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# PC review

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO PC ENTERTAINMENT

## PRINT SHOP DELUXE
FULLY PLAYABLE DEMO



Missing disk?
Consult your newsagent

Missing disk?
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# X-Wing
## FULL REVIEW INSIDE

**ALSO REVIEWED**
*Space Quest 5, Shadow of the Comet, Archer Maclean's Pool*

**FLIGHT SIMULATOR 4**
*Microsoft's veteran: the story so far …*

**VIRUSES**
*How to protect yourself from infection*

**PLUS** *Tips and hints for Ultima Underworld II*

05
0105454960770

PC review
X-Wing reviewed
ISSUE 19 MAY 1993

## 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.

Now, above the Home Counties; Spitfires and Hurricanes are locked in deadly combat with Messerschmitts and Heinkels. There can only be one winner.

This is The Battle of Britain.



Graphically stunning, historically accurate and thrillingly realistic (with instant-replay feature), Their Finest Hour resets the stage for the ultimate dogfight.

One thing's certain, this Lucasfilm spectacular will provide you with many fine hours of pure entertainment.

*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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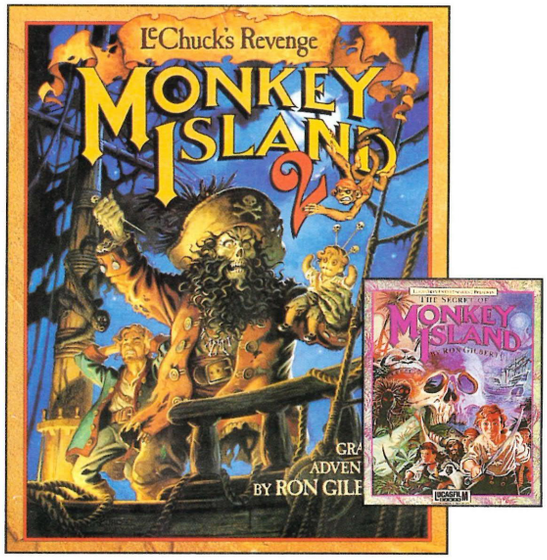
LucasArts™ Lucasfilm Games™

## LAUGHS FOR PC

# Side-splitting pirate adventure

Just when you thought it was le end for LeChuck, he's back.

The legend states that "when LeChuck wants you dead, you're dead"- grim news for his old adversary, young Guybrush Threepwood.






But fear not. Big Whoop holds the key to great power. All is not lost.

In this stunning graphic sequel, young Guybrush's adventures will have you rolling in hysterics. Beware, you'll laugh so hard, milk will flow from your nose.

Behind every pirate is a really gnarly chair and in front of Guybrush is a saga so savage it'll put hairs on your chest.



With 256 colours (PC version), variable difficulty modes, interactive reggae music and "point 'n' click" interface, you'll be transported to Monkey Island in a flash.

So, brace yourself, the fun starts here. Who knows when it will stop?

*Available on*: Amiga (32 colours) and PC (VGA/ MCGA. Requires 640k Ram AT or compatible. Supports AdLib™, Roland™, Soundblaster™ and SoundMaster™II sound cards. Hard drive required.

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# A serious PC experience

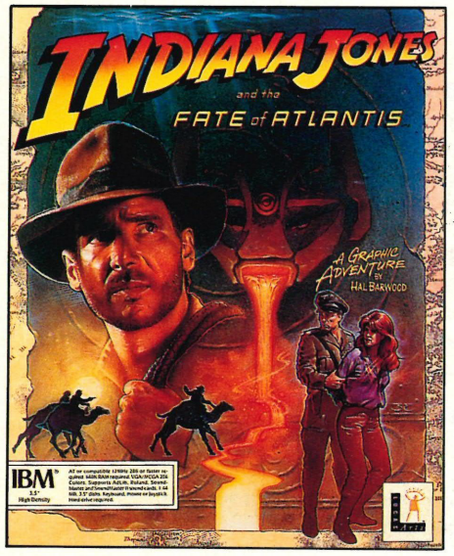
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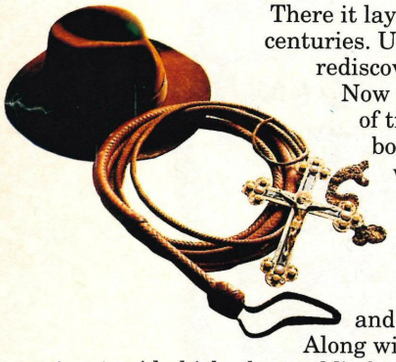
ADVENTURE FOR PC

# 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?



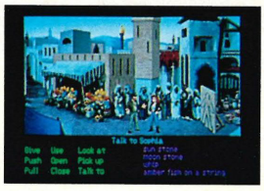
There it lay undisturbed for centuries. Until the Nazis rediscovered the Kingdom. Now it will only be a matter of time until they have a bomb so powerful it will draw World War II to a conclusion. Schnell!

Enter the man with the funny hat and the bull whip. Along with Sophia, his trusty side-kick, the world's future rests on their shoulders.

Is this too much to ask? No way!

Join the intrepid duo in dazzling 3D with full music and sound effects as The Fate of Atlantis and the world is decided.

So, here goes!



*Available on:* Amstrad and C64 Cassette & Disk, Spectrum Cassette, Atari ST, Amiga; PC and Compatibles.

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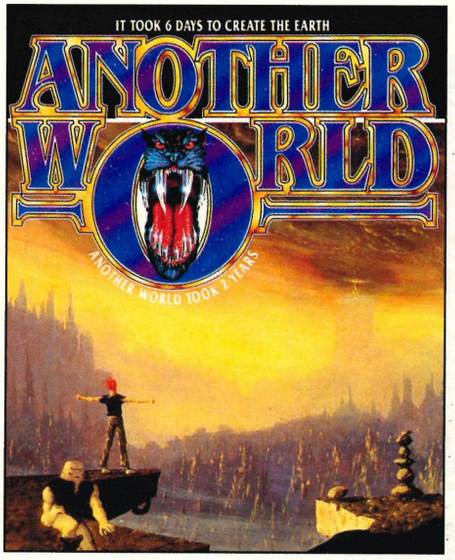
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ADVENTURE FOR PC

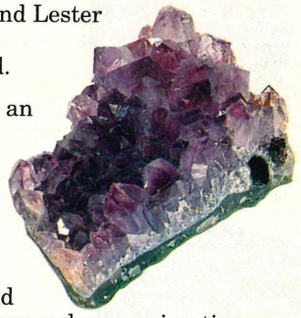
# You're about to enter "Another World"

It was a one-in-a-million chance. But it was about to happen.

Young scientist Lester Chaykin was busy experimenting in his laboratory. He'd just reached a crucial point in a test on sub-atomic particles, when zap,




a bolt of lightning struck and Lester was teleported into a different dimension. Into Another World.



He was on his own, against an unknown quantity.

From the designers of Future Wars - Another World took two years to create. And it's easy to see why.

There's zoom, panorama and close-up shots, as well as a unique polygon animation technique for fluidity.



Delphine's in-house recording studios provide the finishing touch.

Quite simply, you ain't seen nothin' yet.

*Available on:* Atari ST, Amiga (32 colours) & PC (CGA, EGA, VGA, Tandy ®, AdLib™ & Roland™).

DELPHINE SOFTWARE

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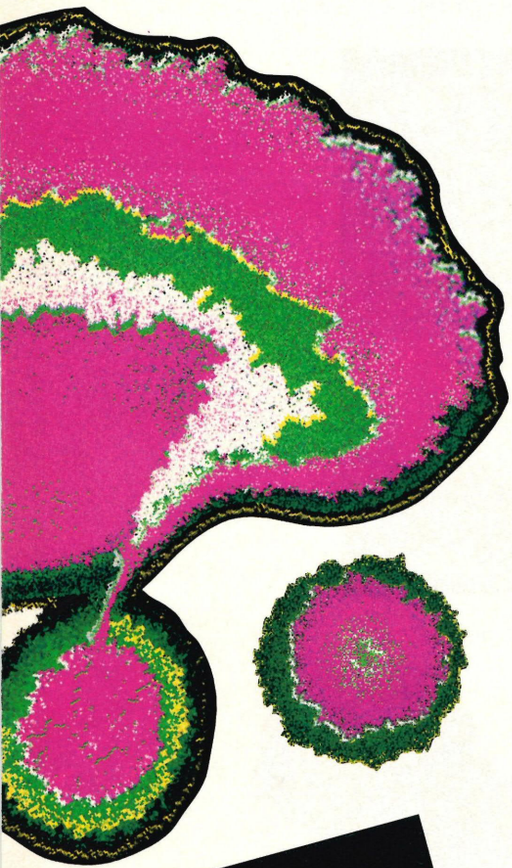
## A serious PC experience

SCREENSHOTS 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

# PC review

**MAY 1993 ISSUE 19**

Printed in the UK



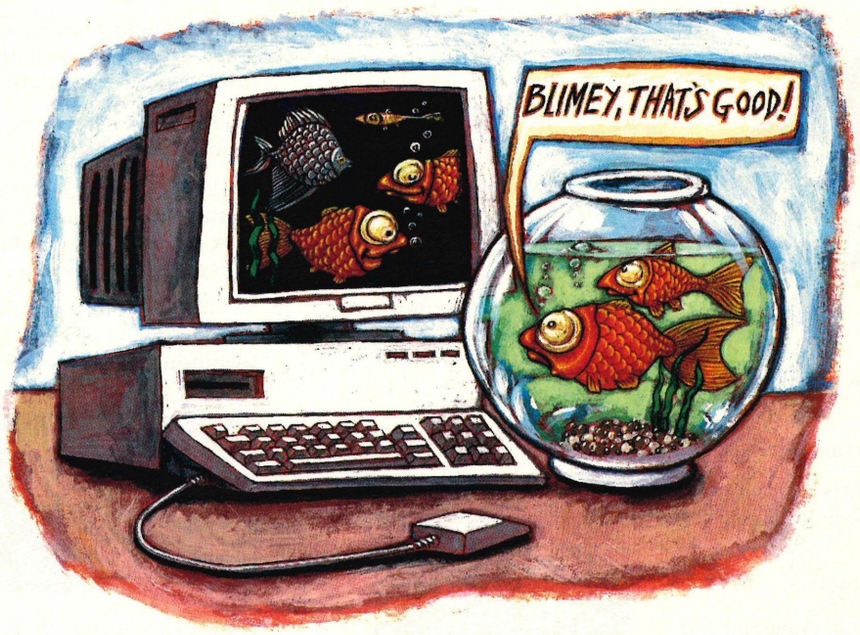


## FEATURES

20 **Acer's all in one PAC**
Acer's PAC machine contains everything but the kitchen sink: a 486SX PC, with a Sound Blaster, CD-ROM drive, fax, modem, radio, telephone answering machine, and a ton of CD software. Is this the PC of the future?

24 **Flight Simulator 4**
Ten years old, and still going strong … Flight Simulator 4 may be a doughty veteran in the market, but it's still played by aficionados throughout the world. Peter Worlock appraises the game, its development, and the mutlitude of add-on disks available.

32 **Save our screens**
A sensible addition to your PC to prevent phosphor burn-in on your monitor, or just a bit of fun to liven up your screen? Almost certainly the latter. But if you've ever wondered just what a screen saver does, Huw Collingbourne has the answers.




38 **Viruses: protect yourself**
The very word 'virus' is likely to strike terror into a PC owner's heart. Mike James explains how viruses on PCs are spread, and suggests some sensible steps you can take to avoid them.

91 **Golden Joystick Awards 1993**
Get your votes in for the only awards that count — voted for entirely by readers, the Joysticks are now in their 11th triumphant year.

# contents




8 **THIS MONTH'S COVER DISKS**

We're pleased, nay, thrilled, to be able to offer 3.5" disk owners a superb interactive version of Broderbund's Print Shop Deluxe this month. This program enables you to mix text and graphics on a single page to create signs, cards, banners, you name it. Printer drivers are included. Also on 3.5" disk, we have a playable demo from the platform game Sleepwalker, and 5.25" users can catch up on Contraptions.

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




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What's new in the world of shareware with Sam Mackenzie.

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Includes the first part of a truly meaty guide to the game everyone's talking about at the moment: Ultima Underworld II.

130 **Classic game of the month**
Courtesy of DMA Design, the team behind Lemmings.

# TORNADO

# Imagine the thrill...






# Now experience it...

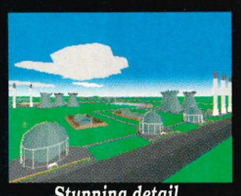
**200 ft. 600 kts. You lead a formation of six Tornados deep into enemy territory. Terrain following system on. Mission planned to the last detail. Split second timing for a synchronised attack with pin-point accuracy.**

**Discover what real Tornado pilots mean by a "target-rich environment". Go it alone or take the squadron - the choice is yours. Tornado. Unbeatable.**

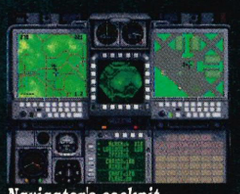
- From simulator training to multi-mission campaigns
- Unsurpassed real world detail
- Laser-guided bombs, JP233, Alarm, and more!
- Unequalled authenticity
- Night flying & low visibility
- 2 player head-to-head



*Pilot's cockpit*



*Stunning detail*



*Navigator's cockpit*



*Sophisticated mission planning*



*Awesome missions*

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# PC review

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**FREE SUPPLEMENT**
**with this issue of PC Review.**

**This Year's Models is packed with tips for buying PCs and peripherals.**

**Issue 19** *May 1993*

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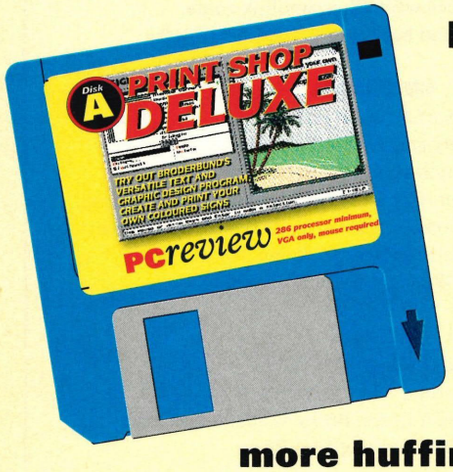
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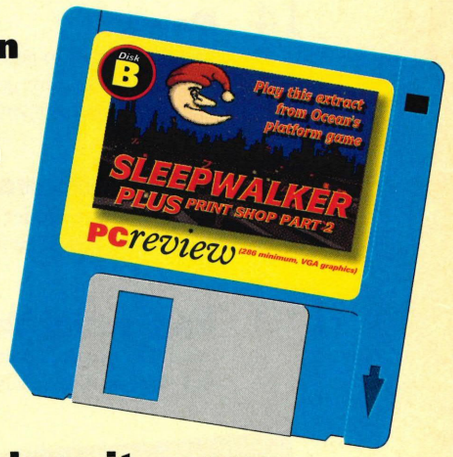
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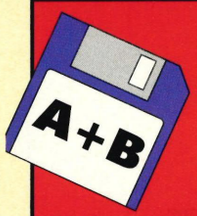
# Cover disks

**Well, we've huffed and we've puffed and squeezed and we've managed it: a fully usable version of Broderbund's Print Shop Deluxe on 3.5" disks. And not just this: there's also a playable level from Ocean's platform game Sleepwalker, sales of which will benefit Comic Relief, so do give it a try. If you have a 5.25" disk, don't despair, more huffing and squeezing and, yes, we've done it — you too can play Contraptions.**




## Print Shop Deluxe




**3.5" disk only**




Print Shop Deluxe is a utility developed by Broderbund in which you can design banners, cards, business cards, signs or posters, using a mixture of text and graphics, and then print them out to your specifications.

In this extract from the program, you can create 'signs' only — good enough for cards and banners though — use a wide variety of graphics from the full version, have a choice of two fonts (see below for obtaining more, if you're interested) and print them out — we've deliberately included as many printer drivers we could, so that you can see the results of your work.

### How to start

Log on to the directory in which you have installed Print Shop Deluxe (Psddemo is the default) and type

**PSD (Enter)**

### How to quit

Press Esc until you get back to the main menu, then either click on the exit box, or use the cursor keys to highlight it, and press Enter.

### Hardware required

286 or higher PC, VGA graphics. A mouse is highly recommended.

### Control

All menu-driven. Move the mouse pointer to the item you require and click to select it (NB the main menu is keyboard-controlled only, so don't panic when you find there's no mouse pointer showing on this screen!). With a keyboard, use the cursor keys to move to the item wanted, and press Enter to select.

At any time during the program, pressing Esc will take you back one stage in the process, and the program will warn you if you haven't saved your work to date. Often, you will be required to select a menu option, 'done', to confirm changes you have made in order to exit 'cleanly' from that menu.

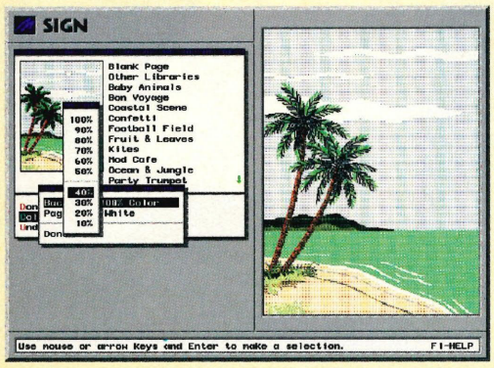
### Main menu

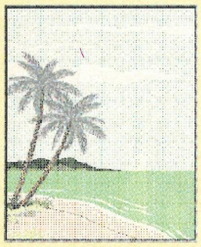
The main menu gives you the choice between designing signs, cards, letterheads and banners (plus the set-up option to select your printer). This cover disk version enables you to create tall signs only.

### Print Shop Deluxe: a guided tour

All the options in the main menu are available in the full version of Print Shop Deluxe. In this demo, you can select tall signs only. This gives you a single A4 page, which is versatile enough to use for cards, flyers and banners. The layout on this single page can be customised as you wish.

### 1. Choosing a backdrop



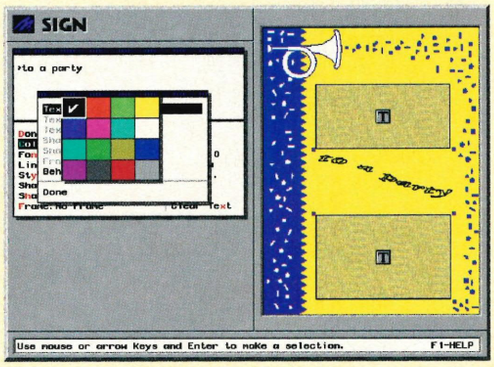



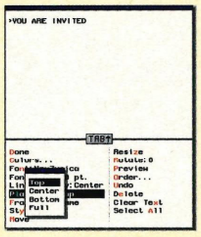
Select from any of the 27 different custom graphics available at this menu. There are backdrops, such as the one pictured, which are a single graphic, and some which create a frame for the page (see the panel below).

Having chosen a backdrop, you can customise it to suit your requirements. For example, you can set your own level of shading, so that, at 40% of the original colour, the graphic, left, appears misty and faded compared with the original, above.

### 2. Adding text

This can either be done by choosing a layout , as in the picture below, or by drawing text or headline boxes to fill with text directly on to the page.



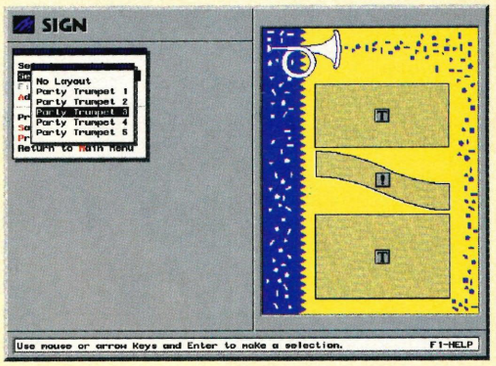



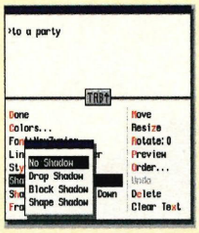
Simply type in your text in the top window (see below) and then use the options in the bottom window to create textual effects.

Headline text comes in a standard size that can be altered by changing the size of the headline box. Text can be used in any size from 18pt to 144pt (18 pt, incidentally, is just slightly larger than the heading 'Print Shop Deluxe' on the opposite page, while 144pt is comparable to the size of the headline 'Cover disks', left).

### 3. Text effects

Apart from sizing your text, there are a number of other effects you can create, such as colouring, shadowing, blending, rotating the text and altering its position within the box. These are all accessed from the menus; the shadow menu left, offers you four different types of shadow to add to your text. Note that text must be selected, or highlighted, for changes to take effect on your design.




### 3. Adding other elements

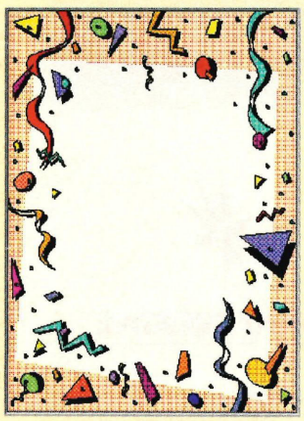
Aside from a backdrops and text, Print Shop Deluxe has a host of other graphics which can be added to your sign, and edited in many of the ways available to text.

Firstly, there are borders, which will frame your sign, either with a plain coloured band, or a decorative pattern. You can also add spot graphics, 'row graphics', or 'rules', which, again, can either be plain lines or patterns from the Print Shop Deluxe library. ▶

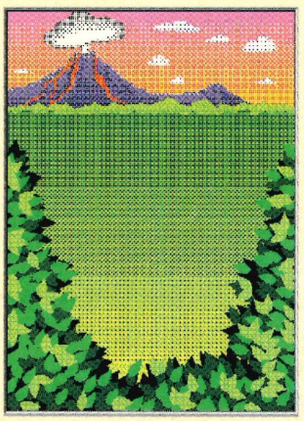
**Installing your cover disk: details on page 15**

## Backdrops

**Below are just a few of the backdrops available in this cover disk version of Print Shop Deluxe. The full selection includes border styles, such as 'confetti', left, full-screen pictures, such as 'snow scene' and 'volcano' and repeated images, such as 'leaves', right. Once you've chosen a backdrop, you can customise it further by changing the colour, both of the backdrop and the page behind it (for example, the blue and yellow party invitation design shown above, was originally black and white), so if you don't have a colour printer, you can still use your own customised black and white (and grey) designs.**









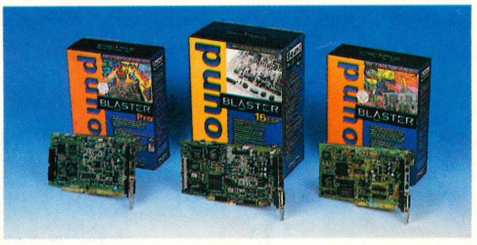



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Your first sound card will introduce you into the amazing world of PC sound and vision. So it's important you choose the card that sets the standard.

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The ultimate all-in-one sound card range, supported by the largest software library, including 1,000's of games, music and education titles, and features Digital sampling and playback, FM Synthesiser, Joystick Port, Power Amplifier and Midi Interface. Fully supported by Windows 3.1.




Only with Sound Blaster can you be confident you've got the pick of the pack, and with the new Deluxe Editions, you get even more multimedia, music and entertainment software included than ever before.

So when the cards are on the table, you know the one to choose.

MPC Multimedia PC

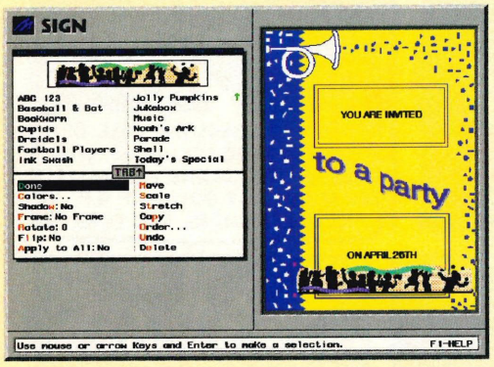
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WESTPOINT CREATIVE

Software included dependent on product: Lemmings, INDI 500, Creative Wave Studio, Creative Talking Scheduler, Creative Mosaic, Voice Utilities, SB Talker with Doctor Sbaitso, FM Intelligent Organ, Talking Parrot, MMPLAY Presenter, Jukebox for Windows 3.1, Monologue for Windows, PC Animate Plus, Midisoft Recording Sessions, HSC Interactive, Software Toolworks Multimedia Encyclopedia (CD-ROM)

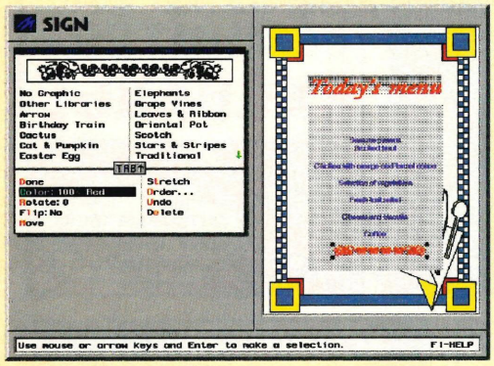
Delta House, 264 Monkmoor Road, Shrewsbury SY2 5ST Tel: 0743 248590 Fax: 0743 248199 Bulletin Board: 0743 360287

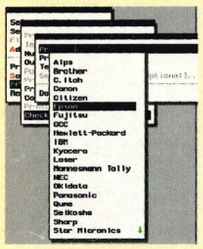



For the party invitation, this line of carousers, above, seems appropriate. These strips can be coloured, and even flipped horizontally, should you feel the need.

### 5. Printing out

There are a number of printer drivers for the cover disk version of Print Shop Deluxe, including the following: IBM Proprinter; Epson (also colour); Canon BJX10 (also colour); Hewlett-Packard DeskJet (also colour), and LaserJet



You can select a printer from either the set-up section of the main menu, or the print menu, pictured here. Select 'check set-up', then select 'printer', and choose the printer nearest your model, or emulation.

If you have problems printing out, try changing the selected printer. With a dot matrix, try using either IBM Proprinter or an Epson FX mode, with an inkjet, try the DeskJet option, with a laser printer, try LaserJet.

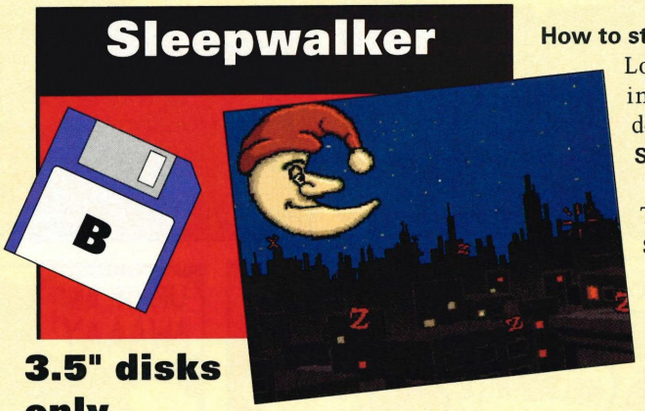
Finally, you can of course save your designs or partial designs to disk.

### Special offer

**So you'd like to make your text more exciting? There are two fonts included in this demo of Print Shop Deluxe. If you'd like more styles to experiment with, just write to PC Review and we'll send you three more fonts to use with your cover disk.**

**Two restrictions (sorry): please only write or fax (the number's at the front of the magazine) for the extra fonts, and secondly, we have to close this offer on May 12th, so please make sure your written request arrives before then.**

## Sleepwalker




**3.5" disks only**

Sleepwalker is a platform game in which you play Ralph, faithful hound to inveterate sleepwalker Lee, and you must protect Lee from falling into chasms or banging against walls as he sleepwalks the night away.

In this special cover disk version, however, it's Ralph who gets all the action. Hidden around the level on the disk are the letters C, O, M, I, and C, and you as Ralph must collect and find them all. The letters have a particular significance, since, for every copy of Sleepwalker sold, £5 goes to Comic Relief, so if you enjoy this cover disk version, please consider buying the full game as well.

**How to start**

Log on to the directory where you installed Sleepwalker (Sleep is the default) and type

**Sleep (Enter)**

To play with a joystick, type

**Sleep +J (Enter)**

To play with an Ad Lib sound card fitted, type

**Sleep + A (Enter)**

To play with an Sound Blaster fitted, type

**Sleep + S (Enter)**

**How to quit**

Ctrl-Alt-Del, or the reset button.

**Hardware required**

At least a 286-based PC and VGA graphics. A sound card is recommended.

**Control**

With a keyboard, use the cursor left and right keys for movement, plus the up arrow to jump. With a joystick, the fire button enables you to jump.

## Contraptions




**5.25" disks only**

Poor old Zack. It's his first day on the shop floor at Gadgetco, and, as a prank, his less than cooperative workmates have hidden his tools. Worse still, the 'suits ' are coming and the production line's down — what a first day! Still, it does give us a good reason to help Zack to put things right, in this fully playable cut-down version of Mindscape's latest 3D isometric puzzler.

**How to start**

Log on to the directory in which you have installed the Contraptions demo and type

**Zack [Enter]**

If you have a sound board fitted (the demo supports Ad Lib, Roland and Sound Blaster), activate one of the batch files in the game's main directory.

**How to quit**

While playing the game, press Esc to reveal an options menu. Move to the Quit option and press Fire.

**Hardware required**

At least a 286-based PC with VGA graphics. Ad Lib, Sound Blaster and Roland sound cards are all supported, though not essential.

**Control**

Move Zack in any one of eight directions around the three-dimensional landscape by use of either a joystick or the number keys surrounding the '5' on your PC keypad.

Zack will automatically jump on buttons or activate wall switches when he's simply moved towards them.

Pressing Esc calls up an options menu, while pressing Enter or Fire confirms your selection.

**How to play**

The object of this demo is to help Zack get the Gadgetco factory running smoothly by repairing all non-working machinery. To do this, he must first explore every room and collect his missing tools.

Colour-coded switches on the floor and walls operate gadgets and remove obstacles — although it's up to you to find out what's connected to what. Best of luck ...


CAPTAIN FORGETFUL
IT'S A QUIET DAY, AND CAPTAIN FORGETFUL IS RELAXING AT HOME, AS PER USUAL..
♫ CLOSER EACH DAAAY... HOME AND AWAAAAAY! ♫
HOME AND AWAY
SUDDENLY THE PEACE AND TRANQUILITY IS SHATTERED BY THE CAPTAIN'S EMERGENCY COMLINK..
CAPTAIN FORGETFUL! COME IN, CAPTAIN FORGETFUL!
WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG?
CAPTAIN - A SCHOOL BUS FULL OF ORPHANS IS TEETERING ON THE EDGE OF THE GRAND CANYON!! YOU MUST ACT QUICKLY, OR THEY'RE GONERS FOR SURE!
OH MY GOD! THE CHILDREN!
I'VE GOT TO SAVE THEM!
IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, THE CAPTAIN SHEDS HIS CASUAL GARB AND IS TRANSFORMED INTO..
CAPTAIN NECROPHILE!
FORGETFUL
THAT'S WHAT I SAID ISN'T IT? ISN'T THAT WHAT I SAID?
UP, UP, AND AWAAAY!
ZOOM
CHARLIE BROOKER™
PUTER EXCHAN
HELLO. I HEAR YOU BUY, SELL AND EXCHANGE ALL TYPES OF PC SOFT AND HARDWARE!
YES THAT'S TRUE. IN FACT, HERE AT THE INCREDIBLE TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD COMPUTER EXCHANGE
THATS "THE TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD COMPUTER EXCHANGE"
..WE PAY UP TO AN AMAZING £15 CASH FOR P.C. GAMES
...I'D JUST LIKE TO REPEAT THAT IN SLIGHTLY LARGER LETTERING IF I MAY...
..UP TO AN AMAZING £15 CASH FOR P.C. GAMES!
WE ALSO STOCK A HIGHLY IMPRESSIVE RANGE OF SECOND-HAND TITLES AT ALMOST OFFENSIVELY LOW PRICES. SO THERE.
PART EXCHANGE OLD P.C. GAMES FOR NEW!
OKAY. THANKS.
CIAO!
COMPUTER EXCHANG
EXTRA! EXTRA! TWO HUNDRED ORPHANS IN CANYON DEATH PLUNGE TRAGEDY!
OH NO! I FORGOT!
SORRY, I MEANT TO ASK YOU BEFORE... DO YOU HAVE A PHONE NUMBER I CAN REACH YOU ON??
CHEERS.
WHY OF COURSE.. IT'S 071 388 2613!!
OPEN TIL SEVEN P.M. MON TIL SAT..... 5PM ON SUNDAYS.
the TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD COMPUTER EXCHANGE
143 WHITFIELD STREET
(NR. WARREN STREET TUBE)
LONDON W1P 5RY
FAX: 071 388 5150
WE ALSO BUY, SELL AND EXCHANGE SEGA, NINTENDO, AMIGA, ST AND LYNX HARD AND SOFTWARE. CALL US NOW FOR DETAILS. WE'RE ACE, WE ARE.

# How to use the cover disk

1. Put the cover disk in any disk drive and log on to that drive. For instance, if you have put it 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.

**Important note 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:

**PCR C [Enter]**

## Helpline

If you have 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 12.30 pm weekdays.

## 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.

However, cover disks are used at the reader's own risk. PC Review can accept no responsibility for damage to either data or hardware caused by use of our cover disks.

We also make every effort to ensure that the contents of our cover disks 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 disks

## 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**
**Merthyr Tydfil**
**Mid-Glamorgan**
**Cymru**
**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

# Amstrad's back — and this time it's personal

Although Amstrad supremo Alan Sugar bemoaned his company's lack of a forthcoming 'blockbuster' during his recent failed attempt to buy back his company from its shareholders, the Essex-based hardware giant almost immediately scored a notable first by beating Apple to become the first manufacturer to produce a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA).

Essentially an electronic organiser in a similar mould to those produced by Sharp, Casio, Psion and Microwriter, Amstrad's 'Pen Pad' is ahead of the pack in that it recognises hand-written input in a number of different languages.

In what was a thinly-veiled broadside aimed at Apple (whose own proposed PDA, the Newton, has yet to see the light of day) Alan Sugar Alan Sugar addressed the Pen Pad's launch with the following:

"I keep reading about PDA machines that are due from the States, but we have yet to see one working. Their deadlines come and go, but I am pleased to say that Amstrad, without any advance publicity, will start to ship the Pen Pad in May, and at a price that will embarrass the competition when their products eventually arrive."

Alongside its handwriting recognition, the Pen Pad also features a diary, address book, calculator, calendar and automatic telephone dialling facility.

Amstrad claims that the 128K Pen Pad will run for 40 working hours from three standard AA batteries (it also incorporates a tow-year Lithium back-up battery). In addition, it is designed to connect to any PC with a serial port for the back-up and transfer of information.

## INBRIEF...

● **The sun may have just popped its head through the clouds for the first time, but already Westminster Exhibitions is keen to announce details of its Christmas show. The Christmas International Computer Show is scheduled to take place at London's Wembley Conference and Exhibition Centre between November 19th and 21st.**

● **Sky TV's new computer games show, Games World, has become the network's most-watched midweek show, and is second only to The Simpsons in its overall viewing figures.Produced by Hewland International, the company behind Channel 4's popular Gamesmaster, games World now attracts more than half a million viewers every night of the week.**

● **High street electronics giant Dixons has taken over the PC World chain of computer superstores. In a deal worth almost £8.5 million, the company has acquired Vision Technology Group, the operation behind the PC World chain, and is now in control of all four shops - Croydon, West Thurrock, Brentford and Staples Corner.**

● **Despite Southend United's poor results since its players first displayed the name Elonex on their shirts, the PC manufacturer is only too happy to continue its policy of sports sponsorship After a successful year's sponsorship of the Subaru rally team, the company now has its name displayed on two of the team's cars — both of which have got the season off to a flying start by taking first and second places in the recent Vauxhall Rally of Wales.**

● **Kuma's latest PC-related book title is Arts and Letters Apprentice Illustrated, a guide to Computer Support Corporation's graphics and presentation package for Windows. Written by Richard Hunt, the book is designed to make the package easier and more enjoyable to use, and is available now priced at £16.95.**

● **The Spring Computer Shopper Show, scheduled to run from May 20-23 at London's Olympia, will feature a number of specialist areas, including a PC Upgrade Clinic, Multimedia Village, Software Demonstration Theatre and Advice Centre. Further information is available from the organiser, Blenheim OnLine, on (081) 742 2828.**

● **The recession appears to be hitting specialist computer shops harder than most, with a number going out of business since Christmas. Perhaps the most notable of these, in PC terms, was the London-based chain Software Circus, which was among the pioneers of PC gaming in the UK. The firm went into liquidation on March 10th.**

● **Daze Software has launched a new budget software label, going by the name of Games Worth Playing. The first release on the new label incorporates Storm Master, Crystals of Arborea and Meal Mutants, and is out now priced at £9.99.**

# Gravis aims for high flyers




Joystick specialist Advanced Gravis is aiming straight for the specialist field of the flight simulation enthusiast with the launch of its latest offering, the Gravis Analog Pro.

A customised version of its standard stick, the Gravis Analog, the Pro model combines a throttle control with four function buttons (three of which are programmable) and a fire button on the usual metal-reinforced and padded structure.

The stick will operate on any PC equipped with a games port and a minimum of Dos version 3.0.

Priced at £59.99 (inclusive of V.A.T.), the stick comes with a suite of calibration and testing utilities and the highly-acclaimed Shareware game, Commander Keen. For further details, contact Advanced Gravis' distributor Logi (UK) on (0344) 891452.

# A ROM with a view?

**The ever-expanding range of uses for the CD-ROM drive you've always wanted takes on a decidedly leisurely aspect this month, with the release of the AA Hotels and Restaurants in Britain and Ireland compact disc, an Egon Ronay-style visitors' guide which lists and classifies more than 4,400 establishments.**

**Jointly produced by Nimbus and the AA, the guide grades hotels with a familiar 'star' system, and awards restaurants anywhere between one and five rosettes, depending on the quality of food and service.**

**Like all multimedia information discs, the guide's classification is set up so that information can be retrieved in a variety of ways — by searching for vegetarian restaurants in specific areas, or for lists of hotels which cater for guests with dogs and other such requirements and so on.**

**The information is mainly text based, with maps and other illustrations available to users with SVGA systems.**

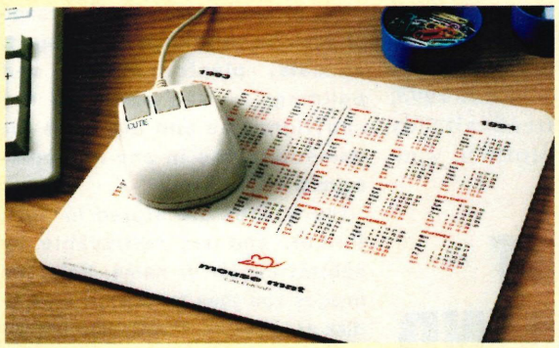
**AA Hotels and Restaurants in Britain and Ireland is available now, priced at £35 (exclusive of Vat). For more on this, and many other CD-ROM titles, contact multi-media specialist Optech on (0252) 714340.**

## PUT IT TO THE FLOOR

Developed by ComputerEasy and distributed in the UK by Guildsoft (call 0752 606200), Floorplan Plus for Windows is a 2D CAD application with a clip-art library of over 125 household objects.

The program allows the user to design any structure, using a variety of wall types, and then to include everything from the kitchen sink to the wiring and plumbing. Results can then be printed out or exported to art packages and other applications.

FloorPlan Plus for Windows is priced at £69.95 (exclusive of Vat) and is available now.



# MAKE A DATE WITH YOUR MOUSE

In what must be a contender for the 1993 'why didn't I think of that?' award, Shieling Technology has combined two essential desktop accessories into a single space-saving unit, with the release of its Mouse Mat Calendar, a 240 x 200mm mat which comes complete with a two-year calendar for 1993 and 1994.

Manufactured in the UK, the mat is a heavy-duty affair, combining a rubber base with a strong PVC work surface and carrying a three-month warranty (you can even mark the expiry date if you like).

Peter Jones, managing director of Shieling Technology, believes that his product succeeds on two levels: "What we have developed is a tough mat to withstand the rigours of daily use and, at the same time, provide a quick and ready source of information," he says.

The Mouse Mat Calendar is available through mail order only, from Shieling Technology, Shieling House, Invincible Road, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 7QU (call (0252) 519224), with the £7.95 price tag covering Vat, postage and packaging.

# Stalker sets out to thwart the pirate

**Having set out to develop a software protection system for its own industrial needs, Southampton-based digital data broadcasting specialist IDAS has now developed a new security program which it believes will help in the fight against software theft, which is estimated to cost the UK software industry up to £300 million per annum.**

**Going by the name of Software Stalker, the new system allows programs to be copied freely, but prevents their unauthorised use. IDAS' John Hunt believes that one particular advantage of this is that programs can now be set up so that illegal copies will work, but only in demonstration mode, thereby acting as a good advertisement for the licensed product.**

**IDAS is currently in discussion with many of the major business software publishers with a view to adding the system to their products, and also hopes to set up deals with a number of games companies.**

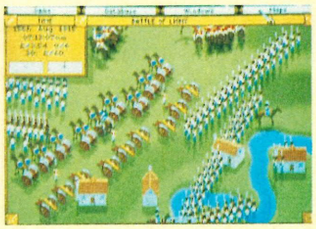
**To demonstrate its belief in the new system, IDAS is to launch a nationwide competition with a prize of £1,000 on offer the first person to run a simple program which it has protected with the new system.**

**For further details of this and any other aspects of Software Stalker, contact IDAS on 0703 670080.**

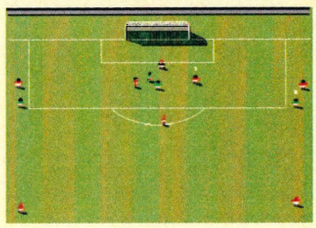
## Zye offers sound solution

Specialist multimedia distributor Zye Technology has launched the first of a new series of 'all-in-one' packages. The SoundTech 2000 Pro Audio Upgrade Kit incorporates a Gravis Ultrasound PC board with a pair of Acoustic Research AV-22 speakers, Gravis PC game pad and a copy of Chuck Yeager's Air Combat. Available now, the kit costs £249 (ex Vat). Further kits are planned for this year, including MPC and PC video upgrades. The Sound TECH kit is available through Dixons and other retail outlets. For further details, contact Zye on (0293) 538666.

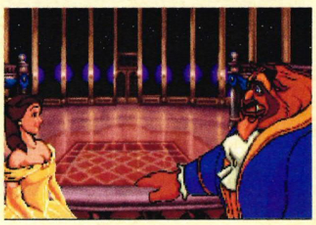




**MicroProse describes Fields of Glory, as not so much a traditional war game as a 'military action game'. Making use of a new graphic viewpoint and user interface, the game allows the player to take control of either faction in Napoleon's final 100 days, across a landscape covering more than 250 miles.**



**Sensible Software's highly-acclaimed soccer simulation, Sensible Soccer, is to finally make its way from the Amiga to the PC. Retaining all of the original's features, including multiple team selection and high-speed action, the game should be available well in advance of the FA Cup final.**

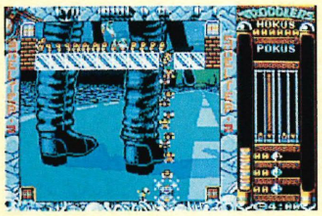


**Disney Software is bringing its parent company's family favourite to your PC's monitor with the release of Beauty and the Beast. Described as being for 'kids of all ages', the game comprises five sub-levels linked by a plot which concerns preparing for the film's climax, the grand ball.**

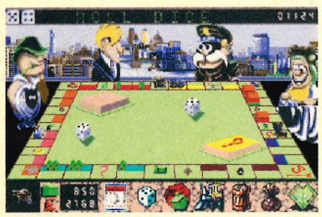



**Pins fall, lights flash and the score mounts up in millions — it must be pinball, that perennial arcade favourite. Now, with 21st Century's Pinball Dreams, you can play out your silver ball fantasies on any one of four digital tables, in full 256-colour VGA, without even leaving your desk.**

COMING SOON



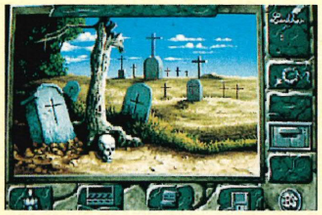

**The trend begun by a bunch of green-haired suicide rodents, as Storm unleashes Troddlers, a 175-level (100 solo levels and 75 for two-players) puzzle game featuring hordes of tiny characters in a race against time. In the two-player game, participants can choose to team up or fight it out.**



**The licence to produce a computer version of Monopoly is now with Supervision, which plans to release the PC version of the perennial board game this month, priced at £34.99. The version will be true to the original, plus your player will be portrayed on screen with a personality all their own.**




**MicroProse is releasing a multi-player, modem-linked version of Geoff Crammond's Formula One Grand Prix . The module contains a full and easy to understand modem set-up screen, so you can now burn rubber with real people rather than computer opponents.**



**The setting is the Yorkshire Moors, so it's perhaps surprising that Black Sect comes from French company Lankhor. This graphic adventure has you investigating spooky goings-on around the village of 'Hobdale', where a dark secret surrounds the fate of a book and your grandfather.**

# One stop shop for Midlands

The concept of the computer supermarket pioneered by the PC World chain appears to be spreading, as the retail group Icon Superstores has opened its first one-stop store in the Merry Hill shopping centre in Dudley.

Open seven days a week, the new shop's 22,000 square feet of space will be occupied by all manner of software, peripherals, accessories and hardware from major manufacturers such as IBM, Compaq, Apple, Apricot, Hewlett-Packard and Toshiba.

According to Icon's chief executive, David Lawton, the stores are designed to cater for individuals and businesses alike: "Our aim is to take the mystery out of purchasing computer equipment and to make it a pleasure and a thrill for business people and consumers alike".

In addition to the standard shopping facilities on offer, Icon plans to use its shop sites to run a series of evening seminars on many aspects of computing and technology. Theses seminars (or 'Arenas' as they're being called) will run twice weekly and will feature presentations from some of the biggest names in the business, including Microsoft and Apple.

Details of future Arenas will be made available through local radio and press announcements.

Icon has plans to open a further 10 superstores throughout 1993, with three sites already earmarked for construction work to begin.



# PICTURE THIS

**Cambridge-based multimedia developer, Eesox, has taken full advantage of the compact disc's storage capacity in its latest release, Image Gallery, a CD-ROM containing more than 1,000 full-colour images suitable for use with many PC productivity software packages.**

**The pictures, which cover a range of subjects as diverse as transport, animals, plants, people and buildings — see above — are copyright-free and available for immediate use in any non-commercial applications.**

**The images are stored in .PCX format, and are retrievable by subject matter or name. Selected images can then be downloaded to disk or imported directly into any art package or DTP document which supports the format.**

**Accessible with any system boasting ISO9660 CD-ROM support and priced at £52.88 (inclusive of Vat), Image Gallery is available now. For further details, contact Eesox on (0223) 264242.**

# GUARDIAN PUTS OUT FEELERS FOR THE BLIND

**Following a link-up with the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB), The Guardian has become the first newspaper to be distributed electronically throughout the nation for the visually impaired.**

**Known as the RNIB Electronic Newspaper, this publication is a stripped-down version of the daily newspaper, compiled into data form and broadcast twice nightly (once at midnight and again at 4.00am) in 15-minute bursts of data which is sent using TV Teletext signals.**

**Using a special decoder attached to the TV aerial, the signal is passed to the user's PC, where it can be retrieved as either Braille, digitised speech or enlarged text, depending on the computer's capabilities.**

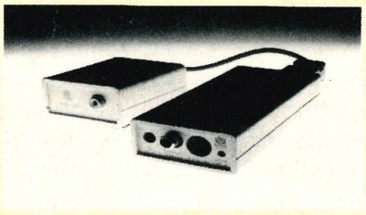
**Although the system is currently used only to broadcast the special version of The Guardian, the RNIB is currently in discussion with a number of other national newspapers and magazines, and hopes that many of them will also be included in the near future.**

**For prospective users who already possess a home computer, the cost of setting up the system starts at £560, which covers installation of the decoder and one year's subscription. For details, contact the RNIB on (071 388 1266).**

# VGA turns TV star

Vine Micros has updated its PC-TV Adapter, with the introduction of a new VGA version. The adapter, which is used to connect any PC — desktop or portable — to a standard TV screen, was initially designed for use in presentations and demonstrations to large numbers of people. However, Vine is keen to stress its uses in other applications including video titling.

The adapter features three output signals: RGB to TV, composite video to standard video recorders and S-Video for compatible machines.



A complete system for any of the above costs £99.95 (ex Vat), while a UHF upgrade ( necessary to enable the system to work with older TVs with standard input sockets) is priced at £35. Further information is available from Vine on (0843) 225714.

# STRIKE COMMANDER







PC shots shown. Actual screen shots may vary.

Strike Commander™ is here - and with a vengeance. Chris Roberts, the writer/designer of this Action-Flight Simulator, has taken flight realism to a level that is nothing short of cinematic. Strike Commander is the next step in the evolution of the interactive movie.

In this compelling tale of global power politics you command Stern's Wildcats, an elite squadron of mercenaries dedicated to flying straight and true in a crumbling world given over to corruption and deceit. You will experience the thrills of air combat as never before. Chris Roberts' revolutionary Real space system lets you see the ground details develop as you rush towards them. Strike Commander is seriously ahead of any other PC Flight Sim.

Strike now.

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# EVESHAM OFFERS £10,000 PRIZE

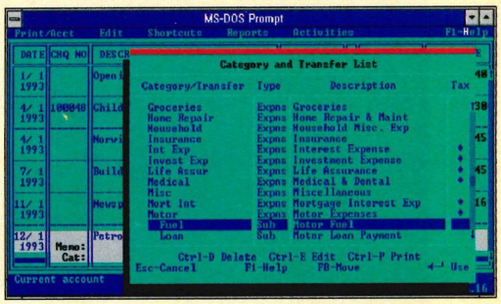
**Worcester-based Evesham Micros is marking its first venture into the Windows software scene with an offer of £10,000 to the user who develops the most ingenious application using its new release, the appropriately-named Applications.**

**Applications has been developed in conjunction with Computer Power specifically for use with Visual Basic 2, and is intended to allow non-programmers to create their own personal database applications without too much fuss. Data compiled under Applications is written in standard dBase format and can therefore be easily transferred to other packages, including Excel and Lotus 1-2-3.**

**The competition is open until March 1994 and will eventually be judged by Evesham Micros' managing director Richard Austin, Bob Barrett of Computer Power and two, as-yet unappointed independent judges.**

**Commenting on the competition, Austin says: "We have no idea what the winning program will do. We will be looking for imagination, ease of use and possibly even commercial potential. We know that there are people out there who can design elegant, functional database applications and we are hoping to encourage them by offering a real incentive to put their ideas into action."**

**Applications requires a machine with a 386SX processor (or better), VGA graphics, Windows 3.1 and Visual Basic 2. It is priced at £199 (exclusive of Vat) and carries a 30-day money back guarantee and 60-day telephone support service. For further details on both the program and competition, contact Evesham Micros on (0386) 765500.**




# Quicken speeds into UK windows

One of America's most popular Windows-based financial control software packages is now available to UK users, as Intuit has released Quicken UK 2.0, an advanced version of the Dos program, Quicken UK 6.0, which stormed into the market last September.

Working in a similar fashion to Microsoft's Money program (see News, Issue 17) the program enables home and small business users to manage complete records of financial transactions — covering all aspects from the setting up of budgets to printing colourful graphs and charts of expenditure breakdowns.

Ian Yarlott, Intuit's business unit manager, points out that the UK version offers more than just a simple language change: "Quicken UK has been developed to incorporate the financial taxes and instruments that are peculiar to the UK," he says.

Quicken UK 2.0 requires Windows 3.1 and 3Mb of free hard disk space, and is priced at £59.95. Further information is available from Intuit's sales line on (0800) 585058.

# Filofax for the system addict

Having spent the bulk of the 1980s becoming a symbol of yuppiedom and Thatcherism, the Filofax is making its slightly belated entrance to the new, 'caring' 1990s with a system developed specifically with computer users in mind.

Once again based on the company's principle of 'plan it, do it, record it', the Filofax System Organiser includes a 3.5" disk pocket in its black or burgundy wallet, and is designed to hold further disks within specially-holed plastic wallets. Also in the wallet are the conventional Filofax pages. In this package, these are orientated towards the business user, with a diary, year planner with dividers, and action sheets, telephone call planner, and perhaps most usefully of all, expenses sheets.

In addition to its disk-storage capabilities, the new Filofax also includes an archive box (or 'mobile office') within its covers, which is used to store projects, information and house records.

The new system is apparently so complex and comprehensive that it even needs a user manual!

The Filofax System Organiser is available from all leading stationery stockists, priced at £69.95, inclusive of Vat.

# Insider information

Specialist book Publisher John Wiley & Sons has released its latest catalogue of software-specific guide books, which includes additions to its 'Insider' series along with an entirely new range, 'Solutions'.

The Insider range, which is produced in conjunction with many of the major software publishers, is designed to offer new insights into many major packages and offers advice on set-up and customisation. The latest offerings in this series cover Visual Basic 2, Paradox for Windows and WordPerfect 6.

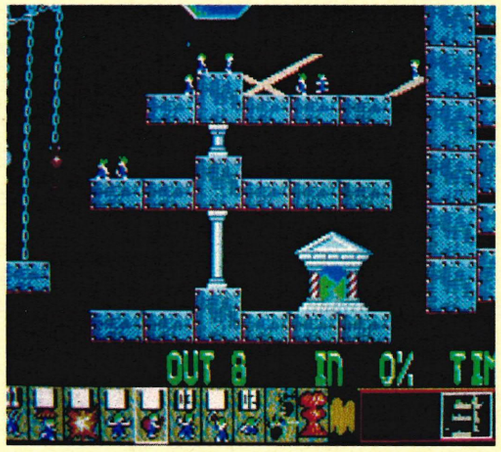
The Solutions series, on the other hand, offers a list of trouble-shooting solutions to everyday problems, and is once again designed to cater for many of the major releases. The titles covered include FoxPro for Windows, dBase for Windows and, once again, WordPerfect 6.

Prices range from £23.95 to £35.95 for the Insider series, and from £21.95 to £26.95 for the Solutions books. For more information, call (0243) 770367.

# Whoops — rodents mutate into humans

In one of those inexplicable nothing-to-do-with-me-guv glitches, we managed to transpose the pictures of Lemmings and Humans in the Alternatively... section of the Creepers review (Issue 18). While it's unlikely that any knowledgeable PC Review readers were fooled, you can cut out and keep the picture, right, as as a reminder just in case.

So, er, Humans is the game featuring hordes of small rodents which will tumble off a cliff unless you assign special powers to them ...? (*You're fired. Ed*).




**This is definitely Lemmings**

# EL-FISH

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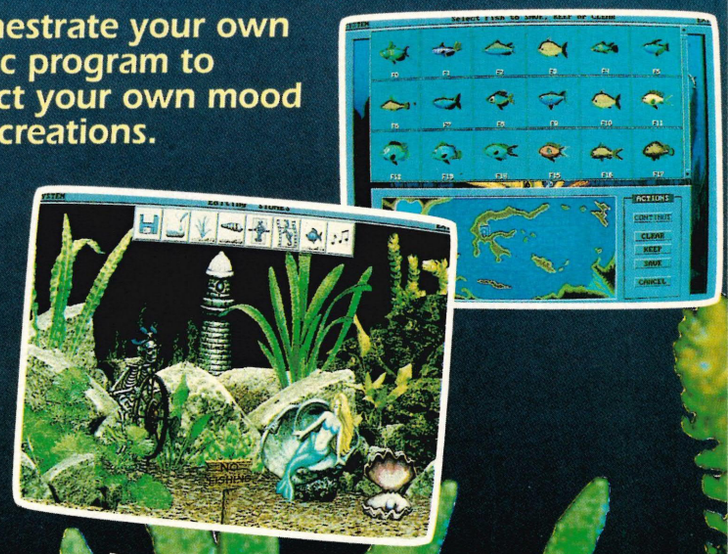
Visually stunning, revolutionary by nature, El-Fish's graphics are at the cutting edge of three dimensional animation. So breathtaking they'll leave you coming up for air as you create your own under-water environment.

