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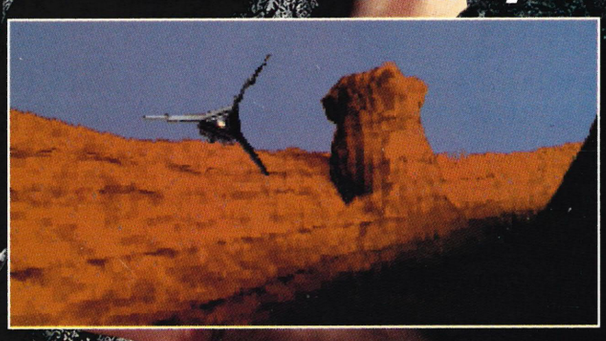
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Reviewed this issue:
Sam and Max
Beneath a Steel Sky
IndyCar Racing

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PC review
Merry Christmas!
JANUARY 1994
27

NO choice?

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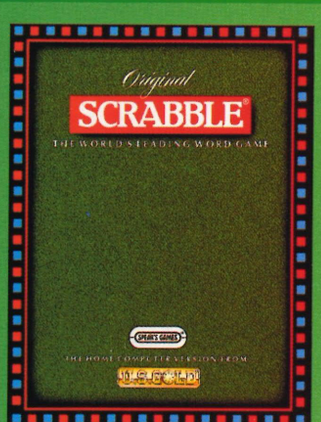
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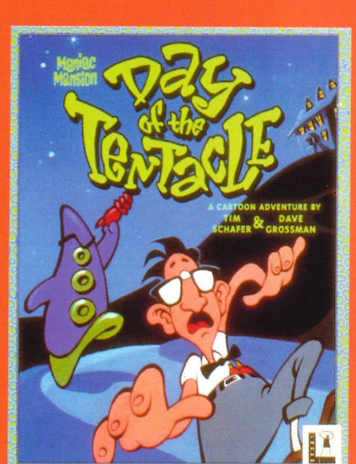


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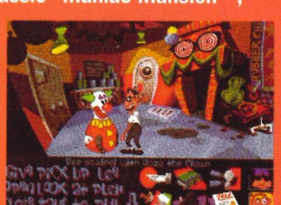
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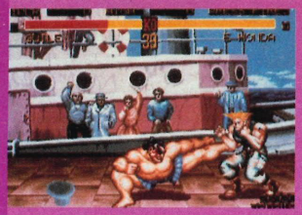


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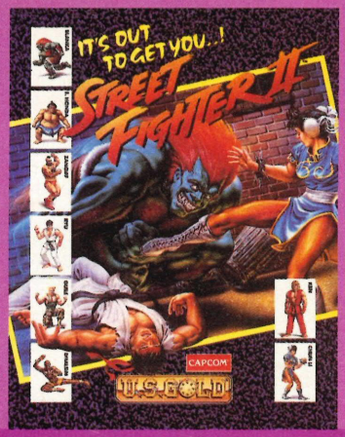
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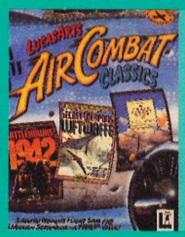
"As far as mindless violence, addictive gameplay and stunning graphics go, Street Fighter II is the genuine article." **PC Zone 81%.**

"One of the best beat-em ups ever!" **ST Format 91%.**





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Available for PC & Compatibles.*



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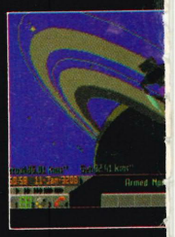
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Look ahead. Look far, far ahead to the year 3200 and imagine a basic space craft as your only worthwhile possession. If you are to fulfil your burning ambition to be the best, you must defeat the best by coupling your inherited flying skills with a vast knowledge of the Universe. Outwit the pirates by beating them at their own game.

Be merciless, be wise, beware.



PC Screen shot



AMIGA Scre

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1985 – ELITE

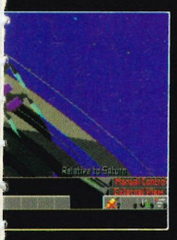
"Elite. Game? It's a way of life!"

Personal Computer World magazine

only the very best

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en shot



PC Screen shot

Intergalactic trading has its rewards and its downfalls. Trade with the international stock markets and play one against the other to get the best deal. Watch your back at all times. Adding to your bank balance could well be adding to your criminal record!

The Feds may or may not like what you do. Tough! They will have to catch you first.

In a galaxy full of challenges, –

this Frontier has no limits.

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ENTS

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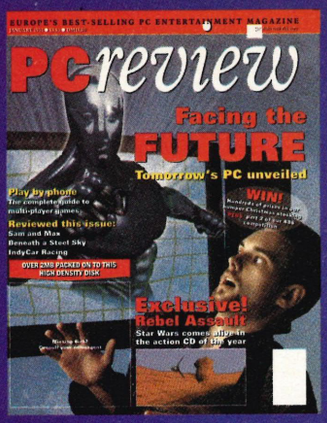
1993 - FRONTIER - ELITE II

"The ultimate in space adventure, Frontier is the single most important step forward for games this decade."
CU Amiga – 97%

mature with time

AMIGA, ATARI ST

by Konami. Distributed by Gametek



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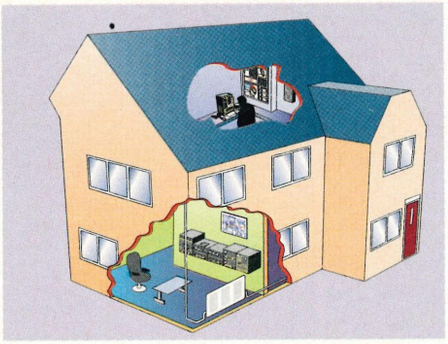
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CONTENTS

COVER STORY
32
The PCs of tomorrow
What sort of PC will you be using in five years time? In 10 years time? John Bennett gazes into his crystal ball, and looks at the personal computing technologies currently being developed.



FEATURES
18
Competition
Part two of our amazing win-a-486 competition: more questions, and the all-important entry form …

36
1993: in retrospect
Christina Erskine picks out the highlights of the year and looks forward to the hot PC titles for 1994.

40
Play by phone
Brian Walker explains how to play against real live opponents using a modem, and presents a comprehensive guide to modem-friendly games.

46
Have I got clues for you!
Cal Jones has, anyway, with an in-depth review of hint books currently on the market.

50
Creation in 3D
The final part of our work in progress series on Rise of the Robots sees the gameplay nearing completion.

52
Inside the PC
We take you inside your printer this month, and show you just how dot matrix, inkjet and laser printers work.

158
Reviews compendium
Your complete guide to all the games *ever* reviewed.



PREVIEWS
30
Theme Park
Alan Dykes tries out the rides in Bullfrog's fairground spectacular.

SHAREWARE
135
The latest shareware and public domain programs.

QED
138
Lost in Time
Cal Jones has more invaluable advice for anyone stuck in Coktel Vision's atmospheric adventure.

140
AV8B Harrier
Dudley Wheeler takes to the air again …

142
Blue Force
… while Robin Matthews is still pounding the beat.

REGULARS
16 **News**
21 **The Cooke report**
Opinions and informed comment from Steve Cooke.
23 **Ciarán Brennan**
Why PC owners have got it made this Christmas.
132 **PC Review Recommended**
Your chance to win our Recommended games and see what's top of the Virgin charts.
147 **Q&A**
Mike James answers your technical queries.
153 **Letters**
162 **Classic Game**
Revolution Software's Charles Cecil chooses his all-time favourite game.

Erratum: on page 133 Sam and Max is marked as being rated 7/10. This is an error: the correct mark appears with the review starting page 62.

REVIEWS

62 Sam and Max Hit the Road
LucasArts/US Gold
68 IndyCar Racing
Virgin Interactive
70 Shadowcaster
Origin Systems
76 Beneath a Steel Sky
Virgin Interactive
CyberRace
Cyberdreams
86 Fire and Ice
Renegade
92 Subwar 2050
MicroProse
94 Chessmaster 4000 Turbo
Mindscape
98 Master of Orion
MicroProse
103 The Even More Incredible Machine
Dynamix/Sierra
104 Uninvited
Viacom/Mindscape
108 Innocent Until Caught
Psygnosis
113 B-Wing
LucasArts/US Gold
114 Fantasy Empire
SSI/US Gold
117 Alien Breed
Team 17





CD-ROM REVIEWS

118 Rebel Assault
LucasArts/US Gold
123 20th Century Video Almanac
Mindscape
123 Advantage Tennis
Infogrames
124 Oceans Below
Mindscape
124 Newsweek Interactive
Mindscape

BUDGET REVIEWS

127-128

24 COMPETITION
Sound Blaster CD16 pack plus 100s of prizes to be won

COVER DISKS

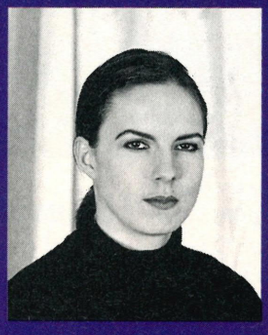


PAGE 8

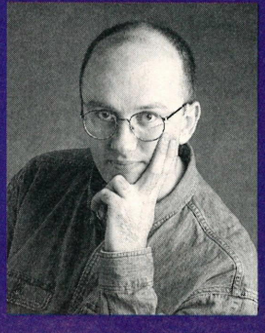
THE TEAM



JOHN BENNETT
Our deputy editor has been researching the PCs of tomorrow, the fruits of which can be read on page 32. He also knows just what he'll be playing on his holographic, voice-activated PC: "Rebel Assault is everything a game should be." All is revealed on page 118.



CAL JONES
After declaring that seeing a better adventure than Tentacle this side of Christmas would have her eating her leather trousers (Issue 23), Cal approached LucasArts' follow-up, Sam and Max, with some trepidation. Read the review on page 62 for the verdict.



CIARAN BRENNAN
"I'd forgotten just how good this really is," declared our X-Wing supremo on revisiting the game to try out the B-Wing add-on disk. In fact, Ciarán reckons PC games players are getting a pretty good deal all round at the moment — see his report on page 23.

