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3 GAMES

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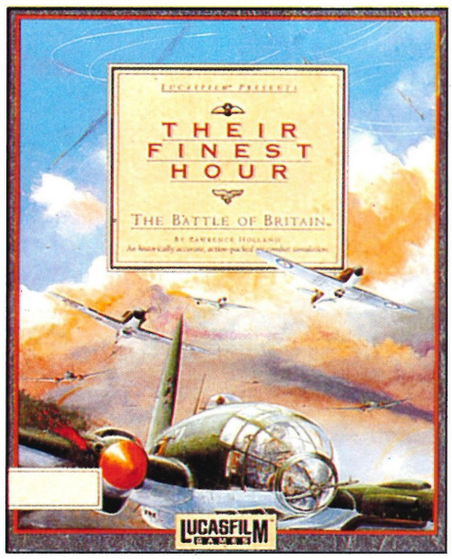
PCreview CD-ROM complete ISSUE 14 DECEMBER 1992

FLIGHT FOR PC

Only you can stop the Luftwaffe

The Summer of 1940. Hitler's war machine has humbled all of Europe - except Great Britain.

Now, the all-conquering Luftwaffe plans to soften up Southern England for an invasion known as Operation Sea Lion.





Only the RAF can halt their relentless progress. The odds are stacked against them.

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This is The Battle of Britain.



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Available on: Atari ST, Amiga and PC and Compatibles (CGA, EGA, MCGA, VGA and Tandy ® 16 colour. Requires 512k Ram. Supports AdLib™ sound card). Mouse or joystick.

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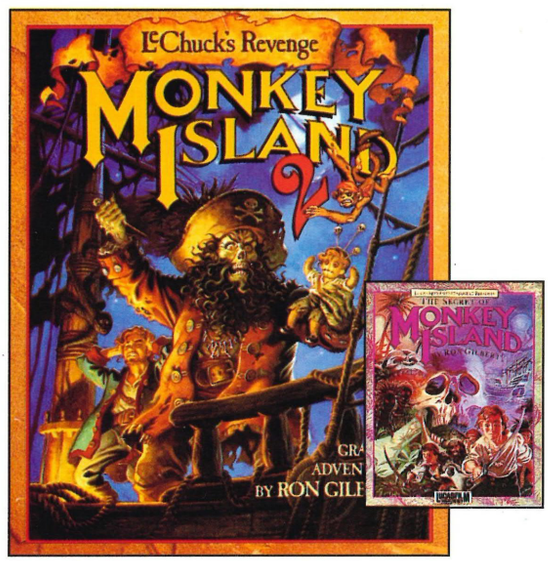
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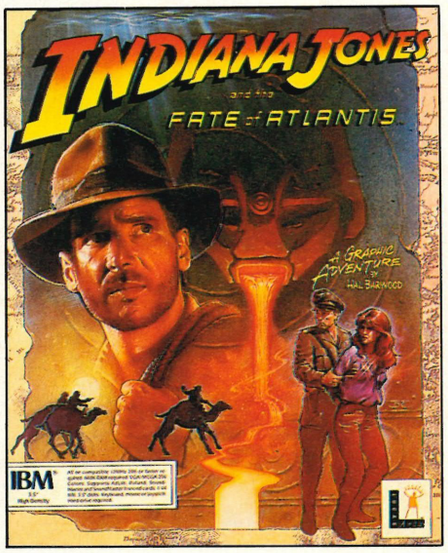
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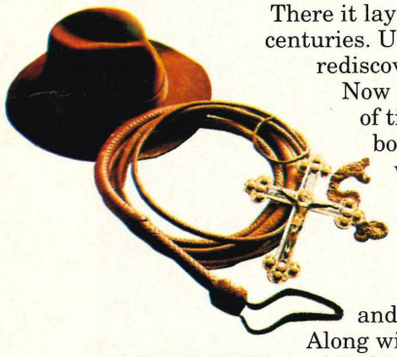
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Who can save Civilisation from destruction?

Who else? It has to be Indy.

It all began a few thousand years ago, when Atlantis sank to the ocean bed. With it, the secret of the most destructive force on earth also sank without trace. Or did it?





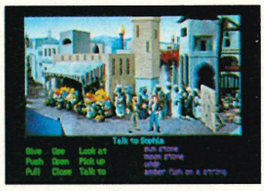
There it lay undisturbed for centuries. Until the Nazis rediscovered the Kingdom. Now it will only be a matter of time until they have a bomb so powerful it will draw World War II to a conclusion. Schnell!

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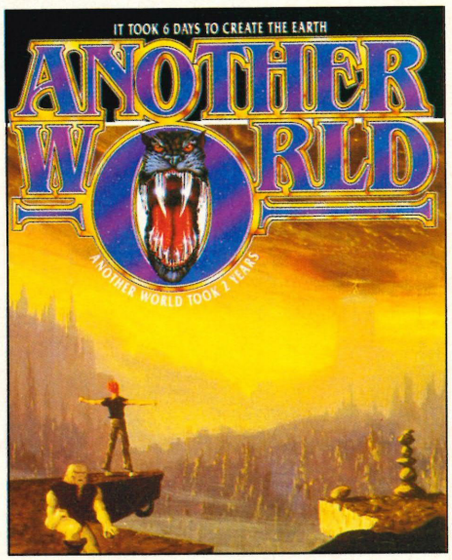
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ADVENTURE FOR PC

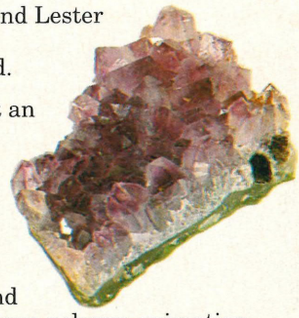
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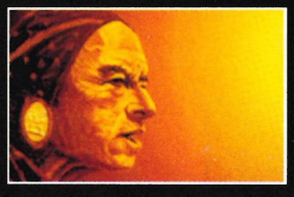
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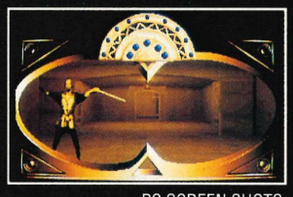


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PC review

DECEMBER 1992 ISSUE 14

Printed in the UK

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Our playable demo of Ocean's Wizkid is a bouncy arcade-style romp, while Print Partner enables you to print calendars, cards and banners from your PC (useful with Christmas fast approaching). Plus, 3.5" disk owners have the added bonus of two exclusive new shareware games, Keen Dreams, the follow-up to the phenomenally successful Commander Keen, and the sophisticated Phylox.

Turn straight to page 10 for full details on using the disks.

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42 **Painting by numbers**

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46 **City Golf**

After last month's exhaustive look at PC golf games, Paul Presley takes to the big screen, with a report from City Golf, Europe's first indoor golf simulator.

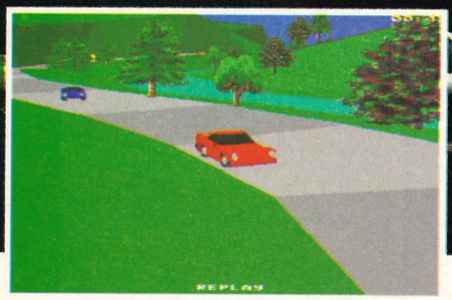
50 **PC oddballs**

Huw Collingbourne takes a trip into some uncharted waters, as he tries out some highly esoteric — and ultimately useful — PC utilities.

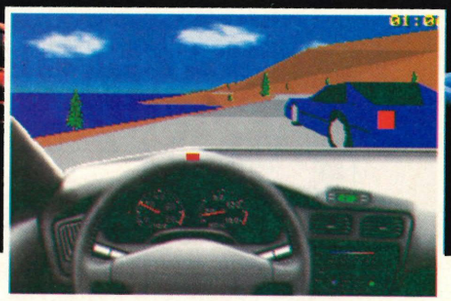


Links on the big screen at City Golf, Europe's first indoor golf simulation centre.









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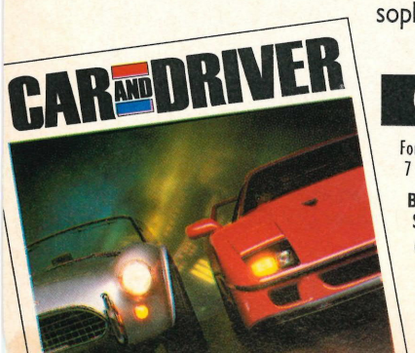
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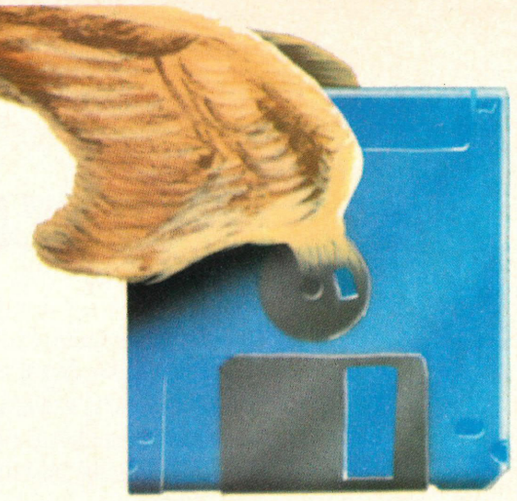
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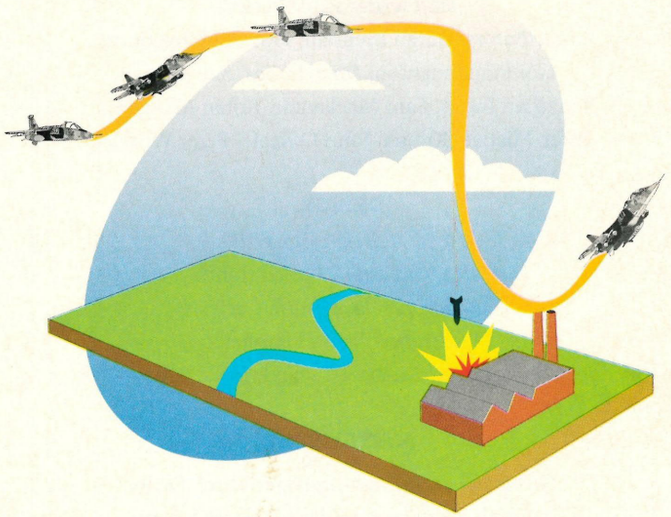


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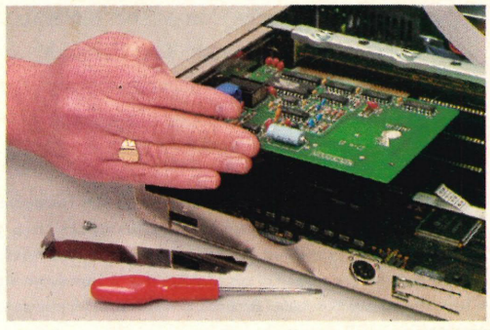
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PCreview

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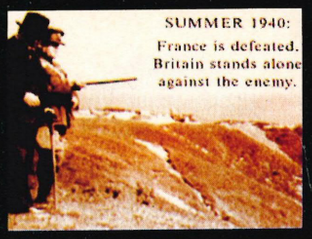
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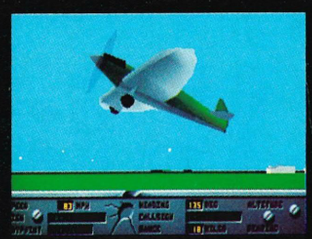
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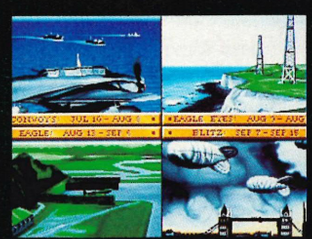












THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

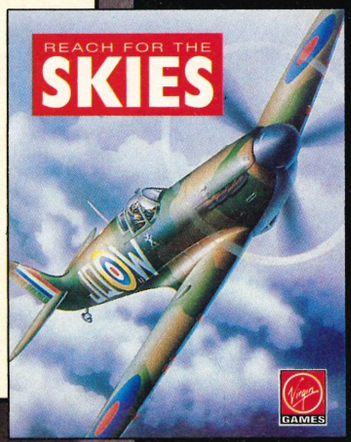
Summer 1940. The future of World War II hangs in the balance. The cream of the German Luftwaffe and the aces of the RAF are locking horns in their most crucial confrontation yet – The Battle of Britain.

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Virgin GAMES

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Cover disk

The response that we get to our cover disks indicates that, while you enjoy getting your heads round flight simulations and strategy games, from time to time you enjoy a bit of harmless action fun, so this month we've brought you a superb action game. Wizkid is the follow up to the bizarre Wizball, and our extract from the game features the trainer level and first world of the game proper. On a more productive note, there's PrintPartner, the ideal tool for creating signs, banners, calendars and more. The 3.5" disk edition also carries a bonus in the form of two great shareware action games.

Wizkid

3.5" and 5.25"





Remember Wizball? The cult hit that made Sensible Software famous was weird enough, but Wizkid, Son of Wizball is even weirder. This playable demo, which contains the Sunset Wizovard world, is an opportunity for you to capture the essence of this unique game.

Your aim in each level is to destroy the creatures by hitting them with bricks. You can fire bricks by bashing into them with your head. Whenever creatures are destroyed by bricks they turn into bonus bubbles — catch these to collect notes and make a tune at the top of the screen. When the tune is complete, you've won.

For further instructions you should select the Boot Camp level from the configurations screen. This is a special training level which will guide you through the objectives of the game. Press the spacebar from the title screen to reach this screen.



Once in Boot Camp, read the snails' instructions and try to carry them out as best you can. This will teach you what your onjectives are and the technqiues you should use duiring the game.

The other stage available in this game is the first world of the game proper, Sunset Wizovard. Try to detsoy creatures with blocks and collect the notes and bonuses they leave by running into bubbles.

Each time you manage to clear a wave of creatures, another one appears. If you clear all the waves you will move on to the next screen. You will also move on to the next screen once all of the bricks have gone. Try not to get hit by the creatures or you will lose energy and lives.

If you manage to get the red nose, you can bounce bricks on your head and then fire them in a particular direction by moving the joystick or pressing keys in the right direction while holding down fire.

On the crossword level, the objective is to fit all the words into the grid within the time limit. Move them around using the cursor keys and toggle them between across and down with the fire button. When you have found a fit, hit the fire button again to lock the word in place and call up the next one.

Controls

Cursor Keys	move Wizkid
Control key	fires

Phylox

3.5" only



This is an impressive debut from new shareware team Beavissoft. It's a frantic shoot 'em up cum platform game. Set in a world populated by weird creatures, this is a nice mixture of action and puzzles. This demo version has the first tunnel level and the first platform level.

In the tunnel, your objective is to reach the end of it, while destroying or avoiding the bugs, and lasers. You have two means of combat — lasers and grenades, but the latter are limited. To get past the forcefield you must destroy the rock in the tunnel roof.

In the platform section, you must avoid or destroy the creatures, lasers and explosive barrels. You can get from one platform to another using the rope and grapple.

Controls
In Tunnel

Cursor Keys	Hover up, right, left and down
Spacebar	Fire
Ctrl	Fire Grenades

In Platform Section

Cursor Up	Look up/Climb Up Rope
Cursor Left	Walk left
Cursor Right	Walk right
Cursor Down	Look down/climb down rope
Spacebar	Fire
Ctrl	Fire grenade
Alt	Attach rope to platform



Keen Dreams

3.5" only



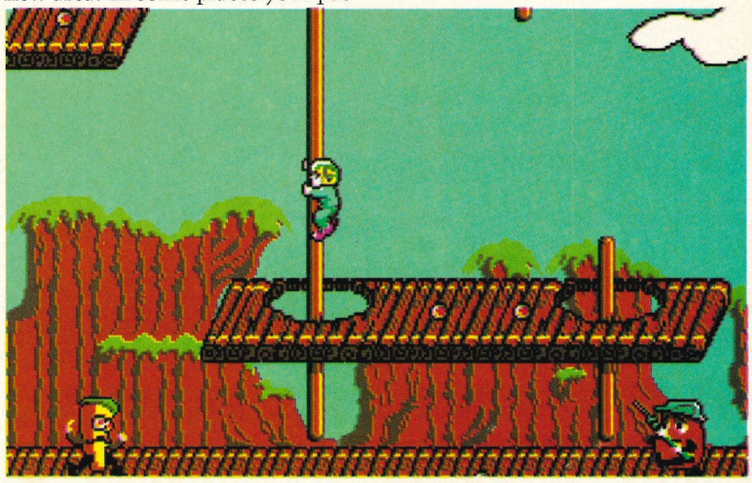
The Commander Keen series of shareware games have gained a massive following, which is hardly surprising considering their addictive quality. Now PC Review is pleased to be able to bring you exclusively, the shareware version of a new Commander Keen game, Keen Dreams.

This one is set in the land of Tuberia, which is populated by all manner of malicious vegetables. Your objective is to explore as much of the land as possible. Move around the map of the land of Tuberia and press Ctrl to enter a new area. In some places your passage is blocked until you complete an area.

Within each area you must make your way to the exit while avoiding the vegetables and collecting as many bonuses as possible. Collect the flower pills for ammo. When you fire these at vegetables they temporarily turn into harmless flowers. If you fire a flower pill and it misses, you have a short time to pick it up again before it disappears.

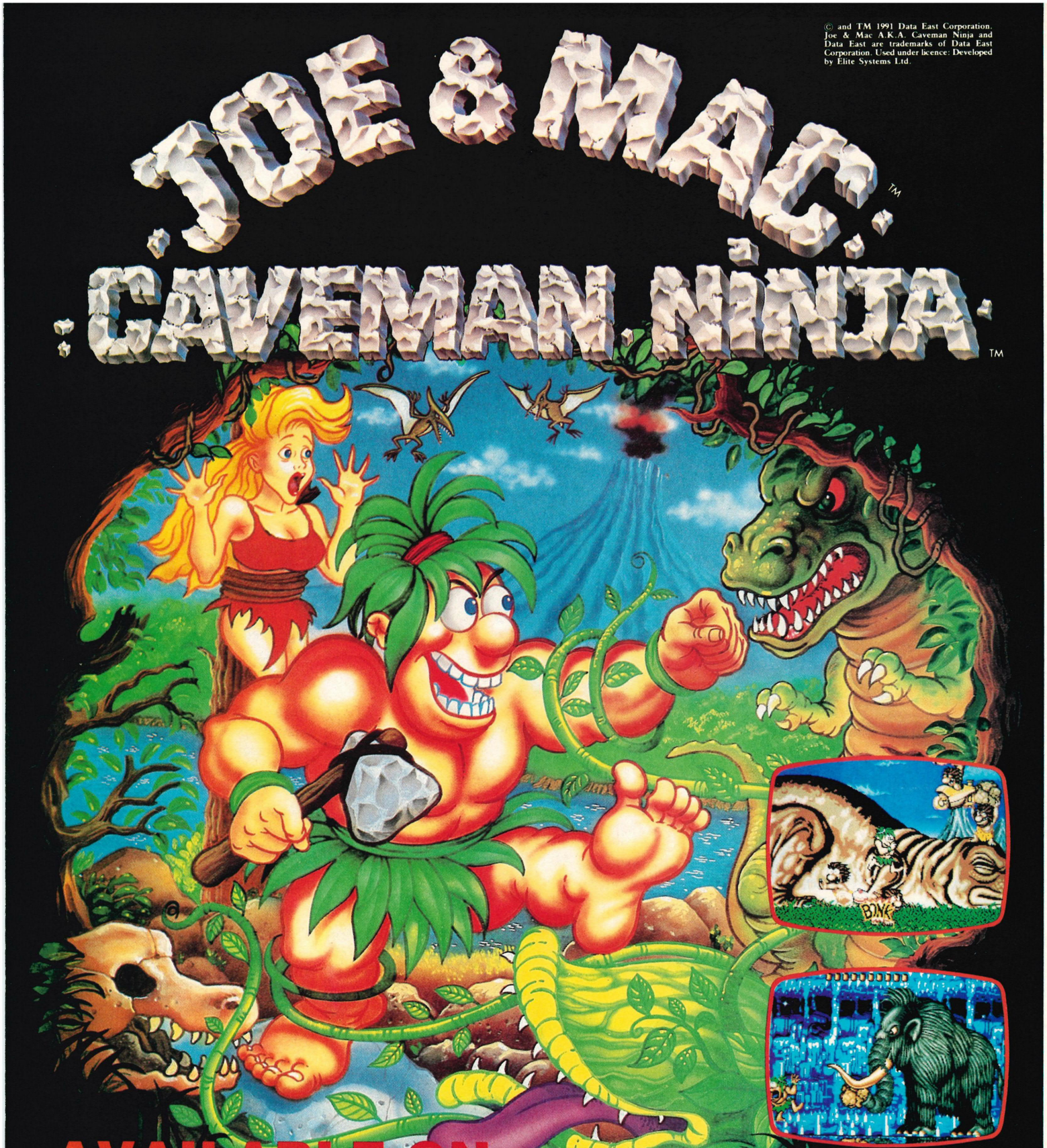
Controls

Cursor up	Climb up
Cursor down	Duck/ climb down
Cursor left	Walk left
Cursor right	Walk right
Ctrl	Jump
Alt	Fire flower pill



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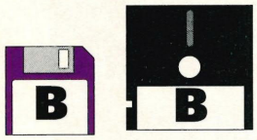
AVAILABLE ON:

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CD Rom

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PrintPartner



3.5" and 5.25"

PrintPartner allows you to make printed banners, signs, calendars, greeting cards and letterheads. Banners can have a graphic on either end and use any font you select, and may be either one or two lines. Signs may have any number of two graphics you select, which may be placed anywhere on the page you wish. Each line of text can use a different font and be sized to your specifications. Calendars with user-entered text can be printed for any month in any year from 1980 to 2098. Greeting cards have two small signs that are printed so that you can fold the paper into a greeting card. Create your own letterhead using a variety of fonts and graphics. The letterhead may be placed at the top or bottom or both on your page.

You can edit pictures and create new ones. You can directly load Printmaster Plus and Print Shop graphics (old Print Shop only, not the New Print Shop) into PrintPartner.

PrintPartner needs at least 384K of RAM to run. In addition, the use of a hard drive is strongly recommended.

At the main menu you are presented with the following choices:

MAKE BANNER	To create and print a banner.
MAKE SIGN	To create and print a sign.
MAKE CALENDAR	To create and print a calendar.
MAKE CARD	To create and print a greeting card.
MAKE LETTERHEAD	To create and print a letterhead.
PICTURE MAKER	To edit and create pictures.
CONFIGURATION	To configure your printer.
EXIT PRINTPARTNER	To quit PrintPartner.

■ Use the cursor arrow keys to move the lighted bar around the menu and press return to select the highlighted item.

Banners

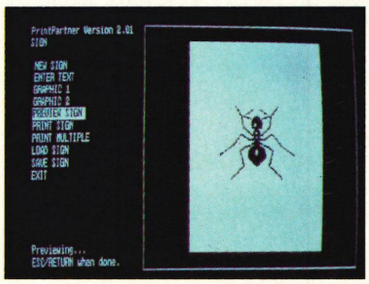
The banner section of PrintPartner allows you to print banners for any occasion. Each banner can be made with any font and can also have a graphic at either end.

Signs

The sign section of PrintPartner allows you to print signs. Each sign can contain any font you like and may have a different font on each line. Additionally, you can select up to two graphics and place them anywhere on the page and in as many different places as you like .

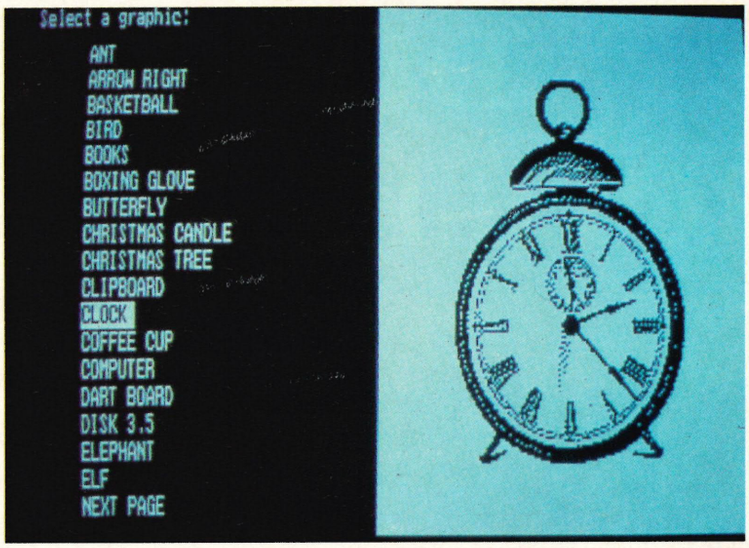
Calenders

The calendar section of PrintPartner allows you to print calendars for any month from January 1980 to December 2098. You can select any font to be used for the calendar and you can place notes within the calendar.



Greeting cards

The card section of PrintPartner allows you to make greeting-type cards for any event. Cards can contain any font and may have different fonts on each line. You can select up to two graphics and place them anywhere on the page and in as many different places as you like. Both the front and the inside of the card can be totally different.



Letterheads

The letterhead section of PrintPartner allows you to print personalised letterheads. You can place your letterhead at either the top or bottom of the page or both. You can have a graphic positioned to the left, right or to both sides of the of the letterhead. The text of the letterhead can be in any font you choose. Optionally you can have a thin or thick line separating the letterhead from the main body of the page.

Picture maker

The Picture Maker section of PrintPartner enables you to create new pictures or edit existing ones.

■ The configuration section of PrintPartner allows you to select the printer that you wish it to use-from the following menu items:

Select a printer

The currently selected printer will be shown at the top of the screen. Use the arrow keys to move around the listing to select your printer or one that is compatible with your printer. Press return when you have your printer name highlighted.

Select printer port

Allows you to select the printer port. from LPT1, LPT2, and LPT3.

Test printer

Choosing this option will cause PrintPartner to print a test picture. on your printer. If the picture prints properly then you have selected the proper driver for your printer.

For further information, and detailed instructions, please read the file PP.DOC supplied with the program.

Faulty disk?

PC Review's cover disks are checked and validated, but if you have reason to believe yours is faulty, pop the disk(s) in a jiffy bag with a self-addressed envelope and postage to the value of 28p (55p from overseas) for return of the new disk, and the form below (filled in) and send the package to the following address:

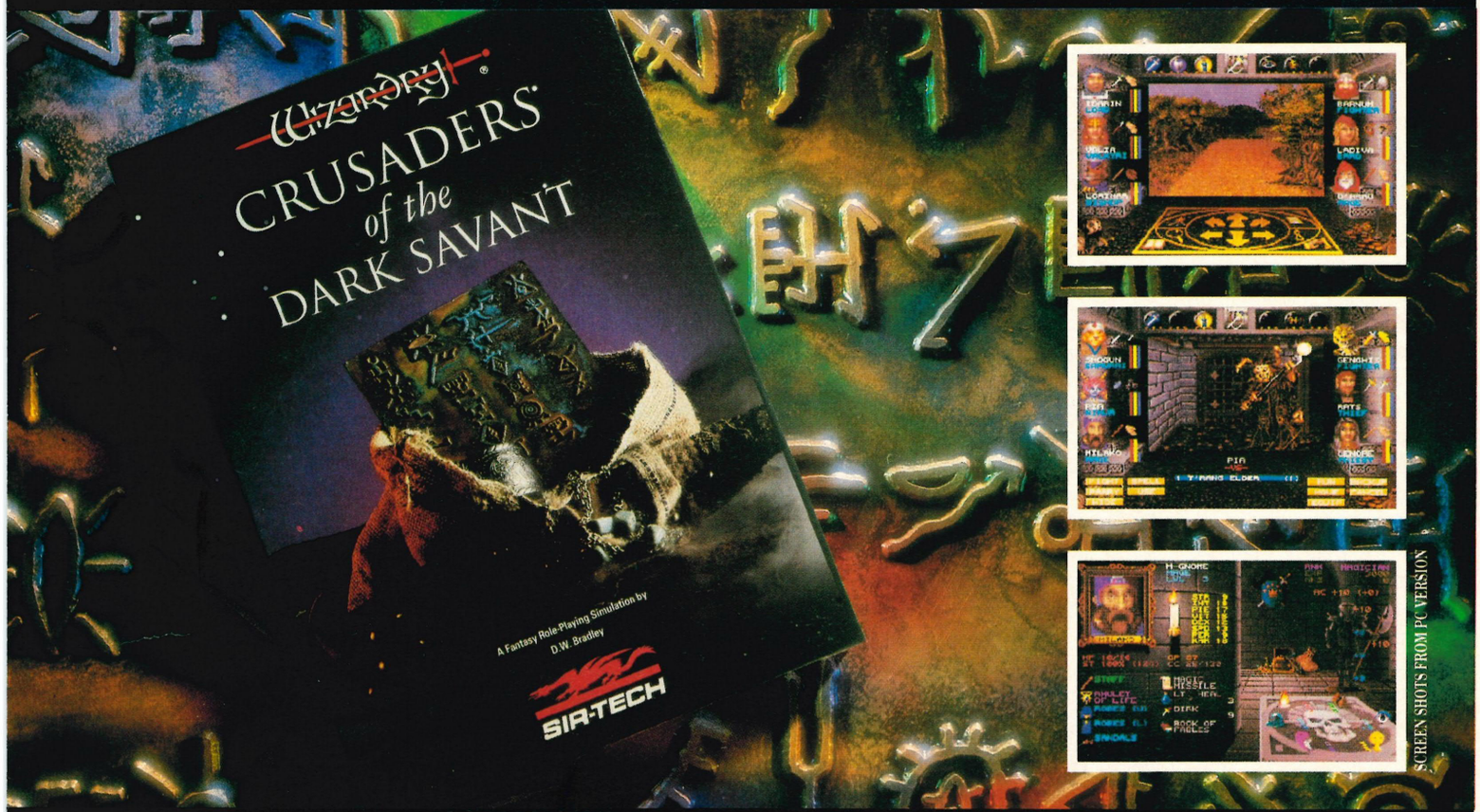
PC Wise
Dowlais Top Business Park
Dowlais
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CF48 2YY

Please DO NOT send the disk back to PC Review - we don't hold stocks of spare disks.

Name:.....
Address:.....
.....
.....

The disk on my copy of PC Review was damaged. Please send me a replacement – I enclose return postage to the value of 28p (55p if overseas) and the original disk.

JOURNEY TO A DEEPER DIMENSION OF ROLE-PLAYING FANTASY



BUT LEAVE A NOTE TO TELL YOUR FRIENDS WHERE YOU'VE GONE

Some people are happy with 'standard' role-playing games - but many want more - to feel involved, to go deeper, to be stretched to the limits of their imagination.

If you're one of those people then you'll be pleased to know that at last someone has acknowledged your plight and developed the first role-playing fantasy that truly does take you to a deeper dimension.

Crusaders of the Dark Savant is the latest Wizardry creation developed by Sirtech. Until recently Wizardry titles were not available in the UK. Thankfully however U.S. Gold, who brought you "Eye of the Beholder' I and II, know the form when it comes to RPGs and have snapped up the exclusive rights to bring them to these shores for the first time.

So why is **Crusaders** destined to be widely acclaimed by both beginners and seasoned role-players alike? Could it be the 3 standards of difficulty that cater for every level of player experience? Or that it delivers over 200 hours of utterly enthralling gameplay? Or the stunning graphics? Or the ability to create a new party from 11 races and 14 different disciplines? Or for those who've played 'Bane', being able to import their established party? Or even the auto mapping, multiple save facility and true mouse control? We suggest that you visit your local software stockist to find out for yourself.

But before you begin **Crusaders of the Dark Savant**, a little advice from someone who's been there - make sure your diary's clear for the next few days, weeks, months.....

Available on:
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SCREEN SHOTS ARE ONLY INTENDED TO BE ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE GAMEPLAY AND NOT THE SCREEN GRAPHICS WHICH MAY VARY CONSIDERABLY BETWEEN DIFFERENT FORMATS IN QUALITY AND APPEARANCE AND ARE SUBJECT TO THE COMPUTER'S SPECIFICATIONS.
CRUSADERS OF THE DARK SAVANT COPYRIGHT ©1991 BY SIR-TECH SOFTWARE, INC. AND D.W. BRADLEY. WIZARDRY® IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF SIR-TECH SOFTWARE, INC.

How to use the cover disk

All the programs

1. Put the cover disk into any disk drive and log on to that drive. For instance, if you have put the disk into drive A: type:
   A: [Enter]
2. Now type:
   PCR [Enter]
   to load the installation program.
3. There may be a menu asking you to select which language you wish to have the installation messages displayed in. To make your selection use the mouse or cursor keys to move the highlight bar and then click the left mouse button or press the Enter key.
4. A list of programs on the disk will now be displayed. To select the program you wish to install or run, use the mouse or cursor keys to move the highlight bar and then press and release the left mouse button or the enter key.
5. If the program is of a type that runs directly it will do so now before returning you to the menu and step 4.
6. If the program has to be installed to another disk you will now have to tell the program where you want it to be installed.
7. The program will suggest a drive and directory to install the program to. If you are happy with the suggested location, press the enter key and installation will begin.
8. If you would like the program to be installed to a different drive and/or directory, backspace over the suggested pathname and enter another one. You cannot install the program on the cover disk itself.
9. If there is insufficient space on the disk you have specified, or if the directory you have specified cannot be created, the program will inform you of this and give you the opportunity to enter an alternative location.
10. All being well, the program will now be decompressed and installed at the specified location. You will see a series of messages on the screen as this happens.
11. Once the program has been successfully installed you will see a message reminding you of where it was installed to and telling you which command starts the program. Press a key to return to step 4.
12. When you have installed or played all the programs that you wish to, press Esc to exit to DOS.

Wizkid

To start playing Wizkid, you must log on to the drive and directory where the program was installed. This is probably C:\WIZKID, unless you chose another drive or directory during installation. Type CD C:\WIZKID (Enter) to log on the Wizkid directory. To start the program, type

WIZKID (Enter)

Keen Dreams

Keen Dreams is supplied with its own installation program. To use this, insert the disk into your drive and type INSTALL. Now follow the on-screen instructions. Note that the game is automatically installed to C:\KEENDRM. To play Keen Dreams, you must log on to the drive and directory where the program was installed. This will be C:\KEENDRM. Type CD C:\KEENDRM (Enter) to log on the KEENDRM directory. To start the program, type

START (Enter) or START /COMP (Enter) if you have an SVGA card

Phylox

To start playing Phylox, you must log on to the drive and directory where the program was installed. This is probably C:\PHYLOX, unless you chose another drive or directory during installation. Type CD C:\PHTLOX (Enter) to log on the PHYLOX directory. To start the program, type

PY (Enter)

PrintPartner

To start PrintPartner, you must log on to the drive and directory where the program was installed. This is probably C:\PARTNER, unless you chose another drive or directory during installation. Type CD C:\PARTNER (Enter) to log on the PARTNER directory. To start the program, type

PP (Enter)

Important notes for users without a hard disk.

1. Providing that the programs will fit, you can install them on to another floppy disk.
2. If you have a twin drive system you should leave the cover disk in one drive and install each program to a blank formatted disk in the second drive.
3. If you only have a single disk drive, you can install the programs to a blank, formatted disk using the same drive. You should specify drive B: when asked for an install path. DOS will now prompt you when you need to swap the disks. When it asks you to insert the disk for drive B: you should insert the blank disk. When it asks you to insert the disk for drive A: you should put the cover disk back in. You will have to swap disks several times during the installation process.
4. On some occasions you may be asked to insert a system disk. In this case you should insert a system disk instead of the cover disk, and then swap them again when prompted to do so.

Important note for users with mono, LCD or plasma displays

1. The installation program should automatically detect whether you have a mono or colour display and run in the appropriate mode.
2. If you have a grey scale LCD or plasma display you may prefer to run the program in mono rather than colour. You can do this by starting the program with the command:
   PCR M [Enter]
3. If you have a non-standard colour display which the program fails to detect you can force it to run in colour mode by starting it with the command:

Helpline

If you have followed the instructions on these pages and are still having difficulty in getting your disk to operate, please telephone our helpline number below before returning the disk.

Disk helpline: (0685) 350505

The helpline operates between 10.30 am and 13.30 pm on weekdays only. If at all possible, please have your computer up and running and your PC Review cover disk ready when you ring the helpline.

If your telephone is not near the computer, then please note down as much information about the fault as you can and have pen and paper handy before you call.

Please note

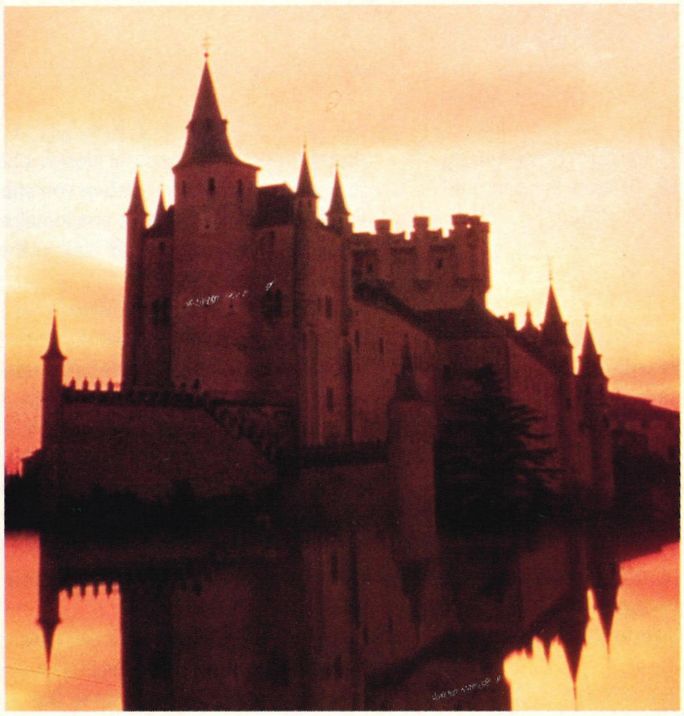
PC Review's cover disks are rigorously checked at each stage of production for all known viruses and duplicated under strict quality control.

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We also make every possible effort to ensure that the contents of the cover disk are exactly as advertised. If, however, circumstances should dictate that we are unable to supply the stated programs we will endeavour to provide alternative software.

PC Review, its distributors and retailers will not be held responsible for any unnotified change to the contents of the disk.

Conquer outer space



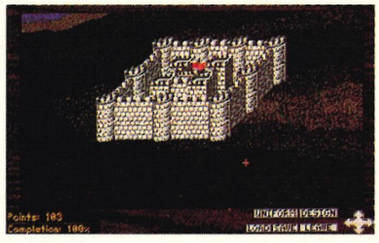
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In the original Castles™, it helped to be the world's most two-faced, double-dealing, power-crazy tyrant.

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The King of France is dead. And so will you be, if you don't grab the throne before some other evil baron gets to it first.

So in addition to commandeering a workforce to build your castles, you're now out to lay siege, attack and destroy those of your rivals, by any means at your disposal.



Send out spies, saboteurs, recruit infantry and cavalry, pillage gold and food, trade for building materials, research new weaponry, bribe the church for their support - just a few of the fun things that go to make a good medieval day's work.





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Now you can know how it felt to be part of Man's greatest adventure - the race to be first on the moon.

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Recruit and train over 140 astronauts and cosmonauts, to find a handful who have what it takes to decide history.

Then using actual data, plan and direct as either US or USSR mission leader, over 300 missions - orbitals, sub-orbitals, manned and unmanned flights, planetary and lunar fly-bys, even emergency space rescues.

"Race into Space", features over 1000 historical photographs and digitised animations, nine levels of difficulty, full musical score and sound effects.

Are you made of the right stuff?



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Battlechess 4000™

Battlechess 4000 launches the world's most classic game into a hilarious Space Age battle. As futuristic animated creatures, digitally created, cause havoc on a translucent chess board.

Swash-buckling captains, mad scientists and weird and wonderful robots, perform moves that you'd never find in any rulebook.

But Battlechess 4000 is not only fun, it's also the strongest and most versatile chess program yet.

It has a library of over 300,000 opening moves and an artificial intelligence that learns and remembers all the strongest moves.

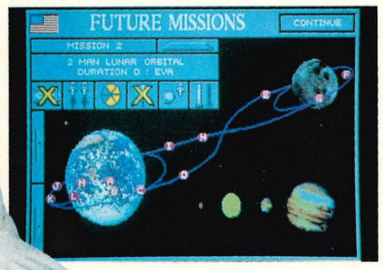
You can play in 2D or 3D - take back or replay moves, even try out a "What if?" scenario. And there are infinite levels of difficulty, so you can get the most out of Battlechess 4000, if you're a novice or a Grandmaster.



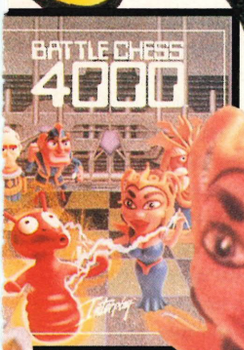


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or a medieval baron.







Mario™ Teaches Typing.

If you want to learn to type, ask a plumber.

But not just any old plumber - Mario - along with Luigi and The Princess, in all your favourite adventures.

So now, whether you're a complete beginner, or you know the basics, you can learn to type and have fun at the same time.

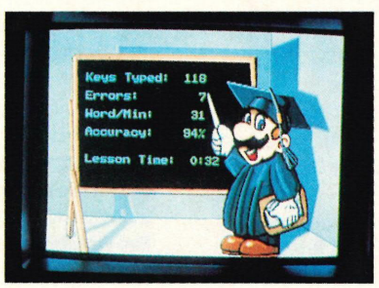
Run, smash, jump, swim and kick.

Make for the castle, keeping a watchful eye out for falling blocks and treacherous quick-sands and discover that you can type whole sentences and even paragraphs before you know it.

Mario Teaches Typing, has clear on-screen and picture-orientated icons to help you. It traces and charts your progress, there are sound effects throughout, plus the famous Mario theme - learning to type will never be dull when Mario and his gang are around.



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Interplay™

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Commodore goes a bundle

HOME hardware specialist Commodore continues its march into the IBM-compatible market this month with the launch of two new hardware and software packages, both of which are available direct to the public through telephone hotlines.

The two bundles are aimed at the leisure and home business markets, with the incorporated software reflecting these separate uses.

Based on a standard 25Mhz 386SX configuration, with 40Mb hard drive, colour VGA, mouse, stereo speakers and a Sound Galaxy card (Ad Lib and Sound Blaster compatible), the Leisure Package (below right) incorporates three games — Wing Commander II, D/Generation and Legend — along with DOS 5.0 and Commodore's own menu/utilities suite. Support is provided in the form of a 90-day hotline and one year's on-site maintenance.

One drawback of this set-up is that it boasts only 1Mb RAM, so users may well find themselves needing to upgrade their machine's memory in order to play many of the latest releases.

The Business Package (below left) adds an extra megabyte of memory, but comes without the sound card and speakers to compensate. The three games are also replaced, this time by Windows 3.1 and Microsoft's integrated business software package, Works for Windows.

Both configurations are priced at £699 (plus VAT) and can be ordered by calling either (0543) 418666 or (061) 877 4806. Both hotlines are open Monday to Saturday.





IN BRIEF...

FOR THE YOUNGER MS-DOSSER who can't help getting his or her mords wuddled up, Europress Software has released Spelling Fair, the first 'special edition' in its highly acclaimed Fun School series of educational programs. Designed to help children up to 13 years of age and conforming with the National Curriculum, Spelling Fair is available now, priced at £29.99.

NOT CONTENT with sneaking through to the next round of the European Cup by the skin of their teeth, the world's favourite Yorkshiremen, Leeds United, are to be immortalised by the release of their very own computer game. CDS, the company responsible for this service to floppy footballing promises more of wily Wilkinson than belligerent Batty, as the game will concentrate on management and tactics.

FANS OF Microsoft's Flight Simulator can now treat themselves to visits to Tahiti, Hawaii and the Grand Canyon, as Digital Integration has taken on a range of scenery disks from Texan developer Mallard Software featuring those locations and more. In all, the Mallard range features nine titles, including scenery disks, a Sound, Graphics and Aircraft Upgrade and an Aircraft and Adventure Factory which allows the user to create just what its title suggests. For more details, contact DI on (0276) 684959.

MODESTLY BILLED as "... a game that may become on the IBM what Dungeon Master was on the Amiga and Atari ST", Storm's Valhalla will be the first product of the Wandsworth firm's recent tie-up with Norsehelm Productions of Sacramento, California. Previously entitled Valhalla, the RPG underwent a swift name change when it was found to clash with the forthcoming strategy affair from Mirage.

TWENTY MILLION MICE might be a problem to some households, but not to Logitech, which has just completed the production of exactly that many long-tailed software controllers. To mark the occasion, the company has launched a new entry level model, the Pilot, which comes complete with "ecologically sound" (ie, smaller) packaging and a simplified 10-page manual. Out now, the Pilot will set you back £27 plus VAT.

PC WORLD, the would-be Sainsburys of PC hardware and software sales, is doubling its retail empire with the opening of two more stores. Once again sticking close to the company's London roots, the new shops will be based in Brentford and Staples Corner.

UBI SOFT HAS TAKEN on the distribution of a new range of software from yet another Californian developer, San Francisco's Asciiware. The first two titles to appear as a result will be Spellcraft (Aspects of Valour) and Dominus.

WHOOPS! In our feature on the new animation package, Playmation (PC Review, Issue 13), we somehow managed to avoid telling you anything about the supplier, the price, the contact number, and so on. Playmation will be available from US Gold (021 625 3366), and priced "between £190 and £200", which sounds like £199.99 to us.

Samurai goes for seconds

Now that Vivid Image Design's First Samurai has finally been released (see the review on page 92), the London-based development team has begun to beaver away at the next instalment in the saga — called, you guessed it, the Second Samurai.

After the tribulations which hampered the original's release (it was initially signed to Mirrorsoft) VID supremo Mev Dinc has not yet decided which publisher will take on the sequel, although it is believed that the race is now between two and an announcement is expected shortly.

The game itself will feature a number of changes, most notably the addition of a two player mode, while the action will be a little more straightforward this time around — that is, there will be more martial mayhem and less puzzle solving.

Those of you who do get your hands on the First Samurai can take your time in completing it however, as the sequel is not due to hit the PC until September next year.

Gold makes logical desision

Following its recent appearance at the top of the PC leisure software publishers' chart, thanks mostly to its array of affiliate labels including Lucasfilm and SSI, US Gold is increasing its drive into the MS-DOS field with the announcement of a new stablemate and a 'mid-priced' budget range.

The newcomer to the ranks is Novalogic Inc, a US developer best known in these parts for its submarine simulation, Wolfpack. The arrangement covers Novalogic's next two titles, Maximum Overkill and Battlefield 2000, both of which will be published in Europe by US Gold.

Both titles, a helicopter flight and fight simulation and multi-vehicle combat epic, make use of a new fully-rendered 3D environment development system which Novalogic is currently patenting, and are due for release early next year.

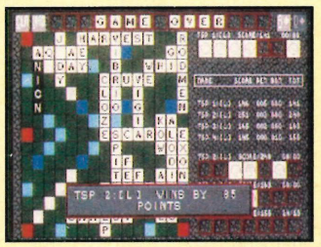
On the budget front, Gold is once again making use of its affiliate labels by re-releasing a number of their titles alongside one Rainbird classic under a new banner 'Kixx XL'.

The opening line-up, which will sell at prices between £12.99 and £14.99, includes Battlehawks 1942, Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders, Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (all from Lucasfilm), Delphine's Future Wars, a single package containing the entire series of World Class Leaderboard packages from Access (including a number of previously unavailable courses) and Rainbird's strategy/action epic, Midwinter.

Further releases on the Kixx XL label are expected in the New Year. For more information, contact US Gold on (021) 625 3366.



Novalogic's Maximum Overkill promises spectacular graphics.



Quagga, quassia and zymurgy are just three words which the less likeable among you might use in US Gold's Scrabble – that is, if the computer doesn't get to them first! Look out for a review next month.



Sequels remain the order of the day at Sierra On-Line, as the graphic adventure and RPG specialist prepares to release the latest epic from husband and wife team Lori and Corey Cole, Hero Quest 2.

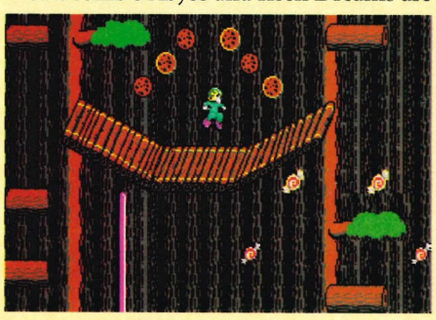
'Lost' Keen game makes comeback

Shareware aficionados are in for a pre-Christmas treat, as a number of previously 'missing' games produced by the legendary ID team (the folks who brought you Commander Keen and Wolfenstein 3D) have been unearthed and brought into the mainstream.

Transend Services (call (0274) 622228) has released a collection of 11 titles, 10 of which have become almost legendary in shareware circles as 'the lost collection of ID Software'.

The near-legendary 10 numbers Keen Dreams, the latest Commander Keen opus, among its ranks, while the eleventh, Catacomb's Abyss, is an all-new adventure game which uses the same 3D Ultima Underworlds style 'engine' as the now-famous Wolfenstein 3D (best of all, you can try out Keen Dreams — exclusively, no less — for yourself on this month's cover disk).

Catacomb's Abyss and Keen Dreams are available now through the normal shareware channels (Transend's sales director Andrew Amess would like any shareware libraries which have not received the games so far to contact the firm for copies) and both disks will carry details of how to obtain the rest of the collection.



The good book gets better

Suitably equipped Christians can now avail of two new digital versions of the good book, as Hodder & Stoughton (on (071) 636 9851) has released an updated version of its BibleMaster program.

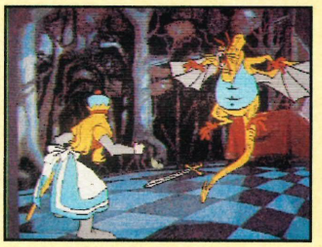
BibleMaster 1.5 provides two distinct versions of the text, the New International Version (Anglicised) and the Good News Bible (the British version), along with a text editor and numerous other enhancements.

Searches can be carried out on either single words or phrases, while the program can handle up to 500,000 cross-references displayed side by side. Furthermore, selected passages can be printed straight from the program or incorporated into other text documents.

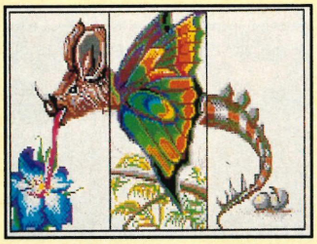
No hardware-straining miracles will be performed, as the program operates on any machine with 384K of memory and DOS v2.11 or higher — however it does take up a minimum of 6Mb of hard drive space. BibleMaster 1.5 is available now, priced at a heavenly £60.



Forget Neil Armstrong and his "one small step for a man" mullarkey, Interplay is about to give you a chance to become Buzz Aldrin, in Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space, now due for release before Christmas.



Readysoft's series of graphically delightful (but interactively challenged) games based on the pioneering Don Bluth Laserdisc coin-operated arcade machines continues with the release of Dragon's Lair 3.



From next month on, you can create the creatures which God didn't have time for with what could be Maxis' most ambitious project to date, Sim Life. Genetic manipulation has never been this much fun!



Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective 2, another CD-ROM based multimedia adventure promises similar full-motion video footage to its predecessor (although this time around in 256 colours instead of 16).



Wearing his admiration for Sega's top Megadrive platform game Sonic the Hedgehog on more than just his sleeve, Gremlin's 'Ninja from the Nth dimension' Zool is about to leap and dash his way onto your PC.



MicroProse's superb Grand Prix is about to get a run for its money from Britain's latest sporting hero, as Gremlin's officially endorsed Nigel Mansell game is due for release next month.

Sounds familiar



If the current range of sound-enhancing hardware for your PC seems a touch bewildering, then you'd better prepare yourself for a shock, as there's a whole new wave of sound cards just around the corner, specifically designed to make your choice even harder.

Westpoint Creative opens the proceedings with the latest in its Sound Blaster catalogue, the Sound Blaster 16. Priced at £249 and complete with built in MIDI and CD interfaces, the 16 offers CD-quality music and effects alongside 20-voice stereo FM synthesis, stereo and digital mixing functions and speedy compression and decompression.

Logi also promises CD-quality sound with the long-awaited Ultrasound. Developed and produced by Gravis, the Ultrasound supports up to 32 digital synthesised voices simultaneously, sampling at up to 44.1 Khz and two DMA channels — all for a price of £149.

Considerably less expensive at £79.95, the Leading Edge Corporation's Sound Commander is a Sound Blaster compatible board, complete with games port, MIDI interface and software. The card is also available in an enhanced Gold version, priced at £169.95.

Another newcomer, Orchid (Europe) brings two new cards into the throng, the Orchid Sound Producer and the Sound Producer Pro. Priced at £69, the standard card offers a built-in amplifier, stereo speakers and Sound Blaster and Ad Lib compatibility, while the Pro card adds further compatibility and other extras for an enhanced price of £159.

The final offerings are Cyonix's Sound Trax boards, the Solo, Trio and Pro versions, priced at £89.95, £109.95 and £139.95 respectively. These three are currently marketed in other parts of the world under the Sound Galaxy banner (see Which Soundboard?, PC Review Issue 13).

All of the prices above are exclusive of VAT. For further details, contact the following numbers:

Cyonix (0525) 850025
Leading Edge (0670) 365057
Logi (0344) 891313
Orchid (0256) 479898
Westpoint Creative (0743) 248590

Humongous news from EA

With the recent spate of comings and goings at Electronic Arts, it looks as though the firm should consider investing in a set of revolving doors for its Langley offices.

After the acquisition of Origin and the departure of Interplay to set up on its own in Europe, the latest announcement is a three year deal with the strangely named Humongous Entertainment.

The company's name may be strange, but some of the personnel will be very familiar to avid PC gaming fans, as the new operation is an offshoot of Lucasfilm headed up by none other than Ron Gilbert, designer and driving force behind such classics as Maniac Mansion, Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade and the Monkey Island series.

The Lucasfilm connection is carried on by the firm's intention to license the SCUMM development system which was used in the production of many of its later games.

Ablac's going to the zoo

A range of education-orientated titles covering everything from basic spelling to the habits of caged animals is now on offer from Devon-based Ablac (on (0626) 332233), as the company has taken on the distribution of Davidson's Zoo Keeper and a range of titles from the intriguingly named Zugware.

Zoo Keeper is an amended version of an American multimedia style education program which has been reconfigured to incorporate a number of UK and European zoos alongside the American originals. Placing the user in charge of an animated zoo, the program seeks to educate through the device of an entertaining adventure.

Davidson's Zoo Keeper is available now, priced at £44.95 (one pound of which will be donated to the London Zoo's development fund).





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PCR 11

EA invades Britannia

The world's biggest entertainment software house, Electronic Arts, just got bigger. Its acquisition of Origin has given it a boost in the CD-ROM field, and a valuable back catalogue. EA's Mark Lewis talks to Ciarán Brennan about the implications of the deal

Electronic Arts' strength in the leisure software market was underlined three months ago when it announced the acquisition of its Texan rival, Origin Systems, in a $35 million deal which combined the might of two of America's most respected software developers.

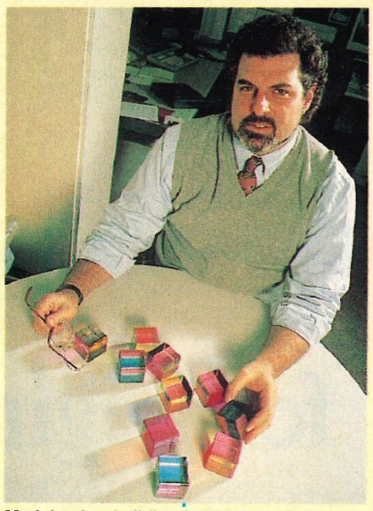
Like EA, Origin has been around for almost as long as the PC itself. And while the company has historically led the RPG field with its series of Ultima games (conceived and executed by Origin's founder, Richard 'Lord British' Garriott) it has also recently taken control of a large chunk of the digital space lanes with the Wing Commander series.

Although the two firms have genuinely complementary software catalogues, their corporate marriage wasn't exactly the result of a whirlwind romance. In fact, the pair began to show an interest in one another more than a year ago. Then, following a period of financial courtship, the deal was finally signed at a civil ceremony in California in late September.

Lewis explains what it was that brought them together: "Whenever Electronic Arts' management meets up, we have discussions about our competition. At different times there can be anywhere between two and a dozen candidates with whom we'd like to be working more closely in some way – Origin was usually somewhere on this list."

Lewis continues by citing a number of reasons why this merger was a good idea, but he increasingly returns to talking about the people involved. "Richard Garriott is one of the world's most creative people," he says. "And not only in terms of entertainment software – he really has a vision about entertainment. He designed his own house in Texas, for example, and it's like Disneyland come alive.