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- **Graphics at the cutting-edge of technology which are literally breathtaking.**
- **Creative, innovative, challenging and as hypnotic as a 'real' aquarium.**
- **3-D animation creates realistic action in vibrant environments ... a superb spectacle.**
- **Orchestrate your own music program to reflect your own mood and creations.**



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# Acer packs 'em in

*The Acer PAC 450 could be everyone's dream PC. But is there a danger of too many eggs in one basket?*

■ **John Bennett reports**




**Given the amount going on inside, the Acer PAC 450 is fairly unassuming to look at. It can also be stood upright as a Tower.**

The Acer PAC 450 is, according to Acer, an "integrated PC system combining computer and consumer electronics". PAC stands for Personal Activity Centre (the less said about that the better), but, jargon aside, this is more like a PC which has packed just about every accessory you can think of into it, and then some.

What Acer has done is to take office essentials, like a fax machine, answerphone, and data modem, add a dollop of multimedia (via a soundcard and CD-ROM drive), garnish it with a liberal helping of business, leisure and reference software, and pour the lot into a 486SX PC. What you end up with is a £1,999 PC that'll do pretty much everything but make the tea.

Acer expects to market the PAC on a three-tier basis — to the home/leisure market, small companies, and big business. For the home market, according to Terry Forrest at Acer UK, it will be available in the high street, but decisions have to yet be made about whether to add speakers, joysticks, extra games and educational software, and if so what type. For the home/office user, there are plans to bundle a printer with the system, and e-mail would be a first priority for corporate users. The company is also very interested in including integrated on-line services tailored to users' needs.

Before these bundles are finalised, this is a brief run-down on the main features:

- 25Mhz 486SX PC, with 4Mb of RAM and an SVGA colour monitor. The processor can be upgraded with a single chip, up to a 66Mhz 486DX/2, and there are three free slots for extra cards.
- A music system for CD audio discs, with 8-track mixer, and AM/FM tuner, with 16 presets.
- A 2,400bps fax and modem.
- A TAD (Telephone Answering Device, Acer-speak for a high-tech built-in answerphone).
- An MPC CD-ROM drive. This plays both audio and data CDs. I'm assured that the sound quality is higher than that of a standard CD player because drives made for the PC industry are made to a higher specification. As with a normal CD player, the quality also depends on the amplifier and speakers hooked up to the system.
- Software. As well as Windows 3.1, DOS 5.0 and specialist communications and sound software, there's Microsoft Works for Windows (Multimedia Edition). This is an integrated business package including a word processing, spreadsheet, charts and a database. There's also Microsoft Bookshelf, which is a full reference library, including Roget's Thesaurus, Hammond's Atlas, the Concise Columbia Dictionary of Quotations and the Concise Columbia Encyclopaedia. And in case the unthinkable should happen, every byte of software comes on a back-up CD-ROM disc.

### Putting it all together

It'd wouldn't be too much of a tall order to put 80 percent of the PAC's features together yourself, although the price would start to climb considerably. What would be much harder to do would be to match the way the software and hardware has been tied together so neatly. It's far more than a case of taking all the necessary bits and pieces, lobbing them into the box and then grabbing a van-load of assorted software.

To start with, there's an

attractive and straightforward icon-based menuing system for each of the major features, and every conceivable kind of on-line help. The more unusual devices (for the PC) are all graphically presented, so, for example, the music centre is a picture of a stereo rack system. The buttons work just like your stereo at home; if you can handle that, you can handle this. The same is true of the telephone software, which has all the features you'd find on one of those fancy office jobs.

Everything has been designed so it can be used at the same time. When a call comes in and you're working away on something, the machine decides whether the incoming call is a fax, data file or simple phone call, and a dialogue box pops up asking you how you want to do deal with it. If it's a phone call you might want to answer it, ignore it, or take a message on the built-in answerphone.

If you do decide to take the call, the volume on the CD track or radio will be automatically turn down while you're talking, and you can still carry on working on your spreadsheet, or whatever. And, if you turn the volume down on the front panel of the PC, this will also turn the volume down on the music centre software settings.

You don't have to be using the PAC, either. When it gets an incoming message it will automatically switch itself on to deal with the call (called SmartStart), and turn itself back off again once it's done. Then when you wander in, bleary-eyed, to the office in the morning, for example, a blinking light on the front panel tells you that there are messages waiting. So there's no chance of missing an important message, and no more having to leave your PC on overnight for a modem call and running up the electricity bill.

You can also set it to send faxes at a set time, to take advantage of cheap rate calls — or simply use it as the world's most expensive alarm clock/radio.

SaveSmart is another neat piece of work which allows the PAC to be turned off mid-stream. When it's turned on again it boots straight back to where you were when you left off — the same file open, saved, and exactly where you left it.

### Where's the catch?

With the best will in the world, machines will still go wrong, and the more complicated they are, the more there is to go wrong. So, are you're putting all your eggs in one basket? If the hard disk crashes, that's your fax and modem out of action. With a fax machine or answerphone this doesn't happen, and with an external modem you simply plug it into another PC.

It's difficult to say from a preview how well the PAC will stay the distance. It looked anything but jerry-built, and the components, like the Sound Blaster card, are tried and tested standards. A couple of months back, I had a similar PC from Acer's PowerLine range for a long term test, and was impressed with the performance, upgradability and finishing. As ever there was the odd niggle or two, but it was a PC that I'd happily recommend.

As a games machine, there are a couple of possible difficulties that spring to mind. The number of TSRs that might be lurking around to handle clever bits like the fax, SmartSave and the wake-up ability, are likely to chew up base memory. This may mean some clever memory management for more memory-hungry games, or it's back to the old boot disk.

The other problem is that the hard disk space left after all the extra gubbins amounts to only 70Mb, after starting with 130Mb. This is a bare minimum nowadays, what with games software gleefully weighing in at 10-20Mb a throw. One suggestion I had thrown at me was to delete functions you don't need (you can always put it back again), but this seems to defeat the point of the machine. It would be worth splashing out the cash on a model with a larger hard disk.

### Worth the expense?

At first, I expected the Acer PAC to be a very expensive toy, a marketing gimmick at best. I came out with a silly grin on my face having been proved very wrong, and having seen what was undoubtedly one of the most desirable PCs I'll ever get my grubby paws on. There's still a touch of the rich boy's toy, but the level of ready-to-go integrated features and the competitive price make this a genuinely practical PC for home and business use.

Bar a printer and a photocopier, the Acer PAC 450 has everything you might need to run a small office (apart from staff). It's an easy to use, powerful 486 PC, with call monitoring, 24-hour phone, fax and modem, and integrated business and reference software. The sound card and CD-ROM also open up a wide range of business possibilities for multimedia presentations.

At home, the range of generally useful features, the CD-ROM reference library, music, educational and leisure facilities are going to be very attractive, particularly since it's all set up and ready to go. Obviously many people already have phones, faxes, etc, so the value of this machine will depend to an extent on whether linking them all together gives you specific advantages

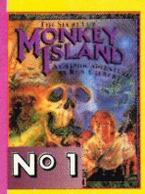
From what I've seen so far, I'll take a dozen. Gimme, gimme.

## Acer PAC 450 486SX

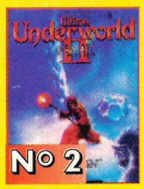
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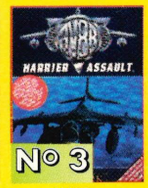
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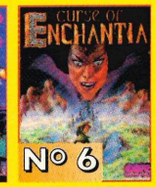

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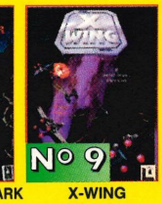

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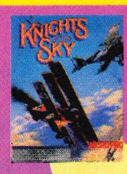
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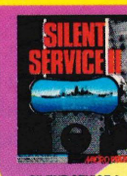
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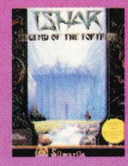
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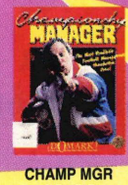
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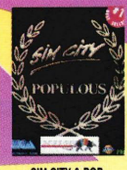
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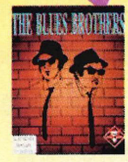
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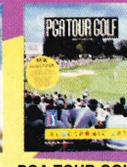
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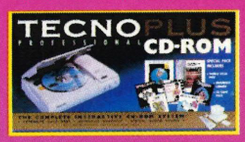
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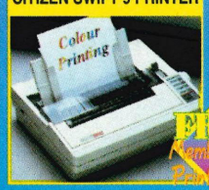
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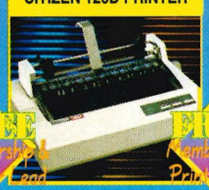


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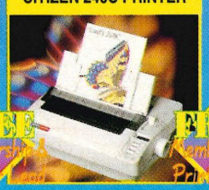


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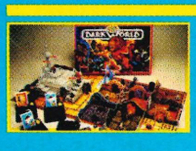
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# Microsoft *Flight Simulator 4*

**It may not have fractal graphics, it may not boast Gourad shading, it may be all of 10 years old, but Flight Simulator 4 is still held in deep affection by a whole generation of PC pilots. Peter Worlock looks at FS4's lasting appeal and guides through all the add-on disks available for this most venerable of flight sims**

The state of the flight simulator art is advancing almost daily. The latest generation boasts fractally-generated terrains,high-tech instrumentation, the newest military aircraft with supersonic capability, and weapons systems straight off the evening news.

But the most popular, most successful flight simulator of all puts you at the controls of a civilian Cessna, stooging around the skies at around 100mph. There's no combat to speak of. And the terrain is embarrasingly like a billiard table with a few building blocks scattered across it. So what, exactly, is the appeal of Microsoft Flight Simulator?

Affectionately known as FS4, the daddy of all flight sims is uniquely successful among entertainment software. It's rapidly approaching its 10th birthday — the original PC version appeared not long after the first IBM PC itself — and it's the centre of a worldwide sub-culture that communicates via modems and online systems. It boasts nearly as many software add-ons as leading business programs like Lotus 1-2-3, dBase or AutoCAD.







**It's not often that you find a DC10, or a Cessna, in your flight sim, but you do in FS4, left and below left, respectively. Also, just check out the detail on those instrument panels.**

But why? Part of the answer is the program's pedigree, and the marketing clout of Microsoft.

Although it was by no means the first flight sim for PCs, it revolutionised everyone's idea of what flight sims could be — for its time FS was graphically excellent. And while Microsoft's reasons for taking on Flight Simulator, from a small US software company called SubLogic, have never been clear — the result is beyond doubt: if a company with Microsoft's 'reputation', a company that brought the world the IBM PC's operating system and many of its leading business applications, was putting its name behind a 'game', then that game was OK with the world's business computer users.

In fact, Microsoft Flight Sim became so much a part of the business computing scene that it was adopted as the accepted test of 'true' IBM PC-compatibility in the early days of the clones. When US and Far East manufacturers began making PC-compatibles they had several goals: their machines had to run MS-DOS; they had to run leading applications like 1-2-3 and dBase, and they had to run Microsoft Flight Simulator. Many failed the last test, and went to an early grave.

While Microsoft's name, and the simulator's revolutionary approach, explain its early success, they don't explain its remarkable longevity. That depends on something more subtle; FS4 has a depth of realism that's unmatched even by the very latest combat sims.

For example, in the prop-driven Cessna that is FS4's standard aircraft you'll find every critical instrument and control you'd expect to find in its real equivalent — right down to carburetor heating, engine magnetos, elevator trim and instrument panel lights. Compare that to, say, Falcon 3.0 (perhaps the most 'realistic' of the combat sims) where it's obvious that many — or even most — of the instruments aren't included simply because there's too much to get on to the screen (or even three screens).

To take another example: compare FS4's weather simulation with the environment in any other flight simulator. In the others you're lucky to find any weather at all — perhaps a few clouds or a solid grey overcast, maybe a single random wind strength and direction. FS4 accurately models cloud layers and wind conditions, including different wind directions and strengths at different altitudes. You can also include random turbulence, thunderstorms, and frontal drift where a weather front moves realistically across your flying area bringing with it radical changes in weather.

A third area of superiority is in instrument simulation. Flight Simulator 4 is capable of acting as a genuine instruction aid to real pilots learning instrument flying. All of the standard electronics are included, such as communications radios, direction finders, distance measuring equipment andeven receivers for navigation beacons.

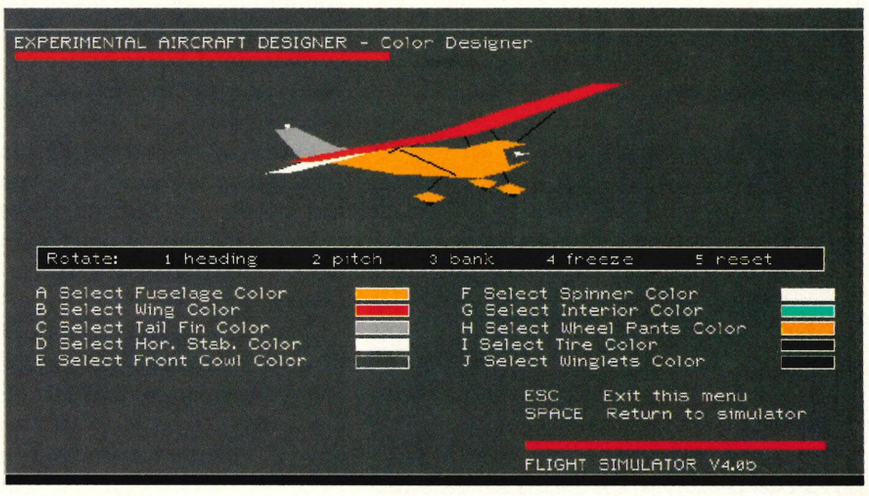
Of course, the provision of those instruments would be pretty worthless without the appropriate electronics in the simulated world, and that leads us to a fourth area where FS4 is unmatched: the astonishing degree of accuracy with which the real world is modelled.

FS4's graphics are undoubtedly crude compared with the fractal landscapes of Falcon 3.0 and others. But while some flight sims accurately model small parts of the world, FS4 covers much of the western world.

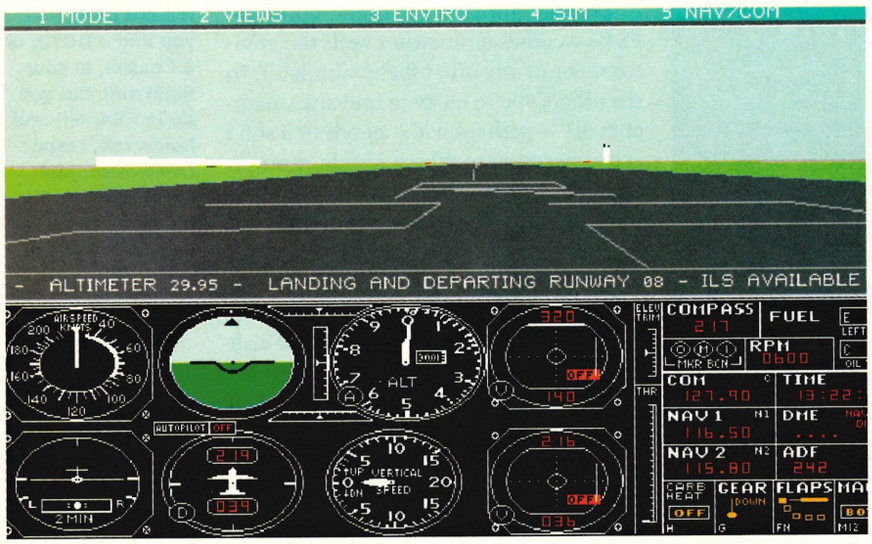
Virtually all of North America, Western Europe and Japan are included, with all major airports, road and rail networks,cities, towns, and natural and man-made landmarks. Because of the emphasis on instrument flying, FS4 also includes real-world navigation aids like VOR transmitters and Instrument Landing Systems.

In the basic package you get five detailed areas in the US containing 118 major and not-so-major airports. Add-on scenery disks and extras from other Flight Simulator enthusiasts provide hundreds more.

Perhaps last on the list of outstanding features are, surprisingly, some of those 'crude' graphics. It may not have state-of-the-art imaging but FS4's designers aren't layabout seither: you'll see 747s and other aircraft near major airports, sailboats on lakes and oceans, and fuelling tankers and otherground vehicles around runways and terminals.




**The aircraft designer: just one of many third party add-ons available for the official, core program.**

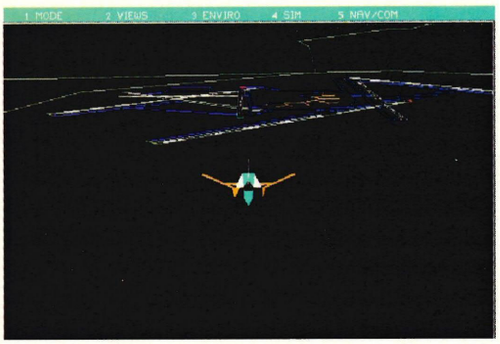



**The permutations are almost endless: using radio control, above, and out on a flying lesson, below right.**

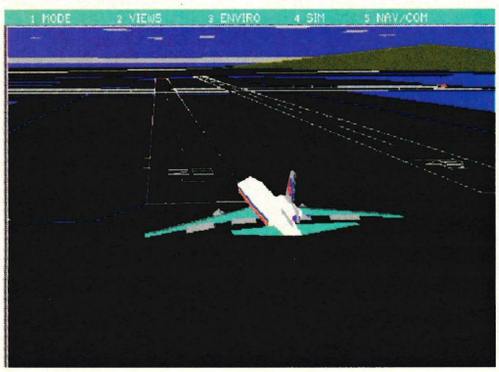
FS4 is still the only simulator that lets you fly around real-world landmarks. Try flying under the Golden Gate Bridge in SanFrancisco, or the Brooklyn Bridge in New York; do a close fly-by of the Statue of Liberty and the World Trade Centre, or the Eiffel Tower in the Western Europe add-on scenery disk.

And while most software starts and ends when you remove the shrink-wrap, FS4 sometimes seems to go on forever (see the Into the Wide Blue Yonder panel on page 28).

If you come to FS4 from other, combat-oriented, sims you'll need a strong sense self-discipline. FS4 demands to be taken seriously and if you treat it like a game you'll tire of it quickly. Unlike combat sims, there are no missions and no preset objectives. Also unlike other sims, there's no winning and losing, so you have to set your own goals and rate your ownperformance. Barnstorming aimlessly around the sky, checking out the scenery but that appeal can't last forever.




**Chicago airport by night, above, and landing a DC10, below. FS4's accurate models of airports are second to none.**




Instead, you have to create your own missions and try to fly them to the best of your ability. For example, you can simulate real world flights — say, from Boston to New York, or (using add-on scenery disks) from London over to Paris.

But for maximum enjoyment you have to put the emphasis on 'simulate'. That means doing correct take-offs, visual navigation, communicating with air traffic control and making your best landing on the correct runway (and, yes, air traffic does tell you which runway).

Once you've mastered basic flight and visual navigation, you can increase the realism of the sim, start flying in random weather and then progress to instrument flying.

The buzz of making a night flight on instruments and making your destination on time and on the money is every bit as good as downing half a dozen MiGs in Falcon 3.0, although it may lack the excitement in the process. And there's also a graphical bonus: FS4 looks better at night, with cities and highways lit up, and the all-dancing lights of a major airport.

Microsoft throws in some other challenges, like WW1 combat mode, crop-dusting and formation flying, but most fans of the program spurn these fripperies for the real challenge of flying point to point.

If the task seems too tough, there's an added bonus in the program's series of flying lessons which aren't just the printed "talk through" you get with most sims, but on-screen instruction that takes you step by step through basic take-offs, straight and level flight, landings, aerobatics and navigating on instru-

## SOME HARDWARE REQUIRED

**One of FS4's big advantages over the latest competition is that you definitely don't need state-of-the-art hardware to fly it.**

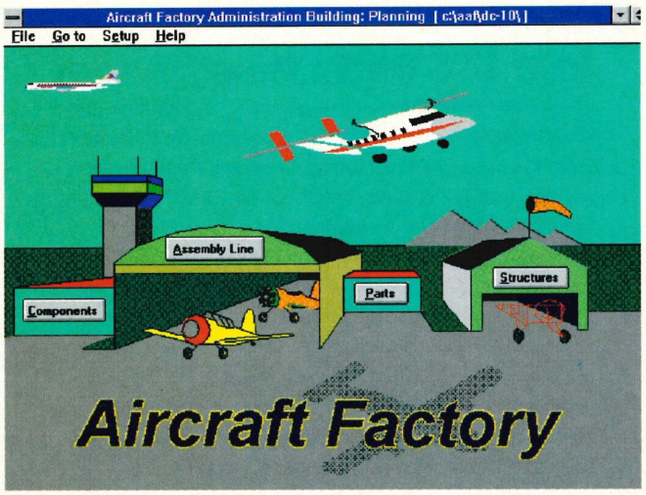
**Unlike many rivals, this is one that'll run acceptably well on 8088- or 8086-based PCs, but Microsoft includes specific program modules to make the best of whatever processor you have (most of my flying is done on a 16MHz 286 notebook and the performance is perfectly acceptable). Similarly, it supports just about every display adapter from CGA up. Although the better your display, the better the results — and VGA is recommended — it's still acceptable in CGA or Hercules monochrome. There are also graphics modes for portable LCD VGA, although it helps if you can switch the palettes to get the best results. Of course, if you enjoy instrument flying your display is pretty much irrelevant.**

**Even a hard disk is optional, although it is strongly recommended. And if you begin to explore the vast world of add-on scenery, then a hard disk becomes essential and you start to push up against some fairly heavy memory requirements.**

**The final hardware question is on flight controls. You can use just about anything from the keyboard to a mouse, joystick or dedicated flight controller. There are those who go so far as to add a control yoke and rudder pedals, others who settle for a specialised flight sim joystick (with extras like a throttle control wheel on the base) — and a few eccentrics (like me) who prefer the keyboard.**

**Prices range from a few pounds for a basic joystick (the least satisfactory solution since you need to swap hands constantly from stick to keyboard) to more than £100 for top-line joysticks and control yokes.**






**At the Aircraft Factory: time to start designing your own set-pieces for use in FS4.**

ments. If, or when, you master all this, you can go on to try designing your own planes, designing your own scenery (put your local airfield into the simulator) or flying with other people's creations.

It may be stating the obvious, but the purpose of a computer simulation is to recreate a real-world possibility. You can take the best of the combat sims and fly them for the rest of your life, and you'll be no closer to knowing how to fly a modern combat jet. But a hundred hours in FS4 will teach you a lot that you could put into action at your local flying school. That's a real simulation.

# The software directory

The FS4 family is large and diverse; here we've picked out a wide-ranging list of add-on and scenery disks, many from third party publishers, all designed to enhance the original program, also listed below.

### Microsoft Flight Simulator 4.0
### Microsoft (0734 270001), £42.50

The current version is 4.0B, which is required to use many of the add-on software listed below. If you have version 4.0 or 4.0A, you can receive a free upgrade — contact Microsoft for details.

### Aircraft & Scenery Designer (ASD)
### Microsoft , £27.75

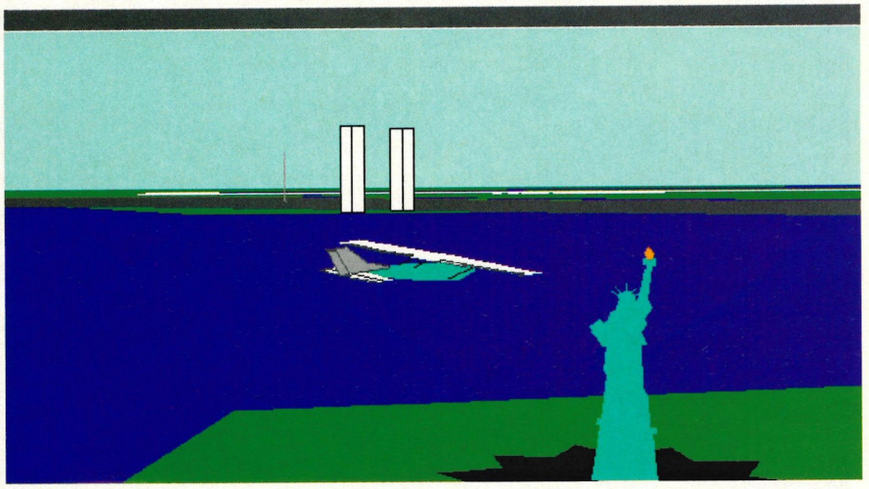
Essential if you want to create your own scenery, or to use scenery files created by others. Also lets you create a wider range of aircraft than the basic designer included in FS4 itself.

### Scenery Enhancement Editor (SEE)
### Mallard
### Digital Integration (0276 684959), £29.99

Works with ASD (ASD required) to create highly detailed scenery files. Lets you use object libraries (buildings, roads, etc) and re-use them in different files.

### Sound, Graphics & Aircraft (SGA)
### Bruce Artwick Organisation/Mallard
### Digital Integration, £29.99

Adds sound support for Ad Lib, Sound Blaster, Covox and Thunderboard add-in sound boards, among others, as well as



**Buzz the Statue of Liberty on your way into New York**

improved sound effects from the PC's internal speaker. You can configure the effects so that, for example, you get engine and instrument noises from the internal speaker, with other synthesised sounds from your soundboard. Lucky Sound Blaster owners will also get synthesised speech from the air traffic controllers.

SGA also adds specific graphics drivers for high-resolution display systems: there's an improved 640x400 driver for all VGA systems, and custom instrument panels for SVGA systems in 800x600 and 640x480 modes.

Finally, the package gives you four accurately modelled aircraft, including Concorde and a WWII P51D Mustang.

### Aircraft & Adventures Factory (AAF)
### Bruce Artwick Organisation/Mallard
### Digital Integration, £39.99

This is a Windows-based aircraft designer, and much more powerful and flexible than the official Microsoft package. Despite the use of Windows, the package is clumsy and often difficult to use, and it requires Microsoft's ASD for best results — although you can achieve some success without it.

Planes you create can be swapped with other enthusiasts — AAF isn't necessary for flying with FS4.

A second module — the 'adventure' part of the name — lets you create missions to be performed within FS4. Using a macro language very much like Microsoft QuickBasic, you can set tasks for yourself or other pilots and monitor performance. Mallard has produced two good examples (£29.99 each), also distributed by Digital Integration.

Flight Adventure No701 sets you two flight plans — one for visual and one for instrument flight — and monitors how well you perform. Highlights include 'intelligent' air traffic control with synthesised speach on Sound Blaster cards, which provides an astonishing sense of realism. Rescue Air 911 puts you at the controls of an air ambulance with injured patients to be collected and flown to hospital as quickly as possible.

### Northern England Scenery Area
### Flight Simulations
### Digital Integration, £29.99

One for British fliers (SubLogic's Western Europe scenery only covers southern England), Flight Simulations has mapped the north of England from Sligo in Ireland, to Newcastle to Manchester. As a bonus, you also get many airfields in southern England, the Channel Islands and France (requires Microsoft ASD, SubLogic Western Europe Scenery Disk, and MS-DOS 5.0 is recommended).

## Into the Wide Blue Yonder

**The basic Flight Simulator 4 package comes with more than enough variety to keep you busy for months. Apart from the core Cessna 182 light aircraft, there are less serious (but impressive) models of a Gates LearJet and a Schweizer 2-32 class sailplane (or glider).**

**The program also includes a rudimentary aircraft designer as standard, so you can modify the existing models — within limits — to emulate other planes.**

**For those who want to fly other planes without the sometimes frustrating business of re-modelling, you need a modem and access to either Cix or CompuServe, two on-line services that act as virtual clubhouses for FS4 fans in the UK and worldwide, respectively.**

**Cix is based in the UK but has London access numbers only, which means a long-distance call for many UK users (call (081) 390 8446 — voice phone — for details). CompuServe is US-based, but has several access numbers in Britain that can mean cheaper phone calls. On the other hand, connection charges are much lower for Cix than for CompuServe.**

**Whichever you join, you'll find an Aladdin's cave of Flight Simulator goodies. Fans around the world use add-on software to create dozens of extra planes that you can fly in FS4 — from early biplanes like the Tiger Moth, through WWII famous names like the Spitfire and the P51 Mustang, to modern jets. There are also a number of unusual types — modern civilian airliners, the huge Hercules military transport, even a microlite. And as this feature was being written, a torrent of new designs was flooding the flight sim conferences on Cix and CompuServe.**

**Moreover, both Cix and CompuServe will give you access to thousands of square miles of additional scenery. Some are highly detailed versions of existing scenery; others are completely new areas; and — of particular interest to British pilots — a few represent UK regions and airports.**

**All of these planes and scenery files are the work of dedicated enthusiasts and cost you nothing beyond the price of your phone call and time spent online (which, admittedly, can be sometimes be substantial: a large, detailed scenery file can run to half a megabyte or more).**




**Hawaii is just one of the exotic locations available on separate scenery disks published by Mallard and distributed in this country by Digital Integration (for details, see the software directory, left).**

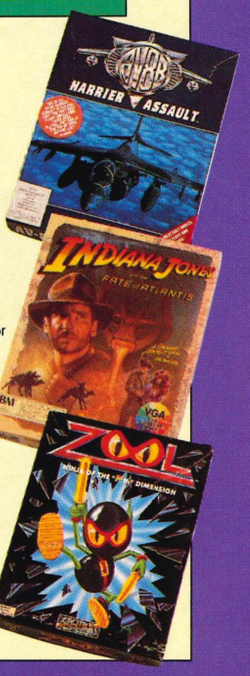
# sound sense

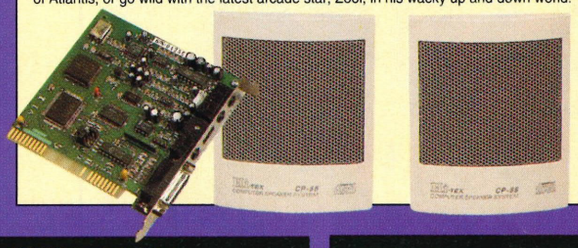
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Mallard also publishes three disks of add-in scenery for FS4. All are very dense, detailed representations of small areas covering Hawaii, Tahiti and the Grand Canyon.

### SubLogic Scenery Disks
### SubLogic
### PDQ (021 625 3377)

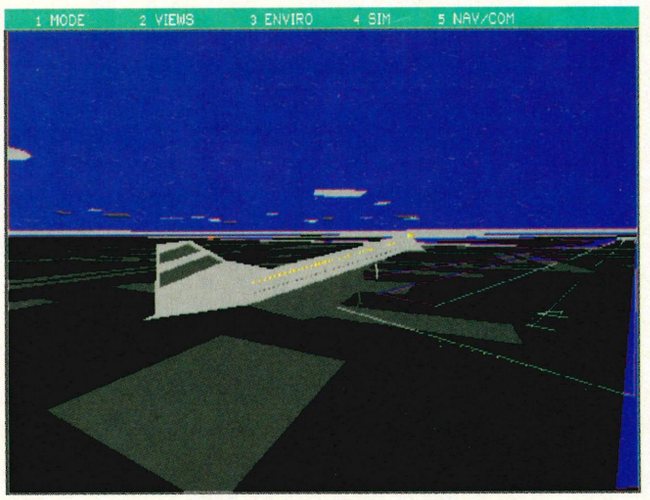
The original add-on scenery for Flight Simulator, the SubLogic collection concentrates on the US and Japan, although there are newer, more detailed packages for Great Britain (£39.95), in addition to the standard Western Europe Scenery Disk (£17.95).The original disks (all £17.95) cover the south-eastern, north-western and mid-western USA, and Japan. New packages (all £39.95), often combining two original scenery disks with extra detail, cover the southern US, east and west coasts of the US, Japan and Hawaii.

### Others

The list above covers only the products that are of greatest general interest — there are dozens more for more specialised tasks. For example, Digital Integration distributes two utilities to help you master the myriad files you can find filling your hard disk if you add many of these scenery, aircraft and utility packages.

Airport and Facility Directory (Mallard, £19.99) gives you an on-line reference of more than 1,200 airports, together with all navigation and radio instrument settings; FS Pro (Mallard, £29.99) helps in managing Flight Simulator 4's multitude of simulation and scenery modes, as well as adding an airport and aircraft database.

If your budget has been overwhelmed by new aircraft and commercial scenery, you can find a multitude of similar (albeit less capable) utilities on Cix and CompuServe that are either public domain (free) or shareware. Also online — and arguably of more value — are a host of informative text files and tutorials that can help you overcome memory conflicts, advise on problems and solutions in using the commercial utilities, and generally keep you flying.




**And, of course, you can also fly Concorde with the SGA scenery disk (detailed in the software directory, above).**



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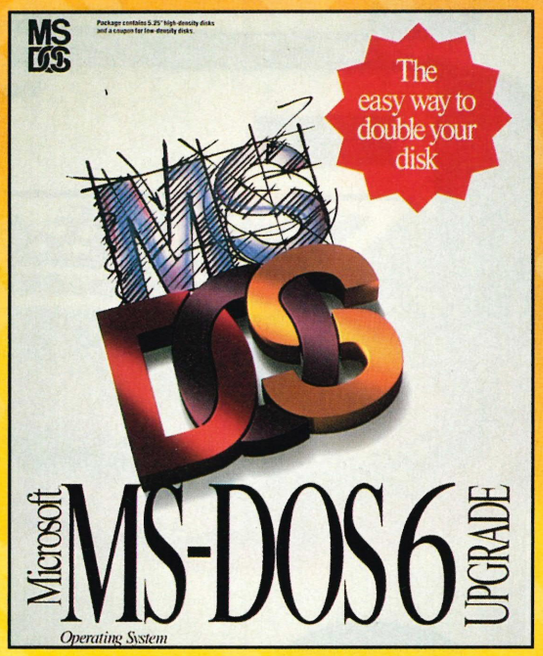
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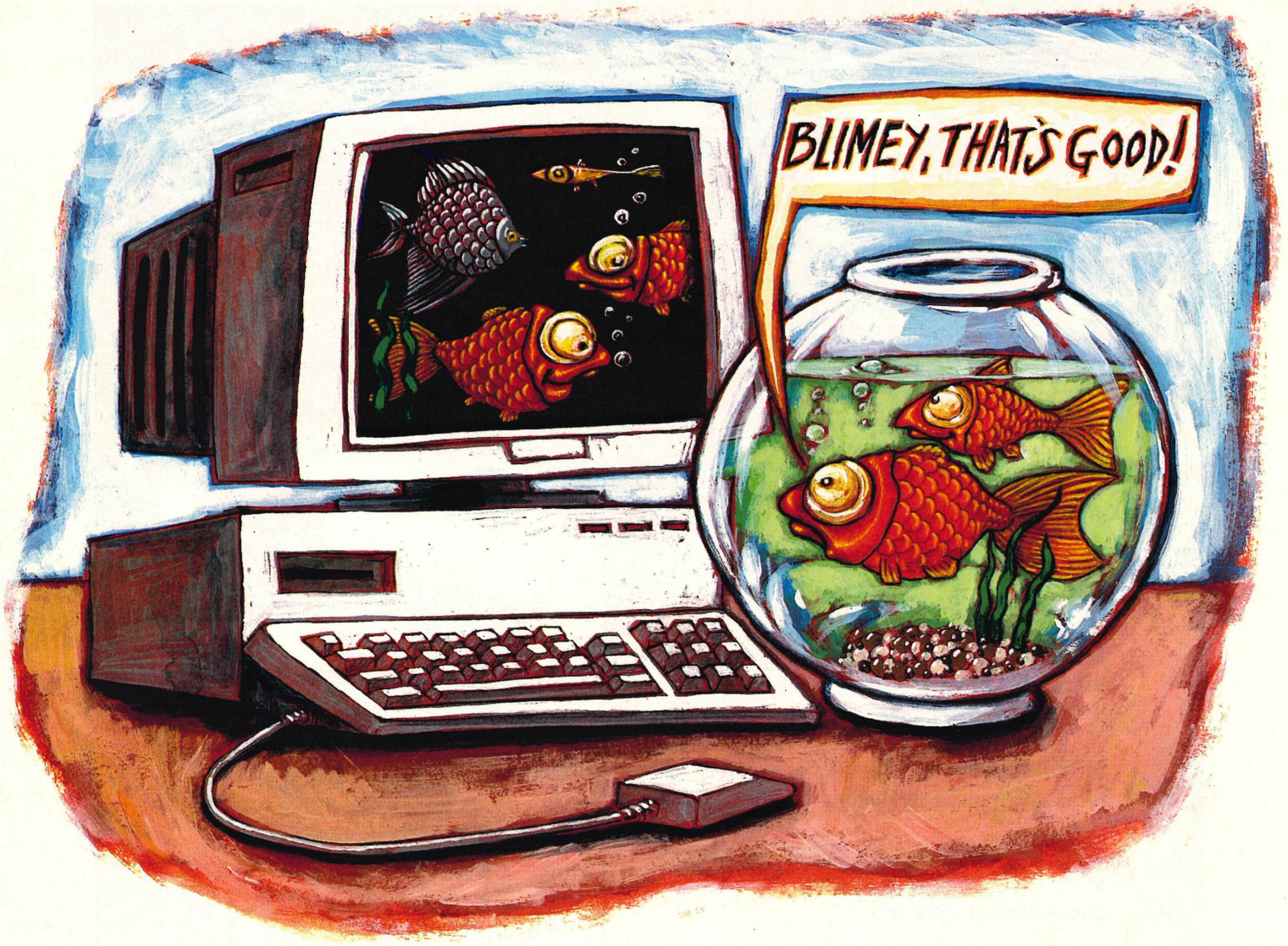
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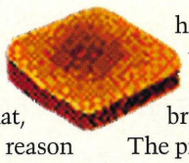
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# Screen savers



Never mind all that rubbish about screen savers being sensible software utilities. If you believe that, you'll believe anything! The real reason why people run screen savers is simply because they are fun.



In theory it is possible for a ghost image to be burnt permanently into the phosphors of your screen if you leave your computer unattended for any length of time. In practice, this is unlikely to be a real danger unless you are in the habit of leaving your PC unattended for days on end with the screen turned up to maximum brightness.

The problem is more likely to arise on old text-based monochrome monitors. On these, the same rows of phosphors (for example, the box around the main window of a word processor) might be continuously illuminated day after day whether or not the PC is being used. But these days few PCs apart from portables use monochrome screens. And most portables have a built-in mechanism to turn off the screen when not in use.

Probably the computers that are least at risk of suffering burn-in are those that run the multi-coloured, continually changing environment of Microsoft Windows. So it may seem odd that most screen saver packages are specially designed to run in Windows.

In fact, it's not odd at all. Because Windows is great for graphics. And most screen savers are no more nor less than sets of little graphic animations that go



**You can decorate your PC screen with flying toasters, fish or just abstract patterns. Screen savers are fun even if they don't serve any great purpose. Huw Collingbourne sifts his way through those on offer**

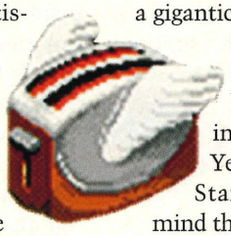
into action whenever the PC is not being used for something more boring.

There are other, simpler, ways of saving your screen (turning the monitor off, for instance). But as I was saying, they tend to be less fun ...

### After Dark 2.0

After Dark is the most famous of all the PC screen savers — and with good reason. Not only does it come with a broad range of animations (over 40) but it also has some of the best and silliest ones around.

The most famous of the lot are its 'Flying Toasters', which features flocks of winged pop-up toasters pursuing slices of freshly popped-up toast. Over the years this saver has attained something approaching cult status. Don't ask me why that should be. Maybe it's something to do with all those poor, sleep-starved businessmen fantasising about the breakfasts they missed in order to get into work early enough to while away a few hours by staring bleary-eyed at the pieces of toast fluttering appetisingly across their screens?



There are plenty of other excellent savers in After Dark too. One of my favourites is 'Marbles'— a kind of on-screen pinball machine in which coloured balls are ejected at the top of the screen and bounce their way through a maze of pins until they gather in heaps at the bottom. Every so often a smiley-face ball turns up and squeaks pathetically whenever it bangs into a pin. Many of After Dark's savers have sound effects and these can be played back through any sound card installed for Windows or (less effectively) through the PC speaker.

After Dark can also mix several animations together so that, for instance, the fish from its aquarium animation might be made to swim through the starlit sky of the 'Starry Night' module.

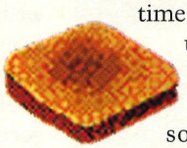
Incidentally, it's worth noting that After Dark is pretty well supported by public domain and shareware authors so you may be able to pick up extra animations for next to nothing. Summary: Windows screen saver with 40-plus animations. Works with DOS sessions run from within Windows. It can be run from the DOS prompt too, in which case it will only blank the screen but not show any animations. Plays sound via any cards installed for Windows or via the PC speaker. A classic.

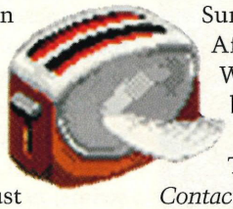
*Price: £35*

*Contact: WindowLine on (081) 642 2277*

### Star Trek: The Screen Saver

Captain Kirk is sitting at the bridge of the USS Enterprise; hosts of unfriendly-looking alien ships flash onto the viewing screen; Mr Scott is performing some delicate but unfathomable operation on the ship's electronics using a gigantic spanner and, just to add to all this, plagues of fast-breeding Tribbles (alien balls of fluff) suddenly start infesting the ship.





Yes, folks, this could only be the Star Trek screen saver. Never mind the Next Generation, this takes us back to the golden age of Kirk, Spock, Sulu and Bones.

There are 15 animations, several of which are based on particular episodes from the TV series. There is the Tholian Web in which the Enterprise becomes entrapped by a network of energy fields that are drawn out on your screen; there's the alien beast, Horta, which chases crew members through a labyrinth of subterranean tunnels and there are the Brain Cell creatures which splat themselves messily all over the inside of your monitor.



Some of the modules come with music from the series and there are also clips of dialogue.

This particular collection is, in fact, a special edition of After Dark. It comes with its own After Dark program so it is completely self-sufficient. Alternatively, if you already possess a copy of the standard version of After Dark, you can just add the Start Trek savers to your existing collection.



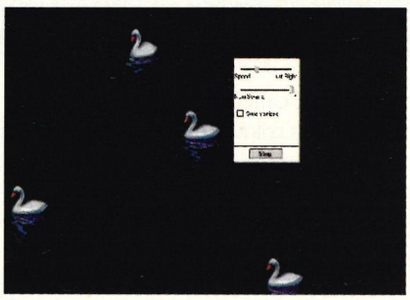
My main criticism is that there are too few snippets of dialogue. Hearing Kirk ask for 'Warp factor two'for the tenth time in the last few minutes can get a bit irritating after a while. Fortunately, however, the sound can be disabled. Summary: A special edition of the After Dark screen saver for Windows with 15 animations based on the Star Trek TV series. A must-have saver for all ardent Trekkies. *Price: £39*

*Contact: WindowLine on (081) 642 2255*

### Intermission 3.0

Intermission is the strongest competitor to After Dark. It includes more than 50 animations, some of which are very spectacular indeed.

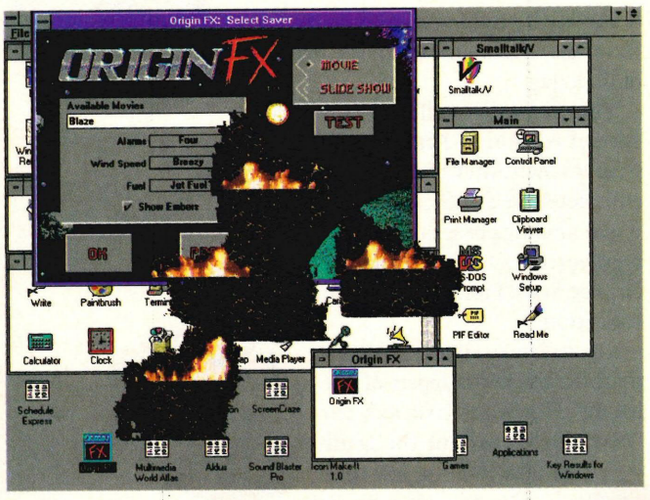
If you have a high resolution monitor capable of displaying 256 colours, you can display many of the savers using



**If you fancy swanning about for a while, just put on your tutu and load up After Dark's Swan Lake saver. Very classy.**



**Probably the most famous screen saver of all time — After Dark's Flying Toasters. Bizarre or what?**




**Above: for a jolly jape, why not burn up a friend's Windows desktop with Origin FX's Blaze! And they call this a screen 'saver'!**



**Left: this is Johnny Castaway. He's a boring old prat who is currently fishing on a little island.**



**And now what's the little fella up to? Diving into the water, it seems. What a (yawn) interesting life he leads ...**

**Right: Wing Commander and Ultima fans can now bring mediaeval spaceships into Microsoft Windows! Though why anyone would want to is beyond me ...**

of public domain screen saver animations. Summary: Another Windows saver that can also blank screens (though not show graphics) in DOS. Startling psychedelic effects. If only it had some flying toasters ...

*Price: £41.11*

*Contact: Mindscape on (0444) 246333*

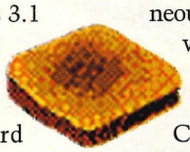
### Johnny Castaway

Billed as 'the world's first story-telling screen saver', Johnny Castaway is virtually a miniature soap opera. It shows the never-ending activities of a tatty little sailor stranded on a tiny desert island with nothing for company but an equally tatty palm tree.

So what does he do with his time? Well, he fishes, he swims, he eats coconuts, he builds fires. Not exactly thrill-packed stuff, you might think. And then, just to liven things up, he also occasionally wines and dines the local mermaid, catches a hungry shark and gets struck by lightning.

But most of the time he just fishes, swims, eats coconuts and builds fires.

Johnny Castaway takes the sublime form of a standard Windows 3.1 screen saver so you don't need any special programs to operate it. All you have to do is add it to the standard Windows desktop using the Control Panel icon.



Personally, I found Johnny Castaway hugely entertaining for all of five (OK, maybe ten) minutes. After that, it started to get on my nerves. The trouble is, it's repetitive and the leading character is a boring old fool. If you like Australian soap operas, you'll probably love it. In summary, it's the dull life story of a washed up old prat. No DOS support.

*Price: £19.99*

*Contact: Sierra OnLine on (0734) 303322*

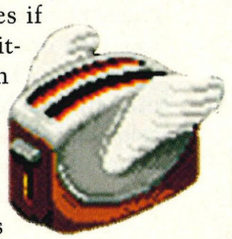
### Screen Craze II

Screen Craze II is a lot more interesting, mainly because it actually lets you create your own screen saving animations.

The modules that come as standard with Screen Craze are, unfortunately, a bit on the dull side. There are bouncing snowmen and penguins, cartoon dinosaurs and a few old faithfuls such as wiggly lines and coloured circles.

In fact, it is fairly easy to develop much more interesting screen savers. Using the editor, you can import background pictures in .BMP, .TIF or .PCX formats (there are plenty of these available from public domain libraries) and then use smaller pictures as the foreground animations, if you wish.

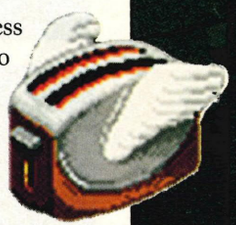
Elements are animated simply by using the mouse to draw out the path they are to follow when the animation runs. You can animate several elements simultaneously, so it's possible to fill your screen with moving images if you wish. The limiting factor of Screen Craze animations is that they are all fixed to run along predefined paths. Other savers such as Intermission and After Dark allow a certain amount of random interaction — things can bump into other objects, fish may eat one another and so on, with the





something called an 'animated palette'. This causes colours to shimmer, flow and deliquesce in a manner that would go surprisingly well with a bit of early Pink Floyd and a few patchouli joss-sticks burning in the background.

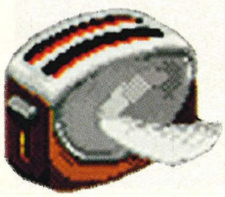
There are also some rather less psychedelic savers including two fairly good aquariums, a John Travolta-style dancing pig (complete with glittering disco ball and optional music) and some battling food mixers.



In common with After Dark, Intermission lets you mix several screen savers together and, if you have no sound card, you can play the sounds through the PC speaker.



Usefully, Intermission can import animations from other screen savers including Norton Desktop's Sleeper and even After Dark itself — which means you can still have access to the full range





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As masters of the flight sim, MicroProse sets the standard for excitement in the sky. Gripping action is at your fingertips, right from the moment you climb into the cockpit.

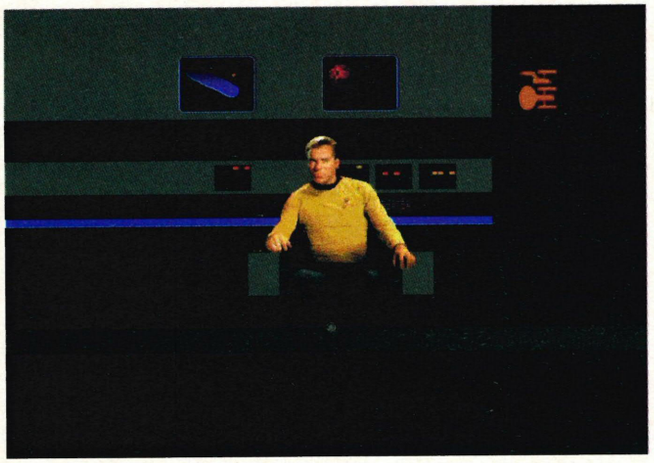
From the romance of the 'Memphis Belle' Flying Fortress to the fast-pouncing Harrier, these flight sims feature unequalled graphics and gameplay. In aircraft as lifelike as these, your imagination is the only restriction on your rapid progress through the skies!

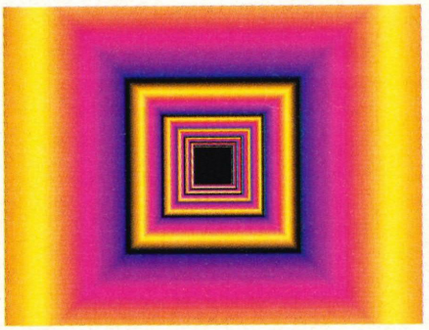
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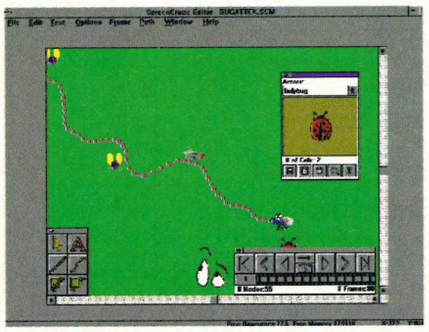
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**Above: if you want to boldly go where no screen saver has gone before, climb aboard Star Trek: The Screen Saver. Trouble is, the dialogue's a bit repetitive — but that's also true of the series, I guess.**

**Like, er, peace, love and pass the patchouli, man, right. Intermission is probably the most colourful thing you'll ever see in a legal frame of mind.**

**Screen Craze II, right, includes this animation editor which lets you create new animations by guiding pictures along little pathways.**

**Below right: Int Fish. Most screen savers include an aquarium. The Intermission one even lets you pick your favourite species of fish.**

sequence of actions being different each time the animation runs.

Even so, it *is* undeniable that it is quite fun to be able to make your own animations without having to do any programming. Summary: A program that lets you create your own screen saving animations. Sadly its own animations are fairly unremarkable. It will import After Dark modules but has no support for DOS. *Price: £29.95*
*Contact: Gold Disk on (0743) 350551*

### Origin FX

If you are a devoted fan of Origin games such as Ultima and Wing Commander, the new Origin FX screen saver will certainly appeal to you. In addition to the 25 animations provided with the package, you will be able to import sequences of cinematic effects from Origin games and run them as screen savers.

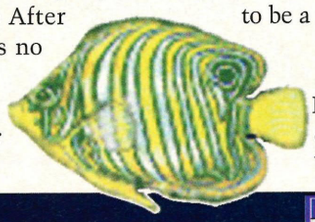
At the moment, only scenes from Wing Commander II can be hijacked in this way. But in future releases all other Origin games will also be able to share animations with FX. So, as long as the games are on the same disk as the screen saver, you will be able play scenes from them on your Windows desktop!

Could this be a cunning marketing ploy, I ask myself, to get you to buy more Origin games just so you can keep on adding to your collection of screen savers? No, no ... shame on me for my hard-hearted cynicism!

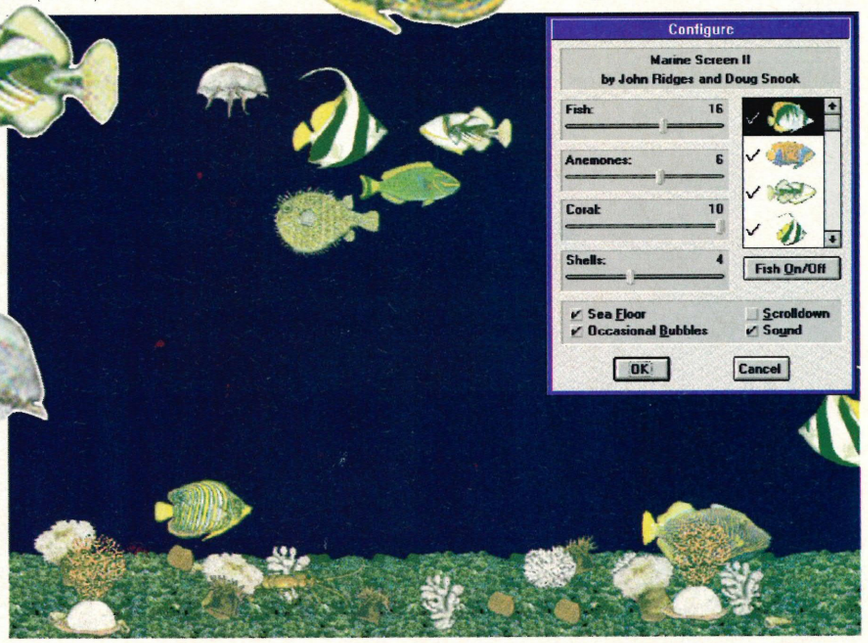
As we've come to expect from Origin, the standard of the best animations provided with this package is very high. I particularly like the bush fires that rage across your desktop burning out great chunks of it.

More sensitive souls may prefer the animated butterflies that flutter between blossoming roses. Another nice one is the window cleaner who reveals lots of weird and wonderful things (everything from industrial machinery to King Kong) lurking behind the windows.

You'll need a graphics card and screen that supports a 256 colour VGA mode to show these animations at their best. The usual range of sound cards is supported. Summary: this is an unusual Windows screen saver that has few conventional animations (not even a fish tank!) but does contain some quite nice 'mini-movies'. In future, you will be able to add more animations from Origin games. However, it can't use After Dark modules and has no support for DOS.
*Price: £25.99*
*Contact: Electronic Arts: on (0753) 549442*











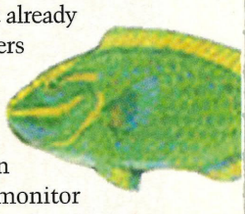

### So which one ...?

Let's face facts — any screen saver for Windows is an unnecessary piece of software. Windows itself comes with its own screen saver as standard (click the Control Panel icon to set it up). And plenty of other software packages also provide screen savers 'for free'. The Norton Desktop For Windows has one, for instance, and so does each of the Microsoft Entertainment packs.

