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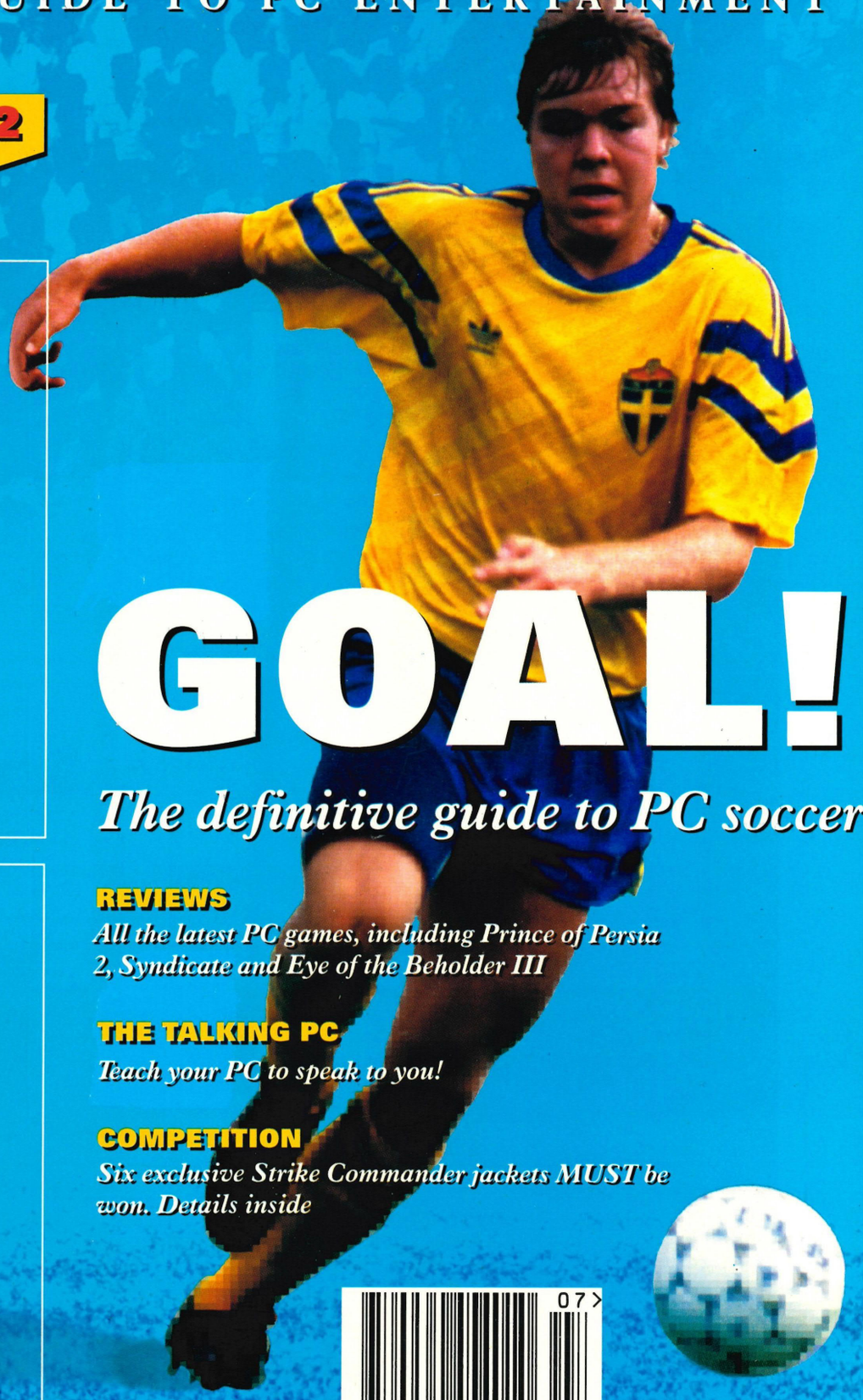
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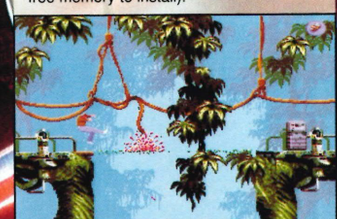
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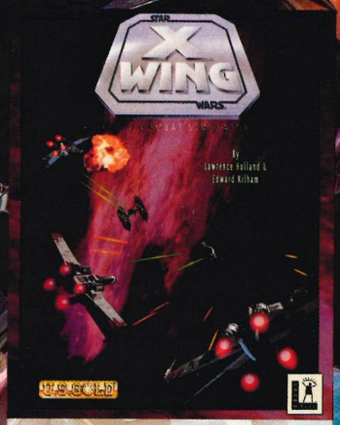
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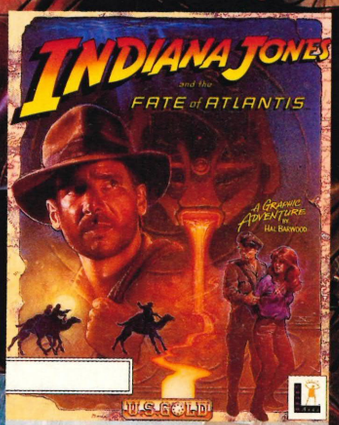




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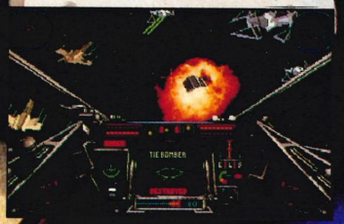
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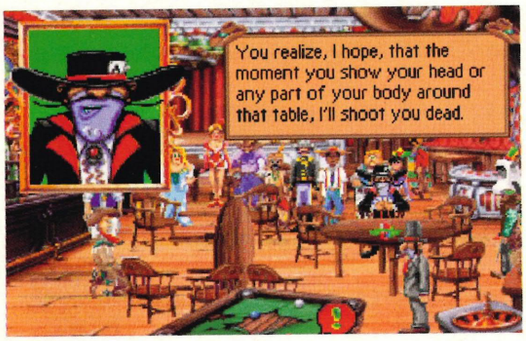
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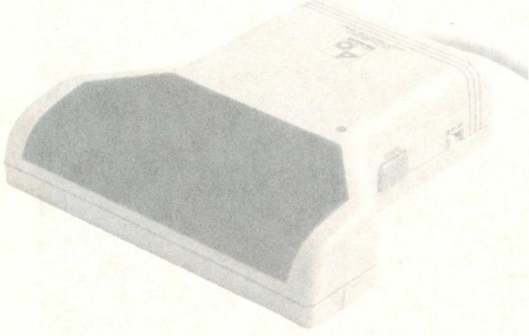
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12 copies of Al Lowe's new game Freddy Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist are up for grabs.

26 **It's a funny old game (Brian)**
The PC is well served for football games, whether you're out on the pitch with the lads, or running the team from the dug-out. Ciarán Brennan tries out the football games on the market and separates the goalscorers from the donkeys.


FEATURE

Our supposedly national game has been served by a strange hotchpotch of arcade style match simulations and strategic management games on the PC. Ciaran Brennan sifts out the Premier League contenders from the bottom of the Beaner Homes League in this tour through the PC football fixture list

It's a funny old game!

The guide to PC soccer

FEATURE

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Due for release this month

Avid Chelsea supporter John Major postponed his 1990 family holiday so that his son James could attend a final... for Aston Villa.

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8 **COVER DISK**

Yes, it's true: a playable demo from the brand new Prince of Persia 2 on your 3.5" cover disk. All the animation techniques from the original classic have been retained, with intriguing new puzzles and superb graphic backdrops. If you prefer a meaty war game, try our extract from Battle Isle 93. And once the heavy stuff is over, relax with two complete shareware games, The Haunted Manor and Cavern.

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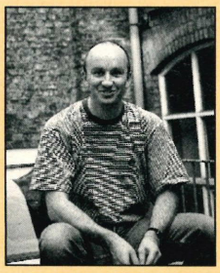
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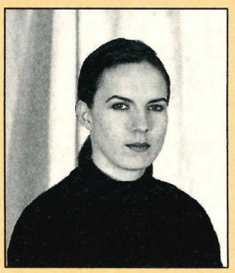
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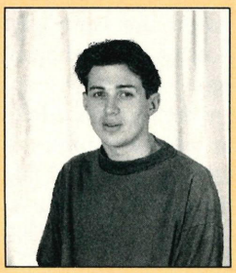
Ciarán Brennan is a long-standing fan of football games (so long as Spurs are winning, of course), and so was a perfect choice to write our guide to PC soccer in this issue. Even though he claimed that Sensible Soccer "would never work on any computer", after being given a sneak preview of the game in development two years ago.



Bullfrog's Syndicate has held Cal Jones in thrall this month, perhaps appealing to the gentler side of her nature with its mass shoot outs, arson and quest for world domination. Cal has also being brushing up on her redoubtable role-playing skills with Eye of the Beholder III.



When not embroiled in the latest PC Review Sensible Soccer tournament, Dean Evans has been digging deep into strategy games this month, becoming one of the first people to complete Maelstrom (reviewed page 80) in the process.



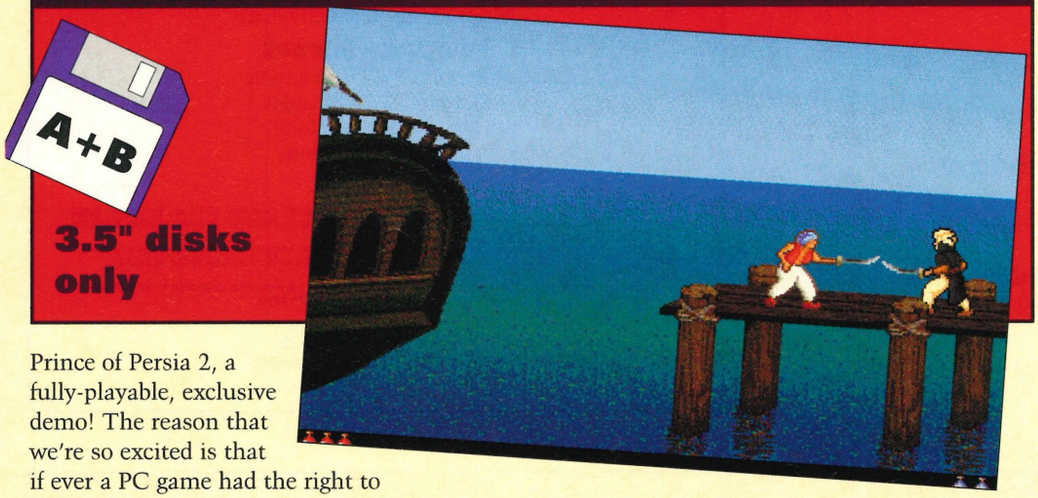
Cover disks

The Prince is back! This exclusive 3.5" playable demo of the sequel to the classic platform adventure is something no self-respecting PC games fan can afford to miss. Battle Isle 93 brings two brilliant levels of mechanised warfare on both disk formats, and endless two-player gameplay. And, if that's still not enough, delve into 32 levels of fiendish Boulderdash-style shareware by the name of Cavern, on the 3.5" disk, or try a complete CGA adventure in Haunted, on 5.25" disks.





Prince of Persia 2



Prince of Persia 2, a fully-playable, exclusive demo! The reason that we're so excited is that if ever a PC game had the right to claim "classic" status it has to be Prince of Persia. Jordan Mechner's original platform adventure first came out around 1990, setting new standards in character animation and gameplay. Prince of Persia 2 carries on from where the first game left off, but brings with it stunning new graphics, an extended storyline, and a mess of new problems to solve. After the animated introduction, the demo launches you into the opening level, complete with death-defying leaps, frantic swordplay and a last minute race to eascape by sea.

How to play

You must install the game from BOTH disks. Log on to the directory in which you installed the game. Then type

Prince [Enter]

How to quit

Hit Ctrl Q to quit the demo, and pressing Esc will pause the game. Hit a key to continue.

If you leave the demo running after completing it, you will see an error message about a missing file. Don't worry! This is only the closing title file, which we have pruned off the demo. It doesn't affect how the demo runs, and it isn't Broderbund's fault, either.

Hardware required

At 286-based PC with VGA graphics, hard disk and 640K of memory. Some sound card setups may cause an address conflict (the message "can't find Sequence.dat"). Remove (rem) the soundcard driver line in your Config.sys, but remember to make a backup first.

Control

The Prince can be controlled with either joystick or keyboard.

Fighting

Although in most cases the Prince will automatically draw his sword when faced with an enemy, hitting the Ctrl key will also cause the Prince to draw his sword.
Either the left or right Ctrl key makes the Prince strike out with his sword.
The up cursor key is used to parry blows.
The down cursor key to sheath his sword.

Moving

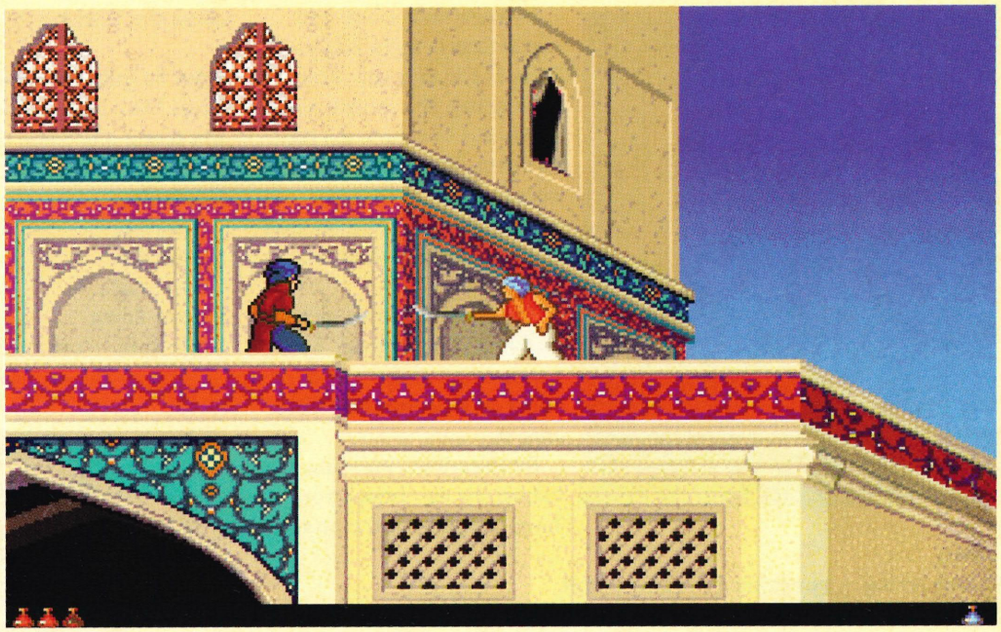
Use the joystick in the normal way, or the cursor keys/numeric keypad to move the character around. Holding down the left or

right cursor keys will cause the Prince to run rapidly in that direction. Stop by releasing the key. Pressing the Shift key with a direction key will cause the Prince to take a single small step at a time.

Jumping, climbing and hanging around

The Prince can make a standing long jump if you use the direction keys and the up key at the same time. If you are running at the time, he will take a few more strides and jump even further in that direction.

Simply pressing the up key will cause him to jump upwards, and pull himself up onto a ledge if he can reach it. If you mistime a jump, it's often possible to catch the edge of a ledge or roof by holding down the Shift key. Then press up to climb back up, or the down key to drop to the ground



Hints and tips

The aim of the demo is to escape from the Palace across the rooftops, fighting the guards as you go, and stow away on board a ship.

The action starts straight away, so the most important thing to remember is to draw your sword immediately and defend yourself the moment the Prince comes flying out of the window. Otherwise, you'll get hacked down before you can get a word in edgeways by the guard below the window.

The strength of both the Palace guards and the Prince, in terms of life remaining, is represented by the potion bottles at the bottom of the screen. When they're empty, you're dead, simple as that, so if you're down to one potion left, try to avoid fights.

Battle Isle 93



Battle Isle will be a very familiar name to computer war game enthusiasts. It's a hex-based futuristic war game, with a total of 32 levels in the full version of this game. The demo gives you the option of one single-player game, and one two-player game scenario.

The aim of the game is to capture the enemy's headquarters, or wipe out *all* his troops and weapons. You have a variety of weapons and equipment yourself, to aid your conquest, and the facilities to build and repair as you go along.

How to start

Log on to the directory in which you installed Battle Isle 93, and type

Moon [Enter]

The menu screen will appear with a series of game options. The code for one player (the default) is **Lumit.** The code for two players is **Karot.**

How to quit

Pressing Esc, followed by

Y [Enter}

at any time during the game returns the user to the opening menu. Select Exit twice, and this will quit the game and return to the Dos prompt.

Control

Use the Spacebar to select, and the mouse or cursor keys to move around the map. In two-player mode, the second player uses C,V,D and X to move, and Ctrl to select.

The control system in Battle Isle 93 is actually very simple, and much quicker than most war games. There's no looking things up in charts or tables; everything you need to know can be accessed on screen.

But, to include all the details would take more space than we have on these pages, so there is a file called Binstr2.eng in the directory you installed Battle Isle 2, which can be opened and read in a word processor.

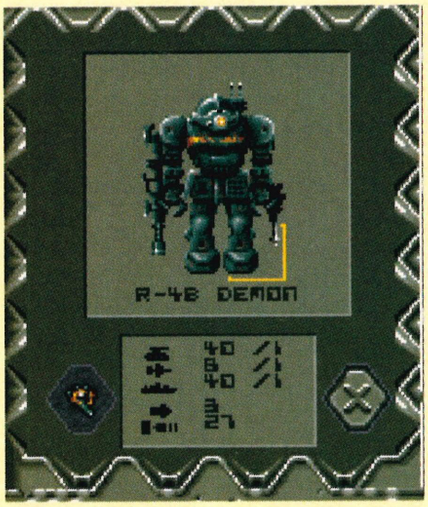
The most important thing to know is that the game operates in turns, alternating movement and attack modes. The right hand screen shows the enemy positions. The left hand screen is where you select your units, move and attack.

At the start of the game it will be your turn to move. Select one of your units, and while you hold down the spacebar press one of the cursor keys. The icon will change according to which direction arrow you press. Release the spacebar and that option will be selected. The options are:

4 arrows icon	**move**
2 arrows icon	**end turn**
? icon	**information**
Eye icon	**map overview**

If you select the Move icon, the range that you can move that unit will appear outlined in yellow on the left hand screen. Select a position and the unit will move there.

Installing your cover disk: details on page 11



In the attack mode, the move icon is replaced by a '!' icon. If the unit can attack the enemy, the targets will be circled in yellow for you to select. When you have chosen all your targets, select the end turn icon, and the fighting will then take place.

There are factories, depots and HQs on the map. To capture one of these you must send an infantry unit into it.

By selecting a building, you can repair any troops you have in it during the attack mode.

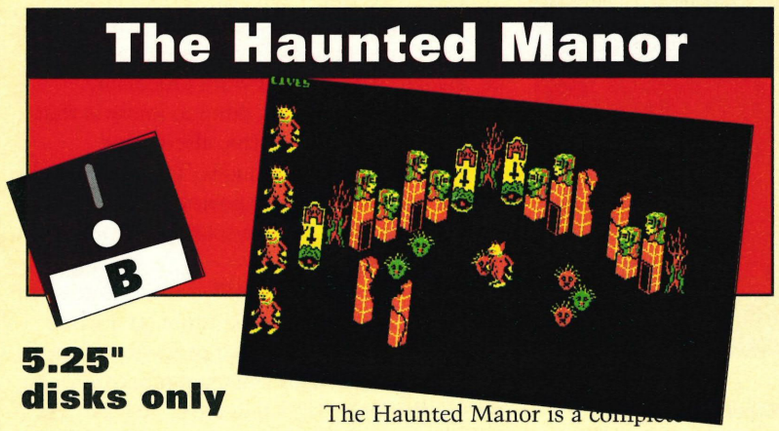
Down arrow + spacebar to repair a unit
Left arrow + spacebar to build a new unit
Up arrow key + spacebar to move a unit out of a building

Surviving the onslaught...
As a unit wins a battle it will gain a star rating. An experienced unit will trash a platoon of rookies. Try to protect and repair your experienced troops.

If all this sounds complicated, don't worry; the game is very easy to pick up as you go along.

Hardware required
Any 286 PC upwards, VGA and 580K of free RAM

The Haunted Manor



5.25" disks only

The Haunted Manor is a complete isometric CGA adventure from Fiendish Software. Your mission, should you chose to accept, is to destroy the Hollywood Monster. The game is shareware, and registration details are on the info screen at the end of the game.

Hardware required
Any PC from 8086 upwards, CGA, 512K RAM. The game doesn't take kindly to top-flight PCs, and it's best if you switch off the turbo button on your PC if the game plays too fast.

How to start
Log on to the directory in which you have installed the game and type **Haunted [Enter]**
At the menu screen, move the cursor to the 'Start Game' option and press the Shift key to start.

How to quit the game
Press ESC during the game, and select the 'return to Dos' option from the menu and press the hand right Shift key.

Controls

Cursor up	Move forward
Cursor left	Rotate left
Cursor right	Rotate right
Cursor down	Fire
Right shift + cursor up	Jump

Cavern



3.5" disks only

Cavern is another complete shareware game from the author of The Haunted manor. You're a geologist, mining for crystals on Triton, and your contract calls for you to mine 10 crystals on each of 32 levels.

You're provided with a spacesuit, and a gun, and a scrolling map of the area. Be careful of what you shoot, and don't stay to long on any level as the crystals have a habit of turning into deadly fungi.

Hardware required
Any PC from 8086 upwards, VGA, DOS 3.01 or better and 512K Ram

How to start
Log on to the directory in which you have installed Cavern, and type **Cavern [Enter]**

How to quit the game
Hit the 'M' key, and use the cursor keys to scroll up to the Quit option.

Controls

Cursor right or X	Move right	Cursor down or ?	Move down
Cursor left or Z	Move left	Cursor up or @	Move up
Right shift	Fire pistol		

Other options

M	Selects the menu (space to select).
F1	Displays a map of the level. (Use the cursor keys to scroll and Space to return to the game)
Esc	Displays a graphic help screen of game
Save	Saves the current state of play
Rest	Restarts the current level/game
Oops	In case 'M' was pressed by mistake (doubles as Pause).

If you complete all 32 levels, the game restarts with your score intact but the radar map screen and the F1 map screen will be inoperative .

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:.....

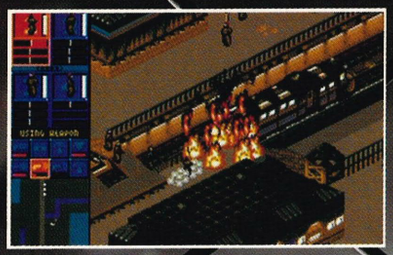
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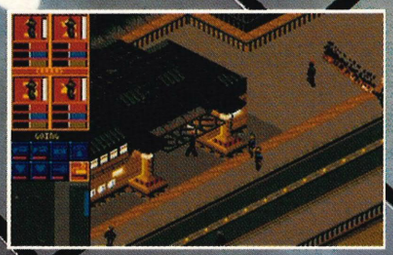
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NEWS

Pentium ignores desktop PCs

The first wave of PCs based on the super-fast Intel Pentium processor has arrived, but it will be a long time before the machines reach affordable levels for the consumer.

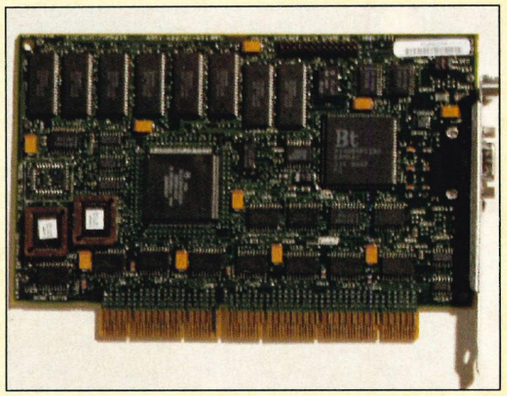
Although just about every major PC manufacturer has now officially announced Pentium-based systems, with prices starting from around £2,500, the majority of these are aimed at corporate purchasers in companies with large networks.

Delays in processor supplies and the high cost of the chip are a large part of the reason why it's going to be a while before we see Pentium desktop PCs in the high street. Intel is manufacturing 60MHz and 66MHz versions of the chip, and the latter are in particularly short supply. This situation should improve when its two new manufacturing plants are up and running, and one of these, in Ireland, will produce the 100MHz versions of the chip.

But this is unlikely to change the immediate availability of desktop PCs. Elonex, which will shortly be unveiling its new range of Pentium-based machines (with prices starting at £5,895) is aiming solely at corporate users. The company "sees no real need for Pentium power for single users on stand-alone PCs", according to Elonex spokesman David Bridson.

Like many manufacturers, Acer UK is waiting until the Pentium chips become more readily available before launching its machine, and believes that it will be too pricey for a single user.

Compaq appears to be the only exception to this, releasing both fileservers and desktop machines from the summer onwards, but prices for desktop machines will start at around £3,650. According to Hugh Jenkins, at Compaq, performance on its Pentium-based PC was 60 to 80% better then a 66MHz DX2 machine, "without sacrificing software compatibility".



The upshot of the delays in chip production and the unit costs still remains that it will be a considerable time before we see this level of performance at prices affordable to individual users.

IN BRIEF...

● The band Alien Sex Fiend is composing the sound track for Inferno, the game being developed by DID for Ocean. DID hopes that Alien Sex Fiend's strong cult following will boost interest in the game. Inferno is due out this autumn (see Coming Soon).

● Auto Insight is a graphic guide to car maintenance. The package contains illustrated reference material on components, fuel, electrics, safety, emissions, with hyperlinks to explanations of specific topics. Minimum system requirements are a 286 PC with 512K of memory and DOS 3.0, and it will be priced at £64.57 (inclusive of VAT).

● Accolade Europe has just announced that four of its current games are to be released in the Autumn on CD ROM. Ringworld, Blue Force, Protostar and Eric The Unready have all appeared on disk, and Accolade currently has no plans to produce CD ROM games in-house.

● The MS-DOS 6 Quick Start Guide, by John Summer, is intended for those who want to get to grips with the new features in the latest version. Both DOS 6's commands and supporting utilities (such as Double Space) are covered in details. Published by Kuma (ISBN 07457 01515), the Quick Start Guide costs £7.95.

● Also from Kuma is the latest version of Corish's Computer Games Guide, which includes hints and tips on over 200 PC titles in its pages. Games covered include Dagger of Amon Ra, Indy and the Fate of Atlantis, Monkey Island II, and Ultimas VI & VII. Corish's Guide costs £12.95.

● Not content with teaming up with Japanese giant Sony (see opposite), Psygnosis has also been given a Queen's Award for Export — the first computer games software developer to do so.

● Orchid has cut the price of its Sound Producer Pro board by £30 — down to £129. Compatible with Sound Blaster Pro, Ad Lib, Covox and Disney standards, the Sound Producer Pro also contains a wealth of bundled software. Call Orchid on (0256) 479898 for details.

● Broderbund's Print Shop Deluxe, which featured on PC Review's Issue 19 cover disk, is being published by Electronic Arts in September, at £55. However, watch this space, because we're hoping to bring PC Review readers a special Print Shop Deluxe offer next month.

Who's who on LucasArts' Dig

LucasArts is acting pretty mysteriously over its forthcoming title The Dig (see news, Issue 20, and also page 32, this issue). This is the game being co-written by Loom author Brian Moriarty and "A N Other". According to LucasArts, A N Other is "a very famous (trust us) film director"; and Moriarty, in this month's report from the Game Developers' Conference, says, "Normally I wouldn't stoop to work with a co-author, but this time I stooped very, very low!".

Given that this is LucasArts, you may have guessed A N Other's identity already, but if you haven't, we can put you out of your misery: The Dig is being co-written by none other than Steven Spielberg himself, and the official announcement is being made at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Chicago this month.

PC Review will be at CES, of course, and we'll bring you a full report on The Dig, and all the other PC entertainment titles on show there next month.

Sony takes control of Psygnosis

Psygnosis, the software publisher responsible for releasing Lemmings to an unsuspecting world, has been taken over by Sony.

Curiously enough, it isn't Lemmings that Sony is interested in so much as Psygnosis's recent development work on CD-ROM and multimedia games. Although Psygnosis will continue to produce games under its own label, it is developing software for Sony's video games division, Sony Imagesoft, including CD games based on Bram Stoker's Dracula, Last Action Hero and Cliffhanger, all of which will use extracts from the related film.

"Working together with a company of Sony's reputation will allow us to build and develop further our reputation as pioneers in the innovative medium of CD technology, taking the bounds of home entertainment beyond anyone's current expectations", said Ian Hetherington, managing director of development at Psygnosis. "This new association with Sony Electronic Publishing will give us access to a spectacular range of development projects, and represents the culmination of all our earlier achievements."

The acquisition of Psygnosis has been planned to concide with Sony's entry into the European market and will form the basis for its European management team as well as significantly boosting Sony's in-house development capabilities.

Psygnosis itself is scheduled to release Microcosm, a "flight" simulator, no doubt inspired by films such as Fantastic Voyage and Innerspace, in which the gamer pilots a miniaturised craft through the human body.

Videos teach software tricks at fraction of training costs

Software training can be disruptively time-consuming and expensive, but the Burgess Video Group is attempting to address this with the release of a wide range of training videos at just £23.49 (inclusive of VAT).

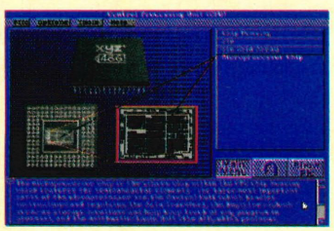
Produced to full broadcast standard, these videos offer step-by-step instruction on a wide range of PC software packages including Using Windows 3.1, Working with CorelDraw 3.0 and Word for Windows.

The theory behind this TV tuition is simply that spending a few minutes watching a PC training video is often better than reading huge chunks of a heavyweight manual.

"Watching one of these videos makes even one of the most complex subjects clear", says Iain Burgess the owner of the Burgess Video Group. "Our business is all about bringing the highest standards of videos into a specialist subject such as the PC at an affordable price."

BVG's video collection should be on sale now and for more information contact Iain Burgess on (0874) 611633.

● ComputerWorks (below), from Guildsoft, is a DOS-based graphics package that explores the workings of the computer and covers both hardware and software. Unlike the BVG video collection, ComputerWorks uses animated graphics, diagrams and text to explain the inner workings of monitors, disk drives, CD-ROM, keyboards, scanners, etc. Detailed lesson plans and quiz sections help you to learn more about the world of computing.



ComputerWorks is priced at £70.44 (including VAT). Call Guildsoft on (0752) 606200 for details.

Dell cuts prices

Dell has recently introduced a range of machines for those who want a reliable, high performance PC with an economical price tag. Called Dell Dimensions, the range starts at £1,009.33 (inclusive of VAT) for a 486 25MHz PC with 4Mb RAM, 80Mb hard drive, SVGA monitor and 512K Video RAM. All Dell desktops include an upgradable Intel processor, and anyone interested in moving up to the Pentium will be able to buy upgrade cards in June.

The Dimensions range also includes laptops, starting at £1,586.25 for the NL25, a 386-based machine with with 4Mb RAM, 80Mb hard drive, 9.5" mono VGA LCD screen and a NiCad battery which lasts up to 3.5 hours.

Owing to a fall in the price of components, Dell has also dropped the price of its regular range 486SX machines. For further details, contact Dell on (0344) 720000.

COMING SOON



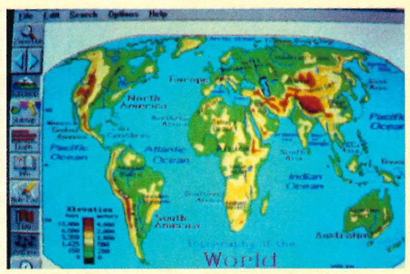
Millennium's Beastball promises plenty of violence come September.



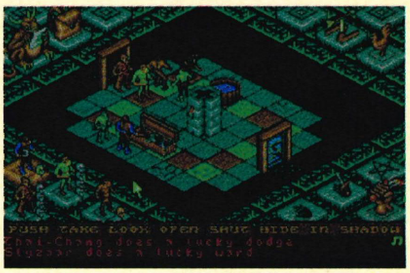
Odyssey is DID's sequel to Epic, with more missions, strategy, and gameplay.



Also from DID is the dogfighting Inferno, out in September.



Software Toolworks' World Atlas v4 has data on over 200 countries. Out now.



Worlds of Legend is a new isometric RPG from Mindscape.

Western Systems launches three multimedia PCs

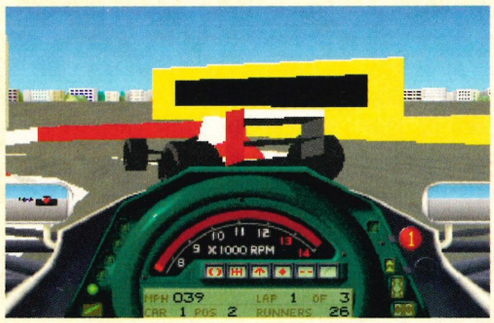
Western Systems has launched a new range of multimedia PCs, designed to cater for everyone, with entry level and higher performance PCs. The machines in the series are — rather cutely — called the Junior, Senior and Professional, based on a 33MHz 386SX, 25MHz 486SX, and 33MHz 486SX respectively.

The processor used and hard disk capacity are the basic differences between the machines (Junior boasts an 85Mb hard disk, the Senior weighs in at 120Mb and the Professional comes with 170Mb hard disk capacity).

All three PCs come with 4Mb RAM, high density 3.5" disk drive, Microsoft-compatible mouse and 14" VGA colour monitor, as well as the all-important internal CD-ROM drive and Sound Blaster compatible sound card. Speakers are also included, as are three CD-ROM software titles (just the one on the Junior), Windows 3.1, DOS 6, and Lotus 1-2-3.

The Junior costs £1,173.83, the Senior is £1,643.83 and the Professional £2,184.33 (all these prices include VAT). Contact Western Systems on (081) 845 8383 for details.

PC games star at Joystick Awards



The Roof Gardens, in Kensington, London, was packed last month as representatives from the computer industry piled in to find out how their titles had fared in the 11th Golden Joystick Awards.

These awards are organised by EMAP Images, publisher of PC Review. What sets them apart from many others is that the winners are voted for by readers of EMAP's stable of computer entertainment magazines, rather than by an industry panel.

PC Review readers exercised their right to vote (Issue 19) in healthy numbers, and with good effect. Best computer simulation was Formula One Grand Prix, from MicroProse, best original computer game was Alone in the Dark (Civilization was the runner-up), and the prestigious game of the year award went to Secret of Monkey Island 2 (with Fate of Atlantis as runner-up).

LucasArts picked up a gong for best programming team, and there was also a strong PC flavour in the software house of the year category, won by Electronic Arts for the second year running.

● Many thanks to all the PC Review readers who took the trouble to fill in an awards form. Your votes counted!

Win a Strike Commander jacket!

We've got another rather special reader competition available this month. Those immensely kind people at Origin Systems have asked us if we can give away six (yes, *six*) of these highly desirable Strike Commander jackets, shown here by PC Review's very own supermodel, Paul Boughton.



Made from real leather, in a deep chocolate brown, the jackets are fully lined and padded, with cloth waistband and cuffs, and all sorts of useful pockets as well. Admittedly, it may be a touch warm for this time of year, but it will make a classic addition to your wardrobe for years to come. The highlight, for the discerning PC Review reader, has got to be the tastefully embroidered Strike Commander logo on the chest (the back is plain, by the way).

Now six people will be able to win one of these jackets, by sending the answer to the following question to Strike Commander Jacket, PC Review, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

Q Who is the designer of the Wing Commander/Strike Commander series?

Taxing, eh? First six correct entries out of the hat get the jacket. Mark on your entry, the answer, your name and address, and also whether you would like a small, medium, or large jacket. Large is the size shown here; medium would be suitable for women or slightly built men; small for children (11 years or so upwards). Finally, we'll close this competition on July 12th, 1993, so if your entry hasn't arrived by then, you're not in the draw.

SIGN OF THE TIMES...

One year ago ...

Processor power and expectations have moved rapidly in the last 12 months. In the July 1992 edition of PC Review, we reported that Amstrad had launched a "fast and powerful" (their words) version of the Family Pack — with a 386SX processor. Furthermore, Links 386 Pro was launched, and felt the need to declare its 386-only status in the title.

It was also just a year ago that Ad Lib, expected to release its Gold Card soundboard, slipped into receivership instead.

Two years ago ...

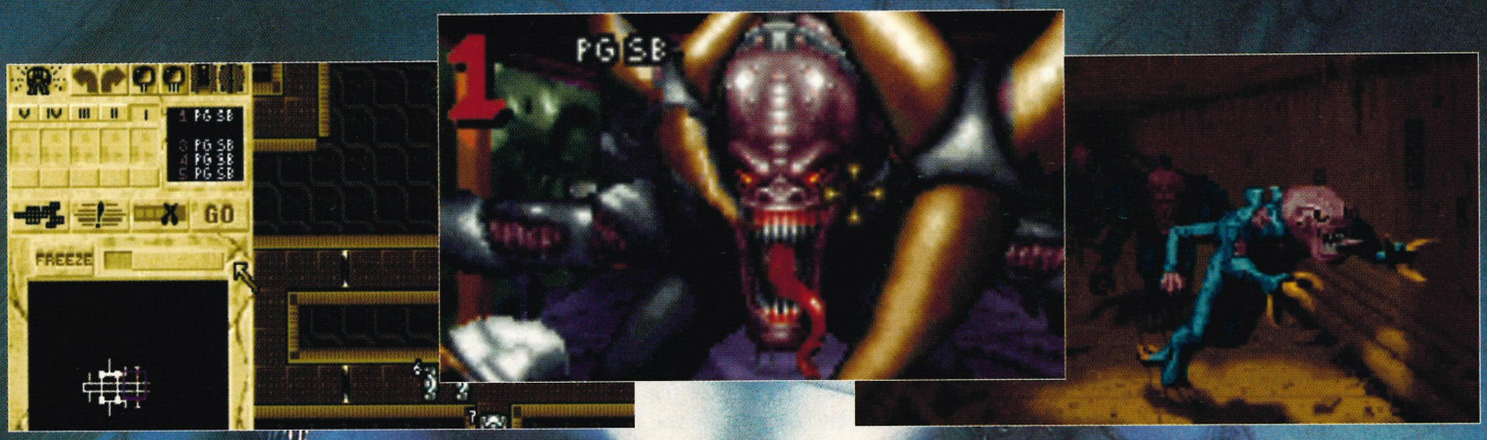
Philips cuts the price of its CDD461 CD-ROM drive from £600 to £399, in "an attempt to get the market moving" — interesting to note that in 24 months, the entry level CD-ROM price has halved again.

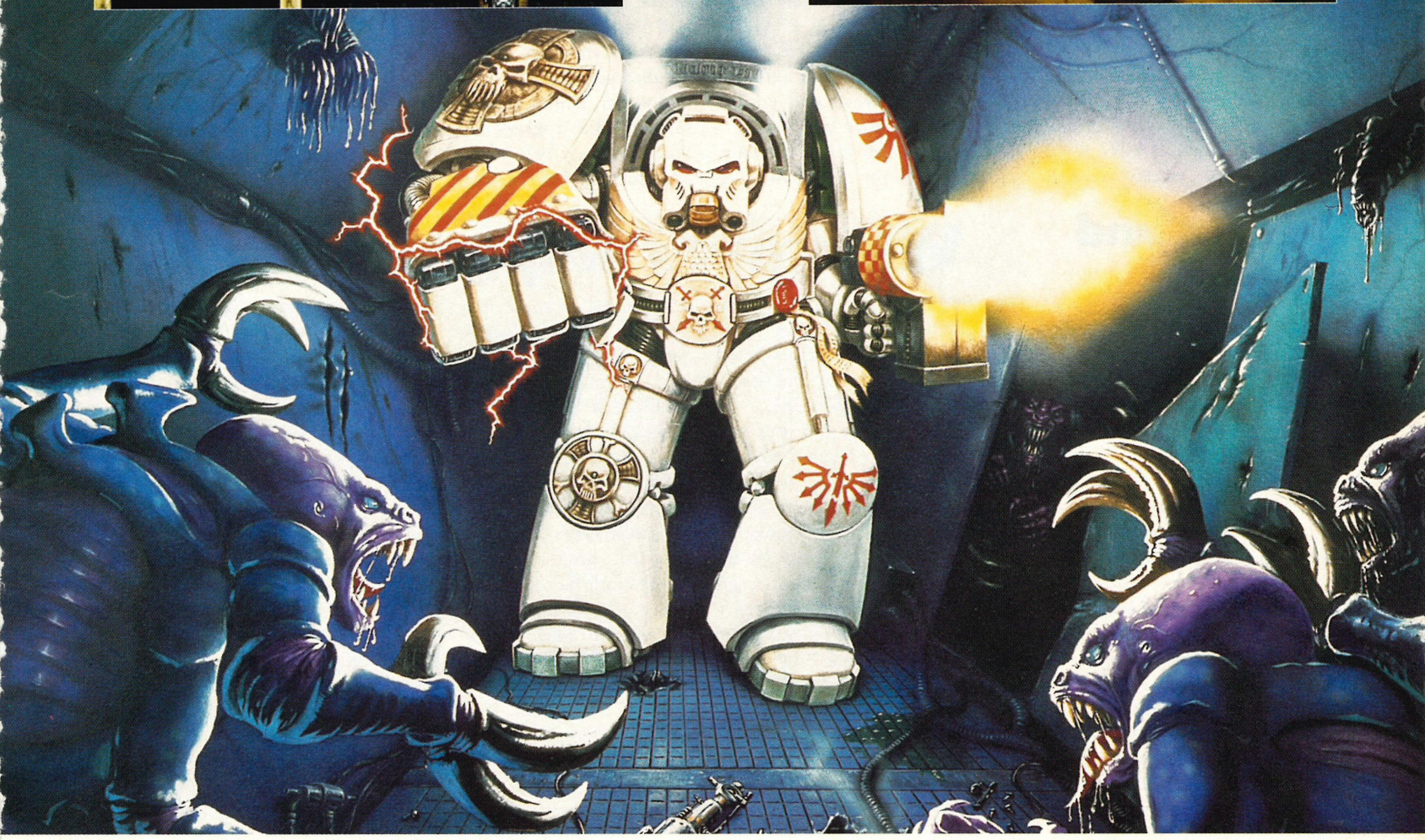
Curiously, an optimistic PC Leisure magazine announced that a new Indy game, based not on a film, but a comic strip and to be entitled Fate of Atlantis, would be released in November. That's November 1991, you understand. Ah well, there's nothing like being first with the news.

Three years ago ...

Software houses were considering the emerging PC platform for a host of games based around that perennial favourite, the movie licence. So, just how many of these promised PC titles have you been playing over the last three years? Total Recall? Days of Thunder? Mad Max? The Spy Who Loved Me? Never-Ending Story II? Thought not.

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Electronic Arts, 90 Heron Drive, Langley, Berks, SL3 8XP.

CD-ROM upgrades from Sony



Sony has put together a hardware and software bundle for CD-ROM upgraders. The Desktop Library comprises both a CD-ROM drive and CD-ROM discs, and is available in three versions.

The entry level pack comprises an internal CD-ROM drive kit and three discs: Geoworks CD-ROM Time Manager (address book, calculator, notepad, CD audio facilities, two simple games, etc), Tempra Access software, and a Kodak Photo CD sampler disc. The CD-ROM drive supplied has multi-session support for Photo CD (see this month's Upgrading Your PC feature on page 44 for more on Photo CD and CD-ROMs). This version of The Desktop Library costs £464.13, inclusive of VAT.

The next version up is also centred around an internal drive, with six discs and a 16-bit sound board and speakers, at £734.38, inclusive of VAT. The third Desktop Library has an external drive and software and sound accessories as above, at £934.13.

As well as the multi-session capability, all the CD-ROMs are MPC compatible. For full details, ring Sony Computer Peripherals on (0784) 467918.

● Singapore-based Aztech's Sound Galaxy sound cards are now available in the UK through Progressive (contact 0706 832666 for details). There are eight cards in the range to cover most needs and budgets, from £81 to over £300, both with and without bundled software.

Also in the range are two multimedia upgrade kits with Sound Galaxy NX boards and a Mitsumi CD-ROM drive.

Seikosha launches fast inkjet

Seikosha is making grand claims in the way of speed and output quality for its new SpeedJet 300 inkjet printer. Its ink nozzle has 128 jets, which, says Seikosha, makes it faster than other inkjets at 300 characters per second. The SpeedJet also incorporates three fonts (which will print in a range of styles) and can handle single sheet paper, transparencies, and envelopes.

It will also emulate the 'standard' Hewlett-Packard DeskJet for software compatibility. The recommended retail price for the SpeedJet is £421.83, inclusive of VAT, and Seikosha has further details on its full range of printers on (0753) 685873.

Protect and survive

If your computer was stolen, the insurance might cover the machine itself, but what about the data and files contained on it?

Firstlok, from Nightguard, is a software package which enables you to load a password program into the PC — the trick is that the user must then enter the password, immediately after the PC is switched on, *before* MS-DOS loads up, and the hard disk cannot be accessed until the correct code has been entered.

This is all very well, but doesn't help return your property to you. Firstlok's second innovation is that a serial number, specific to each user is included in the software package. Users can register this number with a central database, so that police can match the Firstlok serial number on the stolen computer's screen with a name held in the central database.

Firstlok costs £29.95 (plus £2.95 postage and packing), and is available from Nightguard, from which further details can be obtained on (0264) 773977.

Whatever happened to ...

● Digital Integration has been promising Tornado for ages. You've seen the demo, we've seen the box, I'm wearing the T-shirt, but where's the game?

A flight sim is obviously a hugely complex operation and DI has been attempting to make Tornado as realistic as possible. This not only means perfecting the flight model but also the in-game planning, campaign directing, etc, and obviously getting all this right takes a lot of time (so says Digital Integration, anyway).

Despite the delay, the apparent authenticity of the game has led to the RAF buying Tornado as a pilot training aid which is not so much a feather in DI's cap but a whole eagle. Tornado is promised to appear sometime in early June. This year. Maybe.



Tornado

● Elite II is now late with a capital L. It seems that despite its already immense size, David Braben has been continually adding more new features and generally chiselling the program into his idea of perfection. I understand that he's also getting married, which has put the release date back further. So, as far as PC Review is aware, Elite II should appear around September.

● Remember Wacky Funsters? The game that scored a massive rating of one in Issue 19? Following other equally generous reviews, WF has been withdrawn from sale and Accolade is trying to forget it.

Apparently (this should perhaps be "allegedly") its creator, Tsunami , produced the game as a "fun" test product to prove its programming ability. Again allegedly, some bright spark then said, "Hey guys, why don't you release this?" and WF was promptly sprung upon an unsuspecting American public. More amazingly, the unsuspecting American public actually paid around $50 a unit for it. As a result, Wacky Funsters did moderately well.

Unfortunately it wasn't quite the same story over here, and I'm afraid now you won't be able to find a copy in the shops. It is an ex-product.

● Finally, we promised you a review of Sensible Soccer this month. We tried, really we did, but unfortunately come our final, final, definitely final deadline, Sensi still wasn't finished. Betrayal at Krondor (also promised) suffered the same fate, but, eternal optimists that we are, they're booked in for next month.

Let us know if there are any games which have sunk into the PC twilight zone and we'll exhume them for you.

■ **Dean Evans**

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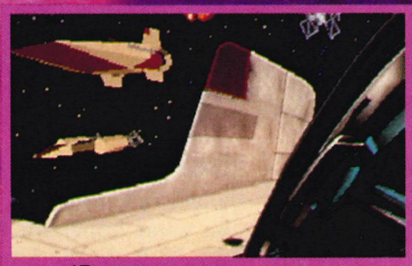
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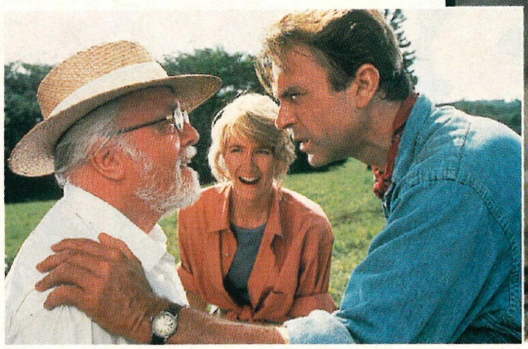
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Title	**Jurassic Park**
Developer	**Ocean (in-house)**
Publisher	**Ocean**
Contact	**(061) 832 6633**
Release date	**October**
Genre	**Arcade puzzle**
Price	**TBA**





Jurassic Park



Top: Jurassic Park, the movie, stars from left to right: Richard Attenborough, Laura Dern, Sam Neill, and in the right hand picture, Jeff Goldblum.

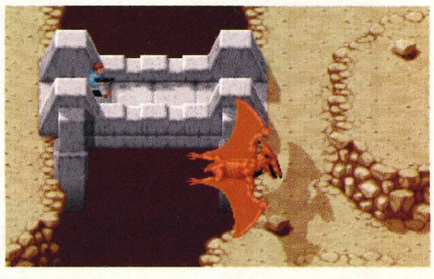
Games based on blockbusting films and the PC haven't had an entirely happy relationship in the past. The 'standard' film-to computer treatment – create a platform game with scurrying characters who may or may not be discernible as the all-action heroes of the big screen — hasn't translated well, platform games not being traditional PC territory, and frequently the PC conversions have tended to be afterthoughts in any case.

So what hope can we hold out for Jurassic Park, the much-touted forthcoming title based on Steven Spielberg's monster, due to be released by movie tie-in specialist Ocean in October? And given the hype that's surrounding the film itself before its summer release, how can the game, coming some months afterwards, hope to compete?

First, this PC version is no afterthought. Development began, with the PC version as one of the prime formats (Amiga and various Nintendos are the others, should you be interested), last year, Ocean having snapped up the licence, shortly after Spielberg bought the film rights to Michael Crichton's novel.

Secondly, it isn't a conversion either. While the console versions of the game will be straightforward shoot 'em ups, the 16-bit computer games will be "designed for older users and therefore involve a little more strategy", and even more heart-eningly, "we've developed each game specifically for its own format, to exploit the architecture of the relevant hardware," according to Gary Bracey, software director at Ocean.

So far, the game sounds like a mix of styles: the main screens as shown here, have an overhead, isometric viewpoint, which according to the developers — the





main programmers are Matthew Wood and Andrew Miah at Ocean — both enabled them to show more of the dinosaurs and to include puzzle elements within the action, but there are also some Ultima Underworld style 3D adventure sections to complement the action in development.

This part of Jurassic Park, the game, will come at the end of 10 levels of arcade-style gameplay each set in a separate dinosaur paddock in the park of the title.

Thirdly, there has been considerable cooperation from Spielberg's team on the film. The developers have been furnished with, to begin with, the script, then the storyboards, access to the studio, and stills of the now-famous dinosaurs which have been recreated for the scenes inside the theme park where the prehistoric giants are on the loose.

"The only thing which we didn't have access to was footage of the dinosaurs in motion, but I suppose we had to live with that, because nobody outside Spielberg's team was allowed to see that," explains Bracey.

The main playing character is Dr Alan Grant, who tries to return the park to some semblance of calm. Graphic artist Bill Harbison is responsible for reproducing Dr Alan, and claims to have spent weary weeks drawing out and redrawing the character, and working out eight animation frames for each directional move. The music, which includes samples from the movie soundtrack, is the preserve of Dean Evans, Ocean's in-house programmer (and no relation to PC Review's staff writer!), and designed to introduce a suitable scary atmosphere.

Left and below: Dr Alan Grant confronts the dinasaurs in Jurassic Park. Blood-curdling renditions of the dinosaurs in full cry have been sampled from the film.

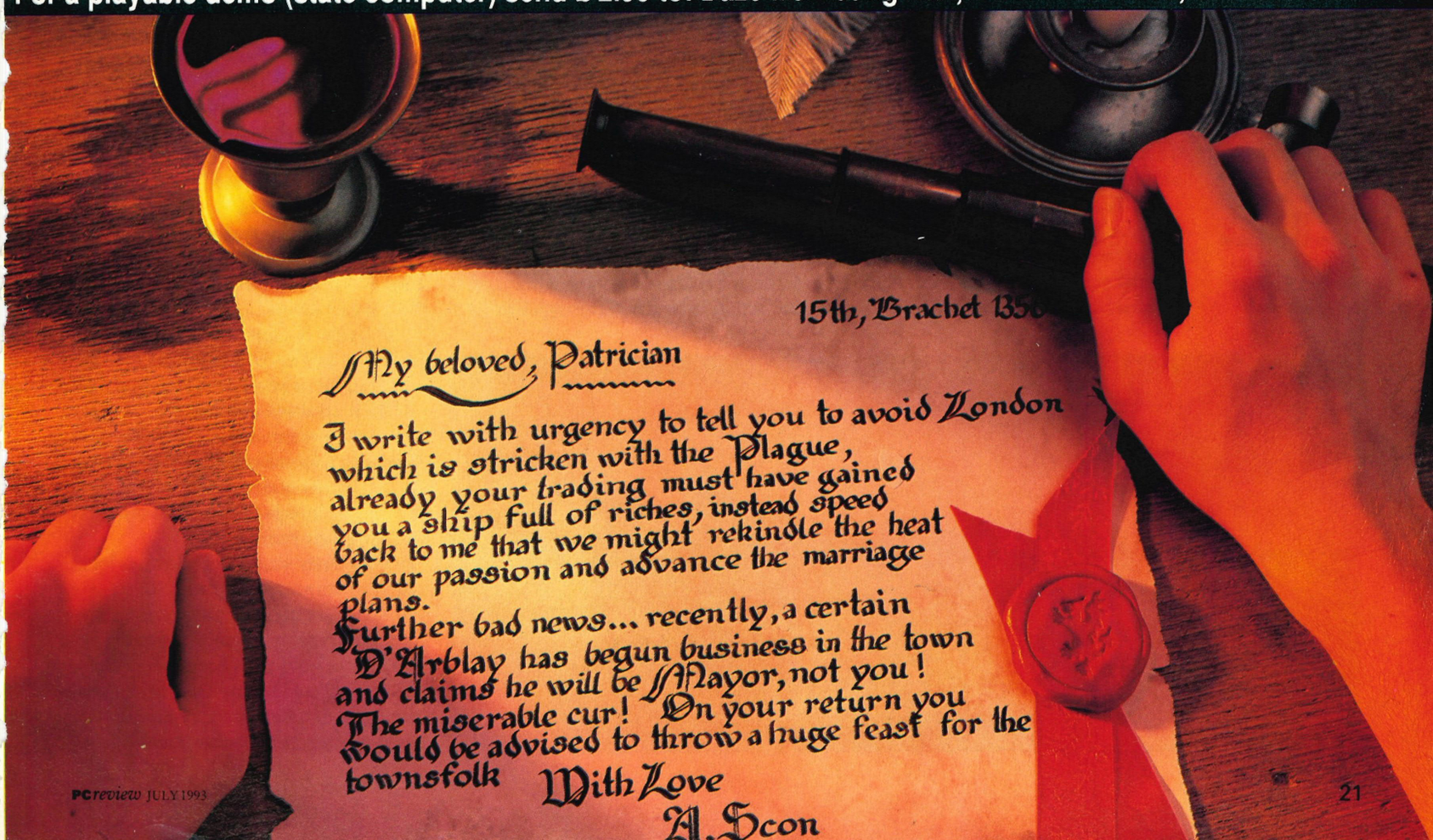
Back to the future

So far, so good. The team seems set on producing a real game, as opposed to a formulaic rendition of film episodes, and we're not yet at the stage of producing reams of movie footage with the odd interactive bit every 20 minutes.

However, it's pertinent to make the point because the growth in CD-ROM means that a number of companies are planning a renaissance of the movie tie-in, notably Psygnosis, which has a CD-ROM version of Bram Stoker's Dracula coming out shortly (see News this month, and look for more on this in our next issue), and, further away, multimedia treatments of Last Action Hero and Cliffhanger for its new parent company, Sony Imagesoft. Movies are destined to be big news on the PC in the future.



For a playable demo (state computer) send £ 2.99 to: Daze Marketing Ltd., 2 Canfield Place, London NW6 3BT.



Title	**Seal Team**
Developer	**Electronic Arts**
Publisher	**Electronic Arts**
Contact	**(0753) 549442**
Release date	**September**
Genre	**3D Combat Simulation**
Price	**£TBA**



The Seals are inserted into the combat area by boat or chopper

Seal Team

Electronic Arts takes you into the jungles of Vietnam on two legs and a flight sim engine

If you'd stepped into the room during the opening screens of Seal Team from Electronic Arts, you could be forgiven for thinking that it was a flight simulation and not about soldiers at all.

Because the interesting things about Seal Team is that it's a combination of flight sim engine and squad level ground combat action. The resulting game is something that has the look and feel of M1 Tank Platoon but with none of the heavy armour plating.

Seal Team is based around the US Navy Seals, an elite force of fighting troops similar to our own Special Boat Service (the aquatic equivalent of the SAS). Placed in command of four such Seals, your task is to guide them on a series of covert missions in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta.

The game promises to be a realistic simulation of US Navy Seal operations against the Viet Cong and NVA in the late sixties. If you think of old Vietnam news footage with soldiers creeping through the jungle and Huey helicopters thudding across the sky then you'll get the general idea. Far from being just a shoot 'em up in the Commando (remember that one?) or Wolfenstein mode, Seal Team is being described as a 3D infantry combat simulation.

