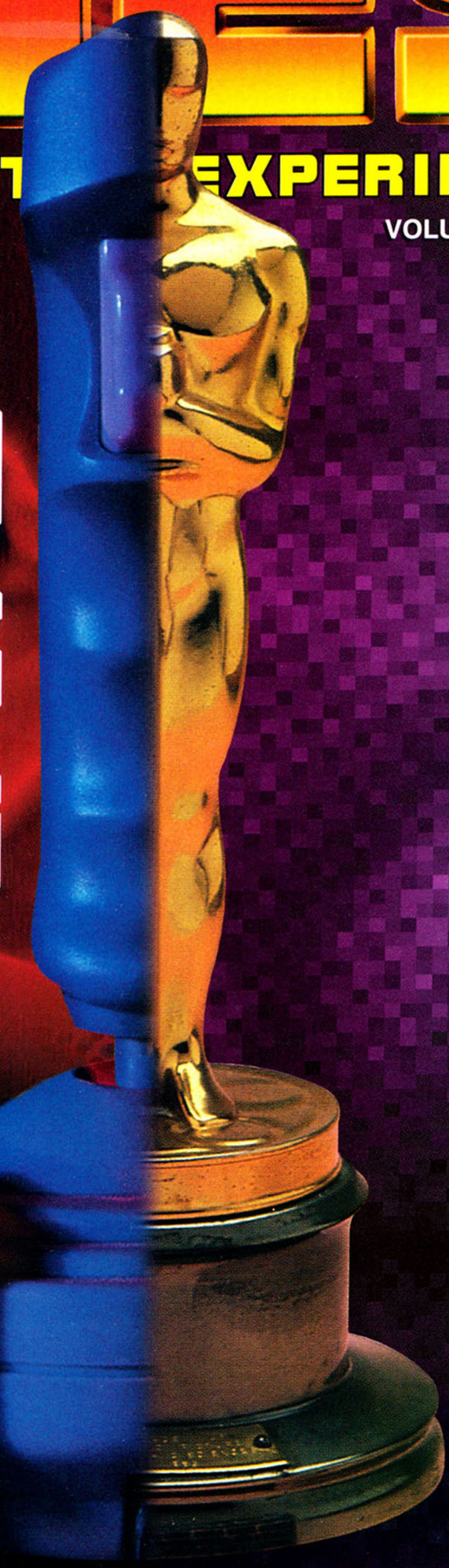
INTERACTIVE SCIENCE FICTION BLASTS OFF • 3DO'S NEW 64-BIT MACHINE • A FIRST LOOK AT DOOM II

ELECTRONIC GAMES™

THE MAGAZINE OF INTERACT EXPERIENCES

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1



WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

HOLLYWOOD MEETS GAMING

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"AWESOME, BABY! ANY WAY YOU LOOK AT IT!"

–Dick Vitale

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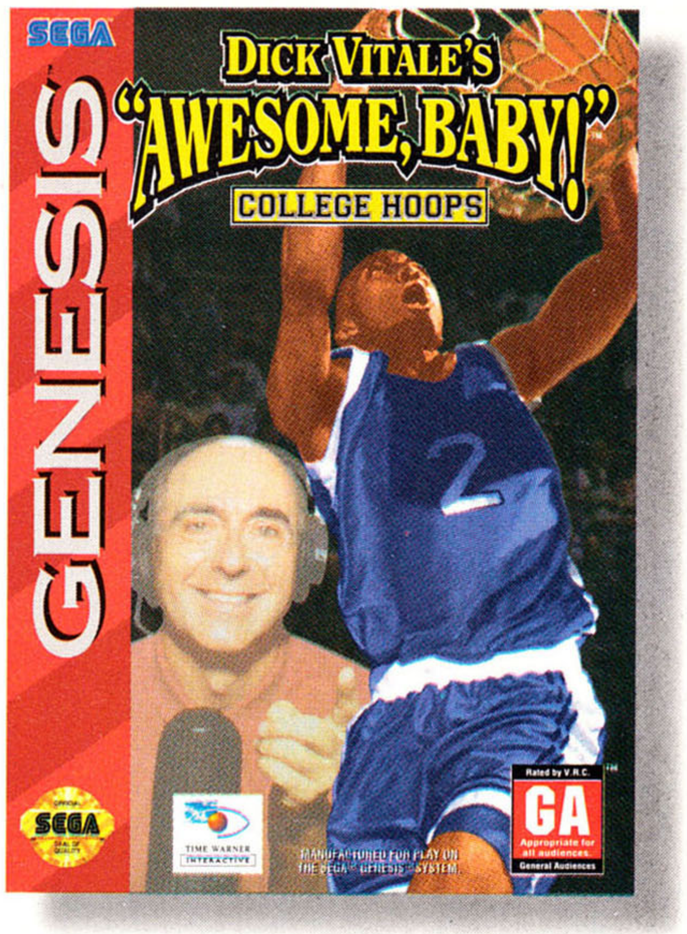
Here's the only Genesis™ basketball game with a *3-D rotating court* – and me, *Dick Vitale!*



I live and breathe college hoops. I eat it, I sleep it, I drink it, I love it, I need it. And now you can too – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The folks at Time Warner Interactive have created a college basketball game that's so much like the real thing, I can't believe it!

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Play it and you'll be screaming,
"Awesome, Baby – with a capital A!"

Dick Vitale

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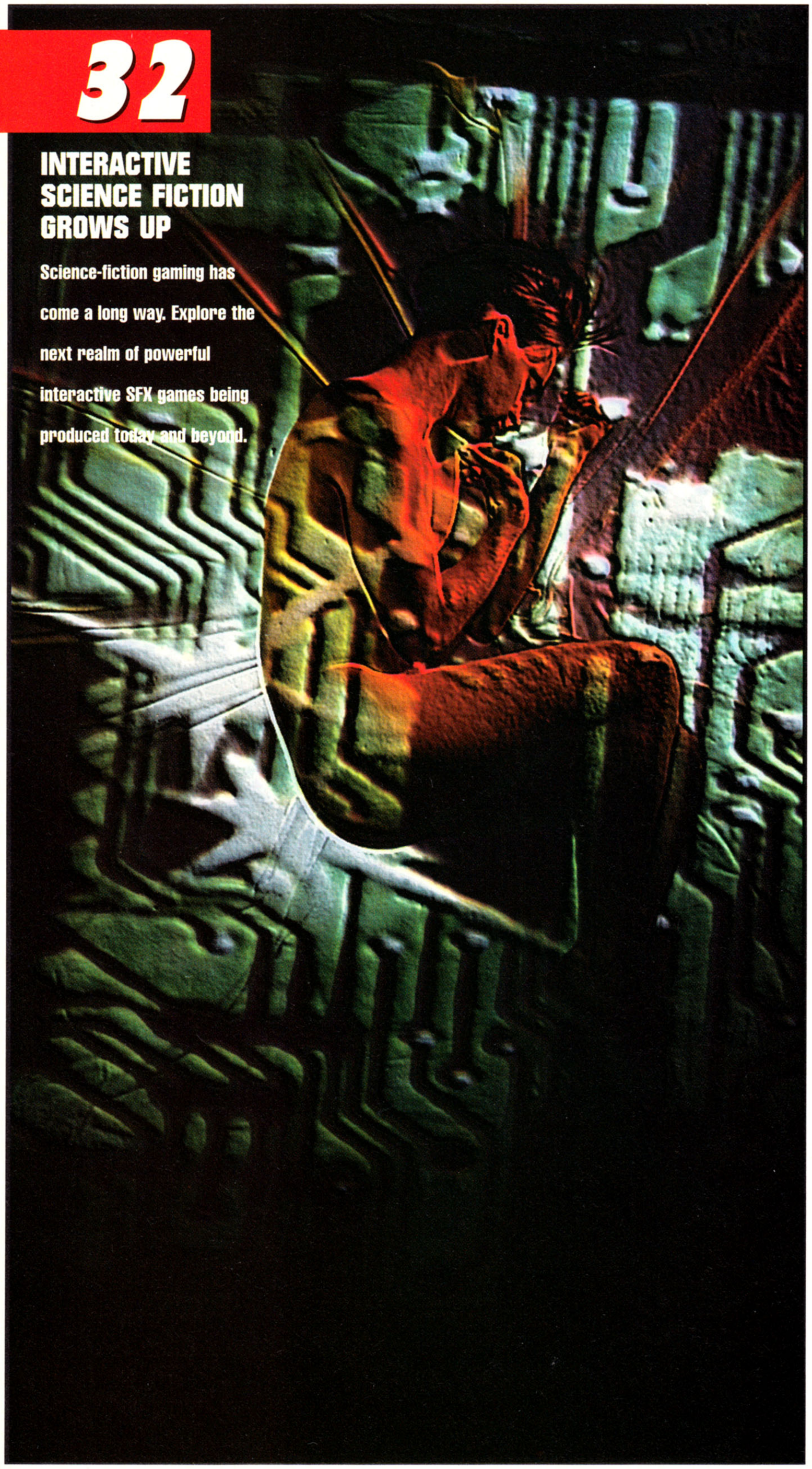

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INTERACTIVE SCIENCE FICTION GROWS UP

Science-fiction gaming has come a long way. Explore the next realm of powerful interactive SFX games being produced today and beyond.

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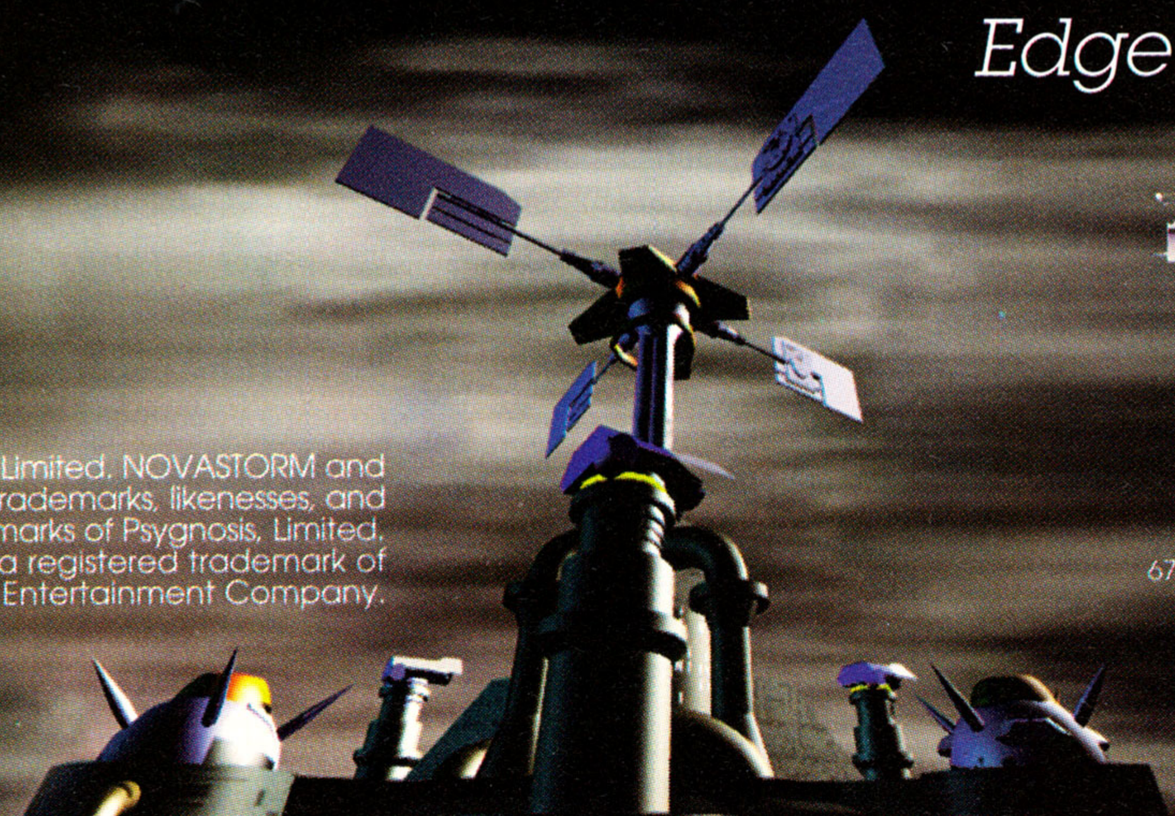
NOVASTORM

THE FORECAST FOR OCTOBER LOOKS SUPER!

"... Has Rebel Assault well and truly licked." -
Edge Magazine



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POWER ON!

NOT JUST KID STUFF ANY MORE

"Let's say that I am anxiously awaiting the dawn of truly interactive television—and maybe a 'delete' button on tomorrow's remote controls."

There's only one thing that sets me off worse than when the media rattles on and on about electronic gaming like it's an activity unknown to anyone past puberty. Recently, after a brief report about Access' **Under a Killing Moon**, the anchorwoman simpered, "My son loves those games." Her male colleague nodded sagely, as though what she said was in any way relevant to the sophisticated interactive movie that had flashed across the screen seconds earlier.

That's when I start shouting at the screen. I don't want to single out anyone by name, in light of the generally pathetic coverage our hobby gets from radio, television, and print publications. Let's say that I am anxiously awaiting the dawn of truly interactive television—and maybe a "delete" button on tomorrow's remote controls.

What could ruffle my habitual good humor more thoroughly than the mainstream media's affronts? It's when I hear the same kind of uninformed comments from people who should know better—members of the electronic gaming industry.

One incident at the last Summer Consumer Electronics Show crystallized my dissatisfaction with the way so many industry people repeated the outmoded and inaccurate clichés that have dogged this industry for far too long.

We were visiting a hotel suite hosted by one of the largest video game and computer entertainment publishers in the world. They had at least a half-dozen major releases, which its staff proceeded to demonstrate for several **EG** editors, including Bill Kunkel and Joyce Worley.

Our guide demonstrated a particularly pointless side scroller that she hailed as a new level of complexity and sophistication. Then she turned to the sequel to one of my favorite games, which looked even better than the original, and said that it was probably good for 8-year-olds.

I barely camouflaged my utter shock. I'd already played a preliminary version of the cartridge. Like everyone who saw it with me, I thought it was clever, cute, witty, and just challenging enough to keep players romping through its varied and innovative game-world. She had arrived at her assessment, I learned through discreet questioning, based on two "facts": the graphics were in the cartoon-style, and video games are played by little kids. Presumably, she was unaware that adults have been known to watch cartoons (*Who Framed Roger Rabbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* to name two) and that the average 16-Bit gamer is in high school, not grade school.

The phrase "self-fulfilling prophecy" comes to mind. If publishers develop games based on the assumption that players are preteens and market them with the same thought in mind, mature players will get the "stay away" message. There won't be games with the depth and texture such players demand, and the ads may give them the impression that there's no place for them in electronic gaming.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Cutting-edge technology makes it possible to offer games and entertainments capable of giving anyone a satisfying interactive experience, no matter what their age. Someone had better let the software publishers in on that information. Otherwise, the industry will turn off potential new customers faster than the mass market turns on the new platforms.

We Get Letters

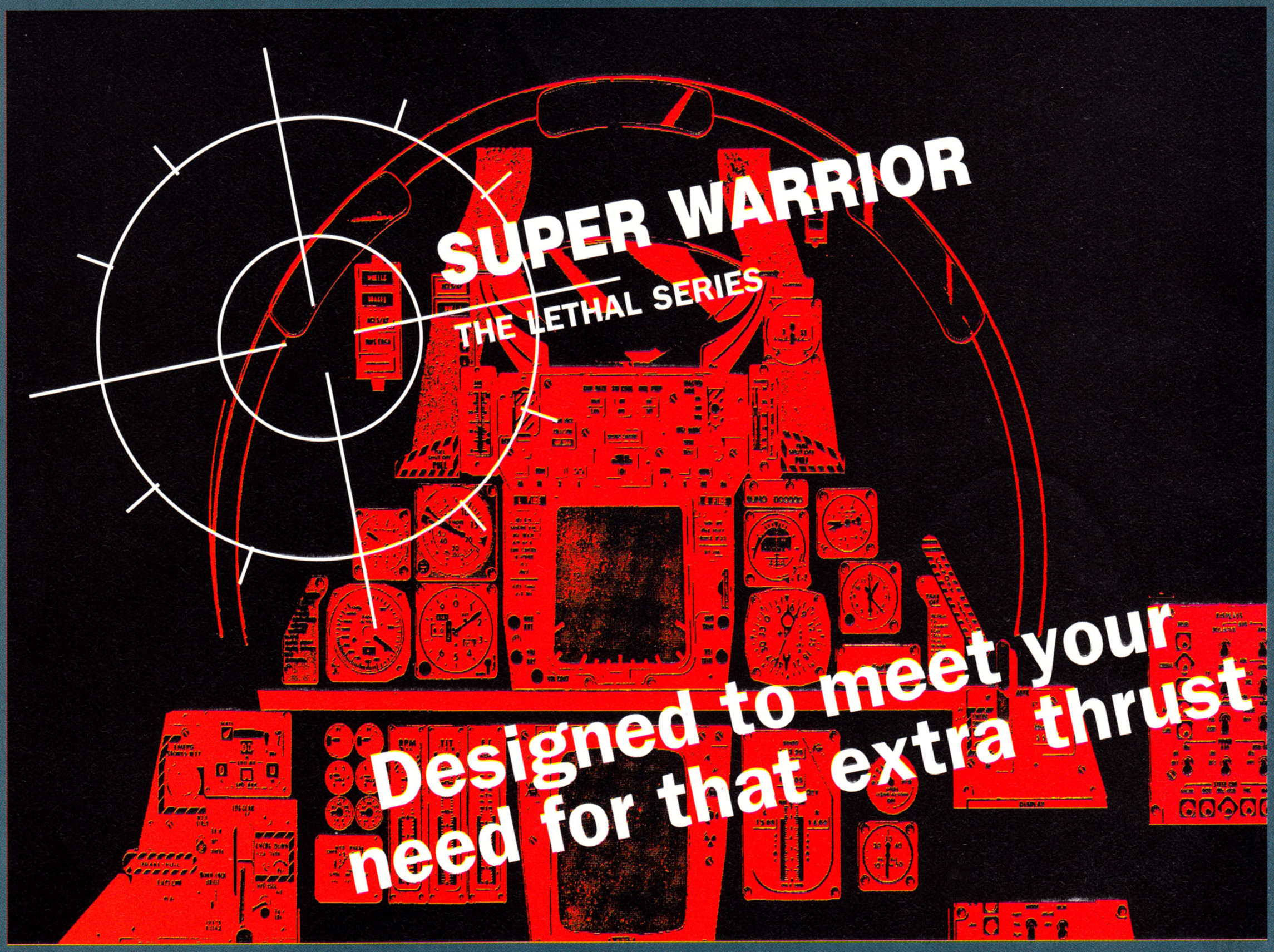
It's not just the mailman who brings your comments, questions and suggestions to the **Electronic Games** editorial office these days. A couple of issues ago, we quietly introduced an electronic mail address for the convenience of our many readers who prefer the digital highway to the U.S. Postal Service.

Maybe we introduced it a little *too* quietly. Consider this a formal, if not quite engraved, invitation for everyone who reads this magazine to send me your opinions. I can honestly promise that I read every single electronic letter personally as I download them for Managing Editor Ross Chamberlain, who writes almost all of the editorial replies you read in "Feedback" each and every month.

One favor, though. Please put your name in the letter so we know who to credit for all those brilliant thoughts.

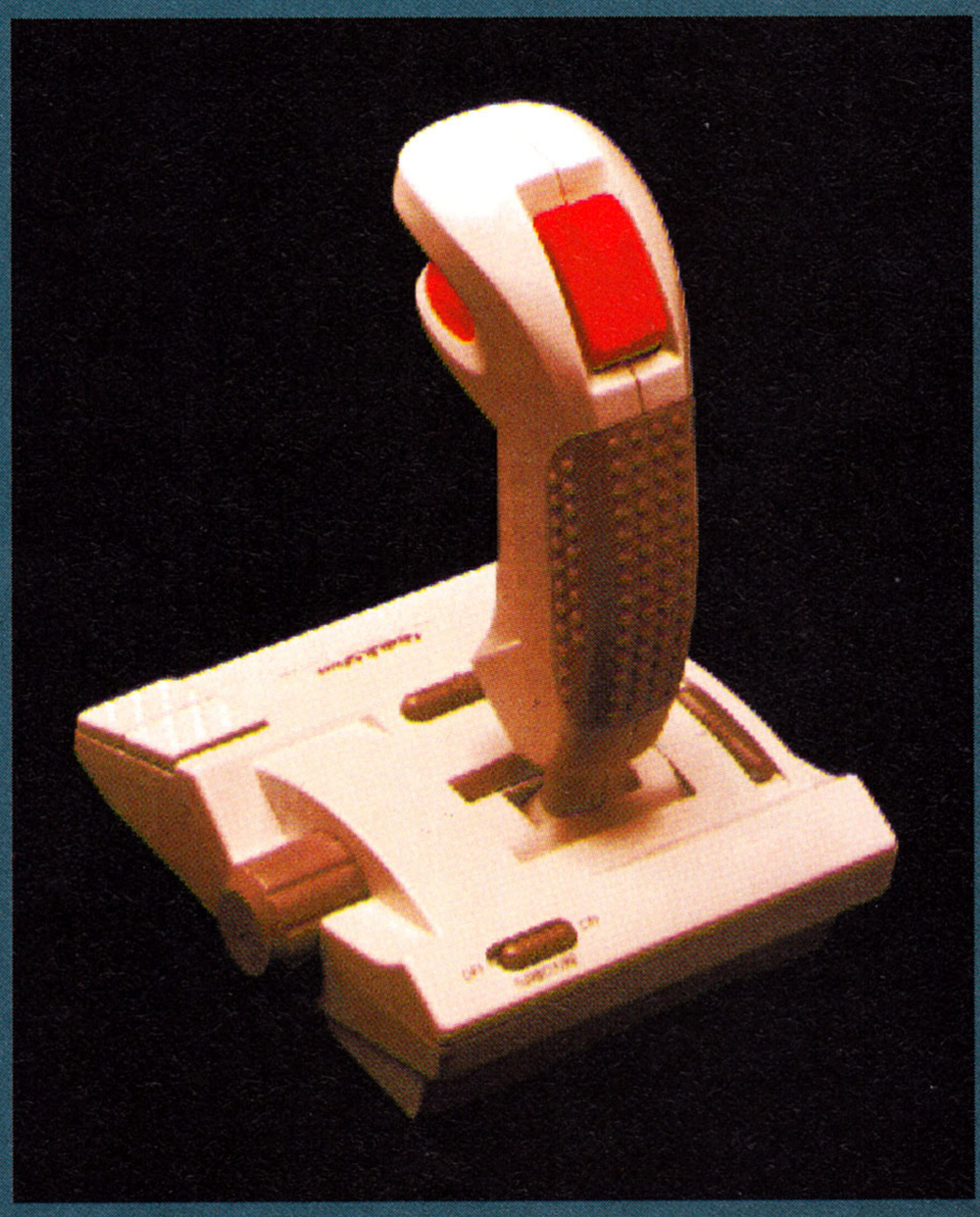
So if you want a direct line to the folks at **EG** E-mail me at **elecgames@aol.com**.

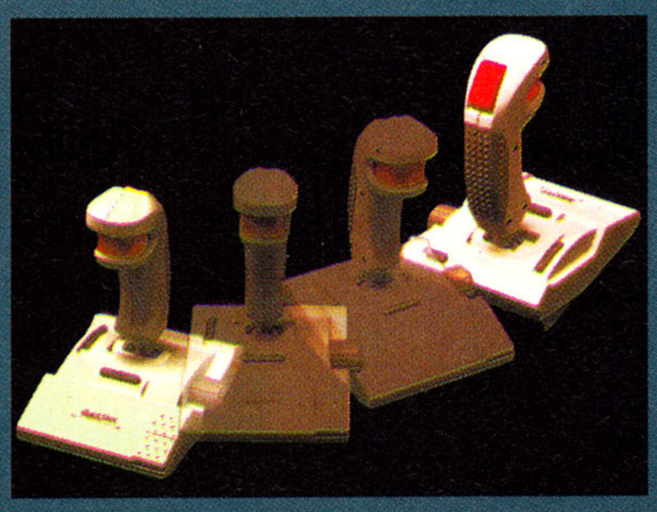
by Arnie Katz



Designed to meet your need for speed and control, the Super Warrior is the first available from a new line of IBM compatible game controllers called the Lethal Series by QuickShot.

The Super Warrior is ergonomically designed with four positive response fire buttons, a smooth tracking bio grip, and high speed auto fire capability. And with a built in throttle control for flight simulation games, you'll definitely get that extra thrust you need to take on any enemy.





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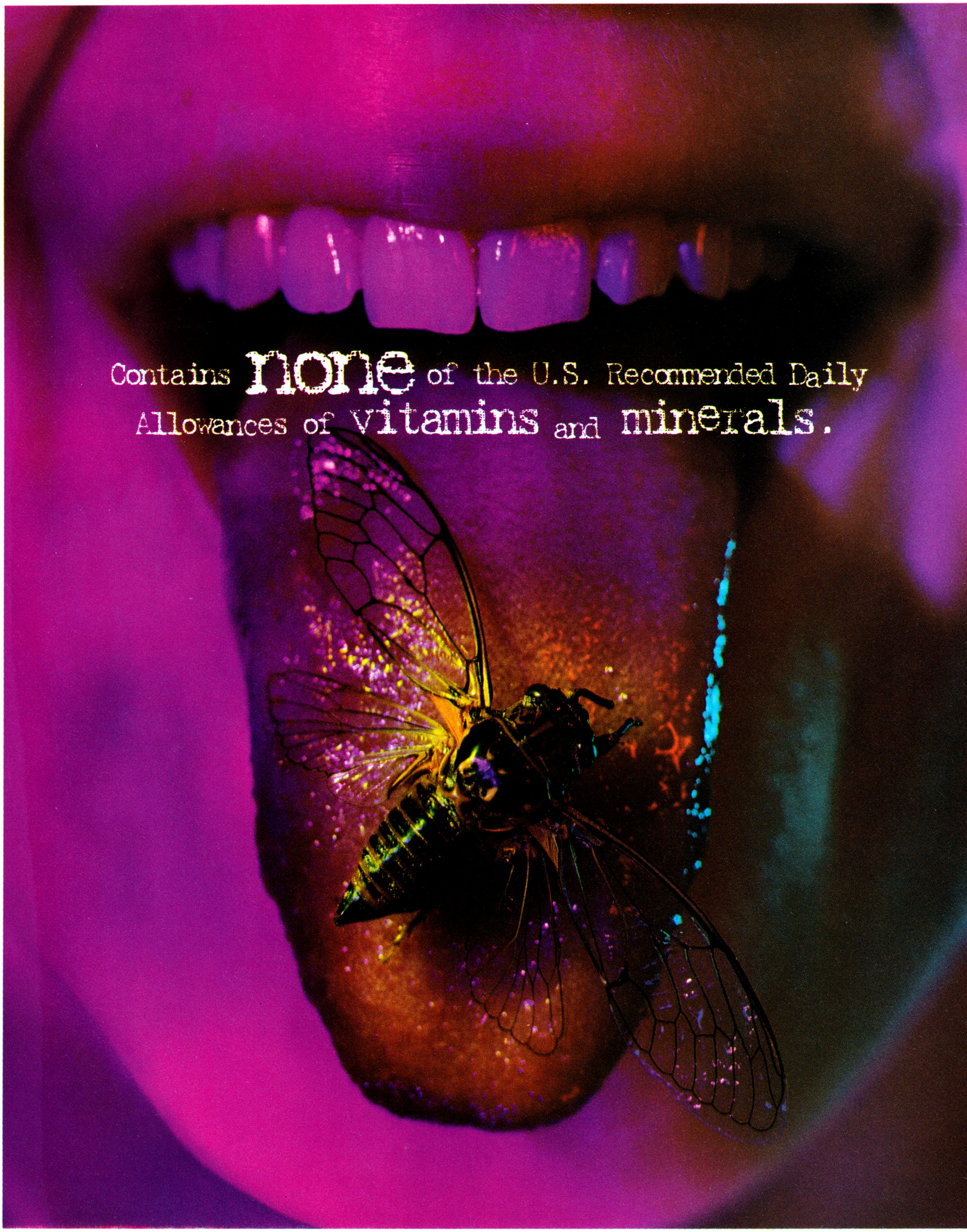
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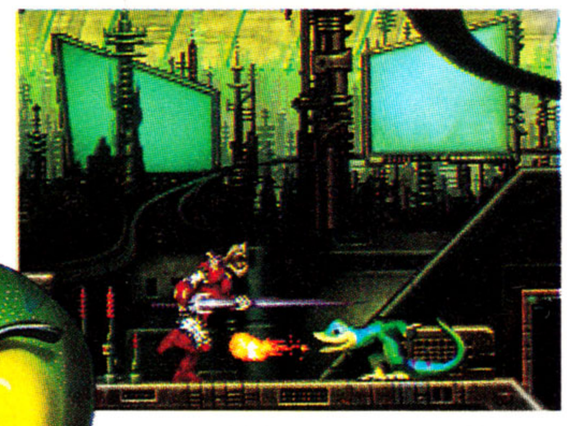

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3DO

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FEEDBACK

THE GHETTOIZING OF GAMING

"No one will ever take games seriously until the companies realize that a game can deliver adult messages as well as any book or movie."

I'll cut to the chase without any preamble: I'm disappointed with the gaming industry. It has the potential to rival the other "biggie" entertainment branches, but for a myriad of reasons, it probably never will.

Huge software houses have developed a stranglehold on the market; independent designers are becoming very rare. This may not sound like a big deal, but much of the creative energy of gaming comes from the small publishers.

The gaming gurus at the software houses are doing more than simply copying ideas: they are slowing the acceptance of gaming as mainstream entertainment. With their prima-donna antics, most people look at the industry as a little child, fit only for hobbyists and fanatics.

The squabble over a ratings system has only reinforced the childish image of the computer/video game industry. Nintendo, for instance, has scared off adult gamers by removing any 'inappropriate' material. No one will ever take games seriously until the companies realize that a game can deliver adult messages as well as any book or movie. By removing these themes, the games can only suffer.

• **DOOM**

Many computer companies have gone in the other direction. With no checks on their products, they have capitalized on adult issues with little regard for the consequences. Pornography is getting a toe-hold in the industry, diverting attention to their inferior products while superior games are ignored. Of course, movies and books have their share of porn, but it does not get the level of attention that the gaming versions do.

As Mr. Simpson (William, that is:) said in the previous issue, too much emphasis has been put on glitter & eye candy, and so, has let the game play suffer. While this is not true in some instances (**Doom** & **Privateer** were very enjoyable), many games are suffering from this disease.

Serious reforms will have to be enacted to put electronic gaming back on the track to what was once heralded as the entertainment of the future.

CORIC@AOL.COM

Some of us are old enough to remember the media attention put on books when Supreme Court decisions opened the way for 'adult' material to be published above ground, rating systems opened the way for 'adult' films, and let us not forget the intermittent controversies over rock 'n' roll. Every loophole will be exploited by some and the media loves it when they do. But meanwhile, look where they are now ... It doesn't bode that poorly for gaming's future.

By the way, you're our second writer to send us e-mail on our on-line address (see below). We encourage this, but hereafter we do request that letters for feedback include a name and address ... Your letter qualifies as the winner of the STD controller this month; please contact us so we can pass it on to STD's prize department.

License to Chill

Your article on bad licenses in the July issue made me think about it, and here's what I came up with. First of all, the James "Buster" Douglas game was basically Romstar's **Final Blow** with a famous name slapped on it. Sega did not rush to get Holyfield's name; in fact, the game was not made until two years after the Buster Douglas game. Another thing not clear is the fact that the Pat Riley game was one of Sega of America's first games, and it was originally scheduled to be released as **Super Basketball**, sans the Riley license. The bad licenses for poor Sega also haven't ended there. Some names I can think of are *Cool World*, Marky Mark, and INXS, just to name a few. Fortunately, **Cool World** was scrapped.

Another thing: **Mike Tyson's Punch-Out** had nothing to do with aliens. In the game, the player was a character called Little Mac who started from an amateur and worked up to a bout against Tyson. The game referred to must be **Power Punch II**, a game by ASC, which has a hero resembling Tyson, and was apparently the sequel to **Punch-Out**. In fact, Nintendo reissued **Punch-Out** taking out all references to Tyson.

Let's not forget, **Global Gladiators** was actually a sequel of sorts to **McKids**, another Virgin game, this time for the NES, that was related to McDonalds, and **Global**, because it was being programmed by David Perry anyway, wasn't going to use anyone but the stars of the NES game, Mick and Mack. But Ronald McDonald does have a few cameo appearances in the game, which is very environmentalist. By the way, Treasure of Japan created **Treasure Land**, which was released by Sega, and is a McDonald's license as well, has Ronald McDonald as the main character, and is a vastly superior game to **Global Gladiators**.

Syd Mead, the futurist who worked on CyberRace, also helped work with **Terraforming**, a game for the PC Engine Duo, but I'm not sure if T.T.I. brought it over here.

Finally, some little corrections in your magazine.

"...Spike McFang is the *man!*" Game Players Magazine, June 1994 **"Editor's Choice – Gold!"** Electronic Gaming Monthly, June 1994 **"Spike McFang i... l, playful game ...** Game Pro Magazine, April 19... **...into this video g... like any hero yo...** Nintendo Power, June 1994 **"... ... excellent sto... and awesome graphics!"** Electronic Gaming Monthly, June 1994 **"...Spike McFang is the game you want to play."** Video Games Magazine, March 1994

Use Spike's lightning hat and spinning cape to destroy his enemies.

Protect your friends along the way —you'll need them later!

Snapping Piranhas have razor- sharp teeth and their lunch menu says "vampire sandwich".

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Searching for a new **action adventure** game? Well, look no further. Introducing **The Twisted Tales of Spike McFang**, the game the critics fell for head-over-cape. **Talking rocks**, fire-breathing zombies, killer garlic and a hip vampire with a **deadly hat and cape**. Don't miss this classic **battery-backed** adventure in the tradition of **Zelda®**.

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Litil Divil

Meet Mutt. He's grouchy. He's grumpy. But hey, let's face it, a little time in the underworld can make anyone a little edgy. And now Mutt has a problem. You see, he was chosen to get the Mystical Pizza of Plenty for his friends. And with all due respect to the eternally damned, the service in the underworld really sucks. In "Litil Divil," you can help Mutt as he makes his way through five soul-repenting levels in the Labyrinth of Chaos. Along the way you'll encounter gigantic spiders, demonic fish, and a few other things your priest never warned you about. All in a search for a double pepperoni with cheese. A few hours with Mutt, and you'll really appreciate that 30-minute-free-delivery thing.

PC CD-ROM — CD-i — PC Floppy

PHILIPS MEDIA

Optional Digital Video Cartridge required for CD-i. Litil Divil™ © 1993 Gremlin Graphics Software Limited. We apologize to anyone whose name actually is Mutt or, for that matter, any fire-spitting demons we may have offended. © 1994 Philips Media. All rights reserved.

The actor's name in **Prize Fighter** is Dick Miller, not Smith, and the Comedy Channel does not exist. Its name is Comedy Central, but it is half owned by Viacom and half owned by Time Warner.

Chad W. Siat
Bangor, ME

Bill Kunkel responds: the Holyfield game was actually released twice, Chad, and the Mike Tyson game with aliens (not from Nintendo) was called ***Tyson Intergalactic Punch-Out****. You're right about Dick Miller, who starred in a bunch of Roger Corman films and even in* Gremlins. *You're right, too, about the Comedy Central name—it* used *to be the Comedy Channel, and our timelines slipped twixt the fingers and the keyboard.*

Don't Ad Before Their Time

Ahhhh! These computer game companies are driving me crazy! How can they get away with advertising their games in magazines long before they are even 1/4 of the way from completion? Some don't necessarily advertise, but they release sneak previews to magazines which are mostly just short animation clips and a description of what the game will be like. For example, I had heard about **Front Page Sports Baseball** in numerous magazines, including a well-designed insert advertisement, months ago. I called Sierra around May 20, and they told me it would be out July 15. So I called back July 15 and they told me not until the middle of September. The problem has been even worse with Bethesda and their new **NCAA II**. I understand that these companies want their games to be perfect when they release them, and that they want to get a jump on their competitors so they advertise early, but this is getting absolutely ridiculous!

Joe Quillici
Chico, CA

When you read about a game here, then you know whether it's due for release or "in the works"—along with an estimate of when the game is anticipated to hit the stores (based on press-time information). Of course, delays happen, and in the complex process of preparing a game for market Murphy's Law has any number of opportunities to take effect. Ads take time to prepare (it's a complex process in itself), and timing promotional and teaser advertising for a specific period in advance of the actual release of a game is a bit like predicting the weather or the stock market months ahead; some do it better than others, but chaos theory and the capriciousness of fate apply.

Will the Real 3-D Please Stand Up

Kudos to Bill Kunkel for his excellent article on Virtual Reality. However, there is one little error in his article.

When talking about Virtual Reality audio, or 3-D Sound, it is important to note that Q-Sound is not three dimensional. Q-Sound (the actual company) will tell you it is merely a stereo enhancement, capable of producing sounds in a 179 degree area (in front of the head). True 3-D sound should be able to be positioned anywhere around the head (360 degrees).

Many of the new HMDs, such as Forte's VFX1 want to create an immersive environment. Because most if not all HMDs use headphones for audio, Q-Sound does not do the job, since it cannot be heard through headphones. Other technologies such as the Focal Point Audio solution, which Advanced Gravis utilizes with its UltraSound family of audio cards, can place sounds in a 360 x 360 degree sphere anywhere around the head, including behind, above, below, and in front. UltraSound audio boards can playback this audio using either speakers or headphones, mandatory for a true 3-D experience.

Thanks for your time.

Bryan Del Rizzo
Marketing Communications Executive
Advanced Gravis, Bellingham, WA

Many thanks, Bryan, for your explanation ... and congratulations as the first letter writer to use our new E-mail address. While a bas-relief frieze has less depth than Rodin's The Thinker, both are three-dimensional works, where even the deepest-appearing work on photographic paper is still two-dimensional. The analogy may not be perfect, since stereophonic sound can, with clever phase adjustments (like Q-Sound and other products like the Omnisonix Imager that have been around a while seem *to come from almost any direction. (We know, technically, it can't be wider than the 179 degree spread you mention; subjectively, it differs by the listener.) Under immersive VR requirements, however, where the effect needs to maintain a consistent direction when the listener's head moves, perhaps it's necessary to concede that full 3-D needs more than just phasing tricks.*

We love to hear from you folks; notice our expanded letter column space? Let's hear from more of you! Write to:

Feedback, c/o Electronic Games
330 South Decatur, Suite 152
Las Vegas, NV 89107

... And now, contact EG on-line!
E-Mail Address: elecgames@aol.com

Letter Contest

Win an STD controller! Each month EG selects one letter and the writer gets a choice of one of STD's fine line of controllers for SNES, Genesis and computers.

HOTLINE

THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO THE ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

The Bulldog is Loose!

The Next 3DO Console Shows its Pedigree

There's a new dog coming down the street, as 3DO prepares to unleash a new system for Christmas 1995.

Codenamed The Bulldog, the 64-Bit 3DO machine will be downwardly compatible with existing 3DO machines, and all existing software will work with it. In addition to the new console, the Bulldog system will also be available as a $100 upgrade cartridge for current 3DO machines. "When it was introduced, the 3DO system was meant to be a platform which could be built on, as the inevitable advancements are created," said Bob Faber, 3DO's senior. VP of sales and marketing. "Any new upgrades in 3DO will absolutely remain downwardly compatible."

The advance information is impressive. The machine is based on a 64-Bit RISC processor, with MPEG 1 built in. The engineers call it a "66 MHz single cell SDRAM system." (The current system uses dual cell 25 MHz DRAM architecture.) They promise a walloping 250,000 texture-mapped polygons per second, and 400 MB per second bus bandwidth, described as three times greater than Sony's PlayStation or top of the line Pentium computers. It also features full hardware support for Z-buffering.

Trip Hawkins is currently putting together a software development department and plans to have seven or eight separate teams to work on Bulldog games to be ready in time for the hardware launch.

Third-party developers will receive their development kits next spring; this probably means that the third-party Bulldog software will appear first quarter 1996.

The Company Revs Up

Software had a slow start when 3DO went to market at the end of 1993, but it's off and running now. The company expects 100 3DO titles to be available by the end of this year, in sharp contrast to the limited number of entertainments available at the time of the machine's introduction.

Many industry analysts thought that it was a mistake when Panasonic insisted on putting out their 3DO machine last fall, when the software wasn't yet ready. They felt it made a poor impression.

Dave Dempsey, from Electronic Arts, explained: "There was some concern from software publishers about the hardware releasing before there were 20 or more titles available.

"The feeling was that Panasonic was overanxious to launch the machine, and sales were sluggish because of the lack of software.

"You need the application of software to generate excitement in a new machine."

Peripherally Speaking

The company has ramped up its support to developers, and third-party accessories are beginning to show up.

3DO shipped its MPEG encoding system to software developers in July, and GTE Interactive will also market and distribute the system. The 3DO Real-Time MPEG Encoding System is a tool that uses a point-and-click interface to encode digital or analog source material. The end result is a more affordable way to encode video and audio into the MPEG format.

American Laser Games is already shipping its Gamegun, a light gun for the 3DO. The colored plastic pistol takes the place of the control pad. ALG designed it to go with their own live-action shooting games for 3DO, **Mad Dog McCree**, **Who Shot Johnny Rock?**, and **Mad Dog II: The Lost Gold**.

TDK also signed a peripheral license agreement. They plan to manufacture and market a 3DO Memory Card early in 1995. This will enable gamers to save games to the card, then transport them from one 3DO system to another.

CH Products will ship their 3DO joystick before Christmas, and Logitech will present a mouse.

Perhaps the most dramatic peripheral to be introduced this year is Creative Lab's 3DO card for PCs, to allow play of 3DO software on computers. The price ranges from around $400 to $700, depending on the configuration.

There are other, even more dramatic peripherals in development, including modems and, eventually, a keyboard.

The Human Investment

In a dramatic demonstration of his continuing faith in the product, Trip Hawkins, currently the chairman of the board of Electronic Arts, announced that he would not stand for reelection to the Board of the company he founded in 1982. Instead, he will focus his time on 3DO. There was an additional reason: EA and 3DO are both involved in making software for the system, and there was concern that there might be a future conflict of interest.

Trip's putting his money where his mouth is, too. He upped his stake in 3DO in June, with a purchase of one million shares of stock costing $12.4 million. Since Trip founded the 3DO Company, he has always believed that the 3DO will become the standard platform for consumer multimedia.

"...You need the application of software to generate excitement in a new machine..."

'95 Software Plans

Bob Faber says that he knows of over 40 projects in development, slated for mid-1995.

Larry Probst, president and CEO of EA, reinforced that company's interest in the system: "Our commitment to the 3DO platform remains strong ... The company has already released four 3DO titles and it has 15 more in development."

Mark Skaggs, president of Tetragon, is looking forward to a good year with 3DO in 1995. "Our second title for 3DO will be ready for February, and we've started on another that will be ready for mid-year. It's a great system, and I have a lot of confidence in its future!"

The 3DO World

"The world market is huge," Robert Faber told **EG**. Faber was just named managing director of the 3DO European office, and is moving to England to establish the 3DO office in London. He'll be responsible for marketing, sales, and development activities throughout Europe. "There are already over 200,000 units installed worldwide," he explained, "and we expect that number to reach over a half million by the end of this year."

It already is on sale in the Orient. The Panasonic 3DO is available in the USA and Japan. GoldStar Electronics is launching its 3DO machine this year in the US and Korea, and Sanyo Electric will launch their system this year in Japan.

Spokesmen for the system are equally optimistic: "After all, the [64-Bit] systems from Nintendo, Sega, and Sony won't be out for Christmas."

Reliable sources say that the manufacturer's suggested price is about to drop to $399. Considering this new price point, the impressive array of games available, and renewed confidence in the future plans of the company, it seems likely that gamers will want the machine. One purchaser explained, "Knowing that there's going to be an improved machine, and that I'll be able to upgrade to that level makes me feel like I'm buying into a system with a future."

Dave Dempsey summed it up with this statement: "Now there are more games ... awesome titles, which together with the lowered price of the hardware, should increase sales dramatically this year."

(Joyce Worley)

TECH SPECS

CPU: 66 MHz RISC processor (possibly R series)
Memory: 4 Mb SDRAM; 4K Instruction cache; 4k data cache; 32k or 64K non-volatile RAM; 400 Mb/sec bandwidth
Graphics: 100,000,000 pixels per sec; 250,000 mesh (textured) polygons per sec; triangle engine (150,000 triangles per sec); hardware texture mapping (bi-linear interpolation); point sampled and MIP mapping; Gouraud shading on Alpha and RGB channels; true 3-D perspective in all modes; full Z-buffer support
Colors: 24-Bit color; 8/16-Bit CLUTS
Video: MPEG1 built in, with flexible rates and multiple stream rates; MPEG2 to follow as an option
Resolution: 640x480-320x240
Storage: Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 2:1 hardware decompression (matching PK.ZIP)
Miscellaneous: NTSC/PAL/HDTV/wide NTSC and support for SVGA; 32K RAM carts for saving data; DVD CD standard by 1996
Available: Christmas 1995

WHISPERS FROM PAVILION X

***JJ Barrel**—he's everywhere! He desktops by night and speaks the truths others dare not utter. JJ puts his private eyes and inside spies into every corner of electronic gaming. Our investigative ace takes no prisoners.*

And now, direct from Parts Unknown ... ***JJ Barrel!***

Nintendo gets along better with the press these days, but the Big N still has lessons to learn. They are now willing to show eproms of forthcoming games to magazines, but they send each one with a personal escort who stays with the game for a day or two while an editor plays it to gather information for a preview. Then courier and cartridge return to Washington....

"There can be only one..." That's a quote from the intro to each episode of *Highlander*, but it also applies to interactive entertainment trade shows. CES Interactive and E^3 are scheduled for the same dates *(see "Hotline" this issue for the whole story),* but bet the farm that only one will actually open next May. Some companies are hedging their bet, taking tentative space at both shows, but with the intention of only going to one...

The Brothers Grunt, the latest addition to the MTV lineup, will be a video game project in the near future. Viacom, which has the inside track on all MTV and Nickelodeon licenses, will publish...

EG's own Barry Friedman (his column starts in the next issue) won a friendly pool on when America OnLine will gets its one-millionth subscriber. The canny Canadian correctly predicted the network's meteoric rise almost a year ago...

Philips has started a music division. Its **Nine Inch Nails** CD-i title is drawing raves from alternative rockers...

HOTLINE

Complied by Joyce Worley & Ross Chamberlin

DID YOU KNOW...

Sega Enterprises opened Joypolis, its first theme park, in Yokohama. The company plans several more amusement parks for Japan, and one for the U.S. next year... The Amusement & Music Operators Assn. awarded 45 Hesch Scholarships of $1000 each, for the 1994-5 school year. This makes 181 scholarships given by the coin-op group since 1985... President Clinton gave the first Presidential Award for multimedia Design Excellent, to InterNetwork, for its CD-ROM **Arctic Data Interactive**. The awards are given every four years, by the National Endowment for the Arts... SDI Virtual Reality Corp. will give $250,000 in prizes for the best four-minute computer animated video of a virtual reality experience. Get details and entry form from SDI Virtual Reality Corp. Prod. Devel. Director, Royal Trust Tower, #1902, 77 King St. W, TD Center Box 272, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5K 1J5... America OnLine now has over 1 million subscribers...

LASERACTIVE PRICE DROPPED

Pioneer Electronics lowered the suggested retail price of the LaserActive player by $235, to $735, and reduced the price of two game control packs to $485. The game packs fit into the player and emulate the Sega Genesis or TurboTechnologies' Duo, so that those software libraries are available for play on the LaserActive.

New software currently in development includes an environmental program being completed by Robert Redford and New Learning Project. The company expects to have 20 entertainment titles available by year's end.

ATARI UNVEILS JAGUAR CD-ROM

Atari Corporation's CD-ROM drive for the Jaguar will be ready in time for holiday shopping.

Slated to retail at $199.95, it lets the Jaguar system play CD-based video games, audio CDs, and CD+G.

The unit fits into the cartridge slot of the Jag and has its own slot for cartridge-based games, which also allows some applications to use both ports at the same time, such as an MPEG video cartridge to come soon. It can also be used for special storage cartridges that save mission data statistics on **Blue Lightning**, a high-speed aerial combat game also due for Christmas release, and for other CD software titles to come.

Other Jaguar CD games scheduled for this year include **Battlemorph**, **Jack Nicklaus Cyber Golf**, **Highlander**, **Creature Shock,** and **Demolition Man**. There should also be some third-party titles ready to ship this fall as well. All together, Atari President Sam Tramiel claims, there will be 30 to 50 Jag titles ready for the holidays, including cartridge games.

The CD-ROM peripheral also incorporates an exclusive: the Virtual Light Machine (VLM), which creates an on-screen light show from the data on audio CDs. It was designed by **Tempest 2000** author Jeff Minter.

Another holiday offering is the Jaguar Voice/Data Modem, made by Phylon Communications. Gamers play against each other over the phone and can speak to one another as well. It includes a pause feature so a call waiting message can be answered without breaking the connection. Games to take advantage of it are **Doom**, **Club Drive**, and **Iron Soldier**.

WHEELIN' AND DEALIN'

BIZ-DEALS

T•HQ is angling deep waters; the company licensed the Bass Masters Classic (the tournament for bass fishers) for their upcoming SNES and Genesis game, a realistic simulation of the sport... The Aura Interactor virtual reality vest is touted in Acclaim's **Mortal Kombat II** and Williams' **Double Dragon V** and **Troy Aikman NFL Football**. Both companies also plan future games with special audio cues to trigger Interactor responses... AT&T plans to buy all of Sierra's shares in The Imagination Network. The deal will probably include an agreement for Sierra to provide programs for INN for several years... Times Mirror, continuing its plans to become a leader in multimedia, made an investment in Rocket Science Games. "Our strategy is to invest strategically in multimedia developers that have particularly strong technology and artistic creativity," said Times Mirror VP Ann Dilworth... The license for *Rocky & Bullwinkle & Friends* went to Asymetrix Corp. for a screen saver/calendar program with the squirrel and moose, Boris and Natasha, Peabody and Sherman, and Dudley Doright... Music videos in MPEG CD format for PC are coming from Warner. The first is a collection from INXS... A sign of the times: Technicolor Optical Media Service, which manufactures CD formats, pressed over 2 million CDs in its first three months of operation... Sega and MGM are going to do cross-licensing, of movies to games, and games to movies.

DISTRI-DEALS

Hi-Tech got the license to market the PC version of Acclaim's **NBA Jam**; it should be available in November... Sigma Designs will distribute the MPEG version of Tsunami's **Flash Traffic: City of Angels**. Sigma is marketing it for use with the ReelMagic MPEG board, which provides full-motion TV quality to the adventure... Virgin used NewLeaf's electronic distribution, now in use at 500 Blockbuster stores, giving players a chance to play **The Jungle Book** (Genesis) before it was available for rent or sale. Look for more electronic sneak-peeks in the future... Dynamix's as yet unnamed flight sim will be bundled with the Discovery Channel's **Wings Over Europe**...

EDU-DEALS

Watch for a growth spurt at Humongous Entertainment; the children's software maker just got $1.2 million of investment capital. Shelley Day, pres and CEO, says they'll double their production capabilities... Jim Henson Productions is collaborating with Starwave Corp. Products will be based on Muppet characters. They also intend to develop new stories and characters for interactive media... World Library will work with Barr Media Group (the country's leading producer of educational films) on a line of CD-ROMs; the first title will be a program about teamwork... Creative Multimedia is teaming with the Smithsonian Institute on **Smithsonian's America**, an all-age study of American history based on the Institute's collections... Hi-Tech is the first third-party developer for Sega's Pico (the system for children.) The initial games are based on Barbie and Beethoven.

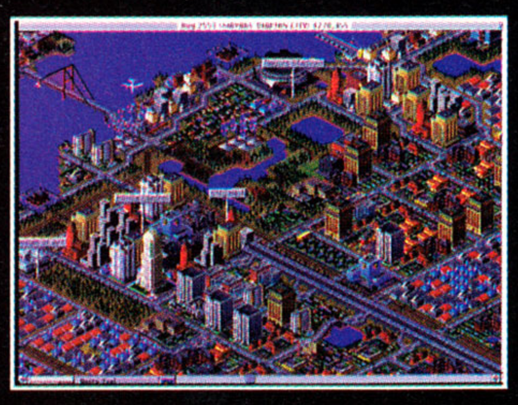
It doesn't seem fair does it?

HOTLINE

MAYORS BUILD SIM-UTOPIA

Attendees of the 62nd Annual Conference of Mayors last June relaxed between conferencing by using **SimCity 2000** to build a utopian city. Over 100 mayors cooperated (in itself a major mayoral accomplishment!) to rid their dream city of crime, while attracting industry, developing the waterfront, parks, and mass transit.

Mayor Mike Johanns, of Lincoln, NE, found the game "fascinating and challenging," even though he had no prior experience with it, and little history of game playing. "I started watching over someone's shoulder and was so intrigued, I sat down and started playing... It deals with some of the same problems we deal with, and shows how one good move can pay dividends, and how one bad mistake can really haunt you for a long time."



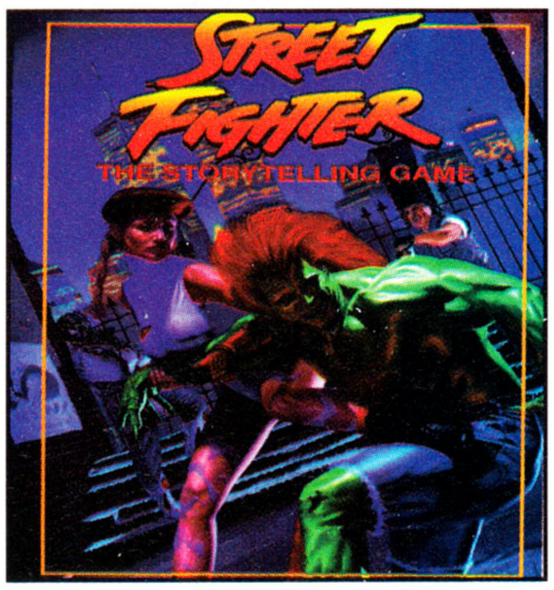
A view of the mayors' ideal city created on SimCity 2000.

Marge Kafoury, director of government relations for Portland, OR, where the conference was held, had this to say about the game: "I can see that it can be a valuable tool for challenging people's assumptions about how simple decisions are. You really have to look at the ramifications of decisions: if you do this, then that happens, and someone is unhappy. This is really, I think, a way for people to learn how to get a long view of actions that they make that they think may be shorter term."

FIGHTING GAMES CROSS OVER

Two popular fighting games showed up in non-electronic formats—a book and a set of action figures.

Street Fighter: The Storytelling Game is a 196-page softbound book in full color from White Wolf, Inc., creators of such role-playing games as *Vampire: the Masquerade* and *Werewolf: the Apocalypse*. It is designed to be used as the basis for role-playing adventures starring fighting characters of Capcom's *Street Fighter* games. Players can also create their own heroes.



Tyco Toys meanwhile introduced the **Double Dragon** action figure line, including Billy and Jimmy Lee, Vortex, and Blaster, plus, on the dark side of the coin, Shadowmaster, Trigger Happy, and Sickle.

Also included in the collection are action vehicles, a dojo playset, and the legendary Golden Dragon Sword with mask.

TALES OF THE CD-I

PHILIPS ADDS TWO CONSOLES

Philips introduced two Magnavox CD-i players at SCES. The CDI450 is slated for sale at $299, and comes bundled with the two-player version of **International Tennis Open.** The second player is $499; the CDI550 comes with the MPEG-standard Digital Video cartridge and **Space Ace**. Both units also have **Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia**.

John Hawkins, president and general manager of Philips Media Distribution, said, "We're almost giving away the machines because we want to sell software." He noted that 200,000 to 250,000 units have been sold in America but expects that figure to double by the end of the holiday season.

CD-i GETS TOUCHY

MicroTouch Systems has a line of touch screen monitors for use with Philips' CD-i players and a unit that allows use of present MicroTouch touch screen monitors with CD-i. All are "fully certified by the Philips Interactive Media Center in the Netherlands," according to Jay Waldron, vice president of new business development at MicroTouch. "Engineers from both companies worked closely together to design and develop a product that results in a seamless integration for CD-i systems integrators."

The first unit available is the TruePoint CD-i20, a $1,350 high-end monitor with many features including video resolution of 600+ TV lines and a touch resolution of 1,024 x 1,024 touchpoints.

JAMES BOND IN CD DEBUT

009 has gone where Bond has never been, with the mid-year release of three bond movies. *Doctor No*, *From Russia with Love*, and *Goldfinger*, the first three titles of the original James Bond series with Sean Connery, are the initial movie titles to be released on Philips Media Video CD format, according to Emiel Petrone, senior vice president of entertainment acquisition in charge of the Video CD group. Three more James Bond titles—*You Only Live Twice*, *Moonraker*, and *A View to a Kill*, the latter two with Roger Moore—will be released in December.

MGM/UA put an indefinite moratorium on video tape distribution of the James Bond films. "Video CD technology provides a better publishing platform for movie studios and record labels' key products because it offers a variety of information that enriches film and music entertainment," said Petrone.

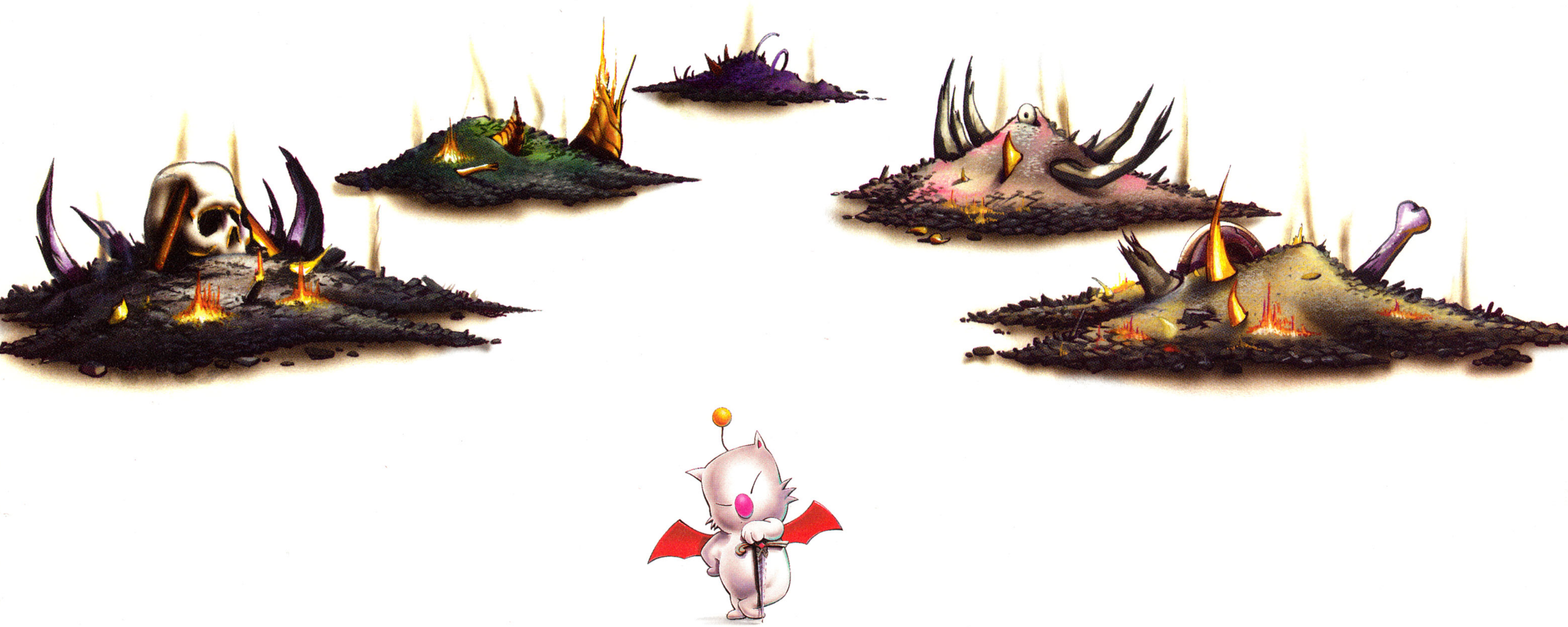
Philips Media anticipates that by the end of the year, there will be a Video CD library of more than 50 film hits and classics.

FULL MOON GOES MULTIMEDIA

Philips Media Games and Full Moon Entertainment, direct-to-video filmmaker and distributor, are working together on a line of multi-platform video games based on Full Moon's adventure flicks. First up, **Josh Kirby ... Time Warrior**, based on a series of six Full Moon films starring a young adventurer caught up in a battle between scientists, and **Arcade 2**, which pulls viewers into a video game universe: "You have three lives, you play multiple levels and you must destroy what lurks at the nerve center of the machine or be destroyed."

"Since we develop everything from the ground up, it affords us the unique advantage to pre-plan and integrate our active projects into our films—and vice versa—from their inception," said Charles Band, Full Moon's chairman, president and CEO.

Other recent agreements for new games from American developers include a trio from Interplay (the first two announced titles are **Lost Vikings** and **Battle Chess**), and Philips and Virgin will develop and copublish **Creature Shock**, **Lost Eden**, and another unannounced title.



Who says life is fair?

The wait is over. Final Fantasy®III is here and it's fair to say that it'll blow you out of your shorts. The critics at *EGM* report, "This huge 24-Meg cart boasts some of the most amazing graphics ever. The soundtrack is better than anything we've ever heard before." And *Die Hard Game Fan* writes, "I kneel in reverence to the brilliance shown by the programmers at Square." [SQUARESOFT®] Go ahead, give your SNES the ultimate Fantasy. Coming October '94.

FINAL FANTASY® III

SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

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HOTLINE

MICROSOFT CUTS CORNER

Microsoft Corp. gave up its corner on the PC operating systems market in settlements with the Justice Department and with the Directorate-General IV of the European Commission.

For many years Microsoft contracts required PC manufacturers and sellers who bundled the MS-DOS operating system (and, more recently, Windows) to pay licensing fees based on *all* systems the company sold—not just those in which the software was loaded. The Federal Trade Commission had looked into whether this practice prevented computer makers from loading rival operating systems, which would have entailed their paying double fees. Provisions included in the settlement loosened Microsoft restrictions that hindered development of software applications using operating systems other than MS-DOS or Windows.

Bill Gates, chairman and CEO of Microsoft Corporation, said, "Many of our customers do business on global terms, and we are pleased that we have resolved this in a manner that will enable them to continue to license software from us easily and inexpensively throughout the world."

HOLIDAY TREAT: THE WHOLE ZORK

Holiday buyers of **Return to Zork** in CD-ROM format (Activision-Infocom, PC or Mac) can also get all five of the original Infocom Zork titles in the **Zork Anthology Collection**, a free CD. The buy-one-get-one-free offer will be available through the end of 1994. After New Years the anthology of classic text-based games will be sold separately at $19.95.

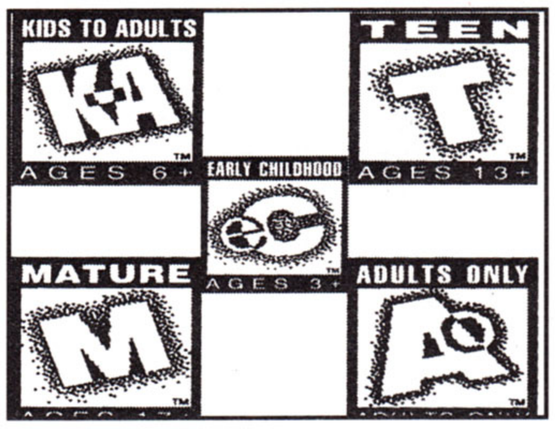
THE RATINGS WAR

The third hearing on game ratings convened July 29, and received testimony from Steve Koenigsberg, president of the American Amusement Machine Association; Mary Ellen Fise, product safety director of the Consumer Federation of America; Chuck Kerby, of Wal-Mart Stores; the National Education Assn.; and various lobbying groups.

