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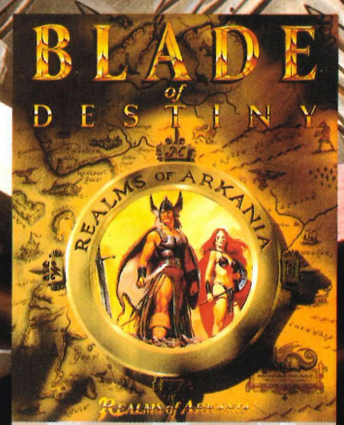
Adventure of the year?

Day of the Tentacle reviewed
page 48

Processors demystified:
page 40

WIN a multi-media kit:
page 26

PC review
Flight simulations
ISSUE 23 SEPTEMBER 1993



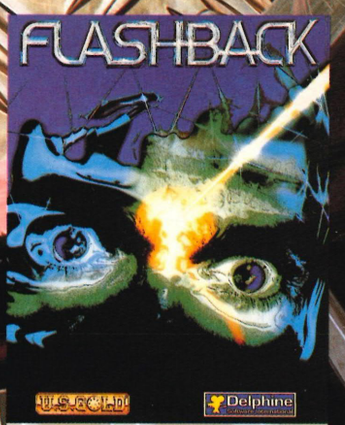
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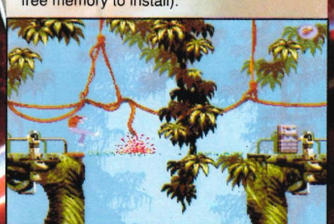




EXPERIENCE A MILESTONE IN ARCADE ADVENTURE

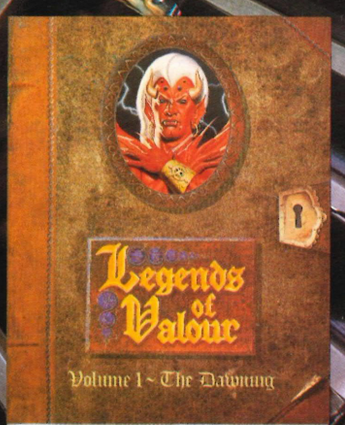
Fast moving action and adventure feature in this unique combination of graphics, animation and music. Produced by Delphine Software, one of Europe's most respected development houses.
Flashback breaks new ground in computer games excitement and intrigue.
Astonishingly lifelike character animation is achieved by the innovative application of Rotoscoping-a technique first developed by the film industry to animate cartoons. Actors are filmed performing all of the movements to be featured in the game and stills from these sequences are used to recreate the movements on screen.

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ROLE-PLAYING FANTASY AT ITS MOST REAL...

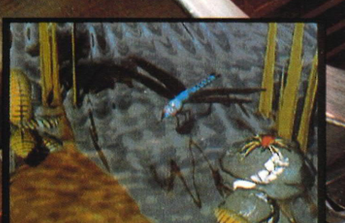
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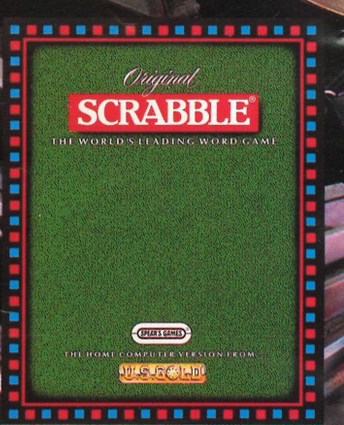
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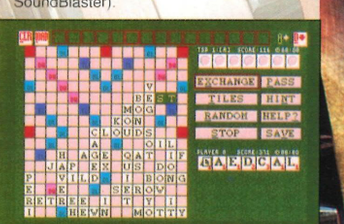


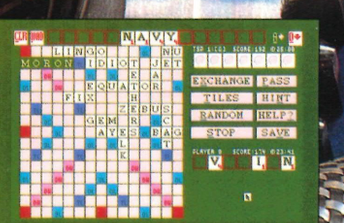


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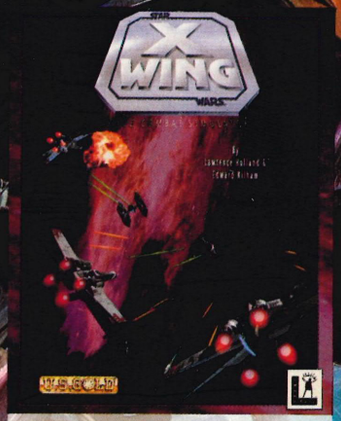
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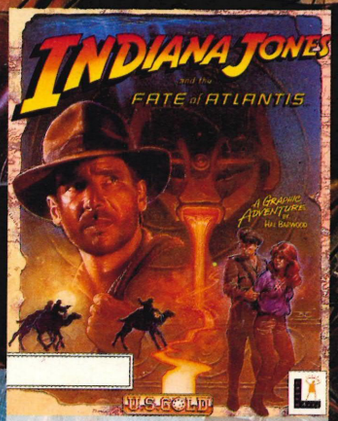




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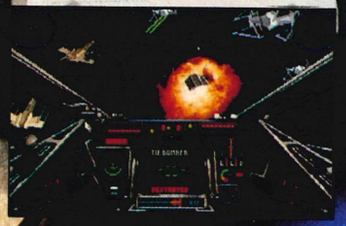
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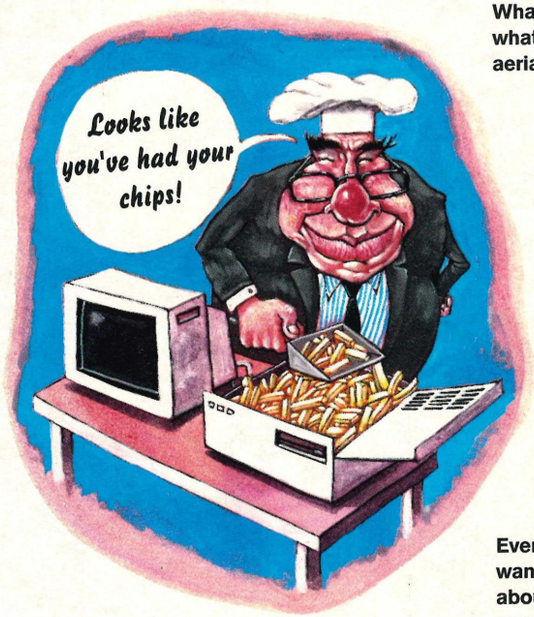
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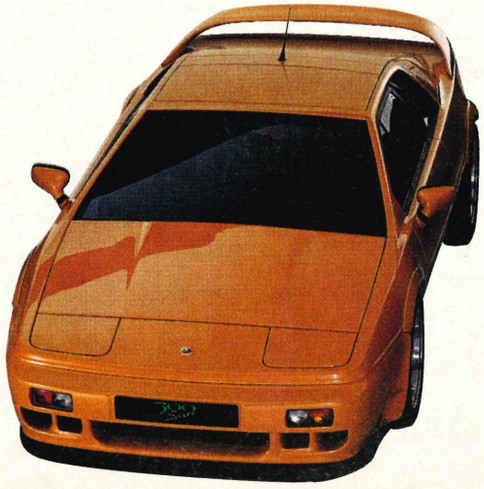
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What's hot, and what's not, in the aerial department



Everything you ever wanted to know about chips, but were afraid to ask ... Andy Johnson investigates, page 40



High speed spills and thrills with Gremlin's Lotus, on page 92

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Bring some life to your PC, in the shape of a complete Multimedia Upgrade Kit, and three Entertainment packages (sound cards, speak ers, games, you know the form ... all waiting to be won.

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Donning his goggles back to front, Dean Evans takes to the skies in search of the ultimate flying experience.

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40 **Processors**

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8 **COVER DISK**

Test your arcade skills with Interplay's great new platform game, The Lost Vikings, or get your head round some tricky puzzles in Sierra's The Even More Incredible Machine. If you're a Windows user, take a break with Volutare 3D. 5.25" disk users can take to the road with Ocean's hot hatchback racing game, Burning Rubber. Plus don't miss our two exclusive demo disk offers for Flashback and Gabriel Knight.

Turn straight to page 8 for full details on installing and using your cover disks.

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PC review

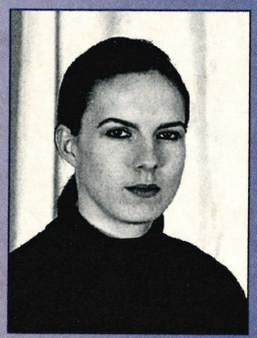
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Christina Erskine
The editor has spent most of this month stuck in jail, and cruising up and down the Old Kent Road — all in the interests of reviewing that board game classic Monopoly, you understand (page 84). She also traces the origins of the games industry on page 36.



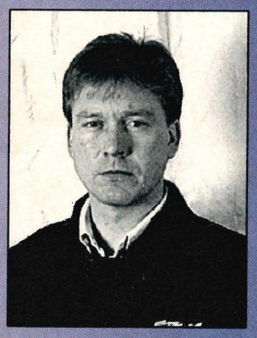
John Bennett
John regressed to his childhood when he got the chance to build a car kit with Revell Motor Stars (page 86). When we finally managed to part him from the glue, he found enough time for a round of golf at the Belfry (page 90).



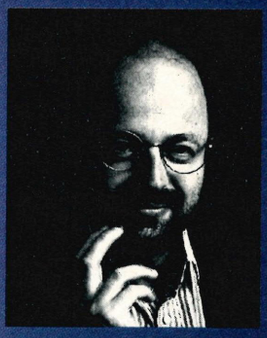
Cal Jones
This month Cal's reviews include Day of the Tentacle (page 48) and Lost Vikings (page 72). Although she says she hates driving, it didn't take much persuading to get her to test drive a real Esprit at the Lotus factory, courtesy of Gremlin.



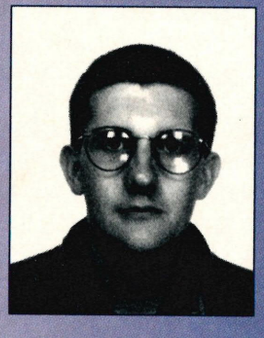
Dean Evans
Squadron leader Evans lovingly researched this month's flight sim round-up (page 28), before rushing off to take on the TIE fighters in Imperial Pursuit (page 68). That's the last time we let him lower his undercarriage in the office.



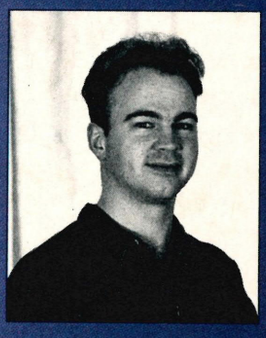
Paul Boughton
Our European production manager has been having a good month, because the office swear box is only half full. After some sulking, he's finally been persuaded to give up his Strike Commander jacket in favour of a dirty old trench coat.



Steve Cooke
This month, guest columnist Steve Cooke examines the attitudes and prejudices people have towards computer games. If you've ever wondered why non-games players regard you as a social leper, turn to page 17 to find out.



Gordon Houghton
Wisely chosing to write from a safe distance away, in Abingdon, our veteran contributor has been getting to grips with Rules of Engagement (page 82), before dragging his pointy hat out of the closet to play Darkside of Xeen (page 88).



Mark Edwards
Mark has been under a lot of pressure this month, what with needing to make last minute changes to the cover and then having to cope when all our computers collapsed on press day. Still, he coped admirably like a true professional.

ISSUE 23 *September 1993*

EMAP Images, Priory Court,
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EDITORIAL
Editor Christina Erskine
Deputy editor John Bennett
Production editor Paula Shields
Staff writers Dean Evans, Cal Jones
Contributors Huw Collingbourne, Steve Cooke, Alan Dykes, Gordon Houghton, Mike James, Andy Johnson,Sam Mackenzie, Robin Matthews, Simon Shaw

DESIGN
Art editors Mark Edwards, Becky Willis
Additional design Sara Pruce
In-house scanning Sara Pruce
Photography Rob Monk

ADVERTISING
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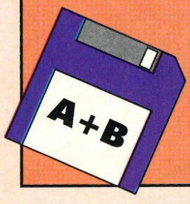
COVER DISKS

The Lost Vikings from Interplay exclusive playable demo has four complete levels for you to try. We also have two puzzle games, Sierra's The Even More Incredible Machine and, for Windows, 3D Volutare. Plus, over the page, you'll find details of two exclusive demo disk offers for Flashback and Gabriel Knight.



The Lost Vikings

3.5" disks only





On disks A and B

This month we're pleased to offer you a chance to play an exclusive demo of The Lost Vikings, a corking platform game from Interplay. The three Nordic adventurers have been teleported into the spaceship of intergalactic zookeeper Tomator, and your job is to help them find their way home. Each level is packed with puzzles, and to solve them you must learn how to make the most of the Vikings' individual talents.

Just to give you a taster, this demo consists of four fun-packed levels to test your platform skills. So if it sounds like your cup of tea, play the disk and then read our three page review on pages 72 to 74.

How to play

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

Vikings [Enter]

How to quit

Hit the Escape key (Esc) to quit the demo, then when it asks you if you wish to quit, simply move the cursor (using the cursor keys) over "Yes" and hit [Enter].

Hardware required

The game requires a minimum of a 286 PC, 256-colour VGA graphics, a hard disk and 640K of memory.

Controls

Using the keyboard, movement is controlled using the cursor keys. Each Viking has his own special moves, and the primary move is selected by pressing F or Space. The primary moves for each Viking are as follows: Erik jumps, Baleog uses his sword and Olaf lowers or raises his shield. The secondary move is selected by pressing D. Erik headbutts walls, Baleog uses his bow and arrows and once again Olaf lowers or raises his shield. Hitting S activates a switch or piece of machinery. To swap from one Viking to another, press Ctrl or Ins.

The Vikings automatically pick up items when they run over them, but to use the item, highlight it using Tab and then press E. When you have higlighted an item, the cursor around it will flash. Press Esc to stop it flashing and you will then be able to use the item or give it to another character. To give an item to another Viking, highlight it using Tab and then press [Enter]. Then use Tab to move the cursor to the inventory of the Viking you wish to receive the item.

Instructions

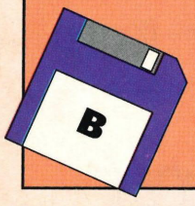
The aim is to complete each level with all three Vikings. It's possible to complete a level if one or two of the Vikings get killed, but you can't move on to the next level unless you have completed the previous level with all your characters alive and intact.

Hints and tips

Each level contains plenty of puzzles, and the trick is to solve them using each of your Viking's special skills. Olaf can protect against monsters and fireballs with his shield, so it's best to send him on ahead. Baleog can kill monsters with his bow, so stand him behind Olaf and fire away to get rid of those pesky monsters. Erik is the only character who is able to jump, so he can leap up and get those hard to reach goodies such as food or bombs.

Volutare 3D

3.5" disks only



On 3.5" disk B

All the way from Sweden, Volutare 3D is an ingenious and addictive puzzle game designed to run under Microsoft Windows.

How to play

It really couldn't be simpler. Go into Windows and then double click on the Volutare 3D icon to get it started. The idea of the game is to rotate the coloured blocks until the uppermost faces are all the same colour. To change the colour of the blocks, click on them using the mouse pointer.

How to quit

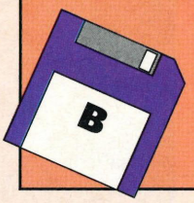
Close the window as you would with any other Windows application.

Hardware required

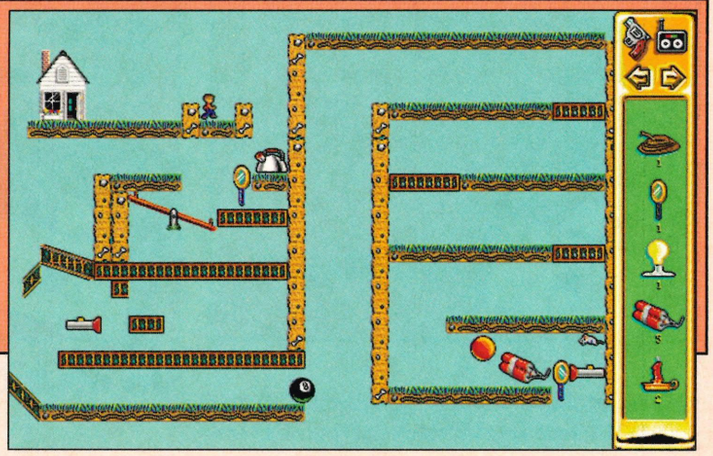
Any PC which is capable of running Windows 3.0 or 3.1 will be suitable for running Volutare 3D. First you must have Windows installed on your PC's hard disk, and in addition you will need a Microsoft compatible mouse to play the game itself.

Incredible Machine 2

3.5" disks only



On 3.5" disk B



Our first demo of Sierra's The Incredible Machine proved very popular when it appeared on the cover disk of our March issue (issue 17), so we're giving you another chance to get your teeth into some brain teasing puzzles in this demo of the follow-up, The Even More Incredible Machine.

The aim is to construct a sort of Heath-Robinson contraption from the available components, which might include anything from ramps, balls and see-saws to such weird and wonderful things as mice on treadmills, monkeys on bicycles and goldfish bowls. Each screen is a separate puzzle, and these vary from getting a basketball through a hoop to saving Bob the goldfish from a fatal encounter with a bowling ball!

How to start

Log on to the directory in which you installed The Even More Incredible Machine, and type the following to play the game straight away.

Tim [Enter]

How to quit

While playing the game, press the right button to get the menu screen. Click the left button on the red button icon on the control panel. When you do this, you should see the word "quit" on the cursor.

Control

The Even More Incredible Machine is controlled by mouse. Whilst it is possible to use the keyboard, I wouldn't recommend it on the basis that it makes the game tortuous to play and you might have difficulty quitting .

How to play

On starting the game, a menu will appear on screen and you will see a description of what you have to achieve with this particular puzzle. A small picture of the game screen will appear above this. Move the cursor over this and the word "play" should appear. Click on the left mouse button to start the game.

The following icons appear on the control panel:

Green arrow	**Start the game**
Horn	**Volume control**
Bomb	**Restarts level**
Red Button	**Quits game**
Spanner	**Not available on this demo**
Puzzle	**Go to puzzle menu**
Gravity	**Not available on this demo**
Air pressure	**Not available on this demo.**

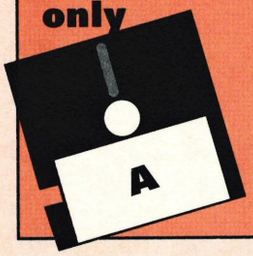
You are given just enough equipment to complete each level. When you have started the game, the puzzle will be explained and you will see the puzzle's fixed devices in the centre of the screen and further equipment on the right. You can select the piece of equipment you wish to use by placing the cursor over it and then clicking with the left mouse button. Now simply drag it across to the puzzle and place it wherever you want to use it. Once you have moved an item, a dotted box will appear around it. Clicking on the hand will allow you to move the box; clicking on the trashcan will return the item to the right hand of the screen and clicking on the red arrow will turn the object around. Items that are already on screen at the start of the puzzle are fixed and can't be moved.

Installing your cover disk: details on page 11

COVER DISKS

CD-Player

5.25" disks only



On disk A

CD-Player allows you to play audio CDs on your CD-ROM and can also catalogue your CD collection.

Requirements

You need a CD-ROM, Windows 3.0 or 3.1 and a soundcard.

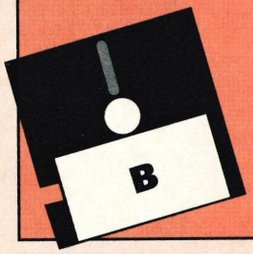
Control

To run, use the Run option in the File menu of the program manager and enter the drive and path where you have installed the program. For further installation instructions, type

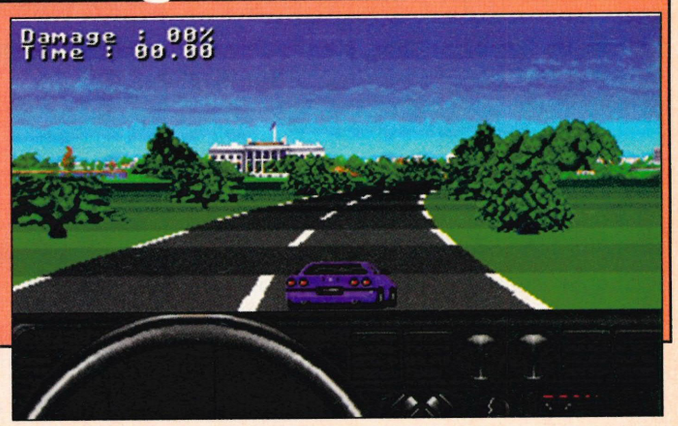
Type install.dos |more [Enter]

Burning Rubber

5.25" disks only



On disk B



We can also offer you an exclusive demo of Burning Rubber, a fast and furious road racing game from Ocean. Take to the wheel of one of six hot hatchbacks as you cruise at break-neck speeds through Europe and the USA. The competition is red hot, but watch out you don't run into the boys in blue!

Requirements

Burning Rubber needs a 386 with VGA, 640K RAM. The game can easily be run straight from the floppy, just log on to the A: drive and type

brdemo_x [Enter]

Control

Movement is controlled using the cursor keys. Use the left and right arrow keys to control direction, whilst the up arrow key causes you to accelerate and the down arrow key is used for braking. Press F1 when stationary to view the overhead map screen, F2 to look at the police capture view and F3 to cycle through the six dream mobiles. Finally try pressing PageUp to cycle through the available graphics modes. For the full game instructions, type

Type readme.txt|more [Enter]

Exclusive demo disk offer

Games get bigger, and demos get bigger. Unfortunately, floppy disks don't and because of this the biggest and best selling programs are often too big to fit on to humble magazine cover disks. As a result, PC Review has teamed up with US Gold and Sierra to offer you the chance to get your hands on a copy of two of the best demos around.

US Gold's Flashback stunned us all in the office last month with its superb rotoscoped animation, platform action and big, loud, echoing gun. As Conrad Hart you discover the sinister presence of alien beings masquerading as humans on your planet. Conrad is kidnapped but valiantly escapes into the forest. Having the added inconvenience of sudden and quite inexplicable amnesia, you must guide Conrad through the levels, collecting items and shooting the bad guys.

Right, you ask, how can I get one? Simply send a stamp addressed envelope marked "Flashback Demo Offer" to USGold Ltd, Units 2/3, Holford Way, Holford, Birmingham B6 7AX. The first 200 letters to arrive at the US Gold offices will receive a copy of the Flashback demo. Minimum requirements for Flashback are a 286 PC with 640k RAM.



An extract from US Gold's Flashback – full game

By contrast, Gabriel Knight is the latest graphic adventure from the Sierra stable. Gabriel Knight is a horror story writer who moonlights as a supernatural detective. As he investigates mysterious happenings in New Orleans, he discovers that the heart of the problem may lie within his own bloodline. Can a man be responsible for the crimes of his ancestors? With a neo-Gothic style (high on psychological suspense and dark mythology) this is the opening chapter in the series featuring Gabriel, Sierra's punkish, arrogant and throughly goodlooking hero. Minimum requirements for GK are a 386SX, 2Mb of RAM and a mouse.

Sierra, bless their little heart, have 100 copies of the Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers demo to give away on high density disks. As above, send a stamp addressed envelope marked "Gabriel Knight Demo Offer" to Sierra On-Line Ltd, Unit 2, Technology Centre, Station Road, Theale, Reading, Berkshire RG7 4AA. The first 100 readers to write in will be posted the stupendous Gabriel Knight demo.



Sierra's Gabriel Knight: seriously atmospheric.

How to use the cover disks

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

A: [Enter]

2. Now type

PCR [Enter]

to load the installation program.

3. There may be a menu asking you to select which language you wish to have the installation messages displayed in. To make your selection use the mouse or cursor keys to move the highlight bar and then click the left mouse button or press the Enter key.

4. A list of programs on the disk will now be displayed. To select the program you wish to install or run, use the mouse or cursor keys to move the highlight bar and then press and release the left mouse button or the Enter key.

5. If the program is of a type that runs directly it will do so now before returning you to the menu and step 4.

6. If the program has to be installed to another disk you will now have to tell the program where you want it to be installed.

7. The program will suggest a drive and directory to install the program to. If you are happy with the suggested location, press the enter key and installation will begin.

8. If you would like the program to be installed to a different drive and/or directory, backspace over the suggested pathname and enter another one. You cannot install the program on the cover disk itself.

9. If there is insufficient space on the disk you have specified, or if the directory you have specified cannot be created, the program will inform you of this and give you the opportunity to enter an alternative location.

10. All being well, the program will now be decompressed and installed at the specified location. You will see a series of messages on the screen as this happens.

11. Once the program has been successfully installed you will see a message reminding you of where it was installed to and telling you which command starts the program. Press a key to return to step 4.

12. When you have installed or played all the programs that you wish to, press Esc to exit to DOS.

Important note for users without a hard disk.

1. Providing that the programs will fit, you can install them on to another floppy disk.

2. If you have a twin drive system you should leave the cover disk in one drive and install each program to a blank formatted disk in the second drive.

3. If you only have a single disk drive, you can install the programs to a blank, formatted disk using the same drive. You should specify drive B: when asked for an install path. DOS will now prompt you when you need to swap the disks. When it asks you to insert the disk for drive B: you should insert the blank disk. When it asks you to insert the disk for drive A: you should put the cover disk back in. You will have to swap disks several times during the installation process.

4. On some occasions you may be asked to insert a system disk. In this case you should insert a system disk instead of the cover disk, and then swap them again when prompted to do so.

Important note for users with mono, LCD or plasma displays

1. The installation program should automatically detect whether you have a mono or colour display and run in the appropriate mode.

2. If you have a grey scale LCD or plasma display you may prefer to run the program in mono rather than colour. You can do this by starting the program with the command:

PCR M [Enter]

3. If you have a non-standard colour display which the program fails to detect you can force it to run in colour mode by starting it with the command:

PCR C [Enter]

Helpline

If you have difficulty in getting your disk to operate, please telephone our helpline number below before returning the disk.

Disk Helpline: (0685) 350505

The helpline operates between 10.30 am and 12.30 pm weekdays.

Please note

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

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

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

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

Faulty disk?

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

PC Wise
Dowlais Top Business Park, Dowlais
Merthyr Tydfil, Mid-Glamorgan
Cymru, CF48 2YY

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

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

.....

.....

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

NEWS

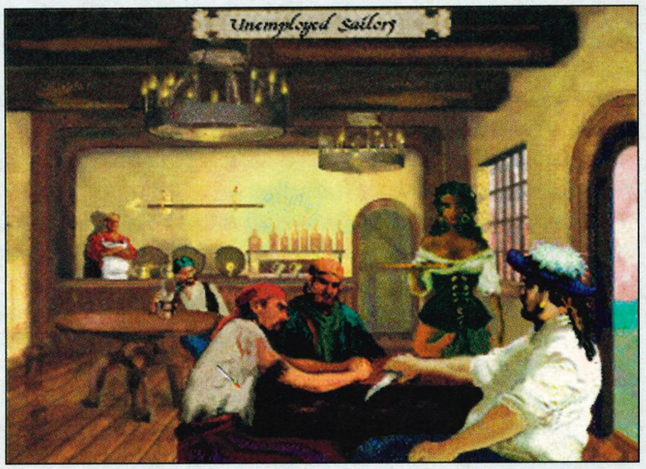
Wild Bill bites the bullet

Last month US games company Spectrum Holobyte announced a $10 million buy-out of flight sim specialist MicroProse. The deal, which sees Spectrum Holobyte — publishers of the acclaimed Falcon 3.0, and the not-so-acclaimed Chess Maniac Five Billion and One — acquire a 60 per cent majority share, brings to a close a turbulent chapter in MicroProse's history.

The multi-million dollar deal has also prompted a significant shake-up of the MicroProse company hierarchy with Sid Meier remaining, whilst co-founder Bill Stealey will leave his job as president and chief executive.

Although the European arm of MicroProse has had a relatively successful year, the company as a whole reported a loss of nearly £3 million. For the most part, the financial hiccups seem to stem from the US, where MicroProse has been involved in a number of capital intensive ventures including a move into arcade machines and launching several products which have not complimented the company's portfolio. The past eight months has also seen MicroProse diversify from its traditional flight simulator market.

MicroProse Europe expects the merger to make little change to the overall way that its business operates. "We see this as a positive move," commented Jason Dutton, PR executive for MicroProse UK. "It will enable us to broaden our already high-quality range. MicroProse Europe doesn't anticipate any change in the way it is run." No decision has been made as to whether the company name will be changed as a result of the merger but now, with its new structure, MicroProse can look towards the future and concentarte on producing top-quality games.



Pirates! Gold, a revamp of a Sid Meier classic, is the latest of several MicroProse releases, a product not due to appear until late August. The plethora of recent releases from the company should reassure the buying public that it's business as usual at MicroProse.

Interaction to team up with PC Review

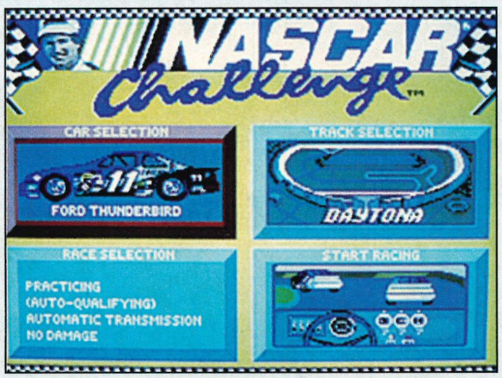
Next month PC Review will be even better value for money than ever. You'll get not one, but two magazines for your cash, because Sierra On-Line's Interaction magazine will come free with your copy of PC Review.

Interaction is published quarterly by Sierra in the US — it sells for $3.95, and has 500,000 readers. With over 60 pages per issue, it covers all Sierra and Dynamix games in detail, with previews, hints and tips, and interviews with the programmers, designers and graphic artists.

Better reserve your copy now: the October edition will be out on September 15.

Gametek pushes £30 games in bid to beat the pricing war

Gametek's new European division have released details of its PC release schedule for the rest of 1993. Its aggressive pricing policy will ensure that none of the 17 upcoming releases will cost more than £29.99. Gametek is at pains to point out that quality has not been sacrificed in favour of lower prices.



Nascar is one of a series of new releases from Gametek that breaks the £30 barrier.

"There's no question at all about the quality of these titles. The only doubt hangs over the £40-£50 price points currently accepted as 'standard' in the PC games market," said Kelly Sumner, Gametek's European Managing Director. "We see the PC leisure arena as having phenomenal potential but it might just be held back by the premium prices that some publishers charge. We think that it's better to sell 50,000 copies of a game at a lower price than 5,000 at an inflated price. That way, more people get to see games that we are proud of and more and more people get accustomed to playing games on a PC."

Although the immediate policy is to keep games under £30, Sumner did not rule out the possibility of charging more in the future.

New releases include Batman Returns, a puzzle game called Tesserae, Nascar, Wilson Golf and Danger Zone, a flight sim.

Explosion in Japan pushes up PC prices

The price of computers is set to rise after an explosion and fire which levelled a chemical factory in the Japanese town of Niihama.

The factory, owned by the Sumitomo Chemical Company, made 55 per cent of the world's supply of an epoxy resin crucial for making the plastic packaging around RAM chips and microprocessors.

The disaster has sparked fears of a RAM shortage, and panic buying by computer companies has sent the price of memory chips spiralling. At the time of going to press, the price had stabilised at around £45 per megabyte, which is a rise of £20.

The first rises seem likely to come from small companies who aren't large enough to negotiate a regular supply from the RAM manufacturers. So far, only one company has announced that it will be putting up PC prices as a result of the explosion, Silicon Valley. It's adding around £100 to the price of its machines.

But larger companies could be affected, too. Dieran Kazandjian, marketing director of Viglen, said larger companies could feel the impact. "At the moment, we're holding our prices," he said. "But we can't do so for ever if prices remain at this level."

No one is too sure how this will effect the market in the long term. Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) and Intel, two of the world's largest suppliers of semiconductors, said they had enough of the resin to see them through the next few months.

But David Brand, managing director of AMD UK, did admit the company was setting up a task force to investigate how other suppliers could make up the shortfall. According to figures from market researcher Dataquest, other suppliers can only meet 80 per cent of world demand for the resin.

While the biggest companies like IBM, Compaq and Dell have enough RAM chips stockpiled to last them a few months, they were unsure as to the long term effects. "We should have a better idea by the end of August," said a spokesman for IBM UK.

Silica goes for Sega

Silica Systems are marketing a new machine based on the Amstrad Mega PC. The Mega Plus PC uses a 33MHz 486 processor. and has a fullly compatible Sega Mega Drive sitting inside the PC's casing.

The price of £799+VAT includes VGA colour monitor, 40Mb hard disk drive, AdLib-style soundcard, stereo speakers and a Sega control pad and joystick. It also comes bundled with games software from Mindscape.

The original 386SX-based Amstrad Mega PC is still available at £599+VAT. For details on either product, call (081) 309-1111.



Music from the page to the screen

Digital Music is launching Midiscan for Windows by American company Musitek.

Midiscan is a revolutionary package which converts printed sheet music into Type 1 multi-track MIDI files, by scanning the sheet into the software.

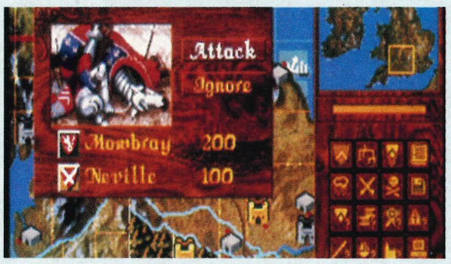
Once it has been scanned, music can be edited and then converted into a standard MIDI file for use with MIDI software. In other words, you can play back the music through a PC soundcard and midi player utility.

No formal music training is required to use the package, and it is equally suitable for serious musicians or casual users. Listed at £285, Midiscan for Windows will be available at the special launch price of £195+VAT. Orders for Midiscan are currently being taken, and for further information call (0703) 270405.

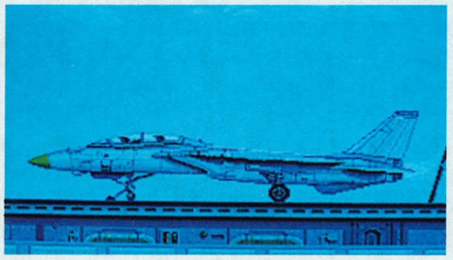
COMING SOON



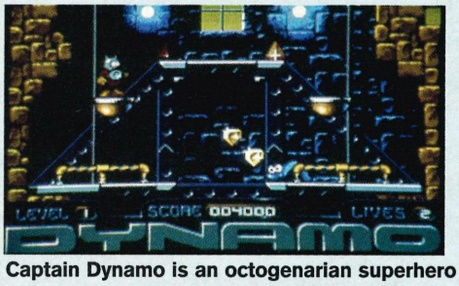
Indy Car Racing promises to pick up where Indy 500 left off. With texture-mapped road and cars, it might even be an F1GP beater.



From boardgame to computer screen, Kingmaker is set during the War of the Roses, with players re-enacting those chaotic times.



Danger Zone a flight sim from Gametek Software, which is ma king a big effort to keep its games under the £30 mark.



Captain Dynamo is an octogenarian superhero fresh out of retirement, performing creaky heroic deeds over many platform levels.



Clash of Steel is another detailed war/strategy game from SSI. Due out this month, it covers the entire European theatre of WWII.

NEWS

IN BRIEF...

● The Interactive Space Encyclopedia is the first title from Andromeda Interactive in Oxfordshire. The CD-ROM is aimed at schools and for general family reference, and it features over 150 3D animations, 2,000 colour photos and 1,000 text documents. Contact Andromeda Interactive on (0235) 529595

● Mortal Kombat is set to hit your PC screens in November. No screenshots were available at the time of going to press, but it looks like it should be there in time to fight it out with Streetfighter 2.

● Silica is cutting the price of Mitsumi CD-ROM drives from over £160 to £149+VAT. Low priced software bundles are also offered with these drives. For details call (081) 309 1111.

● Notebook manufacturer Opti is continuing to fly the Green flag with environmentally-friendly computers. The revamped Chameleon 486SLC notebook is now totally recyclable, including the notebook's casing and all of the packaging.

For information, call Opti on (081) 599 1137

● Microsoft have jumped onto the prehistoric bandwagon with its latest CD-ROM release, Microsoft Dinosaurs. Produced in association with book publisher Dorling Kindersley, the package is an interactive journey into the world of the dinosaur.

Microsoft Dinosaurs aims to show what these huge creatures looked like, how they lived, what they ate and possibly how they died out. Brought to life using sound effects, animation and more than 1,000 colour illustrations, the CD contains information on over 80 dinosaurs, including reference articles, movie sequences and dino screen savers.

Microsoft Dinosaurs will appear in September, priced around £50. Call Microsoft on (0734) 270001.

AST acquires Tandy

On July 14th of this year, AST Research announced its acquisition of Tandy Corp's PC manufacturing operations, which effectively makes it the US's fourth largest PC company.

The purchase encompasses Tandy's PC manufacturing operations and the GRiD North American and European sales but does not include Tandy/GRiD France division.

"The acquired production capabilities, production technologies and marketing and sales organisations represent important enhancements to AST's growth strategy," said AST president and chief executive officer, Safi Qureshey. He went on to say, "In addition, we are pleased to become a valued supplier of PC products to the Tandy retail operations."

"The agreement bolsters AST's manufacturing resources and purchasing leverage, and transfers Tandy and GRiD's highly acclaimed multimedia and pen-based technologies to AST," added Rod Rodericks, Managing Director of AST Europe.

AST will continue to market its own branded PCs, as well as GRiD's award-winning pen-based and notebook computers.

In addition, the company will also market Victor PCs in various European countries, and is also studying various alternatives to the Victor line in other parts of the world. AST will continue to employ approximately 2,200 employees worldwide.

Multimedia moves into furniture...

Thunderseat technologies has announced the release of the Thunderseat Multimedia Chair. Constructed from space age polymer, the Thunderseat chair is a simulation accessory that essentially allows you to create your very own mini-cockpit.

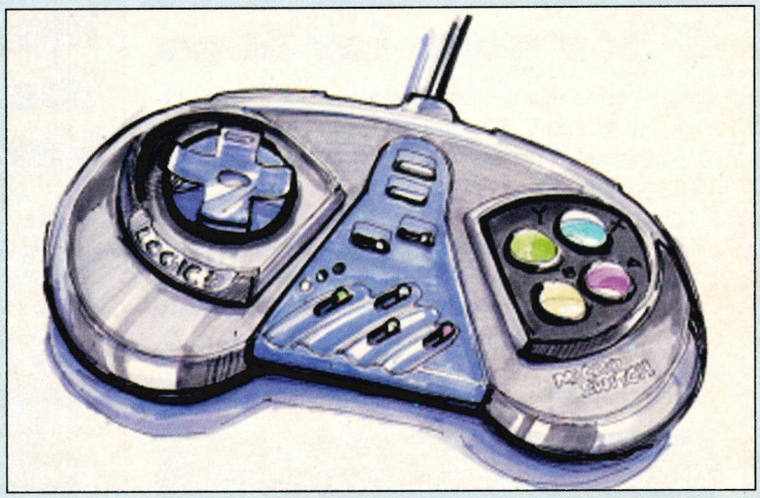
Featuring built-in speakers, the chair claims to heighten the games experience. With Thunderseat sound you can feel the games action explode around you and even create a "surround sound" environment for your favourite CD's.

The Thunderseat can also be purchased with side consoles where you can rest your joystick, putting flight controls at your fingertips. The package is available from Thunderseat Technologies, 6330 Arizona Circle, Los Angeles, CA 90045 priced at a cool $299.95.

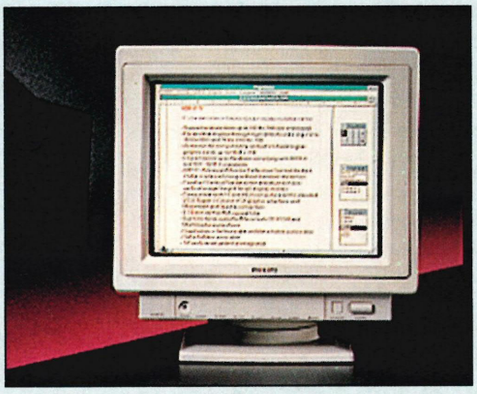
Logic in Tornado and Logipad launch

Logic 3 is responding to the expanding PC game industry with two joystick launches.

According to the company, the Logipad is the world's first games pad with closed micro switches. It features semi and autofire on all six fire buttons and is priced at £17.99. Logic 3 is also launching a PC joystick, the Tornado, which has an ergonomically designed grip and 6 feet of cable. Available in October priced £14.99, call SpectraVideo on (081) 902-2211for information.



Logic 3's new gamepad is the first to feature closed micro switches.



Sound and vision

The latest model in Philips' range of sound monitors is the-4CM4770, a 17" monitor with built in stereo amplifiers and-speakers. Designed to work with all PC compatibles and AppleMacintosh computers, the sound monitor is ideal for use with Windows and multimedia products.

The new monitor is non-interlaced to reduce flicker, and supports all screen resolutions up to 1,024 x 768.

Retailing at £699.99, the price includes one year's on-site-maintenance warranty. Those interested in further details should call Philips on (081) 689-4444.

University teaches Multimedia HND

Although multimedia is claimed to be the fastest growing area in the computer industry, there are few staff who possess the appropriate experience and qualifications to satisfy the demand, according to James Watt College in Greenock, Scotland. To remedy this, the college is introducing an HND course in Multimedia Computing. It was designed after consultation with the industry, both in the UK and the USA, and aims to provide students with a qualification which will be recognised throughout Europe.

Subjects covered include computer graphics, digital audio and video, computer programming and multimedia technology. In addition, students will also be required to take part in a project which involves the design and creation of a complete multimedia application. They can then use the resulting CD-ROM to demonstrate their skills to prospective employers.

To support the course, the college has invested in one of the most up to date computer labs in the country, and each PC has been equipped with a CD-ROM drive and soundcard.

Candidates should have one A-level or two SCE Highers, but mature students without qualifications will be considered on individual merit. For further information contact Aileen Macauley on (0475) 24433.

Level 7 treads the boards

In the lead up to Manchester City of Drama 1994, the Contact Theatre takes to the inner city streets with their production of Kevin Fegan's "Game Challenge Level 7".

The play uses the landscape of a computer game and also the characters within to illustrate the lives of the people of Rusholme, Moss Side and Hulme. Beginning at the Contact Theatre, the audience will set out on coaches to follow computer characters Chaff and Bizee as they battle through the game "Rites of Passage". Scenes will unfold on every street corner as the audience travel the city in search of the elusive 'Level 7'.

Game Challenge Level 7 is performed and produced by people living in the inner city area. The play runs from 7-11 September and tickets are available for £5 (£3 concessions).

For further information, telephone the theatre box office on (061) 274 4400.

KGB to disappear in Virgin Conspiracy

What with the end of the cold war and all that, it seems like the KGB just can't cut the mustard anymore, as they say. At least not enough when it come to selling games. Virgin has now changed the name of its behind the iron curtain politics and corruption adventure from its old title, KGB, to Conspiracy.



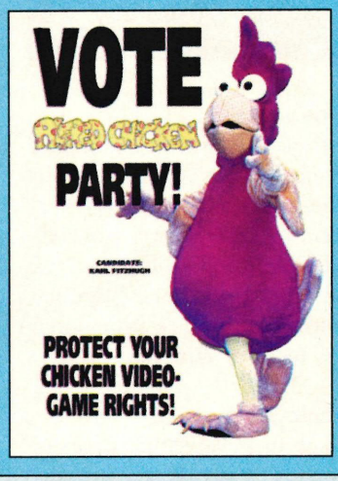
KGB no longer inspires fear...

A CD-ROM version of Conspiracy (aka KGB...) will be released by Virgin in October, with a price yet to be announced.

Alfred Chicken for Prime Minister

The daft publicity stunt of the year award goes to Mindscape. The company promoted Alfred Chicken (alias product manager Karl Fitzhugh, underneath all the feathers) in the Christchurch by-election on 29th July.

Alfred Chicken, the game rather than the future Prime Minister, is currently appearing on console formats. However, Alfred may well make the vital crossover to the PC towards the end of this year, barring intervention from the House of Lords...



Whatever happened to ...?

● Whatever happened to burning babies and combusting canines? Apparently, early versions of Bullfrog's Syndicate contained mums with prams and cute pooches alongside the other city inhabitants.

You might well wonder why these delightful additions didn't make it into the finished product. Well, just try imagining what happens when a trigger-happy games player gets busy with a flamethrower and you'll get the picture. Mum lets go of the burning buggy and it rolls down the street with the baby crying inside, whilst the dog turns into a big ball of flame which runs is circles, yelping and wagging its tail. According to Bullfrog's Peter Molyneux, these were removed in the interests of good taste. Shame.

● Whatever happened to pretentious claptrap? Well, it's apparently still alive and kicking in America. The following little gem appeared in Westwood Studio's first press letter, describing the creation of its role-playing game Legend of Kyrandia. According to game producer Rick Gush, it also "accurately describes the feelings of the Lands of Lore team as well."

"Being on a game design team is sort of like going to summer camp. A strange group of writers, designers, programmers, artists and musicians, we are all crammed together in our psychological tent. The shared frustration and exultation brings us together with the camaraderie of a pack of hyenas. Each individual is cherished, but all melt into the frantic, giggling mass that is the team... We all can't wait to go home now, and we're getting a little edgy waiting for the bus. Nostalgia will set in the instant we're away from the curb. It was an important experience, and we will all cherish the memories."

And I'll bet my bottom dollar that they're all warm human beings, too.

● On the games front, there's still no sign of Elite II. It's nearly finished say Konami but I distinctly recall hearing those words before. March I think it was... or maybe February?

● This time next year maybe we'll be saying "whatever happened to the floppy disk?"

As the 286 flies gracefully into the industry skip it seems that CD-ROM and indeed the PC leisure industry as a whole, is going to take off in a big, if not huge way.

So far we've seen a cosy market consisting of two magazines increase to four and a number of companies now developing for PC only.

Just wait and see what the next year brings. You shall be amazed.

NEWS

Sign of the Times

One year ago ...
Microsoft announced it was going to turn its attention to the games market with a version of Links, cunningly retitled Microsoft Golf. Its stated intention was to use games as a way to introduce more home PC users to Windows.

Three years ago ...
Back in 1990, IBM launched the PS/1 machine, designed as an all-in-one starter PC for use in the home. With a 286 processor running at a not very speedy 10MHz, and versions available either with twin floppy disks or one floppy plus 30Mb hard disk; prices started at just over £800.

Special Reserve adds Sony to its catalogue

Special Reserve, the games club which is an official dealer for Sega, Nintendo, Citizen and other major software labels is adding Sony to its portfolio. As well as including a range of Sony TVs, personal stereos and speakers in its catalogue, the club is also offering discounts on games software with many Sony products.

Only Special Reserve members qualify for offers, but membership can be purchased for £4.99 when ordering goods. Phone Special Reserve Sales on (0279) 600204 for details.



The new range of Sony hardware that joins the existing Special Reserve catalogue

Bull and Packard-Bell join forces

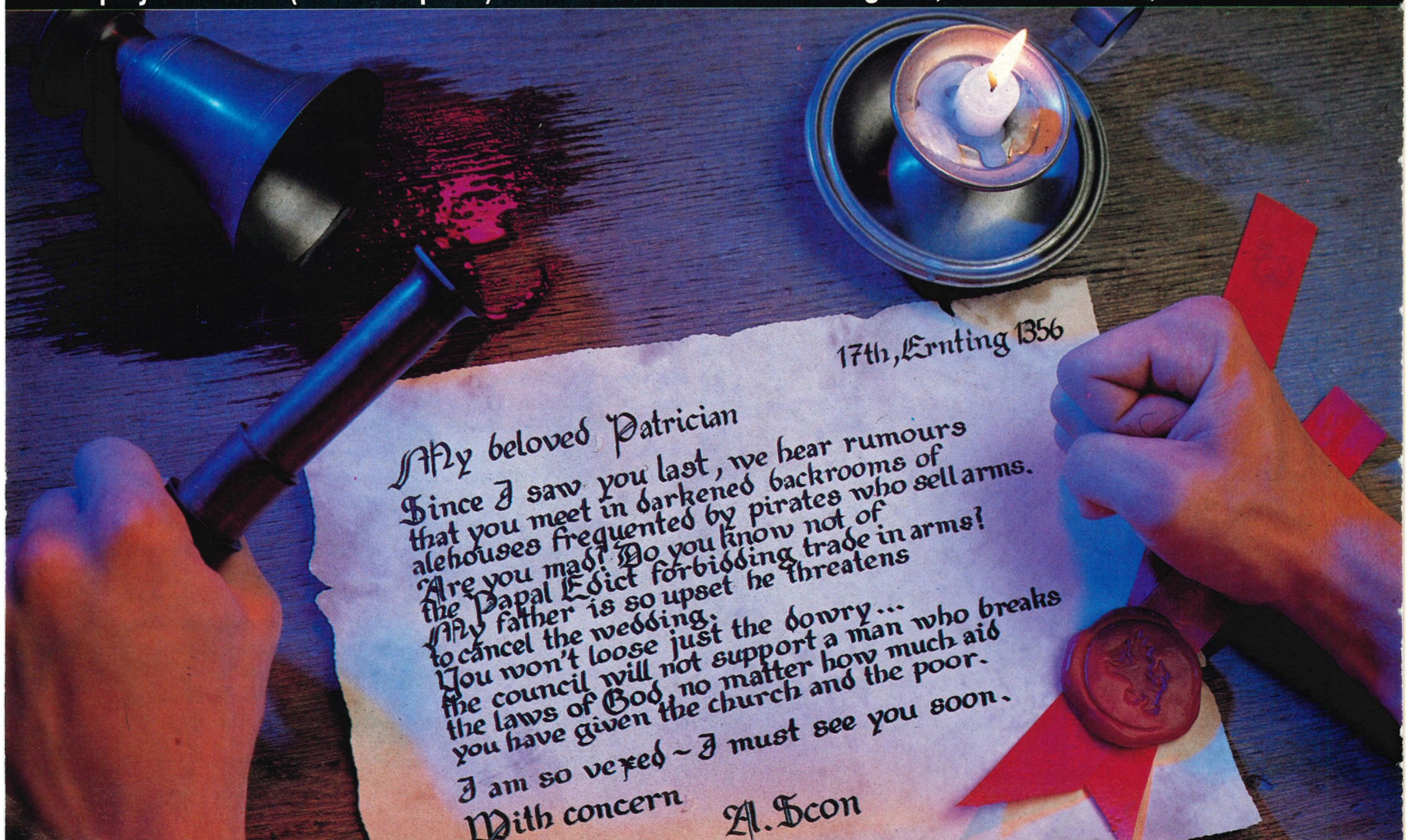
In June of this year, Bull and Packard Bell announced plans to form an alliance between Packard-Bell and Zenith Data Systems.

The upshot of this alliance is a series of plans which include jointly designing and manufacturing desktop PCs, and for Zenith to supply Packard Bell with private label versions of its own highly-rated notebook PCs.

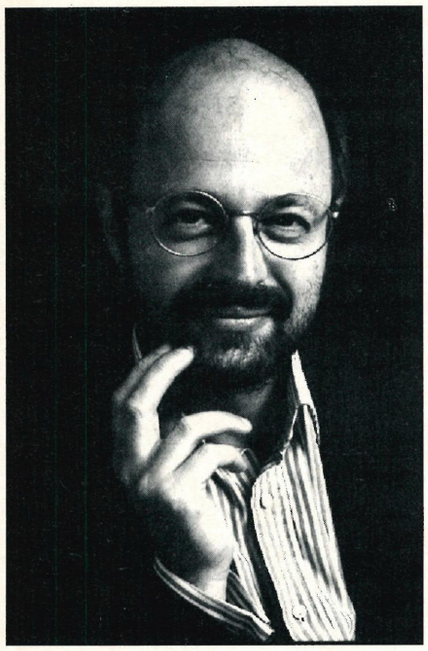
To enforce the deal, Bull is taking a 19.9 per cent interest in Packard-Bell and will be represented on its board of directors.

According to Packard-Bell's President, Beny Alegem, "This accord maximises our individual corporate strengths and will allow both companies to bring even more advanced and competitive products to market — in terms of all round price, performance, features and support."

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



Where ignorance is bliss ...



Steve Cooke tackles the preconceptions that surround computer games

Cooke's Law states that the less someone knows about computer entertainment, the more contemptuous they will be of it. It's an attitude that demands attention, rather than an equally contemptuous dismissal. We need to know why people adopt this attitude. Most of our contemporaries don't play Tornado or 7th Guest and if they remain disdainful of games and games culture, the outlook for our favourite pastime is bleak.

To get to the bottom of Cooke's Law, I invited a few people along to the office for questioning. I chose a cross-section of people I know from work, and took care that most European nationalities were represented. Although they were all reasonably computer-literate, none had ever played games on a regular basis.

The results were extraordinary. Savour the following extracts from my notes:

"I consider," said Monika Dîrre, German, aged 40, "that games are a complete waste of time. No, I have never played them but I have seen them on people's screens. They look absolutely naff. Platform games? No, I've no idea what they are. Do you have to play them wearing platform shoes?"

Valérie Malafronte, aged 29, from France: "Yes, I've played Scrabble. It's very addictive. I haven't played any other games, because I feel that I have to keep away from them. It's a problem of social pressure. If you're addicted to books, people say you're well-read. But if you're addicted to games, they just think you're an antisocial moron."

'"No, I don't play games," said Marisa Julian from Spain, aged 41. "They are all for men and children, all about killing someone, and all seem very repetitive."

Attitudes like these go far beyond prejudice. They are part and parcel of a complete inability to respond to games in the way that veterans like you and I might. Jeannette Dympton, English aged 26, was unable to distinguish the player figure when shown a screenshot of Ultima VI. Marisa, when shown a screenshot of Civilization featuring a simple dialogue box, became quite apprehensive. "Oh dear," she said, "I'm very confused now. I just don't know what to think. What's going on here?"

Those with an MA in Gender Studies may have noticed that all these people are women. But I did speak to men too, and the responses were significantly different. All the men had both seen and played games, in the office and at home, but none of them had actually bought games.

Marcus Sterky, 28: 'I just played the ones that were on the disks already. I don't think I'm the target market: all these Sonic things are aimed at kids.

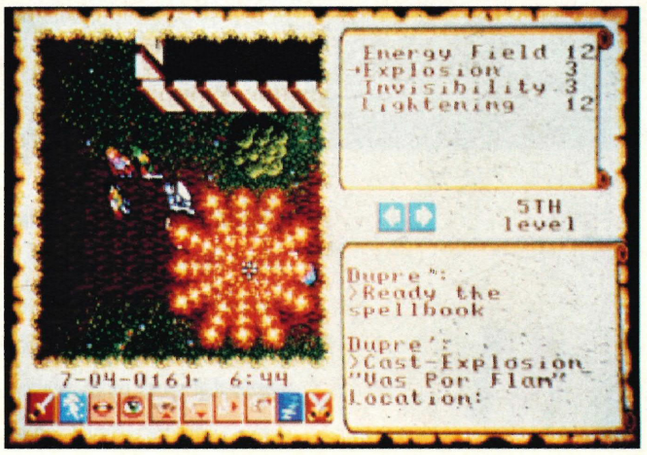
No-one had any inkling of how much games cost. When shown Civilization in its box, several people assumed it cost over £100, while just as many thought it should be about £15. Everyone, interestingly, understood what an icon was, but no-one knew what 'console' meant and Monika's concept of a platform game was about as accurate as everybody else's.

