAN, Internet, or modem.

Developed by Action Forms Ltd.

MEGAMEDIA® corporation

download the demo from The Adrenaline Vault

www.avault.com

1.800.634.2633
1.510.623.1100
www.megamedia.com

Product Information Number 236

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Commercial Gaming Services

Mplayer

Mpath's glitzy online gaming service offers plenty of games and no shortage of gimmicks, but is it fast and friendly enough to move ahead of the pack?

F.Y.I.
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

COMPANY: Mplayer
PHONE: (408) 342-8844
INTERNET ADDRESS: *www.mplayer.com*
PRICING:
- $9.95 per month for unlimited online time.
- $19.95 per month for PSINet subscription includes 50 percent off monthly Mplayer subscription ($24.95 all-in).
- $49.95 for six months unlimited online time.

THE VERDICT

EASE OF USE ★★★★★

CHOICE OF GAMES ★★★

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★

CHOICE/QUALITY OF OPPONENTS ★★★★

SPEED ★★★★

OVERALL ★★★★

BOTTOM LINE
If you're looking for a fast, economical network without a lot of hassle, and can settle for a lack of several big-name titles, it might be a wise idea to check out Mplayer.

Determined to be *the* place on the Internet for high-speed, low-latency gaming, Mplayer appeared in 1995 as a creation of Mpath Interactive. Mplayer went through thousands of beta testers during its trial runs, and now has a user base in the tens of thousands. One of Mplayer's touted benefits is a technology called MCAP (Multi-Client Application Protocol) that significantly speeds up the service, and the other trump card is that Mpath software is implemented in *Quake*.

The client software, weighing in at around six megs, can be downloaded from Mplayer's web site at *www.mplayer.com*. The installation and registration takes around 20 minutes, and you can be up and running *Quake* in five more. My setup proceeded without a hitch, neatly installing Mplayer as a Netscape plug-in.

Hooking up to Mplayer is simple — just pull up the web page, find the desired game, and click "Play." Control is transferred to the Mplayer progam, which verifies that your software is up-to-date (auto-downloading the new version if it isn't), before launching.

Mplayer's gaming universe is divided into lobbies, which contain several chat rooms apiece. Along with a name and description for each, these rooms are also designated with an icon and a color to give you an idea of the connection speed — green means you'll get a good fast connection, while red warns you to stay away. In each room, anywhere from two to several dozen on-screen personas can discuss and set up their favorite multi-player titles.

Adding to the "Virtual Community" feel is an option to hook up a microphone and actually *talk* with others (this aspect of Mplayer is almost as enjoyable as the games themselves). There's also a small "Scribble board" where users can visually plan out gaming strategies, or just doodle. Best of all, if you're lost, a system operator is always available in the help rooms to give you some tech support. If no one's home, just hit the "page" button, and someone will come to your aid within a few seconds.

Technical support is thankfully always on call at Mplayer, and a techie is just a click away.

If you want to play a game on Mplayer, you'll first need to download a small "enabler" file. If a new version of an enabler is released, the Mplayer software conveniently downloads it for you.

The graphical shell is the most polished we've seen — there are plenty of bells and whistles, and even two graphics sets to choose from — but what about the selection of games, and how do they play? At the time of this writing, Mplayer's top multi-player offerings are *Quake* and *Red Alert*, while Hasbro Interactive's *Scrabble* is so popular that other classics like *Risk*, *Monopoly*, and *Battleship* are soon to be added to the service. A few older titles are thrown into the mix, like

In Mplayer's graphical *Quake* chat rooms, talking about, setting up and joining games is simple.

Terminal Velocity, *Command & Conquer*, and *Big Red Racing*. Disappointingly, *Duke Nukem 3D* and *Descent II* are absent — and while *WarCraft I* is supported, its preferred sequel is nowhere to be found, thanks to an exclusivity contract with competitor Engage. *Diablo*, *WarWind*, *MechWarrior 2*, and *Deadlock* round out the list. When I asked several Mplayer users about the selection of games, most said they would appreciate a bigger selection.

The majority of gamers you'll meet on Mplayer are mature and polite — one *Red Alert* lord even offered to teach me the game when he found out I was a beginner.

Even though I consider my *Quake*-playing skills mediocre, they served me well as I rocketed to the top of the kill boards in most games (though more than 200 *Quake* Clans have set up camp at Mplayer, and they're quite ruthless). Also, the number of people I encountered on Mplayer was disappointing — during the busiest hours, I saw around 50 *Quake* players spread out over 10 or 12 games. Finding anyone in the *Terminal Velocity* or *Big Red Racing* room was a rarity, but the *Red Alert* area was predictably well-populated. Ditto with the Hasbro titles — these less aggressive games are attracting a lot of attention.

The majority of the online gamers you'll meet on Mplayer are mature and polite — one *Red Alert* lord even offered to teach me the nuances of the game when he found out that I was a beginner. There are plenty of contests and social events, like "Ladder to Chthon," a *Quake* tournament with $5000 in prize money. Add wacky events like "Trash '70s Music Night" (where onliners get to play their favorite disco) and "Singles Night" for *Quake* clan auditions, and Mplayer is definitely one of the most socially enjoyable networks out there.

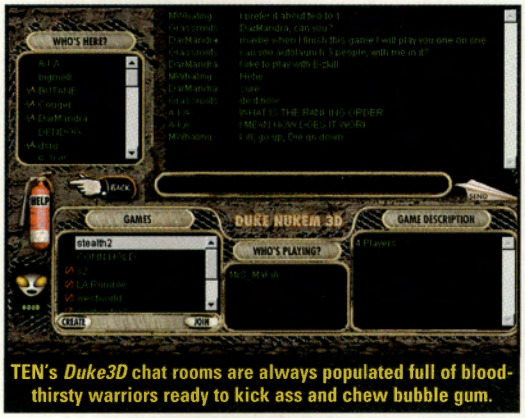
When it came to the latency issue, Mplayer performed very well. Connecting through my local ISP, most of the games I participated in were nicely responsive — and Mplayer confides that using PSINet (its proprietary ISP) will yield even faster response times. Best of all, when you start your own online *Quake* game, Mplayer's computers do the dirty work, relieving your computer of the server duty (most Internet *Quake* servers running off anything less than a workstation and a T1 line tend to slow down to an unbearable crawl).

All in all, Mplayer's users are pleasant, the on-call technical support is great, and the connection times are fast. The recent radical drop in its pricing plan (under ten bucks per month for unlimited access) makes it pretty unbeatable value too. It's just too bad that there aren't more games currently offered. If you're new to online gaming, and could settle for *Quake*, a little *Red Alert*, and a whole lot of pleasant chit-chat, Mplayer would definitely be your safest bet.

Total Entertainment Network

Mplayer's main rival has been making big noises since before the online boom began. With promises aplenty made by its lavish advertising, does Total Entertainment Network live up to its own hype?

Dubbing itself "The Future of Gaming" and boasting 20,000 subscribers, the Total Entertainment Network has been blitzing the media with colorful multi-page advertising spreads, cute drinks coasters, and by emblazoning its logo on heaps of new games. To add to the frenzy, TEN has the exclusive rights for online *Duke Nukem 3D* play — you won't find everyone's favorite blond-haired critter-squisher on Mplayer or any other commercial network. Ditto with 3D Realms' *Shadow Warrior*; the forthcoming ninja game won't be online anywhere else.



TEN's *Duke3D* chat rooms are always populated full of bloodthirsty warriors ready to kick ass and chew bubble gum.

To install, you can call for the free TEN CD-ROM, or download the software from the website at *www.ten.net*. TEN's setup required a bit more work than Mplayer's, and connecting through my own ISP proved to be a bit of a headache. However, a call to tech support and a bit of trial-and-error finally got me up and running.

TEN's interface is nowhere near as pretty as Mplayer's, sporting a sparse, gritty style. The lack of multimedia gloss means you can't pick a graphic to represent you — all you get is semi-impersonal green text on a black background. Still, it gets the job done, and TEN concentrates more on gameplay than dazzling you with a fancy interface.

Something you'll notice about TEN is its sluggishness when it comes to loading chat rooms. This is partially due to a little helper named "Mr. Bandwidth," which takes a few moments to test your server connections before giving advice on whether or not the game speed will be acceptable. Connecting through a local ISP, most of my connections were judged as "Good" or "OK," with a few games sinking into "Don't Bother." While Mplayer doesn't really care whether or not your connection sucks, TEN will *not* let you play if you are too slow, and requires that you shut down programs in the background before you can begin a game (I had to kill my virus checker before I could launch *Duke3D*). Helping to combat the Internet slowdown, TEN has set up multiple servers for different locations in the country, so most people will be ensured a fast connection, no matter where they call in from.

The News@TEN is updated almost daily — you'll always be up-to-date on the network's latest goings-on.

Once everyone joins in and the host launches the game, cross your fingers and hope for the best. If you successfully launched, you may rightfully emit a sigh of relief.

Obviously, *Duke Nukem 3D* is TEN's main draw. However, your performance may vary, based on connection speed, line noise, and the placement of celestial bodies. Unlike *Quake*, in which players can drop in and out of the game at will, *Duke* requires its two to eight players to launch simultaneously. TEN's software handles this nicely, listing *Duke* games and their specifications. All you have to do is select a game and click "Join." If your connection speed checks out, you'll go to *Duke*'s pre-launch screen, which shows a list of the other players and their connection speeds. Once everyone joins in and the host launches the game, cross your fingers and hope for the best. Sometimes it would take as many as three or four tries to get a game running.

If you've successfully launched, you may rightfully emit a sigh of relief, since you've gotten past the major hurdle. Once inside the game, there's a bit of lag between keypresses and the response — detectable, but not serious. Turning seems more "floaty" than usual, but you'll get used to it — and a smooth-running eight-player game of *Duke* is pure gaming heaven. While a lot of *Quake* sessions were susceptible to some lag, all of my *Duke* games ran remarkably smoothly in comparison.

Once again, my mediocre *Quake*-playing put me near the top of the heap in most games, but I doubt that I was pitted against the cream of the TEN's crop — the kill boards listed several players who had clocked over *twenty thousand* frags. Likewise, the *Duke* players were more than on top of things — in a one-on-one DukeMatch, I found myself on the receiving end of *forty-two* frags in under an hour. There's no doubt that the best play here. You can also test new maps and add-ons, and TEN even has support for the popular *Capture the Flag* add-on for *Quake*.

Most of the players I encountered on TEN were a bit more cranky than the ones on Mplayer, and there were plenty of moans about the software (one user stated that TEN and Windows 95 was the most unstable combination he'd ever seen). Surprisingly, many of my *Quake* opponents seemed to take personal offense to my playful in-game taunting, and one even left the game, seemingly heartbroken. Also, I've had major problems when it comes to connecting — TEN occasionally refuses to connect, or just mysteriously stops — and sometimes, Mr. Bandwidth would give me a "Bad" rating out of the blue, shunning me from playing anything.

Putting its irked users and sporadically disagreeable connections aside, TEN is obviously the only place that you can go if you want to play *Duke Nukem* online. The remaining selection of games offered is satisfactory: *Red Alert, Deadlock, Dark Sun: Crimson Sands, Necrodome, Panzer General, Command & Conquer, Confirmed Kill, WarCraft, Big Red Racing*, and *Master Of Orion II*. But just like Mplayer, a wider choice would be appreciated. Without Mplayer's beeps and bloops, TEN appeals to the more hard-core crowd; whether or not you'll fit in is up to you.

F.Y.I.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

COMPANY: TEN
PHONE: (415) 778-3733
INTERNET ADDRESS:
www.ten.net
PRICING:
- Using your ISP:
  $9.95 per month with 5 free hours, extra hours are $1.95
  $29.95 (unlimited usage)
- Using TEN's ISP:
  $9.95 per month with 5 free hours, extra hours are $.95

THE VERDICT

EASE OF USE ★ ★ ★

CHOICE OF GAMES ★ ★ ★ ★

VALUE FOR MONEY ★ ★ ★

CHOICE/QUALITY OF OPPONENTS ★ ★ ★

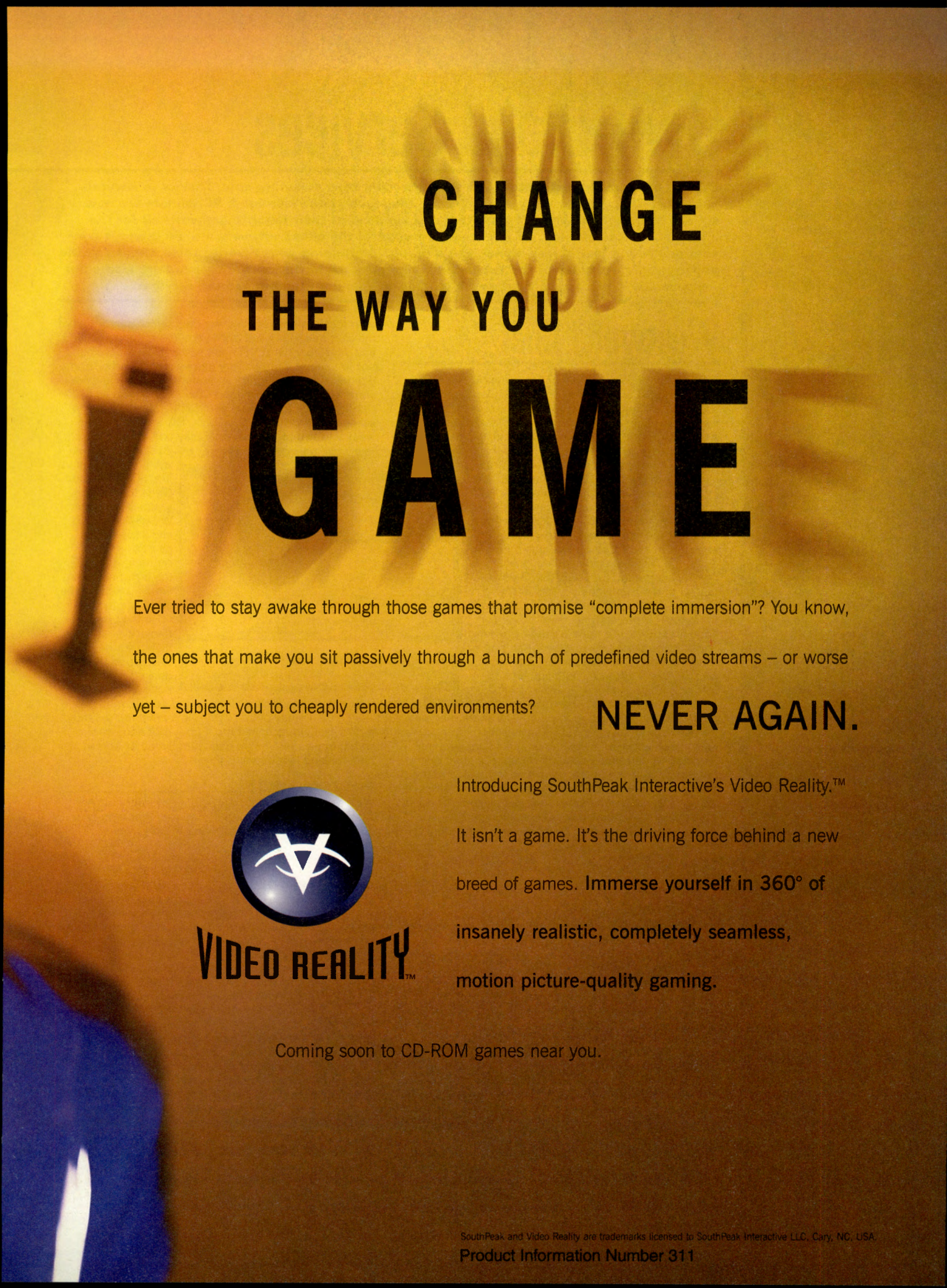
SPEED ★ ★ ★

OVERALL ★ ★ ★

BOTTOM LINE

Hard-core gamers and anyone who likes *Duke* should sign on — but be ready for a few tech problems and connection enigmas which could prove irksome.

SouthPeak
interactive
www.southpeak.com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Ever tried to stay awake through those games that promise "complete immersion"? You know, the ones that make you sit passively through a bunch of predefined video streams – or worse yet – subject you to cheaply rendered environments?
NEVER AGAIN.
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Introducing SouthPeak Interactive's Video Reality.™ It isn't a game. It's the driving force behind a new breed of games. Immerse yourself in 360° of insanely realistic, completely seamless, motion picture-quality gaming.
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Product Information Number 311

Own-Brand Services

The big-name commercial networks may officially start sweating now. Thanks to several online offerings from the likes of Blizzard, Microsoft, and Westwood, PC gamers are now able to link up, chat, and start multi-player versions of their favorite games — all for the unbeatable price of zilch. All you need is a copy of the client software and an Internet connection. With a few mouse clicks, you'll be up and running your favorite titles, thanks to the philanthropic attitudes of the following companies. All of the networks listed are a safe bet — especially if you haven't got much moolah to spend on the big gaming services.

SubSpace

Virgin's frenetic online shoot-'em-up has a huge legion of fans on the Internet — here's why...

Virgin's *SubSpace* is proof positive that a game doesn't have to be some huge RPG, flight-sim, or strategy game to be an online success. This unassuming little game hasn't had the kind of publicity drummed up by big-name games like *Quake* and *Air Warrior*, but it's attracted thousands of loyal players from around the world.

SubSpace could be described as an eight-way scrolling version of the arcade classic *Asteroids*, in which players manuever tiny arrow-like craft with rotate and thrust controls. In each high-res playing field, players compete for supremacy and points by collecting power-ups and special weapons — then they're ready to whup ass. With hundreds of combatants taking part in one game, the lifespan of a lone fighter can be short, so a better idea is to form a team. In team play, a power-up collected by one ship affects all other ships in that team, which helps give a leg-up to novice players.

There are lots of different "zones" available, each with specific rules and victory conditions. And, of course, it's possible to trash-talk each other thanks to an in-game chat window. The appeal of the game is that you can pick it up and play for just a few minutes, rather than committing to some long quest or drawn-out battle each time you log on.

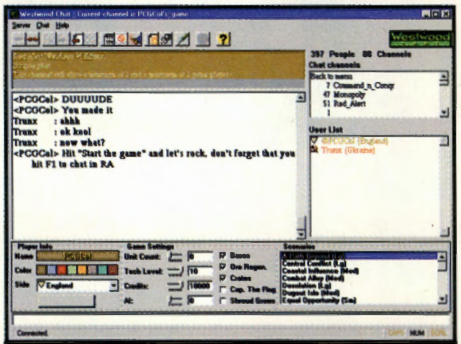
It may not look like much, but *SubSpace* has got it where it counts — multi-player fun.

SubSpace has been free of charge so far, but Virgin is preparing to institute a billing plan of around $10-15 dollars per month. For more information, and to download the *SubSpace* software free, check out the website at *www.vie.com*. The site includes chat areas, tech help, halls of fame and links to other *SubSpace* web pages.

Westwood Chat

If you're looking for a challenging game of *Red Alert*, *Command & Conquer* or *Monopoly*, look no further than Westwood Chat (*www.westwood.com*). It's included free on the *Red Alert* disc — just re-run the setup program if you haven't already installed it.

Signing up is free and easy — all you have to do is enter some personal information into the online setup program, and in a few seconds you'll receive an E-mail with your user name and access password. Westwood Chat is basically a simple IRC program, where you're limited to entering a chat room and carousing with its online cronies. Once you've selected a worthy opponent, just click the "Host" button at the top of the screen, and you're taken to a menu where you can customize the game before starting, with boxes for choosing the game map, amount of cash, and abundance of resources. When you're all set up, just click the "Start" button, and *Red Alert* will automatically launch you into an Internet game.



Starting up a TCP/IP game of *Red Alert* is no problem, thanks to Westwood Chat's seamless interface.

At any given time, there are usually 100 to 500 people active on Westwood Chat — far more than pay services like Mplayer or TEN. The selection of opponents vary, and you never can be quite sure who you'll be going up against — though most players are quite good (I've only won a few games so far). Many of the *Red Alert* players pride themselves on their rankings at *The Ladder* (*www.theladder.com*), a free service which keeps track of nationwide player standings.

Latency times could be a problem, depending on your location and ISP. Westwood's server handles all of the chat messages, but once you fire up the game, you and your opponent's ISPs are responsible for the connection speed. Some of my games ran smoothly; some did not. A way to "Ping" an opponent would be a welcome addition to Westwood Chat — once you've dedicated yourself to a game, you don't want to lag a few seconds after every mouse click. The service's main weakness is that you can only play one-on-one, which advanced players will find rather limiting, but Westwood plans to release updated versions of WC which should allow for bigger games — for the moment, though, the tech people are working around the clock just to keep up with current demand.

Though Westwood Chat doesn't have any bells or whistles to speak of, it gets the job done, and if you bought *Red Alert*, you already own a copy. Next time you're ready for a serious match, just fire it up — but don't come crying to us after you've been humiliated by some high-ranking ladder warlord.

BOTTOM LINE

With a simple interface and plenty of opponents, Westwood Chat is a winner, but only if one-on-one games are your preferred mode of play.

Engage

Run by Interplay, the newcomer Engage (*www.engagegames.com*) is apparently still in its beta-testing stage, and appears to need some improvements if it ever decides to go commercial. With a backlog of lacklustre titles such as *Descent, Castles II*, and something called *Splatterball*, it looks like Engage's saving grace will be *WarCraft II* — Interplay secured the exclusive online rights to the killer Blizzard title, which means that you can't play it anywhere else on the 'net.

Engage's interface works through its web-based front-end.

Engage's meager offering of games isn't exactly causing a deluge of responses — when I logged on to play *Descent*, there were usually two or three others playing. Likewise, the *WarCraft II* crowd was a tad pathetic. If you *can* manage to find someone to play, *Engage* fares well when it came to connection speeds; *Descent* was enjoyable, while *WarCraft II* seemed to perform almost as well as on a local area network.

You can access Engage through its website, where the client software and the game enabler files are located (some of which are obscenely large downloads). Like Mplayer and TEN, all you need to do is download the enablers into your game directories, and the Engage software takes over once you click *Play* on the website.

Engage isn't exactly the most comprehensive gaming service, but at least it's free (for now, anyway). *WarCraft II* is basically your only reason to play at this point. If Engage really wants to be a contender, it had better add some more big-name titles and find a way to siphon gamers from TEN and Mplayer, or it'll be left in the dust.

BOTTOM LINE

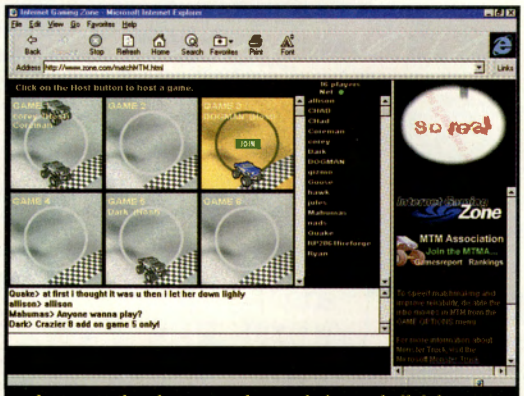
Without a massive number of players and a limited game selection, it might be wise to leave Engage until it matures — but if you're a *WarCraft II* freak, this is your place.

Internet Gaming Zone

Probably the most idiot-proof among all the gaming services, IGZ (*www.zone.com*) is nicely integrated into Microsoft's web site. Since the system uses Microsoft's proprietary ActiveX system, you *must* use Microsoft's Internet Explorer browser in order to log on (Netscape won't cut it). Just surf on over to IGZ, click on the game of your choice, and the chat software is automatically downloaded to your computer. After everything's been installed, just enter your name, and you're ready to play — no muss, no fuss.

While there are plenty of decent opponents available on IGZ, I was almost positive that Microsoft had hired some libidinous teenager to randomly make lewd cyber-sexual advances toward anyone whose screen name is remotely female. Needless to say, the chat isn't all that stimulating (concentrating more on Pamela Anderson than the likes of *Hellbender*), and the apparent lack of a moderator doesn't help matters. Your best bet is to ignore anything that goes on in the chat box, and to just click in on a starting game and hope for the best.

Most of the games I played over IGZ ran fairly quickly, and, aside from a crash or two, the whole system appears to be relatively stable. Your selection is restricted to popular Microsoft titles, including *Close Combat, Hellbender, Monster Truck Madness,* and *Microsoft Golf*, while more tame offerings such as Checkers and Bridge are available. While the service is free, Microsoft plans to expand into IGZ-exclusive games, which may carry a small fee.



Just go to the chat room of your choice and click in on a game — multi-player mayhem awaits.

While IGZ is a bit more drab than other services at this point, Microsoft plans to add support for on-screen personas, gaming leagues, and player-run tournaments. If Microsoft can create more of an online gaming "community," while keeping the latency down and the price close to nil, it should receive an appropriately warm welcome from all of the onliners out there.

BOTTOM LINE

This surprisingly free service from Microsoft is great for fans of its games and easy to use — just don't log on as "SexyMama."

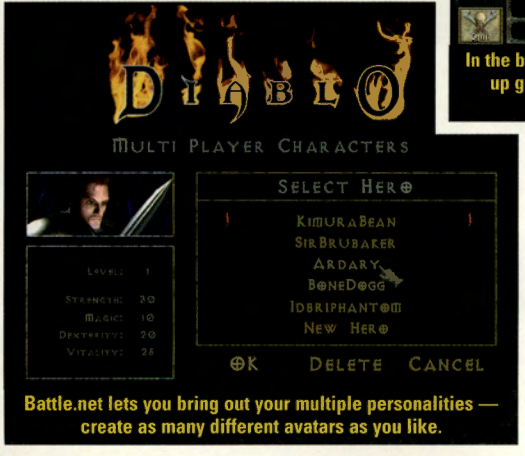
battle.net

Designed specifically for multi-player *Diablo* and the upcoming *StarCraft*, Blizzard Entertainment's battle.net (*www.battle.net*) is nothing short of brilliant. What makes it stand out is how battle.net is seamlessly integrated into *Diablo* — connect to your ISP, start a multi-player game from *Diablo*'s main menu, and you're ready to rock — there's no need to screw around with other separate Windows applications, as in Westwood Chat.

Battle.net's graphical interface is polished and easy to understand, with multiple chat channels, including discussion groups for the different character classes. The variety of ongoing games is appropriate, catering to clueless newbies and bloodthirsty warlords alike. Best of all, the majority of the chat channels are filled with pleasant people (who are probably glad to give their wallets a rest). Playing over battle.net is very fast — in fact, it appeared to be even faster than playing over *PC Gamer*'s local network. Still, that unruly and unavoidable lag can make the game pause for a second or two.

In the battle.net chat room, you can set up games and discuss the subtle nuances of *Diablo* play.

One of the most attractive aspects of battle.net is that it lets you quest with a *lot* of other players — I've been in games with over a dozen warriors hacking and slashing through the fires of Hell. Questing alongside companions is par for the course, and *Diablo* isn't quite as hard when you have someone else watching your back. *Diablo*'s answer to *Quake* clans are Guilds, ragtag groups of adventurers who stick together and give each other backup.



Battle.net lets you bring out your multiple personalities — create as many different avatars as you like.

In conclusion, battle.net absolutely takes the cake, and should grow in popularity when *StarCraft* hits the shelves. Blizzard's superb integration should serve as a model to any publisher interested in offering exceptional multi-player support. Mplayer, TEN, and Engage have added *Diablo* to their services, but one has to ask why — the existing play over *battle.net* is just as good as anything out there, offering a wider selection of more dedicated players... and it's free.

BOTTOM LINE

An excellent service, despite the occasional lag — but, hey, it's free.

Aries Games

A spin-off group of online gaming mogul Kesmai, Aries (*www.ariesgames.com*) is one of the biggest names in multi-player gaming, and rightfully so. It's the company behind some of the most successful multi-player games in the industry — and some of the most versatile and scaleable network gaming systems available. Aries software allows for massive numbers of players at once — and the new *Aries 96* system supports over 10,000 simultaneous players.

The secret to Aries' success is its bonds with Compuserve, AOL, and AT&T's WorldNet. By using these interconnected systems, players can experience lag-free gaming, as long as they connect through their local dial-up. And, with systems like AOL moving to a monthly flat rate, prohibitively expensive phone bills and connect charges may finally be a thing of the past — which means you can spend more time on Aries' games.

Medieval questing awaits you in *Legends of Kesmai*.

Aries' lineup contains around two dozen titles, including the dogfighting orgy *Air Warrior*, the mech blast-fest *Battletech Online*, and the enormous RPG *Legends of Kesmai*. Also available for your gaming pleasure is the classic *Harpoon Online*, and a "virtual" casino with *Blackjack, Craps,* and *7 Card Stud*. If you use any of the major pay-networks, be sure to check out Aries' wide selection of games, and get ready for a multi-player gaming bonanza.

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A movement is brewing. And with its birth, the PowerVR architecture begins the awesome struggle against conventional 3D; and against the techno-bourgeoisie who attempt to enslave the gamer masses. These ~~manipulative~~ technologists are turning their machines of propaganda against GAMERS, desperately trying to make them believe that their [illegible] 3D performance is good enough.

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We are pouring gasoline on the fires of creation.
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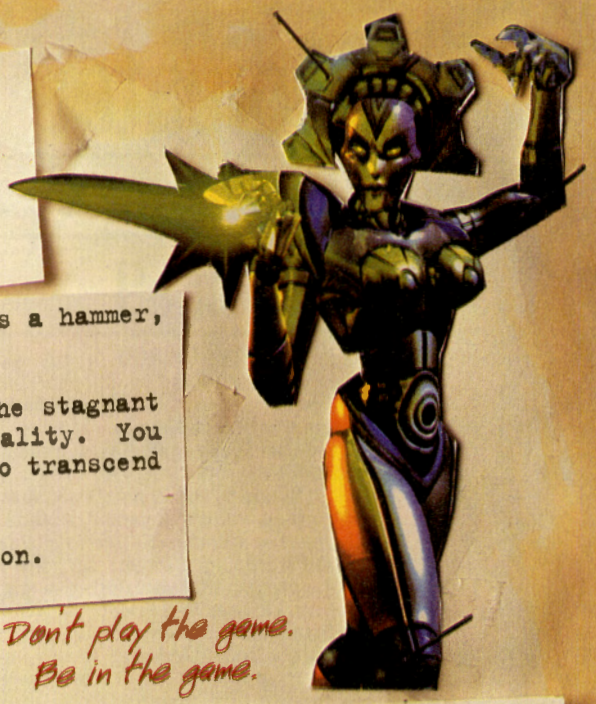
It's a birthright.



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Dedicated Online Games

Aside from services that let you play your favorite games online, dedicated internet games are popping up faster than corpses in a John Woo movie. Here's a few of the most notable...

Meridian 59

The idea of playing a roleplaying game over the Internet is nothing new — multi-user dungeons (or MUDs) have been around since the days of *Adventure*. There's always been the ability to slash 'n hack and cast spells against your friends over a net connection — but the 3DO Company is the first to take the plunge by throwing 3D graphics into a mammoth gaming world that can be played solely using the Internet in *Meridian 59* (*meridian.3do.com*). But will it fly? It's going to be interesting to see the success of a product that contains no single-player mode, and charges $9.95 per month after the first 30 days. In any case, it seems that a few gamers are going for the bait — *Meridian 59* currently has over one thousand subscribers.

Meridian 59 includes a copy of Netscape Personal Edition to get you started, but keep in mind that the matter of finding an ISP is yours. Installation proceeds easily enough, and registration is handled by entering personal info and your credit card number through a web page (don't worry — 3DO has provided a registration 800 number for the paranoid). Once you've gotten your password and user name, just fire up *Meridian 59* and log on.

Whenever you bite the dust in *Meridian 59*, you're transported to the Underworld, which apparently has stylish red carpet.

Your character is attacked by a giant rat, which appropriately has giant pixels.

The only problem is that the *Meridian 59* software has been updated significantly since the CDs went to press. This means that the next one or two hours will be spent downloading updated game files that are obscenely large. Unless 3DO updates the software in its next shipment of *M59*, you'll have to put aside a good chunk of time for those files to come through (you might as well use the time to read the manual).

Just like in the real world, *Meridian 59* features day/night time cycles. At night, the nasty critters come out.

So is *Meridian 59* worth it? The feel of a living gaming world is certainly there. Other players casually walk around the towns and patrol the forests, looking for things to beat into submission, and there are plenty of quests, monsters, and objects to collect. *Meridian 59* has essentially everything that a particularly rich text-based MUD should have. However, two crucial factors make it difficult to enjoy.

Meridian 59's main problem is its graphics engine, which is roughly on the same level of *Wolfenstein*. While other players appear in focus, even when you get right up to their faces, we can't say the same for the monsters, who break up into Lego-sized pixels once they get close. Buildings are essentially bricks with textures, and the overall presentation resembles a mediocre version of *Ultima Underworld*. It would have been interesting to see a gaming world more like *Strife* or *Quake*, since most of the graphics in *M59*, quite frankly, look like they've been whupped with an ugly stick.

The displeasing control also makes things needlessly difficult. In the world of *Meridian*, you walk very, very slowly, and navigation is extremely tricky, especially in the mazelike forests. When it comes to combat, be ready for headaches — due to lag, there may be a second or two between when you press the attack button and when the giant ant in front of you gets whacked on the head. These lag times may vary depending on whether or not the Internet is feeling snippy towards you today, so luck has a lot to do with it. My first play session was less than stellar — a major server was down, and combat was well nigh impossible. Fortunately, dungeon-master types from 3DO are frequently online to offer help and solutions.

Meridian 59 is not for everybody. Hard-core fans of text-based MUDs may be enticed by the ongoing story and the users' social structure, while many others may be appalled by the displeasing visuals and flaky controls. Fortunately, you have a free month in which you can make your decision — and ten bucks per month ain't all that bad — though you still have to buy the game in the first place. *Meridian 59* has a lot going for it, but it could have been so much better. Smart people will hold off to see how *Ultima Online* turns out.

BOTTOM LINE

Meridian 59 is a step in the right direction, but is hampered by nasty visuals and brutal control.

The Realm

In the woods, fights (represented by the cartoon clouds) are commonplace. Always carry a weapon when you leave the town.

A bit different from the 3D world of *Meridian 59*, *The Realm* (*www.realmserver.com*) is a multi-user adventure that concentrates more on the social aspects of banding together than most solo-play MUDs. Designed by the adventuring gurus at Sierra Online, *The Realm* is part *King's Quest*, part *IRC*, with a little bit of *WarCraft* mixed in.

As with every other RPG, you begin by creating a character, choosing from multiple classes, and distributing strength and magic points. One of the more customizable aspects of the game is the way that your character is presented visually — there's a surprisingly large selection of eyes, hair, chins, noses, and beards to choose from, so each character looks distinct (as opposed to the *Meridian 59* folks, who look like they all came from the same gene pool).

Instead of being seen from a first-person perspective, *The Realm* lets you watch the action from a third person view. Backgrounds are flat sprites instead of 3D models, and characters have free movement over the screen. The interface borrows heavily from Sierra's earlier adventures; left-clicking moves your character around, and a right-click brings up a small menu where you can interact with objects.

One of *The Realm*'s nice features is the combat — instead of having action-based (and lag-susceptible) battle sequences, the fighting is, thankfully, turn-based. Still, the fighting sequences are a little cheesy — though your character and the baddies look clean enough, some of the projectile attacks look downright silly. When I attacked a rat, it counterattacked by spawning what appeared to be a large booger that floated across the screen and sucked half of my life points.

One of the problems that *The Realm* suffers from is its repetitive graphics — as you start walking around the forest looking for things to kill, you'll start to realize that the screen you're on looks just like the one you were just at. Also, it appears that the normally creative Sierra writers went on strike — the in-game text leaves much to be desired (the description of a dirt road reads "This is a dirt road. Where could it lead?").

Group shot! Say "Cheese," everyone! You're always welcome to gather in the middle of town and start gossiping.

Here are some of the avatars that you can choose to represent yourself in *The Realm*.

In *The Realm*, everyone gets their own house, in which they can return to rest or store valuable materials.

Though there are always dozens of people playing *The Realm*, there was always an obvious lack of things to do — people would gather in the town square and just stand around, with resulting dialog such as "So, are we gonna quest tonight?" "I dunno." "Quest anyone?" "Where's the quest?" Still, there's more of a social feel, since you're given the opportunity to band together and automatically follow each other in adventuring groups of four.

Though it's a little sterile on the graphics side and a bit shallow on the gameplay, *The Realm* isn't a bad value — a flat rate of $49.95 for the game CD gets you all the adventuring you can eat for the rest of your life, and there's no monthly fee. Sierra fans should check it out.

BOTTOM LINE

Cartoony graphics, acceptable play, and a one-time-only fee makes *The Realm* one of the more economical online graphical fantasy games.

Ultima Online

Origin's long-awaited *Ultima Online* is now entering its preliminary testing phase, and thousands of gamers have already signed up to participate as beta-testers in what will undoubtedly be one of the biggest events to ever occur in the world of online gaming. Becoming a beta-tester is as easy as hopping onto the all-new Ultima Online web page at *www.owo.com*, filling out a form, and mailing two bucks for the beta CD-ROM.

From the descriptions and screen shots we've seen, it looks like *Ultima Online* will have the biggest, fullest, and most alive gaming world that you'll ever set eyes on, with thousands of players simultaneously questing, adventuring, or pursuing everyday life in Britannia. With a unique skill-based system, players can work and become proficient at different abilities, from adventurers and magicians to wandering bards, singing the praises of bold heroes.

Without a doubt, *Ultima Online* is going to be *big* — bigger than *Meridian 59*, bigger than *Diablo*, possibly bigger than Disco. With Origin's talented programmers constantly working on keeping the storyline fresh and interesting, *Ultima Online* is going to be one of the heavy-hitters to look forward to in 1997.

The long-awaited *Ultima Online* will have a huge online gaming world.

Air Warrior II

Can't get enough *Air Warrior*? Interactive Magic has your fix lined up with *Air Warrior II*, filled with enough features and scenarios to keep aviation historians and flight jockeys busy for months. The solo-play mode of *Air Warrior II* includes over 100 painstakingly researched, historically accurate missions that take place in World Wars I and II and the Korean War. With the ability to fly over 25 planes, coupled with what Interactive Magic believes to be the most advanced AI in a flight sim, the solo-play mode should definitely keep you busy. Of course, *Air Warrior II Online* is included, with a slew of new features — you'll find improved terrain graphics, resolution modes all the way up to 1024x768, and all of the noteworthy flight models of its predecessor. Not only that, but Interactive Magic has spent over $250,000 to photograph the cockpits of vintage fighter craft in order to get the in-game art as perfect as possible. *Air Warrior II* is currently in an open beta-testing stage, and should be in stores real soon.

Air Warrior II's enhanced graphics, superior flight models, and new planes should keep *Air Warrior* veterans coming back for more.

Simple graphics; intense play. Pray that good ol' "Wild Bill" won't get on your tail.

Air Warrior

Developed by Kesmai and Interactive Magic, *Air Warrior* is the most addictive title yet for armchair jet jockeys, and possibly the best implementation we've ever seen of a multi-player action game. Simply put, *Air Warrior* is an online World War II flight sim — a *very* large flight sim — that's played over Compuserve, America Online, Prodigy, or EarthLink. Attracting such aces as Interactive Magic's president, "Wild Bill" Stealey, *Air Warrior*'s players are the top guns of online dogfightin'.

The graphics may be simplistic polygons, but any aesthetically displeasing visuals are easily forgivable when you start considering that more than one *hundred* players can dogfight at once. And it's not just random chaos — like the clans of *Quake*, there are Air Warrior *squadrons*, organized groups who fly attack runs, bombings, and other missions where all hell breaks loose.

Air Warrior's battlegrounds are the busiest we've ever seen. There are 12 arenas that have 120 open slots, and they're filled up mighty quickly come the evening (especially on weekends after 8:00p.m. PST, after which connecting is a joke). *Air Warrior* is a true obsession for many — Interactive Magic reports that over a million combined hours are spent online per month.

It's not hard to see why — *Air Warrior* contains dozens of unique features, catering to the rookie and pro alike. If you're tired of getting shot down, just hop in a tank, jeep, or truck, and try taking out your enemies from the ground. If you're a good shooter but can't fly worth a damn, there are always bombing runs — you and five other people can sit in gun turrets, taking out incoming bogeys, while an experienced aviator takes care of the flying. On missions where you simply deliver cargo, you can even be a co-pilot — or just a passenger along for the ride.

One of *Air Warrior*'s minor downfalls is the pricing — you're limited to playing over major pay-networks, and there's no "plain vanilla" Internet play. However, the main reason that *Air Warrior* isn't played over the Internet is because services like AOL are faster and less prone to lag — all of my *Air Warrior* sessions were silky smooth. (Of course, this would only happen if I didn't get an all-too-familiar busy signal from our "friends" at AOL).

Although its graphics are far from cutting-edge, *Air Warrior* is one of the oldest graphical online games — and with its age, it's nearly achieved perfection in the gameplay department. If you're into flight sims and haven't checked this one out yet, you're missing out big. Give it a try — we promise you won't regret it.

BOTTOM LINE

Air Warrior is the ultimate (if only) choice when it comes to mass multi-player dogfighting.

KALI

Bound by the philosophy "quality Internet gaming that won't cost you an arm and a leg every time you play," Kali (*www.kali.net*) may be the system that puts the big-name gaming networks out of business.

What makes Kali so remarkable is its support for *any* game that uses the IPX protocol — and, yes, that means any title with network support. There's no need for enabler files or patches, since any program with multi-player support is compatible with *Kali* right out of the box. Even older titles such as *Doom* and *Heretic* are playable. Even better is the price — a measly one-time fee of $20, which includes version updates for life. Kali can also boast the largest user base among all of the networks — Kali's 200 servers cater to over 100,000 users.

Designed by visionary Jay Cotton, *Kali* originally was a program named *iFrag* that would "fake" another computer, connected by TCP/IP, into thinking that it was connected to the same local area network. *iFrag* was specifically designed for Internet *Doom* — and from *iFrag* emerged Kali, which had the ability to run essentially any IPX network game.

Kali looks a bit like Westwood Chat, but is loaded with more options. When you start Kali, it presents you with a list of detected servers, and gives you a ping time on each one. After you connect to a server, you can enter into several chat channels for a specific game, full of people who want to play. After you agree on the game settings and a port number, Kali takes over and starts the game. Simple.

The only pressing problem with Kali is the lag times. The best ping time I could get through a modem was around 400ms — almost a half-second of lag between keypresses (not great, especially when compared to TEN and Mplayer's 200ms times). However, connections through an Ethernet card, serial line, or a T1 line are wonderfully speedy — but how many people outside of college campuses and big corporations have access to them?

Also, Kali may be the most user-hostile of all of the systems — there's nothing cutesy like graphical avatars or player bios. You *will* have to read Kali's online manual if you want to get anywhere — it's a much more complex system, and some games (like *Duke Nukem 3D*) will need a tad of tweaking before you'll get them running at optimal speed.

Kali may not be for everyone, but the folks with fast connections who take the time to read the manual will benefit in the long run. In any case, once Kali gets its speed cranked up, it's going to be dynamite — and could put an end to "pay" networks once and for all.

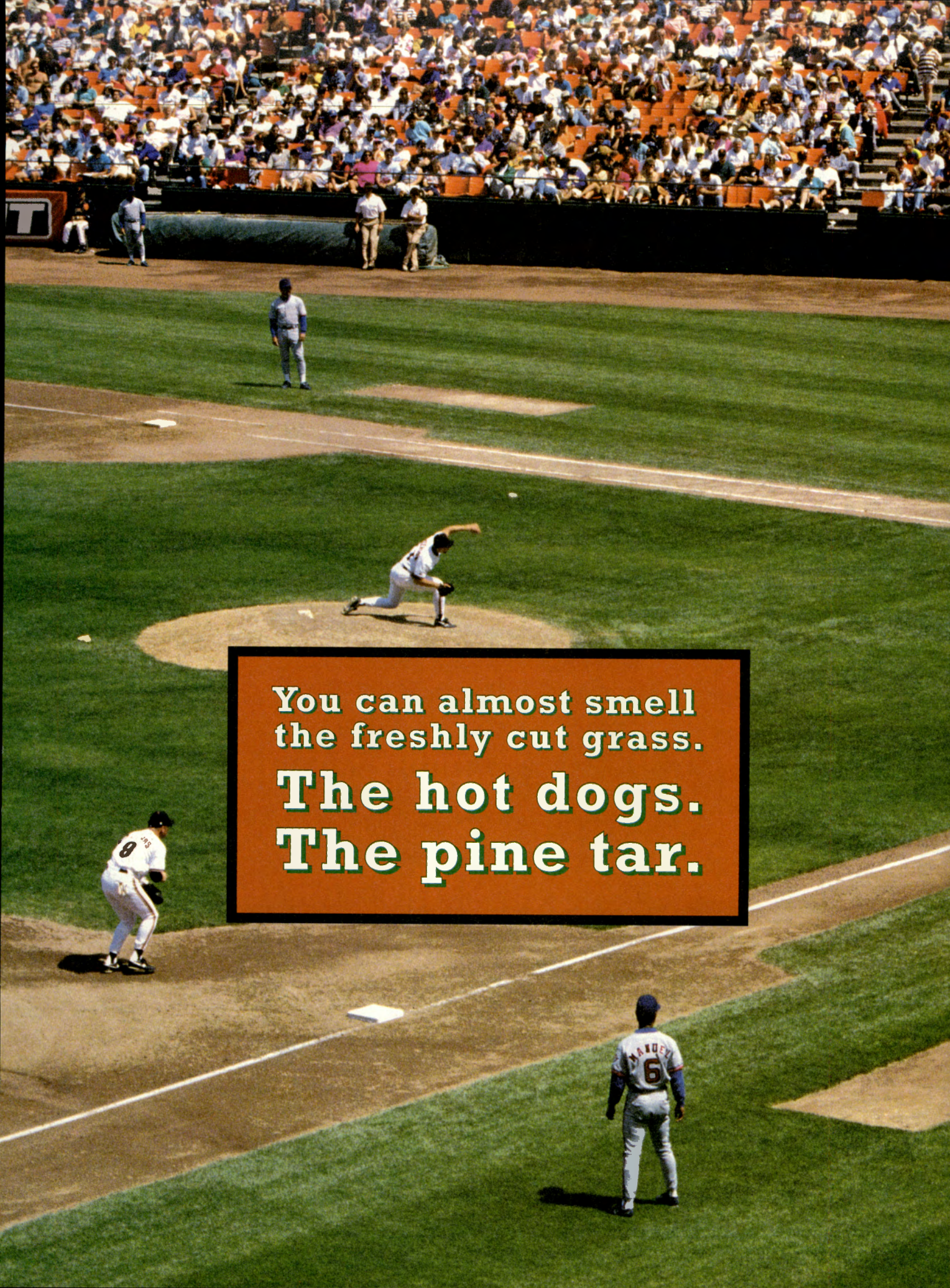
BOTTOM LINE

With a speed boost or two, Kali has what it takes to crush its competition.

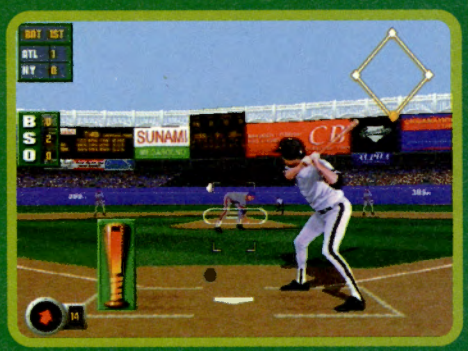
The Wrap-Up

So there you have it — a comprehensive list of the major online gaming services. There's sure to be one that tickles your fancy, in all of your favorite genres — from action to strategy to *Scrabble*. If you're timid about the whole online gaming deal, see how you like *Diablo* and *Red Alert* over the free battle.net and Westwood Chat — and if you like what you see, you may want to graduate to the social gaming meccas of TEN, Mplayer, or Kali. We'll be waiting for you — and after you see your first real-life opponent splatter into a fine red mist, you'll probably never want to play alone again.

PCG


You can almost smell
the freshly cut grass.
The hot dogs.
The pine tar.

Exclusive **Pitching Meter** lets you control your wind-up and release like an ace reliever. Feel the pressure on the mound that it takes to throw big-league pitches.