The trouble is, most of those savers are very dull indeed, which is why the more entertaining screen savers still manage to find plenty of willing buyers. Remember, you don't choose a screen saver for what it does (they all do the same thing after all). You choose it for the way it does it.

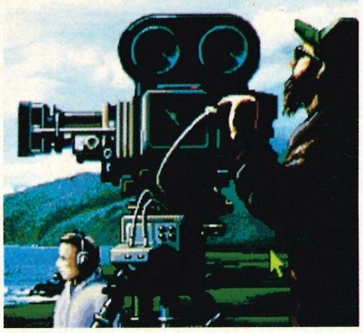
Of the six products reviewed above, the one that really stands out has to be After Dark, with its great set of animations. The special Star Trek edition is also rather wonderful in a tacky sort of way. Intermission is almost as good as After Dark and is especially spectacular on a 256 colour monitor.

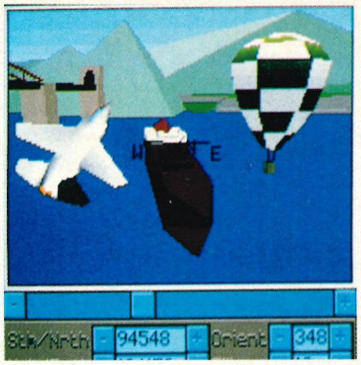
Screen Craze II is fun for anyone who wants to create new animations without programming but doesn't already have any memorable savers as standard.



Origin's FX is an interesting new entry into the field. Once again you need a 256 colour monitor to get the most from it. And it also helps to be a fan of Origin games.

As for Johnny Castaway, however. I think I'd have more fun being stuck on an island with Terry Wogan!

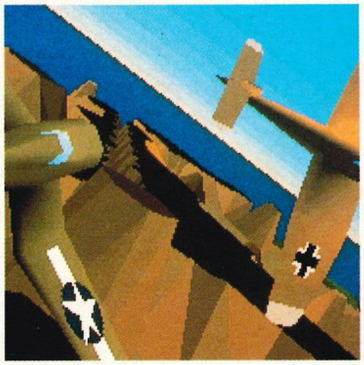








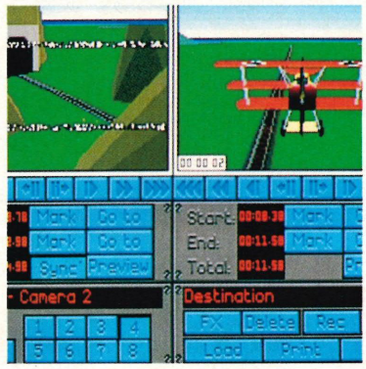

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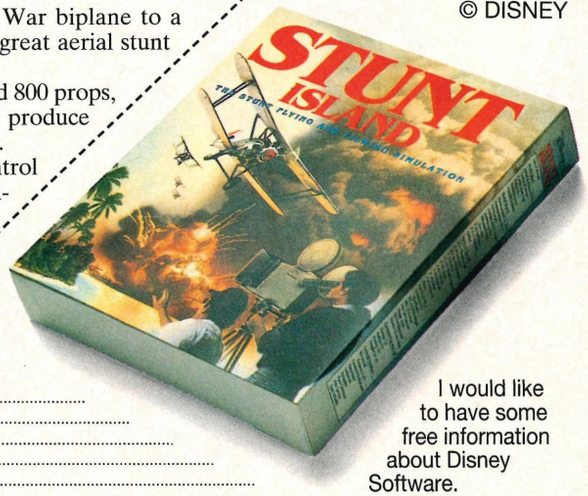





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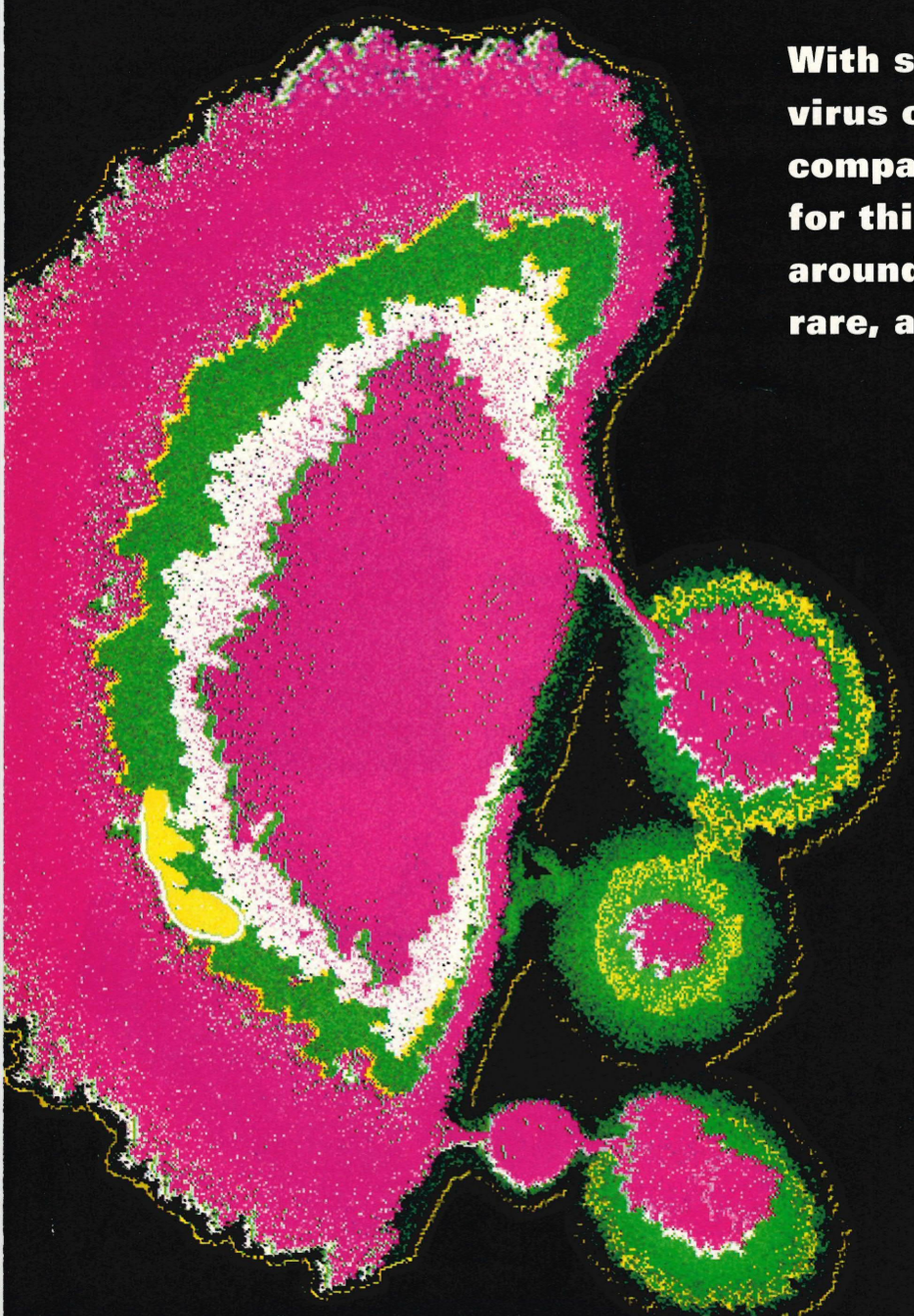
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# Viruses



**With so much publicity surrounding virus outbreaks which bring whole companies to a halt, you'd be forgiven for thinking there's a virus lurking around every corner. But viruses are rare, and avoidable. Mike James reports**

There cannot be a single computer user who hasn't at some point suspected that their machine has a virus. What else could explain the strange behaviour of their previously well-behaved machine? Unfortunately there are enough things that can go wrong with a PC without the intervention of a virus. However, viruses are real and they do pose a threat. Fortunately unlike random hardware failures or just plain bugs in software, there is a lot that you can do to keep the viruses at bay.

I'm not going to give you a long list of viruses and their fanciful names — Friday 13th, Frodo, Dark Avenger, etc. Listing viruses sounds fun and adds to the glamour of the subject but it doesn't do much to help you with the problem. It might even make matters worse by giving them superhero-like personalities! Let's concentrate on the practicalities.

The most important thing to say about viruses is that they are programs just like any other. This may seem obvious but it is very easy to believe in almost mystical properties for viruses — mainly because they are called viruses and because of the other medical/biological jargon used to describe them. A virus infects a machine, but you could equally well talk about installing a virus!

Viruses are programs that install themselves on your machine without your consent and run without your permission. What they do when they run includes making copies of themselves so that they can spread to other machines and a variety of other behaviours which range from amusing displays to erasing the hard contents of the hard disk.

For a virus to propagate it has to remain hidden on your machine for long enough it to make copies of itself that are passed to other machines. This means that a successful virus



can't be too aggressive and kill off its victim quickly. So a virus may lurk for months before it reveals itself and does its damage.

Logically the only way your machine can catch a virus is by way of a floppy disk that carries the virus. Viruses come in two general types — boot sector viruses and file viruses — which roughly correspond to the way that they work.

### Boot sector viruses

Every floppy disk and hard disk has an area, the boot sector, used to store a small program called a bootstrap loader which loads the operating system when you start the machine. The boot sector is larger than it needs to be and a boot sector virus attaches itself to the bootstrap. Once installed the bootstrap virus loads along with the operating system every time you start your machine. You can only catch a bootstrap virus by starting your machine from a diskette that has the virus. Once the virus gets itself installed on the hard disk it infects any floppy disk subsequently read or written. There is a subspecies of boot sector viruses that make use of the partition sector — which acts as a master boot sector for a hard disk.

### File viruses

A file virus attaches itself to an executable file — ie, a file with a name that ends in .com or .exe. You may think that this would be a difficult task but because of the regularity of executable files it turns out to be quite easy for a virus to find the start of the program and intercept it. When you run the program it is the virus which runs first and then hands over to the original program so that everything looks as normal as possible. You can only catch a file virus by running an infected program — copying the file or booting from a disk that contains it isn't enough.

### Accidental booting

Now that we know how viruses work you can understand how they spread. A boot sector virus spreads by starting the machine, often accidentally, from an infected floppy. As most hard disk machines start from the hard disk you may think that booting from an infected floppy is a rare event. What happens is that you install a program from floppies and then forget to remove the last diskette. The next time you start our machine it tries to boot from the floppy.

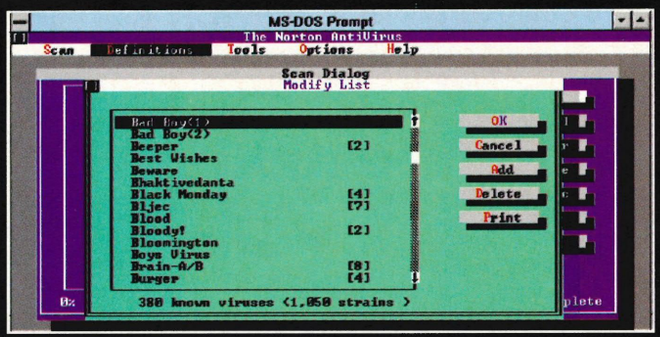
It is easy to say that the solution is don't do it but human nature being what it is... A better solution is to see if your machine has a facility within the BIOS setup to determine which order disks are tried during startup. The default sequence normally is A: then C: which results in the trap described. If you change this so that the system always boots from C: first then you are more or less secure against boot sector viruses.

To stop boot sector viruses spreading you should also make sure that any floppy disk that you are reading is write protected. Boot sector viruses will try to write to a diskette even if you are only trying to read it. Don't panic however if you are installing software and you see an error message that says that the system is attempting to write to the disk. This isn't necessarily a boot sector virus because many copy protection systems work by writing to the installation disks.

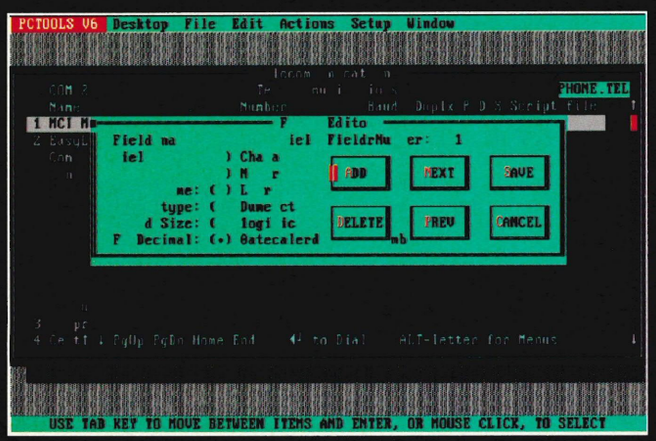
### Detection

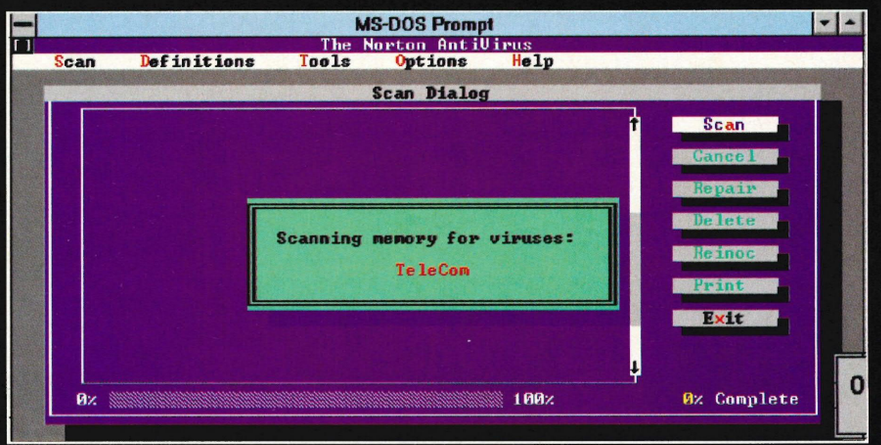
Although there is a simple way of stopping boot sector viruses, there is no simple method of stopping file viruses. All you can do is to try to detect their presence either before they get into your machine or after the event. There are two general approaches to detecting a virus — scanning and checksumming. A virus scanner simply looks at all of the programs on disk and in memory and tries to find a pattern of instructions that is a characteristic of each known virus. The theory is that every virus has a pattern of commands that are its signature — a sort of virus fingerprint. The scanner has a database of signatures that it uses in its search. The obvious disadvantage of this approach is that it cannot detect any new virus that isn't in the database. For this reason virus scanners have to be backed up by a periodic revision of the virus database.

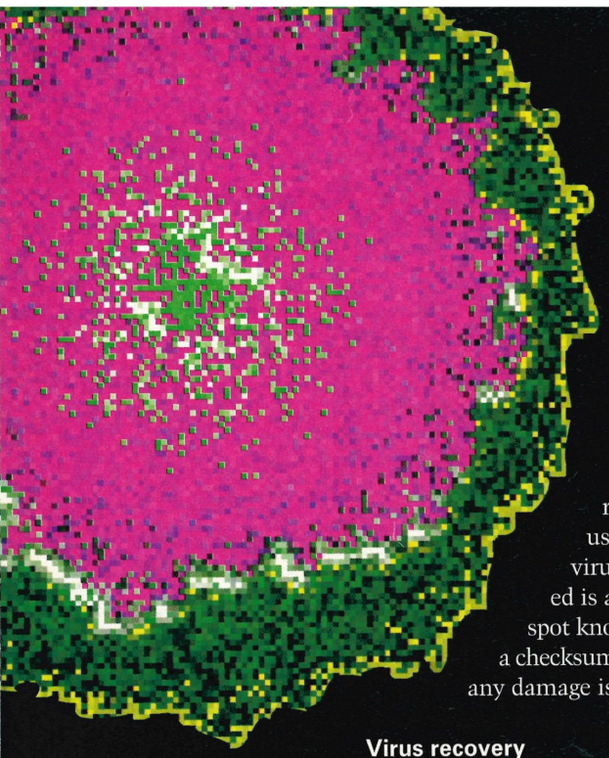
The second method of trying to stop a virus infection is to try to detect the changes that a virus makes to files when it attaches itself. Obviously the size of an infected file changes and some detection programs simply check to see if any file size changes have occurred. This isn't a good detection method because many viruses — so called stealth viruses — actively try to hide their existence and so cover up file size increases in various ways. A better method is to work out a signature for each file on disk. The signature is a number that depends on the pattern of commands in the program file. Any virus which changes this pattern will also change the signature. This method works




**Left: most virus scanners let you examine the list of viruses they recognise. Below: drive a: is now clean of all viruses. Below left: the 'falling letters' effect comes from one of the hardy veterans of viruses, Cascade.**



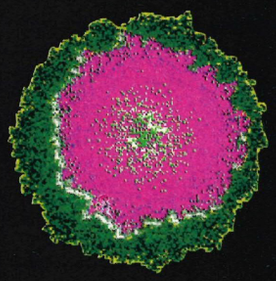


reasonably well and unlike scanning will detect the activity of a new and unknown virus.

There are other measures that can be added to a machine to detect virus-like behaviour. For example, there are programs that will detect any attempt to write to the boot or partition sector of a hard disk and will block any attempt to reformat the drive. All of these are useful additions in the fight against virus attack but what is really needed is a mix of methods — a scanner to spot known viruses before they get in and a checksummer to detect virus activity before any damage is done.

### Virus recovery

The next obvious question is what do you do when you have detected a virus? This isn't exactly a common occurrence and it is important to realise that viruses are still rare — there are likely to be more false alarms than real viruses. If you are not using a scanner or other virus protection you might suspect a virus just because your machine is behaving oddly. In most cases, however, this will be due to a hardware fault or software configuration error.



However, if a virus has announced its presence — some do this by putting a message on the screen, playing a tune or putting on a graphics display — then often the damage is already done. There are one or two viruses that are just a nuisance — 'Stoned' for example just prints a message every now and again an occasionally makes a mess of floppy disks (due to a bug in it) — but the majority attempt to damage the system either by deleting files, formatting the entire hard disk or formatting just a portion of it. In this case the only solution is to reformat the hard disk and restore your programs and data files from a back-up. If you don't have a back-up then the virus has done its worst and there isn't anything that can be done.

Now, before you start to panic I have to add that there is more chance of losing the contents of your hard disk by a normal, if that's the right word, fault. Hardware failure accounts for far more data loss than viruses by a factor of thousands, if not millions! You have to protect your data from highly likely random damage as well as highly unlikely virus attack!

The one complication in recovering from a virus is that if you restore program files that are infected then the virus attack will inevitably happen all over again. Programs should be restored from 'clean disks', preferably the original installation disks which of course have been write protected ever since you received them (of course they have!). If the attack is from a boot sector virus then you need to boot from a clean system floppy — again one that was prepared from the original system disks and then write protected.

If you are using a virus scanner of some sort then you will also have the option of removing the virus without having to go through the trauma of a complete reformat. Most virus kits come equipped with a repair utility that will either attempt to remove the virus from the infected file or delete it from the hard disk. If they delete it you have to provide a virus-free back-up to replace it.

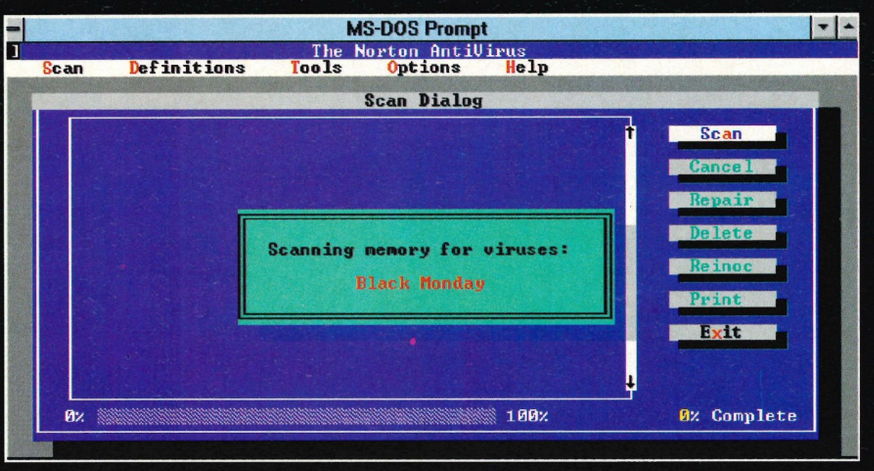
### Sleep tight

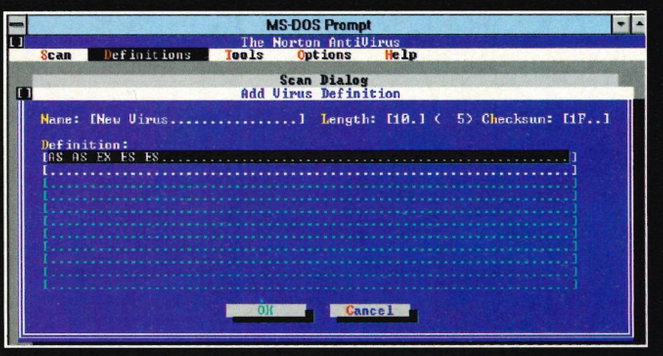
I hope that this introduction to viruses has reassured you that they are not the "programs from hell" that they are often portrayed as and they certainly do not have magic powers to leap from a floppy disk that is still in its packet to your hard disk. Get yourself a virus scanner and use it now and again — especially when you are about to install some new software — be careful about the disks you feed your PC with, write protect your master floppy disks, keep any important data backed up, and sleep soundly at night.

### Some anti-virus products

I can recommend the shareware McAfee Virus Protection Tools and the new Windows version of the same. If you want an enhanced version then try DataSave £128 from International Data Security (071) 631 0548 which includes other security programs such as access control and backup.

Dr Solomon's Virus Toolkit (£99 for the DOS version; £125 for the combined DOS and Windows version) from S & S International Ltd (0442) 877877 is also excellent and keeps very up-to-date with new viruses added often before other manufacturers know they exist! The other two well known anti virus packages are the Norton Anti Virus (£149) from Symantec (0628) 592222 and Central Point Anti-Virus (DOS Version 1.4 and Windows Version 1.0 both £115) from Central Point Tools (081) 848 1414. The Central Point scanner is included in MS-DOS 6 and so is destined to become the standard but the Norton package works just as well.




**Above: all virus scanners check to see if there is a virus already in memory before starting a disk scan. Right: If a new virus is found, you can be sent codes to type in to enable the scanner to detect it.**

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**Brainchild of Lord British (aka Richard Garriott) and cherished loved one of millions of role-players the world over, the Ultima series continues on its merry way with the second part of its seventh instalment**



# Serpent Isle

| | |
|---|---|
| *Title* | **Ultima VII: Part 2 - Serpent Isle** |
| *Publisher* | **Origin** |
| *Contact* | **(0753) 549442** |
| *Genre* | **Fantasy Role-Playing** |
| *Price* | **£44.99** |

Origin's Ultima series has been so successful for so long, with 10 years and an extraordinary seven episodes under its belt, that outsiders would imagine that the team behind it simply hit upon a successful formula at an early stage and subsequently devoted themselves to following its template to the letter.

However, as aficionados of the series will quickly tell you, this couldn't be further from the truth, as up until now, every instalment in the Ultima saga has used a new system (or, as developers like to put it, 'game engine') to tell each successive part of the tale.

While this may at first seem like a strange way to do business, it has certainly paid dividends, as the Ultima series is about to become the longest-running game series of any type in the history of computer gaming.

There's an old saying which says 'if it ain't broke, then don't fix it' — and while Ultima pioneer Richard Garriott's policy of constantly re-inventing his most popular game may have pointed to the fact that he completely disregarded this adage, in some peculiar way his team's policy of keeping the Ultima programs constantly changing could have been the one unifying point which kept them fresh for release after release.

So surely they have decided, for the next instalment, to continue this process of re-invention?

Nope. With their usual perversity, Garriott and crew (which, this time around, consists of a staggering 26 writers, artists, programmers, musicians and producers) have decided that it's now time — more than seven episodes into the series — is the time that two successive Ultima releases made use of the same game system.

Part of the reason for this is that the



**This scene-setting sequence sees your four-man party arrive at the mysterious island location.**

**The introduction makes use of numerous cinematic devices, including very effective close-ups. As you'd expect, these are complemented by the usual array of sound effects and snatches of digitised speech.**

team obviously believes that at it has, at last, hit upon a system which does its brainchild justice. However, another reason may be that Ultima's constant chopping and changing has been a deterrent to 'outsiders' who may have come across the games at a late stage in the series, and that a touch of uniformity may make the proceedings a little more friendly.

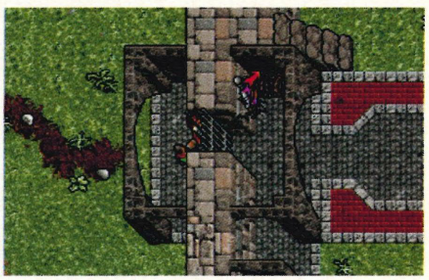
This willingness to appeal to the uninitiated pervades throughout everyone connected with the new release, as anyone who comes into contact with it is constantly reminded that it is a completely standalone product. Time and again, the player is reminded that he or she does not need to own any previous Ultima game (nor to have any previous experience of them) to get to grips with it.

However, while the development team has taken care not to exclude those who've yet to find themselves caught up in the saga of Britannia and its inhabitants, Serpent Isle remains very much a continuation of the series.

Although it is to all intents and purposes a sequel to Ultima VII — The Black Gate, the Origin team has decided not to call its latest offering Ultima VIII. Instead, Serpent's Isle is heralded by the somewhat unwieldy prefix, Ultima VII: Part 2. This, however, makes a good deal of sense, as the story isn't so much a sequel to Ultima VII as its logical continuation.

In fact, this latest instalment in the ever-developing tale takes a number of questions which remained unanswered at the end of Part I, and immediately sets about asking them again — the answers, of course, are for the player to discover.

In short, the problems facing the player at the beginning of Serpent Isle are as follows: what became of Batlin (the leader of the evil Fellowship who managed to slip the net at the end of the previous instalment), what is behind the mysterious storms which are disrupting life in Britannia and what has become of Gwenno, wife of the hero's sidekick, Iolo?



**Interaction and conversation are as vital elements as combat or sorcery — this conversation with a castle guard, for example, reveals a good deal of much-needed information. Note the red cursor arrow — this indicates that our character is in war-like mode (which isn't always the best mode to be in when engaging in conversation).**






**Double-clicking on characters revels this 'dressing doll' inventory screen, where items can be moved from bag to hand (or vice versa) by clicking and dragging. Note that items in your character's hand in the inventory automatically appear in the in-game graphics.**

**No role-playing game is complete without someone, at some stage, going down into a dungeon.**

Following a brief animated introduction (which, like the vast majority of Serpent Isle's rendering, is beautifully polished), the story is taken a stage further to the island of the title — a new and previously uncharted area of Britannia. Here, it would seem, a few answers can begin to be found to the many questions which have been posed.

The gameplay is the usual mixture of exploration, decision-making, diplomacy and combat. However, as the trip to Serpent Isle swapped many of the items in your inventory for a bunch of useless junk (a long-bow for an ox-skull, anyone?), there's an extra element of puzzle-solving added to the equation as you try to retrieve those items that you'll need.

Once within the game proper, those who made their way through the trials and tribulations of The Black Gate will immediately find themselves at home, as the graphic style and user interface employed is very much the same as in that program.

Of course, the team has made numerous alterations throughout, but these are more enhancements to the system rather than major changes and are so intuitive as to remain almost imperceptible — after just a couple of minutes play, you do get the feeling that you've been using the system for years.

But of course, with all Ultima games, the engine, no matter how sophisticated, remains secondary to the plot — and role-playing fans will be hoping to hear that the team's apparent quest for the perfect game engine will not have detracted from their previously-exploited talents as master storytellers.

Only time will tell of course, but first impressions are favourable enough to suggest Ultima part seven and a half will have no trouble whatsoever in holding its head up with the rest of its illustrious family.




| | |
|---|---|
| *Title* | **innocent Until Caught** |
| *Developer* | **Divide By Zero** |
| *Publisher* | **Psygnosis** |
| *Contact* | **(051) 709 5755** |
| *Release date* | **Late June** |
| *Genre* | **Graphic adventure** |
| *Price* | **£39.99** |

**Psygnosis boldly goes where everyone else has been before ...**

# Innocent Until Caught

Innocent Until Caught is Psygnosis's first graphic adventure since Chronoquest II, way back in 1989. The program is being developed by an Islington-based team Divide By Zero, many of whose members were employed by the Robert Maxwell owned Mirrorsoft, before setting up independently last year. This is its first project for Psygnosis — the sole specification for the commission being that the adventure "should beat all others".

There must be a million and one world-saving excuses for guiding a character through the latest graphic adventure, but Innocent has to be the first where the taxman is the villain (tell us something we didn't know, already).

Innocent is set on three planets and a couple of handy spaceships. The hero, Jack T Ladd, wades through a grim, Blade Runner-like future, populated by street gangs, hookers, thieves, gangsters and government officials. He's desperately trying to beg borrow, or more likely steal, enough to pay 30 years of back taxes in 28 days.

The idea is to combine a futuristic setting with today's problems, but from the look of it just getting about on the underground in Innocent is enough to make you long for the peace and quiet of the New York subway ...

Psygnosis is trying to find a balance between the more open-ended games and the linear style. So the story is full of subplots, twists, turns and double-crosses to keep things confused, but solving particular sequences has far reaching consequences to give an impression of greater control over events.

The humour is very cynical, world weary and rude, although the rudery is more often implied than graphic. Quite often it's a very British sense of humour, as in the brothel scene where a man is dragged screaming back through the curtains with his trousers round his ankles which is pure Kenneth Williams.

**It's may seem like a standard mouse and icon bar, but Divide By Zero has added a mass of extras, such as animated icons and a close-up Scan mode. The setting is bleak and sleazy, but humour will be a major feature.**

There's the now-standard mouse and icon bar control system, but several refinements have been added to try and make it as easy to use as possible. This includes cycling through the icons with the right mouse button, animated icons, and a scan mode. A miniature map allows you to click on exits you've come across earlier, and the character will head back that way under his own steam. The same sort of touches are apparent in the close-ups, viewpoints and animations, and one the developers are particularly proud of is that the characters are affected by both light and shade.

There's still a lot of work to be done on Innocent before it's due for release in late June or July, including all the sound. It took Divide By Zero two years to develop Interspective, the scripting language used for Innocent, but so far it looks well worth the effort. It's designed to allow non-programmers to create the story in simple English, treating the characters as 'actors' on 'locations'.

The software does the rest, translating this to the pre-programmed animation sequences and plotting whatever route will get the character safely there. It'll also allow for mid-air collisions, as it were, so a non-player character might turn around and come back later, or take a different route if your actions have caused another NPC to block its path.




The big advantage of the Interspective system, according to Divide By Zero, is that once it's set up for one game, it should dramatically cut down on the time it takes to produce a follow-up. So look out for Innocent II ...




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# reviews

**Our comprehensive reviews service starts here. Over the next 50 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**

## 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, and how much space it takes up if installed to hard disk. 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. 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 practice 'contemporaneous marking' – which means that games are rated to other current games.

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. If it looks excellent compared to everything else around at the time, it'll still be worthy of its eight or nine.


ARCADE GAMES

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## Shareware

The shareware reviews section is an independently-written column on the best and most interesting of the latest shareware and public domain releases.

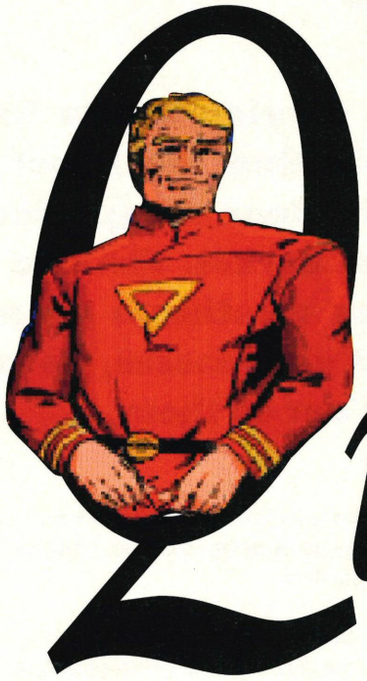
If it's help with specific games that you're looking for, turn to page 97 where our extensive tips section, QED, begins. And in Software Search, we'll help you find the software you need for just about any application.




| | |
|---|---|
| *Title* | **Space Quest V** |
| *Publisher* | **Sierra On-Line** |
| *Contact* | **(0734) 303322** |
| *Price* | **£39.99** |

**Who's the clumsiest, dumbest, laziest and luckiest hero in the galaxy? Roger Wilco, of course — and he's back to bumble and bluff his way through the latest Space Quest adventure**

# Space Quest V:



## Roger Wilco - The Next Mutation

The janitor returns. If you've never played a Space Quest game before, these three words will be about as meaningful and stimulating as 'John Major puts his coat on'. Space Quest fans, however, have been waiting almost two years for the latest episode in the life of Roger Wilco. Roger Wilco, for those of you who've never heard of him, is one of the shining stars in Sierra's software firmament, an inveterate hero of several space-age spoofs. He's also a bit of a twit.

If you want to know more about Roger's life as an accident-prone space superstar, take a look at the panel on The Story So Far, on page 52. In Space Quest V, Roger's performance in the examinations at the StarCon Space Academy (he scores top marks) has rewarded him with the command of his own starship.

Well, not quite. First of all, he has to cheat to pass his exams, and then he relies on a computer malfunction to award him a perfect score. All of this serves as a neat introduction to what the game is all about: a few conversations with fellow-cadets teach you that no one has the slightest respect for Roger, a dry sense of humour accompanies every scene, and the initial puzzles are solved using a combination of mishap and guile.

The StarCon Space Academy is also where Wilco learns of his main mission for Space Quest V. Eavesdropping on an important conference, he discovers that Sludge Bandits are illegally dumping bio-hazardous waste all over the galaxy. His first job is to clear up some of the mess that they have left behind – but that's only part of the story.

In Space Quest IV Roger met his future wife in a hologram; in Space Quest V he encounters her in the flesh while he's polishing the floor. Being a bit of a nerd he makes a complete hash of the encounter, and one of the problems you'll face is how to convince the wife-to-be that Roger is a cool dude.

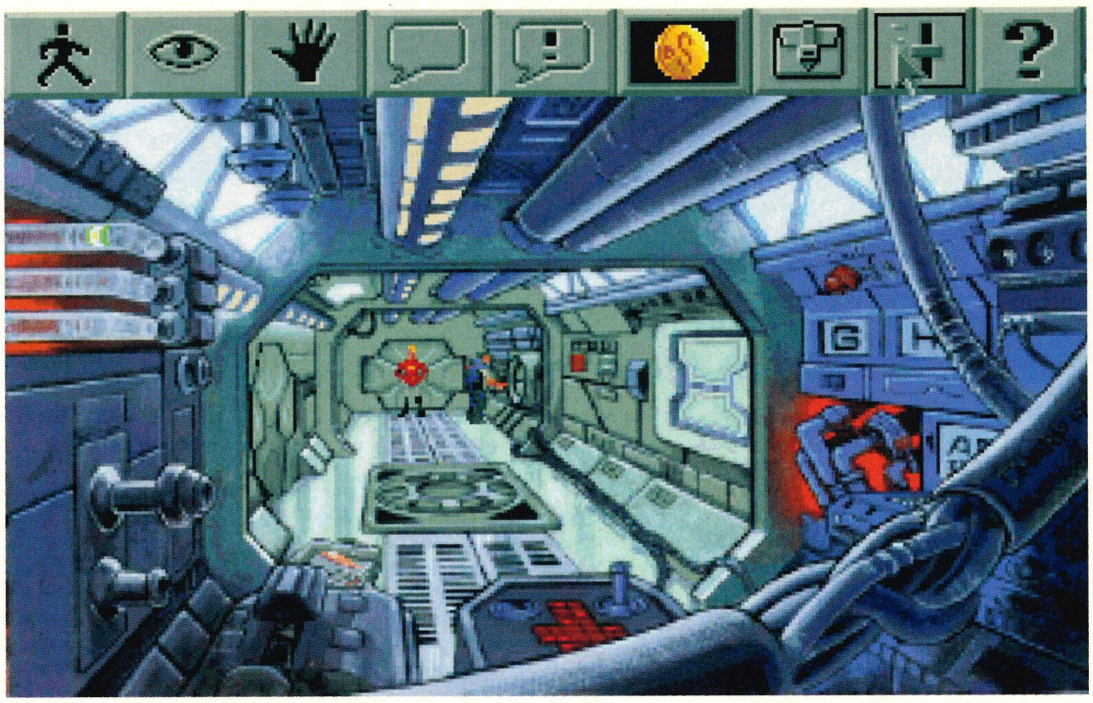
Other 'minor' problems include a gang of mutants knocking about the galaxy in

**Roger Wilco's ability to make the worst of the few talents bestowed upon him is a constant feature of Space Quest V. His first challenges include cheating during an exam, cleaning the floor and finding a space craft ...**



*A brief cut-scene introduces our hero, as he steps shamefacedly from a session in the combat simulator. All he can do is dream that one day he will have a ship of his own, roaming the galaxy in search of fame and fortune.*

a stolen spaceship, a killer android whose sole aim is to rip Wilco limb from limb, a pet face-hugger who won't stop burning holes in his ship, the Eureka – and Captain Quirk, Roger's clean-cut but decidedly dodgy nemesis.



**There are two ways for mouse users to manipulate the action: by cycling through the icons with the mouse button, or by selecting them from this menu. As well as the five basic commands shown here (walk, look, use, talk and issue orders), special commands appear when you use objects.**

### Under control

More about the plot later. When you first rip open Sierra's meaty-looking package you discover five disks, a magazine (Galactic Enquirer) and a manual. The manual is admirably simple: a few technical details, a brief run-through of the icon controls and some general tips on playing.

However, anyone who has Space Quest IV will struggle to spot the differences between that manual and this one, which is slightly annoying if you've just forked out £40. In addition, for all its clarity and brevity, it doesn't really reflect the spirit or humour in the game.

This function is left to the Galactic Enquirer – a genuinely funny National Enquirer spoof which mixes bizarre and occasionally useless stories with some tips on playing the game. It also contains a map of the Space Quest galaxy – something which isn't immediately obvious to anyone who hasn't read the Readme file supplied on disk. It's a good idea to look at the Readme file anyway, because it also contains a few handy technical tips.

The brief introductory animation introduces Roger to anyone who doesn't know what he's like: a self-important (but loveable) idler who spends most of his time playing games and annoying authority. After that you're thrown straight into the game itself, aboard the StarCon Academy space station.

The control system in Space Quest V is virtually the same as that employed by its immediate predecessor. The basic icon commands of walk, look, use and talk are the same, but Wilco's latest adventure includes an 'issue orders' icon for directing the crew of his spaceship. This command brings up a couple of text menus allowing you to plot coordinates, open fire, raise shields, hail planets, and so on.

Other icon commands are object-driven, ie, when you select an object from your inventory, you can use it like any other icon. For example, when you're cleaning the floor in the introduction to the game, your cursor changes to a 'brush', and by moving the cursor around the screen you activate the cleaning equipment.

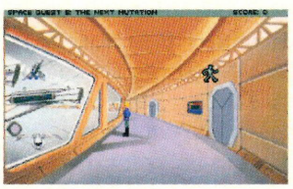
Switching between commands couldn't be much simpler: you can either call up the icon panel at the top of the screen and make your selection, or use the right mouse button to cycle through the available icons. The only trouble I found with this was that I occasionally went one icon too far, and had to cycle through the list again. It's no great hassle.

The screen display, apart from a thin bar detailing your current score and the game's title, is dominated by the view of your current location. The advantages of this are obvious: you get full-screen graphics (rather than the two-thirds view offered by LucasArts games) which look impressive and help to generate atmosphere. Unfortunately, there's a disadvantage that goes with this: you haven't got an on-screen inventory, which means that you can't manipulate objects with instant ease.

However, there's a more important problem with the control system. For me, Sierra's history of interface design in the Space Quest series has been a constant struggle between easy-to-use controls and sufficiently complex puzzles.

The parser used in The Sarien Encounter (SQ1) wasn't abandoned until after the Pirates of Pestulon (SQ3), by which time it had developed into a decent system. Parsers, of course, went out of favour – and Sierra's solution in Roger Wilco and the Time Rippers (SQ4) was an icon-only interface. Although it's fair-

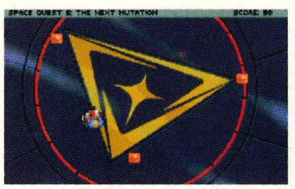
**Two Minutes** *of life as a cosmic dustman*



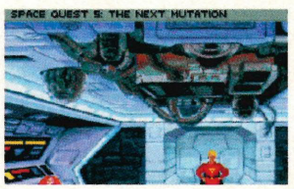
***Staring at all the space craft in the docking bay only inflames Roger's ambition to be master of his own vessel. He knows, deep down, that if he's going to get anywhere he'll have to take his exams like every other student.***




***Unfortunately, it's exam day, and (as usual) Wilco knows nothing about anything. There's only one solution -- cheating. Checking that the robo-teacher isn't looking, he casts a beady eye at his fellow-students' papers.***



***As punishment for being late for his exam, Roger is ordered to polish the Academy crest. A new icon is added to the five already available, and Wilco whizzes around the floor bringing a shine to the insignia.***

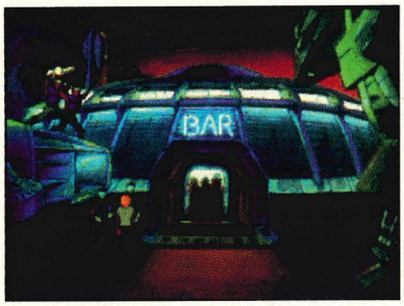


***A severe computer malfunction awards Roger the highest cadet ratings ever. As a result he's been given command of his own starship at last! No more mopping floors for him! But... er... what does he do next?***

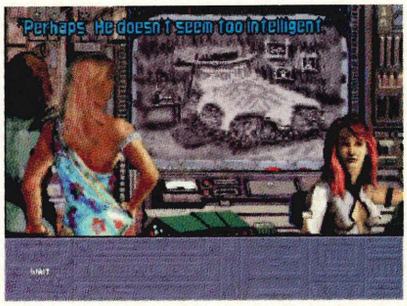


***A few quick conversations with his insubordinate crew and his nemesis, Captain Quirk, reveal the answer. His mission is (literally) a load of rubbish, but for now he can feel the thrill of leaving the space station and heading for deep space.***

## *Alternatively...*




***Space Quest IV: Roger Wilco and the Time Rippers***
***Sierra, £39.99***
*The fourth instalment in the life of ridiculous Roger Wilco is different in more ways than one. For a start, it replaced the previous trio's slightly awkward interface (including text commands) with an all-new icon control system. More importantly, the weird sense of humour, intricate puzzles and original plot are all entertaining enough to keep you hooked. You'll need a hard disk and a fast machine to enjoy it, though.*




***Rex Nebular***
***MicroProse, £44.99***
***Rated 8, Issue 14.***
*More famous for its simulations than its graphic adventures, MicroProse's first step into the world of icon control and object manipulation is nonetheless a good one. The hero is Roger Wilco-esque in his bumbling buffoonery and the plot is Space Quest-meets-Leisure Suit Larry, but there are enough original features to maintain interest. Three difficulty levels cater for novices as much as experts, and the control system is good.*




***Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis***
***Lucasfilm, £37.99***
***Rated 9, Issue 11.***
*The latest and greatest of Indy's adventures might be a little easy for experienced gamesplayers, but the quality of the graphics, sound, and storyline make it irresistible. The control method (the latest version of the SCUMM system) is almost always intuitive, and even if mind-bending puzzles are all too rare, helping Indy find Atlantis via three different routes is a pleasure for any graphic adventure fan.*

**Below left: What Roger keeps in his inventory could mean the difference between life and death. Items can be used on each other as well as on the main screen.**

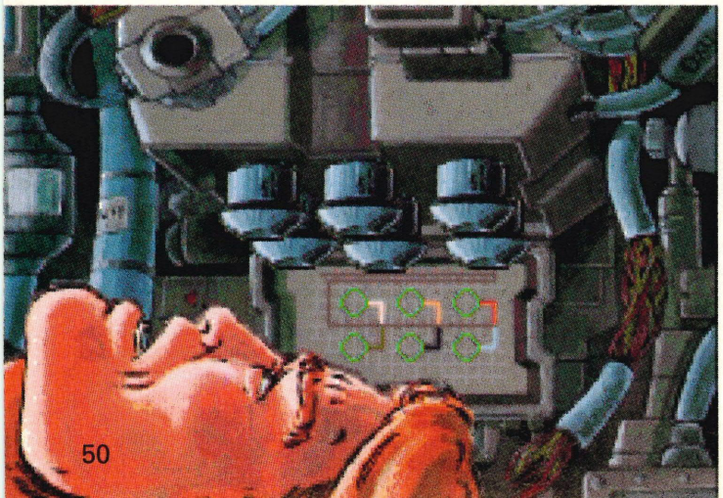
**Below: It looks like curtains for our hero. This is only one of dozens of different ways in which Wilco can kick the bucket. Just pray that you saved the game.**

ly intuitive, this system – also adopted for Space Quest V – places restrictions on interaction and allows less scope for imaginative, multi-faceted puzzles.

On the positive side, it does make playing the game very simple indeed. You can use objects on one another, or on areas of the landscape, you usually only have a maximum of half a dozen main icons to choose from, and any mental effort you expend can be channelled wholly into puzzle-solving.

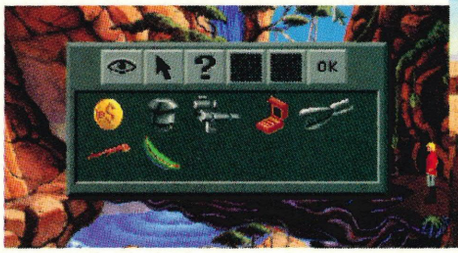
Even so, I feel that Lucasfilm's SCUMM system (from Maniac Mansion, Monkey Island, the Indy games, et al), and even MicroProse's MADS system (seen in Rex Nebular), provide more flexible control over the action and result in more interesting puzzles. The SCUMM system, in particular, may be less precise and less impressive to look at, but it's also less rigid and gives an illusion of greater complexity.

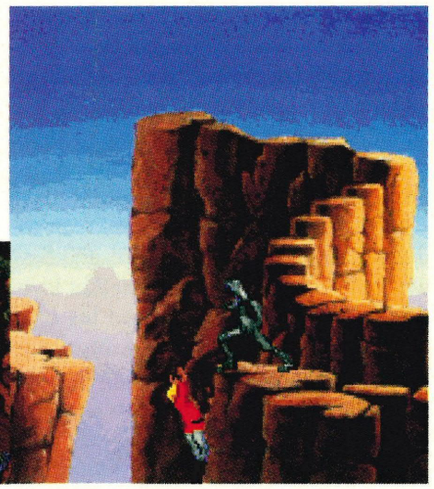
**Different graphical perspectives add variety to the game: this unusual view shows Roger fiddling around inside a fuse box.**



### Riddles and ribaldry

Whatever the drawbacks in the control system – and they don't radically affect your enjoyment – Sierra's strength lies, as ever, in its ability to tell a good story. Space Quest V certainly doesn't disappoint in this respect: the plot is as twisted and bizarre as ever whilst maintaining contemporary interest with its ecological undercurrent. Apart from the main task (which you are obliged to follow) there are constant surprises which take you off on a tangent.



Non-linear progress isn't new in graphic adventures – most recently, Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis has featured multiple routes to the same goal, and King's Quest VI has two end sequences – but Space Quest V allows more freedom to explore than its immediate predecessor.

Roger Wilco's initial mission involves cleaning up a trio of planets which have been dumped on by the Sludge Bandits, but you can actually wander around the galaxy, virtually picking any planet you like. OK, there are some restrictions – one planet has a poisonous atmosphere, some are uninhabited, and so on – but the feeling of general liberty to wander at will is welcome.

The puzzles are always of a decent standard and can be quite tough. If you want an easy introduction to the series you should try Space Quest III, but for more experienced adventurers there are enough challenges here to keep you scratching your head until the hint book becomes available. Examining everything and constantly talking to people helps, because there are plenty of clues in what people say and in the concisely-worded descriptions of objects and places.

Saving the game regularly is also beneficial. It can be a pain because it interrupts the flow of the action, but you haven't really got much choice. The

major problem is that there are so many ways in which Roger can be killed, ranging from death at the hands of an enemy or from neglecting the ship's functions, to instant, unexpected exits caused by experimenting with the wrong objects at the wrong time. You can also find yourself encountering a minor cul-de-sac if you haven't solved the right puzzles earlier in the game. Fortunately though, there's often more than just one way to solve a problem.

Apart from solving the puzzles, what really keeps you going are the characters and the sense of humour. All of Space Quest's wide cast of characters are beautifully drawn, but Roger's sarcastic exchanges with his crew, his confrontations with Captain Raems T Quirk, and his hopelessly sentimental view of Ambassador Wankmeister (the prospective love of his life) are especially funny, and in the last case, it's *not* (thankfully) because of her name — the word just doesn't have the same connotations in American English.

The amount of detail packed into the graphics and conversations is outstanding. It ranges from minor effects – such as heads turning to face people who are speaking, rare sightings of Elvis, or security officers playing video games – to whole sequences of events. Every time Wilco returns to the bridge aboard the Eureka, Droole and Flo (his crew) are wasting their time with a variety of different activities.




**Roger's quest takes him to many planets in the galaxy. Some are friendly, some are uninhabitable, some are simply poisonous, some won't let you land, and some won't even let you orbit.**

PCreview 7

The humour is almost always funny, although it won't be to everyone's taste. A mild streak of anti-feminism and an occasional puerile pun failed to impress only because the rest of the game is so well done. The gags are visual as well as verbal, and trying to repeat any of them here would only lessen their effect – so I won't bother. All I can say, though, is that if you don't laugh out loud at some of the jokes you haven't got a funny bone in your body.

### Waddle and strut

Visually and aurally Space Quest V is well up to scratch. It doesn't mark a significant improvement on Space Quest IV, but the quality is still very high. Sprite scaling gives a convincing 3D effect, and the animation is reasonably smooth, although characters can look a little blocky in close-up. In truth, though, this is barely noticeable, because your attention is drawn much more to the way the characters move rather than their immediate appearance. For example, Roger Wilco's bizarre waddle-cum-strut is a triumph of comic animation.

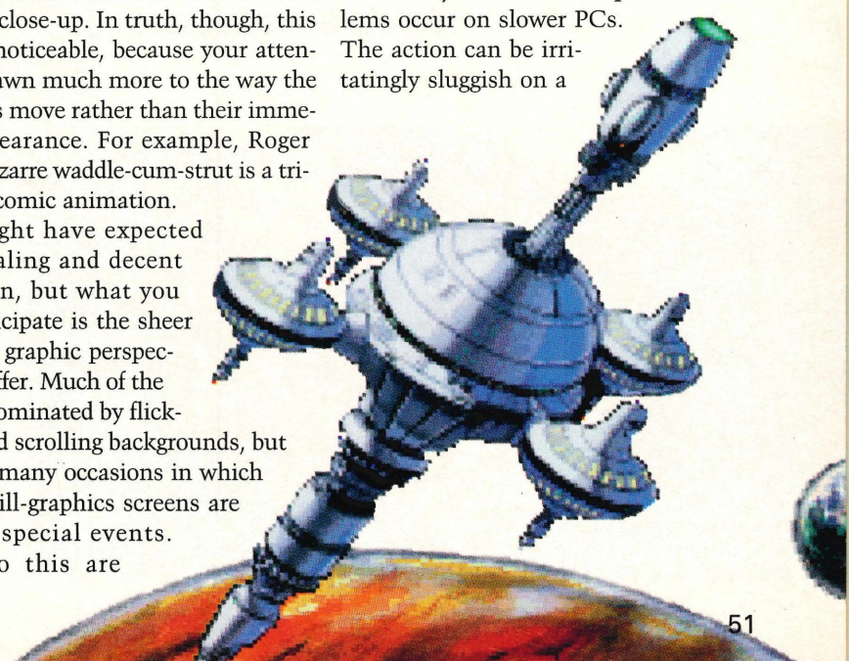
You might have expected sprite scaling and decent animation, but what you don't anticipate is the sheer variety of graphic perspectives on offer. Much of the game is dominated by flick-screen and scrolling backgrounds, but there are many occasions in which unique still-graphics screens are used for special events. Added to this are dozens of animated and comic strip-style cut-scenes. These are sometimes a little lengthy and intrusive, but on the whole they provide a decent reward for making progress in the plot.

One more thing about the graphics. The endgame screen displays a potted animation of Roger's death throes, which varies according to the manner of his demise. It's a nice touch, and typical of the attention to detail throughout.

The music and digitised sound effects are similarly accomplished. The weird and wonderful collection of tunes suit the tone of the game perfectly, and change according to the scene. If you have an Ad Lib card you get all the music and some sound effects, but you also get an odd silent moment as well.

If you have a Sound Blaster card you get the full and impressive range of digitised effects, which add an extra dimension to the atmosphere – whether it's the Star Trek-style 'swish' of opening doors or the constant sound of Roger's pratfalls.

The only real technical problems occur on slower PCs. The action can be irritatingly sluggish on a



## Techspec

***Before you're ready to blunder around space you must have at least 7.9Mb of hard disk space -- you'll need a little more for saved games -- and a high density floppy drive (the game comes on five disks). Tandy graphics mode is VGA-only, but everyone else can choose between VGA and EGA. As well as the sound cards listed below, SQ5 also supports ProAudio Spectrum, General MIDI sound driver, Microsoft Windows Sound System, and Tandy 3-voice. The manual warns that you may experience lock-ups when using a Sound Blaster card, but I had no problems. Also, if you're close to the minimum RAM required you could experience slowdowns in some areas; to help you out, instructions for creating a boot disk to disable memory-resident programs are included. A 286 is the bare minimum system required; at 12MHz you can reduce detail to accelerate the action, but loading/saving games and travelling between screens is time-consuming. Finally, a mouse will increase your pleasure no end.***

*Disk requirements*

| | |
|---|---|
| High density | ✓ |
| Hard disk only | ✓ |
| Space taken on hard disk | 7.9Mb |

*Graphic modes*

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CGA | x | EGA | ✓ | Tandy | ✓ |
| VGA | ✓ | SVGA | x | | |

*Soundboards*

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ad Lib | ✓ | Roland | ✓ | Sound Blaster | ✓ |

*Control*

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Joystick | ✓ | Keyboard | ✓ | Mouse | ✓ |

*Performance*

| | |
|---|---|
| Optimum speed | 20Mhz |
| Minimum memory | 640K |
| Free RAM required | 580K |

286, with screen loading times and some cut-scenes being particularly irksome. However, an in-built feature allows you to alter the level of detail and the game speed, which can reduce the number of annoying moments on low-end machines.

**A load of rubbish?**

There are very few problems with Space Quest V. The control interface isn't perfect, some of the puzzles are slightly tough for beginners, the graphics and sound don't mark a major step forward in adventure game technology – but the urge to play the game to the bitter end is very strong indeed.

This is partly because of the constant barrage of jokes, ranging from slapstick visual effects, through groaning puns and ancient jokes about toupees, to sophisticated parodies of science fiction films and television series. However, it's also down to the depth of the plot and its characters, and the quality of the writing.