But all these people had a very strong opinion about computer games. With the exception of Valerie's liking for Scrabble, they were all contemptuous of them.

If you ask me, it's precisely because these people have not actually played games that they so despise them. And that's not because of blind prejudice, but because of the impressions they have received from their limited exposure to interactive entertainment. If we could correct these impressions, our market might be a lot easier. And I think we can.

From talking to non-games players, it seems that there are four areas which combine to make games unpopular. These are poor graphics and sound, lack of real-life scenarios that people can identify with, repetitive presentation (ie, lots of beat 'em ups with static backgrounds, little sprites and plinky-plonky tunes) and marketing that assumes a base knowledge about games (which only existing games players have).

With the exception of the graphics, which should be addressable by new CD technology using JPEG and MPEG compression of real-life backgrounds, all the remaining problems can be solved by companies investing just a little more in software design and research. After all, creating a good impression boils down to speaking to people in their own language, without tedious repetition, and about something that interests them. All the other media manage to do this. Why can't we?



Unbelievably, there are people out there who don't know what's going on here. Could it be that they're not only uneducated in the visual language of games but also, at heart, not interested in the message?

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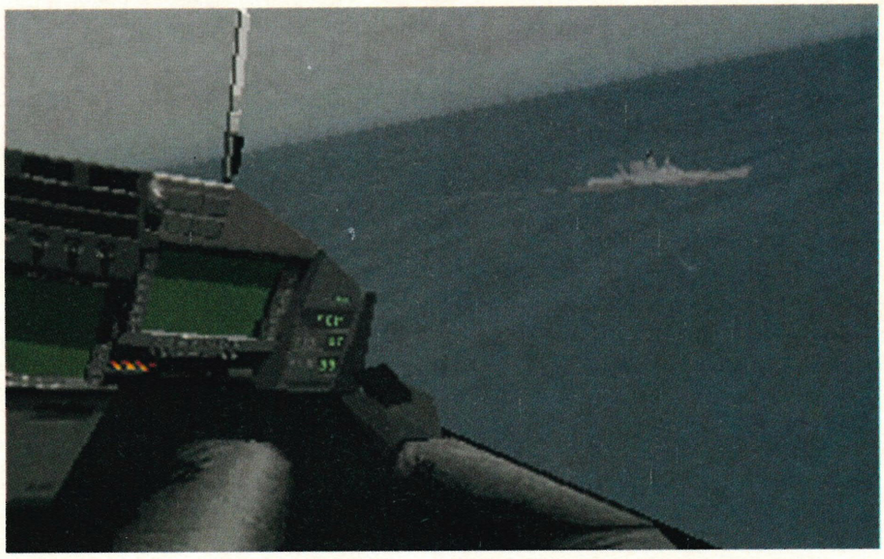
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Title	**TFX**
Developer	**Digital Image Design**
Publisher	**Ocean**
Contact	**(061) 832 6633**
Release date	**September**
Genre	**Flight Simulation**
Price	**TBA**



If you think the flight sim can't be improved, Digital Image Design and TFX will prove you wrong

Tactical Fighter Experiment

These days it seems that flight sim technology is advancing faster and faster. Some games use Gouraud, others have texture-mapping and light-sourcing and a few have shunned all this graphical razzamatazz for simplicity and increased variety. Now, as flight sims get more complicated and increasingly more realistic along comes Digital Image Design with a game that seems to have everything; Gouraud, texture-mapping, variety, the works.

TFX or Tactical Fighter Experiment to give it its full name, is the latest 3D extravaganza from Liverpool-based Digital Image Design. DID is no stranger to 3D coding, with games like F-29 Retaliator, Robocop 3 and Epic dominating its back catalogue. DID is also busy programming Inferno, a follow-up to the space combat game Epic, and has signed a deal with Ocean for its next six games.

TFX itself is set sometime in the near future. As a strategic response to rising world tension, the United Nations has set up a small, rapid response task force to deal with trouble-spots around the globe. If violence flares in Somalia, or a no-fly zone needs enforcing in Yugoslavia, this is the unit that gets the job.

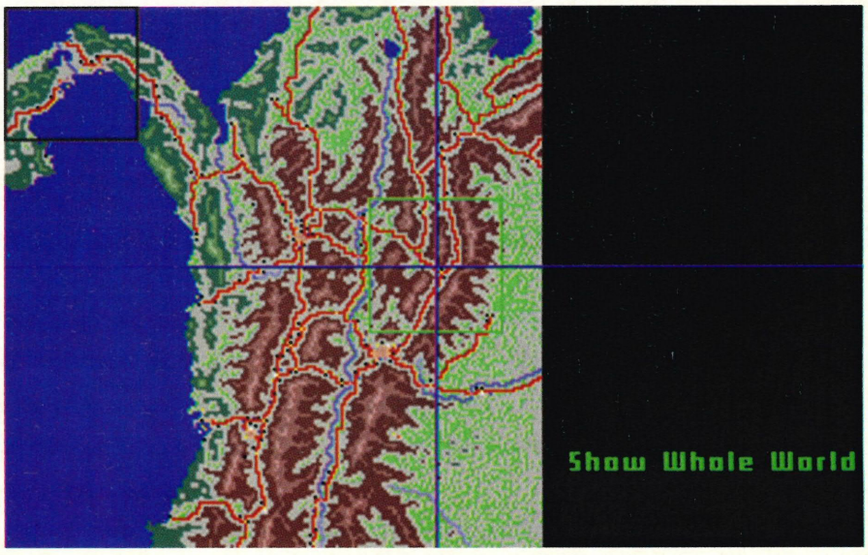
Like most modern sims, TFX contains all the obligatory external views. In fact, the landscape detail is very impressive, featuring large cities, bridges and even snow-capped mountains complete with tree lines. The powerful 3D engine enables DID to incorporate Gouraud-shading and texture-mapping techniques with hardly any loss of overall speed.

Above: one of the most impressive features of TFX is the padlock view. Using this, the pilot can rotate the view around to pin-point targets, track enemy aircraft or just look at ships.

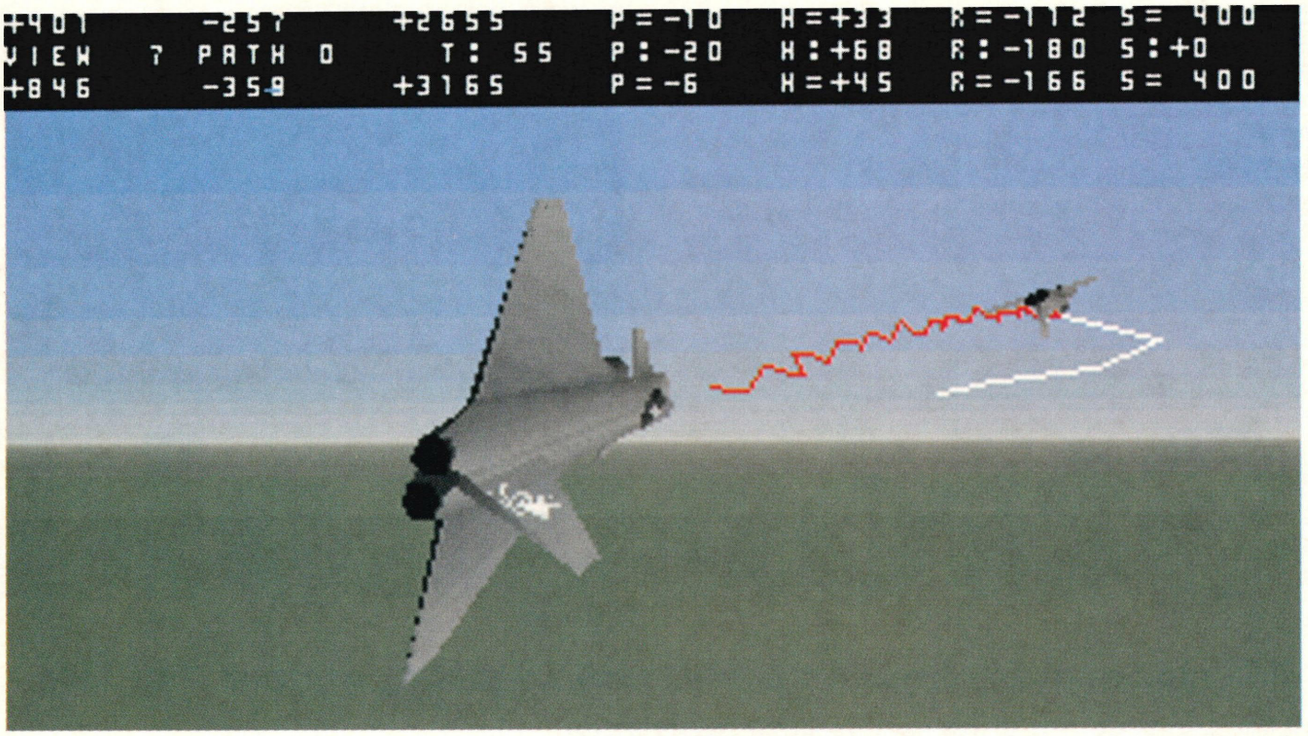
"F-29 was our first 3D engine," explains Martin Kenwright, DID's Managing Director. "It was effectively written for Robocop 3, and even more so for Epic. In TFX, we are now on our fourth generation code."

It seems that so far most of TFX's actual development time has been taken up by research and close attention to detail. DID wants to get things absolutely right and a lot of work has been put in to making the flight model and the combat as realistic as possible. But don't be put off if you're more of an Aces over the Pacific sort of flyer because TFX includes easier, more arcade-orientated options for the less tech-minded flyer who simply wants to shoot things and have a good time.

"TFX is a hybrid," suggests Martin. "We wanted to create a game that was like F-29 and Falcon 3.0 combined, at one end ultra-realistic and the other arcadey, all



Right: the world generator gives DID the facility to recreate the landscape of Eastern Europe, Northern Russia or East Africa in 3D. You will find no fictional countries here and no bare polygonal hills.



The combat editor has been used to design and implement realistic combat manoeuvres. For example, DID can construct a textbook manoeuvre in the editor which then translates the input into 3D aircraft movements on screen.

in the same game. TFX is like six games rolled into one, it's got bits of this and bits of that, all done in our own style."

TFX continues the recent trend for flying more than one aircraft. You have the option to fly one of three advanced jets from either the F-117c stealth bomber, the F-22 Superstar and the European Fighter Aircraft (EFA).

The individual aircraft dynamics have been made as realistic as possible and DID have used USAF modelling methods, sought help from Glasgow University and consulted one professor Curtis, an aeronautics specialist at Princeton.

Obviously it's difficult to get specific details on advanced fighters such as the EFA and F-22 where details are classified and for any flight sim that has claims to be realistic, measurements are vital. So DID has constructed its flight model from the scant details available coupled with information gleaned from a variety of other sources including an illuminating lecture by an F-22 test pilot. The resulting flight models, DID hope, are as accurate as possible.

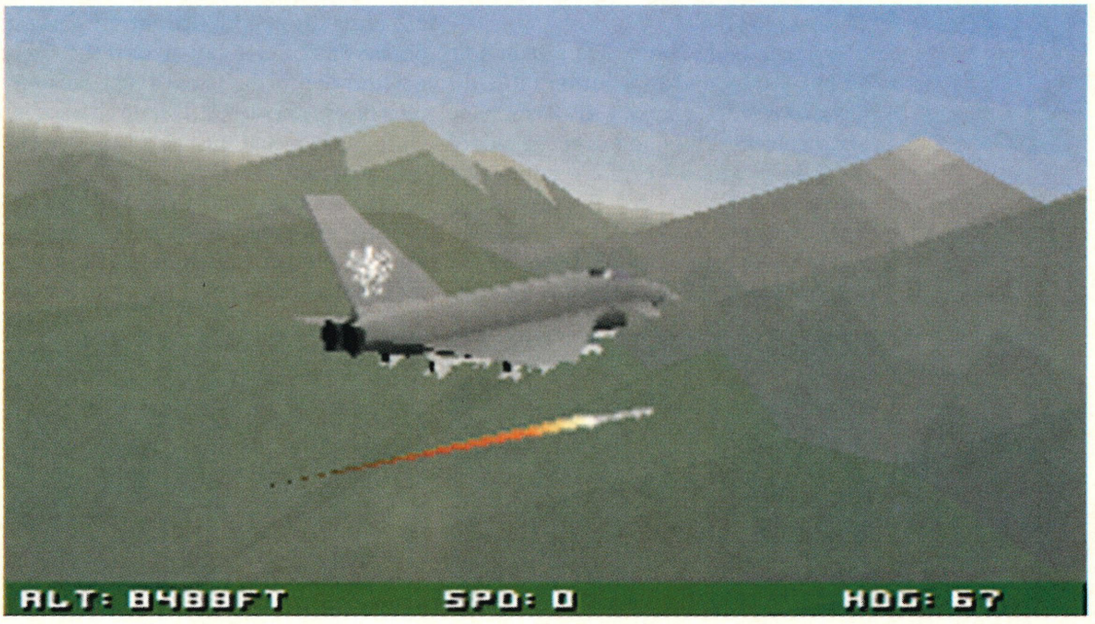
One of the most impressive features of TFX is a nifty looking padlock view. Similar to the view you may have seen in Strike Commander, the TFX view enables the pilot to scroll around the cockpit to find the target, abandoning the traditional left, right, rear and front cockpit viewpoints. "The new planes now have got helmet mounted sight systems," adds Martin. "The only thing that stays fixed in view is the HUD and everything else moves around."

With realistic flight models come both realistic combat and landscape. To create textbook combat moves, DID has written a combat editor and a world generator. Using the world generator, DID has mapped almost 20 per cent of the world's surface. This creates a playing area of one million square kilometres ranging from Russia, Germany and Eastern Europe, to other noted trouble spots like Libya, Somalia, East Africa and the South Atlantic. Not only does this create a realistic landscape but the Alps are in the right place and so are the major cities. No modest achievement.

As I have mentioned, at its least complicated level, TFX can be played as an arcade-type game, but also includes another two levels of realism. Because of this, you may choose how realistic you want your flight model to be, from arcade on the one hand to ultra-realistic on the other — although DID recommends a fast 486 machine for the latter.

In addition to the three levels of realism, there are also three different modes of play, namely; the arcade shoot 'em up; a tour of duty in a single world hot-spot, or a full blown campaign.

DID is rightly very proud of TFX. It promises to be a huge game, with an excellent flight model, Gouraud-shaded aircraft, texture-mapped ground, soap opera type sequences and accessible to veteran and novices alike. I ask you, what more could a flight sim enthusiast want?



This external view shows off TFX's visuals to the full. Note the Gouraud-shaded plane, the UN logo on the tail and the snow-capped peaks fading into the distance.

Title	**Stronghold**
Developer	**SSI**
Publisher	**US Gold**
Contact	**(021) 625 3366**
Release date	**September**
Genre	**Fantasy/strategy**
Price	**TBA**



Stronghold

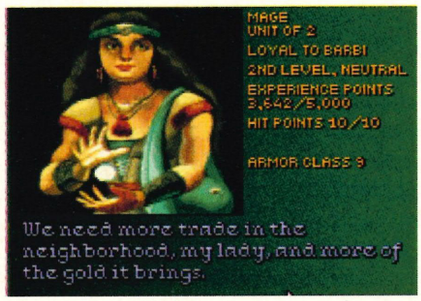
SSI moves away from its traditional stamping ground, and into the realms of fantasy world-building

Stronghold is not what most of us have come to expect from US publisher SSI, not by a long chalk. The company has made its name with a series of heavy-duty war games of the hex-based variety, and some of the more intense and equally heavy-duty RPGs to be found, most notable among them the AD&D Gold Box series.

This game has elements of both these genres, but the end result looks like being similar to neither, particularly in terms of the atmosphere. Much as I hate to admit it, Stronghold is actually rather cute. To complicate matters further, the only credit I can find for Stormfront Studios, the programming team, is Tony la Russa Baseball 2.

Trying to find a convenient pigeon-hole to put Stronghold in is rather difficult. It's a mixture of a fantasy RPG, complete with goblins, elves and other standard RPG fare, and a kingdom game and world-builder a la Populous or Civilization.

The basic principles of the game are straightforward. In a series of five worlds



and a random world generator, the idea is to pick five characters, select class, roll the dice (metaphorically speaking) for attributes, select alignment, and then dump them in the wilderness to fend for themselves.

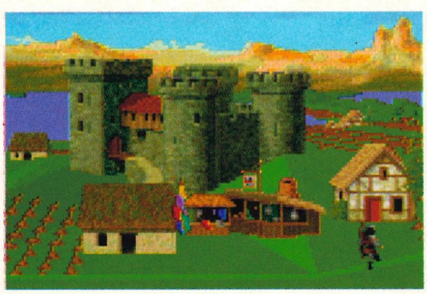
The characters, and all the monsters, are officially sanctioned (an important phrase that, it crops up all over the manual and the intro. There's just no stopping these Americans...) D&D characters, with all the usual hit points and experience palaver.

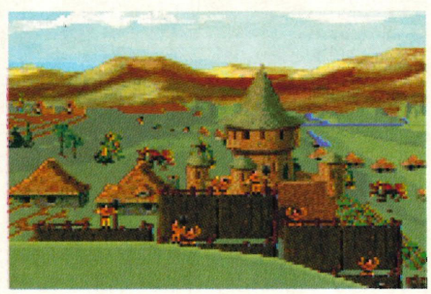
You have to set them cultivating land, mining, chopping down trees, building houses and getting some sort of commercial system up and running. As the seasons progress, your strongholds should expand and that's when the enemies start to appear.

What looks most impressive about Stronghold is the control system, with its activity pyramids (for recruiting, training and building) and the economic and social statistics neatly hidden behind the scenes, the stunningly pretty landscaping with fields and munchkin houses under construction, and the amount of detail of the characters. Although little more than lemming-sized, they are immediately recognisable as belonging to their character type, and when involved in a battle, arrows fly, dwarves lay into all and sundry with hammers, and wizards can be seen to cast a variety of different spells.

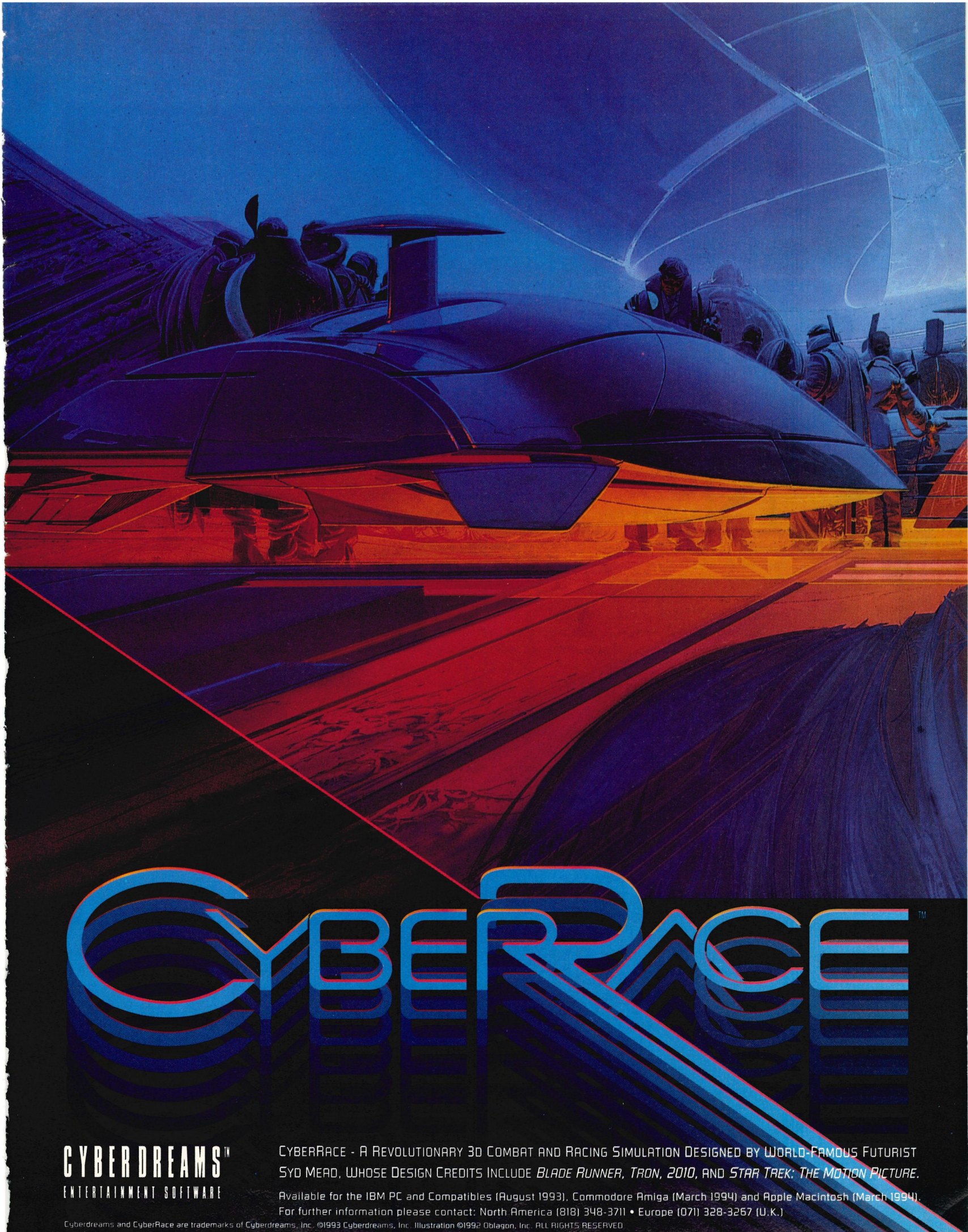
The game is about 95 per cent finished, according to Bob Malin at US Gold, and is due out this month. At a time when we've had about as much as we can take of 'me-too' games, it's a relief to come across something that's quirky, pretty, and very much off the beaten track.

■ John Bennett









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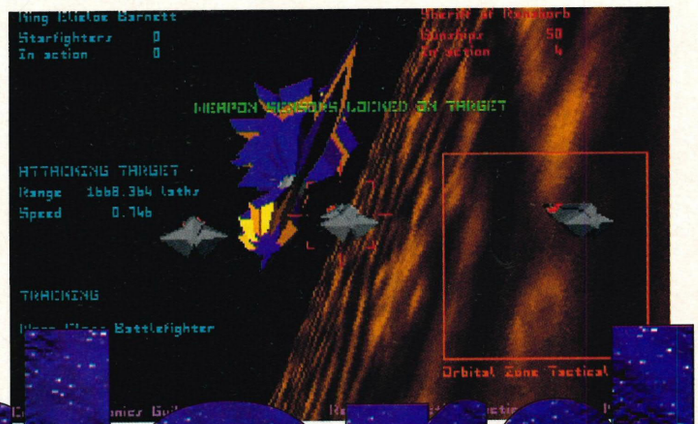
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Title	**Starlord**
Developer	**MicroProse**
Publisher	**In-house**
Contact	**(0666) 504326**
Release date	**September**
Genre	**Space combat and strategy**
Price	**£TBA**



Starlord



The polygon graphics are simple but effective, allowing large scale battles.

Nothing inflates the ego like a good bit of interstellar domination with its violence, utter lack of morality and furious 3D combat. Remember, Elite managed to create a whole new genre out of this lot and since then many have followed (or tried to follow) in its footsteps.

When we first looked at Starlord in Issue 20, MicroProse only had an impressive animated intro on view and precious few actual game shots. Three months down the line and we've been allowed another peak at what is shaping up to be one of its biggest products of the year.

Until now, MicroProse's forays into the intergalactic void haven't been exactly happy or successful. Mantis XF5700 did for space combat what Pavarotti has done for slimming and although Lightspeed and Hyperspeed were better, they still don't rank up there with Wing Commander or X-Wing.

Essentially, Starlord is a tale of selfish and bloody galactic advancement. As one of 1,000 starlords, you must nurture your ambitions, tend your meglomaniacal tendencies and try and move up the galactic class system. Your ultimate aim is to become emperor of the known galaxy (is that all?) and to create a galaxy-wide dynasty, building alliances, crushing weak opponents, stealing, pillaging and sweeping majestically into battles with armadas of craft behind you.

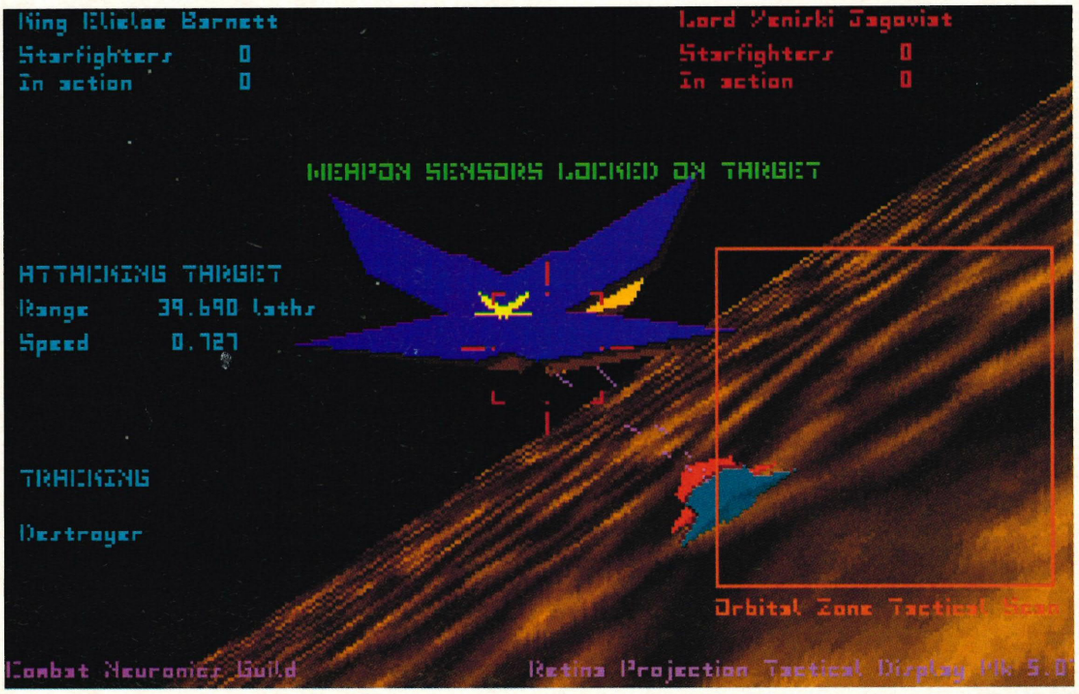
Of course, the job of emperor is not simply up for grabs. You have to vie for power and advancement along with all the other wannabes, destroying a rival here, marrying a king's daughter there, until you are in a position to oust the current ruling family. The emphasis in Starlord is placed on these families, who have the same basic function and set-up as those in the Dune novels.

Starlord is being developed by Mike Singleton who produced the innovative Spectrum classic Lords of Midnight years ago. Never one to tread the path of convention, Mike has adapted Starlord from an original Play By Mail game, using fast 3D polygon routines that have been refined from his earlier releases, Midwinter, Flames of Freedom, and Ashes of Empire.

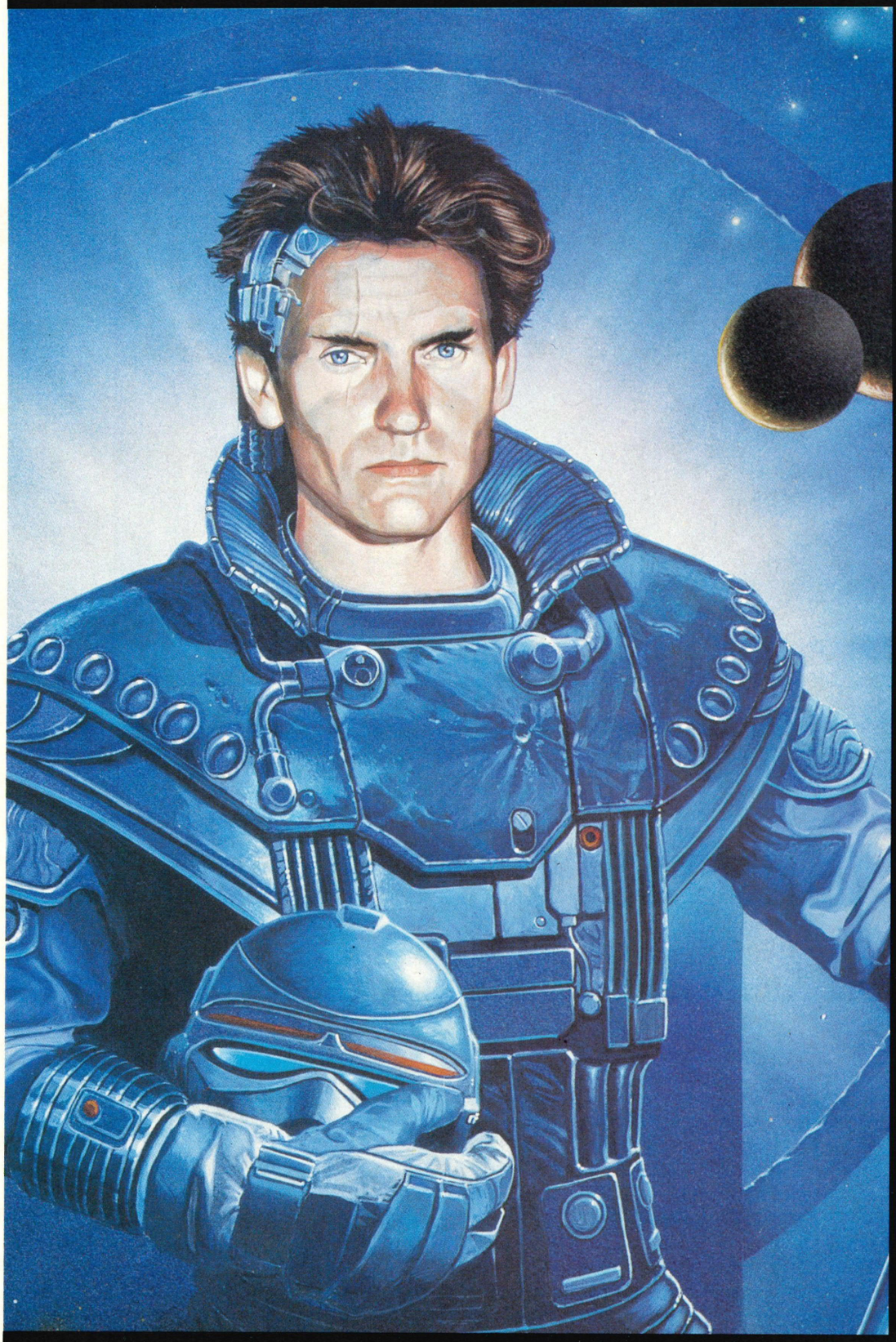
The graphics, although they don't compare with the texture-mapped visuals of Wing Commander, still look very impressive. Starlord promises to create huge starship battles, with large motherships, battlemoons and fighters swooping low over pastel coloured planets.

The advantage of choosing plain polygons over texture-mapping and Gourad is speed, and more speed means more objects on screen at once. Suffice to say, this means the battles in Starlord won't just be huge, they'll be enormous. For example, if you go into battle with 30 ships of your own against a king who has 50, that's 82 all flying around.

But rather than concentrating purely on furiously exciting starship combat, Starlord serves up a sizeable strategy element to boot. This game is looking to encompass the best parts of the space combat genre. In fact, it all looks most promising: we should have a full review in either the October or November issue – keep a look out.



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STARLORD

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First prize winner this month gets his or her grubby paws on a Sound Sense Multimedia Upgrade kit, the ultimate way to bring some life to any dull and boring PC. Arguably the best value multimedia kit to be found, the kit includes a CD-ROM drive, sound card, speakers, games, reference software and utilities.

The Mitsumi internal internal CD-ROM drive offers both Kodak Photo CD compatibility and audio CD capability.

The sound card is the top flight Galaxy NX Pro Extra, which comes bundled with a list of software as long as your arm: Monologue for Windows (for text to speech synthesis), Multimedia Authoring software, a Waveform editor, Windows Jukebox (software for playing your favourite tracks and latest audio CDs), a midi/wave file player, a CD player, assorted utilities, and a collection of tunes to start you off.

In case you were starting to wonder how you'd get to hear all this, the kit comes with a pair of high-fidelity stereo speakers as well, not to mention the MPC Wizard 2.0 disc software, which includes diagnostic tests and tune-ups for your graphics card, sound card and CD-ROM drive, to make sure everything's working the way it should. There's also a wide variety of video clips, and a huge collection of audio files and photographic images in the bundle.

With the Sound Sense Multimedia kit, you get the choice of three titles from a vast list which includes: The 7th Guest, Sherlock Holmes, Wing Commander 2/Ultima Underworld, Monkey Island, Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe, Toolworks Multimedia Encyclopedia, the Guiness Book of Records, the Timetable education series and Soundworks, to name but a few. The choice is yours: winners will be contacted for preferences.

Three lucky runners up will each receive a Sound Sense Entertainment package, consisting of a Galaxy BXII sound card, stereo speakers, and bundled software (Windat, Jukebox, Voice Annotator, Audio Station, wave/midi player, utilities and drivers). And better still, the package comes

complete with LucasArts' Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, Domark's superb AV8B Harrier Assault and Gremlin's Zool.

Please note: the Sound Sense CD-ROM package needs a minimum of a 386 PC, 4Mb of RAM, and DOS 5.0 to run. The drive is an internal one, so it needs a spare 5.25" disk drive slot free in your PC. The winner and runners up will also need a spare 16-bit slot free for the Galaxy soundcard.

For further information about Beatmark products, telephone (061) 877 4806.

How to enter

Dead easy, this one ... all you need to do is come up with the answers to these three ridiculously easy questions on the right. Put your answers on the form provided below, stick the form on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope, and send your entry to:

Sound Sense Competition
PC Review
Priory Court
30-32 Farringdon Lane
London EC1R 3AU

The questions

1. **Who starred in the Sound Of Music?**
2. **What unit is sound measured in?**
3. **How many games are included with the Sound Sense Entertainment package?**

Your entry must arrive by September 15th 1993 in order to be put in the draw for prizes.



Three runners up prizes of the Sound Sense Entertainment package, complete with Zool, AV8b and Indy

PC Review Sound Sense competition

The answers are:

1. .....
2. .....
3. .....

Name .....

Address .....

.....

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

Closing date September 15, 1993

PC Review September 1993

Competition Rules

No entries received after the competition date will be considered.

Only one entry per person, please.

No employees, relatives or associates of Beatmark, Emap Images, or any companies involved in the arrangements for this competition are eligible to enter.

The editor's decision in all these matters is final, and all normal competition rules apply.

Flights of fantasy

The flight simulation has been around almost as long as the PC itself. This month Dean Evans wanders bravely on to the runway to take a look at the latest in aerial gaming, sims that let the armchair pilots amongst us fly anything from a 747 to a Tornado



What would we do without the flight sim? In the 10 years of the PC's life, flight simulations have been a consistently dominant feature of the PC catalogue. Platform games have come and gone, racing games have left brief rubber marks on our digital roads, RPGs are now ten-a-penny, but good flight sims have endured the test of time. After all, people are still playing FS4 10 years after its launch.

But what is the flight sim's intrinsic appeal? Essentially, it allows you to do something you wouldn't or couldn't normally do. Whether it's singlehandedly defeating tinpot dictators or landing a 737 at Chicago's O'Hare airport, there's a flight sim that lets you do it from the comfort of your armchair.

But how real is it all? The words 'real' and 'realism' are often bandied around by software publishers although most differ on what the words actually mean. The majority of recent fly-and-fight releases have been 'simulations' and it's worth remembering the difference. A *simulator* is a representation of what it 'takes' to fly a plane whereas a *simulation* is a representation of what it 'feels' like to fly a plane. Microsoft Flight Simulator 4, for example, is a simulator, while Strike Commander is a simulation.



What's realistic anyway?

But who's to say whether the latest F-16 sim is realistic or not? I'll bet that 99.9 per cent of us have never actually flown one. Nor will we. Can sitting in front of your 14" monitor, Gravis joystick in hand, really compare with piloting one of the world's fastest jets? Unless you're equipped with stereo sound, pedals and flight yoke, a hydraulic chair and a plastic cockpit moulding, I very much doubt it.

While we realise its limitations, a good sim should strike the right sort of balance. Do you create something so realistic that it's almost impossible to fly, or do you put the gameplay first? Where does this realism/gameplay line get drawn? If it was actually possible to simulate a real aircraft would it be a good idea? It takes years of intensive training to fly modern jet aircraft, and if someone presented you with an F-16 today, you wouldn't get very far if it only came with a full colour map, a key reference card and a 300 page manual.

But is realism defined by the flying envelope or how real the actual flying experience is?

Software publishers have approached this realism question a number of ways, producing games that depend on it and those that blatantly ignore it. As a result, it's possible to split the flight sim genre and the flight sim enthusiast into three main types (admittedly using a few sweeping generalisations).

There's gameplayer A, who prefers the realism of civilian aircraft; gameplayer B, who revels in the realism of military aircraft, and finally there's gameplayer C, who just likes to get up in the air, lock realism in a cupboard and shoot the hell out of anything and everything; 'Hello' excitement and a big 'boo sucks' to gravitational physics.

So having decided what you want, whether it is the latest civilian simulator or Aces over Chiswick, you dash along to your local software emporium only to be faced with a quagmire of sims that claim to be the "most accurate and realistic flying simulator on the market today."

Obviously most, if not all of them, are lying. You will see games that are a worthy buy *and* those that simply prop up the shelves in the hope that they will add a more few pence to software house coffers. So which one do you choose? Thankfully, of the current crop of simulators available there are games to suit all flyers. Whether you're interested in real flying, real combat flying or just a good looking shoot 'em up in the air, this guide should cater for one and all.

Jets, missiles and bombs

Harrier Jump Jet

MicroProse, £44.99

Of the two Harrier sims, MicroProse's version scores better on the flight model but gets a big *'nuls points'* for the campaign section. Here, rather than command everything, you simply fly individual missions, do as you're told and hope you win the war. In fact, if it wasn't for the new graphics and the hover mode, you could easily be flying MicroProse F-15.

I can't help feeling that Jump Jet is being sold on its Gourad graphics technology. Unfortunately, it seems so much effort has gone into the development of the visuals, the game itself slipped in only as an afterthought. There's no denying the graphics are good and flying through valleys creates a real sense of being there, but this isn't enough to save it all.

Although Jump Jet is a polished flight sim with the usual doorstop-sized manual, it's lagging woefully behind the new breed of flight sims that cast the player in a wider, and much more challenging command role.



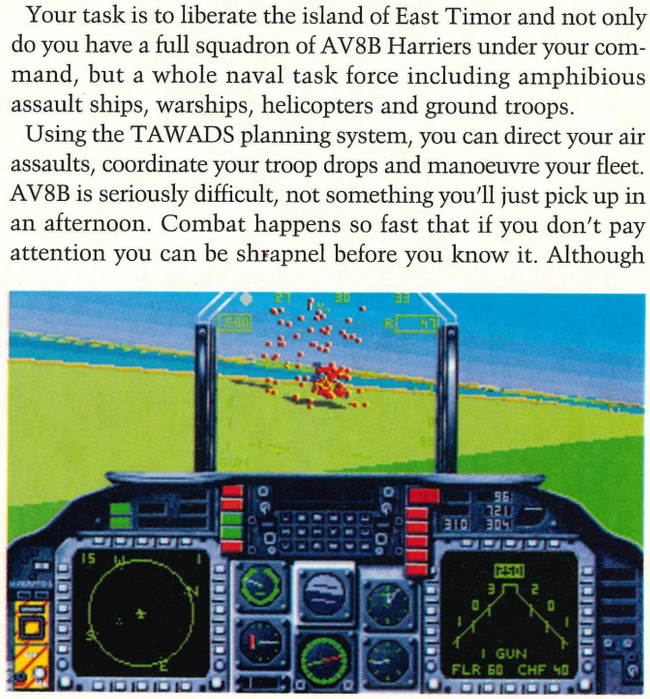
AV8B Harrier Assault

Domark, £39.99

Just when gamers were getting fed up with single plane missions and campaigns that were little more than lots of single missions linked together, along comes AV8B and the most comprehensive campaign to appear to date.

Your task is to liberate the island of East Timor and not only do you have a full squadron of AV8B Harriers under your command, but a whole naval task force including amphibious assault ships, warships, helicopters and ground troops.

Using the TAWADS planning system, you can direct your air assaults, coordinate your troop drops and manoeuvre your fleet. AV8B is seriously difficult, not something you'll just pick up in an afternoon. Combat happens so fast that if you don't pay attention you can be shrapnel before you know it. Although





the ground detail is sparse, the gameplay makes AV8B one of the programs of the year; simply great flying with a strategic element that has more depth than the North Atlantic Trench.

ATAC

MicroProse, £44.99

With the end of the Cold War the new villains for the 90s are the South American drug barons and, strangely, they've got just as much hardware as the old USSR.

There's nothing really ground breaking about ATAC. The landscape doesn't look as good as Harrier, but it's a whole lot easier and more fun to fly. With the addition of a good campaign section you are put in overall control, deciding what targets to hit and how to hit them using a network of agents and a squadron of F-22's and Apache gunships.

There are three levels of difficulty to be completed in ATAC, and I feel it's a game that's been somewhat overlooked. This is multi-role, multi-aircraft campaigning at its most accessible. Compared to this, Birds of Prey (Argonaut's other release) is a bit of a non-starter.

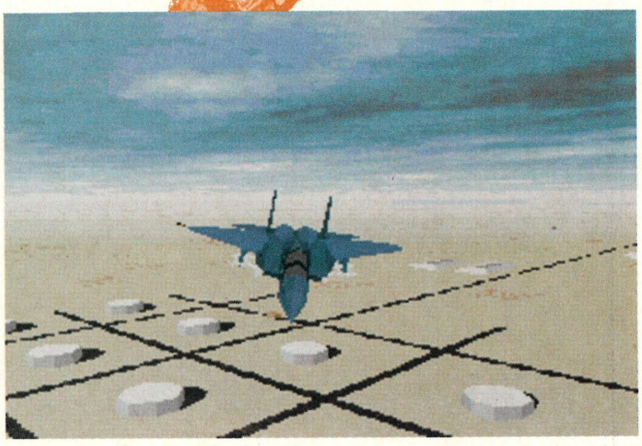


F15 III

MicroProse, £44.99

Shunning the shoot 'em up qualities of its forbear, F15 III is trying to broaden its generic appeal. Now, F15 III is an all-new simulation hoping to do for the F15 what Falcon has done for the F-16.

What more can you say? It's a lot like F15 II but flies more realistically and has greater attention to detail. My initial impression of F15 III, however, was that it's just downright ugly. With its textured sea and ground and bitmapped explosions only the external view of the plane and the sky look any good. I don't think the environment graphics really work. They remind me of the blocky Voxel Space system and I'd have prefered more variety and a few polygon hills to this.



MicroProse has also made the same mistake with its campaign option as it did with Harrier. There is no feeling of being able to affect the outcome of the war, and you get the impression that single missions have just been bolted together.

Despite all this, the F15 has always been a bit of a MicroProse moneymaker, and maybe F15 IV will be a little better.

Tornado

Digital Integration, £44.99

Reviewed last issue, Tornado shows just what can and should be done with the flight sim genre. Choosing variety before fancy graphics, Tornado enables the player to control up to six Tornados on low-level strike missions over enemy territory.

Featuring the RAF's intelligent terrain following system, Tornado's flight model is simply superb, offering swing-wing flight, autothrottled speed and advanced weapons packages like ALARM and JP233 anti-runway bombs.

By far the most impressive aspect of Tornado, however, is the planning screen where missions can be timed down to the second and the player can control either a campaign or full-blown command option where everything is under his/her absolute control. Tornado is one of the best tech-heavy sims on the market, right up there with Falcon 3.0.

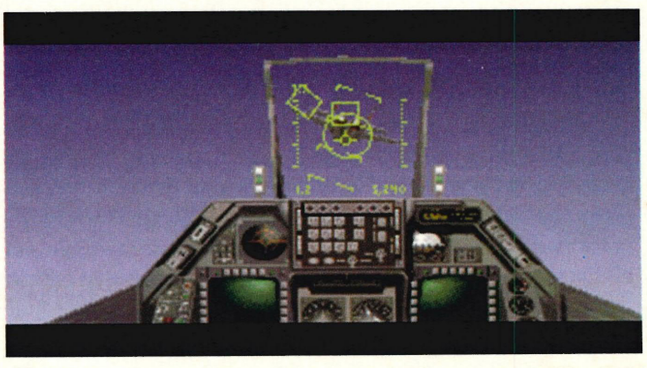


Strike Commander

Electronic Arts, £49.99

I've not mentioned it before but I think Strike Commander is great. It's had a mixed reception but I still maintain that there's nothing to beat playing Strike (on a fast machine) on full volume, music blaring in your ears. This is real atmosphere. Flying nose cone to engine cone, twisting and turning in battle, screaming "die, you bastard" at the screen, the complete opposite of everything FS4 stands for.

Whether Gourad and texture mapping are the future of flight sim visuals remains to be seen, but there's no doubt that Strike's graphics are rather impressive: up in the air you can't help but marvel at the detail (were those actually cars in that parking lot down there?). Unfortunately, the controls are a bit



Multi-player combat

I have seen the future of the flight sim. It's not spectacular texture-mapped graphics or hyper-realistic flight models but simply the ability to fly against real people. I'm talking about the multi-player option, probably the most exciting advance in flight sim gaming since Gouraud.

There are several games around that currently support a multi-player facility allowing you to connect up using either a serial cable, network or modem link. Most modern sims offer a simple head-to-head capability where the aim is simply to get into the air and shoot down the other guy. More excitingly, some games such as Falcon 3.0 and F15 III allow you to take part in cooperative missions, flying as wingman with a friend, for example.

Apart from Air Warrior (a dedicated multi-player program), if you have a modem or are close to another PC, chances are you can link up and have a go right now.

Falcon 3.0 leads the way in this multi-player push, allowing the player to fly head-to-head or with a wingman controlled by a friend. Falcon 3.0 is the founding product in Spectrum Holobyte's Battlefield series, a system that will eventually enable you to link up with other Holobyte products. For example, you could fly aircover in your F-16 with a wingman in Liverpool and A-10 support from Durham.

F-15 III is another game that allows you to fly cooperative missions and head-to-head combat but also allows two people to fly the same plane, with one as pilot and the other as the "Wizzo" (weapons officer) in the rear seat.

Digital Integration's new baby Tornado also has a head-to-head facility, as does MicroProse's Dogfight, and if you want to know more about Air Warrior you can call On-Line Entertainment on (081) 558 6114.

sluggish and I couldn't find the enemy most of the time, but this was a minor problem, believe it or not. Strike, you see, is more of a flight game than a flight sim, with the emphasis on dogfighting with guns rather than missiles. Think of it as Wing Commander with ground.

To see Strike at its best you've really got to have a 50MHz 486 PC. So if you've got the hardware and a spare 37Mb of disk space free, Strike Commander is well worth a look.

Falcon 3.0

Spectrum Holobyte, £49.99

Falcon 3.0 serves up the most realistic flight models this side of a multi-million dollar military simulator. Generally regarded by all as 'the business', Falcon's strength lies in its playability and realism, including ongoing campaigns, wingmen and tutorial flights. All this more than makes up for the basic polygons used for its dull environment graphics, and there's no doubting that it flies beautifully.

Chopper squad

Comanche Maximum Overkill

Novalogic/US Gold, £45.99

More of a combat sim than a true helicopter simulation, Comanche is at its very best when played about six feet away from the screen. Although Novalogic's Voxel technology creates some of the most realistic scenery seen in a flight sim for a long time, it's terribly blocky and memories of the old Atari VCS console spring unbidden to mind.

Despite this, Comanche holds its own as a shoot 'em up where



all you need worry about is your steering and fire button pressing. Voxel Spacing is obviously in its very early stages and doubtless it will improve with time, but if you want a proper helicopter sim you'd be better off going back to Gunship 2000.

World War II

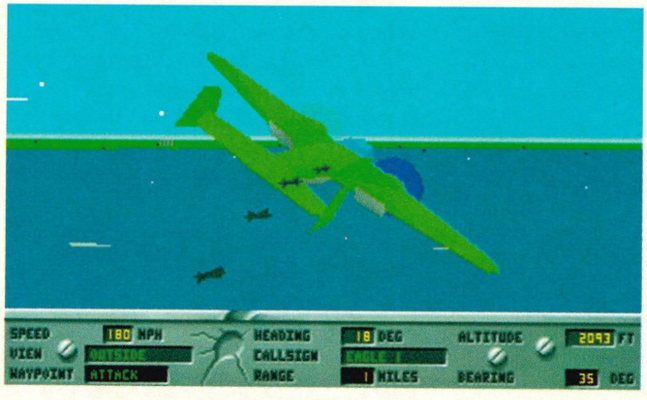
Although the appeal of swooping low over the ground at 600 knots is certainly great, there are times, when the nth enemy Mig has exploded over 11 miles away that you long to see what is actually going on. Enter the historical sim: no sidewinders, no radar, just guns, the flimsiest of planes and an awful lot of determination.

Reach for the Skies

Virgin, £35.99

It's Battle of Britain time and Mr Gouraud has been at work on all the aircraft. In Reach for the Skies, you are given the opportunity to fly for both the Luftwaffe and the RAF in the battle for air supremacy over the channel. You can either play the flight controller and watch the battles or get up into the air and ventilate a few enemy aircraft.

Although the Gourad shaded aircraft look very nice, and the flight model isn't that complicated, Reach isn't the friendliest of programs. It's a good combat sim but I preferred Their Finest Hour from LucasArts for sheer dogfighting action.

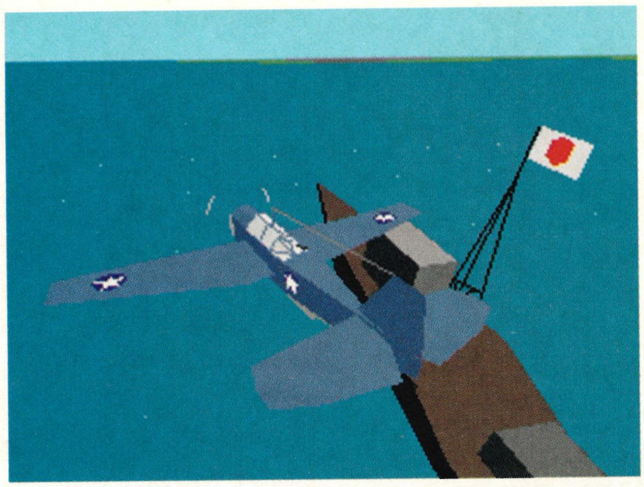


Aces of the Pacific

Sierra, £39.99

A game we've recently rediscovered in the office this month while waiting for Aces over Europe to appear. AOTP puts you in control of a variety of aircraft (Wildcats, Corsairs, etc) right in the midst of the war against the Japanese.





Like Red Baron before it, AOTP is very playable, allowing the pilot to adjust the flight model and combat difficulty level. If you want the ultimate in realism just switch all the options on, but if you want frantic dogfight action just switch off everything and have 'unlimited ammo' and 'no damage'.

AOTP's polygon graphics are beautifully shaded and although the ground detail leaves a lot to be desired, it's a great alternative to the tech-heavy sims. If you have AOTP and Tornado on your hard disk then you've got the flight simulation genre pretty much covered.

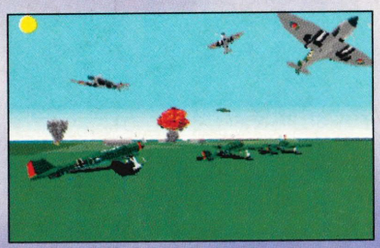
Heroes of the 357th

Electronic Arts, £34.99

Yet another WW2 flight sim which takes its cue from the 357th squadron and their exploits in the P-51 Mustang. Heroes only allows you to fly the one aircraft and is pretty much like all the other WW2 sims on the market.

Missions range from sweeping for fighters, escorting bombers and even chasing incoming V1 rockets as they streak towards the English mainland. Heroes has thrown total realism out the window and gone for playability and it all works well. So, if you're looking for a realistic sim of a P-51 this isn't it. It's a good game with some good flying, but there's nothing really special to set it apart from the crowd.

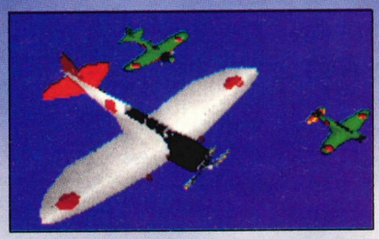
Aircraft on the horizon



Aces over Europe
The follow up to the hugely enjoyable Aces over the Pacific.Looks like AOTP, flies like AOTP but it's got Spitfires and Mosquitos. Enough said?



F-14 Fleet Defender
Using the same game engine as F15 III, Fleet Defender simulates the the carrier based F14 Tomcat. F14 promises to have a more realistic slant and a nice pastel sky.



Pacific Strike
WW2 Strike Commander. Fly a selection of carrier-based aircraft against the Japanese fleet. Expect greater realism and neat touches like sea swell and rolling waves.



TFX: Tactical Fighter Experiment
The new "hyper-realistic" flight sim from DID promises to be something really special. From the team that brought F29 to the PC, turn to the preview on page 20 for more info.



Microsoft Flight Simulator 5
FS4 looking dated? Never! The daddy of the flight sim genre is finally about to be replaced. FS5 is soon to be released, using photorealistic scenery in its attempt for greater realism. Rumour has it that FS5 isn't looking too impressive at the moment, but these are still early days.

Welcome to the real world

For people brought up on combat sims, flying an ordinary plane from A to B without so much as a hand gun may seem a little dull. So, what is the attraction of flying a civilian aircraft? As my knowledge of unarmed flying ranks up there with my knowledge of advanced astrophysics, I turned to Steve Harding, Sysop on the UK Flight Simulator Club BBS for a few pointers.

"Flying an ordinary plane using FS4, you can draw up parts of the country that you know, add Air Traffic Control and see it from a different perspective. By passing on the files to another flyer, you can, using ATC, guide them around the area where you live."

It seems that here you're not just limited to the basics of 'real' flying and navigation, programs such as FS4 give the flyer the chance to test his/her mettle against random weather conditions. The thrill and the satisfaction come from navigating a difficult course through bad weather that randomly changes (from light breezes to hurricane force gales), bringing your aircraft down safely right on the numbers (runway) and right on time.

"Sharing files with others," adds Steve, "means that you can fly an adventure written by someone else, not knowing what conditions or emergencies they have in store for you until bang! it happens."

Unfortunately, civilian sims don't seem to have benefitted from the new graphics technology that's being used in combat sims, but flyers suggest that above all it must be the flight experience that's important. So if you want to ditch your autopiloted jets and opt for the quieter life, there are a number of packages, and a lot of add-ons, you can choose from.

Microsoft Flight Simulator 4

Microsoft, £42.50

Not so much the father, but the grandfather of the flight sim, FS4 offers the most comprehensive simulation of civilian flying.

It's a mistake to treat FS4 as a game, as there are no weapons and no winning or losing. But with it's multitude of scenery disks, add-ons and obsession for realism and detail, it must surely be the definitive light aircraft simulator.



ATP
Sublogic/USGold, £39.99
ATP does for the 747 what FS4 does for the Cessna. With an equal obsession to flight details, ATP is a structured program that puts you in control of large passenger jets like the 747 and 737. Using the same flight model (and also able to use FS4 scenery disks), ATP accurately models jumbo jet flying while unlike FS4 it has an element of structured gameplay allowing you to complete preset flight plans and gain promotions.