"And that's Richard ... his drive is to make sure that entertainment is always interactive, no matter what form it's in."



Mark Lewis – building for the future?

But while Garriott is undoubtedly a major driving force behind the Texan firm's success, Lewis is quick to point out that Origin is no one-man band: "With the addition of programming talent such as Chris Roberts [the man behind Wing Commander], those guys have created part of the same vision which EA has always been dedicated to – and that's pushing back the limits of the personal computer."

Although the two companies are now owned by a single group of people, they will continue to trade separately for the foreseeable future – so Origin fans can rest assured that it is not about to be swallowed into the giant EA corporation.

Now that Origin has joined this rapidly expanding family, it's inevitable that the two companies will be working together in the area of research and development.

Lewis is hopeful that this will happen quickly. "One of the reasons we were interested in Origin," he says, "was their unparalleled expertise in the interactive stories business – the other is there's no doubt that their flight sim stuff has some great technology that's applicable both to the floppy disk and CD media.

"But while we will try to help each other out, it will continue to be very important to us that the Origin brand name is strong enough to stay as a separate entity – I don't think that you're going to see Origin coming out with Earl Weaver Baseball or anything like that."

When the merger was first announced, sceptics put forward the theory that EA had bought Origin because the latter was leading the field in the development of state-of-the-art CD games. Lewis denies this.

"Origin is not ahead of EA in terms of CD software development," he states. "However, it does have different techniques in some important places: some of that is rendering, some of it is compression. One of the attractive things is that we weren't on parallel courses, so we can bring the two processes together to maximise our potential."

The result of all of this should be bigger and better CD games – but will they be in the shops any quicker? Lewis has his own theory on when compact disc gaming will stop being a thing of the future and enter the realms of consumer reality.

"I think that will come in Christmas of 1995," he says. "But the problem is getting people to understand what CD brings. So, until people do CD games which are really top quality, things aren't going to change – 'shovelware' on to CD just won't change things and CD compilations aren't going to make the future brighter. What we need is the kind of stuff that will make people go 'Wow! I want to have that in my living room'."

Lewis is adamant that, at present, the PC is leading the way in CD gaming. This, he believes, is an inevitable byproduct of the way that PC games have grown in recent years, and uses one of EA's own titles as an example: "Sherlock Holmes comes on nine high density disks, which unpack enough data to take up 25Mb of hard drive space. Now, I realise that the PC user at home can't leave a game of this size on their hard disk for a year the way they should, so these really have to be viewed as first generation CD products.

"The titles that will work on CD will be a combination of entertainment and, as much as people hate the term, 'infoedutainment'. Imagine flying over the planet, then deciding to zoom down to Africa to take a look at Victoria Falls or inspect the wildlife – that's the sort of thing that will be possible with compact disc storage. It wouldn't bother me at all if, by the late 1990's EA was known as the National Geographic of CD."

Although there are people in the games development business who find the unstoppable march of technology frustrating, Lewis definitely doesn't rank among them.

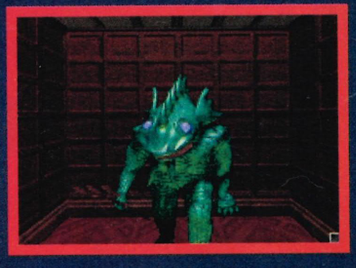
"I think it's great that the hardware keeps forcing the artistic direction to keep advancing," he says. "After all, if you sit down and play something like Sherlock Holmes and then you think back to the eight-pixel black and white blobs of yore, you can't help but think 'Wow! We've come a long way in 10 years'."

THE LEGACY

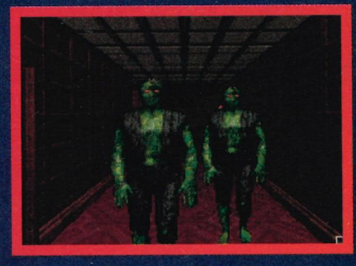
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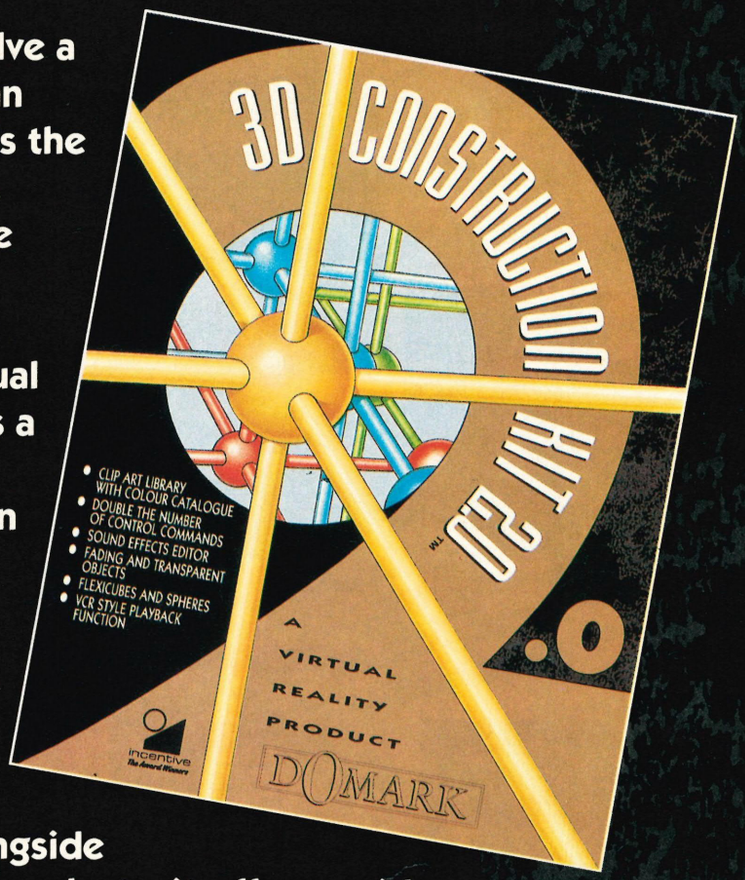
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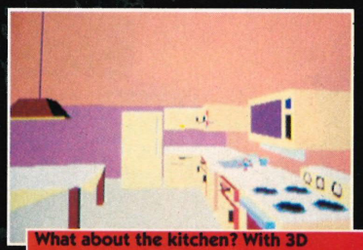
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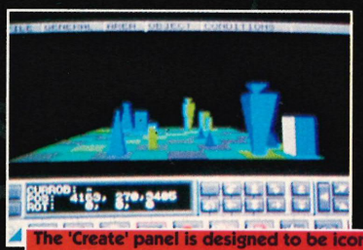
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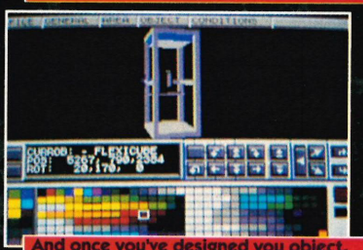
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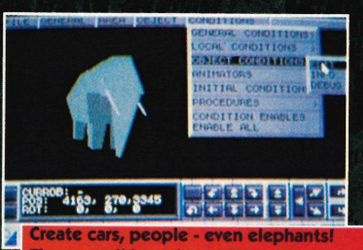
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DOMARK

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Domark Software Ltd., Ferry House, 51-57 Lacy Road, Putney, London SW15 1PR

incentive
The Award Winners



Win an Opus 486SX Leisure Station

British manufacturer Opus has a range of two Leisure Station packages on the market at the moment, and in this competition, PC Review has snaffled a 25MHz 486SX-based Leisure Station to give away as first prize. The Leisure Station (which is also available centred around a 386SX PC) also includes a Sound Blaster II, speakers, joystick, mouse, and 12 month's on-site maintenance. The machine itself comes with DOS 5 installed, a 40Mb hard disk, VGA card and VGA colour monitor. On top of all that, you can choose two games from a selection of 10 Mindscape titles to go with your new PC.

Normally, this little lot would set you back ú999. One of you is going to walk away with it free, gratis, and for nothing as the winner of this competition (and will get to choose their two games to go with it as well).

Ten more people will win runners' up prizes in the shape of a copy of the PC Games Bible, published by Sigma Press and normally costing £12.95. This new book details and reviews 2,000 PC games on the market — an invaluable companion for your machine. (It also has an introduction by the editor of this magazine, but don't let that put you off.)

How to enter

So, how do get your hands on all this loot? Couldn't be easier: on this page there are four extracts from screen pictures taken from four of the ten games available with the Leisure Station. Simply identify the titles correctly, write them on the coupon below, stick that on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope and send it to

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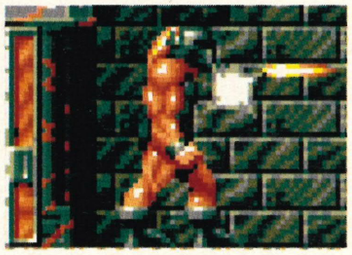
Get all that right, and you'll be in the grand draw for the prizes. The closing date for this competition is December 31, 1992, and no entries received after that date will be considered. The results will be announced in the March 1993 edition of PC Review.



A



B



C



D

Components

25MHz 486SX processor
4Mb RAM
40Mb hard disk
1.44Mb 3.5" disk drive
800 x 600 VGA card and colour monitor
Sound Blaster II
Speakers
Mouse
Joystick

Choice of two from these ten titles: 4D Sports Boxing, Aces of the Great War, Chessmaster 3000, Gods, Legend, Life and Death II, Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing, Wing Commander 2, World Atlas, World Tennis Championships

Leisure Station competition
The games from which the screens are taken are as follows:

A .....
B .....
C .....
D .....

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Address.....
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❑ Tick this box if you do NOT wish to receive any further information from companies associated with this competition.

PC Review December 19

Rules

The winner of the 486SX-based Leisure Station will be the first correct entry drawn at random after the closing date. The winners of the PC Games Bible will be the next ten correct entries drawn at random.

No entries received after the closing date will be considered.

Only ONE entry per person, please. Multiple entries will be disqualified.

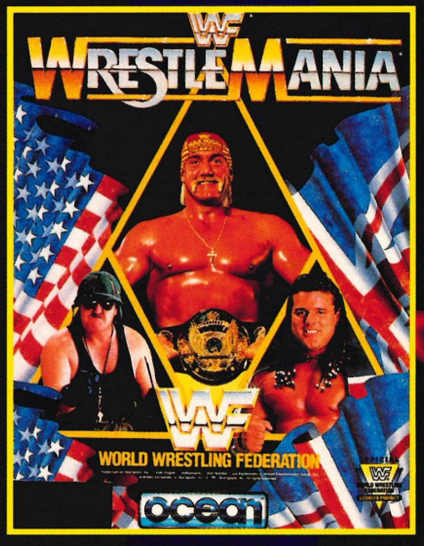
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The irresistible



Talk of relatively cheap CD-ROM drives and forthcoming CD games is so commonplace in the pages of this and other magazines, that a newcomer to the scene would be forgiven for believing that compact disc gaming was yesterday's news.

But the truthis that CD-ROM technology is still very much in its infancy, and even the best of the current crop of games and reference titles available on this medium is only scratching the surface of CD-ROM's potential — especial-

CD-ROM complete

This is an attempt to cover all the CD games releases currently available in the UK through indigenous publishers. To keep the list to a manageable size, this is strictly games only, so you won't find the Grolier Encyclopedia, or Mammals in here, even though they've been reviewed in the magazine before.

The CD-ROM originals (ie, those games which are not available on floppy disk) are marked with a ●, while enhancements to the disk-based versions are noted in the text.

The ratings are awarded on a similar basis as those in the main reviews section, with the additional proviso that simply putting a decent game on to CD and calling it the multimedia version isn't enough. There should be a some incentive for you to buy the CD-ROM as opposed to the disk-based version, such as enhanced music or speech. Therefore, ratings here are not intended to be interchangeable with ratings for disk-based versions.

rise of CD games

The compact disc is now ten years old, and software houses are beginning to wake up to the potential of CD-ROM as a storage medium and for true multimedia entertainment on the computer

ly as the average user's computer technology and memory is only now beginning to catch up with the possibilities offered by the CD's 640Mb capacity (as a rough guide, 640Mb is the equivalent of 444 high-density floppy disks).

Part of the reason for the PC user's almost rude familiarity with the CD is the way that the silver discs have taken over the audio world. It puts things in perspective when you consider that the audio CD was only itself introduced to the mass market in 1982 — almost at exactly the same time as the IBM PC.

The compact disc was the result of a joint development between two electronics giants, Japanese Sony and Philips from Holland, which came up with what is now known as the 'red book' standard — rules designed to ensure that any CD audio player by any manufacturer would be compatible with any other.

It was at this stage that the CD-ROM's data limit of 640Mb was inadvertently laid down. The story has been told so many times that it has now almost become legend, but Rob Ainsley, editor of Classic CD magazine, feels that it's ▶

360 Compilation (Das Boot, Megafortress, Aces of the Great War)
Mindscape, £59.99
Compilation of some worthy simulations. Taken straight from the disk-based games.
Rating: 5

Adventures of Willy Beamish
Sierra On-Line, £44.99
Dynamix's little brat (Larry Laffer in formative years?) in a series of mishaps as he attempts to win the country's Video Game Championships. Beautifully illustrated and some witty caritcatures, with added speech and music.
Rating: 6

BattleChess Enhanced
Interplay/Electronic Arts, £49.99
Chess game in which the 3D pieces do real-life battle with opponents when captured. This version has been pumped up considerably with 256-colour, 640 x 480 screens, more music and sound, extensive tutorial and the ability to play via modem.
Rating: 7

Castle Master + 3D Construction Kit
Domark, £39.99
The game designer cum PC Lego, coupled with probably the best known of the games to use its 'building blocks' as graphics. However, note that 3DCK 2 is due out on disk soon. Not an essential part of your collection.
Rating: 5

Castle of Dr Brain
Sierra On Line, £44.99
Logic problems, word puzzles and mathematical teasers for children, dressed up in a quest to locate the mad scientist Dr Brain, and executed brilliantly, so that the educational content isn't at all intrusive. Classy stuff, with speech on CD.
Rating: 7

CD Game Pack II
Software Toolworks £89.99
A CD-ROM veteran, released into the market when there were perhaps two or three CD-ROM drives in operation in the country. For this reason, this compilation no longer looks like much of a buy, since the games included have mostly been superseded by sequels, or better examples of the genre.
Rating: 4

Chessmaster 3000
Software Toolworks, £44.99
This versatile chess program has been enhanced with audio presentation — spoken advice, animated voice tutorial, narration of historic matches — and increased number of viewing perspectives in 256 colours. Needs an MPC set-up.
Rating: 8

Conan the Cimmerian
Virgin Games, £34.99
Explore, hack and slay in this very average game, now with added sound.
Rating: 3

Eco Quest
Sierra £44.99
One of Sierra's educationally slanted titles for young players, with you as 12 year old Adam battling against environmental hazards to make the world safer for his dolphin friend. Enhanced sound on the CD version.
Rating: 7

Fascination
Coktel Vision, £54.99
This spy thriller's main selling points are its lush graphics, comprehensive 'sound-bites' and the clever use of animated digitised images seen through on-screen windows. However, all the atmosphere and presentational touches in the world don't hide the fact that this is a standard explore, examine and collect graphic adventure.
Rating: 5

● **Family Choice**
Compton's New Media, £69.99
A collection of educational puzzles and games mainly aimed at younger children — hence the Spellicopter, Mathmaze and colourful on-screen jigsaw puzzles. Exceptions to the kids-only games are Designasaurus, where any adult will also enjoy creating strange prehistoric monsters and Fictional Advisor, which is a book quiz.
Rating: 6

Guy Spy and the Crystals of Armageddon
Readysoft, £34.99
No-frills conversion of this Sullivan-Bluth inspired action game, thus beautiful cartoon quality images and animation, but minimal gameplay.
Rating: 3

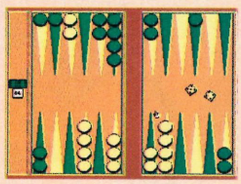
Infocom Collection
Virgin Games, £39.99
Hopelessly dated, bringing back faintly embarrassing memories from years ago, and making you feel that the genre has gone steadily downhill ever since and nobody writes them like that any more. Who could argue with the quirkiness, humour and richness of plot in Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy, Leather Goddesses of Phobos, Planetfall and Wishbringer? See, however, Lost Treasures of Infocom, below, before parting with your money.
Rating: 5

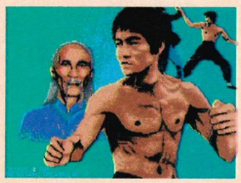
Jones in the Fast Lane
Sierra On-Line, £44.99
Computer board game for up to four players, aiming to become rich and successful and achieve their lifetime's ambitions (how very 1980s). Includes speech over and above the disk version.
Rating: 6

● **Just Grandma and Me**
Broderbund, £39.99
An educational game of some style, this takes the young player through a series of screens which 'tell' various stories — going shopping, a day out, etc. Parts of the screen can be selected for animation and sound effects. Very appealing.
Rating: 7

King's Quest V
Sierra On-Line, £44.99
Another tale in the saga of King Graham of Daventry, this one includes extra digitised music, and speech from 50 actors to accompany the text.
Rating: 8

Laura Bow 2: Dagger of Amon Ra
Sierra On-Line, £44.99
Sequel to Colonel's Bequest. Laura Bow, investigative reporter, is after the dagger of the title in a graphic adventure which mixes detection, egyptology, and 1920s' New York. Enhanced sound.
Rating: 7









From the top: Backgammon and Bruce Lee from Games Pack II, Castle Master and Fascination.



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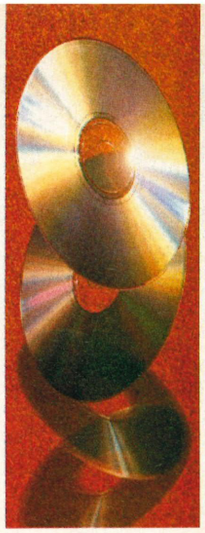
DMA DESIGN

PRODUCTION

- Puzzling problems with hilarious animation
- Enhanced sound support with digitised Lemming voices
- 8-way scrolling
- 15 original soundtracks

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worth telling one more time: "History has it that Sony's chief executive, Akio Morita, who has also taken credit for the invention of the Walkman, decided that the CD should be designed to comfortably accommodate the most popular piece of classical music — and no more.

"Taking him at his word, the Sony team discovered that at the time, the most popular classical piece in Japan was Beethoven's Choral Symphony, which usually lasts for 71-72 minutes. Just to be on the safe side, Philips decided on 74 minutes as the optimum length and included this figure in the red book."

Many hi-fi buffs have lived to regret that decision, as they find their collections filling up with unnecessarily large double-CD cases, but 74 minutes became the capacity nonetheless — and as that translates into 640Mb of computer data, that subsequently became the chosen capacity when the CD-ROM concept was born (actually, it is technically possible to double the capacity of CDs by using twice as many 'pits' as normal — however, a 'blue' laser of much higher density than the current standard is required to read discs of this nature, so the arrival of a new double-length CD is at least five years away).

The digital nature of the new-fangled CD storage medium lent itself perfectly to computer applications, so it wasn't long before Sony and Philips once again teamed up, this time to announce their intention to jointly develop the new discs as computer data storage devices. The first hardware product of this new union appeared in 1984, with prototype CD-ROM software titles following soon after. Because computer gaming was still very much in its infancy at this stage, the first titles to appear were huge text databases and encyclopaedias — in fact anything which could make good use of the CD's capacity, equivalent to 150,000 pages of text (or as some real genius worked out, 17 bibles).

It was because of these academic applications that the late and little lamented Robert Maxwell began to take an interest. Maxwell not only owned an Oxford-based publisher, Pergamon, which specialised in science, technical and medical book publishing, but he had also set up a computer games division, Mirrorsoft. Maxwell believed that the two could combine to exploit the new computer-based compact disc market. Pergamon Compact Solutions was duly incorporated in 1987, headed up by Mirrorsoft's managing director, Jim Mackonochie.

After the company completed its first project, an integrated parts catalogue and maintenance manual for the Boeing 757 (which used a single CD to replace a series of books standing six and a half feet in height, Mackonochie contacted Bob ▶

CD-ROM complete

Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards
Sierra On-Line, £44.99
Larry is looking to score with the babes in the town of Lost Wages, severely hampered by his choice of pick-up lines and trichological deficiency. This 'improved' version is the same as the 'improved' disk version with VGA graphics — no extra speech or sound — and note the CD only contains the first game in the series.
Rating: 4

Loom
Lucasfilm, £45.99
Bobbin the weaver needs to rescue the village elders by defeating evil Signos. The atmospheric graphic adventure gets a pile of speech and sound effects, which enhance what was already a thoroughly satisfying disk-based game.
Rating: 8

Lost Treasures of Infocom
Disc Company, £45.99
A real bumper pack of Infocom adventures, No enhancements, no graphics, no sound, just pure unadulterated Infocom plotting and narration. The separate manuals and hint books have been compiled into just two volumes to make handling easier, and there's a limited assortment of the famous Infocom freebies in the box.

Full game listing: Zorks I, II and III, Zero and Beyond Zork, Enchanter, Sorcerer, Spellbreaker, Deadline, Witness, Suspect, Lurking Horror, Infidel, Ballyhoo, Moonmist, Planetfall, Stationfall, Suspended, Starcross and Hitchhiker's.
Rating: 8

Magnetic Scrolls Collection
Virgin Games, £34.99
Three veteran Magnetic Scrolls text adventures, Fish, Corruption and Guild of Thieves, were enhanced to run under Wonderland's windowing system (thus cleverly disguising the fact that they were still text adventures). The CD is not so well disguised as a direct transfer from the disk.
Rating: 5

MicroProse Collection: Midwinter, Gunship 2000
MicroProse, £49.99
The original psycho-strategy game as seen through ski goggles, plus what is still one of the best flight sims for *any* type of airborne craft. Not a bad duo to start off your CD games collection, but don't expect any extras over the disk versions.
Rating: 5

MicroProse Collection: Red Storm Rising, Carrier Command
MicroProse, £39.99
A couple of relics from the MicroProse crypt here: Red Storm Rising is based on Tom Clancy's novel and adapted for the computer by Sid Meier. Carrier Command is an arcade-style flight game. Both are showing their age a bit now.
Rating: 4

MicroProse Collection: Railroad Tycoon
MicroProse, £39.99
Sid Meier's classic for trainspotters everywhere was one in a field of one until A-Train appeared, but again, this is simply the disk game on CD.
Rating: 4

MicroProse Collection: M1 Tank Platoon
MicroProse, £39.99
One of the first tank simulations, this puts you at the helm of four M1 Abrams tanks and sends you out to pound the Soviets into submission. Now a touch long in the tooth, and looking rather lonely on its own on CD.
Rating: 3

MicroProse Collection: 3D Pool, Savage, Soccer, Rick Dangerous 2
MicroProse, £49.99
3D Pool was good in its day, Savage is a sideways scrolling beat 'em up, and frankly, not MicroProse's finest hour, Soccer is an adequate football sim, and Rick Dangerous II still stands up as a jolly arcade romp. File under shovelware.
Rating: 4

MiG29 + Mig29M Superfulcrum
Domark, £39.99
Flawed but interesting pair of flight sims, if only because of the aircraft involved. But what on earth, may one ask, are both the games doing in the package, given that Superfulcrum was the enhanced and improved sequel? Directly transferred from disk.
Rating: 3

Mixed Up Mother Goose
Sierra On-Line, £44.99
Appealing game for children in which mixed-up characters from well-known nursery rhymes need to be sorted out. *Very* American voices on the CD version, but in five languages — useful for foreign language learning as well?
Rating: 7

'Nam + Prince of Persia
Domark, £39.99
A curious combination, this. 'Nam is Matthew Stibbe's highly detailed Vietnam War 'what-if?' sim. A purple heart to Stibbe for effort, but the play is flawed and difficult to get to grips with.

Prince of Persia is another prospect altogether. It may date from the late 80s, but it's still one of the best animated platform games around. No enhancements here over the disk vevrsion, though.
Rating: 4

● **North Polar Expedition**
Virgin Games, £99.99
Available only on CD, this takes you along with Ranulph Fiennes trekking across the tundra. The game, such as it is, is a quiz-style puzzler about adapting to Arctic conditions and is heavily geared towards group participation and for use in schools.
Rating: 5

Pacific Islands
Empire, £34.99
Sequel to Team Yankee (which is not available on CD), this tank simulation pits your platoon against renegade Soviets in the Pacific atoll of Yama Yama. Directly transferred from disk.
Rating: 5

Secret of Monkey Island
Lucasfilm, £45.99
Classic graphic adventure, full of humour, puzzles and excellent storytelling. A direct transferral to CD-ROM, which will disappoint anyone hoping to hear the assorted pirates actually talk.
Rating: 6









Eco Quest, Jigsaws from Family Choice, Monkey Island, and Pacific Islands.

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Jacobs, the driving force behind Cinemaware, with the result that the two companies began work on a CD-ROM version of the legendary animated adventure, Defender of the Crown.

Although the end result hardly hinted at the enormity of the games to come (being little more than the original floppy-disk game with added speech), it set a path where many have since followed. Mackonochie himself is quick to point out the lessons learned: "The trouble is that CD is an entirely new medium and you need to look at it intelligently. It's wrong to think of the thing as a bloody big hard disk which you can't write to, it's much more complicated than that. "You've got a couple of significant problems to overcome. Firstly, there's the data transfer rate of 150 kilobytes per second — most hard drives work at a faster transfer rate than that — and, secondly, the laser head has to be physically moved to the right place to read the disc, and unless you lay down data in an intelligent way, you may have a delay of almost three quarters of a second, which isn't really acceptable in games terms."

These and other lessons have since been put into practice in development of such notable CD games as Virgin's Guest, but there's no doubt that there are many more still to be learned as designers wrestle to come to grips with the shiny seven-inch beasts.

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CD-ROM complete

Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe
Lucasfilm, £45.99
Flight sim which uses some of the experimental aircraft developed during WWII. This is simply SWOTL on a different medium, although the inclusion of the 'tour of duty extensions' add-on modules is welcome.
Rating: 6

● **Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective**
Icom, £39.99
A rare bird indeed, an original CD-ROM game, and wonderfully realised it is too, with digitised Holmes and Watson introducing and discussing the three cases included on the CD, and a host of people to talk to, places to visit and deductions to be made. This is probably the nearest thing to a must-buy on CD yet.
Rating: 8

● **Software Jukebox**
Compton's New Media
Compilation of demos plus three full games to show off CD's capacity: Links, Faces, and Jetfighter, which reflect how long this CD has been around.
Rating: 5

Space Quest IV
Sierra On-Line, £44.99
Latest in the science fiction series translated to CD. Crisp 3D graphics, extra sound, and a hefty dose of humour.
Rating: 6

Spirit of Excalibur
Virgin Games, £34.99
An enhanced version of Virgin's Arthurian fantasy game, with added speech in the CD version.
Rating: 6

Stellar 7
Sierra On-Line, £44.99
Arcade action in space as you battle against multifarious aliens, including evil overlord Gir Draxon — and hear him speak!
Rating: 6

Supremacy
Virgin Games, £34.99
Virgin's stab at the Elite market in this vast space trading and strategy game, as you struggle for domination of your planet system. From the disk version.
Rating: 5

Ultima I-VI
Origin, £79.99
One for collectors: Ultimas I and II can be unintentionally hilarious now, but one shouldn't forget that the Ultima series pioneered many elements of the role-playing genre which are now commonplace in later games. One day, a complete set of Ultimas will be a valuable slice of RPG history.
Rating: 7

Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?
Broderbund, £59.99
Geographical quiz masquerading as a spy story (Carmen the spy is off the pyramids and you must guess where to go to apprehend her). Some nice static graphics, but horribly repetitive. For younger players who need to brush up on their capitals of the world.
Rating: 5

Wing Commander I + Secret Missions I & II
Origin, £59.99
The PC's best-known galactic flying game comes complete with the add-on disks on CD. Since this edition is £10 more expensive than the complete version of the sequel (below), there seems little question over which to buy first.
Rating: 6

Wing Commander II Deluxe
Origin, £49.99
Includes the Special Operations modules — a good buy given that WC2 on its own is £39.99 on disk, although the game is identical on either medium.
Rating: 7

Wing Commander II + Ultima Underworld
Origin, £49.99
An odd marriage of the Roberts-Garriott branches of Origin, this has evidently been designed to save your hard disk from exhaustion, although nothing here has changed from the original disk versions
Rating: 6

Wing Commander I & Ultima VI
Origin, £49.99
Ultima VI signalled the move towards a point and click interface in the series, and Ultima fans are likely to get more from this CD, since for £10 extra, WC pilots can buy the Secret Missions as well (see above).
Rating: 5

Wonderland
Virgin Games, £34.99
Magnetic Scrolls' sensitive adaptation of Lewis Carroll's classic tale uses a clever graphic interface and appealingly animated illustrations. Directly transferred from disk.
Rating: 5

Zork Trilogy
Virgin Games, £29.99
Cheap, by CD-ROM standards, and cheerful collection of Infocom's classic Zork games: again, the original versions without any multimedia trickery.
Rating: 5

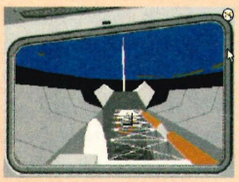
Forthcoming

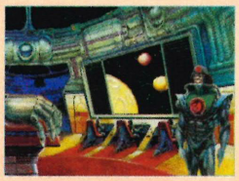
You can expect to see the number of CD-ROM games increase dramtically next year, but look out for the following between now and Christmas.

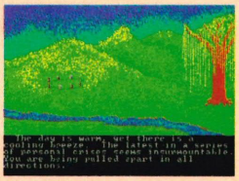
Shuttle
Virgin Games, £TBA
CD transferral of the intensely detailed space flight simulation, with missions adopted from space programmes on both Soviet and US sides in the last 30 years or so, and attention paid to authenticity.

● **The 7th Guest**
Virgin Games, £TBA
Now due for release early next year, 7th Guest is potentially a winner, with digitised graphics, speech, and music in a haunted house mystery. It's going to be vast and definitely CD-ROM only. Judging from the prototype extracts we've seen so far, the graphics and music are beyond, rather than up to, scratch, although we've yet to see exactly how much gameplay and interaction will be involved in the final version. One to watch.

● **Arthur's Teacher Troubles**
Broderbund, £39.99
Educational game for children, designed to brush up on maths and spelling skills.

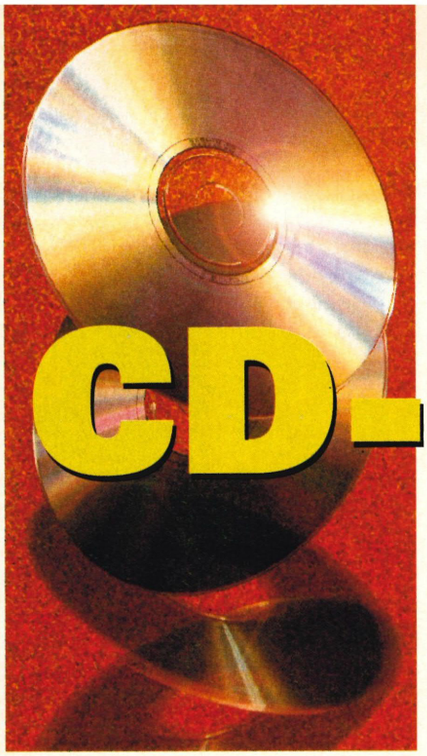








The forthcoming Shuttle, Stellar 7, Ultima IV, and Ultima Underworld.



Choosing and using a CD-ROM drive

It won't be too long before a CD-ROM drive will become a highly desirable addition to the PC set-up. Mike James explains what to look for and how to choose a CD-ROM drive

A CD-ROM drive is like a standard disk drive but it differs in one very important respect — data can only be read from it. You cannot write new data to a CD-ROM. If a 'read-only' disk seems strange and something you wouldn't want, then think again. Just as an audio CD player is useful in a hi-fi system, so a CD-ROM reader is useful in a PC.

Even so, CD-ROM wouldn't really be useful if it wasn't for two other factors — the disks can hold a lot of data (600Mb-750Mb) and they are very cheap to make. When you add to this the fact that a CD-ROM disk can be manufactured for around 50p, you begin to see uses for it.

Of course the most publicised use of CD-ROM is as part of multimedia. A multimedia PC has to have good graphics, a standard sound card and, optionally a CD-ROM. You can implement multimedia using ordinary disks but the amount of data needed to store high quality images and sound, which is what multimedia is all about, makes it ideal for CD-ROM.

How fast?

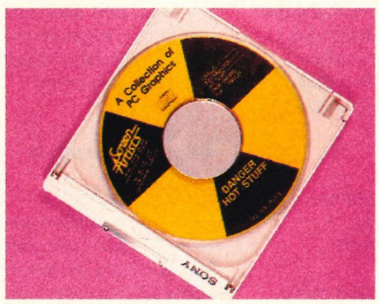
As all CD-ROM drives are created more or less equal in terms of what they will read, the important differences come down to how fast they will read data. If you know a little of how standard disk drives work you are in for a shock because CD-ROM is very different. The basic mechanism of a CD-ROM drive is very similar to that used in a CD audio drive. There is a motor which spins the disk, a laser which follows the track and a light sensitive pick-up which reads how the laser is reflected off the disk. The disk is covered in tiny pits that cause the laser's reflection to twinkle and this is converted by the pick-up into a stream of digital pulses. These are converted into an audio signal in a music CD, but a CD-ROM drive just feeds them straight into the computer.

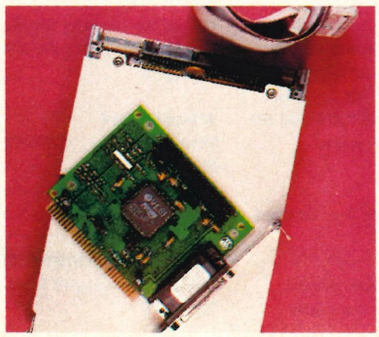
The data is stored on the disk in the form of a single spiral track — roughly three miles long! To get to any part of the disk, the laser has to follow the spiral round until it reaches where it wants to be. This is fine for an audio disc because you generally want to play it from start to finish or at most move from one music track to another.

It isn't so good for retrieving data because it can take a long time to follow the spiral to reach the data that you want to look at. It can take many seconds for the head to move from the start to near the finish of the spiral and all the time you are sitting there waiting to see the image, the data, or play the next level of the game. How long it takes for a CD-ROM drive to reach a specified position is called its access time and this varies from around 780ms (milliseconds) which is slow, to around 300ms, which is fast.

Don't get too concerned about access time, because as long as you don't choose a drive with a really, really slow access time (ie, 1,000ms or worse), it isn't that which will irritate you the most. Access time will keep you waiting while the head moves to where it should be, but once it gets there what matters is how fast it can read the data off the disk. This is the data transfer rate and it varies widely from drive to drive. When, for example, you want to watch multimedia animation, the time it takes the head to reach the correct place on the disk is the access time, but after that how fast and smooth the animation is depends on the transfer rate. In practice, this can vary from 25K per second, ie, so slow that you can see each animation frame being loaded, to around 300K/s which gives smooth animation and might sometimes even be a bit too fast!

CD-ROM software tends to be written so that the read head is moved into position and then just follows the spiral round





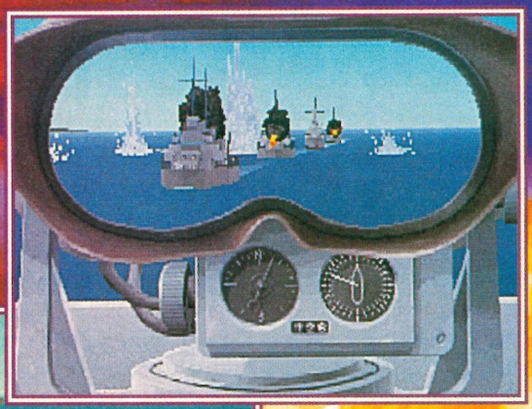


Below left: most CD-ROM drives use a 'caddy' to house the disks — supposedly to protect them from dust and dirt. Right, and bottom, the Toshiba 3301 drive, and controller and cable.

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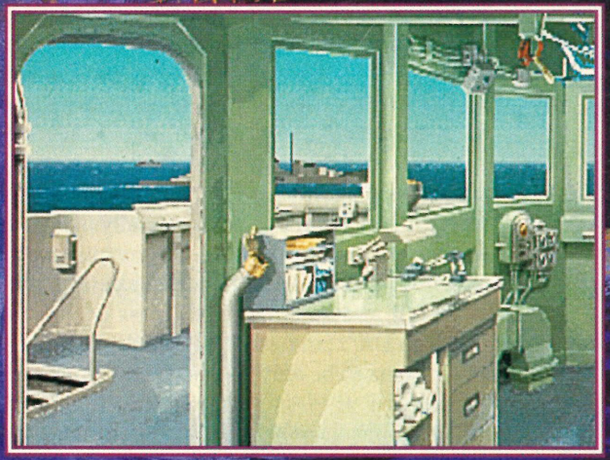




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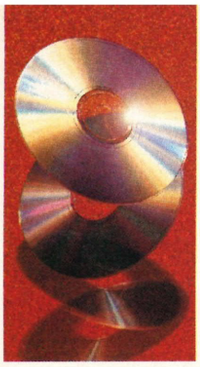
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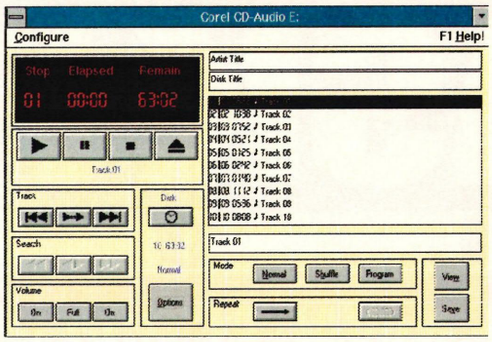
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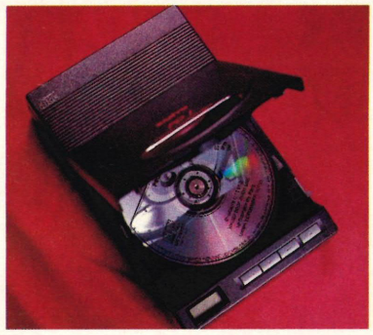
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reading data. This makes the transfer rate the factor that most manufacturers are trying to improve. For example, NEC produces a drive (the NEC CDR-74 L599) that will double the speed at which the disk spins and so will double the rate at which data can be read from it.

Another method of increasing the apparent transfer rate is to use buffer memory to store data so the disk can be read while the PC is getting on with doing something else. For example, the next frame in an animation could be read into the buffer while the current one is on display. Some disk interface cards have buffer memory built in, but in many cases you can opt to use part of your machine's memory as a buffer.





Left: an CD player utility to enable to play audio CDs while you work at your PC. Right: the Sanyo PDI, a typical portable CD-ROM drive. Note the player buttons.

Connections

What determines the transfer rate most is the way that the drive is connected to your machine, ie, the interface. The slowest type of drive is the sort that connects via a parallel printer port. Very easy to fit, but in some cases a complete waste of money. Not all PCs have parallel ports that are suitable for fast data transfer and the only way to find out is to try it out. For example, the Sanyo ROM-PD1 (£300 approx) looks like a good choice. It is portable and connects via a parallel port, but in practice it works at a reasonable speed only with a very limited range of machines.

A great many CD-ROM drives use their own special or custom interface cards. You have to open your machine and plug the card into an expansion slot. You will also have to set switches on the board to make it all work correctly and this makes installation more difficult. Even so, it is worth it because this type of drive usually manages a good data transfer rate — usually in the range 150K/s (kilobytes per second) to 300K/s. Most CD-ROM drives fall into this category.

Below: Sony's Laser Library, an external CD-ROM drive, and decidedly larger than most.



The fastest drives of all generally use a SCSI (small computer systems interface, pronounced 'scuzzy'). As far as installation is concerned, these are identical to the custom interface cards but you can connect other devices to a SCSI interface as well a CD-ROM drive. Typical of this type of drive is the Toshiba 3301 (price from £350 to £550 depending on configuration). If you are interested in a SCSI CD-ROM, then you need to find out more about SCSI devices in general and this takes us beyond the scope of this article.

You can buy most CD-ROM drives in either internally mounting or external units. Internal drives are cheaper, and as long as you have a free drive bay (ie, there is a space for it in your machine) such a drive will take four screws to fix in place.

CD-ROM drive quality

A CD-ROM drive is built to a much higher standard than an audio drive. However, most drives use a 'caddy' — like a plastic CD case but one that can be inserted into the drive — in order to protect the CD-ROM from dust, etc. Caddies probably do keep your CD-ROMs cleaner but having to load and unload the caddy makes it self-defeating because of the likelihood of adding fingerprints to the data.

More serious is the lack of any serious attempt to package the drives for the innocent consumer. If you buy almost any drive from the well known 'household' names — Sony, Sanyo, Toshiba — you will discover that the instructions you receive are poor. The installation software is also often flawed in one way or another and occasionally the driver software may not be fully up-to-date. For example, in the case of the Sony Laser Library (from around £425) the installation routine can become confused if you try to install the software a second time, and the Sanyo PD1's software is unfriendly and limited. When you take into account the prices that are being charged, this is distinctly unimpressive.

One exception to the general lack of presentation is the multimedia upgrade from Creative Labs (see PC Review Issue 11). Nicely packaged, with a well-written manual, a Sound Blaster card and some fairly recent CD-ROMs — though not cheap.

Falling prices?

One of the most surprising thing about the current CD-ROM market place is the range of prices. You can pay between £150 and £800 for a CD-ROM drive and in tests there often isn't a lot of difference. There are one or two expensive drives that do turn in a much better performance (the NEC CDR-74 at £599 for example) but there is a great middle ground of CD-ROM drives that perform more or less equally irrespective of price. At the extremes there are some very expensive drives that only turn in an average performance for example, the IBM CD-ROM II (£900) and some very low cost drives, for example the Mitsumi L005 (around £150) which are just as good! In short, price seems to be only vaguely connected to performance.

However, it looks as though CD-ROMs are finally beginning to come down in price — 1993 could be an excellent time to buy as sub-£200 drives become more of a norm than an exception.

Will it play my audio CDs?

Most CD-ROM drives have a small headphone socket and volume control on the front panel. Yes, you can plug in your headphones and listen to your audio CDs. Some drives, the Philips CDD461 for example, have a set of audio push buttons on the front and in this case you simply press the play button and adjust the volume. In the case of drives that lack such luxury what you need is an audio CD player utility. This puts an audio CD control panel on the screen and you press the play button either by pressing keys or by using a mouse.

Once the CD drive starts to play you can get on with using your machine in the usual way — the drive doesn't need the help of your computer to play an audio CD. Many drives, the Mitsumi for example, come complete with MS-DOS player software. If you are using Windows 3.1 then there is always the media player — just select CD-ROM and play.

If you like to listen to music while you work at your PC, then the audio player facility will justify the cost of a CD-ROM drive. I have to admit that it's what my personal CD-ROM drive spends most of its time doing! If your PC is near to your hi-fi, then most have a pair of standard phono sockets at the rear of the drive or the interface card which can be used to make a direct connection.

Do note, however, that you cannot put CD-ROM-based software into your CD audio player and 'play' that through the PC. You need a CD-ROM drive specifically for use with CD-ROM software.

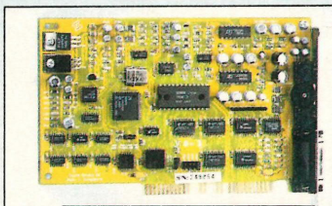
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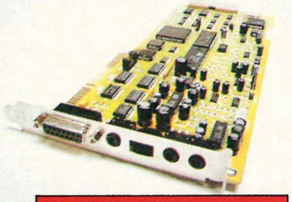
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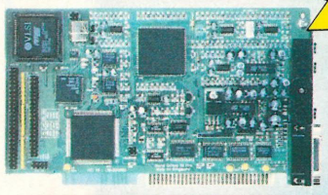
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Sound Source	No	Yes	Yes
FM SYNTHESIZER	11 Voice Mono	11 Voice Mono	20 Voice Stereo
CD-ROM INTERFACE			
AT-Bus	No	Yes	Yes
SCSI	No	No	Option
CONTROL			
Volume (manual)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Volume (software)	No	Yes	Yes
Bass & Treble	No	Software	Software
POWER AMPLIFIER	4W	4W	4W
MICROPHONE			
AGC Amplifier	Yes	Yes	Yes
Stereo input	No	No	Yes
SOFTWARE CONFIGURABLE	No	No	Yes
MIXER SUPPORT	No	No	Yes
DYNAMIC FILTERING	No	No	Yes
SAMPLING RATE			
DAC	To 44.1 KHz	To 44.1 KHz	To 44.1 KHz
DMA & Interupt	Yes	Yes	Yes
ADC	To 15 KHz	To 15 KHz	To 44.1 KHz
Stereo ADC	No	No	Yes
MIDI PORT	Yes	Yes	Yes
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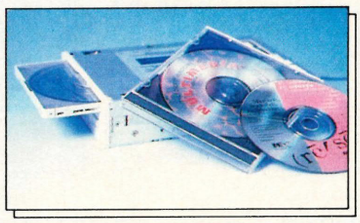
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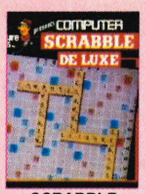
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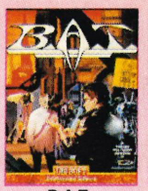
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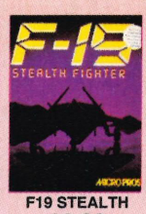
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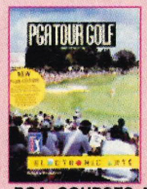
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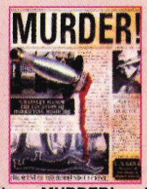
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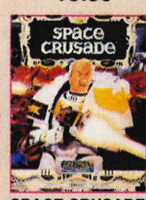
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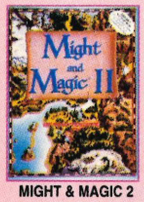
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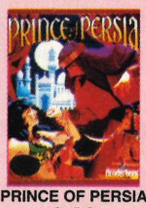
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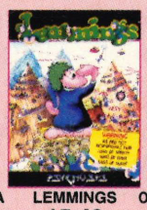
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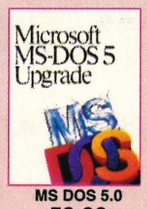
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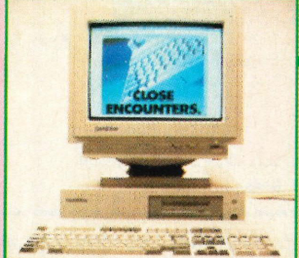
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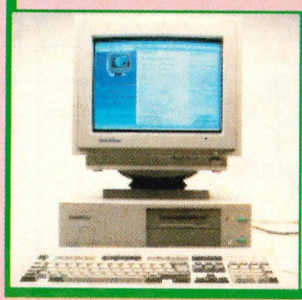


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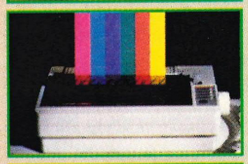
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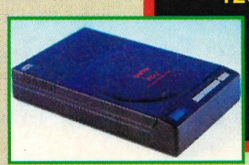
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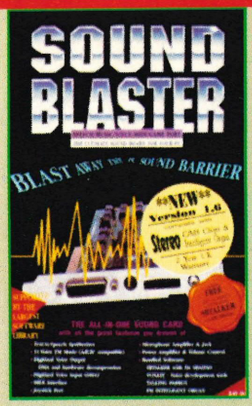
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Once you've assembled your electronic studio the inevitable moment comes when you are faced with that most terrifying of prospects — the blank screen. It's time to unleash all those dazzling images that have been floating around your fevered imagination all these years. Jonathan Inglis takes you through the creation of a picture on your PC

Choosing the right graphics software is crucial. You need to feel comfortable with the program's interface and working environment. Only you can decide whether a standard Windows-based package is going to suit you more than a dedicated DOS program, though you shouldn't be deceived by mere wealth of features. Heavyweight offerings packed with bells and whistles have been known to defeat the most intrepid of artists! If you need sophisticated effects then the answer may be to create your pictures with a simpler program and export them at a later stage.

For me, Deluxe Paint II Enhanced is a clear winner. It is extremely clear and easy to use and offers a range of very useful features, many exclusive to the program. From a long list, I'll select a few highlights. The most important is that a major part of the screen area is available whilst drawing. There's no need for endless scrolling around a cluttered window just to see your picture. A comprehensive quick key structure allows fast selection of tools from the keyboard. Wonderful though GUIs are, there are times when a key press is so much easier and faster to use. The program runs in a variety of modes, all easily accessed with no need to reconfigure the entire program, with the added advantage that images can be easily exchanged between modes.

The program also offers specific drawing features which contribute to its ease of use. The curve tool is very simple to use, no fussy 'spline' handles to baffle the novice. The ability to rotate ellipses provides an essential element in many



pictures. The magnify option allows you to use all the program's tools, rather than just offering pixel by pixel editing. And there's an excellent manual with some useful utilities thrown in, such as a Slideshow creator.

Whatever your package it is the pictures that matter. From linocutting to oil painting, every art medium can achieve certain special effects not possible in other media. It makes sense, therefore, to use your computer to do what it does best and to avoid those areas where it performs less well. Computer graphics scores with the intensity of its colour palette, its ability to repeat images and manipulate them, the ease with which geometric shapes and text can be generated. On the other hand, freehand drawing is extremely difficult and the restrictions imposed by pixellation make fine detailing and smooth lines hard to achieve.

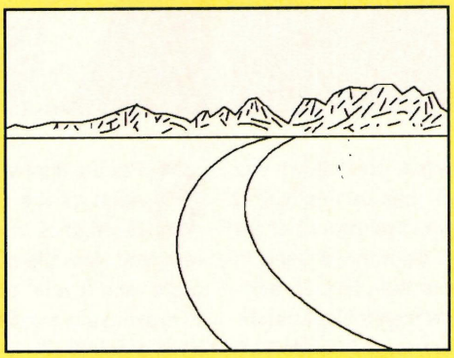
When you're planning a picture bear these factors in mind and think about how the special effects can help. They can provide useful starting points and ideas and may even suggest the subject of the picture itself.

Computer art: a few guidelines

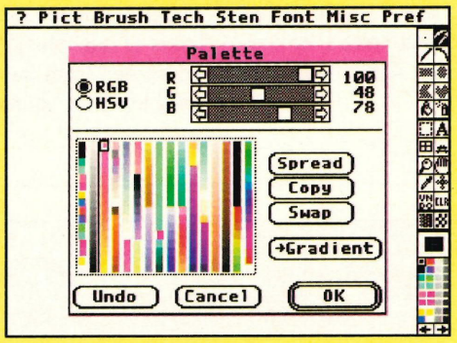
- Avoid the temptation to include too much fussy detail. There's no need to draw every eyelash, blade of grass or last nut and bolt. Trying to include them will often just produce an awkward and clumsy feel to your pictures. It's better to go for bolder more graphic effects which have more impact and look more confident.
- Rather than look at photographs or oil paintings take a look at the work of graphic artists in comics, adverts and magazines to see how they achieve maximum impact.
- Colour is also very important. Avoid the temptation to use too many. Film posters and record covers often just use three or four colours to create very dramatic effects (see the above nighttime picture, created at Electronic Arts, for an example). Many television programmes now use computer generated images, from charts and graphs to credit sequences which can be a good source of colour schemes and effects. Above all, remember the old maxim "The best artists never borrow, they steal"!

Draw it yourself

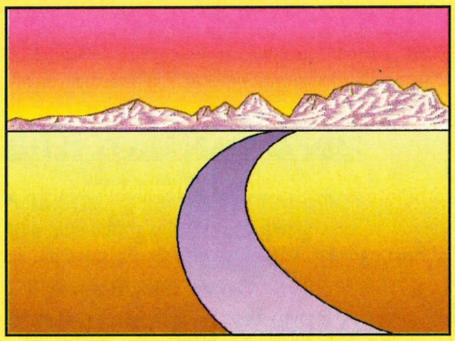
To demonstrate the computer drawing process in action, let's follow the development of a picture designed to exploit some of the more interesting features available in Deluxe Paint II Enhanced.



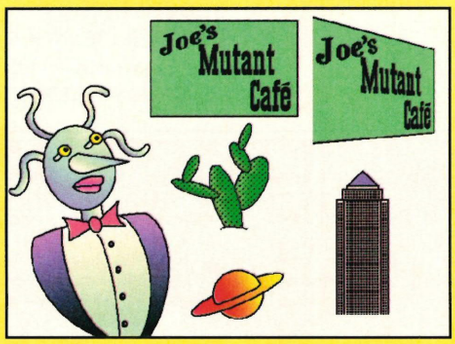
1 The outline sketch is drawn in with a 2 x 2 pixel brush. This slightly thicker line gives a bolder feel and disguises the flakier quality often associated with single pixel width brushes. The mountain range and surface texture are drawn using the straight line tool, since it's not too easy to draw using the freehand tool. For drawing complex shapes the best method is to use a continuous sequence of straight lines drawn bit by bit. The road is drawn using the curve tool. Having set the two end points the line is 'rubber banded' into position.



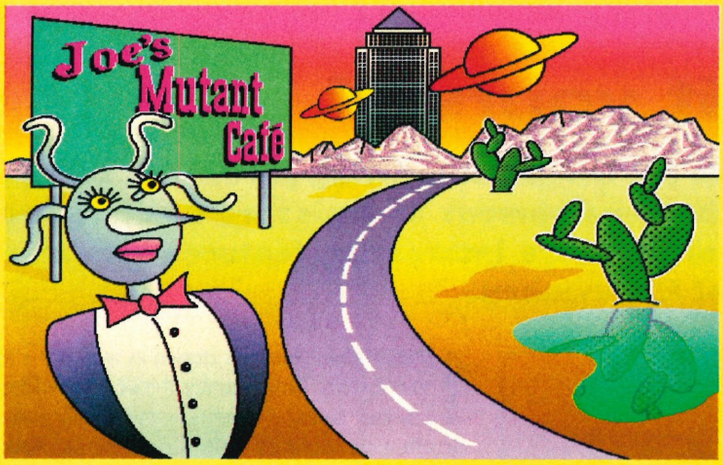
2 The next stage is to add colour and gradients between them. Gradients are created using 'spreads' of colour. The program allows you to alter the colour values of any colour in the palette. Two colours are chosen, allowing a reasonable gap between them. Clicking on the 'spread' button in the menu produces a smooth transition between the two. This spread is now defined as a 'gradient fill'.

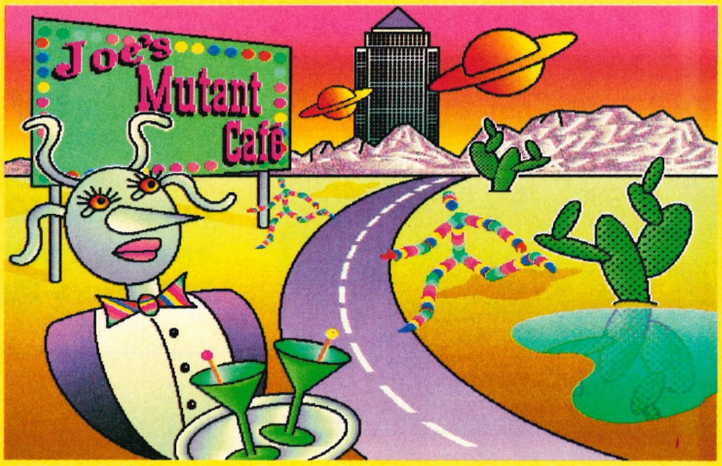


3 A range of styles is available for gradient fills. For the sky a 'straight' fill is used. For the mountains the 'ridged' option produces a more fragmented effect, useful for generating natural textures. Colours and spreads can be altered at any point so there is room to experiment. Even small colour changes can change the mood of a picture. Colour ranges are calculated according to mathematical, rather than aesthetic considerations, so tweaking the odd colour can add sparkle.



4 Moving over to the spare page screen, various elements are created. Lettering is typed in with the text tool and then manipulated using the perspective option to create a three dimensional effect. Once created and coloured in these elements are ready to be cut out using the brush tool and pasted on to the other page.





5 For the skyscraper the Stencil option is selected. This allows you to 'lock' some of the colours used which will then be unaffected by any cut and paste operations. To place the skyscraper behind the mountains, for example, all the colours apart from those used in the sky are locked. Having placed the cactus, it is then flipped horizontally. All the colours except those in the pool are then locked before pasting the cactus in place. The effect of transparency is added by selecting the 'translucent' option from the Miscellaneous menu. The smaller of the two Saturns is produced by selecting the 'halve' option from the Brush menu. For the shadows each brush is halved horizontally, coloured in a single colour, and then pasted on screen using the translucent option.