The only major problem I have with the game is that it's quite similar in style and tone to all the previous episodes, and particularly similar in look and feel to Space Quest IV. If you're the kind of person who prefers sequels with established formulas to original ideas – and you've enjoyed the previous games in the Space Quest series – you should go out and buy the latest instalment straightaway.

However if, like me, you want something that knocks you off your chair with an all-new cast of characters and breathtaking technological advances, you may be slightly disappointed.

Space Quest V is an imaginatively programmed and very entertaining game. If it weren't for a few minor control faults and a general lack of innovation, it could have been a great one.

**■ Gordon Houghton**

## THE STORY SO FAR ...

**Like no other software company, Sierra is the sequel specialist, combining tried-and-tested plot formulas with technological advances to create 'original' games. Space Quest is just one of seven series, which also includes King's Quest (six games), Leisure Suit Larry (four), Hoyle Book of Games (three), Quest for Glory (three), Great War Planes (seven), and Police Quest (three). Space Quest details the exploits of Roger Wilco, a man with more brawn than brains, and more brains than sense. The intergalactic janitor is now the legendary hero of five Sierra adventures:**




### SPACE QUEST I: THE SARIEN ENCOUNTER

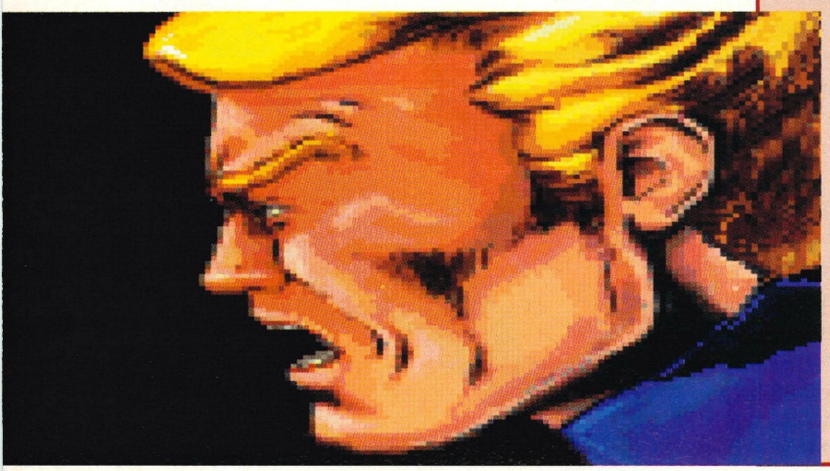
**Now available in an updated VGA/EGA version, this was originally a graphic adventure from the old school, right down to the clumsy text input. The plot? Roger's spaceship has been stolen by Sarien creeps -- but worse still, they've also wiped out his crew and hijacked the top secret Star Generator.**

### SPACE QUEST II: VOHAUL'S REVENGE

**Roger's task is to destroy Sludge Vohaul and foil his plot to infest the universe with robotic insurance salesmen. The control system isn't much of an improvement on Space Quest I, but the sense of humour is more refined. However, it wasn't until ...**

### SPACE QUEST III: THE PIRATES OF PESTULON

**... that the series hit the high spots. Roger's job was to rescue the Two Guys From Andromeda (actually the creators of the Space Quest series) in a quirky jaunt through time and space. It's self-referential, self-mocking and occasionally self-indulgent. It's also the easiest in the series.**



### SPACE QUEST IV: ROGER WILCO AND THE TIME RIPPERS

**A strong vein of humour in this fourth instalment pulls you through a series of tough puzzles spread across multiple historical periods. It first appeared almost two years ago, boasting an improved interface, VGA graphics, scrolling screens and a pretty weird plot. Very good, but not great.**

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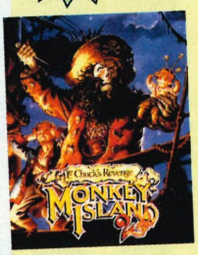
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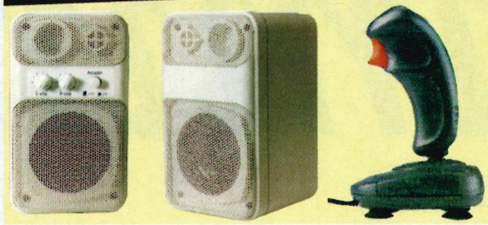
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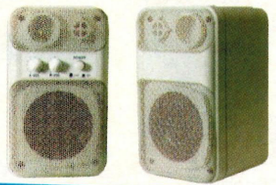
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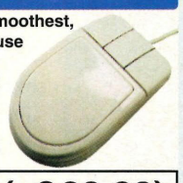
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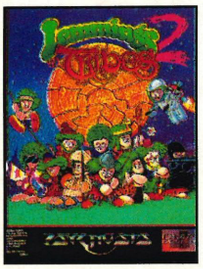
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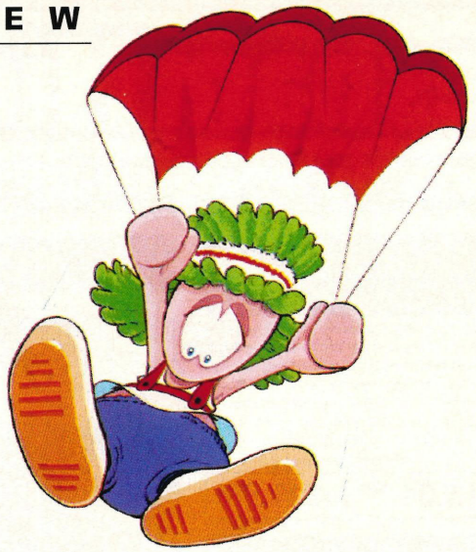
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# *Lemmings 2* — The Tribes

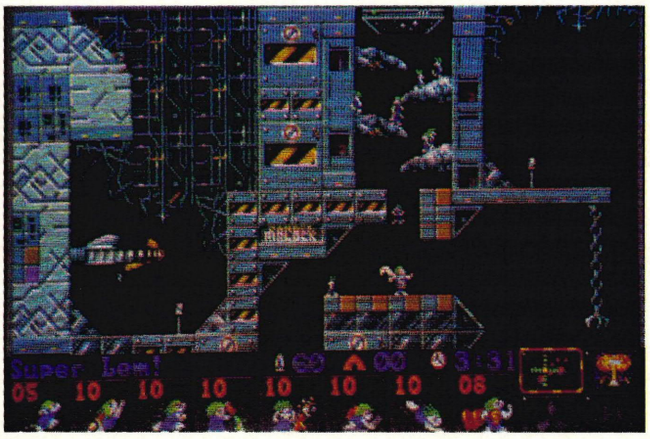


**How do you improve on one of the most addictive and original PC games ever made? Adding more lemmings, with more skills and different settings certainly expands the game**

Lemmings *n.pl* 1. A widespread twentieth century disease afflicting PC games players. Likely symptoms are severe psychological trauma and galloping insomnia. 2. Small vole-like rodents (the probable cause of 1)

For anyone just back from a long vacation on Saturn, who hasn't had the pleasure of dealing with lemmings before, their main aim in life is to beetle merrily off the nearest cliff. Your job is to shepherd them to the safety of the next level by turning limited numbers into skilled (still fairly suicidal) lemmings. It's one of simplest, most endearing and frustrating games ever produced, and probably the cause of more bad language than a Norman Lamont budget.

**In space, nobody hears you scream ... Machine-gun toting robots are the first menace these lemmings will face.**




But how do you improve on it? Oh No, More Lemmings! was just a collection of extra levels. But Lemmings 2 — The Tribes wants to be a complete reworking of the game. Some of the changes are cosmetic, fair enough, but DMA Design has come up with a sequel which hopefully loses none of the original's charm.

Lemmings 2 now has a plot, such as it is. Courtesy of a truly sick-making intro sequence, we discover that the lemmings have been split into 12 happy tribes, each possessing part of a special talisman. They seem to have lost their minor self-destructive urges, and in fact there hasn't been a single parachute-less freefall competition in years.

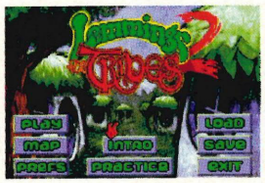
But disaster looms, and the tribes must journey to reunite each part of the talisman to avert some unknown disaster. Or something like that, anyway. It's not that the Lemmings really need outside agents of doom — they do well enough on their own, thanks, but its a fair excuse for more lemmings and a change of scenery.

There are now over 50 lemming skils of six types; wind skills (sic), ground removing, building, shooting, movement and miscellaneous. Many of these are simply variations on the classic lemmings, but you're still looking at a vast array of well-equipped rodents adding character and variety to the gameplay.

In particular, the flying lemmings are a great addition. In most cases, you have to use the new fan icon to direct their path, which makes for a framtic dash to the icon bar and back to the lemming

## Two Minutes *of suicidal tendencies*

**In just two minutes, a dozen lemmings on a road trip can do more to shatter your peace of mind than any game on earth. One whiff and you're hooked, they say ...**




*You've suffered the stomach churning intro, and bitten your nails down to the knuckle in a pre-lemmings frenzy.*



*Sand pourers? Parachuters? It's the All New Lemmings Show, and as this is the first level there's plenty of talent on your side.*



*I didn't fancy my chances on that one, so I've popped over to check out the Polar Lemmings. If God had intended lemmings to ski ...*



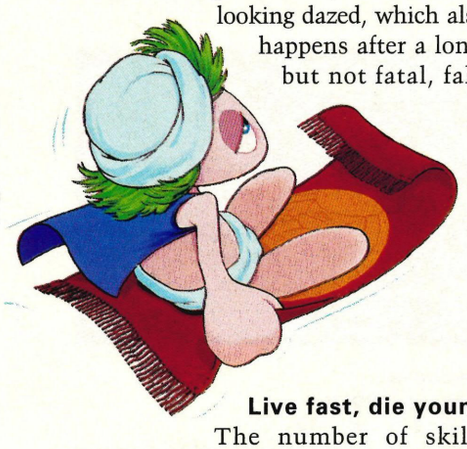
*Not so hot on this one either. There's nothing to stop me going on to the next level, unless I'm aiming for the gold talisman.*

before he floats off into the sky. The SuperLem, however, yanks his Y-fronts over his tights, puffs out his chest in pride, and sets off like a speeding bullet after the cursor.

If I had to pick favourites, it'd be the pole-vaulter, surfer and flame-thrower lemmings.

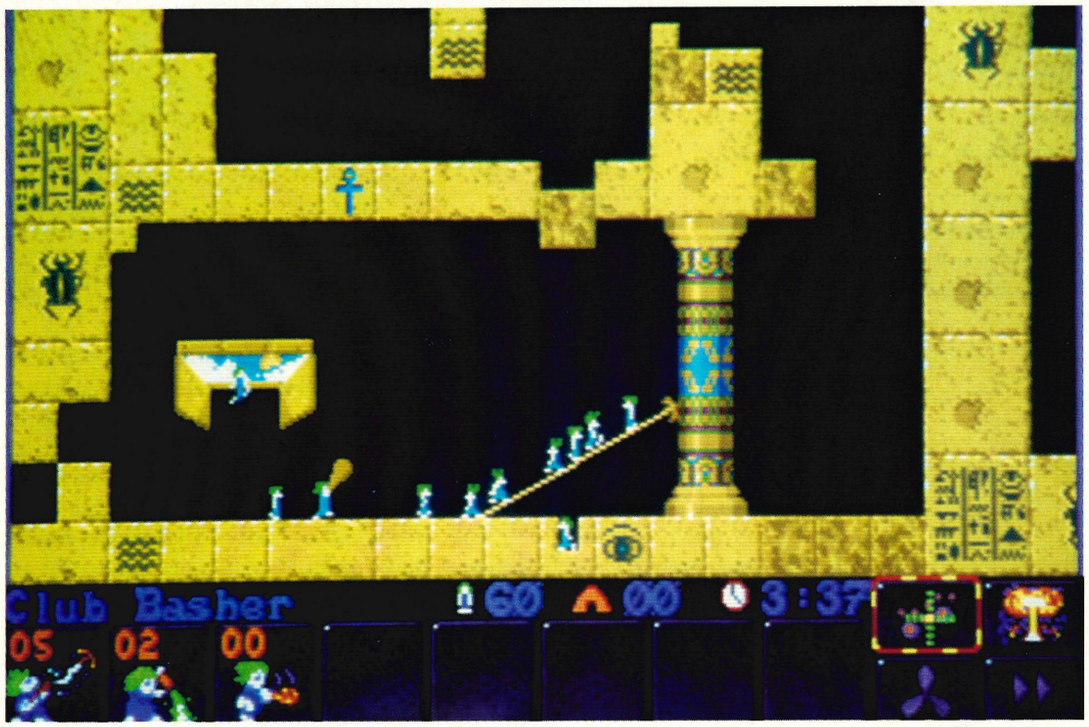
As before, some of the lemmings skills are permanent ones and some can be changed, only now it's a whole lot harder to remember which. To add to the confusion, you can make combination lemmings. A stone-thrower lemming, for example, will lob a rock further if he was a runner lemming to begin with.

Not only are they more skilful, but the lemmings have been taking acting lessons as well. Try firing a a bazooka into a crowd of lemmings — who happen to be hanging around just waiting for this sort of thing — and you'll see the bodies flung into the air by the blast. You can use this technique to blast the little beggars over obstacles, although it won't win you awards for subtlety. The survivors bounce a couple of times, and sit around looking dazed, which also happens after a long, but not fatal, fall.



### Live fast, die young

The number of skills makes it harder to pick the right lemming for the job, and opens up many more possiblities for tackling obstacles. There's a handy practice option which lets you into one of four playgrounds with a hand picked team of lemmings, and this is the best way to try out the new abilities.




**It all looks simple enough, until you realise the screen now scrolls up and down as well as sideways. This is a practice level — a handy place to get used to the new skills.**

It's a shame that the range of abilities aren't necessarily appropriate for each tribes' home turf. Lemmings with lasers in the space scenario is fair enough, but what are surfer lemmings doing in the mediaeval setting? The storyline was thin to start with, and this doesn't do it any favours at all. It doesn't affect the playability in the slightest, mind you, and whoever decided to let lemmings loose with a bazooka in the first place needs to have their head seen to, anyway.

In the first version, you had to get a percentage of the lemmings through each level, before moving on to the next. You knew that you couldn't just waste inconvenient lemmings — no matter how enjoyable it might be. You had to calculate exactly which lemmings you could to use, and how many, if any, you could afford to waste. To me this was a large part of the attraction of Lemmings.

Lemmings 2 takes a different approach. The 120 levels are split across the 12 tribes. You're awarded a bronze, silver or gold medal according to how many lemmings you managed to save each time. The medals dictate what type the talisman part will be — gold, silver or bronze. A single survivor is enough to press on with, you can go back levels and retry them, and swap from tribe to tribe if you get stuck, but you've only completed Lemmings 2 properly when all the parts of the talisman are gold.

With this, the extra skills and marginally easier early levels, it's tempting to rush through more quickly than before, and worry less about the odd lemming casualty. That doesn't last long, though. The extra tribes, problems and skills provide plenty of added playability and variety when you start seriously trying for the gold talisman, and it's back to careful planning and frustration.

There's a lot of inventiveness in the landscapes for each level, and the settings and problems are all in keeping with the

## Techspec

***What looks like a fairly simple game is actually rather greedy. If you want the full quota of Lemmings 2 sound effects and music, you're going to have to free up a lot more base memory than the 550K minimum, and be the proud owner of at least 1Mb of extended memory.***

*Disk requirements*

| | |
|---|---|
| High density | ✓ |
| Hard disk only | ✓ |
| Space taken on hard disk | 4Mb |

*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 |

## The 12 lemming tribes

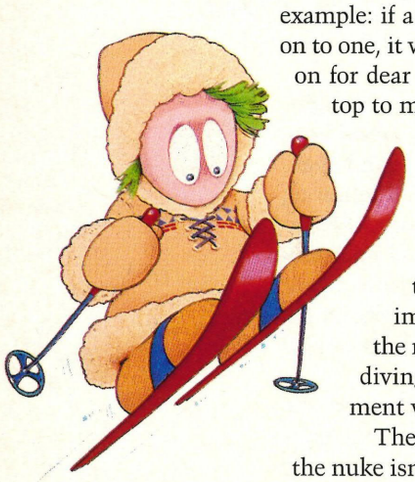



PCreview 8

various tribes, so there are castles for the medieval tribe, sand castles for the beach tribe, and snow and ice for the polar lemmings. It takes more effort than the original Lemmings to work out where you need to get to, because the screen now scrolls up or down as well as left and right. The other problem is second guessing any hidden pitfalls, because first time round they're anything but obvious.

These include numerous movable obstacles, like catapults or cannons, to deal with. Give a lemming the slightest chance and he'll happily climb down the barrel of the nearest howitzer. You have to slide the cannon, say, into the right position by clicking on its direction arrows beforehand. Then, again, there's a certain pleasure in seeing a lemming hurl himself happily into a cliff wall, get up and do it again.

The swinging chains are another good example: if a lemming falls or is pushed on to one, it will, uncharacteristicly, cling on for dear life. Tap the handle at the top to make the chain swing faster, then hit the brakes, and, *voilà*, a flying lemming.



To support the different locations, there's an excellent and varied soundtrack. Better still are the improved sound effects, like the marvellous squelch of a sky-diving lemming losing an argument with the ground.

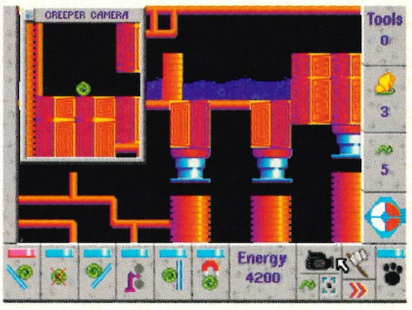
The only thing missing is that the nuke isn't as satisfying as it used to be — it's more snap, crackle and pop than a good old blast (still, at least it's in there — DMA was going to leave this feature out at one point). Let's face it, one of the best things about Lemmings was that when you knew you'd cocked up a level, you could sit back and savour the countdown before the unsuspecting lemmings went to meet their maker, along with large chunks of the landscape. Or the neatly timed nuke on the last lemming just before it makes it to safety. Oh come on, I can't be the only one ...

**Will it damage your health?**

Lemmings 2 is a genuine sequel to the original, not just the same game with a new coat of paint. Psygnosis has given the lemmings a new lease of life without spoiling the simplicity or the addictiveness. As to whether it'll damage your health, if you survived the first version, you'll probably survive this one. Lemmings 2 is an essential for any gamesplayer's software collection, but get ready for some late nights.

**■ John Bennett**

## *Alternatively...*




***Creepers***
***Psygnosis, £39.99***
***Rated 5, Issue 18***
***With 70 stages divided into four levels of difficulty, this is an enjoyable, if frustrating mix of platforms and puzzles. Creepers would be a strong contender on any planet where Lemmings didn't exist. As it stands, this is a game that's most likely to appeal to younger players, and is also slightly expensive for what you're getting.***



***Humans***
***Mirage, £29.99***
***Rated 7, issue 17***
***More sedate than the original Lemmings, and a lot less frantic than Lemmings 2, but still very challenging. Humans offers a combination of puzzle and arcade skills, and the need to accomplish tasks with limited tools. There's plenty of humour as you progess up the evolutionary ladder, but it eventually becomes repetitive.***

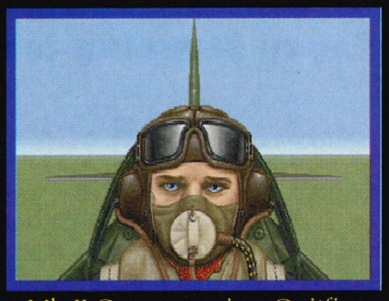
# DOGFIGHT

## 80 YEARS OF AERIAL WARFARE


Sopwith Camel

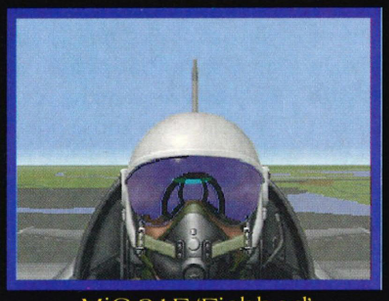

Fokker Dr. 1 Triplane

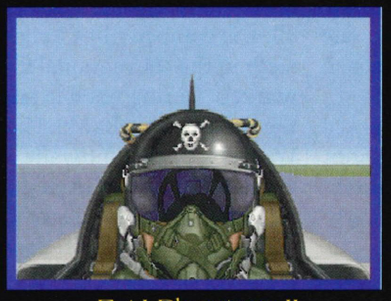

Messerschmitt Bf109E

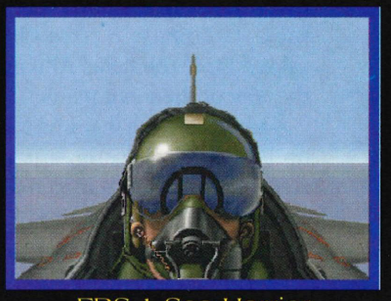

Mk.II Supermarine Spitfire

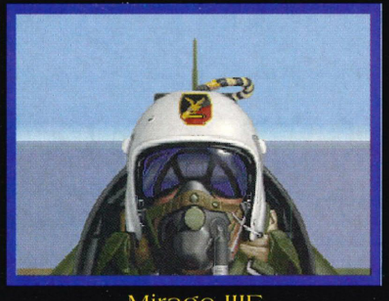

F-86E Sabre

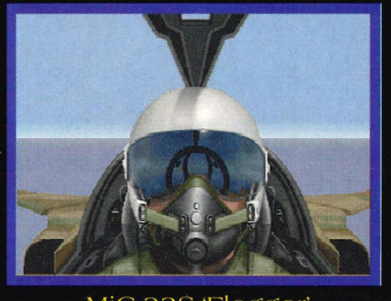

MiG-15


MiG-21F 'Fishbed'


F-4J Phantom II


FRS 1 Sea Harrier


Mirage IIIE


MiG-23S 'Flogger'

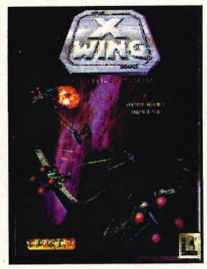

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| | |
|---|---|
| *Title* | **X-Wing: Space Combat Simulator** |
| *Publisher* | **LucasArts/US Gold** |
| *Contact* | **(021) 625 3366** |
| *Price* | **£45.99** |



# X-Wing

**Luke Skywalker may have long since hung up his Artoo unit, but there are still plenty of wrongs to be righted out there in the inky void we call the Star Wars galaxy. Fancy stepping into his space shoes?**

From the moment the words begin to scroll back to infinity across your monitor, you know that you're in familiar territory. "It is a time of civil war. Using fear and intimidation, the Empire seeks to impose a New Order on the galaxy. Only the Rebel Alliance stands in the way of their evil plans."

And this feeling is immediately backed up by the next scene, a panning shot across the bows of an Imperial Starcruiser, reminiscent of the impressive opening to the original Star Wars movie.

And there, in a nutshell, lies X-Wing's greatest advantage — its heritage.

X-Wing is the game which should have appeared simultaneously with the original release of Star Wars way back in 1977. Unfortunately the necessary home computing technology didn't exist at the time, so Luke Skywalker wannabes had to make do with the thrills offered by the simple wire-frame coin-operated arcade cabinet game which appeared alongside Space Invaders during the late 1970s video games boom.

Now, however, technology has moved on somewhat, and with pretenders to the space action throne springing up all around him (after all, what were Epic and Wing Commander, other than Star Wars games in fine disguise), LucasArts supremo George Lucas has obviously decided that PC technology is finally up to the task of doing justice to one of his finer creations, the X-Wing fighter.

Although hindsight always makes things seem a lot simpler, it's really quite strange that LucasArts never attempted anything along these lines before. After all, the company has long since cut its teeth in the conventional flight and fight market, scoring notable successes with the likes of Battlehawks 1942 and Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe. Then again, where CGA and EGA graphics running on machines with relatively slow clock speeds may have been good enough to recreate versions of WWII fighter planes, there are surely many, many Star Wars aficionados out there who will be glad that no attempts were made to do a similar job with the X-Wing until now.

So much for the history lesson. Now that we finally have the 'official' Star Wars simulator, the only question really worth asking is if it's up to scratch. And to put you out of your misery straight away, the answer to that particular question can only be a resounding yes.

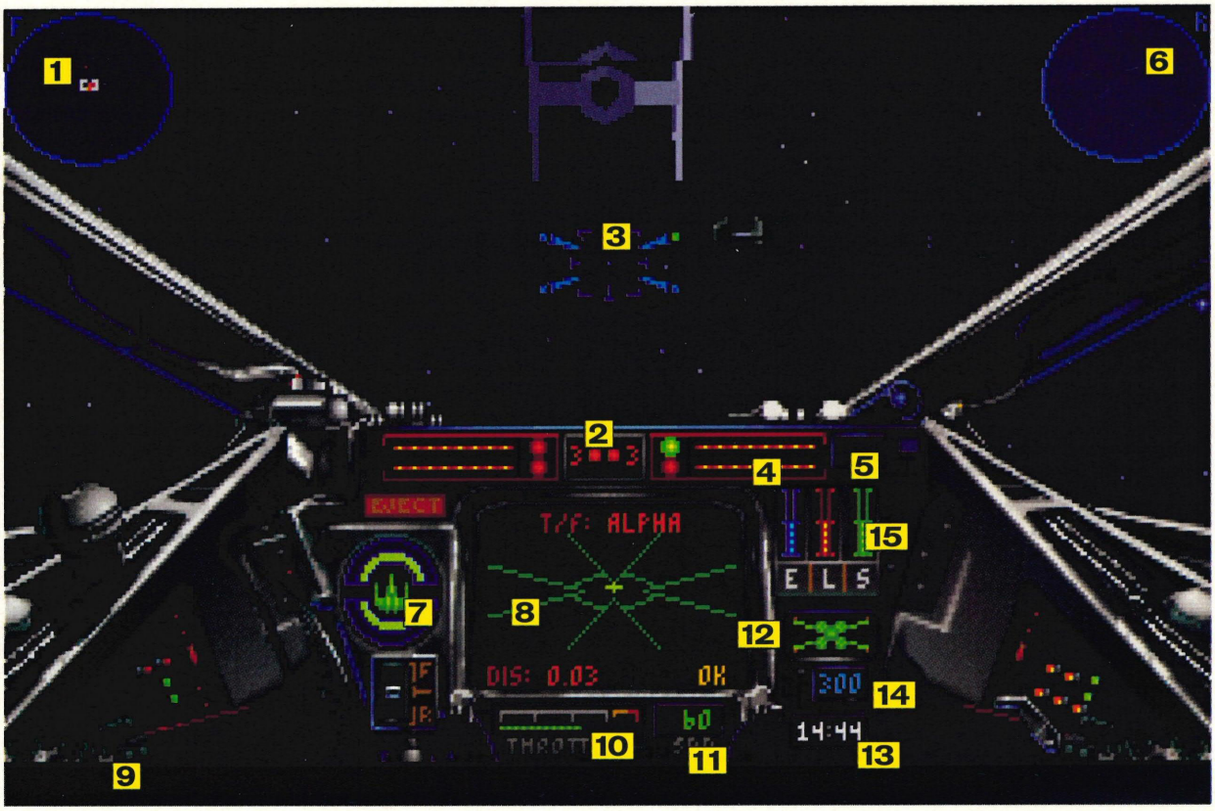
Right from those opening scenes, X-Wing radiates a sense of completeness which very few computer games of any type ever manage to achieve. Of course, much of this is due to the fact that a huge and believable world has already been created by the three films, but it's to the development team's great credit that it

**It's tempting to dive straight in as a fully-fledged X-Wing pilot, or take a trip down memory lane and re-live the great historical battles against the Empire. But be warned, skip the the training grounds at your peril — combat life expectancy is woefully short for rookies.**

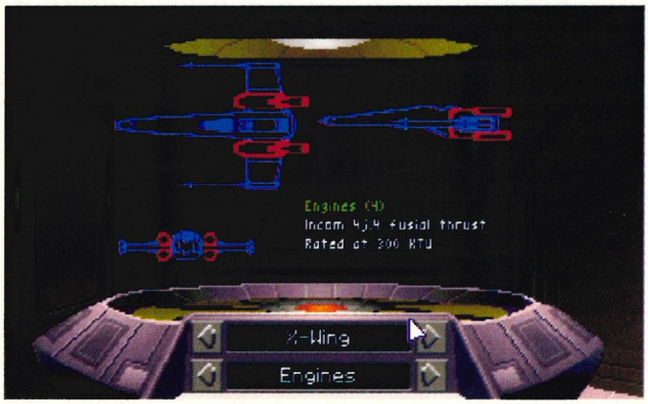


*Welcome aboard the Rebel Alliance flagship, Independence. You want to get straight into the thick of the action? Okay, but first you have go through a brief registration procedure. You know what these protocol droids are like — they can make your life misery if you don't follow the rule book to the letter.*

**There's a bewildering amount of information available at any given time, as shown by the number of gauges and dials. However, while all are useful from time to time, very few require constant monitoring during combat — in fact, once you've picked up an attacking Tie Fighter on your combat multiview display, its usually best to keep track of him by the age-old method of looking out of your window.**




1. Forward Sensor
2. Proton Torpedoes
3. Targeting Sight
4. Laser Cannons
5. Flight Recorder
6. Rear Sensor
7. Hull/Shield indicator
8. Combat Display
9. Communications
10. Throttle
11. Speed
12. Enemy Missile Lock-On
13. Digital Clock
14. Engine Level
15. Engines, Lasers and Shield Configuration




**Students of space junk can satisfy their needs in the Tech Room, which delivers a wealth of data — in either schematic or holographic form — on the engine capacities, sensors, payloads, armour and so forth of each of the simulation's 16 main craft (both friendly and otherwise).**

has managed to enter this world almost seamlessly, without even causing so much as a ripple in its fabric.

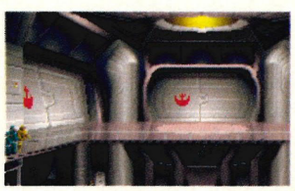
No matter how good the scene-setting and other peripherals though, X-Wing would be completely redundant unless it offered an exciting and enjoyable simulation of what it might actually be like to fight in space at the controls of one of these beautiful fighters.

This too, it manages without even appearing to try. But before we carry on with this seemingly unending litany of praise, maybe it would be a good idea to explain just why X-Wing makes such an incredible impression.

Rather than concentrating on just the X-Wing itself, the program actually offers the pilot a choice of three separate spacecraft, the eponymous starfighter (or, to give it its full title, the Incom X-Wing Space Superiority Fighter) and its two stablemates, the Dodonna/Blissex A-Wing Fighter/Interceptor and the Koensayr Y-Wing Fighter/Bomber. The object of the exercise is to master the control of these three craft fully and then make use of these newly-acquired skills in the completion of 50 linked missions.

As in all modern flight simulators (contemporary or futuristic), the newcomer is offered a chance to open a log of his or her attainments and service history, before heading off for an initial practice flight in the danger-free training mode. And even at this stage every care has been taken to keep the film's atmosphere ... but then, what else would you expect?

## Two Minutes *of battling against the Empire*



***Here inside the spaceport, you can either sit back and enjoy the sights and sounds of a busy complex — or, alternatively, choose your next step from one of the five options (each one hidden behind an automatic door); the Pilot Proving Ground, Historical Combat, a New Tour, the Tech Room or the Film Room.***



***Having chosen the training option, there follows a brief animation of your craft taking you to the Rebel Alliance's secret training grounds. Perfecting your moves and getting a feel for your craft in training will dramatically improve your chances of survival. As with all of the animations in X-Wing, this one can be skipped if desired.***




***A thorough briefing session (split into two sections, mission and combat) prepares you for your first foray. It's wise to pay a good deal of attention at this point, as even the training missions are difficult in the extreme, and you don't want to accidently attack a ship that's about to defect to the Rebels, or carrying a valuable cargo.***



***Before you head off at warp speed to hone your skills on the training ground, there's one more animated interlude inserted for your entertainment. Surprisingly enough, these brief scene-setters aren't quite as dull as in other games — maybe it's something to do with the familiarity of the surroundings?***



***And finally, you're there... alone in the training ground with nothing to lose and everything to gain. Best of luck Rookie... the future of the alliance is now firmly in your hands, and your first target is dead ahead. Time spent in the training grounds will save a lot of frustration in the combat missions, which really do set a demanding standard.***

## Techspec

***Like all state of the art PC games and simulations, X-Wing not only requires a good deal of memory in order to run smoothly, it also needs this memory to be configured absolutely correctly. While the 'install' feature takes care of most of this operation automatically, it's best to know before even attempting to load the program that it can consume anything up to 896K of EMS, which must be version 3.2 or higher.***

*Disk requirements*

| | |
|---|---|
| High density | ✓ |
| Hard disk only | ✓ |
| Space taken on hard disk | 12Mb |

*Graphic modes*

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CGA | x | EGA | x | Tandy | x |
| VGA | ✓ | SVGA | x | | |

*Soundboards*

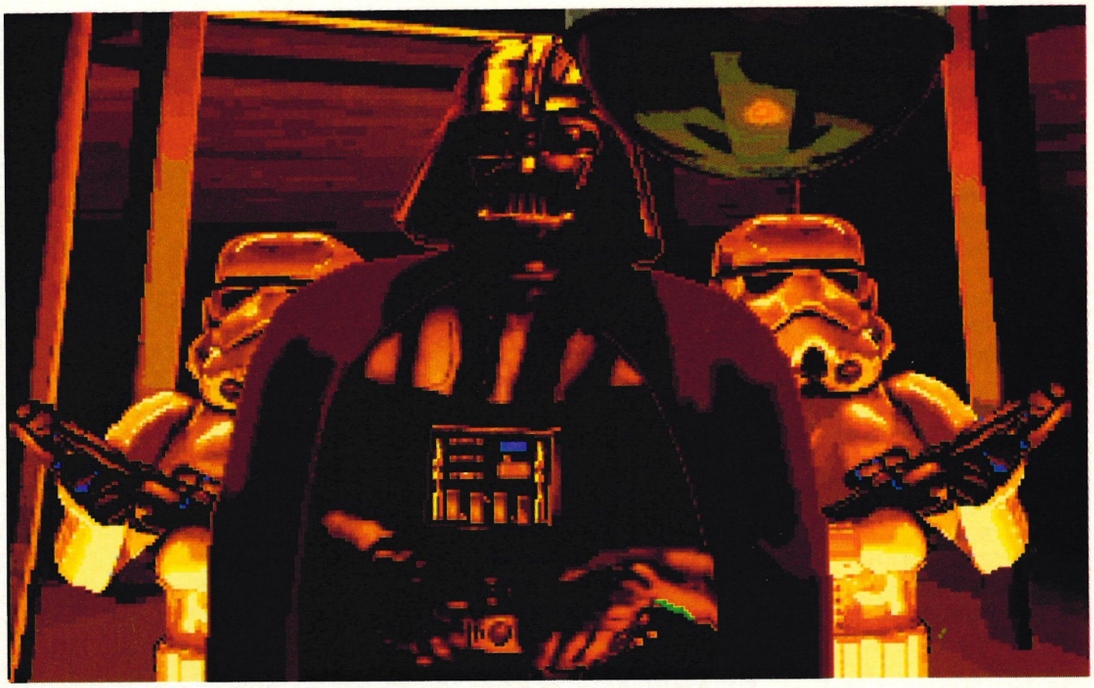
| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ad Lib | ✓ | Roland | ✓ | Sound Blaster | ✓ |

*Control*

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Joystick | ✓ | Keyboard | ✓ | Mouse | ✓ |

*Performance*

| | |
|---|---|
| Optimum speed | 25MHz |
| Minimum memory | 640K |
| Free RAM required | 550K |



PCreview 8

**X-Wing is possibly the only combat simulation ever to offer a fate worse than death — capture and torture by arch-villain Darth Vader. Unfortunately, this still picture can never hope to generate the same menace as the program's brief animated interlude, which is rounded off nicely by a chilling sample of the fallen Jedi Knight's evil baritone voice.**

Simulating space flight has always been a tricky problem for developers — for although many of us have some idea of what it might be like to pilot a plane in normal atmosphere, and are therefore more likely to spot when a program comes up short on realism, there isn't a single person in the world who has anything other than a theoretical knowledge of what it might be like to pilot a small, manoeuvrable craft through a near-vacuum (the advantage of this, of course, is that no-one can ever truly take them to task for not achieving their goals, but that's another topic for debate entirely).

Thankfully, the team behind X-Wing have obviously made a conscious decision to put the actual 'feel' of the finished product above all other possible considerations. Consequently, from the moment you take off to put any one of the three craft through its paces, you really do feel as if you're taking charge of a genuine physical entity.

And once you're in a dogfight ... phew!

While all of this might make it sound as though flying the X-Wing is just a straightforward matter of calibrating your joystick and diving headlong into the action — and to a certain extent it is — the more you play, the more you're likely to realise that the 70 or so keyboard and joystick (or mouse) commands at your disposal are actually there for something more than cosmetic purposes alone, and that you're going to have to master a good many of them if you want to survive more than the first few missions.

In this respect, the 'historical missions' aspect of the training section is a real bonus. Graded in terms of difficulty (albeit with a rather steep learning curve), these serve to introduce the novice to most of the three crafts' functions in a sort of 'drip feed' process, with one mission concentrating on reconnaissance, another on combat and so on.

The net effect of making your way laboriously through this series of lessons is so confidence-building that, in my case at least, all it led to was enough arrogance to get me killed in the first 20 seconds or so of my first genuine mission.

And it's in the missions themselves that X-Wing really comes into its own. No matter how enjoyable the training, no matter how good the between-scenes animations, it would all fall apart if the missions weren't up to scratch — once again, this certainly isn't the case.

Whether undertaken alone, or with a group of computerised 'wingmen' (whose digitised speech is surely among the best yet heard in any game), X-Wing's missions are a real challenge.

Those of you out there who fancy yourself as the type to do your own thing are hardly going to last as long as it takes you to hyperspace to your objective, as most of the tasks set are designed to test your nerve as much as your reflexes. And although you might like to argue that you didn't buy an X-Wing simulator to sit through a lecture as to how to approach your next tour of duty, in most cases this is a necessary chore which might just save

## *Alternatively...*




***Wing Commander II***
***Origin, £39.99***
***Rated 7, Issue 1***
*Up until now, Wing Commander II would have ranked as the finest example of a mission-based space combat game — and in fact it's only now that the base level of IBM-compatible hardware has risen high enough to allow the common man to enjoy its many benefits. However, X-Wing's combination of familiar characters and weaponry and a thoroughly polished program makes it the ultimate victor in this particular space skirmish.*



***XF5700 — Mantis Experimental Fighter***
***MicroProse, £49.99***
***Rated 3, Issue 14***
*For an example of how not to produce a space-based flight and fight simulator, look no further than this study in unfulfilled potential. Although its developers have attempted to include just about everything that makes X-Wing such a success, this one fails because the story is boring, the controls either too simple to use or nigh on impossible — and, worst of all, the gameplay is tedious. Avoid like the plague.*




your life long enough for you to be captured by the Empire.

This — along with the more straightforward option of death — is the likely fate of any novice X-Wing pilot, because actually completing the missions presented by this package is very difficult indeed. In fact, it's so difficult that if they weren't presented in such an enjoyable format, the frustration of having to begin over and over again — at least at first — would probably be too much for most players.

But enjoyable it is — and all the more so because of the care and attention to detail which has been lavished on the documentation which accompanies the five disks. One of these, The Farlander Papers, is a novella "from the chronicles of the Rebel Alliance" and as such isn't exactly an essential accessory for all battle-hardened space pilots (although it does contain some useful hints if you're willing to dig deep enough to find them).

The slim Starfighter Pilot Manual, on the other hand, is a lesson in how to present computer game documentation. Only 20 pages long, this volume still manages to incorporate everything you need to know about training, flying and configuring your machine (well, almost everything, but we'll come to the rest in a minute).

The idea of separating the 'creative' from the essential by producing two manuals instead of one is one of the best of recent innovations in PC gaming and should really be adopted by many more publishers (perhaps as a beginning along the road to abolishing 'creative' manuals altogether).

To take this quest for ease of use just that one tiny step further, the two books are complemented by an A4-sized reference card which opens to reveal all of the main key and joystick commands in a single display — just the thing for those awkward 'what on earth do I do now?' kind of moments.

If there is one problem with both of the manuals, it's that they don't go deep enough into such complex technicalities as rectifying DMA conflicts (which, I believe, may have been responsible for the one and only time which this program locked up during a game), configuring memory and installing the game on unusual hard drives.

This situation is rectified, however, by the inclusion of a fairly lengthy Read.me file which addresses a good many of these eventualities — the section on hard drives is so comprehensive that it covers everything from dealing with drives designated as d: instead of c:, to installing the game on removable drives such as Bernoullis and SyQuests.

The prevalent air of attention to detail is carried through to just about every technical aspect within the program — the sound effects are both crystal clear and perfectly placed (the enemy TIE Fighters even make that characteristic echoing growl as they flash past your bows). The speech and music are of an equally impressive standard (LucasArts' interactive music system, iMUSE, is used to better effect here than in previous releases, announcing the appearance of enemy craft and so on).

Strangely though, the one element which doesn't quite match up to the high standards set by the rest of the package is the still graphics. While the majority of the hardware and backgrounds appear to have been digitised from the original models, some of the hand-drawn characters do leave a lot to be desired (check out the leaning sentry in the 'two minutes' panel for a good example), which is highly unusual indeed considering these have tended to be among the best features of previous Lucas games.

However, it is undoubtedly a mark of the program's ultimate worth that the only true criticism to be made concerns something as trivial as the occasionally dodgy still picture.

Without question, X-Wing defines the current state of the art in space-based fight and flight simulation — but then, with original material as good as this, LucasArts could hardly have failed.

But one last word of warning. X-Wing is right up there with the most difficult to master of all flight sims. So, unless you have considerable experience of programs of this type under your belt already, are happily blessed with the reflexes of a gazelle and the cunning of at least one fox, or are capable of summoning up inexhaustible reserves of inner strength ... you're probably going to have to put up with a whole lot of frustration.

Rest assured though, the rewards are definitely worth it.

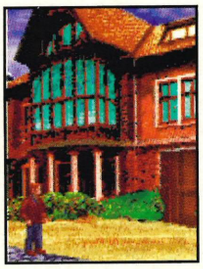
May the force be with you.

■ **Ciarán Brennan**

**Above: Although they're all different on the outside, the X-Wing, A-Wing and Y-Wing (above) carry similar function displays (all of the elements are identical, they're just arranged differently to suit each different cabin's layout).**

**Below: Mission highlights can be endlessly replayed to admiring colleagues in the film room — that is, as long as you remembered to switch on your in-flight camera during combat.**





| | |
|---|---|
| *Title* | **Shadow of the Comet** |
| *Publisher* | **Infogrames** |
| *Contact* | **(071) 738 8199** |
| *Price* | **£39.99** |

**Shadow of The Comet is a slow-moving game, so two minutes is likely to get you about as far as ordering a beer in Illsmouth's local boozer. Here's Parker minding other people's business on his first day in the town.**

# Shadow of the Comet

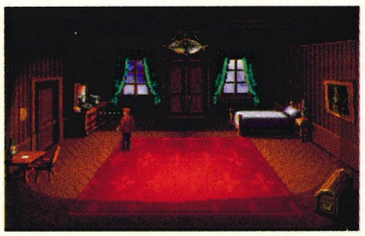
**The genre's the same, the inspiration's the same, but the action is very different. Can Shadow of the Comet hope to repeat the runaway success of Alone in The Dark?**



Hammer horror graphic adventures are appearing by the bucket load right now, and with the amount of blood decorating the walls, we may well end up with an X certificate for PC nasties. But Infogrames has managed to avoid the temptation of too much bloodletting in its latest adventure, Shadow of the Comet, a menacing mystery based on HP Lovecraft's Cthulhu writings. As ever, there are plenty of ways to end up as an involuntary organ donor, but the blood 'n' guts comes a definite second to characterisation and atmosphere.

In most games of this type you have a fairly clear idea of what you have to do, and an obvious bad guy, in Shadow of the Comet it's far from clear what you're up against. A young man arrives in a sleepy village, comes up against local superstition, is warned to leave, there are grue-

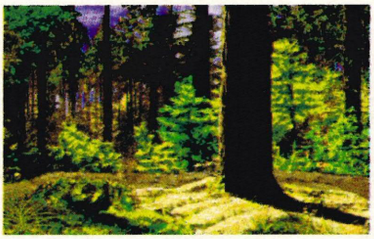
## Two Minutes *of Hammer horror*



*Unpacked and settled in at his lodgings, it's time to get the equipment ready. You can see the dotted line which appears when Parker spots something handy.*



*In the town records you find that Boleskine's guide is still alive — with a complexion to make the man from Biactol weep. But he's not going back into the woods for love nor money.*



*Even so, you're going to have to go there yourself sooner or later. It all looks peaceful right now (some of the scenes really are stunning), but wait until you have to come back at night.*



*I know I said that the first day was a gentle warm up, but that doesn't mean you can't get yourself killed early on. Still, there's nothing like a good funeral march every now and then.*




**Left: This is where it all starts. It's 1910, a lovely day, and everything's looking rosy. All Parker wants to do is photograph a passing comet, so what could possibly go wrong?**

some murders, shreds of documents hinting at a horrible past, strange cults, demonic rituals and ancient gods — it's all straight out of a late night B-movie.

Humour, though, doesn't really come into it, though; it's more of a return to a conventional graphic adventure format after the shifting camera angles and 3D characters of its forerunner, Alone in The Dark.

### The story so far ...

Shadow of the Comet starts innocently enough. It's 1910, and your character, a young astronomer called John T Parker, arrives at a sleepy town called Illsmouth to photograph the passing of Halley's Comet. He's come to prove, or disprove, some strange reports by Lord Boleskine about the comet's last visit, 76 years ago.

The only cloud on the horizon is that whatever it was that Boleskine saw that night may well have been the reason why he ended up a few bars short of a pop-up toaster. Still, not to worry ...

Once you've settled into your lodgings, and met the local doctor and mayor, it's time to start getting your equipment ready and find a spot from which to photograph the comet. Armed only with a notebook — isn't it great how all adventurers keep such complete diaries? — and an old drawing, you get your first good look around the town.

The first impression of Illsmouth is that it's about as threatening as Bournemouth on a wet weekend, all picture-postcard houses and talkative locals. Your first task, getting the photographic plates you need is a simple matter of wandering into the general store and splashing out the readies.

But when you try to find a guide for the forest it soon becomes obvious that something is strangely amiss in the town. It's difficult to put your finger on exactly what, though, and the locals aren't exactly forthcoming on the subject.

### Careless talk costs lives

The idea of the game is to prove over the next few days that something strange did happen 76 years ago. By the end of the adventure you'll have come up against murder and intrigue among the townsfolk, strange cults, bizarre monsters and Lovecraftian demons. In the meantime, all you have to go on are vague rumours, and the only way to proceed is to talk to other characters and have a careful snoop around.

If you're looking for an immediate enemy to tackle, forget it. Shadow of the Comet is a thinking player's game that takes time to develop, and the first time Parker comes across a really dodgy situation in the woods, he has a heart attack. Fat lot of use he is ...

But, I rather like the fact that you can't just grill everyone at random. You have to be very careful who you trust and what you say to them, although you'd be hard pushed not to recognise the non-player characters you meet — with tongue-in-cheek caricatures of Vincent Price, Sean Connery (straight out of The Untouchables), Michelle Pfeiffer, Melanie Griffith and others. Say the wrong thing and you might upset a potential ally, or give away too much to one of the bad guys.

It's possible to pick up a lot of information this way, but there's no guarentee that you haven't been lied to. Even quite late on, I only had half the overall picture and some rough guesswork as to the rest. But this is all part and parcel of the game.

There are numerous written clues to be found, and sometimes flashbacks are used to fill you in on the the history of the town and the legends of the Great

**Far left: Now is definitely not the time to tell him he's got bad breath.**

**Below: "Did I say something wrong?" Somebody should tell these yokels there's a law against this kind of behaviour.**





**In situations like these, it's time to turn to the trusty inventory, and hope like hell you've got the tools for the job.**

PCreview 7

Ancients. Thankfully, the diary only summaries the important things you discover, and provides a useful reminder of what you should be looking for next.

It's not all talk and books, though. There are plenty of ways to get yourself killed unexpectedly — they're a touchy lot, these yokels, when you start prying into their affairs. You're fairly safe for the first day or so, with encounters that need some thought but aren't likely to leave you stuck for too long. Generally, the pace of the game is fairly slow, and the gentle introduction should give most players ample time to get going without meeting an untimely end.

After that the puzzles and dangers get more difficult and varied. Some are easier than others — surprise! It's the note hidden behind the painting again. Some are immensely frustrating, and I was desperately reaching for a non-existent hint book on several occasions.

Two puzzles that stick in my mind are a key in the form of a sliding-block picture, which isn't as easy as it sounds, and that to open a combination safe you need to know the number that symbolises evil in the Bible. You only get three chances at this one before being caught, and no, the answer isn't 666. This type of puzzle where the solution comes from outside the game always comes as a welcome challenge.

There was only one problem that annoyed me. It involved cleaning a drawing with cotton wool and surgical spirit. I was on the right track, I'd worked out what I wanted to do, and I had everything I needed. Unfortunately, I didn't stand on exactly the right pixel next to the table, so I then wasted quite a lot of time looking for other solutions. Wild? I was absolutely livid ...

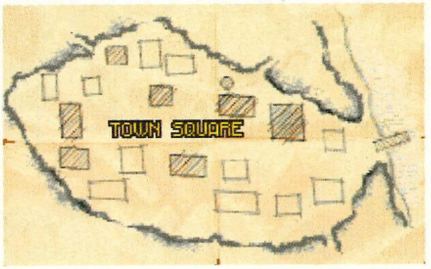
### Getting around

When it comes down to the nitty gritty of controlling your character, Shadow of the Comet uses the keyboard and an icon bar, rather than the mouse. The icon bar springs into action when you hit the Tab key, but really the keyboard shortcuts are all you need to play the game.

This has the advantage that you get a full-screen game, but using the keys to move becomes a bit of an obstacle race when it comes to avoiding tables and chairs. I'd prefer to use a mouse to direct the character, because it allows you to slouch back into your chair and really think through what's going on.

That said, the control system is incredibly simple to use, with keys for talk, look and get, inventory, diary and use. When you want to combine a couple of objects, you simply select one and hit 'use', and you're either on the right track at the right time, or not. There's none of this 'click on bomb, click on chicken and shove it somewhere hopefully' scattergun approach with the mouse when you can't think what to do next.

When Parker spots a useful object nearby, a dotted line appears and he can then look at, or get, whatever it is. I was dubious about this at first, as I thought it would take all the fun out of searching for hidden objects, but it's grown on me since then. It applies to most objects you can use, but not necessarily to things that may provide useful information or are hidden behind something else, so it's still important to have a good old root around whenever you can.




Getting from room to room could hardly be simpler, since the doors have a mildly irritating habit of opening and dragging Parker through to the next screen if he strays too near. For the same reason, any exits at the bottom edge of the screen are marked by a white frame, which may save your character a black eye or two but doesn't add to the aesthetic appeal too much. If you're in a hurry to get around the town, you need only hit the Map key and move the figure over the destination you have in mind.

Graphics and aural effects are an odd mix of the brilliant and the undeniably average. The graphics stills are breath-




**A man who like prancing around the woods half-naked at night. Don't mess with him.**




**Well, stick that in your pipe and smoke it. Miss Picott likes a man with manners.**




**A friendly face at your arrival, the good (?) Doctor's house is where you'l be staying.**

## Techspec

***Shadow of the Comet is about average for disk space damage, not too greedy on memory, and runs reasonably happily on a 286. The only stumbling blocks are that it's keyboard only and insists on a 256-colour VGA video card.***

*Disk requirements*

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

*Graphic modes*

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CGA | x | EGA | x | Tandy | x |
| VGA | ✓ | SVGA | ✓ | | |

*Soundboards*

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ad Lib | ✓ | Roland | x | Sound Blaster | ✓ |

*Control*

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Joystick | x | Keyboard | ✓ | Mouse | x |

*Performance*

| | |
|---|---|
| Optimum speed | 16MHz |
| Minimum memory | 640K |
| Free RAM required | 560K |




**If you've got this far, then things aren't going to badly at all. Unfortunately, things are more than likely to take a hefty turn for the worse unless you come up with some quick thinking.**

taking and varied, and are redrawn for day and night scenes. They contrast superbly with the flat, comic-book style animations for important close-ups and characterisation, line drawn flashback scenes and the constant background movement of gulls, lizards, squirrels, frogs and leaves.

The town and the forest settings are more impressive than the underground and interior scenes, which are less imaginitive all round. The sky radiates an oppressive stillness, and combined with the oddly bright, stylised buildings, it all reminded me of the Village in the sixties cult series The Prisoner.

Sadly, the animation doesn't live up to the same standards. The characters suffer from poorly thought-out perspectives. Parker often gets bigger as he walks into the distance, and the same applies to the uglies in the underground. The flight from the top of the lighthouse is, quite frankly, laughable. This doesn't detract from the playability, but doesn't help with the horror story atmosphere, either.

The music, on the other hand, is a huge contributor to the chilling feel of the game. I never thought I'd be spooked by a computer game, but playing Shadow alone at night with the sound turned up is a spine-chilling experience. Otherwise the sound effects are pretty good — pages turning, doors opening, etc — but Infogrames has missed several chances to get in some good dying screams or flesh tearing sounds, among other things. Shadow of the Comet also cries out for digitised speech for the close-up dialogues, which I'd expect to be first on the list if Shadow ever makes it to CD-ROM, a format, incidentally, to which it would be ideally suited.

### But is it any fun?

Shadow of the Comet is all about atmosphere, and on that count is extremely succeeds — it would be a crying shame not to play it with a sound card. Technically it's fairly conventional, and certainly doesn't make as dramatic an entrance as Alone in the Dark, although it does offer more scope than the single haunted-house setting.

The problems you face are typical of the genre, and it's a fairly slow moving, intelligent game, aimed at people who prefer to think rather than bludgeon their way through the adventure.

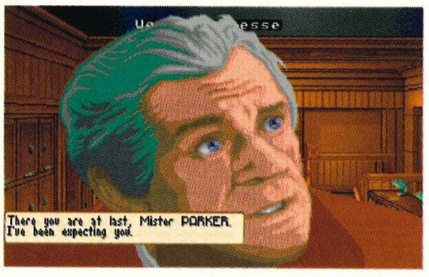



**Enter one very unsuspecting hero, John T Parker, bearing less than a passing resemblance to Dennis Quaid**

It's obvious that the setting has been lovingly created and credit must be given for the 'storyline', and clever combination of different graphic styles, although the lack of mouse support is, I think, a big mistake in a modern graphic adventure. However, it's much closer to the spirit of Lovecraft's writing than Alone in the Dark. Although it may not be to everyone's taste, particularly if you like action-packed games, Shadow of The Comet is a thoughtful and moody graphic adventure.