A320 Airbus
Thalion, £45.99
Like ATP, A320 simulates a passenger aircraft but does it much worse. The graphics are very poor (a flat green landscape with a white grid overlay), there's no ATC and the control system leaves a lot to be desired. Giving no real feeling of flying, Steve-Harding described this game as a "poor man's version of ATP" and after several test flights I'm inclined to agree.



Something a little different?

While flight sims are currently striving for new levels of realism, maybe the idea itself has overstayed its welcome. Despite new planes, new combat theatres and scenery disks, the games themselves don't change – simply get your plane into the air, fly around, shoot things and land, or if you're a sim purist, fly from airfield X to airport Y.

But some games don't always follow the trend, free from the "oh, that's a good idea, let's do one of those" mentality.

Birds of Prey
Electronic Arts, £39.99
Fed up with flying one or two planes? Then why not fly 40 different aircraft ranging from the A-10, X-29, Stealth Bomber, or Hercules C-130, to name but a few.

Force A is battling force B and the aim is simply to reduce the enemy's hardware until they're so badly damaged they must surrender. Argonaut Software boldly claimed that in realistic mode each of the 40 planes would handle pretty much as it would do in real life, but the program was a trifle bug-ridden with planes refusing to dive and veering violently to one side for no apparent reason. On the easy mode this doesn't happen and the game is quite enjoyable, but on easy mode your Hercules now flies just like your Tornado, your F-16 and so on.

Despite this, the core of the game is pretty good, let down by a lack of presentation and a shallow campaign mode. If you want to fly it on easy mode, it's fun as a combat simulator but that's not what it was designed for. BOP has lots of faults but is still the only sim with this many aircraft.



SVGA Air Warrior
On-Line Entertainment, £40.00
You've just met the ultimate opponent. You've never even seen him, but he goes by the name of Big Duke 6. He's not simply another set of algorithms and preset flight moves, but a real, live opponent ready to test your wits.

Flight sims can often get a little dull when you know which way your enemy is going to turn. Line up your sights, he twists left, he turns right, thwakka, thwakka go the guns and he's history. In the Air Warrior universe (fully resplendent in SVGA glory), if you get this complacent, you're liable to get your ass shot off. And if this isn't embarrassing enough, your killer can also insult you as you spiral violently earthwards.

Air Warrior is a modem game where you fly against up to 40(ish) real people. Unlike a computer sim, here your enemies are constantly learning new tricks and honing their skills. If you can afford the on-line costs and you don't mind the simple FS4 style graphics, this is an eye-opening experience. You think you're a good pilot? Come fight some real people ...

Stunt Island
Infogrames, £49.99
Flying under the Golden Gate bridge in a 747 may seem a tad silly in ATP but in Stunt Island this sort of behaviour is actively encouraged. How about landing a Cessna on a bridge or flying a biplane through a barn perhaps?

Stunt Island is one huge studio with sets ranging from San Francisco's bay area to Stonehenge and props that include 45 aircraft (jets, props, hang-gliders, ducks, etc), phone kiosks and missile batteries. Using the planes, you can perform various pre-defined stunts or design your own, setting up cameras to film your stunt, and later editing it into a movie, à la Red Baron.

Don't expect too much from the flight model, the emphasis here is on fun with a capital F. Excuse me while I get back to





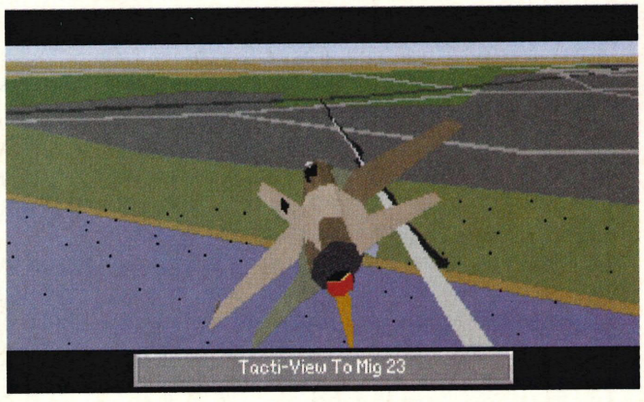
filming my lone multi-role duck which is attempting to stop a squadron of Friesian cows, supported by combine harvesters and an ice cream van, from destroying the UN building.

Dogfight

MicroProse, £44.99

Perhaps the future of the flight sim lies in taking a new angle on an old theme. With this in mind, Dogfight enables you to fly several 'what if' scenarios. See how long a Sopwith Camel can last against a Sea Harrier or put a Spitfire up against an F-16. No new graphics or sound, just a new gimmick.

Essentially this is a nice idea, but the presentation leaves much to be desired. The flight models are pretty much the same and after a while the general appeal begins to pall. To combat this MicroProse has added a campaign section, but it's out of place, a blatant attempt to boost lastability. When it comes to dogfighting there are a host of better games around than Dogfight and to add insult to injury, the whole thing is about £25 too pricey for what it offers.



Back down to earth

I think that people want to see a flight sim that breaks new grounds and flies through turbulence that has never been flown through before.We're not necessarily interested in what the actual plane is and we can't be fobbed off with fancy graphics (well, maybe you might distract us for a while).

After looking at all the games featured here, it should be obvious that there is no such thing as the 'best' fighter. For example, the Tornado can't successfully dogfight with the F-16 and the F-16 can't fly the Tornado's long, low-level strike missions. These days, aircraft are built for specific functions, and so it must be remembered that Falcon 3.0 isn't going to simulate the same experience as Tornado.

But despite the frills in modern flight sims (the external views, replay cameras, alterable ground detail, etc) and their loud shouts of "get your realism here" and "almost like flying the real thing", most of the planes actually fly pretty much the same. The dials and controls are simply in different places.

In Peter Worlock's review of Dogfight (Issue 20), he pointed out that a "good scenario and first-class execution of the concept can still carry the day." If software houses just present us with a different plane, a new war and a couple of new weapons (as they are sometimes wont to do), frankly I'm not going to be that interested.

Programmers should be concentrating on the flight experience itself, the often elusive mix of graphic detail, flight model and campaign options. I couldn't care less if I flew a swing-wing supersonic frog, but if the game gave the impression of really flying and really being a part of an ongoing campaign, I'd snap it up like a shot.

So the question has to be this: why doesn't someone just take the good bits from recent sims, like the Gouraud-shaded hills from Harrier, the texture-mapped planes from Strike Commander, the campaign options of Tornado and AV8B, the city detail of Stunt Island, the weather modelling of FS4 and the multi-player facilities of Falcon 3.0 (phew!), roll them all into one and make the definitive flight sim?

Can anybody answer me that one?

Intrigued? Need more info? If you have a modem why not try:
● The UK Flight Simulator Club – BBS no. (0908) 319291– caters for FS4, Tracon, ATP and flight sim shareware. UKFSC is on line Tuesday to Thursday 6-9pm and Sunday 10am-2pm.
● There's also a BBS that caters for combat enthusiasts called Flame-Out on (081) 773 8262. On-line after 9.00pm.

What of the future?

After the brilliance of Tornado and AV8B, what new surprises can the flight sim throw on to our HUDs? Sometimes it seems that us flyers are being offered nothing new bar a different number after the F, a new design angle and a short-lived graphics gimmick. Are we suffering from a glut of uninventive sims?

"I think the main areas for improvement are speed, graphical content and realism. In most cases all three can be improved and this will be helped by the introduction of more capable machines. As for the future, some ideas are VR, networking and modem sims,improved Artificial Intelligence, multi-player support roles and ... who knows?" Jason Dutton, PR Executive, MicroProse UK

"Faster processors will enable us to improve the 3D visuals, using shading and texturing techniques on high resolution displays, without crippling the frame rate. CD-ROM gives large data storage which could be used for on-line manuals, tutorials, real-time video, high quality sound effects and speech, while high speed data links will lead to multi-player combat. More standard memory (at least 4Mb) will allow us to more accurately map real world areas with a very high level of detail." Digital Integration's programming team

"Military simulators lead the way, offering high degrees of realism, vibrating chairs, huge processing power, surround cockpits, etc. We've got to aim to reproduce this. As for the future, it's got to be SVGA with Pentium, using faster 3D, with smooth light-sourced, texture-mapped graphics. Just remember, around 1984 you would pay around £10m for a military sim that you can play today for under 50 quid." Martin Kenwright, DID

LANDS OF LORE

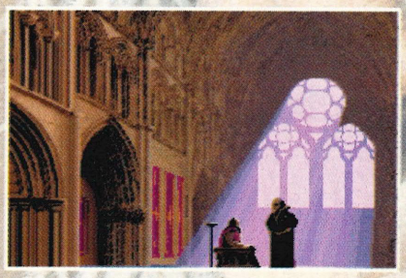
THE THRONE OF CHAOS

Legend has it that a Fantasy Role Playing Adventure like no other will come to pass. It will set new standards with its sheer scale. Its elaborate art, animation, discerning use of speech, and special effects will be talked about for years to come.

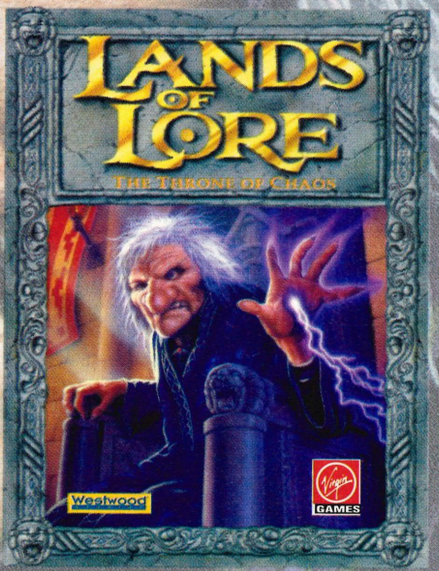


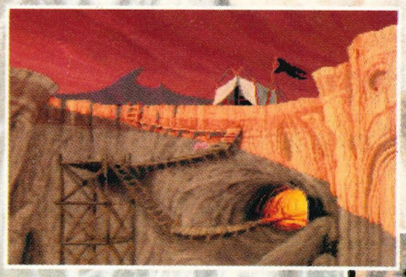


Now the legend is reality...



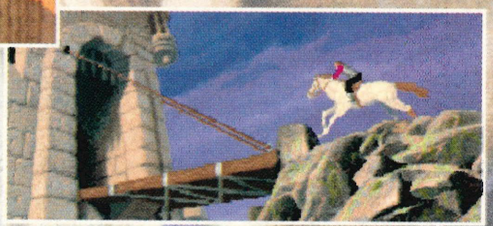
Lands of Lore: The Throne of Chaos from Westwood Studios, the talent behind Eye of the Beholder I &II.





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Westwood STUDIOS

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Virgin GAMES

The making of Silicon Valley



In a strip just a few miles wide and 30 miles long, south of San Francisco, you'll find most of the PC games publishers in a close-knit community. Why here? Christina Erskine reports

Perhaps one reason why the UK and Europe lags behind the USA in terms of software development is that on this side of the Atlantic we perversely insist on keeping cars in our garages — not building computers in them.

Of course, the climate on the US west coast is more conducive to spending long hours in the garage, and it is indeed a remarkably small strip, just 30 miles long, from San Francisco to San Jose in California and between highways 280 and 82, that has become known as Silicon Valley.

Silicon Valley isn't just a collective noun for the US computer industry, but a geographical reality as the map opposite shows. Here you'll find the headquarters of many of the world's leading hi-tech, computer and games publishers — and most of them were indeed started by one person in their garage.

The area has been nicknamed Silicon Valley since the 1960s, for it was here that a technological research community built up around Stanford University, the group becoming the Stanford Research Institute think tank. Also in the forefront of the new technology was the People's Computer Company, whose roots were more in the late 60s' flower power culture than in pure scientific research. But the PCC pioneered ideas about computers being used by individuals, to give "power to the people", and although their ideas never found a wide audience, they influenced both the Stanford Research Institute and Xerox Parc.

In 1970, Xerox set up a research facility in Palo Alto, the Xerox Parc (for Palo Alto Research Center). It was here that talented developers worked on the idea of using graphic interfaces, with icons, WYSIWYG displays, and a mix of text and graphics on-screen, developing handheld pointers to control on-screen icons, and personal computers for the office. Much of this work came from a team headed up by Alan Kay, whose personal project was the Dynabook — a computer no bigger than a notebook, intuitive enough for a child to use.

The sun always shines in California, where Interplay, above left, and Virgin US, right, have chosen to site their headquarters near Los Angeles, rather than Silicon Valley, to take advantage of the expertise of their neighbours in Hollywood.

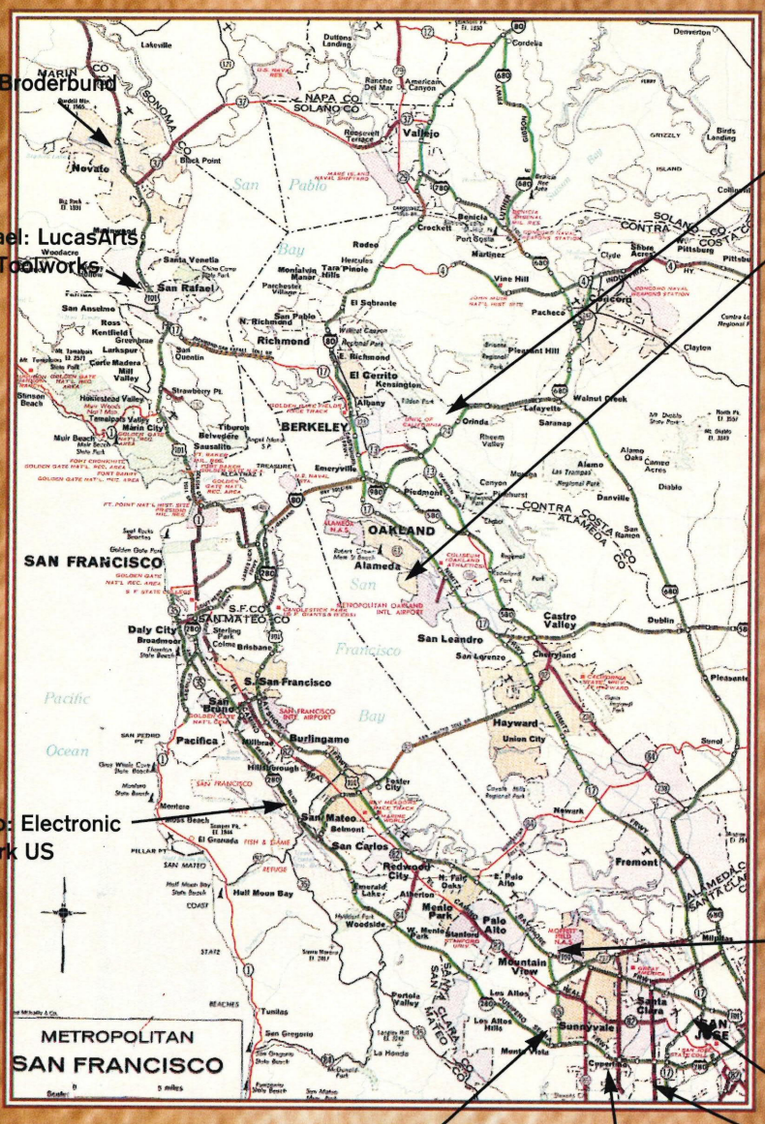
Much of Xerox Parc's work found an outlet, unwittingly, when Steve Jobs, the co-founder of Apple Computers visited for a tour of the facility in 1979. Jobs was then working on Apple's third product, the Lisa (named after his daughter).

Jobs was immensely impressed by the graphic user interfaces at Xerox and had many elements incorporated into the Lisa's software design. Which makes it distinctly rum, that when Microsoft developed Windows as a graphic user interface, with the agreement of Apple, that Apple sued Microsoft for making Windows look too much like the Apple system!

Jobs's vision had been fuelled in 1975, when the magazine Popular Electronics had featured the Altair, the first kit computer. To understand the excitement created by the Altair, a collection of components which buyers had then to wire and solder together (with little guarantee that the finished offerng would work — or do anything very much when it did work), ,



Who's who in Silicon Valley



Novato: Broderbund

San Rafael: LucasArts Software Toolworks

San Mateo: Electronic Arts, Domark US

Orinda: Maxis

Alameda: Spectrum Holobyte

Mountain View: Hewlett Packard

San Jose: Accolade

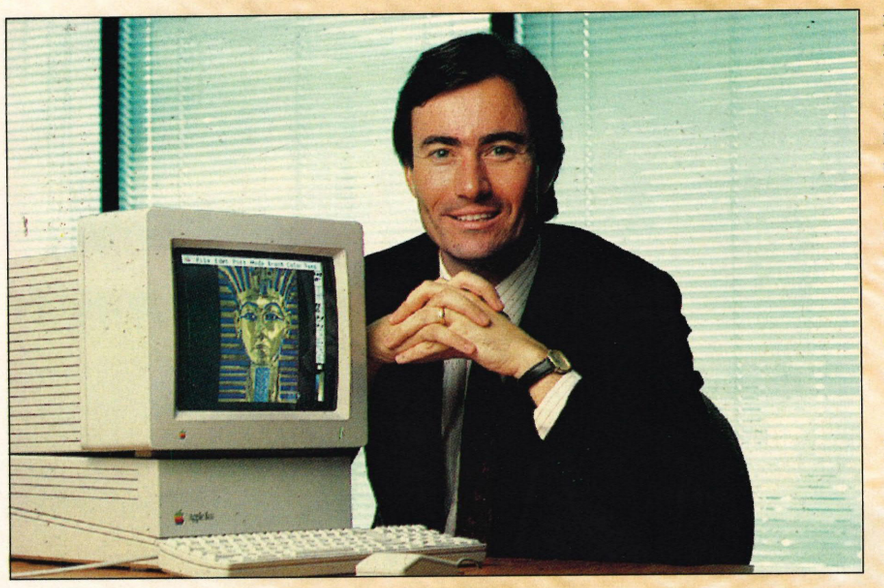
Sunnyvale: SSI, Atari

Cupertino: Apple

Campbell: Three Sixty Pacific,

Hollywood lives

There is also a small caucus of publishers around Los Angeles rather than San Francisco, where the proximity to the movie studios and thus actors, scriptwriters, and film technology, has had a distinct influence on game development. Interplay and Virgin US (pictured above) live just a few hundred yards from one another, and Mindcraft is based near LA as well.



Above: Trip Hawkins, who took a job at Apple primarily to learn about the fledgeling computer industry, so that he could then start his own company. The result of this endeavour was Electronic Arts. Right: Mark Lewis, who went west to "prove himself" in Silicon Valley, and now heads up EA in the UK.

you should bear in mind that until then, computers were mainframes taking up virtually a whole room in offices. The idea of having one of your very own was just a dream for the technological nut. There were orders for more than 4,000 Altairs in the first month.

Apple was a highly influential company in the valley. For a start, its working practices attracted many talented engineers and designers who all subscribed to the laid-back west coast lifestyle. The company became famous for its working 'uniform' of jeans and grubby t-shirts, for having employees working through the night sustained only by takeaway pizzas, and for its small, close-knit, virtually autonomous teams working on each distinct project. Its company philosophy attracted mavericks and brilliant misfits, who were then given the resources simply to be creative.

Just a few miles up the road, Nolan Bushnell had set up Atari, pioneer of computer games, and a company which preceded Apple by three years. Indeed, Apple's co-founder Steve Jobs had worked for Atari in 1974. Nolan Bushnell is generally credited with the invention of the first computer game, Pong — although he himself points out that Pong was actually his second game, and a damn sight better than his first attempt, Spacewar — which was the original block and paddle game, in which a 'ball' was bounced from one side of the screen to the other and two players had to keep it 'in play' with a paddle each.

Pong had initially been developed as a standalone game housed in a cabinet and leased out to bars and cafes, the first one in Sunnyvale. By 1977, Atari was developing video game consoles which would run a variety of games stored on cartridges.

Between them, Apple and Atari acted as a mecca for individuals with ideas and an entrepreneurial streak, who all wanted a slice of the action in this exciting new industry. Computer games began with individuals in their garages (in the US) and back bedrooms (in the UK), and certainly it's difficult to see how the industry could have grown as quickly if, say, a toy giant such as Mattel, or a consumer electronics multinational had set the ball rolling. The first computer games, for the Apple II, or consoles, were manually duplicated, with photocopied instructions and packaged in polythene or zip-lock plastic bags. They were sold, tentatively at first, by the small corner stores which sold chips and electronic components and their reputation spread largely by word of mouth.

Along the way, individuals used the expertise of leading companies to learn the ropes. From very different backgrounds, many of the computer industry's leading figures have in common the fact that they began as computer game enthusiasts.

Trip Hawkins, the founder of Electronic Arts, deliberately joined Apple so that the company could act as a stepping stone for the company he really wanted to work for: his own entertainment software company. When he left to set up EA, a number of his colleagues followed him. Mark Lewis, now head of EA in Europe, had begun developing business software in Pennsylvania, but he too heard the call of the games movement, and as he says, "you had to prove yourself in Silicon Valley if you wanted to be part of it". Those electronics experts lucky enough to live in northern California to begin with found themselves at the forefront of the new gold rush.

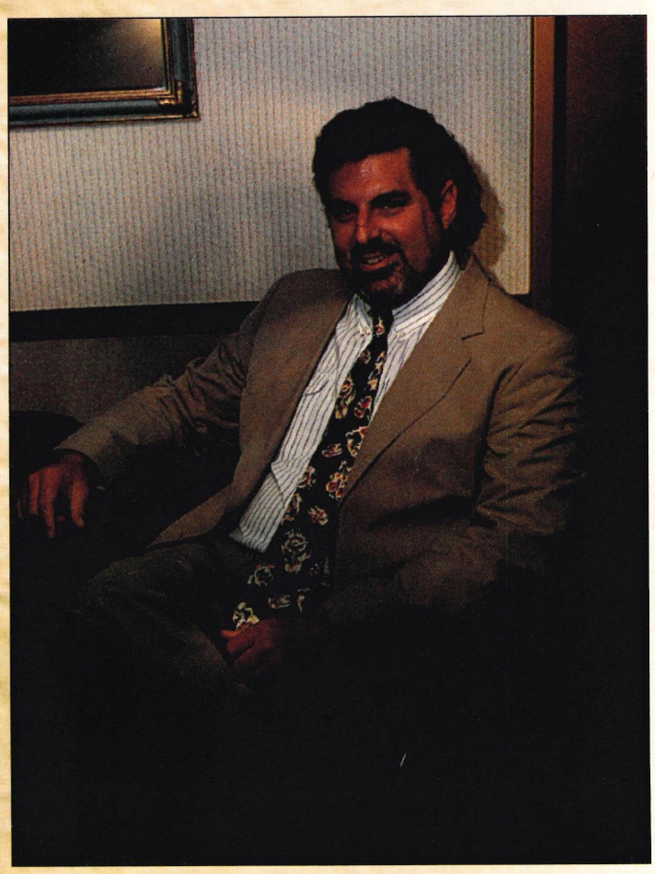
Absent friends

Some of the biggest PC names can't be found on our Silicon Valley map. MicroProse, for example, is based in Baltimore, Maryland, a convenient hop from founder Bill Stealey's mates in the Pentagon. However, the recent merger with Spectrum Holobyte (see News pages), means that at least some of MicroProse's departments will probably move west to Alameda.

Sierra On-Line's HQ is in Coarsegold, in the Nevada foothills and not far from Fresno, so it doesn't miss the map by much. Its affiliate company Dynamix, however, is further north, in Oregon. Also based in Coarsegold is Tsunami, the company set up by a group of ex-Sierra employees.

The influx of Californians attracted by a similar climate and lower property prices to Austin, Texas, has made this area almost a mini-Silicon Valley in its own right, and it's here that Origin Systems is based. Last year's takeover by Electronic Arts gives the company a presence in the Californian strip anyway.

Finally, Bill Gates began selling computer programs while still at school in Seattle, and so when he set up Microsoft, he did so locally, establishing the Microsoft "campus" in Redmond, Washington State.



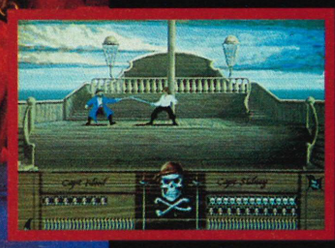
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The last two years have seen an explosion of microprocessors. And, even more recently, microprocessor adverts on TV. So why all the fuss? Andrew Johnson investigates

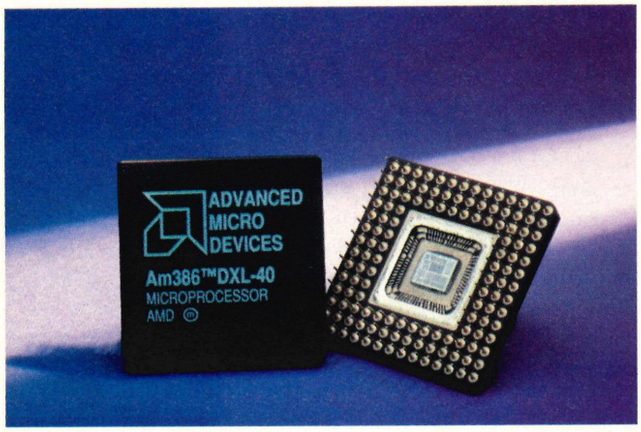
There was a time when a cracking computer game was a pair of paddles and a blob bouncing around the screen, or a simple graphics and text adventure. But all that has changed. The games you get today demand acres of your hard disk and invade most of the available system memory. And even if you slam in the RAM and install a bigger hard drive, you won't see much of an improvement if your microprocessor is still stuck in the age of Pong.

The problem is that microprocessors— or central processing units (CPUs) – are terribly confusing. What's the difference between a 286 and a 486? Can you upgrade one to the other? What's a DX and an SX? What's all this about 'Intel inside'? Will games run on AMD or Cyrix processors? And why would anyone want a Pentium chip?

Back to basics then, the microprocessor is the brain of your computer. It tells your hard disk what to do, attempts to make sense of your software and handles the flow of information around your system. The microscopic electrical circuits stamped on to the silicon are so small that a speck of dust during manufacture can wreck the chip completely. So chip factories are very, very clean. Cleaner than the average operating theatre, in fact.

There are currently three major manufacturers – Intel, Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) and Cyrix. Texas Instruments has an agreement with Cyrix, allowing it to make chips based on the Cyrix design, but they are only widely available in Texas Instrument notebooks. IBM also makes processors under licence from Intel for its notebook computers.

All processors produced by these companies will run your PC games. Don't worry about compatibility if your machine has an AMD or Cyrix chip – it'll run everything the equivalent Intel processor can. But Apple Macs, Acorns and Sun SparcStations



AMD is Intel's strongest rival in the PC chip market. It actually produced 386 chips that were faster than Intel's, which is why Intel markets the 486 so aggressively.

When the chips are down

use very different types of processor, made by different manufacturers. That's why you can't run DOS, Windows and PC games on them (in the normal way).

Intel inside ...

Intel enjoys its current domination of the processor scene thanks to a range of factors. One was the enormous luck it had in 1981 when IBM chose to use its 8-bit chip, the 8088, in the first mass-made personal computer. As IBM gained control over the desktop in the first half of the 1980s, so Intel's fortunes rose with it. And as other computer manufacturers started challenging the IBM's supremacy, they also used Intel processors. This was so they could run software originally developed for the IBM PC – like DOS, Lotus 1-2-3 and WordPerfect.

Intel's next move was the 286 chip, running at 16MHz on a 16MHz motherboard. At the time, it was the bees-knees in processor design. But now these chips are just not up to handling the latest software, and Intel has stopped making them.

In 1985, Intel launched a still better chip, the 386DX. This was the first 32-bit processor, but it could only run on a 32-bit motherboard. This is why you *can't* upgrade a 286 to a 386DX processor – unless you replace the whole motherboard, a bigger operation altogether. Intel produced 386DX chips running at 16, 20, 25 and 33MHz, but only the 33MHz version remains.

The 386SX chip followed in 1988. Like the DX chip, the 386SX runs at 32-bits internally; the difference is the SX chip can communicate with a 16-bit motherboard. So you *can* upgrade your 286 processor to a 386SX. The 386SX became more popular than the 386DX because the clone manufacturers didn't have to redesign their motherboards to use it.

The first 486 chips arrived in 1989. Again, these were DX chips running 32-bits on a 32-bit motherboard. A 486 is basically a 386DX chip, but souped up to make it faster. The 486 is more efficient, and includes an 8-kilobyte cache. This acts like a mini RAM chip, storing the most commonly used information, so that it's ready for instant use.

To make life confusing, the difference between a 486DX and a 486SX is not the same as the difference between a 386DX and 386SX. A 486DX has a built-in co-processor. A co-processor is normally a separate chip, occupying its own socket on the motherboard. It helps the main chip with tasks that use the processor a lot, like complicated spreadsheet calculations. A 486DX has the built-in co-processor; a 486SX does not.

You cannot upgrade any 386 chip to a 486. A 386SX, remember, runs on a 16-bit motherboard, and the 486 doesn't. And, anyway, 486 chips are too big to fit in a 386 socket, even if you have a 386DX machine (unless it has the right pin connections). Otherwise, if you have a 386, the buck stops there unless you replace the whole motherboard.

Prior to 1991, the year the 486SX appeared, Intel had a complete monopoly, allowing the company to keep margins high and develop new chips at a leisurely stroll.

The arrival of Advanced Micro Devices changed this somewhat comfortable state of affairs dramatically. Within a year of launching its own 386DX in March 1991, it grabbed 30 per cent of the market. There were two reasons for this – the AMD chips were cheaper *and* faster, running at 40MHz compared to the Intel top speed of 33MHz.

Intel responded in two ways. The first move was to prosecute AMD, and later, Cyrix, for patent infringement through the American courts. The second was to push its 486 chips as hard as possible. The first policy has met with somewhat mixed success. Intel lost a case which allowed AMD to carry on calling its chips 386s, because American trademark laws forbid the use of numbers as a trademark.

But Intel did win a ruling last year, preventing AMD using Intel's microcode – software that runs the microprocessor –in its own chips. This delayed AMD's own 486 chip about six months, and the first machines using this processor have just appeared. By the quirks of US appeal procedure, the original ruling against AMD was overturned, letting the company use the Intel microcode. But this has been, on appeal, overturned again. But some AMD chips may still have the Intel code ...

Legal action hasn't stopped Cyrix from cashing in on the scene too. The first Cyrix chip, the 486SLC, was not a true 486 at all: it only works with a 16-bit motherboard, like a 386. It's the same size as a 386 too, but faster. Cyrix followed this success with further chips, true 486s, running on 32-bit motherboards.

The second policy has been a lot more successful. In February 1992, Intel unveiled its clock-doubling OverDrive processors. To fit these, you take your old 486 processor from the motherboard, and plug in the new one. For example, a 33MHz 486DX can be replaced with a 66MHz 486DX processor.

Intel dominated the PC processor market with 286, 386 and 486 chips like these. But, US law doesn't allow numbers as trademarks, so rather than the i586 chip, the next generation of Intel chips will be called Pentiums.



Although this superficially promises twice the performance, you're really more likely to see a benefit of between 30 and 70 per cent, depending on the application you're using. This is because the motherboard is still geared for the old chip. Programs using graphics a lot use the motherboard more than the processor. But a faster processor leads to performance gains in big number-crunching spreadsheets, because these impose a heavy demand on the chip.

And the OverDrive processors are not that easy for the average user to upgrade, unless your computer is fitted with what's called a zero insertion force (ZIF) socket. This is fitted with a small lever. Pull it up, and your processor pops out. Replace it, and push the lever down. The chip is firmly secured. Chips are delicate, and replacing a chip not plugged into a ZIF socket means a lot of scary fiddling around with a fork and a possibility of bending or breaking one of the pins in the process.

Pentium: the immediate future

The successor to the 486 is the 586, or Pentium processor. It's called the Pentium because Intel discovered it couldn't trademark numbers, thus giving its competitors every chance to use Intel names on their own processors. The Pentium is designed to be exclusively identified with Intel.

The chip runs at an incredible 64 bits, and is designed to handle heavy duty software. According to tests from the States, a 66MHz Pentium chip does offer nearly twice the performance of a 486DX running at the same speed. This is likely to translate as a 60 to 80 per cent improvement when you start running real software on the processor, rather than benchmark tests.

The Pentium also needs a 64-bit motherboard to get the full benefits from the chip. Very few manufacturers have actually designed such motherboards, and these are largely the big boys, like Compaq and IBM. The prices for these machines start at around £3,500 and go up to £7,000 to £8,000, so they're not worth considering at the moment unless you're determined to follow the old adage about fools and their money.

And Pentium machines won't be priced at current 486DX levels for another two years. The processor has to be made in special factories due to its complexity, and Intel hasn't finished building its Pentium dedicated manufacturing plant in Ireland. It's unlikely to start making the chips in any volume before the middle of 1994. It's also worth noting that, as there's no real competitor to faster 486DXs yet, Intel is justifiably keen to maximise sales of these chips before replacing it with another.

A spin-off from the Pentium processor is the Pentium OverDrive, or the P24T. Plenty of manufacturers have launched machines, claiming them to be "Pentium OverDrive" ready. These computers have special sockets designed to take the larger P24T processor. Be warned, you won't be able to upgrade your standard 486 to a P24T without this socket.

The problem is, the P24T doesn't actually exist yet. It's not expected to appear until the beginning of next year at the earliest, and the rumour mill is talking about a possible mid-94 release. It won't give you full 64-bit power either, because the chips it's replacing are only running on 32-bit motherboards. Again, look for a big improvement in number-crunching, but a smaller one in graphics based programs, like many games.

What of the future? Well, I guess you'll see faster and more powerful chips appearing. Intel already has development teams in place for 686 (Hextium?) and 786 (Septium?) processors. Another trend is downsizing. Computer manufacturers are already putting graphics and sound chips on the motherboard. Companies like Intel and Texas Instruments want to put them on the same piece of silicon. Will we be seeing wrist-watch size computers in the next few years? Wait and see. ■

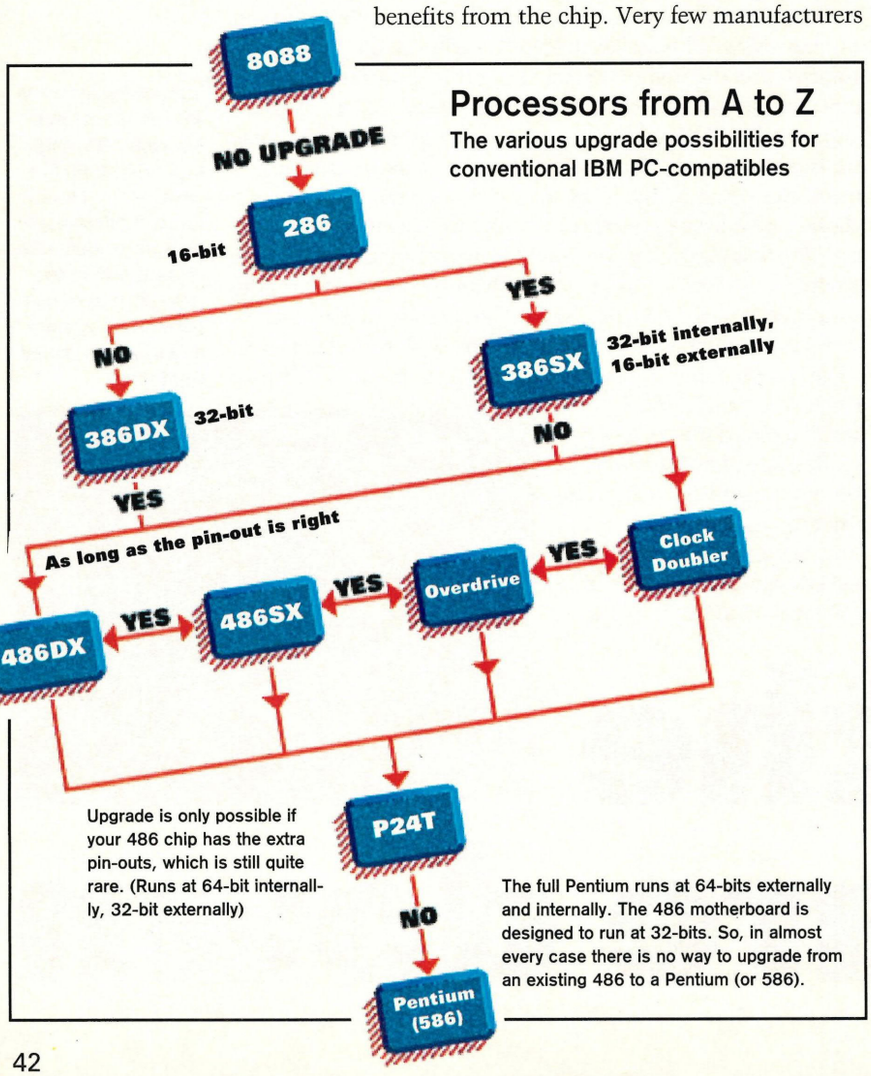
Bits and bytes

The chip knows what to tell your computer to do because it's constantly getting information in the form of a broken stream of electrical signals. Sometimes there's a signal, sometimes a gap. Each signal and each gap is known as a binary digit, or bit. The order of signals and gaps tells the chip what to do, a bit like morse code.

Bits are organised into strings, and the longer the string, the more complicated the instruction to the PC. So an 8-bit processor deals with strings of only eight bits long. Fine for bouncing a blob off a paddle, but not much cop for a game like 7th Guest. A 32-bit processor can handle strings of 32 bits. This means it can do really difficult things, like run your CD-ROM version of X-Wing and count to five million, all at the same time.

The speed of the microprocessor is measured in megahertz (a million hertz). A hertz is a cycle of electricity per second. Each hertz handles one bit-string of information. In an 8MHz, 16-bit processor, eight million strings of 16-bits are whizzing through the chip every second. As each megahertz zooms through your processor, it vibrates.

On faster processors, like Intel's 33MHz 486 affairs, computer manufacturers have to put in heat sinks to deal with the temperatures these vibrations create through friction. Most microprocessors snuggle cosily on the sheet of plastic called the motherboard. There, they cohabit with other odds and sods, like memory chips, keyboard controllers and expansion slots.



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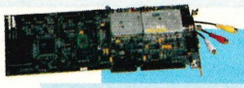
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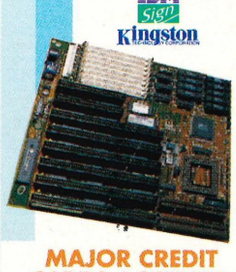
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Power, corruption



If you keep back-ups of the data on your hard disk, and it develops a fault, it shouldn't cause you any problems aside from the hassle and expense of getting the drive repaired or replaced. However, many people don't keep back-ups, and if the disk crashes, it not only wipes out all program files, for which you should have 'back-ups' in the shape of master disks, but also all latest data files too.

And hard disks *can* crash — though, mercifully, it's a rare occurrence. If an area of a disk suddenly fails, the first you will know of it, in most cases, is that a program reports a read/write error. Applications often simply refuse to read a damaged file at all, and so won't even let you recover part of the data. The worst possible scenario is that the damaged area could store a directory — in which case all files in the directory are lost. Sometimes you can initially treat this problem as if the file had been accidentally deleted and use an undelete utility (eg, the one supplied with DOS 5 and 6), but most undelete utilities will give up if there is a read error within a file they are trying to undelete. To do the job properly, you need a file recovery utility that will copy the file to a safe area of the disk or on to another diskette complete with as much data as it can read. Some of this recovered data may be incorrect, but often it is better than nothing.

There are a range of programs that can be used to recover damaged files, and repair damaged disks. Some claim to check the integrity of your disk and move data before a problem occurs. For example, SpinRite will test each data sector on a disk to see how easily it can be read. If the data needs more than one attempt to read it, or if error correction has to be applied to recover it, the program moves the data to another area on the disk and marks the bad area so that it won't be reused. SpinRite offers some security and it even improves the performance of your disk, but it doesn't protect you from sudden failure.

The effect of damage to files depends on the type of file. If the file is a program, it almost certainly won't work properly as the damage will have altered its code or data. In other words, it is usually a waste of time to try to recover programs from a crashed disk. How usable data is depends on how simple the file structure is. If the data is word processed text, the word processor will often still read it in and the damage will show as random characters or missing blocks of text. Using this, it is usually possible to repair the damage and save a clean copy of the file by editing. If the recovered file is a spreadsheet or database, the problem is much worse because usually the original program will refuse to read the damaged file. This makes correcting the damage impossible, the solution being a File Fix utility to read the damaged file and convert it into a legal format that can be read by the application. Once files are fixed you can load them into the application and edit them back to their original form. However, File Fix utilities generally only exist for most common file formats, usually 1-2-3 and dBase. If you can't find a suitable utility you will have to write one or use a raw file editor to change bytes to convert the file to a legal format — a highly technical job.

There are three best selling disk recovery packages, Central Point PC Tools, Norton Utilities and Mace. Although each has some form of disk testing and preventative maintenance, SpinRite is the best known. There are many other packages on the market, but these are more technically oriented than the best known. In nearly all cases, it is possible to do more damage than good if you use a recovery package incorrectly. Read the manuals before you start work.

CHKDSK — a hard disk's health check

One way of keeping an eye on your hard disk and ensuring files are error-free is to run the MS-DOS command Chkdsk periodically. Chkdsk checks up on the file allocation table (FAT) and the file system. The FAT is a table of contents of files saved on your hard drive, *and* where they are on the disk. If the FAT is damaged, DOS may be unable to find files on the disk which are perfectly OK.

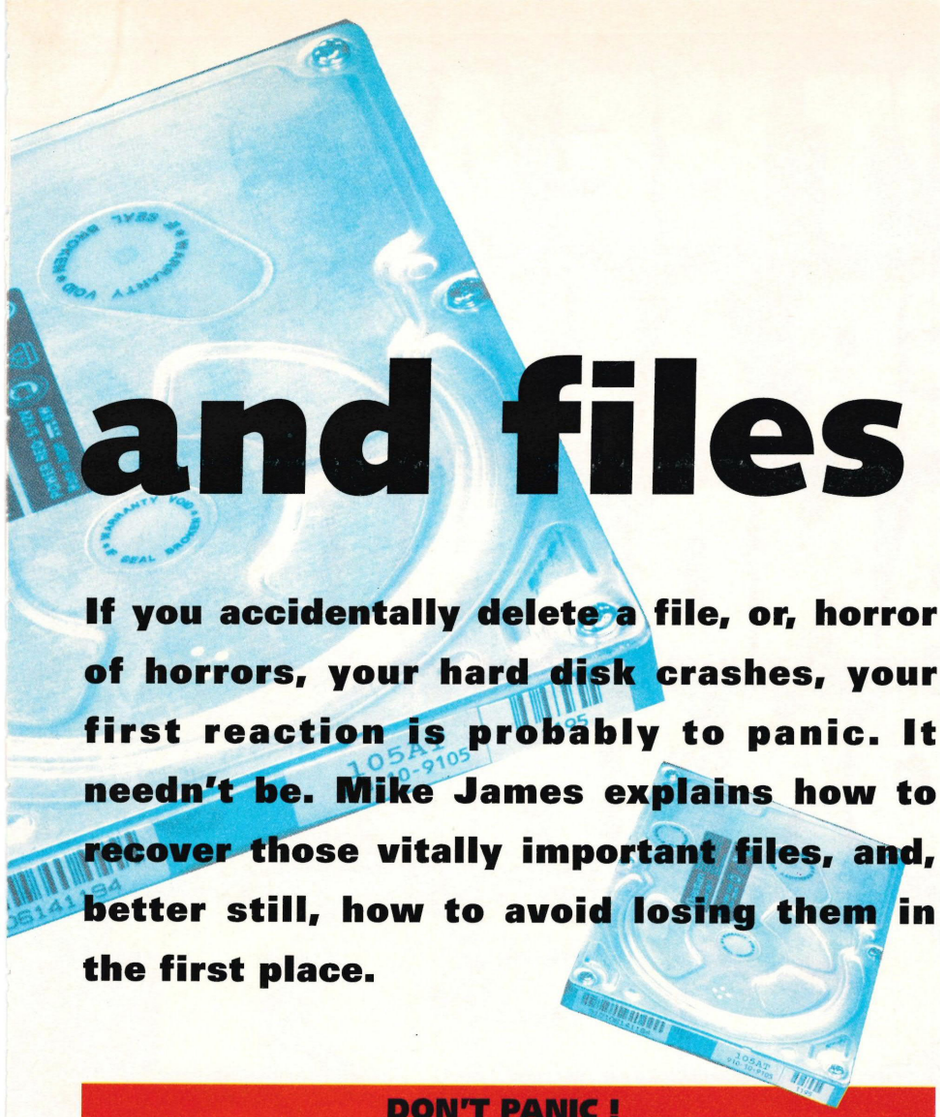
Use the Chkdsk command with switch /f:

CHKDSK /f [Enter]

to 'fix' anomalies. Fix is a typical euphemism from the MS-DOS manual; it converts fragments of files found that aren't listed in the FAT into separate files, FILE0000.CHK, FILE0001.CHK, etc. (The PC Review record for the number of lost chains and clusters found like this is 460, and the hard disk crashed and died shortly afterwards!). You can then view these files using the Type command or a word processor and piece them together again, or delete them.

BUYERS' GUIDE

PRODUCT	MANUFACTURER	PRICE	SUPPLIER
Disk Mechanic 286 or 386	MLI	£79.00	Software Paradise, (0222) 887521, fax (0222) 862209
Disk Technician Gold	Prime Solutions	£ 99.00	Software Paradise, (0222) 887521, fax (0222) 862209
Dos Utils	OnTrack Software	£ 65.00	Software Paradise, (0222) 887521, fax (0222) 862209
Hard Disk Survival Kit	DS Software	£59.00	Software Paradise, (0222) 887521, fax (0222) 862209
HDTest	Ping Software	£ 89.00	Software Paradise, (0222) 887521, fax (0222) 862209
Mace Utilities 1990	Fifth Generation Systems Ltd	£99.00	Fifth Generation Systems Ltd, (0494) 442224, fax (0494) 44225
Norton Utilities 6.0	Norton	£139.00	Symantec Ltd, (0628) 592222, fax (0628) 592393
PC Tools 8	Central Point	£139	Central Point Software Ltd, (081) 848 1414, fax (081) 569 1017
Rescue	Shareware Marketing	£129	Shareware plc (0297) 24088, fax (0297) 24091
Service Diagnostics	Supersoft	£159-£499	Software Paradise, (0222) 887521, fax (0222) 862209
SpinRite II	Gibson Research	£ 89.00	Riva, (0420) 22666, fax (0420) 23700
Shareware			
HDTest	(PDSL: 3262)	AT Hard disk utilities (PDSL 2017)	Hard disk tools (PDSL 1325)
Recovery Tools	(UR2 Sharware Marketing)	Professonal Master Key	(UR4 Shareware Marketing)



and files

If you accidentally delete a file, or, horror of horrors, your hard disk crashes, your first reaction is probably to panic. It needn't be. Mike James explains how to recover those vitally important files, and, better still, how to avoid losing them in the first place.

DON'T PANIC !

Error messages and when to start worrying

MS-DOS has many error messages, most of which seem unnecessarily cryptic. What follows is a selection of those that sound alarming, but needn't be, and those which usually do precede a disk crash. We sincerely hope that you never see any of the latter category!

Data error reading/writing drive x MS-DOS has detected a fault on the disk. This is often the way you find out about faults for the first time. If the message is referring to your hard disk, you may need a file recovery program, or one which tests the disk and mark out the unreadable areas as bad sectors so that DOS doesn't try to write to them again.

Disk error reading/writing FAT This is a bad one. Copy all the important files off on to another disk; you may need a file recovery utility if you have problems with the copying.

Drive not ready reading/writing drive x There probably isn't a disk in the drive, or the drive door isn't closed properly.

General failure reading/writing drive x The likeliest solution is that the disk in the drive is actually an Apple Macintosh or Amiga disk, or it's a high density disk in a low density drive. If it's definitely a PC disk, and definitely the right capacity, then unfortunately the message means the disk is damaged beyond recognition.

Non system disk or disk error Usually, this message occurs when you switch the PC on, and have left a data disk in drive a:.

Seek error reading/writing drive x A nasty one. This means the drive head can't find a track or sector on the disk, and usually precedes a pretty major crash.

Hardware faults are usually reported: **Error: Faulty [hard disk controller/real time clock, whatever]**.

This is a hardware fault, and usually, you will have to call out an engineer to sort out the problem. Just occasionally, you may be lucky and discover that it is nothing more than a mere loose connection inside your PC. Remember, as always, that if you remove the cover of your PC to check for loose wires to TURN OFF THE POWER AND DISCONNECT EVERYTHING FIRST.

LEGENDARY SOFTWARE

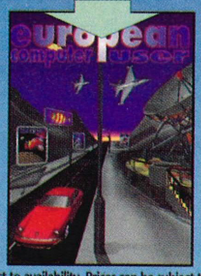
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reviews

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 96

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

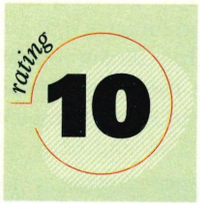
We believe games should be placed in context. You may like the sound of game Y but suspect it might be too technical, or difficult to control. We'll tell you about alternative games of a similar style, subject matter, or interface, which might be more to your taste (or warn you off those which are inferior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

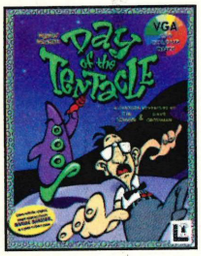
We also practise 'contemporaneous marking' – which means that games are rated to other current games.

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

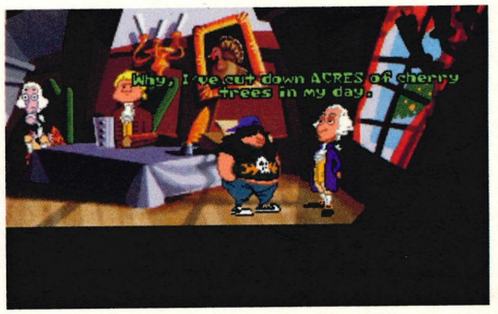
The shareware reviews section is an independently-written column on the best and most interesting of the latest shareware and public domain releases.

If it's help with specific games that you're looking for, turn to page 100, where our extensive tips section, QED, begins. And in Software Search, we'll help you to find the software you need for just about any application.



Title	**Day of the Tentacle**
Publisher	**LucasArts/US Gold**
Contact	**(021) 625 3366**
Price	**£42.99/£45.99 CD-ROM**

After a bumpy ride through time, each of the kids winds up in a different era. Unfortunately, Laverne has landed in a kumquat tree and can't get down without some help. The simple solution would be to remove the tree, but the question is: how?



Green issues were not exactly top of the agenda 200 years ago. A chat with George Washington reveals that he likes nothing better than to fell a few trees — providing they're cherry trees. But how do you persuade him to cut down that overgrown kumquat?

Day of the

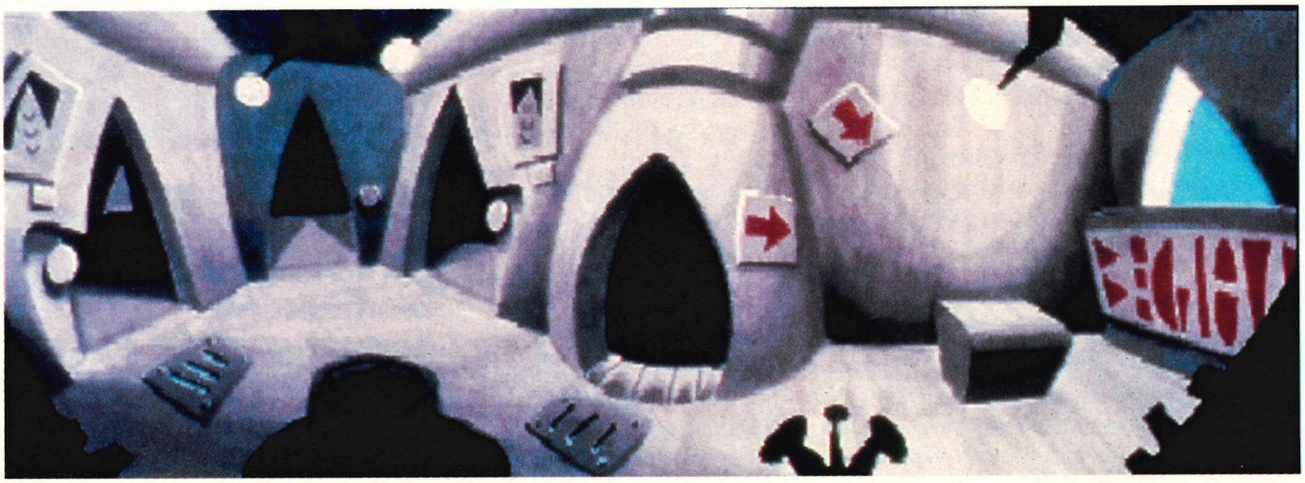
Right from the very moment when I first heard about this game, I had a good feeling about it. The screen shots looked pretty darned good and, more importantly, it was to be produced by LucasArts which has an impressive track record when it comes to producing graphic adventures. With this in mind, therefore, I had only two questions. Would it live up to my high expectations and, improbable as it seems, could it even go as far as to usurp the coveted Monkey Island throne?

Day of the Tentacle is the follow-up to the five year old Maniac Mansion, the first game to use the now famous SCUMM interface (Script Creation Utility for Maniac Mansion, in case you didn't already know). Well, it seems that it has been well worth the wait, because Day of the Tentacle looks set to be one of the most successful games of the year, if not the entire decade.

The story once again revolves around the crazy Edison family who inhabit Maniac Mansion. Doctor Fred Edison is a mad scientist whose creations include a couple of bizarre Tentacle creatures and a machine entirely devoted to filling the river with dangerous toxic waste.

The problems start when the evil but dimwitted Purple Tentacle drinks the toxic sludge and mutates into a megalomaniac genius bent on world domination. In one of his more lucid moments, Doctor Fred realises the problems this could cause and captures the two Tentacles with the intention of putting them both to sleep. But the good-natured and blameless Green Tentacle sends out a plea for help to his old friend, Bernard Bernouli, in the hope that he will come and set him free. And this is where it all goes horribly wrong.

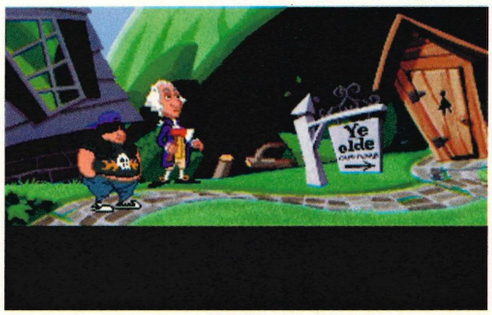
To the rescue come the unholy trinity of Bernard, a computer nerd who bears a striking resemblance to Microsoft supremo Bill Gates; heavy metal roadie Hoagie, an overweight slob who lists belching as his favourite hobby, and Laverne, a neurotic medical student with an unhealthy obsession for dissecting small furry creatures. The three waste no time in releasing Green Tentacle, but in doing so, they also manage to unleash Purple Tentacle on an unsuspecting world.



This artwork shows the game's unique graphic style to good effect. On the left, the Maniac Mansion 200 years in the future, whilst on the right, how it appeared 200 years in the past.



