STATE OF THE ART REPORT: SNES • PARK PLACE: WAS IT RAID OR RESCUE? • GUIDE TO DIGITAL COMBAT

ELECTRONIC GAMES

THE MAGAZINE OF INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCES

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 7

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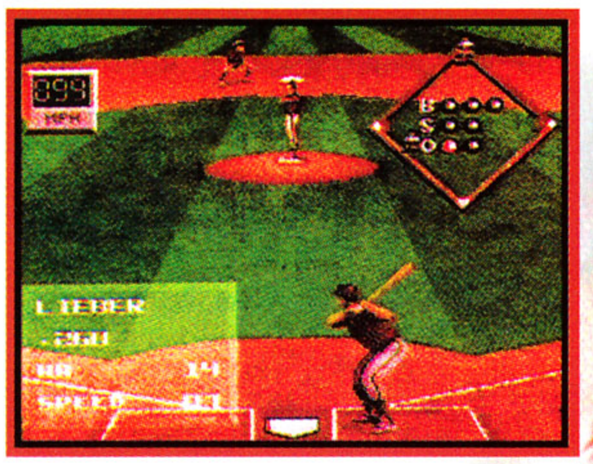

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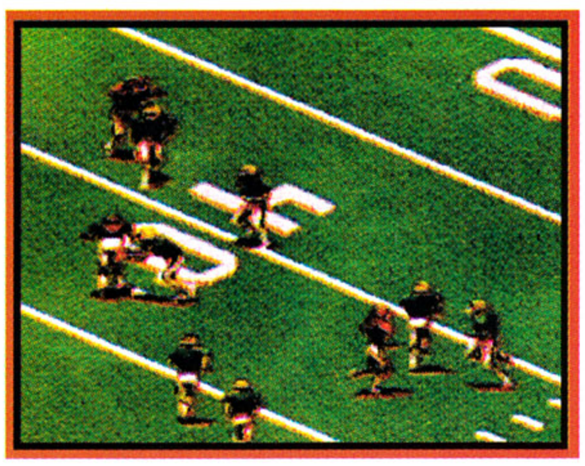

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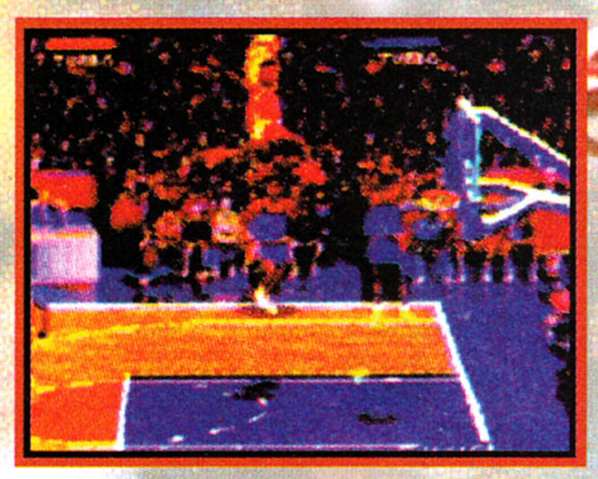

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Wavefront for the awesome cover art
Cliff Spohn — EG Interview
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Post no bills.

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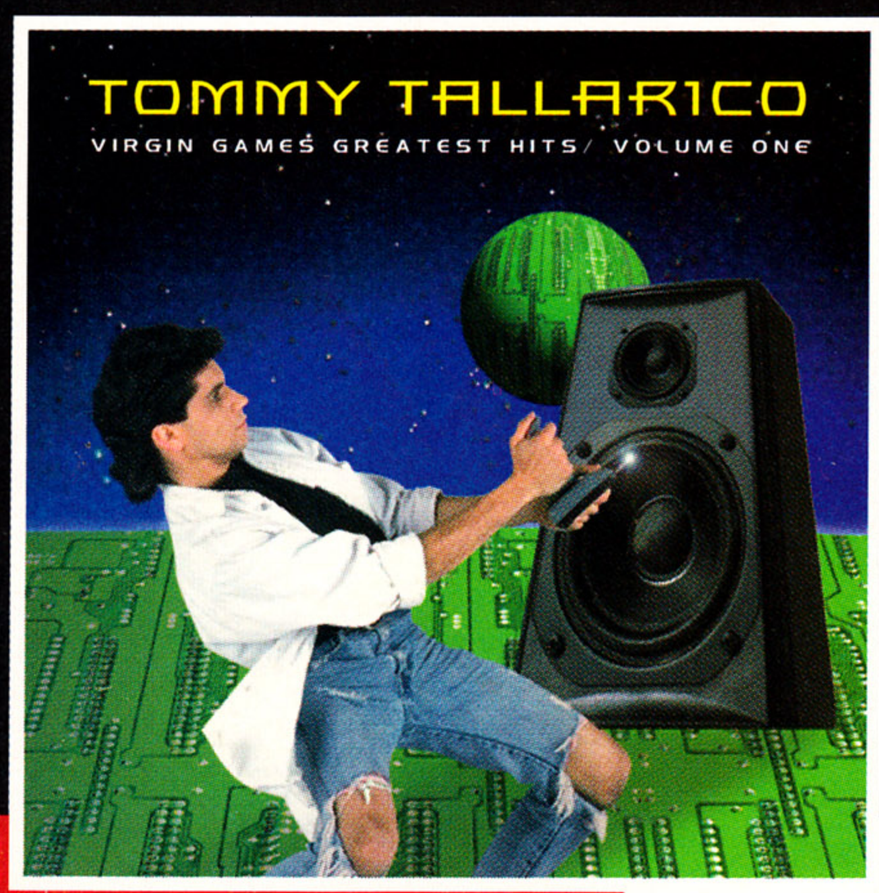

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POWER ON!

ELECTRONIC GAMING BOOM MEANS TOUGH DECISIONS

Just when everything seemed to be settling into a comfortable groove, the trend toward standardization has reversed. During the first few years of the '90s, it looked feasible, even likely, that electronic gaming would concentrate on a fairly small group of hardware platforms.

Consider how things stood after Christmas, 1992. The 16-Bit Genesis and SNES captured virtually the whole video game console market. The NES and SMS had faded, Neo•Geo catered to got-bucks gaming gourmets, and the TurboGrafx-16/Duo never gained a real foothold in the U.S.

In computing, the ST was a dead issue. The Amiga was rapidly following it to CPU heaven, at least in so far as commercially produced entertainment software was concerned. The Macintosh had its fans, but virtually none of the major companies supported it with software. The 386sx was a firmly established standard, and the then-new 486 wasn't altering the digital environment much.

Today, in mid-1994, everything has changed. The SNES and Genesis are still in their prime, but both Sega and Nintendo plan new machines that will debut in the next 12-18 months. Atari has its Jaguar roaring through the software jungle, and Hasbro is readying its own game machine. Sony has its PSX moving to market, and there may be other entries, too.

The pace of computer technology has quickened. There are large numbers of 386s and 486s in the market, 586s are dropping in price, and now talk centers on the 686 CPU generation. The Macintosh has become a better market for electronic games, especially on CD, and the Power PC threatens to open up a third alternative.

And multimedia has exploded. Consoles include the rejuvenated CD-i, Sega CD, 3DO, and single-, double-, and triple-speed CD-ROM drives for home computers.

The extraordinary array of hardware and software choices confronting gamers in the next few years is the best justification I know for a magazine like **Electronic Games**. You've got a lot of buying decisions to make, more of them than ever before, and we want to help you avoid getting your pocket picked.

Even the richest, most hardcore gamers can't afford every system, cartridge, and disk that hits the home market. Every gaming consumer has to allocate available funds to the best stuff and let everything else slide.

That's why **EG** doesn't go berserk over every new product. Personally, I can't stand a magazine that loves everything the day it's announced, and then likes it less and less as it moves from pure hype to concrete reality.

EG previews describe hardware, software, accessories, and peripherals, but we won't rate them until we have the finished game or device in hand. If something looks promising, we'll say so, but it takes more than a publisher's glowing press release to make our crew turn handsprings. As gamers, **EG**'s editors know only too well that everything is awesome when viewed from a great distance. We'll reserve those A+ scores for games you can actually play.

We want to do our job even better, but that will take a little help from you. Please return this month's Reader Poll, and don't hesitate to send suggestions for expanding or enhancing coverage, to *Feedback*.

— Arnie Katz

ELECTRONIC GAMES

May, 1994

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 8

A DECKER PUBLICATIONS, INC. PERIODICAL

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DISTRIBUTED BY:
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BPA Consumer Publication Membership Applied for January 1993

Electronic Games (ISSN #1063-8326) is published monthly by Decker Publications, Inc. 1920 Highland Ave., Suite 222, Lombard, IL 60148. Second Class Postage paid at Lombard, IL and additional mailing offices. Subscription rates for U.S.: $23.95, Canada and Mexico: $33.95, and all others by air mail only: $80.00. Single issue rates: $3.95. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Electronic Games, P.O. Box 1502, Lombard, IL 60148-8502. For subscription changes, change of address, or correspondence concerning subscriptions call 800-444-3334. The editors and the publisher are not responsible for unsolicited materials.

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FEEDBACK

ARE VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES A TRAINING GROUND FOR A BRUTAL SOCIETY?

I suggest that parents do indeed have a compelling interest in the content of interactive games and other media. It is not that we are unable or unwilling to control what our own children do, but that we need to protect our children from what *other* people's children do. Second, the real problem is not the availability of gross games, but the open advertising of these products with the concomitant message that society approves of the actions of product characters.

The argument that exposure to graphic brutality will turn users against brutality has been shown to be ridiculous. The brutalized user develops an appetite for greater gore, as can be seen by recent trends in movies and TV, and most clearly in rashes of "copycat" crimes. The existence of a potential market does not create a moral imperative to produce products for that market.

Any attempt to disclaim responsibility for game content by simply slapping on a warning label is both misguided and self-serving. At the very least, brutal products should not be openly advertised and sold. If we as a society can determine that smoking and consumption of alcohol and drugs should not be promoted through TV advertising, we should be able to live with the idea that brutality should not be promoted to our young.

Mary Pride
Fenton, MO

Thank you, Mary, for your long and thoughtful letter, which we've condensed to the essential points. We at ***EG*** *feel that our readers are able to judge what behavior is appropriate. When the patriots of this country's earlier years drew up the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, it was assumed that citizens would likewise have the intelligence to take care of their own. In subsequent years, society has seen fit to increasingly leave problems to legislation and the courts. It is especially in the context of the First Amendment that* ***EG*** *opposes legislative answers to questions that can and should be handled at a personal and local level. Your point about the need for protection against the deeds of other people's children is valid, but this requires community concern, not federal intervention.*

The Senator and the Comics Code

Senator Lieberman cites the Comics Code Authority in his arguments for regulation of the video game industry (**EG**, Feb. '94). In 1954 a child psychiatrist, Fredric Wertham, who believed comics contributed to juvenile delinquency, moved the U.S. Senate into pressuring the comic book industry for self-censorship. This led to the creation of the Comics Magazine Association of America, commonly known as the Comics Code Authority. The code was a powerful blow to the industry. EC and other comics publishers had to make drastic changes to their lineup of titles; some simply went out of business. Over time, the code decreased in scope and restriction as society finally began to realize that the censorship action had done nothing to curb juvenile delinquency.

Forty years since it began, the CCA Stamp of Approval is now 3/4 tradition, 1/4 pseudo-rating. Perhaps Senator Lieberman should spend a bit more time researching the video game industry than he did studying the Comics Code Authority.

Jeff Bogumil
New Martinsville, WV

What Wertham never understood was that the "offending" comics' readers were mainly teens and college-age; most younger kids actually preferred the Disney, Dell and other funny-animal comics that survived. The CCA Seal ensured that all comics sold on newsstands were of little interest to their former primary market. But when Marvel and some independents re-introduced product for the older readers, it was the change to specialty-store sales (which did not require the CCA Seal) that restored them as a major, profitable market. And yes, Jeff, there may be a lesson here for the video game industry and its detractors and would-be regulators.

Never Say Die

An editorial in one of your sister publications said Sega should bring on their next level and introduce the Saturn in the United States as quickly as possible. I have no problem with this, but it went on to say how they felt the Sega CD was a dinosaur that should be left to die! Gaming magazines did nothing but praise this peripheral when it was coming out. Now, to trash a device which many people bought because of all the build-up is like slapping your subscribers in the face. I see the same thing happening with 3DO; here's a system that got an incredible build-up but already magazines are starting to tear it down.

Electronic hobbyists have one thing constantly going against them: technology. In any other hobby, to have something old and rare is treated as gold. In this hobby, old and rare might as well be old underwear. Gaming magazines have to do a better job of deciding which new systems are going to be around awhile and which are flash in the pans.

Walter Sabino
Bedford, NJ

First of all, Walter, we deny any relation to that other publication beyond an interest in some of the same topics. ***EG*** *may offer some constructive criticism in connection with Sega CD and 3DO from time to time, but would never denigrate either—we like to play with them too much! And that goes for some of the Golden Oldies, too. As to successfully predicting which systems are going to make it and which aren't—don't we wish!*

Thanks to everyone who wrote; we look forward to every letter. Keep 'em coming to:

Feedback, % Electronic Games
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Ooops! In the March **EG**'s *Software Gallery*, we gave the wrong title to Acclaim's **Champions World Class Soccer** throughout the review. Our apologies to Acclaim and Park Place.

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PARK PLACE: RAID OR RESCUE?

Were the Creators of Madden Football Blind-Sided by Sony?

by Bill Kunkel

They have been the dominant force in sports game development in this decade, creators of such landmark products as John Madden Football and NHL Hockey (both published by EA Sports) for the Genesis. Their success was such that they were even able to launch a publishing label, Spirit of Discovery, while remaining one of the most sought-after independent developers in the business. A major new football game, Quarterback Club, was on-track to receive the full star treatment from publisher Acclaim, with a "Touchdown Tuesday" promotion along the lines of the incredibly successful "Mortal Monday" hype. Then there was that lucrative contract with Sony to produce a line of sports games featuring the ESPN imprint. *Inc.* magazine had even honored them as "Entrepreneurs of the Year" in the software category for the San Diego area. Park Place was also the only minority-owned company operating in the video game industry.

And suddenly, almost overnight, the entire house of cards collapsed. In one of the most abrupt reversals of fortune in software history, Park Place went from a seemingly thriving business to a company on life-support, in less than a week.

Last December 30, Mike Knox, president, hastily collected key personnel for a meeting at a local eatery. The news was not good. As most of the company's 110 employees already knew, Park Place had failed to ship several milestone projects in recent weeks, and, as a result, payment from those publishers would not be forthcoming. Game software is produced in stages, dubbed milestones. According to the typical contract, payment is doled out in increments, based upon the arrival of each milestone. No milestone, no check.

Knox reported the grim details to his people: The company was restructuring, liquidating assets, etc., but the brutal fact was that approximately 100 employees would not be having a Happy New Year. Knox promised to help find new jobs for the displaced.

Then things get murky. A key group of Park Place employees met over the New Year's weekend. According to Park Place partisans, it was an attempt by lawyer Andy Zaffron and two former PP producers to lure away some of the floundering company's best talent.

"I hear the way it went down was that they were told that Park Place was not going to meet its payroll, but that there was a job waiting for them at Sony Imagesoft, on the conditions that they give no notice and make the decision on the

spot," says Kent Simon, a former PP programmer who did not move on to Sony. Simon, while not personally at that meeting, reports that he spoke with many workers who were. "They said they were told that if they didn't come aboard right then and there, that they were out." Some 25 Park Placers agreed immediately and another five, despite Sony's alleged demands, were hired by Sony Imagesoft after the fact.

"Sony definitely made threats," says one anonymous source. "Those 30 people were told that if they didn't come aboard they'd be hung out to dry."

According to those people who went to Sony, however, it was a desperate attempt on their part to find work. "When a company says they can't pay you anymore, you go somewhere else," says one anonymous ex-Park Place staffer. "It's as simple as that. Sony didn't recruit us—we went to Sony! Were we rats leaving a sinking ship? I guess you could say that; but then it isn't just the rats that leave a sinking ship, it's anyone who wants to stay alive."

The following Monday, 30 key personnel, most of whom had worked under the two ex-producers, paraded into Knox' office and told him they were leaving. "Some of them couldn't even look me in the eye," Knox told EG. "They felt terrible."

What was Sony's interest in hiring these people? On January 3, a new division of Sony Imagesoft opened up shop in the Sorrento Valley area, according to the *San Diego Business Journal* (1/24/94). The new company boasted 30 employees, all recruited from Park Place, working on projects which had also begun at Park Place as contracted work, including ESPN Baseball. "Sony not only took the programmers and producers," claimed one Park Place partisan, "they also took the source code."

Knox himself told EG: "The programmers took the source code—some of them even took the hard drives containing the source code. In fact, I was told by one programmer who went to Sony that Andy Zaffron, who's now heading up that operation, told him that he could use the source code and Sony would indemnify him against any litigation."

Sony had little to say, on-the-record. "Sony retained Park Place in the past for development of some of its sports titles. As we understand it, Park Place has recently experienced some very serious financial troubles, none of which are Sony's fault. We have [also] hired some programmers who used to work at Park Place," was the official word from Jeffrey Fox of Sony. Everything else drew an immediate: "No comment" because of impending litigation.

The release of ESPN Baseball shows Park Place's programming talent.

But were the employees pushed—or did they jump? "Park Place was in absolute, utter chaos," one ex-employee reported. "It was obvious that none of the milestones were going to be met. The idea that there was some conspiracy to somehow delay the projects, forcing Sony to take over, is just ridiculous. Anybody who worked there—as well as any of the publishers Park Place worked with—knows how bad the situation was and how ridiculous that notion is. Sony didn't lure anyone away. People were out of a job and they went to the most logical place."

Park Place, a company started in 1989 by sports game veteran Troy Lyndon and rising superstar Mike Knox on a few thousand dollars in start-up funds scavenged from Mike's credit cards, had come a long way in less than half a decade. But trouble was brewing long before the December 30 meeting and the following weekend's get-together.

"If we've learned anything from this," observed Simon, "it's that developers have to be more honest with their employees. If a company's in trouble, the people at the top have to communicate that fact to the employees." Clearly, Park Place was a company in trouble. In the wake of its fantastic success with Madden and NHL in the video game arena, and Monday Night Football (which sold an impressive 100,000 copies for Data East) on computer, Park Place was suddenly besieged with offers from publishers such as Konami, Virgin, Compton's New Media, Acclaim, GameTek, and others. The company swelled with new employees. "We introduced a lot of new talent to this field," Knox acknowledged. "Butchers, guys who delivered pizza, we trained them and groomed them."

The sudden prosperity may have warped the company's good sense, however. It seemed that Lyndon and Knox were incapable of turning down offers, while much of the product was being turned out by raw rookies. There were also reports of Park Place executives treating publishers badly, and, when crunch time came, it seemed as if the publishers best able to rescue Park Place simply stepped back and allowed Knox to fall.

"...It's not that I don't think Park Place was trying to get the games done in time, the problem was that they just couldn't..."

Not only were an unrealistic number of projects being signed on, the production cycles agreed to were far too short. "Park Place made promises it couldn't keep," reported one ex-staffer to the *San Diego Business Journal*. "The allocation of production time was too short and apportioned all wrong. The contracts gave Park Place a lot of money up front, but it was inevitable that it would get them in trouble later on."

Other observers agreed with that assessment. "I don't like what Sony did," said one insider, "but Park Place had it coming. There were some major deals in jeopardy; Sony had the ESPN licenses, for example, and they would've gotten killed if those projects weren't delivered."

"I love both Troy and Mike dearly," said international agent and dealmaker Barry Friedman, who represents ESPN, "but their business acumen was not on a par with their software expertise."

Knox and Lyndon have since publicly squabbled over who was to blame for the questionable business practices. Knox complained in the *Union-Tribune* that the unrealistic scheduling was Troy's fault. "We have contracts designed by Troy *kel*

TIMELINE

Before the company's misfortunes tore it apart, Park Place had quickly risen to the top of the independent developer corps. These are just a few of the products that put Park Place on the map:

John Madden Football (1992) *(By **Electronic Arts** for the Sega Genesis)*

The game that made Park Place a star studio. This superb blend of football strategy and arcade action cemented the small developer's rep as a company capable of big things. **B+**

NHL Hockey (1992) *(By **Electronic Arts** for the Sega Genesis)*

The best electronic hockey game engine ever produced. EA Sports took over the license and has produced subsequent editions in-house, all with great success. **A**

Beat the House (1993) *(By **Spirit of Discovery** for the PC)*

Among the best computer gambling programs ever produced, this was published by Park Place's own Spirit of Discovery. **B+**

Mohammad Ali Boxing (1993) *(By **Virgin Games** for the Sega Genesis)*

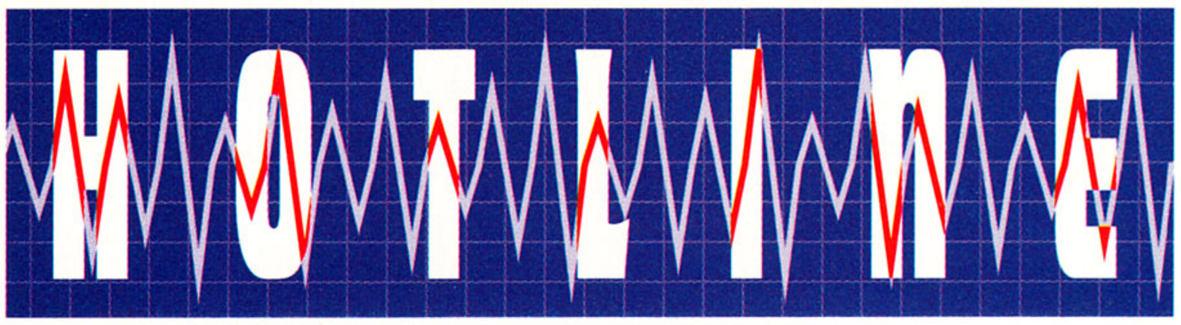
One of the best boxing video games around, the character animation is especially impressive. **B-**

"New" NFL Football (1992) *(By **Konami** for the SNES)*

Park Place fumbled for the first time with this Mode 7 spindizzy of a football game. **C-**

Monday Night Football (1991) *(By **Data East** for the PC)*

If Madden made Park Place a star, this game could be considered their profitable computer screen test. **B**



Lyndon that have ridiculous delivery dates," he reported. Troy countered that the promises "were made by both of us. I have lost my best friend [Knox]. I really do wish the best for Mike, but if he is going to get on with his life, he has to face his mistakes, just as I have."

Lyndon, meanwhile, had disappeared from the scene shortly before all hell broke loose. Reports of his reasons for leaving varied from a near nervous breakdown to a desire to get away from ground zero.

"Troy is now a passive shareholder in the company," Knox told EG, meaning that Lyndon's active involvement with Park Place is a thing of the past. "I have no idea what he's doing now."

Sony had apparently tried to shore up the troubled Park Place operation by buying into the company. The bottom line: Sony wasn't going to bail out Park Place without getting majority control, and Mike Knox was not willing to surrender it. According to one former Park Placer, Knox told him: "We're playing a high-stakes game of 'chicken' with Sony."

Since the break-up, several interesting developments have occurred, including an anonymous mass fax-mailing listing the names of those employees who left Park Place for Sony. "Will you ever hire these people?" the headline asked, followed by: "Park Place had hired all of them, even fired and rehired some of them. They screwed all their fellow employees and Park Place. And maybe you as well, are you going to give them the chance..." There followed a list of 29 names. Some were asterisked, with the postscript: "The people with stars waited until Park Place couldn't pay them, then they left but they went to Sony." Of the names 19 were printed in simple upper/lower case, two in bold, two in bold with all caps, and one name, that of former Park Place lawyer Andy Zaffron, was printed in bold, all caps, and underlined.

No one has taken the credit/blame for the tacky fax, but as even a Park Place loyalist remarked: "It was a pretty stupid idea, really. I'm sure Mike didn't do it; it was probably somebody close to him. I hear that once the *ESPN* projects Park Place started are finished, Sony plans to dissolve the Sorrento Valley operation anyway. In which case that list is a headhunter's dream," referring to the fact that the list contains over two dozen prime talents, all of whom may be seeking out employment soon. Sony Imagesoft's Sorrento division, however, doesn't have the look and feel of a company about to bolt. New products are in development and the employees, at least, seem to feel secure.

The issue of Sony San Diego's ongoing viability, however, is relatively small beer when compared to the larger legal and ethical issues on the counter. Was Sony merely seeking to rescue its valuable property from a morass of managerial inefficiency, or was there a conspiracy on its part to, first, destabilize Park Place by canceling its projects, then loot it of its talent and programming code?

Exactly how bad was Park Place before the fall? "Richard Knox Sr. [Mike's father] told me on the last week that he was actually expecting 'a miracle from God' to meet the payroll," said former PP employee, Phil Weeks.

Other charges have been levied at the Knoxes, from religious zealotry to nepotism. "Mike's brother-in-law worked at Park Place until he was discovered playing another employee's voice mail for the amusement of co-workers," one former Park Placer reported. Then there was a sprite artist named Ray Swanlund, who was fired by Knox, then was rehired, according to ex-staffers, after he told Mike of a dream in which God told him he [Ray] would end up owning Park Place. "By the end of the year ['93]," says Phil Weeks, "Mike had Ray on the board of directors, which should tell you something."

"Mike was under a lot of pressure," agrees another ex-employee, "but there were some strange things going on. Mike is a very devout Christian, as I am, but when he started talking about having religious dreams, with God telling him how to run the company, people got scared."

"The charges of nepotism are totally untrue," Knox told EG. "My family worked up the ranks. My wife worked in the warehouse, stacking boxes. Sure, members of my family worked for Park Place, but it wasn't like they were the presidents of the company. My dad worked his way up from producer to senior producer because he'd worked on more projects than anybody else. Believe me, there were programmers who were making more money than my dad. Look, every company has problems, but pulling the plug when we had over 30 products in development just wasn't right. We had a company that I grew from a couple thousand dollars to one with 120 employees worth $30 million. I'm not perfect, but I'm always giving it my best."

Knox also dismisses the claim that he became a religious fanatic who ran his company based on dream prophecies. "I'm not going to deny that I'm a Christian," he said, "but these people are painting me as a lunatic. Ray was a friend of my dad's who has a strong management background at Hunter Industries. He's also still with me. I know Ray's a Christian, but I have no idea where his church is. As to the dream business, there's only one dream I can ever recall telling anyone about. On the Sunday night before the Monday when everyone resigned, I dreamed that there was a rat on my dresser. I woke up at seven a.m. to a call from [an employee], telling me, 'Mike, I'm your best friend, but Sony forced me to quit.' It was the worst day of my life."

Bad feelings aside, virtually everyone agrees that Park Place was a great place to be during its first year or two. "I loved working at Park Place," said one of the major players in the drama, now at Sony, "right up until those final weeks. And I also believe that Mike has a good heart, in spite of the mistakes he made."

Now comes the litigation. While Knox would not say whether or not Park Place had filed suit against Sony, he did acknowledge: "Our ducks are in a row. I have the chronology going back to October. Park Place was as upfront as an organization could be. We supplied our employees with more information than most developers do. Many, many development companies operate on a month-to-month basis. I remember a conversation I once had with my good friend, the late Todd Zipnick [the founder of Icom Simulations] and he told me: 'Mike, always have two months to a year of operating money in the bank at all times.' I asked him how often he met that standard and he smiled and said: 'Never—but you gotta keep trying.'"

Meanwhile, there are other factors swirling in the background. Several ex-Park Place employees are said to be suing Knox for back pay, and some experts theorize that the programmers may claim they took Park Place source code in lieu of payment. Then there's the matter of Sony recruiting talent from Park Place. Recruiting, or "raiding," is hardly a new story in the software business, where non-raid clauses are not as common as one would expect. "EA Sports basically hired away the key programmers on the Madden and NHL games a few years back," says one ex-Park Placer. "They eliminated the middleman, which was Park Place."

Knox, meanwhile, has done a good job of maintaining the optimistic personality that allowed him to build a software empire on chump change. "I've been down before. I started this business from nothing and I can do that again. Bug-Busters and Spirit of Discovery [Knox' publishing arm] are going strong and things are getting better.

"I'm not going anywhere," he told EG in an exclusive interview. "When I first left San Diego, it was because I couldn't find a job in the game industry. I went north to create a business that I could bring back to San Diego. *That* was my dream. And you know what? You can take my house, you can take my car, you can take my money. But I had a dream, and I made it happen, and someone else walked off with it. That hurt. That really hurt."

Then he sounded a more ominous note: "What frightens me—and what should frighten every independent developer in this business—is that I could start from scratch, build another company out of the ashes, and a major company could come along and do the same thing again. Sometimes, in business, it isn't what's right or what's wrong—it's what can you get away with. It's how many lawyers do you have and how much money and power do you have. If I have a message for other developers, it's this: 'Be afraid. Be *very* afraid. This could happen to *you* next.'"

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FULL SCREEN,
ONLY ON
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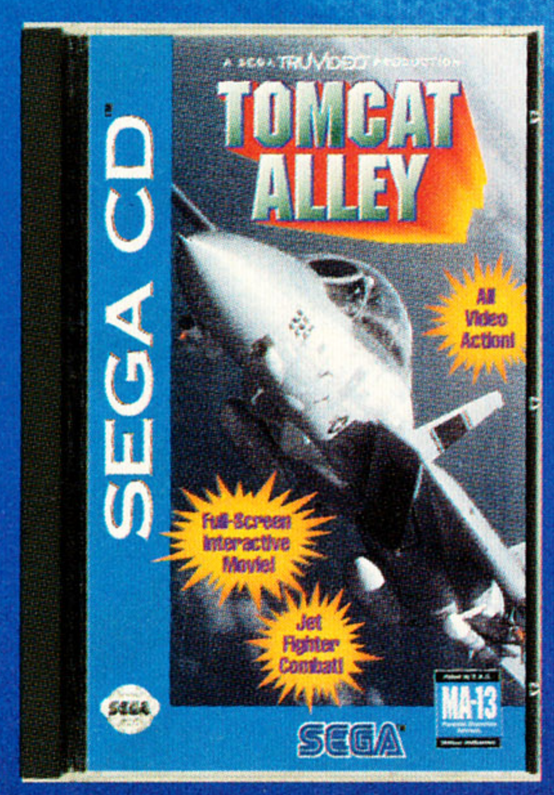
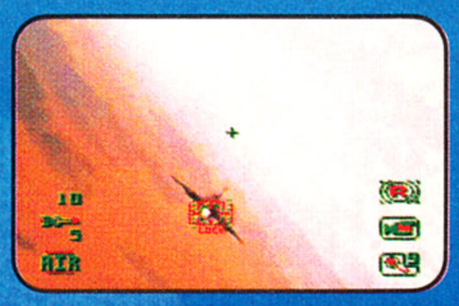


YOUR MAGAZINE

TOMCAT ALLEY™ ON SEGA CD.



(ACTUAL SCREEN SHOTS)

Forget cute little computer animation. Tomcat Alley is the real deal, hotshot, with balls-to-the-wall live action. It's full-screen, full-on aerial action like you've never experienced. Tomcat Alley features seven different combat missions against air and ground targets. And you don't just see the action from under the canopy, you also get a bird's-eye view outside the plane. In fact, Sega TruVideo™ technology takes you as close to the edge as you can get without packing your own chute and wearing one of those helmets with the goofy nicknames on it. Once you've been to Tomcat Alley and back, no little simulator game will do. So bail out on the rest and lock on to the real jet fighter action of Tomcat Alley. Only on Sega CD.

SEGA™

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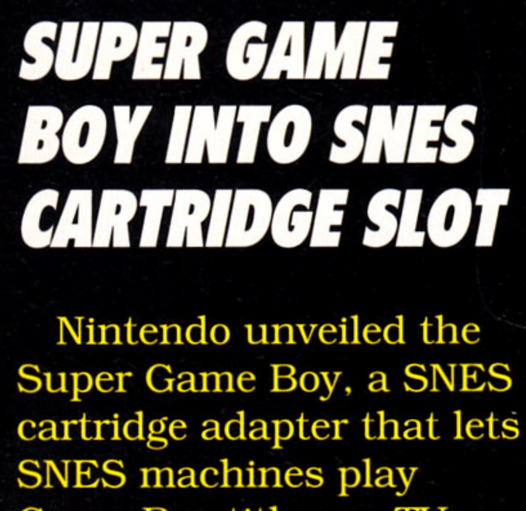
NOTING

NINTENDO PLUGS SUPER GAME BOY INTO SNES CARTRIDGE SLOT

Nintendo unveiled the Super Game Boy, a SNES cartridge adapter that lets SNES machines play Game Boy titles on TV screens. And, since Game Boy titles are actually programmed in color, they're seen as color games with SNES-quality sound when played through the SNES.



Nintendo's new cart brings portable games to SNES!

Because current Game Boy titles are designed to play on the small square screen, the magnified image area will be contoured to that shape. Users can customize game screens by placing a decorative animated border around the play screen. There are several prestored designs, or, if the gamer is feeling creative, they can create their own with a paint program which will allow customizing. All 350 current Game Boy titles will play in shades of four colors, but future titles specially designed for the Super Game Boy will have up to 256 colors. The first to take advantage of the new capabilities will be the **Donkey Kong** cart.

The Super Game Boy will be available in June, and will retail for under $60.

INTERACTIVE TV PLANNED FOR KIDS

The Los Angeles firm, daVinci Time & Space, is working on an interactive television network for kids. They're creating an environment to be the backdrop for a large variety of entertainments that make use of the latest technology, including full-motion, full-screen video with live Hollywood actors. Although there will be edutainment, the daVinci spokesman indicated, "It will be educational like a trip to Disneyland is educational," and stressed that activities would be based on fun, not on curriculum or skill-acquisition.

The whole thing is being created for broadband network (meaning for TV or high-end modem reception), to "take the best elements of movies, on-line communication, cable TV, and CD ROM, and combine them into a new system." They plan the daVinci Network (working title) to be "a union of science and art," that will encourage kids to interact with each other, develop electronic pen pals and even international friendships. About 20 percent of the activities will be provided by daVinci, and the rest will come from well-known entertainment and game developers.

BABYLON 5, LENNON ON CD-ROM

Compton's New Media and Warner Bros. are getting together on a CD-ROM encyclopedia about the universe and background of the television series, with Babylon 5–The Universal Encyclopedia. It describes the ship and all inhabitants, including aliens and their backgrounds, technology, and behind the scenes looks at the production of the series and its special effects.

The two companies are also jointly producing a chronicle of the life of John Lennon that will include unreleased music, Lennon's writings and hundreds of clips and photographs that showcase his life and work.

Both the Babylon 5 and John Lennon CDs will be ready this fall, for Macintosh and Windows CD.

GAME PACKS GRIFFEY CARD

Nintendo's Ken Griffey Jr. Presents: Major League Baseball has a surprise inside, a limited edition autographed Ken Griffey card. The card was created by Nintendo, using 1993 stats, and will only be available with the NES game.

ZERO REFORMS, GETS OWN GAME

Aero's arch-rival, Zero, will star late this year in Zero, the Kamikaze Squirrel. Sunsoft's Rita Zimmerer said "The huge response to our Aero the Acro•Bat game prompted hundreds of inquiries about a game based on Zero. Like Aero, Zero's got an attitude that kids just love."

Zero discovers his forest homeland is being destroyed by an evil lumberjack, Jacques LaSheets, and is determined to stop him. The new game is scheduled for release in the fall, in conjunction with a sequel game for Aero also now in the works.

Zero hits big time with game "Zero, the Kamikaze Squirrel."

PANASONIC CUTS 3DO PRICE

Panasonic cut the suggested retail price of its model FZ-1 REAL 3DO Interactive Multiplayer to $499.95. Richard A. Kraft, president and CEO of Panasonic parent Matsushita Electric Corporation of America, said the price cut resulted from "improvements in technology and an expansion of production scale resulting from the introduction of the multiplayer in Japan and Europe."

Ted Inoue, Panasonic Company President, said "The Christmas selling season was a strong one for Panasonic and our new multiplayer. We look to continue this momentum in a variety of ways."

Trip Hawkins. 3DO's President and CEO, noted that, at the new price, the system "will appeal to an even broader audience. Our competitors in the advanced CD arena announced that they will ship their first products in the U.S. in 1995 at prices around $500. The fact that we currently have a 3DO system on the market, and that we have already broken the $500 price barrier, should put us in a strong position."

ESPN PLAYS BALL WITH PRODIGY

ESPN and Prodigy have signed an agreement to take ESPN sports events online. The two companies are formulating plans for ESPN to provide previews, inside information, and answers to fan questions through the Prodigy sports bulletin board, said Curt Pires, spokesman for ESPN.

TECHNOLOGY GETS PHYSICAL

VEST SHAKES UP PLAYERS

Aura's *Interactor* "virtual reality vest" gives the wearer a thump on the back to go along with the on-screen action, for around $90.

DARK LEGIONS™

A Masterful Blend of Subtle Strategy and Wickedly Ruthless Action!

KILLER GRAPHICS.
OUTRAGEOUS ANIMATION.
SIZZLING SOUNDS.

Demon

For 1 or 2 players, DARK LEGIONS boasts modem play. Sophisticated artificial intelligence. Pre-set scenarios with variable difficulty settings. And a wide range of set-up choices to make every game different and playing time limitless!

Troll

That's DARK LEGIONS™ from SSI. It's got the maneuvering, trickery, and deception of the best strategy games. Plus blazing combat so realistic it rivals the hottest arcade mega-hits!

Create an army of up to 50 beings from the realm of dark fantasy. Choose from 16 different characters, such as the six we took right from the game to show you here! Each character comes with unique powers and abilities. Then, let the mayhem begin! Your goal: seek out and destroy the opposing legion's master — *and wrest ultimate power for yourself!*

Wraith

Think you can cut it? You'll need brains *and* brawn to survive in this alternate dimension, where hidden traps and lurking creatures make every move unpredictable and hazardous!

Wizard

Orc

Conjurer

DARK LEGIONS.
A Savage Battle for Ultimate Power!

TO ORDER: Visit your retailer or call: 1-800-245-4525 with Visa or MasterCard (U.S. & Canada only, please).

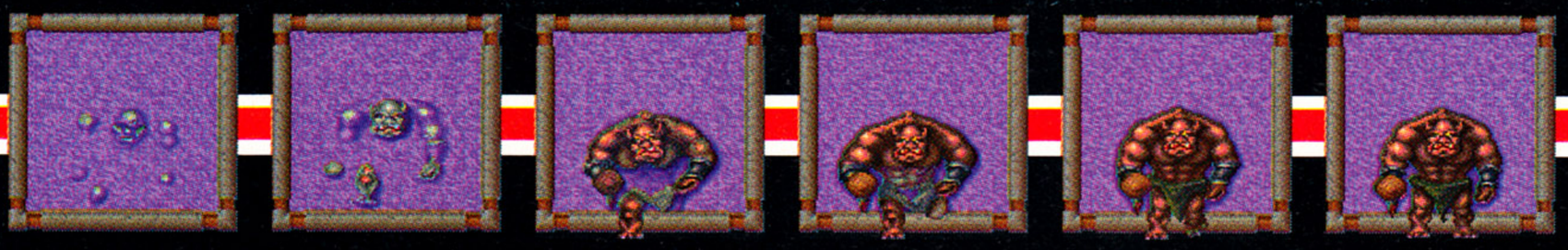
IBM 256-color VGA Displays

A Templar faces three deadly opponents on the main strategy screen.

Scratch one Troll – it's about to be roasted by a Fire Elemental!

Stay away from a Troll's huge club! This Wizard's learning the hard way.

Available for IBM & Compatibles on 3.5″ disks and CD-ROM.



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Developed by Silicon Knights.

HOTLINE

TI DEVELOPS REVOLUTIONARY CHIP

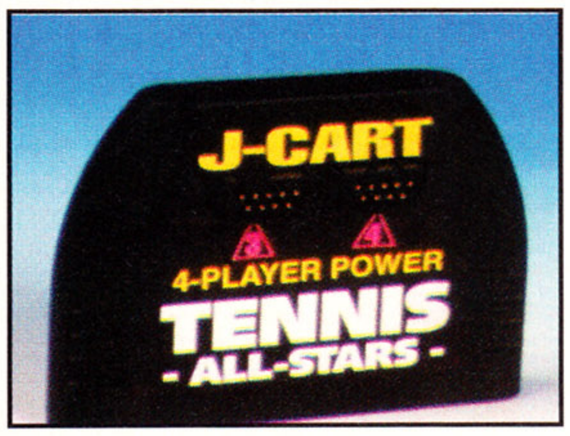
Texas Instruments' new processing chip for multimedia applications is said to outperform all previous semiconductors in speed and power. According to company spokesmen, the Multimedia Video Processor (MVP) will make possible real-time video conferencing, virtual reality, information libraries, and movies-on-demand, since the MVP can integrate video, imaging, audio, and transmission processing on a single chip.

"It is 10 to 50 times faster than the most powerful PC microprocessor you can buy, and it opens the door for new applications that only exist in our imaginations today," said Rich Templeton, manager of application-specific products. The MVP is based on digital signal processors (DSPs), a special microprocessor that can crunch massive amounts of data rapidly. The new chip combines the functionality of four DSPs and a high-speed, high capacity RISC chip on one semiconductor.

Sony will use the MVP in digital video displays. The MVP will let Xerox combine copying, fax, image scanning, and laser printer functions into one machine. PictureTel said the MVP will have a big impact on the company's video conferencing systems, and its image processing capability will take Printrak's fingerprint identification security system into police cars so they may utilize the technology.

CODEMASTER J•CARTS HAVE 4-WAY PLAY

Codemasters Software Company has introduced 4-Player J•Cart, a modified game cartridge with two joypad ports built in, to enable simultaneous play by four gamers. Unlike other multi-player adapters, J•Cart is included with each game in the J•Cart series, so no separate purchases are necessary.



Fast-paced tennis is available now with the new J•Cart.

The first entertainment to use the J•Cart is Tennis All-Stars, with Micro Machines 2 and Psycho Pinball soon to follow.

SPA GIVES $100K FOR JOB SKILLS

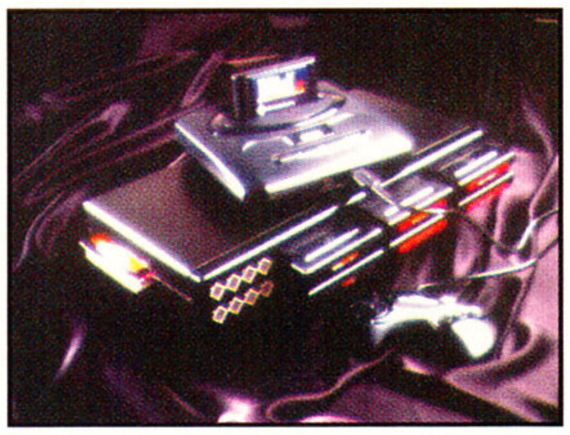
Across the U.S. 10 nonprofit organizations received cash grants of $10,000 from the Software Publishers Association as part of its Community Challenge Grant Program. Each recipient provides computer skills training.

"Technology is the key to continued productivity in the U.S., and we believe it is important that *all* Americans have the opportunity to acquire computer skills," explained Ken Wasch, SPA executive director. "With these grants, the SPA is helping disadvantaged workers to compete more effectively in today's marketplace."

JUKEBOX PLAYS VIDEO GAMES

ASG's Video Jukebox stores six videogames on line, so players can select one to play by pushing a button. Units can be daisy-chained for more selections, so it's good for store demos, too.

Versions are available for Genesis, Sega CD, SNES, and Jaguar, from $50 to $55.



Load Video Jukebox with your video games for easy selection.

NINTENDO UNVEILS PROJECT REALITY

Nintendo announced details of its new 64-Bit video game system, code-named Project Reality. According to Nintendo's Peter Main, the hardware system can access storage media with 100 Megabits of data and more for each game, and five or six times the memory of the current 16-Bit games.

Wei Yen, Senior VP of Silicon Graphics, who worked with Nintendo to develop Project Reality, said, "Project Reality will combine Silicon Graphics' leading-edge MIPS RISC processor and the industry's best multimedia and graphics technology in one storage medium that will provide a quantum leap for the user."

Project Reality software will be introduced first in the arcades this winter, and the home system will be introduced in 1995. The price is expected to be under $250.

DAVIDSON ADDS ENTERTAINMENT

Davidson & Associates, Inc. announced acquisition of Chaos Studios, the developer of entertainment titles such as The Lost Vikings, Rock and Roll Racing, and The Death and Return of Superman. The company, best known for educational products, is forming a new separate label for entertainment software.

Chaos will continue to operate independently, and the first products under the new arrangement will be a series of multimedia entertainments available by Christmas.

DAVIDSON LICENSES FISHER-PRICE

Davidson & Associates, Inc. signed an agreement with Fisher-Price to license that name, logo and products for a line of multimedia software for kids ages three to seven. Davidson will publish a range of titles for Windows and CD-ROM based on the Fisher-Price properties.

Jan Davidson, President and Founder of the software company, explained, "I've often looked to toys for inspiration ... since toys have been interactive and appealing for children long before the advent of multimedia software."

So watch for many of the Fisher-Price toys and characters to entertain and educate our children, utilizing multimedia technology in a brand new way.

SEGA IMPROVEMENT

PERIPHERAL UPS GENESIS TO 32-BIT

Sega announced a hardware add-on, the Genesis Super 32X, to advance the 16-Bit Genesis to 32-Bit technology. The upgrade uses two customized Hitachi SH2 RISC microprocessor chips, and will be available this fall for $149.

According to Sega spokesmen, the Super 32X attaches to the Genesis or Sega CD, to give them some of the advances that will be on the Saturn, Sega's new hardware platform now in development. Among these are faster processing speed, high-color definition, texture mapping, improved polygon graphics technology, software motion video, enhanced scaling and rotation, and CD quality audio.

All 500 existing Genesis games and 100 existing Sega CD titles will play while the Genesis Super 32X is attached to the Genesis, and Sega has over 30 titles in development that will take advatage of the new technology.

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Advanced Dungeons & Dragons® 2nd Edition
COMPUTER GAME

AL-QADIM™

THE GENIE'S CURSE

Explore a new game world in the style of the Arabian Nights!

High magic and dark deeds reign as you face the evil Genie Lords in a quest to restore your family honor! A complex, pre-generated character grants you quick entrance into the all-new AD&D® AL-QADIM™ game world. Encounter genies, sinister sorcerers, wise hermits, and many more mysterious beings, each with their own secrets and challenges. Use magical items to face the challenge of real-time combat and puzzle solving. And savor a tightly woven story line that's enhanced by grand cinematic musical themes *— all in the exotic new AL-QADIM game world!*

IBM 256-color VGA Displays

IBM & COMPATIBLES

Available on 3.5" disks and CD-ROM.

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HOTLINE

WHISPERS FROM PAVILION X

He's everywhere! He desktops by night and speaks the truths that others dare not utter. JJ BARREL puts his eyes and spies into every corner of electronic gaming. Our investigative journalist is in the game to the final whistle; he's no quarter man.

It's shake-up time at Disney Software... again. This company has suffered through more quakes than Southern California. The latest eruption reportedly has the publisher shopping its works-in-progress. Spectator sport for summer: See who gets **Wolf**, a remarkable simulation of life in the wild.

Doc's HiTech called their baseball game, but it wasn't on account of rain. They were caught off base when programmers walked. Doc's hasn't given up, but it's definitely postponed....

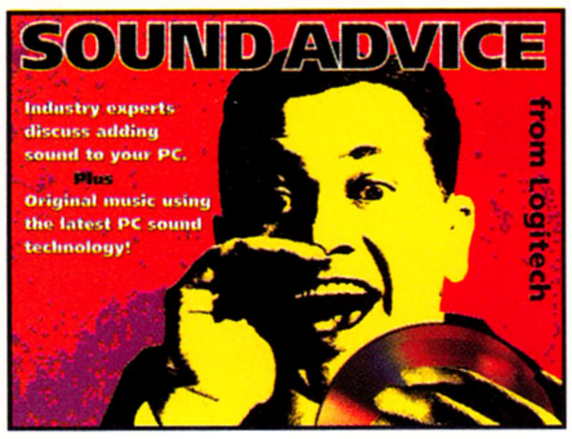
Everyone is watching the Sony-Park Place situation *(see article in this issue)*. The showdown will come over ownership of the code for the ESPN line: How did it get from Park Place to Sony and who really has legal title...

Star Trek: The Next Generation incorporates the names of many famous gaming writers and editors, including **EG**'s own Joyce Worley. One journalist found himself tranformed into a female character. He took the genderbending with good grace...

There's absolutely no truth to the rumor that **EG** plans a Swimsuit Issue. (It's always good to end on a happy note.)

LOGITECH OFFERS SOUND ADVICE

Logitech is giving away a free audio CD, *Sound Advice*, while supplies last, to anyone who phones 800-889-0046. It contains a discussion about PC sound between radio personality Leo Laporte, musician Wayne Gabriel, and Logitech's Sound Product Unit Manager Dave Pelton. The 20-minute chat is followed by three electronic musical compositions by Gabriel.



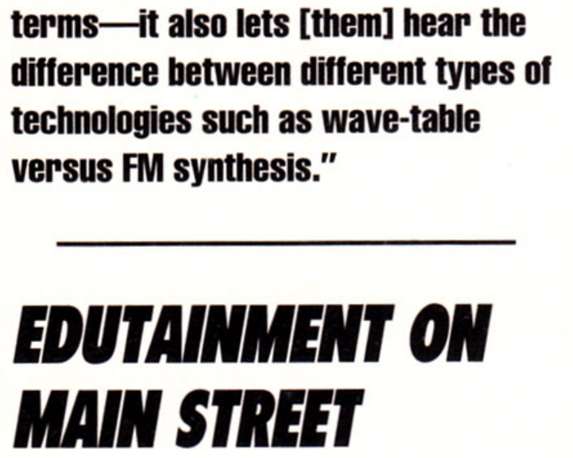
Hey! How about some great advice on the lastest PC sound.

The give-away supports Logitech's new SoundMan Wave, a wave-table synthesis board that uses the Yamaha OPL-4 chip. Dave Pelton explained, "*Sound Advice* not only explains PC sound in layman's terms—it also lets [them] hear the difference between different types of technologies such as wave-table versus FM synthesis."

EDUTAINMENT ON MAIN STREET

WordPerfect Corporation, best known for its effective business application software, added three edutainment games on CD-ROM to its recently formed consumer product line, WordPerfect Main Street.

Canadian firm TUNE 1000 signed with WPC to produce Wallaby Jack and the Bingi Burra Stone, in which classic style cartoon characters take children on an interactive tour of Australia. Wallaby Jack and the Thai Sun, visits Thailand; and Kap'n Karaoke is a sing-along software program with 15 children's songs and five adult songs. All are available in both PC and Macintosh CD-ROM formats and in English, Spanish, French, and German languages.



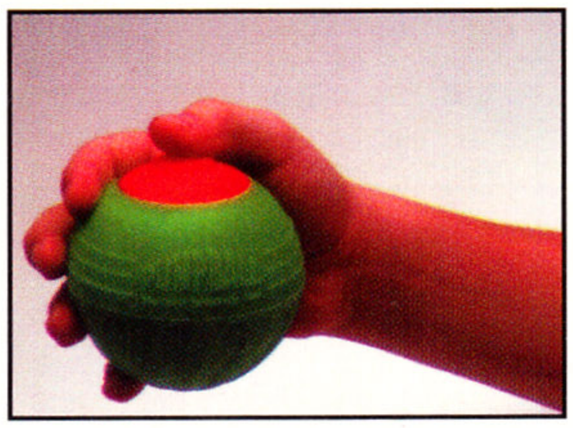
Follow Wallaby Jack to Australia for adventure and education.

PAST WINNERS RETURN TO COMPUTER BOWL

Computer industry leaders representing the East and West Coasts competed in the All-Star Computer Bowl in April for recognition of their respective teams as Computer Masters of the Universe. Many of the players, including Microsoft's Bill Gates, have participated in the annual TV quiz show style competition since 1988 as a fund-raiser on behalf of The Computer Museum in Boston. This year the competitors are all players who were selected in previous bouts as MVPs for their respective teams. The match took place in the Civic Auditorium in San Jose, CA, on a set built by Intel to resemble the inside of a computer.

The confrontation, hosted by Stewart Chiefet, will air nationally on PBS in June, on *Computer Chronicles*.

PUMPBALL MAY REDUCE FATIGUE



Squeeze hard to release stress with Weiss Toys' Pumpball.

Weiss Twice Toys have a prescription for players with sore hands: Spend some time working out with the Pumpball. According to Dr. Dennis Surd, a NYC physical therapist, the Pumpball can strengthen and promote added flexibility in the thumb muscles.

The Pumpball is a soft vinyl ball which can be deflated and reinflated by repeatedly pressing a valve spot. It comes in football, soccer and baseball sizes.

TOP COIN-OPS MARCH, 1994

Figures courtesy of Replay Magazine, based on an earnings-opinion poll of operators.

Best Upright Videos
1. *Mortal Kombat II*, Midway
2. *Virtua Fighter*, Sega
3. *Run & Gun*, Konami
4. *NBA Jam* , Midway
5. *Lethal Enforcers*, Konami

Best Deluxe Videos
1. *Ridge Racers*, Namco
2. *Cybersled*, Namco
3. *Outrunners*, Sega
4. *Virtua Racing*, Sega
5. *Stadium Cross*, Sega

Best Coin-Op Software
1. *Raiden II*, Fabtek
2. *Gal's Panic 2*, Kaneko
3. *Samurai Shodown*, SNK
4. *World Rally*, Atari
5. *Super Street Fighter II*, Capcom

Best Pinball Machines
1. *Star Trek*, Williams
2. *Indiana Jones*, Williams
3. *Addams Family*, Midway
4. *Wipeout*, Gottlieb/Premier
5. *Tales From The Crypt*, Data East

EG READERS' POPULARTIY POLL MARCH, 1994

These games were voted the favorites in EG's monthly poll (see last page in this issue). Duplicate numbers represent ties.

Favorite Video Games
1. *Mortal Kombat*, Acclaim
2. *Sonic 3*, Sega
3. *Gunstar Heroes*, Sega

Favorite Computer Games
1. *Doom*, Id Software
2. *Privateer*, Origin
3. *X-Wing*, Lucas Arts

Favorite Multimedia Games
1. *7th Guest*, Virgin
2. *Crash n' Burn*, Crystal Dynamics
3. *Total Eclipse*, Crystal Dynamics

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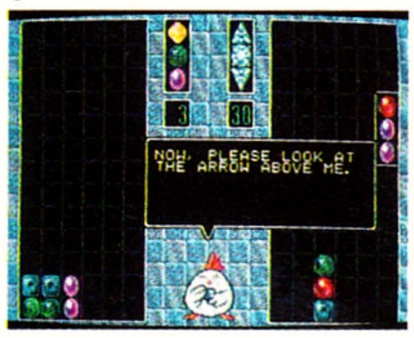
If you've ever played **Columns,** then you know it's as hard to put down as a box of chocolates. But up until now it's been a fairly private habit. Not anymore. We've made **Columns** a free-for-all for you and four of your closest friends. Of course, if you prefer those private moments, you can still go solo. In the meantime, we'll tell your buddies that **Columns III** plays for five.



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SPA GIVES CODIE SOFTWARE AWARDS

The Software Publishers Association handed out the annual Codie Awards at its annual black-tie dinner in San Francisco, honoring the best consumer, educational and business software of 1993.

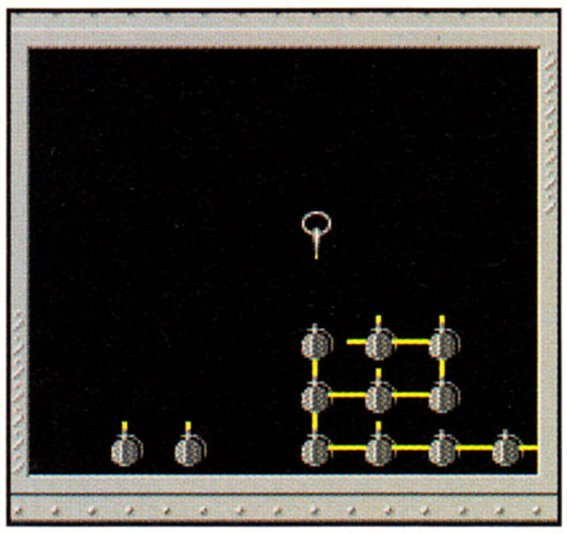
Over 500 products were nominated in 25 categories. Ken Wasch, executive director for the SPA, commented on the high quality of all the nominees: "The level of entries in the 1994 Codie Awards certainly bodes well for the software industry and for the nation as a whole. The innovation, intelligence, and sheer imagination demonstrated in the Codie-winning products is simply astonishing. These programs all enhance the way we work, live, and learn."

Entertainments receiving honors were headed by dual-award winner, Broderbund's **Myst**, named Best Fantasy Role Playing/Adventure Program, and also cited for Best User Interface in a New Program. Maxis carried home two awards, for Best Simulation Program (**Sim City 2000**) and Best Secondary Education Program (**SimFarm**). **Indycar Racing** (Papyrus) won for Best Sports; **Lemmings 2: The Tribes** (Psygnosis) for Best Action/Arcade, and **Iron Helix** (Spectrum Holobyte) won for **Best Strategy Program**.

The annual Critics' Choice Award for entertainment, selected by members of the electronic press, also awarded at the gala, went to **Myst** for Best Consumer Program.

INTERPLAY FORMS RUSSIAN CONNECTION

A team of Russian designers, including a female rocket scientist who formerly worked on the Russian space program, approached Interplay with their creddentials and a six-pack of Russian designs.

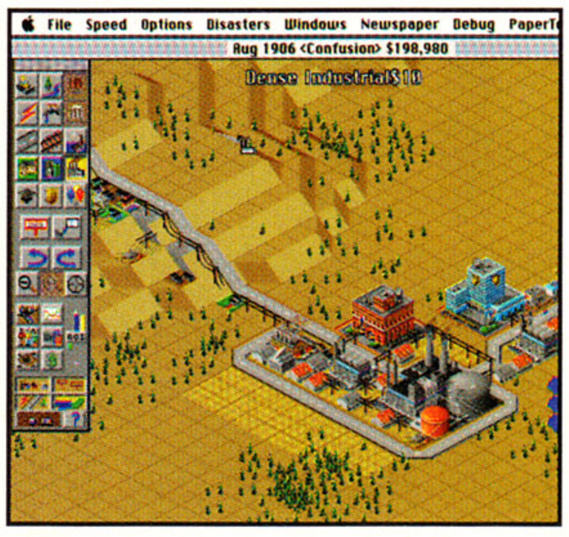


Interplay spokesman, Kirk Green expressed hope that the company's Russian connection would continue: "We hope that there will be more products from the team in the future." The group of designers and programmers are still in Russia.

The first games are included in Russian 6 Pak (Dos and Windows), accompanied by Russian music and special sound effects.

SIM CITY ACCESSES ATLANTA

Folks in Atlanta will get a chance to play a customized version of SimCity on Access Atlanta, an on-line service created by Prodigy and Cox Newspapers, Inc.



Maxis created a special city-scape of Atlanta for the area's on-line service. Users can download the simulation of Atlanta, and use their own SimCity program to manage the city, rezone neighborhoods, and all other SimCity functions.

TOP SOFTWARE JANUARY, 1994

The list of top-selling computer software was compiled by PC Data of Washington, D.C.., based on units sold by ten retail chains, representing over 1300 stores.

TOP MS-DOS Games

1. *Microsoft Flight Simulator*, Microsoft
2. *Star Wars Rebel Assault*, LucasArts
3. *7th Guest*, Virgin
4. *Police Quest IV*, Sierra On-Line
5. *Star Trek: Judgment Rites*, Interplay
6. *Aces Over Europe*, Sierra On-Line
7. *Leisure Suit Larry VI*, Sierra On-Line
8. *Sim City*, Maxis
9. *X-Wing Mission Disk #2, B-Wing*, LucasArts
10. *Wolfenstein 3-D/Spear of Destiny*, Formgen

Continue the fight against the Empire in Rebel Assualt.