**Far left: getting around town is so much easier when you have the map.**

**■ John Bennett**




**Give it time, and you'll be scraping bits of Mr Jugg off the wall. Shame.**




**How come I never get to meet women like this hanging round the local cemetery?**

## *Alternatively...*



***Alone in the Dark***
***Infogrames, £44.99***
*Inspired by the same writing, and produced by the same team, Alone in The Dark is a cracking horror adventure. Original use of viewpoints and 3D characters, plus bags of atmosphere make this a top-rate game. The only criticism is that the gameplay can be a little too simple for serious gamers.*



***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. It also demonstrates that there's still plenty of scope for originality in adventure games. Nicely developed characters and a strong plot.*



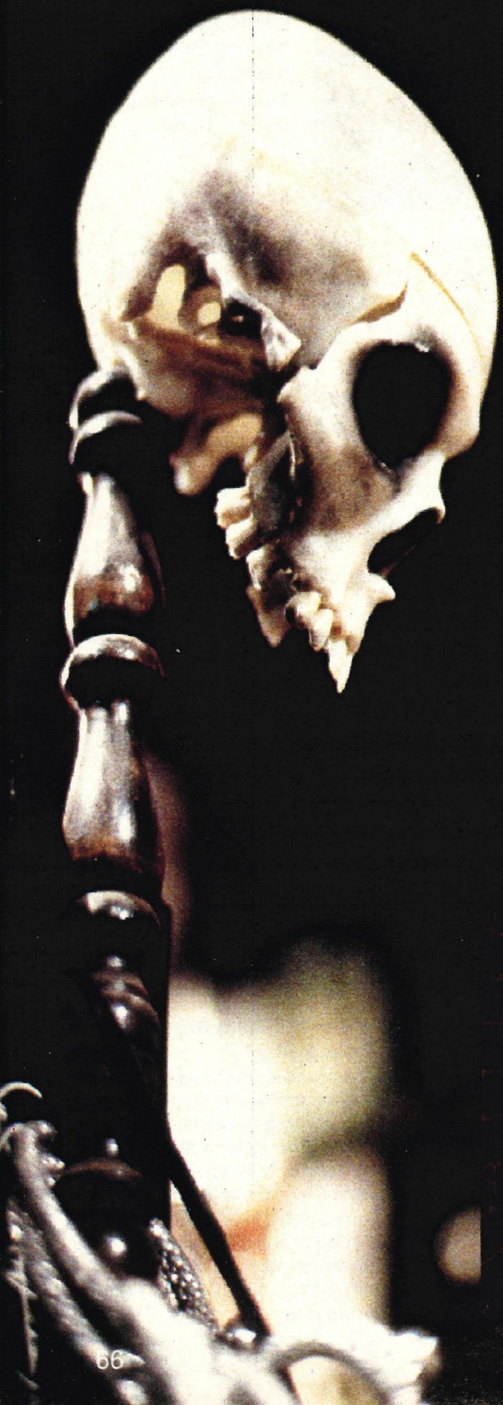
| | |
|---|---|
| *Title* | The Legacy |
| *Publisher* | MicroProse |
| *Contact* | (0666) 504326 |
| *Price* | £44.99 |

**A bunch of relatives you never even met have left you a huge mansion in New England. It appears to be a dream come true — but Winthrop House harbours a dark and deadly secret ...**



***Happy as a clam you walk through the front door and survey your new domain. The door clicks quietly shut behind you and — too late — you discover that there's no way out. Didn't anyone mention that the place is haunted?***

# the Legacy



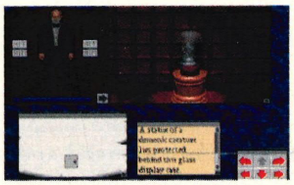


The first-person perspective 3D role-playing adventure has been around for a long time. Dungeon Master, which first appeared on the Atari ST over five years ago, really started the ball rolling — although its debut on IBM-compatibles last year was a little late. The PC now has a fair-sized collection, the best of the bunch being the two Eye of the Beholder games, and the Ultima Underworld series.

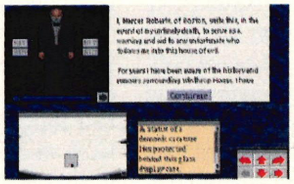
The Legacy is similar to all these releases in its choice of perspective. Similarly, its plot is inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic horror fantasies, subjects not dissimilar to those found in Alone in the Dark and Daughter of Serpents, and currently enjoying a spell in high fashion in the PC entertainment market.

The Legacy's combat system, puzzles and use of spells are nothing new ... and yet, despite all these comparisons, it manages to create its own niche in the role-playing genre. The key lies in its use of a unique flexible 'windows' environment, a powerfully horrific atmosphere, and a modern alternative to the traditional dungeon adventure.

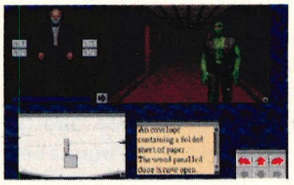
More about that later — but first, the story. I won't reveal too much about this because you learn most of it during the game. Winthrop House — the New England legacy you've inherited from a pretty peculiar set of relatives — is a messy place. There are enough letters lying around to fill a paper bank, most of them revealing something about the mystery mansion, dropping heavy hints or giving advice. All you know before starting is that the house is yours. You



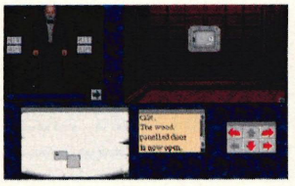
***You might as well do some exploring — after all, it's only a house, isn't it? Perhaps it isn't, judging by your relatives' taste in ornaments. What kind of person would keep this stuffed slimy thing in a glass case in the hall?***



***The same kind of person who leaves sinister, doom-ridden notes lying around the place, obviously. Your worst fears are confirmed: it looks as if someone has let a bunch of zombies loose. Perhaps you should go and look for a gun.***



***All too soon you're introduced to a zombie, just one of 25 kinds of monster. Until you find a handy weapon and a few decent spells it's a good idea to dodge around your undead foes. If you don't, you'll end up joining them.***



***Still on the ground floor you discover a wall-safe. The house seems to be riddled with plaques, switches, messages and monsters. It makes your head spin just trying to solve all those puzzles. Obviously, this safe needs a key.***



***Having explored most of the ground floor, you decide to take the plunge into the cellar. Go ahead — there's a nasty surprise lurking down there. Come to think of it, the house is riddled with rotten surprises. Which way is out?***

walk in, the door locks behind you, and then you have to get on with it.

You have eight predefined characters to choose from (both sexes), all of whom have radically different abilities and appearance. In addition you can choose any character and redefine it, which allows you to use your own name and fiddle about with the statistics.

All the characters have five primary skills: strength, knowledge, dexterity, stamina and willpower. The first three of these also have secondary skills, such as the ability to force doors, use firearms or meditate. Some characters (though not all) come complete with a ready-made spell. Skills, as you might expect, can be improved by trying things out during the game.

### Moving windows

But what about the game itself? If you take a look at the screenshots you'll probably think you've seen it all before. There are plenty of games which feature a character/inventory panel, an auto-mapper, a direction arrows box (forward, left, right, back, rotate left and right), a text panel and a first-person viewing window. What's special about The Legacy is that it allows you to rescale most of the boxes and reposition them all. It's a system that bears all the hallmarks of Magnetic Scrolls, which developed the game for MicroProse.

Anyone who has used Microsoft Windows will immediately realise some of the benefits this system gives you. Repositioning the boxes not only enables you to create a set of game screen best suited to your style of play, it also enables you to obscure some windows altogether. Rescaling the boxes — you can't rescale the character panel or the direction arrows — lets you decide how important various features are to you, and of course, different elements will be more to the fore at different stage sof the game.

This creates some very interesting possibilities. For example, if you just want to explore and you aren't interested in the auto-mapper, the text bar or the character panel, but you do want a very impressive full-screen viewing window, you can have it. What's more, there's no loss of scrolling speed whatever the size of your window (although, on the downside, the graphics can look slightly blocky).




On the other hand, when you first start a level you might want a full-sized map to help you find your way around, loads of textual information and a half-screen viewing window. This, too, is possible.

It's hard to overstate the value of this. Anyone who thought that, say, Eye of the Beholder's viewing panel was too small, or that Might and Magic's viewpoint scrolled too slowly, or that Ultima Underworld's map suffered from being on a separate screen, will have no such complaints with The Legacy.

This isn't to say that the 'windows' interface is perfect. For a start, the viewing window scrolls forward in blocks, Dungeon Master-style; and when you've been treated to Ultima Underworld's smooth scroll it's a little disappointing.

Similarly, the map is fine as a ready reference — but it's far inferior, on the other hand, to Ultima Underworld's, which allowed you to make your own, invaluable notes and gave you a full-screen, detailed display. The direction controls are fine, but limited in comparison again to Underworld, which offers you different running/walking speeds, the ability to jump, and fine control over 360-degree turns. Cramming everything onto one screen has its advantages, but you do tend to lose a little detail and flexibility.

However, the biggest criticism I have of the system is this: it doesn't save your customised layout. You can spend a couple of minutes setting everything as you like it, but every time you reboot you have to start all over again. This isn't a great hassle, but it is annoying.

I would also have liked the chance to create two or three different layouts for different situations, which could then be loaded via the function keys, say. There's nothing like full-screen mode for exploring, but for combat you need the character panel, and for some puzzles the map is invaluable. Sure, you can rescale the windows at any time you like during the game, but you should




**There are eight characters to choose from before the action starts. You can change the name and allocate skill and attribute points to suit your style of play.**



be aware that it's not the fastest process in the world. Also, the play continues in real time while you re-size the boxes, and there are very few occasions when you don't encounter monsters round every corner. Eventually, you'll probably set your preferred hierarchy of windows at the beginning and pretty well leave it at that.

The rest of the controls are quite flexible. The left and right mouse buttons are used efficiently and effectively to achieve various functions. You can pick up objects using the traditional 'click-and-drag' method, and you can examine them in greater detail via menus on the items themselves. This enables you to read something without picking it up (a long overdue feature in adventure RPGs), or simply to examine it. Your inventory is initially tiny, with only six boxes for objects — however, life is a lot easier when you find something to carry things in and a key-ring for all those keys ...

### Size isn't everything

You've chosen your character, you've discovered that the control interface works well — but is the action any good? The first thing I should say is that Winthrop House is *big*. I won't reveal how many levels there are (finding out is one of the game's unwritten challenges), but there are hundreds of rooms. Initial exploration in the house itself isn't all that impressive, but once you find a doorway to another dimension, things get very weird indeed. There are two minor complaints about exploration, though. You have to be facing the right way to see some objects which you're actually standing next to, and doors automatically close behind you.

Size, of course, isn't always the most important factor, and The Legacy contains enough puzzles, monsters and magic to keep traditional adventurers happy. Apart from a couple of special puzzles, there is nothing amazingly innovative in the problems you face — magic corridors spin you around, you sometimes have to walk backwards in order to move forwards, mysterious plaques reveal numerical secrets, pieces of paper give broad hints, some doors need keys, others need forcing — and so on. It's basically a good, solid collection of riddles.



Combat, too, is fairly standard. There are 25 different monster types lurking about the house, ranging from easy-meat zombies to the kind of nasty, winged, bug-eyed creature that can zap you in a couple of seconds. Some of these are genuinely terrifying, particularly when you open a door and a thing you wouldn't want to meet in your worst nightmare lurches out at you; others, such as the ghosts, aren't quite so horrific.

One thing you won't be able to tell from the screenshots is the quality of the animation — The Legacy's demonic horde feature some of the smoothest and most detailed animation frames I've seen in an role-playing game.

There are plenty of ways of attacking your enemies, though if you want to specialise in hand-to-hand combat you won't last long. Weapons range from simple hack-and-slash pokers, through handguns to an M16 Assault Rifle and a chainsaw. It's a refreshingly modern collection, and a welcome alternative to all those broad swords, axes and slings.

Fighting is easy. A couple of boxes in the character panel give you the use of left and right hands, and you have a choice of simply hitting something or aiming first. Aiming is useful if there are a couple of monsters breathing down your neck and you just want to target one of them. Allied to this basic technique are a series of conditions which add realis: an accuracy bar determines the effectiveness of your assault, armour counteracts monster attacks, firearms have limited ammunition (and need to be reloaded), and first aid heals any damage you sustain.

No RPG would be complete without magic, and The Legacy's system is well up to scratch. You need two things to cast spells successfully: a spell book and sufficient skill. There are 19 spells in total, each with its own icon and rather silly 'olde Englande'-style description in the manual. You can cast them immediately or prepare them for later use, and you have to look pretty hard to discover all of them.

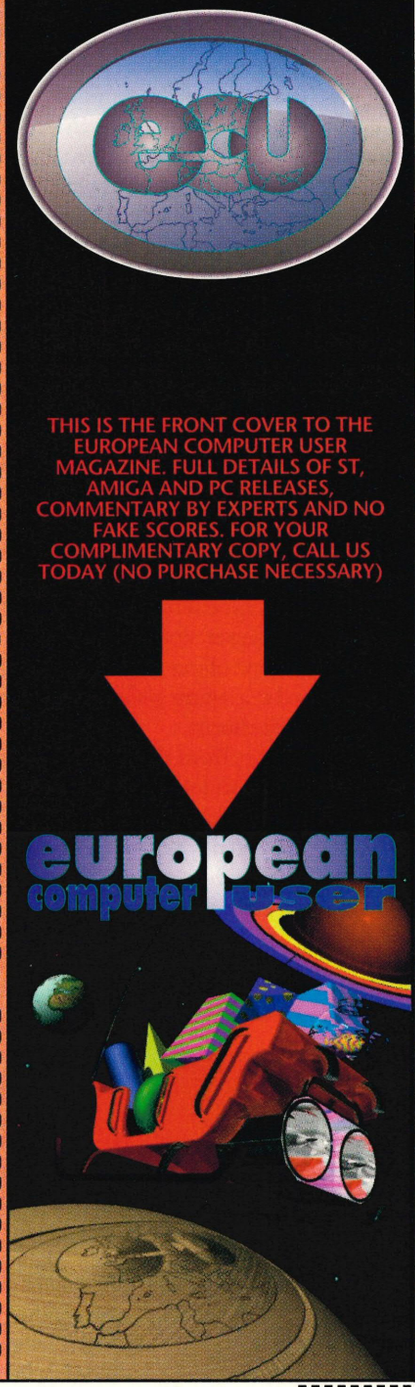
There are two alternatives to stabbing, shooting or casting spells at creatures you encounter. The first is simply to dodge them — advisable if you haven't progressed far or if you're unarmed. Dodging isn't always successful, and there are plenty of heart-stopping moments when you're cornered by some green, slimy tentacled thing and you can't squeeze past.



**The Legacy is unique in providing scalable and movable graphics windows. The three pictures above illustrate just how flexible the system is: you can have a moderately large playing window with easy access to all the main features such as the map and the character panel; you can have a full-screen view with no loss of scrolling speed (although this can be quite 'blocky' in close-up); or you can minimise functions such as the map and text panels, maintain control of your inventory, and still have a very large playing window.**

# SOMETHING FOR THE WEEKEND, SIR?

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PC REVIEW

## Techspec

***There's a long list of requirements to consider before buying, but speed is the most important factor. If you have a 286, forget it: at 16Mhz the screen update and loading times are too slow. You'll need at least a 386 running at 20Mhz to play the game, but the action is most suited to a 486 running at 33Mhz — try before you buy. You'll also need DOS 5.0, a high-density floppy drive for eight disks' worth of code, 25Mb of hard disk space (reducible to 18Mb if you cut the intro and some other bits) and extra space for saved games — each saved position uses around a quarter of a megabyte. Minimum RAM required is 2Mb: 640K base RAM, 768K expanded (EMS) memory and a further 256K extended memory for disk caching. The sound effects are a mixture of the impressive and the feeble, but the music throughout is excellent — well worth investing in a sound card for. Keyboard commands can be used, but a mouse (Microsoft-only) is better. Finally, The Legacy will not work with disk compression utilities.***

*Disk requirements*

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| High density | ✓ | | | | |
| Hard disk only | ✓ | | | | |
| Space taken on hard disk | 25Mb | | | | |

*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 | 610K |

The other alternative is to have a chat. This is only possible with human characters: when you approach one a dialogue window opens and you're given a selection of questions to choose from. It isn't the most sophisticated conversation system around, but it's nice to have the option.

If you survive long enough — and there are many opportunities for getting killed right from the start — you should start to accumulate experience points. The high value increments are reserved for performing key actions in the game — but you can gradually increase your statistics by successfully completing the mundane tasks such as combat.

You also need to rest at least once a day in a special Sanctuary Room, eat food regularly, meditate to replenish your magic points, and avoid too many encounters with monsters. If your character is badly frightened once too often he goes temporarily insane.

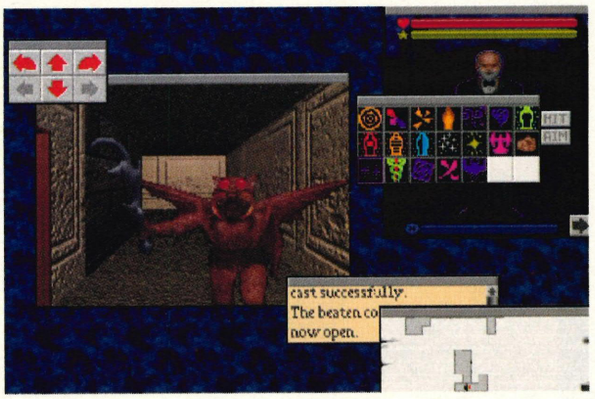
### A gruesome game

The Legacy is horrible. It manages to achieve what only a few role-playing games have so far accomplished — the ability to turn your stomach. Its superb atmosphere is generated by a mixture of reassuringly modern and disturbingly ancient graphics, an eerie music track, some excellent special effects and the odd moment of sheer unadulterated terror.

The sound and music are partly responsible for the shivers down the spine. Apart from a few inappropriate or poor monster noises, the effects are excellent. Some are simply superb — wait until you hear sound of copper doors opening, or listen to a monster's wings flapping on the far side of a closed door.

Most of the praise, though, is due to the graphics. The quality of the backgrounds and character animations is second-to-none, and you only get gore when it's absolutely necessary. The variety of levels is good, ranging from the homely, bland corridors of Winthrop House itself to some very odd places indeed. The fact that you can't clearly distinguish objects and characters from a distance also helps: you never know when that innocuous-looking object on the floor might turn out to be a warm pulsating heart embedded with thorns.

Apart from the big, impressive effects, minor touches add to an overall feeling of quality. For example, your character is animated when he suffers a fright, and if he's holding a torch the light will switch on and off.




**There are more than two dozen different kinds of monster lurking around the house and the underworld. A few, like the zombies, are target practice; the rest, like this bug-eyed beast, can be very tough indeed.**

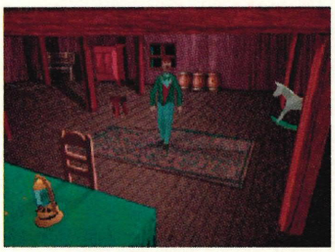
There is one final, minor niggle. Disk access times can be a little lengthy if you don't use Smartdrv, or your machine isn't fast enough. This is part of a bigger problem: The Legacy isn't accessible to anyone who hasn't got the stringent minimum hardware requirements (see Tech Spec). An option to reduce graphical detail and cut animation frames to accommodate slower machines would have helped.

Even so, if you're looking for a very unusual, compelling RPG with great graphics and sound, you won't get much better than this. If you have the right hardware, The Legacy is an excellent choice.

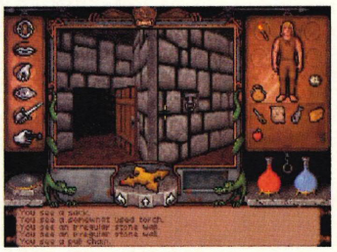
**Gordon Houghton**

PCreview 8

## *Alternatively...*



***Alone in the Dark***
***Infogrames, £44.99***
***Rated 9, Issue 14.***
*Although its graphics and technology are quite different from The Legacy, Alone in the Dark's plot and characters are comparable. Like The Legacy it needs a 486 for the best playing conditions and there's a strong occult vein in the storyline. However, it's more of an adventure game with strong arcade overtones, mixing a variety of unusual viewpoints with superb animation, but little narrative structure. Compelling, but perhaps too brief a pleasure.*



***Ultima Underworld***
***Origin, £39.99***
***Rated 9, Issue 8.***
*A 486 is also required if you want the full, impressive range of scrolling 3D graphics here, though you can reduce the detail to speed things up on slower PCs. It's not just the 3D which impresses: the story takes you through eight levels (and more) of twists, sub-plots and dramatic confrontations with evil. The brilliantly simple control interface just caps it all.Take a look, too, at the recently-released Ultima Underworld II: Labyrinth of Worlds.*



***Wonderland***
***Magnetic Scrolls/Virgin, £34.99***
***Rated 8, Issue 10.***
*Magnetic Scrolls, who helped create The Legacy, were one of the first programming teams to make use of a `windows' adventure system, incorporating a graphic window, scrolling text and an auto-mapper. The action is exclusively menu-driven and beautifully illustrated, though the plot — a loose interpretation of Lewis Carroll's Alice books — can lead to frustrating dead ends. Good puzzles and a friendly interface make it well worth a look.*

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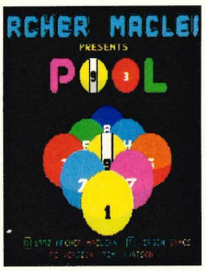
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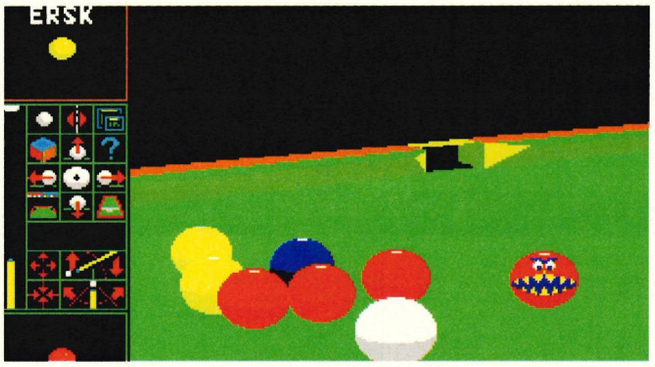

| | |
|---|---|
| *Title* | **Archer Maclean"s Pool** |
| *Publisher* | **Virgin Games** |
| *Contact* | **(081) 960 2255** |
| *Price* | **£29.99** |

**"It's a shame it doesn't play pool", was apparently a criticism made of Jimmy White's Snooker, released last year. That omission has now been remedied by Archer Maclean's Pool**

# *Archer Maclean's*

Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker set new standards of playability coupled with an impressive rendition of the laws of physics: the snooker balls on screen travelled as you would expect them to in real life. Things which ain't broke shouldn't be fixed, so Archer Maclean's Pool uses the same playing system, and anyone familiar with Snooker will scarcely even need to glance at the manual.

Archer Maclean and Pool's programmer Tim Watson have added quite a lot in the way of bells and whistles, but in terms of visibility to the user, these are more concerned with options than technique and movement. Don't worry, all the nice touches are still there: the blinking eyes still pop up from the darkness that is the 'audience', and the balls still pull faces if you take your time over a shot.




**The balls take on a life of their own if you take your time playing a shot: apart from this hideous grimace, they will also smirk and stick their tongues out at you.**

Pool (the game, not the program) is more accessible than snooker: there's a pool table in every other pub for a start, and when you do play, the smaller table means you have a better chance of potting at least something. Thus Pool (the program, not the game) has a less specialist feel to it. Rather than being restricted to a single official set of rules, pool has its own house conventions, and there are a number of options available to enable you to tailor 'minor' rules. There are also 20 computer opponents to choose from, which instead of simply being graded from 'easy' to 'champion', as in Snooker, now have jokey names such as Sam Slick, Steve Safe and Disastrous Dave. Most of the names give you a clue as to their playing ability, but since the manual doesn't go into any detail about their exact strengths and weaknesses, you'll just have to try playing them all to find a computer opponent to suit you.

For those not familiar with Jimmy White's Snooker, the playing interface works like this: all movement can be controlled with mouse or keyboard, although I wouldn't even attempt to use the latter. The strip of icons, which looks hellishly complicated to the uninitiated, is used to control technicalities such as spin, cuing angle and power, and can be positioned along the top of the screen, or as a block down the left hand side. On the main screen, you can use the mouse to switch or pan your camera angles and also to 'lock' on to object balls.

Pool offers three main variants of the game: UK 8-ball pool, the game played in pubs up and down the country, in which you must pot all the balls of a certain colour before going on

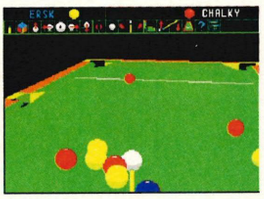



**You always stand some chance of progressing in a tournament, since the computer selects medium-rated players rather than the more skilful hustlers.**

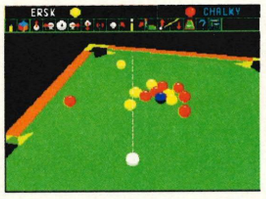
**Two Minutes** *of winner stays on*

# Pool

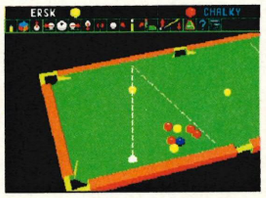
**Set to play a game against the computer, Pool won't let you take back any poor shots, so every one counts. Here we join a needle match against the computer's very own Chalky White ...**



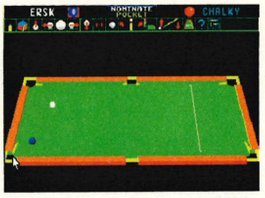

*Chalky is lining up here for a long red into the the top pocket. This is the default camera view for playing your shot, but you can zoom out look down on your shot as well.*



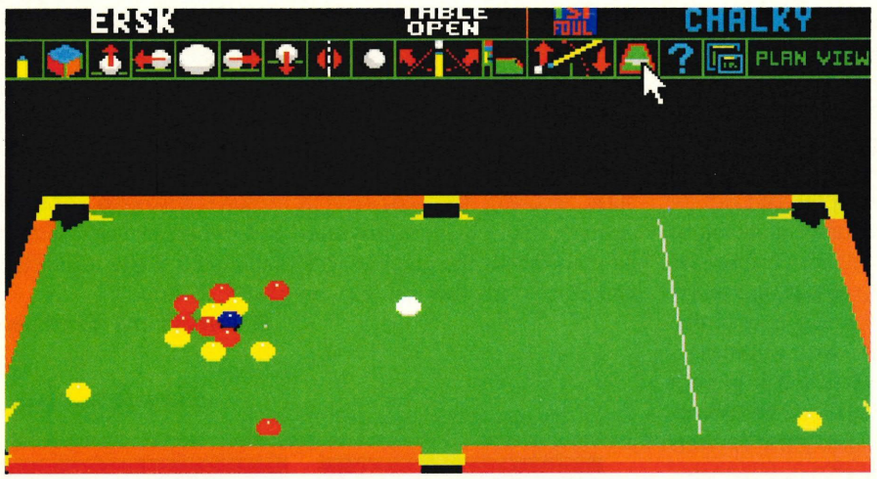

*After you've set the viewlines, it's extremely useful to zoom out, even to the extent of a plan view of the table, to give yourself a much better idea of where your cue ball might end up.*




*If you're snookered, or you to try a double, you can adjust the direction of your shot until you just know you'll hit that object ball with the double viewlines switched on.*




*To cut a long game rather short, it shouldn't be too difficult to pot the black from here ... and you'll never know how many hard-boiled eggs I had to eat to get to this stage.*




**Techspec** *Unusually these days, Pool arrives on just the one disk, supports EGA graphics and makes no particular demands on your PC (although it is 286 and upwards only). It's perfectly playable on a 12MHz 286 as well ... in fact, the only really strong recommendation is that you play with a mouse.*

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Disk requirements* | | | | | |
| | High density | ✗ | | | |
| | Hard disk only | ✓ | | | |
| | Space taken on hard disk | 800K | | | |
| *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 | | | |

**Clicking on plan view, left, enables you to decide which the next best shot is. That yellow should go in the bottom pocket fairly comfortably.**

to pot the black; US 8-ball pool, in which the principle is the same, but there are differences concerning what constitutes a foul and how the other player benefits after a foul shot; and US 9-ball pool, in which there are just nine numbered balls on the table and players must strike balls from the lowest number upwards until they pot the 9-ball, the black.

Having selected which pool to play, you can then choose to play for practice with a human opponent, against a computer opponent in a 'match' in which the computer will save details of your performance in its high score table, against a human player in a match, or in a 'tournament' with eight other players, who can be any combination of computer-generated or flesh and blood.

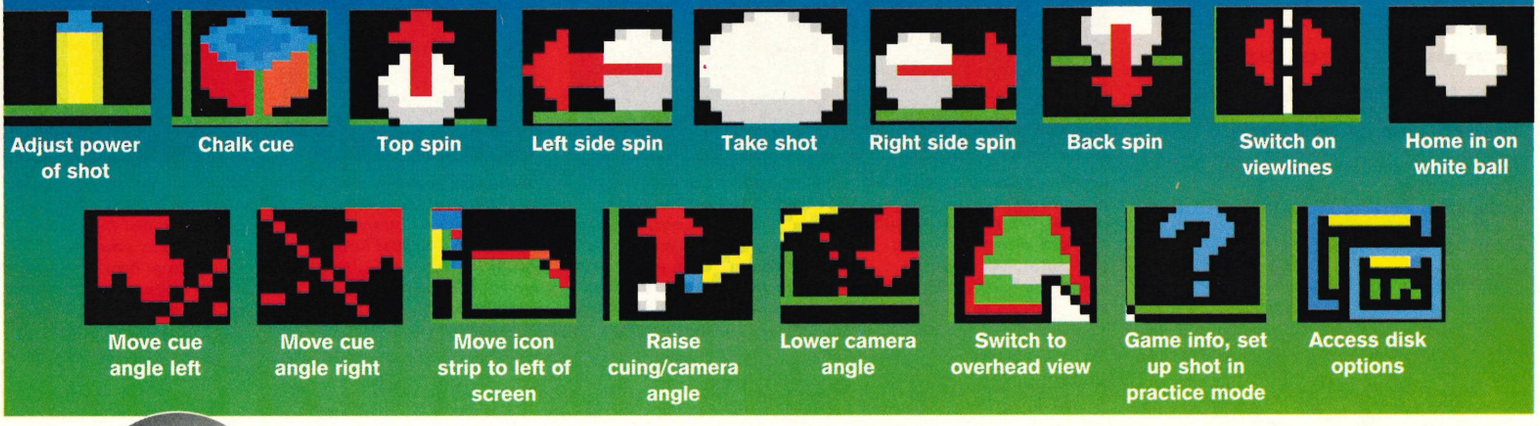
For each game, you can choose which minor rules you prefer to play, for example, whether there should be a D-line or headstring to play the white ball from, whether to nominate a pocket for the black, and how many balls should hit the cushions ('rails' in the US game) after a break. The one question that everyone seems to ask in real life: "Do two shots carry?", isn't addressed here (they do, invariably).

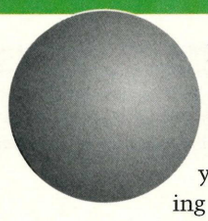
The difference between 'practice' games and 'match' games, apart from the high-score feature, is that in practice mode, you can 'undo' shots (just keep widening that angle until the darn thing finally drops), and you can also ask the computer to set up the shot with the best chance of making the pot for you.

This feature becomes an interesting exercise in itself, since you can play around with it for ages, selecting an obscure object ball, and watching the program go into all sorts of contortions to try to find a way of potting it. Sometimes, of course, it just beeps at you to say it can't do it.

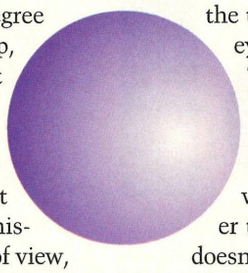
Since these options aren't available in match mode, and practice mode is for two human players only, it's a bit of a shame that you can't practise against the computer using 'undo' and 'set up shot', if only to see exactly how the program's viewlines translate when playing. Once you're familiar with the relation between the viewlines and the angles, your prowess at

## Those icons in full



Pool improves no end. This is exacerbated by the fact that you have complete control over the degree and direction of spin on the cue ball (top, back and side-spin), and *should* mean that you never suffer any of those embarrassing miscues. However, it's a perverse point in Pool's favour that you must chalk your cue before taking a shot with spin applied, and that the program won't guarantee that you won't miscue. Even better, from a presentational point of view, if the program decides you haven't used enough chalk, and you do miscue, the satisfying thwack of cue-tip on ball is replaced by an embarrassingly authentic-sounding clang.



Much is made by Pool's creators of the ability to camera-track the cue ball or object balls after you have played your shot. By clicking on the mouse immediately after you hit the object ball the screen display will whizz round following the cue ball (or object ball — other mouse button) as it rebounds off cushions and cannons into the other balls. This is all very impressive and you get the feeling that you're seeing something pretty technically clever here, but I'm going to sound a note of discord. This isn't actually the picture you want when you're playing pool. What you want to see is the overall effect of your shot. Have you potted the ball? Have you potted the white? Where, indeed, is the white ball going to end up? After a few sessions of watching the cue ball charge round the table in close-up, I stopped bothering with that, and hit the plan view icon instead, so that I could see what was happening on the full table.

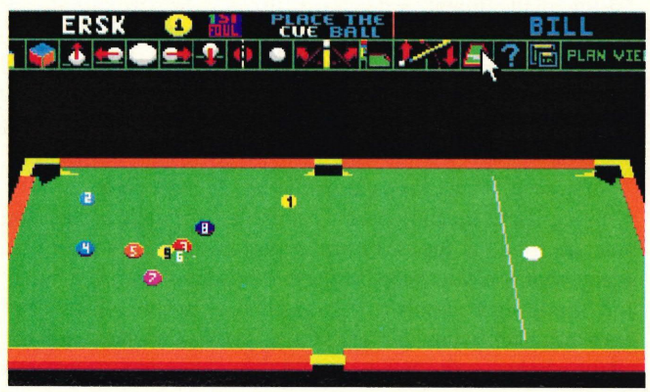
My only other query over the game is in the trick shot section, in which you can set up your own shots — and save them to disk, if you like. This offers invaluable practice for learning the angles and power settings, with unlimited 'undos' available. However, if you want to do real trick shots, then placing the balls very precisely is crucial, and *exact* placement of balls on the table isn't easy. You have to position the balls purely by eye on the table, without any helpful guidelines.

This is nit-picking, really. Pool is immensely accessible, a lot of fun, and challenging. The more you play against the computer opponents, the more you discover about which tactics will work work best with each. Finally, and as with so many games, playing against another human player takes the whole thing into another dimension — and it doesn't cost a pound a time to release the balls from the depths of the table.

There are two further things to be aware of before you decide whether to buy Archer Maclean's Pool. Firstly, if you already have Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker, remember that you're not getting anything different beyond the fact that it's pool, not snooker (though I grant that could be a substantial difference). Secondly, a 256-colour VGA version is underway, although it won't be out before Christmas, and if there is a criticism to be made about the graphics, it's that in 320 x 200 resolution and 16 colours, they can be a bit blocky at times.

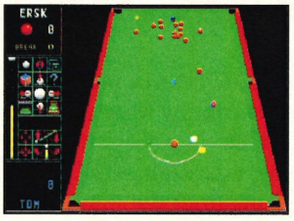
**■ Christina Erskine**

PCreview 8

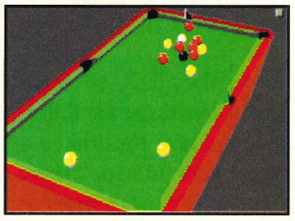



**In US 9-ball pool, each ball is numbered, and players must strike the balls in numerical order, starting with the lowest. First to pot the black (number nine) wins.**

### *Alternatively...*




***Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker***
***Virgin Games, £29.99***
***Rated 9, Issue 11***
*Pool's parent set a very high standard for its offspring to follow, and the difference between the two really boils down to which game you prefer to play for real. You play official snooker, against either a human player or one of four computer opponents, graded according to their skill level, or you can set up trick shots, similar to the trick shot mode in Pool.*



***Sharkey's 3D Pool Kixx, £9.99***
*At a third of the price of Archer Maclean's Pool, 3D Pool is quite a bargain. This has always been a very playable American pool game, with either 8-ball or 9-ball US pool rules. It has the added dimension in that you always play against the computer for money (the program keeps a tally). In terms of precision and authenticity, as well as some of the graphics, Archer Maclean's Pool has more than a slight edge.*

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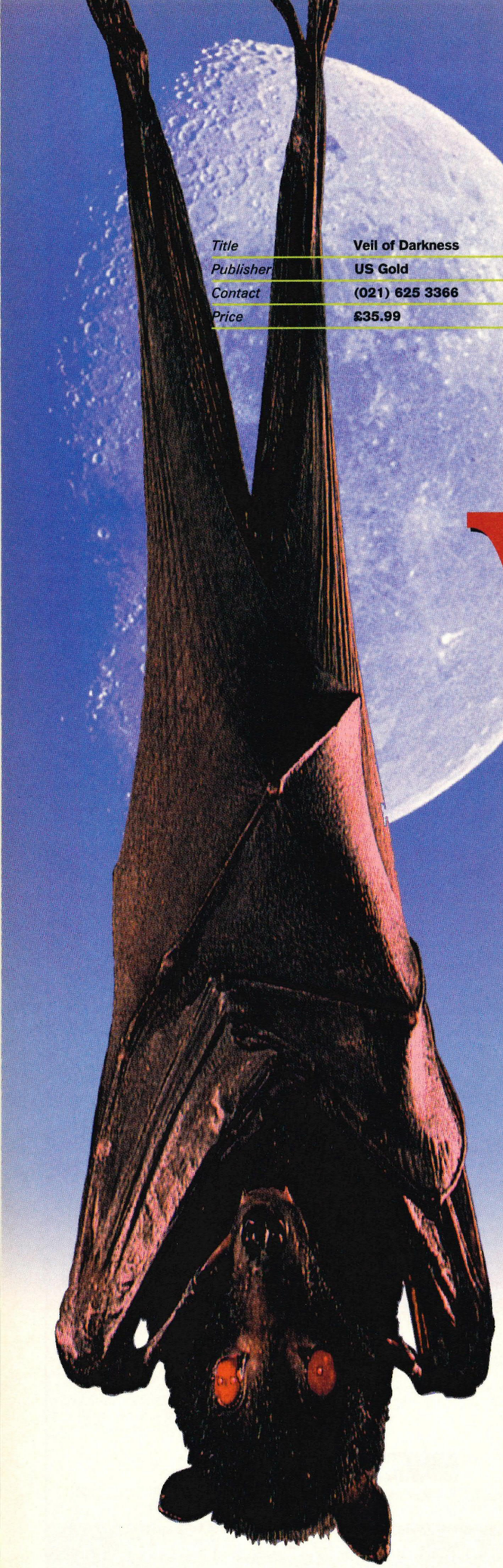
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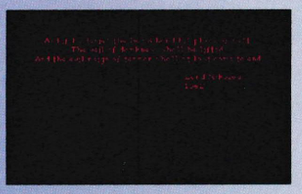
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| | |
|---|---|
| *Title* | **Veil of Darkness** |
| *Publisher* | **US Gold** |
| *Contact* | **(021) 625 3366** |
| *Price* | **£35.99** |

**Scalpels at the ready, it's time for some lab work. Nothing like tinkering with the evolutionary chain to get the creative adrenalin going. Doctor Frankenstein, I presume?**



*If you have a sound card you will hear this forbidding message read out in blood-curdling tones. If you haven't got a sound card you'll have to do the blood-curdling tones yourself!*

# Veil of

**The current media vogue for horror stories has reached the PC, and SSI would like to curdle your blood with a tale of mystery and combat set in deepest Transylvania**

Of all the stupid things a person could do, flying a clapped-out old propeller plane over the Carpathian mountains in the middle of the night during a thunder storm must rank as one of the most stupid.

I mean, when you do a thing like that you really shouldn't be surprised if some vampire bats burst out of the darkness, slam into your windscreen and send your plane plummeting out of the sky. It's the sort of thing that happens over the Carpathian mountains all the time.

And once you've crawled out of the wreckage, I'd say it's a fair bet that unknown hands will reach out to you through the gloom and take you away to a mysterious Transylvanian village where you will encounter animated skeletons, zombies, werewolves, banshees and even the Lord of the Undead himself.

In fact, I reckon that, in the circumstances, it is definitely on the cards that your arrival in a 'bird of steel' will have been predicated by an ancient prophecy which goes on to set out the various tasks you must perform before overcoming the Dark Lord and ending his reign of terror.

So you won't be at all surprised to discover that this is precisely what happens to you in Veil of Darkness. Maybe the only real surprise is that, when you come to your senses, you find yourself in a bedroom with a glamorous, raven-haired beauty who turns out to be called Dierdre. I can only presume they don't get Coronation Street in Transylvania!

### Flight or fight

As is the custom with this sort of game, Veil of Darkness sets the scene with a smoothly animated rolling intro. This shows the Dark Lord sending his bats



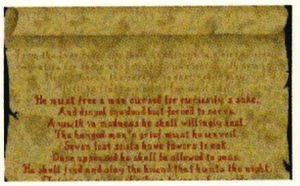
*The animated intro is impressive, one of the best things about this game. Here you are consulting the map that will eventually lead you towards danger, death and a dusky damsel called Deirdre.*



*Now we are into the game proper, the graphics take definite downturn. From now on, you guide the little hero around a 3D-ish village. The bottom panel shows the hero's possessions and status.*



*You can enter a series of cutaway houses and move from room to room by pointing with the mouse or using the cursor. In the time-honoured manner of heroes, doors are opened by kicking them.*



*Having solved the first puzzle, you come into possession of this scroll which prophesies that you will defeat the Dark Lord. It also, conveniently, gives you some handy clues to help you do just that.*



*To see how you are doing, you can expand the bottom 'character window' to see which items are now in your possession. Notice the little coffin. The figure starts to rot when your score goes down!*

# Darkness

into the air and the plane crash that ensues. If you have a sound card, the intro is dramatised by sound-effects, synthesised music and even some snatches of appropriately vampiric-sounding narration.

The trouble with this slick intro is that it promises a good deal more than the game eventually delivers. Once you start playing, you will find that everything (graphics, animation, sound-track and plot) is entirely average.

The interface is pretty much standard for a graphic adventure. Basically the action takes place in a map composed of 3D-effect rooms and exterior locations viewed from a slight elevation. Using a mouse or the keyboard, you move your character from room to room, picking up any useful looking items you happen to notice on the way.

Beneath the main display screen there is a horizontal window called the 'character screen'. This shows you the hero's current status — in other words his health and wealth. Your wealth increases as you collect treasures. Any items you've collected are stored on shelves in the character screen. You can also gather a variety of weapons and tools to assist you when fighting monsters or trying to solve various puzzles.

Fights are controlled by clicking on hand and arm icons in the character screen. Alternatively, you can pick up one of the objects in your inventory and then click on a hand icon to use it. This gives you the ability to throw darts or knives at people and perform other similar acts of mindless violence.

Your health is indicated, a bit pessimistically, by a little picture showing the hero lying in a coffin. When you are in the peak of condition your corpse is as fresh and spritely-looking as a corpse can reasonably hope to be. But if you take a bashing, the body starts decomposing from the feet upwards until there is nothing but a skeleton left. At that point, as you might expect, the game ends.

### Ham interacting

Most adventures pride themselves on the quality of their 'interactive characters'. Veil of Darkness is populated with loads of these. In theory, you are able to engage in more or less meaningful conversations with the characters. In practice, most of the time all that happens is that you click your mouse pointer over a character and up pops a speech bubble of totally uninteractive text.

Just to add a bit of variety, some speech bubbles also contain one or more 'key words' which are underlined in red. If you click on a key word, another bubble pops up with more information on that subject.

For instance, you go into the local bar and start chatting to the barkeeper, Seth. In the course of conversation, he boasts about his fine gold goblet. In the speech bubble, the word 'goblet' is underlined. Clicking on this word makes Seth tell you more about the goblet. Believe me, that guy must be one of the world's greatest a goblet-bores! There's just no stopping him.

Clicking on keys words doesn't really liven up conversations a great deal, however. It just spins it out a bit by demanding a few extra clicks to get through all



**Well, would you like to meet this character on a dark night? Veil of Darkness is populated with ghouls and long-leggedy beasties.**

**Techspec** **This game demands a minimum of a 286 PC and, since it doesn't rely on fast action, it works fairly well on relatively slow PCs — even a 16Mhz processor would be just about acceptable. Although you will need 564K of free 'conventional' memory on a PC with just 640K, you can actually get away with a lower figure if you have some expanded memory fitted. If you are using disk compression software, you should be aware that Veil of Darkness admits that it may not be compatible with Stacker, Super Stor or similar utilities.**

*Disk requirements*

| | |
|---|---|
| High density | ✓ |
| Hard disk only | ✓ |
| Space taken on hard disk | 8.5Mb |

*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 | 564K |

the available speech text. The keyword mechanism is also carried over to the menus for accessing game and disk options.

More interesting are the so-called 'hidden keywords'. These are words to which a character is able to respond even though the words themselves are not underlined. To work out which words will generate a response you have to use a bit of observation and a good deal of guesswork. If a character seems obsessive about a subject, it's worth trying to see if that subject can be used as a keyword.

For instance, during Seth's long and tedious ramblings about his blasted goblet, you notice that he often talks about using it to drink fine vintage wines. The word 'wine' is never underlined but even so you may suspect that the subject is important. So the next time you talk to Seth, you enter the word 'wine' from the keyboard. Seth now tells you that the best wine cellar in the valley is owned by Kirril — at this stage of the proceedings, you may not consider this a useful fact to know, but at least it stops him yammering on about goblets.

### Litter on the landscape

In every adventure game, the hero has to find and use a variety of objects such as treasures and weapons. In Veil of Darkness you collect an object by positioning the hero next to it and clicking the mouse button. Unfortunately, locating and recognising significant objects is by no means simple. As you move about the landscape you are shown literally hundreds of interesting-looking things on screen — everything from books and cupboards to candlesticks and skulls. But hardly any of these are available to be used, opened or taken.

Time and again I wanted do things such as looking under a rug, getting into a bed, moving a painting or taking a lamp. And time and again my attempts were frustrated. I'd move the hero to the object of interest, click the mouse button and all I'd get for my troubles would be the infuriating message, 'Nothing to take'. Why, I wonder, was so much effort put into filling every location with objects if you can't do anything with them?

Of course, every graphic adventure will show more objects on screen than can be used to good effect when solving the game. But there is so much graphic junk littering the landscape in Veil of Darkness that it's almost impossible to spot the few things of real interest when they finally appear.

Other adventures cope much better with this problem. Coktel Vision's games such as Fascination and Ween, for example, pop up the name of any important things whenever the mouse pointer passes over them.

Microprose's Rex Nebular and The Cosmic Gender Bender goes one step further — the available commands are context sensitive to the items beneath the mouse pointer. So if the pointer passes over a chair you will have the option to sit in it, whereas if it passes over a book you may choose to read it and so on. The Veil of Darkness interface is very crude by comparison. It makes it hard to find objects and doesn't let you do much with them once you've found them.

### Points of view

In addition to the fairly inflexible interface, the game also offers a curious mixture of styles. There are elements here of both the traditional type of exploring adventure and the more rigorous score-orientated style of role-playing games in which intangible values such as combat and 'encumbrance points' must be gained if you are to win.

Now, this is entirely a personal opinion, but I felt that this detracted from the purpose of the game rather than adding to it. For all I know, some people may welcome this blend of styles. Certainly the game's author thinks it's pretty neat



and says so in no uncertain terms in a 'Designer's Notes' section in the manual. To be fair, you can tailor the game to be either more or less role-playing orientated by selecting one of three combat modes. Playing at a high combat level makes Veil of Darkness more like a typical role-playing game. At a low combat level it's a bit more like a traditional adventure.

Obviously a lot of time and trouble has been taken to program this game and I just wish I was able to be more enthusiastic about it. Unfortunately, although it does what it does reasonably well, it doesn't do anything that hasn't already been done better.

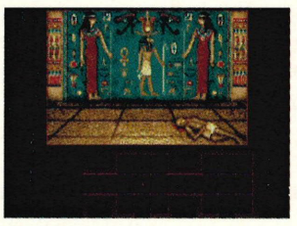
On the box it estimates the playing time at more 50 hours – that, of course, is if you're prepared to stick at it .

Veil of Darkness is an occasionally entertaining game with some graphics appeal. But there are many good graphic adventures available these days and this one simply doesn't stand out from the crowd.




**■ Huw Collingbourne**

## *Alternatively...*



***Waxworks***
***Accolade, £34.99***
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*Quite as good point-of-view adventure game with good graphics, smooth movement through 3D-effect scenery and mazes and lots and lots of blood and gore. The story unfolds in four locations — ancient Egypt, Victorian London, a modern graveyard and a 1940s mine. Good fun if you aren't squeamish.*



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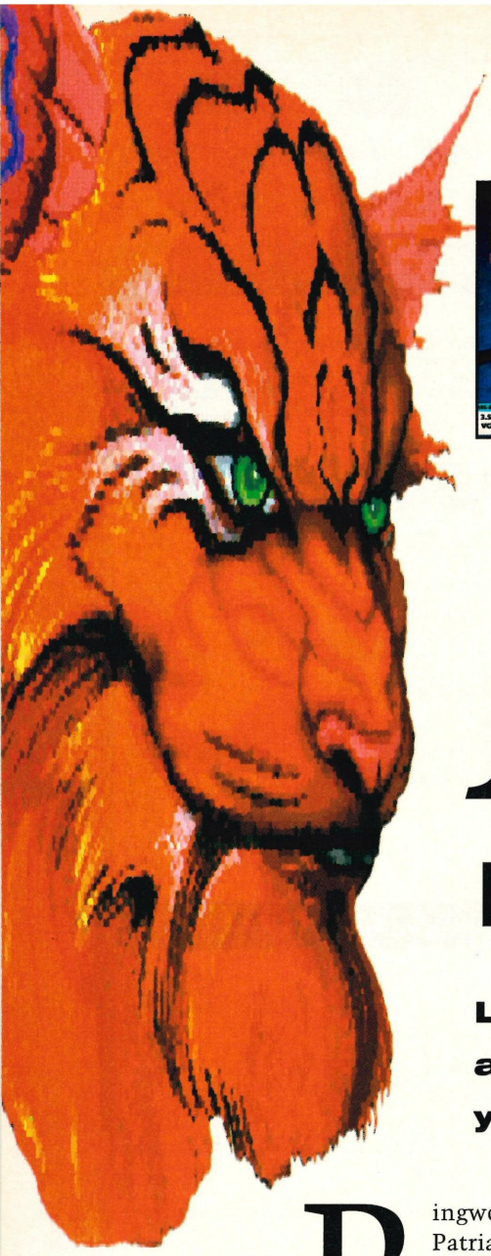
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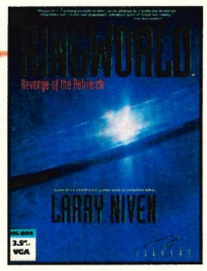
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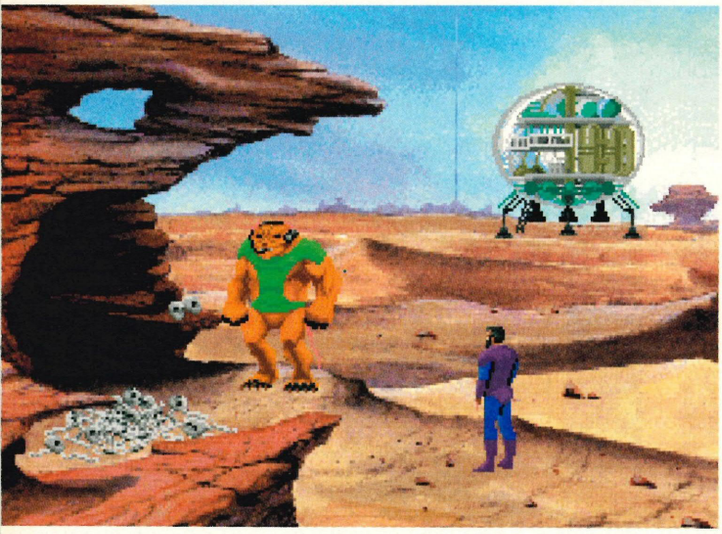

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| *Title* | **Ringworld: Revenge of the Patriarch** |
| *Publisher* | **Accolade/Tsunami** |
| *Contact* | **(081) 877 0880** |
| *Price* | **£39.99** |

# *Ringworld*

## Revenge of the Patriarch

**Locating strange artefacts, surviving alien sex rituals and avoiding assassins are just a few of the problems you must overcome if you want to save the Ringworld**

Ringworld: Revenge of the Patriarch is an interactive story game, set in Larry Niven's sinister vision of Known Space. Although the plot is linked with Niven's previous books, as far as I can see you don't need to have read them to have a fair chance of completing the game. That said, it helps to know that Kzin, for example, are large, orange-furred carnivores, who love a good fight.



*After obtaining the necessary artefact from the Shaman, it's onward to another planet and another scenario. This time Quinn has his Kzinti seeker with him for protection — but that pile of bones looks like an ominous sign.*

The opening screens — which bear more than a passing resemblance to those at the start of Wing Commander II — show the insane Kzinti Patriarch ordering his servant, Centurion Shachra, to perform a three-stage revenge mission.

Shachra's task is to kill a traitorous Kzinti family, destroy the alien Puppeteers' homeworld and commandeer a spaceship. Being Kzinti, Shachra doesn't need to be asked twice.

This is where you come in. Taking the role of Quinn — a 200 year old mercenary — you arrive at the Chmeee family home with a message for your friend Louis Wu. Your arrival coincides with that of Shachra, and you immediately become embroiled in a shoot-out.

If you survive the gun fight — and in Ringworld, it often pays to shoot first and ask questions later — you manage to steal a massive Kzinti spaceship and head off to your homeworld. Your bid for freedom is shortlived, however, as a rogue Puppeteer threatens to reveal your whereabouts to the Kzinti, unless you agree to travel to the Ringworld and locate several artefacts.

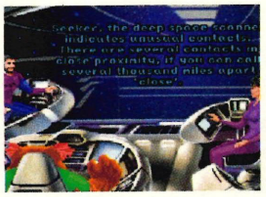
This provides you with several scenarios, which vary immensely in both gaming style and approach. For example, your first encounter is with a primitive race who believe you're their sun-god. To get to the artefact, you first have to get the chief of the tribe drunk, then sleep with his daughter as part of an ancient alien sex-ritual. Another adventure finds you trapped in the 'food pit' of a group of flesh-eaters, unable to fight because their natural body odour makes you dizzy.

Ringworld is a strange blend of narrative and gameplay, combining both adventure and role-playing game techniques with a liberal dose of story-telling to create a unique atmosphere.

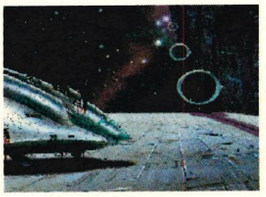
In true adventure style, you need to pick up and use specific items to get you out of certain situations. But unlike many adventures, the items you require link into the scenario logically. And in typical role-playing fashion, you have to converse with colleagues and adversaries. At certain stages of the game, adopting the right tone and response is crucial.