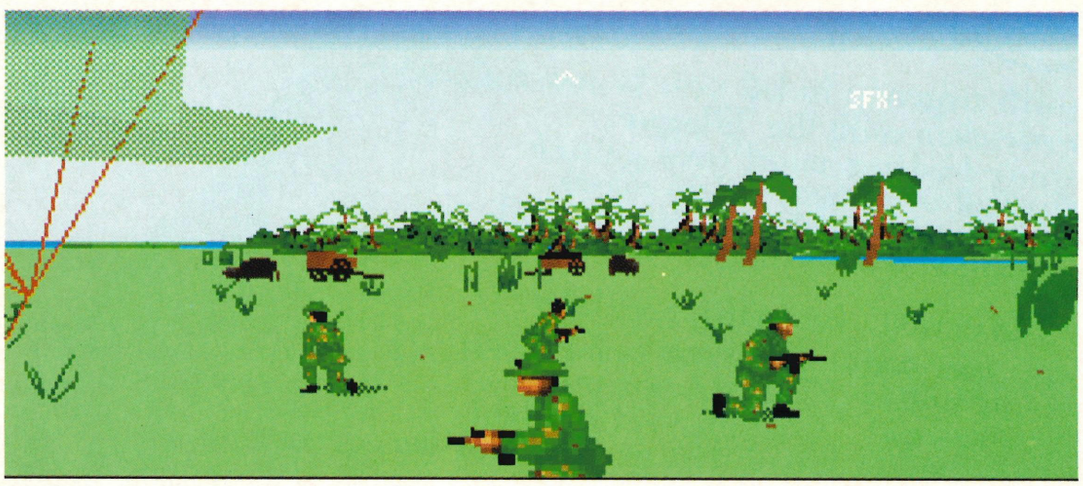
Controlling your team of four Navy Seals, you'll fight and view the world through a soldiers eye view. Almost all of the action is rendered through this first-person perspective where you can also pan around your troops, rotate the screen through 360 degrees, look from the enemy's viewpoint and follow your support choppers.

The game is structured, in essence, very much like a flight sim. Missions in this jungle delta range from simple reconnaissance patrols to destroying bunkers and securing beachheads and your soldiers have the ability to creep, crawl, lie prone, walk, search or run.

They can also be ordered to shoot, direct their fire, search dead VC and survey the ground for booby traps. Although you only control one soldier, the others act as a team following either what you do or their preset orders.

Seal Team is currently being designed in the US and EA is attempting to make it as realistic as possible. The visual look has been achieved utilising a basic flight sim game engine and soundwise, Seal Team has a soundtrack that changes with the pace of the action and effects ranging from jungle insects to the sound of bullets whizzing past your ears.

In these early stages, Seal Team is looking very impressive, and is certainly unlike anything I've previously seen. Electronic Arts are hoping to have the finished game ready for a September release when it will come complete with 80 missions, lots of different weapons and – we hope – atmosphere by the truckload.



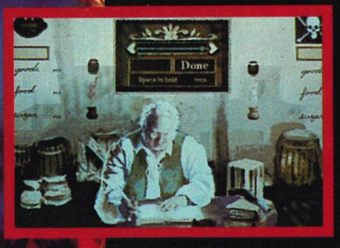
You and your troops can be viewed by means of an external view. There is a zoom facility and the view can be rotated through 360 degrees.

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PC 256 colour VGA displays

Screen shots are PC 256 Colour VGA displays and are 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.

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WIN!

Freddy Pharkas: 12 games and T-shirts to go



Freddy Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist is the latest comedy adventure from Sierra On-Line, and Al Lowe, the man behind the successful Leisure Suit Larry series. The game sets out to parody the clichés in the western genre and, as Freddy, you have to save your home town of Coarsegold from arson, stampedes of raging snails and deadly bouts of animal flatulence. You see, Freddy isn't your ordinary hero and although he was once a gunslinger with an attitude, he has since settled down and gone into the pharmacy business.

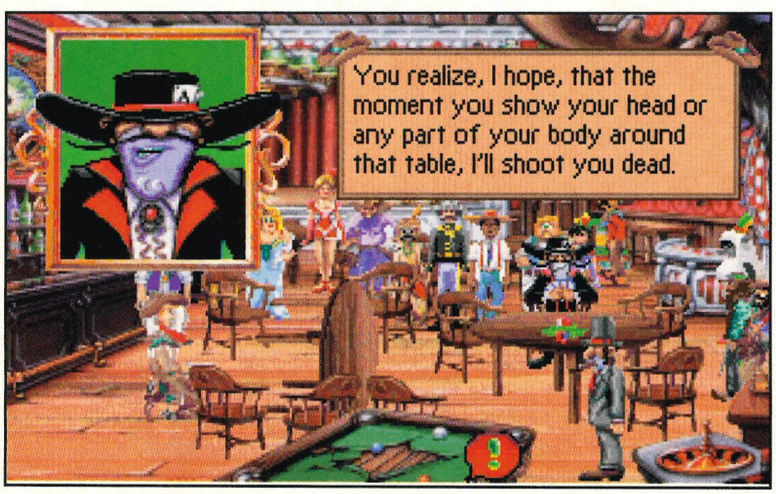
There'll be gunfights, shock revelations, daring escapes from burning buildings and illusions shattered left, right and centre. Who is behind the plot to ruin Coarsegold? Why has Freddy only got one ear? Why are those sheep doing the can-can in the saloon?

Of course, none of these questions are answered in our review on page 68, so to find out you'll just have to enter this great competition and win the game itself. PC Review is offering its readers the chance to win one of 12 Freddy Pharkas games, with 12 Freddy Pharkas T-Shirts for the runners-up.

How to enter

It's phantastically simple. Just answer the questions on the form supplied and stick the completed coupon on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope. Send your entry to

Ready, Freddy, Go!
PC Review
Priory Court
30-32 Farringdon Lane
London EC1R 3AU



Questions

1. The treatment of illness or injury by physical means such as massage and exercise is called:
a) physiognomy
b) philanthropy
c) physiotherapy

2. The science or study of drugs, including their characteristics and uses, is called:
a) pharmacology
b) philately
c) phrenology

3. The process by which plants use light to gain energy from carbon dioxide and water is called:
a) phototropism
b) phosphorescence
c) photosynthesis

The closing date for this competition is July 31, 1993, and all normal competition rules apply.

Ready, Freddy, Go

The answers are:

1. .....

2. .....

3. .....

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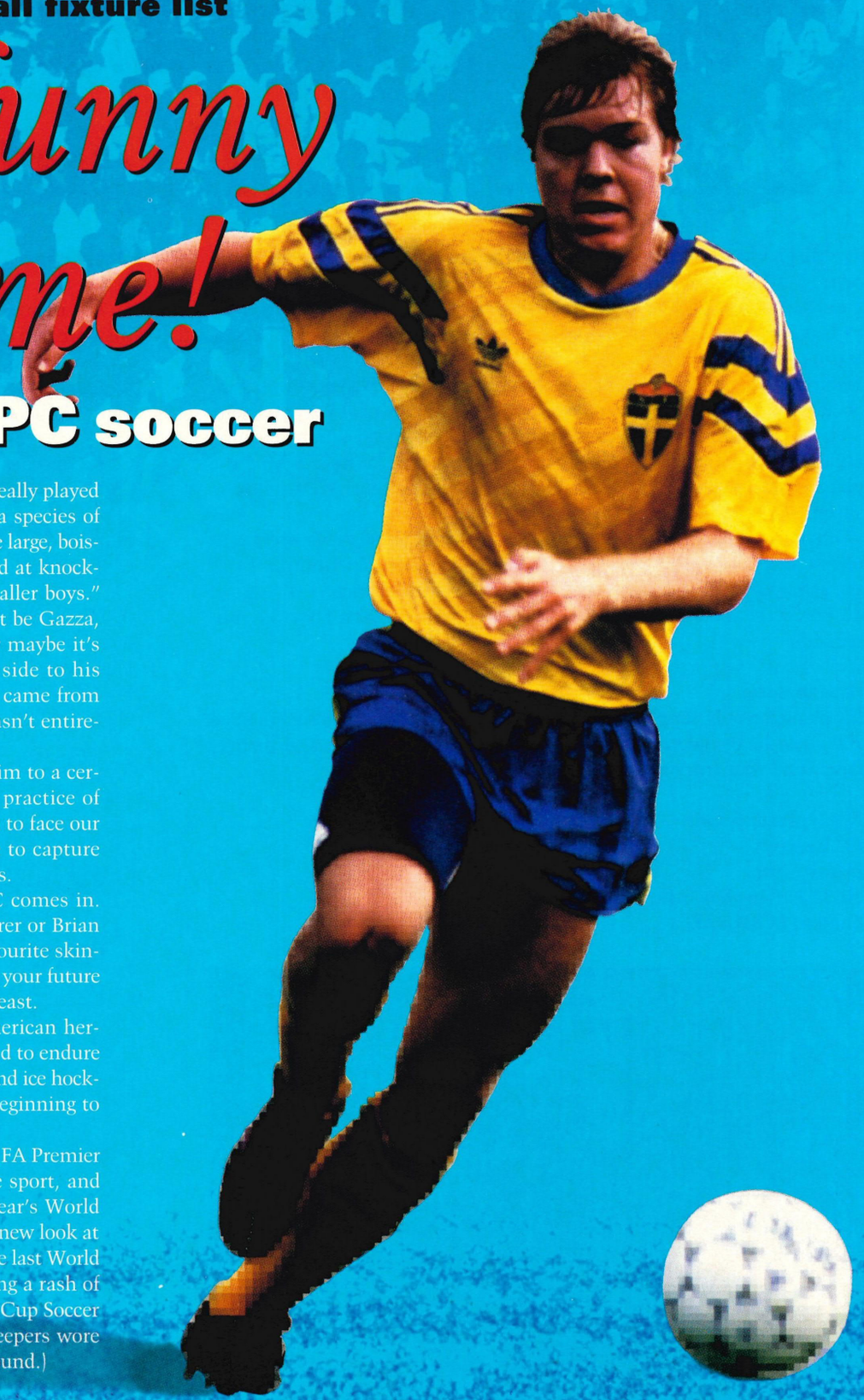
☐ Tick this box if you do NOT wish to receive any further information from companies associated with this competition.

Closing date: July 31, 1993 *PC Review July 1993*

Our supposedly national game has been served by a strange hotchpotch of arcade style match simulations and strategic management games on the PC. Ciaran Brennan sifts out the Premier League contenders from the bottom of the Beazer Homes League in this tour through the PC football fixture list

It's a funny old game!

The guide to PC soccer



"Football, it seems to me, is not really played for kicking a ball about, but is a species of fighting. The lovers of football are large, boisterous, nobby boys who are good at knocking down and trampling on smaller boys."

The words of Graham Taylor maybe? Or could it be Gazza, after Jan Wouters had cracked his cheekbone? Or maybe it's Vinny Jones revealing a hitherto hidden gentle side to his nature? No of course not ... those immortal lines came from none other than George Orwell, who obviously wasn't entirely enamoured of the world's most popular game.

However, there are those of us who agree with him to a certain extent, and while we might find the actual practice of putting on a pair of football boots and heading out to face our punishment a little daunting, we would still like to capture some of the thrills and spills when Saturday comes.

Which is where our friendly neighbourhood PC comes in. Whether you want to be Kevin Keegan, Alan Shearer or Brian Clough — or even if your hero is Wimbledon's favourite skinhead hod-carrier — your computer holds the key to your future health and happiness, in purely football terms at least.

Although the PC has long suffered from its American heritage — with the result that British gamers have had to endure copious simulations of American football, baseball and ice hockey, but precious little soccer — things are at last beginning to change for the better.

The arrival last year of the all-singing, all-dancing FA Premier League saw a huge boom in media interest in the sport, and this, coupled with the imminent arrival of next year's World Cup, has led to software publishers taking a whole new look at the game. (Although it should be pointed out that the last World Cup hardly did great things for PC soccer, spawning a rash of laughable football games, including Virgin's World Cup Soccer Italia '90 — a seven-a-side affair where the goalkeepers wore flat caps! Let's hope things are better this time around.)

A game of two halves

Football games come in two separate (and almost mutually exclusive) camps: arcade-style action games where the player actually gets involved in the thick of the action, and strategy-based 'management' games, where the player simply picks the team and lets them get on with it.

Both types have their admirers, and most real football fans would probably choose to have one of each in their software collection, but as a general rule, your taste in computer games in general will probably dictate your taste in football games — Ultima fans are probably more likely to opt for Championship Manager than Sensible Soccer.

And speaking of Sensible Soccer, its arrival should give a great boost to the arcade side of the genre, and act as a stimulus to other developers to provide equally strong offerings over the next few months. While the game wasn't absolutely finished as PC Review went to press, and hence our planned review has had to be postponed until next month, we've been playing the beta versions until deep into the night, and can honestly say that it should be well worth waiting for.

However, there are a number of other examples of both style of games already available, which should also be considered by the desk-bound soccer fan.

While the following is a rough guide to what's currently available, prospective players should really try to get a little 'hands-on' experience before making a choice, as the football game, more than any other type, is probably the one which raises the most arguments as to the relative merits of each program.

And while you're at it, remember that all football games, without exception, are more enjoyable when another human being is involved. So try to find one which your favourite gaming partner is comfortable with too.

Management games

THE MANAGER

Type: Management

From: Software 2000/US Gold (021) 625 3366

Price: £30.99

Originally entitled Bundesliga Manager, this strategy affair made its way across the continent just in time for the first weeks of the Premier League — although like Championship Manager before it, it did manage to carry on as though the FA's competition didn't exist.

Never mind all that though, these things aren't meant to be based on total accuracy (although a little reality does tend to kick-start the slower imagination), and it should really only be judged as how good a football management program it is.

The answer is that it's both good and bad. Good in that it has all of the options that you'd expect to find in a game of this type (player selection, financial control and so on) and bad in that it tends to fall down in the presentation stakes — mostly, it must be said, because of poor translation.

What The Manager does have that no other management game seems bothered with is a good post-match 'edited highlights' sequence. This may seem like an odd thing to include in what's essentially a strategy game, but though games of this type are supposed to be about mental rather than physical exertion, football does not exist solely in the boardroom, and these little touches tend to put things in perspective. The Manager's graphic highlights are also streets ahead of everyone else's.

Play is open to up to four players, and each can choose to take part in a single season stint, a three season slog or an indefinite marathon. Different leagues and competitions are available depending on which time-frame is chosen, but whichever you opt for you can choose to play at one of five skill levels.

It's little points like this which suggest that The Manager was probably a very good game indeed in its original incarnation. However, like many European programs (not just football games), it hasn't really translated very well — every aspect of written English from the manual to the text screens is poorly executed, and while this is almost endearing to begin with, it becomes quite irritating as a long season draws to a close.



In its favour, The Manager does offer a fairly compelling look at the mechanics of a soccer club (and for the byte-conscious, it probably takes up less hard drive space than any of its contemporaries). However, its distinct lack of production values, poor translation from the original and slightly dated gameplay make it probably the least likely to succeed of all the management games currently available.

Avid Chelsea supporter John Major postponed his 1990 family holiday so that his son James could attend a trial ... for Aston Villa.

PREMIER MANAGER

Type: Management

From: Gremlin (0742) 753423

Price: £29.99

Due for release this month

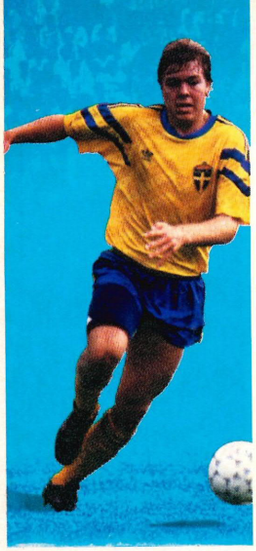
"Fame or oblivion? It's down to you." Phew, that's quite a responsibility — but it's exactly the burden which Premier Manager claims to lay on its player's shoulders. And you thought that this was all for a bit of fun, didn't you?

Actually, of all of the management games available at present, Premier Manager is probably the most fun of the lot — it does make some claim to being a 'serious' strategy game, but at the same time there's something extremely jolly about the whole affair (I even found relegation to be quite a gas... but that's another story).

First off, it should be pointed out that Premier Manager is probably something of a misnomer. Far from putting you at the cutting edge of 'the world's toughest league', the game actually presents the newcomer with his or her choice of 'conference league' outfits and expects them to earn a place in the top flight from these humble beginnings.

As ever with games of this type, the player is presented with a mass of data, covering everything from the squad's ages and relative skill levels to their health and all-round happiness. The

Pele never played at Wembley, but he did make one appearance in London — in a friendly match for his club Santos at Craven Cottage. The Brazilian superstar scored from the penalty spot ... but Fulham won 2-1.



idea, obviously, is to take 11 of these individuals and either mould them into a team that can slowly climb the ladder of success — or, better still, develop a strong enough reputation to make the Premier League clubs sit up and take notice (and hopefully come looking for themselves).

To this end, there's a little transfer speculation to be dealt with, hiring and firing of staff, the setting of training schedules and just about anything else you can think of. Believe it or not, you're even responsible for choosing and placing the advertising hoardings which surround the pitch (there's even a PC Review advertisement board in there, although they've made something of a pig's ear of our logo).

At the end of the day though Brian, it's all about 90 minutes on a Saturday (or Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in these satellite-dictated times) and if you don't get the correct blend of youth and experience on the field, then you can kiss goodbye to any chances of taking the manager's chair at your favourite team (unless of course, it's already in the Vauxhall Conference).

In the 1990/91 season, Glasgow Rangers had enough players on their books to field an entirely 'foreign' team — nine Englishmen, one Dutchman and a Russian.

Overall, Premier Manager is not quite the all-encompassing management experience which it likes to pretend — far too often, the program display's its Amiga roots (especially in the graphics department) and it really just hurtles along at too great a pace to be a real lasting experience. That said, it is a good 'halfway house' for those who would like to dabble in football management, but aren't too keen on developing ulcers for the privilege.

Because Premier Manager is still in the final stages of development as I write this, we'll update you with a proper review next month.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 93

Type: Management

From: Domark (081) 780 2222

Price: £29.99

Domark's addition to the line-up of management/strategy games wasn't exactly enthusiastically received when it first appeared just prior to the launch of the Premier League in 1992.

In fact, at that stage it was definitely looking like relegation material, as our own editor rightly took it to task for its numerous gaffes and blunders, which included the non-appearance of the Premier League itself and the League Cup still going by its ancient 'Rumbelows' moniker. These may seem like superficial faults in themselves, but they did serve to underline the program's general sloppiness and lack of polish.

However, like Manchester United shrugging off the disappointment of finishing second in 91/92 to lift this year's title, Championship Manager has risen to the challenge of righting its faults and appears here in a new, improved form.

The first thing to note is that most of the niggly faults have been corrected — the Premier League is now just that, while Coca Cola has taken its rightful place on the league's knock-out tournament. Other cosmetic changes have been introduced too, including the provision of new improved pictures of current teen favourites (Nick Barmby, Paul Ince et al).

However, it's in the meat of the program itself that the real improvements have taken place. One of the major problems with the original version was the length of time which it took to generate seemingly random results — for example, when you're struggling to keep Tottenham out of the relegation zone, you don't really care who's winning the Anglo-Italian Cup.

But this time around that seems to have been put right. OK, so you're still going to need a fairly fast machine to keep things moving at an acceptable pace, but as long as you have your memory configured to its optimum spec, then you shouldn't go too far wrong.

So much for the mechanics, what's it like to be manager of your favourite team? Well, in my case at least, being manager of Tottenham was too frustrating an experience, so I quickly switched to trying my hand at the (surely simple?) Manchester United job. (I did toy for a while with the option of using my skill and judgement to guide Arsenal to the third division, but in the end the prospect of managing Tony Adams and the rest proved too hideous to contemplate.)

There is a real skill involved in keeping a squad of highly-talented individuals motivated and playing to the best of their abilities. Not only that, but you also have to buy and sell well in the transfer market to keep your chosen squad at its peak for a number of seasons.

In fact, having played at the very top for a season or two now, I think that I may have bitten off more than I could chew — maybe taking over struggling Barnet would have been a better option. But that said, if I'd gone to Barnet, then I would never have fulfilled my lifelong ambition of signing Andy Townsend.



Whatever team you choose to manage, the Championship Manager world carries on in an entirely believable manner — except for a couple of silly faults which we'll come to in a moment. For example, all of the players' temperaments are apparently accurate (Paul Ince is forever being booked for dissent) and the fictional transfers are always entirely believable: Brian Dean to Leeds for £2.5 million, Ronny Rosenthal to Chelsea for £1 million and so on.

The only real gaffe this time around is that the game was obviously finished before the first Premier League came to an end and the developers had to make a few guesses — this will appeal to Nottingham Forest and Crystal Palace fans whose teams are still in the top flight (in fact, as I speak Forest are still battling away in the UEFA Cup), but Oldham fans may not be so happy to be facing Wigan and the rest in the First Division.

These, of course, are only minor problems though — after all, this is meant to be fiction — and Championship Manager has emerged as the most improved player of the last season.

Almost a must for really sad soccer fanatics ... like me.

A striker for the St Mary's Primary School in Flint scored all his team's eight goals one week and six the next in two successive victories over a local side. The player? Ian Rush, aged 10.

On the pitch games

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP 1992

Type: Arcade

From: Empire, as part of the 'Sports Masters' compilation (081) 343 7337

Price: £34.99

Not exactly the youngest member of this PC soccer line-up, but just like Ray Wilkins and Gordon Strachan before it, this veteran still seems capable of keeping much younger upstarts out of the reckoning.

In fact, until the release of Sensible Soccer, this one is arguably the most playable and enjoyable arcade soccer game available — with the emphasis very much on enjoyment.

While many developers of soccer games obviously feel that they have to include everything including the dressing room sink into the programs, the Japanese dudes who developed the original coin-op on which this game is based (which actually appeared well before the 1990 World Cup, making this computer version's name a little bit cheeky really) took the other route and decided to strip their own effort down to the bare minimum.

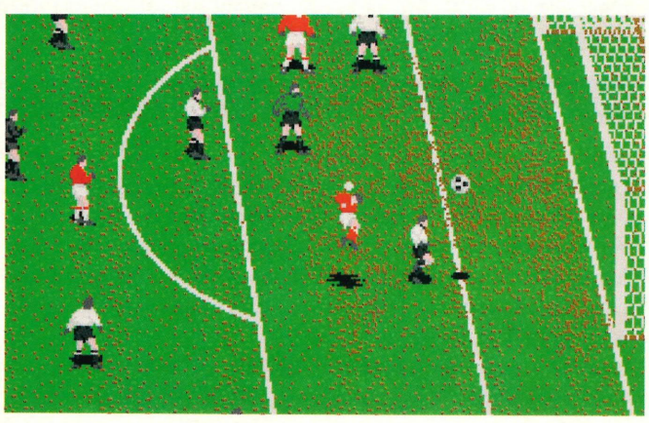
The result is a nicely-paced 'side-on' offering which is good fun in its 'one-player versus computer' mode and an absolute riot when played by two humans: bands play at half time, cheerleaders cheer, players hug and kiss after every goal — in fact, if games were judged on happiness alone, then this one would be an easy League and Cup double winner.

And when it comes to getting stuck in, this sense of fun and simplicity is translated into the control method. The on-screen player under joystick command at any time is highlighted by the simple (but effective) device of a coloured 'spotlight' at his feet. When the player's team is in possession he runs with the ball until he's either tackled or chooses to pass or shoot (one fire button for a lob, the other for a 'daisy cutter').

Whether in attack or defence, the player nearest the ball is always under joystick command, and everything, from tackling to heading and executing near-perfect bicycle kicks, becomes second nature within minutes.

The drawback of this, of course, is that once you've learned how to play, there are no little nuances to discover or tricks to master, but if you only drag the game out for a spot of light relief every now and then, then this shouldn't be too much of a problem.

Although the gameplay itself is fairly rudimentary, there's still a good deal within the program to keep the options freak happy — joystick or keyboard control, multiple sound card support, numerous game times to choose from, save and load options — everything short of Super VGA graphics really (which might be all that's needed if a World Cup '94 version were to make an appearance).



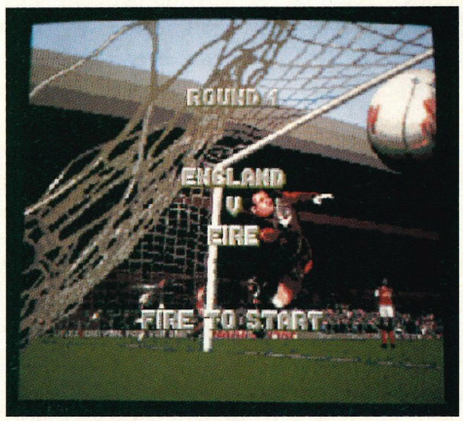
While European Championship 92 has had a good run, it may not be able to hold off the younger generation of football games for very much longer. However, in its current incarnation as part of a good value four-game compendium, this may just be the best option available to the casual armchair footballer.

SOCCER STARS

Type: Arcade (three-game compilation)

From: Empire (081) 343 7337

Price: £29.99



A package of three footie games for less than £30 might seem to be an irresistible bargain at first, but even before the quality of the games is brought into the equation, there's one question which should be asked — who on Earth needs three different football games?

Sure, if the collection had included a number of different game styles linked by a common football theme — one management, one arcade, one simulation or whatever — then this would have been a different matter entirely, but what you actually have here is three practically identical game styles only linked by their shared lack of any quality whatsoever.

Kick Off 2

The original Amiga version of this game may be more than three years old, but it's still widely regarded to be the finest arcade football game ever. This PC version, on the other hand, is probably the greatest travesty since Liverpool knocked Portsmouth out of the FA Cup on penalties. *(Surely 'since Palace were relegated on goal difference with 49 points.' Ed.)*

Not only is the game blessed with the sort of control mechanism which would have Kenny Dalglish break his silence with a stream of profanities, it's also littered with bugs and silly graphical glitches.

And there was no need for it to have been like that. The PC is easily capable of handling a game of this nature — perhaps the worst part of all of this mess is that Kick Off 2's presentation (the team selection process and so on) is unrivalled, and if the programmers could get that much right, why couldn't they have carried it on when the players took to the field?

A shocking mess, but still better than ...

World Championship Soccer

Another overhead view arcade 'action' effort, this one enjoys the dubious distinction of making Kick Off 2 look relatively good value for money. Sure, it's free of that game's programming glitches, but at times this one screams out for a little bug to add a touch of spice to the program.

Not only is World Championship Soccer a serious graphic mess, it's also perhaps the slowest and most uninteresting football game ever to make it from penny arcade to home computer (that's right — the programmers didn't even have to come up with a design of their own!). The players turn, slip and slide

In his illustrious career at Everton and Tottenham, Gary Lineker scored against every first division team — except Sheffield United.



like complete zombies, while the Jabba the Hut-like goalkeepers are almost too funny to be true.

It's very difficult to believe that it came from the same team as that which produced European Championship 1992. Not even the addition of a spurious international championship is enough to endow this effort with any worth whatsoever.

MicroProse Soccer

Like Kick Off 2, MicroProse Soccer was once highly popular on another computer format, although it must be said that it had its day in 1988 on the Commodore 64 and could hardly have been expected to hold its head up when confronted with any superior hardware. Yet again, this one is viewed from an overhead perspective, and while it is perfectly adequately programmed (no, those aren't glitches, it's supposed to be raining!), the design is so archaic that the result is like watching the 'Stanley Matthews Cup Final' on a dodgy old television.



This game does however bear the distinction of being the only part of the trilogy to make me smile — and only because the five-a-side section is so awful that it actually had me laughing out loud.

I struggled long and hard to come up with one single plus point about this terrible threesome, and then , at last, I found it ... they can be played from a floppy disk. And that's it.

All told, Soccer Stars is a misnamed, badly-assembled collection of the worst designed and programmed football games ever developed. £30? Even given away it would be overpriced.

PSYCHO'S SOCCER SELECTION

Type: Arcade (four-game compilation)

From: Ubi Soft (081) 343 9055

Price: £34.99

Another multi-game compilation, not unlike Empire's contribution, although this time around it does have a little more variety, encompassing an experimental 3D game and a little management flavour. Kick Off 2 and World Championship Soccer are, of course, no better in this compilation than the last, but the other two are a more palatable combination.



Paul Gascoigne rarely has a happy New Year. In 1989 and 1992 he missed the January 1st fixture through injury, while in 1990 he cracked his left arm during the game and in 1991 he was sent off.

International Soccer Challenge

Perhaps this one was developed initially to show off the MicroProse team's programming expertise rather than its love of football, but whatever the motives it's an intriguing prospect.

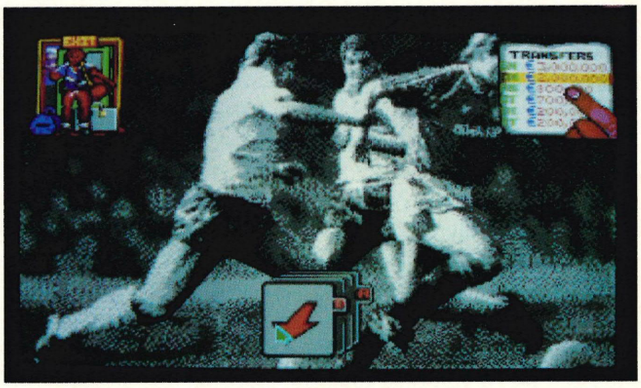
The difference between this and just about every other football game ever invented is that the viewpoint is from directly behind one player, as opposed to the usual overhead or side-on views. And while this certainly adds a lot more realism to the graphics, it does make the game a lot harder to play — not being able to see the rest of your team is a serious disadvantage. Those who like the viewpoint may like to persevere, but I for one found the pace a little slow and the action more than a touch confusing.

Manchester United

Perhaps even more topical than ever, now that the Red Devils have finally overcome their 26-year championship bogey, this is one of the few games available which successfully marries a strong and playable action game with a good variety of management elements.

Once again, the only thing which really works against it is its age — it's surprising how many of the United players have gone over the last couple of years — Danny Wallace, Mal Donaghy and the like — and their appearance unfortunately tends to date things a little. That said, this is still a head and shoulders above all of its compendium-mates.

If you really want to be Manchester United on your PC, though, it could well be worth waiting for Krisalis's Manchester



United Premier League Champions, which promises a top-down viewpoint and "several new features", and is due out some time in the autumn.

Once again, this compilation only appears to offer good value for money — those looking for a nice soccer challenge would be better advised to spend their money on one good game (Manchester United is, after all, available in solo budget form) rather than this mixed bunch.

WHICH FOOTBALL GAME?

While it's easy enough to discount the Soccer Stars compilation from the shopping list, most players' choices will eventually come down to little more than personal taste. My own ideal solution would be to have both Championship Manager 93 and European Championship 1992 installed on my hard drive (which, indeed, they are), but others may prefer Premier Manager's less time-consuming strategy and Sensible's more frenetic arcade charms. Whatever your choice, remember the words of the great Desmond Lynam ... it's only a game.

Sensible SOCCER



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- ★ NAMED SCORERS

Sensible SOFTWARE

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Games of the 21st century

Steve Cooke engaged in fiery debate over the future of the computer game universe at the Game Developers' Conference in California



The rush toward CD platforms has led many software companies to plunder Hollywood for new talent. Michael Conti (right) used to work for Paramount until he was abducted by Brian 'Interplay' Fargo. 'It's been a fascinating experience for me. There are several skills that are second nature to us in the film business: in particular the management of live actors and video production schedules. And we know how to tell stories. But we have a lot to learn from the games companies too.'

Chris Crawford made his name with a game that nowadays few people remember: Balance of Power. Its carefully thought-out strategy made it a market leader in the early 80s. Since then, he's applied a rigidly intellectual approach to each succeeding title, whether it be Balance of the Planet or Patton Strikes Back. The fruits of these endeavours may not be plucked from the tree in quite the same numbers as Wing Commander or the Indy games, but they remain testimony to Crawford's first commandment: thou shalt not design a game on the basis of commercial interest alone.

So it's perhaps not surprising that when CC arranges a conference to debate all matters game-related, several people turn up to hear what he (and others) have to say. This year, the Seventh Annual Computer Games Designers Conference convened at the Westin Hotel in Santa Clara. No less than 900 people joined the queue for enlightenment. As ever, PC Review was there.

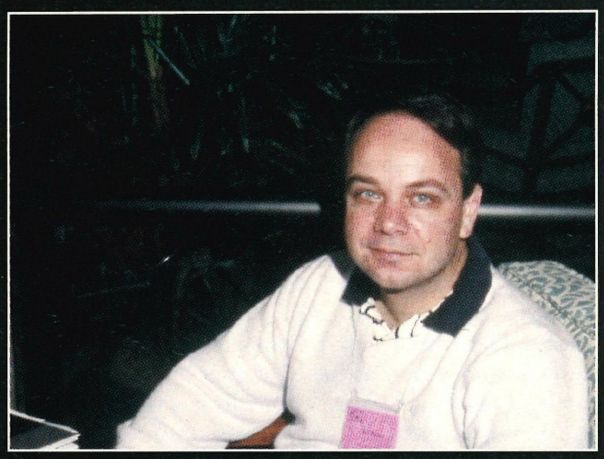
Programmers, designers, producers and wannabes — that glorious American expression which somehow denotes enthusiasm and despair in equal measure — all turned up on a Saturday evening to register for three days, over 80 sessions, and carbohydrates. The latter (which took the form of mountains of cookies and muffins) was possibly the most important element of the whole affair. Although everyone was tagged with a flamboyant pennant proclaiming their status (or lack of it), carbohydrate intake remained an important aid to identification. Producers eschewed it, sticking to coffee; designers picked first at the muffins and then at the cookies; wannabes were too busy gawping to eat anything; journalists (well, this one at any rate) drank margaritas; programmers ate or drank everything.

And of course there were publishers. They drank alcohol in vast quantities and lurked in hospitality suites throughout the hotel. Every so often one of them would slink out to stick up a notice near the entrance, with tempting offers of employment and the chance of an immediate interview.

Throughout this whole circus, from dawn till dusk, the talk was nothing but games, games, games. If you're really into interactive entertainment, there can be few more pleasurably intense experiences than reclining in the bar of the Westin Hotel with a large margarita discussing narrative branching problems and the future of games. To save your sanity, we'll skip the NBPs for the moment. What, according to the experts, *is* the future of games?

The greatest designer of all time

There are two major problems facing the games industry. Sid



"I've always felt that computers were best for playing games. Yes, they're OK at running banks, but I think it's natural to play with your computer."

Sid Meier

Meier, perhaps the greatest games designer of them all, is acutely aware of both of them.

Sid, despite his awesome reputation for designing and programming a list of milestone products that include Civilization, F15 Strike Eagle, Silent Service, F19 Stealth Fighter, Red Storm Rising and Railroad Tycoon, is an exceptionally modest fellow. Whenever you talk to him — he's rather small and quiet, shy even — he gives the impression of putting as much between the words as he does into them. This is what the man who is arguably the world's greatest games designer had to say ...

"I always have several ideas on the go, but Civilization cleared them all out. Since then I've been trying to fill the queue again. I've been working on this project for some time that's to do with the Civil War in the States, but coming to this conference has given me second thoughts about it.

"There seems to be," he continues, "a lot of ferment in the games scene at the moment. Most of this concerns mass-market technology — you know, cable, 3DO, satellite: mass-market systems that may enable us to reach a lot of people.

"And of course, we'd like this to be true. I've always felt myself that computers are best for playing games, that that's what they were made for. Yes, they're OK at running banks, but I think it's natural when you have a computer to start playing with it.

"However, all our games so far have been designed to get round the fact that there's nobody around to play games with. Instead, you play with the computer. Now multi-player technology is really coming: it'll be automatic, by phone line or by cable. And this will make playing games much more acceptable to people, who have previously criticised them for being anti-social. You'll be able to have friends *and* play games! I'm almost worried that games will become too pervasive, that people may become proud to assume their computer personalities in real life.

"We had the CB (Citizens Band) radio craze a few years ago. And one of the reasons for this was that people were able to adopt more interesting personalities over the radio than they were in real life. Multi-player gaming could become really pervasive. I've heard people say that while playing Civilization they've suddenly realised it's three in the morning and they've got to get to work. I want to people to play, but that much?

"Right now I'm a in a bit of a quandary. The Civil War game was looking good, but not as good as Civilization. How do you follow a game like that? People keep asking for Civilization 2, but do I write what people want me to write, or what I want to write? You'd think that after a year I'd have worked that one out, but no ...

"But I'm still absolutely fascinated by the process of writing a game, though I realise the trap of trying to top my previous effort. I doubt whether I'll do a narrative game — I don't think they've settled the problem of branching yet — they keep trying to drag the player back to a predefined storyline and I think that's cheating. The trouble with RPGs and adventures is that you spend so much time admiring the ingenuity of the designer. I always had the feeling I was going somewhere where someone had been before.

"Whatever I do, I want the player to tell the story — I'm not a narrative person. I want them to be at the centre of the game, not the designer ... ", which is probably why Sid remains the unchallenged king of games design.

This little speech, which I've quoted in full because it's not often you get the chance to quote Sid Meier at any length at all, actually puts its fingers on the two most serious problems that games designers face today: Designing Games for Games Players, or Designing Games for the Mass Market (let's call this GPMM for short) and Narrative Branching Problems (or, say, NBPs). Which do we do? Do we produce fabulous RPGs with experience points and inventories which only seasoned games players can understand without spending a day with the manual, but which are perceived to be 'state of the art'? Or do we produce games like Loom and Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis that will appeal to the mass market, get more people to buy games, and grow our hobby until it receives the recognition it deserves?

You might not think that there is a conflict between the two. There is. A recent experiment showed that a group of non-games-players were so far removed from the visual on-screen language, which you and I take for granted, that when confronted with Ultima VI they couldn't even recognise which was the player character, let alone what the icons signified, or even that what they were looking at was a game. Games that Joe Bloggs understands are not games that you and I play.

MicroProse is probably the only major software house to owe its existence to the game designs of just one man. And this is he: Sid Meier, acclaimed by many as the greatest games designer in the known universe. Who else could design AND program such radically different products as F19 Stealth Fighter and Civilization?



The Dig: game design by Brian Moriarty and A Very Famous Person.



Graeme Devine is the man who co-founded Trilobyte, creator of Virgin's 7th Guest CD stunner. "Here's how it started," he says. "Wouldn't it be cool, we asked ourselves, if we could make an interactive version of Twin Peaks?"

Top Secret!

Sid Meier is on record (in PC Review, in fact — Issue 10) as saying that 'I design games for people who play games: I design them for myself.' Brian 'Professor' Moriarty, programmer of Infocom classics Wishbringer and Beyond Zork and, more recently Lucasfilm's Loom, falls into the opposite camp: games for everyone. So what's *he* up to?

"I am working on the biggest project I've ever done, by far," he reveals. "It's called The Dig and for the first time I have a co-author [more about this later]. The story involves a massive mile-wide asteroid that is heading towards earth on an unstable orbit. If it should impact with our planet, we'll be plunged into another ice age. In desperation, Earth sends up a space-shuttle packed with nuclear weapons to blast it. What they find, however, is not what they expect."

The Dig comes with full-screen graphics throughout, so it's not a windowed adventure like, for example, the earlier Indiana Jones games. Most importantly for this and future releases, it features an entirely new development system that is completely icon-based. There are about 100 locations and the game includes graphics and special effects by ... aha!

Aha! Because Brian is not about to reveal the identity of his co-author or that of the company which is doing the special effects. Why? Because the co-author is so humongously famous that his name cannot be mentioned until a dozen or so lawyers and marketing men in lead-lined bunkers have pushed the Red PR Alert button launching an intercontinental marketing missile in June.

But of course, being PC Review, we already know who he's talking about. Respect for Brian's private anatomy (threatened with removal should he disclose anything) forces us to remain silent, but try this. Think of a name (not unconnected with movies), and double it. Keep doubling it until you can't get any bigger. Then think of a name connected with movie special effects and carry out the same procedure. Now you know.

Loom was an honorable attempt to address the mass market, but The Dig has rather more going for it. Famous name, family-friendly scenario that even Joe Bloggs will understand, and T2 style special effects. What more could you want? Could this be the game that finally puts computer entertainment on the map (rather than on the pages of the tabloids)?

Brian evidently hopes so. "Normally I wouldn't stoop to work with a co-author," he sniffs. Then he grins, "... but this time I stooped very, very low!"

So what's NBP?

While Sid and others in his camp continue to write games for each other, and while Brian and his camp write games for everyone else, Chris Crawford thinks we can do both at once — but not before we've cracked the problem of NBP.

NBP is a very simple problem, but it sits at the heart of many debates these days about the future of games. You may have heard Ian Hetherington of Psygnosis quoted as saying, "What we need is photorealistic games to grow the market; the gameplay is irrelevant." Which, of course, he only said for effect. You may have read articles about the growing influence of Hollywood over the games market, now that companies like Sony and Disney are playing ball. You may even have bought a CD-ROM game featuring superb animation — even compressed video windows — and been disappointed at the gameplay while marvelling at the graphics.

All these are evidence of NBP, or the narrative branching problem. It's a very simple one. Everybody likes to tell stories: it's at the heart of the most successful entertainment media around — theatre, literature, and film. Computer game designers would like to tell stories too. Interactive stories ...

But they can't, or at least they can only in a very limited sense. Because every element of a story (especially if told in graphical form) requires lots of data. If we said 512K per element, we'd be erring on the side of caution. Now take your interactive story. You start off and make a decision. Then you make another, and another, and another ...

Assuming that you have only two options each time you decide on a course of action, after eight decisions the programmer will need somewhere to hold around 250 megabytes of data.

And that's only eight branching points. A decent game needs hundreds. And a decent game needs a lot more than 512K of data, especially if you're going to use the full-screen animation that we're all told is what the future of games is all about.

The depressing truth, which no amount of marketing hype can get around, is that stories are heavily data intensive. No wonder we so often say, "Great graphics, shame about the game." There isn't any *room* for the game!

Chris Crawford faced this dilemma head-on in his speech entitled 'I had a dream.' He argued that unless we can generate algorithms to tell stories in formulaic terms, rather than simply storing them as data blocks, our industry will never rise to the state of art which we all yearn to achieve.

These algorithms don't just relate to plot development, but also to graphical exposition. Crawford is working on a game based on the Arthurian legends and he has chosen to concentrate on one particular element — the art of facial expression.

His reasons for doing this are compelling. "Little stick figures cannot convey emotional power," he argues. "We need people in our games — people who can smile, laugh, cry, sneer ...". And he's developing the technology to do just that. For the moment, he's keeping the work behind closed doors, but as soon as we can get in there, you'll see what he's been up to.



Brian Moriarty (extreme right) relaxes for a rare get-together with other Infocom veterans. Steve 'Hitchhikers' Meretsky is on the left; sadly our identification of the others fell victim to alcohol-induced amnesia.



Organised ingestion of carbohydrate (no alcohol supplied). Conference goers were offered the choice of dead bird, dead cow or dead plant. They had no choice, however, when it came to listening to Harlan Ellison for 90 minutes.

Music power

While Chris wrestles with the problems of programming emotion, another big name in the development community — big in more ways than one — has been tackling the problem from a different perspective. The Fat Man, alias music programmer and composer George Sanger, was at CGDC to sell his wares. After putting the notes into Wing Commander and Virgin's 7th Guest, he was much in demand.

You might think that The Fat Man is, well, fat. But he's not. He's over six foot, slim, extremely charming and comes from Texas. "It's a good place to be larger than life," says Sanger. He started off at the USC f~ilm school and then made his way through various R&R bands in LA in the early 80s. "I like surf music. I play mediocre guitar with great love, and I have a lot of great talents, amongst which is *not* great keyboard skills ..."

This comes as something of a surprise. Enter the world of any well-known music programmer, be it Rob Hubbard or Dana Glover, and keyboards are all over the place. Doesn't George have a bit of a problem here?

"No. I've worked my lack of skill to my advantage. I don't play just what's under my fingers, but what I can see in my mind. That's how I work with games. I get a good pic in my head of the situation. I try then to intensify the feeling, the emotion of that moment. I imagine the movie of that moment — the best possible way you could express it in a film, where the music is so good that I'm totally involved with what I'm seeing. I go through all that in my head and, if I'm successful, then the music just comes naturally — I can't stop it."

George works with three other composers; Joe McDermott, who believes, according to George, that "Art is what you do when you're on fire." Dave Govett is a fan of film music scores. "He was a projectionist just for fun," says George, "he just had to be around those scores. When I asked him for music for Wing Commander, he had that whole score in his head."

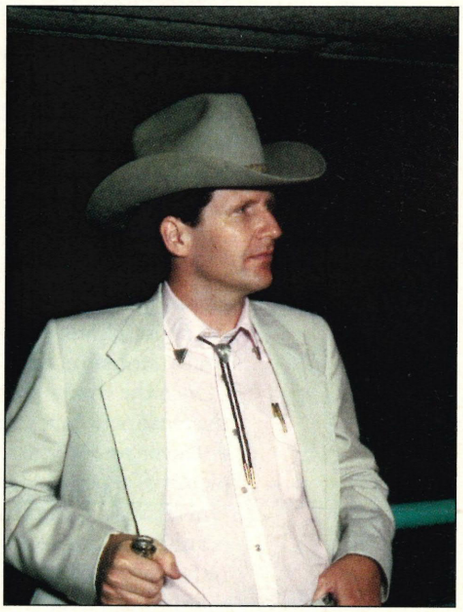
Finally there's Kevin Phelan. "He's our tones expert," explains George. "He's so good at programming those chips, Yamaha licensed the tones for their new Windows drivers. Now he's learning how to compose and boy! He's kicking our ass!"

These guys all work together, but independently. "I like to try and keep a pace of about a tune a day," says George. "We charge twice as much as everyone else, but then we take twice as long. We're not getting rich, but we're getting big. That's sometimes interpreted as meaning the best, but this is music – you can't say who's the best."

Which inevitably leads us into a conversation as to who George thinks *is* the best. With a genuine modesty and willingness to praise others, the Fat Man names "... Charles Deeman at Interplay. He did the Lost Vikings for SNES and the Two Towers, under incredible pressure — not just from the workload but also from his own conscientiousness. A true artist. Then there's Rob Hubbard — that guy writes his music in hex."

So much for the competition. But what about the Fat Man? "I sell two things," he says, "my ability to touch people's hearts, and my ability to let people KNOW that I can touch people's hearts. We want to be at the top, even after Hollywood has flooded into the market. In five years time we want to be the Beatles of interactivity. And the way I've chosen to do that," he grins, stretching to his full height and holding out his arms, "is by being the Fat Man!"

Conclusive proof that The Fat Man is not fat.



We could fill pages with news from the Game Developers' Conference. Instead, we've mentioned just a few of the encounters that really went beyond the muffins and the cookies. We could mention sci-fi author Harlan Ellison's 90 minute speech at the gala dinner; we could mention the horror with which the audience greeted Steve Cooke's revelation that many people in Europe still had — gasp — lowly 386 machines!

But we won't ...

Be a part of the future!

Until last year, Chris Crawford's game design conference was the only one of its kind. Now, inspired by his example and thanks to the tireless efforts of the author of this article, we have one here in the UK too. It's called Develop! and it takes place at Blenheim's European Computer Trade Show. This year the conference will run for two days, with 16 speakers from all over the world, including Chris Crawford, Laura Buddine (one of the world's leading CD developers), Ian Hetherington from Psygnosis, Michael Conti from Interplay (see photo and caption in this feature) and many others.

Normally you wouldn't stand a cat's whisker of getting in, because only members of the games programming community can register. However, PC Review has persuaded the organisers to offer five free tickets to PC Review readers. These tickets will give you free admission to the ECTS and the Develop! Conference. All you have to do is send, on a postcard, your name and address together with the name of your favourite game and (in not more than 50 words) your reasons for choosing it. Send your entry to: PC Review Develop!, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London, EC1R 3AU. Deadline for entries is August 15 1993. Five lucky winners will be drawn out of the hat and their names announced in the October issue of PC Review, out on September 15 by which time they will have received their free tickets, attended the conference, and doubtless have some tales to tell ...

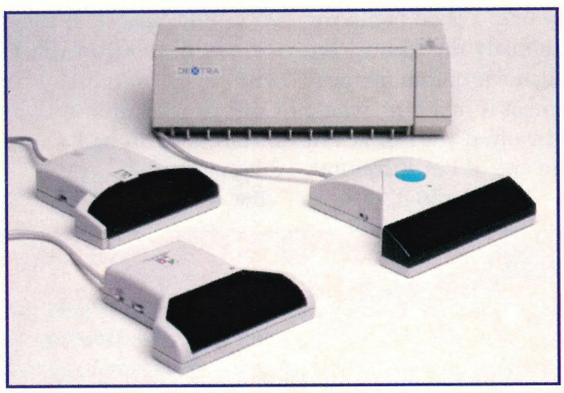
If you are interested in attending Develop! anyway, or would like to suggest a speaker or topic for the event, you can get more information from Cat MacLean, Develop!, Blenheim On-Line, Blenheim House, 630 Chiswich High Road, W4 5BG.

Scandalous!

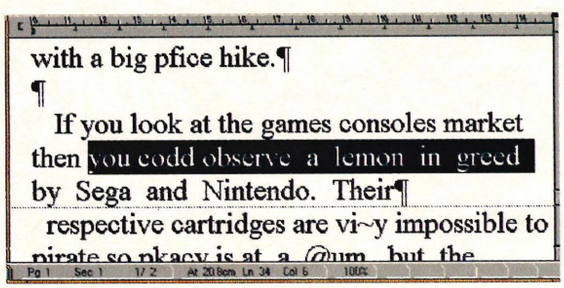
Paperless society? Where? John Bennett looks at affordable scanners that may provide the answer to all that paper the PC was supposed to do away with

File it, search for it, scrabble around in the wastebasket looking for it, there's seems to be no way to avoid the endless reams of paper we generate every day. So, a scanner, which converts images and text to a computer format, would seem like the ideal solution. All those photographs, diagrams, forms, letters or whatever neatly stored on disk and always ready at the press of a key.

Or so the theory goes. It's true that scanners have improved no end over recent years, there are plenty of types to choose from. Unfortunately, many types of scanner are out of the reach of individual pockets. A specialist scanner can cost thousands of pounds. Good flatbed scanners are more reasonable, starting at around £600-£800. That really only leaves a hand scanner as an affordable alternative. They start at a couple of hundred quid and, in pure scanning terms, often offer similar capabilities to flatbed scanners.



The perils of hand-held OCR ...



The problem with a hand scanner is just that; scanning by hand and trying to get the image smooth and straight. Most hand scanners have a scanning speed light which flickers or changes colour if you scan too fast. The result is a distorted, garbled or scratchy image. And as you increase the scanning resolution to get a sharper picture, the scanner needs to be moved slower, or it doesn't read the image correctly.

I've taken at three of the most popular hand scanners, offering a range of different capabilities, and the possibilities offered by a brand new mini-desktop scanner, the DextraReader, which promises to do many of the things a hand scanner has trouble with, for roughly the same price.

The two ways of putting a scanner to work are, (a) scanning an image and, (b) scanning text to turn it into a format you can use in a word processor, spreadsheet or database, for example.

Most scanners come bundled with some sort of image-editing software. These days, this is almost invariably Windows-based, and it will allow you to cover up discrepancies, reshape, resize, rotate, crop, and improve the quality of the original.

To convert scanned text to a word processed format, there's optical character recognition (OCR) software. OCR is great when it works. There's a lovely bit of blurb in one of Logitech's adverts which reads something like, "it's important to remember that the accuracy of any OCR software is directly affected by the original document quality and the quality of scan."

Reading between the lines, OCR works perfectly until you get into the real world — where what you need to scan is a bit crumpled, faded, coffee-stained or just a plain ordinary fax.

That's when the results don't always live up to the adverts. The software that's around at the moment is good, and can save a lot of time, but the conditions have to be right. This is why hand scanners really are a bit of a dead loss for anything but the most basic OCR. Most of us don't often get text to scan that comes in convenient four inch strips. Trying to stitch blocks of text together just adds to the mess. Then, any hand wobble or inconsistency in scanning speed will distort the text, causing the confused OCR software to present you with patches of complete gibberish to clean up.

Getting blood out of a stone

Installing a scanner can be a real pig of a job. Don't get me wrong, I wouldn't be without one, but I could do without some of the set-up headaches.

First off, you have to install the scanner card into your PC, and avoid any conflicts with interrupts, addresses, jumper settings, and so on. The more devices, such as CD-ROMs and sound cards, there are already installed, the more chance there is you'll have conflicts to sort out.

Then you have to install the scanner drivers. These are updated by the scanner manufacturers with alarming regularity. Once that's done, you need to make sure that the software you want to use can actually use those drivers, which is by no means always the case. And finally, with the image-editing software, it's worth calibrating the scanner so that the input is consistent each time, and the same applies to your printer and monitor for colour and output.

Things aren't as bad as they used to be. The software set-up should be menu-based for most new scanners, and prompt you all the way through. There's also a new hardware standard for scanners, called Twain, from Hewlett Packard. This eases many of the software set-up difficulties, and is being incorporated into a lot of software packages (like PageMaker 5.0), so you can scan direct from that program if your scanner supports Twain.

LOGITECH SCANMAN COLOUR

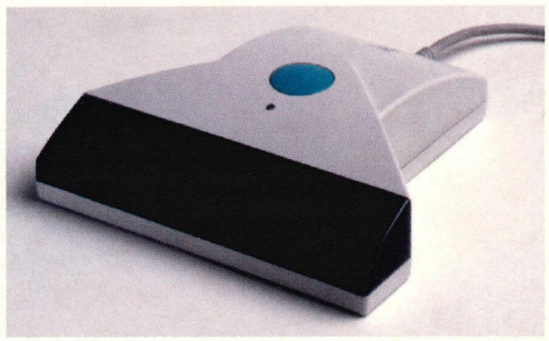
Price: £527.58 incl. VAT

Supplier: Logi (UK) Tel: (0344) 891313

The ScanMan Colour will scan in line art, grey scale or 24-bit colour modes, in resolutions of 100 to 400dpi. The most noticeable difference between it and most other hand scanners — apart from the fact that it scans in colour — is that it's much chunkier all round. The extra size and weight made it feel more stable and consequently much easier to scan steadily with than other hand scanners I've used. However if you have small hands you may find it a bit clumsy.

Like the ScanMan 256, it has jumper switches on the metal plate of the scanner card, so you can get at them without having to unscrew the PC all over again. A definite plus point.

The scanning software is called Fototouch Colour. It's a Windows program which gives you options to scan in whatever direction you want to, and then rotates the image round for you. It's very easy to use, and more than adequate for getting images on to a PC, and for basic retouching and colour enhancing. This includes tools for lightening and sharpening areas of an image, zooming in and out, painting tools and a small number of effects filters. However if you want to get into some fancy image editing or special effects, it's a bit limited and certainly can't compete with Picture Publisher Lite.



Besides the quality of the colour scanning, what impressed me most about the ScanMan Colour was the Autostitch feature. This allows you to scan images larger than the scanner can cover in one pass. Then, the software automatically looks for common elements and stitches the image together. By doing this, it effectively puts an end to one of the biggest limitations of a hand scanner and is very good at matching the respective bits of the scan so the joints are almost indistinguishable. Unfortunately, it's hampered by the nature of hand scanning; you get different tones from diffeent speeds on each pass, and any hand wobble will cause kinks in the picture.

The quality of colour and grey scale scanning stands up very favourably with many flatbed scanners I've used that are well over twice the price. One thing to bear in mind, though, is that scanning in colour creates much larger files than the same greyscale scan. And I don't mean a couple of hundred bytes, either; the difference can be several megabytes. If you don't need the luxury of full 24-bit colour, both Mustek and Genius make 8 and 16-bit colour handscanners as an alternative.

MUSTEK HANDY SCANNER (HAND SCANNER)

Price: £175 incl. VAT

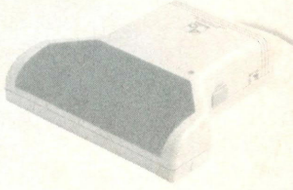
Supplier: Evesham Micros Tel: (0386) 49641

The Mustek Handy Scanner is unusual in that, firstly it's one of the cheapest 256-grey scale scanners available, and secondly it offers scanning resolutions from 100dpi up to *800dpi* (for text and halftone modes; up to 400dpi with 256 greyscales). This is double the normal maximum of most hand scanners. Hard disk space and the power of your PC need to be taken into account, though, because the higher the resolution you use to scan, the larger the file becomes. Not only that, but you have to scan even slower so it gets harder to get a good scan first time round.

Physically, it looks and feels very similar to the Logitech ScanMan 256. It has resolution, brightness, pattern settings and a scanning button on the side panels. On the underside is a set of switches for the various combinations of scanning resolutions and dither patterns, and the Handy Scanner has four scanning modes; one for text/line art, two for dither patterns and one for 256 grey scales.

Having the scanning button on the left hand side panel doesn't make life easier for left handers, though. My other criticism is that it's a bit on the light side, and as a result I found it could be a bit tricky to scan steadily with.

On the software front, it comes with Micrografx Picture Publisher Lite, for image editing, Scankit, a very basic scanning utility, and Perceive Personal OCR software. Picture





Publisher Lite was great fun, I thought, not only allowing me to scan and improve my images easily, but also to do some very silly things with them once they were scanned.

Perceive does a perfectly adequate job, although I have to admit to a preference to the more sophisticated Typereader software that comes with the DextraReader. I'd hate to look a gift horse in the mouth, but using Perceive with the Mustek did nothing to change my mind about the usefulness of hand-scanners for OCR. I set myself a ten minute time limit to get a decent scan of a column of typed text to run through Perceive, but there were still too many mistakes to make it worth while.

If I wanted the option of high-resolution quality, coupled with value for money, the Mustek would be my first choice. In basic scanning terms there's very little to chose between it and the ScanMan 256. Picture Publisher Lite tips the scales in its favour, although the Logitech's Autostitching is a key feature — the Stitch and AutoMerge options the Mustek software offers just aren't a patch on that.

LOGITECH SCANMAN 256 (HAND SCANNER)

Price: £327.83 incl. VAT (MCA-bus £386.58)

Supplier: Logi (UK) Tel: (0344) 891313

Logitech is the dominant force in the low-cost handheld market, and the ScanMan 256 is an ideal workhorse for greyscale and line art scanning. It's straightforward, pretty easy to set up (with easy to reach jumpers on the scanner card backplate, like the ScanMan Colour), reliable, and a generally unfussy scanner.

It'll scan line art or 256 grey scales in resolutions from 100dpi to 400dpi, so no surprises there. Scanning quality was consistently good, and it's difficult to fault the ScanMan 256 for the way it does the job it was intended to do. Like the Mustek, it's a bit on the light side for my liking, and again the scanning button is awkwardly positioned for left handers.

Maybe Logitech could have been more generous with the software: all you get with ScanMan 256 is Fototouch. This is grey scale, a much more basic version of what you get with ScanMan Colour. It allows the same control over scanning directions, and, most importantly, has the same Autostitch feature so you can scan large images. That, a simple pen, brush, eraser and tone control sliders are as far as it goes. Still, it does the job.