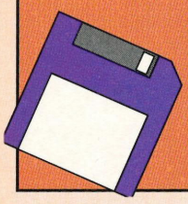
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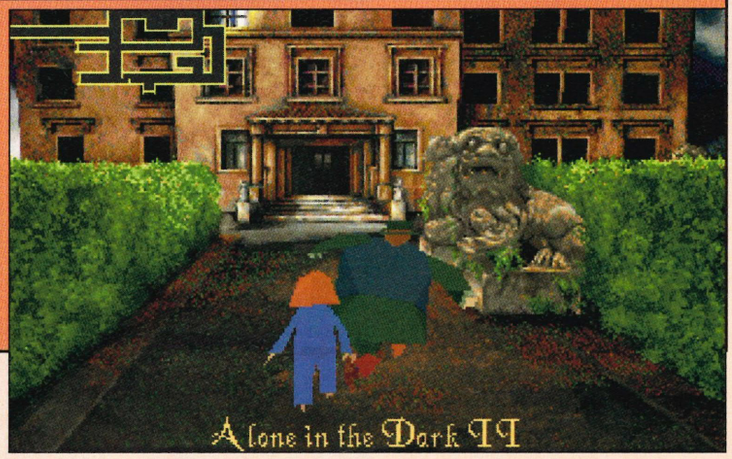
Our 3.5" high density disk is packed with goodies this month. There's a unique demo of Alone in the Dark 2, written specially for PC Review by the Infogrames team, and then we give you the opportunity to improve your chances on the pools with Football Forecast. Then there's Frustration, an addictive puzzle game. Plus, 5.25" disk owners can now see our demo of Frontier: Elite II.



ALONE IN THE DARK 2

3.5" disk only





This month we give you the chance to try out an exclusive demo of one of the most eagerly awaited games of the year, Alone in the Dark 2. Rather than simply providing you with an extract from the game, this unique demo has been specially created for PC Review by the Infogrames team.

It's a complete mini-game in itself and will provide you with hours of fun as you test your sleuthing kills to the limit.

Following his exploits in Jeremy Hartwood's haunted mansion, Edward Carnby is back, and this time he's hot on the trail of Grace, a missing girl. Grace has been kidnapped by zombie pirates, and Edward must rescue her before the pirates sacrifice her to an evil Voodoo priestess.

How to start

Log on to the directory in which you installed Alone in the Dark 2 and type

AITD2 [Enter]

How to quit

When you either complete the demo or get killed, you will be returned to DOS.

Hardware required

386 minimum, 2Mb RAM, VGA and 565K base memory.

Controls

Movement is controlled via the cursor keys. The up and down arrows allow you to move forward and back, whilst the left and right arrows rotate Edward to face in a different direction.

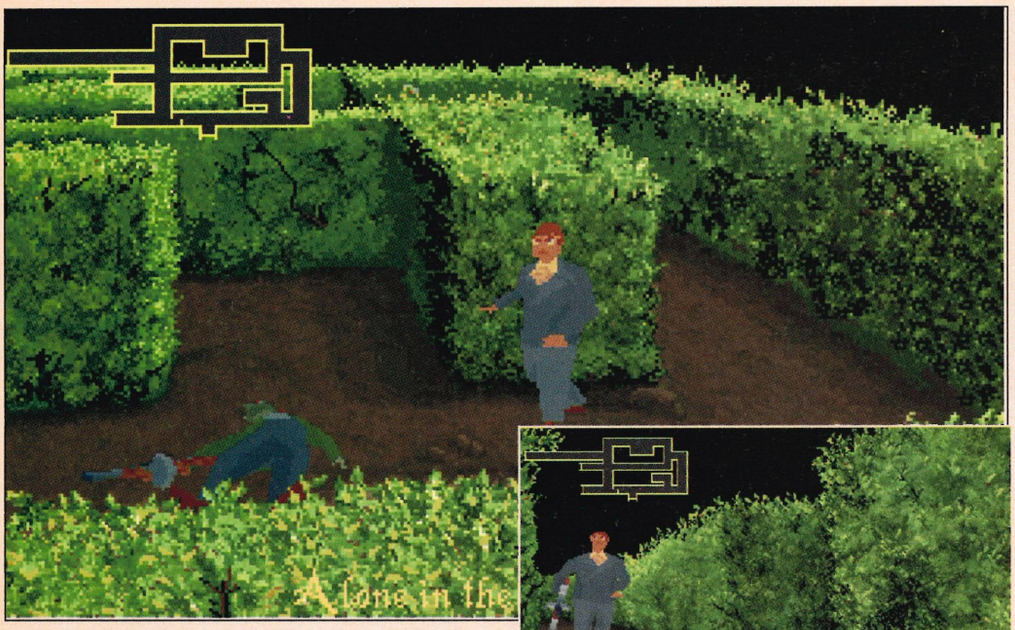
To bring up the inventory screen, press Enter. From here you can use any of the items you've found, as well as initiating actions such as fighting or searching.

To fight, select the fight option from the inventory screen and then return to the main screen. Hold down the space bar and then use the cursor keys to direct your punches and kicks. Use the up arrow to head-butt, the left and right arrows to punch and the back arrow to kick.

If you've picked up a Thompson gun, you can use this instead. Go to the inventory screen, use the ammo clip to load the gun and then use the gun itself. Back on the main screen, hold down space to fire.

Empty or useless items can be removed from your inventory by dropping them on the ground.



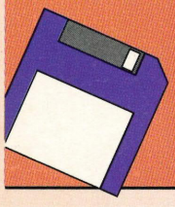


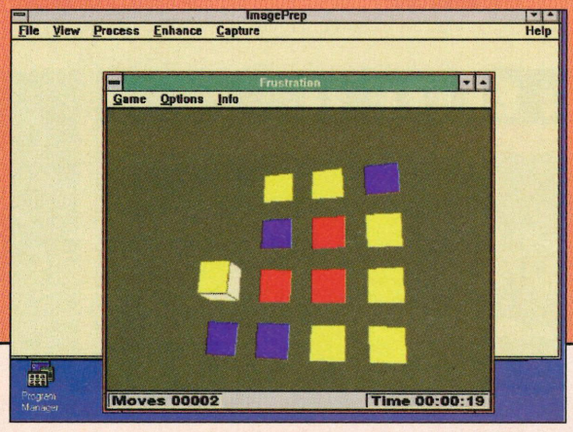
How to play

The game takes place in the maze outside the pirate's hide-out. The aim is to rescue Grace, pick up her satchel (she refuses to leave without it) and escape the maze. At the same time, you are being chased by zombies and must kill as many as possible in order to survive. Health points can be restored by eating or drinking, and you also need to keep an eye out for ammunition so that you can reload your gun. The map in the top left hand corner of the screen is there to help you find your way around, but please note that this feature is unique to this demo and will not be featured in the finished game.

FRUSTRATION

On 3,5" and 5.25" disks





5.25" disk A

This is a simple, but intriguing Windows game, a companion to Volutare 3D and from the same author, Bela von Hoffmann. The screen depicts a cube rotating over coloured squares. Your objective is to roll the cube over the colours until all sides of the cube are blue and it's not as easy as it sounds!

How to start

Run the file FRUSTR.EXE from Windows. It will begin in demo mode, so select 'new game' from the game menu, or simply press F2.

How to quit

Select 'quit' from the game menu.

Hardware requirements

Any PC running Windows 3.1.

Controls

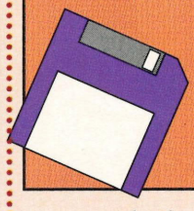
To rotate the cube, simply click with the mouse on the coloured square you wish it to move to. The game menu, apart from giving you the 'new game' and 'quit' options, also offers a selection of difficulty levels. You can also enter your high scores after completing a game.

The options menu includes the choice between a 2D and 3D display.

Finally, the 'info' menu explains how to register this shareware product.

DOUBLEFIX

On 5.25" disk only



5.25" disk B

Anyone who has used the DoubleSpace disk compression utility that comes with MS-DOS 6.0 will know that it's very useful for getting the most out of your hard disk. Unfortunately, many games will not run on a compressed drive and have to be installed on the uncompressed section of your hard disk.

The problem with DoubleSpace is that, even if you're running games or applications from your uncompressed drive, DoubleSpace still eats into your base memory, which may prevent memory hungry games and utilities from running. The purpose of DoubleFix is to disable DoubleSpace, thus freeing up extra RAM.

WARNING: DO NOT USE DOUBLEFIX IF YOU ARE IN ANY DOUBT ABOUT HOW TO USE IT CORRECTLY. PC REVIEW AND ROD HYDE WILL NOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY DAMAGE CAUSED BY MISUSE OF THIS UTILITY.

How to use DoubleFix

Install DBL.BAT in the root directory of your HOST drive (usually H:\). Then read the instructions thoroughly by typing

Type READ.ME [Enter]

To boot without DoubleSpace type

DBL OFF [Enter]

and then reboot.

To re-enable DoubleSpace type

DBL ON [Enter]

and then reboot.

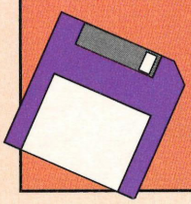
Hardware required

Any PC running MS-DOS 6.0

Installing your cover disk: details on page 12

FOOTBALL FORECAST

On 3.5" and 5.25" disks



5.25" disk A



We can't promise that you'll win the pools with Football Forecast, but at least you'll have a bit more than just intuition to go on when filling in your form!

Football Forecast is a pools prediction program which has received rave reviews in its earlier versions. This is the latest update, and contains data on all teams in the current football season.

The program will predict draw, home and away results for league and cup matches for football teams in all the divisions and leagues which are used on pools and fixed-odds coupons. You'll need to keep the program updated with match results so that it can accurately assess each team's comparative strengths and form. It will then estimate odds for every possible result. The program also includes statistical analysis, a facts and figures module and context-sensitive help.

Incidentally, if you do get rich using this program, please let us know!

How to start

Log on to the directory in which you installed Football Forecast and type

FF [Enter]

How to quit

Press Esc as many times as required to get back to the main menu, then select Q for Quit.

Hardware requirements

Football Forecast should work with all PC compatibles, regardless of processor. It requires around 400K free conventional memory.

Controls

All options in Football Forecast are accessible from the on-screen menus. Either use the cursor keys or the highlighted letter from each item to select the option you want. Pressing Esc will take you back to the previous menu. Press F10 at any time to access the context-sensitive help screens (and F10 again to exit help and take you back to the program screens).

The user menu enables you to make changes to the way that the program makes predictions. You can also print out a display using the copy option.

Test drive

If you don't want to experiment yourself to start with, you can test run the program as detailed below, though this is only a suggested method for getting going with Football Forecast:

Press the Spacebar from the opening screen to access the main menu, then select 'statistics'. Press S again to start before choosing 'facts' from the statistical options menu. You can now view the facts and figures from the on-screen displays.

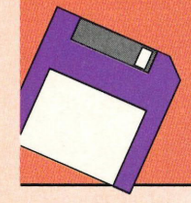
Press Esc until you get back to the main menu, and then choose 'predict', followed by S to start.