Remember that tin of red paint you found in the attic? Well, this is where it comes in handy. Just slap a bit of the old red paint on the kumquats, and hey presto! A cherry tree! Now try talking to Washington again and see what happens.



After a bit of persuading and the odd well-intentioned insult, the illustrious president-to-be will get out his chopper and hack away at the counterfeit cherry tree. Right, now that's solved, but how is it going to help Laverne?



400 years later the tree mysteriously vanishes, leaving Laverne ten feet up in the air with nowhere to go but down. Well, that's one problem out of the way, but poor Laverne has landed herself in even worse trouble with those dastardly Tentacles.

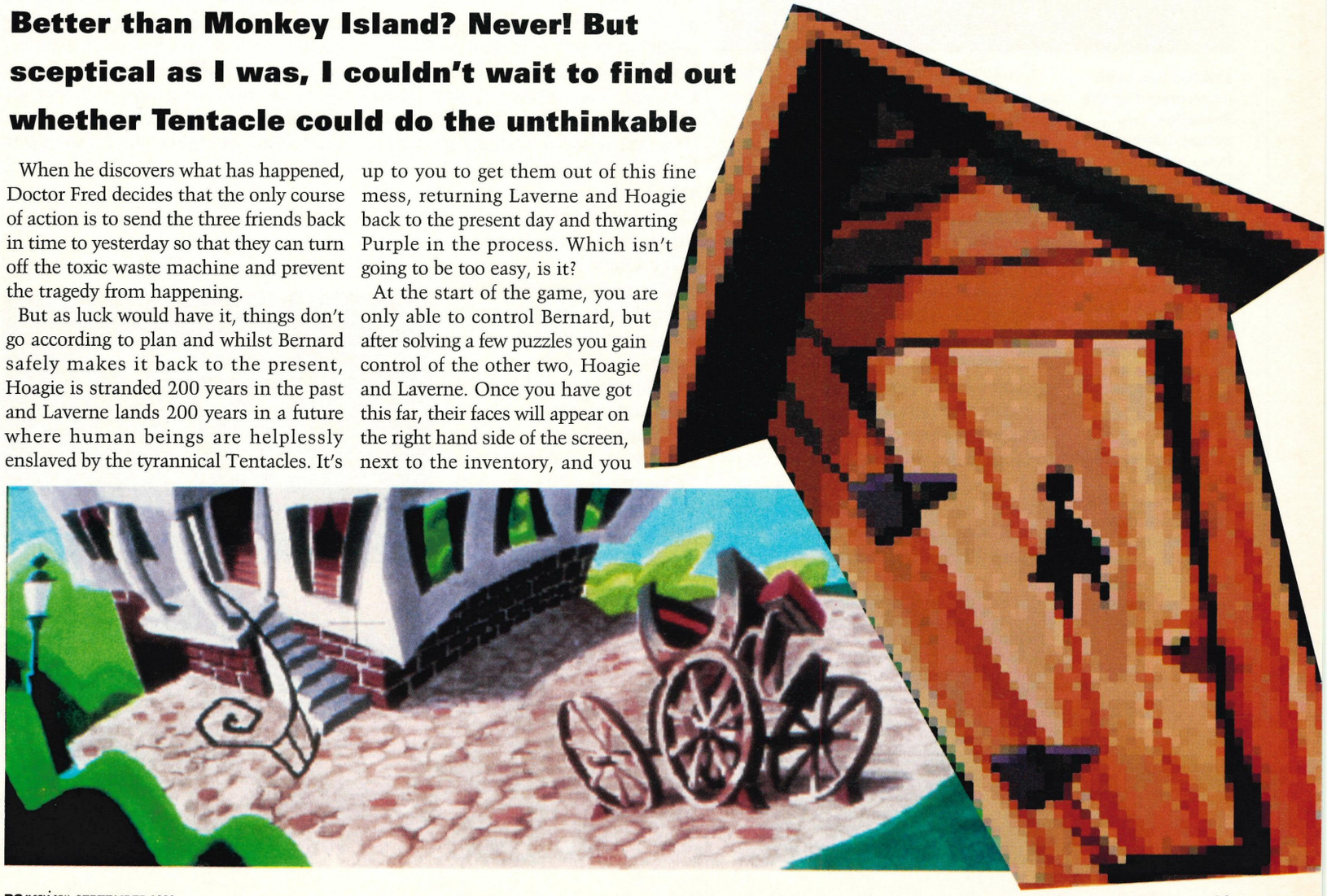
Tentacle

Better than Monkey Island? Never! But sceptical as I was, I couldn't wait to find out whether Tentacle could do the unthinkable

When he discovers what has happened, Doctor Fred decides that the only course of action is to send the three friends back in time to yesterday so that they can turn off the toxic waste machine and prevent the tragedy from happening.

But as luck would have it, things don't go according to plan and whilst Bernard safely makes it back to the present, Hoagie is stranded 200 years in the past and Laverne lands 200 years in a future where human beings are helplessly enslaved by the tyrannical Tentacles. It's up to you to get them out of this fine mess, returning Laverne and Hoagie back to the present day and thwarting Purple in the process. Which isn't going to be too easy, is it?

At the start of the game, you are only able to control Bernard, but after solving a few puzzles you gain control of the other two, Hoagie and Laverne. Once you have got this far, their faces will appear on the right hand side of the screen, next to the inventory, and you







Laverne has been incarcerated by the Tentacles, and getting her out of there ain't easy. Running across the electrified barrier is not the way to do it, as you see.

To the time machine! Still, however bumpy the ride, it's bound to be more comfortable than London transport.

Right: the animated sequences are great fun, as illustrated here. But how did I get these chaps to react like that? Nah, that would be spoiling it, wouldn't it?

Of course, having the right items in your inventory is vital to solving the problems. If you have played graphic adventures before, then you will know that there's an art to finding out which object is used to solve a puzzle. This is half the fun, you see. For instance, what do you need to do in order to get Weird Ed Edison to give you one of his treasured Pony Express stamps? Or how on earth do you get the prisoners to escape from the under the nose of their Tentacle guard when they seem quite happy where they are? It has to be said that these are some of the most bizarre puzzles I've come across in a computer game. Any game which requires you to solve a puzzle using fake vomit can hardly be accused of being unoriginal.

As far as being difficult goes, I found the game a bit easier than Monkey Island 2, but perhaps that's because I've got used to the twisted logic involved in solving LucasArts games. Still, if you use your imagination, you really shouldn't have to resort to using a clue book to get the game finished. The obvious answers aren't always the right ones, but take a bit of time out to think things through and you'll discover that none of the answers are quite as obscure as you first thought. Finishing the game requires plenty of imagination, a touch of lateral thinking and a talent for solving the trickiest of problems armed with little more than a pair of dentures, an exploding cigar and a bizarre sense of humour.

Aside from being choc full of entertaining puzzles, Day of the Tentacle looks pretty spectacular too. I don't know about you, but I'd rather look at some really original, imaginatively drawn graphics than those of the digitised variety any day. Day of the Tentacle is one of the best — and certainly the most distinctive — looking games I've come across in a long time. Walking around the mansion is rather like taking a trip to the fun house at the local fair. Walls, floors and ceilings slope off at impossible angles, furniture is strangely twisted and as for the characters you encounter, you'd be hard pressed to find an odder looking crowd in a freak show. Weird it might be, but take my word for it, it looks amazing.

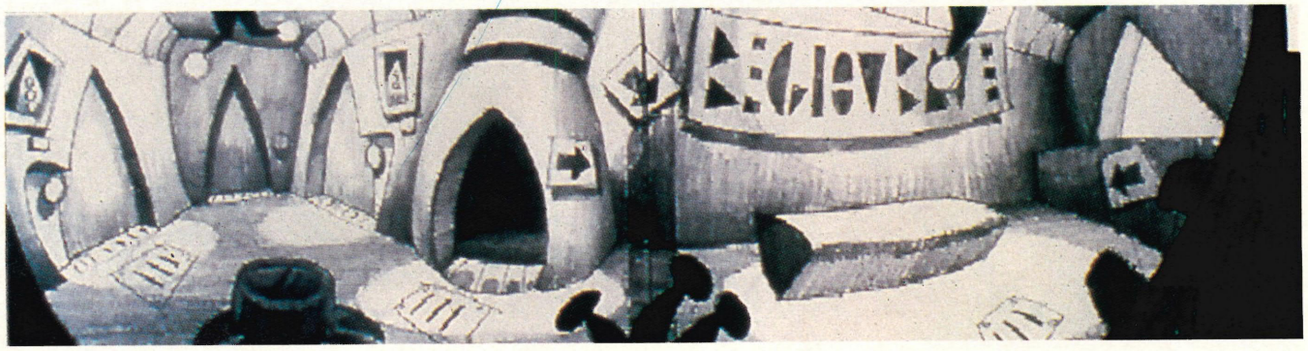
And Day of the Tentacle is not just a pretty face, either. There have been a lot of cartoon-style games, such as Don Bluth's Space Ace or Dragon's Lair, which have wonderful graphics but are let down by a woeful lack of gameplay. I am very glad to say that in the case of Day of the Tentacle, that couldn't be further from the truth. Thanks to the strong puzzle element I mentioned earlier, it's more than just an interactive cartoon. It's definitely not the sort of game which can be completed by pushing the joystick in a certain direction during a set animation sequence, thank heavens.

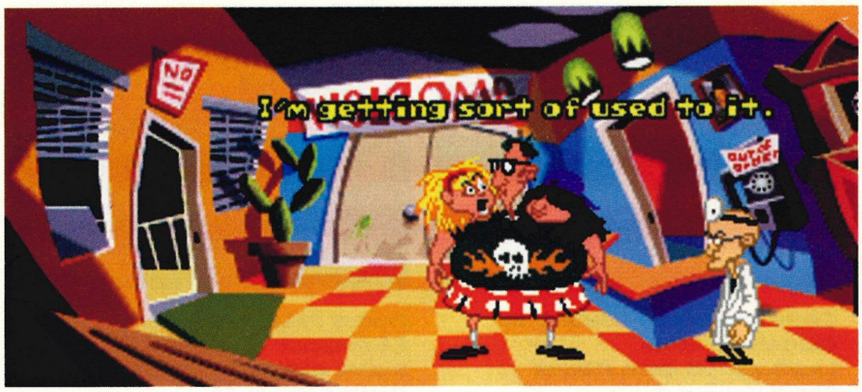
No game is complete without a good soundtrack, and since LucasArts has a history of producing great sounding games such as the Secret of Monkey Island and Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, you might expect Day of the Tentacle to be no different in that respect. And you'd be right. The follow-up to Maniac Mansion sounds every bit as good as it looks. I didn't exactly find myself humming the tunes, but they still ended up going round my head at two in the morning. A lot of adventures contain good



can swap from one to another by clicking on the relevant portrait. And this is where the beauty of the game lies. In most single character adventures, once you're stuck, you're well and truly stuck, which can be somewhat disheartening, to say the least. In this game, as soon as you get into difficulties with one character, you just swap to another and try and get round the problem that way.

One of the wittier, oh all right then, cruder, touches is that the three time machines are actually nothing more than high-tech toilets, or Chron-O-Johns. It's possible to transfer inventory items between the three characters by flushing them through time, which is accompanied, should you have access to a Sound Blaster card, by the appropriate watery sound. Hey, I never said anything about this game being in good taste!





Travelling three to a Chron-O-John can have some unexpected consequences.



Winning the Human Show is another one of your tasks during the game. Thankfully, the Tentacles have a poor appreciation of human beauty.

music, but quite often this is limited to a few locations so that you end up playing most of the game in silence. I was rather pleased, then, to find out that Day of the Tentacle has a continual soundtrack, with different tunes for each location. This really helps set the mood for the game, and you'd be missing out if you played the game without a sound card.

If you are lucky enough to be playing the CD-ROM version, then you also have the benefit of digitised speech, but having said that, the disk-based version also includes some speech at the start of the game. Unfortunately, you won't get to hear it unless you have a Sound Blaster card, nor will you be able to hear all the weird and wacky sound effects which really bring the whole thing to life. But whatever your PC set-up, I can guarantee that you'll have a lot of fun with this game.

Right, so the graphics are brilliant, the sound is tremendous, and it's a huge amount of fun to play, but the same could be said of quite a lot of games these days. The thing that brought home to me most how good Day of the Tentacle is what I call the audience factor. As soon as I got the thing loaded up on to my PC, a crowd gathered and it wasn't long before everyone wanted to have a go. It's a rare game that gets that sort of reaction, believe me. Alone in the Dark had it, and X-Wing and Syndicate both generated a certain amount of interest, but so far nothing has come close to creating the kind of stir that Day of the Tentacle caused. And it wasn't just the editorial staff either. The design team got interested, the boys from our sister magazine, The One, all wanted in on the action and even the work experience lads were sat there giggling away. Still doubtful? Don't be. Just try it for yourself and you'll see what I mean. If there was ever a game to impress your friends with, this is it.

As a bonus, Day of the Tentacle comes packaged with the original Maniac Mansion game. To access Maniac Mansion, you need to go into Weird Ed Edison's room and use the computer. Exiting the game returns you to Day of the Tentacle rather than chucking you straight back to DOS, and you are allowed one save game which won't affect your Tentacle save games.

It's quite interesting to compare the two games, if only to see how much progress has been made in the last five years. I couldn't believe how old Maniac Mansion looked when compared with Day of the Tentacle. Whereas Mansion just looks like a rather elderly graphic adventure – which it is, of

Enhanced Tentacles

If you own a CD-ROM drive, you can experience the enhanced pleasures of the compact disc version of Day of the Tentacle for just £3 extra. The game comes in a bizarre triangular box (a bit like a giant Toblerone), which includes the instructions, one CD, a reference card, a few weird odds and ends, and a free hint book. You don't get the hint book free with the floppy disk version – for that, you have to pay an extra £7.99. Try not to cheat too often, though, as it could spoil your enjoyment of the game!

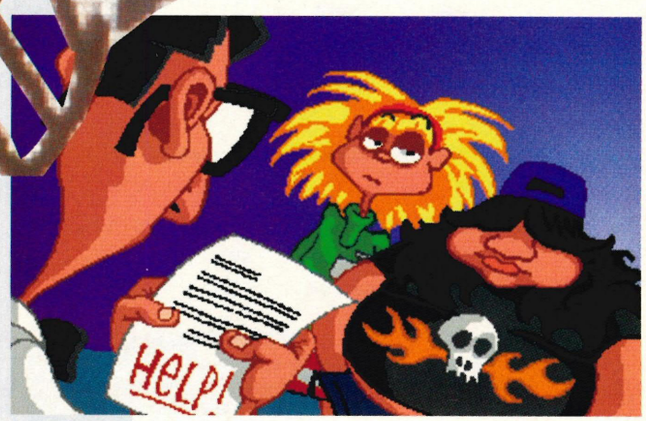
There are no significant differences in either graphics or gameplay between the two formats, but there is a substantial difference in sound. Day of the Tentacle on CD-ROM includes 4,000 lines of recorded dialogue, whereas the floppy disk version includes speech only during the introduction and opening exchanges.

Both versions come with the original Maniac Mansion as a game within a game, should you want to explore the history of Bernard and the eccentric Edison family.

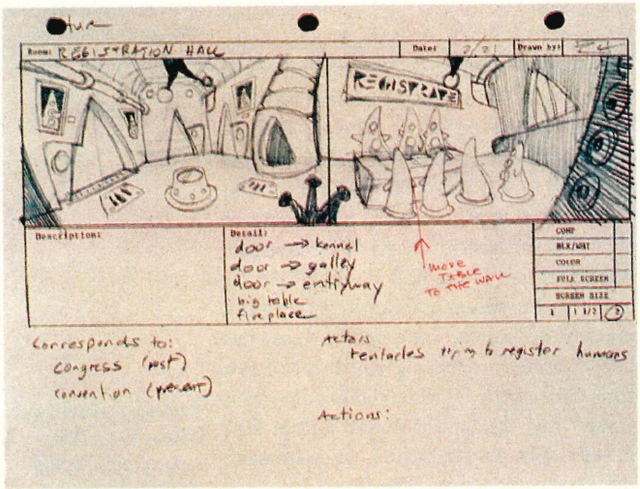
Day of the Tentacle is just part of LucasArts' continuing commitment to CD-ROM games for the PC. Other releases already on the shelves include Loom, a unique and visually impressive adventure which, though a little simple for experienced players, still provides a lot of enjoyment; and Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, a 'talkie' version of one of the finest adventure games ever released. Rebel Assault, another title to take its inspiration from the Star Wars epic, is due out later this year.

As a bonus, demos of LucasArt's Rebel Assault, Fate of Atlantis and Sam and Max were also included on the Day of the Tentacle CD we reviewed.

Gordon Houghton



Day of the Tentacle on CD-ROM may look the same, but the added bonus of 4,000 lines of speech creates a whole new experience.



Above: one of the original sketches on which the graphics were based.

course – Tentacle has all the polish of a feature length cartoon. It is a far superior game, and it's not simply the graphics and sound which have been improved either. The SCUMM interface has come on in leaps and bounds since its first outing, and Day of the Tentacle is far more straightforward to control. It is also a lot funnier, which I expect is down to the fact that it's much easier to create a visual gag using the current level of graphics than it was back then. Five years is a long time in computing, so it seems.

Now for the game's weak points. This will make an extremely short paragraph because, to be quite honest, I couldn't find any. I wouldn't have complained if it had been a bit longer because, as with anything you've been enjoying, whether it's a book, a film or a game, you're always a bit sorry when you come to the end. I managed to complete the game in just under three days which doesn't sound very long, but I was playing it pretty solidly and also swapped the odd tip with my fellow staff-writer Dean (you know the kind of thing; I'll tell you how to get the exploding cigar if you tell me how to get the fake plastic barf off the ceiling). Although I'm in the enviable position of getting paid to play games, I wouldn't have been disappointed if I'd shelled out £42.99 for Day of the Tentacle because it's an absolute corker of a game.

So, it seems fair to say that Day of the Tentacle has lived up to its early promise. But is it really better than Monkey Island? The answer is an emphatic yes. It knocks spots off every graphic adventure going, Monkey Island included, and I make no apologies for saying so. I came within an inch of awarding it a perfect ten, which pretty much sums up how good a game it is. Game of the Year? Well, there's a lot of very stiff competition out there so I'll let you decide that one for yourself. But as for adventure of the year, I don't think it can be beaten. If a better adventure crops up between now and Christmas, I'll eat my leather trousers. And that, I think, says it all.

■ Cal Jones

Right: to repair the time machine, you need a diamond. And to get a diamond, you need two million dollars. Doctor Fred has something in his safe which could help drum up the cash but he can only remember the combination when he's sleep walking. Tricky? You said it.



This game is not intended to be historically accurate. How else do you get George Washington, John Hancock and Thomas Jefferson to dive through a window?

Techspec

Needs at least a 286 and is more playable with a mouse. Supports Ad Lib but needs a Sound Blaster for sound effects and speech. An extra 2Mb hard disk space is required to use a Roland board.

Disk requirements						
	High density	✓				
	Hard disk only	✓				
	Space taken on hard disk	16Mb				
Graphic modes						
	CGA	x	EGA	x	Tandy	x
	VGA	✓	SVGA	x		
Soundboards						
	Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control						
	Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance						
	Optimum speed	20MHz				
	Minimum memory	640K				
	Free RAM required	570K				

rating **9**

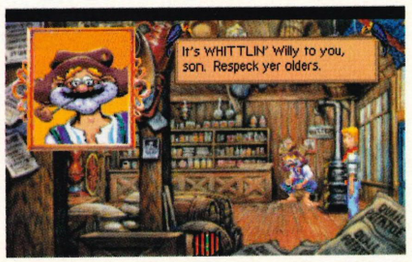
Verdict
Adventure game of the year!

Alternatively...



Secret of Monkey Island 2: Le Chuck's Revenge
LucasArts/US Gold, £39.99
Rated 9, Issue 3

The hugely successful sequel to the Secret of Monkey Island, this game won a Golden Joystick award for best sound in a computer game earlier this year. Aside from the excellent music, the graphics are superb and the plot has some of the best humour I've seen in a game. The only weak point is a disappointing end sequence, but it's an essential purchase nonetheless.



Freddy Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist
Sierra, £39.99
Rated 5, Issue 21

The latest adventure from Al Lowe (he of infamous Leisure Suit Larry fame) is a spoof western packed full of corny gags. Not quite the rib-tickler which it promised to be, Freddy Pharkas is more likely to produce a wry smile than a belly laugh. It does have pleasant graphics and sound, but the game is rather too easy to provide you with anything more than short term entertainment.

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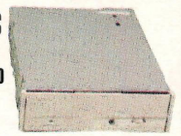
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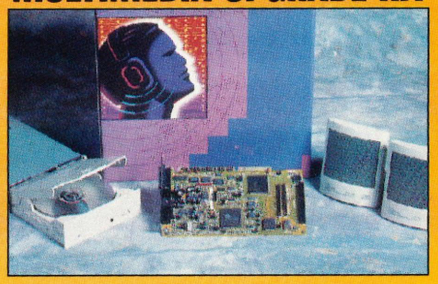
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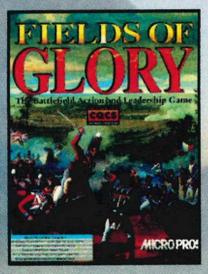
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Title	**Fields of Glory**
Publisher	**MicroProse**
Contact	**(0666) 504326**
Price	**£44.99**

Below left: the control system couldn't be easier to master. Click on a unit and a window appears. Click again on the relevant line and you can alter the formation or select a target. If the window gets in the way you can simply drag it over to a more convenient location.

Fields of Glory

The Corsican ogre is on the loose and once more the eagles are flying over Europe. Thrill to the clash of arms in MicroProse's epic version of the Hundred Days

Fields of Glory is a simulation of Napoleon's last campaign. It offers you the chance to play four historical battles (culminating in the big one, Waterloo) and two hypothetical skirmishes as either the French or Allied/Prussian commander. Obviously it's a war game (despite MicroProse's claims to the contrary), but don't let that put you off. It's designed to be accessible and easy to use (it is) and to appeal to people who don't usually play war games, or rather computer war games.

That qualification is necessary because the standard computer offering, with hex grid and all, takes its inspiration from the board format. Fields of Glory is something altogether different.

What it is, in fact, is a recreation of a tabletop war game with miniatures. Instead of the usual 2D top-down unit counters with obscure military symbols, we get animated sprites in colourful uniforms moving across an attractive isometric landscape in historically accurate formations. The game is played in real time and the action is fast and furious. It's noisy, colourful and fun, and even a novice should be able to get to grips with it in a matter of minutes.

The excellent manual is of the usual MicroProse thickness, but the bulk of it is historical background and the actual playing instructions are quickly digested. The game is completely mouse-controlled, although there are some useful shortcut keyboard commands. After the atmospheric titles, you're taken to opening screens where you select a battle, one of five difficulty levels, and the army you wish to command. You then move to a large-scale map and battle commences.

There are three scales of map. The first one represents an area eight miles across. Topographical details are sparse and the various divisions and corps under your



It's 16 June 1815 and Napoleon has made a surprise thrust to split the Allied armies. All that stands between him and Brussels is a ragbag multi-national army under the command of the Duke of Wellington.

A guide to Napoleonic tactics

The effective range of a musket during this period was about 100 yards, and even at that distance hitting anything was more a matter of luck than judgement. Troops therefore fought in close order (the drill book frontage allowed to a British infantryman was a mere 22 inches) so that devastating massed volleys could be brought to bear at point-blank range. Unfortunately, these dense formations were vulnerable to artillery fire — a single cannon ball fired from a thousand yards away or more could scythe down whole rows of men. Some better-trained, specialist troops operated in loose order, but they were almost defenceless against rapidly moving cavalry. All formations had advantages and disadvantages, and it's vital to know when to switch from one to the other.



A battalion in line would form up in three ranks (two in the British army). Theoretically all muskets could be brought to bear, so it had more firepower than any other formation. Slow moving, so best for defence.



Battalion columns (up to 18 ranks in the French army) had a narrower frontage than lines for good unit cohesion. The fastest close order formation and best for assault but short on firepower and an ideal target for enemy artillery.



Another good artillery target, but the only sound defence against marauding cavalry. The point of a square is that it has no vulnerable flank or rear. Try and get horse artillery forward to pulverise enemy squares. If they break formation your cavalry can pounce and ride them down.



The leading brigade, a light infantry unit, is in skirmish order, screening the close order brigade behind. Skirmishers present an elusive target, but snipe away effectively at the enemy. They also move rapidly, just as well: at the first sign of cavalry they should run like hell.



command are shown by flags. Zoom in to the next level of detail (four miles across) and recognisable troop types emerge — tiny blocks of cavalry, infantry and miniature cannon scurrying across a better defined landscape. This is the most convenient scale for exercising general control. Magnify again to the third level (one mile) and individuals in a brigade (the basic formation) can be clearly made out, along with trees, buildings and hill slopes. This is the best scale for viewing the action, which is lovingly detailed: puffs of smoke ripple out from cannons and muskets; buildings disintegrate under hails of shot; casualties fall out from their formations marking a trail of devastation. You control units simply by clicking on them and then clicking again on the spot where you want them to go. And if you have a sound card you get to hear the call of the bugles as they march off.

All of this is very refreshing. A lot of thought has gone into making the game mechanics clear and comprehensible, and the result is a good looking and innovative system with massive potential. At the moment, however, it still has some way to go, and I have three major criticisms.

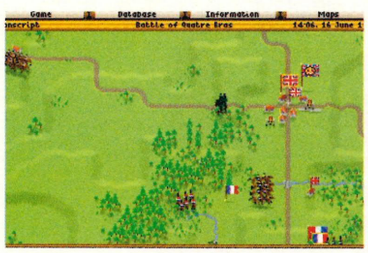
The first is a technical gripe. I've played the game on three machines, a 386SX/25, a 386SX/33 and a 386DX/40. Funnily enough, the best performance came from the first, probably because it had a lot of RAM, but the big battles (and everyone is going to want to play Waterloo) were painfully slow on all three. The sluggishness is not in the movement of the sprites, but in access times to menus and other screens. In a real-time game, quick responses are everything. You have to move rapidly from one side of battle to the other, but the scrolling is so poor that the best way is to zoom in and out of the various maps. This is little faster. I'm told the game zips along on a 486, but then it would, wouldn't it? It wouldn't be so bad if MicroProse didn't claim that the minimum specification is a 386SX/16 with 2Mb of RAM. As the Duke of Wellington once remarked, if you believe that you'll believe anything ...



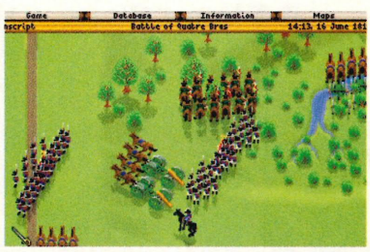
The later stages of the battle of Waterloo as seen on the four mile map.

My second complaint is that the game is too easy. MicroProse has undoubtedly succeeded in making it accessible to the novice, but it's obviously hoping to attract experienced war gamers as well and to this effect they have included five levels of difficulty. The manual boasts that the hardest, 'guard' level will see the computer use tactics to match the 'brilliance of the three army commanders' and is 'extremely difficult to win'. I jumped

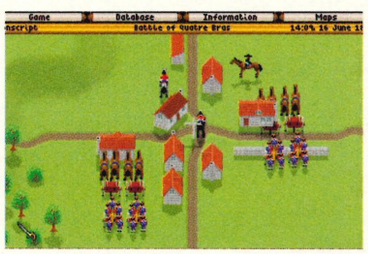
Two Minutes *of rearguard action*



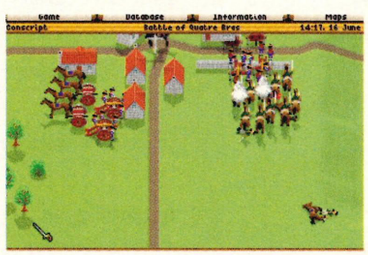
A handful of Allied troops are holding the vital crossroads of Quatre Bras, seen here at the top of the four mile map. A friendly cavalry brigade is riding to the rescue on the left, but they'd better be quick — the French are massing to the south.



And here they come, under the command of Marshal Ney, 'Bravest of the Brave': horse, foot and artillery all swarming up through the woods on the one mile map. If reinforcements don't come soon, poor old Wellington will have to hang up his boot.



And here, at last, is the Iron Duke himself (the blue figure top right). Only these two light artillery batteries are on hand to defend the crossroads, but they're both unlimbered and ready to blast away enthusiastically at the French.



Alas, too late! Enemy dragoons overwhelm the right-hand battery. Notice that they've taken a few Frenchies with them, but not enough to stem the tide. Quatre Bras has all but fallen and the Brussels road lies open. Vive l'Empéreur!

straight in at this level and played and won all six battles without understanding the finer points of the control system.

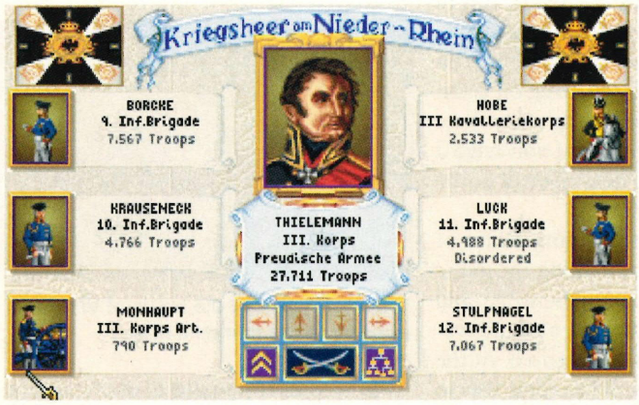
Now admittedly I've played a lot of war games, so I had a fair idea of what I was doing, but it was equally clear that the computer hadn't. An opportunity has been missed here. No campaign in history has inspired more 'what ifs' than Waterloo, so why not have them as play balance options? If, for example, the French could have Grouchy arrive at Waterloo (his wing of the army became embroiled in a meaningless sideshow at Wavre), then the Allied player would really have a fight on his hands. As it was, I had the Imperial Guard routing before a single Prussian had set foot on the battlefield and that can't be right — it was, after all, meant to be a 'close run thing'. This leads directly to my third criticism.

There is no two-player option. It would be impossible for two players to share one machine, but Fields of Glory ought to be a network natural. Even the best artificial intelligences can be cracked in the long run, but Civilization this isn't, and as a result its shelf-life will be severely limited. A do-it-yourself scenario builder and a campaign module would also be welcome, but the lack of a multi-player option is the most serious omission.

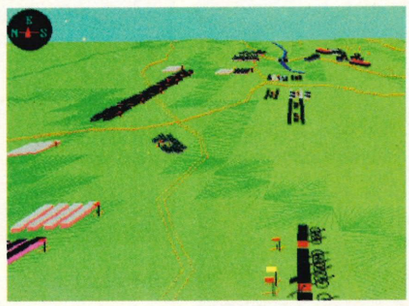
There are some other quibbles as well, but I don't want to end on a negative note. For all its faults, Fields of Glory represents a huge step forward. The graphics, sound and presentation are excellent, and the concept itself is a breath of fresh air. In its present state, the gaming system falls short of the mark, but it's potentially the best thing to have happened to the computer war game since ... well, ever. MicroProse intends to continue developing the system, and it deserves every encouragement. When it gets it right (and when I get a 486) it'll be the kind of game I'll want to keep permanently on my hard disk. And your poor jaded, games-glutted reviewer can't say any fairer than that.

■ Simon Shaw

The massive database contains detailed information on every unit that took part in the campaign, as well as biographies of the principal players. Click on the picture of Prussian General Thielmann here and you'll get a summary of his career and abilities.



Alternatively...



Waterloo
Turcan Research, £16.95
Peter Turcan's venerable version of Waterloo is an obvious candidate for comparison, though in fact it has very little in common with Fields of Glory. You don't exercise the same detailed control over the troops, rather the game is concerned with command decisions — it's all about anticipation. Poor graphics and a clumsy control system, but you'll probably get a more historically accurate result than in Fields of Glory.



V For Victory (Utah Beach, Velikye Luki, Market Garden)
Electronic Arts, £34.99, £34.99, £44.99 respectively
360 Pacific's three World War II games are hex-based, massively detailed, and of specialist interest only. They are, however, the best war games on the market and give advanced players the kind of challenge missing from Fields of Glory. Excellent play balance options enable you to tinker with the levels of difficulty. All games have a two-player option.

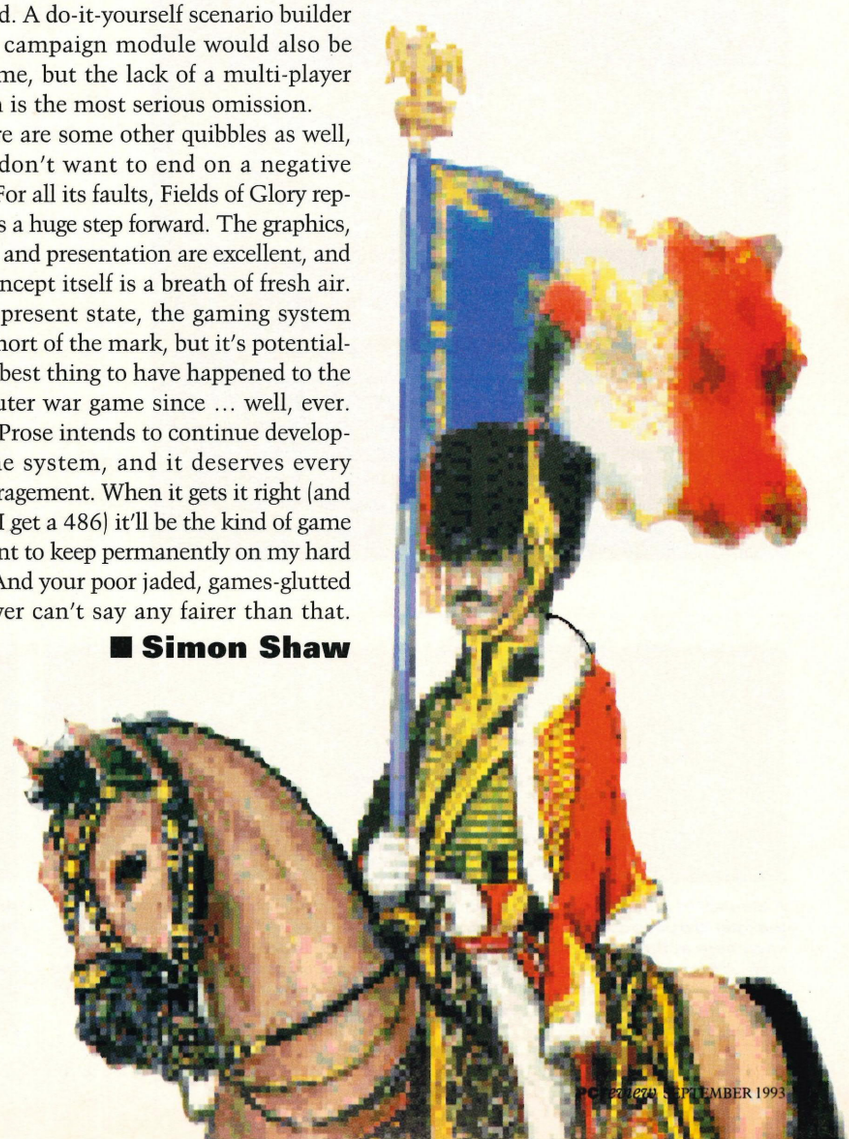
TechSpec

MicroProse's claims that a 16MHz 386SX with 2Mb of RAM will suffice should be ignored. If you want to avoid tearing your hair out in frustration and hurling heavy objects at your screen only consider installing on a 486.

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	33MHz					
	Minimum memory	640K					
	Free RAM required	580K					

rating **7**

Verdict
Flawed and much too simple, but potentially a brilliant game system



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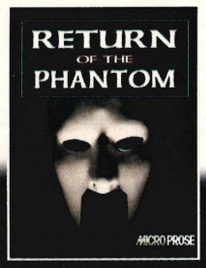
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Title	Return of the Phantom
Publisher	MicroProse
Contact	(0666) 504326
Price	£44.99

During a revival of Erik's opera, Don Juan Triumphant, the chandelier fell from the ceiling killing several members of the audience. Fortunately, opera loving detective Raoul Montand is on hand to investigate the tragedy.



Monsieur Brie is the big cheese at the opera house, and he knows a thing or two about the crime. A similar disaster occurred in 1881, and was attributed to the mysterious opera ghost. The first step is to question the other witnesses, so off I swagger.

Return of

First published in 1911, Gaston Leroux's The Phantom of the Opera has been a popular subject for film and theatre. The most famous, and indeed faithful, adaptation was Universal's 1925 silent film, starring Lon Chaney as the eponymous villain. Later versions, including the highly successful Lloyd Webber musical, have portrayed the phantom as being a far more sympathetic character than in the original novel. The game, however, remains true to the book and the designers have made sure their version of the character closely resembles Leroux's twisted madman.

Return of the Phantom begins in 1993, when, during a performance of the phantom's Don Juan Triumphant at the Paris Opera, the chandelier falls on to the audience with fatal results. One of the survivors is Raoul Montand, a detective with the Paris Sûreté (the French equivalent of the FBI) and patron of the opera. Playing Raoul, you agree to help your friend Monsieur Brie, the house manager, by looking into the incident. All is not what it seems, however; supernatural forces have played a part in the accident.

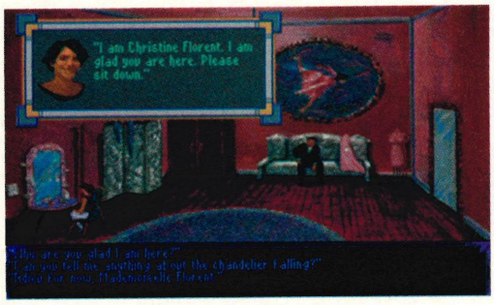


Conclusive proof that playing with your organ for too long can set your pants on fire.

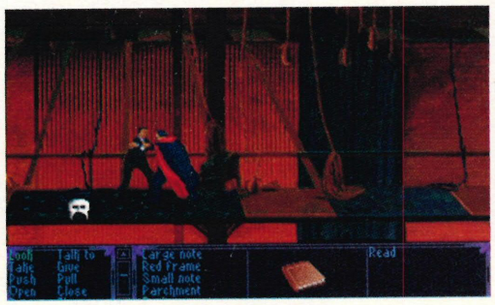
Déjà vu?

As the game progresses, you find yourself transported back in time to 1881 where you become Raoul de Chagny, the lover of opera singer Christine Daae. Just as the two Raouls appear to be different incarnations of the same man, you can't help but notice that Christine Daae also bears a striking resemblance to Christine Florent, the woman who sang the lead in the somewhat ill-fated 1993 performance of Don Juan Triumphant.

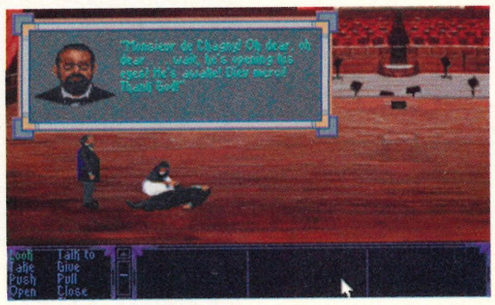
Christine Daae is in grave danger, for she has become the object of the phantom's desires. Hideously deformed, he cannot imagine that any woman could fall in love with him, so he has resorted to trickery and hypnotism to win her for himself. Christine is oblivious to her predicament, believing that the phantom is actually an angel sent by her dead father



The lovely Christine Florent is the singer whose performance has been so cruelly disrupted. She claims to have had dreams about the phantom, and asks me not to leave her alone. Like a cad I do just that, with shocking consequences.



The phantom has committed a horrible crime, so being the heroic, moustache-twirling kind of guy I am, I saunter up into the flies to apprehend the villain. A struggle ensues, and I find myself falling to a certain death on the stage many feet below ...



... only to wake up without so much as a hair out of place on my immaculately coiffured head. But wait, who is that woman who so resembles Christine Florent? And who is that fat man? And why do they call me Raoul de Chagny? Sacre bleu! It's 1881!

the Phantom

He's sadistic, he's depraved, he's ugly and he's utterly terrifying. But the Phantom of the Opera has one chink in his armour. He's called Erik

to guide her through her career. Naturally, you are anxious to rescue her from his evil clutches and find a way of returning to your own time.

One of the first things which struck me about Return of the Phantom was the quality of the graphics. All the backgrounds have been painted in impressive detail, and successfully convey the opulent feel of the theatre as well as the more chaotic and informal backstage area. Although the building has been researched through photographs and books, the game designers are keen to point out that the interiors are not supposed to represent the real Paris Opera accurately. The backstage of any opera house is a sprawling warren of passages, dressing rooms, rehearsal rooms, workshops and studios, so including every location would simply not be practical. As a result, you only get to see those locations which are relevant to the plot.

The characters themselves are digitised, which allows for some very natural looking animation. There are many nice effects which add much to the realism, for example, the way Christine Daae's long dress swings about her as she walks, or the billowing movement of the phantom's cloak. When Raoul attempts to climb the spiral staircase at the back of the stage, a sandbag falls from the flies, missing him by inches. Ever after that, he always looks up cautiously before using the stairs in case some other heavy object decides to come his way. If you leave Raoul standing around for any length of time, he'll start to fidget or stand there with his hand on his head looking most exasperated. It's little touches like these which bring the game to life.



The foyer is a good illustration of the game's high quality graphics. Here, Raoul is about to go up and examine the phantom's box.

Digitised graphics have made an appearance in many adventure games but quite often look blocky and indistinct. That is not the case with Return of the Phantom. As well as being extremely well animated, the sprites look perfectly at home against the painted backgrounds. The

Alternatively...



Alone in the Dark
Infogrames, £44.99
Rated 9, Issue 14
If spooky adventures happen to be your particular cup of tea, take a good look at Alone in the Dark. It is of a comparable size to Phantom, and the puzzles are only slightly harder. Where Alone really scores, however, is in its innovative use of polygonal sprites against bitmapped backgrounds. The sound is superb and it has to be one of the most atmospheric games around.



The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes
Electronic Arts, £39.99
Rated 8, Issue 13
Anyone who likes a good crime could do a lot worse than to check out this game. Taking the part of Holmes, you must investigate the brutal murder of an actress. Decent graphics and sound, lots of attention to detail and you can even play darts in the pub. An intermediate level adventure, the puzzles are taxing without being obscure. A must for Sherlock Holmes fans.

only sequence which is very obviously digitised is right at the end of the game, when Raoul de Chagny takes on the phantom in a gripping fight to the death. Here you will be able to see the two characters battling away in close-up, and if you play your cards right, unmask the phantom. I won't spoil it for you by describing exactly what he looks like, but I will let you in on a secret: the man behind the mask is none other than MicroProse's very own Sid Meier.

It's getting a bit crowded up here, and as a result the chandelier has developed a nasty lean. Can you save the fair Christine before the whole thing goes crashing down into the stalls below?

A Bach worse than its bite

If the graphics are special, then the soundtrack complements them perfectly. The usual creaky floorboards, squeaky doors and bloodcurdling screams are all in there, but you will also hear lots of wonderfully eerie, melancholy organ music (that's a church organ rather than a Hammond organ, needless to say. No Mighty Wurlitzers in this game). For some strange reason, a lot of vaguely sinister characters in books and films seem to favour the organ as an instrument. Captain Nemo played one, The Master in Doctor Who played one, even the great Count Dracula has been known to dabble. And what do they play? Johann Sebastian Bach, of course, and preferably his Toccata and Fugue in D minor. It's hardly surprising, then, that the phantom is no different in this respect, and it is supposedly him that you can hear playing throughout the game. The game designers have even gone as far as to include a puzzle which is based on the phantom's organ. Need I say more?

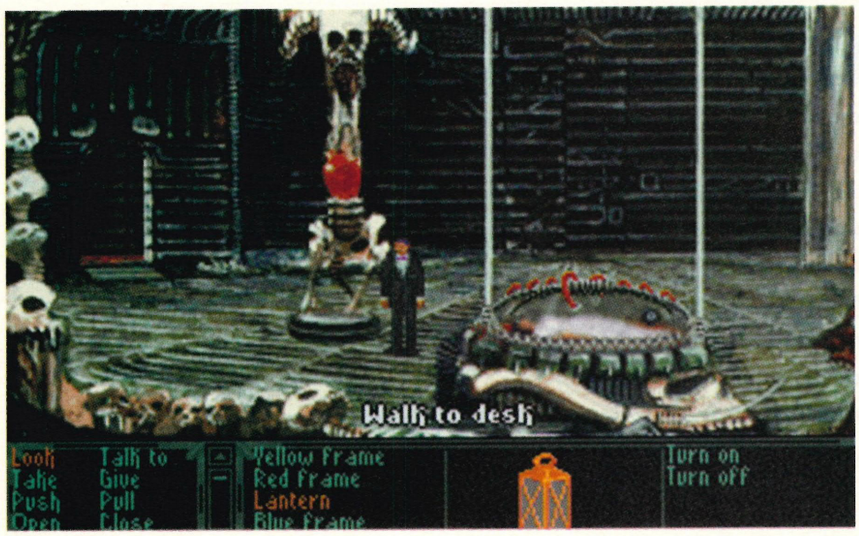
All this adds up to one intensely atmospheric little game. Yes, I know, every time you read a review of an adventure or role-playing game, the word "atmospheric" pops up with monotonous regularity. There is a very good reason for this. Atmosphere is extremely important in an adventure, because without it, a game is like meat without salt: bland. Return of the Phantom scores very highly in this department: it is one of the most atmospheric games I have ever played. It manages to be at once gothic, macabre and marvellously theatrical. The influence of the 1925 film version is very much in evidence, because it really captures the feel of those early silent horror movies – suave, moustache-twirling hero, a vulnerable, pale-faced heroine and a villain who pops up at the most inopportune moments. I loved every minute of it.

There was one thing which concerned me, however. I know the hero is supposed to be a very cool, calm and collected kind of chap, but Raoul Montand seems to have taken this to extremes. At one point in the game, you hear the scream of a very distressed sounding woman. Does our hero go sprinting off to the rescue? Does he hell. He just strolls away quite nonchalantly as if he hadn't a care in the world. Not the sort of fellow I'd choose to have around in a crisis, I can tell you.

Phantom uses the same interface as MicroProse's other recent adventure, Rex Nebular. It's your standard mouse-driven point and click interface, and consequently quite simple to use. Actions, such as look at, walk to or talk to, are represented in the lower left hand part of the screen, so you must first click on the relevant action before clicking on the object you wish to apply it to. Objects you pick up during the game are displayed in an inventory, and although only one is visible at any one time, each may be accessed through use of the scroll bars. Actions specific to the current inventory item are displayed on the right hand part of the screen, so if, for example, that current object is a grappling hook, a grapple option will become visible there. This might sound complicated in theory, but in practice it couldn't be easier.

Another nice feature is that, whenever you look at something on screen, you get a detailed description of that object as well. Playing Return of the Phantom can be an educational experience, since it teaches you all about theatrical equip-





The phantom may have many talents, but interior decoration obviously isn't one of them. Here the fiend has locked Christine into a velvet-lined sarcophagus, so good old Raoul must find a way to set her free.

Techspec *Needs at least a 286 with VGA or MCGA graphics. Supports the Pro Audio Spectrum sound card and can be installed without sound to cut 20K off memory requirements.*

Disk requirements					
	High density	✓			
	Hard disk only	✓			
	Space taken on hard disk	8Mb			
Graphic modes					
	CGA	x	EGA	x	Tandy x
	VGA	✓	SVGA	x	
Soundboards					
	Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster ✓
Control					
	Joystick	x	Keyboard	✓	Mouse ✓
Performance					
	Optimum speed	33MHz			
	Minimum memory	2Mb			
	Free RAM required	575K			

rating **7**

Verdict
Small but perfectly formed

ment and its uses. As with Rex, it will soon let you know if you attempt to do something stupid, although it won't be quite so rude about your mistake.

A further menu can be accessed by pressing both mouse buttons together, F1 or Esc, and this allows you to save or restore games and set various options. If you are unfortunate enough to die, rather than going back to the last point where you saved, the game automatically restores you to the point just before your mishap. This avoids the problem of players who have become so engrossed in the game that they have forgotten to save for some time (God knows it's happened to me often enough), and have to back-track a long way before they can reach the point where they made their mistake.

It is also extremely handy if you happen to forget to save before switching off your PC, or if, for some inexplicable reason, the game crashes. I suffered one crash, but luckily the game managed an emergency save and I was able to continue right where I'd left off. Phew!

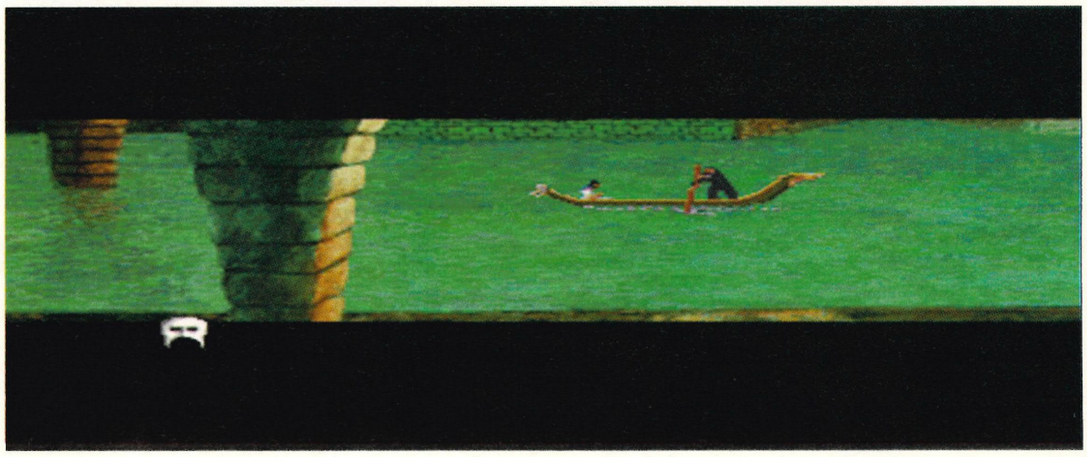
Missing monkey puzzles

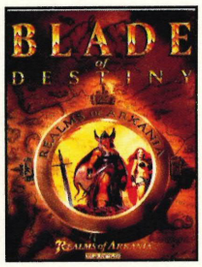
So far I've painted a rather glowing picture of the game, and it is indeed a fine product. Even so, it is not without its flaws. As anyone who has ever played Monkey Island will know, half the fun of a graphic adventure is trying out all sorts of weird combinations of objects to solve a problem. This element is missing from Return of the Phantom. Most of the puzzles are very straightforward, and involve locating a single object or finding out who to talk to next in order to set off the next chain of events. The only really demanding part of the game is the catacomb section, a seemingly illogical maze of subterranean rooms and passages. Sounds familiar? That's because every other adventure seems to include a maze of some description. Monkey Island has one, Infogrames' Shadow of the Comet has one, Westwood's Legend of Kyrandia has one. I could go on. I am not a great fan of mazes, to tell the truth, so I was not exactly thrilled to see yet another crop up in a game. It's rather unfortunate that the most difficult and time consuming part of the game is also the least original not to mention the least interesting.

Having said that, the game is being geared toward novice adventurers, so I fully appreciate that it's not going to be too taxing. I'm dubious about whether MicroProse originally intended to make it this easy, but that's how it turned out anyway. There are two levels of difficulty; easy and challenging, and I managed to complete it on the challenging level within a day. Concerned that this made the game alarmingly easy, we also tried out Phantom on a novice adventurer, who found it quite frustrating. Then again, I did have more time to devote to it than someone who does a real day's work! However, it isn't a large game by any means, and the emphasis has been placed on story, atmosphere and graphics rather than on puzzles and quests. In that respect, it makes for an ideal introduction to adventuring for both younger gamers and those who find most adventures a little too taxing.

If you don't fit into that category, think hard before parting with your cash. It's a thoroughly absorbing and well put together game, but I still feel that £45 is an extortionate sum of money to pay for a couple of days' entertainment. Return of the Phantom is great fun, but in retrospect I wish that it had catered for more experienced adventurers.

■ Cal Jones





Title	**Blade of Destiny**
Publisher	**US Gold**
Contact	**(021) 625 3366**
Price	**£39.99**



Blade

It's time for PC Review's annual outing, but no-one can decide where to go. "How about Thorwal?" suggests Dean. "Why that dump?" asks Mark. "Well," Dean replies, "it's got loads of pubs." "That's settled then," says John, and off we go.



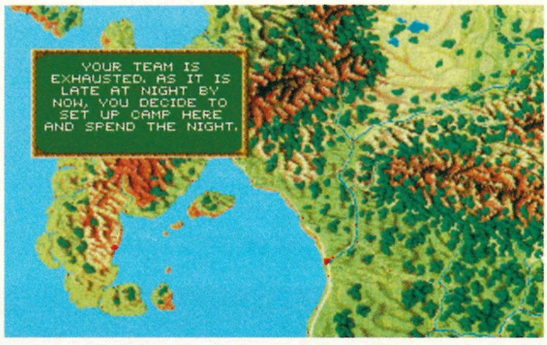
"So where are all these pubs, then?" Mark whinges. We've been wandering around for six hours now and tempers are getting a little frayed. "I'll just consult my guide," Dean decides. "Ah, here we are, the Herring's Arms. I think it's through this door."

Having somehow landed myself the position of in-house role-playing "expert", it's a fairly safe bet that whenever an RPG arrives at the office, it'll find its way on to my desk. So it was with Blade of Destiny. As I opened the box, I had only one question. What magical ingredient could it possible contain to lift it above the usual run-of-the-mill role-playing fodder?

A good RPG is one of the most entertaining pieces of software you can have in your collection, and I've had a lot of fun from the genre over the years. Unfortunately, the vast majority of RPGs now available are dated or unoriginal or both. Consequently, I was desperately hoping that Blade of Destiny would show some imagination instead of following the same old formula.



After a hard night's drinking (the pub is the best place to make contacts, of course) someone is feeling a bit the worse for wear. Oh, it's Paula. What a surprise.

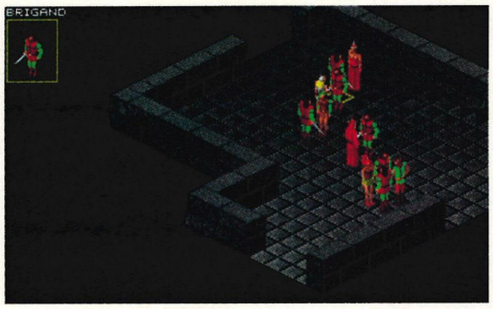


Blade of Destiny is based on Das Schwarze Auge, an enormously popular board game which outsells Dungeons and Dragons in its native Germany. Attic Software, a German company, spent more than a year bringing the game to the computer, and with encouraging promises of 256 colour graphics and over 400 hours playing time, it looked to have all the makings of a decent product.

When I started it up, I was struck by the strong resemblance between this game and the AD&D Gold Box adventures. This didn't exactly fill me with confidence. The old AD&D games were never particularly brilliant to start with and now they're looking distinctly dated. Blade of Destiny has better graphics and sound, but still uses the same old flick scrolling



"I don't think much of this place," John complains. "Where's the pool table?" "Never mind the pool table," Becky chips in. "Where's the bar?" "Oh, I'm sure it's around here somewhere," Dean says, trying to sound confident. Seven hours later ...



"Listen, I can hear voices," Paula announces. We turn the corner and find ourselves in a room full of tough, sword-wielding men. "I think this pub looks a bit rough," Dean whispers, looking nervous. "The punters don't look very friendly, do they?"