It's possibly not as price-competitive as it should be, but I have to own up and say that this is the model I've used for the past year, and it's never given me any cause for complaint.

DEXTRAREADER

Price: TBA. RRP under £600, estimated street price around £350 (+VAT)

Supplier: Reeves Tel: (0604) 670771

The DextraReader is a potentially ideal solution to the "Can I afford a flatbed? Can I put up with a handheld?" problem. It's a lightweight, neatish mini-desktop machine, about 11 inches wide by four inches by four inches, that uses a single sheet feed to pass the page through the scanner. Great! No worries about wobbly scans or inconsistent scanning speeds.

I was dead set on being able to say, "Here's is an affordable alternative to a handscanner, that not only handles images but is also practical for OCR". Unfortunately, it's only just about to arrive in the UK, but because it looked such an interesting idea I badgered a similar, none-too-finished version from Germany, which I was unable to get working consistently enough to test properly, despite a lot of tinkering.

The version that will be available in this country will scan line art or 256-greyscales at up to 600dpi, handle a maximum page size of just over A4 size, and take ten seconds to scan each page.

The DextraReader comes with i-Photo (image editing software), Type Reader (OCR) and Card Reader software. i-Photo is not too bad as an image editor, but it's left in the shade easily by Picture Publisher Lite. Type Reader is a top class package — certainly not a budget job by anyone's standards — which produced excellent results when I ran some test files through it.

Card Reader is a nifty, and pretty unusual, idea. It's simply for scanning in your business cards into a database, which you can then search through, organise and view the cards. Saves carting them around or losing them, but it's a shame that the DOS-based software is a bit quirky and basic.

If you are looking for a general purpose scanner, don't fancy fiddling about with a handheld, and want to be able to use OCR, then the DextraReader is worth keeping an eye on. The questions it needs to answer are how straight it feeds the paper through (for OCR purposes), how well it copes with unusual image sizes, and, simply enough, how well does it scan?

British technology at its best ...

The last thing you want is a photograph with a great big kink in it because your hand shook making the pass. It's also a nice idea to be able to scan what you want straight, not at a 15 degree angle.

So that's where the DIY comes in. Don't laugh, but a bit of makeshift carpentry can save a lot of wasted time redoing scans with a handheld. I use a board with a grid marked out so I can tape the image down straight, and a frame that sits on that — well, two wooden rails actually — between which I run the scanner up and down. Sounds Heath Robinson as hell, I know, but if it gets me a straight scan first time, who cares?

Contacts

Epsom	(0442) 61144	Logi	(0344) 891313
Evesham Micros	(0386) 49641	Tekware	(0562) 882125
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Let your PC do the talking

Relations with your computer would be so much more friendly if only it would talk to you occasionally. Mike James explains how you can easily teach your PC to do just that.

It seems only natural that as computers get more powerful we should be able to talk to them. Speech input, or speech recognition, turns out to be a very difficult problem, but the other side of the coin, speech output, should be easy. After all, if you have a sound card fitted to your machine you will almost certainly have heard it say a few high quality and easy to understand words. So why isn't speech part of every program? The reason is that there are two very different ways of generating speech and one of them is a bit of a con.

It isn't difficult to record sounds using a PC and play them back. Anyone with a sound card that has input facilities can plug in a microphone and make a digital recording. This works by converting the analogue signals from the microphone into a stream of numerical values which can be stored in memory or on disk. Each numeric value gives the amplitude of the wave form at a single instant in time. The quality of the recording depends on how accurate each measurement is made and on how many times per second the waveform is measured. Just a few years ago personal computers were just too slow to deal with the amount of data generated by digitisation of sounds. Today's PC can easily cope with the data flow.

What has digital recording got to do with speech synthesis? Well, it hasn't got anything much to do with true speech synthesis, but it can be used to record individual words or phrases which can be played back in any order to construct new sentences. As the speech can be recorded to any level of quality desired, this sort of machine speech is very impressive. The only places that you are likely to notice imperfections is at word boundaries and you might notice a certain lack of intonation. As each word is recorded in isolation and might be paired with any other word it has to be rendered in a flat expressionless manner. It's a bit like making up a blackmail note by cutting out letters from different newspapers — you can read the message but the letters don't necessarily sit together very well.

Testing ... one, two, three

This sort of speech synthesis is what you encounter most often in games — for example in Wing Commander II — because it is easy to implement and of high enough quality to be easily understood. At this point you might be wondering what is wrong with it. The answer is that it has a limited vocabulary. It can only utter the words that have been recorded. If you want it to say something new, it can't. When you add to this the fact that a reasonable vocabulary of a few hundred words takes megabytes of storage you can begin to see the problems.

Still it is worth saying that this limited vocabulary speech is often sufficient and a great deal of work has been done to compress the speech files down to a reasonable size without losing too much quality. You don't even need an expensive sound card to do the job. For example, PC Talk (shareware — disk 3263 from PDSL) will make use of the standard PC speaker and no additional hardware to replay sound files. Of course you can't make recordings but the pre-supplied library includes a selection of useful and/or amusing sayings — "Hello", "Happy Birthday", and so on. You can add these commands to a batch file to make up your own sayings. For example,

PC-Talk hello password

would say "Hello", "Please enter your password" — it really is that easy and no special hardware is required. The sound quality isn't wonderful — about as good as the worst transistor radio you have ever heard — but it is understandable.

If you want to play back voice sounds with more quality than the internal speaker produces, but don't want the expense of going to a full sound card, then meet the Covox Speech Thing. This oddly named gadget is simplicity itself. It consists of a single combined speaker and amplifier, the sort that you often see used to boost a Walkman so that others can listen to it, and a plug that fits the parallel printer port. The clever part of the Sound Thing is actually contained in the printer port plug. This contains a set of resistors which adds together the voltage on each printer control line. By sending different patterns of data to the printer port, Speech Thing software can create almost any audio signal — and without interfering with the printer! This is so simple (in fact, you could make your own for less than £5), it's ingenious. Using a Speech Thing, sounds can be reproduced clearly enough for demanding tasks such as teaching foreign pronunciations. For example, Pronunciation Tutor from HyperGlot can teach you how to pronounce the basic alphabet, syllables, words and phrases of Spanish or French. The quality of output is reasonable, but not up to hi-fi standards. The advantage is that you can hear the word or phrase as many times as you like without making a fool of yourself.

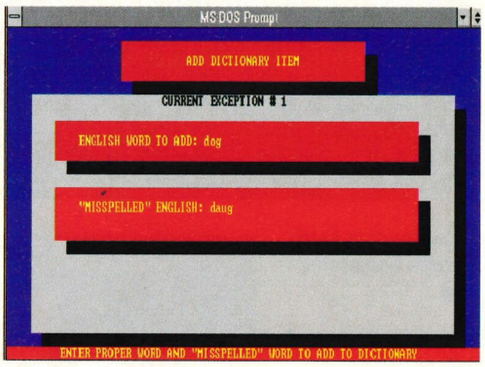
Of course, if you do have a sound card such as the Sound Blaster then you have the hardware to digitise any sort of sound at high quality — Sound Blaster Pro can work at CD quality in mono — and play it back. You can use the software included, VoxKit or Voice Editor to create and play your own sound files — speech synthesis is just a special case.

Increasing your vocabulary

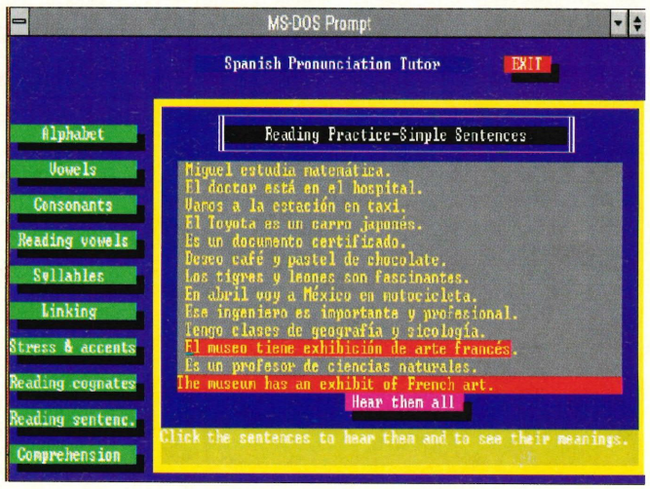
Now we turn our attention to unlimited vocabulary speech synthesis — perhaps what most people really have in their mind when they use the term speech synthesis. How does this work? By breaking speech down into its basic sounds — the phonemes — any word can be created by putting the correct phonemes together. It's a bit like a word construction kit — put the right phonemes together in the right order and it sounds like the word. The only problem is what are the right phonemes? No one to date has found a perfect way of splitting up spoken sounds into a set of basic sounds that can be combined to make realistic artificial speech.

That's the depressing part, but the good news is that you can do a reasonable job of producing speech with only a small set of phonemes. It isn't wonderful naturalistic speech, but with a little practice you can get used to it. Early phonetic synthesisers were very poor and very difficult to use. Each word had to be entered using a strange phonetic spelling that was far from obvious. Sometimes you would find a word that you thought would work as "dog" would have to be phonetically changed to something like "Td oo h gg".

The missing part of the system was a simple way of converting written text to speech. After all, that's really what you need — a text to speech



The exceptions dictionary with a little dog trouble!



The HyperGlot Pronunciation Tutor can teach you Spanish with only the help of a Speech Thing.

system would really have an unlimited vocabulary. The difficulty with this is that English words are not spelt as they sound. However, it is possible to put together a relatively small set of rules that work well enough for a surprisingly large number of words. To deal with the really odd spellings, all that is needed is an exceptions dictionary. In this, the accurate English spelling is entered along side a sound correct English spelling, ie, how the word would be spelt according to its sound. The result is a text to speech program that can take almost any document and make a reasonable attempt at reading it out loud. The same technique can be used from within a program simply by sending any text to be printed on the screen to the text-to-speech module. If the program can also put words together to make phrases, learn words or just echo back what you type then the result really is unlimited vocabulary speech synthesis.

The leader in text-to-speech software is First Byte. It has incorporated voice output into its range of educational software for few years, and now it has packaged the text-to-speech module as a separate product — Monologue. It will work without any sound hardware at all but the intelligibility does improve with the quality of reproduction. The voice is understandable over the unmodified PC speaker but the addition of a Covox Sound Thing is the least you can do for it. If you have a Sound Blaster card then you can hear it without hiss and crackle and really make out the mispronunciations!

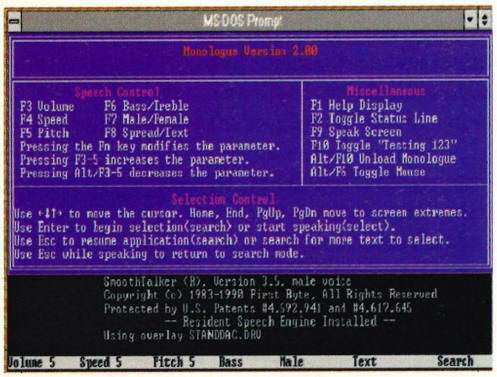
Monologue is a TSR (Terminate and Stay Resident) program that you can pop up at any time after it has been loaded by pressing Alt-T. You can then mark out any area of the screen and Monologue will read it back to you. There are both DOS and Windows versions (although you will need a sound card such as Sound Blaster to use the latter) and the idea is that you can be using any application — word processor, spreadsheet, game — and get Monologue to pop up and read what is on the screen. There is also a utility that reads an entire text file. There is an exceptions dictionary where you enter a list of words along with their correct pronunciation. However, I still can't make Monologue say "dog" reasonably and I've been trying a long time! In the main, though, the pronunciation is quite good and you can usually work out what an odd sounding word is from context.

If you program a little then you can install Monologue as a device driver and send text to it as if it was a printer — the only difference is that it says the words rather than printing them. This means that you can add speech to a program written in any language that has a printer command — Basic, C, spreadsheet macro language — and there is nothing new to learn.

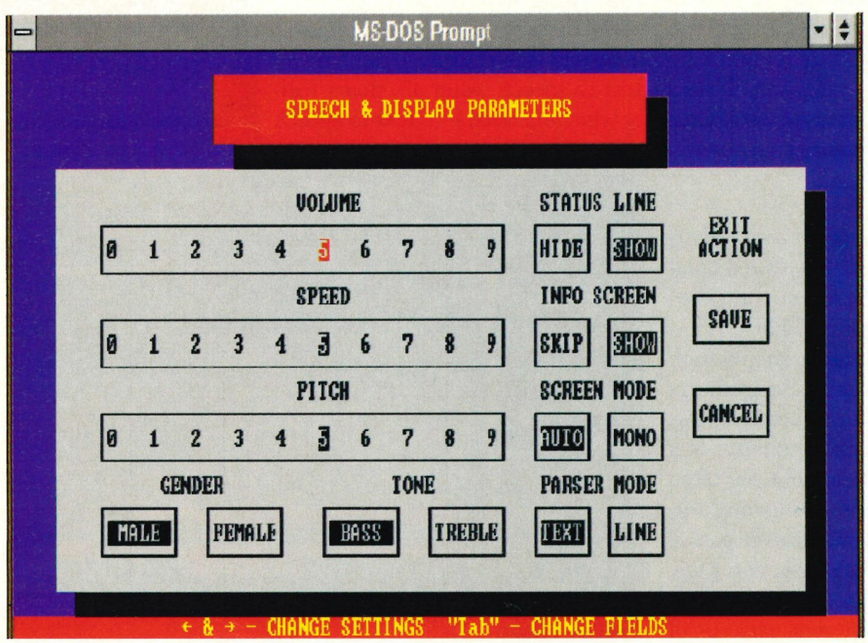
There are few reasonable alternatives to Monologue — they are either over-priced or need special hardware. Not so long ago all speech synthesis needed special hardware which contained electronics to make the sound of each phoneme. Yes, there was a piece of electronics that went "Shhh" and one that went "BBB" and so on! Today this hardly seems necessary as a general purpose sound card does the same job and be used for other things.

Suppliers

Iansyst	(071) 607 5844
Monologue £89	
First Byte range	
Covox Speech Thing	
Sound Blaster range	
Guildsoft	(0752) 606200
HyperGlot The Pronunciation Tutor: £79 including Covox Speech Thing	
PDSL	(0892) 663298
PC Talk	



Monologue's help screen and status line.



Monologue's control panel.

Slick as a parrot

SBTalker, included as part of the Sound Blaster package, also does a reasonable job of text-to-speech but it isn't as convenient to use. It reads text files and is used by the Talking Parrot and Dr Sbaitso demo programs. The Dr Sbaitso program is simply a reworking of the famous Eliza program that produces the illusion of intelligence by firing back stock phrases triggered by your input and by modifying your input and sending it back to you. The difference is, of course, Dr Sbaitso uses a text-to-speech module to actually speak. The SBTalker is quite good and works at the same level of success as Monologue but it hasn't the ability to read the screen and it doesn't have an exceptions dictionary.

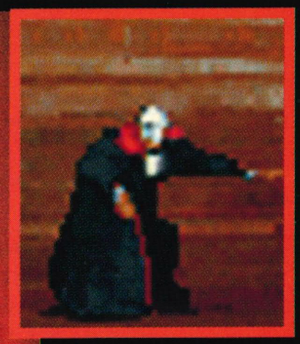
So what of the future? Given that text-to-speech works reasonably well and isn't difficult, it is a puzzle as to why it isn't more common. Most games that offer speech output do it in a fairly half-hearted way but what better way of getting information without having to take your eyes off the screen? You will find speech provided in educational programs aimed at children just learning to read but that's about the only common example. Perhaps the problem is that a speaking computer implies a listening computer as well and that's something we haven't managed just yet.

MicroProse

Presents

Return of the Phantom

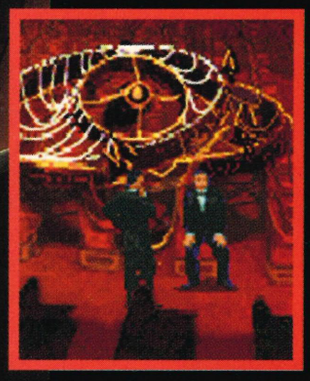
An Inspector Raoul Montand Mystery



A shadowy masked figure stalks the dark recesses of the Paris Opera House...

Inspector Raoul Montand investigates the hundred year old unsolved mystery and delves into the secrets of the legendary theatre.

Encountering numerous traps, mazes and hidden rooms created by the twisted mind of the Phantom, the detective makes his deductions and interrogates a full cast of characters.



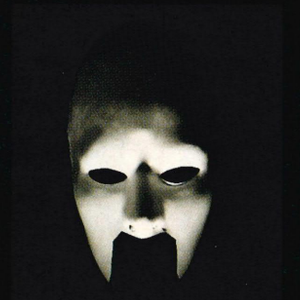
Paris Opera House
1993 -
Opening night of
"Don Juan Triumphant"





The crystal chandelier crashes down onto the audience killing several people. You are Raoul Montand, famous detective with the Sûreté, charged to investigate the recurrence of a notorious crime performed by the Phantom of the Opera.

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Join the multimedia revolution

Buying a CD-ROM drive

Buying a CD-ROM drive is a complicated matter because there seem to be so many options and a very wide price range. However, before we delve into the complexities of CD-ROM standards, it's worth looking at just what a CD-ROM can and cannot do, ie, whether you really need one.

CD-ROM is simply a data storage medium, comparable to your hard disk and floppy disks. Its big advantage over conventional disks is that up to 600Mb of data can be stored digitally on a single compact disc — compare that to 1.44Mb for floppies, and 40Mb-300Mb for hard disks (and a 300Mb hard disk would set you back around £500). Apart from sheer size, it differs from hard and floppy disks in another important respect: you cannot (yet) store your own data on compact disc; it is a 'read-only' medium, so you cannot 'write' to the disc, hence Compact Disc Read Only Memory. Thus, it is not a substitute for a hard disk, but an extra.

There is one other thing a CD-ROM can do, although it is somewhat tangential here: nearly all CD-ROM drives come with software to enable you to play ordinary audio CDs in the drive. Bear in mind, though, that unless your PC is hooked up to your hi-fi, you will be playing CDs through whatever speaker set-up you have — and you will need external speakers. Also note that the converse isn't true — audio CD players won't 'play' CD-ROM software.

With this in mind, the only practical reason for buying a CD-ROM drive is because there is software released on CD-ROM that you want to use. Right now, there are three main types of software which might fit the bill. Firstly, because of the large capacity of CD-ROMs, many of the early titles came in the form of reference titles, effectively a grand database incorporating text, pictures and sound.

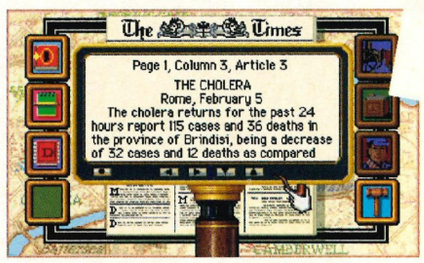
There are a number of multimedia encyclopaedias on the market, the Guinness Disc of Records, the Software Toolworks World Atlas's Mammals, and so on. These are not available on floppy disk, although there is an abridged version of the atlas.

Secondly, if your hard disk is continually being squeezed for space, many larger games eventually get released on CD-ROM: Wing Commander II, the Ultimas up to Ultima VII, nearly all Sierra's titles, including the Space, King's and Police Quests. Buying a CD-ROM drive could give your hard disk a new lease of life, with the proviso that you presumably don't want to pay twice for the same game on different formats, and CD-ROM releases tend to lag behind their disk-based counterparts by around six months.

Some of these games are 'enhanced' on CD-ROM, which usually means extra music and some speech instead of on-screen text, others are simply lifted wholesale from the disk version and planted on CD — and are known, rather disparagingly, as 'shovelware'.

The third type is a tiny category at the moment, although by this time next year, there should be more of them: games that are *only* available on CD-ROM, and not released on floppy disk at all. Step forward, 7th Guest and Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detectives I and II: these are the only widely available games which fit this particular bill at present.

If this sounds as though we're trying to put you off, we're not. CD-ROM has a hell of a lot going for it. With the capacity to include graphics in the form of moving digitised video sequences, with more space for sound effects, music, and particularly speech, which takes up a fair chunk of memory, there is huge potential for games to be more attractive, more intuitive to play, more 'natural', if you like. It's also a cheaper medium in terms of raw materials than floppy disk, although you should bear in mind that with 600Mb to fill, programming and development costs are high. Compact discs are more robust than floppies, and finally, CD-ROM is the great white hope for software publishers beleaguered by piracy — unlawful copying of commercial floppy disks.



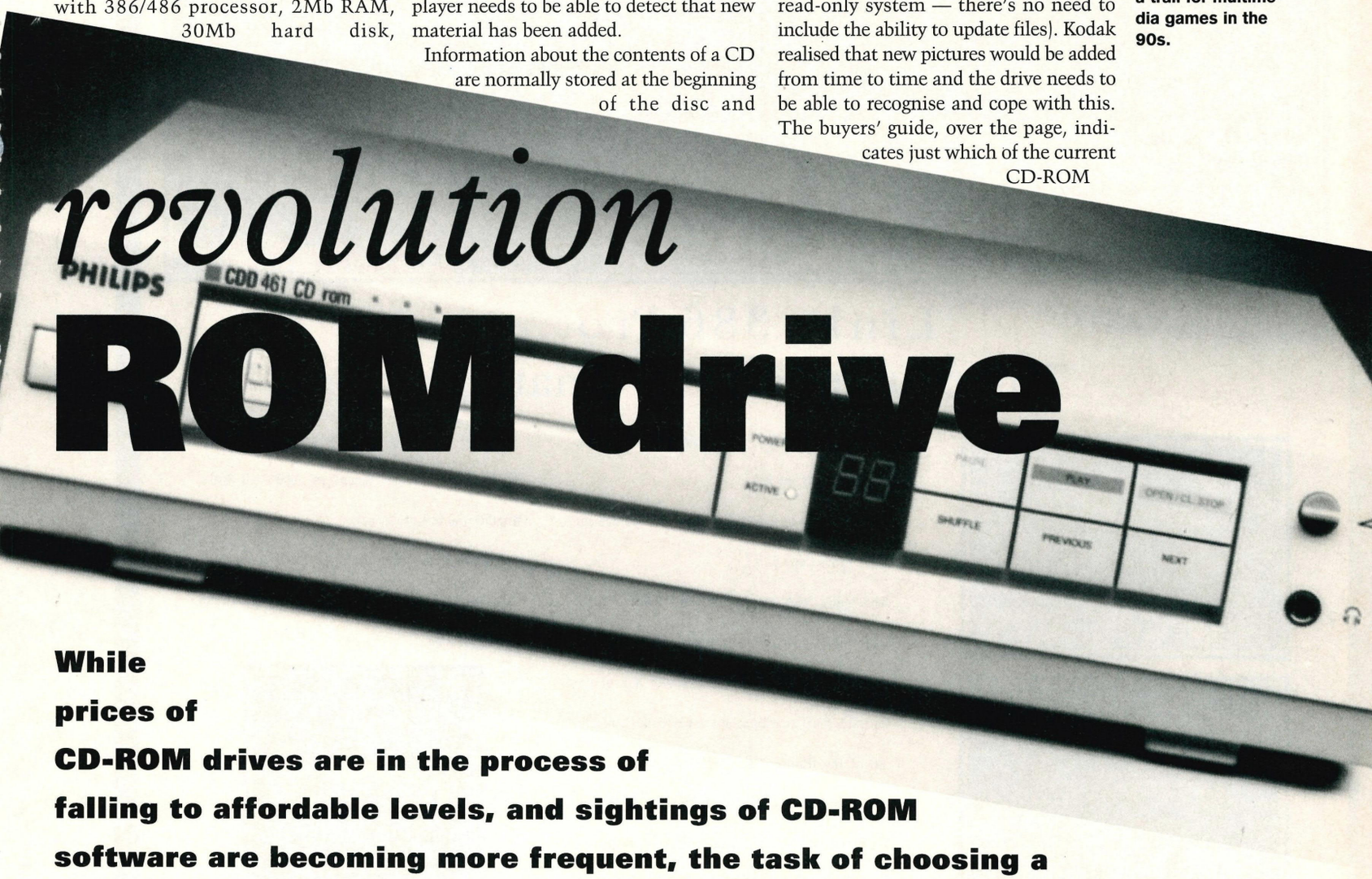


Below and right: Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective, one of the few CD-ROM only games.

Keeping up with standards

Once you have decided to buy a CD-ROM drive, you will have to get to grips with the minefield that is CD-ROM hardware standardisation. Because it's still a relatively new medium, standards haven't settled down yet and you want to be sure that you buy a drive which is reasonably future-proof.

revolution CD-ROM drive



While prices of CD-ROM drives are in the process of falling to affordable levels, and sightings of CD-ROM software are becoming more frequent, the task of choosing a suitable and reasonably future-proof CD-ROM drive is fraught with difficulties. This is, to a large extent, because of the diverging standards in this market. In PC Review's supplement with Issue 19, Mike James explained how and why so many types of drive are being released at the moment, and here, we offer some advice to potential CD-ROM buyers.

In PC Review's Issue 19 supplement, this area was explained in some detail, so here we'll run through the issues to be aware of fairly briefly.

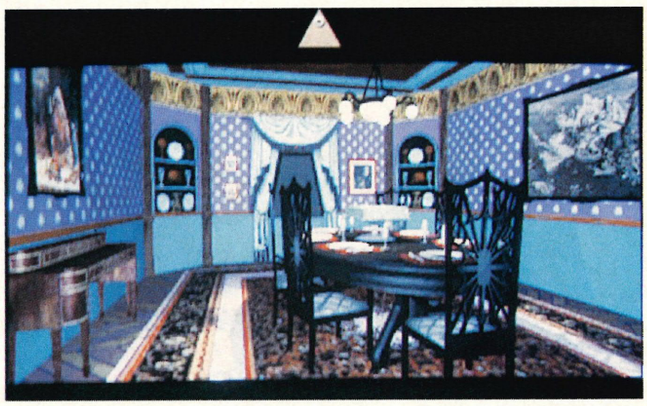
● Do you need MPC compatibility? Yes, definitely. Nearly all CD-ROMs on the market are Multimedia PC compatible (MPC), but you should beware of very old models that might be on the slow side. MPC is simply a definition of capability: the drive should be able to locate a piece of data in less than one second, with a transfer rate of 150K/s (kilobytes per second) or less.

The drive should be running in a PC with 386/486 processor, 2Mb RAM, 30Mb hard disk, Windows 3.1 and 8-bit audio capabilities.

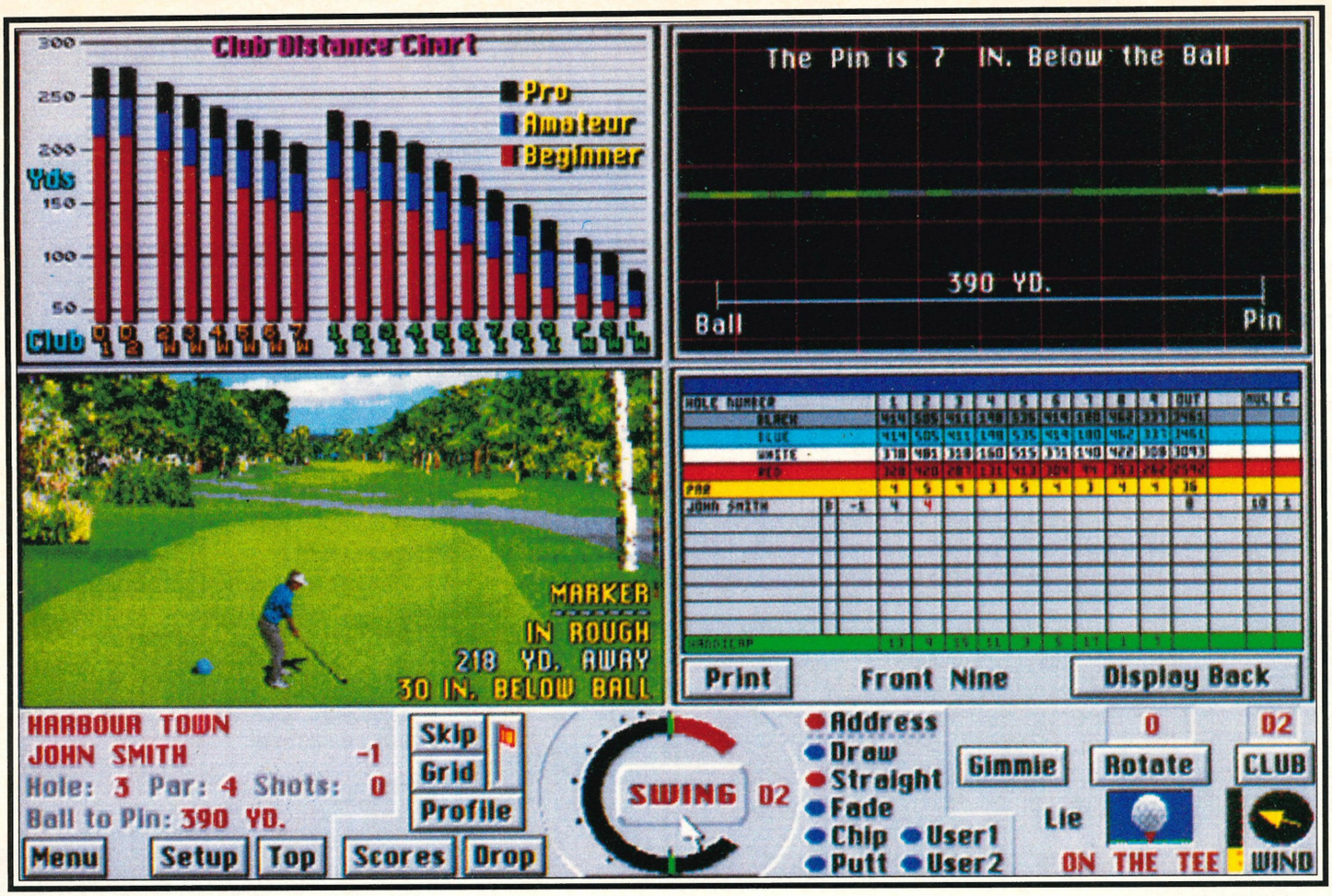
● Do you need a multi-session/Photo CD drive? If you plan to make use of Kodak's Photo CD process then the answer is certainly yes. With this, you can have your camera film developed on to compact disc as well as slides or prints (by the processing house), then view your pictures on CD with a Photo CD player.

Now, one compact disc stores about 100 pictures, and Kodak, reckoning that nobody would take their film in to be developed in neat sets of 100 at a time, made Photo CD 'multi-session', ie, when new pictures were added to the CD, the player needs to be able to detect that new material has been added.

Information about the contents of a CD are normally stored at the beginning of the disc and designed to be written just the once (remember, CD-ROM is intended as a read-only system — there's no need to include the ability to update files). Kodak realised that new pictures would be added from time to time and the drive needs to be able to recognise and cope with this. The buyers' guide, over the page, indicates just which of the current CD-ROM



Above: The 7th Guest, set to blaze a trail for multimedia games in the 90s.



Links 386 Pro.

The rest are strictly amateur.







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

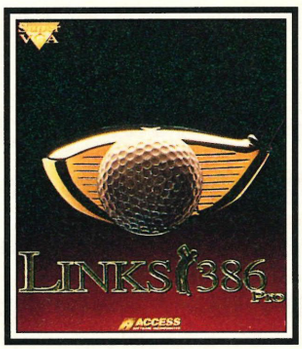
It's like trying to compare a crazy golf tournament with the Ryder Cup.

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

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

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

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



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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

drives have multi-session capability.

● Do you need need XA (eXtended Architecture) compatibility? For the moment this isn't an important standard but it could well become one in the future. XA is a standard devised by Microsoft and Sony, which, basically, provides a 'bridge' between MPC and Philips CD-i. The good news is that multi-session XA drives will read CD-i *and* Photo CD *and* MPC CDs. The difficulty is that XA drives are the exception and they are more expensive. They would be, wouldn't they?

● How fast do you need the drive to be? CD-ROMs are, by their basic design, slow. The very fastest drives make use of a variable spin rate to read data fast and slow down sufficiently to play audio tracks, although fixed speed drives are cheaper and are good enough for most applications.

You should also try to choose a drive with a fast seek time — the time spent looking for the data required on the drive — and you should aim for around 300ms for the read head to move across one third of the disk's surface.

Finally, speed of operation. This is partly governed by the abilities of the drive itself (again, see the buyers' guide for figures), but also by the type of interface used by the drive. In general, a small computer systems interface (SCSI) is fast and SCSI-2 is faster still, and you can buy the interface to fit into a spare expansion slot at the same time as buying the drive***.

This said, you can get reasonable data transfer rates from special non-SCSI inter-



Contacts

Computers By Post, 46 Central Road, Worcester Park, Surrey, KT4 8HY. Tel: (081) 760 0014; fax: (081) 760 9861
Cyonix plc, Commerce Way, Leighton Buzzard, Beds, LU7 8SU Tel: (0525) 850025; fax: (0525) 852728
Evesham Micros, Unit 9 St Richards Road, Evesham, Worcs WR11 6TD. Tel (0386) 765500 Fax: (0386) 765354
Magstore, Unit B, Progress House, Albert Road, GU11 1SZ Tel: (0252) 344355; fax: (0252) 315167
Mediaware, Unit 17, Wellington Industrial Estate, Wellington Rd, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancs, OL6 7EB. Tel: (061) 343 3000; fax: (061) 343 2000
Optech Limited, East Street, Farnham, Surrey GU9 7XX Tel: (0252) 714340; fax: (0252) 711121
'Puters, The Warehouse, 50c Chatterton Road, Bromley, Kent BR2 9QE. Tel: (081) 313 1111; fax: (081) 313 1485
SMC Computers, 26 Farnham Road, Slough, Berks SL1 3TA Tel: (0753) 550333; fax: 0753 524443
Simply Computers Ltd, 28 Walthamstow Business Centre, Clifford Road, London E17 4SX. Tel: (081) 523 4086; fax: 081 523 4002
Special Reserve, PO Box 847, Harlow, CM1 9P. Tel: (0279) 699294
Unica, 39a Hall Street, Stockport, Cheshire, SK1 4DA Tel: (061) 429 0241; fax: (061) 477 2910
Watford Electronics, Finway, Dallow Road, Luton, LU1 1TR Tel: (0582) 487777; fax: (0582) 488588
YVU International, 272 Kidmore Road, Caversham Heights, Reading RG4 7NF. Tel (0734) 472085; Fax:(0734) 463444

CD-ROM drives

Manufacturer	Model	Internal/ external	Caddy?	SCSI/ non-SCSI	Interface card incl?	Transfer rate (K/s)	Seek time (ms*) one third	full disk	Multi-session?	Photo CD?	XA?	Special features	Guide price (incl VAT)
Hitachi	CDR1700SY-4	ext	yes	non	yes	153	300		no	no	no		£734.38
Hitachi	CDR3700Y	int	yes	non	yes	153	320	390	no	no	no		£516.41
Hitachi	CDR1850SY	ext	yes	SCSI	yes	153	300		no	no	no		£734.38
Hitachi	CDR3750Y	int	yes	SCSI	yes	153	300		no	no	no		£628.83
Hitatchi	CDR-1750S	ext	yes	SCSI	no	153	320	440	no	no	no		£669.75
IBM	CD-ROM II	ext	yes	SCSI	MCA only	171	380	700	no	no	no		£1,036.35
Mitsumi	CRMC-LU005	ext	tray loading	non	yes	150	350	650	yes	yes	no		£386.58
Mitsumi	CRMC-LU005	int	tray loading	non	yes	150	350	650	yes	yes	no		£280.83
NEC	CDR-74	ext	yes	SCSI	yes	150	280	1000	no	no	no		£703.83
Panasonic	CR-562S	ext	tray loading	non	AT interface kit included	300	320		yes	yes	yes	dual speed	£545.20
Panasonic	CR533B	int	yes	SCSI-2	yes	300/2Mb	290		yes	yes	yes	avail summer 93	£596.90
Panasonic	CR533S	ext	yes	SCSI-2	yes	300/2Mb	290		yes	yes	yes	avail summer 93	£749.65
Panasonic	CR562B	int	tray loading	non	AT incl	320		y	es	yes	yes	dual speed	
												avail Summer 93	£392.45
Philips	CDD461	ext	tray loading	non	yes	153	700	1500					£411.25
Pioneer	DRM-604	ext	six disc autochanger	SCSI	no	612	300		yes	yes	yes	double speed	£1,408.83
Pioneer	DRM-610	ext	six disc autochanger	SCSI	no	153	600	800					£992.88
Sony	Lazer Library	ext	yes	non	yes	150	340	530	no	no	no	bundled with software collection	£586.33
Toshiba	XT-3301BA	ext	yes		yes		325						£511.13
Toshiba	XT-3301BA	int	yes		yes		325						£386.58
PC/AT													
Toshiba	KT340/SAK	ext	yes	SCSI	AT(ISA) inc	330	200	330	yes	yes	yes	double speed	£844.83
Toshiba	KT340/BAK	int	yes	SCSI	AT(ISA) inc	330	200	330	yes	yes	yes	double speed	£668.58
Kodak Photo CD Kits for the PS/2													
Toshiba	KT340/SPK	ext	yes	SCSI	MCA	330	200	330	yes	yes	yes	double speed	£774.33
Toshiba	KT340/BPK	int	yes	SCSI	MCA	330	200	330	yes	yes	yes	double speed	£774.33
Kits for the PS/2													
Toshiba	KT330/SPK	ext	yes	SCSI		153	325	350	yes	yes	yes	single speed	£881.25
Toshiba	KT330/BPK	int	yes	SCSI		153	325	350	yes	yes	yes	single speed	£599.00
Kits for the PC/AT													
Toshiba	KT330/SAK	ext	yes	SCSI		153	325	350	yes	yes	yes	single speed	£791.95
Toshiba	KT330/BAK	int	yes	SCSI		153	325	350	yes	yes	yes	single speed	£611.00

NB information in each section was not available for all machines

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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

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SHAREWARE 92

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.

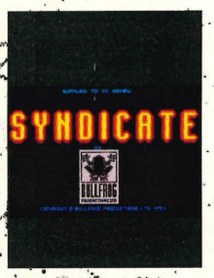
We also practise 'contemporaneous marking' – which means that games are rated to other current games.

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.

Shareware

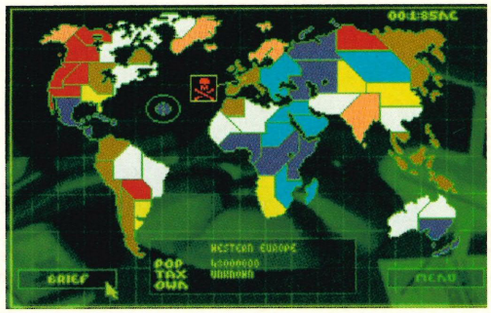
The shareware reviews section is an independently-written column on the best and most interesting of the latest shareware and public domain releases.

If it's help with specific games that you're looking for, turn to page 98 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	**Syndicate**
Publisher	**Bullfrog/Electronic Arts**
Contact	**(0483) 579399**
Price	**£44.99**

Life is tough at the top, and in the cut-throat world of corporate business the only way to play is dirty. Starting out with a handful of cyborg agents and a basic level of technology, you're a long, long way away from global domination.



The map shows how many territories have fallen under your influence. At the start of the game you don't have two square metres to your name, but all that is about to change.



Syndicate

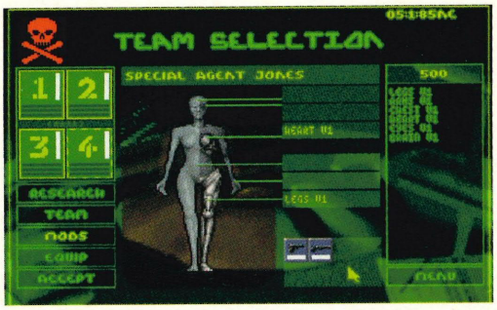
In Populous you were God, in Powermonger you played a military general, and now Bullfrog has cast you as corporate dictator. But how will Syndicate compare with the earlier successes?

The majority of computer games fall into two categories: those which are action based, such as shoot 'em ups and beat 'em ups, and those which require a bit of thought, such as adventures, strategies and puzzle games. Few, however, have managed to combine both elements with any degree of success. Until now, that is, because Syndicate aims to change all that.

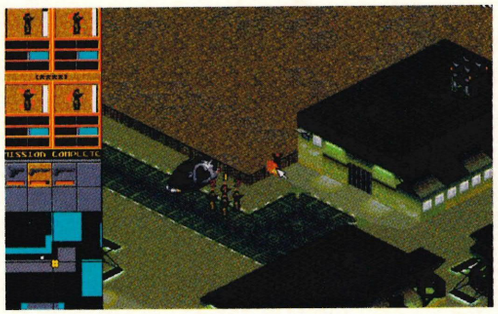
One of the attractions of Syndicate is that anyone can pick it up and begin to play without having to wade through an enormous manual beforehand. Starting off with two teams of four agents and a relatively low level of technology, the idea is to complete various missions which help you to expand your corporate empire.

The concept behind the game is surprisingly simple, revolving around three slider bars which represent adrenalin, perception and intelligence. These bars can be adjusted according to how you want to play the game: high adrenalin coupled with low intelligence will make the agent trigger-happy but a bit careless, whereas an agent with high intelligence and perception but lower adrenalin will be a lot more wary. Altering the intelligence level affects how much control you have over an agent: someone who's intelligent and

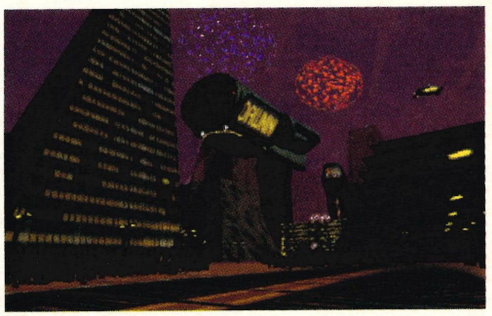
Two Minutes *of corporate mayhem*



Before entering a mission, it is advisable to kit out your agents with as many weapons and cybernetic body parts as your budget can stand. The competition is fierce and only the strong survive.



The first mission is to assassinate a ruthless colonel. After taking care of the guards, your agents can now concentrate their efforts on taking out the big fella, shot-gun style.



The mission is successful and you now have some territory to call your own. The locals demonstrate their new loyalties by putting on a firework display. You reward them by raising their taxes.

perceptive can pretty much look after himself, but if you want him to do something very specific, lowering his intelligence enables you to direct his every action. You might, for example, spy a big, heavy-duty weapon nearby, but what if there are several heavily armed guards between you and it? No-one with half a brain would want to risk his life for a weapon, so if you really want it, you need to turn the agent's intelligence right down before marching him in there to get it.

Another thing worth bearing in mind is stamina. It is possible to turn all the bars up to maximum by pressing both mouse buttons at the same time, which is useful in an emergency. However, the agent can only operate on that level for a short length of time before his performance begins to deteriorate. Experimenting with the bars is the key to the game, and agents can be adapted according to their role in the mission.

Your syndicate starts the game without any territories, so the object of the first mission is to gain yourself a toe-hold in Europe. Once you have conquered a territory, revenue can be raised through taxes. At first, the citizens will be only too pleased about getting rid of the old regime, so a high tax rate should not affect morale. Bleed them for too long, though, and they will rebel, leaving you with no option but to replay the mission and take back the territory.

Profits can be spent on equipping your agents with the latest weapons, but you should also plough a hefty portion of your income into research. Any weapons or technological items found during a mission can be handed over to your Research and Development department for analysis. If sufficient funds are made available, the new equipment can be duplicated and added to your arsenal for use in future missions. The Research and Development boys are also capable of coming up with their own inventions, so after a while you should have access to a pretty comprehensive range of hardware.



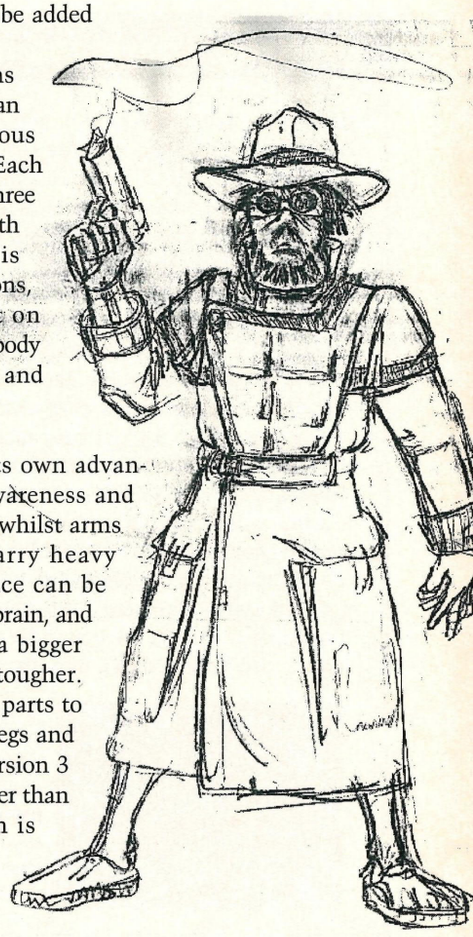
At the beginning of the game, the only weapons available are the pistol and the shotgun. These are adequate for the first couple of missions, but once the competition hots up you could find yourself at a serious disadvantage unless you have developed something a bit beefier. The bigger weapons are also a lot more fun, especially if you possess something of a sadistic streak. If you want to cause maximum carnage, you can't get much better than a mini-gun. My personal favourite, though, is the flame thrower, which can turn anyone who gets in its way into a screaming human torch.

In the future, it's always 2am and raining.

Not every weapon is designed to kill, and one of the very best items to have in your armoury is the Persuadertron. This is a short range device which helpfully removes a person's free will, brainwashing them into accompanying your agents wherever they go (see panel on page 52). People who have been 'persuaded' will act in exactly the same way as your agents. Start a gun battle and they join in, grabbing the nearest weapon if unarmed.

Once you have persuaded 32 civilians, enemy agents will also become vulnerable to the device, and any who survive to the end of the mission can be added to your personnel.

In addition to weapons and equipment, agents can also be fitted with various cybernetic body parts. Each modification comes in three versions, and to begin with only the first version is available. As with weapons, money must be spent on research before superior body parts can be developed and even then they are very expensive to fit.



Each body part has its own advantages. Eyes improve awareness and accuracy with weapons whilst arms can help the agent carry heavy equipment. Intelligence can be boosted by fitting a new brain, and agents equipped with a bigger heart are stronger and tougher.

The most useful body parts to research, however, are legs and chest. An agent with version 3 legs can move much faster than his adversaries, which is useful for running away in moments of panic. There only problem

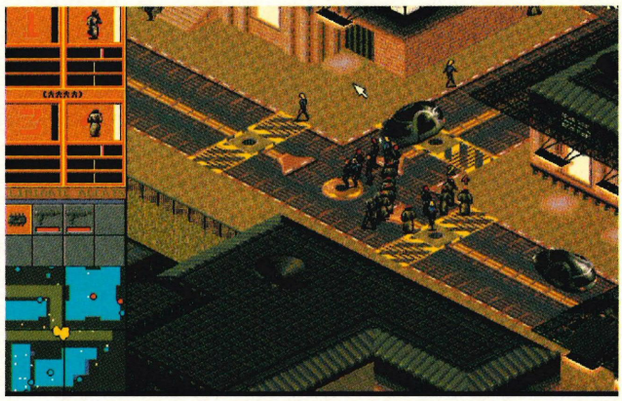


with this is that agents with inferior legs and any people you might have persuaded will tend to get left behind.

Fitting a version 3 chest will prolong an agent's life. This modification can help him withstand a good deal of punishment, and if he takes any damage, tissue can be regenerated fairly quickly. If the worst comes to the worst and the agent is surrounded and unarmed, the chest also contains a huge explosive charge which can be detonated in self-destruct mode. You may lose an agent, but the enemy syndicate will lose many more of theirs.

Of course, once an agent has been kitted out with all the latest parts, getting him killed can prove costly. If you are unfortunate enough to lose all your agents, your syndicate will show their displeasure by giving you the boot. Needless to say, there are no golden handshakes in this business; the price for failure is death.

Missions take place in a variety of places; cities, research complexes and pumping stations to name but a few. Each location seems to have a life of its own. People go about their daily business, traffic increases on the road at rush hour and corporations plug their wares on the video screens. City residents appear to possess a certain amount of rudimentary intelligence; for example, they will stop and wait until the road is clear before they cross over, and if one of your agents is waving a gun around they'll tend to give him a wide berth. This attention to detail



If you're short of muscle, use the Persuadertron to brainwash the locals and you'll soon have a small army at your disposal.

Bullfrog's dark and mindless future

Syndicate paints a very dark and sinister picture of the future. The world has developed into a place where giant corporations compete for territory and only the ruthless survive. After numerous take-overs and buy-outs, only three remained; one in the US, one in Europe and the third in the Far East. Such was the influence of the surviving corporations that they could buy and sell whole countries, installing puppet governments to carry out their whims with no thought for democracy or freedom. The three multinationals had grown so vast that they had effectively become the real world powers, wielding massive influence through commerce.

At first, this worked very well, with each corporation producing enough goods to satisfy the exact requirements of its consumers. As a result, everyone was content and unemployment and war were things of the past.

Then everything went horribly wrong. One of the corporations developed the ideal product, a chip which, when inserted into the back of someone's neck, could radically alter their perception. You could, for example, plug in a 'sunny day' chip which gives the illusion that the sun is shining even in the depths of winter. Alternatively, if you wake up feeling rough with bags under your eyes and a spot on the end of your nose, just plug in a chip which makes you believe you look like your favourite film star.

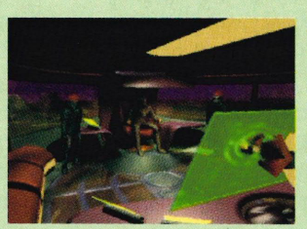
The chips were a great success. As the company slogan went, "Why change your world when you can change your mind?" Not surprisingly, the demand for other forms of entertainment, such as television, cinema and computer games, declined dramatically and the rival corporations began to suffer as a result.

If this wasn't disastrous enough, there was an even more ominous development: the discovery that the chips had a 'back door'. By using a special hand-held device, the Persuadertron, it was possible to gain total control over anyone who had a chip implant. Naturally, the two rival corporations felt threatened and decided that drastic actions were called for. So began the Corporation Wars.

At the start of the game, the three corporations have split up into eight smaller organisations, and you are head of one of these. The aim of the game is to gain control of the entire planet by whatever means are necessary, including espionage, assassination and brainwashing. Ethics don't come into it and the only way to further your ambitions is to play dirty.



When you send your agents on a mission you can observe their progress from the relative safety of your personal airship.



If a mission goes wrong, there's no better way to vent your anger than throwing your table lamp through the holo-screen.



Here I've kitted out one of my lads with a flame thrower, hence all the burning bodies. Toasted teacake, anyone?

Developments

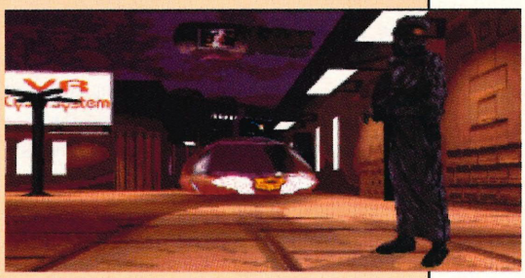
Syndicate started life on the Amiga as a mainly action-based game, but as it grew increasingly sophisticated it was decided that the PC would be a more appropriate development machine. This is the first game Bullfrog has produced on the PC, and it has made an effort to get the most out of the hardware. The graphics are very high-res, using a 640 x 480 screen mode, and a fast graphics card is recommended. The game will also require a minimum of a 386 to run.



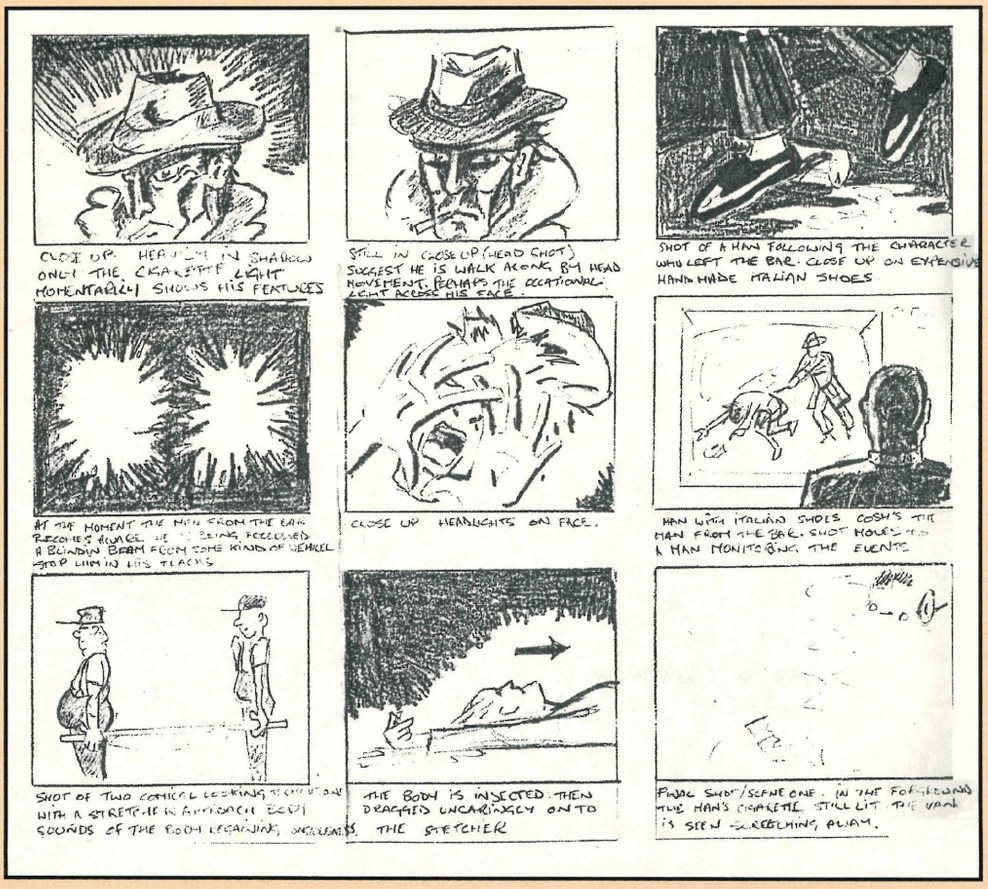
The game is mainly mouse driven and the control system is very straightforward. Most functions can be performed my clicking around the screen. For example, click on the part of the screen where you want your agent to go, or click on a weapon if you want him to pick it up.

As well as the slider bars controlling adrenalin, perception and intelligence, earlier versions of the game contained a number of different icons. However, these were abandoned when it was decided to keep the controls as simple as possible to make play intuitive.

The number of agents available for each mission was also reduced from eight to four because it became too difficult to keep track of them all. By keeping things basic, Bullfrog has managed to come up with a very playable and absorbing game.



In addition to the PC, Syndicate will be available on a number of different machines including Amiga, 3DO and CD-ROM. The CD-ROM version will have a longer intro sequence, more personalised syndicates and a greater level of detail in the cities. There is also the possibility of an upgrade for the PC version, containing extra levels and a network capability which would enable up to eight people to play against each other. The current version should have been network compatible, but unfortunately hit a few snags. There is no definite release date for the upgrade, but if it does appear it's estimated that it will be at least six months away.



was one of the things which really impressed me about Syndicate, because it helped to bring the game to life.

I would have liked to have been able to see inside buildings, although the fact that you can't is probably intentional because you are meant to be viewing the action from an airship. This does not handicap you too much, since each agent is numbered and even when you lose sight of them, the numbers are still visible.

Since each city is so tremendously large, it is unlikely that you'll have a chance to see all of it during a single mission. Exploration is an option worth considering, although it is not always necessary to achieving your objective. You could just get in there, complete the mission and get out again, but if you take the time to look around you might discover something that could help later on, such as a more advanced weapon or piece of technology.

On the other hand, you have to remember that there are seven other corporations who are equally trying to further their own aims. If you hang around admiring the scenery instead of getting on with your mission, you could find that someone has beaten you to it.

Syndicate is certainly a great deal of fun to play, and it has that unfathomable addictive quality which kept me glued to the computer for hours at a time. It is difficult enough to be challenging with-

Top left: The cyborg agent is vital to your plans of world conquest.
Above left: The intro sequence shows how agents are recruited. Pick a likely subject, run him over and then cart him off to HQ to be customised. Hardly ethical, is it?
Left: The original storyboard for the intro sequence.
Below: Feeling lazy? The monorail can get you there quicker.



out being completely frustrating, although some missions are almost impossible unless you have spent enough on researching arms and modifications.

The first few missions seemed quite easy, and lulled me into thinking that I'd have the game finished in no time. I couldn't have been more wrong. My progress came grinding to a halt and I found myself stuck on one particularly annoying mission. At that stage, I was on the verge of putting my fist through the monitor, but I decided that it would be a lot more sensible to sit down and rethink my strategy.

It then turned out that, although I had been researching my weapons, I had completely neglected to develop better body parts with the result that my agents were not tough enough to withstand a lot of punishment from the opposition. Once I had rectified that mistake, I was able to complete the mission and get on with the rest of the game.

If I have one criticism of Syndicate, it is that some of the missions are a bit too similar. Most of them seem to be a variation on assassination, "persuading" an important local figure or eliminating a legion of enemy agents. They get harder and more complex as you progress, but it isn't until you get quite a long way into the game that you start to get a bit more variety.

Similarly, if one of your territories goes into revolt, you have to repeat the mission to regain control of it. For instance, say the original mission for that territory was to assassinate the mayor. Lose control of it and you have to send your agents in to assassinate the mayor again. I think it would have made a lot more sense if you'd had to send in a team to put down the revolt, either by assassinating the ring leaders or by "persuading" or shooting at the rampaging crowds until they came round to your way of thinking.

Despite this, I didn't get at all bored with the game; in fact, I found myself getting drawn in deeper with every mission. There are always new goals to achieve, such as taking over a new territory or developing a new weapon, and this keeps the interest level high throughout.