Mark Traphagen, counsel for Software Publishers Assn. and its Computer Game Ratings Working Group; and Jack Heistand, chairman of the Interactive Digital Software Association presented rating system proposals. Both groups came up with a multilevel category system and icons for packages.

The IDSA System

The Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA), representing Acclaim, Atari, Capcom, Crystal Dynamics, Electronic Arts, Konami, Nintendo, Philips, Sega, Sony, Viacom, and Virgin, suggests five rating categories: Early Childhood (ages 3+), Kids to Adults (ages 6+), Teen (ages 13+), Mature (ages 17+), and Adults Only. Rating icons on packages will be supplemented with phrases describing the content, in four categories: Violent



content, sexual theme, profanity, and other (such as gambling).

The IDSA proposes the Entertainment Software Rating Board, a freestanding organization made up of anonymous raters, to be financed by a combination of rating submission fees and IDSA contributions. The ESRB will judge software for all platforms, including cartridge-based, CD, PC CD and PC floppy disk systems.

The group will make their decisions based on evaluation of videotapes, storyboards, scripts, and narratives submitted by the publisher.

The SPA Proposal

The SPA's plan was prepared by the Computer Game Ratings Working Group, representing 25 SPA member companies, and other industry groups. They too propose an independent nonprofit agency, the Recreational

Software Advisory Council (RSAC) to assign ratings based on disclosure statements from the publishers.

The RSAC proposes a three-part approach. The Governing Board will be made up of representatives of software developers and publishers, parents' organizations, teachers' organizations,

ALL SUITABLE FOR ALL AUDIENCES	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4 EXTREME CONTENT
VIOLENCE CONTENT MAY INCLUDE:				
BENIGN AGGRESSION; SOME DAMAGE TO NON-LIVING THINGS	DAMAGE OR DESTRUCTION OF NON-HUMAN LIVING THINGS	DESTRUCTION OF LIVING THINGS INCLUDING HUMANS; SOME BLOOD	DESTRUCTION OF LIVING THINGS INCLUDING HUMANS WITH BLOOD AND GORE	WANTON OR GRATUITOUS VIOLENCE; TORTURE; SEX CRIMES
NUDITY/SEX CONTENT MAY INCLUDE:				
NO NUDITY OR REVEALING ATTIRE ROMANCE; NO SEX	REVEALING ATTIRE PASSIONATE KISSING	BARE BUTTOCKS; FLEETING NUDITY CLOTHED SEXUAL TOUCHING	PARTIAL NUDITY NON-EXPLICIT SEXUAL ACTIVITY	FULL FRONTAL NUDITY EXPLICIT SEXUAL ACTIVITY; SEX CRIMES
LANGUAGE CONTENT MAY INCLUDE:				
INOFFENSIVE SLANG; NO PROFANITY	MILD EXPLETIVES & PROFANITY	MODERATE EXPLETIVES; NON-SEXUAL ANATOMICAL REFERENCES	STRONG LANGUAGE; ; ORIGINAL OBSTURITIES	"FOUR-LETTER" WORDS, CRUDE OR EXPLICIT SEXUAL REFERENCES

public health, and law enforcement. The Advisory Committee will be comprised of media researchers, psychologists, and other experts. The Ratings Review Panels would be made up of parents, teachers and other concerned individuals.

Ratings for recreational software will be assigned based on disclosure statements provided by the publishers, and the Panels will have the right to conduct Post Distribution Reviews and impose "significant penalties" if the content is found to differ from prepublication disclosures.

There's Real Dissension

Counselor Traphagen, in his testimony, pointed to the differences between video game and computer software industry, and argued that a single rating system would be inappropriate. He also said the IDSA represents the video game industry. "Persuading Congress to allow another industry to control a single rating system covering personal computer software industry would be a shrewd competitive move." He went on to say this could "impair competitiveness and reduce the availability of low-cost software to parents and other consumers."

Carolyn Rauch, speaking for IDSA, pointed out that the rating procedure is a voluntary concern, so it couldn't actually be considered a move to control the software industry. "Publishers can make independent decisions about whether to submit their materials. We really don't have any control regardless of whether they are a video game manufacturer or PC publisher." She also went on to point out, "Many of our members also publish for the PC platform."

It's Not a Law

Many retailers have said they will not carry rated products. However, some will, and it is each publisher's own decision to carry a rating. The Video Game Act is not a law, nor is it likely to become one.

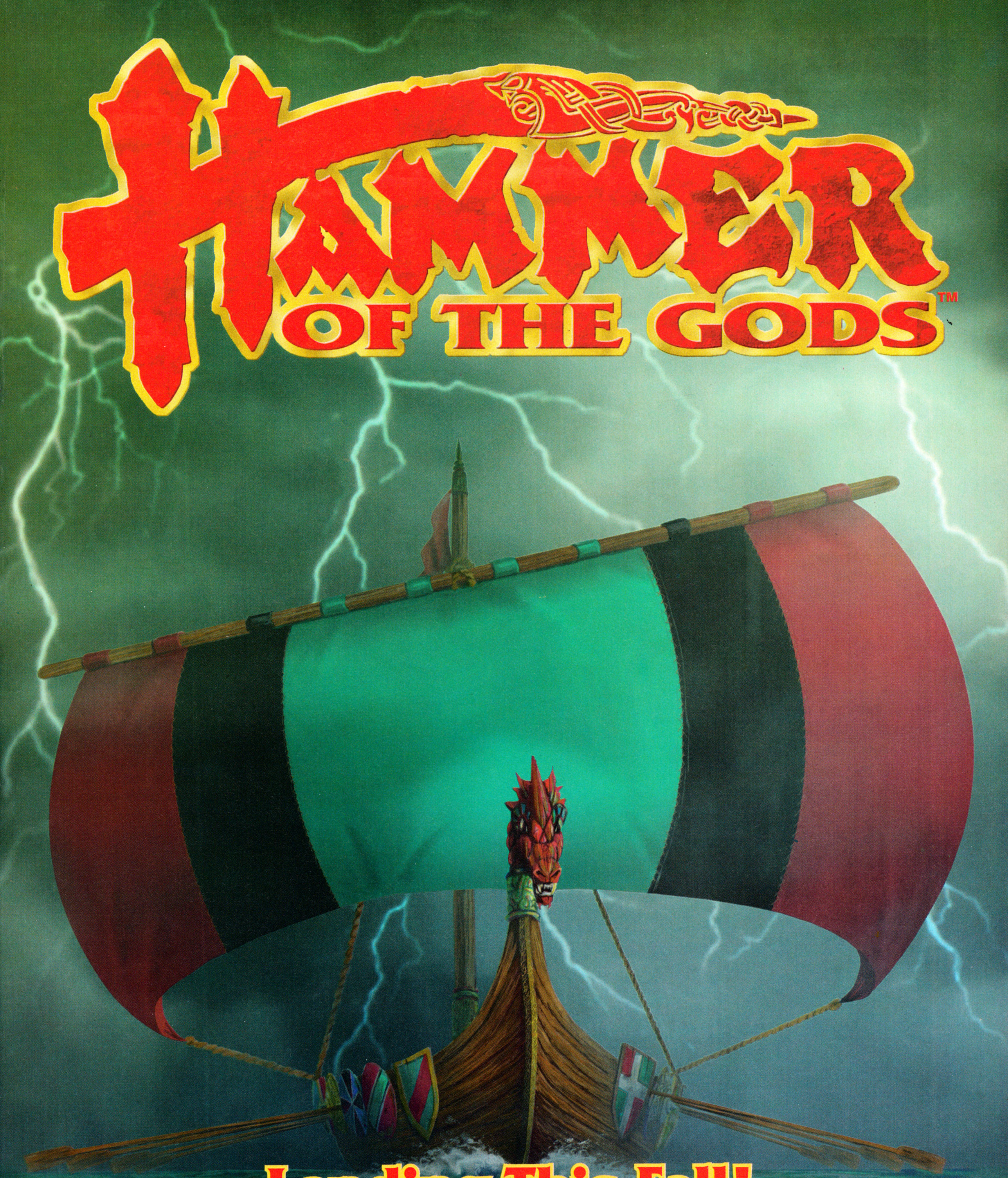
Senator Joe Lieberman, in his statement at the hearing, said, "If the video game industry takes this rating system and goes the next step: rating and labeling the games that are on the store shelves, then we can shelve the legislation we prepared to force a rating system into existence."

What Will Happen This Christmas?

It seems unlikely that there will be just one system in use for some time to come. Although many companies will accept rating by one of the proposed groups, many will not. Both the IDSA and the SPA have indicated they will proceed with their plans.

"In the long run," said Carolyn Rauch of IDSA, "it will be the retailers and purchasers who will make their voices heard about which system is easier to use."

HAMMER OF THE GODS™



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HOTLINE

HARPOONED 360 FILES CHAPTER 11

Three-Sixty Pacific filed for Chapter 11, a form of bankruptcy that allows a company to continue in business while it is reorganizing its financial affairs. Since March, the company has worked with a committee of creditors to formally restructure its debts.

According to company President Tom Frisina, the company is focusing on product development efforts while completing a plan that's acceptable to the creditors. "We anticipate this process will take a few months after which Three-Sixty will be on firm financial ground."

Sales of Harpoon II have exceeded expectations.

Frisina says that the company had its first $1,000,000 month in June, and that sales of **Harpoon II** exceeded expectations. "Our employee base remains committed to completing the suite of **Harpoon II** add-ons and **Victory At Sea PC**."

A separate announcement from Alliance Interactive Software revealed that company licensed the first **Harpoon**, and hired a lot of the original development team for the product. Alliance will release an updated version, **Harpoon Classic**, for CD-ROM, containing an expanded interface, better sound support, more AI, new tutorials, plus all add-on products, battlesets, the designer series, the scenario editor, and **Harpoon OnLine** from Kesmai for network play. The game will be under the Arsenal banner.

MEDIA VISION REORGANIZES

Media Vision filed for protection under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code at the end of July despite efforts to avoid it by its new management (see *Hotline*, August 1994 ***EG***).

The company's primary financial institutions, First National Bank of Boston and Comerica Bank, failed to accept a restructuring plan that had been signed by creditors representing over 90 percent of Media Vision's debt.

"Media Vision should be able to file a plan of reorganization shortly," said Michael Ahrens, an attorney with a San Francisco law firm representing the company. "Our agreement with our other creditors should serve as the basis of [the plan] and allow Media Vision to emerge from this case quickly."

G. Robert Brownell, the newly named president of the beleaguered company, joined other company executives in expressing disappointment with the banks. "Since our new management team came aboard in May, this company has overcome many problems," he said. "We could have avoided Chapter 11 and continued to satisfy our creditors, including the banks."

As a result of the banks' refusal to cooperate, Media Vision filed two suits in the bankruptcy court against them, seeking offset of security preferences granted the banks in May, and the return of a $3.3 million offset taken from the company's bank account.

NAKI MARKETS TRIAX CONTROLLER

Naki Interactive Technologies signed a licensing agreement with Triax Technologies to market and distribute Triax's line of joysticks and controllers under the Nakitek brand. Triax president Rodger Kolsky acknowledged, "Naki has the most extensive retailer support base of any independent accessories company, as well as the resources to market our revolutionary controller technology." Triax will continue to do its own research and development and manufacture its own products.

The unique multi-functional Triax joystick due out the fall of '94

First on line, due out in December, is Nakitek's MVP Arcade Joystick, with 3-D (X, Y, and Z axes), multidirectional movement (beyond the standard eight directions) and variable speeds in games encoded to use these capabilities.

Several game manufacturers have signed up to develop games for use with the MVP controller, including Virgin (**Hoops Basketball**), Interplay (**Star Fleet Academy**), Electronic Arts, Time Warner, and U.S. Gold (no titles yet determined).

PATENT JURY FINDS AGAINST NINTENDO

Nintendo was ordered to pay a $208.2 million award to Alpex Computer Corp. for infringement of its 1977 patent on a method for reproducing images in a video game.

Alpex, a Colorado company in bankruptcy liquidation proceedings since 1983, filed suit in 1986 against Nintendo Co., Ltd., of Japan and Nintendo of America, claiming Nintendo used the process in its 8-Bit Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), which hit the market in 1985, and in all cartridges made for it. Alpex sought $400 million in damages against unpaid royalties.

In June this year a federal jury found for Alpex, and two months later based its award on sales through 1992 of the NES and 118 NES cartridges, specifying "wilful" infringement by Nintendo of America.

Nintendo's attorneys claimed throughout that Nintendo used a different technology for displaying its NES games, citing opinions of "highly qualified patent counsel" that it did not infringe the Alpex patent. In a statement released following the award Nintendo avows that the jury brought in its verdict too quickly to have fully absorbed and understood the complex testimony and highly technical evidence and exhibits. Nintendo called for dismissal of both the decision and the award, either by Judge Wood or by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington, DC.

It appears that Alpex never exploited the technology covered by its patent, which expired in May 1994, or marketed a unit using it.

DATA IN DIGITAL DEPTH

HOLOGRAPHS STORE INFORMATION IN 3-D

Researchers at Stanford University have found a way to store information using holography. The new system digitally encodes text, sound, and images into a three-dimensional framework.

Scientists and engineers have theorized for years that holography—a process that uses lasers to create three-dimensional images—could be adapted to store large data libraries.

Current storage media, such as floppy disks and CDs, store information in a single layer on the surface of a rotating disc.

The holographic system stores about 1,000 times the amount of data on a CD on the full thickness of a stationary wafer, and retrieval of the data is about 100 to 1,000 times faster, according to researchers.

The university spokesmen believe the first use of the holographic storage system will involve video on demand systems.

It's time you finally did something about those monsters under your bed.

3DO

You're not a helpless kid anymore. You've grown up and you've got *Slayer*,™ the first ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game on 3DO.

Now you're an AD&D® game hero armed with weapons and magic, exploring dungeons filled with the deadly monsters of your nightmares.

Hack and slash away at these vile creatures, avoid treacherous traps and solve mind-bending puzzles.

The randomized dungeon generator can create over *4 billion* different dungeons. Which means a new monster hunt every time you play!

Because it's designed for play on 3DO, *Slayer* gives you the most awesome graphics and animation you've ever seen. Plus a first-person perspective that lets you look up, down and all around.

It's virtually real!

Slayer. It's time you made those monsters look under *their* beds!

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

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HOTLINE

TOP COIN-OPS AUGUST 1994

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

Best Upright Videos
1. *Revolution X*, Midway
2. *Mortal Kombat II*, Midway
3. *Virtua Fighter*, Sega

Revolution X, with Aerosmith narrowly beat the two fighting games. Does this prove music calms the savage beast, or just that the gun is more powerful than the fist?

Best Deluxe Videos
1. *Daytona USA*, Sega
2. *Ridge Racers*, Namco
3. *Outrunners*, Sega

Sim-speed kept coin-droppers racing back for more; once again, driving games dominate the deluxe machines.

Best Coin-Op Video Software
1. *Alien vs. Predator*, Capcom
2. *Super Sidekicks 2*, SNK
3. *Gal's Panic 2*, Kaneko

Capcom's science-fiction game of battling baddies is a hit.

Revolution X offers a unique change in the video arena.

Best Pinball Machines
1. *Star Trek*, Williams
2. *Demolition Man*, Williams
3. *World of Soccer*, Midway

Star Trek is still in first place, where no other pin can go as long as it's on top.

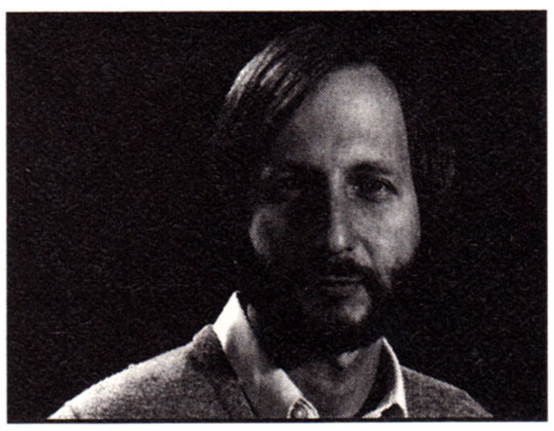
Best New Games
1. *The Last Bounty Hunter*, ALG
2. *Guns & Roses*, Data East
3. *Battle K-Road*, Jaleco

Here comes ALG, with another live-action shooter! I predict we haven't seen the last of **Bounty Hunter**.

GRAPHICS GURU GOES INTERACTIVE

That master of movie illusion, Douglas Kay, is now devoting his skills to interactive entertainment. Formerly the senior manager for digital operations at Industrial Light & Magic, he moved over to LucasArts Entertainment Company as chief technical officer. Both companies are part of George Lucas's entertainment empire.

Kay, a founder of ILM's computer graphics department in 1985, noted, "At LucasArts I'll have the chance to apply what I've learned in 16 years in the visual effects field to an emerging industry where the possibilities are unlimited. I'll have a hand in generating new game ideas as well as the chance to contribute to the creation of the high-end graphics that realize the concepts."



Douglas Kay to apply his skills and expertise to LucasArts.

At ILM Kay was instrumental in developing computer graphics including the transformation technology called morfing, originally developed for *Willow,* and the digital retouching and wire-removal techniques created for *Back to the Future II.* "Doug was critical in making ILM the premier special effects house in the country," said Randy Komisar, president of LucasArts. "We're thrilled he will be turning to LucasArts and eager to tap into his technical know-how and ingenuity."

George Lucas said, "When I started a computer group in the early 1980s, I knew digital technology would eventually become crucial in the creation of both films and interactive entertainment. LucasArts grew out of that group, as did ILM's computer graphics department. We've only scratched the surface in terms of the kinds of talent and tools ILM and LucasArts can share. I expect the synergy between the two companies to grow stronger over time."

TOP VIDEO GAMES JULY 1994

This list of top-selling video games was compiled by Babbages.

Top SNES Games
1. *Super Street Fighter II*, Capcom
2. *FIFA International Soccer*, EA Sports
3. *Stunt Race FX*, Nintendo

Super Street Fighter II won the top spot, but **FIFA International Soccer** came on strong during the World Cup playoffs.

Top Genesis Games
1. *Super Street Fighter II*, Capcom
2. *HardBall '94*, Accolade
3. *FIFA International Soccer*, EA Sports

After martial arts, team sports continue to dominate Genesis players.

Shockwave by EA holds on to the number one position.

Top Game Gear Games
1. *Aladdin*, Sega
2. *NBA Jam*, Acclaim
3. *Mortal Kombat*, Acclaim

Aladdin rode his magic carpet all the way to the top of the Game Gear heap.

Top Sega CD Games
1. *Star Wars 3-D: Rebel Assault*, JVC
2. *Vay*, Working Designs
3. *Heimdall*, JVC

Although the cartridge crowd likes sports best, science fiction rules the CD crowd.

Top 3DO Games
1. *Shock Wave*, Electronic Arts
2. *Who Shot Johnny Rock?* ALG
3. *Pebble Beach Golf Links*, Panasonic

EA's space thriller has players glued to their controllers, but **Johnny Rock** is a close second.

SEGA SEES TRUEMOTION

The Genesis 32X will use two technologies from Duck Corporation: TrueMotion video compression algorithm, which does not require specialized hardware for digitized full-motion video, and their Comprending interactive media engine, which allows multiple-image control from a pointing device.

According to Joseph Miller, Sega senior vice president of product development, "These technologies will allow those developing software ... to program more authentic settings, characters and details as well as more imaginative boundless creativity into their games."

Other advantages include the ability to interact with the game from multiple points of view, to simultaneously move multiple characters within multi-layered 3-D backgrounds, and "to enjoy graphics in which aliasing, pixelization and artifacting no longer impair full-motion video images."

ANNUAL HILL INVITATIONAL

Jayson and Laura Hill, Knoxville, TN, held the tenth Annual Hill Video Game Invitational in April. The tournament game was, as it has been in eight of the ten competitions, the ColecoVision version of **The Activision Decathlon**, but the 22 guests actually played 11 systems and 76 games. John Kelley won the 1994 Golden Joystick Award, and his name was added to the HVGI Hall of Fame plaque.

HELL

A CYBERPUNK THRILLER

STARRING

DENNIS HOPPER

STEPHANIE SEYMOUR

GRACE JONES

GEOFFREY HOLDER

AVAILABLE THIS HALLOWEEN

GAMETEK

TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE SOFTWARE

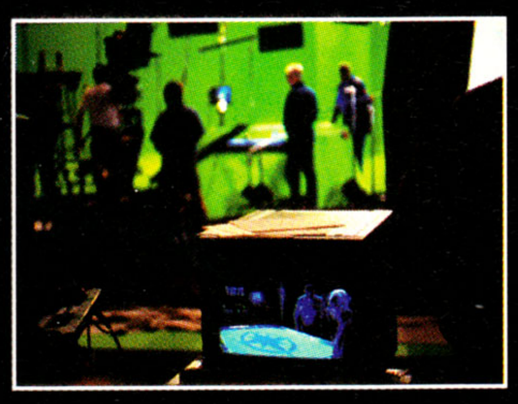
HOTLINE

LOOK FOR THE UNION LABEL

As gaming and Hollywood edge ever closer in the new era of multimedia, it was only a matter of time before the unions entered the picture.

At the moment, the stars who appear in high-profile, big budget interactive movies such as **Under a Killing Moon** (Access) and **Wing Commander III** (Origin) are represented by one of two unions. Several major software companies have already signed an agreement with AFTRA (American Federation of Television and Radio Actors).

The other major player is



Filming on the set of Origin's Wing Commander III.

SAG (the Screen Actor's Guild), whose Interactive Contracts Division under Michael Prohaska is busy locking up the silicon studios by signing with individual producers, scoring deals on games such as **The Horde** (Crystal Dynamics).

"We have about 40 signatory companies and our contract with them has been in effect since June of '93," says Prohaska. "We've had programs done with Sega, Crystal Dynamics, Hyperbole Studios, Media-Vision. We're trying to organize a marketplace for our members to work in."

What does the contract call for? "A session payment, plus pension and health payments. The session payment starts at $504 and the pension and health is a traditional 12.65 percent. The only additional payment would be if it goes to a video server or [another form] of transmission."

INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT

MARK MILLER AND THE NEUROMANTICS

Game development was once a simple process, full of one-man bands; today, it's a field full of specialists, with artists, designers, code crunchers, composers, and sound effects specialists producing the cutting edge games we take for granted.

At the audio end of the video game development spectrum, few artists are shining more brightly than Mark Steven Miller, founder and prez of the San Francisco-based Neuromantic Productions (formerly Nu-Romantic). His work on games like **ToeJam & Earl** and **Tazmania** for the Genesis (for which system Neuromantic has scored over 40 games!) has gained him considerable recognition in recent years, but he has just come off a creative spiral that will have gamers humming his themes for many moons.

First, there's **Taz 2** for Sega. While the wildly avant-garde, interactive score of the original served as the basic for much of Neuromantic's current work, the new **Taz** has lots more music—30 different pieces—with new themes for each milestone.

Next up, he was invited to create the sound fx and score for Shiny Games' **Earthworm Jim**.

"[David Perry] did some checking around about me and I did some checking around about him, and once I got a sense of the project, we became very excited. The thought of a character and story line as subversive and underground, literally, as **Earthworm Jim**, being produced by such a flawlessly polished team was very exciting to me. To see **Aladdin**-quality animation [telling the story] of a hopped-up earthworm in a cybersuit was full of appeal."

Neuromantic also produced the audio fx and music for Rocket Science's **Loadstar** and **Cadillacs & Dinosaurs**, as well as **Creative Antics**, the bundle-in which comes with the Sega Club package and may be the most innovative music program ever produced for a video game system. Stay tuned.

THE DIGI-VERSE STOCK MONITOR

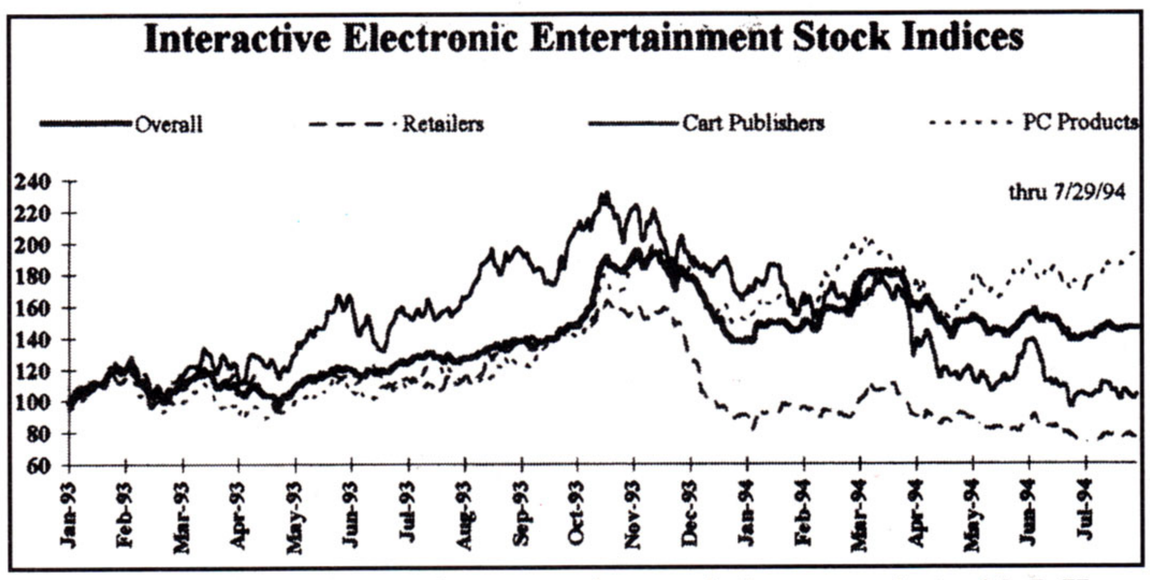
THE JULY TRENDS

Continuing trends in place since January 1, share prices of PC software publishers rose during July while cartridge publishers' eroded. Share prices of companies in the PC segment rose 12.4 percent during the month, pulling up the entire Interactive Electronic Entertainment Index by 3.7 percent. The retailer segment rose in line with the index, while share prices of cartridge publishers dropped 1.1 percent as a group.

The largest movers on the upside were Spectrum HoloByte (+22 percent amidst positive reception for new product releases like **X Com**) and Creative Technologies (+21 percent because of upward revisions in CD-ROM sales estimates in 1994.) On the negative side were Activision (down 21 percent) and WMS Industries (down 8 percent due to concerns about a slow first half of fiscal June 1995.)

One key watershed will be September 13, the street date for **Mortal Kombat II** from Acclaim. Consumer sell-through velocity (versus retail buy-in) and retail pricing for this key title could give important clues about the outlook for the video game business during the holidays. Many industry insiders are quietly sweating about ongoing consumer demand for high-priced cartridges. Unit sales of CD-ROM titles will also be closely monitored for signs that the installed base of PCs is really beginning to consume entertainment products as anticipated.

Finally, sales of new platforms such as 3DO and the Atari Jaguar will offer insights both about the 16-Bit life cycle and the early adopter hunger for higher performance but high priced new game hardware. *(John Taylor)*

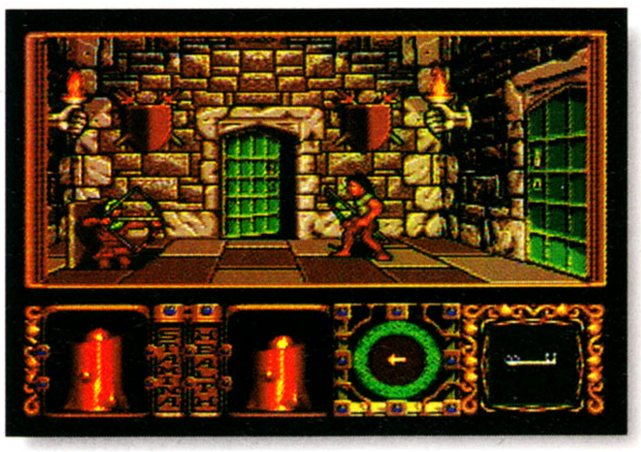


John Taylor is an interactive entertainment industry analyst with L.H. Alton & Co., a San Francisco-based investment banking firm.

CD TAKES DYLAN HOME

Bob Dylan is moving on down the digital highway. The Graphix Zone and Columbia Records are working on an interactive CD-ROM chronicling his music, to be ready by December. Columbia is providing Graphix Zone access to Dylan's music, videos, and some unreleased recording. Chuck Cortright, Graphix Zone president and CEO, said he believed the artist's musical contributions were a perfect match for the depth available in this format.

A once peaceful land has gone stark raving mad.



The precious Gems of Tranquillity have fallen into evil hands. Now darkness and chaos rule the kingdom of Obitus. Your challenge is to find the four lost gems and return them to the Dark Tower, restoring light and harmony to the crippled kingdom.

- Dozens of weapons and magical items.
- Battery backed to save your progress.
- Hoards of brutish beasts to battle!

Chaos rules and survival is up to you.

In forests, castles, dungeons and catacombs, you'll find clues that will lead you to the gems while deranged creatures stand ready to put a gruesome end to your quest. The unequipped adventurer won't get far however. So, stay alert and search every nook and cranny for the items that will assist you in your quest.

SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

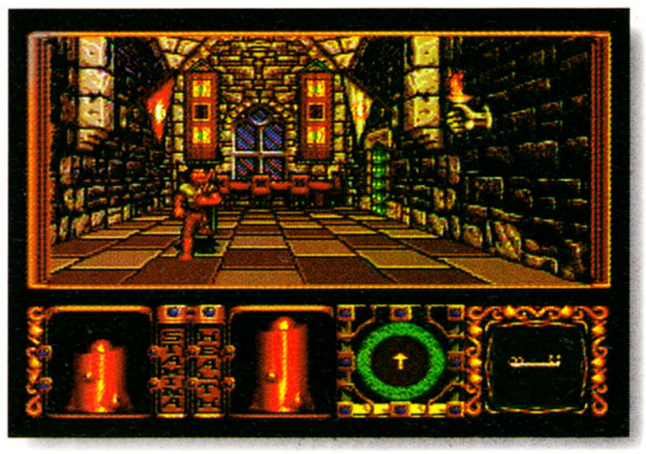
Discover the secrets of the Dark Tower.

Unleash the power of a legend.

Bullet-Proof Software, Inc.
8337 154th Ave. NE, Redmond, WA 98052

Step into a world of dark mystery.

Awesome first person perspective view lets you experience this perilous adventure first hand. And 3-D action view screens will show you what's really going on! Make sure you know who your friends are—not everyone is who (or what!) they seem.



- First-Person and 3-D action view stages.
- More than 12 adventurous areas, including forests, dungeons, castles and catacombs.

Detailed maps and strategies included.

Take the challenge.

Find the gems and you'll be a hero. Make one too many mistakes and well... nice to know you.

The kingdom of Obitus is depending on you. Is the adventurer inside you ready?

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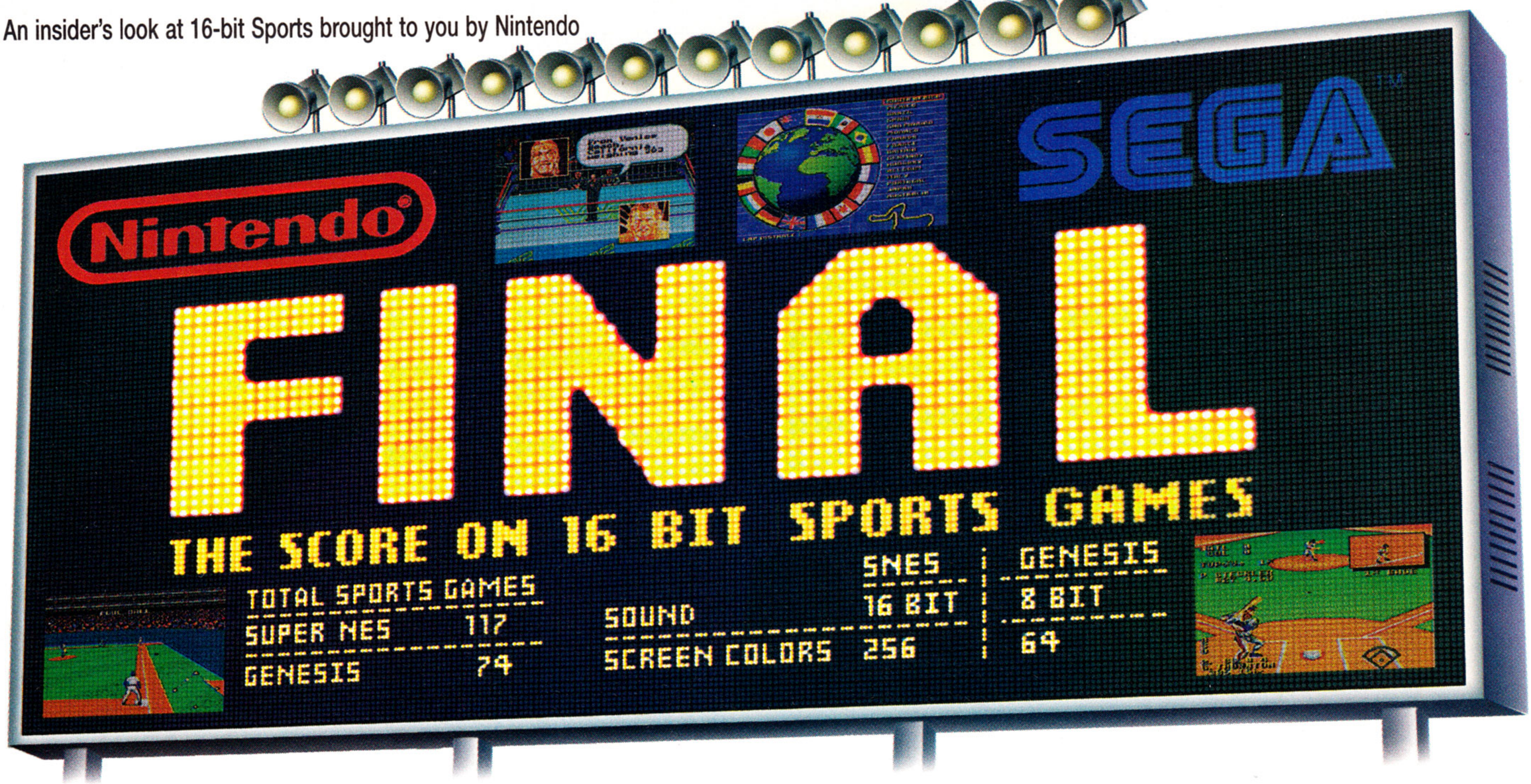
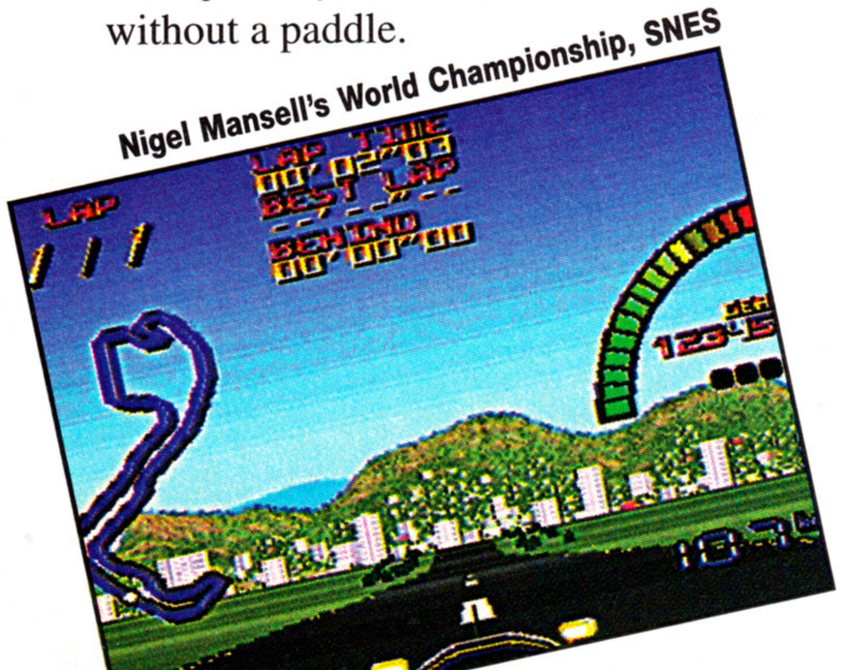


The Green Flag

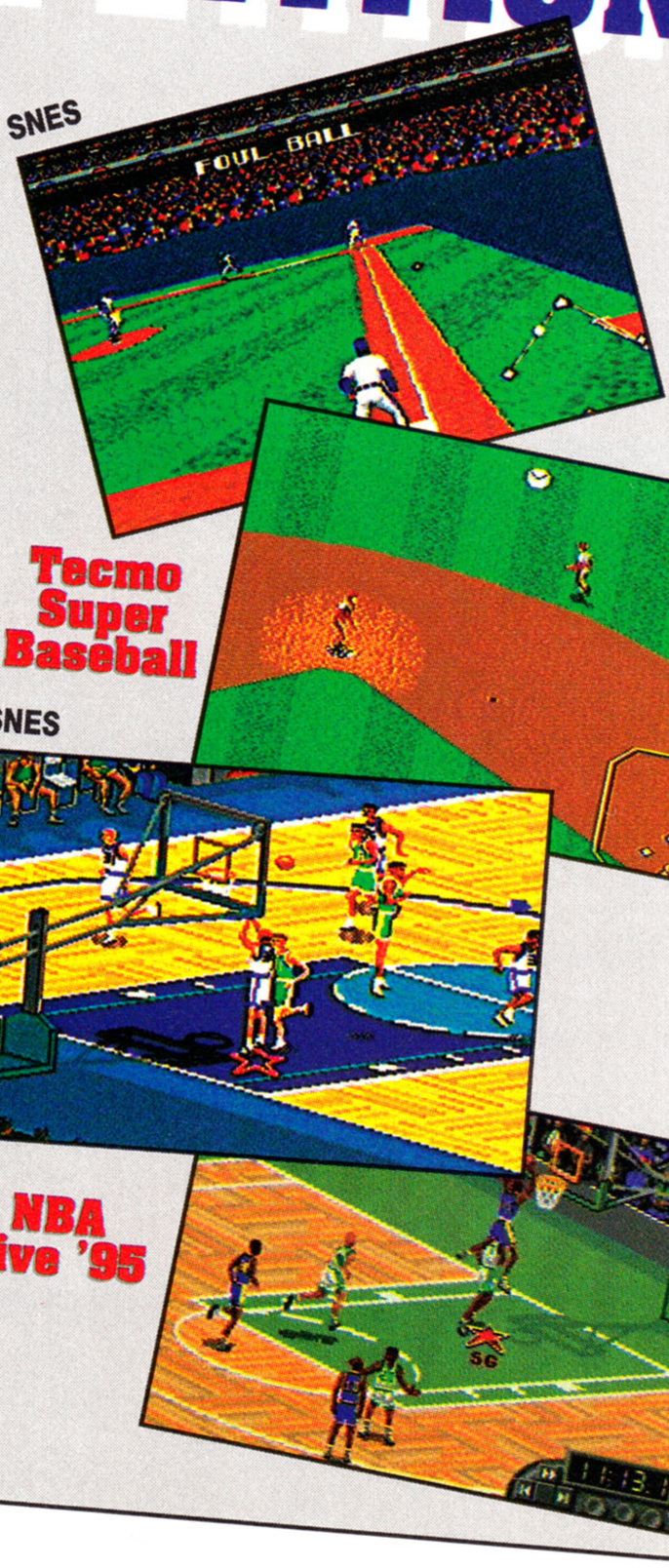
Back in the early days of 16-bit gaming, Sega of America made the claim of sports superiority, and they were right. Early games like *John Madden Football* from EA Sports were designed for the Genesis and were later adapted to the Super NES without making use of the technical capabilities of Nintendo's 16-bit system. It was like taking the paddle out of a canoe and trying to use it on a hydro plane. But once developers realized what they could achieve by using the Super NES' custom graphics processors, a new generation of sports games quickly redefined what a sports video game could be. Super NES sports games are now technically advanced, more realistic, and there's more of them. And where's Sega? Let's just say that they're somewhere without a paddle.



Nigel Mansell's World Championship, SNES

Head-To-Head Competition

Many games from sports software leaders like EA Sports, Acclaim, Sony, Accolade and Tecmo are now custom designed for both 16-bit game systems. Even when the screen perspective and play characteristics are the same, the larger number of colors on the Super NES, its Mode 7 capabilities and its superior sound processor allow for more realism in the Super NES versions. The differences are dramatic in some titles, like Tecmo's new *Tecmo Super Baseball*. The Super NES version gives you a unique, rotating fielder's point of view that is missing from the Genesis game. The simple fact is that you get more with most Super NES sports games—more color, more sound, more realism.



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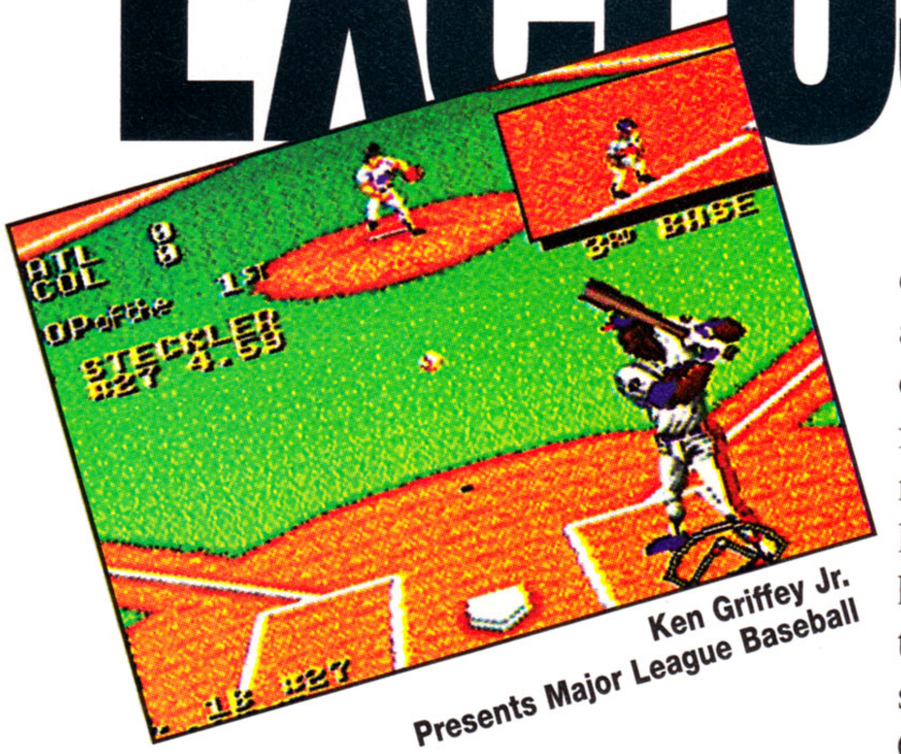
SUPER NES EXCLUSIVES



Ken Griffey Jr. Presents Major League Baseball

The most realistic sports games available are found only on the Super NES. Why? It's not just a matter of licenses. The name on the box doesn't put fun in the game. The reason that Super NES sports games play more like the real game, look more like the real game and sound more like the real game is due to the custom hardware inside the Super NES control deck. The Super NES' two graphics processors contain special graphics modes including Mode 7 which allows for the easy manipulation of objects in a 3-D environment. Sports take place in three dimensions, not two. The Super NES's ability to rotate perspective and scale objects lets designers create realistic fields, courts, race tracks and even mountain slopes. Imagination is the only limitation. The Genesis, on the other hand, is limited because it doesn't have the custom graphics processors or a 16-bit sound processor, which means that Genesis sports games simply can't compete on a level playing field with Super NES games. They're behind from the very start.

Box Scores

Nintendo holds the edge on sports titles.

	Nintendo	Sega
Baseball	15	7
Football	15	12
B-ball	10	8
Hockey	7	4
Soccer	11	5
Racing	27	13
Golf	9	6
Boxing	4	4
Other	19	15
Total	**117**	**74**

Figures taken from Spring issues of Nintendo Power Game Pak Directory and Sega Soft Newz. (Does not include future sports titles.)

THE SUPER NES ADVANTAGE

If you don't own a Super NES, you can't play many of the best sports games available like: *Ken Griffey Jr. Presents Major League Baseball, NCAA Basketball, Stunt Race FX, Tommy Moe's Winter Extreme Skiing & Snowboarding, NHL Stanley Cup*, classics like *F-Zero* and *Super Tennis* or up-coming games like *Michael Andretti's Indy Car Challenge*. And the hottest titles available for both systems won't be as intense on the Genesis. If you want the most game from the hottest titles like *NBA Jam, Madden NFL 95, WWF Raw* and *NBA Live '95*, you have to get the Super NES version because the best graphics and sound are available exclusively for Super NES sports fans.

Tommy Moe's Winter Extreme

NHL Stanley Cup

SUPER NES 3-D ROTATION & SCALING

When Nintendo's *NCAA Basketball* took to the court in 1992, the radical behind-the-player perspective "KO'd" the competition and the critics. No one had ever seen such a realistic video game. The perspective produced the closest experience to actually playing the sport. Since then, Super NES sports games have explored many new arenas of realistic sports action—arenas where Genesis titles have never gone.

Advertisement

GAME DOCTOR

SOME Q'S, A'S, AND 32 X'S

Lots of video game queries this time out. With all the new technologies on the horizon, gamers are more confused than ever. Should they hold on with 16-Bit technology, make a partial trade-up via the 32X, or spend the bucks to pick up one of the black box systems, none of which have yet taken off in a big way?

Let's look in on the tragedy experienced in this area by just one of our faithful readers, shall we?

Q: What's the deal with Project Reality? Is it cartridge or CD? I hear it will be cartridge. What does that mean to me? Will the system be cheaper? Will the games be as good?

Doc, I'll be frank with you, this has been a real strain on my nerves.

Jim Paulus
Bridgeport, CT

A: *Believe me, Jim; I understand. The Ultra 64 (formerly Project Reality) will originally be released as a ROM cartridge-based system. This means the price will probably be under $200 for the hardware.*

The real question concerns the cost of the software; remember the Neo•Geo, with its $300 game carts? Well, considering the current amount of memory required to produce state-of-the-art software, and the high price of memory storage in ROM, it's likely that those Ultra 64 games could wind up costing plenty—perhaps even more than many of the third-party publishers will be able to pony up because they will have to purchase the expensive chips and pass along the cost to us consumers.

I believe Nintendo is attempting to follow Atari's strategy for marketing the Jaguar (which was sound in theory, albeit limited by inadequate funding). The idea is to get the base machine out there at the lowest possible retail price, supporting it with some of the hottest-looking software possible—which at least Nintendo will be able to sell at a moderately reasonable price because it tends to be more egalitarian in pricing chips when selling to itself.

Either a CD-based drive, or at least some form of alternative mass storage device should turn up on the heels of the Ultra 64, however, since the ROM format can't remain practical for very long on such a high-powered system.

Q: Let's skip the fun and get straight to the boring question: Will the 32X work with LaserActive's Genesis module?

Alan Lanoie
Greenfield, TN

A: *A mundane question, perhaps, Alan, but it was a bleep to*

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.

answer. We moved up the entire Pioneer foodchain before finally interfacing with Mark Smith, guru of the LaserActive Division, whose answer could be paraphrased in the immortal words of Butt-head himself: "Uhhhhhh ... I dunno." Seriously, Mark is a very bright and helpful guy, who was able to provide some solid information. First, there are no obvious technological reasons as to why the 32X could not be used in conjunction with the LaserActive's Genesis emulator. However, it does seem as if the current 32X peripheral configuration will not fit into the cartridge slot on the LaserActive Genesis module. This is not an insurmountable problem, as either an adapter or a special LaserActive version of the 32X could be produced.

The main considerations seem to be marketing ones. Obviously, adapting the 32X format looks to be at least a minor hassle for Pioneer, from production through marketing, and it was the Doc' s impression that Pioneer would prefer to wait and see whether the 32X flies or not.

By the way, Alan is editor of the gaming fanzine Infestation, *and no, the Doc is not "pretending" to be male. Or, if I am, it's one hell of an impression.*

And, speaking of that transforming 32X...

Q: What is this? Could the Game Doctor be wrong? Or does he know something that no one else does? In the August issue of **EG,** you claimed that the new 32X add-on for the Genesis would likely have an S-Video output that could be connected directly to a TV. But if you call Sega (which I did) and ask them about the 32X, they will claim that it cannot connect directly to a TV and must go through the Genesis video output. So what's the truth?

Ross Burns
San Antonio, TX

A: *The answer, Ross, is that Sega changed its mind. At Sega's Gamers' Day, several reporters and one Game Doctor directly asked the Sega reps whether the 32X would have S-Video out capabilities, and were repeatedly told that it would and that, moreover, with the 32X, the entire Genesis and Sega CD could be run through this output.*

After much beating around the bushes, Terry Tang of Sega reported to us that the company had changed its mind on the issue of offering S-Video out. Like you, I was very disappointed to hear this; anyone who owns both a Sega (running through an RF box) and a SNES (running direct through the TV) knows the difference in quality is profound.

Fortunately, companies like Freetron (telephone: 415-952-6285) make adapters that allow the Genesis model 2 to be run directly through a TV set (ask for the MR-419 cable), but we haven't been able to come up with anything for the original Genesis models. Anybody out there who can help us out on this gets a Game Doctor Prize Packet—as does Ross for bringing the issue to our attention.

Q&A QUICKIES: Several readers have written in asking whether or not the Electronic Arts four-player controller adapter will work on the Sega CDX.

The bad news is that the existing peripheral doesn't seem to fit into the remodeled configuration of the Sega CDX, because of the redesign of its controller input slots. The good news is that EA is reportedly already hard at work creating a compatible new adapter that *will* interface with the neat new Sega system.

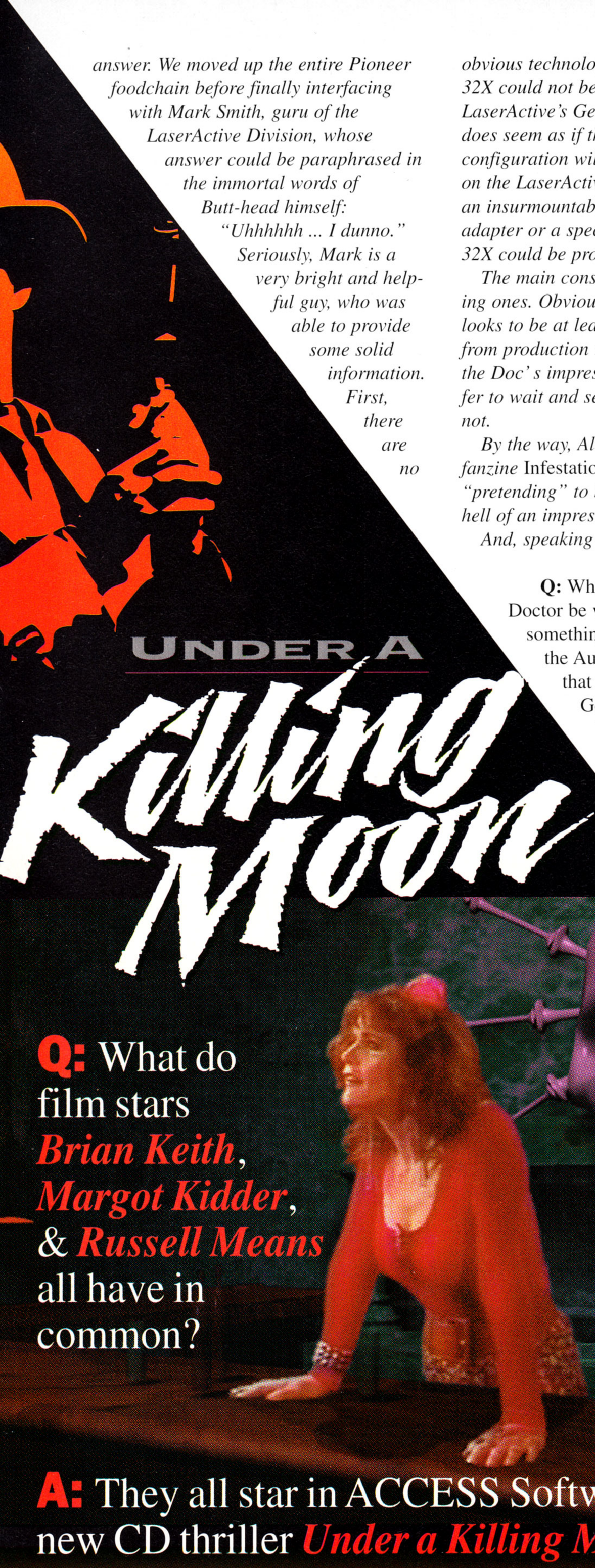
And that about finishes us off for this month's go-round with the ever-changing world of interactive electronic gaming.

Remember to send all those questions, comments, and corrections (or additional info, of course) to:

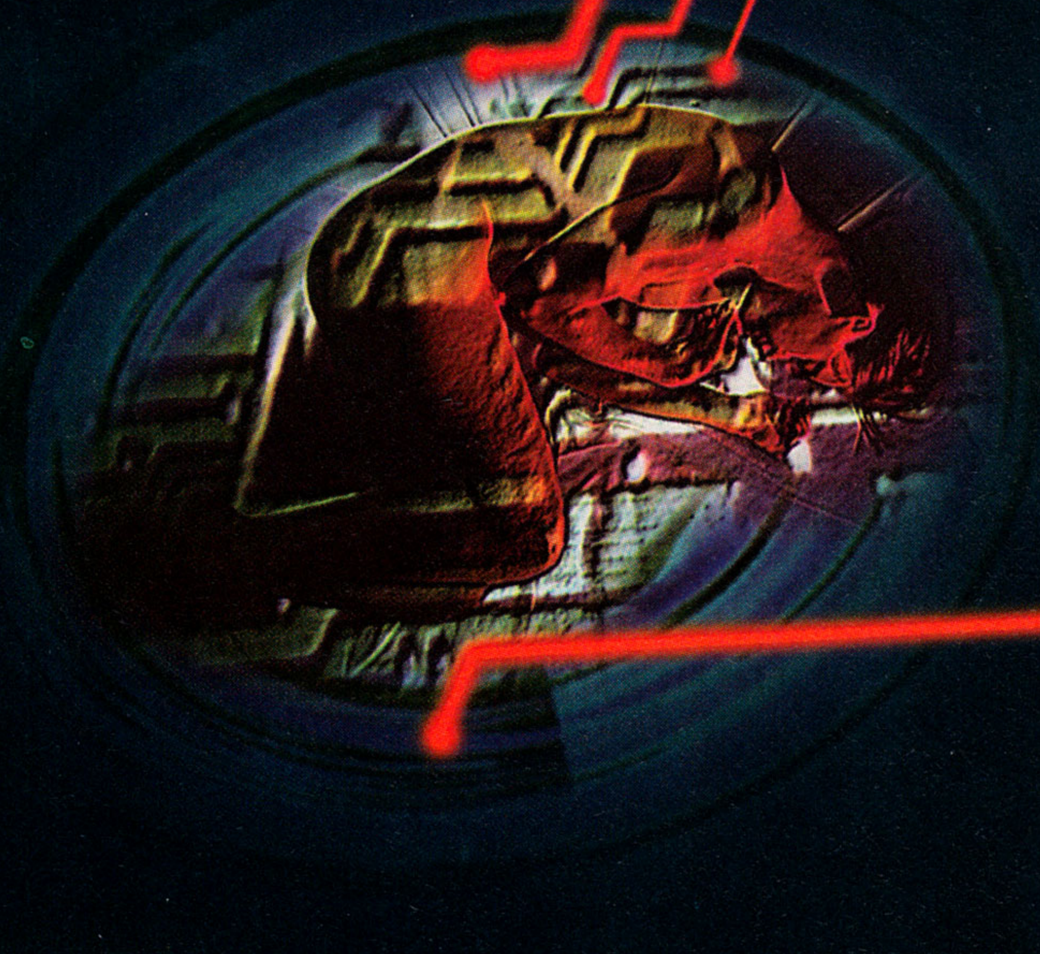
The Game Doctor (EG)
330 S Decatur
Suite 152
Las Vegas, NV 89107

And now, if you'll forgive me, the jacuzzi is waiting, along with the Game Nurse and some friends.

Aloha!



Photography by David Robinson



Interactive Science Fiction: Living in the Future

Is Interactive SF Growing Up? Better Content Fuels a New Breed of Science-Fiction Games!

by Arnie Katz

No game theme is more popular, or more haphazardly used, than science fiction. The first computer game (**Spacewar**) and many of the classic video coin-ops (**Space Invaders**, **Asteroids**, **Star Castle**, **Galaxian**, and many more) drew on SF for inspiration.

It's no different today. Recent winners like **Doom** (FormGen) and **Shock Wave** (Electronic Arts) are among 1994's biggest hits. Futuristic titles due in time for the holidays include **Wing Commander III** (Origin), **Outpost** (Sierra), **Delta V** (Bethesda), and a fleet of carts and disks based on every conceivable permutation of the *Star Trek* universe. (See sidebar on the next page for reports on works-in-progress.)

The quantity is impressive, but the same can't always be said of the quality. They're often wonderful games, filled with fast action and high-impact visuals. As science fiction, they stink. Game developers are quicker to use science-fiction symbols than to infuse the content with sophisticated extrapolation.

The Cliche Festival

The science-fiction equivalent of the kidnapped princess fantasy plot is the one-ship-against-the-universe story. This originated with the numerous unlicensed *Star Trek* computer games in the early 1980s and reached a peak with the **Star Raiders** cartridge for the Atari 800 computer. The genre continues through the present day with the likes of **Stellar 7** (Dynamix) and **Astrochase 3-D** (First Star).

No matter how it's rationalized in the

inevitable backstory in the documentation, the idea is neither believable nor original. Unfortunately, it's all too typical of the level of science fiction found in video, computer, and multimedia games.

Interactive SF tends to borrow rather than create. A litany of stock plots and cardboard characters is unnecessary; every gamer has seen them a dozen times.

No science-fiction game has ever won a Hugo from the World Science Fiction Convention or a Nebula from the Science Fiction Writers of America. This is symptomatic of the low option science-fiction professionals and knowledgeable enthusiasts have of the worth of interactive SF.

In the early days, the problem was clearly technological. There wasn't room in memory to build a convincing SF world, so no one tried very hard. That's no longer a barrier, but few designers are familiar with SF literature. Their concept of science fiction comes from shlock movies and comic books (which most borrow from the novels and short stories, losing a lot of depth in the process).

Are the Times Changing?

Science fiction-loving gamers have reason for some hope. While some publishers are still rolling out games filled with futuristic ready-mades, others are bringing in writers and artists from the science-fiction fields. Among those involved to some degree with current or forthcoming interactive products are such luminaries of the science-fiction world as Harlan Ellison, Gregory Benford, Larry Niven, Piers Anthony, and Raymond Feist.

Among forthcoming games, **Outpost** and **Under a Killing Moon** are harbingers of more adult science fiction to come. As radically different as they are from each other, both are more in the SF mainstream and are not obvious clones of some sfx-laden film.

Outpost is a hard-science epic, based on plausible projections of contemporary science and engineering. The player flees the ruins of a destroyed Earth to build a spaceship, locate a suitable planet, and colonize a new home for humanity. It's been done before, but the designer has conceived this future rather than lifting it from an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

The story line in **Under a Killing Moon** is not as spectacular, but Access' team produced a world full of vivid people and exciting drama. If the promised sequel puts the same effort into the background world and plot elements, it could be a serious candidate, along with **I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream** (Cyber Dreams), to take a Hugo when fans gather in Los Angeles for the 1996 Worldcon.

Tomorrow and Tomorrow

The most hopeful sign to date is the way publishers have turned to the genré's established creators for game content. Technology is making it easier for non-techies, which includes most writers, to make substantial, direct creative input.

Once, publishers had to choose between great game play and a deep story and characters. Now that it's possible to put both into the same program, the first golden age of interactive science fiction may be at hand.

Future Games

A recent long-range scan has spotted these hardcore sci-fi titles on the **EG** event horizon.

Star Control II (Crystal Dynamics/3DO) This eagerly anticipated title promises to be the best two-player game to hit the 3DO yet. A universe spanning plot puts the fate of entire species into players' hands. Lots of full-motion video, digitized speech, savvy strategy, and hot ship-to-ship combat will propel this one off the shelves.

The Fortress of Dr. Radiaki (Merit Software, IBM-PC) This campy **Doom**-alike features twisted genius, Ultimate Weapons, Cuban thugs, ninjas, radioactive rat-men, and mutant infested tunnels. The fortress is a 30 story building, and the only way in is through the sewers. Doors open to the public late this summer.

Star Trek: Star Fleet Academy (Interplay, SNES) Players enroll as students at Star Fleet Academy, and the Bridge Simulator is where they train to be Starship Captains. Command a variety of Federation ships, or captain a Klingon Battle Cruiser or Romulan Bird of Prey. Train in a variety of missions, including a few classic scenarios taken from the original *Star Trek* TV series.

Iron Helix (Spectrum Holobyte, Sega CD) A popular title on the Mac and PC comes to the Sega CD. Players must avert an intergalactic holocaust by piloting a small, robotic probe through a huge maze-like ship.

Quarantine (Gametek, CD-ROM, PC, 3DO) In this first-person driving and shooting game, players take the role of a desperate hover-cabbie who'll take any fare to get out of quarantined Kemo city. Pick up and deliver passengers, avoid mines and rockets, mow down slow pedestrians with your headlight-mounted machine guns. Crosswalks are safe until this arrives for Christmas.

Star Crusader (Take 2, CD-ROM) Heavy-duty space combat is the heart of **Star Crusader**. 3-D graphics, four-channel stereo and fully digitized speech should make this a real grabber. Lead the Gorene Empire against the Alien Alliance and pilot a variety of ships through a hundred strategy-combat missions.

Microsoft Space Simulator (Microsoft, MS-DOS) Based on information from NASA, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory and other sources, **Space Simulator** combines action games and educational software. With an interstellar spacecraft, explore a realistic simulation of our solar system and surrounding galaxy, a virtual space encompassing 8.4 billion light years. Coming to a galaxy near you, open for your exploration, bound only by the limits of your imagination, this September.

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For The Hell of It

EG Previews Doom II: Hell on Earth

by Ed Dille

October 10 has special meaning for the computer-based gaming community. Sure, the kids and console cohorts may have had Mortal Monday, but we've got Doomsday! Local area networks everywhere will stagger under the weight of this demonic game. Blood may splash the inside of the monitor screen, but spit will splatter the outside as players pursue

one another in fits of rabid blood lust. Friendships will explode with a single well-placed BFG 9000 round and marriages won't stand a chance. It will be hell on Earth, but hey, you were warned in the title.

At the end of **Doom**, our hero, having returned to Earth, is left staring at a flaming

city, evidence that the demon aggressors have arrived ahead of him. It turns out that the monstrous invaders are all over the place. There are demons from Tokyo to Timbuktu, from Stockholm to Scranton. Many people are dead. Some people have been transformed into flesh-eating zombies, but some have actually survived. The remaining leaders of humankind have evolved a plan to save the human race.

In orbit, they have built dozens of enormous ships to carry all the remaining people into space, away from their ruined world. However, the only spaceport with sufficient capacity for these ships to land has been taken over by the demons. A small band of tough fighters is sent into the port to kill the demons and permit the ships to land and take on passengers. If you lose, all mankind is (you guessed it) doomed.