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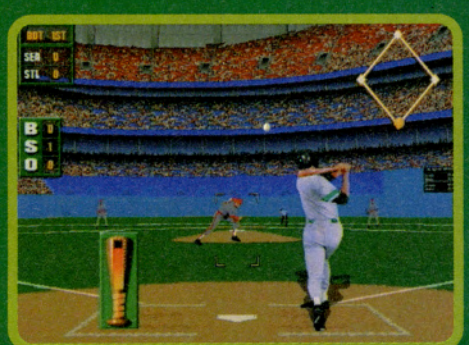

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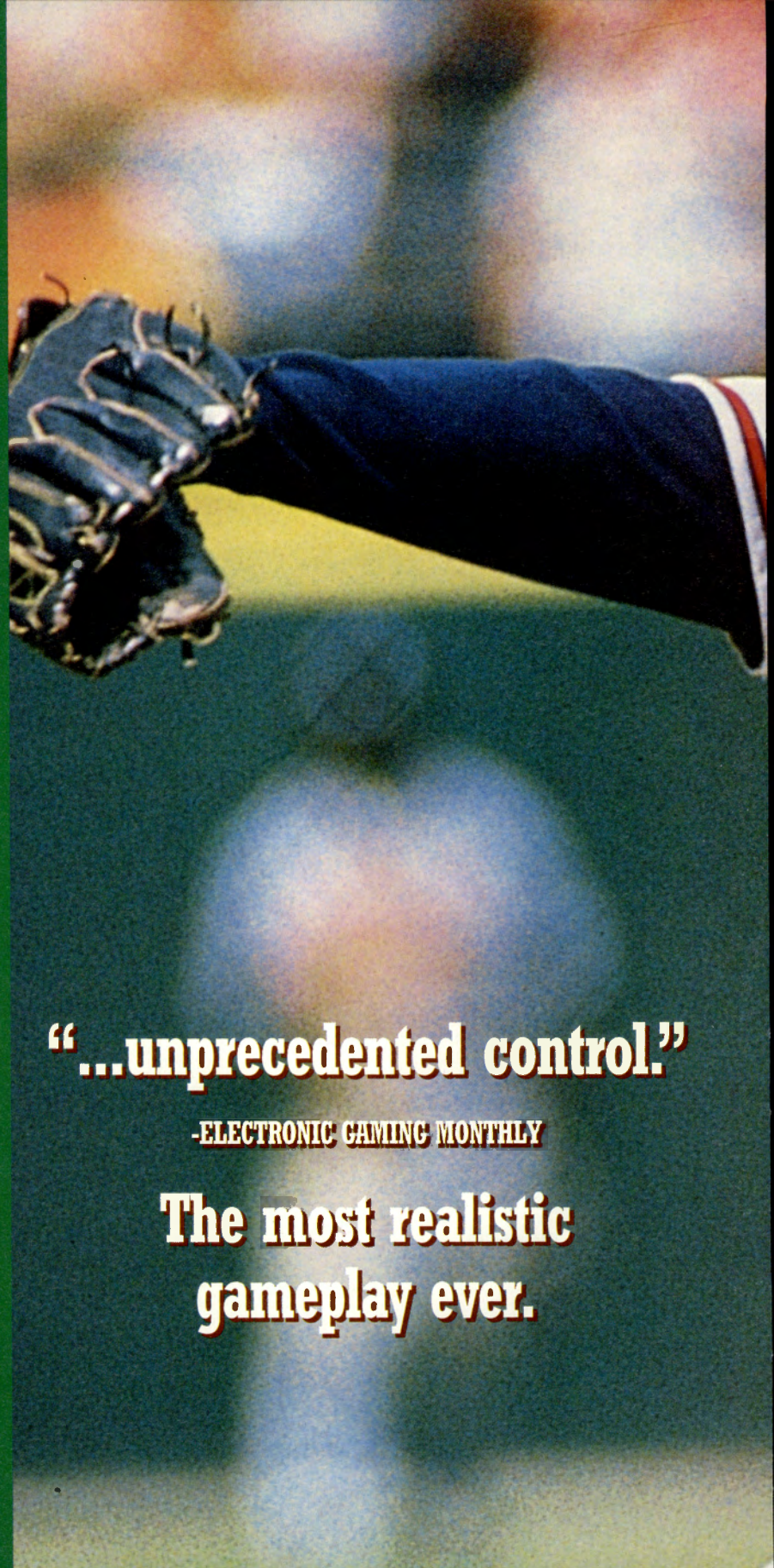

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Product Information Number 340

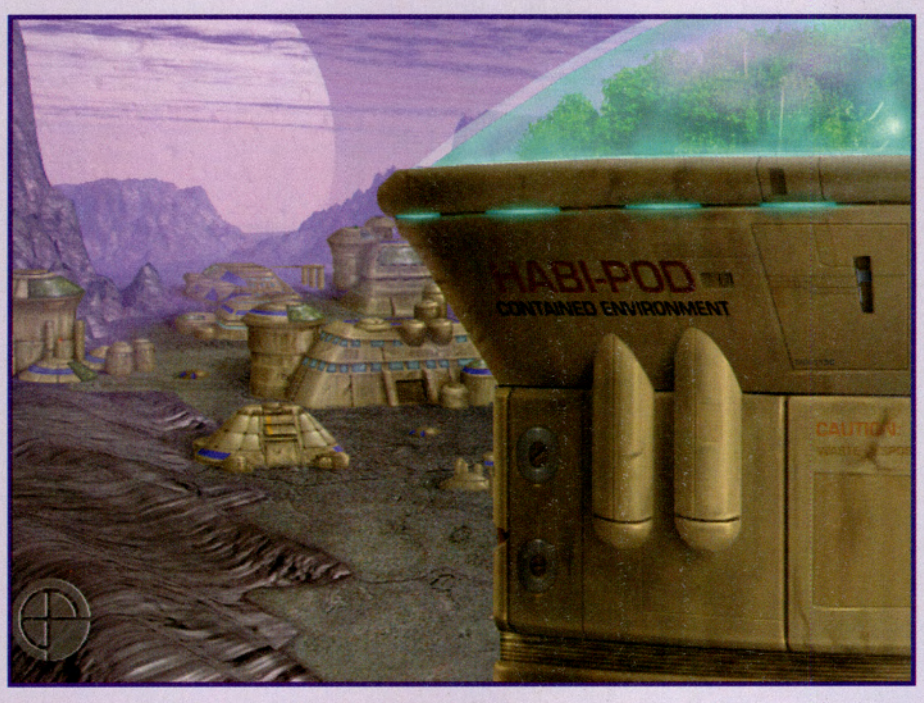
Just a few of the 31 games Sierra plans to release this year: *Captives* (right), an arcade/strategy game with a twist; *Outpost II* (far right), the brave follow-up to the disappointing original; and *Earthsiege 3* (below), the newest game in the robot-war genre.

high sierra

Back in the early days of *PC Gamer* (or *PC Entertainment*, as it was known in its earliest and most humble incarnation), the arrival of a new Sierra game in our editorial offices was always An Event. Given how full our dance cards usually were, it was unusual for the editors actually to fight for specific titles, but when such squabbles occurred, they were often centered around new Sierra games.

The catch-word for Sierra games in the late 1980s was "quest," as in *King's Quest, Quest for Glory, Space Quest,* and *Police Quest.* The company had developed a successful formula: warm-n-fuzzy adventure games with the best graphics possible, robust good humor, and brain-tickling puzzles that were hard but not *too* hard. To advance the game, you usually had to type in the right answer to a riddle or conundrum, and — because of the limitations of text-parser technology — part of the challenge, and the fun, came from trying to guess exactly which words the computer would accept as "correct." Indeed, when *King's Quest V* came out in 1990 with a graphical interface instead of a text-parser, there were howls of protest from many fans of the series.

But there was also a kind of maverick edge to Sierra's first generation of games, a sort of nudge-nudge, wink-wink, elbow-in-the-ribs quality that bespoke irrepressible high spirits on the part of at least some elements of the company. Although it seems pretty tame by contemporary standards, the first *Leisure Suit Larry* adventure (1988),



Despite some growing pains, the Sierra colossus has gotten its house in order and stands poised to deliver a tidal wave of exciting games in 1997 — and this time, the company is determined to back them to the hilt. **BY WILLIAM R. TROTTER**

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WELCOME TO THE FIRST SPORT SIM WITH A DISTINCTLY VIOLENT FLAVOR.

No referees. No rules. In this league it's pummel or be pummeled, beat or be beaten. Your challenge is to guide a six-man team through a gauntlet of 15 international teams in practice, league or cup play.

The first futuristic sport sim to deliver ultra-realistic game play with full sports management capabilities. Crush the life out of your opponents from multiple camera angles with full multi-player capability.

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Product Information Number 271

with its user-adjustable "smut quotient," ended up on the hard drives of every male editor on the staff, and for weeks, we were calling our friends over to witness each new sight-gag and revel in each double-entendre.

In 1991, Sierra made its first big move into genres other than the roleplaying adventures that had made its reputation, by acquiring Oregon-based Dynamix, one of the leading producers of military simulations. The Dynamix partnership soon bore rich fruit indeed: *Red Baron, Aces of the Pacific, Aces of the Deep* — winners, all, and in the case of *Red Baron*, a classic of monumental proportions.

Less than a year later, Sierra took a pioneering leap into the realm of online multi-player gaming by inaugurating The Sierra Network. The "online community" idea was way ahead of its time — few players understood the concept, fewer still had the technological capability to participate.

By the time Sierra sold its interactive network to AT&T in late 1994, the venture had turned into a cash hemorrhage that hobbled the company's other projects, sometimes severely, and left it short of operating capital. The AT&T deal solved both problems at once. With renewed vigor, Sierra launched into new genres, new concepts, and new technologies. The first Gabriel Knight adventure captivated a huge audience (and the second won a *PC Gamer* Award), *Front Page Sports Football* established Sierra's hefty presence in the sports-sim category, and *The Incredible Machine* remains one of the jolliest and most endearing dip-and-twiddle games ever published.

And then came the car-wreck that was *Outpost*...

Intended to be the biggest, deepest, richest space-colonization/strategy game ever published, *Outpost*'s 1993 debut was a flaming disaster that rocked Sierra to its foundations. The advance hype was deafening, with Sierra's PR staff promising everything but the Second Coming.

The reviews were savage, ripping the game to bloody shreds for its incompleteness, its pathetic documentation, its impenetrable interface, and its general failure to deliver what Sierra had promised.

If anything, however, the *Outpost* debacle seems to have energized the company more than discouraged it. When *PC Gamer* requested a complete list of forthcoming titles, in preparation for this article, we counted an astounding 31 names in the pipeline, covering every genre. Obviously, we can't devote equal space to all of them (and some of them have been covered already in *PC Gamer* Scoops), but here's a closer look at some of the more interesting games you can expect to see between now and next Christmas.

Sierra designers took many of their customers' suggestions and incorporated them in to *Outpost II*.

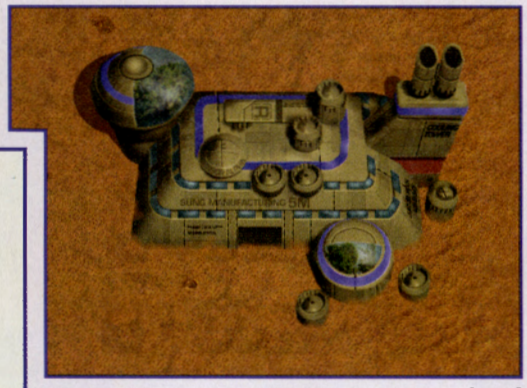
Outpost II will feature real-time gameplay. The game proceeds in chapters, with clearly defined goals for each section.

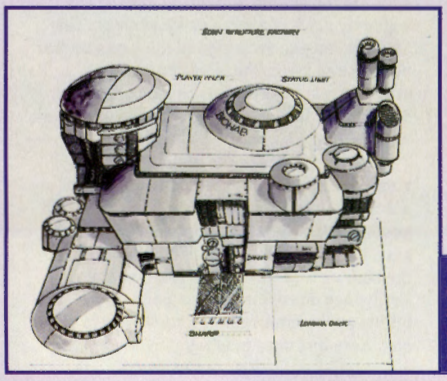
Bury the Dead and Move on!

How does it feel to be responsible for the sequel to a game that's been "honored" by one magazine as "Worst Computer Game of All Time"? I asked this question point-blank to Pat Cook, director of *Outpost II* (scheduled for early summer release):

"Well, if it's true that there's no such thing as 'bad' publicity, then we have nowhere to go but up!" he says, chuckling. Ironically, despite the bad ink, *Outpost* sold quite well; the majority of feedback from consumers went along the lines of: Great concept — now here's what you need to do to realize its full potential. After sifting through the tremendous amount of suggestions, Sierra decided to keep what was *good* in the game, and completely revamp everything else.

"For instance," Cook says, "a lot of players felt, after the first half-hour of managing their colony, that they simply were swimming, not knowing what to do next. We've fixed that: now the game proceeds in chapters, with clearly defined intermediate





From sketch pad to finished artwork, the *Outpost II* designers created more than 2,000 graphic tiles to accomplish their goal of having an organic, engrossing feel for the game. The original game displayed only a half-dozen such graphic tiles.

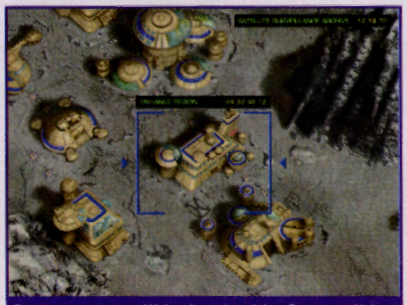
goals as well as a climax."

Other changes: the new game will play out in real-time, with full multiplayer options. There will be combat involved, but the primary goal is survival of your colony. There will be recognizable threads connecting the sequel to the original (the colonies' names will be the same, for example), but the emphasis is now on the whole, rich, contextual universe in which the basic story premise lies embedded. Sierra views this game as just one of a potential series, and sees enormous creative possibilities for future titles. And the graphics — very fine to begin with — will sport a whole new look.

While the original *Outpost* displayed only a half-dozen graphic tiles, the new one will have more than 2,000. "Craters will look as they would on a real planet, so will lava flows and other terrain features, as well as buildings," says Cook. "Also, the visual jump from the lush cut-away scenes to the game screens will not be so much of a distraction — the whole game will have a beautifully organic style to it."

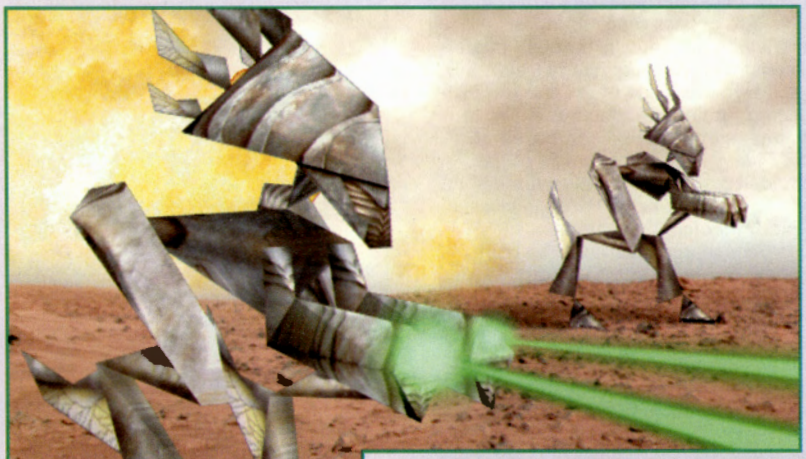
Despite the savage reviews and bad publicity for *Outpost*, the director of *Outpost II*, Pat Cook, decided to take what was good from the original — and then completely revamp the rest.

As Cook describes his design goals for *Outpost II*, you can sense his (and Sierra's) determination to change what was basically a rather dry and aimless original into a really engrossing *game*. Certainly, there's a huge potential customer-base for the sequel, comprising thousands of gamers who saw a germ of greatness beneath the original's shortcomings and have been waiting patiently. They may be very pleased indeed when *Outpost II* hits the stores.



Some combat will be involved in *Outpost II*, but the primary goal of the game is the survival of your colony.

earthsiege 3



Dymanix has as many as 50 vehicles and weapons planned for *Earthsiege 3*, with approximately 50 missions in the works. They've also thrown a spanner in to the works: the Martians, a guerrilla army of colonists willing to fight just about anybody.

Talk about a "duel of titans": Dynamix' continuing Earthsiege saga of robotic mayhem is preparing a massive frontal assault on the Mechwarrior games that have hitherto dominated this popular sub-genre. A top secret "Skunk Works" project is now creating a new 3D engine, which Dynamix believes will be "revolutionary" for the genre, and the first fruits of this cutting-edge technology will debut, in time for Christmas 1997, as *Earthsiege 3*.

Producer Ken Embry throws down the gauntlet in no uncertain terms: "We at Dynamix feel that we more or less created the robot-war genre," he says, "and with this game we hope to establish our pre-eminence. We're in this for the long haul."

According to Embry, Sierra/Dynamix devoted a lot of corporate attention to studying consumer feedback regarding *Earthsiege 2*. "Once we studied the information, we were able to isolate the weaknesses in our games, vis-a-vis the competition. One criticism about the previous game was that its narrative quality was not as gripping as it could be — that the mood was a little flat," Embry says. "The new game will have plenty of narrative substance, much stronger atmosphere, and a terrific line-up of vehicles and weapons, about 50 in all. You won't be maneuvering just an assortment of Hercs anymore, but tanks and fliers as well, and in many of the missions, you'll have to develop squadron-level tactics in order to succeed."

In the new game, players can select from three different "psyches" or personae: if you play as the Terrans (the easiest level), your objectives are very human ones and your resources are funded and organized in a familiar corporate manner. Playing on the intermediate level as the cyborg-like Cybrids will require you to think, plan, and prioritize as an essentially emotionless mechanical life-form.

The wild card in the game (and the most challenging level) are the Martians — a guerrilla army of Human colonists whose goal is to free their planet from all outside influences, be they robotic or corporate. These scrappy freedom fighters lack the financial and technical infrastructure that supports their more powerful enemies — they fight with what they can capture and repair, using hit-and-run tactics.

There will be approximately 50 missions in *Earthsiege 3*, but they will be structured with much more care than in the previous game. Says Embry: "A lot of real hardcore gamers kind of got turned off by the simplicity of the early missions in the second game, and didn't stick with it until they got to the heart of things. But after a month or two, the word spread online that the game really got a lot better in the middle and late missions, and suddenly we had a huge spike in sales. This time around, we've designed the game so that players can sense the overall arch of its progress much earlier on, so they get drawn deeper and deeper into the program with each mission they complete."

While Embry (quite understandably) would not speak "on the record" about just precisely what the new 3D technology would accomplish in terms of graphics and gameplay, if it even comes close to doing some of the stuff he told me "off the record," then *Earthsiege 3* may indeed live up to its advance billing as "revolutionary." I can't wait to strap on a Herc and start blasting.

THE GAME THAT STALKS BACK!

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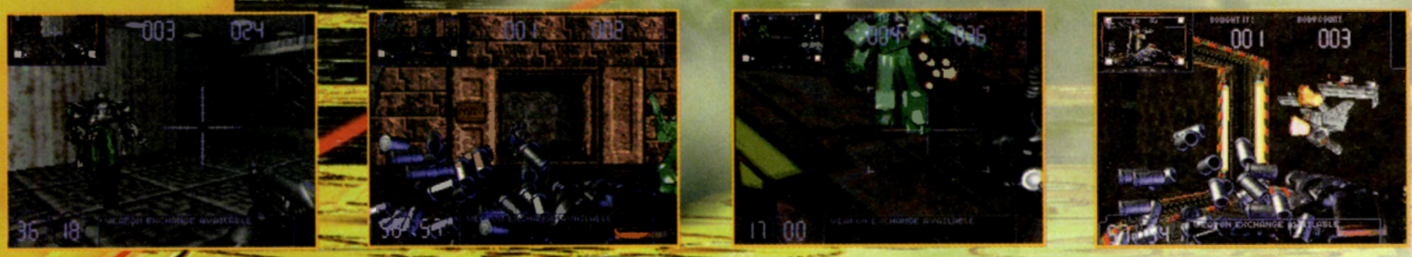

TEEN T AGES 13+ ESRB

DOS/PC CD-ROM

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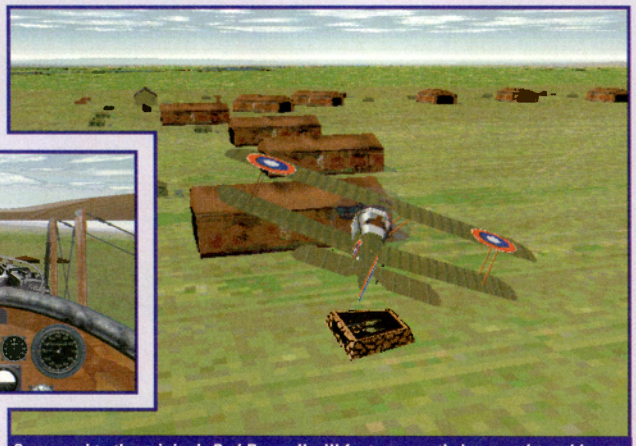


Compared to the original, *Red Baron II* will feature greatly improved graphics, much more realistic flight models, and an expanded scope.

Flying High

Building on its solid reputation as a designer of military flight sims, Dynamix is about to challenge Microsoft in the not-too-crowded field of civilian flight simulators. *Sierra Pro Pilot* is nothing if not ambitious — the intent is to replicate not only the experience of flying, but also the process of training for certification at the controls of three Beechcrafts (the King Air B200, the B58 Baron, and the ever-popular Bonanza) and the Cessna CitationJet.

Sierra and Dynamix are busy working on the cutting edge sequel to *Red Baron*, one of the most popular air-combat sims ever published. The results promise to be amazing.

Players receive training from an interactive Certified Flight Instructor (CFI) at both the basic and the more advanced levels. After obtaining a private pilot's license, gamers can progress to certification for seaplanes, multi-engine craft, and commercial jets. If you successfully complete a number of assignments, graded for safety, airmanship and efficiency, you can obtain commercial pilot privileges — something no other flight sim offers.

Dynamix wants its graphics to be competitive with the best on the market: 25 million elevation points are modeled, encompassing 20 major cities, roads, rail lines, rivers, mountains, and numerous smaller communities in both the U.S. and Canada. Cross-country flights incorporate 2,500 real airfields, large and small, and every flight is accompanied by a multitude of realistic sound effects: transmissions from Air Traffic Controllers, other pilots, flight instructors, engine noises... every sort of sound you would encounter in real flight assignments. The goal here is to create a virtual experience as close to the real thing as current technology allows. If you qualify for every certification in the game, you can probably go out and get a real pilot's license in record time.

As interesting as *Pro Pilot* appears to be, the Dynamix game most players lust for is *Red Baron II*, a cutting-edge sequel to one of the most popular air-combat sims ever published. The white-knuckled mano-a-mano duels that made the original game so gripping will be present, of course, in greatly improved graphics and much more realistic flight models, but the scope of the sequel is greatly expanded.

In the career mode, players seek to rise through the ranks by demonstrating discipline and teamwork as well as valor, participating in a wide variety of missions, all modeled after historical events of the World War One era. Once you achieve the rank of squadron commander, you have to think and act like one — although you still have the option of challenging enemy aces to duels, and responding to *their* challenges.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of *Red Baron II* is its enhanced "dynamic mission builder." Missions are not pre-scripted, as they were in the original game; instead, the AI generates a historically accurate battlefield environment within a 50-mile radius of the player's squadron, according to what was actually happening over the Western Front on that day, at that stage of the war. While flying a routine patrol, you will encounter fluid, unpredictable situations, just as a real pilot would have: dogfights in progress, enemy bombers pounding friendly targets, observation planes being bushwhacked, etc. You must decide how to respond to each encounter, and the results of your intervention automatically alter the sub-program in progress. When the mission is over and you fly out of that 50-mile envelope, the generated battle folds seamlessly back into the computer and you resume the main, linear progression of the game.

All of this action will unfold in gorgeous, texture-mapped graphics that make the chunky generic terrain features and pixelicious planes of the original look positively antediluvian. Of all the tasty titles in the Sierra family's line-up, this is the one I most want to get my mitts on!

Action and Strategy!

Slated for a fall release is *Demon Isle*, an action-packed fantasy RPG developed by Cat Daddy Games. The adventure is set

Pro Pilot offers something no other flight sim does — if you successfully complete your assignments, you can obtain commercial pilot privileges.

sporting news

Fans of classy styles of racing will appreciate *Grand Prix Legends*, a sim featuring cars from the late Sixties that's being designed by the same man who created the IndyCar and NASCAR sims.

SODA Off Road Racing (above and top) from Papyrus promises off-road down and dirty action.

Ever since Sierra's first venture into this ever-popular genre (*Front Page Sports: Football*), the company has maintained a strong market presence and plans to expand that presence in its 1997 line up. The "Front Page" trademark will appear on new baseball and football games (*Baseball Pro '97*, and *Football '98*, scheduled for spring and fall, appropriately enough), and will break new ground with a realistic skiing simulation (September), a basketball sim (November) and a fly-fishing adventure (October — all release dates are, of course, tentative).

More sedate pastimes will also get their due: *Hoyle's Poker* and *Hoyle's Chess* should appeal to fans of these classic games. And since I personally consider pinball a "sport" (it takes at least as much moxie to rack up a great silver-ball score as it does to finesse a great hand of poker), mention should also be made of *3D Ultra Pinball 3*.

Those speed-freaks at Papyrus have two tantalizing race games in the works. For those who love the rough-and-tumble excitement of off-road trucks and buggies, Papyrus will deliver *SODA Off Road Racing*, a gritty melange of air-jumps, collisions, and rollovers sanctioned by the Short-course Off-road Drivers Association. A somewhat classier style of competition is featured in *Grand Prix Legends*, a simulation of the glory days of Formula One racing in the late Sixties, a period when this sport achieved a level of glamour and sexiness unmatched before or since. This game is being designed by Dave Kaemer, who created the hugely successful IndyCar and NASCAR simulations.

in the land of Magincia, a realm just recently purged of its evil residents and separated from its homeland, the Demon Isle, by an impassable strait of water.

But not for long — the expelled evil powers are mobilizing their magic to rebuild the bridge and reconquer Magincia. To prevent this catastrophe, the player must journey to Demon Isle and destroy its sinister ruler, known only as the Evil Presence. This can only be done by locating and destroying seven fortresses, each guarding a single fragment of a potent relic that, when assembled, gives you the power to tackle the Evil One.

This game seems refreshingly linear in overall design (a clear-cut goal is established from the beginning), but its scope offers plenty of room for exploration and action. Sierra promises the game will be "beautiful," and the screen shots I've seen confirm that claim. Graphically, *Demon Isle* will be a hybrid of polygon-based elements and fractally generated scenery. In addition to single-player mode, the game will also be playable (via LAN or Internet) by groups of at least 32 players. Sierra may also launch the game, via servers, in the form of semi-permanent virtual worlds that online players can drop into at their convenience.

Demon Isle, an action-packed fantasy RPG, features this oh-so-attractive demon master.

Players who love their bang-bang will get an abundance of it in *SWAT 2*, the latest in the on-going *Police Quest* series. Producer Oliver Brelsford promises: "This game will look and play a whole lot differently than its predecessor. We're combining real-time urgency with the complexity and detail of a good strategy game," he says. "While you must master basic SWAT-team tactics to succeed, you'll have plenty of freedom to put your personal spin on the action."

25 missions are planned, some of which can be played either from the SWAT side or the side of the terrorists — a nice touch. When playing as the SWAT commander, you get to micromanage your plan of operations, positioning snipers, emergency personnel, helicopter assaults, tear-gas launches, and armored vehicles. You must also select the right people for the job by recruiting from a roster of 120 candidates, each with detailed stats, abilities, and personality profiles. A vast arsenal of weapons is available, and selected officers can be detailed for additional training as snipers, explosives experts, K-9 handlers and the like.

The player will also be in constant touch with his Crisis Negotiation Team, deciding whether to accept or reject the terrorists' demands. If negotiations break down and a SWAT operation is launched, you have options to order stealth entries or to come in shooting with flash-grenades, tear gas, and automatic weapons. AI controlled opponents are programmed to respond quite differently each time a scenario is run, so no two replays will be alike — some times, the hostage-takers will surrender, other times they'll fight to the bloody end.

Amphibious Assault vehicle.

The Quest Goes On...

One of Sierra's most anticipated new releases is *Quest for Glory V: Dragon Fire*. The setting is a Tolkeinian land called Silmaria, where the old ruler has just died as the game begins. You (and others, since multi-player modes will be fully supported) enter the Olympic Games and compete for the coveted Laurel Crown of the new ruler. But things are not as simple as they seem, for, in addition to outsmarting and outfighting your competitors, you'll also have to watch out for assassins and roaming monsters, all doing their best to turn the orderly transition of power into anarchy and thus laying the groundwork for the appearance of a huge dragon that betokens the end of the world.

The lady who started it all, Roberta Williams, is hard at work on the next title in the King's Quest cycle, a 3D adventure game that promises to push the envelope.

In keeping with the traditions of this series, *Dragon Fire* will offer a mix of heroics and ribald humor, with some romance thrown in for good measure. You'll battle with classic mythological creatures such as hydras and gargoyles, quest for the treasures of Poseidon, and figure out a way to slip past the jaws of Cerebus, the guardian of Hades.

Silmaria itself will be lushly rendered — a blend of classical Greece and the sexiest Club Med resort you ever dreamed of visiting. Self-tuning difficulty levels and several optional degrees of online help should assure the game's appeal to a wide range of players, from novice to expert.

Scheduled for a "Holidays '97" debut is the latest and most ambitious of the King's Quest cycle, *Mask of Eternity*, designed by the legendary lady who started it all, Roberta Williams. Since the KQ series is an all-time best-seller (seven million copies to date), the formidable Williams wants this eighth installment to push the ol' envelope as far as it can be pushed.

In *Quest for Glory V: Dragon Fire*, you must participate in the Olympic Games to win the Laurel Crown of the new ruler.

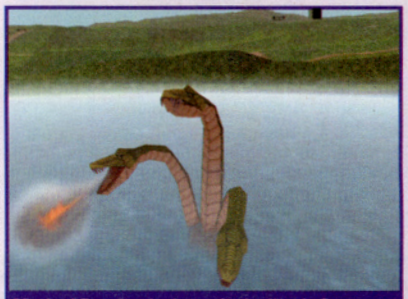
Gone are the previous animated, cartoon-style characters and sets, replaced with a completely immersive 3D environment that combines the qualities of a live-action game with Williams' customary skills as a teller of vast, intricate stories. Sierra spokesman Eric Twelker describes the game in these words: "*Mask of Eternity* is the world's first adventure game created entirely in 3D, using an extremely powerful proprietary 3D engine. It offers a degree of character movement and exploration never before seen in an adventure game," he says. "If you want to peek around a corner, or check out what's happening over the next hill, you can. You can explore every nook and cranny of this world. Characters, objects, puzzles ... they all exist in three physical dimensions."

The premise of the adventure is this: before the game starts, a destructive magical storm has swept the kingdom of Daventry, turning all the inhabitants — including King Graham and Queen Valancia — into stone, save one: Connor Mac Tyrr, who suddenly finds himself centerstage with destiny. Starting from scratch, Conner must uncover the reasons for the magical devastation, the nature of the forces behind it, their motives, and the location of the one sacred object that can restore the kingdom to peace and prosperity: The Mask of Eternity. In the process, Conner also makes a voyage of discovery into his own past, to learn why he alone was spared petrifaction.

Although Sierra is understandably reluctant to reveal more than the bare bones of the plot, it's a safe bet that the story line will be rich with characters and incidents, and full of the emotional commitment Williams always shows for her characters. Fans of this series will surely have a treat in store when *Mask of Eternity* ships this winter.

The summer months will bring a bumper crop of action games. *Captives: Rescue at Rubicon* is an arcade/strategy title that takes a refreshingly different stance from the current crop of hard-action shooters. In this game, the object is not just to slaughter everything in sight, but to rescue helpless captives by means of clever arcade maneuvering, quick reflexes, and puzzle-solving (of course, there *are* lots of disgusting alien abductors you'll need to blow away in the process, so the game is not entirely without violence...what a relief!). In its multi-player mode, *Captives* includes an interesting new twist: which player can free (or hold) the most captives.

Wargamers will be intrigued by *Ground Zero: Amphibious Assault*, a strategic/tactical game of invasion and resource management set on a mostly aquatic planet. Operations will take place not only on land, sea and air, but also under water. Players will have the option of fighting a campaign's worth of missions in any order they choose, and a major part of one's strategy is dictated by the fact that surviving units are carried over, and sometimes upgraded, from mission to mission. This game could be hot.



Mask of Eternity, the latest in the King's Quest cycle, will feature an immersive 3D environment.

And that's NOT all, folks!

In addition to the games highlighted above, let's not forget such keenly anticipated titles as *Betrayal in Antara*, *X-Fighters*, *Birthright* (latest in the Advanced Dungeons and Dragons series) and the already buzz-worthy "*Quake*-killer" *FEAR* (slated for December release; Sierra is reluctant to say much about the game at this point). Sierra's expansion into new genres, its so-far highly successful corporate marriage with companies such as Impressions and Papyrus, all bear witness to the firm's energy and vision.

PCG

There are some great, new games
that feature really cute, lovable creatures.

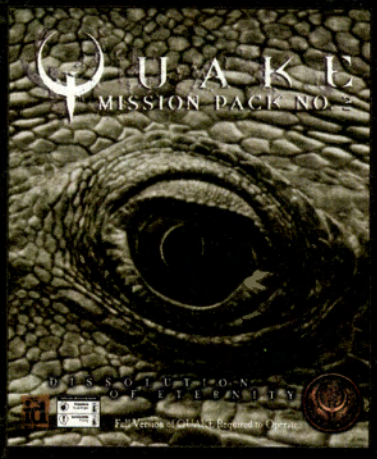
15 beastly levels plus one secret level. Nasty lightning traps, floating spike mines, and fully functional gondolas.

Swarming, bloodthirsty gremlins. Armor-plated scorpion cyborgs. And a biomechanical, missile-launching boss creature.

A maximum-range, massive-damage Laser Cannon. Mjolnir, the electrical war hammer. And motion-sensitive Proximity Mines.

QUAKE MISSION PACKS NO. 1&2

15 lethal levels. Pendulums that slice and dice. Monstrous earthquakes. And lightning shooters with minds of their own.



Armor-piercing lava nails. 8-in-1 multi-grenades. 4-in-1 multi-rockets. And a few beefed-up plasma guns that chuck energy balls.

Heat-seeking, fireball-throwing, skeletal overlords and their evil minions. Power-packed electric eels. Slashing phantom swordsmen. And one two-ton, flesh-searing dragon boss.

THE ONLY OFFICIAL QUAKE MISSION PACKS FROM id.

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Published by: id

Developed by: ROGUE ENTERTAINMENT

Product Information Number 97

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These are not those games.

While you spent the last six months of your miserable life quick-saving Quake every two minutes, some sick-minded individuals were hard at work expanding the hideous depths of evil even further. These are not a conglomeration of clone levels. These are not for children. These are Quake Mission Pack No. 1 and Quake Mission Pack No. 2, the only official id Software mission packs for Quake.

Nighty-night, sissy boy.

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Over 50 land, sea and air units

Ultimate control. Total customization. Advanced battlefield strategy. Wicked SVGA graphics. M.A.X. has it all.

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TEEN T AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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Product Information Number 194

Ten Things You Never Knew About PC Gamer

We thought it would be nice if we we got to know each other a little better, gentle reader, so we've delved deep to provide you with ten fantastic facts that should titillate your trivia buds. Actually, one of these is false; see if you can guess which one it is...

1 The famous car chase in the Steve McQueen thriller *Bullitt* ends with the bad guys' car crashing into the construction site of the *PC Gamer* offices!

2 Scott Wolf changed his name to Wolf because he likes wolves so much, and he even owns some!

3 The official theme song of *PC Gamer* is "Inca People" from the soundtrack to the game *Inca*. Don't ask us why — it's a *long* story.

4 Three different staff members have provided the voice of Coconut Monkey for the *PC Gamer CD* — Todd Vaughn, Joe Novicki, and Matt Firme. Coconut Monkey himself is in negotiations to provide his own voice-over for future CDs.

5 Our publisher Matt's nickname is Ned because he looks like actor Ned Beatty.

6 Our wargames guru Bill Trotter writes historical non-fiction and fiction, and one of his short stories was nominated for a Bram Stoker award. Unfortunately, he was beaten out by a story from *Psycho* creator Robert Bloch.

7 Even though Mike Wolf is six feet four inches tall, he cannot dunk a basketball. But he sure can dunk a cookie into his milk!

8 The only *PC Gamer* staffers to appear on the magazine's cover are Todd, Mike, and Lisa.

9 Quintin and Jason used to live in the same dorm at college (but never knew each other) before meeting again when they both joined the staff of *PC Gamer*. Uncanny!

10 This is the *Jedi Knight* cover that very nearly was...
(Dilbert: copyright Scott Adams)

Hardware Requirements

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

THE PC GAMER RATINGS SYSTEM

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

89%-80% EXCELLENT
These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your attention, though it may not make any significant advances over its rivals. Also, some genuine benchmark games of decidedly specialist taste will fall into this area — it may be the best 7th Cavalry simulation on the market, but not all of us want to relive Little Bighorn.

79%-70% VERY GOOD
These are pretty good games, which we would recommend to fans of the particular genre — although it's a safe bet that there are probably better games out there.

69%-60% GOOD
A reasonable, above-average game. It may be worth buying, but probably has a few significant flaws that keep it from earning a higher rating.

59%-50% FAIR
Very ordinary games. Not completely worthless, but not a very good way to spend your gaming dollar, either.

49%-40% BELOW AVERAGE
Poor quality. Only a few, slightly redeeming features keep them from falling into the abyss of the next category...

39%-0% DON'T BOTHER
Just terrible games — and the lower you go, the worse they get. Avoid these titles like the Plague — and don't say we didn't warn you!

PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

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

EXTREME CHESS

p.131

M.A.X

p.124

STARS!

p.106

NBA Live 97

Category: Sports

Developer: EA Canada

Publisher: Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404 (415) 571-7171

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 75; 16MB RAM; Mouse	Quad speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 133; Gamepad

With its list of enhancements and rock-solid gameplay, EA Sports' newest hoop sim delivers a slam dunk on the competition.

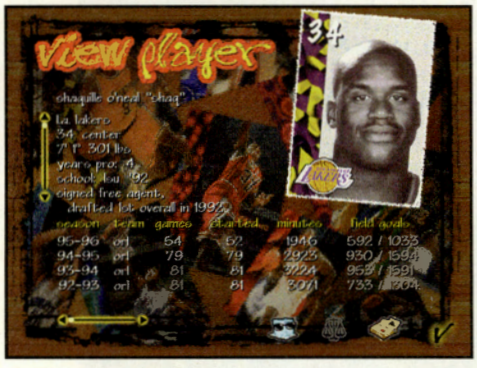
The slam dunks are a sight to see, whether it's the reverse, tomahawk, gorilla, or 360.

Last year was undoubtedly the year of EA Sports, with *NHL 97*, *Triple Play 97*, and *FIFA 97* mopping up as the top picks in their respective fields. And it looks as if EA will have another banner year if *NBA Live 97* is any indication; it easily surpasses the previous benchmark in hoops titles (which was *NBA Live '96*, by the way) en route to becoming the best PC basketball game ever.

The amount of stats and options in the game is astounding. There are more than 60 offensive plays you can call on the fly, plus ten different defensive schemes. Every single NBA player on all 29 teams is represented and rated (although untouchables like Jordan and Barkley aren't named), and if some hot rookie enters the league, you can create him with the extensive player creation feature. Three difficulty levels (rookie, starter, and all-star) allow you to find an opponent worthy of your skills. Play through an entire season and have every single stat tracked — even for the guy on the end of the bench who played one minute all season. It's features like these that have made the Live series the best around, and there's no basketball game around that can touch it.

However, the real upgrade in *Live 97* is the look of the texture-mapped polygonal players that run up and down the floor with amazing grace. Each team is represented by exact replicas of its real uniform, right down to the logo, player name, and number. Step back from the screen a bit, and you'll swear you're watching Tuesday night basketball on TNT. And speaking of TNT, Ernie Johnson lends his vocal skills to the audio of the game for an even more authentic feel.

To create realistic motions for the players, EA brought in Sacramento Kings sharpshooter Mitch 'Rock' Ritchmond for a motion-capture ses-



While *Live '97* still doesn't have elusive superstars like Michael Jordan and Charles Barkley, this is the only game where you'll find powerhouse Shaquille O'Neal.

Missing in Action

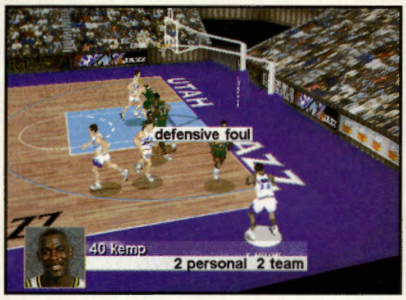
ARE SOME STARS TOO GOOD FOR ANY BASKETBALL SIM?

If you're a die-hard hoop fan or suspect you may be one (help is available), there are two important facts you'll need to know before diving into EA's latest and greatest basketball game. Michael Jordan and Charles Barkley would not release their names for use in the game, leaving the rosters of both the Chicago Bulls and the Houston Rockets without their biggest stars.

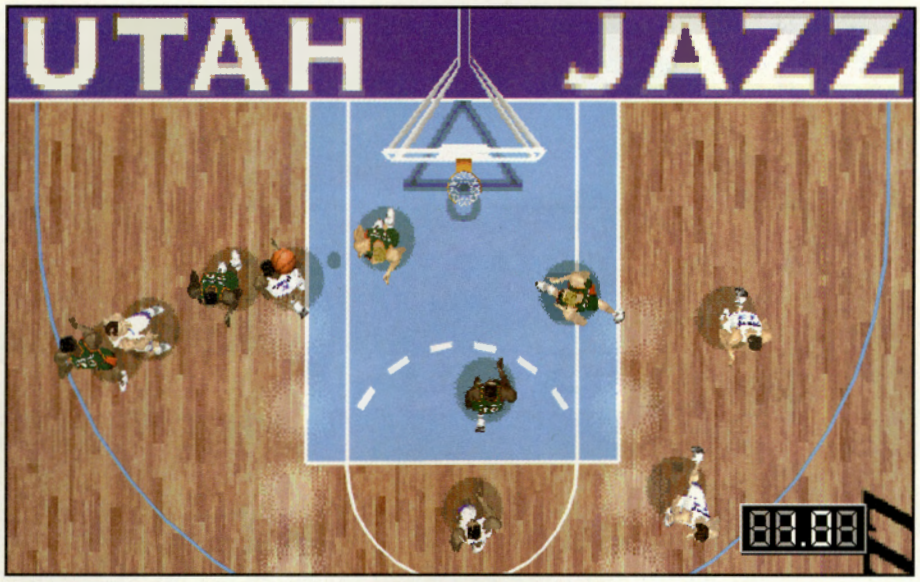
This has been one of the most hotly discussed topics among computer gamers, as big-name players withhold their names and likenesses in search of bigger endorsement deals. While we're not going to fault these players for trying to get the best deal possible (basketball careers can be notoriously short-lived, and a million bucks doesn't buy what it used to), the lack of accurate information about these superstars detracts from the realism of every game and can have detrimental effects on the statistical outcome.

The most notable loss is Jordan, who in a single game can contribute more than half of his team's points. Without accurate player statistics and background, you're left with a character that can only mimic portions of his game, and even the slightest deviation in percentages of steals, three-pointers, and fouls can seriously affect the standings of the entire team.

Thanks to the player editor, EA has provided a way to work around this, but it's a small consolation to the true basketball fan who expects to find the latest and greatest players working their magic on the computer screen.



Simulation mode obeys full NBA rules, but you can customize those rules to switch off any you don't particularly like.



The courts for every NBA team are recreated in incredible detail, right down to the reflections on the court.

sion. The result is that every player in the game has entirely realistic motions (and they all move like Mitch Ritchmond — even less athletically gifted oafs like Luc Longley and Gheorge Muresean). The game can be played from any of several swiveling camera angles that really take advantage of the 3D court and players. And let us not forget the dunks; in *Live 97* the slam dunks are a work of art, with the smooth motions and powerful audio that make each dunk thunder home with authority. If you didn't get a good glimpse the first time around, you can run a replay from any camera angle you wish (and taunt your opponent the whole time).

The game is Gravis GRiP-compatible and can be played via modem or local-area network by as many as four players. The multi-player game is where *Live 97* is at its best; you can throw out the stats and the playbook and get down to some trash-talkin', slam-dunkin', in-your-face action. The multi-player drawback is that, owing to the limitations of the old PC joystick spec, EA could only use two action buttons on when two players compete a single machine, and the game's just crying out for a third button that could be used for stealing.

Even though *Live 97* is the best game around, it's far from perfect; in fact, basketball is the sport EA is farthest away from capturing accurately. The slippery control that *Live* fans have become accustomed to is back, and it's gotten worse. The poor control and lack of a steal button make playing defense an exercise in futility. Because of that, there's no reason to run any of the 60 offensive plays, because running the ball down the court and firing a three-pointer is just as effective. EA claims to have rated each player based on his real-world performance, but the game doesn't back that claim up too well. In fact, each player seems to run at approximately the same speed, jump at the same height, and shoot with the same accuracy. Once you figure out the sweet spot on the jump shot, lumbering power forwards like Elden Campbell can and will knock down just as many threes as sharpshooters like Steve Kerr, and centers like Luc Longley are just as capable of playing point guard as guys like John Stockton. This kind of inaccuracy really takes away from the simulation element in the game.

The jump shot has a sweet feel; once you get the rhythm, you can light 'em up from downtown.

Despite those flaws, though, there's not a game out there that can play on the same floor as *Live 97*. And while it's by no means an all-encompassing simulation, *Live 97* is pure arcade fun, especially in multi-player mode.

— Mike Salmon

The sharp polygonal players look incredible; just check out the detailed uniforms.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

84%

HIGHS: Incredible graphics, full rosters, all the stats, and unequaled presentation.

LOWS: Slippery control, poor frame-rate on slower systems, and some flaws as a sim.

BOTTOM LINE: The best-looking, best-playing basketball game available, even with its flaws.

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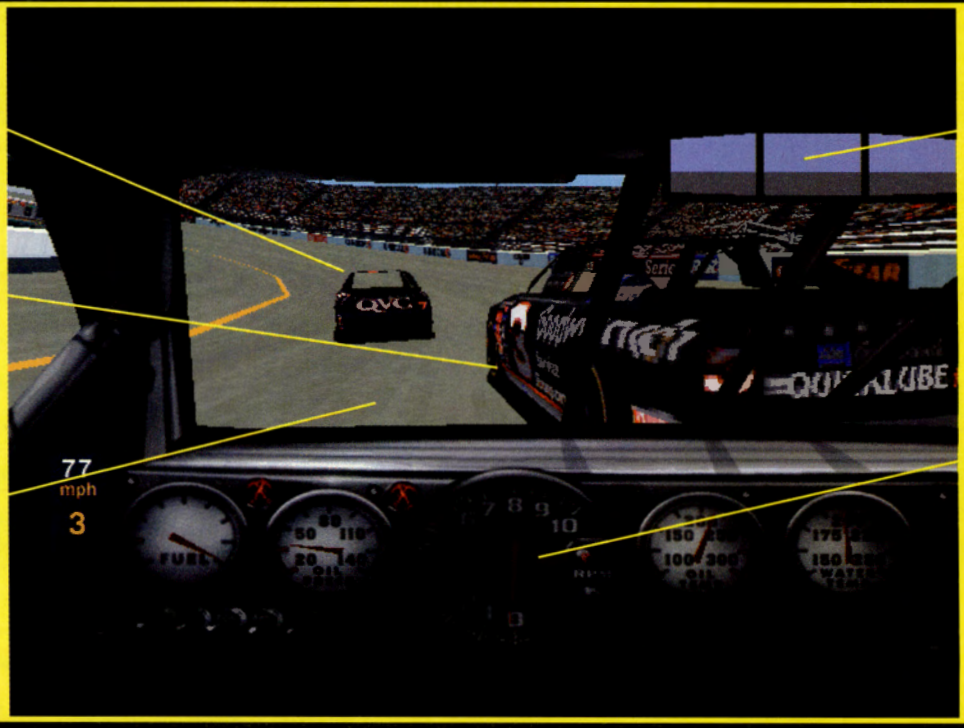

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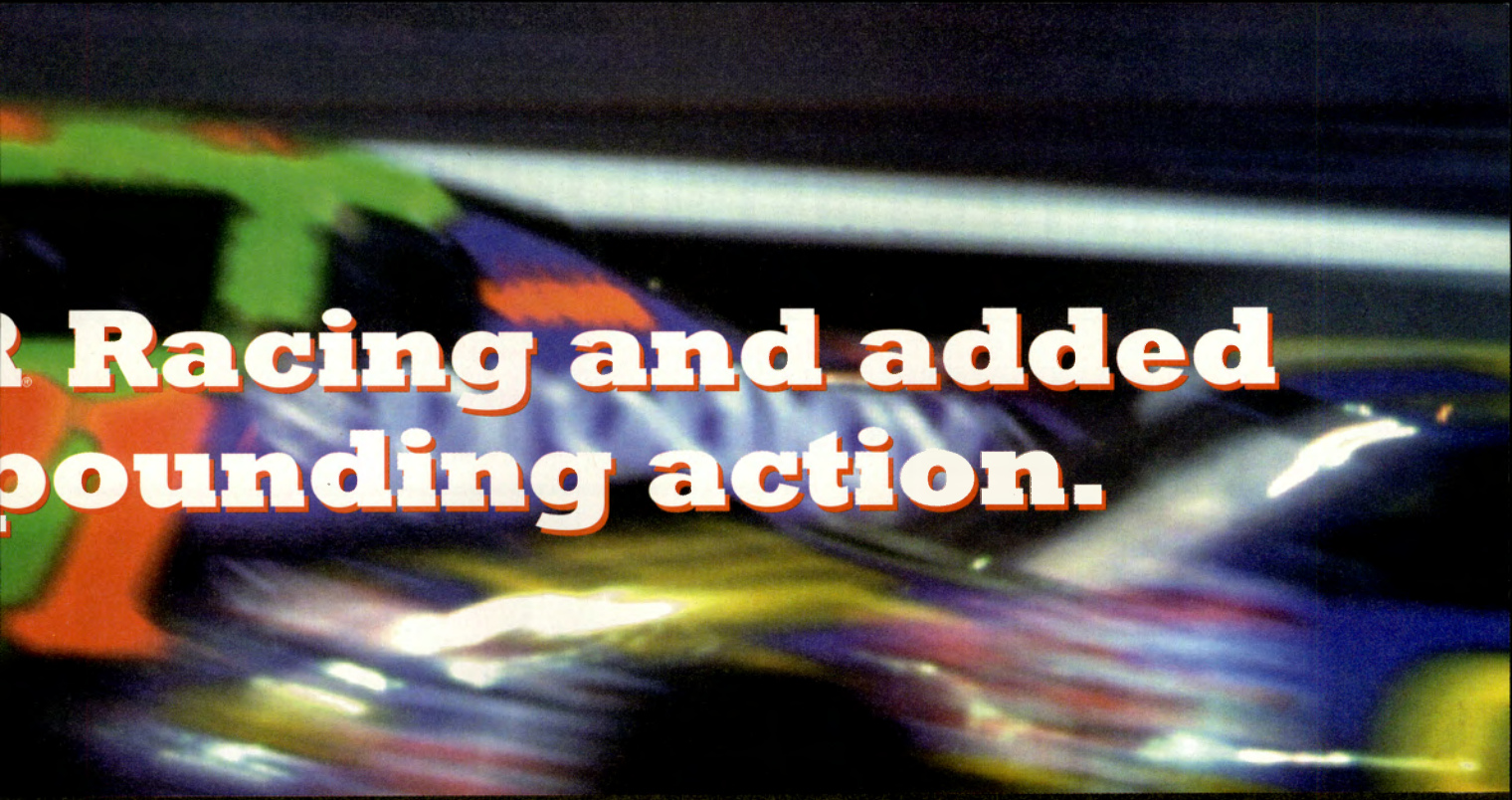

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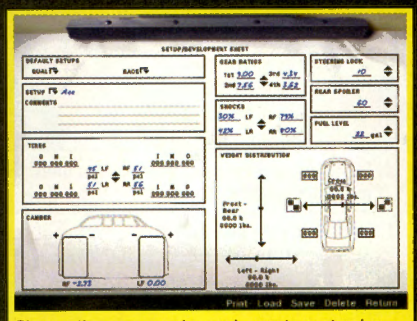
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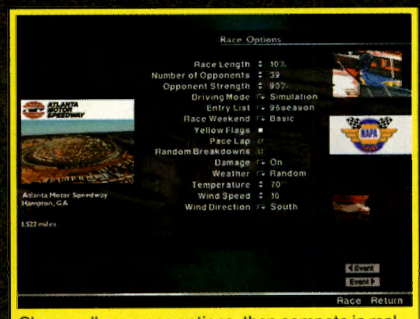

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Discworld II: Mortality Bytes

Category: Graphic Adventure

Developer: Perfect Entertainment

Publisher: Psygnosis, 919 E. Hillsdale Blvd., 2nd Floor, Foster City, CA 94404 (800) 438-7794

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

Terry Pratchett's best-selling books come alive on your PC screen once again, in Psygnosis' second Discworld adaptation.