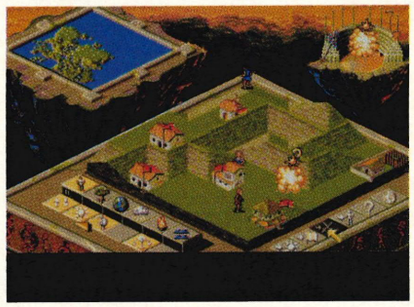
Another thing which attracted me to Syndicate was its atmosphere. The introduction sequence is reminiscent of the film Bladerunner, and this is carried over into the game itself. It's all very dark and sinister, combining high-tec with low-life in the best cyberpunk tradition. Shadowy streets, cybernetic assassins, sizzling neon signs – it's all there. Anyone who has enjoyed the novels of cyberpunk writers such as William Gibson or Bruce Sterling will instantly feel at home.

The depth of atmosphere is complemented by stunning high resolution graphics, a decent soundtrack and plenty of good, meaty sound effects. Syndicate is definitely a game which is best enjoyed with the volume turned up loud, and to hell with the neighbours.

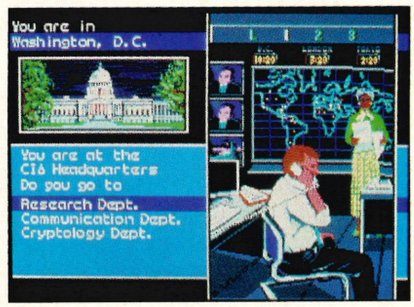
Syndicate certainly does not disappoint in terms of presentation. What we have here is a game that looks great, sounds great, is addictive and fun and has loads of depth. Bullfrog's Peter Molyneux believes that it's their best game yet. After spending more than a few hours playing it, I can only agree.

Cal Jones

Alternatively...



Populous II
Bullfrog, £34.99
Rated 8, Issue 15
This improved and updated version of the Bullfrog classic has all the ingredients of the original but with much better graphics, even more features and, best of all, a two-player option. Completely engrossing and great fun, this is the game for anyone who has ever nurtured a God complex. Anyone for megalomania?



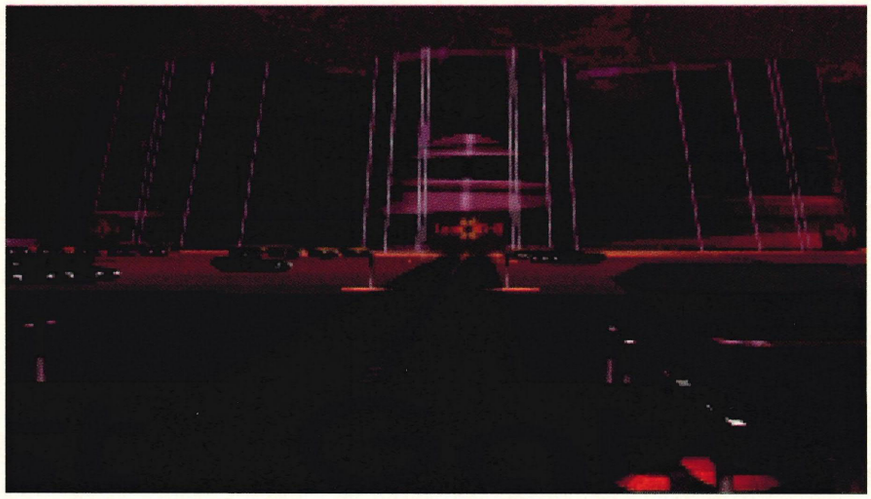
Covert Action
MicroProse, £40.86
One of the most underrated games around, this Sid Meier spy sim contains puzzle solving and strategy in equal amounts. There's wire tapping, code breaking, car chases and plenty of snooping around, so if you fancy a bit of espionage, this is your game. Graphics and sound are somewhat rudimentary, but it's nonetheless enormously addictive.

Techspec *You'll need 20MHz 386 or greater with VGA, mouse and sound card. The Covox is also supported. Bullfrog recommends a fast VGA card to get the most out of the game.*

Disk requirements					
	High density	✓			
	Hard disk only	✓			
	Space taken on hard disk	12Mb			
Graphic modes					
	CGA ✗	EGA ✗	Tandy ✗		
	VGA ✓	SVGA ✗			
Soundboards					
	Ad Lib ✓	Roland ✓	Sound Blaster ✓		
Control					
	Joystick ✗	Keyboard ✗	Mouse ✓		
Performance					
	Optimum speed	20MHz 486			
	Minimum memory	3Mb			
	Free RAM required	580K			

rating **9**

Verdict
Action, strategy, atmosphere: Syndicate has something to please everyone

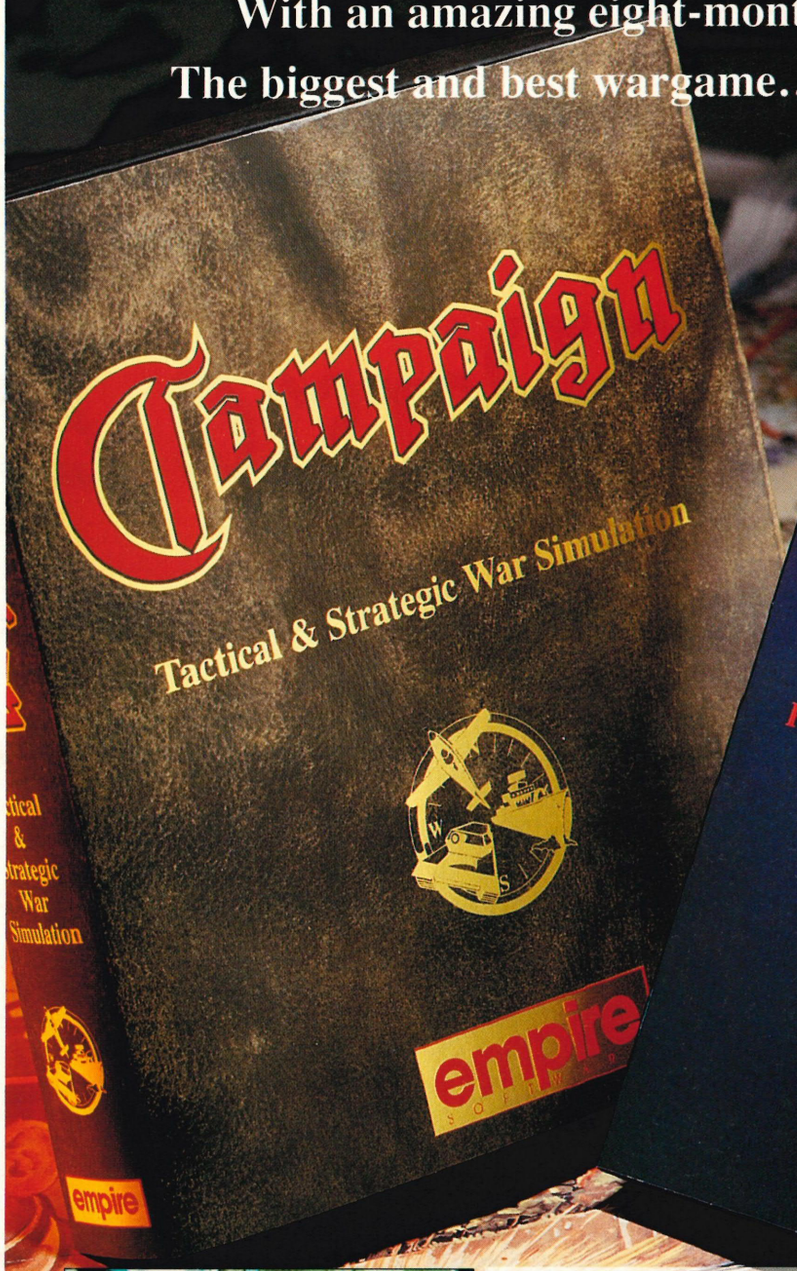


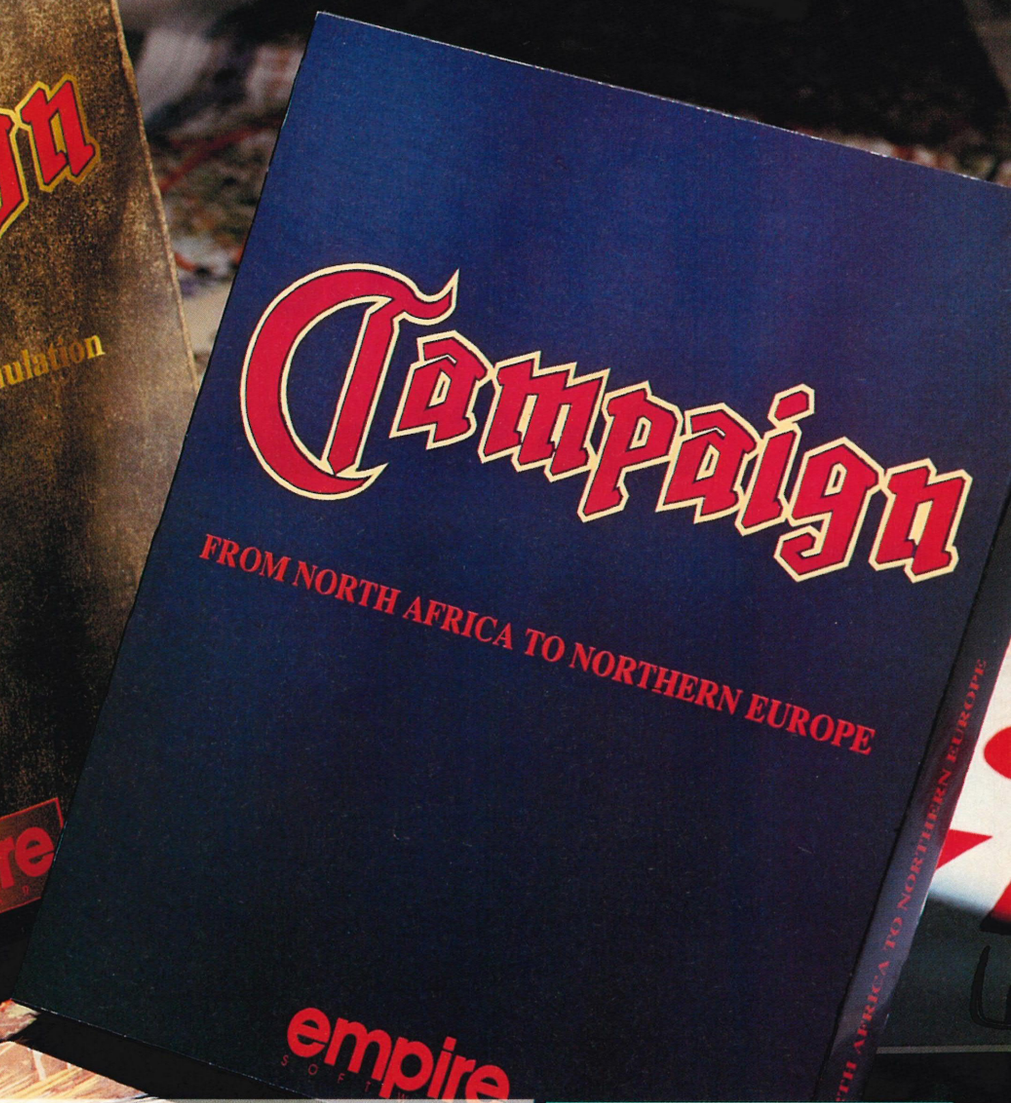
Home sweet home — Syndicate Headquarters.

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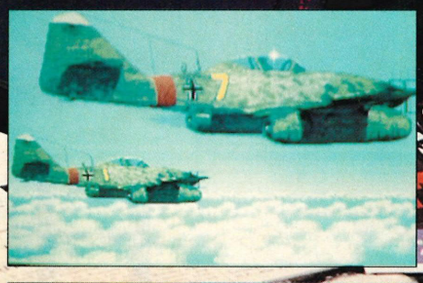






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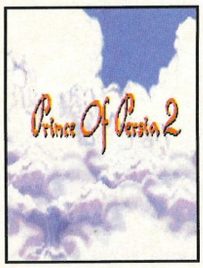


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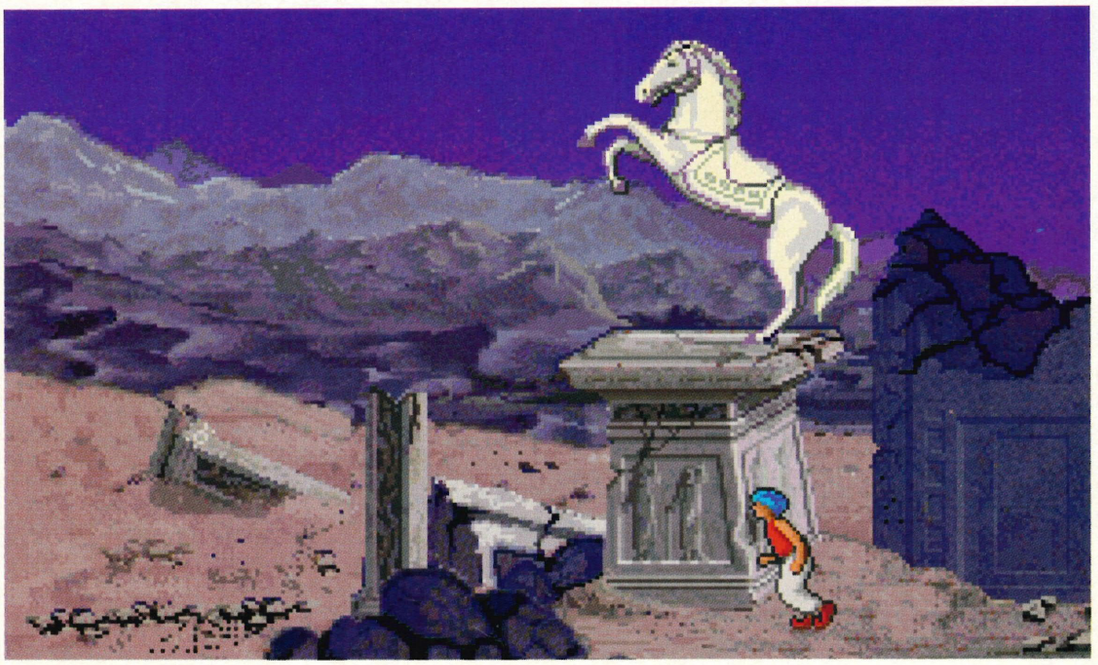


Title	**Prince of Persia 2**
Publisher	**Broderbund/Electronic Arts**
Contact	**(0753) 549442**
Price	**£39.99**

The Prince is back. But how do you improve on one of the all-time classic games?

Prince of Persia 2:

The Shadow and the Flame



He runs, he jumps, he climbs. And he runs. Then he climbs a bit more. Sometimes he dangles. He swordfights a lot, dies a lot, and jumps a bit more just for the hell of it. No prizes for guessing, then, it's got to be Broderbund's Prince of Persia 2.

As games go, they don't come much more simple in principle than Jordan Mechner's classic platform adventure. And from the moment the Prince first appears in this sequel, you know you're back on very familiar ground.

Given that the original was such a great game, I'm not sure whether to be pleased or disappointed about this. Nothing radical has been done to improve the Prince after three years or so, but then again he hasn't lost any of his charm either.

Controlling the character in Prince of Persia 2 is as easy as it ever was; perfectly straightforward with either joystick or keyboard. I have to admit I found the keys preferable for the more difficult climbs, but then the joystick has the edge for fights and speedy jumps. In fact, the only real addition to the Prince's movement is that he can now crawl under things if he gets the urge, and that he's even been seen to go for a quick dip. But other than a new set of togs and a different sword, you'd never guess that he'd been away.

He's still a remarkably lifelike — even charismatic — character, but the movement and animation are no longer that impressive when you compare them to something like the Rotoscoped character

Right, ready for some strenuous exercise? Life doesn't get any easier just because you're royalty you know. Ask Charles. I bet he doesn't have to go through all this ...



He jumps, he climbs, and sometimes he dangles. Now is one of those dangling kind of moments. This is beginning to look like an advert for some kind of aerosol deodorant.

animation in Delphine's Flashback. It's pretty obvious where Delphine got its inspiration from, but the fact is that it has been taken a stage or two further than Prince of Persia 2 can offer.

Perhaps Broderbund could have added 3D movement. It needn't have been all the way through the game, maybe just at set locations. For instance, the fight scene in the market square at the start of the game would have been ideal for this sort of open 3D play.

Or they might have done away with the static screens instead. A scrolling screen would certainly have made both combat and jumps easier, but it could be said that it would destroy some of the mystery altogether as you dangle off a ledge to see what awaits you below.

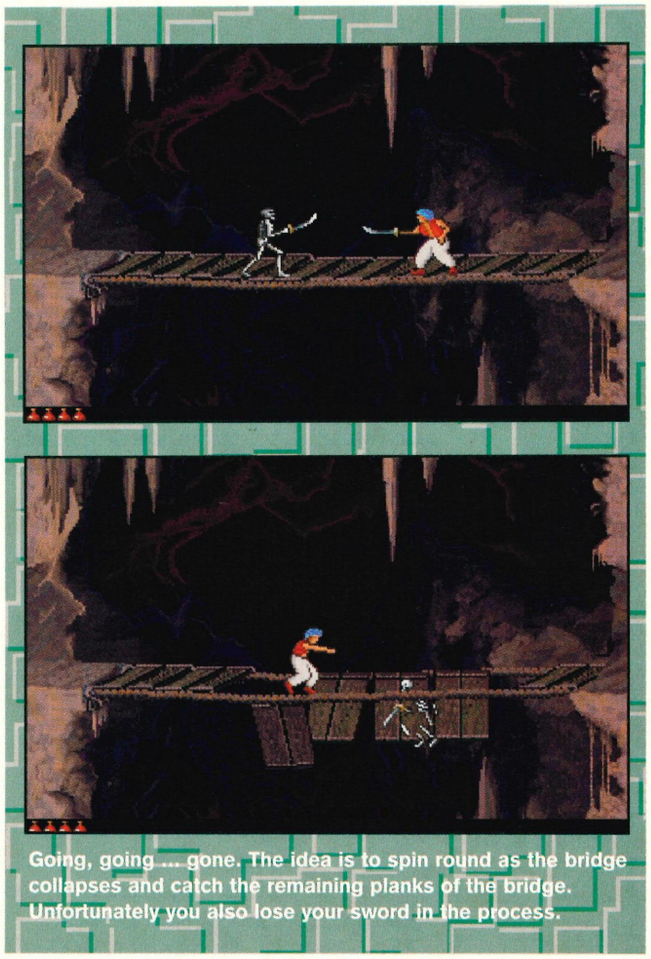
But the mechanics of the game are pretty much as they were. There are plenty of familiar features all round, like gut-wrenching leaps across 80-storey drops, scrambles through closing gates, endless climbs, potions, spikes, and falling floor and ceiling slabs. The chomping gates have been replaced by waist-high scythes, which you crawl under if you see them in time, but the principle's the same.

They have had the decorators in, though. While the obstacles were inventive, the backgrounds could be a bit dull in the earlier version, and certainly much simpler. The graphics for the backgrounds and scenery are certainly miles prettier, more detailed and more varied in Prince of Persia 2.

The same can also be said of the more frequent in-game sequences. The story follows on from the original adventure, and starts with a magician imposter taking your place as the Prince. You escape the palace guards, take refuge aboard a ship, and later have to make your way back to save your Princess and reclaim the throne. The story unfolds in even more detail, using fade-ins, animations and stills, as you manage to complete sections of the game.

In this way, Persia 2 puts a whole lot more emphasis on the storyline than the original did. It's not like a graphic adventure, where you need to keep an eye on these sequences to progress further — it's still a platform maze game — but it does feel like there's more purpose to the whole thing. There's a real sense of achievement when you reach scenes like the flying carpet, the Prince discovering his father's sword, and when the horse statue comes to life at the end of the second level.

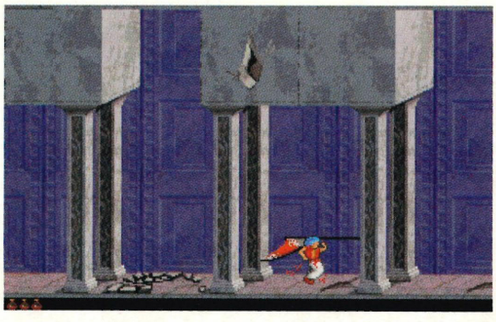
When I first played the original Persia, it was without the luxury of a sound card. Hearing Prince of Persia 2 as it's meant to be for the first time made me realise just how much I was missing out on. It also gave me more than a bit of aggravation as well. While the game worked happily with a variety of assorted sound cards and boasts a good list of others that it supports, I had endless problems whenever I tried to use a ProAudio Spectrum card. At this point, the game stubbornly refused to load, even when I then selected PC speaker sound. The suggestion in



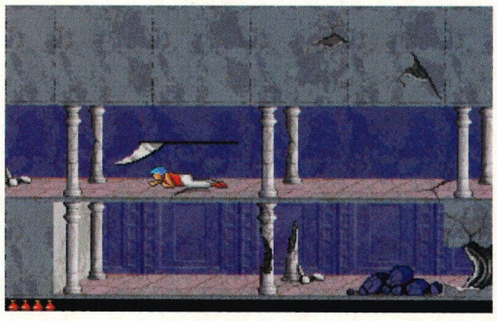
Going, going ... gone. The idea is to spin round as the bridge collapses and catch the remaining planks of the bridge. Unfortunately you also lose your sword in the process.



Two Minutes *of dangling around*



He jumps, he climbs, and if he doesn't watch where he's going, he gets chopped in half. The more sensible option would have been to crawl under the blade, not through it.



He jumps, he climbs, and he ... crawls? Doesn't really seem right somehow, but there it is. Still, if it saves getting the Prince sliced in half, it's got to be worth a shot.



Right, that's quite enough of this running, jumping and climbing lark. I need a brew.' Purely for medicinal purposes of course, but it's good to see that some things never change.

the manual is that the trouble is most likely the result of an I/O conflict, but despite a whole lot of tinkering with the card settings I was never able to sort out the problem.

Gameplay

OK, animations and storyline aside, he's wearing roughly the same gear, moves and fights much the same way, crawls occasionally and there's prettier scenery; but what's new about the gameplay?

There are 12 levels, divided into four main scenes. The starting levels will probably feel pretty tough for newcomers. Leaving aside the uglies and the guards, I'd say that the opening to the first dungeon stage is about as hard as the sixth level of the original version — in terms of false ceilings and floors, fake trails, obstacles and difficult jumps.

Further into the game, the hidden (and sometimes false) tunnels are also a welcome addition, as are the spinning floor plates and the walls that move in and crush you if you step on the trigger plate. They add variety to the stock platforms and jumps, and make the problem of finding the exit and staying healthy at the same time that much more difficult.

Then there's the opposition. The skeletons are a familiar curse from the first episode, but there are also snakes, Medusa heads, a Genie, and much tougher guards, among others. To make life as difficult as possible, there's plenty of them and they have a nasty habit of being in the most awkward places, so I often had to resort to moving from one screen to the next with my sword drawn just in case.

But, Prince of Persia 2 relies quite heavily on set pieces for the really challenging stuff. The one that gave me the most trouble, and the most enjoyment, is the run up to the horse statue. First, you have to fight off all the Medusa heads along the bottom, before retracing your steps and trying to go along the top of the colonnade.

To achieve this you have to time and judge a difficult series of leaps and holds. But if you dislodge just one of the loose slabs, you'll have to start all over again. Getting to the point where I could leap on to the horse statue and take off to the next level must have taken me the best part of 40 minutes. A similarly tricky set piece involves fighting a skeleton on a rope bridge, and grabbing hold of the remaining planks as the bridge collapses under you. The idea's straight out of Indianna Jones and the Temple of Doom, but who cares?

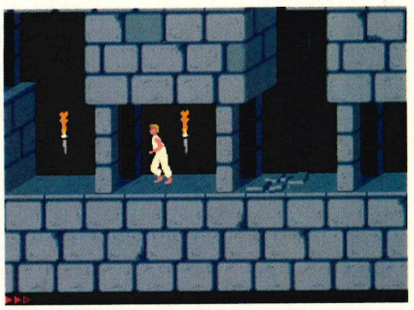
I was also quite pleased to see that the chance to chuck around a bit of magic comes into the game as well. Towards the final stages, there's a point where the Prince can throw fireballs to kill off opponents, once he's overcome the genie.

He can also leave his body and become a shadow by spinning round rapidly, provided he has eight life points in order to survive the change. This isn't so easy with the keyboard, but is quite easy to do accidentally with a joystick and costs you lives if you do. On one occasion you can even be tricked into thinking you've died because of this, which is rather sneaky, but a nice touch none the less.

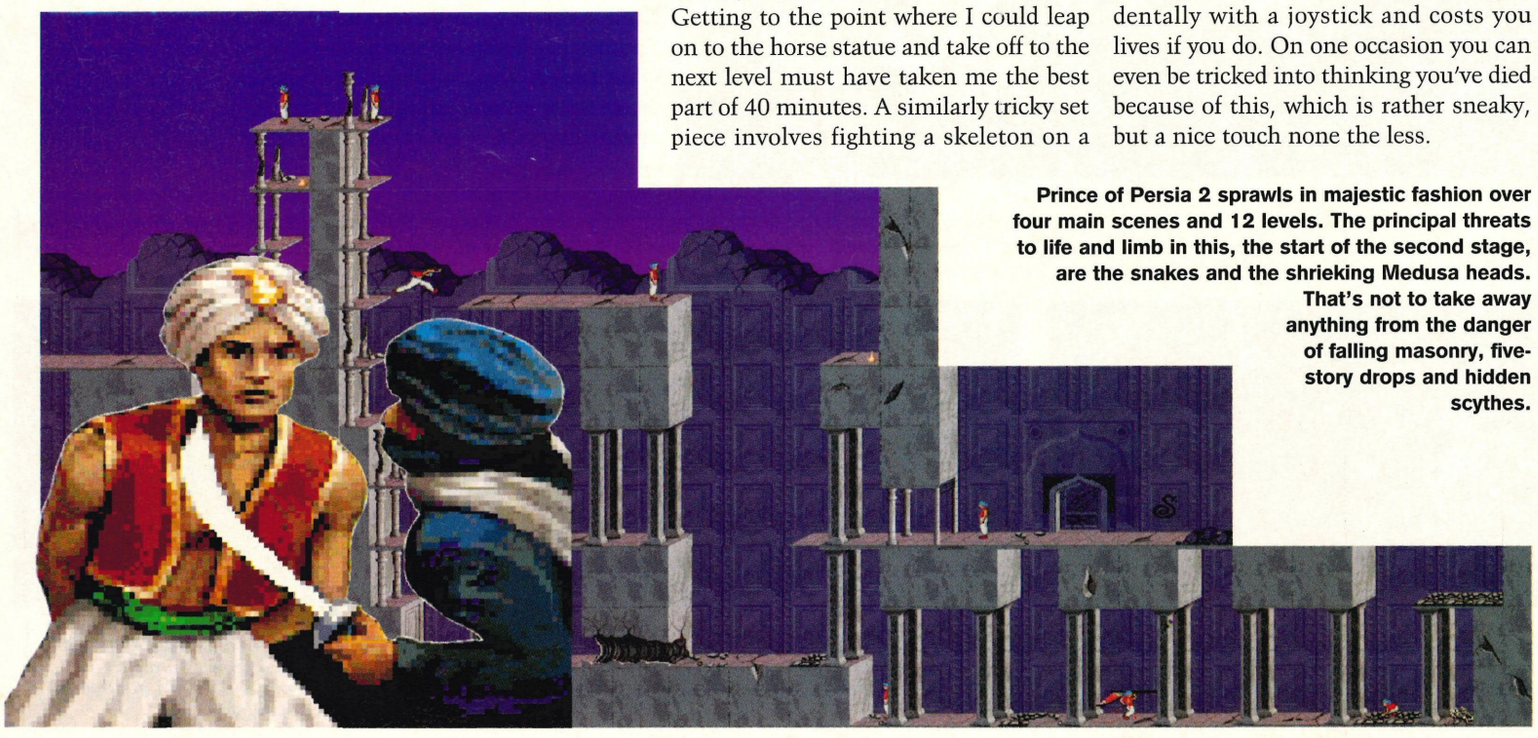
Alternatively...



Flashback
Delphine, £TBA
The follow up to the SF platform adventure Another World is due out next month. It's similar in principle to Prince of Persia 2, and obvious comparisons can be made between the Rotoscoped characterisation in Flashback and the animated movement in both Persia games. Needs to be more depth and challenge if it's going to make more impact than Another World.



Prince of Persia
Kixx, £12.99
An original blend of platform action and adventure released in 1990 that has proved to be both simple and addictive, offering plenty of levels, great action and longlasting gameplay. It's starting to look understandably dated compared to the newer crop of games, but it ranks as one of the all-time classic PC games and will always be worth the cover price.



Prince of Persia 2 sprawls in majestic fashion over four main scenes and 12 levels. The principal threats to life and limb in this, the start of the second stage, are the snakes and the shrieking Medusa heads. That's not to take away anything from the danger of falling masonry, five-story drops and hidden scythes.

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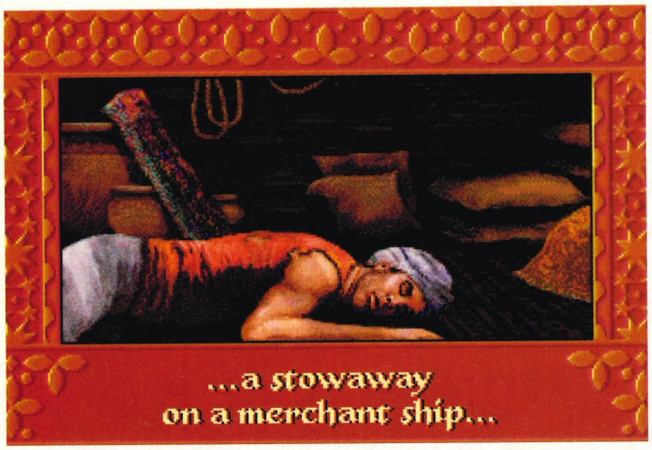
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Tough enough ...

As a fan of the first episode, just the chance to have more of the same, plus new problems, and better graphics was a real delight at the start. But towards the latter stages, I began to find things unnecessarily frustrating in places simply because the 'save game' option leaves a lot to be desired.

Obviously the game designers have set out to make Prince of Persia 2 as challenging as possible, and nobody wants a game they can finish at a single sitting. So, fair enough, if you could save the game position every step of the way it would make things ludicrously easy. But when you get to level three onwards, making a mistake and getting killed can send you back a hell of a long way.

This was just as true of the first Prince of Persia game, but here, where the going is that much tougher, I really didn't appreciate having to trudge back up 14 flights, make 17 mundane leaps, crawl down the same tunnel and get past the same five guards for probably the tenth time just to get back to the point where I'd come a cropper before. Extending the life of a game through sheer repetition is no answer, and it was what caused me to quit Prince of Persia 2 in frustration on more than one occasion.

The swordfighting was always one of the great attractions of the original, and Prince of Persia 2 more than lives up to the tradition. Many of the guards used to end up as little more than cannon fodder once you'd got the knack of blocking and moving in for the kill in the first game, but the opposition are now that much quicker, and not nearly such dumb swordsmen.

This makes for some interesting and tricky duels, and moving back to defend and forwards for a well-timed lunge is still what it's all about, rather than just hacking away.

Unfortunately, it doesn't look like he's been putting in enough fencing practice, because I don't think that the Prince's swordplay has managed to keep up with theirs too well. I'm all for a challenge, but at least give us a chance! The keys for blocking and moving during a fight were sometimes just too unresponsive to cope (or that's my excuse, anyway) with the speed of the blows coming at me.

If you can see a blow coming early, and have better than corpse-like reactions, you should have a fair chance of blocking it — not see your sword raised to parry five seconds later. The temptation then was to resort to hacking away frantically against the better opponents in the vain hope that I'd get more blows in before he did. It's still great fun, though, even if I do think I was robbed on more than a couple of occasions.

Prince of Persia 2 is undoubtedly a good, game, and I can certainly say I've enjoyed it as much as the the first version, if not more. The simplicity of the original design is still there, but with extra variety and new problems posed. There are lots of nice touches, it's great fun, good to look at, demanding, and occasionally frustrating.

On the other other hand, there's been no attempt to make any sweeping improvements to the original, and I think that it could've been even better. I suppose I'm disappointed that Broderbund didn't really take the plunge, but who can really blame them for sticking to a winning formula.

■ John Bennett

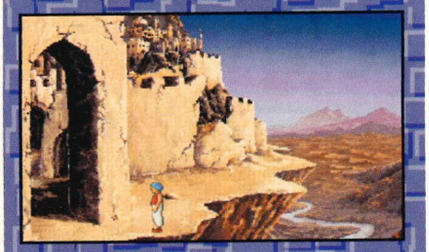
Techspec

Prince of Persia 2 needs DOS 3.1 or higher, VGA and 2Mb RAM for digitised sounds. Worth noting that it should run happily on any 10MHz 286 and above, which can't be said of many games coming out these days.

Disk requirements					
	High density	✓			
	Hard disk only	✓			
	Space taken on hard disk	7Mb			
Graphic modes					
	CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy ✗
	VGA	✓	SVGA	✗	
Soundboards					
	Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster ✓
Control					
	Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse ✗
Performance					
	Optimum speed	16MHz			
	Minimum memory	640K			
	Free RAM required	550K			

rating **7**

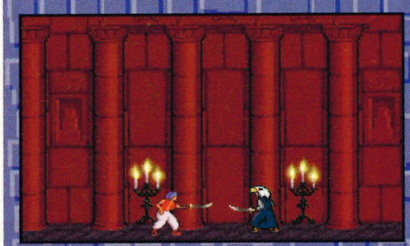
Verdict
Great game, but could have been even better



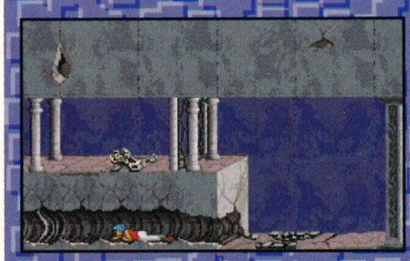
The backdrops and graphics have been given a complete overhaul and the results are stunning.



While the between-game sequences are more often stills and fade-outs rather than animations, they're beautifully presented.



Prince of Persia 2 offers you a whole new set of baddies and uglies to avoid or skewer.



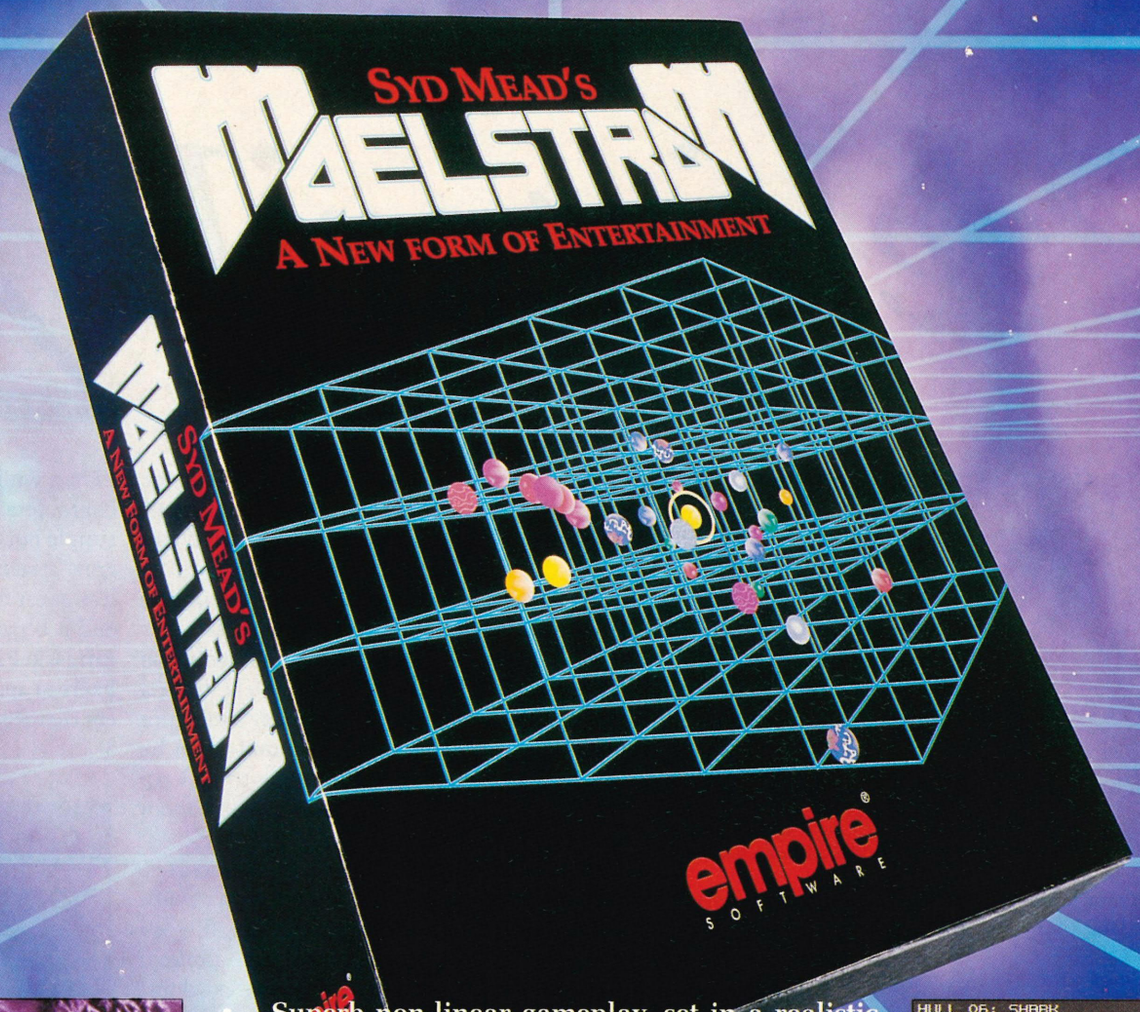
There are plenty of tunnels, so the Prince can find alternative routes if he doesn't fancy going overland.



'I think I just took a wrong turning ...' Moving walls are a new way for the Prince to meet a sticky end, as if there weren't enough already.

BORN IN THE MIND OF SYD MEAD
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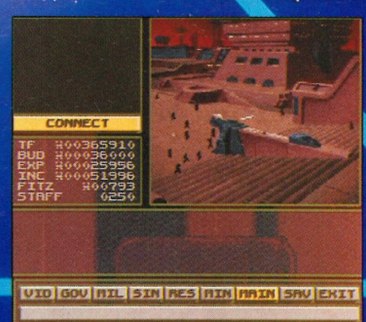






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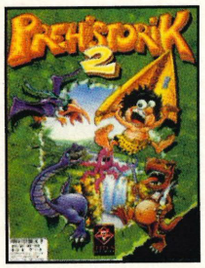
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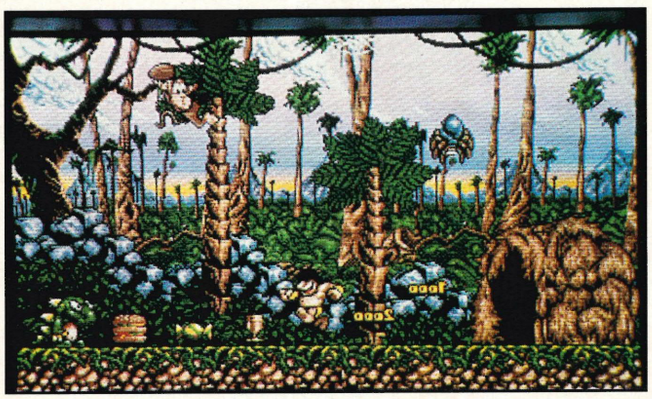
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Title	**Prehistorik 2**
Publisher	**Titus**
Contact	**(071) 700 2119**
Price	**£29.99**

Prehistorik 2



"Hey, it's moving! I know, I'll sneak up on it and smash it over the head with this club until it stops." Splat.

It seems a shame to start with the same old whinge, but there's still a real shortage of halfway-decent, quick and *imaginative* beat 'em up platform games for the PC. Titus's Prehistorik 2 doesn't exactly change this, either. The storyline goes like this; our hero has had his food stolen by 'that nasty Gorilla-Rap', and needs to russle up a quick brontosaurus burger to stave off hunger pangs. OK, that's about as much tension and drama as the story can handle — cue the game.

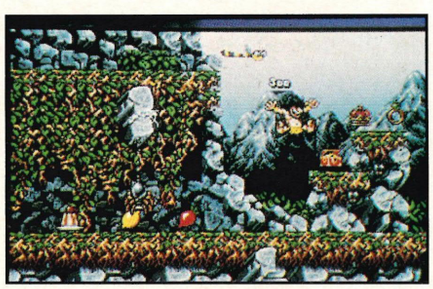
It's aimed squarely at younger games players, and comes with all the usual cutesy, platform trimmings; cartoon style graphics, things appearing out of the ground and from the sky, hidden areas, hitting things, and running. Then there's the jumping — for multipliers, for life-points, and across gaps — you name it, this guy'll jump up and down on it.

The hero, Grunt, picks up new weapons as he moves through the levels; from a club to a swirling axe. Nobody's told him that dinosaurs weren't around when he existed, so he's quite happy to pick up whatever comes to hand and wellie them over the head regardless.

He is the best feature of the game. He's sort of a beer-bellied medallion man with an acute case of the munchies, dressed up as a Tarzanogram. To make things a bit harder for him, the prehistoric wildlife comes in all shapes and sizes, and has a nasty habit of springing up from nowhere. The art of camouflaging a brontosaurus in a shrubbery is not dead, it seems.

Bonuses are collected along the way, and can be found in all sorts of strange places. The right combinations will have different effects; like turning all the enemies on the level into food, or causing them to explode. And, as ever, there's the bonus word to complete, the reward for which is 100,000 points. But points, bananas, hats, whatever, it's hardly original, is it?

Prehistorik 2 didn't start off too promisingly, and certainly doesn't develop into anything wildly original. As platform games go, we've seen all this before far too many times. I'm hard-pushed to find any differences between this and the original Prehistorik other than new levels and minor cosmetic changes. It looks like Titus is planning to get as much mileage from the game design as possible.



"Right, that's breakfast sorted, what's for elevenses?" Pick any two minutes of Prehistorik 2 and you'll see pretty much the same thing; violence and lunch.

For a while it grew on me, because the characters are very cute, the setting is simple but slick, and it was quite easy to grow attached to old Grunt and his endless quest for dinosaur burger. But in the end it became too repetitive and boring. Jurrassic Park it ain't, but it's still quite likely to appeal to the younger game players that it's really aimed at.

■ John Bennett

Techspec *Prehistorik 2 needs a 100 per cent VGA compatible video card, and also will only support Sound Blaster and Ad Lib sound cards. Other than that, it's hardly likely to put much strain on even the most humble PC*

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	1.2Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		

Soundboards

Ad Lib ✓	Roland ✗	Sound Blaster ✓

Control

Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✗

Performance

Optimum speed	16MHz
Minimum memory	640K
Free RAM required	512K

Verdict

Cute, tidy but very run of the mill

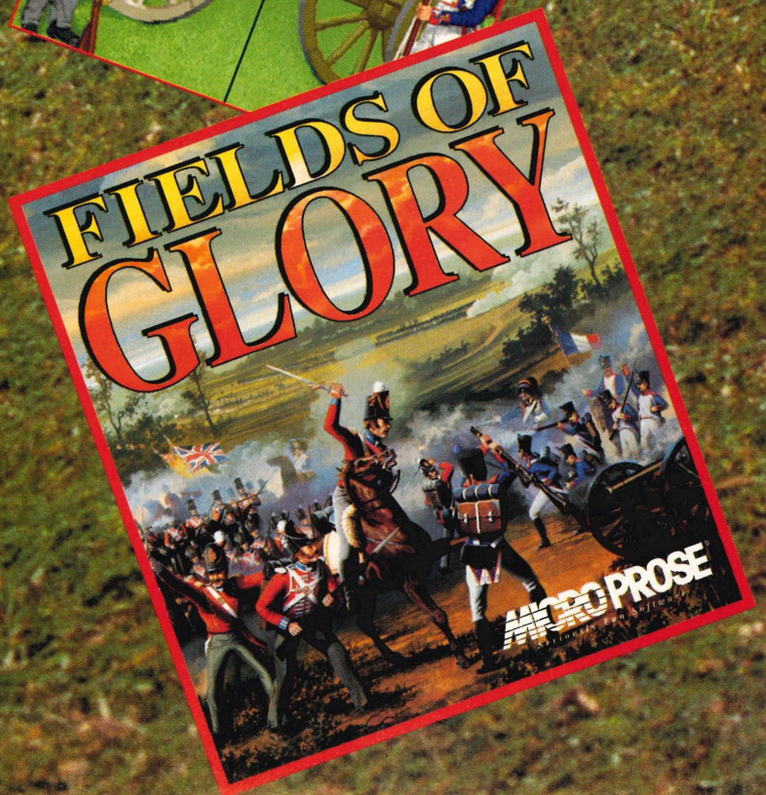
rating **5**

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Title	**Eye of the Beholder III Assault on Myth Drannor**
Publisher	**SSI/US Gold**
Contact	**(021) 625 3366**
Price	**£39.99**

I've been rudely dumped in the middle of a forest without so much as a picnic basket and a blanket to sit on. It's dark, it's spooky and there doesn't seem to be a way through the trees. Luckily, I do have an axe ...

Eye of the Beholder III: *Assault on Myth Drannor*

Assault on Myth Drannor promises to be the biggest and most complex Eye of the Beholder yet, but how does the latest Advanced Dungeons and Dragons title shape up against the competition?

As a veteran of the first two Eye of the Beholder games, I was keen to see whether Assault on Myth Drannor had anything new to offer. Westwood Studios, the programming team behind Beholders I and II, has parted company with SSI and a new team has replaced them. I wasn't sure how much this would influence the final game of the trilogy, but if it proved to be anything like as good as the other two, it promised to be an enjoyable experience.

Yet I began to have misgivings about the game as soon as I started it up. The introduction was not nearly as impressive as I had come to expect from the previous games in the series, so I was naturally concerned as to whether the game itself was also going to be down in quality. Fortunately it isn't.

At first sight, Eye of the Beholder III looks much the same as its predecessors. If you are unfamiliar with the series, Eye of the Beholder games use a three dimensional, first-person perspective, which enables you to see the dungeon from the viewpoint of your characters. Movement, combat, spell casting and the inventory screens are all controlled with the mouse, although a keyboard option is also available, and this remains largely unchanged from the previous games in the series.

The only really noticeable difference is the camp screen, where you can rest your party, learn new spells and save or restore games. All these options are now accessible from one single menu, which makes the system that much quicker and easier to use.

There was one other new feature which I was very glad to see, the "all attack" button. Click on this and all your characters can attack at once, providing that they have an appropriate weapon ready. Unfortunately, magical items such as wands and spellbooks can't be used in this way, but it's now possible to attack from the second rank using polearms as well as ranged weapons like arrows or throwing knives. Using the "all attack", you can make short work of an enemy and can often dispatch weaker monsters before they have a chance to land a deadly hit on you.

On the whole, though, there have been very few changes. I would like to have seen the sort of auto-mapping facility which Ultima Underworld offers, for example. As with the other Beholder games, you have to map the entire game yourself, and quite frankly, I find this a chore. There might be a few individuals who enjoy sitting there with their graph paper and pencils trying to map each level, but I suspect that the vast majority would rather have it all done for them.



Myth Drannor, lost city of the elves and the goal of your quest.



This row of trees doesn't seem too exciting, until one of my party notices that they look a bit flimsy. It isn't very ethical, but taking an axe to them might solve a few problems.



After a quick chop, I've reduced the once-majestic trees to a somewhat pathetic row of stumps. A few more hacks and I should be through to the other side.



I've uncovered a secret glade, but it seems that this ghost got there before me. It looks very much as if I've got a fight on my hands. Oh well, I suppose I need the experience points.



I've killed the ghost (if that's possible) and can now explore the glade in peace. There's a big heap of goodies hidden just round the corner — some of that armour should come in handy.



The inventory screen is one feature which has been retained from the original game.

However, bearing in mind that this is the last game in a trilogy, it might be fair to assume that any drastic alterations are being saved for whatever title succeeds it.

Bigger equals better?

The game has been improved in terms of size — it's twice as large as Beholder II — and has more detailed graphics and three times as many cinematic sequences. One thing I couldn't fail to notice was the new range of digitised sound effects. I have never heard so many disgusting noises emanating from my soundboard in all my life! Enter an area populated by ogre slugs and you can hear all manner of revolting squishing and slurping sounds, whilst the forest is filled with snorts and grunts as you pass close to a group of minotaurs.

The game is set in the lost city of Myth Drannor, some miles away from your home town of Waterdeep. The object of your quest is to find and defeat the evil liche who has caused the city to fall into ruin. The start of the game sees you deposited in a forest some way from Myth Drannor, so the first part of the adventure involves searching for the city itself. As a result, much of Beholder III takes place outdoors, unlike Eye of the Beholder I, which was set entirely underground, and The Legend of Darkmoon, which had only a tiny woodland section at the start of the game. Assault on Myth Drannor has much more variety than either of the previous games, including a graveyard, a forest and a ruined city complete with crumbling buildings. It's not until you reach the Mages' Guild in Myth Drannor that things start to look a bit more familiar. In fact, the interiors of both the Tomb in the forest and the Mages' Guild look suspiciously like certain sections of the Darkmoon Temple, but it does have a couple of novel underwater sections which can be reached by crawling through manhole covers.

So, with improvements to the tried and tested features, better sound, greater depth and extra variety, Eye of the Beholder III ought to have the makings of an interesting game.

But it has to be said that Eye of the Beholder III is far from perfect. If I had to pick out one major weakness, it is that the game is way too hard. This is largely due to the fact that it's been designed to allow you to import characters from previous games in the series. For example,

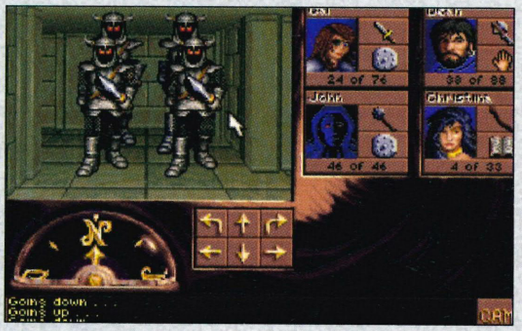
Bestiary

These are a handful of the weird and wonderful monsters which you will meet during your adventure.



The Undead Beast

A charming creature whose only aim is to kill. It is about the size of a small dragon though generally less wholesome, with bones clearly visible through its rotting flesh.



Death Knights

The Death Knights have been punished by the gods for unchivalrous behaviour such as failing to help old ladies cross the road. As with other undead creatures, they tend to be less than fragrant.

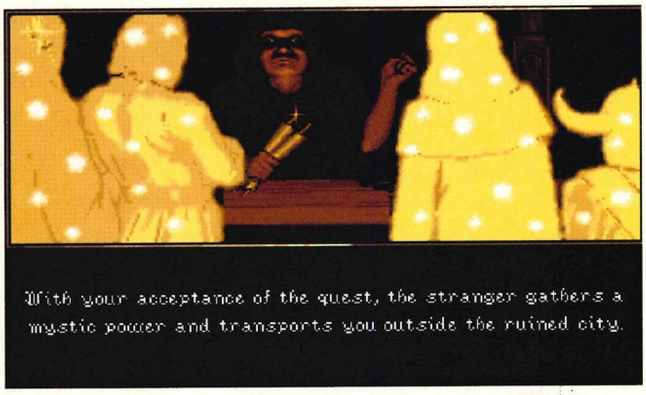
Techspec

You need a 386 or better, VGA, MS-DOS 3.3 or higher, and Microsoft-compatible mouse. Sound effects need 1Mb EMS and Smartdrive is advised. Won't run if Share.exe is loaded into memory.

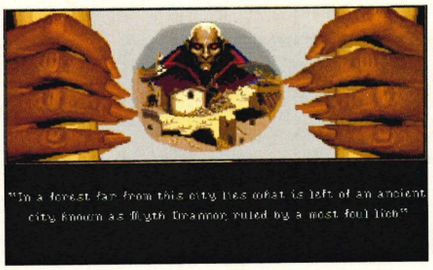
Disk requirements					
	High density	✓			
	Hard disk only	✓			
	Space taken on hard disk	9.8Mb			
Graphic modes					
	CGA x	EGA x	Tandy x		
	VGA ✓	SVGA x			
Soundboards					
	Ad Lib ✓	Roland ✓	Sound Blaster x		
Control					
	Joystick x	Keyboard ✓	Mouse ✓		
Performance					
	Optimum speed	20MHz			
	Minimum memory	640K			
	Free RAM required	575K			

rating **6**

Verdict
Suffers from comparison with newer games but remains challenging



During the introduction sequence, this odd looking character teleports you to a forest close to the mythical city of Myth Drannor. The question is, what does he stand to gain from your victory? He looks about as trustworthy as a used car salesman, so I have my doubts.



A mysterious stranger asks you to journey to Myth Drannor to defeat an evil liche (that's an undead magician to you and me) and restore the city to its former glory. But should you really trust a man with long fingernails?

your party from the original game can be transferred to the second, and any survivors from the second game, Legend of Darkmoon, can be used in Assault on Myth Drannor.

Since your party members will gain several levels of experience during an adventure, each successive game needs to be more demanding than the last. As a result, the puniest monsters in this game could eat several Beholders for breakfast and still have room for more.

This leads on to another problem with Beholder III, which is that your characters tend to progress very slowly. Because they start out at a higher level of experience than in previous games (freshly created characters typically start at level 10 or 11, while characters imported from previous games might start even higher), they need to gain a huge amount of experience points before they can advance even one level. In the first Beholder game, all the characters started on level three and were able to advance fairly quickly. It might be only a small part of the game, but it encouraged a sense of achievement and was one of the things which gave me an incentive to continue.

If the monsters are tough, then the puzzles are even tougher. Whereas the original Eye of the Beholder started out with a couple of simple pressure plate problems, the early stages of Beholder III contain lots of hidden passages and a couple of tricky mazes. This shouldn't prove too much of a problem for experienced gamers, but those new to RPGs could well be put off by the level of difficulty. Suffice to say that if you can make it through this game without resorting to any help, then you're probably eligible for Mensa.

Although Beholder III has plenty of atmosphere, I couldn't help but feel that it had lost some of the charm of the original. Perhaps this is a case of familiarity breeding contempt, but I definitely didn't derive as much enjoyment from this game as I had done from the other two. Bigger is not necessarily better, and although at 40 to 100 hours playing time this game offers value for money, I found that after a while I started to get bored with it.

When Eye of the Beholder was released back in 1991, it proved to be one of the most successful role-playing games to appear on the PC. Although it bore many similarities to FTL's Dungeon Master, that game was not available on the PC at the time and so Eye of the Beholder filled



The character generation screen is more or less unchanged from previous Eye of the Beholder games, although there are a few new faces to choose for your characters.



Ogre Slug

The Ogre Slug has the upper body of an ogre and, strangely enough, the lower body of a slug. As well as punching with their huge fists, they are also able to spit acid at you. Quick, fetch the salt!



Watchghosts

Watchghosts are unusually intelligent for undead, and they will often serve powerful vampires, spectres or liches. They are usually encountered near tombs, treasure vaults and tube stations late at night.



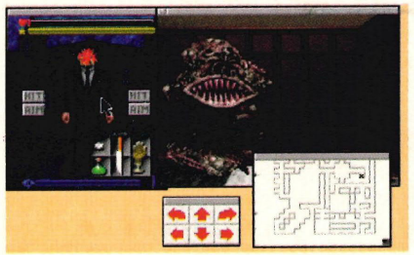
Earth Elementals

Earth Elementals really know how to pack a punch. Formed from earth, stone and precious metals, they can travel through rock at will. Slow, stupid and definitely not known for their sense of humour.

Alternatively...



Ultima Underworld
Origin/Mindscape, £39.99
Rated 8, Issue 8
This game revolutionised the first-person, 3D role-playing game with its smooth, multi-directional scrolling and useful automapping facility. The player is able to look up or down, climb, jump and even swim, and there is more emphasis on action than on puzzle solving. Challenging without being frustrating.



The Legacy
Microprose, £44.99,
Rated 8, Issue 19
If you enjoy 3D RPGs but are bored with dungeons, goblins and dwarves, this game should fit the bill. Inspired by the Gothic horror fantasies of Edgar Allen Poe, it is set in a haunted New England mansion populated with undead. One of the most atmospheric games around, but not for the squeamish.



The Summoning
SSI/US Gold, £34.99
Rated 5, Issue 14
The Summoning is an overhead, isometric game in which you move around a vast, sprawling dungeon. Includes a good automapping feature, lots of monsters, magic and puzzles to solve. The graphics are average but the game is fun and, at around 100 hours playing time, offers great value for money.

a gap in the market. However, many other companies started to produce their own 3D fantasy games, a few of which were superior technologically. One of these was the ground-breaking Ultima Underworld which, unlike Eye of the Beholder, featured texture mapped graphics, 360 degree scrolling and the chance to swim, jump and move up and down slopes. Suddenly, Eye of the Beholder began to look dated.

I'm not saying that Eye of the Beholder III can't compete. It may not be as technically sophisticated as Ultima Underworld, but the graphics are still attractive and the presentation is of a high standard. The puzzle solving element is far stronger than in either of the Underworld games, so anyone who enjoys a tough mental challenge should find Beholder III entertaining. On the other hand, it doesn't place quite as much importance on combat as Underworld. There are more than enough monsters to fight and some of these are extremely difficult to defeat, but generally the combat itself is less involved.

If you are trying to decide whether or not to buy Eye of the Beholder III, there are several things worth taking into account. To start with, it's a very complex game and would probably prove too difficult for those seeking a good introduction to role-playing games. The original Eye of the Beholder would be a better bet, because it breaks you in more gently while remaining enough of a challenge to keep you interested. It's also not so demanding of hardware than the newest game in the series and will run quite happily on an XT, so bear this in mind if you own a less than powerful machine.

Anyone who has played either of the Ultima Underworld games might well find Assault on Myth Drannor disappointing in comparison. I have, and I found it difficult to go back to the style of game offered by the Eye of the Beholder series – despite the fact that I greatly enjoyed the first two games. On its own merits, it's a fairly good product, but it doesn't compare well to the newer, more sophisticated games. Unless you could not get enough of Beholders I and II, I would think very carefully before purchasing Eye of the Beholder III.