"Run away!" yells John, suddenly realising the seriousness of our mistake. But it's too late. In a matter of seconds, the PC Review team has been reduced to a large heap of steaming offal. Oh dear. I knew we should have gone to Alton Towers.

and doesn't even look as sophisticated as the first Eye of the Beholder game.

The combat system was similarly unimpressive. In most first person adventures, fighting is usually a matter of clicking on the monster in the view window with the cursor. In this game, you are merrily wandering through a dungeon when suddenly the 3D view is replaced by an isometric one and you find yourself staring blankly at half a dozen badly animated sprites which bear no resemblance whatsoever to your character portraits.

Combat is turn based, so you can decide whether your character will cast a spell, attack with a weapon or run away. With a maximum party of six, it takes forever. I got fed up with this and let the computer handle my moves for me, and that took forever too. I could go and make a coffee, come back and sit down, wait for the coffee to cool, make a phone call, drink the coffee and the fight still wouldn't be finished. It's pretty much the same as playing around with miniatures and floorplans, only not nearly as entertaining. You can't beat up your dungeon master if he is being unreasonable and you can't stamp on your best mate's lovingly painted lead figures when you happen to get annoyed.



This is the character generation screen. It's the usual case of choosing name, gender, character class and portrait. Enough said.

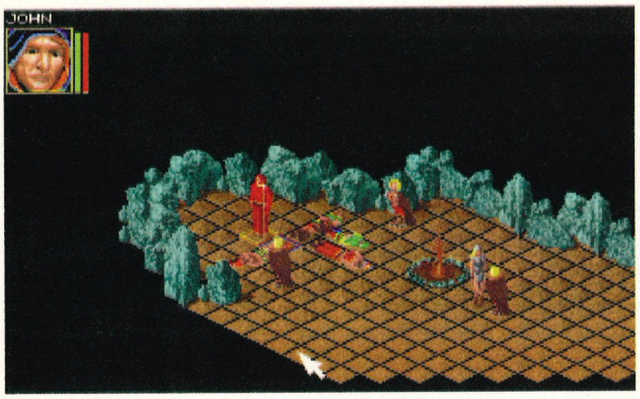
It seems as if Attic Software has made a serious attempt to convert every aspect of the board game to computer, because it's so laden down with statistics. The manual contains a huge amount of information on character attributes, phobias, diseases, spells, herbs, enemies and so on, which is great if you want a really in-depth game, but not so good if you'd rather have a bit of straightforward monster bashing with the odd puzzle thrown in for good measure.

When it comes down to it, if I'm going to get that involved in a game, I'd sooner dig out the graph paper, the pens and the dice, ask some friends round, get a few beers in and do it for real. If a board

Far left: whenever you leave a town, you are presented with this map. This is where you plan your routes across Arkania's rugged terrain. Exciting stuff indeed.

Once more we enter into the realm of elves, dwarves and scantily clad warrior women. Yes, it's another role-playing game

of Destiny



Setting up camp without organising a watch is not a good idea. If you thought being woken by the dawn chorus was bad, imagine what it's like being descended on by a bunch of harpies.

game is going to be converted to the computer, it should offer something the original didn't have. Blade of Destiny fails here, because whilst it is undoubtedly faithful to the original, it lacks the social aspect of playing the board game and doesn't make up for this in other areas.

One fine example of this is the game's atmosphere of the game. The Blade of Destiny press release promised "a depth of atmosphere hitherto unknown in computer role-playing adventures." Right, and I'm Lord Lucan. This game has rather less atmosphere than the moon. For a start, all the towns look exactly the same. You would expect, for example, that a mountain village would contain a lot of buildings constructed from the local stone, whilst a settlement located near to a forest would be built mainly from wood. A large town with a port should have a wide variety of building styles, using both local and imported materials. One thing I liked about Ultima VII Part 2: Serpent Isle and Ishar 2 was that each town had its own, distinctive character, but in Blade of Destiny the only difference is size. Without this variety, there is very little incentive to get out and explore.

But surely the game must have *some* good points? Well, one thing I will say for it is that it's large. It's also non-linear, so you aren't obliged to stay in one place if you get stuck or just plain bored with it. Still, as I said earlier, all the places manage to look the same anyway, so moving from town to town at will is really not such a big deal after all.

Mind you, if you really do get fed up with it, you can always indulge in a bit of spot the role-playing cliché. Goblins, trolls, damsels in distress: you name it, it's in this game. Even the storyline lacks originality. It revolves around finding a mystic weapon and defeating the orcs which have been terrorising the land. Some games can get away with this because they're either technically better or a lot of fun to play. Sadly, Blade of Destiny is lacking in both these qualities.

To put it bluntly, I wouldn't pay money for this game. I wouldn't play it if I got it for free, come to that, unless, of course, my editor was standing over me with a big stick. It has absolutely nothing new to offer and there are at least a dozen RPGs much better than this one. Blade of Destiny? I think Bladder of Destiny would have been more appropriate.

■ Cal Jones

Techspec

Needs at least a 286 and is a lot more playable with a mouse. Also supports the Pro-Audio Spectrum, Thunderboard, Tandy, Roland LAPC1 and MT-32 sound cards.

Disk requirements					
	High density	✓			
	Hard disk only	✓			
	Space taken on hard disk	**10Mb**			
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	**600K**			

rating **3**

Verdict
A faithful conversion, but a very dull one

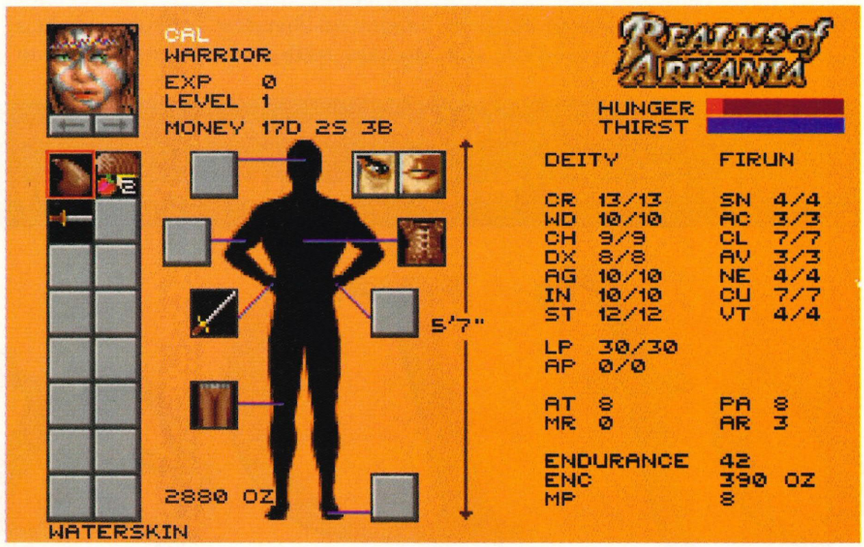
Alternatively...



Ultima VII part 2: The Serpent Isle
Origin, £44.99
Rated 7, Issue 20
Although it presents the action from a different point of view to that of Blade of Destiny, Serpent Isle contains many of the same elements. There are lots of places to visit, countless acres of terrain to wander about in, many characters to interact with, and dozens of sub-plots and quests. The principal difference is that Serpent Isle is by far the more attractive of the two and has ten times the character. And it's huge.



Eye of the Beholder 2: The Legend of Darkmoon
US Gold/SSI, £37.99
Rated 7, Issue 4
One of the better 3D, first person perspective RPGs around, Eye of the Beholder 2 is chock full of devious puzzles and monsters to kill. Whilst it isn't as technically accomplished as Ultima Underworld, the graphics and presentation are of a high standard. It's quite a tough game and can be frustrating at times, but should keep you entertained for some time.

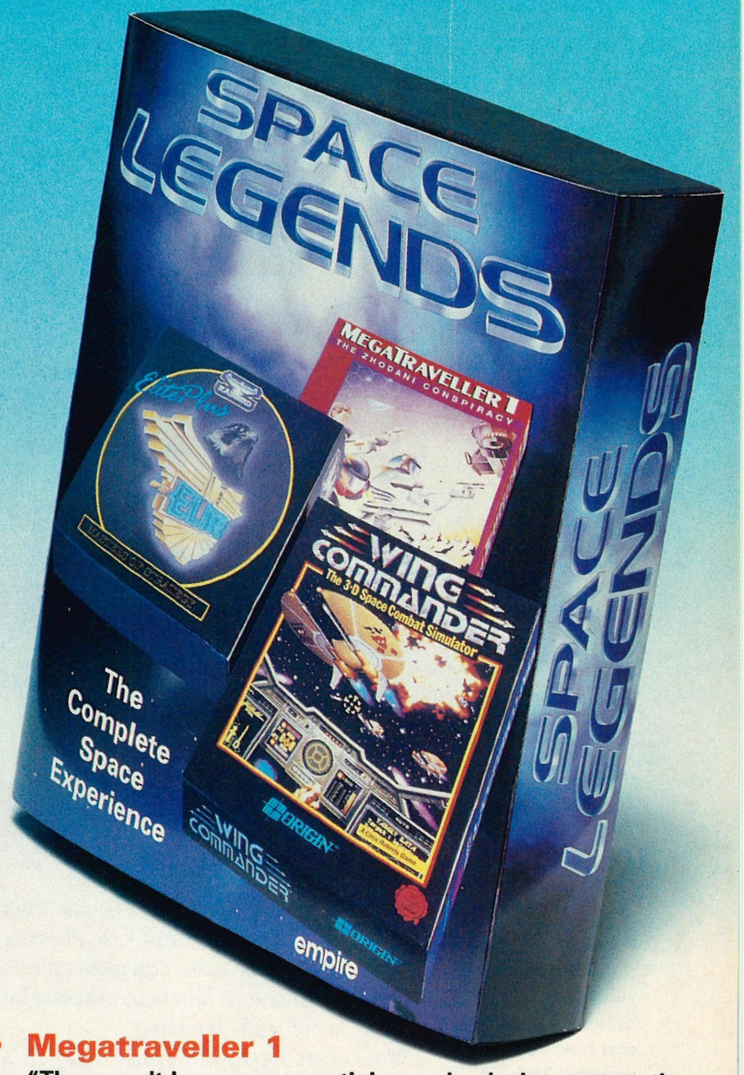


The inventory screen allows you to move objects around, and review your character's statistics. It's also a vile shade of yellow.



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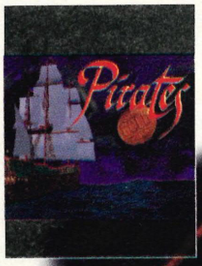
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Title	**Pirates! Gold**
Publisher	**MicroProse**
Contact	**(0666) 504326**
Price	**£44.99**

What shall we do with a drunken sailor? Why sign him up, of course. Every captain needs his crew, and where better to find one than the local pub ...

Avast there, landlubbers! It's time to shiver your timbers, screw in your peg-leg and try to find out why Roger's so jolly in MicroProse's swashbuckling romp

Pirates! Gold

Pugwash vs Erroll Flynn – the match of the century! Choose your weapon or, better still, capture and hold him for ransom. There's more to a pirate's life than blood and violence, you know. There's money.

Pirates! Gold must be the least ambiguous game title I've ever come across. You play a pirate and your aim is to amass a lot of gold. Amazing.

You start with one small ship in a friendly port from whence you wreak havoc on the Spanish Main. In addition to committing brazen acts of piracy on the high seas, you can plunder enemy towns, capture and ransom your rivals, dig for buried treasure and when you're rich enough (the bulge in your wallet is all that counts) marry the governor's daughter.



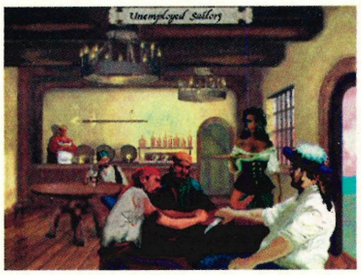
Your fame spreads, promotions and grants of land from your grateful country jack up your personal equity, and when you've finally had enough of the parrot screeching in your ear, you get to retire and see out your days living off the fat of the land. Are those what you'd call enticing career prospects? Well, yes and no.

Pirates! Gold is quite a lot of fun, and it's an unusual, beautifully presented game, but it's also quite repetitive and bits of it are without doubt less fun than others. It's a revamp of an old Sid Meier game (simply called Pirates) and like anything from the keyboard of the master deserves to be treated with respect.

The hand of Sid, alas, is not particularly evident in the new game, and I wonder if the programmers have been quite bold enough. The tiny graphics on the main screen, though sharply resolved, look fiddly and dated. The ships are so minute that the sea fights lack atmosphere, and the design of the land battles (you can disembark to assault enemy towns on foot) is frankly dreadful. There's a third kind of combat, a side-on mouse or keyboard-controlled fencing match which occurs whenever you board a ship, scale fortress walls or engage in a duel, but little skill is involved and these are the most antiquated sequences of all.

Of course novelty isn't everything, but there seems little point in giving a game half the treatment — it's like having half a facelift. In the original Pirates, you could sail around for ages without anything happening, but MicroProse's solution to this problem, the provision of a 'turbo' button, is far from adequate: what's the point of speeding up periods of inaction? Why not get rid of them altogether? The ship to ship combat sequences are probably the most enjoyable, but once you've

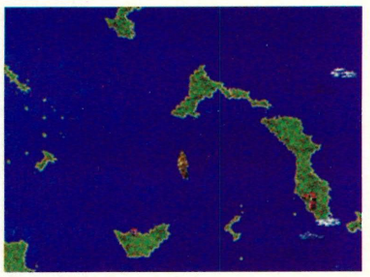
Two Minutes *of life on the ocean wave*



The innkeeper at the back keeps you informed of gossip and world events, but it's the lads in the foreground you'll want to recruit. Sadly, the buxom barmaid isn't interested in coming along for the ride, but ask nicely and she'll give you a drink.



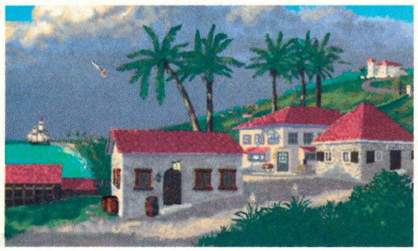
Now cast off, me hearties! and you'll find yourself in the captain's cabin. Click on the globe to check your bearings, and on the dresser at the back to save your game. And if you want a bit of fencing practice, select the crossed swords on the wall.



You're off to sunny Panama to loot the Spanish treasure fleet. But first you have to force your way through a nest of cut-throat pirates and Spaniards. It's time to splice the mainsail and jib the thingy – your lookouts have spotted a hostile sail on the horizon.



But I'm confident your superior gunnery and seamanship will soon sort that out. A couple more broadsides and you'll be ready to swing across and grapple her. Start counting those pieces of eight, boys! Captain Pugwash rules the waves.



Sail into harbour and check out the lie of the land. The shipwright will keep the barnacles off your bottom, while the merchant, the banker and mine host at the inn will all be delighted to receive your custom. The big house on the hill belongs to the governor. Do well enough and he might give you a promotion or even let you chat up his daughter.

sussed them out they present too one-sided a challenge: a manoeuvrable little eight gun pinnace can always outsail and eventually sink a massive 24 gun galleon, which must be surely ludicrous.

The mouse and cursor driven control system works well enough, but the gaming environment is only partially realised and this causes no end of frustration. For example, when you get into a sea fight you are offered a choice of ships to command. Now if you have only one vessel in your fleet that's easy, but if you've a choice of ships, you'll obviously want to go for the fastest and/or the heaviest armed. There is, however, no way of finding out which is which, and no way either of transferring cannon or even crew between your ships. What is the rationale behind allowing only one ship to engage in combat anyway? It may make for a more manageable game, but it's the triumph of expediency over common sense.

But perhaps the crucial deficiency in the game is the lack of purpose. You sail around looting and plundering, you plunder and loot a bit more and you retire. You're then shown a few pretty storybook screens telling you how happily ever after you lived and that's it. You have the option at the start of recreating a famous historical expedition (such as Drake's raid on the Spanish silver train) but in practice these are little different from the 'career' scenarios. The game needs to be much more task-driven in order to generate any sense of achievement.

The 'feel' of the game reminded me very strongly of Daze's recent release, The Patrician, which shows clear signs of having been influenced by the earlier Pirates. Frustratingly, both games are flawed, though they remain sufficiently attractive to suggest that the market would bear a really first-rate period sea-faring/trading/exploring game. The best thing in that line I've seen is Avalon Hill's excellent Conquistador board game. Anyone for a computer conversion?

■ Simon Shaw

Techspec

Pirates! Gold uses a 'DOS extender' to access the memory required for its high-resolution graphics. The program requires about 2Mb of available memory of any type.

Disk requirements					
	High density	✓			
	Hard disk only	✓			
	Space taken on hard disk	**19Mb**			
Graphic modes					
	CGA ✗	**EGA** ✗	**Tandy** ✗		
	VGA ✓	**SVGA** ✗			
Soundboards					
	Ad Lib ✓	**Roland** ✓	**Sound Blaster** ✓		
Control					
	Joystick ✗	**Keyboard** ✓	**Mouse** ✗		
Performance					
	Optimum speed	**16MHz**			
	Minimum memory	**2Mb**			
	Free RAM required	**550K**			

rating **6**

Verdict
Like Long John Silver - colourful, but with bits missing

Alternatively...



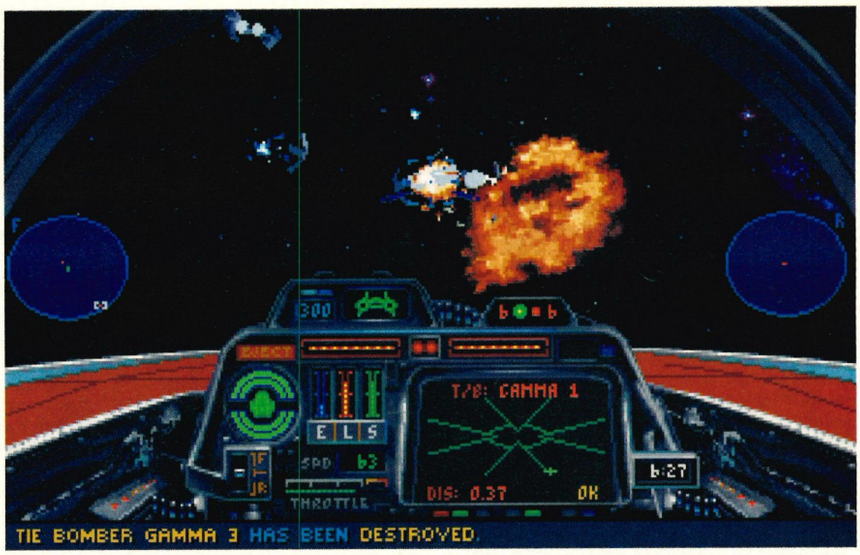
The Patrician
Ascon/Daze, £34.99
Rated 6, Issue 22
An attractive game with many of the same faults as Pirates! Gold. You play a merchant prince trying to build a seaborne financial empire during the Middle Ages. The aims are a little clearer, it's authentically detailed, but it's still long-winded and repetitive. If you're into profit-making, this might be the game for you.



Elite Plus
MicroProse, £39.99
If history isn't exactly your scene, what about outer space? The ships may be equipped with hyper-drive instead of sails but the principles of trading and buccaneering remain the same. Elite Plus may be showing its age but it's still hugely enjoyable. And, who knows, someday sometime we may even get the chance to sample Elite 2 ...



Title	**Imperial Pursuit**
Publisher	**US Gold**
Contact	**(021) 625 3366**
Price	**£19.99**



Tour of Duty: Imperial Pursuit

If I was to say "cut the chatter red-two"or wheeze in a deep, metallic sort of way, you might think I was completely mad. But to those of you who've single-handedly faced star destroyers and skimmed the surface of the Death Star, it can mean only one thing. So cue vast starfield background, cue the words that scroll up into the distance, cue operatic music and ready yourself for a new X-Wing tour, the Imperial Pursuit.

The mission disk for LucasArts' X-Wing takes up the Star Wars saga where the first movie left off. Just when you thought it was safe to put your feet up, or go for long moonlit walks in the Yavin woods with the princess of your choice, the Imperial fleet is back to wreak its revenge.

More than slightly annoyed by the destruction of the Death Star, the vastly superior Imperial Fleet again masses to attack the rebel base on Yavin. Despite the alliance's newfound strength, the Empire has bigger, more horribly beweaponed and more triangular star cruisers than they do, and the rebels are forced to flee, hoping to evade the Empire and begin the quest for a new home.

Above: if those TIE Bombers think they can shoot my corvettes, they haven't dealt with me and my concussion missiles. Another bomber bites the dust.



Right: using the Top Ace pilot you can play all missions from the original. So if you've never done it before, fly down the famous trench. It'll be just like Beggars Canyon back home.

Imperial Pursuit features over 15 rip-roaring new missions. Although there's nothing radically new here in terms of graphics, LucasArts has included a new iMuse musical score, which I think is more atmospheric than the original. In addition to the extra TOD, Imperial Pursuit also includes a Top Ace pilot, who far from being just a hot-shot wingman also allows you to play any of the missions from the original first three tours. Now you can forget the cheats and complicated Xtree hacks, if you haven't flown the Death Star mission, you can now.

If there's one thing Imperial Pursuit isn't, that's easy. I'm all for challenge but attacking a huge Nebulon frigate in an A-Wing is like attacking the Ark Royal in a dinghy. But heroism against overwhelming odds is what the game's all about. The Empire is going to throw all it has at you; Assault Gunboats, advanced TIE fighters, TIE bombers, the works. Thankfully, there's a vague rumour that the rebels have the B-Wing heavy assault fighter in production, but I can't confirm it.

At PC Review, a good game will stand out a mile. You see the game will not just fascinate the reviewer, but other PC Review staff, Amiga magazine staff, and assorted passers-by will crowd around the monitor, drool, utter silent wows and beg for a quick go. It happened months ago with X-Wing and it's just happened with Day of the Tentacle. Imperial Pursuit breathes a new lease of life into your old X-Wing, having drawn all us vets back on to the game and even converted those who'd never played it before. If you loved the original X-Wing, you'll adore Imperial Pursuit. Granted it's just more of the same, but it's fast, furious and exciting sameness and comes highly recommended by us all.

■ Dean Evans

Techspec *Obviously Imperial Pursuit needs the original X-Wing and if you've got that running OK you shouldn't encounter any problems. As for compressed drives, check with US Gold.*

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	**1Mb**

Graphic modes

CGA	**x**	**EGA**	**x**	**Tandy**	**x**
VGA	**✓**	**SVGA**	**x**		

Soundboards

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

Control

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

Performance

Optimum speed	**25MHz**
Minimum memory	**640K**
Free RAM required	**571K**

Verdict
More missions, more fun and yet another chance to beat the empire

rating **8**



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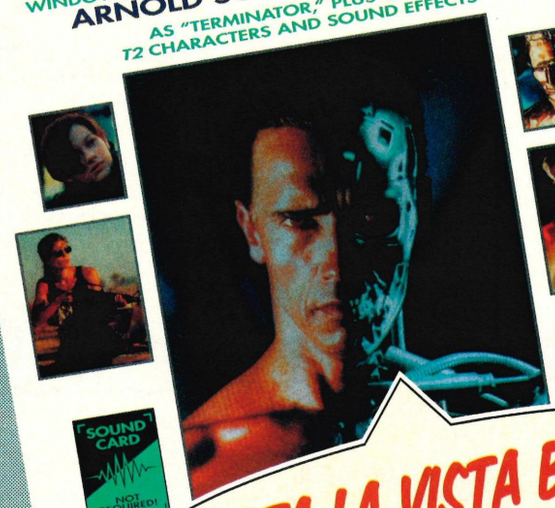
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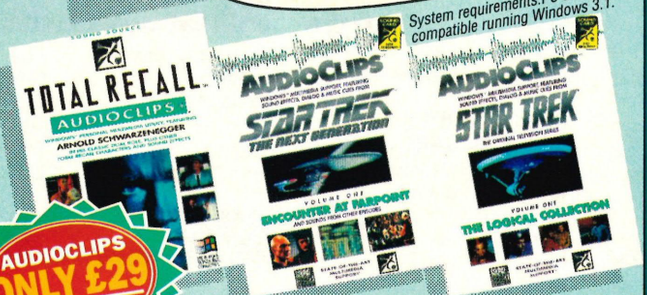


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Title	**The Lost Vikings**
Publisher	**Interplay**
Contact	**(0865) 390029**
Price	**£34.99**

Prehistoria is a land inhabited by hungry dinosaurs, spitting snails and tumbling, blue-haired cavemen. And that's without taking into consideration swamps, firepits and all manner of spiky things. Survival is a matter of team-work.



Aha! A wall. Now that could cause a problem or two. Being an athletic sort of fellow, Erik could climb up to the ledge above and get past it that way. Trouble is, Olaf and Baleog aren't quite nimble enough, so that's not the answer.

Dust off your helmet, buckle your broadsword and get chopping – it's time to join the Vikings in Interplay's latest platform romp

The Lost

I'm not sure that a platform game really needs a plot, but since this game has one, I'll fill you in on the details. The three Vikings in question are Erik the Swift, Olaf the Stout and Baleog the Fierce. They're happily going about their daily business, fighting, pillaging, swilling ale and whatever else it is Vikings do, when suddenly they find themselves sucked into a passing alien spaceship. This is no accident, however, because the ship belongs to none other than the evil intergalactic zookeeper, Tomator, who has been busily searching Earth for some prime human specimens to add to his collection.

As you might have guessed, the goal of The Lost Vikings is to help the three Nordic chappies find their way back home. To achieve that, you must get them though no less than 37 levels, fighting monsters, solving puzzles and, ahem, getting killed. Easy it ain't.

There are six different worlds to visit, starting and ending with Tomator's spaceship. It's just one great big intergalactic safari. There's Prehistoria with its dinosaurs, swamps, volcanoes and anachronistic cavemen; Egypt where you enter trap-filled pyramids to do battle with berserker mummies; the Factory, a hazardous place filled with robots, rip saws, conveyor belts and large, deadly pistons, and Wacky World, which is like Willy Wonka's chocolate factory with added spikes. The potential for death is enormous. Right, so you've got your work cut out. Let's get cracking.

If you're going to survive, you need to co-operate. That is the key to solving all those tricky puzzles. OK, you might say, there's a great concrete wall up ahead with a nasty monster on the other side.



Far right: the very last level pits you against the tyrannical Tomator himself. Uh oh. It's getting tricky!

Right: our Scandinavian backpackers have managed to include a trip to Jurassic Park in their hectic schedule.

Below right: I knew I shouldn't have tried that high fibre diet! Erik attains knew heights through gas power alone.



Right, so how do you get around it? Simple. You don't. You go through it. As well as being the Nordic equivalent to Linford Christie, Erik also knows how to use his head. Not to think, you understand, but to head-butt walls.



OK, you're through. Fine. Except that there's a ruddy great fireball trap underneath. Take Olaf down first, and he'll use his shield to protect against those molten missiles. Next, bring down Baleog to polish off the tumbling troglodyte with his sword.

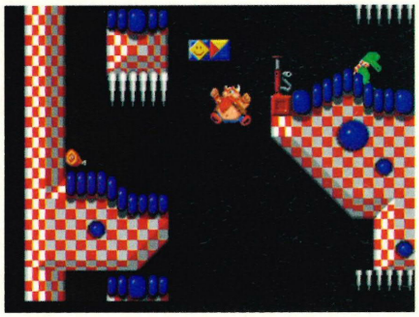


It's a doddle. All that remains now is for the troublesome trio to pick up that red key and unlock the next door. Sounds easy, but keep an eye out for even more ravenous beasties and fiendish traps because it keeps on getting tougher by the minute.

Vikings

What do I do? No problem, mate. You see, each of your cuddly Viking adventurers has his own special ability. Baleog's a fighter, and he's pretty handy with his sword and bow. Erik, the temperamental redhead, is a bit of a mover, so his specialities are running, jumping and breaking down walls with his head. Last but certainly not least is Olaf, a rather large fellow who knows how to put a shield to good use. When you approach a problem, it's a simple matter of knowing how best to exploit their individual talents.

Of course, the further you progress through the levels, the harder the puzzles become. Now I've said it before, but I'm not the most co-ordinated person on this planet, so it took me more than a few goes to complete each level. And no, I still haven't finished it yet. Ask me next year. Anyway, what I mean to say is that you'll need the cunning of a fox and the reflexes of a gazelle to get anywhere with this game. There's plenty of frustration, but there's also bag-loads of fun to be had.



One of the things which makes The Lost Vikings fun to play is the humorous animation. As well as having specific abilities, each Viking has his own personality. For a start, each character behaves differently when you leave him to rest for a while. Erik ties his shoe-laces, Baleog starts flexing his muscles and Olaf picks his nose and, erm, examines it. Well, what do you want from a barbarian?

Their facial expressions are also amusing. Just see what happens when you drop one from a height. One second your Viking looks all fierce, macho and self-assured, the next his eyes bug out and his jaw drops. There are many nice touches like this which give the game character.

In all, it's a nice-looking game. With 256-colour graphics, it's bright and cheerful, and the sprites are cute without being nauseating. It's not a static-screen affair like Prince of Persia or Flashback, and the scrolling is quite smooth. The sound isn't too shoddy, either. If you have



See you in Valhalla

Ah, the futility of life. The inevitability of death. Here are just a few of the more novel ways your Vikings can book a ticket to the ale cellar in the sky.



Glub glub glub ... Erik gets that sinking feeling.



Frying tonight. Erik's zapped by a live generator.



Splat! Baleog wasn't quick enough beneath the pistons.
Olaf gets barbecued by a fireball.

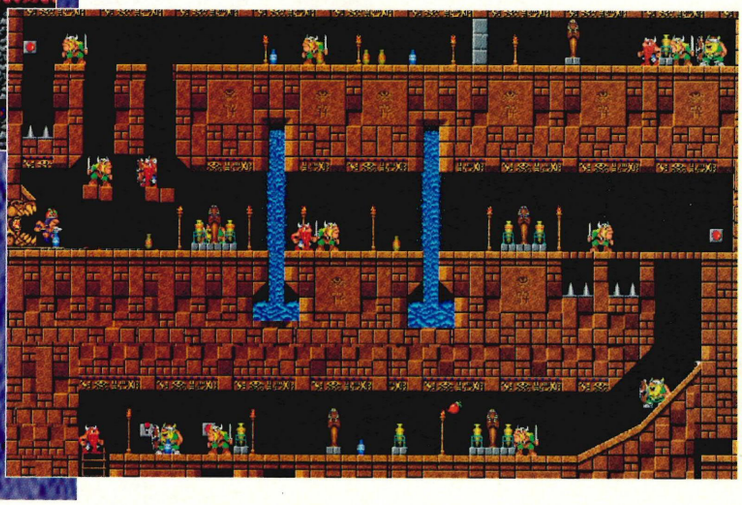


Right: Egypt is the third world you'll visit, and with all the fireball traps, spikes and mummies, making it through to the end is a matter of teamwork. Each Viking gets to use his special skill at least once.

a soundboard, you'll be able to hear digitised sound effects, and each world has its own appropriate music.

The only thing I wasn't so sure about was the control method. Although you can use a joystick, I was playing with a keyboard and it's quite easy to press the wrong key by mistake. Pressing all those keys in the right order requires practice. On one level, you need to press a switch located just above an electric force field. To do this, you have to use a crane which is armed with a magnet. First place a Viking in the crane, then turn the magnet on. Next, get Olaf to raise his shield so that he is picked up by the magnet. Get the Viking in the crane to move Olaf over the switch, then turn off the magnet. Quickly change to Olaf, let him drift down and press the switch. Now change back to the first Viking, turn the magnet on again and pick up Olaf before he gets fried by the electric field. That's a lot of different key changes, and it only takes one mistake and you've had it. In practice, that means restarting the level each time a Viking gets killed. This is horribly frustrating when you've already had 10 attempts at the same level. Oh boy, did I use some colourful language when playing this game!

To complete each level, you have to get all three Vikings to the end. This may not sound too hard, but bear in mind that you can't save the game. Instead, you get a password whenever you complete a level which saves you from starting from scratch each time you play. It would have been nice if there had been a power-up facility which allowed you to resurrect a dead Viking, but maybe that would have made things too easy. In retrospect, I think that the difficulty level was just about right. Let's face it, not everyone's as clumsy as I am, so making it any easier would have made it possible to complete the game quite quickly.



Below: each level contains all manner of fiendish traps and unfriendly creatures.

Alternatively...



Zool
Gremlin, £34.99
Rated 7, Issue 20
One of the best arcade games currently available on the PC, Zool contains 18 levels plus hidden bonus stages. It's standard platform fare, with cute, colourful graphics, lots of monsters to kill and stacks of treasure to collect. Smooth scrolling and the addition of scoring will also keep you going back to better your high score.



Lemmings 2 – The Tribes
Psygnosis, £39.99
Rated 8, Issue 19
As in Lemmings, the object is to guide the suicidal rodents from A to B without getting too many killed. It's a bit like Vikings in that each lemming has its own skill, whether it's digging, archery or parachuting, which you must make the most of to solve each level. It's horribly addictive, and with 120 levels to solve, you'll lose plenty of sleep over this.

The Lost Vikings is one of the most entertaining platform games I've seen on the PC, and despite my frustrations, I enjoyed it immensely. It's got enough levels to keep most people happy for a couple of weeks minimum, and that's if you play it constantly. It contains the right balance of puzzles and action, and the use of three characters rather than one is fairly novel. So, if you're after a good arcade game and want something that's both challenging and fun, I'd recommend this without any hesitation.

Cal Jones

Techspec *Requires a 286 PC to run, and is quite memory hungry so load DOS high if possible.*

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	2Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	x	EGA	x	Tandy	x
VGA	✓	SVGA	x		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	x
Performance					
Optimum speed	20 MHz				
Minimum memory	640K				
Free RAM required	600K				

Verdict
Rollicking good fun

rating **8**

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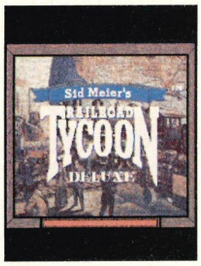
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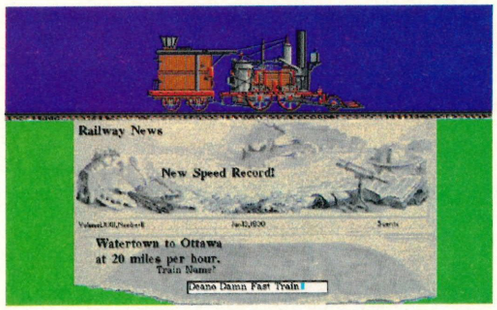
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NED



Title	**Railroad Tycoon Deluxe**
Publisher	**MicroProse**
Contact	**(0666) 504326**
Price	**£39.99 (upgrade £19.99)**

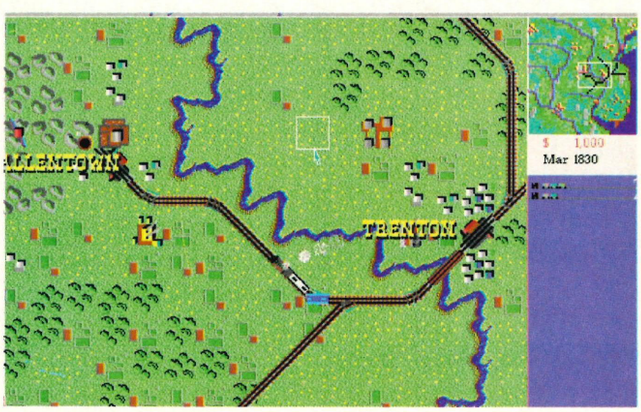


RRT is not just a pretty looking train set. The player has access to a wealth of statistical info ranging from the income of individual routes to speed records attained by the trains themselves.

Railroad Tycoon Deluxe

It's digital train set time again as MicroProse offers up an enhanced version of one of its most successful releases. If you haven't come across RRT before, the aim is to build a railroad empire, running all manner of services, ruining your competitors, coping with disasters and ultimately proving that you can do better than BR. In fact, Railroad Tycoon could easily be Sim Train, or even Steam Civilization, and although it might not sound too exciting it's a game that will get you hooked.

Starting with $100,000 you simply pick two likely-looking starting towns, build some track between the two, knock up a couple of stations, the odd train or two and you can start running your first train services. Soon your fledgeling services begin to recoup their costs and both towns begin to develop and grow. With extra money you can expand your network, building depots near coal mines or lumber yards. Wood, for example, can be transported back to town and sold or taken to a paper-mill, turned into paper and then sold. Whatever makes the biggest profit makes the most sense.



At the most detailed level, you can watch your trains chuff their way between towns. Here you can survey land, build track and improve your stations.

You can build railroads in a number of countries including the USA, Europe, South America and Africa but be advised, you do not start alone. At least three competitors will be out developing their own railroads and after a while they're all bound to clash. You can either buy others out or indulge in rail wars where whoever shifts the most the fastest takes control. There are four difficulty levels, and since the hardest requires you to control all signalling operations while fending off competitors so unscrupulous they'd sell their grannies for a fast buck, RRT should keep even the expert busy for a long while.

But if you've already got RRT, why should you buy it again? Firstly the game graphically enhanced, with an SVGA display and digitised pictures. Soundwise, the trains now actually sound like trains and your progress is punctuated by well-timed yee-hahs and spurious cowboy whooping. Apart from the extra scenarios, namely Africa and South America, the game adds 11 new engines ranging from the lightning fast 4-4-2 de Glehn Atlantic to the modern Amtrak F40PH.

But deep, deep down beneath its pretty exterior, the gameplay in Railroad Tycoon Deluxe is pretty much the same. There are still the tiny inconveniences including bridges being swept away by raging rivers and now the added annoyance of your trains being robbed by notorious outlaws.

Railroad Tycoon Deluxe is still a very good game, but I've mixed feelings about its potential as an upgrade. Although graphically it's been improved, I don't get the impression that the gameplay has changed sufficiently when compared to the original. I like and will continue to like RRT and I'd say that if you liked Sim City and Civilization, you should have a bash at this one. But if you already own the original, think very hard and study the pictures before you go buying the Deluxe version.

■ Dean Evans

Techspec *Railroad Tycoon Deluxe shouldn't cause any problems for any system. Although the game can be run from the keyboard, a mouse is recommended. Like Civilization, Sid Meier's RRT is compact and uncomplicated.*

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	**5Mb**				
Graphic modes					
CGA	**x**	**EGA**	**x**	**Tandy**	**x**
VGA	✓	**SVGA**	✓		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	**Roland**	✓	**Sound Blaster**	✓
Control					
Joystick	**x**	**Keyboard**	✓	**Mouse**	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	**16MHz 386**				
Minimum memory	**640K**				
Free RAM required	**580K**				

Verdict
Prettier than the original, but perhaps not much of an upgrade

rating **7**

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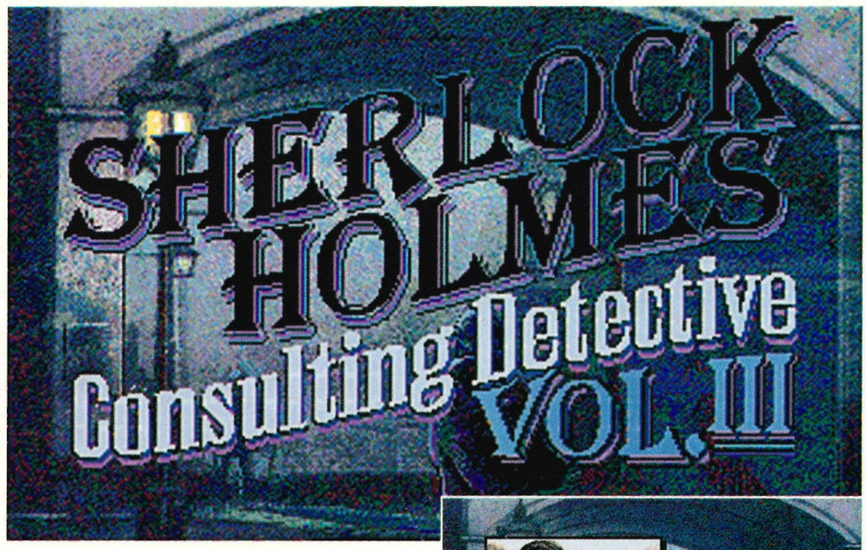
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Title	**Sherlock Holmes Volume III**
Publisher	**Icom/Mindscape**
Contact	**(0444) 246333**
Price	**£58.74**

If you've got a multimedia PC and you want to flaunt it, this is the perfect game for the job

Sherlock Holmes *Consulting Detective — Volume III*



In common with the two earlier volumes in the series, Volume III of Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective makes extensive use of recorded speech, sound-effects and music. And to top it all, the adventures unfold in the form of a series of live-action digitised video scenes boasting a style of acting so ham it makes TV's Jeremy Brett seem like a model of restraint.

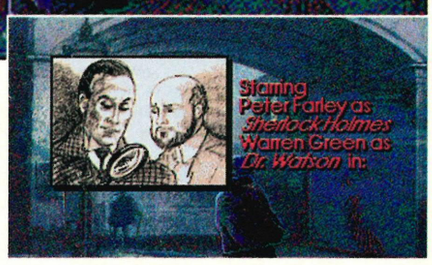
In terms of its interface and gameplay, Volume III lives up to the standards set by its two predecessors while the technical quality has actually been improved somewhat. The sound reproduction is better, the graphics look sharper and, in common with Volume II, there's a 256 colour display (volume I used just 16 colours).

Little else has changed, however. Once again we are provided with three adventures on a single CD. Each of these involves all the familiar characters — Holmes, Watson, Lestrade and a variety of informants with silly names. Once again there's the point and click interface with icons giving access to Holmes's address book, his personal notebook, his files, pages from The Times and reports delivered by the Baker Street Irregulars.

Each of the stories, The Solicitous Solicitor, The Banker's Final Debt and The Thames Murders, begins, as we've come to expect, with a corpse. In the first there are so many motives it's almost difficult to find a character who didn't want to kill the victim. The second story goes to the opposite extreme as it delves into the mysteries of an apparently motiveless murder. And just to top it all off in suitably gruesome style, the final tale serves up no less than five corpses apparently dispatched by a serial killer.

The object of the games is, of course, to identify the villains and bring them to justice. The primary source of the clues are the wonderful video clips. To view a clip you must first select a name from Holmes's notebook or an address book and then click on an icon of a horse-drawn carriage in order to take Holmes and Watson to meet the selected person. Assuming the person is at home — and not all of them are — you will then be shown an acted scene of the interview.

If you haven't played these games before I cannot over-emphasise the awfulness of the over-acting. This is an American



Above right: this is a small-screen game with big-screen ambitions. The introductory section has the thundering score of a Hollywood spectacular. It even has the obligatory 'all-star' cast list.

The only way of progressing through Consulting Detective III is to click on the icons in the main screen. This means that there's not much you can do to influence the outcome of the game so you might as well but sit back and enjoy the videos ...

Techspec *While it is claimed you can run this game on a 12MHz 286 PC, you should really be thinking of a 20MHz 386SX at the very least for any multimedia games. You must have both a sound card and a CD-ROM drive to play this game.*

Disk requirements

High density	n/a
Hard disk only	n/a
Space taken on hard disk	n/a

Graphic modes

CGA	x	EGA	x	Tandy	x
VGA	✓	SVGA	x		

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✓	Roland	x	Sound Blaster	✓

Control

Joystick	x	Keyboard	x	Mouse	✓

Performance

Optimum speed	20MHz
Minimum memory	640K
Free RAM required	520K

Verdict Another entertaining game but many players will have seen it all before

rating **7**

product and the wayward 'British' accents only add to the unintentional hilarity. Most of the underworld characters appear to have modelled their accents on Dick Van Dyke's colourful Cockney in the film Mary Poppins. The more upper-class characters seem to think that superior breeding can only be conveyed by waving your hands around and sighing between words. The end result is a bit like a combination of Julian Clary and Quentin Crisp — but considerably more camp!

Oddly enough, in spite of the modern multimedia interface, the most valuable medium for solving this game is an old-fashioned pencil and paper. This is because, apart from a facility for copying names from Holmes's address book into his notebook (not that useful, as it happens), there is no way of keeping track of clues using on-screen tools. There's nothing for it but to jot them down longhand.

A complaint that is frequently made of traditional graphics adventures is that many of them don't allow the player to explore a broad range of different pathways. At first sight, it might seem that this is one criticism that cannot be levelled at Consulting Detective III. Its free and easy approach does not restrict the player to conducting the investigations in any particular order.

However, the fact of the matter is that if you fail to play the game in more or less the 'right' order you're unlikely to make much progress at all. If you randomly jump from entry to entry in Holmes's address book, you'll find that many entries are just red herrings. If you try to interview all the people listed you will soon grow tired of Watson's dejected reports that "there's a note on the door that says they will be out all afternoon".

It soon becomes apparent that this game works on the assumption that you will conduct interviews in an order dictated by the sequence in which clues are revealed in the video clips. Indeed some clips even refer to other clips in the past tense. However, there's nothing to prevent you from watching them in the wrong order if you so wish.

Presumably it's the game's point, click and view playing style that justifies its claim to be an 'interactive video mystery'. However, while you can easily interact with the interface, there is no scope for interacting with the characters and objects. You cannot take or drop things. You cannot speak to people or give commands to the game. In fact, the player takes a very passive role in these adventures. After a while it begins to feel like you are sitting in front of a video recorder continually finding and replaying snatches of action from a disjointed film.

Nevertheless, even though this isn't the most challenging game around at the moment, it has to be said that it is a lot of fun. If you have a multimedia PC, this game can almost be regarded as an essential. Unless, that is, you already have one of the earlier games in the series.

Personally, I think most people would enjoy playing one discful of these adventures. Playing two discs of them could begin to get be a bit tedious. Playing three discs is a trial of endurance.

■ Huw Collingbourne

Alternatively...

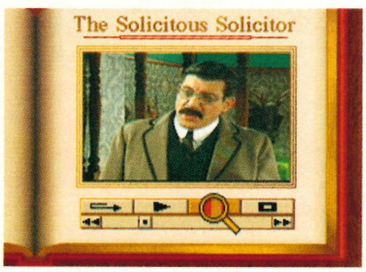


Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective: Volume II
Mindscape, £49.99
Rated 7, Issue 16
Same interface, same accents, same outrageous acting. The three adventures available in this volume are The Two Lions, The Pilfered Painting and The Murdered Munitions Magnate, none of which are particularly difficult to solve. If it's a straight choice between volumes I and II, this is to be slightly preferred because of its better graphics. Even so, PC Review rated this volume lower than its predecessor due to the fact that it merely regurgitates a formula rather than trying offer something new or different.



The Lost Files Of Sherlock Holmes: The Case Of The Serrated Scalpel
Electronic Arts, £39.99
Rated 8, Issue 13
Several young women are murdered in the East End of London and all the evidence points to Jack The Ripper. However, Holmes notices that the murder weapon is a knife with a serrated edge rather than the surgeon's scalpel favoured by the Ripper and he sets out to investigate. This is a superior example of the conventional type of point and click adventure in which little animated characters wander about in a graphic landscape. It's not a multimedia game so is fairly undemanding of hardware.

Two Minutes *through the magnifying glass*



The gent with the phoney moustache and even phonier accent is Inspector Lestrade of Scotland Yard. This game opens up with a sublimely over-acted video introduction in which the Inspector tells Mr Holmes of a young solicitor's death.



The main screen puts several sources of information just a pipe-click away. Before you can start investigating a subject you must first select a name either from Holmes's personal notebook or the address book which is seen here.



To get detailed information on the topic, click one of the icons at the edge of the screen. In this case, I have clicked on Holmes's filing cabinet. This has located a page of information on the Criterion Club which was the selected item in the address book.



And now the fun really begins. Having chosen another entry in the notebook and clicked the icon at the top right of the screen, I have sent Watson and Holmes on their first interview. And I thought I'd never see that old magnifying glass and eye cliché again!

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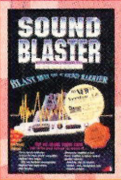


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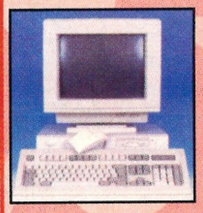
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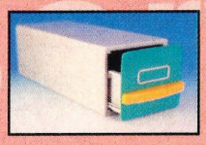
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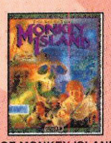
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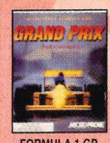
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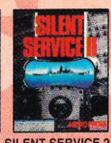
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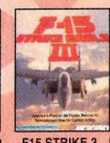
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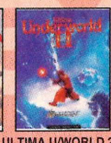
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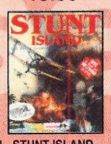
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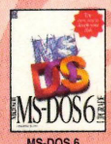
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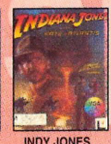
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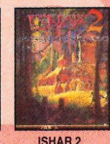
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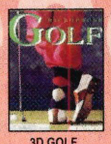
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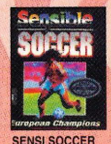
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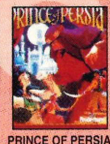
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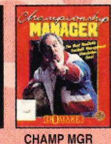
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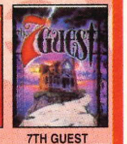
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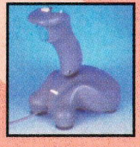
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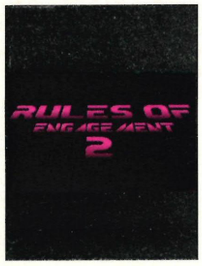
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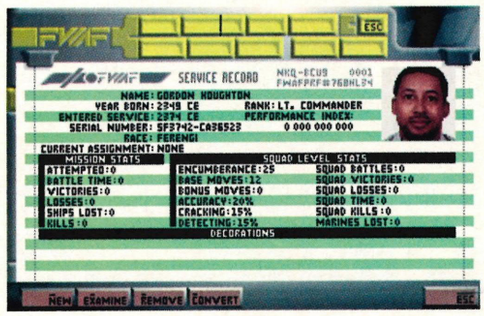
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Overseas orders must be paid by credit card.



Title	**Rules of Engagement 2**
Publisher	**Impressions**
Contact	**(071) 351 2133**
Price	**£44.99**

Rules of Engagement 2 comes with its own 22-page training manual, an impressive, comprehensive guide to the basics of playing your first game and the tactics required for success. This is what it teaches you ...

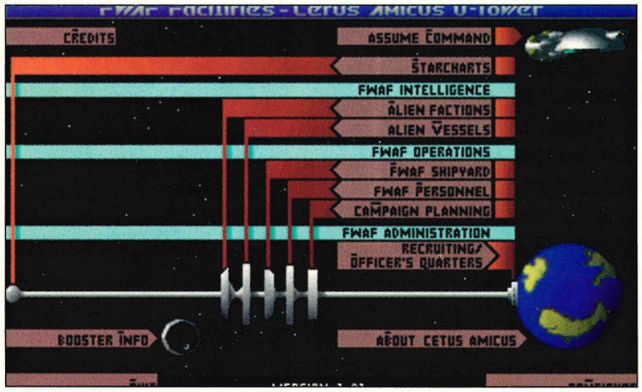


You play the Fleet Commander of the Federated Worlds Armed Forces, and you're at war. Before you start, you need to define your alter ego. Choose from 18 personality traits and eight different photographs — then prepare for power.

Rules of Engagement 2

Omnitrend's latest addition to its strategy-based interlocking game system picks up precisely where its predecessor left off — in deep space

As with the original game, it's the 24th century, and you are Fleet Commander of the Federated Worlds Armed Forces (FWAF) main task force. You are still at war with the United Democratic Planets (UDP), but the conflict has escalated and hostile aliens have been discovered in the local group. To sum up: ROE2 = FWAF vs UDP. You're in personal command of a fleet of starships and have to engage enemy vessels and outposts.



The main menu screen is a functional display which allows access to all other systems. Its apparent complexity is initially baffling but ultimately logical.

The FWAF computer system, known as CCSI2, is the interface you use to play the game. There are over 30 missions and four campaigns to choose from, and as Fleet Commander you have complete control over your forces. Your basic job is to study the mass of data available to you (hundreds of different displays and menus) and to issue appropriate commands in the war against the UDP. Most of the time this is a dry, menu-driven activity, but you do occasionally get hands-on experience of direct combat.

As you can probably guess, you need a lot of time just to get to grips with how the various computer systems function, but the learning process is rewarding as the action is so complex. Flashy presentation isn't ROE2's strong point, but

Techspec

A low-density disk version of ROE2 is available. A minimum of an 80286 running at 16MHz is fine. ROE2 uses XMS (390K for full sound effects, a further 805K for digitised speech) and EMS (1,024K for speed loading) memory.

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	**8Mb**

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	**575K**

Verdict

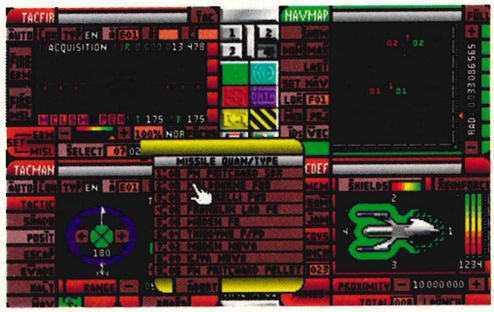
A complex space strategy game for fans of the genre only.

rating **6**

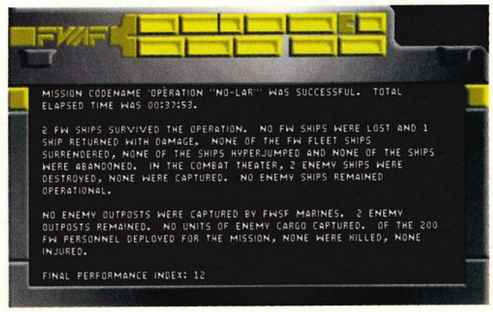
Two Minutes *of interstellar conflict*



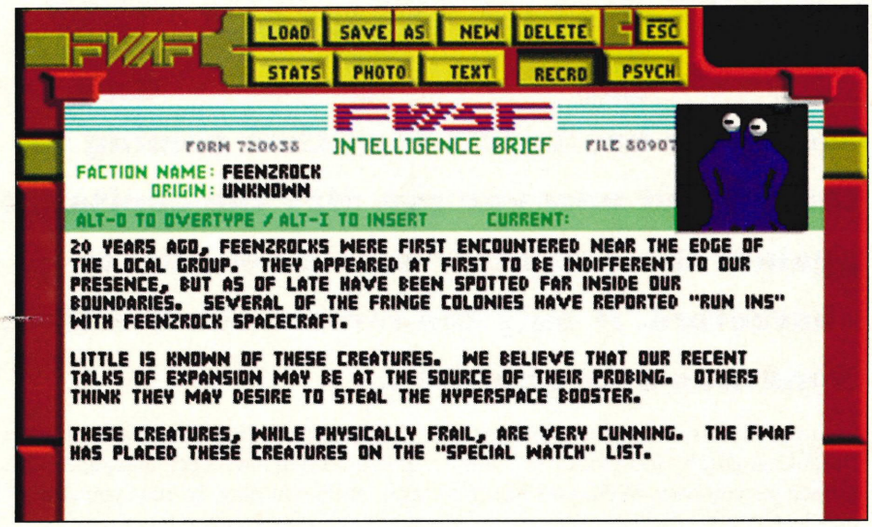
After selecting the mission and assigning your ships to the appropriate waypoints, you access the QuadPanel screen. This shows (clockwise from top left) your mission, a solar system map, sensor information and current orders.