Adored by readers and critics alike in his British homeland (where he's the country's best-selling author), Terry Pratchett isn't so well known in the United States, but he has attracted a healthy cult following on this side of the pond. Now more than 20 titles strong, his epic Discworld series of books has earned its success through a combination of rip-roaring storytelling and absurdly well-observed humor that gleefully pokes fun at the staid conventions of fantasy literature. The Discworld, as its name suggests, is a flat, circular planet that barrels through the cosmos on the back of four giant elephants that in turn stand on the shell on a huge turtle — which should give you some idea of the eccentric imagination at work here.

Indeed, Pratchett's work is so outlandish that it has often defied conversion to other media — a film and television series have long been talked about, but neither has surfaced, so the only time we've ever seen Pratchett's disjointed cast of ribald and offbeat characters come alive on screen was in

Eric Idle and his backing singers high-kick it through the finale to *Discworld II*'s elaborate musical number "That's Death".

In the game's opening sequence (an unashamed rip-off of *Lethal Weapon 3*), it's up to our bumbling hero Rincewind to defuse this bomb.

Psygnosis' graphic adventure adaptation of two years ago. Though still some way behind LucasArts' standard-bearing work, it did do a splendid job of weaving a compelling puzzle structure around Pratchett's world. Its success (like the books, bigger in Europe than the U.S.) justified a bigger and more ambitious sequel, and three years later, that's exactly what we've got.

As in the first game, *Discworld II*'s principal character is one of Pratchett's most often-used — Rincewind, a bumbling and cowardly apprentice wizard with virtually no grasp of magic but an extremely heightened sense of self-preservation. Despite his reluctant nature, he's always the one who finds himself having to rescue the princess or slay the dragon, and generally ends up doing so more through luck than judgment. The player, unfortunately, will not be able to rely on such an approach in a game story that's more tightly packed with puzzles than any I've ever seen. The plot goes that Death (yes, the guy in the black robe with the scythe) has gotten bored with his soul-ushering chores and decided to take an extended vacation. As a result, the Discworld is becoming filled

The wizards of Unseen University discover something is wrong with the natural order of things when one of their more elderly number simply refuses to die.

with ghosts and zombies because the undead are not being properly transported to the afterlife. This just won't do, and so it's up to someone to persuade Death to get back to work. Someone like... yeah, you guessed it.

Discworld II's story is spread across two CDs and three sprawling Acts, encompassing most of the better-known characters and locations from Pratchett's books. After collecting the requisite items to perform the Death-

Rincewind encounters the *Discworld*'s trio of beggars (from left): Foul Ole Ron, Coffin Henry, and The Duck Man.

summoning Rite of Ashk 'Ente in Act I (yes, it's the standard object-gathering, sub-quest stuff), Rincewind must make the grim reaper a movie star in a big production to increase his public image (he's not the most popular chap, understandably, despite his endearing personality) and eventually assume, part-time, Death's chores while the rest of the story plays out. This is, of course, anything but straightforward. Like most adventures, even a simple task like acquiring a candle or some beeswax involves working through a huge succession of interrelated puzzles and quests.

Discworld II is nothing if not lavish. The production value is the highest I've ever seen for a graphic adventure, putting recent elaborate efforts like *Toonstruck* and *Circle of Blood* to shame. All the characters and backdrops are cartoon quality, and there are so many cut-scenes, intermissions, and other graphical treats, it's a wonder they managed to squeeze all this onto two discs. Ex-Python Eric Idle has returned to his role of Rincewind, leading an accomplished voice cast, which, between them, delivers a quite astonishing amount of conversational dialog — perhaps too much in fact, since I often found myself wishing the characters would stop indulging in "humorous" wordplay and

Death's irritable assistant Albert will let Rincewind take over his master's duties — if he can prove he's up to the task.

In the far-off land of Djelibeybi, Rincewind must enlist the services of the local mystics (and avoid being hustled by the devious street merchants).

cut to the chase. The situation isn't helped by Idle's apathetic delivery, which sounds like it was hurriedly recorded in just a couple of days (which was, in fact, the case). Full marks, however, to the hilarious Python-esque musical number "That's Death" that Idle composed and performed for the game's opening and closing credits.

Discworld II certainly sets new technical standards for animated graphic adventuring, but what of the game itself? Well, much like the first, there's one central problem here: the subject matter it's based on. Pratchett is a genius and his books are brilliant, but they don't translate well to other media, including games. Simply put, his dialog and situations are funnier when written down than played out. Like a great book made into a mediocre movie, somewhere along the line the point has been lost. The game tries its best by adhering strictly to the quirky internal logic of Pratchett's world, but this creates puzzle difficulties for anyone not well-versed with the books. One puzzle, for example, revolves around the fact that the river that flows through the Discworld's capital city is so filthy and disgusting that it behaves more like a solid than a liquid, but how would I know that if I hadn't read the right Discworld books? So for each of the two kinds of potential audience for this game, there's a problem: if you're not familiar with the Discworld books, you'll have problems with some of the puzzles; and if you are a fan of the books, you probably won't like the way the humor and characters have been translated.

Pratchett himself is said to have mixed feelings about this latest adaptation of his work, to the point that he doesn't want to

Act III takes Rincewind to Death's world, where everything is black; there's a scythe in the umbrella stand and even the fish in the pond are just skeletons.

see a third Discworld adventure — at least not one in this style. He's probably right. Like any adaptation that involves input from lots of different people, much of the original author's energy and magic has been lost, and for a game so tightly constrained by its subject matter, that's something it can't afford. It's a shame, because the people behind this game are talented adventure-makers, and there are some truly beautiful and awe-inspiring moments along the course of this monumentally huge game, but unless you're a die-hard Discworld fan, you're probably better off waiting for something like *Monkey Island 3*.

— Gary Whitta

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

73%

HIGHS: Terrific animation, great music, and a huge story to work your way through.

LOWS: Too much pointless dialog, working knowledge of *Discworld* books required.

BOTTOM LINE: Discworld fans will have fun, but everyone else will simply be confused.

PRIVA

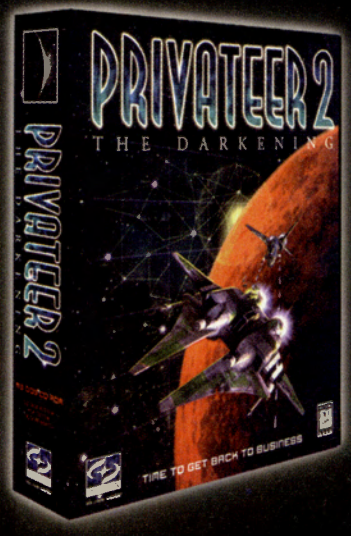
PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

"You'll be sorry to see this game end, period." 92%

– PC Gamer

"The video and graphics were of such high quality that it truly felt like 'being there'."

– Computer Gaming World



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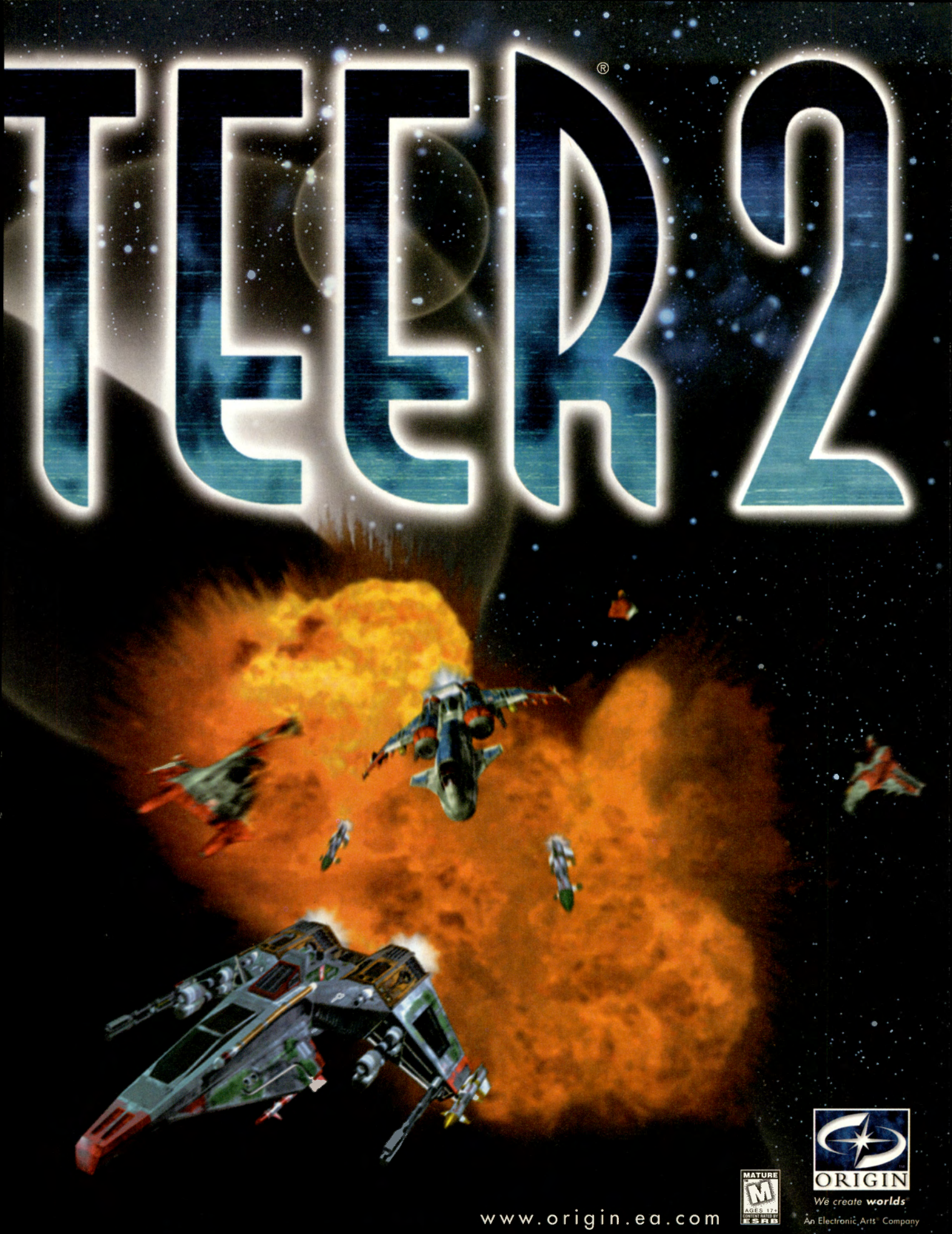

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Product Information Number 260

Stars!

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Strategy

Developer: Jeff Johnson/Jeff McBride

Publisher: Empire Interactive, 13220 Wisteria Drive, Germantown, Maryland 20874 (301) 916-9302

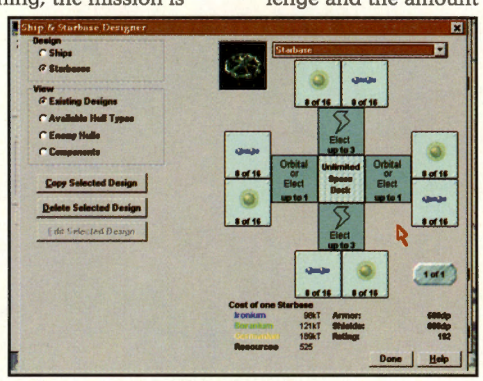
Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 386; 4MB RAM; Mouse; 2MB hard-drive space; Windows 3.1 or higher; Mouse	486DX/266; 8MB RAM; Modem

A game of galactic proportions, *Stars!* recalls the glory days of gaming with accessible, addictive fun.

If you're one of those veteran gamers who has become disenchanted with the current emphasis on action, graphic prowess, and shock value, *Stars!* is one of the those rare games that will restore your faith that substance can be a part of gaming's future. In an age of *Quake* and *Duke Nukem*, *Stars!* trades superficial flash for exhaustive amounts of depth, offering gamers an easy to play but massive interstellar combat strategy game that is as addictive and accessible as any on the market.

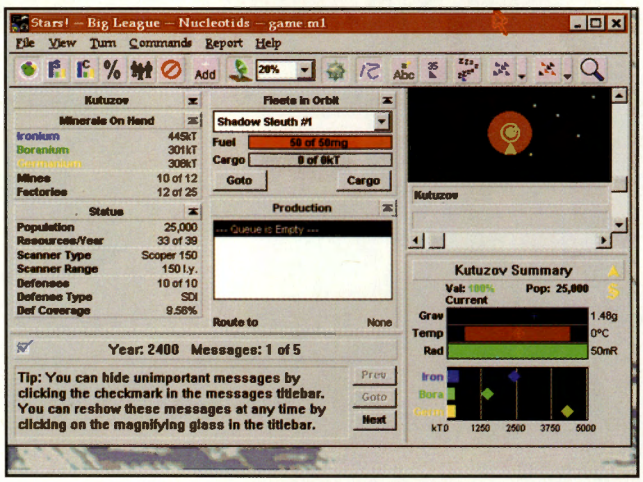
You are the leader of a race of creatures (chosen from a predefined selection or created by you) that lusts after galactic glory, wealth, and power. You start out with a planet, some ships, and a desire to build an empire. You'll conquer new planets, mine their resources, build massive galactic fleets, and send powerful armadas against those who would stand in your way. The job ahead of you is entirely customizable with a wealth of options that allow you to set the size of the galaxy and the number of other races represented in the turn-based game.

At the beginning, the mission is simple enough, as players must allocate what they will research, and assign mission objectives to ships already orbiting their planet. As time wears on, though, a rich assortment of options become available, including setting research objectives, setting up mine fields, and designing starbases and ships. This abundance of features guarantees that *Stars!* has almost limitless replay value.



Starbase and ship design is just one of the engaging options available in *Stars!*.

Stars! owes a lot of structure to MicroProse's classic *Civilization*. For example, when the game begins, players have little knowledge about the universe around them. The existence of life on other planets becomes apparent as players' ships venture away from the home world. The homes, starbases, and outposts of many as 15 others races could be lurking just beyond your world. From there, the game flows fairly traditionally as the boundaries of your known universe are pushed ever wider, and your economy begins to churn stronger and stronger as more worlds' resources are utilized.



This screen contains most of the menus players will access during the game. Though somewhat confusing at times, the design offers a wealth of information for would-be interstellar Caesars.

When battle does come, players are not given individual command of the ships. Instead, fleets and starbases follow the battle plans you have selected for them. While this may deflate the interest level for some, it works better than you would think because it eliminates the nuisance of fighting the same battle over and over again.

While the sheer scope of this challenge and the amount of options is daunting, the inclusion of a very well designed tutorial and extremely helpful and detailed manual really helps to make the game accessible to novices.

Another feature that will wet the appetite of players is that the game allows players to battle against the computer, or against other humans over a local area network (LAN) or by transferring files using ftp, modems, E-mail, or computer bulletin boards. *Stars!* allows up to 16 players to engage in battle, and that number can be made up of any combination of computers and humans.

If there is a weak spot, it may be that the interface can be somewhat confusing at times, as windows must be opened and closed repeatedly in order to read all the displays needed each turn. But these are customizable and moveable within the main window, so after a bit of tweaking, you can find a solution that works.

Overall, *Stars!* is a winner, recalling the days when computer games were as much a tests of wits as they were entertainment. And though it may be a bit over the heads of some players, those seeking an intergalactic test that is rich in strategy need look no further.

—Brett Jones

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

88%

HIGHS: Rich in depth and flexibility, intuitive interface, excellent manual, unmatched tutorial.

LOWS: The number of command windows can be confusing. May not interest casual gamers.

BOTTOM LINE: Proves there can be more to games than cute characters and big explosions.

SimGolf

Category: Golf

Developer: Maxis

Publisher: Maxis, 2121 N. California Blvd., Suite 600, Walnut Creek, CA 94596 (800) 336-2947

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; 26MB hard-drive space; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

The familiar Sim name doesn't put Maxis any closer to the green with a game that doglegs into the rough from the very first hole.

If golf sims were golf shots, then *SimGolf* would be a triple bogie. Compared to this, Greg Norman choking on the last day of the 1996 Masters was a stellar performance. It plays about as well as Ian Baker-Finch at the British Open and looks as sharp as Fuzzy Zoeller after a couple of six packs.

If you're not a golfer and those references mean nothing to you, then try this one: *SimGolf* is the *Microsoft Soccer* of golf games. It may not be as bad as Lyriq's *Picture Perfect Golf*, but it's only a chip shot away.

At first glance, *SimGolf* appears to offer a number of novelties: it has a course editor, two good courses (Princeville and Rancho La Quinta), a novel swing-control interface, and some good viewing angles. Those elements, however, don't gel into a solid whole, and they don't make up for the game's considerable shortcomings.

First — and most notably — there are the graphics. A good golf sim *is* 80 percent graphics. Like it or not, this is what makes a sim and gives it a believable and credible feel. But *SimGolf*'s visuals are lacking. They're plain, flat, and uninspired. There are plenty of innovative zoom controls, as well as the ability to raise and lower the viewing angle, but they bring little to the game when what you're looking at is so mediocre. Golfer animations are jerky and badly merged with the scenery, and the interface bar that allows access to various features (viewing angles, game saves) is confusing. And it's all drawn onscreen very slowly.

Next up is the new control format, which is supposed to mimic the natural, mouse-controlled pool strokes in Interplay's *Virtual Pool* (a similar design is expected to make an appearance in Sierra's long-anticipated *Front Page Sports: Golf*, formerly known as Headgate's *The Golf Club*.) This is a mouse-based swing interface, in which you draw the club back by moving your mouse backwards, then swing by shoving the mouse forward very quickly. This worked for *Virtual Pool*; it doesn't work for *SimGolf*. No matter how hard I and a number of other testers practiced that swing, getting a straight shot with decent power was impossible. Even a bad golfer can get 200 yards out of a driver, but *SimGolf* makes even this low-water mark hard to achieve. Maybe we all lacked the necessary skills to make it work right, but it's more likely the whole system was poorly implemented and over-sensitive to minute variations in movement. If this is the replacement for the power bar, I'm not interested.

We're ready for your helicopter shot, Mr. Palmer: one novel effect in *SimGolf* is being able to see shots from very high or low angles.

***SimGolf*'s primitive graphics and herky-jerky golfers are one of its fatal drawbacks.**

Someone put boiling lava on the greens! That's gonna ruin the break!

The course designer is slightly better, but it's still a far cry from perfect. The powerful terrain-shaping tools you'd expect are absent, but you can still create a basic course without a ton of fuss. Big deal; once you've created it, you have to go play it with bad graphics and a worse interface, and that won't do at all.

No one respects Maxis and *SimCity* more than I. It is, truly, one of the landmarks of software design. But Maxis has had spotty results attempting to carry that success into other games, and *SimGolf* is a notable misfire. The problem is compounded by the high quality of other games in the field, which exaggerates the flaws, however small, of anything less than cutting-edge. *Links LS* and *PGA Tour* are super products, *British Open* and *Jack Nicklaus 4* both look like strong contenders, and even *Greg Norman Ultimate Golf* has its charms. If you're not ready to compete against that kind of field, then you don't belong in the game.

If you want the best-looking and playing game on the market, get *Links LS*. If you want a good course designer, wait for *Jack Nicklaus 4*. If you want outdated graphics, bad controls, and under-powered gameplay, then by all means pick up *SimGolf*.

— T. Liam McDonald

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

52%

HIGHS: Robert Trent Jones, Jr., does the video tips. The profile view is well done.

LOWS: Poor controls, ancient graphics, bad interface.

BOTTOM LINE: There are much better golf games out there.

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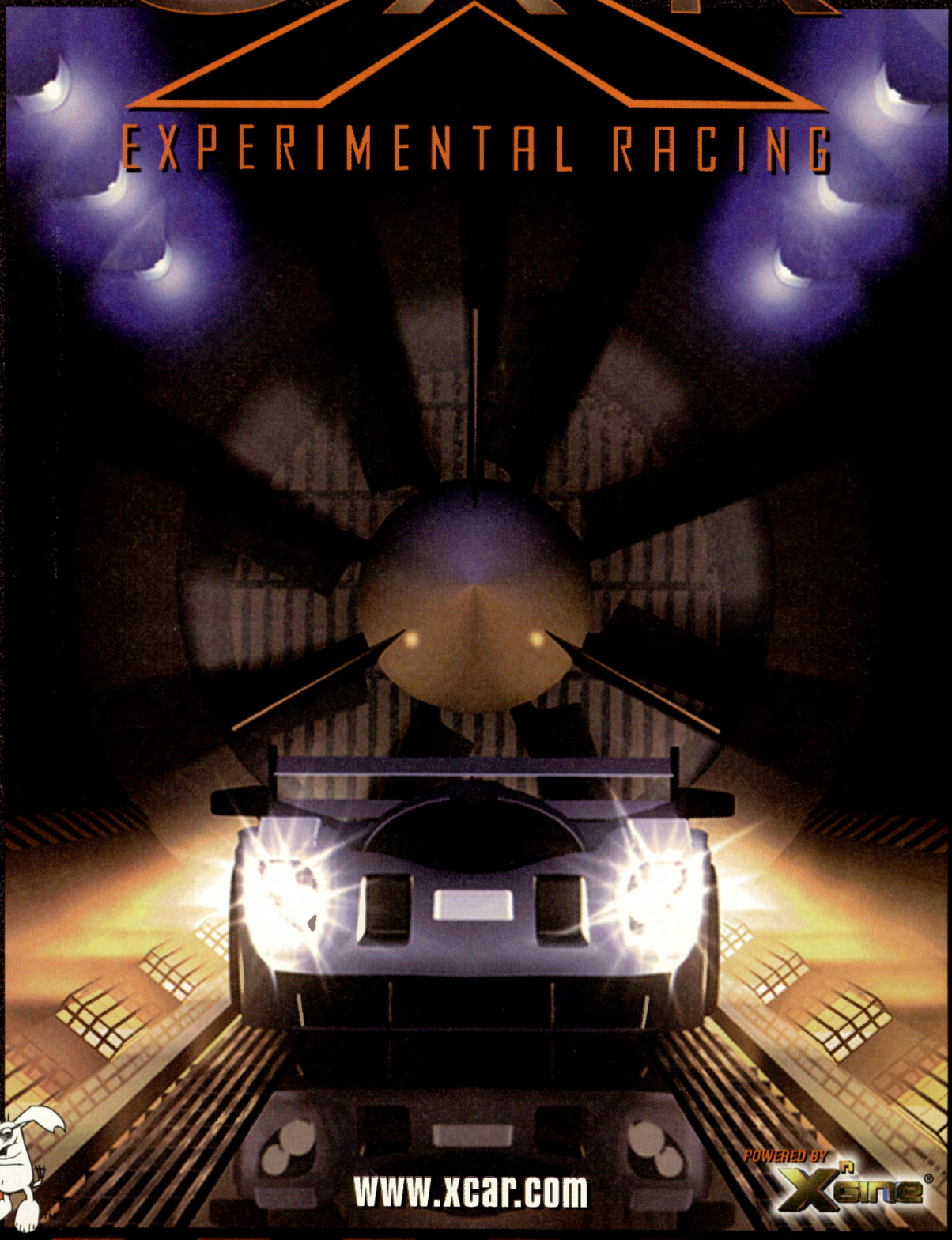

KIDS TO ADULTS
K-A
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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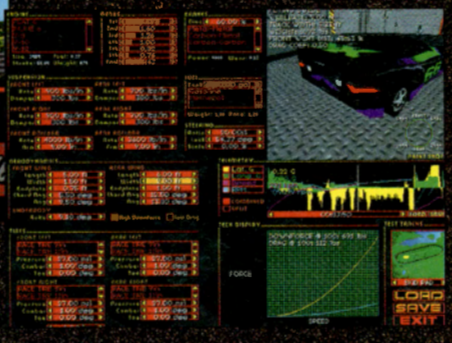

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Product Information Number 103

Timelapse

Category: Puzzle Adventure

Developer: GTE Entertainment

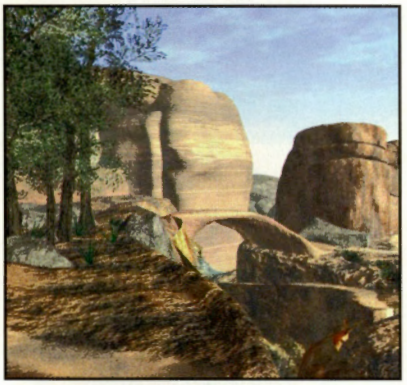
Publisher: GTE Entertainment, 1035 Corte Del Nogal, #100, Carlsbad, CA 92009 (800) GTE-TODAY

Required	We Recommend
2x CD-ROM drive; 486/DX66; 8MB RAM; Super VGA video card	4x CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 50MB free hard-drive space

Journey through the mysterious worlds of *Timelapse*, where the lush graphics are as abundant as the pointless puzzles.

By now, you've probably heard the news that GTE Entertainment is getting out of the PC games business for good, but before the company turned out the lights, it shipped *Timelapse*, yet another mish-mash puzzle adventure that combines lush graphics, an entertaining story line, and plenty of those aggravating parlor game puzzles.

In *Timelapse*, you're trying to track down your long lost colleague Professor Nichols. He's devoted his entire career to searching for proof of the lost city of Atlantis, and disappeared while investigating his findings on Easter Island. As you begin the game, you discover that the professor has been doing a little time traveling to ancient Mayan, Egyptian, and Anasazi civilizations; you must retrace his steps to find him. This means solving numerous puzzles on each of the worlds, including Atlantis (if you make it that far). As you puzzle your way to the big finale, you'll discover a link between all four worlds and have to save the lost people of Atlantis.



The beautiful graphics in the Anasazi world can't cover up for its pointless puzzles.

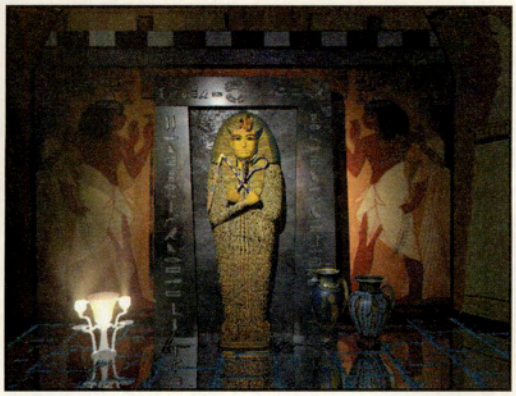
From a design standpoint, *Timelapse* offers nothing new over any other post-*Myst* puzzlers. Designed around rendered still screens, this is a workmanlike point-and-click affair where you can only go to certain areas and click on certain objects. You are all alone in the game except for occasional full-motion video clips of the loopy professor, the Guardian of Atlantis, and messages from people on each world.

The worlds of *Timelapse* are graphically beautiful, rich in detail, and full of puzzles. And the designers deserve credit for making many of these puzzles tie in to their respective worlds.

Designed for Microsoft Windows 95 TEEN AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

What you get to do: Shoot with gun, shoot with D-pad, shoot with D-pad and partner, shoot with gun and partner,

©1997 SegaSoft Inc. All rights reserved. SegaSoft and the SegaSoft logo are trademarks of SegaSoft Inc. Sega is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Sega Saturn is a trademark of Sega. Scud: The Disposable Assassin, the character



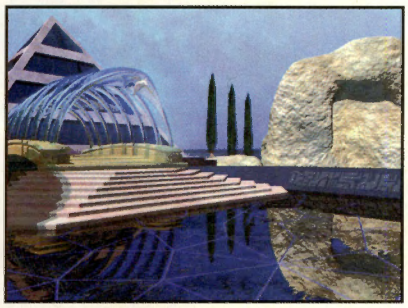
Some of *Timelapse*'s puzzles involve learning real-world systems. Setting the right combination to open this door requires translating Egyptian numerals.

For example, on the Egyptian world, you must figure out the Egyptian method of counting. And on the Anasazi world, you have to weave a Native American-style blanket. But, unfortunately, all these informative, world-based puzzles are thrown in with oh-so-exciting puzzle staples like a tile-sliding puzzle (yuck!), a variation of "rock, paper, scissors" (huh?), and a maze (yawn!). There are also some unusually difficult puzzles, like one in the Mayan world in which you must move a lizard around a crystal pyramid: The pyramid has 22 tiers, and you have to light each tier in a certain order. You click on six different skulls to move the lizard, and each skull represents a certain direction the lizard can move. Sound confusing? It is. There is a clue, if you can find it, but it's still a needless exercise in frustration.

When you come to the really tough puzzles, you will most likely discover that you're at a dead end. There are no alternate routes; *Timelapse* is mostly linear, and each world has several smaller puzzles that connect to the world's main puzzle, so you're stuck in that world until you solve those smaller puzzles. And, after wading through four CDs of puzzles to finally get to the big climax, it's a major disappointment. There are alternate endings (in a few of them, you end up dead), but none of them are satisfying. Plus, the final puzzle is relatively easy, requiring nothing more than shooting in the right direction and moving quickly through the world. For any gamer who's suffered through all of the good and bad puzzles nestled within *Timelapse*, this finale is nothing less than an insult.

If the game had concentrated more on the original context oriented puzzles found in each of the worlds, *Timelapse* may have been able to distinguish itself from those run-of-the-mill puzzlers that have become so annoying. The game isn't really that bad, but in today's competitive games industry, you need more than just "not bad" to survive — something that GTE found out the hard way.

—Lisa M. Howie



Well, you finally made it to Atlantis. Now you just have to figure out what happened to its people before the Guardian can stop you.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

60%

HIGHS: Beautiful graphics; intriguing story line; some interesting puzzles.

LOWS: Too many meaningless puzzles; restricted movement; linear gameplay; standard point-and-click affair.

BOTTOM LINE: The graphics and story line aren't enough to save *Timelapse*.

shoot with D-pad and gun, shoot with gun in each hand. What you don't get to do: Recite poetry, pick daisies, hug lovable stuffed animals.

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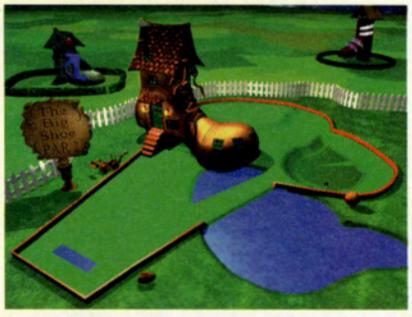

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Product Information Number 303

Maui Mallard in Cold Shadow

Category: Arcade

Developer: Disney Interactive

Publisher: Disney Interactive, 500 South Buena Vista Street, Burbank, CA 91521 (800) 426-3306

Required	We Recommend
2x CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM;10MB HD space; Win 3.1+; Super VGA	4xCD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; Gamepad

For the past couple of years now, developers on both sides of the console/PC fence have been trying to figure out a way to deliver their games to both audiences. While a select group of companies can now boast modest successes in this ongoing quest, *Maui Mallard in Cold Shadow* from Disney Interactive is destined to be one of those signposts that marks a wrong turn.

In its limited days as a console title, *Maui Mallard* was not a bad action/platform game; it pushed all the traditional buttons of the genre with a play-it-safe approach. But as this aging 16-bit convert hits the PC, it'll probably only appeal to younger or less experienced players with its predictable and familiar design. Instead of using innovation or style to revitalize the side-scrolling genre, *Maui Mallard in Cold Shadow* simply falls in line with the long list of other platform/action games that were considered average six years ago.

Without question, the best thing about *Cold Shadow* is the trademark Disney animation and character design, which is all top-notch. The game also boasts responsive control and solid level design throughout its 23 stages, but the gameplay itself is altogether predictable. If there were even a few original elements built into the game, it might be easier to get excited about; as it is, though, there's nothing to differentiate it from countless others. That being the case, *Cold Shadow* mainly serves as a reminder of how stale the genre has become.

Some gamers will enjoy any kind of videogame experience on the PC simply for the nostalgic quality; for those folks, *Cold Shadow* is as good as any of them. But if the game was meant to improve on this style of game in the face of competition from faster, better-looking, and deeper action games, it's not likely to find much success.

—Patrick Baggatta

Apparently banking on the Disney name and artistic style, *Cold Shadow* offers nothing special in the gameplay department.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

62%

HIGHS: Smooth animation and Disney's attention to character design.

LOWS: Reliance on traditional platform formula makes it predictable.

BOTTOM LINE: If you're nostalgic for a mindless action/platform thrill, this could be it — but there are much better action games for the PC.

Dragonheart: Fire and Steel

Win95

Category: Arcade

Developer: Funcom

Publisher: Acclaim, One Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542-2777 (516) 759-7800

Required	We Recommend
Win 95; 2x CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; 10MB HD space; Super VGA	Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card; Gamepad

From the earliest days of computer gaming, movie licenses have been popular fodder for game publishers eager to hitch their wagons to big-budget hits. A popular film can be seen by millions of people; most games are lucky to reach sales in the six-figure range. When a publisher makes the effort to really develop the ideas and themes of the chosen film, this gambit can work in a game's favor (most notably in LucasArts' Star Wars games and Bethesda's Terminator lineup). On the whole, though, film-based games typically have been among the most poorly conceived offerings on the market, hastily created and rushed out the door in time to ride the last waves of a film's popularity.

The latter seems to be the case with Acclaim's *Dragonheart*, a truly uninspired take on last year's popular fantasy film that starred Sean Connery and Dennis Quaid.

While the film's basic themes of knight's rebirth and a dragon's quest for eternal peace could've made for an exciting adventure in the right hands, Acclaim took the safe route, tossing out the script and banking on the gullibility of action fans everywhere. As a result, *Dragonheart: Fire and Steel* receives Acclaim's trademark side-scrolling treatment, where bland backdrops, hastily created characters, and sloppy controls dominate the experience. You walk toward the right-hand side of the screen, bash things, collect items, and walk to the right some more. Repeat procedure until thoroughly bored. Whatever spark of excitement was generated by the film license is quickly extinguished as you labor through level after level of pointless repetition, fighting sluggish controls, and reliving none of the elements of the film.

The biggest disappointment isn't the fact that it's a bad game (although you'd think Acclaim would've learned by now how to at least make a good side-scroller); it's the fact that *Dragonheart* attempts to hide all of its failings behind the appeal of a hit film. If you enjoyed the movie, you might be suckered into playing it, and if you're a fan of side-scrolling action games, the film's appeal may have been the deciding factor in bringing this one home. Now you know better.

—Todd Vaughn

Don't expect any big-screen delights in *Dragonheart*, a pointless side-scroller with little connection to the film.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

25%

HIGHS: Them dragons are good eatin'.

LOWS: Clumsy controls, repetitive gameplay, and chunky graphics. A terrible use of a good movie license.

BOTTOM LINE: It's pointless and it has little to do with the movie. Don't bother.

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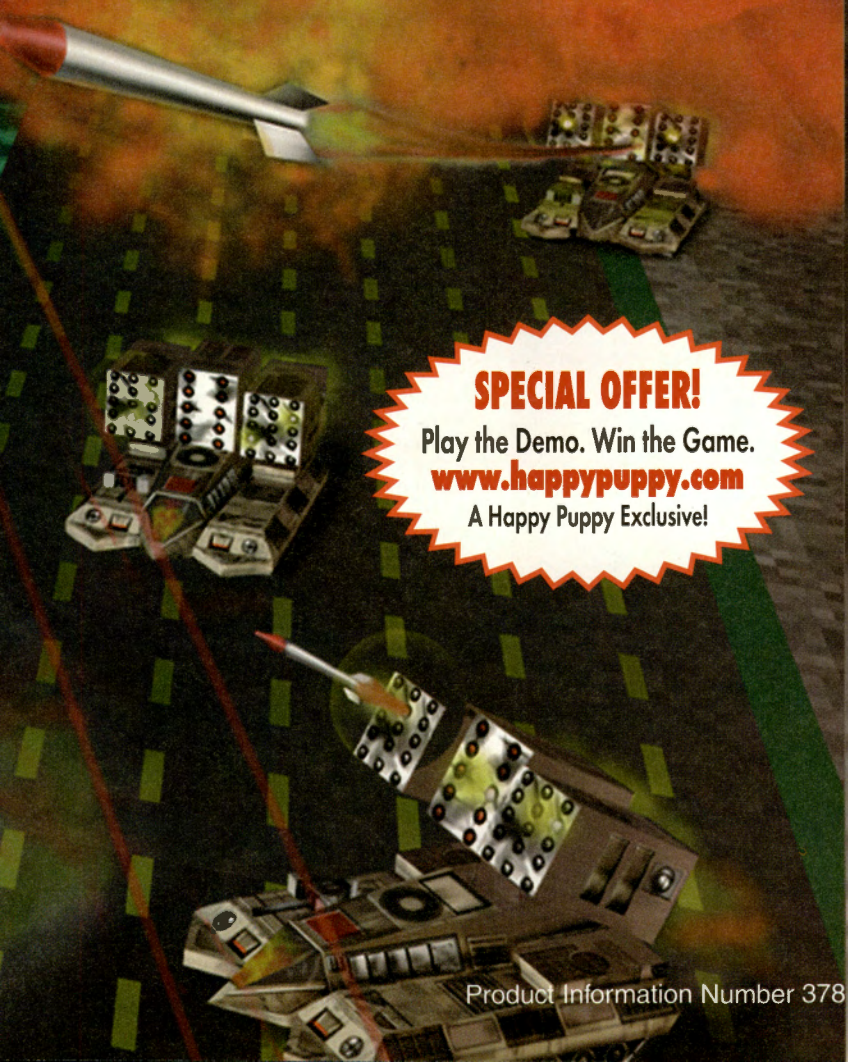

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Product Information Number 378

FPS Football Pro '97

Win95

Category: Sports Simulation

Developer: Sierra

Publisher: Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; Super VGA	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 100; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

Like a team of aging veterans with five-year contracts, this Sierra title can slog through the season, but it won't make it to the playoffs.

My first encounter with Sierra's Front Page Sports series was in 1993, with Dynamix's original *Front Page Sports: Football Pro*, which was just about the apex of computer football gaming. It ranked right up there in my top three games of all time, along with *Doom* and *Civilization*. It's been great for many years since then — what other football game gives you trades, retirements, career-ending injuries, a Hall of Fame, and uniforms that can be customized down to your sock color?

But except for a few touches — like the sock colors — most of these features have been in the game for three or four years now. What's new in *Football Pro '97* are the uniform numbers, player names on the screen, and one of the worse DOS-to-Windows 95 conversions ever released by a major publishing company. For years, this was the best football game on the market, but the '96 version only held the line, and the '97 version is actually a step backwards.

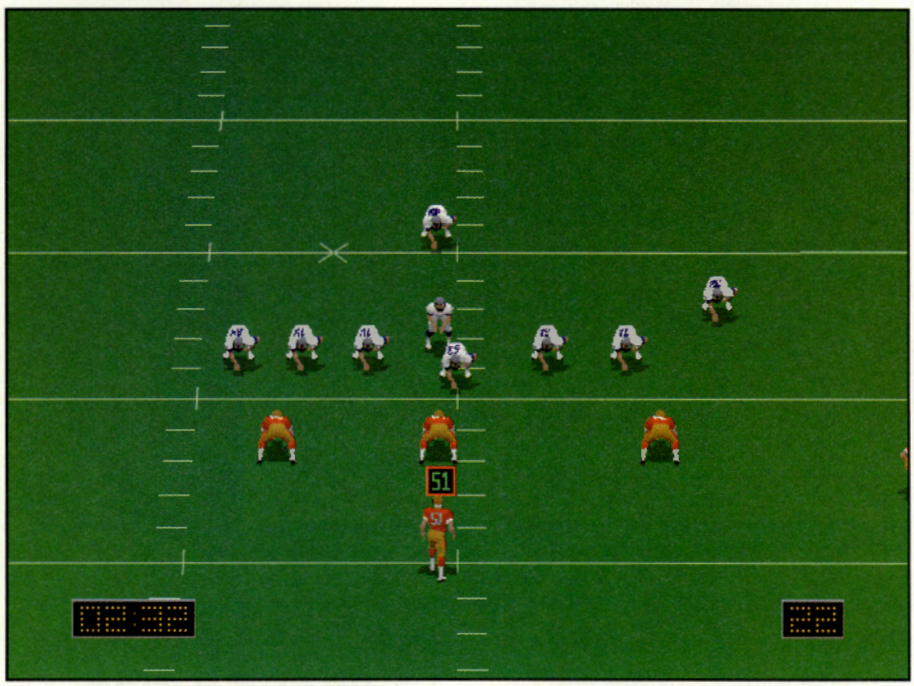
There's no need to adjust your television set; these black spots represent rain. The animations feel slow compared to the older, smooth DOS versions.

You can still run your old teams and plays by using the update utilities — some of which must be retrieved from the Sierra web site. You can still beat the artificial intelligence with a little misdirection and by overloading the flanks or stacking receivers on one side and running the quarterback around the other side. There were a lot of ways to beat the old game, too, but — and this is the key — in order to do so, you had to think. You had to draw up the plays and practice them; in short, you learned more about football than you ever could from just watching TV or playing action-oriented football games.

But that no longer applies. You can't run up the middle in this version, because the defensive linemen have some sort of magnetic powers; as soon as your man is touched, he's down. And if you can't run up the middle, you can't call it a good game of football. Too often, your ball carrier and quarterback get snagged on each other in the backfield, the way the playing pieces in those old electric football games would bounce off each other for no reason.

Then the defensive line comes in and puts you on the carpet, because the blockers are terrible, leaving wide lanes open for blitzing linebackers. If you have a fast quarterback, you can still get real running yardage by overloading one side and then rolling out to the weak side and running for the first-down marker. I'll admit I abused this design flaw in earlier versions of the game, but this time around it was the only way I could consistently make running yardage.

If you've played earlier versions of *Football Pro*, you might wonder why



Several years and one operating system later, Sierra's football series falls short of its former glory.

your players are suddenly in a little black box, with ugly Windows menu bars around them. That's because you've got to be running Windows 95 in its minimum 640x480 resolution to get the "full screen" game; otherwise, you get a sort of letterboxed version of the game. The new game's animations feel slower and jerkier than the old, smooth DOS versions, and the game couldn't find its own plays unless it was installed in the default C:\SIERRA\FBPRO97 directory. You've also got to edit the game's icon yourself if you want the game to start in full-screen mode.

The play-calling screen, like most of the other screens, looks exactly the same as in older versions (not counting the distracting Windows ephemera), but it's actually less user-friendly. Used to be you could double-click on a play, and you'd automatically break huddle. Now you must carefully double-click, then choose "Break" in order to get into the game. Sounds like a minor quibble, but if you've played older versions where play calling used to be a snap, these inexplicable delays are annoying.

Simulating league games is at least as slow as it was four years ago, and even though Win 95 normally is a fairly robust multi-tasking environment, whenever I simulated league games and minimized the game, it was virtually impossible to run any other applications, even something as simple as Notepad. Why bother making it a Windows 95 title at all?

Furthermore, in order to change the sound quality from 11Mhz to 22Mhz (CD quality), or the player animations from 8 frames to 16, you have to manually edit an .INI file, a fact left out of the manual. That's not good planning.

So what's a football gamer to do? You could wait for the patches and hope for the best. Alternatively, you could go with this game in coach mode only when you're in the mood for league simming, and use *Madden 97* or something similar when you want no-brainer action play. But if you can't afford that, your best bet is to scrounge up a used, pre-'96 copy of *Front Page Sports: Football* and go with that.

The game is certainly more playable, more attractive, and better supported that the recent *Front Page Sports: Baseball* fiasco, and the technical support staff has been far more responsive — they had the first patch in the beta-testing stage as we went to press and went so far as to extend the money-back guarantee to thirty days after the second patch is released.

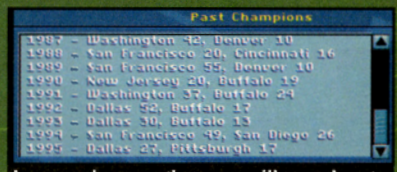
However, such measures wouldn't be necessary if they weren't rushing a product onto Windows 95 only a year after the last version's release. One good release in two years would've been much better than two bad ones: there's no reason Sierra couldn't sell a stat-roster-league update disk in the off-year and do a major re-release of the game a year later instead of rushing out a buggy version every year. Of course, this would be easier if they didn't include the year in the title, thus dating an otherwise good game engine that really needs at least 18 months of revision and testing before it can be considered sufficiently improved to justify loyal customers shelling out another $50.

This is a once-great game series in serious decline. It's not surprising that none of the names in this year's manual appears in the original credits of several years ago (other than Pat Cook, who was in the *Football Pro '97* manual) only gets credit for "Original Concept." Sierra will have to make a serious commitment of resources, talent, and development time to bring this game to its full potential in the new 32-bit environment and win back the many fans who've been let down.

—Jason Bates

Still the best?

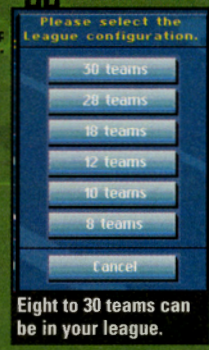
Over the years, the primary strength of the FPS: Football Pro series has been its many custom options. You can tailor plays, teams, player ratings, and leagues to your heart's content, allowing you to simulate any modern NFL year, fantasy draft leagues, and various college divisions. Most of these features have survived intact in the '97 version.



In career leagues, the game will record past champions and Hall of Fame players.

You can tailor your uniform to your own tastes.

Coach and team plans, profiles, and draft settings are all customizable.



Eight to 30 teams can be in your league.

You can even choose your hometown from dozens of U.S. cities, affecting the weather in your schedule.

The VCR mode lets you save highlights and zoom into the action.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: The original design is there; you won't find a better way to make leagues and plays.

65%

LOWS: Dubious multi-player action; numerous bugs; Windows screen clutter; DOS hangovers.

BOTTOM LINE: You'd be better off with an earlier DOS version of the game.

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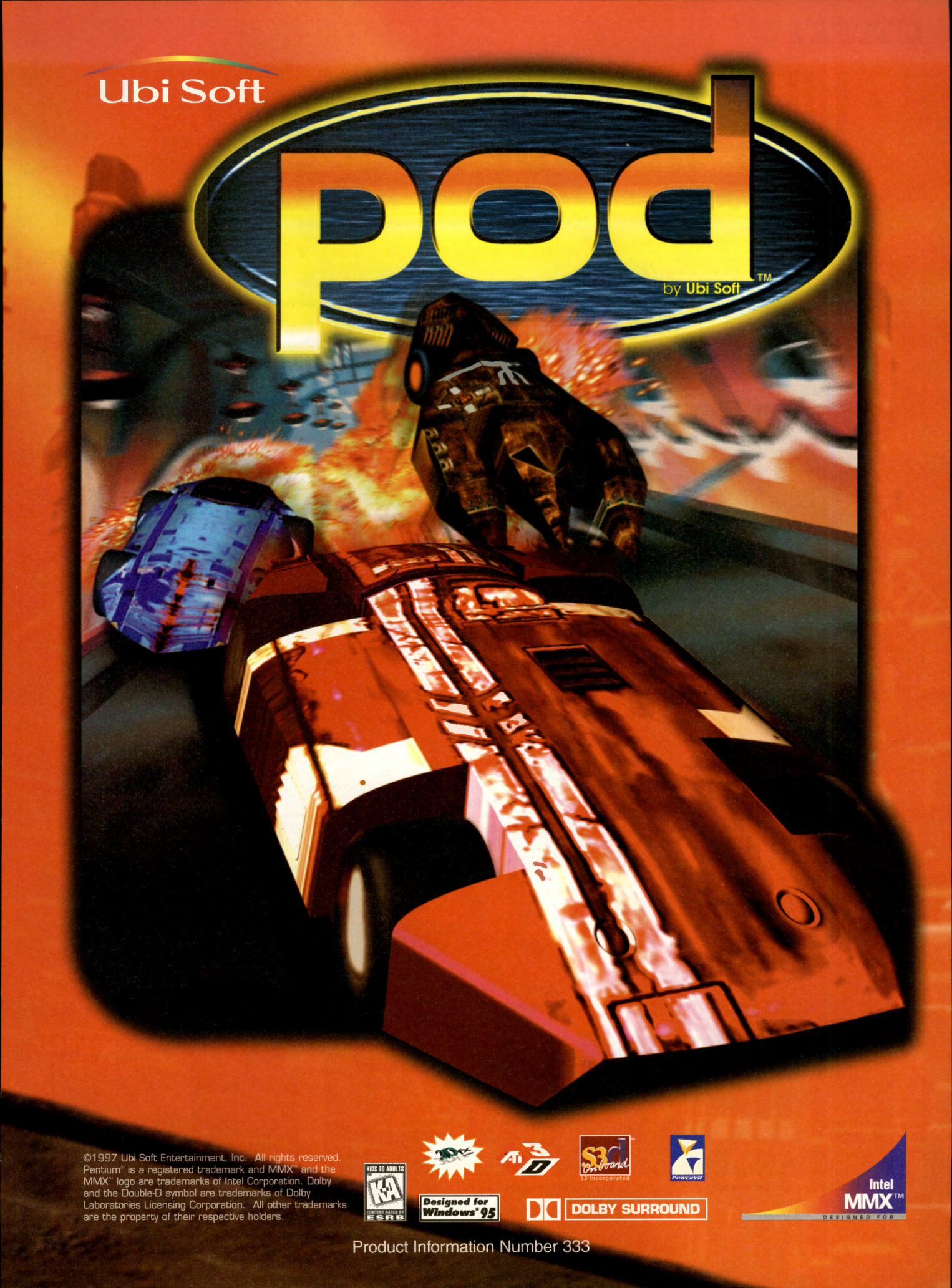

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KIDS TO ADULTS
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Designed for Windows® 95

DOLBY SURROUND

Intel MMX™ DESIGNED FOR

Product Information Number 333

WWF In Your House

Category: Arcade

Developer: Sculptured Software, Inc.