Cal Jones



NPCs come in all manner of shapes and sizes, from the tiny, fairy-like sprites to lizard men and even were-tigers.



Steel Shadows

Steel Shadows are little more than giant worms with a metal fetish. They enjoy dressing up in suits of armour and will steal your weapons as soon as look at you. Keep a tin-opener handy when encountering these chaps.



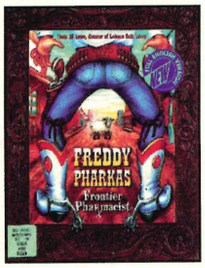
Scaladar

The Scaladar is a giant robotic scorpion which attacks with both pincers and tail. They can give you a nasty nip, so if you've seen any of these around, make sure you shake your boots out before putting them on.



Water Weirds

Water Weirds are snakes made out of water. They enjoy popping up from drains to attack people, but due to their rather damp nature, use only stainless-steel weapons to fight these strange creatures.



Title	**Freddy Pharkas Frontier Pharmasist**
Publisher	**Sierra**
Contact	**(0734) 303322**
Price	**£39.99**

Coarsegold is in deadly peril! Methane levels are rising fast and you've not got long to solve this problem before your lungs give up, and you collapse and suffocate. Can Freddy find the cure for these terminal equine emissions?

Freddy Pharkas
Frontier Pharmacist

After the sexploits of Leisure Suit Larry, the new comedy hero from the Sierra stable is Freddy Pharkas, one-eared gunslinger and fearless small-town chemist

Freddy Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist is a gentle Wild West comedy adventure from Al Lowe, the creator of the acclaimed Leisure Suit Larry series. For a long time the success of Larry established Sierra as the dominant force in comic adventuring, and Al Lowe's brand of humour fast became the yardstick against which all other contenders were measured. But then along came Monkey Island and the hapless Guybrush Threepwood and suddenly Larry seemed about as funny as a Little and Large pier show. So now the lounge suit has been packed away to be replaced by stetsons, spurs and suede jackets with tassels and shiny metal studs. Enter Freddy Pharkas, a comic hero for a bygone age.

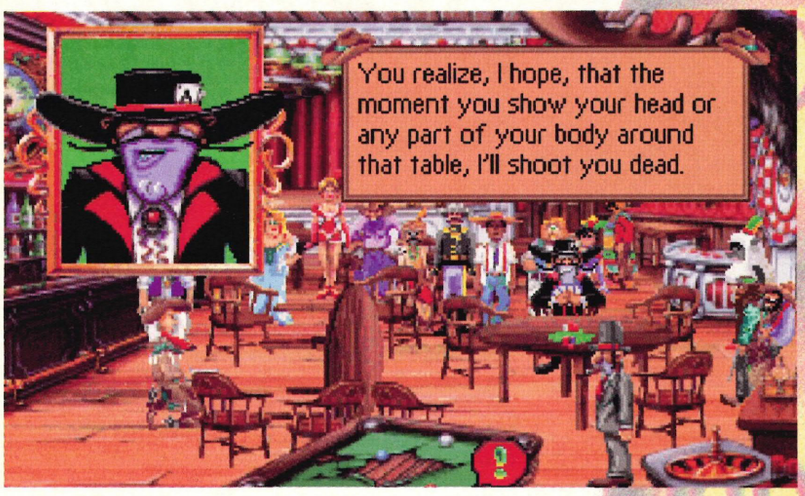
When you think about it, it's rather strange that the seam of potential in the Western genre hasn't been mined before now. Laughs have generally tended to be few and far between on the untamed American frontier, but the Mel Brooks parody Blazing Saddles and the odd Spaghetti Western have undoubtedly proved that there is a multitude of comic possibilities in the 'ole' Wild West.

Where the Space Quest series parodied great handfuls of science fiction clichés, Freddy Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist (FPFP) parodies the Western genre equivalents. Think of all the westerns that you've ever seen. Remember the small wooden towns, the poker games at smoky green-baize tables and the end of picture gunfight in the dusty street? They are all here in Coarsegold, a small town in post gold-rush California, and, interestingly, the location of Sierra's US GQ for real.

The year is 1888, and you, as Freddy Pharkas, uncover a treacherous plot that threatens to turn your home town into a Canary Wharf type ghost town. In the best traditions of point-and-click adventuring, you must help Freddy overcome one catastrophe after another, ranging from the perils of arson to the sheer terror of terminal statewide flatulence.

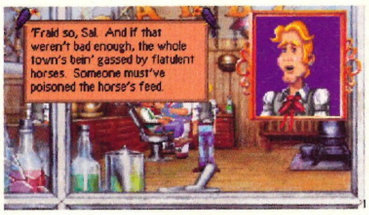
The same ancient rules of adventuring also dictate that you must start off with no possessions, no money and absolutely nothing whatsoever to aid you, bar Freddy's thriving drugs business and his secret past. Where Space Quest had a heroic janitor, the West now has an equally heroic chemist.

The game begins with the Ballad of Freddy Pharkas. This is a scene-setting

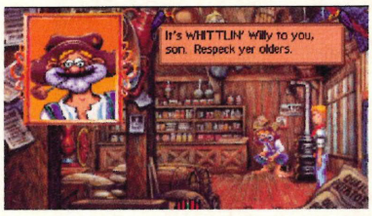


Shoot-out in the Golden Balls Saloon. Aces Hall has been cheating at poker and you just had to point it out. Looks like the whole town has turned out to see you get shot.

Two Minutes *of Wild West pharmacy*



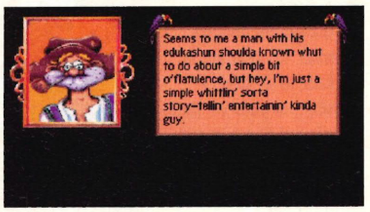
If you don't know what you're doing, it's always best to ask someone. You explain the situation to Salvatore the town barber, but he's far too busy creating the first of the Mohicans.



How do you go about curing animal flatulence? Use a cork? Still at a loss, you go into the hardware store to ask Willy who has about as many good ideas as he has teeth.



The fate of the town is in your capable hands. At your medicine counter you must try and formulate a cure for this outbreak of deadly wind. Some aminophyllic citrate might do the trick.



Too late. Having made an antidote, poor old Freddy didn't have time to use it. You need more time and something to help you breathe. Did they have gas masks in the 1800s?



Freddy has a talent for getting into trouble. Here, tied to a chair and locked in the basement of a burning schoolhouse, his chances of survival look slim, to say the least.

device that tells the story of Freddy's life with the aid of pictures, piano music and a bouncing ball that hops over the words indicating the song's rhythm. It's an old, twangy camp-fire sort of a song which you can skip altogether if you like.

The game proper fades nicely into colour from an old, grainy Western style photograph, and then you are dumped clueless into Coarsegold's main street. The tale of Freddy Pharkas is actually told after the event itself. This means that Freddy has already saved the town and the story is being retold much later by Willy, the wood-whittling narrator. Controlling Freddy, you're plunged into a series of situations that have already happened and you must react as Freddy reacted to progress further.

These situations are structured into four separate acts, each introduced by Willy and containing their own puzzles and problems. The plot structure is unvaryingly linear, unlike the multiple paths found in a game like Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis.

Willy's ramblings usually contain enough helpful pointers as to what the player should be doing next. For example, when the old timer opens the game with, "It all started when Freddy went to open his pharmacy ..." you shouldn't need a huge flashing neon sign to tell you that the pharmacy might be a sensible place to visit first.

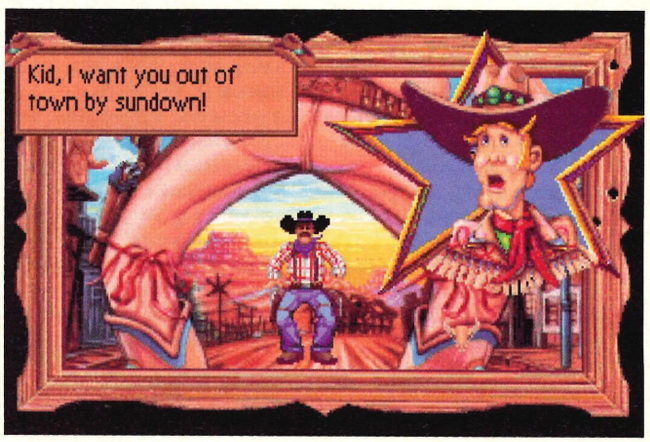
The early part of the game is spent filling in prescriptions for the townsfolk. No real puzzlers here, but the drugs can't be prescribed correctly without The Home Medical Adviser contained in the box. The Adviser lists the major chemicals and their ingredients as well as some common (and uncommon) medical complaints. There are useful, nay vital, clues here and although this early prescription filling is really nothing more than a glorified copy-protection system, your knowledge of chemistry is called upon later to make cures for a deadly bout of flatulence and rampant town-wide diarrhoea.

To move Freddy around, the game uses the same icon control interface as King's Quest VI and Police Quest III. There are the usual 'walk', 'look', 'use' and 'talk' icons and together with the inventory this slim selection of options is all you will need. If you've never used the interface before it's very easy to get to grips with, but slightly more fiddly than the LucasArts SCUMM system.

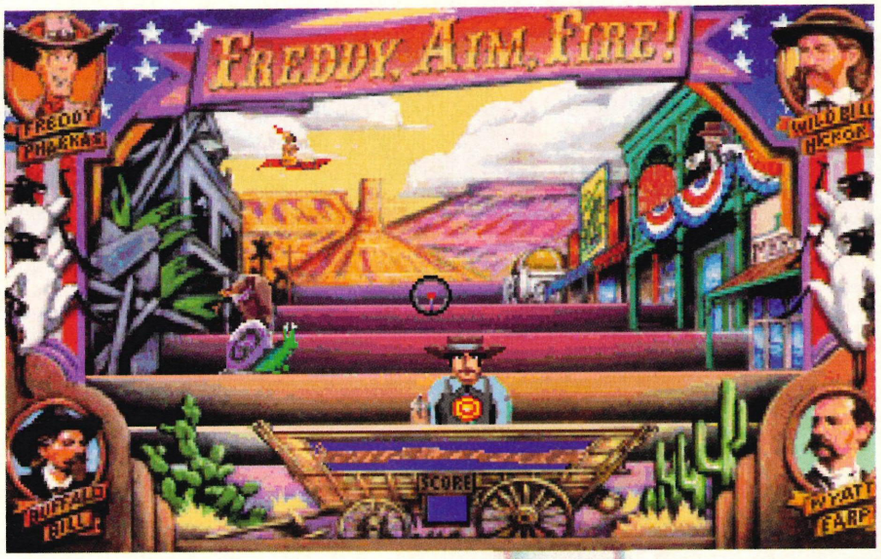
At the beginning of FPFP you have the freedom to wander round and explore. All the expected wild west locations are here including the Golden Balls Saloon, the hardware store, the bank, the graveyard and the brothel.

Unfortunately, your casual exploration isn't going to take you very long. Coarsegold is a small town and all the action takes place within its humble boundaries. As a result, there are only a few locations and no new ones to be unexpectedly discovered, and everything you require to solve the game can be located in the town. This will come as a bit of a disappointment to adventurers who get frustrated wandering around the same locations with no prospect of somewhere new to go.

The backgrounds are beautifully drawn in 256-colour VGA and lend an authentic air to the old West style of the town. But to really appreciate the game and its Western flavour, you really must play it with some sort of sound card. The effects range from loud whoops and 'ye haws', whip cracks and some sampled speech to several different background tunes (heavy in the harmonica and bass drum depart-



Gunfight! The street is deserted and Freddy faces his old arch enemy, Kenny the Kid. Kenny was the villain who shot Freddy's right ear off. Perhaps it's time for revenge?



This is one of the two arcade sequences in the game. To dispose of the four Lever brothers you've got to shoot their cardboard cut-outs in a fairground shoot!

ment) that change with the action; there's even the haunting whistle from The Good, The Bad and The Ugly. In addition to all this there are even a few simplistic arcade sequences. You can skip past these if you're an adventure purist, as they're more of a dull diversion than an extra piece of exciting gameplay.

Freddy is principally a comedy adventure, and Al Lowe's particular brand of humour is obviously the game's major selling point. The humour is also what will doubtlessly divide many opinions, however. Freddy Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist is something more than just Leisure Suit Larry goes west, but it's difficult not to notice that there are some things here that would certainly feel easily as comfortable in Leisure Suit Larry VI (should it ever appear).

Like the Larry games, FPFP has none of the sharp wit of Monkey Island, preferring the well trodden path of word play, the pun and the double entendre. Gun barrels become phallic symbols, a brothel is run by Madame Ovaree (who else?) and there's a native Indian brave called Running Gag.

Veterans of the Larry series will get the distinct feeling that they've been this way before and, as if to confirm their suspicions, Larry himself even makes a cameo appearance as a tired, but still sex-hungry, cowboy. The humour is rather hit and miss and FPFP is more likely to give rise to a soft chuckle rather than rib-tickling laughter. But if you liked the humour of Al Lowe in the Larry series then you'll probably like the gags here, although there's much less emphasis on sex this time around.

The main weakness of Freddy Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist (what a mouthful that is) is that it's just a tad too easy. Although it had me stumped two or three times, it really didn't take very long to finish and if you're a hardened adventurer you shouldn't find it too much of a long term problem. Perhaps this is due to the limited number of locations and, as a consequence, the limited number of objects that can be used.

To spot some of the more well-hidden objects will require some judicious use of the 'look' icon, but then this is standard practice for adventurers these days. Once you have your objects, as I've pointed out, it's simply a case of using one with another until the solution presents itself, even if it seems a little on the weird side. Like many other modern graphic adventures it's a hit and miss mode of play, using item A with item B to get result C, and the puzzles don't offer a challenge that's either sizeable or lasting.

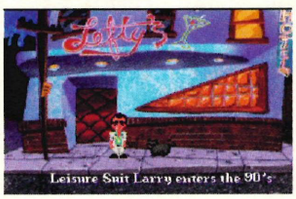
In the past, Sierra has been criticised in the past for improving the visual and sound aspects of its adventure games while neglecting to improve the gameplay. This is a criticism that can be levelled at many games developers, who still don't realise that beneath all the fancy graphics, new easy-to-use icons and sampled sound there has to be a good basic game. The sooner that the software companies start remembering this the better off everyone is going to be.

Freddy Pharkas might just conceivably become very popular, spawn a sequel and go on to achieve some of the heady success that Leisure Suit Larry enjoyed in its heyday. All in all, it *is* a moderately enjoyable graphic adventure, but it breaks no new ground and isn't sufficiently challenging in the long term. These days if you're going to pay up to £40 for an adventure game, you'd expect it to keep you playing for weeks rather than days, to offer a multitude of locations and a large helping of devious puzzles.

But unfortunately, Freddy Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist really offers none of the above, and although it's nicely presented, beautifully drawn and fun for a while, you can't help feeling that there should have been more to it.

Dean Evans

Alternatively...



Leisure Suit Larry series
Sierra, £39.99 each
Each title follows the jaunts of America's favourite anti-hero in the land of sleaze, where he moves from place to place and woman to woman, getting married, divorced and bankrupted along the way, despite his complete lack of street-cred and a, shall we say, 'challenging' haircut. The games aren't particularly difficult and became a cult hit in offices everywhere due to their bawdy Carry On humour.



Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge
LucasArts, £39.99
Rated 9, Issue 3
A game that did wonders for converting many a computer gamer back to the world of point-and-click graphic adventuring. Filled to the brim with razor-sharp humour, pirate Guybrush Threepwood stumbles on his way to collecting the four map pieces that will show him where to find the treasure of Big Whoop. Funny, difficult and still very good.

Techspec *While Sierra quotes a 16MHz 286 as minimum specification, it recommends a 16MHz 386 for smooth playing. The program will use any extra memory you have, supports 256-colour VGA and even has a 16-colour EGA mode.*

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	11Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	✗	EGA	✓	Tandy	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	16MHz				
Minimum memory	640K				
Free RAM required	581K				

Verdict
Average, adequate and undemanding. Nice visuals though

rating **5**

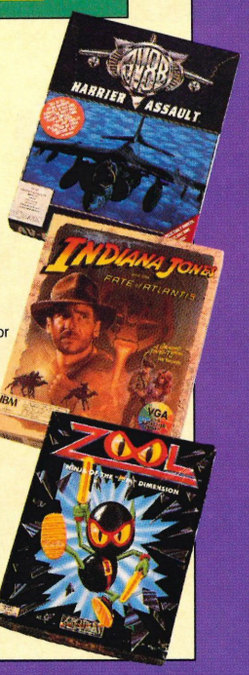
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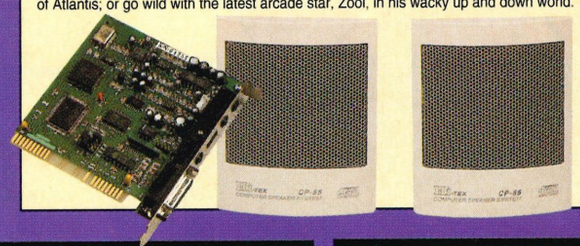
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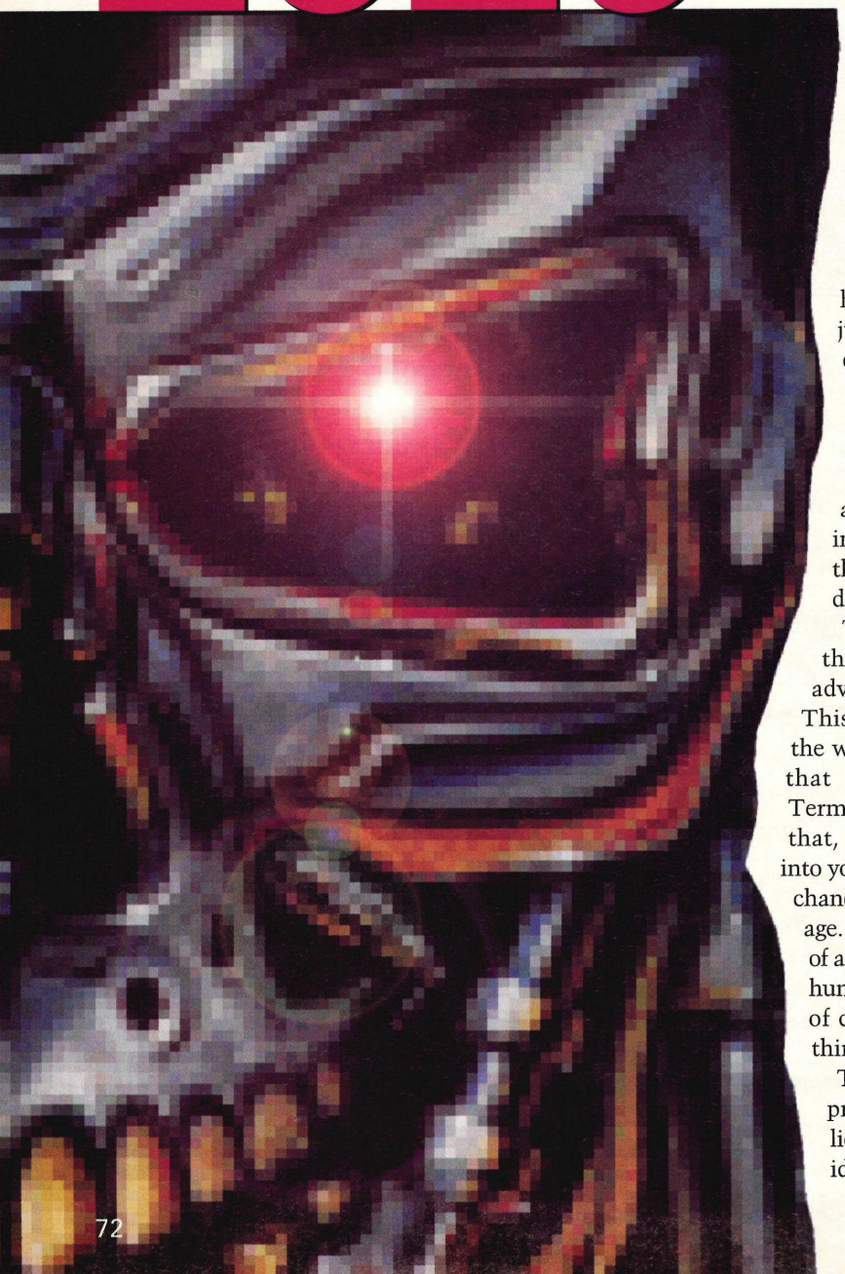
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Title	**The Terminator 2029**
Publisher	**Bethesda Softworks**
Contact	**(021) 625 3366**
Price	**TBA**

It's 2029AD, the nuclear holocaust has been and gone and the world is being run by machines. Only one person is capable of saving humanity. Oh dear

The Terminator 2029



Terminator 2029 is not a game for the faint-hearted. Anyone who's seen either of the Terminator film will know just how much damage one of those machines can do.Unfortunately, Terminator 2029 is set in a post-holocaust future where there isn't just one Terminator, but legions cheerfully trying to eradicate what remains of the human race. Your job, of course, is to stop them.

This means completing a series of daring missions with the aim of stealing technology, bombing strategic locations and ending the nastiness. You are expected to do this all on your own.

The good news is that you have the latest in combat armour, the advanced cybernetic exoskeleton. This miraculous equipment boosts the wearer's strength and reflexes so that one man can easily take on a Terminator or two. The bad news is that, since the suit is wired directly into your nervous system, there's a fair chance of ending up with brain damage. Still, when you're in the middle of a field surrounded by Terminators, hunter-killers and other instruments of destruction, that'll be the last thing on your mind.

Terminator 2029 looks a lot more promising than the two previous licences. While it takes most of its ideas from the two films, it isn't actually tied to either storyline and has a fresh plot of its own. The most noticeable improvement, however, is the use of a first-person viewpoint. The excitement is much more immediate, since it's infinitely more satisfying to blow away a target that's staring you in the face than to move a small sprite around a screen filled with other small sprites.

So far so good, but in practice the game doesn't work quite as well as it might. For starters, it employs the kind of 3D technology which limits you to turning 90 degrees and moving one step at a time, like an RPG such as the Eye of the Beholder series, or FTL's Dungeon Master. This works well enough in a dungeon full of narrow corridors, but when you're out in the open and surrounded on all sides by moving targets it proves less than satisfactory. The game would have been much better if it had used the kind of multi-directional scrolling which

You have been directed to recover some vital information from a SkyNet base to further the human cause. Simple enough, eh? Not if you want to avoid getting shot to pieces by the world's most awesome killing machines.

Techspec *You'll need a 286 or better, VGA or MCGA, 1Mb of expanded memory , keyboard and mouse. The game takes about half an hour to install since files must be uncompressed once they have been copied to your hard disk.*

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	**14Mb**				
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	**640K**				

Verdict
Sadly does not live up to its potential.

rating **5**

proved so successful in games like Ultima Underworld and the shareware classic, Wolfenstein 3D (see alternatively panel).

I was also disappointed with the quality of the graphics. The intro sequence was a bit crude, and while the in-game graphics seemed better, that might have something to do with the fact that I was too busy running away from things to pay much attention to my surroundings. The dark, glowering atmosphere of the films comes across quite well, but the general presentation is let down by jerky animation and scrolling.

Another letdown was the mission-briefing sequence. One of the technicians just happens to be a scantily clad, improbably endowed blonde whose sole function seems to be to show as much of her figure as a seductively draped lab coat will allow. The game is set in a post-holocaust wilderness, not at a Californian beach party, for heaven's sake!

One thing's for certain, wherever it's set, Terminator 2029 is no picnic. The missions are quite straightforward, but completing them in one piece is another matter. Once you've taken a few hits, your armour, weapons and ultimately your body start to deteriorate. Unless you can crawl into a safe place and make the necessary repairs you're in trouble. It only takes one mistake and before you can say, "Hasta la vista", you'll have a small cloud of steam where your head should be.

This wouldn't be too bad were it not for the fact that you can't save during missions. I suspect that the reasoning behind this is to avoid making the game too easy, but there's nothing more frustrating than struggling through a mission only to get killed as you try to return to base. As a result, I found that most of my playing time was taken up by cowering behind walls while waiting for my armour to repair itself. Knowing when and where to do your repairs seems to be a key part of the strategy, but it isn't very exciting game.

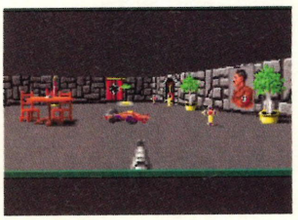
What the game does offer is size. There are 19 large missions to complete if you have the patience and stamina to see it through to the end. While there is some pleasure in blowing away Terminators with your plasma cannons, the novelty soon starts to wear thin. True, it passes the time for an hour or so, but there's not enough appeal to make you come back for more. Ultimately, the biggest problem with Terminator 2029 is that both the subject matter and the technology are two years out of date.

■ **Cal Jones**

Alternatively...



Space Hulk
Electronic Arts, £34.99
Rated 7, Issue 20
Another game where you get to wander round in heavy-duty battle armour, Space Hulk contains a stronger strategy element than Terminator 2029 and puts you in charge of up to five marines. Lots of carnage, lots of entertainment.

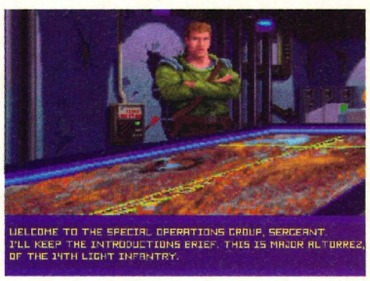


Wolfenstein 3D
ID/Transend, registered version £24.00, shareware version £5.
Reviewed Issue 12
If you're after a good 3D shoot 'em up, you can't do better or cheaper than Wolfenstein. Set in a Nazi POW camp, it's fast, furious, violent and great fun. Not for the politically sensitive, however.

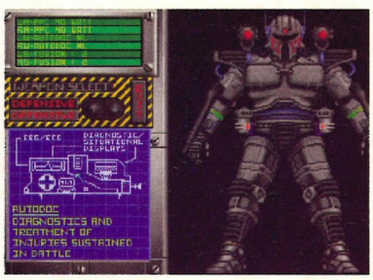


Some Terminators are disguised to look human so that they can infiltrate resistance strongholds. That doesn't make them too easy to deal with.

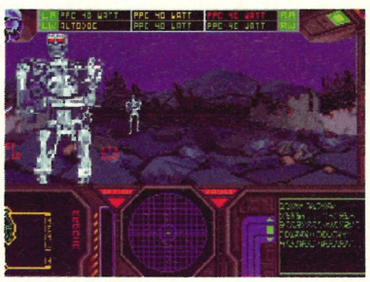
Two Minutes *of being reduced from an exoskeleton to a skeleton*



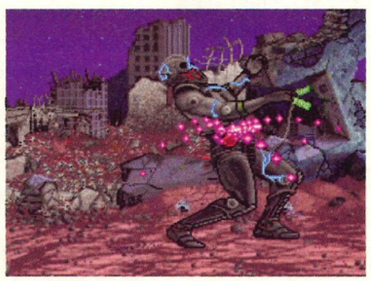
The mission briefing: Colonel John Connor and his buxom technician friend are more than willing to give you a couple of points to remember.



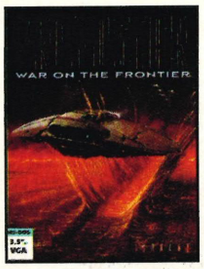
Your ACE battle armour will protect you from heavy blows and can be fitted with an assortment of exotic weapons. Just the thing for rush hour.



Letting a Terminator get this close isn't a good move, especially when you're a bit damaged. Time to do your iron chicken impression and run for cover.



Too late. Your head explodes in a big shower of sparks and you are no more. Maybe you should have taken along that spare fuse after all.



Title	**Protostar: War on the Frontier**
Publisher	**Tsunami/Accolade**
Contact	**(081) 877 0880**
Price	**£39.99**

It's almost a decade since Elite was released on the BBC micro, and it spawned a host of space exploration, trading and combat games. Is Protostar just another excuse to keep you occupied until Frontier: Elite II arrives?

Protostar
War on the Frontier



After gathering all the information you can from various sources, it's time to get a move on. It's a good idea to take on as much fuel as you can afford: it's a long way to the disabled starship and you don't want to get stranded.

Stardate 2336, Thule Sector. The Skeetch Empire has long regarded humanity as ripe for conquest. Jealous of our prosperity, they have sealed the borders of human space, escalated activity from sporadic raids to an all-out siege, and tortured businessmen in grey suits. Mankind's answer is the Protostar directive, a licence for you to engage in unlimited covert activity against the Skeetch.

The details of this activity are mostly at your discretion, but the overall aim is clear: you have to create relations with and ally the four sentient alien species who can help you defeat the Skeetch, and make enough money from trade, exploration and combat to maintain humanity's defence forces.

Anyone who's played Elite will immediately recognise the basic elements of money, goods and alien contact in this story. The similarities don't end there. Both games share a huge, explorable universe, trade opportunities, space stations, upgradable spacecraft, limited fuel supplies, deep space combat, pirates, illicit missions, and so on.

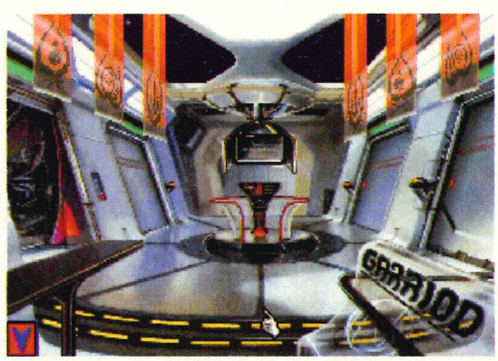
But Protostar is more than just a carbon copy of David Braben's classic. Your mission here is more altruistic, more ambassadorial and more clearly defined. You also have a crew to hire and control, the ability to revive injured comrades, and a huge range of people to talk to.

What you get in the package isn't quite as impressive as the scope of the game demands. The small manual contains too few screen shots, no novella-length background story and no tactical advice, athough you do get a lot of tactical help from people you encounter in the game. Apart from the manual there's a useful quick reference card and a neat blueprint-style spacecraft comparison chart. Even so, I would have liked a star chart for extra atmosphere, since compiling a functional list on paper of the most useful planetary systems just isn't the same. There's one bonus, though: you don't get a tacky plastic badge.

The final frontier

If you're playing the game for the first time, you have the opportunity to input your own name (or whatever perverse

Forget about trading, combatting the Skeetch or making allies of alien races — your first task is to find a crew for your vessel. But how do you go about it?



You start at the local outpost. There are three of these, each offering the same services: alcoholic beverages and helpful chat, a communications network, hardware shop, trading post and biotechnology lab.

pseudonym takes your fancy). People then address you by this name whenever you talk to them — it's not quite as special an experience as a string of victories for your favourite footy team, but it's a nice touch nonetheless.

When the action starts, you find yourself aboard an outpost — one of three remote space stations spread around the galaxy. Everything is mouse controlled, although there are hot keys to bypass most mouse functions. Of the two basic icon controls, one describes whatever you're pointing at, the other interacts with objects such as doors, icons, people and menus.

The faults of this system are obvious: with only a couple of basic icons (plus others in special situations such as combat, detailed below), you have limited interaction with your surroundings. Your activities tend to focus on opening doors, selecting options and deciding what to say from a list of choices. As a result, the quality of the interaction isn't as sophisticated as I would have liked.

On the other hand, Protostar is a very safe game. Unlike Space Quest V, where you can die often and in occasionally frustrating circumstances, Protostar allows you to wander around, chat, gather resources, trade, buy equipment — and all in relative safety. It would be a very dull game if there wasn't any danger, of course, and there are plenty of opportunities for combat both in space and on the surfaces of planets you visit — but on the whole you have few chances to 'spoil' the game because of your mistakes.

The action is divided into three basic areas — outposts, interstellar travel aboard your starship, and solar system exploration — and you can engage in a variety of activities in each. As I've said, you begin at one of the outposts, each of which is divided into five areas: com-terminal (where you can review announcements and contact your boss, Director Hawking, to transfer funds), exchange centre (pick up fuel and sell goods at a price which doesn't fluctuate), biotech centre (revive crew members and study alien races in the library), frontier craft (the engineering department, where you can upgrade your ship's systems) and the lounge (a useful place for information).



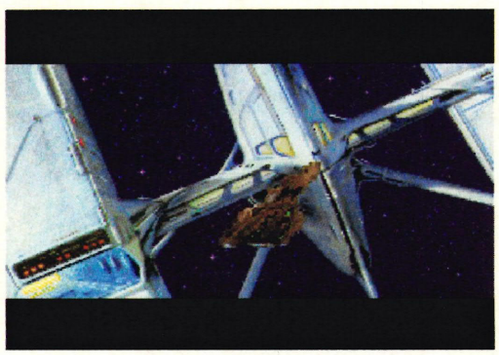
Each outpost has a biotech centre where you can revive injured crew members and study data on alien races. The Skeetch (shown here) are more threatening than they look.

Once you've finished at the outpost, it's a good idea to stock up with as much fuel as you can carry, otherwise getting stranded in space could be a frustrating feature of your first few games. When you first enter your starship, you only have one, automated crew member aboard, and your first mission is to seek out the rest. If you've talked to enough people, your first human crew member shouldn't be hard to find, but be warned: the more experts you take on board, the more money you have to find to pay them.

Your ship is well equipped with gadgets, including a tactical display, radar, status gauges, stardate display, regional coordinates, fuel level and a range of command functions. These functions are accessed by some nondescript-looking icons, and it took me a while to sort them all out (the only easy one is 'E' for engineering).

For those of you who like lists, the command functions are: navigation (including hyperspace and regional travel, docking, orbiting, and hands-on control of the ship during combat or planetary encounters), contact (administrative functions such as an intercom, station assignment for the crew, surrendering to enemies and hailing vessels), science (basically used to scan planets or other vessels), tactical (arm/disarm weapons and shields), engi-

Two Minutes *on the savage frontier*



You already have one crew member pre-installed: Automated Being Evolution 440 (Abe for short). Unlike everyone else available for hire, he costs nothing, is superb at his job and obeys all your commands immediately.



Arriving at the sector which Dodel has told you about, you find this craft: XOE-9283. There's only one crew member left alive, and she's eager to join your fight against the Skeetch Empire. Her craft also contains valuable cargo.



Now you can begin to explore a whole universe full of mysterious planets. Some contain resources, some offer trade opportunities, some reveal old friends — but many are also extremely dangerous. How long can you stay alive?

Alternatively...



Elite Plus
MicroProse, £39.99
Elite is the space exploration, combat and trading game that launched a hundred clones. It was first released on the BBC micro about 10 years ago, and though the PC version features far superior graphics, the gameplay (you play a freelance cargo carrier aiming to reach 'elite' pilot status) remains virtually the same. Not to be confused with the original four-colour CGA version, or the forthcoming Frontier: Elite II.



Space Quest V
Sierra On-Line, £39.99
Rated 7, Issue 19
Roger Wilco's latest space escapade is laced with environmental concerns, as the hapless hero tries to clean up the galaxy. An easy-to-use, if crude, interface helps keep your mind focused on the strong puzzles and superb graphics, and a good sense of humour keeps you hooked. It can be frustrating because of the need to save often, but newcomers should enjoy it as much as fans of the series.

neering (direct repairs, optimise ship performance, and reveal, acquire or retrieve cargo), and biotech (medical services such as scanning aliens, healing injuries and analysing lifeforms held in cargo storage).

What this deceptively lengthy list of functions actually means is that you usually have plenty to do when you're hopping about the galaxy. Life is made a lot easier (and the chances of success are better) when you have a full crew to help carry out decisions. If you're wondering precisely what there is to do, a typical gameplay sequence might run like this:

You leave an outpost having refuelled, bought some goods and gained some information. Conversations usually take the form of questions and answers, and you can adopt a series of postures ranging from excessively servile to downright aggressive, depending on who you're talking to. Once onboard the starship, you can plot a hyperpath course to somewhere in the galaxy — usually a location revealed during one of your conversations. Once you've reached the coordinates, the vessel's main viewer shows a collection of planets and/or other space craft.

Visiting planets allows you to gather mineral resources to be sold later. After making appropriate scans, you enter orbit, transfer to an explorer vessel and scour the surface for goodies. Alien encounters are not unusual and not always friendly, but many planets have cities where you can barter for goods and engage in idle chat with the merchants; you can also trade with other starship commanders. In both cases, getting a good deal is not always the best option, since you may want to make friends with the alien race you're dealing with. Sometimes it's better to take a loss in order to gain an ally.

Hands-on or out of control?

Once you have completed your dealings, it is time to move elsewhere. It's a dangerous universe, though, and it won't be long before you have to fight to survive. Opponents range from the vicious Skeetch to unprincipled pirates who are usually happy if you surrender some of your cargo. But if you decide to fight, you have to make use of the vessel's hands-on control mode. This allows you to fly the craft directly, using a radar to pinpoint enemies and other objects.

However, this isn't the easiest system to get to grips with. Even if you manage to manoeuvre your craft successfully, it's hard to target weapons accurately. You only have three basic kinds of weapon, too: a slowly-recharging wave gun, a relatively ineffective accel cannon and a homing pursuit pod. Nine times out of 10, you end up outnumbered with little chance of survival — until you've mastered the required skills. As a last resort you can always run away.

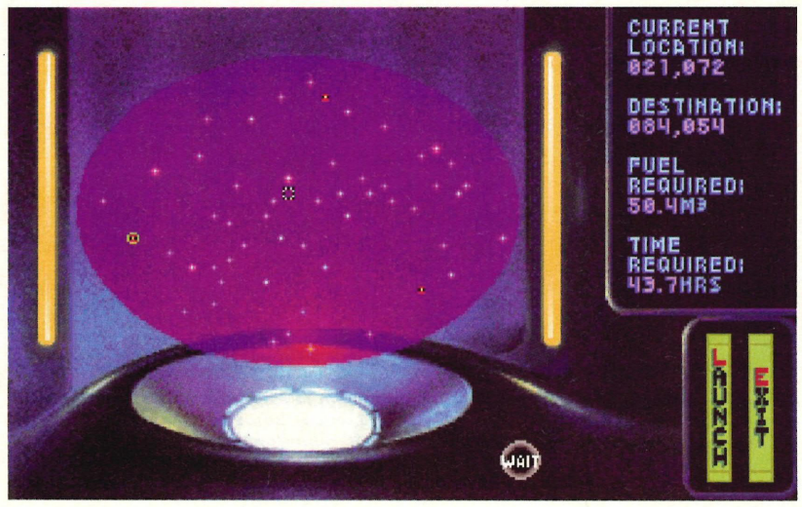
If you do die in combat though, some comfort is offered by the decent endgame sequence (which I won't spoil by revealing).

So, is Protostar just one more run-of-the-mill exploration, trading and combat game which will keep you occupied until Elite II comes along? The answer, sadly, is a qualified yes. There are plenty of features to recommend it — the wealth of conversations, the altruistic main mission, lots of subquests, a vast universe, strong strategic elements, some neat puzzles, and a good game structure. Unfortunately, this seeming variety is an illusion. After you've visited a few planets it's easy to get bored with the relatively featureless landscape graphics. If the initial frustrations of running out of fuel, being hijacked and trying to figure out how best to complete your mission aren't enough to dissuade you, the ultimately repetitive nature of the game will be.

The same could be said of the original Elite, of course — and Protostar certainly has more varied graphics (including some excellent animations) than Braben's classic, as well as speech, understated sound effects and decent music — all of which help create a strong atmosphere. However, if anything, Protostar has tried to do too much: in packing the game with so many planets and people it has lost the excitement and individuality of genuinely different encounters.

If you consider the strategic side of a space exploration and combat game more important than something which looks and feels like a real universe, this is a reasonable alternative to Elite. For me though, Protostar's appeal is shortlived and ultimately lacking the substance and genuine variety to make it a great game.

■ Gordon Houghton



Your universe is divided into local solar systems and the entire frontier sector. The sector map allows you to travel between solar systems using hyperpath tunnels.

TechSpec

Four high-density disks must be installed to a hard drive. You need a minimum of DOS 5.0, a 386 running at 25MHz and 256-colour VGA. A mouse is essential, but plenty of keyboard commands also make life easier.

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	6Mb				
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	590K				

Verdict

Goes to show variety is not the spice of life

rating **5**

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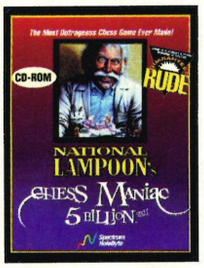
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Title	**Chess Maniac**
Publisher	**Spectrum Holobyte/MicroProse**
Contact	**(0666) 504326**
Price	**£44.99**

It was painful to watch. The Chess Maniac encountered the German master Fritz across the chequered board. While the Maniac's pieces indulged in all sorts of jolly japes, Fritz's pieces played chess. Guess who won.

Chess Maniac
5 Billion And 1

Computer chess isn't all about opening move books and ELO ratings. After Battlechess's animated on-board skirmishes comes a National Lampoon endorsed version, which is altogether ruder

Chess programs tend to fall into two camps. On the one hand, we have those that play good chess. Fritz, M-Chess and one or two other specialist programs belong in this category. On the other hand, we have sheer pawnography. These games *look* as if they're playing good chess. In addition to fabulous 3D displays and weird pieces, they are usually bursting with obscure or even – in the case of Chess Maniac – mildly obscene features, all presented through dozens of menus and sub-menus. Tempting you, in fact, to do anything rather than concentrate on the actual game in hand.



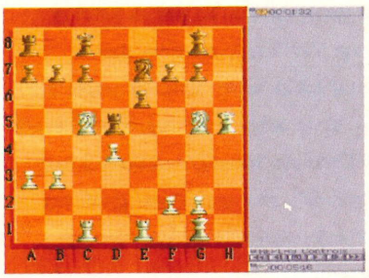
The Bawdy Set's 3D display is hopelessly cluttered by default, but you can position it for maximum clarity. The only reason to play with this set is to see the animations.

Chess Maniac Five Billion And 1 is unashamedly pawnographical. The secret of success in this hotly contested genre is to do exactly what all the other programs do, but add something different. Chessmaster 3000, for example, claims more playing options than any other program, a clever feature that analyses your position in perfect English, and a good enough playing strength to defeat you and me. Chess Maniac doesn't have so many features, is not a very strong player, but offers some rather jerky video clips and thinks it's very funny.

Well, it is quite funny, if you're a fan of the National Lampoon style of humour. There's a 72 page manual, well-written and occasionally amusing. Unfortunately, that means you have to skim through 72 pages every time you want to find out how to do something. After a while, the humour palls.

Once you've worked out how to play the game, and — more importantly, how to get it to run — you get a choice of the 'boring' set or the 'bawdy' set. You choose the latter, naturally, because that's why you bought the game. You get some rather camp figures facing each other across a disappointingly jaggy display. Their design is so obscure that the pro-

Two Minutes *of humiliation for the Chess Maniac*



It's the Maniac (playing black) to move. Fritz is playing white and has a clear attacking opportunity. The game is being played using the time controls rather than the skill levels.This is Chess Maniac's 2D display.



After 22 ... Qe8; 23 Qh7+ Kf8, he can run, but he can't hide. It's worth mentioning that in this game Fritz was denied the advantage of an openings book). We selected the Maniac's 'Boring' 3D display for this shot.



After 24 Nge6+ f7 x e6; 25 Ne6+, let's have fun floating the board around the screen, while Maniac contemplates imminent defeat. Will Fritz's victory get him a glimpse of the famous Strip Chess sequence?



After the Black King sneaked off to f7, Fritz's Queen ended it all on g7. And here's the Strip Sequence. Everything is in the best possible taste. Unfortunately, we got to win so often that even the strip gag wore thin.

gram will identify a piece if you click on it with both mouse buttons. This is helpful: the white bishop, for example, does not look like a bishop. It is also black.

From then on, we're in Battle Chess territory. Just in case that baffles you, hark back to the famous holographic chess set in Star Wars which inspired (I presume) Interplay's Battle Chess and its animated hi-res pictures of pieces eating each other and so on as the game progresses.

The pieces in Chess Maniac don't exactly eat each other. Instead, a move sets them mincing and prancing across the board and a capture results in a sudden close-up and a mildly humorous low-res video sequence. This gives you a sense of realism that's missing from the latest incarnations of Battle Chess, but at a cost of poor resolution. It's a crowd-puller, for sure, but it wears thin after a while.

Other humorous touches include 'distractions' (pawns yawning, for example), strip chess, which for politically correct reasons doesn't really deliver what it promises, and occasional madness, as when the Chess Maniac attempts to steal one of your pieces. Providing you've got a sound card, you also get witty commentaries (delivered in a voice very like Hal 9000 in the movie 2001) on your moves and chess-playing prowess. You will soon wish to disable this option, methinks.

We installed Chess Maniac on two machines: one private and one public. The public demonstration of its skills certainly drew a large crowd. After a while, most drifted away. Gosh! Isn't it amazing what PCs can do these days?

Those of us who stayed began to explore the sub-menus. We wanted to see how well it could play chess. Frankly, it doesn't play chess at all well. None of your 'openings' nonsense here — if you want to play the Giuoco Piano (you must be mad), you'd just have to wait for it to emerge by chance. That could take some time.

Pitched against Fritz — not the strongest PC player these days, but still a good bet — Chess Maniac was thrashed after thinking for four minutes and thirty seconds. Since the Maniac was thinking on a very fast 486 PC and Fritz was struggling on a 16MHz 386, this was disappointing. Even more alarming was the fact that the game occupied Fritz's mind for only 40 seconds. Subsequent games confirmed this weakness.

I honestly can't think of any reason to buy this product. Yes, it plays good enough chess to beat most people, but so do all chess programs and this is weaker than most. Yes, it is quite funny at times. But you're not likely to be laughing after seeing its routines for the 100th time. If you want to show off your PC, get Strike Commander or something like that. If you want to see your PC thinking and be able to beat it at chess sometimes, get Chessmaster 3000. If you want to see belly dancers shimmying across the board and indulging in some very humorous antics, take a look at Chess Maniac.

I said 'take a look'. Let some other mug spend the money. You won't have to install it, and you won't have to worry about losing your sense of humour when the program cracks that joke about sleeping with your wife for the 500th time. If you do invest in Chess Maniac, very soon you'll be disabling all those features that led you to buy it in the first place.

■ Steve Cooke

Techspec

You need 27Mb, a sound card, an hour to copy across the 12 disks, 1Mb of EMS plus DOS 5.0 or higher. There's a CD-ROM option, but it plays slower unless you copy over all the files, in which case you still need the 27Mb.

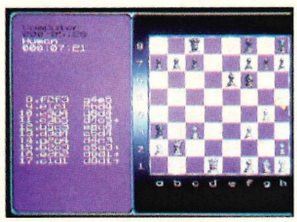
Disk requirements	
High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	27Mb
Graphic modes	
CGA ✗ EGA ✗ Tandy ✗	
VGA ✓ SVGA ✗	
Soundboards	
Ad Lib ✓ Roland ✓ Sound Blaster ✓	
Control	
Joystick ✗ Keyboard ✓ Mouse ✓	
Performance	
Optimum speed	33MHz
Minimum memory	2Mb
Free RAM required	560K

Verdict

Initially amusing, if not very good at chess

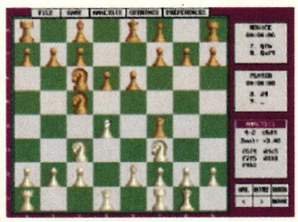
rating **4**

Alternatively...



Battlechess 4000
Interplay, £34.99
Rated 6, Issue 18

Whimsical animated figures on a variety of space-age backgrounds continue the Star Wars animated chess tradition. The 3D board displays are sharper and the individual pieces easier to identify than in Chess Maniac, but the humour is rather less adult in nature. The animation method is more Claymation-like and isn't quite as instantly appealing as the digitised video approach of Chess Maniac. But then, it only requires 13Mb of hard disk space ...



Chessmaster 3000
Mindscape, £35.99
Rated 9, Issue 4

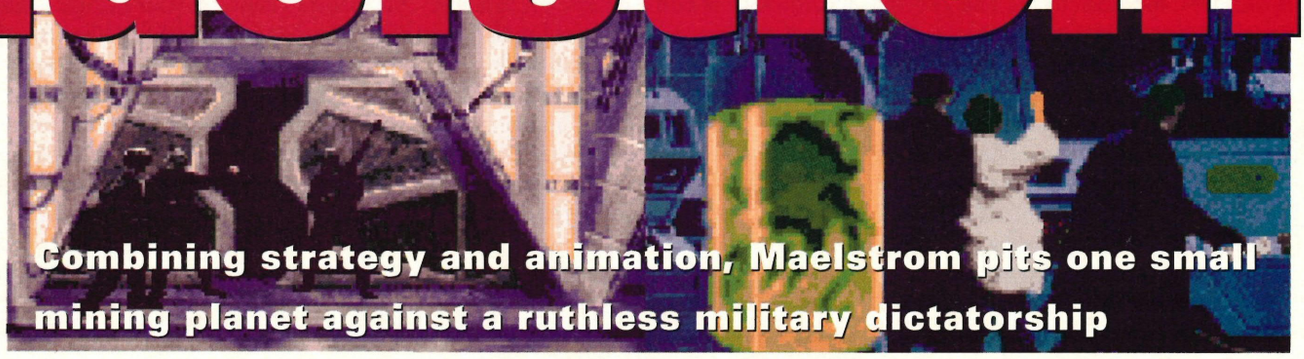
If you're keener on the chess side of things but still hanker for a decent display, Chessmaster is still the best buy. Loads of options, including a very impressive (for the beginner, at any rate) interpretation of your current position and prospects, delivered in plain English. Chessmaster doesn't play as strong a game as the dedicated chess programs like Fritz (see Issue 5) but for most people it is a good compromise between looks, features and performance.



Title	**Maelstrom**
Publisher	**Empire**
Contact	**(0268) 541126**
Price	**£39.99**

It's going to take a long, long while before your resources will allow you to have the kind of battle fleet that Darth Vader would be proud of, so you've got to start by building up your finances.

Maelstrom



Combining strategy and animation, Maelstrom pits one small mining planet against a ruthless military dictatorship

Maelstrom, the title, denotes the political turbulence in the outer galaxy which sets the scene for Empire's new military strategy game. Using a combination of military action, animation sequences, economics, spaceships and mining, you are dumped into a good versus evil scenario, knowing only that you must defend your planet against encroaching enemy forces, while at the same time attempting to finance your own interstellar explorations and conquests.

As the military overlord of the small mining planet of Harmony, your objective is simply to prevent evil Syndicate forces from (a) crushing neutral planets and expanding their dictatorship and (b) invading your home and blasting a hole in your head. At the beginning this seems like a tall order. Your space fleet is woefully small (two tiny ships) and you have little starting capital. Luckily, however, there's a serious wealth of untapped resources just waiting to be exploited. So, in order to build up your fleet you must first increase your cash flow. This is achieved by mining, selling weapons and blackmailing other characters.

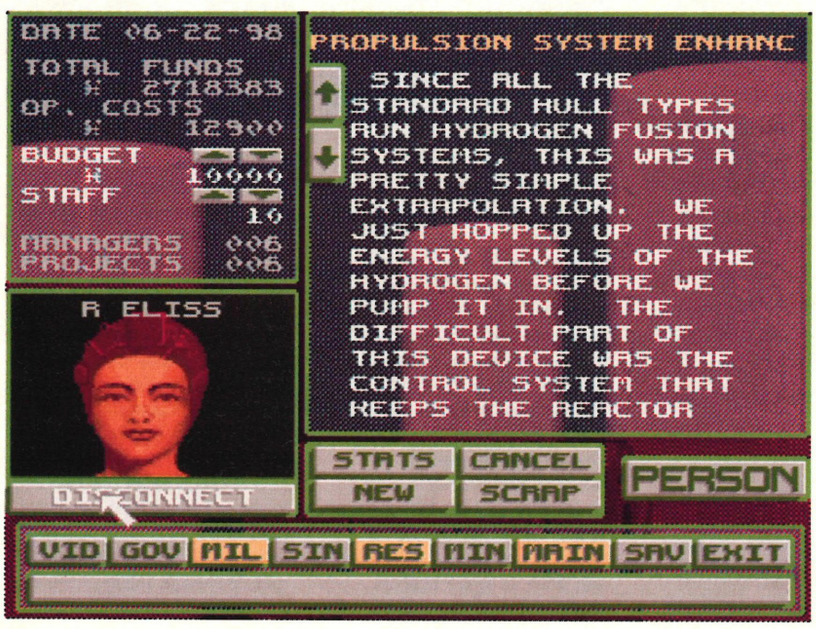
The day-to-day running of Harmony's affairs is conducted via several different departments. The governor screen allows you to raise/lower wages, adjust monthly budgets and hire general staff; military lets you build, equip and direct your space fleet; at intelligence you can assign agents to recon planets, incite rebellions and make dossiers on other characters; research enables you to research and invent new weapons, and finally mining gives you a satellite overview of Harmony's surface where you can locate and then stripmine the ore fitzholnium, the real basis of your wealth.

Each of these departments has a monthly budget and as long as your income is greater than their combined budget requirements your career as overlord can get off and running.

Early on, the gameplay involves little more than economic groundwork, ie, establishing your mines, sending out agents and slowly expanding your space fleet. You can interact with other characters through a video link, where friends might call you to say "hi", plead for help or even threaten you with destruction.

Maelstrom uses what its programmers call "cellular automata", which makes every character appear to have its own life, motivation and rules.

This means, in essence, that there's a whole galaxy out there just doing its own thing. Sadly, if all my rivals were making their own personal decisions I didn't really get to experience it. I can't help wondering if it would have been rather more interesting if everyone plotted against the



At the Research screen, project leader Eliss has invented a propulsion enhancer. An invention such as this can either be kept quietly to yourself or sold for huge sums of money.

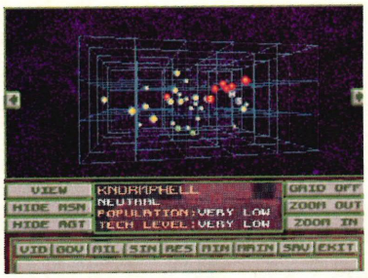
Two Minutes *of interstellar expansion*



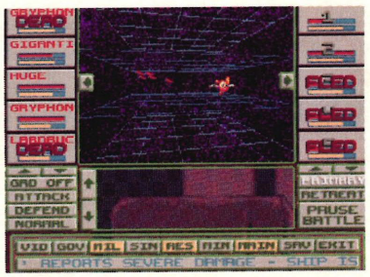
To increase cash flow, start surveying and digging as soon as you can. Mining fitzholnium will be your major source of income, so supervisors must be hired and staff numbers increased.



When you've built up some money, you should buy and equip some heavy-duty hardware. The choice of weapons range from fitz bombs and scatter missiles to heat rays and fungus bombs.



When the fleet is finally up to scratch, it's time to kick some Syndicate ass. Here at the sector map, you can plan who's going to feel the force of your mighty armada.



The battle screen. It's here that the talking stops and the fighting begins. The two fleets face each other and then methodically begin to blow each other up in a battle of numbers and technologies.

player rather than fighting their small private battles amongst themselves.

All your confrontations are resolved in 3D sequences where fleets battle on a four level grid and you view the battle as if you were watching from a nearby ship. If you leave them alone, your crews will fight to the best of their abilities, but you're also able to send orders personally, telling your ships to attack, defend, or retreat, etc.

Unfortunately, player influence appears to be somewhat limited in terms of the outcome of combat, and the battle sequences are inclined to be slow and rather tiresome. It was disheartening, to say the least, when my eight expensive ships, with their arsenal of heat rays, bacteria bombs and super laser cannons, lost out to a lesser fleet of four smaller ships with hardly so much as a handgun between them. Only after a significant change in strategy did my fleet become powerful enough to steamroller all opponents.

Although the action is mostly 'non-linear' (ie, you can go about fighting the Syndicate your own way) there are a number of preset situations or tangential plots that occur in the game. These range from the abduction of a scientist to the discovery of a lost ship in an uncharted nebula.

Again you have the freedom to approach these in whatever way you choose. For example, if an enemy agent kidnaps the head of your mining department and demands a ransom, you can either pay it, let her die or try to mount a daring rescue. These diversions punctuate the increasingly laborious process of mining, shipbuilding and reconnaissance.

By far the most impressive part of Maelstrom is its use of animated sequences. Often confined to appearing in the preset plot situations, these brief animations serve to complement significant pieces of action. For example, should you lose out to an early invasion attempt, you are shown a short animation of your planet being overrun by enemy soldiers. When I stumbled across the lost ship Phaeton, for instance, an exceptional animated sequence showed the crew being revived from their cryogenic chambers.

These animations are not sloppy cartoon-like pictures either. The images have the look and feel of digitised footage but have all been painstakingly hand-drawn. There aren't that many of them, though, which is a great shame as they add much to the game. That said, the novelty of these animations can wear off after a while, like the cinematic bits in Wing Commander.

At first glance, Maelstrom has a lot going for it. It seems to offer a scenario of great depth, alterable parameters, lots of stats and very good animation sequences. However, it can become quite tedious and the departmental screens (where most of your time is spent) are a little on the dull side. OK, so it's a strategy game and the screens are meant to be functional rather than digital works of art, but it's easy to lose interest while you wait for ships to go from A to B, or agents to report.

It also seems to be quite easy. With a bit of thought, a strategy can be formulated that seems to make you unbeatable, so much so that I was able to finish Maelstrom within a week.

I was expecting more from Maelstrom, especially once I'd seen the animations, but unfortunately there's little atmosphere or excitement. In short, it's not enough fun. I'm not advocating in-cockpit 3D battle sequences, far from it, but having clawed my way to the end I didn't even get a muted congratulations. This really summed up my disappointment. Maelstrom is a nice idea, but the final product is sadly lacking in the gameplay department.

■ Dean Evans

Techspec

Maelstrom doesn't demand much of the ordinary computer user. You can play it on a 286, but you must have DOS 5.0 and a Microsoft compatible mouse.