Eventually, you manage to kill the demons guarding the spaceport and find the master switch to turn off the flame barrier that prevents the ships from landing. You are able to pull the switch, and the ships land. People file onto them as fast as possible and they take off. Unfortunately, you are trapped in the room with the switch and are unable to leave with the rest of humanity.

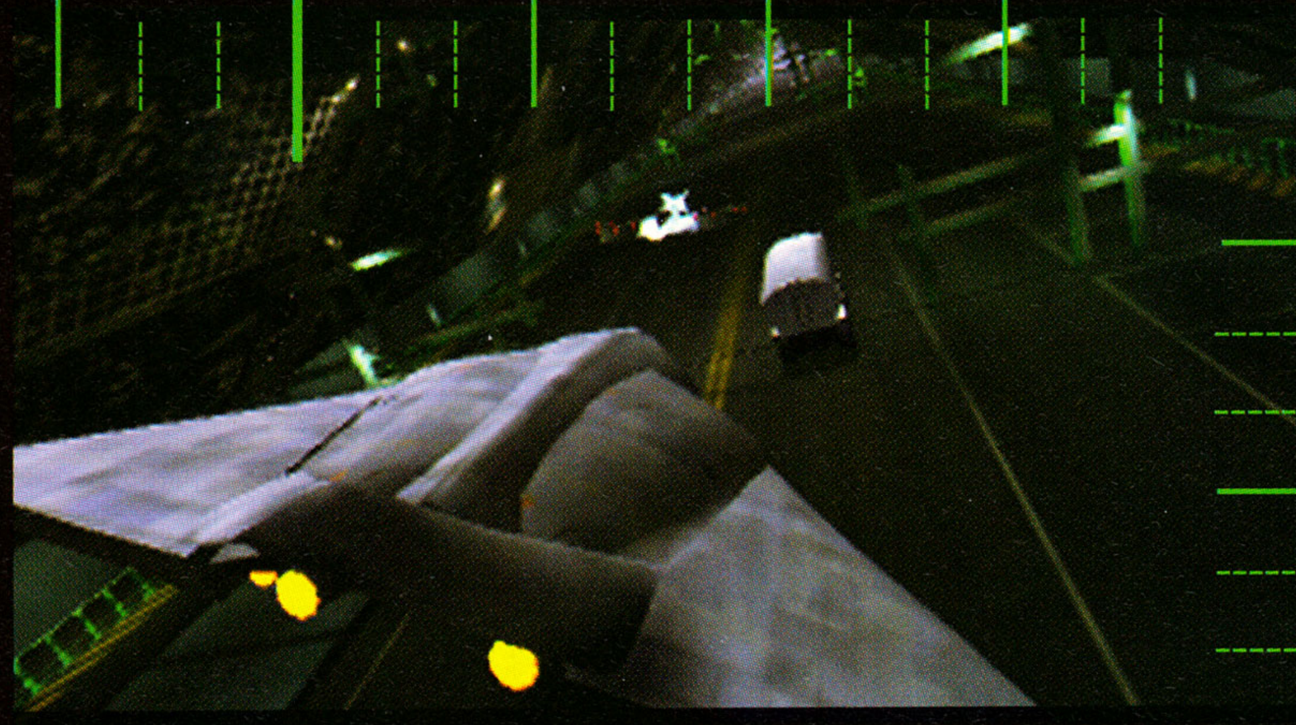
Now, you are the last human left on Earth. Everyone else is a zombie, dead, or in orbit. The High Command radios down to you and says that their sensors have determined that all the demon's power comes from a single spot. If you could find that spot and somehow close it down, they would lose much of their strength, and humanity could land back on the planet and begin to reclaim Earth from the demon horde. You must fight your way through the suburbs and slums of a ruined city, making your way to its very heart, where the monsters have raised a mighty citadel of evil.

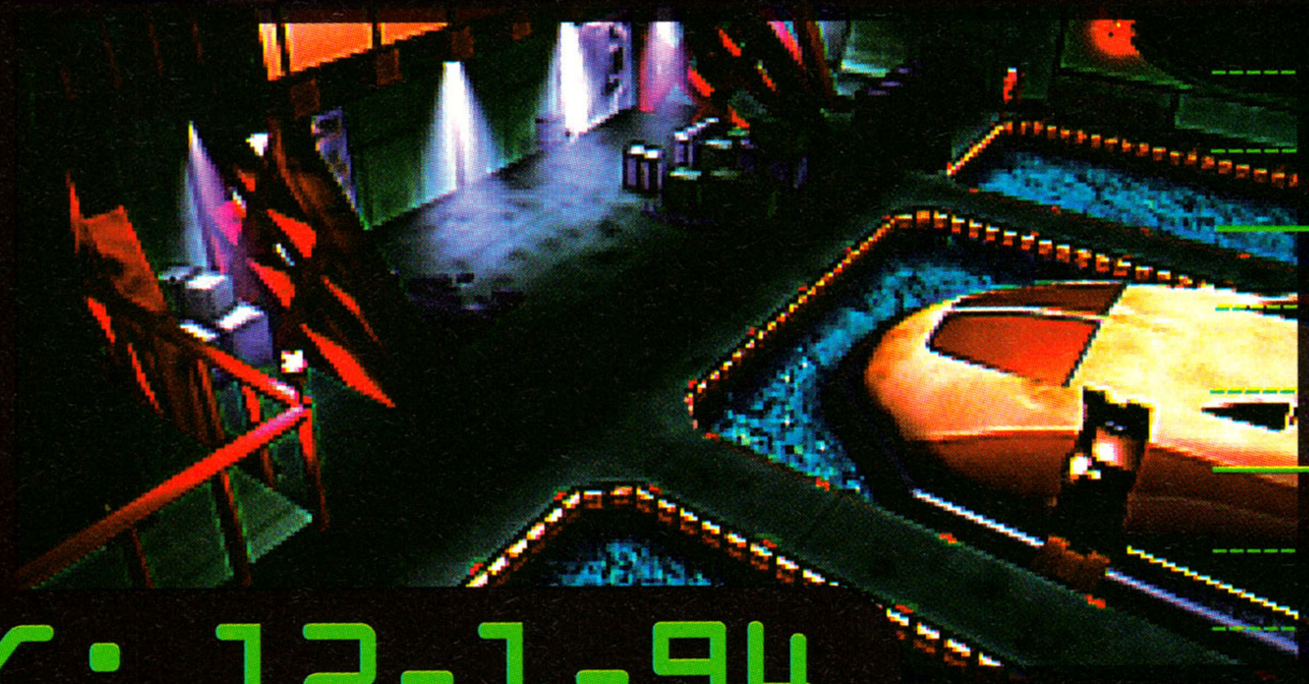
You break into it and find the source of power. It is, of course, a portal direct

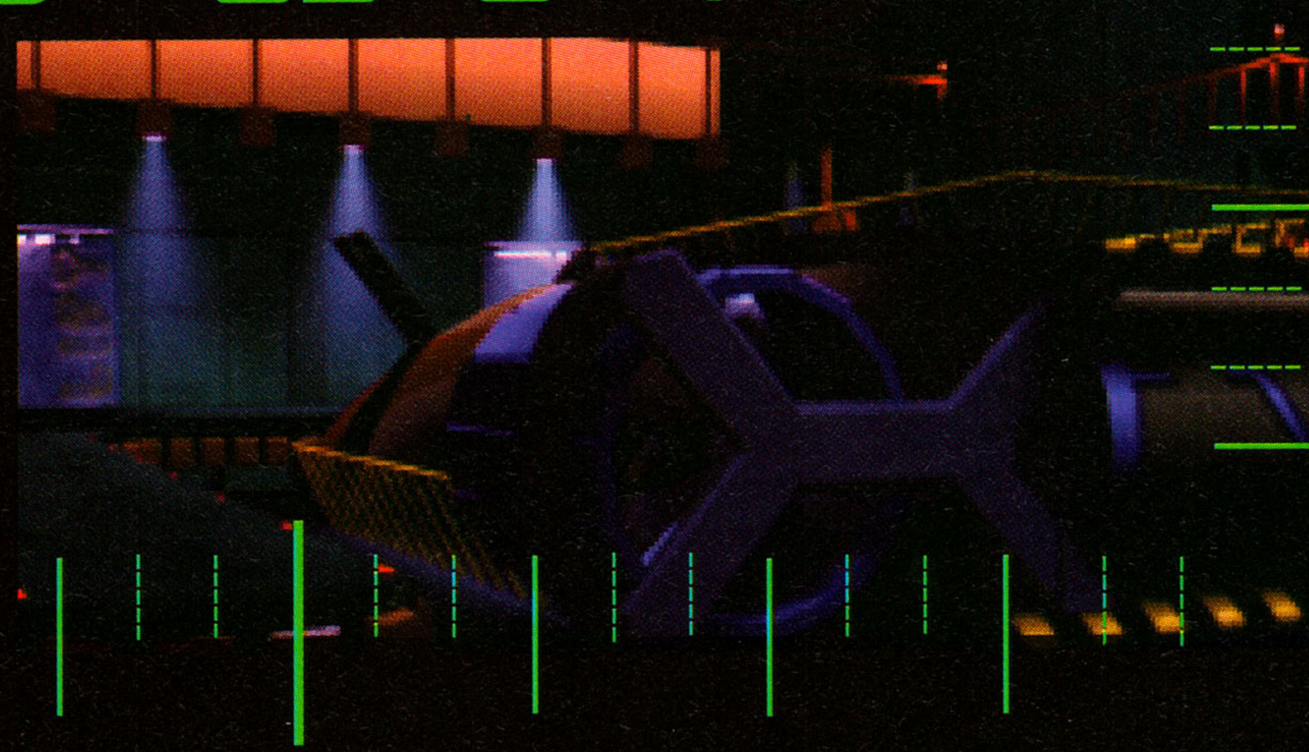
to hell. To close off the gate, you must go through the portal into Hell, and close it from the other side.

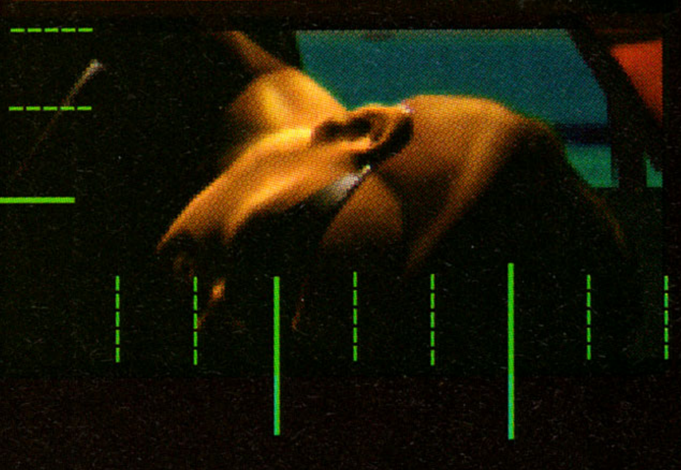
Without hesitating, you plunge through. Now, in hell, you have to fight your way through the diabolic landscape to the center of hell, where you find the master source of all power and destroy it, thus closing the gate to Earth and trapping the demons back in their nether dimension. You are flung back out of hell to Earth. Humankind is saved and the demons are thwarted. Now you can have a donut.

Doom II: Hell on Earth may appear similar to the original shareware sensation that swept the nation, but beauty is only skin deep. Things gets ugly fast once you go tactical. Id has made it plain that they won't hold the hands of their Marines anymore. Death comes









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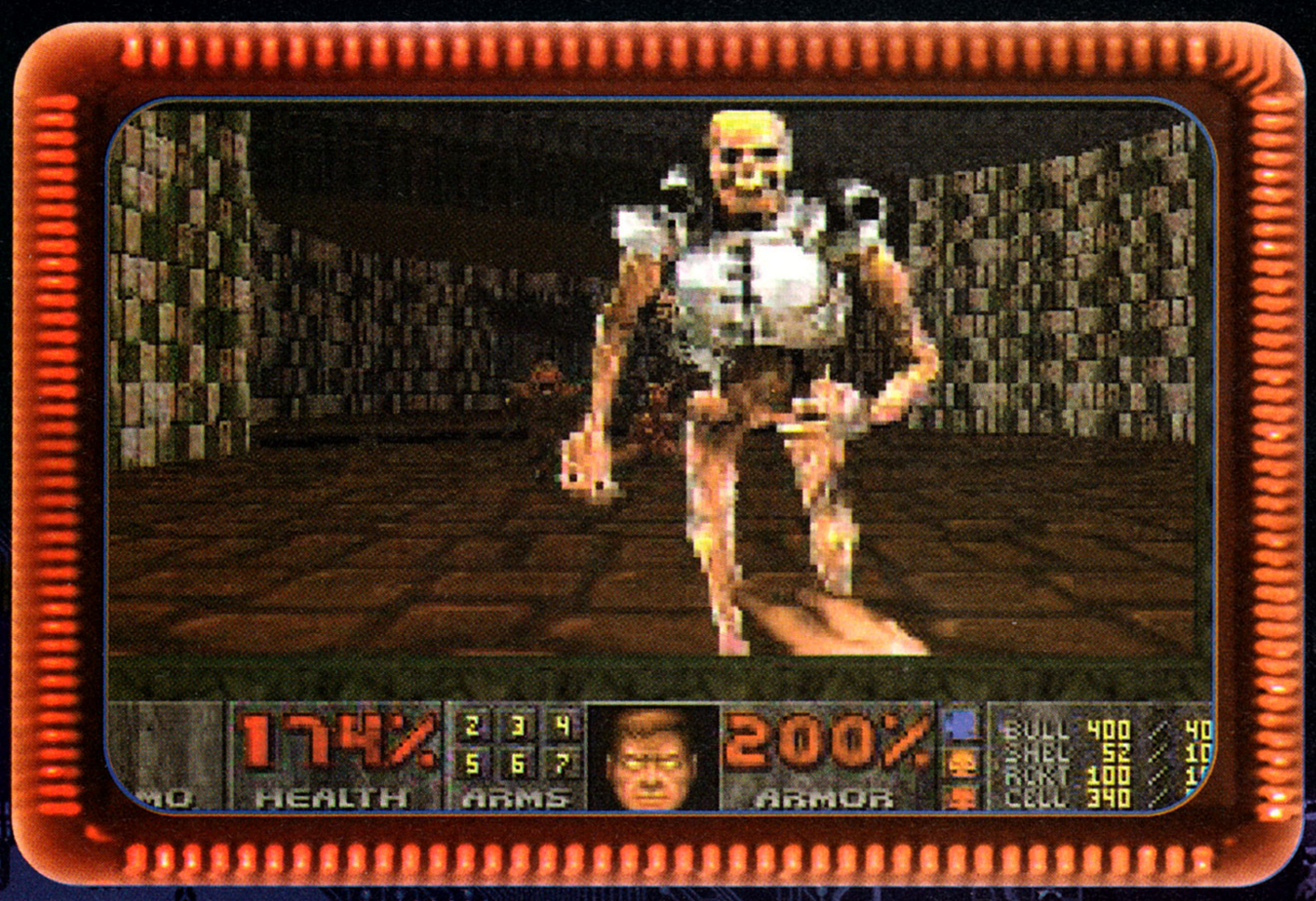
quickly in **Doom II**. Slow down in a bad neighborhood and you die. Forget to look both ways before crossing the avenue and you die. Inhale when you should exhale and you die!

Who or what will be wreaking this havoc upon players? Well, as one might expect, all of the old favorites are still present and accounted for, though some of their strengths have been modified a bit, mostly for the worse. The new cast of characters includes eight new baddies, bringing the total number of opponent types to 18 (see sidebar).

Naturally, with all these new, even nastier playmates, one would expect a lot of new, death-dealing firepower as well, right? Wrong. The only addition to the armory, albeit a nice one, is a double-barreled super shotgun. This weapon gives a somewhat wider pellet pattern than the normal shotgun and inflicts three times as much damage. Unfortunately, it also packs quite a kick, which means a longer recovery time between shots. This can cause things to get very hairy when you inadvertently step on a trip wire that sends 20 demons rushing into the room. **Doom II** takes no prisoners. Players will also find some (un)pleasant surprises in the way of puzzles. Switches, secret doors, and slime pits are prevalent players in the **Doom II** environment. To succeed in this situation, one will have to be both clever and quick. For example, in one area of an early level, players have to run and hit three switches in rapid succession and the correct sequence to cause an elevator platform to lower. There is no other way out of the room and you must bolt breathlessly to each of the four areas or you will not make it in time. **Doom II** shows no mercy.

So what's the bottom line to **Doom II**? If you're looking for an even break, you won't find it here. **Doom II** is hell on Earth, but that probably won't scare most veterans away; they will sell their souls to this game just for the hell of it.



Additions to the Doom Zoo

- **Mancubus**—Grotesquely obese creature with two massive metal guns for arms. Once the Mancubus sites you he will quickly fire off six rounds, then resite and conduct follow-up attacks as necessary. Unfortunately, they aren't necessary very often.
- **Revenant**—A rocket-launching skeleton with a mean right hook when he is up-close and personal. From a distance, he fires slow, guided projectiles that are easy to outrun, but always hit on target.
- **Pain Elemental**—A skull-spitting, floating brown ball that resembles a Caecodemon from the original **Doom**. The Pain Elemental actually spits out Lost Souls, which makes it extremely deadly. This is because, even though you are being bombarded with flaming skulls, you must still concentrate some of your effort on killing the Pain Elemental itself or you'll be fighting forever.
- **Arch-Vile**—A long-legged, massive-attack, raise-baddies-from-the-dead nightmare. The Arch-Vile is probably the hardest demon to defeat. He has a fire attack that is similar to the awesome BFG 9000. If you're in his sight during an attack, you will quickly become Marine Flambé. To top it all off, the Arch-Vile runs around the levels raising demons from the dead, undoing all your fine work up to that point.
- **Former Human Commando**—Big brother to the former human sergeants. This ugly post-Marine boasts a large chain gun and can dump heavy amounts of firepower on you in short order. By the way, they are not nearsighted either.
- **Arachnotron**—The small offspring of the Spider Demon that was the final boss in the original Doom. They can sling lead just as good as their daddy, but can't stand the same level of damage before going legs up.
- **Hell Knight**—The guardians of the Castles of Hell. They lay on as much firepower as the Barons of Hell from **Doom**, but also can't take quite as much damage.
- **Final Boss—**UNNAMED and UNKNOWN at the time of this writing. He, she, or it may still be under construction, but this Marine is willing to bet the Boss won't be a pushover like the Spider Demon was at the end of **Doom**.

Kingmaker™

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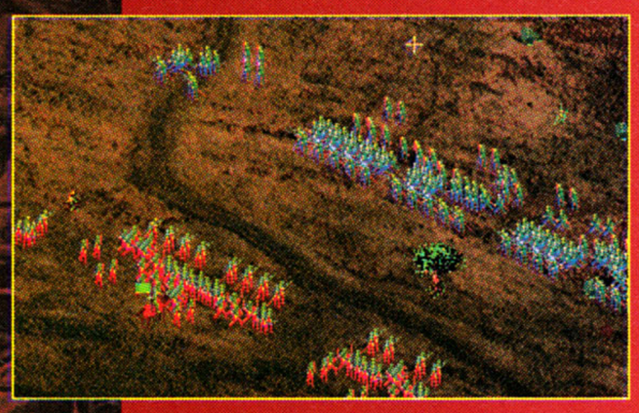

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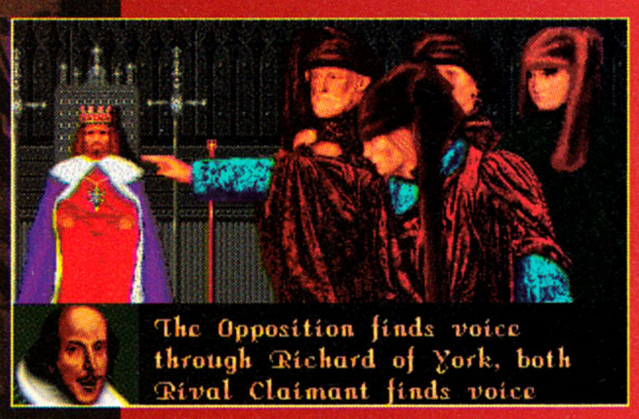

Shakespeare's great drama Henry VI recounts the War of the Roses throughout Kingmaker. "Come, let us four to dinner. I dare say this quarrel will drink blood another day.".

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V as in Velocity: Delta-V Flies!

by Russ Ceccola

Lately, something has been moving at incredible speeds in Maryland. It's certainly not the cars on Interstate-95, thanks to the Delaware toll booth. Instead, it's not far northwest from Washington, a bit southwest of Baltimore and will soon arrive in software stores everywhere.

This speed demon is none other than Bethesda Softworks's **Delta-V**, simply the

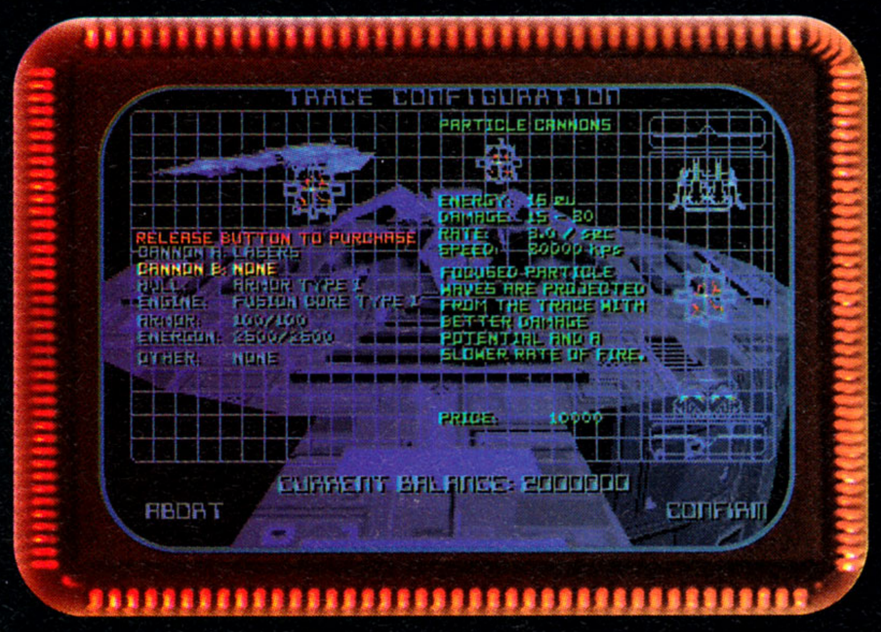
fastest, most exciting flight experience for home computers. Fans demand high-speed, adrenaline-pumping arcade games. **Delta-V** will surprise these joystick jockeys and capture the rest of the flight sim fans who give it a try. **Delta-V** is not by any means a flight simulation. It concentrates on the action and avoids the trivialities associated with learning vehicle controls.

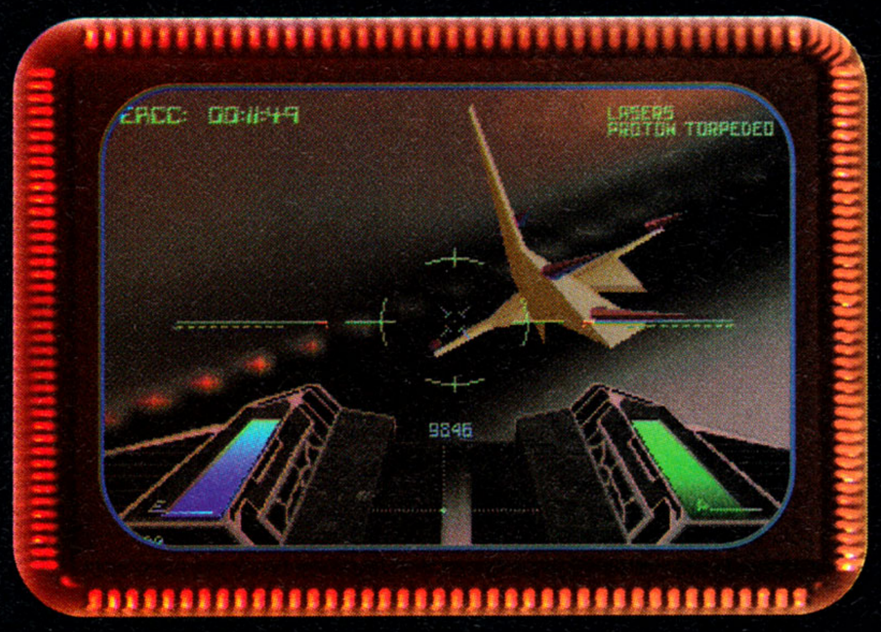
Delta-V takes place in the 24th century, a future in which data is money and enterprising individuals known as "netrunners" have discovered ways to intercept data on the worldwide computer network lines and mainframe computers. They do this in cyberspace by "jacking" into the networks through a neural link that allows them to control a trace that can explore the data pathways. This trace is the vehicle that players control in Delta-V. The 3-D trench-like play fields in each level are data lines. The enemies and obstacles players encounter are the defenses set up by rival corporations to guard their data.

In **Delta-V**, each level is another mission for the players to conquer in order to live another day and eventually win their freedom from the Black Sun Corporation that tricked them into acting as netrunners for the company on the GlobalNet.

Only a small part of **Delta-V** compares to what people know as a flight simulation. The best way to classify it is as an arcade game. Players control a vehicle akin to an airborne craft (the trace) that they outfit with weapons and special attachments. The goal of each mission/level is to make it to the end of the trench or pathway and collect any data packets along the way.

Executive producer and Bethesda Softworks president Chris Weaver commented in a recent visit that "we don't believe **Delta-V** falls neatly into any one category. The game pushes the envelope of speed and frame rate where nobody has gone before. We had designed most of the parts that were





assembled into **Delta-V** before, but we had to go a lot further from the start to make the game fun and technologically feasible."

The graphics in **Delta-V** require a lot of power from the computer on which the game will run. Although the game works best on a 486-based computer at a clock speed of 66MHz, designer Greg Kreafle smartly set up the graphics options. Players can turn off the sky or cockpit of the trace and turn down the graphics levels on other elements to keep the game fast without losing too much of the original game vision. Kreafle explained how the design team wanted to "make the game visually stimulating, easy to get into

and exciting so that people have a total blast. Trying to balance the levels of detail on all computer configurations is difficult, so we put that power in the hands of the player."

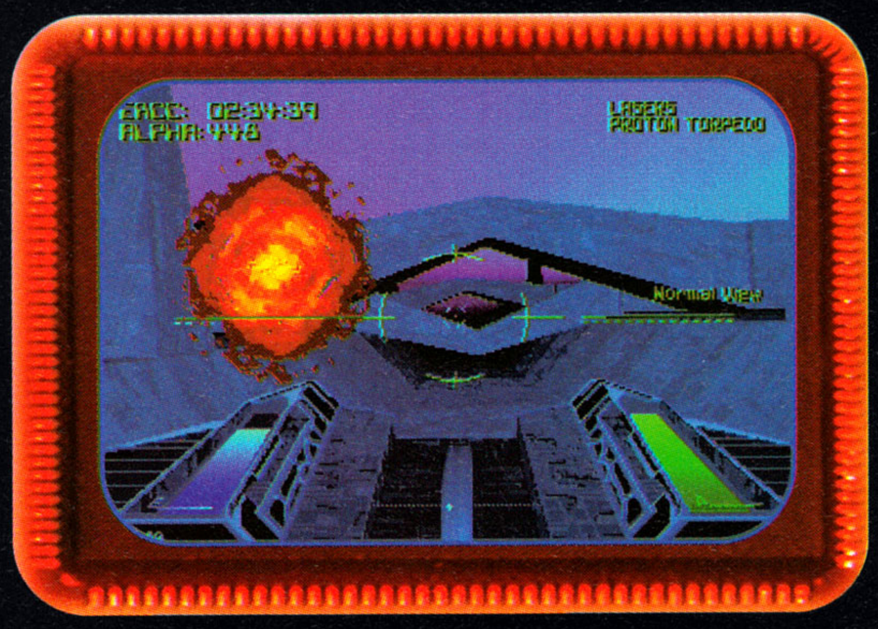
The game's artists used 3-D Studio to design the trenches, vehicles, enemies and other 3-D graphics and then converted the graphics files to maximize space and game speed. **Delta-V** effectively uses a variety of techniques including Gouraud shading and polygon-based objects that make the game as visually exciting as the game play itself.

The graphics and high-speed action are impressive, but the elements that tie it all together and add emotion are Eric Heberling's incredible audio effects and music. Although **Delta-V**'s music will shake the walls of any room in which it is played, the game is clearly a reason to wear headphones. Heberling uses completely original science fiction-type themes to make the game seem that much faster. The music is sometimes unsettling and dark, but other times it sounds upbeat. The sound effects complete the illusion of total immersion in the game world. Turn down the lights and turn up the volume for a session that will surely make any player sweat.

The future world in **Delta-V** is a very bleak one. With all these greedy corporations, one may wonder if there is any hope for a bright future. Survival is such a primitive goal, but netrunners are thankful for that opportunity because of Black Sun's disregard for their well-being. The almighty dollar is supreme!

Kreafle is pleased with the story behind the game, but realizes that "many players may just want to run the trenches. That's fine, but they'll miss many of the explanations behind each run and the subtle hints imbedded in the mission briefings." The best suggestion for those players who want to concentrate on the action is to give the story a try for a few missions to get accustomed to the goals and then check in again every time there is something new in the trench. **Delta-V** has 40 levels, some of which have end-of-trench "bosses" to surprise players and catch them off-guard.

Delta-V is the ultimate test of a player's reactions and hand-eye coordination. Weaver has a pilot's license and many hours in the air under his belt. He explained how **Delta-V**'s players must "develop their skills so that they fly so well that they're thinking ahead a few moves and ready to make instantaneous adjustments. You can't be complacent in the trench."

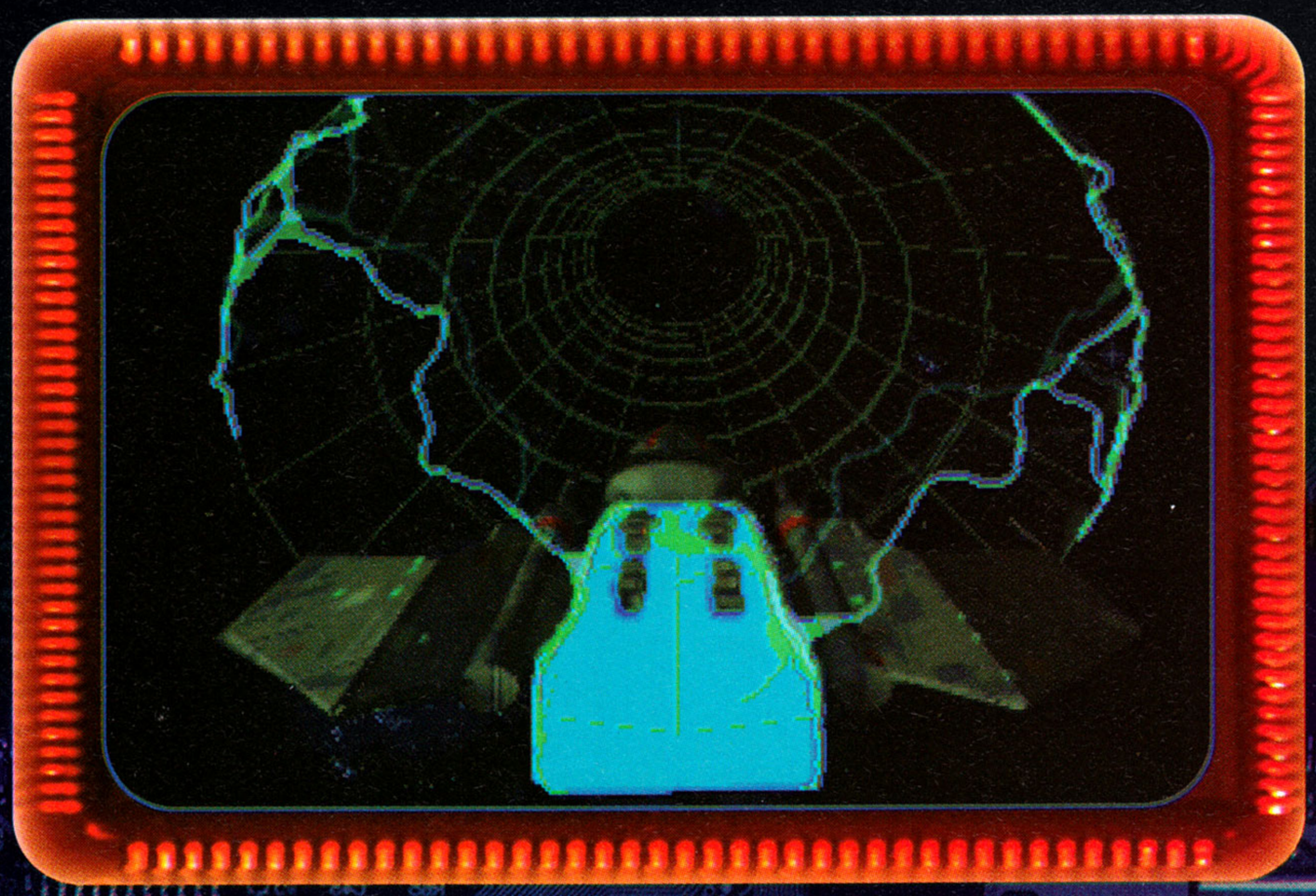


Kreafle described the game in different terms. "There's a steep learning curve, but as soon as you get good at **Delta-V** you go crazy because everything changes and there is a random element to the layout of the trenches." Players have walked away from the game sweating. The action is so intense and fast that many players will find it difficult to pull away from the game because of their incredible concentration on what happens on the screen.

Delta-V has such a hold on players that they'll continue to "run" a trench until they get it just right. That will work well on the early levels, but only the players who develop great reactions and throw away their expectations of what will happen next in the trench will be able to complete all of the game's missions.

One **Delta-V** expert at Bethesda Softworks appears almost superhuman as he reacts in less than a half of a second to levels in the '30s. The better players get at the game, the less that reaction time seems impossible. Kreafle is proud that "the game is even fun for the developers after countless hours of testing, so I know we're doing something right."

Jack into the net, 'runner, and see how data retrieval is a game of life and death in the 24th century.



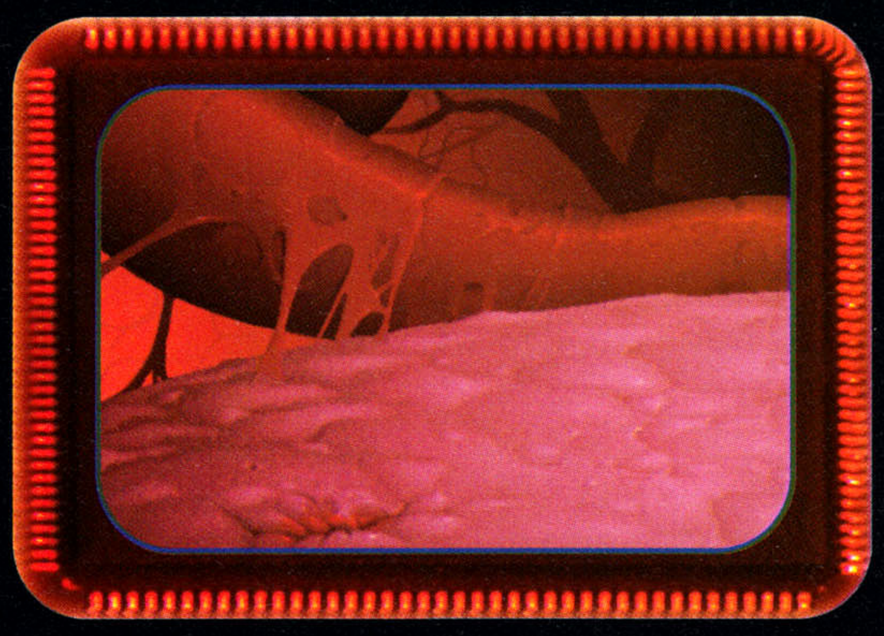
Space Quest Starts a New Chapter

By Russ Ceccola

Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? Oops, wrong slogan. Who knows what wickedly corny jokes lurk in the depths of the design offices of Sierra On-Line in Oakhurst, CA? Josh Mandel knows...

Early in 1995, Sierra On-Line will release the sixth game in their very popular **Space Quest** series. The first four games in the series were the creations of the Two Guys from Andromeda (Mark Crowe and Scott Murphy), two of Sierra's wackiest personalities. When Crowe left Sierra to join sister company Dynamix in Oregon, he took the series along for the ride. **Space Quest V: The Next Mutation** was a solo Crowe (at that point, the One Guy from Andromeda) effort.

The fast-approaching **Space Quest VI** began with a search for a new designer by Murphy and Crowe, both busy with other projects. Those loyal fans of Roger Wilco, the series' star, who buy the recently-released **Space Quest Classics** CD collection will also find a treat on the CD—a video narration of the search for the sixth game's designer. Many people come and go in the clip, but one person fits and looks the part perfectly—the bearded Josh Mandel, a much slimmer and shorter version of wacky Cabin Boy star Chris Elliott.



Mandel received the Two Guys's blessing for **Space Quest VI**. "**Space Quest** is my favorite series, so I had a lot of enthusiasm to do the game," Mandel explained in a recent interview. Five minutes with Mandel is certainly long enough for his sarcastic wit and wry humor to evoke at least a groan or two from the listener.

Mandel began his career at Sierra in 1990, anxiously searching for a project as he wandered the halls of the design building. **Space Quest IV** was in production at the time, so he managed to write some jokes for the game, notably the computer game parodies in the Galaxy Galeria's mall and the fake hint book packaged with each game.

While Crowe ran off to Oregon with **Space Quest V**, Mandel teamed up with **Leisure Suit Larry** creator Al Lowe on **Freddy Pharkas: Frontier Pharmacist**. Mandel and Lowe filled the game with so many puns, jokes, and visual guffaws that it was easy to spot someone playing the game from both the laughs and groans that accompanied every move. Now Mandel is back to the **Space Quest** series, but without a catchy name like his predecessors (send any suggestions to Sierra On-Line).

The basis for Mandel's humor and quick-on-the-trigger ability to pop out a joke (Why *did* Michael Jackson like K-Mart?) goes back to his childhood.

No, it wasn't troubled. No, he was not related to Tonya Harding, Madonna, *or* John Wayne Bobbitt. But he did live in a large family that "verbally fenced all the time. You had to think fast." Also, Josh was the class clown and "nerdy picked-on kid," so it was easy for him to develop a sarcastic, cynical attitude (much like Scott Murphy) when he defended himself against his foes and the big bullies by "humiliating them verbally." Those influences perfectly prepared him for games like **Freddy Pharkas** and **Space Quest VI**.

This latest **Space Quest**

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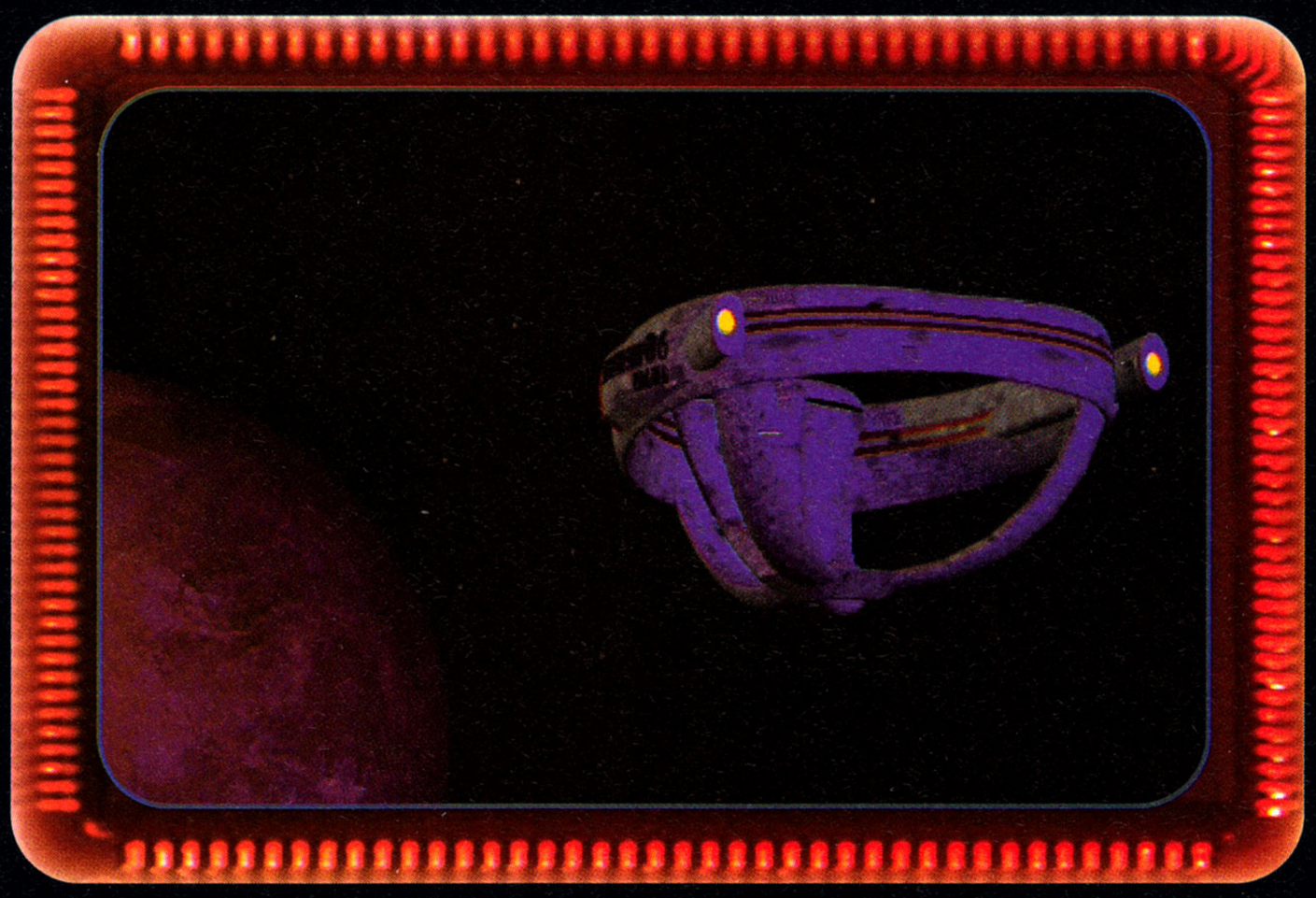
game takes place immediately after the finale of **Space Quest V**. Roger Wilco is held accountable for all the destruction in the previous game and gets demoted back to janitor (his role in the first four games). Over the course of this new adventure, Wilco develops a friendship with Corpsman Santiago who he must eventually save from evil forces.

Murphy helped Mandel out on **Space Quest VI**. "Scott and I talked about Roger Wilco a lot and decided that it was better to have him as a janitor than a captain because he's ultimately an underdog, not a leader," Mandel explained.

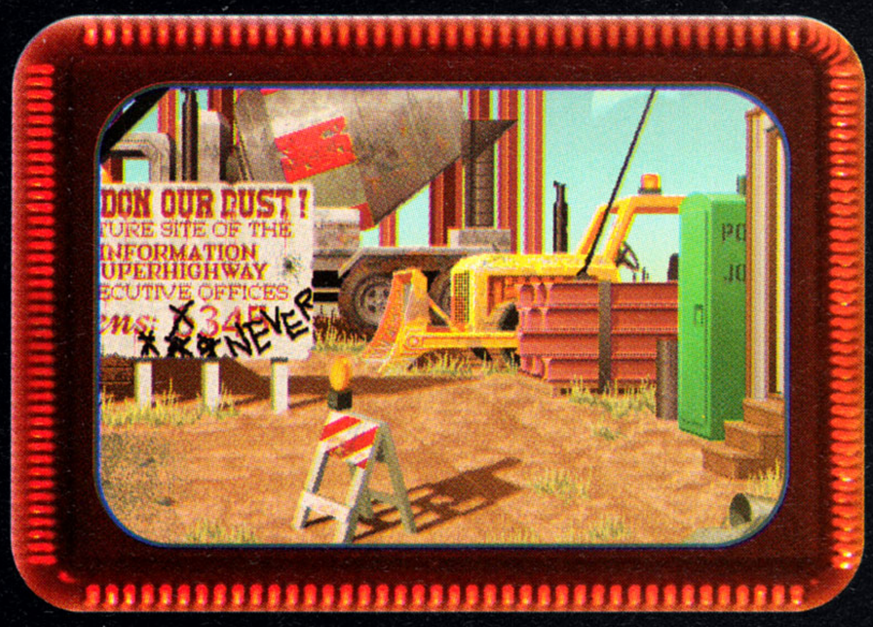
Although Mandel heads the design team for **Space Quest VI**, he realized that the series may not continue to be in his list of upcoming designs. "I feel like I'm just babysitting, which



is fine, because the **Space Quest** series is really Scott and Mark's baby."

Mandel picked up many of his necessary design skills with **Freddy Pharkas**. "On **Freddy Pharkas**, I had to deal with issues that a designer has to consider that I hadn't touched before. Also, it was the first time people responded directly to my work. I've used their comments and criticisms to make **Space Quest VI** a better game than **Freddy Pharkas**. I'm basically just trying to please myself," he confessed. "The **Space Quest** series has a history of getting into trouble," he added. "But I have avoided the touchy subjects and instead relied on the vast supply of science-fiction shows, movies, and books for inspiration and joke targets."

Space Quest VI has a different look than previous games, but a similar interface. The artists filled the screen with high-resolution graphics as detailed as Saturday morning cartoons. This approach returns some of the flavor of the first three games and avoids the realistic and graphic novel looks used respectively for the fourth and fifth adventures.



The graphics in Mandel's **Space Quest** are so detailed and lively animated that players will be able to see a character raise an eyebrow or subtly frown. The design team maintained the standard Sierra graphic adventure icons and unique action pointers for each inventory item, but they tweaked the commands just a bit. For example, the walk icon is now a "feet" icon, which expands the puzzle possibilities.

Space Quest VI will ship on CD-ROM formats only. Every line of dialogue has an accompanying voice. There are also lots of musical styles and both futuristic and wacky sound effects. "It's a lot harder to maintain the flexibility of the game because we're producing it on CD-ROM first. This means we have to record all the voices in advance, but there are places where we can add humor visually and in some text," Mandel said. "I've tried to avoid using sound and/or verbal clues for the puzzles because I think there are probably a good number of people who still play these games at the office."

Space Quest VI will set the stage for more Mandel-led games at Sierra. When asked about a sequel to **Freddy Pharkas**, he explained how "a **Freddy Pharkas** game has to be tied to the next wave of popularity of Westerns. Right now they're down. Even *City Slickers II* didn't do well."

Does Mandel worry about the resurrection of another notorious yet lovable sanitation worker in outer space from the early '80s, namely the player-hero of **Planetfall**? "The future needs more janitors," he joked. **Planetfall** is his favorite game of all time. "Steve Meretzky [designer of **Planetfall**, **Stationfall** and the **Spellcaster** series and another bearded funnyman] is one of my top two favorite game designers. The other works for Sierra. If I do half as well as he does with a game, I'll be partly satisfied." **Space Quest VI**'s players will judge that last part, but one thing is certain. Josh Mandel has the wit and memory for humor to fit in with that bunch of Andromedans, wherever they are in the galaxy. Now what's the deal with all these bearded designers??

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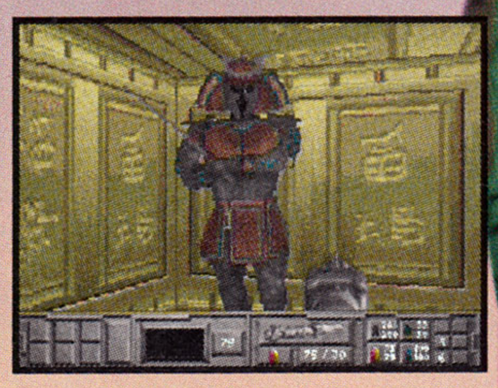

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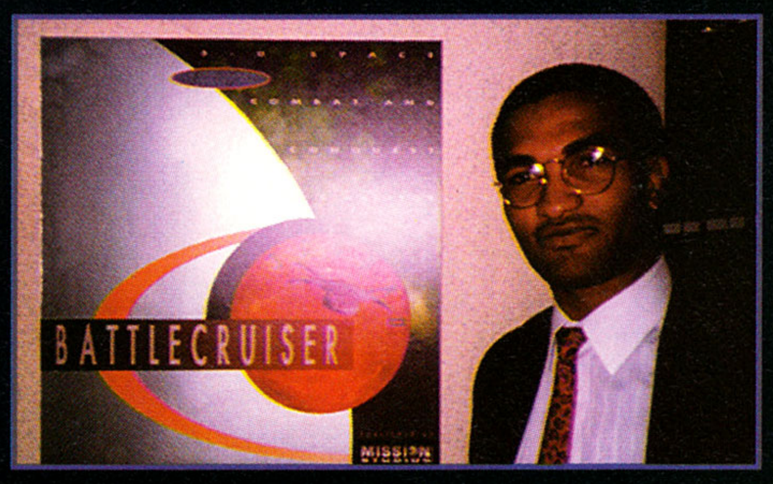


A Smart Future

Battlecruiser 3000 AD's Designer Redefines the Gaming Universe

by Ed Dille

Derek Smart is a man with unquestioned determination and brilliance, a lone wolf who refused to compromise his vision despite unbelievable adversity.

The result of his six-year odyssey through the maze of electronic game design is **Battlecruiser 3000 AD** (**BC**), a science-fiction opus that transcends any game ever produced. **BC** is not just a play environment, it's an alternate reality that some players may never want to surface from again. How is such detail possible? **EG** delves inside the mind of the creator to find the answer to this, and other burning questions.

EG: What sets **BC** apart from other games in your mind?

DS: It's really three games in one. The players start out as lowly Interceptor pilots and must work their way up through the ranks to get command of a Battlecruiser. They gain this experience in the Transim, which is short for training simulator. The Transim is a first-person space combat simulator that is even more detailed than **Wing Commande**r, and it also has air to ground missions, which take place in the atmosphere of planets, that are as challenging as **Falcon 3.0**. Each time you enter the Transim, it generates a completely new mission profile with up to 10 waypoints and populates them with enemies based on your skill level, so some players will never want to go anywhere else.

Once you advance to command of a Battlecruiser, you can either go to the ACM, which is the Advanced Campaign Mode (I'll talk about that in a minute), or continue in the Transim. If you continue in the Transim, you will be up against other Battlecruisers and Carriers. Each Battlecruiser has four Interceptors on board and, during the battle, you can hop back and forth among each of them and the Battlecruiser, alternately flying and fighting or sitting back and letting the individual pilot AI handle the combat.

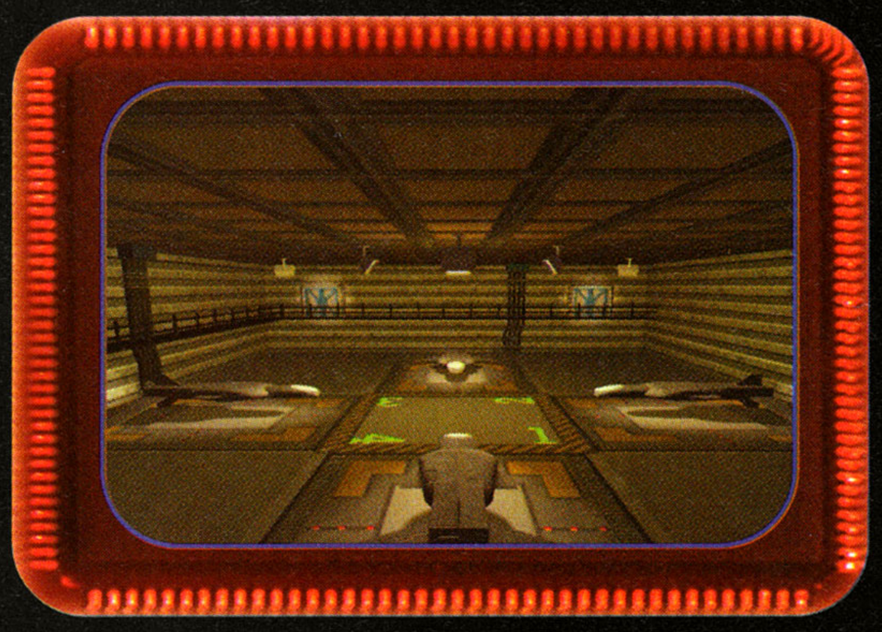
When you eventually do go to the ACM Mode, you find out just how detailed this program really is. You are in command of the Battlecruiser and your eventual goal is to stop the Gammulans from taking over Terran or friendly portions of the galaxy. You don't just fly and fight anymore, you've got to manage the crew of the Battlecruiser, each member of which has their own AI personality and skill sets. You have guys like a chief engineer who walks around the ship monitoring equipment status and fixing the things you tell him to. You listen to their input about all the different daily events the neural net generates exclusive of the main game and make decisions based on how much you trust their judgment. Some crew members are good, others not so good, and the player will only find out over time how much their input can be trusted. Also, because the entire universe is modeled in 3-D, these crew members actually walk the decks of the ship in the correct manner to get from point A to point B to do their jobs. If they just happen to be walking past the security cell, for example, when the neural net determines that some prisoners being held there are going to conduct an escape attempt and run through the ship sabotaging things, they might be killed or taken hostage. Events like this are not part of the scripted story line of the game, but they happen because of the way the neural net makes decisions.

The Universe never comes to a stop unless the player hits the pause key. It is a completely dynamic environment. If there is a war going on 15 light years away, the neural net manages that war exclusive of the player's interaction. If the player actually travels to that system to intervene, then the net stops and evaluates that player's thread directly into the equation and modifies events accordingly.

EG: To clarify, if you are carrying prisoners and they break out, they can travel anywhere in the ship and cause problems that have nothing to do with the thrust of the main story that you are working on, but they still must be dealt with despite the timing.

DS: Right. You have to make sure that when you send your marines to the surface, and you would send them when it is necessary to either take out a sub-target or conduct a covert mission where the use of Interceptors would give it away, you put them on a shuttle or in the transporter and send them to the surface. When they get on the surface, which is also completely 3-D modeled, you give them a mission and pick out a target. While they are carrying out the mission, and remember, all these guys have governing AI personalities and variable skill levels as well, you watch them from the overhead screen on the Battlecruiser, where you can literally zoom down to see the whites of their eyes if you want to. So they finish their mission, for example, and ask for permission to bring back prisoners.

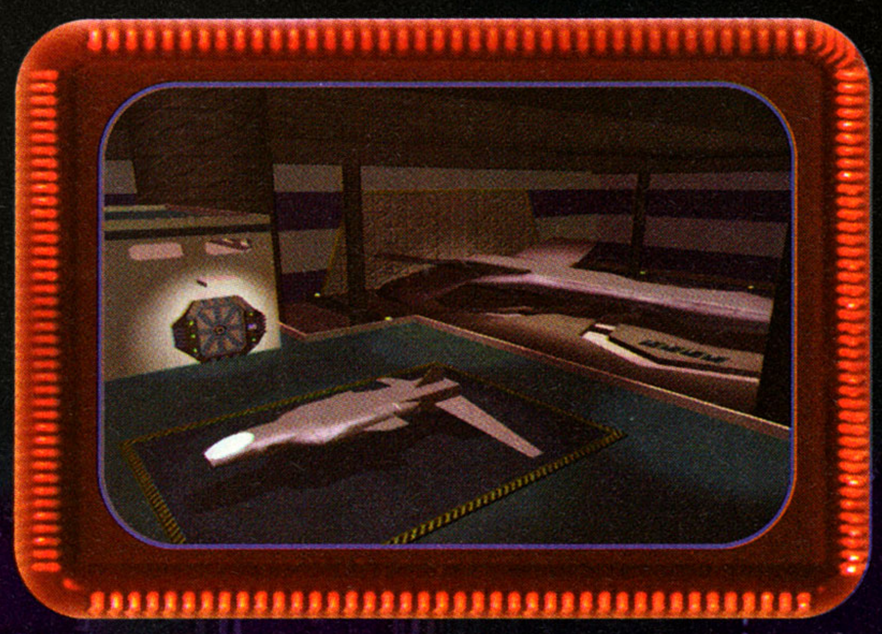
Now, if your research engineer had a high enough AI level to begin with, he might have told you that this particular area had high levels of radiation or contamination. If you remember this, or the research engineer catches the readings on the sensors when the shuttle returns, you can contain the problem. If you don't pay attention to these little details and you move these people out of the shuttle to the detention hold, guess what happens? Every deck they go on gets contaminated and infected.



Now, if you don't have the vaccines, everyone starts to die off one by one. You either have to isolate the contaminated people, put them all on a shuttle, send it off and detonate it, or you've got to stop everything else you are doing on the current mission to find the vaccine. Either way, you are going to lose people with critical skills that you need for the mission due to a lapse in judgment. The game is very real world that way.

EG: You mentioned a thread earlier, please explain for our readers what a thread is and how it works inside the net.

DS: Sure. I have one neural net that handles game play. It is like the center of a web and it controls and monitors 10 distinct game engines. The minute you execute the program it initializes the entire Universe: 75 planets, 25 star bases, 48 star stations, 144 moons, 3,419 stellar objects including asteroids, meteorites, comets, flux fields, jump points, worm holes, black holes, binary stars, all the galaxies, and so forth. The whole thing is astrophysically correct. All the orbits and trajectories are correct. If the player does something to influence the trajectory of a meteorite, for example, the program will calculate a completely accurate new trajectory based on force, mass, angle of attack, all of that. If the new trajectory places the meteor on a collision course with another object, it will hit that object unless the player does something else to correct it.



Anyway, to get back to the threads, the net has various channels that it uses to monitor and control game events simultaneously. These are called threads. Three threads are used to monitor all the friendly alien races, and three more for the hostile aliens. There are 14 alien races in all. One thread is used exclusively to monitor and evaluate the player's actions. Another thread is dedicated exclusively to updating the physical 3-D model based on actions that occurred anywhere in the game, with or without player involvement. Finally, there are two threads that the net uses for its own strategic thinking and decision making. When the player enters a region, their thread takes priority over the other threads, but all the threads are still working together to shape the flow of events in the game. It is a living thing, such that no two games will ever be the same.

EG: Let's return for the moment to the physical model. The effort it must have taken to create a physically correct model must have been tremendous.

DS: It was, but it was worth it. The only place I took some liberties was with the jump points. I didn't want the player to have to sit down and endure a flight from Earth to Mars, for example, so I used jump points to get the player from one action to another quickly. To get from A to B you can also use a wormhole. The only thing is, you will take slight damage, but you won't use any power. With flux fields, you won't take damage, but there is no guarantee that it will get you where you want to go. You may have to backtrack.

Anyway, the jump points are also important because I can design a new galaxy, link it with a jump point, and create an entire mission disk that will plug into the existing galaxy and operating system and immediately be recognized and maintained by the neural net that is already in place.

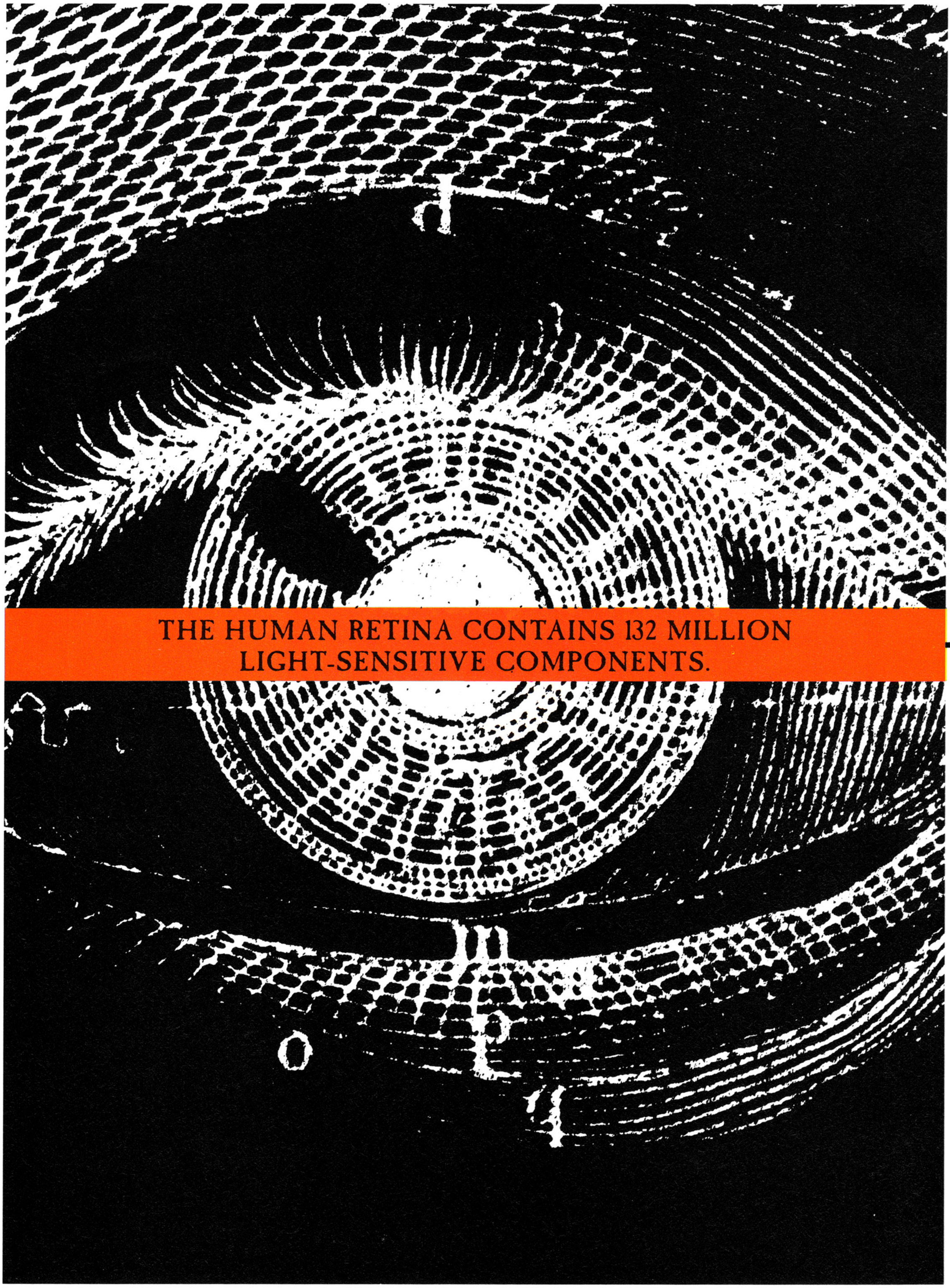
EG: The neural net also learns from the player and becomes tougher as it goes along, correct?

DS: Yes, it controls everything and reacts to every event. It handles all the alien beings and the game play, not according to a preset pattern, but according to a logical pattern based on the governing rules it has been given. It decides who gets born as well as who gets killed. If a building gets blown up, the net determines when it gets rebuilt based on the tech level of that planet and the available resources. For example, if you go into a region and lay waste to a planet, but leave its nuclear reactor on-line, when you return after a period of game time, it will be rebuilt bigger and better. If you had to take out five missile sites before, you might have to face six or seven this time around, simply because the net knows that five was not enough to stop you before. I emphasize again, that these are all unscripted events that occur in response to player actions or, in some cases, inaction, and are not a preordained part of the game's underlying theme.

EG: So, in other words, the player is just another "random" variable in an existing dynamic universe?

DS: Exactly, and no game as ever done that to the degree that **Battlecruiser 3000 AD** does. Now that I'm finally down to the final stages of development, I'm very excited.