Publisher: Acclaim, One Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542-2777 (516) 759-7800

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; 28MB hard-drive space; VGA	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; Supported sound card; IPX network

Do you channel-surf past pro wrestling on TV with a sigh of disgust? You might become a fan after three rounds with this silly game.

As I loaded up *WWF In Your House*, I prepared myself for what I figured would be the most ridiculous PC game in history. Personally, I've never quite grasped the nuances of professional wrestling, in which large, sweaty men in spandex pretend to pummel each other in a violently choreographed display of testosterone. I expected this title to be mediocre and as mentally devoid as the so-called sport itself. And danged if I wasn't wrong — this game is *fun*.

At your control are ten of the mightiest grapplers on the World Wrestling Federation circuit — from teen heart-throb Shawn Michaels to the cross-dressing Golddust. Instead of being confined to fighting on a single plane as in *Street Fighter*, you have complete freedom to move anywhere in (or out of) the rings, which are all set in suitably wacky locales that fit the wrestlers' personalities. The Undertaker fights in a mausoleum, while The Heart Break Kid wrestles in a nightclub, complete with a band in the background singing his theme song, "Boy Toy."

And what a wacky bunch of moves these guys have. Instead of being set in a world where the laws of physics apply, *In Your House* features uppercuts that send your opponents sailing into the air a la *Mortal Kombat*, and ridiculously funny finishing pins — *In Your House*'s version of fatalities — you can use to butcher your opponent. It's genuinely funny stuff.

The cross-dressing Golddust unleashes a pile of hurt on The Ultimate Warrior.

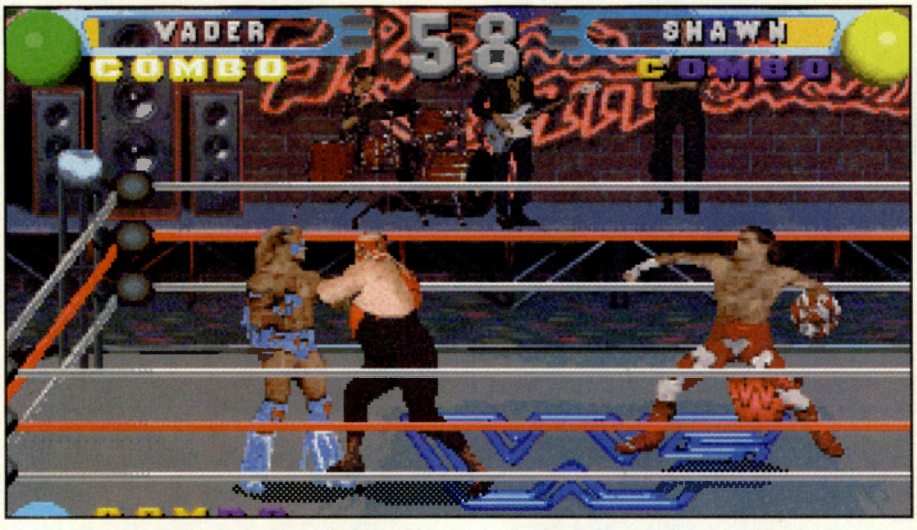
Tying everything together is a remarkably tight control system. Four buttons are used for punching and kicking, and two for blocking and running. Combining these buttons lets you rack up the combo hits and score multiple moves on an unsuspecting opponent. Also easily performed are headbutts, suplexes, and overhead lifts that result in spectacular head-smashes. The only downside to the control scheme is that you *must* use a keyboard if you really want to master the game — *In Your House* maps a 6-button layout to the standard 4-button PC gamepad (and it doesn't support more sophisticated controllers like the Gravis Gamepad Pro). You can *kinda* pull it off by bashing two of the buttons at the same time to trigger the block button, but it's just not worth it.

Head-to-head modes tend to lengthen the shelf life of most fighting games, and *In Your House* is no exception. But why play with just one person when you can play with three? *In Your House* supports four-player, simultaneous, tag-team network play over an IPX network, and it's a total blast. There are plenty of multi-player modes to choose from — you can team up with a friend to take on the ten computer challengers, or choose an AI buddy to help you squash your opponent. And when you start up a real four-player game, it's total mayhem, every man for himself.

Unfortunately, the game is dragged down a bit by its graphics, which are quite bad. Those rasslers don't look too good in low-res VGA; they bring back nasty flashbacks of the over-pixelated *Catfight*. But thanks to their absurd get-ups and wacky outfits, you can usually differentiate between who's who. The audio seems a bit scratchy, but the goofy commentary from the refs ("Oh my!" "It's *only* in WWF!" "Amazing!") make up for it.

Acclaim has earned my respect for taking a completely ridiculous license and making it immensely playable. The game may look crummy, but the gameplay *has* to make you smile — especially if you have a taste for pro wrestling buried deep down inside. Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to go practice Owen Hart's "Northern Lights Suplex."

— Colin Williamson



"Play the pain game with Vader, you will lose!" Because of his versatile vocabulary, we've actually considered giving Vader an editorial position here at the offices.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Manages to be totally stupid *and* totally enjoyable; excellent network play.

79%

LOWS: This game deserved better graphics than it got.

BOTTOM LINE: Takes the dumbest phenomenon on cable television and makes it fun.

Baldies

Category: Strategy

Developer: Creative Edge Software Ltd.

Publisher: Panasonic Interactive Media, 4701 Patrick Henry Dr., Ste. 1101, Santa Clara, CA 95054 (408) 653-1898

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 4MB RAM; 2MB hard-drive space; VGA; Mouse	Windows 95; Pentium; 8MB RAM

This quirky little game will have you begging for more — more information on how to play, that is.

After being tossed around for years like the proverbial hot potato, this gaming oddity has finally found its way onto the PC. Delivered with a cartoonish flair, *Baldies* is a real-time strategy game of a different sort; you won't find a heavy militaristic theme or science fiction-inspired plot, instead, the ultimate goal of these shiny-domed guys is to take out the Hairies, a sinister race of beings that have (ick) hair growing out of their heads.

And from the opening animations, down to the actual missions, it's all very cute, to be sure. The designers have put lots of little details into the game to try to keep the action fun and fresh. The baldies change clothing to fit the world they're in (the buildings and inventions change too), and the animations that accompany their actions give these little guys a lot of personality — whether they're jumping on the bed in the break room or relieving themselves on the side of buildings as they wander outside — you'll probably find yourself chuckling at their antics at some point during a game. However, after playing for a while, that cuteness tends to wear off when the inevitable frustration rears its ugly head.

First off, although the manual explains much of the game, it neglects important details. For example, to create a new building, you must have enough builder power in your meter (one of four power meters — the other three are scientist, worker, and soldier). But, for some reason, the manual neglects to mention which action makes building proceed quicker — keeping more builders in the house upgrading it or more builders outside gathering materials. The online tutorial contributes a lot when you're first starting out, saying things like "Animals can trigger some inventions" or "Soldiers in strong houses make bullets for outside soldiers." However, a simple statement like "You need a barracks so soldiers can make grenades" strikes frustration in even the stoutest gamer when you create the barracks and yet have no idea how to utilize the grenades you supposedly have access to.

Instead of controlling groups or single units a la *WarCraft II* or *Command & Conquer*, the baldies simply wander around the field, intermingling with the enemy, and generally just walk randomly across the map. They pay no attention to where they're going, even to the point of setting off the traps you've laid for the enemy.

Here's where the "strategy" comes in. You have to think about where to build traps to catch the enemy as they wander about, but far enough away so your baldies aren't killed by mistake. You need to weigh the consequences of taking your workers out of the recreation/reproduction room and turning them into scientists to lay more traps. However, it's a strategy based solely on luck, which no good strategist would ever want to trust in a battle situation.

The visual differences between the Windows 95 version and the DOS version make playing it in Windows 95 a must. However, you have to get the DirectX compatibility patch from the *Baldies* web site at *www.baldies.com* in order to run the game under Windows 95.

The key to succeeding in *Baldies* is good reproduction. Get those baldies working making other baldies.

The game has a lot of variety, with several worlds and atmospheres to play in, and over 100 levels to try out. But the frustration level simply overwhelms the fun factor when you're dealing with units that don't do what you want them to do and an unclear understanding of how some of the game mechanics work.

Baldies succeeds at putting a unique twist on an over-done genre. It's cute, funny, and a blast to play — but only for the first few levels. When the computer opponent starts presenting a real challenge, in its slow, methodical way, the limitations of the game, and the manual, become abundantly clear. And unless you're the type of player who, when you play pool, just hits the cue ball somewhere and hopes a ball of your color enters a pocket, you'll soon switch over to something like *Red Alert*, where you can really control the units.

—Mike Wolf

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

55%

HIGHS: Cute. A new twist.

LOWS: Much of the game relies on luck. You have little control over the baldies, which is very frustrating.

BOTTOM LINE: It's a great attempt at making something fresh and funny, but it falls flat after the first few levels.

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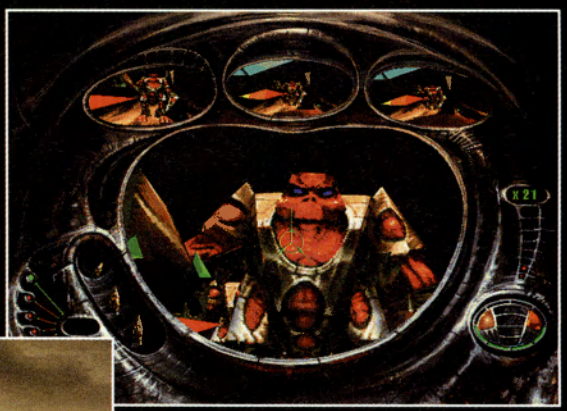

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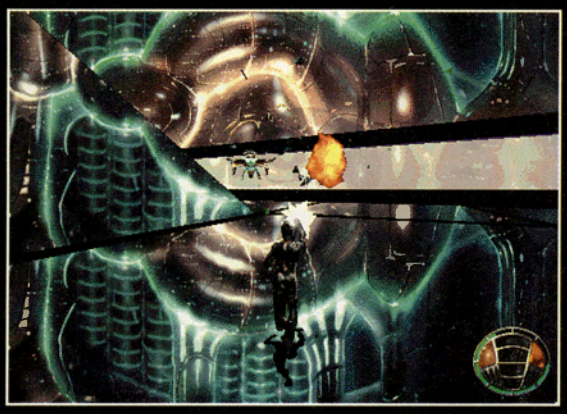

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Product Information Number 272

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M.A.X.: Mechanized Assault & Exploration

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Strategy

Developer: Interplay

Publisher: Interplay, 16815 Von Karman Ave., Irvine, CA 92606 (714) 553-6678

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 22MB hard-drive space; Super VGA; Mouse	Pentium 75; 16MB RAM; 64MB HD space; Sound Blaster or compatible sound card; Modem or IPX network

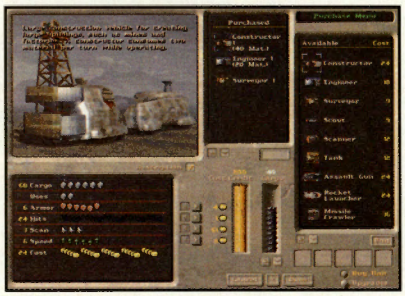
Long-time strategy fans and recent converts alike will love this versatile game of futuristic warfare.

***M.A.X.* features attractive graphics and a top-down view, but don't mistake it for a real-time strategy game, such as *Command & Conquer* or *WarCraft II*.**

Let's get one thing straight from the start: *M.A.X.* isn't a real-time strategy game, and it doesn't pretend to be. *M.A.X.* recalls those bygone days when a strategy game with pretty graphics and a science fiction setting wasn't necessarily a *Command & Conquer* clone. So you won't see any comparisons to *Red Alert* or *WarCraft II* in this review.

What is *M.A.X.*? It's a wonderfully well-designed game that offers a huge number of strategic possibilities and gameplay options, all backed up by a friendly interface, a helpful tutorial, attractive graphics, and effective sounds. Simply put, *M.A.X.* is a lot of fun.

About 15 pages of the 100-page *M.A.X.* manual are devoted to the game's back-story. It has something to do with humanity's colonization of the galaxy with the help of a mysterious group called the Concord — and it matters not at all. When the game heats up, you won't need to know who the Star Lords are; all you'll need to know is how close the enemy is and whether or not your Gun Turrets and Missile Launchers can hold off his Tanks long enough for your Heavy Vehicle Plant to crank out a few Mobile Rocket Launchers.



You begin some scenarios by buying your starting units on this Purchase Menu.

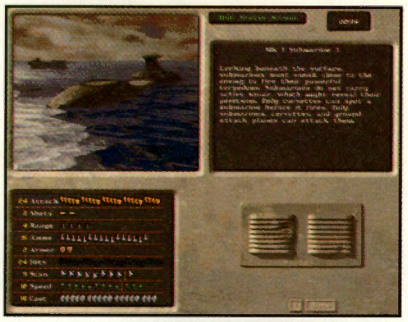
Your objective in *M.A.X.* usually revolves around points — you win some battles by having the most points at the end of a fixed number of turns, while other battles are won by the first side to accumulate a given number of points (it's a subtle distinction, but it can make a big difference in the way you play the game). Those points are hard to come by; since you're building colonies on hostile planets, you get one point per turn for every domed Eco-Sphere you have in operation, but naturally it's not as simple as building rows of Eco-Spheres and waiting for victory. Eco-Spheres need people to tend them, which means you'll have to build Habitats for your workers; the spheres also need power, which means you'll have to build Generators. Of course, Generators use fuel, so you'll need Mining Stations, and you'll have to be sure the stations aren't spending so much time gathering fuel that they can't produce the raw materials you'll need for building more structures and military units.

Defending your Eco-Spheres is no simple matter, either, but it's crucial. Lose any of the supporting structures to enemy action, and your Eco-Sphere shuts down, producing no points until you can get it back online. Lose the Eco-Sphere itself, and you forfeit all the points it has generated since it was built.

As you must've guessed by now, *M.A.X.* is a very complex game, but that doesn't mean it's complicated. The game's manual is nothing to write home about — in fact, it leaves some vital concepts unexplained — but it's supplemented by a good tutorial and an online, context-sensitive help system. Fifteen training missions explain the game, starting out very simply and introducing new concepts at a pace anyone can handle. When you're ready to go solo, you can get detailed information on just about any button or display by clicking the mouse on a question-mark icon, then clicking on the item in question.

Right-clicking on a unit or structure brings up a full-screen explanation of its capabilities and properties (attack strength; range; armor; speed, etc.). This is especially handy, since *M.A.X.* features a whopping 62 different units and structures, many of which you can improve by buying upgrades or doing research (at a research facility you build, of course).

And all those units aren't just window-dressing; they all have their purposes in the game. The Infiltrator, for instance, is a foot soldier whose weak attack and light armor might make him



You can access detailed information about any unit at any time with a click of the right-hand mouse button.

seem ineffective — until you factor in his ability to move unseen behind enemy lines and disable or steal rival units. The lowly Infantry man would appear even less useful, if he weren't the only unit that can spot Infiltrators before they attack. *M.A.X.* strikes a chess-like balance among its playing pieces that should be the envy of any strategy game designer; the result is that there are no useless units, and there's no single super-unit that guarantees victory in every situation.

No single strategy will work every time, either; the variety of missions ensures that you'll be running into all kinds of different situations. Although your objective in most missions is to accumulate points and/or limit your rivals' scores by trashing their Eco-Spheres, other battles ignore scoring entirely and challenge you to destroy an enemy structure within a fixed number of turns, or simply defend your own base for a given period. Even the point-based scenarios call for a variety of strategies; if the goal is to be the first to score 60 points, you'll have to take a very different approach to the game than if your objective is to have the highest score after 200 turns.

In addition to the expected campaign made up of related missions, 24 stand-alone missions and a custom mission generator add to *M.A.X.*'s replay value.

The stand-alone missions present some fascinating challenges; in "Man vs. Machine," for instance, you're limited to human units (Infiltrators and Infantry), while the enemy has access to Tanks and Mobile Rocket Launchers. You start the battle with more Eco-Spheres than the enemy, so a good defense will win the day — but it's up to you to figure out how a handful of foot soldiers can hold off mechanized armor. In another scenario, you start with tons of different units and structures, but you have no way to produce more; instead, you've got a bunch of gold you can spend on upgrading your existing forces. The enemy base is right next door to yours, so combat is imminent. The idea is to figure out which upgrades will let you make the most of what you've been handed.

The downside to these carefully-created stand-alone missions is that too many of them play out like puzzles. There are, at most, only a few narrow paths to victory, so winning is more a matter of figuring out the "trick" than managing your resources better than the enemy.

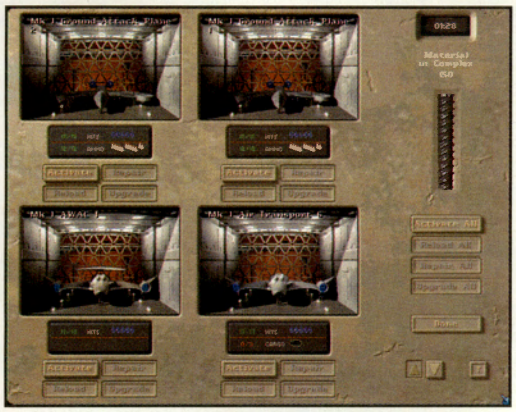
If you're looking for more straightforward battles, you can create them with the custom mission generator. It lets you choose one of 24 maps on which you can engage as many as three computer-controlled opponents. You can also set the strength of the artificial intelligence; determine how rich the planet's resources are; and establish victory conditions. Finally, you can choose to fight for one of eight warring clans (each with its own strengths and weaknesses). It'd be nice if *M.A.X.* came with a full-featured scenario editor, but the custom mission generator is the next best thing.

Naturally, *M.A.X.* has the traditional complement of multi-player options. You can generate custom missions or choose from 12 pre-designed scenarios, and play them against as many as three buddies via local-area network or hot-seat (or one opponent via modem or serial cable). *M.A.X.* is refreshingly stable in multi-player mode; unfortunately, there's no built-in support for Internet connections, so gamers without access to a LAN will be limited to a single online opponent.

M.A.X. has been known to lock up on rare occasions — especially if you're in Windows with programs running in the background. Fortunately, it automatically saves your game at the end of every turn, so you'll never lose much progress, even if you forget to make your own saves.

The year is still young, and no one can say exactly what it will bring to PC gaming, but *M.A.X.* already looks like one of the best turn-based strategy games of 1997. Its combination of strategic complexity with user-friendliness and high replay value make it the game to beat. If you're ready for something deeper (and considerably more challenging) than the current crop of real-time strategy games, give *M.A.X.* a shot.

— Dan Bennett



Park your military units in structures like this aircraft hangar, and you'll be able to reload, repair, and upgrade them.

M.A.X.IMUM INTELLIGENCE

As a scenario progresses, your information needs will change. *M.A.X.* makes it easy to tailor the display to your liking with a continuously variable zoom feature and map overlays that show damage, ammo levels, scan ranges, names, and more for every unit on the battlefield.

M.A.X.'s unique zoom slider lets you see the map at any level of magnification, from a view of the whole planet right down to a close-up on a single unit.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Great balance among units and structures; tough AI; multi-player options; loads of replay value.

90%

LOWS: No Internet support; manual should have been better.

BOTTOM LINE: This could end up being the best turn-based strategy game of 1997.

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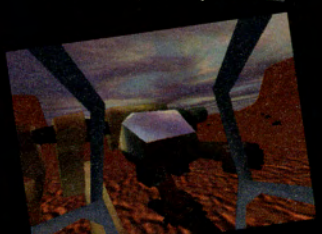

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Product Information Number 343

Iron Man/X-O Manowar In Heavy Metal

Category: Arcade

Developer: Realtime

Publisher: Acclaim Entertainment, One Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542-2777 (516) 759-7800

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; 2MB hard-drive space; Super VGA	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; Gamepad; Supported sound card

Acclaim resurrects two dead superheroes, and alien goons line up for the slaughter. And you thought it couldn't get any worse...

After years of trailing behind videogame consoles when it came to bringing home arcade action, the PC has finally come into its own, providing more than enough power to run console games in all their glory. Thanks to careful attention by companies like Psygnosis, Eidos Interactive, and Electronic Arts, we've even seen plenty of cases where the PC version of a console game outshines any other system's version.

But this newfound power isn't without its downside: now every two-bit company with a console game has decided to try and recoup some losses by doing a straight port to the PC, regardless of quality or relevance. The real question is this: Do we really need all this crap shoved on us, when even the console guys didn't want it?

In keeping with this disturbing trend, Acclaim, the company that brought us *Judge Dredd* and *Batman Forever*, has dropped a rung on the license ladder, going from movies to comic books and turning out *Iron Man/X-O Manowar In Heavy Metal*. Not only does it have one of the most unwieldy titles ever, it's about as bad as a game can get.

Not only is it bad, it's basically pointless. Both of the characters chosen to star in this side-scrolling disaster are dead in their current incarnations. Iron Man, the old Marvel Korean War vet, and X-O Manowar, Valiant Comics' star, have both met untimely deaths. At least a new man has stepped in to fill the prior Iron Man's shoes, but X-O has been hung out to dry — permanently. Still, the game plods on.

The plot for this turkey involves Crescendo, X-O Manowar's arch nemesis, and Baron Zemo, Iron Man's foil du evil. The two have joined forces to collect the shattered shards of the Cosmic Cube, or Rock Of Reality. Once all of the shards have been assembled, they will have achieved ultimate power, or something like that. They've sent Crescendo's legions of Spider Aliens — the ones who originally kidnapped X-O — to wreak havoc on Earth. You pick either Iron Man or X-O (or both if it's a two-player game) to combat them. It's an easy choice, really, since they're essentially the same character, and they both do exactly the same thing.

Boasting some of the most incredibly limited animations and drab backdrops we've ever seen, *Iron Man* is possibly one of the worst side-scrolling games to date.

In this aggrivating side-scroller you'll have your choice of two nearly identical but somewhat different superheroes.

You guide your chosen superhero avatar left or right across a two-dimensional battlefield, punching, kicking, and shooting whatever foes you find waiting to be shot. There's no artificial intelligence to speak of, since each enemy character simply runs through a preset four-frame animation cycle. Even the bosses, who've been programmed to be way too tough (presumably to make up for the absence of actual AI), run through pre-programmed patterns. True, these are the same ingredients that propelled Earthworm Jim to superstar status, but the utter lack of innovation, humor, style, and challenge in this game leaves nothing but the outdated comic book license to carry the game.

Iron Man/X-O Manowar In Heavy Metal, with its shoddy graphics and sluggish control, is representative of the nadir of PC gaming. It's the ultimate quick-buck port, and it plays that way.

— Adam Douglas

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

15%

HIGHS: Umm, I'm thinking...

LOWS: Poor graphics; sluggish control; no AI to speak of; lack of innovation; outdated comic book license.

BOTTOM LINE: Avoid this dog like it has rabies — and don't say we didn't warn you.

DeathDrome

Win95

Category: Action

Developer: Zipper Interactive

Publisher: Viacom New Media, 1515 Broadway, New York, NY 10036 (800)469-2539

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 75; 16MB RAM	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 100; Supported sound card; Gamepad

Fast and furious but seriously flawed, *DeathDrome* is an action game with little replay value.

How will future societies deal with crime and delinquency? The consensus, at least among computer game designers, is that criminals will be forced to battle each other to the death in brightly colored, futuristic arenas (and, apparently, forced to listen to rave music while they're fighting for survival). That's the premise behind *DeathDrome*, a fast-moving, futuristic motorcycle shoot-'em-up from Viacom that puts you on a bike and challenges you to compete against seven other riders in a maze of walls, ramps, and power-ups.

The basic gameplay is fairly fresh and initially compelling; you've got to score a set number of kills within a couple of minutes if you want to move on to the next stage. Fail, and the game ends, although you can use a level code to restart at the same level rather than starting over from scratch. Each level (or domain, in *DeathDrome* terms) requires three victories to advance, and there are eight domains in all.

Your cycle is armed with lasers and a glowing barrier you can deploy from the rear of your bike, producing an effect similar to the light-cycles in *Tron*, although it won't last as long or reach as far. With bogies on your tail, the *Tron* wall is an excellent weapon, and by threading the needle between two battling bikers, you can often get them both to ram into your wall.

Besides that basic weaponry, you have access to a number of power-ups that help you get the job done. There are brief invulnerability screens, whip lasers that lock onto a target, immobilizing disrupters, and turbo speed chargers; but by far the most useful power-ups (and the only ones you should actively search for) are the guided missiles. Also effective, but far rarer, are the impulse bombs: once you trigger those, everyone in a close radius around you is torched.

Ramming works effectively on weakened opponents, but you'll take damage, too. The most effective way to rack up kills is to lurk around the entry/exit zone.

The game moves very quickly, and it's a lot of fun to play — at least the first time through. The graphics are varied from level to level to retain interest, although there's only so much variety the terrain can have: ramps, ledges, and other jumps. The final victory screen is less than rewarding — just a couple of screens of text and a chance to go back and play the same levels again.

As a whole, *DeathDrome* would still be a decent, enjoyable game if not for one severe design flaw. The rules of the game create this situation: first, you must kill a certain number of enemies per level in order to advance to the next level; once you get your obligatory number of kills, you must head for the exit dome before game time elapses.

Now, every time you or an enemy dies, a new bike reappears on the exit dome, which doubles as the entrance dome. The problem: it's very easy to win any level if you just hang out around the exit/entrance dome, lock on each regenerating biker and score a kill, and then hang around and wait for the next new bike. Following this plan, you can easily wipe our your required number of kills with two or three minutes to spare on virtually every level. Since there are no difficulty settings in the game, there's no way around this problem.

This isn't cheating, it's just exploiting a game-design flaw. After all, the whole premise of the game is that you must find out the quickest and most efficient way of killing a large number of enemies before time expires — well, this is it. But the end result is the same as if you'd cheated: you'll finish the game far too soon.

Other than this egregious flaw, *DeathDrome* is fast and furious — and if you can restrain yourself from using the sure-fire solution, it can even be challenging. It was certainly the most enjoyable drive-and-shoot game I've played recently, at least until I found the weak link in the design. There's quite an adrenaline rush to be had from realizing you only have one minute to kill two more bikes and race back to the exit area before the arena self-destructs. If *DeathDrome* could just be patched so that dead players reappeared at random locations, this could be a very challenging and entertaining game.

— Jason Bates

The white light cycle lays down a power wall in the purple bike's path. Though it looks like something out of Tron, in fact the walls aren't long enough, and they curve.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

68%

HIGHS: Runs fast, looks good, and it ca be fun.

LOWS: Once you figure out how to exploit a glaring design flaw, it's far too easy.

BOTTOM LINE: With a little more care and attention paid to gameplay, *DeathDrome* could have been a lot better.

Extreme Chess

Category: Chess

Developer: Davidson

Publisher: Davidson/Simon & Schuster, 19840 Pioneer Ave., Torrance, CA 90503 (310) 793-0600

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space; Mouse; Win 3.1+; 256-color SVGA	Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

This may not have the glitz of other chess programs, but it's got something better: a brain.

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Davidson's *Extreme Chess* is not your everyday, run-of-the-mill, fuzzy-bunny chess game. It has no elaborate chess boards, no silly elf or bug tile sets, and no pointless animations. Actually, it's quite homely and has a somewhat cumbersome interface. Yet, even in a crowded market that currently includes several pretty strong chess packages — *Chessmaster 5000*, *Power Chess*, and *Maurice Ashley Teaches Chess* — it emerges as the clear, hands-down winner.

Extreme Chess has a prestigious pedigree. At its heart is Fritz, a program many believe to be the best chess engine ever created. It proved it by beating Kasparov, Short, and several other grand masters in 1994. It also whipped IBM's Deep Thought II in numerous encounters, and it's the reigning computer chess champ. The original Fritz, Version 1.0, came to America from Europe's ChessBase as *Knightstalker* in the early 1990s. Fritz 2 followed in 1992, and the program has been consistently upgraded and tweaked over the years, with versions 3.1 and 4.01 being the most recent incarnations.

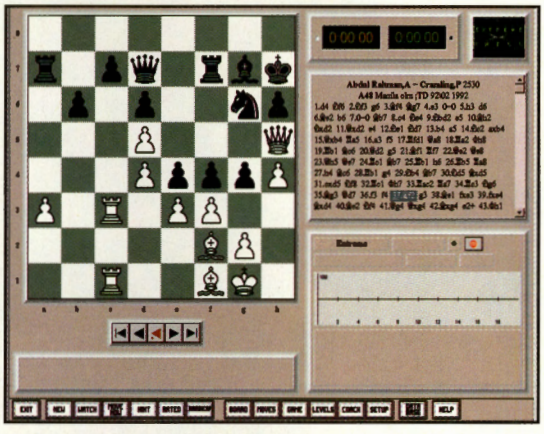
Davidson made an agreement with ChessBase to package Fritz for the American mass market, and the result is *Extreme Chess*. It is an extremely no-nonsense game, though not without a sense of humor. *Extreme Chess* allows you to play against a brilliant computer opponent at almost any level, including blitz games. With a strong online coach and move-by-move analysis, as well as more than 50,000 recorded classic games (many annotated), this is not just a formidable chess opponent, but an excellent tool for honing your skills.

When you start a game in *Extreme Chess*, the first thing that strikes you is its stark yet efficient layout. Two games boards are available: a simple black and white 2D board and a 3D color board. While the 2D board is a good no-frills option for those who just want to concentrate on the game, the 3D board is no less playable. It's actually quite an effective layout, with all pieces visible at all times while still maintaining a sharp, realistic feel. Not a lot of computer chess games pull this off.

Each of the boards can be resized from very small to full screen, depending on how much other information you want to see. A move clock is in one corner, and this can be set for blitz or tournament play. Beneath it is a running list of moves that can be annotated at any point or configured to handle variants. A search display below this shows a graphical representation of how deep the computer is searching for moves and allows you to stop the search at any point.

When playing, you can call on the chess coach to analyze the board and your play. If you make a bad move and the coach is active, he'll warn you and suggest an alternative, even to the point of telling you what the computer is planning (if you ask). This coach is one of the best implemented on the PC, with incisive comments and a genial tone and wit that make it come alive.

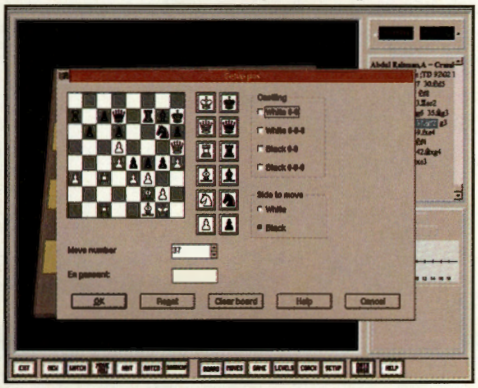
Games can be saved at any point, added to database, annotated, and analyzed by the computer. The database is simply extraordinary. It understands both .CBF and .PGN file formats, and allows you to search for games by any criteria, from players to opening move families to ECO code numbers. The game can even provide a rating based on your play level.



The 2D board is simple and fast for gamers who don't want a lot of glitz while they work on their attacks.

Extreme Chess is the game for the serious chess player or the person who is serious about learning. It can be easily customized for any skill level, and at the hardest settings will provide an unparalleled challenge. It has zero chrome (and, frankly, it could've used just a *little*), and though the lack of Internet play is a real failing, it hardly has an equal in AI. Interface buttons could have been laid out better, and the whole package would benefit from better documentation, but in the end this is the best chess brain on the market.

— *T. Liam McDonald*



In *Extreme Chess*, you can set up a custom board to work through specific chess problems. The whole package can be customized for different skill levels.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Powerful chess engine; many classic games; strong analysis and annotation features.

91%

LOWS: Poor documentation; occasionally awkward and confusing interface; no Internet play.

BOTTOM LINE: This is the chess game for serious chess players. It may help improve your game.

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Product Information Number 195

Leisure Suit Larry in Love for Sail!

Category: Adventure

Developer: Sierra

Publisher: Sierra, P.O. Box 85006, Bellevue, WA (206) 644-4343

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; 22MB hard-drive space; Super VGA; Compatible sound card	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM

Set sail with Sierra's laughable lounge-lizard as Leisure Suit Larry takes to the high seas for a pleasure trip.

Sierra's stumbling, bumbling anti-hero, Larry Laffer, may be the Jerry Lewis of computer games. Like Lewis, Leisure Suit Larry's cornball humor can hardly be described as high-brow, but his adventures can be strangely appealing.

Well, okay — the Jerry Lewis argument may be debatable. But it's certainly the case with the latest addition to Sierra's long-lived adult comedy adventure series. In *Love for Sail!*, Larry, who is a deservedly lonely geek, heads off on an ocean cruise aboard the *H.M.S. Bouncy* with the goal of claiming a few conquests in the name of losers everywhere. The plot — if you can call it that — is simple enough, but for Larry, it's always a matter of life and loss.

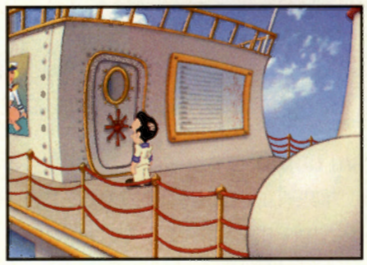
As he trolls the deck looking for potential loves, Larry will run into Peggy, a sailor (who knows how to curse like one); Dewmi Moore, a woman who knows the naked value of a dollar; Victorian Principles, who will teach you the ins and outs of the Dewey Decimal System; and Wydoncha and Nailmi Jugg; a duo who like to sing for their supper. But as the game begins, it's Captain Thygh who sits at the top of Larry's menu of desire. The laughable loser will have to compete in a ship-wide contest in which the winner will be given a free week of cruising in the captain's quarters.

Larry gets an icy reception from Victorian Principles in the ship's library.

If you're familiar with the Leisure Suit Larry series, you've already recognized all the usual elements. Very little is new in terms of Larry or his adventures, but this is certainly the most appealing and attractive game in the series. The graphics look as if they leapt out of a Ralph Bakshi cartoon, and some care has been taken to make sure there's a plot, however thin it may be. Mix all this with quality voice acting, puzzles that range from easy to outlandish, and raunchy, tongue-in-cheek humor, and you're on twisted trip to the dark side of good gaming.

The interface allows players to manipulate the onscreen action either through clicking and dragging with pop-up menus or by typing in commands. The return of typed commands should be welcomed by gamers who've felt the point-and-click interface limited their interaction with characters and settings.

One hilarious touch in the game is the addition of CyberSNIFF 2000, a scratch-n-sniff card that features a strange bouquet of scents. The game tells players when to use it, and while it's only a gimmick (and one that's been done before, in Infocom's *Leather Goddesses of Phobos* and in the films of John Waters), it seems perfectly matched to the game.



Before Larry can board the ship, he's going to have to find a way out of this little fix. Maybe he can pick the lock?

Larry must prove his prowess in the Lovemaster 2000 booth as he competes in Capt. Thygh's contest.

Leisure Suit Larry in Love for Sail! carries a Mature Content warning, meaning it shouldn't be played by anyone under 17. That warning shouldn't be taken lightly; this game can be downright raw. But if you've enjoyed Larry's previous adventures — or if you harbor a secret affection for reruns of "Three's Company" — you'll find that this game proves polyester and really bad puns still have a place in gaming.

— *Brett Jones*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

84%

HIGHS: Great graphics; Al Lowe's skewed humor; the return of the (optional) text-based interface!

LOWS: Fairly high "been there, done that" factor; sometimes the tongue-in-cheek humor is tiresome.

BOTTOM LINE: If you can handle Adult Situations and Partial Nudity, this is a ship-shape winner.

CG RATED
Computer Gaming World

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– Johnny Wilson, Computer Gaming World

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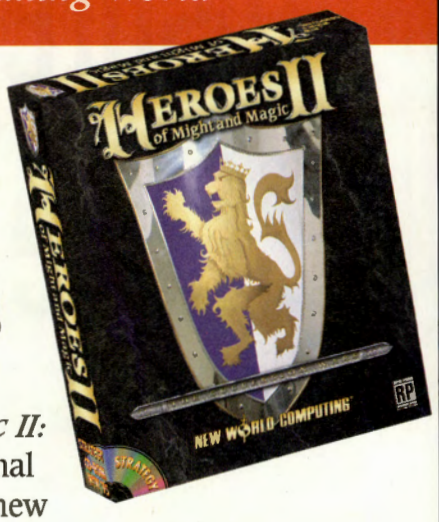
THE SUCCESSION WARS



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Product Information Number 251

Microsoft Golf 3.0

Win95

Category: Sports

Developer: Access Software

Publisher: Microsoft, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399 (206) 635-6100

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; 25MB hard-drive space; Super VGA; Mouse	4x CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; Local-bus video card; Supported sound card; 28.8Kbps+ modem; Internet connection

With no-brainer Internet play and support for Windows 95, Microsoft's aging golf sim manages to survive for one more round.

It doesn't take an industry analyst to realize 1996 was the year when Microsoft finally decided to get serious about the PC gaming market: it released nine major titles last year, spanning a wide variety of genres from simulations and wargaming to arcade-action and sports sims.

But just because Microsoft has apparently started taking gaming seriously doesn't mean gamers will take Microsoft's games seriously — not until the company puts out a game that's at least comparable to its best competition. Case in point: *Microsoft Golf 3.0*. While it sports some improvements over *MS Golf 2.0*, and Windows 95 support makes hardware conflicts all but a thing of the past, the bottom line is that it doesn't even come close to Access' *Links LS* in terms of graphics and gameplay options.

MS Golf 3.0 is at its most disappointing in the graphics department. Forget comparing this game to *Links LS*; even at its highest resolution (1024x768 with 256 colors), *MS Golf* still looks like *Links 386 Pro*, which is nearly five years old now. Whether you're playing at Harbor Town or Banff Springs (the two courses included with the game), all the trees appear to be members of the *Biggus Pixelus* species, even when they're many yards away.

MS Golf fares much better when it comes to actual gameplay, which can be attributed to the fact that the game engine is still essentially the one used in *Links 386 Pro*. All the usual options are here, from choosing which clubs to carry to tinkering with variables like swing plane and stance. Create a player, and you can customize his or her hair color, shirt color, style of clothes, and skin color; assign control of that player to the computer, and you're able to set its skill level by choosing a 1-10 rating in six different categories. An option to use a three-click system instead of two when making a shot is much appreciated, and the addition of four new game types — match, amateur skins, pro skins, and team bestball — give *MS Golf 3.0* nice depth of play. A few improvements could be made — there's no option for practice, which means you have to play to a hole to practice on it, and the drop-down menu interface can't compare to the super-slick, icon-based menu of *Links LS* — but on the whole *MS Golf 3.0* plays pretty much as it should.

***MS Golf 3.0*'s best feature is its easy Internet play. As long as you have an ActiveX-compatible browser installed (and configured as your default browser), you can join or create a multi-player game over the 'net.**

Of course, if adequate gameplay was the only strong point *MS Golf 3.0* had going for it, *Links LS* owners wouldn't need to even consider buying it (and those thinking about buying their first golf sim should start with *Links LS*). But *MS Golf 3.0* has a secret club in its bag, one that moves an otherwise aging sim into the realm of gaming goodness: free multi-player gaming over the Internet. Provided you have an ActiveX-compatible browser (read: Internet Explorer 3.0), *Microsoft Golf 3.0* allows you to join or host a one- to four-player game over the Internet via Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone, absolutely free of charge. Better yet, it only takes one or two clicks to get a game up and running: no muss, no fuss — there's no chatting to find out someone's IP address, or paying money to a subscription gaming network such as TEN or Mplayer.

So you really have to hand it to Microsoft for making multi-player gaming over the Internet easy, fun, and free, but you've gotta scold 'em for not updating all the other aspects of *MS Golf 3.0*. A lot of *MS Golf 3.0* owners will spend countless hours enjoying the game online — until they learn the much better *Links LS* can also be played online via Kali, the famed shareware program that carries a one-time $20 registration fee. And once those PC duffers find out they can have their cake and eat it too, maybe Microsoft will decide to spend enough money to make its golf sim competitive with the other top titles on the market.

— Ned Gaskins

The online tutorial in Microsoft Golf 3.0 can help you master the basics of shot placement and control.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

65%

HIGHS: Easy multi-player options for playing over the 'net.

LOWS: The graphics should've been updated; the menu-driven interface is sorta clunky.

BOTTOM LINE: If Internet competition is your thing, *MS Golf* delivers a seamless entry onto the web; if you're a die-hard duffer, stick to *Links LS*.

Deus

Category: Adventure

Developer: Silmarils

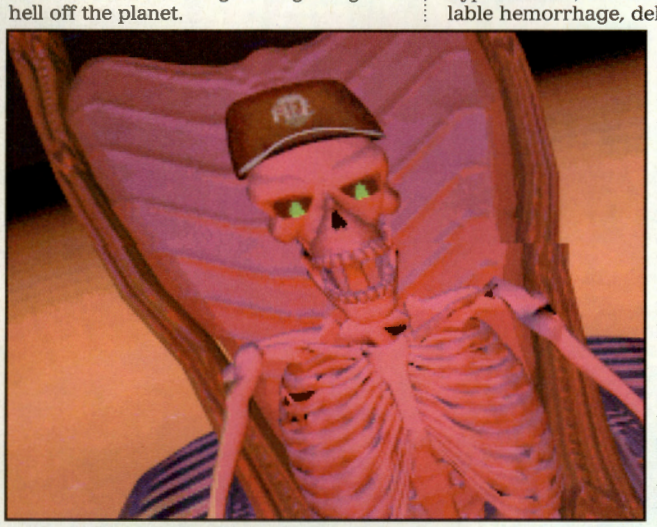
Publisher: ReadySoft, 2221 Yonge Street, Suite 400, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4S 24B (416) 322-7350

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/DX266; 8MB RAM; 5MB hard-drive space; VGA; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 54MB hard-drive

Experience the magical wonder of countless ways to die in ReadySoft's ill-fated return to *Robinson's Requiem.*

It's never a good sign when a sequel goes out of its way to avoid any mention of its predecessor, carefully hiding the similarities to that awful game you were suckered into playing a few years ago. But one look at ReadySoft's *Deus* gives nary a clue that it's Silmarils' follow-up to *Robinson's Requiem*, which earned itself a whopping 49 percent in the October, 1994, issue of *PC Gamer*. Maybe that's because it's basically a rehash of the original game, with a smattering of significant new features.

In *Robinson's Requiem*, you played an Alien World Exploration (AWE) Student, Officer Trepliev, sent to explore (and die on) the prison planet Zarathustra. You wandered around a fiendishly pixelated landscape, killing everyone you met and robbing their corpses of anything useful to your own survival and ultimate goal of getting the hell off the planet.



Appearing more often than an America Online TV commercial, your death sequence is almost as long.

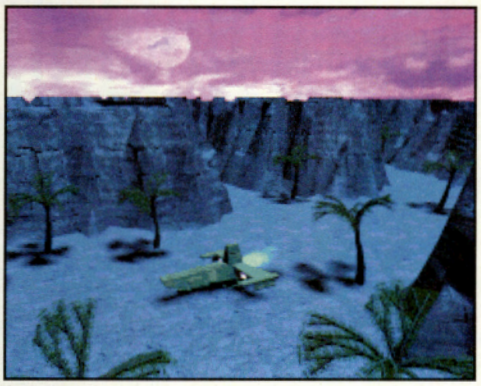
In *Deus* you're still Trepliev, now an elite AWE bounty hunter out to save the scientific research station on yet another world — Alcibiade — from the "Crusaders," a terrorist group with a no-remorse, no-regret, nuke-'em-back-to-the-stone-age philosophy.

Requiem's biggest failing was its unforgivably ugly landscape — a disorienting mass of splotchy color that both hindered movement and had the curious ability to promote frequent, unexpected deaths. *Deus* remedies most of that ugliness with a new high-resolution mode, but like its precursor, control is still awful and death comes at the slightest provocation. Keyboard, joystick, mouse — it doesn't matter, they're all clumsy and uncomfortable.

The game's other screens — your personal computer, the pharmacy (medikit), and map — are quite nice, displaying a crisp economy and efficient design, but the tenuous illusion of coherence dissipates the minute you go back to the 3D action window.

Two modes of play are available; a simulation mode where the adventure-roleplaying elements are felt in full force, and an arcade mode that allows you to forego the details and cut straight to the action. Playing in simulation mode, death still comes far too often, from such varied and wondrous causes as hypothermia, heart attack, hypertension, exhaustion, uncontrollable hemorrhage, dehydration, alcoholic coma, venom poisoning, gangrene, violent trauma, suffocation, electrocution, drowning, incineration, and drug overdose — just to name a few. By constantly monitoring and treating your injuries, you can keep yourself alive long enough to, say, accidentally fall off a cliff (or something equally ignominious).

Of course, you can do away with all of that medical mumbo jumbo by playing in arcade mode,



Like *Robinson's Requiem*, the best bits of *Deus* are the attractive opening and death sequences.

where the game takes on a *Doom*-style persona (more *Dr. Radiaki*-like, actually, but how many people remember that game?), requiring only that you collect necessary items and (naturally) kill everyone in sight. But sadly, without a multi-player option, even this mode of play gets tiresome quickly.

But whether you choose to play it as an adventure or an action game, *Deus* (which ReadySoft insists is pronounced like "noose") is still Son of *Robinson's Requiem*, a troubled, muddled mess of a game that tries to be the master of many skills and succeeds at none. A wise man once said, "You can't build a solid foundation on crap," and it's a shame designers didn't listen to this sage advice.

On the up side, sound is used to good effect, and you can have lots of fun experimenting with the contents of your medikit. If tedious exploration, combat, survival, and the occasional plunge off a cliff are your driving passions, you may find *Deus* moderately entertaining. Providing you haven't seen *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Quake*, or *System Shock*, that is.

—Scott Wolf

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

58%

HIGHS: Immersive sound; two play modes; an improvement over its predecessor.

LOWS: Irritations still outweigh any enjoyment you might find.

BOTTOM LINE: Interesting ideas are sabotaged by poor implementation and dated design.

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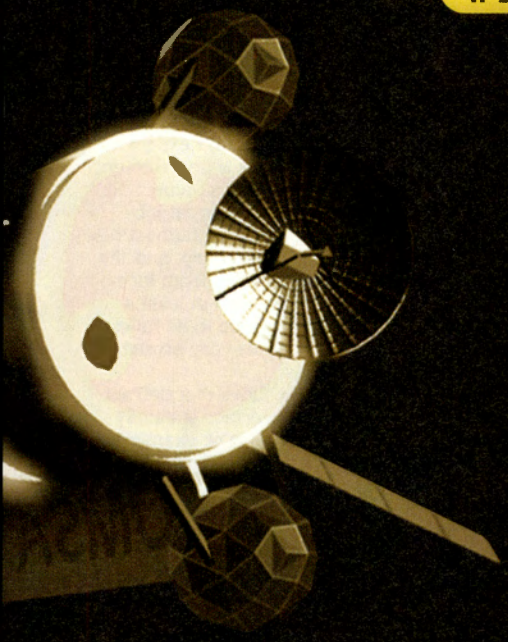

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Realms of the Haunting

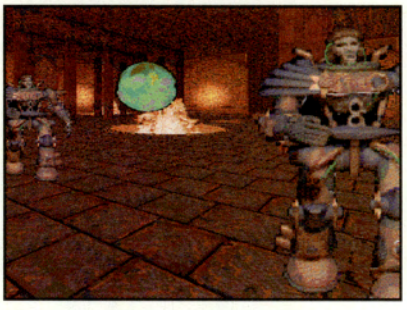
Category: Adventure

Developer: Gremlin Interactive

Publisher: Interplay, 16815 Von Karman Ave., Irvine, CA 92606 (714) 553-6678

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; DOS 5.0 or higher; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

Relive the days when adventure ruled PC gaming as Interplay takes you on a hair-raising ride through the Realms.



This is a deep adventure in the grand old tradition, with a few first-person-shooter elements thrown into the mix.

At first glance, Interplay's newest adventure is a bit underwhelming, to say the least. With its full-motion video and first-person perspective, it's all too easy to be fooled into thinking *Realms* is yet another tiresome *Doom*-alike adorned with a just few adventure-game elements to separate it from its bloodthirsty brethren.

But once you've invested some time in the first bit of exploration (and overcome a few interface problems), *Realms of the Haunting* proves to have more in common with classic adventures like *System Shock* and *Ultima Underworld I & II* than the current wave of shooters, providing genuine chills as the plot unfolds and dishing out lots of deviously designed problems to solve, with nary a sliding-tile puzzle to be found.

Part horror game, part campy thriller, *Realms*' success isn't due to its graphic prowess or FMV sequences, instead, good, old-fashioned adventuring wins the day as you step inside a haunted mansion and try to retrace the steps which led to your father's death. A priest troubled by visions and nightmares, your father's mysterious disappearance has left you in much the same state.

Searching for answers and led by visions of your own, you decide to delve deeper within the mansion, where you'll discover secret passages, connections to other worlds, and the remnants of a powerful demonic cult. You'll have to disarm or anticipate traps, carefully read messages left by otherworldly beings, and — as in the classic adventures of old — make heroic leaps in logic to piece together the story. If you're tired of sliding tiles and rewiring spaceships in the flood of *Myst* clones, *Realms*' traditional approach to puzzles is like a breath of fresh air.

The game can be customized to provide just the right amount of puzzling and action for your tastes, but a word to the wise: you'll want to crank up the puzzle difficulty, set the action to easy, and dive into the adventure with both feet. This is a massive game with lots of areas to explore, and as you begin to puzzle your way through, you'll find yourself wanting to check out "just one more room" into the wee hours.