6 For the final stage, the finishing touches are added. Small details, such as the cocktail sticks are drawn using the magnify tool. Highlights are placed in the eyes and any odd or stray pixels removed from the picture. The stick figures are drawn using the 'multi cycle' and 'cycle' options from the Techniques menu. This allows you to draw using a cycle of colours, defined and selected in the same way as a gradient fill. Dotted lines, also using the multi cycle option, are added to the sign. Having set the gradient speed for your colour cycling all that is needed is to press the Tab key and sit back. Unfortunately the limits of publishing technology prevent the astonishing effect this has on screen from being demonstrated on the printed page! You'll just have to try for yourself.

WING-BACKS IN A SOCCER MANAGEMENT GAME



SOCCER SUPREMO

AN INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT GAME

In the traditional number-juggling soccer management game wing-backs, sweepers, formations, styles, tactics are, at best, cosmetic, at worst , meaningless. The unique match simulation at the heart of Soccer Supremo restores all these and more, allowing genuine control over team performance, In addition to the visual feedback on your team, this match allows substitions, tactical positional changes and workrate instructionsto individual players which then influence the flow of the match. The increased realism and control transforms the supreme, but childish, gameplay of the traditional game into a compulsive simulation..

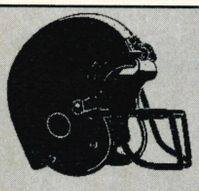
Yet another England manager has learnt the hard way that controlling an international squad is a very different ballgame to club management.
Every match is a cup-tie and every team -selection and result is picked apart by a voracious press. The pressure to succeed is incredible.
Soccer Supremo puts you in charge of a European national squad preparing for the European Nations Cup qualifiers. You have an initial four year contract that may be extended to six or eight years, or reduced to two, as the results dictate. You'll be expected to qualify for the Finals, then put up a show against the best European teams. but this is just preparation for the big one:The World Cup!
Customisation. The game will allow you to take the European nation of your choice and you will be allocated an initial squad of 16 players. You can introduce a further 34 players, making 50 in all, whose names and skills (but not levels) You can define yourself. These players are introduced gradually as you discover the weaknesses in your squad and also to create the balance of skills that match your style of play. The original 16 players can be defined in the same way using the EDIT program (free with the game) if you wish as well as the teams that will make up the opposition.

3D, 22 MAN MATCH DISPLAY

Continuous display of:
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IND PLAYER ACTIVITY STATS.
PLAYER FATIGUE /FITNESS STATS. STATE-OF-THE-GAME INFORMATION
PLAYER-WITH-THE-BALL INFORMATION

IN MATCH TACTICAL MOVES

SUBSTITUTIONS
POSITIONAL CHANGES
OVERALL WORKRATE
IND. PLAYER WORKRATE



HEAD COACH V3

"From my point of view , the game has kept me sitting up at nights through holidays and weekends for up to 12 hours at a stretch, with miniscule breaks for food and other necessities.....It is a game I have no hesistation in recommending to anyone with even the slightest interest in American Football"(ATARI USER)

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Indoor simulating the

Europe's first ever indoor golf centre recently opened in London. Paul Presley puts on his plus-fours and goes clubbing





Above, the specially adapted version of Links, whose graphics are also displayed on the big screen.

The sensor pad under the 'tee' tracks the direction and angle of your shot, and the continuation of the ball's flight is then reproduced by Links.

The scene in front of me is typical of any golf course in the country. It's a beautifully clear day, the fairway stretches away into the horizon, the tip of the flag is just visible over the ridge. I select my one wood from the bag, tee up the ball at my feet and prepare to drive off. I strike the ball with a satisfactory thwack and watch eagerly as my white projectile soars up into the air and hits the screen with a loud thump, falling to the floor below. On the screen however, my ball continues to fly down the fairway, landing in a perfect position for my second shot (all right, so I fluffed it and ended up in the rough, but why spoil an otherwise beautiful moment?).

No, I'm not on some fancy golf course somewhere in the heart of a deeply wooded area. Neither am I playing a game on my computer screen. The heavily wooded area is in fact 50 yards away from Farringdon station in the heart of London and the course is at City Golf, Europe's first indoor golf simulation centre.

The atmosphere upon entering City Golf is that of a private squash club rather than a golf course. Six separated playing courts, shrouded in semi-darkness, plus a small bar, pro shop and rest area. Interestingly, the floor is dotted with randomly positioned holes, used for putting practice or to pass the time while waiting for a course to become free.

What 'drives' City Golf is a series of ordinary 386 PCs running specially modified versions of Access's golf simulation Links. The difference between playing Links at home and playing in this underground centre is that here the computer is



connected to an interesting little device called the swing pad. Place the ball on the pad, play your shot using real clubs, as if you were on a real course, and the computer will analyse everything from the strength of your shot to the angle of your club face when it struck the ball. At the other end of the PC is a large wall-mounted screen, against which the ball bounces and the rest of your shot is displayed in the usual 3D digitised manner of Links.

The pad was developed several years ago in America where indoor golf has enjoyed a rising popularity for some time. Japan also sports a healthy number of centres, proving to be most popular with businessmen looking to relax after (or even during) a hard day's work.

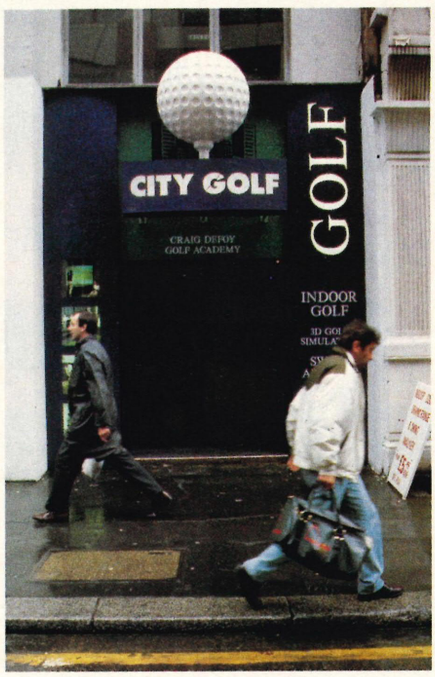
Although the hardware used isn't the only such device available, it's the most comprehensive and certainly the most user-friendly. The pad contains a layer or rubber-set optical sensors covered by two layers of hard-backed plastic. A series of holes in the plastic enable the sensors to read the exact angle that the club approaches the ball, what speed it's travelling, what angle the club head is at when it hits the ball and what direction the ball moves in, once hit. From there the program calculates the dynamics of the shot and shows the ball travelling in the appropriate manner on the screen.

One aspect of the game that the technology is unable to simulate at the moment is putting. The sensors on the pad are tuned to look for large swings that cover the entire pad. Unfortunately, putting just doesn't provide a large enough swing to register, so for the purposes of the simulation, all the player is required to do is reach the green.

Apart from just playing a normal round of golf at one of the three available courses (which include Torrey Pines and Bay Hill) you can also practise your swing on the swing analyser. City Golf also provides the wannabe golfer with a full tuition course, run by the club's professional, taking students from basics such as grip and swing to advanced lessons like playing from sand traps and other difficult lies. To simulate such awkward conditions, two of the booths have been converted, one being covered with a layer of sand, the other having a bizarre angled turf contraption used to simulate playing from slopes. The private training room contains all the normal simulation facilities as well as video cameras to record, replay and study your shot and enough privacy for you not to feel inhibited.

As with all golf clubs, the centre is primarily a members-only affair, although one-off players are welcomed for a more expensive price (see panel for club rates). Members don't just benefit from reduced course rates. Handicaps are calculated for members after completion of several full rounds and regular tournaments are scheduled for members. A word of warning, though. Don't expect to be able to take the handicaps you earn here and use them on a real course.

As the first of its kind in Europe, City Golf is really just testing the water. Whether this we'll soon see huge centres like the ones in Japan or whether we'll start seeing potential Nick Faldos emerging from the simulated world is a debatable point, but the centre is certainly a good place to practise your swing and build up enough confidence to take yourself out on to a real course, as well as a great way of spending a couple of hours after work.







City Golf also boasts a bar and lounge area, and a relaxed atmosphere away from the bustle of the city.

golf swing

Club rates

City Golf, 35 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3JB, tel: (071) 404 6060

Single membership — £100 per year, £60 per six months

Company membership — £900 per year for 12 membership cards

Course simulation

Non-members — £30 per hour peak times, £20 per hour off-peak

Members — £20 per hour peak times, £15 per hour off peak

Swing analysis

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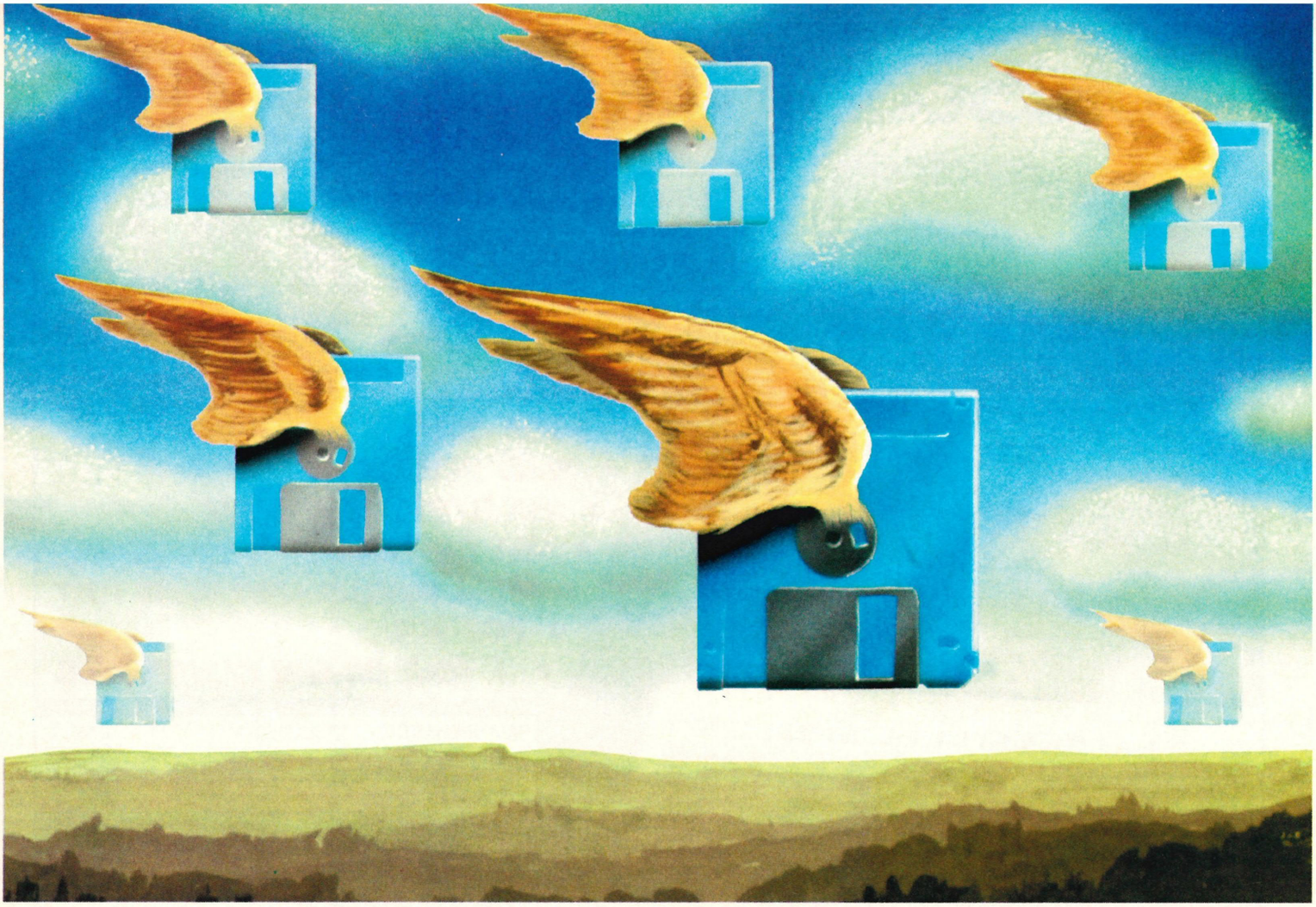
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£12 (including VAT and P&P), David Jackson: (0706) 816854

The Computer Form Book
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The Perfect CV Computer Kit
£38 (including VAT) KIMS (04865) 3406

Garden Manager Pro
£87.95 (including VAT & P&P); GM Home (£49.95) Pro version has database of 3000+ plants, Home version has database of 1000 plants. Garden CAD (0202) 681182

Sante
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WordFinder
£15.50 (including VAT) Bradway Software (0433) 630799

It's about time I did something with my life, made more creative use of my leisure time, improved my mind or (if that task proves to be beyond my capabilities) improved my bank balance at the very least.

I've been glancing through some of the small ads in the back pages of the computer magazines and have discovered that there are PC programs to help me bring about exactly the radical changes my life so badly needs. With luck, maybe they'll help me discover I've got some great hidden talent buried deep down inside this apparently worthless exterior.

There are programs to help me get a better job (well, I guess there must be loads of jobs better than reviewing programs to help you get a better job!). There are programs to help me make my fortune without working at all. And there are programs to help me eat more healthily, solve crosswords more expertly or master the esoteric art of the well-rotted compost heap.

I'll come around to the health and wealth stuff later. But first, the compost heap calls ...

Where there's muck ...

I have to admit I'm very much an armchair gardener. I always watch Gardener's World and consider Clay Jones to be one of the great unsung geniuses of our time. But as for actually getting out there in the cold and wet and doing the back-breaking work of digging heaps of manure into my all too solid soil, no, I'm afraid I have never really come to terms with that side of gardening.

The Garden Manager is the perfect thing for a lazy person such as myself. It lets me design my flower borders and plant my trees without ever venturing from my nice, warm office.

If you want to design a garden from scratch, you can do this in its graphics editing screen. Using the mouse or keyboard, you can 'draw' your garden, placing trees, shrubs, flowerbeds and paved areas wherever takes your fancy.

Once the basic layout is defined, you can go on to select the plants you wish to grow. When trying to decide on particular varieties, you can narrow down the search by entering conditions that must be met. You could then view a list of all fragrant red, climbing roses, for example, without having to wade through whole lists of other roses that don't fit the bill.

The professional version of Garden Manager (but not the cheaper home version) comes with a costing utility. This works out how many of each species you have planted in your on-screen garden and multiplies this by an estimated price per plant.

My garden so far comes to £1,253. Unfortunately, I haven't got that much cash to spare just now. Luckily, however, I've been looking at a couple of programs that might just help me to get it — by winning a small fortune on the horses.

... there's brass

I must make clear at the outset that I am not a gambler. The idea of spending money without necessarily getting something in return is one I

PC *oddballs*

PC software is all about business programs on the one hand and state of the art games on the other, right? Wrong, wrong ... the PC has a weird and wonderful range of programs catering for just about every special interest you can think of. Huw Collingbourne takes a look at a random selection of PC titles which simply defy any attempt at categorisation

cannot even begin to comprehend. On the other hand, if the odds were dramatically weighted in my favour, I *might*, just might, be prepared to have the most cautious of flutters.

Naively when I first saw the Horse Race Predictor, I imagined that all I had to do was to load it up, press a key, discover the name of the winner, bet a few bob and, a little later on, go and collect my winnings. Unfortunately, I was soon to discover that while the program itself is fairly straightforward, horse racing isn't.

I mean, I was under the impression that a horse race was a horse race was a horse race. When the program asked me whether I was backing a national hunt or flat race, I was totally at a loss. So much so that I had to fall back on the software reviewer's last resort — reading the manual. This takes the form of five pages of dot-matrix print-out, so reading it didn't take too long. But after that, I had to start studying the racing reports in the daily newspapers too. This was a whole new world to me ...

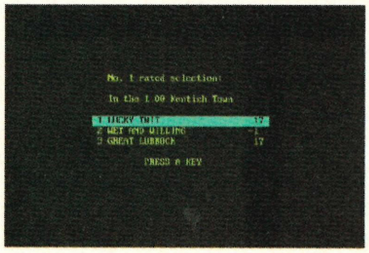
Once you've entered details of all the horses for each race, the program will, in theory, work out the horse most likely to win. Unfortunately, its guesses are not always that good. Over the couple of weeks I used it, my total winnings if I'd bet my own money (which I certainly didn't) wouldn't have amounted to much. True, if I'd backed all its national hunt recommendations, I could have won about £60 (which is encouraging) but I would also have lost about £162 by backing its flat recommendations (which isn't).

David Jackson, the program's author, tells me that experienced gamblers would use the program for guidance and advice rather than as a straightforward predictor. If you want to try David's tips before buying his program, his answering machine will give the day's predictions every Saturday between 9.00 am and 1 pm.

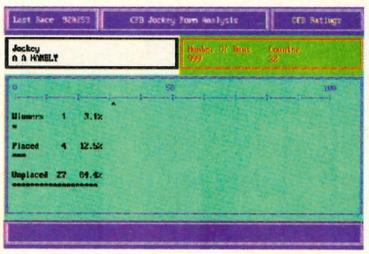
Horses for courses

The Computerised Form Book looks a lot more professional than The Horse Race Predictor. In the long-run it is also a lot more expensive. It doesn't demand that you enter data yourself. Instead, it comes with all the past season's data on disk and you can get weekly updates at a cost of around £30 per month. It has options to print and analyse the past form of a given horse, trainer or jockey and to give details of the racetrack. The core utility of the system is the Race Card Analysis. Here, in a luridly multi-coloured screen, you can study horses and courses. The supplied database contains most of the essential details but you can add or alter information too.

If you are already sufficiently familiar with racing to know what a form book is and how to keep one, you may be attracted to this computer-based alternative. But if you don't have



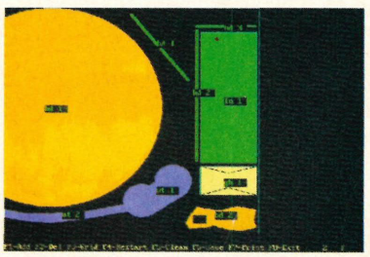
Once you enter all the details of today's races, the Horse Race Predictor forecasts the winners. But I'm still not convinced this is the shortcut to untold riches.



If someone told me they were analysing jockeys, I might reasonably wonder about their sanity. But this is the sort of thing you can do with the Computer Form Book.



Here I am using the Perfect CV kit to define my magnificence — something I could happily spend all day doing, without ever getting weary of it.



Using the Garden Manager, I have drawn out flower-beds, ponds, lawns and hedges on screen. Simple enough. But will I ever really do all that planting and digging?

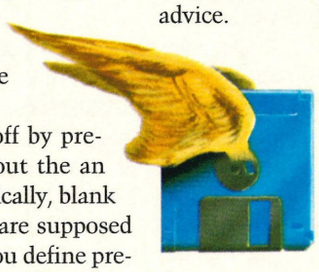
any idea what a form book is, you can be positive this program is not for you. Whatever the virtues of these two programs to the serious punter, I cannot say that either of them seems likely to further my personal quest for easy money with the minimum outlay.

On the job

Maybe a less risky way of making money would be to get myself a new job.

First, of course, I'll need to send a curriculum vitae to prospective employers explaining what a tremendously wonderful person I am, in spite of all appearances to the contrary. The Perfect CV Kit seems to be just the tool for the job.

The kit comes in the form of two programs. The first one, called the Career Consultant, is supposed to help you choose an appropriate career. The second one, called the Resume Builder, helps you write the CV itself.



The Career Consultant starts off by presenting you with a little story about the an average day in your ideal job. Periodically, blank spaces appear in the text and you are supposed to fill in the gaps in order to help you define precisely what this 'ideal job' might be. To help you do this, the program pops up boxes of suggestions. For example, one sentence in the story reads: "Looking at my schedule, I see that my first major task to do today is to ..." and then there's a gap.



At this point, the suggestions box offers these alternatives: "hire a new person, write a report, assemble a car, teach a workshop, plan a budget." A little later on in the story, you are asked to gloat over your achievements in this hypothetical job: "In the short time on this job, I ..."

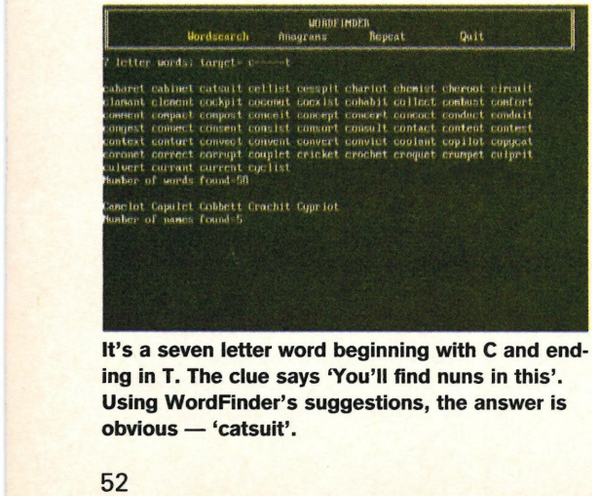
The suggestion box offers "increased productivity, wrote technical manuals, counselled drug abusers, trained new staff, investigated complaints." Is it my imagination, or are some of those suggestions just a little on the fanciful side? I mean, how many jobs can there be that require you to assemble a car in the morning and counsel a drug abuser in the afternoon?

There are other sections to be filled in, too, such as the oddly-named 'Define your magnificence' in which you have to indulge in a bit of gushing self-flattery. I mean, I don't mind defining *my* magnificence. But what happens with all the rest of those poor suckers out there who haven't got any such magnificence to define?

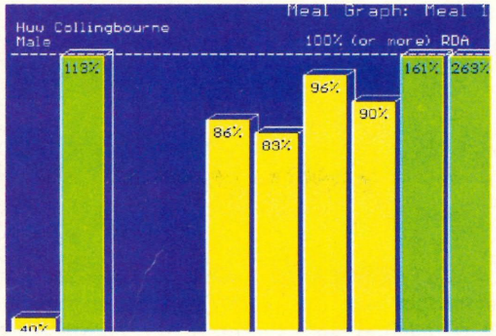
Well, I've sent my CV off. After such a great beginning, I have every hope of success in my application for the chairmanship of the BBC.

Survival of the fittest

If I am to take on a high pressure job, I suppose I'd better make sure that I am in tip-top condition. I don't do much exercise, I eat lots of the fatty foods. I reckon I could do with a little dietary advice.



It's a seven letter word beginning with C and ending in T. The clue says 'You'll find nuns in this'. Using WordFinder's suggestions, the answer is obvious — 'catsuit'.



This graph from Sante shows a meal so unhealthy it's almost lethal. Which is frankly worrying — since I've just eaten a huge plateful and enjoyed every mouthful!

That's why I've been consulting a program called Sante — which is supposed to be 'like having a dietician and weight control counsellor in your computer'. Sante lets you analyse your meals in gruesome detail. You tell the program all about the meals you are eating and it tells you why you shouldn't be.

Food is analysed into calories, vitamins, cholesterol, fibre, protein, carbohydrate, fat and other such unappetising glop. Sante will even plot these dietary elements in the form of a graph, if you really want to depress yourself.

Just in case your weight, gluttony and lack of exercise isn't enough to get you really worried, it will also nag you about problems you didn't know existed. I mean, until now I had never even guessed that I had a major problem with my calcium:phosphorus ratio. Now I know about it, I can't stop dwelling on the fact.

Can anyone recommend a computerised psychiatrist? I'm beginning to think I need help to sort out this dietary paranoia syndrome I've started developing.

Lost for words

Or maybe I just need to relax. Sit down and solve a crossword, perhaps? Except ...

Well, I hate to have to own up to this, but it is a simple fact that I am absolutely useless at crosswords. It is a constant source of embarrassment that a person of my towering intellect still gets stumped by things such as *2 Down: Portable ablutionary container (4,3)*

It would be bad enough if I were doing the cryptic crossword. But that one comes from The Guardian's Quick Crossword — you know, the one intended for congenital simpletons — and I still can't figure it out. The way I see it, the second word has to be 'pot'. But since the first word has only four letters, it can't be 'chamber'. So what else can it be? I know, how about 'pi..' — no, surely not even The Guardian would stoop to that kind of vulgarity.

After solving a few other clues, I found that 2 Down's last letter is 'b' — which meant that the second word couldn't be 'pot' after all. But I was still stumped.

This is where Wordfinder comes to the rescue. It is the crossword cheat's best friend. It lets me enter words in the form of letters and blanks. It then searches through its database of 19,000 words and 5,000 names and produces lists of all possible solutions.

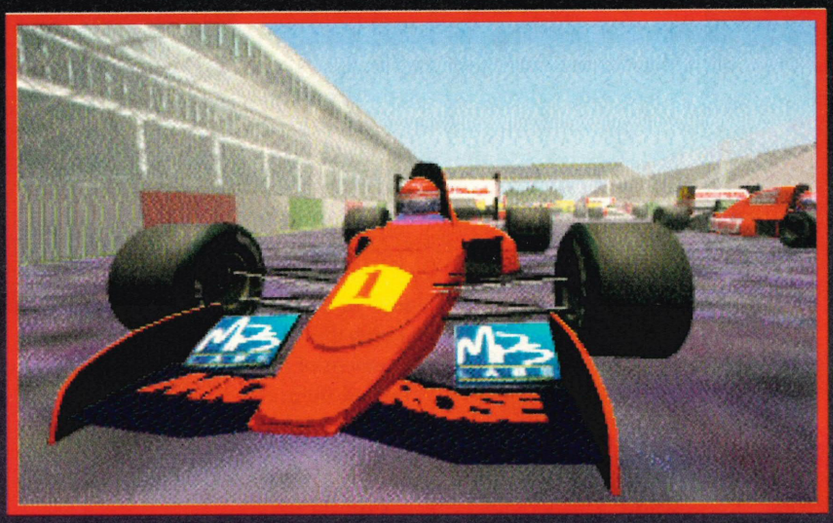
In the above example, 2 Down read '__T__B'. I entered these letters and blanks into Wordfinder and, in no time at all, it had found the solution — 'bathtub'. Well, of course! Obvious really. You can also use Wordfinder to solve anagrams. For instance, maybe you have an anagramatical answer which currently reads __BA__D. You tell Wordfinder you have an anagram with 6 letters including the letters, BAD. It will show all the possibilities (23 in this case) — including words such as brandy, aboard and (the one I need) ribald.

Unfortunately, it doesn't handle multiple word anagrams so there is no way I can transform the name of our beloved editor into something satisfyingly obscene.

You know, I'm not sure that these programs are going to bring about any far-reaching changes in my life after all. But, what the heck, they are a great way of wasting time.

Who knows, maybe time-wasting is my great undiscovered talent?

When the arguing stops, which team will you be driving for next season?



MicroProse Formula One Grand Prix - Just Drive!





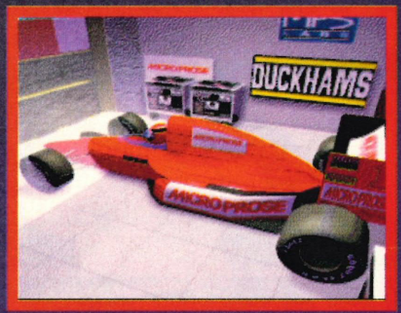


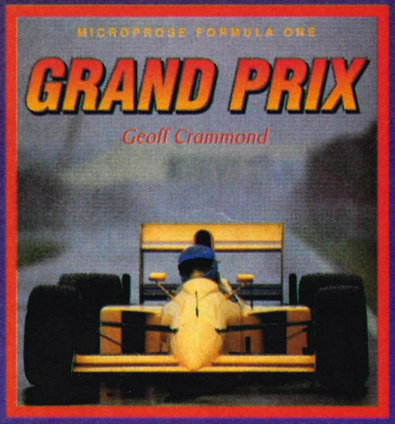
If competing with the best is your driving ambition, there's only one choice: MicroProse Formula One Grand Prix.

The only game where all sixteen GP circuits are recreated in 3-D. Where you can adjust gears, brake balance and wings. Where five different difficulty levels help you acquire the essential skills gradually. Where you can choose from six compound tyres in timed pit stops. Where televisual coverage of every car in each race allows you to view the action anywhere around the track. And where you can race against a friend via modem or serial link.

Why lead the pack when you can lap it?

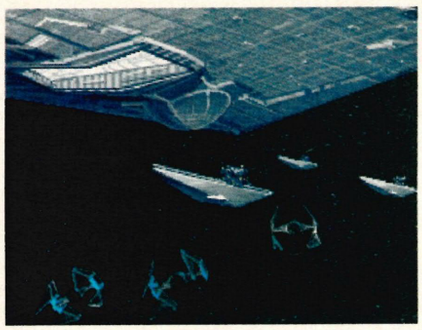
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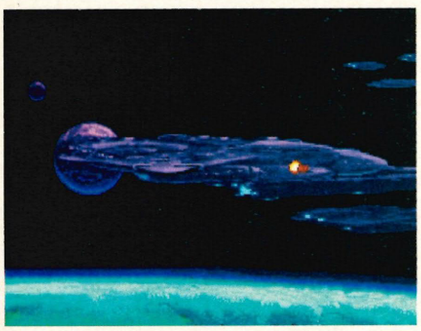


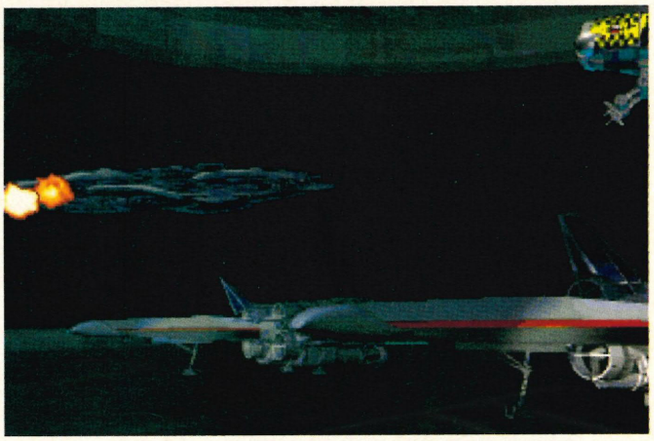


COMING SOON FOR IBM PC COMPATIBLES

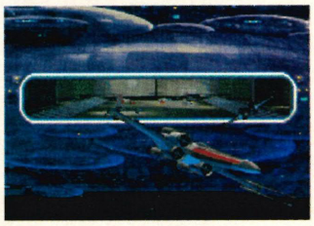
MicroProse Ltd. Unit 1 Hampton Road Industrial Estate, Tetbury, Gloucestershire. GL8 8LD. UK.Tel 0666 504 326.











Your futuristic space-craft emerges from the hangar ready for another mission.

LucasArts' second biggest film licence finally makes the official conversion to a computer game

X-Wing

If you think about it, we've already had Star Wars the computer game for a couple of years now. Origin's Wing Commander has already given us a tale of frantic space combat mixed with a rich story of interplanetary life. "Origin actually wished it had the Star Wars licence and contacted us several times," reveals Lawrence Holland, project leader for LucasArts own, official Star Wars-based game. "Both Chris Roberts and Richard Garriott are really big Star Wars fans and that was quite evident in the game they produced."

X-Wing is the first time the Star Wars licence has been used for a game since the coin-ops seen during the early eighties. Rather than take the plots of the three films and put them into an Indy-style graphic adventure, Holland has relied on the technology he used for his earlier hits — Their Finest Hour: Battle of Britain and Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe — to re-create the action and excitement of the films' epic space battles. "I think there is a real emerging desire in people to relive the films' space combat. In the way that it's portrayed in the movies it has a lot of similarities to air combat of World War II — close-up dogfighting, huge ships going fairly slowly, a lot of ships in the air at the same time.

"I was very interested in jumping to an arena that wasn't based in fact, wasn't tied to history. All the indications that we had, all the merchandising, still shows a really strong interest in Star Wars. Star Wars and Luke Skywalker, for the American public, has become ingrained in the psyche as what makes a hero. It's a classic."

X-Wing is rooted in the essence of exciting close-quarter space combat, depicting everything from the X-Wing Fighter and the Empire's TIE Fighters (affectionately known to Holland and the game's designers as 'cannon fodder') right up to the huge Star Destroyers and the mighty Death Star. You'll also see a few ships that are brand new to the Star Wars universe. "The TIE Fighters don't provide much in the way of gameplay," explains Holland, "they're really the 'grunts' of the Empire. One shot and they're gone. To balance the game we came up with a couple of Empire spacecraft that are much tougher and much more of an adversary."

One such ship is the Assault Gunboat, a heavily armed five-winged fighter theoretically developed by the same company that designed the Imperial Shuttles seen in Return of the Jedi. There are boarding vessels simply called Stormtrooper Transports, used to dock and take over enemy ships with the 30-odd Stormtroopers it carries on board. Each new ship has been designed so that it will look as though it fits into the rest of the Star Wars universe but is sufficiently different as to provide a greater challenge.

What about the more familiar ships from the films, though? The infamous



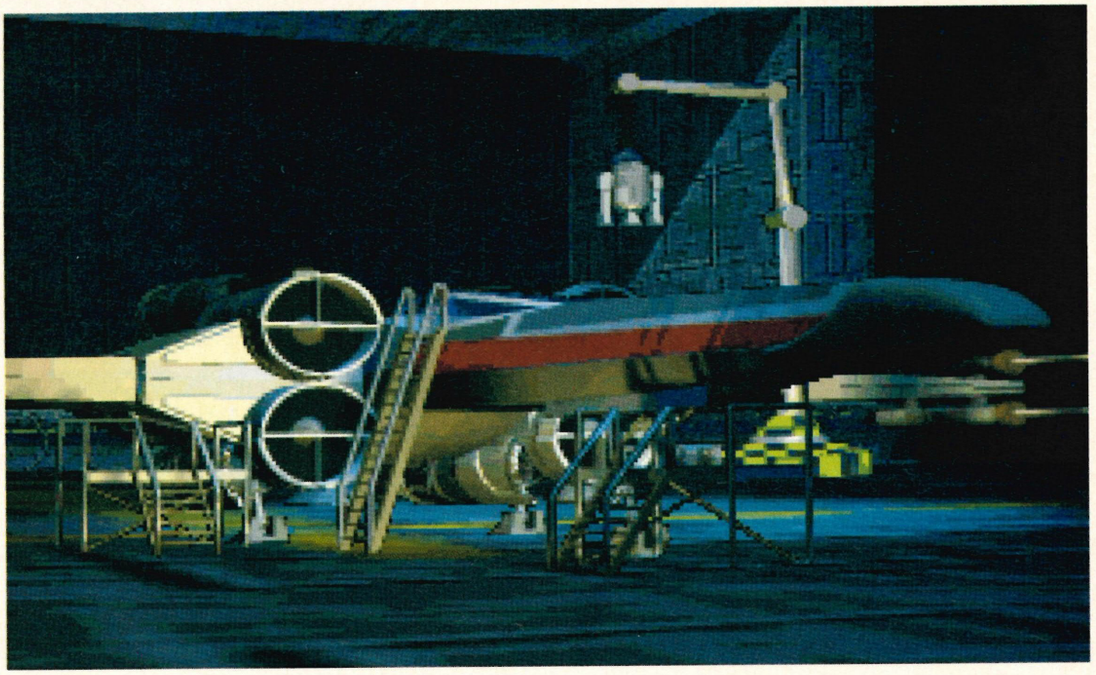
Millennium Falcon for instance? Sadly this particular ship won't appear in the game as Holland feels that the film's characters shouldn't interfere with the player's involvement in the game. "You sort of brush up against the characters from the film and fight in battles with them but they don't appear to any great extent. I prefer this approach because I really had no interest in building a clone of the Star Wars movie. Instead I wanted to create a flavour of what it's like to be in the Star Wars universe."

The player takes on the role of a young Rebel pilot, starting out in what's known as the Pilot's Proving Ground, a training camp for all budding fighter pilots. Here you are taught the basics of flying an X-Wing, testing your skills over a tough obstacle course. "It's done in the style of Hard Drivin', where you have different manoeuvres to perform and targets to shoot in the course of each lap. You'll get to learn all about flying the X-Wing, A-Wing and Y-Wing spacecraft and are given the chance to prove yourself worthy of flying in the Rebel Alliance."

The Historical Simulator takes the player through a series of famous battles from the Rebel Alliance's history. The player is instructed by famous Rebel pilots and is given a good idea of how a typical mission will go and the kinds of tactics used by the Empire. The historical missions are all standalone flights and work similarly to those in SWOTL.

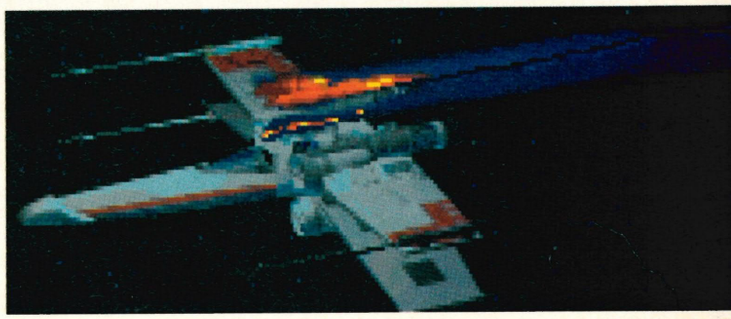
The main sections of the game are the three Tours of Duty. Here the game takes on a Wing Commander flavour, telling the continuing story with the player flying relevant missions as and when necessary. The three tours follow the story of the young pilot from his first days with the Alliance right up to the final assault on the Death Star.

The final mission involves everything from frantic space battles to the spectacular trench flight from the climax of the first film. It's even possible for you to fire the final destructive shot instead of Luke Skywalker.



To create the world of Star Wars, Holland has relied on the technology used in SWOTL but in a much more advanced state. The objects are all made up of comprehensive polygon shapes, overlaid with bitmap designs. This kind of visual quality serves two purposes — it makes each spacecraft look much more realistic than simple polygon effects, plus Holland feels that with the technological progression of PCs over the past few years, most of today's owners will be able to run such a game without sacrificing too much speed.

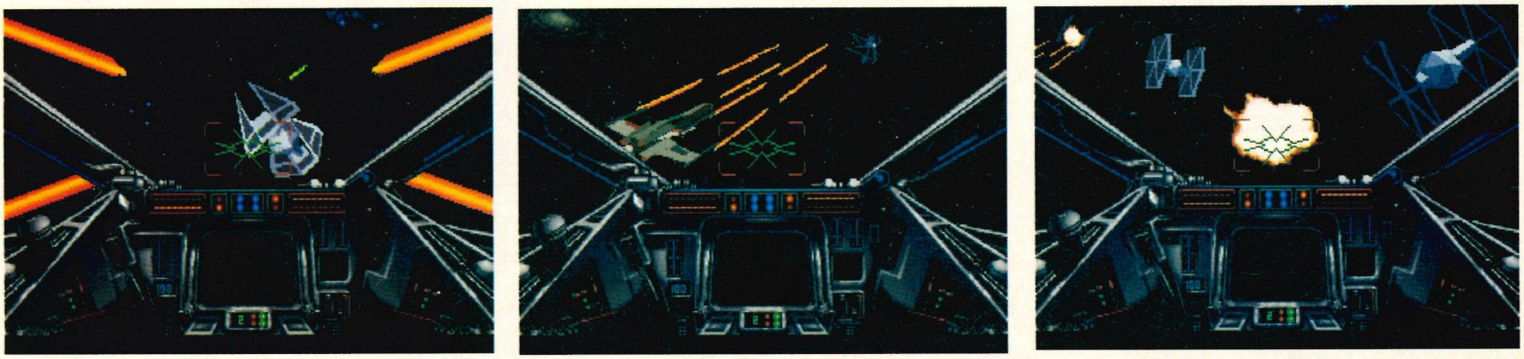
The sound effects are also used to good effect, with digitised noises being taken from the films (Darth Vader's mechanical breathing, engine roars as ships fly past your cockpit) and the first ever use of iMUSE outside an adventure game. iMUSE is a musical system that plays a continuous tune that changes to fit the action on screen. The melody will suddenly flare up with a heavy drumbeat if the action gets hot, fading back to normal as the last of the ships is polished off.



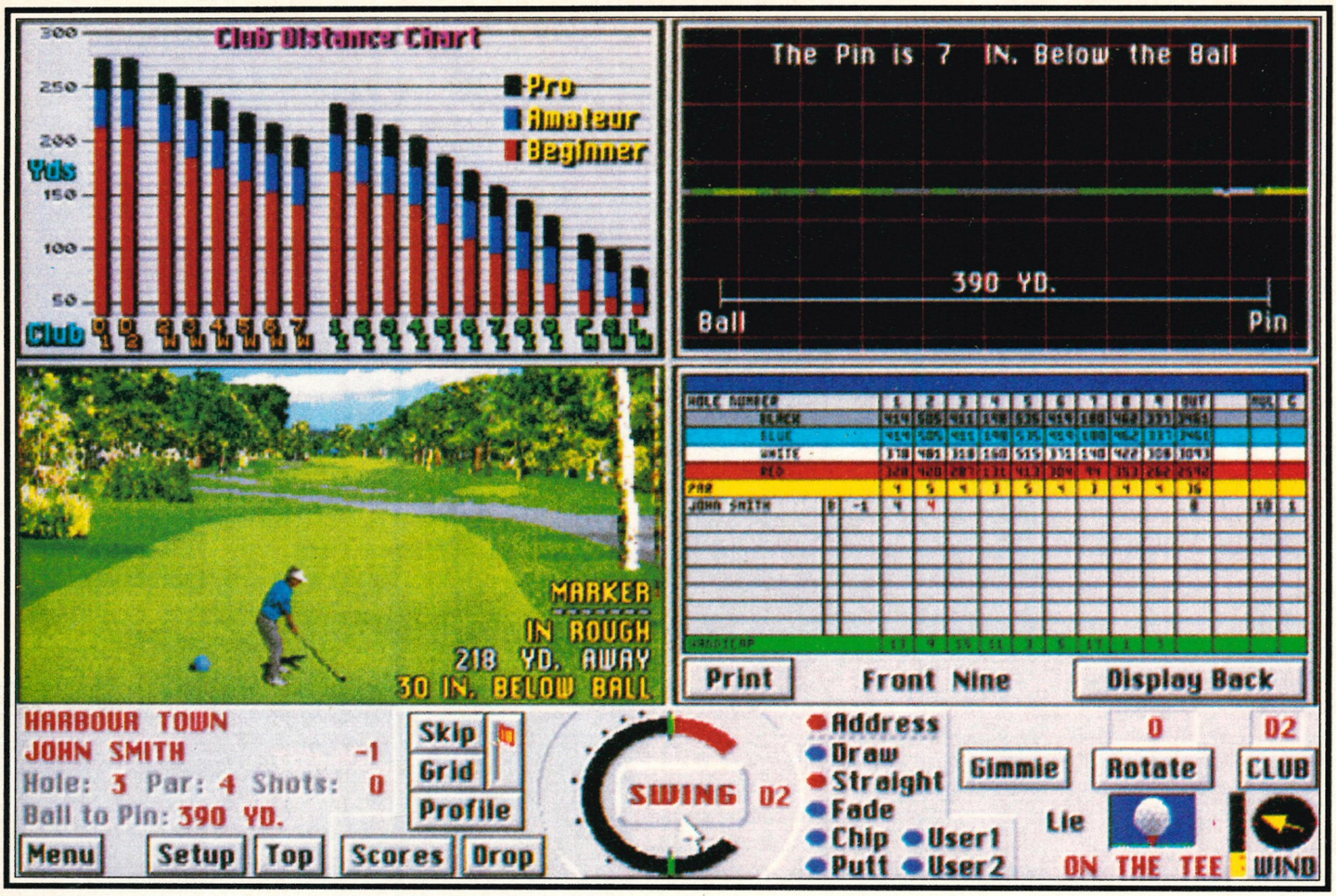
X-Wing won't be the only game to make use of the Star Wars licence. Already Holland is working on expansion disks and sequels, even giving the player a chance to fly some of the Empire's ships or to take on the Imperial AT-AT Walkers from The Empire Strikes Back.

Top, a large scale view of the hangar, and above, the X-Wing itself.

Title:	**X-Wing**
Publisher:	**LucasArts**
Genre:	**Space/Flight Simulator**
Programmer:	**LucasArts**
Release date:	**December**
Price:	**£TBA**



Intergalactic action from early versions of X-Wing



Links 386 Pro.

The rest are strictly amateur.







There are other golf simulation games. And there's Links 386 Pro.

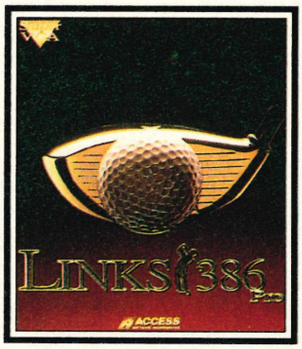
It's like trying to compare a crazy golf tournament with the Ryder Cup.

The Super VGA graphics are so realistic, you'll imagine you're driving up the fairway of the featured championship course, Harbour Town, or any of the 7 separate championship courses currently available.

All of the features on Links 386 Pro leave other games flailing in a bunker of mediocrity. With over 345 different options of viewing windows you are able to set up the screen the way you like it, perhaps showing profile from ball to pin, the leaderboard and the club distance chart. You can even choose the colour of your golfing attire!

But the real beauty of Links 386 Pro is that it's simply great fun to play around on. Again and Again. Whether you're a pro or not.

Links 386 Pro is compatible with MS - DOS computers with 386 or 486 processors and requires Super VGA Graphics, Hard Disk & 2 MB RAM.



U.S. GOLD

LINKS 386 PRO - THE No 1 GOLF SIMULATOR

HINTS TIPS 'N' HELP CALL THE GOLD PHONE: SPELLJAMMER • PROPHECY OF THE SHADOW • THE SUMMONING • DARK SUN • EYE OF THE BEHOLDER • LEGEND OF DARKMOON (EYE OF THE BEHOLDER II) • DRAGONS OF FLAME • HEROES OF THE LANCE TEL: **0839 654 139** OPERATION STEALTH • ANOTHER WORLD • FLASHBACK • CRUISE FOR A CORPSE TEL: **0839 654 284** LUCASFILM HELPLINE • LECHUCK'S REVENGE (MONKEY ISLAND 2) • INDIANA JONES (LAST CRUSADE & FATE OF ATLANTIS) • ZAK MCKRACKEN • MANIAC MANSION • LOOM • SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND • BATTLE OF BRITAIN TEL: **0839 654 123 INFORMATION LINE: 0839 654 124** • LEGENDS OF VALOUR TEL: **0839 993 366** • ACCESS HELPLINE: AMAZON TEL: **0839 654 394** • SIR TECH HELPLINE: CRUSADERS OF THE DARK SAVANT TEL: **0839 994 477**

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reviews

Our comprehensive reviews service starts here. Over the next 58 pages, you'll find the latest PC games fully evaluated, with clear comparisons made to similar games on the market. We also try to make it easy for you to see whether a game is suitable for your machine and your tastes, so read on to see how to get the most out of them

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Specifications

PCs come in so many different flavours and configurations that finding out whether a PC-compatible game really is going to work with your set-up can be a minefield. Each review carries a detailed TechSpec column, explaining what features are supported by the game in an easy to read, at-a-glance panel.

The graphics, soundboards and control sections tell you which popular devices are supported by the game in question.

Under disk requirements, you'll find out whether a game needs to be installed on to hard disk in order to play it, how much space it takes up if installed to hard disk, and we also note if the game comes on high density disks.

The performance section isn't quite so clear cut. Publishers often state a set of minimum hardware requirements on the box, but these can be very minimal indeed. Our optimum performance level is a subjective rating, and gives you not the publisher's base specification required, but rather the minimum we think the game needs in order to run comfortably. Game X may run on a 286, but at a snail's pace, or it may run OK on a 16MHz 286 but be unacceptably slow at 8MHz. This is where we let you know.

After the optimum speed rating, we note the minmum RAM required to run the game, and finally, how much of your base 640K RAM must be available for the game to load properly.

Alternatively

We believe games should be placed in context. You may like the sound of game Y but suspect it might be too technical, or difficult to control. We'll tell you about alternative games of a similar style, subject matter, or interface, which might be more to your taste (or warn you off those which are inferior to the game being reviewed, however superficially similar).

Two Minutes

This is the closest you'll get to seeing the game in action before you reach the shop. We take a series of manoeuvres from the game and explain clearly the gameplay required to get through the screens. You may find some helpful game hints in this section!

Rating system

We give a single mark out of 10 to indicate what we think of the quality of the game. As a rough guideline, the ratings break down thus:



0-2	Dreadful
3-4	Deficient
5	Average
6-7	Good
8-9	Excellent
10	Staggeringly perfect

Ratings are not the sole preserve of the author of the review, but are discussed and thrashed out by everyone at PC Review who knows the game in question.

We also rate the games relative to other games currently on the market.

The reason for this is that, while PC programming expertise is improving all the time, and Monkey Island VI will doubtless be miles better than Monkey Island II, that doesn't mean it will have to get 16 out of 10 when reviewed. By the time it arrives, if it looks excellent compared to everything else around at the time, it'll still be worthy of its eight or nine.

Shareware

The shareware reviews section is an independently written column on the best and most interesting of the latest shareware and public domain releases. Here you'll also find the Shareware Finder Service. If you have a particular software need for your PC, but don't know if such a program exists, try us. We may well be able to pin down a cost-effective shareware program to do the job for you.



Title	**Alone in the Dark**
Publisher	**Infogrames**
Contact	**(071) 738 8199**
Price	**£44.99**

As investigator of the weird and wonderful, Edward Carnby, has agreed to catalogue the items in Derceto, now deserted after the suspicious death of its owner, Jeremy Hartwood.



What better place to start than the attic? The perfect location for uncovering family heirlooms.

ALONE *in the dark*

If you thought that H P Lovecraft's weird writings could never be successfully translated to a computer game, think again. They have inspired Infogrames to create the best 3D adventure we've ever seen



I have to admit that I didn't expect to see a better adventure than Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis this side of Christmas, let alone a game that is as ground-breaking as this one. Everyone who had seen the preview shots of Alone in the Dark expected the graphics to be first class, but nobody on this magazine was quite prepared for the game as a whole to be quite as brilliant as it is. And believe me, it is brilliant — coming closer to that elusive 10 rating than any game I've seen to date.

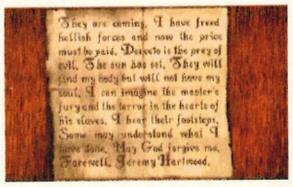
Alone in the Dark is, at first glimpse, nothing new — a third person perspective 3D adventure — but what sets it apart from other efforts in this genre is not simply that the 3D technology has been considerably improved, but also that the way in which that technology has been used to successfully create an atmosphere of suspense and mystery is innovative and highly effective. This is one of those rare examples of good technology being matched by superb game design, and it's about time that the two went hand in hand.



Ah ha! This old oil lamp may come in handy for exploring the darker recesses of the house.



An old Joanna in the corner. Let's see if her ivories are still tinkling despite the woodworm.



Hang on, what's this? A note from Jeremy Hartwood. It seems that something strange was happening.



I think I'll take the rifle in this chest before exploring further. I may need it.



Oh my god, what was that noise? Breaking glass and... something wicked this way comes.



(Left) There are separate animations for each weapon that your character can use, so that he will move differently when shooting the gun or firing an arrow.

Inspiring horror

The plot of the game has been heavily influenced by the writings of H P Lovecraft, particularly those based on the Cthulu Mythos. In fact this is the first of a series of planned games called Virtual Dreams, and the second of these is to be officially linked to the Cthulu books.

The plot is straight out of a Hammer House of Horror film. You know the sort of thing: creepy old mansion with a murky past harbours strange creatures from another dimension, and of course, one man or women is destined to enter alone and sort it all out. Not before getting scared half out of their wits first though. The hammer impression is not really surprising considering that Lovecraft has been one of the strongest influences on the horror genre as a whole.

An ancient manor house, Derceto, has been the location of a grisly death. The owner of the house, painter Jeremy Hartwood, has, it seems, taken his own life. But two people are not so sure that the painter's death is quite as much of an open or shut case as the police seem to believe. They are Emily Hartwood, the niece of the dead painter, who spent part of her childhood in the house, and Edward Carnby, a private detective who has been appointed to compile an inventory of the items within the house.

The superb animated intro sequence shows either Emily or Edward, depending on the player's choice, arriving at the house and making their way to the attic. It is at this point that the action begins. Within two minutes of first taking control of either character you will discover why the house is shunned by the inhabitants of the local village. At night there are unpleasant things abroad, and they are all after your blood. Your objective is to explore the house, tackling the strange creatures that inhabit it, and attempting to find where the are coming from and how to banish them completely from the world of mortals.

Three-dimensional world

The animated characters and backgrounds within the game are generated from filled polygons, very much in the style of Delphine's Another World. The big difference between the two games is that Alone in the Dark uses conventional bitmapped artwork for the backgrounds which give the locations so much more atmosphere, and it is set in a genuinely three-dimensional world, whereas much of Another World is two-dimensional.

Alone in the Dark is really revolutionary in its use of perspective and camera views. Each location has two or more preset 'cameras' which show the action from different angles. Depending on where your character moves and what he or she does, the view cuts between the alternate camera views to give the game a genuinely cinematic feel. This feature alone makes the game more exciting to play, but it is further enhanced by the use of exaggerated perspective and unusual choices of angles for some of the camera views.

If you enter a corridor, for example, you might initially view the action from high up in one corner — a weird spider's eye view of the scene. As you walk along the corridor the view will suddenly cut to show you head on from floor level. These movie style cuts are rarely, if ever intrusive, and give the game a very creepy and sinister atmosphere.

In fact the tension is one of the best features of the game, and strangely it increases as you come to learn what sort of things to expect. You will enter a new room and the door will mysteriously slam ▶



One of the most atmospheric aspects of Alone in the Dark, is the odd choice of camera angles and the forced perspective, as demonstrated superbly here in the coal bunker.





(Left) Down in the catacombs the world of Derceto becomes a lot darker and more sinister, but it is here that your quest must ultimately lead you.

shut behind you. Having explored the room, you turn and open the door behind which stands a zombie, which immediately advances towards you, its arms outstretched.

Having got over the shock of the initial encounters you may feel able to cope with future brushes with the creatures, but be prepared for some surprises. Not everything in the mansion is exactly as it first appears. Neither is killing the creatures all too simple. The most common types can usually be dispatched with a few well aimed kicks or punches but many require either a weapon of some description, or must be sent on their way with magical means.

A weighty problem

You begin the game without anything with you, but there are plenty of objects about the house to aid you on your quest. Some will need to be combined with other objects before they can be useful. In the first location, for instance, is a very useful lamp, but it will be of no help to you until you find some oil for it, and something to light it with.

Like most adventure games, Alone in the Dark has a protagonist with magic pockets who can quite effortlessly carry around all manner of junk without tripping up or slowing down. There is a limit however, and in a concession to realism, this is based on the maximum weight you can carry rather than the number of items. So, if you come across a box of biscuits say, but cannot pick it up because you are carrying too much, then dropping a letter isn't going to help you much, because you still have too much weight. If, however, you drop a gramaphone then you will have shed so much weight that you can not only pick up the box of buscuits, but several other objects besides.

Each of the objects in the game has its own frames of animation, including those that the main character can carry, so you don't get an image of the main character with an object poorly pasted onto it, the two are correctly integrated. When your character is holding a gun, he or she moves in a different fashion. Try firing a rifle, and you will actually be knocked back by the recoil, use a knife and you will execute several slashing and cutting moves. The attention to detail in the animation is absolutely superb. All of the creatures in the game are realistically animated with very believable spine movements, and all of them are beautifully rendered with Gouraud shading. This technique makes the boundary between polygons less obtrusive by blending the colours of each surface together. The result is that objects look more rounder and solid, and in this case of objects with blades, these even have an evil looking gleam.

Clever programming

The animation has been cleverly programmed to cope with a range of processors while minimising the change in running speed. It does this by missing out some of the frames on slower machines, resulting in less smooth motion, but maintaining the speed to a certain degree. You can also speed up the game by switching off the detail and Gouraud shading, thus gaining speed at the expense of visual appeal.

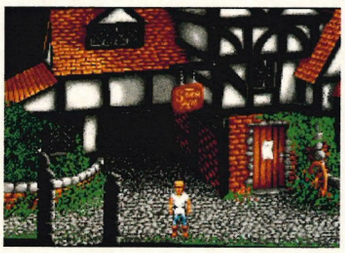
Although this is a very action oriented game — there are lots of creatures to overcome, and plenty of running around and jumping to be done — it also offers quite a good cerebral challenge. Many of the puzzles are connected to the creatures, and how to kill them, but others involve more traditional adventure logic. You discover a mechanism, but what does it do, and how does it work?