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	**12Mb**				
Graphic modes					
CGA	✗	**EGA**	✗	**Tandy**	✗
VGA	✓	**SVGA**	✗		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	**Roland**	✗	**Sound Blaster**	✓
Control					
Joystick	✗	**Keyboard**	✗	**Mouse**	✗
Performance					
Optimum speed	**16MHz**				
Minimum memory	**1Mb**				
Free RAM required	**589K**				

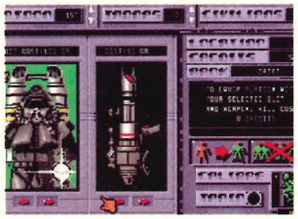
Verdict
A good concept with some nice animation, but lacking in long term gameplay

rating **5**

Alternatively...



Utopia
Gremlin Graphics, £29.99
Rated 7, Issue 12
More than just Sim City in space, Utopia challenges you to expand a small community into a thriving nation. You've got to mine, build defences and cope with a hostile alien race while keeping the populace happy.



Supremacy
Virgin, £34.99
A strategy simulation where you battle for economic and military domination of four planetary systems. You are responsible for managing resources, governing people, etc. Crush your enemies and protect your planet from alien invasion.



Title	**SVGA Air Warrior**
Publisher	**On-Line Entertainment**
Contact	**(081) 558 6114**
Price	**£40.00**

Air Warrior pilots usually adopt 'handles', or nicknames; Ghostrider, Ensor, Ninja and Mad Dog all fly the unfriendly skies. Here, Big Duke 6, flying for A-land, interrupts a private dogfight between A P38 Lightning and two Focke-Wulf 190's from B-Land and C-land.

SVGA Air Warrior

Until recently, it was very much a solitary activity. Now, there's a flight sim that lets you do it with 20 other people all at the same time ...

Have you ever asked yourself, having completed all the missions and achieved the rank of Five Star General in a combat flight simulation, how you would fare against a warm-blooded, intelligent opponent or three? I'm a flight sim addict, pure and simple, and I quickly become frustrated with computer-generated flight sim bandits; they certainly don't learn from their mistakes, or evolve new and imaginative tactics on a regular basis.

Air Warrior provides an answer to this. It's a multi-user combat flight sim in which you are flying with and against a large number of *real* people, most of whom you have never met face to face.

The game has a number of theatres of conflict, with a total of 23 appropriate fighters and bombers to fly. These range from Fokker Triplanes in World War I, through the Pacific (carrier battles, Zeros, etc) and Europe (Spitfires, B17s, Fw190s) to Korea and Mig 15s. There are also tanks, ack-ack guns, jeeps with .50 calibre machine guns and a generally not very useful, unarmed truck to play with.

Pay and play

In order for you to be able to fly and fight with other people, you need the Air Warrior terminal software (the game itself) and a V22, or better, modem. There also needs to be a central system, or host, into which you all connect. The European host is operated by On-line Communications.

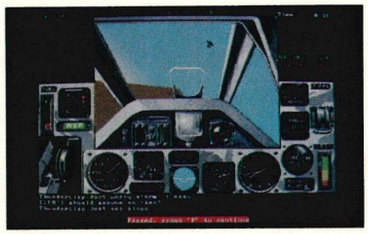
The game costs either £2 per hour or £10 per month to play, plus your telephone bill to London. You get 15 hours free usage credit when you buy it, and there are access options which may be cheaper if you live outside London.

As for terminal software, there's a veritable surfeit for a wide range of different computers available for free download from On-line, or via Cix (the bulletin board); this includes a free cut down CGA/EGA PC version of the game that will enable you to experience Air Warrior in fairly unexciting low-resolution graphics. This is a good way of sussing out the game before parting with any cash, but for ultimate PC Air Warrior experience, you will need to buy the SVGA terminal.



Tally ho chaps! A Spitfire IX dives into the action as battle rages above this small Pacific island. The coloured tags adjacent to the viewing window tell you what each plane is, which side it's on and how far away it is.

Two Minutes *of ducking and diving*



Ooops! The P38 has suddenly gone vertical and will shortly be right behind me. Never mind, the two Fw190's are both busy with each other, so I'll nail them when they're not looking.



He's going down ... must have got his engine ... just finish him off. Better take a quick look behind me first ... Arrgh! That P38... full emergency power, Split-S turn ... I'm hit ...



He was going a bit too fast to turn with me ... one long burst nails him. He must have already been damaged ... now back to base in a hurry. I'm on fire, and that other Fw is looking unfriendly.



Back out on the hunt again, and it looks like there's another potential victim dead ahead. Or he will be if he doesn't manage to duck out of my gunsights sharpish.

Techspec *The game doesn't work with all SVGA cards. It also wants a fair bit of conventional memory, and 2.5Mb of XMS, and it won't work with most memory managers (including the standard MS DOS 5.0 EMM 386) installed.*

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	20Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	×	EGA	×	Tandy	×
VGA	×	SVGA	✓		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	×	Roland	×	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	25MHz				
Minimum memory	640K				
Free RAM required	550K				

Verdict
A great way to fly against live opposition

rating **7**

Once the game is up and running, there's a practice mode, from which to choose a plane and starting airfield, and then fields, planes and skill levels for up to four robot pilots. You can then practise your dogfighting skills against them, and get the hang of the controls.

Air Warrior can be flown with mouse and keyboard, but really needs a decent joystick. Control is precise, and planes respond 'realistically' — a Spitfire feels as I think a Spit should, and not like some recalcitrant arcade game — and there's a lot of attention to detail, like the degree of altitude lost in tight turns, and the effect of carrying too much fuel.

While they might not be in Falcon 3's 'padlock view' league, the view options are intuitive (you can look in any direction simply by using the keys in combination). Graphically speaking, it's pretty good, if not state of the art — more in the Flight Sim 4 mould than the Gourad shading of Strike Commander.

Flying offline is a great way to practise basic air combat maneouvres, learn about gunnery, perfect your Immelman, and get the hang of the all-important view keys. You can start in a Spitfire against a single novice Me109, and progress to flying a Yak 9D versus four aces in Spitfires.

Then, turning on the various reality modes instantly changes the whole ball game — doubling the speed, adding red-outs and black-outs, and allowing you to fly 'outside the envelope' in exactly the way that modern fly-by-wire systems are designed to prevent. It was at this point that I really began to admire the people who actually flew such planes, never mind fought in them.

When you think you're ready, you can join the real action on the host system. If your modem supports MNP5 you will have to disable it; it upsets the Air Warrior host. You also need to turn off all those reality modes, which is a shame. A host that supports them is running in America, and is due here later this year.

Once you have signed on to the On-line system with your credit card number, then worked yourself through the menus to get to the Air Warrior host, select a plane and hit the Fly button, start the engine (or engines) and take off into the wild blue yonder.

Radio messages should then appear from other pilots, scrolling up at the bottom of your screen, often plaintive cries for help or warnings of impending attack. A look at your radar will show where the battle is.

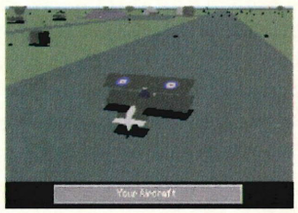
The first thing I found was that unless you are a professional fighter pilot, or have hitherto unheard of natural aptitude, you will be shot down, several times, before you get your first kill. As you improve, you'll be able to watch them outmanoeuvring you, and maybe see how they did it. Finally, you will start winning in the occasional dogfight, and before you know it you will be up with the pack.

If you aren't the fighter pilot type, you could always try bombing. This might involve sneaking in low under the radar to strike at an oil refinery, attacking an airfield in a B17, flying in a troop transport full of paratroops.

The main thing is that you can never stand still in Air Warrior; unlike a computer-driven simulation, everyone is improving, learning new tricks, honing their skills. If you want to stay at the top, you have to work at it. Personally, I think it's an absolutely outstanding game, marred by a few irritating, largely technical, niggles. If you can afford the online costs involved then it's an experience I'd recommend to any flight sim enthusiast.

■ Ken Haylock

Alternatively...



Dogfight
Microprose, £44.99
Rated 5, Issue 20
Dogfight could best be described as an example of everything Air Warrior isn't. The graphics, controls, game dynamics and flight models all leave something to be desired, while the animations and external views are quite pretty. Like Air Warrior, it offers you the chance for head to head combat over a modem link, but only for two players.



Falcon 3.0
Spectrum Holobyte, £49.99
Rated 9, Issue 4
This hyper-realistic F-16 sim comes highly recommended indeed. You are just a pilot here, but you do have access to a wealth of useful options such as wingmen, ongoing campaigns, even tutuorial flights if you wish. Although the graphic quality of the game is a touch arguable, there's no doubting its immense playability.



Title	**Battle Isle 93**
Publisher	**Blue Byte**
Contact	**(0727) 868005**
Price	**£25.95**

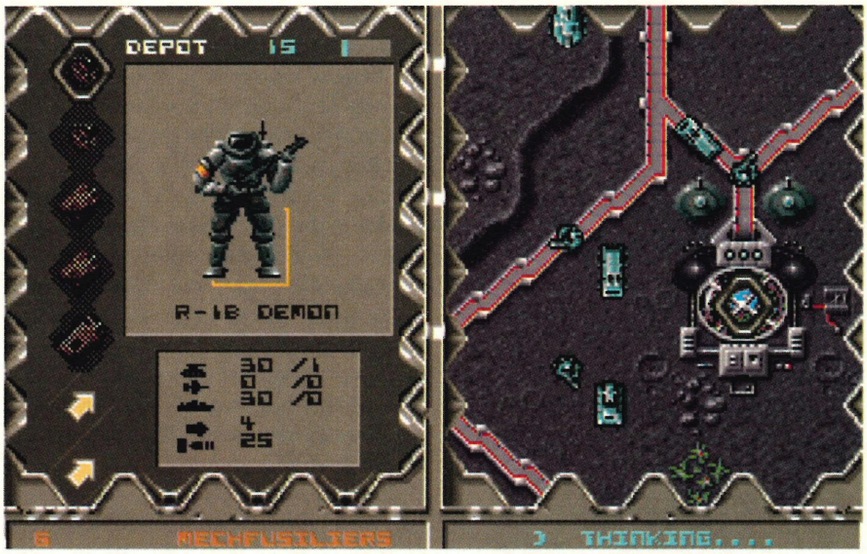
Battle Isle 93

Battle Isle 93 is essentially a revamped version of the original, with new maps (battles), improved weaponry, and parts of the engine and intelligence system used in the recent Historyline game. So why a review of what amounts to a mission disk, in all but name?

Mostly because it's a cracking piece of hex-based strategy game design, at less than a premium game price. Well presented, but simple, it's kept me absolutely hooked for the past two weeks.

It's a self-contained game, and doesn't require the original to play. There are 24 new one-player levels of all different shapes and sizes, and eight two-player levels. The main differences in the one-player levels are a new scenario, revamped weaponry, and landscapes with new hazards and pitfalls; otherwise the main features of Battle Isle have been retained.

In the original Battle Isle, play took place on 32 sunny islands. In this version, the location has switched to the Moon of Chromos — hence the rather mean and moody pictures on this page. Your sole opponent is to wipe out your opponent: computerised or human. You move your on-screen characters by issuing orders which the 'troops' then carry out, and the vertical split-screen means that when playing with a friend, you can both make your turns simultaneously.



One of the first things to capture is a factory from which you can build or repair units. Selecting the info icon shows what troops are available, their state of health and their fighting abailities.



The split screen can be used to take on the computer or a live opponent. The yellow outlines show where I can move the unit I've selected, given the terrain.

Playing the computer was more than challenging; it had that simple, addictive hook to it that meant I just couldn't leave until I'd finished a battle. Interruptions were likely to be met with absent-minded dismissals or snarls. This got worse once I was past the first six levels or so. The gameplay is a good mixture of speed and thoughtfulness at the same time — there's no looking through charts and tables, all the information you need, be it a map overview, game stats, troop abilities, etc, can be found by selecting a troop unit on screen.

There's also plenty of variety in terms of new equipment, which is introduced as you progress, but the main thing is that even after succeeding with one of the harder levels, there was no guarenteed victory — no sure-fire strategy — when I replayed earlier levels. You get to know how to exploit the terrain, and how much hardware you're going to face, but it's still going to be a hard fight.

The main weakness of any computer intelligence is that it can be predictable. Battle Isle 93's brain is good, but it's not



When it's time for the bullets to fly, whichever side initiates the attack drops into a simple animated combat sequence.

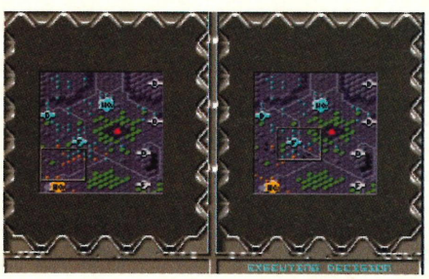
that good. For example, the computer will tend to converge on a weak unit, so a suicide squad can tie up enemy troops very neatly. More importantly, the way the game works is that your troops gain ratings for successful battles. An experienced platoon will make mincemeat of a platoon of raw recruits. So, it's vital to get your successful troops back to a depot and back to full strength. The computer is not so hot on this, preferring to build new units, which become cannon fodder against seasoned troops.

Because the computer usually has the odds massively stacked in its favour, geographically and in terms of military and manufacturing might, some levels occasionally degenerate into a massive test of endurance. Not only that, but this computer jus' don't know when to quit — you have to fight to the bitter end to win. My only other criticism is that the sound could be a bit more interesting (thank God you can turn the in-game music off).

Playing the computer is one thing, but I've had most fun using the split-screen mode to play against someone else. Of course, you can both see what the other is doing, but it's really too quick to keep track of and as you have to register your moves and attacks at the same time, this makes little tactical difference.

It's the playability of the two player mode that makes all the difference. Battle Isle 93 has a fundamentally strong strategy game design which is always going to make extra levels value for money. But the two-player option extends the life of the game immeasurably.

John Bennett



To get an overview of the state of the campaign, you can zoom out to the map view.

TechSpec *There's nothing special that springs to mind as essential for Battle Isle 93, other than VGA and 580K of base memory. There is also a special mono laptop mode.*

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	580K				

Verdict Great value strategic gameplay, with good two player option

rating **7**

SUMMER'S HERE

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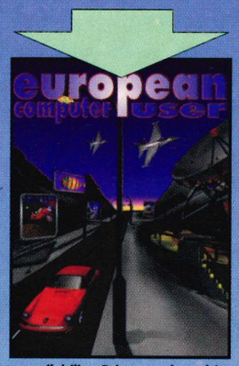
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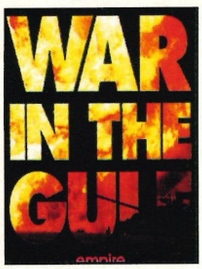
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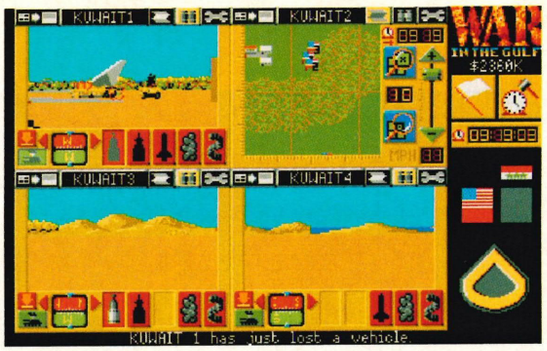
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PC REVIEW JULY 93



Title	**War In The Gulf**
Publisher	**Empire**
Contact	**(081) 343 7337**
Price	**£34.99**



In battle, use of the quadrant view is essential as you're forced to keep track all units simultaneously.

War in the Gulf

The sequel to Pacific Islands, War In The Gulf pits a crack unit of M1 tanks against invading Iraqi forces in Northern Kuwait

War In The Gulf is the third release from Empire using the game engine developed for Team Yankee. If you want to label it, the game can be termed a battlefield simulation: a war game with 3D shoot 'em action, and a tank simulation without the realism.

For those of you who aren't familiar with the original program, Team Yankee (and Pacific Islands, its sequel) gave the player control over four groups of four vehicles, with each group being controlled simultaneously by a set of icons through a quadrant or split-screen windowing system. All the action is resolved and displayed in real time, and as the tanks don't fire by themselves you've got to jump from one unit to the other, firing off Sabot shells and planning unit movements. Unlike MicroProse's M1 Tank Platoon, these screens are not meant to simulate the "inside" of a tank, but hope to simulate the experience of "being" inside a tank on the battlefield.

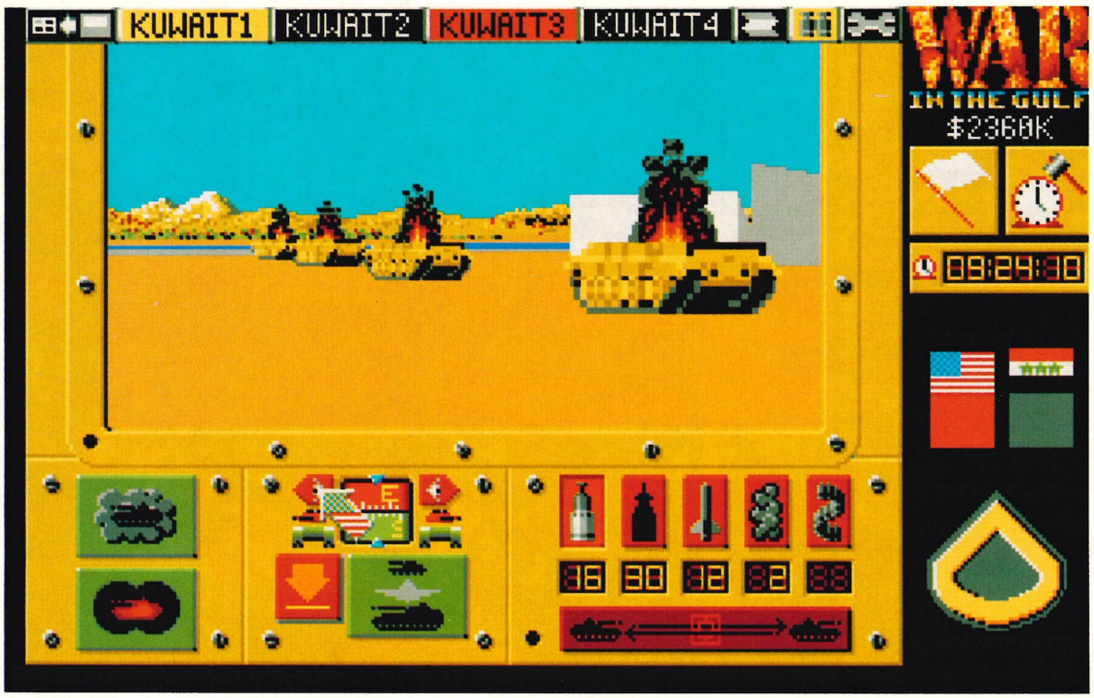
WITG is set against the backdrop of a fictional future gulf war. Set in 1995, after US troop withdrawals, the Iraqis have mounted another surprise attack on Kuwait. After swiftly overpowering local resistance, Republican Guard divisions have taken two islands that are Kuwait's most important offshore assets. With only 16 vehicles, some hefty spending money and your wits, you've got the job of recapturing enemy-held territory.

Like Pacific Islands, WITG has 25 missions that form the basis of the campaign. This means that there are 25 battles between you and victory and you've got to win all of them. Unfortunately, it doesn't start by being easy on the player. If you're a novice it's going to be a difficult, long-term challenge right from the first battle. Don't expect an easier ride if you've played Team Yankee or Pacific Islands either, as it's still all of the above.

WITG has a tutorial mode to take you through the basics of the game before you get into serious action. You are directed around a preset course, where you learn to identify objects and familiarise yourself with the icons and vehicle controls.

When you're confident enough, it's time to choose the battle option. Before this serious tank-trundling, the option screens

Wide screen action as unit Kuwait One storms the defences of an Iraqi-held town.

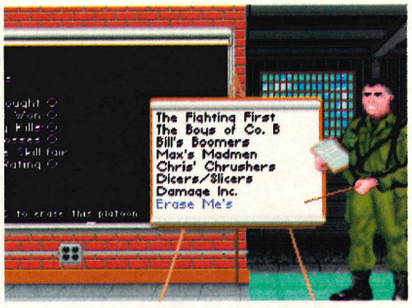


The Republican Guard have captured Bubiyan and Failaka islands. Team Kuwait has been ordered to spearhead the assaults to retake them. Once these two fall, the gateway is open to Northern Kuwait ...

Alternatively...



Pacific Islands
Empire, £34.99
Rated 7, Issue 7
The forerunner to War in the Gulf, Pacific Islands was a bigger, better version of the original Team Yankee. Set on the Yama Yama atoll, North Korea has overrun a NATO communications base and the US responds by sending "Team Pacific", a small armoured task force. WITG is almost like this in every respect.



M1 Tank Platoon
US Gold, £14.99
On the other hand, this 3D tank sim is still a challenge. You control a unit of four tanks (as opposed to four units of four) and take command of the individual crew positions. M1's strength lies in its realism with polygon graphics, air strikes and artillery support. It may take a while longer to get to grips with but it's a lot more fun.

allow you to configure your weapons, buy more armour and select the area of attack. The island of Failaka for example, is split into three separate enemy-held "squares", and each must be conquered before you can move on to the next island and then the mainland.

Next up, the briefing screen shows a map of the selected area, your immediate mission objectives and possible enemy locations. You can also call in artillery bombardments and smoke screens which can often turn the tide of many battles. But all this preparation will be for nought if your battle-tactics aren't up to scratch.

So now forget the stats and worries of military management, it's time for the real business of the heroic liberation of a nation. The visuals are sprite and polygon based, while the background has been accurately mapped, although this flat desert terrain has more than its fair share of towns, villages and oases.

The split-screen control method takes a lot of getting used to, but practice makes it progressively easier. At first, I found myself relying just on the full screen view, but as the quadrant view is the secret to well-managed campaign coordination, it's best to persevere and learn how to use it.

As well as having night-based battles where in infra-red everything is a rather fetching shade of green, each mission is subtly different. There is no single way to win a battle, but many possible approaches. I found that I had to update my strategies constantly as the battle progressed, while the computer was adjusting its response. WITG is far from being a turkey shoot and this digital Saddam isn't going to be such a pushover.

Unlike other sims, your forces also don't get automatically replaced after each battle. Come out badly in the first battle and you may have serious hardware problems when it comes to the next.

So, although you only have to take two islands, push on to the mainland, capture the oilfields and push the Iraqis back to the border, it should take you a frustratingly long time. If you want a game you can beat within a week, this isn't it.

However, War in the Gulf offers nothing strikingly new when it's compared to its two earlier incarnations. It is a pity that Empire hasn't taken this opportunity to update the game engine. If it had made use of different vehicles, or naval and air support, WITG could have been a very good game indeed. Air strikes made a significant contribution to the actual Gulf War itself, and they would have added a welcome extra dimension to the game as well. Instead, the mechanics of the game engine have remained practically the same.

As a result, WITG is rated lower than its predecessor. It is fast-paced and absorbing, admittedly, but it is essentially a repackaged Pacific Islands, in the desert this time. If you've played the previous game, you've been there before.

■ Dean Evans

Techspec ***WITG makes no real demands on your system at all. It comes on a single 3.5" disk and runs on any PC compatible with DOS 3.0 and above. Although you can use a joystick, Empire (and myself) recommend mouse control for the best results.***

Disk requirements						
	High density			✓		
	Hard disk only			✓		
	Space taken on hard disk			**2Mb**		
Graphic modes						
	CGA	✗	**EGA**	✓	**Tandy**	✗
	VGA	✓	**SVGA**	✗		
Soundboards						
	Ad Lib	✓	**Roland**	✓	**Sound Blaster**	✓
Control						
	Joystick	✓	**Keyboard**	✗	**Mouse**	✓
Performance						
	Optimum speed			**16MHz**		
	Minimum memory			**550K**		
	Free RAM required			**1Mb**		

rating **6**

Verdict
Fast, difficult and challeng
but not much more than
Pacific Islands in the sand

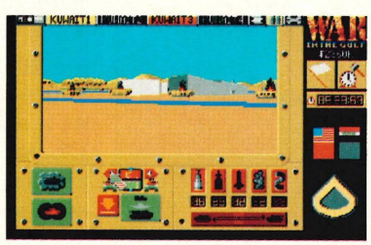
Two Minutes *of Kuwaiti liberation*



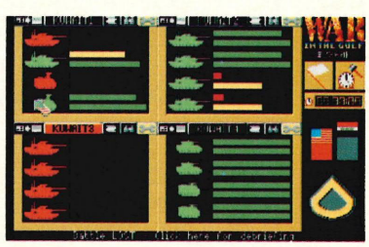
The map/movement screen. My four armoured battalions move quickly through the trees heading towards the town in the centre. Our mission: to recapture the town from the Iraqi forces while limiting civilian damage.



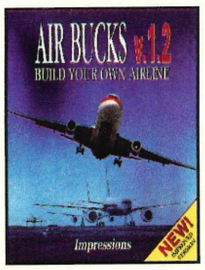
With the destinations set, it's time to get rolling. The quadrant view is generally better for coordinating your overall tank movements while the full screen view is better used for the full scale engagements.



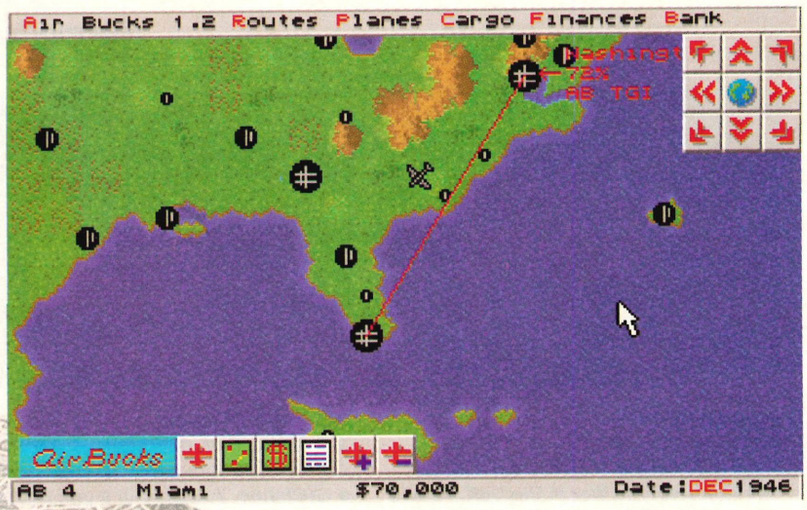
In the heat of battle, it's fast, furious and confusing with fire incoming from all quarters. The assault on the town is going well. Having destroyed the defending Iraqis, I've now got to occupy the area.



The battle is lost because I didn't happen to notice a rogue T-72 slip past the perimeter at my back. Now, with an Iraqi unit in the town, it is deemed no longer occupied and I have failed rather miserably.



Title	**Air Bucks 1.2**
Publisher	**Impressions**
Contact	**(071) 351 2133**
Price	**£34.99**



The game starts in Miami in 1946. First on the agenda is to acquire landing rights at another airport (here Washington) and then it's time to assign your veteran DC3 to the route.

Business simulation games are big, competitive business in their own right. Will Air Bucks 1.2 get off the ground?

Air Bucks 1.2

Once upon a time there was a game called Railroad Tycoon and it was a huge success, although to this day no one has understood quite why. And yet there it was and is, acclaimed, exciting and addictive and, not unnaturally, hugely influential. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, Sid Meier must be feeling awfully flattered.

Which brings us to Air Bucks 1.2, a revamp, you'll be amazed to hear, of Impressions' Air Bucks 1. It's a game in which you have to build up an airline business empire from scratch, constantly expanding and updating your fleet, forever ferrying passengers and cargo to an increasing number of destinations, while all the time fighting off three cut-throat rivals who are not only trying to filch markets from under your nose (Mr Branson will sympathise) but will also seize any opportunity to dive aggressively into the stock market and buy you out.

Bottom right: This screen comes up whenever you purchase a new aicraft, allowing you to juggle the ratios between passengers (first and economy class) and cargo.

The game starts in Miami in 1946. The first item on the agenda is to acquire landing rights at another airport and then it's time to assign your veteran DC3 to the route. You'll need to look for other routes immediately if you want to keep ahead of the opposition. The ticket prices on each of your routes need to be set, and then checked at regular intervals to maintain profit margins, keeping in mind factors such as fluctuating oil prices. The control over detail is impressive, but I'm not sure whether it's the right kind of detail.

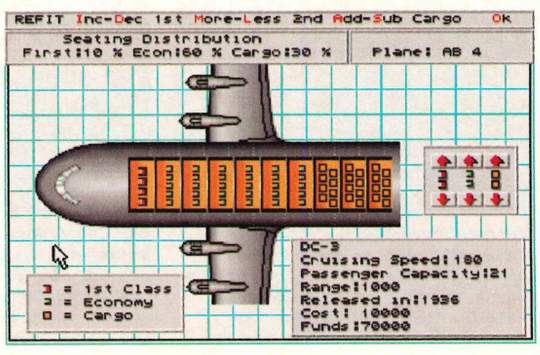
As an example, take the crucial question of which operations are left to the player to control, and which to the computer. In Railroad Tycoon, you lay a line, buy a train, work out the right cargo and set it running. In Air Bucks 1.2, you do much the same, but then you have to decree the ticket price, establishing the optimum financial return by trial and error.

I'm quite prepared to believe that the economic model is as accurate as is claimed, but the ensuing input required from the player unbalances the game, giving it too much the flavour of a detailed business simulation: the action spans a period of 40 years and ticket prices fluctuate in apparently monthly cycles. This means you have to check every price on every route 480 times in the course of each game, which is going to tax your patience horrendously.

I'd prefer Air Bucks to take a somewhat larger view, leaving you to make up the shortfall in your revenues by planning new routes and trade wars, not by fiddling with the paperwork. Economically it's much less accurate, but who cares? It's the gameplay that counts.

It would be almost impossible for anyone to design a business strategy game and not be influenced by Railroad Tycoon. The problem is that any imitation is bound to be judged to a high standard. AirBucks 1.2 isn't a bad game; it's just that in any comparison it's going to come off second best.

■ Simon Shaw



Techspec

Manufacturers' recommendation is for a 16MHz 386SX or faster, and a Microsoft-compatible mouse.

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

rating **5**

Verdict
A good business simulation, but emphasis on unnecessary detail hampers gameplay

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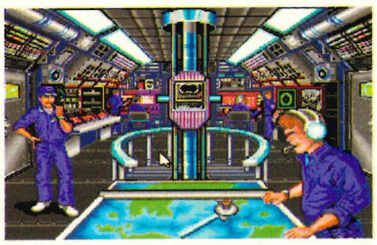
We'd like to be able to review every game in depth, but with this month's bumper crop of releases we just couldn't find the space. Reviews Extra aims to cover the games that missed out on the big time.

If there's one thing you can rely on apart from a Volkswagen, it's that at least four Hit Squad titles will arrive each month. This month has been no exception. So, if you're operating on a budget, look out for these one-disk wonders in your local stockists or call the Hit Squad direct on (061) 832 6633.



First up this month is Accolade's The Cycles (£12.99), an EGA motor cycle racing game. The Cycles has the look and feel of Accolade's previous game Grand Prix, but this time you take control of a fast 500cc bike competing on some of the toughest tracks on the international circuit. You can race single races or plunge headlong into the season option, where you get to act like Wayne Rainey and compete on every track from Laguna to Le Mans.

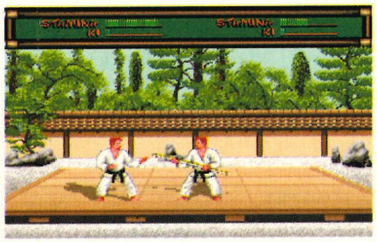
Against the likes of F1GP, The Cycles shows its age, but there haven't been many bike sims around to date and if you fancy leaning into a corner or seven then this might be worth a look.



Submarine games, on the other hand, have always been for the patient, and 688 Attack Sub (£12.99) is no exception.

Commanding either a US Los Angeles or Soviet Alfa Class sub, you can ambush enemy convoys, duel other hunter/killer submarines and strike at inland targets. There is a lot of hiding and waiting around and the action is little more than sporadic. But as this sort of thing used to happen in all those old black and white WW2 films, it's an integral part of the game. Overall, 688 Attack Sub has aged well, but check out Silent Service II from MicroProse as an alternative.

Back on dry land, it's time for a little digital violence. With Budokan (£12.99) you can try your hand at



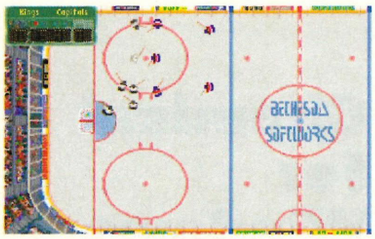
the martial arts, including Karate, Kendo, Nunchaku and Bo. In the practice section you will kumite or spar against instructors and you can choose to fight any discipline, matching Karate with Kendo or perhaps Karate with Bo. All this practice will prepare you for the championship part of the game where your combat skills will be tested to the limit. You must match your skills against advanced students in many disciplines and you will get to see weapons and techniques that are not used in practice. Budokan has a lot of depth and to my mind is is well worth its new budget price.

At the other end of the excellence scale is WWF Wrestlemania (£9.99). If you've seen them on TV, now you can control your favourite American wrestler. Fight with Hulk Hogan, Slam The Ultimate Warrior on to the canvas and give Sergeant Slaughter a pasting. It's all here. The pre-bout threats and the razzamatazz. This game obviously sought to cash in on the popularity of the coin-op and in comparison WWF Wrestlemania is a poor attempt. I can think of much better ways to spend both your time and your money because this game is really only enjoyable if you're an ardent WWF fan.



Staying with brutal American sports we come to Tom Landry's Strategy Football (£34.99, Merit Software). Unlike Mike Ditka's Ultimate Football and Front Page Sports Football, this is, as its name suggests, a much more strategy-based affair. If you're a dedicated fan of US football and are deeply in love with stats and numbers then this could be for you. However, as TLSF doesn't give you the option to control your players on the field it might put a host of people off. In fact, the arcade section where you watch your team execute the plays you have chosen can be switched off. This proves that TLSF is not

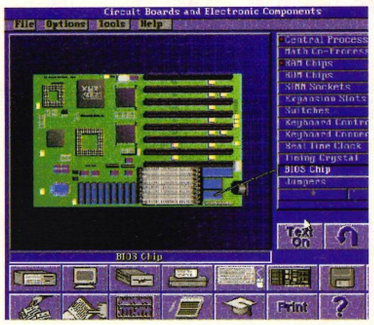
interested in arcade action and if you purely want to coach I'd suggest that you'd be better off buying one of the two games mentioned earlier and just play with the arcade section disabled. All in all there is little to recommend Tom Landry's Strategy Football and it offers little in the way of competition to the other better gridiron sims. Either plump for Front Page or Ditka or just wait around for the promising Microprose version (previewed in Issue 20).



Next, we move swiftly along from the astroturf to the ice with Wayne Gretzky Hockey 3 (£30.99, US Gold, (021) 625 3366). This latest Gretzky outing has two views (an overhead and a three-quarters view), penalties, nice player animation and sampled speech. Graphically it looks very good, but the lack of a season option pulls the whole thing back a point or two. If you're a hockey fan and you're looking for a really good simulation of your favourite sport, keep looking.



On the quieter side, Oxford Softworks (0993 823463) have come up with a games compendium entitled 10 Intelligent Strategy Games (£34.99). This package has all the old board game veterans including Chess, Draughts, Backgammon and Othello. The engines (the way the computer responds to your moves) for each game have been individually designed to be as challenging as possible but are all accessed with the same simple mouse driven interface. Don't expect to find any bitmapped explosions here, these are games that are meant to exercise the mind, not the joystick arm.



ComputerWorks is a high-tech tour guide to the world of computers (see this month's News section). Using drawings and animated graphics, ComputerWorks allows you to explore different subjects from the history of computing to the inner workings of a notebook. If your experience of computers is limited ComputerWorks can take you through the workings of drives (optical, tape and disk), monitors, keyboards, motherboards and other such digital oddities.

ComputerWorks is beautifully presented and easy to use with a pop-up notepad, quiz sections and on-line help features. If you're curious about the way computers work, but are put off by the jargon in the hefty literature and manuals, ComputerWorks is an easy, entertaining introduction to your PC's innards. (ComputerWorks is available from Guildsoft 0752 606200 at £59.99 + VAT + £5 P&P.)



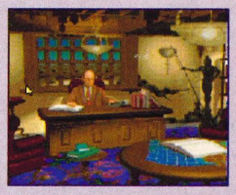
Lastly and briefly we come to Super Cauldron from Titus. You must help Zmira the friendly witch find her lost magic powers in a world haunted by jumping pumpkins, slimy bats and other bewitched creatures. Super Cauldron is a cute actio adventure game, full of surprise.

Reviewed this issue

Syndicate	9
Prince of Persia 2	7
Air Warrior	7
Battle Isle 93	7
Eye of the Beholder III	6
War in the Gulf	6
Freddy Pharkas Frontier	
Pharmacist	5
Terminator 2029	5
Protostar	5
Maelstrom	5
Airbucks	5
Chess Maniac	4
Prehistorik	2

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.



Strike Commander
Origin, £49,99

More of a flight game than a flight sim, SC combines mercenary dogfighting and the thrill of fast jets. Great fun, but unless you have a monster machine, you'll stay stuck on the runway.



The 7th Guest
Virgin, £69.99

A visually stunning CD interactive drama, using video footage, SVGA graphics and sampled speech. A must for CD owners, it's the first game to make proper use of CD-ROM.



X-Wing
LucasArts/US Gold, £45.99

The official Star Wars game combines the challenge of a good flight simulator with the excitement of a shoot 'em up. It looks great, it's fun and it will keep you entertained for weeks, if not months.



Lemmings 2 – The Tribes
Psygnosis, £39.99

Those wayward critters are back again, and this time there are 12 different tribes, each with their own skills. At least as addictive as the original Lemmings, this superlative puzzle-game should keep you up into the wee small hours.

Shareware reviews

This month Sam Mackenzie gets to grips with drums, chess, spreadsheets, molecular modelling, spell checking and space invaders

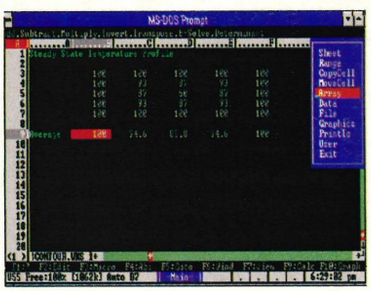
As Easy As

As Easy As is a very well established shareware program which is extremely well maintained and well supported, and has now been updated to version 5.5. It is not only highly regarded in shareware circles but stands up pretty well when compared to commercial DOS spreadsheets.

A spreadsheet is often thought of as an extended calculator and just a number crunching facility, but this is just the tip of the iceberg. In fact, As Easy As is a useful tool for analysing, manipulating and creating reports about any kind of data and can produce attractive informative graphs as well.

As Easy As started out (in 1985) closely modelled on Lotus Development's expensive market leader, 1-2-3 (As Easy As 1-2-3 – geddit?).

Over the years, As Easy As has increasingly developed a style of its own and has sometimes offered features that 1-2-3 lacked — for example it supported a mouse before 1-2-3 did, and can let you view two graphs at a time. One of its main advantages is that it can be run on a 384K system and even on a floppy-only machine as long as it has a 720K drive. Despite being compact, it still offers all the functionality you require for dealing with financial and business data and has more facilities for scientific purposes than many other programs on the market. Its grid can be up to 8,192 rows by 256 columns.

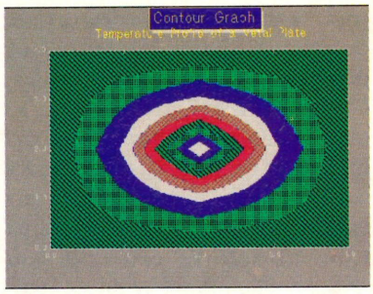


If you have ever used a DOS version of 1-2-3 you could probably use a lot of the program's features without needing to consult a manual. If you have never used any spreadsheet before or seen someone else working with one you might feel a little lost — since there is no tour or tutorial included in the package.

This is a bit of a shame because a spreadsheet is very easy to use once you get started but just having an empty grid and commands in a drop down menu can be rather daunting. Luckily, beginner's guides to spreadsheets in general, and As Easy As in particular, are readily available and there is a sample application included in the documentation of the registered version.

With the shareware version there is online help for each command and facility which you can also print out. A bound paperback book of about 200 pages, plus a supplement covering the new features in the latest version, is supplied with the registered version.

New features in version 5.5 include a revised user interface, two new information screens for hardware details and graph and printer settings and a new scientific graph type, the contour graph, which adds to an already comprehensive selection of



charts. As-Easy-As now also has a direct ability to plot functions — which is quite handy for teachers and students.

More facilities for statistical data analysis are now included and another of the major enhancements is to the database where the form facility has been made more versatile and the number of fields that can be defined increased from 20 to 50. All this makes As Easy As excellent value for money.

Supplier:	*Shareware Marketing*
Tel:	*(0297) 24088*
Product code:	*SP7*
Price:	*£2.50 plus £4 per order handling plus VAT*
Registration Price:	*£45 plus VAT*
Registration package:	*Manual*
Minimum Specification:	*CGA, VGA, EGA, SVGA, keyboard, mouse, any PC with 384K RAM*
Disk space:	*667K*

Product
As Easy As

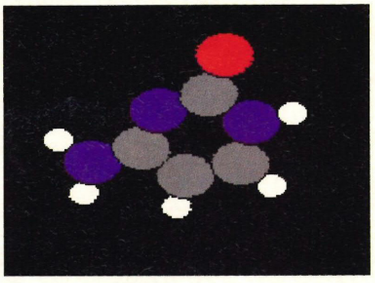
shareware tech spec 1993

Chemical for Windows

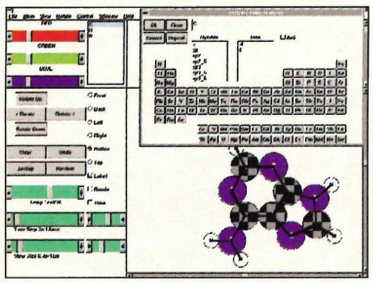
One of the exciting things about shareware is the incredible range of applications that you can find — from knitting patterns to simulated nuclear contamination clouds — and I'm not exaggerating.

Chemical for Windows is a molecular modelling program and in its Version 1 form it is in the public domain and this means that you don't have to pay anything for using this sophisticated program unless you would like an improved version or the source code for it.

You can build molecules by choosing atoms from a period table display and then dragging them together. When you drag one atom on top of another a dialogue box appears which



offers you a choice of orbitals to use to bond the two together. You can quickly create water simply by picking oxygen and a couple of hydrogen atoms, dragging them together and selecting the default bonds. The angles of the bonds within the molecules are accurate as are the sizes of the atoms. This is fun up to a point but you quickly



realise that Chemical isn't as sophisticated as it might be. There is minimal documentation supplied and as far as I can discover there is no way to get rid of an atom once you have added it, no way of listing the bond details of an atom already in place and no way of changing bonds other than by dragging the atoms apart and rebonding them.

You also have to select an atom with the appropriate set of orbitals for the molecule that you are trying to construct — for example, there is no point trying to build methane starting from a ground state carbon atom. As there seems to be no way of modifying the orbitals available for bonding after the atom has been selected this is a bit of a nuisance. Even so, it does force you to think about the nature of the molecule that you are trying to build, I suppose.

Version 1 is clearly only the beginning and there are a number of features that are half implemented, some which I couldn't get to work and some which even crashed the machine — but it is still worth having. There is also a 3D molecule viewer that allows you to inspect any molecules that you have made. Recommended if you are interested in chemistry at A level and just beyond stage. Chemical for DOS is also available direct from the author.

Supplier:	*PDSL*
Tel:	*(0892) 663298*
Product code:	*3408*
Price:	*£4.65 (1 disk)*
Registration Price:	*$20/$30*
Registration package:	*Latest version/ source code*
Minimum Spec:	*EGA, VGA,SVGA, keyboard, mouse, Windows capable machine*
Disk Space:	*320K*

Product Chemical for Windows

shareware tech spec 1993

WinSpell

Many users find that their requirements for word processing using Windows is so slight that it can be met by Write which is included as part of Windows — if only it had a spelling checker. WinSpell is a low cost shareware spelling checker for Windows that will work with virtually any Windows or DOS application running under Windows.

Its standard mode of operation is to check what you type as you type it. Any misspelling is flagged by a beep and/or the active window flashes for a moment. Often the beep is enough to let you correct a mistyped word but if it really is something that you don't know how to spell then you need to ask WinSpell to make a guess. This is where the system is disappointing. It takes far too long to make a guess and it doesn't let you paste the guess into the application that you are working on. You have to type it out. This coupled with its poor guessing of misspelled words makes it a bit irritating.

The main problem with the first version of WinSpell was that its dictionary was not very large — only 50,000 words. In Version 2.0 this has more than doubled to 110,000. As with the earlier version, you can add words to its dictionary from a document or by typing them at the keyboard. WinSpell 2.0 runs in the background and therefore does not slow down other applications. Another new feature is that it will now notify you of consecutively typed words.

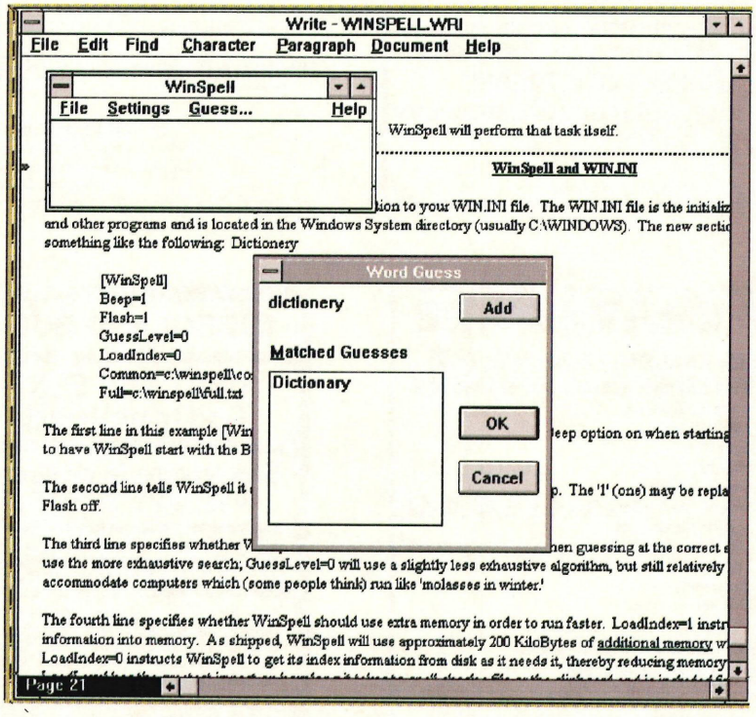
You can also use WinSpell to spell check text copied to the clipboard or .WRI, ie, Write documents. In this case, all you are presented with is a list of misspelled words without any idea where they might be in the document. Clearly the best way to use it is to spell check as you go along even if this does threaten your flow of thought.

As long as you are reasonably good at spelling and don't need to look words up and as long as you are prepared to sift out American spellings as you go along, WinSpell is usable but I wouldn't describe it as the perfect solution.

Supplier:	*Omicron*
Tel:	*(0702) 701391*
Product code:	*WIN334*
Price:	*£3.50*
Registration Price:	*$30*
Registration package:	*Latest version*
Minimum Spec:	*EGA, VGA,SVGA, keyboard, mouse, Windows capable machine*
Disk Space:	*1.3Mb*

Product WindSpell Version 2

shareware tech spec 1993



SDI2040



This sounded promising – "a VGA version of the original Space Invader arcade game". The original Space Invader game looks very simple by today's standards but a good implementation of it could offer the addiction factor that many games lack no matter how good they look.

SDI2040 is a VGA implementation and it has Sound Blaster sound effects. It should be great, but in fact it is a bit of a washout. The reason is that while it looks good, and even sounds good, it is mostly unplayable.

The speed of the alien attack and the defending ship varies according to the speed of the machine that you are running it on. A 486-33 makes it zip along so fast you can't keep up but on anything less than a 386-25 it is unresponsive. This is a serious mistake for any game.

In addition, while the sound effects are very good there is no music to heighten the tension. There are also no shields to hide behind. If you have a Sound Blaster card then the sound effects do improve the game, but whatever you do don't play this and think that you have played classic Space Invaders because you haven't.

Supplier:	*PDSL*
Tel:	*(0892) 663298*
Product code:	*3513*
Price:	*£4.65*
Registration Price:	*$2.5/$5*
Registration package:	*Latest version/ source code*
Minimum Spec:	*VGA, Sound Blaster, keyboard, 386-25 or faster*
Disk Space:	*390K*

Product SDI2040

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Balistix (1/C/E/V)
Battle-X (1/V)
Bolo Adventures I & II (1/E/V)
Boloball (1/E/V)
Catacomb Abyss (1/E/V)
CD-Man Pacman (1/V)
Chinese Checkers (1/E/V)
Commander Keen - Goodbye Galaxy (1/E/V)
Commander Keen Dreams (1/E/V)
Cosmos Cosmic Adventures (1/E/V)
Crux (1/C/E/V)
Crystal Caves (1/E/V)
Corncob 3D (1/V)
Engineering Jones (1/V)
Fuzzball (1/C/E/V)
Galactix (1/V)
Hollywood Trivia (1/C/E/V)
Hugo House of Horrors (1/E/V)
Hugo II WhoDunIt (1/E/V)
Hugo III Jungle of Doom (1/E/V)
Jill of the Jungle (1/C/E/V)
Kiloblaster (1/E/V)
Lost Stone Mansion (1/E/V)
Mahjong (loads of tile sets) (1/E/V)
Majik Adventure (1/C/E/V)
Major Stryker (1/E/V)
Picture Puzzle (1/E/V)
Pinball (1/E/V)
Robomaze II (1/E/V)
Robomaze III (1/E/V)
Solit300 (1/E/V)
Space Blaster (1/V)
Space Invaders (1/V)
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PC Shareware is "try before you buy" software. If you find a program useful, and intend to use it regularly, you are required to send a separate payment to the author.

KEY

In the brackets the first number is for the number of disks supplied, 1.44 indicates 3.5" High Density. C/E/V is for graphic level supported, either CGA EGA or VGA.

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DrumBlaster



This is a basic drum synthesiser that allows you to play a range of drum sounds using the keyboard. Each key produces one of a set menu of sounds. You can alter the sounds set using the Librarian but this requires you to first capture a sample as a VOC file. To do this, you have to resort either to the demo software included with the Sound Blaster card or find yourself a VOC file recorder/editor. In synthesiser mode you can select one of the sample drum sounds to be used to construct a 12-note scale which can be played on the keys Q to], ie, the second row.

It should be possible to pick out a tune using the synthesiser while playing other drum sounds on the remaining keys, but if this is too difficult you can select one of the pre-prepared music tracks.

There is also a small collection of pre-prepared rhythm tracks—but there is no way to add to these. In other words, DrumBlaster doesn't give you any way of recording and playing back a performance and for me this reduces its appeal. I also found it difficult to control using the keyboard.

If you have used a drum machine then you will know that each drum pad works independently of the others making it easy to keep up a rhythm.

In DrumBlaster's case, there is an interaction between the keys that seems to make it impossible to start a sound until the first one has stopped. In fact, the whole keyboard handling of the program seemed flawed because it was even difficult to alter the tempo using the arrow keys because of a huge response lag.

You need a Sound Blaster card to get much out of this program. It claims also to work with just a basic PC speaker but I couldn't get more than a few unrecognisable squeaks and rasps out of the two machines I tried it on.

In short, good fun but you need to buy the full sequencer, which is promised to be available soon, to record and edit performances.

Supplier:	*Precision Software Publishing*
Tel:	*(0223) 208288*
Product code:	*GA338*
Price:	*£3 (3.5" disk), £2.50 (5.25" disk)*
Registration Price:	*£19.95*
Registration package:	*Updates plus extra sound effects*
Minimum Specification:	*EGA or VGA (256K) Sound Blaster, keyboard, any PC with 512 K RAM*
Disk space:	*934K*

Product
DrumBlaster

shareware tech spec 1993

Power Chess

Supplier:	*Transend*
Tel:	*(0274) 622228*
Product code:	*1440*
Price:	*£2.50*
Registration Price:	*$35*
Registration package:	*Updates, better opening game*
Minimum Specification:	*CGA, EGA, VGA and Hercules, keyboard, 286, 386, 486*
Disk space:	*934K*

Product
Power Chess

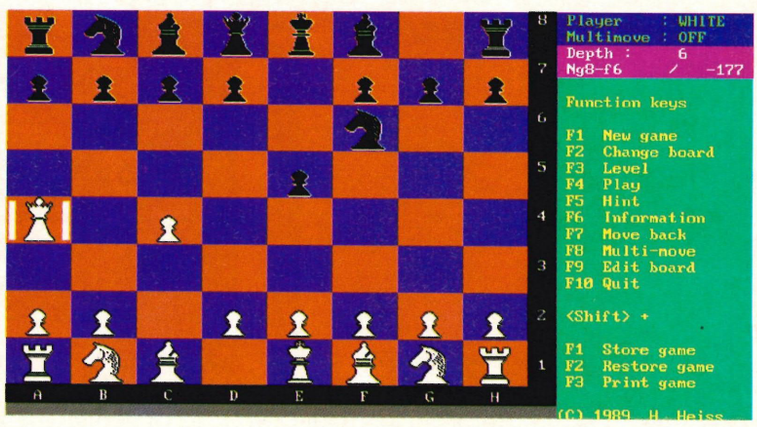
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I'm not a very good chess player but I do like to play. I prefer human opponents simply because they are more fallible and so more likely to miss what I am up to, do it's always a bit of a shock to play against a program and discover just how much your game depends on your opponents' mistakes!

Power Chess is a good and more than basic chess program. It will work with AT (286/386/486) class machines with a CGA/EGA/VGA or true Hercules graphics display of the board with well drawn pieces that are easy to recognise and you can move the pieces using the cursor keys. The only hardware incompatibility I found was that I couldn't run it under Windows.

You can select the amount of time the program has to think — minimum 10 seconds — maximum 10,000 hours. As it thinks, you can follow the course of its analysis as it reports the value of the best move it has found so far. Seeing a high score prepares you for the devastating loss of your queen or some other important piece that you hadn't noticed! Of course, how deeply it thinks in the given time depends on the power of the machine you are running it on. On a 486-33 it managed to look five to six moves ahead using only the minimum 10 seconds. The program recognises all of the standard rules such as en passant, 50 move draw, stalemate, checkmate, etc. It will suggest moves for you, play end game puzzles, save and load games and you can even cheat a little by altering the board positions or by making multiple moves! Its worst feature is that it can be set to announce checkmate in N moves ... which is enough to make anyone resign! The registered version comes with a wider range of opening games.

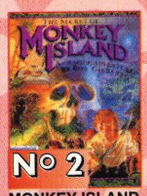
I've no doubt that a chess master would find fault in it but if you are an average player in search of a challenge, or want to improve your game by seeing what the computer would do or suggest, I think you will enjoy Power Chess.



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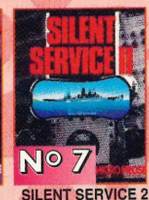
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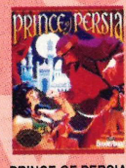
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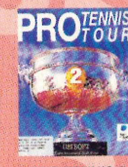
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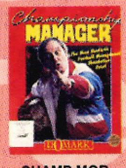
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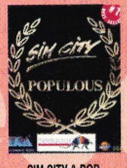
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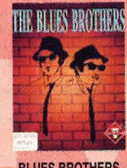
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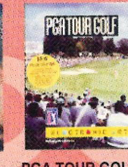
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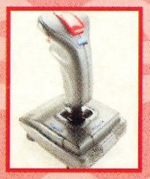
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Ultima Underworld II

In this instalment of the guide to Ultima Underworld II, Robin Matthews takes you through the three later worlds in the game

Part Three: *three later worlds*

By this stage the goblin tower should be complete, the ice world should be virtually finished, and there will be a couple of loose ends from Killorn Keep. You should have found three black gems as follows:

- Goblin tower — in Bourne's Room
- Ice world — in the south-west corner of level two, before the river
- Killorn Keep — in the headless pit on level two

Altara will have given you a quest regarding the listener, and it seems to trigger the next stage of the game. The three gems must be found, warmed and used on the big black gem on level five in the castle) and the listener must be disposed of. Altara will give you the means, and then it's a question of exploring an earlier area of lava walls back in the castle. This area will now open up into the listener's abode. Use the item from Altara and he will be destroyed.

Report this to Altara, speak to the usual people in the castle, and another three worlds will open up. These are substantially more tricky than the earlier worlds and are accessed via the next three facets of the big black gem. All three should now be open, and it is likely that you will go back and forward gradually completing them.



The pits of carnage

This is a combat intensive world spread over three large levels. If you do not have a 'fighter' character, you are well advised to complete the other worlds first.

Krilner will be your first contact; be firm, but also show him mercy. He will give you many useful background details, and will point you at Dorstag at an early stage.

This entire world thrives on combat and the various arenas allow you to accumulate both experience and in some instances hard cash — Josphur is obviously related to fight promoter Don King, but money only plays a small part in Underworld II.



After a number of fights you will be left alone, but until this stage the arenas of earth and water can be the easiest. The arena of fire is tough, unless you have magical fire resistance, and the arena of air is the most impressive of all.

For those less combat orientated, it is wise to develop hit and run tactics, and for real magic users the paralyse spell (an ex por) is a cracker.

Anybody whose name begins with a 'Z' is worth spending some time with — Zogwith will give you an undocumented spell and Zaria some extremely helpful advice. The Dorstag confrontation can safely be left until later, and instead use the stairs in the north-east corner of level one.

Level two is surprisingly large, and by going north and round in a loop you will soon be up to higher things. There are lots of doors to open in this area, so those with lockpick skills or higher magic users will find it a doddle. This will lead to the third 'Z' who is crucial to the game — so take detailed notes. In an adjacent room there is a useful book on potions, but don't dally in this complex.





There should be an unexplored area to investigate in the north-east of level two, but watch out for one big fighter. In some ways he looks worse than he is. Use 'freeze time' (an tym) if you have it, and have lots of healing/mana potions handy. This will take you further down to yet another hard level. Gazers, reapers and others make this a real test. Wands and spells may need to be used and a fight/win/save and rest routine is the best method.