Now you can input matches for prediction, starting with the home and then the away teams. Use the cursor keys and [Enter] to select. The function keys allow you to switch between the different divisions.

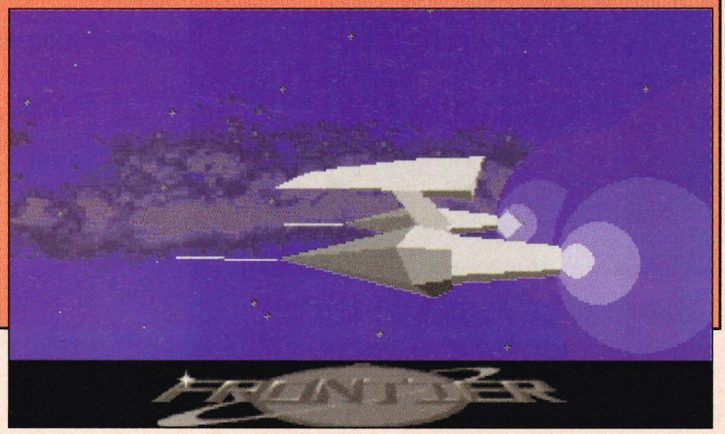
Select P for the prediction displays; from the predictions options menu, select 'form' — or 'homes', 'aways', or 'draws'.

FRONTIER: ELITE II

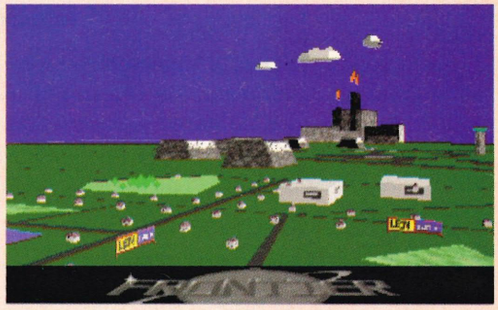
5.25" disk only



5.25" disk B







How to start

Log on to the directory in which you installed Frontier and type

FRONTIER [Enter]

How to quit

Press Ctrl-C to leave Frontier and exit to DOS.

Hardware required

You'll need a 386 processor or better, with VGA graphics.

Controls

Erm ... there aren't any. Since this is a rolling demo, all you need to do is sit back and watch.

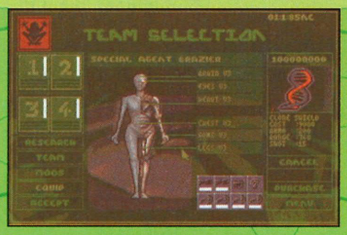
Problems with your cover disk? See page 12 for help and advice

AMERICA! YOU'RE NEXT.



"Syndicate™...Incredibly violent, completely amoral and brilliant fun" PC Zone – 90%
"...Action, strategy, atmosphere: Syndicate has something to please everyone..." PC Review – 9/10







Now, from Alaska to Argentina the cities of the Americas' are out of control. As the leader of a controlling Syndicate you must do whatever is required to bring the troublesome populace back in line before your enemies and business rivals can gain a foothold in the sick and corrupted streets of an America gone wrong.

To assist you in the 21 all new missions the research and development boys have come up with a whole host of deliciously callous weapons and gadgets, all quite capable of aiding your agents in a touch of inner city depravation.

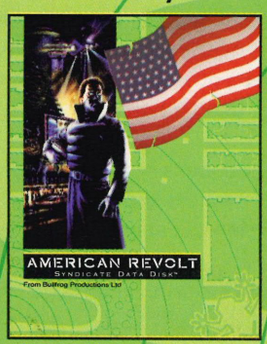
A cunning new clone shield lets you holographically disguise your agents as ordinary innocent civilians , allowing them to mingle among the nobodies before whipping out their Uzis and mowing down everyone in sight.

Or by merely activating a homing beacon you can call up air strikes that vaporize entire trouble zones of enemies you really can't be bothered to tackle face to face , after all this is America.

And there's network support for up to 8 players, with specially designed multi-player missions, so you and your friends/enemies can all try to out do each other in the nicest possible way.

Syndicate...American Revolt™

The future just got darker.



AMERICAN REVOLT™
SYNDICATE™ DATA DISK

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ELECTRONIC ARTS®

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To buy your copy of this game, visit your local retailer. In case of any difficulty, contact EA Direct on: 0753 549442.

Distributed in Europe by Electronic Arts, 90 Heron Drive, Langley, Berks SL3 8XP.

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:.....

.....

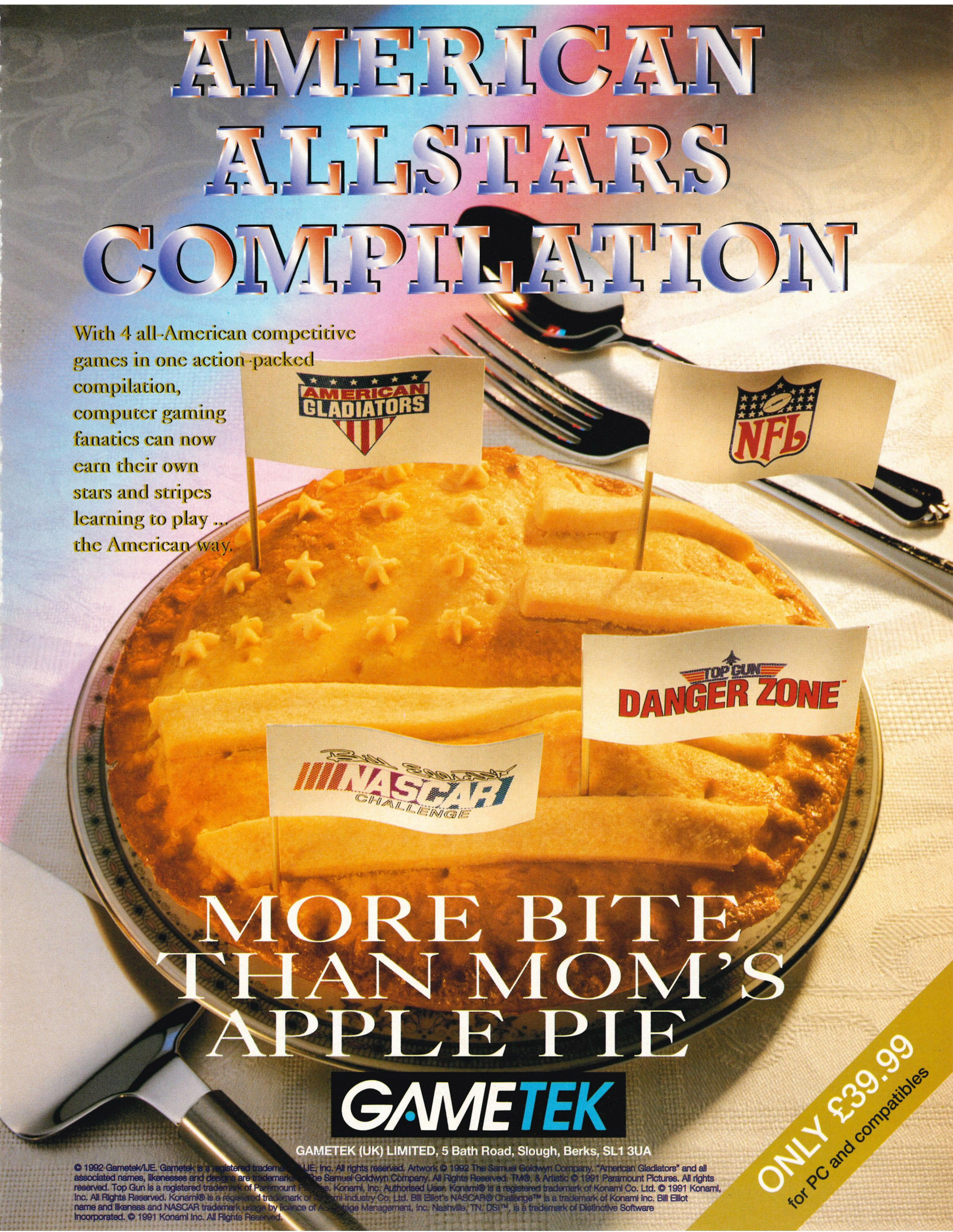
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The disk on my copy of PC Review was damaged. Please send me a replacement — I enclose return postage to the value of 28p (55p if overseas) and the original disk

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"The graphic detail is quite superb, with stunning visuals... TFX is quite often like watching a movie... when I first saw TFX my jaw dropped so far it took me 15 minutes to find it again! It's fast, good looking and fun." PC REVIEW



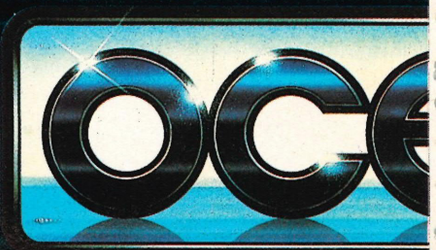






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NEWS

Intel sets up lab to handle 'problem' Pentium clones

Following doubts that all so-called Pentium Upgradable PCs will actually work with its P24T Pentium Technology upgrade chip, Intel has initiated a laboratory-based verification programme to make sure that they do.

The Intel Verification Programme (IVF) consists of a series of lab tests to which all PCs must be subjected before Intel certifies them Pentium-ready. The programme is already running in California, and Intel is in the process of setting up a lab at its UK HQ in Swindon.

Any machines that fail part of the testing will be sent back to their manufacturers by Intel for tweaking, and then re-tested. Intel says it will work with OEMs to ensure that machines are modified to achieve certification. Intel anticipates that the vast majority of machines that fail will do so due to poor heat dissipation or incorrect BIOS.

Major manufacturers anticipate no problems in achieving certification, but there is a question mark over Pentium Ready machines from smaller players that are already shipping. If manufacturers have to alter these machines to pass the testing programme, it is then their responsibility to recall and alter all non-certified machines in readiness for the P24T's appearance in mid-1994.

So, if you own a 'Pentium-ready' machine and are worried about whether it will work with the P24T, get in touch with your supplier as soon as possible. Intel will also release lists of certified machines as soon as they pass through the labs; if you want to find out whether this includes your machine, your best bet is Intel's OverDrive FaxBack service; the company will also set up a specific Intel Verification Programme FaxBack service in the near future.

Contact Intel on (0793) 696000 for details.

Dell US to bundle ReelMagic card

Dell Computer Corporation has announced that it plans to bundle Sigma Designs' ReelMagic MPEG video playback card, featured in PC Review, Issue 25, with a number of machines in its PC range.

Sadly for UK users awaiting a spot of full-motion video, the deal is limited to the US for the time being, and Dell UK was unavailable for comment about the possibility of the bundle making its way to UK machines.