There is not really any narrative flow to Alone in the Dark, although you do discover more of the story behind the house ▶

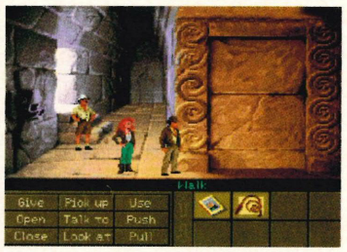
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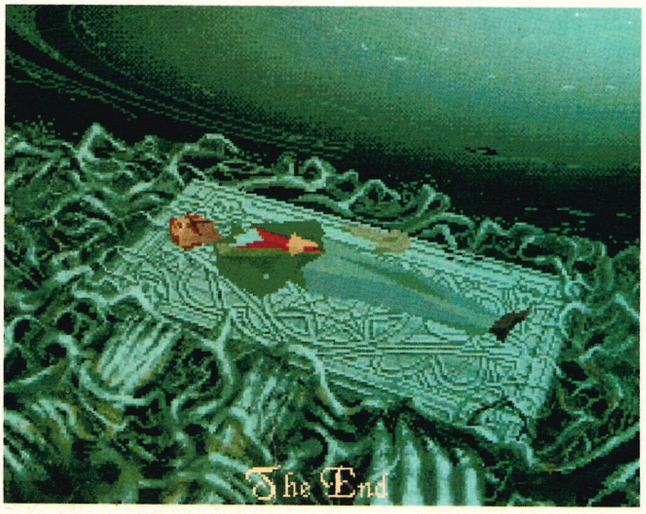
Another World
US Gold, £30.99
Delphine's animated adventure took the games playing world by storm when it emerged some time ago, but that was largely down to the fluid animation of filled polygon characters and backgrounds rather than the plot. Frankly it's not a patch on Alone in the Dark, but it still stands up well if science fiction is more your thing.



Lure of the Temptress
Virgin, £35.99
Lure of the Temptress is another game that has you investigating hazardous locations to solve a mystery and face a final horrific encounter. The reason it's including here though, is that it also demonstrates that there is stil plenty of scope for originality in adventure games. Nicely developed characters and a strong plot are evident.



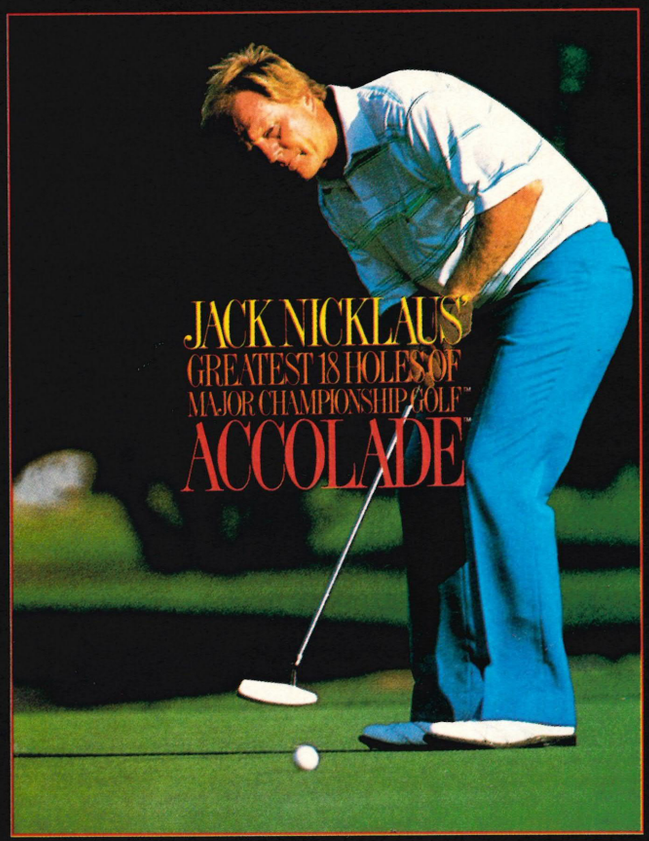
Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis
Lucasfilm/US Gold, £37.99
The reason that this program is included as an alternative is not because it bears any similarity to Alone in the Dark, but simply because it's the only adventure game currently available that is anywhere near as good. If humorous action and adventure is your scene then add this to your collection.



If any of Derceto's creatures overcome you then your fate is to be dragged to your doom in the nightmare world below it.

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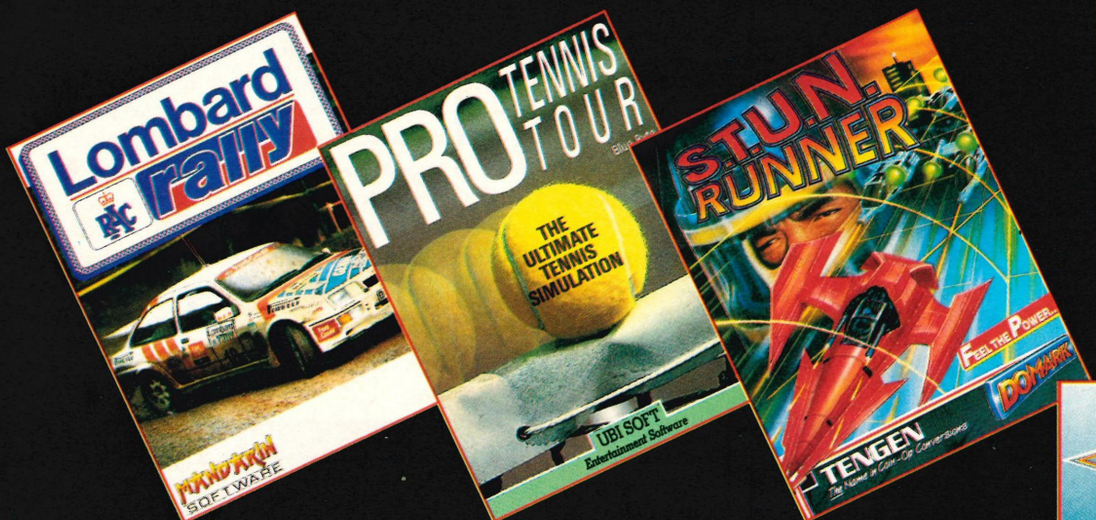
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Travel ahead in time to the 21st century and experience the thrills of racing at speeds of over 900 mph!
Increase your speed by riding the outer walls of the tunnel, jump the ramps and annihilate the opposition with Shock Waves.
Complete the challenge screens and race through the S.T.U.N. Network towards the ultimate challenge.

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Hit Squad

PC

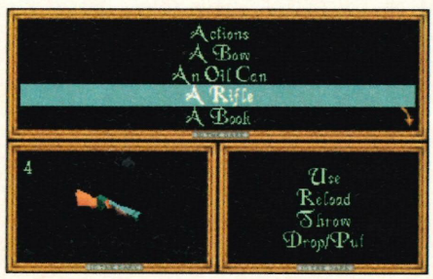
HIT SQUAD . 2 CASTLE STREET . CASTLEFIELD . MANCHESTER . M3 4LZ . TELEPHONE: 061 832 6633 . FAX: 061 834 0650



Some of the creatures you encounter are very colourful, like this pirate, who's swaggering gait belies the fact that he is a cunning swordsman.

Techspec It's a demanding one this. Speed is the most critical aspect of the game. If you've got a 286 machine, don't waste your money until you upgrade, and if you have a machine below 33Mhz then, if possible, try before you buy.

Disk requirements						
	High density	✓				
	Hard disk only	✓				
	Space taken on hard disk	5.7Mb				
Graphic modes						
	CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
	VGA	✓	SVGA	✓		
Soundboards						
	Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control						
	Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✗
Performance						
	Optimum speed	33MHz				
	Minimum memory	640K				
	Free RAM required	600K				



For a weedy looking guy you certainly can carry a lot. Objects and actions are selected from this menu and all of them work in the same way. Holding down the space bar performed the last action you selected.

as you progress in your search. The lack of a strong plot, however, does not stop this from being a sensational journey of discovery. The initial fun of opening doors and not knowing what to expect soon gives way to a burning desire to find the answer to the riddle posed by the house: where are these creatures coming from, why are they here, and how do you banish them?

It would be unfair to give to much away, but rest assured that, as horrific as the house is, beneath it are murkier and deadlier locations, and beyond them, a final encounter with terror. Move over, Amityville!

Equal opportunities

This being an equal opportunities game, you can cast yourself as either a male or female lead. Rather cleverly, the development team have not been lazy and simply changed the look of the cental character depending on which one you choose. Not only do they look different, they move in different ways, and have different skills. Emily is faster and more agile, while Edward is better at using weapons, so while playing Emily will probably give you an advantage during the hop, skip and jump sections of the game, swordplay is definitely not her forte, so you'll have a little more difficulty killing some adversaries. Once you've played the game with one of the characters you can always try and see how you fare with the other. Emily also has a completely different perspective on the house than does Edward, because she lived there as a child.

Perfect computer game?

Before you get the impression that Alone in the Dark is the perfect computer game, let me assure you that I do have some criticisms. Firstly it's not the most accessible game I've ever come across — you'll need a powerful machine to get the most out of it, and really 20Mhz is the slowest speed at which you'll find it playable.

The control system works well, especially using keys, with one exception. At some points in the game you really do need to make the characters run. This is achieved by pressing the walk key twice in quick succession. This is far too fiddly and can result in sudden death if you mistime it. It would have been better to have a second key perform the run function.

Perhaps the most cardinal sin committed by the programmers is that the game is too short. Really dedicated gamers will probably manage to finish it in little more than one weekend of solid play, and believe me, you'll be so hooked that it will be quite easy to while away an entire weekend with this game without realising how the time has flown.

In all fairness I do have to say that the game's plus points far outweigh the negatives, and I'd rather spend money on this game and put up with these than waste it on the latest piece of run-of-the-mill ripoffware.

The reason that it has generated such enthusiasm is that it manages to achieve something which so many sophisticated PC games fail to do. Once you have stopped being astonished by the quality of the graphics and animation, and the novelty has worn off, rather than having a white elephant, you find that, beneath the gloss, there is a very good game indeed. You really will want to carry on playing until you have discovered Derceto's ancient and horrific secret.

All in all this ranks alongside Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis as being easily the best release I've seen this year, if not this decade, and if you have a powerful machine I'd recommend it wholeheartedly. If you don't have a powerful machine then this is as good a reason as any for upgrading it or buying a new one.

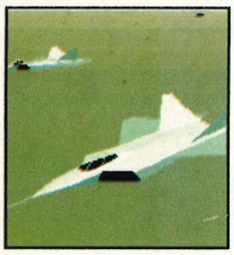
■ **Laurence Scotford**

PCreview **9**



If a male protagonist doesn't take your fancy, then you can always opt to take Emily on a journey of discovery.


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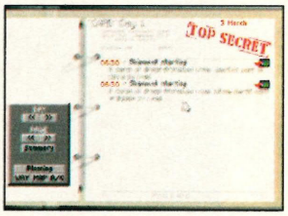


Title	**ATAC**
Publisher	**MicroProse**
Contact	**(0666) 504326**
Price	**£44.99**

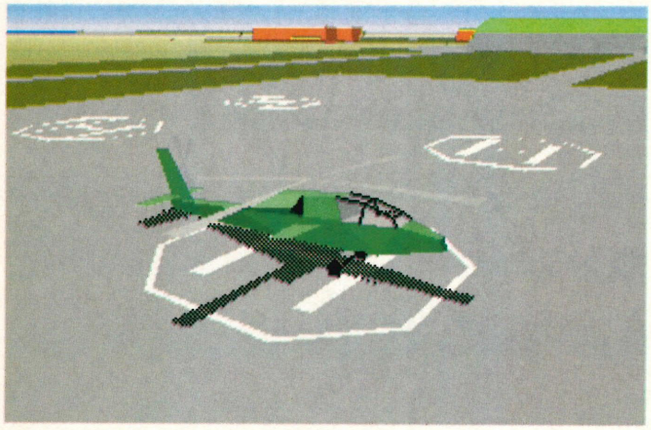
ATAC

Last month it had us flying around in a multi-role, ongoing air campaign in Birds of Prey. This month Argonaut has us flying around in a multi-role, ongoing air campaign in ATAC. Is there any difference?

ATAC is based around the gathering of intelligence reports on the enemy's activities. Here we see a typical strike mission, hitting a moving convoy of drug-laden trucks, from the intelligence briefing through to successful elimination of the target.



An intelligence report indicates that a cargo of drugs is being moved by a convoy of trucks along a road that's conveniently within striking distance. Let's set up a flight of F-22s to go and deal with the situation in their own special manner, ie, blowing them up.



The Apache Gunship. Possibly the most famous attack helicopter in the world, the Apache has been in service since the late 70s and continues to outperform all of its rivals, even today.

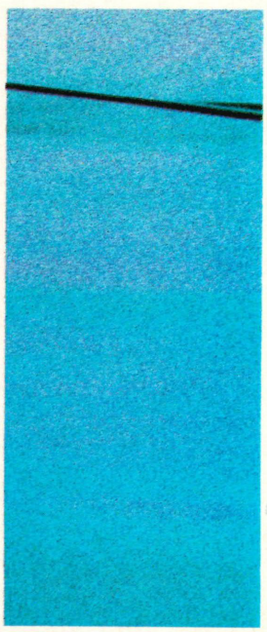
Ever since the Cold War ended, techno-thrillers, spy films and computer games have all started looking for new villains to combat and 98 per cent of them have turned to the drug barons of South America. If it hadn't been for the Gulf War, we probably wouldn't have seen a flight simulator with anything other than tropical landscapes to fly over. And don't you find it slightly odd though that all these narcotic-dealing tin-pot dictators seem to be armed with nothing but Soviet hardware? Well, almost all.

ATAC is that rare event in today's flight simulators, realistic *and* exciting. The overlords fighting against you here don't just settle for MiGs and SU-27s. You'll be facing Cessnas (not really much of a threat but still important), converted Boeing airliners, DC-10s and assorted other low and high grade military equipment gleaned from around the world.

And tell me that approaching the scene of a pitched air battle, with a sky full of white trails of smoke as missiles dart around from one target to another, with yet more yellow flashes followed by trails of smoke erupting from the ground doesn't get the old heart a-thumping.

It's also pretty good strategy fare for those gamers of a less action-oriented ilk. You don't have to fly anything if you don't feel up to it. Simply planning the missions based around the information gathered by your agents, your own knowledge of drug runners activities (supplied by the manual) and a good strategic sense is more than enough challenge to keep you going for some time.

One criticism of Birds of Prey is the fact that although you could select the type of mission to fly and the equipment to use, you never really had a feeling of overall control. It seems that for ATAC, Argonaut Software (the developer of both

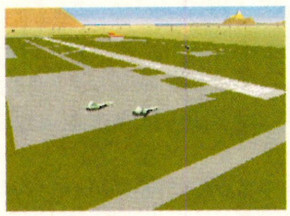




First, we arm the planes with the necessary weapons, our lead plane having the air-to-ground ordinance, with the wingmen heavy on the air-to-air missiles. Two wingmen should ensure a safe passage, leaving one pilot free to deliver supplies to an agent by helicopter.



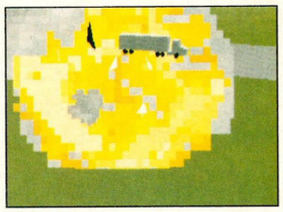
Plotting the course on the campaign map we set the waypoints for the lead plane, tell him what height to fly at and what weapons to use when he gets to his destination. The other two planes are set up as wingmen, where they will respond to any aerial threats.



With the mission details all set up, we opt to watch as the planes take off and head towards the target. Around the runway they taxi until they reach the take-off position, from where they hurtle down the tarmac and rise up into the air. Once up, they all fly into formation and head towards the target.



Several minutes later they approach the target area and we decide to take over manual control. The trucks are located on the radar and are acquired on the head up display. We close the gap until the HUD flashes its lock sign and then release the missiles towards their targets.



Just one look and then their trucks went boom! As pieces of carburettor and windscreen wiper fly everywhere, our flight of three turns back towards home, its mission complete. It's a small victory in the ever-escalating war against drugs, but every attack counts.

games) has decided to take you in the other direction. You are in complete control of the campaign deciding what to hit, where and when.

The premise for ATAC is that in the year 2003 the American government finally decides that the drug barons of Colombia have to be stopped using whatever means possible. A special task force is formed, given the codename ATAC (Advanced Tactical Air Command, in case you're wondering) and set up in a secret airbase in the heart of Colombia. Armed with eight Apache helicopters, eight of the very latest F-22 Advanced Tactical Fighter aircraft, eight of the best military pilots in the country and 250 undercover agents, your task is to wipe out the four drug barons before they find and wipe you out.

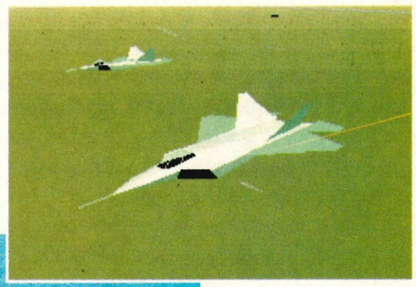
Thankfully you're not thrown right in at the deep end in your first game — unless that's what you want, that is. There are three ways to play ATAC: the single plane shooting everything that moves, the limited campaign against just the one drug baron, and the full game.

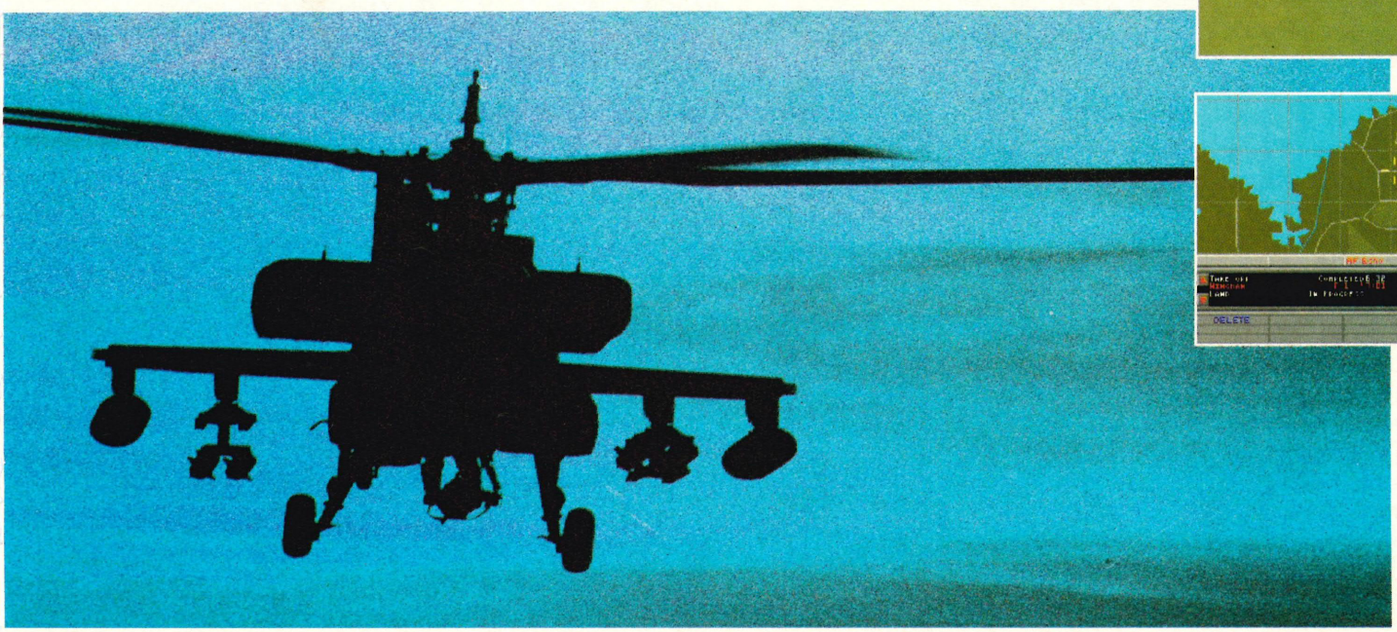
Level one, the simple air strike, is little more than an action-fest designed to get you used to flying the respective aircraft. Take either an F-22 or an Apache gunship up into the Colombian skies of and start shooting everything that moves or has 'enemy' written all over it. It's here that you first notice how good the simulation side of the game is. To be honest, I wasn't expecting this to be as good as other MicroProse simulations, but on playing around in level one for a while I found it to be detailed enough to class it as a simulator and exciting enough to be a simulation. From a flying point of view, it's almost akin to JetFighter's level of playability vs realism.

You also notice the graphic quality of ATAC, specifically how good it is, despite the apparent lack of foliage (this is a tropical country after all; where are all the trees?). Having seen the likes of MicroProse's F-15 III and Harrier in preview stages, I wouldn't go to the lengths of saying ATAC looks just as good – there's nothing really ground-breaking involved. It does look a lot better than most of the simulators currently available, though.

There are also a lot of extremely nice little touches, like the smoke trails from ▶

The campaign map, apart from being a realistic representation of Colombia, allows you to keep track of what's happening where. Full zoom facilities let you go in far enough to study individual towns, see trucks moving from one location to another and check out the local air activity.







The F-22 Advanced Tactical Fighter. Still in the experimental stages in real life, this low-level all-purpose fighter-bomber is capable of reacting to any threat in a matter of minutes.

missiles as they are launched towards their target. Explosions produce a large burst of flames before showing the destroyed item breaking up into pieces. If your plane is hit by a missile, the camera cuts to an external view showing your plane spiral into the ground.

The best example of this is when flying a campaign. Set up a mission and send your squadron of planes into attack, then just opt to watch the action as the good guys engage the bad. Select an external view as an F-22 engages a MiG-29 and watch as your automatic pilot weaves in and around missiles that flash past his nose.

There are a few moments when the otherwise high graphic quality of the game tends to falter. It's great fun to watch your sleek white tube zoom towards its target with every intention of turning it into a pile of rubble. It would have been better had the missiles not looked for the most part like bloated penguins without their dinner jackets. This is a bit of a shame when you consider that the rest of the object detail is actually pretty high.

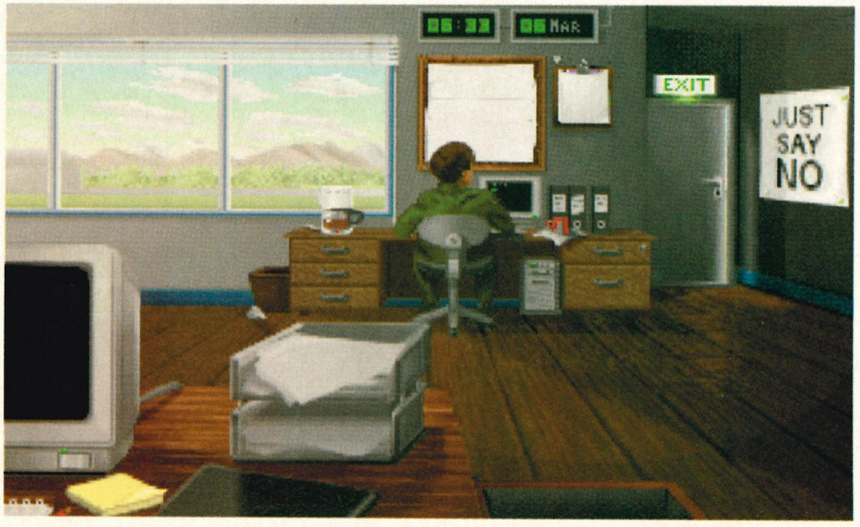
Back to the core of the game and we have reached level two, the limited campaign. This is designed to give you a flavour of what the full thing will entail, pitting your strategic wits against a single enemy instead of the full four. This is where the manual's tutorial comes into play, taking you step by step through two days of a sample campaign, letting you experience the importance of keeping your agents supplied, gathering information and acting upon it as and when necessary.

During one particular game, I planned an attack on the enemy's HQ as my first mission, just to see what would happen. Now I'm not sure whether this would happen again or whether it was down to a degree of serendipity on my part, but as my flight of four F-22s approached their target they were met by a squadron of MiGs coming up at us and a private passenger plane heading off in the other direction. Naturally suspicious, I took control of one F-22, swooped down on this unfortunate Cessna and blew it apart. Upon returning to base, I entered the debriefing room and waited while the Commanding Officer delivered his soliloquy on the success of the mission, only to discover that the drug baron had been killed and I had won the game. One mission and the game was over! It didn't happen again, but that's not to say it won't ever.

The full campaign — level three — is where the real meat and veg of the game is at. Four individual drug barons, fighting it out for control over the Colombian cocaine producing factories and farms, as well as fighting it out with you. The key to winning any kind of victory is to use your agents skilfully and plan only those air strikes that will do the most damage.

You start each day by leafing through your intelligence folder, reading the agents' reports on what is happening where. These are usually in the form of 'A cargo of harvest/drugs/troops is heading north out of Sabana by road'. The majority of air strikes in ATAC will be directed against trucks but you will get the odd report asking you to bomb a boat or a train. The use of agents is perhaps the weakest aspect of the whole game. There's a lot of scope for more advanced use of the field operatives that has really just been overlooked. Being able to use spies to sabotage a warehouse or an factory for instance would have enhanced the strategic aspect tenfold. Using a system similar to that seen in Special Forces (another MicroProse game available now — see page 109) would have been perfect.

The key to a successful campaign is to realise that the targets indicated by your spies aren't always the best ones to go after.



Alternatively...



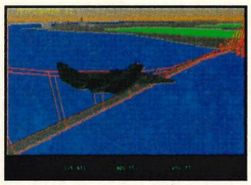
Birds of Prey
Electronic Arts, £39.99
Although I've already compared Argonaut's earlier project to ATAC a couple of times in the main review, I feel that I'd better just go over the main points again. Despite Birds' claim of over 40 different planes and an ongoing war to fight in, you just don't get the same feeling of involvement as you do in ATAC. Not only that but the flight models for each aircraft seem to be flawed to the point that most of the time the game is quite unplayable unless you tone down the realism. ATAC is by far the better of the two.



Gunship 2000
MicroProse, £39.99
Presenting itself as a more serious and detailed helicopter simulation, MicroProse's earlier venture into the world of rotor-driven aircraft also features several different types of helicopters to fly, but again doesn't give you the feeling of overall control. Here you are very much a pilot and nothing more. In a departure from most modern MicroProse flight sims you don't get to fly over South America, restricted to just Central Europe and the Persian Gulf instead. MicroProse is releasing data disks for the game in an effort to expand it further, though.



Falcon 3.0
Spectrum Holobyte, £49.99
If you just want a single plane simulator on the other hand, Spectrum Holobyte's hyper-realistic F-16 sim could be just the thing. Again, as with Gunship 2000, you are just a pilot, but you do get all the options like wingmen, ongoing campaigns, even tutorial flights. Although the graphic quality of the game is arguable, there's no doubting its playability. It's worth waiting to see what some of the other forthcoming single-plane sims are going to be like, but for the moment, Falcon is the best.



JetFighter 2
US Gold, £39.99
The only other drug-busting dependent flight simulation I can think of, JetFighter 2 is more of an action game than a technical flight sim. In this particular story, South American drug barons have invaded North America, taking over the lower regions of San Francisco and the rest of the western coast. Your task is to fly a number of varying missions in either F-22s, F-16s or F-14s, striking back at the forces of evil, blah blah. Wonderful to play but don't expect it to be the most realistic game you've ever enjoyed.

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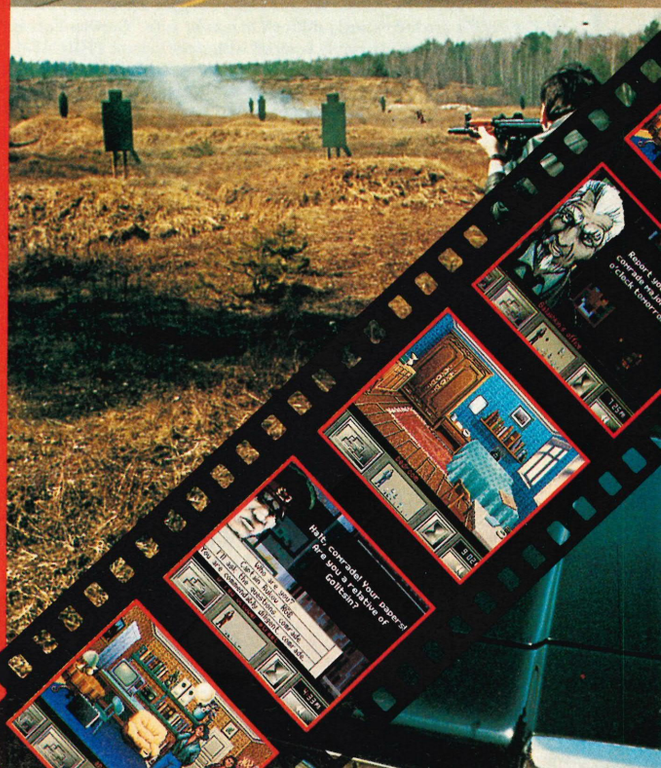
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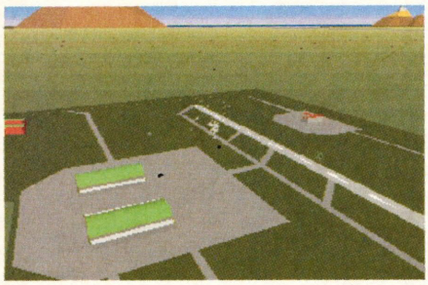






Find and destroy an enemy owned airfield and you reduce the amount of enemy aircraft that can be sent up against you. One area that did strike me as odd was that you know the location of the enemy's HQ immediately. To have kept this hidden until your agents could source it out would also have increased the strategic value of the game.

The rest of the planning stage is fairly standard stuff. Arming screens are nice enough and you can switch from one area to another without too much fuss. The campaign map is particularly nice as well as very large. Missions are easy to set up through the use of waypoints and attack commands. What is slightly annoying is that you can only have four aircraft fly in one day and there is no scope for rearming and taking off for a second time.



Once the missions are set and you've entered the operations stage of the game, things really pick up. You have the ability to switch to any of the aircraft currently in the air or to watch from the map and direct the action from there. This means you can leave the dull parts of the missions up to the computer pilots, jumping into the respective cockpits whenever something interesting happens. It's all very enjoyable and aside from the relative difficulty in actually flying the helicopters, very playable.

PCreview 8

ATAC is infinitely better than Birds of Prey, mainly down to the feeling of overall control. It can be a touch easy to complete the limited campaigns but switch to a full one and you're likely to be there for some time. It does make me wonder about the way the two games were developed (considering that they are both from the same programming team). It seems that by the time Argonaut got around to designing ATAC it had realised that Birds of Prey was something of a non-starter so the best elements of the campaign flight simulator concept were kept for the newer product. ATAC is entertaining and, as I've said, one of the most exciting flight sims that I've played for ages.

■ ***Paul Presley***

Techspec

Be careful if you don't have the right amount of free RAM to run the game. ATAC will still load up without any signs of danger and go through all the menu commands and the operations room options. But as soon as you try to get into the flight simulator part of the game — bang. You're dumped back into DOS.

Disk requirements						
	High density	✓				
	Hard disk only	✓				
	Space taken on hard disk	3.5K				
Graphic modes						
	CGA	✘	EGA	✘	Tandy	✘
	VGA	✓	SVGA	✘		
Soundboards						
	Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control						
	Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance						
	Optimum speed	16MHz				
	Minimum memory	640K				
	Free RAM required	518K				

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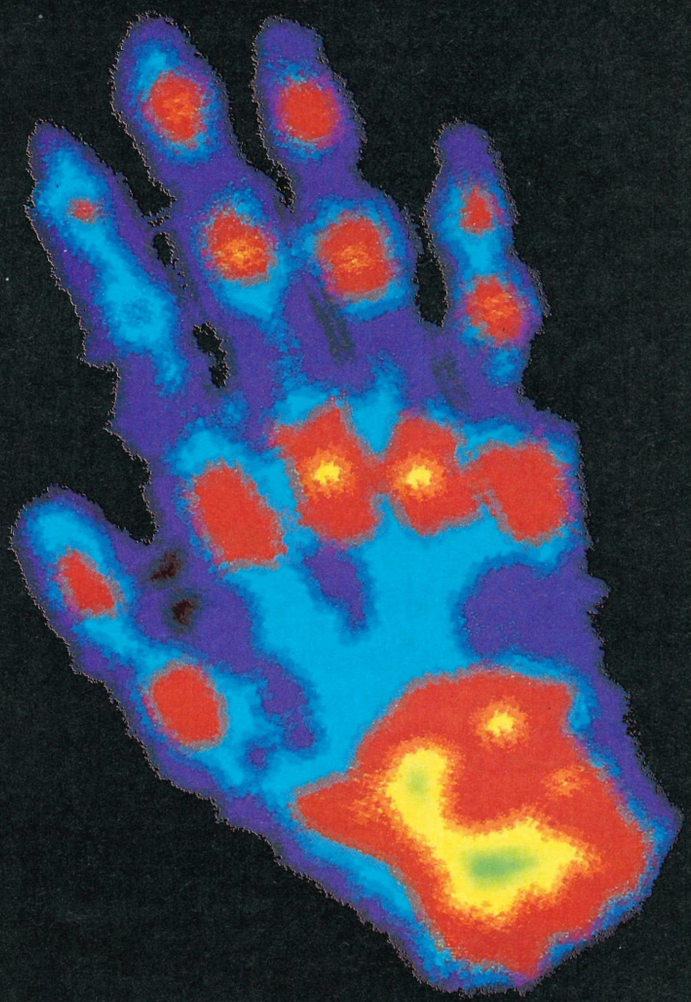
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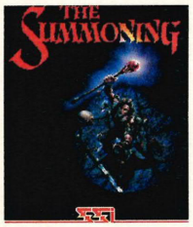
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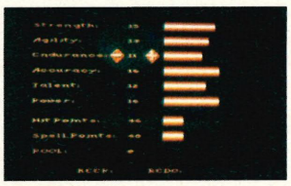
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The BITMAP BROTHERS



Title	**The Summoning**
Publisher	**SSI/US Gold**
Contact	**(021) 652 3388**
Price	**£34.99**

Challenged to fight the good fight for the umpteenth time, you strap on your leatherwear and prepare to enter one more dungeon. But wait! You're not quite ready for the task ahead ...



First of all, you need a spot of character building. During a lengthy introduction sequence to the game, you have to decide whether you're going to be fleet of foot or strong of limb, or both. Decisions, decisions.

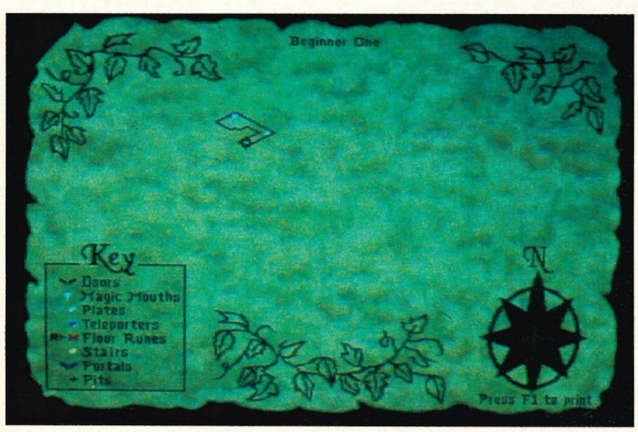
The Summ

With a host of releases under its belt, no one has more experience in RPGs than SSI. Unfortunately, the quality of its game engines doesn't always match the strength in game design

Role-playing games seem to be getting ever bigger and ever more diverse. Programmers have tried just about every viewpoint, from Dungeon Master-style first-person 3D, through overhead-scrolling to isometric 3D, and if a game doesn't have a huge map and dozens of different monsters, spells and objects, it's barely worth releasing.

Quantity is The Summoning's major strength. The long opening introduction sequence, over 40 levels and almost three dozen denizens of the deep, over 100 hours of exploration, combat and magic, and a hefty manual to boot, all contribute to the impression of size. But size, of course, isn't everything.

The introductory screens are beautifully done, featuring animation, great graphics and a neatly-told story (basically, Good hides from Evil, Evil finds out where Good is hiding and launches a surprise attack, Good summons a hero to enter Evil-ville, and Bob's your storyline). This opening also doubles up as a character generator which is quite handy, since not everyone appreciates a long series of pretty pictures.



The auto-map facility is superb. Not only do you get this detailed display, but you can also print it out for future reference.

Character building

The character generator is everything you'd expect from a company with years of experience in RPGs. For a start, even though you can't design your own heads (and, let's face it, some of us can only draw stick-men), there are over 42 different faces to choose from. More than enough, I'd say. You can choose male or female, but the attributes are the same for both: strength, agility, endurance, accuracy, talent and power, all of which influence the skills of weapon-wielding, speed of movement and magic. Enhance one area and you'll suffer in another: for example, if you want your hero to be fleet-footed a high agility score is best, but if you want him to be top in the magic stakes, power and talent are the logical choices. You can, of course, allow the computer to select random attributes or determine them yourself, and, if you don't want to go through the whole process of customising a character, you can just select one of the three preset heroes at the very beginning.

Once your character is chosen, it is trained in one of four weapons skills (edged weapons, clubs and axes, pole arms, or projectiles) and one of four magic classes (wizardry, sorcery, enchantment, or healing). How good you are at either of these disciplines is determined by your



Having custom-forged the person you want to be, Rowena, the head of the sorcerers, whisks you off to the dungeon entrance. At first, it looks as if it's just a solid wall of rock — but, slowly, a crack appears ...



... and so you find yourself in this antechamber. Here you meet Malachi, who offers you so much helpful advice that you feel the need to print it all to a sheet of paper. He also has a bag of gold, which he's not so free with.



Objects can be tricky things to find, unless you turn on the very useful magnify option, which makes them look about twice as large as they actually are. So many items to collect, and so little time to do it ...



Having progressed virtually nowhere significant so far in the game, you come to the entrance to the Labyrinth. Over 40 huge dungeons and mazes lie ahead, with over 30 different kinds of monster. Gulp!



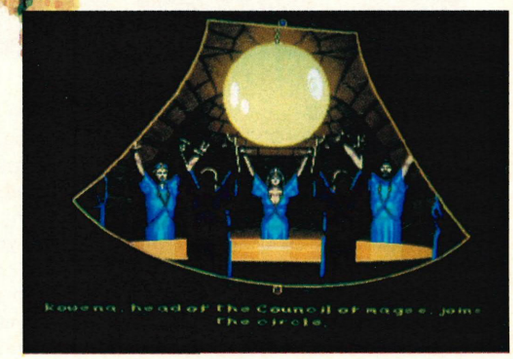
Before you can travel on to the further reaches of the game you must face your first taste of combat. Fortunately this mercenary is not too difficult to beat, but he does provide valuable practice nonetheless.

oning



attributes, though all skills are improved through experience.

One unusual feature about The Summoning is that you only get to control one character. Most games these days feature a band of four or more, but you have to explore on your lonesome. This is fine as far as feeling closer to your on-screen counterpart goes, but it cuts out all the fun of regenerating dead chums, being surrounded by monsters and having to hack your way out, and having party members with radically different skills who need to work as a team if you are to progress.



The introduction sequence is long, innovative and colourful. It also incorporates a character and attribute selection system, and training in the arts of might and magic.

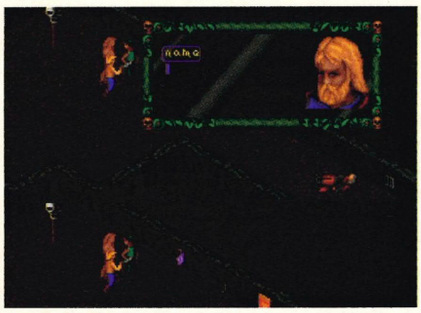
Exploration, even with only one hero, is usually compelling. The display is isometric 3D, which is fine when it works well — but it doesn't here. For a start the graphics can be disappointing, particularly the main character animation, which is jerky, slow and even has occasional glitches. This is particularly bad after the excellence and professionalism of the introduction screens, and suffers in comparison to a game such as Shadowlands (see Alternatively panel). On a more positive note, objects you put in your character's hands are actually displayed on-screen, and there is so much variety in the graphics that you barely notice the blocky movement after a while.

Meeting people

There is a lot to do in the dungeons, but the game system doesn't always let you do it with ease. For example, if you find an object, you have to stand very close to it before picking it up. This is realistic, but not particularly helpful when you're rushing around: there are even occasions when the game says there is nothing to pick up, and you can see the objects at your feet.

By far the most interesting part of wandering around is stumbling across a new character. These can be monsters, or people you can have a decent conversation with. These conversations bring the game to life, using a system of keywords to help you frame questions, as well as hidden keywords which you need intuition and a good memory to discover. However, the best feature is that you can print out every single conversation with every character you encounter — and that means reams of text. It really helps you to get the most from the action.

No RPG would be complete without puzzles and traps. These get increasingly complex as you get deeper into the dungeons, beginning with simple switches, levers, keyholes and pressure plates,



Talking to characters is achieved via a series of dialogue boxes. Subjects of interest are highlighted, and you can ask about any of these that interest you.



Not all of your encounters are completely horrific. This young women seems harmless, but is she?

developing through rolling balls, object holes, and runestone floor spaces, and ending with some pretty devious teleporters, cryptic advice from magic mouths and special floor areas which drain or increase your power points. You have to learn as you go along, and listen to what people say.

Combat is the worst form of trap, particularly when you open a door and find a gang of armed skeletons on the other side. Unfortunately, the combat system isn't as easy to use or interesting as it should be. Every time you hit something, you are given an atmosphere-destroying "Rolled 18, Damage 1" kind of message — though, luckily, you can turn this off. Worse than this is that encounters with creatures much stronger than you involve a lot of running away and recuperating with potions. This is fine in a game like Dungeon Master where the swift first-person perspective is exciting in itself, but in isometric 3D it quickly becomes tedious.

The control system can be clumsy, too: in the heat of battle you can easily find yourself clicking on your character's clothes rather than his hands, which means that, instead of arming himself, your hero strips naked. This isn't a good idea when you're facing a giant poison bubble.

And then there's magic. The idea is great: you have to learn hand gestures to create spells, and make use of 24 rune stones, scrolls, potions and chance encounters with magicians. The execution is not so good: for example, if you want to cast the same spell twice, you have to access the magic screen, create the spell, quit the magic screen, cast the spell, access the magic screen, create another spell, quit the magic screen ... and so on. It would have been better if the program would remeber that you'd learned that particular spell, and made it accessible with a single keypress. That said, the various methods in which you learn about magic and the variety of spells (there are 28 altogether) are an incentive to persist against the awkward system.

Clumsy movement

The Summoning is pretty much a mixed bag. Few people would have any gripes at all with the design: it's rich in objects, characters, magic, combat and puzzles. However, the poor control system and clumsy player movement can be a great hindrance to enjoyment, and the constant switching between displays and menus is a little cumbersome.

There are a host of excellent features, including the option to print conversations and maps, a first-rate, detailed automapper, generally unobtrusive disk-loading, a magnify option which makes objects easier to spot, and a hefty manual which includes a comprehensive bestiary.

Some of the bonus features backfire, though. There are places in the game where you're treated to animation sequences which are slightly too long. The levels are all markedly different in graphics, music and challenge, but there are also occasions on which you can do a lot of walking for very little reward.

The whole appearance of The Summoning promises arcade-quality controls coupled with RPG depth. It undoubtedly delivers on the latter, but is sadly lacking in the former. Even so, despite the faults of the control system and the often awkward, sluggish movement of the characters, it's still compelling to see what's lurking around the next corner, and to pursue the next experience level. If you can handle a game system that's a little rough around the edges, you'll find the action itself very rewarding.

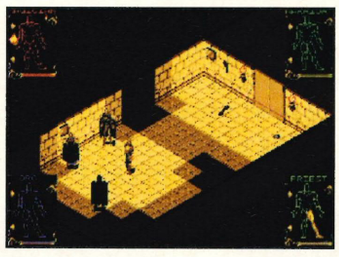
■ ***Gordon Houghton***

Techspec The Summoning comes on one high-density and one low-density 3.5" disk. You only need 3.5Mb of hard disk space to begin with, but SSI recommends that you have at least another 2Mb for saved game files: these increase in size the further you progress, and towards the end of the game you can use up to 800K in a single file. As well as the sound support listed below, the program also caters for Tandy 3-voices for the music; sound effects, however, are only on AdLib (and compatibles) and Sound Blaster. If you want to use the map and text printing function, you'll need to set up your printer to use the full IBM character set.

Disk requirements						
	High density	✓				
	Hard disk only	✓				
	Space taken on hard disk	3.5Mb				
Graphic modes						
	CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
	VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		
Soundboards						
	Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control						
	Joystick	✗	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance						
	Optimum speed	16Mhz				
	Minimum memory	640K				
	Base RAM required	550K				

PCreview 5

Alternatively...



Shadowlands
Domark, £29.99
Teque's stab at the 3D isometric RPG introduces a whole range of innovative features a lighting technique christened 'photoscaping'. The object selection system and poor EGA graphics fail to impress, but are easily forgotten when you consider the excellent game design, the innovative magic system and the variety of puzzle-solving. An excellent, arcade-oriented alternative to The Summoning.



Cadaver
Renegade, £35.99
The Bitmap Brothers' first attempt at role-playing successfully bridges the gap between arcade game and RPG, giving you arcade-style controls over your character (a belligerent dwarf), but pitting you against the kind of classic, convoluted puzzles and horrible creatures you'd normally find in role-playing. The game's depth, atmosphere and (ultimately) difficulty, stand comparison with any RPG.



Legend
Mindscape, £30.99
This is a kind of hybrid of Cadaver and Shadowlands and, again, is more arcade-oriented than The Summoning. It features a multi-character party and icon controls, and has all the classic elements of RPGs. The action takes place over a wilderness which includes one huge dungeon, and plenty of other above-ground locations which provide variety and are essential to your quest.

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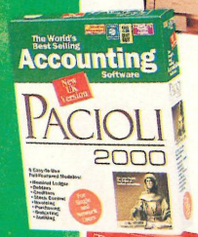
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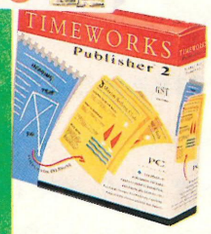
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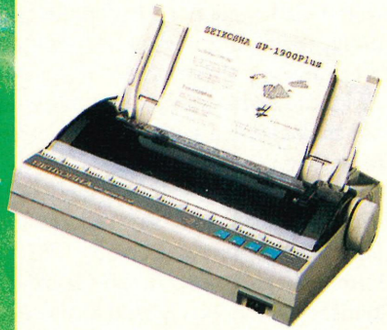
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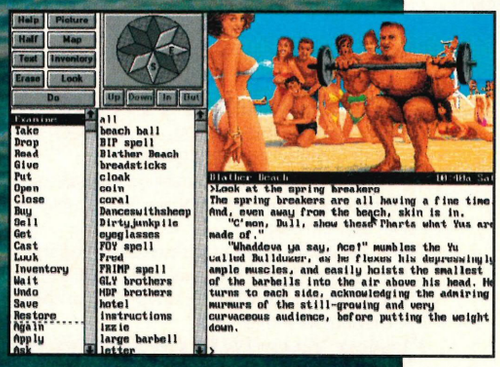
Title	**Spellcasting 301: Spring Break**
Publisher	**Accolade**
Contact	**(081) 877 0880**
Price	**£34.99**

Have you ever noticed how everybody who has any involvement with computer games from programmers, through marketing men, to journalists, has a ridiculous enthusiasm for thinking up a revolutionary new medium, genre, or technology and then pretending, usually with little success, that there are already computer games or games machines that meet this amazing new specification?

Current flavour of the month is Virtual Reality, and for supposedly highly advanced software and hardware technology, it is incredible how many new games claim to operate in a 'stunning virtual reality' mode. When you've seen one or two of these games you wouldn't really be blamed for treating the rest with a heavy dose of scepticism: for 'Virtual Reality' read '3D'.

Spellcasting 301 SPRING *break*

When you attempt to marry old and new styles in an adventure game, you may get an exciting new format, on the other hand you may get the latest Steve Meretzky breeze



A couple of years ago, everybody's favourite term was Interactive Fiction. Lo and behold, within weeks of some idiot first coining the term, adventure games weren't allowed to be called adventure games any more, they had to be interactive fiction. The worst offenders in this respect were the now defunct American team, Infocom, among whose number was the media-styled guru of 'interactive fiction', Steve Meretzky.

If you've been mucking about with PCs for a while, you may be able to remember classic text adventures (sorry, interactive fiction) like Planetfall, The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Zork Zero and Leather Goddesses of Phobos, which has recently been blessed with a graphic (or should that be more graphic) sequel. All of these were skilfully crafted by the imaginative, and most certainly warped, mind of Steve Meretzky.

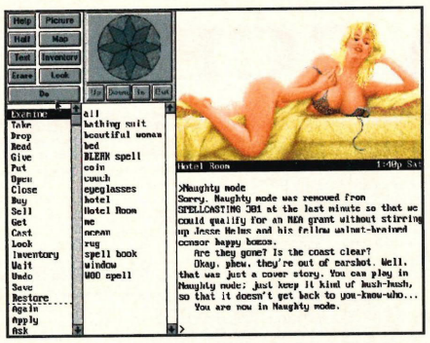
To be fair, those early games did have a hell of a lot more narrative flow than Crowther and Woods' Colossal Caves, the

game which inspired them all, but frankly, they pale into insignificance when compared to the narrative structure that has been achieved by Lucasfilm of late.

The same is true of Meretzky's latest opus, the third in the Spellcasting series. It just doesn't have a narrative flow which comes close to matching, say, Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis. This brings us to a rather sticky point. How can a text based adventure, like Spring Break, be less narrative than a largely text free adventure like Indiana Jones?

One of the biggest problems with the Spellcasting series as a whole is that Meretzky and his design team have created a system which tries to please everybody and probably ends up pleasing nobody, least of all the purists, the people who claim that pure text adventures are best because they free the imagination and provide a greater range of possibilities. They no doubt also believe that life was richer and more rewarding when it was still possible to die of whooping cough in the West.

Meretzky's system also makes a concession to those who like a little visual stimulation, by offering small graphic representations of each location with limited animation. Then there's the point and click interface which allows you to construct sentences with the mouse, the compass and auto-mapping. I'd be lying if I said that this particular hybrid worked.



The game starts in nice mode in which, for the benefit of the easily offended, scenes like this are censored. Good job too, because the uncensored version is ...

... as tame as your nextdoor neighbour's pussy!

Of course, the big attraction of the Spellcasting system is the naughty bits. Ernie Eaglebeak, apprentice wizard and full-time nerd, has plenty of opportunity to ogle buxom beach beauties in bare-as-you-dare bikinis. Those of you looking for a ready source of titillation are going to be disappointed though; in cinematic terms Spring Break would struggle to get more than a PG rating.

The smut and sixth form humour tends to leave you with the feeling that you've just sat through one of those American college sex movies like Porky's or Screwballs – it's definitely not erotic, but it hardly qualifies as soft porn either.

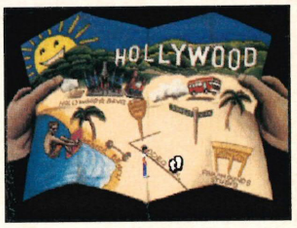
Where Meretzky is at his best is in his self-referential comedy, like the instructions to pirates for manufacturing their own game documentation: 'put your game disk in the disk drive and type FORMAT A:', or the message you get when attempting to pick up a starfish, which '... realising that there are no starfish-less graphics for this location, struggles out of your hand ...'. This is by no means a bad game, if you can get along with the idiosyncratic system, but I wouldn't recommend it wholeheartedly unless you're already a fan.

■ ***Laurence Scotford***

Alternatively...



Leather Goddesses of Phobos 2: Gas Pump Girls Meet the Pulsating Inconvenience from Planet X
Activision, £49.99
Meretzky's earlier text based exercise in sci-fi smut has been updated and expanded here to make use of the graphics and sound capabilities sported by modern PCs. So, if you fancy the idea of lewd larks but prefer gorgeous graphics to titivating typing, then this may well be your thing.



Les Manley: Lost in LA
Accolade, £34.99
Accolade's answer to the infamous Leisure Suit Larry, sleazes his way admirably through this graphic adventure. The artwork is quite impressive, and flesh fanatics will no doubt find the digitised Playmates from Playboy to be the major appeal, although you shouldn't expect more than a few fuzzy pixels where the naughty bits go. The humour isn't really up to Meretzky's standards though.

Techspec

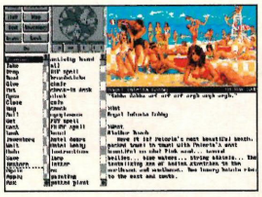
If you really want to ogle those beach babes, then you'll want to take advantage of the SVGA mode on this one. Considering that the system doesn't have to cope with any huge realtime processing tasks, this game demands a high speed and can become sluggish.

Disk requirements						
	High density	✓				
	Hard disk only	✓				
	Space taken on hard disk	6.2Mb				
Graphic modes						
	CGA	✗	EGA	✓	Tandy	✗
	VGA	✓	SVGA	✓		
Soundboards						
	Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control						
	Joystick	✗	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance						
	Optimum speed	16Mhz				
	Minimum memory	640Kb				
	Free RAM required	518Kb				

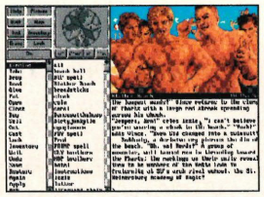
PCreview 6

Two Minutes *to get abreast of a problem*

Hurrah, you and your fraternity have finally arrived at your holiday destination. Now that you've got here safely, you can enjoy getting stuck in at the beach.



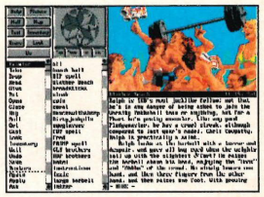
Off to the beach ... and yes, Chick City! It's exactly as you hoped it would be. This looks like its going to be a nerd's paradise.



Oh dear, here come the muscleheads, trying to impress the babes by kicking sand into nerds' faces. Now what are you going to do?



They've challenged you to a weight-lifting competition. There's absolutely no way you'll lift that large barbell unless ...



... you cast a levitation spell on it first. Real neat, huh? A little magic has saved the day, and your spotty face, once again.