So are we. The **EG** staff has never witnessed anything that rivals the complexity and richness of detail that Derek has rendered. Players can sit behind a planet and do nothing except drink coffee and watch if they wish, and the game is still "smart" enough to work its way to some conclusion. But, just as in the real world, you can make a difference if you want to. **Battlecruiser 3000 AD** is truly a watershed product in the age of interactive experiences.



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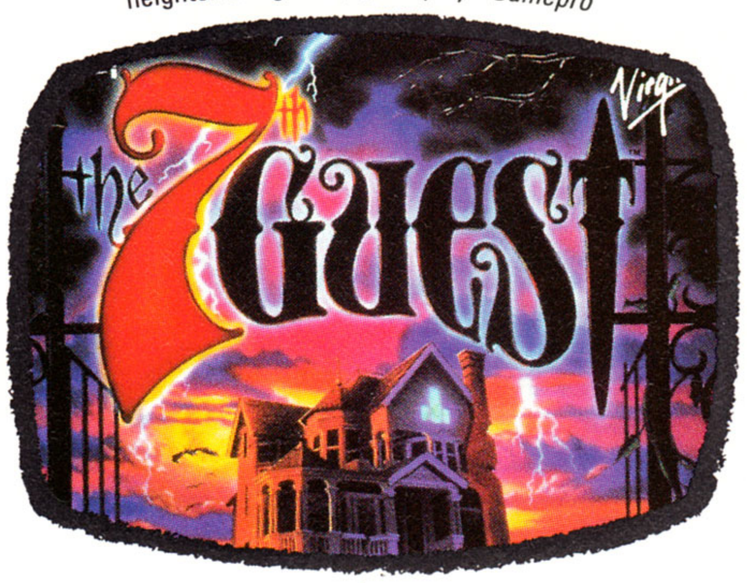

Space Ace

"Space Ace is a blast to play and is truly faithful to the original coin-op. The digital video is perfect and the game controls great." *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

Dragon's Lair

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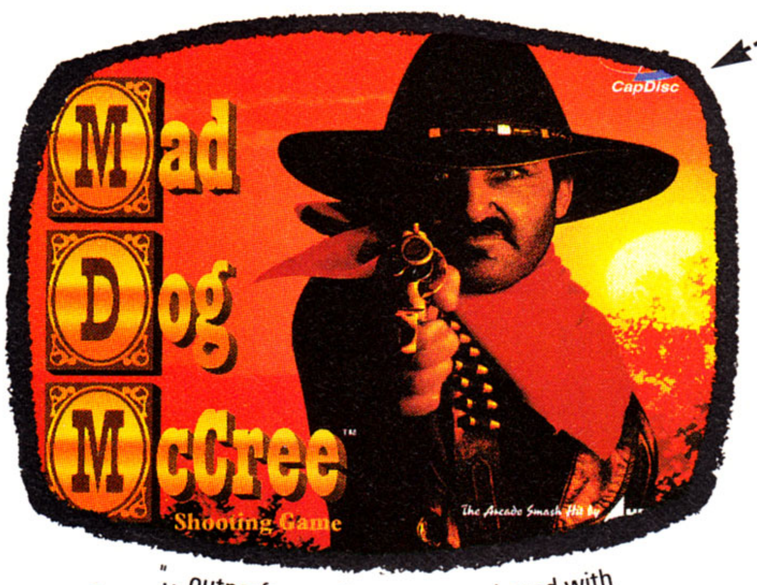

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HOLLYWOOD MEETS GAMING

by Joyce Worley

Since the birth of electronic gaming, Hollywood has eyed the industry as an avenue of expansion. However, although there were excursions of the movie world into gaming, the blocky graphics of early systems discouraged the giants of entertainment.

That's all over now. Improvements in the interactive entertainment experience made the big boys in Hollywood take note of the lucrative gaming market.

Movie giants started edging into the industry in response to graphic improvements. It was a multipronged maneuver. At first, movie properties were licensed to gaming companies for development. Now, there are even a few crossovers going the other way: hit games turned into movies. Movie companies formed their own game divisions, and acquired top talent to man their efforts. At the same time, some prominent software companies looked to movie people for expertise in special effects.

The growing multimedia market intensified the exchange of ideas and talent. Now, many games star live actors and contain movie footage.

Flicks Go To Disk

There's been a steady stream of movies licensed for interactive entertainment, since the days of *E.T., Kramer vs. Kramer, and M.A.S.H.* There's hardly a hit movie without a game based on it.

Some of the most famous crossovers are from science-fiction movies. LucasFilms' *Star Wars* trilogy has been mined for games over and over by LucasArts. Similarly, Paramount's *Star Trek* universe provides grist for the game mills; this year, Spectrum Holobyte, Paramount Interactive, Interplay, and Simon & Schuster will continue the *Star Trek* journey. The *Alien* mythos also burst onto monitors. Most recently, Capcom USA teamed with 20th Century Fox on an *Alien vs. Predators* coin-op.

Some Games Become Dramas

The most unique movie/game crossover is being developed by Leigh Rothschild of Capstone. **Body Count** is being developed as a game, first for CD-ROM, then for PC Disk, and simultaneously being produced by Leigh as a movie. This uses an enhanced **Wolfenstein 3-D** engine, in a battle to take back the terrorist-occupied United Nations.

There's a long history of games becoming animated television series, from **Pac-Man** to **Street Fighter**. The latest to go to tube is Capcom's **Mega Man**. Ruby-Spears, a producer of children's animations for TV, created and produced the series for syndication.

Filming of the movie *Street Fighter* started in May in Thailand, starring Jean-Claude Van Damme and Raul Julia. It's produced by Edward Pressman, who just finished *The Crow,* and written by Steven de Souza (his previous credits include *48 Hrs., Die Hard, The Flintstones).* It's the first movie ever completely financed by a game company; Capcom Co., Ltd., the Japanese parent of Capcom USA, is picking up the bill.

Pressman explained his interest in games as a source for movies: "This is a time in which comic book and video game characters have permeated the popular consciousness. They provide a wealth of imaginative characters, settings, and situations for motion pictures and multimedia projects."

Movie Talent In Gameland

At first, all the roles were played by the company staff. Now, companies hire professional actors to star in the games.

This new source of employment for actors attracted the attention of the Screen Actors Guild. After meetings with industry figures, Guild lawyers recognized that game sales aren't big enough to pay the same as movies. Yet, this market will provide employment for many Guild members.

Other people are interested in the industry, from special effects designers to business management. It goes all the way to the technicians: Technicolor, the world's largest processor of motion picture film, is now providing replication services for CD games.

One company, Rocket Science Games, drew heavily on Hollywood talent to form its team. Screenwriter Mike Backes worked on *Rising Sun, Jurassic Park,* and *Congo.* Writer/designer Ron Cobb (*Aliens, The Abyss, Back to the Future, True Lies)* is working on the company's first game, **Loadstar: The Legend of Tully Bodine**. The crew also includes visual effects producer Mark Mullen (Industrial Light & Magic, Paul McCartney, *Space Rangers,* Coca-Cola); producer David Brownstein (*In The Pig's Eye);* producer Matthew Fassberg (MTV, Comedy Central, *Entertainment Tonight);* and producer Tony Payne (*Kiss of the Spider Woman).*

The Studios Make Their Moves

The most dramatic marriage of movies and games occurred when Viacom purchased ICOM Simulations to be their game development arm. Viacom's entertainment holdings, including their own library as well as MTV, VH-1, Showtime, and Nickelodeon, were then increased by the addition of Paramount Pictures and Paramount Television.

Viacom Interactive will use these resources as bases for interactive entertainment. **Dracula Unleashed, Rocko's Modern Life, Beavis & Butt-head, MTV's Club Dead** and **Nickelodeon Guts** use Viacom properties. Paramount Interactive already has a group of award winners, from developers like Cyberflix (**Lunicus, Jump Raven, Skullcracker**), Medior (**Rock, Rap 'n Roll**), Music Pen (**Lenny's Music Toons**), and Novotrade (**Richard Scarry's Busytown**). Future products will be based on Paramount properties.

Universal Interactive Studio, a unit of MCA Inc., will develop interactive software based on MCA movie and television properties. Universal, too, saw the value of working closely with a top software publisher, and purchased an interest in Interplay Productions. Universal also will publish **Way of the Warrior**, the 3DO martial arts game developed by Naughty Dog Software.

Twentieth Century Fox established Fox Interactive and hired veteran Ted Hoff (formerly with Tengen/Time Warner) as general manager. His role is to create and acquire properties to be turned into interactive entertainments. The first projects in development are **The Pagemaster**, based on the movie by the same name scheduled for November release; and **The Tick**, based on Ben Elund's comic books, which also will be an animated TV series on Fox Children's Network this fall.

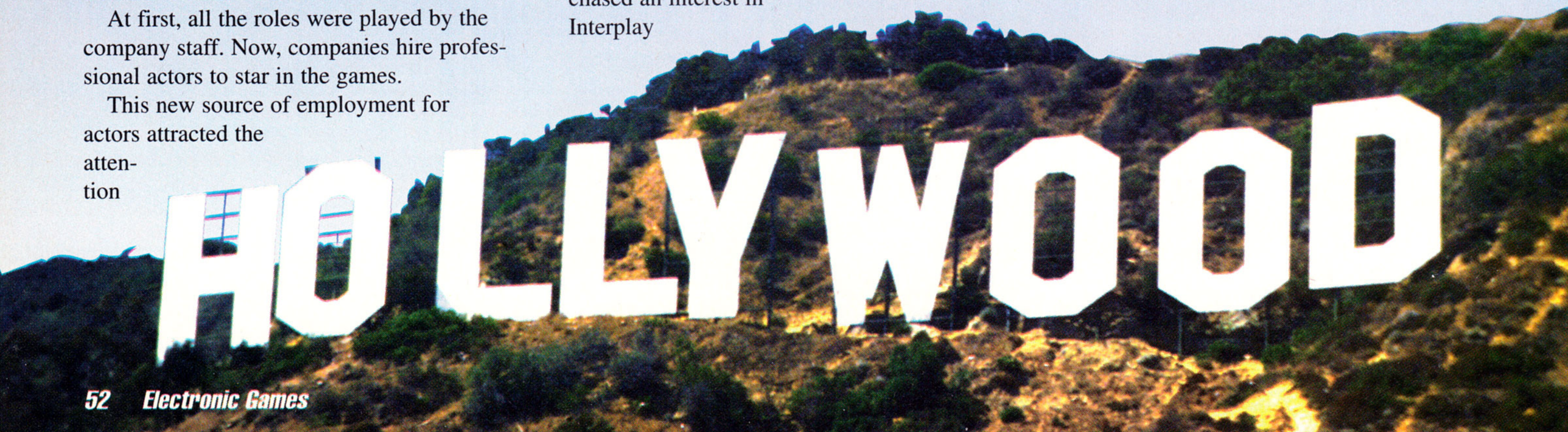
Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer signed a deal with Sega of America; the companies will jointly create games, television programs, and motion pictures, to be released under both names. "This agreement is ambitious in its immediate goals and wide-ranging in its intent, because MGM and Sega will immediately begin work on a range of titles. We plan to work toward the simultaneous introduction of traditional film and interactive product..." said Joe Miller, SoA's VP of product development.

Vivid Interactive, the world's largest producer of adult films, decided to become part of the gaming industry. Their first release, **Winner Takes All** is a roulette game, but now they're more ambitious. Inspired by Philips' CD-i production **Voyeur,** Vivid is filming **Mirage; The Game**, an interactive cowboy and Indians game aimed squarely at the over-16 market. "It's adult, but definitely not pornographic," said Vivid's David James.

But adult entertainments are coming. In response to encouragement from Philips, Vivid put five movies on CD-i, starting with *Blonde Justice*, described as "soft adult." They're negotiating with Atari to make the products available for the Jaguar. In Japan, Panasonic formed a special consortium to market adult products for 3DO; so Vivid's movies will be available in the Island Nation.

Not every movie company has made its mark in gameland. For example, there's a giant untapped reservoir of film properties waiting in the Time Warner company coffers. Officers have made no statements about developing its library into interactive entertainments, but it seems likely to happen.

But, one thing's for sure: Hollywood has arrived in gameland.



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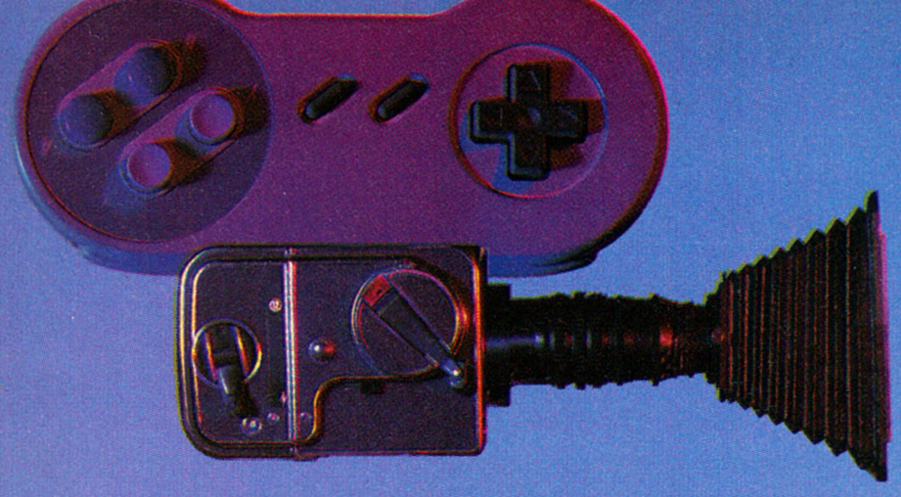


UNDER A HOLLYWOOD MOON

ACCESS ON THE WALK OF FAME

by Bill Kunkel

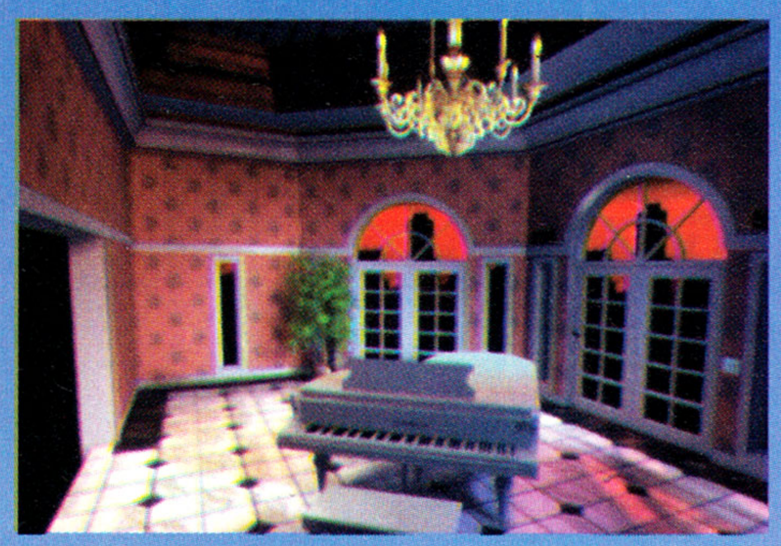
The lights! The cameras! The celebrities!

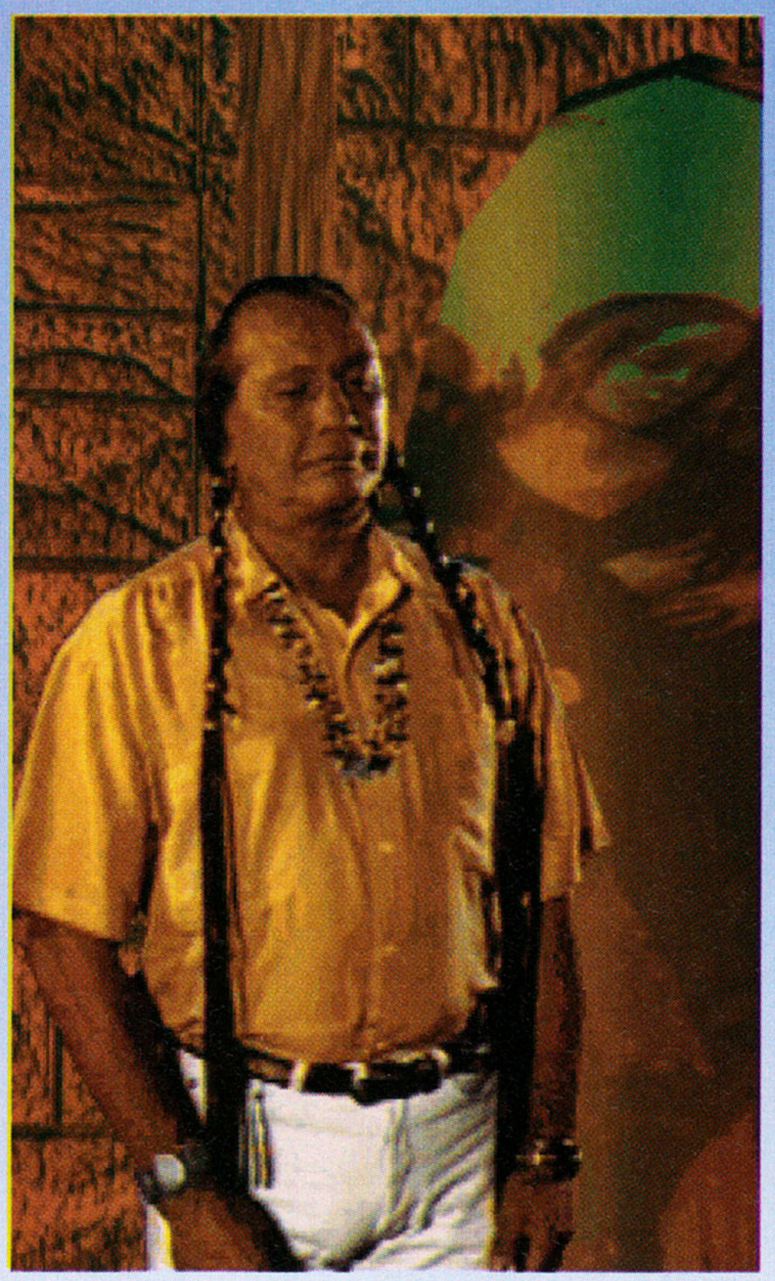
Was it the gala premiere of Spielberg's latest blockbuster? George Lucas sneak previewing the first reels of the new *Star Wars* trilogy? Martin Scorcese announcing a film deal with King Missile?

No, gentle readers, it was none of those things. In fact, there weren't even any klieg lights, and no one interviewed me on a red carpet as I stepped from the limo in front of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Science building in Hollywood.

But the event was not without its historical significance and, in the long run, may be far better remembered than many more high-profile tinseltown openings.

In fact, this gathering of celebrities, journalists, media vultures, and a select segment of the gaming press comprised the first-ever Hollywood-style premiere for an electronic game. Access had come from its humble Salt Lake City home base to sin-soaked lotusland for the purpose of gaining maximum media





impact for the launch of its long-awaited interactive movie, **Under a Killing Moon**.

The game is the latest in the Tex Murphy saga (**Mean Streets** and **Martian Memoran-dum** being the earlier entries in the series) from triple-threat Chris Jones. Jones was an aspiring filmmaker whose unsold, satirical gumshoe script, "The Singing Detective," was gathering dust on an agent's shelf when he connected with Access Software. The script became the genesis for **Mean Streets**, which Chris not only created and designed, but in which he also portrayed protagonist Tex Murphy, a role he continues to assay in **Under a Killing Moon**.

In addition to his design hat and acting fedora, Chris also dons the pinstripes for a full-time executive role at Access' highest level. Jones and co-author Aaron Conners (who arrived with his lovely bride), another

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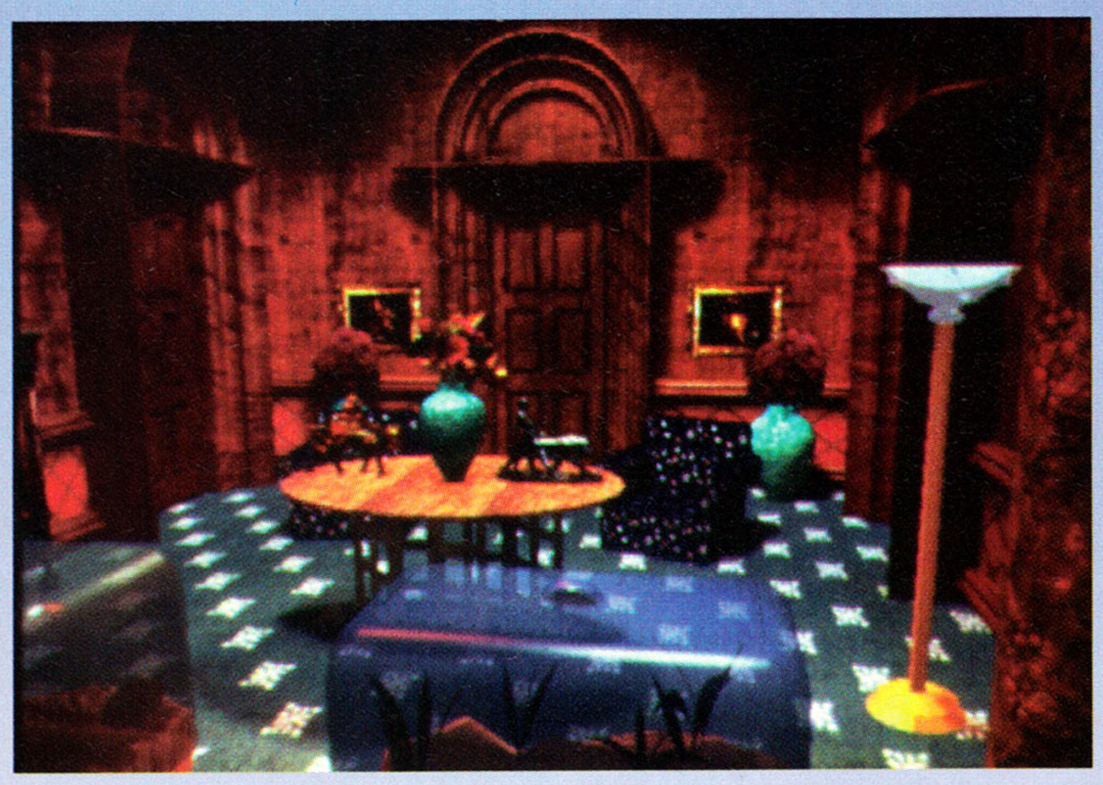
bright young recruit from the University of Utah, showed the flag for Access, along with marketing wizard Steve Witzel, PR dynamo Susan Dunn, and legendary Access founder Bruce Carver.

Guests brought in for the sizzle included **Killing Moon** stars Margot Kidder and Russell Means (Brian Keith couldn't make the festivities), as well as a positively Felliniesque collection of videocam-toting TV crews, low-level celebs and fading TV personalities. Gary Coleman (who owns his own arcade and declared himself absolutely ecstatic about the Access game, especially when a camera was around) was there, as was David Birney and former *Benson* star Robert Guillaume, who made some skeptical comments to the press about "acting in front of a blue screen" that didn't seem to indicate a passion for interactive cinema.

American who plays the villainous "Chameleon" in the interactive movie, was also extremely patient and cooperative, though after viewing his performance in several key

scenes, it was not unlike buddying up to James Earl Jones (who portrays **UAKM**'s "Big P.I. in the Sky" but no-showed the premiere) after watching *Star Wars*.



The media blitz produced maximum results for a minimum of expense (the Pentium computers on which the game ran were contributed by Intel, for example). The event was all over TV and, for the first time, the release of an interactive movie was treated with the class and credibility of a feature film debut.

As the event closed down, the celebs filed out and the big screens and computers were broken down, a thought persisted: in five years, would this event be seen as a trivial footnote in interactive gaming, or a milestone in the history of entertainment?

Kidder, best known for her role as Lois Lane in the Christopher Reeve *Superman* films, plays "Sass" in **UAKM**, a salty barmaid and informant who provides Murphy with some key info in the course of the cinemarcade contest. She was certainly a trouper at the party, closing down the show, partying hearty, and conversing freely with anyone who approached her. Russell Means, the Native

Access' Chris Jones Detects The Future

Chris Jones is not just Tex Murphy; he's the driving force behind Access' extravagant production of **Under A Killing Moon.** He co-designed the work with scriptwriter Aaron Conners, starred in the production, and also acted as Project Director through the two-year endeavor.

Chris's educational background readied him for a business career. But he had a great interest in movies. "I used to actually study the cinematics," he explained. "I loved movies and wanted to understand how they produced the emotional responses in the viewers."

It's no surprise that the man who is Tex Murphy says detective movies were his favorites; *Maltese Falcon*, Humphrey Bogart, and Robert Mitchum were his primary influences.

But love for games got him started in his career. He and Bruce Carver, while working for an engineering firm, used to play Intellivision during their off hours. "We mostly played sports games. **Intellivision Baseball**, in particular, kept us playing late into the nights." Then in 1982, Bruce bought a Commodore 64 and asked Chris to go into business with him, so they started Access as partners.

Chris feels that the CD medium is providing developers with a vehicle for programs that, in Chris's words, "approach art, by blending plot, character, graphics, and sound into a unified work." He stressed that it's vital for future entertainments to be truly interactive, and not just passive experiences.

What's ahead for Access? "Well, we're going on with golf, of course. And, next year there'll be a sequel to **Under A Killing Moon**. We'll use everything we learned doing the first one, and try to move the art forward, to push the edge of what is possible."

Will Tex be back? Absolutely! And the tall man from Access will be right there, bringing him to life.

(Joyce Worley)

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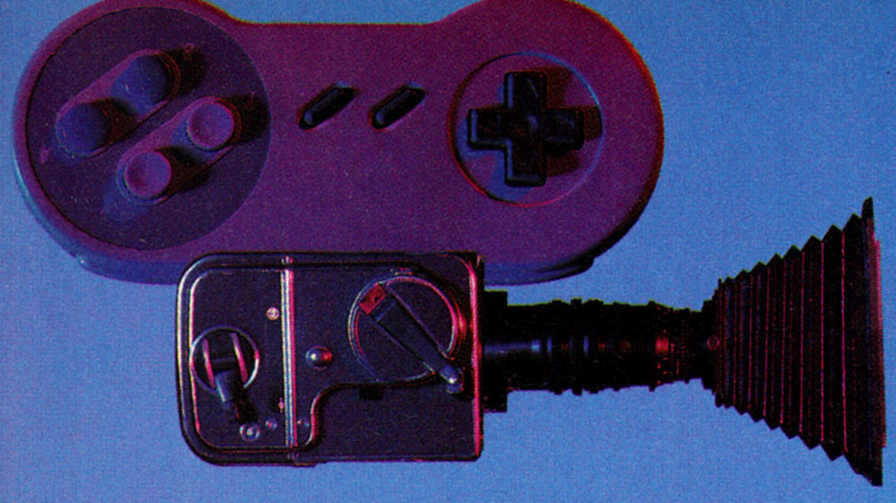


THINKING

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT WEAVER

by Bill Kunkel

The field of interactive film directing is not exactly crowded. Most FMV sequences are overseen by either the game designer, or a hired hand—a film, TV, music video, or advertising pro—is brought in to coordinate the physical specs for the shoot in conjunction with the game designers.

In the hazy netherworld where Hollywood and electronic gaming have come together, no one has more credibility than Robert Weaver. He directed the first interactive movie with genuine star power, **Voyeur** (Philips) starring Robert Culp. He has since worked with Crystal Dynamics, heading up the FMV unit for **The Horde**, and has just completed the first interactive flick to be shot on location, **Thunder in Paradise** (Philips), based on the TV show starring Hulk Hogan and Carol Alt.

Weaver has the unique distinction of having directed multimedia sequences using blue-screen technology (**Voyeur**), a traditional sound stage (**The Horde**), and now location shooting, giving him a unique perspective in the burgeoning field of interactive storytelling.

An actor since the age of six, Weaver has piled up TV screen appearance credits for almost 30 years. He also worked for many years in music, from performing to producing, which brought him into contact with digital audio. He explains, "During that period of time, computers became a hobby with me. The audio led me into the computers, which led me into the whole idea of digital media."

Voyeur was the breakthrough product for Weaver. It not only boasted star power, it was showcased heavily by Philips as a potential system seller for its then-new CD-i technology. "It was developed at Philips POV Entertainment, and David Reardon, who is the creative director there, had come to me very early [in the process]. I had done a project about nine years earlier, called **Sewer Shark**, whose original incarnation was as a VHS interactive title that was produced for Hasbro. I had something of a reputation around town as being on the cutting edge of digital technology, so they came to me to figure out how to do the audio on **Sewer Shark**, which I did. And that really whet my appetite for this whole idea of interactive entertainment. Although he wasn't directly involved in that project, I met David through Tom Zito [currently at Digital Pictures] and his group."

David then moved on to help Bob Jacob revolutionize the notion of interactive movies at Cinemaware, producing games such as **King of Chicago**, **Lords of the Rising Sun**,

• **ROBERT WEAVER, FAR RIGHT**

and the masterpiece, **It Came from the Desert**. When Cinemaware went belly-up, David founded POV, and once again sought out the services of Robert Weaver in ironing out the audio kinks on several early TurboGrafx-16 CD games, including the multimedia version of **It Came from the Desert**.

"It was very clear to me that there were problems on the production side of the medium that just created a nightmare on the post-production side. So, having had a long history in video and film post-production, I suggested that I come out and help define a production pathway that is more in line with industry standards. That way, they could take these projects anywhere in town, so that any post-production house will understand it and you're not reinventing the wheel. So I did that, but with the understanding that what I was doing at that point in my career was directing. So I wound up directing [CD version] **Lords of the Rising Sun**, and helped them reorganize their production system. Then, when **Voyeur** came along as a concept, I was the natural guy to go to. I was involved with the project early on, with the writing and the whole idea, with David, who designed the game, to bring this notion of what an interactive narrative might be."

The greatest challenge faced by veterans of linear, movie-type production when entering the electronic game arena is interactivity. Whereas they are used to simply tell a story with complete control over plot flow and other details, this new medium has new challenges. What if the player *doesn't* do the expected thing? How does one tell a story within such a non-linear medium?

"Of course, **Voyeur** is nearly three years old now, but at that point, the main difficulty was the constant juggling between what your vision was and what you wanted to do, and what the medium was capable of. And I guess that's where I fit into the loop, having the technical background to understand issues of data bandwidth, and double buffering and all the stuff that goes along with that and what that all meant to the ultimate look and feel of the game. I could look at those issues with a director's eye and ask: 'How are we going to take these limitations and make them artistic choices?'

"You [also]

CINEMATIC

had to think in three dimensions and say, okay, it goes here and it goes there, but if the player does *this*, then it goes here and here. You had to constantly check back and look at what you've done and where you're going, and make sure it fits all the parameters. With a linear story, that's simple because with a good script, you have a very clear arc of where the story's going, but this is different in that you have to consider all the options and make sure they all make sense.

"It's what's known in the world of chaos as base and boundaries. Base and boundaries are those fine edges in life that the marble balances on, and it falls one way or the other into a basin that represents a whole other world. As you look at a through line, there are universes galore on either side of it. As soon as you make the turn into one of those other ideas, it becomes potentially much more than a simple: 'Oh, I'm going to choose to do this.' You really step into a kind of parallel universe and all of a sudden there are infinitely more possibilities. So the key, the real trick to all this is, how do you limit this? How do you keep that experience recognizable and familiar while it's still open-ended enough to be valuable. Because just making choices, in and of themselves, is rather boring. What you want to do is make choices that have consequences and have an impact, and teach you something different that results in a better score or [at least] the realization that, 'Oh, that was a good choice.'"

The traditional solution to this problem has been to create what are called "bottlenecks" in the story line. The user can wander anywhere they want within the bottle, but they must ultimately pass through the bottleneck in order to reach the next level of the story.

"That's a limitation of the fact that we're working in non-virtual spaces—they're film clips. But you still have what I call the spine of the story; you may go off and explore other alternatives here and there, but ultimately you have to follow the spine. I think that as technology pushes forward, those options may become more of a tree-type structure, but I think that's going to take quite some time."

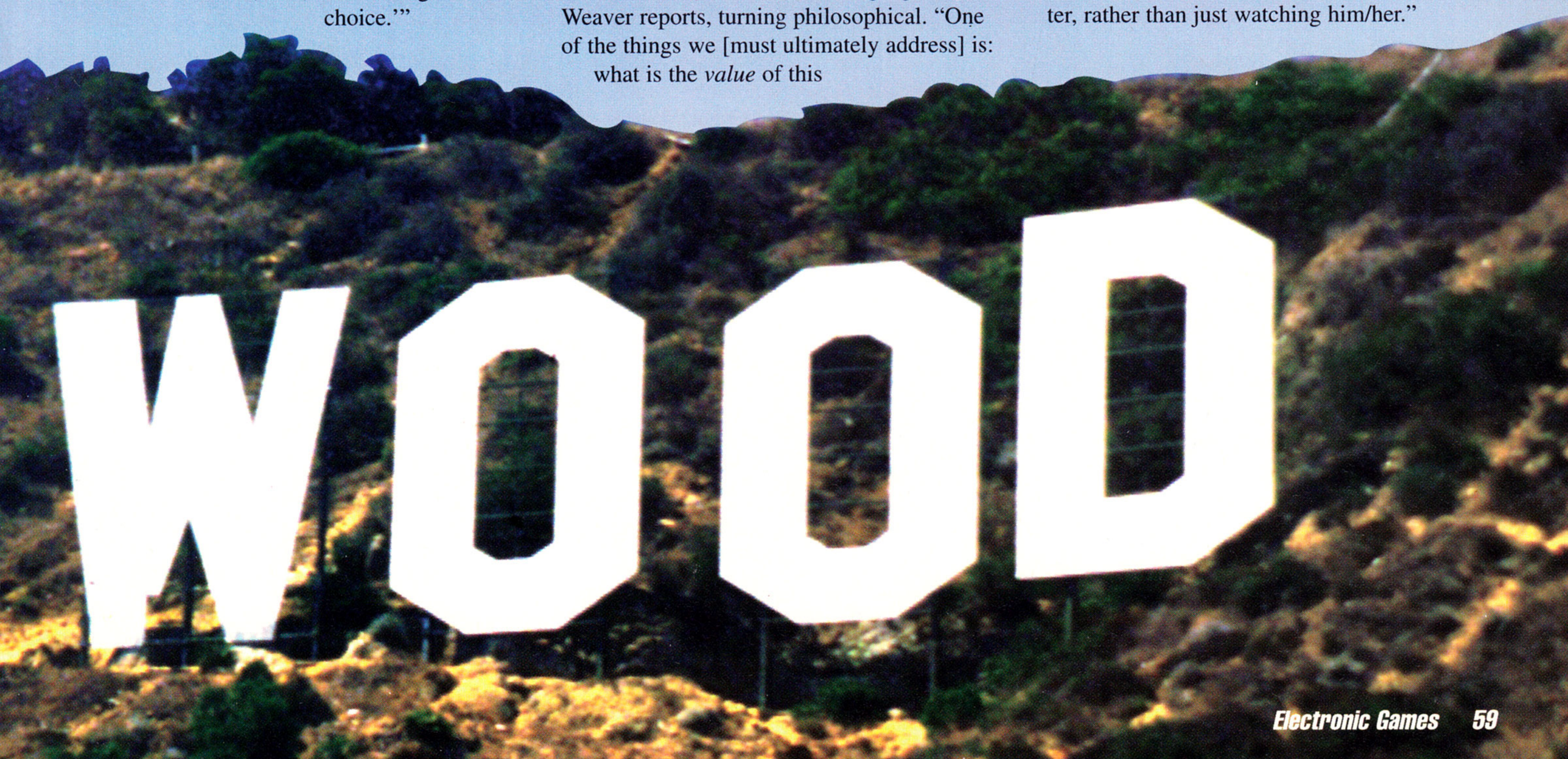
After **Voyeur**, Weaver went to work for Crystal Dynamics, creating the cinematic sequences for **The Horde**, starring Kirk Cameron and Michael Gregory. Technologically, this represented the next level of sophistication in interactive cinema, with sequences shot on actual sound stages, unlike the blue-screen techniques employed in **Voyeur**. With blue or green-screen technology, actors work in a literal void, up against backgrounds covered in a camera-sensitive color (traditionally, cobalt blue), which can be easily wiped in post-production. The sets are then rendered at high-powered work stations, and the actors are blended into this computer environment.

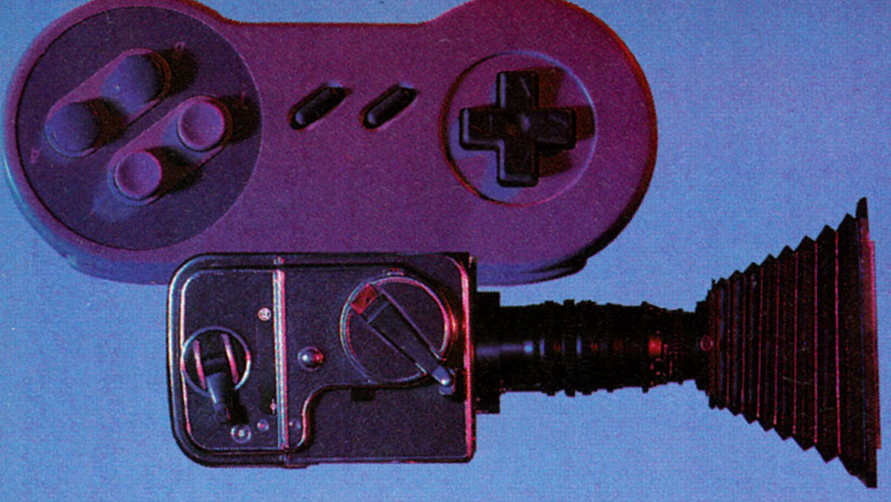
Then came his next great challenge: a location shoot based on a TV show, *Thunder in Paradise*. "**Thunder** is in editing right now," Weaver reports, turning philosophical. "One of the things we [must ultimately address] is: what is the *value* of this experience, of these games? I always get asked: 'Isn't this all leading us into a more isolated world with these games?' I guess my answer to that is: 'Yes, we are.' But, given that, why does everybody like to play them so much? I think, for me, it comes down to an issue of empowerment; the result of playing these games is an empowering experience. Now, take that out into the world, and you get the social interaction with people talking to one another about that experience.

"What is the value of a good film? It's the fact that you can relate to the protagonist, understand what happens to him, and relate to his actions and the consequences of his actions. It teaches you something through self-reflection. So, in video games, we need the same kind of experience, the same kind of action-consequences experience that mimics life. And **Thunder** is an experiment, to some degree, in how to create that experience for the *player*. We already know how to create it for the viewer. We've educated viewers for 90 years with the language of film. If you took someone who was used to movies from the early days of photographed staged plays and showed them a current movie, they wouldn't know what was going on; the time jumps and quick cuts would be too confusing.

"I felt that a lot of interactive movies—including **Voyeur** to an extent—threw out all those conventions and language. So with this project I really felt that this business of seeing everything from the player's POV and never seeing the player was becoming a mistake."

In **Thunder**, therefore, the player becomes a guest character in a typical episode of the TV show. "Everybody talks about interactive television and felt that for the player to feel the consequences of their character's actions, they had to *see* that character, with the player periodically cued to start playing that character, rather than just watching him/her."





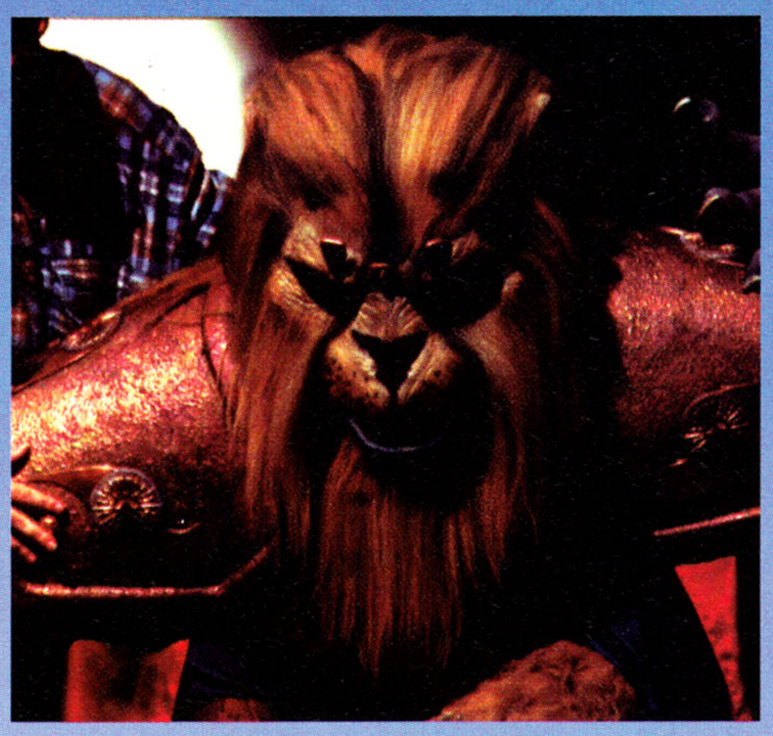
WING COMMANDER III: STARS AMONG THE STARS

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS ROBERTS

by Bill Kunkel

Some pretty impressive names have dabbled in the new interactive cinema. Real stars; people like Brian Keith, Robert Culp, Margot Kidder, Kirk Cameron, and James Earl Jones. But no entry yet has come salted with the star power and big-budget special effects seen in the FMV sequences of Origin's **Wing Commander III**. Any cast that includes Malcom McDowell *(Clockwork Orange, Cat People),* John Rhys-Davies *(Raiders of the Lost Ark),* Mark Hamill (the *Star Wars* trilogy) Tim Curry (*Rocky Horror Show, The Hunt for Red October*) and mega-babe Ginger Lynn Allen is going to be damned impressive. Then add in sophisticated SFX (the Kilarathi were produced using actors in state-of-the-art animatronic masks), and it becomes obvious that the world of interactive entertainment has taken a quantum leap forward.

WC III is the work of electronic auteur Chris Roberts, creator of the entire **Wing Commander** series. Chris has somehow managed to up the ante for the entire industry with each new generation. "I've always wanted to



do this stuff," Chris enthuses. "But technology was always holding me back. I just try to involve you in the universe and tell you a story, and obviously, having great visuals and great audio helps a lot."

What was the experience of going from game designer and film fan to director like? Chris sums up the experience with his favorite phrase: "It was really cool. I liked it because it was a lot like directing a game, but the feedback was quicker. When you do a scene on computer, you sit back and talk about it with the artists, and I'm still seeing it three weeks later. But with live action you frame the shot and within a minute or two the actors are ready to give their performance. then you tweak and work with it and the next day you can see a rough cut of the scene."

There are a variety of formulas being used to create interactive movies. The problem has traditionally been an inverse relationship between the amount of FMV and the level of interactivity. "I'm pretty lucky," Chris confesses. "Because I think the WC formula really works well; we added more interactivity in **Wing III** than we had in the previous two games put together. It's an interactive story, so the player needs to feel as if they're in control of the story, and you don't want them doing anything that [the player] doesn't have control over. Every scene is a reactive one; you can click on a character and talk to them. In the past **Wing Commanders**, you'd initiate the conversation. You might hear Mark Hamill ask: 'Should I go left or right?' You tell him and that determines how the scene ends."

Each interaction also has an effect on future interactions, determining a character's attitude in ensuing encounters. "It's fine to cut away and show a sequence with a lot of stuff happening, as long as it doesn't involve you, the protagonist. When it's you, it's you who has to make the decision." You watch someone like Malcom McDowell, who has been acting all his life, and they can just turn it off, it's incredible. For the actors, it was a challenge, like going back to acting school, working against green screens with only each other to work off of. "I think Malcom was the one who impressed me the most, because he has such presence. Mark was incredible; the poor guy, he didn't realize that this was a 300-page script and he was in almost every scene. But he hit his mark every time, worked long hours, and entertained everyone. The other person who was great was Tom Willson, who played Biff in *Back to the Future 1, 2,* and *3*. One of the funniest guys I have ever met."

What's next? An actual, full-length movie! "Next time around I'm definitely going to shoot a movie and footage for a computer game at the same time. A proper theatrical release. To get the production level and quality I want on my next game, it will have to be Hollywood budget level."

• MALCOM McDOWELL

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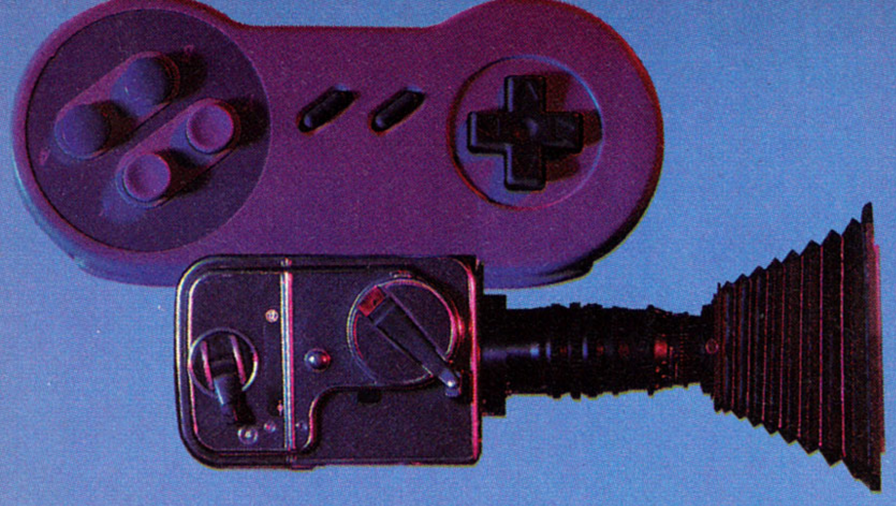


DO GRAPHICS

ALIAS GIVES GAMES A NEW LOOK

By Steve Kent

Alias is the perfect name for this unrecognized member of the entertainment community.

The public already knows the company, if not by name, then by its works. Alias Research, Inc., the manufacturer of PowerAnimator, a powerful animation tool used by professional artists and designers, has been involved in several television commercials and blockbuster movies.

When the Tyrannosaurus Rex attacked the raptors in *Jurassic Park*, critics sang the praises of Industrial Light & Magic, George Lucas' movie effects studio. Before Spielberg's Jurassic monsters were cloned from DNA, they were hatched on a Silicon Graphics workstation by an artist using Alias Software's special animation tools.

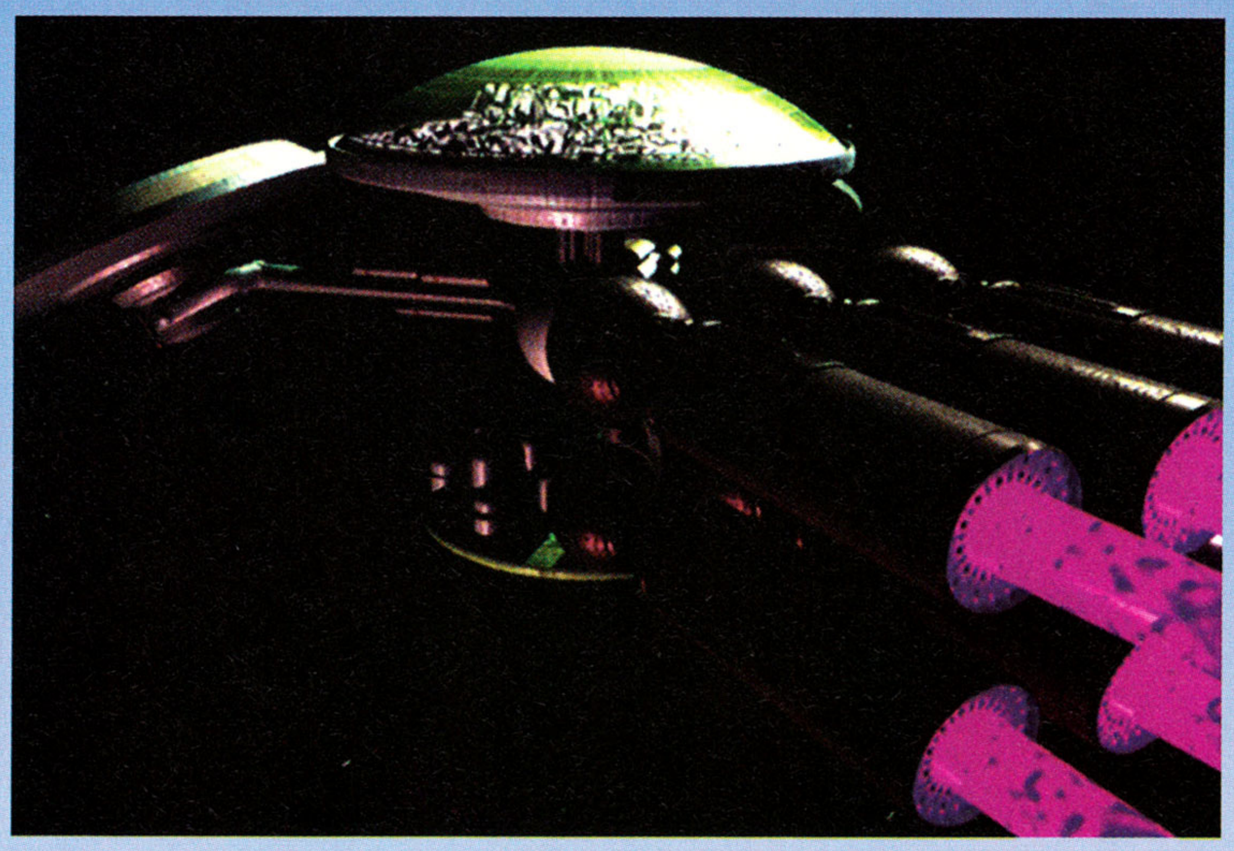
Creating the dinosaurs with models was impractical, said I.L.M. chief animator Steve Williams. "I built a T-rex skeleton using Alias PowerAnimator. In Softimage, we animated it adding muscle and skin. That was how we created the dinosaurs for *Jurassic Park.*"

The morphing T-2000 in *Terminator II* was also created using Alias software. In fact, the water tentacle from *The Abyss*, the Cave of Wonders in *Aladdin*, and much of Jim Carrey's visual personality in *The Mask* all started on Silicon Graphics computer stations equipped with Alias animation tools.

The same technology that gave life to dinosaurs and killer robots is now being applied to video games. In May, Nintendo announced a strategic partnership with Alias Research and encouraged authorized third-party publishers to use Alias animation tools for developing future games for both the Super Nintendo and Ultra 64 game systems.

While other companies are also using Alias software to create video and computer games, the Nintendo connection is the most significant. The home version of Ultra 64, Nintendo's 64-Bit game system, is still more than a year from distribution. With new super systems from Atari and 3DO already on the market, and Sega's 32X just a few months from release, Nintendo must convince consumers to wait a year before purchasing.

Their answer is 16-Bit titles that look and handle as well as most coin-op games.



Donkey Kong Country, developed by RARE Ltd. for the SNES, is the first Super Nintendo cartridge created using Alias animation tools. The cartridge makes a strong case for 16-Bit systems. In the past, games like **Ecco** and **Super Metroid** were lauded for their great graphics. **Donkey Kong Country**, with its sculpted characters, moody lighting effects, and deep 3-D settings, redefines the standards of good graphics.

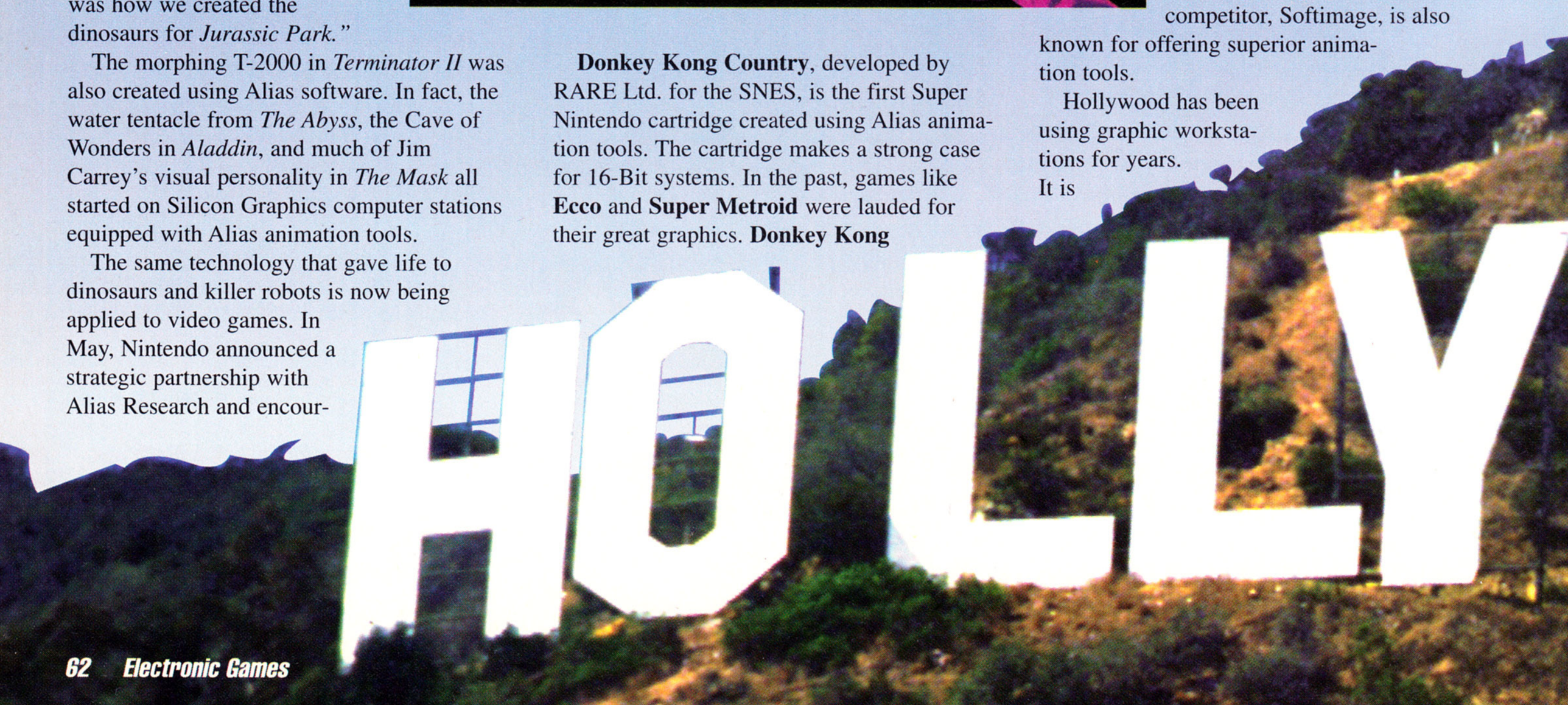
Alias is creating customized tools specifically for use in the creation of Nintendo cartridges. Nintendo promises that Alias will incorporate feedback from Nintendo and third-party publishers in developing even better animation tools in the future.

The First to Test Animation Tools

In the past, most video games were created on PCs. Now, although the majority of game developers still use PCs, many of the bigger publishers are shifting to Silicon Graphics workstations equipped with high-end animation tools such as Alias Power Animator. Silicon Graphics stations are extremely powerful computers configured to specialize in graphics and animation. Designed for the most demanding commercial use, SGI stations often cost upward of $30,000 and run equally expensive software.

Alias Research is not the only high-end software manufacturer to enter into this market. GameWare, by Wavefront Technologies, is the exclusive game graphics and animation development software for the Atari Jaguar system. Another competitor, Softimage, is also known for offering superior animation tools.

Hollywood has been using graphic workstations for years. It is



MAKE THE GAME?

possible to create photo-realistic settings on a personal computer, but the process is time prohibitive.

One of the best examples of photo-realistic PC art is **The 7th Guest**, which Trilobyte artists created using 3-D Studio by Autodesk. The results were beautiful, but it did take a lot of time to produce them.

Game developers only discovered the high-end graphic tools in the last year or so, according to Phil Neray, director of marketing

at Alias Research. About a year ago, they saw technology changing. CD-ROM gave computer games more storage space than they'd had before. Video game hardware changed too. Systems like 3DO have higher quality graphics and RISC (Reduced Instruction Set Computers) processing.

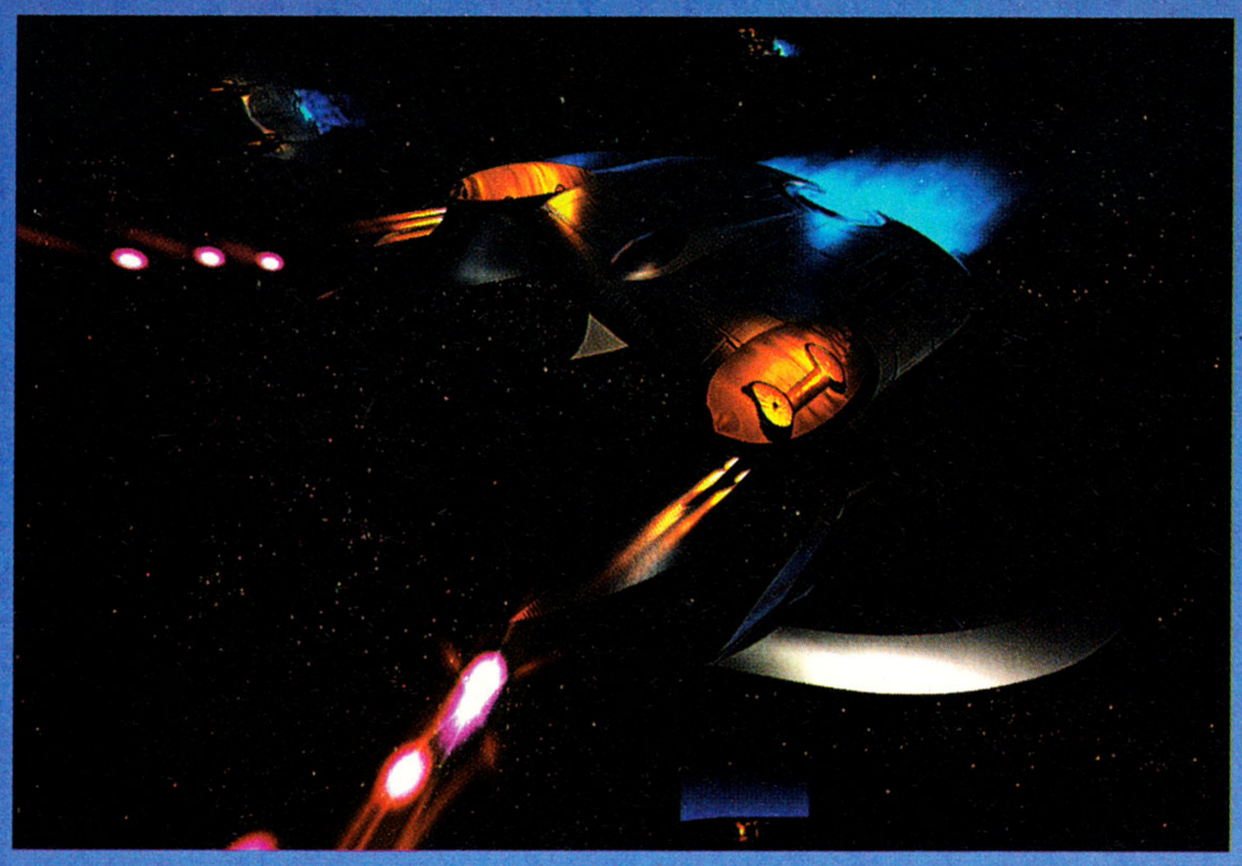
To accommodate the special demands of the electronic gaming industry, Alias Research is beefing-up PowerAnimator, their premiere core system. At the Consumer Electronics Show in June, Alias unveiled PowerPlay, a new set of graphics tools specifically designed for game developers.

Unlike movie graphics, which are rendered and played on commercial workstations, video games are created on high-end machines and viewed on extremely unsophisticated graphics machines—video game systems. Even the best game systems have much more limited color pallets, smaller memories, and lower Line Per Inch resolution than commercial workstations. One of PowerPlay's most important features is the ability to convert workstation-quality graphics into simpler forms that can be run on home game systems.

Crystal Dynamics and Psygnosis were the first companies to incorporate Alias tools into their production. Psygnosis used Power-Animator to create the dramatic opening sequence of **Microcosm**. Crystal Dynamics used the program to create some of the animated sequences in **The Horde**. "The software we used when we made **Crash and Burn** and **Total Eclipse** didn't have appropriate tools for character animation," said Crystal Dynamics' lead staff artist, Cyrus Lum. "We could animate objects, but we needed better tools for complex animations like creatures and people."

"When we made **The Horde**, I used Alias to sculpt the red monster," said Lum. Using PowerAnimator, Lum was able to create the Horde King from the inside out, designing a skeleton and then filling out the body. The superior animating tools allowed him to form the monster's body as a single unit, making the job quicker, easier, and more realistic.

Crystal Dynamics is currently using Alias to create non-interactive animations for **Star Control II**. According to Lum, Alias tools are used to create the full-motion/non-interactive segments which comprise about 20 percent of the game. This is a step forward in visuals, but Lum says he would like to see improved graphics used throughout future games rather than confining them to animated sequences.



Among the other companies currently developing games with Alias animation tools are such industry giants as Virgin Interactive, Acclaim, Sony, Disney Computer Software, Ocean, Interplay, Trilobyte, Spectrum Holobyte, and Sierra On-Line.

Sprites, NURBS, and Silicon Stations

In some ways, creating a game is similar to producing a play or a movie. The first task is to make a good set. Artists often place 3-D objects in the background of games to give the illusion of depth. Three-dimensional objects are either imported from existing computer art or modeled as wireframe objects. These wireframes show proportion and may represent anything from mountains to pedestrians on a sidewalk. Once the wireframe sketches are complete, they are enhanced with texture and color.

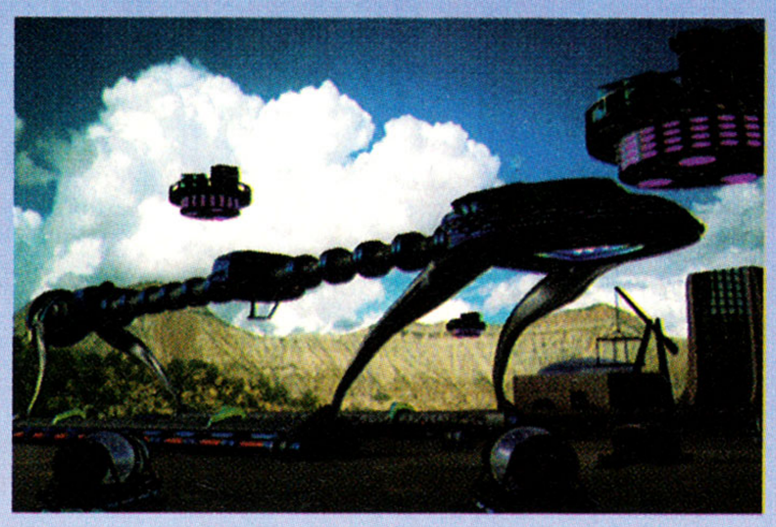
Top-of-the-line animation tools like PowerAnimator and GameWare allow artists to tinker with lighting effects. By placing lighting icons around a scene, artists can experiment with lighting angles. Optical effects such as glows, lens flares, and explosions are among Alias PowerAnimator's strong suits.

Another strength is PowerAnimator's modeling tools. In the past, artists used polygons to create game graphics. Working in the Alias environment, artists use NURBS (Non-Uniform Rational B-Splines) to create lifelike characters. Designing with NURBS allows artists to sculpt characters as a single unit rather than draw them as a collection of polygons.

"I love NURBS-based modeling," said Doug Cope of Virgin Interactive. As the supervising 3-D Animator of Virgin's **Demolition Man**, Cope was involved in one of the premiere titles for 3DO. "I feel like we can build anything with NURBS," said Cope.