The ReelMagic card: to be bundled with Dell PCs.

The ReelMagic card plays a new form — new to the PC, anyway — of compressed high resolution video, enabling it to handle up to 72 minutes of full-motion footage on just one CD and to play it back at qualities approaching that of television. The card was originally designed to meet the requirements of the forthcoming VideoCD format, but has now branched out into the wider avenues of full-motion interactive gaming, with the imminent release of MPEG format titles like Activision's Return to Zork and Dragon's Lair .

For further information, Dell UK can be contacted on (0344) 720000. The ReelMagic MPEG video playback card is available from Silica Systems, telephone (081) 309 1111, priced at £339 plus VAT.

Video game in health education drug shocker ...

Healthwise, the Liverpool-based Health Education organisation, is in hot water over the release of a platform game called Wrecked. Designed as an aid to drug education, the aim ois to score points by taking as many drugs as possible. The drugs have different effects which either help or harm the player.

MPs Timothy Rathbone and Lady Olga Maitland are trying to get the game banned, condemning it as "horrific" and "scandalous."

Healthwise has hit back, describing this reaction as "knee-jerk moral panic." Healthwise director James Kay explained: "Education about drugs which takes the pompous finger-wagging approach just doesn't work. Wrecked is controversial because it understands that young people take drugs because they enjoy them.

"It is designed to be fun, but it is also a serious attempt at drug education. We don't care if the game doesn't appeal to MPs. It wasn't written for them."

Escom rounds off PC range for 1994



On a very unusual note, Escom is to release a circular 'cake-tin' PC, aimed at style-concious and executive users. Prices start at around £2,000 for a 66MHz 486DX2, and PC Review will be taking a closer look at the PC next issue.

Also, Packard Bell has launched two multimedia PCs aimed at home users. With a choice of either a 486SX/33 or 486DX2/50 processor, the PCs include a 170 or 250Mb hard disk, 16-bit soundcard, 4Mb RAM and a CD-ROM drive. Both are bundled with DOS 6.0, Windows 3.1, Microsoft Works and Ocean's Jurassic Park. Prices start at £1,349. Call (0753) 831914 for details.

Finally, Opus is adding three PCs to its range, the Opus Prelude, Premier and Professional. Prices start at £570 (plus VAT) for a Prelude 386SX/33 with 4Mb RAM, 130Mb hard disk and mono monitor. Further details from Opus on (0293) 821555.

Logic hits the button

Logic 3 has unleashed two new joysticks on to the gaming public.

The Logipad claims to be the world's first fully micro-switched joypad. It also has six fire buttons and independent autofire — making it ideal for combat games. It's out now for £18.99.

Also from Logic 3 is the Tornado. This joystick with a self-centering shaft, and autofire is billed as one of the most sophisticated and 'user friendly' joysticks around, all for the price of £14.99. For more information contact Spectravideo on (081) 902 2211.



The Logipad: ideal for combat games.

Domark starts club for flight sim fans

To coincide with the release of its Flight Sim Toolkit, Domark has set up a club to give users the chance to share knowledge, solve problems and learn of new developments. All members receive a quarterly newsletter and have access to a personal helpline.

Domark is also running a competition to give FST buyers the chance to win flying lessons. The prize includes 40 hours flying, exams, membership and logbook. To enter, you must create the best all-round flight sim using the program. The closing date is 31st March 1994.

Look out for our review of Flight Sim Toolkit in the next issue.

● Three leading flight sim organisation, SimuFlite, Mallard Software and MicroWings, are organising their own competition in connection with Mallard games. The winner and a guest will be flown to Dallas-Fort Worth for classroom tuition, instruction in a training simulator and the chance to co-pilot a Lear Jet. Entry forms will be found in specially marked Mallard products, and the competition closes on 28th February 1994.

COMING SOON



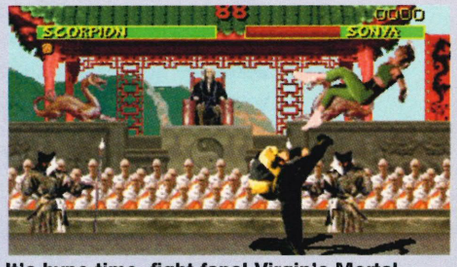
The Lost Kingdom, part one of the forthcoming 'Armaeth' series from Real World Software is due out in late December.



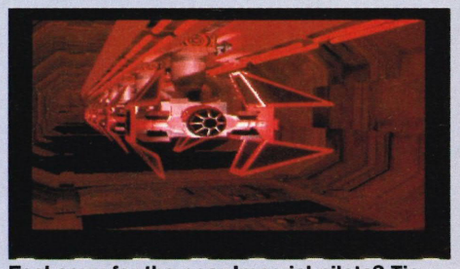
Fury of the Furries is a distinctly strange platformer from French developer Kallisto, available later this month from Mindscape.



Developed in Hungary, Reunion promises to be a vast space trading, combat and empire-building game, to be released by GrandSlam.



It's hype time, fight fans! Virgin's Mortal Kombat is all set to punch its way on to the PC in late January.



Feel sorry for the poor Imperial pilots? Tie Fighter turns the tables on the rebels in this X-Wing follow-up. Due out in April.

WIN A 486DX PLUS DRACULA — THE AUDIO, VIDEO AND COMPUTER EXPERIENCE

Part 2!



It's time for part two of our mouth-wateringly good Unica 486/Dracula competition. Last month we asked you a number of staggeringly simple questions and this time round we've got the rest of the questions, plus the coupon you need to put your answers on (photocopy it if you wish).

The prizes

For the first prize winner, we have a stunning Unica Media Pro 486-DX33, complete with internal, double speed CD-ROM drive, 4Mb RAM, 250Mb hard disk, Sound Blaster Pro, built-in speakers, 14" colour monitor and a superb bundle of CD-ROM software.

Normally this would set you back £1,756.63 (including VAT)! With a spot of luck, it could be yours for the price of a stamp.

And that's not all. Three more winners will each take away a special Dracula package. The package contains five versions of the classic Transylvanian story, including a video of Francis Ford Coppola's Dracula film starring Anthony Hopkins, Keanu Reeves, Gary Oldman and Winona Ryder, and a board game, computer game, audio CD and a video of the making of the film. See last month's issue for a full description of the contents of the Dracula runners-up package.

How to enter

Simply write your answers on the coupon below (or the photocopy), and send it by January 20th 1994 to:

486 competition, PC Review,
Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane,
London EC1R 3AU

Last month's questions

1 Who played Count Dracula in the Francis Ford Coppola film?
a) Anthony Hopkins b) Keanu Reeves
c) Gary Oldman

2 Name three of the CDs bundled with the Media Pro 486DX-33.

3 What can a multi-session CD-ROM drive do that single-session drives can't?
a) be used more than once before data is erased.
b) read CD-ROMs which have been written to more than once, such as Kodak's Photo CDs.
c) read more than one CD-ROM simultaneously.

This month's questions

4. Who wrote the original novel, Dracula?

5. What is the name of the character played by Winona Ryder in Coppola's Dracula film?

6. What is the approximate storage capacity (in megabytes) of a CD-ROM disc?
a) 1.44Mb
b) 600Mb
c) 1,024Mb

PC Review Unica 486 competition

The answers

1..... **6**.....

2..... **Name** .....