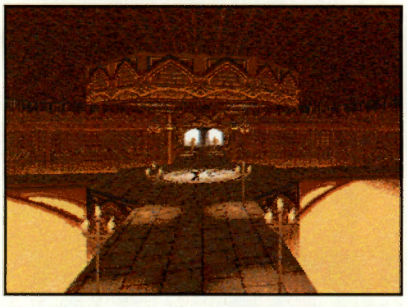
The full-motion video is well done, with acting and production values that are well above the norm. More importantly, they aren't just for looks; after puzzling your way through a particularly nasty section and taking into account of all the information you've received via letters, books, and characters, you're often called to make important choices during these sequences.

Using a combination of mouse and cursor keys for control, you'll have freedom to explore each environment, use items in your inventory, and arm yourself for combat. While combat does play a role in the game, don't expect a *Doom*-style blastfest, the action element is used for occasional shock value, and the designers have done a great job making it do just that. In the highest resolution, the graphics are sharp, and the scenery is incredibly varied from location to location. You'll need at least a Pentium to enjoy the game to its fullest, though, since it becomes very pixelated in lower resolutions.

There are a few flaws that detract from the game: the interface is clunky when you're trying to use or examine items, and the story is needlessly vague until you're well onto the second disc (Interplay seems to be aware of this problem, since they've included a walk-through to help you through the rough spots in the first three quarters of the game). But if you're willing to overlook these minor quibbles, *Realms of the Haunting* is the sort of good, old-fashioned adventure that should inspire gamers (and other publishers) to take another look at the genre.

—Todd Vaughn

The interactivity of the full-motion video sequences in *Realms* could teach watch-and-wait games like *Phantasmagoria II* a thing or two. Here you must decide if you're willing to accept your fate as a prophesied hero.



You'll have to journey into the fiery depths beneath the old mansion to fulfill your role in the prophecy.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

86%

HIGHS: Large game world; devious puzzles; creepy atmosphere.

LOWS: Clunky interface; sluggish beginning; occasionally vague plot.

BOTTOM LINE: If you've been looking for a good adventure yarn with genuine thrills, *Realms* awaits.

Gex

Win95

Category: Arcade

Developer: Crystal Dynamics

Publisher: Microsoft Corporation, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399 (206) 882-8080

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 75; Local-bus Super VGA	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 100; Supported sound card; Gamepad

Ever get the urge to play Super Mario Brothers with a trash-talkin' reptile? This could be the game for you....

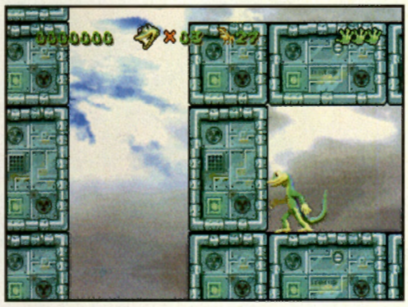
Big companies frequently use hip catch-phrases when they want to create a mascot — and even more frequently when they want to make a lousy title look more appealing to the kiddies. You know it's a bad sign when three of these immortal pack-em'-in-like-cattle sayings are prominently featured on the back of the *Gex* box — "wise-cracking," "trash-talkin'," and, of course, "with an attitude!" After all, it worked for Sonic the Hedgehog and Earthworm Jim, right?

In *Gex*, you play a smarty-pants, tube-watching gecko who's been sucked into his beloved television by Rez, an evil something-or-other who derives joy from subjecting innocent reptiles to reruns of sordid TV. Battling his way through five zany worlds with themes based on old B-movies, Gex runs, jumps, and — guess what — jumps some more. Loads of nasty critters stand in his way, from sumo wrestlers to zombie "DuckTales" rejects, all easily taken out with a whip of your fearless lizard's tail.

One of Gex's unique features is that he can leap up and attach himself to the walls with his suction-cup feet, adding a little element of strategy in those sticky situations. Also, Gex can slurp up bugs with his long tongue, easily grabbing otherwise hard-to-reach power-ups. Rounding out Gex's selection of reptilian self-defense is a tail-stomp, which lets him squash bad guys and sail high into the air on the rebound.

Put all that stuff aside, and it's simply *another* side-scroller, this time starring a sarcastic reptile instead of a blue hedgehog or fat plumber. I assume that Gex needed more "attitude," so the programmers hired the remotely amusing Dana Gould to do the voice. But is he funny? It depends. Personally, I found a lot of Gould's delivery to be annoying, and his impressions not nearly as "side-splitting" as promised. And while more than 400 phrases were recorded for the game, it seems that the same 20 or so get played over and over. Thank God you can turn the speech off in the options menu.

Although there are five worlds in *Gex*, with five different themes, most of the levels they contain look identical. There's nothing special about this side-scroller.



Mmmm...mazes. In "The Projects," you'll have one hell of a time escaping this pointlessly long, drawn-out level.

Graphically, *Gex* isn't exactly thrilling, either. Though each of the five worlds has its own quirky style, most of the levels they contain look identical. On the other hand, Gex himself is nicely rendered and animated, although he looks a little out of place beside the hand-drawn enemies and backgrounds. The digital musical track is appropriately bouncy and fits the action, and the sound and speech effects are sharp.

Besides the voice acting, one of *Gex*'s most annoying features is the game save feature, which is handled through passwords you get whenever you find a hidden videotape. Come on, Microsoft, this ain't the stone age, and *Gex* isn't a videogame cartridge — how about the ability to easily save your game after each level instead of having to type in XRWJJOX every time?

As a whole, *Gex* isn't a bad game — the control is fine and the scrolling is smooth, but it just can't compete with the undeniable charm of *Earthworm Jim*. And if you're looking for something truly funny, this ain't it.

— Colin Williamson

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

58%

HIGHS: A few interesting additions to the genre — and you can turn off Gex's voice!

LOWS: So-so graphics; not all that amusing.

BOTTOM LINE: If Microsoft tells you something's funny, run for your life — I found more humor in Windows 95.

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APOGEE

RoboQuest

Category: Action

Developer: Kidum

Publisher: Philips Media, 10960 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90024 (800) 340-7888

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; 25MB hard-drive space; Windows 3.1	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; Supported sound card

In a kid's game, should you go for style over substance or substance over style? Philips doesn't even bother to answer the question.

Sometimes I get the feeling these so-called "kids' games" are programmed by people who were never kids themselves. Most programmer-types don't realize a normal kid doesn't care about pretty graphics and digitized sound, especially when a game is dull and repetitive to begin with. (Heck, I even know a certain big kid who prefers the Atari 2600 version of *Return of the Jedi* over *Mario 64*.)

The programmers at Philips had a half-decent idea in *RoboQuest* — children use a robot construction kit to make their own metallic monstrosities, which march into a haunted house to save little kids — almost like Mail Order Monsters meets *MechWarrior 2*. Not a bad premise to hang a game on, but it's put together so carelessly, you'd be hard-pressed to find any kid who would actually enjoy it.

To start off, we have the construction set, which you'll use to piece your robot together. On the left of the screen are all the parts you'll need. There are around a dozen of them, so any normal person would figure you've got some control over how your robot looks and the way in which you build it. This isn't the case — instead of being rewarded for creativity, you're rewarded by how quickly you can complete your assembly-line robot. Construction is always the same, moving from feet to head, and always connecting the parts in the same order, just like a factory worker building a Chrysler. But it can't be that bad in the long run, could it? You just find the familiar parts, piece them together in a few seconds, and get on to the actual game.

The Evil Witch has stolen the villagers' children, and it's up to your robot-guy to save them.

Wrong. Unfortunately, this is where the "fun" starts. There are three types of robots you can build, creatively named "Good," "Better," and "Best." Assembling the "Good" robot is easy; a few clicks and drags of the mouse, and you're quickly on your way into the actual game. It's not the best robot to play the game with, but it sure beats the frustrating alternatives.

Having to build the "Better" and "Best" robots is a chore. When you add a new part and drag it over to where it looks like it should go, it won't click into place. Just rotate your view, and you'll discover that the part is floating askew in front of the robot. That's right — you'll be forced to contend with three dimensions. Polish up on that Spatial Geometry, kids, 'cause you'll need it! It's difficult to picture any 8-year-old who could handle the pixel-perfect adjustments needed to make the pieces click together. Yes sir, it takes a keen eye, a relaxed hand, and preferably a few years of CAD experience to assemble "Better" and "Best," those mack-daddies of the robot world.

Still, all of this has to have a payoff, right? Surely the programmers wouldn't put you through the torment of going the "Best" route without rewarding you with a gaming experience as satisfying as building the robot was frustrating.

Wrong again. Once it's finished, your painstakingly constructed robot gets to play *Doom* — minus the effective graphics and fun, of course. In your quest to save the kiddies, your robot runs through pixelicious hallways as you use your "stun gun" to nonviolently "deactivate" the bad guys. You also add spells to your inventory and use them against the witch, who will occasionally pop her ugly head into your screen to zap you with some wizardry. She may get the better of you on numerous occasions, simply because the blasted inventory system doesn't work correctly.

Here's the robot construction screen, where you'll end up spending a long time.

Dear God, no! It's *Wolfen-Doom*, running in a window the size of a postage stamp!

Simply put, *RoboQuest* combines the worst of two worlds: an all-too-linear construction kit and an outdated 3D shooter. Once again, remember that this game is intended for children aged eight and above. It's my belief that any real red-blooded kid would take one look at this, chuck it back in the box, and go back to killing monsters in *Quake*.

— Colin Williamson

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

12%

HIGHS: Since it doesn't include an uninstall program, you'll get some practice in deleting files.

LOWS: Construction kit is linear and pointless; the sub-par *Doom*-clone doesn't make up for it.

BOTTOM LINE: Two poorly designed segments can't hope to make a good game.

Scorched Planet

Win95

Category: Action

Developer: Criterion

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

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 8MB RAM; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 100 or higher; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

Prowl the surface of an alien world or take to the skies for bug-blasting fun with this stunning new shooter from Virgin.

The colony comes under attack by nasty bird-like creatures. Take 'em out!

If you've ever laid eyes on *Terminal Velocity*, *Fury3*, *Starfighter*, *Surface Tension*, or countless other flying/shooting games, *Scorched Planet* may seem like something you've seen and played before. You may take one look at the box, figure it's another derivative clone, and dismiss it. Don't be fooled, though; not only does *Scorched Planet* provide you with your recommended daily allowance of action, it also offers a more strategic — if no less frantic — style of play.

While the cookie-cutter aliens and science fiction plot aren't anything to howl about, *Scorched Planet*'s ace-in-the-hole is its strategic element. The evil Voraxians are attempting to conquer a barren, human-colonized planet that has little or no means of defense. This is where you, an ex-fighter pilot, enter the picture — your job is to fly 18 missions against the Voraxians in your special attack vehicle, which can morph between an agile aircraft and a nimble tank at the touch of a button.

You'll want to take out as many enemies as possible, but the game centers on your efforts to rescue the colonists — kind of like a high-tech *Choplifter*. In the first mission, you have to pick up as many colonists as possible and fly at top speed through a space gate to warp them to safety. It gets more complex in the following stages, where spider droids will turn the humans into zombies. Driving the tank, you need to find and activate an antidote to convert them back into human form, then morph your vehicle into plane form and fly them out of there. Each mission has a different twist — including the ability to dispatch homing beacons that attract civilians, place gun turrets that human soldiers can use to nuke the opposition, and "repulsors" that shoo away the alien assault. This strategic element is a breath of fresh air, pulling *Scorched Planet* out of the "go blow things up" pit we're too often thrown into.

Watch out for these lizard chaps, who prowl around the planet's surface and munch your colonist friends.

Success depends on your mastery of both vehicles, although you'll probably be in the air for most of the game. Be careful to keep tabs on your fuel supply — you can't stay airborne forever without refueling, and the last thing you want to do is transform back into a tank at 600 feet above the battlefield. You'll experience the best control with one hand on the mouse for aiming and shooting, and the other on the keyboard for inventory control and morphing. Keep a thumb on the spacebar — just give it a tap, and your plane does an automatic 180-degree turn, giving you another chance to do a delicate high speed run through a space gate.

Action fans weaned on the best shooters around will appreciate the fact that *Scorched Planet* looks *good*. Using Criterion's Renderware package, *Scorched Planet* may have the smoothest visuals you've seen yet on a PC monitor. Though the 3Dfx and Matrox Mystique 3D accelerator cards are supported, this game has the ability to crank out amazing detail in full-screen SVGA on a fast Pentium without a 3D card. Everything is rendered in shaded, texture-mapped polygons, from the hostages who scramble around on the ground to the giant bugs and lizard-men out to ruin your day.

The sonic portion of *Scorched Planet* doesn't succeed nearly as well. The digital soundtrack is scratchy and changes abruptly when enemies get near. There's also a touch of that good old full-motion video hooey, where desperate colonists plead for your aid as their colonies get nuked in the background. Fortunately, it doesn't get in the way of the gameplay, and only takes up 15 seconds after each level. Another minor problem is that you can only save your game after you complete a stage — but hey, that *does* keep the stakes high and the action intense.

Scorched Planet reintroduces a feature that's gone missing from many recent games in the shoot-'em-up genre: fun. The ability to change vehicle types at will adds variety for planetary exploration and combat; the lush graphics provide lots of eye-candy. This one's a winner.

— *Colin Williamson*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

85%

HIGHS: Splendid graphics, good gameplay, and a slick morphing vehicle to control.

LOWS: Music isn't great; full-motion video is only so-so.

BOTTOM LINE: This has the fun, creative spark that too many other games aim for and miss.

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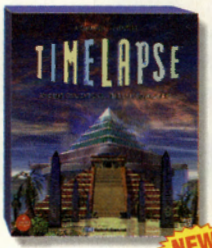

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Product Information Number 220

Toy Story

Category: Arcade

Developer: RAD Software

Publisher: Disney Interactive, 500 S. Buena Vista St., Burbank, CA 91521 (800) 426-3306

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

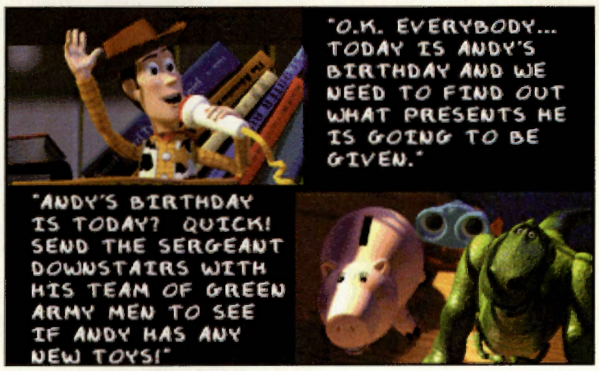
Disney's computer-generated blockbuster was a cinematic milestone, but the PC spin-off is one bad game.

There's no denying that Disney's *Toy Story* was a landmark in feature film animation. It combined jaw-dropping computer animation with a story that could melt even the coldest heart. It exceeded all expectations of what computer animation could be and easily made up for all those years of cheesy fractal sequences we've had to witness since *The Lawnmower Man* came out.

Given how firmly rooted *Toy Story* is in computer technology, you'd think a PC game based on the movie would have to be a winner — and to even be worthy of the *Toy Story* name, you'd expect it to reflect the movie's touching story of two toys' friendship overcoming their rivalry for a young boy's love. Unfortunately, the film's bankability and cast of colorful characters seem to be the only elements that survived Disney Interactive's attempt to bring *Toy Story*'s big-screen delights to your PC monitor. Originally rushed to market on the Sega Genesis to coincide with the film's release, this port of the 16-bit game bears all the marks of a hastily assembled formula game; any resemblance to the original movie seems to be a last-minute addition.

The PC version of *Toy Story* gives you the task of guiding Woody, the hapless and jealous cowboy doll, as he attempts to recapture little Andy's love from the shiny and cocksure Buzz Lightyear. On the surface, it's very similar to the movie, and when the game begins, it follows the plot of the film closely enough. There are a few deviations from the original story line — but those can be put down to artistic license and the simple fact that this is a game, not a movie. For instance, if you saw the film, you'll recall the story begins with the toys nervously awaiting the arrival of Andy's birthday toys and an intelligence report from an army of toy soldiers. The game begins the same way, although now you have to free the army men from their bucket and knock the baby monitor down to them, so they can listen in on the party.

In the early levels of the game, you must free the army men from their bucket so they can carry out surveillance on Andy's birthday party.



The familiar cast of characters from the blockbuster film *Toy Story* return as useless cannon fodder in this lackluster side-scroller.

Unfortunately, after five or six levels, the plot wavers, and that artistic license becomes a license to kill (the story line, that is). And precious little innovation is evident in the creation of the game's environments or levels. The game is laid out with the same simple design you'll find in scads of other uninspired running-jumping-climbing games; you move to the right across a two-dimensional, side-scrolling playing field, leaping from platform to platform and jumping over bad guys.

This brings us to the first of *Toy Story*'s many problems: The game is limited to two dimensions of gameplay, and when you're called to jump from a precarious perch to, say, a floating tennis ball off-screen, it's difficult to gauge exactly where in space you really are. It's also difficult to tell if an object in your path is a barrier or a background object, as there's no difference in appearance. It's all down to trial and error.

In fact, most of the game isn't really played, but bungled through until you figure out the correct pattern. In addition, Woody has been scaled so large on the screen (perhaps to appeal to younger gamers?), it's impossible to see what's coming up. You'll invariably end up banging your head on a worm or jumping into an oncoming plane, as there's no way to see them ahead of time. The programmers may have thought this would make the game harder, but it only serves to frustrate; children will find it especially difficult to maneuver through the levels. Sluggish control only compounds the frustration; before you get to the unplayable race car level (if you can even call it a level), you may have smashed your gamepad in disgust.

Aside from the cute and familiar cast of characters from the movie, *Toy Story* has little to recommend it. Forget the game and go rent the video again; you're guaranteed a much better time, and it's a whole lot cheaper.

— Adam Douglas

Most of the puzzling in the game requires Woody to jump on building blocks and collect stars in order to help his friends.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

27%

HIGHS: Those cute *Toy Story* characters.

LOWS: Sluggish control; children will find it overly difficult and frustrating.

BOTTOM LINE: This is just a lackluster side-scroller game; *Toy Story* doesn't come close to recapturing the magic of the film.

Mummy: Tomb of the Pharaoh

Category: Adventure

Developer: Amazing Media, Inc.

Publisher: Interplay Productions, 16815 Von Karman Ave., Irvine, CA 92606 (714) 533-6678

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; 22MB hard-drive space; MPC2 compliant sound card; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM

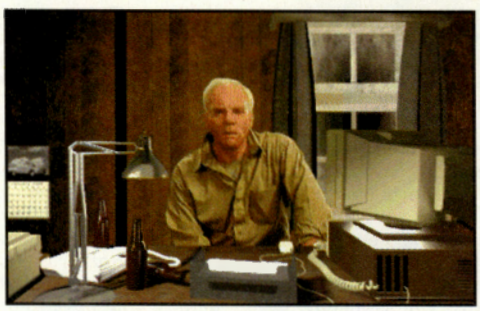
Just when you think you've seen everything in graphic adventures, *Mummy* shows it to you once again.

Since their discovery in the late 19th century, ancient Egyptian tombs have been romantic settings for countless adventures in books, films, television, and, yes, computer games. The themes of Kings and Queens, cursed artifacts, and brilliantly devised traps have proved too tempting to ignore, providing nail-biting tension and a glimpse into the strange beliefs of the past. Interplay's *Mummy: Tomb of the Pharaoh* cashes in on all of these conventions and more, yet it manages to remove any intrigue by steering you through the plot like a student driver in heavy traffic.

As Michael Camron, a facilitator for the National Mining Company, you have been sent to resolve a "situation" that has developed at an Egyptian mining site. Mine workers have been scared off by the discovery of a mysterious box, possibly an ancient artifact. The on-site Egyptologist — your ex-girlfriend, Lorrie — has shut down all mining in the area until she can determine the authenticity of the box and locate any tombs that may be nearby. Your job is to return the local workers to the mine, confirm the presence of the tombs, sort out the mystery surrounding the box, and resolve matters with the Egyptian authorities. Of course, that's easier said than done.

You spend your first evening in Egypt familiarizing yourself with the layout of the mining camp and meeting the main characters. Each person has an opinion and information to share, and you must talk to them all. *Mummy* ensures that you have all the facts before you go it alone by shepherding you on until every task has been completed. If you should happen to miss something, it's not long before a character comes into view and gives you a glaringly obvious hint as to what to do next. Just to be sure you got it, the game's instruction manual contains a walk-through of this entire section.

With a deeper understanding of the situation and some new suspicions, you do what any good hero would: You go to bed. When you wake up next morning, the camp geologist has been murdered, and the game really begins. *Mummy* finally leaves you to your own devices, exploring the camp and mines, discovering underground rooms, and reading other people's private correspondence.



Malcolm McDowell does an excellent job portraying the bitter, threatening Chief of Mining Operations. He's out for revenge against the company, and no one will stand in his way.

Mummy: Tomb of the Pharaoh suffers from an acute case of "been-there-done-that." You know the recipe: take one bitter, threatening bad-guy, mix liberally with unexplained death, sprinkle in a pinch of love interest, and stir until credibility is thoroughly dissolved. Add mine-car rides to taste.

For the most part, the puzzles are solved through simple logic or trial and error. They become secondary to the story line, which isn't captivating enough to survive without them. Most disappointing of all, the game includes a six-level mine, four levels of which have no value whatsoever. Still, you'll have to explore them just to be assured of their uselessness. Should you slog your way through all this, you'll experience a brisk, inadequate ending sequence with two possible outcomes (both of which are essentially the same).

That being said, *Mummy* isn't completely without merit. Veteran bad-guy Malcolm McDowell (*A Clockwork Orange, Wing Commander III* and *IV*) is excellent as the shifty mine operator; the scenery is well rendered; and the day/night transition adds an interesting twist of realism. Despite their occasional irrelevance to the plot, the full-motion video sequences are well integrated and occasionally entertaining, and the sound effects and music are excellent as well. But even with the polish and detail that has gone into the game, *Mummy* doesn't muster enough interaction to keep you interested. The puzzles are unoriginal and artificially difficult, and the plot fails to connect to the sinister aspects of the story. While the game's simple nature may attract newcomers to the genre, adventure fans who've been suffering through a drought in quality graphic adventures won't find anything to quench their thirst in *Mummy*.

— *Angela Bennett*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

65%

HIGHS: The music and sound effects provide a wonderful atmosphere.

LOWS: Plot and puzzles are ordinary, without anything new to offer the seasoned player.

BOTTOM LINE: A good introduction to the adventure game genre, but there's better out there.

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Huygen's Disclosure

Category: Adventure

Developer: Microforum

Publisher: Microforum, 1 Woodborough Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6M 5A1 (800) 465-2323

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; 80MB hard-drive space; Windows 3.1 or higher; Super VGA; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 140MB hard-drive space; Supported sound card

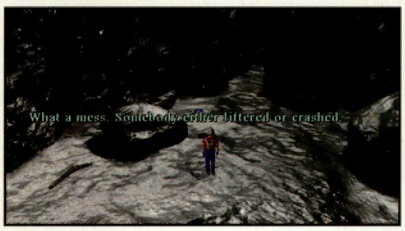
Match wits with alien races in an attempt to save the Earth from certain destruction in this unsophisticated sci-fi adventure.

In this science fiction adventure from Microforum, Earth is once again under threat of certain doom and destruction. This time around, though, the threat doesn't come from an alien invasion or a menacing overlord bent on world domination, but from neglect; the Earth's environment has deteriorated to the point where the final seconds of humanity's existence are ticking away.

The decaying ozone layer has been depleted so severely that the sun threatens to bake the surface like a Pop Tart unless you can get to Saturn's largest moon, Titan, and lay claim to a substance known as Rachellium. Discovered by the space probe Huygen before scientists lost contact with it, Rachellium is a gas that makes up Titan's deadly atmosphere and bonds with oxygen to form ozone. As a member of a galactic recon unit in charge of recovering the vital gas, you have to go to Titan and secure the Rachellium — or die trying.

Once you set down on Titan, however, you'll realize that laying claim to the Rachellium isn't going to be as easy as it sounds, since a full-scale alien revolution is in effect, and the slightest misstep could get you killed.

Using a traditional adventure game interface, *Huygen's Disclosure* is a mix of action and puzzles — sort of a bargain-basement version of *Tomb Raider*-meets-*7th Guest*. At your character's disposal are a helmet-mounted beam weapon and a grenade launcher. You can also make use of weapons you find on Titan or machines you piece together using scraps of recovered equipment.



After the eyeball is given a fatal poke, look around on the ground. There are a lot of important items here.

The command screen in the corner allows you to quickly click on an action for your character. The interface is well designed and gives easy access to both your inventory and the options screen.

The welcome wagon that greets you as you step off your ship is hardly friendly, but a quick blast from your beam weapon will dispatch the dancing eyeball.

The puzzling combines classic adventure problem-solving and *Myst*-style abstract puzzles. One of the first puzzles you'll encounter has you trying to piece together a solar energy panel. This task has more in common with a jigsaw puzzle than any solar panel we've ever seen, but as you progress through the game, you can determine how you prefer to resolve certain situations. Do you fight with the aliens and simply take the items you need? Or do you use diplomacy to build alliances with these strange creatures and help them out?

While *Huygen's* does deliver a nice mix of adventuring and some genuinely challenging puzzles later in the game, there are a few flies wriggling in the ointment. The voice acting is amateurish at best, the dialog is cheesy, and the cartoonish graphics are unsophisticated and, at times, downright laughable. But there's more to this game than the usual pretty slide-show interrupted by abstract puzzles. If you're willing to live with its, you'll find there's a decent adventure game lurking under *Huygen's* hood.

—Brett Jones

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

68%

HIGHS: Well designed interface; some challenging puzzles.

LOWS: Some of the puzzles are of the abstract, *7th Guest* variety. Bad voice acting, graphics, and dialog.

BOTTOM LINE: A decent graphic adventure with a handful of significant flaws.

Krazy Ivan

Win95

Category: Action

Developer: Psygnosis/Tantalus Intertainment

Publisher: Psygnosis, 919 East Hillsdale Blvd., Foster City, CA 94404 (415) 655-5683

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 60; 8MB RAM; Supported sound card; Super VGA	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium 120; 16MB RAM; Joystick

This giant battling 'mech game from Psygnosis has surprisingly brief gameplay and little depth.

One of the top developers for Sony's PlayStation videogame console, Psygnosis has earned a reputation as a driving force in action games, with such hits as *Destruction Derby*, *WipeOut*, and *Assault Rigs*.

The PC incarnations of these games fared reasonably well because they had gameplay to back up the flash, although they had their occasional shortcomings. Unfortunately, *Krazy Ivan*, a giant-robot shoot-'em-up ported from the PlayStation, has too much of the latter and not nearly enough of the former.

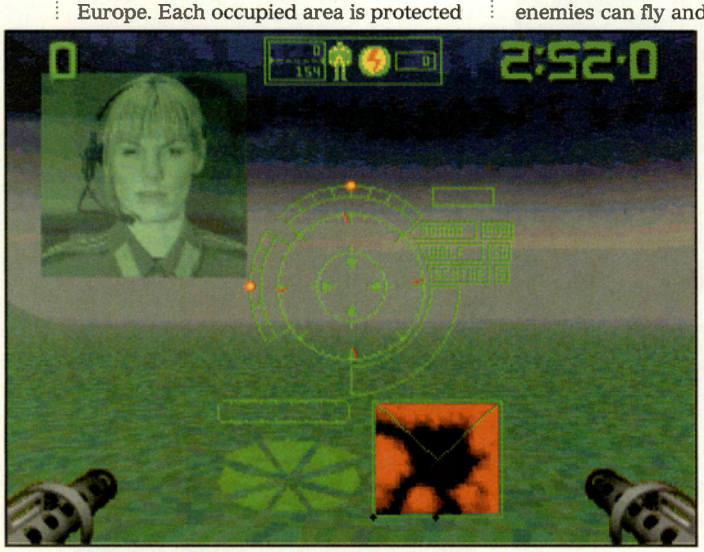
In *Krazy Ivan*, it's the year 2018, and aliens have invaded the earth. They've set up bases at five strategic points around the world: Russia, Japan, the Middle East, the United States, and Europe. Each occupied area is protected by a force field created by a central field generator. Within each zone are two types of mechanical aliens: sentients and drones. The drones are mindless robots that just get in your way, but the sentients can match you in terms of speed and firepower. To complete your mission objective, you have to destroy all the sentients, then trash the field generator.

Krazy Ivan is, at its heart, *MechWarrior 2* without the clans. You pilot your giant 'mech across a 3D terrain, picking fights with other giant 'mechs who happen to be in your way. The enemies in *Krazy Ivan* are more varied than in *Mech2*; the drones range from your standard 'mechs to giant, flying manta rays. The gorilla-like sentient that swings his legs up to shoot from the soles of his feet is particularly funny.

While the graphics are decent, all of the levels are shrouded in a dense fog. This does give the game a somewhat eerie quality, but it's really there to limit the amount of terrain that has to be drawn onscreen at any given time. The fog also screws with the enemies' graphics, sometimes only showing parts of the attacking 'mechs or not showing them at all. Of course, they can somehow see you, and will keep shooting at you even though they're hidden.

This is typical of the enemy's artificial intelligence; even at the easiest level, it seems to be significantly tweaked in the bad guys' favor. Also, enemies can fly and drop down on you from above. The controls let you look up and shoot, but movement is impaired when you're looking straight up. Compared to the full freedom and massive environments of *MechWarrior 2*, *Krazy Ivan* is needlessly frustrating.

As a port from the PlayStation, *Krazy Ivan*'s emphasis is rooted firmly in the arcade. While this may make it more immediate than *Mech2*, *Krazy Ivan* looks suspiciously small trying to fill these significantly larger PC shoes. Instead of mission after mission of varied and intense battles that constantly challenge your abilities, the game is only five levels long; you can easily finish it in a matter of hours. This was true on the PlayStation, and it's still the game's most serious flaw on the PC.



Once inside your giant robot, your comrades will keep you up to date on the enemy presence and give you briefings in the field.

The big alien 'mechs are fearsome and fairly tough, but with just a few hours of effort, you'll blast through the entire game.

Krazy Ivan isn't all pain and suffering, though. Once you get used to the slightly awkward controls, the game itself is pretty entertaining, in a basic sort of way. You've got lots of artillery to blast those aliens with — everything from basic guns to missiles and lasers. Plus, there are lots of power-ups to grab; they appear every time you rack up another kill. You can also play *Krazy Ivan* over a local-area network, if you're so inclined, although the action is limited to two players.

At the end of the day, you could do worse than *Krazy Ivan* — the action is brisk, exciting, and constantly challenging — but the lack of any real substance makes it seem hollow. If all you want is a few hours of down-and-dirty shoot-'em-up action, *Krazy Ivan* might be worth a look, but you'll get gameplay and variety for your money by sticking to *MechWarrior 2* and its ilk.

—*Adam Douglas*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

60%

HIGHS: Lots of weapons and power-ups; smooth gameplay; multi-player.

LOWS: Easily finished in a few sittings; occasionally wonky controls.

BOTTOM LINE: Even as a PlayStation game, *Krazy Ivan* was a little too simplistic; most PC gamers will find it a hollow experience.

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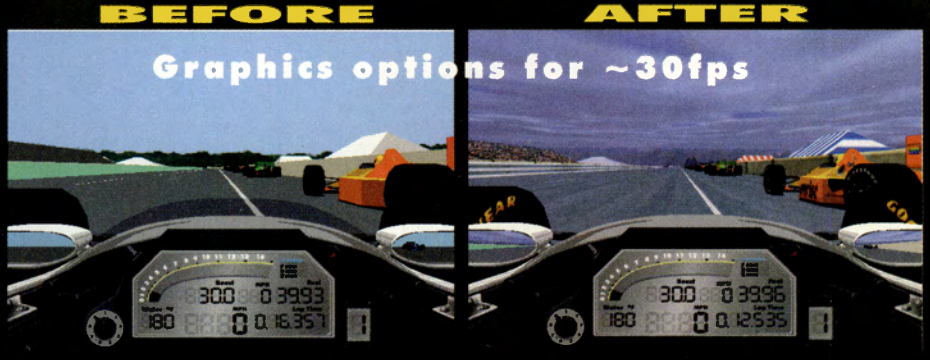

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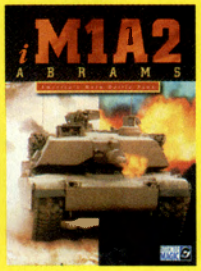

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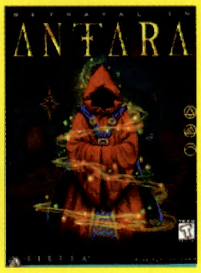

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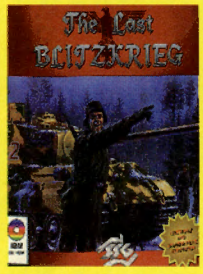

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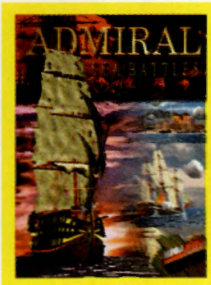

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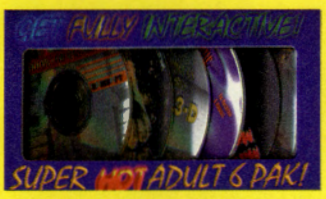

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Product Information Number 112

The Need for Speed

Before you can connect to the internet and start playing games online, you'll need a decent modem. But which one to buy, and how to make sense of all that confusing jargon?

By Daevid Vincent

So you've seen the cool ads, and heard all the hype about this crazy "new" internet thing that can let you talk to Aunt Selma all the way on the left coast for free (my favorite four letter word), send pictures of yourself to your folks, and play your favorite games against several of your closest friends (or worst enemies, depending on how you feel that day) and you want to be a part of it all. Your question then is, what do I need to make it happen? Well one thing's for sure, you won't get very far without a modem.

Starting with the basics and working our way up from there, the word modem itself stands for MOdulator/ DEModulator. Modems send and receive data as sound. The transmitting modem converts all those ones and zeroes (bits) that you wish to send as data into audio tones transmitted over the telephone lines, then the receiving modem uses the same procedure to decode the audio back into data again. That's the techy part, but how do you go about choosing the right one for you? And how do you make sense of all that jargon on the packaging? Luckily, we're on hand with reviews of some of the most popular modems out there, and a handy guide that makes sense of the jargon...

SupraExpress 336I Sp ASVD

Sounding only slightly worse than a normal telephone call, the ASVD feature on the SupraExpress 336I Sp Modem by Diamond Multimedia was quite intelligible and I was able to converse while sending data as if I had a second phone line installed.

Setup of the modem was incredibly easy. Plug in the tiny ISA card. Boot up Windows 95 and insert the supplied diskette. I didn't have to answer any questions or even click a continue button! All hardware installations should be so simple.

Establishing an ASVD call is achieved through a cryptic AT-SMS=2,,,1#VLS=0 command (don't forget those commas and the "1", they make all the difference in the world as far as voice quality goes). As expected, I found the modem to perform slightly better than a 28.8k modem. Transferring a one-Megabyte text file from our server connecting at 26400 the Supra took 5.8 minutes at 3.22 kb/s; the same file sent to another SupraExpress took 4.85 minutes at an impressive 3.95 kb/s.

Some interesting features that stand out about the SupraExpress are the fact that all the manuals are on a CD-ROM in HTML format. I'm not sure this is the optimal choice for ease of use and installation for all products. I like to have a hard copy to reference and booting up my computer to find out what's wrong with my computer seems like a contradiction in terms. On the other hand, it does save the environment and makes for searching a lot quicker. In this case, I think it works as a delivery medium. The CD-ROM also contains a bunch of programs, including a very nice Voice Mail & Fax center, *WarCraft II*, and some trial versions of FarSite Lite whiteboarding software & VDOPhone for video conferencing. The price/performance ratio on this one is the best of the bunch.

SupraExpress 336I

PRICE: $129 (Internal)/$149 (External)
COMPANY: Diamond Multimedia
PHONE: (800) 727-8772
URL: *www.diamondmm.com/products/communications/supraexpress/supraexpress336isp.html*
BOTTOM LINE: A great upgrade modem. It's cheap, fast, and easy to install.

Zoom Comstar SVD

PRICE: $199 (Internal)
COMPANY: Zoom Telephonics, Inc.
PHONE: (800) 631-3116
URL: *www.zoomtel.com/products/comstar-svd-internal.html*
BOTTOM LINE: A close second. The price is slightly higher, but via mail order you might be able to get it cheaper.

Zoom Comstar SVD 33.6Kbps V/F/SVD Modem

Zoom has always been known as a contender in the PC modem arena. Its latest offering is no disappointment, and makes a worthy opponent in this new class of simultaneous voice and data modems.

In keeping with the whole Plug n' Play philosophy, getting this champion ready to fight was as easy as plugging the 16-bit board into a free slot, connecting the included speaker and microphone, and booting up and loading the driver when prompted. After a simple AT$$AS4=ON, and then the dial sequence, I was connected to my friend. He picked up his phone and my speaker rang, I picked up my phone and we were talkin' loud and clear. Let the bout begin.

File transfer rates are a major factor in determining a good modem, and the Comstar SVD doesn't disappoint, although it may have gotten a few knocks to the head and can't count right. I say this because I first tried send-

ing my usual test files to our server's 28.8k incoming PPP line. The results I got knocked me out. For a 1MB text file using the standard Windows 95 FTP client, it took a super-quick 109.85 seconds or 10.21 kb/sec. I tried it again, and got the same result! FTPing a 1MB wave file indicated a more believable 384.26 seconds or 2.68 kb/sec. I sent some test files to my friend on his 33.6kbs Supramodem and the results were on the order of what we'd expect: 4m 32s at 3852cps for a 1MB text file and a tired 9m 17s at 1676cps for a 1MB wave file.

The Comstar uses the speaker for the dial and touch-tones as well as the same Rockwell AudioSpan technology as the other ASVD modems. All the normal MNP error correction, fax groups, and V.34 standards are adhered to as well. BitWare is the bundled multiple mailbox voice mail/fax center software and is quite robust. One ideally helpful feature on a modem that stays on all day to answer your voice calls or faxes is the ZoomGuard lightning and power surge protection. I can't tell you how well it works, as I was unable to summon a bolt of lightning no matter how hard I tried.

The price is a bit steep, all things considered. A single speaker is not really worth the difference in price compared to, say, the Supramodem above, compounded with the sad transfer rate of that wave file. On the plus side, the voice quality was very good and easy, and BitWare is a nice piece of software.

Best Data 336SP 33.6Kbps Voice/Data/Fax Modem

The Best Data 336SP internal Voice/Data/Fax Modem is slightly faster at transferring data that cannot be compressed, compared to the other modems I've tried recently, and comes with a few really nice features.

Some of the more noteworthy points of this modem are the fact that its manuals are printed (unlike the other two modems I tested where they were HTML documents on a CD-ROM) and contain many trouble shooting tips. Another snazzy feature that I haven't seen yet in the competition is the MOH plug or "Music On Hold." Just as the name implies, it allows you to play audio from any source connected to it to the person on hold via the included QuickLink software.

Sending a 1MB text file to another 33.6kbps mode achieved a transfer rate of 3855 cps. Granted, that is an impressive figure, but it is still about average with modems of this caliber. Sending a 1MB wave file (that doesn't compress very well) resulted in a transfer of an impressive 2075 cps.

The speakers aren't utilized for the dialing procedure as they are in the other modems; this one still relies on the onboard piezo speaker.

Overall this is a good buy if you don't care about the ASVD features that most newer modems are sporting for about the same price.

Best Data 336SP

PRICE: $179
COMPANY: Best Data
PHONE: (818) 773-9600
URL: *www.bestdata.com/336.htm*
BOTTOM LINE: A bit pricey considering what it's lacking.

IBM ComCentral

PRICE: $399
COMPANY: International Business Machines Corporation
PHONE: (800) 426-2968
URL: *www1.ibmlink.ibm.com/HTML/SPEC/g2214316.html*
BOTTOM LINE: A very expensive answering machine; The display is the coolest part about it.

IBM ComCentral 33.6

Installation of the ComCentral was fairly simple, although be careful — you need to read the entire "readme" portion of the install procedure to find out the exact numerical (i.e. cryptic) modem driver to install! Consequently, this modem isn't billed as Plug n' Play. Also note that the supplied serial cable is a 9-pin on both ends (one male, one female). If you have an older computer, you'll have to get a converter, as the package doesn't supply one.

Transfer rates were very good for text, but not so good for data. Using my standard FTP test, the 1MB wave file crawled at 972 seconds or 1.06Kbps; this was connecting at 26400 to our server directly. Much better results were achieved on the 1MB text file: 78 seconds at 14.3Kbps. I sent that file twice, and both tests resulted in about the same numbers. I also connected to another 33.6 modem. No matter what settings we tried to change, we couldn't get the modem to say it was connecting higher than 24000. The wave file transferred at 1988 cps in 8m 39s.

I found it very peculiar that I couldn't get the standard Hayes AT Answer command (ATA) to work — meaning I couldn't take incoming calls? It didn't even display the standard RING notice on the terminal window whenever the phone rang.

On the plus side, the LCD display is trés cool — it tells you plenty of information about the status of messages for both voice-mail boxes, faxes received, time, date, and the typical modem light indicators as well. There is also a volume slider for the built-in speaker.

No sound card is needed either to record or retrieve your messages (as is the case with almost every other modem I've tried). In fact, it doesn't even need the computer to be on. This modem will work like an answering machine in its stand-alone configuration. The software included is really only a nicer, albeit simplistic, front end. Call forwarding, Caller ID, distinctive ring, one set of phone/wall jacks for each of the two lines, and pager notification are all included.

There just isn't enough good to outweigh the bad on this overpriced product. I really wanted to like it, but you could buy a better modem for about one quarter the price and use the extra money you'll save to buy a second phone line or pay the increased electric bill for a year after leaving your machine on 24 hours a day.

Global Village TelePort 33.6Kbps

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Speakerphone/Fax/Modem with Simultaneous Voice & Data

Included with this modem is a 9-pin cable, built-in speaker, built-in microphone and a volume slider. In addition, there is an answer on/off switch, mute switch, and message waiting light (which doubles as activity light). The back has jacks for an external speaker and microphone as well if you want to use your own.

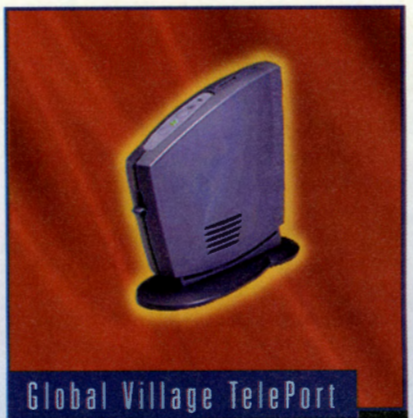
This modem really excels in transfer rates. Sending via modem to another 33.6Kbps modem, it achieved a blazing 2185 cps (7m 53s)

for the 1MB wave file, and an astounding 5685 cps (3m 18s) for the 1MB text file. I swear I could smell smoke! Both times were the fastest of all five modems reviewed.

A simple installation combines with fantastic software. Using the included Focal Point integrated voice mail, fax and E-mail center you can do all the standard features this type of program uses, plus extras like voice annotated E-mail with spell checker and electronic hold that auto-detects other extensions being picked up. Caller ID goes one step beyond with call return at the click of a button. Music on hold, conversation recording, and scheduled sending of faxes and E-mail messages are also included. The fax part supports OCR as well as TWAIN scanners directly.

Had space allowed, I could rave on and on about this product. I haven't even touched on the AudioSpan SVD (simultaneous voice and data) feature. Suffice it to say, you won't be disappointed with this modem. It has all the features you could want now, with the ability to expand into the next wave of high speed 56Kbps modems seamlessly.

PCG



Global Village TelePort

PRICE: $229
COMPANY: Global Village Communications, Inc.
PHONE: (800) 329-9675
URL: *www.globalvillage.com/tpwhome/tpwhome.html*
BOTTOM LINE: Expensive, but the best modem of all those reviewed here.

That modem jargon in full...

These are the main things you're going to be concerned with when you go to your local computer mart with cash in hand.

KBPS

This stands for Kilobits per second, and it's the most important number to be concerned with because it basically tells you how fast your modem is. These numbers currently include 14.4Kbps, 28.8Kbps, 33.6Kbps and by the time you read this, 56Kbps. It would seem obvious that the bigger the number, the faster the modem, but it's not quite as simple as that. Yes, a 33.6Kbps modem is faster than a 28.8Kbps modem, but only under certain conditions, and even then, you're only talking about a 15 percent or so improvement. Also, if you're getting the modem to connect to the Internet, many ISPs (Internet Service Providers) still only have 28.8Kbps modems as the dial-in lines; so the extra speed and money can be wasted for now. Should you get a 33.6Kbps then? I would say yes. For the difference in price, and the fact that it is becoming the standard speed, you'll be one step ahead of the obsolescence game — for the next several months anyways. Avoid anything under 28.8Kpbs unless someone gives it to you for free, and even then, don't spend too much time getting it to work. You're better off getting a new (faster) modem for the $150 or so.

V/V.

After Kbps, the next big block of text you're likely to see on a modem box is something to the effect of V.34, V.FC, V.32bis or V.EVERYTHING. All this means is that the modem conforms to a specific set of standards published by the CCITT (a French acronym for the International Telegraph and Telephone Consultative Committee). V. is for voice grade and V (without the period) is for data grade over telephone networks. As a general rule, most any modern modem will conform to all the V. specs it needs for all the features it has to (voice/data/fax), so you don't need to pay too much attention to this potentially scary piece of jargon.

INTERNAL/EXTERNAL

Now, this word is important. As it implies, internal modems are cards that fit inside your computer in one of the 16-bit ISA slots. An external modem will connect to your serial port (usually the 25-pin one) via a cable. Internal modems are proprietary in that you can't use an internal PC modem on another kind of computer, like a Macintosh; external modems have the advantage of portability to other platforms. Internal modems are typically cheaper by about $40, but that money isn't wasted. External modems have all kinds of status lights and some (like the ZyXels and the new SupraModems) even have LCD displays. Personally, I recommend the internal variety. Most are now Plug n' Play, so installation is a breeze; they don't take up any more space around your desk area, and they tend to run just a little bit faster since they're directly connected to the bus of your motherboard. As an added bonus, some of them can be used as a rudimentary sound card.

MNP ERROR CORRECTION

MNP (Microcom Network Protocols) is another set of standard protocols that help to ensure error-free communications. This is a large factor in squeezing every bit of speed out of a modem. By compressing the data being sent, the modem can, in effect, send more data in the same amount of time. The values go from MNP2 through MNP10. This protocol is similar to the V and V. standards above in that it's fairly safe to assume that the modem you buy will conform to all the MNP protocols it should, and you don't have to worry too much about it.

FAX

Don't forget to look for this if you also want to use your modem to send and receive faxes directly from your computer. All newer modems conform to Group III, Class 1 and Class 2.0 standards, so you won't have any trouble there. It's also worth noting that the maximum speed of a fax is 14.4Kbps regardless of the modem's speed, so don't be misled by the hype.

VOICE

Throw out those antiquated answer machine cassettes: these days voicemail is the coolest thing next to a cellular phone. Just about every modem these days has this ability to double as a sophisticated digital answer machine. You can set up virtually unlimited mailboxes, one for each member of your family and then a few extras just for fun, each with its own greeting, passwords and storage space. You can even save your messages as sound files if you're so inclined. Aside from auto-detecting the type of call, the voicemail software can page you when you receive a message or fax, forward the call to another number, send the caller a fax on demand, and now they even incorporate Caller ID and distinctive ring detection as well. One modem I've encountered, the IBM ComCentral 33.6, doesn't even require the computer to be switched on!

ASVD

Some of the very newest modems have a handy new feature called ASVD, which is an acronym for Analog Simultaneous Voice & Data. This simply means that once you've made a data connection with your modem, you can also use your telephone (or microphone and speakers) to talk to the other person as well. Of course, both of you must have ASVD (sometimes just SVD) modems for this to work. Once a connection is established, you can just pick up your telephone handset and the other person's speakers will "ring". When they pick up, talk away as you normally would while you simultaneously blast each other in a game. However, this is only good for a direct modem connection between two people, as in a head to head challenge. It won't work over the Internet, although there are programs that simulate this kind of telephony over a network. Bandwidth (for lack of a better word) is technically unaffected by voice; note the word technically. I say this because when you tell the modem via an AT command string (which typically must be entered prior to each call you plan to use this feature, as it is not the default) to make a voice connection, the modem automatically allocates a chunk of the bandwidth for only voice and not data. Therefore, in theory at least, a straight data connection is faster than an ASVD connection, but not significantly. The usefulness of being able to talk to someone you're directly connected to is still to be determined. At present, it seems more like a novelty than a practicality, but then again, it could definitely come in handy if you've forgotten to tell a person something after you've accidentally started your game, or you wish to get that upper hand by taunting your opponent in an adrenalized *Quake* DeathMatch.

FLASH BIOS

One feature that can save you some time and money is a modem's ability to upgrade itself either in speed, features or both, via software, or "flashing." US Robotics and Supra tend to take advantage of this quite a bit. For example, say you plop down $200 for a new 33.6Kbps modem and three months from now 56Kbps becomes all the rage (as it inevitably will). You simply go online to the company's World Wide Web site and download the latest "flasher". Follow some simple instructions and run the program, and voila! You now have a faster, dare I say, better modem in about 15 minutes and it didn't cost you a cent. Definitely something to look for on the box.

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SSI Expands on All Fronts

T. Liam McDonald

There's something interesting about this month's column: for the first time, the bug patch section makes up more than 50 percent of the total column. Why?

The two months preceding the holiday buying season saw the release of, by my count, around 500 new games. Sierra alone published more than three dozen games within a period of a few weeks. Of course, only a handful of these 500 games were worthwhile — that goes without saying. But what's significant is the amount of post-release patching that went on: publishers were so desperate to shovel even more crap onto retail shelves that they released unfinished products. It reached epic proportions in *Battlecruiser 3000 AD*: a game that should not have been released.

Is this new? Of course not. Marketing departments have always operated on the principle that the customer comes last (and that the customer service department can fix things later), but it's never been this widespread. The industry is growing too fast for its own good. No business can survive unrestrained growth without an eventual contraction: a weeding-out process. Companies might not go away, but with luck we won't see this volume of half-baked, unfinished, uninventive, redundant products again. (This year's moratorium should be on new real-time strategy games: enough is enough, okay?)

In the meantime, get your patches while they're hot. There's bound to be another crop next month.