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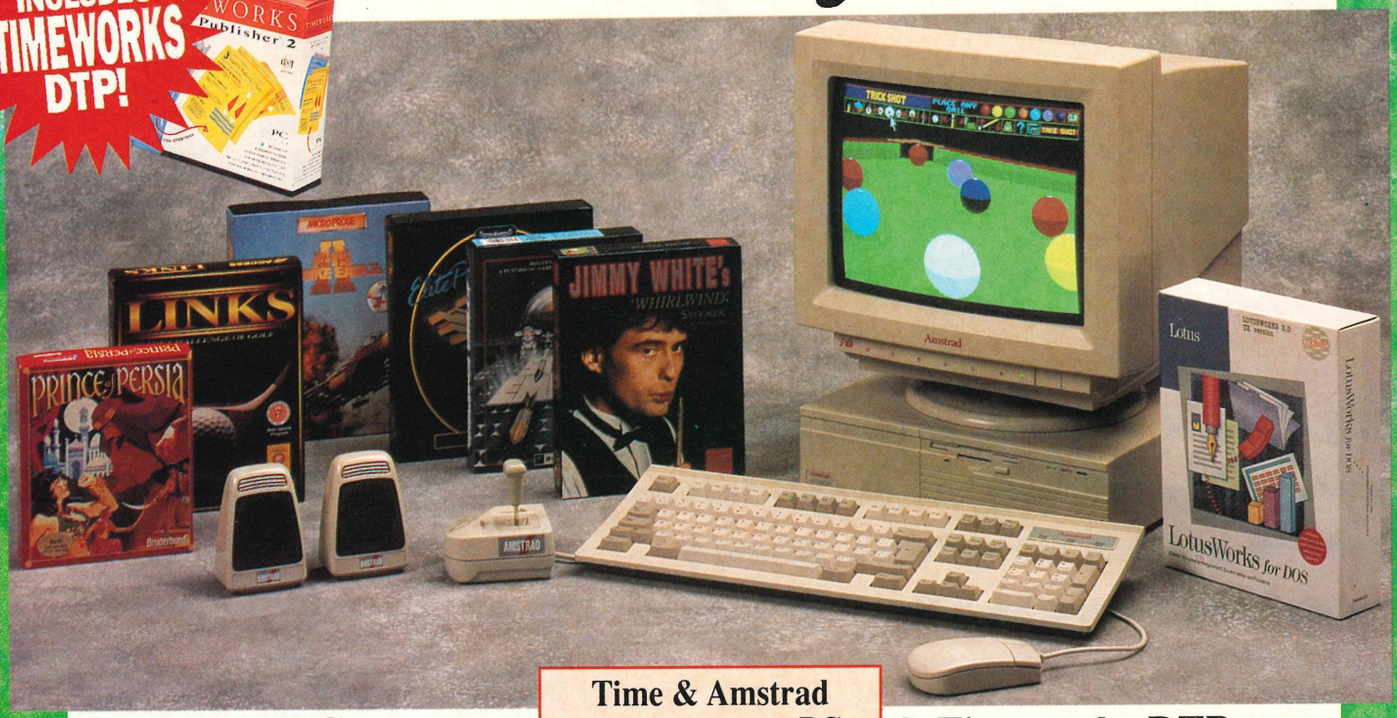
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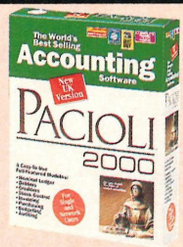
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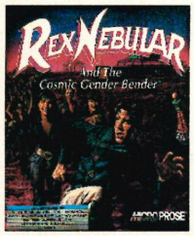
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Title	**Rex Nebular and the Cosmic Gender Bender**
Publisher	**Microprose**
Contact	**(0666) 504326**
Price	**£44.99**

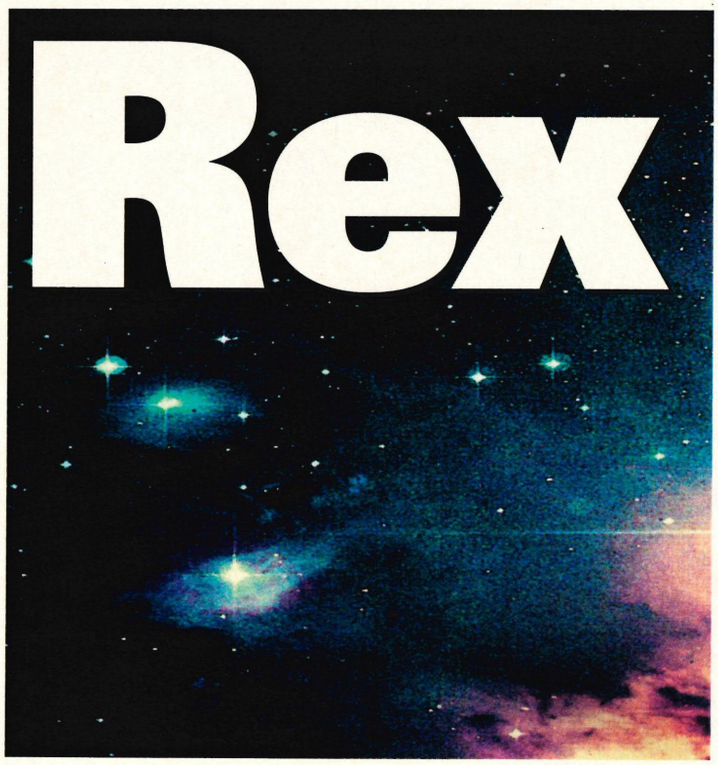
A 15-minute, cinematic opening sequence introduces the vain, bumbling bounty hunter, Rex Nebular. Unusually, the story begins after the action has finished, as Rex tells the prospective purchaser of a rare artefact exactly how he recovered it ...



Rex has been forced to crash-land on the all-female planet of Androgena, and is looking to escape. Most of his actions are controlled using a combination of mouse, single word commands and objects. Note the furry dice.

Rex

Having created all kinds of world-beating simulators, MicroProse has at last turned its hand to graphic adventures. Should Lucasfilm and Sierra be quivering in their shoes?

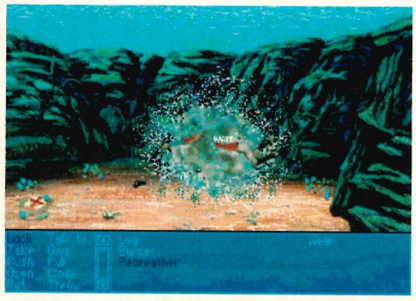


It had to happen. The company famous for its planes, trains and automobiles has finally dipped its toes in the adventure game market. The result is an 'adult' mixture of sex, violence and detective work, all taking place on the remote, women-only planet of Androgyne at the far end of the universe. It's as bizarre as it sounds.

Rex Nebular — whom you might like to imagine as Space Suit Larry Looking for Artefacts — is the hero of the tale. His main aim is to recover a rare, green vase for a client, but there are plenty of distractions along the way, including multiple liaisons with the indigenous inhabitants of Androgyne. If you think this sounds like an excuse for some cheap thrills, you're mistaken. For one thing, the game has a whopping great price-tag, and for another, the sex is pretty harmless. You can make it even more harmless by locking the game into 'nice mode' on installation, but I expect most people will head straight for the 'naughty' level.

So much for the set-up, now for the system. MPS Labs' response to the eternal problem of making a game easy to play but difficult to conquer is MADS (MicroProse Adventure Development System). It claims to have created many ground-breaking techniques, and the superficial results are certainly impressive, if not entirely original. For example, sprite scaling is used widely to show a character 'disappearing' into the distance, and good use is made of special effects, such as increasing volume when you approach an object which is making a lot of noise.

There are many ways to die, and this is just one of them. Swimming too close to a submerged mine, Rex discovers that his torso is not connected to his legs quite as securely as he thought.



Generally, MADS takes on board many of the excellent ideas developed by Lucasfilm and Sierra over the years, and then gives them an extra twist. For example, you have a collection of standard single-word commands at your disposal: look, talk to, take, give, push, pull, open, close, put, and throw. You use them to execute most actions, and by combining them with objects in your inventory you can create sentences — anyone who's played a recent Lucasfilm game will be familiar with this procedure. In addition however, each object has a small, unique list of special commands, such as 'eat', 'read', 'disassemble' or 'smell', which add to the scope of your abilities and increase the game's depth.

Hot spots

Mouse (both left and right buttons are used to good effect) and/or keys are available for interacting with your environment. A combination of both works best. You can also define your own default mouse click, so that with the right button you can go around taking, pushing or opening everything in sight. The fact that the range of key commands isn't quite as wide as in the Lucasfilm games is a minor drawback, but on the whole the controls allow you to solve puzzles and manipulate objects easily enough.

The system works like this: as you move the mouse around, the cursor passes over 'hot spots', and the most obvious action you can perform is revealed in a message at the foot of the screen — 'sit in chair', for example. If you want to use one of



Sitting in his comfy pilot's chair, Rex decides to check on a probe he launched just before crashing. Using the viewscreen, he can't quite believe what he's seeing: a beach, a bathing beauty, and — blast! The probe self-destructs.



Having discovered he's landed underwater, Rex scours the ship for his rebreather. There are plenty of objects just lying around, just waiting to be collected. You never know when that maggoty burger might come in useful.



Success at last! Rex enters the airlock and takes a swim in Androgena's ocean. Unfortunately, every time he tries to surface an irate, anonymous woman attempts to fry him with a laser. Perhaps there's another way up?



Indeed there is — and after much swimming around, and avoiding more multiple death-traps, Rex surfaces inside a cave. After straightening his hair and collecting himself, he decides to explore. Dry land at last!



Dicing with death on occasions too numerous to count, Rex finally encounters his first woman in the village. If he plays his cards right — and talks rough 'n' ready — he'll discover that his adventure has only just begun.

Nebular

and the Cosmic Gender Bender

the other commands, just roll the mouse over to the command box and click on the verb of your choice. Deceptively simple, isn't it?

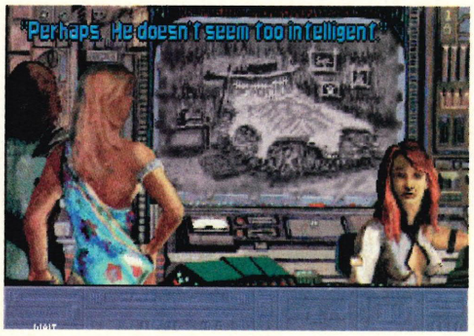
One of the best aspects of the game is that it really is worth trying everything out — particularly on the expert level. You might not think that stuffing a mouldy burger inside a dead fish is the best course of action, but sometimes the odd solutions are the best ...

Rex Nebular's puzzles are neatly structured. Because of the three difficulty levels (novice, advanced and expert), you can tailor the game to match your skills. Experienced players will mock and curse the novice level because it's far too easy, but to anyone who's new to the genre it's just taxing enough to keep you interested. The action is similar whatever level you're playing, but the quality of the puzzles really does change. For example, in the early part of the game you have to get past a purple sea snake guarding an underwater cave. In novice mode all you have to do is toss it a dead fish: it loses all hunger and lets you swim by. In expert mode however, the solution is a lot more devious: the snake is hungrier, so you need to stuff a rotten burger (which you found on board the spacecraft) inside the dead fish, and then toss it to the creature as before. The sea snake dies dramatically, poisoned.

Your reward for completing a puzzle successfully can be anything from access to a new location (you can't leave your space craft until you've found the rebreather), a new object which comes in useful later on, or a further revelation of the plot. MPS Labs has gone to a lot of effort particularly over the ▶



Rex Nebular's travels take him through a large number of different locations, many featuring background animation. This engineering room, in the spacecraft, is just the first example: fire, multiple sparks and a hamster running in a wheel produce an impressively lively effect.



Every so often during the action the game switches to a cut-screen, and reveals a little more of the plot. In this one, a trio of bizarrely-clad women is spying on Rex as he enjoys himself with one of the island women.

text messages, creating a dry sense of humour to match anything that Monkey Island has to offer.

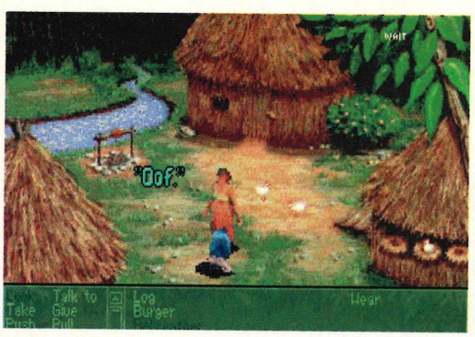
As soon as you start making significant progress in the game, the natives make their appearance. This doesn't happen early enough: you spend a good deal of time at the beginning trying to avoid getting killed by fairly innocuous traps, or wandering around looking for objects. However, once you do find someone to talk to, there's a chance to practise your chat-up lines.

Here again the humour is fairly consistent, partly because of the wide variety of characters. Once you've decided to talk, a list of potential questions and answers is open to you, chosen with the mouse. Unfortunately, if you don't select the right speeches straight off, you're forced to repeat yourself until you get the desired result. This can be tiresome.

Technically, Rex is well up to scratch. The graphics are excellent almost without exception, with particularly smooth character animation — though some of the cut-scenes can be a little rough. There's also plenty of on-screen background animation and, if you have the memory, you can access special effects such as a slick fade between locations, spinning items in your inventory, or animation in the text window. Whether you think any of these things are necessary is up to you — but it's nice to have a choice.

The sound effects and music are well suited to the bizarre plot, but if you disagree you can always turn them off. If you have the right kit, you can also enjoy digitised speech. The graphics are less cartoon-ish than Lucasfilm and Sierra games, and more akin to a 1950s comic book. Coupled with the unusual sound and music, it creates a compelling atmosphere.

This is reinforced by the manual. While it's minimal with the game instructions — there's no waffle to wade through, so you can just get straight into the game — it's well-endowed with technical advice and a logbook. The technical section explains exactly what you need to run all of the game's more advanced functions, tells you how you can speed the game up, and even offers sample Config.sys files to help you free memory. The excellent logbook, written by Steve Meretzky of Leather Goddesses of Phobos fame, introduces Rex in far greater detail than the game can hope to manage, and is particularly well written.



Few of the people you encounter are friendly. Here, a swift kick in Rex's intimate regions is his reward for exploring a little too widely. He's lucky: many islanders would have killed him.

One question still needs to be answered: can Rex die? The short answer is yes. His modes of death are as varied as they are enjoyable to watch: as you guide him through Androgyne he'll be zapped by a laser gun, swallowed by sea-weed, blown up by a mine, sucked dry by a sea snake, and crushed to death by a carnivorous cannibal woman. And that's just for starters. Fortunately, you can save the game as often as you like, and you're often put right back on the very screen you were killed on, so that you can try to progress again using a different technique.

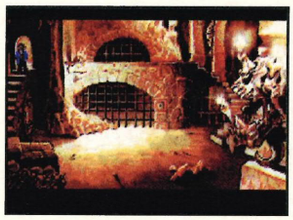
This is typical of the game's overall friendliness. With three difficulty modes it can be as easy or as taxing as you like — but it's always interesting, amusing and compelling. There are still a few faults to be ironed out, both with the MADS interface and the balance of the design. More key commands would have made the controls even more helpful, and there are too many annoying ways of dying or being delayed and not quite as much interaction with characters as I would have liked.

These are only problems if you're so much in awe of Lucasfilm and Sierra that you won't accept any other graphic adventure system. Rex Nebular is an excellent first effort with accomplished graphics and sound and plenty of neat little technical touches. It's not perfect, but who cares? Enjoy it.

■ ***Gordon Houghton***

PC review **8**

Alternatively...



Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge
Lucasfilm, £39.99
Any recent Lucasfilm game is a decent alternative to Rex's sexploits, but Monkey Island's humour and profusion of islands are nearest in tone and territory. The plot — defeating the evil LeChuck — is similar to the original Monkey Island, but this is wider in scope and just as funny. It's a more surreal approach to the genre, and less overtly 'male' than Rex Nebular.



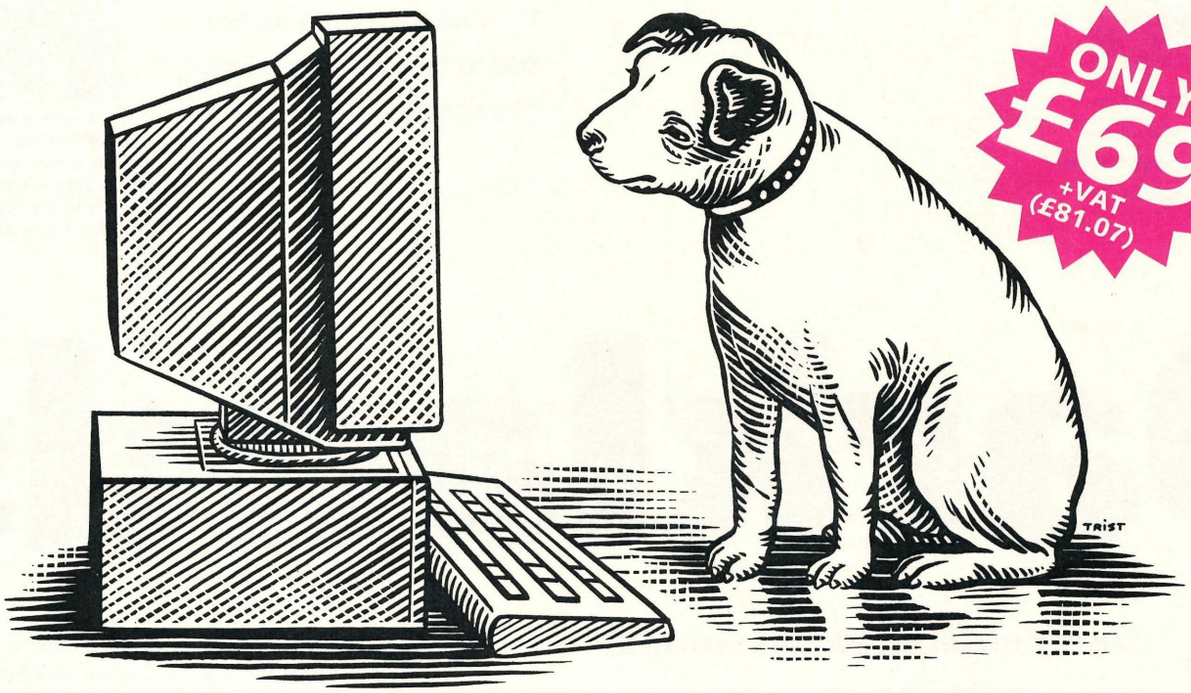
Leisure Suit Larry V
Sierra, £39.99
Larry Laffer's sexual adventures are legendary among adventurers, and the fifth in the series is much like all the others. It has the best graphics of the lot, and it's also easier to play than its four predecessors. The plot here encompasses both the Lounge Lizard's day job (undercover work for the FBI) and his night shift work (attempting to bed his long-time love, Patti). Harmless fun.

Techspec

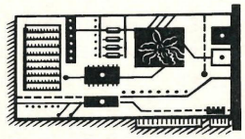
The minimum free RAM needed is 575K, but if you want a spinning inventory and an animated text window you'll need an extra 50K — making optimum performance at around 625K RAM. This is not insurmountable if you have a powerful enough machine with DOS 5.0, but if you haven't ... tough. Keep away from the keyboard during installation: if you accidentally hit a key, you'll have to start all over again — and that means about a 20-minute wait. The minimum recommended speed is 16MHz — the game is too slow at 12MHz. As well as the usual sound cards, Rex also handles Covox and ProAudio Spectrum, with digitised speech available too.

Disk requirements						
	High density	✓				
	Hard disk only	✓				
	Space taken on hard disk	13Mb				
Graphic modes						
	CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
	VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		
Soundboards						
	Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control						
	Joystick	✗	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance						
	Optimum speed	20Mhz				
	Minimum memory	640K				
	Base RAM required	575K				

HIS MASTER'S CHOICE

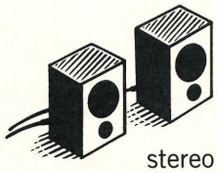


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Title	**Darklands**
Publisher	**MicroProse**
Contact	**(0666) 504326**
Price	**£44.99**

Come and see Germany along the scenic route. How about a little winter trip to find a historic book of prayers?



The party is on the road again to fulfil another task, and earn more in the way of fame and fortune. The Medicis in Heidelberg are willing to pay us five florins if we take the long way to northern Germany.

Darklands

Deutschland, Deutschland, how much darker can you get? Try becoming rich and famous in the German Dark Ages in MicroProse's first RPG

MicroProse's first stab at the role playing market comes along with a bundle of ten high density disks which expand to no less than 18.5 Mb of hard disk space, so the inevitable clear-out is necessary before you can even think about playing the game.

Once installed, you can get going at once with the 'quick start', or knuckle down to creating your own party of characters. Here I felt that the character generation options overdo things somewhat, what with all the different occupations, social background and loads of skills available for each. In the game, this turns out to play only a minor role, so why all the fuss?

Anyway, the team fixed, we set out to get our bearings in this vast terrain (18.5Mb-worth, remember). Our tour began in Dresden, with the evening drawing in. We set off into the gloaming to get a taste of the night life, but instead we got caught by the town guards telling us that it is illegal to wander about by night. Oh, and of course they took all our remaining money. (Don't try to fight the guards or your reputation in that town is down the drain).

How about a little distraction? See how you can manage in a fair duel. There is not much to win here, but who thinks of his bank account when virtue and other higher things are at stake?



As if we hadn't had enough already we were then attacked by some mediaeval muggers, a short fight leaving us relatively unharmed. We took whatever they left behind to sell it at the market the next day. The fighting system allows automatic fights, where the computer takes over character controls, who only become active as soon as they get attacked themselves, otherwise they just stand and stare. Manual fight control is somewhat better, realistic and underscored by appropriate sound effects. After that first eventful night, we went to market to sell the loot. The next evening followed the same routine since, frankly, there doesn't seem to be much else to do on an night out in Dresden.

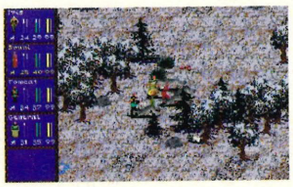
After one week of nightly forays we collected 63 fame points in Dresden, which made us local heroes, and gave us a chance to be allowed to see a local banker. The Medicis offered a task and 14 florins if we would go after a robber knight for them. Since our weaponry skills were now honed by all those nocturnal rampages through the town, we agreed to go. When you travel overland your party is represented as an icon, which is hard to see and even harder to steer correctly. After some incidents

Techspec **Darklands runs on a 286 with at least 12 MHz and 606K of free RAM but a 386 or 486 with 1Mb of free RAM are recommended. You will also need a mouse and 18.5 Mb hard disk space. Sound Blaster compatibles, Roland and internal speakers are supported and provide some nice background tunes. The ProAudio Spectrum provides even more dramatic sound effects.**

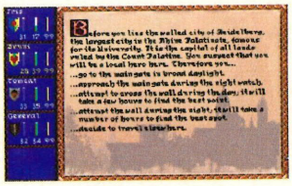
Disk requirements						
	High density				✓	
	Hard disk only				✓	
	Space taken on hard disk				**18.5Mb**	
Graphic modes						
	CGA	✗	**EGA**	✗	**Tandy**	✗
	VGA	✓	**SVGA**	✗		
Soundboards						
	Ad Lib	✓	**Roland**	✓	**Sound Blaster**	✓
Control						
	Joystick	✗	**Keyboard**	✗	**Mouse**	✓
Performance						
	Optimum speed				**12Mhz**	
	Minimum memory				**670K**	
	Base RAM required				**606K**	



What's a decent winter's tale without some decent wolves to whom we are but a little midnight snack? Ah what, enough of that drooling. Let's show them what men of steel are made of.



And there they are, only to get their hides tanned. Should the skins prove any good, we'll have some nice warm boots made from them. But first we need to wallop the marrow out of them.



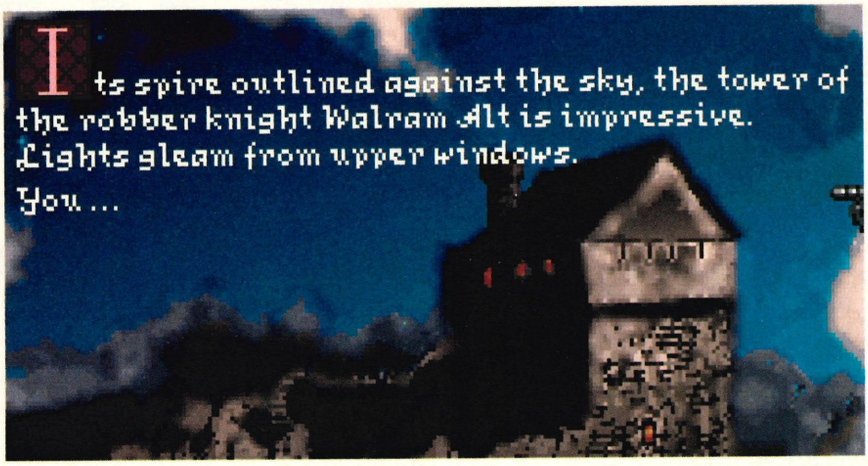
At last we are back from our arduous journey. Heidelberg lies just before us and we are all eager to snuggle into a warm and cosy room at the hostel. Gosh, doesn't it feel like party time?



Thanks, Herr Medici, for paying promptly, and we look forward to being of service again in the future. But please allow us to withdraw now and have a rest from the strenuous journey in the hostel.



If you are tired of showing every dirty scoundrel what your maces are used for, mixing some alchemistic potions can help a lot. They keep the mob at a distance and you can rest your muscles.



Being a robber knight doesn't pay your rent in this game, but every now and then there are some unsatisfactory customers who will hire a bunch of adventurous knights to show you just how strong they are.

with wolves and wild boars, plus a couple more robbers, we reached our destination. The robber knight was not an easy prey and he took the life of two party members. But at last victory was ours and we began the long trip home.

Having received our reward we sold our booty at the market, but held back back the most useful items for ourselves. Then it was back to the hostel to rest a lot and heal our wounds

The rest of the game is more or less the same. You travel from city to city to save somebody else's bacon, gain points for it and try to get as rich and as famous as soon as possible.

There is no special magic system in Darklands. Should some of your characters know enough about alchemy they can brew some special mixtures from sampled or bought ingrediences. Supernatural assistence is available in the form of saints that you know and call upon in prayers. The level of virtue of your characters decides which saints will stand by you. Your generosity towards monasteries, churches, beggars and travelling monks will be taken as especially virtuous and therefore good for those vital character statistics.



Take extra care when brewing new mixtures. You won't be the first to blow up a hostel into flames and ashes. Buy new ingredients at every possible occasion.

Darklands gives the impression of being, graphically at least, a little long in the tooth, especially when you think of the technological wizardry of, say, Ultima Underworld. The least I was expecting were that some the city's graphics reflected some of their famous buildings (the Holsten gate in Lübeck or the Cologne dome in the making), but apart from the city's names nothing separates one from the other. Although MicroProse contracted some real Middle Ages specialists do the research into the life and lore of the times, I felt that this hadn't been followed through in the implementation of the whole game.

Currently, there are two versions of Darklands on sale. The first version I tested still contained a couple of bugs which were supposed to be cured with a now available patch disk. Patched versions should be marked with a sticker on the box. If in doubt, look up the file Darkland.exe on your first Darklands disk. Should it be dated before 31/8/92, write to MicroProse for a patch disk. Unfortunately, our patch disk not only cured some existing bugs, but also created interesting new ones, like not being able to transfer items between characters anymore.

Darklands can be fun to play once you really get in deep, but I found it makes it unnecessarily hard for you to get that far. MicroProse has more games like Darklands are in the planning stages, which should be worth looking at, since the game is promising, even if flawed in this initial implementation.

■ ***Peter-Michael Krojna***

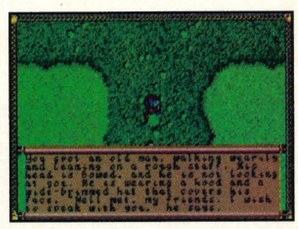
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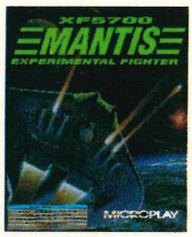
Legend
Mindscape, £30.99

If the messing about with Alchemy in Darklands tickles your fancy, then you might want to consider this follow up to Bloodwych. While not being the best RPG around it is a very competant effort with some nice features like the necessity to mix your own spells with varying results. It's also a lot more visual.



Lord of the Rings II
Interplay, £34.99

Another role-playing game which seeks to inject much more of a narrative flow into the conventional hack and slash formula. Unfortunately Interplay, like MicroProse, haven't quite pulled it off, which is a shame given the richness of the material. Nevertheless, if you're a Tolkein fan, give it a try.



Title	**XF5700 Mantis Experimental Fighter**
Publisher	**Microplay/MicroProse**
Contact	**(0666) 504326**
Price	**£49.99**

XF5700 Mantis Experimental Fighter

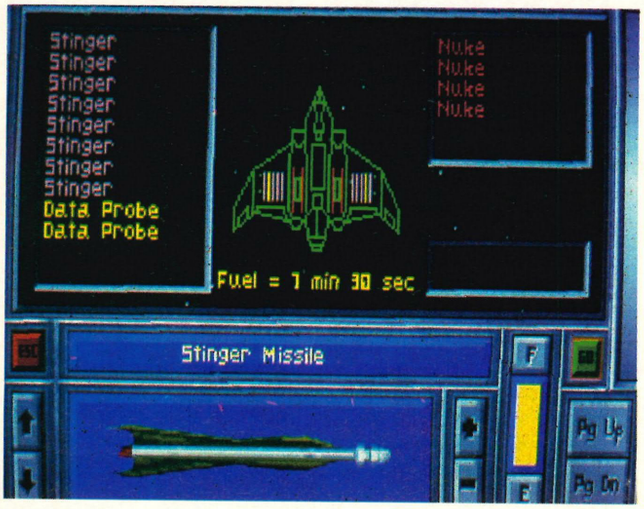
A 3D fight and flight simulator in outer space? It looks as though MicroPlay is boldly going where at least one other has gone before

With the age of high-capacity CD games almost upon us, software publishers seem to be preparing us for the shock by producing increasingly memory-hungry epics which chew up hard disk space faster than the pound can fall against the deutschmark.

One such animal is MicroPlay's Mantis. Although this is based on the ageing Amiga game Warhead (which fit snugly into that machine's half-megabyte of memory), the addition of a 'movie-style' plot and enhanced graphics have swelled this updated version so much that it now makes its entrance on nine high density floppies and overwhelms roughly 19Mb of precious space on your hard drive.

The proceedings are opened by a slightly disjointed introductory animation (augmented by the manual's entertaining opening pages), which not only sets the scene, but also provides a taste of the visual treats on offer. Unfortunately, the potential which this hints at isn't realised when the game is up and running.

If Mantis's style can be said to owe a good deal to Origin's Wing Commander epics, then its content is equally in debt to Ridley Scott's Alien. Both the manual and the intro sequence tell of the Earth's devastation by the Sirians, a race of huge cockroach-like creatures searching for vertebrates in which they can incubate their eggs – the air of déjà vu is even further enhanced when the intro is embellished with a familiar scene where an insect-like alien bursts from a human body.



Numerous weapons can be added to the Mantis' 'hardpoints', although the default armaments seem to be enough to cope with even the most daunting of missions.

The story goes something like this. Having launched an nuclear strike on the Earth's main population centres, the hideous Sirians are now closing in for the kill. The world leaders' response to this threat is to form the almost comically named Fist Of Earth (FOE), a global defence force designed to resist the 'invasion of the bug things' from the vantage point of an orbiting space station, Solbase.

As a veteran of aerial combat, you (call-sign Viper) are assigned to Solbase where you receive your training in the art of flying the experimental Mantis fighter and await your chance to help in the defence of your mother planet.

Techspec

Apart from that paralysing 19Mb of harddisk space required, you also need at least a fast 386SX, and preferably a 386DX, machine to play Mantis, and a high density disk drive from which to install all those floppy disks.

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	**19Mb**

Graphic modes

CGA	✗	**EGA**	✗	**Tandy**	✗
VGA	✓	**SVGA**	✗		

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✓	**Roland**	✓	**Sound Blaster**	✓

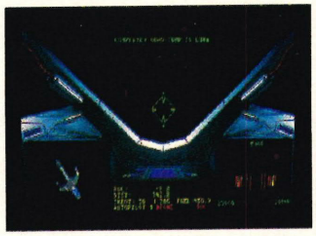
Control

Joystick	✓	**Keyboard**	✓	**Mouse**	✓

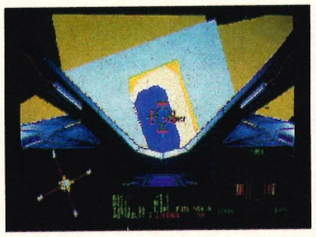
Performance

Optimum speed	**20MHz**
Minimum memory	**640K**
Free RAM required	**<600K**

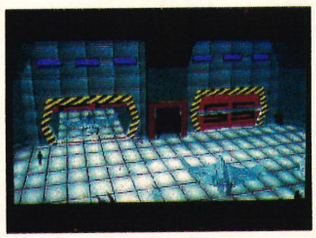
Join the gang in the briefing room, where Colonel Vincent T Seremet delivers the lowdown on your forthcoming mission. There are no strategic or tactical hints offered at this stage, but it's nice to know what you're being asked to blow up.



The head up display provides a wide variety of useful information which can be altered as the situation changes. However, some of its elements are not explained, either in the manual or within the game – for example, what does ROC stand for?



Getting back to Solbase provides the only real challenge within any given mission. Daring pilots should see how close they can fly to the station before pressing L to activate the automatic landing system – well, you've got to do something for kicks!



Between briefing and take-off stands the launch animation, above. This is lovely to look at the first time around, but it doesn't have anything to do with furthering the gameplay and the fact that it never varies will soon have you reaching for the Esc key.

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Except you don't ... receive any training, that is.

With the manual read and the introduction watched, you suddenly find yourself thrown into the deep end of the action without really knowing one end of the Mantis from the other. Okay, so there's an option to use the 'flight simulator', but that's just as confusing as flying the real thing (an art which registers right at the high end of the confusion scale). Luckily, the opening missions are on the easy side: all you have to do is watch a nice animation of your ship's launch, 'quad-jump' to your pre-set destination, launch a couple of guided missiles at harmless opponents and head for home.

Then, with two of these milk runs under your belt (a comfortable five minutes play), you're rewarded for your daring and expertise with a place in FOE's elite squadron ... surely some mistake?

If this was some sort of science fiction comedy vehicle for Jerry Lewis or Norman Wisdom you'd laugh along with this extraordinary turn of events. But no – this plot is presented with strong-jawed seriousness. The powers that be have obviously decided that you *are* a hero, so you'd better get out there and start to act like one.

This was only the first of many inconsistencies thrown up when Mantis attempted to marry its gameplay with the animated interludes. Another notable bloomer cropped up only a couple of missions later: bored with a particularly sense-numbing mission, I quit early and returned home to receive an official reprimand – then, in the very next scene, I found myself done up to the nines and attending an awards ceremony where my duty and diligence were duly rewarded.

Mantis attempts to straddle the two stools of playability and entertaining storytelling – and falls flat between them.

The storyline is far from gripping, while its rigidity makes it irrelevant to what happens in the action sequences (what's more, the fact that you have no choice but to play a strong-jawed hero who returns after successful missions to swap yarns with his beautiful girlfriend might seem a little offputting to certain players – women, for example).

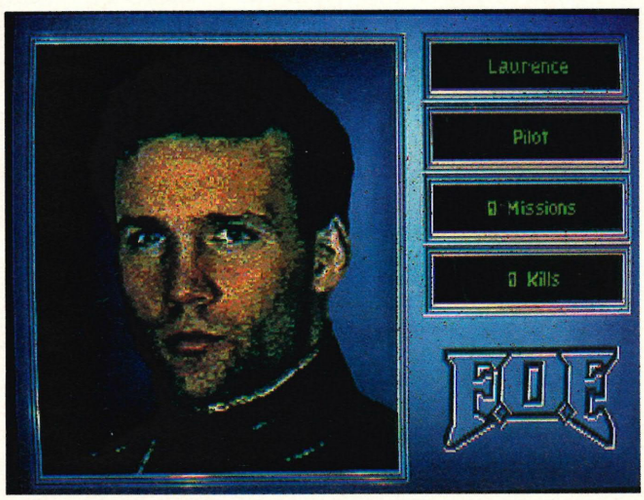
You want to complete a mission? This is exactly how ... press the Enter key half a dozen times to skip the unvarying launch animation. Press Ctrl-Q to quad-jump to your destination. Press 3 to set the auto-pilot. Press Enter a dozen times to fire off your missiles. Press Ctrl-Q again to head back to base. Press 3 to head for Solbase. And finally, press L to initiate the landing sequence.

And that's about it ... anywhere between a dozen and 20 key presses and you can accomplish any mission. And if you get blown to smithereens by the Sirian's firepower? No problem, just select Continue and you're right back at the beginning of the mission to start all over again.

It's not as if there's even a good learning curve to be conquered: control of the ship is lamentably easy using the auto-pilot functions and downright impossible without them.

There's no doubt that a healthy dose of technical competence and imaginative flair have been expended by Mantis' developers – what they seem to have forgotten is that in space no-one can hear you yawn

■ ***Ciarán Brennan***

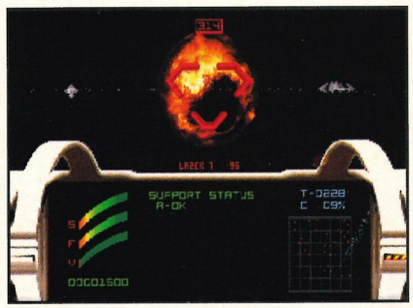


This is you. Hunky Viper, daring pilot and husband to be for beautiful computer engineer Heidi R. Martin. Looking forward to this little bit of role playing, eh girls?

Alternatively...



Wing Commander 2
Origin, £39.99
A continuation of the Wing Commander theme, this offers as much gameplay as the original (ie, more than Mantis) with even more of the inter-mission cinematography and a major advance in the field of digitised speech. Be warned, this is definitely one for the well-equipped PC gamer.



Epic
Ocean, £34.99
The title of Ocean's addition to the cinematic space fighter stable was appropriate not only because of the game's scope, but also because of the length of time it took to complete. Unfortunately, the wait was hardly worth it, as it suffers from many of the same faults as Mantis.

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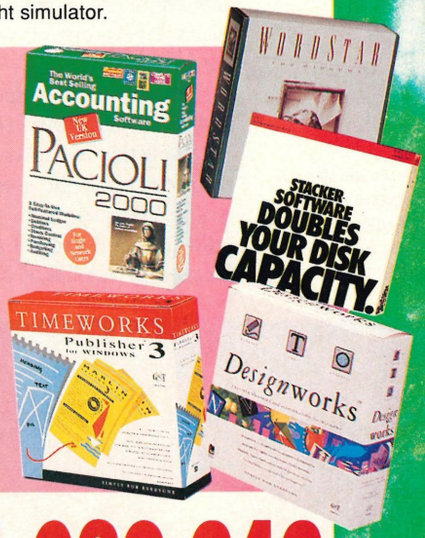
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Title	**Inca**
Publisher	**Coktel Vision/Digital Intergration**
Contact	**(0276) 684959**
Price	**£44.99**

One of the first things you'll have to get used to in Inca is how to fight in space. Here we see a typical battle from an early section of the game.



You start by watching the animated take-off sequence. The Tumi (your ship) lifts from the launch pad and soars effortlessly out into the wild black yonder. The graphics are astounding as the light shines from the golden surface of your ship.

A new leaf and some brand new technology for a French company that has so far had a pretty low profile. Coktel Vision pulls out all the stops in its search for an ancient tribe

Inca

A turning point, it would seem, is the order of the day for French development house Coktel Vision. Having yet to make a really major impact outside their own country (aside from the popular ADI educational range, distributed through Europress), it is now about to hit us big time with four potentially stunning products. The cartoon capers of Gobliins (sic) 2, the graphic quality of Ween and the stunning video images of Doralice will be covered in detail in later issues. For the moment we have Inca, a game that combines Wing Commander, Ultima Underworld and an ancient South American tribe.

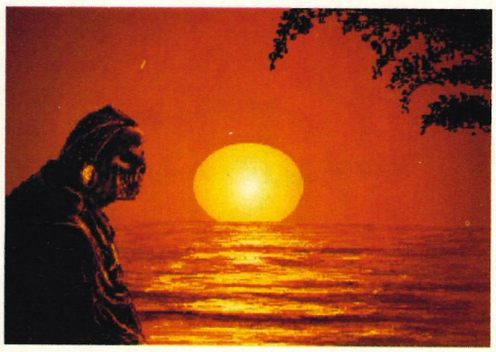
Put to shame

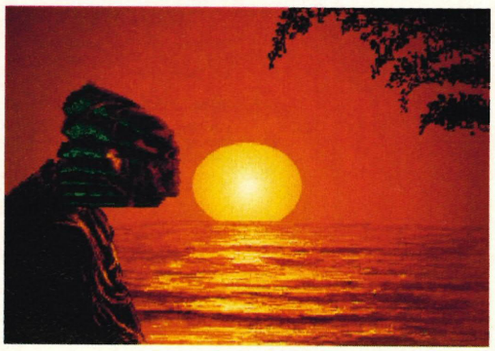
Coktel Vision's previous titles — most notably Gobliins and Fascination — have proved that although the actual quality of gameplay left something to be desired, what was being done from a technical point of view was, to say the least, astounding. Two games in particular, AGE and ESS Mega had graphics that easily put anything the Americans were, and are, doing to shame.

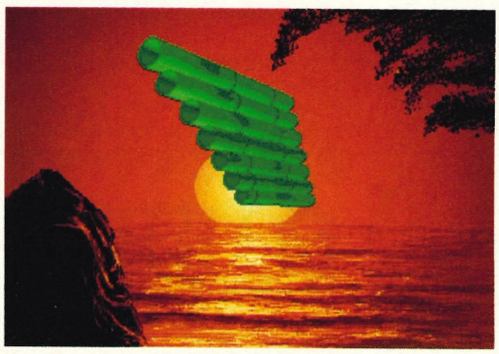
What Inca is supposed to herald for the rapidly growing developers is the start of a new line of games, which retain and improve upon the graphic quality we've come to expect from the continent and add to it a degree of gameplaying skill and enjoyment that can walk up to the likes of Wing Commander or Monkey Island and poke them firmly in the eye with a pointed stick. Well, while the gameplay in Inca is somewhat better than you'd expect, the eyes of the aforementioned games are still pretty safe in their sockets.

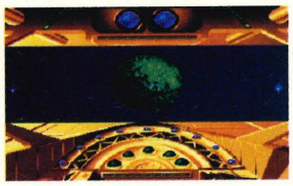
Not surprisingly, Inca is based around the legends, customs and prophecies of the extinct Peruvian civilisation and somehow manages to turn it into an all-action space combat and shoot 'em up. Actually the whole Inca mythology is very detailed and appears to have been extremely well researched. Your spaceship for instance is called a Tumi, the Inca name for a ceremonial dagger, and your ship is exactly the same shape as the real thing. Owners of Sound Blasters will be treated to a digitised Inca descendant

Here we see the impressive morphing technology at work as the old man turns into a set of pipes.

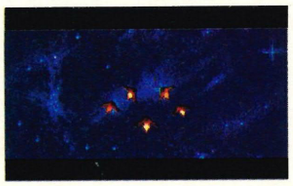








Your cockpit shows everything from front and back radar to shields and gun temperature (it shuts down when it gets too hot). The small gems indicate life points. Lose all nine and you'll lose one of the five overall lives.



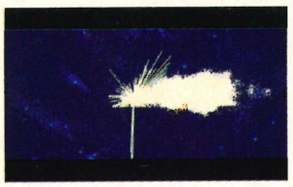
Approach the planet and you'll alert the bad guys who race off to intercept you. The number of enemy ships is always five, but the amount of attack waves depends on how far into the game you've reached.



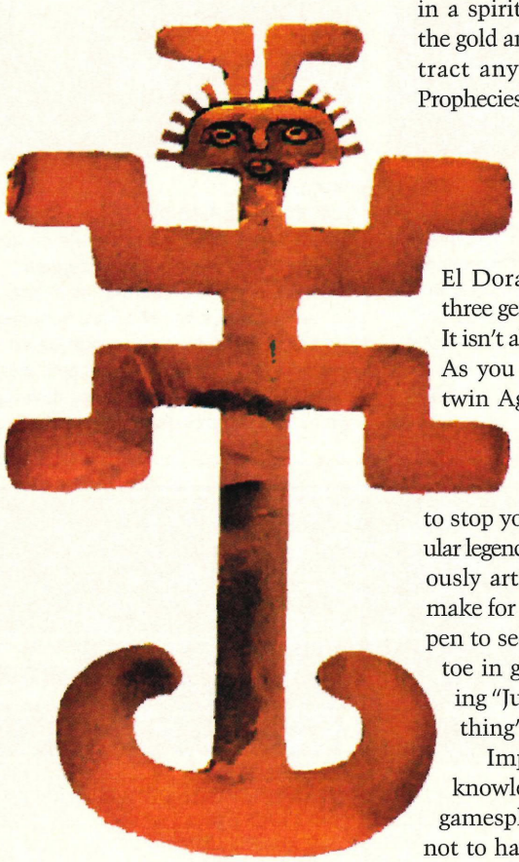
Mid-battle and your on-board computer locks on to the nearest potential target. The numbers in the small box indicate distance as your guns are only effective if the target is closer than five kilometres.



Get one in your sights, let a loose a volley of cannon fire and all being well, it should explode in a white ball of smoke. It will probably take a couple of passes to destroy the things but once you're used to things they're not too hard.



Kill all five of the enemy ships and you're treated to aview of the last one exploding. Your lasers rake along its hull and it turns into a plume of smoke. Then it's back to the planet and on for a flight along the trenches à la Star Wars.



speaking to you in the real Incan language across the intro sequence. I understand that the chief designer of the game, Yannick Chosse, spent a considerable amount of time in South America finding out whatever he could about the subject. Ah, if only all game designers worked so hard for a game.

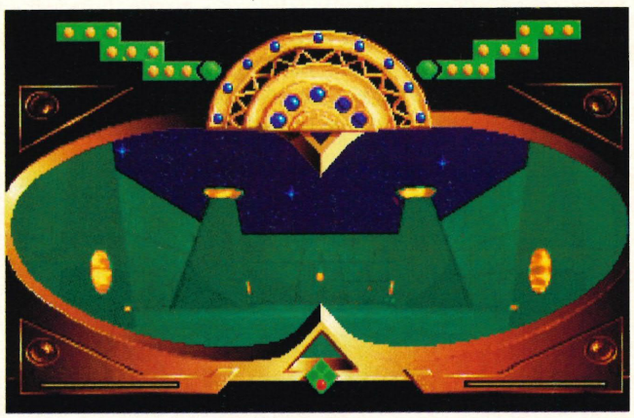
Waiting for El Dorado

The upshot of all this studious research and enthusiastic designing is that you are the chosen one (naturally), foretold in legends as he who will bring about the glory of the Incan nation once again. Late in the 16th century the last of the Incas on the shores of Lake Titicaca hid the final remnants of the once mighty empire in a spiritual ceremony, leaving behind the gold and the material treasures to distract any would-be treasure hunters. Prophecies foretold that one day El Dorado (the Golden) would come and regain the powers, bringing about the might of the empire once more.

As you've guessed, you are El Dorado and you have to find the three gems of power to wake the nation. It isn't all a simple treasure hunt, though. As you were formed so was your evil twin Aguirre who is also out to gain the power for his own dastardly ends. Hence the combat sections of the game, his forces sent to stop you. Now apparently this particular legend isn't too far from the truth (obviously artistic licence has to be used to make for a playable game), so if you happen to see anyone covered from head to toe in gold and who goes around saying "Just call me El", you know something's up.

Implementing all of this ancient knowledge into a format suitable for gamesplayers across the world appears not to have been an easy task and a lot of the time you can't help but wonder as to exactly what is going on, who you actually are or even when and where all of this action is taking place. Possibly the closest comparison I can make is that it is like playing a hybrid of the action of Wing Commander and the storylines of Twin Peaks.

The intro sequence is where you first see just how good Coktel Vision's graphic technology is. The old man sitting by the lake slowly turns into a withered husk of a body, then polymorphs into an ancient Incan flute which darts off to its resting place. Coktel Vision's PR department has been keen to inform me that the graphic techniques used are comparable to those seen in films and indeed, watching one object smoothly transform into another is certainly very reminiscent of the effects seen in films like The Abyss and Terminator 2 (although obviously not quite on the same scale).



The maze sections involve Ultima Underworld style scrolling with a slight lack of freedom. Hunting you throughout the maze are Aguirre's henchmen.

Is Inca enjoyable to play, though? Is there really much of a game behind the graphics? The short answer is yes, on the whole Inca is actually a pretty enjoyable game although it is glaringly obvious at times where things could have ▶

Techspec Inca isn't particularly demanding, despite its amazing technology. Interestingly enough the only major sound board it doesn't support is the Roland — simply because it hasn't been officially released in France yet!

Disk requirements						
	High density	✓				
	Hard disk only	✓				
	Space taken on hard disk	16.5Mb				
Graphic modes						
	CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
	VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		
Soundboards						
	Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✗	Sound Blaster	✓
Control						
	Joystick	✗	Keyboard	✗	Mouse	✓
Performance						
	Optimum speed	20MHz				
	Minimum memory	640K				
	Base RAM required	540K				

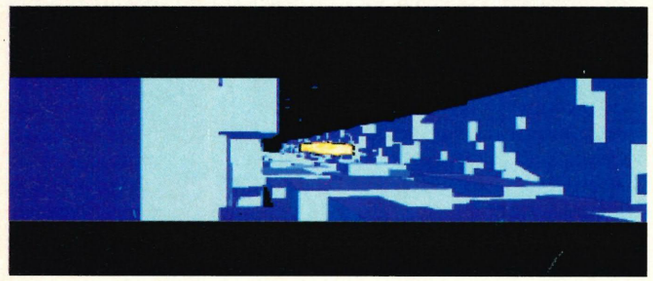
PCreview 8

been so much better. But then why judge a game on what it isn't as opposed to what it is? The space combat sections are fun, challenging and almost as playable as American fare , while the maze sections are interesting, if not up to the standard of Ultima Underworld. The puzzle element is where things become a trifle jejune. Your eternal guide provides some clue as to what is going on but sometimes the solutions are obscure.

Like Wing Commander, like Midwinter, like The 7th Guest, Inca is very much the starting point for a new style of game and a new style of programming. While I do have my reservations about the lasting appeal of this particular product, from a technical point of view Inca is superb. Having been lucky enough to see how Coktel Vision is advancing this technology in its future products it would seem to me that Europe could have an answer to the development skills of Origin.

As to whether I would recommend the actual purchase of Inca, it depends on whether you are interested in owning what is undoubtedly the beginning of a rewarding career in computer gaming software. At times Inca causes you to flop back in your seat with a huge sigh of overwhelming awe. Other times you are sat on the edge of your seat, brow a-furrowed with perplexity and puzzlement. It's your decision: do you want a pleasurable but slightly limited experience or can you wait for a more substantial sequel?

■ ***Paul Presley***



Apart from battling the bad guys in space you also get to fly along a Star Wars style trench in a race to beat the others to the end before they can seal the access hole.

Alternatively...



Wing Commander 2
Origin, £39.99
Inca has similarities in certain sections of the game to things like Wing Commander. Naturally the space combat sections in Wing Commander are more detailed and more rewarding, but Inca scores in that it allows the player to do different things (such as fly along trenches and explore mazes).



Fascination
Coktel Vision, £49.99
Adventure set in the sleazy world of Jackie Collins novels. Heroine Doralice gets mixed up in a tale of murder, espionage and sultry goings-on. The intro sequence had some of the best video digitisation ever on a PC. The rest of the game wasn't so hot but it's interesting to see how technology has progressed from here to Inca.

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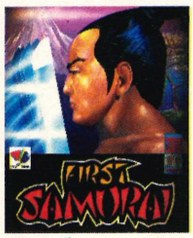
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Title	**First Samurai**
Publisher	**Ubisoft**
Contact	**(081) 343 9055**
Price	**£30.99**

One of the more mystical aspects of First Samurai is the use of magical bells to summon aid from the great wizard. Here we show you a practical use.

First

Managing to rise from the ashes of the Mirrorsoft debacle comes Mev Dinc's smarter-than-your-average arcade game. Oriental excitement and magical malarkey as we travel through time in pursuit of a demon

When I was reviewing games on the Amiga and Atari ST machines a year or so ago, I had the rather pleasant task of testing First Samurai, a platform-cum-beat 'em up with many good ideas and a fair amount of hidden depth. Unfortunately it was released on the Image Works label, an affiliate of the ill-fated Mirrorsoft. Well, as we all know, Mirrorsoft went under and after only three or four weeks on the shelves, First Samurai was hurled into obscurity and a PC version never looked like it was going to appear. Now, however, it has made the conversion, after all, thanks to the folks at Ubisoft who seem to know a good game to sign up when they see one. And, boy, is this a good game.

First Samurai's biggest plus is that it goes beyond the realms of ordinary arcade scrolling beat 'em ups. Yes, you walk left to right across various screens, attacking and being attacked by various monsters/villains/ne'er do wells. Yes, you have plenty of hacking, slashing, throwing and rotating weapons at your disposal. Yes, the levels go through different stages but remain essentially the same game on each.

Somehow, thankfully, First Samurai just manages to gel it all together into a game that feels like it gives you more and therefore hooks you to it with all the attraction of a worm superglued to a fish-hook.



The intro sequence depicts the sorrowful tale of the malevolent demon and the young samurai bent on revenge for his master's death.

Dozens of moves

I don't know if anyone remembers those 8-bit martial arts classics Way of the Exploding Fist and International Karate Plus, or even the more up to date Budokan. The key to the success of these games was having dozens of moves using different combinations of joystick pushes. The same principle applies here, only now it combines it with a scrolling platform romp through plenty of very graphically detailed levels.

First Samurai is steeped in Oriental occultism, or at any rate a very good attempt at recreating it. Whether any of the mystical devices and ideas used were based on real fact or not is debatable, but it passes itself off with enough authenticity not to matter.

Take your magical sword, for instance. You start the game unarmed and with little magic energy. Every enemy you destroy adds a little to your energy until you have enough to be able to wield said sword. Certainly very mystical and spiritual, but authentic? Who really cares?

One very nice idea is the ability to hop back and forth between levels at will. Let's say you make it on to level

Techspec **First Samurai isn't particularly taxing on your hardware, although don't expect to play it if you don't have VGA. It will support monochrome VGA displays but that's the lowest.**

Disk requirements

High density	✗
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	1.5Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		

Soundboards

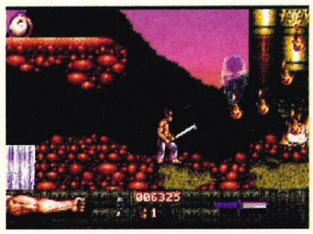
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✗	Sound Blaster	✓

Control

Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✗

Performance

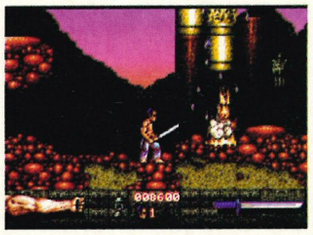
Optimum speed	20MHz
Minimum memory	640K
Free RAM required	590K



An impassable fire spouting flames. How ever shall we pass? Actually, you could just walk through it but you'd lose a fair amount of energy doing so. Look, as we approach, we see a ghostly wizard appears



Luckily we are carrying this fine example of a magical ringing device. To use the bell to summon the wizard would be prudent. Time for a spot of devout praying (while holding the fire button down).



Hark! The wizard doth appear and douse the flames with his watering can, dampening their spirits. You'll still be burnt if you walk into the fire but jumping over the flames is now easier due to their lack of ferocity.



And so we continue to fight another fight, safe in the knowledge that our wizard chum is always on hand to help us through times of great peril. Always on hand to — whoops! Didn't see that land mine sitting there.

Samurai

three by the skin of your teeth, short of necessary energy and life to progress much further. Simply hop back to the last level, beat up a few lesser bad guys, increase your energy — maybe getting an extra life or two — and carry on.

Sound of silence

One area of the game that hasn't quite made a successful translation, despite the fact that the Sound Blaster could quite easily have pulled it off, are the sound effects. In the original versions there were wonderful chanting, ghostly, harmonic noises emanating from the computer's speaker units every time you did something on the screen. This audio delight is sadly missing from the PC version and so, unfortunately, is a major part of the game's atmosphere and appeal. Even just one "Hallelujah" would have appeased this young reviewer.

What else is wrong with it? Well, the joystick controls are slightly awkward and not nearly as instinctive as the original versions. That was always the big thing about First Samurai: if you wanted to perform a move on the screen, you'd more or less move the joystick in the manner that felt right and it would usually work. However, PC joysticks are fiddly beasts at the best of times and never quite work the way you want them to. It takes a little while to get over the initial irritations but you can live with them eventually.

You may find that the longer you play the game the less enthused you become by it all. After a while, the levels all start to look a bit similar and the original ideas that littered the first few areas start to become repetitive. But never does it become enough to totally turn you away from the game and no matter how much you think it's all starting to pale, there's usually something coming up just to prove you wrong.

At times, First Samurai comes across as little more than an up-market console game, and to a certain extent that's a pretty fair description. All the crucial elements of console-dom are there, plenty of sprites, plenty of weapons, and so on, but this isn't necessarily a bad thing. In between all our globally-important strategy games and flight simulations that are so authenticthat they come with their own parachutes, it often does you good to unwind with a little out and out mayhem. Especially when it's as enjoyable as this.

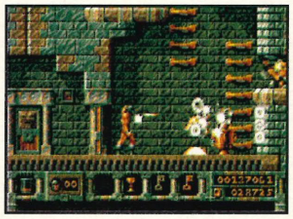
■ ***Paul Presley***



The later levels take you out of the forest and into a modern city, full of modern hooligans, punks and other assorted villainous types.

PCreview 7

Alternatively...



Gods
Renegade, £34.99
Considered possibly the best arcade game on the PC, the Bitmap Brothers' platform jumping beat 'em up has everything necessary for addictive, playable action. Excellent graphics, a thumping soundtrack, and huge muscular men with axes. As for playability, you won't be disappointed.



Golden Axe
Virgin, £29.99
Golden Axe is your more typical arcade slugfest with creatures galore and all sorts of ways of polishing them off. As arcade conversions go, it's not bad, but then, the coin-op was never anything special. Comparing Golden Axe to First Samurai is like comparing something standard to something pretty good indeed.



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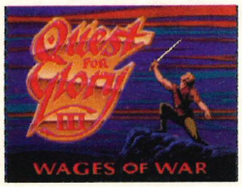
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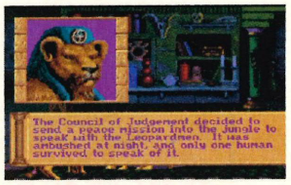
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Title	**Quest for Glory III- Wages of War**
Publisher	**Sierra On Line**
Contact	**(0734) 303171**
Price	**£39.99**

Much of the action takes place in the wilderness, but before you can venture out there you need to make some preparations in the city.



Spend a lot of time talking to characters you meet. You learn about the task ahead, get useful tips to help you survive, and develop your communication skills, thus getting more information when you talk to them again later.

Quest for Glory

Wages of War

In the beginning was the adventure, with the emphasis on atmosphere and story. Then came the role-playing game, with action and blood-letting. When would we get a game with the best of both worlds?