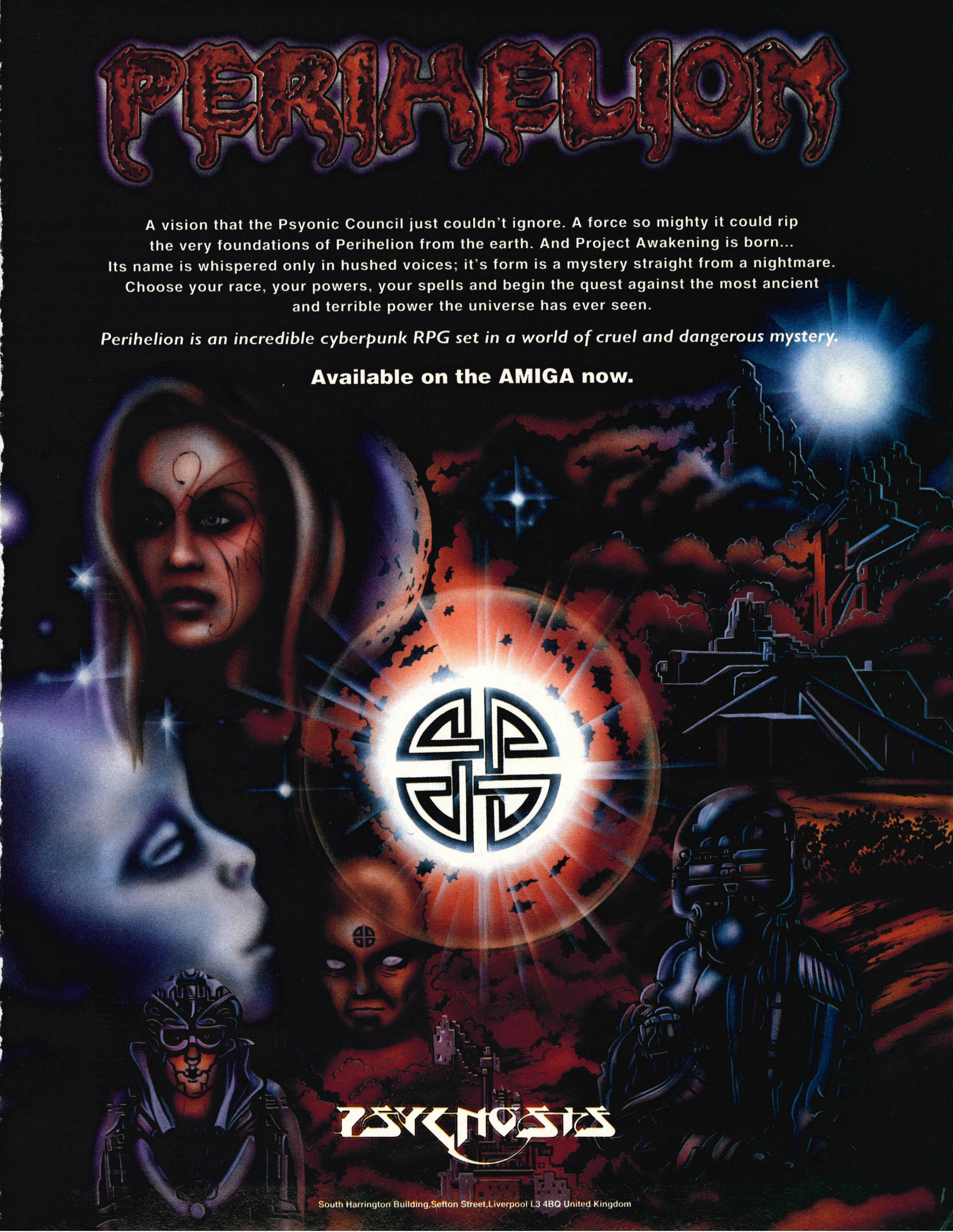
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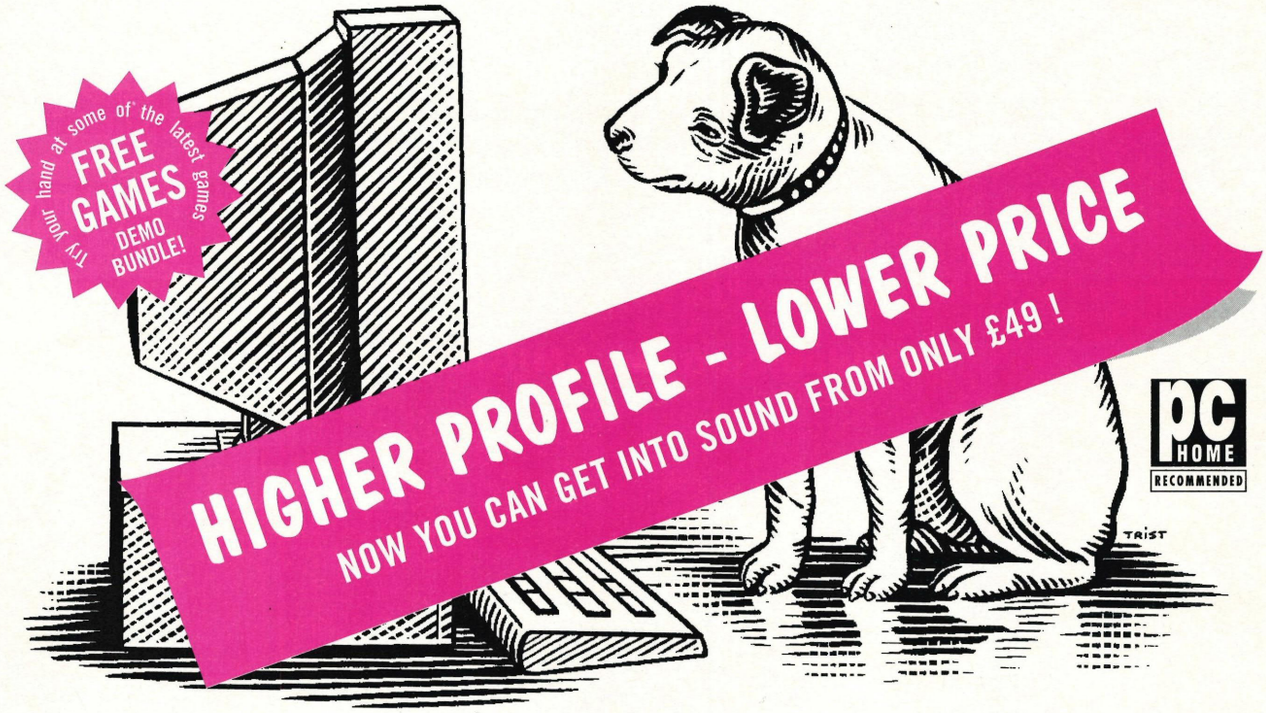
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☐ Tick this box if you don't wish to receive further material from companies associated with this competition

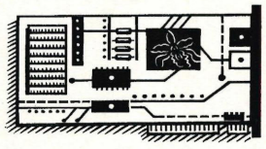
Closing date: January 20th 1994


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A vision that the Psyonic Council just couldn't ignore. A force so mighty it could rip the very foundations of Perihelion from the earth. And Project Awakening is born... Its name is whispered only in hushed voices; it's form is a mystery straight from a nightmare. Choose your race, your powers, your spells and begin the quest against the most ancient and terrible power the universe has ever seen.
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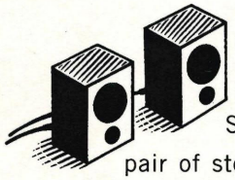


Orchid Sound Producer

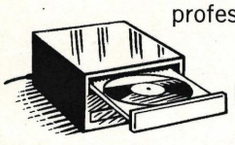


Since his master introduced Sound Producer, a year ago, to bring quality sound to his PC, astoundingly it's become the popular choice!

For Multimedia to games, fully compatible with SoundBlaster and AdLib, it's been *so* well received that *PC Home* made no bones about recommending it!



Which could be because the Sound Producer system includes a pair of stereo speakers, a built-in 4 watt amplifier and its MIDI interface affords access to the world of professional music production.



Or because Sound Producer/Pro - with 20-voice stereo FM synthesizer, CD ROM interface, software-controlled studio standard stereo mixer/volume, microphone and Voice Notes software - sounds even better!



What *is* clear is that its successful pedigree has enabled his master to take a bite out of its bark and cut its price to only £49 for Sound Producer and to £89 for Sound Producer/Pro!

So, if you want to run with the pack, take their lead, call (0256) 817722 - lines are open daily 8 'til 8 including weekends - for details of your nearest dealer, order the higher profile Orchid Sound Producer at a lower price... and make his master's choice!



ORCHID

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Interaction and experience

THE COOKE REPORT

There are only really two different types of computer game, the interactive and the experiential, claims Steve Cooke

After reading last month's column, in which I talked about defining a language to describe games, a friend remarked that would be a pretty restricted lingo: "You'd only need five words: adventure, RPG, arcade, puzzle, and simulator."

You can apply a sort of 'set theory' to most things: 17 basic stories (boy meets girl; boy meets girl but she's a boy; boy changes into girl, etc, etc), five basic pastimes (sex, art, sport, religion, politics), and so on. What about games? Are there really only five basic types, say?

My first stab at answering this question — and I hope you'll join in this debate — suggests that there are only two. It may seem an academic question, but I found it threw up some interesting points.

> **"At the highest level, there are two categories: programs which require you to interact and ones that don't"**

At the very highest level, there are two categories: programs which require you to interact, and ones which don't. The latter is usually overlooked, probably because there has only ever been one notable example. This was David Crane's Little Computer People. The screen showed a cutaway of a house, populated by a little man, a dog, and numerous household items. The little man goes about his business and the enjoyment of the game was watching him do it. You could interact, but you didn't have to.

In David Crane's honour, I think we should christen this category of game 'LCP', and the first investment tip in this column is that LCPs will account for 20% of software sales within the next three years. Such products have previously been hampered by the fact that people used not to spend much time in front of a computer screen. The original LCP was boring not because of the idea but simply because nothing much happened.

If you don't believe that a self-generating version of LCP on CD-ROM would sell millions, consider a program like After Dark. We call them screen-savers, but really these are evolving into modern LCPs and they're extremely popular. As people spend more time with their PCs, LCPs will become more popular. People don't just like to interact. They also like to sit and watch.

The LCP branch of our tree hasn't developed very far yet, but I'm sure it will sprout numerous twigs. Meanwhile, let's get back to more familiar territory: games that do require you to interact (let's call them INGs). INGs, in their turn, can be sub-divided into two basic types: control INGs and experience INGs. All interactive programs require information to act upon, and these categories determine how that information is provided. They may sound academic but they have an effect on the game experience.

Control games are those games (or parts of games) where you provide information by issuing commands. The computer then does all the calculations and then displays the result. You're in control of a situation, but you don't actually partake in it. We'll see what this means in practice in a moment, but control games no longer exist in their purest form. Flight sims, for example, began as control games: you just entered numbers and the computer flew the plane, reporting crashes or whatever.

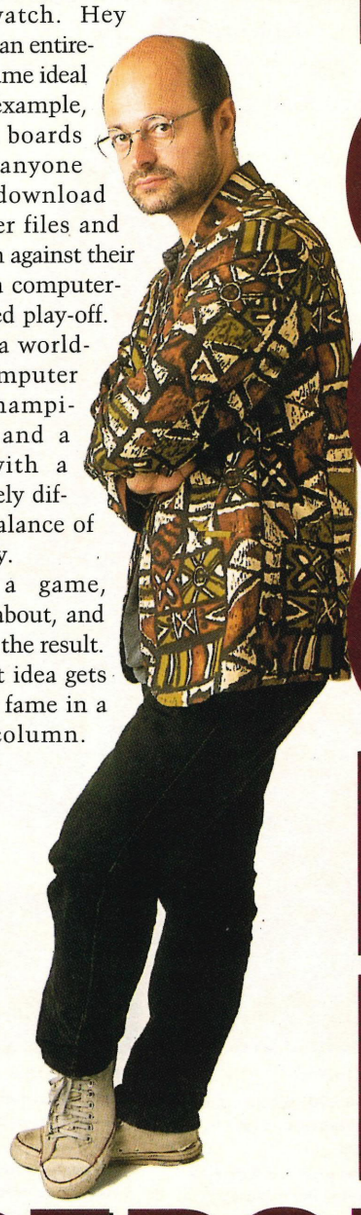
Experience games are those where you provide information by determining an action. You do this by controlling a player token, be it a car, a character, a plane or whatever. The computer, in real time, displays the consequences of your actions.

Determining basic categories isn't purely academic: it can work wonders when you're approaching game design.

Let's finish with a practical example. Take a basic head-on view racing game (category: ING/experience/simulation/sport/racing). Simply by modifying the balance of the ING/LCP and experience/control influences, we can change it out of all recognition. Here goes: enlarge the control element by providing a set of data entry modules that define 'histories' for cars and drivers. Vary these with experience: practise laps on different tracks to add more information to the histories.

Now increase the LCP element. Introduce a module where the computer manipulates all the entrants in a race according to their histories. All you have to is watch. Hey presto ... an entirely new game ideal for, for example, bulletin boards where anyone can download car/driver files and test them against their own in a computer-controlled play-off. Result: a worldwide computer car championship and a game with a completely different balance of gameplay.

Take a game, twist it about, and send me the result. The best idea gets undying fame in a future column.



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Ciarán Brennan

Consoles are just a passing fad, but the PC is here to stay! Ciarán Brennan spills the beans on the games publishers' grand realisation

Courting PC owners

Have you any idea how popular you've been lately? Did you know that all those new deodorants you've tried and all the magazine articles you've scoured for tips on how to win friends and influence people were just a waste of time?

In fact, all that you — the PC Review reader — had to do to become one of the most popular people in the country over the last year or so was to keep on gaming on your PC.