Top CD-ROM Titles

1. *Star Wars Rebel Assault*, LucasArts
2. *7th Guest*, Virgin
3. *Microsoft Encarta*, Microsoft
4. *Return to Zork*, Activision
5. *Gabriel Knight* , Sierra On-Line
6. *King's Quest* VI, Sierra On-Line
7. *Wolf Pack*, Brøderbund
8. *AD&D Dungeon Hack*, Strategic Simulations
9. *Dracula Unleashed*, Viacom
10. *Might & Magic: World of Xeen*, New World Computing

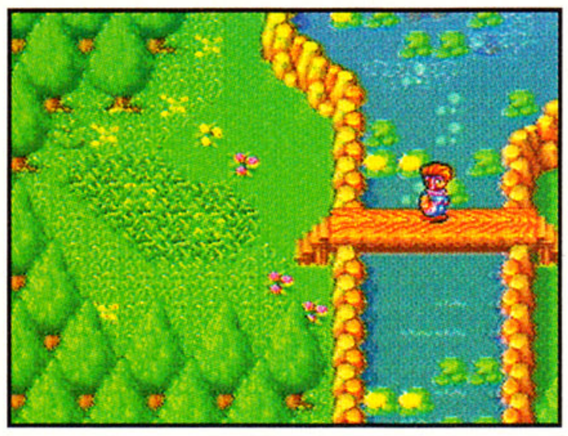
Try to solve a baffling mystery in New Orleans with Gabriel Knight.

TOP VIDEO GAMES AS OF FEBRUARY 14, 1994

The following figures are provided courtesy of Babbages.

Super NES

1. *Lufia: Fortress of Doom*, Taito
2. *Lethal Enforcers*, Konami
3. *Mega Man X*, Capcom
4. *Secret of Mana*, Square Soft
5. *The 7th Saga*, Enix



What is the Secret of Mana? Only the serious player will find out.

Sega Genesis

1. *Sonic The Hedgehog 3*, Sega
2. *Mortal Kombat*, Acclaim
3. *NFL Football '94-J. Montana*, Sega
4. *NHL Hockey '94*, EA Sports
5. *FIFA International Soccer*, EA Sports

Face-off for fun and quick action in Electronic Arts' NHL Hockey.

Game Boy

1. *Tetris 2*, Nintendo
2. *Kirby's Dream Land*, Nintendo
3. *Castlevania II*, Konami
4. *Super Mario Land*, Nintendo
5. *Kirby's Pinball Land*, Nintendo

Sega Game Gear

1. *X-Men*, Sega
2. *Columns*, Sega
3. *Cool Spot*, Sega
4. *Sonic Chaos*, Sega
5. *Winter Olympics* , US Gold

Sega CD

1. *NHL Hockey '94*, EA Sports
2. *Ground Zero Texas*, Sony Imagesoft
3. *Dragon's Lair*, ReadySoft
4. *WWF Rage in the Cage*, Acclaim
5. *Lethal Enforcers*, Konami

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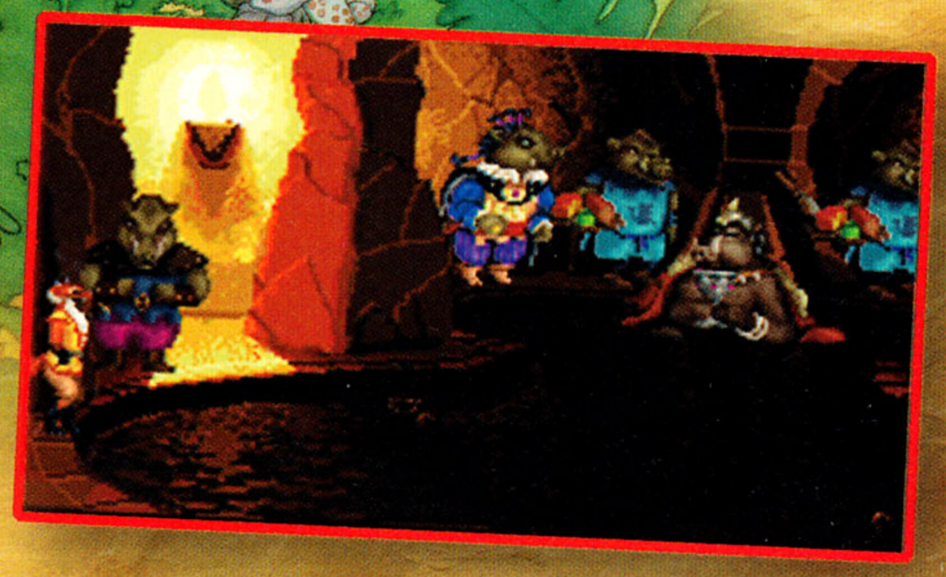

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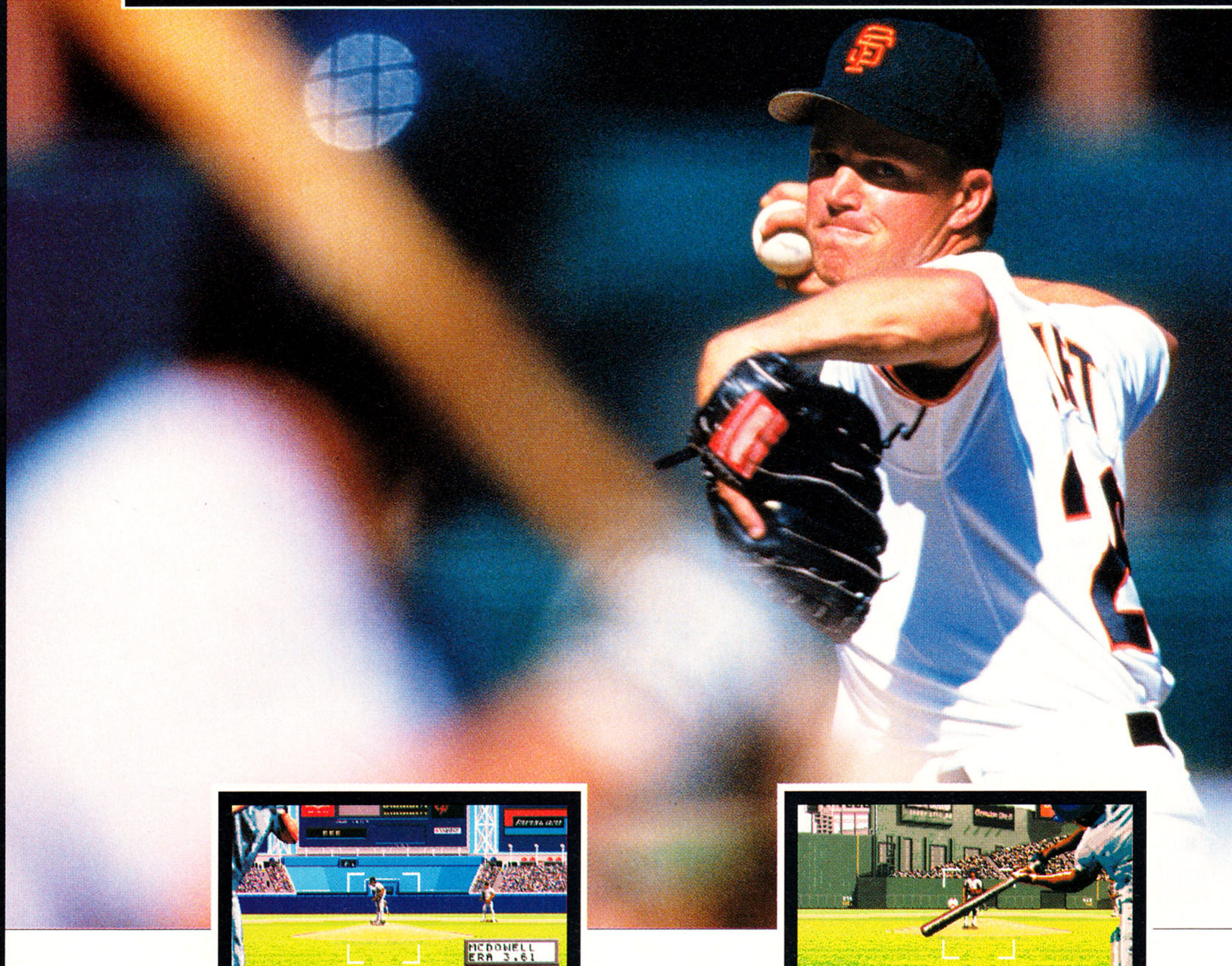

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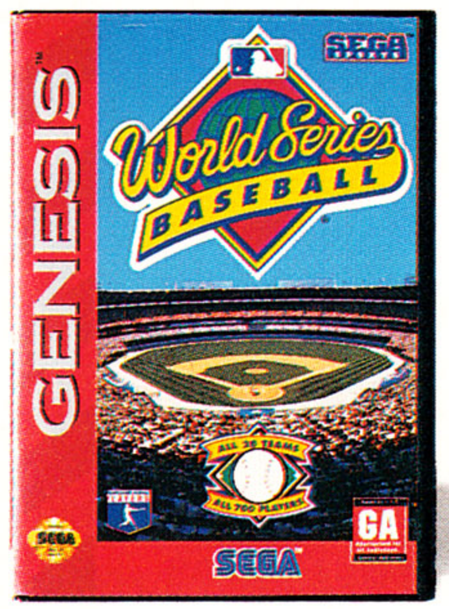

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GAME DOCTOR

THE SEGA SUPER CART & MICHAEL JACKSON

We've gotten over a dozen letters in the past week or so on a pair of Sega-related questions. Since these questions are important and obviously the hot topics of the moment, let's devote most of this installment to spreading what knowledge and light we can on these issues which are, obviously, causing a lot of sleepless nights and resting close to our readers' beloved hearts:

Q: Is Camerica producing an Aladdin-type cartridge for the Genesis? Or is Sega doing it? How much will it cost and what will the result be, in game terms—what will the new games be able to do?

Lester Stephenson
New Orleans, LA

A: *As we discussed briefly last issue, Aladdin was a cartridge created by Code Masters and introduced by Camerica at the lovely and intensely entertaining January '93 WCES. The idea behind it was that all NES sound and graphics while using up less ROM, so games that interfaced with the Aladdin would be, theoretically, better and cheaper. The peripheral didn't take off for several reasons, primarily the death of the NES and cartridges contained the same redundant, boilerplate code. If that code could be placed elsewhere—as in the Aladdin cartridge—programmers would have much more room for*

ACCESS Brings You a Virtual World Interactive Movie!

What Reviewers Are Saying:

"Lots of games push the envelope—Under a Killing Moon blows it to smithereens!"
—William Trotter, PC Entertainment

"A ground breaking CD adventure!"
—Joyce Worley, Electronic Games

"Under a Killing Moon combines the best elements of movies and computer games... It literally pulls you into the screen."
—Denny Atkin, Entertainment Editor, Compute Magazine

This category-creating Interactive Movie from ACCESS Software goes light years beyond any other product labeled "interactive." *Under a Killing Moon* takes you to the streets of post World War III San Francisco and casts you into the role of Tex Murphy, Private Investigator, who first appeared in *Mean Streets*, then *Martian Memorandum*. *Under a Killing Moon* is a Virtual World full of people and places so richly detailed, you'll feel like you're actually there.

Camerica's inability to produce a line of sufficiently desirable software.

But conceptually, the idea was brilliant, and Sega now stands poised and waiting to take full advantage of that concept by producing a new add-on cartridge which will contain boilerplate code, Sega's proprietary SVP chip, and heaven knows what else by the time it's released.

The purchase of this cart would be a one-time expense, and would give gamers access to (we hope) lower-priced, superior products down the line. It could easily extend the life of the Genesis by a year or more—a priority if the Genesis is going to carry on its current base of quality games.

*By the way, **Joe R. Town**, of **Moorhead, MN**, whose letter appeared in last issue's Game Doctor column, wins the Prophet of the Month award—and a Prize Packet if he writes to us again with his full address—for asking this question over a month ago. Nice going, Joe.*

Q: Is it me, or does it seem like Sega has some kind of licensing curse? They hire Buster Douglas, he loses. They hire Pat Riley, he retires. Now they've got Michael Jackson hosting the big bus-like coin-op at that Las Vegas hotel—I'm sure you know where it is, Doc.

you being a local and all. I was also wondering if there's been any fuss in Vegas regarding the use of Jackson in this game, and does Sega plan to continue using the Gloved One?

Adam Aiello
Stonybrook, NY

A: *Yes, Sega has a legendary losing streak when it comes to signing up personalities (by the way, you forgot to mention Evander Holyfield, who was signed by SoA after he beat Douglas, and promptly dropped the strap himself, only to regain it later). And, if you'll notice, SoA has cut way back on games based around individual athletes, celebrities, or whatever.*

As you probably know, the Disney organization recently severed its ties with Michael Jackson, dropping his cinematic masterpiece, "Captain EO" movie from EPCOT Center. Disney hemmed and hawed, saying it "may have gotten some complaints," but that it was simply rotating an older attraction out of the loop.

Apparently emboldened by Disney's move, Sega USA (which controls Sega's coin-op ventures apart from SoA) recently introduced new operating software for its AS-1 Motion Simulator—or at least restructured the old software. The amusement, now part of Sega's VirtuaLand arcade at the pyramid-shaped Luxor Hotel/Casino, offers three different software scenarios which are stored on laser disk, and none of the scenarios now being run use Mr. Jackson. No celebrity will be selected to replace Jackson—Sega has apparently decided to go with anonymous, animated characters instead.

That wraps up another installment of Game Doctor. Don't forget to send all questions, comments, and corrections to the Doc at: 330 S Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107.

By the way, don't let the sun catch you crying.

UNDER A

Killing Moon

Q: What do film stars *Brian Keith*, *Margot Kidder*, & *Russell Means* all have in common?

A: They all star in ACCESS Software's new CD thriller *Under a Killing Moon!*

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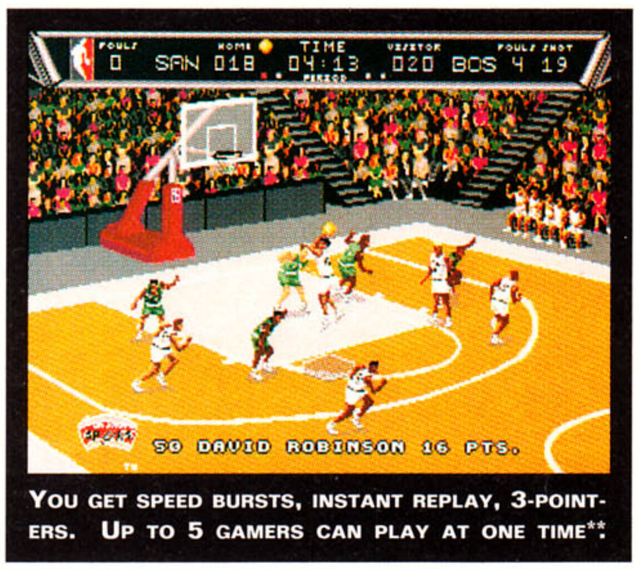

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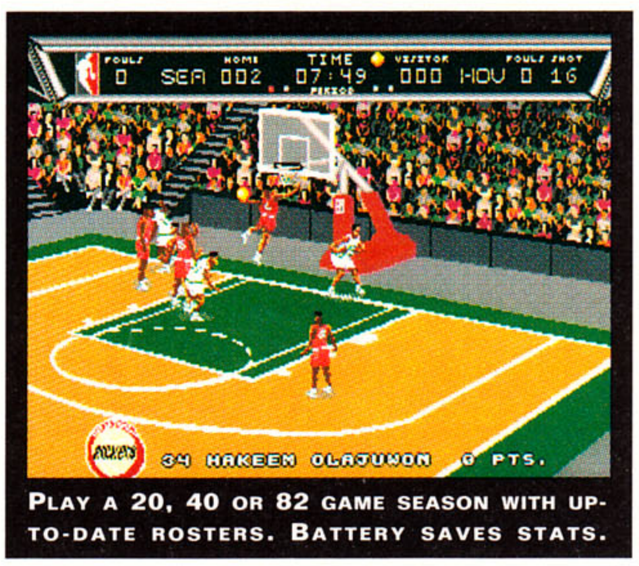

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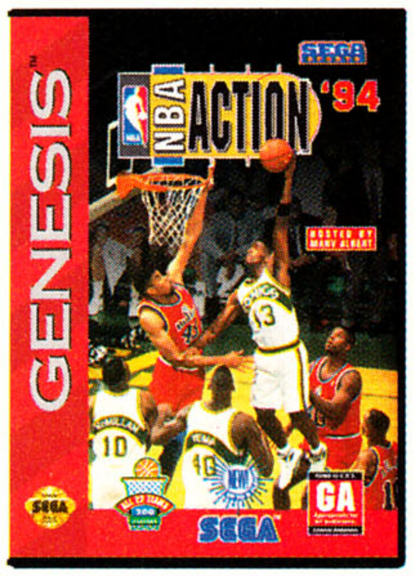

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The Electronic Gaming Awards

Here are YOUR Picks for the Best Interactive Entertainment

by the EG Editorial Staff

The February **Electronic Games** presented our editors' nominations for the best video, computer, multimedia, and portable interactive entertainment of 1993. It was an exciting feature, since last year was a great one for new products, but it was only the start of the process.

Electronic Games, for the second year in a row, left the final decision up to the most knowledgeable group of gamers in the world, the 400,000 savvy players who read this magazine every month. So it's *your* opinions that separate the winners from the almost-but-not-quites.

Interactivity is the core of electronic gaming. Once again, our readers demonstrated their willingness to interact with this magazine. The ballots overflowed our capacious mail box, made precarious piles in the office, and took our tabulators many, many hours to process. It was worth it: Once again America's expert gamers have proven their mettle by separating gold from brass.

And now, let's salute the winners—the Best Electronic Games of 1993!

Video Game of the Year

Aladdin (Virgin-Sega/Genesis)

The hit movie became a colorful, playable game that swept this category by a landslide. The other three contenders, all award-worthy titles, accumulated about the same number of votes, combined. **Aladdin** proves that intriguing play and great audiovisuals are more important to most gamers than sheer challenge. **Aladdin** isn't tough to play, but it sure is fun.

Honorable Mention: **Rock & Roll Racing** (Interplay)

Computer Game of the Year

Alone in the Dark (I•Motion)

Adventure-lovers made this horror-mystery a winner in one of the closest races in the history of these annual awards. Multimedia-quality visuals, a compelling plot derived from the H.P. Lovecraft mythos, and excellent writing gave I•Motion, a fairly new publisher, a nail-biting victory in its first year in the business.

Honorable Mention: **X-Wing** (LucasArts)

Console Multimedia Game of the Year

Sonic CD (Sega)

It looks like **Sonic the Hedgehog** still isn't suffering from over-exposure. It scored a lopsided win, racking up 50 percent more votes than the other three nominees put together. 60 levels of side-scrolling entertainment await players in this visually impressive multimedia action contest. The revolutionary Q-sound technology creates an aural environment second to none.

Honorable mention: **Voyeur** (CD-i)

Computer Multimedia Game of the Year

Day of the Tentacle (LucasArts)

This sequel to **Maniac Mansion** had an unusually long gestation period, but no one can quarrel with the quality of the ultimate result. The tongue-in-cheek storyline, excellent visuals, and the voice of Richard Sanders as the time-traveling hero are among the aspects that raised **Day of the Tentacle** to the top of the stack last year.

Honorable Mentions: **Return to Zork** (Activision); **Seventh Guest** (Virgin Games)

Portable Game of the Year

Mortal Kombat (Acclaim)

Varied environments call for different types of games, or so it seems. **Mortal Kombat** didn't take the "Best Video Game" prize, but the stellar Game Gear fighting title walked away with the portable game honors. It's easy to see why. Not only is this a great-looking game, exceptionally true to the original design, but it has lots of super-powered combat. Aside from all the controversy surrounding the "violent content" of this title, the overall gaming experience provided from the portable version is almost the equal to the regular console versions

Honorable Mention: **Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening** (Nintendo)

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Best Action Video Game:

Cool Spot
(Sega/Virgin)

What gamers like most about this high-energy side-scroller is the sparkling personality of its effervescent hero. The 7-Up character is right at home in game-land. There's nothing spotty about this one's graphics, sound, or play-action. **Cool Spot** has what it takes to satisfy anyone's thirst for an enjoyable, yet difficult, action cartridge. The fun-loving, cartoon-like graphics lend a light-hearted feel to the quest, and the great detail provided by the programmers assures gamers of a hilarious adventure that will delight them for hours.

Honorable Mentions: **Batman Returns!** (Konami); **Road Rash II** (Electronic Arts)

Sports Video Game

NHL '94
(Electronic Arts)

Though most of the **EG** staff thought this cool blend of stats and action would bodycheck its competitors into the seats, no one was bold enough to predict such an easy victory. Facing three all-star rivals, **NHL '94** attracted nearly two-thirds of the total vote. The most popular new features have proven to be the four-way play, hot and cold shooting streaks, and the pass-and-shoot combo move.

Honorable Mention: **Mutant League Football** (Electronic Arts)

Best Action Strategy/Strategy Video Game

The Lost Vikings
(Interplay)

This wacky mixture of Vikings and science fiction won a hotly contested vote to emerge as the best of 1993's video braingames. The play-mechanic, which tests the gamer's ability to combine the three characters' special skills, is both involving and a stiff test for the grey matter. Manipulating one hard-nosed Viking would be a test for anyone, but getting the three Nordic misfits to work in conjunction on the tougher puzzles is really a workout for any true puzzle game fan. Toss in Interplay's usually excellent artwork and music, and **The Lost Vikings** is one fine package.

Honorable Mention: **X-Men** (Sega)

Best Adventure/ RPG Computer Game

Lands of Lore (Westwood)

The established role-playing series took a backseat to this newcomer last year. Westwood Studios is no novice in this category, however, and the development house crafted an electronic RPG that combines brain-teasing situations with cutting-edge audiovisual effects. The player-character takes on more adventuring charactersitics than most RPGs. The enhanced CD version of the title contains the voice talents of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s Patrick Stewart, who plays the part of the king. This, along with astounding graphics and an easy game interface, create a game that is a true joy to play. Rick Parks, artist extraordinaire, deserves special

Best Electronic Gaming Audio/ Visual Effects

Ecco (Sega)

Ecco is the best *looking* video game! **Ecco** is the best *sounding* video game! It's two, two, two games in one! No title could be a more fitting winner in this category, because this action-adventure dolphin story excels in both respects. Never before has sound been so intimately integrated into game play. Critics loved it, too, because we got to use unexpected adjectives like "enchanting" and "lovely" to describe a video game. If played through a hi-fi system, gamers can experience the soothing tones of the many sounds that are created beneath the sea.

Honorable Mention: **The Myst** (Broderbund)

Best Strategy Computer Game

Syndicate (Electronic Arts-Bullfrog)

This highly detailed strategy game postulates a future society in which mega-corporations live the capitalistic dream to the full. Greed, power, and violence collide in producer Peter (**Populous**, **Power Monger**) Molyneaux's latest effort. As an executive in a European syndicate, the player tries to fight and deal along the rocky path of global supremacy. Living out the lives of high-powered hit men may seem like a short order, but the missions you must undertake are both complex and frought with danger from competing corporations who want you dead.

Honorable Mention: **Even More Incredible Machine** (Sierra)

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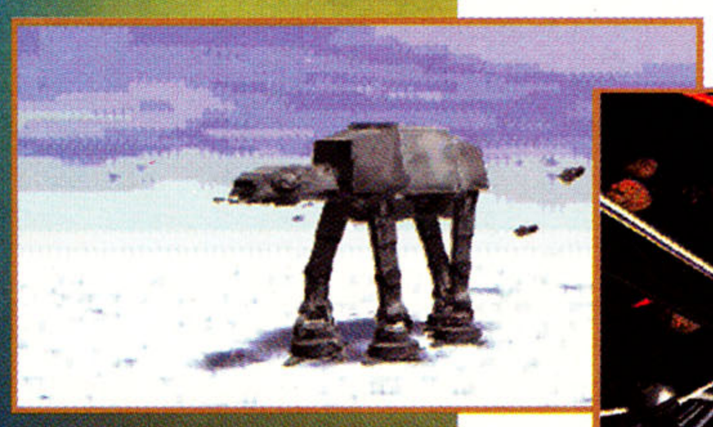

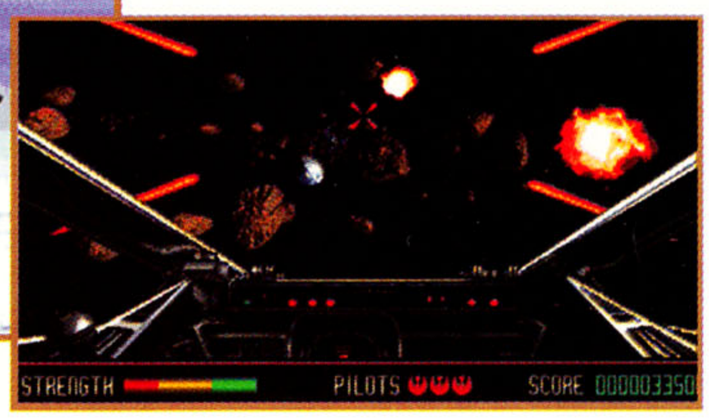

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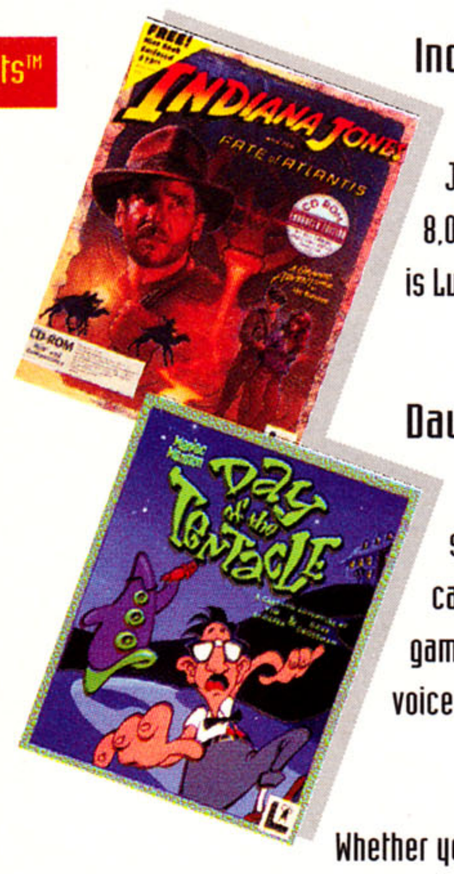

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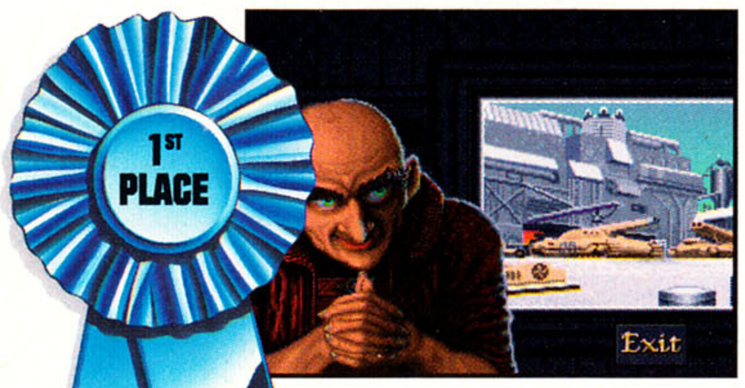
Best Action/Action-Strategy Computer Game (Tie)

Lemmings II (Psygnosis)

Prince of Persia 2 (Broderbund)

Talk about down-to-the-wire elections! These two games finished in a dead heat in the closest election in this year's Electronic Gaming Awards. Both are sequels that did much more than just add a few frills to the hit titles which preceded them.

Lemmings II adds the concept of tribes which greatly diversifies and individualizes the Lemmings. **Prince of Persia 2** packs much more dramatic punch with its complex and wide-ranging plot.



Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Electronic Game

Dune II (Virgin)

Westwood Studios, also a winner with **Lands of Lore**, shows its versatility with this exceptional strategy game based on the Frank Herbert science fiction novel. The interplanetary political struggle to possess Arrakis and its spice riches is a situation filled with exactly the kind of strategic possibilities that make a strategy game a classic. The battle for the spice rages on, and you must control the most precious element known in order to set up a secure dynasty.

The forthcoming CD version should be one of 1994's most exciting science fiction releases.

Honorable Mention: **StarFox** (Nintendo)

Best Sports Computer Game

NHL Hockey (Electronic Arts)

Although hockey has yielded many excellent video games over the years, computerists have had comparatively slim pickings until Bethesda and Electronic Arts got into the field. **NHL Hockey** has a greater emphasis on statistics and season play than EA's popular rink cartridge, but it has many of the same strengths, especially its excellent simulation of up-and-down-the-ice action. Real teams and players provide the requisite authenticity.

Honorable Mention: **Indy Car Racing** (Paprus)

Most Humorous Electronic Game

Clay Fighter (Interplay)

The "clay-mation" animation technique is not just for raisins any more. Interplay's decision to embrace this system of animation for interactive products is looking mighty good. **Clay Fighter** uses clay animation to put slapstick zip into its outrageous fighting characters. The game would be a good fighting title without the bizarre on-screen gyrations, but **Clay Fighter**'s fans wouldn't give them up for anything.

Honorable Mention: **Zombies Ate My Neighbors** (Konami)

Best Electronic Military Simulation

Warlords II (SSG)

Simulating diplomacy with artificial intelligence so well that a solitaire session is as good as one against human opponents is one of the ultimate goals of game design. Though the achievement of that impressive feat still lies in the future, no game has come closer than this year's winner in the "Best Electronic Military Simulation" category. This offbeat fantasy conquest game needed no help from magic to coast to victory.

Honorable Mentions: **Liberty or Death** (Koei); **Clash of Steel** (SSI)

Best Electronic Gaming Fanzine

Digital Press

Joe Santulli knocked on the door in last year's voting and took home the award this time. His intelligent and informative fanzine is a model of maturity and even-handedness—and no one knows more about collecting electronic games, as **EG** readers will discover next month. Send $1.50 for a sample copy of **Digital Press** to 44 Hunter Pl., Pompton Lakes, NJ 07442.

And there they are, the gamers' choices for 1993's best interactive entertainment products. **EG** and its editors would like to thank everyone for taking the time to vote and, again, we congratulate our winners!

Wavefront: the New Graphics

by Bill Kunkel

Making the Flesh Crawl

People were shocked. People were angered. The graphic violence, the blood, the decapitations, and full-spine removals; it was too much. They had no idea, no idea at all.

The public over-reaction to **Mortal Kombat** last holiday season was largely the result of the unexpected reality check it imposed on baby boomers. People who grew up playing **Pac-Man**, **Space Invaders**, **Asteroids**, and **Donkey Kong**—even those who had checked into the NES revolution—had absolutely no idea how realistic computer-generated graphics had become. It wasn't so much what was happening on-screen that startled them—we have all seen far more lurid and realistic violence on the evening news.

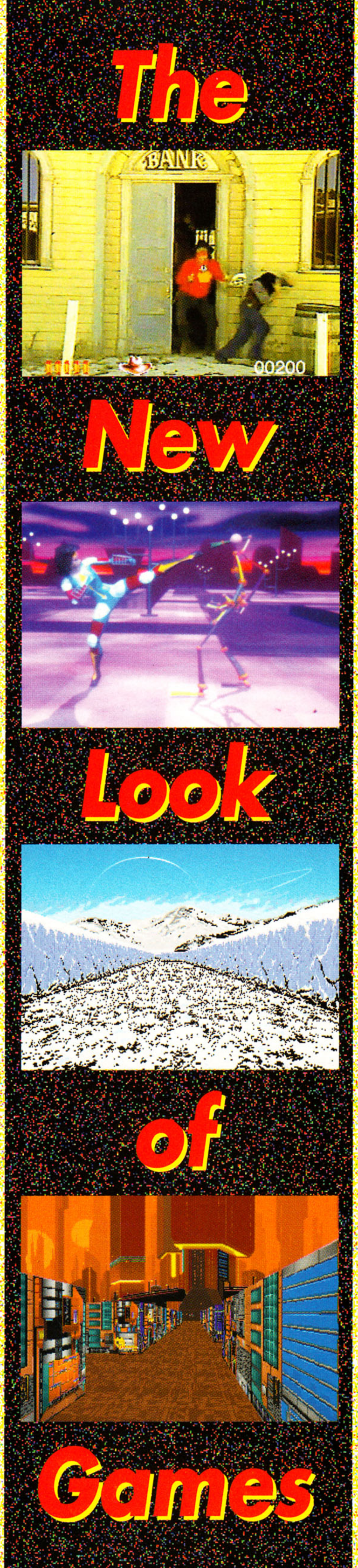
It was the *characters*; they looked, moved—and died—disturbingly like "real" people.

Electronic game graphics have advanced exponentially in the past five years, taking tremendous strides, especially in the area of human modeling. Compare Atari's crude digitized combatants in 1990's **Pit-Fighter** to the far more fluid fighters of Midway's **Mortal Kombat** less than two years later. And then compare the somewhat raw-looking, unnatural video characters of **Mortal Kombat** with the magnificently textured, natural moving martial artists seen in the sequel.

The Silicon Connection

The reason for this incredible bump in electronic imagery can be largely laid at the doorstep of one company: Silicon Graphics. The SGI "look" has become as integral to interactive gaming as the polygon was in 1990. With the stampede toward multimedia formats, any artist who can successfully conceptualize an idea, and can learn to operate an Indigo Workstation, can name their price in this seller's market.

Now comes the next wave; specialized graphic tools which operate with SGI hardware to create even more incredible visual effects.



Catching the Wave

When Wavefront, one of the largest animation vendors in the world, showed up along with SoftImage and Alias at SGI's recent East Coast Expo, nobody was surprised. Wavefront *did* raise some eyebrows, however, by being the first such company to appear at a CES.

"We went to CES to introduce the new **GameWare** product," explained Tom Reyburn, the company's Marketing Communications Specialist. "Since this software was specifically created and tailored to the needs of game developers, we knew that [CES] would be a great place to introduce it, because there are so many gaming companies and game developers attending that show. And it was a great success. We've had a lot of interest in **GameWare** and signed up quite a few new developers."

Wavefront-generated graphics have appeared in every medium, from movies (*In the Line of Fire*, *Lawnmower Man*, *Alien III*, etc.) to network sporting events. Wavefront made its bones in the computer world, meanwhile, back in 1984, when it produced **Advanced Visualizer**, the first commercially available 3-D animation system to offer compatibility with off-the-shelf hardware. This was followed by **Visualizer Paint** in 1990, and **Composer** and **Director** the following year. **Composer** offered scene planning, compositing, special effects (sfx), and video recording, while **Director** offered a user-friendly interface for the entire Wavefront product line.

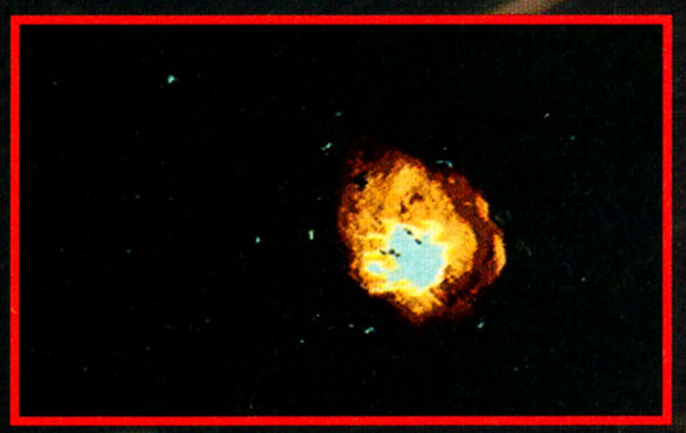
But the package that really puts Wavefront on the map is **GameWare**, the software package the company was peddling to developers at WCES. **GameWare** is run on SGI Workstations and allows programmers to create 3-D actors, environments, and sfx.

Despite the heavy hardware to run it, **GameWare** can create images for use by any gaming system. The color bandwidth problem created by systems such as the Genesis is handled by allowing the creator to render to reduced color palettes.

"**GameWare** was created to be platform independent," Reyburn explained. "[**GameWare**] is more useful on some of the platforms, like the 3DO, which offer high-resolution graphics. But the product *will* create platform-independent graphics."

STRAP YOURSELF IN

FOR THE FLIGHT



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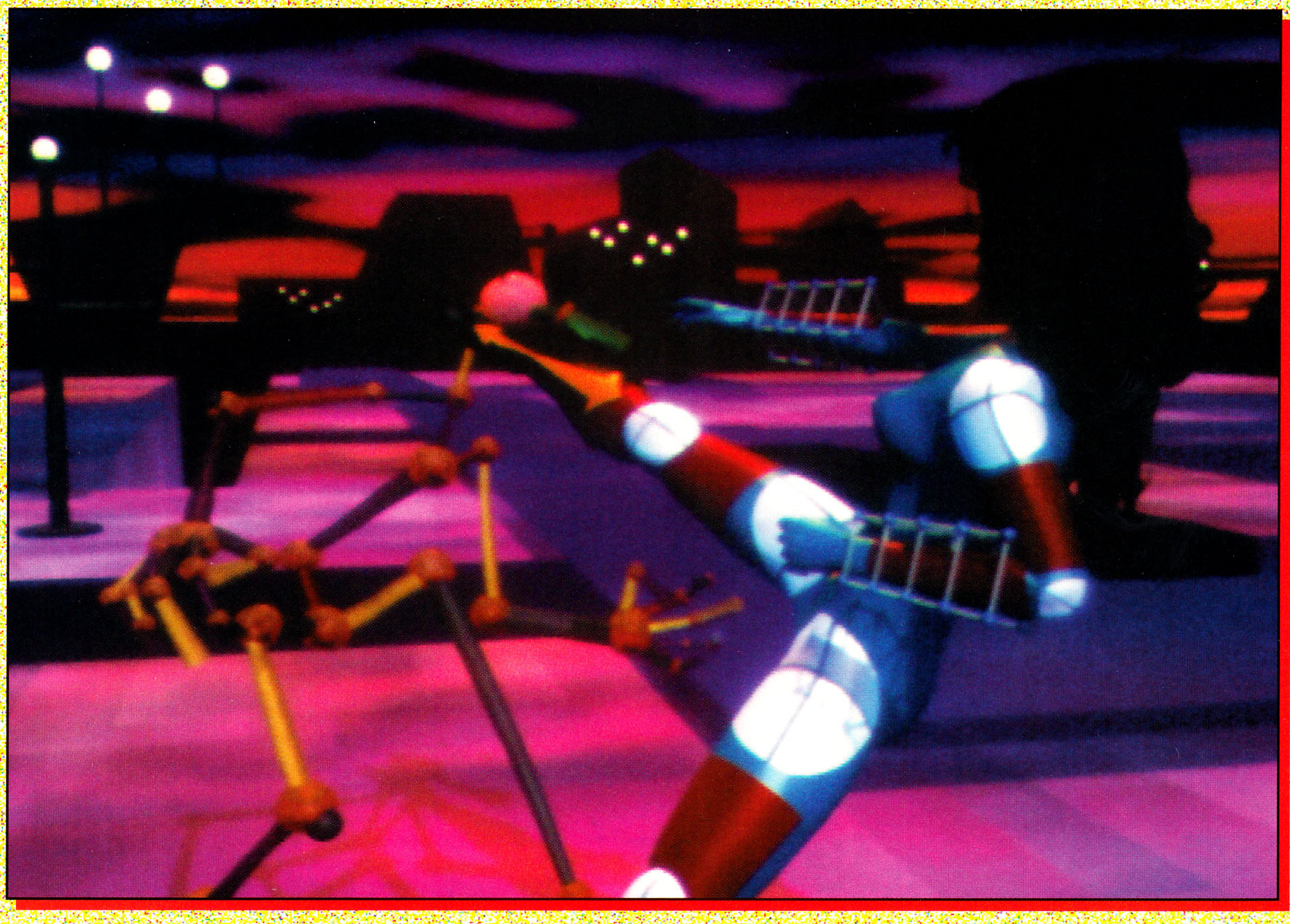


Expensive Tricks

GameWare's other features are equally impressive, especially the Kinemation capability, which allows developers to animate static models through a puppeteer-like manipulation of the user-defined skeleton.

That takes care of the movement, but what about the surface? Skin, clothing, and other complex images are handled through a process dubbed Smart Skin. "Smart Skin," according to Reyburn, "is a new technology that allows [the user] to teach skin how to behave. Let's use, as an example, an elbow joint flexor. The developer can create it so that the biceps of that arm will flex. And it's very easy to teach the skin how to behave by attaching these flexors to it."

Smart Skin is also useful in creating realistic fabric effects. By applying the flexors, the folds in a curtain as it opens, or the way a sleeve of a character's shirt moves when he moves his arm, can be made to look completely realistic.

While none of the company's new projects were ready for discussion, Reyburn did mention several cool Hyper Option utilities which are either already available or soon will be, for use with the basic **GameWare** package. The most exciting, from a gaming point of view, is Dynamation. "We've got some Hyper Plug-Ins," Reyburn reported, "which allow the developer to produce several new effects, one of which we call GameWare Dynamation. This program allows the developer to create realistic, natural phenomena, such as fire and rain and smoke and stuff like that—physically-based animation effects."

The list of developers and publishers already using **GameWare** reads like a Who's Who of modern interactive entertainment, including, among others: Acclaim (the space monsters in **Alien^3** were created using the system), Argonaut, Core Design, Electronic Arts, Probe, Spectrum-Holobyte, Capcom, Dreamweavers, Gremlin, Ocean, Sega, U.S. Gold, Leland, Namco, Learning Company, Arc Developments, and Taito. Obviously the excitement is growing over these new developments.

Making Magic

Developers, especially artists, have been truly liberated by this new wave image processing technology. "If you've created a scene by hand," explained Matthew Carlstrom, supervising 3-D artist on Spectrum-HoloByte's forthcoming **Star Trek: The Next Generation** (EG's pick as Best of Show at the last CES), "and you don't like it or maybe it shows the view from the wrong angle, you have to throw it out and start over. With the computer, you can just edit what you don't like, or move the camera and show the scene from another angle."

"If you draw something by hand," echoes Arc Developments' Paul Walker, "and then decide it's too small or too big, it has to be done again. On the computer, instead of looking at a scene dead on, you can move the camera and re-render. If it's too big, you can re-render smaller. If the lighting was wrong, you can re-render. If there's something you don't like, you can reposition the elements and render again."

Another major advance in the latest

round of image processing is the automatic tweening capability. In traditional cel animation, the star animators produce the pivotal frames—for example, the beginning, middle, and final frames of a movement—while the intermediate cels are produced by second-rank artists dubbed "In-Betweeners," hence the term "tweening."

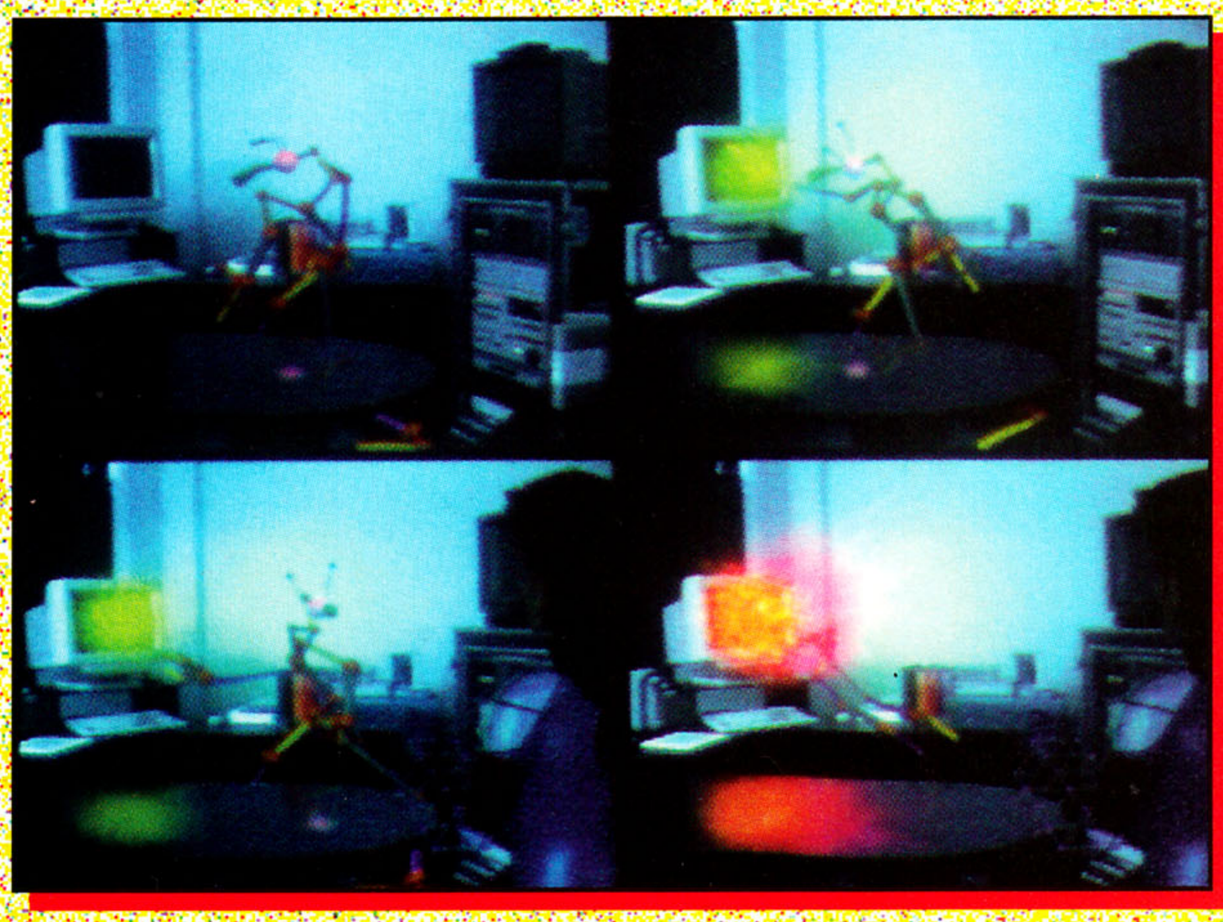
Computers are perfect tweeners. The artist enters in what are called the Key Frames, the computer analyzes them, and produces remarkably faithful interpolated cels. Wavefront's literature cites an ideal example: The user enters two images, one of a soda can standing upright, the next showing the can on its side. The software will not only fill in the entire animated sequence depicting the falling can, but allow the artist to set the speed and spin, using simple menu commands. This method greatly reduces

Smooth scrolling, three-dimensional graphics are enhanced by sophisticated computer animations.

the time involved in animating objects. It's a far cry from the good ol' days of single sheet animation. Imagine how many more Bugs Bunny cartoons we could've had if computers could have done this years ago.

The new graphics technology has also been a boon to driving games—as anyone who has seen Namco's **Ridge Racer** can attest. The realism is as uncanny as a drive through the park or better yet, a raging speedway.

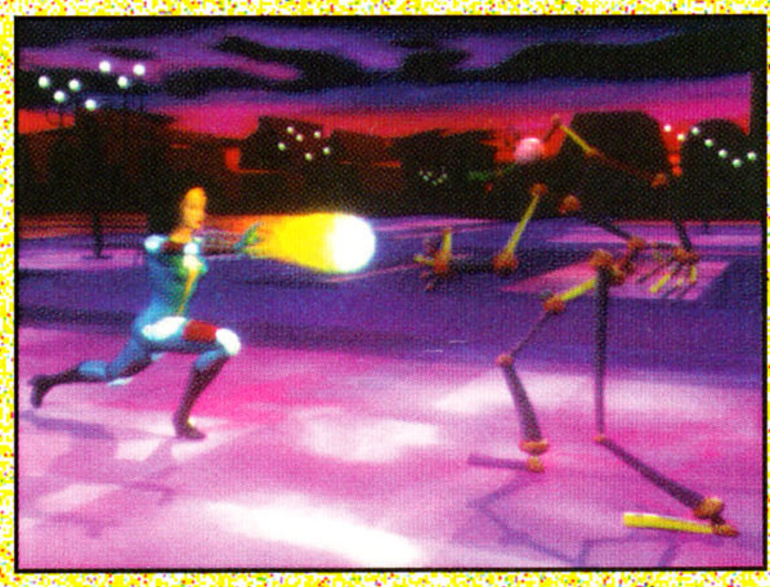
A course is designed, then a "camera" is placed in the driver's seat, for example. The ride is then animated, rendered, and transferred to CD. "It gives us more versatility for developing the dynamic motion and for putting the player on the race course," attests Leland Interactive Media's sfx wizard, David Witters. "Once we've iterated all the different game play possibilities and choreography, we can then render the various sequences with different lighting and materials to create different environments." With all the bases covered in the video-to-computer transfer, the action comes alive with striking realism on the screen.



Who's Next?

The question now is: Which of the major animation companies will jump aboard the gaming bandwagon next? With the possibilities of this new genre being so vast and wide, it's only a matter of time before the field is flooded with entries.

"It's a good step to make," reasons Tom Reyburn. "The reason we've gotten involved in it, primarily, is because so many gaming people had been coming to us because our graphics are so well known in the film and video industries. And they were looking for tools they could use as well to take advantage of some of these graphics. The games marketplace is just so huge—it's larger than the film and video marketplace in terms of entertainment dollars."



Intense graphics are sure to catch the eye of gamers looking for a new and exciting experience.

It's a fact that when money is involved, and especially large amounts of money, companies are going to try and stake a claim in the new look of electronic games.

The burgeoning image processing field is just beginning to make its impact felt on the electronic gaming community.

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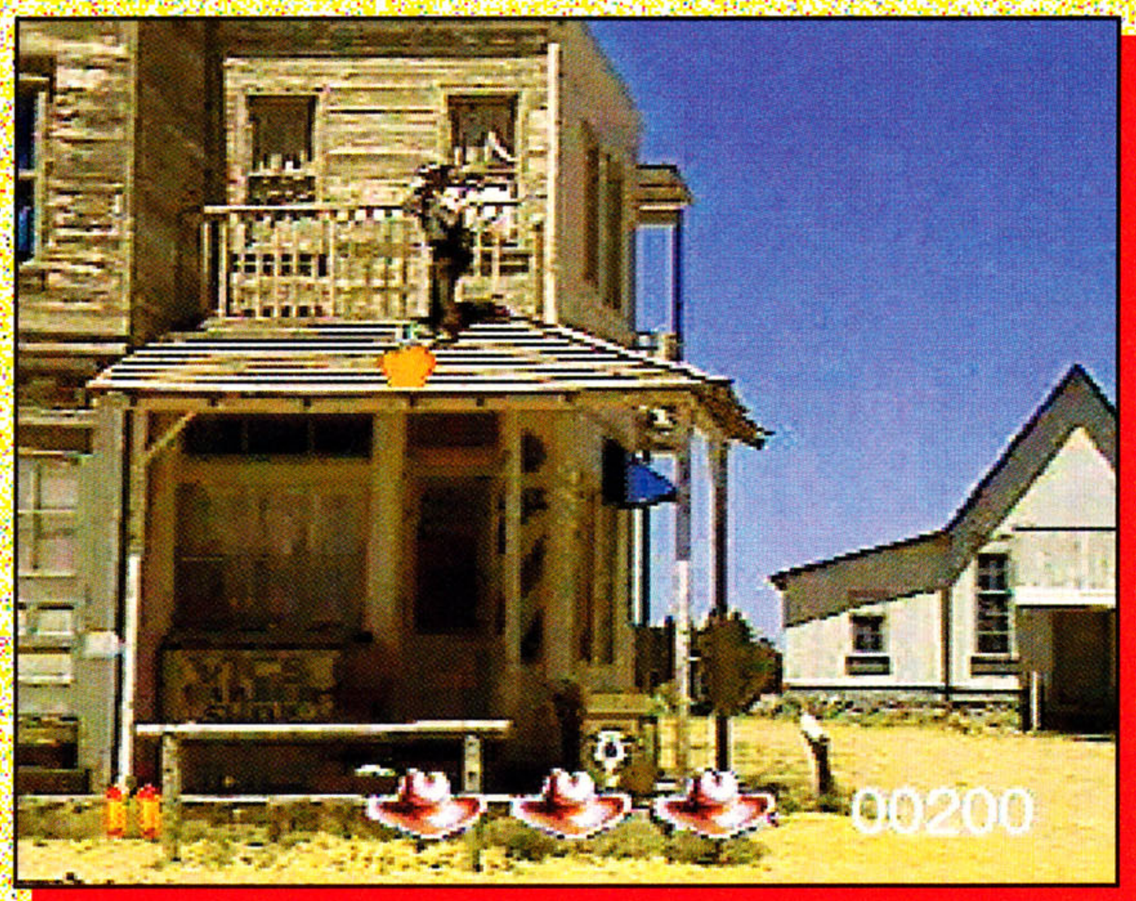
THE INTERACTIVE MOVIES

By Russ Ceccola

Graphics quality in electronic gaming has grown steadily over the years as hardware capabilities improved and as artists became more creative. Today's players demand more realistic scenery and video clips. No game company would be able to get away with a dragon that looks a lot like a duck as Atari did in the game **Adventure** for their 2600 machine in the early '80s. Nowadays that dragon had better be a stop-motion model, cartoon, or hand-painted beast.

The result is a market in which the designers and graphic artists use their noggins to think up new ways to visually entertain the gamers. Multimedia technology offers a wide realm of possibilities for innovative designers. In the drive to produce the most realistic experience, game companies must use a number of different techniques. Let's look at a couple of games that exemplify some of the more common ones.



There are as many different approaches to game graphics as there are game companies. For example, Canada's ReadySoft spent years producing **Dragon's Lair** and **Space Ace**, in which their artists used common graphics tools and paint programs to reproduce the look of the laser-disc games' original scenes for home computers. Now the technology has caught up so ReadySoft can port over the original video scenery, sound effects, and music to CD-ROM systems without too much trouble. Players will find that the game play is different, but the quality of the graphics finally matches the source.

While ReadySoft ports over the graphics for their multimedia games, other companies like Sega produce completely original titles. The Sega CD is the most affordable CD-based game system available, and the number of titles for it has grown greatly. Leading the pack are Sega-designed games like **Sonic CD**, **Double Switch**, and **Prize Fighter**.

Prize Fighter is the most realistic-looking boxing game available because the game's perspective is first-person, from the eyes of the boxer, while the challengers are real people. Sega set up boxing matches for the game much like a film company might, with actors playing the parts of the boxers and referee, and extras in the stands as the audience.

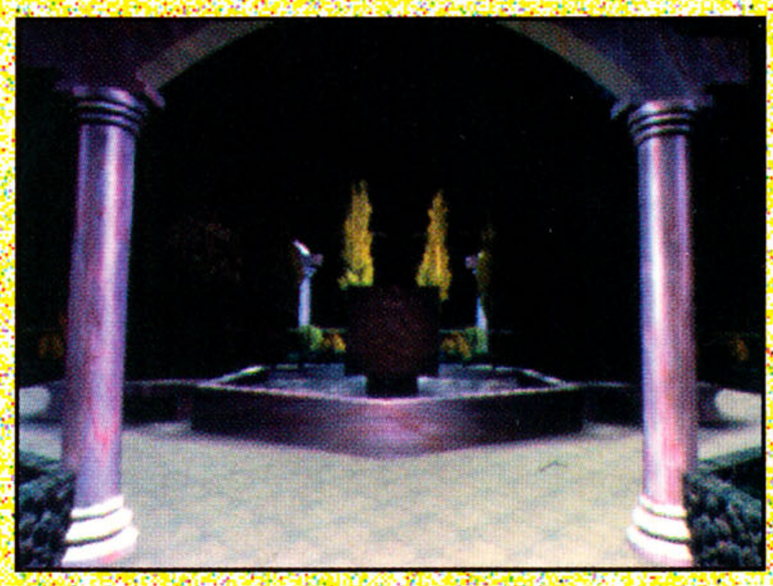
American Laser Games (ALG) has released a number of laser-disc games to arcades that test the shooting skill of players in settings from the Old West to outer space. **Mad Dog McCree** and **Who Shot Johnny Rock?** are currently available on various formats. Access Software has the three-CD mystery/adventure game **Under a Killing Moon** on the way for home PC CD-ROM drives. It showcases a trio of popular performers and a variety of graphics techniques. **Mad Dog McCree** and **Killing Moon** serve as typical examples of the methods companies use to, respectively, port over graphics or design them from scratch.

ALG's home game division's mission is not to design groundbreaking original products, but to convert the company's arcade hits to home formats. ALG currently produces titles for the 3DO format, Sega CD, and PC CD-ROM. John Pasierb, VP of Engineering at ALG, described their process. It starts out with the video from the original game. They digitize every single frame of the film and then run algorithms on the data in order to compress it for storage on the game's CD.

Even with the digitization and programming efforts, glitches break up the video in places. "In order to fix the problem, you perform data compression and decompression," Pasierb revealed. After a few passes, the video scenes are as clean as possible for the particular hardware.

The size of the characters or moving objects plays a part in the resolution as well. The current hardware just doesn't have the resolution necessary to reproduce all film clips clearly. The Sega CD's palette has an additional limitation with its smaller number of colors. Pasierb added that sometimes clarity is also "a function of how the scenes were lit and how they were shot."

Because there is no simple way to port the original video directly to a



Illuminating blue light makes this a striking scene, adding to the mystery of Under a Killing Moon.

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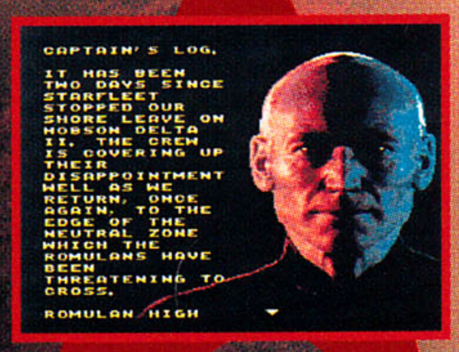

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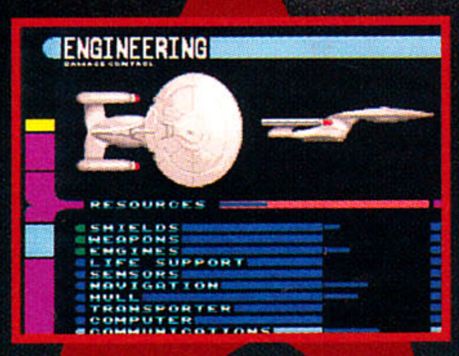

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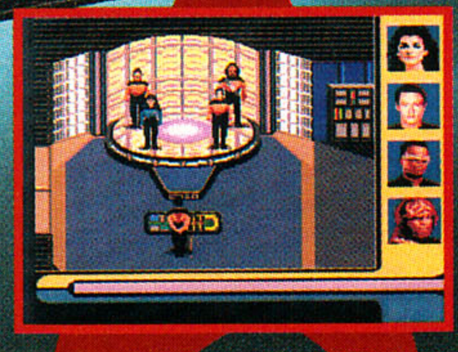

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CD-ROM and then show the scene upon request. it takes a lot of experimentation with each scene to maximize its quality. Until all CD drives are faster and the hardware's resolution improves, companies will have to work within the hardware standards. Video also doesn't look smooth because the current systems don't display the clips at 30 frames/second. Plug-in video boards for computers and more powerful computer chips will correct this problem in the future. Until then, ALG will do their best to accommodate their fans.

For example, those PC owners who buy **Johnny Rock** will find that the game supports both single and double speed CD drives. Pasierb used this example to show that ALG's goal "is to bring what we do in the arcade to the home."

Killing Moon's scenes involve an even greater number of display techniques. The backgrounds are computer-generated or hand-drawn, the characters are filmed actors and actresses. The scenes themselves are 3-D rooms in which players can turn around and move realistically. Nathan Larsen and Mark Hulka, two members of the game's large design team, described the various methods and tools they used to produce **Killing Moon**'s look.

Realistic rooms come alive with digitized video enhancing the scenes to near cinematic levels.

The backgrounds were mostly rendered by computer for the game. The artists drew wire-mesh models on the computer and then mapped painted art or digitized photos onto the models with the animation program's tools. The combination of photo-realistic art and hand-painted scenery gives **Killing Moon** an otherworldly, surrealistic look. Larsen described the game's scenes as "a lot like Hollywood sets, except that they're completely done in the computer." Players can easily move around within these 3-D scenes with simple mouse controls. The result is Access's VR (Virtual Reality) engine, which Larsen said had "the graphic quality of **The 7th Guest** in a **Doom**-like engine."

Three-dimensional video digitization adds depth and the illusion of space to this splendiferous parlor.