After dispatching a ship under your command to destroy one of the two enemies you face, it's time to annihilate the other yourself. Adding three tactical displays to the QuadPanel allows access to weapons and navigation systems.



After 37 minutes and 53 seconds, both enemy craft were wiped out and your ships returned triumphantly. A mission debriefing summarises the bare facts of your success. Now, perhaps you should try something a little harder ...?



some effort has been made with a brief introduction and in-game 3D animations.

These animations are effectively token gestures, because where the presentation really succeeds is in the design of the computer system itself. Despite garish colours, the displays and customisable menus *do* convince that you are in charge of an impressive, useful and serious network. The more you play the more familiar it becomes, until you're immersed entirely in the believable world it creates.

You begin at the CCSI2's main menu screen, and your first task is to create an alter ego for yourself. After that you're on your own. Apart from providing entry to the missions themselves, the main menu also enables you to consult a variety of other information screens. These provide reams of data on over two dozen star charts: the game is more than comprehensive, but the menu structure is logical and helps you through the mass of different command functions.

The missions themselves can involve you in almost any activity, from a simple seek-and-destroy operation with two ships, through defending FWAF Outposts, to massive undertakings with entire armadas. All missions take place within a confined space, and you cannot leave the map during an operation; some also have time limits to tax your wits further.

You could be forgiven for thinking this all sounds a bit drab and highbrow, and if you're not keen on in-depth strategy games that's certainly the case. There is no real 'action', in the arcade sense: the nearest you get to it is during the combat sequences when you control dozens of weapons and tactical arrays and can actually watch your conflict taking place in one of the QuadPanel displays. That aside, there are an awful lot of precise, methodical steps to be taken, which don't necessarily get repetitive but do make prolonged demands on your concentration.

However, as you grow more accustomed to the requirements of the operating system, your skills improve and you derive a good deal of enjoyment from developing ever more sophisticated strategical approaches to the different missions.

ROE2 is a very dense, very sober game which will appeal most to people who like their strategy involved and totally credible. If you're seeking a quick blast and a lot of adrenalin-pumping fun, you won't find it here. The mark I've awarded reflects the fact that I found it just a little too earnest and complex for my personal taste. However, serious-minded strategists are in for a treat.

■ Gordon Houghton

Rules of Engagement 2 is fully customisable. As well as creating your own missions and campaign structure, you can construct your own fleet, design solar systems and alter the aliens you face.

Interlocking games

Rules of Engagement 2 can be combined with other Omnitrend games to expand the range of combat and other sequences. For example, if you own a copy of Breach 2 you can board an enemy vessel in ROE2 and take part in the boarding sequence in Breach 2. Your achievements as a Commander are carried between games, too.

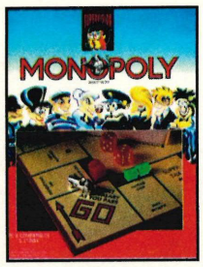
Alternatively...



Rules of Engagement
Mindcraft, £34.99
It's the late 24th century, and the Federated Worlds require a bigger and better space fleet than ever before. Your particular task is to command this fleet in the war against the United Democratic Planets. Over 20 detailed missions and the ability to build your own customised scenarios guarantee lastability, and you can combine this game with Breach 2 for shipboard battles and commando raids galore.



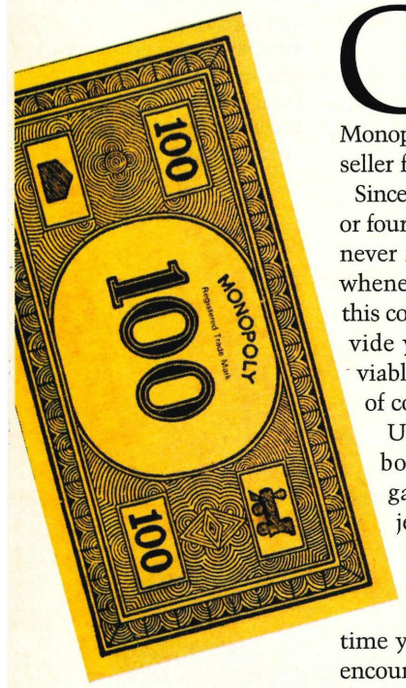
Breach 2
Mindcraft, £34.99
An advanced version of the original Omnitrend RPG combat game, you play a marine squad leader guiding your troops through missions against an alien force. Lasers, explosives and anti-grav devices are just some of the many weapons available, but the enemy also has access to the same hi-tech gear. An interesting strategy game made more impressive when interlocked with Rules of Engagement 1 and 2.



Title	**Monopoly**
Publisher	**Supervision**
Contact	**(071) 702 9391**
Price	**£34.99**



Monopoly



Monopoly has been a long time coming to the PC, but now you can play the capitalist against the computer with a new set of characters. If only the rent on the Old Kent Road was still only £2 ...

Can there be anyone reading this who has never once played Monopoly? Inflation resistant and impervious to recession, Monopoly the board game has been a best seller for 60 years.

Since Monopoly is best played with three or four players, whom, of course, you can never find around or in the right mood whenever you happen to fancy a game, this computer version should at least provide you, or you and a friend, with a viable game played against a selection of computer opponents.

Unfortunately, this is a somewhat botched version of the venerable game. The animation is horribly jerky, no matter how fast your PC, the main on-screen cursor flickers almost continuously, the screen seems to need a total refresh every time you select an option, and I've also encountered the occasional crash.

On top of this, it has one glaring and ridiculous glitch: you cannot see what properties you own. Well, you can, but only by a) accessing the property menu, b) selecting 'mortgage', c) waiting for two separate screen refreshes, and then d) you see each of your properties outlined on the board. Nowhere on the main playing screen does it show you what's yours, what everyone else owns, and thus what's still available. You can highlight a property to find out who owns it, but you can't select an opponent to see what they hold.

This is crazy. It means that you more or less need to have a pen and paper with you while you play, so that you can jot down properties as you buy them.

Now, I have long contended that if a computer version of a board game is going to be successful, it must offer something more than the original (beyond the ability to play on your own against the computer), especially as the computer versions are often more expensive.

Monopoly certainly attempts this. It introduces new, reasonably humorous, characters to match with the familiar hat, iron, car, boot, ship and dog. If you go to jail, or are just visiting, an animation shows you either being carted off by a



General Hobnail has been quietly amassing a nice little nest egg with The Angel, Euston Road, and Pentonville Road. Houses and also hotels are depicted graphically and updated in the game, and while the houses here on Euston Road aren't exactly architect-designed, those on Mayfair and Park Lane are plate glass penthouses.

When selecting the computer characters to play against, their skill levels can be altered to 'beginner', 'intermediate' or 'advanced', although I can't say I've noticed any particular difference in their playing tactics.

Techspec *On just one high density disk, Monopoly is easy to install and doesn't take up too much space. A fast, powerful machine is essential, or else the game is too slow to be truly playable.*

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✗				
Space taken on hard disk	1.3Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	✗	EGA	✓	Tandy	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	✗	Keyboard	✗	Mouse	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	25MHz 486				
Minimum memory	640K				
Free RAM required	550K				

Verdict Dissappointing version of the classic board game

rating **4**

police car, or popping in for the visit. The squares are illustrated in close-up when you land on them, and bear a passing resemblance to their real life counterparts. When you pass Go, the square is represented by a grandiose looking arrangement of money-bags.

The best part of Monopoly doesn't take place on the board at all, of course. It's the ruthless, double-crossing, devious elements you can bring to bear in person when trading properties with the other players. In the PC game, this part of the game is reproduced reasonably well. Not only can you respond to offered trades from computer players, but initiate your own — and the procedure for so doing is relatively straightforward. The only problem is that it's a bit difficult to come up with an unrefusable offer for anyone, when you can't tell what they own.

The animated gestures of the computer players are reasonably amusing the first time. Each one has their own 'signature' movement, so that Miss Trixie's hair bobs up and down, Lord Topper giggles, Mobile Michael blushes and grows a pair of cuckold's horns (why?), and the like. Most characters have a 'happy' gesture — for collecting rent, passing Go, etc, and a grumpy look for paying out.

But there really isn't any need to have three sets of scrolling messages when rent is due. "Bosun Barnacle demands £26 rent from Granny Knot" crawls across the screen. Then there's a round of blushing, wiggling and twitching. "Granny Knot must pay £26 rent to Bosun Barnacle" comes next. More twitching. "Granny Knot pays £26 rent to Bosun Barnacle" ticker-tapes its way across. More wiggling follows. *"Get on with it!"*, screams the frantic human player.

Also cumbersome is the procedure for building houses. In 'real' Monopoly you simply pick up the little green pegs, arrange them evenly across the set and pay up. In PC Monopoly, you must access the property menu, then the build icon. Then select the square to build on. Then watch the animation as your house goes up. That's one house. Back to the build icon, and select again for the next house. You want to put three on each square in one fell swoop? It's going to take a while, and there are all those jerky screen changes to go through as well, in which the board blanks, your playing pieces (and existing houses) disappear, then it refreshes again, they reappear, another refresh, and finally the new house is there.

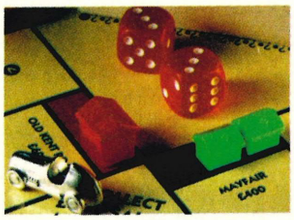
The sound effects (with a sound card only) do go some way to redeeming the game. Miss Trixie, represented by what I think is the Yorkshire Terrier — or possibly one of those 'gonk' toys that had a brief vogue in the 70s — yaps round the screen, there are suitable train noises if you should land on a station, police sirens when you go to jail, and so on.

Just in case anyone thinks I came to this product with a jaded eye, or never much enjoyed Monopoly in the first place, actually I was really looking forward to it. I haven't played the game for ages and I thought it would be immensely fun to recreate all those triumphs of bankrupting the smug bastard on your right, not to mention the tears when they bankrupted you. I was disappointed. There are some good ideas in here, but the implementation is infuriating.

Lord Topper is the hat, Mrs Starch the iron, Miss Trixie the dog, Mobile Michael the car, Bosun Barnacle the ship and General Hobnail the boot. The new kids on the block are Farmer Barrow and Granny Knot. Granny plays with a glass of strong liquor in her hand, and I have every sympathy with her.

■ **Christina Erskine**

Alternatively...



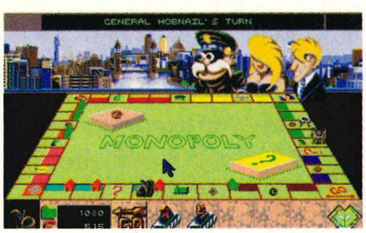
Monopoly (board game)
Waddingtons, £19.99
The original game has changed remarkably little in 60 years, although you can also buy sets based on Paris or New York streets. With the real thing, you get a clearer board layout, easier access to houses, and real title deed cards. Of course you need to find at least two other people willing to play with you.



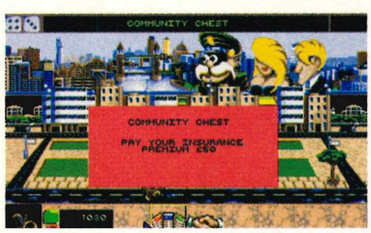
Jones in the Fast Lane
Sierra On-Line
A board game that originated on the computer, Jones in the Fast Lane can be played as single human against computer opponents or human versus human. The object is the pursuit of money, happiness, education and career prospects, played either with a disk-based version, or on CD-ROM.



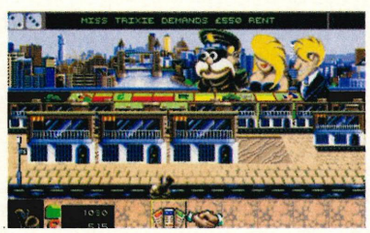
Two Minutes *of landing on Go*



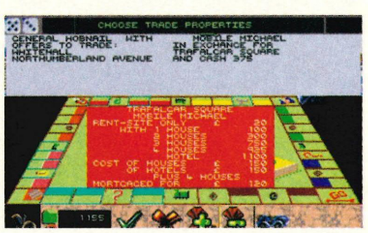
This is the main board view, with Miss Trixie and Mobile Michael as the computer players; General Hobnail (the boot) is me. Miss Trixie owns that nice little load of real estate around Euston Road.



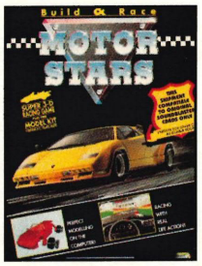
The Chance and Community Chest cards are reproduced faithfully in the PC game, right down to the dreaded street repairs and Go Directly to Jail cards, the beauty contests and the bank errors in your favour.



There's something to be said for building quickly on the cheaper properties — such as pulling in the odd £550. If the victims don't have the cash, they can mortgage property, sell houses, or trade in order to pay up.



To initiate a deal with another player, you select your trading partner, and the properties you wish to exchange. Throwing in some cash as well usually provides a good incentive for the other person to agree to your demands.



Title	**Motor Stars**
Publisher	**Revell**
Contact	**(081) 207 1213**
Price	**£59.95**

Despite the temptation to plough straight in, stick it all together and then wonder why you've still got three unidentifiable bits left over, if you take the time to work through the CD tutorial it'll be well worth the effort.

Motor Stars

Is it a kit? Is it a game? Is it a reference disc? Revell's Motor Stars series is a mixture of all three, and probably the only PC game where you'll need a tube of glue as well

It's all rather ironic; model kits are being shunted off the toy and model shop shelves to make way for row after row of computer and console games, yet here I am reviewing a plastic kit for a PC games magazine.

The speed with which model kits have been elbowed aside by computer games is quite dramatic. A friend of mine, teaching engineering at a secondary school, used to use a plastic kit as an example of injection moulding techniques. He doesn't bother any more: half the kids hadn't got the faintest idea what he's talking about.

Revell has obviously come to the conclusion that 'if you can't beat 'em, join 'em,' and married up the traditional plastic model kit with the PC to create the Motor Stars CD series. This covers four cars; the Porshe 911 Slant Nose (the review model), the EB110 Bugatti, the Ital Design Nazca, and an old favourite, the Lamborghini LP500S. Revell plans to follow up with a series of aircraft, American classic cars, space themes, and dinosaurs.

Quite whether we're being sold a model kit, with a CD-ROM game thrown in, or vice versa, is not exactly clear ...

What you get is a model kit, of course, and a CD-ROM. This contains assembly instructions, technical and historical info, and advanced modelling tips. And once you've learnt about your car, built your car, stuck your fingers together and spilt the paint over the dog, it wouldn't be complete unless you could race the damn thing as well. So, to cap it all, there's a complete racing game as well.

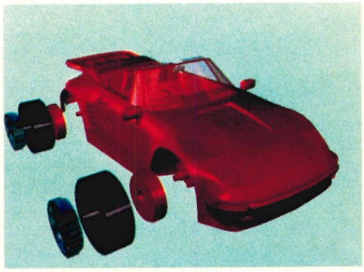
As far as the 1:24 scale kit itself goes, the moulding is generally sharp, the plastic is high quality and the level of detail is also good, without being exceptional. There was some 'flash' to be trimmed off, and some parts didn't fit together too well (like the rear bumper assembly, for example) and so needed a bit of filling. To be fair, though, this was the exception rather than the rule, and with a bit of patience you'll end up with a neat little model sitting on the mantlepiece.

From my own bitter, or at least slightly twisted, childhood experience, most

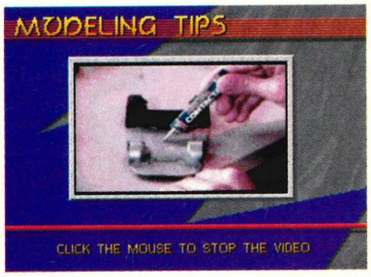


Assembly instructions are a lot easier to follow when they come in animated form, like this.

Two Minutes *of solvent abuse*



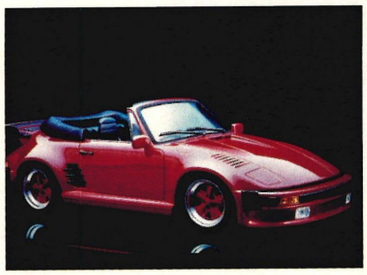
A quick run through of what goes where to start with, before moving on to the step by step instructions. The animations and exploded diagrams are easy to follow, but rather slow.



Well, why not try the professional approach? The advanced modelling tips, which cover painting, glueing and finishing techniques using digitised video footage.



Now, while the paint dries, it's time for a spot of racing to see just how my Porsche really handles. What you don't get to see here is the carnage I caused on the way to the race track.



And here's the finished model. Well, it's a finished model, anyway. It's just not my finished model, which happens to have quite a lot of glue and fingerprints on it. But I'm getting help for that ...

model manufacturers make an art-form out of the gibberish they laughingly call 'written instructions'. So, before starting this kit, I got hold of another large-scale Revell kit, to see if my memories were correct. Sure enough, badly proportioned diagrams, confusing anotations and downright misleading viewpoints. And no, it's not 'all part of the fun.'

The answer to those indecipherable kit instructions is on the CD-ROM. And it's a superb example of how CD-ROM *should* be used to best effect. The presentation is superb, it's a doddle to use, and the 3D animated assembly shots, digitised footage and sound are first class.

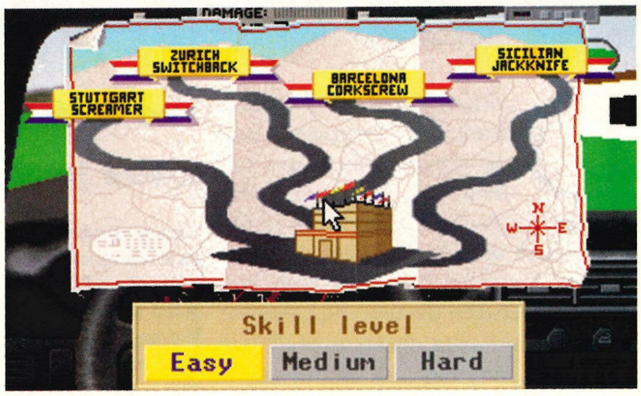
It's all centred round the garage and the showroom, with a simple point and click interface that enables you to sample step by step instructions, a library of modelling tips, exploded views, 3D animated diagrams, and technical details on the car in question. For example, during the assembly instructions, you can click on any machine part on screen and find out what it is, or find out what tools you'll need at a given stage from the Toolbox.

My only real criticism is of the relatively slow speed of the tutorials, even on a high-spec 486 with the animations on the fastest settings, because of the slow access times of CD-ROM drives. I also have some horrible visions of plastic cement in the disk drive, but that's another story.

When the kit is all done, or when you need a break, you click back to the showroom screen, select your car and screech off to the race track. It's a polygon-based race simulator, rather than an arcade style game like Gremlin's Lotus, and it reminds me rather a lot of Hard Drivin'.

It also has to be the first racing game I've come across in which you can drive the car to the track, stop for fuel, get pulled over by the police and dodge oncoming traffic at over 150mph, before you start racing. There's a choice of four cars, as I said, three difficulty settings and four tracks, so there's plenty of mileage in the gameplay. I'm not sure if I could tell much difference in driving 'feel' between the cars, to be honest, and although you can adjust the viewpoint from within the car, change wing and tyre settings, etc, I wouldn't put it in the same league as MicroProse's F1GP (it lacks external views, for example), or Indycar Racing (which is due out shortly). But it's still plenty of fun nonetheless.

The hardest part of this review is to give the Motor Stars CD a mark, because there's nothing else to compare it with. I'm particularly impressed by the CD-ROM tutorial, the racing game is fair-to-middlin' and the kit doesn't look too shabby either, now I've had some help.



There are four different tracks and three difficulty levels to chose from in the Eurorace game.

But, pricing may be a bit of a sticking point. For serious modellers, £60 buys you one hell of a kit. The quality and scale of the kit on its own puts it in the £15 bracket. Then again, any full price CD-ROM will be pushing the £50-£60 mark, so maybe it's not too much to ask.

However, pricing aside, I hope the Motor Stars series works for Revell, largely because it does demonstrate what you can actually do with a PC and CD-ROM to enhance a hobby.

■ John Bennett

Techspec

Insists on having Emm386.exe loaded and working. A 486 is recommended, with a minimum of 4Mb of RAM for reasonable performance.

Disk requirements

High density	n/a
Hard disk only	n/a
Space taken on hard disk	n/a

Graphic modes

CGA	x	EGA	x	Tandy	x
VGA	x	SVGA	✓		

Soundboards

Ad Lib ✓	Roland x	Sound Blaster ✓

Control

Joystick ✓	Keyboard ✓	Mouse ✓

Performance

Optimum speed	33MHz
Minimum memory	2Mb
Free RAM required	575K

Verdict
An unusual combination that works extremely well together

rating **7**

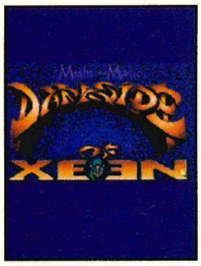
Alternatively...



Formula 1 Grand Prix
MicroProse, £44.99
Rated 8, Issue 15
Currently the undisputed king of the racing simulations, F1GP is still waiting for the head-to-head link that MicroProse is promising. Championship racing, Grand Prix tracks, detailed car set-ups and external view options make for a superb game.



Lotus: The Ultimate Challenge
Gremlin, £34.99
Rated 6, Issue 23
Lotus is a no-frills arcade game. Where it does offer something more than your average OutRun clone is in its course designer module (RECS) which lets you create an almost infinite number of tracks and conditions.



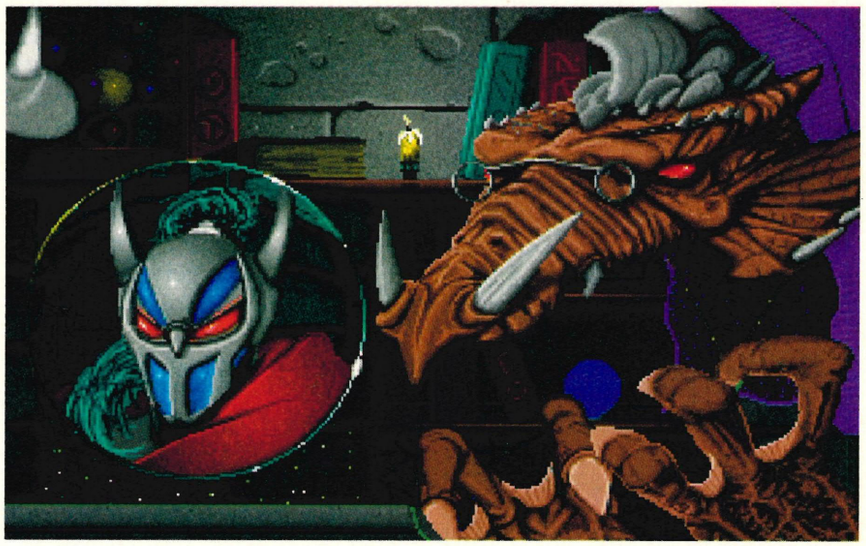
Title	**Darkside of Xeen**
Publisher	**US Gold**
Contact	**(021) 625 3366**
Price	**£45.99**

Darkside of Xeen

The fifth instalment in the Might and Magic series looks just as good as the rest. But is that good enough?

Darkside of Xeen is the latest in one of the longest-running role-playing series, Might and Magic. An adventure in its own right, it is also a companion to the game which directly precedes it, Clouds of Xeen. If you have copies of both, you can travel between the two and complete multiple cross-over quests as well as a brand-new, very large, third end game.

Although it's impressive, this ability to travel between games is unfortunately one of the few original features in Xeen. Anyone who's played recent role-playing adventures will discover little here that is fundamentally surprising or innovative. You will find some excellent sound effects (particularly speech), a complex and neatly-structured set of role-playing statistics, occasionally stunning graphics, and a huge game world. What you won't find, as far as I'm concerned, is anything that grabs you by the throat and compels you to play the game to the bitter end.



Xeen's intro features some of the clearest and best acted speech you'll find anywhere. It's original and never dull — two qualities which the game itself lacks.

For your £46, you get eight disks, a manual, reference guide, map and notepad. The manual is a standard RPG effort: a brief introductory tale detailing the struggle between the good Dragon Pharaoh and the upstart Alamar, a beginner's guide to role-playing, instructions, spell tables and a few token illustrations. The notepad is handy because you will make copious notes during the game, despite an impressive in-built note-taking feature.



When you want to add a new member to your happy band (within a maximum of six), all you do is find a tavern and check in. After that, take your pick.

If you're the kind of person who likes to get straight into the game, the intuitive control system is helpful. The screen is divided into icons which change according to whether you're exploring, engaging in combat or using magic, a character panel (masses of information about your six characters), and a viewing window. Xeen features the type of block-scrolling 3D environment popularised by the Bard's Tale series and used to greatest effect in games such as Dungeon Master, Eye of the Beholder and The Legacy.

As I said earlier, Xeen boasts a huge game world. It ranges from Castleview and its labyrinthine sewer system to deserts, forests, mountains, towers, other cities, and some uniquely special locations. Size isn't everything though, and what Xeen gains in quantity, it loses in quality. Too many locations are bland, repetitive sequences of graphical blocks you've seen before, interspersed with encounters with cartoon-style enemies which are unusual but hardly terrifying.

You begin your adventures in Castleview, just a tiny part of the Xeen world map. It has plenty of adventures to offer, many characters, and opportunities to earn gold and learn new skills.

Alternatively...



Clouds of Xeen
US Gold, £39.99
Rated 7, Issue 18
This game is bright and colourful, but it lacks atmosphere and looks old-fashioned. However, if you own both this and Darkside, you can merge them to create an expanded game with added features.



Crusaders of the Dark Savant
US Gold, £45.99
Rated 8, Issue 13
Much better than Darkside or Clouds of Xeen, the seventh in the even longer-running Wizardry series has a massive game world to explore and some unusual spells (96 in all).

As a result, Xeen lacks the kind of threatening, graphically-inspired atmosphere that was so successful in a game like The Legacy. It's a role-playing adventure, so I expected to be frightened and amused in equal measure. Instead, I found myself thinking that the icon-controlled combat sequences were a hindrance rather than a challenge, and that searching every pile of rags for food or weaponry was a chore rather than an opportunity. The number of available weapons is excellent, and there are over 70 spells to be learned — but far too much of the action is methodical.

On the good side, there's plenty to recommend it to role-playing enthusiasts who aren't overly concerned with innovation, and to beginners who aren't used to more impressive graphics or more interesting combat.

For a start, the variety of missions is outstanding. In Castleview alone, you can take on six sub-quests almost immediately on your way to delivering the Dragon Pharaoh's Orb to Ellinger's Tower — and there are many more. Sub-quests bring their own rewards, whether it's a chest full of treasure or eternal gratitude from the people you assist.

There's a similarly huge variety of non-player characters (NPCs) within the game, all neatly defined and offering a number of different services. Characterisation is enhanced by some of the clearest and best-acted speech I've ever heard in a PC disk game. Above all, the NPCs are useful for the masses of information they provide. If you were thinking of entering the desert without having learned the navigation skill, for example, they'll soon put you straight. Some of the NPCs won't appeal to all tastes, however: Tanya the Floozy is hardly likely to go down well with advocates of political correctness.

The puzzles can be complex, requiring a lot of mental juggling (or an organised notepad), but much of the time you'll simply be looking around for keys, pulling levers, trying to find secret entrances, guessing whether you're being told the truth, or deciphering the dozens of cryptic messages you're given.

Xeen is an accomplished RPG that ultimately doesn't stand head and shoulders above the current crop. Its flashes of genius include a good deal of impressive speech, a flair for organised complexity and a huge game world. Unfortunately, it also lacks consistent variety and includes too many 'chores', such as combat, searching for objects and mapping every inch of ground. Above all, it's not unusual enough, and looks a little old-fashioned.

I'm reluctant to give it a higher mark, even given its depth and the accomplished and impressive effort that has gone into creating it. This is because in the end I feel its technology, plot and atmosphere are neither stunning nor particularly inventive. If these limitations don't concern you, or you enjoyed the previous Might and Magic games, or even if you're simply new to the genre, there's plenty of entertainment on offer. However, if you're getting a little tired of the current crop of mythical role-playing adventures, and you're looking for a ground-breaking combination of mind-blowing graphics, complex puzzles and terrifying atmosphere, I suggest you look elsewhere.

■ Gordon Houghton

Techspec ***The box recommends a 286 PC or faster, but you'd be better off with a 16MHz minimum (and preferably better). Apart from the sound cards listed, Xeen supports Wave Blaster and ProAudio Spectrum.***

Disk requirements							
	High density	✓					
	Hard disk only	✓					
	Space taken on hard disk	**16Mb**					
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	**570K**					

rating **6**

Verdict
Lacks innovation, but won't disappoint Might and Magic fans

Two Minutes *of tales from the Darkside*



Zelda the Herbalist welcomes you to the world of Xeen and gives you the first mission. You have to deliver the Dragon Pharaoh's Orb to Ellinger's tower. If you fail, terrible things will befall the people of Xeen.



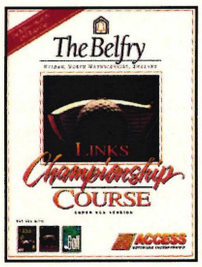
Plenty of malevolent creatures are out to stop you — this bizarre individual is a goblin. As soon as you encounter enemies, the control panel provides you with a list of nine combat options. A quick fight sorts out our purple foe.



Having picked up many clues (such as Ellinger's fondness for boots), solved some puzzles and visited a few local craftsmen, it's time to see where you are. The auto-mapper obliges. Perhaps there's something westward?



After a run-in with Gettlewaithe the Gremlin king two-thirds of your party have been wiped out. At last however, you have a chance to enter Ellinger's tower — but didn't someone mention that it was full of traps?



Title	**The Belfry**
Publisher	**Access/US Gold**
Contact	**(021) 625 3366**
Price	**£22.99**

The Belfry



The Belfry in North Warwickshire is the venue for this year's Ryder Cup, where British and European golfers with rather more cash than sense ... sorry, where the leading money winners on the professional tour battle it out with the Yanks. And if recent years are anything to go by, we refuse to let the Americans take the cup back afterwards, either.

The Belfry is also the latest, and most timely, addition to the series of add-on championship courses for Links. Unfortunately, Access doesn't have the official rights to the Ryder cup. Ocean has cornered that particular advantage. Consequently, there are no players and teams to compete against, and no irritating idiot shouting "It's in the hole" as you slice the ball unmistakably into the trees; you're simply paying for the pleasurable opportunity to sit back and play the Belfry's Brabazon course instead.

To do so, you'll need either the original Links, Links 386 Pro, or Microsoft Golf (which I happened to be using). I had an enjoyable round, or three, playing the Belfry at the easier levels.

Taking things a bit more seriously, though, I soon realised what a deceptively tough course it actually is, with extremely awkward bunkers, plenty of trees and bushes to come a cropper against, and water hazards that have a mysteriously magnetic quality whenever I tee off in the vicinity. But the most noticeable thing about the Brabazon course at the Belfry is that it's a very American-style sculpted golf course (designed by Peter Alliss and Dave Thomas) unlike the more traditional lumps and bumps English courses.

Unfortunately, the setting still doesn't offer some of the variety of, say, the Florida courses, for example, both visually and in terms of gameplay. There are plenty of challenging holes, true enough, but the overall impression is that it's all just a touch too flat and 'samey'.



Below left: plenty of trees to cause problems, but The Belfry could do with some more variety.

But then, the ultimate object of the exercise is a faithful recreation of a real golf course, so you can't really blame Access if Peter Alliss and co didn't have computer golf games at the top of their list of priorities when they were designing the course.

Mind you, Access could have made some attempt to recreate the vagaries of the good old English weather to go with it. Every time you step up to the tee, it is a sunny day, complete with cute fluffy clouds drifting past. Now every time *I* go out on an English golf course, it buckets down — to put it politely.

Above: this is not actually the way I should be facing. I just wanted a shot of the club house.

Graphically, it's up to the usual high standards set by the original, and, to be honest, nothing else comes even remotely close in this respect. The old criticisms of Links 386 Pro and Microsoft Golf still apply, of course; you still have to wait as the game 'terraforms' each particular landscape, and it still runs painfully slowly on anything less than a 486. As an add-on course, the Belfry makes a welcome, probably essential, addition to any Links fan's collection.

■ John Bennett

Techspec ***You'll need a 386 or better, VGA and Microsoft-compatible mouse. This is an add-on course, not a stand-alone game, so you need to have either the original Links, Links 386 Pro, or Microsoft Golf.***

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	**33MHz**			
	Minimum memory	**640K**			
	Free RAM required	**575K**			

rating **6**

Verdict
A well-presented, challenging course

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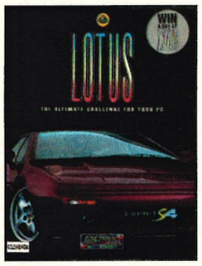
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Title	**Lotus; The Ultimate Challenge**
Publisher	**Gremlin**
Contact	**(0742) 753423**
Price	**£34.99**



Lotus: *The Ultimate Challenge*

If you're fed up with driving through the rush hour in your old banger, slip into something a little more comfortable with Gremlin's latest arcade racer

The speed, the power, the handling: it was all too much for me. In the 10 minutes it took me to get my Dad's Lada out of Sainsbury's car park and safely home, I vowed never to drive another car as long as I lived. Still, making vows was never my forte, so when given the opportunity to slide behind the wheel of a Lotus Esprit S4, how could I resist? With 264 brake horse power, 0-60 in 4.7 seconds and a top speed of 164 miles per hour, it's a far cry from the kind of junk-mobile I'm used to driving. I guess it's kill or cure, then.

Lotus: The Ultimate Challenge is not a technically accurate racing simulation. It's an arcade driving game. Subtle difference, yes, but if you're after a game in which the car looks and behaves as it would in real life, you may find this disappointing. On the other hand, if all you want is a high-speed thrash on improbable tracks, with lots of competition, Lotus delivers the goods in no uncertain terms.

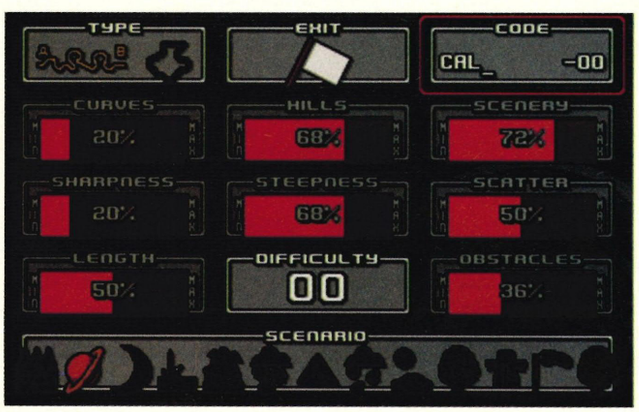
One of the chief attractions of a game like this is being able to drive cars you wouldn't normally be able to afford. As well as the rather swanky Esprit S4, you can also test drive Lotus's concept car, the M200, or indulge in the pleasures of open-top motoring in a Lotus Elan.

Once you've chosen your car, you need to decide which track to race on. There are 64 pre-designed courses, from a straightforward race circuit to a muddy rally track complete with stagnant puddles. Unfortunately for the sadists amongst you, this game is spectator free, so you can't play squash-the-marshall or ram-the-crowd. Just as well, I suppose.

If you get bored with the existing tracks, you can always design your own using the RECS course designer. Each section on the RECS screen (pictured on the left) represents a different aspect of the course, and these can be altered depending on how much or how little you want that feature to influence your creation.

First, you choose whether the race will be in laps or stages, and how long it will last; next, how many curves your track will have, and how tight the angle (determined by altering the percentage rating). The lower the percentage, the straighter the track and the gentler the bends.

Hills are another factor, and once again you get to decide how many and how



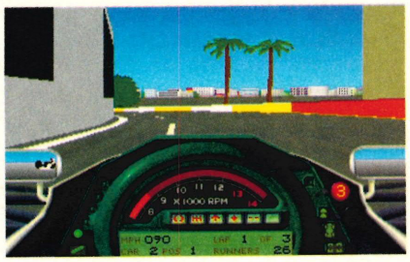
Below: build your own custom courses using the RECS track design system. There are five trillion different permutations, apparently.



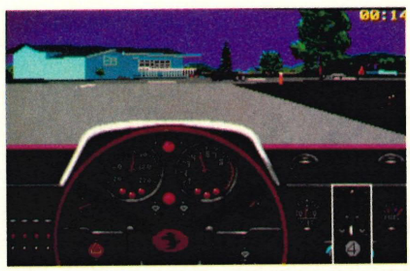
Right: Lotus is a lot more fun in two-player mode, shown here.

Cars make me nervous. I'd sooner bungee jump off Clifton Suspension Bridge than drive to the shops and back, let alone scream round a racetrack at speed in excess of 150mph. Still, If it's got to be done, I may as well do it in style ...

Alternatively...



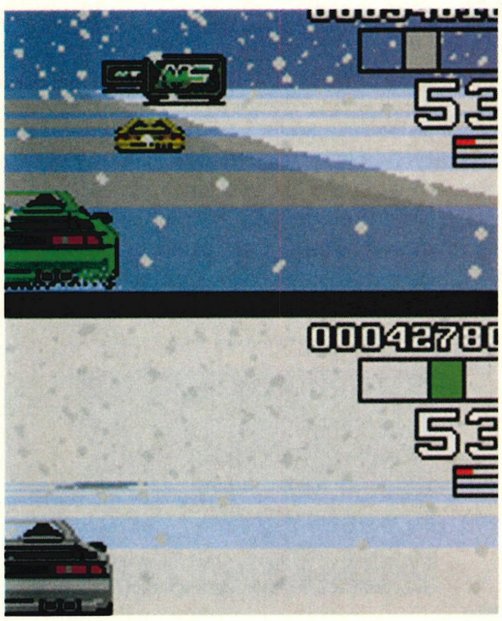
Formula One Grand Prix
MicroProse, £44.99
Rated 8, Issue 15
One of the most popular racing games around, F1GP boasts high quality polygon graphics, plus plenty of realism: you can even play a 70 lap race, should you have the stamina. It also allows you to link two PCs for some real head-to-head action.



Car and Driver
Electronic Arts, £34.99
Rated 8, Issue 16
If you prefer sports cars to Formula One, You can't go wrong with this racing sim. There is a variety of dream mobiles, and plenty of different tracks, both real and fictitious. The polygon-based graphics are top notch and SVGA is catered for.

steep you want them to be. You can even decide how much scenery you want on the course, although at 164mph, you won't have time to admire the view.

Finally, you can select one of 13 scenarios. There are various weather conditions, but if you're really adventurous, the game also includes less conventional tracks, such as a futuristic circuit with



lasers to slow you down and a revolting checked road surface designed to distract the drivers by making them car-sick.

The mountain track has a cliff on one side and a stomach-churning drop on the other, which makes overtaking almost impossible. You can also play chicken with the oncoming traffic in the motorway section (you drive on the right, as if things weren't confusing enough already), but if you want the real M25 experience, try the roadworks. Mile upon mile of traffic cones, and not a JCB in sight. The only thing that's missing from this shining example of authenticity is the sneakily hidden police radar trap. Marvellous stuff.

Once you've done all that, it's time to go racing. You can opt for a single race, or try and make it through a season. The only problem with the season is that as soon as you fail to finish, it's game over, grossly unfair when you happen to be miles ahead on points. If this had happened to Nigel Mansell in 1992, he wouldn't be World Champion.

The other problem is that you can't crash. This is because Lotus, like most car manufacturers, doesn't like you to see their cars in pieces and anyway, they never leave the road, right? Not even during a 164mph head-on collision with another car. They just slow down a bit. Hmm ...

That aside, it's not bad as arcade games go. It's at its best in two-player mode, since a bit of rivalry can add a lot of excitement. Sadly, the 'no-crash' feature means that you can't take each other out, but you can still block and shunt, and you get a nice, smug feeling when you look at the other player's screen and see your car go screaming past.

The accent is on fun rather than accuracy, graphics are reasonable and you get a good sensation of speed, especially on hilly tracks. You even get to choose the music for each race. The course designer is fun and extends the life of the game somewhat. Lotus would keep most people happy for a few weeks, if not months, and it's something you'd probably want to go back to from time to time.

■ Cal Jones

Techspec

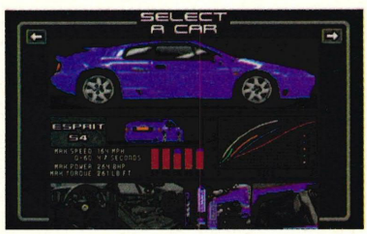
Needs a 286 to run and a 386 or better is recommended. Also requires DOS 2.0 or greater. Supports the Freewheel joystick. Low density disks are available on request from Gremlin.

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	***20MHz***			
	Minimum memory	***640K***			
	Free RAM required	***550K***			

rating **6**

Verdict
An undemanding but entertaining game

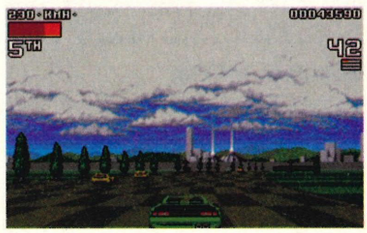
Two Minutes *of skid marks*



Oh, choices, choices. Which one of these lovely cars shall I wreck? As a woman, I think I'm supposed to choose the car whose colour I like the best. Well I'm not going to, so there. I'm going to pick the fastest one.



On the grid now, and I can feel my knuckles going white already. I have to be careful not to let my foot slip off the clutch so that my extremely expensive dream machine doesn't end up buried in the car in front. And we're off!



And there she is, in the Works Esprit, storming through the ranks. It's quite incredible. Oh no, that was someone completely different. And now it's the penultimate-last-lap-but-one. She takes the chequered flag!



Well, Murray, I had a good race and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the team for their support and to apologise to that man I ran over on the Victory lap ... Right, where's the champagne?

Reviews extra

The games that got away!

We don't always have room to review every game released this month, but so that you don't miss out, Reviews Extra covers the best of the rest.



Hard Nova (£9.99)
Hit Squad (061) 832 6633

First up this month is Hard Nova, a futuristic role-playing game which unceremoniously dumps you in at the deep end as a big, square-jawed intergalactic mercenary (and that's just the female character). After a freak accident wipes out the crew of your starship, your task is to assemble a new crew and to carry on smuggling, gunrunning and casually breaking most of the smaller laws on the interstellar frontier just like you used to.

Hard Nova uses a combination of the overhead view and some nicely drawn animated pictures, but the whole thing looks positively ancient. The control system is awkward, especially if you use a keyboard rather than the recommended mouse. In fact, Hard Nova is dire. If this is the cutting edge of entertainment (as it boldly claims on the box) then I'm a small, mahogany table made during the reign of Queen Victoria. And I'm not, I can assure you.

Gunboat (£14.99)
Hit Squad (061) 832 6633

When the sale price of a budget game ups by a fiver you know you can expect something a little better and Gunboat doesn't disappoint. You are invited to take the helm of one the US Navy's river patrol boats, chugging up a mud-choked river, slap-bang in either Panama, Colombia or war-torn Vietnam.

The idea behind Gunboat is a simple one. You've got to complete 20 missions, destroying anything and anyone that looks vaguely shifty or carries anything bigger than a peashooter.

With multiple viewpoints, Gunboat is really nothing more than a 3D shoot 'em up. Like most other budget releases the graphics and long term appeal are limited but Gunboat is fairly enjoyable if you don't expect too much of it.



Starblade (£9.99)
Games Worth Playing
(071) 328 2762

Cue atmospheric music. In the year 3001, the human race has been reduced to a few small, hi-tech colonies by the onslaught of the ruthless insectile Cephalhydras. These chitinous creatures need to be destroyed and, as the rest of your pitiful band ums and ahs, you bravely step forward to save the day. Yes, you have volunteered to search for a number of data disks that have been scattered on various planets by the recently deceased, but terribly heroic professor Julius Gordon. Once all these disks have been collected they will reveal the location of Genolyn the insectile brood Queen. If she is destroyed, the Cephalhydras will die out and mankind will be saved. Hurrah and huzzah.



Despite its simple animation, Starblade isn't a bad game for the asking price, but it isn't that much fun either.



Boston Bomb Club (£9.99)
Games Worth Playing
(071) 328 2762

This simple game describes itself as a bit of a puzzler. According to the box, in the 19th century a group of mad scientists (in Boston) used to gather round tables, rolling lighted bombs through fiendishly designed mazes. Their compatriots, stout of heart and no doubt saturated of beer, would then attempt to divert these rolling bombs over trampolines, cog wheels, steam engines etc. into buckets of water, thereby defusing them.

And that's about the essence of the game. Just guide the bombs around ever more intricate mazes, dunking them in the bucket of water at the end before they explode and maim the contestants. It's simple, addictive for the first five minutes and then frankly very, very boring.

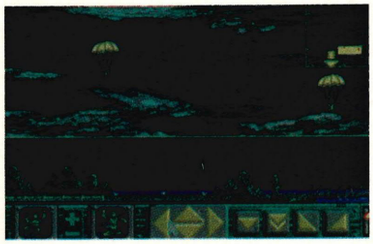


Superski 2 (£9.99)
Games Worth Playing
(071) 328 2762

Superski 2 would actually be quite fun if it was the sort of thing you could play when Strike Commander was installing. But as far as long term enjoyment goes, Superski 2 is only any fun when you play it with more than one player.

In the game you can compete in six winter sports events, namely: special and giant slalom, bobsleigh, hot-dogging, ski-jumping and downhill racing. There is a training

mode where you can practise any of the sports until you feel confident enough to take the plunge and participate in Olympic competition.



D-Day (£35.99)
US Gold (021) 625 3366
Basically, D-Day uses four different sub-games to recreate the events of June 5th 1944; the day allied armies invaded France. After studying the war map, planning your tactics and ordering your troops, whether you succeed or fail comes down to your performance in the four sub-games.

First up you must take to the dark French skies in a B-17 Bomber aiming to soften up the ground targets. Next follows the parachute drop and then a 3D tank battle until finally you end up fighting a running infantry battle with a squad of tiny, Sensible Soccer-sized soldiers.

Controlling all aspects of a war is a nice idea, but I don't think D-Day has got it right at all. Now if you were to put AV8B Harrier together with M1 Tank Platoon and Seal Team, that would be something, but D-Day's game sequences are embarrassing to say the least. On the whole, D-Day is very shallow, attempting to be jack of all trades but finishing up master of none.

VGA Planets (£24.99)
PAW PBM (0392) 498022
VGA Planets is an interactive gaming experience and like Empire's recent release Maelstrom, you find yourself in control of a single planet faced with invasion and war from every quarter.

Unlike Maelstrom, VGA Planets is interactive. Although you can play VGA Planets as a stand-alone product, PAW PBM is really looking for you to join its play-by-mail operation. The game uses a series of 'turns' during which you plan and set your plans in motion. When you've exhausted all your allotted movement quota, you simply send your game files to PAW PBM and its main computer.

Although the process is a slow one, this interaction adds a completely new dimension to the game. At the end of the day, it's better fighting against real, unpredictable people than fighting a computer who is sometimes as predictable as night following day.

Worlds of Legend: Son of the Empire (£25.99)
Mindscape (0444) 246333
A party of adventurers lunch quietly in the small, unassuming town of Britdorf. There are four of them; an assassin, a beserker, a troubadour and a runemaster. Alas, the assassin's father, the Emperor, has been murdered and you must control these four warriors as they journey to the Empire of the Moon to find the Sorcerer Ti-Mann Mochun, once the Emperor's aide and now your deadly enemy.



Worlds of Legend is a mouse-driven 3D isometric RPG that boasts spell casting, a plethora of scrolls and weapons, devious puzzles and a facility to import your original Legend team from the first game. Despite this, Worlds is not at the cutting edge of RPG technology — it could never compete with Ultima — but if you like this kind of thing, liked the original Legend and thought Shadowlands was a hoot, this game might be worth a look.

Campaign Mission Disk (£17.99)
Empire (081) 343 7337
Campaign is Empire's biggest selling game and its popularity has spawned a worthy add-on disk. The disk contains 25 new military scenarios spanning Northern Europe and the northern tip of the African continent.

The mission disk features such notable military actions as the Battle of Ypres, the Allied breakout from Normandy, and even the Battle for Stalingrad.

Campaign fans shouldn't miss the chance to extend the longevity of the original game.

Reviewed this issue

Day of the Tentacle	9
Imperial Pursuit	8
The Lost Vikings	8
Fields of Glory	7
Motor Stars	7
Railroad Tycoon Deluxe	7
Sherlock Holmes vol III	7
Dark Side of Xeen	6
Lotus: The Ultimate Challenge	6
Pirates Gold	6
Return of the Phantom	6
Rules of Engagement	6
The Belfry	6
Monopoly	4
Blade of Destiny	3

PC review's best buys

Taken from the last three issues, PC Review recommends the following:



Sensible Soccer
Renegade, £34.99
The most playable soccer game to appear on the PC, Sensi has cost PC Review more lost working hours then the common cold. At its best in two player mode, even the most ardent football hater will enjoy it.



Syndicate
Bullfrog/Electronic Arts, £44.99
A successful combination of action and strategy in which you head a huge corporation bent on world domination. Set in the near future, it's extremely atmospheric, absorbing and fun to boot.



Strike Commander
Origin, £49.99
More of a flight game than a flight sim, Strike combines mercenary dogfighting with 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, £45.99
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.

Shareware reviews

Sam Mackenzie has been looking at games which don't demand too much in the way of processor and memory capacity this month, as well as some versions of old classics, such as chess

Baron Baldric



Supplier:	*Springsoft*
Tel:	*(0352) 770049*
Product code:	*CHESS*
Price:	*£1.99*
Registration price:	*£15*
Registration package:	*latest version & Draughts For Windows*
Minimum specification:	*windows, mouse, keyboard, any windows machine*
Disk space:	*1.5Mb*

Product
Chess For Windows

shareware tech spec 1993

Baron Baldric is as good as many full commercial games of the same type. It could be called a platform game, but that would be underselling it. It's a bit like a more lighthearted version of Gods.

You make your way through the castle, climbing ladders and jumping around. You can also remove barriers and conjure up ladders by tapping with your stick. The sound effects for this are very good with a Sound Blaster or Ad Lib card, but you can also hear the Baron wheezing and grunting around the castle! Without sound effects, be warned, the game seems a little dead.

The quality of animation is impressive as you soon get to know the Baron's personality. If you make him jump and bump his head, his look of pain and shock makes you not want to do it again! There are all the elements of a typical animated adventure game. You pick up useful things, such as food and treasure, to use at the correct time.

The trouble is that this sort of description makes Baldric sound boring, which he isn't, because of the quality and fullness of implementation and the strange sense of humour behind it all. The shareware version has three levels which are quite enough for you to find out if you want to go on and try all 10 levels of the registered product. Baron Baldric is highly recommended.

Supplier:	*Precision Software Publishing*
Tel:	*(0223) 208288*
Product code:	*Baron B*
Price:	*£3*
Registration price:	*£25.50*
Registration package:	*the full game*
Minimum specification:	*VGA, Ad Lib, Sound Blaster, joystick, keyboard, 286 or better*
Disk space:	*1.2Mb*

Product
Baron Baldric

shareware tech spec 1993

Chess for Windows

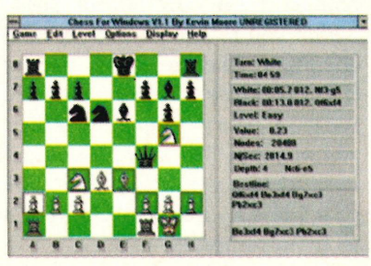
Not another chess program, I hear you scream! But this one is special (honest!) because it is a good chess program that runs under Windows. It has a nice, but not gimmicky, board display that depicts the traditional pieces.

You can move these pieces by selecting and dragging, or by selecting current and destination squares. You can also set the level of play and ask for hints if you need them. Level of play can be set by depth of search or by time.

If you find that the game isn't going your way you can even rearrange the board. Of course this facility is officially used to set up chess problems! Even better, there is an undo and re-do command that you can use to 'rewind' a game to the point where you might have made a better move.

Games can be saved to disk and restored which means you can think about them overnight if necessary. If you are into the theory of how chess programs actually play then there is an option to change the weightings of individual pieces. The registered version contains more information on how it all work but, unfortunately, there is no help on the unregistered version.

This is a good program and the programmer (UK-based) deserves to be supported, so try the program and then register it. You may reap the benefit in years to come and have fun playing chess and improving your standard of play.



Solar Winds

Supplier:	*Transcend*
Tel:	*(0274) 622228*
Product code:	*11600*
Price:	*£2.50*
Registration price:	*£20*
Registration package:	*more episodes, hint book, cheat codes and bonus games*
Minimum specification:	*VGA, Sound Blaster, keyboard, joystick, 286*
Disk space:	*1.6Mb*

Product
Solar Winds

shareware tech spec 1993

Solar Winds is a blend of two traditional classic games, Asteroid and Star Trek. The ship in your command is in the middle of the screen and you can rotate it using the cursor keys or a joystick. From this position, you are able to fire laser cannon or missiles at a range of targets, some of which may even fire back at you!

If this was all there was to the game, it would very quickly become boring, but happily you also get to pilot your way around the galaxy. Point your ship in a certain direction and the up and down arrow keys (or joystick up and down) will control your speed. You have a radar screen at your disposal which you can use to see what is going on further away.

When a ship comes on the local view screen, you can stop your vessel extremely quickly by pressing the space bar. At this point what happens next is entirely up to you. You can just blast the other ship if you so wish, but in most cases it is better to communicate and negotiate with it.

This is where the story line is cleverly built into the action. You can make your responses by selecting one from a list of options. Sometimes a confrontation doesn't have to end in a fight if you don't select the aggressive options, funnily enough. A lesson for political leaders everywhere, perhaps?

You also have a range of controls to play with such as scanners, shields and weapons. The on-line documentation was somewhat scattered around the place and you do have to keep on selecting help constantly to find out how everything works but it is too important a task to be neglected.

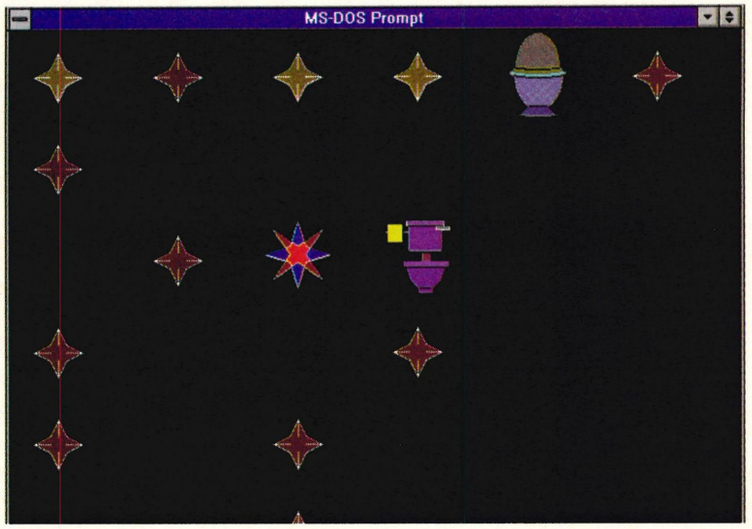
Nothing in the game is quite as impressive as the opening graphics stills would seem to suggest, but overall it is a rather clever reworking of two old ideas with some additional aspects of a mission/adventure game thrown in as well for good measure.

The only drawback which you need to be made aware of is that I never managed to make the game work with my joystick. The ship just spun in the middle of the screen out of control and made the instructions well nigh impossible to understand!

Try using the keyboard first and if your joystick doesn't work, then at least it is no great loss.