The story-telling element is something I haven't seen before. Ringworld is a game that runs on its own. After you've made a decision that determines a course of action, your character sets off under his own steam and performs these actions at his own pace, talking to other

**A place the size of the Ringworld will take more than a couple of minutes to explore. It would be no easy task at the best of times, and especially not when the Kzinti are breathing down your neck.**



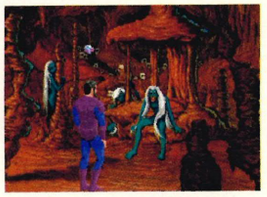

*After making off with the Kzinti spaceship, Quinn and his associates discuss where to begin their long search for the first of the artefacts.*



*The ring that gives Ringworld its name is massive in the extreme. It can hold all kinds of secrets, especially those lying in derelict spaceships.*



*The Shaman is caught in the act of meditating, and that empty door at the back looks ripe for some useful, not to say profitable, exploration ...*



*Captured by the flesh-eaters, their leader doesn't seem that friendly. A pity really, as one artefact Quinn seeks is at the top left-hand part of the screen.*

## Techspec

***Although the publisher says that a 386SX running at 16Mhz is the minimum needed to run Ringworld, we'd recommend a faster 386, otherwise you'll spend a lot of your time looking at a blank screen. The first Ringworld novel is also included with the package.***

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| *Soundboards* | | | | | | |
| | Ad Lib | ✓ | Roland | ✓ | Sound Blaster | ✓ |
| *Control* | | | | | | |
| | Mouse | ✓ | Keyboard | ✗ | Joy-stick | ✗ |
| *Performance* | | | | | | |
| | Optimum speed | 16Mhz | | | | |
| | Minimum memory | 640K | | | | |
| | Free RAM required | 590K | | | | |

people and various minor non-playing characters. This means you can be left watching the screen for up to 15 minutes, without having to lift a finger. This isn't necessarily a criticism, since, although watching a game, rather than playing it, can often be irritating, I found it absorbing in this case.

The combined effect of all three elements is like reading a book and then watching the storyline unfold, but with the added bonus that you make all the important decisions and solve all the problems as they arise. This also means that menial tasks — like driving the spaceship — can be left to the characters, while you sit back and absorb the information. As this is obtained from a variety of sources, I found that the only way to survive was by making copious notes and relying religiously on the spaceships' computer database.

The on-screen action comes thick and fast and is helped by a quick game system. The right mouse button accesses the action menu, with six icons for walking, looking, touching, talking, inventory and Tsunami (utilities).

Interacting with non-playing characters is vital to the game. There are two ways to do this. The first is automatically dealt with on the main adventure screen, and this is where most of the idle chit-chat takes place. However, when the subject is important, the screen changes to a large close up of each speaker's face.

Graphically, Ringworld is very impressive, particularly the face-to-face situations. The characters move about the screen with a surprising fluidity, although the scrolling between screens is quite slow. Each screen also has its own soundtrack, which adds to atmosphere considerably, with eerie organ music when you investigate dark, dank dungeons and upbeat rock to carry you through space.

Another factor in Ringworld's favour is that it's very much a 'play-and-discover' game. The rulebook is deliberately kept vague, forcing you to rely on the interactive aspect to progress through the game.

On the negative side, I found that my copy of the game crashed at random intervals, about once every 15 times I played.

All things considered, the good in Ringworld vastly outweighs the bad. It has a great interactive story with many sub-plots and good adventure-style problems. If you are the kind of gamer that 'feels' for your computerised characters, then Ringworld is well worth a look.

**■ Wayne Legg**

PCreview 6

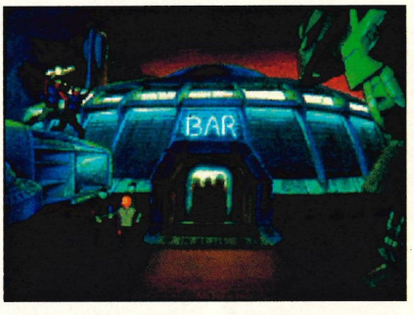


**Entering the Flesh-eaters throne room enables Quinn to pick up the next artefact — the next problem is to find a way out and free Seeker.**

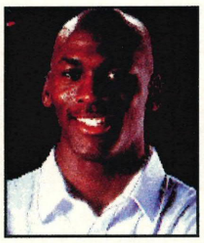
## *Alternatively...*




***Bat II***
***Ubisoft, £34.99***
***Rated 7, Issue 15***
*Set in the grimy SF future of films like Bladerunner, BAT II is an interactive adventure which requires immense dedication to finish. Puzzles and problems abound and most of them are solvable if you talk to the right people. The graphics are nice and feature unique game screens that open out on each other like a collapsable telescope. The main problem is that you have to talk to hundreds of people to get the information you require.*

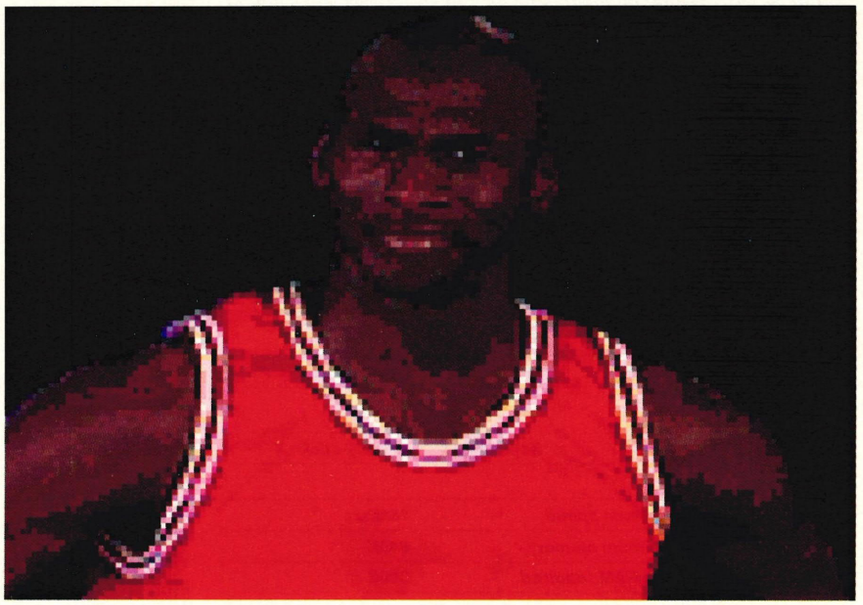



***Space Quest IV: Roger Wilco and the Time Rippers***
***Sierra, £34.99***
*The most combat-experienced janitor in the galaxy returns to stop his nemesis taking over the universe. Roger visits past Space Quest games in an attempt to foil his opponents plans. Excellent graphics — it's the first Sierra game to use scrolling screens — and wonderful digitised sound effects plus a fantastic sound track. See also the review of Space Quest 5 on page 48 for the latest antics of Roger Wilco et al.*



| | |
|---|---|
| *Title* | **Jordan In Flight** |
| *Publisher* | **Electronic Arts** |
| *Contact* | **(0753) 549442** |
| *Price* | **£39.99** |

**Just like the real thing, Jordan In Flight needs patience. And remember, this is Michael Jordan you're playing as — it's no good just plodding up and down the court potting unimaginative baskets, you've gotta show a bit of style.**



# JORDAN

I don't know about you, but I could handle waking up and discovering that I was Michael Jordan. If, like me, you've discovered the breathtaking NBA basketball, you'll know that the man is possibly the most complete basketball player ever. With Jordan In Flight, Electronic Arts offers you the chance to "get to be Michael Jordan, and jam in the face of a 7-footer and hear him grunt as you drive your knees into his chest ..."

But how does Jordan translate to the PC? I've seen him do things on a *real* basketball court that look physically impossible. And, given that team sports haven't had the best of success crossing to the PC, I'd happily put a tenner on the failure of any attempt to recreate playable top-flight basketball. However, EA has pulled out all the stops with Jordan In Flight, and done just that.

JIF is demanding all-round — a 33MHz 486 with 4Mb of RAM is recommended — and you'll have to work hard at mastering it. It's also one of the fastest, most frenetic and enjoyable games I've come across.

Sensibly, the attempt at basketball simulation hasn't followed the format of the real game exactly. You play JIF in half the court, with two teams of three men shooting for the same basket, and some additional rules.

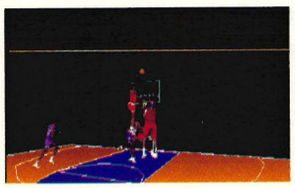
Boot the game up for the first time and, typically, you get to choose sound cards, joystick or mouse. Ron Barr, presumably the American equivalent of Des Lynam, welcomes you and introduces the game. Then it's time to pick your team after a careful look at the opposition. You need three players plus a sub from a pool of 27 players, each with their own character, strengths and weaknesses.

All this stuff is daunting at first, but really adds to the game once you've got to grips with it. It's definitely a good plan to read the manual cover to cover (a large scotch will help with the basketball jargon), start off on the easiest level and pause to reread the manual when things aren't going to plan.

This is a game that will get to everyone, not just basketball addicts, even if, like me, you're not the world's greatest sporting hero. And when you do, the game's niceties really grab you by the whatsits.



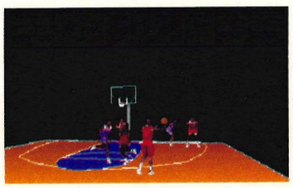

**The genial Ron Barr introduces you to the tournament, which involves several sides, league tables and so on. Shame about the spelling mistake on his autocue — it's a good job he's a real pro...**



*The ball bounces off the rim, a messy goalmouth scramble ensues and big Floyd Hicks from Wilmington, Jordan's team, comes away with the ball after a mighty leap.*



*A good steal, and it's back out to the halfway line. Now's the time to chose the attacking play, and see if he can really make those missed three points count.*



*Jordan advances and passes the ball to Leon Burrell on the right, having spotted that Burrell has done a nice job of occupying one of the defenders.*



*Jordan makes a scything run into the keyhole, calling for the ball from Leon, who's been pressured into the corner. A well timed pass, leaves a clear run to the basket.*



*Style, remember? Jordan twists round underneath the basket, enabling him to jump up and deposit the ball backwards into the basketover his shoulder. Flash, huh?*

# *in Flight*

**Basketball may be bigger in the States, but if Jordan In Flight plays as good as it looks, we could soon all be slam-dunking.**

There are two ways to play it, either with Tracking on, so you control the player nearest to the ball and direct passes (joystick trigger) and shots (joystick button) to other players, or with Tracking off, when you just control Michael Jordan. With the tracking off, you have to manoeuvre yourself into space when you're not on the ball, make sure there aren't any opponents between you and the man on the ball and hit the trigger; the ball will then be passed to you.

Attacking the basket and choosing the right play are fairly straightforward. At first, I found defence impossible, especially controlling just Jordan, but I've now mastered it — not as well as I'd like, but you have to be pretty tasty and put in a lot of practice before you become a JIF star. This is definitely a game that lasts.

It's a game of many angles — literally. You can control the camera angle (it moves around with you, anyway), record and play back pleasing sequences, and there are many other impressive touches. After a particular piece of cack-handedness, Jordan might appear, shake his head and say, "What a brick, " with a knowing smirk, or a well-crafted play might elicit, "Way to take it to the hole!"

Sound is adequate, if not brilliant. The annoying tinkly music switches off when you start a game, and is replaced by a pretty realistic representation of the sounds you hear on a basketball court. The cheering and booing (when you make a foul) are a bit weak, but even so, once I'd run it through my trusty Soundblaster to the hi-fi, I really felt like I was *there* on court. This is the essence of Jordan In Flight — it's so fast, realistic and involved that you quickly develop a lasting addiction.

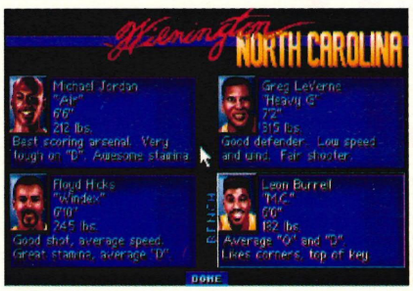
To achieve this realism, the authors filmed Jordan performing all his moves, without the ball, simultaneously from eight angles. These images were then digitised and flight-simulation algorithms applied to them. The fact that so many camera angles were used means that the players look truly 3D, and the practice certainly matches the theory.

When you start fiddling around with the program's built-in sequence editor, you still can't find any flaws in the three-dimensionality and the true-to-life movement of the players. The only things I can find against Jordan In Flight are the somewhat excessive hardware demands and the fact that it's only a one-player game. I'd love to take on all-comers in a two-player game, and I don't reckon that a head to head version of Jordan In Flight would be unmanageable.

It reminded me of a particularly upmarket version of those arcade soccer games, only faster, more visually exciting, controllable and satisfying — this is the closest *I'll* ever get to serious basketball.

If you think all this sounds appealing, buy it; I'm just off to see if I can get my man Floyd Hicks to recreate that glorious three-pointer. Way to go, bro!

**■ Steve Boxer**

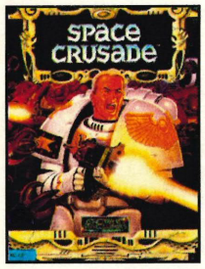



**Time to choose your players. The man on the bench can be brought on at any time by calling a timeout. If your players tire, they tend to stand around with their hands on their knees looking knackered, so you can usually spot them.**

**Tech*spec*** **It'll run on a 16MHz 386SX with 2Mb of carefully configured RAM,but a sensible minimum must be a 486SX/25 with 4Mb of RAM. It's quite easy on hard disk space, though, taking up just 2.8Mb of mine (3.5Mb is the absolute maximum). It operates perfectly instandard VGA, although there are 256-colour drivers for "the most popular graphics cards" — not, in fact, a very convincing list. Sound card support is OK, but you don't get some of the effects and Jordan's little interjections on anything but a Sound Blaster or a Pro Audio Spectrum, which is a bit disappointing.**

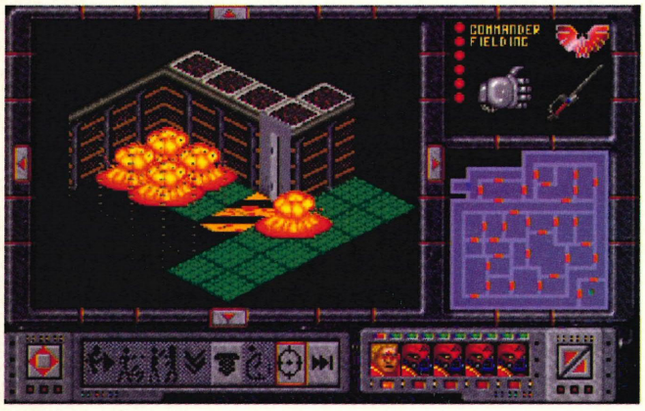
| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Disk requirements* | | | | | | |
| | ***High density*** | | | | | ✓ |
| | ***Hard disk only*** | | | | | ✓ |
| | ***Space taken on hard disk*** | | | | | ***3.5Mb*** |
| *Graphic modes* | | | | | | |
| | ***CGA*** | ✓ | ***EGA*** | ✓ | ***VGA*** | ✓ |
| *Soundboards* | | | | | | |
| | ***Ad Lib*** | ✓ | ***Roland*** | ✓ | ***SoundBlaster*** | ✓ |
| *Control* | | | | | | |
| | ***Joystick*** | ✓ | ***Keyboard*** | ✗ | ***Mouse*** | ✓ |
| *Performance* | | | | | | |
| | ***Optimum speed*** | | ***33MHz*** | | | |
| | ***Minimum memory*** | | ***2Mb*** | | | |
| | ***Free RAM required*** | | ***584K*** | | | |

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| | |
|---|---|
| *Title* | **Space Crusade** |
| *Publisher* | **Gremlin** |
| *Contact* | **(0742) 753423** |
| *Price* | **£34.99** |

**A group of derelict starships has been infested by aliens. Space marines — the most effective fighting force in the galaxy — have been assigned twelve vital missions in the fight against the invaders.**




**Space marines and alien hordes do battle in Gremlin's second conversion of the role-playing board game**

# Space Crusade

Board game conversions pose plenty of problems for programmers. It's often the case that what the computer version gains in instant implementation of the rules and the ability to play alone, it loses in atmosphere and social interaction. The problem lies in how closely you stick to the original: simply transferring the rules can lead to a slow-moving, uninspiring and finally uninteresting game.

These were the basic faults with Gremlin's first conversion of an MB/Games Workshop RPG, HeroQuest, and the situation hasn't improved much for Space Crusade. The rules have been accurately transferred, the computer does all the hard calculation work, and virtually all the original's elements have been included — but because of the game design, Space Crusade's atmosphere and long-term appeal are open to question.

The aim, reinforced by a brief historical scenario in the manual, is simple enough: aliens have infiltrated a group of derelict spacecraft in deep space, and up to three players have a chance to engage in a dozen missions against them. Each mission is different, varying in difficulty from a straightforward search and annihilate campaign against an alien dreadnought, to the destruction of the 'cube of chaos' — a device which could unleash terror on the entire universe. Personal ambitions also include the accumulation of points and promotion.

Once the game has loaded you're given three basic choices: select a mission, select a chapter (a team of marines) and play the game. The mission difficulty level is rather nicely graded, although the initial sorties are a little too easy if three people happen to be playing.

Selecting a chapter gives you three options: the Blood Angels, the Imperial Fists and the Ultra Marines. There's little practical difference between the three, but you can fiddle about with their weaponry. This is one of the more interesting aspects of the game because a range of weapons can be tailored to suit your playing style. If you're entering a ship full of small rooms and narrow corridors you're better off with plasma guns and hand-to-hand weapons; if you have a lot of powerful aliens to defeat or large groups of weaker enemies, missile launchers are more suitable.

You've selected a mission and chosen a chapter to complete it — now you're ready for action. All the space hulk battlegrounds are presented in 2D 'overhead' mode, which switches to a 3D display when combat takes place. I soon found myself disabling this 3D mode, since it contributes little to the atmosphere and is more distracting than useful.

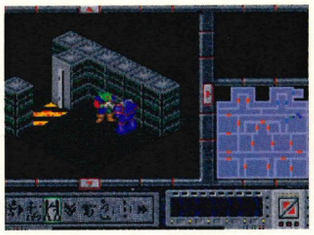
As you'd expect from a conversion of a moderately sophisticated role-playing game, the rules list is extensive. Anyone who's played the board game will be pleased to know that the entire rules system has been transferred, with few modifications. Play is a series of 'turns', during which each team member may make a move and/or perform an action. Once the marines' turn is over, the alien, controlled by the computer, makes decisions of its own.

The major advantage of having the computer as your opponent is, of course, that you can play on your own. You also don't have to bother with calculating line-of-sight (you can't hit an alien unless you can actually 'see' it), and you don't have to worry about hit-points. Personally, I think removing this element of physical interaction with the game softens its impact. There are no dice to roll, you can't have disputes over line-of-sight with fellow-players, and — above all — you don't get all the cheap and cheerful extras you had with the board game. Here you have a mouse and a computer screen; with the original you had miniature play-

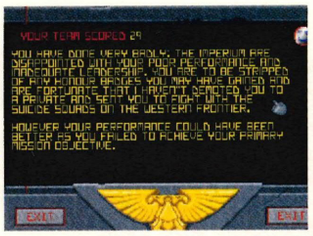
## Two Minutes *of alien encounters*



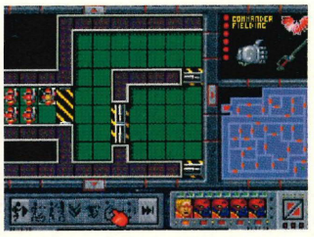
*Your first task is to choose a mission and a chapter (group of space marines) to complete it. There are a dozen missions in all, and although they're arranged according to difficulty you can attempt them in any order you wish.*



*Next, it's time to select your chapter. There are three to choose from, allowing up to three people to play against the computer. Each has its own style, weapons and objectives, but the ultimate aim for all is promotion.*




*A preliminary exploration of the surrounding area shows little of immediate concern. However, scans reveal the presence of three alien objects — those small blips at the foot of the screen — and they could just be heading this way.*



*Fail to finish a mission with adequate points and you could be stripped of all honours gained so far. Running away is sometimes the only available option, however — unless you don't mind sacrificing your life for the cause.*

**Techspec** ***You can risk your life using two floppy disks or a hard disk, but installing the game makes life much easier. For arcade-quality scrolling, movement and control you're better off with 20MHz or faster, because at around 12MHz there are some major hassles. There's little difference between VGA and EGA graphics. The sound effects didn't work using AdLib on an Amstrad, but were fine using Sound Blaster; the music is much better anyway. The mouse is by far the best control method — joystick response was sluggish and keys awkward to use.***

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Disk requirements* | | | | | | |
| | High density | | | | ✗ | |
| | Hard disk only | | | | ✗ | |
| | Space taken on hard disk | | | | 1Mb | |
| *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 | | | | 530K | |

ers, walls and doors, cards, rank badges, tokens, reference charts, scanners, reinforcements, and so on.

Tension is generated by scanning the surrounding area for aliens, combat is always an uncertain affair and actually finding what you're looking for in the mission involves a lot of nerve-wracking exploration. However, innovative features such as a map, several methods for scrolling the screen and the 3D display are initially impressive but ultimately flawed.

Space Crusade as it stands is a poor cousin to the board game, and so much more could have been done to bring it up to scratch. For example, abandoning the overhead view in favour of a Dungeon Master-style, first-person 3D approach and a more detailed map would have been just one way to generate more atmosphere. A system of sub-screens packed with intensive information and gadgets, rather than the single screen with limited visual appeal, would have given greater scope for strategy and presentation enhancements. A mission editor with variable goals and difficulty settings would have provided greater long-term interest than the twelve missions here alone.

The graphics and sound could have been better, too. The overall look captures a little of the board game's impressive artwork, but the animation is poor: characters move stiffly, square-by-square, in 2D mode, and the animation in 3D mode doesn't allow them to shoot in eight directions. Unfortunately, the sound also lacks bite, with weak, 'tinny' effects emphasising the game's general lack of atmosphere. The weird music, on the other hand, is worth listening to.

Space Crusade is by no means terrible, but you can't help feeling that much more ought to have been done to transform it into a powerful, innovative strategy RPG. If you're not playing alone then you're much better off buying the board game and enjoying a good laugh; if you are playing alone you don't get any of the social advantages that make role-playing enjoyable, you don't get any gadgets to play around with, and you face mission after mission of dry, tactical exchanges using an awkward control system.

Two more things. One: if you liked the way HeroQuest was converted you'll like this; if you didn't you won't. Two: Space Crusade isn't an awful game — but it is, ultimately, a tedious one.

**■ Gordon Houghton**

PCreview **4**

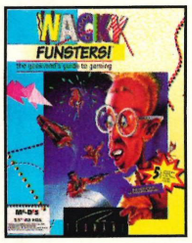
## *Alternatively...*



***Hero Quest***
***Gremlin, £29.99***
***Rated 5, Issue 4***
***The team that brings you Space Crusade also brought you HeroQuest. All the board game's missions are included, the graphics are accurate and the rules are spot-on, but the major drawback is that you never quite feel involved in the action. Its colourful appearance and simple role-playing rules are well suited to nine to 14-year-olds, but if you're older you'll probably want a more interesting challenge.***

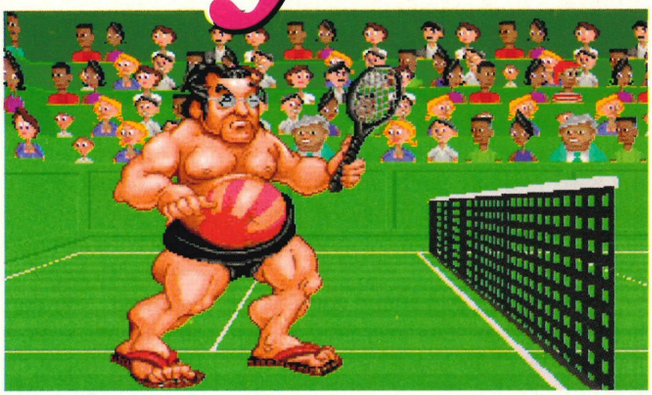


***Space Crusade***
***Milton/Games Workshop, £26.99***
***For £8 less you can have more fun with the original board game. The computer conversion is accurate, but anyone who's keen on the social side of RPGs will recognise the superiority of the original. The number of missions in both is the same, but the board game allows you to assemble and handle dozens of finely-sculpted miniature playing pieces, knock over your opponents' teams when you're angry, and wreck the board when you're losing.***




# Wacky funsters

| | |
|---|---|
| *Title* | **Wacky Funsters** |
| *Publisher* | **Tsunami / Accolade** |
| *Contact* | **(081) 877 0880** |
| *Price* | **£19.99** |



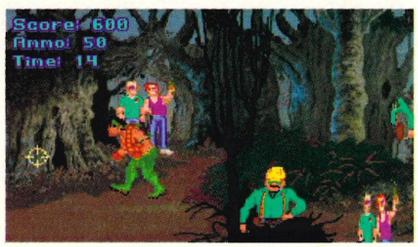
**Selecting Ping, you meet your first opponent a Sumo wrestler.**

The Accolade/Tsunami partnership got off to an impressive start with Ringworld, an excellent adventure game (see page 80). Unfortunately, Wacky Funsters fails to reach the same heights, and not by a small margin, either.

Funsters consists of five different arcade games; Ping, Steroids, Rambi vs Blambo, Big Guys with Muscles and Roadkill, weakly linked by a central plot. King Wacky III's kingdom is under threat from Duke Wayningdon, who stole all Wacky's game designs and then put a curse on him. The only way the curse can be lifted is if all five games are completed in one sitting.

PCreview 1

The first game, Steroids, is absolutely appalling. The aim is to manoeuvre a miniature body-builder around the screen, punching mutated steroid crystals in the process. If the crystals touch any part of his body apart from his fists, he expands until he explodes, although touching some molecules makes him smaller again. Steroids is little more than a full-colour, 3D version of the arcade classic, Asteroids, but it's not nearly as playable or entertaining.




**A typical scene from Rambi vs Blambo. Here Blambo is about to receive a .45 in the head from Rambi.**

On the subject of old games, Ping is simply a slightly modified version of the old table-tennis console game. The aim is to beat three opponents – a sumo, a robot and a young German girl — at tennis by moving your bat up and down the right-hand side of the screen. Anyone who has spent half an hour playing Arkanoid will finish this easily. I managed to complete it at my first attempt in 10 minutes.

Big Guys with Muscles is a wretched excuse for a combat game. You control a spotty youth against a slob, a body-builder and a teacher, and by using two punches in combination with moving and ducking, you have to knock them down three times each to win. All you have to do to win is keep one key depressed, move forward until you have your opponent up against the edge of the screen and then they fall over when you hit them.

And it gets worse. Roadkill is a truly dreadful road-racing game, where you accumulate points for running over animals and shooting bad guys. You can change lanes to avoid obstacles, but the game runs so slowly that you'd have to have the reactions of a corpse to collide with anything.

The final game, Rambi vs Blambo, is the worst of the bunch. Taking the part of Rambi or Blambo, you must kill either animals or hunters, depending on what side you're on. I confess I didn't finish this game because my gun, entirely of its own initiative, fired at random intervals when I didn't want it to, and then didn't fire when I had a creature lined up in my sights.

The only favourable aspects of Wacky Funsters are the music, and some of the graphics. That aside, it lacks everything a good game should have: atmosphere, depth, challenge, originality, design and pace. I didn't find evidence of any humour, wacky or otherwise, but what I did notice was the games, and some comments between them, were moronic to the extreme. Wacky Funsters is badly designed and ill-conceived. Avoid at all costs.

**■ Wayne Legg**

## Techspec

**Wacky Funsters comes on three high density disks. If the animation is running very slowly, or you get a "Fatal Error" message, you don't have the required 545K bytes free — booting up from a floppy disk gets around this problem.**

*Disk requirements*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***High density*** | | | ✓ |
| ***Hard disk only*** | | | ✓ |
| ***Space taken on hard disk*** | | | ***4.5Mb*** |

*Graphic modes*

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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*Control*

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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| | |
|---|---|
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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 MHz | 25 MHz | 31 MHz | 47 MHz | 51 MHz | 66 MHz | 54 MHz | 67 MHz | 84 MHz | 92 MHz |




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- *Ergonomic 102-Key PS/2 Type Keyboard*
- *Dimensions - 325mm (w) x 78mm (h) x 292mm (d)*
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- *Software - Windows 3.1 & MS-DOS v5.0 (pre-installed) + Amstrad Desktop Graphical Interface + Interactive Tutor, Mindscape PC Games Pack: Wing Commander "Special Edition", Life & Death II "The Brain", Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing, Hooray For Henrietta and Henrietta's Book Of Spells*
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**Vote for your favourite PC games of the last 12 months**

**The Golden Joystick Awards, now in their eleventh glorious year, are the most highly regarded in the computer games industry for one simple reason — they are voted for by you, rather than trade representatives or judging panels.**

**The Golden Joystick Awards are organised by EMAP Images, publisher of PC Review, among other computer entertainment magazines. Where the various gongs eventually end up is decided by the votes from readers of all magazines published by the company.**

## THE NOMINATIONS

### Game of the Year

Alone in the Dark *Infogrames*
Civilization *MicroProse*
David Leadbetter's Golf *MicroProse*
Falcon 3.0 *Spectrum Holobyte*
Formula One Grand Prix *MicroProse*
Harrier AV8B Assault *Domark*
Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis *LucasArts/US Gold*
Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker *Virgin Games*
LeChuck's Revenge: Secret of Monkey Island 2 *LucasArts/US Gold*
Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes *Electronic Arts*
Ultima Underworld *Origin*

### Software house of the Year

Domark
Electronic Arts
Infogrames
LucasArts
Maxis
MicroProse
Origin Systems
Sierra Online
SSI
Virgin Games

### Best computer simulation

Car & Driver *Electronic Arts*
David Leadbetter's Golf *MicroProse*
Falcon 3.0 *Spectrum Holobyte*
Formula One Grand Prix *MicroProse*
Great Naval Battles *SSI/US Gold*
Harrier AV8B Assault *Domark*
Harrier Jump Jet *MicroProse*
Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker *Virgin Games*
Reach for the Skies *Virgin Games*
Shuttle *Virgin Games*

### Best original computer game

A-Train *Maxis*
Alone in the Dark *Infogrames*
Civilization *MicroProse*
Cruise for a Corpse *Delphine/US Gold*
Dagger of Amon Ra: Laura Bow 2 *Sierra Online*
Legend of Kyrandia *Westwood/Virgin Games*
Legends of Valour *US Gold*
Lure of the Temptress *Revolution/Virgin Games*
Populous 2 *Bullfrog/Electronic Arts*
Ultima Underworld *Origin*

## How to vote

**Below you'll see listed a shortlist of nominations of games released in the last year in the relevant categories, and we'd like you to vote for one title in each category (you can omit a category if don't have any particular preference), using the form at the bottom of the page. Please send in your votes — we're biased here at PC Review and we'd really like to see PC games sweep the board this year! The closing date for entries is May 15, 1993, and we cannot count any forms that arrive after that date towards the final results.**

## Win free software!

Just to give you even more of an incentive to vote, all Golden Joystick entries will be put into a grand draw, from which one form will be picked to win £500 worth of free software.

### The Golden Joystick Awards 1993

Fill in your votes from the shortlist for the categories listed below. You can use a photocopy of the form if you don't wish to spoil the magazine, but, please, only one entry per person. Remember that the closing date is May 15, 1993.

### The Awards

Best computer simulation 1992.....
Best original computer game 1992.....
Software house of the Year 1992 .....

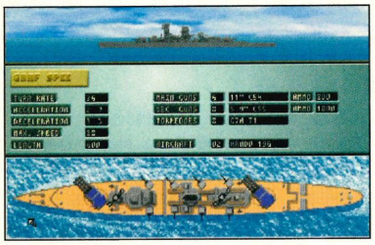
Game of the Year 1992.....

**Name**.....
**Address**.....
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.....
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**The Golden Joysticks — the awards voted for entirely by readers**
**PC Review May 1993**

# Reviews extra

## *The games that got away*



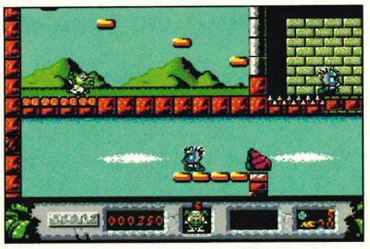
From Great Naval Battles ...



... to America in the Atlantic



DJ Puff, from bad...



... to worse

**So many games clamouring for attention, so little space. We'd like to cover every release in detail, but it's just not possible, so the reviews round-up is the next best thing for the best of the rest.**

Let's start with the immoral majority, and a game that ought to appeal to budding gamblers — Casino Master from Inspiration Technology (£31.95). Anything that comes with a game called Crapsmaster has to be worth a peek.

The layout is simple in the extreme, and graphically isn't anything to write home about. You have the option to play five different games — namely Blackjack, Poker, Roulette, Baccarat and of, of course, Craps.

What the chips are down, as you'd expect, it's all about betting against the computer's skill, and a bit of Lady Luck as well. You're kept well informed of all the important details (mostly how much money you have left) and the game flows smoothly enough, without long gaps or delays.

If you fancy a flutter, but can't face a trip down to the bookies, then Casino Master is a fair way to pitt your wits against computerised odds without even the danger of losing your shirt.

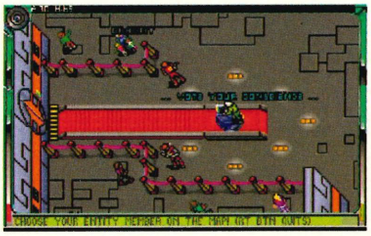
If Casino Master involves as little frantic movement as possible, a good platform games has to be the complete opposite. First out of the starting blocks is Ocean, with Lethal Weapon. The game apparently com-

## Reviewed this issue

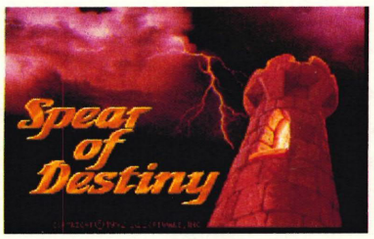

| | |
|---|---|
| Archer Maclean's Pool | 8 |
| Legacy | 8 |
| Lemmings 2 — The Tribes | 8 |
| X-Wing | 8 |
| Jordan In Flight | 7 |
| Shadow Of The Comet | 7 |
| Space Quest 5 | 7 |
| Veil Of Darkness | 6 |
| Ringworld | 6 |
| Space Crusade | 4 |
| Wacky Funsters | 1 |



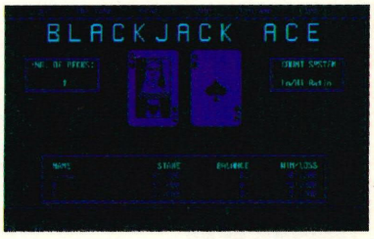
Storm Master



Tegel's Mercs




Spear of Destiny




Casino Master

bines parts of all three Lethal Weapon movies — although it's difficult to tell which parts. It gets off to a bit of a false start, with very standard platform stuff, broken up into several different stages and levels. The only out of the ordinary thing it has to offer is a miniature character with longer than average hair, if you chose to play Riggs rather than his sidekick.

The graphics, although basic, are fairly pleasing and the scrolling is quite smooth. Lethal Weapon will appeal to fans of the film, and it's a passable enough platform game, but that's about as far as its goes.

Lethal Weapon may be decidedly average as platform games go, but the rather uniquely titled DJ Puff (Codemasters, £9.99) can't even claim that dubious distinction.

Fair enough, it's a budget game, but there's little that this can offer that can't be bettered byany halfway decent shareware series, such as Commander Keen and Captain Comic. The graphics are crude and the scrolling is jumpy on the numerous and repetitive levels. Add to this a storyline about a dragon trying to rescue his CD collection from an evil dictator, and you get a well below average game.

If they met in a dark alley, both Commander Keen and Captain Comic would probably make short work of DJ Puff. Duke Nukem would eat him alive.

On the subject of shareware, Psygnosis, of all people, has released the sequel to Wolfenstein 3D, one of the best shareware games ever to hit the PC. The new adventure is called Spear of Destiny, and has the fast and furious pace of Wolfenstein, the same high-speed panning viewpoint, and a similar love for gratuitous mayhem.

As a shareware game, it would stand pretty much head and shoulders above the rest, but how it will fare as a commercial release is difficult to say. Although there's plenty of entertaiment value, the graphics maintain that shareware look, the storyline is simplistic in the extreme and it just doesn't compare with the sophistication of the latest action-based graphic adventures.

Mindcraft's role playing adventure game, Tegel's Mercenaries (£39.99), looks more promising, but also fails to deliver in the long run.

You are sent on a variety of missions and have to select six mercenaries most suited to the task, each with his or her own statistics and credentials. The missions vary considerably in difficulty, and the game also includes its own mission builder program for you to design more adventures.Sounds good so far.

But from a strong start, Tegel's Mercs fades rather badly. The isometric viewpoint. graphics are pretty average, and the scrolling shakes and jerks. With so many controls the game soon becomes confusing as you try to command each of the mercenaries. It's good, but it's not that good,

Fantasy just doesn't come into the picture in SSI's America In The Atlantic (£24.00), an expansion disk for its Great Naval Battles strategy game released back in January. It allows you to take control of nine new American ships including cruisers, destroyers and battleships. If that's not enough, it also includes a whole new campaign, two operations and ten battles.

With gameplay and graphics that are the of the same high standard as Great Naval Battles, this has to be an essential for fans of the original's naval combat strategies.

From serious simulation to futuristic fantasy, Storm Master, from Daze, is a budget re-release, mixing role playing and strategy on an alien planet.

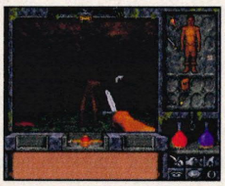
The aim is to attack and loot seven different cities in a bid to keep your population alive and kicking, while fending off your enemies.

You are helped by seven 'consultants', each with their own specialists subjects, like entertainment and food production (to keep the great unwashed happy), or ship designing.

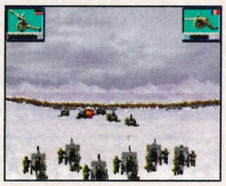
Storm Master is very playable, and combines strong, well drawn graphics with simple sound effects. Getting to grips with the principles of the game (and a confusing manual) may cause a few headaches, but the strategy and role playing elements are well balanced, and there's plenty of mileage for gamers.

## PC Review's best buys

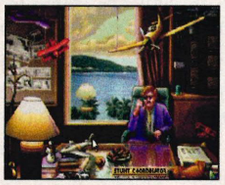
**What are the best games currently available? PC Review's Best Buys are taken from the last three months of reviews in order to give you a good idea of what to shell out for.**



**Ultima Underworld 2**
**Origin, £39.99**
A thoroughbred follow-up to one of the landmarks in PC role-playing games, and part of one of the longest running role playing sagas. Atmospheric and challenging, it would walk into anyone's top 10 RPGs of all time.



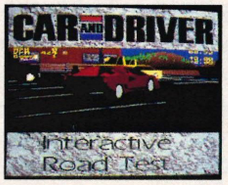
**Historyline**
**Bluebyte, £39.99**
Hardly the historical simulation that the title suggests, Historyline offers some of the best, if not the best, and most accessible WWI strategy gaming to be found on a computer.



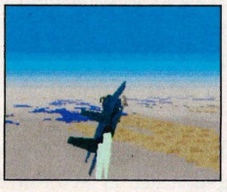
**Stunt Island**
**Disney/Ifogrames, £49.99**
Wonderfully original stunt flying and filming game: swoop down to the Golden Gate bridge, or loop the loop over the desert and preserve your efforts on ' film ' which can then be cut and edited. A vast program which should last you months.



**Shadow President**
**DC True/Empire, £34.99**
An in-depth simulation of life in the White House, with you as the president facing turmoil in the Middle East and potential trouble at home. Not for the faint hearted, or dilettante games player.



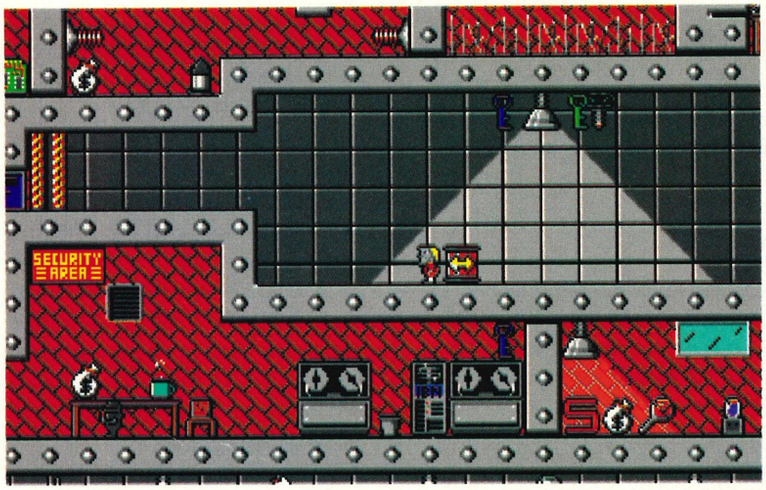

**Car & Driver**
**Electronic Arts, £34.99**
If F1GP is the king of the racing simulations, C&D is certainly the best plain driving game. Take the world's top sports cars and drive like there's no tomorrow.



**F-15 Strike Eagle III**
**MicroProse, £44.99**
The third in MicroProse's long line of F-15 sims is a satisfying challenge and a half-decent simulation. It may not be the best flight sim the 'Prose has ever done, but it's certainly one of the better ones.

# *Shareware* Reviews

## Secret Agent




Yes another platform game from Apogee! If you've played Commander Keen in any of his adventures then Secret Agent will look familiar but give it a second look because this one is a little more addictive.

It doesn't really matter what the plot is but essentially you are a secret agent (006 and a half, would you believe!) trying to retrieve stolen plans. You can wander round an island map and enter various castles, etc. As you'd expect in a platform game your character can jump around the different levels and the animation is very effective.

There are lots of hazards and plenty of things to collect. You also have a gun with limited ammo. The playing area is the entire screen which scrolls to let you see more of the level as you move around. The scrolling was very smooth on the VGA cards that I tried it on, but the instructions do warn that some VGA cards might produce a jerky scroll. There is an alternative video setting that you can try in this case. There's no sound support apart from chirps and beeps from the internal loudspeaker.

What makes Secret Agent slightly different is the element of logic needed to solve some of the problems. For example, in one room you are locked in with the keys for the two doors hung from the ceiling. You can't jump high enough to reach the keys but there's a block that you can push into place to help you reach either key. The twist is that a security system detects you when you are under the keys and an automatic gun in the ceiling comes to zap you. You can either try to dodge it by hiding or you can find a way to get high enough to shoot at it.

There are plenty of other situations where you have to work out what to do rather than just bounce around firing at everything in sight. Another example is the way you have to have particular objects before you can open doors or deactivate force fields, and so on. This often means that you have to go back to where you last saw the object after getting to a position. There are also a range of robot opponents that can only be defeated once you've worked out their weakness.

Games can be saved and restored facility so you don't have to start from the beginning each time. I don't know if Secret Agent is the best platform game I've played but I rate it better than the Commander Keen adventures, and as good as Duke Nukem. What you get for registering is a set of extra adventures which I personally think are well worth the cost.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Product:* | *Secret Agent* |
| *Supplier:* | *Precision Software Publishing* |
| *Tel:* | *(0223) 208288* |
| *Product code:* | *n/a* |
| *Price:* | *£3 (3.5" disk) £2.50 (5.25" disk)* |
| *Registration Price:* | *£29 plus VAT* |
| *What you get for registering:* | *Set of extra adventures* |
| *Machine:* | *any with hard disk* |
| *Disk space:* | *330K* |
| *Video modes supported:* | *EGA/VGA* |
| *Sound cards supported:* | *none* |
| *Input devices supported:* | *keyboard/joystick* |

## Corncob 3D

If you like flight sims plus shoot 'em ups and are on a budget then you'll appreciate CornCob because it's both. If you have seen Microsoft Flight Simulator then you will recognise the style of CornCob — a view out of the front windscreen and a rear view enable you to keep track of your target when you are firing at it and of the missiles when it is firing at you!

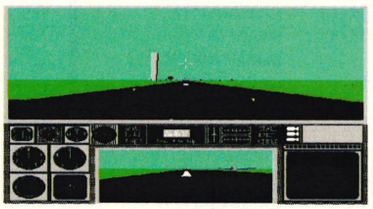
The plane can be controlled via a joystick or the keyboard and its response is on the realistic side. This means that until you get used to it just staying in the air and getting to where you are going is tricky. You can fire missiles at targets and drop bombs and there are a range of missions for you to fly. You can even bail out and do some damage on foot! You have a gun and a bomb and if your plane cannot do the job then you can. If you land your plane you can also get out and walk about the airfield.

To attack a target you have to fly directly at it and fire a missile or you can try to drop bombs on it. The target fires back with AA flack and missiles. You get different points for destroying fuel dumps or missile bases, etc. If you select a training flight then things still fire at you but you have an invulnerable aeroplane which means you have time to learn how to fly the thing and can still have some fun shooting at targets.

There is no sound card support, apart from a brief moment at the start of the intro, but the advanced version of the program does support Ad Lib. Registration is $10 and for that you don't get anything extra

other than supporting Pie in the Sky so that they can carry on developing the program. For $15 you get the advanced version which provides Ad Lib support and lots of extras including a mission construction program. Personally I would recommend the $15 option!

This is a good program and great fun but don't expect to master flying your mission in five minutes — it's difficult to be good at CornCob.



# Envision Publisher

If you occasionally want to put together a typeset quality document be it a club newsletter or an advertising flyer then Envision Publisher will most likely be all the DTP package that you need. It's an MS-DOS program, which means that it will run on limited hardware but it implements its own GUI interface which makes it easy to use. It makes use of its own scalable fonts which will print on a wide range of printers including HP LaserJet and DeskJet, PostScript, Epson FX, MX and LQ, Proprinters, PaintJet, Quietwriter and the LPB 8/4. Other printers are supported by virtue of being compatible with one of the others on the list.

The important point to make about Envision is that it is a full Wysiwyg DTP package. You actually see the fonts and graphics on the screen as they will appear on the paper. You can create multi-column layouts and place irregular text and headlines in frames.

You can enter text directly but you can also import text files in a range of formats — Plain text, EVP enhanced text, Total Word, VolksWriter, WordStar, PC Write, Galaxy and PC Type.

When it comes to graphics Envision is a bit limited compared to other DTP packages in that it will only read in PCX format bit maps. Any drawings have to be created using the tools that Envision supplies — straight line, ellipse, curve, rectangle, etc.

Compared to the big DTP packages Envision is lacking in many areas — no colour separation, no indexing, no spell checker, limited import ability, no table facility, etc. but on the other hand its very cheap — £49 and you can try it for 30 days before having to register. And I do think that in this case you will probably want to register. The reason for this is that you only get three fonts with the unregistered version and while these are enough to get you going it isn't enough. There is also a Pro version which you can get for £119 more. Personally I would prefer to choose something more standard like PagePlus or TimeWorks rather than pay the extra.

You can run Envision on almost any machine but I should warn you that it seems to be fussy about the type of mouse it works with. I couldn't make it work properly on two of the machines I tried it with using either the standard Microsoft Mouse driver or an MSC mouse driver. Perhaps I was just unlucky.

Envision is certainly up to creating news letters, advertising flyers and even technical manuals but don't try a book length document unless you have patience.




| | |
|---|---|
| *Product:* | *Envision Publisher* |
| *Supplier:* | *Transend* |
| *Tel:* | *(0274) 622228* |
| *Product code:* | *10470* |
| *Price:* | *£2.50 each for 2 disks* |
| *Registration Price:* | *£49 (£119 Pro)* |
| *What you get for registering:* | *latest version, 40 more fonts, clipart, templates and full manual* |
| *Machine:* | *MS-DOS compatible PC; hard disk with 2.5 Mb free* |
| *Disk space:* | *1.7Mb* |
| *Video modes supported:* | *VGA, EGA, CGA, Hercules, MCGA, 8514, SuperVGA* |
| *Sound cards supported:* | *n/a* |
| *Input devices supported:* | *Mouse recommended* |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Product:* | *CornCob 3D* |
| *Supplier:* | *Advantage* |
| *Tel:* | *(0242) 224340* |
| *Product code:* | *CORNCOB* |
| *Price:* | *£3* |
| *Registration Price:* | *$10 ($15 for advanced version)* |
| *What you get for registering:* | *nothing but advanced version comes with Ad-Lib support and extra missions.* |
| *Machine:* | *286/386 at least 12MHz, colour VGA minimum* |
| *Disk space:* | *380K* |
| *Video modes supported:* | *VGA* |
| *Sound cards supported:* | *no sound support* |
| *Input devices supported:* | *Joystick optional* |

## Quality Shareware

(PC only) with easy to use menus or on disc help to get you started. Shareware programs require separate payment to the author if found useful. Number of discs is in brackets after the name. HD=requires hard disc. Please remember to state disc size and to total up the number of discs.

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**SHARE SPELL** (1) Stand alone spell checker.
**MR LABEL** (1) Flexible label printing program.
**WAMPUM** (1) Develop your own relational dBase.
**ZEPHYR** (3) (HD) Menu driven relational dBase.
**CLUB** (1) Simple membership system.
**AS EASY AS** (1) 123-style popular spreadsheet.
**TUTOR 1-2-3** (1) Interactive tutor for Lotus 123.
**INSTACALC** (1) Pop-up spreadsheet.
**FORMGEN** (1) Form designing program.
**PF FORM DESIGN** (1) Popular form program.
**TASK-PRO** (1) (HD) Project management.
**MANAGEMENT TRAINING** (1) Teaches skills.
**EASY STOCK MANAGER** (1) (HD) Stock control.
**PAGE FINANCE CONTROL** (2) (HD) Accounts.

### MUSIC/GRAPHICS

**VECTOR DEMO** (1) (HD) (VGA) Awesome!
**MODPLAY PRO!** (1) (HD) Play Amiga MOD files.
**CD MUSIC PLAYER** (1) (CD) (MSW3.1) Play CDs.
**SCREAM TRACKER** (1) Advanced version.
**STM LIBRARY** (3) Music files for Scream Tracker.

### MS WINDOWS PROGRAMS

**TOMMYSOFT CAD/DRAW** (3 x 3.5" discs only) Brilliant CAD program for Windows.
**LOGOGO** (1) Change the Windows startup logo.
**TERMINATOR** (1) Windows "file shredder".
**TOUCH TYPING TUTOR FOR WINDOWS** (1)
**BACKROOM BOY** (2) UK Personal Organiser.
**WINJAM** (1) Full featured midi sequencer.
**ARCHIVES** (1) PKZIP/PKUNZIP front end.
**CD MUSIC PLAYER** (1) Play audio CDs.
**CLIPBOOK** (1) Store multiple pages of clip art.
**GRABIT** (1) Screen capture program.
**WINDOWS SCREEN CAPTURES** (1) Grabbers.
**MICROLINK** (1) Excellent comms program.
**TODAY FOR WINDOWS** (1) Horoscope program.
**TOILET** (1) Delete files by flushing them away!
**WINDOWS TETRIS** (1) Collection of Tetris games.
**WINWAV** (1) Apply sounds to any Windows event.
**WYNDFIELDS** (1) Relational database.
**PAINTSHOP PRO** (1) Popular picture file util.
**WINSPELL** (1) Checks spelling in any MSW prog.
**BIGDESK** (1) Increases the size of the Desktop.
**ZIP MANAGER** (1) Controls, PKZIP, LHAR, etc.
**GRAPHIC WORKSHOP FOR WINDOWS** (1).
**SCREEN PEACE** (1) Screen saver.
**WINDOWS ICONS** (1) Hundreds of icons.
**ICON TOOLS** (1) Edit, draw or view icons.
**WINDOWS TOOLS #5** (1) including WINZIP.
**SOUNDER** (2) Digitised sounds through speaker.
**ACTIVE LIFE** (1) Calendar, appointments, dialler.
**ORGANISE** (1) Personal information manager.
**CHOMP** (1) PacMan game.
**WINDOWS GAMES** (1) 12 games, Yahtzee etc.
**WINDOWS BACKGAMMON** (1) Very good.
**WINCHESS** (1) Very good chess game.
**BATTLE ON DISTANT PLANETS** (1) Combat
**CASTLE OF THE WINDS** (1) Fantasy role play.

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**0423 880471 (9 to 5 only)**
**FAX: 0423 889728**

### GRAPHICS

**ENVISION PUBLISHER** (2) (HD) Fantastic DTP.
**PRINT PARTNER** (1) Banners, letterheads, signs.
**PCX SUPERSHOW** (2) (HD) Create presentations.
**GRAPHIC WORKSHOP** (2) (HD) Convert/view pics
**DRAFT CHOICE** (1) Easy and very popular CAD.
**EASY DRAW** (1) Technical drawing.
**CHARTS UNLIMITED** (1) Flow/Org. charts, etc.
**NEO PAINT** (1) (HD) 2/16/256 colour PCX drawing.
**FINGERPAINT** (1) B/W PCX drawing program.
**FINGER VGA** (1) 256 colour PCX drawing.
**VGA PAINT** (1) 248 colour drawing.
**COOPER SET PCX** (2) Over 1500 pics.
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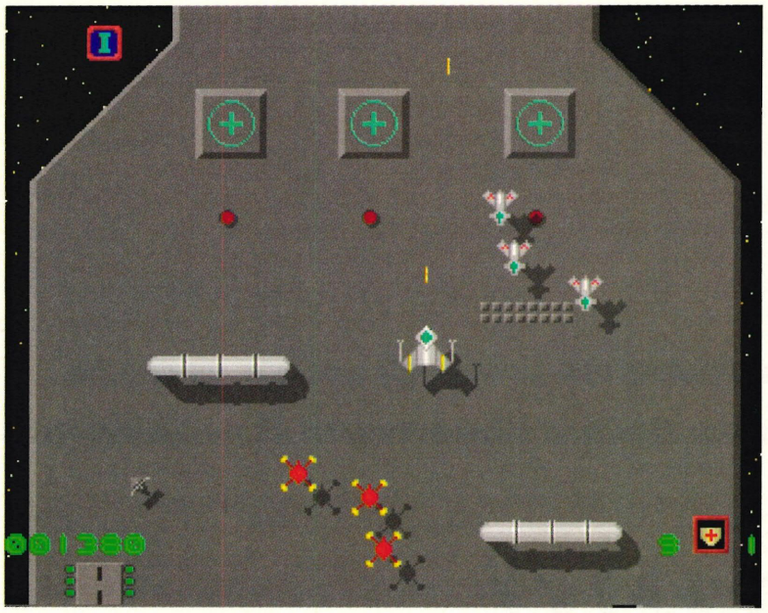
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# Starfire

Starfire is a shoot-em-up in the mould of OverKill and others but it has a higher degree of playability than the average. Its the usual stuff about saving the planet and if you don't succeed you see the earth vaporise before your very eyes. You fly your space ship, joystick is best but you can use keyboard or mouse, though the enemy space station zapping everything you can. Of course they fire back and loosing a life is very easy. As you clock up your score you can pick up tokens to increase your fire power, shields etc. There are a number of levels each with their own characteristic enemy, speed etc. If you make it to a level then you are given a password so that you don't have to be bothered with earlier levels ever again.

It is always difficult to say what makes a shoot 'em-up playable but in this case it is the attention to detail. Targeting is good and responsive and the explosions are fairly satisfying. If you have a Sound Blaster then the sound effects add to the satisfaction. It will even talk to you — but occasionally this doesn't work.

This isn't a game that you will return to often — is any simple shoot 'em-up ? — but until the novelty wears off it's great fun.

# Handwriting Analyst

How much can you tell from a signature? Well, if this to be believed, you can get a fairly detailed breakdown of someone's personality. Graphology — the study of handwriting — is taken fairly seriously in many circles but I think this shareware version should be treated with a fair amount of caution. You have to bear in mind that in fact it is nothing more mysterious than a database and it selects personality descriptions just on the basis of a few items of information.