It was a trickier process to incorporate the game's video clips into the scenes. Originally, the game's video experts used a black screen background to film the characters rather than the traditional blue screen techniques used by most film companies to merge video. Hulka explained the rationale: "There was a blue halo around each character. There were no halos with a black background." The artists later cut out the character in each frame of video with paint programs and layered the cutouts onto the backgrounds. Until there is a method to port the video directly from hardware system to hardware system without an intermediate step, these kinds of tricks will be necessary to produce a high quality scene in which video images blend with electronic ones.

Later in the game's development, the artists switched to the blue screen process because they had researched superior methods of video, ultimately increasing their video skills. In the end, only about 20 percent of the game uses blue-screen video.

The game's stars, Margot Kidder, Brian Keith, and Russell Means, really enjoyed participating in this up-and-coming form of electronic entertainment titled **Under a Killing Moon**.

Access shot over three hours of video for the game in three sessions. Larsen recalled how Kidder laughed riotously at her saucy character's lines, and remarked that "it was nice to see their reactions and amazement at the whole process."

Killing Moon opened up a Pandora's Box in Access' graphics department. Players can expect to see more of their techniques and methods in the future as the result of their hard work to this pioneering process. One possibility is a 3-D clubhouse for their **Links** golf games!

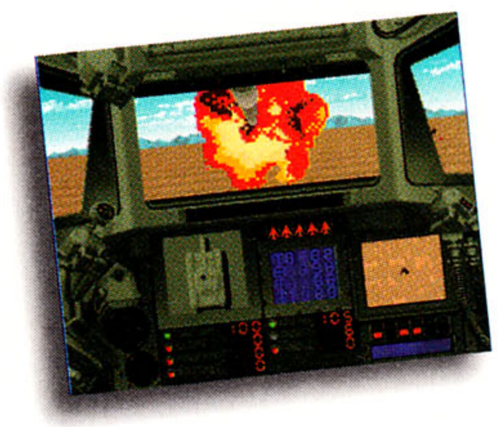
It's quite clear that multimedia opens up new doors for creativity to artists, video technicians, and graphics specialists. In turn,the method will expand horizons for creative writers who utilize the possibilities of this media. Imagine what could be done with real-life actors interacting with a virtual plethora of objects big and small, tame or saucy—the sky is the limit. We as gamers will be able to experience as never before the action of a game as if it were actually happening to us. The reality of actually seeing the characters as real-life people will heighten the thrill of the experience, opening our minds to what the creators of the game really want us to experience. Perhaps the method will spawn even more possibilities as technology grows steadily.

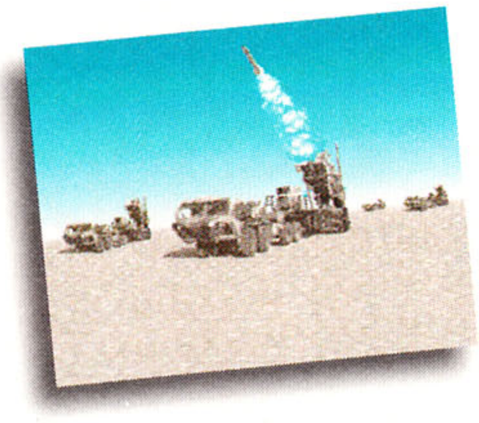
Access and ALG are two of a large group of game companies jumping onto the multimedia bandwagon that's riding into the future of gaming.

Games will continue along this path until the phrase "video game" takes on a new meaning, with the emphasis on the word "video."

IT'S A ROUGH WORLD...

Super NES® screens shown. Other systems' screens may vary.





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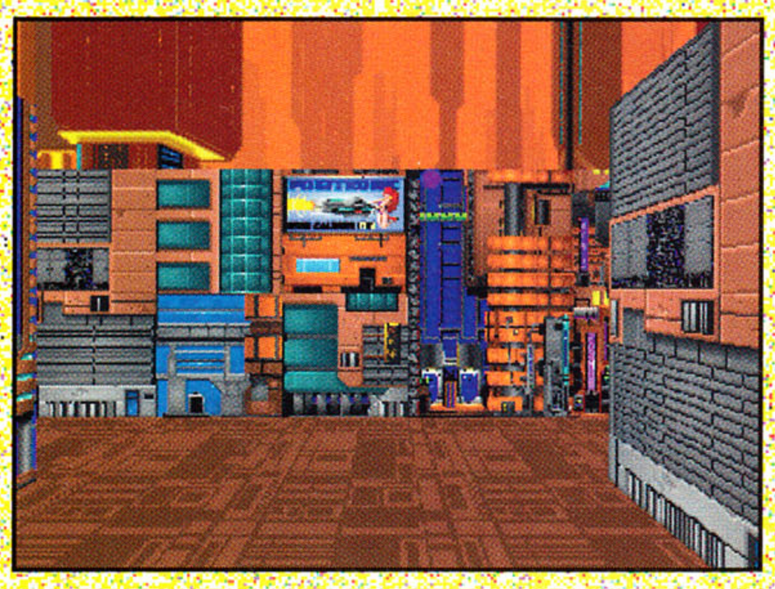
New World Dons the Helmet

by Joyce Worley

Have a seat, turn on your computer, and put on your helmet—it's time to go to war!

New World Computing's exciting, futuristic simulation for CD-ROM puts a cap on all past tank battles, with a combat simulator that's specially designed to be compatible with virtual reality helmets and most joysticks.

Although most first-person viewpoint games can be played with a helmet, few are designed to take advantage of the special faculties of headsets. New World's **Zephyr** is one of the first in the new wave of these first-person virtual reality games for play on home computer.



Three dimensional renderings create an all too real experience for the die-hard sci-fi lovers.

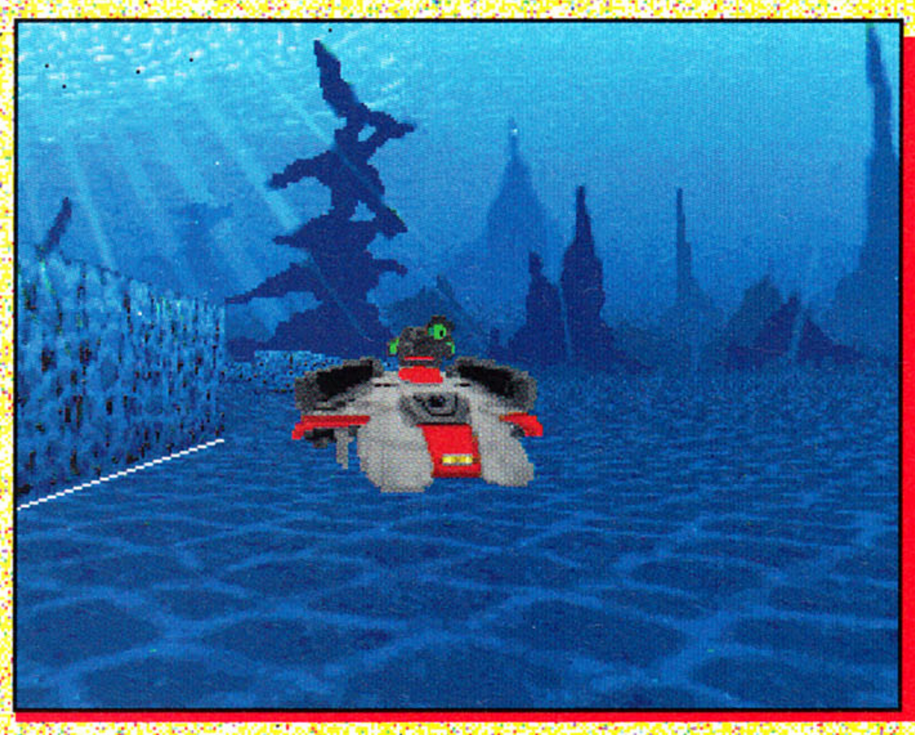
Zephyr (MS-DOS CD-ROM) is the first title designed just for CD that New World has tackled. It puts gamers in charge of state-of-the-art hovertanks, and throws them into battles and competitions on a dozen planets. Using keyboard control or a joystick, the turret moves independently of the tank, so the hovertank can move one way as the player fires in another.

The background story is centered around the Interplanetary Battle Circuit. Writer Paul Rattner explained, "The player is a gladiator, contracted to pilot for a corporation in gladiatorial arenas."

Paul explained the plot. "The megacorporations send their pilots on missions [sometimes sportive and sometimes more militant] across 12 worlds, including ice, cyberpunk, ocean, desert, and other worlds. The events are tailored to the surroundings, such as hovertank ice hockey on the cold world, or defending a geo-thermal rig on the ocean world."

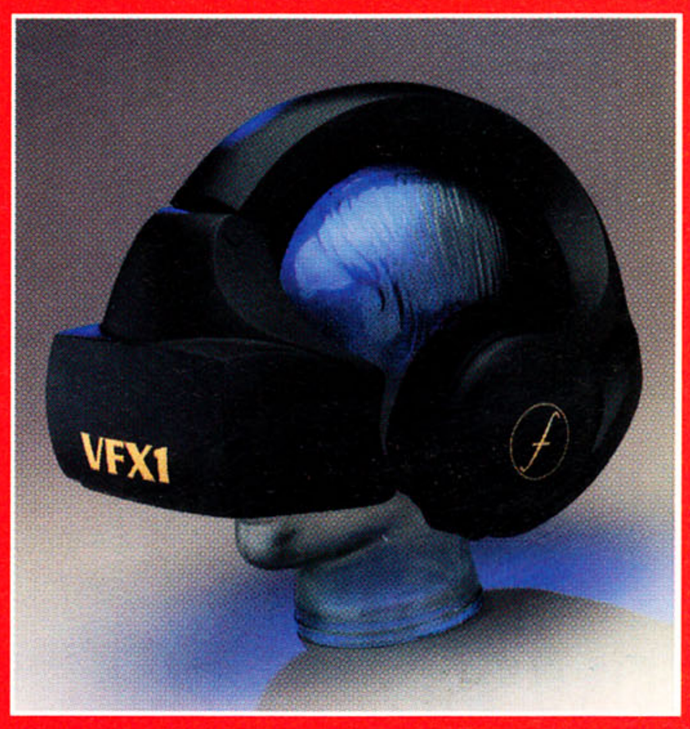
The game features 3-D rendered graphics with many objects and science fictional terrains. The tank was created with 3-D Studio, with 64 sides to produce a smooth visualization of the turning tank.

Up to six human or computer tank drivers will be able to compete, or cooperate in three-player teams, using network and modem capabilities.



The Forte VFX1

Advanced Gravis and Forte Technologies are joining together to form a new company to produce a virtual reality headset. At this point, they expect the product to hit market this fall, for under $1000. It features stereo sound, Virtual Orientation System for head-tracking the roll, pitch and yaw, and two color LCD's that produce 3-D high-res 428 x 244 images.



Looking good in your VFX1 headset, experience the spenders of virtual reality like never before.

The VFX1 Smart Visor has a flip-up visor and various adjustments to make the system fit most head sizes. It's designed for IBM-PC or compatibles.

The CyberMaxx

Currently in development, the latest helmet from VictorMaxx will be lighter than most previous head-mounted displays, with field of view and resolution comparable to or better than the other helmets. The stereo headset produces quality audio, and contains two .7" active-matrix liquid crystal displays that produce resolution of 120K and 180K pixels with depixelation filters.

The CyberMaxx also has built-in tracking. There's a 75 degree horizontal field of view, with 360 degree yaw tracking, and plus or minus 45 degree pitch and roll tracking.

Kevin Koy, President and CEO of VictorMaxx, explained what this means. "Think of your neck as a joystick. Pitch is when you nod 'yes', yaw is nodding your head 'no', and roll is putting your ear to your shoulder. These three movements change your field of vision [looking up, down and from side to side], and built-in tracking insures that the image matches up with your head movements."

CyberMaxx will be compatible with IBM-PC and compatibles, Macintosh, SNES, Genesis, and Jaguar, and should retail for around $449.

Behold the new lighter and enhanced CyberMaxx headset with stereo sound and built-in tracking.

Los Angeles 2053:

Air so hot and filthy, you sweat toxic waste.
Streets so mean, murder is an act of mercy.
It's a perfect place for the dragon.

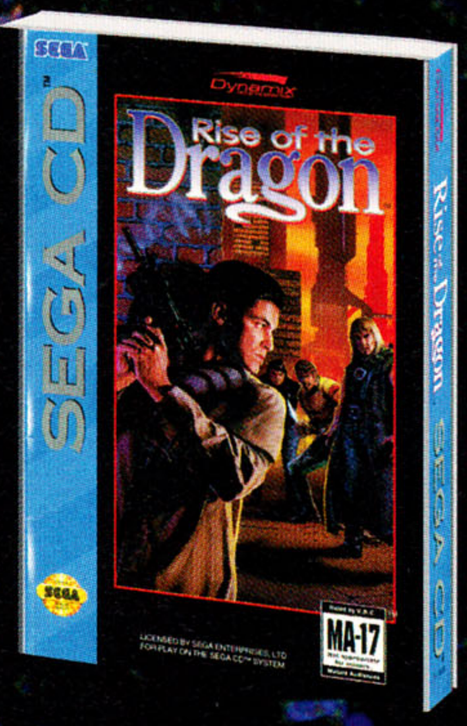
Rise of the Dragon

He controls the streets with terror. He rules the underground with his sweet poison. And, by the way, this animal's got your girlfriend.

You're William 'Blade' Hunter, an ex-cop doing grungy private-eye work in a seedy city. Now, the mayor, who took your badge for not going by the book, wants you to throw out the book and terminate the Dragon.

As 'Blade,' you must conduct the most desperate investigation of your life. In five days, cover the entire city, challenge everyone—and trust no one.

Use any weapon you can lay your hands on and every dirty trick you know to outsmart a complex cast of characters and end the Dragon's vicious reign.



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PLAYERS' GUIDE TO MARTIAL ARTS

CARTRIDGE CARNAGE

by Bill Kunkel

Fighting games were created in the crucible of the arcades, but they reached national prominence in the home video game market. Sub-Zero was performing bloody spinectomies on defeated opponents for years in arcades, and no one but the players seemed to notice.

But once **Mortal Kombat** arrived on the home front, even the halls of Congress reverberated with outraged cries at the deeds of these digitized fighting masters.

These days, fighting games are being challenged on their original arcade turf by hot driving games, Virtual Reality, sports sims, and other new diversions. But in the home video game market, the genré was never healthier.

Martial arts/street fighting games actually comprise two categories: action-adventure combat and one-on-one fights. The action-adventure games are best exemplified by the **Double Dragon** series, in which characters move along an angled, horizontally-scrolling street, or other setting, meeting a variety of enemies along the way. Each level then concludes with a fight between the player-character(s) and a level boss.

The one-on-one style, meanwhile, was first seen in Data East's 1984 coin-op hit, **Karate Champ**, and more recently, in games like the **Street Fighter II** and **Mortal Kombat** series. These games share a number of conventions. A digital counter usually appears at the top of the screen, along with a pair of energy gauges, for example, and each fighter is frequently associated with a specific part of the world, which is then used as the background for their combat. **SF II**'s Guile, for example, is a U.S. military man, so armed forces stations provide his backdrops, while the sumo E. Honda battles against a Japanese cityscape.

Just Scrolling Along

The astonishing popularity of **SF II** largely overwhelmed interest in the action-adventure style street fighting games which were so popular in the late '80s, but they have just started to make a small but impressive comeback.

In Taito's superb **Ninja Warriors** for the SNES, players select from among three player surrogates—Ninja, Kunoichi, and Kamaitachi, all of whom are androids created by Mulk. Mulk is the leader of the resistance against the evil ruler Banglar. In the game's introduction, we are told how Mulk, dying from a dozen different wounds, threw the switch which activated his robotic fighters just before death claimed him. The player then selects one of the three androids—Ninja, a seven foot tall monster; the beautiful female android, Kunoichi; and the metallic Kamaitachi—and sets off on a trail of destruction. Each of the three androids possess distinctive fighting styles and special moves, and the use of large, gorgeously animated sprites makes **Ninja Warriors** one of the most entertaining fighting games around.

Try to dodge the clawed foot stomping around you. It could easily crush you like a little walnut.

Vic Tokai's **Mazin Saga: Mutant Fighter**, meanwhile, combines both types of fighting games to produce an extremely entertaining hybrid for Genesis fight fans. This post-nuke action contest sends player-character Mazinger-Z on a quest to rid the planet of the Steelmask Force's mutant monsters. The game begins in angled side-perspective, with fairly small characters battling one another on

the ruined streets and highways of the decimated Earth. But once Mazinger-Z reaches the location of a boss, the action toggles to a spectacular one-on-one fighting contest, with clanging swords and hand-to-hand combat the order of the day.

Hardcore hand-to-hand combat with burly brutes is what you'll find in Capcom's final Fight 2.

Among the most popular of the scrolling street fighter games are Capcom's **Final Fight** and **Final Fight 2**, both of which feature large sprites and visually compelling backgrounds. The sequel includes two-player simultaneous action and three characters—Haggar, Maki, and Carlos—to select among.

Other games that use the action-adventure motif include Jaleco's SNES game **Brawl Brothers**, and the latest incarnation of the game that started it all, Tradewest's **Super Double Dragon**, also for the SNES. Once again, Billy and Jimmy Lee are out to crush Duke's criminal empire. The sprites are not as large as those in **Ninja Warriors**, **Brawl Brothers**, or the **Final Fight** games, but it does offer an impressive variety of environments and background art.

Jaleco, the first publisher to bring two-player simultaneous action to a SNES fighting game with **Rival Turf**, updates the genre with **The Peace Keepers** for the SNES.

Finally, TecMagik will attempt to bring movie-style martial arts action to the home scene with its Steven Seagal game, **The Final Option**, for both SNES and Genesis. Players control filmdom's favorite bone-breaker in this cinematic thriller which uses actual digitized images of Seagal.

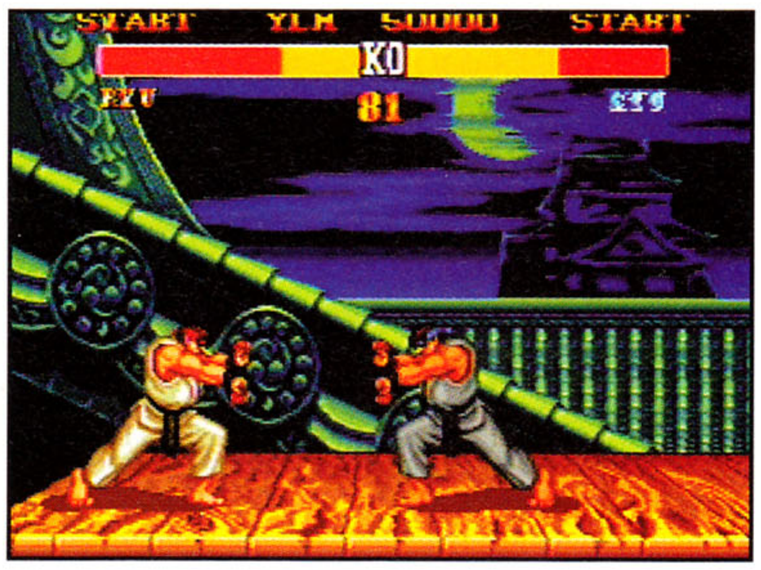
The scrolling street fighting games are more interesting to some gamers because of the movement, and constantly changing scenery and enemies. But many fans dismiss them because they can't offer as many different fighting moves and special powers as the *mano-a-mano* contests.

Just Me and You

The most popular type of fighting game, however, remains the **SF II**, one-on-one format.

Unless you've spent the past half decade on Mars, Capcom's **Street Fighter** series boasts some of the most instantly recognizable visuals in our entire culture. Characters like M. Bison, Chun Li, Balrog, and E. Honda have become as popular as Hulk Hogan, Mike Tyson, Chuck Norris, and other, real-world warriors.

Whereas the combatants in **SF II** (Capcom/SNES), **SF II Turbo** (SNES),



A brilliant night sky adds to the ambiance of the battle in this beautiful scene from Street Fighter 2.

and **SF II Champion Edition** (Genesis) can perform physically impossible feats, they are all representatives of reality-based fighting disciplines, such as sumo, wrestling, boxing, and kickboxing.

Other real-world fighting games include **Battle Blaze** (American Sammy/SNES), in which combatants in a mythical kingdom compete with one another as specialists in the use of weapons—swords, daggers, pikes, etc.

Takara's **Fatal Fury** is even less fanciful than **SF II**, with characters limited exclusively to reality-based striking techniques. There are no inverted helicopter kicks or corkscrew punches in this gritty combat contest.

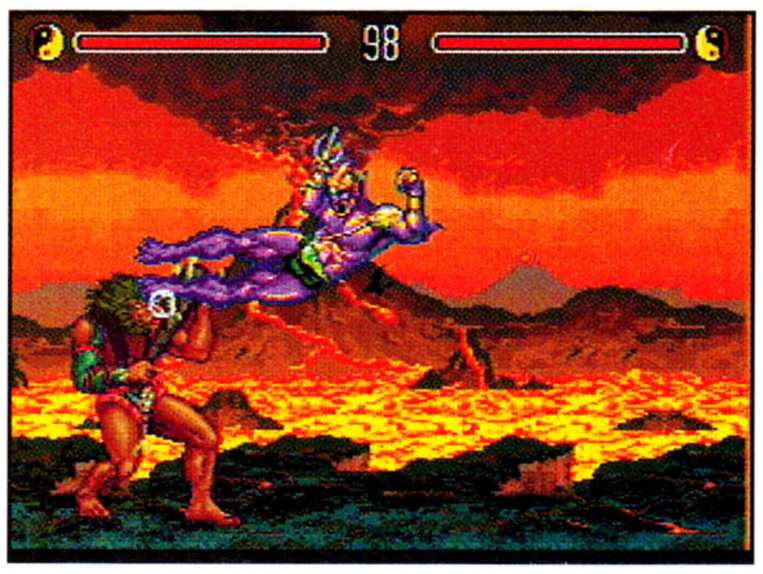
Other games in the **SF II** tradition include Irem's **Street Combat** (SNES), **Tuff E Nuff** (Jaleco/SNES), **World Heroes** (Sunsoft/SNES), **Art of Fighting** (Takara/SNES), **Art of Fighting 2** (SNK/Neo•Geo), **Fatal Fury 2** (Takara/SNES), **Ultimate Fighter** (Culture Brain/SNES), **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Tournament Fighter** (Konami/SNES and Genesis), and **Power Moves** (Kaneko /SNES). Each of these games have their diehard fans—especially the **Fatal Fury** games and **TMNT: Tournament Fighters**, which is perhaps the most challenging street fighting contest on the market.

The hottest new fighter on the street, however, is definitely SNK's **Samurai Shodown**. With its huge sprites, awesome anime-style characters, and spectacular animation, this game would be a wonderful addition to any fight fan's gaming library. Although it's only available on the Neo•Geo, the system does the game justice to say the least! The crisp graphics and smooth rolling action is made for the Neo•Geo system. The fighting is realistic, with a dozen fighters competing in both armed and unarmed combat. Swords can be knocked from an opponent's hand—it's even possible to cleave a foe in half! With that option open to you it's a wonder you would use any other move. This one has it all—icon power-ups, blood, and stupefying special effects.

In fact, most hardcore street fighting fans actually prefer **Shodown** to even **SF II** itself.

Eternally Yours

Sega finally stepped into the home fighting game sweepstakes with **Eternal Champions** (Genesis), a massive 24-Meg contest featuring nine fighters, each possessing at least 35 different moves, and more options than one could shake a nunchuk at. The title character is a god-like being whose job is to maintain the cosmic balance, which has unfortunately begun to tilt in the direction of evil. To set things right, the EC resurrects nine great warriors from the dead. Each fighter must use their particular fighting skill—kung fu, judo, kickboxing, etc.—to gain dominance in the



Grab a spectacular move from the massive bag of tricks in the ever thrilling Eternal Champions.

combat, a second chance at life, and restore the cosmic balance.

Special features include a Battle Room, in which the gamer can set up the challenges their fighter will face—a nice option to have in a game.

PLAYERS' GUIDE TO MARTIAL ARTS

It's Magic!

By the time the coin-op version of **Mortal Kombat** arrived on the scene, it was no longer necessary for the fighters to employ styles based on real-world fighting. After all, when the competition includes a seven foot tall, four-armed prince from another dimension, a savate kick seems like a fairly inadequate response.

In **MK**, the emphasis changed considerably from the rules established by **SF II** and other games in that school. The more fanciful moves seen in **SF II** were no more than visual manifestations of *chi* and exaggerations of the type long present in chop-socky films. **Mortal Kombat**, on the other hand, substituted spectacularly realistic graphics and eye-popping special effects for the more traditional martial arts moves.

The phenomenal popularity of Acclaim's Genesis and SNES versions of **Mortal Kombat** meant that all bets were off. No longer would designers and animators be bound by the laws of physics; anything the mind could imagine was possible in the new

With a powerful left uppercut all laws of gravity are defied as Sub-Zero lofts Liu Kang into the air.

Coin-Op Combat: A Guide to the Latest Arcade Fighting Games

The first fighting games appeared in arcades and were only later adapted for home play. As a result, to this day the coin-op palaces are the birthplace of the majority of martial arts and street fighting contests.

The latest rev of arcade punch-ups always include at least one entry from Capcom, longtime king of the coin-op fight genre. The folks who brought us the original **Street Fighter**, then **Street Fighter II** and its small army of spin-offs, is back with **Super Street Fighter II: The New Challengers**. The latest wrinkle in the SF II mythos offers new fighters and locales for those who can't get enough of that Capcom coin-op classic.

The Hot Shots

Mortal Kombat II (Midway) was the #1 moneymaker in arcades as of the March '94 issue of *RePlay*, the coin-op industry bible. And, according to Bally-Williams-Midway prez Roger Sharpe, even with all the strategy-obsessed game magazines and InterNet hot-shots punching away at it, many of its coolest secrets have yet to be uncovered.

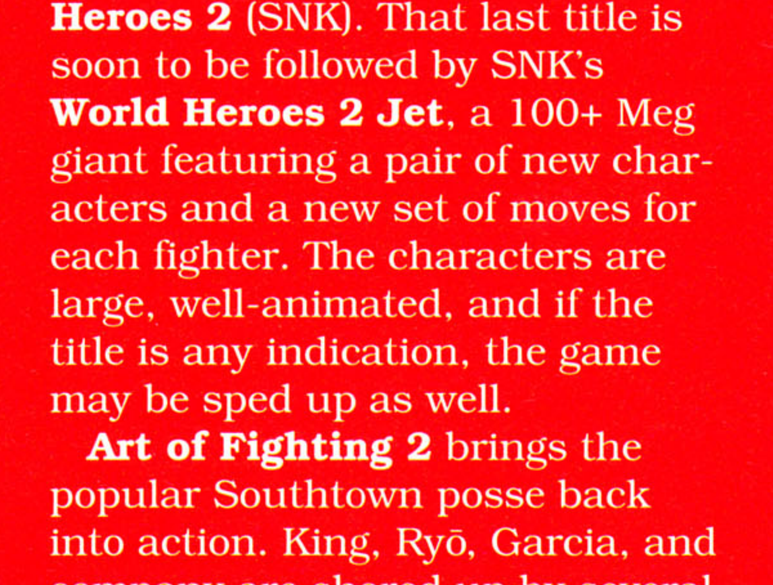
Right behind **MK II** on the best seller charts is Sega's knockout **Virtua Fighter**, featuring the most incredible polygon-based human figure animation ever seen in a fighting game. **Virtua Fighter** is of particular interest because it's the first street fighting game in which the combatants meet in a three-dimensional environment.

Whereas other martial arts and fighting contests allow for only forward and backward movement, **Virtua Fighter** sets its huge combatants on a ring-like, 3-D grid.

The Best of the Rest

Other fighting games making waves in the arcade world include **Art of Fighting 2** (SNK), **Fatal Fury 2 Special** (SNK), and **World Heroes 2** (SNK). That last title is soon to be followed by SNK's **World Heroes 2 Jet**, a 100+ Meg giant featuring a pair of new characters and a new set of moves for each fighter. The characters are large, well-animated, and if the title is any indication, the game may be sped up as well.

Art of Fighting 2 brings the popular Southtown posse back into action. King, Ryō, Garcia, and company are shored up by several new fighters, each of whom has the obligatory special moves which will have arcaders experimenting wildly with offbeat control configurations. **AoF2** offers some of the largest characters in the genre, each of whom has a distinctive and smoothly-animated fighting style.



Get pumped to rumble with enhanced power and a forceful kick to the head in SNK's Art of Fighting 2.

As a Neo•Geo compatible game, **Fatal Fury 2 Special** will be available both on home machines and in arcades. It boasts 15 player-usable characters—including bosses—massive sprites, and slick animation. It also looks to be one of the most difficult fighting games to master, with super moves which can only be executed when the energy gauge turns red.

The Grue Crew

Finally, we have a new entry from Konami that may well be a dark horse in the street fighting sweepstakes. **Monster Maulers** is a side-scrolling fighter featuring a crew of three anime-style player-characters, gruesome monsters, and a Two-player Mode that greatly facilitates progress. Our favorite enemy was the so-called Brain Golem, a grotesque giant brain, tendril arms, and a huge, gaping eye which fires a beam of killer energy at the player-character(s).

Despite the limitations of the side-scrolling format, **Monster Maulers** boasts an interesting variety of maneuvers with each character provided a special move.

The arcades are likely to remain a spawning ground for fighting contests. Street-style combat has been established—along with sports, platform, and driving games—as a staple of arcade gaming.

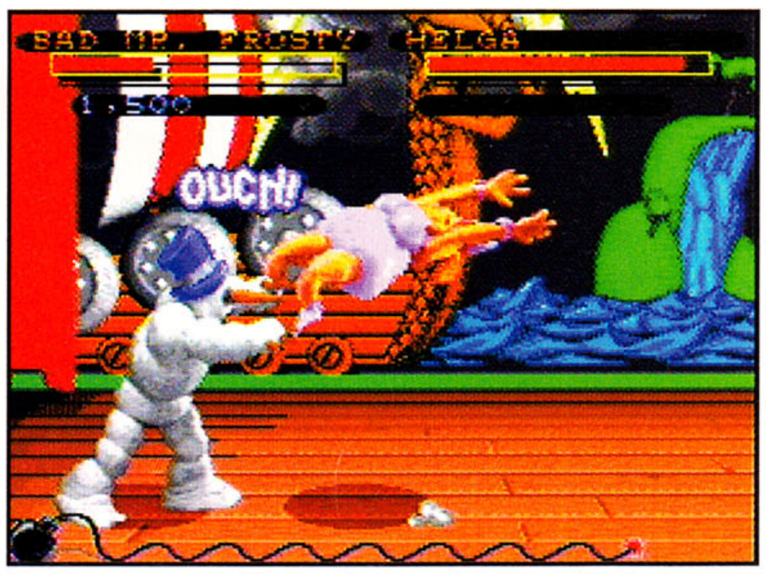
—Bill Kunkel

electronic fighting arenas.

This realm of fantasy street fighting has been explored in both semi-traditional and experimental titles. In Renovation's **Doomsday Warrior**, for example, an otherwise ordinary **SF II**-style fighter, one of the combatants (Grimrock) is a lizard-looking mutant and another (Nuform) is composed entirely of a fluid, shapeless substance.

The long-awaited release of Cultures Brains Super Deformed Golden Fighter was worth the wait.

Another fighting game with strong fantasy overtones is Culture Brain's **SD Golden Fighter** (SNES). The SD stands for "Super Deformed," by the way, with most of the fighters resembling cartoonish monsters. The combatants can hurl fire at opponents, which include a griffin (a lion with the wings of an eagle) and what looks like a mutant duck.



A circus-like atmosphere adds to the comedy of the hilarious Interplay fighting game, Clay Fighter.

And at the far end of the fantasy spectrum, we have **Clay Fighter** (Interplay/SNES and Genesis), a game in which **all** the combatants are cartoon-like caricatures. There's Bad Mr. Frosty, a carrot-nosed snowman with a detachable head; Taffy, a stretchable puttyhead whose arm span is as long as it needs to be; Blue Suede Goo, a paunchy Elvis imitator with dangerous hair, and five others, all funny, all magnificently animated using blobby modeling technology.

Interplay is already hard at work on **Clay Fighter II**, and hopes to have it in stores by Christmas. It features new fighters, new locales, and new situations—along with a few old, familiar faces. Interplay also looks to have the long-awaited Genesis version of the original **Clay Fighter** ready by September.

On the Horizon

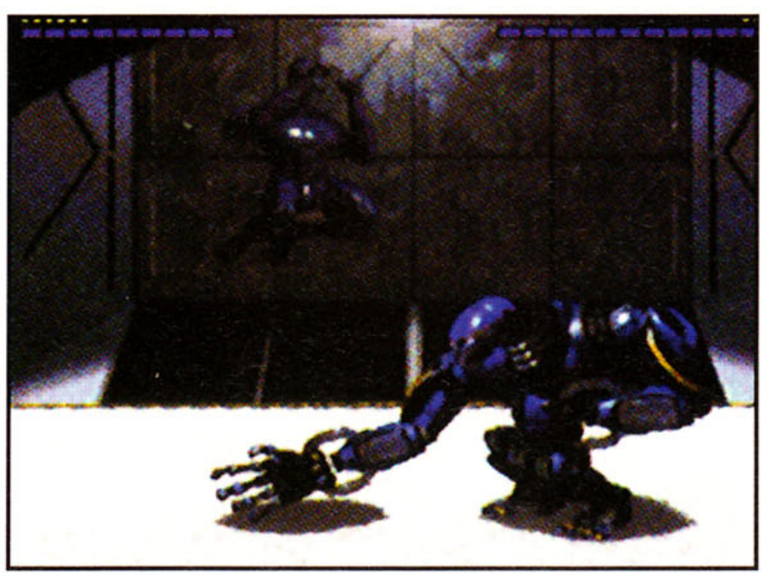
Several impressive new projects are now in development which may vault fighting games to a new level of popularity. As coin-ops like **Mortal Kombat II** (Midway) and **Virtua Fighters** (Sega) show, fighting games can be tremendously enhanced through the use of state-of-the-art graphics technology.

This next-generation of fighting contests is simultaneously being engineered on the home front. Games like **Clay Fighter**, **Mortal Kombat**, and **Samurai Shodown** broke new ground in terms of graphic sophistication on home systems. That innovation is quickly being surpassed, however, by sequels already in development, as well as several new projects on the video game drawing board.

Rise of the Robots is headed to all systems from a variety of publishers, including Absolute for the SNES. This game features Silicon Graphics level rendering and the most realistic robot vs. robot fight scenes since the film *Terminator 2*.

Even more intriguing, however, is an upcoming Accolade game for both SNES and Genesis, entitled **Juggernauts: The New Breed**. This game, set in the near-future, pits two quartets of super-powered beings in a comic book-style conflict. The various good and bad guys have been enhanced through everything from genetic manipulation to black market cybernetics.

What makes this project of special interest to gamers is its incredible visual presentation. Using cutting-edge motion capture technology



Watch out for this mechanized beast with an attitude, in the ever thrilling Rise of the Robots

combined with SGI 3-D character modeling, **Juggernauts** is one of the most breathtaking graphic experiences ever captured on a home machine.

Accolade hired actual martial artists, then attached sophisticated motion detection devices to critical body parts—joints, hands, head, feet, etc.—which then appeared on computer monitors. As the martial artist performed a move, the computer captured the motion and retained it to memory. The result is amazingly realistic.

The game's eight primary characters were created using sophisticated Silicon Graphics technology to produce texture-mapped computer models for each superhero and supervillain.

The new wave of graphic technology will have a profound effect on all genrés of electronic gaming, but it seems

The cartoon-like look and animation of Clay Fighter offers an alternative in the fighting game category.

likely that fighting games, with their need for realism in animating the human form, look to be beneficiaries.

Given the modeling power of the new SGI workstations and the special software which runs on it, designers need not be restricted to the human form. As the blobby animation of **Clay Fighter** and the superheroically proportioned stars of **Juggernauts** show, the human body is only a starting point in the production of computer-generated lifeforms.

Fighting games are, at bottom, simply the latest wrinkle in electronic role-playing. The realism only adds to the bond between player and character to create a truly satisfying role-playing experience.

Exotica

As whimsical as the fighting game genre can be—witness **Clay Fighter** —there are still some games that don't quite fit into the neat and tidy generic classifications.

For example, how about a street fight between giant Japanese movie monsters? Or two? In both **King of the Monsters** (Takara/SNES) and its sequel, **King of the Monsters 2** (SNK/Neo•Geo), giant turtles, lizards, and robots punch the stew out of one another on the streets of famous cities.

And if Japanese movie monsters getting it on sounds like fun, how about the first one-on-one fighting game ever published for the SNES back in 1991? It was

It doesn't get any better than this—squaring off with a big, fuzzy, endangered species.

called **Ultraman Toward the Future**, starring that well-known Japanese hero with the metal head, bug eyes, plus a red and white costume. This Bandai entry saw Ultraman fighting a variety of giant monsters in several urban settings.

But our personal favorite oddball fighting game is unquestionably **Ranma 1/2: Hard Battle** from DTMC. Based on a Japanese cartoon, Ranma was originally scheduled to star in the old Irem SNES game, **Street Combat**, but was removed before arrival in the States. In any case, the story line involves a strange river which transforms those who bathe in it. Ranma is a little boy who blunders into the pool, and transforms into—a gorgeous, red-haired female named Ranma-chan! Of course, things could be worse: his father fell into the pool, he became a giant panda!

Mayhem In Multimedia

by Bill Kunkel

Multimedia has been somewhat slow in jumping on board the fighting game bandwagon, but thanks to the increasing interest in the Sega CD format, several interesting titles are either already available or soon will be.

Positively Brutal

Gametek was an early adopter on the Sega CD with **Brutal: Paws of Fury**. Despite its rather harsh-sounding title, **Brutal** is not an especially violent game. It is, in fact, a rather gentle satire of fighting games and the bogus mysticism that surrounds them.

Brutal takes a light-hearted poke at fighting games satirizing characters and their actions.

Using anthropomorphic animals as its characters, the game begins with the Deli Lama, the big ham, sending out invitations to eight great fighters. These characters have names like Kung Fu Bunny, Penjat Panther, and Foxy Roxy, and each has his/her own reasons for entering the tournament on Brutal Island.

Unlike most fighting games, characters do not begin the tournament with a complete repertoire of moves. Instead, they work their way up through the martial arts ranks in realistic fashion, from white belt to black, by defeating their opponents. Only after overcoming the other seven participants does the fighter meet the Lama in the dojo and receive a new belt. There's even a password system for retaining fighters' records.

Perhaps the lightweight nature of **Brutal** will turn off blood-seeking hardcores, but for most gamers, it should prove an entertaining entry into the fighting game genre.

Similarly mild-mannered fighting action can be found in **Battle Fantasy** (Absolute Entertainment/ Sega CD). With its bizarre sound effects and humorous animations, this is another non-intimidating access point to a normally violent game category.

Which Way, Warrior?

For those hard-core street fighting fans we mentioned earlier, however, the most interesting of the multimedia entries is definitely Naughty Dog's **Way of the Warrior**, a **Mortal Kombat**-inspired punch-out for 3D0 compatible systems.

The characters are based on digitized models and the animation is nearly flawless. The game is also extremely violent, and without apologies. The development group/publisher doesn't call itself "Naughty Dog" for giggles, after all.

Way of the Warrior also features a number of cool, 3D0-based features, including an automatic camera zoom for close-ups when the characters get up close and personal, and an auto-pan that kicks in when the fighters back off.

The game offers 10 different fighters, each consuming two MB of graphic space. Every character has a minimum of 15 moves and a pair of fatalities in addition to a base of approximately three dozen primary maneuvers.

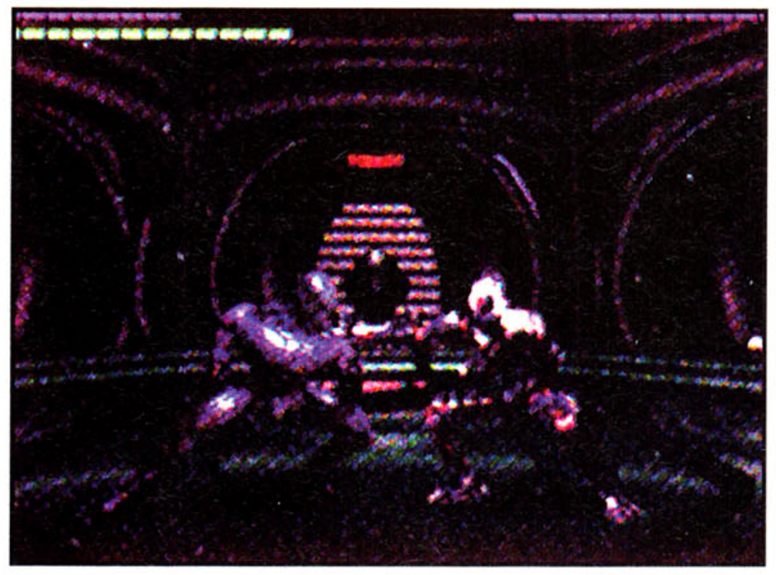
Way of the Warrior's bosses are also appropriately special, including a well-rendered dragon and a demonic skeleton. The sprites are huge, with characters capable of moves never executed before in any electronic fighting contest.

No entertainment system is truly ready for the mass market until it has its very own street fighting game. Well, the 3D0 should now be ready to roll, because **WotW** looks like one hot property.

Ninjas, Robots, and Mortal K

Perhaps the most unorthodox fighting game in the history of the genre is also on its way to the Sega CD. Renovation's **Revenge of the Ninja** is a cross between a martial arts game and **Dragon's Lair**. The plot is as conventional as the execution is offbeat: A princess has been kidnapped and it's up to the ninja player-character to rescue her from the ominous sounding Castle of Evil. The presentation, however, involves a variety of unusual camera angles with player commands executed entirely by pushing the right button at the right time. The ninja can cling to the ceiling, scale walls, and attack with the silence of a cat.

While far from an ordinary fighting game, **Revenge of the Ninja** is nonetheless an interesting sneak peak at what multimedia martial arts contests may offer down the road.



Ice blue backgrounds and a steel-like atmosphere add to the scene of metallic beasts going toe-to-toe.

Rise of the Robots will also be making an appearance on the Sega CD courtesy of JVC.

Acclaim's **Mortal Kombat**, has finally been completed by the folks at Probe who created the Genesis version. The Sega CD Edition (with blood codes) is largely a reproduction of the Genesis SKU with the addition of a cool introduction (based on the famous "Mortal Kombat!" TV commercial) and souped-up sound that is markedly superior to the audio on any other home version.

PLAYERS' GUIDE TO MARTIAL ARTS

FIGHTING GAMES CONQUER THE COMPUTER

by Laurie Yates

Martial arts simulations have enjoyed unequaled popularity on coin-ops and video game systems, and have made impressive inroads in the new black box marketplace. Until recently, however, computerists had little or no opportunity to test their skill at *mano-a-mano* electronic combat.

The reasons for this are twofold: The computer game marketplace has been historically unreceptive to coin-op translations, especially in the PC era. Early DOS-based machines were simply too sluggish to perform at the high speeds required in an all-out action contest. Then there was the perception that computerists preferred exclusively cerebral games, such as RPGs, war games, sports strategy, and sophisticated sims.

The Chi is A 'Changin'

In recent months, however, the computer game universe has been assaulted by street fighting software, with users being given an opportunity to test their more bloodthirsty instincts on both arcade/video game translations and original designs.

The following is a look at some of the major releases in both categories.

The era of **Street Fighter II** began in 1990, when Capcom unleashed what would prove to be among the most popular series in coin-op history. **SF II** and its gallery of sequels—**SF II Turbo**, **Championship Edition**, **Super Street Fighter II**, **The New Challengers**, etc.—established most of the conventions and ground rules for the current generation of one-on-one fighting competitions. Unlike earlier martial arts contests, it introduced special moves which were not reproducible in the real world—fighters could hurl fireballs across the screen and even possessed powers such as limited flight. Midway's **Mortal Kombat** took the fantasy aspect even further, producing fighters not clearly associated with real world fighting styles—kung fu, savate, sumo, grappling, etc.—capable of astounding magical abilities. Of course, **Mortal Kombat**'s most memorable element involved its ultraviolent fatality moves, rendered in meticulous and bloody detail.

Both of these games have been million-plus-selling mega-hits in the video game world, so it was only a matter of time before they made their arrival on the PC scene—especially the 486-based systems, where all the frenetic action and distinctive graphics can now be more faithfully reproduced. So, how did the two most well-known street-brawling coin-ops fair on the chip circuit?

Street Fightin' Man

Street Fighter II (UltraTech/DOS) has all of the options that are available in the original arcade game, including the VS Battle Mode. All eight champions (Ryū, Dhalsim, Ken, Guile, E. Honda, Zangief, Chun Li, and Blanka) are accessible as are their special moves, and geographically-based backgrounds.

Single players, as well as two gamers, can eventually work up to meet M. Bison on his home turf.

Gamers have several customization options in the PC version of **SF II**, including difficulty levels, time limits, control configurations, and handicapping the opponent in the VS Mode.

The graphics made a smooth transition from coin-op screen to computer monitor. The backdrops remain the same, and the graphics include the vivid coloring and special effects that **SF II** fans demand. Even the music is reasonably faithful to its source material.

The biggest disappointment in **SF II** is the lack of responsive control. Character reaction time is slow, and unfortunately, a two-button joystick doesn't fill the requirements of a game that employs a six-button controller interface in its original format (even SNES and Genesis owners have access to special 6-button controllers designed specifically for fighting contests). This means that the special moves are difficult to execute, and even simple jumps can absorb too much time, causing the player-character to take several additional blows.

While the computer version cosmetically resembles its arcade archtype, when it comes to actual game play, hardcore Street Fighters are likely to be disappointed.

Let It Bleed

Mortal Kombat (UltraTech/DOS/Amiga) fans, on the other hand, have a bloody good time awaiting them with the arrival of UltraTech's PC version of this arcade classic.

Under the UltraTech umbrella, the computer version of **MK** was produced by Acclaim, publishers of the video game versions. It once again brings seven of the world's deadliest fighters together in a fight-to-the-death competition.

Yikes! Is that Raiden's head and spine in Sub-Zero's hand? These boys really know how to rub it in!

The fighters include: Johnny Cage, a movie star martial artist; Kano, a mercenary thug; Rayden, the mortal avatar of the thunder god; Liu Kang, a Bruce Lee-type; Sub-Zero, a Chinese ninja; Scorpion, a dead man in ninja form; and Sonya Blade, a covert U.S. operative. All of them have special attack maneuvers, as well as those trademark fatality moves.

Yes, **MK** fans, all the blood and spine-ripping excitement that set Congress' collective hair on end can be found in the PC version—which is rated PC-17, by the way, as opposed to the milder MA-13 which appears on the Genesis version.

The look and sound of this computerized deathmatch duplicate the coin-

Street Fighter started the fist-to-mouth fighting rage but none has matched this gem.

op with impressive fidelity. The animations and graphics are sharp, cleanly rendered, and extremely fluid—especially on a 486. The sound effects, speech, and music are also expressive and true to the original, However, the real test is the control. While workstation warriors will miss the five-button control setup of the arcade version, the two-button PC joystick turns in a surprisingly good performance.

The two-player mode of **MK** does make the contest more equal than competing against the CPU, but even the single player contest produces a solid workout.

New Kids on the Block

Translations and licenses aside, there are also original street fighting games available. **Metal & Lace: The Battle of the Robo Babes**, a PC fighting game from MegaTech, takes place on Earth in 2053. Society has become sanitized, a la *Demolition Man*, with contact sports and other "unhealthy" influences forbidden. Everything is a bland panacea of peace and love. However, to every rule, there is an exception. In this case, we have MeCha, an island paradise known for beautiful women and the blood sport of Robo Fighting.

The original Japanese design for this game involved robotic catfights, or strip-fighting: A lost match meant the loser was forced to surrender an article of Robo babe clothing. Since MegaTech was aiming for a larger audience, and a self-imposed NR-13 rating, the nudity was toned down, but the subject matter still retains a mature theme. (A NR-18 upgrade is available to registered users and features two additional graphics of the seven babes in more erotic and partially nude poses.)

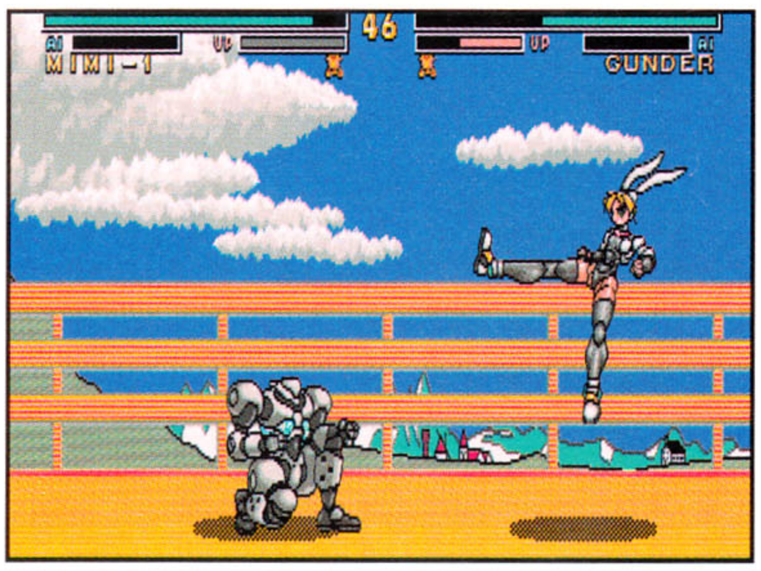
Gamers start out with a bankroll of $5,000 to pay tournament fees, buy armor—seven different types, each with its own special moves and attacks—or purchase power-ups. Then there's the matter of tips (that towel girl can be a wealth of information if properly inspired) and bribes.

The battles occur in a variety of simple arenas. Unlike **SF II** or **MK**, this is not a fight to the death, but a fight to the humiliation—scorn for the human loser, or an anime illustration of the defeated Robo babe.

The music is mostly oriental twang and the voices grate after extended game play. Fortunately, both can be turned off. The graphics, while not cutting edge, are satisfactory.

The shortcoming of **Metal & Lace** is in the fighting engine. The special moves are not well implemented and the control is difficult. Fortunately, the control options allow for the use of either the four-button Thrustmaster or the Gravis Game Pad.

If a soft-porn fighting game doesn't quite hit the appropriate spot, then perhaps **Body Blows** (MicroLeague-Team 17/DOS) will.



Newcomer fighting game Metal and Lace has an original concept in the slam bam fighting genre.

This British import features 10 fighters from around the world: Nik and Dan (Boston), Junior (London), Lo Ray (China), Kossak (Moscow), Mike (New York), Maria (Barcelona), Dug (Las Vegas), Yit-U (China), and Ninja (Japan). They are all in competition with one another, with the winner getting a chance to defeat Max, the lord of the criminal underworld.

Each of the 11 characters have an individual personality profile, and, naturally, power moves that range from whirlwinds to flying splits in mid-air.

Body Blows features four modes of play, including the tournament, which allows up to eight players to compete.

As a real-time fighting game, **Body Blows** does well. Game play is good with the keyboard or with a compatible joystick. Unlike the complicated multiple command sequences found in other games, gamers can access special moves in Body Blows by simply pressing and holding the action-key. Ease of operation makes this game even more enjoyable.

Heavy Metal

The silicon streets still aren't safe, as Accolade's **Rise of the Robots** is waiting in the alley for its turn to perform some futuristic rumbling. This action-oriented street combat simulation features sophisticated humanoid robots who have been contaminated by the company supervisor with a powerful virus.

PLAYERS' GUIDE TO MARTIAL ARTS

PUNCHING WITH THE PROS

by Ed Dille

Want to be the Eternal Champion, or just another Streetfighter? Ofttimes, the difference between winning and losing has less to do with talent than it does with opportunity. Every opponent has weaknesses. Most players can recognize these after familiarizing themselves with a given game, but they may still lack the responsiveness or timing to seize the moment. In the world of video games, finding the right controller can be the great equalizer.

Fighting games are a genré born almost exclusively of coin-op conversions. Because of this heritage, many players have grown to expect the same level of intensity they experience in the arcade, and are quick to judge products which fail to provide it. When this occurs, it is often as a result of inadequate control, as opposed to a poor conversion.

Coin-op machines are designed with the stick and buttons spread apart for two hand, palm down operation. The latter distinction is significant, because it clearly establishes the way arcade players have been conditioned to control their characters. The left hand controls a large stick or knob, and the right hand is spread out, palm down, over the button array. This configuration permits players to use the dominant index and middle fingers for button combinations, and the thumb for tertiary operations. If one cares to dispute the responsiveness of the two primary fingers over the thumb, simply visit the local arcade and observe players. Most players are not conscious of the distinction between the way they play at home and at the arcade until it is drawn to their attention but, once it has, they immediately understand skill differences or other anomalies that had puzzled them.

Controllers, regardless of their other special features, traditionally come in two flavors, pads and table top models. Pads are inherently incapable of providing the same level of control as the arcade arrays because the player cannot use them in the same fashion. There is no full size stick for directional control and, because the player must hold the unit, palm down control of the buttons is impossible. Players are relegated to their two least responsive digits, the thumbs, and are forced to recondition reflex motions which had become instinctive at the arcade. Some might contend that this is not as problematic as it sounds but, if that were the case, what is the explanation for the current proliferation of programmable "cheat" controllers?

Table top designs (until now) have fared little better. Some have a decent control knob for the left hand but, to operate it properly, one must grip the unit with the right hand. Others will stay fixed on the table to allow right hand, palm down operation, but their button arrays are undersized or too crowded to allow fine control.

Enter the Arcadian, which, as the name implies, is the first controller designed exclusively to cater to the playing style that coin-ops have conditioned us to expect.

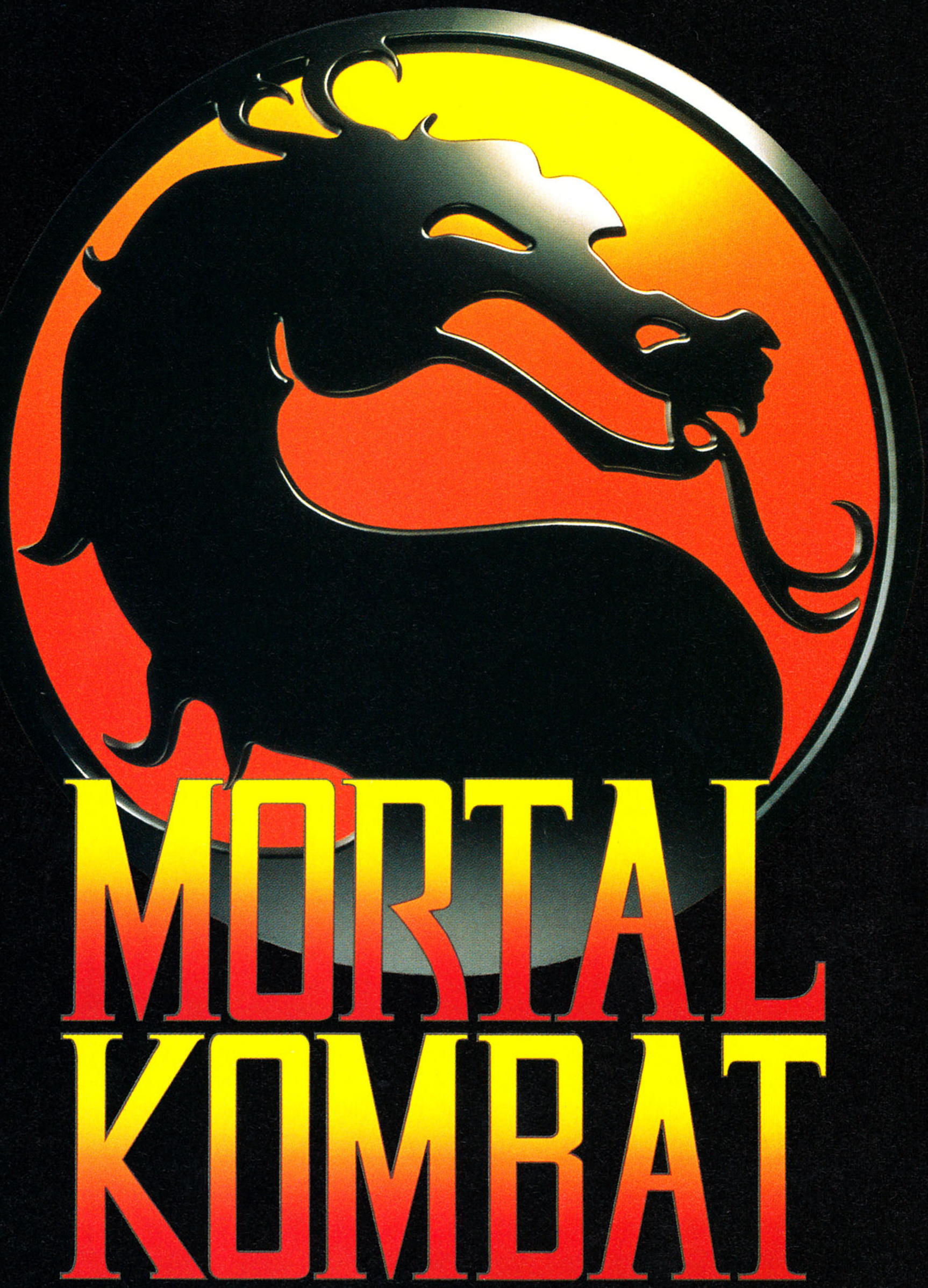
The Arcadian DUAL (KBM: $99.95) features a three-inch arcade control stick and full size, color coded, six-button array. The components are of the highest commercial quality (i.e., each microswitch is rated at 10 million depressions) and the control face is mounted in a wide, oversized base that tips the scales at almost four pounds. The unit is fully compatible with both Sega Genesis and Super NES but, if players don't have the need for dual compatibility, single system models are also available at a reduced price.

The Arcadian not only seems as responsive and familiar as arcade arrays, it also provides the almost subconscious tactile and audible feedback we have come to expect. If you turned down all the background noise in the arcade, and players were quiet, the only sound one would hear would be the "clicking" of hundreds of microswitches. Even though players don't think about this feedback during play, it reinforces (through our fingers and ears) the actions we are taking onscreen. This is more than just important stimuli, it is the method we use to figure out what happened when our character doesn't perform as expected. Without that feedback, it usually takes much longer to master a game.

This is not to say that specialized pads and programmable whiz bangs don't have a place in the market. After all, there are many different types of games to play, some of which benefit immensely from the features these controllers offer. However, if you are an Arcade Warrior who wants to streamline your fighting style at home, there are no other units comparable to the Arcadian.

Prepare for Kombat on your PC!

Experience all the action of the arcade sensation!



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SMASHING

THE MYTH OF SPEED & POWER

Have you ever wondered why balloons came before supersonic jets? It's simple. Hot air is easier to make. When it comes to 16-bit video games, the hot air coming out of Sega's marketing department could inflate a giant Macy's Thanksgiving Day hedgehog—well, almost. Before you make a choice between 16-bit systems, you should get the cold, hard facts.

A BLAST OF HOT AIR

This "Blast Processing" you've heard about is said to speed up Genesis games, but what is Blast Processing? When we called Sega, they said it was just a marketing buzz-word. And according to programmers we talked to who design games for the Genesis, Blast Processing doesn't exist except in the minds of Sega's marketing department. There's no Blast Processing hardware. There's no Blast Processing technology. There's no super "Blast" boost of any kind. So what about Sonic's speed? The truth is that you could put Sonic or any character on the Super NES and have it race across the screen just as fast. You could also easily scale him so large that you'd see each individual hedgehog hair (not a pretty sight) and you could rotate his background until he really turned blue. So why don't Genesis games have special effects like that? Because they don't have the custom graphics processors that are used in the Super NES, and because Blast Processing isn't worth a hedgehog's hair when it comes to real gaming advantages.

The truth is that you could put Sonic on the Super NES and have him race across the screen just as fast!