SSI Goes Add-on Crazy

All of SSI's first-quarter releases for 1997 will be add-on disks to supplement its solid line of 1996 products. Here's what we can expect:

Age of Rifles will feature three new campaigns: British Colonial Indian Mutiny, Wars of Italian Unification, and Civil War: Hood's Drive North. An additional fifteen scenarios, some from the Internet, will supplement the campaigns.

Steel Panthers Campaign Disk 2 will also provide three new campaigns: Panzer Command (twenty battles of General Hans von Luck), Red Guards (Russian 1st Guards from Kursk to Berlin), and Bushido Warriors (Japanese army in Asia). More than 40 stand-alone battles will also be included, and a few of these will be released on the SSI web site as a teaser.

Su-27: A substantial revision, version 1.5, will be released, along with a minimum of 100 new missions.

Silent Hunter Patrol Disk 2: This is a big one. It will include two new patrol zones, Hong Kong and Vietnam, as well as 15 historical scenarios. The big news, however, will be the mission editor, which gives you access to all enemy shipping, allows you to set convoys and routes, establish thermal layers, and set other parameters such as crew experience.

There are also some plans for a *War Wind* disk, but those are still shaping up. About a dozen new scenarios can be found at the SSI web site: *http://www.ssionline.com*.

Steel Panthers II Campaign Disk: The first campaign disk has three new hypothetical campaigns, two of which are England & France against the Germans in the near future. Battle for the Low Countries sets the Brits against the Huns in Belgium for six scenarios. Five scenarios makes up Drive Into the Rhineland: France versus Germany following an invasion of Poland. The largest campaign is Korea 1998, an 11-scenario set in which you play the South Koreans trying to thwart (what else?) an invasion from the North.

There are also thirty new stand-alone scenarios, with a good mix of Korean War (various nationalities), some excellent Vietnam scenarios, the Falkland Islands, Middle Eastern (Arab-Israeli Wars), and a good hypothetical Bosnian battle. To whet your appetite a bit, SSI has released a new campaign on its web site, and we've put it on this month's cover disk. *Bulge 1999* has the Americans taking up where the Brits and French left off against the Germans. The 82nd Airborne, following the 3rd Armor, makes a drive on the Ardennes in this hypothetical scenario.

SSI's first-quarter plans are aimed at solidifying its hold on the strategy market with expansions to last year's excellent offerings.

The Marines hold off a VC assault in a Vietnam battle for *Steel Panthers II*.

Flight Sim 95

Ironic, isn't it? Microsoft has been jamming some form of Windows or another down our collective throats for years now, but this is the first time its most successful game, *Microsoft Flight Simulator*, has ever been available as a native Windows application.

The appeal of *MS Flight Sim*, in all its many permutations, has long eluded many gamers. Why fly if there's nothing up there to kill? But that misses the point; you can't really compare this to other games, because it is truly what it says it is: a flight simulator, not a combat simulator. It simulates flight for the thousands of people who fly for pleasure without ever coming within a continent's (or a half-century's) breadth of a dogfight. And it continues to do this exceptionally well.

Flight Sim 95 is a fairly well-executed reworking of this classic sim for a new platform and a new generation. Much of the old *Flight Sim* look and feel remain. The purpose is still to successfully take off, navigate, and land. You have to do preflight checks, deal with weather, cope with random system failures, and generally experience many of the challenges actual pilots face in the real world. The new version adds an extensive set of flight lessons and online help that's

quite effectively integrated into the fabric of the sim. Narration and video clips essentially teach you to fly, and since the accurate representation of real-world instruments is at the core of *Flight Sim*, when you're done you will honestly have a pretty good feel for the workings of an airplane.

All the many airports and geographical locations fans have come to expect from *Flight Sim* are here, with New York, London, Tokyo, the San Francisco Bay Area, and other regions modeled in some detail, and more scenery packs to follow. The graphics are an improvement, though not a staggering one; *Flight Unlimited* still looks better. Terrain tends to go blocky, and lights on the ground can seem to shift like confetti in a breeze. But the exteriors of the planes all look superb. Better crash animations are still in order, however, since a Cessna doesn't tend to shatter like a plastic model when it smacks into the ground.

Aside from the new online help and spiffy graphics, the biggest addition to *Flight Sim 95* are the two new planes.

In an effort to compete with *Flight Unlimited*, Microsoft included the Extra 300S aerobatic plane.

The Extra 300S aerobatic plane is here (no doubt as a response to *Flight Unlimited*), and aerobatic champ Patty Wagstaff is even on hand to offer some pointers. This is a good addition to *FS*, and the aerobatic element is a strong one. The other addition is just as interesting: a Boeing 737-400.

That's right: a lumbering passenger jet. And man, after a few minutes behind its sluggish controls you'll have a new understanding of just what airline pilots go through.

There's enough new and enhanced material in *MS Flight Simulator for Windows 95* to make it a worthwhile buy for *FS* fans who are Win 95 users. Are there that many? Well, enough to make this thing a constant seller year after year. Just know what you're getting into when you pick it up; this is more like work than most games, but for those who want a slice of the real thing, it's a sure bet.

PCG

BUG PATCHES

A-10 Cuba! v.1.01 (Activision): Allows you to reverse those infamous backwards rudders and addresses joystick centering issues. Pressing Enter or ESC when you first enter the game no longer causes any problems. Original serial numbers will now work. *A10PATCH.EXE*

Admiral: Sea Battles Mission Fixes (Megamedia): Fixes mission structure in certain scenarios. *MISSION5.ZIP*

Age of Sail v.1.02 (TalonSoft): Has improved AI and campaign game. *AOS_102.EXE*

Battlecruiser 3000 AD v1.01c (release 3) (Take 2): At this point, does anyone still care? *BC1TO1C3.ZIP*

Battleground: Antietam v.1.01 (TalonSoft): Fixes PBEM replay crashes, melee bug related to automatic victory vs. routed units, and adds missing woods artwork 3D maps. *BGN_101.EXE*

Battleground: Gettysburg v.1.24 (TalonSoft): Fixes PBEM replay crashes, melee bug related to automatic victory vs. routed units, map data for path on south edge of the \gb map, adjusts ranges for Parrott and Napoleon cannons. *BGG1245.EXE*

Battleground: Waterloo v.1.07 (TalonSoft): Fixes palette corruption in leader faces, melee effects when video option is turned on, and PBEM replay crashes. *BGW_107.EXE*

Blood & Magic v.1.01 (Interplay): Fixes problems with Brigand on Level 3 and improves modem play. Previously saved games will be lost. *BLOOD101.ZIP*

Daggerfall v.1.05.195 and Gravis Ultrasound Patches (Bethesda Softworks): More bug fixes plus a separate patch with two files to fix native Gravis Ultra Sound support. *DAG200.EXE*

Descent II 3D Card Support (Interplay): For Verite and Virge cards. *D2VERITE.EXE AND D2VIRGEP.EXE*

Drowned God v.4 (Inscape): Addresses various crashes. *DG_PATCH5.ZIP*

Duke Nukem 3D: Plutonium Pak v.1.5 (Apogee): Fixes some small bugs, including those related to installation. *PPACK15.ZIP*

F-22 Lightning II v.1.01.00.18 (NovaLogic): Adds chat mode, additional "look" views, more native joystick support and fixes for VESA compatibility issues, static sounds, and high IRQs for modems. "Secret" missions are unlocked. *F2210018.EXE*

Harpoon Classic 97 1.62c (Interactive Magic): Dark water shade changed to lighter, adds ability to load any saved game from the File/Load menu regardless of the current Battleset, adds a plane crash sound effect, fixes Formation Editor multiple zone selection bug, Launch Aircraft window now shows current loadout, addresses other bugs as well as updating some scenarios. *HC97UPD.ZIP*

Heroes of Might and Magic II v.1.10 (New World): Random Map Generator has been added. All single scenario maps may now be loaded in the editor. Sound and Video support code has been updated. TCP/IP connections are more stable. Other anomalies and bugs corrected. *H2DOS11.EXE and H2W9511.EXE*

Jagged Alliance: Deadly Games v.1.13z (Sir-Tech): Fixes many minor problems, including some "No Turn Limit" problems, rare speech crashes, and a fix for the final mission of the main campaign and mission 34 of infinite campaigns. All the new turn limit options are also included. *DG1132.ZIP*

Leisure Suit Larry 7 Patch (Sierra): This patch corrects the 'flatulence lockup', saved game problems, and miscellaneous general protection faults/illegal operations. Save games will be lost. *LSL7PAT.EXE*

Lords of the Realm 2 (Sierra): Corrects problems with battles crashing when music is turned off, arrow buttons not accelerating as they should when selling/buying items, the map of Europe crashing from the custom game screen, and problems where every other map was 'missed out' in the 'Play Now' Campaign. *LOTR2103.EXE*

M.A.X. v.1.03 (Interplay): Fixes Network disconnect bug and video card conflicts with Matrox Mystique and others. *MAXE.EXE*

Madden 97 Week 14 Roster Update (EA): Updates rosters and stats to the current Week 14 NFL season's stats and rosters. *WEEK14.EXE*

Missionforce: Cyberstorm Patch (Sierra): This tweaks difficulty levels, making the harder missions more difficult and reducing the difficulty of the first 'Elite' Mission. It also adds hot seat play and PBEM for multi-player games, as well as opportunity fire. Minor enhancements are added and crash bugs fixed. *CSTORM11.EXE*

Over the Reich v.1.01 (Avalon Hill): Bomber defensive fire has been reduced in effectiveness. A new menu option, "Easier Computer Player," reduces effectiveness of all computer-player gunfire, including defensive fire. Reinforcements at combat scale are less frequent, especially later in dogfight. Fighter squadrons are more likely to set up for a head-on attack versus bombers. Airplanes and pilots suffer damage and loss of consciousness from high-G maneuvers less often and for shorter periods now. Other gameplay fixes. *PATCH95.EXE and PATCH31.EXE*

Robert E. Lee Civil War General Additional Scenarios (Sierra): Contains alternate scenarios of two types. The 'Altx' scenarios are intended to allow balancing of the various battles in favor of one side and the other using plausible historical 'What ifs'. *CIVILSN1.EXE*

Shattered Steel v.1.11 (Interplay): For "Read Failure on Drive D" errors. *SS_P112.ZIP*

SimCopter v.1.01 (Maxis): Only get this one if you want to eliminate the "guys in swimsuits unofficial Easter egg." *COPTER.ZIP*

Third Reich 1.34 (Avalon Hill): Gameplay and stability fixes. *3R1_35.ZIP*

Titanic CD-ROM Fix (Cyberflix): For people experiencing CD lockups. *TI_S.EXE*

Tomb Raider 3D Patches: "Beta Version 4 of the Rendition 3D Graphics Patch" is now available. Also, an updated "3DFX Patch" corrects some of the anti-aliasing problems. *RENBETA4.ZIP and 3DFX.ZIP*

Wages of War v.1.2.8 (New World): Fixes a few major user-reported problems. *WOW128P.EXE*

War Wind 1.2 (SSI): Fixes some crashes and modem problems. *WW_12.EXE*

Whiplash 3D Blaster Patch (Interplay): Adds support for 3D Blaster. *WHIPADD.ZIP*

Wooden Ships and Iron Men v.1.02 (Avalon Hill): Adds North to the available directions in the scenario editor, and fixes crashing problems in scenario editor on 8MB systems. *WSIM1_02.ZIP*

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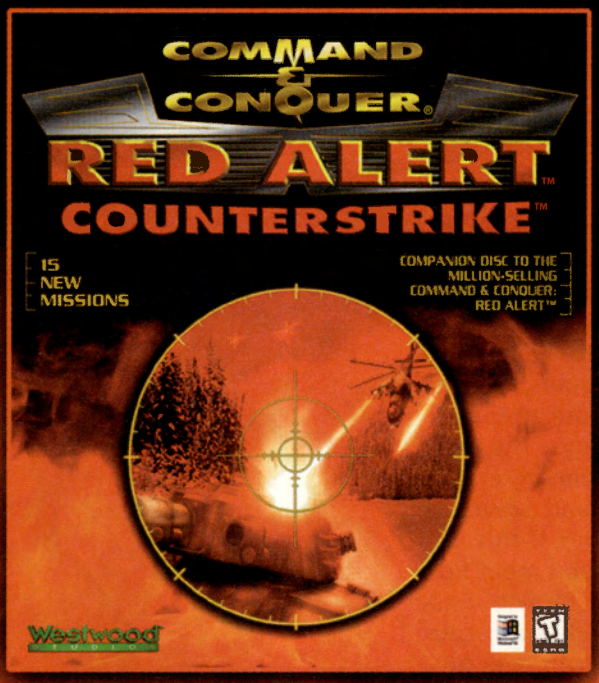

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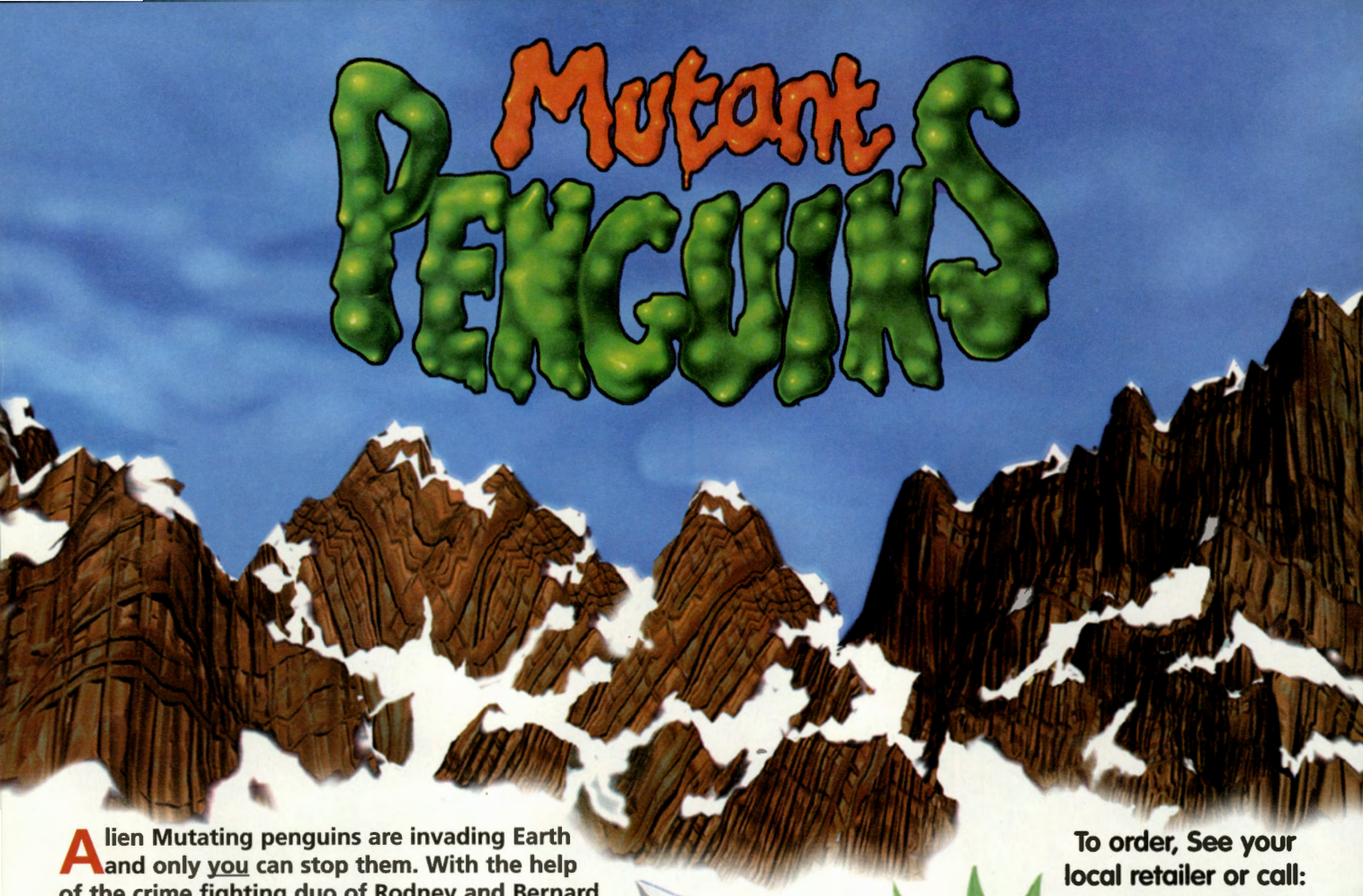

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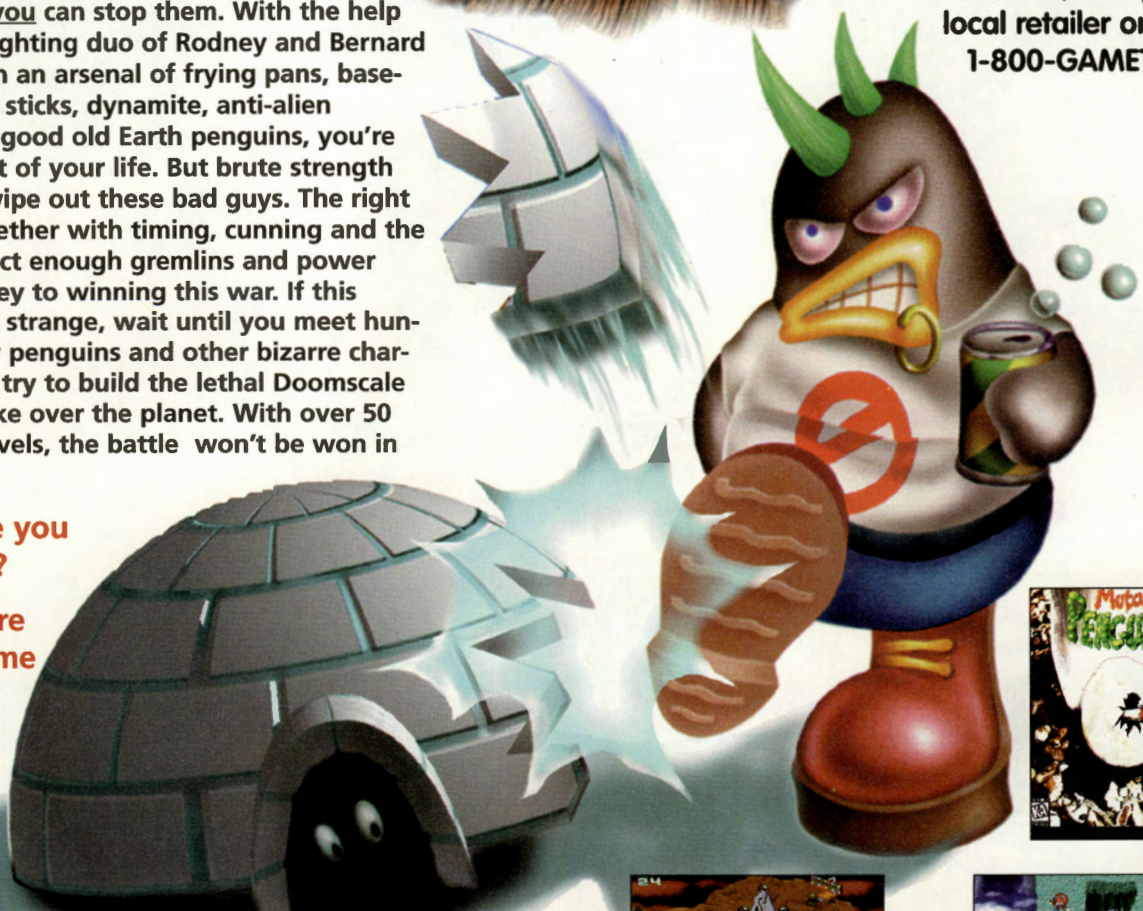

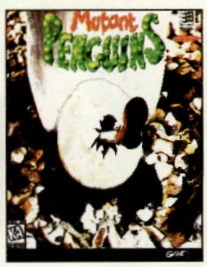

KIDS TO ADULTS
K-A
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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PC-CD ROM
WINDOWS 95
DOS

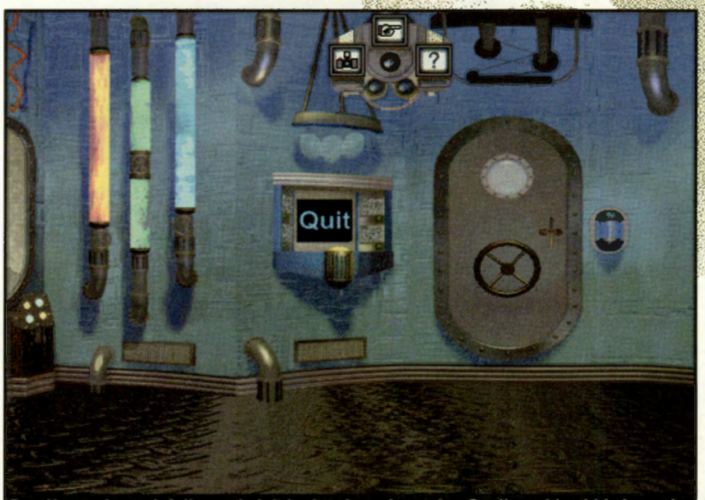
Playing with Real Science

A nine-year-old tinkers with the electrical connections between two conveyer belts. A ten-year-old manipulates some data in a model of tectonic plates and forms a small volcano in a lab. One child designs a plane with helicopter blades, while another child builds a rocket to gather specimens from the atmosphere. How can they do that?

With two new educational programs, kids can come closer to manipulating real-science power tools than ever before. The Discovery Channel's *Invention Studio* and Pacific Interactive's *Bill Nye the Science Guy: Stop the Rock* bring a new level of realism to science software. Adding to the effect, both packages try to wrap the tools in interesting environments that double as interfaces. They work well in some ways, and they falter in others.

Invention Studio opens with Doc Howard, your friendly invention guru and lab janitor. He guides you around the studio, pointing out the desk where you can record information and research ideas, the various workshops where you can build new inventions, and the testing grounds where you can try out your new gadgets.

Most areas of the program feature an interesting array of gadgets and an informative tutorial. The workshops include a mouse maze where you can toy with electronics to guide rodents through weird devices; a junk heap where you can recycle old machinery to make new objects; and a garage where you can build trucks and planes to test in fantastic settings. Children will love the wacky components that go into some of the projects and the space-age components that go into others. These workshops may remind you of *The Incredible Machine* or *Widget Workshop*, but *Invention Studio* structures the projects so they feel more focused and more realistic. Neither approach works better; they're just different.



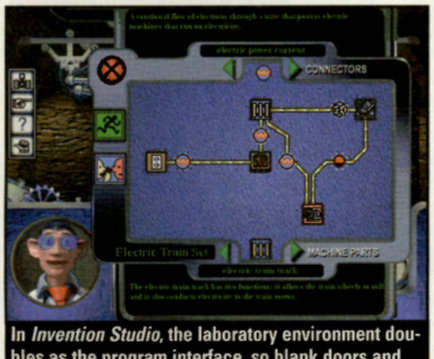
Doc Howard, a painfully nerdy lab janitor from *Invention Studio*, guides kids in such areas as the Machine Shop where they recycle old machinery to make new gadgets.

Heidi E. H. Aycock

Once you've completed a project in one of *Invention Studio*'s workshops, you can test it. If your invention doesn't work, Doc — or the studio computer — often provides helpful feedback, suggesting appropriate changes. This feedback supports the believability of *Invention Studio*; you get the feeling the program is actually digesting your work in an intelligent way, not just rattling off one out of a handful of negative responses. If your invention runs properly, you can proceed to the patent office for a certificate documenting your original idea. For once, you'll enjoy a bureaucratic process, because it feels genuine. This kind of positive feedback reinforces your work, not your knowledge. It focuses on what you have achieved through experimentation, not through memorization.

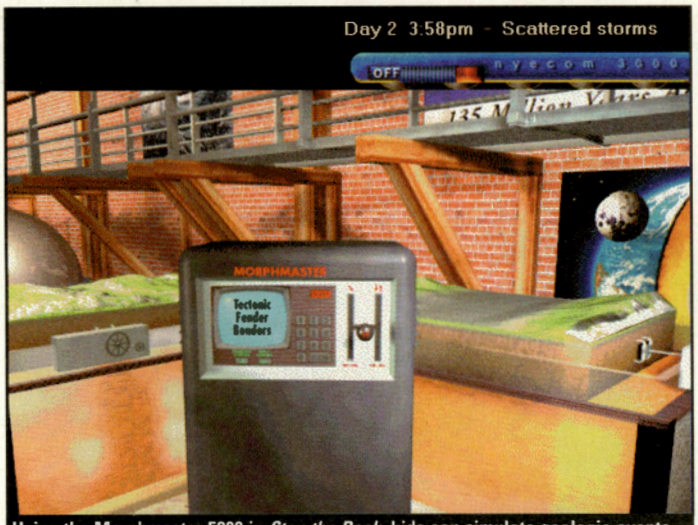
Besides the workshops, *Invention Studio* offers a special module that sets the program apart from many other construction sets. The Brainstormer teaches you how to think through the invention process. By posing a series of questions, it helps you define a problem, characterize the solution, and describe the details. Lessons learned in the Brainstormer go far beyond the field of science. Like the other areas of the program, the Brainstormer includes a tutorial (which had a small error in it, but was still quite helpful).

The feedback, the tools, and the content all add up to an excellent educational design. However, the environment and the interface suffer in comparison. Doc's squeaky, high-pitched voice annoyed me after a very short acquaintance, and he was a little too earnest and effusive. Set against a more beautiful two-dimensional background, his ugly three-dimensional rendering featured enormous ears and caffeine-widened eyes. With his tense smile and



In *Invention Studio*, the laboratory environment doubles as the program interface, so blank doors and unclear controls make it a little tough to get around.

Two new and different software packages let your kids learn science by conducting realistic experiments with engaging — and sometimes, not so nice — helpers.



Using the Morphmaster 5000 in *Stop the Rock*, kids can simulate geologic events, but lookout for the sarcastic responses to mistakes.

perpetually raised eyebrows, he came off as an anxious geek, straight from a Revenge of the Nerds movie.

Besides Doc's over-the-top characterization, the program also lacked interface labels. Because the environment *is* the interface, this was a serious problem. Blank doors led to the most interesting workshops in the program — but who knew? Fortunately, the program includes a Go To menu from which you can select your destination. But the menu dilutes the ambiance of the digital setting. These problems would've been easy to fix, but while they're aggravating, they don't ruin the program.

Invention Studio's Doc is a constructed fiction, but Bill Nye is another story — well, actually, he's not a story; he's for real. In his new adventure, *Bill Nye the Science Guy: Stop the Rock*, he infects you with his contagious fever for every kind of science.

As *Stop the Rock* opens, you approach the door to Nye Labs. You may choose to "hang out," or to join Bill's team. As a new team member, you attend a staff meeting with Bill and his weird coworkers. Together, you learn that a meteor is heading directly for Earth. Fortunately, Earth has a secret weapon: the Meteoroid And Asteroid eXterminator, a.k.a. MAAX. Unfortunately, MAAX, a super-intelligent computer network, has developed an ornery personality. It has refused to exterminate the meteor unless Nye and his team solve seven science riddles. The plot is a little contrived, but it matches the campy style of Nye's television series. The plot also drives the program forward in an adventure-game fashion. Without the plot — as you can see if you try just hanging out — there's less motivation to navigate the environment and explore.

Driven by the plot, you explore all kinds of data with Nye Labs' powerful equipment. There's an electron microscope, a rocket lab for gathering specimens from the atmosphere, a remotely-operated submersible explorer (called ROSE), a pressure chamber, and a kitchen stove — among other tools. Some tools are related. For example, you can use the microscope to examine the specimens gathered with the rockets. But most instruments seem to be isolated from each other; you can't take something from the kitchen, for example, and put it in the pressure chamber.

Nye explains the equipment and concepts very clearly, as clearly as he does on his television show. He is a master of science education because he knows how to draw relationships in a useful way, piggybacking the new content on familiar information. He also knows how to convey what appears to be genuine curiosity and ardor regarding the way the world works. Best of all, he's got a keen sense of cool-osity. Compared with the fictional Doc of *Invention Studio*, Nye is dapper and witty — even though he's still eager and wide-eyed.

On the other hand, Nye's staff is less impressive. And this is the main flaw of the program. From the first character you encounter to the last, not one is suitable to guide children. Young Moody, the lethargic receptionist, teaches you how to navigate through the program, but he admits that he knows little. He's not much of a support. Sue Nami, the oceanography expert, pops in several times, goading you to be more aggressive. If you move too slowly through the puzzles, she compares you to a piece of driftwood and suggests that you act more like a tiger shark. If Sue Nami offered guidance rather than jabs, she'd be a better teacher and teammate. In another case, the Morphmaster 5000, a machine that simulates the movement of tectonic plates, uses sarcasm to point out your errors.

The Maximachine is *Invention Studio*'s reference library with articles about many of the great minds and great machines in history.

This is not what educators would call appropriate positive feedback. This is actually cruel humor at the expense of someone who's trying, perhaps struggling, to learn something. I imagine the program designers were trying to appeal to current trends in television humor, but the fact that they're trends doesn't make them an appropriate educational tool. Nye and his team should be encouraging more appropriate interaction as well as reinforcing a child's attempts to learn.

While *Invention Studio*'s drawbacks are aggravating, *Stop the Rock*'s flaws may be more serious. Parents have to decide how their children will respond to this style of feedback. Will it hurt a child's feelings? Will it reinforce an attitude or behavior that a parent has been trying to change? How does it jibe with the positive lessons of the program — the value of exploring, the wonder of science, and the advantage of mastering tools? Do the excellent content and devices outweigh the negative tone of the comments? For a child with a sturdy self-esteem, *Stop the Rock* may be a safe choice, but for a child who is timid about intellectual expeditions, it may be too discouraging.

Both *Stop the Rock* and *Invention Studio* offer more than the bits and bytes stored on their CD-ROMs; they nudge educational software design in the right direction. As educational software comes closer to providing a convincing and absorbing environment in which kids can explore things otherwise out of reach, computers come closer to justifying themselves as wonderful teachers.

As Bill Nye has shown with his television show, though, no computer can outdo human teachers who love their work, who see magic in every detail of the topic even as they dispel myths. But a computer could be a contender, and these two programs show how to begin.

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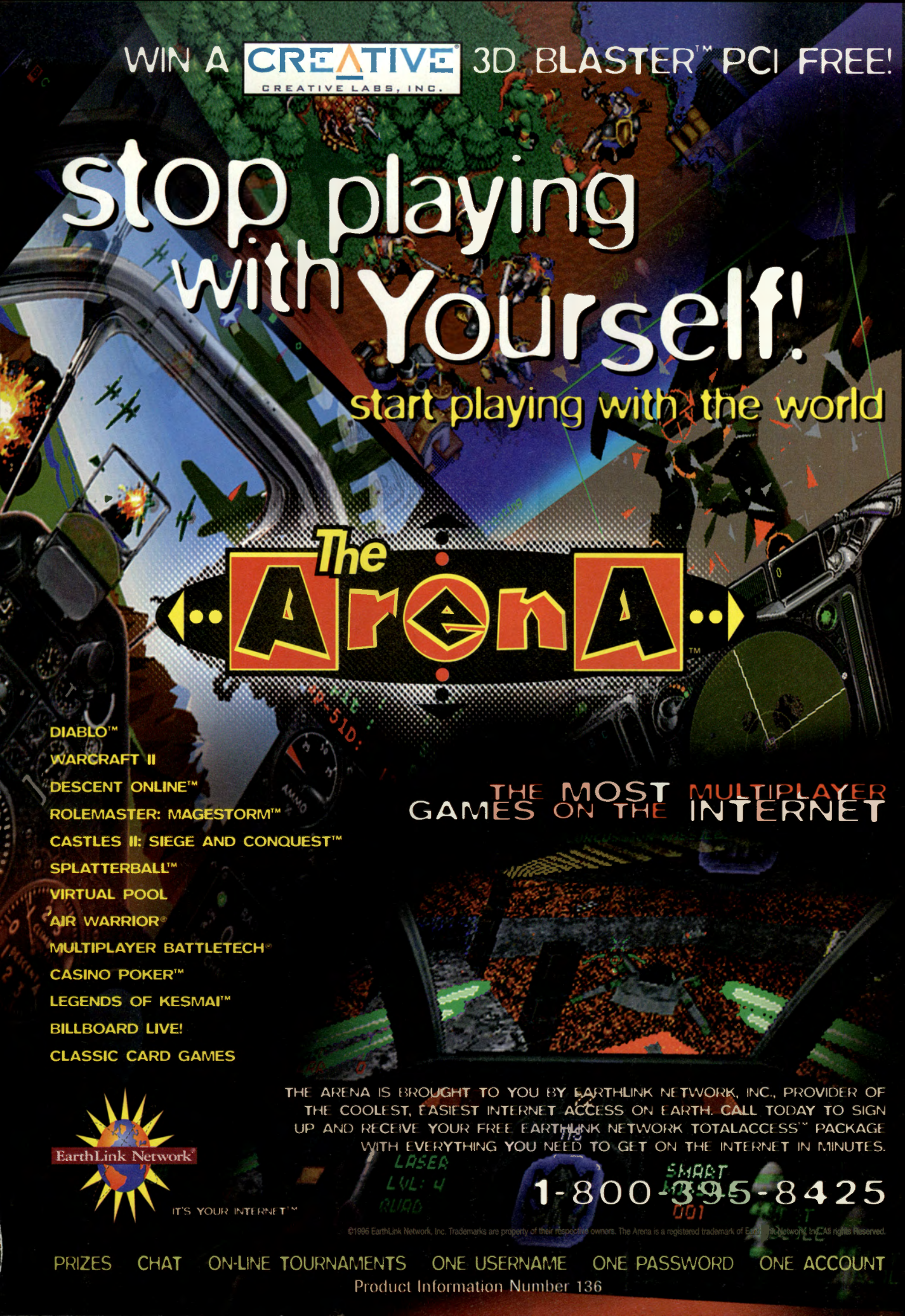
Nye Labs' electron microscope reveals the contents of a rocket probe into the atmosphere in *Bill Nye the Science Guy: Stop the Rock*.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Where are the Heroes?

With a whole feature this month devoted to online gaming, I've got an excuse to stray off subject a bit.

Before I do, though, I'd like to add one footnote to our cover story: you have to wonder how long Mplayer and TEN can keep going if the best games they offer — *Diablo, Quake, Red Alert* — are playable for free elsewhere across the Net. What I would do if I were one of these services? I would offer an all-in-one Internet gamer's package: all the regular ISP stuff (E-mail, ftp, newsgroups, home pages), *plus* the online gaming network — all with unlimited access for a price of about $20-$30 a month — and then throw in some discount rebates on top-of-the-line, upcoming products. That would be a far more compelling package than what is offered now.

Gaming Roots

Back in the 1980s, I played a lot of pen-and-paper role-playing games at a time when computer games were — let's admit it — not quite as good as their RPG counterparts; after all, computer games had little or no multi-player element. Since then the tables have turned. Paper RPGs are in decline, having degenerated into card games (*Magic: The Gathering*) and hand-puppet charades (*Vampire: The Masquerade*), while computer gaming — particularly Internet roleplaying games — have only just taken off, not only as a commercial market but as a creative medium for game design.

So, in a way, the online gaming market today is like the paper RPG market of the mid-to-late 1970's: bubbling and brewing with a dedicated, creative base of hard-core players, and just waiting for that crossover hit to break the market wide open.

One neglected paper RPG genre is the superhero game, and with Marvel Comics filing for bankruptcy, the time would seem ripe to snap up the online rights to the Marvel Universe; at the very least, it's about time someone finished up one of the many superhero computer games that have been lurking just over the horizon for ages. And why is it that the only superhero/comic-book games in development — the *Invincibles*, for example — are set in some generic science fiction future? When you talk about comic book superheroes, most people think of costumed crimefighters in a contemporary world, like the *X-Men Spider-Man*, or *The New Titans*, not some gunslingers in a vaguely futuristic, *Judge Dredd*-style world. Even the *Superhero League of Hoboken*, which is probably the one good comic-book computer game that ever came out, is set in some post-apocalyptic future and done in a humorous style. That's no knock on the game, but with such a lack of real superhero computer games, it reeks of missed opportunity. And apart from *Hoboken*, superhero games to date on PCs and consoles have largely been a bust — second-rate side-scrollers and bad movie tie-ins — and we don't need more of those.

No, what we need is a legitimate, action-strategy superhero game, with or without a Marvel/DC license. The basic game design has been around for years: just look at the *Villains and Vigilantes*, *Marvel Super Heroes*, or *Champions* pen-and-paper RPGs. Whether through licensing or by "creative borrowing," someone ought to make an action-strategy game along those lines.

Ideally, how would such a game play? First-person perspective is a must, though with an option to jump out to a third-person view. To me, the first-person perspective is the more immersive, and you want the players to identify with the heroes they've created. But perhaps in fighting sequences — particularly between martial artists — I can see doing a classic fighting-game perspective.

Character creation should be a building process as in *Hero/GURP*: you pay in points to acquire different skills and abilities, thereby customizing your character's stats. The *Hero Rules System*, though complex and kludgy at times, is the best I've seen, especially for superhero characters. The only caveat is that *Hero*-rules combat tends to be detailed and prolonged; on the other hand, we're talking about computer games: CPUs were born to do that kind of dull calculation. So when my Hulk-type character picks up a car and throws it at your Spider-Man, the computer calculates my character's strength, the mass of the car, the speed which I can throw it, your character's reaction speed versus an area attack, your quickness, and your resistance to physical damage when two tons of steel drop on your web-slinging ass — all in a split second.

A world where superheroes fight it out is a world where every structure must be dynamic: cars, trees, walls, tables, everything must have hit points and defenses and be breakable, like a few of the objects in *Duke Nukem 3D* were. In super-hero games, you could punch someone right through a wall, pick up a street light and beat him with it, or fly your powered-armor suit headlong into a pack of gun-toting thugs and topple them like bowling pins. But all you can do in a game like *Quake* is shoot things.

Just browse through the pen-and-paper RPG rule books; the ideas are all there: character types, the organization of hero groups, secret identities, bases, reputations.

It will be interesting to see what Interplay will do with *Fallout*, which uses the *GURPS* license — although again, this will be a post-apocalyptic world, and is more of a linear adventure, not an online game. Still, it may end up being an important bridge from paper RPGs to computer games.

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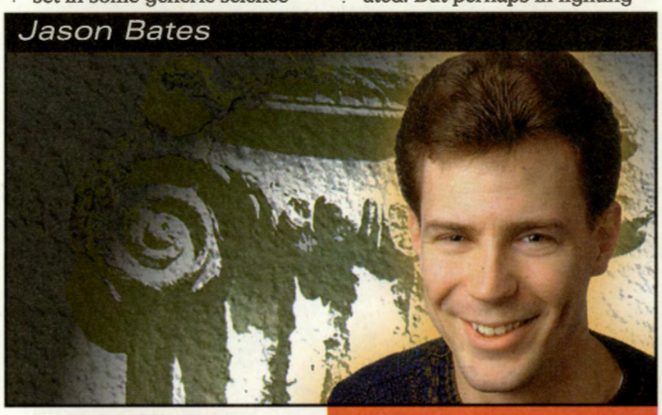
Jason Bates

Before you give up on the idea of comic-book heroes on your computer, imagine fighting evil as part of an online Justice League....

Another [Online] World

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, it's another look at what's new and hot in the world of online roleplaying games. This month, I took part in a little E-mail correspondence with Peter Clark, the CEO of CyberNations, Inc. His company will soon release a beta test of their new online RPG, *Ethereal*. Here's the scoop on this intriguing new addition to the online scene:

Ethereal will put players in a three-dimensional universe, complete with digital stereo sound effects and high-resolution graphics. The game will use the Gamma graphics engine developed by Worlds Inc. Gamma uses polygons to create a 3D world; all of the detailed texture maps are stored on your hard drive, so even when graphic resolution is high, the game speed won't suffer.

As released, the game will use a first-person perspective; third-person will be an option available later. Although *Ethereal* will run on a 486-based PC with a 28.8Kbps modem, CyberNations recommends a Pentium 75. The game is designed to alter its features dynamically, depending on the quality of your Internet connection — if the data stream gets clogged, the screen resolution will drop in order to keep the game's speed up. This shouldn't be a significant problem, however; Clark says the Gamma engine uses only two-thirds of the bandwidth of a 28.8Kbps modem. The engine was created with Java, which means it will work on both PC and Macintosh computers.

The story centers on seven deities, each with its own agenda. Each player will choose one of the as-yet-unnamed deities to hold as his or her sovereign. The seven gods are associated with seven elements: Earth, Fire, Water, Air, Electricity, Fertility, and Void, and they all inhabit their own dimensions. Players can travel between the different dimensions as they grow in experience and power.

"The ultimate quest will be to develop your character to epic proportions," Clark says. "Users at very high experience levels will be allowed to create their own *worlds*, as opposed to simply being able to construct buildings in the already-existing worlds."

That means the developers of the game will turn over some of the tools of creation to players who gain sufficient levels of experience, Clark says.

Michael Wolf

"We intend to create a sort of online tool kit for high-level players to run old-style campaigns right through our systems, running in tandem with the worlds that we create," he says. "We'll also provide libraries of prefab rooms, objects, and textures as well as random room/dungeon generators for quick starts."

By far the most intriguing aspect of the game, the ability to create worlds should attract hordes of gamers who've dreamed of doing just that.

"Our intention is to create an ever-expanding set of worlds that will be driven not just by the creativity of our staff, but by the massive wealth of imagination that our players will bring to the game," Clark says. "*Ethereal* will begin as a medieval fantasy game, but will, in the future, link to parallel games with wholly different genres."

That's not to say that high-level characters will have all the fun. Lower-level players will have the ability to create their own homes and other buildings. As with any RPG, much of the player's time will consist of developing his or her character. However, because of the online elements, the social aspect will be strong. Each player can choose to wander around killing things or spend time talking to other players and developing diplomacy skills.

Skill development will work similarly to the system in *Ultima Online* — the more you practice a skill, the better you'll get at it. If you don't use a skill for a long time, though, your character will lose the knack and you'll have to re-learn it. Clark hopes this twist will "prevent users from 'resting on their laurels' and require that they actively pursue those things that they find important for their character to know."

Because of the way the Gamma engine works, players can not only build onto the world of *Ethereal*, but truly share it as well.

"We support shared-state objects," Clark says. "That is, as I walk over and open a treasure chest I've just found, everyone else in the room can see me actually open the lid of the chest. It's not an animation sequence run on the local system, but rather a true shared experience. I can toss a ball to another player in the game and they will receive it in real time, with an unscripted result."

CyberNations has other plans for the game, as well, including real-time transmission of players' voices using technology from Voxpro. If you're the shy type and don't care to have your voice broadcast to hundreds of people, you'll have the ability to modify the frequency of your "Ethereal Voice" so it'll differ from your own.

Initially, *Ethereal*'s software will only be available through the Internet, although Clark says it may eventually be distributed on CD-ROM to save new players from having to download the basic textures and objects. On the web site, the software will be free, and $6.95 a month will buy unlimited playing time — pretty good as online RPGs go. Of course, you'll need your own Internet service provider (ISP) to get online.

According to Clark, the beta test of *Ethereal* should start sometime in April and should last through the summer months. Keep in mind that although all of the features mentioned here are planned for the game, they may not be available in the beta test. Already CyberNations wants feedback from players who have specific requests. For more information and the chance to sign up for the beta test and their mailing list, surf on over to *www.cybernations.lonekeep.com*. PCG

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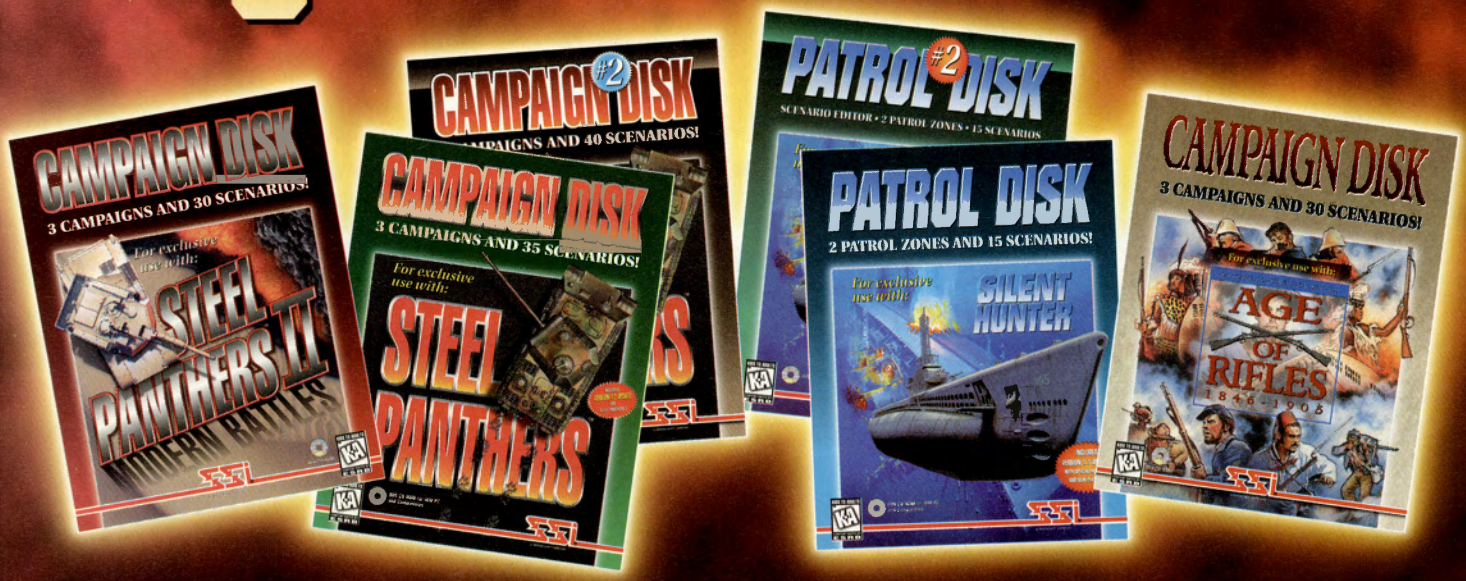

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Until recently, HPS Simulations' entire staff consisted of one man, Scott Hamilton; software companies don't get much smaller than that. By steadfastly bucking the bigger-is-better trend that currently holds the industry in its merciless basilisk-stare, Hamilton has retained full control over every aspect of his products, and in the process has acquired a reputation for customer service that is (or bloody well *should* be) the envy of many larger companies.

It isn't easy. He spends two to three hours out of every day (weekends, too) either working the phones or going online to answer customers' inquiries, debate their suggestions, and listen to their complaints — and he responds to *every* message. When HPS recently published a complete upgrade of its popular *Tigers on the Prowl*, Hamilton offered the program to all registered customers for only $20. At that price, he's barely breaking even, but as he sees it, that's not the point.

"I myself am primarily a *customer*," Hamilton says. "I buy and play games just like anyone else. When I pay fifty bucks for a game and boot it up only to find it's full of bugs and crashes, I feel deeply violated. And then when the publisher kindly offers to sell me an upgrade that fixes what should have been fixed in the first place, it makes me very resentful. It's as though the company were penalizing all the people who bought the game early and had enough faith in the manufacturer to take a risk."

Hamilton refuses to let a game out the door until it has "no known bugs, period." Of course, within a week, he's getting feedback from users who *have* found bugs, or who have their own take on the game and want to contribute suggestions for making it better.

"I know it sounds like a cliché," he says, "but I seriously believe that the customer is always right. The people who buy our games are intelligent, knowledgeable individuals who may very well have valid criticisms and suggestions, and it's entirely possible that they've spotted something I missed. I feel obligated to listen to what they have to say."

HPS Simulations embodies a passion for PC wargames that dates back to Hamilton's years in the Army. In 1986, his dad gave him a Commodore 64, and he began playing some of Gary Grigsby's early, classic games like *Kampfgruppe*.

"I was serving in the combat engineers," he says, "and our job was to advise and support the combat arms. We'd train with them maybe two weeks out of the year, and run a tactical exercise. It dawned on me that our training would be much sharper if we had access to PC wargames. Of course, I was way ahead of the military establishment in thinking that, but personally I was hooked."

After leaving the Army, Hamilton worked in a number of jobs: marketing engineer for a firm that made computers for utility companies, real estate database consultant, repair man for a stereo dealer.... All the while, however, he was working on his own game design and teaching himself to program. Gradually, the project became an obsession.

In 1990, he took the plunge. After discussing it with his wife, he decided to publish the game, called *Point of Attack*.

"I had to sell my wife on the idea," Hamilton says. "After all, I had a great resume on paper — MBA degree, ex-officer, engineer, etc. — and I was on the verge of leaving the world of 'real jobs' and plunging into the great unknown. Besides, to finance the venture, we had to dig deep into our resources and spend money that more rationally should have gone into the house or the savings account."

Hamilton and spouse decided to go whole-hog, issuing the game in a professional boxed format, so as to avoid any perception of being an amateur operation. Many in the field didn't give him much encouragement.

"I had one 'expert', with *Strategy and Tactics*, tell me I would be lucky to sell a hundred copies," he says. "Fortunately, the game did well enough to convince me that we had a chance to make a go of it."

His next product was one that has become something of a wargaming legend. *Aide de Camp* was a complex utility program that allowed gamers to convert their favorite boardgames into PC programs. The idea was inspired by Hamilton's own frustration at trying to play some of the "monster" boardgames that were popular at the time.

"I'd been playing *War in Europe* with the same guy, by mail, for four years!" he says. "I kept thinking, there's gotta be a better way to keep track of all the movements and record-keeping; and the obvious answer was the computer."

ADC was popular for another reason, too. Playing one of those monster games required isolating an entire room of your house for weeks, so that pets and kids didn't wander through and wreck a set-up that could never be duplicated. Hamilton laughs about this phenomenon: "I'll bet we've sold more copies of *ADC* to people who have kids and cats than anybody else!"

Initially, the program met with adamant resistance from the boardgame companies, who perceived all sorts of copyright violations and loss of sales. But when Hamilton began displaying the product at trade shows and gaming conventions, the boardgame people began to realize that *ADC* could only help their sales, not hinder them. Today, every surviving boardgame company has signed on to support the product, with one major exception: Avalon Hill. "I don't suppose they'll ever come around, although it's a mystery to me."