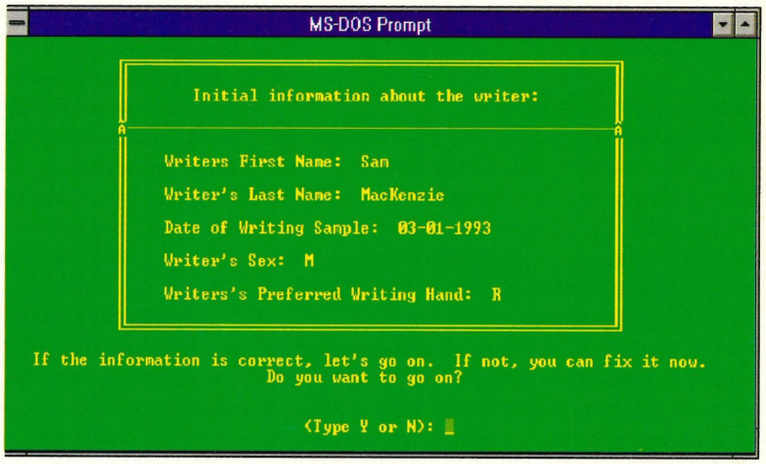
The shareware version is limited to analysing a person's signature. You ask the subject to sign a piece of paper and then you answer a series of questions about the appearance of the writing. You have to decide on features such as expansion — the relative width to height of letters — how connected the letters are, and the height of loops, choosing at each stage between a number of alternatives. Online help is available for each characteristic to explain what to look for. The two reports are of course essentially the same but the longer one just amplifies some of the points.

So what did I discover on the basis of being male, right-handed and having a fairly straightforward way of scrawling my name? Well here's a few quotes from the report:

"Sam is an intense person with a lot of vitality and a zestful, exuberant attitude. While Sam tends to be generous, he also tries not to waste his resources ... primarily an intuitive thinker, he is able to make logical connections occasionally and produce some cohesive ideas .... He is discreet, tactful and willing to respond openly and honestly when questioned."

While I am willing to go along with this, it would seem to apply equally well to many people — and when we ran the analysis on another person in the office whose style — both in handwriting and personality — seems pretty different, some of the same comments were repeated. So our advice would be not to treat this program too seriously and to remember that you can get out of it only what somebody else has already put into it.

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# QED

**Robin Matthews presents the first of a four-part comprehensive guide to Origin's blockbusting dungeon adventure: Ultima Underworld II — Labyrinth of Worlds.**

# *Ultima Underworld II*

This month we start with a beginners' guide, which should be particularly useful for those who may not have played or completed Underworld I (The Stygian Abyss), and which covers basic game techniques and the first few levels.

## Just for starters

Character creation is straightforward, and there's no sexual discrimination between the skills of a hero or heroine. The choice of professions does not hugely alter the plot line and a paladin seems a fair compromise of magic user and fighter. Shepherds merit a high attribute bonus and could be one of the most challenging ways to play.

It can be worth spending some time re-rolling the character statistics to get some big numbers, and normally apportion any additional skills in line with your character's class — with a pure mage, concentrate on Mana and casting, with a fighter, go for the physical stuff. With regard to the latter, it's unlikely that you will switch weapon types, so don't split points between the skills of axe, sword or mace — also don't forget your defence, it's all well and good being able to cause huge amounts of damage, but if a powder-puff punch from a lowly Green Gob makes you keel over, you're not going to get very far ...

With the lesser skills, similar considerations apply to both initial skill levels and subsequent advancement. Although the characters' skills won't change the plot line, they will affect how you tackle the game. The problems and puzzles can be solved in different ways, the most obvious being that locked doors and chests can be opened by those with enough lock-picking skill, or burst open by fighters with enough force. Lore is an ability that should not be ignored as it allows you to identify the multitude of objects that are found throughout the gaming world — until this ability is refined, an impressive lightning wand with five full charges will just read as 'a magic wand', for example.

The ability to swim should also not be ignored as in several areas breaststroke is the only way to travel. And on occasion, you may end up falling from a great height and finding yourself up to your neck in it. The bartering part of the Underworld games remains underdeveloped, and it may be possible to downgrade the importance of associated skills of charisma, assaying, etc.

Combat forms a major part of Ultima Underworld II, and is in 'real-time'. Things are not so frenetic as in the Eye of the Beholder series, but the basic techniques still need to be practised. The monsters within the first part of the game, the enshrined Castle of Lord British, are generally good sword/axe fodder and with the exception of the odd gazer, headless or reapers can be dispatched quite comfortably in a couple of rounds.

The trick is to alter your perspective downwards for those low level creatures like slugs and worms, and elevate your sights for bats and mongbats. This is achieved by using the 1, 2, 3 keys and when co-ordinated with the high, low, or medium blow should sort out most foes. More advanced combat tips will follow in later instalments of this guide.

Easy or standard mode varies only in the level of combat. In easy mode, the monsters which your characters encounter are weaker and easier to hit, while in standard mode it's tougher, but your characters do seem to get promoted quicker.

## Levels one and two

OK, having set the scene and set up the basics, it's time to get on with playing the game. You start in your own room in the north west part of Level One of Lord British's castle. Grab most of the items and also look to your north for hidden secrets. Here you'll find the all important rune bag and the first runes. These are the key to spell casting, and most are duplicated in other locations. Some, however, such as the 'ex', the 'vas', the 'nox' and the 'tym' are 'one-offs' and can be tricky to find.

The bedroll is essential as it lets you sleep anywhere, but note that you need some food in your tummy as well. This can be created using the 'in mani ylem' spell, but it's always worth keeping a loaf or two in your inventory in case you don't have enough mana to make your own when you need it.

Everyone will point you at Lord British. He will give you the initial briefing and the task to find a way out of the castle. Miranda is head of the escape committee, and you should check in with her regularly as she will point you at other non-playing characters when events dictate. Before you begin a detailed exploration below the castle, make sure to speak to everyone, the following in particular have important information — Nelson, Dupre, Nystul and Nell.

One of the these four characters will give you the sewer key, which you will need to start your subterranean sortie.

Most of the NPCs in the castle can train you in certain skills. As you explore, kill monsters and solve subquests your character will receive experience points and skill points. If you then visit these trainers, the skill points can be traded for improvements as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Nelson — | lore and search |
| Julia — | disarming traps, pick locks, and repair items |
| Lady Tory — | charisma |
| Dupre — | mace and axe |
| Nystul — | mana and casting |
| Geoffrey — | attack and defence |
| Syria — | sword and unarmed combat |
| Iolo — | accuracy, swimming and assay items |

Use your skill points wisely. The skills to develop early on are mana and casting, and one of the major weapon types. In other locations there may be more teachers, but one of them may make a premature departure! On Level one, once you've worked out the walls of the castle you should be motoring, don't worry too much about the armoury and Level two other than the six new runestones.

There are several ways down to Level two, but the main route actually bypasses it altogether. Later, there's a quick way back from a lower level, but at the moment it can almost be ignored.

## Level three

Level three starts to test your combat skills, and it may be wise to avoid the headless until you are stronger. Headless are gregarious creatures and are normally found in twos or threes. If you do decide to mix it with them, lower your sights a little and use the 'slash' approach. When you arrive at the disappearing floor, heed Fissif's advice (don't kill him, and as a matter of interest, check later in the jail).

Once you've cracked the floor area the remainder of this level will open up. The gazers are best left for a while, but when tackled the best tactic is to close the range and concentrate on disposing of one of them first, rather than splitting your firepower between all of them. At this stage of the proceedings, this will be a tough fight, but the rewards are a rare 'ex' runestone (very handy). Chain boots and a helmet can also be found here.

Magic-wise, good 'general' low-level spells to have as you go into combat are 'resist blows' ('bet in sanct') and 'luck' ('bet ort in').

## Level four

This is a testing level that may need several visits to complete successfully. There are two nests of nasties in the mid-north and the reaper to the south is a right so-and-so.

Additional magic help may be needed here, but the eventual prize is the key to the armoury on Level two (although this is actually not as exciting as it might suggest). King Rat is a hardy opponent and there's one area that can't be entered until you've been elsewhere in the meantime.

Several monsters will poison you, but the leeches will cure this, so grab them whenever you come across them. Unfortunately, the use of magic is limited in the castle, so spells over Level four will not work. At (3) on the map (see below) is a lantern which will be the best source of light for some time, oil is needed to fuel it. A word of warning here, if you do take a quick nap, make sure that you extinguish any candle or lantern — it makes them last a lot longer!

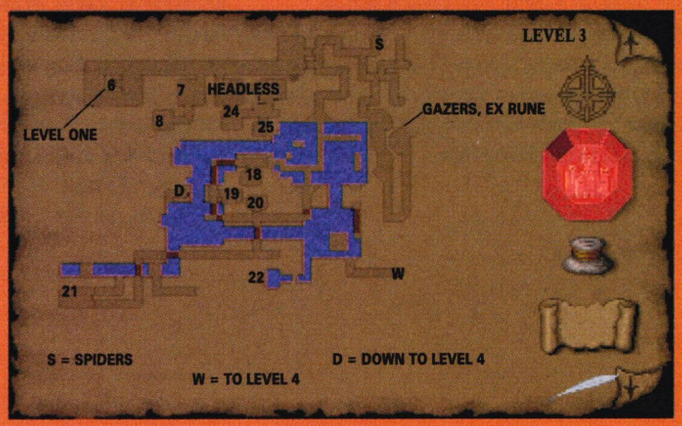
Much of this level and Level three involves swimming around — so examine all grates and try to swim through them. Many lead into completely new areas, often with substantial rewards. Generally, when you come into contact with water, the new spell of 'water walk' ('ylem por') is useful, and prevents your character turning blue.

For general combat, the 'speed' ('rel tym por') spell can help, and always keep healing potions within easy reach during the longer fights. As a last resort, break off a fight, retire a safe distance, heal and re-equip and then go back for another bash.

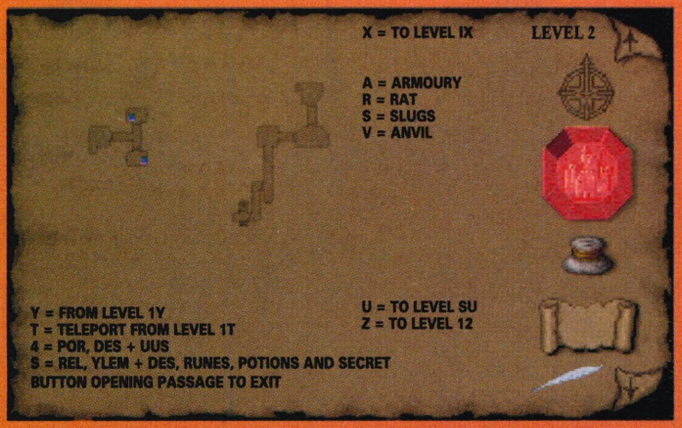
The middle section of Level four will take you down to the lowest level of the castle, Level five, but that will be covered in part two next month.



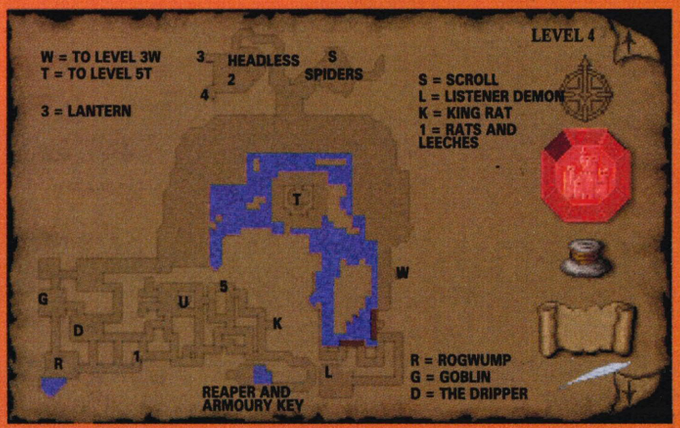

1. Leather vest, leather boots, scroll (invitation); sack (torch, dagger and thread); pastry, meat; chest (dagger, quiver).
2. Crossbow and bolts
3. Runebag, and the following runestones: ort, jux, bet, sanct, in, mani
Pack (bedroll, dagger, 3x torcher, food, lockpicks); box (sling and pebbles)




7. Bedroll, bottles of water and ale
8. Sack (ale, water, food x2); lockpick, oil, flask, broken axe; chest (purple potion, lor rune, lockpick)
18. Scroll, food and water
19. Food and torch
20. Wand, helmet, colourless potions
21. Food, vest and scroll
22. Pack (magic yellow potion, flute, dagger, gold)
23. Chain, boots and sword
24. Leather leggings, buckles




4. Chest (runes: por, des, uus scroll)
5. Runes: rel, ylem and des
Potions: green, colourless, yellow, purple
Bottle of water




2. Blue gem (after defeating headles x5)
3. Lantern (and oil x3), food, wand
4. Serviceable mail leggings
5. Serviceable chain gauntlets, magical scroll, black egg-spider shells

# QED

## Chapter 1

KGB begins on your first day with department P. Your supervisor, Major Vovlov sends you to check the office of one Golitsin, a private detective who has been murdered by persons unknown (by Galushkin's people, in fact ... Golitsin was getting too nosy). You are told that department P's interest is merely that Golitsin was once a KGB officer and any possibility of KGB involvement in his death must be looked into for form's sake.

At Golitsin's you must interrogate Golitsin's sister. If your questioning is successful she will hand you an audio cassette recorded by Golitsin before his death. the recording points to a certain club, clearly a hang-out for underworld types.

Vovlov orders you to investigate the club. Your mission is to discover the identity of a certain "Hollywood" and the nature of his activities.

The club is part of a building which also contains a bar, a meat shop and a number of apartments. You will finally end up in the clutches of the criminal gang and will have to escape with evidence of the gang's activities (they make snuff movies for export) as well as a lead to follow up. You will also find photographic evidence suggesting that the violent death of your parents in Afghanistan some years ago may not after all have been the work of a local resistance group.

The first chapter ends with you being ordered by department P boss, Colonel Galushkin, to continue the investigation in Leningrad, where local Department 7 officers may very well be involved in the export of the snuff movies.

### At Golitsin's

Show your ID to the militia man, then go into the office. Inspect the drawer. Go back out and ask the militia man for the key to the drawer.

Take the matches from the desk.

When everything has been inspected (or when you decide to leave), Golitsin's sister Irina arrives. Be either very nice or very nasty in your questioning. Then tell her to go, and she'll hand you an audio cassette.

To listen to the cassette, take the set of batteries from the radio and put them into the recorder. Then put the cassette into the recorder ... and you'll hear the recording.

Now you can leave. Don't forget the cassette and matches.

Remember to stop by at Uncle Vanya's on the way back and pick up the American dollars in the drawer in your bedroom before returning to Department P.

### At Department P

Tell Vovlov you listened to the cassette.

You're then ordered to investigate the Enthusiastic Progress Club and identify somebody who uses the codename "Hollywood". You must also find out what criminal activities this Hollywood deals in.

### Inside the bar

Inside the bar itself, avoid mentioning Hollywood or "Buyer 2" to the elegant client (he's Romeo, one of the gangsters).

If you talk to the barman, Yuri,he'll tell you that the club is upstairs. If questioned about Hollywood or Buyer 2, he'll advise you to try the residents of the apartment block.

You will have to enter the door in the side-street, just round the corner from the bar front, and then go upstairs. Avoid turning on the lights. Use your box of matches to see by. Inspect the place and take the clipboard. Then return to the street.

### The apartments

A sign at the bottom of the stairs in the hallway at the back of the building directs you to the caretaker's apartment, number seven upstairs, for all enquiries. If you choose to ignore this hint you can visit the apartments and speak to all the people; this solution is viable, but longer, and more difficult, since, should you decide not to visit the caretaker's apartment, the other apartment dwellers can eventually get fed up with you and refuse to talk to you ever again.

The thing to do is to find the beginning of the thread and start pulling. The beginning of the thread is the current occupant of the caretaker's apartment number seven.

Zhanna, living in what used to be the caretaker's apartment will invite you in if you say you're carrying out an opinion poll and if you have the clipboard as proof of your identity as a pollster. Once inside you should quickly point out that you are not in fact conducting a poll, but are looking for some criminals and that you couldn't say anything in the hallway. Avoid being insulting or heavy handed (no mention of KGB, militia or private detectives).

Zhanna will then point you at Belussov, in apartment five.

Talk to Belussov about Lefortovo prison. He'll point you at Ryumin, in apartment four.

Talk to Ryumin about Wrangel Island. He'll tell you about the meat shop and its manager, Sytenko of apartment six. This information is not enough to corner Sytenko, but justifies your breaking into






his meat shop. In order to do so, you will need a lock-pick. You can get hold of the lock-pick by visiting the club.

## Inside the club

The easiest way into the club is through the back, from the landing where the upstairs apartments are located. Don't enter the club with the clipboard; it belongs to the manager and he won't take kindly to your being in possession of it.

To gain admittance, you'll have to pay the manager $30 (taken from the drawer in your bedroom at Uncle Vanya's). Once inside the club, avoid taking the hidden dollars from the toilet. Wait instead for the punk to visit and leave the toilet, then slip in and take the cocaine from the trash-can. Flush the cocaine down the toilet.

Avoid talking about Hollywood or Buyer 2 to the people in the club. Instead, talk to a character called Video. He's by himself. Buy his video-cassette and he'll give you a tip: don't mess around with the twins; they're part of a very dangerous gang that hangs around the club. Video will say that the other people in the club are harmless, except for two punks who specialise in muggings.

The punks, Petka and Lyonka, will attempt to lure you outside, whatever you say you're looking for. Once you're in the street behind the building, attack Lyonka, the big one. He's got a lock-pick on him. Take it, then put his body in the dustbin.

## The meat shop

Armed with the lock-pick, you can enter the meat shop by its side door. Go through the first room and into the shop. Use your matches to see. Inspect the counter and switch on the red diode. Go into the cold-room, switch on the light and inspect what's hanging from the meat-hooks. These dead bodies are what you need to make the butcher Sytenko, start talking. Before leaving the meat shop remember to light a match and switch the diode back off.

When you've forced the butcher to spill the beans, wait until the old lady, Yevdokia Chevchenkova, leaves her apartment, number




eight, and goes out to feed the local stray cats. Then break into her apartment, which is Verto's hideout. He's the bad guy in chapter one.

## Inside Verto's apartment

Go into the studio, take the video-cassette and "use" them on the VCR. Whatever you do next ...Verto and his boys come in and catch you. You are placed in a small cell. Inspect the table and crush the microphone.

Don't give any information to the girl Rita. When the American joins you, avoid any urge to harm Rita. When you here the muffled sound of a conversation from the living-room, listen at the door.

Show the smashed microphone to the American. This will convince him that you're not another plant. Inspect the plastic alarm box. Tell him it could be connected to the meat shop and encourage him to set off the alarm. This will get Verto out of the way. Tell the girl you know where the cocaine is because you took it. Promise to take her to it. When she opens the door, attack her.

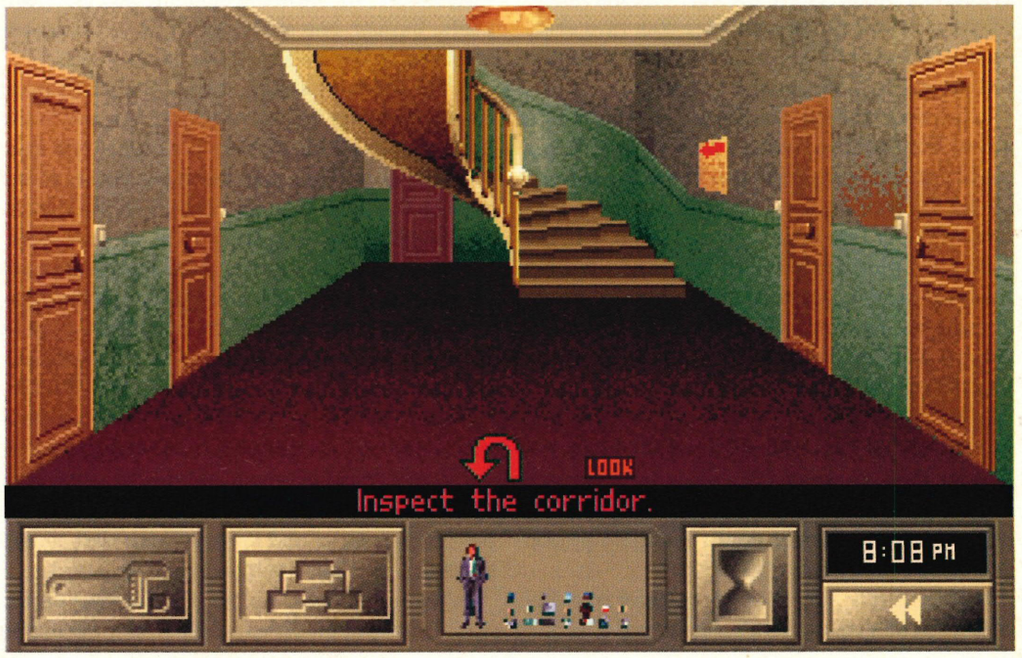
Let the American leave. Take all the objects from the living-room drawer and then go into the studio. Take everything, including the Polaroid camera. Use the camera on the blank white piece of paper and inspect the resulting photograph. Return the piece of blank paper to the drawer in the living-room.

Wait for Verto to return. When he gets to the door, hide yourself behind it. When Verto comes in. attack him immediately. Inspect the unconscious Verto and take the blue piece of paper. Use the camera on it, inspect the resulting photo, then put the blue piece of paper back on to Verto. Then leave. Return to Department P.

## Back at KGB

Tell Galushkin that you intend going to Leningrad in order to be at Ladoga Park at 3 pm on August 16, 1991.

You're then sent off to Leningrad for the next part of the game, which is where we will be next month.



QED

# Alone in the Dark



**Thanks to Jonathan King, who is hot on the trail of the murder of Jeremy Hartwood in Infogrames' superb Alone in the Dark, and sent in this solution. Part two next month.**

Starting in the loft, push the wardrobe in front of the window to keep out the winged beast. Then push the chest over the trapdoor in the floor to keep out the zombie. Now you can safely search the loft. Open the chest to get the rifle. There is a note behind the piano on its right hand side, and a book in the small bookcase opposite the window. Read and leave the book (extracts of golden fleece) and the note. Open/search the wardrobe to get the Indian cover. Take the lantern from the table. Exit through the opening in the corner to the right of the barrels (the same way you entered) into the storage room. Once there, open/search the shelves on the right to find the can of oil. Use it and leave the empty can. Take the bow on the way out of the door to the first hallway where the floor has a weak spot (so be careful).



Enter the first bedroom, on the left, and then the second bedroom, on the right. Exit the third bedroom and go into the first bathroom, on the left. Leave the first bathroom and go left through the closed door at the end of the first hallway to the top of the wooden stairs.

In the first bedroom, open/search the desk to get the key. Use the key on the chest to get the old calvary sabre. Leave the key. Use the rifle to kill the zombie when you open the door (two shots required). Leave the room and go across the first hallway to the other second bedroom.

In the second bedroom, close the door behind you to keep out the zombie. Walk through to the next third bedroom where you should prepare to kill the flying beast, as he enters through the window, with the rifle (two shots required). Get the vase and throw it to get the dresser key, leaving the broken vase. Use the key to open the dresser and take the two small mirrors. Leave the key and exit through the closed door. Go across the first hallway to the first bathroom.

In the first bathroom, open/search the closet for the first aid case. Open/search the case and take the flask, but leave the empty case. Eat/drink the flask to add life points as needed. Leave the bathroom and turn left into the first hallway and go through the closed door.

At the top of the wooden stairs, walk near the wall to the statues by each gargoyle and drop/put a small mirror on each statue. The reflection of each other kills the gargoyle. Go down the stairs.

At the bottom of the wooden stairs, go right, without arousing the knight, through the closed door. Do not disturb the dark figure! Take the gramophone and matchbox, but leave the poker. Open/search the wardrobe to get a box of cartridges. Reload the rifle (or use the cartridges — same thing). Leave and go to the other side of the stairs (past the knight) and go through the door into the second hallway. Now that you have been in the second hallway, you can get relatively close to the knight and throw the heavy statuette at him. Take the sword, leave the statuette and go downstairs, through one of the openings by the wooden stairs, to the bottom of the stone steps.

In the second hallway, (or go straight through the door directly in front of you into Jeremy's old bedroom), enter the door on the corner, the second bathroom. Then go around the corner to the door on the right, the dark room. Use the matchbox to light the lantern and walk in the dark room.

In the second bathroom, enter quickly and get the jug. Optionally, you can open/search the closet to get another first aid case (you may want to reenter to avoid being attacked). Exit quickly back into the second hallway. Go back around the corner (past the bathroom and Jeremy's old bedroom) and go left back down the wooden stairs.

In Jeremy's old bedroom, get the notebook from the mantle. Be prepared to kill another flying beast behind you. Read and leave Jeremy Hartwood's notebook. Exit back to the second hallway.]

In the dark room, drop/put the lit lantern on the floor. Open/search the night stand near the bed to get some bullets. Take the heavy statuette and the book. Take the lantern and go into the hall. Stop using the lantern by choosing an action (open/search is good). Read and leave the book (diary of a journey). Back to the second hallway.

At the bottom of the stone stairs, go left through the unlocked door (on your right) into the garden. Go up the stone stairs to the bottom of the wooden stairs (again). Now go to the left side of the wooden stairs and re-enter the second hallway. Go back past Jeremy's old bedroom, the second bathroom and the dark room to the closed gallery door. Enter.

In the garden, go to the statue of the girl and the goat. Open/search the dirt at the base of the statue and take the three arrows back out of the room before the spiders get you. Go back to the bottom of the stone stairs.

In the gallery, face the picture on the left and drop/put the old Indian cover. Turn and face down the gallery and use the bow. Aim at the yellowish object (painting) at the other end of the gallery. Shoot the painting (three shots, one hit required, and leave all unused arrows). Go to the painting just shot and enter the single door on the right, Jeremy's 'new' bedroom. Here, take the (false) book. Push the clock aside. Open/search the hole in the wall to get a key (to Jeremy's study) and parchment. Read and leave the parchment (the creatures of the night). Exit back to the gallery and go left to the double doors now on your left which lead into the library.

In the library, use the lantern, enter and drop/put the lantern on the floor. Run to the left and go right, past the secret door, when you cannot go any farther. In the corner to the right of the secret door, put/drop the (false) book in the bookcase to trigger the mechanism. Go left and enter the secret room. (Optionally, open/search the library for several books to further explain the story and give clues. Note that there are books on both sides of the desk. Caution: reading one of the books makes you go temporarily insane, which is interesting but costs life points.) Exit through the closed set of double doors, go downstairs, back to the bottom of the stone stairs (again).

**To be continued ...**

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# QED TIPS

Do not attempt the tips marked with this icon unless you are sure you understand what you are doing. In any case, it's sensible to make back-ups of the files before you start tinkering around with program editors. PC Review is not going to accept any responsibility for damage to data incurred when trying out tips, so be warned!

Send all your cheats to QED Tips at the usual PC Review address. We'll print as many as possible each month and the sender of the highlighted Star Tip wins a software prize — so don't forget to include details of your PC's configuration with your letter.



## The Manager

STAR TIP

James Reed of West Sussex is over the moon about these cheats he's found in US Gold's The Manager. "When you have started the game, move to the options menu. There you will see an arrow that will take you back to the main menu. Place the mouse pointer over this arrow, but do not click. Press the key D (you should see the box flash) and then the key A (it should flash again.) Return to the main menu and look at your team: your squad members should have skills of 99 in every area. You should also have a huge amount of money."



## Civilization

Paul Paskin in Perth has some ideas for making progress in MicroProse's Civilization easier. "Firstly, make sure you have a good infrastructure of railroads as soon as possible. It helps you defend threatened cities at a moment's notice, and trade routes can also be set up faster. Caravans can be a great help not only for creating trade routes, but also for production. If you are building something which you want to be created sooner, you may enlist help of other cities by getting them to build caravans, eg, you want to build a factory in your capital city, but it will take several turns. Temporarily change construction to a world wonder, bring in the caravans, change it back to a factory, and development is much closer to completion, depending on how many caravans you used to help.

A real gem is when you have things like chariots (ie, units with multiple moves). If you take it out, do your stuff without finishing the units turn, take it to the city and sentry it. Click on it again to cancel the sentry command as it appears again, with full movement.

When you are in a democracy, it can be a pain to take out troops when you want to go to war. A good way around this is "diplomatic warfare". Though this can be quite hard on the funds, you form diplomats to take the cities instead. Simply incite revolt and if you can afford it, pay the price and you have the city with all its improvements and even its troops. This will use up your diplomat, but on the way to the target city you can even subvert troops, providing there is only one occupying the target square. This is even better if you are away from your own cities as these come up with "Home: None", which means it needs no support and has no unhappy citizens."



## Star Trek 25th Anniversary

Paul Paskin adds: "I noted that Jennifer and John Guttridge's problem (Issue 13) was not totally answered. In QED, Issue 17, told them what had to be done to get through it, but they still don't know how to use one item on another. Using the keyboard, you call up the inventory ('I'), select, for example, the phaser type II.

Once you've done this, call up inventory again and select the phaser welder. This should charge the welder, ready for use on the bits of scrap metal. Adapt this procedure to the appropriate steps as detailed in QED, Issue 17."

## The Adventures of Robin Hood

Merrie Man Edwin Mitson of Lancashire has some useful hints for Millennium's Robin Hood game: "Items that can be collected:

- The habit: this should be collected once you have robbed Friar Tuck. When he joins your band you will get this off him. It is useful in Nottingham when you have been outlawed.
- Lightning: when it is summer and the dragon is about, don't fight him but talk to him. He will say he has a thorn in his paw. Just walk into him to remove it and he will give you the lightning.
- The ring: Maid Marian gives you this after you have talked to her three times. It enables you to see people's statistics.
- The horn: Will Scarlet will give you this after you have rescued him from the gallows near the end of spring. Use it to summon your outlaws.
- The toadstool: this can be found in any number of places and will appear as a white ring. Use the closed fist to pick it up. It can be used to resurrect the dead but once you have used it you will have to find another.
- The feather: this can be obtained by talking to the swan and then killing it with your bow. Used to view the whole of Sherwood Forest.
- The crystal: this can be obtained by just talking to the priest of Herne. Use it to view the whole of Sherwood as a map."

## Risky Woods

For cheat keys type qwertyuiop on the title screen and "cheat keys (F1-F4) activated" appears. The following cheats are now available:

- F1: restores lost energy to a maximum nine lives;
- F2: increases money by one gold piece to a maximum of 999;
- F3: increases time by three seconds, which gets you a bigger bonus at the end;
- F4: skips to next level.



## Ultima VII

Start the game by typing Ultima 7 ABCD (with a space after the ABCD which is input by holding down Alt and typing 255). When you start the game, you can press F2 to get the cheat menu and F3 for the teleport map.

Thanks to Richard Bridge, of Herts, for the above two tips.

## Dyna Blaster

Luke Parnell, of Hampshire, has been getting into some serious action with this excellent arcade game:

"On the level with the remote control bombs, set some and get out of their range (as usual). Press the detonator button and as the bombs are exploding press the detonator button ▶

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NOV '93

# QED TIPS

rapidly. This gives you more bombs to play with and to get the maximum eight bombs repeat steps one and two a couple of times. Then bomb those beasties."

## Bart Versus the Space Mutants

Akram Ragab writes in with the following: on the screen where all the Simpsons are sitting on their sofa in front of the TV type **Cowabunga** and then start the game.

And again on the screen where the two aliens are talking to each other type **Cowabunga**. You will now have infinite lives.




## Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade

From Akram again: use PC Tools or Norton Utilities to look at the file Indy.com.

For infinite lives find:
80 3E F0 0300 [74 03]
[E8 15 4A]
[E8 1D 4C]
Change the bracketed figures to:
90 90
90 90 90
90 90 90 in their corresponding rows.

For infinite energy find:
[28] 06 EF 03
BF 26 04 80 7D 0A FE [72 01]
And change the numbers in brackets to:
CF
90 90, respectively.

## Rick Dangerous

Akram also has some useful cheats for the following games. remember, if you want to try these out, back up the files first!

Using a word processor or Edit, create a text file called Rick.dbg containing the following ...

| | |
|---|---|
| G266 | All 0s are zeros. After creating the file, type **DEBUG RICK.COM < RICK.DBG'** You will now have infinite lives. |
| T | |
| G37 | |
| T | |
| G0FE | |
| T | |
| ECS: 02 F3 C6 | |
| 06 8C 6E 06 C3 | |
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# HELP WANTED

## Indiana Jones and the last Crusade Adventure

How does he unlock the chest in Henry's house?

How does he pick up the torch on the wall under the ground in Venice?

How does he get past the grating near the manhole cover underground?

How does he get the plug out of the pool of water without getting wet?

**Gareth Ellis**
**Bristol**

## Legend of Kyrandia

After being instructed to obtain water from the fountain, Malcolm duly destroys it by hiding a part of it.

Where is this part hidden and how do you get it?

**Michael Brocklehurst**
**Cheshire**

## Zac McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders

I have bought and picked up all the items up to the first plane flight to Seattle.

On the flight I am stuck trying to create a diversion to get away from the stewardess to pick up the item mentioned in the manual.

Can anybody give me any help on a diversion, what do I do next?

**Tim Ruane**
**Milton Keynes**

If you can offer solutions to any of this month's four tormented souls, write to Help Supplied, PC Review, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU

And if you're hopelessly stuck in a game, write to the same address with details of your problem, and mark the envelope Help Wanted.

## Eye of the Beholder II




In Issue 7 you gave tips for Eye of the Beholder II. In particular on page 100 middle column you say "there is a down and down and up problem". This presumably refers to the room with three leavers on the wall and a switch on the opposite wall. There are an infinate number of combinations of lever operations (with repeats) — unhappily down,down,up gives no jackpot. I either get solid walls or closed transparent doors. The best I can get is with down, up, down, which leaves just two inner doors, however all moves from here are retrograde. The exact solution will be a godsend. Please. I was stuck at level eight of Dungeon Master hence I started EOTB II. So now I'm stuck twice. Where, please, is the key to open the door at the bottom of all those stairs? Presumably this is the door to level nine.

**K R Northway**
**Stirlingshire**

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# Software Search NEW!

**Looking for that elusive piece of software which answer all your computing requirements and make your life easier? Try PC Review's Software Search**

**Last October, PC Review introduced the Shareware Finder Service, in which we asked you to write in if you were looking for software to fulfil a particular computing need. We then undertook to locate the shareware product and give you a few details on the program(s) we found.**

**The Shareware Finder Service has proved so popular that we can no longer answer everyone's query on a single panel in the Shareware section of the magazine. So, welcome to Software Search, a whole two pages devoted to finding the programs you need.**

**We've implemented one important change to the service: it's no longer shareware only. What we undertake to do, from now on, is to look at the shareware market first, but also look at commercial software available at up to £150.**




In January's Shareware Finder column we passed on a request from Sam Fox for a ZX Spectrum emulator to run on the PC and in March we reported a preliminary — if not quite accurate reply. In fact we have continued to have a lot of response to this item and we can now present Sam with a definitive answer by passing on other reader's comments.

Frank Rodolf of Maastricht wrote:

I happen to be a registered user of what I consider to be the best Spectrum emulator on the PC. It is written by Gerton Lunter, also a Dutchman. It emulates a standard 48K Spectrum, including all unofficial Z80 op codes, the Interface 1 serial port (via COM1 — 4, LPT1 — 3 or a file), a number of joystick interfaces, including Kempston, Interface 2 and Protek and something called SamRam, which includes a built-in disassembler/monitor.

Programs can be loaded from and saved to disk, using a menu system or function keys. Registered users also have the option to load programs from or save programs to tape. If the PC used is fast enough, one can even use fast-loading tapes. When saving to disk, a (compressed) memory image is written, so even copy-protected software may be written to disk.

Registration is only £10, and provides the advantage mentioned above of loading from tape, the program's source code and a number of utilities, including a program to convert the files used by this emulator to and from formats used by some other emulators.

Mark R Strijbos faxed in his comments on the same emulator:

This program has been tested with over a thousand ZX programs and all of them worked fine. The latest version (1.45) of this program supports the use of the original cassette tapes; you can load them through the PC's printer port using a very simple interface. Once a program is loaded and running it can easily be saved to your PC disk in the emulator's own .z80 file format.

The emulator mentioned in March is in fact the one above, so the good news is that it is easy to obtain on disk. The correct details are: BG Services, 64 Roebuck Rd, Chessington, Surrey KT9 1JX, tel: (081) 397 0763 Fax (081) 391 0744

The shareware version is £3.50, the fully registered version £13.50 and to register an existing shareware version send in your disk and £10.

In March we also mentioned Spectrum Emulators were available from Daniel Thomas. He has now written to us to give us his correct address: 101 Garner Street, Cliff Vale, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 7AX, tel: (0782) 214396

Daniel knows of six Spectrum emulators but only has two of them available for distribution — Gerton Lunter's Spec145.zip as described above and Jpp.zip about which he comments:

"This is another excellent Spectrum emulator although a bit more restrictive on hardware in that it requires a 386SX and VGA graphics. There are two versions in the file — Jpp, which runs as fast as possible and Pjpp, which is for fast 486s and runs at the same speed of the original Spectrum. It's a Public Domain emulator and programs that work with the Dutch emulator work on this one.

I am studying GCSE in Design and have been set a project on educational games. I am writing an educational computer game and want to review, or read reviews of, existing examples.

Alistair Watts
Trowbridge, Wiltshire

**There is a great deal of educational games software, both commercial and shareware and the key elements are that it should encourage the user to get the answers right and not discourage them when they are wrong, but rather present the right answer in such a way that they learn from their mistakes. There are many pitfalls to avoid — including making getting the wrong answer more rewarding than getting it right and introducing a challenge.**

**You do not mention what subject you want to concentrate on. Arithmetic is one good choice because it is easy to tell when the answer is right. Spelling in English, French or another**

language is another possibility but then you have to be careful about marking otherwise correct responses wrong because of arbitrary rules like insisting on a leading capital letter.

Choose your target age range with care. There seems to be lots of scope for programs for younger children but it is difficult to convey the instructions or other information in simple enough language for them to read it. Two educational programs aimed at primary and junior school children that I feel fail on the grounds of being too wordy or expecting too much in terms of linguistic ability are Monkey Business — a shareware game aimed at seven to eight year olds but which has screens full of text to read, and The Teddy Bears Picnic, a commercial program aimed at five to ten year olds. It based on the traditional story (and so will be fine for the under sixes) but it demands a reading age of seven or over.

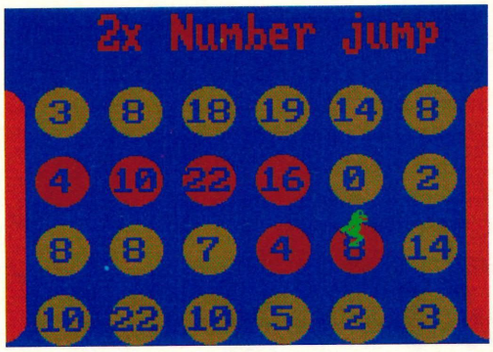
If you want to look at good examples of programs for younger children look at the Fun School series from Europress (0625) 859333 and Hooray for Henrietta, a shareware game which gives practice in number skills.

Finally, you asked for reviews of educational software. If you have Issue 14, you will find a review of Sparky's Maths in the Shareware pages and a review of Mario Teaches Typing whi while it is training in a rather different sense, has some elements in common with an educational game.

I am revising for my GCSE Maths exam by answering old exam questions. The problem is I do not know if I get the answers right as exam boards do not issue answers. Do you know of any software in which I could enter a question and it will return the answers — mainly in quadratics, matrices and volumes. It should be cheap as I do not have much cash to spare.

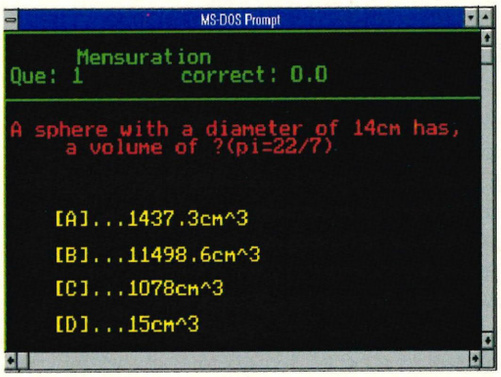
F Hewitt
Norwich

I imagine there are lots of students in your position and your PC can certainly help you do your revision and might also be useful for studying any topics you feel you have not understood by providing an alternative approach. To start with commercial software, Micro Maths (£24) from LCL Software (0491) 579345 contains 24 programs for self-tuition or revision to GCSE. As it is aimed at ages 11 upwards it includes the simpler topics in the syllabus — averages and percentages — as well as differential calculus and matrices. Altogether 59 topics are covered and the program is well aware of the requirements of the examining boards. Looking through the list it seemed to cover most of the things I had problems with at 'O' Level — including simultaneous equations, the solution of triangles and vectors. To answer your specific request, all the programs include an unlimited number of




problems and complete explanations for wrong answers. It also constitutes a complete maths course as there are instructions and explanations of all the topics and two books included with the program.

Another commercial program is Better Maths (£22.95) from the Irish company School Software (010 353 6145399) aimed at the age range 12-16 years. It includes four topics for which there is tuition — ratio and gradient; linear equations; factors and quadratic equations (see picture one) and a revision section on 15 or so topics — including "mensuration" — ie measurement including volumes — algebraic expressions and algebraic factors. The questions are multiple choice and you get two chances to get the right answer after which the correct one is indicated. At the end of the test you see a bar chart with your scores on all sections tested.




When it come to maths shareware the problem is that a great number of the programs available originated in the USA and therefore concentrate on a different syllabus. However, algebra is an international subject so you might be interested in Algebrax. This generates problems randomly and it is not multiple choice — you have to work out the answer, not just guess!. It has five levels of difficulty with five questions at each level but after each correct answer you proceed to a more difficult problem. When you give a wrong answer the program takes you though the problem step-by-step. For volumes you might find Equator useful as it has a section devoted to equations for areas, volumes and surface areas of regular shapes. This is not a test — instead you can experiment with equations so that you become familiar with them.

I would like to learn to program in C. Can you recommend a compiler that would be suitable for my PC — a 286 with 40Mb hard disk? Eventually I want to write games but if I can prove to myself that it is possible I will buy a full development system so low price is important at the moment.

Dennis Truelove
Northampton

The best and most used version of C is probably Turbo C from Borland (0800) 212727 or (0734) 320022. This is available for £46 from Grey Matter (0364) 54399 and if you do decide to move on to something better you can upgrade it to full Borland C which includes Windows developments tools and a lot more. If you want a shareware C compiler then try Personal C Compiler — disk CL 30 from Shareware Marketing (0297) 24088. This is based on a commercially available C compiler and while it lacks the extras it is perfectly serviceable. You will also need some good books on C and why not give one of the shareware C Tutorial programs a go — try disk CL7 from Shareware Marketing.

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# *Upgrading Your PC*

# Joysticks and

**A joystick isn't standard issue on a PC which may well be used for business applications, but for many games players it's the most intuitive way to control programs. In this refresher course from last year's First Steps series, we explain how to set up a game card and joystick on your PC**

To connect a joystick to your PC you simply need two things, a suitable game card and the stick itself. Before you go out to buy a game card, do check the ports at the back of your PC to make sure you don't already have one fitted. A few PCs do come with a game port, and if you have a sound card, you may find a game port is incorporated — the Sound Blaster has a integral joystick port, for example. The thing to look for is a 15-pin male connector — see the pictures opposite.

Where joysticks are concerned, make sure that the devices you are looking at are PC-compatible. The 9-pin digital joysticks used with Amigas and STs will not be suitable for your PC, which expects an analogue stick with that 15-pin connector. You can buy products that allow you to use standard digital joysticks with your PC — usually just a simple connector box with a 9-pin input socket on one end and a 15-pin output lead on the other — if you have digital joysticks lying around the house from the days of owning other machines, then an adapter will be an easy, economical purchase.

However, the range of PC-compatible sticks is so wide and diverse that you shouldn't really feel the need to buy a converter. Apart from the standard sticks with shaft and a couple of fire buttons, there are Flightsticks, yokes and pedals for flight sim buffs, driving wheels for motor racing enthusiasts, joysticks which act more like mice, and joysticks which act more like trackballs. Personal preference is the main factor which will determine the best stick for you, so trying before you buy is essential. You may like the intuitive control of a small, handheld stick, while your neighbour feels insecure unless the stick is heavy, sturdy and huge.

To start with, a standard joystick is certainly versatile, and really just about all you'll ever need for shoot 'em ups and platform games. Major brands in this market include Quickjoy, Gravis, and Suncom. The Quickjoy sticks tend to be traditional models, with large moulded shafts and fire buttons placed at the top of the shaft as well as on the base. Quickjoy also makes the Mach range of small sticks, which instead of being clamped to the table-top with rubber suckers, can be held in the hand.

Gravis's sticks always look well-designed and well-made, and the MouseStick range has long been a favourite at PC Review for its precise movement; Suncom's we often find a bit squidgier to manipulate, but then the MouseSticks are extremely expensive, and Quickjoy's sticks start at £10. Prices for joysticks range from £5 to £100 (see buyers's guide over the page), and it's not necessarily true that the more you pay, the more durable the stick.

Most PC joysticks come with vertical and horizontal axis adjusters. These ensure that the readings sent out by the joystick when it's in different positions are OK with the limits defined by the program. If they are out somewhat, you adjust the settings until they match up. This is usually achieved by a joystick calibration screen, called up when you select joystick control for the game. Adjusting the trim controls stops the joystick from favouring a certain direction when left in neutral, something that can cause all sorts of problems when your car suddenly veers off to the right for no apparent reason.

Flight simulator enthusiasts that want the ultimate in realism are well-catered for by PC joystick manufacturers. As well as out-and-out flight yokes, there are more conventional-looking joysticks designed for use with flight sims. The Flightstick, possibly one of the most favoured flight simulator joysticks around, has two buttons on the top of the shaft and its own throttle wheel for games that support this option.

The throttle wheel replaces the need for keyboard speed controls (usually the numeric keys along the top of the keyboard) by having it right next to the stick. The Flightstick is highly responsive, and we've been using it for some months now on just about any game that comes our way, so it certainly isn't restricted to use with flight games.

The Thrustmaster joysticks are also designed for specialist flight sims, with two devices, the Flight Control System, and Weapons Control System. The former looks like a cockpit control stick, and is festooned with all manner of buttons and switches for targetting and firing and switching the occkpit views, while the Weapon

# game cards

Control System takes care of landing the plane and conventional throttle commands.

Yokes, on the other hand, are actually better for use with civilian flight sims, such as Flight Simulator 4 (see elsewhere in this issue), since you'd probably find the movement just isn't quick enough for dogfights. Yokes also work extremely well with driving games, making for a rather effective steering wheel.

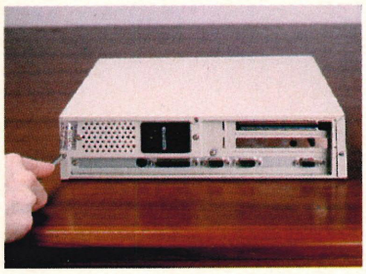
Or, of course, you could just buy a steering wheel. The Logic 3 Freewheel is a weird beast indeed, attached to the PC's joystick port by a thin cable, and working with optical sensors rather than microswitches. Push forward to accelerate, back to reverse, and two buttons on the wheel itself take care of all gear changes. Once you get accustomed to the strange feeling of holding a wheel suspended in space, it really does work rather well.

For those of you wanting a fully realistic atmosphere while buzzing the Golden Gate Bridge in your Cessna, several companies also produce sets of rudder pedals to complement the yokes. These do little other than provide subtle changes to your horizontal position — except in helicopter simulations where they become really useful for quick swings around the horizon — and they don't feel wonderfully sturdy (being made mainly from cheap plastic) and you often think that by applying anything more than the merest picojoule of pressure, you're going to put your foot right through it.

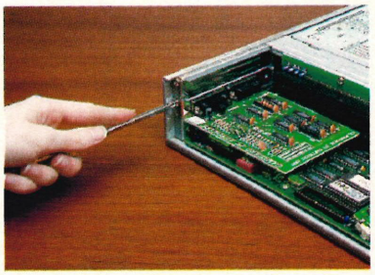
As with the yokes, using them on driving simulations is infinitely better, replacing the unrealistic keyboard controls for accelerating and braking. They still give that brittle, breakable feel, but at least it feels pretty good when you can slam on the brakes in one of these games for real.

Installing a joystick from scratch is normally a simple two-stage operation. Insert the game card into a free expansion slot (see below), plug in your joystick(s) and off you go. Individual games may ask you to 'calibrate' your joystick, that is, to ensure that pulling the joystick won't shoot the cursor way off-screen while pulling it right makes it grind to a halt a good two inches short of the right hand side, but this is hardly a technically demanding process.

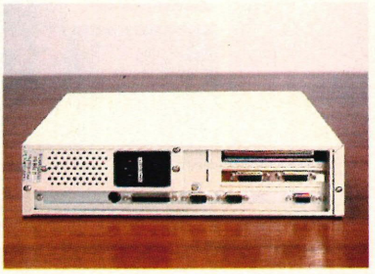
**Yes, installing a game card means that you'll have to open up the PC, but it really is one of the simpler operations, and shouldn't cause problems if you follow the instructions carefully. The should be clear instructions in your game card manual as well.**



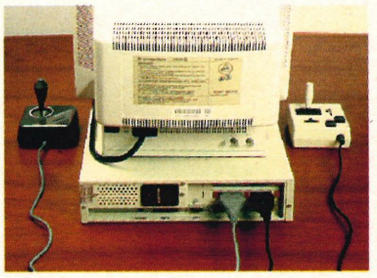
**Disconnect the PC from the mains, and identify the screws needed to remove the casing. There are usually only four or five screws to undo at the back of the machine, and the only danger here is that you might unscrew the power supply by mistake. Keep the screws in a safe place and then ease off the lid of the PC: it usually either lifts upwards, or slides back.**



**This shows the bank of expansion slots inside the PC. Remove the blanking plate of the slot you wish to use (keep it safe as you might want it again). Insert your game card so the card connector is fully pushed into the slot: a firm-but-gentle rocking technique works better than pushing downwards. The joystick port should now be aligned with the space where the blanking plate was.**



**This picture shows the PC complete with new game ports. Slide the case back on carefully, making sure you don't snag any of the cabling inside. The new joystick interface should fit snugly into place, without bowing, or sagging. At this stage, you may want to tighten only a couple of the screws, just in case you need to get back into the box to adjust the game card again.**



**Lastly, plug in your joysticks, load up a game and start playing. If you have problems with programs not recognising the joystick, check the card is fully fitted into the expansion slot, check any potential confusion over whether your interface is port one or port two (see your instruction manual), and also check that the program itself isn't still set up for mouse or keyboard control.**

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# *Buyers'* guide

## Suppliers

**Computermate,** The Wheel, Robin Way, Cuffley, Hertfordshire EN6 4QB
Tel (0707) 875757; Fax (0707) 875513

**DataGEM** Ltd, 23 Pitfield Street, London N1 6HB
Tel (071) 608 0624 Fax (071) 608 0688

**Euromax,** Bessingby Way, Bridlington, North Humberside, YO16 4SJ
Tel (0262) 601006 Fax (0602) 601006

**Evesham Micros,** Unit 9 St Richards Road, Evesham, Worcs WR11 6TD
Tel (0386) 765500 Fax (0386) 765354

**Mail Order Express Distribution,** PO Box 95, Woodford Green, Essex IG8 0PH
Tel(081) 559 1704 or (081) 504 8377

**PC Action**, 60 Constance Road, Whitton, Twickenham TW2 7JA
Tel (081) 893 3630; Fax (081) 893 3630

**Powermark plc**, Premier House, 112 Station Road, Edgware, Middlesex HA8 7AQ
Tel (081) 951 3355; Fax (081) 905 6233

**RC Simulations Unit** 1B Beehive Trading Estate, Crews Hole Road, St George, Bristol, BS5 8AY
Tel (0272) 550900; Fax (0272) 411052

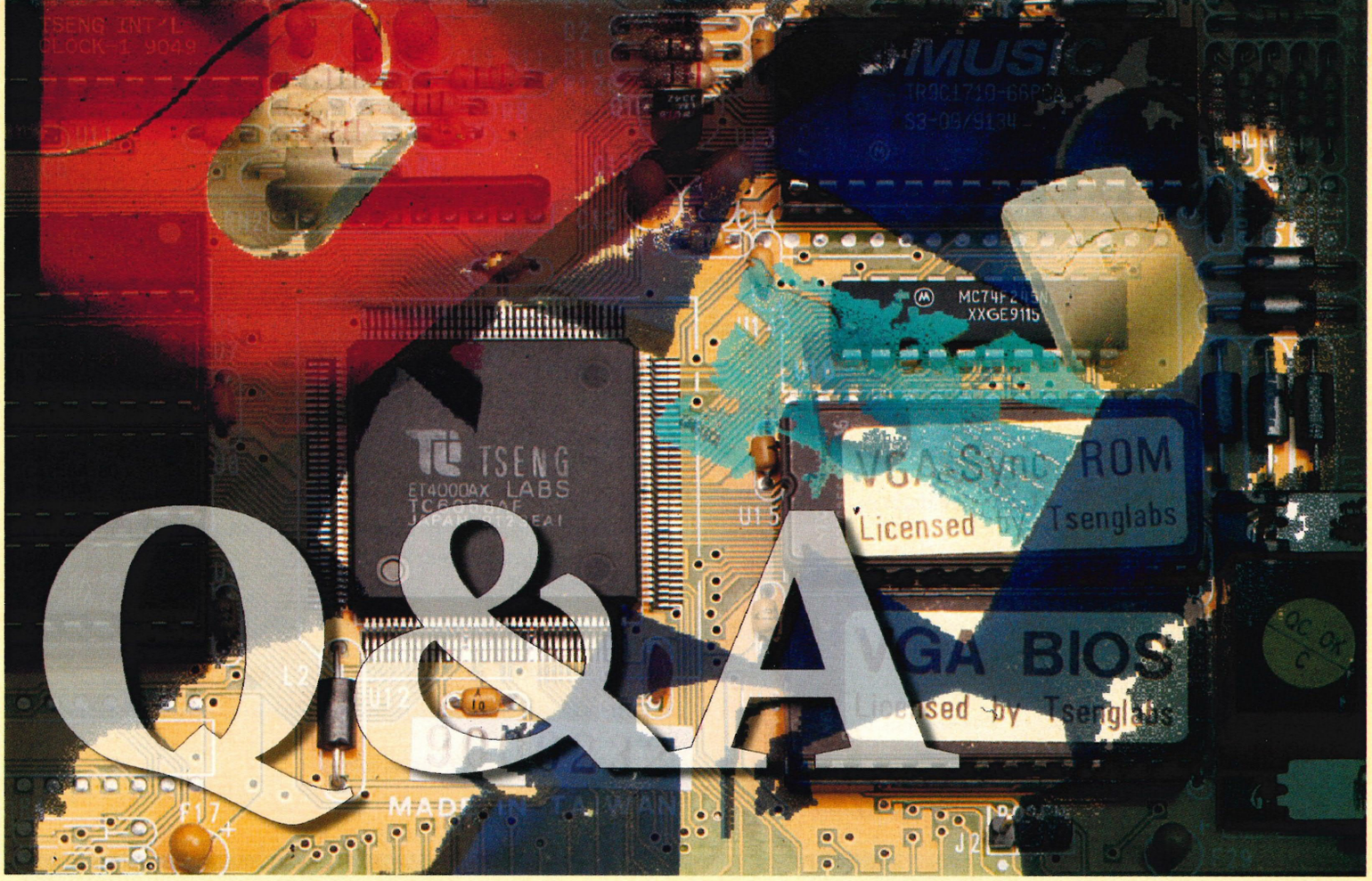
**Special Reserve**, PO Box 847, Harlow, Essex, CM1 9PH (NB Only supplies members, membership from £6.99)
Tel (0279) 600204

**Viz Trade Company Limited**, 293B London Road, Burgess Hill, West Sussex, RH15 9QJ
Tel (0444) 239999 Fax (0444) 230972

**YVU International**, 272 Kidmore Road, Caversham Heights, Reading RG4 7NF
Tel (0734) 472085; Fax(0734) 463444

## Joysticks

| Joystick | Price | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| *Advanced Gravis Joystick* | *£39.99* | |
| *CH Flightstick* | *£34.95* | *Includes ratched throttle control and 7ft long connection cable* |
| *Commander Joystick* | *£16.00* | *Stick and base mounted fire buttons* |
| *Euromax Digital Joystick Adapter* | *£17.99* | |
| *Euromax Zoomer* | *£49.99* | *Flight yoke* |
| *Flight Yoke 2000* | *£29* | *Two fire buttons, throttle control, desktop clamp and suction cups* |
| *Free Flight* | | *A long stick with optical sensors and no base* |
| *Freewheel* | *£36.99* | *Steering wheel, suits most driving games* |
| *Gravis PC MouseStick* | *£89.95* | *Very accurate optical (3-button mouse) joystick, auto-calibrating, three-quarter card including game port* |
| *Kraft Thunderstick* | *£16.99* | |
| *M500 Pistolgrip* | *£17.99* | |
| *M600 Analogue Precision Joystick* | *£17.99* | |
| *Mach I* | *£17.95* | *Small control stick* |
| *Mach I Plus* | *£21.95* | *With built-in fire button* |
| *Mach II* | *£24.95* | |
| *Mach III* | *£29.95* | |
| *Mouse Yoke* | *£29.95* | *Uses your existing mouse for smooth and accurate control* |
| *Quickshot Aviator 5* | *£45* | *Flight Yoke* |
| *Quickshot Warrior 5* | *£11.00* | |
| *Quickshot Games Card Plus* | *£15.99* | *Twin port games card to allow use of two joysticks* |
| *Sigma Ray Analogue Joystick* | *£9.99* | |
| *Suncom Analog Edge Joystick* | *£29.99* | *Two-way switchable fire buttons and aircraft-style grip, complete with dual input gameboard half -card* |
| *Suncom Analog Extra Joystick* | *£39.99* | *Variable autofire, four switchable fire buttons, aircraft-style grip, complete with dual input gameboard half card* |
| *Thrustmaster Flight Control Stick* | *£79.95* | *Replica Phantom joystick with extra fire buttons and quick access to different views for use with Chuck Yeager's Air Combat, Aces of the Pacific and Falcon 3* |
| *Thrustmaster Flight Control Stick Pro* | *£109.95* | |
| *Thrustmaster Weapons Control System* | *£74.95* | *F15 type throttle control with settings for 22 games* |
| *The Yoke* | *£23* | |
| *The Yoke Pro* | *£36* | |
| *Virtual Pilot* | *£79.95* | *Flight yoke* |




# Q&A

**Bemused, befuddled, or bewildered about your PC? If your hardware gives you headaches and you're stricken with software seize-ups, share your problem with Q&A's Mike James and he'll endeavour to help**

## Copy protection problems

Q I have just purchased Chessmaster 3000, which I can't get to function. It seemed to load on to the hard disk but after the appearance of the titles and a chess board, the following message appears on the screen:

**CRITICAL ERROR!**
**LAST LOADED RESOURCE =42**
**HARDWARE CONFIGURATION HAS CHANGED, PLEASE REINSTALL**

Is this software, hardware, or an incompatibility problem? Your advice would be most appreciated. My computer is a Packard-Bell Legend 200 with a 12MHz 286 processor and DOS 5.0 is installed.