I've never been schizophrenic enough to get maximum enjoyment out of multi-part role-playing games. It's hard enough to suspend your disbelief and become a mighty-thewed warrior, weasel-like thief or imperious magic-user, without having to assume four ormore of these exotic personalities. So I quickly warmed to Sierra's Quest for Glory III for its single-person viewpoint (and then cooled slightly when it enforced a men-only policy: in this game heroines are out, although many of the other key characters are female). I also welcomed the out-of-body graphics, long familiar from Sierra's other adventure games (like the King'sQuest and Police Quest series) but somewhat overwhelmed recently by the through-the-eyes viewpoint that was such a breakthrough in RPGs like the original Dungeon Master and Eye of the Beholder. Sierra's movie-like perspective at least lets you see more of your surroundings, and is more convincing at creating the movie experience than the first-person approach is at creating the feeling of "really being there".

Quest for Glory's combat system is one of the disappointments. Landing blows, dodging and parrying are — literally — hit and miss affairs. With around half the monsters, you have no option but to run away.

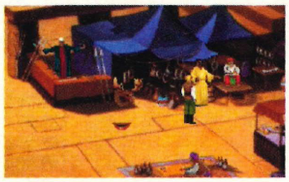


Conan the Childminder

Aside from these minor technicalities of the genre, what I really liked about QFG III was the storyline. It's not just a quest (although you do have to recover some sacred objects), and it's not just a matter of defeating the baddies (to begin with, you don't know who the baddies are). In Quest for Glory II, you defeated a demon with the help of two friends. Now, the peoples of those friends are poised for war with a third nation. One of their daughters is missing and there are hints that a demon is about (apparently you can't keep a bad demon down).

Like a one-man United Nations task force, your mission is to bring peace to this troubled corner of the globe. Along the way you must find the daughter, recover the objects, promote tolerance and harmony, and thwart the evil genius behind this mess. And if all this sounds too much like Conan the Childminder, there are a satisfying number of giant ants, flying cobras and other mutant monsters on which you are encouraged to practise swordplay and zap spells. But in QGIII the emphasis is far more on deduction and investigation than on combat. You have to talk to everyone, snoop around, ask questions — even try a little bribery and corruption, and flirting with servant girls — to try to get a handle on what's really going on.

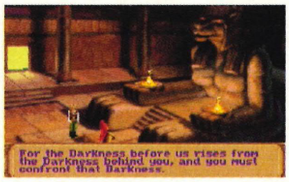
Anyone familiar with Sierra's adventures — King's Quest started the company, Space Quest, Leisure Suit Larry and Police Quest continued and developed the style — will feel instantly at home in Quest



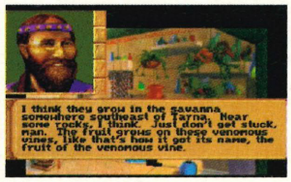
A visit to the bazaar is critical – what you buy depends on your character. Whatever role you play, you'll want to visit the junk dealers to buy a tinderbox, and you might stock up on food and gifts for bribery.



Before you can buy anything, you have to get some local currency. On your first visit, you'll witness a theft. In any event you'll be called to appear at his trial, but trying to catch him will improve your standing with the locals.



While in the city, a visit to the temple is worthwhile. You learn that your past — the defeat of the demon in QFGII — has a bearing on the present. Besides, it's not every day you get to hear a giant statue talking.



Whatever you do, don't miss the apothecary. He not only sells things you'll need, but actually has a way to defeat the demon. First, though, you have to collect the ingredients for the potion, a job that will occupy most of the game.



Once in the wilderness, you won't live long without a campfire at night — it scares some monsters away. But you can't make a fire without a tinderbox, so if you forgot to buy one, it's back to the bazaar to stock up.

III

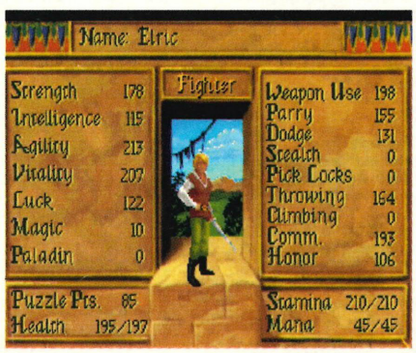
for Glory. The obvious change is the introduction of role-playing elements. There are three character types to choose from: fighter, magician and thief, with some limited scope for mixing classes (fighters can be a bit stealthy, or thieves can dabble in magic, for example). Or you can import your hero from QFG II.

A screen of statistics measures your character's abilities. For example, fighters are strong and skilled in the use of weapons, but tend towards the stupid. Thieves are sneaky, and skilled in lock-picking and climbing walls, but lack a bit in the bravery and honesty departments. Magicians are intelligent, but a touch feeble. You can develop skills by using them, or practising, but there are limits. As the manual correctly points out, you can't develop a skill you don't have — so if your warrior has no magic skills, he can't, under any circumstances, learn to cast spells. Where the derivation from adventuring is really apparent is how the emphasis is shifted from monster-bashing. And in the Sierra tradition, the puzzle-solving required is much more story-driven than the often-obscure puzzles you were required to fathom in games like Zork or Colossal Cave.

So, high marks for concept and plot. Unfortunately, QGIII gets some penalty points for execution. Many of the basics are well done. The conversations may be menu-based, but they are far in advance of the "tell me your name" and "tell me about the rune" level of the early Ultima games, for example. The character animation dubiously claims to be based on actual video sequences (in which case our hero must have had an accident with his dagger, given his painful, stilted walk) but the backdrops and detailed scenery are beautifully drawn, and the game makes excellent use of VGA's palette-changing to present dramatic nightfalls and candlelit interiors. And the presentation is crowned by a lengthy and original musical score that even sounds good through the PC's internal speaker and is a delight to the ears through the supported soundboards.

Combat control

Then there are the low points. Having commended the intellectual challenges, I feel compelled to say that I enjoy a bit of hack-and-slay as much as the next armchair barbarian and, sadly, the combat system in QFG III sucks. The viewpoint switches to a dramatic close-up of the action, and you are supposed to control your hero in real-time. Thrusts, parries, overhead blows and sideways dodging are all supposed to be possible, but character control is so slow and jerky that it boils down to sheer luck and your character having sufficient hit points to bore your opponent to death. Although you gain extra skill points for weapon use and dodging if you vanquish the enemy, you quickly discover that you earn those anyway if you fiddle about for a bit and then run away. Successfully running away also boosts your luck.



When creating your character, most statistics are preset according to whether you choose fighter, thief or magic user. You get an extra 50 points to allocate where you wish — but there are penalty points for increasing skills that have no points to begin with. For example, it takes 30 of your 50 bonus points to give a fighter 10 magic points. Using and practising skills earns extra points — but only if you have some points to begin with. This fighter, for example, will never improve at lock-picking.

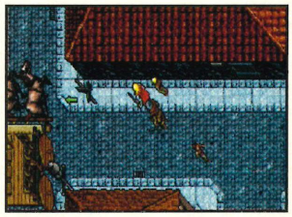
An additional problem is the open nature of the game. So far as possible, Sierra has tried to remove the constraints normally associated with adventures and role-playing games. To a greater degree than normal, you are master of your own destiny and there is no single sequence of actions you must make in order to win. In itself, this is welcome but it does mean that — if you want to avoid a boringly conservative approach — you often find yourself in combat with creatures you can't hope to defeat. Giant ants are fairly easy, and flying cobras aren't a problem if you have a good supply of anti-poison pills. But demon worms ... run away, run away. It's not a game guaranteed to put a swagger in a hero's stride.

Then there are problems with character movement. The game provides a psuedo-3D world and your character can

Alternatively...



Ultima Underworld
Origin, £39.99
Stunning graphics, and — like QFG III — with a single character to control. The viewpoint is 'through the eyes' and is probably as close as you can get so far to the experience of being there. Unfortunately, you'll need a fast 386 machine with plenty of memory to experience it at its best.



The Ultima series
Origin, price varies
Ultimas I to VII created and developed many of the themes now common to the RPG genre. There's a good deal of puzzle solving, and talking to other characters is essential. With the exception of the most recent releases, notably Ultima VII the games run on fairly humble hardware.

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PC REVIEW DEC

Reviews



Take a walk on the wild side. Typically for a Sierra product, Quest for Glory III has plenty of gorgeous 3D locations for you to walk through, all digitised from hand painted artwork of course!

move 'into' and out of' the scene as well as from side to side. But the perspective seems to have been chosen so as to fail to coincide with the direction controls: given a beautifully-drawn street angling into the distance, your character must proceed in a drunken zig-zag since any single direction will send him walking boldly into walls, trees or any other bit of available scenery. Worst of all, since each screen has a limited number of 'exits' (which can include entrances to depicted buildings), it's possible to move your character into a dead end in which he's invisible. In one case, I sent my character off the left-foreground and, after no change in scenery and much blind mousing and key pressing, suddenly saw him strolling down the side of a pyramid in the middle distance.

PCreview 6

Techspec If you have recently begun to suspect a global conspiracy whereby software publishers are trying to force you to buy a fast 486-based PC, Quest for Glory comes as a welcome relief. With the emphasis on static graphics rather than full-screen animation, the key requirements are memory and plenty of hard disk space. A VGA adapter is highly recommended. Sierra was one of the first companies to recognise the potential of sound, so there is support for many types of audio hardware, including the less-common ProAudio Spectrum, and any kind of MIDI set-up.

Disk requirements

High density	✗
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	7Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	✗	EGA	✓	Tandy	✓
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓

Control

Joystick	✗	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓

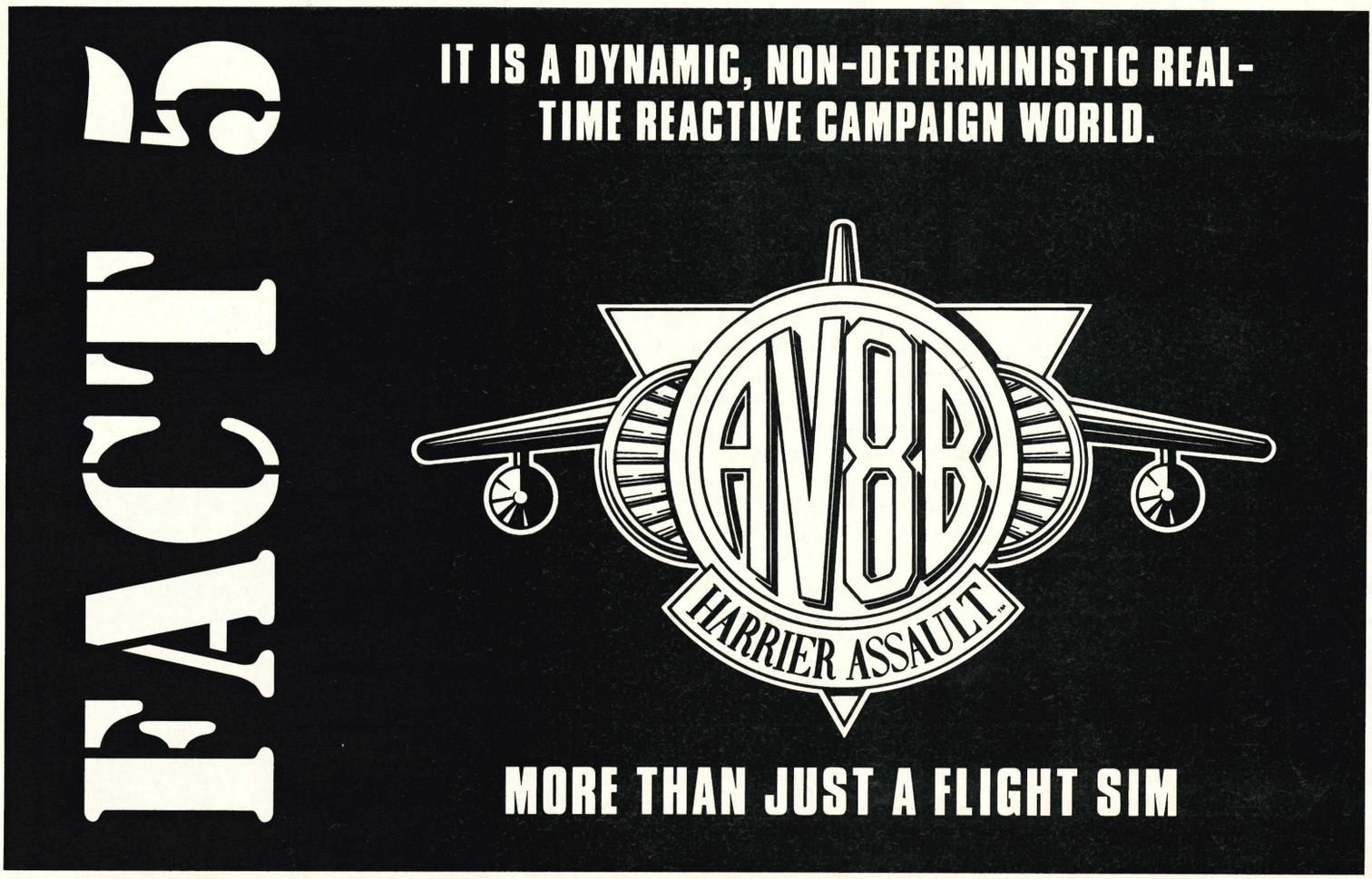
Performance

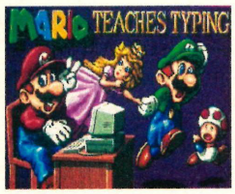
Optimum speed	16MHz
Minimum memory	640K
Free RAM required	570K

Finally, the game exhibited a couple of fatal flaws during review. On one occasion an animated sequence went into an infinite loop that couldn't be interrupted without quitting the game. On the second, after mistakenly exiting a city and immediately re-entering, the game flashed up the following message: "You have done something our designers didn't anticipate. Please contact the Sierra helpline." It then dumped me unceremoniously into DOS. This is a particularly infuriating piece of cleverness. If the software is smart enough to catch the problem and display the message, why isn't it smart enough to perform an emergency game save?

I wanted to like Quest for Glory III a lot. In fact, I do like it quite a lot: I like the graphics, the emphasis on mental dexterity, and I particularly like the fact that it's different from the standard monster massacre set in thousands of twisty little passages all alike. And if you have played all the other headline-grabbing RPGs of the moment and yearn for something a bit different, you'll probably enjoy it, too. But if you're looking for an introduction to the schizophrenic world of role-playing, there are better choices. And the quest for the ideal mix of adventure and RPG goes on.

■ **Peter Worlock**





Title	**Mario Teaches Typing**
Publisher	**Interplay/Electronic Arts**
Contact	**(0753) 549442**
Price	**£29.99**



MARIO *Teaches Typing*

Because computers let us correct our mistakes we no longer need to be perfect typists. So perhaps it's all right to stay as a 'hunter and pecker' — a two-fingered typist who has to peer at the keyboard to find every letter to press. Well no — it's an embarrassingly slow method and instead of being able to enjoy the freedom of using a computer, it becomes frustrating.

At the same time you don't want to make a chore out of learning to type and Mario Teaches Typing is a program that tries to make it a game by using the characters familiar from Nintendo games and with musical effects. If you have a sound card you will also hear a few snatches of Mario's Italian voice, now apparently more recognisable in the US than Mickey Mouse, such is Mario's fame. The use of Mario immediately implies that this is a product aimed at a younger audience.

There are three levels of lesson. Mario's Smash and Dash is the beginners' level and here you type the letters that appear on turtles and on elevated squares. As with the other lessons, you can choose whether your position on the course is shown by Mario, Luigi or the Princess.

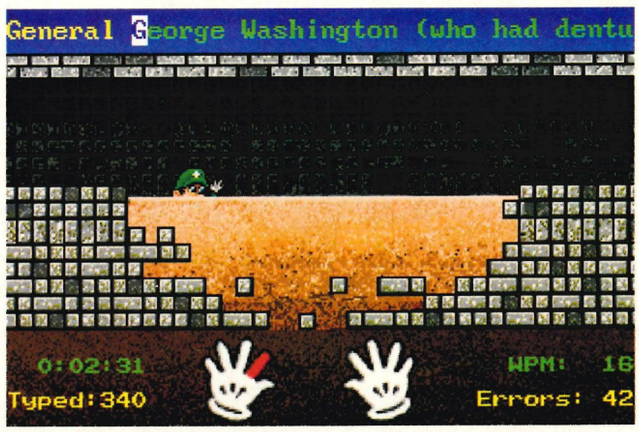
At the intermediate level you take on the Wet World Challenge in which your character is deep sea swimming and is being chased by a jaw-snapping fish and an octopus. However the excitement soon falls flat when you realise that there is no chase — the two just swim along independently of your efforts! However fast or slowly you type you are not going to get further away or closer to the danger. You just copy words that float across the surface of the sea and there are no real rewards.

When you progress to the advanced section you come to Mario's Tunnel of Doom in which your character's safety depends on you copy typing complete sentences. The passage is about the American War of Independence in which the British were defeated, which rather rubs in the fact this is an American product.

The program automatically starts with the middle row of the keyboard — these are the 'home' keys, so called because this is where your fingers should be positioned during typing. Mario never tells you this — either on screen or in the manual and I feel this is a mistake. The lessons menu allows you to add the other rows, numbers and symbols and to use the entire keyboard. The other main menu option, 'students', allows different personal files to be set up. This means many different people can share the program, all with their own individual goals and score sheets.

The aspect of the program that I liked best in comparison to other typing tutors is that while errors are counted up mistyped letters are ignored — you therefore cannot get out of step with the target by fail-

PCreview 5



Luigi making his way through the tunnel of doom. The text will help your American history.

ing to press a space for example. You just stick until you do the right thing.

I felt this program was less successful than other less gimmicky typing tutors. There was insufficient attention paid to the very fundamental skill of pressing keys with the correct fingers. The screen does always show a diagram indicating which finger to use but because of the visual busyness of the display you tend to overlook it. If you are going to go to the trouble of learning to type it is a good idea to do the job properly and this means hitting keys with the correct fingers. This isn't just nit-picking because the if you don't learn to use the correct finger for each key you will never manage to type accurately without looking at the keyboard.

The other big bugbear was that in the first exercise — the one you have to pass satisfactorily before you can proceed — the target letters were presented at two different positions on the screen. This made the already tricky task of reading a stream of letters presented without any meaning to them even more difficult.

All of our testers — who ranged from young non-typers to older experienced typists (although not professional typists who can just type their way through anything anyway) found that the sound and animation effects in this program hindered rather than encouraged them in their efforts to learn to type. Luckily the program does provide a section, Mario's Expert Express, in which you can practise without any of the distracting game elements. Also the screen provides encouragement in that Mario's face appears with a sad, neutral or happy expression according to how well you are doing.

The program is good at letting you know how well you are doing. Even when you are only at the beginners level the screen shows WPM — words per minute – and the number of errors made. At the end of each level there is a scoring screen and you can also look at a Report Card which shows each user's name, skill level, the words-per-minute goal and the speed achieved and which keys give you problems. When you reach a target you will be rewarded by a victory screen.

Overall, I see no reason, why Mario shouldn't teach you to type, but I also reckon this will be despite, rather than thanks to, his help.

■ **Sue James**



Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing Software Toolworks, £35.99

Mario Teaches Typing is not as successful at teaching typing techniques as the ever popular Mavis Beacon. While Mavis uses game playing — there is a Road Racer arcade type — this is an alternative and even when you choose drill you still enjoy the process of learning to type because experiencing success at typing is really very satisfying. Mavis is also clearer on which finger to use for which key.

Incidentally, few people realise that the character Mavis Beacon is fictitious, invented by Toolworks as a name which sounded like the embodiment of reliability.

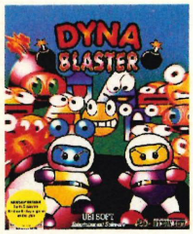


Crash Course in Typing Iansyst, £45.83

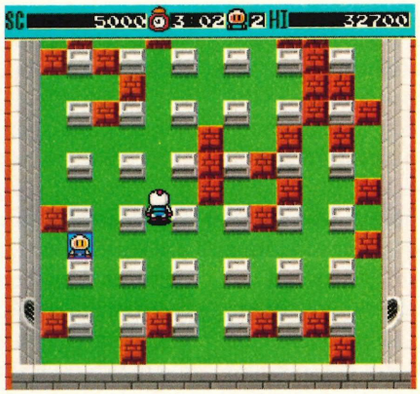
Kerry, aged 12, has been using a rather much more straitlaced typing tutor (the Crash Course in Typing from Iansyst) for a few months so we asked her to compare it with Mario.

"One way in which I found Mario more difficult was that it included a lot of capital letters quite early on and this slowed me down just when my speed was getting better. I'd already discovered learning to type is fun because you do make progress and I didn't think extra graphics and sound effects helped at all. So after trying out Mario Teaches Typing I think I'll go back to my ordinary course."





Title	**Dyna Blaster**
Publisher	**UbiSoft**
Contact	**(081) 343 9055**
Price	**£34.99**



As you dash around in the one player game you'll come across the occasional power-up. Any that you haven't found once you've killed the monsters are revealed as flashing blocks.

Dyna Blaster

PC review **7**

The PC is woefully short of quality arcade conversions, which makes the arrival of Hudsonsoft's Dyna Blaster all the more welcome. This game owes more than a nod to that old 8-bit classic Boulderdash: you need to bomb your way through the tunnels, avoiding, or blowing to smithereens, various monsters along the way.

Dyna Blaster would be nothing more than a jolly romp through the eight levels, well presented without being groundbreaking and worthy of budget release at most, were it not for its multi-player option, which takes the game on to a different plane altogether, and justifies its higher price.



Here the object of the game changes. Rather than finding your way through the different levels, you play on a fixed screen with the two, three or four characters each starting from one corner. Now the bombs can be used to blow up your opponents as well as the walls which obstruct your path.

With two or more of you, the atmosphere quickly becomes frantic, with bombs flying all over the place — you'll find you blow yourself up as often as not. Like the one-player game, this version of the game also includes a time limit, but in practice the game is usually over, and strewn with on-screen carnage before time is up.

The one player game is fine, although time starts dragging when you're simply blowing up the walls trying to find the exit. This is definitely a game to be played in company.

The backdrops are good but nothing special, and the sprites are quite cute. The sound is good as well, with a dashing little melody, and the explosion sound from the bombs is very effective. One main criticism would be that when you use the joystick and you desperately want to avoid an explosion, you get stuck in joystick frenzy, causing you to get nowhere fast, and eventually blown up. This can be quite frustrating.

Other than this, Dyna Blaster is a thoroughly enjoyable game and this is down to its simplicity. There are plenty of players in the PC Review office willing to testify to its hideous addictive qualities.

■ ***John O'Keefe***

Techspec

Along with the disks, Dyna Blasters also comes with its own joystick-adapting 'dongle', to enable two players to use a joystick each, which goes — oh yes — in the parallel port.

Disk requirements

High density	**✗**
Hard disk only	**✗**
Space taken on hard disk	**700K**

Graphic modes

CGA	**✗**	**EGA**	**✓**	**Tandy**	**✗**
VGA	**✓**	**SVGA**	**✗**		

Soundboards

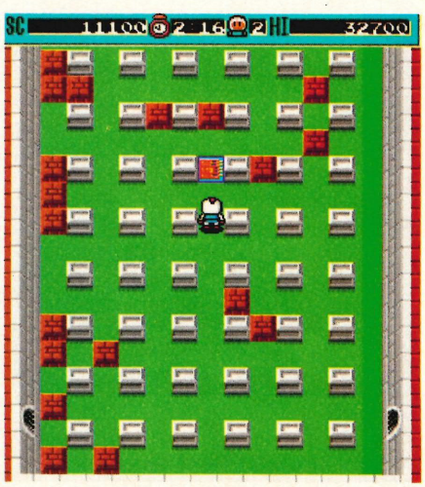
Ad Lib	**✓**	**Roland**	**✗**	**Sound Blaster**	**✓**

Control

Joystick	**✓**	**Keyboard**	**✓**	**Mouse**	**✗**

Performance

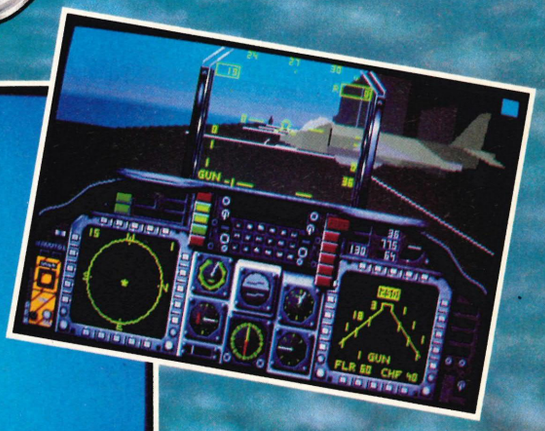
Optimum speed	**16MHz**
Minimum memory	**640K**
Free RAM required	**550K**



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DOMARK

Programmed by Simis Ltd. Graphics The Kremlin. Sound Martin Walker
Produced by Jim Tripp AV-8B Harrier Assault © 1992 Domark Group Ltd.
Amiga Screenshots
Published by Domark Software Ltd.
Ferry House 51-57 Lacy Road, Putney, London SW15 1PR

SIMIS



Title	**Reach for the Skies**
Publisher	**Virgin Games**
Contact	**081-960 2255**
Price	**£35.99**

Reach for the Skies gives you an opportunity to play the Luftwaffe and change history. During the early part of the conflict your main aim is to sink the supply convoys that sail down the channel with aircraft parts for Britain.

Reach *for the Skies*

Yet another strategic flight simulation takes to the skies, this one focusing on those heroic chaps who fought the Battle of Britain

Back in the 1980s it was possible to release a flight simulation which featured just a single plane, in which all you could do was take off, attack targets and land, and in which the only view you had was straight ahead from within the cockpit. Provided you could still experience the thrills and spills of manoeuvring an aircraft and the adrenalin rush of dog fighting, or dive bombing, nobody was too worried about the sort of presentational extras that were expected of other games.

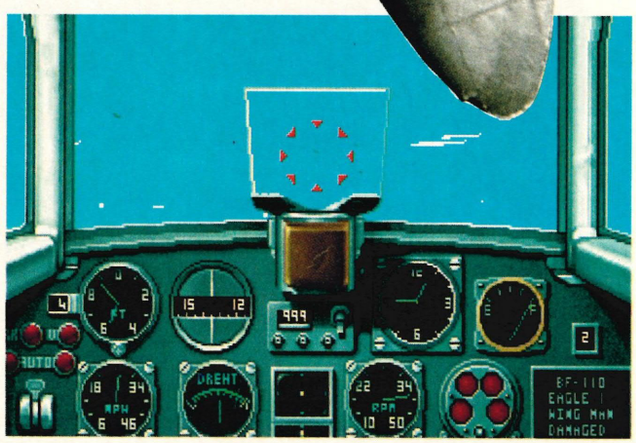
I can't remember which was the first flight simulation to burst the bubble — perhaps Vektor Grafix' Fighter Bomber — but suddenly a choice of planes, a host of unrealistic external views and as many unnecessary extras as you could dream up became de rigeur for flight sims.

If the idea of getting more for your money seems quite a pleasant prospect, it's worth remembering that this loss of innocence has not been totally for the best. Flight simulations now seem to be judged in terms of features, while the quality of the flying experience seems to be far from the top of most critics' lists.

Reach for the Skies doesn't have as many bells and whistles as other recent flight simulations, like Aces of the Pacific, for example. The development team, Rowan, does, however, seem to have spent a lot of time trying to accurately recreate the experience of aerial combat during World War II, and that should be a welcome development for serious fans of the genre.

Historical flight simulations have proved to be immensely popular, perhaps largely because of the lack of complex instrumentation and the necessity of flying by the seat of your pants. If all you want is to get up in the air and dogfight other aircraft, then you don't want to have to worry about MFDs, radar signatures, and the like.

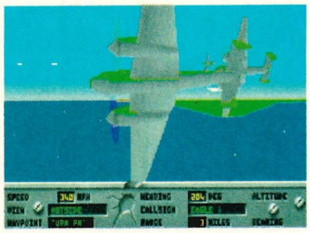
Given that Reach for the Skies takes as its theme the defence of South East England by Spitfires and Hurricanes during World War II, it has plenty of potential for accessible flying and exciting dogfighting.



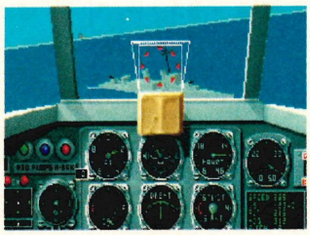
The cockpits of the planes have been generalised, rather than being accurate representations of the real thing. So, all Luftwaffe planes look like this, and the interior views of the Spitfires and Hurricane are identical.



The controller's map is where you identify potential targets and assign aircraft to them. It also shows any active RAF groups over south-east England.



Keeping a close formation, your bombers fly out at an angle from the target, turning towards it only when they are close. This confuses the enemy.



As you approach the target you begin to dive down towards it ready to drop your deadly cargo. Your trajectory should make the bombs travel towards the ship.



Your mission is a success, and your colleagues gather round to hear you elaborate on the details of the mission. Who's to know there were only three ships, not six?



In a dogfight, or indeed in any complex aerial manoeuvres, pilots very rarely stare straight ahead of them; they have to be looking around all the time. In addition they can orientate themselves by visually checking their position relative to the ground, and by the pull of centrifugal forces and gravity. The armchair pilot is denied these vital functions. Personally I've found that the most enjoyable flight simulations have been those that accept this fact and provide additional aids to the player to make up for the deficiency. These can redress the balance enough to prevent the frustration you might experience from getting shot down because lack of visual versatility has made you screw up a manoeuvre.

Reach for the Skies uses a combat view which is an external view keeping your plane in the foreground and the opponent in the background, the idea being that you manoeuvre using this view and then switch back to the cockpit to finally line up for a shot at the enemy.

When you do finally get involved in close combat, the effect is quite spectacular. The aircraft are all rendered with Gouraud shading, which means that they appear rounded rather than angular, with smooth changes between areas of light and shade. They put the blocky polygons of products like Falcon 3 to shame, and more than make up for the sparse ground detail.

Like ATAC, which is also reviewed in this issue, this game has tactical elements too. You can, if you wish, play the controller and decide where aircraft are stationed and where threats are intercepted from, although you are still expected to fly in one of the missions on each day. It is, however, possible to switch all the planes to a completely automatic mode and then switch between them to view the battle.

There's plenty of variety too. You can play in either the RAF or the Luftwaffe, and in some missions you can operate gunning positions as well as or instead of flying the plane. The missions cover everything from interception to dive bombing convoys.

It has to be said that Reach for the Skies is far from being the friendliest or the best presented flight simulation of recent years. It requires some effort from the player to get the most out of it, but it is worth persevering with. The strategy aspect is pretty much a take it or leave it adjunct to the main game, but the combat is exhilarating.

■ ***Laurence Scotford***

PCreview **7**

This is far from being the most demanding of flight simulations in terms of hardware. However, you will want a VGA card and a reasonable processing speed to get the best out of the superb plane graphics. Sound contains some sampled speech if you have a Sound Blaster.

Disk requirements

High density	✗
Hard disk only	✗
Space taken on hard disk	2.9Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	✗	EGA	✓	Tandy	✓
VGA	✓	SVGA	✓		

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓

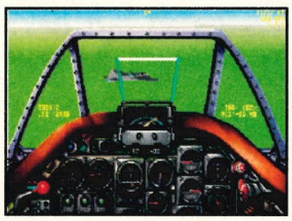
Control

Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓

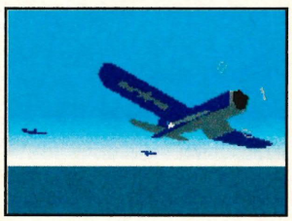
Performance

Optimum speed	20MHz
Minimum memory	640K
Free RAM required	550K

Alternatively...



Chuck Yeager's Air Combat
Electronic Arts, £34.99
If your main interest is dogfighting, and you are not interested in playing complete campaigns, then this is still the best historical simulation to buy. Graphically superior to most other flight simulations, it can also be configured to give you a difficult realistic flying experience or a fun easy one. The simulation covers World War II, Korea and Vietnam.



Aces of the Pacific
Sierra On-Line, £39.99
This is easily the sexiest looking and most feature-heavy of the recent simulations. It is based upon the conflict in the Pacific between American and Japanese forces. The texture mapped polygons look very smart, and there are enough configurations of the options to keep even the most hardened flight sim buff happy for several weeks of heavy play.

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Reviews extra

The games that got away



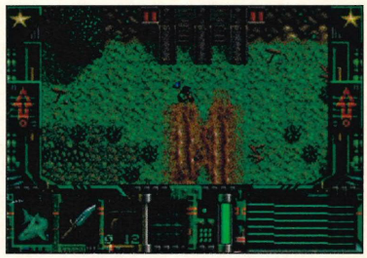
In Operation Fighting Tiger, you get to fly over Pakistan, Japan and Korea ...



...by day and by night, in a series of new campaigns.



Islands and Ice spans the Phillipines and Antarctica in this Gunship 2000 add-on.



Also from MicroProse, Special Forces is a standalone game in its own right.

It's time to face the rest of the games that are on offer this month but either didn't arrive in time or warrant enough attention for a full review. What follows is the best of the rest.

If you don't want — or can't afford — to buy a brand new game this month, could always consider the option of upgrading one of your older games, and there's a wealth of data disks being released round about now.

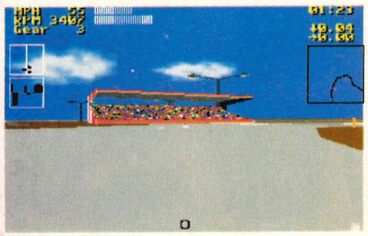
First out of the hangar is Falcon 3.0 Operation: Fighting Tiger (Spectrum Holobyte, £24.99). New theatres, new variations of the F-16 Falcon to fly, new bad guys to shoot and new campaigns to win. Everything that made the original Falcon 3.0 such a classic is retained and even improved upon as you now get to fly missions over Pakistan, Japan and Korea.

New theatres are the order of the day for Gunship 2000 as well, only this time they are the Philippine islands and the icy wastelands of Antarctica. The Gunship 2000 Islands & Ice Scenario Disk (MicroProse, £24.99) is extremely good value for money, not just giving you extra scenarios but also improving the ones you had to begin with.

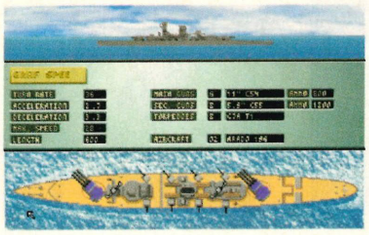
Now the Iraqi missions see you coping with much more rugged terrain as you fly across the mountains of Northern Iraq, while the Central

Reviewed this issue

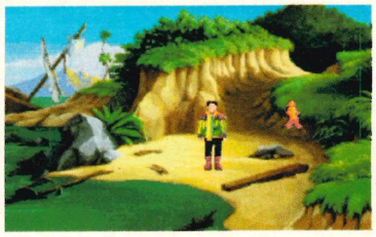
Alone in the Dark	9
ATAC	8
Inca	8
Rex Nebular and the Cosmic Gender Benders	8
Dynablaster	7
First Samurai	7
Reach for the Skies	7
The Summoning	7
Quest For Glory III	6
Spring Break	6
Darklands	5
Mario Teaches Typing	5
XF5700 Mantis Experimental Fighter	3



EA's Car and Driver.



The Grafspee from Great Naval Battles.



King Graham's back in King's Quest VI.

Europe campaign now has you flying in heavily populated urban areas. The thrill of nipping down the local high street blowing away enemy tanks is unlike any other.

One word of warning, you will need the original Gunship to use this pack (as you will need the originals for each of these data disks). I know this sounds obvious but it isn't mentioned anywhere on the box and there are plenty of newcomers to both Gunship and the PC who won't realise that these are accessory disks.

The third of this month's data disks is for that age-old classic of WWI dogfighting Red Baron. The Red Baron Mission Builder (Sierra/Dynamix, £24.99), as you would probably expect, lets you create your own combat situations, your own settings for WWI action as well as introducing new Aces to fly against and new planes to face them with.

The Mission Builder couldn't have come at a better time really as the recent release of Aces of the Pacific has somewhat put this older (and better) game in the shade. This is just the thing to breathe some new life into the product.

Getting back into the more familiar realm of full games, Special Forces (MicroProse, £39.99) is a follow-up to the amazingly old cult hit Airborne Ranger. Simulating life in a special operations unit, you have to control four commandos in a series of infiltration, search and destroy or recovery missions in a style of gameplay that isn't too dissimilar to that of Gauntlet. This is definitely a departure from the norm for MicroProse and sadly doesn't quite work as well as it could do.

Finally this month sees a very different piece of software from a company more used to bringing you classic adventures.

Sierra's Take A Break Crosswords (Sierra, £24.99) is a Windows leisure utility that is quite simply what it says it is. Over 350 crossword puzzles are yours for the solving, although this particular feat of mental agility doesn't exactly take too long as none of the puzzles are amazingly difficult.

It also suffers from the handicap of being American, so many references will be lost on us Europeans and many of the spellings (color instead of colour for instance) will be slightly off-putting.

PC Review's best buys

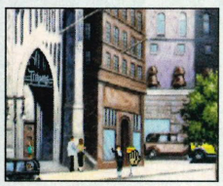
What are the best games currently available? PC Review's Best Buys are taken from the last three months of reviews in order to give you a good idea of what to shell out for.



The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes
Electronic Arts, £39.99
Not Icom's Consulting Detective on CD-ROM that everyone is raving about, rather the floppy disk game that everyone is raving about. A challenging murder and impressive atmosphere make up a thoroughly absorbing game.



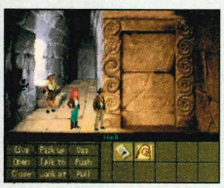
Wizardry VII
US Gold, £45.99
The latest in the long line of American RPGs takes the series into the nineties with fantastic graphics, an all-new interface and some highly detailed magic and combat systems. Role-playing at its finest.



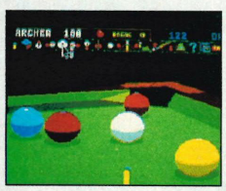
Laura Bow II: The Dagger of Amon Ra
Sierra, £39.99
Murder, mystery and suspense in this sequel to The Colonel's Bequest. Once again Laura Bow is caught up in a web of 1920s deceit as she tries to prove whodunnit, what the murder weapon was and where the nasty business took place.



Hong Kong Mahjong Pro
Electronic Arts, £29.99
As ancient Chinese games go, Mahjong is one of the most popular. Electronic Arts give you the chance to play this intense game of skill in your own home, without the annoyance of losing all the tiles.



Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis
Lucasfilm, £37.99
The latest and greatest Indy adventure from the masters of interactive story-telling. Join the world's most famous archaeologist as he battles Nazi soldiers and ancient religions in a search for the mythical underwater city.



Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker
Virgin, £30.99
Archer Maclean's successful snooker simulation comes to the PC and just gets better. Super smooth 3D and immense playability makes this a classic in every sense of the word. Look out for his Pool game in a few months time.

In the works

The following games are titles that just missed our reviewing deadlines and are scheduled to be covered in full reviews next month. Below are our first impressions of the product just to give you an idea of what to expect.

Car and Driver
Electronic Arts
EA's impressive looking driving simulator seems to be hitting the mark in all respects, from graphics to playability. Take control of the world's top sports cars and race around some of the toughest tracks, highways and road networks known to man (including oddly enough San Dimas Car Park as immortalised in the Bill & Ted films).

The game is excellently presented, depicting itself as a car enthusiast magazine on your screens with mini-reviews of the cars and courses and appropriate pictures. If there is a problem then it's to do with its performance on low-spec machines. Initial testing proved it to be slightly jerky on a 20MHz PC unless a lot of the graphic detail was removed.

Great Naval Battles
SSI/US Gold
SSI's answer to MicroProse's Task Force 1942 looks just as impressive as the simulation specialist's attempt, despite the lack of 3D graphics. In fact this lack may be what proves to be its downfall even though the rest of it is finely presented.

Strategically the game plays fine with intelligent battles and comprehensive control detailed in the weighty manual. Playing it is like a cross between Silent Service 2 and ... well any game with huge naval craft in it (not that there's been that many).

King's Quest VI
Sierra
The latest in the popular fantasy adventure series this time puts you in the shoes of King Graham's adopted son in search of his kidnapped Princess in a far-away land. At first glance it all appears to be the usual Sierra fare, excellent graphics, lovely sound and run of the mill gameplay, although the intro sequence did herald a couple of very nice touches and promised something a little bit more than what you'd expect.

Amazon
Access/US Gold
Another feast of digitising glory from the people best known for Links. Taking you back to the world of 1940 cinema serials (Flash Gordon, King of the Rocket Men etc) you find yourself trapped in the Amazon jungle by huge bugs, evil pirates and the obligatory tribe of scantily clad Amazonian women.

The game plays in a very similar fashion to most of Access's other adventures (Countdown, Martian Memorandum) which isn't necessarily a good thing as the control systems employed there weren't exactly wonderful.

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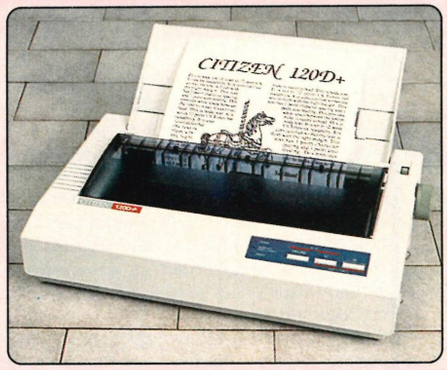
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- *Parallel Interface*
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❒ CROSSWORD CREATORProduce and print your own crossword	2
❒ X-WORD WRIGHT Popular crossword puzzle generator	1
❒ HOME VIDEO TOOLKIT ENHANCE YOUR HOME VIDEO	3

EDUCATION

	No of disks
❒ PRE SCHOOL PACK 5 Educational Interesting Activities	1
❒ AMY'S FIRST PRIMER Pre-school alphabet, matching, songs	1
❒ WORD GALLERY Helps associate words with objects	2
❒ ANIMATED SHAPES Correct answers rewarded by animation	1
❒ ANIMATED ALPHABET Fascinating animation for each letter	4
❒ ANIMATED MEMORY GAMETests memory skills with animations	1
❒ ANIMATED MATHS Rewards correct answers with animations	1
❒ HOORAY FOR HENRIETTA Tests arithmetic with animations	1
❒ HENRIETTA'S BOOK OF SPELLSTests spelling with animations	1
❒ TEACH YOUR CHILDRENMaths Music Composition Art English	1
❒ EDUCATING JUNIOR Mosaic, Alphabet, Animals, Clockgame	1
❒ NIFTY NUMBERSBabyMath, 123-GO, Coins In The Box, FunMath	1
❒ WACKY WORDS Fun With Words & Letters, Spelling Balloon	1
❒ ANDY'S WORD GAMESOpposites Word Find Synonyms Odd Word	1
❒ FUN WITH LETTER & WORDS Makes it interesting and fun	1
❒ FUN WITH MATHS Keeps them entertained while learning	1
❒ FUN WITH DESIGN Stimulates creativity and recognition	1
❒ EXPLORING WORDS Hangman, Spelling, WP for Children	1
❒ EXPLORING MATHS Algerbra, Fractions, Areas, Volumes	1
❒ EXPLORING CHEMISTRY Periodic Table & Molecules	1
❒ EXPLORING PHYSICS Covers classical and modern physics	1
❒ MONKEY BUSINESS Interactive story for youngsters	1
❒ WORD RESCUE Teaches spelling, logic, word meanings	1
❒ LEARNING MATHS Teaches basic arithmetic for youngsters	1
❒ MATHS TUTOR Covers most aspects from age 6 to adult	1
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❒ MAP MAKER Useful system to produce print out of maps	1
❒ THE WORLD ABOUT US Maps and info about the world	1
❒ WORLD NAME GAME Quiz or tutorial on capitals & countries	1
❒ FRENCH TUTOR Exercises French-English & English-French	1
❒ FRENCH GCSE Learn, test and revision aid on the language	1
❒ PC-TUTORThorough course on use of computers and MSDOS	1
❒ FASTYPE Graphics typing tutor with a variety of exercises	1
❒ PHYSICS GCSE REVISION A teacher's novel aid to study	1
❒ COMPUTER SCIENCE GCSE REVISION A novel aid to study	1

SPECIAL INTEREST

❒ T-SQUARE Brilliant 2-D draughting package	4
❒ PC DRAFT CAD Professional quality computer aided design	1
❒ DRAFT CHOICE Powerful Computer aided design	2
❒ COMPOSER Use on screen stave to compose a tune, play it	1
❒ PIANO MAN Turn you PC keyboard into a musical one	1
❒ MUSICIANS TOOLBOX An essential set of musical tools	1
❒ MELODY MASTER Lets you ctreate, save, edit and play music	1
❒ ODYSSEY A comprehensive UK communications program	2
❒ NIGHTSKY A computer planetarium. Fully illustrated	4
❒ SKYGLOBE Amazing display of sky at night printing	1
❒ DISCOVER THE BIBLE Produces a daily quotation and quiz	1
❒ SAMFINDEX Complete Holy Bible with text search, find etc..	7
❒ SEEDMASTER is an extensive Bible concordance	9
❒ POWER MENU Quick access too all programs at touch of key	2
❒ MENU DIRECT GOLDComprehensive & award winning system	2
❒ FLEXIBAK PLUS Fast easy to use hard disc back up system	2
❒ DISK COMMANDO Shareware equivalent of Norton utilities	2
❒ INTEGRITY MASTER Anti-virus and data integrity checker	1
❒ PK ZIP The latest ZIP archiving/dearchiving systems	2
❒ 4-DOS A sensible alternative to MSDOS	2
❒ ESSENTIAL UTILITIES Large collection of firm favourites	1
❒ C COMPILER See for Yourself how to program in	

ENTERTAINMENT

	No of disks
❒PHYLOX Great new animated game.UK Author	1
❒ JUMP JET Fly over enemy territory bombing and blasting	1
❒ SHOOTING GALLERY Good simulation of fairground attraction	1
❒ QUATRIS PRO is Tetris-type game using 16 colours, 3D	1
❒ KUNG FU LOUIE Two karate students have added their touch	3
❒ SHARK ATTACK An underwater animated graphics game	1
❒ MINER VGA Latest version of the classic 70's game	1
❒ SLITHER New version of Hungry Snake. Soundblaster compat	1
❒ OILCAP Like Pipemania only with more features	1
❒ GOLDHUNT Pick up pots of gold and avoid roaming monsters	1
❒ CAPTAIN COMIC High quality animated graphics arcade game	1
❒ ROBOMAZE II Employing sophisticated animated graphics	1
❒ ROBOMAZE III The natural successor to ROBOMAZE II	1
❒ BOLO 1 Try to get Mr Bolo out of the 40 room maze	1
❒ BOLO 2 Forty more more rooms to challenge you and Mr Bolo	1
❒ MONUMENTS OF MARS Animated arcade game set on Mars	1
❒ PHAROAHS TOMB Nevada Smith in Raiders of the Lost Tomb	1
❒ ARCTIC EXPLORER Second adventure of the famous explorer	1
❒ JUMPMAN LIVES Another great arcade game from Apogee	1
❒ COMMANDER KEEN Invasion of The Vorticons. Very good	1
❒ COMMANDER KEEN 2 Goodbye Galaxy-2nd series	2
❒ COSMO'S COSMIC ADVENTURE Young alien on way to Disney	1
❒ WOLFENSTEIN Unique virtual reality game. Outstanding	1
❒ DUKE NUKEM An absolute gem! Features4-Way scrolling	1
❒ SECRET AGENT Superb animated action and top gameplay	1
❒ DRACULA IN LONDON Very good interactive roleplaying	1
❒ DARK AGES Animated adventuring in medieval world	1
❒ HUGOS HOUSE OF HORRORS Creepy but enthralling game	1
❒ HUGO II WHODUNNIT Excellent sequel featuring Penelope	1
❒ HUGO III JUNGLE OF DOOM Third and final episode	1
❒ REALM OF HAKROM VOL 1 The Axe of Fargrim. Superb	4
❒ VAMPYR: THE TALISMAN OF INVOCATIONExtensive gameplay	2
❒ CAVES OF THOR Loads of puzzles and traps to investigate	1
❒ COLOSSAL CAVE ADVENTURE The one that started it all	1
❒ DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Fascinating and complex adventure	1
❒ JACARANDA JIM Escape from the planet Ibberspleen IV	1
❒ ALIENS LAUGHED AT MY CARDIGAN Weird title- weird game	1
❒ ANOTHER LIFELESS PLANETAnd Me With No Beer. Amusing	1
❒ GRAND PRIX Design and race your own sports car	1
❒ FORD SIMULATOR II Popular driving simulation test drive	2
❒ CADDIE HACK Very realistic full feature golf simulation	1
❒ STICKY WICKET Good cricket simulation. Choice of teams	1
❒ FOOTBALL MANAGER Extensive simulation from UK author	1
❒ ARMY MANOEUVRES Strategy game with good graphics	1
❒ FACING THE EMPIRE One-player interstellar conflict	1
❒ SPACE SHADES Places you in cockpit of a space cruiser	1
❒ PC-ONOPOLYBased on the well-known buy-&-rent board game	1
❒ SLEUTH Whodunnit based on the Cluedo - different each time	1
❒ POWER CHESS Probably the best version of computer chess	1
❒ TRIBOLO Interesting 3-way Othello game. Each board differs	1
❒ CLASSIC GAMES Popular collection featuring Space Invaders Pacman, Ribit Bricks, Donkey Kong, Q-Bert,	1
❒ FUN AND GAMES Pango Babies Elevator Centipede Pyramid Pac Osbit Dragons	1
❒ GOLDEN NUGGETS Striker Paratrooper Sopwith Flightmare	1
❒ KEEP THEM AMUSEDBurger Grime Racer Ninja Caverns Galaxy	1
❒ SPORTING LIFE Golf, Bowling, Basketball, Volleyball	1
❒ WIBLING WILF & THE DUNJAX Wilf BitBat Robotron Dunjax	1
❒ ARCADIA Digger, Snipe, Snakepit, Harbour	1

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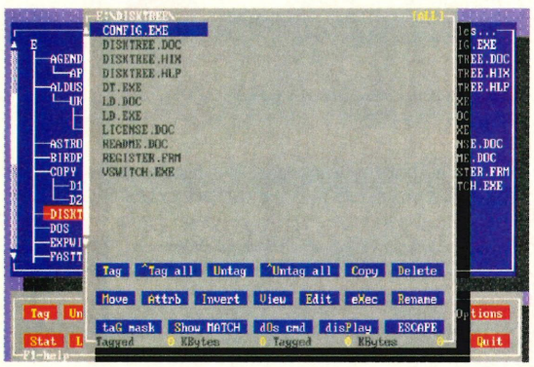
Shareware Reviews

Sam Mackenzie brings news of Catacombs of the Abyss, the sequel to the acclaimed Wolfenstein 3D, plus a maths game for improving your arithmetic for all ages from five onwards, a directory and file utility, and the regular Shareware Finder Service.

Disk Tree

DOS is not exactly the most friendly program in the world to use, and when you have a large hard disk with lots of files on it, trying to work your way around the directory structure is no fun.

Disk Tree is a utility program that allows you to view your directory and file structure, and to make changes where you think fit. It is similar in look and feel to the package X-Tree. As you move around your file structure, you can choose to 'tag' files or directories. Once tagged, you can carry out operations on the marked files, such as deleting them, or their parentdirectories, moving them, copying them, or zipping them up to save space on your disk. The amount of space taken by the various directories and files is shown, so you can see exactly where that 100Mb went to, and take appropriate action.



Other options will show you statistics about the disk, such as sector size, directory entries, and so on. The product is slick to use, and works well. If you are having difficulty keeping track of your disk, I highly recommend it.

Product:	**Disk Tree**
Supplier:	**Precision Software Publishing**
Tel:	**(0233) 208288**
Product code:	**n/a**
Price:	**£3 on 3.5" disk, £2.50 on 5.25"**
Registration Price:	**£29**
What you get for registering:	**Mouse support**
Specification:	**XT**
Disk space:	**310K**
Graphic modes:	**EGA, VGA**
Soundboards:	**n/a**
Control:	**Keyboard**

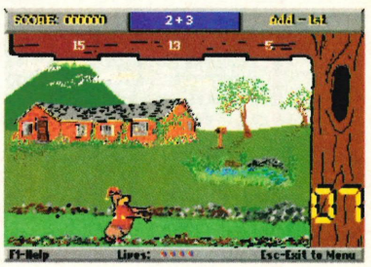
Sparky's Maths

This educational software involves learning through a game. You control Sparky the bear in Jellystone National Park. A sum is shown at the top of the screen, along with three possible answers. By moving the arrow keys and pressing the space bar, you get the bear to move to underneath the correct answer, then throw a stone at it!

The main disadvantage with this package is that there is no real incentive for winning — or at least I never found any, though that might say something about my maths! You can get into the high score league, but other than that you have only the satisfaction of a job well done. If you get a sum wrong, you get a little 'talking-to' from the teacher, and lose one of your five lives.

You can alter the level of difficulty of the arithmetic, with six levels corresponding to the grades in United States schools. The non-registered version has only the addition module, with other modules for subtraction, multiplication, and division being provided in the registered version.

While this package is fun for a little while, more could have been done to add the games side, particularly to make more use of the sound facilities of the PC, and also to add some reward for getting things right. Even so, it is still worth getting if you know someone whose arithmetic could be improved!



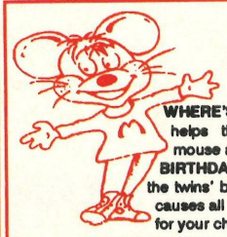
Product:	**Sparky's Maths**
Supplier:	**Softcell**
Tel:	**(0443) 238630**
Product code:	**2150**
Price:	**£2.50**
Registration price:	**$15**
What you get for registering:	**Other molecules, certificate printer**
Specification	**XT**
:Disk space:	**585K**
Graphic modes:	**EGA, VGA**
Soundboards:	**None**
Control:	**Keyboard**

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MARMALADE MOUSE ADVENTURES
Price £19.99

WHERE'S THAT MOUSE? The user helps the twins find the naughty mouse and put him to bed.
BIRTHDAY FUN! Your child goes to the twins' birthday party and Marmalade causes all sorts of trouble! Personalised for your child! Age 4 to 8

INTERACTIVE STORIES

These stories offer the child choices throughout, so that the user decides the direction the story will take. Each package also features a personalised story in which your child takes part in the action. The references to your child by name and details of favourite food, best friend, etc. keep your child involved. This, together with lively colour illustrations and music make these stories "come alive" on the computer! Each package comes complete with two stories and a printed activity booklet featuring characters from the stories. The personalised story is sent to you within 24 hours of receipt of your child's details. They need an EGA 286 or above machine with a hard disc.



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GAMES FOR CHRISTMAS!

We have registered versions of many of the popular Shareware games. These registered versions come with extra levels not available as Shareware, printed instruction booklets, and often with hints for playing the game, making them a perfect present!