There are drawbacks to all of this power. As stated earlier, Silicon Graphics workstations have better resolution than video consoles. Doug Cope had originally drawn flashing lights and a foggy atmosphere in one scene of **Demolition Man**. "It looked great on the Silicon Graphics station. When we reviewed it on 3DO, the details banded together. Instead of having flashing lights in a fog bank, the 3DO showed flashing fog." In the end, the game team settled for simpler graphics to create the same dramatic effects.

Cope sees Alias PowerAnimator as a modeling tool first. "We started **Demolition Man** using *3-D Studio* on PCs. During the project we purchased some SGI workstations and Alias software, so there was a steep learning curve as we went along. I used PowerAnimator for camera flybys and simple animations like a helicopter taking off.



"We used it to create sprites (characters and objects that are not part of the background in a game). Alias made designing, rendering, and texture mapping sprites quicker and more attractive."

According to Phil Neray, animation is Alias' third strong suit. "Offering the latest motion-sampling technology, Alias has developed a system for capturing motion information from live subjects for use by animated characters. Motion sampling creates incredibly realistic animation in a fraction of the time needed to design a traditional animation," Neray explained.

The Graphic Future

According to Perrin Kaplan, Nintendo's corporate spokesperson, Alias Research is a key ingredient in that company's future plans. Nintendo, a company that survives by predicting what gamers will want next, has placed its bets on enhanced animation for video games.

If Nintendo's **Donkey Kong Country** is a fair representation of the future of video games, cartoon graphics will soon be replaced by sculpted animation. By the same token, the characters in Nintendo's first Ultra 64 titles, although blocky, look lifelike and move very fluidly. To date, none of Nintendo's competitors have attempted to match these high standards.

The first titles for Sega's 32X are improvements on existing arcade and video art. The same could be said about most existing titles for 3DO and Jaguar. In fact, except for 3DO's excursions into video, none of the new supersystems are currently offering any major innovations in graphics.

Changes in Computer Graphics

Computer games are moving in new directions more quickly than they ever have before. **Under a Killing Moon**, Access Software's much-delayed adventure game, successfully combines the photo-realistic sets of **The 7th Guest** and **Myst** with the free-wheeling exploration of **Doom**.

In the future, gamers simply will not be satisfied with fixed-path limited interaction. **Under a Killing Moon** proves that computer games can hit that next level of realism without changing the existing hardware.

The real test will be photo-realistic Virtual Reality. In software terms, that goal may still be generations away, but companies like Alias and Softimage have proven that nothing is really out of reach.

We're still working on the
"Golf Cart Joy Ride & Crash" feature.
Other than that, it's perfect.

LINKS

the challenge of golf

Links for **Sega CD**™ is the most near-perfect, outrageously realistic golf game available.

How perfect is **Links**? The course mimics Torrey Pines exactly —incredible, 35 mm photography places you behind every tee, fairway, water hazard and bunker, wherever the ball lands, and gives you an accurate view of your next shot. It's so life-like, you can almost smell the green (that's a good thing).

And as you'd expect from any decent golf game, **Links** features
- Tournament play
- Practice mode, Front 9, Back 9
- Instant Replays
- Save player info

But then, **Links** goes far beyond any other golf games to give you in-depth golf features like
- 1 to 6 players (sorry, other games can only handle up to 4)
- Full support of TeeVGolf Club™ for the most accurate, realistic and fun golfing experience available
- Aerial fly-overs of each hole so realistic you may get airsick
- Running stats on how many fish you tag when your ball lands in the water.

Okay, we're just kidding about the last feature.

But as you can see, **Links** for **Sega CD** is the closest thing to perfection when it comes to golf games. So you can bet that if any game comes out with a "Golf Car Donuts On The Fairway" feature in the future, it'll be **Links**.

Virgin

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TEST LAB

BOARD WITH SOUND?

"Fellow travelers are also reminded that, at the high end of the spectrum, the only other major difference in cards today is wave table sampling."

Several months ago, *Test Lab* began a trek across the hinterlands of sound sampling with the intent of breaking the audiophile barrier. The stalwart and hearty readers who have stayed at our sides throughout this quest have gained invaluable experience. First, they learned the language of sound, then applied that language to evaluate and conquer the lesser beasts, speakers, and other audio peripherals. Buoyed with confidence, they then delved into the mysteries of chipsets. Now, on the final leg of the journey, we must jointly face the boss monsters, the sound boards themselves.

What justifies equating these exquisite equestrians of music as monstrosities? Perhaps the ease with which many of them loot and rob system resources to make their music, or the discord they express when forced to cohabitate with other "lesser" cards. Or could it be that some of them simply require players to be software engineers first, and game players second.

How about all of the above.

This forces a slightly different method of evaluation than one might expect. Unless one is a musician, or in some other way attuned to the musical spectrum, many of the high end cards sound just fine, and virtually all of them would provide a solid gaming experience. But which ones are the easiest ones to live with? Who has created the best, most unobtrusive designs and complimented them with creative software packages that allow players to actually enjoy the sounds of their games because they are not spending an inordinate amount of time reconfiguring drivers?

Fellow travelers are also reminded that, at the high end of the spectrum, the only other major difference in cards today is wave table sampling. Instead of emulating a musical instrument by warping a defenseless sine wave into a very rough approximation of a musical instrument (as in FM synthesis), wave table sampling has actual recordings of the instruments and scales them up or down to meet the right tone. The result is a tremendous improvement over the tinny, electronic-sounding FM boards.

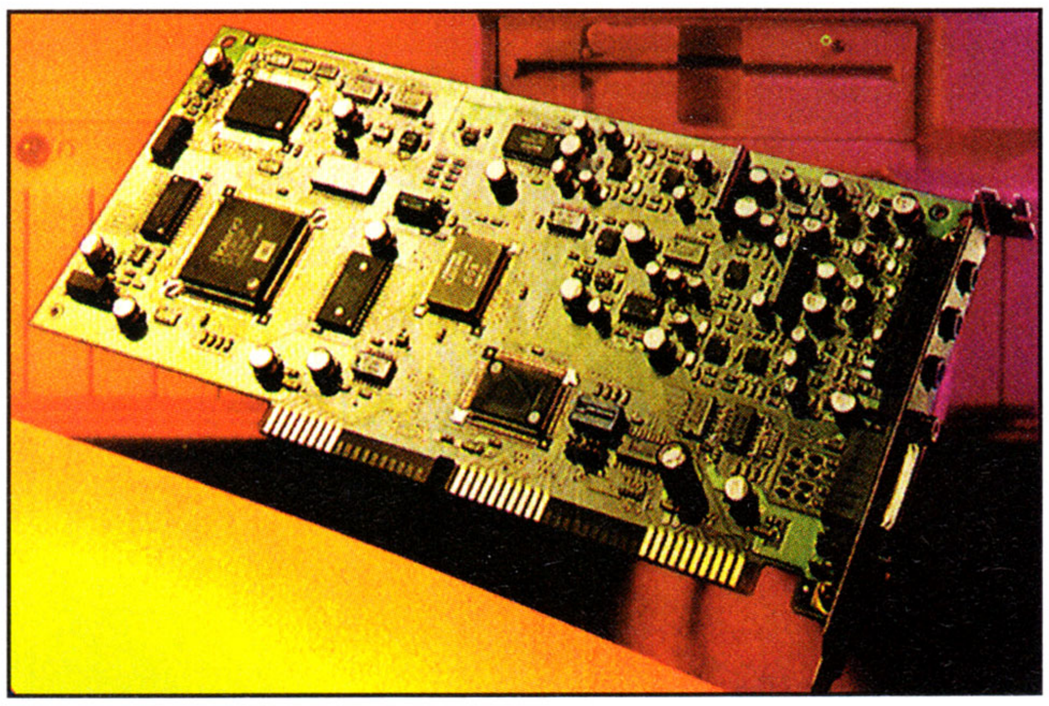
Having girded ourselves accordingly, let us venture into the caves to see who emerges victorious.

Roland RAP-10
MSRP $349; Street Price $249

The name Roland is synonymous with electronic music. Along with Korg and Yamaha, Roland dominates the synthesizer market, and the company has been instrumental in expanding the MIDI musical interchange standard. So it should come as no surprise that the Roland Audio Producer 10 is more of a mixing studio in a box than a game-oriented card.

However, for those gamers who are extremely serious about their sound, or amateur musicians, this card is the Cadillac of sound. The synthesizer chips are from the Roland Sound Canvas chipset and, quite frankly, the clarity of these chips and samples just blows most other cards straight out of the water.

And for those interested in making music, the software provided with the card puts a whole electronic 18-track studio at their beck and call. While many of the new generation of cards ship with the almost-generic Voyetra suite, Roland provides their own custom software that gives full control of the specific features of the card. The mixing panel even gives the ability to combine MIDI and WAV tracks, a very useful and almost unique ability.



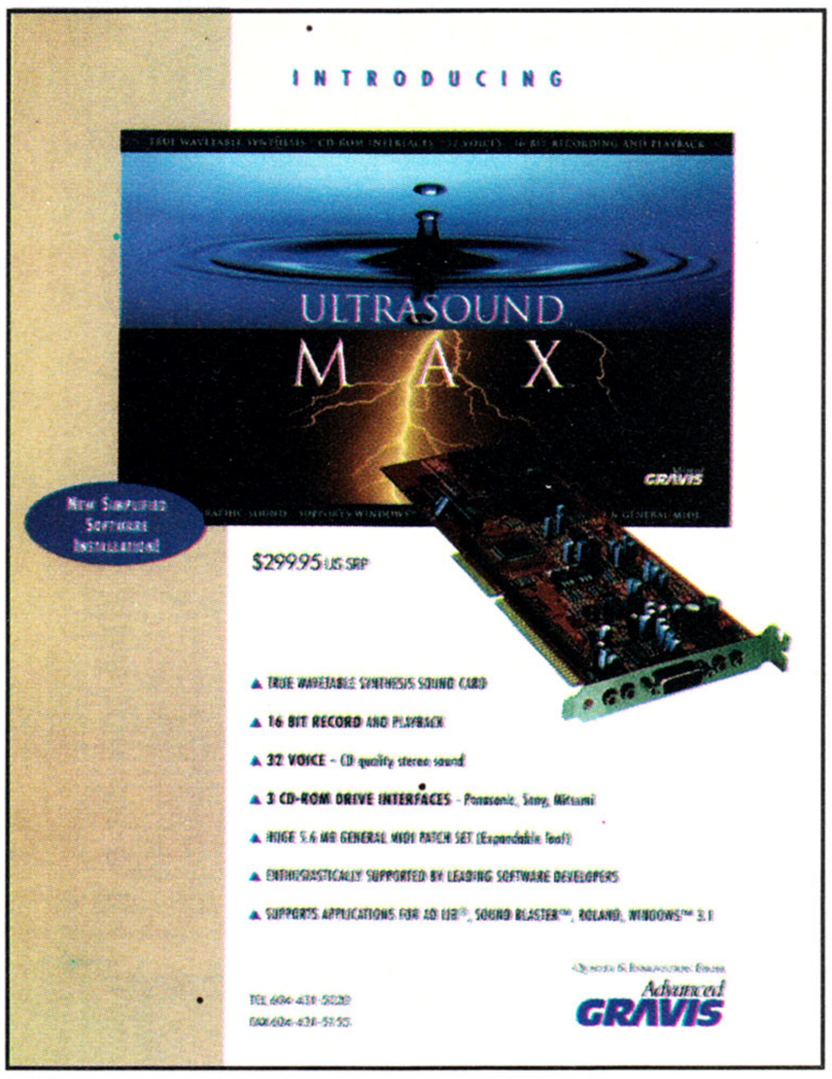
• ROLAND

The drawback to the Roland card, from the point of view of the gamer, is in its lack of Sound Blaster emulation. As a result, the card might not provide sound effects on the older generation of games. However, most games today provide MIDI output, and the Roland card simply has the highest synthesized sound quality of almost any product on the market. Games can sound like symphony productions with this card and a good set of speakers.

The Advanced Gravis Ultrasound Max
MSRP $199 Street Price $189

While the sound quality of the Ultrasound is not quite up to the standards of the RAP-10, this card is still big musical iron for those who not only want the best in crisp and clear sound for their games, but are also looking for a viable desktop musical composition and recording source.

Advanced Gravis has put solid wave table synth capabilities on their card to start with, and more importantly, also given the user complete control over



• **GRAVIS ULTRASOUND MAX**

defining and loading patches. Patches are the samples used to create the instrument sounds on a wave table board. This makes the Ultrasound basically a high quality sampling synthesizer on the desktop. Sampling synths are extremely expensive pieces of equipment, so the truly musically minded have always kept a warm spot in their hearts for this line of cards. Unlike Roland, Advanced Gravis doesn't ignore the fact that Sound Blaster is the de facto gaming sound standard, but their solution isn't the best in the world, either. The Ultrasound Max ships with a TSR Mega-Em, that provides software emulation of the Sound Blaster, as well as Roland products. This is a fairly clunky solution, and just one step ahead of the Rolands total lack of support.

But more and more games are supporting the Ultrasound directly, and while Creative Labs is tending to put a bit more distance between themselves and developers as they grow in size and influence, Advanced Gravis is, as they say, trying harder. Gravis actively woos developer and industry interest, and recent deals with AMD to start using Ultrasound technology show a high level of support for this card in the future. Expect more games to ship directly supporting the technological capabilities of the Ultrasound Max.

Orchid SoundWave 32+ SCSI
MSRP $279; Street Price $200

The SoundWave is the Swiss army knife of the soundboard world. It comes with its own microphone and speakers, it acts as an SCSI controller for CD-ROM drives and even comes with a set of multimedia speakers. Oh, and it also does sound.

The SoundWave is not the best sound card on the market for musical reproduction, but their product does a fine job for most gamers. The music is crisp and clean and the patches are solid. Sound Blaster FM synthesis support is onboard and almost as good as an actual Sound Blaster.

However, what really makes this card stand out is a great software suite. Not great for musicians, particularly, but more for those people who want fun stuff to do with their new piece of hardware. There is a breed of user who puts down $200 on a peripheral and they expect it to quack like a duck. Well, Orchid has that group pegged. That isn't saying that the software doesn't come with the obligatory mixers and players and level controls and boring musical stuff, but they also put in the FUN stuff.

The best piece of software is far and away the personal effects module, which distorts the user's voice, making them sound like anything from Mickey Mouse to Darth Vader. **EG**'s *Test Lab* phones are now permanently patched to this unit for those tense moments on the tech support lines.

Also in the suite is Quick Voice, a voice recognition system designed to give commands to the PC. The recognition is somewhere around 70 percent, but the training time is fairly low.

On the negative side, the speakers that come with the unit are cheap throwaways, taking up space in the box that could be occupied by perfectly good air. And sometimes the voice input and effects features lock due to the mike being too "hot."

Despite these drawbacks, the Orchid is a good all-around package, that doesn't do any one job better than the best of the market, but does a little of everything and throws in some fun stuff.

Reveal SoundFX WAVE 32
Street Price: $179

The Reveal is based on the Ensonic wave samples used in a number of pieces of professional music equipment, and while this card should stand out, the MIDI quality is not as high as one would tend to expect, coming out somewhat tinny and dead sounding on even the best headphones *Test Lab* could provide.

The Voyetra suite comes with the SoundFX WAVE to handle basic chores of sound editing and sequencing. However, the composition program that comes with the board, SuperJam! Jr. is less than inspired. Though it claims ease of use, well-wielded garbage can lids can also claim this distinction with much the same sonic results. The scariest part of SuperJam! Jr. is that the name implies there is probably another SuperJam! out there somewhere.

Further, there were numerous problems getting the SoundFX WAVE 32 to respond to its software setup routine, giving consistent error messages with almost every attempted configuration. While this board supports many different emulations commonly used in games, it might not be the best bang for the buck compared to the current crop of contenders.

• **ORCHID SOUNDWAVE 32**

Media Magic DSP 16 Plus Audio Board
Street Price: $259

The Media Magic DSP 16 seems designed with multimedia presentation building in mind, particularly because it includes SoundScript, a sound scripting routine for FLI files along with the usual cast of Voyetra software suspects.

The Media Magic boasts an excellent 48 Khz recording rate: the same as Digital Audio Tape. Only the Ultrasound Max has the same rate, with the rest of the pack weighing in at 44 to 45 Khz.

However, strange quirks abound with this card; the first the user will notice is when the install procedure starts insistently demanding disks that don't exist.

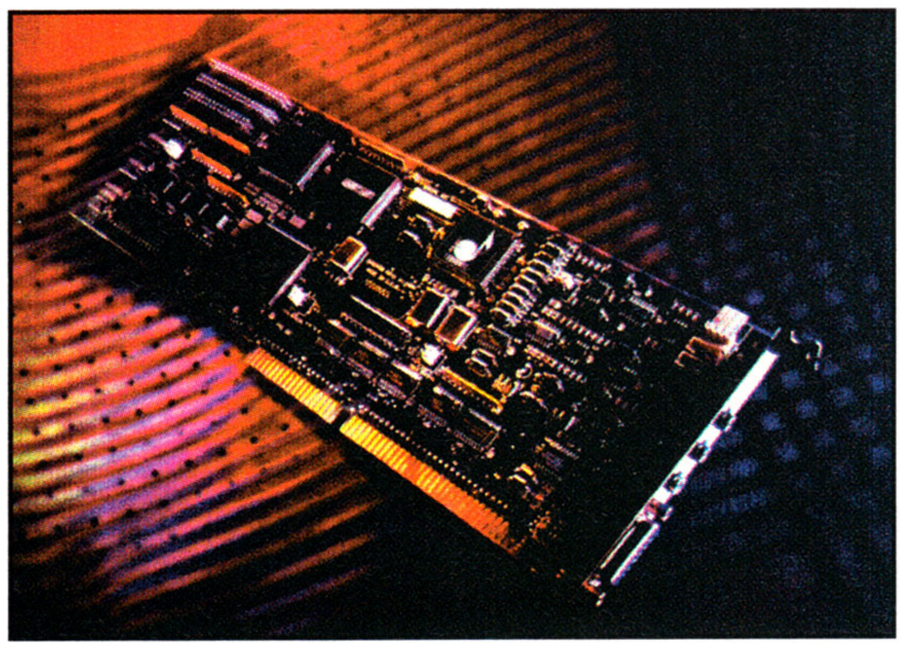
"The most important question about the AWE 32 is a matter of support. Unless games are written to take advantage of its advanced features, it is a very slight improvement over the SB16."

A few seconds spent staring at the two disks that come with the board causes one to jump to the rather obvious conclusion that no matter what the setup routine asks for, it must just mean the other disk. However, there is a harrowing moment of panic as the unsuspecting installer starts frantically searching for the "Master Drivers Disk #1" that doesn't exist.

While that problem is relatively minor, the next is a bit more damning: noise. There is a constant background hiss with this unit. No matter what it is emulating or doing, the noise is always lurking, waiting for a quiet moment. A few minutes spent plugging in a range of speakers and headphones is more than adequate to make it obvious that the culprit is the card itself, and not external factors.

Ensoniq S2000

This board is almost identical to the Reveal offering, not a surprising statement considering the fact that they are both powered by the same chipset. The unit provided to *Test Lab* was a beta model but it seems to have slightly better sound quality than the Reveal.



• ENSONIQ

Unfortunately, the physical construction quality of the board is lower than average, and the board was literally damaged during insertion into the test bed unit. With higher production standards in the finished unit and a reasonable price, the Ensoniq chipset may have a better chance to shine in this vehicle. Only time will tell.

Creative Labs Sound Blaster AWE32
Street Price: $265

Last but not least comes this new entry from the company that has set the de facto standard for PC sound, Creative Labs. The AWE 32 is a real leap forward in card technology, and could easily bear the subtitle "Roland Killer." While it might be merely coincidence, the prices on the RAP-10 have taken a steep drop since the introduction of the AWE.

First and foremost for the game enthusiast, the AWE 32 is, obviously, Sound Blaster compatible. Just to be funky, Creative Labs has also included Sound Canvas and MT-32 compatibility.

The heart of the AWE 32 is the EMU8000 integrated audio digital signal processor. The E-MU technology was originally offered as daughter card for the Sound Blaster 16, gaining a loyal following among those who were serious about their computer sonics. But the AWE version has added chorus, reverb and the sonic positioning technology called Q-Sound to the mix to create a strong heir to the Sound Blaster line.

• CREATIVE LABS

1-Meg of ROM samples drive the wave table synthesis on this card, and, to coin a pun, they sound awesome. The MIDI playbacks are barely distinguishable from the RAP-10, an incredible performance. Digitized sound comes through without hiccups or static and is as crisp and clean as a church bell in the morning. This card even makes FM synth sound almost passable.

Utilities are included to add chorus and reverb effects to the FM functions of the card for games that will only support this mode. If you have to live in a bad neighborhood, at least you get to live flashy.

But Creative has made the leap others haven't: a premium soundcard requires a premium software bundle. A good part of the strength of the RAP-10, not to mention the Ultrasound Max and SoundWave 32, is in the proper software selection. The first software in the Creative Labs arsenal is HSC Interactive.

HSC is a multimedia authoring tool using iconic representations to allow intuitive placement of elements. A run-time module is included to play the finished presentations. Voice Assist and Text Assist give voice-to-command and text-to-voice recognition, respectively. Cakewalk Apprentice, a fairly common, but very competent, sequencer is also bundled.

Then there are the usual roundup of sound players and utilities to round out the package. The recording capabilities of this card don't quite match those of the Ultrasound, and the music studio aspect isn't quite as tight as the RAP-10, but this is a card trying to be all things to all people, and doing quite a job of it.

The most important question about the AWE 32 is a matter of support. Unless games are written to take advantage of its advanced features it is a very slight improvement over the SB16. Some of the smaller developers are annoyed over Creative Lab's caginess to give out the specifications to their card, making it difficult for custom drivers to be written without sending into Creative for "black box" drivers. With a number of the younger and more aggressive companies begging for developers to support them, there is a possibility that some hot young designers will not bother to take advantage of the AWE's impressive new feature set. It is a question that only time will tell.

There are a number of new cards on the market, fitting many different price and need ranges. But it is obvious that wave table synthesis is here to stay, and almost all future games will be written with this quality of sound in mind. The explosive growth in the technology of the PC sound industry is anything but boring.

by Ed Dille

way down there where you don't know what's really going on
is the spot where your breakfast was and your lunch is and now the interactor's there thumping away at
your gut making your favorite video game incredibly fresh because now you're feeling everything the second you put it on plug it in crank it up.
interactor. cool.
it takes explosions, kicks and punches off the screen and puts them in your gut.
AURA INTERACTOR
interactor works with all video games, tv's, vcr's, stereos and anything else you wanna feel.
aura and interactor are logos and trademarks of aura systems, inc.

THE NET

WELCOME TO THE STARTUPS WALTZ

"...The digiverse is going to look like an elephant waltz for a while, and a few wall flowers are sure to get crushed."

The nuclear family has melted down and the decay process has produced the information family. Mom and Dad are on-line for business and entertainment. Junior jacks in to pull down everything from hot (hotly contested that is) MIDI files to school reports. Grandma sports apple pie recipes that move at 14.4. All hipsters have an E-mail address and custom domain names on the Internet are rapidly becoming the tacky identifier of the season. These facts are not lost on the investment community, where the name of the game right now is to hemorrhage cash into anything that might buy a piece of the infopie.

There are three basic ways to carve a chunk out of the bandwidth and into the investor's bank account. The first is to be involved in the emerging technologies that might form the underpinnings of some part of the new data superstructure. Things like direct link satellites. Or the new super cable/phone companies (or phone/cable companies depending on whether John Malone manages to kneecap the Bells). The problem with this is the investments involved are mega. Or worse, the technologies are already in the hands of someone with big guns to defend their turf.

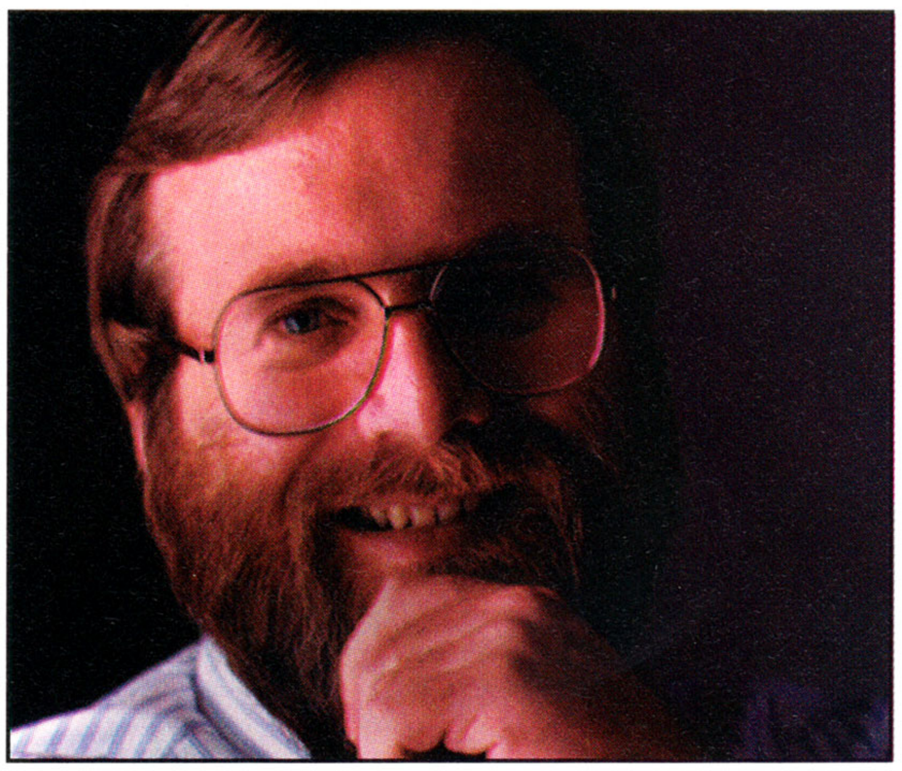
For those with plenty to spend and a can-steal attitude, just buying or starting an on-line service looks pretty lucrative. But while not as locked up as infrastructure investment, it still takes a pretty penny to start or get a sizable chunk of an on-line service. And the market is about to be so crowded with big boys (Microsoft, Apple, 3DO, and Ziff-Davis are just a few of the big name players entering the on-line map in the next few months) that the digiverse is going to look like an elephant waltz for a while, and a few wallflowers are sure to get crushed.

And there are other problems to starting a service: services by their nature are behind the technology curve almost from incept. Now that the potential market has gotten to the point even Tibetan monks can smell the stink of money in megabyte transfer, it's sure there will be constant, gee-whiz new players bringing the hottest technological toys to the table to try to get their 30 pieces of silver. Every new jump up the technoladder poses a problem for a previously established service as they have to leap through exploding hoops to make the fancy new improvements while keeping continuity with their established technologies.

CompuServe, for instance, runs off a terrifying combination of stone age mainframes linked in union with cutting-edge small system networks. And who isn't aware of the highly publicized problems America Online had with underpowered tech earlier this year?

However, there is yet another road to on-line glory, or so many savvy investors hope: value-added information providers.

Savvy cybernauts already know information isn't the problem. A simple search of the word "alchemy" just in gopherspace yields scores of citations, and those can branch off into dozens of more specialized searches. Hundreds of gigs of raw data, citations, FAQ's, and files can be pulled off the net by the info-masochist. The problem is sorting through it all and trying to make sense of the deluge of unprocessed facts without losing all use of one's frontal lobe.



• PAUL ALLEN

Putting information into a manageable form, and then interpreting it in an entertaining manner is the bread and butter of value added information providers. They generate a package of data that is witty, informative and most of all, comprehensible. Then they sell this package through established service providers.

A couple of advantages are inherent in this sort of enterprise. One is relatively low startup costs in comparison to other info-buy-ins. The second is the ability to stay ahead of the technology curve with relative ease. The on-line carrier provides the bandwidth and the delivery hardware. Information packages and front ends are the only changes that need to be made by the value added server when a new computing miracle is introduced to the telecommunications world.

It would seem that a value added service is a natural for the smart investor, and that assumption is rapidly confirmed by the fact that Paul Allen's newest venture is an online sports service provided through Starwave, one of his many companies.

Paul Who? Paul Allen, that's who. Mr. Allen is the "other guy" who pulled a spare few billion out of Microsoft, and when he talks people don't only listen, they reach for their Quotex terminals. When Allen dumped half of his American Online stock, the value of a share immediately plummeted five points. Heavy is

too wimpy a word for Allen; this cowboy has his own gravitational pull.

So what is Starwave?

In a nutshell, Starwave is a company devoted to exploiting the increased bandwidth created by advancing technology. Broken into divisions that deal with technological advances, information publishing and entertainment publishing, Starwave is poised to sail in any direction the currents of progress dictate.

Currently, the entertainment division is working on multimedia titles involving characters as diverse as the Muppets and Clint Eastwood. But everyone is getting into multimedia CD-ROMs. More interesting, and more germane to the electronic traveler, is the Online Sports service being provided by the information publishing division.

"What we are doing in sports publishing is creating what we think is kind of a very ambitious electronic sports section. An interactive sports section, if you will. Even in this early stage of on-line media this is the on-line equivalent of a sports page. One that does not suffer from the same kinds of constraints that traditional media suffer from," says Geoff Reiss, director of sports publishing for Starwave.

On-line sports page? Don't we have the AP taking care of that on every on-line service worth its silicon?

"The difference is between having just plain AP on a wire and getting context and design to the information. AP can give you a great story about how Ken Griffey is doing this, that or the other thing, but can they give you a full understanding of Griffey from 18 different perspectives? It is a matter of raw material versus finished product," continues Reiss.

To help provide this kind of depth, Starwave has signed an agreement with Sports Team Analysis and

• STARWAVE

Tracking Systems (STATS) to acquire sports statistics and related data for use on the service. STATS is a notoriously strong sports information provider, feeding data to both professional teams and media sources. STATS also does fantasy sports, an expected important draw to the Starwave offering.

STATS is also, not so coincidentally, one of the many information related companies that Paul Allen is heavily invested in.

STATS is probably a critical ally for Starwave, if nothing else than for their established fantasy leagues. As any modem maven can tell you, if they are going to pay big bucks for a premium interactive service, then that puppy had better be INTERACTIVE, and not just a digital rehash of *Sports Illustrated* back issues. So expect to see lots of chat features, fantasy leagues, columns, and feedback features.

Starwave is being purposely squirrely about the exact list of features the service will have, due to the developed vagueness currently in vogue among potential providers. Far from electronic freedom felt by the pioneers of the net, everything today is driven by big money, and that means big paranoia.

"This is going to be a brutally competitive environment and we are looking at a potential launch that is going to be in the last quarter of this year or first quarter of next year," says Reiss.

However, one thing that is sure about the new service is it will be provided, at least initially, by the upcoming Ziff-Davis Interchange service, one of the coming new breed of high-bandwidth on-line services that will be proliferating in the next few months.

"Starwave has chosen to work with next generation on-line service platforms, like the one at Ziff which is the one we have announced our intention to work with at this point, because of the higher common denominator they allow us to design to," says Reiss.

This means users can expect high resolution video and strong multimedia elements to be a standard part of the Starwave delivery platform.

Something for Everyone

While jacked-in sports fans have already probably heard enough to make them drool, there are good reasons for the less athletically obsessed to keep their eye on Starwave. This sort of information provider is a model of one of the possible futures of the on-line universe, and it's success or failure could have a strong impact on the future of network information access.

The current model of on-line information access is basically a one stop payment plan. You pay to sign on to an on-line service and you have access to the data and services that they provide. But there are other ways, currently not widespread except in the professional database world, where the user signs on to the service and then is charged for each element of the service separately. This is the model value added carriers such as Starwave are betting the integrated chips on.

"The existing on-line services do not have very well developed business models allowing a premium supplier of content to come on as an information provider and contribute to their services. One thing Ziff is doing, and this is going to be consistent with the next generation of on-line services, is they are looking to create an electronic mall or supermarket, and they are looking to invite people in like Starwave for the purposes of providing stores within that electronic mall.

"So unlike now where you get into AOL and you pay one price and you are free to just run amok all over the place, they are saying come on into something like the cable TV system and if you want to buy a premium sports channel here is a premium sports channel and if you want to buy a HBO or Disney channel here is an HBO and a Disney channel," says Reiss.

Is this the future? Only time will tell us the answer to this one. But if past experience is any gauge, there is a real good chance that Paul Allen and Starwave will hit one over the fence...

"As any modem maven can tell you, if they are going to pay big bucks for a premium interactive service, then that puppy had better be INTERACTIVE."

"... virus has been discovered on the Internet. The Chinon name has been illegally attached to a piece of shareware called CD-IT which claims to be a CD utility, but is, in reality, a Trojan that trashes hard-drives..."

The Net-News

Consumers: Thumbs Down to On-line Advertising

When an advanced new and technologically hip way to deliver information comes along the best and brightest of the human race always see a chance to better human understanding of others and dissolve cultural boundaries. Madison Avenue, however, sees a way to skim a percentage. With advertisements before movies (not to mention in them), video, and sound spots clouding the radio and television spectrum like ether-eating locusts, and billboards papering the landscape so completely as to make grass and trees seem the invaders, it shouldn't surprise anyone that the net brotherhood might be a bit reticent about getting advertising with their on-line information. With apologies to David Ogilvy, it would seem that very few of the net community see advertising as an essential service.

A survey of 409 on-line users by Interactive Facts magazine revealed that 67 percent felt that unsolicited messages shouldn't be allowed on commercial networks. Eighty-six percent felt that it would be a serious faux-pas on the Internet.

While it would be nice to think that high moral and intellectual standards are the motive behind this dislike of on-line flaking, the answer more likely lies in the cost of on-line time, as evidenced by the fact that 54 percent of those surveyed said they would be happy to get the mail as long as free hours or other financial incentives were offered.

But Where There's a Buck ...

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, McDonalds is going to be offering the ubiquitous golden arches on-line in the form of a downloadable commercial in conjunction with the NBC On-line area on America Online.

The logic behind this kind of action is murky at best, and an astute net maven might even consider it the sign of a sharp blow to the head on the part of McDonalds PR execs. Only time will tell, but it seems pretty

• AMERICA ONLINE

questionable that users are going to pay to download a commercial. According to *The Wall Street Journal* article even "McDonalds executives concede there's no clear motivation to download a commercial, at least in this initial experiment."

AOL over 900,000

America Online, Steve Case's on-line enfant terrible, is over 900,000 users and expects to log its 1,000,000th user by the time this report is in print.

In other AOL related news, a new front end should be going out to users this month, representing a major update to the interface, taking the first steps in the direction of multimedia, with a GUI incorporating picture and sound elements. The Mac version of the software will ship first, followed by the Windows versions in approximately a month. The mailings will be in waves until all of AOL's million subscribers have the new software. And a quick kudos to savvy Steve: the update is free.

Prodigy Gets Stones

Mick Jagger and Keith Richards scheduled late summer on-line appearances, answering questions posted to a special Prodigy area over the course of a week. This is the first in a series of publicized cyber-appearances by big names on Prodigy, who hope to use the on-line appearances, both in posted forums and new "chat stadiums," to woo subscribers. Some names slated: Jamie Lee Curtis and Erica Jong.

Prodigy also announced tests in delivering local access to specific groups in Canada. This test is to study the feasibility of a Canadian version of the 2 million member service sometime in 1995. Seeing as how the 1994 edition of the Canadian Internet Handbook was cited as being the number one selling non-fiction paperback in Canada by the Financial Times recently, the interest is certainly there.

And Are The Stones Cybercrazy or What?

Stones@Delphi.Com is the official E-mail address of the Stones in the digital ether. Delphi, who claims the distinction of being the Rolling Stones official on-line service in a recent press release, will also have a number of contests and giveaways of Stones and Voodoo Lounge related merchandise and tickets.

TechnoBadness

According to various reports, a new virus has been discovered on the Internet. The Chinon name has been illegally attached to a piece of shareware called CD-IT which claims to be a CD utility, but is in reality a Trojan that trashes hard-drives and other system resources.

New Netbook

According to savvy Internet surfer Barry Friedman, The Netizens and The Wonderful World of The Net: an Anthology will appear at the following sites. The first is the current location for the book by chapter. The later is the eventual WWW site for the book.
Gopher:gopher.cic.net/1/e-serials/alphabetic/a/amateur-computerist/netbook
HTTP://www.cc.columbia.edu/~hauben/project_book.html.

And Printed Matter. . .

The book *Net Guide*, published by Random House, is about to become a monthly magazine and an on-line service; the service will be called Your Personal Network and should be available through local access numbers nationwide. *NetGuide* magazine, dated December, will hit the newsstands in November.

by John Withers

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EARTHWORM JIM

Not just your ordinary romp through the worlds.

David Perry seemed to be taking a gamble when he bolted Virgin last year to form Shiny Entertainment. His **Global Gladiators** was a sales disappointment, but became a cult hit whose engine has piled up a lot of mileage since its development. Next came **Aladdin**, the magic project that made David's rep in the industry.

Then, incredibly, he left Virgin, taking most of the **Aladdin** development team with him. Not only did he split, he did so in the middle of his then-current project, Disney's **Jungle Book** (yet another platform game), obtained financing to start up a development group, and Shiny was born.

Perry exploited his **Aladdin** rep to obtain as high a profile as possible in the game magazines, then set about to create the ultimate platform game, **Earthworm Jim**, which has since been converted into a miniature empire and potential cash cow that could vault the moon for Shiny.

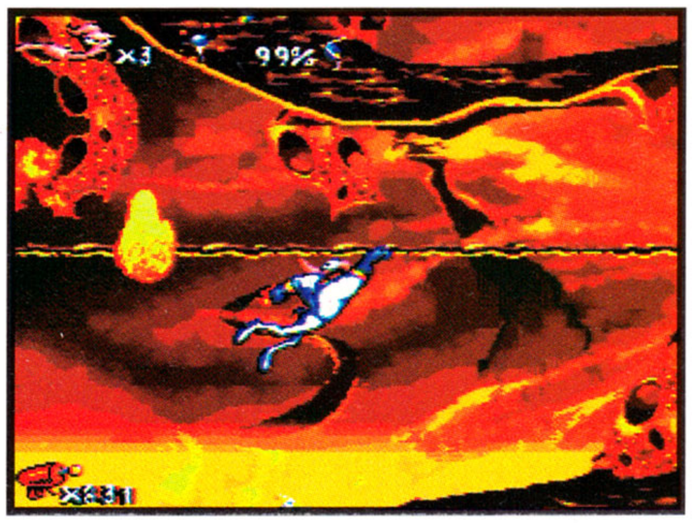
Some of the more hyperbolic reviewers have gone so far as to dub **Earthworm Jim** the Game of the Year; one even conceding it Game of the Decade. This wild-eyed praise, unfortunately, owes more to Perry's personal charisma and the product's superficial appeal than it does to any spectacular merits inherent in the game.

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	Playmates
SYSTEM:	Genesis
THEME:	Platform
MEGABITS:	24
PLAYERS:	1
LEVELS:	11

Earthworm Jim is a slick vehicle from which a parade of delightfully whacky toys and TV shows may well emerge, like clowns from a tiny Volkswagen, but it is not even the best *platform* game of the year, much less Game of the Decade.

Here's the, ahem, skinny: the player-character is a mutated worm who somehow inhabits a suit which serves as a sort of exo-skeleton for our invertebrate hero. Which is to say, in full EJ Mode, Jim looks about as much like an earthworm as Hulk Hogan does. EJ has the ability to jump, cling to the edge of objects, and hoist himself up, **Prince of Persia**-style. He can (and this is *really* cute) extract his entire body from the suit and use himself as a whip. Of course, he has an automatic weapon. Periodically, he finds higher-powered zap guns capable of shredding the screen with their smart blasts.

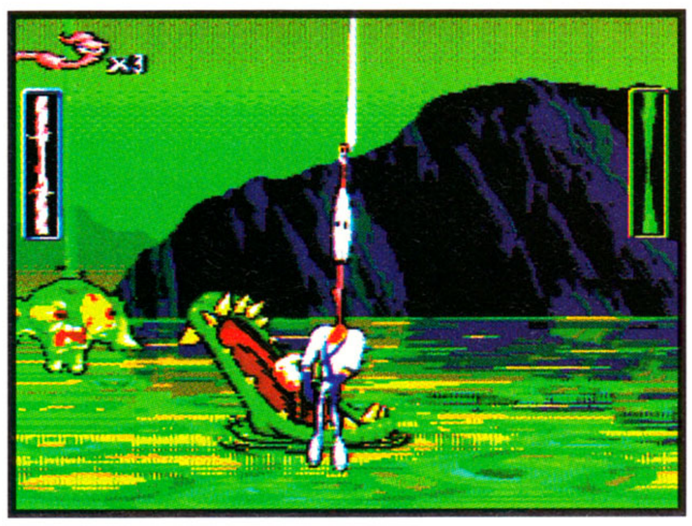


The game begins in New Junk City, a toon-like junkyard inferno containing mountains of rubber tires, unlikely pathways, and whatever other whimsical objects the design team wanted to toss into the mix.

There are also enemies, including pesky crows, a junkyard dog, and a parade of whimsical bosses, including a garbage can with tire appendages who can dance, attain vehicular mode, or simply slam the p-c up against the wall. Or how about Prof. Monkey-for-a-Head, a mad doctor type whose head consists of a live, inverted monkey? The characters are a gas and beautifully designed from a graphic point of view, but in game terms, they simply don't produce anything special.

It sometimes seems as if Shiny was designing a TV show all along, rather than a video game. The characters are all crafted for maximum visual impact, but their individual quirks tend to be meaningless game cliches or mindless gross-outs. One character spews live fish from his yap every time EJ strikes him, and there are sub-levels with titles like "Snot a Problem" and "Buttville," and the fact is, this game frequently looks and plays an awful lot like **Global Gladiators**, one of the most physically vulgar video games ever produced outside of Japan.

Obviously, Perry wanted to avoid the rap that **Aladdin** received as a game that was a milk run for ace gamers. **Earthworm Jim**, therefore, is Difficult, with a capital D. It is not difficult in the sense that it requires great gaming smarts to penetrate; it is Difficult in the British tradition which equates the amount of time it takes to dispatch an enemy with superior "play value." In **EJ**, even the crows take about a dozen shots to put down. The Garbage Can Man (the game's very first boss) can only be killed in the



following manner: launch a salvo of gunfire at him while he dances, thereby luring the galvanized goon into his vehicular mode. Next, fire approximately 10 million rounds into the open can when the attacker infrequently raises its lid. All the while, the boss is spitting anvils and slamming the p-c into rock walls, while tubas (don't ask) fall from the sky and must be fired on to deflect them away from our hero.

This is not to say that there aren't some amazing things in this game. The scene in the Professor's Laboratory where bizarre lab creatures morph into brains, is one of the wildest visual displays in gaming history. And the machine gunfire is viscerally satisfying from both an audio and visual perspective. But in these days, where even minor development houses and publishers have access to SGI technology, gross-out eye candy may not be enough to sell a game that doesn't occur in a coherent, logical universe, and lacks range and game diversity (power-ups, original enemies, etc.). Even the audio wizards at Neuromantic, who rarely fail to catch a groove and fly with it, never seems to find anything to latch onto in this game. The sound fx are good, but the music is uninspired, and the voice samples are so poor that none of our testers were able to figure out what it is that Jim screams every time an enemy thumps him.

In addition to the platform game sequences, which constitute 98 percent of **Earthworm Jim**, there's a recurring bonus level that the player rotates Jim around the perimeter of a swirling vortex, **Tempest**-style, avoiding harmful objects while collecting bonus globes. On the fun scale, this scenario is on a par with watching **DPaint** dry.

David Perry is a master at self-promotion. In **Earthworm Jim**, he has produced no more than the visual framework for a great video game. **B-** *(Bill Kunkel)*

REPORT ON SNES PORT

The SNES version of **Earthworm Jim**, also from Shiny and Playmates, is a duplicate of the Genesis SKU.

Despite hopes that attempts would be made to take advantage of some of the SNES's superior technology, financial realities seem to have dictated otherwise. This is obviously a sign of the times; if a game can be ported with relative ease from the Genesis to SNES platforms, or vice versa, it's tough to rationalize doing otherwise.

The SNES version, therefore, shares both the virtues and weaknesses of the Genesis edition. On initial viewing, it is among the most impressive-looking video games ever produced in the 16-Bit arena. The character animations duplicate the feel of an interactive cartoon as well as, or better than, any other game in history. When the junkyard dog attacks Jim, for example, the comic ferocity is so over-the-top and skillfully rendered that it produces an impression somewhere between Warner Bros. neo-classic, and hip, modern stuff like *Rocko's Modern Life*. **Earthworm Jim** doesn't look like any particular cartoon, but its toonish cred is awesome.

Perry has one overwhelming strength in Shiny: his artists and animators are simply incredible, among the best in the business.

Earthworm Jim has some technical and design flaws, unfortunately, which also ported over from the Genesis. The scrolling should update a little faster, for example; when EJ moves at full tilt, the screen area ahead of him allows the gamer to see more than a few feet ahead of the p-c. There are also some logical problems: Jim can bounce on some tires, for example, and not on others. Bonus points are awarded, on the other hand, for the cable which carries Jim left or right, using momentum created by EJ's gunfire!

VORTEX FX

Blaze through the Vortex and conquer the Aki-Do

ElectroBrain brings home a gripping 3-D game for the SNES with **Vortex**. **Vortex** is the third title to use the vaunted Nintendo SFX chip. Basically, the chip adds a little extra graphical umph to the 16-Bit platform, allowing it to manipulate polygons with more sophistication than was previously possible.

Vortex is a 3-D combat game. The player takes control of the Morphing Battle System, a mech that can change into four different vehicles, each with its own capabilities. As commander of the MBS, the player is on a quest to stop the hordes of Aki-Do. The luddite barbarians have stolen the A.I. core and scattered its components over a wide area. The player must travel through the Vortex, and locate the pieces of the A.I. Core while battling the evil Aki-Do.

The Morphing Battle System transforms into four different shapes, each with unique abilities. The Walker is the main MBS shape. The Walker is a large robot and the best offensive platform. There are four weapons available in this form. The right arm alternates between a laser gun with infinite shots and a cannon with much greater firepower but a limited amount of ammunition.

The left arm carries a missile launcher with homing missiles or a rocket launcher useful for knocking out heavily defended ground targets.

The Jet is the second MBS configuration and it is quick, lightly armed and a real gas guzzler. When in Jet form, the MBS can use only the weapon on the right arm, so there is no missile or rocket capability in this mode.

The Land Burner is a wheeled vehicle that zips across the terrain. It doesn't use as much fuel as the Jet, but like the Jet, only right arm weapons are available to the Land Burner.

The fourth MBS unit is the Hard Shell. It's a defensive platform, with no guns, but here the player can access ElectroBombs. These are smart weapons that wipe out all the opponents in the vicinity of the MBS in a flash. The Hard Shell doesn't take damage to the shields like the other platforms, but instead damage reduces the fuel. When not under direct attack, the Hard Shell replenishes its fuel via solar panels.

Much of the action takes place in a follow point of view, with the Morphing Battle System in the foreground. The other POV is a first-person, "head-cam" view, utilized when the player journeys through one of the alien underground complexes. These are filled with traps and hazards to the MBS, and a little deductive reasoning is required to negotiate them without taking damage.

There are several mission types, each emphasizing a different capability of the MBS. Some require flying, while others are suited to the Land Burner. The Walker is the all-around platform. With the press of a button it can leap great distances via rocket boosters. With another button, it springs up and turns around to face the rear; a move that looks specifically designed to show off the capabilities of the FX chip.

And show them off it does. The player can roam freely over the 3-D terrain which turns smoothly as the player flies, rolls, or walks along. There are lots of dramatic zooms and rotations. The view scales in and out during battle. This looks good and is helpful in targeting the numerous enemies.

There are flying and walking opponents, stationary gun platforms and traps. At the end of each level the player confronts a boss which must be defeated before moving on to the next level.

All of the good looking action is complemented by atmospheric music and very realistic sound effects. The heavy rumbling explosion of the ElectroBomb is especially good.

Registration is a problem. There are numerous places where the MBS runs into surrounding buildings when it should have clearly missed them. This isn't a serious flaw except in Jet Mode. The Jet has a tendency to repeatedly slam into obstacles, a good way to accumulate a lot of damage very quickly.

Another annoyance is the bosses. The levels are big and long, and the bosses are difficult to destroy. There are no milestones, so after journeying through a level, the player is soon destroyed by the boss and the whole level must be replayed. This is euphemistically known as extended play value.

The FX chip is expensive. To keep cart costs down, ElectroBrain kept **Vortex** at a paltry 4-Megabits of memory. It's a

testimony to the skills of the programmers at ElectroBrain, but one can't help but wonder what this game would have been like with a Super FX chip and 16-Megs of chip power. But one also wonders if gamers would be willing to pay for such a game, so perhaps 4-Megs makes sense.

Still, **Vortex** is challenging. The game becomes more enjoyable as the controls are mastered; it's mostly fun to play and looks impressive. **Vortex** will grow on you. **B** *(John Wesley Hardin)*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	ElectroBrain
SYSTEM:	SNES
THEME:	3-D Action Shooter
MEGABITS:	4
PLAYERS:	1
LEVELS:	10

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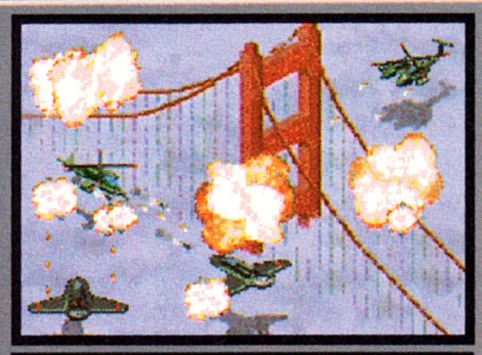

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DYNAMITE HEADDY

Standing the Game Gear on its head

Here's an odd little game from Sega that will give jaded portable players a refreshing, if temporary, boost.

Dynamite Headdy is a side-scrolling, platform jumping game. Fortunately for players, **Dynamite Headdy** isn't afraid to be weird. Savvy designers know that to stand out above the horde of platform games, a new title must be something different. By injecting the game with some puzzle-solving and shooter-game elements, Treasure Software gave **Dynamite Headdy** a little more dimension than most platform games.

Headdy is endowed with the dubious skill of being able to detach his head and use it as a projectile weapon. Thusly armed, Headdy goes out into his world to fight the forces of evil. There's a superfluous plot here that involves the Dark Demon and a nefarious plan to take over the world.

There are six stages, each with two or three levels. At the end of each stage, Headdy confronts a boss. Headdy's health is indicated by a spotlight in the upper left corner of the screen. It's bright green when he is unscathed. As more damage is done to him, the spotlight goes from green to yellow to red to flashing red. Flashing red means that Headdy is about to expire and the player had better be careful. When Headdy meets a boss, the same device is used to indicate the bosses' strength.

Headdy has five different heads available to him. This is less than the number available on the Genesis, but we portable players have to take what we can get.

Among his heads, Headdy has the Vacuum Head, which sucks in all the opponents on a level in a spectacular animation. There's the Sleepy Head that regenerates Headdy's energy level, and the War Head which allows him to fire homing missiles at his opponents. A couple of other heads round out the arsenal. All of them have neat animations and each gives Headdy a new appearance.

In addition to the head power-ups, there are stars which add bonus points to the player's score, and bananas which restore Headdy's energy.

All of this is, of course, in good fun. There's a great deal of sly humor here, with character names like Trouble Bruin, for a rampaging teddy bear. Levels with names like Twin Freaks, Toys in the Hood, and Fatal Contraption show a hip,

pop culture awareness that is absent in too many games that are supposedly "cool."

In these latter days of the Game Gear's life, the software has matured to take full advantage of the platform's capabilities. While **Dynamite Headdy** doesn't have the pure cartoon feel of other games on the Game Gear (**Chuck Rock II** comes to mind), its smooth play and numerous animations are extensively easy on the eyes. It has a unique look.

Dynamite Headdy is straight out of the surreal school of graphics. Seeing the flying doll heads, shiny, flying smiley faces and bizarre characters, it is somehow easy to imagine Japanese schoolkids playing this game.

There's a twisted, alien-culture feel to **Dynamite Headdy** that gives it a large part of its appeal. It's almost as if we're seeing one of those games that are huge successes in Japan but never make it to these shores because the game companies are afraid we *gaijin* won't understand it.

Headdy is not destined to replace Mario or Sonic in the minds of gamers, but he does have a certain appeal, with his large eyes and deadpan expression. He fires his head in eight directions and utilizes it for all sorts of things a head is not conventionally used for.

The stages are pretty good sized, and there are hidden surprises and bonus items scattered around. There is no timer, and players are encouraged to explore and find the hidden goodies. Despite this, the levels seem quite linear, with only one true path leading through any given area. This defeats the purpose of having no timer and encouraging players to explore.

So, is **Dynamite Headdy** a great game? Well, no. It has a lot going for it, but it certainly isn't the perfect Game Gear title.

While the graphics are interesting and colorful, the sound is neither. It serves the purpose of giving feedback to the player when Headdy takes a hit or picks up a bonus, but that's about it. The music is nondescript. There is no option to turn it off; for that matter, there are no options at all. No difficulty setting, no controller configuration (not that one is needed) no passwords or anything like them. Gamers get three continues and that's it (more can be earned). This seems a little extreme for a game with over a dozen levels.

Players who like a more vanilla kind of action game may not care for the off-beat air of **Dynamite Headdy**. It is different, and some players may not want different.

But maybe in the end **Dynamite Headdy** isn't different enough. Under the outlandish touches and unusual ideas, this is still a fairly conventional platform game, and for players who want something truly unusual, this may not be enough. It's a dilemma.

Dynamite Headdy is still charmingly original enough to warrant a look. It won't be the game to revitalize the portable platform, but it should intrigue many players who will want to see Headdy on the more capable Genesis. For standing head and shoulders above more conventional games, **Dynamite Headdy** gets a **B-**.
(John Wesley Hardin)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	Sega
SYSTEM:	Game Gear
THEME:	Action
MEGABITS:	4
PLAYERS:	1
LEVELS:	15

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LARUSSA BASEBALL '95

Just in time for the baseball strike

TECH SPECS	
PUBLISHER:	EA Sports
SYSTEM:	Genesis
THEME:	Sports
MEGABITS:	16
PLAYERS:	1-2
LEVELS:	N/A

Finding the appropriate baseball simulation to take its rightful place in the EA Sports video game pantheon has proved almost as difficult as finding someone to pull Excalibur from its stone. EA's production of "In Search of..." has been an ongoing difficulty for the division since its creation in the wake of **Madden Football**'s success.

The origin story of EA Sports has rarely, if ever, been reported. In a way, it is much like the saga of Orson Welles, the boy genius director of the '40s who was never able to surpass his first two films (*Citizen Kane* and *The Magnificent Ambersons*). Though he did much good work in the decades that followed, he could never quite top that phenomenal, early success.

John Madden Football was initially released as an over-complicated strategy sim for the computer, long before EA even *had* a sports division. Trip Hawkins then hired former Gamestar honcho Scott Orr (working with Jim Simmons and Park Place) to take over EA's fledgling sports ops (originally called the Electronic Arts Sports Network, or EASN—until ESPN started growling about litigation). Scott set about to design the most playable, realistic football game ever. "I always enjoy **Tecmo Football**," he once told me during the 8-Bit Nintendo days. "You can just plug it in and play it. I really like that simplicity."

Orr took the Madden name and designed a game that eclipsed every football re-creation before or since, and continues to serve as standard for the industry.

Then came hockey, and lightning struck twice with Orr, Simmons, and Park Place combining once again to create **NHL Hockey**, the engine that continues to stand helmet and shoulder pads above every other on-ice simulation. Thereafter, Orr's High Score team worked without Park Place, refining the engines into the best action-strategy sports games the world had ever seen.

Basketball proved more troublesome for EA Sports, with a host of less-than-memorable releases. But the void that *really* stuck in the company's throat was the lack of a superstar baseball game. Not since the days of **Baseball All-Stars** and **Tommy LaSorda Baseball** has there been anything remotely resembling a standard-bearer in baseball video gaming.

In the past year, EA Sports released not one, but *two* individual baseball franchises, **LaRussa Baseball** (based on the SSI computer game created by Don Daglow's Stormfront Studios) and **MLBPA**, based on a license with the currently out-of-work Player's Association. Neither game was a roaring success, though **LaRussa** was extremely well designed and created a loyal following of stat-loving arcaders.

Now comes **LaRussa '95**, featuring the combined efforts of Orr's EA Sports team and Stormfront. The problem is, the game looks as if it was indeed designed by a committee. Almost every element of the game's action component seems either compromised or unnecessarily altered from the original.

The game uses much of the interface established by Stormfront in the original, superior version of **LaRussa**, but the visual engine is completely original.

Pitching and batting is seen from the shortstop's POV, giving the entire game an unreal looking effect. The game's physics—the way the ball moves when thrown and hit—seem skewed; the ball gets larger and smaller at unlikely moments, and it seems to float rather than curve. After the ball is hit, however, the screen toggles to the standard, angled overhead perspective.

There are lots of neat features in **LaRussa '95**, including six sets of stadium configurations, DH option, errors, and either full-count or single-pitch at bats. The game also retained its MLBPA license, rather obviating the need for two different baseball games from the same publisher. Players are rated in 27 categories for position players and 19 categories for pitchers.

The game has more than enough statistical credibility to serve as a manager-only simulation (and with a 32K onboard battery, stat retention should be no big problem), in which case the physical problems becomes less of an issue. In fact, for video gamers who have never tasted the fruits of statistical replay, **LaRussa '95** certainly has more to offer than any other game in its division.

But the bottom line remains the same: Sega Sport's **World Series Baseball** puts the spikes to **LaRussa** in terms of visual sizzle and visceral oomph. Cerebral play is all well and good for a computer baseball game, where most players are more interested in strategy, tactics, and statistical evaluation than they are in getting their rocks off by slamming baseballs into the cheap seats. But a top flight baseball video game has got to be more fun to play than this new version of **LaRussa**.

We know that both EA Sports' High Score Productions and Stormfront are individually capable of producing superb sports games. Perhaps it's best, however, if next time EA decides on one or the other. Unfortunately, **LaRussa Baseball '95** is a thinking fan's game in an action fan's medium.

Here's hoping that EA Sports has better luck with future baseball games than Orson did after his great work—I'd hate to see a genius like Scott doing wine commercials for Gallo. **E+** *(Bill Kunkel)*

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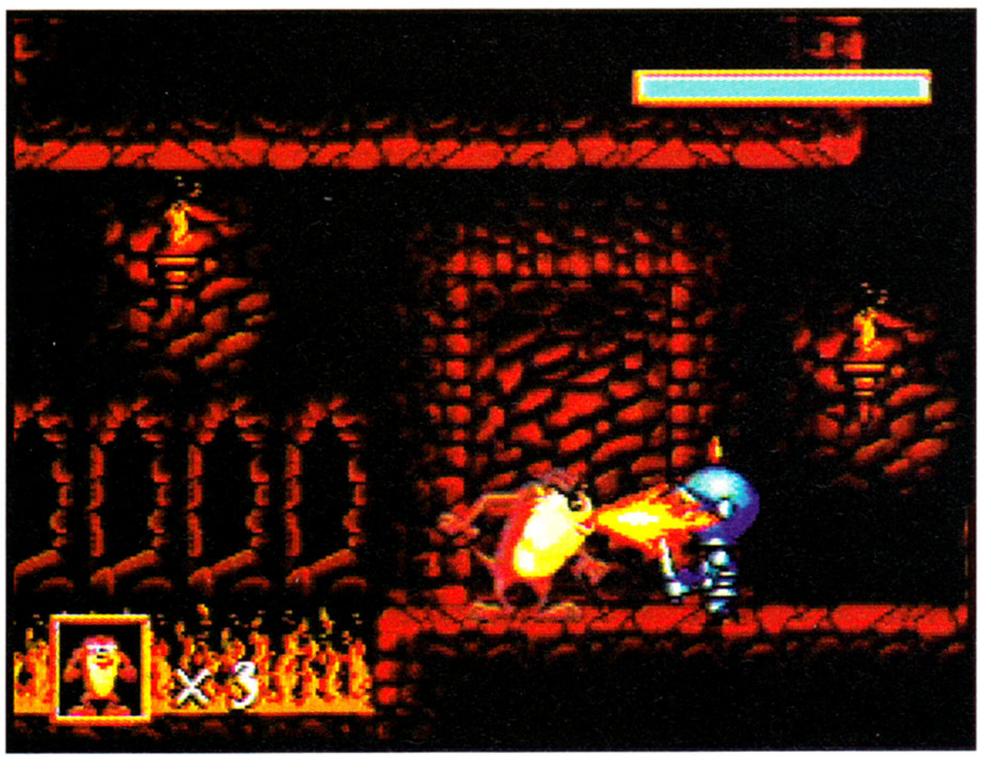
TAZ IN ESCAPE FROM MARS

Taz takes exception to Marvin's zoo hospitality

Taz is spinning along, minding his own business when Marvin the Martian beams him up and carries him off to a Martian zoo chock full of unearthly and unfriendly critters. Taz is an irascible fellow at the best of times, and is soon on his way outta there, creating havoc on the way, in this fairly traditional, platform/puzzle game.

Taz uses his Tornado Spin to burst through weakened walls (the player can help him with this by pointing him at the walls with the cracked bricks) or to travel along narrow vertical shafts and loop-de-loops, or even dig into the ground. Shrink rays and an occasional potion miniaturize him long enough to get him through some



narrow squeaks; other potions blow him up to twice his size—mean and snarly, but too heavy to spin.

Taz is prone to eat anything that isn't nailed down. In a rare animation for video games, he actually picks these things up and swallows them (whole, of course) instead of just running across them. The problem is, not everything's good for him. There are bombs and pretty birthday cakes with big red candles left lying around which, when swallowed, blow him up literally. He's tough! this doesn't kill him unless his life bar is low, but it does lose him health points. If the player lets him hesitate long enough where one of these is found, he'll pop it in his mouth.There's nothing that can be done about it.

There are first aid kits to restore his health, burgers and other items that at least don't seem to hurt him—and there are items he can use for weapons. If he swallows a box of rocks he can spit rocks lethally, and if he imbibes a can of gasoline, he becomes his own flamethrower.

Taz generally takes out enemies with his Tornado Spin or by spitting stones or fire, though other techniques have to be discovered for some and for the level bosses. If he spins over power-ups they're gone, so bombs may be thus rendered harmless. But he won't gain the benefits of the good ones this way, so it's wise to learn the locations of which "snacks" are where during the inevitable replays.

There are six levels, each with several waypoints (signified by little Taz statues), to which Taz returns on losing one of his three lives. At the last of these, he also gets three continues, but they return him to the beginning of the level, not a waypoint.

In the surrealistic world of cartoons and video games, there doesn't have to be any real logic about the locations where things happen, and Taz frequently jumps from one area to another via transporter, often at waypoints within each level. So in addition to Mars and the zoo surroundings, the first level, Taz finds himself being chased by a giant drilling machine through the Moleworld and splashing through Planet X, a water world.

Then he inexplicably discovers himself blasting through a politically doubtful Warner Bros. Mexico that includes confrontations with Yosemite Sam, Wile E. Coyote, and the Road Runner as well as banditos and an outrageous bull. A haunted castle follows, complete with Witch Hazel and throw rug-like monster Gossamer, and, lastly, things begin to turn really weird as Taz traverses Marvin's nightmare home.

Graphically, Taz is captured in all his bewildered belligerence (a satisfying departure from the now tiresome "attitude") and while most of the creatures he encounters are from the standard video game mold, many do capture something of the Warner Bros. style. It's now familiar for the player-character to show foot-tapping impatience if left standing too long; Taz slips into this easily, and soon expresses his frustration with his classic raspberry growl and a spinning flurry of hands, feet, and teeth.