**M Spasovich**
**Coventry**

*A It might be a memory problem — almost anything can be a memory problem — but in this case it sounds like a copy protection problem. Many copy protection methods rely on files on the disk drive being in a particular physical location and the bit of the error message about the configuration changing makes it sound as though something has moved. The solution is to send the original disks back for a replacement set.*

## Hard vs soft cache

Q I am trying to optimise the performance of my 40MHz 386DX. My hard drive has a 64k built-in cache. Would using some of my RAM as a disk cache speed up the operation of the disk? Without a software cache, the SI rating of my disk is 8.2. With a soft cache installed in extended memory, this rating falls to 6.3.

However, the disk appears faster when the software cache is installed! Which would be the optimum configuration?

**C J Biddle**
**Oadby**
**Leicester**

*A There is no clear cut answer to this question. A disk cache speeds up the operation of a disk by keeping recently read data in memory. If it's a choice between a hardware cache and a software cache, then the hardware cache is usually to be preferred because it works faster.*

*However, a 64K built-in cache isn't that large and a software cache of several megabytes would probably help it along. Depending on how each cache is implemented it is just possible to imagine a situation in which they would slow each other down — it's not likely but it is just possible.*

*The Norton SI rating is a mixed measure of machine performance in that it a tests CPU speed, RAM speed and disk speed in a variety of ways. The slow-down that is reported could be because the CPU is spending time looking after the disk cache. To discover the effect of a disk cache on the disk you really need something that measures only disk performance — like the disk index in Norton Sysinfo. In the absence of any hard measurements, my best guess is that a large soft cache — 1-2Mb — would overwhelm the effect of a 64K hard cache and so speed up overall disk operation.*

## Noisy portables?

Q At present I have a Compaq 386 laptop which I would like to connect to a soundcard for use with a synthesiser. Is it possible to connect up a soundcard to a laptop?

Obviously, there isn't enough internal space, so can they be connected externally? I'm particularly interested in the Roland LAPC-1 or SCC-1.

**Mark Finlay**
**Scotland**

*A The problem with adding any adapter card to a portable is that they generally don't have any standard expansion slots that you can plug the card into. The only solution to this problem is to use a customised add-on that connects to the portable via the parallel printer port, the serial port, or the non-standard expansion connector that most portables have. Your only hope is to discover whether Compaq has a docking module for your particular portable which allows it to make use of standard PC periph-*

*erals. A docking module more or less converts your portable into a desktop PC.*

*As to the choice between the LAPC-1 and the SCC-,1 all I will say is that the SCC-1 is a replacement for the LAPC-1.*

## More than one sound card

**Q** I own a PC 386 33MHz which I have had for around two years, and I also have a Sound Blaster and Roland board installed in the machine. The problem is with the Sound Blaster board. Over the last five to six months I have noticed that certain games were not working properly when the Sound Blaster was selected for music and sound effects. But when I ran the same games with the Roland selected there was no problemplaying them.

When I first installed the Sound Blaster board and ran the set-up program, the program could not detect the interrupt IRQ7, which is the board's default value. So I changed the jumper to IRQ5 and the set-up program worked fine, but these games kept on crashing.

I have changed my Sound Blaster board with no success, so the problem is not with the board. I think there is something on my machine that is using up IRQ7 and these games are using this IRQ7 as default for the music and sound effects, except for Ultima 7 and Underworld where you can specify the IRQ Channel, but still these games crashed even with the right IRQ Channel selected so something must be conflicting.

**D A Evans**
**Cheadle Hulme**

**Q** I am one of those fortunate people to have both the Roland LAPC-1 and SoundBlaster Pro sound cards installed in my machine. However, it's not all plain sailing.

I have just tried loading Lure Of The Temptress, but it crashes as soon as the title screen appears. All I get is a flashing musical icon in the bottom left hand corner of the screen. I have contacted Virgin, which appears to be oblivious to this, although I am awaiting a written reply.

Other games also react strangely to this. Both LucasArts' Monkey Island games would crash on the first attempt, and only after soft booting my machine would it load, using Sound Blaster audio only.

Since the LAPC-1 is far better in terms of sound quality, why doesn't software written for either soundcards default to Roland if both are installed?

**John Hughes**
**London**

**Q** On my previous PC I happily used a Roland CM-32L sound module connected to a CMS-401 MIDI card for games purposes.

The card was set at an address of 330H, which is the same address as the Adaptec 1542-B SCSI card in my new machine. The SCSI card needs to be set at this address, as my hard drive is connected to it, and the machine will not boot if it is set to an alternative address.

Unfortunately, none of the games I have tried will work if the MIDI card is configured differently, so I'm left with the Roland sitting idle on my desk.

Is there any way to alter the address at which games look for the Roland, similar to the way Access allows Sound Blaster users to change the I/O address in the game Links? If not, is there any chance of software houses including this option in future releases?

**Robert Fitzpatrick**
**Swansea**

**A** *I have contacted Roland and Creative Technology and neither know of any problems in using the cards together provided that they are both set up correctly and no conflicts exist. (I was going to set up an experiment with both sound cards in one machine, but Roland wanted me to sign my life away to borrow one of their boards!)*

*Of course it is the 'no conflicts' part of the statement that is difficult to ensure. Both the Roland and the Sound Blaster default to the same port address and the same interrupt number.*

*Now I'm sure that you don't want to know about port addresses and interrupt numbers, and you don't have to as long as you remember the golden rule that no two devices can use the same port address and interrupt numbers. It doesn't matter what they are, but each device must have one of its very own.*

*To check that there are no conflicts, try running Test.sbc, or Test.spb, which test the Sound Blaster card. If the test program crashes then you need to change the setting that it was just testing — the manual tells you how, and what values are most likely to make it work.*

*Now we come to the difficult bit. The Sound Blaster card has a well-known and standardised way of telling software where it is, ie, its port number, IRQ number and an extra specification: its DMA channel. It does this by adding an environment variable to MS-DOS that supplies this information.*

*The trouble is that the Roland cards don't have a simple way of letting software know how they have been set up and so some lazier programmers have just written their software to use the Roland defaults. What this means in practice is that you should always try to resolve conflicts between the Sound Blaster and the Roland by moving the Sound Blaster card.*

*Of course, if the conflict is between the Roland card and a device that you cannot move, like an Adaptec SCSI interface, then the Roland has to move. In this case, you will encounter software that doesn't work with the Roland.*

*In an effort to solve problems like this, Roland would like you to tell them about any software that doesn't work when any of their products are set to anything other than the default.*

*Please write toChris Padgett, at Roland UK Ltd, Atlantic Close, Swansea Enterprise Park, Swansea, SA7 9FJ, and he will do his best to make the programmers see the error of their ways! He would also like to know about any programs that sound different on the SCC-1, compared with the LAPC.*

## Extra RAM?

**Q** In November I decided to upgrade from my Amiga to a PC. I purchased a 40MHz 386DX with 4Mb RAM. I am incredibly chuffed with my new toy — the more thought-provoking games, such as flight-sims and RPGs are just so much faster and more colourful than on my trusty old Amiga, and although Windows 3.1 is not quite as user friendly as Workbench, it is much more capable and 'configurable'.

This brings me to my problem — although it may seem as if I have blown £1,200 on a games machine, I do in fact use my PC primarily for word processing and spreadsheet calculations. I therefore spend most of my time within the Windows environment, and have to reboot my machine under a different configuration if I want to run any games.

Initially I just used a basic start-up disc with my optimised Config.sys and Autoexec.bat files on it, but now I use a shareware utility called Config, but I still have to exit from Windows, run CFG from the command prompt, choose my optimised set-up, and finally reboot the machine.

Is there a way of changing extended memory (used by Windows) to expanded memory (used by games) without rebooting? Ideally, I would like to run a batch program from Windows which would do just that.

I do realise that there is still another problem in that I have a host of TSRs and device drivers running, and that my conventional memory is reduced to 537K, which is not enough for most games. If I used a program such as Qemm386, would I free more conventional memory to let me use Windows all of the time instead of continually going through the hassle of switching configurations?

To sum up then, is there a way of switching between XMS and EMS without booting up from a different Config.sys file, and is there a program which would free more conventional memory?

**D K Sington**
**Southampton**

**A** *The answer to your problem is to change the memory manager that you are using. Both the latest versions of Qemm and 386Max claim to have implemented dynamically reconfigurable expanded memory. What this means is that you can set up expanded memory that is available in MS-DOS, but when Windows starts to run it is all returned to the extended memory pool. The problem with using anything but the memory manager, Emm386, that comes with MS-DOS is that you are*

*moving off into the realms of the non-standard and even if there are no compatibility problems you can't help but wonder if the last system crash might not have been due to this.*

*Having dynamically reconfigurable memory solves half of your problem. As you say, the drivers and TSRs are the second half. You don't really need an enhanced memory manger to move these out of conventional memory, since the standard Emm386 will do that much for you, but if you buy something like Qemm to solve the first part of the problem, it will do the second half as well.*

*Having said all this I would like to throw the cat among the pigeons by pointing out a different way of looking at your problem. What you are complaining about is essentially a shortage of memory — so why not buy another 4Mb?*

*It wouldn't cost much more than, say, Qemm, and with 8Mb your Windows applications would go much faster.*

*How does this help the MS-DOS situation? Well, with 8Mb you can afford to allocate up to 1Mb as expanded memory on a permanent basis — and there are very few MS-DOS programs that can make good use of more than 1Mb of expanded memory. Oh yes, they will use more, but you will not see any noticeable performance gain!*

*As to the second half of the problem, ie, freeing more conventional memory, it may come as a surprise, but Windows applications benefit from a large amount of available conventional memory as well as MS-DOS applications. See either PC Review's article on this in Issue 18 (pages 112-117), or use Emm386 or Qemm to clear as much space as you can by moving drivers, etc, up into high memory and everyone will be happy and you will not need to worry about multiple configurations.*

## If you can't stand the heat ...

**Q** I have a PC that will only work reliably (almost) with the lid off. The PC will always boot up from cold, but with the case on it will 'lock-up' in the first half hour of use.

Once it has started locking (not responding to any keyboard input, usually stopping with the hard disk access light on) it often takes several attempts to re-boot. The less time you give the PC to recover the less far through the boot-up procedure you get.

The lock-up can be encouraged by frequent DOS commands such as Chkdsk and Xcopy, as well as Arj and Zip. Use of the a: drive also speeds disaster. Locking-up also happens when using games and 'serious' software although it is less easy to predict.

I have tried checking the fit of all ribbons, cards and wires and even exchanged the I/O card with a friend who has an identical (non-claustrophobic) PC. I have also tried running some diagnostic software (Norton and Checkit) but I get no warning messages.

**Paul Barker**
**Runcorn**

**A** *Your machine has a heat fault. When you first switch your machine on, it is stone cold. It starts to warm up and continues toget hotter throughout the day, until turned off again.*

*It can take 12 to 24 hours for a machine to reach its maximum temperature — and this is the reason why sometimes accidentally leaving a machine on overnight can mean that you come back to find it not working in the morning!*

*Recent machines using a 486 processor suffer from this problem more than earlier XT and 286 machines. The 486 can get hot enough to fry an egg!*

*Your comments about particular actions speeding up the failure could be just coincidence, but if they aren't then it sounds like a power supply overheating fault.*

*The floppy disk and the hard disk both make heavy use of the +12V supply and this could cause the power supply to overload at the working temperature. The fact that the longer you wait, the more successful you are at restarting the machine, is also characteristic of a heat fault.*

*How to cure it? Difficult ... if you are adventurous you could try a hair dryer to heat up different parts of the system when you first switch it on and see which one causes it to fail. My best guess is that it will be the power supply, and you will need to get it replaced.*

## Q&A update

### RAM chip speeds and SIPs/SIMMs

Until very recently, I have been giving the advice that when upgrading RAM chips, SIPs (Single Inline Packages) or SIMMs (Single Inline Memory Modules), the speed of the device didn't matter as long as it was fast enough or, more exactly, faster than the machine really needs. The speed of a RAM chip refers to how fast it can read and write data, and the theory is that as long as the chip can work faster than the CPU tries to read and write data, then everything should be just fine.

Unfortunately, reality isn't quite this simple. Chips actually have a range of timing specifications that govern how fast they do particular parts of the read/write cycle. There are now RAM chips, mainly built into SIMMs, that can actually complete what is called a refresh cycle too fast with the result that they lose data. So, crazy though it may seem, it is possible to fit SIMMs that are too fast for the machine. If you cannot get the type of SIMM that the motherboard manual suggests then I would advise checking with a dealer before buying faster SIMMs. If you want to fit the memory chips yourself, then it is the newer 3-chip SIMM that is causing the problem

While on the subject of SIMMs, it must be something of a worry to owners of machines that use SIPs that this type of memory is rapidly going out of fashion. If you find it difficult to get hold of SIP memory you might like to consider soldering in a SIMM socket in its place. Yes, that's right, the pin connections for a 32-pin SIP are the same as for a 32-pin SIMM. This can be done reasonably easily, as long as you are good with a soldering iron — but make sure you know what you're doing, and remember, I didn't tell you to do it!

Finally it is worth knowing that many new motherboards are starting to incorporate 16/18-bit SIMM sockets. The most common type of SIMMs is a 8/9-bit device.

When you plug one of these in you provide so many memory locations each holding eight bits. Usually these have to be used in pairs, or even fours, because modern processors need 16- or 32-bit memory. The new SIMMs provide 16-bit memory in a single module so they can be used in ones or twos to increase the memory. The only problem with them at the moment is that they are more expensive, so ask carefully what sort of memory expansion any new machine you are contemplating will use. In the long run, I'd expect all new machines to switch to 16/18-bit SIMMs as standard.

■ **Mike James**

***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.***

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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!**

## The key to beating piracy ...

There is no doubting that software piracy is a major problem in the computer world. It robs the programmers of their hard-earned royalties, and degrades the quality of software through lack of funds (or so we are told).

In an effort to combat this, many publishers use copy protection such as looking up a word from a manual of codewheels.

Besides being extremely annoying these methods are fairly useless. Anyone with a photocopier can easily bypass these methods and 'pirate' to their hearts' content. Even these dark papered sheets that supposedly cannot be copied, (eg, Sim City), can easily be photocopied with some careful adjusting of the copier settings.

Games such as Speedball 2 and TV Sports Boxing (both of which incidentally, are excellent), use a key disk, ie, the disk must be kept in the drive for verification of its legitimacy while loading.

This system works perfectly, does not detract from the game, and is not nearly so annoying as other fiddly methods. OK, so you can't make back-up copies of your disk, but so what. If the disk is faulty or is broken, send it to the publisher and get a new one. If it is lost, it is your fault, and the publishers can hardly be expected to reimburse you. If you were to lose, say, a CD, you wouldn't expect to be given a new one.

The traditional methods of copy protection are, in my view, outdated. Games with a key disk run happily on a hard drive, and thanks to a moment's reading from the floppy drive, the disk's validity is assured.

Publishers are constantly telling us that piracy causes higher prices.This method would reduce the price of games too, which are ridiculously high at the moment. I think all software houses should use key disks. It will stamp out piracy completely, reduce prices, increase quality, and wouldn't the computer world be a happier place?

**Mark Grant**
**Nuneaton**

## ... and a key to spotting it

I have noticed that there do not seem to be many letters about software piracy recently, so I thought I ought to write in with this simple three question test:

1. You have just shelled out on a new 486 with a 60Mhz processor and SVGA graphics. You don't have enough money left to buy a game to test out this incredible machine. Then a friend offers you a copy of Ultima Underworld 2.

Do you, a) Refuse?

b) Accept?

2. You aren't planning on buying a game, but a (so-called) friend offers you a hacked version of a game.

Do you, a) Accept, because you wouldn't have bought a game, anyway — so you can't be doing anything bad to the market?

b) Accept knowing full well you are pirating software?

c) Refuse?

3. Finally, you're saving up for a game, but won't be able to afford it for another month.

Do you, a) Earn extra money to buy the game?

b) Wait for a month to buy it?

c) Pirate it off a friend, saving any cost or work?

Though all the answers are pretty obvious, how many of you (even those dedicated against piracy) would have the strength of will to refuse a copy of the game you've just found you won't be able to get for a long time. I nearly succumbed to the urge, when I was saving for Ultima 7, while only getting two quid a week!

But I urge you, don't pirate games, or you'll eventually destroy the PC games market. Be honest with yourself, don't kid yourself with naff excuses, ie, "Copying one game can't hurt the industry, surely..." That's what thousands of people say, in a feeble attempt to cover their conscience.

Or, "If game prices weren't so high, I wouldn't have to pirate games ..." If you didn't pirate games, the prices wouldn't be so high!

Having given my opinions on that, I may as well give my opinions on Lure of the Temptress. Though Virtual Theatre is a nice idea, I feel that in converting the idea to the game format, it has lost the basic idea of characters "acting individually". Also the gameplay around it is a little feeble: for instance, anyone who's seen the end sequence will probably agree with me! Don't get me wrong, it isn't terrible, but I feel Revolution should come up to date with the modern standards of adventure gaming before shouting in the streets about Virtual Theatre!

**Tim Phillips**
**Berks**

*I can think of plenty of people who dislike the key disk system advocated by Mr Grant (although personally I'd rather keep a key disk handy than plough through a manual counting lines and words) and it seems no more effective against the detemined cracker than codewheels, manual protection, et al. Anyway, I'd be interested to hear what other people think about this, and also about the issues raised in Mr Phillips' letter — are these the main reasons for 'casual copying'? There's no disputing that illegal copying has led to higher prices (some software houses reckon they have only actually sold a tenth of their disks that are in circulation, so we all pay for illegal copies), but paradoxically, the cheaper games get pirated just as much as the more expensive titles.*

*PC Review, unsurprisingly, has a pretty simple stance on the subject of software piracy: don't do it. Quite apart from the moral and legal arguments, piracy has done enormous financial damage to the industry, and this has — inescapably, and with little alternative — been passed on to the consumer in the way of high prices and unwieldy copy protection systems.*

## Virus-free zone

I was quite impressed with your survey of modems, BBSs and comms. However, the last paragraph betrayed a startling ignorance of the BBS community.

The last place I would expect to find a virus is on a BBS. Any reputable BBS is dependent on its reputation and good image for use. A BBS would soon find itself without callers if viruses were not detected quickly. All BBSs I know of use stringent virus scans on all uploaded software. BBSs are safe places to collect software, but it would still be prudent to scan all new software before use, even shrink-wrap. The most common method of virus spreading is sharing software. Since swapped software is not checked (your friend doesn't have a virus, does he?) it's very easy to contract a virus. Also note that many virus cannot spread through BBSs, such as boot sector viruses that require a floppy to live on.

I write because the BBS community needs all the support it can get, between the virus profiteers and the scandals that paint all BBS users as anarcho sex perverts.

Another point is that you missed out the excellent 4DOS from your list of alternative DOS shells. It is miles better than any other replacement, and sports such niceties as 'aliasing', better batch files, more commands, command histories, the ability to load itself into XMS/EMS/UMBs, colour directories and basically make life a lot easier for the DOS user.

**Christian Mogensen**
**@CIX**

## In defence of Scrabble

I refer to Paul W Hunt's letter in the March issue of PC Review relating to the US Gold version of Scrabble. While I agree with most of Mr Hunt's complaints, they are of minor importance when measured against the plus points of the program. I am a hardened Scrabble player of 25 years experience and I can state categorically that this program is nothing short of brilliant!

Over the years, I have played computer Scrabble on the Spectrum (good considering this machine's limitations), the Commodore 64 (disappointing), the Atari ST (getting better), the Amiga (going downhill again), the early PC version (the pits), and Virgin's latest deluxe Windows edition (pretty, but weak).

Only with the US Gold version have I met my match. The speed of response is incredible on all levels (no more making a cup of tea while the machine checks all combinations of letters) and it really does contain every word allowed in competition play. For the serious Scrabble player, graphics, letter manipulation, the annoying double disk protection device, cost and even the wonky board take second place to the ultimate game play.

This really is the program for the *erudite* (for which combination you might score over 80 points if strategically placed on the board).

**Michael Summers**
**London**

# Star Letter

## Sequels: part two

**May I reply to Mr Higgins (Star Letter, Issue 18)? He remarks on the naffness of F15 III, following its superb intro, then extends this to all PC games. I nominate him for the Kinnock Award for Airy Generalisation, and would like to take issue with him.**

**Firstly, all his comments about F15 III actually prove the frequent failure of sequels to live up to the original (though plenty, eg, some of the Sierra efforts and Monkey Island do). Why is it that the games which spawn sequels (eg, F15, Populous, The Terminator, Paperboy, Lethal Weapon, etc) are often those which were either rubbish in the first place or whose sequels must bear a startling similarity to the original, with improved sound and graphics? Here are some suggestions for sequels I want to see:**

**Civilization II: how about a simulation of interstellar empires! Why does the game stop when you reach Alpha Centauri? Why does it ever stop?**

**Sim City II: The Disaster Zone. Take control of present day Los Angeles and confront earthquakes, riots, droughts, mud-slides, bush fires ...**

**The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes II: The Case of the Missing Millions. On the trail of Robert Maxwell.**

**And here are some sequels I don't want to see, but doubtless will: Kings Quest X: Quest for Roberta Williams. The famous designer herself has gone missing, and king Duncan must find her. Sierra is counting on you ...**

**Terminator 3: the inevitable attempt to cash in on the inevitable sequel to the inevitable sequel of the original.**

**Populous III: Raise land, lower land, raise land, lower... I can think of better ways to exercise my index finger.**

**Secondly, all he seems to see is "quality intros and boring or just plain poor games". While it is true that the introductions on some games are infinitely better than the game which follows, he should not condemn every PC game simply by quoting one flight simulator. I challenge him to play Ultima Underworld, Monkey Island 2, The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes, Rex Nebular, or even F117A, and then repeat this statement.**

**Thirdly, he complains about having spent £45 on F15 III. Didn't he know that he could have ordered it mail order and saved £10-£20? He may have had to wait a few days, but surely the saving justifies the wait, particularly as he did not seem to have tried the game out in the store.**

**Finally, he wants to pay £400-£500 for an Amiga 1200 (more if he wants a hard disk monitor) to save money on buying games such as F15 III. As the average price of an Amiga game from ECU seems to be only £2-£3 lower than that of a PC game, he would have to buy between 130 and 250 games for his Amiga, costing at least £3,000 and perhaps £5,000 to recoup his expenditure. Does his letter come from Norman Lamont's Primer on Economics?**

**Peter John**
**Surrey**

## The future of shareware

I am writing about shareware games. They have obviously starting improving in quality with authors such as Apogee and Epic Megagames. They are becoming more graphically orientated and while most of the current high quality software games are fairly palatable, as they become more like commercial games, I fear we are going to lose that playability. I have never found a commercial game that made me want to keep coming back (not even Lemmings!), but certain Public Domain and shareware programs, such as Space Invaders and Sopwith, I have had for almost five years, and I still enjoy playing them.

I have always looked upon shareware as a place where authors, who maybe are still learning how to use their language or are not up to the standards of commercial writers, can sell their software that may not be beautifully presented but is still fun to play. Admittedly, quite a lot of shareware is rubbish, but there are some good programs available. However, if shareware continues the way it is going, then the authors of these programs will be too embarrassed to sell their shareware because it is not full of brilliant graphics and sound, and we will come to the stage where our share-

ware is like most of today's commercial software packages which are VGA only, need a 386 to run, fill up your hard disk and turn out to be nothing but a group of 256-colour pictures and some nice music.

**Timothy Rushford**
**Hants**

## The price is right

There appears to be an ever increasing popular theory that PC games are too expensive. I'm not some rich kid with oodles of money, but I think PC prices are reasonable. Console games can cost up to £60, and personally I think £60 is too expensive for a game which lacks quality and depth. However, paying up to £45 for a game like King's Quest 6 or Monkey Island 2 is fine. OK, I agree that you can pay £40 for junk like Dragon's Lair, but if you read your reviews properly then you won't have this problem. I, like a good many other people buy a lot of software from computer shows and mail order, where prices are greatly reduced, making the games even better value for money.

If there is one thing I completely disagree with, it is Stephen Higgins' opinion (Issue 17) that people are going to buy A1200s instead of PCs. The variety on the Amiga is a lot less (ie, only arcade games) and the quality is appalling. I for one would gladly pay an extra £10 or £15 for a game with more plot, digitising speech, incredible 256-colour graphics and a stunning sound track.

Finally, have these people who are complaining about prices been buying the right games? Stephen Higgins for example, said he had just been ripped off by buying F15 Strike Eagle 3; has he perhaps played AV-8B Harrier Assault of Falcon 3.0 (both were rated higher)? I can understand people who buy rubbish, like Risky Woods or Campaign being not entirely pleased, but if you have just gone out and bought Ultima Underworld or Fate of Atlantis, then you can hardly complain about the price.

**Christopher McClan**
**Surrey**

## Curse of Maxwell

I am an avid adventure gamer who has now reached an emotional point in life which has been forced upon me by a now deceased past citizen. I never thought that the death of Robert Maxwell could possibly affect me; I only ever read the Mirror once and that was because someone left it beside me on the 7.45 Maidenhead to Waterloo; I never had a pension or desired to work on Fleet Street. The mistake I made was to purchase Cadaver after playing your cover disk (demo version) and then write to Image Works looking for help with one of the puzzles, only to find that the guys from Anderson (official receivers) could not offer guidance on adventuring — funny, that! Oh well that's accountants for you — I bet they could have helped with Leisure Suit Larry!

Please can you either provide an address for the publisher of Cadaver or alternatively print this letter and we can see if any of your readers have completed the game.

**Karl Reynolds**
**Berkshire**

*For help with Cadaver, try calling The Bitmap Brothers on (071) 481 9214. The Bitmaps created Cadaver and currently reside at publisher Renegade.*

## Beneath a 386?

I was pleased to read the letter from Robert Lightbody (Issue 17) in which he agreed with my suggestion that software houses should continue to support 286 PCs. How embarrassing that in the same issue we that our new product Beneath a Steel Sky is to be written for 386 only.

I shall explain why we have had to change tack for our second product. Mr Lightbody stated that some software seems to run as well on a 286 as on a 386. For many simpler products I would agree with him an go further as to say that often the 386-only restrictions are imposed to cover up for inefficient code. For larger programs, however, it is necessary to use 'protected memory' — a feature that is available for 286s but is only technically practice for 386 PCs.

We intend to produce better product than our main competitor — LucasArts. To do this, we need, among other things, to pack each screen with animation. This requires large amounts of RAM and we have found that even the expanded memory (the 384K above conventional memory) is insufficient. The program needs to be able to access extended memory in protected mode directly. We have no choice, therefore, but to restrict the product to 386 PCs and above only.

Having said that, I would consider our product to be an exception because of the huge amount of graphics and music data that need to be in memory at any time. In general, I would reiterate my comments that companies do not need to and should not restrict their product to 386 unless it is technically necessary.

**Charles Cecil**
**Revolution Software**

## Driven mad

Will someone please tell me what is so impressive about Car & Driver? When I first read a preview of this game, I was led to believe that it would be based around test driving several high performance cars on a large, interconnected road system, complete with 3D scenery (ie, a proper driving simulator).

It was this, together with your review, which convinced me that Car & Driver would be an enjoyable game to play. So I decided to buy it.

I installed it on to my hard disk (all 7.9Mb), and began to play. Oh dear. I would really like to know why you consider this game to be good. Some of the graphics are rather nice (eg,. California Route 1 and New York Highway 97), but the rest are hardly outstanding.

Now let me say a few things about a game which I have nothing but praise for. That game is Formula One Grand Prix.

This is quite simply the best game that I have ever played. The graphics are excellent and super smooth (even at the highest detail level), and the game play is incredibly addictive.

Your review of this brilliant game puzzled me. In the TechSpec, your reviewer stated that a 25Mhz 386DX was required for the game to run smoothly. This is complete rubbish. Maybe he forgot to press the turbo button before he played the game? I own a 25Mhz 386DX and the graphics are ultra smooth with the highest level of detail and ground texturing. I really do think that you should advise your readers that this was a major error in the review.

I noted the correction in the following issue, whereby you stated that the detail could be turned down. However, this is not good enough, and the situation does need rectifying.

I first installed Formula One Grand Prix with all animations. However, this means that the game takes up 6.3Mb of hard disk space. After seeing the introductory sequence of animations, I promptly re-installed the game and saved myself 2.5Mb.

Why do game designers have to waste time and money on a pointless exercise like this? Surely they could both be put to a better use to improve the game itself (and let's face it, this is what most people part with their money for). It would be justifiable if the animations were an integral part of the game, but how many can claim that?

**Christopher Low**

# COMPETITION*WINNERS*

## Murderous Mystery Tour (Issue 15)

**Adams, of course, was the murderer in the detective puzzler we set you in Issue 15, and just about everyone who entered got the right answer. After much scrabbling in the PC Review hat, it was Chris Payne, from Sandhurst, Surrey's entry which emerged first, and wins the trip to a murder mystery in Wales. Copies of Alone in the Dark go to our doughty runners-up: Mr P Rodrigues, of Hornsey, London N8; Mrs Boniface, of Hastings, and Dr Jean-Marie Luijkx (Hope we've spelt it right) of Wimbledon, London SW19. Hearty congratulations to all four.**

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| Scalable Resident Fonts - in HP LJ III Emulation | - | 8 | 8 | 0 | 8 |
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| HP LaserJet III Emulation Included | - | YES | YES | - | YES |
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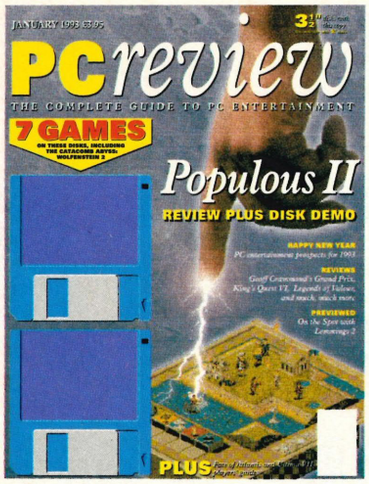
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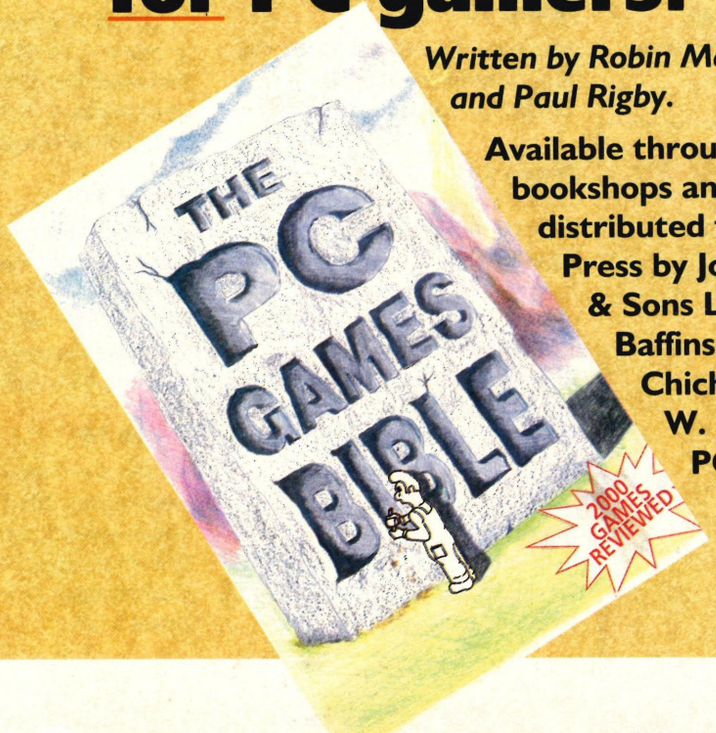
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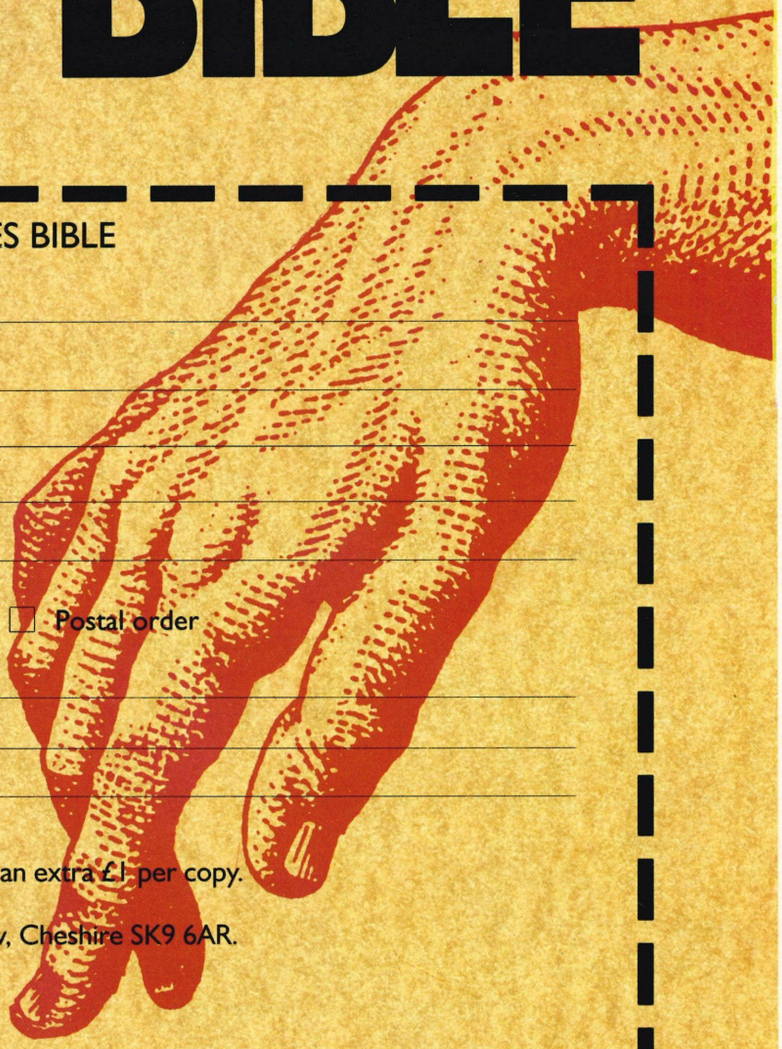



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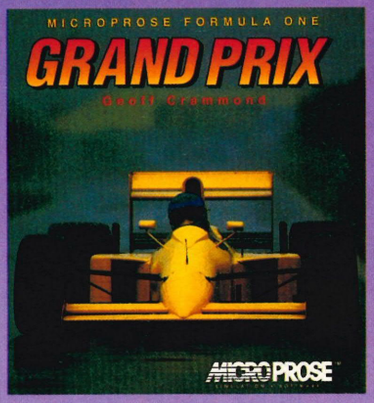
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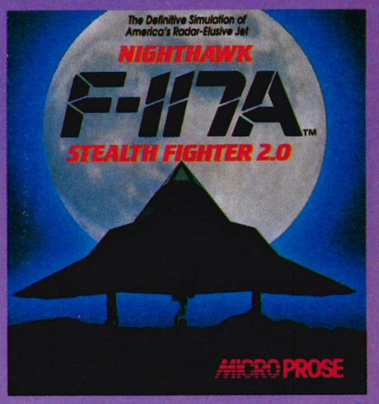



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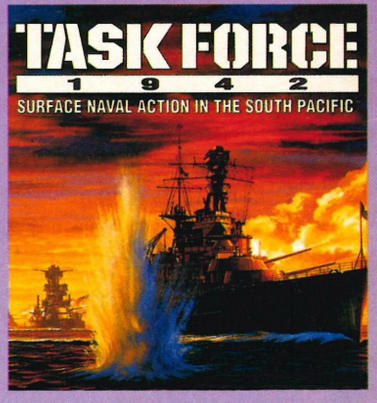
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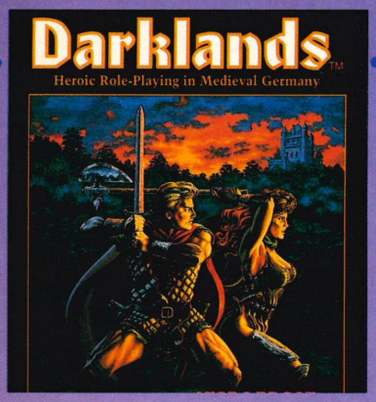
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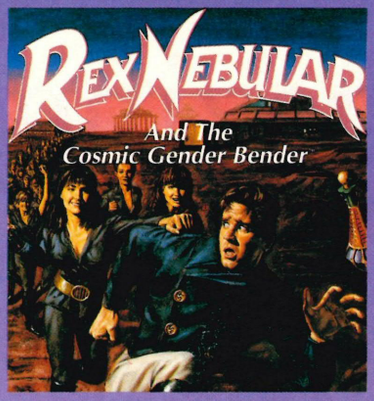
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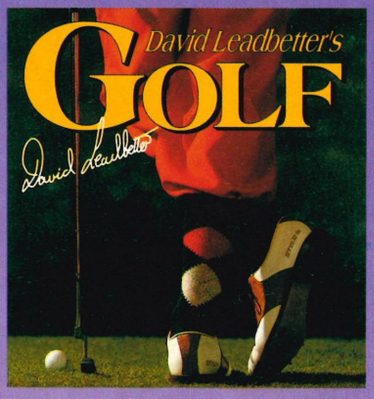
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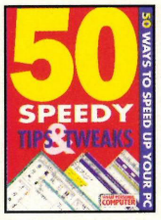
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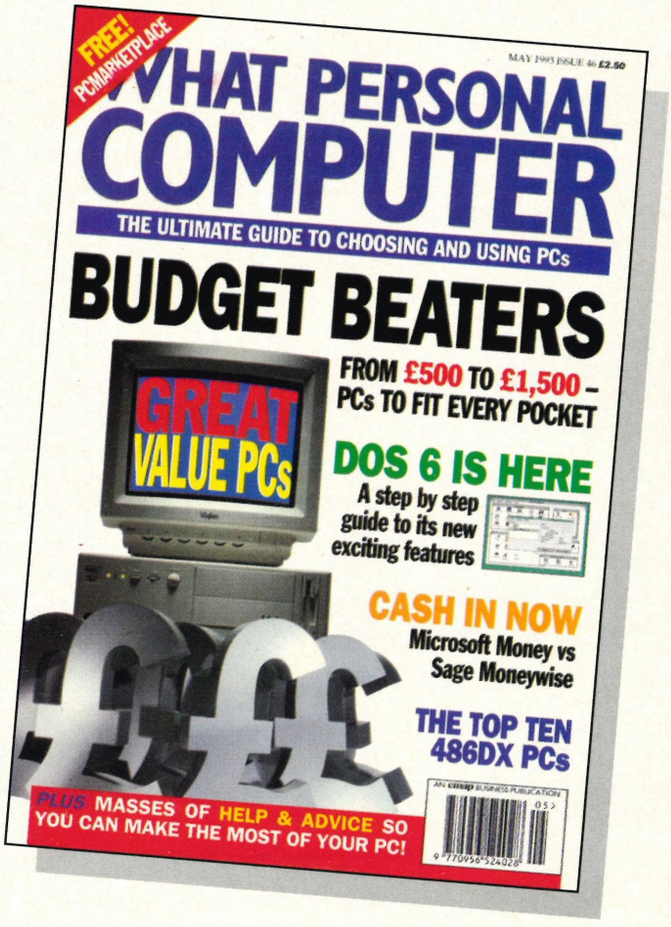

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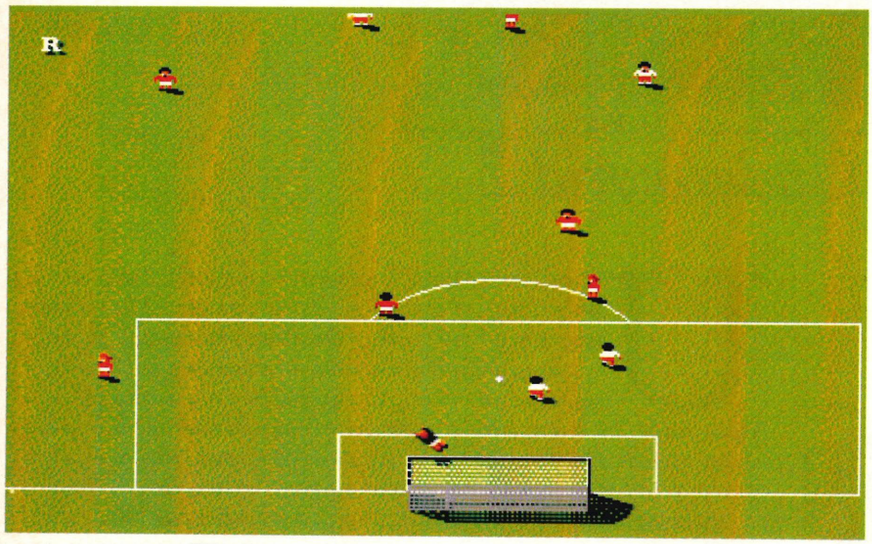
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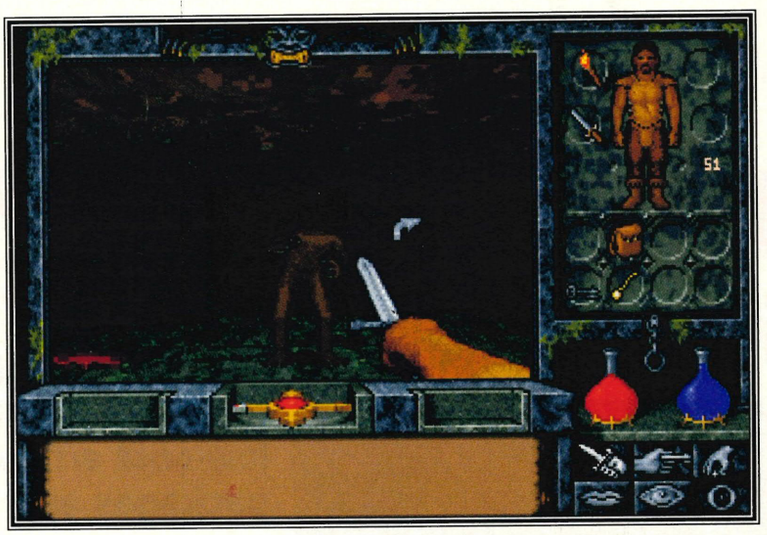
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**More tips for Ultima Underworld 2, Alone in the Dark and KGB.**

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# DMA Design's *Classic* GAME OF THE MONTH



## *Ultima Underworld 2*



**"This is the perfect marriage of technical excellence, stunning graphics, depth of gameplay and hack'n'slash fun. Too much!"**

Ultima Underworld 2: Labyrinth of Worlds, may seem a little new for the accolade 'classic', but since it is undoubtedly a good few strides ahead of The Stygian Abyss — which is *definitely* a classic — it seems a fair bet that it will take its place in the PC history books. Ultima Underworld 2 is a first person perspective dungeon adventure, in which character interaction, exploration, puzzle-solving, and combat all play a part in your bid to thwart the Guardian's plans to detsroy Britannia.

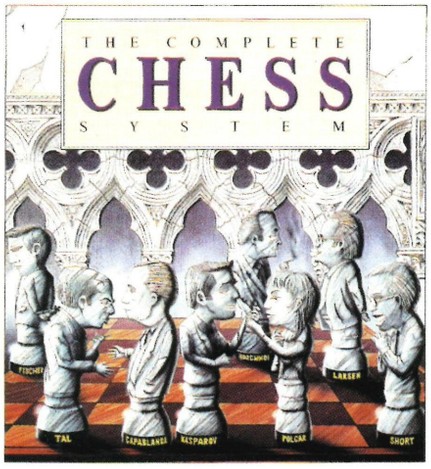
Underworld 2 isn't solely confined to subterranean passages, however. The game opens in Lord British's castle, and after the customary spell in the dungeons, there are also forests and other castles to explore. The graphics, particularly of dungeon creatures, are more clearly delineated and detailed than in Underworld 1, and the story is, if anything, even more complex.

### PROFILE

**DMA Design** is the team responsible for dreaming up Lemmings, Oh No! More Lemmings, and Lemmings 2: The Tribes. The company hails from Dundee in Scotland, and currently numbers 25 programmers, graphic artists, and support staff. DMA Design was founded in 1988 by David Jones and its first game, Menace, for the Commodore Amiga, was released in the same year. Menace was published by Psygnosis, which proved a fruitful partnership, since all DMA's subsequent titles have also been released through the Liverpool-based company.

These games include the shoot 'em up Blood Money, the PC version of Ballistix, and the forhtcoming games Walker, another shoot 'em up, and Hired Guns, a space adventure, which are both due out later this year. DMA is also heavily involved in research and development for CD platforms, including PC CD-ROM.

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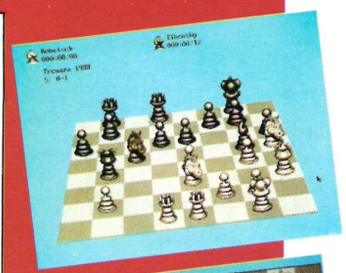

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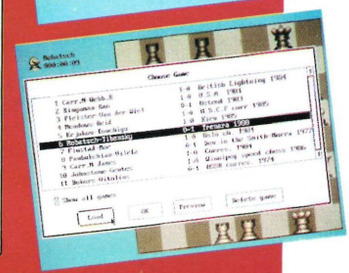
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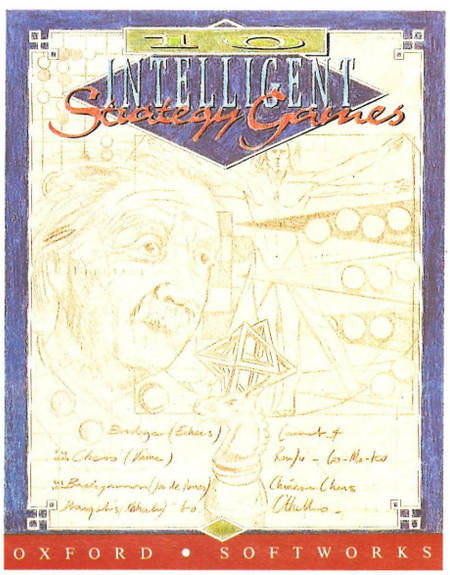
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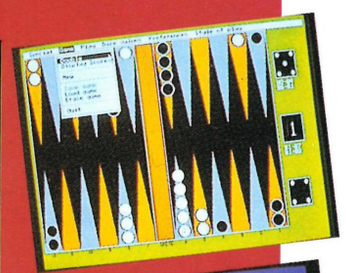
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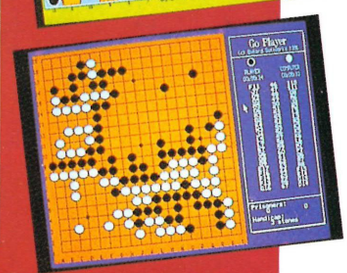
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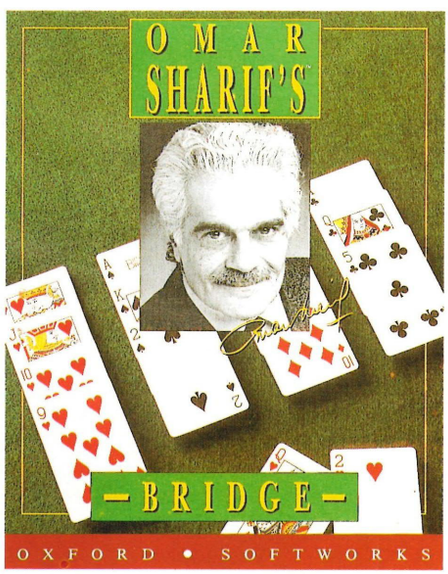
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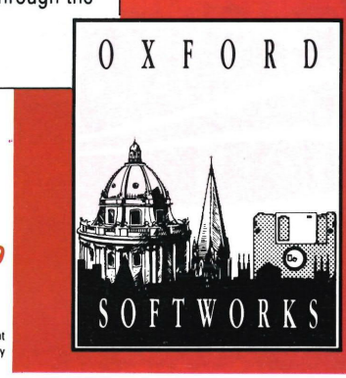


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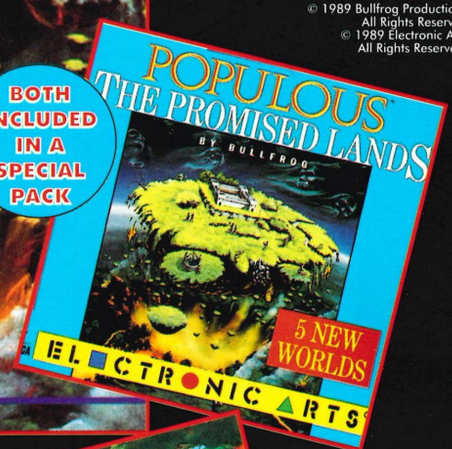
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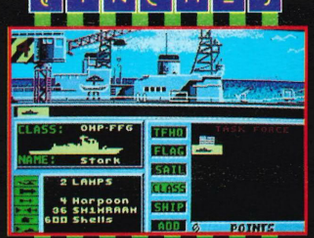




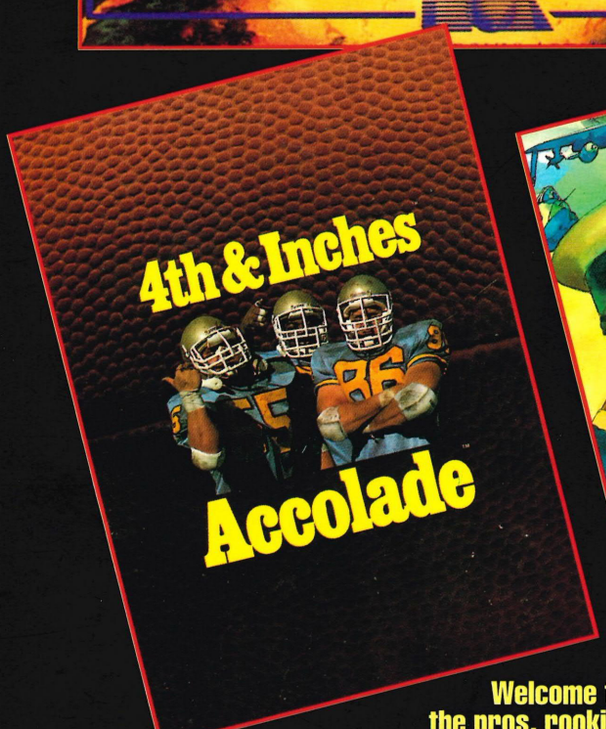
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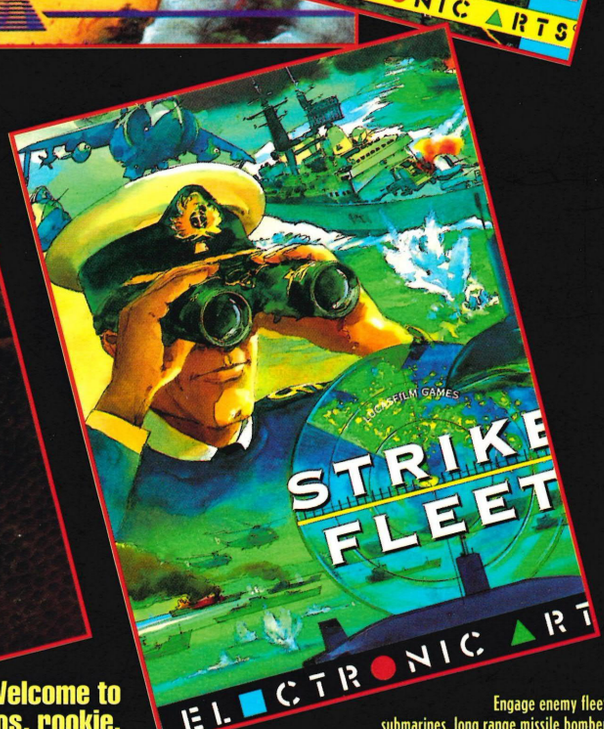



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