Comparing speed on the two systems is like comparing apples to oranges. Processing speed can be measured in several ways including CPU clock speed and memory cycle time. For instance, the Super NES has a slower clock speed but a faster memory cycle time. Even so, according to game programmers, processing power is not just a matter of CPU speed. In fact, CPU speed is only one of many factors. The only real way to judge speed is by playing the games. It is important in games like F-Zero and Street Fighter II Turbo, because the element of speed adds to the challenge. On the highest speed settings of SF II Turbo (at ten stars), only a real master can react quickly enough to throw a winning combination. On either the Super NES or Genesis you could have characters move so fast that you literally couldn't see them, but what's the fun in that? So what is this myth about Blast Processing? That's simple. Clever ads from Sega's marketing department. If you've been taken in by this myth, don't feel bad. You're not alone.

TRUE POWER PROCESSING

When the Super NES debuted, critics said that Nintendo had waited too long before entering the 16-bit market. What Nintendo had been doing, however, was creating a new technical standard for video games. The Genesis had been put together with mainly off-the-shelf parts that had been designed for generalized computing functions, not video games. But the Super NES incorporated six customized chips and a CPU with specialized, Direct Memory Access high-speed functions and two advanced PPUs or video processing units. The video processors are uniquely designed to provide graphic effects like the eight independent background mode functions including the rotation and scaling effects of Mode 7. Mode 7 is a built-in function of the Super NES PPU that has revolutionized home video games. Sports games in particular have risen to a new level with in-your-face perspectives like that of NCAA Basketball and NHL Stanley Cup. This is true Power Processing. It's wired in. And the Super NES does more than manipulate graphics—it also gives you better graphics from the start with more than 32,000 colors to choose from while Genesis has 256. The Super NES can display 256 colors at one time while the Genesis can only show 64. While 128 sprites can appear on the screen on Super NES games, only 80 appear on the Genesis. Put a Super NES game like Street Fighter II, Alien^3, The Lost Vikings, or Nigel Mansell's World Championship Racing next to its Genesis equivalent and you'll see the difference: the Genesis, presents a flat, pale reflection of the Super NES. It's like comparing fresh oranges to Tang. The Genesis just ain't got the juice.

Advertisement

SUPERior NES

- Two video processor PPU units with eight mode effects including Mode 7 for special graphics effects like rotation and scaling
- 6 custom designed chips for video games as opposed to only 2 custom chips on the Genesis circuit board give more graphics effects, more colors and better sound
- Almost twice the internal memory for speeding up programs
- Data retrieval is 280 nanoseconds for the Super NES—88% faster than Genesis
- Sound Signal to noise ratio is 2.5 times better in the Super NES for sharper more realistic sound effects, voices and music
- The Super NES Controller has 12 buttons to eight for Genesis for greater game play versatility and better control

FOR THE SUPER NES ONLY

If speed is all that a game has, then it won't be fun for long. Involving game play is a matter of variety, challenge and depth. It might feel good to rocket through Sonic 2 the first time you plug it in, but what then? The built-in power of the Super NES gives game designers and programmers more meat to sink their teeth into. These guys are masters—they want to take their game ideas to the limits, and the Super NES is the 16-bit platform that gives them the custom graphics and sound processors to do it. Here are some of the best: *Super Metroid, Street Fighter II Turbo, The Legend of Zelda: A Link To The Past, Super Empire Strikes Back, Star Fox, Mega Man X, Super Mario Kart, NCAA Basketball, Secret of Mana, Final Fantasy II, NHL Stanley Cup, Tommy Moe's Winter Extreme Skiing & Snowboarding, Actraiser, Turn & Burn: No Fly Zone, Ken Griffey Jr. Presents Major League Baseball, Tiny Toon Adventures Buster Busts Loose, F-Zero, Pilotwings, Contra III, Bugs Bunny Rabbit Rampage, Road Runner's Death Valley Rally, Mario Paint, Stunt Race FX, Super Mario All-Stars, Soul Blazer, Castlevania IV, Star Trek: The Next Generation, SimCity, Top Gear, Super Bomberman, Tony Meola Soccer, Wicked 18, Wings 2, Yoshi's Cookie* and many more classic games in every category including action, sports, adventure, RPG, puzzles and simulations. You could never duplicate these games on the Genesis except in name, and many of these games will never appear on the Genesis in any form. In other words, if you only own Genesis, you can't play *these* games.

GET REAL, GET NINTENDO

So you spent your hard-earned bucks on the Genesis and now you can't play the best games. It may not seem fair, but it's not the end of the world. For less than the cost of a couple of Genesis games, you can have the system that gives you the best fighters with lightning fast control like Street Fighter II Turbo, the deepest fantasy adventures from Square Soft, Enix, Koei and Nintendo, the most challenging and creative action games like Super Empire Strikes Back and Star Fox and the most realistic and revolutionary sports games like NCAA Basketball and NHL Stanley Cup. The Super NES is the system with real power. If you don't have it, you're missing the real action. Get real. Get Nintendo.

Super NES	Genesis
Alien³	Alien³
The Lost Vikings	The Lost Vikings
Nigel Mansell's World Championship Racing	Nigel Mansell's World Championship Racing

Q&A: THE QUESTIONS THAT COUNT

Which system gives you 2 custom graphics processors?
Super NES

Which system gives you 4 times the colors?
Super NES

Which system gives you the deepest game play?
Super NES

Which system has a black control deck?
Genesis

Which system has a more versatile controller?
Super NES

Which system has the most custom chips?
Super NES

Which system has Mode 7 effects?
Super NES

Which system has twice the internal memory?
Super NES

Which system uses electricity?
Both

Which system can use the most sprites (128) simultaneously?
Super NES

Which system has a European porcupine for a mascot?
Genesis

Which system has true digital sound?
Super NES

Which system has specialized DMA architecture?
Super NES

Which system can turn you into a super man?
Neither

Which system costs about $90?
Both

Do you really need anyone screaming in your face?
No

Now you add it up.

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State of the Art Report: SNES

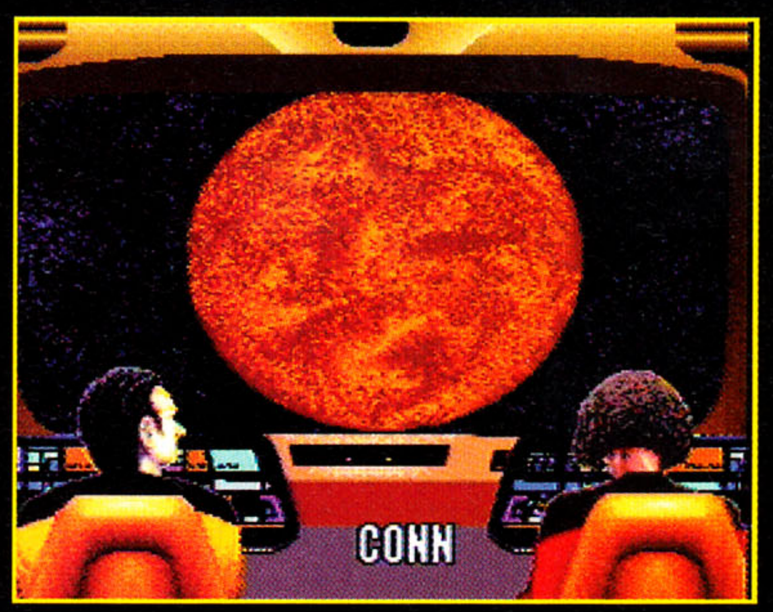
These Cartridges Define The Nintendo 16-Bit Experience

by the Editors of Electronic Games

After almost single-handedly revitalizing video gaming in the late 1980s, Nintendo found itself playing catch-up in the 1990s. The Genesis' year headstart made the SNES struggle for the universal acceptance that came so automatically to the NES.

Today, in mid-1994, the SNES represents about 40 percent of the US 16-Bit console market. That may be a far cry from the balmy days of 80 percent market share, but not even Tom Kalinske would deny that the Super Nintendo Entertainment System is successfully entertaining millions.

What about software? Nintendo and its third-party licensees have had trouble zeroing in on the elusive audience. The typical player during the 8-Bit era was 10-12, but 16-Bit gamers average five-to-seven years older. That means the old formula doesn't work as well as it once did.



Ride along with the Star Trek: The Next Generation crew in search of artifacts, Romulans, and Chodak.

The Best of SNES

Claws Encounters of the Furred Kind (Accolade)

Better known to its many admirers as Bubsy Bobcat, after the lead character, this engaging side scroller was a successful attempt to give SNESers something comparable to Sonic. The wacky science fiction plot sends Bubsy walking, running, jumping, and soaring though a world suddenly infested with cute, but deadly aliens.

Bubsy catches massive air bounding from place to place with no regard to boundaries or rabbits.

The play-action is pure silk as Bubsy tromps on enemies and avoids pesky traps while collecting bonus objects. The water pipe sequences add some visual pyrotechnics to what is already an eye-catching presentation. The sequel is likely to make the next SNES report, six months from now, but this one is still the definition of an intelligent action cartridge. Great game play, original concept—fun!

Riddick Bowe Boxing (Extreme)

This 16-Meg fist festival may well be the best boxing game on the market today for any system. It's that realistic and that exciting to play.

The game may prematurely disappear from shelves if Bowe fails to recapture the belt from Evander Holyfield, but it's hoped that Extreme will build on this fine design when it next steps inside the squared circle.

Equally enjoyable against the computer or another human, **Riddick Bowe Boxing** offers three ways to play: Exhibition, head-to-head fight, and the career campaign mode. The latter provides all the desired pre-fight training and hoopla, but not at the cost of first-rate ring action. That's where this game leaves rivals kissing the canvas. The close up shows exceptionally large fighters, but the secondary display at the top-center of the screen makes ring generalship an important element.

Star Trek: The Next Generation "Future's Past" (Spectrum-HoloByte)

This dream-come-true for ST:TNG fans is irresistible to any gamer with even a modicum of familiarity with the series. All the familiar characters and locales from the syndicated hit show are on hand in this stunning SNES edition, along with plenty of cool aliens and an abundance of machinery to monkey around with.

The sound and graphics in **Future's Past** are absolutely top-notch, and entirely faithful to the source material. The plot revolves around the search for an ancient artifact dubbed the Derandomizer, with Romulans, the mysterious Chodak, and the Federation in a race to locate it. But before the Enterprise can claim the object of its quest, the crew must pass a series of tests set forth by the Arbitrator, the ancient force which guards the Derandomizer. Beam us down, dude!

Super Empire Strikes Back, a 12-Megabit refinement of the 1992 **Super Star Wars** cartridge, is one of several fine games which have sprung from this license in recent years.

The 20-level solitaire contest uses three game-formats (side-scroller, first-person flying and shooting, and Mode 7 combat) to portray pivotal scenes from the second film in the series. Although **Super Empire Strikes Back** is substantially similar to **Super Star Wars**, it does embody improvements such as a password system to save games, a choice of weapons for Luke, and spectacular visual effects. Now let's see if **Super Return of the Jedi** will stake out new design/development territory.

Zombies Ate My Neighbors (Konami)

Some question the consistency of the Nintendo guidelines which somehow allowed the hostile spirits to kill babies on upper levels of this otherwise light-hearted spook show.

In this omnidirectional scroller, the player roams through his neighborhood, saving people, gathering items, and fighting monsters. The catalog of creatures includes all the horror movie favorites like zombies, ghouls, and chainsaw maniacs.

Best Fighting Games

Clay Fighter (Interplay)

Interplay resisted the temptation to take the easy road, hopping on the fighting game bandwagon, and the result is one of the most entertaining action cartridges ever published. **Clay Fighter** is a good arena fighting game, packed with the expectable assortment of martial arts moves and super powerful finishers.

However, that's not why it's included in this section. The genré may be repetitious and unimaginative as a rule, but **Clay Fighter** breaks the mold with humorous animations and a slightly weird take on hand-to-hand combat. Each three-round bout in this one or two-player game is a treat for the eyes as well as the usual workout for the synapses.

Mortal Kombat (Acclaim)

This is a controversial product in some quarters, because SNES guidelines required Acclaim to turn all the drops of blood into beads of sweat (though the widely available code turns them back again). Such mutings aside, this is essentially faithful to the arcade machine, especially in its depiction of the Shaolin Tournament and its colorful entrants.

Smash your opponent with a wild fury of punches in the king of the fighting games, Mortal Kombat.

No home version of **Mortal Kombat** has crisper graphics and slicker animation than this cartridge. The gamer can pick any character and guide him or her through the two-out-of-three matches. Despite the hotly debated changes, Acclaim has done an exemplary job of bringing home this intense fighting game.

Ranma 1/2 (DTMC)

This is the second game based on the comic books and animated films now popular in Japan. Unlike the 1992 NES **Street Combat**, however, the stateside release of **Ranma 1/2** sticks close to its inspiration. It features a more convoluted plot than in most other fighting games, but there's no shortage of action as the hero fights against 10 highly individualized characters.

Exotic animals fight with expert skill, kicking, punching, and putting the hurt on worthy foes.

The graphics are fresh, especially the end-of-match animations. They reveal a lot more of the warriors' personality than the typical perfunctory wrap-up.

The play-action is equally good. The standard array of punches, kicks, blocks, and expert maneuvers is available in **Ranma 1/2**, but the novel implementation is what makes it a cutting-edge title that has not been touched by another so far.

Street Fighter II Turbo (Capcom)

Is a backlash building against this series of fighting games? While a few fans have complained that each game doesn't seem sufficiently advanced

After a victory, don't stand around waving to the crowd; there are plenty of brutes left to pound.

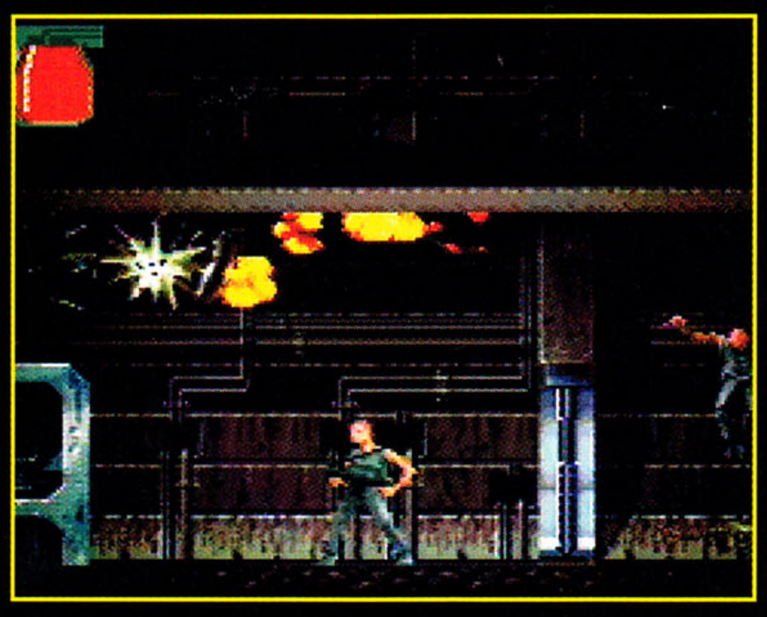
over the previous one, there's no comparable sales slowdown in either the amusement arcades or the home market indicating the fighting game is still very popular. One or two players punch and kick through 12 fierce levels in the 20-Meg arena-style fighting game.

Mortal Kombat uses classic martial arts techniques almost exclusively, but **Street Fighter II Turbo** incorporates superhero action. The new moves, and the built-in **SF II Championship Edition**, are much-appreciated enhancements of previous cartridges. It's nice to see a company doing their best to improve a game that was already pretty good.

Best Action Games

Alien 3 (LJN)

This one-player scorcher got across-the-board A+ ratings when it premiered a year ago, and it has held up remarkably well. As Ripley, the player must rescue humans trapped in alien cocoons, destroy the deadly creatures infesting Fury 161, and eliminate the nesting Queen who hides somewhere deep inside the prison complex.



Dark passage ways and drippy ceilings surround them in the search for humans trapped in cocoons.

The computer terminals provide an element of strategy not found in the Genesis cartridge. The computers produce maps of Fury 161 that cuts down on aimless wandering. This keeps the nail-biting atmosphere strong during the seemingly unending hunt for these lethal creatures.

Claymates (Interplay)

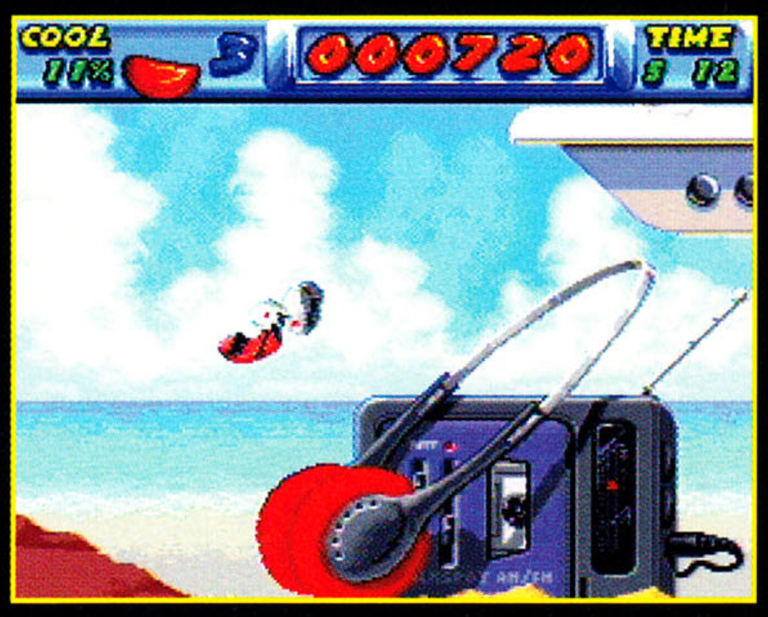
Roleplaying a ball of clay in this side scroller turns out to be a big, and enjoyable, stretch. Through the magic of clay-animation, the pliable sphere turns into any of five animals. Each creature has abilities which help cope with the traps and enemies. Clayton travels across four continents to battle evil Jobo and rescue his scientist father. The goal is to finish each of the 17 levels, collecting colored crystals, before time runs out.

Each continent receives a full graphic treatment. Not only are the illustrations appropriate, but clay-animation allows designers to create an unusually active, and interactive, game-world. This look is unlikely to become a universal standard like filled polygons, but clay-animation imparts a charming, comical look to games. When such visuals are supported by versatile game-play, it's time to think "classic."

Cool Spot (Virgin)

This action quest seems a lot more relevant to the license than Virgin's **Spot** strategy game, which was little more than a souped-up version of reversi. Spot has much the same bubbly personality as in the award-winning commercials as he tries to rescue his buddies.

Many gamers are skeptical about this type of license, citing the lack of overt gameworthy elements in the original property. In this case, Virgin shows how much can be done. It has built a brain-teasing real-time contest around Spot that is appropriate to the character in every way.



Cool Spot, ramblin' around, taking in all the beauty of the beach while on a quest to rescue buddies.

Lethal Enforcers (Konami)

There's no denying that this coin-op translation is at its unfettered best on other platforms, but the SNES cartridge is still a frenetic shooter with enough strategy to satisfy most video gamers. As part of an elite law enforcement squad, one or two players can stop crime in five multi-segment scenarios.

Each case begins with a digitized, non-interactive sequence showing the commission of a crime. Each mission then moves through four phases, two fixed-location gunfights, a moving shoot-out, and the confrontation with the boss.

Realistic surroundings and ever-looming gunmen rule in this game of marksmanship and skill.

All this action is portrayed in high-impact visuals with a stirring soundtrack to match. Even the SNES edition is quite violent, but this is the kind of strong gaming medicine that ace players always adore.

StarFox (Nintendo)

The success of this flying and shooting game comes from two factors: The unprecedented graphics made possible by Nintendo's proprietary SFX chip and its challenging missions which require the player to practice maneuvers until competent in their flying skills. Thanks to the new bit of silicon, the polygon fill graphics move at breathtaking speed on the SNES, and speed is the very essence of this combat cartridge.

England's Argonaut development house earned universal kudos for creating a game that cruises the frontiers of technology without sacrificing playability. Involving characters and a good story raises **StarFox** above simpler shooters, but the richness required no sacrifice of meat-and-potatoes combat excitement. It's a beautiful marriage of form and content that still rates playing time a year after its release.

Soaring just inches above the ground in high pursuit of elusive enemy ships in this 3-D thriller.

Climbing straight up the face of a tall tree is no problem when transformed into an agile Kitty-cat.

Strategy & Action/Strategy

Choplifter III (Extreme).

Four scenarios, each divided into four mini-missions, are offered in this solitaire helicopter game. The player must fly choppers through hostile enemy skies, battle ground forces, and rescue captured comrades from a militant faction of the Magrebb guerrillas. The allied forces work against a tight deadline, a withdrawal ultimatum from the terrorists, and the copter's limited load-bearing capacity.

The play-mechanic which made the original Broderbund release so popular with computerists is well preserved in this substantially revamped program. The graphics and sounds are much better this time, and **Choplifter III** is also the kind of game that can be enjoyed again and again through many play-sessions.

The jungle comes alive with the roar of a chopper preparing for a mission into enemy headquarters.

The Lost Vikings (Interplay)

Three Viking brothers, kidnapped by Tomator the interstellar zoo-keeper, must pool their skills to escape his clutches. They explore a variety of game-worlds in time and space on their way back to their native land and era. One Viking is fast, a second fights well, and the third has a shield that deflects otherwise-deadly attacks.

This one or two-player puzzle contest would be good with even ordinary graphics. Thankfully, Interplay embellished this intriguingly wacky concept with marvelous animation that brings out the personality of each of the major characters. Another strength is that the difficulty of the puzzles is well-calibrated; this game tests your brain without driving it nuts from frustration.

Help the Vikings find their way back home in this intricate, graphically intense, puzzle-quest game.

Romance of the Three Kingdoms III (Koei)

Events in ancient China in the aftermath of the fall of the Han Dynasty are the basis for six challenging scenarios. This military strategy simulation, suitable for multiplayer or solitaire use, weaves warfare, economics, and diplomacy elements into an easy-to-follow play-mechanic. On-screen prompts pull players through the multi-phase turns.

The illustrations, especially the head-and-shoulders vignettes of the major characters, are amply detailed, which helps generate the exotic atmosphere of this remote place and time. Clever AI makes sure that machine-controlled Rulers and the non-player character Officers act, as well as look, appropriate. One thing about **Romance of the Three Kingdoms III** is that you haven't just played something exactly like it. Koei has enlarged the boundaries of 16-Bit video gaming, and this is perhaps their most successful effort.

Colorful, detailed maps will help you strategize while planning placement of your fearless armies.

Side Pocket (Data East)

The history of pool and billiard simulations isn't a happy one, so it's especially good news for SNES owners when Data East decided to produce an edition of its popular Genesis cartridge for the system. A topdown view of a pool table may not sound like the world's most exciting visual statement, but the authentic ball action and true-to-life pool physics generate more than enough interest in the proceedings.

Six-ball in the side pocket with an assist from the 3-ball? No problem with this top view pool game.

The one or two-player cartridge contains several different sets of rules. Options range from a cross-country tour to regulation nine-ball or a trick shot shoot-out. The music library includes 22 jazz and fusion songs, and the audio in the SNES edition is superior to the Genesis SKU. The game does a good job of simulating the roll and pitch of a ball banking off the bumpers or hitting other balls. Solid play-mechanics and appropriate thrills, not to mention a cool soundtrack, make **Side Pocket** the best pool simulation on chips.

Turn & Burn (Absolute)

Digitized graphics produced from actual F-14 cockpit photos give this one-or two-player flight simulator its unique look. Attention to detail has paid off for this flight simulator. This technology enables **Turn & Burn** to develop a fair rate of speed without resort to the costly Nintendo SFX (as in **StarFox**). As a combat pilot, the player must keep enemy aircraft from intruding upon a "no fly" zone established to defuse a political powder keg in the Mediterranean.

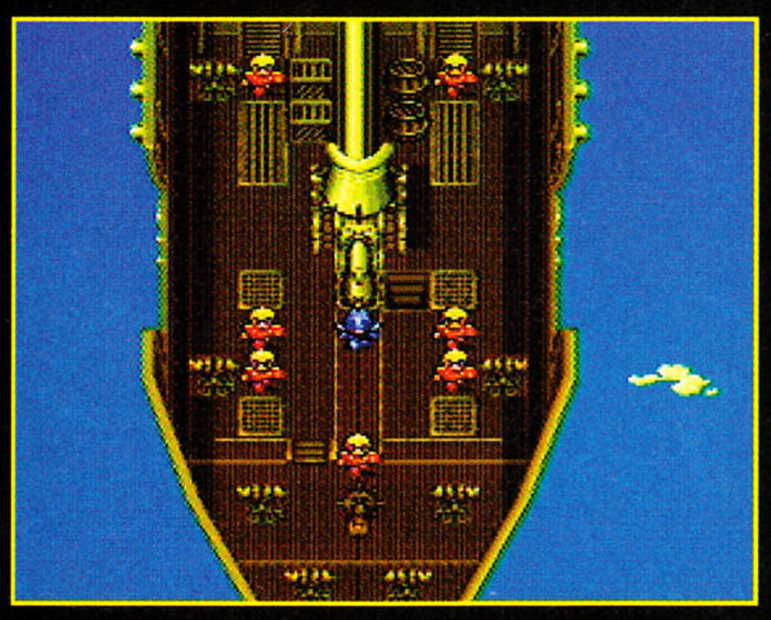
The cockpit computer display (CCD) is the main feature of the finely detailed cockpit. It displays vital in-flight data and warns of approaching bogeys. The player has three types of missiles and a 20mm cannon to scrag dogfight opponents. Mark Van Hecke's martial music and the realistic sounds effects provide the proper ambience for the fierce and realistic air combat action.

Best Adventures & RPGs

Final Fantasy III (SquareSoft)

This series, imported from Japan, is one of the main reasons why adventures and roleplaying games are so much more popular on the SNES than the Genesis. One of the reasons is that, unlike most computer RPGs, **Final Fantasy** gives players action as well as puzzles.

A user-friendly interface, evocative artwork, and near-flawless animation are also elements which have won plenty of praise from players. **Final Fantasy** cartridges always feature a sprawling world in which to adventure, and the 16-Meg **Final Fantasy III** is the largest, and most challenging, so far.



Climb aboard for adventure in this role-playing game that combines puzzles and action.

Lufia and the Fortress of Doom (Taito)

The publisher is best known for action contests, but this roleplaying game is a tremendous first effort in a new genré. The absorbing plot ties two battles, separated by a century, together. In the first, the player assaults a floating island with four warriors to defeat the malevolent Sinistrals. In the second, a knight of Alekia battles a resurgence of the Sinistrals and their monstrous minions a century later.

Lufia and the Fortress of Doom has all the spells, monsters, thrills and spills, and treasure items any RPGer could ever want or desire in a game like this. The graphics are effective, and entertaining too, especially for an 8-Meg program. The attractive color pallet really gives the backgrounds a boost. There isn't a lot of animation here, but it's certainly professionally implemented. The use of a ready-made character removes a little flexibility, but it lets gamers get into the thick of things without delay.

Excellent graphics only add to the many attributes that make Secret of Mana a great video RPG.

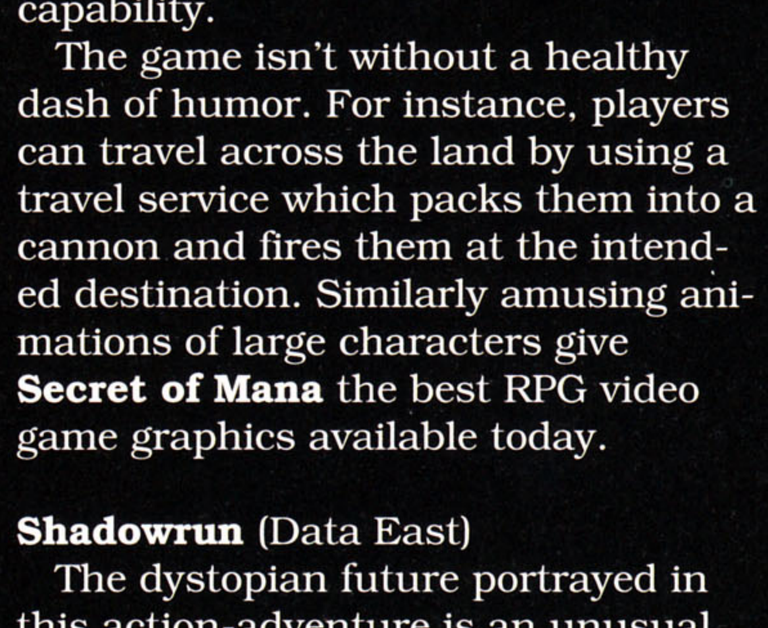
Secret of Mana (Square Soft)

After winning the allegiance of video adventurers with the **Final Fantasy** series, Square Soft has started another line which mixes action with more traditional roleplaying activities. The story is little more than a search-and-destroy mission against the evils of the world, but the interface imparts depth and complexity to the product. Although the story begins with only one hero on-screen, two more soon join. These can be controlled by the computer or other humans, which gives **Secret of Mana** multiplayer capability.

The game isn't without a healthy dash of humor. For instance, players can travel across the land by using a travel service which packs them into a cannon and fires them at the intended destination. Similarly amusing animations of large characters give **Secret of Mana** the best RPG video game graphics available today.

Shadowrun (Data East)

The dystopian future portrayed in this action-adventure is an unusual blend of super science and wild magic. The hero's quest is set in a society dominated by huge corpora-



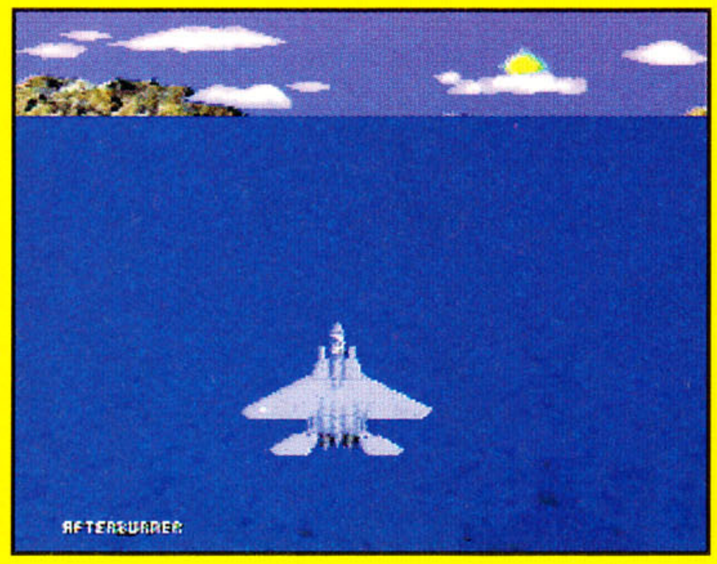
Great 3-D graphics help to bring this chilling future world of corporate greed alive in startling realism.

tions, where violent death seems to lurk just around nearly every corner.

Yet **Shadowrun** isn't all firefights in this one-player fantasy adventure; Talking to the NPCs is vital to winning the game. Collecting information in any way, shape, and form is not always done in the usual fashions. The angled overhead perspective shows each location in detail, while preventing the gamer from seeing much beyond his immediate area. This Beam Software creation is a richer experience than most cartridge RPGs, and its high play value keeps it plugged into SNES consoles a year after publication.

Super Strike Eagle (MicroProse)

Although it's been around for nearly two years, no other flight sim has come close to **Super Strike Eagle** in terms of graphics or playability. A variety of perspectives and some eye-popping Mode 7 fx transform this multi-scenario combat simulator into a uniquely appealing contest guaranteed to push the buttons of both hardcore sim fans and the more action-oriented arcade gamers.



A beautiful panoramic picture punctuates the calm before Strike Eagle descends into battle.

Spectacular air-to-ground graphics feature an impressive variety of landscapes, from snow capped mountains to dense, urban-industrial landscapes. But when the pilot sends his aircraft into a dive, and the Mode 7 scaling and rotation kicks in, players may start reaching for the oxygen.

Super Strike Eagle is based on the **F-15 Strike Eagle** series of computer software simulators, and this development team clearly knows how to make flight fans happy in the video game arena, as well. This game is an essential component of any SNES library.

Best Sports Game

Champion World Class Soccer (Acclaim)

Any soccer title must break through Americans' indifference to the world's most popular sport. Acclaim's entry in this suddenly crowded category is a one or two-player action-oriented simulation that incorporates plenty of real soccer moves and tactics.

One or two coaches pick from among 32 international squads and play either exhibition games or join a tournament ladder. Besides controlling individual players, the gamer can set team formations that shape overall strategy.

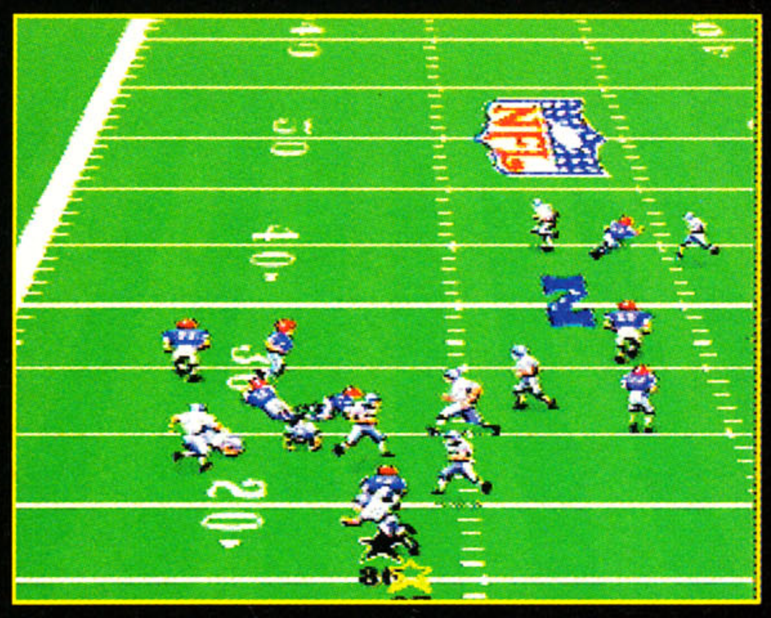
The duel playfield display immediately sets this Park Place design apart from competitors. The whole-pitch view in the upper right hand corner helps players stay aware of the overall situation without detracting from the screen-filling close-up of the action. This fast-moving soccer cart is great for solo play or head-to-head showdowns against another human coach.

Plant your feet and toss in the ball to start soccer game play on Acclaim's World Class Soccer.

John Madden '94 (Electronic Arts)

The worst thing that can happen to a book or movie series is to have someone other than the original creators take charge. The same has held true in electronic gaming more times than not, but EA's decision to take **John Madden** in house has turned out very well, indeed. The latest annual rev wins the SNES Super Bowl, outscoring all competitors.

The interface is the core of this game. No one has yet discovered a better order entry scheme for statistically influenced action football simulations. It offers a maximum number of choices with minimal memorization. This year's model has better graphics and more moves for ball carriers and defenders.



Quarterback option wide to the right, is just one of the many plays available on EA's Madden football.

NBA Jam (Acclaim)

On-court roundball meets **Mortal Kombat** in the most entertaining two-on-two basketball sim in arcade history. The incredibly fast-paced action, hot graphics, and spectacular special moves make this game positively addictive. On-court players who sink three successive baskets are declared to be "on fire," which not only means that they have unlimited energy, but also that their basketball is transformed into molten metal and trails flame as it streaks through the air like a golden comet.

Pick a pair of star players from the NBA squad of your choice, then face off against two top jammers from any other team, to the accompaniment of some truly funky color commentary.

This game offers the total package—great sound, super graphics, and playability that just won't quit. So strap on your high-tops and get ready for some Slam, Jammin' fun!

NHL '94 (Electronic Arts)

The publisher, which tumbled to the optimal football game interface years ago, took a little longer to develop its hockey concept. Future editions, which will also update the statistics, will surely find ways to further refine individual elements, but **NHL '94** is bound to please anyone who feels passionate about pucks.

It's all here. The real teams and players, rotoscoped character animation, season play, and coaching strategy. The rink has never looked better on the gaming screen. There are other good hockey video games, but there's only one great one.

A full-nelson or hanging pile-driver, it's all up to the individual wrestler and the moves they use.

Royal Rumble (LJN)

Here's 16 Megs of grunt 'n' groan action straight from the rings of the World Wrestling Federation. Promoter Titan Sports is experiencing a batch of legal trouble, but that has no impact on this perceptive and realistic simulation. It is based on an inside-out battle royal which is the main gimmick in an annual pay-per-view show; randomly selected wrestlers enter at timed intervals, which creates unusual combinations of heroes and villains inside the ropes.

In **Royal Rumble** each grappler has an individual repertoire of holds to inflict on any one opponent.

Action and strength meters to monitor the participants' physical condition are other **Royal Rumble** innovations. LJN is in championship form with this sports title.

Best Graphics

Disney's Aladdin (Capcom)

This is completely different from the cartridge of similar name which Sega and Disney produced for the Genesis in 1993. That product drew a tremendous amount of attention; this platform cartridge has a lot to recommend and commend overall.

Characters fly through the air with the greatest of ease in the exciting adventure of Agrabah.

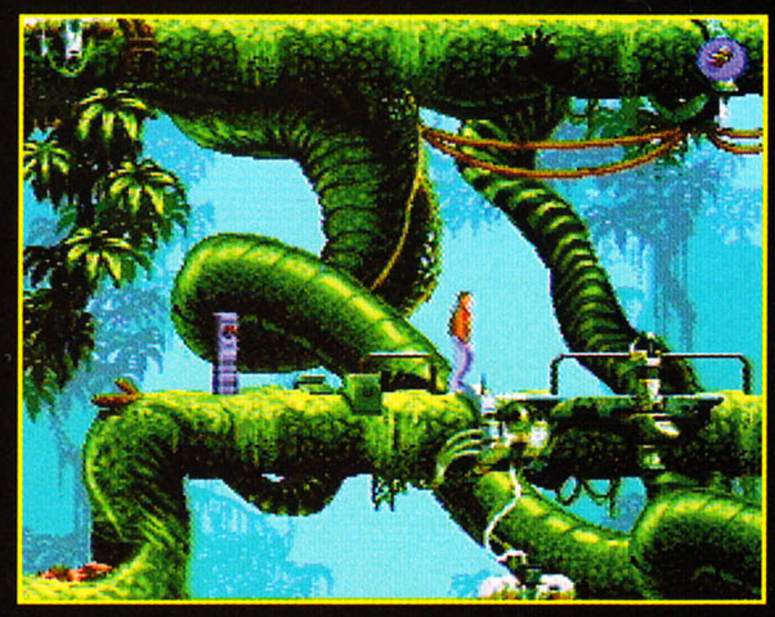
Though it doesn't recapitulate the movie plot, the five-level exploration of Agrabah deftly invokes the animated film's characters and settings. Every location is beautifully rendered, and the surreal lamp sequence is a visual triumph.

Daffy Duck; The Marvin Missions (SunSoft)

This interactive cartoon adventure stars the Warner Brothers marquee mallard in a struggle to stop the interstellar menace of Marvin. It's drawn from the "Duck Dodgers" cartoons.

Great graphics are what turn this side scroller into a premium product. Not only are the images faithful to the

Daffy goes berzerk in his interstellar search-and-destroy mission for that wild and crazy Marvin.



Search for your memory and evil aliens while negotiating large trees in the exciting Flashback.

original, but the detailed backgrounds and slick animation are fully worthy of its license.

Flashback (U.S. Gold)

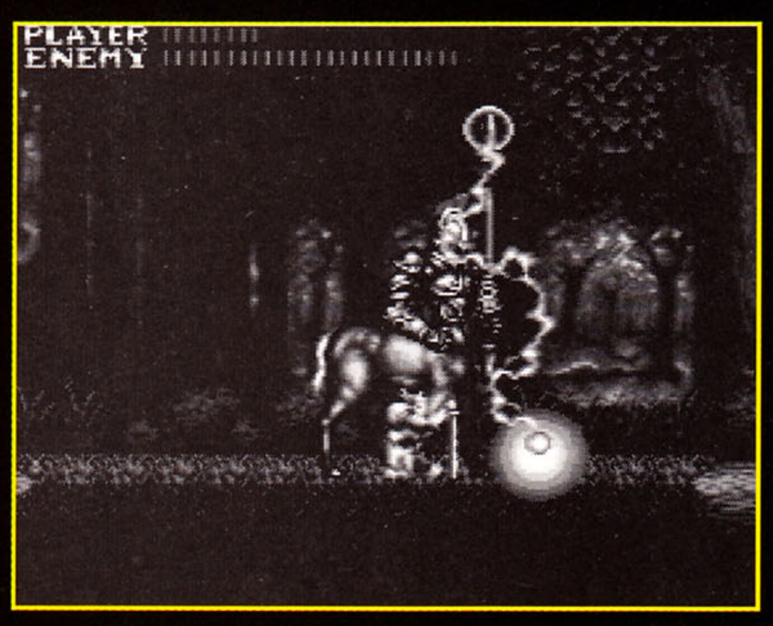
Conrad Hart must save the Earth from an alien conspiracy, but first he must collect the shards of his shattered memory in this 12-Meg action-adventure. Hart moves through seven stages that take him from an awakening on Titan to the deadly confrontation on the alien planet Morph.

Implementation is what lifts this above the usual amnesia yarn, and the visuals are a major component of this strange and intriguing game.

Best Sound

ActRaiser 2 (Enix)

Yuzo Koshiro, the video game maestro who scored the original **ActRaiser**, has somehow managed to surpass himself on the sequel. The neoclassic, eclectic compositions



A brilliant scene of magic and sorcery is made even better by a melodic and majestic soundtrack.

perfectly complement the on-screen action, giving the entire game dynamic a symphonic grandeur seldom experienced in electronic gaming. The sound effects are good, but it's the music that elevates this game into the realm of greatness.

Pocky & Rocky (Natsume)

Cutesy sound tracks generally get stiffed when it comes to handing out awards, but this one or two-player scroller is definitely one of the cutest titles currently available on the SNES, and the music has a lot to do with its ability to enchant players.

Pocky is a little girl and Rocky is a raccoon and together they have appropriately whimsical adventures, punctuated with some good fight

Pocky and Rocky find themselves in a heap of trouble on their whimsical adventures.

scenes. The music, like Baby Bear's porridge in Goldilocks, is ... just right.

Rock n' Roll Racing (Interplay)

If this report permitted multiple placements, you'd be reading about this nail-biting race game on just

Roaring over jumps and bumps in the pursuit of victory is part of the fun in Rock n' Roll Racing.

about every page. Few cartridges demonstrate comparable superiority in so many areas as does this race game. Larry Huffman's play-by-play call of the action is unmatched for sheer frenetic energy in all electronic gaming, and the driving beat of the music is ideal for this arcade racer.

Spar With The Gods,

Not The Game Manual.

Prove your vikinghood by wrestling wild boars and rescuing feisty barmaids.

Innovative "point-and-click" interface gives you total character control.

Get into the viking spirit by hack-'n-slashing with giants and gods.

Why spend your time thumbing through stacks of game documentation when you can be thumbing your way through the Dark Ages as a viking godsend?

Thanks to an intuitive game design, you don't need to know how to read the runes on a wizard's staff to indulge in the legend of Heimdall. Pillaging, plundering and battling sword-wielding hordes is as simple as "point-and-click."

Whether you're an RPG-pro or just getting into fantasy games, Heimdall gives you all the rich detail and enduring action of the most popular role-playing titles—without the brainfry.

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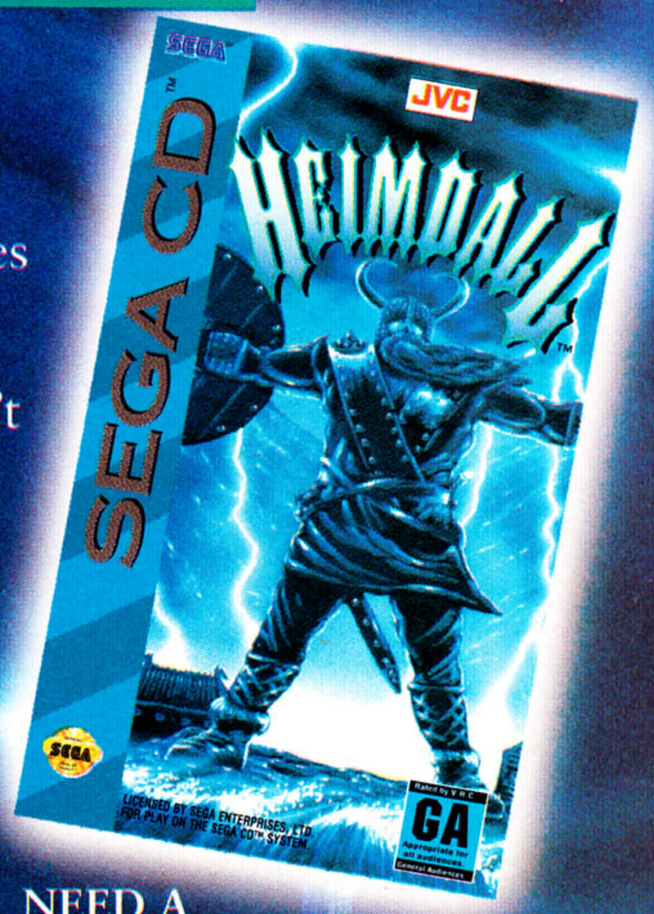

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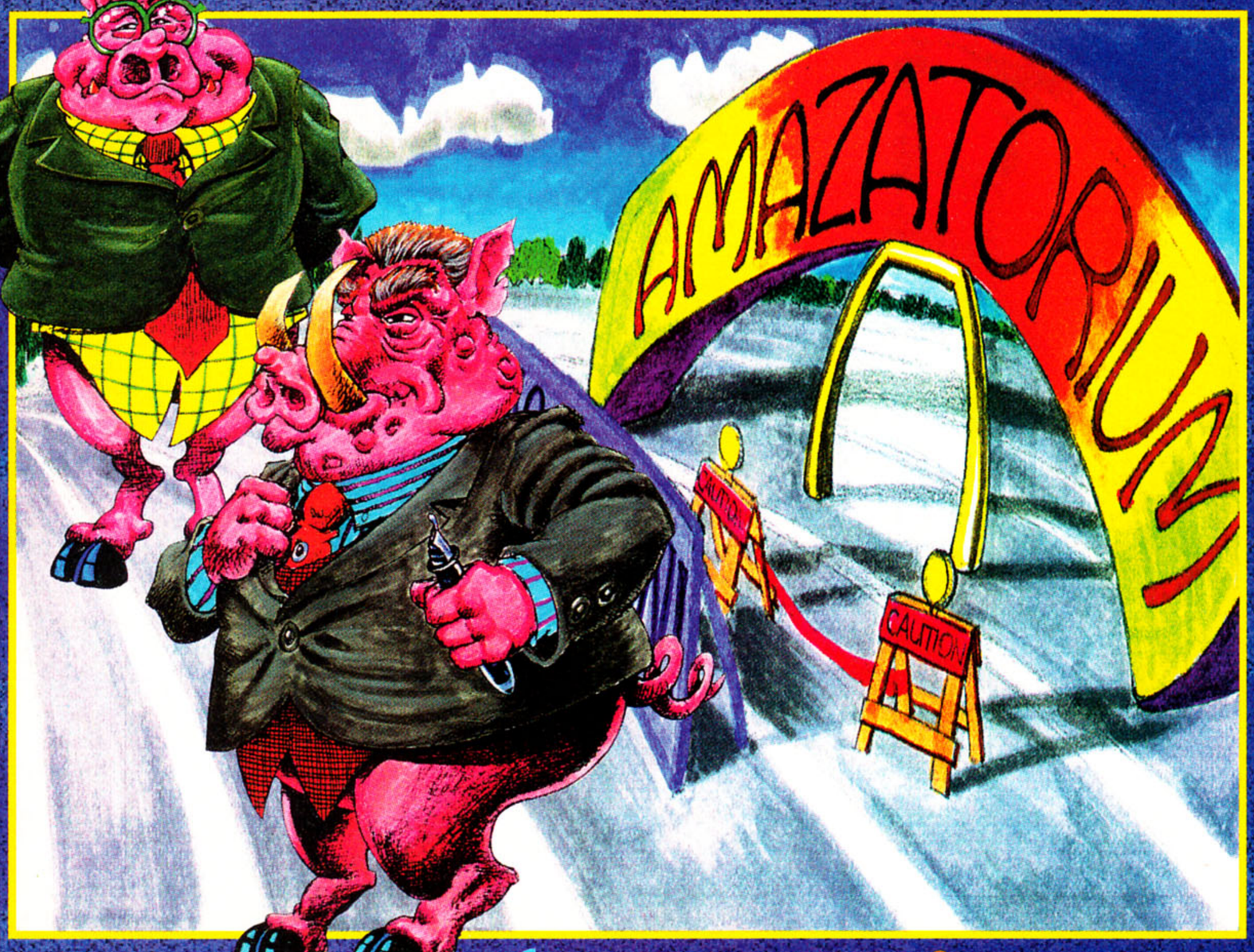


It's Bubsy Time!

Bubsy II sighting confirmed—and here are the pictures to prove it!

by Arnie Katz

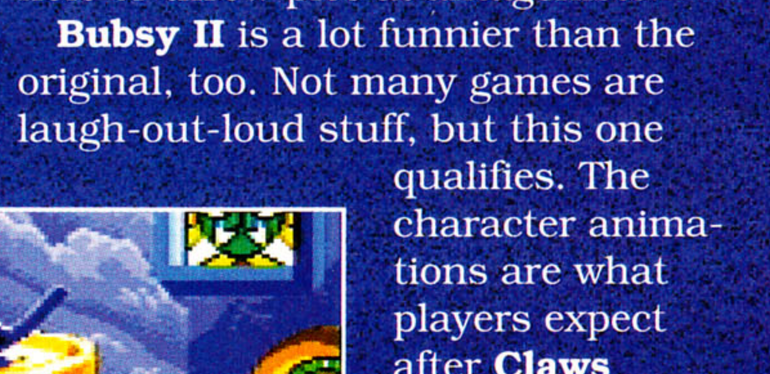
Electronic gaming's favorite Bobcat is back to star in a second madcap romp through a gorgeously illustrated world. The cartridge is still a distance from completion, but **EG**'s editors spent a whole afternoon elbowing each other out of the way to play a partial, undocumented beta copy. It isn't always easy to tell if the development team will finish off the project properly, but right now **Bubsy II** is one of the most promising 16-Bit video games seen so far in 1994.

The Title Screen shows Bubsy standing in front of the Amazatorium. This museum easily lives up to its name, too. Bubsy walks along paths which take him past dimensional gates. By standing in the circle in front of a gate and pushing the D button up, Bubsy teleports to one of five sub-worlds.

Something resembling a large crystal can teleport Bubsy to another position in the museum where the walkways are less neatly laid out. It takes a bit of jumping and soaring to get him to the gate he desires. The gate items are the same, but they lead to different parts of the same world.

Complete mini-games are a major feature of the sequel. Typical is something insiders dubbed "Frogapult." Fire happy, smiling frogs at objects on the water below for points. Bubsy works a power gauge which determines how far the frog will fly.

Bubsy benefits from some entertaining new power-ups this time. He can still run at blinding speed or soar over the landscape from a sufficiently high perch, but he can also use intriguing devices like the portable hole or throw pies at antagonists.



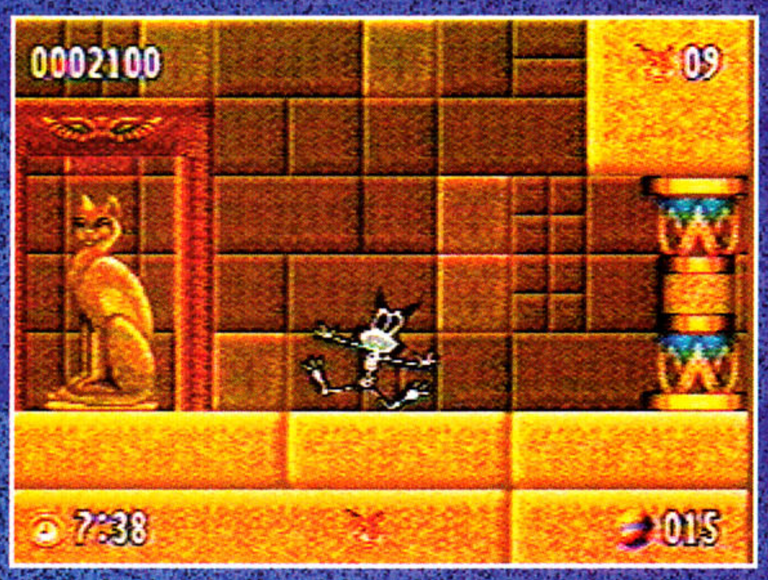
While taking a breather by the Sphinx, Bubsy prepares to teleport to another wacky world.

Bubsy II is a lot funnier than the original, too. Not many games are laugh-out-loud stuff, but this one qualifies. The character animations are what players expect after **Claws Encounters**, but there are a lot more secondary animations than in the series' first cartridge.

Superlatives come easily to anyone who tries this high energy side-scroller. The multi-layered graphics, with even better parallax than in **Claws Encounters**, are simply beautiful. Each area has a specific visual theme. The best may be the music world with its animated drums and notes, but even currently unfinished segments already look great. Even the color pallet seems stronger and brighter than in other Genesis titles.

Bubsy II has great music, all are professionally composed and recorded. The soundtrack is a perfect counterpoint to the on-screen activities.

Electronic Games will, of course, review the complete **Bubsy II** in a near-future issue.



Wow, instant x-ray for Bubsy as he travels through the decorated halls in one of the worlds.

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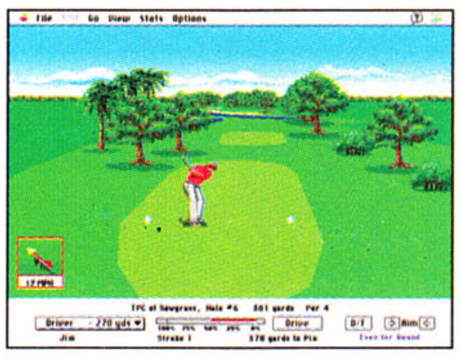

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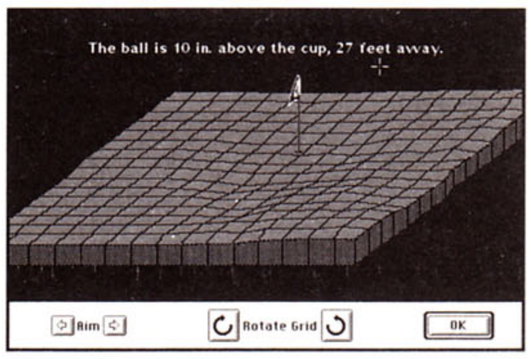
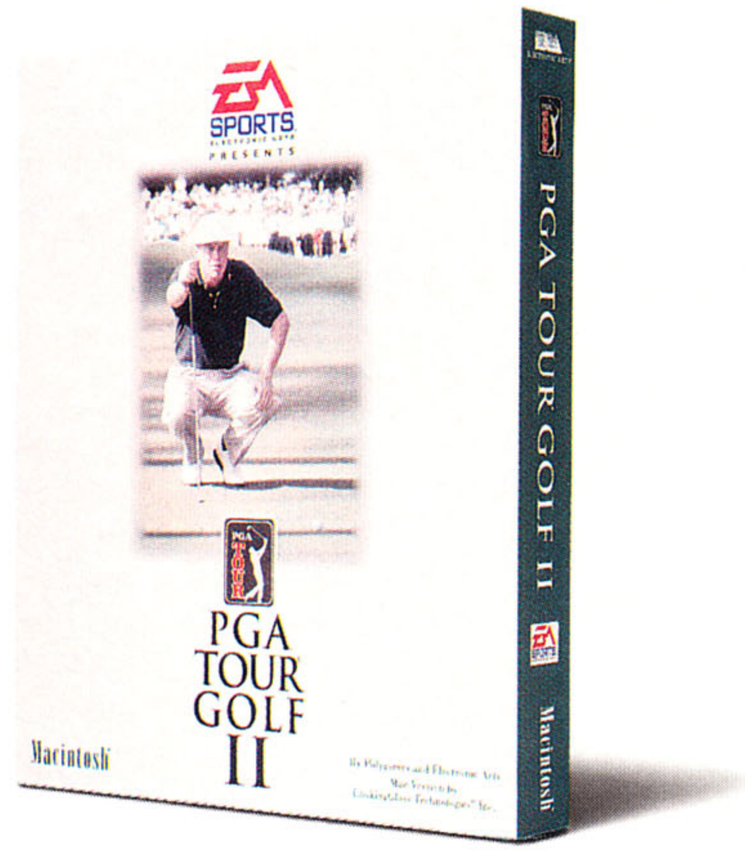


3-D putting grid rotates to expose the contours of each green. Read the breaks from a TOUR pro's perspective.



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EG INTERVIEW

GILBERT AUSTIN

THE DAVID LYNCH OF ELECTRONIC GAMES

by Russ Ceccola

Gilbert Austin is a friendly, outgoing person. He'll talk to you forever, if you give him the chance (as he did for this interview), about the topics and the game that he holds dear. That game is **Harvester** and those topics ranged from violence in entertainment to his love of writing and interest in horror. Austin is one of those individuals in the gaming industry in an enviable position. He has experience in writing, story development, and game design, but also has a background in filmmaking that enables him to effectively develop multimedia games. **Harvester** is his first multimedia title. If this is the type of game he develops his first time out, all the game companies better watch out when he hits his stride.

Austin began his creative journey in college where he earned a degree in filmmaking from the University of Texas at Austin. He developed a passion for writing and storytelling—the importance of which many game designers overlook: "I sometimes spent hours poring over a paragraph and writing as much as I could so that I could polish my abilities," he revealed.

His efforts produced short stories, screenplays, and even a novel. Much of that work remains unpublished, but it ultimately made Austin a better writer. He also directed, shot, and edited a number of short films—a process that gave him an eye for cinematography and moviemaking techniques. However, even with all this talent under his belt, Austin couldn't break into the movie industry in his beloved Texas. He instead pursued another route, and went to work for Origin.

Austin joined Origin just as **Wing Commander II** got underway. He served as one of the game's writers and even provided the voice of Prince Thakrath. **Strike Commander** was next on the project list. Austin wrote the entirety of the game quickly, but much of his original script got "lost" along the way because the project lasted so long that there were many changes, both in plot and in technological possibilities. In fact, he completed his writing duties for **Privateer** and the plot outline for **Wing Commander III** before **Strike**

Commander was even finished. It was at this point that Austin left Origin because he "saw the opportunity to do something unusual and different."

This "something unusual and different" became **Harvester**. Lee Jacobsen, President of Future Vision, wanted Austin to write, design, and direct a solid, successful project—whatever he desired as long as it worked. Future Vision had previously released the challenging space strategy game **Command Adventures: Starship**.

Austin took a look at the major game categories to choose the type of game he wanted and noticed an absence of horror titles. He felt that fantasy role-playing games (RPGs) and simulations had been done to death, so why not give horror a shot? Besides the noticeable lack of games in this genré, Austin has a genuine interest in horror/suspense films and books.

One man's horror is another man's humor. Austin described how a scene in the movie *Halloween* made him laugh, while other people in the audience screamed. This ability to separate himself from the horror will ensure that **Harvester** is as terrifying as possible. Some elements of the game greatly disturb him, so they MUST be intense. Austin's take on "horror" is intentionally a lot like Hitchcock's approach. "Horror is often what you don't see—what's withheld or lurking around the corner. A game is more of a cooperative medium than a manipulative medium. You may not be able to scare or surprise someone, but you can disturb them."

His attempt to disturb game players is the plot of **Harvester**. The player controls a character who wakes up with amnesia in a seemingly normal small town called Harvest. A murder takes place and the townspeople treat it with indifference. Solving the mystery entails discovering what's wrong with the town, who killed the victim, and who you are. The ultimate answer lies within The Lodge outside of town. Admission is "by invitation only" to this hall of the Order of the Harvest Moon. The second half of the game takes place inside The Lodge. Most of the game uses a first-person perspective graphic adventure interface, but toward the end there are combat segments with monsters inside The Lodge to spice things up.

Austin recognizes that "the computer game industry is where the motion picture industry was back in the teens. Now we need to string together the individual shots that wow the audience to tell a story." He wants to keep the game as cinematic as possible and plans to use an organic, non-intrusive interface. Most scenes will use fully rendered 3–D graphics. Characters will be filmed actors, but their lip movements will not synch with the speech players hear. This effect was intentional, according to Austin, to "contribute to the oddness of the town."