Not bad—but the loop's too short, with no variation, and it can get annoyingly repetitious quickly.

The background music is good, typical, or above-average video game stuff during play. It does sport a bouncy, jazzy theme behind the Title Screen that evokes the Warner Bros. cartoons of yesteryear—from before Taz became a member of the team, actually.

There is no Option Screen opportunity to listen to the themes or sound effects. The only options offered are to switch the effects of the A, B, and C buttons from their respective defaults of Action (like spitting rocks or fire), Spin, and Jump. One would need to be careful with making such changes, because Taz frequently requires a jump-spin combination that takes good coordination between the buttons that control them.

Escape from Mars is inspired by the world of Looney Tunes but owes much to Sonic and Bubsy. Its violence is mild for a video game—most enemies disappear quietly in little puffs of smoke, and Taz's squawks of pain when hit are not really meant to draw sympathy.

The real fun, as for most video games, is working out the puzzle patterns that will get him past the next waypoint and the next boss. Overlaying this standard pattern, **Escape from Mars** has its own style and Taz is given some different ways to deal with his obstacles to freedom. It's fun to spend a few hours to help him find his way out. **B+** *(Ross Chamberlain)*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	Sega
SYSTEM:	Genesis
THEME:	Platform Puzzle
MEGABITS:	16
PLAYERS:	1
LEVELS:	6

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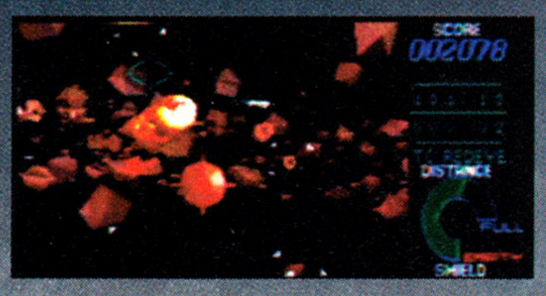

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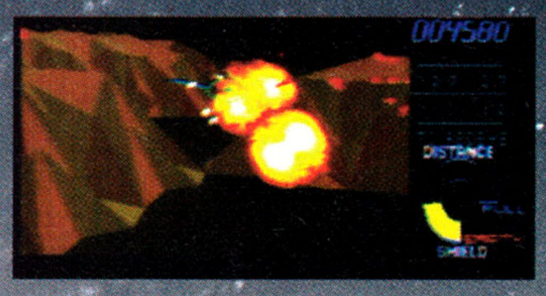

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ROCK N' ROLL RACING

This game gives new meaning to "Hard-Drivin' Music"

This is not a first-person racing game, and forget Mario Andretti or Nigel Mansell. For one thing, the setting is a space opera future and the available racing equipment reflects this. Blowing away the opposition is part of the game; weapons and armor are standard issue and upgradable. Besides, how could a game that starts playing *Bad to the Bone* behind the opening screen be other than rough, tough, and just plain in-your-face mean?

The racers are interstellar in origin. They have names like Snake Sanders (from Terra), Tarquinn (Aurora), Jake Badlands (Xeno Prime), Ivanzypher (Fleagull), Katarina Lyons (a catwoman from Panteros V, not at all like Michelle Pfeiffer), and Cyberhawk (from Serpentis). These are just the player-surrogates available under the Choose Heroes Selection Screen. Opponents names are: Viper MacKay, Grinder X19, Ragewort, and Slash. Most have a toothy, wait'll-ya-see-what-I'm-gonna-do-to-you grin that's called a rictus in medical circles.

Each of the player-characters has plus-one strengths in two of the many elements required for racing well on the courses provided. Once players are comfortable with the game, they should select their p-c to fit their own style of playing. For example, Tarquinn's strengths are top speed and cornering, while Cyberhawk's are acceleration and jumping.

The game resembles the NES game **RC Pro-Am**, which simulated racing radio-controlled cars around a track full of bumps and hairpin turns, picking up bonuses along the way. Here the angled side-perspective retains that sense of controlling from a distance, over an increasingly hazardous series of courses. Bonuses can include money, armor repair, etc. It's also a good idea to watch out for mines and other hazards—including any the player may have left down for others that didn't get their marks.

Gamers used to first-person perspective play may find themselves having to unlearn ingrained direction control responses. For example, on stretches where the vehicle is facing the player, a push left on the control pad sends the car to the player's right.

According to the background story, when mankind contacted the Saurians of Bogmire in 2833, auto racing and late 20th century rock 'n' roll became a craze. This led to the establishment of the Rock N' Roll Racing Commission, and the first interstellar race was held in 2911, a millennium after the first Indianapolis 500. It should be noted that in 10 centuries records might not be perfectly preserved, which probably explains why Henry Mancini's heavy jazz-based theme from *Peter Gunn* got included among the rock 'n' roll selections, but it works.

Other credited themes besides that and *Bad to the Bone* are *Born to be Wild*, *Highway Star*, and *Paranoid*. There is no option to listen to the themes individually; Sound Options allow music on or off, ditto for sound effects and, as a third selection, the player may shut up Larry "Supermouth" Huffman. He complains "Ouch!" when switched off, and exclaims "Wo!" when returned to service.

Everything he shouts in his gravelly voice has an exclamation point. When he's on, Larry keeps up an exciting running commentary during the race ... "Snake jams into first!"..."Rip's about to blow!" ..."Viper looks lost out there!" And when the race is over, the lineup is called: "Snake scores a first place knockout! Rip finishes second! Shred takes a weak third! Viper is in another time zone!"—always the same phrases, but with the names changed. The player may want to shut him up eventually, but he's fun for a while.

Winning races, or even placing second or third (there's always four cars on the track), gains the player money, which may be used to upgrade weaponry and armor, improve the car's performance, or even acquire a new car. The player starts out with a selection between two vehicles (there's a third, expensive one to dream about). As money is won, the car may be enhanced. Points are also scored, with the aim of reaching a high enough score to advance to the next division—or planet.

One may keep racing at the old level if desired, to gain money and practice, and upgrade the car, but with sufficient points it's possible to move ahead to the next level at any time. There's a neat series of scenes in which the ship takes off, then is seen as a dot breaking off from orbit around a globe in space. Stars rush by as the ship accelerates, then decelerates, and drops into orbit around the new planet.

Before each race a Selection Screen shows which planetary level the player has reached; how much money the player has, how many points and how many more are needed to advance, and also how many races out of the current division's total have been run. Icons with associated

text indicate the available selections: start the next race, buy equipment, advance to the next level, buy a new car, or setup options. Setup also offers a 12-digit password for returning to the same level and status at the next game session.

With practice, **Rock N' Roll Racing** makes it exciting to keep trying for the next win—not to mention relieving one's aggressions on those smugly nasty opponents! **B** *(Ross Chamberlain)*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	**Interplay**
SYSTEM:	**Genesis**
THEME:	**Racing**
MEGABITS:	**8**
PLAYERS:	**1-2**
LEVELS:	**N/A**

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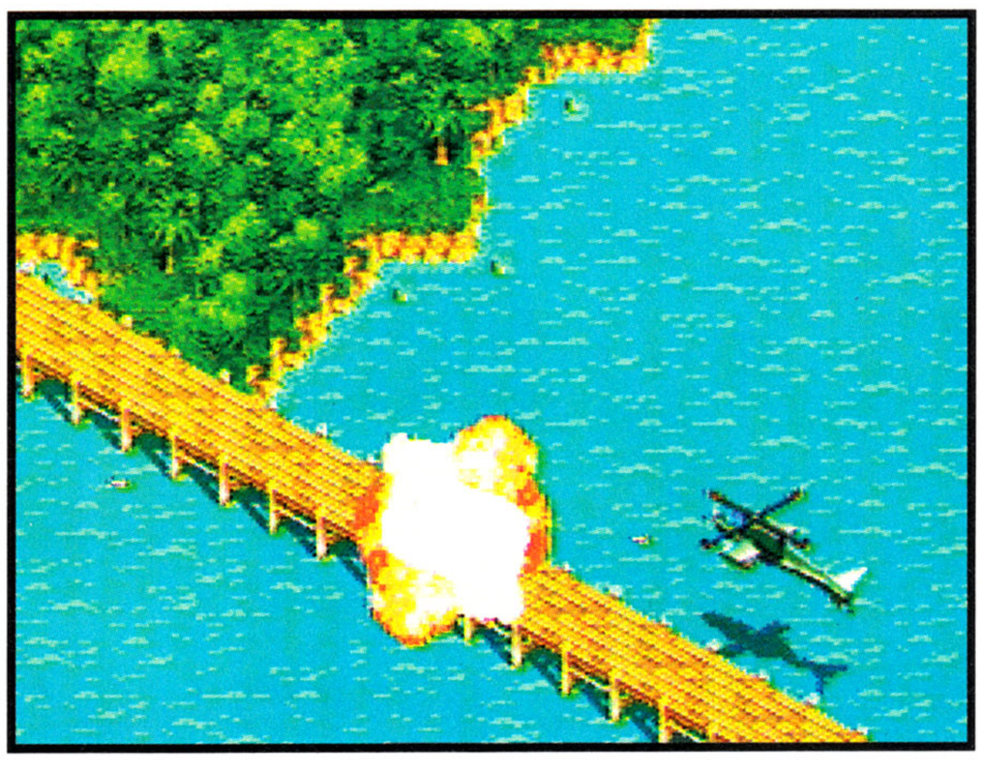
CARTRIDGE

URBAN STRIKE

"Why Can't I Ever Fight an Evil *Idiot*?"

All right, so you totaled the desert, blasting the burning sands into a billion texture-mapped bits from the cockpit of your Apache combat chopper. Then you moved on to defoliate the jungle, scorching more Earth in a single game session than General Sherman did in an entire campaign.

You love the smell of synthetic napalm in the morning. It smells like … a bonus round!



But, are you ready for a *real* challenge? Then prepare to take on some serious American cities, tough guy, along with a quick side-trip to Mexico, in **Urban Strike**, the latest in Electronic Arts' popular combat helicopter series.

Employing the same basic engine John Manley and Mike Posehn originally developed for **Desert Strike** and **Jungle Strike**, **Urban Strike** blasts away at New York City, San Francisco, and even the glitter palaces of Las Vegas.

The Evil Genius this time out is H. R. Malone, a wealthy zealot who, after losing a bid for the presidency in the late 1990s, structures a paramilitary organization to strengthen America. (I wonder who *he's* supposed to be?)

By 2001, the temporal environment for the game, Malone has set up his secret bases in a variety of urban locales, and is in the process of creating a "deadly" super weapon (aren't they all?). United Special Forces Agent Ego, last seen in **Jungle Strike**, has infiltrated Malone's headquarters, and, before becoming street confetti in a car bombing, reports to HQ that the pieces of this weapon are being assembled in Hawaii.

As fate and the necessities of plot would have it, **Urban Strike**'s anonymous player-character pilot is currently in Hawaii enjoying the sun, sand, and surf. He cancels his vacation and takes on the challenge of stopping Malone (Ego's death makes this "personal").

The basic game structure has undergone some technical and design upgrades. The Apache has been decommissioned in favor of a Mohican combat-copter. Additionally, the p-c has access to a Blackhawke rescue chopper, a ground assault vehicle and, in some scenarios, may also face the enemy on foot.

The basic rules remain the same: use talented and skillful flying techniques to destroy the enemy, rescue civilians, uncover secret lives and extra supplies, and save the world from an Evil Genius.

The ammo has not been upgraded; fighters have access to a combination of hellfires, hydras, and chain guns as in the previous **Strike** sagas. However, some levels feature a smart bomb that if found and correctly deployed, will clean out an entire area. There is a logistics problem, though. In some scenarios, chain gun fire does not kill an enemy soldier unless the gun is precisely aligned; yet, the entire *building* on which the sniper is standing can be obliterated with a few rounds of chain gunfire! This kind of shoddy logic makes suspension of disbelief very tough.

The graphics vary with the campaigns, but everything from the lush green of Hawaii to the gaudy Las Vegas casino carpeting is well rendered, if occasionally a little sparse. The angled, top-down, perspective that worked so well in the earlier games continues to do yeoman service in **Urban Strike**, and the **Strike** development team once again used ray-drawn technology to render the combat vehicles.

Don Veca's game score is appropriately martial, and sets up the gamer for some pulse-pounding play. Unfortunately, there just isn't *enough* music, because the missions themselves rely solely on sound effects. While the sounds of enemy aircraft, artillery, and armies blowing up produces a somewhat satisfying visceral accompaniment, players have come to expect the same level of audio support in games that they experience in films. Imagine a war movie where the climactic battle scenes offered no musical support, relying on ballistics for its audio content.

Urban Strike's strong point, as always, is its great play value. Because it utilizes the same engine as its predecessors, veteran **Strike**rs will be able to pick up where they left off with little adjustment in skill and almost no learning curve. Novice players will have to spend the opening campaign learning to pilot their chopper, either with or *sans* momentum; experiment with different co-pilots; and become familiar with the **Strike** experience.

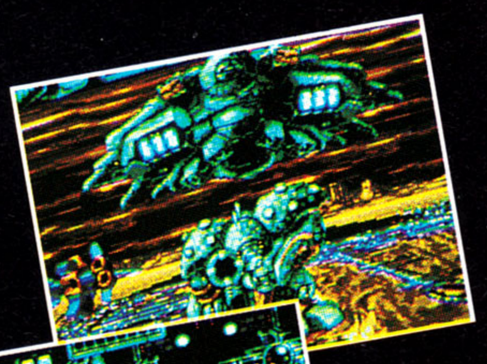
The only real complaint would be that this third installment in the series is *too* similar to its predecessors. Only the hardcore urban levels, like New York City, offer a unique challenge, from a visual and game play perspective. Too many mission locations have no urban quality whatsoever—Las Vegas seems like a desolate wasteland, marked by a few, isolated casinos and countless QuickieMarts.

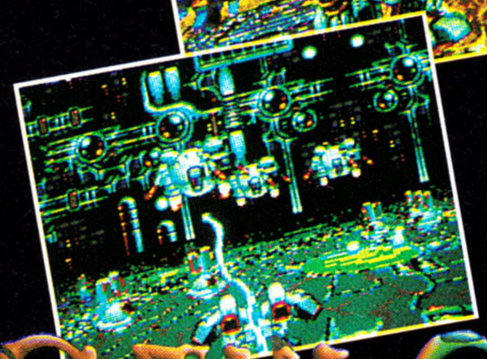
Even San Francisco is short changed. We all know SF is fogbound, but the fog seen in **Urban Strike** is terrible; dense and grey, like dirty snow. Some buildings poke their top stories above the morass, but everything else is impenetrable. For most of the level, it is all but impossible to see where blasts are coming from, or even where to fire. But the New York scenario, on the other hand, *is* spectacular, with bullet-riddled snipers tumbling off skyscrapers after being hit, and a maze of huge, navigationally challenging buildings.

Overall, **Urban Strike** does provide new challenges and a new madman to defeat, but one wonders how much longer the **Strike** series can continue without a serious upgrade. **B** (*Laurie Yates*)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts
SYSTEM:	Genesis
THEME:	Action-Strategy
MEGABITS:	16
PLAYERS:	1
LEVELS:	10





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GamePro, CES Showstoppers, April 94

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Game Fan, April 94

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Electronic Gaming Monthly, April 94

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Game Fan, February 94

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THE FINAL GRADE

The following chart details the thoughts and opinions of several different *EG* editors on some of the latest software. In the future we will feature guest reviewers from around the country.

	Arnie Katz Editor	Marc Camron Senior Editor	Bill Kunkel Executive Editor	Russ Ceccola Associate Editor
Aerobiz Supersonic	B+	A-	B	-
Ballz	C	C	C+	-
Blackthorn	B+	B	B+	B
Breath of Fire	A-	A+	A-	A+
Bubba 'N' Stix	B-	B	B	B
Bubsy II	A-	B	B+	B-
Castlevania Bloodlines	-	A	B+	A
Champ. W.C. Soccer	A	-	B-	B-
Chester Cheetah	C	C-	D	-
Daffy Duck: Marvin Miss.	B	B+	B+	B
DNR of Superman	B-	D	C+	B
Double Dragon V	C+	C	C+	B+
Eye of the Beholder	B	B	B+	-
Flintstones: Treasure...	B	B	B	B-
Goofy's History Tour	B-	A-	B	-
HardBall '94	B	B-	B-	B+
Jammit	B-	B-	C	C+
The Jetsons	C+	C	B+	C+
Jungle Book	A-	A	A	B+
Lord of the Rings	A	A-	B	B
Mario Andretti Racing	B+	B	B+	-
Maximum Carnage	A-	B-	A-	B+
Megaman Soccer	A-	A-	B-	B
Mega Turrican	B-	C	A	-
MLBPA Baseball '94	B-	B	B-	-
NBA Jam	A	A	A+	B+
Obitus	-	B	C+	B
Pele Soccer	B+	-	B	B-
Prince of Persia (Gen)	B	B	A-	A-
Rocko's Modern Life	B+	B+	B+	-
Saturday Night Slm.	B-	B	-	B-
Star Trek: TNG (SNES)	B	B	A-	B+
Sub-Terrania	B	B+	B+	B+
Super ADV. Island	-	B-	D	-
Tempest 2000	A	A+	A	A
Time Trax	-	B-	C	B
Turn & Burn: No Fly Zone	-	C+	B-	A-
Wizardry V	B+	B+	B+	B
World Heroes	C-	C-	D	-

Experience lightning-fast action in an intense battle in Contra: Hard Corps by Konami.

Combat Cars *(By **Accolade** for Genesis)* There's something very, very wrong with the learning curve of a game when the first of nearly a dozen rounds is challenging and enjoyable, but from Level Two on, the game becomes so difficult that it virtually cannot be played successfully against the computer.

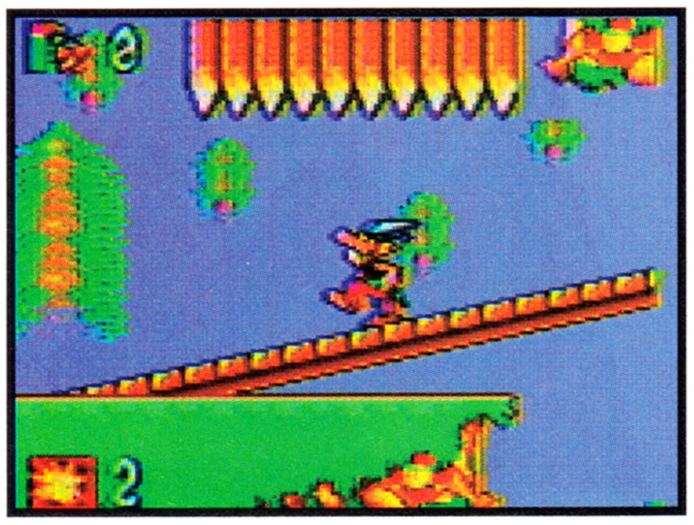
Combat Cars is a topdown update of games like **R-C Pro-Am** (Nintendo) and **Rock n' Roll Racing** (Interplay) that works fairly well at first, but one playable level is pretty short shrift given the prices of today's video games. One almost wonders if the same team that created the first level worked on the rest of this game. **C-** *(Bill Kunkel)*

Sylvester & Tweety in Cagey Capers *(by **Time Warner Interactive** for Genesis)* Although **EG** reviewed this game a while ago, it shifted hands from TecMagik to Time Warner Interactive, who upgraded the game controls and made some other slight changes to the overall picture. The game actually plays a little bit easier now. The goal to this cartoon runaway game is to guide Sylvester through the game's varied levels to ultimately catch his little yellow nemesis, Tweety Bird. Sylvester does this with a variety of devices like umbrellas and pogo sticks as he avoids typical enemies like Granny and Spike the Bulldog. **Cagey Capers** is particularly exciting because the graphics and animation are as good as cartoons and the sound effects came directly from the Warner Bros. archives. Watch out for that monster, Tweety! **B** *(Russ Ceccola)*

Contra: Hard Corps *(By **Konami** for Sega Genesis)* If this game ever had anything to do with the Nicaraguan Contras, it doesn't now. This sci-fi themed shooter is a real challenge that will have players burning up lives like tissue paper. Gamers have four surrogates, including a robot and a wolfman, with which to raise hell in the name of law and order. There are some choose-your-own-adventure elements

here, but for the most part **Contra** is about destruction. Neat weapons, fast, fast action and a steep learning curve will have shooter fans playing this one over and over. All others, be advised. **B** *(JWH)*

Asterix and The Great Rescue *(by **Sega** for the Game Gear)* recaps the story found in the 16-Bit version; Asterix the Gaul must rescue his dog Dogmatix and the druid Getafix. To this end, the popular



European comic character has a variety of magic potions and powers. With the press of a button, Asterix transforms into his buddy Obelix. Obelix can't use potions, but he packs a real wallop.

Graphically very appealing, **The Great Rescue** is pretty run-of-the-mill stuff. The game play is repetitious. It's fun, for a while. **C+** *(JWH)*

Sparkster *(by **Konami** for the Sega Genesis)* This is the second time out for Sparkster, the possum with a rocket pack.

Now he has a slew of new opponents, but still the same girlfriend. The play is much the same; fast, visually interesting, and a challenge to master, with more emphasis on puzzle-solving than in **Rocket Knight Adventures**. Players who enjoyed the first game should have no complaints with this one. **B** *(JWH)*

Zero Tolerance *(by **Accolade** for the Sega Genesis)* Fans of first-person shooters (like **Doom**) finally have something to play on a 16-Bit platform. Players must single handedly stave off an alien invasion. Choose your surrogate and blast away with a wide variety of weapons and equipment. Good sound, adequate graphics, and lots of action make Zero Tolerance a **B.** *(JWH)*

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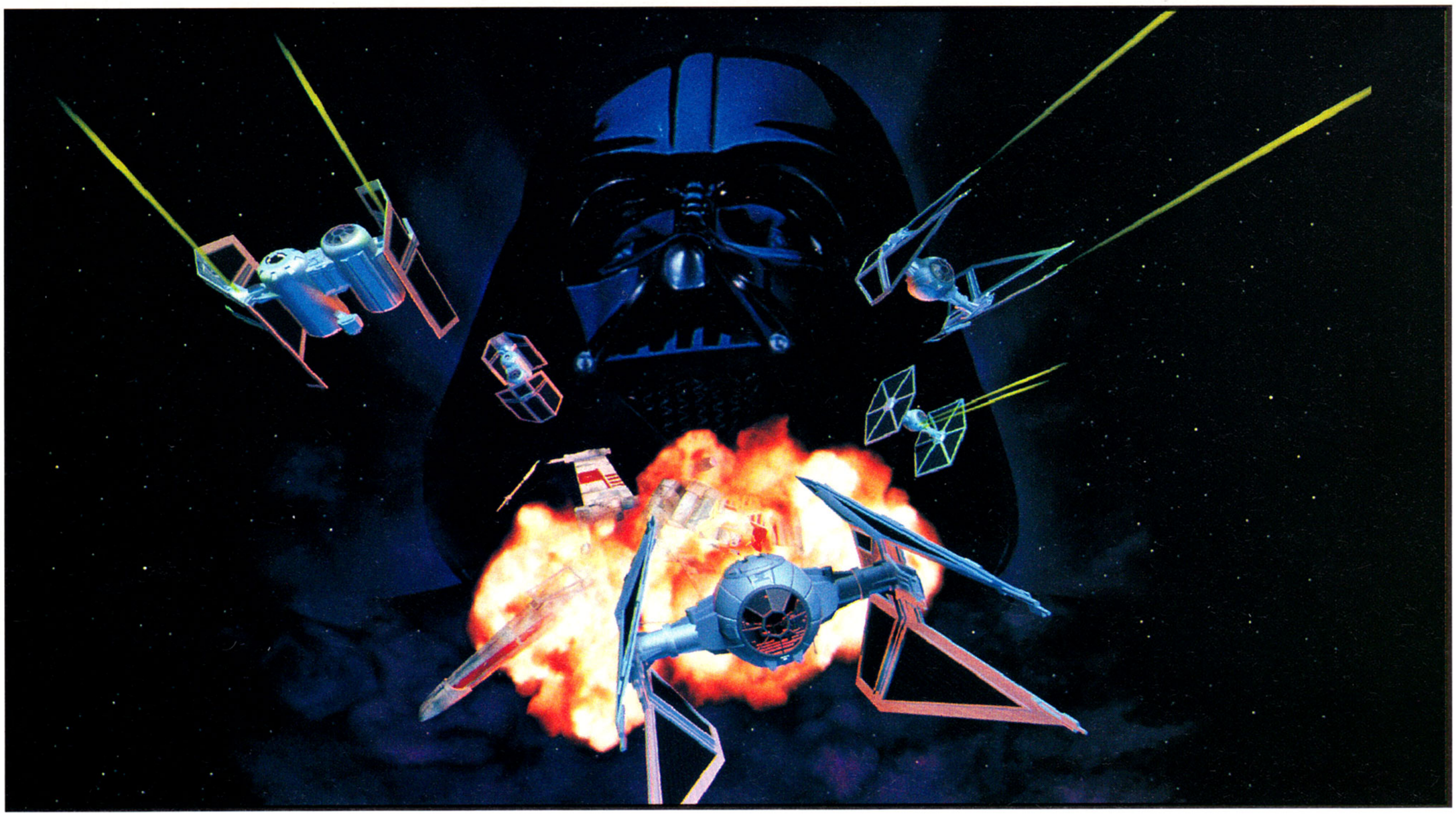
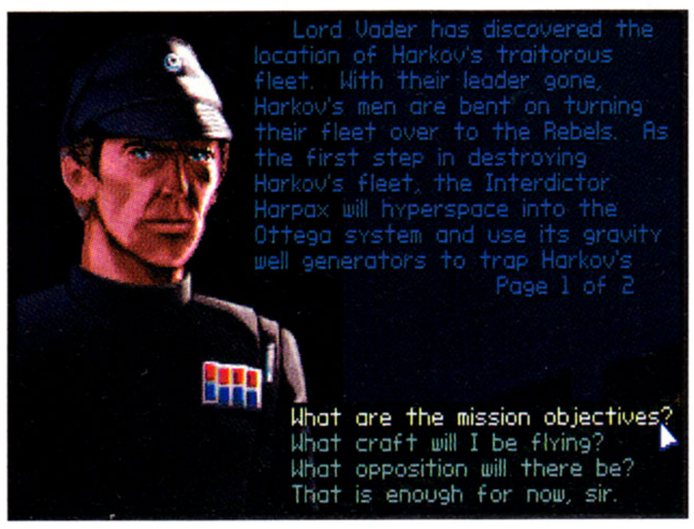


TIE FIGHTER

Let the dark side of the Force entice you into a great game!

Wow!!!!! That one word efficiently sums up the reaction of anyone who spends just a few minutes or a mission or two with **TIE Fighter**, the sequel to the hit space combat simulator **X-Wing**. Designers Lawrence Holland and Edward Kilham took the comments and complaints they received over the course of time that **X-Wing** and its add-on disks



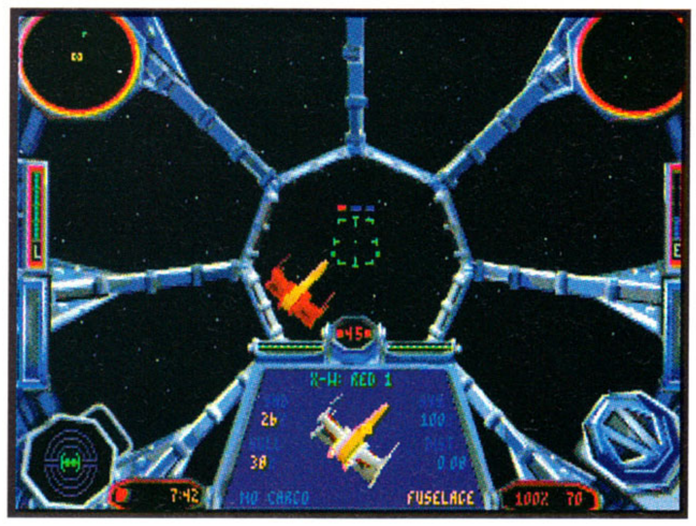
dominated the shelves and redesigned their game interface around an entirely new perspective in the Star Wars saga. In **TIE Fighter**, players control the TIE space ships and Gunboats of the Empire in missions against the Rebel Alliance as directed by Darth Vader and Emperor Palpatine. The switch of perspectives, new interface features and player-controlled mission difficulty levels take TIE Fighter to the very top of the genre as the year's best space combat simulator.

TIE Fighter's pilot progression is similar to that of X-Wing. The player controls a new recruit in the Imperial Navy as he flies training missions, combat chamber missions and a complete campaign of non-linear missions that roughly follow the plot of *The Empire Strikes Back* from the Empire's point of view. Players will quickly discover that the Empire's members are NOT the one-dimensional bad guys portrayed in the *Star Wars* trilogy. There is a lot more that goes on behind the scenes that establishes the Empire as an organization with different goals, albeit warped by the dark side of the Force wielded by Vader and Palpatine. A secret society of elite pilots will try to lure the player into their midst through political maneuvers, but it's entirely up to each person how deeply they explore the dark side.

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	**LucasArts**
DESIGNER:	**L. Holland, E. Kilham**
SYSTEM:	**MS-DOS**
THEME:	**Space Combat Sim**
HD SPACE:	**15 MB**
PLAYERS:	**1**
LEVELS:	**50+**

New recruits should begin in the training missions and combat chamber before they tackle the "real world." **TIE Fighter**'s interface contains cinematic screens and audio nudges that direct the player to the game options. From the main screen, players can access the campaign, training, combat chamber, film room or tech room (displays of game ships in 3-D holograms). Practice is very important before players can fully handle all of the available fighters.



One of **TIE Fighter**'s few weaknesses (although some might consider this an advantage) is that the cockpit of each of the Empire's ships has almost the same look. Although the ships handle differently, this common appearance might wear on some of the die-hard pilots.

The new features and interface adjustments make **TIE Fighter** play much better than **X-Wing**. For example, the designers expanded the list of wingman orders so that players can direct wingmen away from the enemy they are attacking. This

eliminates much of the wasted wingman power players experienced in **X-Wing**. **TIE Fighter** adds a group of new in-flight data, navigation and status screens so that players don't need to return to base to track their progress. A 3-D navigation screen highlights every target and friendly ship. Players can also equip their ship in **TIE Fighter** with their weapons of choice before each mission. Most importantly, each mission has three difficulty levels, but the Easy and Hard levels involve a point deduction and bonus respectively. Nobody can complain that **TIE Fighter** is too hard! There are many more subtle interface changes in **TIE Fighter** that show how Holland and Kilham made a conscious effort to design the best possible sequel to **X-Wing** that both new players and veterans of that game would learn in no time.

TIE Fighter's graphics, sound effects, music and cinematic scenes are stunning. The game is as much a movie reversal through the story screens and incredible animation as it is a space combat simulator. Although these "cut-scenes" pepper the game's campaign, the graphics throughout TIE Fighter are of the highest quality. LucasArts's musicians reworked John Williams's original score and music for the movies, slightly darkening the tones to fit the game's attitude. The music and sound effects reinforce the fast action and space battles so that players can easily slip into that Star Wars frame of mind. LucasArts took all of the latest graphics and audio technology and crammed it into **TIE Fighter** so that players experience the ultimate combat challenges in over 50 missions.

No game is perfect, but **TIE Fighter** continues a terrible element from **X-Wing** that made players want to send a squadron of **TIE Bombers** to LucasArts headquarters bent on destruction. *Every* time players start **TIE Fighter** they must enter a password based on symbols from the game manual. This is annoying! Also, the manual becomes dog-eared and tattered. Software copy protection should only surface occasionally or during game installation, not at the start of each and every game! Enough said.

TIE Fighter is addictive and exhilarating because it's the first time players have ever been able to pilot Imperial space ships and it's the only *Star Wars* property to examine the films' events from the Empire's viewpoint. Besides, it's not a smart move to disappoint Darth Vader. **TIE Fighter** permits player flexibility and offers such a wide variety of game play and pilot development that other game companies should look to this game as a model of excellence.

May the Force be ... oops. May your journey to the dark side be rewarding. **A**
(Russ Ceccola)

LARRY HOLLAND

Game Designer Larry Holland spoke to **EG** right after **TIE Fighter**'s release. He acknowledged that many players thought that **X-Wing** was too difficult. "We really wanted to find a way to build a system that was more configurable to people's skill levels," he explained. Hence the three difficulty levels. As far as the shift of perspective to the dark side, he commented that "an overwhelming majority of the people love the new perspective, but only a small minority rebel against the idea. We enjoyed looking into the Imperial organization and adding a lot of texture that wasn't there before."

Holland offered two important tips to players of **TIE Fighter**. "Understand your goals and watch that goal screen—especially if you want to rise in the ranks of the elite Imperial pilots. In **TIE Fighter**, you have a lot more forces on your side as the Empire normally does, so use your wingmen to complete your goals."

The future of the *Star Wars* combat simulator series is currently undecided. Holland admitted, "We have a story line that allows us to introduce new Imperial and Rebel ships, but nothing can beat the TIE Defender." What is Holland's favorite ship? "I'm partial to the Gunboat, but I like the TIE Defender because of its look and design."

INHERIT THE EARTH

Puzzle-solving adventure in a mythic future

It is far, far in the future, and the time of humans has long since passed. Their legacy to the Earth is a population of Morphs, tribes of animals that have been given sentience and intelligence. Although there are those tribes that have carried on the stories of humans, the entire species has become legendary, endowed with the wisdom and powers of ancient gods. Most of their technology has been lost, with only bits and pieces surviving. The

Morphs of today live in a society not unlike the human times of Robin Hood and the Knights of the Round Table, and magic has re-entered the land.

The game begins at a Faire, in the final seconds of the Grand Tournament between Rif the Fox and Scorry the Rat. Because he has been concentrating on the win, and not the game, Rif is beaten by Scorry and is awarded the Silver Medallion instead of the Gold.

As he is berating himself, an Elk appears and declares the Faire closed: The Orb of Storms, the tool used by the Morphs to predict the weather, has been stolen. This could be a catastrophe, especially for the Boar Tribe, who need the Orb's predictions to plan their Mud Baths. And who is the prime suspect? Naturally, it's Rif—everyone knows that Foxes are sly, cunning thieves, just as Elks are noble and administrative, and Boars are stupid and aggressive.

But Rif is also a master puzzle-solver, as he proves by showing his medallion, and convincing the forces of the Forest King (who is an Elk, of course) to allow him to find the Orb. But if Rif doesn't find it by the next new moon, he will stand trial for its theft. Accompanied in his quest by Each the Elk and Okk the Boar, Rif sets off with very few clues with which to accomplish his task. Whether he succeeds, clearing his own good name and that of the Fox Tribe, and rescuing his girlfriend Rhene from the clutches of the Boar Tribe, depends entirely on the cleverness and perseverance of the player.

Kids love this game. In fact, some kids find this game irresistible, and keep coming back to it again and again, despite some of the difficulties encountered in play. The idea is to visit as many places, talk to as many Morphs and gather as many clues as possible, slowly putting together the pieces of the puzzle and solving the mystery of the Orb's disappearance.

The game is played from a three-quarter overhead view that's fairly close to the ground, so it's often difficult to tell exactly where Rif and his party are, and whether they've been there before. In fact, this can be a very frustrating aspect of the game, and many players may be tempted to put down the mouse after a short time.

When the band members travel between areas, though, they're seen as a tiny spark of light on a three dimensional map, until they reach their next destination. The screen is divided horizontally, with the viewing window in the top half, and the action/inventory screen in the bottom half. Game play is with a mouse, and because the character actions are listed below the game window it's sometimes hard to get Rif to do what the player wants, as he or she has to move and click with lightning speed to, for example, talk to passersby before they disappear off the screen. It's also a good idea to keep the manual handy, as some of the questions asked (mostly by members of the Rat tribe, who are the intellectuals) require looking up certain words on certain pages. Those who have been spoiled by the near-photo-quality graphics of some games will find the graphics here a bit blocky, but they're certainly passable and don't deter from the enjoyment of the game.

The opening scenes of the program use spoken as well as written dialog, but once game play is started the dialog is only written—with a control for reading speed. The background music is suitable to the Medieval setting of the game, and is innocuous enough not to become annoying during game play.

There may be questions in the minds of some whether, in these politically correct times, it's wise to have a game that relies so heavily on introduced stereotypes—

each tribe, as it were, displaying certain personality traits. On the other hand, one could argue that an undercurrent of this game is a lesson in the uselessness of stereotypes, as Rif is obviously not what most believe members of the Fox Tribe to be, and goes a long way toward proving it by his actions and his honesty. Either way, the game is intricate, involving, and often tough to solve, and promises not only hours of enjoyment for the players, but also free time to stressed-out parents. C+

(Sara Slaymaker)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	New World Computing
DESIGNER:	The Dreamer's Guild
SYSTEM:	MS-DOS
THEME:	Puzzle
HD SPACE:	15-17 Meg
PLAYERS:	1
LEVELS:	N/A

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WARTIME CONSTRUCTION SET II: TANKS

Tanks for the memories

Does the steady clank of tank treads bring fond tears of remembrance to your eyes? Is nothing more pleasant than the acrid sting of dust rising into your nostrils? If so, then you are probably ripe to jump into a turret and roll across North Africa (or any other armored battlefield from 1918 until the present) with **War game Construction Set II: Tanks!**

SSI's latest war game is reminiscent of their early classic **Kamfgruppe**, largely because game play does not get mired down in the mud of complex and overlapping rules. In fact, it is almost a click and play war game, which is a rare find indeed. **Tanks** extends far beyond **Kamfgruppe** (as it should) in scope and flexibility, however.

Tanks comes with over 20 pre-generated historical scenarios that span 12 major time periods. As one might expect, the focus of each is mechanized warfare. Airpower, with the exception of attack

helicopters in the more modern scenarios, is an automatic function governed by the computer at the start of each turn. Whichever side is awarded air superiority may conduct between zero and six airstrikes each turn. The player cannot specify the composition or targets for these strikes.

In addition to playing each scenario as a stand-alone encounter, players can use any one of these individual engagements as jumping off points for a campaign in that era. It works like this: the computer will assign a required victory point total for the campaign that is based on the level of difficulty chosen. Points are awarded to either side for capturing objectives and destroying enemy units. At the end of a given scenario (which is reached when one side is completely destroyed or the time limit expires), the victory points are calculated for both sides. If one side has reached the required level, regardless of whether they won the current battle or not, they receive the victory. If neither side has reached the requisite total, the program uses its own scenario builder to generate a new engagement almost instantaneously.

In a nutshell, **Tanks** is a very sophisticated version of Capture the Flag. In order to win, the player must control as many objective (flag) hexes as possible, while limiting friendly losses and inflicting maximum losses on the enemy. Each scenario has its own specific victory conditions based on the location, number, and values of objective hexes, which will also differ depending on whether the type of encounter is an assault, defense of a static position or a meeting engagement. The program determines this unless players generate their own scenario manually.

The Editor Menu, which gives players complete control over creation or modification of scenarios, is the most impressive feature of the game. It is the same tool used to design the standard scenarios that come with the game, and its unprecedented level of flexibility allows players to design some truly "memorable" engagements. The only limit is imagination.

Each piece of equipment in the game has a value that depends upon its combat and movement characteristics. Victory points for lost equipment are scaled so that the weaker force will be awarded more points than the stronger force for killing enemy equipment. Weakness seems to be determined purely on a quantitative, rather than qualitative basis.

For example, in the Gulf War engagements, American Forces are generally given the inferiority bonus. Granted, there may be a lot more Iraqi units in the order of battle, but each of them is relatively easy to defeat on a unit by unit basis. As long as the American player does not allow the Iraqi to mass forces and concentrate their firepower, quick victory is almost preordained. Some players may argue that this situation accurately reflects reality but, when you consider that each casualty the Iraqis inflicted was much more politically significant, a better method would have been to bias casualty bonuses in their favor.

Game play proceeds in turns, combat resolution in pulses. On any given turn, both players are given the option of issuing orders to most or all of their units. Prior to the issuance of orders, the program automatically resolves reinforcement, resupply, intelligence gathering and the merging of under-strength units located in the same stack.

When issuing movement orders, players can also specify whether the moving units should hold their fire or can return fire automatically when enemy units are encountered. The distinction is significant. Units with auto-fire enabled may stop well short of their planned objectives and expend the remainder of their movement allocation firing at the specific enemy that engaged them. As a rule, it is generally better to order all the units to hold fire while moving.

Tanks can be played at three levels of difficulty, but only the most advanced setting will prove a worthy opponent for most players. As always, finding a decent human opponent makes the game much more enjoyable over the long run. Unfortunately, modem play is not included as an option.

Tanks is a good beer & pretzels war game in the vein of **Perfect General**. It isn't worth writing home about, but it does bring you back time and again. **B–**
(Ed Dille

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	**SSI**
DESIGNER	**Bret Berry**
SYSTEM:	**MS-DOS**
THEME:	**War game/Strategy**
HD SPACE:	**5 MB**
PLAYERS:	**1-2**
LEVELS:	**N/A**

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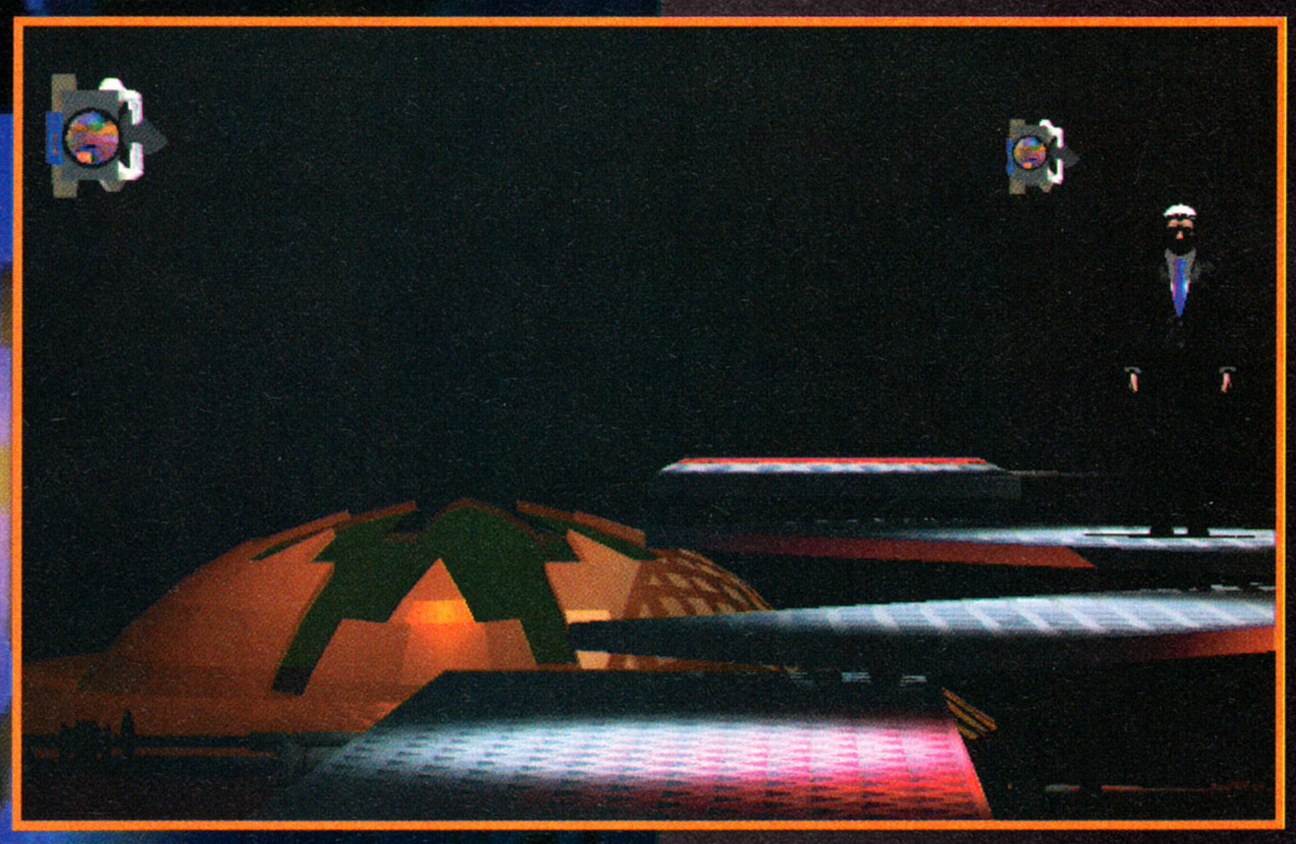

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SERF CITY: LIFE IS FEUDAL

SimCity Meets Lemmings in The Middle Ages

Good strategy games walk the fine line between difficulty and playability very carefully. There have been very intuitive interfaces for games that seem impossible to win as well as simple games where you can't figure out how to work the controls. **Serf City** is neither of these. It is, in fact, a rather challenging, but fair, game with a basic interface that's easy to learn.

The challenge comes in managing all the events in the game world intelligently. Players have to act as both businessmen and conquerors in this strategy game where they go from having next to nothing to taking over a city (serfdom) of another player (the computer or another person).

Serf City is like a combination of **Lemmings** and **SimCity** in format. The player controls serfs with a variety of different skills as they build a thriving serfdom that can withstand attacks from other serfdoms and ultimately destroy the opposition through a strong army. The game is also a race against time because the other serfdoms develop at the same rate as the player (or faster). There is a progression of steps that serfdoms must go through before battles are possible. The best players will be able to reach this point quickly.

However, this does not mean that they will become bored with **Serf City.** A number of world sizes and random world generation ensure that no two games play the same. Still, there are a series of established missions for those who want to compare their skills with a friend.

The training games and Demo Mode are where all players should begin their journey. Watch the computer-controlled serfdoms in the Demo Mode to get a handle on how the skilled serfs go about their business. The training games take players through the development of a serfdom and its various construction phases. After someone plays these games, they should be able to tackle a real game.

At the start of any game, all the player has is a castle and a small number of serfs. Some of these serfs already have jobs and are just waiting to be activated. However, serfs only perform their duties when there are opportunities for them to work. If a player builds a guard house, there is sure to be a guard in the building. Serfs have such varied duties as fisherman, miller, blacksmith, lumberjack, transporter, and construction worker. As players lay down roads or construct buildings, the appropriate serfs come to life and do their job.

Serf City's interface consists of a scrollable view screen that depicts part of the game world and a few command icons at the bottom of the screen. These command icons access construction, statistics, and other game functions.

Games have a natural progress. In order to attack another serfdom, a player needs weapons and knights. In order to make weapons, there must be raw materials. Raw materials come from mines and foundries, whose workers have to be fed by butchers, fishermen, and farmers. Players must work up from the construction of farms and roads, and build up their supplies and treasury before they can even hope to design a simple weapon. Statistics and charts reveal exactly how well a player progresses.

If the supplies, intelligence level or growth rate drop, a serfdom could be in trouble. If a player builds faster than he produces the wood and granite necessary for this construction, the situation is even worse. The game designers smartly considered this problem and when necessary, assign an emergency supply of wood and granite so that a player can construct a lumberjack's hut, sawmill, and quarryman's hut. The chances of winning are pretty slim at this point, but it is possible. **Serf City** is a game of balance. Some people will become frustrated that they don't have enough supplies, but they will certainly know better the next time how to handle this situation.

Serf City is replayable because of the many ways people may play and because of the random factors. Some may build on tracts of land spread out all around the castle, while others might instead bring the buildings closer together. The terrain, water supply, and underground deposits determine the best placement for each type of building. It is especially important to keep a close eye on the charts later in the game because one move can modify the future of a serfdom dramatically. Like most simulation games, players can control all the events in **Serf City**, but they must carefully balance their actions so that both the immediate and future changes benefit the serfdom.

Serf City supports both high-resolution Super VGA graphics and standard VGA Mode. Although the high-res graphics are very realistic and nice to watch in Demo Mode, they also limit the amount of the world that's viewable in the game window. The serfs themselves are fun to watch and have all kinds of goofy animations that add humor to the challenging strategy. Still, they perform their jobs much like their real-world counterparts, so the game's world is as realistic as it is humorous. The sound effects bring to mind construction sites, farms, and bustling suburban communities. They perfectly complement the on-screen events.

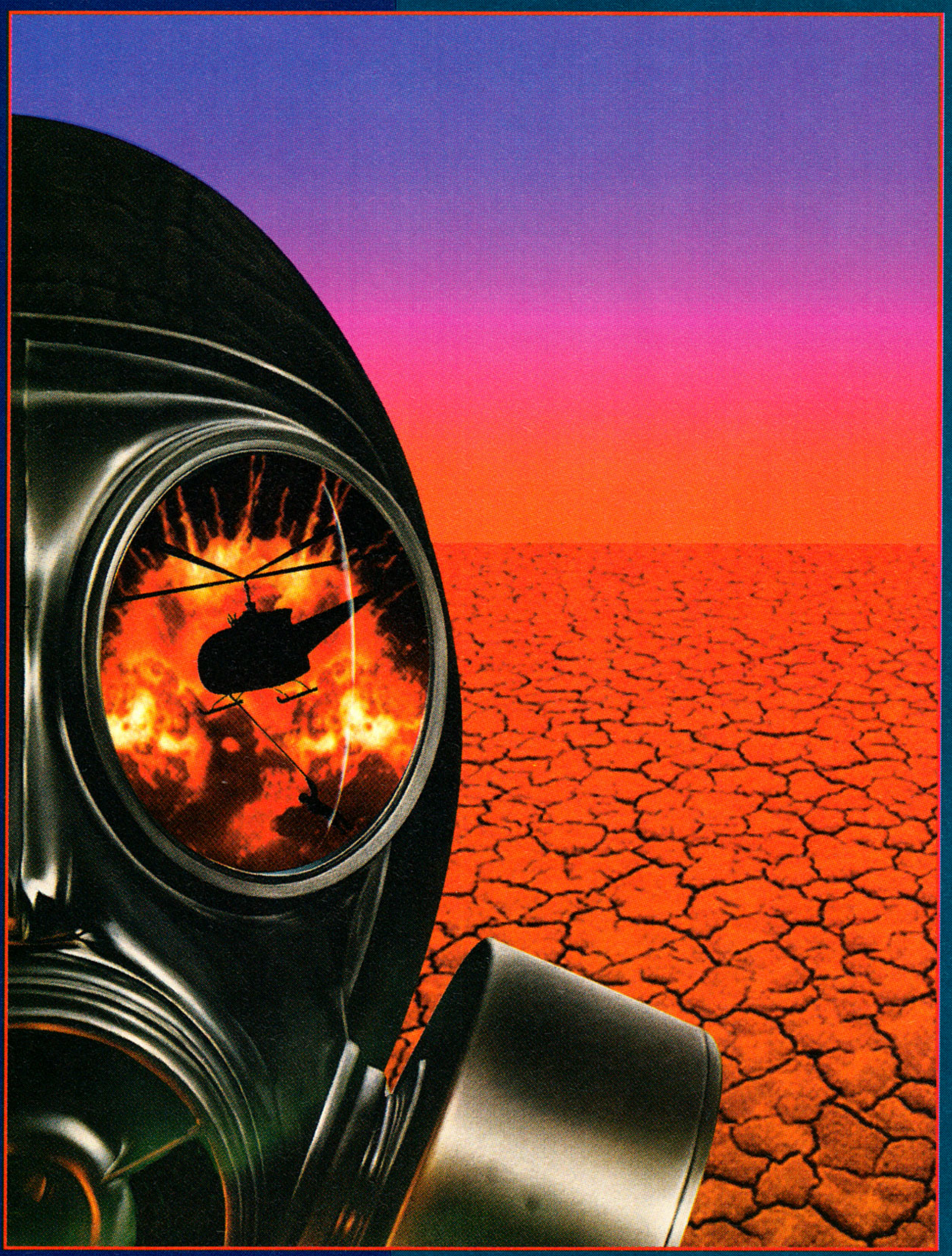
Multiplayer games are another way people can revisit the game worlds, but with a maximum of 32,000 possible serfs in the largest game world, there should be enough meat for solo players.

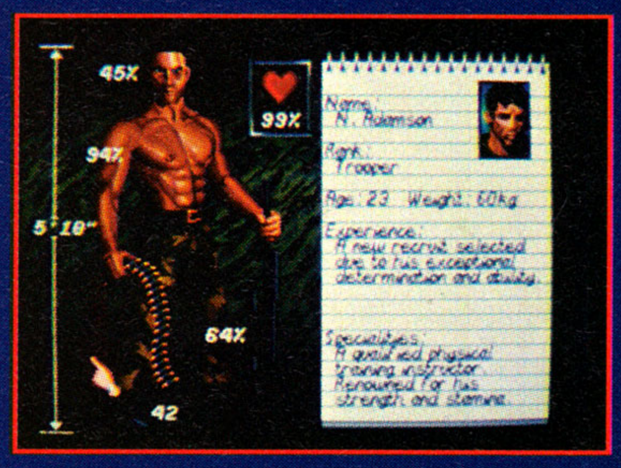
The random elements, icon-based interface and simulation angle keeps **Serf City** exciting and fresh while the players are busy. The game is a step back in time to a medieval era when lords did rule over serfs and battles between rulers happened every day. **B** *(Russ Ceccola)*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	**SSI**
DESIGNER:	**Blue Byte**
SYSTEM:	**MS-DOS**
THEME:	**Strategy**
HD SPACE:	**5 MB**
PLAYERS:	**1-2**
LEVELS:	**Unlimited**

Sabre Team





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POWER POKER

Put on your best poker face for this one

Power Poker is for folks who know when to hold 'em and when to fold 'em.

Kinder, gentler poker simulations take newcomers by the hand and teach them the ropes. But **Power Poker** knows well that poker is no "girly man's" game, and the program runs roughshod over players who wouldn't know the difference between a full house and a straight if their lives depended on it.

In fact, this Windows game comes so close to a real poker game, you'd swear those are billowing clouds of cigar smoke obscuring your monitor. Hey, who's got the beer and pretzels?

Electronic Arts calls **Power Poker** "the ultimate poker simulation," and it's tough to argue with that. John Scarne, the gambling authority, is said to have identified 117 variations of the game; **Power Poker** includes 108 of them—from the basic five-card draw to the popular anaconda and baseball, to the more obscure gruesome twosome, screwy louie, and the ever popular spit-in-the-ocean.

Never heard of spit-in-the-ocean? A quick click on the Rules Sub-Menu will display how the game got its name, what poker family it belongs to, what other game it is based on, and what makes it unique or interesting.

If none of the 108 games are particularly appealing at any given time, all are fully editable with enough options to practically design a new game.

There's nothing to learning how to customize **Power Poker**. Click on "open" to select a game variation, and then on "rules" to become acquainted with both the house and the game rules. Not happy with the house rules? Change 'em!

The Menu Bar displays an incredible array of choices. Will there be an ante before the deal and, if so, how much? What procedures will the dealer use when dealing? Will jokers be included? How about wild cards, action cards, and power cards? What are the opening requirements to bet? Which hands are playable and which are winning hands?

It's enough to boggle the mind of Bret Maverick himself.

Power Poker will even do its best to turn so-so players into real card sharks. Not sure how good a hand is? A Hand Analysis Option displays a hand's historical chance of beating all the others. Then, when it's time to draw, roll, pass, or discard, **Power Poker** can recommend which cards to discard. A "what-if analysis" calculates chances of improving the hand by replacing the selected cards before they are actually discarded.

To make **Power Poker** really come alive, a video option turns on video clips of real poker players who react and comment on the game. It adds to the fun but requires an SVGA card with 256 colors. On the other hand, gamblers who settle for non-animated opponents will be treated to zippier game play.

TECH SPECS

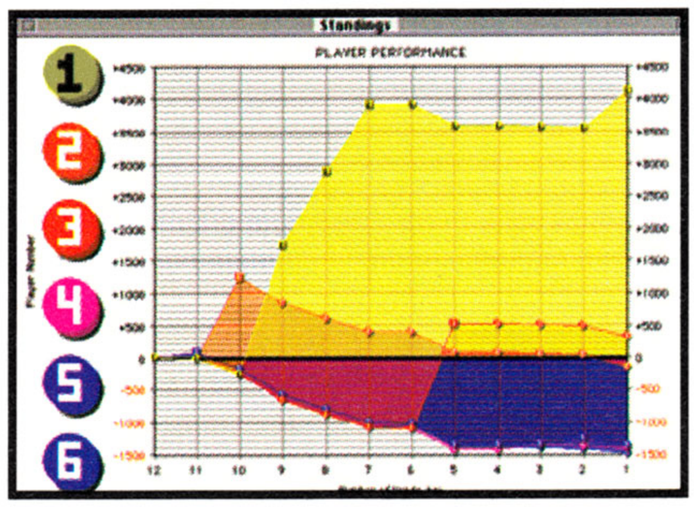
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
DESIGNER: Todd Ouzts
SYSTEM: MS-DOS
THEME: Simulation/Strategy
HD SPACE: 7 MB
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

Just as no poker game is played in silence, **Power Poker** is enhanced with the sounds of cards shuffling and chips clicking, and the digitized voice of the dealer.

While **Power Poker** stands heads above most other poker programs, it does have its downside. Its Windows platform makes it easy to call up in a flash for a few quick hands, but its window can't be sized and is annoyingly tiny. The chips, for example, are microscopic and blend in with the tabletop color (the only thing that can't be customized) so they are particularly difficult to count.

While the earlier Mac version allowed 10 players to lose their money at the same time on a network, the PC version is for solo play—one human against up to five computer opponents.

Power Poker does include a glossary in its manual for novices who don't know, say, that a "big dog" is a hand with an ace-high and nine-low but with no pairs. But there's no easy, back-up for which hands beat what, an obvious aid for those who aren't sure whether three-of-a-kind wins or loses to two pair.



Power Poker will be most appreciated by die-hard card players who can only manage to get the guys (or girls) together on Tuesday night—and don't want to wait a whole week to lose their shirts. **B+**
(Paul Hyman)

A CLOSET POKER MANIAC

Todd Ouzts, the man behind Power Poker, describes the 3 1/2 man-years he put into his "ultimate poker simulation" as "pure therapy."

"All day long I work on business software, and I wanted to build something that could be popped open and played for fun just to kill time." He says that now that he and his friends are in their early-30s and have families, it's harder to get together for one of the poker nights he loves so much—so he developed Power Poker for solo play.

Currently his Salt Lake City-based Scenario Software Co. is investigating a follow-up.

"Maybe we'll do a CD-ROM version with lots of video, faster play, networking, different table layouts with first-person perspective, and smarter AI." He's also considering toying with an Old West adventure game that revolves around poker.

His advice to **Power Poker** players? Watch for Easter eggs. When you get a royal flush, for example, you hear the distinctive sound of a toilet flushing.

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NEW WORLD COMPUTING®

THEME PARK

Looking down the business end of your favorite park

So your last family outing to Twelve Flags Over Sheboygan was less than memorable? The lines were endless, the concessions ran out of food, and the giant coaster screeched to a halt leaving you stranded atop that last peak just as the thunder clouds rolled in?

Bad, was it? Now try to imagine what it was like for the poor guy running the place.

That's the nightmare players encounter in **Theme Park**, an intricately designed simulation that challenges would-be amusement park owners to entertain thousands of visitors while trying to keep their own sanity.

The goal seems simple: build a resort that is not only the hottest ticket in town, but also a winner on the stock exchange. How hard can that be?

Players who recall Lucille Ball scurrying to decorate cakes before they fell off a conveyor belt will soon learn the meaning of panic. The mind boggles at how many details are involved in building and maintaining a theme park.

The first decision is where to locate it—there needs to be lots of customers nearby, but the more dense the population, the more expensive the land. More developed economies tend to have higher inflation, interest, and land tax rates. What about the climate? The terrain? Are there competing theme parks around and how well are they doing? Do their owners hold any vendettas against you?

There's lots of preliminary work to be done. Rides need to be carefully selected based on their cost, excitement value, reliability, and capacity. Stores must be built and stocked. Paths, trees, lamp posts, hedges, and even outhouses have to be set in place.

Then players must determine which employees to hire—entertainers, handymen, mechanics, and guards—without busting the payroll. Want to save money by hiring one less mechanic? Better beware the next time the merry-go-round goes up in smoke. Feel like doing without the costumed characters, like Squid Man and Chicken Man? The customers won't appreciate it when the rains come and there's no one to hand out umbrellas. Don't want to sign on any guards? What's going to happen when thugs start kicking the entertainers?

How high should ticket prices be? Food prices? Salaries? If wages are too low, the unions may insist on some tough negotiations that could leave the park penniless.

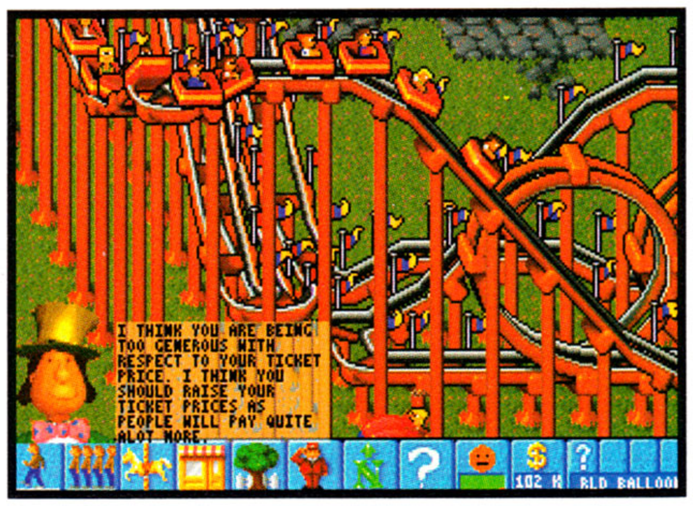
Done with the decisions? Get real! There are many more to be made when the entrance gates are thrown open and it's time to rake in the profits. Customers wandering around too slowly? Time to boost the caffeine level at the coffee shop. No one's buying drinks? Better spike the fries with more salt. Not enough food stands? Don't place the new ones too close to the rides; if one customer loses his lunch it could start a whole chain reaction.

Now *that's* called getting down to the real nitty-gritty of amusement park management!

While **Theme Park** offers three difficulty levels, even the "sandbox" level can overwhelm beginners. Only gamers named Disney should even attempt the "full" level where they must research additional facilities, answer to the banks, and contend with rival operators who will do their best to put you out of business.

At the end of each financial year, players receive a statement rating their performance against 40 rivals in six categories: richest park owner, most exciting park, most amenities, cost satisfaction, biggest park, and most pleasant park. The only way to win is to become numero uno in all six categories.

If there's a downside to **Theme Park**, it's that its mouse interface is not as smooth as it should be—setting up



pathways and rides can be aggravating.

But that's minor compared to the fun of spending endless hours tinkering with every aspect of **Theme Park**. This is a package as big as its namesake—its 21-MB size is crammed with an impressive animated introduction, a helpful tutorial for beginners, and enough play value to keep the game going seemingly forever. No need to shut down just because you're a success; move on to another site and then another, and build a **Theme Park** empire.

Watch out, Twelve Flags Over Sheboygan; here comes **Theme Park**.

A *(Paul Hyman)*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
DESIGNER: Bullfrog Productions
SYSTEM: MS-DOS
THEME: Simulation
HD SPACE: 21 Meg
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: N/A

A STROLL THRU THE PARK

Alex Trowers of the **Theme Park** design team offers these undocumented hints for running a successful **Theme Park**:

- Be aware of customers' moods by watching the thought bubbles over their heads. If several people get hungry in the same area, build a concession nearby.
- Nobody likes a messy park. Food shops create litter and, if there's too much litter, customers will stay away. Have sufficient handymen to clean up.
- Left alone, mechanics will sit and eat sandwiches. Keep an eye on them and be ready to route them toward rides that show signs of blowing up.
- Never leave the park unattended; there is always something to do. Remember that awards go to parks that are run smoothly, and awards not only improve your reputation but put cash in your bank account.