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ROBOMAZE III £30	CRYSAL CAVES £34.08
SAND STORM £17	MONUMENTS/MARS £34.08
COMMANDER KEEN I	PHARAOH'S TOMB £34.08
COMMANDER KEEN II	ARCTIC ADVENTURE £34.08
COMMANDER KEEN III	JUMPMAN LIVES £34.08
(EACH VOLUME £34.08)	PAGANITZU £34.08
DUKE NUKEM £34.08	SECRET AGENT £34.08
WOLFENSTEIN 3D £51.70	WORD RESCUE £29.38
COSMO'S COSMIC ADVENTURE £34.08	JILL OF THE JUNGLE £28.20
	KILOBLASTER £28.20

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TESTWARE'S TOP SHAREWARE
(Based on sales in the last three months)

COMMANDER KEEN III (1)(HD) "Aliens Ate My Babysitter"
HOORAY FOR HENRIETTA (VGA)(1)(HD) Latest version.
COOPER SET PCX (2) Over 1500 clip art pictures for DTP
COMMANDER KEEN I (1) One of the best ever PC games!
GRAPHIC WORKSHOP (2)(HD) Converts, views and edits.
COMMANDER KEEN II (2)(HD)(EGA) "Goodbye Galaxy"
HENRIETTA'S BOOK OF SPELLS (VGA)(1)(HD) New version.
JILL OF THE JUNGLE (1)(HD) Super-heroine Jill is a hit!
WOLFENSTEIN 3D (1)(HD)(286) Virtual Reality game.
WHERE'S THAT MOUSE? (1)(HD)(EGA)(286) age 4 to 8.
PRINTPARTNER (1) For cards, banners, calendars, ltrhead.
TOUCH TYPE TUTOR (1) Easy to use typing tutor.
C TUTOR (2) Learn to program in C.
ASEASYAS (1) Famous 123-style spreadsheet.
COSMO'S COSMIC ADVENTURE (1)(HD)(286) The best yet?
BROTHER'S KEEPER (4)(HD) Genealogy program.
FAMILY TREE (1) Another popular family tree program.
DRAFT CHOICE (1) Accurate, easy to use CAD program.
ASTROMART (1) Calculates Astral charts.
MONKEY BUSINESS II (1)(EGA)(HD)(286) Age 7 to 10
PERSONAL C COMPILER (1) Good for learning C language.
WINDOWS GAMES (1) 12 games for MSWindows.
CHARTS UNLIMITED (1) Flowcharts/electrical/Gantt, etc.
SHOOTING GALLERY (1)(VGA) 7 shooting competitions.
PKZIP/PKUNZIP (1) The indespensible file archiver.
BOLO ADVENTURES (1)(EGA) Forty levels, superb graphics.
HYPERDISK (1)(HD) Very flexible disc caching program.
FORD SIMULATOR III (4)(HD)(VGA) Test drive a Ford today!
GALAXY LITE (1) WordStar compatible word processor.
EASY DRAW (1) Technical drawing, flowcharts, diagrams.
FOOTBALL FORECAST (1) Helps you find the score draws!
VGA PAINT (1) Excellent graphics/drawing program.
DARK AGES (1)(HD)(286) Great game.
SCREEN PEACE (1) Screen savers for MSWindows.
PC-TUTOR (1) Thorough PC tutorial, needs some experience
MCAFEE VIRUS TOOLS (2) Virus detection and clean up.
FRENCH TUTORS 1 & 2 (2) Multiple choice tests.
BACKGAMMON (1) Plus Cribbage and Draughts. Very good!
THE SOCCER GAME (1) Popular UK soccer management.
TUTOR 1-2-3 (1) Interactive tutorial for beginners.
COPYMASTER (1) Great disc copying utilities.
MR LABEL (1) Flexible label making program.
PAGE FINANCE CONTROL (2)(HD) Leading finance package
WAMPUM (1) Fast, fully relational database. Great value!
POWERMENU (2)(HD) Friendly menus, easier than DOS.
GALACTIX (2)(HD)(VGA) Fantastic space invader game!
HUGO III (2)(HD)(EGA) Jungle of Doom, biggest Hugo game
GEOCLOCK UK (1) World map/time with moving sunlight.
F-117A TRIAL (3)(286)(VGA)(HD) Microprose simulation.
PC LEARNING GAMES (4)(EGA) Maths, words, etc. (2-8 yrs)
FRACTAL GRAPHICS (1) PCX drawing using Fractals.
8086 TUTOR (1) Good basic tutorial for Assembler.
A86/D86 (1) Fast Assembler/debugger.
CRYSTAL CAVES (1)(HD) Cave after cave of adventure.
PKZMENU/PKLITE (1) Two utilities for PKZIP.
DUKE NUKEM (1)(HD) Stop Dr Proton from ruling the world.
PCX-SUPERSHOW (2)(HD) Professional presentations.
WINCHESS (1) Very good chess game for MSWindows.
PUNTER'S PAL (1) UK horse racing analysis program.
ZEPHYR (2)(HD) Easy to use fully relational database system
EASY STOCK MANAGER (1)(HD) UK stock control.

We have thousands more titles, and anything we don't have, we can almost certainly get for you within 24 hours, if it is genuinely Shareware or Public Domain!

Order 5 or more Shareware discs, choose one extra disc FREE!

Hooray!

New 256 colour versions of these popular educational games! Both programs have optional Sound Blaster support and need a hard disc and VGA.





HENRIETTA'S BOOK OF SPELLS (ages 7 to 14, Price £29.99). Henry has been turned into a frog by the evil witch Morgana and by answering spelling and hangman quizzes, the child helps Henrietta break the spell! You can create your own word lists and even French, German, Italian and Spanish words can be used.
HOORAY FOR HENRIETTA (ages 5 to 12, Price £29.99) Your child can help Henrietta marry Henry by answering sums. John the parrot has other ideas and keeps trying to cover Henry in custard! Great for teaching addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

NEW RELEASES

Here are some of the new titles that we have recently received. We have hundreds more, so if there is something else that you want, 'phone us to see if we have it.

TASK-PRO (1)(HD) Project management/job scheduler.
ORGANIZE YOUR BUSINESS (1)(HD) Client database, sales management and mailing list manager.
DATAWORKS (1)(HD) Fully relational database.
TAPCIS (1)(HD) For saving on-line time on Compuserve.
CHINESE CHECKERS (1)(EGA) Favourite board game.
MOVIES TO GO! (1)(HD) Movies database and reviews.
ANIMATED SERIES These programs won the 1992 Shareware Industry Award for Best Educational Software. We now have the latest versions of the full series and registered versions are available from ourselves. Try one or two of these amazing Shareware discs, then get the full registered series from us. Full details on the discs.
ANIMATED ALPHABET (2)(HD)(EGA)
ANIMATED WORDS (2)(HD)(EGA)
ANIMATED MEMORY GAME (1)(HD)(EGA)
ANIMATED MATHS (1)(HD)(EGA)
ANIMATED SHAPES (1)(HD)(EGA)
They are all for age range 2 to 6 and registration brings more extended games and personalised versions.



We have recently extended the range of registered programs that we publish or distribute for the authors. You can obtain these directly from us, here are some of them:

EASY STOCK MANAGER £23.50	SHARESPELL £23.50
	POPSAURUS £23.50
FINGERPAINT £30	WORD TRANSLATOR £45.83
FINGER VGA £45	ORGANIZE! £59.50
GEOCLOCK UK £30	PUZZLER £11.75
WAMPUM £76.38	BROTHER'S KEEPER £45
ZEPHYR £64.63	TEXT SHOW £49.50
PCX-SUPERSHOW £59.50	ABC FUNKEYS £17.63
PCX-SHOW £59.50	TASK-PRO £58.75
PCX-SUPERTOOLS £35	ORGANIZE/BUSINESS £69.50
PRINTPARTNER £23.50	DATAWORKS £69.33
FORMGEN £42.50	TAPCIS £59.50

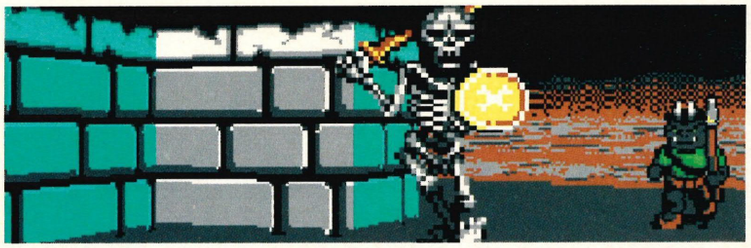
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Catacombs of the Abyss

Evidence that the PC Shareware market has matured, at least in terms of programming and design excellence, if not in subject matter, came this year in the form of Wolfenstein 3D from development team ID.

Whereas shareware authors could previously be expected to deliver value for money gameplay with slightly sub-standard graphics, here at last was a game that not only boasted addictive gameplay, but also a 3D graphics system that put many commercial games to shame.

Now ID is releasing a follow-up to its first 3D success. This time the action moves on to slightly firmer moral ground, as it is set in a typical fantasy RPG world. Essentially the action is still the same: run around a maze of 3D rooms casting magic missiles at the host of creatures that attack you.

The big difference between this game and its predecessor is that Abyss is rendered in garish EGA graphics rather than the crisp VGA graphics of Wolfenstein. While this is nice for the minority of people who still haven't got VGA or SVGA systems, I really can't understand the total absence of a VGA mode, especially since the visual appeal is at least half the attraction of this sort of game.

One plus point is that the graphics are more varied than those in Wolfenstein, and there are better puzzles too. At one point you will find yourself in a series of rooms that are slowly flooding, for example. There is also a greater use of hidden rooms and keys. Despite the EGA graphics, this game and its predecessor should have the many purveyors of shoddy commercial software quaking in their boots.

Product:	**Catacombs of the Abyss**
Supplier:	**Transend**
Tel:	**(0274) 622228**
Product code:	**TBA**
Price:	**£2.50 a disk**
Registration price:	**TBA**
What you get for registering:	**TBA**
Specification:	**386 20MHz or better**
Disk space:	**720K**
Graphic modes:	**EGA, VGA, SVGA**
Soundboards:	**Ad Lib, Sound Blaster**
Control:	**keyboard, mouse, joystick**



If you would like to take advantage of the Shareware Finder Service, fill in the form, right, or reproduce it in letter form, and send it to PC Review, Shareware Finder Service, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. You can also fax your request to (071) 972 6710, or e-mail it to pcreview@CIX.compulink.co.uk.

Please note that PC Review doesn't undertake to *supply* you with the software we come up with, but we will identify the product we believe will suit your purpose, and give it a quick evaluation for you.

Shareware Finder Service

"Do you know of a spell checker to work on an 8088 under Windows 2.03. It needs to be acceptably quick and not to take up too much disk space".
Antony Scott Warwicks

That's quite a poser, Antony, and I'm printing your question, not because I have an answer, but in the hope that somebody else who reads it may know of an appropriate program. ,

The problem you have that current Windows shareware, that is, programs written for Windows 3 and later, is not backwardly compatible with Windows 2. Windows shareware did not take off until Windows 3 — partly because Windows 2 was a difficult environment in which to program anything. So while it was thin on the ground at the time, it has now more or less vanished. The good thing about shareware is that you can share it, as long as you play by the rules and pay the registration fee for any program you decide to use, so if anybody out there knows of a Windows 2 specific spell checker we'd like to know about it.

Meanwhile as Windows Write, presumably the word processor you are using, produces ASCII text files you could use a DOS spell checker such as Share Spell (Disk WP6 from Shareware Publishing, 0297 24088 L2.50). This is a standalone system that works in ASCII files and has a 112,000 plus word dictionary and a facility to merge specialised word lists of your own. It is very fast and highly compressed to take up minimal space. It shows the word in context and a list of possible replacements — just highlight one and it replaces the misspelled word in the document.

"Wanted – a function plotter to draw multiple graphs on screen from Cartesian and or polar equations showing asymptotes, preferably with radians and degrees and changeable constants. Provision for parametric equations would be useful".
Martin Hart – Merseyside

Surprisingly, while there are a lot of graphing packages, they nearly all work with tables of data rather than equations. Even the few that seemed to work didn't do a very good job. It is also difficult to know exactly what you want to do. For example, none of the programs I looked at will automatically add asymptotes and I'm not even sure it is possible! Anyway, the nice thing about shareware is it is cheap to find out if a program is useful to you or not, so why not give IMath (Disk MA29 from ShareWare Marketing (0297) 24088, and costing £2.50) a try. It will create a graph from a function of one variable.

As an alternative, have you considered drawing these graphs using a spreadsheet? As-Easy-As (a shareware spreadsheet) includes XY, Polar and 'Radar' charts and would therefore cope with Cartesian and polar coordinates. While it only shows one chart on the screen you can define up to six series each of which will produce a curve and can merge two graphs, thereby increasing this limit to 12. Using a spreadsheet you would have to do more of the work for yourself, specifically tabulating the functions but in this case the spreadsheet would help you do the necessary calculations.

Name .....
Address .....
.....
.....
Daytime tel no (in case we need more details).....
PC system specifications:
Processor.....RAM .....Hard/floppy disk.....
Graphics .....DOS. .....Windows.....
I am looking for software which will perform the following task .....
.....
.....
.....

QED

The classic first person perspective game, Dungeon Master, that has been cloned so many times is now available on PC. Robin Matthews provides a starter guide for those new to the game.



Into the depths of Dungeon Master

Level One
Character generation

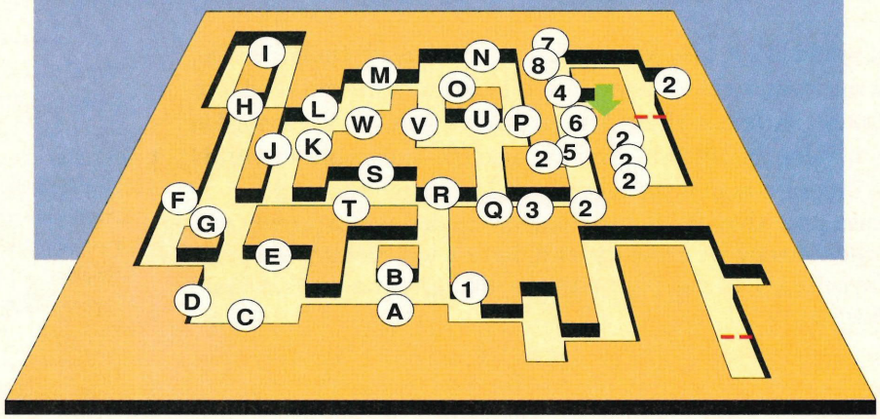
You start in level one, south-east of the Hall of Champions. In this hall are the bones of 24 heroes, four of which will become your party. There are four character classes — fighter, ninja, priest and wizard — and the key to success in DM, especially in the early stages, is to have a balanced party. Four fighters may seem like a good idea, but in the latter stages you will really struggle without any decent magical skills. Each hero has varying experience and abilities and a full chart is included here so that you can consider your choice. There is no ideal party, merely guidelines worth following.

Many of the heroes are experienced in more than one class and during the game it is worth rotating characters, trying to develop characters in several professions. One of the attractions of DM is the inherent flexibility of your party — do you want to use specialists in each position or use more utility-like characters? The purists will probably play with specialists, but for 'real' players (the sort who wouldn't touch quiche and normally eat trolls for breakfast) the continual switching of players, the moving of fighters back into the rear ranks after a promotion and the levelling out of magic skills provide a massive logistic challenge. So, accepting that there are lots of good parties, here are a couple of ideas for excellent ones.

Fighters: Sonja the She Devil is a real hard nut that has some initial mana and her own sword. Hissssa the Lizar of Makan has the highest strength rating, good dexterity and five mana points.

Dungeon Master (PC) Level 1

A. Iaido Ruyho Chiburt 48/65/11
B. Zed, Duke of Bonville 60/60/10
C. Chani, Sayyadina Sihaya 47/67/17
D. Hawk, the Fearless 70/85/10
E. Boris, Wizard of Baldor 35/65/28
F. Nabi, the Prophet 55/65/13
G. Alex Ander 50/57/13
H. Hissssa, Lizar of Makan 80/61/5
I. Gothmog 60/15/18
J. Sonja the Devil 65/70/2
K. Letla Shadowseek 48/60/3
L. Mophus the Healer 55/55/19
M. Stamm Bladecaster 75/80/0
N. Azizi Johari 61/77/7
O. Leif the Valiant 75/70/7
P. Daroou 100/65/6
Q. Halk the Barbarian 90/75/0
R. Syra Child of Nature 53/72/15
S. Gando Thurfoot 39/63/26
T. Linflas 65/50/12
U. Wu Tse Son of Heaven 45/49/20
V. Tiggy Tamal 25/45/35
W. Wuff the Bika 40/50/30
X. Elija, Lion of Yaitopya 60/58/22
1. Hall of Champions
2. Food
3. Pressure plate
4. Water
5. Scroll
6. Torch
7. New lives for old bones
8. Altar of re-birth





may look innocuous: lots of goodies are to be found in DM so take your time and search every nook and cranny. The combat is frantic enough, so enjoy the peace and quiet while you can!

OK, having enlisted your intrepid adventurers and practised the various arts and skills, it's time to move onwards to level two.

Level two
The journey begins

This is really the introductory level, used for practising magic and combat techniques and building up your character stats. The level is large, but monsters are infrequent. It's worth spending plenty of time here perfecting your fighting tactics. Try hit and run tactics and waiting around corners. Get used to swivelling on squares to stay face-on to monsters. In combat you can load up a blow and unleash it when required.

Monsters are really limited to mummies and shriekers. The latter are pretty easy to dispatch, and provide a useful food supplement. Mummies need to be treated with more care and it is with these that it can be a good time to start using long range weapons and other combat manoeuvres. Fireballs are particularly effective as they ignite the mummies' rotting bandages!

If you are engaged in lots of combat, don't forget to keep an eye on your hunger meter. When it starts getting low — eat! Light can also be a problem, so have all your characters practise light spells. This should be all you will need in the main part, but stow away a couple of torches, just in case of an emergency.

Water is also important. There are several fountains on this level, so fill up flasks for when you need them. There are many locks on level two, mostly of the gold, topaz, iron or solid variety. All the relevant keys are also on this level although some may need some detailed searching to uncover. Other devices include pressure plates that need to be weighted down with objects, teleports to recover keys, levers and doors that often need a good physical battering.

Scrolls on Level One
Invoke FUL for a magic torch

Scrolls on Level Two
Casting VI BRO into a flask creates cure poison
Casting VI into a flask creates heal wounds
DES VEN will conjure a poison spell

Next month: we continue to delve deeper.

Ninjas: Leyla the Shadowseek doesn't just have a cracking record, she is the only level four ninja and has her own rope (more useful than it sounds).

Priest: Leif the Valiant is a good utility option, being a priest and a level three fighter. Elijah the Lion of Yaitopya is one of the highest level priests, is a level one fighter and has a magic box.

Wizard: Gothmog is an outstanding character with high mana, the highest antifire and the useful Cloak of Night.

When you select a hero you have the option of reincarnation or resurrection. With the latter, the hero is restored as he was before death, recalling all skills and abilities. If they are reincarnated their memories are wiped clean, but the forgotten skills are converted into higher physical attributes. Reincarnation also allows you to rename the characters, but for beginners don't be vain. Settle for resurrection.

An unusual feature of Dungeon Master is that the more you practise the better your characters become. Right from the start, get your magic users casting spells. Any old rubbish will do – it just gives your players more experience. With ninjas, get them throwing items from the outset, and also, in early combat, try (carefully) using magic users in physical combat. A useful tactic can be to find a quiet part of the dungeon and just practise magic first, then when your mana is exhausted get the ninjas to practice throwing and then the fighters to slash away at fresh air. This aspect of Dungeon Master remains almost unique, so may well be underestimated by gamers more used to other experience gaining products.

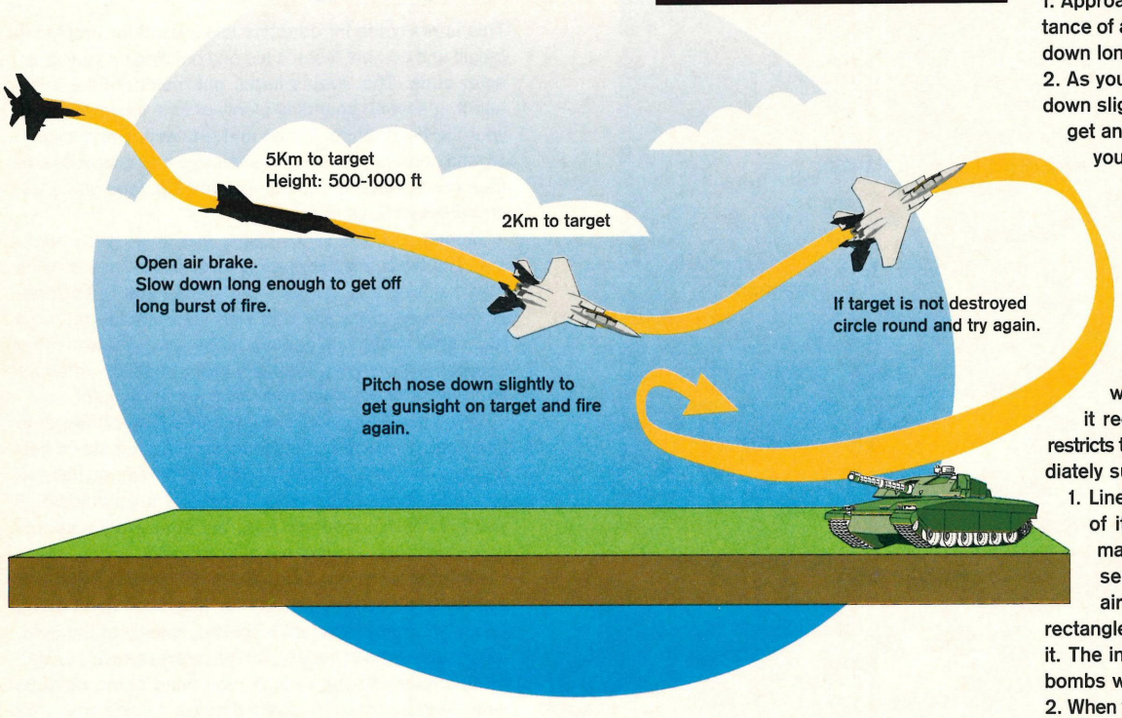
Some general points. First, to play Dungeon Master successfully, it is almost essential to map each level. There are scores of hidden doors and secret rooms and when looking at your maps you can almost develop a feeling for where these rooms are. Many players have completed the game without touching vast portions of the dungeon complex. Secondly, save, save, and save again — you never know what is round the next corner and to have to repeat an entire level is heart breaking. Get into the habit of saving after a big combat, at the end of a level, and so on. Always search under things that

Character	Iaido	Zed	Chani	Hawk	Boris	Nabi	Alex Ander	Hissa	Gothmog	Sonja	Leyla	Mophus	Stamm	Alizi	Leif	Daroou	Halk	Syra	Gando	Linflas	Wu Tse	Tiggy	Wuuf	Elija
Health	48	60	47	70	35	55	50	80	60	65	48	55	75	61	75	100	90	53	39	65	45	25	40	60
Stamina	65	60	67	85	65	65	57	61	55	70	60	55	80	77	70	65	75	72	63	50	47	45	50	58
Mana	11	10	17	10	28	13	13	05	18	02	03	19	00	07	07	06	00	15	26	12	20	35	30	22
Fighter	03	01	01	01	–	–	–	03	–	04	–	–	04	01	03	03	04	–	–	03	–	–	03	01
Ninja	–	01	–	–	01	–	03	01	–	–	04	–	–	03	–	–	–	–	03	–	01	01	–	–
Wizard	–	01	03	–	03	01	01	–	04	–	–	–	–	–	–	02	–	03	01	01	03	03	–	–
Priest	01	01	–	03	–	03	–	–	–	–	–	04	–	–	01	–	–	01	–	–	–	–	01	03
Strength	43	40	37	45	35	41	44	58	40	54	40	42	52	47	46	50	55	38	39	45	38	30	33	42
Dexterity	55	40	47	35	45	36	55	48	43	45	53	35	43	48	40	30	43	35	45	45	35	45	57	48
Wisdom	48	40	57	38	55	45	55	35	48	39	35	40	35	42	39	35	30	43	45	47	53	50	45	42
Vitality	35	50	37	55	40	45	40	35	34	49	47	48	50	45	50	45	46	45	33	35	45	35	40	36
Antimagic	45	40	47	35	45	55	35	43	50	40	45	40	35	30	45	30	38	42	48	50	47	59	35	53
Antifire	50	40	37	35	40	55	40	55	59	40	35	45	55	35	45	45	48	40	33	35	40	40	40	40

QED

Simulation

1 Strafing runs



A change in the scheduled timetable this month. Those of you expecting tactics on stealth flying will have to wait awhile longer. This month, we focus on ground attack techniques — how to take all those Mk 84s or Mavericks hanging under your wing and let them loose on your targets with optimum precision. This particular lesson caters for everyone from WWII bombers (except the large multi-engined types like the B-17) to F-15s and beyond.

Take off

After arming your plane, follow standard take-off procedures to get yourself into the air. Now for these practice sessions you're going to need a target, something large, easy to spot and preferably not too far away. If you have a bombing range or a training ground to fly over, then pick a target from here. If not, you'll just have to choose a friendly target to practise on if you don't want to run the risk of flying deep over enemy territory. Anyhow, pick and head towards your target, flying straight and level at about 500ft.

Missiles and rockets

By far the easiest form of ground attack is with fire-and-forget missiles (in modern aircraft) and rockets (in older ones). Very little needs to be done to score an accurate hit, apart from lining yourself up on the target, getting a lock if necessary and pressing the trigger. To be doubly sure of getting a hit, try to get the target lined up with the cross-hairs on your HUD (head-up display) and wait until you can see the whites of their eyes, so to speak.

One other point about releasing missiles is that you should for the most part be over 500ft before firing as most missiles drop down from your aircraft before arming themselves.

Strafing runs (illustration 1)

Destroying 'soft' targets (tanks, trucks, small buildings, etc) with your cannon is also a fairly easy process, although you do have to keep a careful eye on your altitude to avoid ploughing into the ground.

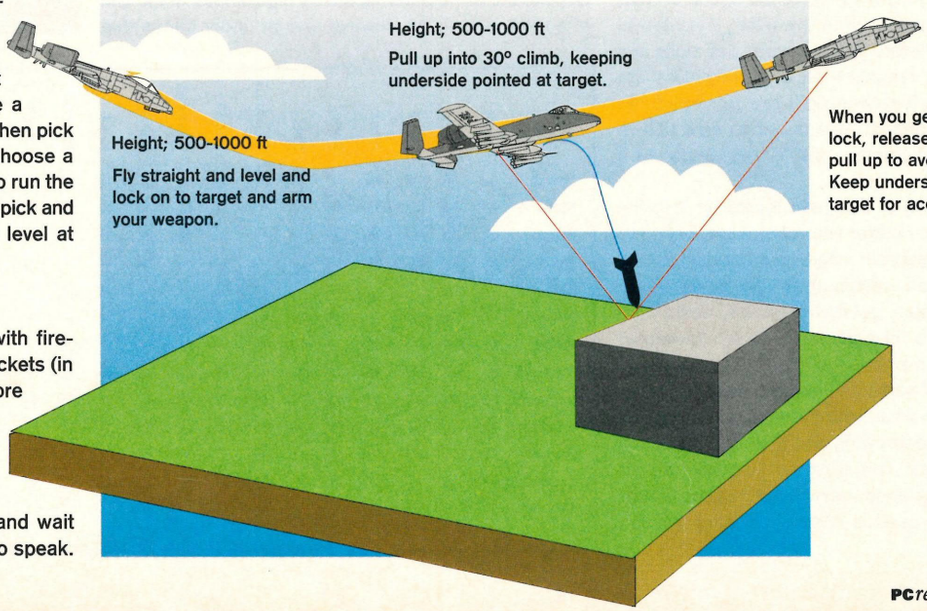
1. Approach your target between 500ft-1000ft at a distance of around 5km. Open your brake in order to slow down long enough to get off a good burst.
2. As you get within 2km of the target, pitch your nose down slightly in order to get the gun-sight over the target and let her rip. If you don't destroy the target on your first pass, circle round and try again.

Dive bombing (illustration 2)

The most ancient art of dropping bombs, a technique that can be applied to practically any bomb-carrying aircraft, is the classic flying-up-to-a-great-height-then-dropping-down-vertically method. Despite being pretty old, dive bombing remains the most effective way of releasing free-fall bombs, mainly because it reduces the chance of missing the target and restricts the damage caused should you miss to the immediately surrounding area.

1. Line up on the target before you get within 10km of it as you're going to need a bit of space to manoeuvre. When you have the correct HUD mode selected for dive-bombing (obviously not in older aircraft) you should see your target in a [racking rectangle and a bomb-sight indicator moving towards it. The indicator represents where on the ground your bombs would hit if released now.
2. When you get within 5-7km of the target pull your nose up into a steep (60-80 degree) climb. Continue to fly at full speed in order to reach the desired altitude of 8,000-10,000ft before you overshoot the target.
3. When high enough, level off quickly, opening your air-brake as you do so. Opening the brake at this stage is the most important part of the manoeuvre and the most easy to overlook. Failing to do so will almost definitely mean an overshoot and possibly means you won't pull out of the dive fast enough.
4. When you reach the apex of your climb, you should only be around 1-2km from the target. Push your nose over into an 60-80 degree dive, lining the bomb-sight

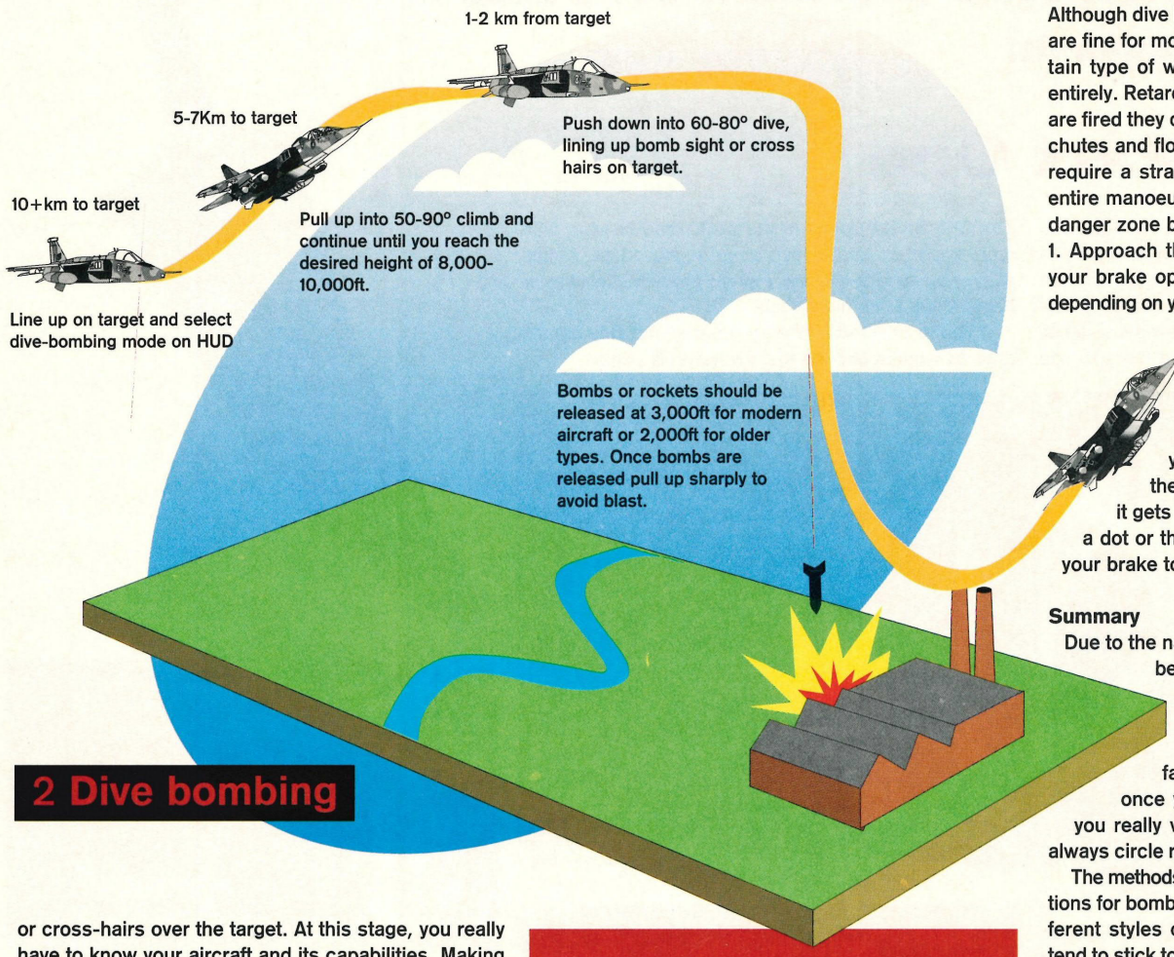
3 Laser-guided bombing



School

Lesson 3

Air-to-ground attacks



2 Dive bombing

or cross-hairs over the target. At this stage, you really have to know your aircraft and its capabilities. Making sure you know exactly when to start pulling out of the dive is essential if you don't want to end up delivering your bombs by hand. You may want to practise a few dives before you start your bombing run, testing out different altitudes and speeds until you get to a turning rate you're happy with.

5. Ideally, the bombs (or rockets, or whatever) should be released at around 3,000ft for modern aircraft or 2,000ft for older flyers. Once away, make sure you pull out of the dive, close your brake and turn away sharply so as to avoid taking damage from the blast. If you are bombing over enemy territory, it's prudent at this point to check for enemy activity. When you perform a dive-bomb, you do tend to make yourself extremely visible to detection.

Laser-guided bombs (illustration 3)

Laser-guided bombs work in a similar way to missiles in that you get a lock on a target and wait until you are in range. The difference with LGBs is that they need to be guided into their target right up to the moment of impact. The bombs are fed their target information by the use of a laser beam emitted from the underbelly of your plane. Should the connection break the bomb will fall uselessly to the ground.

1. Approach the target flying straight and level between 500-1,000ft. Lock on the target and arm your weapon.

2. When you are within 5km of the target, pull your nose up into a shallow (30 degree) climb, keeping your underside pointed at the target. When your HUD flashes a confirmed lock or asks you to fire, release your payload and pull up to escape the blast area. Even once the bombs have gone you'll have to keep your underside pointing towards the target for an accurate hit.

Level bombing

Although dive bombing and laser-guided toss bombing are fine for most normal types of bomb, there is a certain type of weapon that require a different method entirely. Retarded bombs (so called because once they are fired they drop from the aircraft, deploy small parachutes and float down to the target before detonating) require a straight and level approach throughout the entire manoeuvre, allowing you to be well clear of the danger zone by the time they explode.

1. Approach the target in the standard manner, with your brake open. Get a lock on the target and then, depending on your simulator, you'll get some kind of ranging bar or a target distance indicator on your HUD.

2. Some simulators will then take care of the whole process for you, firing the bombs at the correct time. For those of you that require a manual delivery, watch the ranging bar or the distance indicator as it gets smaller. When the bar is little more than a dot or the distance is zero, press fire and close your brake to avoid taking damage.

Summary

Due to the nature of most bomb runs, external views become pretty redundant unless you can turn on the HUD outside your plane. It's best to practise each technique from within the cockpit, only bothering with fancy viewpoints of your target blowing up once you've really started to master them. If you really want to survey your handiwork you can always circle round and pass over the target for a look.

The methods described above are generalised instructions for bombing runs. Different simulators handle different styles of bombing in different ways, but most tend to stick to the same path. Where you will find them differing is in their presentation of HUDs and other information. If you don't have a bomb-sight indicator to drop your bombs with, try using the distance indicator instead. Improvise with with what you have to get the best results.

Review

A thorough testing is hardly necessary for these techniques as if you've been practising them as we've gone along you've already started to master them. Things you may want to try are bombing at night (if possible), destroying targets with just one bomb and going through the motions without referring back to the text.

Glossary

Fire and forget — if your bombs have been 'locked' on to their target, you don't need to time the drop precisely.

Free-fall bombs — Bombs that are not artificially guided to their target by any form of radar, laser or heat-signature.

Head up display — your first person viewpoint sitting in the cockpit.

Ranging bar — A line on your HUD that slowly decreases in size, indicating the optimum moment to release your bombs.

Tracking rectangle — A white rectangle on your head-up display surrounding the current target.

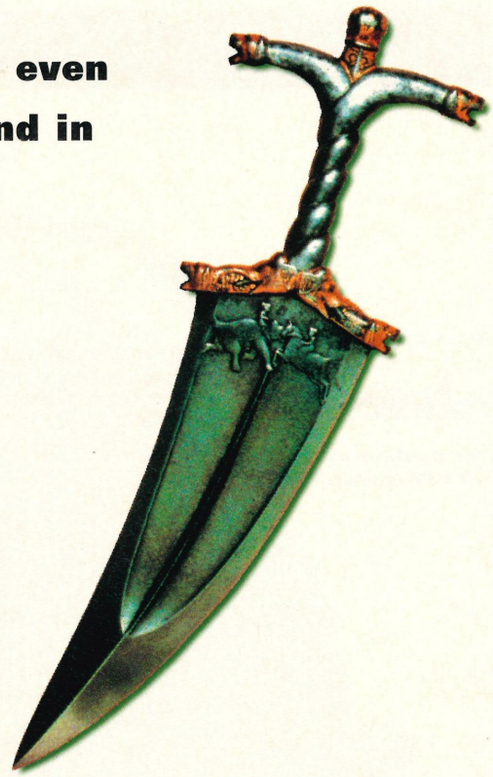
Next month: we concentrate on dogfighting tactics with WWII craft, courtesy of Reach for the Skies programmer Rod Hyde.

QED

Laura Bow II

The Dagger of Amon Ra

Amateur Agatha Christies, professional Poirots or even veteran Van Der Valks could all probably use a hand in Sierra's latest whodunnit.



Part One

As in Laura Bow's prequel, The Colonel's Bequest, The Dagger of Amon Ra is divided into a series of acts through which you progress by completing certain tasks and witnessing various events, some of which happen whether you are there to see them or not. If nothing much is going on at your present location, don't hang about waiting for the action to come to you, explore other places, even if you've been there before.

Ms Bow's notebook is an essential sleuthing tool for recording information gleaned from the various characters cum suspects. In this, you build up a complete dossier, which, combined with a prudent use of "ze little grey cells", will hopefully bring you to the right conclusion.



Act one — a nose for news

Starting the game in the news room, you need to speak to Rube about every entry in the notebook. Look through both the litter bin and your desk, the key for which is under your nose!

With the contents of the desk safely collected, it is time to visit the locations you currently know about. There are two basic ways to travel, either by walking about or using taxis (use the signs to hail a cab and your press pass will get you round). If you're on foot, don't forget the green cross code (otherwise you'll end up as a nasty mess on the sidewalk).

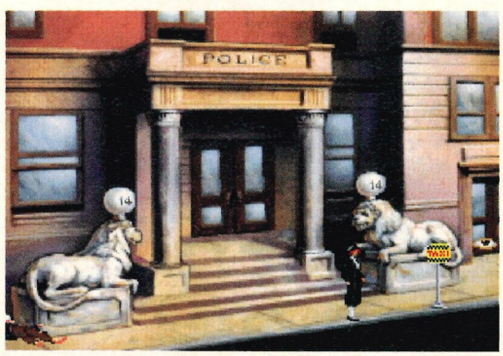
The police station is a good place to start, but check the tramp who gets the news later. The desk sergeant will be more helpful once you've found a way to feed his appetite, but at the moment just speak to Detective O'Reilly. When you leave the station, keep an eye out for any changes.

Next you can go to Lo Fat's laundry, making sure you speak to the street urchins. Keep a sporting attitude and you won't regret it. Inside the laundry, make sure you speak to Lo Fat about everything.

Back at the paper, or rather just outside, Luigi is worth talking to. His one track mind is just the ticket and those who have been working long shifts will appreciate his fare! This could be the passport to success at the illegal club and Ziggy and flappers are the people you want.

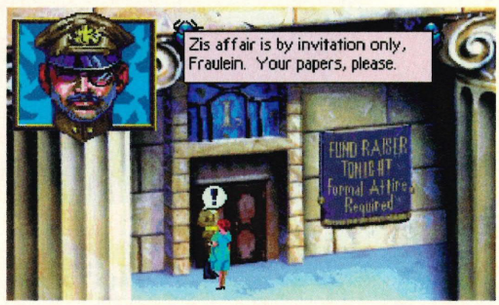
The 12th Street Docks is the next place to visit, with more important information from the stevedore. At this stage, you need to address a single problem, the answer being found in an untidy cab.

If you've covered all the above, then Act One should draw to a close and the real mystery will begin.



Act two — suspects on parade

After Act One, you are automatically ferried to the Leyendecker Museum, the time being 7.00pm. Your press pass will satisfy the doorman, allowing you to enter the main hall. Speak to everyone you can, asking them all about the growing entries in the notebook. Present should be Dr Carter, Dr Carrington, Yvette Delacroix, Ziggy, Rameses Najeer and all the main characters.



Information is gained through direct conversation or eavesdropping on a series of animated sequences. As these conversations occur, characters start to disappear. Once you have overheard all the relevant gossip, the room will be empty, but grab a classic piece of equipment, which will help you later on 'behind closed doors'. When you visit the gift shop, examine in detail the exhibits, noting any discrepancies. This should lead to your exclusion and the time should march on to 7.30pm. The obstacle to the dinosaur room should now be gone, so have a good look round, picking a bone when you can.

Explore other rooms as well: in particular give the ancient relics some real attention. If you've had a start then Act Two is done, the time is 8.15pm and now the real test begins ...

Next month: Mrs Peacock in the study with the lead piping!

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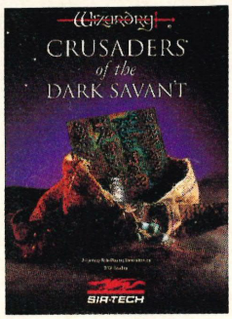
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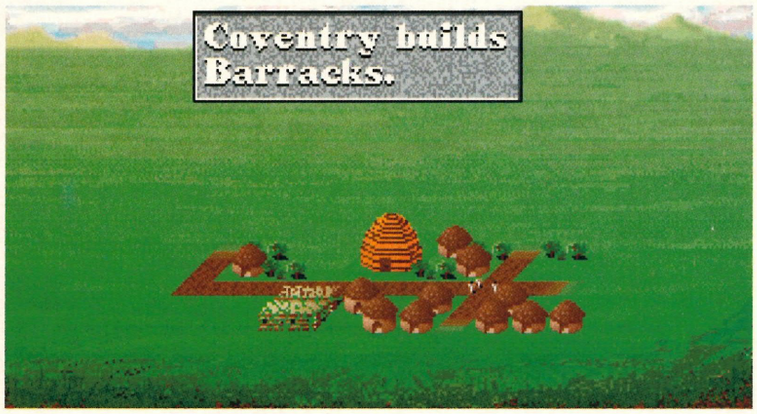
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TIPS

Thank you for all the splendid tips that you continue to send in month after month and although we can't use them all, we do attempt to print as many as possible. Remember, senders of the tip or tips considered to be the best of the current month's crop will win themselves a software prize.



Civilization

Andrew 'Bruce' de Wijin of Victoria, Australia, has sent in the following rules for total world domination.

Rule one — while playing the game hold down Shift and type 1234567890QWERTUIOPASDFGHJKL. Rule two — there is NAWW rule two. Rule three — hold down Alt and type the same.

This should uncover the whole of your-world without you having to explore it. You can also click on any enemy city and view its report, change anything about it apart from what it is producing, and view all enemy moves.

Titus the Fox

The rather cunning Matthew Connor of Surrey has managed to find "masses of extra energy tokens" on level three of this cutesie platform romp. When you go up the ladder at the very left of the platform with the two buzz-bombers on it, you will find a pot of paint. Go past it and jump as far to the left as you can to claim six energy tokens.

Use the spring that you land on when you come off the first block of scaffolding to collect the tokens on top of the pile of dustbins guarded by a drunk.

If you go down the manhole, you can find even more tokens. Jump over the two floors of spikes, collecting the spring on your way and then climb down the ladder.

The next use of the spring is evident. When you are standing next to the first spike pit, jump past it. On the second, you must jump into the pit and press yourself against the left wall. Crawl along the passage you have found and you come to a room with several boxes. Move the boxes to reveal a secret passage.

This leads to several rooms full to the brim with tokens that eventually lead to the pavement again.

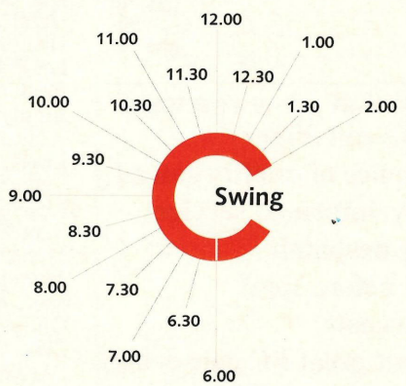
Links

STAR TIP

This has to be one of the handiest tips ever, it's certainly helped my own game of Links improve no end. Many thanks to Michael 'Tricky' Hurt for his excellent guide to chipping and putting, and sorry we took so long to publish it.

CLUB	IN THE AIR	ROLLING	TOTAL
LW	58ft	5ft	21yds
SW	23yds	2yds	25yds
PW	33yds	3yds	36yds
9I	43yds	4yds	47yds
8I	50yds	5yds	55yds
7I	54yds	6yds	60yds
6I	58yds	6yds	64yds
5I	57yds	7yds	64yds
4I	59yds	6yds	65yds
3I	57yds	7yds	64yds
2I	55yds	8yds	63yds
1I	51yds	8yds	59yds

DISTANCE REQUIRED	TIME ON CLOCK
15inches	6.00
3ft	6.30
7ft	7.00
10ft	7.30
14ft	8.00
18ft	8.30
26ft	9.00
33ft	9.30
40ft	10.00
47fy	10.30
52ft	11.00
22yds	11.30
26yds	12.00
30yds	12.30
35yds	1.00
39yds	1.30
42yds	2.00



As always, should you have hints, tips, cheats or other information of a helpful nature, then don't hesitate to imprint the data in a textual form on to a sheet of information conveyance using a writing implement of sorts. Dispatch said papyrus to our good selves at the usual address wherein we shall endeavour to perform to the best of our abilities in the manner of enabling your manuscript to appear in our hallowed pages. Mark your envelope Tips, though, or you won't get anywhere.

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Upgrading your PC

Fitting a

Last month we took a look at the major soundboards on the market, but once you've made the decision to buy one, how do you go about getting it up and running? If you missed our feature on fitting a soundboard the first time round, here is a quick refresher course.

Despite tremendous technological steps like the Realsound process, which can actually squeeze quite a decent performance out of it, the humble PC bleeper has had its day. If you play modern PC games without a soundboard, you are missing half the fun. And there really is no need, because there are sound add-ons available at a range of prices and sophistication from £30 upwards.

When upgrading from the PC's built-in speaker to a more sophisticated device, there are several paths you can take, depending on what you ultimately want to do with the machine. Let's consider them one at a time.

The simplest and cheapest sound solution is to buy an external digital/analogue converter. These start from about £30 in price. They are an ideal solution if you don't like the idea of opening up your machine because they simply plug into a parallel port.

If you only have one parallel port and you use a printer, then you could look for a sound device that allows a printer to be plugged in at the same time. Otherwise you will have the hassle of switching between them. Beware however, because this often results in a rather unsafe connection on your parallel port and any movement of the machine may result in either the connector or the parallel port being damaged.

These devices work in a very simple way. Sampled sound is sent as a series of bytes to the printer port, the device then intercepts these and converts them to an analogue signal which can be fed to headphones, a small speaker or an amplifier. Because the sounds are sampled, the possibilities are endless.

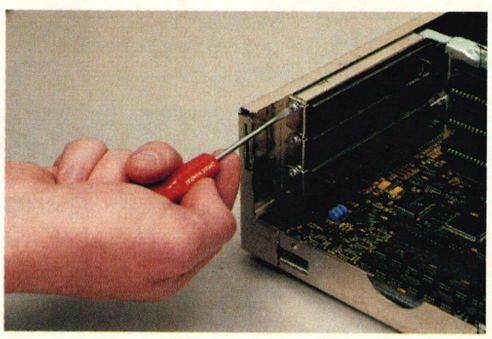
If you have a portable machine, or a machine with no free expansion slots then this type of sound device may be your only option, although Westpoint Creative has invented a version of the Sound Blaster, called the Port Blaster, which plugs into a parallel port. Another point to bear in mind is that the most powerful of these devices require either a mains adaptor or batteries to run.

If you want a more sophisticated device, then you will need to fit it internally in an expansion slot. These devices range from £80 to upwards of £300. Take care, when you are making your choice, that you have a free expansion slot of the right size. While many soundboards will fit quite happily in either an 8-bit or a 16-bit slot, some are 16-bit only, and some are quite big (the Roland LAPC-1, for example, is a full-length card).

With regard to the way that soundboards generate sounds, one is by a digital-to-analogue conversion process which is identical to that used by external devices, and the other is synthesised sound. This type of sound is generated directly by the circuitry on the board, rather than being reproduced from samples. Some soundboards feature both types of sound generation on the same card.

Fitting a soundboard may be a little more complicated than fitting many expansion cards because you must configure the card. Each card will be designed to work at a range of I/O addresses, DMA lines, and Interrupt numbers. Don't worry about what these mean, just take our word for it that many external devices use them to communicate with your computer, and each device must have separate address, DMA line and Interrupt number assigned to it. Your card will be configured at the factory to a default setting, but this may conflict with another device that you are already using, like a mouse. You must resolve the conflict, or it is possible that neither device will work properly.

Configuring the card is usually achieved by changing the position of jumpers. These are tiny plastic and metal bridges that connect pairs



After disconnecting the machine from the power supply and carefully opening it, find a free expansion slot in which to fit the card. If the card is long, then try and choose a slot in which it will fit easily without interfering with cables.

Soundboard

of pins protruding from the board. The actual operation is not particularly harrowing, provided that you read the manual carefully and put the jumpers in the correct place.

It is very unlikely that you will damage the card if you do get them in the wrong place, but if you are worried about doing this sort of thing, your best bet is to find a retailer who is prepared to fit the card for you, and check that it is fully functioning. Note that it doesn't matter which way round the jumper blocks go as long as they connect firmly to both pins. If you see a jumper block connected to a single pin, then it is not actually performing any function, so you can safely leave it where it is. It's probably safer there than lying around in a drawer, and you'll know exactly where it is if you need to reconfigure your card at any stage.

Most cards are supplied with set-up and diagnostic software which you should run to complete the installation. This will ask you questions about the board's configuration, and then test it by trying to play some sound effects or music through it. It will also install any necessary driving software on your hard disk, and possibly alter your Config.sys and Autoexec.bat files so that your soundboard is properly set up every time you start up your machine. A further piece of internal tampering will be required if you want to use the optional facility offered by some cards, to reroute the standard bleeper sound through the card.

The advantage of this is that you can control the volume of the bleeper sound, and it will be of higher quality. So if you already have a volume control and you're happy with it as it is, don't bother.

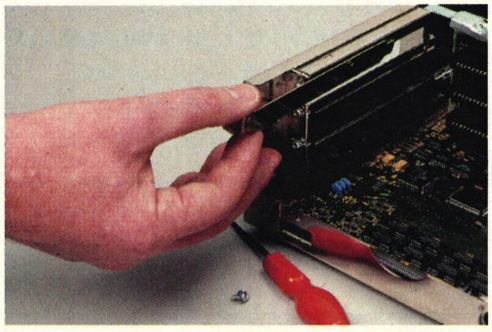
The operation involves finding your PC's speaker and tracing the wires back to the point at which they connect to the circuit board. If they plug in, rather than being soldered directly to the board, then you can simply unplug the speaker, and connect up the wire from the soundcard instead. If the speaker is soldered directly to the circuit board, then you can still perform this operation, but you'll need to have had some experience of simple electrical construction first.

The best way to go about it is not, as you might at first imagine, to cut the plug from the wires connected to the sound board and solder these to the main board in place of the speaker. Instead, cut the wires from the speaker about three or four centimetres short of the circuit board, and solder the section of cable from the circuit board to a socket compatible with the connector from the sound board (you should be able to buy such a component from your local branch of Tandy). Now you can plug your sound board into the new connection, but it can be easily removed at a later stage if necessary. Furthermore, soldering a suitable plug to the wires emerging from the speaker will mean that the two methods of bleeper output are freely interchangeable.

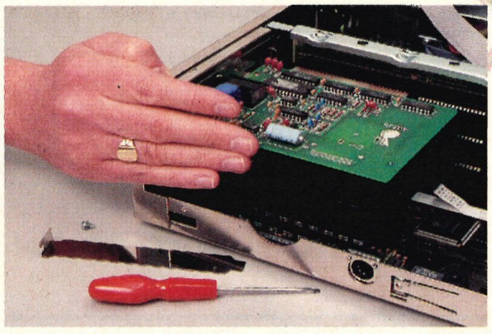
All soundboards will have at least one socket into which you can plug headphones, speakers or an amplifier. They all vary, some sporting 3.5" stereo jack sockets, some quarter inch stereo jack sockets and others, like the Roland cards, having more professional twin phono sockets.

When you first connect your sound card to speakers or an amplifier, start with the volume control on the card low and the volume control on your speakers/amplifier at maximum, while playing the test music or sounds through the card, slowly turn it up until it reaches a comfortably loud level with no distortion.

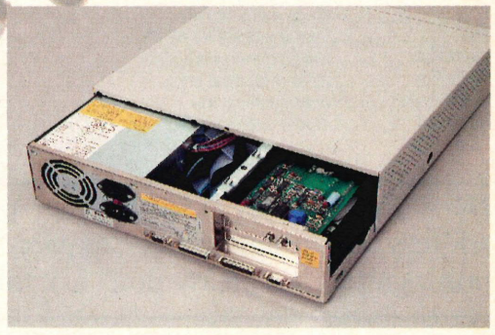
The volume control on your card is now set at the optimum level for your set-up and you



Unscrew the blanking plate and carefully slide it out. Put it in a safe place in case you need to blank off that slot again in the future. Make sure that there are no stray cables likely to tangle on the card as you insert it.



After changing the jumper settings on the card, slide it carefully but firmly into place. Make sure that it is pushed all the way down and flush against the end of the chassis. Use the screw from the blanking plate to secure the card.



After connecting the internal speaker circuitry if required, slide the case back onto the chassis, but don't put all of the screws back in yet, you might have to change a jumper block on the card if you discover a conflict.

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* Information only — no sales

Letters in brackets indicate which of the soundboards the supplier deals with (see table).

	Price	Int/Ext	Compatible with		
			Ad Lib	SoundB	Gen.Midi
A Ad Card	**£50.20**	**Internal**	**Yes**	**No**	**No**
B Convox Speech Thing	**£84.99**	**External**	**No**	**No**	**No**
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D GMX-1	**£211.91**	**External**	**No**	**No**	**Yes**
E Gravis Ultrasound	**£175**	**Internal**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**
F Pro Audio Spectrum	**£292**	**Internal**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**No**
G Roland LAPC — 1	**£322.55**	**Internal**	**No**	**No**	**No**
H Roland SCC — 1	**£285.11**	**Internal**	**No**	**No**	**Yes**
I Sound Galaxy BX	**£89**	**Internal**	**Yes**	**No**	**No**
J Sound Galaxy NX	**£126**	**Internal**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**No**
K Sound Galaxy NX Pro	**£168**	**Internal**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**
L Soundblaster 2	**£89**	**Internal**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**
M Soundblaster Pro	**£139**	**Internal**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**No**
M Soundblaster Pro 16	**£179**	**Internal**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**
O Soundmaster+	**£79.99**	**Internal**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**No**
P Soundmaster II	**£199.99**	**Internal**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**No**
Q Waveplay RS	**£17.01**	**External**	**No**	**No**	**No**

should leave it set at this point, adjusting the volume by using the control on your speakers or amplifier.

Some soundboards also have a sampling facility, and may provide you with a microphone or line-in socket or both. The line-in socket should be used if you are sampling sounds from another device like a tape deck or radio. The microphone socket is a lot more sensitive than the line-in socket and should only be used with low-power microphones. Don't plug anything powerful into this socket or you may damage the card.

If the volume control on the sound card is also used as an input limiting control for sampling, then you will also want to find the optimum level for this using your microphone, and other sound sources. This is not likely to be the same as your optimum volume position, so you may need to clearly mark both settings.

If you want to connect other musical instruments to your soundboard, you will require a model with a MIDI connector. Again, there is no particular standard for the type of connector used. It will usually be a single 15-pin D-type socket, which carries MIDI in, out and thru signals, or a pair of Din sockets, carrying separate in and out signals. Check whether the MIDI connector produces a signal that can be directly supplied to external MIDI instruments, or whether, as is the case with Roland's LAPC-1 card, it must be routed through a MIDI processor first.

Not all sound cards come supplied with MIDI connecting leads, even if they do come supplied with a suitable MIDI socket, so you may have to add this on to your budget when planning your purchase.

On some devices, the MIDI connector doubles as a joystick port. In this case, it will certainly be a 15-pin D-type socket. This is rather useful if you are short of free expansion slots, because you can replace your existing joystick card with the soundboard. If, for some reason, you wish to keep your existing joystick card, then you may have to disable the joystick controller on the soundboard. This is usually done by, once again, moving a jumper block.

All in all, you shouldn't find installing a sound card too traumatic, especially if you've installed other cards before. If, having set everything up, you fins that you're not getting the noises you expect, or the machine keeps freezing and slowing down, then the most likely cause is a DMA, interrupt or I/O address conflict, which can be easily resolved by changing the positions of jumper blocks, so you should experiment with these before rushing the board back to the manufacturer with a letter of complaint.