He thinks his filmmaking background is of the utmost importance to the project: "What I bring to Harvester is a real good sense of visuals and how to put together a sequence of scenes. I'm trying to make it as cinematic as possible."

"I'm trying to evoke a mood—that's very difficult. You don't want to yank the player out of that world, which you'll do if you're clumsy.

"I'm going for a weird, understated atmosphere with bizarre elements that slap you across the face once in a while," he confessed. Examples of these jolting images to which he alluded are the scenes in the demo of the bloody skull and backbone of the murder victim on a bed, and a basketball bouncing over a pool of blood in a sedate suburban street with the sound of children laughing and playing in the background. **Harvester** pulls no punches!

Well thought design and technique come together to create a beautiful environment for horror and evil.

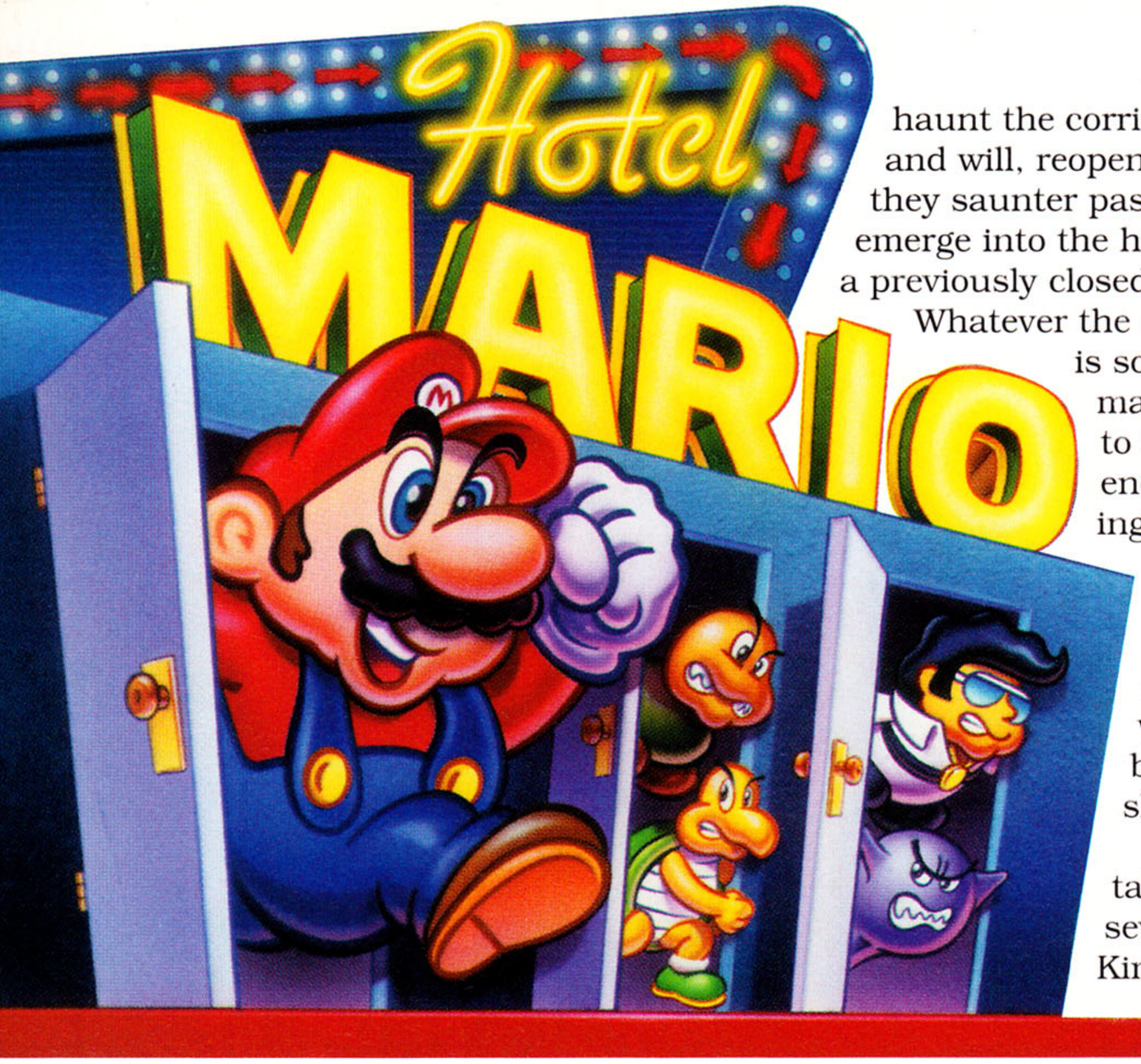
And it goes against all of the conventions of other adventure games and RPGs. Austin declared that "if you truly role-play, you have to be able to be evil." **Harvester** will allow that. He kept many of the plot elements to himself, but hinted that events like the town bake sale and blood drives might not be as innocent as they seem.

A small team is working with Austin on the game until its summer release in PC CD-ROM format through Merit Software. Mike Napadano, Chad Woyewodzic, and R. Kevin Obregon are the art team. Nick Shaffner is the game's programmer and Tom Lima acts as technical design assistant.

Austin has also started a small company called Maelstrom Software with Joel Manners and Edwin Harrell of **Privateer**, to publish software from small developers.

When all is said and done, **Harvester** will be the most graphically horrifying game ever released.

You might want to play the game from under the covers.



Hotel Mario

Check In Without Reservations

by Laurie Yates

The world's most famous plumber arrives on the CD-i scene, courtesy of Philips' Fantasy Factory development group. **Hotel Mario**, while not your standard running-and-jumping platform game, makes the perfect introductory vehicle for Nintendo's nuts-and-bolts mascot.

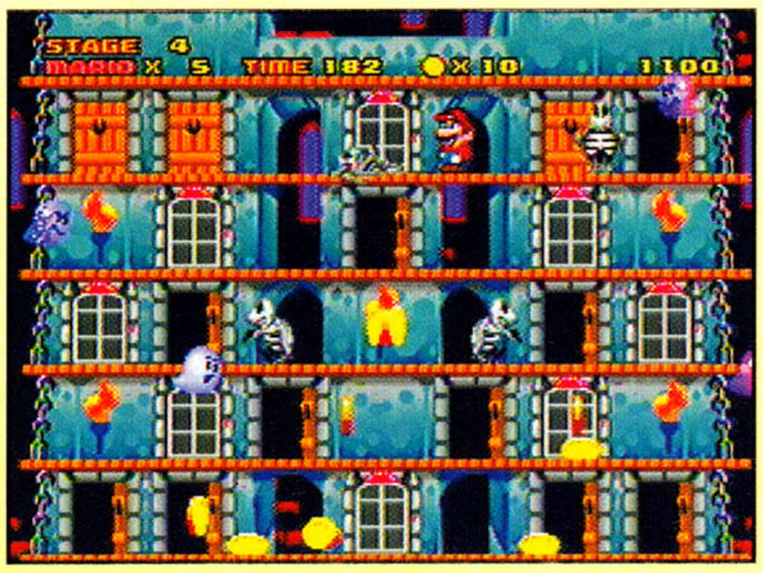
Hotel Mario is actually an extremely cute—and, ultimately, acutely challenging—action-puzzle contest spanning seven hotels in the Mushroom Kingdom. Why? Bowser, evil king of the Koopalings, has not only captured Princess Toadstool for the umpteenth time (so much for the palace guards), but he's eliminated all the guest accommodations!

Hotel Mario is a one or two-player alternating kinetic puzzle, with the levels becoming progressively more challenging. The player-character must solve 90 sets of deceptively simple puzzles before he can free the Princess and liberate the hotels.

The playfield is presented as a series of five horizontally parallel hotel corridors. It's Mario's task to patrol the halls and shut all the open doors, moving from floor to floor by way of elevators. Unfortunately, closed doors do not always remain that way. If Mario doesn't eliminate the Koopas and other enemies which haunt the corridors, they can, and will, reopen the portals as they saunter past. Or, they will emerge into the hall from behind a previously closed door.

Whatever the method, Mario is soon rushing madly from floor to floor, battling enemies, collecting gold coins (which appear mysteriously, and bounce down the hallways like beach balls), and slamming doors.

The action takes place in the seven Mushroom Kingdom establishments. Gamers start out at Morton's Wood-Door Hysteria Hotel, which is a treehouse design; then move over to Roy's Hard Brick Hotel, a low budget dive with an electrical system that leaves much to be desired—and frequently leaves Mario in the dark. Lucy Koopa's Chillton Hotel is a frozen cave, complete with icy floors and refrigerator-like rooms. Lemmy Koopa's High-ate Regency takes the p-c to a floating palace in the clouds, while Ludwig Koopa's Thump Castle includes doors that disappear. Wendy Koopa's Blitz-Snarlton, where Koopas dolled up as Elvis impersonators boogie through the halls, has two levels to each stage. Finally, the player reaches Bowser's Seizures Palace, which contains 15 double-level stages with all of the previous enemies and the added pleasure of fireballs.



Take your time and enjoy the many levels of fun and challenge, just watch out for those pesky turtles.

Hotel Mario has a great deal of detail work which was also done with the background graphics. Level 1-1 is at the tree base and the area between the doors is gnarled and moss-covered. However, as Mario works his way up the oaken hostel, he encounters more leaves, with the trunk giving way to branches. By the end of level one, the background still

Follow Mario to the beautiful, yet challenging, upper levels of Morton's Wood Door Hysteria Hotel.

displays tree branches, but peeking through the leaves are blue sky and white clouds. In Roy's Hotel, the "lights" are dimmer in certain areas, making the view less clear and the game more challenging. The color selections are vivid and tasteful. The original soundtrack, meanwhile, is superb; the music sets the right tone and proper pace for each of the puzzles. The sound effects possess a digital clarity.

In the Mario tradition, a variety of power-ups are available. Gold coins and beach balls facilitate extra lives; while mushrooms, stars, and flowers help preserve Mario's current life.

Players will want to stick with the standard joystick as much as possible, since neither the trackball nor the wireless remote are really geared for the precise lateral movement that **Hotel Mario** requires.

Hotel Mario shows that the CD-i is a viable system. The Fantasy Factory development team prove that they can take a well-known and popular character and provide an original game format. This means that Philips Interactive Media will not have to rely exclusively on translations of other systems' titles, such as **7th Guest** and **Mad Dog McCree**, for its lifeblood. This independence moves CD-i into a more direct competition with the other black box technologies.

Hotel Mario has the look and feel of a very addictive game. Once a gamer checks in, he should plan an extended stay.

PRETTY COOL FOR A GUY NAMED DEXTER!

Life as a space hero can be pretty miserable sometimes. Like now, for instance. The evil Commander Borf has blasted you with his Infanto Ray and turned you into a little kid, captured your gal, Kimmy, and is threatening to conquer the Earth. On top of all that, your name is Dexter.

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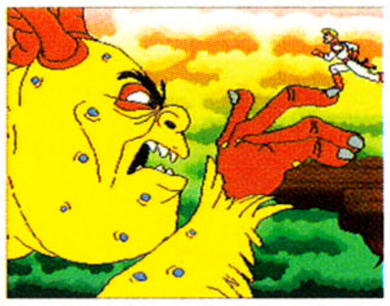

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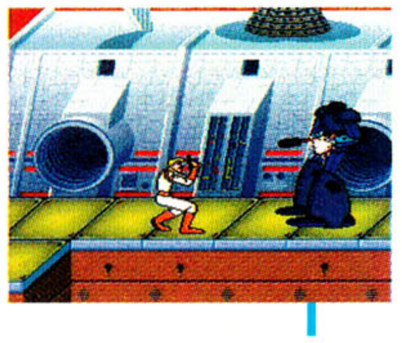

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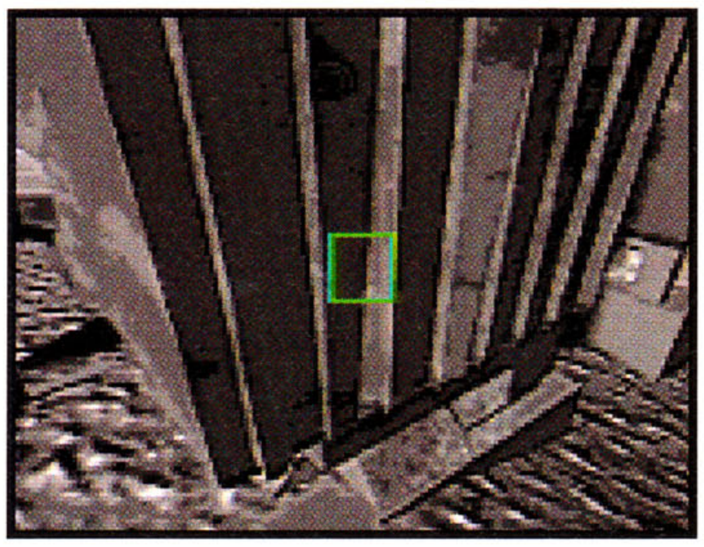
SUB-TERRANIA

Go to the depths of the world to find game play with gravity!

Some Genesis action games confine players to an environment with boundaries and challenge them to avoid the dangerous extremities and the hostile enemies found within those walls. Sega's **Sub-Terrania** takes place in a multitude of caverns that increase in difficulty both in enemies and layout with each game level.

The game's attraction is its action,



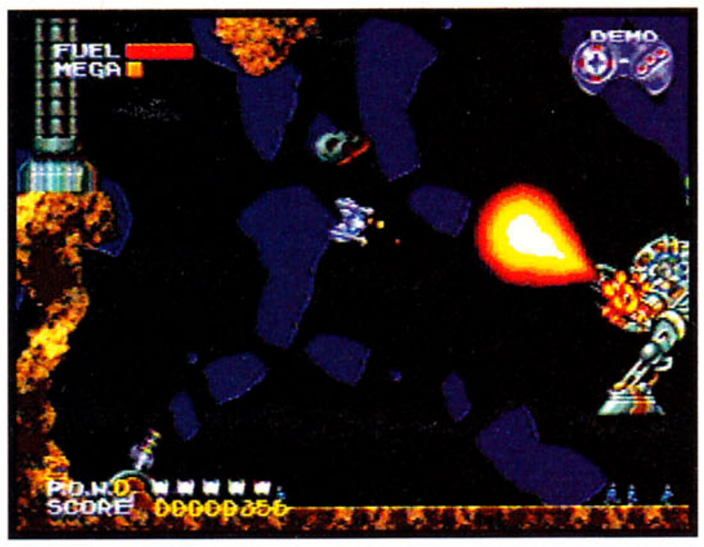
A cinematic introduction to the game will draw players into the gruelling conflict.

which involves piloting a space ship with thrust controls under the influence of heavy gravity. This game play may turn off a lot of players, but veteran gamers will enjoy it for its kinship to older game classics (see sidebar).

In **Sub-Terrania**, players must guide a space ship through a variety of cavern environments. Aliens have taken over the caverns, and it's the player's job to defend the inhabitants of the caves from the alien attacks. The player's space ship has a number of weapons and a defensive shield. Power-ups throughout the caverns replenish the shields, refuel the ship and award more weapons and lives. Additionally, players may also be required to pick up stranded miners and destroy

Confounding waves of enemies will try to thwart your progress underground.

Be careful when flying near dangerous obstacles. All-out firing works the best.



The enhanced graphics are really quite incredible, coming from the Sega system.

special installations.

Each level begins with an overview or mission briefing. A side view of the level's entire cavern pops up on the screen along with numbered notes that indicate the locations of the level's special areas. It is extremely important to remember the layout of the cavern from the mission screen because fuel and time are precious and there is no other way to find your way around.

Sub-Terrania employs a side perspective for game play. Players use forward and reverse thrust controls to move the ship through the cavern. Most games that used thrust/speed controls in the past in a gravity-based environment only provided forward thrust. Control was more difficult than in **Sub-Terrania** because you had to rotate the ship all the way around to go backwards. The reverse thrust allows tiny adjustments to direction and movement.

The object of each level varies, but in all cases you have to return to the starting pad and land the ship. Other landing pads contain the game's power-ups or stranded miners.

It is challenging to move to the locations marked on the map at the beginning of each level and both conserve fuel and destroy enemies along the way. More powerful weapons help out with the enemies, but fuel is a precious commodity in **Sub-Terrania**. Even when you let gravity take over and "float" in space, you expend fuel. So never pass up a fuel power-up or waste too much fuel by holding down the thrusters. Caverns occasionally have tracks to help players move from one place to another. These tracks go to important places and help conserve fuel.

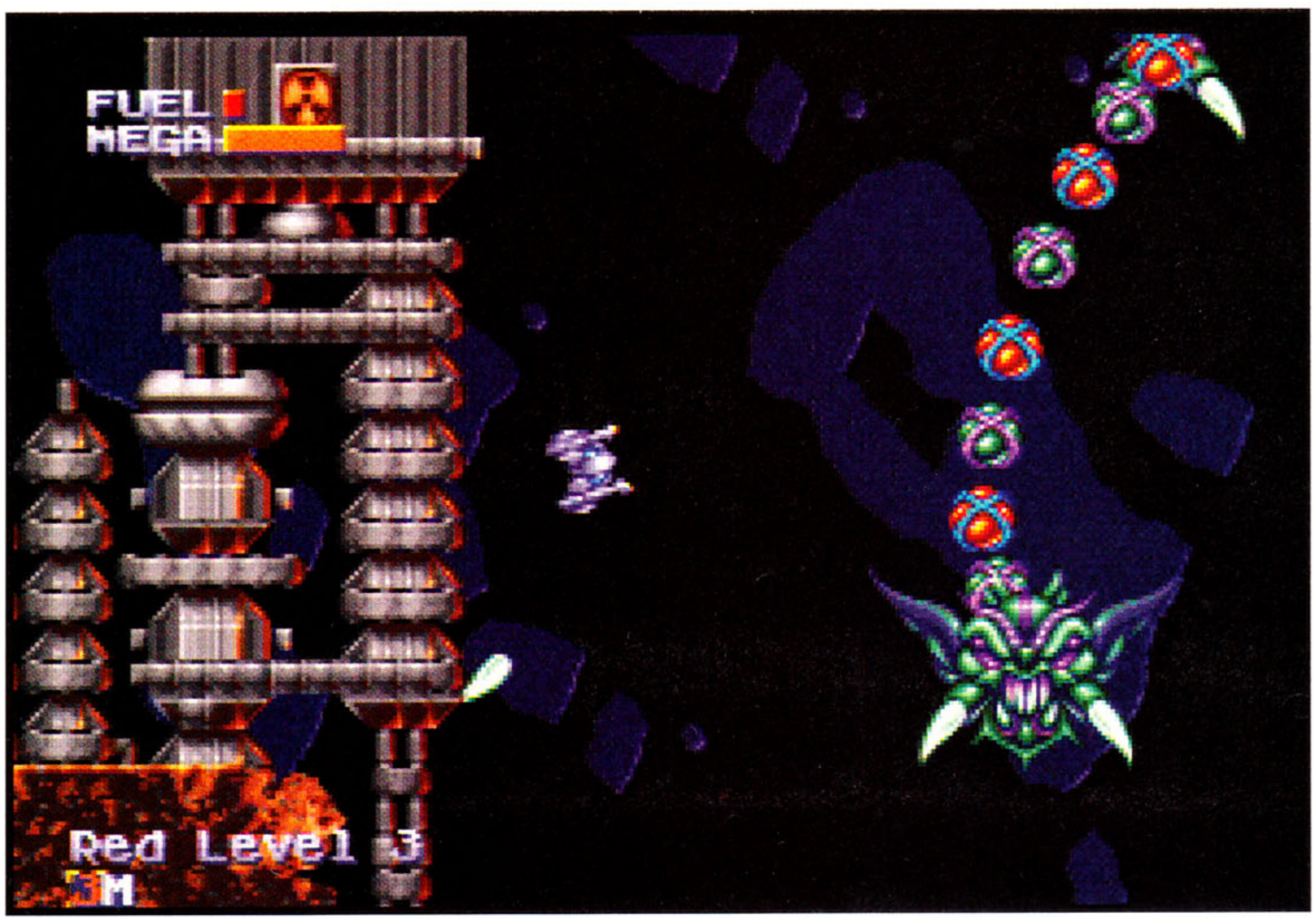
Sub-Terrania is visually busy at times, but the graphics are generally detailed and sometimes quite colorful (depending on the level).

One problem with the weapon fire is that the missiles or other projectiles explode on impact wherever they hit. This effect makes it difficult to understand exactly what should be destroyed because the caverns contain a lot of atmospheric structures in addition to the enemies, gates and barriers that require weapons.

The game's music is fast and exciting and the sound effects are varied and space-like.

Sub-Terrania is a difficult game to control at times, so practice is a must. A training level with a controller superimposed on the screen at the bottom was a nice touch, but the level should have had more regular game features.

Players who give **Sub-Terrania** a chance will be surprised at how addicting it can get once they navigate the lower levels and push forward for "just one more level." **B-** *(Russ Ceccola)*



BEHIND THE SCREENS

Players of **Sub-Terrania** may enjoy the game so much that they want to find other games with similar game play aspects.
Here are a few:
Scramble - An arcade game in which you maneuver a ship through scrolling caverns.
Choplifter - A computer game in which you rescue stranded prisoners. Extreme recently revived the series for the Super NES as **Choplifter III**.
Gravitar - The closest relative to **Sub-Terrania**, players pilot a ship against gravity around asteroids with deep caverns.

TEMPEST

A remake of a favorite plays great on the Jaguar!

When Atari's coin-op division introduced **Tempest** in 1981, it knocked gamers' eyes out with its full-color vector graphics and wide assortment of polygon enemies. There was also something else: Here was a game that did not make any attempt to mimic reality. There were no

imitation space ships, mazes, or even organic-looking enemies. **Tempest** was a totally abstract expression of mathematic principles, presented as a video game.

The basic idea was elegantly simple: The gamer was presented with a series of three-dimensional grids, ranging from v-shapes to diamonds, to pseudo-circles. Each of these grids was partitioned into pie-like slices from a vortex point. A steady stream of geometric enemies emerged from that vortex throughout the game, moving relentlessly toward the perimeter of the grid. The player, meanwhile, patrolled this perimeter with a cannon. The object: Keep the enemy objects spiraling up from the vortex from reaching the perimeter by blowing them to pieces. If any enemy object made contact with the cannon before being obliterated, the player lost a life.

Some objects, especially the spider-like Grabbers, remained active after reaching the perimeter, from which position they stalked the cannon, flipping along the edge of the grid, sector by sector, until the Grabber captured the gamer's gun and dragged it into the vortex.

Tempest was a wonderful, compelling game that was never successfully adapted to home systems because of the limitations of the then-available technology.

Tempest was, therefore, the ideal choice to be resurrected from the ashes of Atari antiquity. It remained only for the developers at Llamasoft to properly polish this golden age gem and make it shine on the new, high-powered Jaguar.

Tempest 2000 joins the growing ranks of neoclassic remakes—including such recastings as **Choplifter 3**, **Pitfall**, and **Stellar 7**—proving yet again that a good play mechanic doesn't get old, just dusty.

Tempest 2000 offers several game variations, including Traditional Tempest, Tempest Plus, and Tempest Duel, in addition to Tempest 2000 itself. Traditional Tempest is a classy reiteration of the '81 coin-op, featuring graphics which virtually duplicate the original's. Tempest Plus is a one- or two-player game in which a floating second cannon, manned by either another player or the program's AI, provides the primary gamer with laser back-up. Tempest Duel is a two-player, head-to-head contest in which duplicate grids appear simultaneously on screen and two gamers must battle it out for the highest score. It is also possible for a solo player to prepare for Duel via the practice option. **Tempest 2000**, meanwhile, is a faithful reproduction of the original game, using shaded polygons as

The enhanced capabilities of the Jaguar bring the playability to a new standard.

enemy targets instead of the wireframe shapes used on the coin-op.

Tempest 2000 also reproduces the Super-Zapper from the original game. The Super-Zapper is a smart-bomb feature which wipes out all enemies on screen, and it is automatically recharged after the completion of each level. In 1981, the sequence in which the player's cannon warped from a completed level to the next grid was a real stunner. **T2000** attempts to gild the lily, somewhat, by increasing the mass of

the starfield background, but by 1994 gamers have done the warp thing too many times for anything less than a trip through cyberspace to impress.

Summing up, **Tempest 2000** does just what a good remake should; it reproduces the play mechanic and basic skeleton of the original, but fleshes out the primitive sound and graphics with state-of-the-art audio-visuals, and, in this case, a couple of game variants. The Jaguar control pad isn't the ideal control device for this game—the dial on the coin-op worked much better—but after a little practice, most players won't notice the difference.

More than a dozen years after it first amazed and delighted gamers, **Tempest** is back, and it's still dazzling good fun. Now, guys, how about new versions of **Missile Command**, **Warlords**, **Red Baron**, and **Star Raiders**? **B** *(Bill Kunkel)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

When Vector Met Raster

In the early '80s, coin-ops came in two technological flavors: vector and raster. Raster-scan was used on most monitors and all TVs, but vector was superior in its ability to generate intensely bright lines. Unfortunately, although the early technology created polygons, it couldn't fill them, giving the games a weird, cyber-crystalline look. The first vector games included **Star Castle** and **Asteroids**.

Atari dubbed its vector technology "quadrascan," with the brilliantly lit lines and incredibly crisp 3-D graphics which made **Tempest** its first color offering for the arcades.

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Super Nintendo Screens shown

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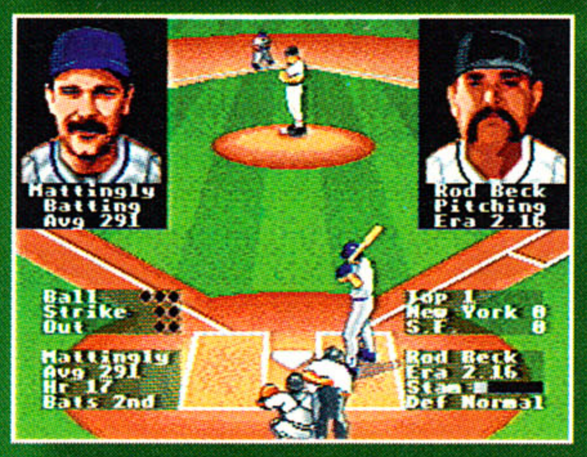

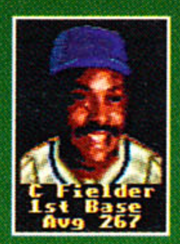

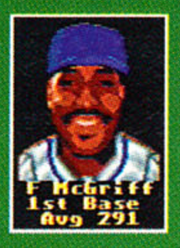

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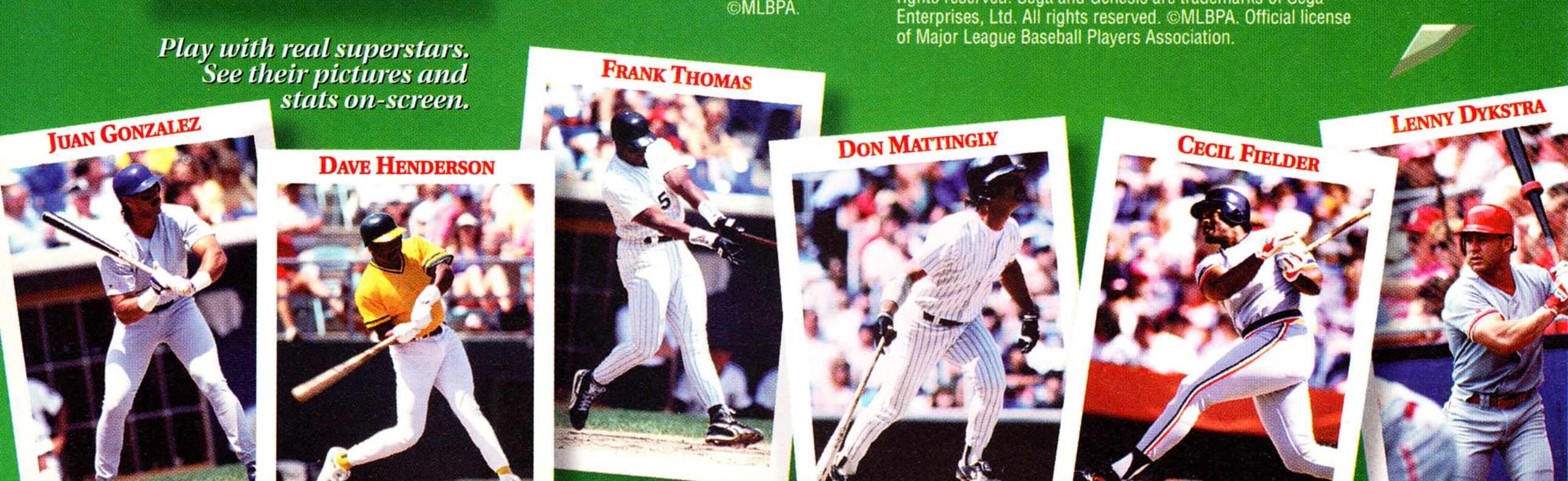

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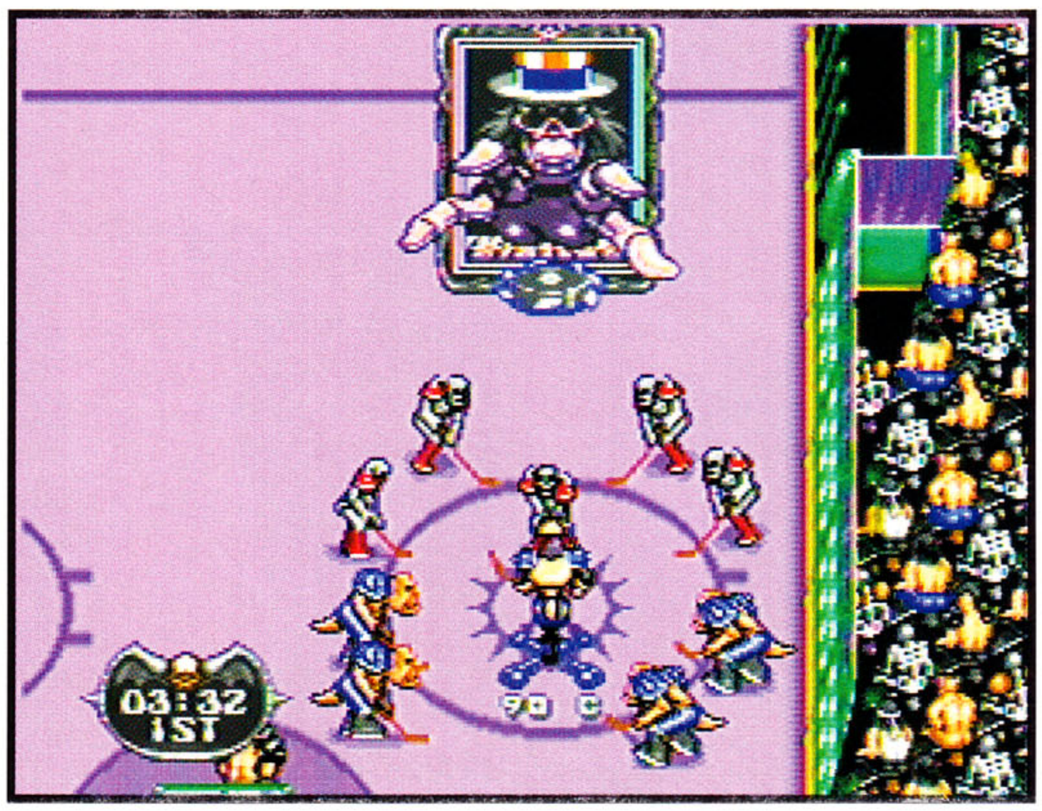
MUTANT LEAGUE HOCKEY

I was at a fight last night, and a hockey game broke out...



Conceptually, the idea was a no-brainer. Ever since Games Workshop introduced board gamers to the thrills of **Blood Bowl** a decade or so back, traditional sports games with monsters have been a popular idea. And mutants, thanks to Marvel Comics, are always a hot commodity. So why not take the engines from the excellent EA Sports franchises (**Madden**, **NHL**, and **MLBPA Baseball**), add mutants, and stir?

Electronic Arts did just that with the **Mutant League Sports** series. The first game in the series, **Mutant League Football**, was a delightful surprise, deftly blending standard grid action with mutant mayhem.

Mutant League Hockey, unfortunately, has not produced such a synergistic cocktail. While football is a game of brute force, punctuated with moments of balletic grace, hockey is a much more subtle type of contest. Speed, skill, and accuracy are the stock in trade of the hockey player—not mines and mayhem.

The game begins with a team/options select screen similar, but not identical, to that used in **NHL '94**. Gamers who have always dreamed of playing hockey on a green, turf-like surface, where the puck doesn't move unless somebody whacks it, for example, will have their dreams answered by **MLH**. The game should also prove ideal for those hockey mavens who've long fantasized about playing at the "Puke Palace" with such mutant stars as "Mo and Spew Puke." (Obviously, the sport the designers were *really* interested in was Hurling.)

But barf jokes aside, **MLH** does offer a range of interesting sounding options. For example, weapons periodically appear on the ice. Then there are the bombs which explode and produce gaping holes in the rink surface (reminiscent of the cracker mines in **2020 Baseball**). There are also spikes, fire pits, and ice sharks—nasty, sharp-toothed predators who troll beneath the ice.

Players come in three flavors: Trolls, Robots, and Skeletons. Trolls are big, strong, and stupid; robots are agile but fragile; and the skeletons are fierce fighters and solid skaters. Now this breakdown—while having nothing whatsoever to do with mutation—would make sense if these player archtypes represented even a caricature of real, NHL action. But there are too many trolls, there is far too much emphasis on fighting, and with all the bombs going off, the brawls and cruising ice sharks, the hockey game itself almost disappears.

There are several major differences, beyond the obvious, between **MLH** and the **NHL** series. A top-hatted skeleton appears on-screen for each center ice face-off, and the puck spirals downward before it hits the rink surface. When a fight breaks out, the game toggles to an upper-torso side view until a victor emerges. Both combatants then adjourn to the sin bin, but the loser does a longer stretch.

Then there are the Special Plays. Spectators, for example, throw coins onto the rink surface, which players can acquire for purposes of bribing the referee. Waste the Ref, meanwhile, is a strategic counter to this ploy in which everyone but the goalie trashes the corrupt ref.

Your faithful coach will be happy to give sound strategy and tactical pointers.

Rule changes include two-point goals (for shots netted from behind the black-and-blue line) and, of course, player deaths.

The graphics, alas, are not impressive, or even especially amusing, and the on-ice action is difficult to track, even for **NHL** veterans. The major problem revolves around the size and movement of the puck. In real-time sports simulations, it is always necessary to exaggerate the size of hockey pucks and baseballs, lest they disappear. In **Mutant League Hockey**, the tiny puck often seems to move about the ice by means of teleportation.

Perhaps younger, and more marginal hockey fans will find it sufficiently amusing to compete against teams with names like the St. Mucus Ooze and the Deathskin Razors. They may also find all the on-ice pyrotechnics and isolated punch-outs a major hoot.

But real hockey fans are likely to be overwhelmed by the spikes, mines, rocket pucks, and ice sharks—not to mention the arbitrary game mechanics and goofy rules.

(Bill Kunkel)

BEHIND THE SCREENS

The creepy, funked-out music for **Mutant League Hockey** was composed and produced by Russell Lieblich and Michael Sokyrka for Abalone.

Lieblich is one of the industry's genuine legends. A first-rate musician, he has composed music for everything from Atari games to Hanna-Barbera cartoons.

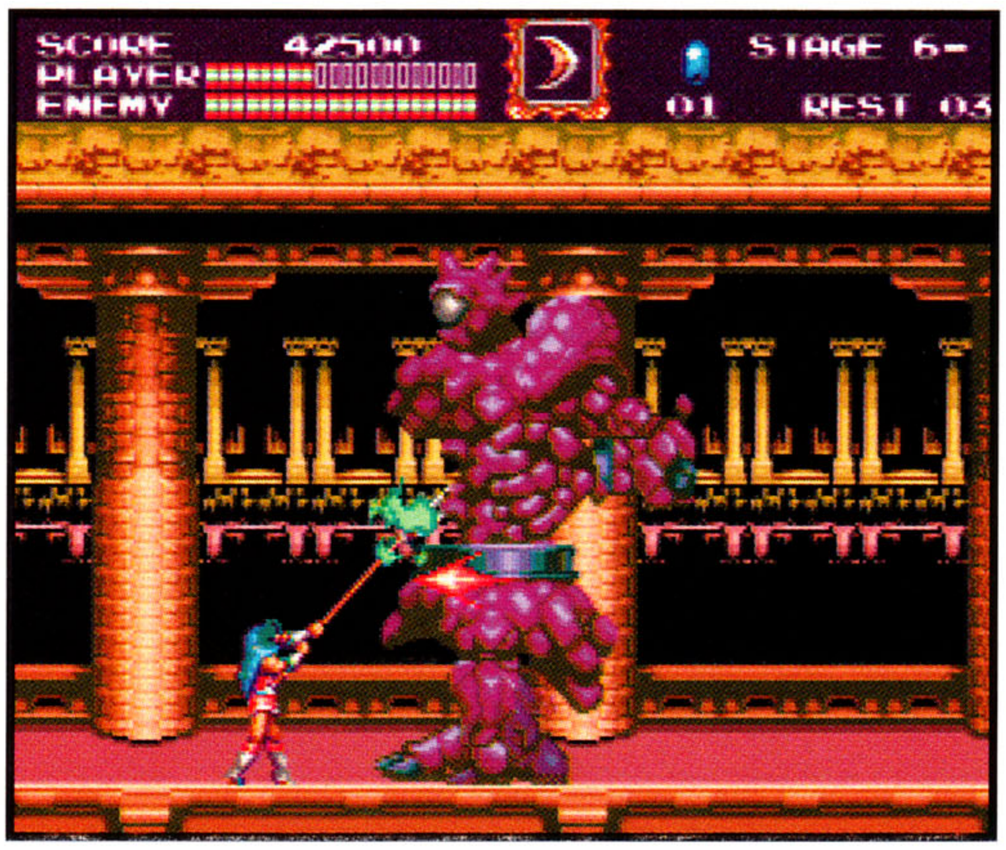
Russell started out working for Mattel in the early '80s, producing audio for early Intellivision games. From there, he moved to Activision, where he not only scored video games, but designed and programmed them. Indeed, his talents run deep, and gamers can most likely expect to see (or rather hear) more of his work.

CASTLEVANIA BLOODLINES

Bloodlines advances the great Castlevania pedigree.

Castlevania Bloodlines marks the debut of the popular platform game series on the Genesis. For the occasion, Konami commissioned a new engine and a plot line that spans several centuries, from the Middle Ages to the present, complete with a horrid cast of monstrous enemies.

Two legendary blood-drinkers, Count Dracula and Elizabeth Bartley, serve as the main player antagonists in **Bloodlines**. Elizabeth was sentenced to death in 1421, according to the documentation, after being declared a vampire. Dracula, meanwhile, was destroyed in 1897, according to Bram Stoker, when Quincy Morris, a descendent of the House of Belmont, plunged the stake of eternal death through Dracula's chest. Morris paid for his valiant act with his life. After witnessing the Dracula/Morris struggle, his son, John Morris, and John's childhood friend, Eric Lecarde, vowed to rid the planet of the evil creatures of the underworld.



As the game begins, 20 later, an amateur witch casts a spell which accidentally brings Elizabeth back to life. She, in turn, makes plans to revive her uncle, Count Dracula.

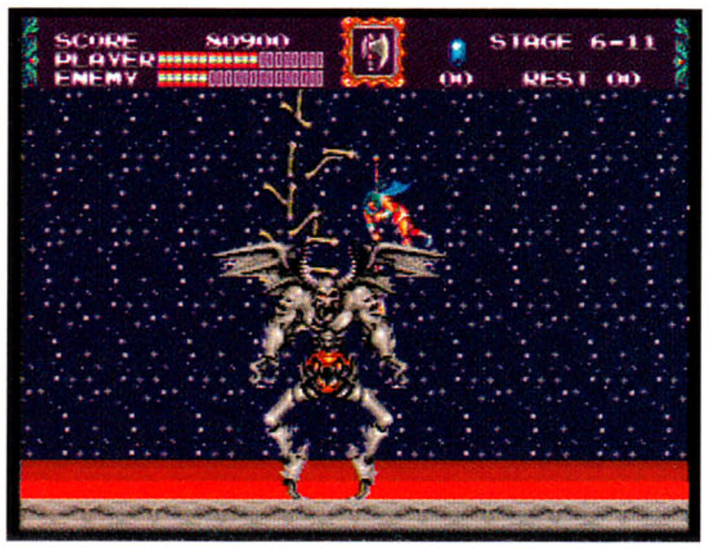
The gamer can choose either John Morris or Eric Lecarde as their player-character. Morris (who hails from Texas) is a big, brown-haired bruiser who wields the mystical Belmont bullwhip as both a weapon and a tool, using the lash as a rope to swing over chasms.

The blond-haired Lecarde, a master lanceman from Segovia, Spain, uses the Alcarde spear, which takes on a variety of power-up forms including a pogo stick, razor-sharp axehead, and a trident. In addition to pole vaulting skills, Eric can perform a mega jump, which is three times higher than normal, and a spinning lance routine which serves as a shield.

John or Eric must pass through six side-scrolling levels, each more gruesome and challenging than the last. The player begins the quest at Dracula's Castle, which should spark a sense of *déjà vu* in gamers who've played **Castlevania** on the NES.

After traversing the multiple stages within the first level, and defeating the armored knight boss, the p-c moves on to Greece, and the legendary Shrine of Atlantis. This level, which is partially submerged underwater, features many mid-level bosses and a gigantic statue as the end boss. Level three takes place in Italy, at the Leaning Tower of Pisa, complete with tilted and moving rooms. Next stop: Germany and the Soldier Factory. After defeating the skeleton workers, the p-c must conquer a sadistic boss, who is made up entirely of gears, and displays his pleasure by dancing gleefully while the p-c writhes in agony. The fifth level drops the gamer into a jungle outside the Palace of Versailles (oh,*that* jungle), from which point they must breach the Palace and defeat the Giant Moth. The final level climaxes at Dracula's new castle in England (Drac has this thing for dreary English castles).

Bloodlines is blessed with excellent audio and appropriately atmospheric visuals. The bosses are skillfully animated and the enemies, which include a flaming skull, a Skele-Dragon and even Death himself, boast some incredible special effects.



A plethora of level bosses await you as you journey through the dark castle.

Bloodlines has several user-selectable options, including difficulty (easy or normal), number of lives (one to five), control pad configuration, and audio tests for background music and sound effects.

Bloodlines permits the gamer to use the continue option no more than two times per game, at which point the p-c is returned to the last milestone position. Fortunately, at the end of each level, a passcode is awarded.

While **Castlevania Bloodlines** is not for the fainthearted, it is a must-have for horror fans. This Genesis version has a darker, more genuinely frightening air to it than previous, somewhat watered down Nintendo editions, and despite its GA rating, parents may want to check it out before allowing very young gamers to go virtual vampire slaying—some of the graphics could quite possibly be genuine nightmare makers for kids, so be forewarned of the content.

Bloodlines marks an impressive Genesis debut for one of the most successful series in gaming history. This one could be a monster, with future titles almost assuredly in the works for most (if not all) console systems. **A-** *(Laurie Yates)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

The character of "Elizabeth Bartley" in **Castlevania Bloodlines** is based on an actual historical character. Countess Elizabeth Bathory was a depraved Hungarian noblewoman who believed she could retain her youth eternally by bathing in the blood of slaughtered virgins.

After depopulating the countryside of virtuous young girls, the local constabulary turned up one day and arrested (and, later, executed) the Countess.

Bathory has been the subject of many stories and films, including Hammer's 1970 movie, Countess Dracula, starring Ingrid Pitt, Nigel Green, and Lesley-Anne Down.

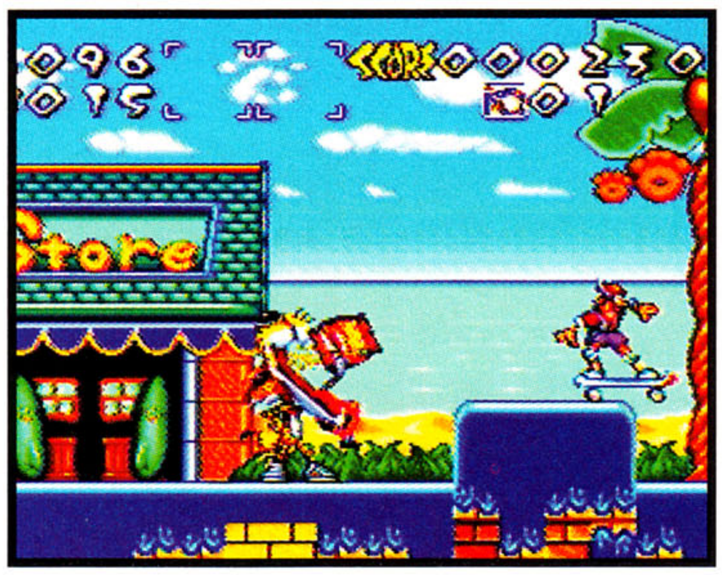
CHESTER CHEETAH

HAVE CHEESE PUFFS, AVAILABLE TO TRAVEL

Chester Cheetah ... Wild, Wild Quest, from Kaneco for the Super NES, marks Chester Cheetah's second side-scrolling platform game outing.

The Cheetos-munching cheetah has escaped from the Four Corners Zoo on his trusty motorcycle, in search of Hip City, USA.

Chester isn't the zoo's only escapee, however: Mean Eugene, the bully from **Too Cool to Fool**, is also on the loose, and in full nemesis mode. As part of his harassment campaign, Eugene races from a speed



Health food will always help Chester become energized for his adventures.

trap, tears Chester's road map into 10 pieces, and scatters them across the U.S. Now Chester must visit 10 cities, locate the map pieces, and defeat each end boss in order to continue on his journey to Hip City.

Although Chester is a cat, he begins each level with only three lives. Unfortunately, while more lives can be earned as the player collects power-ups, they do not carry over to the next level. This is a Bad Thing.

The map of the States appears at the beginning of each level, where it serves as the selection point for each of the available cities. The mythical cities, and their states are: Euphreaka, CA; Omahog, NE; Lostin, MA; Quakersfield, CA; Little Shock, AK; Un-Clearwater, FL; Numb, AL; Wallup, NM; and Rally, NC.

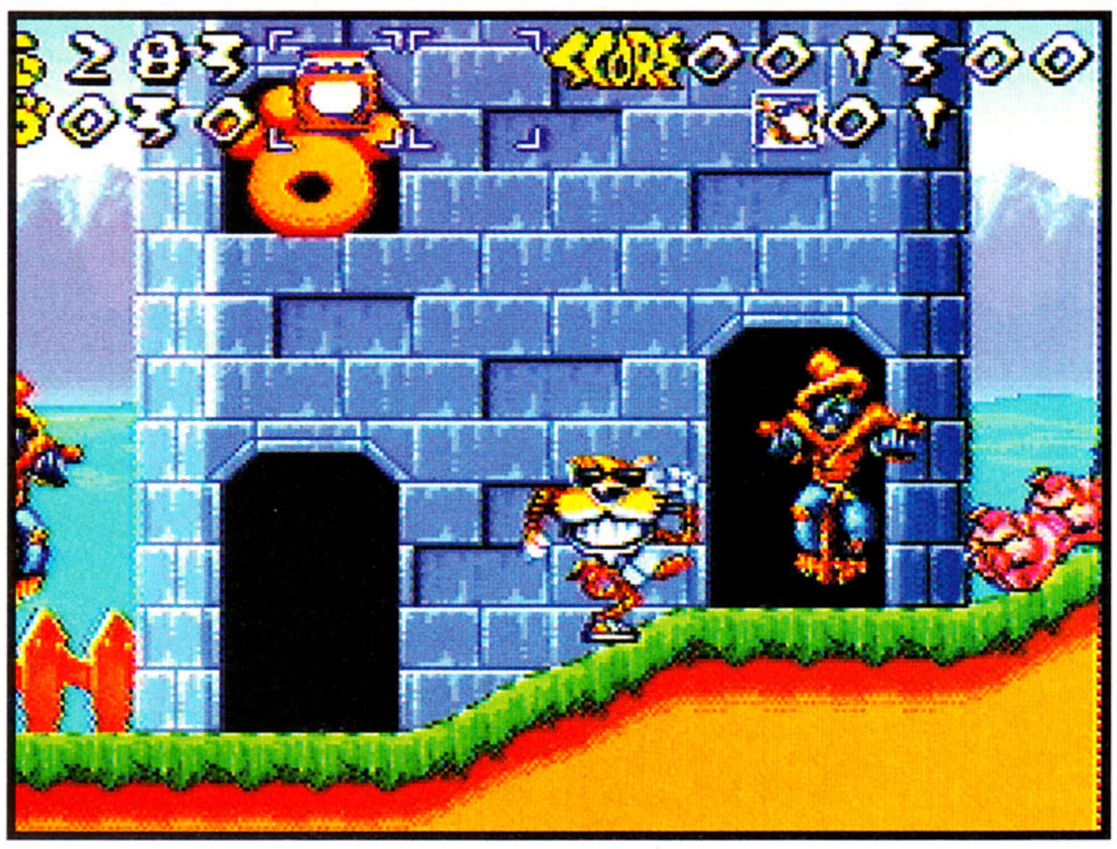
A power-up bonus round appears when the player-character gathers enough cheetah paws.

In keeping with Chester's overall nonviolent theme, the p-c may draw upon four jumping styles: straight up, standard right or left, running jump, and super jump.

Wild, Wild Quest's graphics, unfortunately, are disappointing. The backgrounds are very crude, resembling 8-Bit technology, melded with the SNES color palette. Chester is too large for the background and has the effect of cluttering the screen. The sprite animation is clunky, and the text character set is very difficult to read, especially on the Pause Screen.

The music is not only generic and low-energy, it doesn't reflect the action on-screen. The sound effects have a flat quality that totally lack pizzazz, an essential ingredient in the snack food—and video game—market.

The gamer has several play options available. They can customize the control pad commands; run a sound test; and select the difficulty level. The control of Chester is poor. Our hero responds to commands in a sluggish manner entirely inappropriate for the world's fastest mammal.



Wild, Wild Quest does not succeed for several reasons. First, given only two categories of power-ups (points and extra lives) it is senseless for gamers to lose accumulated lives from level to level. Second, a game with a low violence factor attracts younger gamers. Why frustrate them by eliminating passcodes, thereby forcing them to endlessly replay the same early levels? Third, non-violent should not be a synonym for boring. Put simply: When all you can do with a character is make them jump, it gets old in a hurry; even Mario has projectiles to toss at enemies, not to mention a kazillion different power-ups. Fourth, there are extended periods during the game when the player must sit around and wait. And wait. And wait. Finally, Chester hasn't enough unique characteristics to be appealing as the lead character in a video game. This is a character whose only distinctive activity was eating snacks and running into things. It was cute and humorous—for 60 seconds.

This raises the related issue of overall suitability.

Despite the movement of media characters to video games, not every corporate mascot is appropriate for translation. Some characters make the transition well, especially if they are placed in a game that complements and enhances their personalities (ex: Virgin's **Spot** games). Unfortunately, Chester has not yet found his place in the video game sun.

One last comment: **Quest** is not only far too similar to Chester's earlier game, **Too Cool to Fool**, but it also shares many of the same problems.

Not even the promise of the "extra-wild ending ... for anyone who ... score[s] all 10 pieces" will be enough to keep any but the most diehard Chester fans playing this disappointing sequel. (Diehard Chester fans?) **E-** *(Laurie Yates)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

Will Chester Star in a Trilogy?

According to Jeff Hill, Director of Product Development, there are currently no plans for a third game.

The most challenging aspect of designing a Chester Cheetah game is developing a storyline that satisfies not only Kaneko, but also the licenser, Frito Lay, who does enforce restrictions on Chester's many vibrant and colorful activities within the game.

The **Wild, Wild Quest** story line was the result of brainstorming sessions with Chester's creators. This obviously helped in the final stages of the game. Jeff says "it was through working with the creators that the game's real flavor emerged."

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HEME6

TOMMY MOE'S SKIING & SNOWBORDING WINTER EXTREME

Electro-Brain releases a downhill thriller for the Super NES.

This cartridge is not for anyone whose idea of a skiing weekend is sitting around the fireplace in the lodge, sipping hot toddies, and trading sneers with large blond fellows named Günter.

The French game designers, Loriciel, take players out on the slopes of a world-class alpine ski resort (their original title of this cart was **Val d'Isère**) and let them loose. Woe betide the player uncomfortable with heights and high speeds, especially if using a large screen TV. Once under way, the thrill of plummeting down a real and twisting course on the side of a mountain is captured remarkably well. The snowy slopes across the valley scroll back and forth across the screen with every twist and turn. Even the changes from shade to sunlight along the trail are evoked with graduated tinting of the screen for shade and a disconcerting white-out of detail in sunny areas.

Take a wild ride on the latest craze in winter sports: snowboarding like crazy!

The player has an option between skiing and snowboarding. The difference is primarily graphic, as all events are available for each, and play control appears to be identical.

The gamer's viewpoint is from right behind the skier on the screen, as though following him on the slope. (The character is presumably male, though loosely bundled up as the figure is, it *could* be a woman.) There are a fairly limited number of animation frames, most of them used for kicking off and slowing to a stop, plus standing, crouching forward, right and left turns (easy and sharp), and a couple of jumping positions. There is an effective falling sequence, as well, for those initially frequent occasions when the player overshoots the track and crashes across any of various obstacles. There's even one for crashing headlong into a tree.

Happily, this game is not a real sim; the skier is extremely resilient and always recovers even from the most spectacular spills without evident damage.

Gamers who stayed glued to the ski events at Lillehammer last February will recognize the three racing options available: the Slalom, Giant Slalom, and Downhill. Each of these may be taken in one of three modes: Freeride, Compete, or Training.

In Freeride, the player competes against the clock, and must succeed in beating a preset time for each checkpoint in order to continue to the next run. If unsuccessful, the video-skier must try again, from the start of that run. Once a run is completed, a tram carries the player to the top of the next slope.

This is done with an overview map of the entire resort, showing each trail. After the first run, the player may choose to go on to the next one or repeat a previously covered trail, to try to improve the timing. Unused time may be carried forward to the next run.

In Compete Mode, the player is skiing against a roster of seven names and must qualify in each challenge to go on to the next race. The player has three lives, or chances to qualify, for each of four challenges. Each challenge consists of three races. When a challenge is successfully run, the player wins the appropriate award for placement (gold, silver, or bronze for the top three).

In Training Mode, the player may select from any four runs in each of the three race types: Slalom, Giant, or Downhill. The effective difference between these is the frequency and placement of gates. In the Slalom, blue and red sets of gates on alternate sides of the trail offer a narrow and undulating path on a relatively short run. In the Giant, the sets are farther apart along a longer run, and in the Downhill, gate markers straddle the whole width of the trail. In all cases, straying outside the gates means a two-second penalty against the overall time.

Soft snow off the trails does slow the player down, though no automatic time penalty is made as long as the skier returns to go between the gates.

It's not easy to qualify, but it's a lot of fun trying (despite the challenging insults throughout the manual). Players whose responses have been honed on auto racing games like **F1 Pole Position** or **Indy Racing** should feel somewhat comfortable with **Tommy Moe's Skiing**, except possibly for that sense of a barely controlled, headlong plunge down the mountainside.

B+ *(Ross Chamberlain)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

Tommy Moe, 1994 Olympic Gold and Silver medal winner, signed with Electro Brain shortly after the Winter Olympics to collaborate on a series of skiing and snowboarding based games and educational products. Moe, himself an experienced video game player, is pleased with the game that bears his name, saying it is "by far the best skiing and snowboarding game ever made. The graphics and sound effects make you feel as if you are actually on the slopes competing. I am looking forward to being involved in the design and development phase of future skiing software products with Electro Brain."

IT'S LIKE CHINESE FOOD ...
AS SOON AS YOU FINISH, YOU'RE HUNGRY FOR MORE.

Ahh! Shanghai II. Millions have been tantalized, amazed and intrigued by the greatest strategy game ever devised. It's easy to get started. And even easier to get hooked.

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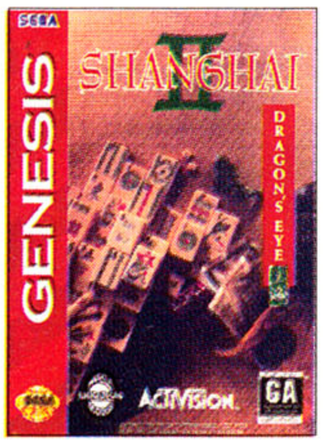
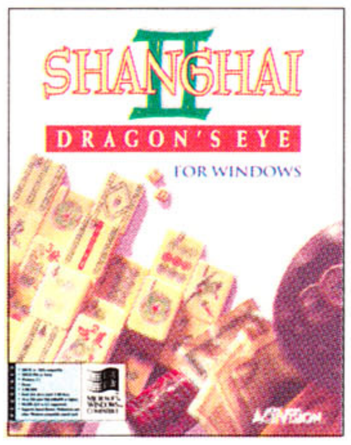
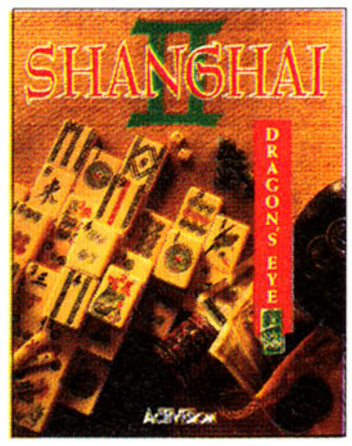


Shanghai II's tiles are never arranged the same way twice, so each and every game is a whole new challenge. And ever more difficult with each new level that awaits you as your skill improves.

So, if variety is the spice of life, Shanghai II is hot stuff indeed. For not only can you try out 13 different tile layouts, but you can also choose from a variety of eye-catching tile designs and three challenging game modes. And now our newest Shanghai II games for Sega™ Genesis™ and Windows™ will satisfy your appetite for exciting animation and sound.



Enter a new dimension in Shanghai by challenging the computer or an opponent to a game of Dragon's Eye, where one tries to bring the dragon to life while the other attempts to slay it.



Help yourself to Shanghai II: Dragon's Eye, but beware . . . once you start, you'll never get enough!

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ASTERIX AND THE GREAT RESCUE

You Asterix, you got it in a brand new adventure!

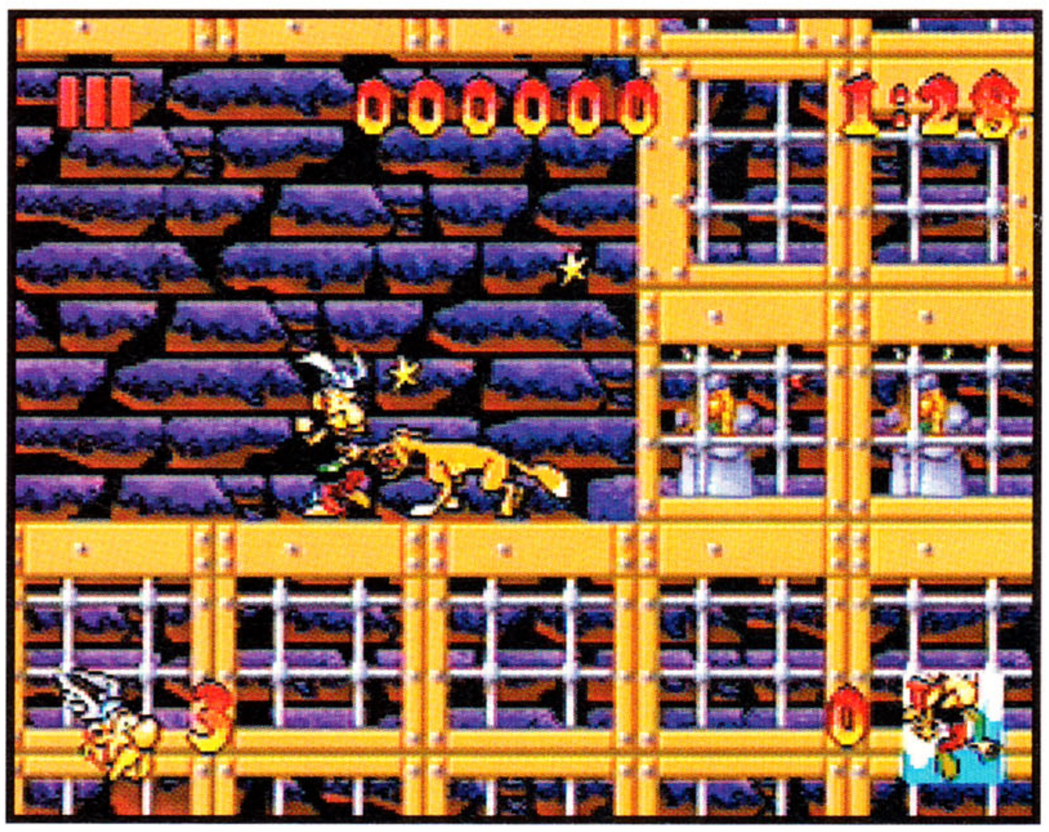
Asterix and the Great Rescue marks the first appearance of the popular European comic character on the Genesis. While the diminutive Gaul's current story line is cosmetically different from the plotline used in ElectroBrain's SNES version (see sidebar), many aspects of this side-scrolling platform game are similar.