Blog can be a very, very useful ally, so play his games, or if you've come across another colour option in other worlds, this will produce a pleasant response. Check maps carefully to locate the Earth Golem's cave where there are lots of goodies, including 'rel', 'jux' and grav' runes and a jewelled shield. Open the secret door here and watch the Golem's actions. He's fairly shy, so if you keep your distance ranged weapons and spells may work without reprisals.

This may only leave Dorstag, who can be handled in one of several ways. Attacking him outside the arena is the toughest, but 'animal magic' is by far the easiest! Whichever approach is used, success should result in that which you want. The next facet of the big black gem will lead to ...

Talorus

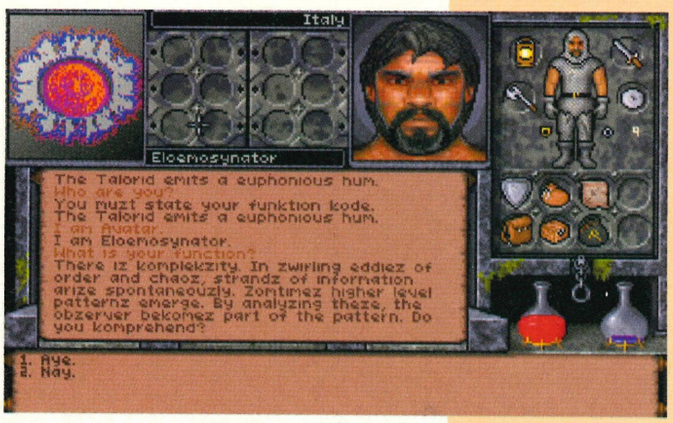
This is the world of the Vorz and, with the exception of the ethereal void areas, is unlike any other world in Underworld II. In Talorus, the scenery, non-playing characters and methods are different and if you approach this world at the end of a long day it can appear over-difficult. The best advice here is to have an early night, gird your loins, sharpen your pencils, polish your helmet and get into a positive frame of mind to tackle this psychedelic dimension.

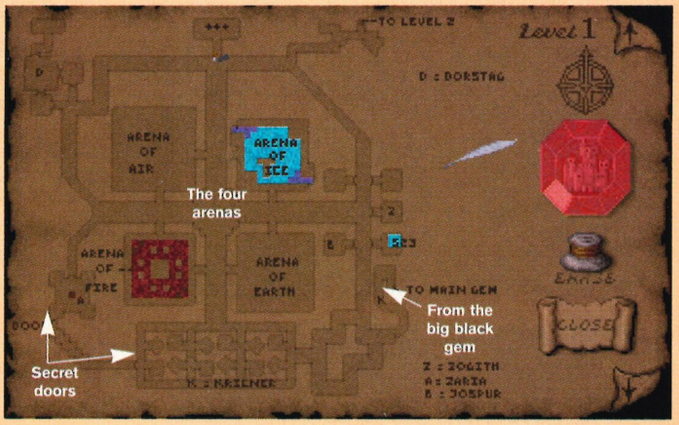
Talorus is set over several levels, but the main level has some important NPCs. Unlike the pits of carnage, conversation is the key, with it being necessary to speak to characters in a certain order.

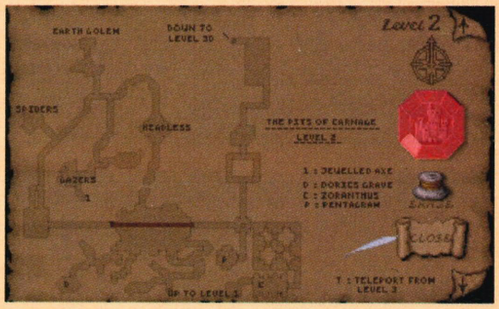
Basically the Talorids have particular functions, and you must find out about the past, the present and the future. Take your time, as some conversations will not be repeated, and do not pick up items willy nilly — if you don't need it at the moment, note where you put it down!

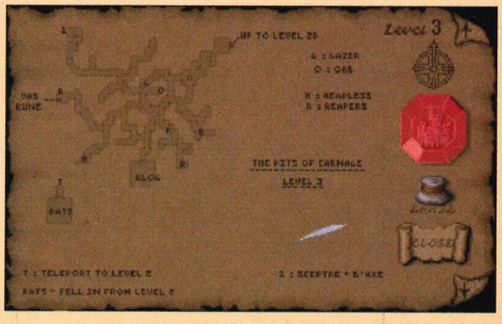
The 'twinkles' at the corridor junctions are teleports to other junctions, but there is another exit leading to another level. The Talorid quest is fairly involved, but revolves around the 'bliy skup' chamber (a joke on the Blue Sky programmers?) and a three part solution. Remember your past, and that the future holds the key, and you'll be OK.

Talorus also holds the item needed for the lady in Killorn Keep, and has some interesting mineral formations that are more than useful elsewhere. The later level should be carefully explored as Underworld II often has hidden secrets.









The Scintillus Academy

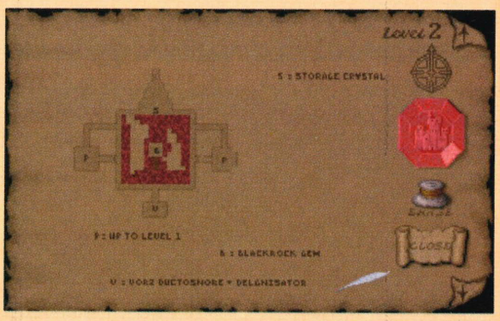
This is by far the hardest of the first seven worlds. It is a multi-level, magic and puzzle orientated world that contains some of the best locations and teasers in any computer game to date. You arrive on level one in a waiting room before the mage's examination room.

Please take note that once in the exam, you have limited mana so make sure you are extremely topped up with food, mana, scrolls and potions (especially 'clear' and 'yellow' — see panel on potions). You can magically restore mana, but you cannot replenish it as normal by a decent rest.

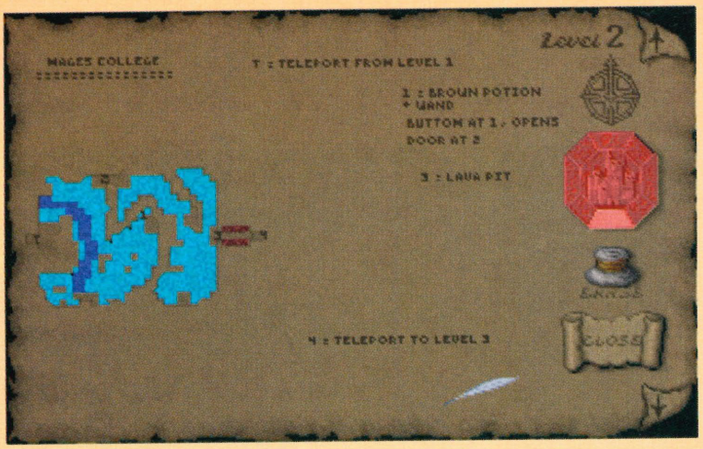
Practise each level regularly using the save facility — the puzzles can normally be solved by both magical and other means, but in the later areas they will require all the mana you can muster.

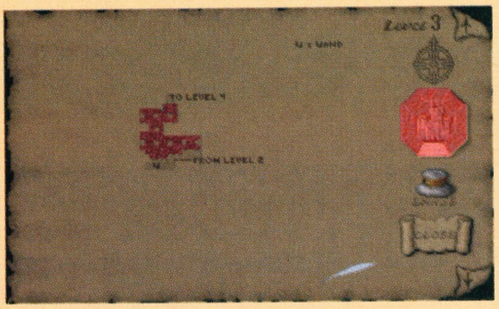
Upon entering the examination proper, you are in a large room with several portcullis and a gold coffer. If you look at the floor you will notice that each portcullis has a pressure plate. Placing the coffer on these will open the gates — one will take you to level two.

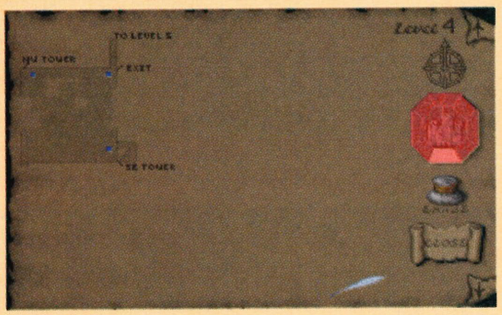
Level two is a tricky ice region, where the tactics perfected in the ice world will be a great help. Refer to



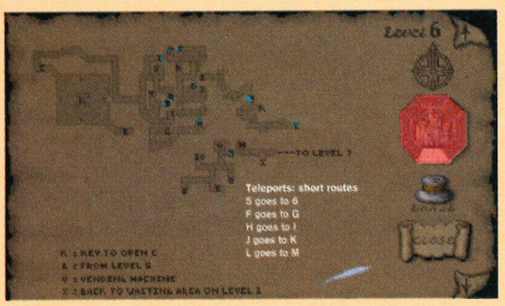


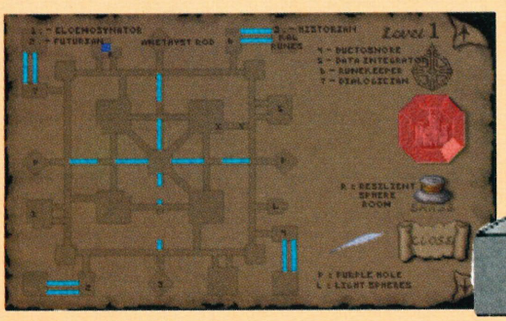












the maps, opposite, but, put simply, the button at (1) opens the gate at (2). At (3) it's all a matter of skilful timing to avoid the squeeze, and the teleport at (4) takes you to level three.

Level three is psychokinesis and terraforming. It has a lava field with a series of columns. On the surrounding walls are a number of buttons, which lower the columns. The object is to manipulate the columns to get to the other side.

Diagram one, below, shows the correct route, but there are also items to be found elsewhere in this region. The technique of 'column jumping' takes some practice, but edge as far forward as you can go and then use the standing jump — press the Shift and J keys. Take a 'master' save before you start jumping, and use other saves when you make a good jump.

Spatial reasoning

Level four of the academy is 'spatial reasoning' and one of the favourites. It's a monster and item-filled level with a real sense of being in a 3D world. You'll need to do a lot of jumping here, but try to avoid the temptation to use magic. After a while you will become properly orientated, but if you are struggling, save, use a flying scroll or spell to get your bearings, and then restore the save game.

There are three towers in the south-east, north-west and north-east corners, with keys on top of the first two. These unlock the doors at the top of the third tower which then teleports you to level five.

Level five consists of a series of levers that presumably open up a door that gives you a key. This in turn opens a portcullis which then takes you to a single room and level six. A far simpler approach here, especially if you have husbanded your mana, is to cast either an open spell on the problem doors or use a portal spell to get round the portcullis.

Level six is a real pain, with lots of teleports bouncing you all over the place. Firstly, negotiate the central complex to get a key which then opens up the teleports. Watch out for the yellow squares, which will bring you all the way back to the examination anteroom (get the hankies out if you do not have a recent save)! To complete level six requires much frustrating trial and error, but the maps here should help you to find the shortest route, although then you might miss out on some of the special items.

Potions and their uses

The potions in Underworld II vary in colour and effect. Here are the 'normal' powers of the more common potions:

Yellow	healing
Red	cure poison
Purple	protection
Brown	speed
Black	invisibility
Clear	restore mana (but note basilisk oil is also clear)

Stay tuned ...

The remaining levels of the academy, the first taste of the ethereal void, and the tomb of Praecor Loth will feature in next month's fourth instalment of the Ultima Underworld II guide.

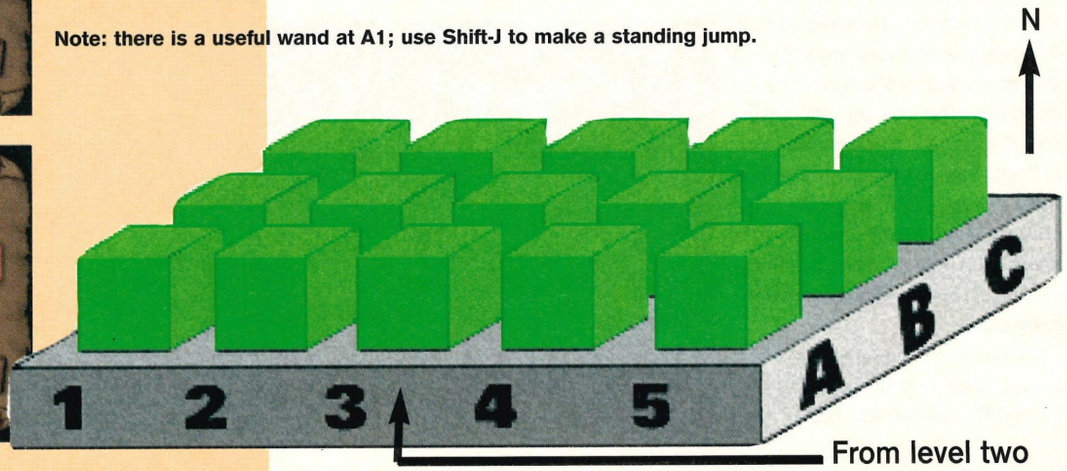


The lava field

Below shows the lava field in diagrammatic form, with the buttons placed to the side of C1, B1, and C5. The sequence to move through the field safely is as follows:

C3, C4, C5 (press button to right)
C3, C2, C1 (press button to left)
C3, C2, B2, A2, (A1 — see below), A3 (jump to exit)

Note: there is a useful wand at A1; use Shift-J to make a standing jump.



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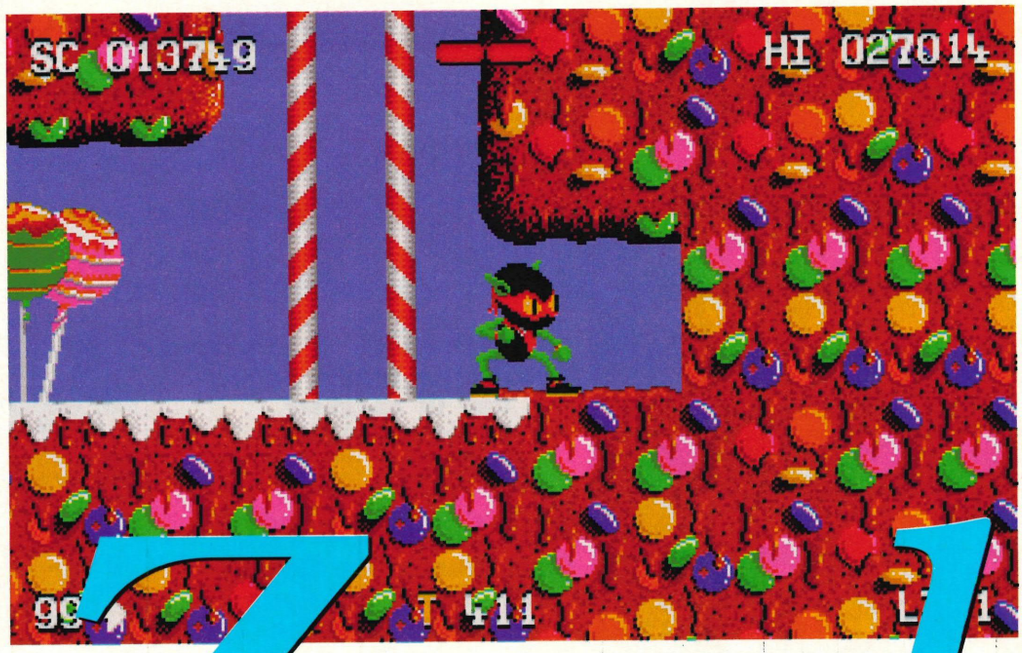
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QED

If you're having trouble with your sword-wielding, ledge-leaping Ninja from the Nth dimension, then these helpful hints from Gremlin should guide you safely through the deadly perils of the various different worlds



Zool

Getting going

After being sucked into a vortex while on his way home, the six worlds that Zool must negotiate require subtly different strategies. Before you start it is worth visiting the options screen, where if things have been moving too fast you can slow down the scrolling or reduce the difficulty level.

At the beginning it's better to take things rather slowly, making sure your jumps are clean and the baddies definitely killed. If you go too fast you can miss the collectable items and slam headlong into the baddies. Be too surefooted and slow and the baddies will just keep on coming. In this game it pays to keep just on moving.

The challenge is to strike the balance between speed and collecting as many points as you can. The only real way to achieve this is through long hard hours of practice. Don't forget, when you finally finish it all, bump up the difficulty level and try it all again.

Sweet world

On the first level, Zool's flying sword attack can destroy some lollipops to gain extra bonuses. The first wall to the right of the second restart point can be punched through to gain a super bonus. Just above the second restart point there is also a vertically moving platform. Jump on this to get to an extra life.

Try to complete level two as easily as possible. If you pick up a shield, move as fast as you can towards the exit. Watch out for large drops (they usually have spiked bottoms).

On the following level, you will encounter a series of boxes with 'hit' written on them. Hit the first and third boxes to gain bonuses. There are two possible ways to defeat this level. You can take on the end boss, in which case the best tactic in dealing with him is to stand at the left of the screen, leaping up to avoid his bombs whilst shooting him as fast as you can.



The second way to defeat the level is to allow your timer to run down to 50, at which point the first right hand wall at the start of the level can be punched through. This lets you into a secret room of bonuses, extra time, two extra lives and an exit to complete the world.

Music world

On level one, look out for small remote controls as they are the restart points for the music world. Use Zool's flying sword attack to destroy the speakers and gain bonuses. Jump up into the bell and you can use it as a shield to get past a lot of baddies: just press fire while inside to break out.

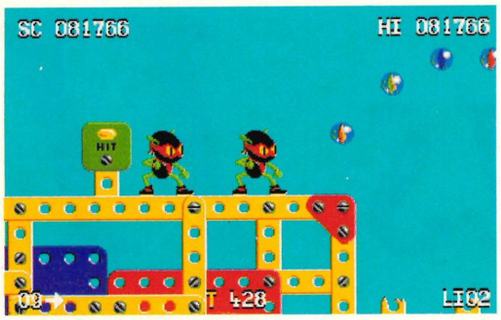
There are two hidden levels. Directly above the first restart point (about a screen above) is an invisible entrance to the first shoot 'em up bonus level. You will find the second shoot 'em up level by playing the Close Encounters tune on the first piano you come to. If you are not too sure what the tune is, use the grey, white, black, red and green notes in that order.

It is important on the next level to be able to use the pianos, so take your time getting used to hitting the right notes. If you make a mistake, jump off the piano and move away and start again.

On the first piano you come across use the brown, yellow, red, orange and green notes to create a large note over the piano and jump on to this to enter a hidden room which has bonuses and a new set of notes. Enter these notes on the same piano – brown, orange, green and dark blue – to gain an extra life.

When you reach the next piano (which is located at the end of the level) enter these notes: red, yellow, light blue and dark blue. Another large note will then appear: jump on this to be carried to the exit.

Try to keep going as fast as possible on level three as you don't have much time. On long runs use Zool's sliding attack to kill the baddies. To kill the boss monster you must shoot the guitar while its eye is open. You must stay near the left edge of the screen dodging the lightning bolts and destroying the fruit that is fired at you.



Fruit world

Watch out for the bananas that act as restart points on level one. You can gain extra bonuses by crouching down and pulling radishes from the ground and also by cutting the tops off some carrots.

Stand as still as you can and continue to destroy falling grapes to replenish health. Try and work your way along the top of the level as near the end you will discover an extra life.

If you find the exit but do not have enough bonuses to complete the level, work your way back and look for a slightly different route.

On level two, punch through the first right hand wall to earn lots of bonus points. Remember to bounce on the can lids in order to get two extra bonuses and gain an extra life.

You will come across a hole filled with bonuses in a V shape. Punch through the left hand wall to accumulate further bonuses.

On level three, punch through the first low right hand wall to get extra bonuses. At the next big left hand wall (the one close to a tree), punch it for even more bonuses. Keep going until you discover a series of fruit cans: bouncing on the lid will propel you up to gain an extra life.

To kill the boss, first of all shoot the alarm clock (which is indestructible) to wake the banana up. When attacked, try to stay to the left of the screen whilst shooting the banana.

If you die while fighting the banana (a likely occurrence), you can get back to him from the last restart point by just running right and shooting as fast as you can. This should take care of all the enemies in between and keep Zool safe.

Remember even with the banana destroyed the alarm clock will remain, so don't get caught out.

Tool world

On the first level, watch out for the blocks of wood which have nails in as these are the restart points for the tool world. The darker shades of wood invariably lead to lots of bonus points.

To locate the next hidden shoot 'em up level, go right from the start of the level until you come to the first wooden platform, take Zool to the top and jump left from the far left hand edge of the wood.

It can be very difficult to accumulate enough bonuses on level two, so try not to miss any you see, especially large groups.

Level three is possibly one of the hardest levels in the game to crack. The best bet is to search the beginning of the level thoroughly for as many bonuses as possible as they become much more scarce the further you progress.

When you finally encounter the boss monster, remember to go for his eyes as quickly as possible. Speed is extremely important here as the drill takes out the ground beneath Zool.

If you've got the necessary energy it can be more than worthwhile to take a couple of hits in order to get several attacks in on the drill.

Toy world

The restart points for the opening level are nice recognisable 'hit' signs. Watch out for low fast moving clouds and tanks which will fire at you. Remember also that you can only stand on the red and green blocks, not the blue or orange ones.

Travel right from the start of the level until you come to the giant bonus panda. If you jump on to the left hand blue column and jump left, you should hit the hidden entrance to access the fourth and final shoot 'em up level.

Level two is very similar to level one. Basically just be careful and remember to use the restart points and you should find this quite a straightforward level.

Be extremely careful on level three when you are thinking about dropping down any gaps as they could well be spiked. At one point, you will arrive at an area containing several very similar looking holes.

Drop down the sixth hole to make useful progress. To destroy the robot boss, shoot at his head, but watch out for when he opens his chest as the robot will most certainly shoot back.

Fair world

Again the restart points are well marked on level one and look similar to those of the same level in toy world. Try to let the hammer monsters hit the base of the bell machine and if you've positioned Zool correctly he will be carried rapidly upwards.

If you come to a dead end on level two, then you might as well hang around awhile and you may well see a balloon come into sight after a few moments which will carry Zool onwards.

Also, if you can't see where to jump next, it's often a good idea to take the biggest jump you can as there may well be a platform some way away.

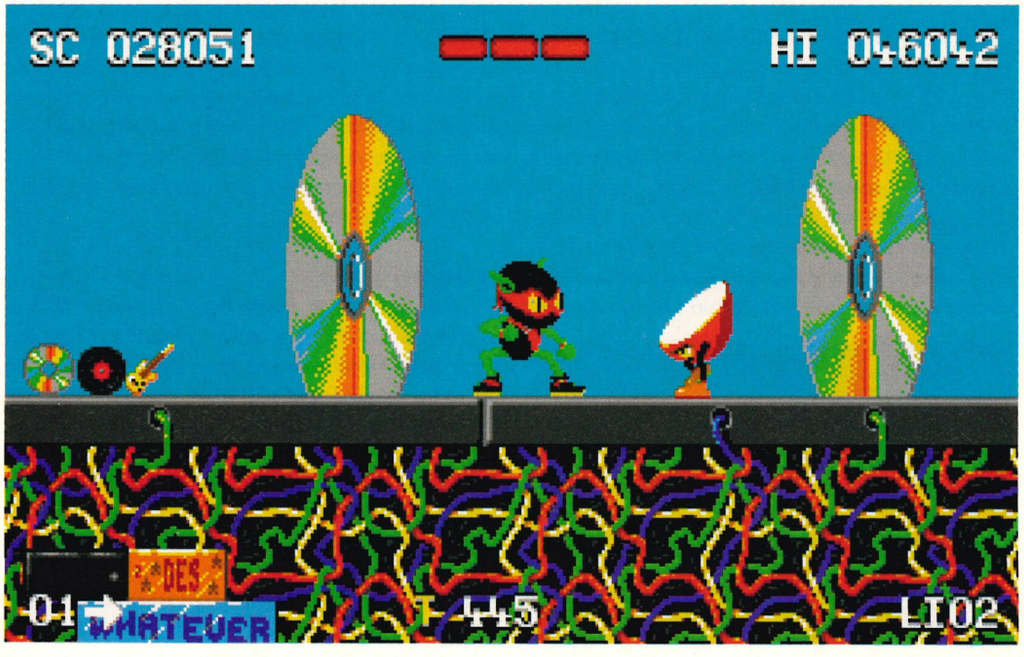
If you notice bonuses that you can't manage to reach on level three, then you will have to see if a balloon is around to lift you up.

To complete the Zool arcade machine, first start the machine up and then keep jumping on the red button. Whenever an obstacle appears, walk on to the white button to jump over it, and then revert back to jumping on the red button.

When at last you have completed the machine you will have three extra lives. To destroy the final boss, the evil clown, stand on the first platform, duck down low and shoot him in his large central eye.







QED

Populous II

Populous II's designer Alex Trowers follows his guide to special effects guide in Issue 16, with a second look at playing God



In the beginning ...

The start is possibly the most important aspect of the game. If you are allowed to, sprog your first house immediately. Each time you see a flag on screen, sprog that house. On early grassland levels, you can even sprog before the flag is above ground level.

If you are not allowed to sprog, then don't make castles as they take too long to fill up and kick people out on their own. Instead, make a series of mounds around which people can settle without their houses getting too big.

For maximum land-flattening ability, find an area of sea and raise a point twice before lowering the same point. In three clicks, you will have achieved what would normally take nine. At the start of the game, don't bother lowering the final point; these will create the mounds for your people to populate.

"Next time we retaliate first"

Getting the first effect in is important. Initial effects should be cheap, but devastating. A whirlwind planted on the enemy coast will cause your opponent untold hassle. At this point it is probably not worth saving up for more expensive effects. Storm should be the most expensive that you aim for. Take two lightnings into enemy land? Ideally, you want to plant an effect, then return to building and developing your own land. Swamps are too easy to clear up and fire columns are inaccurate. Stick to whirlwinds over the sea or storms in a heavily populated area.



In the middle ...

By the time you have two or three screens' worth of castles you will have entered the mid-game section. Every house that you build now should be made into a castle as soon as possible and your use of effects should be tailored to a particular battle plan. Don't just throw any old effect in at random; think about what you are doing, where you are doing it and how it will affect your later attacks.

Making land

The quickest way to create flat, 'settle-able' land is to use the 'two-up, one-down' principle. Raise the same point twice from sea level and then lower the tip of the mound that you have created. This will leave you with a two-by-two area of brand new land.

The lightning approach to killing enemy heroes*

When you win a fight you gain mana. If you top enemy people by using effects then you get diddly squat. A rather risky approach to get more mana and kill off that troublesome hero is as follows: firstly, place the shield on the target's head (otherwise you won't know how healthy he is). Next, zap him with lightning and keep on zapping until he is down to two flags. Now let him carry on. Your lads should have no trouble in beating him up and, in addition to you gaining man for topping him, your opponent loses mana for losing him.

Pseudo-volcs

A nasty tactic that was developed early on is the use of 'pseudo-volcs'. A pseudo-volc is the illegal practice of raising your opponent's land to the highest possible level and so wrecking all of his settlements. This was outlawed in Bullfrog's own two-player games very early on, as the damage caused by various items of hardware flying through the office was extensive. The computer, however, doesn't get irritated so it is fair game in one-player mode. Just don't ever try it on me, OK?

Countering fire columns

If you are the victim of a fire column attack, there are two things you could try. One is to simply lower the fire column into the water. This is the easiest and

* except Odysseus who is immune, and Helen, because you cannot fight her



most effective, but if you cannot lower land then you have to resort to tactic two. Create a pyramid of land that is two higher than the plain that the fire column is on. The fire column will then burn its way to the top of the hill. Any nearby settlements will have been uprooted by the raising of the pyramid and the people should be well out of the way.

Playing the landscapes

● Raising land: take your time about raising each individual point. On no account be tempted to use the triple click combo. Effects that affect the landscape (swamps, earthquakes, etc) are your biggest threat. Counter them immediately with 'verdant'. If you cannot use verdant, then head your entire population over to the enemy territory and mix it up close.

Whirlpools can be used to reset areas of land that have become too raised but this is quite a dodgy tactic. Volcanoes and batholith are the most lethal effects.

Whatever happens, don't be tempted to build on land higher than altitude three, as this is far too expensive.

● Lowering land: this is the same as raising, except that the effects are reversed. Strange, huh?

● No modify land: this one is all about population and available space. It also depends on what effects are available. A plague on these levels is the nail in the coffin, and is almost impossible to get rid of. Volcanoes actually create four settle-able squares, provided you have verdant and can wait for the fire columns to vanish. Volcanoes placed a strategic distance from other volcanoes will create strips of habitable land. If you are separated from the enemy by water, then basalt can be used to create bridges for invasions.

With all three cases above, it is important to note that while you are restricted in your land modifying, the computer isn't always bound by the same rules. It all depends on what level you are playing.

Water is fatal

One of the first tactics employed on a water fatal landscape is to go around and lower your opponents into the water. This will work fine on the earliest levels against the computer and you will make fast progress in the game ... but with absolutely no experience, which hampers your chances later on.

Water is harmful

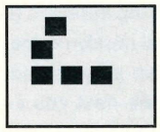
Don't even think about lowering the computer's people into the water as it will save them long before any real damage is done. Sometimes you can get away with it against a human, though ...

Life patterns

As everyone knows, the fungus effect is controlled by the rules of Conway's Life. Everyone must know the rules of life, but not everyone knows some really decent patterns to try.

After some stringent biological tests at our custom-made Life generators, the following patterns have been approved for use in general conflict.

The 'glider'



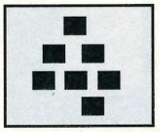
An unbelievable useful pattern that gradually moves into enemy territory (provided you aim in the correct direction; the example here will travel diagonally down and left.)

The 'wave'



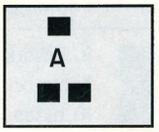
Yes, I know that this is just a straight line. It is quite useful though. Just line it up along your territory (sideways to the enemy) and watch it go. It does have the rather annoying habit of travelling towards you as well, but as you started it you should have had the common sense to make a ridge between your land and the fungus. The range of the wave is determined by the length of the line.

The 'bomb'



This one is quite good fun. It will expand outwards, and when it has finished it leaves behind four more bombs, although these are not armed. To arm them, simply add a piece of fungus in the middle of the bomb.

The 'assassin'



A sneaky one this. Not much in the way of devastation by hard to spot. When the assassin kicks in the target at point 'a' is killed and then the assassin vanishes without a trace. With Effect Dots turned off, all your opponent will see is a house vanish on the map.

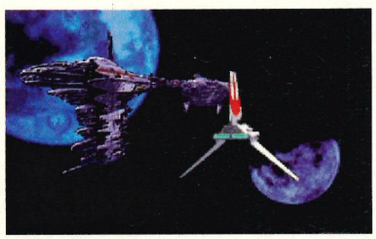
Populous II special codes

Oblivious	Enables a mana cheat on the F9 key.
Maggie	Allows the player to place the 6 random monsters using Alt 1 to Alt 6. Placing mon sters requires mana.
Plumpleys	Replaces the fire column with the fire burst effect at no extra mana cost.
Frenzy	Instead of creating burnt land fire rain creates pools of lava.
Big Leggy	Walkers no longer die from exhaustion.
Cartog	Toggle the overview map between a contour map and a relief map.
Kaboodle	Switches all effects on.



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.



X-Wing

STAR TIP

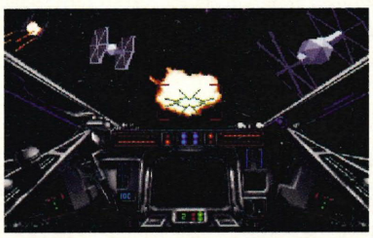
We've been deluged with X-Wing tips this month, so there now follows a brief summary of everything the fledgling rebel cheater needs to know. Thanks to P Hilling from Barnstaple, North Devon, who wil brief you on the many ways to improve your gameplay. Don't forget to back up your files before you hack.

1. The good old "back-up your pilot" cheat.

2. Editing the pilot data file using PC Tools or a similar hex editor. The first 10 bytes in the data file are the most important.

Byte no. 02 pilot status, ie,
00=alive, 01=captured, 02=dead
by changing this value you can revive a pilot without losing rank, rating or points.

Byte no. 03 — rank, ie,
00=flight cadet
01=flight officer,
02=Lieutenant,
03=Captain,
04=Commander,
05=General



08,09,0A — fighting points.
Points acquired during training missions. Alter bytes 08 and 09 to FF to give you a top ace rating.

3. Better wingmen. Using step 2 above to give yourself a Top Ace rating, copy your pilot's file to several different names, ie, Wingman1.PLT, Wingman2.PLT, Wingman3.PLT, etc. This gives you wingmen who are all top aces, although you still have to select them first.

4. Renaming missions (see panel below for original mission names). If you're having trouble progressing from one mission to the next you can rename the mission to an easier one. For example, if you can't complete the last mission on tour one, "Recover explosive warhead", type from the C:\XWING> prompt:

```
CD MISSION [return]
RENAME MAX20.* TEMP.* [return]
COPY AWAISTEM.* MAX20.* [return]
CD.. [return]
XWING [return]
```

complete the changed mission, exit from the game and type:

```
CD MISSION [return]
DEL MAX20.* [return]
RENAME TEMP.* MAX20.* [return)
```

Mission No	Tour 1	Tour 2	Tour 3
01	DEFECT	STARSNDB	DEFEND2
02	ID-RECON	RESCUE1	YRAID
03	WXRGARD1	YSTRIKE5	MAX14
04	WXPROT2	XYCAPT2	MAX17
05	ATTACKXY	MAX9	WYRESCS
06	MAX13	CRNDRFT1	LARRY1
07	MAX10	MAX18	LARRY2
08	ATTACK3	MAX1	LARRY3
09	SULLUST	STD1	ASSULT2
10	ACK-HARD	STD2	MAX19
11	CYGNUS	LEIA	DEFEND1
12	MAX20	INTCEP1	DSTAR1
13	n/a	n/a	DSTAR2
14	n/a	n/a	DSTAR3



Ultima VII Part Two: The Serpent Isle

Don Neelin, way out in Ontario, Canada has been beavering away at the latest Origin epic and has a cheat for it already.

In the original Ultima VII, typing U7 ABCD (with the space after the ABCD part made by holding down ALT and typing 255) and pressing F2 allowed you to access a menu of cheats (to make the Avatar invulnerable, to enable you to move things about) and F3 gives you a map allowing you to teleport around. The very same cheats are also available to the Avatar in Serpent Isle by typing SERPENT PASS at the DOS prompt.

Lemmings II: The tribes

A mysterious D Blake from Sittingbourne has sent a cheat for all you suffering gamers playing the second incarnation of the Lemmings story. To play any level of the game, run Lemmings 2 as usual and save a game in the highest saved-game slot. Now exit the program and using a file editor (Norton Disk Editor, PC Tools or Xtree Gold) edit the file "SAVE.DAT" and change the code from data block C8 to:

3C 00 03 00

Repeat this four block pattern up to block 2A9. Now run Lemmings 2 and load the saved game. Using the map, click on the ark at the centre of the screen and watch the end sequence. Now you can play any Lemmings 2 level.

Eye of the Beholder II

Readers have been having trouble in the azure tower on level two. Nick Gillot from Cheshire was one of many who wrote in supplying answers to the problem. The left lever and the centre lever have to be pulled down and then the button pressed. But beware, because this releases two basilisks. The button opens a transparent wall down the corridor to the south and west where you can find a useful amulet. Leave the room by the west exit and follow the right wall into the large room. Press the button in the south wall. Go to the north and face west. When the basilisk is in front of you, throw an item. It should hit the creature, drop on to the pressure plate on the floor and allow progress to the west. After this things get a bit hot in this direction so watch out.

Captive

Droid problems in Captive? No problem. Martin Shuttleworth has unearthed a few handy tips for this ageing Tony Crowther classic. When you buy refill canisters from the shopkeeper for the flambos and the acid dispensers, they only contain 10 shots. If you then place the flambos canisters into any fire pit they change to 60 shots. Also, if you place the acid canisters in any of the acid pools they miraculously change to 50 shots.

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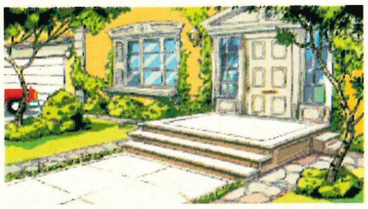
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If you ever have trouble from step one, different names also give different properties to your droids. Some of the better names are: Ann Droid, Fishface and Papillion.



Willy Beamish

It's short, it's snappy and it's also the answer to your Willy Beamish problems, sent in by QED's old regular, Edwin Mitson.

The baby sitter

When she turns into a bat, run up to Brianna's room and get the mouse. Run downstairs and jump behind the sofa in the lounge.

Put the mouse on the table and change the cursor. When the bat comes down to eat the mouse, click on it a couple of times.

Getting home from West Frumpton

Go to the Tootsweet company and get an order form. Afterwards, go to the Golden Bowl tavern, try and get in three times and the gang will arrive. Throw the bomb at the gang then use the monkey wrench on the fire hose. Run to Tootsweet and say, "These guys are going to clobber me".

Getting out of security

Use the Nintari key on your chain and use it on the security man. Choose the third to top hypnotic phrase and then get out.

Rescuing Horny

Go directly to the Humpford mansion and pretend to be interested in Polly. Go to the dining room and put the cup on the floor and pull the table cloth off the table.

Go back to the entrance and put the table cloth at the feet of the iron man. Pull the armour and get the head and the map.

Go back to the dining room and pick up the cup. Go into the kitchen and throw the cup at chef Childish and walk behind her.

Pick up the saucepan and pour the lard at her feet. Then move the cauldron carefully. Go back to the entrance to the kitchen again and jump on to the conveyor belt.



When she starts screaming, put the iron head on her. Press the button and the frogs will all drop down. Rush out of the room.

Getting into the sludge works

Get the radio from your jetski and go straight to the local 209. Go through the window and when Louis comes in, throw the plunger at him. Grab the security card from his desk and leave.

Walk to the telephone and put the recorder on the desk. Phone horoscopes and record what they say. Phone the Golden Bowl and press play. Go into the Golden Bowl and give Bert your lottery ticket.

After the lottery, pick up the nudy calendar and get out. Walk to the sludge works and give the plumbers the calendar and the man at the gate the security card. Walk in.

In the sludge works

When you get inside, run to the island and turn it on twice. Use the colour combination illustrated on the map and turn the joystick accordingly.

Run to the next room. Switch the machine on and type AIR. When the guards come in hit Enter.

Now type TRAM and press Enter. When you land on the walkway duck when Stanley throws his hat, then retrieve it and throw it back at him. Jump on the valve when it pops up.

Tub tray tram tunnels

Go up, right, left, up and left.

Showdown

Use the yo-yo on yourself and then throw it at Leona. Now jump on to what looks like a whistle.

Historyline 1914-1918



David Earl of Leicester has sent in the means to progress in this fast-paced and highly rated strategy game from Bluebyte Software. If you're fed up or stuck at a particular stage, simply enter the level codes to try each of the later levels.

German

1. PULSE	7. ORKAN	13. GOTHA	19. COBRA
2. CIVIL	8. FRONT	14. BALON	20. ATLAS
3. MOUSE	9. RATIO	15. PAUSE	21. AMPER
4. VENOM	10. PARTS	16. ELITE	22. RHEIN
5. NOISE	11. PLANE	17. INFRA	23. CANDL
6. RIGHT	12. FLAME	18. HILLS	24. STERN

Allied

1. BATLE	7. BUMMM	13. SIGNS	19. BLADE
2. GOOSE	8. LEVEL	14. HOUSE	20. ZORRO
3. SPORT	9. TOXIN	15. SIGMA	21. STONE
4. BIMBO	10. PRINC	16. SEVEN	22. MOSEL
5. TEMPO	11. CLEAN	17. ZOMBI	23. ORDER
6. BARON	12. XENON	18. MOVES	24. SODOM

HELP WANTED

Waxworks

In the Egyptian exhibition, I have managed to solve all the puzzles up to level six, including the logic problem and avoiding the boulder. Having done all this, I can't find a way out. How do I get out?

Also, how do I kill the monster in the centre river? And what does the blood-stained papyrus at the start mean?

In the other exhibitions I can't kill the opponents, and in Jack the Ripper I keep getting seen by the police? How do I break into the tailors to get a disguise and where do I get a sharp spike to cut off the zombie's arms in the graveyard?

Paula Phelby
London

Fascination

I am stuck on Fascination. My friend and I have tried and tried but cannot get past the part with the organ that has the secret zodiac signs. Can anybody help me?

Mathew Woods
Wirral

Ultima Underworld

I realise that Ultima Underworld is the game, has always been the game and will always be the game, but I still can't find two of the talismans, the cup and the ring.

Mow Ching Yap
Birmingham

Send all contributions to PC Review at Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. If you have any tips or cheats, mark the envelope "TIPS" in big capitals.

If you're hopelessly stuck on a game, send in your cry for help marking the envelope "Help Wanted'. If you're replying to a lost soul write "Help Supplied". Lastly, don't forget to include details of your PC in case you win the Star Tip prize.

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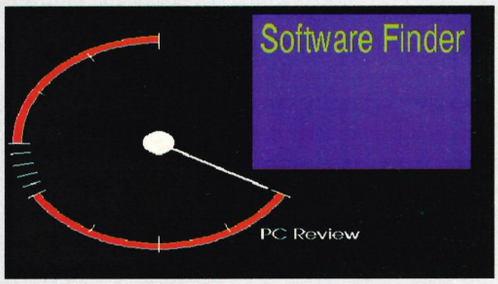
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Title chaser

Q I own a PC386 SVGA with 2Mb of RAM, DOS 5 and a 20Mb Disk. I am looking for a titling package for my camcorder, like PC Titler, by Maze Technology. I wonder if you could help – is there a different program available?

Neil Westwood
Wolverhampton

A Unfortunately, the problem goes deeper than finding a suitable titling package. Before you can record any graphics produced by your machine you need a PAL compatible video board or GenLock because the output of a VGA card isn't a standard TV signal and converting it into one is a difficult process. This results in such conversion hardware either being expensive – £200 plus – or not very good. This is certainly one area where the PC needs to catch up with other machines.

Assuming you can solve the hardware problem you might try The Essential Video Utilities which is shareware – disk H064 from PDSL. This includes a countdown clock, titler and cinemascope border generator and colour bar test card. The Maze Technology (081 556 5620) titler is very good though, so I'm not sure how or why you want to better it.

Alternatively, you can use any of the many presentation packages available for the PC – Lotus Freelance, Harvard Graphics, etc, all available from dealers or Software Paradise on (0222) 887521. These include the facilities to create complex titles and introduce them with wipes, fades, random fades and other effects. If your pocket stretches further, try contacting Vine Micros, (0843) 225714, which has a complete range of hardware and software. For a professional quality SVGA to TV board try Dynacom Display Systems on (0525) 402294.

Flying tonight?

Q I am writing to you for some good advice. I would like to purchase a good flight simulator that would be compatible with my computer. I have Action 16 F16's Combat Pilot but would like something with better graphics. My computer is an Amstrad PC5286HD with colour monitor and I also have a Quickjoy joystick.

Keith Simpson
Co Down

A There are so many possible answers! It is true that an Amstrad PC5286 is a bit slow for some, more recent flight sims, but there is still plenty of stuff that works very well. Have you, for example, tried the classic Microsoft Flight Simulator – this isn't just a program, it's a whole environment with add-on scenery packs, etc. Its strong point is its realism – so much so that it could even be used as part of basic training! If you want a more shoot 'em up oriented sim try Chuck Yeager's Air Combat, or MiG-29M Super Fulcrum; for a Microsoft Flight Simulator style program with plenty of extras, CornCob 3D – it's available from most shareware dealers.

All of these will run on your PC5286 and there are quite a few others I could add, but none have graphics stunningly better than the F16 flight sim you already have and the problem is that the very latest generation of flight sims needs a faster machine to produce more visual detail in real time. If you have the flight sim bug you will need a machine change in the future.

Not so nimble

Q I used to own a 186 RM Nimbus PC, and recently I purchased a 486 Olivetti PC. I had a lot of software for my RM Nimbus, but it won't run on my Olivetti. Do you know of a RM Nimbus emulator which I could purchase, roughly how much it would cost, and where could I get it from (I have looked around the shops and found nothing)?

James Render
Devon

A As both machines are standard PCs you shouldn't need a Nimbus emulator – the two machines are the same apart from speed and perhaps graphics modes that are supported. If you have applications that used to run on the Nimbus but will not run on the Olivetti the chances are it is a matter of configuring the machine so that they will run. I am almost 100% certain that a Nimbus emulator doesn't exist because one isn't necessary,

but if there is one exists then I'm sure some kind reader will write and let me know about it – but to satisfy my curiosity can you also tell me why one is needed!

Glorious black and white

Q We have an Amstrad PC 5286HD and a Citizen Printer, a Tribute 224, a colour model, which came as a package from Dixons in April last year. We have bought Deluxe Paint II – Enhanced published by Electronic Arts (brilliant) and in its manual it lists that it can operate our printer.

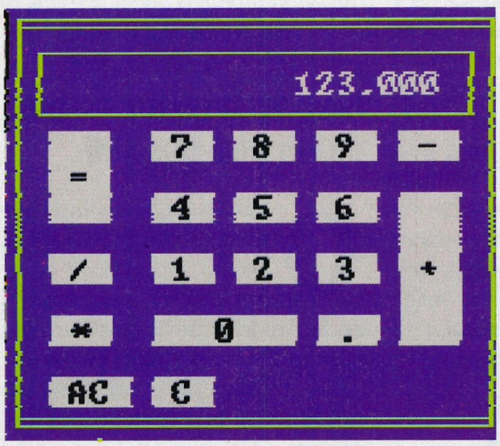
Although our printer works in general it will not work with DPII and if we try using other printers' details it prints jabberwocky! What happens is: DPII asks for the printer. If DPII thinks it is a colour printer it automatically puts a cross in the 'colour' box shown on the screen.

However, in our case it simply won't. We are entering the correct port, the dip switches are all correct and we have tried everything to operate the printer (per DPII's manual) but with no luck. Citizen and Electronic Arts have both suggested we need a 'driver' – and that only shareware will have one.

Jonathan & Ellie Wallace
Kent

A I thought that I'd managed to solve this problem a couple of times, but each time I got hold of the utility it turned out not to support the 224's colour mode.

The reason seems to be that the colour mode is an option not many 224 owners decided to take up, and so Deluxe Paint II thinks your printer is black and white only – which is correct in most cases. As the printer is now no longer in production – and my guess is that's exactly why Dixon's was bundling it with the Amstrad – there is little hope of getting Citizen to take any notice of the problem.



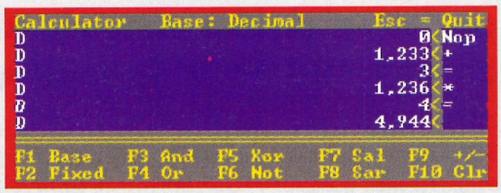
Unless anyone reading this can supply a driver that will fit the bill, the only thing I can suggest is to give the standard Epson JX-80 driver a try in the hope that you can at least get 9-pin colour printing – most colour dot matrix printers are able to support the JX-80 control code set.

Pop-up maths

Q I am looking for a TSR calculator (preferably with maths functions) which must run in text mode for compatibility with large character and speech synthesis.

David Weir
Fife Society For The Blind

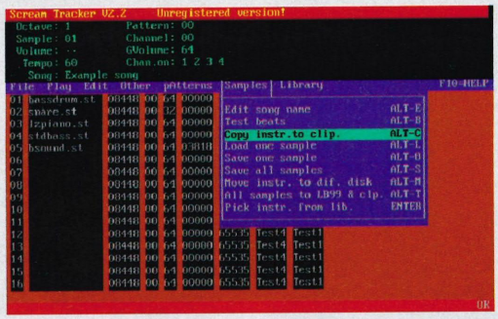
A This question used to be relatively easy to answer when Borland's SideKick TSR was the number one seller of all software utilities. This program is still available, but at the silly price of £79! Today pop up calculators are old hat and hard to find and there aren't many with functions. Ro-Soft DOS (PDSL 2985) utilities includes a multi-base calculator that allows you to see more than just the current result. If you are prepared to type in the formula you want to work out, try RCALC from the Rock utilities (PDSL 2790) – this supports: ABS, ARCTAN, COS, EXP, LN, SQR, PI and SQRT. A pretty calculator, without functions, can be found in the MEMTOOL utilities (PDSL 2971). RAMdesk (PC-SIG 2271) is another type-in-the-expression calculator.



My final suggestion may seem a little crazy, but it is worth thinking about. Why not try a pop-up spreadsheet? Yes, there are such things and they provide the full range of maths, financial functions, etc, that you would expect to find in a full spreadsheet. Try InstaCalc (PDSL 2724) or find an old copy of Lucid 3D – which is no longer available new!

Tracking down sound

Q I just bought a Sound Blaster Pro card, attracted by the sampling abilities. I thought it would give me the capability to make compositions from samples just like on the Amiga. I discovered though, that the sequencer in the package could only handle the Sound Blaster's FM-generator, not the samples.



Since then I have been searching for a program that could compose music with samples (.voc files) but without success. In fact, I learnt that every Sound Blaster owner I know was searching for a program. I heard that there could be a program called "Soundtracker" for the PC, that could handle .voc files. "Soundtracker" is a much used composing program on the Amiga.

I hope that you can help me out with this, because I find the sound of the built-in generator not good enough for my purpose to compose music with samples. Does Soundtracker exist for the PC? If so, where can I get it? Or are there any other programs with which I can compose music with sample files.

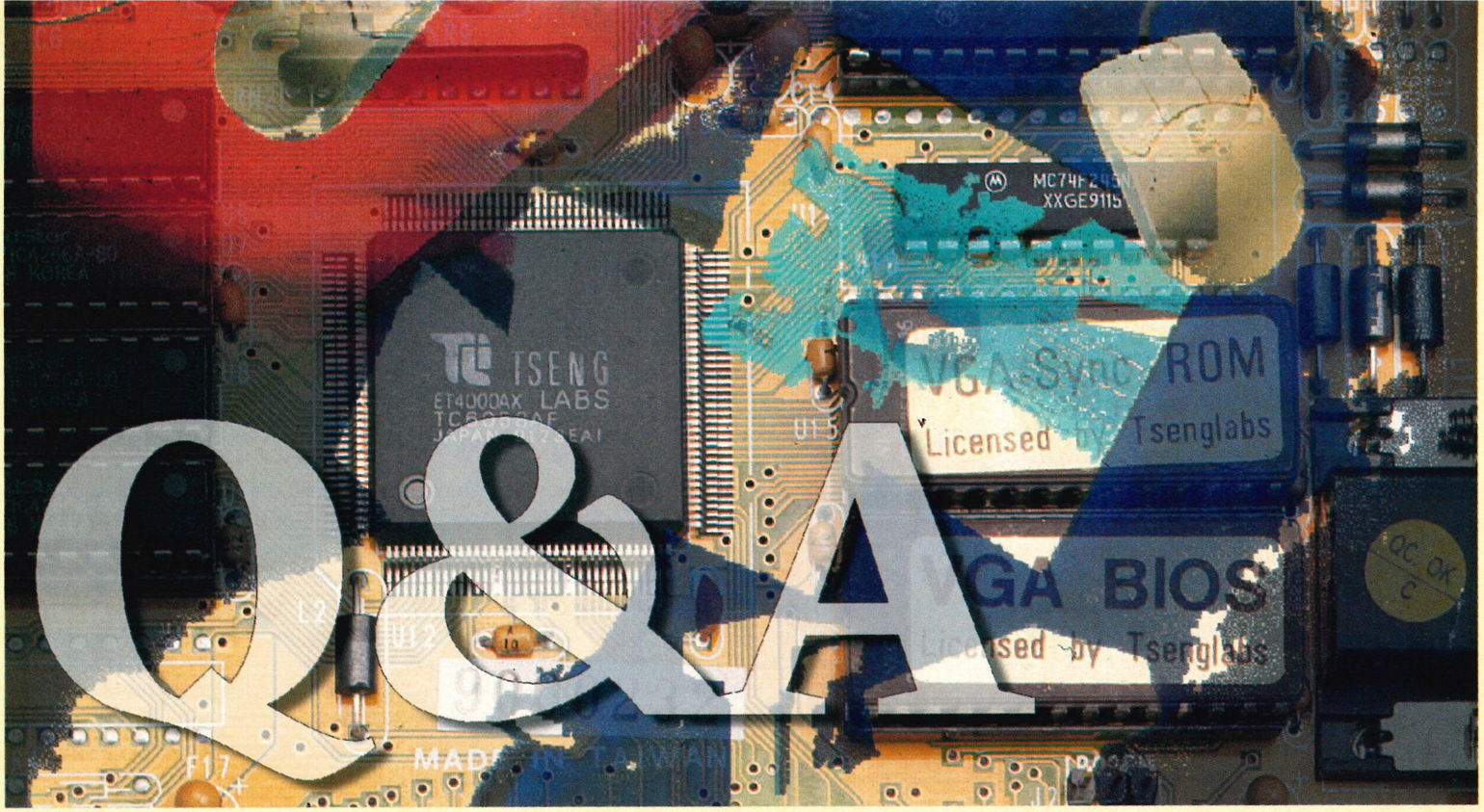
Joris Wittenburg
The Netherlands

A I can at least suggest a starting point for what you are looking for. Scream Tracker will allow you to play samples using the PC keyboard. It's shareware, so you can at least try it for free but if you want to save your compositions you will need to register the program. The Scream Tracker (3015 PDSL) works with Sound Blaster, PC speaker and Covox – although the PC speaker sounds awful. Something else that's awful is the documentation – it could take days to work out how to get your own samples into it! You will also need either the VoxKit or Voice editor that should have been supplied with your Sound Blaster. Good luck.

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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

Does the Amstrad 2386 work with MS-DOS 5?

Q I have an Amstrad 2386 which has 4Mb RAM, and came supplied with DOS 4.01. However, having upgraded to DOS 5, I am unable to convert any of the extended memory to expanded. Using the original set-up program which Amstrad supplied on the DOS 4 disks I have set the base memory to 640K and extended memory to 3546K.

I have tried using Emm386.exe in all its various forms, and I have tried many different page frame numbers, but to no avail. After making the alteration to the Config.sys file and rebooting, the machine invariably hangs after it installs Himem.sys. There is never any error message, just the flashing cursor which appears after the line "Installed A20 Handler No 1" and I have no option but to switch off and start again.

After reading as much as I could about memory management and not finding any solution to the problem I finally approached Amstrad, but they were unable to help, except that they intimated that my machine is one of the earlier versions of the 2386, and maybe it isn't compatible with Emm386.exe. I distinctly gained the impression from them that, having changed from the original DOS, I was on my own.

I should add that Windows 3 works perfectly well.

Carolyn Brown
Cumbria

A *I suppose the people at Amstrad might be right that their old machine cannot work with Emm386, but it sounds more like an attempt to dispose of your problem without doing any work! The fact that Windows 3 works (I assume in enhanced mode!) suggests that the basic extended memory configuration is fine. If so, the only real problem is likely to be memory mapping. I have made a 2386 work with Emm386 using the following line*

```
DEVICE=EMM386.EXE 512
x=CC00-CFF x=E000-EFFF
M4
```

which creates 512K of expanded memory. If you want more or less, just alter the 512 to a suitable figure. The x= parts of the command exclude areas of the upper memory region where the Amstrad's second disk controller sits: facts that are not documented in the manual. If this doesn't work, there might be something odd about early 2386s, but I doubt it. If all else fails, try a copy of Qemm386 which can replace Himem.sys and Emm386.exe and is well supported by Quarterdeck's technical department.

Low cost CD

Q I have recently installed an internal Mitsumi CD-ROM drive from UK Flex. This seems an excellent drive which is fast, reads multi-session CDs and does not need expensive caddies — a bargain at £159 plus VAT. A small tip for users like me who need 600K free to guarantee most programs will run. Both drivers would not initially load high and only the Mtmcde.sys file was configured to use extended memory. The cure was to add the /E parameter to the Mscdex.exe file to enable it also to use expanded memory. My Autoexec.bat file now reads:

```
LOADHIGH
C:\BIN\MSCDEX.EXE
/D:MSCD001 /M:64 /E
```

This is now small enough to load high and sets the sector buffers to the maximum of 128K to speed up the operation of the drive.

David Heath
Leicester

A *I have recommended the Mitsumi drive for its low cost and high performance a number of times, but notice that the new multi-session drive is faster and more versatile than the original model. Loading the CD-ROM device drivers high is a good idea and did you know that the automatic memory optimiser does just that? However, what it fails to do is add /E to the end of the Mscdex command even though both are Microsoft products and it is trying to maximise available memory!*

Mating modems — and death and the 386

Q I am considering buying a modem. Can a PC contact a different type of computer with a modem? I know two friends with modems but they both have Amigas.

Also, I want a faster computer but my funding is a little low at the moment. I have a 386SX running at 16MHz and I mainly use Windows 3.1. So would a Windows accelerator card speed up all my graphics programs, eg, art packages and games? Or will it just speed up Windows? Is the speed increase con-

siderable, or if I want a noticeably faster speed, will I have to save for a new processor?

Finally, how long will my computer will last before most of the software market has surpassed it in speed. I have seen a lot of worrying magazine articles that link the words "386" and "dead" together.

M Robinson
London

A The only condition for one modem to connect to another is that they both support the same signalling standard and one can work in answer mode while the other works in originate mode. The type of computers the modems are connected to is irrelevant as far as modems are concerned. For more information on how to decide if modems are compatible, see Q&A Update.

It isn't really worth fitting a Windows accelerator card to a 16MHz 386 because the cost would be better put towards either a machine or motherboard upgrade. But this is a matter of personal preference — if you are attached to your machine, a Windows accelerator will speed up screen redraws by as much as a factor of two when Windows and some other graphics applications are running. This will only speed up drawing on the screen every other action will occur at the original slowish speed.

Finally, if I were a 386 I think I would be using the line about rumours of my death being exaggerated. The 386 isn't dead in any technical sense — the 486 can for all practical purposes be considered to be just a fast 386. The 486 is being aggressively marketed by Intel as it is the only company making the 486 chip at present (though this is about to change — see last month's news story). It would like the 386 to die because it is also made by its competitors, Cyrix, AMD, etc. To encourage this, Intel has priced the 486SX so that it matches or slightly improves on the performance of a 386DX of the same price. Hence most users will choose the 486 model unless the price of the 386DX really is bargain basement.