Even with the success of *ADC*, HPS was only beginning to hit its stride. Next month, we'll have more on Hamilton's amazing company. PCG

William R. Trotter

HPS Simulations may be tiny in size, but this fiercely independent company has a mighty reputation for quality and service.

Strategy, Schmategy

My good friend Jay Scott, author of *The Guitars of the Fred Gretsch Company* (and other manic manifestos) once said to me, "Why are you still wasting your time with magazine articles? Books are where the money is."

Not long after that, Brady Games asked me to write the official strategy guide for Spectrum HoloByte's *Top Gun: Fire At Will!* — an opportunity I jumped at, having a vast and otherwise useless knowledge of carrier aviation in general, the F-14 Tomcat in particular, and the Tom Cruise movie for no apparent reason.

This being an "official" strategy guide, I anticipated poring over mountains of data provided by the game designers and carefully selecting relevant sections to add to the expected hours of intense gameplay I knew were forthcoming. What a maroon...

Like many of the industry's high-end projects, *Top Gun* was running far behind schedule, with a stable version of the game many weeks away. Fine, I thought — I'll write all of the background stuff first and play around with the quirky beta copies just to get a feel for the game. What I hadn't anticipated was an insidious new attitude in the "companion guide" press — one of getting the book out simultaneously with the game.

Now, I've been a gamer a lot longer than I've been a writer, and I've bought my share of strategy guides for games I've gotten hopelessly stuck in. Maybe it's my imagination, but I seem to remember a time when strategy guides came out long after the games they covered. It just made sense; you released the game and got the public playing it, while at the same time giving the strategy guide author a reasonable period to romance a *finished* version.

Curiously, Spectrum's licensing agreement with Brady dictated that the book be released no later than 30 days after the game's release. And it didn't help that the *Top Gun* team was in northern California and I was stuck in the Midwestern hell of suburban Chicago, making communication a problem even if the designers *hadn't* been in a complete frenzy to get the game finished and out the door.

Scott Wolf

Don't get me wrong — I don't fault them for being more concerned with completing the game than helping with my silly book. I *do*, however, fault the Marketing and Accounting-driven pressure to complete a project in less time than it takes to actually do so. You just can't make the Kessel run in less than twelve parsecs — Han Solo's claim notwithstanding.

Despite our best efforts, this artificial time constraint resulted in the *Top Gun* strategy guide being somewhat less than we'd hoped it would be. One online critic suggested, "This is the first time I'm waiting for a patch for the *book* instead of the game." And his comment was one of the *generous* ones!

I was naturally delighted when Prima Publishing offered me authorship of the *JetFighter III* strategy guide — Mission Studios was located only 20 minutes from my house, and I'd already developed a cordial relationship with the guys there. Redemption at last, I thought.

Well, yes and no. This time the book was supposed to be out on the *same day* as the game — the motivation being the mistaken belief that everyone who buys a game buys the hint book immediately, too — and, like *Top Gun*, *JF3* was running far behind schedule.

I asked about a half a dozen retailers how often their customers buy a game and its strategy guide together. Without exception, they replied, "Never."

It stands to reason that a certain lag time between game and book would actually *extend* the game's life (and, consequently, the book's). Not so, say the Powers That Be, and despite an enormous amount of cooperation from Mission Studios and my project editor at Prima, the *JF3* book was rushed to press with myriad typos and miscellaneous errata left knowingly uncorrected. It's a good book, and I'm damned proud of it, but I couldn't help feeling that the overall quality of the book suffered needlessly because of some marketing weasel's dubious research.

I look back over some of my favorite strategy guides — Nick Dargahi's *Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.1* book; Origin's and EA's in-house books for *Wing Commander III*, *ATF*, and *AH-64D Longbow*; just about anything by Rusel DeMaria; and the lovingly encyclopedic *EF2000* guide (released nearly a year and a half after the game; prevailing logic dictates they shouldn't even have bothered) — and I see no evidence of such compromise.

Simulation strategy guides are fundamentally unique. Platform and adventure games are fairly straightforward — characters and objects are usually found in expected places, and certain actions always achieve predictable results. But you've got to put in a lot of time to discover definitive strategies for games that simulate real-world combat situations. The good guys *and* bad guys are in constant motion, and the variables are ever changing. It's life and death in the skies (or at sea, or in space), and only a weenwapper of the highest magnitude cheats himself by stepping through a brand new game with its strategy guide in his lap.

But don't cry for me, Argentina. I got paid, and that's all that matters — well, that's *not* all that matters, but it's a sad truth that these books are product, not literature. These are trying times for artists, my friends.

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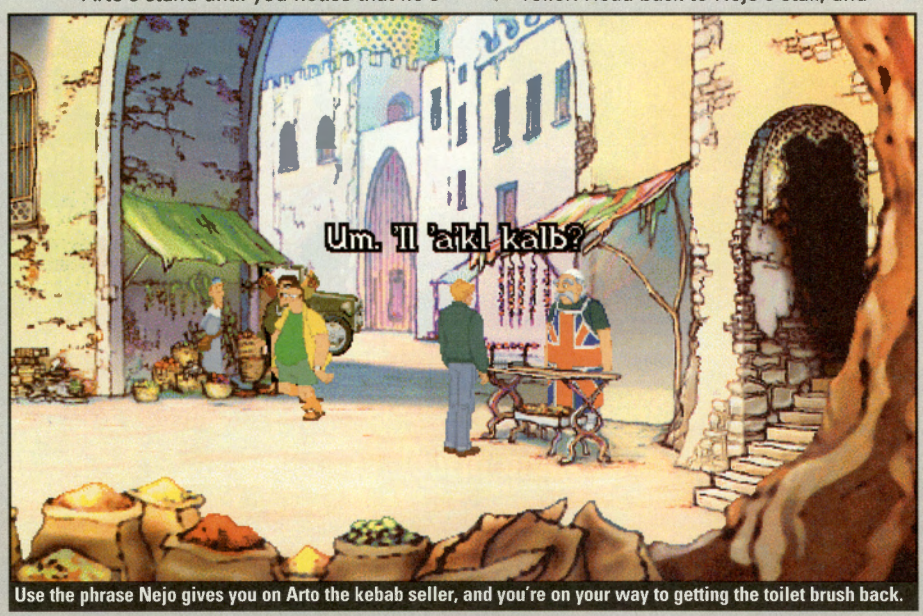
Circle of Blood: Part 2

This classic-style graphic adventure features some classic-style mysteries, so we've got the answers you need!

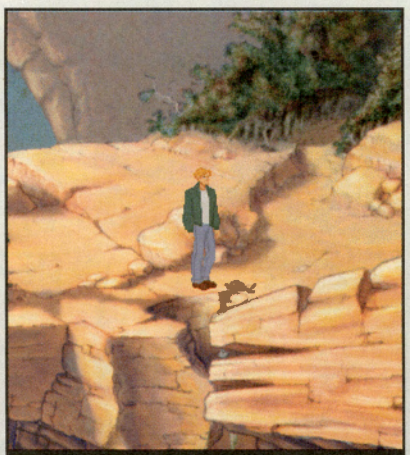
When last we left our hapless hero George Stobbart, he just uncovered the existence of a new order of Templar Knights bent on ruling the world. With information discovered by smarts and a bit of luck, he and his partner Nico know that the next key to the mystery lies in Marib, Syria. And that's where we pick up the story in the second part of our definitive solution...

Act 5: Syria

Immediately upon arrival in Marib, head up the stairs on the right hand side of the screen. Show the matchbook to the carpet seller, and head on up to the club when he moves the carpet. Try to use the toilet, read the sign, and then ask the oh-so-friendly Utar about it. Go back down to the main street, and talk to Arto, the kebab seller. Keep looking at Arto's stand until you notice that he's using the toilet brush on the kebabs. Talk to little Nejo about Arto, and then offer Nejo the red ball to help you get the brush. Use Nejo's phrase on Arto, then go back and talk to Nejo after Arto stops chasing you with a knife. You'll get the brush from Nejo. Head back to Club Alamut, and give the toilet brush to the manager. Go into the bathroom, and use the keys to unlock the towel dispenser and take the towel from the roller. Head back to Nejo's stall, and



Use the phrase Nejo gives you on Arto the kebab seller, and you're on your way to getting the toilet brush back.



In Act 5, tie the end of the towel to the stick, and use it on the crack in the ground to get down below the plateau.

while he's playing with the ball, pet the cat. Then ring the bell on the counter. The door will open, the ball will bounce and scare the cat, and the cat will knock the statuette onto the ground. Take the broken statuette, and use the tissue paper on it to make it look like stone. You can then sell the statuette to Duane (the obvious tourist with a bad John Wayne impersonation wandering around) for $50. Head back to the club, and show Ultar the picture of Khan. Talk to him until he offers a ride to Bull's Head hill. Pay him the $50. Meet Ultar at the truck, and give him the towel to replace the broken fan-belt.

Once you get to the cliffs, take a branch from the tree near the edge and use the cut towel on it. Use the stick/towel combo on the crack near the edge of the cliff and climb down. Find the ring in the niche on the side of the cliff, and pull. Go into the revealed passageway. Search Klausner's body, and look at the inscription on the wall. When Khan comes in and questions you, don't bother lying to him. When he offers to let you die honorably, take it like a man and shake his hand. You'll have a few seconds of time, so use the buzzer on him and jump off the cliff while he's down. You'll end up back in Paris at the end of the Act.

Put the white chess pieces in this position to place the red king in checkmate and uncover the secret of the Vasconcellos mausoleum in Act 6.

Act 6: Spain

When you get back to Paris, go talk to Lobineau at the museum about everything possible. Go ahead and give him Nico's address. Then go talk to Nico, and head back to the museum and talk to Lobineau until he tells you about Spain. Go to the airport, and head off to Spain.

Once you get there, the man watering the grass (Lopez) won't let you in the house. Put the blood-pressure gauge you got from the hospital on the hose near where it enters the house, and even though Lopez tells you not to, go inside when he leaves to check on why his hose died. Walk down the hallway to the right of the stairs, and when the dogs start barking, click on the suit of armor to hide behind it. When Lopez goes back to quiet the dogs, walk up the stairs and start talking to the Countess. Ask her everything you can, and when she takes you to the mausoleum, move the bible on the lectern. Ask the Countess about the checkered pattern, and talk to her while Lopez gets the chess pieces. Once you have the pieces, place them on the board to put the red king in checkmate. Take a look at the picture to see how to do this. Once that's done, you'll watch the Countess pick up the chalice and you'll be back at Nico's.

Act 7: Montfaucon Church

Go back to the Montfaucon Church in Paris and show the chalice to the priest. Let him clean it. While he's cleaning it, look through the scroll in the statue's hand, and then use the lens on it. You'll see a burning Templar and a date. Talk to the priest and get the chalice back. Examine the tomb on the right hand side of the rear wall, and you'll discover the tomb of Don Carlos Vasconcellos. Then go to the museum and talk to Lobineau about Baphomet. Head to the Baphomet dig site.

Use the lens you got from Syria, and you'll see the figure of a burning Templar, with a clue to the location of the next piece of the puzzle.

Act 8: The Excavation at the Institut Nerval

Head down the stairs to the lobby. Click on the door on the right, and when the guard tells you it's locked, ask him for the keys. Go in the bathroom, and use the set of keys on the soap near the sink. You'll make an impression of the excavation door key. Use some of the plaster on the soap, and wet it under the tap. Go back and give the keys to the guard. Head back up to the street, and use the plaster key on the painter's bucket. When the painter tells you go to away, go back downstairs and call Nico on the phone. Go back and tell the painter he has a phone call, and dip the plaster key in the paint after he leaves. Go back downstairs, and look at the thermostat on the left hand wall. Talk to the guard about it, and then turn it to cold. After the guard puts on his gloves, ask for keys to the bathroom again, go into the bathroom, and swap the plaster key for the real one. He can't feel the fake one for the real one with his gloves on. Try to get in the door. Call Nico and wait for developments. While the guard is distracted, use the key on the excavation room door. Put the chalice in the floor, and you'll see what the pattern shows. Talk to Nico back at her place, and then leave for Spain to talk to the Countess again.

Successfully solving the puzzle will give the Countess back the Chalice of Vasconcellos, and her family pride.

Act 9: Spain

Once you enter the Countess' house back in Spain, take the small mirror from the utility room in the Countess' house. Then go speak to her on all the topics available. Go to the mausoleum and close the

At the excavation site, put the Vasconcellos chalice at the center of the strange pattern to decode the image.

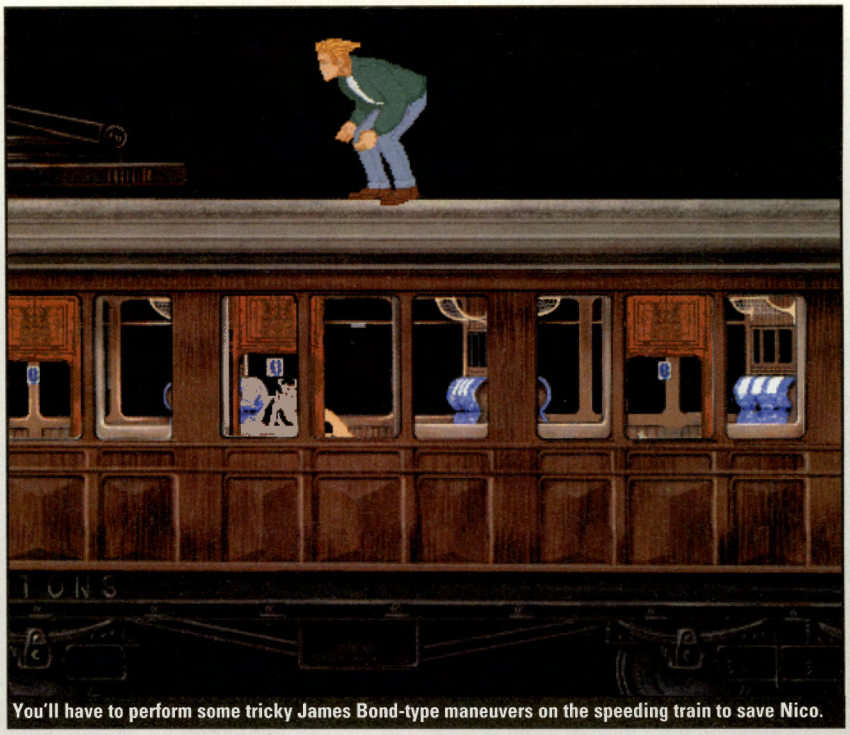
Nico will serve you well in distracting both the painter and the guard at the excavation site.

The Vasconcellos children and a clue to the location of the Templar secret is buried underneath the Countess' property in Act 9.

window with the long pole. Use the tissue on the pole, and then light the tissue with the candle. Light the big candle high above with the burning tissue on the end of the pole. The candle will burn away, and you'll get a stone key. Take the bible, and head back to the Countess. Have her look up the references you found on Don Carlos' tomb. You discover that there are more secrets in a well. Talk to Lopez about any wells on the property. Go back to where the hose enters the house, and get a dowsing stick from the tree near the window. Give it to Lopez. After a while, you'll find the well and descend down it. Look at the lion's head, and pull the tooth. Immediately step back, or you'll be crushed. Look at the exposed wall. Use the mirror on the shaft of light to illuminate the wall, and use the stone key on it. Go into the room. Watch more of the story unfold as you find the remains of the missing Vasconcellos children.

Act 10: Train

Once you're back in Paris, you'll learn from Lobineau that the end of the trail rests in Scotland. George and Nico will set off, and you'll eventually end up on a train riding through the Scottish countryside. Get up and try to go out the door of the train. A conductor will come in and ask for tickets. Once he leaves, walk out the door. Walk to the left, and you'll meet Guido. You'll remember that the conductor reminds you of Eklund, the man who killed Marquet. Walk back to your compartment, and notice that Nico is missing. Go into the compartment with the two drunks, open the window, and climb onto the roof of the train. Go to the right to the baggage car, and climb into it. As soon as Flap is thrown out of the car, pull the emergency brake. Talk to Khan. Try to leave the train, and then talk to Nico. Once she's untied, leave the train.



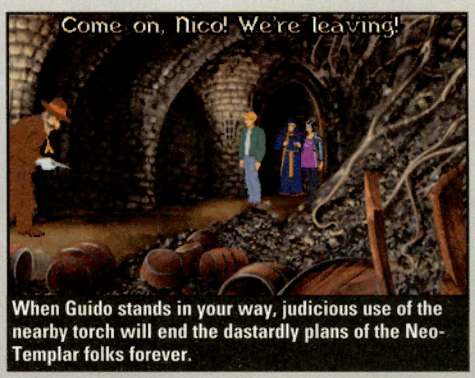
You'll have to perform some tricky James Bond-type maneuvers on the speeding train to save Nico.

Act 11: Scotland

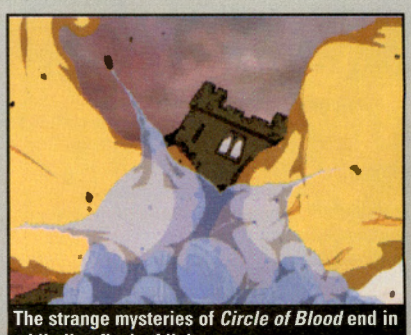
Go into the tower, and turn the handle on the wheel mechanism. Take the cog and spindle, and look through the rubble for all sorts of items, including a second cog. Put both cogs in the demon's eyes, and use the handle on it. Walk in the door, and then walk to the far end of the crypt. Watch the climax unfold. When Guido stops George and Nico from escaping, throw the nearest torch into the pile of gunpowder.

Then sit back, and watch the Neo-Templars fail in their mission to take over the world. You're now victorious!

The Sword of Baphomet isn't a sword at all, and the powers it gives the user can create an empire.



When Guido stands in your way, judicious use of the nearby torch will end the dastardly plans of the Neo-Templar folks forever.



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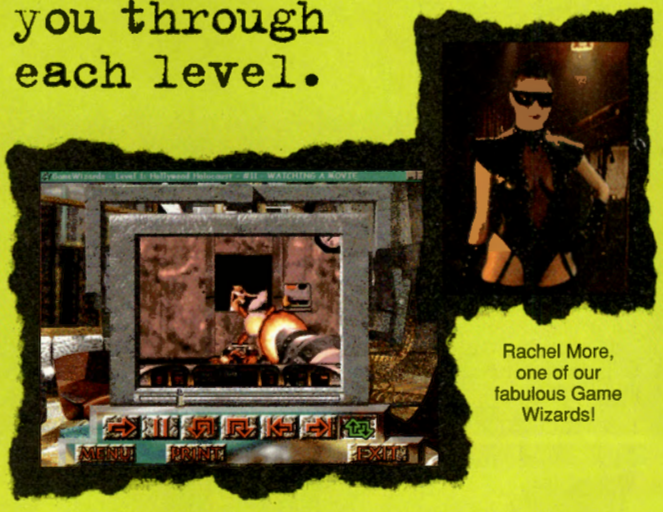

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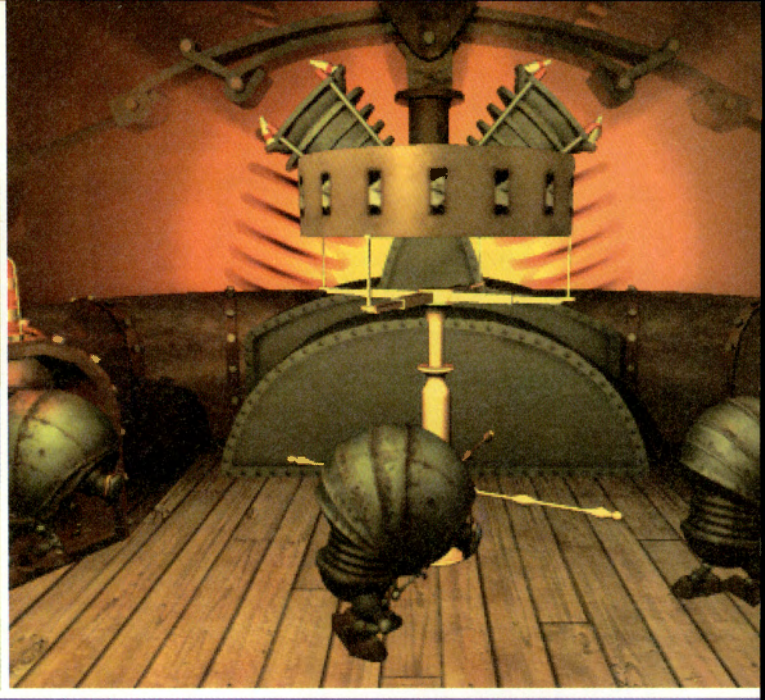

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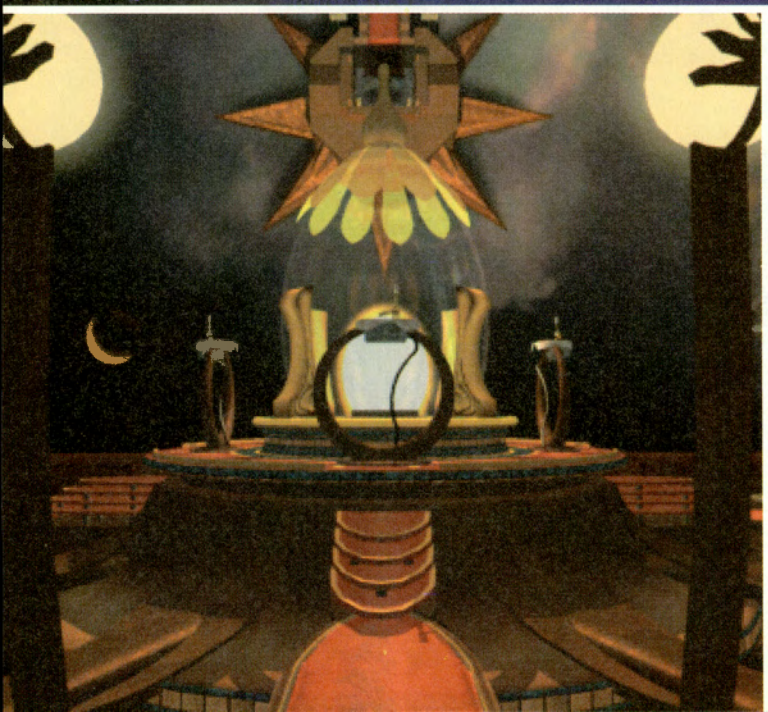
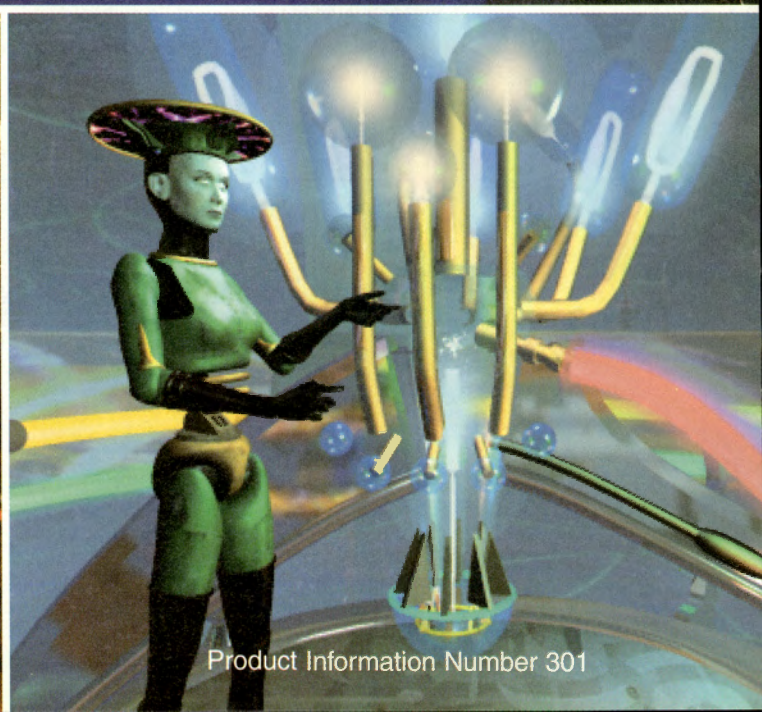




Product Information Number 301

Heroes of Might and Magic II

Expert strategy for this award-winning strategy game!

On its easiest level, conquering *Heroes II* isn't too difficult, but on any other setting, you've got to know how to get the most out of what you're given, or you'll quickly find yourself at the mercy of your opponents. There are plenty of new strategies the *Heroes II* tactician must be aware of, and for this, needless to say, you've come to the right place.

These flying Fairies have been divided into several groups before going after these Halfling archers.

Properly Grouping Armies

Getting the right mix and arrangement in your armies is of the utmost importance. Keep slow-moving creatures close to your archers to protect them. Try to have some flying units to tie up enemy archers. Having an army with creatures from the same type castle helps improve morale. These are all basic techniques.

More effective methods include combining two average armies into one, tougher army. You can engage the tougher army in battle while the other, now weaker army, can run off back to your castle or go stealing resources and grabbing free units on the map or purchasing Medusas, Nomads, or other creatures within your range.

One of the more finesse moves is when you have an open spot in your army. *Heroes II* gives you the ability to split any group in your army into multiple groups. For example, one group of 20 Gargoyles can be turned into two groups of 10 Gargoyles. This is especially effective when going after groups of archers, where a flying unit can tie up the archers and keep them from firing. After the battle you can always regroup them into one big unit again. A lot of people don't seem to be aware of this feature. It's accomplished by holding down the Shift key, clicking on the unit you want to split up, and then clicking on an open space.

Upgrading Ogres gives better mobility and additional hit points. This eliminates the non-upgraded Ogres' most serious drawback — their slow movement across the battlefield.

Before the first week is over, it's always good to buy a well. This increases the number of creatures grown each week.

What to Build Next

Developing your castles is a difficult balancing act, what with all the different structures you can build in the beginning. You should of course be aware of what resources your castle needs and go after them. Unlike the original *Heroes*, some of the creature dwellings can be upgraded to provide additional abilities. You shouldn't always go after the upgrades right away. Occasionally there are structures on the map you can visit that will automatically upgrade some units, allowing you to delay the purchase of an upgrade.

The Vampires are an exception, and should be upgraded ASAP. They are given a unique ability to regenerate lost lives by absorbing an enemy creature's hit points as they strike. If you have more than 20 upgraded Vampires, they're almost unbeatable. It will usually take advanced spells or a group of the toughest creatures to take them down.

No Substitute for Experience...

A new addition to *Heroes II* is how a Hero gains experience. A Hero can improve in many different areas like Spell Power (super-critical), Attack Skill, Mobility, and Knowledge, to name a few. This is accomplished in a combination of methods from gaining combat experience to stopping by structures on the map that provide instant skill enhancements.

If you're not in a money crunch and come across a treasure chest, you're given the option to take the cash or accept the experience points. Always take the experience points.

This guy has been in some serious combat. His Spell Points are well up, he has some very useful artifacts, but after a few tough scrapes he doesn't have a good army any longer. If he's forced into battle before resupplying, he may be killed, so retreat if you're forced to fight.

This Hero's spell power is very good, but his spell points are almost out (it shows he only has 27 of 80 remaining in the right corner). He needs to recharge them ASAP. There's nothing worse than losing a good Hero for lack of spell power.

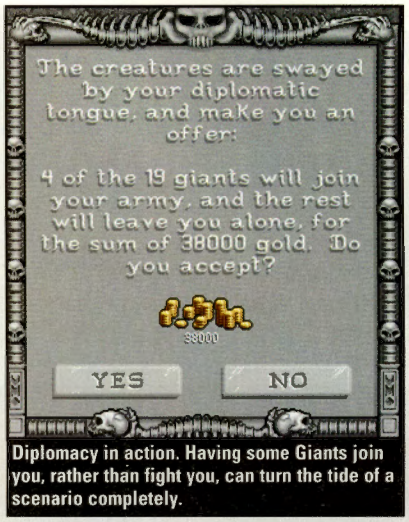
There's nothing like an experienced hero. It can make all the difference in combat.

One of the new attributes a hero can gain is Diplomacy. This increases the chance of random creatures on the map to join your army. Your Diplomacy skill can increase through experience, and it's a good one to have. With an expert Diplomacy skill you can try to go through just about any group of creatures, but you'll have to provide an open space in your army for this to work (another good reason to keep an open spot).

...So Run If You Have To

Probably one of the most important decisions you can make in combat is when to retreat. It may seem like the cowardly thing to do, but by retreating, your Hero will immediately become available to purchase, along with all the experience *and* artifacts they have gathered.

In contrast to this, you don't want enemy Heroes running away before you've killed off all their creatures. The most effective method is to use a Blind or Paralyze spell on the enemy's final surviving unit. This skips the enemy hero's turn and doesn't provide a chance to retreat. You'll need to use the spells each turn until the enemy unit is wiped out. By doing this you'll gain more experience points, any artifacts the Hero may possess, and the enemy won't be able to immediately buy up their lost, probably experienced, comrade on the next turn.



Diplomacy in action. Having some Giants join you, rather than fight you, can turn the tide of a scenario completely.

Spell Casting 101

There are numerous spells available in *Heroes II*, many more than in the original *Heroes*. Without good spells you're destined to fail. This means you'll need to develop your Spell Power and Knowledge as much as possible. The Spell Power increases the strength and/or duration of a spell while Knowledge gives your hero a greater number of spell points to use (each spell takes a certain number of spell points).

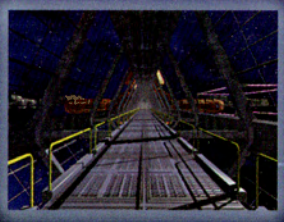
Some of the new spells you'll find yourself (and your enemy) using a great deal are Chain Lightning and Steel Skin. The Chain Lightning strikes four units at once, and can even hit your own if they're too close. It's a vast improvement over the standard Lightning, but of course takes more spell points to use. The Steel Skin helps protect a unit by decreasing the amount of damage from enemy creatures.

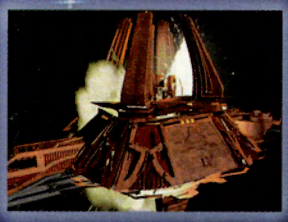
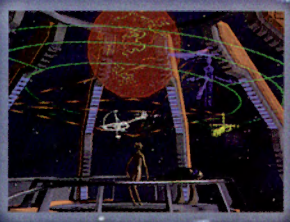
During battle you can right click on the enemy Hero and see how many spell

Before attacking a castle, you'll want to develop your ballistic skill. This allows your catapult to do more damage to the enemy wall and even fire multiple shots. Your catapult can also attack enemy towers, so having multiple shots will help take them out sooner.

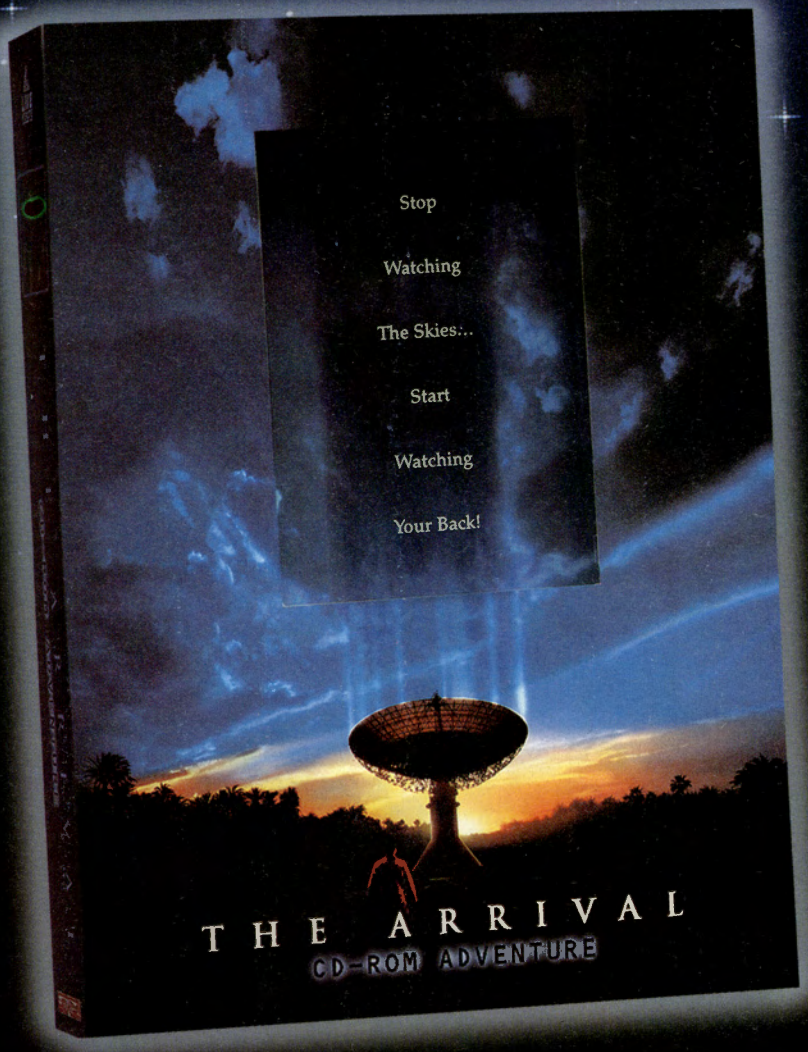
THE ARRIVAL

CD-ROM ADVENTURE



ACTUAL GAME PLAY



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Product Information Number 221

points he has remaining. If he's out, or almost out, you know he can't blast you with a high-level spell which allows you to use your spell power with impunity. Running out of spell power can also happen to you, so make sure you keep your spell points at their maximum. This can be done by spending a turn in a castle that has a Mage Guild or by stopping by wells, which are randomly placed throughout the map.

The Open Seas

A new feature for *Heroes II* allows you to gather resources floating in the ocean. You may want to buy a boat and get a Hero grabbing these goodies before the enemy does. The resources gained will often more than offset the cost of building a ship, and you'll have a Hero that can drop into enemy territory to steal other resources and mines.

New Castle Techniques

One of the changes to *Heroes II* is the size and features within a castle. If you're defending a castle you can now add additional towers to fire at the enemy each round.

There's also a moat, which causes enemy units to stop before entering or exiting a castle (this doesn't apply to flying creatures). The moat can be especially effective if the enemy has slow-moving units and you can keep at a distance while your tower does some damage. Your castle is also equipped with a front door so you can go out and engage the enemy before the walls are destroyed, if need be. Another feature, once your castle is fully developed, is a Captain of the Guard. If you don't have a Hero defending the castle, the Captain takes over. He normally has very weak skills and low spell points, but he is capable of tossing a few spells on the enemy.

READER STRATEGIES

I recently bought *Heroes II*. I am having a grand old time hacking and burning my way through the many different scenarios. I noticed a few issues back that you mentioned a code to reveal all of the map for *Heroes*. While traveling the lands of MM, I ran across a signpost that had the following numbers: 8675309. Type these numbers in, and presto, the whole map is revealed to your spying eyes.

For those of you looking for an edge in the game, you will notice that when you first start each scenario, there are usually a few artifacts around. Quickly grab these items up to see what their powers are. If they are not ones that you like, just reload the Win scenario and start over. The placement of the artifacts will be the same, but there will be different ones. I found it particularly useful to find the Endless Pouch of Gold, which helps boost your gold in the early stages.

And don't forget, load up your best Hero with all the beneficial artifacts, i.e. ones that boost your stats, and most powerful monsters that you can afford. Then take this single Hero and forge a gouge in their defenses. Find the weaker Heroes and defeat them as quick as possible. This will make your opponents spend 2500 gold on new Heroes and not on more monsters/armies.

One last helpful hint : Sometimes, when a stronger Hero comes toward one of your castles, buy all the available monsters and leave the slow monsters in the castle. Then take your Hero and run away. The computer will then make a bee line for your castle. The computer will take over the castle and then leave, and at the same, it usually leaves a small garrison to protect it. The key now is to let him hang onto the castle until the sixth or seventh day and then recapture it. This gives the computer time to possibly build some additional facilities inside the castle and this gives you the castle back before day one when the garrisons are replenished.

— Jim Coakley, Las Vegas, NV

When grabbing resources grouped like this, it's always best to take the mine first, just in case you don't have enough movements to grab all three things. This gets the mine working for you on the ensuing turn. The stuff lying around will always still be there.

Cheater's Corner

Jim pointed out the ***8675309*** cheat code for viewing the entire map. Here's a couple more, but be warned, regardless of which cheat you use, you'll be branded a ***Cheater*** if your win places you in the high-score list.

911 — During a campaign, typing ***911*** will give you a win for the current scenario and take you to the start of your next mission.

/NWC — A powerful cheat that will access the game's debugger. With it, you can give your Hero extra mobility, free spells, free resources, free creatures, and select secondary skills. Unlike the other two cheats, ***/NWC*** is not typed in during the game. You need to use it as an extension to the ***HEROES2W.EXE*** executable file. Under Windows 95, you can create a shortcut to ***Heroes II*** and under the Properties option, change the executable to read ***HEROES2W.EXE /NWC***.

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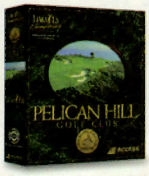

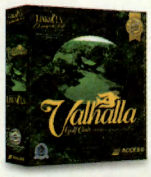

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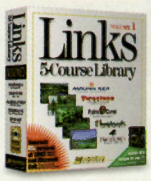

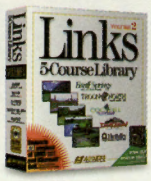

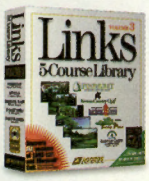

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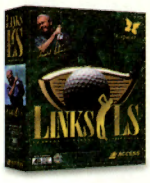

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Product Information Number 80

Product Information Number 326

Archimedean Dynasty

How to deep six the enemy and win the game!

In Blue Byte's futuristic sub simulation, *Archimedean Dynasty*, you're a hired gun entangled in a dire plot where you'll have to keep your friends close and your enemies closer as you navigate the murky depths of the world's oceans. But with this detailed walkthrough straight from the game's designers, you'll get the complete rundown on who you can trust as well as detailed instructions on how to win the game. One note: This walkthrough is designed to give you the shortest path to the finale — there are a lot of side missions that are not part of the main plot that will allow you to buy better weapons systems that could help you complete the game. Now suit up and prepare to get wet!

Argentine Basin

MAGELLAN

In the beginning, you will receive a message from Perry LaSalle telling you that El Topo, your boss, will be calling in a few minutes. Talk to a few other people around the station until El Topo calls. He will tell you to go to Vespucci and pick up Perry Lasalle and bring him to El Topo's asylum. Go to Vespucci, pick up Perry; while you are here, talk to all the people you can. It is important to note that how you treat people will reflect on you later in the game. If you mistreat someone, they may tell a friend and cost you a commission later on. Before going to El Topo's asylum go to the arms dealer and upgrade your sensors, your current sensor can not tell the difference between friend or foe until they fire at you!

ATTACK

On the way to El Topo's asylum, someone attacks you. Get used to it. This combat sequence is as simple as it gets. The enemy is directly in front of you, so just get him in your sights, lock the target, and blast him with your guns to complete the mission.

TOPO'S ASYLUM

Once at the asylum, go talk to El Topo — the plot thickens. Your next mission from El Topo involves clearing garbage debris from two NAV points. Make sure to talk to the arms dealer before going on the mission to repair any damage done to your ship in the previous fight, then start the mission.

CLEAR THE GARBAGE

At NAV A, clear all the garbage. Part of the way through blasting the trash, an Anarcho shows up; do as El Topo demands and destroy him. Now do the same at NAV B — there may be another scout here, if so, destroy him as well.

When you enter Gibbs canyon, take out the Helinox tank and then use a few torpedoes on this control unit.

Combat Tip

After locking on to a target, the radar display will show you what its weapon range is. Using this, you can try to stay out of its range while keeping it in yours. This is one of the reasons it is important to keep upgrading your guns as more advanced weapons systems become developed and are affordable.

NAV C has yet another Anarcho. They are becoming a nuisance in the area. Go there, and blast him. Mission accomplished. Speak with El Topo again, and don't forget to repair and re-arm your ship with torpedoes if you used any. Try to save as many credits as possible; the more you save the better weapons and sonar systems you can get.

PATROL EL TOPO'S ASYLUM

At NAV A, you are instructed to go to NAV B, so do so. Kill any Anarchos you come across and head for NAV C. Once there, go north until you see three crawlers. Destroy anyone threatening them. At NAV D, you will be told to retreat to NAV E, since there is a base by NAV D that you cannot take out by yourself. At NAV E, you will meet up with two more of El Topos's boats. Follow your instructions and go with the bomber back to the Anarcho base (NAV D). Once at the base, you will be instructed to identify the communications devices. One of the buildings is a communications center; select a building and get within 30 meters of it to identify it. Once you find the correct building, help the bomber destroy it, then get out of there! Back at the asylum, talk to El Topo. It now looks like it's time to go back to Vespucci, this time to stop some Anarchos from destroying it. Since the missions become more complex from here on, make sure to repair and re-arm your ship after each mission.

DEFEND VESPUCCI

At NAV A, find the crawlers and follow them as long as you are not told to go to another NAV point. In the mean time, several Anarchos will try to destroy these crawlers, so take care of them. At NAV B, you will find some more scouts, a tank and possibly a bomber. The scouts should be easy now, since you have encountered them before. However, the tank must be attacked from behind and is very fast, so you will need to do a lot of maneuvering. The bomber is tough; it is the first ship that you will probably have to use torpedoes on. Attack from behind — there are less gun turrets there.

VESPUCCI

At Vespucci, El Topo contacts you again. Now it's off to Entropoint II and points unknown. There are several side missions you can try for more credits before you go; feel free to do so, the more credits the better. Talk to everyone here as well (it's a good general rule to do so anyhow), and then head to Atacama City.

The ships that you will protect aren't all that helpless, but they can certainly use a hand when overwhelmed.

ATACAMA CITY
Once you arrive in Atacama City, speak to everyone there — again, there is the opportunity for some side missions here. Repair and re-arm your ship and proceed to Scavanger.

SCAVANGER
In Scavanger, make sure you speak with Fuller in Garcia's Lounge, along with everyone else. Now go to Atacama City.

ATACAMA CITY
Once you arrive at Atacama City, speak with everyone then head towards Lima I. In Lima I, accept the mission from Vasquez, then head back to Atacama City and speak with Chris Kruegar. Watch the cut-scene, then you will be in Galapagos. After you're done speaking with Chris Kruegar, speak with everyone else and head towards Mockturtle II.

MOCKTURTLE II
In Mockturtle II, you will have the choice of doing a side mission. After completing it (if you accepted it, of course), make your way towards Mockturtle I and speak with Iwan King, then hurry back to Styx to let Chris Kruegar know how your meeting with Iwan King went, and speak with anyone else at Styx. Make sure your ship is repaired and re-armed, then dock and start the mission.

FAKE ATTACK ON STYX
Go to NAV A and wipe out two of the enemy ships. Move along to NAV B and engage the enemy until you are allowed to use the auto-pilot. It doesn't really matter how many ships you destroy here, the important part is that you keep them busy.

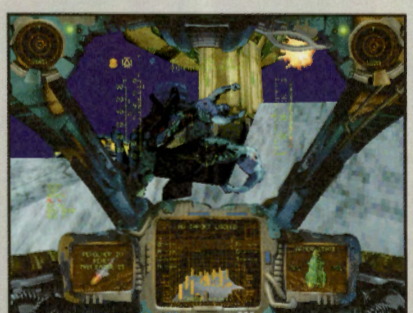
After the mission, Chris Kruegar will contact you. Repair your ship and meet Kruegar on the Poseidon. Once there, speak with Kruegar again, then dock and start the mission.

REVENGE OF KING'S ANARCHOS
Immediately find cover from the enemy bomber because those torpedoes can wipe you out quickly. Try and keep it occupied until reinforcements come, then proceed to NAV A. Once there, take out the bomber. Back on the Poseidon, speak with Kruegar. When he tells you to relax, repair your ship then go back to the crew room and speak with Kruegar once again.

Atlantic Federation

NEOPOLIS
Once in Neopolis, go to the meeting room and speak with Franco Farelli and then make your way to Jules I. Once there, speak with Kross, then make sure your ship is repaired and fully armed before the next mission. It is extremely hard — so beware!

PIRATES IN GIBBS CANYON
After reaching NAV A, continue down the canyon and cut your engines. Flow with the current until you slow down, then restart your engines. When you reach the base, find the gas tanks and search for the Helinox system tank. When you take that one out, all the other


Destruction of the enemy often results in their bodies floating as debris at the depths of the sea.

Bombers are the most potent weapons the enemy has. If you see one, destroy it immediately.

tanks will follow. After that, follow the pipes, and target and destroy the control unit. You need to take it out quickly. If you can find a ledge above the unit, the enemy gun towers might not be able to find you. This will make your task much easier. Make your way to Neopolis. Once there, speak with Franco Farelli and General Cox, along with anyone else you find. Again the opportunity is here to do some side missions if you choose to. Speak with the Mogh follower then go back to General Cox and let him know how the conversation went.

DEEPDRAFT II
Head to Deepdraft II and speak with the Admiral. Dock and proceed to Seacore, once there speak to Capt. Bullock. Here you'll find yourself in Limbo. Speak with everyone as usual. Go back into the crew room and talk to Franklyn. Then dock and start the mission.

ATTACK ON FREIGHTER ISHTAR
Head out to NAV A and identify the Ishtar. Retreat back to NAV B and escort the bombers there. Keep the mercenaries busy until the bombers complete their mission. Keep an eye out for the captain of the Ishtar. When he tries to escape towards the east, follow him and make sure his ship becomes disabled.

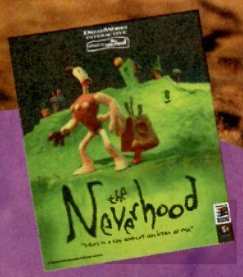
SCRANAGER
In Scranager, speak with everyone, especially the Brewmaster. Again there are side missions available here, accept them if you wish. The next mission described is the one from Franklyn that you have to do.

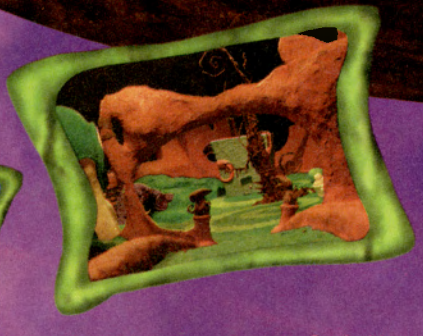
ENTROX AGENT AT LIMBO
Hurry to NAV B, get the enemies' attention, and let them chase you back to NAV A. Engage the enemy there but stay close to the gun turrets, since these will help you with your attack. After the mission in Scranager, speak with the Brewmaster once more. Try and get him to help you capture Captain Sorrow. When you speak with Sorrow use the info that the Brewmaster gave you to persuade him to board your ship. If he refuses don't worry about it — you will just lose the bonus that Bullock had offered you, but that's a lot of credits to lose. Head back to the Seacore and speak with Bullock.

DESTROY THE LOCK
You need to take out the generator ASAP. Ignore all the enemies and fly straight to

You're Fighting to protect good and Restore the Rightful King to power.

The Bad News is you're the guy on the right.





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NAV A. Find the generator and destroy it quickly. You need to meet the captured bomber at NAV B. Once you hook up with him, move on to NAV C and take out all the gun turrets. Escort the saboteur while he completes his mission. Stay very close to him and try and draw enemy fire away from him while he finishes his mission. After the pirate base is destroyed, you need to protect the Seacore from the remaining angry pirates.

HELP SEACORE

Stay close to NAV A and destroy any enemies you encounter. Proceed to NAV B and do the same, then move on to NAV C. Again, take out all the enemies and then make your way to NAV E. Escort the command bomber back to NAV D and take out any boats that threaten the command bombers.

SEACORE

After that, you will find yourself back on the Seacore. Speak with Bullock and watch the cut-scene. In Floating Bombay, you need to speak with everyone. Take any side missions that appeal to you. Make your way to New Babel and speak with Yallah Rangon. After speaking with everyone else, dock and go to the Star of Bengalia. Speak with Yallah Rangon once you arrive.

PATROL STAR OF BENGALIA

Patrol NAV B, then head to NAV C and inspect the paralyzed scout ship. Be careful — there are other enemy ships in the area. After destroying them, head back to NAV A and protect the Start of Bengalia against all attackers. Track down the remaining enemy ships at NAV D. Back on the Start of Bengalia, speak with Yallah Rangoon and make any repairs or upgrades to your boat that are needed.

PROTECT THE BREATHING GAS TRANSPORT

Meet with the squadron and follow them to the gas transport. Once there, escort the transport. When the strange ship attacks, wait for the other ships to disable it. Then hit it while it's paralyzed. After the mission, speak with Yallah on the Star of Bengalia.

Once you arrive in Ajanta II, speak with Admiral Peacock. For the next mission, you need to load up on Flash Shark torpedoes. You might want to upgrade your torpedo magazine here as well; you will need a lot of torpedoes for the upcoming missions.

If you're as good as Deadeye Flint is supposed to be, you'll get a sight like this one often.

BOARDING A BIONT SCOUT

Hurry to NAV B and hit the mysterious Biont with your Flash Shark torpedoes until it's paralyzed. Once it's disabled, protect the specialist while it examines the paralyzed boat then escort them to NAV A. Keep the attacking Bionts off their backs. When trying to paralyze a Biont with the Flash Shark torpedo, try and get as close as possible to the Biont before launching the torpedo.

Don't let those tanks take you off guard. They may be stuck on the ocean floor, but they pack quite a punch.

AJANTA I

Once the mission is completed, you need to go to Ajanta I. After arriving in Ajanta I, speak with Admiral Peacock in the destroyed hall. Dock and make your way to the Polar. Once there, El Topo will contact you. After speaking with him, talk to Admiral Peacock and watch the cut-scene.

Tornado Zone

MACHINA ANTARCTICA

In Machina Antarctica, you need to talk to everyone before starting the mission.

ATTACK ON BELLINGSHAUSEN

This is a very tough mission, so make sure you are fully armed before attempting it. Take out all the scouts that are attacking the gas tanks. Find the command bomber, destroy it, and then finish off the rest of the Anarchos.

MACHINA ANTARCTICA

Back in Machina Antarctica, speak with Barhelm and then dock and go to Little Paris. Once there, speak with the beggar and everyone else. Dock and make your way to Entropoint III. Check in, and jump to Entropoint V.