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Official RRP (excl. VAT)	£945	£1,179	£1,099	£1,099	£1,195
Maximum resolution in dots per inch	300 x 300	300 x 300	300 x 300	300 x 300	400 x 400
Windows 3 Driver @ 400 dpi	-	-	-	-	YES
Print Speed	6ppm	4ppm	4ppm	5ppm	6ppm
Straight Paper Path	YES	-	-	-	YES
PCL 5 Printer Command Language	-	YES	YES	-	YES
HP-GL/2 Vector Graphics included	-	YES	YES	YES	YES
Resolution Improvement/Enhancement	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Standard RAM	0.5Mb	1Mb	1Mb	1Mb	2Mb
Full A4/300 dpi graphics with standard RAM	-	-	-	-	YES
Warm Up Time	<45 secs	<60 secs	60 secs	33 secs	45 secs
First Page of Text Output	<20 secs	<40 secs	34 secs	20 secs	<15 secs
Document Description Language included	-	-	-	-	YES
Flash ROM	-	-	-	-	YES
Upgradable Firmware	-	-	-	-	YES
IC Card Slot	YES	-	-	YES	YES
Scalable Resident Fonts - in HP LJ III Emulation	-	8	8	0	8
Resident Bit-Mapped Fonts	11	14	14	16	14
AGFA Intellifont Scalable Font Technology	-	YES	-	-	YES
HP LaserJet III Emulation Included	-	YES	YES	-	YES
EPSON FX Emulation Included	YES	-	YES	-	YES
IBM ProPrinter Emulation Included	-	-	YES	-	YES
Standard Tray Capacity	100	70	100	200	100
Protective cover on standard tray	YES	-	YES	YES	YES
Cost per copy**	1.65p	2.00p	1.71p	1.64p	1.65p
Min-Max Paper Weight in gsm	60-157	60-105	60-120	60-131	60-157
Able to print on OHP Film	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Able to print on card (157gsm - Manual Feed)	YES	-	-	-	YES
Standby -Noise Level	<40dB	31.7dB	<35dB	38 dB	<38dB
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Q&A

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Turbo troubles

Q I have recently upgraded my old XT for a fast 16MHz 286 machine. I have noted that the performance increases markedly when the 'turbo' switch is depressed on the front. Having bought my machine second hand, I lack much of its documentation and am unable to find out exactly what this switch does. What would have been a mere curiosity has become a necessity due to a related 'fault' I have noticed.

Whilst playing Battle Isle, the computer displayed an 'unable to find program' message and dumped me back into DOS. A quick Chkdsk informed me that 12Mb of program files contained errors. This has happened once before, but rather than re-formatting the hard disk last time, I tried to 'correct' the problem with the /f switch on Chkdsk, but only succeeded in losing 95% of all the programs on the hard drive, (including the operating system).

I then turned the turbo switch off and re-ran the Chkdsk command. Hey presto ... no errors. Is this a common occurrence, does it only happen if the turbo has been operating a long time, and most importantly, is there a cure apart from turning it off?

R Pegg
Windsor
Berks

A *I'm afraid I have some bad news ... The turbo switch controls the clock speed of your machine. When the turbo switch is on, your machine runs at its fastest clock speed, ie, 16MHz in this case. When the turbo switch is off the machine usually falls back to a sedate 8MHz, the speed of the original IBM AT. The only reason for having a turbo switch is to allow programs that would run too fast at 16MHz to run at a more normal speed. In other words, your machine should work perfectly at 'turbo' speed because, despite its name, this is its normal mode of operation.*

Now we come to the small problem with the hard disk. If I follow your description of what happens you seem to be saying that the disk drive occasionally misbehaves when running with turbo on, but the problem goes away when it is then switched off. This shouldn't happen and it suggests that there is a fault in the hard disk controller. The fault is probably heat-related because the speed at which a device can work goes down as it heats up.

The conclusion is that you almost certainly need to replace the disk controller and/or the drive itself. There is no easy way to find out which except by substituting new devices. In the meantime I wouldn't trust the drive with important data.

Instant upgrade?

Q After I read Mark Dalloway's letter in the September issue I decided to try to change my Amstrad PC2086 from an XT to a PS/2 to run games such as Links, etc. I searched through my MS-DOS manual and found a part about DIP switches but it was headed PS/2 or AT mode, which seemed to indicate I had either a PS/2 or an AT already. I looked to see how the switches were currently configured and found switch six on, making it a PS/2. I then turned on my computer and ran Device, and found mono/colour "on" whereas in the AT mode it was disabled. The graphics mode was PVGA 03h whereas in the AT mode it was 07h.

Which mode should I keep my computer in for running games such as Links as either mode seems possible? Also, please could you tell me if either of these modes could run Wolfenstein 3D?

Robin Hare
Hassocks
West Sussex

A *This business of AT/XT or PS/2 mode is much simpler than you might think and it all goes back to the problem of running colour software on a black and white monitor. If you have a machine with a colour monitor then this whole question is virtually irrelevant to you. But if you are using a mono monitor it is important no matter what type your machine is.*

There are two different ways of supporting colour on VGA mono systems — usually called PS/2 and AT mode. The PS/2 mode will automatically compensate for a program that is trying to work in a

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colour mode on a mono system. The result is that the colours show as intermediate shades of grey. The only drawback of this mode is that you cannot use a second video display adapter. As this isn't something many of us want to do you are reasonably safe in leaving your set up in PS/2 mode. In AT mode VGA colour software refuses to run on a mono monitor and the very few examples there are of mono only software will refuse to run on a colour monitor. You can make them run using the Mode command to tell the VGA adapter to pretend to be a mono or a colour system but this isn't automatic.

All of this should explain the changes you report, ie, colour on/off, and while modes 03 and 07 are the same resolution, 03 is colour and 07 is mono. So, in short, the PS/2 vs AT mode has nothing to do with speed of running software and very little to do with compatibility. Set the switch to PS/2 mode and let the machine automatically cope with the problem of supporting colour displays on a mono monitor and vice versa. As you can now see this whole question has very little impact on whether or not a piece of software will run on your machine or not. There are much bigger differences between an XT, AT and PS/2 than just how they cope with the VGA colour/mono problem.

101% compatible rubbish?

Q I'm in the process of buying a new PC and the only thing I have to decide is if I should get it with DR-DOS 6 or MS-DOS 5. You seriously confused me by giving the strange answer to John Mulvany's DR DOS vs MS DOS letter in Issue 9 (that "101% compatible rubbish"). I read in your magazine that Monkey Island 2 might not work too well with DR-DOS. Would that only happen in the early versions of the DOS that had Superstor v1? If I bought DR-DOS now, would it have Superstor v2, and would that help gaming problems? Superstor claims to be able to increase your floppy disk drive — what does this mean? Please could you print some sort of pros and cons list for each DOS.

Would you recommend a three-button mouse instead of a two-button one? Is the third mouse button helpful for mouse-driven games?

Faheem Zaman
Chesterfield
Derbyshire

A *I am pleased that you have narrowed your choice of PC down to just which operating system to buy — most people don't really worry which operating system they get until after they have it! If you want a list of DR-DOS's plus points they are: potentially more conventional memory left free, better disk cache, disk optimiser, pass word protection, disk compression and a file transfer utility.*

It is important to realise that each of these plus points really only comes down to a free extra bundled with the product. What I mean by this is that if you want a better disk cache, file transfer utility, or disk compression program for MS-DOS 5, you can go out and buy one. The only features that you cannot add on to MS-DOS 5 by buying extra software is the larger amount of free conventional memory and the password protection. However the increased conventional memory, over and above what can be obtained by MS-DOS 5, is achieved by some tricks that I personally don't trust.

I suppose the real difference is what you think is most important — a slight technological edge or security. Yes, it really is the 101% compatibility question. Suppose you have just installed some new advanced software (most games come into this category!) on your DR-DOS 6 machine and it doesn't work. It could be something to do with the software, but there would be the doubt in your mind that it was DR-DOS 6. Contrast this with the situation where you are using MS-DOS 5 instead. Most of the PC world is using MS-DOS 5 and it is a good bet that the developers of advanced software do. So even if the problem isn't DR-DOS 6 you can't help suspecting it when things go wrong — and even if you don't I guarantee that the help line that you eventually phone will!

Lots of users have been happy with DR-DOS 6 and if you value the slight edge that it has over MS-DOS 5 then by all means go ahead and use it. Personally I'll stick with the 101% compatibility of the 'real thing'. Just to put the cat in the pigeon loft — did you know that MS-DOS 6 is just around the corner ...?

Finally, when it comes to a three-button mouse there is no disadvantage but most software, including games, simply ignores the middle button. By the way, it has been long taken as a mark of superior intelligence that the average PC user manages to juggle two mouse buttons whereas the Mac user has only one to play with!

Analogue vs digital

Q I have just purchased a Dynamics games card which changes the joystick ports from 15-pin to 9-pin, so I can use Amiga and ST joysticks. But the problem is that when I put the joystick into its port, nothing happens with any games, apart from Prince Of Persia when the main character will only jump. Can you please help because I am don't know whether to take it back or if I am doing something wrong.

Matthew Scanlon
Cardiff

A *The card is probably working but you still might want to take it back! The reason is that many 9-pin joysticks are digital joysticks rather than the more common analogue joysticks used with the PC. As a result, they will not work with games that are configured to use a standard PC joystick. The board may be working fine but I don't think it's what you want. Take it back, if you can, and swap it for an analogue card and joystick. There are some reasonable priced offers that make re-using an existing digital joystick not worth the effort.*

Where has all the memory gone?

Q I have an Eagle PC with a 386SX processor, 2Mb RAM, 42Mb hard drive, 1.44Mb floppy drive, and SVGA graphics. After reading the cover story in Issue 11, A Voyage Around The PC, I tried out some of the things you had suggested. When I got to the part about checking the free RAM by typing Mem I got this reply:

655360 bytes total conventional memory
655360 bytes available to MS-DOS
591248 largest executable program size

1441792 bytes total contiguous extended memory
0 bytes available contiguous extended memory
589824 bytes available XMS memory
MS-DOS resident in High Memory Area

Please could you tell me what this means, and how I can free the 1.44Mb of contiguous extended memory.

David Greenwood
Hanwood
Shrewsbury

A *This is a very common question and it's due to the madness in the current state of PC memory — see this month's Q&A Update.*

First, some arithmetic. You need to remember that one kilobyte (1K) is 1,024 bytes, not 1,000, and that one megabyte (1Mb) is (nearly always) 1,024 lots of 1,024 bytes. So with 2Mb fitted you have 2,097,152 Bytes of memory. The 640K (655,360 bytes) of conventional memory leaves 1,441,792 bytes unused as extended memory. The first 64K of this is used to load MS-DOS into high memory leaving a theoretical 983,040 bytes, or 960K, free. As Mem reports only

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577.4K this leaves 382.6K missing. Now I cannot be sure what this is being used for but the number looks very close to the 384K that would be used by enabling complete ROM shadowing. The upper 384K of the first 1Mb of every machine is used for ROMs and video hardware, etc. A great deal of often used system software is stored in ROM and the problem is that ROM is a lot slower than RAM. To speed the machine up the contents of ROM are copied to RAM which is then switched into the place the ROM occupied. The result is usually a very worthwhile speed up.

If you want the memory back, then you should look at your machine's manual to discover how to switch ROM shadowing off or to restrict it. Whenever I have tried this I have always switched it back on again because the machine really does slow down a lot! With memory down at around £25 to £30 for 1Mb I would look into buying more memory before fiddling with shadow RAM.

Give us the fax

Q I carry out a lot of my business work on the computer — mainly creating letters and sketches to send to clients, showing the products that I am involved with. I have a scanner and incorporate drawings within word-processed documents.

The next obvious addition to my computer that would be of great benefit in my work is the ability to fax the documents rather than to print and mail them. A fax card seems an obvious way of doing this, but I'm not clear about how one works.

Would the fax card receive faxes if I were out and left my computer on, or do I have to prepare the computer before telling the transmitter of the fax?

Richard Thomas
Glasgow

A Fax cards are a good idea, but they have some disadvantages when compared to a conventional fax machine. In general, what happens is that you print your document to the fax card instead of the printer. This means that instead of having to print the document out on paper and then scan it through a fax machine you can cut out the middle man, ie, the printer.

In principle, anything you can print will be faxed exactly as it would appear on the printer but exactly how true this is depends on the software. MS-DOS based fax software sometimes has difficulty sending mixed text and graphics and you need to check the specification. However most Windows fax cards and software have no such problems. All you do is print from any Windows application to the fax card device just as if it was a printer and the fax is sent.

When it comes to receiving faxes, the disadvantage is that you have to have your machine on and the fax software loaded and running. When the fax phone rings the machine answers it and saves the fax data to a disk file. If you are using Windows, then this all happens while you get on with using another program. If you are using DOS then you normally have to stop what you are doing while the fax comes in. You can view or print the fax file when you want to and you can discover what faxes have been received in your absence by looking at the fax log. The quality of the printed fax depends, of course, on the quality of your printer. The only real problem is that you need to leave your machine on, hard disk and all, while you are out and this worries some users enough to make them buy a real fax as well!

Send your queries to Q&A, PC Review, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, or, if you have access to CIX, the Compulink Information Exchange, you can e-mail us at: pcreview@cix.compulink.co.uk.
Mike James can only reply to your problems on this page, so please don't enclose SAEs or requests for personal replies.

Q&A *update*

Types of memory

The types of memory that you can fit is about the most confusing part of using, buying or upgrading a PC. Even when I get a question that isn't directly about memory problems I can often tell that the writer isn't entirely clear about the way memory is being used. So here is as straightforward an explanation as I can produce — memory in a nutshell.

The first thing to do is to make sure that you know the names. There are three types of memory — conventional, extended and expanded. Notice that it's very easy to confuse the last two because they have very similar names.

Conventional memory is the first 640K of memory and it is the only memory that MS-DOS programs can use in a simple way to store data and run sections of themselves.

Extended memory is any normal memory that is available in addition to the 640K. You can only really understand what 'normal' means in this context by contrasting it with expanded memory — see later.

You can think of conventional memory as the space that an MS-DOS program has to work and live in and any extended memory as a, usually huge, chunk of free space somewhere above its head that it cannot get at. Yes that's right — standard MS-DOS programs will ignore megabytes of extended memory and live in the cramped quarters of the 640K of conventional memory.

To make use of extended memory you need a program that knows how to get at it. In the jargon you need a 'protected mode' as opposed to a 'real mode' program. All Windows programs, for example, are protected mode programs and use extended memory as if they were born to it. No 640K prison cell for them.

Now we come to the confusing element — expanded memory. If the world was a perfectly logical place expanded memory wouldn't exist. It is an historical accident and I wish it would go away. Before 286 and 386 based machines, the original XT couldn't make use of extended memory. It physically was not capable of working with it. So to get around the memory limitation problem Lotus, Intel and Microsoft (LIM) invented a weird scheme to get the XT some extra space. Expanded memory works by allocating a small area of memory — a 64K frame — and then allowing the processor to swap the block of memory that sits in the frame. This is very like the way you can swap diskettes in a disk drive. How much data can a floppy disk drive store? It all depends how many diskettes you feed it with! In the same way the amount of memory that a 64K frame can hold depends on how many 64K expanded memory pages you can swap in and out of it.

You can think of expanded memory as like feeding the processor, trapped in its 640K box, extra memory through a small window. It can have as much memory as it likes, but only 64K at a time.

This description of expanded memory isn't entirely accurate because LIM improved the way it worked to include page frames bigger than 64K but not many programs use expanded memory in this more advanced way. Most simply use the 64K pages to store data that will not fit into conventional memory. It is also obvious that a program has to understand how expanded memory works before it can make use of it. As progress marches on expanded memory should just fade away because it is a complicated and slow way of giving a program some extra kilobytes to play with.

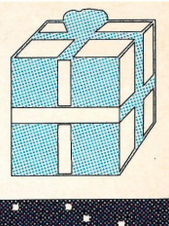
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BS23 JOB COST (3)
BS24 CHURCH MANAGER

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E001 MATHS GAME
E003 SET OF MATHS GAMES
E004 MATHS FLASH CARDS
E005 FINGER MAPS IN PCX
E006 H/WRITING ANALYSIS
E007 HANGMAN
E008 TEACH YOU COMPUTERS
E009 TEACH TOTS TO TYPE
E010 MATHS-MAZE GAME
E011 MATHS AD'TURE GAME
E012 PERSONALITY PROFILE
E013 LEARN ROADSIGNS
E014 STOP! SAVE THE PLANET
E015 SORT YOUR THOUGHTS
E016 FRENCH/REQ'S BASIC (2)
E017 GERMAN TUTOR
E018 HEBREW TUTOR
E019 ITALIAN (REQ'S TEACHER)
E020 TEACHER (For E019)
e021 JAPANESE TUTOR
E022 SPANISH TUTOR (2)
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EW24 AMY'S FIRST PRIMER
EW25 DRAW ANIMATED FACES
EW26 LUNCHBOX For 3 to 7 years
EW27 TEACH TOTS C'PUTERS
EW28 ALPHABET GAME
EW29 LONG DIVISION TUTOR
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EW31 CALC PLANETS D'TANCE
EW32 8 GAMES (for 18 months)
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EW34 SCIENCE TUTOR
EW35 SPELLING TUTOR
EW36 TYPE & SPELL TOGETHER
EW37 CHEMISTRY TUTOR
EW38 TOUR THE WORLD
ES39 BALLOON SPELLER 3-7 yrs
ES40 COUNTING SHAPES
ES41 600 WORLD FLAGS
ES42 ALGEBRA TUTOR
ES43 RUSSIAN TUTOR

PRINTER UTILITIES

ES44 LEARN DOS THE EASY WAY
ES45 YOGI BEAR MATHS GAME
P001 PRINT 3 x5" LABELS
P002 PRINT 5x2.5" LABELS
P003 CREATE CASSETTE INLAY
P004 BANNERIFIC V2.0
P005 PRINT BARCODES
P006 LQ ON EPSON/IBM
P007 PRINT BUSINESS CARDS
P008 SEND OUTPUT TO DISK
P009 CONDENSE YOUR PRINT
P010 FONTS FOR EPSONS
P011 LABEL MAKER SUPREME V1.0
P012 IMAGE PRINT V3.3
P013 HEBREW/YIDDISH ON EPSONS
P014 GREETING CARD MAKER
P015 LABEL MASTER V1.0
P016 DESIGN LETTERHEADS
P017 ONSISE (Sideways Clone)
P018 COUNT Pgs' IN DOC FILE
P019 PRINT PICTURE LABELS
P020 PRINTER STATUS CHECK
P021 PRINT SPOOLER
P022 LABEL YOUR VIDEOS
PW23 PRINT 4 PAGES TO 1
PW24 CREATE BOOKLETS
PW25 PRINT GIF FILES
PW26 MR LABEL V5.0
PW27 DESL/LASERJET UTILITIES

SPREADSHEETS

SP01 ALITE V1.1 (with graphics)
SP02 ASEASYAS V5.0
SP03 INSTACALC V2.0
SP04 EZ-SPREADSHEET V2.0
SP05 PRO-QUBE LITE V1.0
SP06 QUBECALC V3.02A
SP07 TURBO CALC S/HEET V8.1

MUSIC/SOUND

M001 S/BLASTER UTILITIES (2)
M002 DRUMBLASTER V1.0
M003 .MOD FILE PLAYER
M004 CREATE .MOD FILES
M005 .VOC PLAYER
M006 10 ASST'D .MOD FILES
M007 10 .MOD FILES VOL 2
M008 10 .MOD FILES VOL 3
M009 10 .ASST'D .ROL FILES
M010 10 .ROL FILES VOL 2
M011 10 .ROL FILES VOL 3
M012 10 ASST'D .VOC FILES
M013 10 .VOC FILES VOL 1
M014 10 ASST'D .CMF FILES
M015 CONVERT CMF-TO-MID
M016 .CMF PLAYER
MO17 PLAY/EDIT .ROL FILES
MO18 CONVERT CMF-TO-ROL
M019 S/BSTR DIGEST VOLI-9 (9)
M020 CREATE & PLAY MUSIC
MO21 CREATE .MOD FILES
M022 CREATE & PRINT MUSIC
M023 TEXT-TO-VOICE READER
M024 .ROL PLAYER

DATABASE

D001 FLEXBASE (3)
D002 FILE EXPRESS V5.0 (3)
D003 INSTANT RECALL
D004 WYNFIELDS V1.2
D005 ZEPHYR V1.0 (2)
D006 ADDRESS C'TROLLER V8.8
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DW08 FOR BOOK COLLECTORS
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DW11 GROCERY SHOPPER V5.3
DW12 BOWLING SECRETARY
DW13 HOUSEHOLD INVENTORY
DW14 INFORMATION PLEASE V2.0
DW15 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS (3)
DW16 MEMEBERSHIP DATABASE
DW17 WAMPUM V4.2 (2)
DS18 CARDX (Roladex)
DS19 HORSE/FARM MANAGER (2)
DS20 INFO ON 300 VIDEOS
DS21 NEWSPAPER ROUTE (2)
DS22 PC-FILE V5.01 (3)
DS23 PICTURES/SOUND D' BASE
DS24 SPORTS TEAM MANAGER
DS25 DBSTEEL (4)

WORD PROCESSORS

W001 FREEWORD V1.0
W002 GALAXY LITE V1.7
W003 JOVE (Emacs Editors) (2)
W004 GALAXY V3.0
W005 KWIK WRITE
W006 MULTI EDIT V4.0
W007 MINDREADER
W008 NEW YORK V2.2 (2)
W009 PC-WRITE V3.3
W010 SHARESPELL V2.0
W011 WORD FUGUE (2)
W012 BLACKBEARD V7.4 (Editor)
W013 FROM GENERATOR
W014 FORMFILL (FOR FORMGEN)
WW16 SUPERFORM
WW17 MULTILINGUAL 30 Lang's
WW18 MOREFORM (Form design) (2)
WW19 MULTIWORD (Thesaurus)
WW20 JORI V4.1 (Dictionary) (2)
WW21 SUPERWORD V2.2 (4)
WW22 PC-TYPE V4.0 (4)
WW23 PC-FASTYPE (Typing Tutor)
WW24 PC-FASTYPE (For Laptops)
WW25 POWER LABEL V2.7

CAD/DRAWING

A001 MICROCAD (Basic but good!)
A002 DANCAD V2 (3)
A003 NORTHCAD V4.2 (2)
A004 PC-DRAFT CAD V2.0
A005 PC-KEYDRAW V2.2
A006 PC-TRACE V3.0
A007 PCB DESIGN
A008 DROEGE (PCB Design) (3)
A009 DRAFT CHOICE V1.4
A010 DEMO MOVIES FOR DANCAD
AW11 CADET V3 (FOR AUTOCAD (2)
AW12 GENCADD (3)
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SP08 LOTUS 123 TUTORIAL (2)
SP09 123 MARCROS (5)
SP10 TIME ANALA
SP11 ASSORTED W'SHEETS
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SP14 HEALTH W/SHEET
SP15 LOAN ANALYSIS
SP16 PAYROLL SYSTEM
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MM01 EMS V4.0 (Expand 740k limit)
MM02 ALLCHARGE V2.51
MM03 EXPAND MEMORY TO 740k
MM04 EMM (For Itnel Boards)
MM05 DIAGNOSTICS FOR MEMORY
MM06 SPEED UP WITH RAM DISK
MM07 DISPLAY DOS INTERUPTS
MM08 MEMORY TEST V1.4
MM09 USE H/DISK TO EXP MEM
MM10 CHANGEABLE RAMDISK
MM11 REMOVE RDISK NO REBOOT
MM12 TURBO EMS V4.01
MM13 UNN.SYS V1 FOR MS DOS

DOS UTILITIES

MM14 RAM DISK FOR 80286
DU01 FASTMENU GOLD V4.11 (VGA)
DU02 MENU DIRECT GOLD V3
DU03 POWERMENU V5.3
DU04 BACK'N'FORTH (M/TASK) (3)
DU05 4DOS V4
DU06 AUTORUN AT DIFF'T TIMES
DU07 AUTO MENU V6.0
DU08 ARJ V2.3 (Archiver)
DU09 UNCOMPRESS ARJ FILES
DU10 LHARC V1.3 (Archiver)
DU11 PKZIP V1.1 (Archiver the best!)
DU12 ZOO V2.1 (Archiver)
DU13 CM.PRESS .EXE FILES (and run)
DU14 SHELL V1.4 (For all archivers)
DU15 SHEZ V6.5 (PKZIP front end)
DU16 SUPER DISK COPY V3.0
DU17 DISK COMMANDO V2.1
DU18 DISK CATALOGUE PROG
DU19 LABEL'S FOR H/DISK B/UP
DU20 FIND DUPLICATE FILES
DU21 SCAN FOR ASCII TEXT
DU22 COPY PROTECTION UTIL
DU23 DISKDUPE V3.3
DU24 STUPENDOS (H/D Front end)
DU25 PASSWORD P'TECT H/DISK
DU26 NO-CAN-SEE SCRAMBLER
DU27 ASCII TABLE GENERATOR
DU28 AUTOSAVE YOUR FILES
DU29 READ "CPM" DISKS
DU30 256k K/BOARD BUFFER
DU31 SPEED UP AT K/BOARD
DU32 MONITOR CPU USEAGE
DU33 M'AFEE'S SCAN V86B
DU34 M'AFEE'S CLEAN V86B
DU35 M'AFEE'S VSHIELD V86B
DU36 387 CO-PRO EMULATOR
DU37 BENCHMARK DIAG'S V5.6 (2)
DU38 EASY ACCESS V5.3
DU39 FORMAT MASTER V3.36
DU40 SCREEN GRABBER V3.8
DU41 HYPERDISK V4.21 Disk Cache
DU42 INFOPLUS SYSTEM INFO
DU43 LAPTOP BATTERY CHECKER
DU44 SCREENSAVER V2.0
DU45 DISK OPTIMISER
DU46 POINT'N'SHOOT BACKUP
DU47 INFO ON OVER 1000 H/DISKS
DU48 COLORADO UTILITIES
DU49 MOTHERBOARD BURNIN'

GAMES

DU50 SPEED UP ANY COMPUTER
GM01 CAPTAIN COMIC V3
GM02 DUKE NUKEM
GM03 "Caves of Thor" (Apogee)
GM04 KEEN "Marooned on Mars"
GM05 RICK DANGEROUS II
GM06 THE DUNGEONS OF SILMAR
GM07 SUPERNOVA SPACE GAME
GM08 ARCTIC ADVENTURE
GM09 SECRET AGENT (From Apogee)
GM10 EGA ARKROIDS
GM11 BATTLESHIPS V2.3
GM12 EGA BASEBALL
GM13 BRUCE LEE (Fight the Ninja)
GM14 PACMAN (VGA ONLY)
GM15 CRYSTAL CAVERNS
GM16 DARK AGES (Prince of Destiny)
GM17 .. .. Quest for Kings Orb
GM18 DANGEROUS DAVE (VGA)
GM19 FOR DRIVING SIMULATOR
GM20 JUMPMAN LIVES!
GM21 KEEN "Keen Must Die"
GM22 KEEN "Secret of the Oracle"
GM23 MARIO BROS COPY
GM24 MARBLE MAN
GM25 "Monument of Mars" (Apogee)
GM26 ROBOMAZE II VOL 1
GM27 SCORCHED EARTH (Tanks)
GM28 SHOOTING GALLERY V2.1
GM29 WHEEL OF FORTUNE (VGA)
GM30 PC-XMAS LEMMINGS
GM31 3D NOUGHTS & CROSSES
GM32 BACKGAMMON (EGA only)
GM33 ANOTHER BATTLESHIP
GM34 VGA CHINESE CHECKERS
GM35 MAHJONG V2.2 (needs mouse)
GM36 MONOPOLY
GM37 ROULETTE
GM38 OTHELLO (1 OR 2 PLYS)
GM39 SCRABBLE
GM40 GINRUMMY AGAINST C'PTR

GAMES/ Cont'd

GM41 PC PONTOON V3.2
GM42 BRIDGE CARD GAME
GM43 BRIDGE TUTOR
GM44 BLACKJACK (VGA)
GM45 BLACKJACK TUTOR
GM46 CRIBBAGE (CGA VER)
GM47 POKER (VGA)
GM48 YAHTZEE
GM49 BASS TOUR V4.12 (Fishing)
GM50 COMPUTER FOOTBALL V2.3
GM51 FOOTBALL POOL M'NGR
GM52 COMPLETE CROSSWORD (2)
GM53 BOWLING GAME

PCX CLIP ART

GM54 QUIZMASTER
PX01 ANIMALS (2)
PX02 AIRCRAFT
PX03 ADVERTISING
PX04 AUTOMOBILES (American)
PX05 BIRDS
PX06 BUILDINGS
PX07 BUSINESS
PX08 ASSORTED/MISC (5)
PX09 FOOD
PX10 GIRLS/WOMEN
PX11 COOPER GRAPHICS (6)
PX12 HOLIDAY
PX13 HUMOUR
PX14 LOVE
PX15 PLANT/FLOWER
PX16 OLD/ANTIQUE
PX17 RECYCLING
PX18 SAILING/BOATING
PX19 MEDICAL/SCIENCE
PX20 WAR
PX21 TRAINS
PX22 SPACE
PX23 SCENIC (2)
PX24 SPORT
PX25 CAMPING
PX26 SANTA CLAUS
PX27 EDUCATION

PRINTSHOP PRINTMASTER

PX28 FANTASY (4)
PS01 BLOOM COUNTY GRAPHICS (2)
PS02 CALVIN & HOBBS GRAPHICS
PS03 CARTOON CHARACTERS
PS04 RELIGIOUS (3)
PS05 COMIC CHARACTERS
PS06 HOUR SIGNS
PS07 JL ART GRAPHICS
PS08 NPS MONEY/MAIL
PS09 NPS NEWS
PS10 NPS MEDICAL
PS11 NPS AN IMALS
PS12 PRINT PRINTSHOP GRAPHICS
PS13 COOPER GRAPHICS (5)
PS14 PRINT[ARTNER (PrintShop clone) EXCELLENT!!
PS15 PRINT GALLERY
PS16 GRAPHICS FOR KIDS
PS17 P'SLIB GRAPHICS (3)
PS18 PRINT P/SHOP GRAPHICS
PS19 SYMBOLS
PS20 VIRUS FUNNY
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HB03 PC BARTENDER
HB04 BIORHYTHMS PROG
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HB11 THE PERFECT C.V (2)
HB12 BROTHERS KEEPER Family Tree (3)
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HB14 FAMILY SCRAPBOOK
HB15 HERBS & THEIR REMEDIES
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HB17 ON-LINE BIBLE (14)
HB18 SLIMMER V2.1
HB19 FOR COIN COLLECTORS

MEAL MASTER

HB 20 FOR STAMP COLLECTORS
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MMT2 APPETIZERS
MMT3 BEEF
MMT4 BREAD
MMT5 CHINESE
MMT6 MICROWAVE(3)
MMT7 LAMB
MMT8 SOUP
MMT9 PIES
MMT10GARLIC
MMT11CHOCOLATE

WINDOWS

MMT12CHEESE
MMT13WELSH
WD01 1700 ICONS
WD02 ADDRESS MANAGER
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WD04 DESKTOP MANAGER V2.2
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WD16 DATABASE
WD17 SPELL CHECKER
WD18 POST-IT NOTES
WD19 DIARY/NOTEPAD
WD20 SMART ACCOUNTS
WD21 ZIP MANAGER
WD22 ICON DRAW V1.2
WD23 PAINT SHOP PRO V1.0
WD24 VIDEO TAPE LIBRARY
WD25 I PASS DISK DUPLICATOR
WD26 DRAWING PACKAGE

WINDOWS GAMES

WD27 DISPLAY/PRINT ATM FONTS
WD28 MCAFEE'S SCAN 84B
WG01 ALIEN FORCE
WG02 ASTEROIDS
WG03 BACKGAMMON
WG04 BLACKJACK
WG05 CHESS
WG06 CHECKERS
WG07 TETRIS
WG08 LUNAR LANDER
WG09 MASTERMIND
WG10 NOUGHTS & CROSSES
WG11 TAIPAI
WG12 POKER

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GR02 GARDENER'S ASSISTANT V1
GR03 LANDSCAPE MANAGER V1
GR04 HOME INSURANCE
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GR06 UK POSTCODES
GR07 UK STD TEL CODES
GR08 UNIVERSAL ESTIMATOR V2
GR09 RESUME WRITER
GR10 SURVEYSOFT V3.0
GR11 TELE-SALES V4.1
GR12 SERVICE CALL TRACER (4)

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MC03 PC-TALK III
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MC06 TELEMATE V3
MC07 COM-AND V2.8 (4)
MC08 OMEGA BBS V1.4 (3)
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KORMA
LIVIA
LOGGER

TT10 VOLUME 10

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MURIEL
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OSWAB BLACK
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TT11 VOLUME 11

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PLAY BILL
POST-CRYPT
ROTHMAN
SCRIPT

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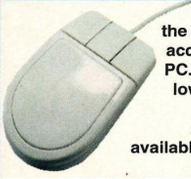
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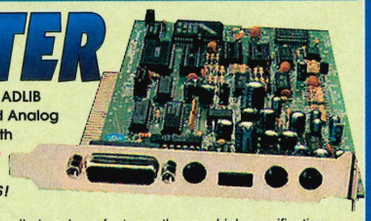
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Letters

PC Review welcomes letters on any subject under the PC sun. The editor will chop them to fit if need be, and we'll assume letters are for publication unless you state otherwise. Send your mail to Letters, PC Review, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Star letters win software prizes!

Speaker sound

I would like to congratulate you on your new cover design on Issue 12. It makes the magazine a lot more interesting and attractive. I also thoroughly enjoyed the demo of World Tennis Championships and its introductory sound because I thought that it was very impressive on a normal PC speaker. Why can't other software manufacturers produce their software with this quality of sound? I know it's not the best sound you can get for the PC but surely it's not just Mindscape who can produce this type of sound on a standard internal speaker.

Chris Williams
Manchester

More pictures, please

May I compliment you on an excellent magazine. I know of no other which is prepared to spend more than one side of a page on leisure software for PCs. Surely in this day and age, 'games' is far too short a term for the products you review.

If I have just one quibble (apart from the price, guys!), it is that myself and all my cohorts who read your magazine would love to see more and more snapshots of the graphics in a new game being reviewed. For example, this October's review of Frontier – Elite II, we would have loved, no grovelled, to see more screenshots.

R J Griffin
Selby

Cup winners

Issue 12 was the first copy of PC Review that I'd seen, and I was very impressed with it, until I saw the Letters pages. Having not seen the article in question *(you guessed — he means the European Championship 1992 review. Ed)*, I can't comment on the article, but I am in complete agreement with Richard Stevenson on his letter regarding apparent comments made about Wimbledon and Luton Town. I also support Luton, and need not remind you that both Luton and Wimbledon between them won the two major domestic trophies in 1988 (Luton won the Littlewoods — League – Cup and Wimbledon won the FA Cup). Anyway, if the comment was made with regard to attendances, then it should have been Wimbledon vs Coventry City as that holds the record for the lowest (old) Division One attendance ever.

Richard C Hewison
Luton, Beds

Angry of Wimbledon

I was annoyed to find that under Kick Off 2, in the Alternatively box of the European Championship 1992 review (Issue 10), you said, "Avoid it like a Wimbledon-Luton fixture at Selhurst Park". I see one of the Luton supporters has written in, so now it's the Wimbledon supporter's turn, but then, it could be settled again with a copy of European Championship 1992.

Philip John
Royston, Herts

This correspondence is now not so much closed, as locked up with the key thrown away.

Speeding up

I thought that some of your readers might be interested in the following tips. I am surprised that you haven't printed the advice before!

Ever wondered why a 16MHz Amstrad 286 runs at a similar speed to 'slower' 12MHz 286 machines made by any other manufacturers? The reason is that Amstrad have used slow 100ns memory chips

Starletter

Ultima VII: too complex?

Am I the boy who saw the King without his clothes? For that is how I feel about Windows. Using Windows is hard work, I find it easier and faster to just call up the game or program I want straight from the C:>prompt. Anyway I find Windows interferes with other programs. Try altering the border colours of Windows then see what happens to the icons in the game Prophecy.

Having dug at Windows can I dig at Ultima VII too? Technically it is superb. What a fag to play through – I much preferred Ultima IV and V. They even have to have a help line to enable punters to load the game. Far too complex for the simple folk like me.

One last dig. In common with many of your readers I buy your magazine to save money. By reading your reviews I get a good idea about a game and do not have to waste money buying games that are totally unsuitable for me.

You do not however give a scale of how hard/easy RPG games are. Some of us humble folk out here need a clue book to find their way around their own home let alone a game that requires one to yell "Banzai!" at a bowl of porridge for a key to appear to open a door. A rating of ease of play coupled to just how complicated the controls are would be excellent. I for one could not have played Underworld without your assistance and even then I failed to complete it.

Byron Alexander
South Stoke

(SIMMS). Changing these to 'standard' 70ns chips will show a considerable speed increase. The approximate cost is just £30 per megabyte. To make the machine even quicker, disable the built-in 256K VGA card and add a fast Super VGA card (1Mb). Approx cost: £65.

To prove the amazing transformation of the machine, I recommend using the 3D Benchmark PD program developed by New Dimension International. The program calculates the speed of your micro, taking memory speed and video card speed into account. Approx cost: £3.00.

Of course users can save themselves a lot of trouble by not buying Amstrad in the first place. I admit that if it wasn't for Amstrad there would not be a UK home-PC scene, but all the time that it is using non-standard components in its PCs, Amstrad is losing a lot of friends.

Warren Chrismas
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex

Text adventures

I am writing to you for advice as to whether I should write a text-based game. I have a brilliant plot, and good ideas for the interface, etc. The user would also have to do minimal typing. I would then release it as shareware for between £10-£20 with bonuses, such as other games.

Unfortunately, my language only allows for text-based graphics (which I'm not going to use!), so I can't write a graphic adventure (I don't think my artistic skills are up to it anyway). The question is, in these days of graphic adventures like Secret of Monkey Island 2 and Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, is there really a market for text-based adventures?

I need some reassurance before I start writing the program.

A D Burton
Crewe

The standard of current graphic adventures has certainly raised people's expectations in this genre. We asked Steve Lee, head of Shareware Marketing, for his opinions on this, and I'm afraid his advice was that the day of the text-only adventure is pretty well over. With developers like Apogee in the shareware market, graphic adventures, even those available non-commercially, can be of a very high standard, and players do expect graphics these days. As a small consolation, Steve does add that text-only adventures are still well-liked in the US.

Bridge that gap

For the past six months or so, I have been searching in vain for a review of software on the topic of bridge. Now, the non-bridge player might be forgiven for thinking that it is a game played solely by plaid-clad, half-senile old grannies over a scone and cup of Earl Grey, but in fact, bridge is one of, if not the, widest played card games in the world. I know that bridge programs for the PC exist, but constructive criticisms of them appear to be rarer than dentists for chicken.

Please (and I would be very surprised if these sentiments aren't echoed widely) could you put me out of my misery and review some of this software. Bridge is an extremely technical and skilful game and therefore requires skilful programming: I'm certainly not prepared to spend £50 on software that a five year old could master.

Geoff Camp
Baldock, Herts

We reviewed Omar Sharif's Bridge in Issue 9 and that, at the moment, is the flagship bridge title on the PC. There are shareware bridge programs which are rather more rudimentary. Oxford Softworks (Omar's publisher) is the only company I know of that is actively researching and developing programs and routines for bridge, which as you rightly point out, is a complex art, and there certainly isn't the programming tradition in this field that there is for chess, for example.

Omar Sharif's Bridge is fine for beginners and those who need to build their confidence with the game (it's clearly and attractively presented, with Omar's digitised voice talking you through the bids and tricks), but as an experienced player, you might find some aspects frustrating: its cardplay, for example, is often mechanical and it trots out trumps and leads into obvious tenaces too often for comfort.

Unfair to CD-i

I would like to comment on your article about CD-i in Issue 10. In the article, you're almost leading the reader to believe that CD-i is meant to be a games machine.

I'm sure you've checked out which policy Philips has taken for CD-i's marketing. You would find that Philips is very cautious about this. Philips wants to prevent CD-i from becoming just one of many games consoles like the NES, Megadrive and so on. In other words, games are a trivial (though perhaps very lucrative) subject for the CD-i platform. With this in mind, I don't think it's fair to compare the CD-i games collection to the one that CD-ROM has. In this aspect, you forgot to say that the art and culture titles (infotainment) for CD-i are leaps ahead compared to what CD-ROM has to offer.

I have no relation with Philips whatsoever, but I think the CD-i system should be given a chance considering its wide potential.

William Li
Amsterdam

COMPETITION WINNERS

World at War (Issue 11)

This competition may have been a tad tougher than most, but there are obviously plenty of military buffs out there willing to have a go for the chance of picking up a complete set of World at War videos based on the acclaimed Thames Television series.

The two sets on offer have been scooped up by Robert Whitehouse, of Darlington, and Mr D Sidhu, of Southall, Middlesex. Well done to the pair of you.

Five runners-up won a copy of Longman's book Chronicle of the Second World War: Mark Doggart, of Calne, Wilts; Kark Butcher, of Benfleet, Essex; Jake Barayev, of London N16; Richard Mitson, of Wollaton, Nottingham, and Stephen Goggin, of Dublin.

Finally, 20 more winners get a copy of Empire's PC war game Campaign: Mr C Riley, of Newport, Gwent; Fergal Curran, of Co Dublin; Mr D W Innocent, of Bramcote Hills, Nottingham; Bryan Tompkins, of Southam, nr Leamington Spa; Harry Graham, of Newcastle Upon Tyne; Mr G Timm, of Meersbrook, Sheffield; Mr K Nizam, of Bryanmill, Swansea; Steve Tetchner, of Westcliff on Sea, Essex; David Gilham, of Christchurch, Dorset; Mr M Bruce, of Bickley, Kent; Anthony Sharman, of Bromsgrove, Worcs; James Sherwood, of Crawley, W Sussex; Mr L A Walker, of London NW7; Mr I Doble, of Keynsham, Bristol; A M Singleton, of Solihull, West Midlands; J R Martin, of Ickenham, Middlesex; Neil Woodhouse,of Bromley, Kent; K McKenna, of Farnborough, Hants; Nigel Clements, of Stanley, nr Wakefield, and Simon Kidd, of Bath, Avon.

The answers were as follows:

1. The War of Jenkin's Ear was fought between Britain and Spain.
2. The Opium War took place in China.
3. The Battle of the Bulge took place in the Ardennes forest, Belgium.
4. Either 115 years or 116 years, depending on whether you count the Hundred Years War as lasting between 1337-1453 (Encyclopædia Britannica, and others), or 1338-1453 (Pears Cyclopædia, and others). Both were acceptable for the purposes of this competition.

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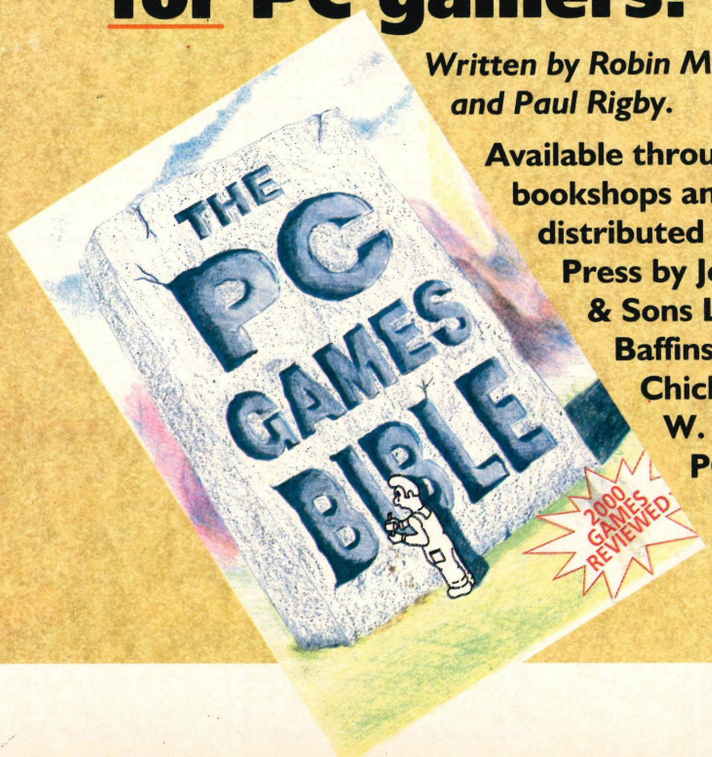
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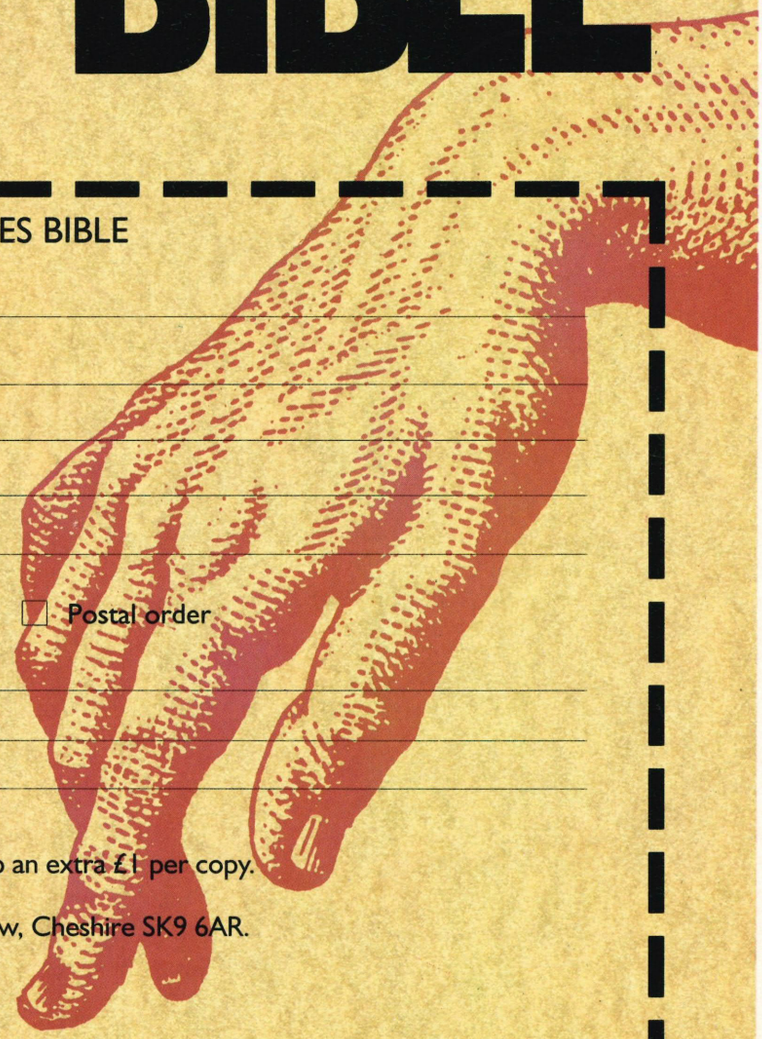


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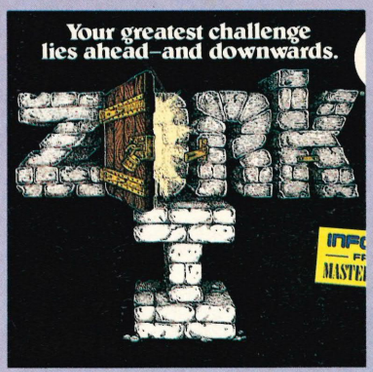
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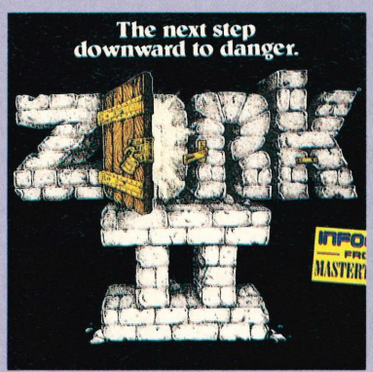
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Super smooth strategic vertically scrolling shoot 'em up with digitized graphics. A classic from the Bitmap Brothers.

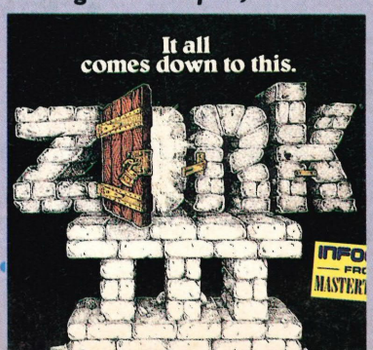


ZORK I
Search for the treasure of Zork in this exciting interactive treasure hunt, and journey to a place limited only by your imagination.



ZORK II
Back for a second time, battle the wizards of Frobozz in this vivid action-adventure sequel.

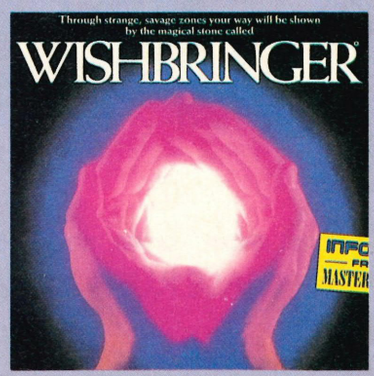
ZORK III
The final battle for the great underground empire,



encounter the dungeon master - he who embodies the greatest mystery of all...

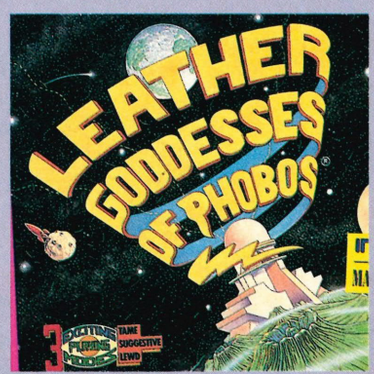


DOUBLE DRAGON
Double Dragons, Billy & Jimmy, seek to bring poor Marion back to life - but only if they can penetrate the secret lair of the Shadow Boss.



WISHBRINGER
You're granted 7 magic wishes to solve this interactive puzzle with a richly-woven storyline.

LEATHER GODDESSES OF PHOBOS



The first interactive story with an amusingly risque theme - and three "naughtiness levels": tame, suggestive and lewd!

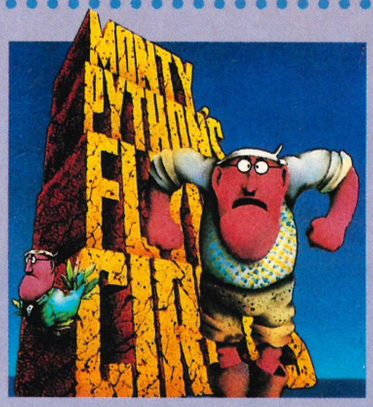


ITALIA '90
The official license to the last World Cup, Italia '90. Features a bird's eye view of the pitch with on screen score and adjustable match timer

PLANETFALL
Planetfall teleports you 12,00 years into an outrageous



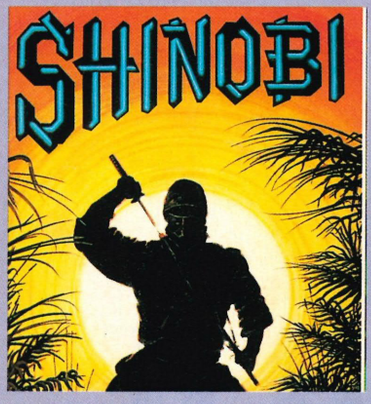
future to explore the galaxy - until your ship explodes...



MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS
Based on the cult TV comedy series, this game combines surreal graphics and off the wall gameplay.



THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY
In the role of Arthur Dent, you set out across the galaxy with Ford Prefect, Trillian, Zaphod Beeblebrox and Marvin.

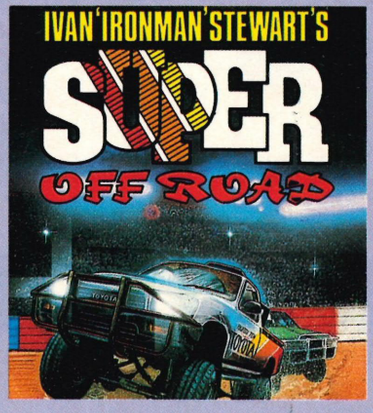


SHINOBI
Enjoy frantic oriental action in this Ninja beat 'em up.



GOLDEN AXE
The most famous of SEGA's coin op beat 'em ups smashes its way onto your PC.

SUPER OFF ROAD
Grab the wheels and hit the nitros - the challenge of Off Road Racing awaits you.



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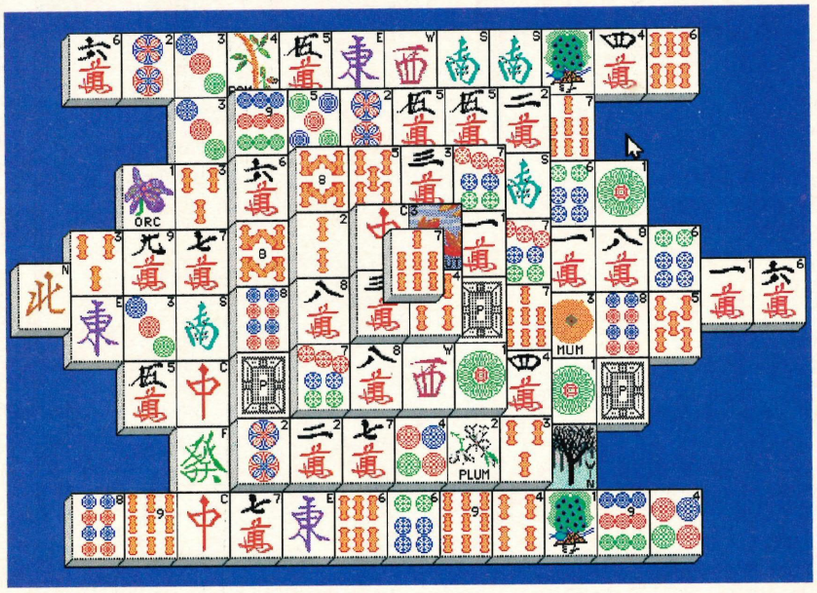
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Steve Meretzky's

Classic Game of the Month



Screen from Shanghai II

Shanghai I and II



"This game of removing tiles in pairs is so simple, so elegant, and yet so hideously addictive. At Infocom, there was one Macintosh exclusively devoted to Shanghai, and word would spread around the company when someone 'discovered' a particularly difficult arrangement in tournament mode. I do most of my game-playing in 10 or 15 minute breaks while working, so I prefer solitaire-type games that can be played in a short period. I still enjoy playing Shanghai, six years after the first game appeared."

Shanghai was designed by Brodie Lockard, and originally released by Activision in 1986. The game involved removing exposed identical pairs of tiles from a pre-set layout. Shanghai II's gameplay is the same, but there are now 12 different layouts, different tile sets to choose from in addition to the original Mahjong characters, and an extra match-the-pairs game called Dragon's Eye. Shanghai II is currently available, at £39.99.

Steve Meretzky

Steve Meretzky has been writing adventure games for over a decade, joining Infocom in the pioneering days of 1981. His fist game, Planetfall, featuring Floyd the robot, was released in 1983. His best known titles are probably Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (in collaboration with Douglas Adams), Leather Goddesses of Phobos, Zork Zero, and Spellcasting 101: Sorcerer's Get All the Girls. His twelfth game, Spellcasting 301: Spring Break, is reviewed in this issue.

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- Police Station - maze game

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PC Format
IBM compatible PCs, minimum 640K required, VGA, sound blaster compatible (hard drive installable)

Available on PC from the end of November at major stockists.







IBM PC screen shots

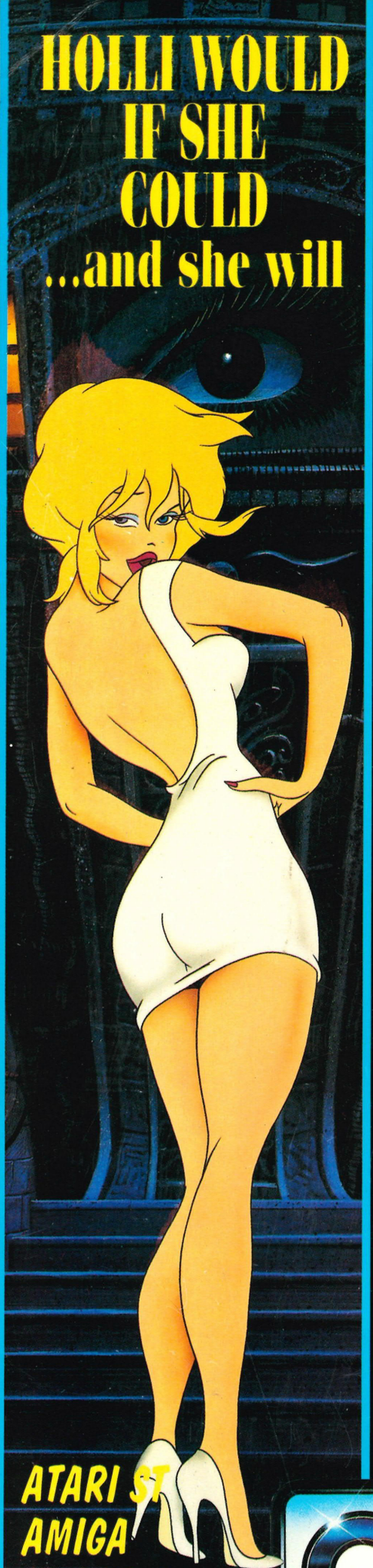
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