Before I go any further, I should point out that I'm not trying to push forward some new theory about how your habit of playing the latest Ultima game for interminable hours has suddenly made you attractive to either your peers or members of the opposite sex. Certainly not. But it has made you stand out clearly to one specific group who'd like to court you ... the software publishers.

The nation's newspapers and television screens may be full to the brim with pictures of Sonic, Mario and all of their furry, colourful and cuddly friends, but after nearly two years of the so-called video game 'boom', a growing number of the people who make and sell games are gradually coming to the conclusion that the really serious gaming fraternity doesn't waste its leisure hours pounding away on a sub-£150 glorified lunchbox, it spends real time and real money playing real games with lasting value.

See that desirable consumer? That's you, that is.

The reason for this is that while new video games platforms will come and go — with all of the new market creation, media hype and other hassles this brings - the PC just keeps rolling along, going from strength to strength in the process.

Need proof? Well I can't exactly provide that, but I can point to the fact that Ocean Software recently signed a massively expensive three-year deal with Digital Image Design, the 3D specialist behind such efforts as Epic and TFX.

As Ocean has traditionally been a purveyor to the masses of exactly the type of platform fare that's been the staple diet of console owners over the last year or two, it's no small news that it has now shifted its attentions towards our own neck of the digital woods.



But if it is true that we, after years in the wilderness, are about to become the next big thing — will this actually mean any improvement in the lot of the PC games player? Much as I hate to come across as a cynic or depressive, I must say that I sincerely doubt it.

The problem is that a good deal of the new attention focused on us will come from games companies who have only ever tailored their wares for the video games market. And, while this might be superficially similar to our own domain, it doesn't take too deep a scratch to reveal the differences — and they are many and major (can you really compare the forthcoming Sim City 2000 on PC with Street Fighter II on Sega Megadrive?).

Can you really compare StreetFighter 2 on the Sega Megadrive (below), with Sim City 2000 on PC (bottom).



Apart entirely from the fact that the PC simply isn't designed to handle many of the things which these video game developers have come to take for granted — multiple sprites simultaneously careering around the screen for example — there's a different discipline involved in designing software for PCs and other systems.

By all means glory in the attentions which are about to be lavished upon you by a whole new breed of game publishers, who will come to the brave new world of MS-DOS full of high hopes and equally high misconceptions. But don't make the mistake of thinking that they have anything new to offer. You could be sorely disappointed.

EVERYONE'S A WINNER*

In the PC Review Christmas stocking

It must be the time of year, but PC Review has come over all festive and full of yuletide spirit, with literally hundreds of prizes to give away in this special Christmas competition.

Firstly, though, we're chuffed to bits to be able to announce that the first prize-winner will get the latest and prestigious Sound Blaster CD16 upgrade kit from Creative Technology — that's a Sound Blaster 16 *and* a double speed CD-ROM drive in the same pack. This has been very generously donated by Digital Integration, which is throwing in a copy of Tornado on CD-ROM, especially so that the winner can get to grips with this rather superior flight sim.

And that's just the start...

That's the Christmas present on offer to one winner. But just look at what else is waiting to be won — hundreds of stocking fillers, such as games, T-shirts, badges, shoulder bags, even sunglasses.

There's nearly 200 prizes in total in this give-away of the year! And all you have to do is solve our hideously seasonal crossword puzzle to be in with a chance of winning something.

How to enter

First you need to fill in the crossword puzzle on these pages correctly. Then, using



Clues

ACROSS

1. Very Good At pictures (3)

2. See picture left (7)

3. Pane-free PC interface? (7)

4. Graphics + sound + text + video ... = ... (10)

5. To your monitor's rescue? (6,5)

6. See picture below (3,2,3,8)

7. Bundles parrot, so plays great music (anag) (5,7,3)

DOWN

1. Purveyors of 2, among others (7,11)



*Well, almost everyone

ONE SOUND BLASTER 16 PLUS CD-ROM DRIVE MUST BE WON

Hundreds of prizes!



Kindly donated by Digital Integration, the Sound Blaster CD16 kit comprises an internal, double speed CD-ROM drive and Sound Blaster 16 card for you to add to your current PC set-up. Stereo speakers and a microphone are also included. There is also a wealth of software being given away in the box, so that you can use the CD-ROM and Sound Blaster straightaway: STW Multimedia Encyclopedia, Animals, Loom, SWOTL, Monkey Island, Multimedia Music Explorer and a Kodak Photo CD access disk. Plus, of course, Digital Integration's superbly authentic flight sim, Tornado, rated 9 in PC Review, Issue 22.

either the original from the magazine, or a photocopy if you don't want to cut up the pages, send the completed diagram, with your name and address, to

PC Review Christmas stocking competition
Priory Court
30-32 Farringdon Lane
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Make sure it reaches us by January 17, 1994, or it won't be considered in the prize draw (which would be tragic, under the circumstances).

Rules

- Prizes will be awarded to the first correct entries selected at random after the closing date.
- Employees, and their associates, of EMAP Images, Creative Technology, Digital Integration, or any other company donating prizes, are not eligible to enter this competition.
- One one entry per person, please
- No entries received after the closing date will be considered
- The editor's decision in all matters pertaining to this competition is unrelentingly final.

Those prizes in full

1. First prize: Sound Blaster CD16 upgrade kit
2. 5 hold-alls from Electronic Arts
3. 5 Origin audio CDs: the complete soundtracks from Ultima VII and Strike Commander (and remember, this record is not available in the shops ...)
4. Syndicate: the ultimate game of world domination — five of these are up for grabs
5. MicroProse bags: 10 limited edition carry-alls
6. 25 F117 Nighthawk T-shirts to round off your wardrobe
7. 10 MicroProse sunglasses for when you don't want to be recognised in the street
8. Formula One Grand Prix: five copies of Geoff Crammond's classic racing game
9. Gunship 2000: five people will win at his definitive helicopter sim
10. Coaches Club Football: rated 8 in PC Review — another five of these are going, going, gone ...
11. Infogrames' clever and imaginative adventure, Eternam, is on offer to five more winners
12. Reach new heights of sartorial elegance with a Cool Spot pin badge or 50 — yes, that's how many we're giving away
13. 10 Virgin T-shirts to keep you warm this winter

And that's about your lot, though if we can lay our hands on a partridge in a pear tree, we'll throw that in as well.



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THE PLAYER IS CAST AS GRU CAPTAIN MAKSIM RUKOV WHO HAS BEEN MYSTERIOUSLY TRANSFERRED TO DEPARTMENT P OF THE KGB SECOND DIRECTORATE IN MOSCOW.

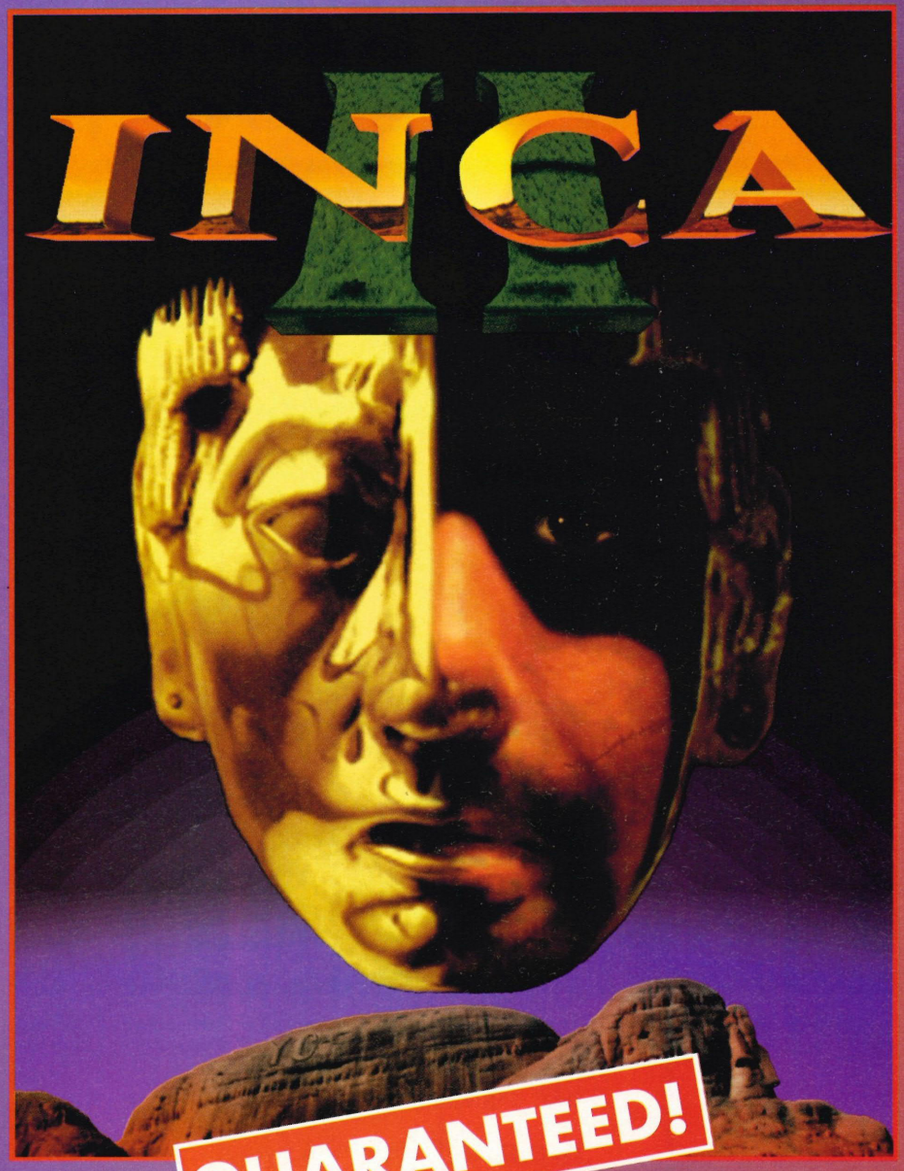
DEPARTMENT P WAS FOUNDED IN PERESTROIKA'S HEYDAY. ITS FUNCTION WAS TO INVESTIGATE POSSIBLE CASES OF KGB CORRUPTION. AS THE PLAYER SETS OUT TO DISCOVER THE MURDERER OF PRIVATE DETECTIVE GOLITSIN, THE STENCH OF TREACHERY AND DECEIT BECOMES MORE AND MORE OVERPOWERING.