If you find the unregistered version of the game is too straightforward, you can rest assured that the registered version (at £20) contains further levels and bonus games – as well as cheat codes and a hint book.





DTQ

DTQ stands for Deux, Trois, Quatre and it is a variant on the matching game Concentration (or Pelmanism) where you have to discover matches from among an array of objects.

Concentration is often restricted to finding pairs, but in this particular game you can opt to find three of a kind or even four.

You play against the computer and there are four levels of play (determining the number and similarity of the objects) and increasing levels of difficulty (which appears to affect the computer's performance). You can play with icons, coloured spots — which I found tricky because some of the shades were pretty similar to each other — and numbers. On the whole, the icons are to be preferred — especially as they include some unexpected items which adds to the game's interest.

The principal object of the game is to score points and the full game consists of 31 stages — 11 each for deux and trois and nine for quatre. There is a high score table to record progress and a cheat mode enables you to swap your points with the computer's — as long as the computer has no more than half the points possible during a game, that is. You can only exercise this option once in a match, however.

The game claims to have a training function for using the keyboard and mouse. I have to admit that how this operates, I am not at all sure, though it certainly does have a role in improving mental agility. It can indeed help develop concentration and power of observation. It can also be used to monitor alertness — an individual's performance will indeed be affected by fatigue and external distractions.

The game runs under DOS, requires VGA graphics and is likely to be slow on limited hardware. It includes simple renditions of familiar tunes in its start-up sequences but the sound effects throughout are just beeps and tones which can be easily switched off.

The registered version can be personalised with names both for the player and the computer. In all this is a nicely presented implementation of a well known game.

Supplier:	*Springsoft*
Tel:	*(0352) 770049*
Product code:	*DTQ*
Price:	*£1.99*
Registration price:	*£8.55*
Registration package:	*Latest version, can be personalised*
Minimum specification:	*VGA, mouse, keyboard, any PC*
Disk space:	*570K*

Product
DTQ

shareware tech spec 1993

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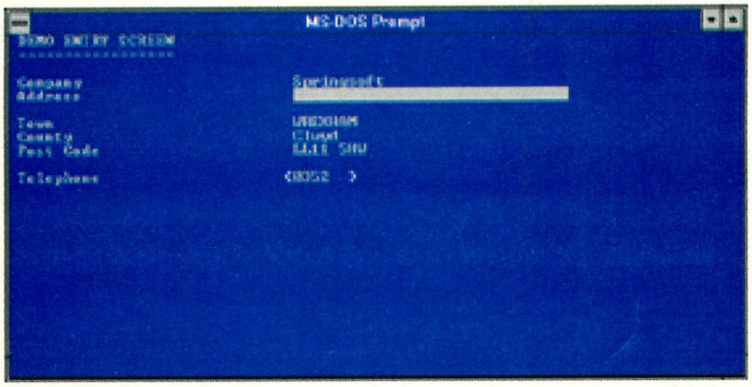
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Rapid Address

Rapid Address is a useful utility for anyone who has to enter lots of addresses and telephone numbers into a database.

It helps by automatically filling in the town and county when a post code is entered and it also provides an entry for the STD code field of the number.

To help you see how it works, Rapid Address comes with a file called 'Testing' that you can use to put it through its paces. When entering data into this form, you have to make an entry to the first field — Company — but then the cursor jumps to the post code field.

Once you make an entry here, the town and county fields are instantly completed and so is the STD code. Having used this file for demonstration purposes, you will want to devise your own entry form — one that can be used to transfer information to a full database program when necessary.

Rapid Address enables you to set up a grand maximum of 23 fields (of any standard type) in any order that you should require, and, more importantly, the entry order can be different from the file order, if that is what you ask it for. This is vital because to make use of its facilities you want to enter the post code as early as possible.

The completed records are stored in a comma delimited file, with the fields in the same order as they appear on the screen, which can consequently be easily read into most databases.

Unfortunately, Rapid Address will not always be right, particularly as it only uses the first part of the post code — the part before the space. This means that there is not a perfect match between post code and STD code. And where two or more towns share a single post code prefix, it will be programmed with only one of them — it seems to be the first alphabetically most often.

You can update the database by typing in the details for town and STD code that you want to correspond to a particular post code prefix and pressing F4.

However, this solution is unfortunately only a partial fix for the problem as it just means you have a different alternative associated with the post code.

That said, the problems are just the exceptions to the rule and if you need to enter a large number of addresses and telephone numbers, then Rapid Address is the type of program which will almost certainly save you a lot of time and deserves your consideration.

It's especially attractive for those people who have a relatively underspecified PC. The program itself takes up only 390K (excluding your data files) and it doesn't require any particular graphic mode or processor to run.

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Product
Rapid Address

shareware tech spec 1993

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Product
Typesetter PC

shareware tech spec 1993

Typesetter PC

There is a great deal of shareware still available which now looks extremely dated and limited when it is compared with state of the art programs now running on high-powered hardware.

If however you are looking for programs which will run on a minimal system then it is good to know you can still find programs that were written before hard disks became that commonplace.

Typesetter PC is a page layout program that does not require a hard disk and lets you design single pages, mix text in a variety of fonts and graphics anywhere on the page, and print them to a 9-pin dot matrix printer in "near laser quality".

Ahem. It may print out a series of fonts clearly, and with a number of print head passes, but dot matrix print is dot matrix print, and I doubt you would mistake it for laser printing even in a poor light!

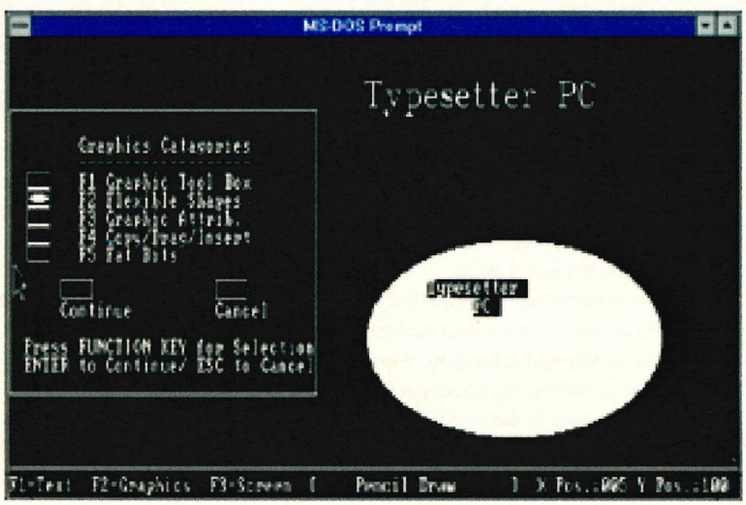
There are two bitmapped and one vector fonts available which can be made bold and italicised. The program also allows you produce proportionally spaced fonts.

Typesetter PC includes a basic selection of graphics tools including a pencil; a k-line which means that you can produce only vertical and horizontal lines; a circle, rectangle and spline, for drawing curves. There is also a spray can tool for painting, an eraser.

These tools are associated with function keys in nested menus (so that you have to press a sequence of function keys to perform some of the operations) and you can discover how to make use of them from on-screen help menus such as the one shown below.

The program supports a mouse, but can equally be put into practice via the keyboard alone. The file Typeset.doc is a 40 page manual that has a detailed description of all the functions.

Anybody used to working with Windows desktop publishing software would find this program idiosyncratic, even awkward, to use. But only a few years ago we all had to work this way and this type of approach is still the only option if you are constrained by very limited hardware.

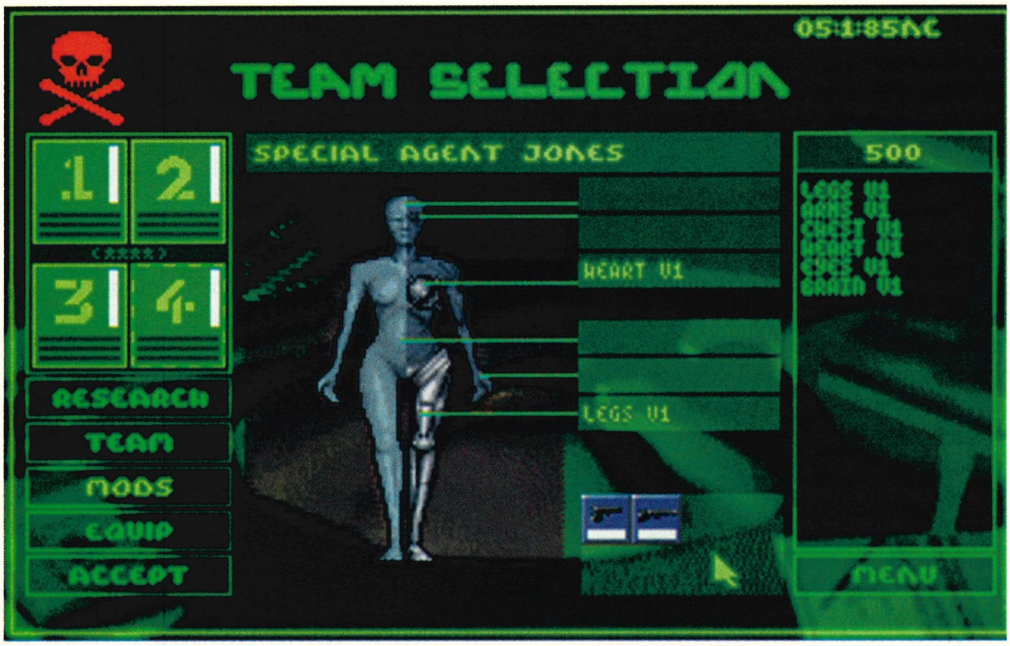


QED

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Syndicate

Bullfrog programmer Alex Trower's guide to corporate mayhem



Getting started

The first step is to get used to the controls and to how the man will react in different situations. Be aware of where you are clicking on the screen as your man will try to reach the exact point.

As you are viewing the cityscape from an airship, it is very hard for you to direct your man to an area that you cannot see (behind a building, for example).

For the first missions, you should only take in a single agent. If you take in too many, you run the risk of losing some whilst you are concentrating on one of them. Stick with one agent until you feel confident with your degree of control. Then start increasing the number of agents gradually and use group mode a lot. Once you've got the hang of that, you can move on to advanced tactics.

The best laid plans

The most important thing about any mission is the briefing. Spending money on extra information is also worthwhile. After reading the briefing thoroughly, you can decide what equipment to take.

The pistol costs nothing, has a slightly longer range than the shotgun and is good as a back-up weapon or for actual use when opponents have shotguns.

The shotgun is cheap and deadly at close range. Hide in doorways and wait for your target to open the door before opening up on them. It works just as well around the corners of buildings and will damage even the most armoured agent, so be warned!

The uzi is the mainstay of your arsenal. Relatively cheap to buy and maintain, it has a moderate range but uses ammo quickly. It can be useful against light vehicles such as ground cars or dust carts.

The flamer is the most lethal close-range weapon. Use in the same way as the shotgun. It has stacks of ammo and one blast is usually enough to barbecue even the toughest of agents. It's a bit heavy and unmodified agents should stick to shotguns.

The long range rifle is the ideal sniper weapon. Pick off your targets from rooftops far away from the combat zone. It isn't much use against heavily armoured targets or vehicles, but keeps enemy agents at bay.

The mini-gun is the ultimate automatic weapon. It is big and heavy, with plenty of ammo and a fast rate of fire. Towards the later stages of the game, this should replace the uzi as the standard armament of your forces. Even the smallest of bursts should take out armoured agents. Agents with no modifications should also give this one a miss.

The laser is anti-tank weaponry capable of destroying the hardest vehicle in seconds. It makes a good support weapon with plenty of range.

The gauss gun is a portable rocket launcher which fires napalm missiles. Slightly shorter range than the laser but a larger blast radius. Utterly devastating, especially in confined spaces. The time bomb is similar to the gauss gun, but stationary. Plant it in an area



where you know the enemy is going to cross and wait. When they are over the bomb, shoot it.

Surprising as it may seem, there are also some non-destructive items of equipment as well.

The scanner increases your scanner's range to show more of the city, useful for detecting enemy agents while you still have time to do something about them.

The medikit repairs all damage and returns the subject to the peak of health. Essential on all missions, it will even save a burning man if you are quick enough.

The Access card fools the police into thinking that you work for them. Until you shoot one, of course.

The energy shield protects the subject from incoming bullets. Energy reserves are low and prolonged use should be avoided. Doesn't protect against flamers, lasers, persuadertrons or explosions.

Modifications

When researching new methods of destruction, don't neglect agent modifications. It's all very well having 20 mini-guns fire-linked, laser sighted with a 40 watt range, but if you can't lift them, what use are they?

Modifications come in three stages depending on how far you research them. Version one is the cheapest and least effective and Version three is the best.

The chest repairs damage and returns an agent to full health during missions without the need for medikits, although they are still necessary for emergency spot repairs. It also contains an explosive charge for self-destruction (the D key) when all else fails.

Arms enable you to carry heavy equipment without slowing to a crawl. Legs make your agents run faster. They're useful for getting out of trouble in a hurry. The brain improves the intelligence of the agent, and allows easier use of the persuadertron. Eyes improve the perception of the agent. Good for sniping. The heart improves the adrenalin of the agent. Easier to hype up or calm down.

Team tactics

Moving around cities as a team is simple. With group mode on, all agents accept commands at once. Devastating if you instruct them to fire at a target, but it makes them vulnerable to enemy fire. Hence the scatter option. When moving around in a city that has an active police force, your weapons should be stashed away and not carried openly. You may have to lower their Intelligence to stop them getting their guns out whenever they are startled by something.

Vehicles and other transport systems should be used as often as possible. Not only are they much faster than an unmodified agent, but they provide more protection. If the vehicle comes under heavy fire, get out and make a run for it; you don't want to get caught in an exploding car! Vehicles under your control can't leave the road but can run over enemy agents.

During a prolonged burst of combat, try to split up your squad. Come at the enemy from as many different sides as possible, since they can't shoot in all directions at once. The same applies to defending an area. Boost intelligence and perception and make sure they have plenty of ammo. Cover all the available attack points and keep your men spread out. Leave them in group mode so that you can bring them all to fire on a single point if it looks like the enemy are about to get through. Otherwise, let the men have a field day.

Once you have got the hang of this, you might like to try other more complex methods of moving around.

The skirmish line

Your agents line out side by side to cover almost the screen. They then move forwards until the enemy is engaged. When the enemy is found then the line can concentrate its fire-power on one spot. You should have sufficient width in the line to negate almost all cover that the enemy may have and you automatically attack from multiple directions.

The drag formation

Have one agent on point with two others as flankers, three blocks behind and to either side. The fourth agent hangs back with support weaponry (either a mini-gun, long range, laser or gauss gun). The point man will reveal where the enemies are (ensure that he is well armoured or equipped with an energy shield) and if the flank agents can't deal with them, open up with the support agent. Don't worry about shooting your own lads unless you are using the gauss gun, since the explosion will kill your guys as well.

Anti-guard tactics

Going from A to B without getting killed is useless if you get slaughtered on arrival. Here's how to get rid of those annoying guards in hard-to-reach places.

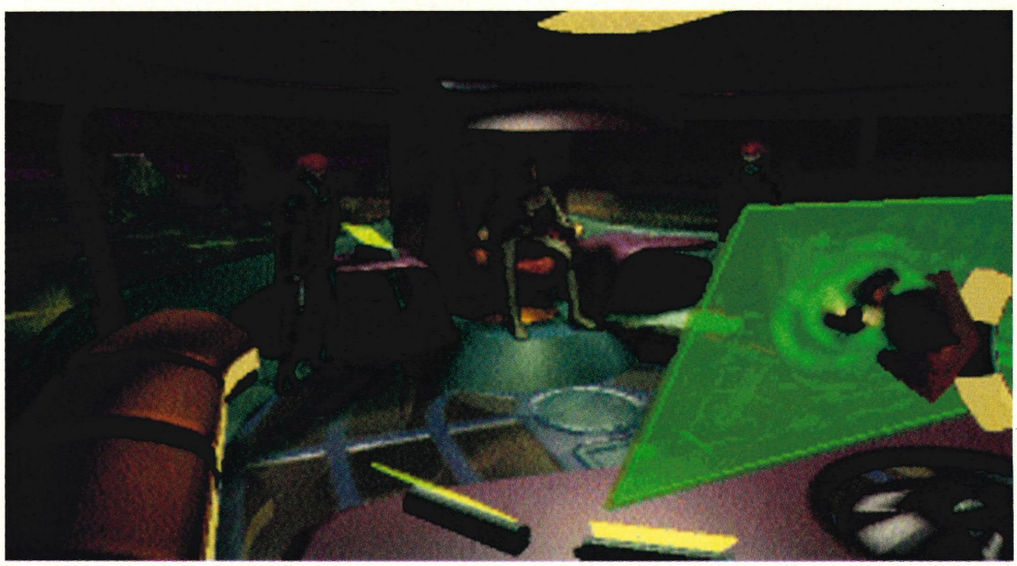
For any guard in the open, stay out of range and shoot them with a long range rifle.

For guards in the open but too close for comfort, drive past them in a car and blast them with the shotgun. Otherwise, split the squad and come at the guards from two directions. Move the agents in using available cover. When in position switch to group mode and move them in, shooting as you go. For guards at the end of road bridges, run them over. Simple. If they're not on the road, drive up and shoot them.

For guards behind closed doors, come at the door from both sides. Get close before it opens. Make sure you have shotguns selected and boost intelligence and perception. Turn adrenalin right down to enable faster healing. When you are ready, move your agents to the doorway until it opens. If the guards are too far back you will need to select a different weapon.

Dirty tricks

- Commandeer a car by shooting it (not too much, though). The driver should make a run for it, leaving the keys in the ignition. Then run over enemy agents.
- Run around with energy shields on when there is more than one squad of enemy agents. Head



towards one group and the other group should mow them down. Works well until the shields run out.

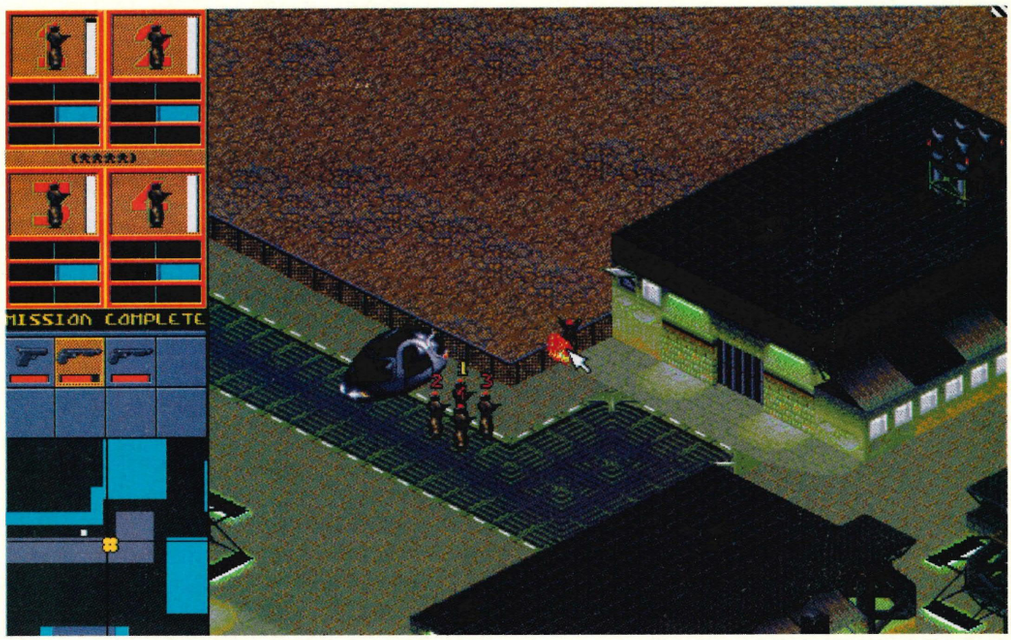
● Wait behind doors with a flamethrower and toast passing agents as they open the door. Fine unless there is another entrance to the building.

Playing the first two levels

Western Europe

Before starting the mission, research automatics. Take in two agents with pistols. Leave one at the start zone and move the other towards the base entrance. He should be approached by two guards, one from the west and one from the south. Boost intelligence and perception so that he can deal with them himself. The building to the north of the courtyard also houses a guard. Be aware of him as you move towards the target building to the north west. As you approach the building, the target will attempt to leave in the ground car. When he opens the door, shoot him. If he makes it to the car, shoot the car as well.

There is also an uzi up for grabs which will come in handy for the research team. It is currently being used by a guard on the south entrance to the base. Drive up to him in the car, park next to him and open fire. The uzi is yours for the taking.



Scandinavia

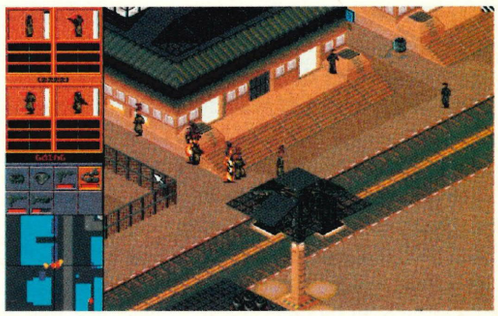
As before, take two agents. The second agent should only be used if the first agent is lost. Equip them with persuadertrons, pistols and, if you have them, uzis. Head straight for the first target in the west of the city. Select your persuadertron so that you can pick up a couple of unlucky civvies on the way. You should now be facing a small building at the top of a flight of steps. There are three guards here; one with a pistol, one with a shotgun and one with an uzi. If you have only shotguns, you will get hammered trying to get up the steps. If you have pistols or uzis, raise intelligence and perception before moving up the steps. Once you have disposed of the guards and taken their weapons, head inside and persuade the target. To do this, select the persuadertron and then click on the south east corner of the building (the pointer should turn into a crosshair). Next, head towards the second target, leaving the persuadertron on, and then finally the drop zone. As long as your guns are stashed away you should have no problems moving around the city.

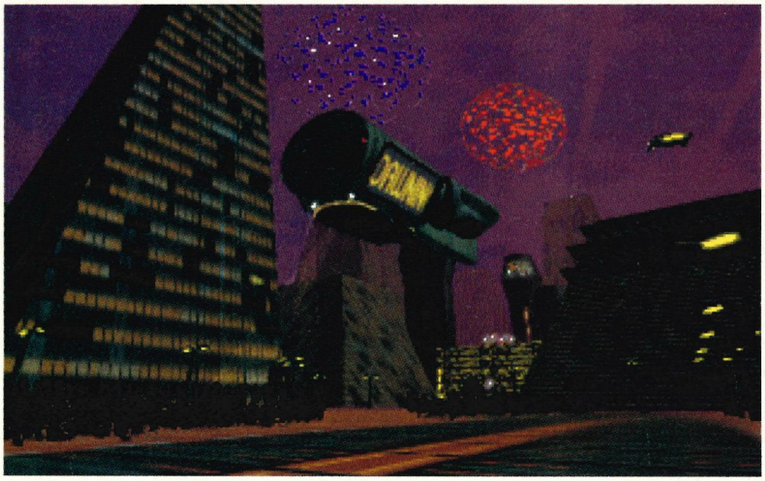
Playing tougher levels

Mongolia

Since this level appears very early on, lack of decent equipment may cause problems. Take uzis and, if you have them, long range weapons. The agent with the persuadertron should have brain Version one at least. Take three agents into the level; one with a persuadertron and the other two as back-ups. Don't forget medikits and scanners.

The trick is to get to the top level of the city quickly. To do this, use the ramp situated by the city entrance. Climb to the catwalk levels and proceed to the rail station. Board the train and get off at the next stop. This is the safest and easiest way to get to the target complex. Once there, persuade the target and return to the station. At this point, enemy agents should be running around beneath the platforms so avoid returning to street level. Let your back-ups shoot them from the walkways. Once you have killed as many as possible, take the train back to the first station and proceed along the walkways to the evacuation point. Avoid persuading people on the way to the target because trying to get the target home with a crowd in tow can be confusing. Persuade people on the way back instead.





Venezuela

The key to this mission is the building to the east of the target. It's the only way into the compound which, in turn, is the only way to the target. There are two ways to complete this mission. One is to capture the east building's roof. Next, take out the guard at the end of the catwalk with a long-range gun or sneak up underneath and open up with uzis or mini-guns. Once he is dead, get into the courtyard and boost your agents' intelligence and perception so that they take care of themselves. Storm the door like last time and kill the target.

The second method involves a gauss gun. Wait outside the complex and try to get one of the guards to come outside (you may have to wait until the enemy agents get really close to the target). As soon as the door opens, fill the room with missiles.

Atlantic Accelerator

You'll be under fire right from the start. Your agents need Version three on most modifications. Lasers, mini-guns and gauss guns should be the mainstay of your equipment. If you have to use an energy shield, run towards the enemy agents and get in amongst them. Hopefully they will take enough of themselves out to let you deal with the rest. Stay in group mode and with all values boosted to maximum; there won't be enough time for a rest period. If you get an agent pinned against a wall, you can kiss him goodbye.

After that, it's all down to reflexes and decent equipment. A gauss gun is hidden somewhere on the level if you should need it. Go to the second helipad (due south from the start position). Stand by the gap in the fence and try to get yourself shot through it and into the water. An invisible platform there runs south. Use the scanner as you move along since one false step will drop you into the water. At the end of the platform is a gauss gun. Return to the helipad, go underneath and you should reappear on the pad itself.

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QED

Space Quest V: The Next Mutation

Part one: promotion and the first missions

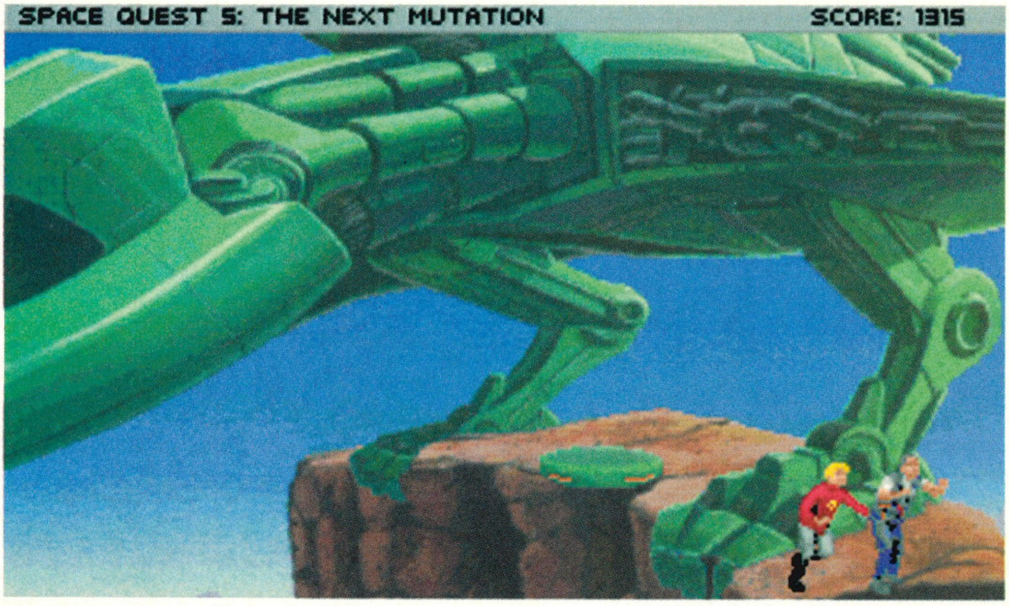
Space Quest V is the latest in Sierra's long running spoof sci-fi series. With a new icon system, this attractive graphic adventure boasts good puzzles and problems. Robin Matthews offers the first part of a complete solution

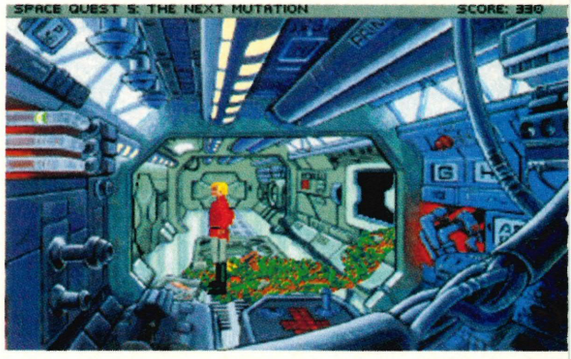
This solution gives you the maximum score of 5,000 points, and indicates how many points are awarded as you progress. The first figure shows the points scored for that puzzle; the seccond is your total so far.

In Space Quest V, you continue the exploits of Roger Wilco, saviour of the Universe and interstellar janitor. The game starts with Roger elevated to the rank of admiral taking on alien warships. Alas it's only the StarCon Academy bridge simulator and Roger is chastised and relegated back to his studies. He's taking classes to improve himself but is running late.

Go north from the simulator and enter the classroom (5/5). There are two problems here: you are late, and it's exam day! The StarCon aptitude test is tough and try as you will you just can't come up with the right answers. A bit of cheating is the only solution, look to your right to get the right answers but watch out for the Invigilator droid. Switch back and forth ten times to get all the answers and complete your answer sheet (5/10). Even when you answer all the questions, you still get penalised for being late and a clean sweep is what you need. Go south and open the cupboard to get both the traffic cones. (10/20) and the Scrub-a-matic (10/30). Go south again and then east to enter the main rotunda. Stand on the teleporter to get down to the crest and then 'use' the cones.

Use the polisher by selecting from your inventory and then clicking on it. You need to polish the crest within a time limit, the best technique being not to keep the mouse button continuously depressed, but to click on and off to manoeuvre. If you successfully clean all the crest you move on to an animated sequence with Quirk and Wankmeister (50/80).



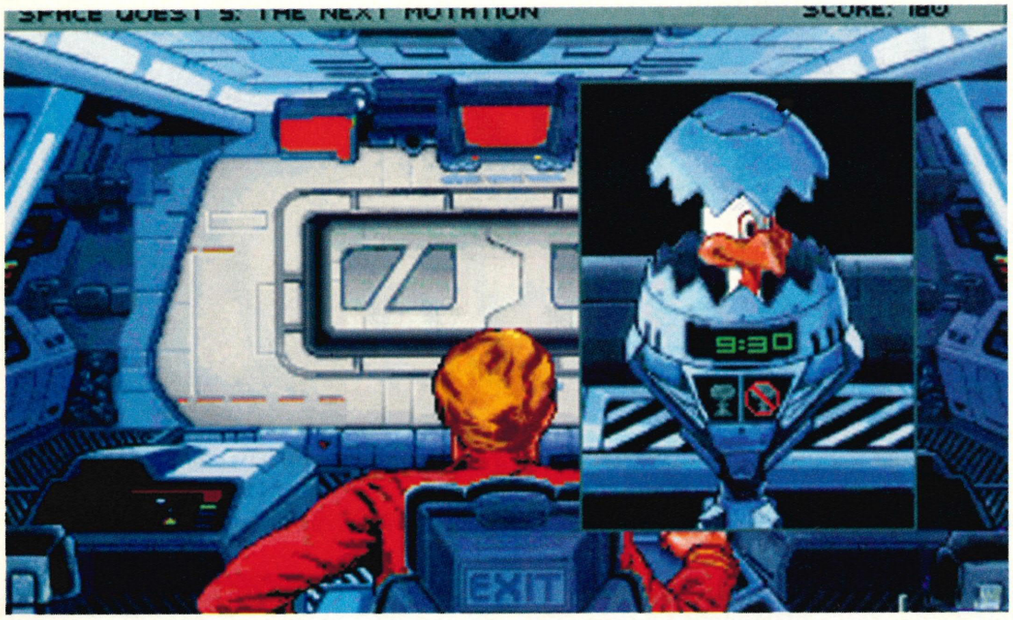


Leave the rotunda going west and you will trigger a 'meanwhile' sequence with a mouse getting into the exam computer and causing mayhem (if your system hangs here, contact Sierra to get the patch disk). The net result is that you will pass the Aptitude test with flying colours. Go back to the classroom area and check out the bulletin board (100/180).

Another animated sequence sets the main storyline as far as garbage is concerned and although you fall flat on your face, a captain you will be! Your ship may not be quite what you expected, but it's a command. For now it's time to boldly go and explore your flying refuse lorry but eventually you must take the hot seat. This allows you to talk to the two crew members and enjoy the warmth of their welcome.

Take a save and examine the three controls to your right. The middle one will not work but try out the far right for a laugh, unless you're chicken! Space Quest V contains lots of tie-ins with previous Sierra and other computer games.

Pressing the other mouse button scrolls through the default commands and the '!' is heavily used in SQ5. Invoke this and use it on Flo to hail Starcon. Receive your mission and clearance to depart, and then instruct Droole (again using the '!') to lay in co-ordinates for the first planet, Gangularis.



To use the travel system, select your destination, and then order 'lite speed'. Droole will keep you informed when you get near. When this happens, instruct him to drop down to 'regular speed'. With space stations or planets, choose 'Enter orbit'.

At Gangularis, your mission is to collect the rubbish which is orbiting the planet in a huge black bag. Order Droole to use the Refuse Removal System (RRS) and the bag will be scooped up (100/280). You should now receive a warning from Cliffy the engineer that there is a life form in the rubbish.

Leave the bridge and enter the engineering corridor. Open the rubbish hatch using the control board near the hatch. Shades of a great film perhaps, but this one seems to be tame! (20/300). It is not terribly distinct but there is a tool box situated to the lower left: open it and take the laser cutters, fuse, hole punch and antacid pills (5/5/5/15/330).

The cloaking device puzzle on the droid ship

This is a quite a nasty little puzzle, since the solution appears to be achieved only by trial and error, but it does seem to be consistent. When you enter the droid ship, touch the panel to the right where the ship's cloaking device is secured, which you need to complete the game. Once you start fiddling with the panel, the timer of an explosive charge is activated and you have to move fast. Here is a sequence that will allow you to obtain the device: 'Click first on the top latch, then the bottom latch. This will reveal the cloaking device. Now turn all four dials so that they are offset, click on the small oblong panel to the left of the top left lock – this should open. Next repeat this for the lower right panel. Turn the two remaining locks so that they are square, click on upper right and lower left panels – this should open all panels and let you remove the device.' Once you have your prize leave the droid ship very rapidly (200 points).

Now go through into the engineering/teleport room on the left of the corridor and walk straight back in. Your newfound pet should be here and should be put in the large red specimen container. He is a nice old thing but leaks acid everywhere: just trying leaving him loose! (20/350). Spike has got a bit of a funny tummy so some medication would work wonders ... (20/370).

Check with Flo and then set course for planet number two, Peeyu. Once again collect the rubbish (100/470) and you will intercept a message indicating strange goings on. Planet number 3 next, Kiz Urazgubi, but things don't quite turn out that way. It's time to pay for misdeeds in Space Quest II. There is no alternative to beaming down (10/480), but you need to stay on your toes.

You land in an area with a waterfall and a large cave entrance (main pool). Go quickly to the north west corner as the droid will soon arrive and blast you. You now appear in an area with two caves and an exit off to the east (two caves). Go east to an area with a large hollow tree across a chasm (hollow log). Do not cross the tree, but head towards the northerly branch. This will snap under your weight and return you to the main pool. Pick up the broken branch (10/490) and return to hollow log. Now cross the log and use the branch to move the bananas. As they swing towards you grab one (25/515).

Now go back west through the hollow log and go to two caves. Enter the westerly cave and you will exit up in the north east corner. The WD-40 Annihilator (nice!) has a cloaking device à la Predator, but if you carefully watch the waterfall you'll see the silhouette. It is all a matter of timing now, but the crunch is that the droid must follow you up the cave passage.

Jump the chasm and using the arrow icon to get up on the same level as the boulder. Lever the boulder with the branch and you'll give the Annihilator something to think on (100/615). If for any reason you cannot move the boulder and get a 'wrong timing' message it means that the droid is not tracking you. Cross back over the chasm into the tunnel and come back – repeat this until you see the WD-40 following you through the waterfall.

The droid has now lost her ability to cloak and is very miffed. Go down to the main pool and then once again to the hollow log. This time wait in the middle of the log and ready the banana. The droid will land on the log and you can gum up her means of propulsion. This may take a couple of attempts, but if she buzzes off, come out of hiding for a second and then return to the log. Once you get it right matters should proceed with a bang (200/815).

Exit the log and get ahead (25/840) then return to the main pool. Cliffy is busy picking up the pieces and you both then beam up (175/1015). Do another in and out of Engineering and Cliff has got his Meccano set out. He gives you a left over that will give you access to the killer droid's ship.

Beam back down to the planet and use the remote control on yourself. The spaceship uncloaks (100/1115) and you can board by standing on the pad. Once on board (again if you get a system hang you need the patch disk) there is a single tricky puzzle. This is covered in the separate inset panel below, so ignore it if you want to try it yourself.

Once you've solved the droid ship (200/1315) you deserve a break so speak to the crew and head for StarCon. Once you get into orbit, put Spike back in his container and beam down (10/1325).





Note: the first release had several bugs which made the game hang at certain stages. A patch is now available from Sierra, and if you have the old version the various problem areas are indicated.

QED

Ultima Underworld II

It's been an epic journey, but Robin Matthews has reached the last world, and presents this, the final part of our guide to Underworld II

Part five: *the final journey*

The ethereal void is the eighth and final world of the game. Before moving into this area you'll need to have cut the guardian's power lines in the first seven worlds. These are severed using the enchanted amethyst rod from Altara, at the locations listed in the panel below.

Goblin Tower –	**Level 8, room next to the bishop's cell.**
Ice World –	**Fountain in Anudonus**
Killorn Keep –	**Brain creature's room**
Pits of Carnage –	**Rat room, north middle of level 1**
Talorus –	**Blue skup chamber**
Scintillus Academy –	**Pentagram on level 8**
Tomb of Praecor Loth –	**Blocked cave in level 1**

The amethyst rod will be enchanted by Altara if you give her the rod (from the world of Talorus), and egg shells of a dread spider (after some spider encounters) to go with her own black pearl.

To complete the game, you will need to get the djinn bottle from Zoranthus, achieved by giving him the sceptre of deadly seeker (from red hell in the void).

The void is unlike any other area in Underworld II. Auto-mapping does not work, nor does the compass rose. Without these aids to navigation, the first explorations of the void can be somewhat disorientating. The best advice is to take a save, and then just wander around for a couple of hours to get accustomed to this brave new world.

In the void, there are several different coloured paths, each of which must be successfully completed to gain access to a central pyramid. Each time you solve a coloured path you can climb up and down the pyramid in 'Q-Bert' fashion, changing the entire colour of the pyramid to the colour of the path just completed.

Once you've done this it will open up another coloured path and you repeat the sequence. When you have completed all the paths, you are then allowed to the Central Shrine.

The red path involves several locations but the teleports may be random. Speak to Mokpo who will set the scene. Travel through the locations until you get to red hell. Here dispose of the demon, get the sceptre and fly up to the moongate.

In this dream world, ignore the giant monsters – they don't exist. Concentrate on the mongbats, bats and demons. Once these have been cleared you can sleep/rest in this area. In the poisoned pond, cast 'an tym' and dispose of the demons first. Use 'an nox' and leeches regularly to pass through to the red pyramid. Jump on/off each step until all are red, then go up the ramp to the red door.

The yellow and blue paths are easier, but in the latter you may not be able to see what Prinx is saying. The purple path merits a special mention: use the 'fly' spell to negotiate the slippery squares and find the purple guardian. Enter the skull and you'll be thrown back into the original Ultima I. It's only a small area but will complete the purple path.

The golden maze is a real toughie and only by looking



for higher things will you solve it. For those who are really stuck here are some tips. Find the etched brass wall and cast 'fly'. As the compass rose does not work, use this: if you are looking directly at the wall assume this to be north. Fly as far west as you can, then as far south as you can. Then fly east. Pause here for a second as you are about to enter an enclosed area.

Save and prepare for a conflict with some brain creatures. Freeze time can again be the best approach, but keep your eyes peeled for anything that could be useful for an inhabitant of the void. Completing the gold run on the pyramid will open up a route to the shrine.

Entering the shrine is an art in itself, and there are various legitimate and other ways of achieving this. One method is to cast fly and portal spells, another is the famous 'dream cheat' – see post. In any event, once in the shrine, peer over the shrine, get the black-



rock gem and use the amethyst rod.

Eight blackrock gems found and used, eight cut power lines and now we're into the end game. Give Zoranthus the sceptre of deadly seeker in order to get the djinn bottle. Carry out the ritual by going to the ice world, drop the basilisk oil in the mud, and then swim in the mud (comment of '... the oily mud coats your skin').

Next, go to any lava and stand on a hot bit (comment of '... the oily mud bakes on your skin'). Now go back into the void, visit the sigil of binding and complete the ritual – this must be performed word for word to imprison the demon within you.

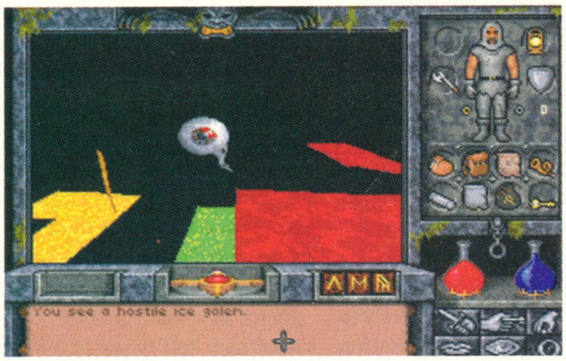
Return to Killorn Keep and visit Altara. Check out the rest of the keep and expect a pitched battle. When you manage to get some light reading, high tail it back to the castle as this is what Nytsul has been waiting for. Sort out the library from the study, and the lead piping from the rope (have you paid attention?) and you will be whisked into the final sequence.

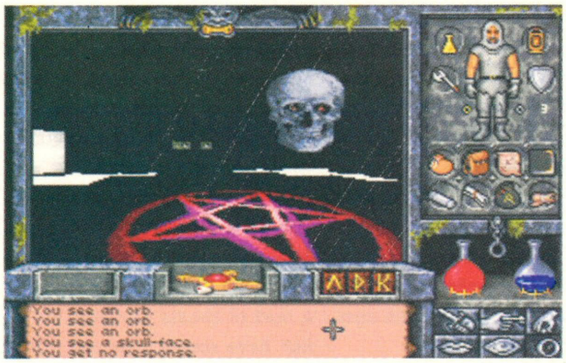
There may still be one small surprise, but magic will rapidly win the day – combinations of An Tym and Smite Foe will effectively defeat anything at this stage of the game. As previously mentioned, the magic power balance goes a bit awry towards the higher levels – dedicated players may decide to make use of more traditional means to fight the harder foes.

Not wishing to spoil anything, the end sequence is a disappointment and a small reward for all your efforts. What of the guardian imprisoned in the shrine? What has happened in Britannia? This and lots more questions deserve an answer – perhaps in Underworlds III, or even in Ultima VII Pt 2?



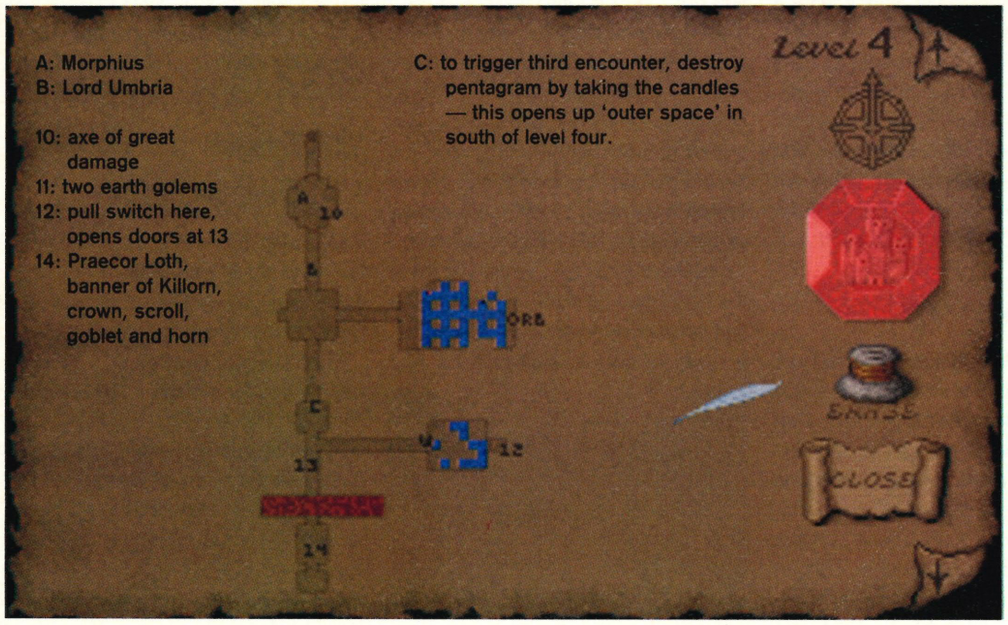
Above: the red path in the void.





Above and below: two views from Ultima Underworld II's etheral void.

The tombs of Praecor Loth (level four)



Here's a collection of some great odds and ends. Some are general observations, some are alternative ways of doing things, and some are where to find, and what to do with items. Together they are some of the very best unusual hints about Ultima Underworlds II – Labyrinth of Worlds, and complete PC Review's comprehensive guide:

- There appears to be no way of avoiding the death of Nelson. You can't kill Patterson first, and you can't lock him up. Shame that the plot line didn't allow you to find some incriminating evidence that would have him imprisoned.

- VAS and TYM Runes. Here's where to find these rare and important rune stones: VAS: pits of carnage, level three, under skull in grim reaper room. Praecor Loth's Tomb, level four, Lord Umbria
  VAS & TYM: Scintillus Academy, level 8, secure vault.

- Opening stubborn doors. Carry weapons that you do not use in combat, and use these to break down doors: this avoids damaging your main swords/axes, etc. This technique will work on all portals except 'massive' doors or portculli, ie, it does work on secret doors and chests. Also items known as cudgels of entry that will open everything, one is to be found on level three of the tombs.

- To break up boulders, use rock hammers, do not destroy the brain creatures in Killorn Keep (take a save and try it!). Magic spells above level four do not work in the castle, but you can prepare certain spells in another world and return with them – for example, the open spell! This will reveal a gem in the tombs.

- Mors Gotha – in the early version may not appear, especially if you've killed the brain creatures in Killorn Keep, or killed Praecor Loth.

- Charles will give you the key to the locked room on level four, this will give you the second moonstone. The goblin smith in the tower will tell you the repair spell, and filanium mud is found in the ice caverns.

- There are several places where you can have 'perpetual' fights to gain experience. Scintillus Academy, level one, with the gold coffers and mongbats, and on level five there are never ending skeletons by pulling the chain by the portcullis. Also there is the odd skeleton or two in the tombs.
- Four ways to open locked doors: pick lock (skill level): open spell/scroll; cudgel of entry; portal spell/scroll

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.



Premier Manager

Telford United going nowhere fast? Stalybridge Celtic in a rut? James Woods from Beckenham comes to the rescue of all us prospective Premier Managers with hugely useful tips for Gremlin's latest management game. It's time to banish those Conference mid-table blues, as promotion and cup glory are now within your humble grasp.

The first cheat, which does wonders for your bank balance, is a relatively simple one. Go to the transfer market and then to the sell player option. You will notice that underneath the list of all your players is a blank space. Click around this space and you will usually receive a "Player can't be sold yet!" message. If, however, you click around the bottom you may find a player called Lukic who can be sold for up to £600,000. Watch out though, because sometimes you may find your first team keeper is up for grabs, so reject. At PC Review we've found that this process can be repeated every four or five matches.

Tactically it's best to use the long ball against defensive and passing teams, playing 4-4-2. Only use the long ball against attacking teams with care and play 5-3-2 if possible. Otherwise it's often best to play either defensive or passing against attacking teams. If a team plays long ball, do likewise.

As far as training is concerned, give all your coaches the maximum £270 wage as it's not really bank-breaking and they tend to do a good job.

To obtain a player with "the ultimate" (99) handling, put him in the goalkeeper position on the team list and phone the number 753423. Go back to the team list again and you'll see that his name has changed to Gremlin, but he now has a handling of 99.

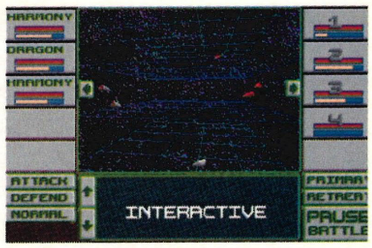
Use the edit name icon to change your player name back. It is advisable to do this to every player in your squad because not only do you eliminate goalie replacement problems, but you can earn more money from players sold.

Lastly, if you want a quick route to a good squad, start two teams and then when one team has lots of good players get it to sell them to the other one for a minuscule amount. One club will unfortunately be riddled with debt but the other should be a much better team.

Using these very tips, James has triumphantly taken VS Rugby to the first division while Dean and Christina are knocking them dead in the Premier League. So, come on, you blues!!

Maelstrom

In Empire's game of interstellar survival, you really need never lose a deep-space battle. Sometimes it seems that although your ships are full to overflowing with multiple death weapons (fungus bombs, laser cannons, missiles, etc) your best fleets still get trashed by three ships with one gun between them. What is going on?



The QED winning strategy can be developed using a bit of reverse-engineering. When you enter a battle you should be able to see what weapons the enemy is carrying (after they've fired at you). Winning is simply a question of beating them at their own game and getting whatever weapon they have. This usually turns out to be a long-range missile launcher, a weapon with an effective range of 400 that you should be able to find in your own arsenal. Equip your entire fleet with these and an assortment of defensive measures and your fortunes should change.

As far as defeating the syndicate is concerned, you've got to invade their base planet. This is one of the red stars in the top right corner of the star chart. Fly from one to the other until you encounter their planetary fleet which you should be able to defeat easily enough. If it's the right planet, you'll be shown a great animated invasion sequence and will have won the game.

James Pond 2: Robocod

A host of cheats for Millenium's bionic fish have recently arrived from Roger Peacey of Cheltenham.

When you start the game, Robocod is outside the castle. Move him right until you get to the "Arctic toys" sign and use the expandosuit to extend upwards. On the roof you will see five bonus objects. Collect them in the following order: cake, hammer, earth, apple, tap.

Once you've done this Robocod will become temporarily invincible and if you complete the levels behind the first door, all other doors will become unlocked.

And there's more ... when you enter the first door, go right and collect the first set of objects in the following order: penguin, oil can, wine glass, earth, racquet. This will give you the maximum number of health points. After this move right again and collect the next set of objects thus: lips, ice cream, violin, earth, snowman. This will give you the maximum number of lives.



Although there are many secret rooms amongst the levels, there is also one in the castle itself. Unlock all the doors using the first cheat and then go up until you get to the tallest, right-most tower. Jump on to the turret and fall off of the right-hand edge. You should fall on to a roof. Instead of moving right along the roof, walk left into the tower wall and you should fall into a secret room giving access to two more levels.

Finally, QED knows that if you type "Little mermaid" the screen border will flash. Not very impressive I grant you, but if you now press L you can access any of the levels.



Fascination

Cyril Tjahja from the Netherlands has been single-handedly silencing some of the woeful cries of Issue 21's Help Wanted section. In reply to Mathew Woods of the Wirral: to play the organ, you have to get the paper and put the ring under the microscope.

You'll see a date of birth. Keep the flashlight under the microscope and you'll see a word. The letters of the word are the keys you will have to play. Now look up the horoscope which corresponds to the date of birth and play the letters from the word on the organ.

Ultima Underworld

Continuing his one-man crusade for those needy of knowledge, Cyril Tjahja once again offers the solution to Mow Ching Yap's plea for assistance.

To get the ring of spirituality, go to the room with four switches (NE) and pull them like this: NW-SE-NE-SW.

To get the cup of wonder, go to level 3 (NE). There's a room in the water area (you'll have to swim through some kind of tunnel) with a gazer in it. Kill it and play the flute (3-5-4-2-3-7-8-7-5). Now you have the cup (only if you have a

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space for it in your inventory). By the way, if you use the mantra INSAHN at any shrine, it will tell you the cup's direction from the shrine.

Ultima Underworld corner continues with Pascal Chapelot seeking to defeat the Slasher of Veils on level eight and open the portcullis to free Ariel on level seven. To kill the Slasher throw all eight talismans into the lava: he'll be banished to another seedier dimension. As for the portcullis, you have to kill Tyball for the key he holds to the gate in question.



Elite Plus

Gavin Lee from Stonnall in Staffordshire was finding it difficult to locate the space stations in David Braben's classic space trading game. QED replies: once you have hyperspaced into a system, head straight for the planet until the "S" appears on the console, showing that you are within the space station's protective range.

Use the compass and align the dot (big dot means the station is in front of you, small means it's behind you). Once you have visual contact, aim for a point directly between the edge of the planet and the space station and accelerate forwards. Stay like this until you can see the station in either you're left or right view. Then just simply turn to face it, match the old rotation and dock.

The ratings are as follows: harmless, mostly harmless, poor, average, (is there a good? we can't remember), dangerous, deadly and elite.

Battle Isle

Blue Byte Software's superb strategy game is going through a bit of a Renaissance these days with the release of Battle Isle 93, but there are still some poor souls stuck on the original. So here are the codes for the original one-player game to help the needy.

2. PHASE	7. FIFTH	12. TESTY
3.EXOTY	8. VESUV	13. TERRA
4. MOUNT	9. MAGIC	14. SLAVE
5. FIGHT	10. SPACE	15. NEVER
6. RUSTY	11. VALEY	16. RIVER

And then there's two player mode ...

2. GHOST	7. FOTON	12. DONNN
3. GAMMA	8. POLAR	13. VESTA
4. MARSS	9. TIGER	14. OXXID
5. EAGLE	10. SNAKE	15. DEMON
6. METAN	11. ZENIT	16. GIANT

Star Trek 25th Anniversary

Stephen Higgins is somewhat stuck on the fourth episode – "Another fine mess" – with Harry Mudd. Fortunately for him, QED beams down to aid his beleaguered landing party in his hour of need.

Raise your shields, arm your weapons and destroy both Elasi ships in the Harlequin system. At Harrapa talk to Spock and consult the computer about Harrapa and Mudd.

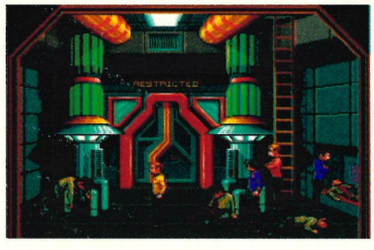
Beam across to the ship and talk to Mudd. Get the energy device (lower left box), small yellow sphere (box to the left of Mudd) and a lens (in the box below him). Use the lens with the energy device. Use the device on Mudd and then go north.

Use Spock on the blue button on the control panel. Use Spock on the purple button and select choice two. Go north west, use the tricorder on console and get the yellow ball. Go north, pick up the tool to the right of the controls and use Spock on the panel.

Go south west, use Spock on the console, then the tricorder. Use Spock again on the console. Use the sphere on the console to download info. Go north. Use Kirk on the panel and check communications carefully. Choose response one. Use Spock on the panel and select all options in turn.

Go south east in search of Mudd. Use Spock on him, pick up the vial which you will find at the cabinet at the bottom of the screen and use it on on the monitor. Use McCoy's medical kit on Mudd and then go north.

Talk to Mudd. Go east and south twice afterwards and look closely at the life-support machine. Use the tricorder and the tool on the machine. Go back to the bridge then, use the control panel to enable you to talk to Scotty and give responses three and two.



HELP WANTED

Ween

I am unable to complete the game as I am hopelessly stuck at the REUUSS (egg timer) at the end of the game. I've managed to open both hideaways, got the knife, made the flute and called the bat. But I am unable to stop the pendulum cutting through the rope.