The time is 50 B.C., and the land of Gaul is almost completely occupied by the Romans. One small village of indomitable Gauls, of which Asterix is a member, are the remaining holdouts. The Romans devise a plan which involves the kidnapping of Getafix, the Druid who provides magic super-strength potions to the Gauls.

The plan is put into action: Getafix is kidnapped, as is Dogmatix, Obelix's little dog who prefers chasing Romans to chariots. When the village discovers that the Druid has been taken, Chief Vitalstatistix immediately charges Asterix and Obelix with the task of rescuing the two hostages.

The Great Rescue takes the player-character through six levels, each comprising multiple stages. After successfully leaving the Gaulish Village, the p-c must survive a sojourn through a Roman encampment. The gamer will then locate a safe path through the Forest, which provides an entryway into Germany. A Roman Galley is the setting for the fifth level, with the final showdown taking place in the city of Rome.

The playfield schematic displays the number of lives in the bottom left of the screen; the health points, indicated by three vertical bars, at the top left, while the score is listed in the top center. A timer appears in the top right of the playfield while a window in the lower right indicates special weapons and how many uses each of them retain.



Asterix and Obelix have the chance to arm themselves with four special weapons: fireballs, clouds, invisibility disguises, and levitation, simply by drinking the potions they find along the paths. Points are awarded for destroying enemies and finishing the level with time still available. The plethora of power-ups and bonus items along the way include: point increasers (coins, money bags, and helmets), health enhancers (food, chalices, and extra lives), and defensive measures (sickles of invulnerability and bombs of manic energy).

The music is light and energetic, which suits the whimsical nature of the Asterix character. In an interesting use of music, the tempo increases when the game is paused. The sound effects produced when either of the characters hit an enemy or collect an item are perfect ear candy and complement the action perfectly.

Unfortunately, **The Great Rescue**'s graphics, while professionally rendered, do not provide a much of a treat for the eyes. The water-color palette which was chosen for coloring the village blends the backgrounds so well that gamers will be hard-pressed to decide where the character can and cannot jump. In one case, a horned head hangs over the ledge of a house, as if it were an obstacle to be hurdled, yet Asterix can walk right past it without a blip. In another scene, a fishmonger stands with his catch at the end of the wharf, seeming to block Asterix' progress, yet the p-c can walk right past him. These poor examples of perspective are disconcerting and distracting, especially in a platform game.

The gamer has several play options, including three difficulty levels, controller set-up, passwords, and a sound test.

The playability of **The Great Rescue** is enhanced by the game's puzzle elements involving the use of special powers. The gamer may also decide that strategic withdrawal is the way to handle a confrontation, rather than entering the fray with fists flying. The inclusion of passcodes, as well as three to five continues, saves gamers the frustration of having to play the game in a single sitting.

The enchantment of **The Great Rescue** does pall, though, once the game's novelty wears off. Does the Genesis need another side-scroller? Wasn't there anything more creative the Sega development team could have done? **B-** *(Laurie Yates)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

Asterix the Gaul is a virtual icon in Europe,where he is among the most popular characters in comics history. The feisty Gaul has also garnered a strong and ever growing cult following in the States over the years.

Asterix first appeared in the U.S. video game market in 1993 with the release of Asterix the Gaul (Electro-Brain/SNES), which features a storyline almost identical to the Sega game with two minor variations:

1) The victims of the kidnapping are Obelix and Dogmatrix,

2) Asterix' wild and wonderful route takes him to Rome via Egypt.

THE PIRATES OF DARK WATER

Scrolling, swashbuckling swordplay on the high seas.

Sunsoft's Genesis version of **The Pirates of Dark Water** is an interesting blend of lightweight RPG conventions and traditional fighting game action of the **Double Dragon** and **Final Fight** variety, with pirates and rapiers replacing street punks and nunchukas. Unlike the SNES version, however, developer Iguana Software (best known for turning out Sunsoft's **Aero the Acro•Bat** and Acclaim's home versions of **NBA Jam**) added some cosmetic fantasy role-playing touches which elevate this version considerably over its rather mindless Super Nintendo cousin.

The gamer can role-play any of the cartoon's three protagonists. Ren (no, not *that* Ren—that's a different cartoon), the pretty boy of the group, possesses average strength and agility. Ioz is an ox of a man, big and strong but not exactly fast on his feet. Tula, the cartoon's resident babe, isn't very strong, but her amazing speed more than compensates for any power deficiencies.

The villain is an alien pirate named Bloth, whose ship is the Maelstrom. The adventure is set on the watery world of Mer, where mysterious sectors of Dark Water swallow up anyone or anything unlucky enough to make contact with them (if this were an SF game, they'd be black holes). The only force powerful enough to counteract the Dark Water is

the Treasure of Rule. So, Ren, heir to the throne of Octopon, along with Ioz and Tula, sets off on a quest to locate the treasure, defeat Bloth, and eliminate the cursed Dark Water.

The story line is based on the Hanna-Barbera produced cartoon series created by David Kirschner, who supposedly also provided significant input into the game development process.

Plot, of course, is pretty tangential in what amounts to a nonstop scrolling street fight. The player wades through enemies, engaging in swordplay as well as hand-to-hand combat. On the early levels, unfortunately, the various attackers don't offer sufficient variety, either in terms of appearance or fighting style. The player-character, on the other hand, has several methods of dispatching opponents. In addition to punching out or slicing up an enemy, the p-c can use a magic potion, or unleash a special attack. Special attack weapons are collected periodically as the player-character moves through the horizontal and vertically scrolling terrain. These weapons appear at the top of the screen and can be invoked against an enemy at any time.

Other bonus items and power-ups include coins, food, potions, extra lives, and keys. It's also wise to acquire a melon whenever possible, since this is Niddler's favorite food. Niddler is the crew's mascot, a hybrid monkey-bird who can be very helpful—so long as his stomach is kept lined with melon. Niddler can also perform another extremely useful function: If supplied with 10 minga melons, he will fly the player-character back to their ship, the Wraith, where the gamer can select a different hero to continue the game.

While the fighting sequences are the heart of this game, it's the lightweight RPG-style features that make it memorable. Communication screens allow characters to interact, for example, obtaining helpful information in return for gold coins the p-c has collected during the course of the quest. An inventory screen, meanwhile, provides insight into the various power-ups and treasures the p-c acquires, while also serving as the interface in the use of special potions.

Passwords are awarded after the completion of each level.

The actual fighting scenes are well-rendered and slickly animated against an impressive variety of pirate-style backdrops.

Player-characters can perform different maneuvers, including somersaulting leaps, sword slashes, and dropping down to the next lowest level.

While the SNES version offers each character a wider variety of fighting maneuvers, this Genesis edition should have considerably greater appeal to the average gamer.

The Pirates of Dark Water is not the most outstanding game of its type, but it is a very entertaining game that should appeal to fans of plot-driven action-adventure contests. **B** *(Bill Kunkel)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

Unlike the Genesis version reviewed here, the SNES edition of **The Pirates of Dark Water** is a replica of the **Final Fight** game archetype, complete with a two-player mode.

The action in this 8-Meg version is nonstop, hair-raising excitement, with superb controller response and a variety of fighting moves. The first level is a simple milk run, even on the more difficult setting, but the action heats up considerably on Level Two.

The SNES edition comprises eight levels, instead of the 11 found in the Genesis version.

Fighting game fans should wholeheartedly enjoy the visually offbeat treatment.

CARTRIDGES

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

Explore the final fontier on the Super NES

Players command the most famous starship and crew in the known universe to solve a galaxy-sized mystery that begins with an enigmatic artifact. It comes to a head where the fate of all humanity hangs in the balance.

As the game begins, the Enterprise is summoned deep into the Romulan neutral zone, where a Vulcan scientist has made a discovery that could have huge impact on the Federation. Unfortunately, the Romulans arrive first, and the introductory mission charges the player with rescuing the scientist from the Romulans.

Trekkies and adventure fans alike should find plenty to do in this lengthy game.

What follows is a quest in true Star Trek tradition. The player must crack the Romulan secret code, cope with a hostile new race, discover the use of the unknown artifact, pass the tests of a mysterious, time travelling super-being, and save the Federation, all while fighting Romulan spaceships and doing good deeds, like rescuing miners and bringing antidotes to plague-stricken planets.

The game uses varied, simple and intuitive controls. The primary interface is the bridge of the ship. The player stands in the middle of the finely rendered Enterprise bridge and turns to the various stations to issue orders. An efficient menu system allows the player to set the ship's course and speed. The Engineering console is the damage control screen. The Computer station gives access to a large database of useful information about the Star Trek universe. The Sensors station allows the player to scan whatever planet or ship is displayed on the main view screen. The Briefing room is useful when players want advice on where to go or what to do next.

The Transporter room sends an away team on a mission. All the familiar cast members are here, their digitized images shown along with a group of ensigns to round out any party.

Players can fill the away team with senior officers, but if too many of the bridge crew are injured in a mission, the Enterprise is ordered back to Starbase and the game is over. Likewise, in keeping with the Star Trek ethos, if Captain Picard is hurt or killed the game ends immediately.

Once a landing crew is transported to its destination, the perspective changes to a high, angled overhead view that takes up most of the screen. Pictures of the away team members line one side of the screen and a box along the bottom shows stats and inventory of the active character. Besides tricorders and/or phasers, senior officers have Command icons. Players control the away team by highlighting one officer's Command icon and touching the other team members. They then follow the commanding officer anywhere.

Away team missions could have come directly from the television series. Logically structured puzzles must be solved amidst dramatic, life threatening situations. Any injured senior officer is automatically beamed back to the Enterprise and the player must play the mission again from the beginning. A password system allows the player to go back to a game in progress.

Space combat is part of the Star Trek universe and the action is fast and furious when the Enterprise runs up against an opponent. When combat is joined, the view automatically switches to the Tactical station. The top half of the screen is taken up by the Main view screen, which faces forward. The bottom half of the screen is the Tactical view, a top-down perspective à la **Star Control**. A display shows shield status, phaser power, auxiliary power and photon torpedoes remaining, plus the status of the other ship's shield and hull.

The graphics are very good, if not always excellent. The cut scene of the ship going into warp is nifty, but the bridge crew could have been sharper. Despite this nit-picking, though, there is really nothing wrong graphically.

Sound really reinforces the Star Trek feel. Close your eyes and stand on the bridge of the Enterprise. All the noises of the show are in the game, from the whirr-chirp of the conn to the soft, insistent note of an incoming subspace message. The sounds of phasers and photon torpedoes are also authentic.

Spectrum-Holobyte hit the mark with an engaging game while remaining faithful to the television show that inspired it.

B+ *(John Wesley Hardin)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

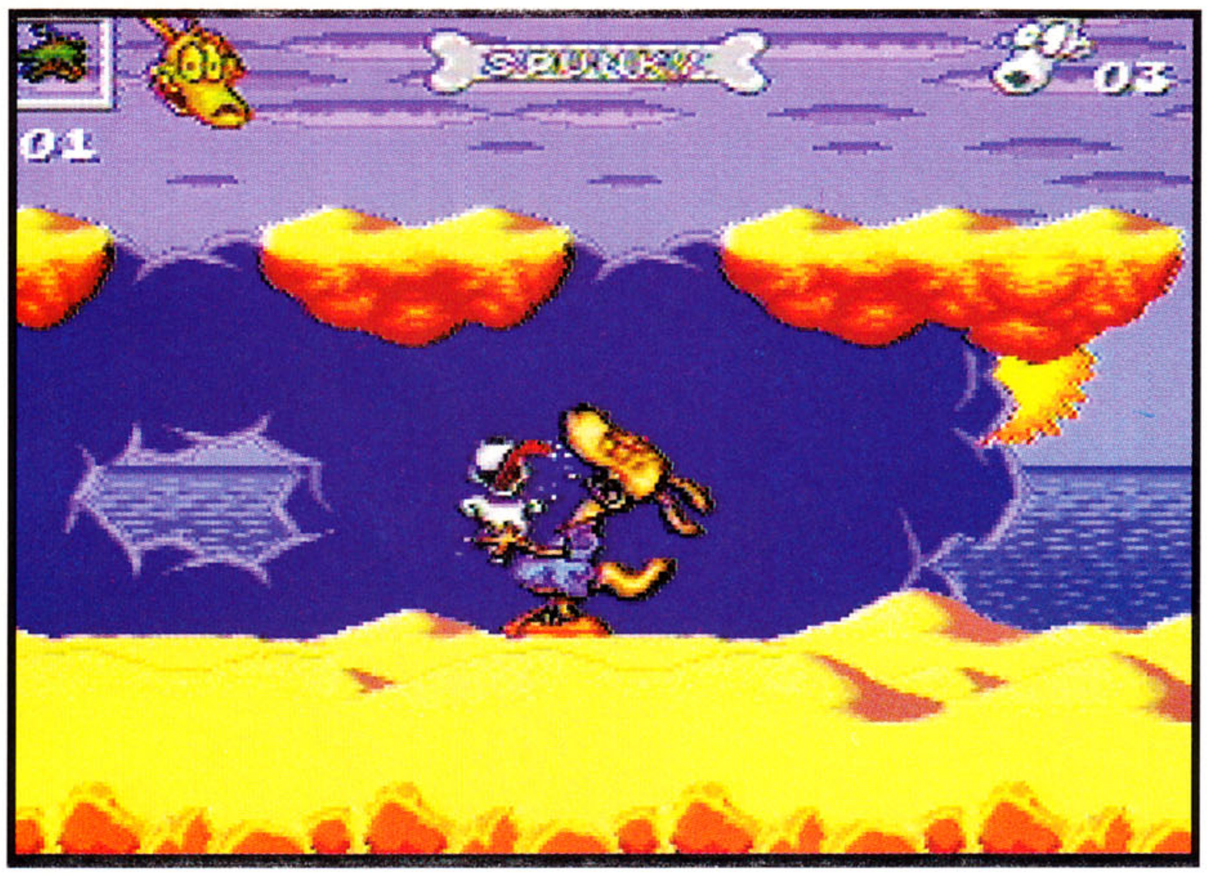
Daniel Lucas, director of cartridge development, Spectrum Holobyte:

"We tried very hard to bring the feel of Star Trek to the SNES and I think we were true to the spirit of the show. Star Trek is important to so many people, we wanted to be as true as possible to the license, so everything in the game is from Paramount. We used the writer's guide and the Star Trek tech manual, but we'll undoubtedly get many people writing about how things should be. The game is very deep as well."

ROCKO'S MODERN LIFE

Things like this shouldn't happen to anyone's dog.

The latest generation of Nickelodeon cartoons, or Nicktoons, if you will, are some of the finest examples of modern animation around. *Doug*, *Rugrats*, and especially, *Rocko's Modern Life*, offer new game publisher Viacom a virtual gold mine of gaming material.



Rocko is a displaced Australian wallaby—a smaller version of a kangaroo—living in the surreally modern metropolis of O-Town. The buildings look like something Frank Lloyd Wright might've created under the influence of mescaline and sleep deprivation. The characters are anthropomorphic animals—such as Rocko's buddy Hef, a huge, dull-witted heifer. And basically, everything in O-City is out to get Rocko, and make his life even more miserable than it already is.

Rocko's Modern Life: Spunky's Dangerous Day is Viacom's first attempt at exploiting one of its own licenses, and the results, while not perfect, are extremely hopeful.

In **Spunky's Dangerous Day**, player-character Rocko must successfully lead his dog Spunky across a series of danger-strewn landscapes. The game offers four areas, each containing four sub-levels, with environments ranging from the beach to a lethal laundromat.

In the initial beach scenario, for example, Rocko and Spunky are happily tossing a frisbee when a toss goes wild and carries the plastic disk to the other end of the beach. In order to get Spunky safely across the sandy surface, Rocko must perform a variety of tasks, from launching the dog, catapult fashion, onto the boardwalk, to collecting bonus bones, and battling beach bullies.

Rocko has several offensive weapons at his disposal. He can: lay back on his wallaby's tail and deliver a series of kicks; jump and kick simultaneously; wipe out low-flying obstacles with a tail swipe in either direction; and bound great distances. (The longer the player holds the action button down, the higher Rocko jumps.) He can also punch, access objects in his survival pack, and even pick up Spunky in order to rescue him from some scrape or reverse his direction.

Survival supplies include dog bones which can be used to distract Spunky while Rocko scouts ahead; green grunge which slows Spunky down if he eats it; and hearts, which restore Spunky to vim and vigor. There are also hot peppers which, when consumed, cause Spunky to take off like a rocket. There are balloons which prompt Spunky to inflate, allowing him to float above danger; shields, which protect Rocko's faithful pooch; and even extra Spunky lives (in this game, both characters have a limited number of lives).

Game power-ups include lightning, which provides Rocko with a quick burst of speed; springs, which let him leap higher; and short term shields.

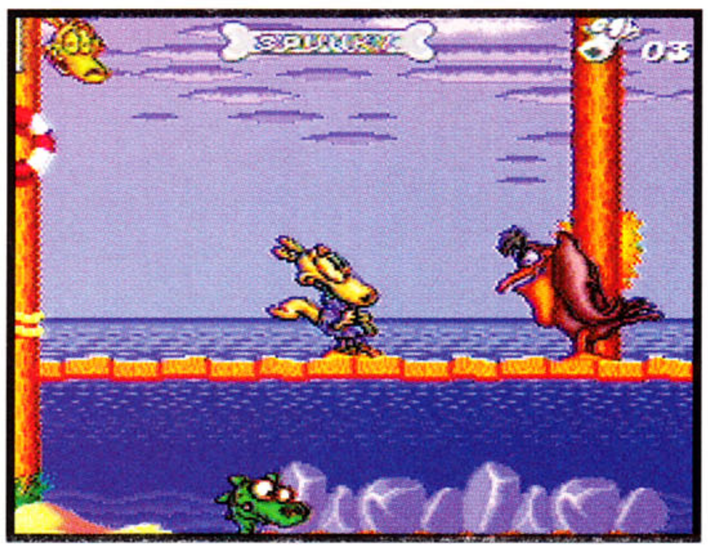
The four main areas explored during the course of the game are the beach, the garbage dump, Rocko's street (a mad quest to reach the ice cream truck on a hot summer day), and the laundromat.

Spunky's Dangerous Day is an interesting and offbeat type of video game. It offers direct, real-time control of Rocko, but focuses game attention on Spunky. The result produces a kind of detachment that some gamers may find frustrating. In most side-scrolling contests, after all, the player is responsible solely for the fate of the character under their direct control.

There is no question, however, that this game was thoughtfully designed and skillfully executed. The cut scenes are beautiful and totally faithful to the cartoons, as are the game graphics themselves. The sound effects, music, and visuals are absolutely first-rate, game control is superb, and the puzzle designs are pretty clever.

Rocko's Modern Life: Spunky's Dangerous Day is an impressive debut for Viacom, and shows that the publisher has the Right Stuff for the electronic gaming business. Rocko is a wonderfully sympathetic and amusing character, and the game perfectly captures the skewed reality of his cartoon environment.

Now let's bring on Beavis and Butthead. *That* should be *rilly* cool. **B+** *(Bill Kunkel)*



Nickelodeon fans will be thrilled to see their favorite characters in this fun title.

BEHIND THE SCREENS

Where's Hef??

Aside from our wallaby hero and his pup, Spunky, the star of the cartoon *Rocko's Modern Life* is Hef, a good-natured yet sometimes feisty character, who is also Rocko's best friend (or so he thinks).

Hef had an interesting start in life—he was raised by wolves, for example. This obviously led to some problems. In fact, his dad's nickname for his unusual son was "Meat."

While not featured prominently in **Spunky's Dangerous Day**, Hef does appear occasionally as a prop (he's the trampoline on the beach, for example). We hope to see more of loveable Hef in future games.

MEGAMAN SOCCER

Capcom brings a popular character to SNES sports.

Mega Man stops fighting Dr. Wily's evil creations in his second appearance on the SNES, long enough to play a nice, unfriendly game of soccer with them.

It's a normal day at the soccer stadium, where two teams are about to go head to head. Unexpectedly an explosion rocks the stands and obscures the playing field.

When the smoke clears, a horrified audience sees that the athletes have been replaced by robots. Dr. Light, creator of Mega Man and soccer fan, is watching the game at home. He immediately recognizes the robots as the creation of the evil Dr. Wily. Rather than let the evil doctor take control of the world via it's most popular sport, he activates a reserve of the blue, crime fighting robots led by the ever trusty Mega Man.

Mega Man Soccer equips the player with a team of robots, all taken from the popular series of **Mega Man** games, and pits that team against opposing robots.

Underneath the whimsical trimmings, **Mega Man Soccer** is a solid sports sim with all the features. Gamers watch the action from an angled, overhead perspective that scrolls to follow the ball. A radar screen at the top of the playfield shows the position of all the robots and the ball. This can be turned off with the select button. Kickers may play a one-man game against the computer, against another human, two players may team up against the computer or the gamer can watch a demo match between two computer controlled teams.

Exhibition lets the player compose a team from the available robot types and line them up against the bad guys. Capcom Tournament is a one or two player tournament where the gamer controls the Mega Man team and battles eight other robot teams. Tournament is the same as the Capcom Tournament, except the player can captain any of the nine robot teams. League is a one or two player feature where the player's team faces a season against all the other robot teams.

Each type of robot has unique skills and abilities, plus an individualized appearance. They show some personality, too, when a goal is made. The scoring robot does a victory routine, and each one is different.

Mega Man Soccer adds special attacks to all the usual kicks, passes, tackles and headers of soccer. Each robot has a special kick that transforms the ball and sends it hurling towards the opponent's net. Bomber Man kicks a bomb, while Snake Man turns the ball into a flying green snake. Any robot hit by Pharaoh Man's ball bursts into flame, while Cut Man's flying blades renders opponents into multiple pieces. This is unbelievably effective against goalies.

More than a wonderful, cute touch, these special attacks affect the game play. The player can forgo them altogether in the options stage and make for a relatively straightforward soccer game, or max them out and watch point totals rise. If the special attacks are used correctly, they are a can't-miss goal shot.

The options allow the player to configure the control pad, hear the sound and music tracks, turn off stereo output, set game length from two to 20 minutes, determine if the goal keeper is auto or manually controlled and, most important, set the number of special shots allowed both teams.

Graphically, **MMS** is solid, if not notably innovative. The animation is smooth, and the effects of the special attacks are very entertaining. Each robot is distinctively drawn in typical superdeformed Japanimation style, with big heads and little bodies. Commendably, the soccer ball always looks and behaves like a soccer ball, except when it's not a soccer ball, and is never hard to keep track of amidst all the on-screen action.

Fans of the rest of the worlds favorite football sport will love Megaman.

Sound is satisfactory, with many effects lending a wide range of effects to the aural pallette, and the soundtrack features dozens of irrepressibly light, perky tunes. Other than that, though, there's nothing wrong with the audio.

Mega Man Soccer will satisfy Mega Man fans, sports game lovers and newcomers alike with its big, humorous cast of characters. The solid game play and origianl concept make this unique game an enjoyable one. **B-** *(John Wesley Hardin)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

In 1987, Capcom introduced **Mega Man** to the Nintendo Entertainment system. It instantly caught fire, becoming a favorite of video game fans accross the world. Now, seven years, 12 games and 2.5 million cartridges later, the blue titanium superhero is poised to take on SNES gamers. Second only to Mario in his number of starring roles, Mega Man owes his success largely to players on the NES.

This fall, Mega fans can catch their hero on TV where he'll be making his syndicated series debut. Look for many of Mega Man's most famous allies and adversaries in a show that promises to be as wild, crazy, and certainly as much fun and exciting as the games that inspired it.

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THE FLINTSTONES

The Treasure of Sierra Madrock and the Grand Poobah.

Hey, look! It's all our favorite Bedrock pals in an all new and wacky adventure.

It has always been Fred Flintstone's dream to become the Grand Poobah of the Loyal Order of Water Buffaloes. When the current Grand Poobah announces his retirement, Fred thinks he's a shoo-in for the position. Unfortunately, the Poobah doesn't see it that way! He feels that a few people are eligible to be Poobah, so he agrees to grant the Poobahship to whoever finds the fabled Treasure of Sierra Madrock. Barney and Fred speed off to beat the other Water Buffaloes to the Treasure. **The Flintstones: The Treasure of Sierra Madrock** is a race against time to find the Treasure and have a lot of fun along the way!

Follow Fred and Barney on their quest for the Treasure of Sierra Madrock.

The Flintstones is mostly a platform game, but a map screen for each game area plays like a board game. If there is only one player, he controls both Fred and Barney. If there are two players, each controls a character. Fred and Barney take turns throwing a bowling ball that allows them to move one, two, or three spaces on the board. The space they land on may be another character, a scene they must pass, a race track, boss monster, or other challenge. Fred and Barney must catch up with the other Water Buffaloes in each area to collect items they need to find the Treasure.

The graphics are very colorful and the sprites are large. The game looks much like one of the cartoons. The board game aspect of the game makes it a tougher challenge because players might not always land exactly on the space they pick. The game is fast due to the race going on behind it. Move quick to catch buffaloes.

Fans of the show will see all of their favorite characters and discover new areas of the Flintstones' world in their search for the Treasure. **B** *(Russ Ceccola)*

THE JETSONS

Invasion of the Planet Pirates and other galactic goofs.

Meet George Jetson...the gangs all here, and ready to embark on an adventure.

The Jetsons: Invasion of the Planet Pirates begins with George Jetson late for work, as usual, and running as fast as he can. Captain Zoom, defender of the Cosmos, suddenly pops up and informs George that he must help save the galaxy from Zora the Space Pirate and her band of brigands. George seems helpless, but Captain Zoom gives him a special weapon, the Pneumo Osmatic Precipitator (P.O.P. for short). George takes the weapon and runs off to save the galaxy from the pirates before they steal the planets' natural resources.

The Jetsons is a sometimes difficult game largely because of the P.O.P. device. It acts like a suction cup that George can use to cling to walls and ceilings or to suck in objects and spit them back out at enemies. The placement of many of these things makes it hard to move further in the levels. Players have to be able to press the button for suck action at the right time to catch the structure and go on.

There are five worlds and 20 stages in **The Jetsons**. George will have to square off against boss enemies if he plans to succeed in his protection of the galaxy. Bonus stages and secret locations in the game make it as much fun to play the second time around as the first. **The Jetsons** is a long game, but full of the futuristic gadgets and not to mention the hilarious George Jetson blunders that players expect. **B-** *(Russ Ceccola)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

The Flintstones and The Jetsons are two of Hanna Barbera's most popular cartoons. The cartoons have been hitting our funny bones for a long time now. The Jetsons have already appeared in an animated feature film, and *The Flintstones* much anticipated live-action movie is due this summer.

Taito has designed previous fun games for these particular cut-up characters. The two games in their most recent offerings of SNES titles revisit these hilarious cutups with added humor.

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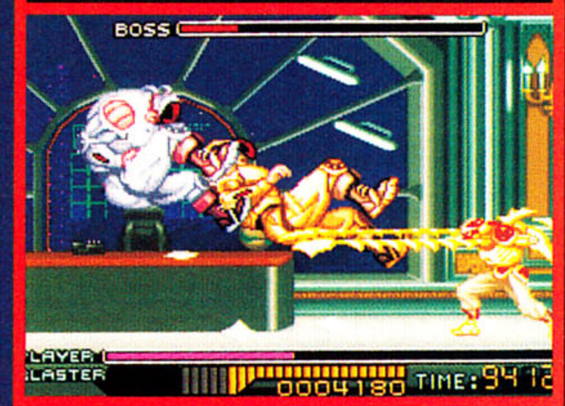

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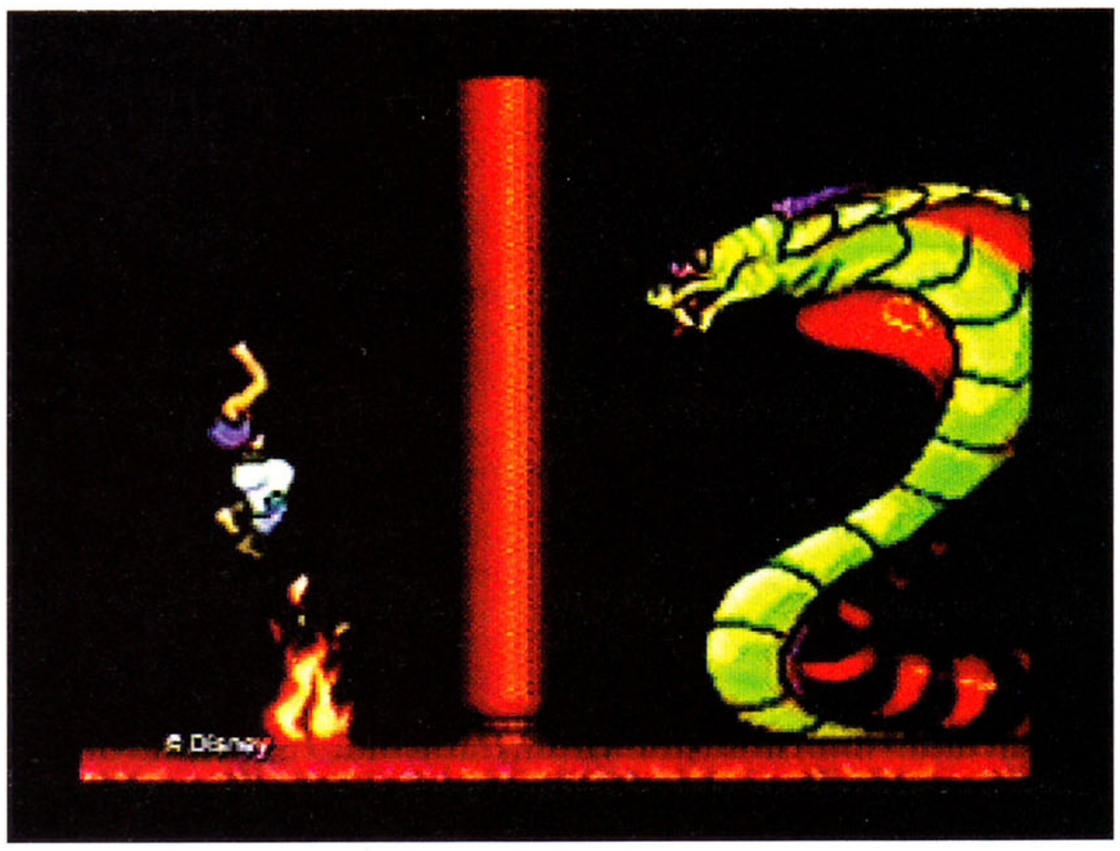
DISNEY'S ALADDIN

Aladdin makes magic on the Game Gear

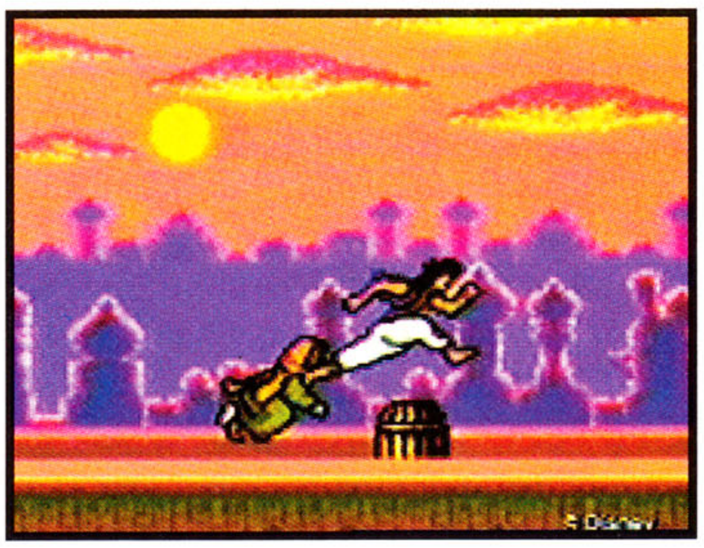
Too often when a game is brought over to a portable system from a console, the portable game buyer gets a cut down version of the original that almost by definition does not capture the spirit of the first game. The designers of **Disney's Aladdin** for the Game Gear smartly sidestepped trying to capture the feel of another game. Instead, they took advantage of the Game Gear's strengths and designed a good-looking, original game that is exciting and fun to play.

Good design and smart graphics contribute to the quality of Aladdin.

Side-scrolling action takes the player through the story of Aladdin as he goes from food-stealing street rat to sorcerer-battling prince via a magic lamp. A lengthy introductory sequence uses scenes from the movie to set the stage. After players watch the king's evil advisor Jafar try fruitlessly to retrieve the magic lamp from the Cave of Wonders, the location changes to the streets of Agrabah, where the player must help Aladdin evade the city guards. The simple but innovative play mechanic here has Aladdin running across the screen with a guard in hot pursuit. As the background scrolls quickly by, the player must help Aladdin jump over potholes, rolling barrels, and other obstacles in the streets while staying out of the grasp of the city guard who runs just behind. This is a real test of any players' twitch skills and the fastest thing to hit the Game Gear since **Sonic The Hedgehog**.



This interface is so effective that it returns throughout the game, but it is by no means the only one. A magic carpet ride through the Cave of Wonders is even quicker and more harrowing, while exploring the cave and the king's palace are adventure scenes more reminiscent of **Prince of Persia**. The action in all scenes fills the screen while three jewels across the top show Aladdin's health. In the running sequences, Aladdin can only jump, while the adventure sequences allow him to walk, run, jump, tiptoe, and slide through the various challenges and pitfalls. Some are harder to master than others, but there is no limit to the available continues and there are passwords for each level, for the gamer who wants to continue later.



Action and fun come together to create a great gaming experience in Aladdin.

When **Disney's Aladdin** doesn't challenge the player, it entertains. There are fewer action scenes than non-interactive cut scenes, which fully recreate the plot line from the film, using printed dialogue and scenes taken from the animated movie. They can be skipped by pressing the Start button, but players will watch them at least once, just for the fun of it.

The graphics are everything that one would expect in a game with the Disney name on it. Despite the limitations of the Game Gear, the eye never wants for color or detail. The characters and artwork in the backgrounds and numerous cut scenes are faithful to the last detail of the movie and the sprites are large, well drawn and easily recognizable. Even in the quickest action scenes, there is no discernible blurring and the registration problems that plague so many other portable games are non-existent here. The designers really have the Game Gear jumping through hoops, especially during the climactic scene on the final level, when Jafar transmogrifies into a giant cobra. Few Game Gear games ever reach this level of graphic sophistication.

Sound is rich and detailed as well. Numerous sound effects and varied music complement the action and the graphics, while tunes from the movie abound and are used in their appropriate places and scenes. Sound is another area where few portable games excel but, again, **Aladdin** performs admirably.

Overall, **Disney's Aladdin** is a superior product in which real thought is evident. More than a second-rate clone of another game, it is a wonder to look at and can be played many times without growing stale. With **Disney's Aladdin**, Sega grants the wish of players who've been waiting for another outstanding game on the Game Gear. **A** *(John W. Hardin)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

Today, video games are increasingly well thoughtout and designed—to the point where many actually surpass the original graphics of the animated television shows. Now, with **Disney's Aladdin** for the Game Gear, a portable game has attained better quality graphics, action, and artwork than most Saturday morning cartoon fare. Video game animation is now so well done that it's possible for some animated characters to crossover from series to game without any real loss of integrity. Witness **Rocko's Modern Life** or **Fido Dido** and **Beavis and Butt-head**, as well.

BARTMAN MEETS RADIOACTIVE MAN

Bartman is an underachiever and isn't afraid to say so.

Radioactive Man has been nabbed by a team of his archenemies and imprisoned in the Limbo Zone, an interdimensional void orbiting a black hole. Only Bartman can save our radioactive hero's skin from Swamp Hag, Dr. Crab, Lava Man, and the mysterious Brain-o the Magnificent.

Players are introduced to the story in a non-interactive animated sequence where Radioactive Man's sidekick, Fallout Boy, finds Bart alone in his tree house, reading a Radioactive Man comic book. He tells Bart of the problem and that only Bartman can save the day.

Bad Bart knows how to do his thing when it comes down to real action.

After Bart accedes to do the good deed, players begin Chapter One, to face the first of the game's enemies, Swamp Hag. Her domain consists of four levels, starting at the junkyard and ending in Swamp Hag's hideaway. Chapter Two takes Bartman to the seabed, where he must swim or walk through five levels before reaching Dr. Crab's underwater lair.

After taking out the first two baddies, Bart goes on to meet Lava Man in his sunken volcano where Bartman must go through three flaming levels before confronting Lava Man. Now, Bartman gets some much needed assistance from Radioactive Man, as they both go up against Brain-o the Magnificent.

Bartman walks, jumps, swims, and flies through all the various adventures. An indicator shows how much power and bonuses Bartman has remaining; the Pause button brings up info on his points and lives.

Visually, **Bartman Meets Radioactive Man** is appealing. Everything is brightly colored, (as one would expect for a cartoon) and very faithful to Matt Groening's twisted comic style. Where **Bartman** fails is in the animation. A few hitches when there is more than one moving object on the screen can be overlooked, but every time Bart takes damage, all action on the screen freezes for a moment, giving the game a hitching, jerking, feel. Registration is also faulty: Bartman may be a superhero, but even he isn't able to stand in mid-air, except in this game. Sometimes Bartman takes damage from things that clearly never touch him.

To the benefit of the designers, Bart's Mighty-Hero Maneuvers; the Mighty-Punch, Super-Kick, Spin-Kick, and Double-Fisted-Mighty-Blow, are entertaining to watch besides being effective against the bad guys. Other tools available to Bartman are Bonuses, Mighty-Powers, and Super Mighty-Powers. Collect the Radioactive Man #1 Bonus Icon and Bartman gets an extra life. Find the Laser Bolt Mighty-Power Icon and Bartman can shoot 20 laser bolts out of his eyes.

Going air-born is really no problem with Bart's super-human powers of flight.

Isn't there a better way to instill a game with lots of play value than denying players passwords and keypoints? These levels are long and difficult, with only one keypoint in the middle. Fortunately, there are a lot of continues, extra lives, and no timer, so the frustration level doesn't go too high, but nothing breaks the monotony of having to play the same scenes repeatedly. Also the learning curve is kind of steep. At more than one point, the player is required to jump blindly into space to discover what lies ahead; in other areas, leaping blindly into the abyss costs a life and sends the player back to the beginning of the level.

Like too many video game soundtracks, the music quickly grows repetitive. The sound effects fare a little better but an occasional "Aye, carumba!" or other trademark Bart-ism would have added to the atmosphere of this particular license and increased enjoyment.

In the end, the game has its good moments, but is a flawed product. Bart Simpson-philes will like it, but **Bartman Meets Radioactive Man** is an underachiever, man. **B+** *(John Wesley Hardin)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

Sam Goldberg, VP of Marketing, "There is still lots of life in the Simpson's license. *The Simpsons* is still one of the top rated TV shows, Matt Groening just started Bongo Comics, and we'll be doing cross promotions with them." What's next? "**Bart's Nightmare** has an Itchy and Scratchy scene, that the players loved. The interaction between the characters was magical. Our next emphasis will be on Itchy and Scratchy." Can fans of the *Simpsons* expect any surprises from Acclaim? "Keep your eyes open and thumbs poised, because the surprises are in the games."

GENGHIS KHAN II

Match wits against powerful rulers in the fight for an empire.

Although the Eurasian tundra has never been a place of quiet solitude, it has been quite some time since the sound of thousands of hoofbeats struck terror into men's hearts; hundreds of years in the real world, a scant five in the world of gaming. When the original **Genghis Khan** appeared in 1989, its depth as a socio-economic simulation of life in the Middle Ages was widely praised. In this ambitious sequel, the strong points of the original design have been reinforced, and the weaknesses, however few, eradicated.

The original featured two scenarios. In the first, the player assumed the mantle of Temujin, the Mongol chief who was to become Genghis Khan. The objective was the unification of Mongolia, and the completion of that goal was necessary to advance to the scenario of world conquest. Both of these have been incorporated (albeit with some fine tuning) into the sequel. Additionally, there are two entirely new scenarios that explore the campaigns and conquest of Genghis Khan's successors, including the venerable Kublai Khan, whose exploits live on in poetry as well as history.

The system requires players to learn to balance combat and diplomacy to achieve their objectives. Further, the quickest way to fall from grace is to over extend one's empire without the economic base to support it. Economic vitality in the home province and vassal states (conquered territories) is maintained through mercantile trade on fluctuating markets and careful control of production levels of the various resources. Popular sentiment is maintained

by distribution of goods, successful foreign policy, and military conquest.

Players have the option of making these decisions themselves, or allowing their advisor to make them. Advisors act in accordance with their political skill. Those with a skill of "A" are the most competent, while those with an "E" don't even know enough to be dangerous. The letter system replaces the numerical ratings used by the original. All characters are rated in four areas: Politics, War Fighting Ability,

Keep a close eye on the various stats that reflect the direction of your quest.

Leadership, and Charm. The higher their rating in a given area, the fewer the body points consumed performing that function. Body points are less a reflection of health (as in the hit point system) as they are a limit of the number of actions a character can realistically manage in a given turn.

The selection of possible actions available to players is actually very broad for this type of game. In addition to the standard economic and military functions one would expect, it is also necessary to spend a little time with the family once in a while. This time is best spent procreating. because extending the family lineage is critical. Characters age and die, some of them quite prematurely. Without a male successor to assume the throne, the game is over. Daughters are also useful to arrange politically motivated marriages

When human opponents are unavailable, the computer plays a fairly strong game. In the Setup Menus, players have the option of biasing the computer strategy toward either hostile or intellectual approaches. The latter will rely on diplomacy and alliance building more heavily than the former, and should provide a greater long term challenge for most players who want to experience the intricacies and difficulties of building an empire in the ancient Far East.

So many worlds to conquer, so little time. Can you become a great leader?

Overall, the greater attention to detail confirms the fact that Koei is listening to their players, and striving to refine an already impressive gaming engine. **B+** *(Ed Dille)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

One of the great strengths of the design is that it functions exceptionally well as a multi-player game. **Genghis Khan II** makes it easy for several players to enjoy on the same terminal, with rapid turn resolution and minimal dead time between turns, particularly if battles are automated. If time permits, however, leave the battle animations on. **Genghis Khan II** eschews traditional Koei overhead combat screens for three-dimensional miniature type icons that are finely rendered and allow the player more tactical flexibility than ever before. Think you can rule a dynasty? Just try it!

ARENA: THE ELDER SCROLLS

Wander a world of incredible detail as you destroy evil.

Jagar Tharn effortlessly extinguished the life of Talin's childhood friend Ria shortly after he banished Tamriel's Emperor to another dimension, and took the place of the Emperor on the throne. Ria's ethereal form clung to life long enough to free Talin from his cell in the sewer, and send him searching for the eight Chaos Staff pieces needed to restore the Emperor and defeat Tharn.

Fighting through the sewers was easy; now Talin needs to choose a profession and train to become adept enough to challenge and defeat Tharn and his demon guards in the Imperial Arena. No problem. Piece of cake.

Travel over a huge game area as you encounter many strange characters.

The 12 million square kilometers of Tamriel are divided into nine provinces. Each province has eight city-states, eight towns, and 16 villages. Within and without each walled village are hundreds of real inns, shops, temples, houses, crypts, towers, and other locations that can be entered and explored. Each area has non-player characters (NPC) that can send Talin, the one-player character of the game, on quests, or who can buy, repair, create, and sell artifacts and spells. Every NPC in the game has a profession, a name, and limited knowledge of his surroundings and of Talin.

The attention Bethesda paid to detail in this DOS title goes beyond any game ever attempted, with hundreds of characters, 18 character classes, eight races, 2,500 magical items, a 150,000-word story, 22 monster types, seven secret societies with their own agendas, 17 diseases, 15 potions, 16 special magical and non-magical artifacts and many other refinements. The elegant and brilliantly conceived spell generation system allows you to combine over 80 spell effects to construct custom spells to augment the 48 known spells available in the mage guild. Each Staff of Chaos piece, special map piece, and special artifact has its own uniquely diabolical master dungeon that must be searched for the needed item.

Talin's first-person perspective displays a real-time, three-dimensional world with weather, moving celestial bodies, animated characters, and dithered horizons. Light-sourcing technology produces shadows and brightness on the textured surfaces of buildings, walls, and skies. The phenomenal, highly detailed, clear graphics and animation retain perspective when jumping or levitating, and are only marred by the inability to join the rectangular surfaces to each other seamlessly. The beautifully rendered and animated lightning, rain, snow, and fog effects are only surpassed by the beauty of a simple sunrise or sunset.

Combat is in real-time. Time freezes while the player selects items to use and spells to cast from pick lists. Swing melee weapons through any arc or screen positions to which a mouse can point. Resting on raised platforms in the dungeons turns off the infinite monster generators, allowing undisturbed rest, but later in the game resting becomes more difficult. Monsters increase in proficiency as Talin does, keeping up the level of challenge, but also creating improbably high-level encounters in areas which are relatively safe in other games, such as in towns.

The excellent mouse interface is marred by the disappointingly incomplete and badly designed keyboard controls. Unfortunately, the excellent automapping system, which allows you to note locations on the town map and automatically travel to destinations on the province map, can only be used in one of the four types of map systems.

Nobles, innkeepers, and others can offer Talin seven types of quests. The most unusual and satisfying capture quest requires Talin to engage a brigand in combat in his lair, where he surrenders as he nears death.

Arena is marred with occasional quest and graphics bugs, tedious conversation and shop routines, occasionally monotonous music, and a poor keyboard interface. On the other hand, **Arena** shines with beautiful graphics, animation, sound effects, mouse control, excellent detail, interesting character generation, a flexible spell creation system, and many details too numerous to mention. Its elegant and ambitious game system deserves the promised sequel, where the vast land can be even more thoroughly filled with detail.

B *(Al Giovetti)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

An Interview With VJ Lakshman:

"When playing the game with another tester, we had cooked up some super characters to try out the rigors of the Imperial Arena. As he reached the fourth floor, the tester asked, 'What did you guys put here?' Just as the answer came back, 'liches,' the scream of a lich pealed out of the speakers followed by the crash of a spell, knocking his spellsword character back four paces and killing him. The shock of the sound sent the tester flying out of his seat, giving him quite a long and unexpected scare. We laughed for a long time about the two casualties of that encounter in the testing room confines."

THE LOCALS WOULD LIKE TO HAVE YOU FOR LUNCH.

The good news is you survived the plane crash. The *bad* news is you're on the Isle of the Dead.

Now, as you search for survival items and a way off the island, you face a horrifying assortment of flesh-eating zombies, hideous bats, blood-thirsty wolves and other unsavory locals. Can we help it if the press is calling it "gory," "gruesome," "graphic" and "sickening?"

You'll traverse dense jungles, treacherous caves and explore the local village to unlock riddles that could aid your escape. And if you're lucky, you may even rehabilitate a beautiful zombie babe.

But don't forget to keep an eye out behind you. Because on the Isle of the Dead, *you're* on the menu!

See your dealer or call today!

ISLE OF THE **DEAD**

WARNING: This game depicts scenes of graphic violence.

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"Big, bright, oh-so-gruesome graphics . . . enough blood and gore to make even George Romero blanch. A real tongue-in-cheek, teeth-in-flesh kind of adventure."
PC Entertainment, October, '93

"Definitely not for the faint-hearted. Sampled realistic sounds add to the sickening, bloody atmosphere."
VideoGames
September '93

"Brings new meaning to the term "graphic adventure."
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IBM 3.5" HD disks. Minimum requirements: 386 PC or 100% compatible, 4MB RAM; DOS 5.0 or greater, hard drive and VGA graphics.
Sound support: Sound Blaster® and compatibles. ©1994 Merit Software.

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HANNIBAL

It's Carthage versus Rome and everything in-between.

Microleague's **Hannibal** for MS-DOS focuses on strategic siege warfare between the Roman and Cartesian Empires from 218 to 183 B.C. Though the real Hannibal is best remembered for crossing the Alps with his elephants in the year the game begins, most players are probably unaware that he remained the guiding military force of Carthage for 35 years after that accomplishment. Indeed, no other empire came as close as Carthage to replicating the glory that was Rome in her heyday. The legacy that Hannibal left was sufficient to sustain Carthage for nearly 40 years after his death. In 146 B.C., the Romans penetrated the walls of Carthage after a three-year siege. Carthage was burned to the ground, the land leveled with plows, and the few remaining survivors sold into slavery.

Hannibal provides players the opportunity to rewrite that outcome, provided they have the strategic savvy and patience to pull it off. Patience is a prerequisite, because it takes a long time to unify Europe and North Africa under the Cartesian banner. Conversely, defeat can come swiftly to those who foolishly commit their forces to unprofitable sieges or inferior positions on the field of battle.

Hannibal features over 700 historically correct cities and villages. Though there are some independent "free" cities, most are part of geographically defined groups that share common ancestry, such as the Hispana of the Iberian peninsula. These groupings are important; if either side lays siege to one of the cities within a group, it is necessary to subjugate the remainder of that "nation" before moving on.

Cities can exist as free neutral bodies, whose markets are open to either side, as free states pre-disposed toward one side or the other, or as colonies. Only colonies produce revenue through taxation, but friendly free states can provide troops if one's negotiations are successful. Mercenaries can be hired at almost any city, though how many are available varies by the town's size and how long it has been since the last hiring.

Initially, the player begins with three armies, though up to 10 can be controlled before the game is over. When an army arrives at a city, players can go to market, enter negotiations for more troops, besiege the city, or move on without combat. Provision armies to capacity before undertaking the march to the next location. If a siege is successful, the player can incorporate the city as a new colony (though subsequent revolution is always a possibility), pillage the local treasury and market or sack the city, which strips all the resources and eliminates that city's value for the remainder of the game.

The economic game de-emphasizes the corruption of the day. One gets what one asks for as long as tax rates are not too prohibitive. Funds from mining and taxation can be used to bolster the Army Treasury, boost the economy or subsidize specific cities. The latter is necessary when constructing larger city walls.

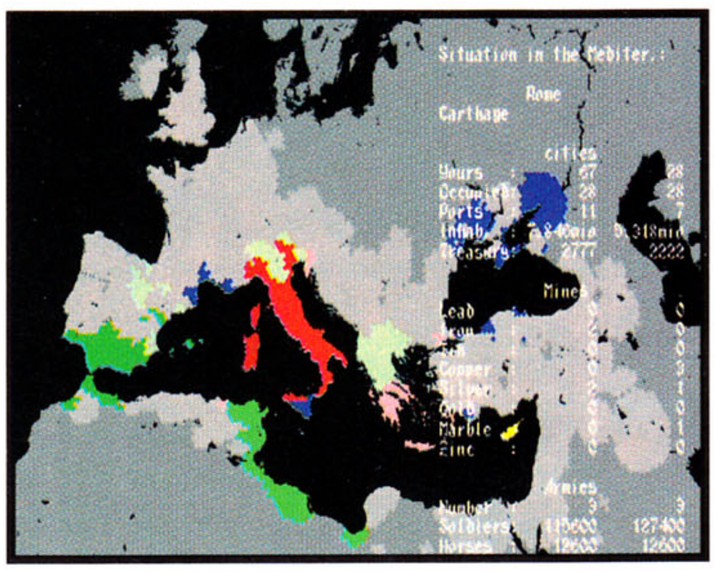
Unfortunately, it is far too easy to make almost any position defensible (with about 2000 troops) against armies of 30,000 or more, particularly port cities that the Romans are approaching over water. When this happens, the enemy army just sits there like it doesn't know what to do next. Friendly troops must travel to destroy the invaders in the field. These battles are disappointing because the player simply chooses offense or defense and selects from one of six formations. After that, two numerical displays tick down rapidly to show the remaining forces.

Characteristic of a good strategy title, **Hannibal** offers 80-200 hours of play, but lacks any other elements that hold a player's attention for the duration. Non-existent sound and uninspired graphics only further the feeling that the player's time would best be spent elsewhere. Hannibal was a warrior, not a mathematician. C+ *(Ed Dille)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

The combat system of Hannibal is stripped of anything but strategic concerns. When armies face off in a prolonged siege, the player does not have the option to place or control ballistae or siege towers. Resolution comes from a straight numerical formula based on the relative strengths of the two combatants, with the height of the city walls acting as a flat modifier for the defender. Food supplies, a critical aspect of siege warfare, are ignored altogether.

Further, none of the other realities of combat—luck, timing, deception, surprise, and tactical finesse—come into play.



Exercise your power as you strive to expand your empire across Europe.

The Elder Scrolls

ARENA

"I've played role-playing games since they first appeared on mainframes a decade ago. The Elder Scrolls: Arena is quite simply the most captivating, well-designed, realistic world available on home computers."

—Russ Ceccola, Associate Editor, Electronic Games

"The most impressive showing by any company...Bethesda's Fall line-up is one of the best going."

—Computer Game Review

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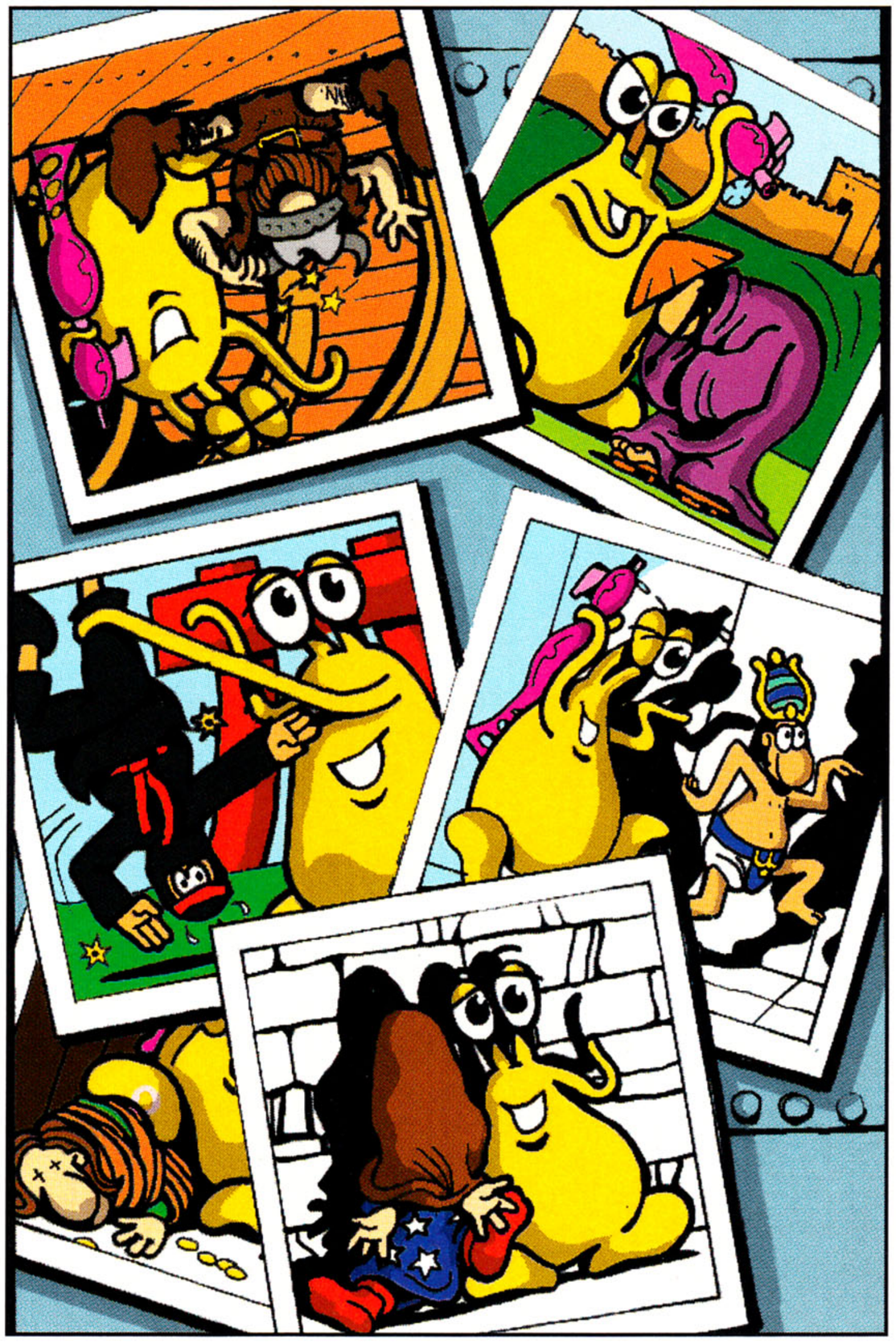

PLANET ROCKED BY DISAPPEARANCES

Dateline Earth: The planet has been rocked by the apparently motiveless kidnapping of several important personalities from various periods in history, causing severe repercussions throughout the time continuum.

Polaroids found at the scenes of the abductions indicate that the perpetrators were the same group of little yellow aliens with eyestalks responsible for the disappearance of the Earth Rock Icon Elvis Aaron Presley.

Rumours have been circulating, also supported by photographic evidence, of a breakout attempt by the kidnappees. This attempt, said to be led by an unidentified caveman, has yet to be confirmed, although several sightings have been reported as far apart as Ancient Egypt, Feudal Europe and the Stone Age.

Temporal Police sources are unusually silent, with the only official statement being "We have several promising leads, and we're hoping to make an arrest sometime within the last few centuries."

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Temporal Times Nth Whentember -0000-

BRONTO BLAMED!

BRONTOSAURUS BLAMED FOR SNARL-UP!

Traffic was at a standstill in Manhattan yesterday morning, as gridlock gripped the city. "Nothing unusual about that." you might say, except that this time the Transit Authority didn't point the finger of blame at the lone driver, but at a large brontosaurus. They should at least get points for originality.

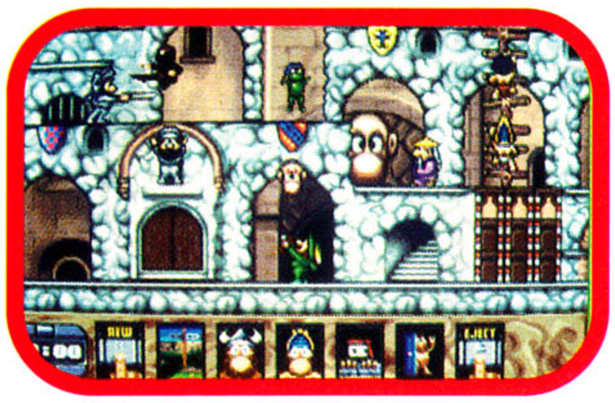
A beleaguered Transit Authority Spokesperson claimed that a large brontosaurus was grazing on trees at the edge of Central Park, and ten-block tailbacks caused by the critter were the reason for the gridlock.

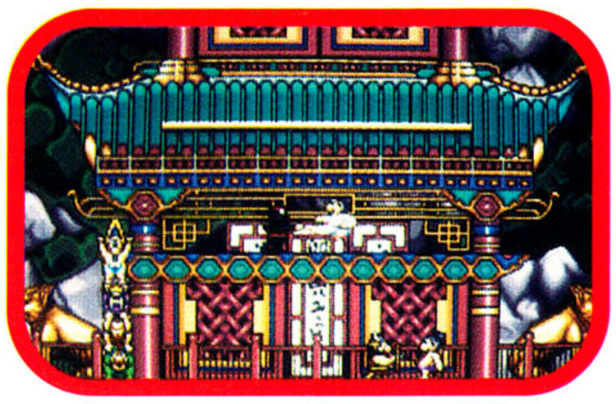
Large crowds of curious bystanders were aggravating the problem, and so far N.Y.P.D animal handlers have failed to come up with an effective way of moving the beast. "You can't just throw a leash on something the size of the Staten Island ferry and expect it to come quietly.", exclaimed a harassed animal expert.