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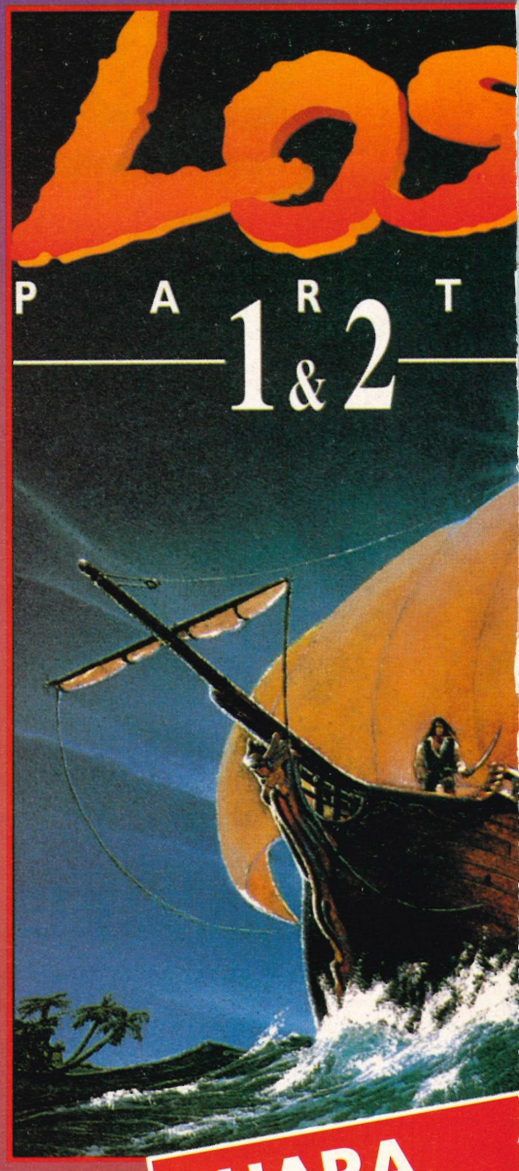
HIS DEAD FATHER. DONALD SUTHERLAND IS DIGITISED WITH VIDEO AND SOUND AND PLACED IN CONSPIRACY'S EXTENSIVE HELP SYSTEM FOR USE THROUGHOUT THE GAME.

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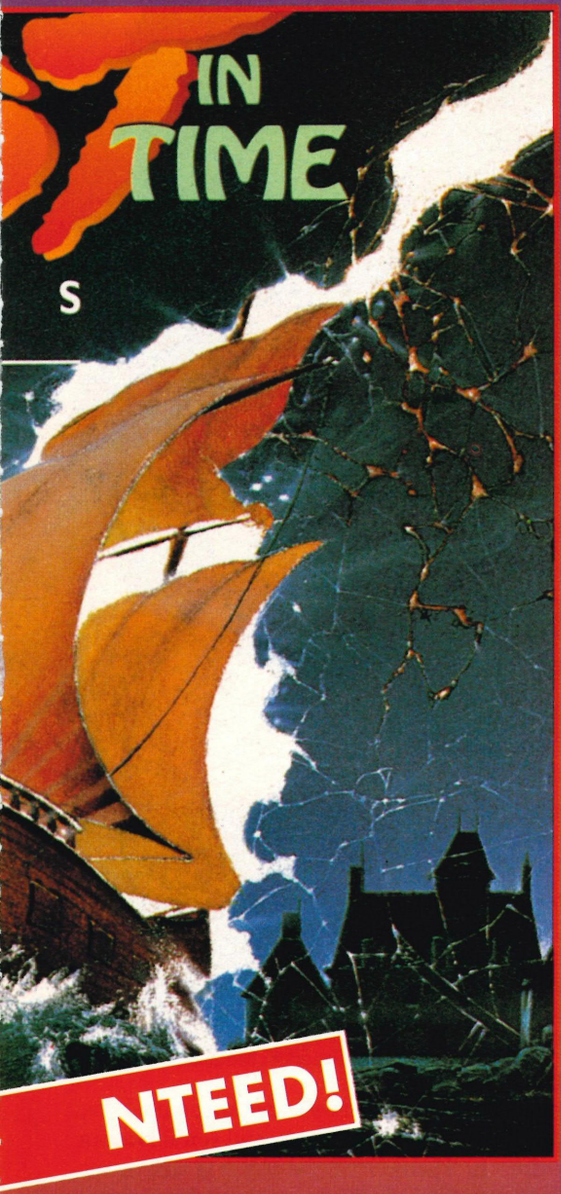
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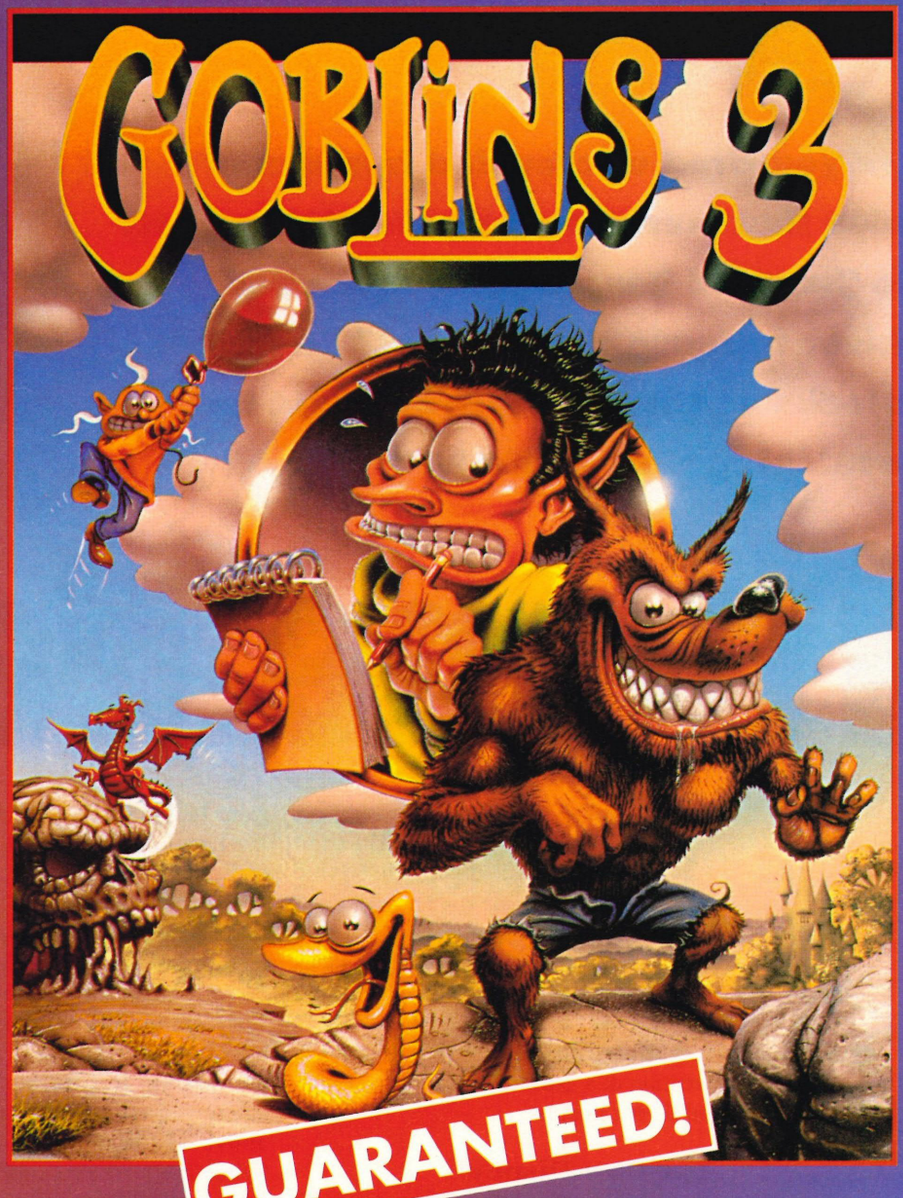
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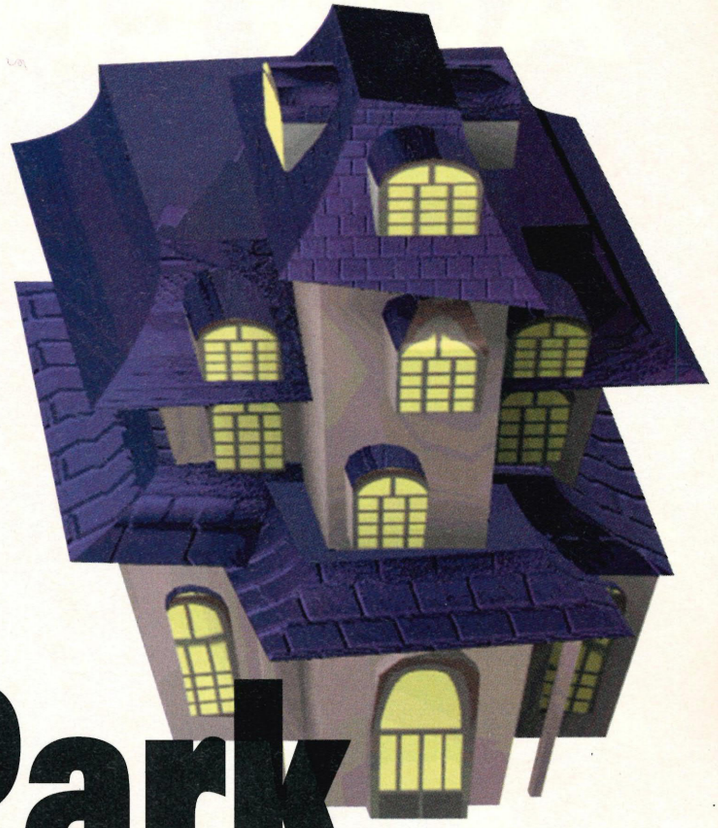
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Title	**Theme Park**
Developer	**Bullfrog**
Publisher	**Electronic Arts**
Contact	**(0753 549442**
Release date	**Spring 1994**
Genre	**Strategy**
Price	**£TBA**



Are you tired of crowded fairground rides that weren't really worth the wait? Do 'haunted houses' only make you shiver because they're cold? Well, It looks as though Bullfrog could be developing the solution

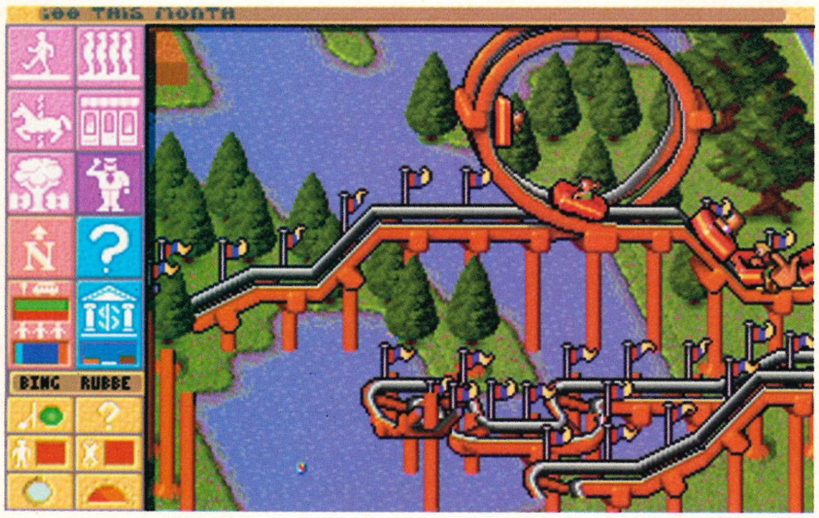
Theme Park

It's widely known that if you want to do something properly then you've got to do it yourself. So why not build your own fairground attraction? Up until now it would have taken more cash than most of us ever dream of having, but those world builders over at Bullfrog have decided to bend their combined wills towards the creation of a game that will allow you to fulfil your dreams.