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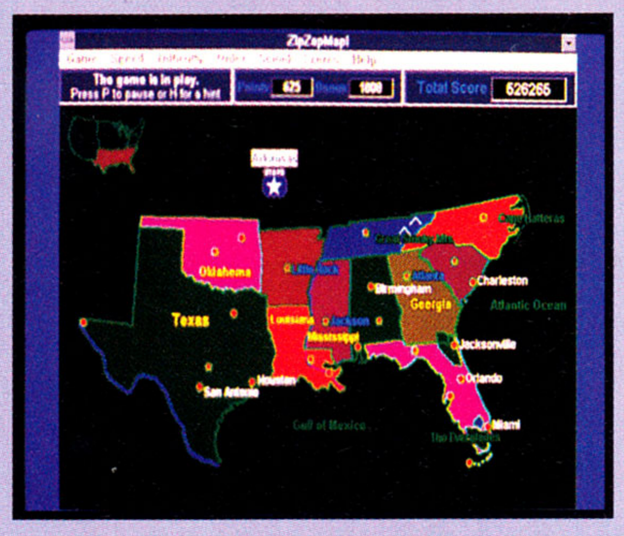
THE FINAL GRADE

The following chart details the thoughts and opinions of several different EG editors on some of the latest software. In the future we will feature guest reviewers from around the country.

	Arnie Katz Editor	Marc Camron Senior Editor	Bill Kunkel Executive Editor	Russ Ceccola Associate Editor
Al Qadim	B	B-	B+	B
Alone in the Dark II	A	A	A+	-
Arena Elder Scrolls	B	B	A-	A
Astro Chase 3-D	A	B+	A	-
Com. Adv.: Starship	B-	B-	B	B
Doom	A-	A	A+	A+
Empire Soccer '94	C	C	B-	C
Formula One	B-	C	C+	B
Front Page FB Pro	A	A	A	A
Geekwad Games	A+	A-	B+	B
Genghis Kahn II	B	A	A	-
Global Domination	B	B	A	B
Goblins Quest III	B+	B+	B	A+
Harpoon II	A-	B+	B+	-
Heirs to the Throne	C	C	-	C+
Hired Gun	C	C-	-	B
Indy Car Racer	A	B+	B+	B+
Kingmaker	B-	B-	-	-
Lands of Lore	A-	A	B+	A
Leisure Suit Larry 6	-	A-	B	B+
Metal and Lace	C+	D	D	C+
Microsoft Arcade	A	A	A	A
Mortal Kombat	B	B+	C-	B+
Nigel Mansell's	B-	C	C+	-
Pacific Strike	A-	B	A-	C+
Ultima VIII: Pagan	A-	B	B+	A-
Pea Shootin' Pete	B+	B-	B	B+
Quarter Pole	C+	C	C	-
Ravenloft	B-	A-	C+	B+
Return to Zork	A	A	A-	A
Sam and Max	-	A+	B+	A
Shadow of Yserbius	B-	C	C	A+
SimCity 2000	A	A+	A	A+
Specter VR	B	B+	B-	B+
Star Trek: Judgment Rites	B+	B	B	B+
Terminator Rampage	A-	A-	B+	B
TFX: Tactical Fighter	B-	C+	C+	A
Ultimate Domain	B+	B+	B+	B
X-Com: UFO Defense	A-	A	-	A+



Test your knowledge of geography or just concentrate on the puzzles with Zip Zap Map.

Planet Soccer *(By **Infogrames** for PC)* While the video game world certainly doesn't need another soccer simulation (three kazillion are, perhaps, sufficient), there are actually very few European-style futbol sims in the computer universe.

Despite the title, which seems to suggest that the game will be the Soccer version of **Cyberbowl** or **Baseball 2020**, **Planet Soccer** is actually a very well-produced, straightforward soccer game, with great animations, and solid rotation SFX. Also, having been produced by Euro-peans, it's incredibly faithful. **B+** *(Bill Kunkel)*

Double Talk *(By **Boyle & Elggren** for PC)* **Double Talk** is a cute computer word game in which players click on squares, which produce split-screen text clues to which there is a single answer. (Example: if the two clues are "Ghost Talk" and "Alcoholic's Master." then the word is "Booze.") Entering the correct answer removes that square from the board which, itself, contains yet another double-pronged puzzle.

There's no special sense that a computer makes **Double Talk** any more or less entertaining than a non-electronic version—the graphics are minimal, for example, though there are sound effects—but it's entertaining and original, so why complain? **B** *(Laurie Yates)*

Links Pro Macintosh *(by **Access** for Macintosh)* The classic golf simulation

series for 386-or-better MS-DOS PCs has been translated to the 256-color Macintosh screen intact. Starting with the Harbour Town Golf Links, the courses are reproduced in exacting detail, as is readily seen as each scene builds on screen. Impatient compu-golfers will want the full recommended 8-Megs of memory to speed up this process; players with a Power Mac will avoid the distraction entirely. The complex interface appears intimidating, with many details to the setup. The game's capabilities are wide-ranging—there's even a speech-recognition module which allows club selection by voice. Once past the preparations, however, the game's a satisfying re-creation of nine or 18 holes on the real links, without all the walking. **B+** *(Ross Chamberlain)*

Robinson's Requiem *(By **Silmarils** for PC)* A "survival/adventure" simulation from French designer Andre Rocques inspired by the adventures of Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe.

The player is stuck on an alien planet with over three square miles of predators,

prey, and NPCs.

This is not a bad idea, the execution is acceptable, and there are some interesting and highly detailed survivalist features, but **Robinson's Requiem** seems extremely dated. It's an icon-driven adventure that looks and plays like a two-year-old game, and in this business, two years is a loooong time. **C** *(Bill Kunkel)*

Zip Zap Map *(By **National Geographic** for PC)* This is an occasionally bizarre combination of **Tetris** and the old children's board game, **Go to the Head of the Class**.

State shapes and icons fall onto blank, regional map forms of the United States, and the player must correctly position them. States, large cities, mountain ranges, rivers, and other geographical data drops onto the screen in a variety of randomized formations, so the player must be quick with both their hands and their wits.

The graphics are pretty primitive (and you'll *swear* that it's the infamous "Butthead" who announces "Yesss!" when a player correctly positions a data entry), but this is a challenging game design disguised in a very simple package. **B-** *(Laurie Yates)*

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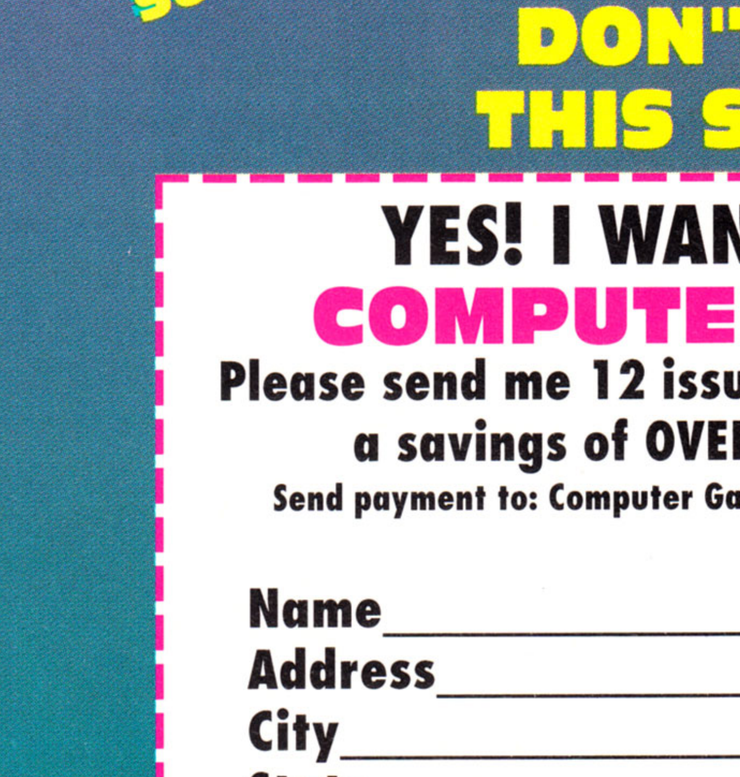

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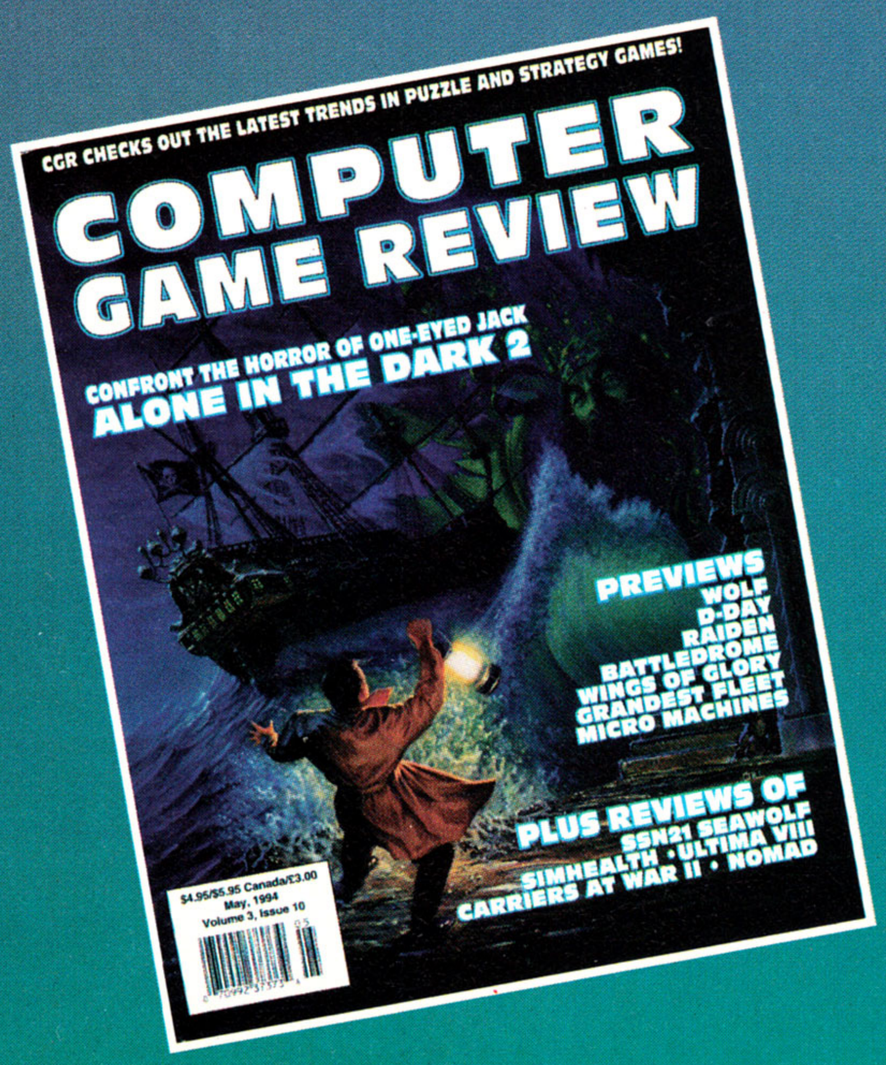

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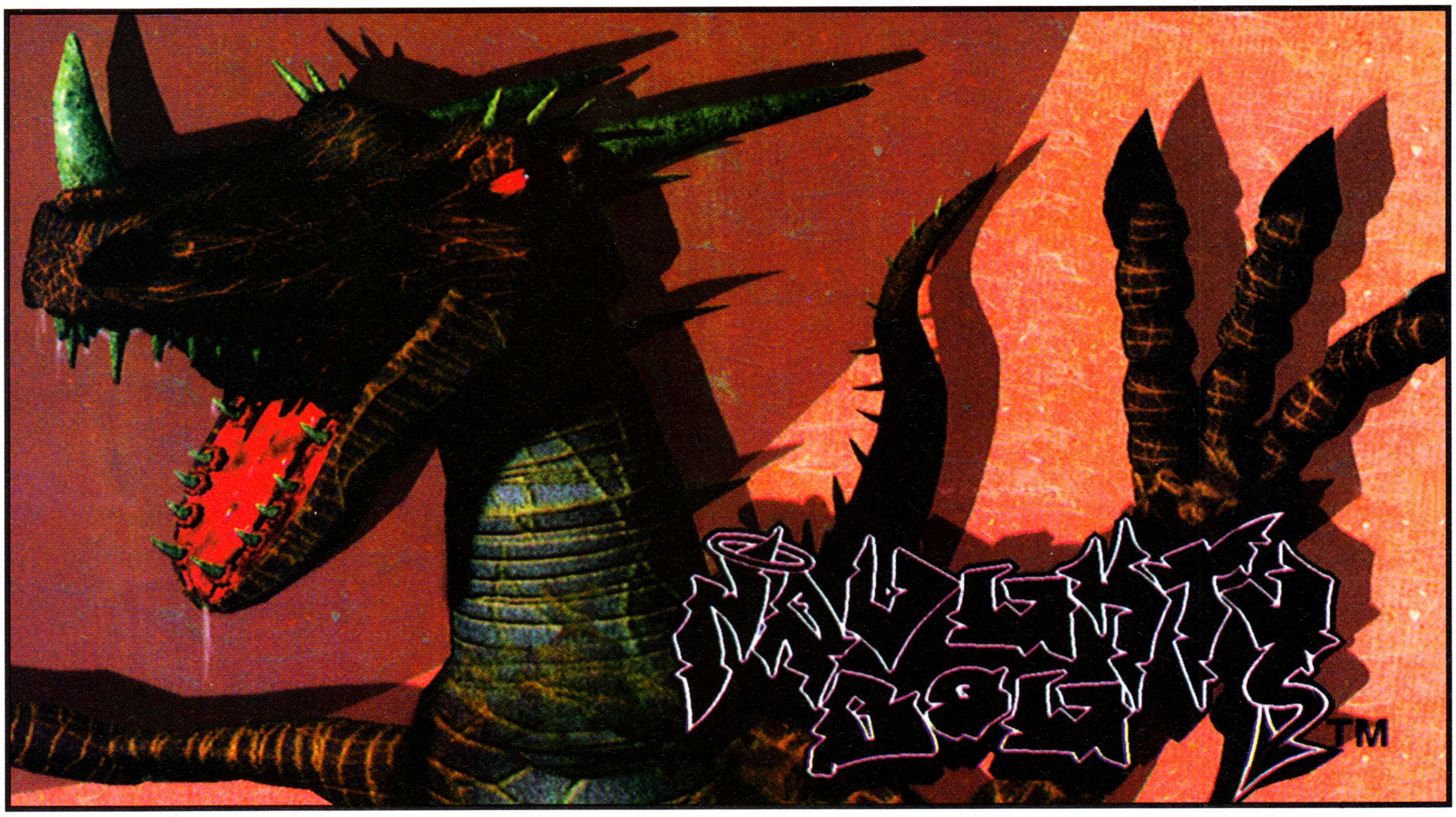


WAY OF THE WARRIOR

Home today, but in the arcades tomorrow

Ancient riddle, Grasshopper: when is **Street Fighter** simply not sexy enough any more? At what point does Mortal Monday become Mortal Mundane? Answer: when a very Naughty Dog struts across your path. Naughty Dog's **Way of the Warrior** will soon be the way of the world, and a seller of 3DO units as well. Why? Because **Way of the Warrior** is simply the most raucous, vicious, in-your-face fighting game to grace any screen, inside or outside the arcade. It's a good thing this one doesn't take quarters, because it could generate its own crime wave among addicts.

Way of the Warrior is the first fighting game to exploit the superior graphics and animation features of the 3DO platform and, quite frankly, 3DO would have done a lot better up until now if it had had a game of this quality in the initial offering. Many of the individual features in the game are bigger than an entire 16-Bit cartridge game itself. Each of the characters in the game are over 5-Megabytes, not megabits, well beyond the size of a Nintendo or Sega cartridge. **Way of the Warrior** incorporates 60-Megabytes of sound effects alone, equal to approximately 30 16-Bit cartridges, as well as five minutes worth of digitized full-motion video (the aggregate total of all the standard and special moves, not just cut sequences).

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	**Universal Interactive**
DESIGNER:	**Naughty Dog, Inc.**
SYSTEM:	**3DO**
THEME:	**Martial Arts**
HD SPACE:	**N/A**
PLAYERS:	**1 - 2**
LEVELS:	**10**

Each character in the game has a distinct personality and fighting style. Unlike many other fighting games that limit characters to three to five individual moves and a few special attacks, **Way of the Warrior** gives each character between 50 and 60 regular moves as well as his or her own repertoire of 15 to 30 special combinations. The latter include dramatic throws, killer grabs, spinning/leaping moves, projectile attacks, back-breaking knee drops, and superhuman kicks.

Also unlike the characters in other games, these warriors are different sizes and shapes as well. Several warriors can also transform themselves during combat via hidden moves that generate strength or

agility, adding yet another strategic element to the already challenging game play.

Champions in their style of fighting, the warriors include: the Dragon, a Chinese martial artist; Major Gaines, the most expensive assassin in the world; the Ninja, an unknown but deadly Japanese opponent; Crimson Glory, a classic American tomboy who is always up for a bar brawl; Nobunaga, a superhuman Japanese Kendo fighter; Nikki Chan, an acrobatic kung fu master with a curse from the gods she must fight to reverse; Konotori, an American raised in Japan seeking revenge on the killer of his adopted father; Shaky Jake, a wild man from the Australian outback; and Fox, a street-smart bodyguard to the rich and powerful.

Set in a Citadel high atop the Himalayas, the tournament that is the foundation of **Way of the Warrior** determines who will fill the final page in the ancient "Book of Fighting." The Book, kept by the Kthundra monks who descended from the great mythical dragons of lore, chronicles the greatest warriors through the ages. This century's victor wins the honor of adding his or her name in blood to complete the Book and finally tip the scales in favor of good or evil for the remainder of eternity.

The battles take place in a number of exotic settings in and around the Temple. In addition to the main temple arena, which will surely remind some players of the setting from Bruce Lee's famous epic, *Enter the Dragon*, there is the Bridge, the Lava Pit, the Roof, the Dojo, The Cliffs, Abbot's Choice, The Graveyard and The Throne Room. All of the fighting arenas are 3-D modeled with fully parallaxing

backgrounds and automatic camera zooming that keeps the action center stage.

While fighting, the player can also pick up a number of bonus items and special power-ups, the appearance of which are tied to performance on the field of honor. These power-ups include No Damage, which gives a brief period of invulnerability (use it wisely); Skull Bonus, which awards varying fatality points from 10 to 100 percent; Invisibility, also for a short duration; Mega Blows, which makes each hit two to three times more powerful; Bone Breaking, which adds strength to your power bar; and Combo, which is the only way to perform certain special moves (think of it as an adrenaline rush).

Way of the Warrior can be played in either solitaire Tournament Mode against the AI (which is a very wicked opponent, no matter how calloused or seasoned the player), or Versus Mode, in which two players go head-to-head for three rounds to determine a victor. The best thing about the "two out of three falls" approach is that the program also features one of the most helpful handicapping systems ever designed to equalize play among opponents of varying skill levels. The bias can be set to equal, light, medium or heavy in either direction. With seven handicap settings, it's hard to imagine a situation where any two players could not find a balance that is challenging to both.

Way of the Warrior is a monumental achievement in mega-violence, and is also one of the most viscerally exciting games of the year. The Moral Minority may claim that this Naughty Dog is barking up the wrong tree, but action gamers everywhere are bound to go out on a limb with them over **Way of the Warrior**. **A+**
(Ed Dille)

WHO IS THIS DOG & WHY IS HE NAUGHTY?

James Rubin and Andrew Gavin have been designing video games since they met in Washington, D.C., at the young age of 13. At the ripe old age of 15, they produced their first commercial game, **Ski Crazed** by Baudville for the Apple II computer system. This successful endeavor lead the friends to create **DreamZone**, also for Baudville, and brought them to the attention of the creative team at Electronic Arts. While designing for EA, the young developers created the games **Keef the Thief** for the PC, and **Rings of Power** for the Sega Genesis system.

Currently living in the Boston area, Gavin, 24, completed his master's degree in artificial intelligence from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, while Rubin, 24, holds a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Michigan. With the completion of **Way of the Warrior**, their first game for play on the 3DO Interactive Multiplayer System, Gavin and Rubin plan to move Naughty Dog, Inc., to the Universal Interactive Studio offices at Universal City, California.

The Not for Prime-Time Players Guide

Way of the Warrior features some of the most spectacular and sadistically lethal fighting moves to splatter a game screen. Some of the highlights include:

Ninja: Disappears into the ground and reappears on the opposite side, fires lightning bolts that can fry opponents into a column of ash, decapitates, or eviscerates dazed enemies with a wakasashi, taunting them with "you have no guts."

Nobunaga: Throws stars that rip hunks of meat out of the enemy. Jumps to head level and slices downward with a katana amidst plenty of blood spray. Cuts defeated enemies in half.

Konotori: Throws razor tipped fans and uses same to fly like a helicopter. Fatality move is used to decapitate the opponent with a fan, punctuated by profuse arterial blood gouts.

Crimson Glory: Throws beer bottles. Picks up opponents for rapid face punches complete with blood and bone fragments flying. Her fatality attack is to hit enemies so hard their heads explode.

Nikki Chan: Uses her hair like a whip. Her ultimate attack is to blow you the kiss of death, which literally knocks the opposing character off the screen.

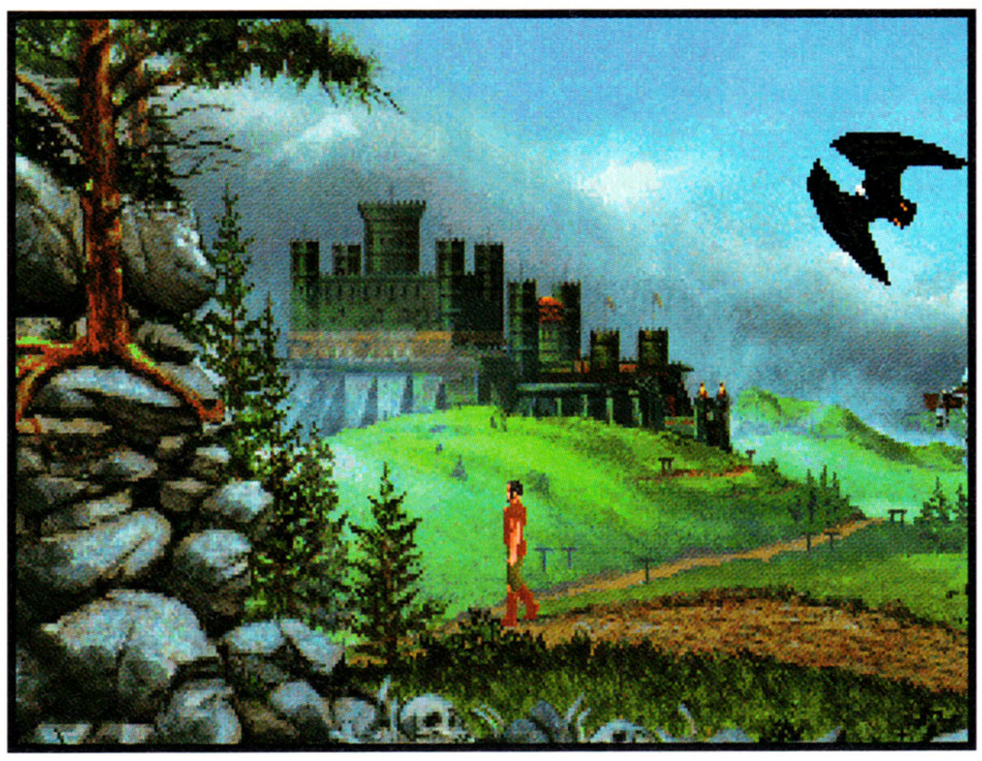
Dragon: Devastating fire attack that immolates the opposing character.

RETURN TO RINGWORLD

An adventure big enough for Ringworld explorers

Ringworld: Revenge of the Patriarch was Tsunami's first adventure game. It introduced the company's simplified interface and a world that suggested further exploration—Larry Niven's Known Space, which he wrote about in *Ringworld* and other books.

The main problem with **Ringworld** was not the interface, story, or graphics and music. They were all fine. There just wasn't enough meat in the game. Too many things happened automatically in cinematic scenes instead of involving the player, and there was not a lot to do overall. A typical player could finish the adventure in a few hours.



Return to Ringworld solves all of those problems, upgrades the graphics and effects, and presents a brand new story that exploits the capabilities of CD-ROM technology.

Return to Ringworld continues the story of the characters in the first game, but those players who missed it won't have trouble catching up because Tsunami included a comprehensive summary in the manual. **Return to Ringworld** immediately follows the events of the original game.

In the 29th century, Quinn McQuarry (a male human), Miranda Rees (a female human), and Seeker of Vengeance (a male

kzin—a catlike race) have blown up the Kzinti Patriarch's ship/weapon called the Destroyer. They have also stolen a special advanced drive system from the Puppeteers, a paranoid race. The player must guide these three fugitives to safety and ultimately discover the secrets of Ringworld itself. The United Nations' Amalgamated Regional Militia (ARM) are hot on the trio's trail during the game to keep things interesting.

Adventure game veterans and novices alike can play **Return to Ringworld** as soon as the first scene appears. The only thing they need to remember is that the right mouse button brings up the command icon window and the left mouse button activates these commands.

The Main Game Screen is a typical graphic adventure side-view of each scene. A row of inventory items below the Game Screen are those of the character under direct player control. The commands are very basic: walk (default), look, use, talk, and switch characters. A Tsunami logo icon accesses game functions: save game, load game, and change audio device.Click on a command and on an object, location, or character on the game screen to execute that command.

Return to Ringworld is unique because players can control all three main characters at once. Sometimes it is advantageous to split up the trio and direct them in different locations. Other times it makes no difference to the plot at all. Players have to experiment to maximize the usefulness of this game feature.

Return to Ringworld has some particularly tricky puzzles, but the majority are fair and straightforward. The neater sections of the game require the player to learn how to control alien devices. Physical puzzles like these give an immediate reward and satisfaction to the player that solves them.

The game's puzzles and devices are important to the game play, but the story and its dramatization through clever animation and recorded voices define a much better experience than "silent"

games. Voices help to further enhance an already interesting game, while the music and sound effects set the tone for the exciting adventure.

Designer Ken Allen used the *Ringworld* stories and locations as sources for a captivating science-fiction game with some surprises and challenging game play. **Return to Ringworld** is a much more tense and serious game than its predecessor with many more characters and locations to define through audio. Rendered graphics light up the screen with their detail, but some of the character animations are choppy and downright cheesy. The variety of worlds, devices, and characters challenged the artists to use an assortment of views and techniques as well as a lot of creativity. Their work complements the audio effects, speech, and plot nicely.

Return to Ringworld is a welcome return as far as the trend of sequels are concerned. There are more puzzles, locations ,and plot twists than the original game. The ability to switch characters also expands the possibilities for investigation and lends a personal approach to the plot. The *Ringworld* books are a vast source of stories and inspiration for countless more games. Tsunami should explore Niven's literary world as long as they continue to produce games as complete as **Return to Ringworld. B+** *(Russ Ceccola)*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	**Tsunami**
DESIGNER:	**Ken Allen**
SYSTEM:	**PC CD-ROM**
THEME:	**Adventure**
HD SPACE:	**2 MB**
PLAYERS:	**1**
LEVELS:	**N/A**

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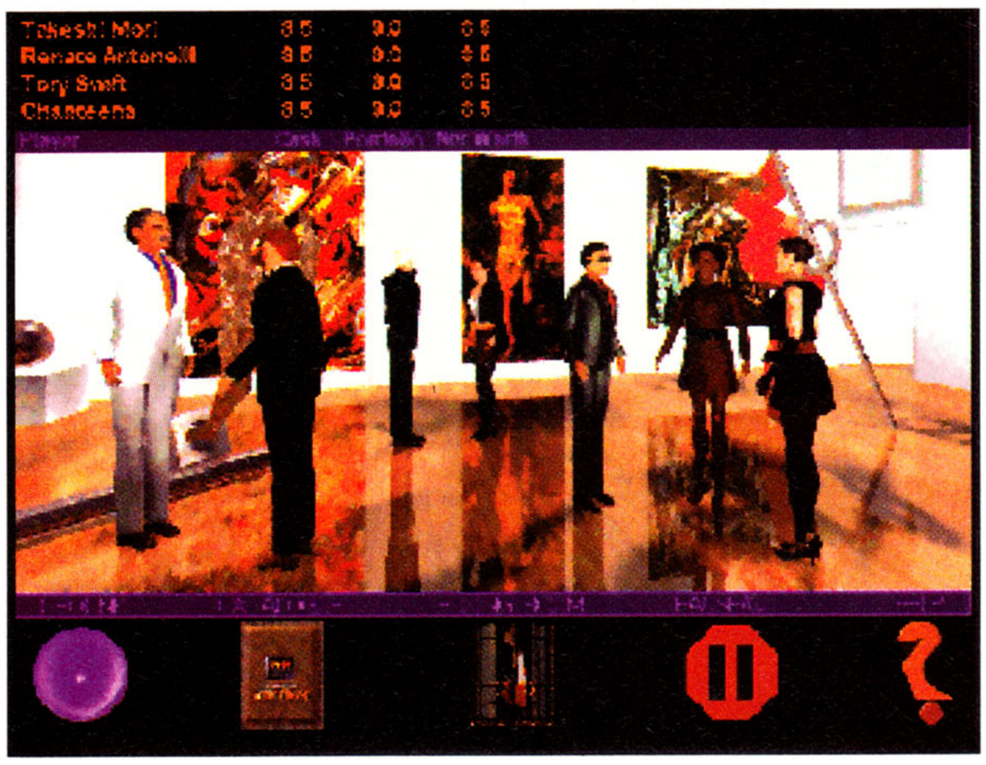
MILLENNIUM AUCTION

Step into a slightly mad, strangely intriguing world of art



Once in a very long while a totally unique game comes along. Shoved between copies of the latest **Doom**ed clone, slightly beside the infinite versions of **Morbid Combat** and just across the isle from the latest **Super Sonic Brothers XXIIV** side-scroller lurks a game that brings back faith that there are still developers in the world with an entirely different skew on life. If the game manages to be exciting without the appearance of a single gun—well!

Millennium Auction is just such a game. While the premise seems slightly inane, the well thought out and detailed backstory fits it perfectly in place. Pretty as a picture, one might say.

In the year 2006, an insane art collector named Derek Movigne burned three Van Goghs from his private collection during a press conference. He did it, apparently, just to prove he could. The public outcry was incredible. The world government acted immediately, declaring all art to be the common property of the human race. This infuriated private collectors. Many went underground with their collections.

Finally, an uneasy truce was hammered out. Any art in public hands, that is in galleries or on display in publicly owned areas, was covered by the Treasures of Humanity Declaration, hence illegal to buy or sell. But art that was in private hands could remain there.

An elite group of art traders sprung up. Under the auspices of the World Body Auction House, a few traders with impeccable moral credentials are permitted to buy and sell some of the greatest works of art of the human race.

The Bidders, as they are called, have achieved celebrity status: each auction is as much a public spectacle as a business transaction. The buying and selling of art has become the Super Bowl, World Cup, and World Series all rolled into one.

This premise might be harder to swallow if Eidolon software hadn't gone to such great lengths to make an excellent presentation. Included on the two CD-ROMs making up the game is a history of the world, detailing the events leading up to the World Body Art Auction with all the multimedia stops pulled out. News footage, both real and bogus, in full-motion, excellent sound effects with narration, and sparing use of well-implemented animation bring the universe of **Millennium Auction** to life for the player.

The actual game is mainly a simple trading model. Works of art have an appraised value, which might prove to be much higher or lower than their actual worth. The player bids against computer opponents in three rounds of auctioning to attempt to amass the greatest total wealth.

Between each round there is the opportunity to access Artnet. Artnet is a computerized database allowing the bidder to view their portfolio and see ads from collectors looking to buy a specific work or works.

Artnet is one of three basic locations in the game. The next is the Gallery. In the Gallery, players are able to gain valuable information that might help keep them from buying a work that is a forgery or is otherwise going to plummet in value. Much information comes in the form of newscasts sent over the TV located in the corner. Most of the bogus news is intensely funny including amusing anecdotes about the Clintons (Bill's sax is one of the auction items) and other leaders.

The final location is the bidding room, where the actual art buying takes place. The player and three computer-controlled opponents go head to head in bidding wars that are, oddly enough, very exciting. Art auctions are not particularly thought of as a thrilling environment, but after a plethora of guns and explosions, a taut little bidding war is a refreshing change of pace.

Tone is the key in a game like this, and stunning, wireframe, fully-rendered graphics create artificial people and backgrounds so lifelike it is easy to get lost in the **Millennium Auction** world. Voice help, always just an icon click away, also lends to total immersion in the game.

The only problems with **Millennium Auction** are the hassles endemic to the fledgling multimedia environment: heavy equipment is needed to even get into the auction house. Theoretically, the system will run on a medium 486 with 4-Meg of ram and any CD-ROM, but to get decent performance a minimum of a 486-66 and double speed CD-ROM are required. **EG** also had some driver conflicts trying to run this game on a tricked out Pentium testbed machine, so potential bidders should keep the tech support number handy when first installing **Millennium Auction**.

But for those with good hardware, and a bit of technical patience, **Millennium Auction** provides hours of strangely stimulating fun. Laced with humor, tension, dynamite interfaces, crisp sound, and plenty of digitized pictures of great art, both real and fictitious, Eidolon provides a solid and entertaining game. More importantly, it is *original*, something that can be said for a vanishingly small number of titles in the current wave of multimediocrity washing over the industry. Potential bidders should grab a copy of **Millennium Auction** before it is going ... going ... gone! **A-** *(John P. Withers)*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	**Electronic Arts**
DESIGNER:	**Eidolon**
SYSTEM:	**Windows CD-ROM**
THEME:	**Strategy**
HD SPACE:	**7.2 MB**
PLAYERS:	**1-6**
LEVELS:	**N/A**

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3DO

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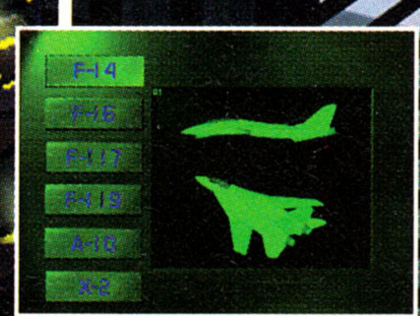

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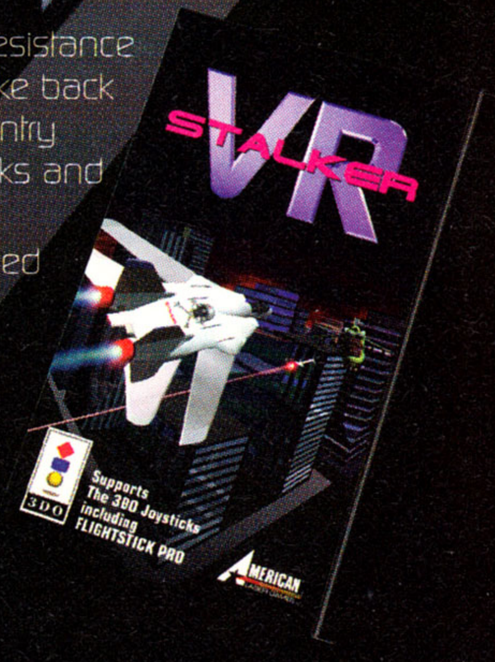

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Mortal Kombat

Mortal Kombat on Sega CD —too little, too late

Mortal Kombat is one of the great success stories in video game history. A smash in the arcades, Acclaim performed a masterful job in overseeing its translation to home video game and computer systems. It sold and it sold and it sold, and every time Acclaim runs a flight of ads, it sells some more.

But perhaps there are some Sega owners out there who have not yet acquired their very own version of this classic fantasy fighting game. Perhaps they put off buying the cartridge edition of **Mortal Kombat** nearly a year so that they could revel in the full-tilt, over-the-top multimedia splendor of the Sega CD version.

Those people must feel pretty darned foolish right about now.

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	Acclaim/Arena
DESIGNER:	Probe
SYSTEM:	Sega CD
THEME:	Fighting
HD SPACE:	N/A
PLAYERS:	1-2
LEVELS:	N/A

But don't feel bad, folks; even the gaming magazines were impressed after a first peek. Acclaim unveiled the superb home video game versions of **Mortal Kombat** on the Genesis, Game Gear, SNES, and Game Boy at SCES '93. The Sega CD version was also on display, to be developed by Probe (which had done the Genesis and Game Gear SKUs) in the U.K..

Somehow, though, in the ensuing year, the CD version regressed from what was on display at the Acclaim booth at SCES '93, to the point where the Genesis version is actually superior to this serious disappointment.

First, let's discuss the areas of significant difference between the Genesis and Sega CD editions. The Sega CD version opens with a haphazardly digitized replay of the "Mortal Kombat! Mortal Kombat!" promotional spots that can still be seen occasionally on pro wrestling and other such savory television venues.

Then there's blood. Oh, man, is there ever blood! Great gouts of the stuff are sent flying in all directions every time the most basic blow is landed. Blood spurts as if gamers are viewing a Hershell Gordon Lewis film retrospective, but none of the grue has any impact. The bloodbath is so overdone that the effect is far more comical than disturbing; in retrospect, it's unfortunate that this version wasn't

The **U.N.** tower is *infested* **with** pests.

released first, since it might have short-circuited the entire long-lived game violence brouhaha.

The real tragedy is that this project should never have come this far. From the very beginning, Acclaim acknowledged that Probe was having more headaches with the Sega CD version than it had with the Genesis and Game Gear editions combined. And when the developer and publisher were barely able to get the CD version of the original into stores before the arrival of Acclaim's **Mortal Kombat II**, it should have been scuttled then and there.

The sound and graphics of **MK CD** are significantly worse than the SNES version as well. Sculptured Software gave that edition magnificent animations and perfect audio accompaniment (including a great gong effect whenever the player chooses Option or Tournament—a sound effect that is, incredibly, missing in this CD edition!).

MK CD suffers from sloppy play control, and totally lacks the crispness required of a fighting game. Players used to earlier versions of this classic will find it takes some time to adjust to the altered feel of the CD game's slippery controls.

Of course, being **Mortal Kombat**, it comes with certain built-in deficiencies. It's still not as good a fighting game as **Street Fighter II**, and the plot still defies logic—how, exactly, does a movie actor compete with magically-empowered aliens and reanimated corpses? But those complaints are small beer; nobody really quibbled with the story line when **MK** was raking in tokens in coin-opville or breaking sales records on home game systems last Christmas. But this Sega CD version

is an affront, the kind of product that begs to have critics shine the flashlight of cynicism into its weak spots.

The real question remains: why *was* it published? Economic necessity, perhaps? Acclaim only sold about six million **MK** cartridges, so maybe the money was required to help pay off Williams/Midway for the license.

Or, it could well be that Acclaim had a commitment to Sega to publish this game in CD format. If so, Sega certainly wasn't doing its CD owners any favors. With each passing month it becomes more and more obvious that this hardware may be black, but in its electronic heart, it's a white elephant. Every time a CD edition of a game is released that offers no significant improvement over the cartridge—or, worse yet, is actually inferior to it—consumers are being taken for marks.

It won't take long before a backlash begins against this sort of slapdash publishing.

Of course, all the **MK** characters are here, they look right, possess all their moves, and they have also apparently contracted hemophilia. Except for the jumpy screen, the graphics are essentially duplicates of the cartridge version.

So, bottom line, what do we have here? A sloppy SKU that looks rushed despite the fact that it ran almost a year over schedule. Another long-overdue piece of Sega CD software that emerges after months of rumors concerning technical headaches and design nightmares.

Fans of badly digitized TV commercials and gamers too lazy to enter in their **MK** blood codes may think this new edition is hot stuff, but the rest of the Sega world should be asking some hard questions about the wisdom of waiting for Sega CD editions of pre-existing cartridge games. ■
(Bill Kunkel)

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POLICE QUEST: OPEN SEASON

Gritty realism makes this adventure almost a simulation

Working the streets as an L.A. cop has got to be one of the toughest jobs on the planet. Between gang violence and the more traditional big-city crime, the L.A. boys in blue have more cases to solve than 1,000 Perry Masons and Columbos—and all while putting their precious lives on the line.

On the other hand, in spite of the danger and drudgery, being a cop is a fascinating career—at least for those of us with more mundane lives—and one can't help but be intrigued by the prospect of trying on a case or two.

For anyone who's ever had a hankering to clip on a badge and patrol the streets for trouble, **Police Quest: Open Season** may be just the ticket. In this gritty and often startling police drama, the player is immediately plunged into a scene of violence and death, as well as charged with solving a double murder. Because of its real-life authenticity and often shocking events, however, this is no game for the kiddies. For example, the discovery of a young child's corpse in a dumpster is enough to make any adult's skin crawl and is definitely nightmare fodder for the younger generation.

For added realism, the newly released CD-ROM version of the game features a slew of actors who have brought their talents to the story, replacing the text balloons of the original floppy-disk version with spoken lines throughout. In addition, the CD-ROM edition features extra animation, new arcade sequences, new music, and more.

The CD even includes a short *Making of Police Quest* video to run under Windows, as well as the software you need to try out Sierra's on-line fun-and-games network, ImagiNation. Strangely, the documentation provides no instructions for installing anything but the game itself. If you want to view the video or the ImagiNation software, you have to figure out the installation for yourself.

When it comes to the gaming experience, though, there's probably never been a more realistic feeling adventure. Thanks to the involvement of former L.A. police chief Daryl Gates, this game features puzzles derived from real police duties. In other words, the player must tackle everything from recording and gathering evidence at a crime scene to filing the paperwork and questioning witnesses.

The game's interface is a delight, enabling the player to issue commands easily and quickly, without having to resort to the keyboard (though that's optional). The shape of the mouse cursor indicates the currently selected command, and the player can easily cycle through the commands by clicking the right mouse button. Alternatively, bringing the mouse cursor to the bottom of the screen causes a button bar to appear, from which the player can select any command desired.

Issuing the inventory command displays the items available to the player. To make it easier to handle inventory items, the Inventory display window contains its own set of command icons.

For example, by clicking on the eye icon, the player can examine any item in the inventory, whereas selecting the arrow button places the inventory item in the player's hand, from which it can be used in the game.

Each scene in the game, of which there are hundreds, features plenty of animation, with the on-screen characters interacting in various ways. Players can talk to almost anyone who crosses their path, as well as use the precinct's computer, and even sharpen their marksmanship skills at the shooting range.

The scene backgrounds, which were created from films taken around Los Angeles, are mostly well detailed, although it is often difficult to determine which objects can be manipulated and which are just part of the scenery. Objects that one needs to manipulate are often hard to see, even when you know what you're looking for.

The CD version of the game features an extensive soundtrack, including musical styles from eerie to funky-cool.

The game also claims to include over 10,000 lines of spoken dialog. (No, I didn't count them!) Unfortunately, while the dialog is well delivered, the recording process distorted many of the S sounds, leaving much of the dialogue sounding slightly strange, as if the actors all have a slight speech impediment. Still, this is a small problem, one that the player learns to ignore.

These small defects notwithstanding, **Police Quest: Open Season** is the perfect game for someone interested in modern police work. It's so realistic, in fact, that, if it weren't so deeply rooted in the adventure-game genre, one might be tempted to call it a simulation.

As such, this game is no breeze. The player must work hard to solve the crime, working out even small details—like turning in proper report forms—in order to keep the case moving forward.

Also, the subject matter can be disturbing, surprisingly so for an adventure game. People easily affected by violence and tragedy may want to stay clear.

For tougher players, **Open Season** is a rewarding and eye-opening experience. It's almost like training for a career in crime-solving. **B+** *(Clayton Walnum)*

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	Sierra
DESIGNER:	T. Dargan, D. Gates
SYSTEM:	PC CD-ROM
THEME:	Adventure
HD SPACE:	8 Megabytes
PLAYERS:	1
LEVELS:	N/A

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Contains Mature Subject Matter

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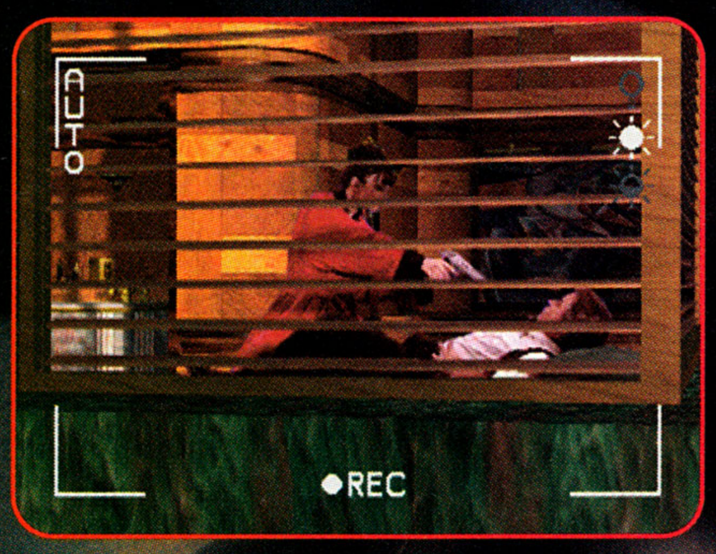

IBM screenshots shown

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GRIDDERS

Where in the Grid is Sandra What's-Her-Name?

Kinetic puzzles have a long and impressive history in interactive entertainment. From archived coin-ops like **Pengo** to Spectrum HoloByte's latest offering, gamers of all ages, tastes, and philosophical persuasions have embraced the action-puzzle genre. **Gridders**, Tetragon's first 3DO title, meets the high standards set by past classics in this category.

In **Gridders**, gamers are thrust into a three-dimensional futuristic world requiring a love of adventure, a nimble sense of strategy, and a well-honed creativity. The hero of this world is Zack. Zack's world is

Earth 2040, and the Earth's natural resources have been virtually depleted. To circumvent the further deterioration of Earth, the United World Council requests the assistance of the Gridders Corporation to save the planet.

Regrettably, the corporation designated to save the Earth is controlled by a heartless Director (evil CEOs have become the hottest new villains in gaming), who is using the secret technology to fully automate the plant.

Just before the game starts, Zack, the last human employee, is laid-off. When he returns to the company to pick up his final paycheck, he locates a note from the mysterious "Sandra" requesting aid in revealing the secret of the company's mysterious basement.

Zack, and his faithful canine companion, Fidex, must avoid the automated Gridders (which look suspiciously like large crates used for shipping freight) and expose the secrets within the cellar. Fidex, by the way, is not an ordinary dog. He is half bionic, and has a special talent that will serve Zack well.

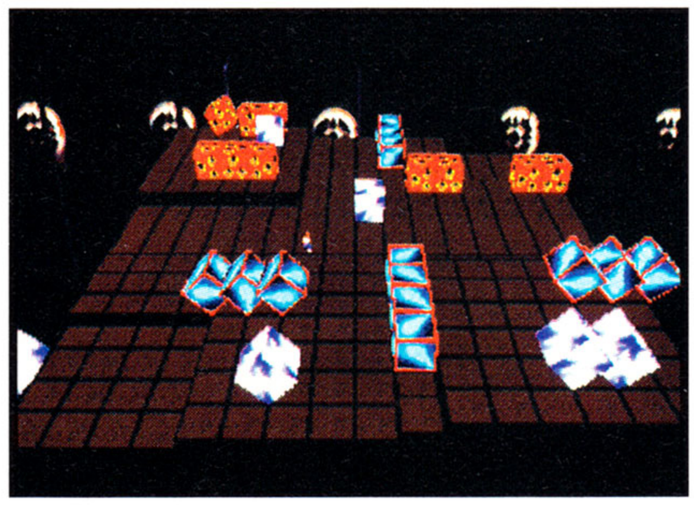
Gridders takes place on a matrix of 16 squares wide by 16 squares long. The grid squares can appear at different heights, producing a sense of terrain. On this grid, in addition to Zack, are a variety of interactive elements. Divertors allow gamers to alter the direction (in 90-degree increments) in which a Gridder is rolling. Telepods transport Gridders to a new location, and these special squares can be manipulated by Zack. There are also elevators, gates, trap doors, hydraulix and mini-hydraulix sections, and secret squares that prompt a reaction from Fidex.

The largest components of interactivity, however, remain the Gridders. As they roll across the matrix, Gridders travel in different directions and produce a variety of combinations. Predictability is not the strong suit of these rolling boxes. Zack must contend with Generators, Proto-Generators, Mecca Techs, Killers, Buddy Cubes, Duds, and Drones. The Generators contain the Pyramid Keys that are needed to advance to the next level. If two Proto-Generators collide, they create a single Generator. The Meccas contain Hex Keys that activate the gates. Buddy Cubes and Duds can both be used to maneuver the other Gridders.

Some of the objects of interest that Zack should acquire include the pyramid and hex keys; bones, useful for summoning Fidex; blue diamonds, which add points/time to the bonus indicator; freezers and slo-mo, which stop and slow the action; and auras, which convert all Gridders into Duds.

There are, of course, negative objects that Zack needs to avoid: anti-diamonds; anti-pyramids; anti-Buddy Cubes; killer squares; energy taps; and instant death rings, just to name a few.

The graphics are very impressive. Matt Bigham, Joey Bryant, and Don Williams should be commended for their artwork and animations. **Gridders** makes full use of parallax scrolling and multi-layered backgrounds. The animations of Zack and Fidex appear natural and smooth. The details and animations of the cut scenes push the story line along, while giving gamers a solid image of the evil cigar-chomping villain with whom they must contend.



Doug Benson did a great job with both the musical tracks and sound effects. The original compositions provide the correct amount of intensity without overwhelming the gamer. The sound effects are very creative. One effect, for example, was generated by recording the sound of a person sucking in air through his mouth, played backwards.

Gridders has three difficulty modes (Easy, Normal, and Dangerous), as well as a practice level. If the thought of puzzles with only one solution sounds tedious, gamers will be pleased to know that each level has at least two planned solutions, and, according to Tetragon's Mark Skaggs, players can invent many other strategies.

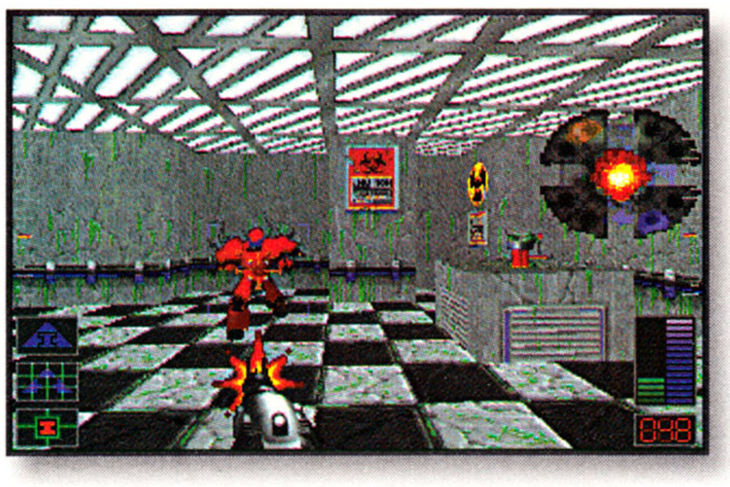
As Zack nears the basement, the levels become more challenging, testing the user's accumulated knowledge. Zack is also "smart" enough to automatically pick up objects, maneuver cubes, and climb and descend the grid heights, so the gamer can focus on solving puzzles and avoiding menaces.

Players can also select the viewing angle of the game. The primary display is an angled top-down perspective which shows the entire grid, but gamers can opt for a faux first-person perspective from the floor of the mighty grid. This latter POV, however, increases the game's challenge exponentially, because it's much harder to visually keep track of events on the other side of the matrix.

As a kinetic puzzle game, **Gridders** provides a breath of fresh air in a genre that too often tends to pass off minor variations of past successes as original ideas. **Gridders** is a welcome addition both to the 3D0 catalog, and to the entire genre of action-puzzles. **A** (*Laurie Yates*)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER:	**Tetragon**
DESIGNER:	**Jim Von Ehr**
SYSTEM:	**3DO**
THEME:	**Puzzle**
HD SPACE:	**N/A**
PLAYERS:	**1**
LEVELS:	**36**



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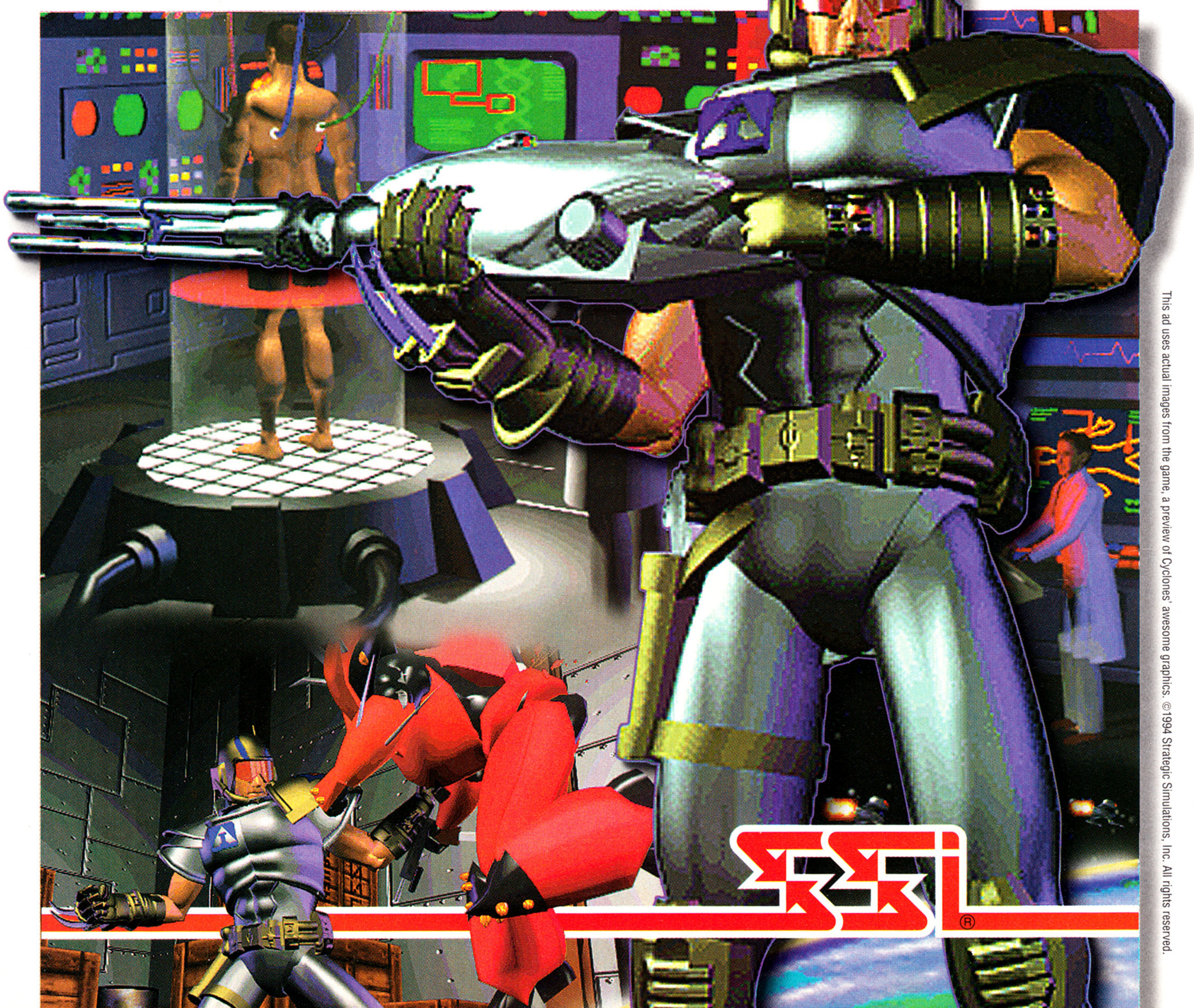


This ad uses actual images from the game, a preview of Cyclones' awesome graphics. ©1994 Strategic Simulations, Inc. All rights reserved.

THE FINAL GRADE

The following chart details the thoughts and opinions of several different EG editors on some of the latest software. In the future we will feature guest reviewers from around the country.

	Arnie Katz Editor	Marc Camron Senior Editor	Bill Kunkel Executive Editor	Russ Ceccola Associate Editor
Aegis Guardian/Fleet	A	B+	A+	-
Brutal: Paws of fury	B+	C+	B-	-
Castles: Siege/Con.	A	A	A-	C+
Comanche CD	A-	A-	A	A
Day of the Tentacle	A-	A	A+	A+
Dennis Miller (3DO)	D	F	D	D
Dracula Unleashed	A	A-	A	B+
Dune	B+	B+	A-	B+
Dungeon Master II	B-	B+	-	A-
Escape ... Monster M.	A-	B	C	B+
The Horde 3DO	B-	C+	B	-
Inca II	B-	B	B+	A
Incredible Machine (3DO)	A	A	A	B+
John Madden (3DO)	A	A	B+	B-
Jurassic Park (3DO)	B	B	B	B+
Kether	A-	A-	C+	-
Lethal Enforcers	A	A-	B+	B+
Lunar: Silver Star	B	B+	-	B
Man Enough	D	D	F	C+
Microcosm	B+	B	B-	A-
Myst	B+	B+	A+	A+
Out of This World	A	A-	A-	B
Outpost	A	C	C	D
Prize Fighter	A	B	B	B-
Return to Zork (MAC)	B+	B+	B+	-
Revengers of Vengeance	-	C	B+	-
Rise of the Dragon	-	B	B+	B+
7th Guest (PC)	A-	A-	A	B-
Shockwave	B+	B+	A	B
SimCity Enhanced	A-	B-	B-	A
Star Trek 25th An. Ed.	B+	A	B+	A+
Stellar 7: Draxon's Revenge	A-	B	A	A
Super Wing Cmdr. (3D)	A-	B+	B+	B
Tomcat Alley	B	B	A	-
Tony LaRussa B. Ball	A	A	B+	A-
Total Eclipse	B+	B	B	-
Voyeur	B	B+	B	B+
Who Shot Johnny Rock	C	C-	F	B
World of Xeen	B-	A+	C-	A

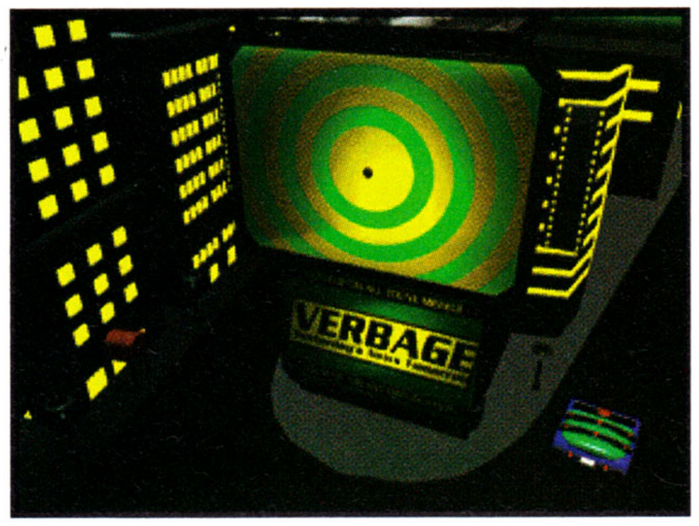
Hey, stay off those speaker towers! Relive the magic of Woodstock via the CD-ROM.

Formula One World Championship: Beyond the Limit *(By **Sega** for the Sega CD)* Yet another bitter pill for Sega CD gamers to swallow. **Beyond the Limit** offers players mediocre graphics, terrible play control, and objects (such as hot air balloons) which appear and disappear.

View the action from behind the wheel of a Formula One car, with walls that can be driven through and some of the worst visibility in the history of racing games.

If nothing else, **Beyond the Limit** was appropriately titled. **D** *(Bill Kunkel)*

Jump Raven *(By **Cyberflix** for PC CD-ROM)* Another *Blade Runner* wanna-be, this one is more talky and less interactive than most of these dreadful exercises in



what has been called "rendertainment." There's plenty of sassy graphics to stick on the back of the box, but the player spends most of his/her time watching and waiting, endlessly waiting, for the gorgeous graphics to end so it will be possible to actually *do* something.

The game play comes down largely to menu-driven conversations with a collection of sci-fi cliches. **Jump Raven** is an interactive movie that forgot about the interactive part. **D** *(Bill Kunkel)*

Woodstock *(By **Time Warner Interactive** for PC CD-ROM)* Having had the opportunity to watch the recent Woodstock 25th Anniversary fall victim to the same greed, manipulation, and eventual chaos as its predecessor, viewing this CD-ROM re-creation of the original makes for a fairly interesting, if unenlightening CD experience. There's the usual background data, QuickTime video clips capturing actual songs and performances, and a branching interface, using a reproduction of the classic Woodstock poster lettering.