After you arrive, dock and move along to the Big Fat Mama. Make sure you speak with everyone on the Big Fat Mama. You need to gather all the info you can. Then dock and start the mission.

ATTACK ON BLUE HAWAII

At NAV A, wait for any enemy ships that make it through the mine field. One will try to escape back the way he came. Follow him, and identify the enemy freighter. Then return to the Blue Hawaii. Meet up with their defenses at NAV B. From there you need to take out the enemy tanks (cluster bombs are extremely effective against multiple tanks when they are grouped together). Then take out the enemy bombers. When you hit auto-pilot, select Deepdrift. In Deepdrift, speak with Santiago, talk to everyone else there, and then make your way back to the Big Fat Mama. Once

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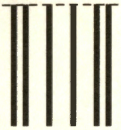

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there, speak with Santiago again and make your way back to Deepdrift. Pick up Fritz Rasmussen, then dock and go to the Mole.

GOTCHA

You need to kill all the enemies in the area extremely fast, so use your torpedoes. Make your way to NAV A and finish them off. Once at the Mole, speak with Colosimo and start the attack on the Big Fat Mama.

ATTACK ON THE BIG FAT MAMA

Go to NAV A and take out the guard ships and escorts, then finish off the weapon transports. After that's done, hook up with the squadron at NAV C and take out the rest of the Guard ships. Back on the Mole, take the 5,000 credits that Colosimo gives you and upgrade your ship as much as possible for the upcoming missions.

CAPTURING BIG FAT MAMA

Follow the bomber and clear the minefield on the way to the Big Fat Mama. Protect the bomber as it boards and disables the Big Fat Mama. Once it's disabled, finish off the remaining guards. After that is done, repair your ship then go take out Santiago.

THE END OF SANTIAGO

This one's pretty basic but very gratifying. Take out the guards, then send Santiago to the Abyss where he belongs. Back on the Mole, after speaking with Colosimo, you need to speak with general Cox on the Triton. Dock and take care of Willy Boy.

PATROL BIG FAT MAMA

At NAV A, keep Willy's people from destroying the crawlers. When the attack wave from the south comes, stay close to the Big Fat Mama and destroy all the bombers who attempt to infiltrate the Fat Mama. Make sure you don't let any bombers slip by you when you are attacking other ships. It doesn't take long for them to capture the Mama. Once the bombers are taken care of, destroy Willy Boy's remaining ships. Once back on board the Triton, speak with everyone. Go to the weapon shop and make any repairs or upgrades as needed. Then dock and start the next mission.

When you're going up against a fast enemy, make sure you keep him in your sights as much as possible. If you let him get behind you, you run the risk of getting up close and personal with one of his torpedoes.

AVALON'S UNDER SIEGE

Follow the canyon north-east until you get to the transport. Identify it, then take out the escorts. Once they are finished, wipe out the transport. Move on to NAV A, go straight up about 300 meters and kill the Moghs.

After that mission, you will find yourself at Avalon. Make sure you speak with everyone there. Then dock and start the new mission.

Clans Union

THE MOGH BATTLE

Once at NAV A, destroy all the Moghs while protecting the Freighter. Hurry on to NAV B and destroy the operations center as quick as possible. Move on to NAV C and meet up with the battle squadron. Take out all the Moghs in the area, and help the battle squadron destroy the energy supply. Once the mission is complete, speak with Admiral Cox when you arrive at the Triton. He will give you another mission, so make any repairs or upgrades, dock, and start the mission.

Use everything you can to your advantage, including sheer cliffs and trenches.

THE SHOGUNATE IS ATTACKING

Proceed to NAV A, and start destroying the enemy. When the Triton starts to have problems hurry to NAV B and protect it. Shoot down any torpedoes that are launched. Take out the enemy bombers first, then finish off the rest of the attackers. Back on the Triton, speak with Cox, repair your ship, then get back to the grind.

ATTACK ON TRITON

Hurry to NAV B, and once there, destroy Alpha squadron (try and destroy the bombers first, it makes things a lot easier for you). Once Alpha is destroyed move on to NAV A. Destroy all the enemies that are attacking the Triton. Watch out for the bombers. Take out both waves of attackers. Back in the Triton, Major Lopez will tell you to meet him on the Polar. Speak with him and everyone else. Dock and start the mission.

GUARD THE STRAITS AT SECTOR A

At NAV A, take out any enemies that you come across. Hurry to NAV B and protect the supply freighter. Go to NAV D and protect the freighter with the plans. Don't worry when the plans are stolen, just take out the rest of the enemies. On the Polar, you need to speak with everyone and upgrade your guns to plasma if you have enough credits.

AKIRA'S SECOND WAVE OF ATTACK

Hurry to NAV B, destroy the attackers. Make your way to NAV C and take out the tanks. When prompted, go to NAV A and protect the tank transport. Destroy all the enemies and remember to use the cluster bomb if you find a lot of tanks grouped together. Back on the Polar, a new ship awaits you. Go to the arms dealer and spend some credits. Make sure you load up on Flash Sharks. In the mission, find and paralyze the Biont scouts. Once they are disabled, destroy them. Don't worry about the Biont bomber. After the mission, re-arm your ship with Flash Sharks for the next mission against the bomber.

AKIRA'S KAMIKAZE ACTION

Head toward NAV B and take out the bomber's escorts. Then send the bomber to a watery grave.

On the Polar, speak with everyone. Re-arm your ship with Flash Sharks again and proceed to NAV A. Use the Flash Sharks to paralyze all the Bionts. Once they are all disabled go back and destroy them. After that go and help the Shogunate warriors at NAV B. Do the same thing you did at NAV A: Paralyze and destroy the Bionts.

After your return to the Polar, talk to everyone, then dock and free Hong Long.

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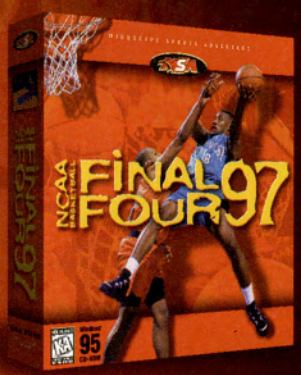

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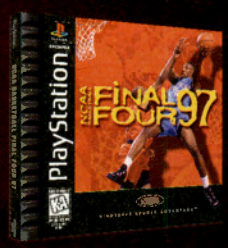

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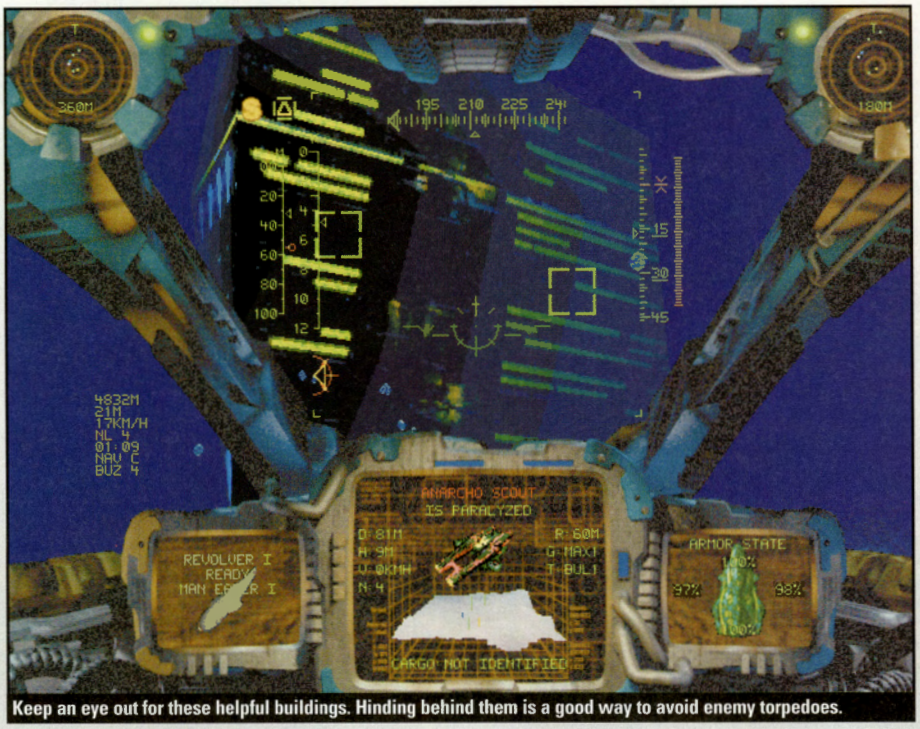


Keep an eye out for these helpful buildings. Hinding behind them is a good way to avoid enemy torpedoes.

FREE HONG LONG

Head out to NAV A. Once you pass it, cut your engines and let the current carry you. When the current stops carrying you, restart your engines. Find and destroy the energy containers, then take out the Bomber of Zalman.

Upon returning to the Polar, speak with Hong Long and Major Lopez. After that you'll find yourself in Svesda Wostock. Make sure you speak with everyone there. Be careful about which side missions you choose to accept. Upgrade and repair your ship as required, then dock and start the mission.

ATTACK ON SVESDA WOSTOCK

Meet up with the task force at NAV A. Proceed with them to NAV B and engage the Bionts. Once the freighters are attacked, hurry to NAV C. Once there, take out all the Bionts as quickly as possible (when fighting against a large number of Bionts make sure you paralyze all of them first — then go back and destroy them). Back on Svesda Wostock, speak with everyone. Repair and restock your ship with Flash Sharks and go start the mission.

THE BATTLE FOR THE WATER WORKS

You need to follow the Samuri. When you see the Bionts, engage and destroy them. Remember to paralyze them first, then go back and destroy them. Do the same thing to the second wave of Bionts. Once you return to Svesda Wostock, speak with everyone, then repair and rearm your ship.

CHASE!!!

Follow the rookies until you get to NAV A. Start attacking the enemy. Do what Ping says and hurry to NAV B. Once there, destroy all the Bionts. Keep an eye out for the rookies — if one gets in trouble, help him out immediately. Remember, all the rookies must survive the fight. Once you arrive on the Polar, speak with everyone, then dock and go to the Challenger. At the Challenger you need to speak with Admiral Ping in the Shang Chang Long. Then dock and start the mission.

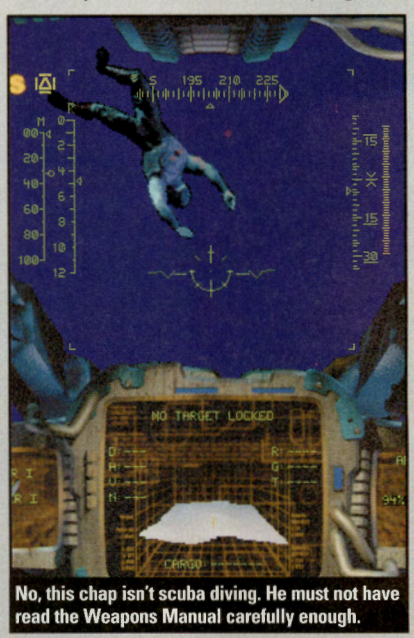
BIONT ACTIVITIES IN THE MARIANAS TRENCH

Meet up with the battle forces at NAV A. From there you need to move on to NAV B and identify the bomber's cargo. Then engage the enemy and protect the power plant. Keep the enemy busy until they give up and retreat.

Back on the Challenger, speak with Admiral Ping. Then you need to dock and choose Progress. Once there, speak with the scientist and get all the information you can off him, then dock and return to the Polar. In the crew room on the Polar you'll find Fritz Rasmussen; speak with him. After that load up on Flash Sharks then dock and start the mission.

RECOVERING THE SEISMOBOMB

You need to drop the water man off at NAV A. Once that's done engage the Bionts until the water man contacts you. Once the water man is ready, pick him up back at NAV A. Secure the bomb and hurry to NAV B. After completing the mission, repair your ship.



No, this chap isn't scuba diving. He must not have read the Weapons Manual carefully enough.

DEFENDING THE POLAR

This one's fairly easy, all you need to do is destroy all the attacking Bionts then return to the Polar. Speak with general Cox and get ready for the next mission. It's one of the hardest yet.

SECTOR B OF THE 1ST RING

You need to take out all the gun turrets first, then engage and destroy the enemy ships. Try and take out the gun turrets quickly because they are the main threat to the squadron. When engaging the Bionts make sure you don't get too close to the Biont battleships; their firepower is definitely more than you can handle. Help the squadron finish off the remaining Bionts. After returning to the Polar, speak with Admiral Cox. Rearm your ship and start the next mission.

THE ATTACK ON SECTOR C

Go to NAV A and help protect the Star of Bengalia. You need to take out the gun turrets first, then destroy the bombers and scouts. When prompted, head to NAV B and help destroy the remaining gun turrets and enemies. Some of the gun turrets are hidden behind the garbage, so you might have to clear some out of the way before you can get to them.

THE TRITON ATTACK ON SECTOR D

You need to protect the Triton at NAV A. Once that is done, move on to NAV B and destroy all gun turrets and enemies. Make sure you take out the gun turrets first, as they are more of a threat then the ships are. After returning to the Polar, speak with Hong Long. Then get ready for the penultimate mission. You might want to carry a few Big Bang torps for use against the Biont battleships.

THE ATTACK ON SECTOR E

You need to protect the Polar by helping bring down the battleships. Attack the battleship's gun turrets to draw fire away from the Polar. When Hong Long joins the battle, watch her back because she has to survive. Destroy all the enemies and gun turrets in the area. Back on the Polar you need to speak with Admiral Cox. Then make sure your ship is fully upgraded for the final battle. For this mission, you are virtually on your own, so here's a couple of hints: When taking out the many gun turrets, use the canyon walls for cover. If your shields are getting low, retreat and find a good hiding spot while they recharge. Good luck on this one — the fate of all of Aqua depends on you!

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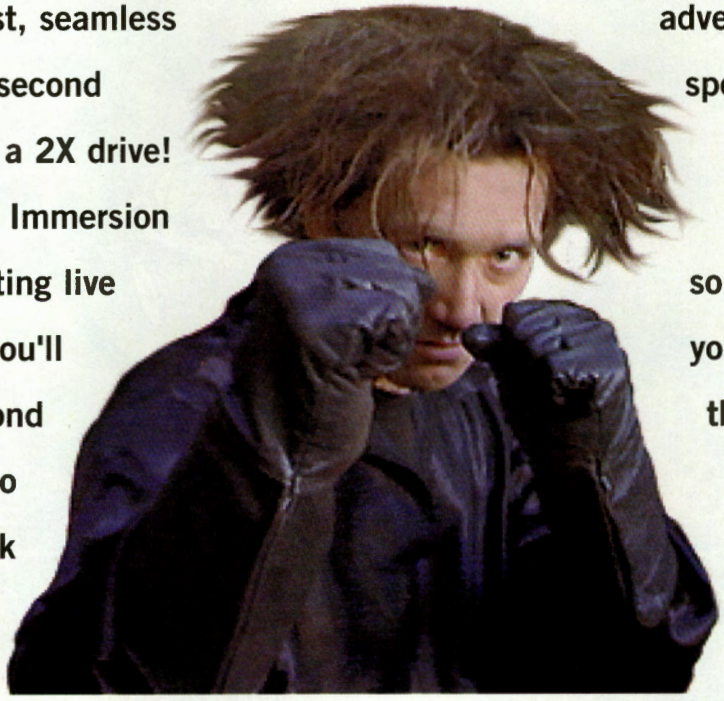

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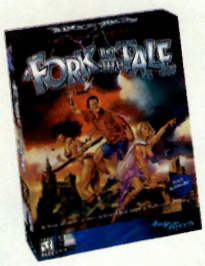

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Product Information Number 344

Readers' Requests

You've got questions. We've got your answers right here.

This month, we've received almost as many reader tips and strategies as we have reader questions. Either games are getting easier, or you readers are getting smarter! (We prefer the latter explanation).

In *Daggerfall*, wait until the store closes, save and reload, and this hapless shop owner will leave you free to pillage his livelihood.

Daggerfall

I've got a great tip for ya! Ever since I received the *Daggerfall* demo in the January issue, I have been playing it non-stop, and have found a very useful little bug (at least I think it's a bug). You know how handy it is to have a horse and cart? And how long it takes to get all the money to buy it? No more! All you have to do is go into any of the taverns that have treasure in the attic, then get the treasure and save the game. Now load your saved game, and the treasure will appear again. Do this for a little while and you've gained a sizable fortune. After you've got all you can carry, go sell your stuff and buy a horse and cart, then you will be able to go back to the tavern and fill your cart up with all that gorgeous loot! By the way, you can get rid of all that junk that nobody buys at the antique store in Betony.

— **Joshua Condon**, *Brodhead, WI*

That's good use of a built-in bug of the game, Joshua. It also works in the full version, and in other cities besides Betony. Of course, there are other ways of making money quickly, as we've heard from many readers, including the tips outlined in the following letter:

Here's a tip for getting a ton of gold quickly in *Daggerfall*. All you have to do is enter a shop of your choice, and loiter there until the shop closes. Although the shopkeeper still appears to be watching you, simply saving and reloading your game will make him disappear.

Then you can clean out the joint without incurring the wrath of the city guards, because you didn't actually break in! If you choose the shop wisely, you can even steal a horse and cart to help you load up on the loot. Then, if you like, you can go to other shops in the city and try your hand at breaking into them. Save your game before trying the lock, and if you don't pick it successfully, you can reload and try again. If your picklock skills are too low, try using an Open spell. The next morning, you can even sell your items to the shopkeepers you stole from (keeping the good stuff for yourself, if you need it). Keep this up, and you can build a fortune overnight!

— **Tony Sanchez**, *Omaha, NE*

Who says crime doesn't pay?

Crusader: No Regret

This tip will give you all inventory items, and a special bonus, without cheat codes. The secret area is located at the end of the mission where you are required to destroy the ore separator. When you get to the ore separator, and before you drop a fusion pack into it, cross the conveyor belts and follow the path until you reach the health regenerator. If you walk west along the wall to the north of the regenerator, you will trigger a floor switch that opens a wall panel leading to a teleport pad. Use the teleport pad. This will take you to the secret area. No need to be cautious; there are no enemies here.

Follow the path south until you reach the ever-so-deadly Dicor and toilet bowl pile, and follow the path East. When you reach a junction in the path, follow the path to the North. Here you will find every weapon, shield, power-up, and device available in the game. Take all you can! Next, follow the path back to the junction, and follow the path to the East. Keep going until you reach a door. Enter and enjoy one of the game designers' Easter eggs; a demon will rise out of a pentagram on the floor and say "I've waited a long time for this, Crusader." Next, a picture (one of the designers) will appear at the top of the screen and you will hear, in his best southern preacher voice, "You will not succeed-uh!" At this your crusader will blow the demon away. Have fun!

— **Jason Goldberg**, *North Hollywood, CA*

That's a pretty fun tip, Jason! It's always nice when players can find those extra little tidbits that the programmers left behind when they made the game, especially when they're things that have nothing whatsoever to do with the plot!

Space Hulk: Vengeance of the Blood Angels

I must point out just how right you are in your wunderbar strategy guide to *Space Hulk: Vengeance of the Blood Angels*. Although you provide admirable specific information on the missions, I have some tips that may be useful in general.

My first pointer is a formation to use in situations where you must have your whole squad in the open. With all bolters, of course, a line abreast will work fine, but with more diverse weapons, protection for the weak is critical. For instance, in the Great Hall mission, I array my troops like this: from right to left; Claws, Bolter, Cannon, Bolter, Cannon, Bolter, Claws, with the two flame units standing behind the group. The close combat terminators prevent the enemy from flanking, and the mix of fire in front lays waste to any frontal attack. This strategy can also be adjusted to conserve ammo by moving the assault cannons back and closing ranks in front. It is also extremely stable when advancing, and quite easy to turn. I suggest you personally occupy the flank guard who is in the most danger, following this advice on close combat: The

ARE YOU A GAMING GENIUS?

Do you know the secrets to every PC game ever made? Want to share your love of gaming with the world? Then Strategy Central wants you for The Tip of the Month Club. Every month we'll select a letter that gives the best advice or puzzle solution to a current game, and the lucky winner will receive a slew of prizes, including a *PC Gamer* T-shirt, a free strategy guide to inspire you, and a PC game pulled randomly from our mysterious and sinister Box O' Prizes. Send letters to:

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Keep in mind, we've seen plenty of cheat codes and old tricks (anything related to *WarCraft II*, for example), so keep your ideas novel and fresh.

The secret to a good offense in *Space Hulk* is strategic placement of your forces, as these genestealers will discover. The hard way.

Space key strikes or parries with the power-glove or the left hand weapon (both hands, with claws, and right hammer with the Thunder Hammer, and, in some cases, chain fist or sword). The Tab key parries or strikes with the ranged weapon up close (parries with claws and raises shield with hammer). Contrary to the manual, you can kill your opponent by pressing Tab; it simply uses the less effective weapon. A good strategy is to use both buttons at once until the stealer readies a claw. Then, respond with the weapon on the *same side* as the prepared strike. This will either parry the blow or slay the genestealer.

I've found that you can never get enough practice in close combat, so I suggest starting each serious playing session with several "warm-up" missions, usually single trooper historical missions, to get your timing down. After all, this is a game, dammit, and you can't afford to lose!

— **Ari Samsky**, *Brookfield, CT*

That's some sound advice, Ari. Knowing your enemy and arranging your troops correctly is essential to any battle campaign. And those genestealers are some nasty opposition!

Conquest of the New World

Here's some tips on how to win *Conquest of the New World*. When you get your first ship, explore the coastline about two turns in each direction. Look for a forest, but if you can't find one it's okay. Just don't go more than two turns in each direction, otherwise you end up behind the other players. Find the best sight from what you explored and land your crew.

Remember to build the colony on the coast. When you first get your settler and found a colony center, build as much housing as needed to house your colonists, then build a farm, three to four mills, a dock, two to three metal mines, and a church or two. Then buy two goods and build a commerce.

When you've got that done, make any building that you need to produce vital resources. However, on each turn, expand to the limits of your resources or size of your workforce.

Trade any resources that you aren't going to use for gold, and built two to three forts in your colony. Always keep at least one leader at full strength in your colony. Upgrade buildings as soon as you can and recruit new settlers as soon as you can, even if they're level one, until you have four to five colonies, then start developing them. Remember to build your colonies on the coast. When recruiting leaders, have the leader be able to control 13 to 14 units and seven to eight attacks. Transfer goods to your new colonies to help them develop and remember to keep at least one leader in each colony.

Battling Native Indians isn't the hardest aspect of *Conquest of the New World*. However, the following strategy works very well, especially when you're outnumbered. Equip your leader with six cavalry, and three artillery and infantry. On the battlefield, move the cavalry to the second square in the left and right columns. Move the artillery into the flag square and move the infantry behind the cavalry. When the enemy comes between the cavalry, shoot at them with the cavalry and artillery. Then the enemy will start to withdraw as you begin to pick them off one by one.

Battling European forces is harder. Equip the leader mostly with artillery and cavalry. Move the cavalry into the second square of each column. Move the artillery behind the cavalry and just start shooting!

Don't declare independence if you're on unfriendly terms with a player, because then you'll have to battle your mother country and the other player will probably attack you. When you are ready to declare independence, make sure you have a big army, a healthy amount of gold, and that your colonies aren't dependent on the mother country for food or some other goods.

Remember to build a navy also. One or two fleets are fine. Equip each fleet with about eight ships. Build one to two fourth level ships, one to two third level ships, and four to six second level ships because they're good fighters.

To attack other colonies, you should use a spy to find out how many military units are in the colony. Then take two or three leaders and put them on ships. Move the whole fleet to your enemy's colony and destroy ships around the colony to cut off support from the sea, but keep ships that are carrying troops out of combat. Then raid the colony with one leader to weaken the colony, and then attempt to capture it with your other leader.

— **Peter Kuchnio**, *Oakville, Ontario, Canada*

READER'S TIP WINNER OF THE MONTH

Thanks, Peter! Anyone having a hard time with Conquest of the New World *is sure to get some value out of those tips. And congratulations, you've won the Tip of the Month award this time around. Expect to see some Gaming Goodness come your way soon! Thanks to everyone who sent in tips and cheats. Keep 'em coming!*

Placement of your colony in *Conquest of the New World* makes all the difference when you're trying to build your empire.

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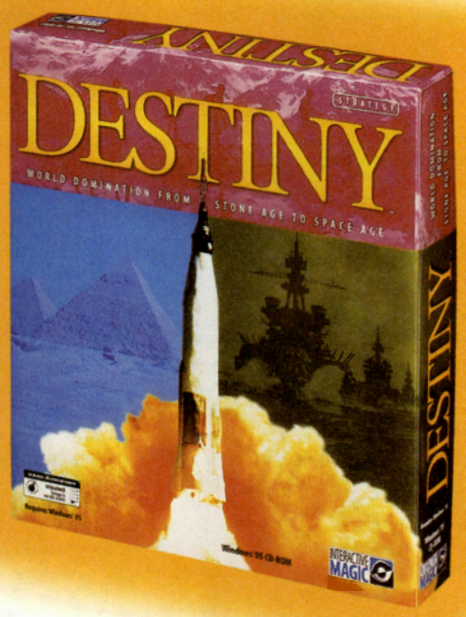

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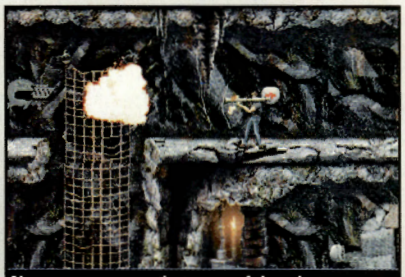
Cheaters' Corner

Admit it; you're proud to be called "Cheater, cheater, pumpkin-eater!"

There's nothing like dusting off an old favorite and playing it all over again — especially if you can cheat. So, this month, we give you the secrets to *Ultima Underworld*, a way to have invulnerability in *Apache*, and other cheats for some of your favorites. Happy gaming!



Now you can use that powerful rocket launcher in *Hunter Hunted* as much as you like with a simple code to make sure you've always got some ammo for it.

Hunter Hunted

Having a rough time surviving the obstacles set before you by your alien taskmasters? Staying alive gets tough when just about every object you encounter seeks your blood. For those of you who have found the challenge of Sierra's new action game a tad high, we managed to locate several codes that will ensure your victory over your jailers. Just hit Enter before and after typing in these codes, and you'll be home free.

COLE — 100 Health, All Weapons, Full Ammo and Invulnerability.
TREVOR — All Weapons and Full Ammo
INVINCIBLE — Invulnerability
SNELLINGS — 100 Health
BLUE — Changes player color to Blue
AVACADO — Changes player color to Green
OCHRE — Changes player color to Brown
VINCENT — Changes player color to Gray
SAGE — Changes player color to Bright Green

Apache

Flying the unfriendly skies can really make staying airborne a challenge. With missiles flying, shrapnel screaming by, and more enemies in the air than you have ammunition, keeping your ship from careening into the ground becomes a battle of reflex and smarts. Just when you thought it was getting impossible, though, we sent out our crack team of experts to uncover the secrets of longevity in this war-torn game of survival. What we came up with was a way to maintain unlimited ammunition and a force of invulnerability that the opposition will never puncture. The key to this awesome power is as simple as creating a new pilot and giving him the same name as one of the designers, **Monty Barrymore**. Then the next time you take to the clear blue yonder, your enemies will quake, and your missiles will fly with fury.

Ultima Underworld

Sure, it's an older game, but sometimes those are the best games to have and play. And *Ultima Underworld* definitely fits in that category. Whether you like the roleplaying elements of the whole Ultima series, you're a fan of Lord British, or you just like first-person dungeon exploration games, this one has it all. From mystical magic to melee mayhem, *Ultima Underworld* is a *PC Gamer* favorite. So when we came across these dusty cheats hidden away in a cubbyhole down in the basement, we couldn't help but to make sure everyone has them, if for no other reason than to inspire gamers to load up the fantastic title and give it another whirl. So, without more ado, the *Ultima Underworld* codes. To use them, just press and hold **F10**, and then hit one of these letters:

G — Unlimited Strength
I — Increase Light
Z — Stop Time and Monsters
W — Jump to the Next Level

Fire Fight

When it's time to clean up a mess, who better than someone with enough firepower to clean out an entire planet? It's not an easy task, though, picking up after those that go against the wishes of the Phantom Council, so it's always helpful to hide a few tricks up your sleeve for those occasions when a couple of key presses open a world of possibility. With these cheats, you can waltz through the missions in *Fire Fight* like the wind through a planet-wide forest fire. To use them, press **C**, **W**, and the **plus (+)** key on the number pad all at the same time. When the female's voice says "Cheater," well, you'll know it worked. Then, pressing **F12** will give you the cheat menu, where you can use such fine functions as invulnerability and unlimited weaponry.

You'll have nothing to fear from the enemies in *Fire Fight* with a few secret codes in your pocket.

CyberGladiators

When the never-ending battle between the Gy Djin and the Alliance rages on, it's always handy to have a few cheat codes to keep you warm at night. The codes are tricky to use — enter them at the fighter selection screen, and you have to enter them just like a move in the game — quickly and accurately. However, the payoff is great! Of course, you can find these codes yourself if you finish the game without using a Continue, but hey, taking out Carnigore or Shrapp is one tough challenge! If you enter the codes correctly, you'll hear a nice ka-boom.

U,D,U,D,U,D,L,R,L (**W,S,W,S,W,S,A,D,A** on keyboard for Player 1) — Unlimited Continues

U,D,PK+SK (**W,D,J+L** on keyboard for Player 1) — Disco Mode

U+L,U,D,D+R (**W+A,W,S,S+D** on keyboard for Player 1) — Limb Loss

BOSS CODES

Highlight Psyclopps and enter **PK,PP,SK,PP** (**J,I,L,I** on keyboard for Player 1) — Fight as Shrapp

Highlight Carnigore and enter **SK,PP,PK** (**L,I,J** on keyboard for Player 1) — Fight as Carnigore

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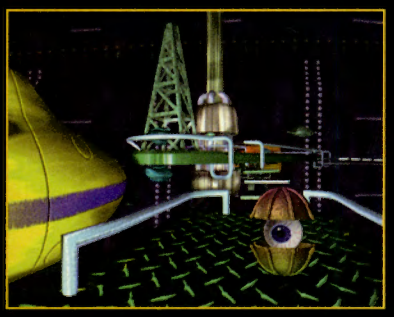

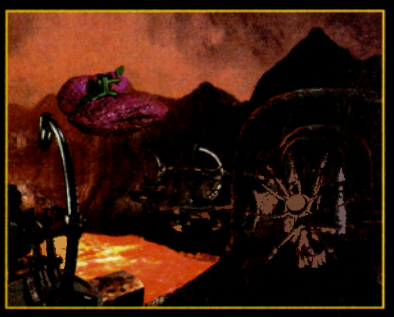

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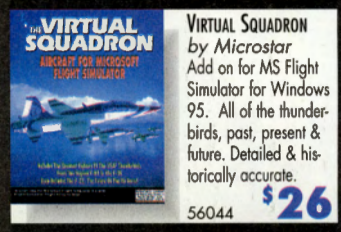

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The buzzing in our heads is getting louder and louder, which can only mean that the big Spring/Summer Games Slump is right around the corner. We may have to expand this Letters section to around 30 pages just to make up for the lack of new games to review and preview, so please keep those letters and E-mails coming! We're counting on you, dear readers, to sustain us through those gaming dry spells.

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Bethesda's *SkyNET* is a good example of the right way to make a game based on a hit movie; it captures the flavor of the Terminator films without trying to be a Terminator film.

Reel Gaming

One day I overheard some of my friends talking about games based on movies, and they all seemed to be in agreement that it was a bad idea. After more time and investigation, I found that more than a few people think it is a really bad idea.

Well, I have some points to make: If it weren't for movie-to-game conversions, you could kiss a lot of LucasArts software goodbye. All of the Star Wars games developed by LucasArts have been top-notch stuff. I don't hear a lot of people complaining about *TIE Fighter*, *Dark Forces*, or the upcoming *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* and *Jedi Knight*.

And what about the Terminator games? *Terminator: Future Shock* wasn't a bad title, and *SkyNET* looks fabulous. And what about *Dune*? Would we have seen *Command & Conquer* if *Dune II* hadn't come first? I doubt it. I think the answer to making successful games based on movie/book/television licenses is to take only the bits you find interesting for a game and use them, and leave out all the stuff you don't need. If people were really looking to see that much of the movie in the game, they could rent or buy the darned videotape.

— Allan Spears, *Ajax, Ontario, Canada*

Allan, it is true that a handful of really good games have been based on movies, television, or books, but they're still the exception that proves the rule; for every Dune II, *it seems like there are at least two* Judge Dredds. *You're right, though, that the best tie-in games don't make the mistake of hewing too closely to the movies they're based on; you won't find Han Solo or Luke Skywalker anywhere in* TIE Fighter *or* Dark Forces *from LucasArts — instead, what you'll find is a game that captures the flavor of the Star Wars movies without trying to reproduce specific elements from the successful films.*

Adventures in Text

One of Michael Wolf's recent columns discusses the adventures of old. I must say that, even in the days of text adventures, there was some utter crap on the market. These days (or at least before *Myst*), you might have to try to use every object with every other object to get ahead, but with some text adventures — even when you knew which objects went together — you had to find just the precise words the game's designer had in mind.

And I'm not entirely sure that a good story line is what new games are missing. I mean, you can't say that the story line of *Monkey Island* was a work of art. But *Monkey Island* was a lot of fun, and it had some original ideas in it (the insult fights were great). Perhaps that's one thing that's missing — many new adventure games prefer horror over humor.

And I'm not really against technological development. In fact, games running at 320x200 now seem less playable to me. I think that the main problem with technology is that you have to work much harder to produce a high-technology game than a simple one. With a text adventure, all you need is a good parser and a lot of imagination.

Problem is, I'm not sure I'd want to go back to the days of text adventures — unless, perhaps, someone creates a real artificial-intelligence parser that will not tell me "there is no tree here" when I type "climb tree" in the middle of a forest.

— Eyal Teler, *via the Internet*

Well, Eyal, no one really wants to see a return to text adventures; it's the quality *of those old games that we miss. You said it yourself: a text-adventure designer had to rely on his imagination — and the gamer's, too — since words were the only tools he had for creating the game's images. These days, too many games seem to replace imagination with technology, resulting in too many adventure games that look and feel just like the last.*

The campaign in SSI's *Fantasy General* is considerably tougher and more time-consuming than in *Panzer General* — but it can be won.

Generally Frustrated

Mr. Trotter's declaration that *Fantasy General* has the toughest AI really struck a nerve with me. I agree, though I suspect that it has more to do with SSI's numskull campaign design. What the hell were they thinking? The campaign is downright unwinnable.

I win all the time in *Panzer General* and *Steel Panthers*, but I find myself getting killed on the third isle of the *Fantasy General* campaign. I have a magnificent army — many of them with five shields' of experience — and I find myself struggling to survive in the scenario "The Serpent's Cauldron." It just can't be done.

Tell me, were the designer's thinking: "Okay, it's fantasy; let's add some respectability by throwing killer odds in the campaign"? Nothing is more frustrating than defeating the enemy in 20 battles, and seeing little impact upon the enemy. Where the hell is the enemy getting more and more (and better and better) units as the campaign drags on? And why the hell does the Shadowlord win if you've lost one battle? What, one battle and you lose the war — despite winning 20 in a row? Utter nonsense!

SSI had better make a patch for *Fantasy General*, or this old grognard will wait for a cold day in hell before buying another product. I love SSI, but I'll be damned if I'm going to pay 60 bucks just to fail constantly.

— John Psinas, *Montreal, Quebec, Canada*

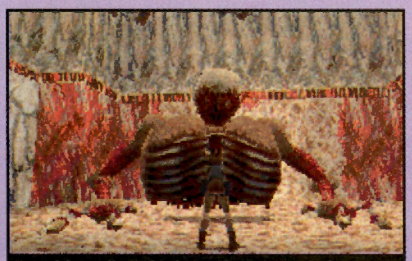
Believe it or not, John, the campaign can be won; it's just very hard, and it can take forever. Maybe the Fantasy General *veterans out there have some tips we can publish in the Strategy section. What about it readers — do you have any tips for John? We're keeping our eyes peeled!*

Polygons Revealed!

I'm just writing in on a whim, but this is important to me: I'm aware that a lot of people (all of them non-programmers, and most of them under 13 years old) have been getting the illusion that a polygon is a three-sided, three-dimensional figure. They're totally confused! A polygon, as any programmer like myself knows, is a two-dimensional figure; such as a triangle or a square. The complex 3D "polygon" characters in games like *MechWarrior 2* and *Tomb Raider* are actually a intricate bunch of polygons (2D figures) that are joined at the edges. Maybe I'm wrong, and all the polys I create aren't messing up kids in geometry class, but I thought I'd set the record straight anyway.

— Nicholas J. Porter, *via the Internet*

Uh...yeah.



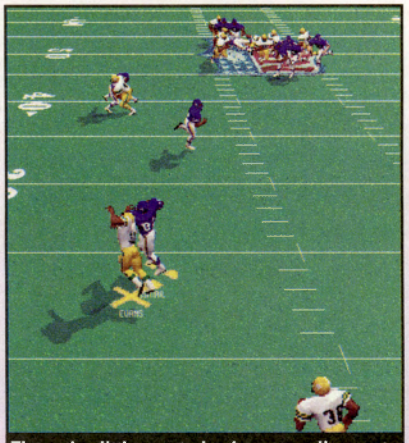
Gasp! Lara Croft isn't a polygon — she's a bunch of polygons joined at the edges! But we still think she's the cat's pajamas.

Madden Revisited

I'm writing in response to your review of *John Madden NFL 97*. I love the game and think it's great. I wanted to address the problem you had with the high scores and excessive yardage allowed in a game. Almost every football game I've ever played, whether it was on Nintendo, Sega, or the PC, allowed excessive yardage and points. Two things cause this: First, since a top view, or at least a distant view, is needed to see the whole field at once, the players have to move at higher speeds than in the real world, or the game would seem sluggish. Didn't you notice that you can run 60 yards in about 3-4 seconds?

Second — and most important — look at the play clock when you snap the ball. It's probably around 30-35 seconds. It takes much longer to get a play from the coach's booth down to the sidelines, onto the field, and called in the huddle than it does for you to pick one on a computer game. In the NFL, the ball is usually snapped with 5-10 seconds left on the play clock. That's a huge difference. To get more realistic results, either let the play clock run down, or adjust the quarter length to five minutes.

— Stuart Rodda, *Richmond, VA*



Those tiny little quarterbacks can really scoot — maybe that's why the yardage and points really add up in some PC football games.

Thanks for the tip!

Sex! Sex! Sex!

I have something to address regarding computer games: sex. I feel that games don't need sex unless it is used as a part of the plot in a game, such as Sierra's Leisure Suit Larry series. In those games, sex is used in the puzzles and as a vehicle for humor. But most games that contain sex (or use sex to lure us into buying them) usually aren't good games anyway — like *Catfight* — so what's the point of blatantly exploiting the sexual angle? Even *Duke Nukem 3D* has sex, yet it is very mindless. Oh, what fun to watch the strippers! Game companies that use sex to make a buck aren't very smart. Let's hope gamers won't be sucked in by their tricks.

— Patrick Ratanpunna, *Norcross, GA*

Heh-heh. He said "sucked."

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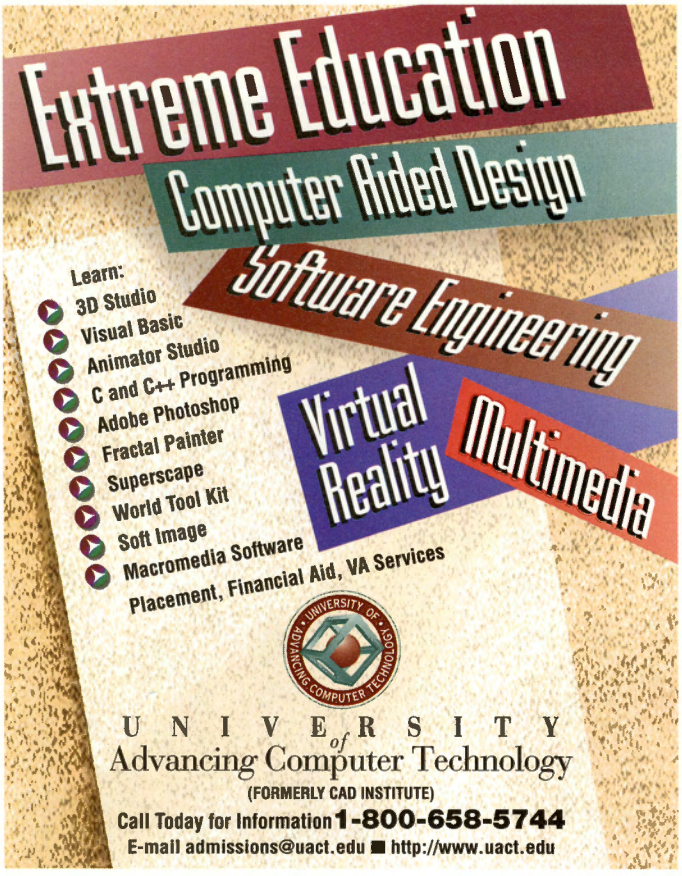

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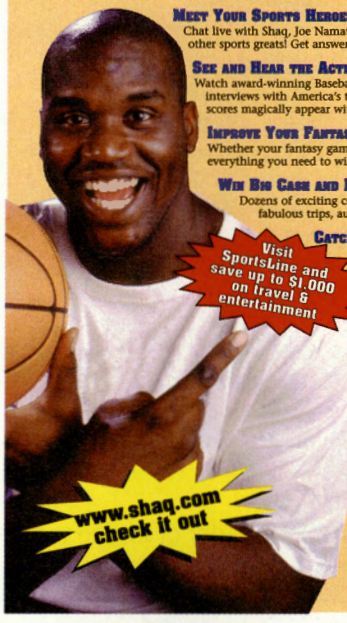

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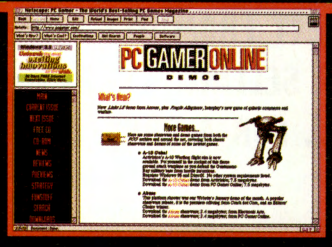

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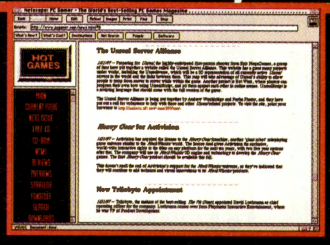

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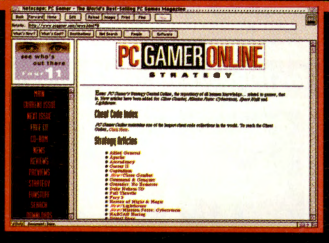

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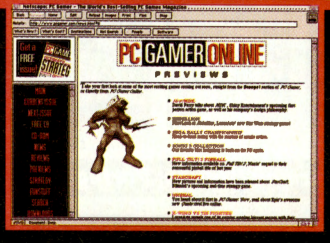

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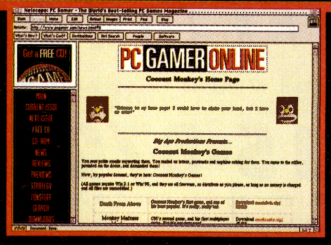

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Jake couldn't believe what he was hearing. It wasn't just that he didn't want to believe Susan was dead — there was also the fact that Marcus Priest hadn't uttered a single word of truth in the seven months Jake had known the man.

Even when Marcus had hired Jake to "take care" of his wife, he hadn't really been looking for a bodyguard. He'd wanted someone who could get rid of her — murder her and make sure it looked like an accident.

Marcus had thought he'd found the right man for the job in Jake, as if every down-and-out private eye was just a few hundred dollars away from becoming a hitman. And, to be honest, Jake had seriously considered doing the job for a while.

But that was before he knew Susan. He'd had the luxury then of imagining she was the kind of woman Marcus Priest deserved; as cold-hearted and despicable as Marcus himself.

All of that changed when they met.

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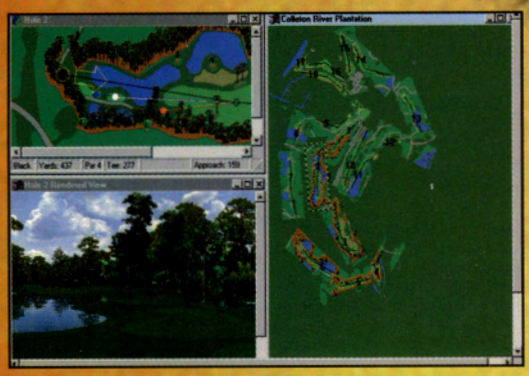
The Course Designer



This is the Course Designer that created all 5 Nicklaus-designed courses in the game!

Use the Designer to re-create your favorite course! Import, modify, and play courses from previous Nicklaus games!

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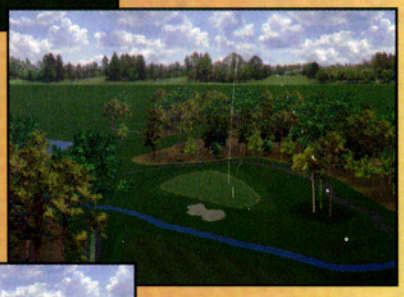

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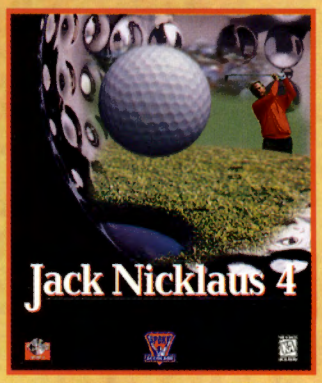

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Featuring *Colleton River Plantation, Country Club of the South, Muirfield Village, Cabo del Sol,* and *Winding Springs.*

The Course Designer

Input the basic details of a course from a real scorecard–the "Wizard" automatically routes each hole.

"Is it live or is it...?" Our Course Designer is so true-to-life, it's hard to tell the difference!

This image is of the 3rd Green at Country Club of the South. The left half of the image is from the Course Designer; the right half of the image is an actual photo.

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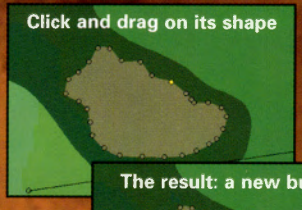

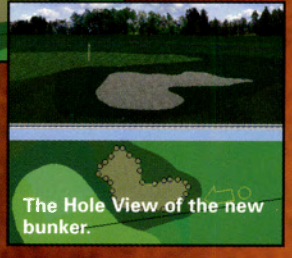

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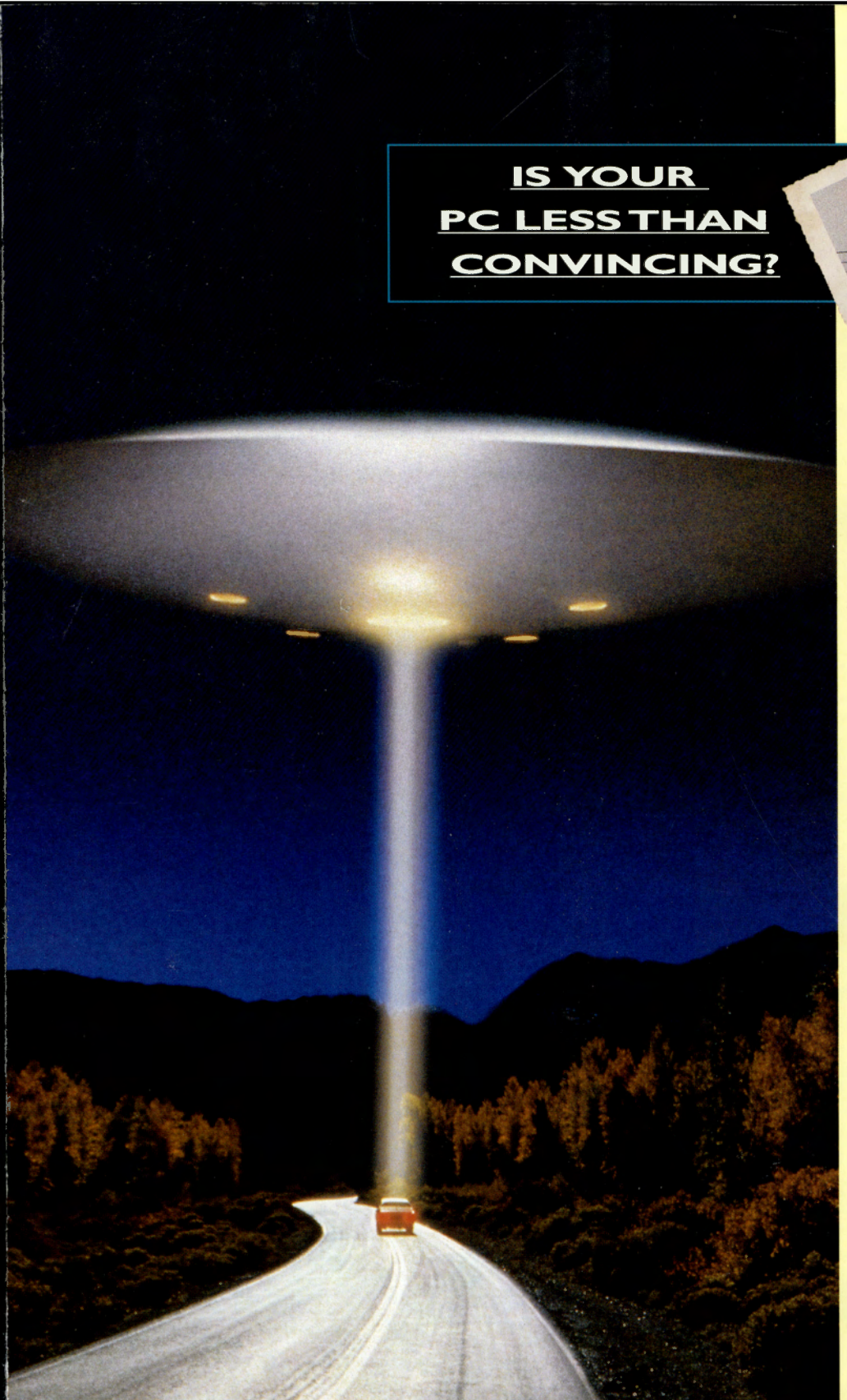

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