At the moment the 386SX can still be considered an entry level machine — but even here the speed has been cranked up to 25MHz or even 33MHz to compete with the 486SX models. The original 16MHz variety has more or less vanished from manufacturers' lists and is probably best considered obsolete. As the 386SX-16 is about the same power as a 286-16 the fate of the two are connected. When software producers finally give up trying to support the existing AT user base then the 386SX-16 users will also be almost the same position. I should think that you should be able to get another year, possibly two, of use before you start to find that the majority of new software expects something faster.

What's wrong with a daisy?

Q I have recently bought a Locland 486 33MHz computer, with a number of Lotus application programs as part of a package with Windows 3.1. After initial problems because I was new to PCs, I am very pleased with it and especially the very helpful back-up service I have had over the phone from Locland.

My problem is that due to a lack of driver I am unable to use my old daisywheel printer (a very reliable Juki 6100) within Windows. Do you know of any way I could get my printer to work, or anywhere I could buy a printer driver for it? It just seems a shame to have to buy a new inkjet or dot matrix costing a few hundred pounds, especially after spending over £1,400 already on my PC, that probably won't give me any better letter quality printing.

C Parvis
Coventry

A I have had a quick look to see if I can find a Juki driver. I didn't find one and can't really hold out much hope of finding one. (If any reader does know of one, please write in!) The reason I am so pessimistic is that the technology behind the daisywheel printer really isn't suitable for use with Windows. Modern printers allow the software to control what appears on the page down to the placement of a single dot, but a daisywheel will only let you print a character at a fixed location. When Windows prints text on a page it generally does it dot-by-dot and this allows it to support a wide range of fonts and types styles even if the printer doesn't. In short, buying an ink jet printer or 24-pin printer for around £200 will produce much better and more versatile output than your daisywheel can even with a driver. You will be able to print all of the typestyles that you see on the screen plus any graphics you want to incorporate and all without having to change the print wheel!

If you still want to use a daisywheel printer under Windows then you might try the Generic/Text only printer driver. This can be customised so that you can use some of the facilities of the printer but many Windows applications find this so primitive that they refuse to work with it!

A needless worry?

Q I am a bit worried about my PC. Over the last fortnight I have had a lot of error messages, such as:

non-system disk or disk error
sector not found reading drive C
unable to load Dosshell
unable to load Command.com
insert disk with Command.com in drive A:

and the most worrying so far:

hard disk failure

All of my batch files have been installed properly, and this only happens if I turn the computer on within about three hours of last using it. The man I bought it from said not to worry about it, but I just thought I'd write and ask your opinion. I have only had my PC for a couple of months and I'd really like to set my mind at rest.

Philip Robinson
Herts

A I cannot believe that any responsible dealer would tell you not to worry about error messages that are all informing you that your machine's hard disk is failing. As it happens after around three hours' use, the problem is clearly a heat-related fault, either on the controller card or the hard disk itself. You need to replace the hard disk before it gets so bad that you lose all of the data on it. I would also replace the dealer after that — he is clearly only after a quick profit.

Will Grand Prix run on a 386SX?

Q I have recently bought an Ambra Hurdler 386SX 25 and have a few questions.

1) I want to play games such as flight sims, etc. Will my machine be good enough? If not, how can I bring it up to scratch? And how much will it cost?

2) Will I need a sound card? If so, which is the best to go for (around £150)?

3) Since reading your last issue I was horrified to read that for MicroProse's Formula One Grand Prix a 386SX won't do, only a DX. Why is this? Will it be a common problem? Is there anything I can do to right it?

Edward Thomas
East Sussex

A I didn't think there could be any reason why a program would specifically need a 386DX as opposed to a 386SX but to make sure I asked MicroProse's technical department, including a fax of your letter. All I really wanted was a yes/no answer to the SX/DX problem, but to my surprise they answered the whole question — all three parts — for me! So brought to you by the MicroProse technical department is ...

"1) Your 386SX should be fine for playing such MicroProse flight simulations as Harrier Jump Jet and B17 Flying Fortress. You should, however, look at a minimum of 2Mb of RAM configured with at least 600K conventional to solve any memory problems. Because of the modular design of the PC, upgrading the computer is very easy. Through experience we've found an ideal specification for many of our simulators:

386/486 20MHz minimum (33MHz recommended)
2Mb RAM minimum (4Mb max)
80Mb uncompressed hard drive (120Mb drive recommended)

512K-1Mb VGA/SVGA card
Colour video monitor
Ad Lib sound card (Sound Blaster recommended)
Microsoft compatible mouse (with latest Microsoft driver)
Analogue joystick
Microsoft MS-DOS 5.0/6.0 only

If you contact your local computer dealer or study any of the adverts in the computer magazines then you should be able to compile a suitable price for all the necessary components — however a new machine with the above should cost you around £1,000.

2) A Sound Blaster compatible card should be the best one to go for — again shop around for the best price but it should cost you around £100.

3) Grand Prix and Prix/World Circuit ***will*** *run fine on a 386SX which runs at 16MHz minimum.*

To clarify the position with Grand Prix/World Circuit, this program will run quite happily on most 286, 386, and 486 computers which have been set up with 600K of conventional memory and 256K of expanded (EMS) memory. To use a 286 computer, you must obtain an expanded memory driver relevant to their machine. This product, as with all MicroProse titles, is only designed to run under MSDOS without any form of compression. The update for two player link-up is not yet available, but we are aiming to release it at the end of this month."

Many thanks, MicroProse. I agree with the opinions and only wish other technical departments took their job as seriously! Perhaps I'll try them with some other questions not necessarily connected with their products!

The 20 second nap

Q I have an AT/286-12 with a 43Mb Fujitsu hard drive and a recurring problem. The machine seems to lock up for about 15-20 seconds at random. It doesn't happen all the time, but when it does it can happen in any application, be it AutoCad, Works, Windows or a game, or even at the DOS prompt. For instance when going into Xtree, the program should read the files on the hard drive. It usually works with no problem, but sometimes it will stop counting up the files for about 20 seconds and then continue, until the next time. Or at the DOS prompt, I can type "Dir" and nine times out of 10 it does what it is supposed to do, but that other time the cursor will just sit there after the Dir command for about 20 seconds, then do what it is supposed to do.

Right now, while I am writing this letter in Works, just about every other time I click on the file menu, the machine stops for a while. Due to this, the machine is slower than the old Amstrad 2086 that I used to run Works on. Generally in word-processor type programs, the cursor can disappear for 20 seconds or so and then return.

I have noticed that when the machine 'wakes up' after this time, the hard disk can be heard to click and then everything works OK, until the next time.

Steve Komosa
Sudbury

A *The most likely explanation for the occasional 20 second nap is that your machine's hard disk is about to fail. When a hard disk starts to develop a slight fault, it attempts to re-read data more than once. Hard disk controllers have very good error correction circuitry but the disk will try to read the data without error five times or so before it gives up and attempts an error correction. If this works, the disk moves on to read the next sector. Although each pause caused by the re-reads and the error correction is small it is repeated for each sector read and this can build up into a very noticeable overall wait. You could try reformatting the drive, both a low level and logical format if possible. It might help.*

Send your queries to Q&A, PC Review, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, or, if you have access to CIX, the Compulink Information Exchange, you can e-mail us at: pcreview@cix.compulink.co.uk.

Mike James can only reply to your problems on this page, so please don't enclose SAEs or requests for personal replies.

Q&A update

Modems

Adding a modem to your machine comes somewhere after adding a sound card and ranks about equal with a CD-ROM drive for the amount of fun you can get out of it. My only word of warning is that if you live outside the London local charge band, then you might be better advised to buy a CD-ROM first! In any case, it would be worth while making a list of some of the services you might like to use and see how many of them can be dialled at a local rate before you take the plunge.

Buying and using a modem is relatively easy at the moment because you can buy a single unit that supports all of the common standards. There is a new standard that is about to be introduced for very fast data transmission, but such modems will cost around the £1,000 mark for some time to come.

The standards supported are usually reported as a set of V-numbers — V24, V48, V48bis and so on — in the advertising or specification of the modem. Each V-number corresponds to a data transmission speed and as long as two modems can support a common V-number standard they should be able to talk to each other. The only complication is that one must be set to make the call, ie, originate mode, and the other to receive the call, ie, answer mode.

Currently I would recommend a modem that can support V32bis, V32, V22bis, V22, V21, V23, MNP 2-4/V42 and MNP 5/V42bis — any others that are included are so much the better! If you are interested in using the modem to send and receive faxes, then you should add V29/V27 and V21 to your check list. A modem meeting this specification should be able to connect to almost any other modem in current use. Although this is a fearsome list of V numbers, most modems quote the highest standard that they support somewhere prominent. So a modem that supports the full list given above will usually just say "V32bis/32" as part of its short specification. Believe it or not you can find modems that are this good for around £100.

Standards

V21 – old 300 baud teletype standard but still in use
V22 – 1200/75 baud use for Prestel and Viewdata in general
V22bis – 1200 and 2400 baud modems — most commonly used
V32 – 4800 and 9600 baud high speed modems
V32bis – 12000 and 14000 baud ultra high speed modems
MNP 2, 3 or 4 – error correction method
V42 – error correction standard that uses enhanced **MNP 2, 3, 4**
V42bis – data compression standard

■ ***Mike James***

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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!

Indiana Jones and the Fate of DOS 6

My son and I have found your game reviews invaluable in selecting alternatives, and in avoiding games which would be too demanding for our 16MHz 386SX.

Consequently, we feel somewhat let down by a potentially serious omission from your review of MS-DOS 6 in the April issue. I felt that I should write to advise you of the potential pitfalls which we have experienced.

We had been using DOS 3.3, plus a 1987-vintage 386MAX for perfectly adequate memory management, and did not need to upgrade to DOS 5. DOS 6, however, offered sufficient additional features to justify upgrading, and I was one of the many to purchase DOS 6 from our local retailer over Easter.

For us, the main selling points were multiple configurations, virus checker, and especially disk compression. Our IBM 55SX has a 60Mb hard disk partitioned into C and D drives. There is furious competition for hard disk space between my son's games (drive D:), and my business requirements (drive C:), and we thought DOS 6 would provide the solution.

To a large extent it does. Installation, virus checking, defragmentation, and back-up were extremely simple, but I found manual memory configuration more effective than MemMaker. Our problem is with disk compression.

Your review of DOS 6 gave no warning of potential incompatibility between some programs and compressed drives. Nor did the DOS 6 manual or my retailer. Disk compression is straightforward with DOS 6, and fortunately all my business applications, and most of my son's games work normally.

Unfortunately, my son's favourite game, Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, will not. We had removed this game after completion to make space for Monkey Island 2.

After disk compression we attempted unsuccessfully to reload Indy, so I telephoned LucasArts helpline and was informed that their games are incompatible with compressed drives.

They expressed surprise that Monkey Island 2 was working normally. Do you think that this is because Monkey was on the disk during compression, whereas we tried to load Indy on to a compressed drive?

The other program which would not run after disk compression was F15 II. We experienced temporary problems with Software Toolworks' Chessmaster 3000 and Mavis Beacon because of their "hardware configuration changed" copy-protection, but both programs subsequently reloaded and worked satisfactorily.

Similarly, Dynamix's A10 version 1.5 displayed a "shell error" message after disk compression, but then worked normally after reinstallation.

We are disappointed that your DOS 6 article did not warn of potential disk compression problems. We had assumed that as it is the latest "industry standard", MS-DOS 6 (and *all* its features) would have been tested and proven fully compatible with all the software we wish to run. We now have plenty of free space on our hard drives, and a comprehensive collection of good games which do work.

Unfortunately, some of the better new releases may not now be available to us. The only positive aspect is that I shall save £40 by not buying my son X-Wing, as it will not load on to a compressed drive.

Hopefully, software publishers will now make their future games compatible with compressed drives. Until that time, will you please give clear warnings in your reviews sectionabout games which will not work satisfactorily with compressed drives.

Ian Townsend
Chicheley, Bucks

The problem of games not working on compressed drives is a fairly recent one, and LucasArts' games (which include Monkey Island, Indiana Jones, and X-Wing) tend not to run.

One reason that details of incompatible games are often unforthcoming is that publishers simply don't know, as we explained in our article on hard disk compression last month (Issue 20). This is something we intend to test ourselves as soon as possible.

Foiling the pirates

I read with some interest in the May issue the two letters concerning software piracy. Mark Grant thinks that the key disk system is the answer; I can assure him, however, that it is not.

Also, the idea of manual protection, whilst being more acceptable, is only likely to stop casual piracy. The truth is that piracy is here in a big way and if the technology exists to create protection then the same technology can be used to break it. Piracy is something that all computer users will have to live with and this is not just games players, but business users as well.

The problem with piracy is that it creates a vicious circle. Software houses say that price increases are inevitable because of the damage done by piracy, and consumers feel that software is just too expensive and so they are more likely to accept the odd pirated game.

If you look at the Amiga situation then you can see what damage has been done, and largely it's the paranoia of the software houses that is responsible.

I owned an Amiga with a hard disk and only a quarter of my games could be installed to the hard disk. Because many games have this bizarre on-disk copy protection, this caused all sorts of problems with loading, etc.

The software houses were spending fortunes on on-disk copy protection, only to find that in a matter of days a cracked and hacked version of the game was available, and meanwhile who pays the cost of the R&D? Yes, Mr Honest at the shop till. This situation has not reached the PC market but there is a danger that it will. Then we will see a slip in the standard of software coupled with a big price hike.

If you look at the games consoles market, then you could observe a lesson in greed by Sega and Nintendo. Their respective cartridges are virtually impossible to pirate, so piracy is at a minimum, but the games are still priced at ridiculous levels, and I believe that most software houses would not bring prices down to a sensible level if piracy did not exist.

So what is the answer? I do not claim to have it but a big reduction in prices will encourage more people to own original software, also more shops allowing you to try before you buy so that you know before you part with your cash if you're getting a turkey, also perhaps more companies bringing out trial mini versions of a game that you can obtain for a few quid and evaluate at your leisure. Certainly one thing for sure is that no amount of copy protection will deter an organised pirate.

Away from piracy for a moment I also read Christopher Low's letter regarding Formula One Grand Prix, and would have to agree with him about the technical spec needed for the game.

For anyone else considering buying the game and for a few that already have, there is an undocumented feature in the game that can help you to get the best out of it. The frame rate can be adjusted from within one of the menus and can be tested in a race by pressing the letter 'O' on the keyboard.

This displays a number at the top of the screen, which is the Processor Occupancy Percentage and if the number rarely exceeds 100 you are getting maximum performance; anything over 100 and you can reduce the frame rate and vice versa. It always pays to read the Read me files.

John Glover
Camberley, Surrey

Star Letter

Catch 22

I was interested to read the letters of Robert Lightbody, and especially Charles Cecil, concerning their suggestions that software houses should continue to support 286 PCs.

This is a very difficult decision for software companies to make. In the last few years the majority of games have been purchased by 286 and 386 owners and I'm sure that the software houses must feel a sense of loyalty to these people.

However, competition between the various companies is fierce, with each company trying to outdo each other with each release. Mr Cecil himself has admitted that Revolution Software is trying to produce a product that is better than Monkey Island 2, but that it requires the power of a 386 to accomplish this.

The steady advance in computer games technology shown in SWOTL, X-Wing, Strike Commander, etc, means that the hardware requirements are creeping up. 286 and 386 owners may not like it, but it is a fact. Two years ago I bought a 386 DX33 with 4Mb RAM and all the trimmings. At the time there wasn't a game on the market that it couldn't run. Two years on it is struggling. Many of the latest games were slow and frustrating to play until I replaced the motherboard to a 486 DX50 with 8Mb RAM. Once again I am able to run the most power hungry games although my wallet is now £700 lighter. Last year the entry level PC was considered to be a 386SX25. This year it is a 486SX25 and next year it will probably be a 486DX33. The increasing power of entry level machines means that in another two years I may well have to upgrade again.

The software houses keep on improving their products in the quest for absolute realism and in most cases keep the hardware requirements in line with the current entry level machine. Faster animation, better graphics and improved gameplay will always require faster processors, more disc-space and better graphics cards. No matter how talented the programmers at Origin are, there is no way the Strike Commander will be able to run on a 12MHz 286. In other words, if you want state of the art software then you must have the necessary hardware to handle it.

It seems to me that the software houses are in a Catch 22 situation. If they continue to release better games, then the 286/386SX owners will moan that their hardware isn't being catered for, whereas if the software houses decided to produce 286-based games then 486 owners will say that programmers and game designers have reached the limits of their capabilities and have nothing new to offer us. You can please some of the people some of the time but not all of the people all of the time.

Kevin Marshall
Swindon, Wilts

CD is the answer

I read Mark Grant's and Tim Phillips' letters on software piracy with interest. Having been a PC user since before the Amstrad 1512 was thought of, it's a subject that I have considered for some time.

Currently I find any method of copy protection personally irritating. Having to pay £35 to £45 for a game is bad enough, but then thumbing through a manual looking for key words or inserting a disk really isn't on. Don't get me wrong: I'm not condoning piracy, and the software houses must have the right to protect their interests but this subject hinges on individual morality, wherever copyright infringement is found, whether it's videos, tapes cassettes or audio CDs.

As far as software is concerned, though, I would have thought that CD-ROM is the answer to programmers' prayers. Think of it. They can produce a game like King's Quest VI on one CD (costing a fraction of the costs of nine high density disks), throw in full speech, more scenery, etc, and it rockets the game to over 30Mb. Who can afford to pirate that with your average high density disks costing over a pound? It would be cheaper to buy the game.

This is where the industry has the perfect opportunity to 'clean up'. All it would take is for them to throw all their efforts into producing CD-ROM as their main media, reduce the cost of CD-ROM games to slightly less than their disk counterparts and watch the tide turn.

I, for one, would rather pay for a better game with more value for money than pirate its lame disk equivalent. Not only that, but the argument that your average punter could afford a CD-ROM drive is falling by the wayside with a perfectly respectable drive available for less than £200.

Software houses, the ball is in your court!

Mark Leeming
NATO Registry, Gibraltar

Mario and Moonstone

I would like to point out that in PC Review, Issue 18, Michael Edmonds wrote in asking if it was possible to buy any of the Mario Brothers games for the PC. You were quite wrong when you said that the original Nintendo games weren't available for the PC. There is a shareware version of the original Mario Brothers game available from Testware for £3.

Another point I would like to make is that on page 71 in the May issue Moonstone was advertised for £12.99 and on page 75 it was advertised for £9.99. Which is the correct price?

Ben Hinchliffe
Winterbourne, Bristol

Moonstone's list price from the publisher, Mindscape, is currently £19.99. The prices you've spotted in PC Review are those advertised by mail order companies, which are offering a discount on the list price in order to tempt you to buy from them, rather than anyone else. So, the short answer to your question is, I suppose, that they're all correct.

Introduction to value for money

I am a great fan of simulations and graphic adventures. A few days ago I bought Strike Commander with the Speech Pack and paid a total of F218,00 guilders (£66) for it. Although the price is worth it, why doesn't Origin include the Speech Pack with the main game?

I would also like to respond to a few letters in Issue 19, starting with Christopher McClan's comment on the price of software. I agree that £45 is a reasonable price for most software, but some companies give better value for money than others.

For example, when you buy a game from Microprose, Spectrum Holobyte or Dynamix, you get an excellent, large manual filled with useful information, whereas all you get from Sierra is a thin pamphlet containing installation instructions.

The second letter is Christopher Low's. Whilst I agree with him that Formula One Grand Prix is a much better driving game than Car and Driver, I disagree with him about introduction sequences.

When I buy a game and load it, the introduction gives me my first impression of what the game will be like. X-Wing has one of the best introductions I have seen and this is reflected by the quality of the game itself.

On the other hand, one good intro can lead to disappointment if the game itself fails to measure up, as was the case with ATAC and also Special Forces.

My view is that a good intro adds value to a game and should give some idea about what the game is about.

Patrick Rozijn
The Netherlands

Terminator 2 turkey

What is the funniest game that you have ever played? Monkey Island 2? That is what a lot of people would say but my personal favourite is Terminator 2!

Another game of the film, Terminator 2 failed miserably. And why? Because the designers have put together some cheap rubbish and used the name to boost sales.

If game designers were to think about why people watch films, their games might be better. For example, people might want to take the part of the film's hero so that they could see how their own decisions and skill would have affected the final outcome.You should be able to either re-enact the film or do things differently from the hero.

So, for instance, in Terminator 2 you should be able either to do as John Connor did or, perhaps, surrender to the T1000 or even leave Sarah in the asylum. What do other readers think?

Tim Phillips
Reading, Berks

Footnotes from a notebook user

As a notebook user I have two gripes. The first is the lack of attention many products pay to the clarity of the graphics on monochrome displays. This is most obvious in Windows where an LCD screen saving colour scheme is provided but I can't see the score or timer in the Minesweeper game and the drawing crosshair and test insertion cursors are difficult to see. This makes me very cautious when it comes to buying games, although I can solve the problem by buying a colour monitor.

Secondly, I'm tired of hammering away at my precious built-in keyboard because I do not have the option of buying a joystick (they all seem to require expansion slots).

If no-one is going to sell a usable joystick adapter I'd like some help in building one that simulates keyboard presses. I'd like to plug a Sega joypad into the unit which would then convert the signals into keypresses, add them to the signal from the external keyboard and send them to the keyboard input of the computer. The joypad to key conversions could be set as cursors, space, enter and two others, but manual programming using a breadboard or dip switches could be employed.

That is the concept, but I need everything else: Sega 9-pin D-connector wire allocations, details of keyboard signals and wires and any details of power and resistance solutions that may be needed.

I know it seems a tall order, but a little help or perhaps an article would be much appreciated, not only by myself but everyone else who lacks free expansion slots.

Norman Cod
Rusholme, Manchester

Hype and higher price?

I've just read the letters page in your May issue and was pleased to see some response to my letter that was printed in a previous issue about the

Print Shop Deluxe special offer

Many thanks to everyone who wrote in to ask for the three extra fonts for our Print Shop Deluxe cover disk demo. We were quite overwhelmed by the response, and we're just glad that the demo proved so useful for so many of you. Everyone should have had their extra fonts disk long ago, with one notable exception: could you, Mr or Ms T A Begg, please write in with your address — if you're still interested? Finally, please don't suddenly decide that you'd like some extra fonts for Print Shop Deluxe; the offer is now firmly closed!

price and quality of PC games. I would like to answer a few of the comments made.

Firstly, to Mr John, I would like to say that my comments about poor gameplay weren't simply based on F-15 III but on bitter experience of the many games I have played on my PC (F-15 III and Comanche were just examples).

I agree that there are some excellent games available (Monkey Island 2 and Ultima Underworld) but the point was, the more presentation a company puts into a game the more they feel they are entitled to charge a higher price for it. As to his point about mail order, doesn't the fact that companies can afford to reduce the price of a £45 game by £10-£20 tell you something? Somebody is making a lot of money.

As to Mr. McClan's comments about buying the right software, I did buy Indy and the Fate of Atlantis, it cost me £35 and I think it was well worth it. The point of my letter was that as new "mega games" are released the price seems to go up without any actual improvements in gameplay while people from software houses either tell us we never had it so good or blame it on piracy.

Now that I've said that of course, more people will probably write in and say, "Well, what about Falcon 3.0, etc?", and I agree. There are some good games available that do live up to the hype surrounding them (X-Wing for one, and my CD-ROM is itching to get 7th Guest).

But if games become more and more expensive, fewer people will be able to afford them and piracy will become more rife.

What will the response of the software industry be? Yep, put the prices up and blame the software pirates. Again, I'm not condoning piracy, but the sort of prices we're talking about here do make the prospect of a free copy far more tempting.

Stephen Higgins
Sale, Cheshire

Super Cars search

I am writing to ask if you could possibly tell me how and where to obtain a copy of the game Supercars 2 by Gremlin Graphics.

I have seen the game on the Amiga 500 and on the box there were screen shots from the PC version. After asking at many computer retail shops I discovered that it had been withdrawn to be released as a budget game. I wrote to Gremlin who told me that the game was simply no longer available and they could help me no further.

I would very much like to obtain a copy of this game and that you may be able to help me as I can't think of anywhere else to turn to.

Bill Slaymaker
Headington, Oxford

Xenobots with a mind of their own

As a keen player of many simulation games I feel you may be interested in some criticisms I have of the game Xenobots. As reviewed in your magazine, it's a game mixture of strategy, simulation and tactics set in an alien-infested post-holocaust future.

The first gripes are largely to do with the forces that you control when they are in auto mode, ie, the gameplayer is too screwed up to control events himself.

I deployed two net builders to deploy relays automatically while I got on with the messy business of fighting a battle. Cycling through the robots several minutes later I found that both robots had driven themselves on to terrain from which they could not move. This can really screw up your ideas of expansion, as the other 'bots rely on the relay net to get their energy.

Luckily I managed to destroy the Alien Xenobots by manually controlling my own forces. My mission brief had been to destroy all enemy forces. Having done this they still did not accept defeat. I eventually sussed that I had to destroy the enemy base in order to complete the mission. This involved marching my available forces (not including the two stuck on a hillside somewhere) up to the enemy base.

Having used up all the energy in my robots without successfully destroying the base, I then had to march them all the way back to the energy net. Suitably recharged I got them back within strike range and targeted all their computers on the enemy base, set them to automatic and thought I'd go to the loo while they blasted seven bells of smelly stuff out of the base.

I hadn't counted on the moronic stupidity of the systems again. They had all run out of juice firing their weapons and had decided to retreat. At some stage (even though they have a collision avoidance mode) they decided to ram each other. When I returned two were practically inoperable and I had to limp back for repairs before repeating the entire process again.

OK, you've guessed. I'm disappointed. It could be a great game, though. Nice robot graphics (although the terrain is appalling), OK sound effects and strategy potential. I'm particularly upset because I bought Comanche, also written by Novalogic, which is a *great* game and will be even better once the missions disks are available.

Finally, a quick word to David Inglis of Edinburgh who won your April 1993 Star letter. I largely agree with your comments about flight sims, David, but a couple of points.

As a professional pilot, I can tell you that FS4 is perhaps best known for its detailed representation of instrument flying. I reckon that there are other sims/games that are more satisfying for you in terms of "stick 'n' rudder" fun which actually fly better. MIG29M Super Fulcrum flies very realistically in complex flight mode although I cannot vouch for the game itself.

Also you are wrong to criticise FS4 for allowing any aircraft to stall at any speed. Stalling is a function of the angle at which airflow is presented to the lifting surface, and not of speed per se. Stalling speeds are usually quoted for certain aircraft but this does not mean that they cannot be stalled faster, especially if you haul on the "G"!! OK, in your Cessna your wings may fall off first, but you know what I'm getting at

Paul Haynes
West Swindon, Wilts

Californian customs

I am planning a trip to California in the autumn and as software is cheaper over there I was going to buy some games. Are there any snags in my doing this, legal or otherwise?

Steffan Kent
Horsham, Sussex

There are two things you should be aware of. Firstly, you will need to bear the requirements of HM Customs and Excise in mind when you return to the UK. The personal allowance for goods from the US is £36 (ie, about one PC game). If you bring back any more than that you will be charged duty of 5.1%, plus VAT of 17.5%. So, go shopping with a calculator to ensure you really will be making a saving!

Secondly, if the product you buy requires you to register for support, the reply card will only have the US address on it, and the UK division (if the publisher has one) may be unwilling or unable to offer you direct support or other registration facilities.

Competition winners

Swift printers (Issue 17)

Stashed away in the recesses of Mr C Hathaway and Michael Dobson's brains are some curious snippets of knowledge. They know, for example, that the noise which is also a children's game is Ker-plunk!, that the art of adding sound effects to film soundtrack is dubbing, and that Mad magazine was renowned for bizarrely written sound effects. Furthermore, they were plucked from the PC Review competition hat: Mr Hathaway, from Amersham, Bucks, emerged first, and wins a Swift 240C colour dot matrix printer; Mr Dobson, of St Neot's, Cambs, followed closely behind and takes the Swift 200C.

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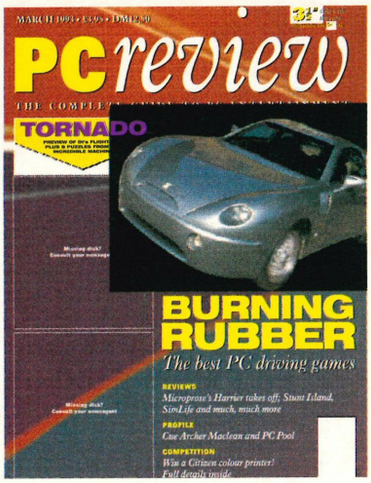
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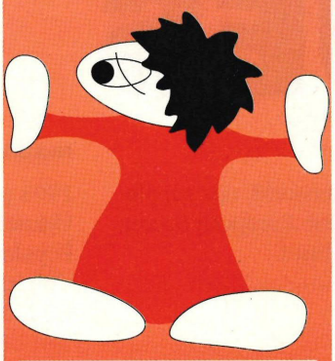
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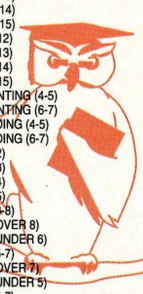
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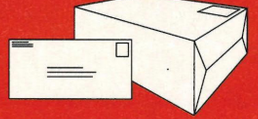
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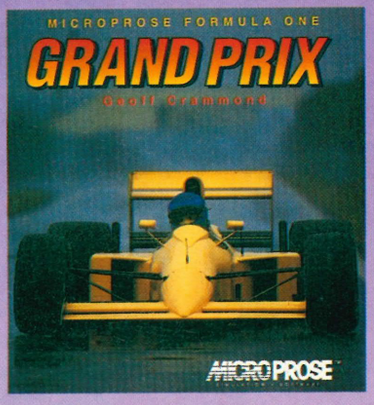
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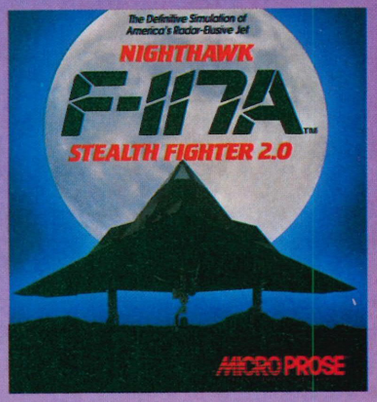


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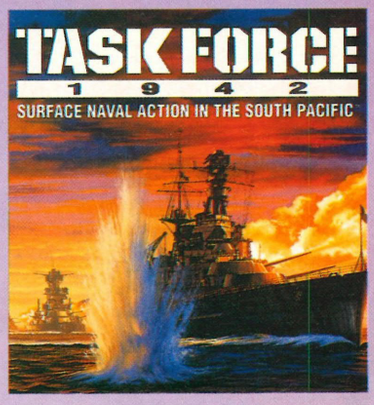
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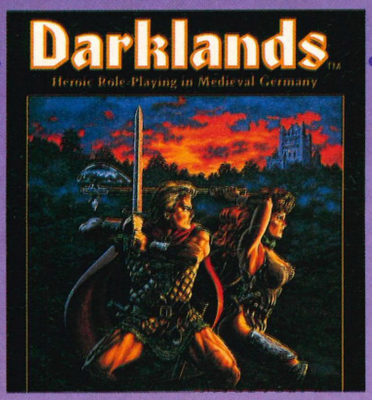
A long lance torpedo rips through the hulk of your flagship. Huge columns of water from enemy gunfire surround your battleship. It's just another day in Task Force 1942. Extensively researched and historically



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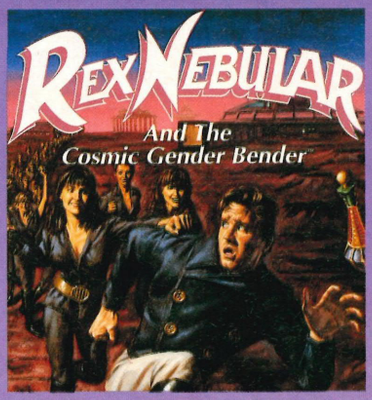
Darklands is the first realistic fantasy role-playing game.



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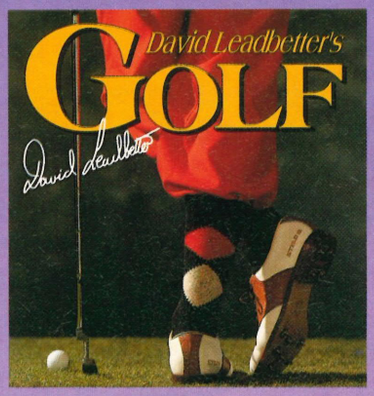
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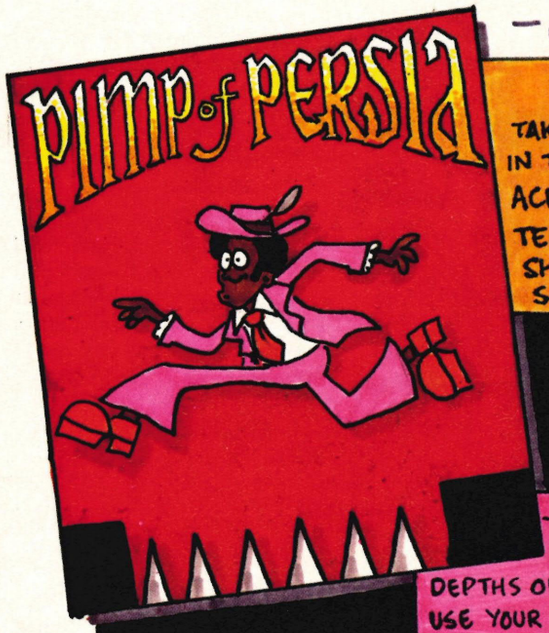
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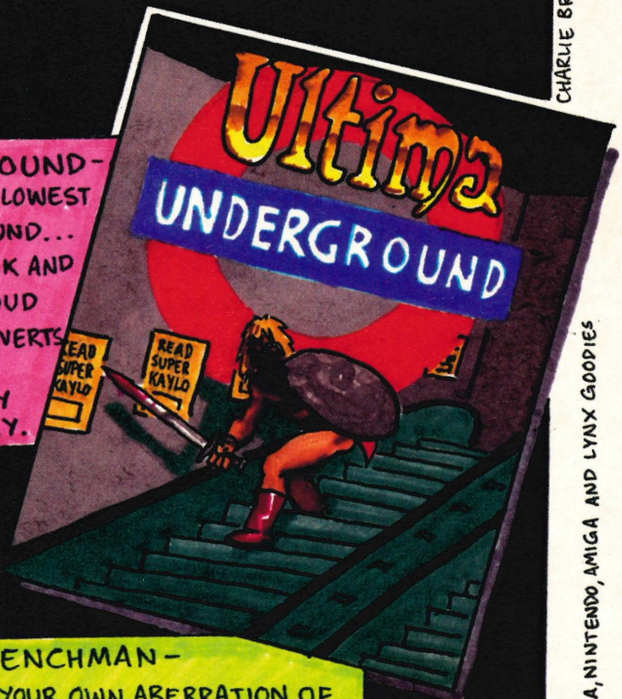
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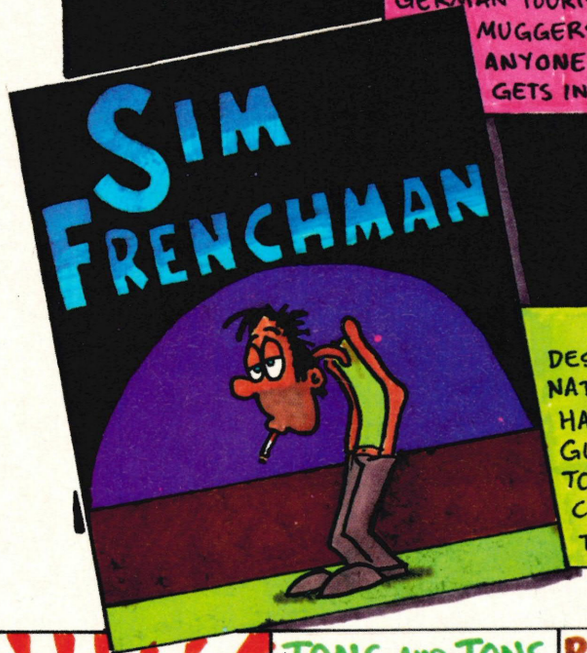
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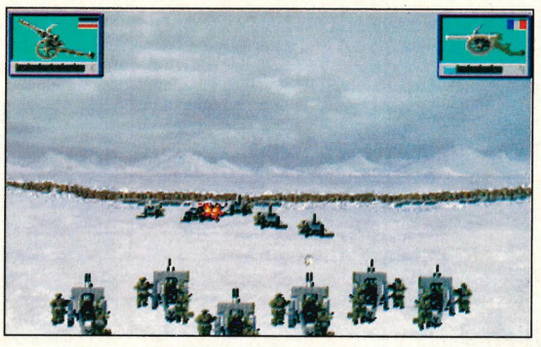
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Title	Publisher	Rating	Issue no
3D Construction Kit 2.0	Domark	6	16
*7th Guest	Virgin	7	20
A-Train	Maxis/Ocean	7	12
A-Train Construction Set	Maxis	5	17
A Line in the Sand	SSI/US Gold	3	18
Aces of the Pacific	Dynamix/Sierra	8	11
Advantage Tennis	Infogrames	6	4
Adventures of Willy Beamish	Dynamix/Sierra	5	1
Alone in the Dark	Infogrames	9	14
Another World	Delphine/USG	8	7
Archer Maclean's Pool	Virgin Games	8	19
Ashes of Empire	Mirage	7	17
ATAC	MicroProse	8	14
AV-8B Harrier Assault	Domark	9	15



A

B17 Flying Fortress	MicroProse	6	12
Bard's Tale Construction Kit	Electronic Arts	7	3
BAT II	Ubisoft	7	15
Battle Isle	Ubi Soft	7	3
Battlechess 4000	Interplay	6	18
Battletech: Crescent Hawk's Revenge	Activision	5	3
Big Deal	Accolade	4	1
Birds of Prey	Electronic Arts	5	13
Bloodwych	Mirror Image	5	2
Bodyworks	Guildsoft	–	15
Buzz Aldrin's Race into Space	Interplay	6	20



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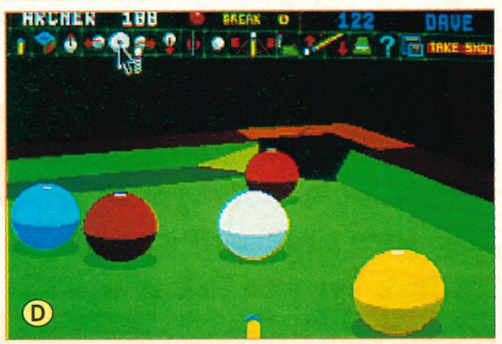
Cadaver	Bitmap Brothers	7	3
Caesar	Impressions	7	16
Campaign	Empire	4	16
Captive	Mindscape	6	15
Car & Driver	Electronic Arts	8	16
Carrier Command	Kixx	5	15
Carrier Strike	SSI/US Gold	6	10
Carriers at War	SSG/Elect. Arts	7	13
Casino Gambling	Accolade	3	1
Castle of Dr Brain	Sierra	8	4
Castles II: Siege and Conquest	Interplay	6	16

Title	Publisher	Rating	Issue no
*CD–ROM Games Pack	Software Toolworks	–	3
Championship Manager	Domark	4	13
Chemistry Works	Guildsoft	–	15
Chessmaster 3000	Software Toolworks	9	4
Civilization	MicroProse	7	1
Comanche Maximum Overkill	NovaLogic/USG	6	16
*Compton's Multimedia Encyclopedia	Britannica	–	3
Conan the Cimmerian	Virgin Games	4	4
Conquests of the Longbow	Sierra	7	3
Contraptions	Mindscape	6	17
Creepers	Psygnosis	5	18
Crisis in the Kremlin	Spectrum Holobyte/MicroProse	6	11
Cruise for a Corpse	Delphine/US Gold	8	6
D/Generation	Mindscape	7	6
Dagger of Amon Ra: Laura Bow II	Sierra	8	12
Darklands	MicroProse	5	14
Darkseed	Mirage	4	9
Daughter of Serpents	Millennium	7	18
Deluxe Trivial Pursuit	Domark	5	15
Disney Animation Studio	Disney/Infogrames	8	7
Dogfight	MicroProse	5	20
Double Dragon III	Storm	2	13
Dreadnoughts	Turcan Research	6	9
Dune	Virgin Games	7	8
Dune 2 — Battle on Arrakis	Virgin Games	7	16
Dungeon Master	FTL/Psygnosis	6	12
Dyna Blaster	Ubi Soft	7	14
Earl Weaver Baseball 2	Electronic Arts	6	2


C

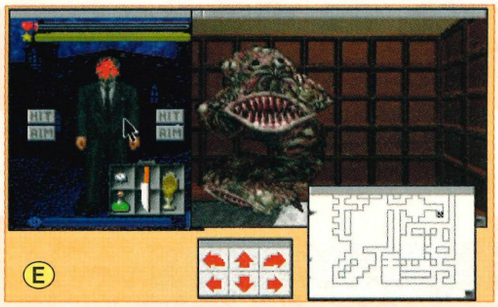
Eco Quest	Sierra	7	8
El–Fish	Maxis	5	18
Elf	Ocean	6	7
Elvira: the Arcade Game	Accolade	7	4
Elvira II: Jaws of Cerberus	Accolade	7	6
Epic	Ocean	4	10
Eric the Unready	Accolade	7	18
Eternam	Infogrames	8	10
European Championship 1992	Elite	7	10
Eye of the Beholder II	SSI/US Gold	7	4
F15 Strike Eagle III	MicroProse	8	16
Falcon 3.0	Spectrum Holobyte/MicroProse	9	4
Falcon 3.0c	Spectrum Holobyte/MicroProse	9	9
*Family Choice	Britannica	–	1
Fantasy World Dizzy	Code Masters	5	12
*Fascination	Coktel Vision	6	9
First Samurai	Ubi Soft	7	14
Flight of the Intruder	Action Sixteen	8	15
Floor 13	Virgin Games	7	2

Title	Publisher	Rating	Issue no
Formula One Grand Prix	MicroProse	8	15
Fort Apache	Impressions	3	7
Free DC	Cineplay/US Gold	4	5
Front Page Sports: Football	Dynamix/Sierra	7	16
Fun School 2	Hit Squad	7	15
Future Wars	Kixx XL	6	15
Games: Winter Challenge	Accolade	7	3
Global Effect	Millennium	4	11
Gobliins 2	Coktel Vision	7	16
Gods	Bitmap Brothers	8	4
Golden Eagle	Loriciel	7	5
Grandmaster Chess	Accolade	7	12
*Great Cities of the World	InterOptica	–	4
Great Naval Battles	SSI/US Gold	8	15
*Guinness Disk of Records	Britannica	–	1
Hare Raising Havoc	Activision	6	5
Harpoon Datadisks	360/Electronic Arts	8	5
Harrier Jump Jet	MicroProse	6	17
Heimdall	Core Design	8	7
Heroes of the 357th	Electronic Arts	8	10
HeroQuest	Gremlin	5	4
Historyline 1914–18	Bluebyte	8	18
Home Alone	Accolade	4	3
Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	Electronic Arts	8	12
Humans	Mirage	7	17
Hyperspeed	MicroProse	7	4
Immortal	Electronic Arts	6	2
Inca	Coktel Vision	8	14
Incredible Machine	Sierra	8	17
Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis (action game)	US Gold	7	9
Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis (adventure game)	LucasArts/US Gold	9	11



D

Jack Nicklaus Golf and Course Design: Signature Edition	Accolade	6	9
Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker	Virgin	9	11
Jordan in Flight	Electronic Arts	7	19
KGB	Virgin Games	7	13
*King's Quest V	Sierra	5	8
King's Quest VI	Sierra On–Line	6	15
Laffer Utilities	Dynamix/Sierra	3	4
Laser Squad	Blade	5	13
Leather Goddesses of Phobos 2	Activision	6	10
LeChuck's Revenge: Monkey Island 2	LucasArts/US Gold	9	3
Legacy	MicroProse	8	19
Legend	Mindscape	7	9
Legend of Kyrandia	Virgin Games	7	13
Legends of Valour	US Gold	8	15
Lemmings 2 — The Tribes	Psygnosis	8	19
Les Manley: Lost in LA	Accolade	7	5



Title	Publisher	Rating	Issue no
Lord of the Rings II: The Two Towers	Electronic Arts	4	12
Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes	Electronic Arts	8	13
Lure of the Temptress	Virgin Games	8	10
Mad TV	Rainbow Arts	7	1
Magic Candle 2	Electronic Arts	6	7
Magic Candle III	Mindcraft	6	20
Magic Pockets	Bitmap Brothers	7	11
Magnetic Scrolls Collection	Virgin Games	7	1
*Mammals: a Multimedia Encylopedia	Software Toolworks	–	2
Manager, The	US Gold	6	11
Mario is Missing	Mindscape	5	17
Mario Teaches Typing	Interplay	5	14
Martian Memorandum	Access/US Gold	6	1
Matrix Cubed	SSI/US Gold	4	6
Maupiti Island	Ubi Soft	6	6
Midwinter 2: Flames of Freedom	MicroProse	7	5
MiG–29M SuperFulcrum	Domark	7	2
Might and Magic III	New World/US Gold	7	1
Might and Magic IV: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	7	18
Mike Ditka Ultimate Football	Accolade	7	3
Moonstone	Mindscape	6	13
*Multimedia Beethoven	Microsoft	–	6
National Pro Tennis Tour 2	UbiSoft	8	2
*New Grolier Electronic Encyclopedia	Grolier	–	5
NFL Football	Konami	6	10
NFL Pro League Football	Interplay	5	1
Nigel Mansell's World Championship	Gremlin	5	20
*North Polar Expedition	Virgin Games	4	8
Nova 9	Dynamix/Sierra	6	4
Oh No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis	7	5
Omar Sharif's Bridge	Oxford Softworks	6	9
Orbits	Guildsoft	–	15



Title	Publisher	Rating	Issue no
Pacific Islands	Empire	7	7
Paperboy 2	Mindscape	2	5
Patton Strikes Back	Broderbund/Electronic Arts	8	2
Perfect General	Ubi Soft	7	8
PGA Tour Golf for Windows	Electronic Arts	5	12
Pit-Fighter	Domark	4	4
Plan 9 from Outer Space	Gremlin	5	8
Police Quest 3	Sierra	7	2
Pools of Darkness	SSI/US Gold	5	1
Populous II: Trials of the Olympian Gods	Bullfrog/Electronic Arts	8	15
Powermonger	Bullfrog/Electronic Arts	8	3
*Presidents, The: It All Started with George	National Geographic	5	13
Quest for Glory III	Sierra	6	14
Ragnarok	Mirage	5	18
Reach for the Skies	Virgin Games	7	14
Realms	Virgin Games	7	8
Rex Nebular and the Cosmic Gender Bender	MicroProse	8	14
Ringworld: Revenge of the Patriarch		6	19
Risky Woods	Dinamic/Electronic Arts	4	16
Road & Track Presents Grand Prix Unlimited	Accolade	7	13
Rocketeer	Disney/Infogrames	3	5
Rome AD92	Millennium	6	17
Samurai: The Way of the Warrior	Impressions	5	8
Scrabble	US Gold	7	16
Scream Tracker	Datamex	7	10
Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	LucasArts/US Gold	6	1
Shadow of the Comet	Infogrames	7	19
Shadow President	DC True/Empire	8	17
Shadowlands	Domark	8	9
Shadoworlds	Krisalis	7	18
Shanghai 2	Activision	7	1
*Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective	Icom Simulations	–	7
*Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective II	Icom Simulations	7	16



Title	Publisher	Rating	Issue no
Shuttle	Virgin Games	8	5
Siege	Electronic Arts	7	13
SimAnt	Maxis/Ocean	7	6
SimLife	Maxis/Mindscape	6	17
*Software Toolworks World Atlas	Software Toolworks	–	2
Space Ace II: Borf's Revenge		2	5
Space Crusade	Gremlin	4	19
Space Hulk	Electronic Arts	7	20
Space Quest V: the Next Mutation	Sierra On–Line	7	19
Spaceward Ho!	New World Computing	6	20
Spellcasting 201: Sorcerer's Appliance	Accolade	7	1
Spellcasting 301: Spring Break	Accolade	6	14
Spelljammer	SSI/US Gold	7	17
Sports Masters	Empire	7	18
Star Trek: 25th Anniversary	Electronic Arts	7	6
Steel Empire	Electronic Arts	5	7
*Stellar 7	Sierra	–	7
Storm Master	Silmarils	5	7
Strike 2	Millennium	7	2
Strike Commander	Origin	8	20
Stunt Driver	Action Sixteen	5	15
Stunt Island	Disney/Infogrames	8	17
Summoning, The	SSI/US Gold	5	14
Supaplex	Digital Integration	6	5
Super Space Invaders	Domark	5	6
Super Tetris	MicroProse	4	8
Taking of Beverly Hills	Accolade	2	7
Task Force 1942	MicroProse	7	16
Team Suzuki	Gremlin	7	1
Terminator	US Gold	1	1
Terminator 2	Ocean	2	2
Theatre of War	360/Electronic Arts	6	12
Thunderhawk	Core Design	8	5
Titus the Fox	Titus	6	7
Tony La Russa's Baseball II	SSI/US Gold	5	20
*Town with No Name	On–Line Entertainment	3	11
Treasures of the Savage Frontier	SSI/US Gold	4	9
Trolls	Flair Software	7	17
TV Sports Boxing	Cinemaware	6	3
Twilight 2000	Empire	7	5
Ultima Underworld	Origin	9	8
Ultima Underworld II: Labyrinth of Worlds	Origin	8	18
Ultima VII: Part 2 — Serpent Isle	Origin	7	20
Ultima VII	Origin	4	9
Unlimited Adventures	SSI/US Gold	4	20
Unreal	Ubi Soft	2	6
Utopia	Gremlin	7	12
Veil of Darkness	SSI/US Gold	6	19
Wacky Funsters	Tsunami/Accolade	1	19
Waxworks	Accolade	7	15
*Wing Commander/Ultima VI	Origin	6	6
*Wing Commander + Secret Missions 1 & 2	Origin	7	6
Wing Commander 2	Origin	7	1
Wizardry VI: Bane of the Cosmic Forge	Sir Tech/USG	6	10
Wizardry VII: Crusaders of the Dark Savant	Sir Tech/USG	8	13
Wizkid	Ocean	8	16
World Class Leaderboard — the Series	Kixx XL	2	15
World Class Rugby	Domark	2	20
World Tennis Championships	Mindscape	6	11
Wrath of the Demon	Readysoft	4	1
Wreckers	Audiogenic	6	6
X–Wing	LucasArts/US Gold	8	19
Xenobots	NovaLogic/Electronic Arts	5	20
XF5700: Mantis Experimental Fighter	MicroProse	3	14
Zool	Gremlin	7	20

*** CD–ROM titles**



Pictures: A) Bard's Tale; B) Crisis in the Kremlin; C) Epic; D) Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker; E) The Legacy; F) Perfect General; G) Star Trek: 25th Anniversary; H) Wing Commander II.

Done up to the nines

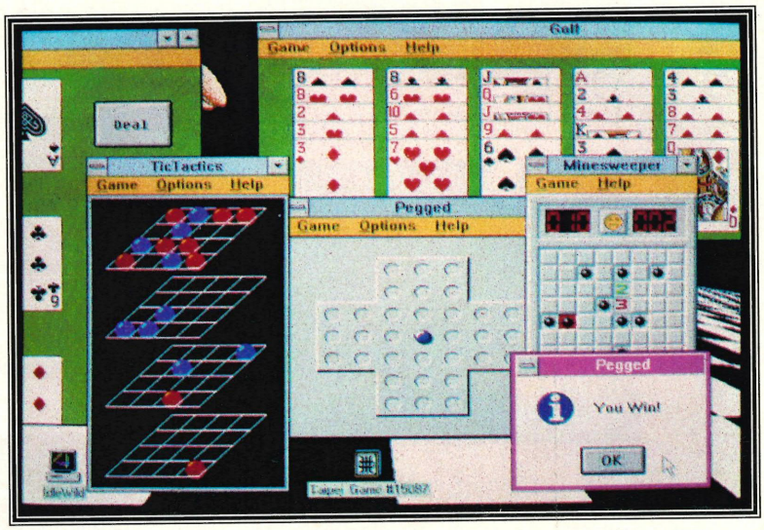
In 21 issues, PC Review has only given eight games the coveted 9 rating, so the following should really take a bow:

1. **Alone in the Dark**
2. **AV8-B Harrier Assault**
3. **Chessmaster 3000**
4. **Falcon 3.0**
5. **Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis**
6. **Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker**
7. **LeChuck's Revenge: Monkey Island 2**
8. **Ultima Underworld**

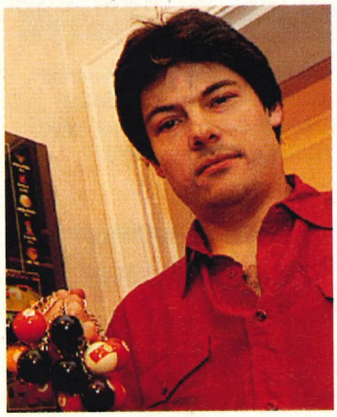
Archer Maclean's

Classic

GAME OF THE MONTH



Microsoft Entertainment Pack



"Not a day goes by without a quick dose of the solitaire Golf, followed by Tetris. I start with a dozen rounds of Golf, and I don't quit until I've completed two or three games with five or fewer cards remaining. After my Golf fix, I have a couple of shots of Tetris, usually on auto-pilot while my mind mulls over the problems of the day. This is a perfect example of the infuriatingly simple puzzles that only the mind of an eastern bloc designer can come up with, and it's hopelessly addictive."

Microsoft's Entertainment Packs — there are four separate releases now available — have introduced many Windows users to playing games on the PC. If you've bought a PC within the last year, you may well find that one of the packs has been bundled with the machine, and that Solitaire, Tetris, Tic Tac Toe, SkiFree, or Klotski can take up a surprising amount of working time. The packs comprise around seven games each and are designed to be very simple, very accessible, and to provide some light relief during coffee breaks. As they all run under Windows, the standard of presentation is high (and you can quit out of them quickly when the boss is around).

Many of the games are based on well-known standards: a number of solitaire (ie, patience) card games, a version of Mastermind (guess the combination of four coloured pegs), even a version of Blackjack on v4. Of Archer's favourites, Golf is a card game, while Tetris needs no introduction from us. Each Microsoft Entertainment Pack costs £34.95.

PROFILE

Archer Maclean is best known in the PC market for Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker and Archer Maclean's Pool, but his first computer program was Dropzone, a space arcade-style game, for the Atari 800. Dropzone was followed up by International Karate, before Archer turned to the green baize for inspiration.

Archer has also asked us to point out, firstly, that had Monkey Island 2 or Lemmings not already been chosen on this page quite recently, he might have gone for either of these instead, and secondly, that on Golf, he has played 4,626 games, with 79 wins, 1,929 5-or-under finishes, and 1,572 10-or-under finishes, and that his all-time record on Tetris, starting at level seven, is 23,239.



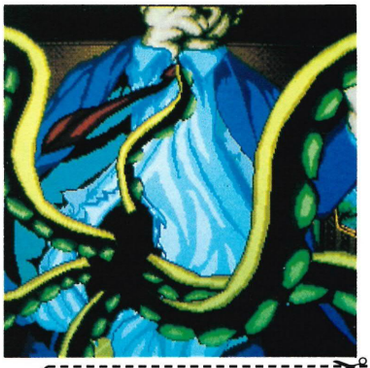



SHADOW OF THE COMET



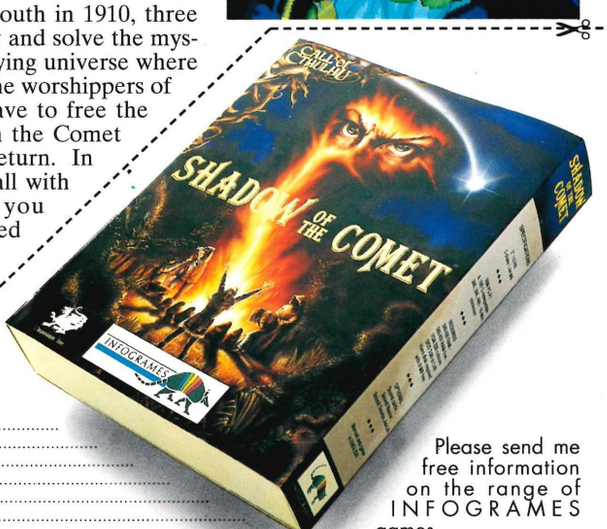

A Game like this only comes around once every 76 years...




A CALL OF CTHULHU ADVENTURE

The last time Halley's Comet flew past, the scientist Lord Boleskine observed that at a specific location in the village of Illsmouth, the stars appeared to be strangely close and threatening. As a result of this phenomenon Boleskine went insane, and his research work faded into obscurity. As a young astronomer, you travel to Illsmouth in 1910, three days before the Comet is due to fly past again, to try and solve the mystery : *Shadow of the Comet* plunges you into a terrifying universe where you must conduct a supernatural investigation into the worshippers of Cthulhu. Three days and three nights is all you have to free the world from the curse which hangs over it, for when the Comet passes again, Cthulhu and the Great Ancients will return. In the village itself, you will meet some forty people, all with greatly differing personalities. They will give you valuable information which is automatically recorded in a notebook which you can refer to at any time. In the course of this absorbing adventure, you will explore more than 100 full-screen settings using either keyboard commands or icons to perform certain tasks. Will you be able to lift the curse of Cthulhu and chase away the *Shadow of the Comet* ?



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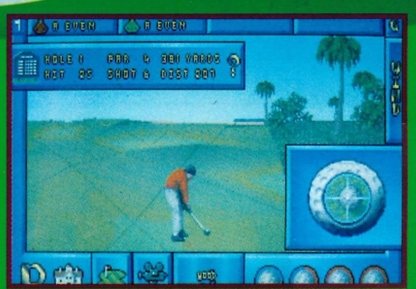
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