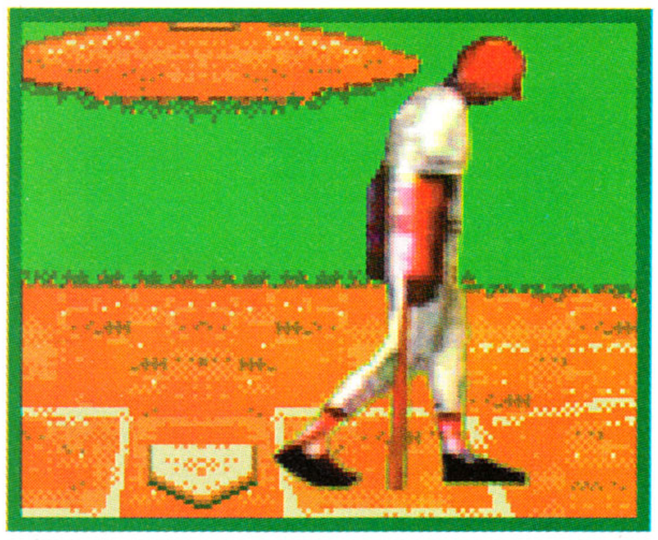
It's cute, and it does capture a superficial, through-the-looking-glass perspective on the event, but you sure can't feel the mud. **B** *(Bill Kunkel)*

FIFA International Soccer *(by **EA Sports** for Sega CD)* From the first second of the amazing introduction, **F**èdèration **I**nternationale de **F**ootball **A**ssociation **International Soccer** is something special. This is to soccer fans what **John Madden Football** is to football fans; the last word in sports sims. One to four players can play exhibition matches,

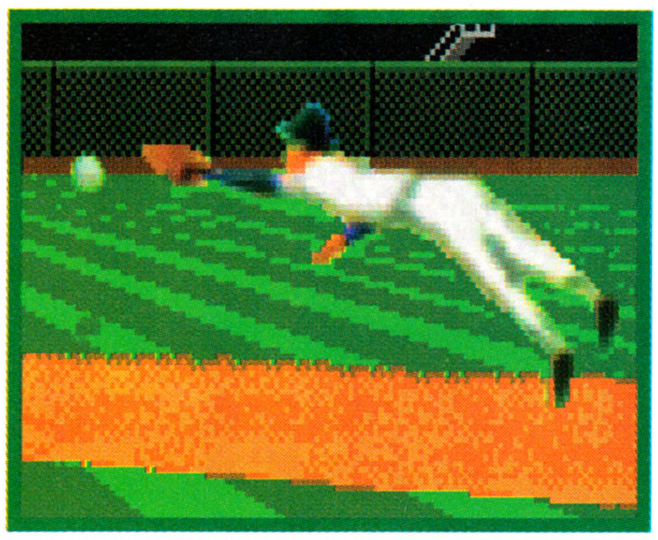
tournaments, playoffs, or form their own leagues. Play on any team from around the globe, or take a handicap and control the U.S. team. Over 150 FMV clips and 20 minutes of CD sound complement the footy goings-on. Sexy graphics, shiveringly-good sound and music, plus fast, authentic action could make **FIFA International Soccer** more popular than the World Cup. **A+** *(John Wesley Hardin)*

1994 Guinness Multimedia Disk of Records *(by **Grolier** for Macintosh CD-ROM)* The second best-selling book of all time (the Bible is first) is here to settle disputes of fact for Mac owners. There are 3,800 categories with over 800 photos, all of which can be sifted via a Random Record Search, Word Search or five other ways. Extensive full-motion video with synchronized audio adds to the package. It even comes with a paperback copy of the 1994 edition. This is the most fun you can have without a joystick. **B+** *(JWH)*

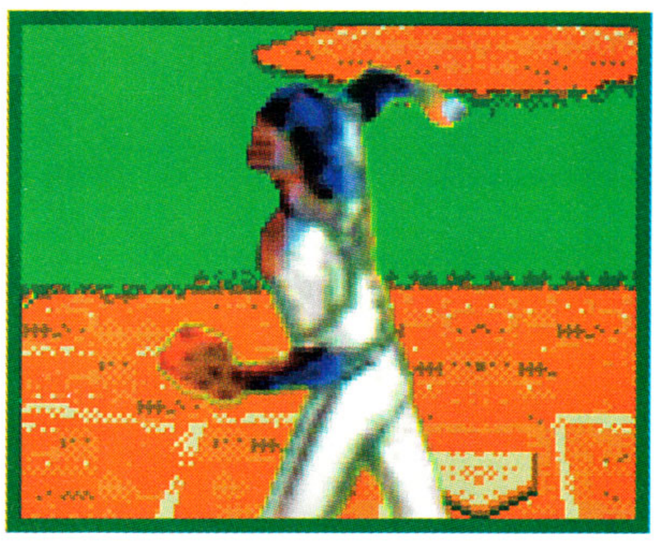
Panic *(by **Data East** for the Sega CD)* It's a puzzle game, or it's not a game at all, or maybe it's a quasi-abstract video labyrinth. An intriguing interface, but the execution is off. **Panic** is ostensibly an adult title, but the animations, while good and colorful, seem straight out of a cartoon aimed at 5-year-olds. Players make their way through a maze of animations. The on-screen character (looks like a child) is confronted with a panel of buttons at each screen. Pushing the (unmarked) buttons rewards the character with some bit of (non-interactive) humorous animation, or takes him onto the next screen, where the process is repeated. The problem is that most of the jokes, if funny at all, are only funny once or twice, but players may see the same scenes half a dozen times during the course of one session. Panic tries desperately hard to be hip and falls painfully short of the mark. Maybe it feels so weird because it's a direct import from Japan. Strictly a novelty. **C** *(JWH)*



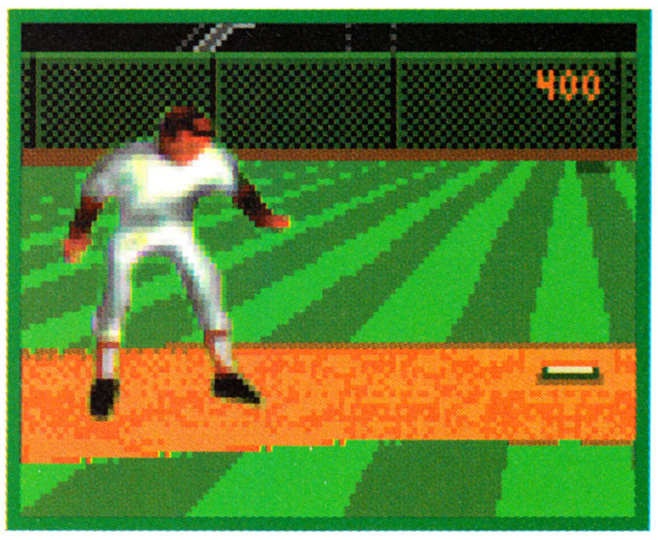
BATTER HANGS HEAD IN SHAME AFTER STRIKEOUT. DAN PATRICK RUBS IT IN BY ADDING "THE WHIFF."



INFIELDERS DIVE TO SNAG LINE DRIVES.

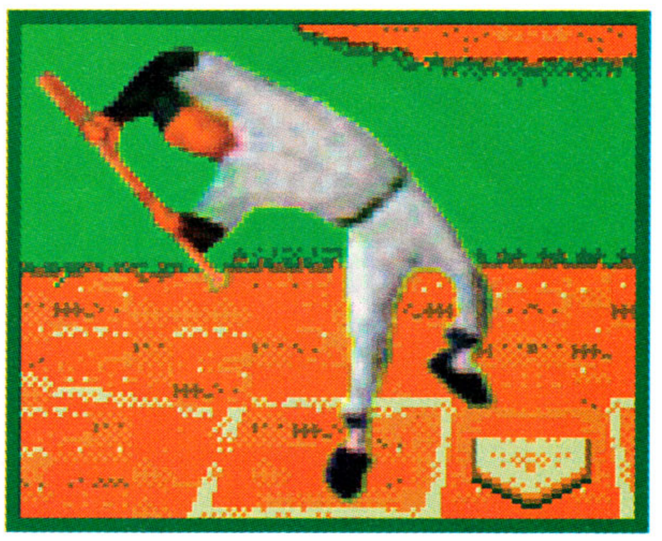


CATCHER LEAPS UP FROM CROUCH TO GUN DOWN GREEDY BASERUNNERS.

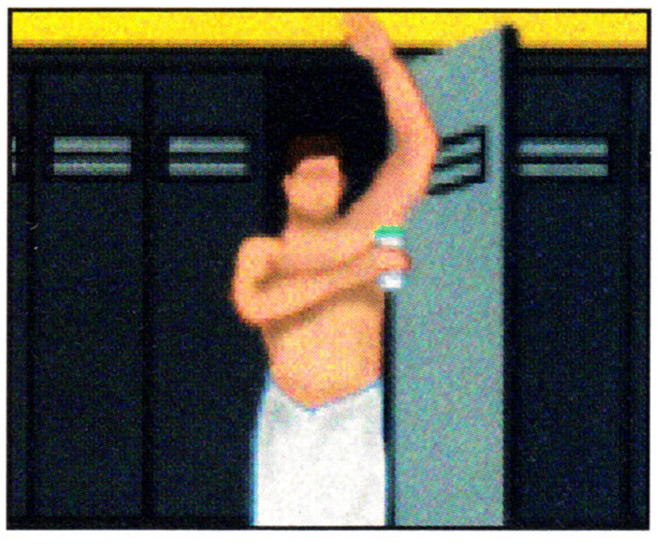


BASERUNNERS CREEP SLOWLY OFF THE BAG TO AVOID BEING PICKED OFF.

WHEN WE CREATED THIS GAME, OUR OBSESSION WITH REALISM ALMOST GOT OUT OF CONTROL.



BATTERS COLLAPSE IN PAIN AFTER GETTING HIT BY A PITCH.



PLAYERS CHOOSE FROM THREE DIFFERENT DEODORANT SCENTS: ORIGINAL, MUSK, OR ALPINE BREEZE.

★★★

TREASURE GALAXY

A princess and some jewels provide a quest for learning

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: The Learning Company
DESIGNER: Lisa Marks
SYSTEM: PC-DOS or Windows
THEME: Education: Math
HD SPACE: 5 MB
PLAYERS: 1

The latest in the **Treasure** series surrounds math drills with a quest. Players from age five to nine can practice their tables while having some fun. It also adds measurements, geometric shapes, and an unusual calendar skill-builder to make this an exceptionally well-rounded package.

True to its quest-format, the program starts with a lengthy background story. Bottom line: the Queen's crystals are hidden throughout the galaxy. Thankfully, this overly-familiar theme is nothing more than a setup for the actual game. It provides a little reading practice at the beginning but then can be safely ignored as irrelevant to the play.

To regain the crystals the gamer must fly a space scooter through three orbits, through levels of learning that can be set by the parent, or automatically move ahead as the gamer becomes more skillful.

To advance through the orbits, the player has to collect digits. The numerals are awarded for successful completion of learning tasks, or they can be purchased in the store. Once the player has the digits, it's possible to fly through the space port to the next orbit.

Each orbit is inhabited by sundrops to be snagged with sunbeams (a sort of spiraling ray that encircles them.) Once captured, the sundrop hosts a number analogy challenge. A group of objects are pictured on the left; then a different number of the objects is shown on the right. For example, two kites on the left may become four on the right. A second set, for example three kites, may become five on the right. The challenge then shows a third grouping, and asks the child to complete the correct number on the right. This requires the student to figure out what was done to the first two sets to produce the results, in this case, add two. The equations progress from counting and addition, through subtraction and multiplication.

A correct answer pays off in Starbucks, which can be used to purchase additional sunbeams or digits in the store.

Each of the orbits has a special learning station. In the Shape Station, the player assembles geometric shapes. The Measure Mill shows common objects to be examined with a scale or measuring rod. The Day Dock requires the youngster to pick a date to match verbal clues, such as "tomorrow," "one week from today," or "third Tuesday after the fourth Wednesday in March."

Each of the activities awards a digit, or if the digit counter is full at the time, Starbucks. In the store, the player can exchange the Starbucks for more Sunbeams, to capture more elusive Sundrops, or purchase digits to advance through the portals. The Starbucks are pictured in whole, half, quarter, or eighth, so the student gets some practice with fractions while paying the fee.

Monitors are scattered around the orbits, and if the screen of a monitor is live, the player can scoot into it, to decipher an encoded word. On early levels, the letter-number codes are shown on screen. Later, the code may be incomplete, for gamers to deduce the pattern of the sequence, counting by twos or threes to assign numbers to each letter.

Successfully deciphering a word produces a crystal. After the player has traversed all three orbits, the scooter is whisked back to the princess and the castle to deposit the crystals found so far into the treasury, in an animated cut scene. Then it's back to do it all again, as the challenges get more complicated.

The graphics are colorful and well-drawn. Animations are limited to the focal objects of each game, with no irrelevant action on screen during the challenges.

The great strength of **Treasure Galaxy!** is that it does keep the player coming back for more, and while searching for the crystals, the games reinforce skills and logical thinking. Because the game tracks up to 99 separate players, it's suitable for more than one child, even classroom study.

The challenges become more difficult as the player advances. In fact, that produces the only problem. In order to actually complete the quest, the child must accumulate a great many crystals, and go through all the levels of learning. It is less satisfactory for very young players who may not be advanced in arithmetic far enough to win the game.

It would have been better to have several shorter quests, rather than making the entire study procedure into one long endeavor that will take many play sessions to complete.

But, students who've begun to study addition, subtraction, and multiplication should have no trouble. It's unusual to see math study presented as a quest game. But in this instance, it definitely works. Although the graphics are not complicated, and the story line is unexceptional, the totality of the learning experience shines through. **B+** *(Joyce Worley)*

LAUNCH PAD: THE DESKTOP FOR KIDS

Launching applications has never been so fun ... or safe

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Berkeley Systems
DESIGNER: Avi Urban
SYSTEM: Macintosh (6.0.7)
THEME: Utility
HD SPACE: 4 MB
PLAYERS: 1

As most adults make their first stumbling forays into the world of computer desktops, their children eagerly wait by the computer for *their* turn to play. Parents are therefore faced with a twofold dilemma: how to protect their own files from unintentional destruction as a result of Junior's random input, and simultaneously create a youthful-friendly environment that will enable the next generation to enter the computer revolution. The answer to both problems can be found in Berkeley Systems' new kid-parent utility, **Launch Pad: The Desktop for Kids**.

Parents must install **Launch Pad** and set up accounts for their young users. After typing in the child's name and age and selecting an icon (which is depicted as a key chain), the program approves applications suitable for the youngster's age. This list can easily be modified.

When **Launch Pad** is first accessed by the child, the computer displays a 2/3 screen image of Bingo's Rocket Car (the program's mascot in a glidercraft) at a crossroad. The lower third of the screen presents a strip with a Power Off switch and the child's personalized car key tag.

After the child clicks on the assigned car key, the perspective—but not the screen division—changes to Bingo's POV as he sits in his car looking out at the Panorama. At this stage, five scenes (Dinosaurs, Haunted, Space, Castle, and Under Sea) are available for point-and-click animation, plus the After Dark Cinema, with one module, Flying Bingo.

The lower section is now the dashboard, from which the children interface with the utilities. The dash not only contains the **Launch Pad** desk accessories (KidsClock, KidsCalc, and KidsTalk), but also allows youngsters to use approved applications and open the Glove Box to store and retrieve documents. If the child has been approved for CD-ROM applications, then he will also be able to eject CDs from this area. It is also possible to return to the Launch Base by simply clicking the stop button.

Launch Pad's desk accessories are especially youth-friendly in their use of digitized speech. KidsClock has two modes of operation: real time and practice. KidsCalc is a straight four-function calculator that receives input from either the mouse or the keypad. The "buttons" are larger than a standard calculator and the KidsCalc gives the user a memory function via cut-and-paste commands. KidsTalk is a tape recorder function that records sounds or voice messages. The normal playback can be enhanced with different special effects, including space, robot, bear, bird, and backward sound.

Launch Pad also makes children's outside applications easier to use. Kids hear menu items and dialog boxes announced; menu bars stay open without keeping the mouse button pushed down; documents can be quickly saved into the glove box, where they are inaccessible by unauthorized siblings; printing is simplified and bypasses dialog boxes; and the keyboard and mouse can be customized to the users.

The background artwork in **Launch Pad** include original drawings that were processed through a 3-D program to obtain photo realism.

Bingo's actions and mannerisms are sure to delight both children and adults. The point-and-click scenes, while hardly original, offer a nice break for the user.

The dashboard makes good use of the primary and secondary color palette, while the Panorama scenes successfully capture both the dark and fearsome atmosphere of a graveyard and haunted house at night

and the bright fantasy nature of the castle and unicorn.

The digitized voices are crisp and clear, a very important feature in children's software. The recording features also play back well, but it is disappointing that the audio cannot be saved to either the hard drive or floppy disks.

Launch Pad is an eminently friendly package. Both the installation—and deinstallation—processes are simple. The children's password options include both picture and text, which can even be overridden when the youngster fails to remember it. A forgotten adult text password can also be accessed, but only via the install disk.

Pre-readers should feel comfortable with this program, since the need to understand text has been eliminated.

While not a true edutainment product, **Launch Pad** is bound to make parents' lives less nerve-wracking and present children with a more comfortable atmosphere in which to play their own games. Rather than duplicate an adult desktop, like some of their competitors, Berkeley opted to translate the desktop experience into something even a child can appreciate.

A- (*Laurie Yates*)

ON THE HORIZON

Do It Yourself

A recent poll conducted by Olsten Corporation contacted 1,022 North American businesses to learn their position on computer skills and in-house training programs. The Olsten Corporation questioned businesses about automation, their employees' skills, and how it affected their businesses.

The survey really concentrated on the question of how much on-the-job computer training an employee could expect to receive.

The news isn't good, if you're hoping to learn while you earn. Now, in contrast to previous business practices, companies expect their employees to have their skills in computers and other high-tech business equipment before they get their jobs.

The survey found that businesses are now investing in easier-to-use technologies, and they expect the employees to master them on their own time.

The good news is that many businesses are willing to provide employees with the equipment, instruction manuals and software for study and self-education. But, they expect it to be done at home, at the employee's own learning pace.

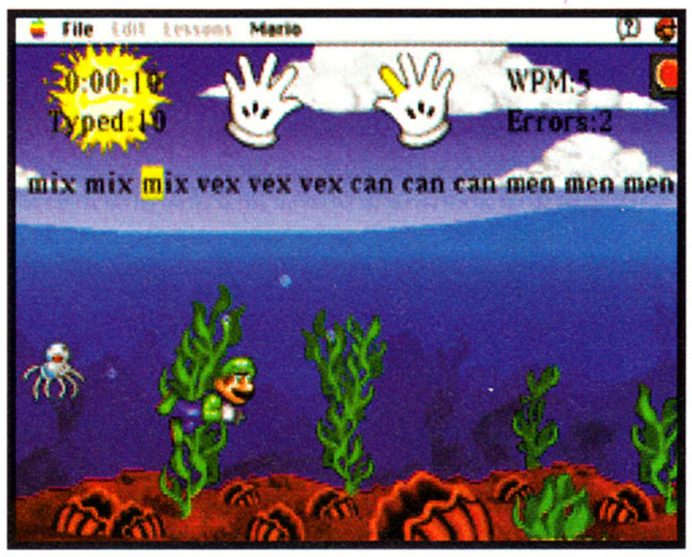
About 73 percent of all executives say they favor employee self-training, but only 28 percent of companies offer the employees any help in accomplishing this goal. This is in marked contrast to the past, when employees often provided schooling for their computer-using personnel.

Yet, apparently this method of self-teaching isn't actually working out the way the businesses had hoped. Despite the companies' desire for employees who are highly skilled with computers, only 22 percent of those contacted found their employees' computer skills acceptable.

There were two areas, in particular, that showed change in employers' expectations in regard to technological skills.

The first is in information systems. There's been no appreciable increase in the demand for information systems personnel. The exception to this is that employees with network management skills are in more demand than at any time previous. Second, nowadays, there is a large demand for employees working in customer service to have good computer skills.

Mario Teaches Typing *(By **Interplay** for PC CD-ROM—ages five-Adult)* Typing programs with kid appeal are on the rise, but few can match Interplay's Mario title, which adds games, familiar characters, and reward screens to the process. After



players learn the positions of the letters, and the correct fingering, the Expert Express removes the game elements and works as a traditional typing tutor.

If families are looking for only one typing program, **Mario** should be a serious contender. **B+** *(Laurie Yates)*

Math Blaster: In Search of Spot *(By **Davidson** for PC CD-ROM—ages 6-12)* More kids have learned from **Math Blaster** than any other computer program, and this new version is the best yet. Addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division are covered, as well as fractions, decimals, percentages and a most unusual skill, estimation (which is actually rounding numbers up or down).

Kids practice arithmetic through four activities that take a lot of the pain out of study, through six levels. **B+** *(Joyce Worley)*

Morgan's Trivia Machine *(By **Morgan Interactive** for PC or Mac CD-ROM—ages 7-14)* The whole family can race their climber up the mountain by answering trivia questions. The subjects are geography, science, plus a grab bag of miscellaneous facts, in six skill levels. The on-screen companions are a pair of quipsters who wisecrack their way through the competition. Graphics are great, including video clips and animations, as the gamers answer over a thousand questions. Up to six can play, and they'll gain a lot of information while answering the trivia questions. **A-** *(Joyce Worley)*

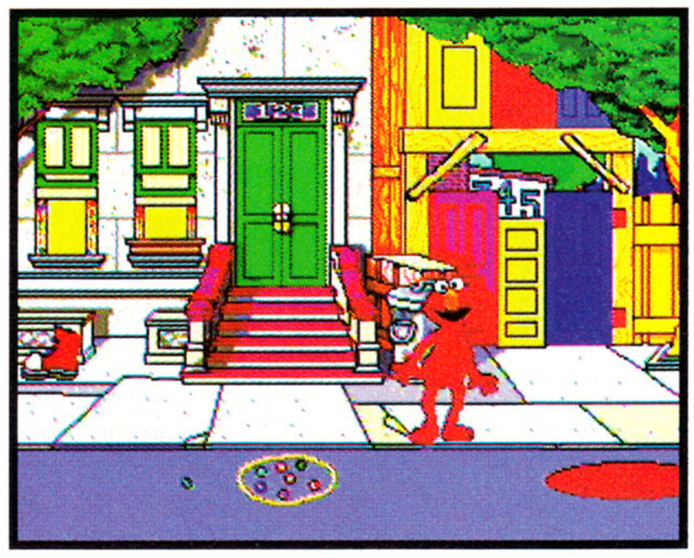
Smithsonian Institution Dinosaur Museum *(By **Software Marketing Corp.** for PC CD-ROM Windows—all ages)* Two years ago, this database-style program would have been pretty exciting, but having experienced the film version of *Jurassic Park* and over a dozen pieces of state-of-the-art saurian-based software, it comes off as pretty weak tea.

The program is broken up into three primary areas: the Museum Room, the Conservatory, and the Game Room. The Museum area features weak sketches showing dinosaur statues and unrealistic-looking dioramas; the Conservatory contains more exhibits, as well as DBase material on dinosaur myths, theories, and famous members of the academic community. Finally, the Game Room offers a series of (rather difficult) quizzes on dinosaur recognition and related topics.

The problem: the presentation is so bland, and the graphics look like something from an old AppleII+ program. As one would expect of a Smithsonian product, the steak is all here, but a user could generate more sizzle by simply spitting into the LaBrea Tar Pits. **C+** *(Bill Kunkel)*

The Software Toolworks World Atlas *(By **Software Toolworks** for PC CD-ROM—all ages)* Every home should have an atlas. They fill their users with dreams of distant places, as well as a great deal of knowledge. This one is especially interesting. It's not just maps; there's information about geography, people, the economy of the nations, governments, agriculture, and a lot more. Browsing the colorful photos and video clips brings the people of other lands closer. There are even phrases in 30 languages, flags, currency information, and lots more. **A** *(Joyce Worley)*

Sesame Street *(By **Electronic Arts** for 3DO—ages 3-6)* The world's most famous teaching program is now an activity toy, and it's bound to keep preschoolers laughing and learning for many hours of fun. The child uses the control pad to move the



cursor, in this case a large star, through the streets, and the *Sesame Street* gang acts as companions and helpers. There are lots of objects to point-and-click, for animations, and also games to play, stories to hear, and things to watch. Simple number games help the child learn to count, but the real fun comes from the songs, videos, and animations. Graphics are in the familiar Sesame Street style. **B+** *(Joyce Worley)*

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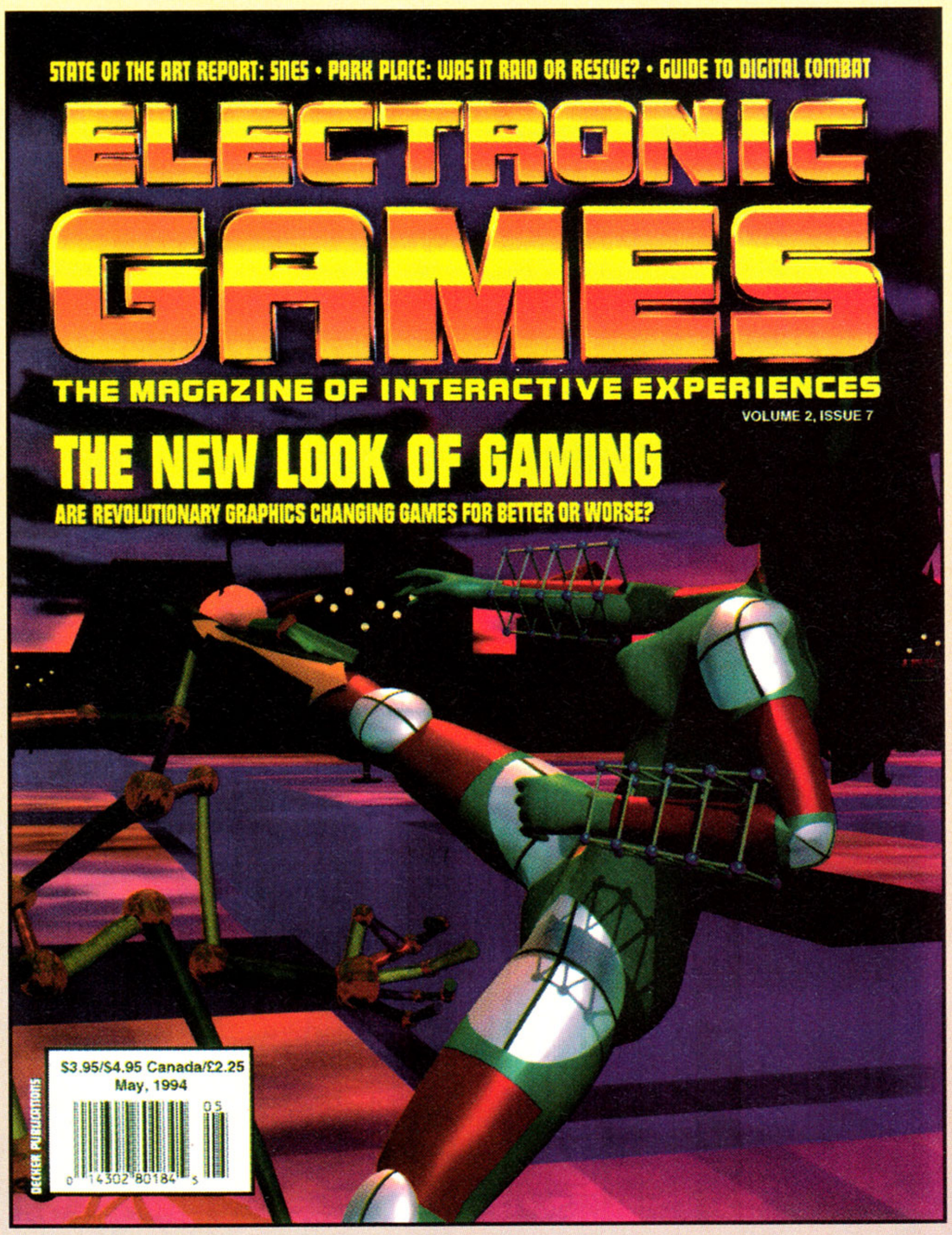

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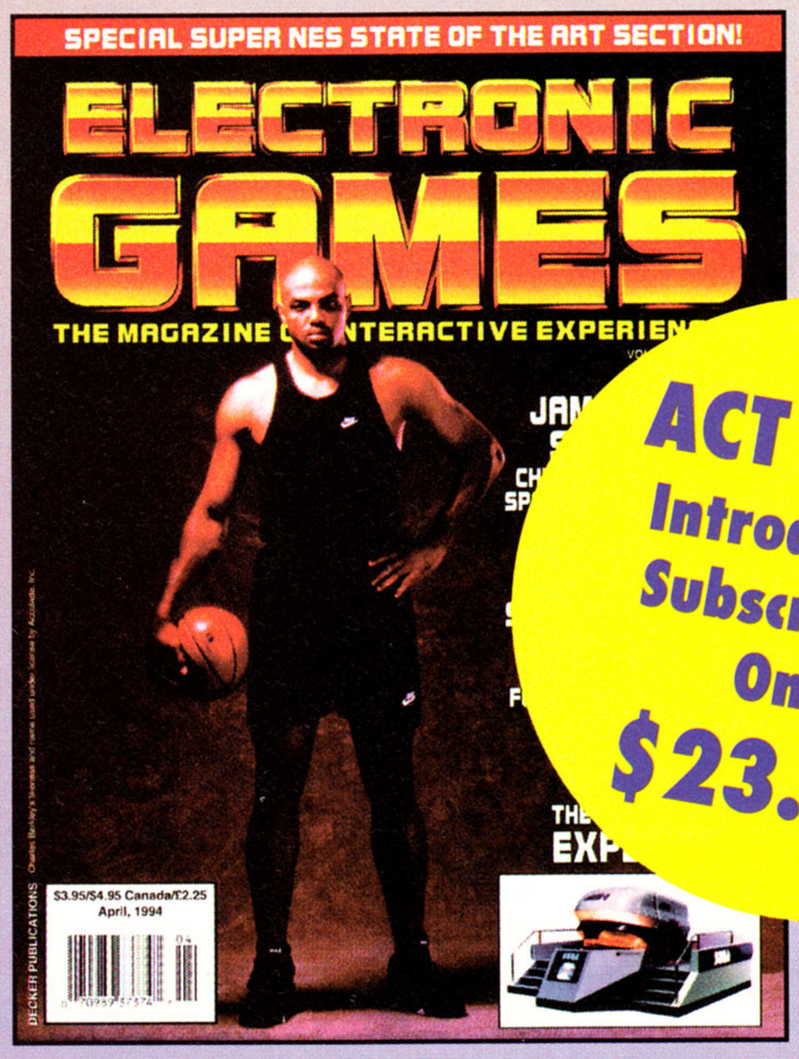

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SUPER METROID UNAUTHORIZED GAME SECRETS

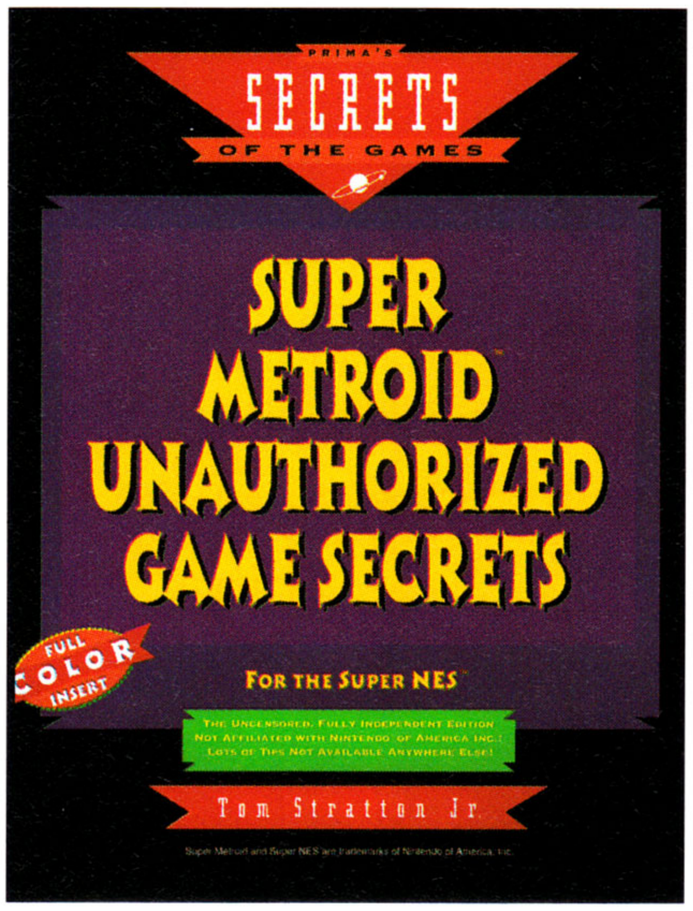
Tom Stratton, Jr., Prima Publishing, 168 pages (softbound, $14.95)

This is a highly illustrated volume with details of the world of Zebes and the incredible mazes that Samus, the bounty-hunter heroine, must traverse to save the universe from Ridley and the Mother Brain—again. Most of the screen shots and composite maps are in black and white, but there is an eight-page color section toward the middle of the book that contains a concentrated dose of hints and things to watch for.

Players who haven't explored the game may feel daunted by the quantities of hidden rooms and passageways that are described. Never fear, because Stratton explains where to go and what to do once there. *How* to do it, isn't always provided in detail, at least, not in sequence.

The first chapter, titled "Getting to Know Planet Zebes," includes a rundown of Samus' available actions on the standard SNES controller. It describes the several types of doors and security gates that will be encountered and what it takes to get through them, and then illustrates various rooms and items to be found throughout the complex. The chapter ends with an unaccountably truncated opening story. In fact the continuation appears at the end of chapter two.

The events seemingly left out are touched on in a capsule in the color section, but none of this should matter to owners of the game, who will already



have an idea of what's going on. (However, these same folks might be puzzled by references in the color section to a boss named Platoon who, it turns out, is actually called Phantoon in the main text.)

Most of the second chapter continues with an overview of Zebes and its various sections—Crateria (the surface), Brinstar, Norfair, Maridia, the Wrecked Ship, and Tourian. These overviews include maps, list items to be found there, and picture some of the enemies including the bosses. Among them, Ridley is boss of Norfair, Phantoon of the wrecked ship, and Mother Brain hangs out in Tourian.

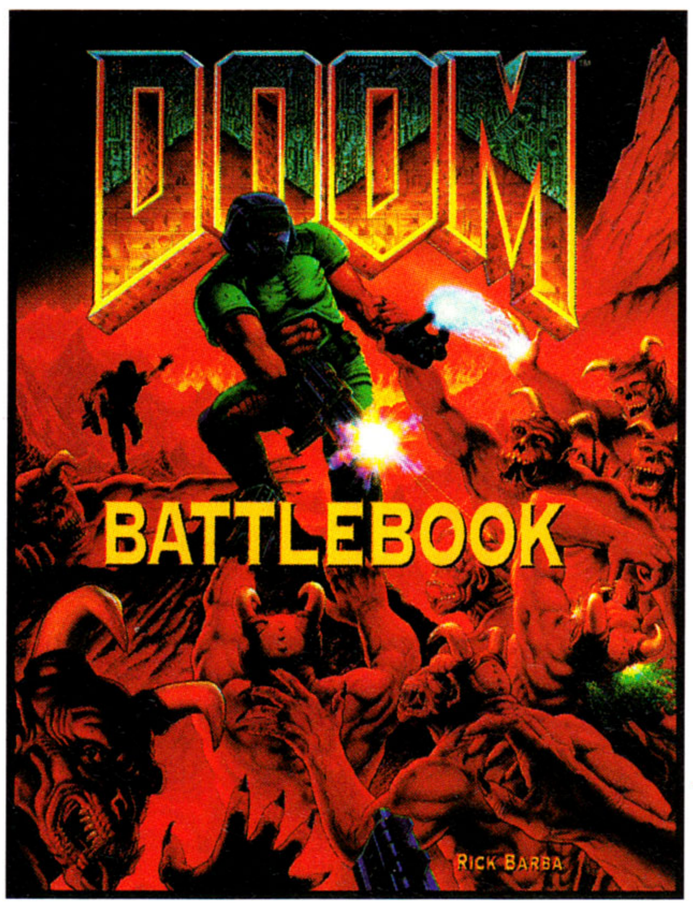
Chapters three through seven follow a walk-through of these areas, each bringing Samus as far as the main boss of that section. Locations of needed items and the paths to missile tanks, energy recharge rooms, and so on, are described. Among these are Data Save units where the game in progress can be stored, and Map Data Access Rooms where Samus can view the area. These show the areas already explored. The game is not wholly linear; there are multiple paths to various goals, but for Samus to succeed in her primary efforts, some items must be acquired. The map rooms can be a valuable asset in this area.

Chapter eight provides some close-ups of various areas where hidden rooms and other secrets may be uncovered by well-placed missiles and bombs.

This book will clearly be of major value to the multitudes of **Super Metroid** players and presents the challenge of the game to those who do not have it yet. "Try not to follow it word for word," Stratton urges. "Instead, refer to it when in dire need. That way you can explore on your own and locate the multiple paths to multiple items." That's good advice for any hint book, and this one lends itself well to that approach. *(Ross Chamberlain)*

DOOM BATTLEBOOK

Rick Barba, Prima, 208 pages (softbound, $14.95)



This game from id Software based on its **Wolfenstein 3-D** engine is described as an "action-oriented slugfest." It involves slugging with fists and pumping hundreds of rounds of slugs into bad guys, and these bad guys are the worst—demons from the pits of hell. Prima's book designers chose to spatter red splotches across every page. Titles and subtitles are printed in the font called Horror, which is suitable for the theme, but less ideal for listing cheat codes, since it's not all that easy to read.

Part one, called General Strategies, includes a list of remarkable cheat codes that the author urges players to ignore until they're already fully familiar with the game—some can render it too easy to play to be worth the time. These are followed by descriptions of items, enemies, and areas to be found in the corridors of Phobos and hell itself, and what in general can be done with or about them.

Part two, "Doom Survival Guide," is a three-chapter walk-through with detailed keyed maps. An appendix offers suggestions on Multiplayer Mode. All is written with good humor and insight. The *Doom Battlebook* is recommended for helping sublimate the killer instinct in us all. *(Ross Chamberlain)*

INFORMATION WARFARE: CHAOS ON THE ELECTRONIC SUPERHIGHWAY

Winn Schwartau, Thunder Mouth Press, 432 pages (Hardbound, $22.95)

It is practically impossible to pick up a magazine or turn on the television any more without being bombarded by some form of hype centered on the grand and glorious information superhighway.

Consumers may not care who "brings it to them," but this unprecedented media blitz has succeeded on two fronts: people are both dazzled with the possibilities and blissfully ignorant of the inherent dangers that come with unregulated expansion of access.

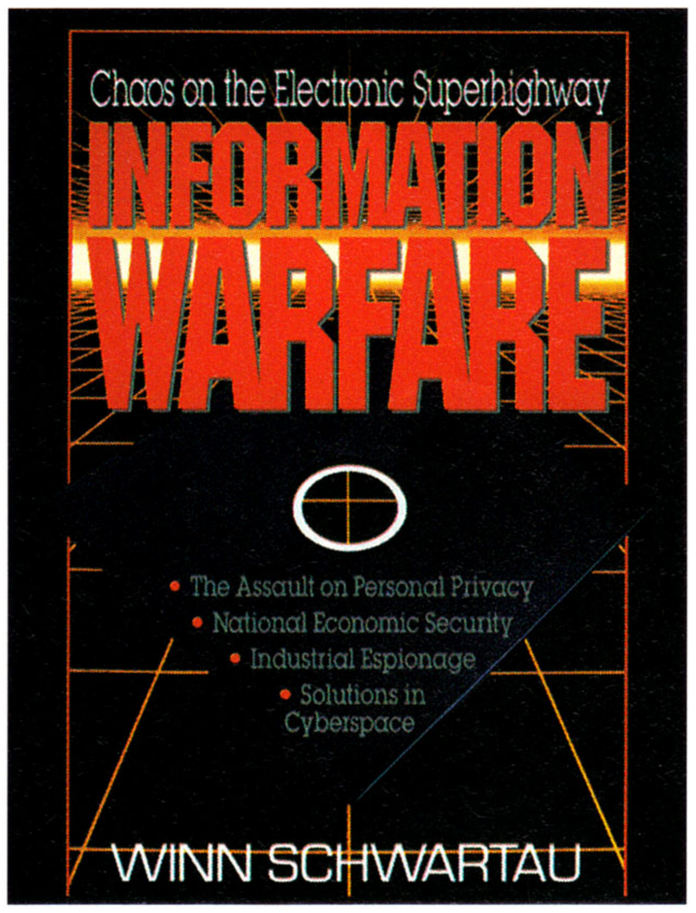
Most corporations, because they must deal with the possibility of industrial espionage, are not ignorant of the dangerous Pandora's box that is being opened, but they also see no need to share this information with the consumers of their services. Mr. Schwartau, one of the nation's leading experts on information security and electronic privacy, explodes this code of silence with insightful commentary about what is really going on in cyberspace daily, as well as some frightening speculation about what could happen to the unprepared. His thrust is not to dissuade readers away from the potential benefits of a global community, but rather to awaken them to some of its darker aspects, such that they might be informed, alert citizens rather than passive victims of electronic violence.

With over 125 million computers inextricably tying our economy together through complex land and satellite-based communications systems, a major portion of our domestic six-trillion dollar economy depends on their consistent and reliable operation.

Through sabotage, theft, data manipulation, and other means, our economy could be crippled beyond anything that has ever occurred in recorded history. As an example of the potential scope of such operations, Mr. Schwartau details how the banking community uses creative accounting practices to hide millions of dollars that are lost to Information Warriors every year.

In *Information Warfare*, the "digital persona" plays the role of victim and perpetrator. The wrong hands could extract the most personal information about the "digital you" imaginable, not the least of which could be medical, financial, business, legal, and criminal documentation. This data could be used in its current form, to effect a purpose through other means, such as finding out someone's PIN and using it for unlawful phone charges, or digitally altered to accomplish some other purpose directly in Cyberspace.

Imagine the horror of suddenly losing your entire electronic identity. No record of your birth, credit history, vehicle registration ... full electronic death. Some individuals will also alter their own records in this manner to erase nefarious histories.



Information Warfare outlines almost every conceivable kind of info disaster, but it does not leave the reader thinking that there may be no way out of the quagmire of the new information age. Rather, Mr. Schwartau inspires the dialogue necessary to establish a National Information Policy, a constitution for Cyberspace and an Electronic Bill of Rights as it were. In this manner alone, he has done an invaluable service to the entire legitimate electronic community.

Visionaries like Alvin Toffler see the inherent potential in all things, both good and bad. Practice realists like Mr. Schwartau take the process one step further. They examine emerging developments on the content and establish a social framework to maximize that potential, by minimizing the possible negative ramifications of going into unknown territory.

Cyberspace has been a lawless frontier almost from the very beginning, as has historically been the case with all virgin territory. As the potential for exploitation and profit expands however, lawlessness generally must give way to order (though it never completely disappears).

Information Warfare: Chaos on the Electronic Superhighway suggests methods of obtaining and maintaining this order that are both practical and palatable. Thanks to the author, there is at least one clear voice of reason amidst endless sound-bites of cyberbabble. *(Ed Dille)*

"Today's Second Wave money consists of printed paper with or without commodity backing. What's printed on the paper matters. The money is symbolic but still tangible. This form of money comes along with mass literacy.

Third Wave money increasingly consists of electronic pulses. It is evanescent ... instantaneously transferred ... monitored on the video screen. It is, in fact, virtually a video phenomenon itself. Blinking, flashing, whizzing across the planet, Third Wave money is information—the basis of knowledge.

Increasingly detached from material embodiments, capital and money alike change through history, moving by stages from totally tangible to symbolic and ultimately today to its 'super symbolic' form.

This vast sequence of transformations is accompanied by a deep shift in belief, almost a religious conversion—from a trust in permanent, tangible things like gold or paper to a belief that even the most intangible, ephemeral electronic blips can be swapped for goods and services.

Our wealth is a wealth of symbols. And so also, to a startling degree, is the power based on it."

—Alvin Toffler, futurist and author, from *Power Shift*

CYBERWATCH

THIS POLYGON WALKS INTO A BAR...

"Sign of the times: More American boys ages six to 11 recognize... Mario than they do Mickey Mouse."
–(Woman's Day *9/94*)

"A software engineer dies and goes to heaven to be evaluated at the pearly gates. 'Well,' says St. Peter, 'things look pretty good, Programmer. Your sins and your good deeds ... balance out. Tell you what—you may have your own choice of either heaven or hell.' The engineer, weary of design trade-offs and wary of uninformed decisions, asks for more details. 'Sure,' replies the gatekeeper. 'Here is the elevator. You can ride up to see heaven and down to see hell. Take your time and ... choose wisely—there is no turning back!'

"So the engineer rides the elevator up and takes a look at heaven. He sees the angels playing on their harps and the beatific look on the faces of the faithful... 'Well, that looks about like what I expected,' he says to himself. 'Let's go take a look at the alternative.' So he rides down the elevator to the floor labeled 'hell' and looks around. To his delight, he finds sandy beaches, beautiful women, snowcapped mountains ... and parties going on all over. Returning to the gates, he has no problem informing the gatekeeper of his decision. 'Heaven looks fine, but pretty boring ... hell is what I've always dreamed of! Let me in!'

"The gatekeeper hands him an entry pass and the engineer goes back down the elevator to take his place in hell. But, to his surprise, the sun has gone out, the snow has melted and the parties are over. There are snakepits ... fire and brimstone, fiends torturing sinners ... 'Wait!' [the engineer] cries as two monsters haul him off to the chamber of eternal agony. 'What happened to the beach parties, fun, and sunshine I saw before?'

"'Oh,' replies the devil. 'That was just the demo.'"

—Anonymous (*Wired* 8/94)

"In a sense, **Myst** is a beginning. There are many things wrong with it, many things that the creators would change. But it is the first artifact of CD-ROM technology that suggests that a new art form might very well be plausible, a kind of puzzle box inside a novel inside a painting, only with music. Or something."

—*Wired* (8/94)

"**Cruis'n USA** is the new advanced driving simulator from Midway Mfg. It's available in full-motion and stationary cabinets, dual or single player versions. An upright will follow ... This is Midway's first-ever game to use the Ultra 64 technology (earlier known as 'Project Reality'). It's also Midway's first game to employ texture-mapping, advanced computer graphics on a 3-D polygon system."

—*RePlay* (8/94)

"Cambridge University physicist Stephen Hawking told an audience at a Boston computer show Tuesday that computer viruses should be considered a 'life form.'

"Hawking said a computer virus fits the definition of a living system even though it has no metabolism of its own, and is a parasite using the metabolism of a host computer. 'I think computer viruses should count as life,' Hawking said."

—Associated Press (8/3/94)

"AMOA and AAMA people will meet with Dr. Arthur Pober, executive director of the Interactive Digital Software Ratings Board, at his New York offices on August 8. They'll discuss what kind of information and symbols to put into video games' attract mode. In addition to symbols indicating the level of sex and violence, games will also carry 'age-appropriate suggestions' including five different age categories: very young kids, a 'universal' audience, teens, 'mature,' and restricted to adults. The exact terminology to be used for these categories has not been settled at press time."

—*RePlay* (8/94)

"... Jim Clark, founder of Silicon Graphics, has decisively parted ways with his old company concerning the information superhighway by forming Mosaic Communications. [SGI] is currently working with Time-Warner on a trial interactive TV system. By contrast, Mosaic Communications is betting on the PC and, more specifically, the Internet, as the true superhighway ... In spite of the apparent unwieldy and even chaotic nature of this system, Mr. Clark has said, 'I believe the Internet *is* the information highway ... I'm religious about this. I don't think it is cable television.'"

—*The Red Herring* (7/94)

"The Multimedia, Interactive revolution ... is mostly happening in trade shows right now ... if you want to make good money, right now, today, don't go out and hire a batch of software engineers. Go hire a Convention center and have a trade show, or conference.

"This might be a backlash born of fatigue and jet lag, of course... Comdex in Atlanta, followed ... by the Digital World Conference in L.A. ... and off to the CES in Chicago. Retailers are probably used to it, but the Hollywood Powers, Pundits, and Wannabes are getting tired and a little frustrated, waiting for tomorrow to get here."

—Dennis C. Michael
Entertainment Retailing Industry (7/94)

by Ed Dille

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HEGK0

HEIMLICH MANEUVER

So What's Multimedia, Really?

"In its simplest form, multimedia is nothing more than a fancy extension of a word most of the mainstream publications avoid like the plague. That word is 'Games.'"

Multimedia has finally become a runaway wagon, and we need to start watching out for it. Virtually every mainstream computer publication has gone overboard in their attempts to define and explain multimedia to the rest of us. The problem isn't that multimedia is tough to define. The problem is with those who have been attempting to define it. Frankly, those of you reading this column know exactly what multimedia is. In its simplest form, multimedia is nothing more than a fancy extension of a word most of the mainstream publications avoid like the plague. That word is "Games."

Gamers have exploited multimedia software and hardware for years and yet, you'd have to search quite a while to find any mention of gaming in your average computer publication. If this doesn't qualify as ironic, nothing does. How can an industry, eager to keep us all on top of multimedia issues, manage to completely overlook its most popular incarnation? I'll bet it's the old attitude that games aren't serious. Many people still won't admit that their hard disk is bursting with games. The problem is that this attitude is hurting gamers in the long run.

Over the years computer hardware changed significantly. Sound and video, the two biggest elements of multimedia, underwent more than their share of change. These changes made it difficult for the average user to keep up. As a result we read every professional recommendation and opinion we can get our hands on. In the computing world the sources of such information are limited indeed. Most people end up turning to the mainstream publications for hopeful insights.

Don't get me wrong, there's plenty to recommend in publications like these but gamers have to understand one overwhelming reality: these publications are not geared to gamers and our special needs and desires. Right now the biggest topic in most computer publications is Microsoft Windows. If it's not being done in Windows, they're not interested. Frankly any serious gamer knows that, in its current incarnation, Windows and games don't mix. Plans are in the works to change this, but for now, it's not a happy marriage.

Are you in the market for a new video card? Most of us have been in the past year. Given that, most of us also did a lot of reading about the potential products we might buy. However, if you were to base your decision on the recommendation of the average computer publication, you'd most likely have made a bad choice in regards to gaming.

Right now technical publications are most interested in tests that involve things like WinMarks. WinMarks measure the speed of a card under Windows. Many video cards designed with Windows in mind excel at such tests but are notoriously slow under DOS which also means they're slow with most games. Video cards that did wonders for games like the ATI Graphics Ultra Pro received less than stellar grades from these publications simply on the basis of their performance under Windows.

I can't remember the last time I saw a video card review that even bothered to mention performance with top games. And as most of us know, games account for some of the most intensive video manipulation possible. I don't know about you, but I'm more interested in speeding up **Links 386 Pro** than I am about speeding up **Excel**.

The sound card side has fared even worse. Most publications still don't get it. To date, well over 85 percent of the sound cards sold have been sold to gamers. You'd think this fact would result in gaming having some impact on editorial. In one recent sound card survey a card that was criticized as being a poor choice for business audio. It then went on to recommend the card for gamers based solely on its claim of Sound Blaster compatibility. The irony is that this particular product just happens to be one of the least Sound Blaster compatible products available. The publication never even bothered to check the compatibility claims. In other words, it's not good for business but because it's a sound card, it MUST be good for games, right?

The Turtle Beach Multisound wins just about every Editor's Choice award there is. It's always listed as the best card for the business audio market. What business audio market? There's no such thing. It's as if publications are so turned off by gaming that they have to dream up a completely fictitious market. I can't tell you how often I get mail from people who have read these reviews and gone out to buy a Multisound only to find out that it's virtually useless for games. I'm not criticizing Turtle Beach either. They have some fantastic products to choose from, but most you'll never read about (like the Maui and Rio) because they're aimed directly at gamers.

So where do you turn for quality input? The best place to start is with other game enthusiasts. Talk to as many as you possibly can. Inquire about their experiences with specific products and why they liked or disliked them. The odds are that an average gamer will have more useful information about a product they use than any other editorial source that only gets limited use of the same product.

In the meantime, spread the word that gaming is important to you. Publications won't start to change until we're loud enough to make them hear us.

Rich Heimlich *is president of Top Star, Inc., a quality assurance developer specializing in entertainment software and hardware. He's also a noted authority on multimedia issues.* **The views expressed are his own and may not reflect the views of this publication.**

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THE KUNKEL REPORT

THE CULT OF PERSONALITY

It was only a few months ago, in the April issue of *EG*, that I wrote a column called "Author! Author!" bemoaning the lack of artist-oriented marketing in the electronic gaming business. After all, every other form of entertainment uses its artists—the writers, painters, musicians—as the primary component in the product's marketing. People rarely purchase books, attend movies, or watch TV based on its publisher or production company.

Yet for decades, game publishers have sold consumers millions of dollars in product based solely on the publishers' identity, despite the fact that consumers feel no identification with faceless corporations.

• **EARTHWORM JIM**

When I wrote that column, it seemed like just another go-round on a familiar hobby horse; I have been singing this song, after all, for over 15 years and it never seemed to make an impression. In fact, it often seemed as if the industry was going backward in this regard. Back in 1978, Activision became the premiere third-party publisher in video gaming by spotlighting its creators (all snatched from Atari's anonymous bosom). On the computer front, Electronic Arts merchandised creators like Bill Budge as if they were rock stars, even sending Bill on a personal appearance tour to plug a computer pinball program.

Then, gradually, greed and paranoia set in. Creators who were treated like stars began to *act* like stars. They were more difficult to control and *always* wanted more money.

And, of course, there was the old, unreasonable fear that if you build up an author, they'll just be stolen away by a bigger company. To this day, Acclaim has a formal policy of refusing to divulge the names of the developers who produce their games—even when those names appear on the game intro screens!

But suddenly, at this year's SCES, there was a different wind blowing. Its two most spectacular manifestations were Alexey Pajitnov and David Perry, but small, persistent cults of personality have sprung up all over the industry. Like holes in the dam, we will soon see the entire facade give way before a torrent of consumer curiosity.

Suddenly, Alexey—perhaps the best-known creator in the entire industry—is "hosting" and consulting on an entire line of kinetic puzzle contests from Spectrum-HoloByte. His smiling Russian face appears on the cover of every box, accompanied by the immortal words: "From the creator of **Tetris**!"

"From the creator of—" has been the great marketing mainstay of the publishing industry since Gutenberg used his first slipsheet. Yet only now is the game business discovering the power of that sales pitch. Much of the change is being forced by the artists themselves—bright, ambitious young turks who understand the value of self-promotion. David Perry made his bones on the cult smash **Global Gladiators**, then had a breakthrough success with the Genesis version of **Aladdin**. On the strength of that success, he started his own shop, Shiny, and produced the slickest platform game within his considerable power (**Earthworm Jim**). He then took that game to the magazines and thumped it like an interactive P.T. Barnum. The next thing you know, David's publisher, Playmates, has signed with Shiny to produce a line of **E.J.** toys, and there's now an animated TV show on tap.

And so David Perry is now a star. Just like Virgin musician Tommy Tallarico, whose audio CD of video game music is being hyped heavily by Capital Records as an experiment that could eventually yield major dividends.

The new generation of interactive entertainment magazines have also helped push creators. The July issue of *Wired* featured a major spread, with photos, on the Id Software team (creators of **Wolfenstein 3-D** and **Doom**) while the Miller Brothers (Robyn and Rand) of Cyan Software (**Myst**) made the cover in August.

The great wall of creator anonymity is crumbling. It's about time.

by Bill Kunkel

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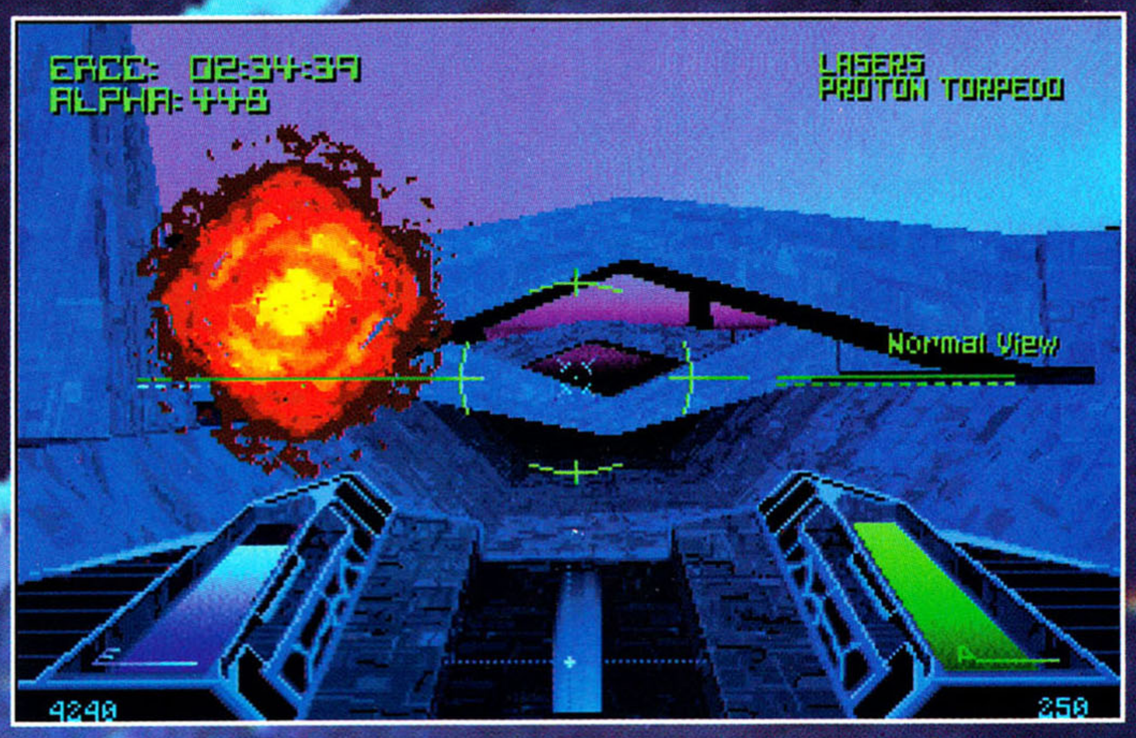

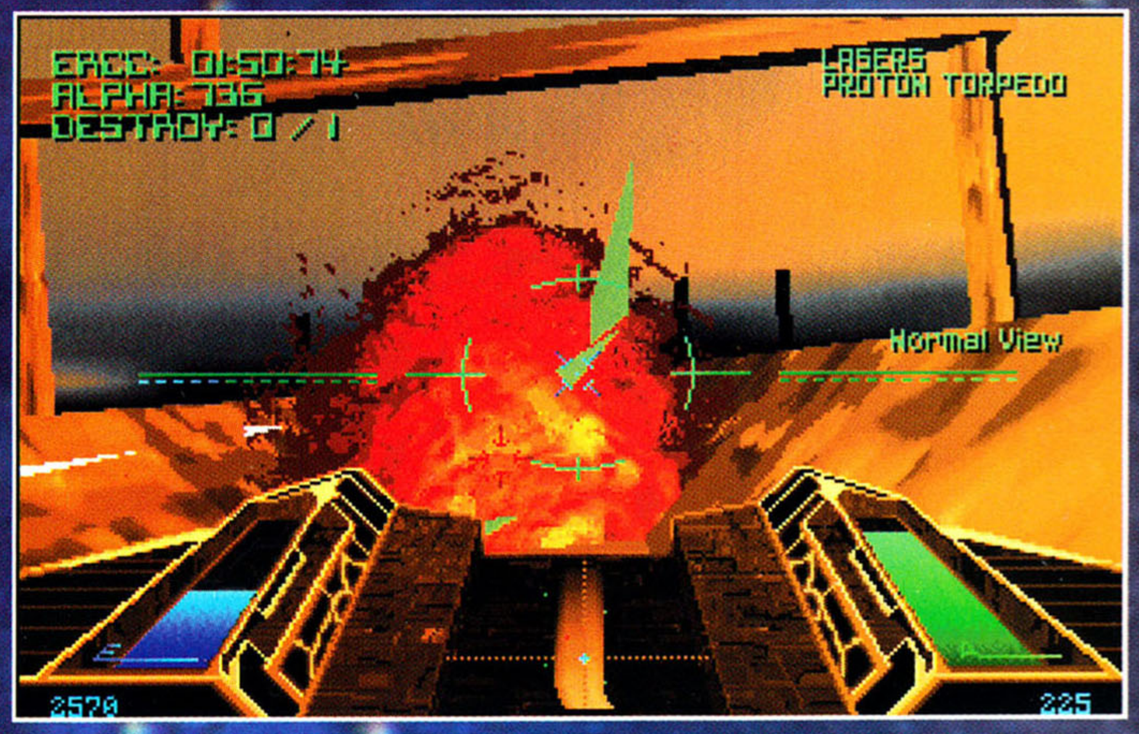

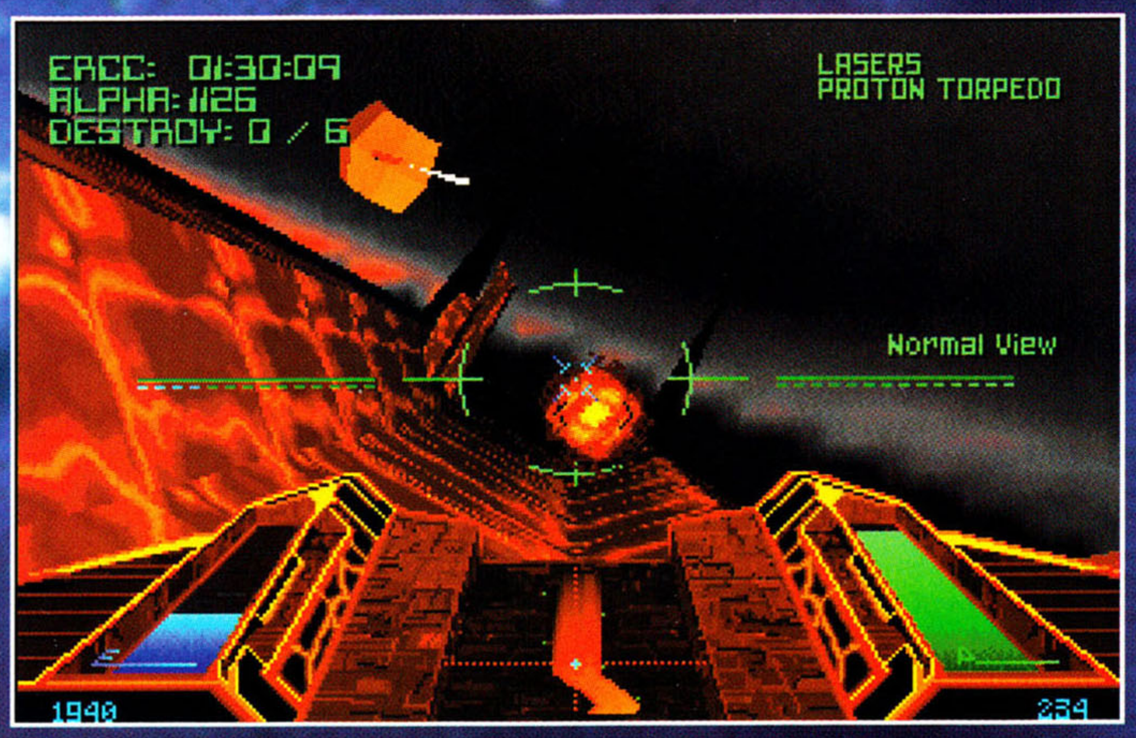

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"So chummer, you want to know about runnin?

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"Like I always said, Netrunnin' is like a drug, the speed gets you higher than a 'ject of Cephilene Blue, but a mistake'll leave you deader than a jacked out straightliner.

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—GROTHAN JHIR, ex-Netrunner.

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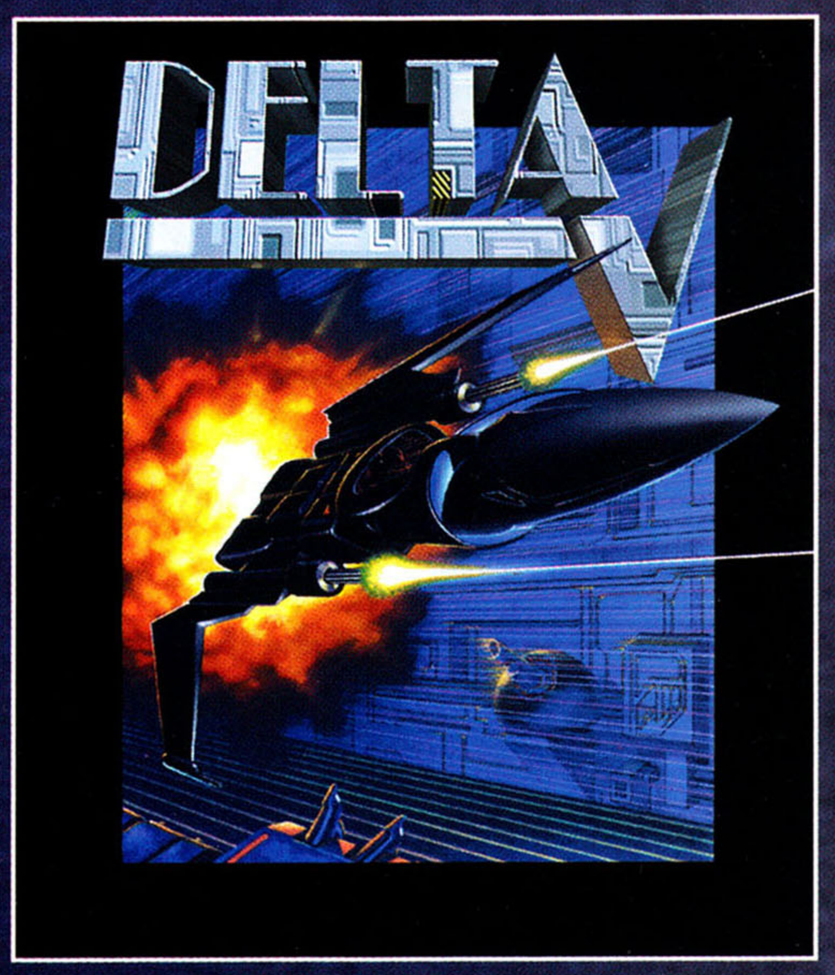

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