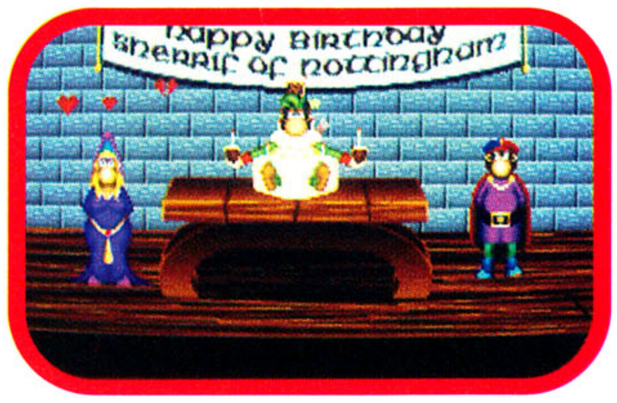
Sources within the United Nations refused to confirm or deny that this latest anomaly was linked to recent discoveries of a ruined Burger Franchise in the ruins of Pompeii and a fossilised '74 Dodge in Yosemite National Park.

Evolution - Lost In Time

A hilarious Race Through Time as you, the Caveman, attempt to get all your fellow characters back to their correct time zones before your Alien captors and their minions grab you and slam you back in the icebox!





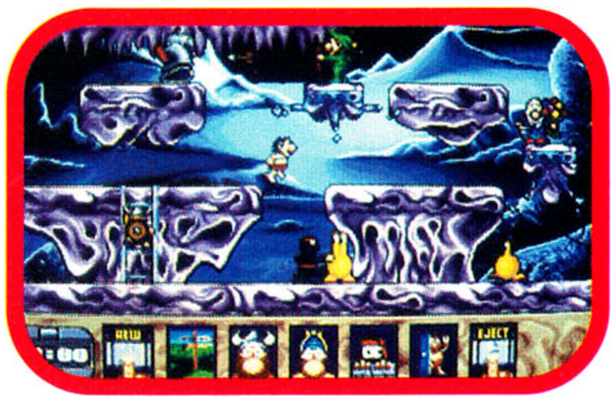


Trout Hypnosis

Scientists from the department of Trout Hypnosis and Temporal Science at M.I.T have released a bulletin explaining the recent rash of weird temporal disturbances.

According to the eggheads, someone (or something) has been altering significant events in Earth's history. Disruptions in the flow of the Time Stream caused by this meddling have lead to rifts, such as the one that brought a Brontosaurus to Central Park, Manhattan, causing traffic chaos at the height of rush hour.

The bulletin concludes that unless the flaws in the time stream are repaired quickly, wholesale chaos will ensue.



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QUEST FOR GLORY: SHADOWS OF DARKNESS

Save Mordavia from the usual enemies, but do it quickly!

The fourth installment of the **Quest for Glory** series is everything one would expect it to be—fun, complex, absorbing, and funny. **Shadows of Darkness** continues the series' irreverent take on Heroes with a trek to and through Mordavia, a Transylvanian town surrounded by oddly named mountain ranges and chock full of unusual townspeople, creepy characters, eerie buildings, and horrid monsters—all drawn in loving detail by Lori and Corey Cole, two people with a bizarre and charming sense of humor.

Your player's characteristics are quite important to the outcome of the game.

A cult has kept alive the image of the Dark One for 200 years, and now a demented wizard and a lethal lady vampire have teamed up to awaken him. The pair have surrounded themselves with some other delightful characters as well, including Werewolves, Vorpal Bunnies, Wyverns, and more Vampires, all of whom are dedicated to the ultimate demise of—you guessed it—Our Hero.

The aforementioned hero awakened in a cave full of skeletons, with no idea of how he got there and no provisions or weapons. He must find his way out of that cave and a few more, as well as get through the fetid swamp that has cut Mordavia off from the rest of the world, before he is on the road to the village. As always, the hero's progress and continued good health is bolstered by some honest pilfering from dead bodies, caves, etc. In this way he can arm himself, light his path, provide money to buy provisions, and make some McGuyver-esque contraptions to help him out of the to-be-expected tight spots.

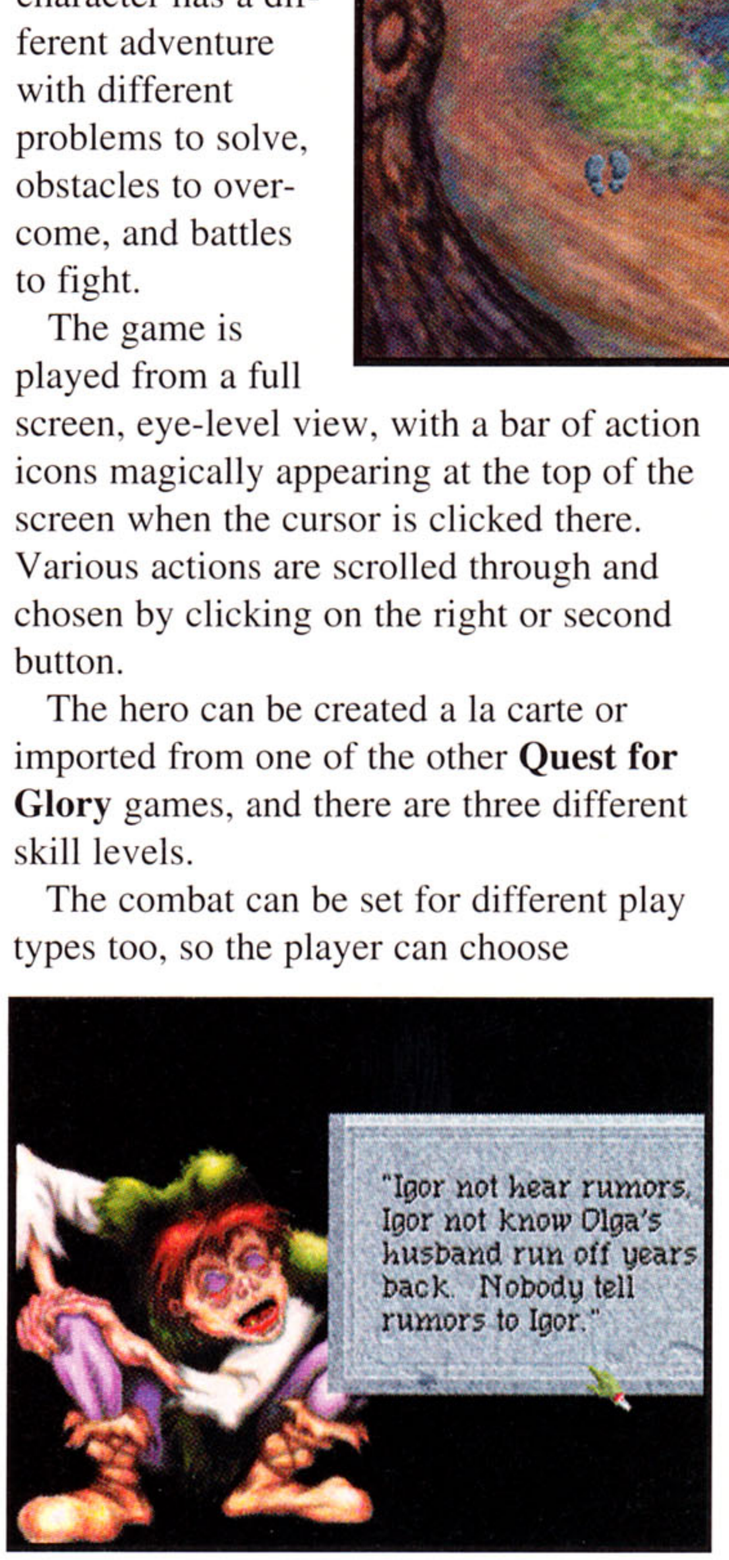
Shadows of Darkness is actually three games in one, as the player can choose to be a fighter, magician, or thief. Each character has a different adventure with different problems to solve, obstacles to overcome, and battles to fight.

The game is played from a full screen, eye-level view, with a bar of action icons magically appearing at the top of the screen when the cursor is clicked there. Various actions are scrolled through and chosen by clicking on the right or second button.

The hero can be created a la carte or imported from one of the other **Quest for Glory** games, and there are three different skill levels.

The combat can be set for different play types too, so the player can choose Strategy, where the computer uses "fuzzy logic" and predetermined player settings to fight battles for the player or, if that sounds too tame, set the level to what Sierra terms "adrenaline-pumping, thumb–twitching arcade action."

The Magic User has six new spells, including the abilities to walk on water, freeze opponents, and hide in plain sight. All play can be done with a mouse, but the keyboard is supported as well and **Shadows of Darkness** supports the use of Logitec's new Cyberman controller.



Interact with many different characters on your quest to destroy the Dark One.

There are lots of icons, making game play faster so the player can concentrate on solving the puzzles in the game, and many, many helpful things are found, assimilated, put together, and used in ingenious ways.

The graphics are excellent (no surprise) and the sound is great, with proper background sound in the proper places (bird song, not music, outside) and not just your usual run-of-the-mill heroic themes where they're called for. These are expected, but also done with the same class that characterizes the game. There's also a whole slew of nifty sound files that add a lot of enjoyment to the game.

Along with the disks and manuals, Sierra packaged the Halloween issue of *Hero, the Journal of General Job Adjusting*, a gleeful parody of soldier-type magazines that also holds some helpful hints for the stumped player.

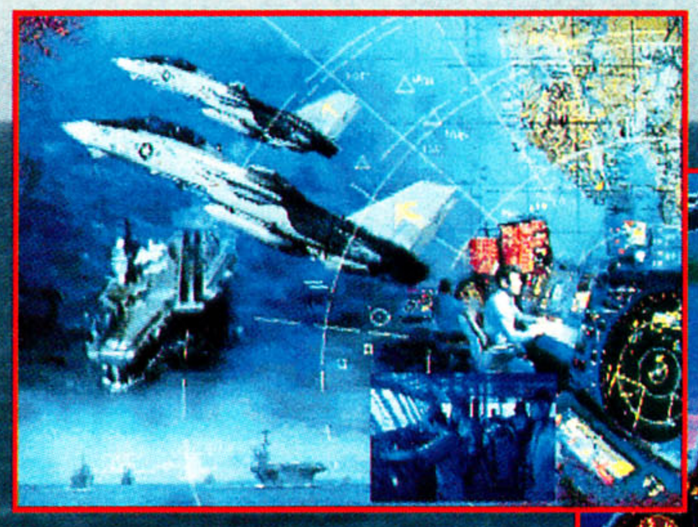
Sierra seems to have a knack for making their games entertaining—even the installation is fun. **Shadows of Darkness** will not disappoint loyal fans of **Quest for Glory**, and is sure to bring new devotees to the series. **A** *(Sarah Slaymaker)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

Corey and Lori Cole designed the **Quest for Glory** series in an attempt to combine fantasy adventure and role-playing, where the player would create not only an interactive story but a character who would grow and develop during the course of that story.

"I wanted the player to really identify from the beginning with the character," says Lori. Corey adds, "The tale develops out of the combination of the game setting and the player's actions: The story doesn't really exist until the player as Hero has inserted his/her part." The result is an ongoing achievement in gaming entertainment.

PILOT THE NAVY'S FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE.



Actual screens may vary.

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TAE

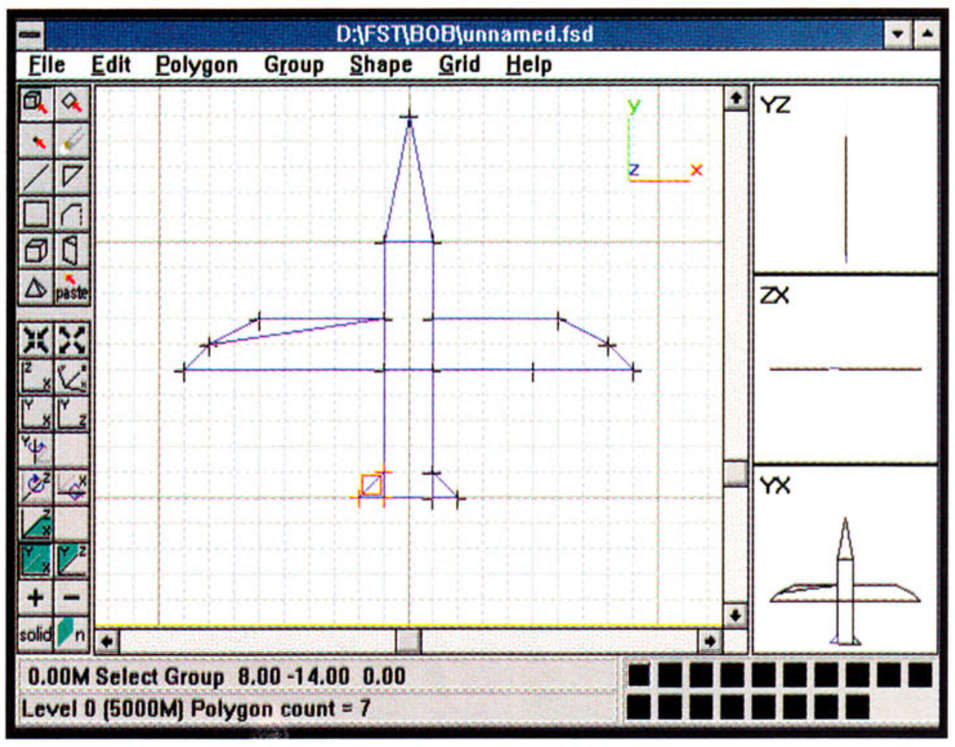
FLIGHT SIMULATOR TOOLKIT

Domark lets you design and pilot your dream plane.

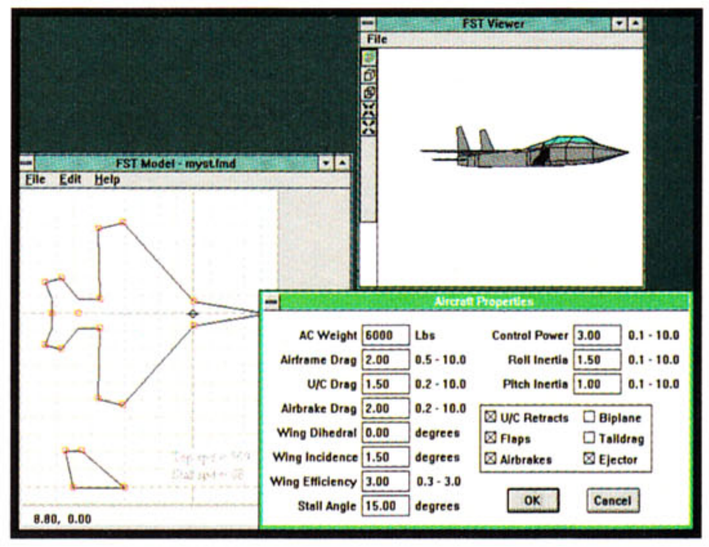
As the name suggests, this MS-DOS game within a game is a flight simulator that allows the player to create an entire world, complete with ships, buildings, terrain, and planes. Airplanes, once constructed, contain basic flight simulator controls, with the added advantage that the shape, color, cockpit instrumentation, flight model, and outside world can all be modified to individual specifications and preferences.

These totally customized flight simulators can be exchanged with friends. The downside is that the software has no mission generator and the flight simulator lacks many niceties, such as an autopilot or map display.

A three-dimensional computer aided design program lets the player create a world from scratch, using five editor modules to create or modify ground terrain features, object shape, color palette, cockpit components, and the plane flight model.



Flight Sim Toolkit comes with a clip art library of 207 fully rendered objects and two ready-to-play flight simulators: Top Gun and Private Pilot.



Incorporate your own plans into the design of various aircraft as you play.

The 3-D CAD shape editor lets the player design filled polygons that reflect light from any angle, with dead-on surfaces the brightest and shading for other facets, simulating time of day. These shapes are rendered by the computer in real time, so that they can be given a flight model program and fly around the world.

The flight model may also be designed to exact specifications, by setting numerical statistics for 11 variables, including drag, wing characteristics, and aircraft

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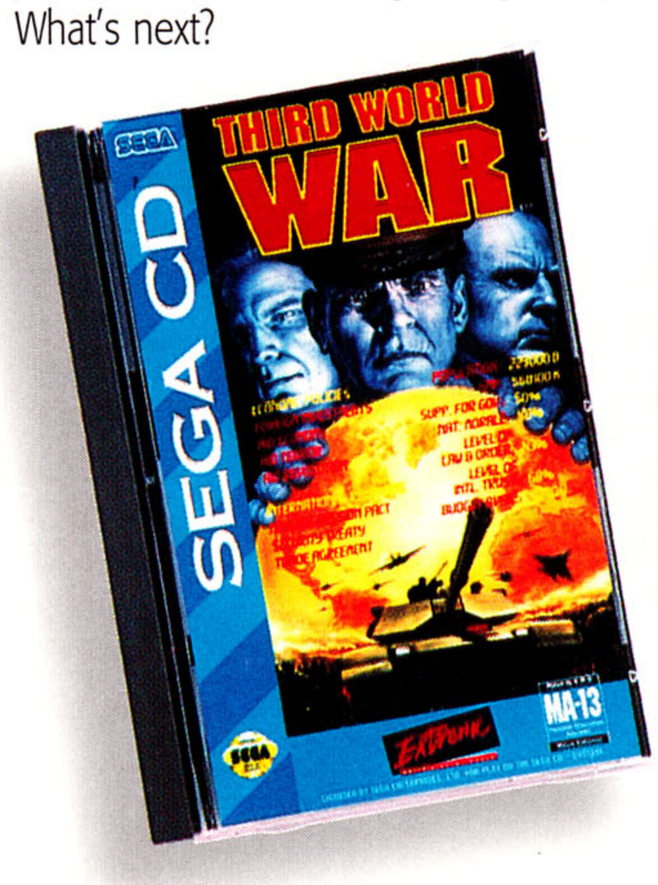

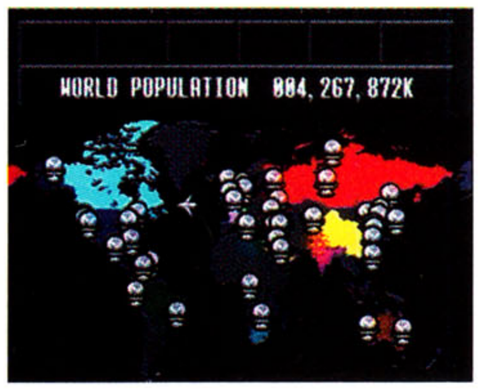

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weight. There are six aircraft features that can be given to the plane, including retractable undercarriage, flaps, airbrakes, and ejector. Once designed, the flight model can be assigned to any shape, setting up whimsical worlds where ships fly and airplanes sail the oceans.

Design and fly your own flight models as you take off into the bright blue sky.

Those unhappy with other flight simulators can spend many enjoyable hours designing and flying their own special flight models consistent with Newtonian mechanics. The color editor lets the player set the mood by changing the palette, from bright, realistic colors to some that could only come from an alien landscape. The cockpit editor offers the opportunity to create or add instrumentation from the clip art file, using any paint program that supports PCX files. One could put a heads-up display in a World War I biplane, or have little or no instruments.

The world editor uses terrain data from the American Geological Survey and provides a realistic landscape. Objects rendered in the shape editor can be placed anywhere. Any object can be given a flight model with an autopilot so as to simulate enemy fighters or commercial aircraft, or move as ships or boats over land and sea on a defined path. Sound is provided by wave files that can be linked to certain events

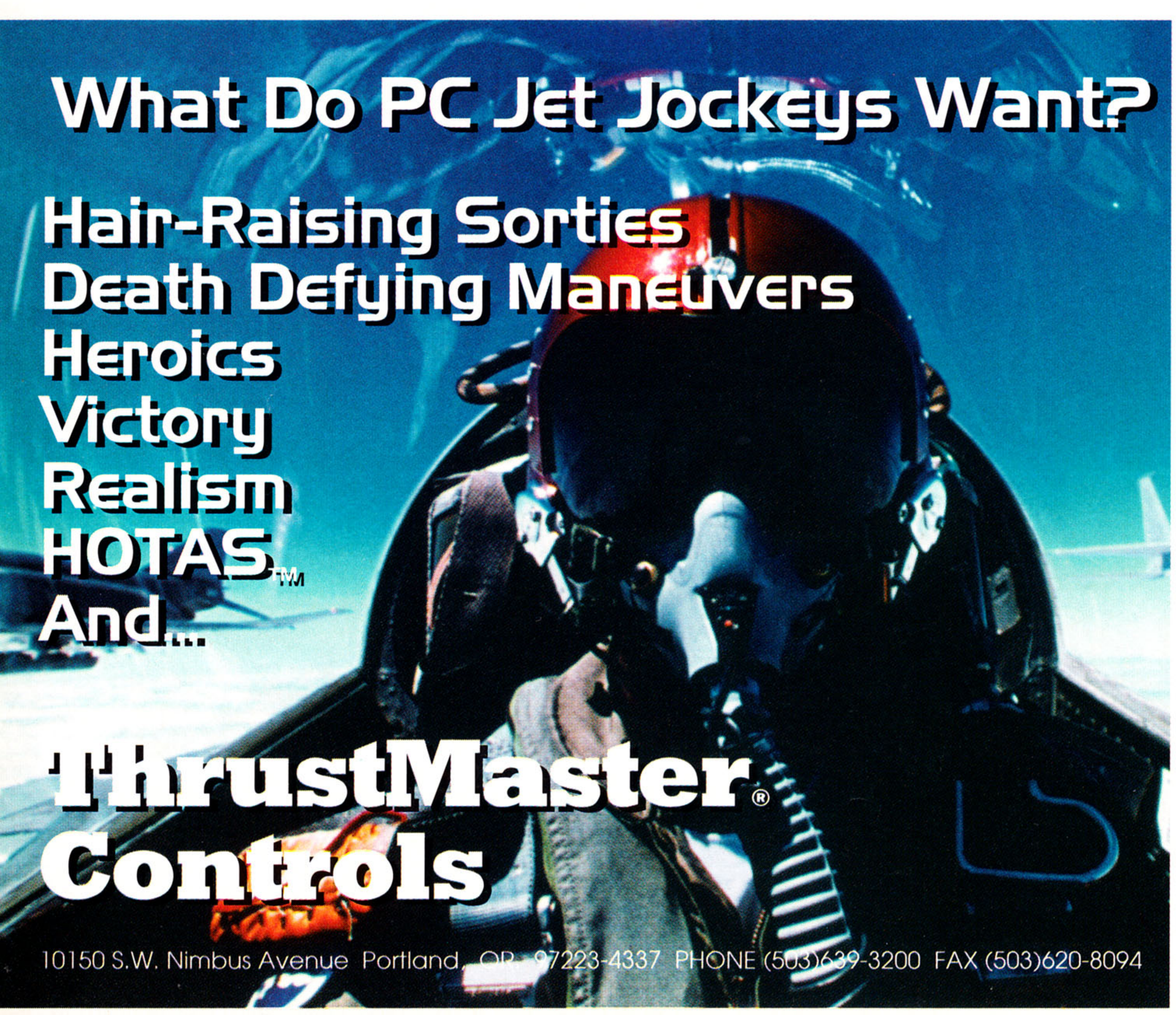
The flight model, called Fly, supports either civil or combat types of simulators, which in turn support navigation, artificial intelligence that learns from experience, cannon, A-A, A-G, rockets, bombs, AAA, and SAM realistically linked to radar and supply. Fly is a high performance 32-Bit program that uses all the available memory of an extended memory driver, and for maximum performance should be run from DOS after exiting Windows.

Players should enjoy the ability to exchange worlds and flight models with friends over on-line services and BBs. Fly has a little over 50 control commands; somewhat limited when compared to a dedicated flight simulator, and this may disappoint many enthusiasts. But for the perfectionist who likes to tinker with designing worlds, and has the patience to realize his or her goals, **Flight Sim Toolkit** is a rewarding way to keep armchair aviators up in the air. **B** *(Al Giovetti)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

Matt Miller, Software Manager Domark USA

"We designed a jet airplane without wings and without the ability to take off. We gave this giant jet 'dragster' good turning ability and high speed and spent many fun hours dragging it around the tile with other dragsters of similar make and design. I liked designing the ultimate jet fighter by varying the flight characteristics and then test flying my design. I've been disappointed by the lack of realism in F/A-18 Hornet flight simulators, so I set out to produce a very accurate F/A-18 flight model."



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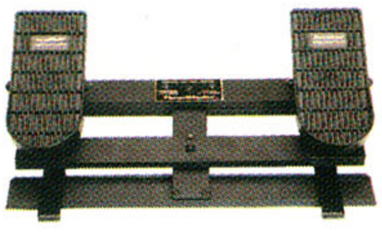

RCS® (Rudder Pedals)

THE TERMINATOR: RAMPAGE

Skynet is back, tougher than ever and ready to rumble.

In the future, machines of war, controlled by the Skynet computer network, relentlessly destroy the last, tattered remnants of humanity. But John Connor and his brave Resistance fighters barely succeed in liberating Earth by destroying the orbital control center of Skynet at the end of **Terminator 2029**. The future is secure, right? Unfortunately, the world suddenly and inexplicably reverts. It seems that Skynet is back to its old time traveling tricks, and someone has to come back to 1994 and stop it.

In **The Terminator: Rampage** for MS-DOS, Skynet has managed to send a modified T-800 Terminator, called the metanode, back in time to take over Cyberdyne Systems. The Resistance can only send back one man to stop this hideous infiltration. The fate of the world rests in the player's hands.

Rampage is an example of the standard building-crawl shoot-'em-up that has become a solid sub-genre of games since **Wolfenstein 3-D**. **Rampage**, however, pulls the job off well, with many nice features, a slick package and very few deficits. The most notable fact about Rampage is it's *hard*! On the easy level this game is more difficult, hands down, than any comparable game on the market. Getting through the first level alone is a major challenge. Ammo and equipment are sparsely scattered among a plethora of enemy troops. Challenges abound for even the most experienced machine gun killer.

In fact, were it not for a late addition in the product development cycle, **Rampage** might have attained the distinction of being the first "impossible" game. Now, however, when a level is passed, all items regenerate, while bad guys don't. Bethesda added this feature during play test to give the players a fighting chance if an important item is missed along the way. Now it remains simply for survival's sake.

But saying **Rampage** is difficult is not to say it doesn't play well. A multitude of weapons wait to be acquired and selected. There are also other items, such as weapons parts and access cards, which must be picked up along the way in order to meet the final challenge. These subgoals give a feeling of progression to the game absent in "oh, another level to clear" type scenarios. **Rampage** also has different sounds for each attacker. A minor point, perhaps, but very useful. Even if an attacker is out of view, the danger level is known.

Rampage also boasts some of the best graphics Bethesda Softworks has produced to date. Texture mapped walls and object detail are a refreshing change from the "floating furniture" of many games of this type. The targeting pictures of the terminators, in particular, deserve praise. Even at extremely close range, there is almost no pixelation, which adds to the suspension of disbelief tremendously. The animated sequence depicting the destruction of LA deserves special mention as well. It remains one of the most detailed and disturbing graphics in any game on the market.

The first-person perspective lends a very realistic feel when searching the levels.

Good skill with a weapon is just one vital link between survival and destruction.

BEHIND THE SCREENS

Interview with V.J Lakshman, Chief Designer

When people first boot it they think it's a slow game, but after finding the proper level for their machine, it runs fine. Keep lowering the detail setting until it works; this really only affects how far ahead walls are drawn.

Our next project will use the **2029** targeting system combined with the 3-D graphics of **Rampage**. In **Operation Ironstorm** you will select the type of armor you want to wear and then get dropped into trouble spots to mop up problems. It should offer plenty of 3-D bang and boom, so be ready for some serious action.

The only complaint with **Rampage** lies in its speed, which is less than average. With a reasonably fast machine and the proper settings (see interview), this isn't that big of a problem, but gamers with 386 based systems might find the frame rate a major annoyance. Despite this grumble, the game is good enough to justify a new CPU chip, or a little extra RAM. After all, every time Skynet comes out with some radical new design, it's up to the dedicated and strong Resistance fighters to resort to drastic measures to save one possible future of humanity. **A** *(Ed Dille)*

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STAR TREK: 25TH ANNIVERSARY CD

Interplay's game really speaks to the true Star Trek fanatic.

"Space, the final frontier..." Those familiar words certainly ring true with this new version of the PC game hit **Star Trek: 25th Anniversary** (**ST25**). In this case, it's the space available on the CD-ROM that's the final frontier.

Interplay tweaked the original game's engine and provided the perfect collection of voice-over talent to enhance the game for CD-ROM. The result is a title that both Star Trek fans and those who played the PC version of the game will enjoy.

ST25 was a hit game for computers because the game system is logical (pun intended), the outer space combat is exciting (although a little clunky), and the missions/planet-side actions have all the spirit, mystery, and humor of the classic Trek episodes.

No longer are players confined to merely watching the TV show. **ST25** is the first of many Star Trek-related games that allows players to control the plot of Trek-like missions with a simple interface and lots of familiar elements, from tricorders to phaser banks.

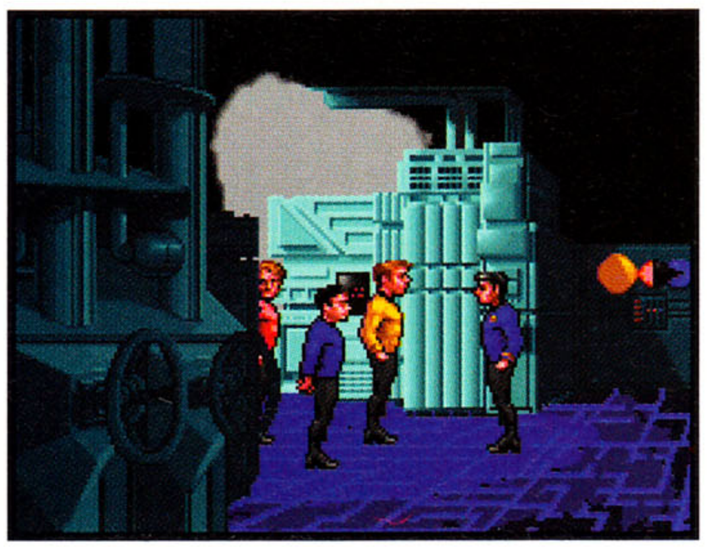
There are three modes of game play in **ST25**: the Bridge Interface, Combat (from the bridge) and Planet-side Investigation. Click on one of the seven classic cast members on the bridge to access appropriate icons for game control. For example, click on Uhura to open communications channels, on Spock to access the ship's computer or on Chekov to take the *Enterprise* wherever the mission requires.

Use the ship's controls to travel to

What an astonishing scene! Discover the secret behind the mysterious deaths.

planets and locations where the real action takes place in the missions.

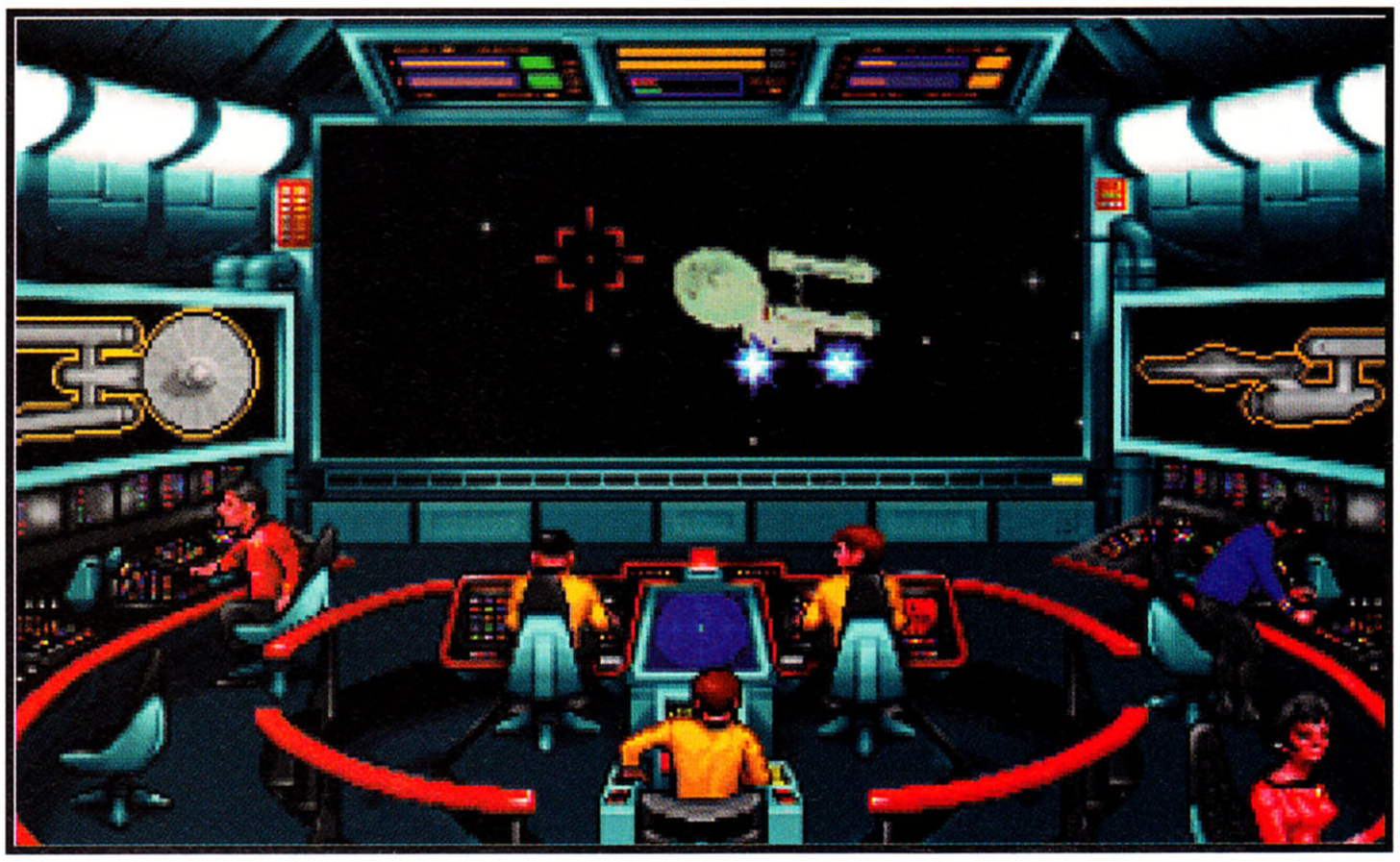
Along the way, other ships may challenge the *Enterprise* to combat. Combat is like a simple flight simulator. It gets difficult later in the game when there are more enemies and they have better captains. Use photon torpedoes and phasers to destroy enemy ships. The best shooting strategy is to lead (aim ahead of) the enemy ships.



First Officer Spock and the rest of the crew will offer advice on the journey.

The missions on the game's planets and other space ships make up the meat of **ST25**. Kirk, Spock, McCoy, and a red-shirted security officer (the type that always got killed in the first five minutes of the TV show) beam down to the planet or ship to investigate the area.

Players encounter ancient alien cultures, hostile enemies, puzzles, and difficult situations. Controls are limited to basic take, look, use, talk, and game options icons. Players must use their inventory items, diplomacy, and brains to solve the mystery or problem in each mission and return to the *Enterprise*. The game awards commendation points to players based on their exhibited skills in each mission. True to the spirit of the TV show, McCoy displays his sarcasm from time to time,



Spock never breaks a sweat, and the red-shirted security officer *can* die.

ST25's graphics are very simple and colorful. Players see a variety of environments in the missions. The ships in combat are impressive: They are digitized models that the design team built for the game.

More important than this CD game's graphics are the voice talents involved and the additional sound effects. Every cast member from the original show recorded

Trekkies get to hear the voices of the actual actors from the television series.

their character's lines in the game in a number of sessions in a few studios. It's worth playing **ST25** just to hear the beloved cast members fall back into character in conversations that seem lifted right from the show.

ST25 CD is an example of the excitement companies can add to a product by enhancing it with new sounds and speech. Fans of the original game will also appreciate the CD version because Interplay listened to their fans and revamped the final episode. Now there's more to the game than just combat, and there's a brand new ending.

Star Trek fans and adventure fans alike will enjoy the audio drama and serious game challenges that **ST25 CD** provides.

A *(Russ Ceccola)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

Fun Things to Try

Some of the most entertaining aspects of **ST25 CD** are the lines that the TV show's cast had to deliver. Here are some things to try in the game that elicit fun responses.

- Use a weapon on Spock or McCoy.
- Travel to a planet not involved in the current mission.
- Find a way to kill the red-shirted security officer.
- Ask McCoy to carry some thing heavy.
- Listen to any Captain's Log.
- Ask Scotty for emergency power twice or three times in a row.
- Do all the wrong, illogical things in the game. Ruffle the feathers of the entire starship *Enterprise* crew!

CRITICAL PATH

Guide this Kat through a dangerous mutant hell.

Critical Path is just one of a number of multimedia CD-ROM extravaganzas which have flooded the computer game market since last summer's software drought. **Hell Cab**, **Iron Helix**, **The Journeyman Project**, and Media Vision's other offering, **Quantum Gate**, all seemed to explode on the scene at once; each with its own unique approach and each claiming to be The Ultimate Interactive Gaming Experience. The common element among all these titles is the combination of outstanding graphics and an abundance of either live-action video or computer generated animation, intertwined to create a convincing alternate reality (let's put the term Virtual Reality out of its misery).

By reading the book left by the colonel, the player guides Kat to a safe haven.

Critical Path has taken some pretty stiff criticism for being great to look at but offering very little in the way of player interaction. It's an accurate assessment, but not all gamers want to spend three weeks battling their way through some fantasy empire, collecting knickknacks and conversing endlessly with inscrutable NPCs. To some people everyday life is enough of a challenge; when they sit down at the computer they simply want to be entertained.

And **Critical Path** is very entertaining, indeed. Utilizing live-action video, shot against blue screen and seamlessly overlaid against awesome 3-D Studio rendered backdrops, Critical Path is a role-reversing version of Max Headroom, where video reporter Edison Carter was remotely guided through an ominously futuristic cityscape by his lovely controller Theora Jones.

In **CP** the player must guide the character Kat (actress/ stuntperson Eileen Weisinger), a no-nonsense Apache helicopter pilot shot down over an uncharted island, to a waiting chopper on the roof of a drug factory full of fleshy-headed mutants.

From a control room adjacent to the roof, players have access to a small video monitor patched in to both the factory's security system and Kat's headset-mounted camera. There is also a Military Communications Link through which the player transmits instructions to Kat; a bank of 18 switches which control the factory's machinery (only four do anything worthwhile), and an addressable detonator for setting off explosive charges conveniently placed around the factory by the island's mad dictator, General Minh (a fiendishly hammy Min Yee, Media Vision's Executive Vice President).

Basically, **Critical Path**'s game play falls somewhere between EA's **Space Hulk** and the laser disc classic, **Dragon's Lair**: players don't directly control Kat's actions, except for the very few (20 to be exact) instances where an input is required to keep Kat from losing one of her nine lives. The security cameras reveal the dangers around Kat, while her headset camera provides a Kat's-Eye view of the action.

There is something perversely fascinating about "watching television" on a computer monitor, even in the quarter-screen QuickTime window which the control room setting does a good job of incorporating in a deceptively logical fashion. The normally disruptive transitions between individual QuickTime movies are also handled quite naturally with brief flashes of electronic snow.

It's undeniably true that **Critical Path** is guilty of being too short. Once the correct inputs are learned, the game can be finished in roughly half an hour, including the opening titles, introduction, and closing credits. The way Kat relates directly to the player and the immediacy of her predicament succeeds in creating the kind of character/player bond which is difficult to create in a more traditional style of game.

The bottom line on **Critical Path** is a question of balance between the limited interaction and playing time, the top quality production values and the rather hefty price tag. There's really nothing wrong with the game that lopping 20 bucks off the price wouldn't solve. **B+** *(Scott Wolf)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

The Next Path

While leading Kat to safety is not the easiest job in the world, it wasn't meant to be an impossible task either. According to Allan Thygesen, Gen. Mgr. of Media Vision's Publishing Group, "The key point of **Critical Path** is to provide an enjoyable gaming experience for the novice multimedia user, based on a visual feel they're comfortable with, namely television and cinema. It was never our intention to compete with the full-blown RPG market, which is already well served by other publishers. We're currently working with Mechadeus on a new title which will have a larger video window, a complex storyline, more interactive options, and a longer playing time."

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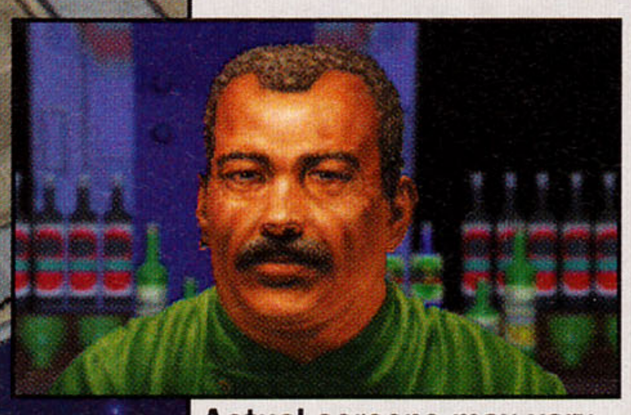

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3DO

TOTAL ECLIPSE

A first-person shooter that brings down the 3DO house.

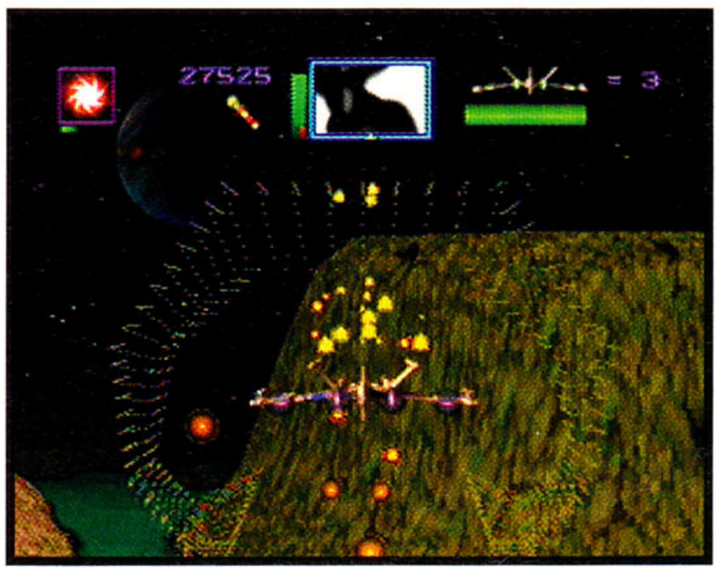
Crystal Dynamics has a new enemy for you and your 3DO, and they're not anything to laugh at. The Drak-sai, a particularly vicious race of starfarers, have a hobby: hunting. Unfortunately for humanity, the Drak-sai hunt sentient races, and humanity is the quarry of the season! In the first confrontation between the races, the Drak-sai used an insidious weapon, the Sun Dagger, to nova a star. Now they are threatening Earth's sun with the same weapon. Humanity has but one hope, the powerful and fast FireWing fighter craft. With the player strapped firmly inside, the FireWing is dispatched on a desperate series of assaults on the Drak-sai worlds.

There are five missions to be completed in order to save the world. In the course of these missions, enough alien firepower is brought to bear against the lone FireWing to make **Total Eclipse** challenging for even the most jaded arcade wizard.

The mechanics of the game are simple. The player must pilot the FireWing through narrow canyons, some of which offer branching paths. Avoiding the scenery is difficult enough in most areas, even without the seemingly unending array of enemies one encounters. Shooting enemies boosts power to the FireWing's shields, and there are also bonus gates that provide better weaponry when flown through. Each overland area is separated by tunnels. Flying above ground is hard enough, but the tunnels are a nightmare. Obstacles, both stationary and moving, provide plenty of chances for the player to make the ultimate sacrifice. If the FireWing makes it out of the tunnels in one piece, then it has the chance to blow up the mission objective target, which can be anything from missile silos to refineries to enemy headquarters, etc.

Of course, before completing each planet there is the obligatory boss craft to defeat. As one might expect, the boss must be hit multiple times and fires an entirely unreasonable array of death dealing weapons at the FireWing. Fortunately, controller response for this title is excellent. Crystal Dynamics provided four different configurations to give players maximum reflex advantage from the beginning. The game also allows up to five fighters per game and two continues, which keeps players progressing at a reasonable pace as they become familiar with the nuances of the FireWing.

There are, however, a few minor bones to pick. The first is a common failing of the genré. Where did all these power-up icons come from? You are on an enemy planet, in the thick of battle, and there happen to be nine separate weapon/shield types specific to the FireWing just waiting to be picked up. In a game that does this good a job setting a realistic feel, at least some explanation should be given for this bonanza of hardware.

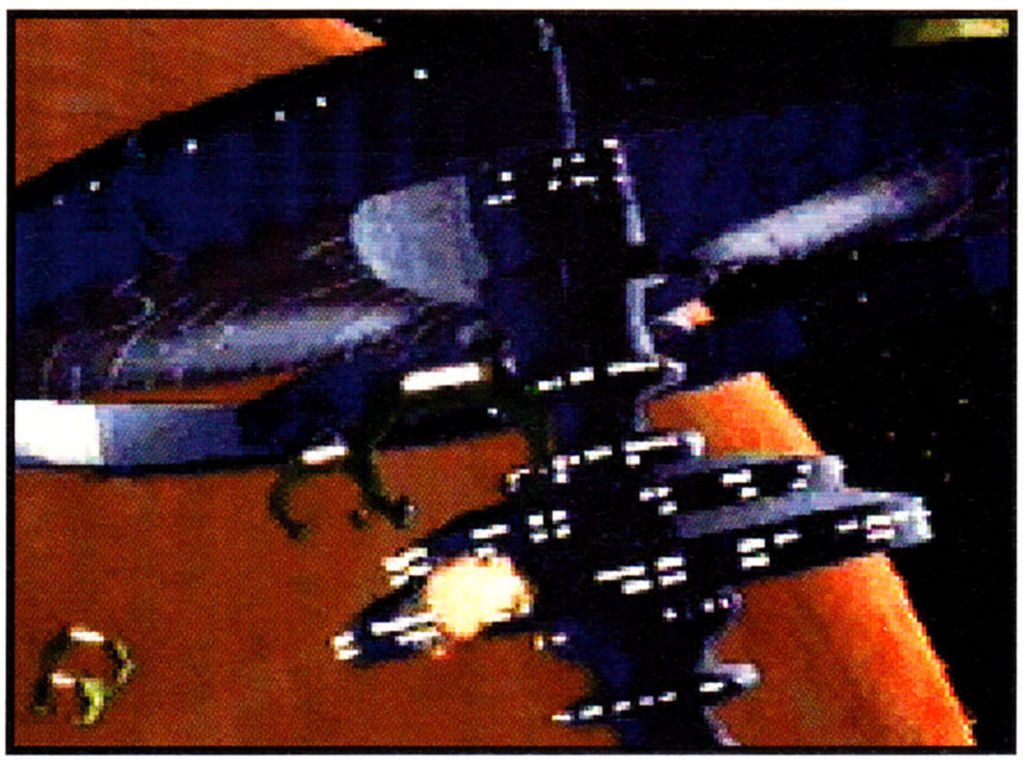


Direct hit! This speedy shooter just might give you feelings of vertigo and dizziness.

A bigger failing is the inaccurate radar display. In a brief respite from getting shot at the natural urge is to look up and see how many points of shield are left. To do so, one must glance away from the main display and continue to fly with the aid of a small radar display beside the status bars.

Unfortunately, after a few lost ships, it becomes clear that the radar display is just a bit off in where it puts the ship in relationship to the mountains. This is an annoying problem.

These complaints, however, recede with a little practice and patience. After that plateau is reached, hours of shooting adventure await. Strap in and take the offensive to the enemy. Turn the Drak-sai hunters into quarry, and waste no further time about it—there is precious little of that left. **B+** *(Ed Dille)*



BEHIND THE SCREENS

Total Eclipse may not redefine the multimedia genre, but it is a well constructed shooter that shuns the traditional side scroller or Zaxxon perspectives for a chase view, which adds to the level of intensity and helps to draw the casual player into the feel of the game. The opening scenes are incredibly well rendered and fluidly animated, making strong use of the much-heralded 3DO's video capabilities.

The high realism of the opening attack of the Drak-sai makes the player want blood right from the start. The candid military briefing that describes the plot of the game just prior to takeoff really conveys the intense and urgent feeling of actual, real world pre-combat communication.

WE REGRET THE APPEARANCE OF THIS AD, BUT THE MILITARY INFORMATION IN THIS NEW GAME HAS ONLY RECENTLY BEEN DECLASSIFIED.

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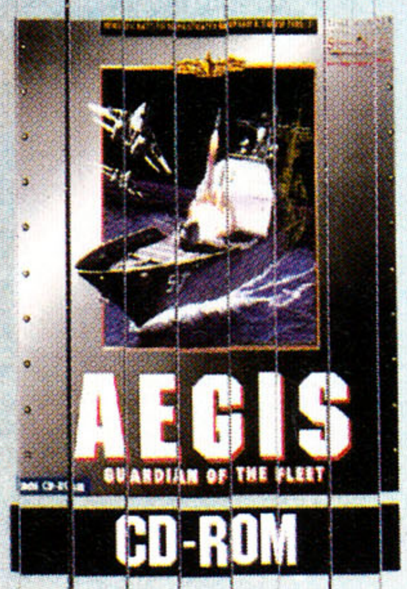

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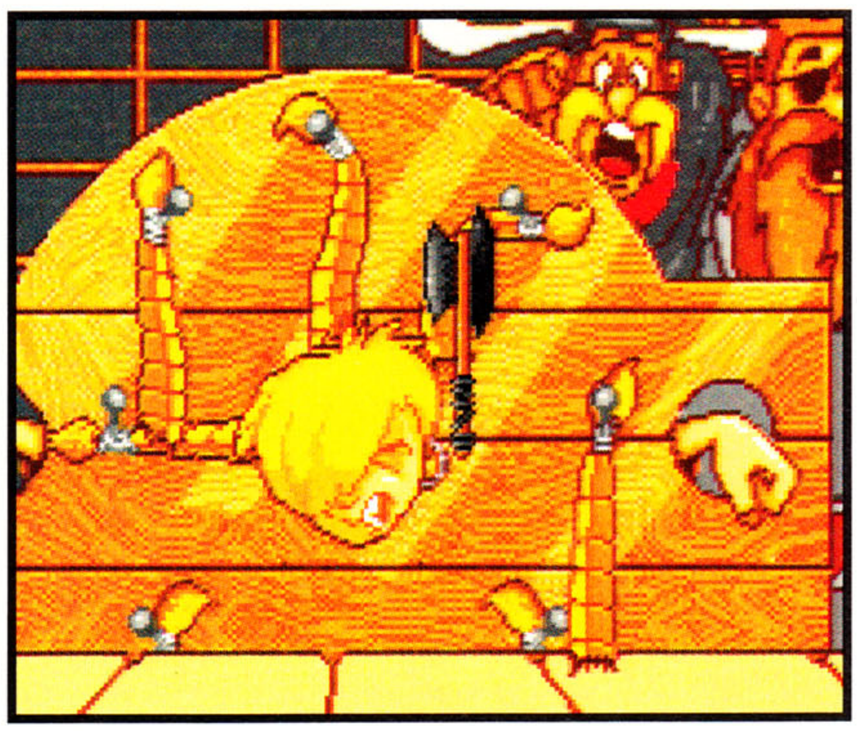
HEIMDALL

Welcome to JVC's virtual Valhalla for the Sega CD.

JVC, suddenly a major force in the multimedia software marketplace, has transported **Heimdall**, a popular computer RPG designed for novice adventurers, to the Sega CD.

Heimdall harkens back to the days of the Norse gods, at the start of the Age of Ragnarok. Prior to this, the gods had frequent contact with their creations, the people known as Vikings. The coming of Ragnarok, however, and its threat of unleashed universal warfare, put a real crimp in the tourist trade between Asgard (where the gods hung out) and Midgard (aka Earth). In the post-Ragnarok universe, gods were compelled to become mortal in order to hobnob with humans.



Loki, god of mischief, convinced that Ragnarok was weighted in favor of the gods of goodness, stormed Valhalla and pilfered Odin's sword, Frey's spear, and Thor's hammer. When this treachery was discovered, Frey, one of the oldest and wisest gods, revealed a plan. Foreseeing that one day the gods would need the Vikings, he sent a great warrior among them. And this great warrior's name was (you guessed it) Heimdall.

Heimdall drops the player-character into the role of this god-sent fighter. The size of Heimdall's motley crew (no more than five) is determined by how the p-c performs in the three pre-game practice events: axe throwing, pig catching, and sword fighting. The traditional FRPG character categories—warrior, wizard, thief, etc—are represented, with each character awarded ratings based on strength, health, agility, luck, and magic.

The map screen interface makes plotting a trip a true no-brainer; the gamer simply clicks on the desired destination and is instantly transported there. If a trip to a selected location exceeds the gamer's means, the trip will not be permitted. The Command, Shops, and Combat Menus are intuitive, icon-based, and provide the standard RPG options.

Heimdall's graphics qualify as Sega CD state-of-the-art. The character sprites are clean and crisp, and stand out against the distinctive, beautifully textured backgrounds. The angled top-down viewpoint (described in the original Virgin Games computer edition as "scrolling isometric") is eye catching and effective. The icon depictions, though small, are clear and easily identified, and the sprite animation is extremely fluid. The non-interactive cut sequences really pop and serve to entice gamers into the world of **Heimdall**.

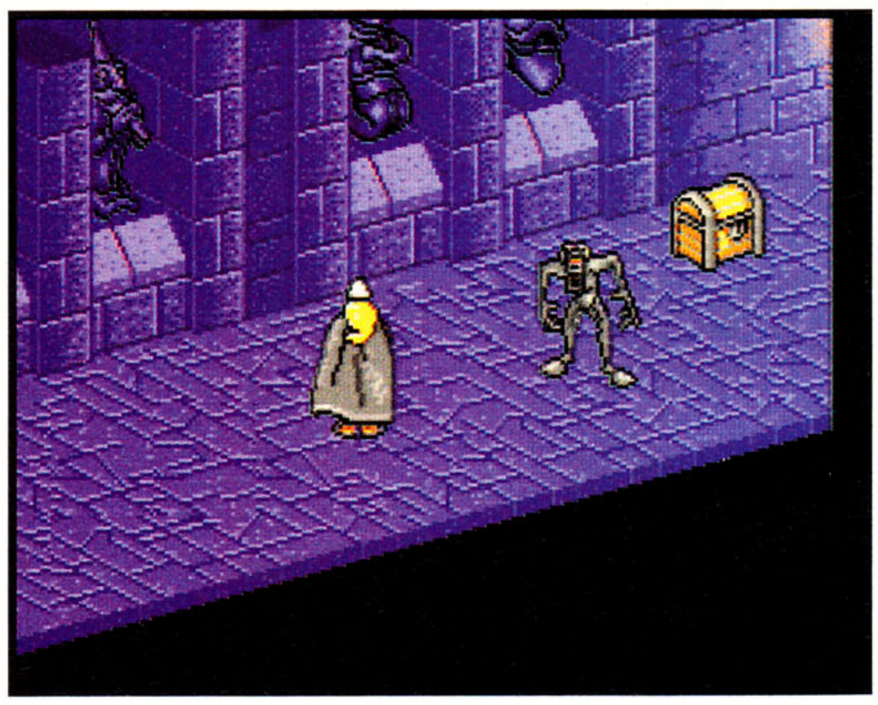
The music sets the appropriate mood; unfortunately, there isn't nearly enough of it. Entire sections of the game play to no musical accompaniment whatsoever. The vocalizations are audibly crisp and precise, and the sound effects are appropriately realistic.

Heimdall was originally designed as an entry-level RPG, and this new version

Traverse the heavenly realms as you take on the persona of a great warrior.

continues that tradition with its streamlined plot and user-friendly interface. However, hard-core gamers will also find plenty of challenges in this Sega CD conversion with its three levels, 27 islands, and more than 100 rooms to explore.

Heimdall's Practice Modes provide a nice entree to the game. In the axe-throwing contest, the gamer must free Helga the Barmaid from the pillory by chopping her braids free. Unfortunately, too much strong ale has affected both the p-c's vision and steadiness of hand, and to reflect this, the control is erratic.



Pig wrestling requires the player to get down and dirty by capturing a greased wild boar in a pen of mud.

The final test of skill is the boat fighting contest. Heimdall must run from the starting point on the stern to the bow of the boat, where our hero locates a bag of gold, which he must then return to the starting point. Alas, several armed Viking guards are on hand, determined to thwart the p-c's efforts. How well the player does determines not only Heimdall's attributes, but also how many followers (anywhere from 15-30) the gamer will be able to choose among.

Heimdall is an excellent conversion of a first-rate computer game and a welcome addition to the Sega CD library (a catalog which needs all the strong RPGs it can get) for all players who want a great adventure.

A- *(Laurie Yates)*

BEHIND THE SCREENS

Heimdall first appeared for the PC under the banner of Virgin Games.

Fans of the original game will be pleased to learn that JVC arranged for the conversion to be as close to the original as possible, right down to the point-and-click interface. This is good news because no one appreciates a poor copy of the original.

The superb graphics and animations, as well as the top-down scrolling point of view were also retained.

This faithfulness was achieved by having JVC contract with the original developers, Core Design, to produce this Sega CD edition.

The result is quite pleasing, and it should be. After all, you don't mess with the gods.

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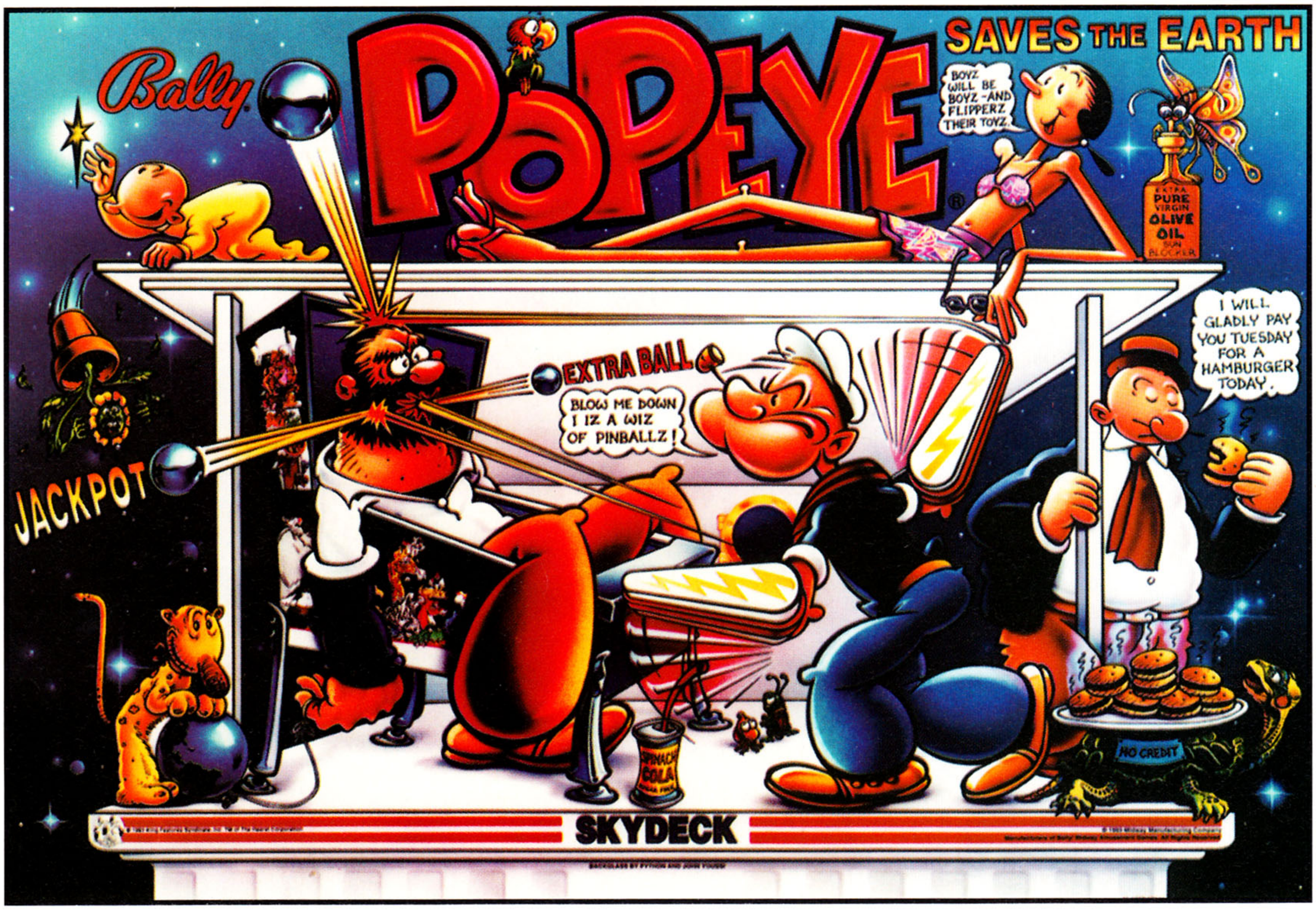

THE RITES OF SPRING

Games Emerge from the Winter's Hibernation

It's an annual occurrence in the world of coin-operated entertainment. The emergence of spring is when manufacturers introduce a much broader array of games. One of the reasons is the increased demand for machines by beachfront sites, resorts and other vacation areas that mark Memorial Day weekend as the official opening of their business season. Fortunately, the impact extends back into the inner city and suburban locations where owners recognize the need to stock up and stay competitive by offering the latest and most popular attractions.