Paul
Mid-Glamorgan

Football Director 2

Help. I can't be promoted from the fourth division without changing clubs. Is there a better formation for beating teams? Why is it whenever I hire coaches or physios they are always bad until my fifth or sixth try. Has anyone any tips?

Thomas Rodda
Amersham

Space Quest 3

I can't get off Ortega after destroying the force-field surrounding Pestulon. How do I leave Ortega?

Joseph Dimmer
Fareham

Eric the Unready

I am stuck at the castle. I have defeated the turtles but cannot get the branch of wood or kindling from the oaf, or unlock the door to the inner keep or get a drink at Howard Johnson's. Please help, I am in total desperation.

John Arnold

Helpline numbers

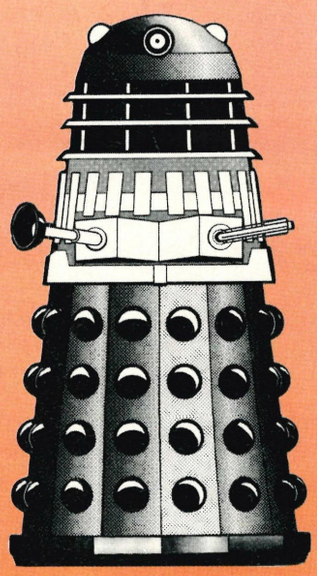
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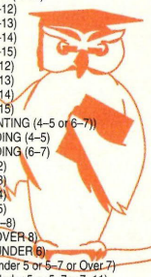
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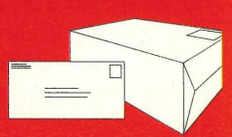


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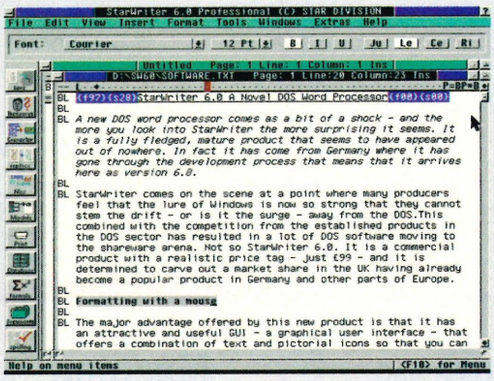
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Software SEARCH

Looking for that elusive piece of software which answers all your computing requirements and makes your life easier? Try PC Review's software search

The first question this month has been passed on by Mike James. Katherine Canoville is looking for "decent word processing software (with Mail Merge, if possible) for not too massive a price" to run on an Amstrad 1512 once it has had a hard disk added.



Mail merge is pretty vital if you want to use word processing software in a business environment, for example, if you want to send the same letter to more than one person. This requirement ruled out the shareware program Galaxy Pro Lite but there are still plenty of products in the sub-£100 bracket to choose from. On the shareware front, there is the well established PC-Write, now at Advanced Level 4.0 with mouse and button bars, which supports conditional mail merge from external data files. It costs £79 to register.

On the commercial front, CA-Textor (the DOS version) costs £79, also offers mail merge and is easy to learn, if a little idiosyncratic. If you want a 'mainstream' word processor Letter Perfect costs £99 and is a cut-down version of WordPerfect — but if you do not already know WordPerfect, be warned that there is a lot to learn about this program in the DOS environment and a lot of this knowledge will be pretty redundant in future when more and more business users will be working under Windows

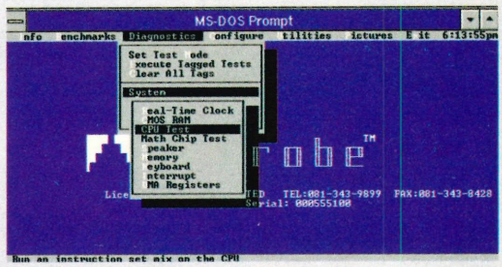
Personally, I find being able to use a mouse a great help when it comes to editing text and the other feature I find essential is being able to have multiple documents open. You can move between up to 10 open documents, CA-Textor supports up to eight and LetterPerfect just two.

One word processor I have been impressed with recently is StarWriter 6.0 (also £99). A mature program in the WordStar tradition, it has been developed over many years in Germany but is new in the UK. It has an attractive graphical user interface — which is special in the DOS word processor environment — does include mail merge and lets you work with up to ten files. It has an impressive array of facilities but is not difficult to learn.

Doctor, Doctor

Q I read the Q&A column with interest and a sort of morbid fascination at all of the ills and misfortunes that strike the typical PC. Mine has been working fine for about two years so at the moment my interest isn't desperate, but I do wonder what I will do when it goes wrong. Surely there must be diagnostic programs that you can buy that will tell you exactly what is wrong with a machine? Or do you really have to put up with guess work?

Allen Sharpe
Plymouth



A *There are lots of diagnostic programs on the market but what they can do is strictly limited. When your PC is working OK they print out pretty lists of technical information that is reassuring. However when your PC dies a death they either cannot be run because it is completely dead or they find working within a slightly faulty machine too difficult to be able to provide useful information!*

There are some types of fault that such programs are good at finding. If your machine has an intermittent problem with memory or a disk drive a diagnostic program can generally test the hardware to find it. This type of problem is just within their capabilities because it doesn't damage the machine to the point of inoperability.

There are a great many programs designed to test memory and disks and a complete list is impossible. However for memory checking you could try ordering Chkmem.zip, Chkmemry.zip, or Emschk.zip from Benetech. For hard disk testing then try HD-Test (Shareware Marketing disk UH7). For testing floppy drives try AnaDisk (Shareware Marketing disk UH16).

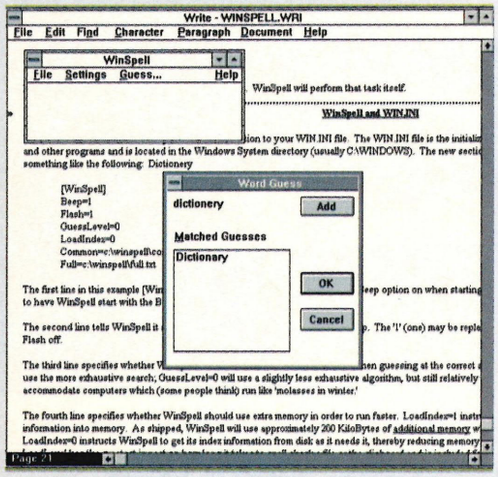
If you want a collection of test programs then try PDSL disk 0753 or Shareware Marketing disk UH16. A good commercial set of diagnostics is

PC-Probe which is available from a number of sources at around £60. There are also a number hardware add-on cards that will test your PC from LandMark, the same people who invented the LandMark speed test — but these are expensive and specialised.

Spelling test

Q I am looking for software that will check spelling in a word processor.

John Paul Forristal
County Cork



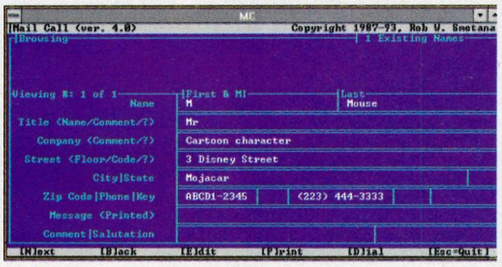
A *You are spoiled for choice! If you are working with MS-DOS try The Word Plus from NewStar (£25.55 plus VAT) but tell them what word processor you want to use it with as it doesn't work with everything. As an alternative try ShareSpell (disk WP6 from Shareware Publishing). If you are working with Windows then try Windows Spell (Software Paradise) or WinSpell (disk WP29 from Shareware Publishing) which was reviewed in Issue 23. However a separate spell checker never works as well as an integrated one so why not consider changing your word processor!*

Dear diary

Q Do you know of a program to allow me to keep a Samuel Pepys/Adrian Mole/Doogie Howser style diary in which I can search for and print selected files. The closest so far has been Cumbernauld Diary, but navigation around the program is difficult, the date is in American format and whilst you can search for text in each day's heading it is not possible to search all text for a keyword or phrase.

Pete Stipple
Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex

A *Sorry to hear that you have rejected Cumbernauld Diary because that's the one I would have suggested! It has the advantage of being shareware and not very expensive. The difficult part about your request is wanting to search the entire text. Most of the PC users that I know who keep a diary do it using a standard wordprocessor and have made their own page template. I can understand your wanting something more customised though. If you are prepared to spend a little time doing the customisation for yourself then you could try Surefire, which is described as a word processor for creating smart documents — as this is shareware you could try it out! Disk WP15 Shareware Publishing. Another alternative would be a free form database such as AskSAM (Software Paradise) or Information Please (disk DB25 Shareware publishing) but these tend to be more difficult to use at first. Does any reader know of a diary program that allows full text searches and uses a UK date format?*



Get it sorted!

Q I am trying to keep a name and address list of club members using a basic XT and MS-DOS. Is there a cheap, simple way of doing this job.

Martin Post
Richmond

A *Depending on how you are keeping the list you either need a database or perhaps even nothing at all! Starting with the nothing at all option it is worth knowing that there is a Sort command built into MS-DOS. It will only sort plain Ascii files, ie, files that don't contain control codes or formatting information, and it will only sort lines of the file into order. So if you have used a simple text editor like Edlin or Edit or you can save the word processor file in Ascii format, you might be able to sort the name and address list without anything extra. Suppose the file Name.txt contains the name and address list to sort on column 1, ie, the very first letter of the name you would use*

SORT /+1 <NAME.TXT >NEWNAM.TXT

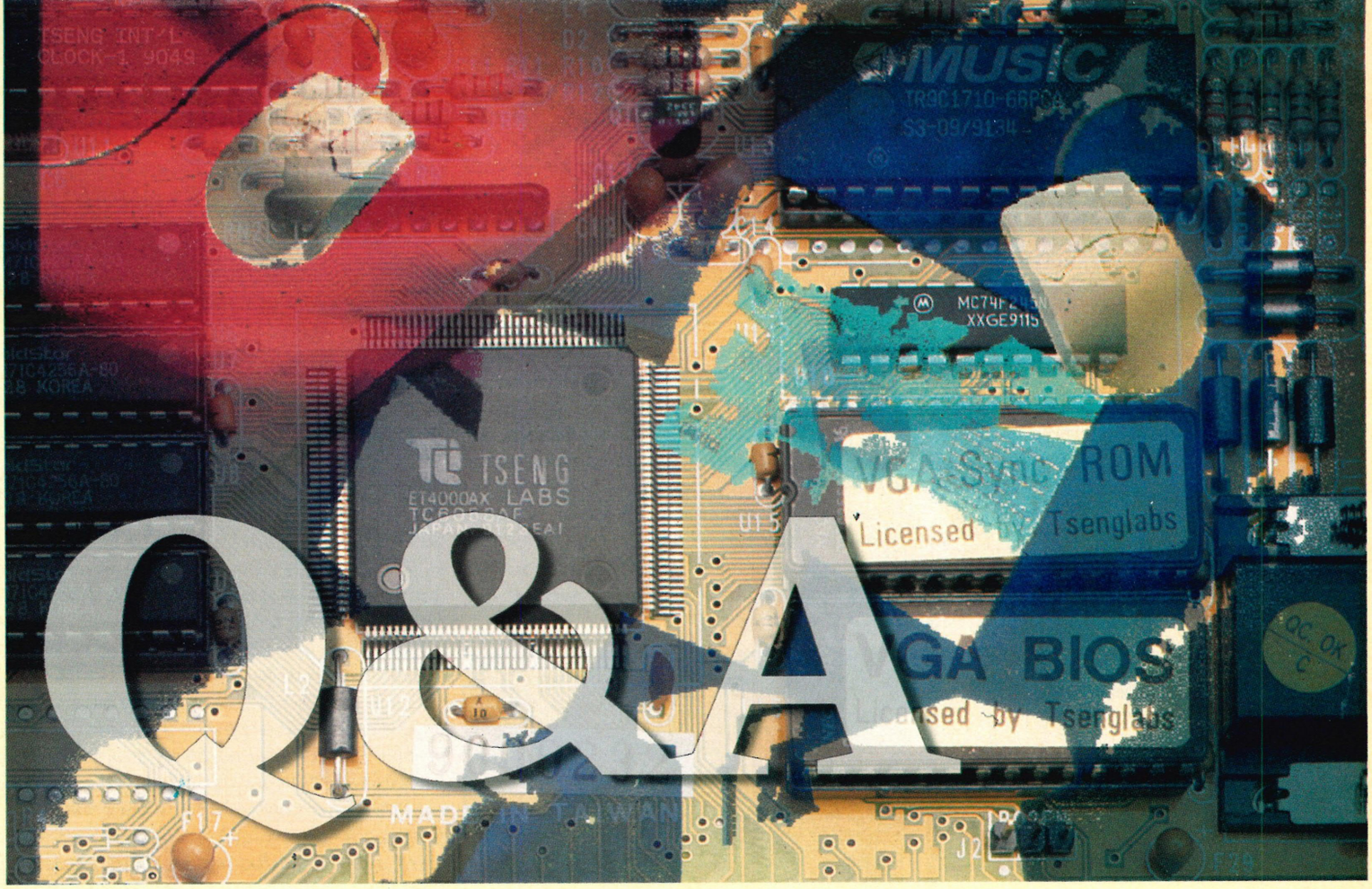
and the result would be stored in the new file Newnam.txt. You can sort on any column in this way and so it is a fairly flexible command as long as you have kept each address on its own line and started each part of it at a fixed column number by using tabs or whatever.

While this approach can be made to work reasonably well it doesn't cost much to make the job really easy by using a database. There are lots of good database programs on the market but the problem is that for a relatively simple job like keeping a list of names and addresses they require too much investment of time to learn and setup. In this case you would probably be better off using a database that has been customised to name and address format. I would recommend the Little Black Book in Deskamation 2 (3589 PDSL) but there are plenty of others to try out. If you are actually trying to keep a mailing list to be used to print out labels then the best solution would be to use a specific mailing list database. Try Mail Call (3562 PDSL) which sorts and searches on any address field. The problem with most customised databases is that they are designed to be used with US style addresses – something of a problem for UK users. At least Mail Call lets you customise the format of the postal (zip) code and the phone number. The trouble with these suggestions is that you may already have typed in the names and addresses but without knowing the format you've used I cannot be of more help.

If you would like to take advantage of Software Search fill in the form, right, or reproduce it in letter form, and send it to PC Review, Software Search, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringson Lane, London EC1R 3AU. You can also fax your request to (071) 972 6710, or e-mail it to pcreview@CIX.compulink.co.uk.

Please note that PC Review doesn't undertake to supply you with the software we come up with, but we will identify the product we believe will suit your purpose, and make our own, necessarily subjective, evaluation of it.

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Address .....
.....
.....
Daytime tel no (in case we need more details) .....
PC system specifications: .....
Processor ..... RAM ..... Hard/floppy disk .....
Graphics ..... DOS ..... Windows .....
I am looking for software which will perform the following task .....
.....
.....
.....



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

1001 uses for a dead computer

Q On advice from various consultants, I have just purchased a new 386 PC with a 386 100Mb hard drive – it seems fine for its purpose (essentially accounting). That's not the problem. The problem is that I also have an Amstrad PC1512DD and would still like to make as full use of it as possible (mainly for word processing). How do I do this with the least cost? Basically, I'm happy (price permitting) to add a hard drive. How do I do that and how much would it cost me? Then I guess I'd need a decent word processing software (with Mail Merge, if possible) for a not too massive price. Please advise this confused PC owner.

Katherine Canoville
London

A *My feeling about the 1512 is that apart from minor upgrades such as adding a hard disk it should be left well alone. If you really are attached to it you can go as far as upgrading its motherboard to make it a 386SX – see Issue 17. Personally, I wouldn't go that far. Adding a hard disk is a sensible move though – it's easy and should cost less than £100.*

There are two ways of adding a hard disk to a 1512. The first is to open the case, remove one of the floppy drives, fit a hard disk in its place, plug in the controller card, connect up the cables and close the case – easy enough if you have done it before, or are prepared to read up on how to do it, but there is an even easier way. If you buy a hard card – an expansion card with a hard disk and a disk controller mounted together – all you have to do is lift off the expansion slot cover under the monitor and plug the card in. A 20Mb to 30Mb hard card can be found for just under £100 at the moment – mainly because not many people want a disk that small any more! However, fitting a larger disk to a 1512 wouldn't make much sense.

As to good word processing software, I passed the question to Software Search! My final advice is to stick with simple MS-DOS text based programs. They may look boring compared to Windows but they still get the job done.

Disk compression problems

Q I was recently on holiday in France and spotted English versions of two games I have being waiting to materialise for months. These games are Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis and Aces of the Pacific. I read the software requirements and I had everything needed to run both games in a 386SX with 4Mb of RAM and a hard disk.

What wasn't on the boxes was that both of these games have problems running in conjunction with SuperStor which the owner of the computer uses. Upon loading Indy the game kept crashing at random points in the introduction sequence and during the game, throwing out messages like "costume 12 not in room 16 at ???????????? (a sequence of numbers which changed every crash) thus making the game unplayable. Upon ringing US Gold I was told that it won't work with SuperStor or Stacker and that I would have to partition part of my hard disk and leave it un-SuperStored. I have no knowledge of the ins and outs of DOS and the owner of this machine is not around to help and won't be for a few weeks yet.

After this disappointment I spent what seemed like hours installing Aces and then trying to get 610K free to run it. As I already said, I am a stranger to DOS but I started to try to edit my Autoexec.bat and Config.sys files to allocate enough memory. In the process, I nearly mucked up the whole system and needed the owner's friend to come and fix it. I got it running off a bootable disk my friend brought round and to my dismay upon selecting random options the game went back to DOS giving me an error message. The next day upon trying to get the bootable disk to work I found my computer somehow overriding a memory command called EMM386, so now I can't attempt

to play it until the owner comes back. After ringing the Sierra help line, which I found more helpful than US Gold, they said it was probably a SuperStor incompatibility and that they would send me help sheets.

The point of this letter is to warn prospective buyers with SuperStor and to ask you if software companies can get away with this.

Michael Callaghan
Cork

A At the moment, a disk that is compressed is the odd disk out and so very little software has actually been tested with a reasonable number of disk compression utilities in a reasonable range of machines. What this means is that if you phone up for technical information the software company may not know the answer to the question, "Will it work with xxx disk compression?"

I spoke to the technical support people at US Gold who remarked that this situation is made worse by the attitude in the US that if a disk is too small the problem is easily solved by ripping it out and installing a few more gigabytes of disk! Hence US software houses haven't even heard of disk compression! This situation is changing because of MS-DOS 6's adoption of disk compression, but it is still early days.

I also spoke to Sierra's technical support and they were, as you say, better prepared for the questions and did send me the technical info sheets you mention. In the case of Aces of the Pacific, the problem isn't really anything to do with disk compression, just the huge amount of conventional memory needed to run the program. You would have the same trouble with any additional drivers that occupied conventional memory.

To install a game that has trouble with disk compression, simply install it to the uncompressed drive – usually D: or H: in the case of MS-DOS 6. See PC Review Issue 20, "The perils and pitfalls of hard disk compression" for more info.

A PC for flight sims

Q I would like to know what PC hardware you would recommend for flight simulator/motor racing games that has a reasonable chance of remaining acceptable for the next few years. I have seen the 286 chip become obsolete, the game size increase from 1Mb to 15Mb, sound and CD-ROM be introduced, and the Pentium chip is around the corner. So what specification do I go for if I want to throw out my old computer and buy new?

My inquiries so far suggest:

1. 486 chip, rated no higher than 33MHz as the game will probably "foul up" at higher speeds. The Pentium chip is a no-no, as current games can't cope.

2. Disk capacity. Buy enough hard disk capacity to satisfy all your anticipated requirements without the need for products like Stacker; not all simulators respond well to compressed files.

3. Memory managers, caches. Avoid or disable memory managers and caches unless they are essential.

4. Video. Minimum is VGA. Accelerator cards don't provide any real benefit. What about local buses?

5. Soundboards/joysticks. Buy to suit requirements.

6. CD-ROM Drive. Buy to suit requirements.

Clearly technology will not stand still. Future games will be designed to take advantage of the new advances and facilities offered. So where are simulator games going, what are the imminent hardware advances and what specification do you recommend to keep me up to speed – but not over the top?

D H Wheeler
Co Durham

A As a fight sim enthusiast myself, I can reassure you that most of the latest offerings run well on a 386DX-25. I don't think it is possible to future-proof yourself against the increasing demands that flight sims make on hardware because they are the most demanding of games and therefore exactly where hardware will become obsolete first! Your specification is about right for the moment and the only modifications I would make are to suggest a 486-DX2 running at 33MHz or more. You can never have enough power when it comes to flight sims and this is the aspect of your machine that is likely to become a problem in the near future.

I would also want a local bus video card despite the inherent problems – see Q&A update – because it is faster. I would also add that the quality and type of joystick affects the realism of the game. Try a Gravis mouse stick or one of the yokes plus rudder pedal models.

Making a joystick work

Q I am currently undertaking GCSE Technology at Secondary School, and for my final project I have decided to make a control device for my 486 computer. I have a few questions. Is it true that two variable resistors are used to read the X/Y position of the joystick? Could you possibly print a circuit diagram for a two buttoned analogue joystick? Could you print addresses of some companies that I could approach for further research/information?

Adam Butler
Eastbourne

A Yes, a joystick uses two variable resistors – one for each axis. A standard game adapter has inputs for two complete joysticks and so it can handle four variable resistors. There is no need to print a circuit diagram: once you know the pin connections the diagram is obvious.

Pin 1 – +5v to one end of variable resistor X1 and Y1 Pin 2. Fire button 1;

Pin 3 – centre connection (wiper) of variable resistor X1 Pin 4. Fire button 1/2 common;

Pin 5 – Fire button 3/4 common;

Pin 6 – centre connection (wiper) of variable resistor Y1 Pin 7. Fire button 2;

Pin 8 – earth;

Pin 9 – +5v to one end of variable resistor X2 and Y2 Pin 10. Fire button 3;

Pin 11 – centre connection (wiper) of variable resistor X2 Pin 12. n/c;

Pin 13 – centre connection (wiper) of variable resistor Y2 Pin 14. Fire button;

Pin 15 – n/c;

You can use this pin connection list to wire up your own joysticks or create a splitter cable. Each variable resistor should be 0 to 100K ohms but some commercial joysticks use 150K. As to who to write to for more info – I wish I knew! If you want to use the joystick input for your own programs, look at the Qbasic manual for the STRIG command.

Don't touch that switch!

Q 1. I have heard that when I turn the power off my PC I shouldn't turn it on for at least 30 minutes. Is this right?

2. A friend says that unbranded disks are better than branded disks. He says that bad sectors more often appears on branded (than unbranded disks). My other friends advise me to buy branded disks, because of the quality. What should I do? What do you recommend?

3. In PC Review Issue 11, I read that I should clean my hard disk once a month if I often install or reinstall (or delete) games and programs. How much installing and reinstalling do you mean? And what happens if I never do so?

Lars Olav Gjoera
Norway

A The 'don't turn it off brigade' do have a point. Have you ever noticed how a light bulb fails most often when you first turn it on? Well, the same is true of electronics. The power surge when you switch on or off is usually the cause of a faulty component finally giving up. Most engineers agree on this observation. Where they differ is in what they recommend as a result of it. The most obvious recommendation would seem to be don't ever turn it off. Well, even if you could stand the noise and the waste of electricity, your machine might be worse off due to a build -up of heat.

Most PCs are not designed to be switched on full time. My best advice is not to switch the machine on and off unnecessarily, but don't leave it on for ever. Thirty minutes seems an arbitrary time and as long as you don't make a habit of switching it on and off in quick succession, it shouldn't come to harm if the period is a great deal shorter!

As to buying diskettes, I have found more difference between brands than between unbranded and unbranded diskettes. Personally I use unbranded diskettes because they are cheap and work well most of the time and when one fails I can

afford just to throw it away.

The only sense in which you can 'clean' a hard disk is to defragment it. As you use the disk, files are stored using up free space. If you delete a file the space it occupied becomes free and so the free area on the disk slowly fragments into smaller chunks. When you store new files they use the fragmented bits of free space and so are themselves stored in fragments – and so it goes on.

The result is that the disk slows down as the head has to move all over the place to read and write a single file. If you run a defragmenter on the disk it moves the files around so that each file is stored in one chunk and all free space is joined up into one huge free area. How often should you defragment? You only find out by trial and error. Most defragmenters tell you how fragmented the disk is when you first run them so you can use this to check to see what interval passes before it is worth the effort.

Help a Star Wars addict

Q For many weeks I awaited your review of X-Wing to see if it would be a worthy successor to my beloved Wing Commander 2. After reading the review, my acute love of the Star Wars films resurfaced after seven years hiding in the depths of my mind. I had to go out and buy the game. I quickly scanned the Tech Spec section to see if the game would run on my machine. It was then that my bubble of my excitement burst. Your review said that the game can consume anything up to 896K of expanded memory. I can only convert 1024K of extended to 864K of expanded using my present set-up. I have two questions to ask:

1. Do I have to upgrade to QEMM386 to get the required amount of expanded memory (is there any way of converting 1Mb of extended to 1Mb of expanded memory?) or would altering my Autoexec.bat and Config.sys be enough? If so, what is the best way to do it? The line that loads EMM386 in Config.sys reads as follows:

Device=c:\dos\emm386.exe 1024

2. I have an Opus 80386 (about four years old, hence the reason for only 1Mb of extended memory) running at 25MHz with a Sound Blaster soundboard, 40Mb hard disk and MS-DOS 5.0. Would X-Wing work on my machine with only 864K of expanded memory? I don't want to buy the game only to find that it does not work and have to go through all the hassle of trying to convince the computer games outlet that I have not made a pirate copy.

Joe Twyman
Essex

A *Although X-Wing can use up to 896K of expanded memory it can manage with less. If you want to give it more expanded memory just alter the line in the Config.sys file. For example, to allocate 2Mb to expanded memory you would use*

Device=c:\dos\emm386.exe 2048

Unfortunately, you don't say how much memory your machine has in total, so I can't be sure this solves your problem. Given that your machine is a 386DX, my guess is you have 4Mb – if not, add more. Adding more memory costs about the same as buying QEMM. When you allocate 1,024K of memory to be converted to expanded memory, some of this is used to do the conversion, ie, it's where the EMM386 memory manager lives. So you don't get 1,024K of expanded memory from 1,024K of extended memory. All memory managers, including QEMM, have this overhead.

I think that you are worrying too much about your machine. 25MHz is fine for X-Wing. Your biggest problem is going to be finding space to install it on your 40Mb drive – it needs 12Mb, remember!

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 include SAEs or requests for personal replies.

Q&A *update*

Local bus

You may have heard some new jargon recently – local bus. Computers with local buses are now becoming cheap enough to be considered as a reasonable option for a games machine so you need to know what it is all about.

A local bus is a direct connection to the processor that enables devices such as graphics cards to work much faster. The standard way of connecting a video card is via the ISA (Industry Standard Architecture) bus. This is an old and slow bus introduced along with the original IBM AT. It may be slow but for many devices it is certainly fast enough and it has the considerable advantage of being cheap and reliable.

Items for which the ISA bus is not fast enough include really fast disk drives, high resolution video and, of course, memory. It is a long time since the memory expansion was achieved by fitting an ISA card. Ever since the 20MHz 386, processors have been much too fast to use data transfer via the ISA bus and hence SIPs and SIMMs.

When you add memory by plugging in a few SIMMs you are using a local bus and in this sense most recent machines are local bus machines. However, if local bus is a good idea for fast memory why not for graphics cards? This is the next logical step and machines are just starting to take it.

You can now buy machines that enable you to connect graphics and other cards directly to the processor via a local bus. The problem is, which local bus? There are currently two local bus standards and quite a few non-standard designs.

The standards are the VESA VL and the Intel PCI. At the moment, the VL bus is by far the most common but there are signs that the PCI bus might catch up in the future. Even if you buy one of the standards then there isn't a huge choice of plug-in cards that work with it and they aren't particularly standard.

As a result local bus machines tend to come with local bus video cards, disk controllers, etc, already fitted. At the moment pick and mix seems like a dangerous occupation and will remain so until the standards settle down a bit.

The speed increase for local bus video should be roughly a factor of four or more. In practice, the gains usually aren't that great. If you take a slow ISA video card and compare it to the best VL card then you do get something like a factor of three but this is a slightly contrived test. If you compare a good ISA card with a good VL card then the gain is more like 20%. Still it is a speed gain and, unlike the speed gain produced by Windows accelerator cards, it works for any application.

So should you buy a local bus machine? You certainly have nothing to lose because even a local bus machine has ISA slots into which you can plug standard adapter cards. In a year or so the situation will have settled down and then the answer will most likely be an unqualified yes.

■ ***Mike James***

MITSUMI MULTI-SESSION INTERNAL CD-ROM DRIVE £149 EXC VAT

HOW THE MITSUMI CD-ROM COMPARES	RRP EXC VAT	ACCESS TIME MS	DATA TRANSFER RATE KB/S	MPC COMPATIBLE	KODAK PHOTOCD COMPATIBLE	CACHE MEMORY	DUST SEAL	MULTI SESSION
MITSUMI LU005S	£149	350	175	✓	✓	32K	✓	✓
HITACHI 3700Y	£410	300	150	✓	-	64K	✓	-
PHILIPS 462M	£349	350	175	✓	✓	32K	-	✓
TOSHIBA 3401B	£499	200	375	✓	✓	64K	✓	✓
NEC MULTISPIN 84	£409	280	300	✓	✓	256K	✓	✓
PANASONIC CR562B	£334	320	300	✓	✓	64K	✓	✓
PHILIPS 215	£329	360	175	✓	✓	64K	✓	✓
SONY CDU 31A	£395	550	150	✓	✓	64K	-	✓

All of these drives are internal and include an interface card except the Toshiba 3401B. This internal drive does not include an interface and is priced at an SRP of £499.



Kodak Access Software CD extra - see left for software details

PACKAGE OPTIONS

In addition to supplying the Mitsumi CD-ROM Drive on its own for £149+VAT, Silica Systems also offer the Mitsumi Drive packaged with either KODAK ACCESS or GRAPHICS WORKS software on CD (details below). See bottom right for pack pricing.

KODAK ACCESS



The Kodak Access software application is Kodak's official PhotoCD software title. With it you can select, view and manipulate photographs which have been stored using Kodak's PhotoCD technology.

- View Stored Photographs
- Crop & Resize Images
- Rotate & Flip Pictures
- Export to Other Programs
- Change Colours

GRAPHICS WORKS



Graphics Works from Micrografx® provides all of the functions found in Kodak Access, PLUS the ability to edit images or existing photographs, apply special effects and then save them in other formats. Also supplied are three extra programs which allow you to create presentations, edit logos, or use one of the 10,000 supplied images in your own applications!

SOFTWARE FEATURES COMPARISON	KODAK ACCESS	GRAPHICS WORKS
DIRECT PHOTO CD IMPORT	✓	✓
RESIZE OR CROP IMAGES	✓	✓
FLIP AND ROTATE IMAGES	✓	✓
EXPORT TO: BMP, TIFF, JPEG FORMATS	✓	✓
IMPORT FROM OTHER APPLICATIONS	–	✓
SPECIAL VISUAL EFFECTS: BLUR, EMBOSS ETC	–	✓
TEXT HANDLING	–	✓
BITMAP DRAWING TOOLS	–	✓
VECTOR DRAWING TOOLS	–	✓
LOGO CREATION	–	✓
PAINTING TOOLS - BRUSH ETC.	–	✓
ALSO SUPPLIED:		
PRESENTATION PACKAGE INCLUDED	–	✓
WIPE AND FADE BETWEEN IMAGES	–	✓
WINDOWS DRAW PACKAGE INCLUDED	–	✓
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Some applications require that the information written to a CD-ROM is updated on more than one occasion. This involves several or 'multi' sessions of writing to the disc. The Mitsumi is multi-session compatible, which means that it can read all of the information which has been written to a CD in this way. Inferior, single-session CD-ROM drives can only read what was originally written on the first session, not the information added on subsequent sessions.

Applications such as Kodak's PhotoCD use multi-session technology to update CDs with additional photographs. Other users of multi-session technology will include hospitals, who will update individual medical records, plus many other users whose reference information is constantly being updated.

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The Mitsumi CD-ROM drive is ready for all types of multimedia applications. It is fully compliant with the Multimedia PC (MPC) standard, full compatibility with existing and future multimedia programs.

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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 all 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!

Compression: a hit and miss affair

I read the article on disk compression in Issue 20 and the letter from Ian Townsend in Issue 21 with eyebrows raised in surprise.

These had claimed that many of LucasArts' latest games will not run from a compressed drive and yet here am I happily running Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, The Secret of Monkey Island 2, and X-Wing from a compressed drive with no problems whatsoever up to now.

I use a 33MHz 486DX with a 120Mb IDE hard disk, 80Mb of which is used as a compressed drive D: created with MS-DOS 6's DoubleSpace utility. All of the above mentioned games were loaded on to the disk after compression. I wonder if the size of the compressed drive or the compression ratio (in my case 2:1) affects whether a program will run or not.

Have many other PC users experienced problems (or had none when it would seem that they should have had problems) in using games on compressed drives? At the present moment it seems a very hit and miss area of computing.

John Greggor
St Helens, Merseyside

"Hit and miss" is exactly the term used by US Gold to describe the current situation with LucasArts' games and compressed hard disks. Its technical support department tells us that while some people have had no problems with the likes of Monkey Island, Indiana Jones and X-Wing in conjunction with compression utilities such as Stacker, SuperStor, or DoubleSpace, others do.

More worryingly, the games may work for a while, and then hang up, with a script error, or similar, at which point, removing the game from the hard drive and reinstalling is the only practical remedy. Official policy is to recommend that you do not install the games on to compressed drives, and this also goes for other US Gold titles, such as Flashback and Scrabble.

Slightly more helpfully, if you want to know what your chances of success are, US Gold says that DoubleSpace appears to cause fewer problems than Stacker or SuperStor, that X-Wing and Day of the Tentacle are more likely to work OK (and that most problems have been encountered with Monkey Island 2 and Indy 4), and that the faster your hard drive, the more likely you are to find that the above-mentioned games don't work. US Gold is now testing games in-house for compression compatibility and putting appropriate stickers on boxes.

Obviously, the situation is highly unsatisfactory for anybody who might actually like to buy one of these games, and PC Review will keep you posted as things become clearer, or software developers take compression utilities into account when writing games. See also the Star Letter, opposite, and the letters below, for more on this issue — it's something of a disk compression special this month!

X-Wing compacted

In reply to Ian Townsend (Letters, Issue 21), I can categorically state that X-Wing can be installed on to a compressed hard disk. Unfortunately, this information may cost him £40!

The specifications of my brother's computer are 25MHz 486SX processor, 120 Mb hard disk, compressed with Stacker 2, Windows 3.1 and MS-DOS 5.

He has successfully installed X-Wing on to his hard disk with no problems. As for running the game, he is currently on the penultimate mission of Tour 3, having completed every other tour mission previous to this. There can't be much wrong with that, now can there?

My other point concerns the letter from Patrick Rozijn of the Netherlands. I completely agree that

in certain cases an intro sequence gives an impression of what a game will be like, but only when the game itself has been played. It is impossible to determine if a game will be enjoyable to play, simply by watching an animated intro sequence.

This is exactly the point he made with respect to ATAC and Special Forces. In the case of Formula One Grand Prix, the opposite is true. The game is excellent, but the intro sequence serves no purpose other than to waste 2.5Mb of hard disk.

However, the intro sequence to X-Wing is another story entirely. This piece of software will only be removed from my hard disk by a nuclear bomb. I have never played this game without first listening to the music and reading the storyline as the words fade into the distance.

The difference between these two intro sequences is astronomical. The main reason for this is that Star Wars is a film. In order for the game to generate the necessary atmosphere, it must be made to look like a film to a certain extent. This is what LucasArts has achieved brilliantly. What Star Wars game would be complete without the familiar soundtrack and style of the film's opening sequence? The animated sequences throughout consistently generate the feeling that you are involved in the overall event.

Finally, I would like to ask a question. At the moment, I have a rather basic Covox SoundMaster sound card (yes, X-Wing sounds good even with this!). I would like to be able to replace this in the near future with one that can handle digitised sound and music, so that I can get even more enjoyment from X-Wing (it's that game again!). I am interested in the Gravis Ultrasound, but before I decide, I would like to know if it is fully Sound Blaster and Ad Lib compatible.

Christopher Low
Ulverston, Cumbria

Indy squeezed in

I have just read about some of the problems with disk compression software and games that would not work with them in Issue 21. I would just like to say that three of the games you listed as incompatible with disk compression software, do actually work on my machine with no problems whatsoever.

They are Monkey Island 2, Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, and MicroProse Grand Prix. Other games that work perfectly well are Wing Commander 1 and 2, Links 386, Space Quest IV, Sim City, Populous, Lemmings and Falcon 3, to name but a few. All these games were installed on the hard disk before the compression software (Stacker 3.0) was installed.

It is also possible to have disk compression software and still have over 600K of conventional memory free by using QEMM with the stealth facility enabled.

This set-up could cause one minor problem. The stealth facility on QEMM has two settings. One of these causes problems with Wing Commander 2; the other conflicts with Links 386. This is not a major problem because if I know that I am going to play one of these games, I just change one character in my Autoexec.bat file and reboot.

I would also like to ask a question on a different topic.

I have a Mitsumi CD-ROM drive and was wondering how it would be possible to play conventional audio CDs on my drive, but get the sound to come through my Sound Blaster card and speakers. At the moment, I have to disconnect the speakers from the Sound Blaster and reconnect at the front of the CD-ROM drive.

E Makki
Reading, Berks

Strike doubled up

After using DR-DOS 6 for 18 months, I have given up the struggle and bought DOS 6 with which I am extremely pleased – so far!

I was perfectly happy until software houses wrote games specifically with DOS 5 in mind, which caused problems for users of DR DOS 6. Several games would not run or had problems running under DR DOS, these included: Harrier Jump Jet, speech on F-15 Strike Eagle III, David Leadbetter's Golf, a Formula One Grand Prix demo and worst of all Strike Commander which wouldn't even install!

Another point to note is that Strike Commander will not work with SuperStor (makes your hard drive 'read only'), but works perfectly with DoubleSpace.

Star Letter

Installation insight

Having purchased a Diamond Phoenix 386 DX/40 shortly before DOS 6 was being bundled with systems and having subsequently installed it myself, I am probably in quite a good position to comment on problems with the DoubleSpace utility. My 386 arrived with AST DOS 5, but I had already received my DOS 6 upgrade from Microsoft so installing this was an early priority, thus giving me a virtually 'clean' hard disk to start from.

First, let me say that I seem to have been fortunate in having encountered only two problems, only one of which proved insurmountable using direct methods. On both occasions the problem has occurred in the installation of the game, not the playing. On the first occasion, Rex Nebular refused to install, repeatedly reporting errors reading the game disks. A letter to MicroProse regarding Rex revealed that it, like LucasArts, takes a dim view to disk compression being used with any of its products.

So to the important point. Having another PC (without any form of disk compression) handy I installed Rex on this without trouble and simply copied the directory to the 386 via LapLink. The game runs beautifully and I have encountered no further problems of any nature. Since installation therefore seems to be the main problem might I tentatively suggest that in the absence of having a second PC kicking around, anyone experiencing trouble installing games with DoubleSpace running, could try creating an uncompressed section of hard disk, installing the game there and then and copying it into the compressed drive. The directory on the uncompressed section could then be deleted, allowing the process to be repeated. I cannot say for certain if this will always work, but it may be worth trying for those with beloved games lying forlornly on the shelf.

As a point of interest I have installed, amongst others, MicroProse Golf, Front Page Sports, Dune, Grand Prix Unlimited and, er, X-Wing, Mr Townsend, on my compressed drive without any problems other than mentioned above (and I disclaim any liability for anyone buying X-Wing for their son only for it not to run after all ...).

While I'm writing anyway, is there any way around DMA clashes with soundboards? I know it is probably an old question, but my Orchid Sound Producer Pro clashes with my mouse (and many thanks to LucasArts' helpful Readme file with X-Wing for enabling me to find this out). It's not a big problem to date, since it only occurs when digitised speech or sounds are employed, and both X-Wing and FPS can get along quite nicely without the mouse, but I can see frustrations ahead.

Stewart D MacNeill
Greenock, Renfrewshire

I must say, however, that Novell (Digital Research) is trying very hard to correct problems and produce patches for DR DOS 6. Even with this in mind, there are only so many times you are willing to ring Dusseldorf even if the number is free!

If you're a flight sim fan like myself who buys all flight simulation releases, the last thing you want to do is stare at the box unable to play it while a patch is being worked on hundreds of miles away.

Sorry, DR DOS 6, but enough is enough!

Michael Hurt
Carshalton, Surrey

PS Please mention my BBS which is *free* and non-profit making. (In fact it costs me a fortune). It's Flame-Out Flight Simulation BBS (081) 773 8262 8-N-1; 21.00 hrs – 01.30 hrs (24hrs in September).

All right, then, consider it mentioned.

Obsessed with piracy?

Why is everyone so obsessed with piracy? Every PC Review issue has at least one letter about it. If I want a game I always get the original. It may be inviting to get a pirated game for free but then you don't have the manual or anything like that.

I know lots of people in my area who have PCs. Some have pirated games but most have originals. If I get bored with a game, I can just swop it with someone. People won't swop pirated games because all they want to do is copy it and give it back. My income is very low and it takes a long time to save up for a game. This just makes me choose more carefully. I know someone with an Amiga and his games collection is 90% pirated, so I don't see why software companies put PC games prices up while they manage to keep Amiga prices at an affordable level.

William Walker
Wargrave, Reading

Syndicated sound

I recently bought Syndicate, the day it cam out in fact — and what a game! It's just bang, bang, bang, splat all the way through. Unfortunately, on my machine, it goes bang, bang, bang, silence, more silence ... crash.

After playing the game through about two missions, the sound starts to deteriorate, pausing before sounds and then all the effects disappear. Then, after another mission like this, the game just exits. At first, I thought it was the memory, but I have 4Mb RAM, so it couldn't be that.

I called Electronic Arts, and when I finally got through — after being on hold for about 15 minutes — I explained what had happened and I was told it was my sound card. I have a Sound Galaxy NX Pro (an excellent card).

According to the EA representative, the only card the game will work with properly is the original Sound Blaster and that after the game was developed, they found it would not work with any other card. I don't know how you got the information that it works with other cards; it most certainly does not!

I was disgusted — amazed that such a large developer could cut corners to this extent that its new (and very good) game would not work with any card other than the Sound Blaster. I would warn anyone else without an original Sound Blaster who was thinking of buying the game to think again and not waste £40 on a game that won't work properly.

According to Electronic Arts, it says on the box that the game will only work with Sound Blaster — this is true, but every other game on the market that states this will also work with a compatible card.

The man at EA did say that if they were inundated with calls like this, they would have to make an upgrade, but otherwise they have no plans to do this. All I can say is, inundate Electronic Arts with calls, for the sake of everyone who has already bought the game not knowing this.

Edward Newby-Robson
Market Deeping, Peterborough

Our information about Covox compatibility came from the horse's mouth, ie, EA itself, so we can only apologise for passing on misleading information. Electronic Arts' telephone number is (0753) 549442, for those who want to start inundating.

Compatible with Nimbus

Here is an answer to the question on the Nimbus PC 186 in Q&A, Issue 21.

The 186 was designed to supersede the 8086 in a big way, insofar as the 186 is almost a PC in itself. The 186 is not just a processor chip alone: it controls its own timers, interrupt controller, DMA controller, and memory controller, which is why you tend to see it on intelligent adapters.

Unfortunately, the internal peripheral controllers are not compatible with those of the 80x86-based PC chipset, namely the two 8237 DMA controllers, the two 8259 interrupt controllers and the 8254 timer. This is why you don't see any 186-based PCs claiming 100% IBM compatibility.

You may ask why, if the software does not drive the hardware direct, it doesn't work. The answer is that Research Machines has its own graphics hardware, which is not compatible with anyone else, so if you try to drive the graphics hardware directly, you're in trouble. The Nimbus PC also has its own sub-Bios, rather than the standard IBM Bios, but the Nimbus PC *is* supposed to be MS-DOS 3 compatible, so, as long as your programs only go through MS-DOS calls, it's portable.

Nick French (ex-RM systems programmer)
Littlemore, Oxford

Trainspotter alert!

Many traditional games have been successfully transferred to the PC, such as Formula One Grand Prix (like a Scalextric set), and Fields of Glory (Napoleonic toy soldiers).

I am very surprised that no-one has produced a traditional British train set for the computer. Modules could be sold for GWR, LMS, LNER or Southern — maybe even Thomas the Tank Engine! Such a game would strike a chord with many PC owners and would sell as well as some of the odd (and dull) games now on offer.

P Swain
Leeswold, Clwyd

Is this why computer buffs are sometimes referred to as trainspotters?

Competition winners
7th Guest (Issue 20)

With four decidedly sumptious prizes available in the shape of a Panasonic CD-ROM drive and a copy of Virgin's 7th Guest to play in it, we weren't too surprised when the postbag started bulging for this competition.

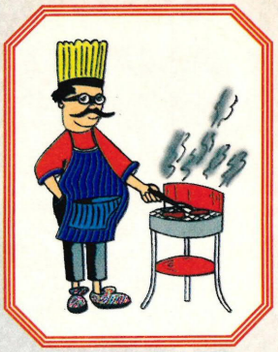
And showing an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of suspense movies (chosen for the subject of the competition questions in a rather tenuous link with The 7th Guest), were the following four winners, who get the CD-ROM and the game: Steven Davies, of Ebbw Vale, Gwent; David Porter, of Sheffield; Richard Martinez, of Guildford, Surrey, and Paul Collings, of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Congratulations; prizes should have been received by the time you read this.

And ... those answers in full.

Robert Englund played Freddy in the Nightmare on Elm Street films; Jones the cat survived Alien along with Ripley; and Robert Mitchum and Gregory Peck appeared in both versions of Cape Fear (we asked you to name one of them).

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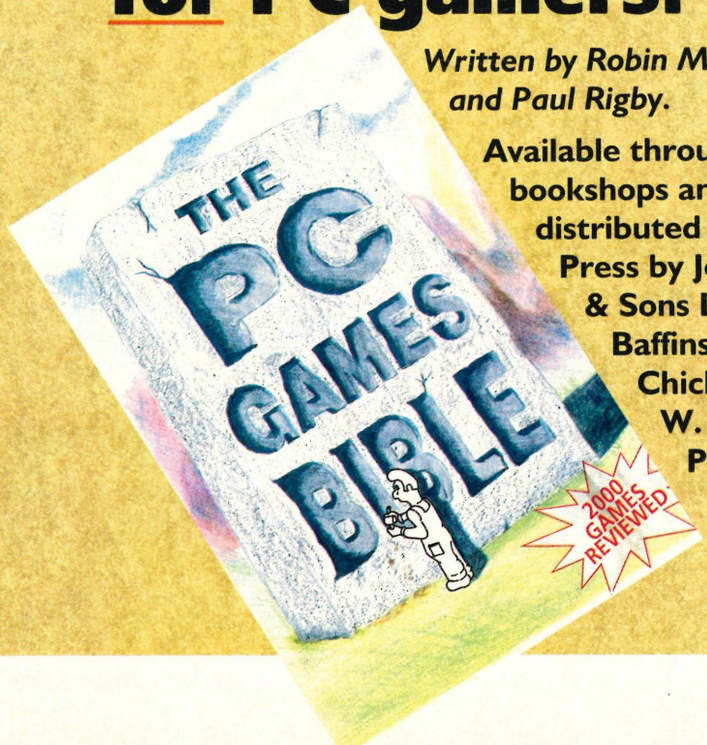
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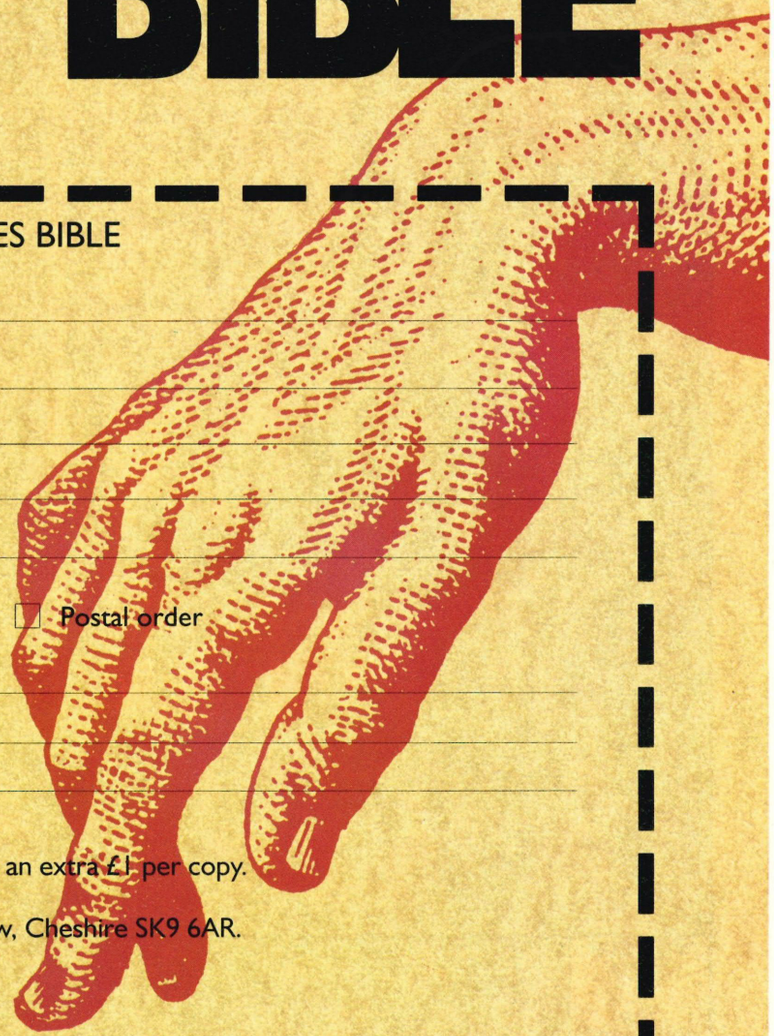


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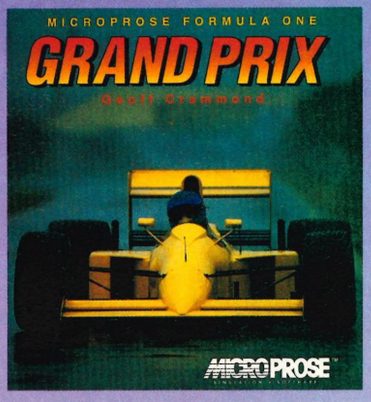
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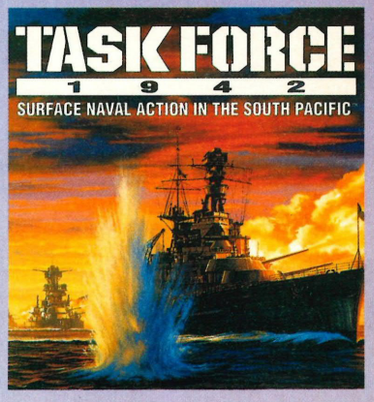
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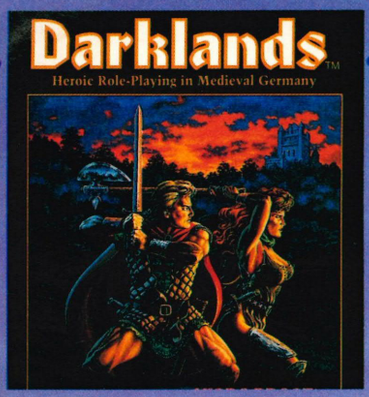
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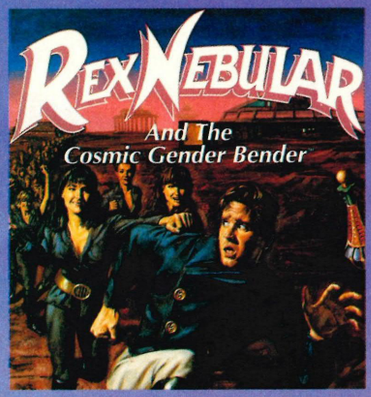
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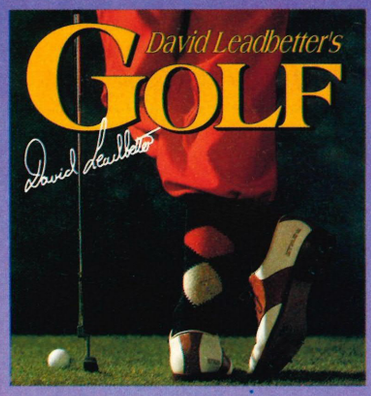
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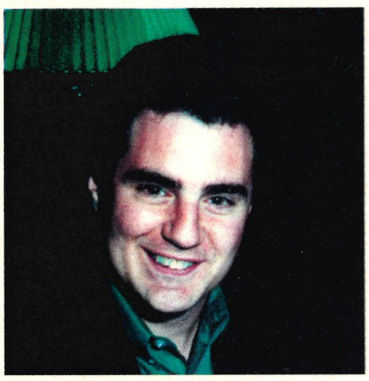
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Brett Sperry's *Classic* GAME OF THE MONTH



X-Wing



"X-Wing is one of my favourites because it is so well done. It's an in-your-face action game, not at all like the standard sit-back-and-fly simulations. The challenging missions require fast thinking, quick decisions and sharp reflexes — it completely absorbed me while I was playing it"

Released earlier this year, the official Star Wars game was some time coming, but the films' X-Wing, Y-Wing, and A-Wing fighters have quickly found a place in the hearts and minds of PC games players. There are 50 linked missions to be achieved successfully in the game proper, but you can master control of your craft in the training mode before being let loose in the galaxy.

In training, the practice missions are graded in order of difficulty; a good thing too, since X-Wing is a tough and challenging game. With over 70 specific keyboard commands to be learnt and used, it's not just a question of pointing your craft forward and blasting the enemy to bits.

In addition, the Star Wars atmosphere has been recreated with sophisticated introductory screens and linking sequences — and of course, the music from the film acts as a stirring introduction.

Experienced X-Wing pilots should note that the first X-Wing mission disk, Imperial Pursuit, is now available, and is reviewed on page 68 of this issue.

PROFILE

Brett Sperry co-founded Westwood Associates with Louis Castle in 1985. The Las Vegas-based company began as a conversion house, before developing original games, such as Battletech I and II, DragonStrike, and — most famously — Eye of the Beholder I and II, most of these being designed and directed by Sperry himself.

In 1992, Westwood was bought by Virgin Games and became Westwood Studios, and has since published Legend of Kyrandia and Lands of Lore. Brett Sperry is currently working on the sequel to Kyrandia, which promises a similar illustrative graphic style to the original game, but with many more locations.

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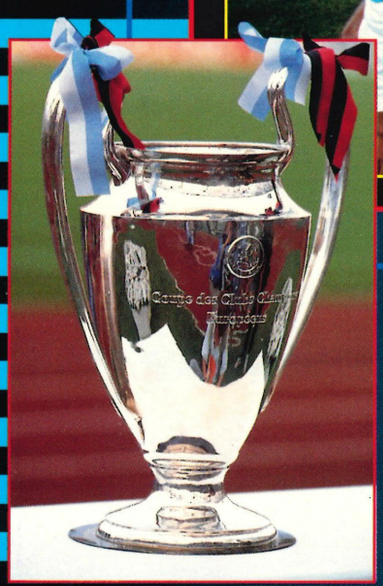
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