The result is that some of the machines you heard about in the past few months but couldn't find, might now be more easily accessible in both urban and rural locations as brand new additions to your local game rooms. Add in the constant stream of all-new equipment and the time is right for game players everywhere to get their fill of coin-op fun.

Leading the way for this month's offerings is Midway's total revamping of the Best Video Game for 1993. **NBA Jam** is back in a **Tournament Edition** that should have fans heating up the hardcourt as never before. More secret players and special combinations for dazzling action on screen is only the beginning, with **NBA Jam TE** featuring expanded and updated rosters (up to five players from each of the league's 27 squads); the ability to do half-time substitutions, and same team match-ups.

The number of NBA player characteristics has now been doubled with eight different strengths to consider including speed, dunks, three-point shooting, passing, power, steal ability, blocking, and clutch performance. And **NBA Jam TE** also serves up a secret Superstar Team option and Tournament Play mode for no-nonsense, straight-up competition.

Taking elements from **Mortal Kombat**, the **Street Fighter** series and **Samurai Shodown**, kick/punch fans have a trio of games to sample that should be in much wider circulation. American Sammy's **Survival Arts** lets you get familiar with the digitized movements of eight warriors including Viper, Gunner, Santana, Tasha, and Hiryu, all with their own special weaponry and secret moves accessed through the joystick and six-button control panel.

Power Instinct from Atlus unleashes the battle for the leadership of the Gogetsu Clan from eight different characters. There's White Buffalo, Angela Beuti, Hattori Saizo, and Gogetsuji Otane along with the other combatants in match-ups that allow you to perform long distance and mid-air attacks as well as a special technique to steal energy from your opponent. Controls are via an eight-directional joystick and four action buttons as you attempt to wield your way to ultimate success.

Justice Computer Inc. hits these shores with the 256-Meg power of **Rebellion-X** and a fight to the finish in a world of 20 different background sets as well as two bonus stages. Select from any of nine unique fighters, each with their own special weapons and power combinations whether you choose Akira, Rai-Jin or Lady Bathera as you attempt to move up the ladder and confront the deadly Big Mama. The controls are the standard joystick and six action buttons for over 200 moves in what can be head-to-head play or single competition where you pick who you want to take on.

In 1990 a vertically scrolling fighter pilot game hit the scene and became an instant favorite. Now, Fabtek has licensed a worthy sequel from Seibu Kaihatsu with the return of **Raiden II** as a one-player or two-player cooperative mission-based encounter.

With continuous buy-in options, players have eight different stages to complete and an equal number of powerful boss enemies that need to be destroyed in order to advance to the final conflict. The joystick and multiple action button controls allow not just split second maneuverability but also access to firing missiles, cluster bombs or a high-tech lock-on plasma beam laser.

Pinball also continues its resurgence as evidenced by three current models that blend classic and contemporary themes with some highly stylized and innovative game design. Data East's **Tales From the Crypt** brings out the best of the Crypt Keeper's frightful flipper fun beginning with a special door handle control to launch a ball into play.

Adorned with gravity-defying ramps, drop holes, spinners and a sinking tombstone target, **Tales From the Crypt** brings to life 12 distinct game modes that all pay homage to the ghoulish television series. There are Jackpots and Double Jackpots along with an array of various multiball modes including the delivery of up to six balls on the playfield for some heart-thumping excitement.

Alvin G. & Company, one of the newer contenders in the pinball sweepstakes, gets a jump start on the coming proliferation of wild west feature films with an original design called **Pistol Poker** that also melds in card playing as the central focus of action.

Featuring a double-level playfield with the upper surface having a single top right flipper and the bottom offering the standard dual flipper set-up, **Pistol Poker** challenges players to 'get' five different card hands off the playfield targets—from one pair on up to a royal flush. In addition, to round out the action and strategy there's a bingo-style card display in the backglass where you can control which lit card you want to select during a timed sequence. And, as is the case with all recent vintage pinball machines, there's over a dozen different bonus scoring rounds along with multiball play and multiple Jackpot rewards.

That spinach-eating hero is back as an environmentally concerned crusader in the latest Bally pinball—**Popeye Saves the Earth**. Bluto is wreaking havoc, Olive Oyl has been kidnapped, Swee' Pea is lost in a maze of corridors, and Popeye has to rescue five endangered species of wildlife.

From the opening spinning wheel skill shot, players find an adventure-filled game that includes an escalator that takes pinballs up to a top mini-playfield on what, ostensively, is Popeye's Ark. From a series of special timed modes to Jackpots and Super Jackpots, and a variety of distinct multiball play where up to six balls can be released on the playfield, all the action is presented via the Dot-Mation visuals displayed in the backglass and the DCS sound system for CD-quality sound effects and speech from the entire cast of this classic cartoon property.

The stakes in coin-op industry continue to increase for potential success. The manufacturers recognize that today's player isn't going to be satisfied with the ordinary no matter what season it may be.

(Jay Carter)

THE KUNKEL REPORT

MORE ON THE VIDEO GAME RATING SYSTEM AND NEWS FROM SOGGY SEATTLE

by Bill Kunkel

Oh, those whacky moralists at Nintendo! There are now games on the SNES in which: Babies are chopped up with chainsaws (**Zombies Ate My Neighbors**), gamers use a light gun to shoot at and kill digitized, on-screen human beings (**Lethal Enforcers**), and the world's most violent cat and mouse team commit mayhem on one another (**Itchy & Scratchy**). But still no warning labels—despite rumors that at least one publisher has already requested such a warning on one of its SNES SKUs and was turned down by the Big N. Reason? Because acknowledging the need for ratings or warnings on SNES games might give people the impression that Nintendo tolerates the existence of such games. In other words, since Nintendo doesn't allow games to be published for the SNES which could possibly offend anyone, it doesn't need a rating system.

Right. And it doesn't rain in Redmond in the winter time.

Speaking of the glorious, wet Pacific Northwest, however, a recent tour of the bustling Seattle-Redmond, Washington area produced evidence that there's some high quality, and extremely diverse product on the way for SNES fans.

Seattle is a strange place. It rains so often during the winter that it's not unusual to find a window washer ply his trade in a downpour. After all, the thinking goes, if you wait for it to stop raining before you clean something, it'll never get done.

Redmond, a nearby suburb of Seattle, has suddenly found itself the center of a significant software universe. Within a few square miles of this programmer's paradise can be found a virtual profusion of electronic gaming hot spots. Bullet Proof Software, Kemco, Squaresoft, Enix, RPGI (a mail-order house for RPG games), and Humongous Software, among others, are all within a 10 minute drive. Most of these companies have sprouted, like silicon mushrooms, in the verdant shadow of the neighborhood's Big Boys, Nintendo, and Microsoft.

Bullet Proof immediately commands the interest of visitors with its many high-profile female employees. The company also goes its own way in terms of software development, focusing primarily on action-puzzle games while the rest of the world seems to be searching for the Hot New generic shooter or fighting game. BP has

several dynamite kinetic puzzle games in the pipeline, including **Wild Snake** (points awarded for not calling it "Snake-Tris") and **Cyberslider**, a wildly innovative entry that combines **Tetris** and those non-electronic slider games where a series of letters and an empty slot must be manipulated to spell out a message. There are several variations, including one created by Alexi Pajitnov himself, and a two-player mode that offers a spectacular challenge to both a player's wits and hand-eye coordination.

SquareSoft, meanwhile, has a new **Final Fantasy** game (**FF6** in Japan, **FF3** here), a 24-Meg masterpiece from series creator Hiro Sakaguchi (look for an interview with Sakaguchi-san in an upcoming issue of ***EG***).

Enix has a new Soulblazer game on the way, **The Illusion of Gaia**, as well as **King Arthur & the Knights of Justice** (from Manly & Associates), and a more adult take on the Zelda genre, **Brainlord**. These products all come as welcome news to adventure and RPG fans who must have been wondering where all the 16-Bit RPGs went.

Final Fantasy VI, from SquareSoft, brings to the U.S. shores 24 Megs of role-playing euphoria.

Among the most interesting stops on the Seattle tour—not counting those incredible restaurants—was Microsoft. The OS giant is just beginning to flex its gaming muscles, but its mere appearance on the scene makes it an instant Player. Nonetheless, this cynical industry observer couldn't help but remark as we left Microsoft's sprawling industrial park headquarters: "This place is really huge. Why, it's almost as big as Atari was in 1981."

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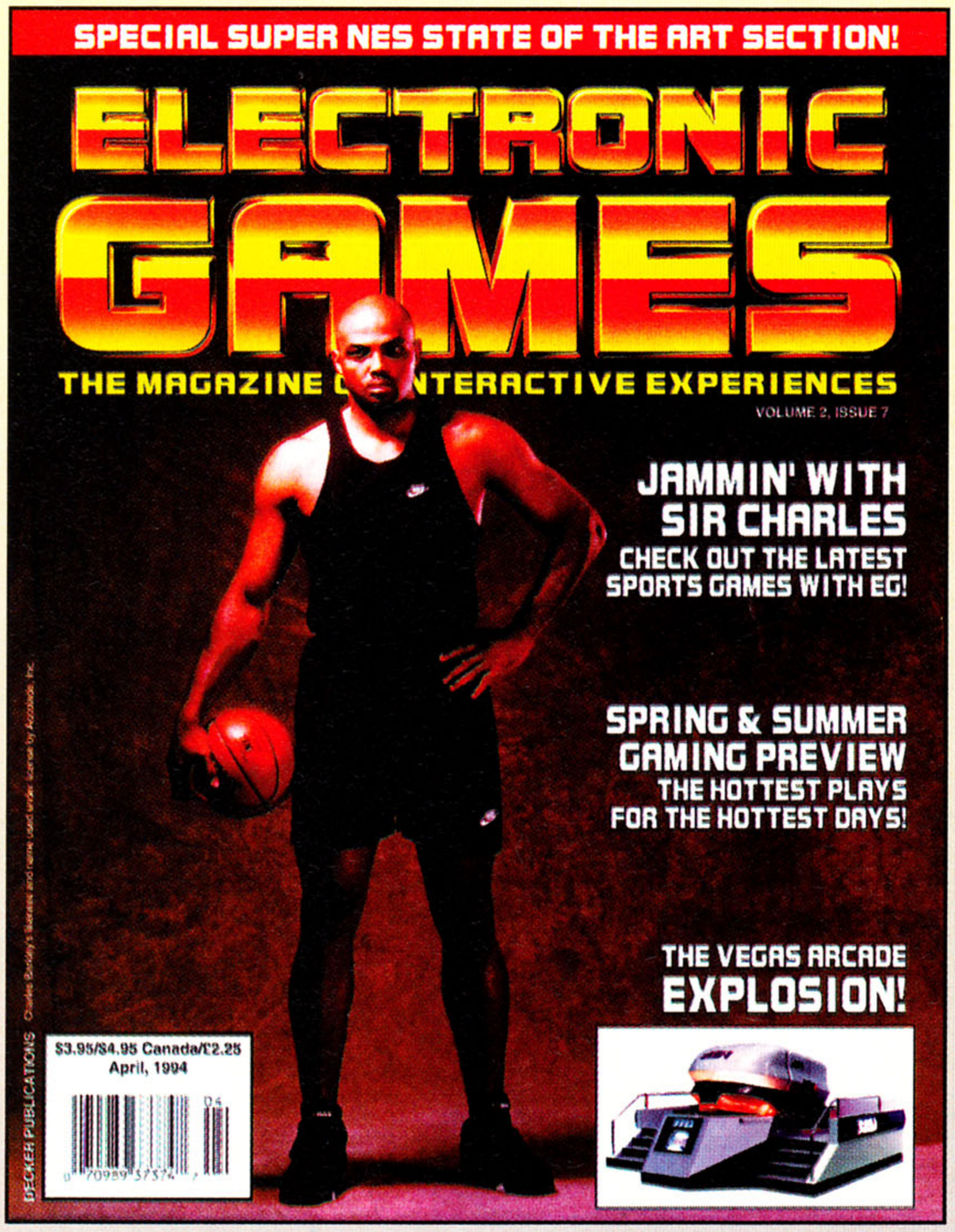

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FANDOM CENTRAL

ARNIE'S BACK FROM VACATION — AND HE'S GOT NEW FANZINES!

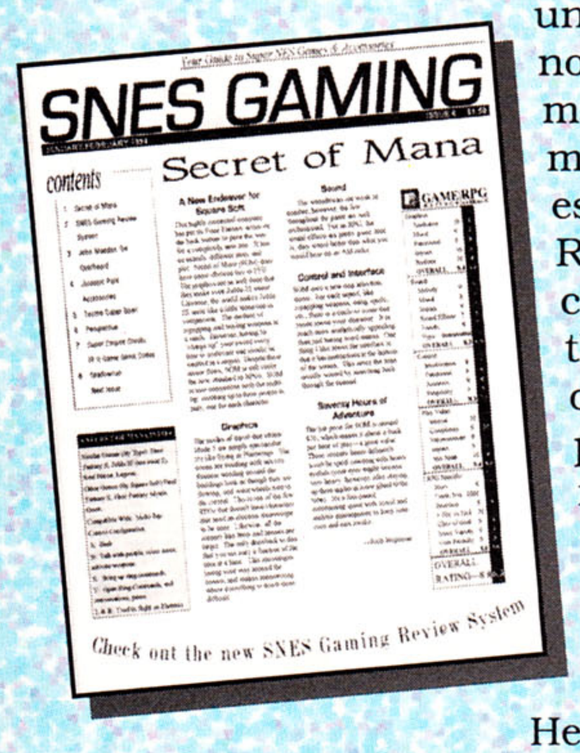
I've been away from you a long time... That's an old song lyric, but it's also how I feel after not doing this for two months.

A late-breaking story stole the page in March, and Joyce Worley asked to guest-write the column in April. I've escorted her politely, but firmly, back to her office. The shackles that bind her to the **EG** news desk should hold, so I think I'm back in charge at *Fandom Central*, at least for the foreseeable future.

I'd need a dozen pages to tell you about all the new fanzines. Since I've only got one, I'd better get moving!

SNES Gaming #6
Edited by Rich Wigstone
770 Concord Lane,
Hoffman Estates, IL 60195-1835
Bimonthly, $1.50 per issue, 8 pages

Rich introduces a sophisticated, but understandable, rating system for SNES cartridges. A lot of fanzines (and prozines) review major titles like **John Madden** and **Jurassic Park**, but this fanzine's treatment is truly unique. Of non-review material, the most interesting was Rich's discussion of the benefits of, and prospects for, hardware standardization in video gaming.



He acknowledges that such uniformity is not easily obtainable, which may still be an understatement. **SNES Gaming**'s ultra-neat newsletter-style layout is attractive and functional. If you play on the SNES, you need this fanzine.

The Good, The Bad, & the 8-Bit #5
Edited by Brian Pacula
33 Florence Ave.,
Mill Valley, CA 94941
Frequent, $1 per issue, 14 pages

This feisty fanzine's title may sound like it's devoted to antique systems, but Brian's coverage of 16-Bit, console multimedia, and portable gaming is thoroughly up-to-date. Reviews are the main attraction, but Brian's column about whether or not he'll buy a Jaguar was good, too.

Some of the writing is pugnacious. At least Brian saves his salvos for big targets like software publishers instead of time-wasting vendettas against other fans. There's obviously a pretty nice guy behind the verbal fireworks, and it would give this zine more balance if Brian let his gentler side come through more often.

One thing's for sure, no one will doze off when this fan takes to the keyboard! Let's give this lively amateur publication some support!

Video Views #19
Edited by Ulrich Kempf
4732 Glenwood Circle,
Emmaus, PA 18049
Quarterly, $2.50 per issue, 20 pages

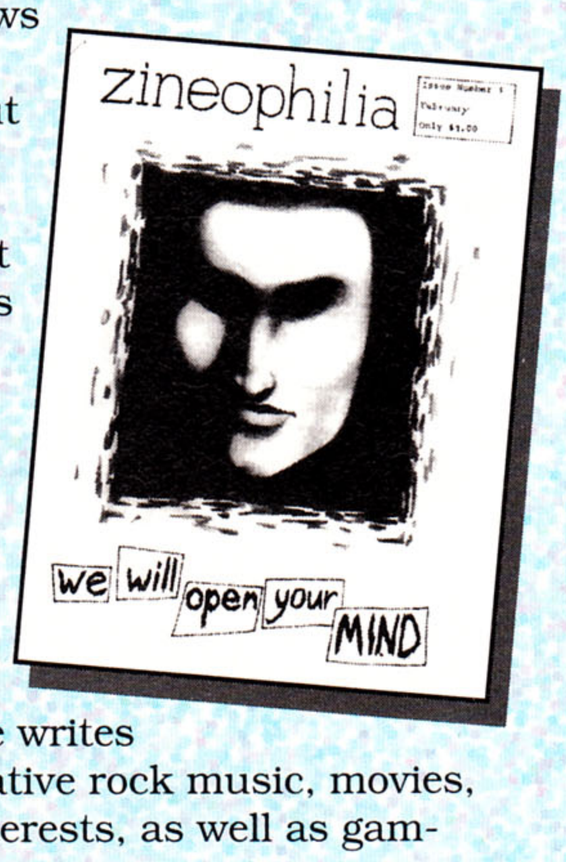
Everyone's favorite hedgehog stars on the color cover of this third annish. Ulrich mixes incisive short reviews, literate columnists and his own excellent writing to concoct a fanzine that maintains high readability issue after issue.

Joe Santulli's review of *Game Over*, Francis J. Cone, Jr.'s column, and

Jeff Lin's retrospective of *VG & CE* are my picks from this superb issue, but there's something worth reading on every page. Every fan needs this one.

Zineophilia #1
Edited by Noah Dziobecki
4436 E. 5th St.,
Long Beach, CA 90814
Bimonthly, $1 per issue, 24 pages

The creator of the fondly remembered **Phanzine Star** is back after a one-year hiatus. Welcome back, Noah! It's a joyous return, too, because **Zineophilia** is a breath of fresh air. This fan knows how to be funny without being insulting and personal without telling us he's a Great Big Man.



Bored with a single-subject fanzine, Noah now takes a broader approach. He writes about alternative rock music, movies, and other interests, as well as gaming.

And when Noah writes about issues like women in gaming or fanzine publishing trends, it's well-reasoned and highly interesting. This is definitely the best first issue of the month. A dollar for a sample would be well spent.

— *Arnie Katz*

Send fanzines for review to:
Arnie Katz, 330 S. Decatur, Suite152,
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TEST LAB

The Activator
Sega
$89

Do video games promote a sedentary lifestyle? That's certainly one of the points of contention between adversaries and advocates of the industry. Though it could not be said that the Activator was created to counter some of the arguments being offered against video games, it definitely fulfills that function. How so, ask those among you who are unfamiliar with Sega's latest peripheral?

The Activator is unlike any other controller on the market. The main unit consists of several interlocking pieces that join to form a large hexagon on the floor. In the center of each side of the hexagon are translucent triangles that fire continuous infrared beams at the ceiling. White, reflective ceilings are preferable because the triangles must receive the return reflection of the beam as well or the unit will not function properly. Because of this, high ceilings or angled cathedral ceilings are problematic as well, so don't plan on bringing this unit to church unless you play in the basement.

The player stands inside the hexagon with their arms at their sides as the unit is powered up and calibrated. Once the unit is on, the player must think of themselves as encased in an invisible cylinder (as opposed to a hexagon) because the only active points on the array are the aforementioned triangles. To prompt a response from one of the eight cardinal directions, which is an easy way to refer to them, the player simply breaks the beam of light with a body part.

Beams may be broken at two levels, each of which can generate a different onscreen response. Players can break the beams at a low level, near the floor, by kicking or sweeping their feet over one of the Activator panels. The upper height limit for these commands is 20 inches above the floor. Alternately, players can break the beams at chest height with punches, elbow jabs, and high kicks to receive a completely different onscreen response.

Previously, Test Lab has examined other applications of infrared technology (specifically the doomed SNES Super Scope 6 and Sega Menacer). Both devices were one way transmitters with the receiver hooked into the control port of the console. The player pulled the trigger, a beam traveled from transmitter to receiver and was translated into an onscreen shot. These were rather shortsighted uses of the technology, and their fate on the marketplace bore that contention out. The Activator isn't that much more sophisticated, but its configuration allows more flexibility in terms of control options and game design.

THE ACTIVATOR IS UNLIKE ANY OTHER CONTROLLER ON THE MARKET TODAY.

To understand this difference, it is important to remember that the translucent triangles are both transmitters and receivers. The beams are transmitted continuously, as opposed to when a trigger or switch is activated, hence the need for a separate DC power source instead of batteries. Each time the unit is energized, it calibrates itself by measuring the amount of time it takes a transmitted beam to travel to the ceiling and return. This becomes the baseline setting, measured in microseconds.

Subsequently, when part of the player's body passes through one of the beams, they are not actually "breaking" the beam, they are shortening it. The beam is still reflected off

For those who want to combine their athletic prowess with gaming, the Activator fits the bill.

the players' hands or feet (white socks are necessary) and returned to the receiver, but the length of time it takes to make the trip is considerably shorter. Obviously, the time differential varies depending on whether the beam was interrupted high or low.

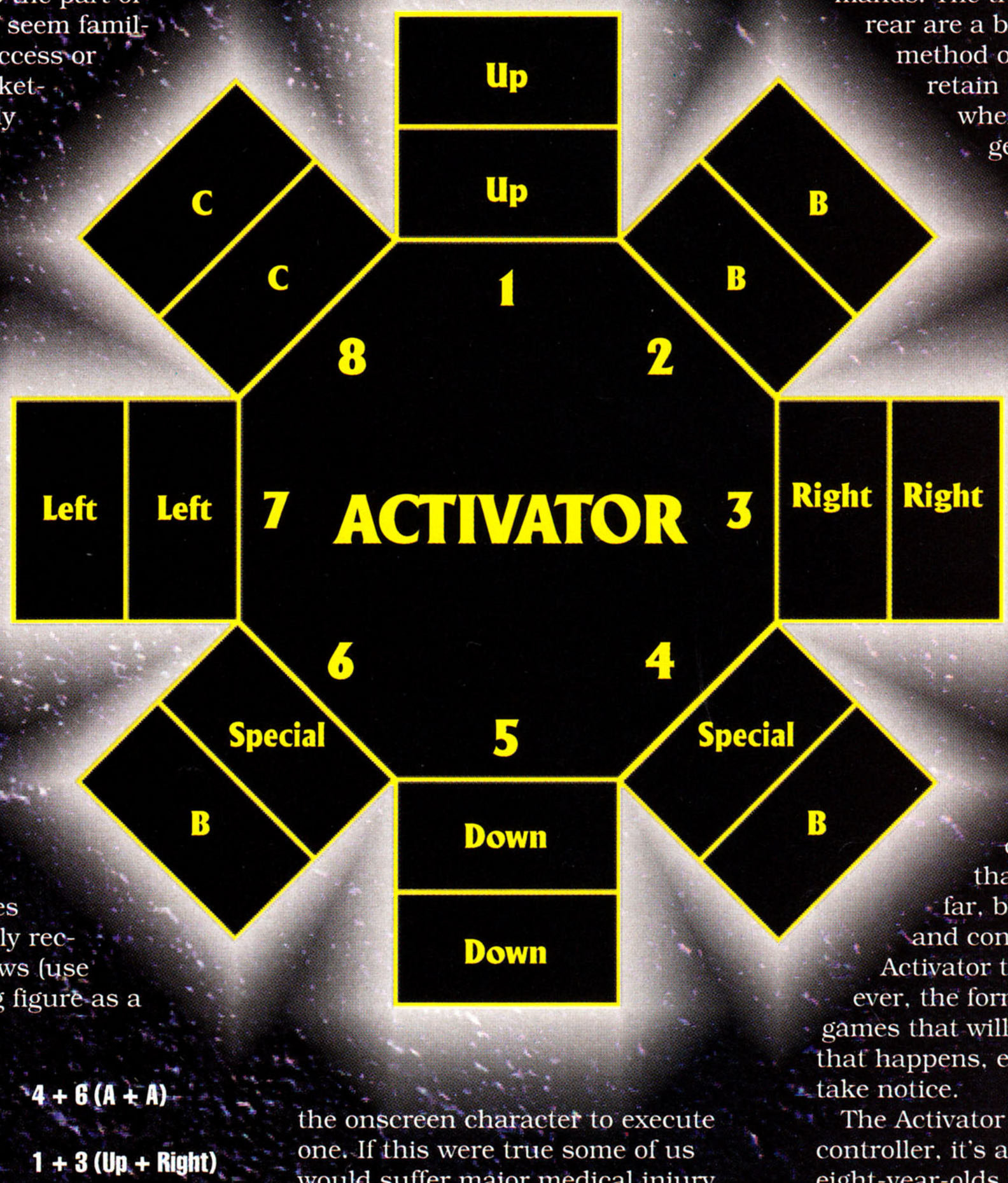
The processor views each region as a bandwidth, if you will, and sends the appropriate command to the console (via controller port one) for whichever triangle and height came into play.

If the processor of the unit were sophisticated enough, it would be capable of creating different responses at all levels of the beam. Possible applications for a unit which could convert wavelength to commands across the full spectrum of motion might include the composition of body music, or other more esoteric pursuits. Indeed, one of the preliminary demonstrations of this unit involved just such a process. Exciting stuff, but don't expect to do it at home just yet.

Are two eight-point control bands really limiting for video game applications? Absolutely not! Let's do the math for a game designed specifically to take advantage of the unit's potential. First, there are 16 single-point commands (eight top, eight bottom). Next we have two-point combinations. Because it would be impossible for the player to interrupt the infrared beam emanating from a single triangle in two places, there are not 64 possible combinations, as one might first conclude, only 56.

Based on body motion, 72 command combinations open up a lot of possibilities, but let's take it even one step further. It would be unreasonable to expect most players to jump up and hit two foot commands but most could do one foot and two arm combinations. Do the math again and it comes out to over 400 possible command combinations. Is that a number designers can work with? You betcha; the limiting factor for the upper end of this envelope will be player conditioning, not cartridge memory.

Now we come to the part of the story that will seem familiar. Activator's success or failure in the marketplace will definitely depend on the number and quality of games that are developed specifically to support it. Granted, the unit is hyped as being compatible with all existing games, but that level of compatibility varies greatly from title to title. For the current generation of fighting games, the general list of combination moves that are universally recognized is as follows (use the accompanying figure as a guide):



Start:	**4 + 6 (A + A)**
Rapid Attack Right or Diagonal Right:	**1 + 3 (Up + Right)**
Rapid Attack Left or Diagonal Left:	**1 + 7 (Up + Left)**
Down Diagonal Right:	**5 + 3 (Down + Right)**
Down Diagonal Left:	**5 + 7 (Down + Left)**
Pause/Resume:	**4 + 6 (A + A)**

Naturally, this list excludes a lot of special moves that players have already perfected on their standard (or programmable) hand-held controllers. Some games have additional special moves listed in the Activator Game Guide that comes with the unit, and players always have the option of investing some time to discover their own. The Activator is at its best when doing combination moves like flying jump kicks and spinning back flips, which are achievable by interrupting multiple beams at once, or in specific sequences.

Please don't misunderstand and think that it will be necessary to actually perform a spinning back flip for the onscreen character to execute one. If this were true some of us would suffer major medical injury. Though it might be exciting to see one's body movements translated directly to the screen, art does not mirror life in this instance. Further, if the unit actually required that level of player conditioning and actual martial arts skill, it simply wouldn't be any fun for most of us to play **Mortal Kombat** anymore.

What the Activator excels at, however, is in making older games challenging and fun again. **Sonic 2** may have been a breeze for some players, but it won't be as easy to get the timing down when thumbs are exchanged for other body parts. In fact, adults may find that they have to "cheat" when they get winded from vigorous punching, kicking, and hopping around. In deference to the over 30 crowd (of which I am a proud member), the method of cheating is to kneel or sit cross legged inside the hexagon instead of standing, then simply raise or lower one's hands to the appropriate level to input commands. The triangles directly to the rear are a bit of a stretch, but this method of play allows one to retain a shred of dignity when playing against energetic offspring. If forced to explain why you are not standing, simply claim that you felt it would be more fair if you played at the same level as they do. (Warning: this deception will not work if the child was previously kicking the stuffing out of you).

Because the Activator has the ability to rejuvenate the play value of games that have been previously beaten, it deserves more support than it has received thus far, both from the industry and consumers alike. For the Activator to really take off, however, the former has got to design games that will make it shine. When that happens, everyone will sit up and take notice.

The Activator is not just another controller, it's an aerobic workout for eight-year-olds that just won't quit. Does little Johnny suffer from sugar overdose and a severe case of numb thumb? Or, is he bored with the usual conventional game play. No problem; "Activate" him and kick back to watch the fun as your child burns more energy than a wood-burning stove. After an hour and a half of electronic twister, he'll return to earth ready to sleep it off for a while.

—Ed Dille

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HEGE3

LORE

Official Sega Genesis Power Tips Book, Vol. 2, Carl Rowley, Prima Publishing, 112 pages (softbound, $14.95)

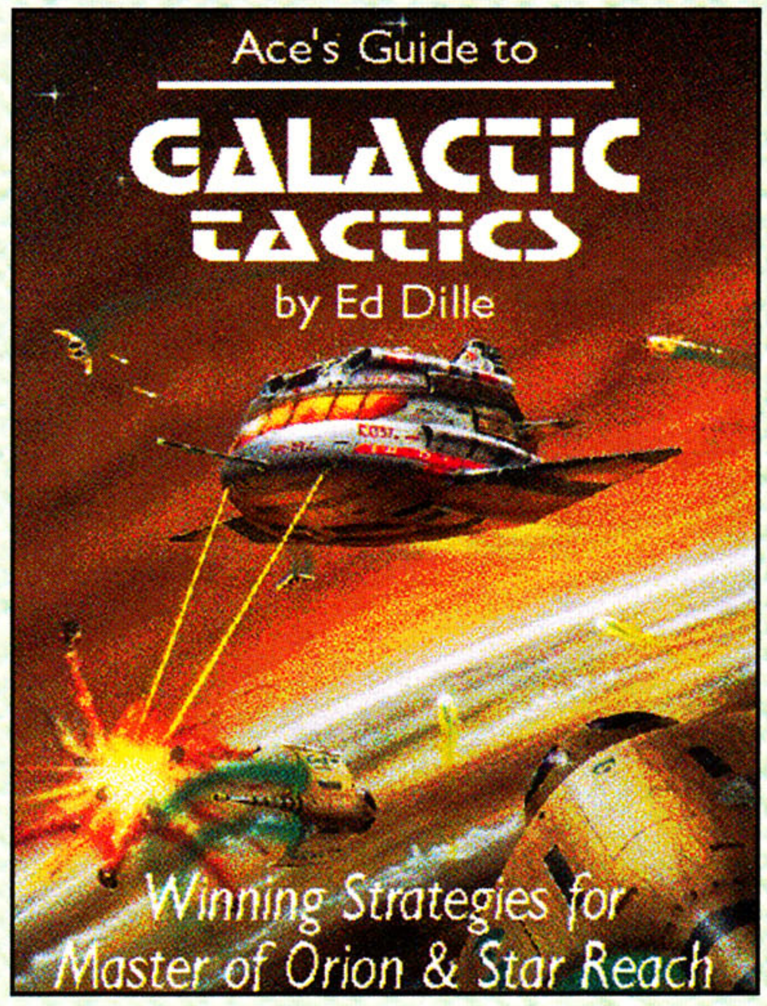
Color! That's the immediate, outstanding impression on first glance at the interior of this magazine-sized (8½" x11") book. For those familiar with strategy and hint books, this is a welcome change from the standard black-and-white graphics of most such titles, no matter how clear and sharp they may be.

Graphically, it's a joy to leaf through this book. Technically, it will be useful for players of the many games included, but it is not a walk-through. True to its title, the book provides tips and localized strategies for the games, but there's no room to include every step. At least a two-page spread is given to each of the 35 game titles, and frequently more, as for **Ecco the Dolphin**, **Flashback**, **Krusty's Super Fun House,** and **Sonic the Hedgehog 2**. The other titles are: **Alien³**, **Another World/Out of This World**, **The Aquatic Games** (a James Pond title), **Batman: Revenge of the Joker**, **Batman Returns**, **Bio Hazard Battle**, **Cool Spot**, **Cyborg Justice**, **Global Gladiators**, **Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade**, **James Bond 007: The Duel**, **John Madden '93**, **Jungle Strike**, **Lemmings**, **LHX Attack Chopper**, **Mega-Lo-Mania**, **Mortal Kombat**, **PowerMonger**, **Predator 2**, **Road Rash 2**, **Rolo to the Rescue**, **Shadow of the Beast 2**, **Speedball 2**, **Streets of Rage 2**, **Sunset Riders**, **Super Kick Off**, **TMNT: the Hyperstone Heist**, **Terminator 2**, **Thunder Force IV**, **Tiny Toon Adventures: Buster's Hidden Treasure**, and **X-Men**. An appendix adds tips for an additional 50 games.

Each title is identified by type, as Action, Driving, Sport, Shooting, or Role-Playing Game. A joypad diagram shows how buttons are used. Levels, rooms, or other game divisions generally have separate boxes and colored backgrounds for quick identification. The headlines are large, but a small, condensed type is used in most of these boxes for the main body type. It's easy to read, but requires enough concentration that players seeking a specific answer to a particular problem probably won't accidentally see more than they wish.

Crowley's prose is clear (except when he uses the phrase "take care of" when he means "be careful of"), and lighthearted, and Genesis owners should enjoy checking out this book.

— Ross Chamberlain



The Ace's Guide to Galactic Tactics, Ed Dille, Clue Books Express, 185 pages (softbound, $18.95)

This is a how-to book for the would-be galactic conquerors among us, based on two games that give us the opportunity to try: Interplay's **Star Reach** and **Master of Orion** by MicroProse. Indeed, this is in effect two books in one, as Dille concentrates on each title exclusively for approximately half the overall volume.

Both games are highly complex investigations into the strategies of interstellar conquest as extrapolated from our own earth's history. The author's approach is to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of each of the possible combatants in a variety of areas, and then go into depth on the pro and con options for each.

Areas common to both games involve colonization, ship building and combat, and economic, political and diplomatic considerations. For example, **Master of Orion** involves 10 races (including humans), each with its own characteristics. The player adopts one to try to bring to galactic leadership, and four of the others are randomly selected as the opposition. A different approach is used by **Star Reach**, but in the end, the basic parameters are set for interaction among several civilizations.

The author avoids duplicating information provided by the game manuals and concentrates on putting everything into perspective, with the aim of aiding players to shepherd their chosen body politic to supremacy. He examines the AI behind each race's activities and predilections, noting the advantages the player has in terms of flexibility in dealing with them—and, equally, the cautions that should be taken. What may work for one may not work for another, and yet another aspect may change when it's necessary to play one off against another.

Whether the player's inclinations are to confront all comers from military strength or achieve success through diplomacy, using a straightforward approach or subterfuge and espionage, this is the book for owners of either (and especially both!) of the covered titles.

— Ross Chamberlain

GAMING ON-LINE

MAKE A KILLING ON THE STOCK MARKET OR MANAGE YOUR OWN DREAM TEAM

Compuserve

Competition on Compuserve's **Falcon 3.0** ranking ladder has heated up a lot in recent months, as armchair aviators vie for Top Gun bragging rights. **Falcon 3.0** is ongoing and always available for those who have yet to enter. After enough play to establish a ranking, one may challenge up to two rungs higher on the ladder at any time. **Sniper** has also established a long standing, ongoing tournament. Each round of competition centers on three patrols, and one's success or failure on these missions affects military promotion and medals as well. Two divisions are held within the competition. One caters to lieutenants and below, the other to captains and above; this provides a chance to fly against players of the same caliber. Winners of each round receive free online usage credits.

Finally, Compuserve has changed its basic rate structure for modem users as follows: $8.95 per month for the basic plan, $4.80/hr connect fee up to 2400 baud, $9.60/hr connect fee up to 14.4.

Falcon 3.0 has heated up the modem lines on CompuServe by offering intense two-player action.

INN

Anyone who has been active on INN (formerly TSN) lately could not help but notice the tremendous usage of NTN's Interactive Trivia competitions. NTN has terminals in hotel rooms, bars, and restaurants across the country, and just recently began offering real-time competition on BBSs nationwide. Based on the tremendous success of this venture, NTN Communications struck an agreement with Replica Corp to bring the latter's sports and investment fantasy games to all of NTN's existing cable and online distribution channels, including INN and Genie.

Replica's investment and sports challenges have been played by hundreds of thousands of participants since their first appearance in 1987, most of them from metropolitan areas like New York and San Francisco. By virtue of these games going online on the major networks, this segment of "fantasy" gaming is expected to explode. Here is how it works. Players register to participate in a competition by paying a fee of around $80 up front, exclusive of their connect time. In the investment division, this purchases $500,000 of play money to manage a high stakes stock portfolio. The stocks are real, based on up-to-the-minute quotes from NASDAQ, AMEX, and NYSE. Only the money is fictitious. Players call their "brokers" to make buy/sell decisions and the portfolio stays current throughout the months-long competition.

Replica sports operates under the same principle, except "team managers" are given an imaginary $10 million bankroll to buy and trade professional sports players for their "dream team" in either football, basketball, or baseball. Over the course of the season, challenge points are racked up based on the player's actual on-field performance in various categories. Using a toll free 800 number, managers speak with live "sports agents" to check fluctuating player values, make weekly trades, and find out their standing in the national rankings. These standings are more critical than basic bragging rights; there are real cash and prizes at stake in the Replica arena.

John Laub of Danbury, CT, just won the $10,000 top prize for the 1993-94 NFL challenge: not a bad return on an $80 investment. The deadline for '94 baseball season sign-up is April 3. Would-be stock moguls fare well also. AT&T sponsors a collegiate competition with the Replica model, and winners frequently get recruited by brokerages in addition to their prizes. Finishing first out of 13,000 participants from 900 universities, University of Wisconsin student Scott Christensen racked up more than $25,000 in cash, and prizes over nine weeks, including a 1994 Pontiac Firebird Formula, $5000 in cash and $1200 in AT&T long distance certificates.

Granted, one may not prove as lucky or skillful as these two players, but where else can months of entertainment be guaranteed for about the average cost of a video game? Call 1-800-858-1994 for more details on registration for upcoming events.

MPG Net

MPG Net has announced an online scavenger hunt to be held in "The Kingdom of Drakkar" during the month of April. Network members will be automatically invited to join the hunt and search the lands for clues and strange items that have been scattered everywhere. More details, including prizes, rules and exact dates, will be announced in MPG's online news bulletin. If you don't have an account with MPG, now is the time to act.

Genie

Genie's recent modifications to **Air Warrior** have resulted in a tremendous surge of new users. Flying the unfriendly skies has never been better. Taxi and take off here as soon as possible to see the latest news!

— Ed Dille

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*** To qualify for a second game, the customer must bill $20 per month in 3 of the first 6 months.

**** THE MOST discounts apply to in-state/intraLATA calls only where authorized.

PLAYING IT SMART

THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE TRAVELS DISTANT LANDS AND FANTASY WORLDS

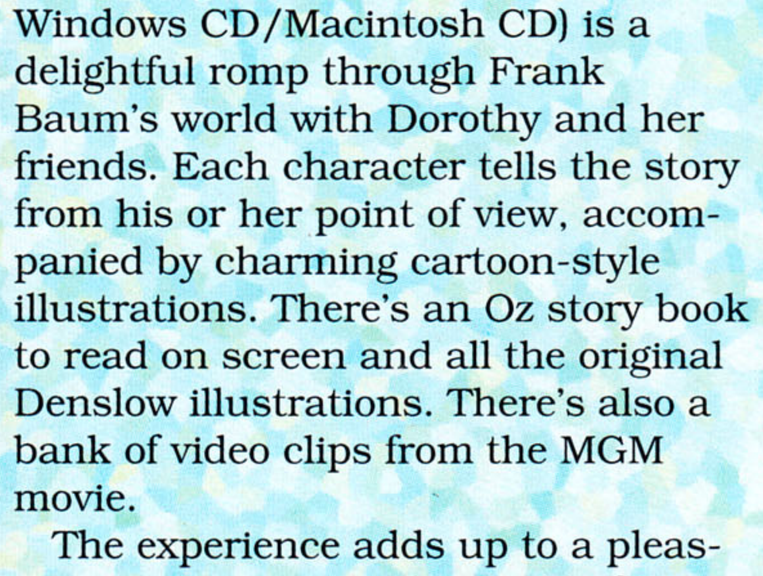
by Joyce Worley

Learning games usually concentrate on pre-school learning and the three R's. They definitely can teach the alphabet and how to count, or help a student master arithmetic and many other critical lessons. But at no time do they shine brighter than when they undertake to expand the user's horizons.

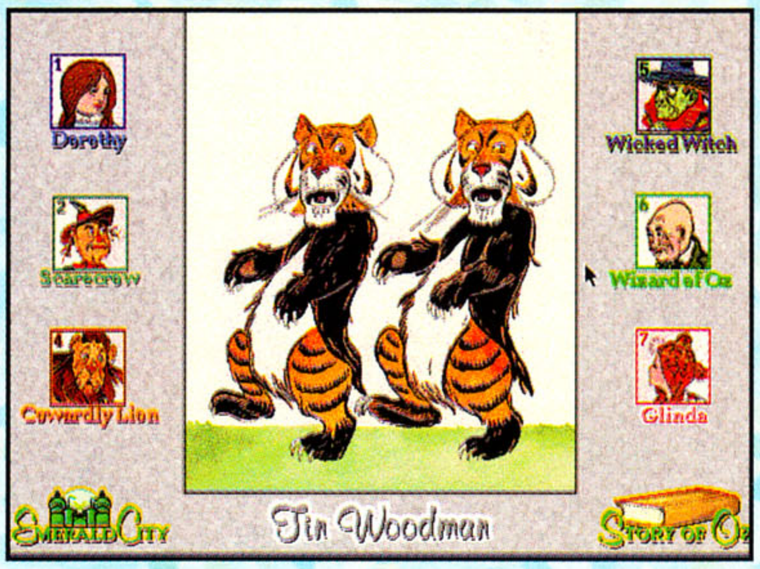
This month we're looking at three unique products designed for all-family play. Each takes the user down a long adventurous road, one in the United States, one in Brazil, and the third in the fantastic land of OZ.

The Legends of OZ (Multicom, Windows CD/Macintosh CD) is a delightful romp through Frank Baum's world with Dorothy and her friends. Each character tells the story from his or her point of view, accompanied by charming cartoon-style illustrations. There's an Oz story book to read on screen and all the original Denslow illustrations. There's also a bank of video clips from the MGM movie.

The experience adds up to a pleasant immersion into the world of Oz. But, there's more. Roger S. Baum, Frank's great-grandson, wrote three new Oz adventures, starring a new character, the SillyOZbul. The first two SillyOZbul stories are told through interactive animated cartoons, with clickable items and narration; the third is illustrated text, for the more advanced reader. There's also a concentration-style game.



Join Dorothy and the crew for a magical mystery tour through the beautiful and enchanting Oz.



Enjoy the adventure from the Lion's perspective: talking, dancing, and exploring the magical land.

All these child-pleasing activities are further enhanced by sound effects and new renditions of the familiar musical score.

America Adventure (Knowledge Adventure/DOS or Windows CD) is an enormous program that will keep learners traveling for many hours of learning play. It's a point-and-click exploration of the country, with side-trips down varied cultural roads and social paths, that totals more real knowledge about the USA, its past, and its people than most kids learn in several seasons of textbook study.

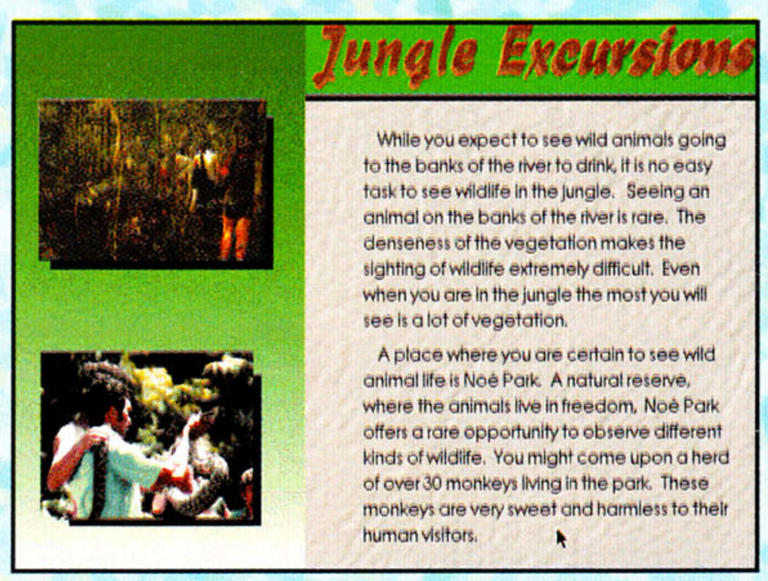
Some of the things they can do is travel around the world to see where Americans came from, study history from the first settlers down the time line to the present, study the presidency, visit national landmarks, see the National parks, and study the way the population has shifted.

QuickTime movies show such diverse scenes as the Mississippi floods, the attack on Pearl Harbor, Dr. King's 'I have a dream' speech, Kitty Hawk, Nixon's resignation, and many more.

The bank of icons include People, History, Natural Wonders, Native Americans, Wars, Arts, Foods, States, and Global Immigration. There's also a Zoom feature for traveling around the globe, and a simulation of the population expansion.

There are games on board, such as Where Is It? in which you locate a famous spot, Find The State, and the State Capital game. It's completely remarkable, and better than Amtrak for touring the country.

Brazil: An Exotic Journey (3D-ROM Multimedia/Macintosh and MPC CD) is the first real attempt to produce a tour on disk. It takes the user through the five regions of Brazil, each shown on a main map, then a regional map, and finally a state map, each surrounded by its own icon bank for further exploration. On the main map, the player can see a table of contents, slide show, general information, look at the capital, or go to the regional level to study its population, history, national parks, fauna, flora, weather, and geography. The state maps also include a Fun button,



View actual pictures of tourists discovering the diverse animal and plant life found in Brazil.

to show the attractions of that area.

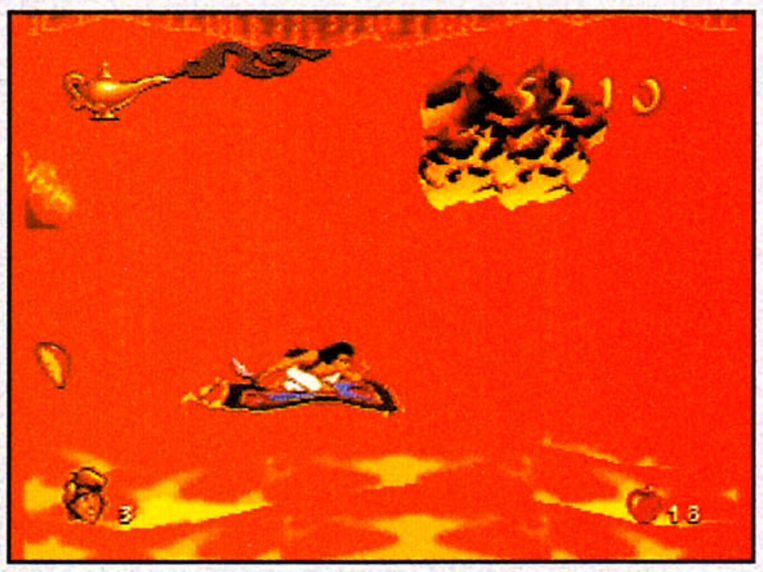
QuickTime movies, slide shows, and animations make it lively, and the full-screen slide shows on each map level keep it graphically splendid through the jungles, along the Amazon, to the glittering capital city, and Carnival.

Things are getting good for arm-chair travelers. The fact that they'll learn a lot while enjoying the experience is icing on the computer cake.

THE JURY

READERS AGREE: ALADDIN FOR GENESIS CAPTURES MOVIE LOOK, GOOD GAME PLAY

This month's contest was obviously welcome to fans of Disney's *Aladdin*, a number of whom are evidently fans of the game as well. Although the contest was open to reviews of either



The carpet ride is a visually intense part of the Genesis game that captures the thrill of the movie.

Sega's Genesis or Capcom's SNES version, most of the entries we received, including both our winners, were for the Genesis rendition.

Aladdin

Sega/Genesis
1 player

Winning Review
by Michael N. Hidalgo

Movie-game translations can be rough. Who can forget **E.T.** for the Atari 2600? Technology's had to play a tough game of evolution in order to successfully capture the spirit of a hit film. With maturing 16-Bit programming techniques, we're seeing a new dawn.

Sega, Virgin, and Disney have joined their forces to produce a video game version of **Aladdin** that pushes the envelope of the Genesis' capabilities *and* does genuine justice to the core material.

It follows the movie's plot and essence reverently as you guide Aladdin from the streets of Agrabah to the ultimate showdown in Jafar's palace. Eyes will be primarily trained on the beautifully fluid animation throughout, coupled with flawless control; here, look is no substitute for game play. The game gets progressively more challenging as you rise through the levels, never growing frustrating with tediousness.

The music is acceptable for a cart, weaving the film's score into a standard, repeating melody. A CD version would undoubtedly elevate the game that one notch higher, though it's a minor thing.

Aladdin for Genesis is a must-have for any serious owner's library, representing a landmark chapter for the console and for video games as a form of interactive entertainment.

Runner-Up Review
by Alfonso & Antonio De Pasquale

Aladdin for the Sega Genesis represents a winning collaboration between Sega, Virgin Games, and Disney. The three companies have each applied their own unique strengths to create a beautiful interactive cartoon. The title loosely follows the events of the film. As Aladdin, the player must complete 10 levels of jumping, climbing, sword fighting, and high-speed magic carpet rides, culminating in a final confrontation with the villainous Jafar.

The animation, courtesy of Disney, is flawless and stunningly fluid, capturing all the magic of the film.

"He's become a one-man rise in crime!" Guide Aladdin through the tough streets of Agrabah.

The backgrounds and main characters are both colorful and exquisitely rendered. The soundtrack sports original music as well as tunes straight from the film's Academy Award winning score.

The programmers at Virgin have created a fun yet challenging game. The level of difficulty is just right and the control is perfect. Don't let the subject matter fool you, **Aladdin** is a title that will require many hours of innovative game play to master.

Finally, Sega has thrown all its marketing muscle behind this title, making sure that everybody knows about it.

No matter how you slice it, **Aladdin**, the video game, just like its cinematic counterpart, is an instant classic.

JOIN THE JURY
REVIEW A GAME IN EG'S MONTHLY CONTEST!

Each month, **Electronic Games**' critics review dozens of new releases. They do a great job, but a lot of our readers are knowledgeable and perceptive about the games, too. Now, our unique monthly contest lets you strut your stuff. We'll pick a video cart each month, and challenge gamers to review it. Then, in *The Jury*, **EG** will print the best ones—and give a free game cart to the winner.

The rules are simple:

1. All reviews must be of the nominated game.
2. Entrants can submit only **one** review of each game.
3. All submissions become the property of **EG**.
4. Reviews should be 200 words or less, typed double-spaced.
5. The month's best review, as determined by **EG** editors, earns the writer the currently available video or computer game of his or her choice (sorry, no Neo•Geo carts).
6. The contest is open to anyone who has not sold professionally to **EG** within the previous 12 months (exclusive of this contest).

GAME FOR CONTEST #18: SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 3 SEGA/GENESIS

Deadline for this month's contest:
May 1, 1994
Send entries to:
The Jury (Electronic Games)
330 S. Decatur, Suite 152
Las Vegas, NV 89107
... and don't forget to tell us what video game you'd like if you are the winner!

THE EG POLL

The editors of **Electronic Games** want to know about you, the reader, so that we can tailor the magazine to your needs. The Reader Poll lets us know what aspects of the electronic gaming hobby are most interesting to you. We also want to know what you're playing, and to receive your vote for the most popular game programs each month. Those results appear in "Hotline" every month.

Just circle your choices below, then send your poll sheet (or a photocopy if you prefer) to **Electronic Games, 330 S. Decatur, Ste. 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107.**

Sex: Male Female

Age: Under 12 12-16 17-21
22-29 30-39 Over 40

Family Income:
Under $20,000
$20,000-$39,999
$40,000-$49,999
Over $50,000

How many people read your copy of EG?
1 2-3 4-6 7-8 9 or more

I regularly play (Circle all that apply): Video Games
Computer Games
Multimedia Games
All

How many of the following did you buy (or receive from others) in the last 12 months:
Video Game Cartridges _____
Portable Game Cartridges _____
Computer Games _____
Multimedia Games _____

Please check all hardware you own or plan to buy in the next 12 months:

	Own/ Use	Plan to Buy
SNES	_____	_____
Genesis	_____	_____
Neo•Geo	_____	_____
Jaguar	_____	_____
Game Boy	_____	_____
Game Gear	_____	_____
Lynx	_____	_____
CD-i	_____	_____
3DO	_____	_____
Amiga-32	_____	_____
CD-ROM Drive	_____	_____
Macintosh	_____	_____
MS-DOS Computer	_____	_____
Other Computer (write in name)		
Own/Use	_____	
Plan to Buy	_____	

Check the following computer peripherals and accessories you own or to which you have access:
Mouse___ Trackball___
Pointing Device_____
Joystick_____ Sound Card___
Video Card___ Windows_____

Check the following computer peripherals and accessories you plan to buy in the next 12 months:
Mouse___ Trackball___
Pointing Device_____
Joystick_____ Sound Card___
Video Card___ Windows_____

Please rate the following game subjects from 1 (no interest) to 10 (very interesting):
Sci-Fi/Fantasy ___
Mystery ___
War ___
Sports ___

Please rate your interest in these game categories from 1 (not interesting) to 10 (very interesting):
Video Games ___
Coin-Ops Games ___
Computer Games ___
Multimedia Games ___

My favorite video games are:
1._____
2._____
3._____

My favorite computer games are:
1._____
2._____
3._____

My favorite multimedia games are:
1._____
2. _____
3. _____

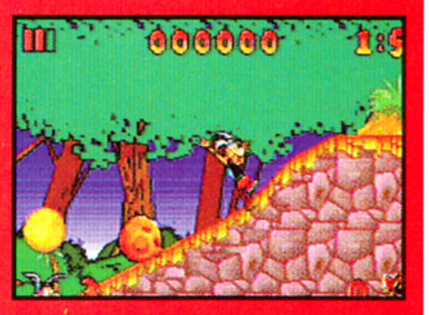
My favorite coin-op game is:
1._____

LET EG KNOW WHO YOU ARE! SEND IN THE POLL TODAY!

THINGS TO COME

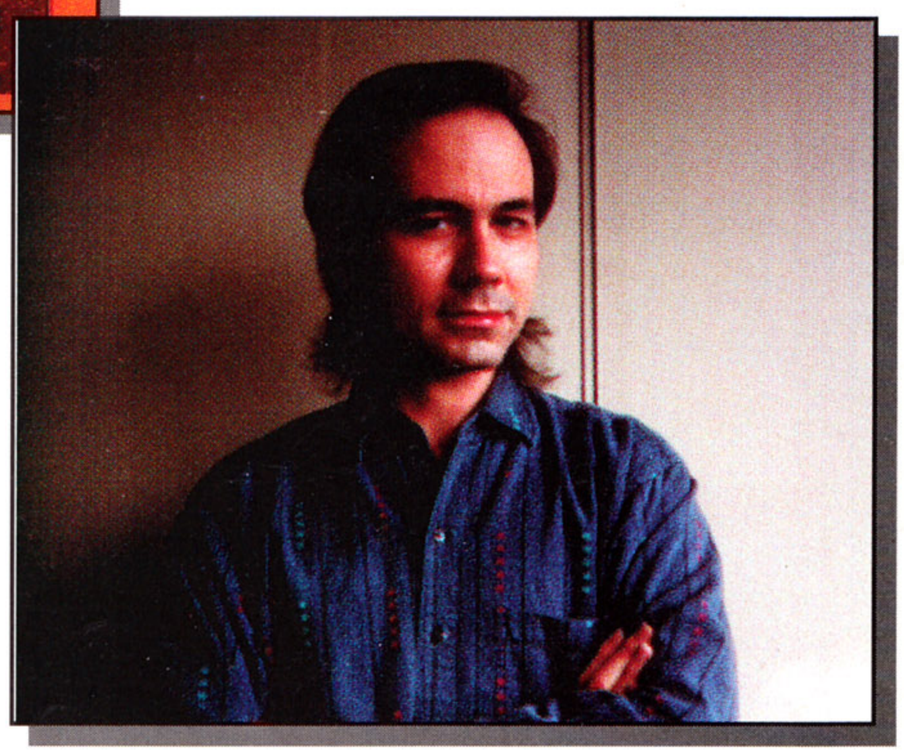
The Giants of Electronic Gaming

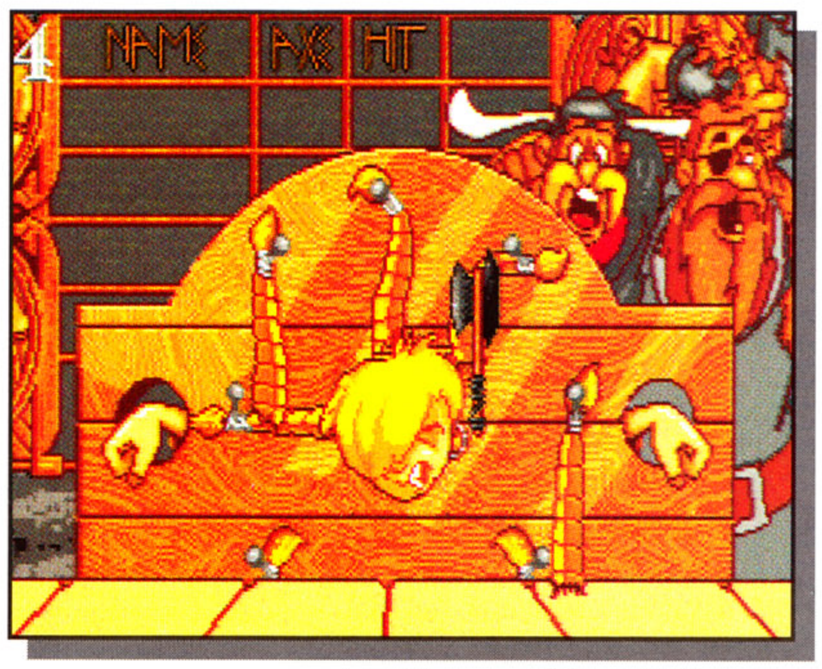
These are the men and women who determine what games we'll play, when we'll play them, and what hardware we'll be using to run the programs. Meet the secret masters behind the screens and find out about tomorrow's titans!



The Players' Guide to Baseball

The Boys of summer are back... and so is **Electronic Games**' annual salute to the National Pastime. Find out about this season's best new video, computer, and multimedia baseball games, plus tips on how to manage your way to a championship and an exclusive look at electronic entertainment for the true baseball fan.





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