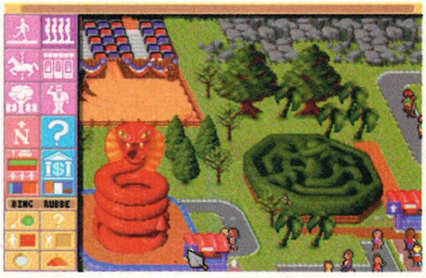
Eur-own-Disney?

Peter Molyneux and co have created a space for themselves in the computer game hall of fame since 1988 with titles like Populous, Populous 2, Powermonger and more recently Syndicate. Populous, one of the most popular PC games of all time, needs little introduction and after its immense success Bullfrog appeared to be somewhat 'one theme' orientated. That was until Syndicate appeared. OK, Syndicate is definitely all about ruthless domination too, but unlike Populous where you view your minions from far above and play only a guiding role, Syndicate puts you right down in the heart of the action, controlling individual agents' actions rather than just their surroundings.

With this in mind, Theme Park would appear to be a return to the old days, but in many ways it's not. This is a serious game, but it's also very original (like Psygnosis' Lemmings it's a gamble which, hopefully, will pay off) and humorous. In Populous you really do have to be a bit of an egotist to succeed. You can have fun, but it's usually of the malicious type, and it never lasts because if you do something stupid your people won't like you and you'll lose out. In Theme Park the object is still to succeed but, hell, why not have fun doing so.



It's a rollercoaster ride to success in Theme Park. Look at that beautiful scenery! Look at those happy people!



Starting off with a bare strip of land, a bus stop and some money in the bank, the object of Theme Park is to put together the craziest possible collection of rides, games and attractions so that coach loads of visitors can have a good time and swell your bank account — allowing you to construct more attractions and so on.

On the right hand side of the main screen is a window which allows you to view one portion of your park. On the left there is a click-on icon panel. Before you start developing, the land is covered in grass, under which is a grid. Each square of the grid represents a unit of foundation for building on. There is a wide variety of buildings, landscaping items and other bits and pieces to put on your grid and most are, to put it mildly, zany.



Poor John, he mustn't have been very good at that either. Who knows, maybe Bullfrog have it in mind to train future leaders of this country by honing their strategic political and economic skills with Populous, while advancing their entertainment skills with Theme Park.

Buildings include hilarious burger-shaped burger bars and packet-of-chips-shaped chip stalls to keep the punters' stomachs happy and a Caribbean bar with what amounts to a tropical beer garden outside to relax in (I hope they include a toilet or it could all go horribly wrong). You'll also be able to build merry-go-rounds, slides, haunted houses and a gigantic inflated castle for the kiddies to hop around in. Best of all though, you get to construct your own rollercoaster!

Landscaping is very important in Theme Park so there's no shortage of goodies to help you plan your park properly. These include roads, paths, fences and barriers to guide the revellers around, while trees (tropical, deciduous and conifers — how nice), fountains and hedge mazes add a touch of beauty to the park.

There's no shortage of staff for the game either, and here again conventional ideas are cast aside (well for us Europeans anyway — you can expect anything in an American theme park).You'll be able to choose from 'giraffe men', rhinoceroses and seals as well as some unusual humanoids.

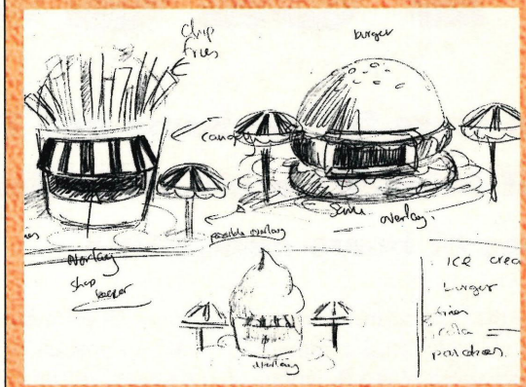
The graphics are very colourful and extremely cute and, like Populous, the biggest attraction is being able to sit back and watch the masses swarming all over your rides and ordering like maniacs from your vending outlets, once you've got the formula right.

A major attraction

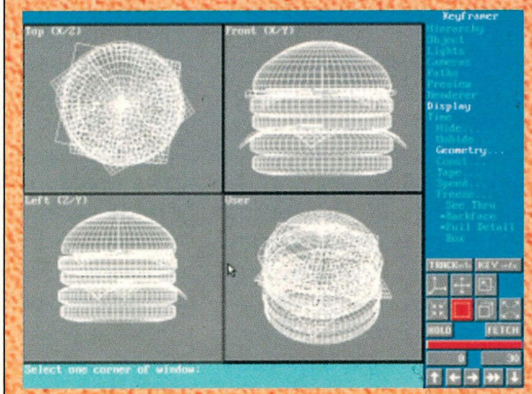
Theme Park is due for release early in 1994, on both floppy disk and CD and is being worked on by a team of four programmers and graphic designers, as well as Bullfrog's founder Peter Molyneux, who originated the game idea. The complexity and attention to cartoon detail of the background graphics and sprites (see box) is impressive, as is the humorous attention to detail in the development of the attractions and people.

They say that Britain's Prime Minister, John Major, ran away from a circus to become an accountant when he was a lad.

How to make a burger



Peter Molyneux's original sketch of his idea for a burger outlet.



Four views of the 3D line construction, before it has been coloured.



Hey presto, a burger. It almost looks good enough to eat (perhaps).

In the beginning there was darkness ...

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* Alone In The Dark I now available on PC and CD Rom complete with "Jack In The Dark" (featuring characters from Alone In The Dark II)

The PC of the future

What does the future hold in store for the home PC? Trying to avoid wandering into the realms of science fiction, John Bennett looks at the possibilities and probabilities of home computing

How do you predict the long term, or even the short term, future of the PC in the home? On one hand, the sheer speed of development of the PC in the past five to ten years has been nothing short of staggering. And it only takes one development to turn the whole direction of the computer industry on its head. Windows 3.0, for example, has had a phenomenal effect in driving hardware capabilities over the past couple of years. Virtual reality may yet do even more to change matters. Who knows? The sky *is* the limit — ten years ago, PCs were in their infancy, fifty years ago the man in the street wouldn't know a computer if it came up and bit him.

But, much as we'd like to see a holographic PC the size of a wristwatch that operates telepathically (or something equally daft), it actually takes technology a lot longer to wend its merry way to the high street than you might expect — mostly for money reasons, as usual. CD-ROM, for instance was touted as the mass storage saviour from day one, but it's taken around eight years to make any real impression.

Even so, if something can be done now, even if it costs ten grand and fills up half a room, the chances are that it will filter through to the high street and the home eventually. To make components smaller, faster or cheaper is a good deal easier than to invent a whole new technology.

This is why I've used technology that is either commercially under development right now, or theoretically possible, as the basis of this 'future PC'. Some (hopefully not all!) of it will fail to materialise for one reason or another, but the majority of it should be 'just round the corner'.

Radical change

It seems to me that any more dramatic changes hang on three main technologies; holographics, voice recognition and virtual reality (VR). All of these relate to the human/computer interface — the way we interact with the PC.

But after a great deal of media attention — particularly towards VR — all three have drifted into limbo somewhat. We've seen little or nothing more of holographics since a couple of games appeared in the arcades a year or so back and then vanished. Mind you, it could be argued that holographic displays would be more of a cosmetic advance than a functional one, anyway.

Games which make use of voice recognition are starting to appear (Impression's Rules of Engagement on the Aria Listener sound card, for instance), but the voice recognition is so limited that it's only really worth it for the novelty value. To progress beyond that we need a much more intelligent PC to be able to handle the vagaries of the human voice. Effective voice recognition would change the role of the PC overnight, enabling it be integrated into all aspects of the home.

VR has a similarly phenomenal potential for both leisure and work computing, providing access to new, simulated worlds and accurate modelling of our own world. But, VR needs greater processing power — something the future will definitely bring — for it to live up to its potential. Until then, it is still essentially rather limited, crude and blocky.

Even so, the advantages of these technologies are immediately obvious and any company that manages to iron out the bugs in them eventually will make a fortune. This is always a good incentive for progress. Any company that does so is going to make a fortune. When, is more difficult to guess — it could be any time in the next 20 years before we have all three.

Part of the furniture

What is more immediately inevitable is that the PC of the future will have a much bigger part to play all round the home. In fact, it's probably going to be wired up to large chunks of it.

Let's suppose that the PC becomes an electronic 'black box' for the household. It certainly has the potential. In that case, it's more than likely we'll have more than one device in the home; a central PC, connected to terminals around the house (and yet more remote controls to lose down the back of the sofa). Once the PC emerges from the confines of the study, it

can be used to control all sorts of things, but first it needs to be able to communicate.

Remote access will be important, for one thing, with more and more people working from home. A direct link to the office PC and a vast array of graphical on-line services (eat your heart out, Ceefax) are a must as we become more and more of an information-based society. Then there's split-screen video conferencing, answerphones and entryphones, fax and modem capabilities, all of which are getting nearer the high street.

None of this is difficult to put into a single PC. It just needs to be incorporated on to smaller chips or boards, and better integrated. And, of course, cheaper.

On the leisure side, the obvious candidates are television, hi-fi and video. PC sound cards and CD-ROM's can already be wired up to a stereo to give top quality — even 3D — sound. TV emulators are also readily available, so it's no great shakes to imagine a time when we'll all be watching TV and working on the PC all on the same screen. But with the age of interactive shopping dawning on us whether we like it or not (God Bless America ...), the PC also needs a direct link to all of the hundreds of available TV, cable and satellite channels.

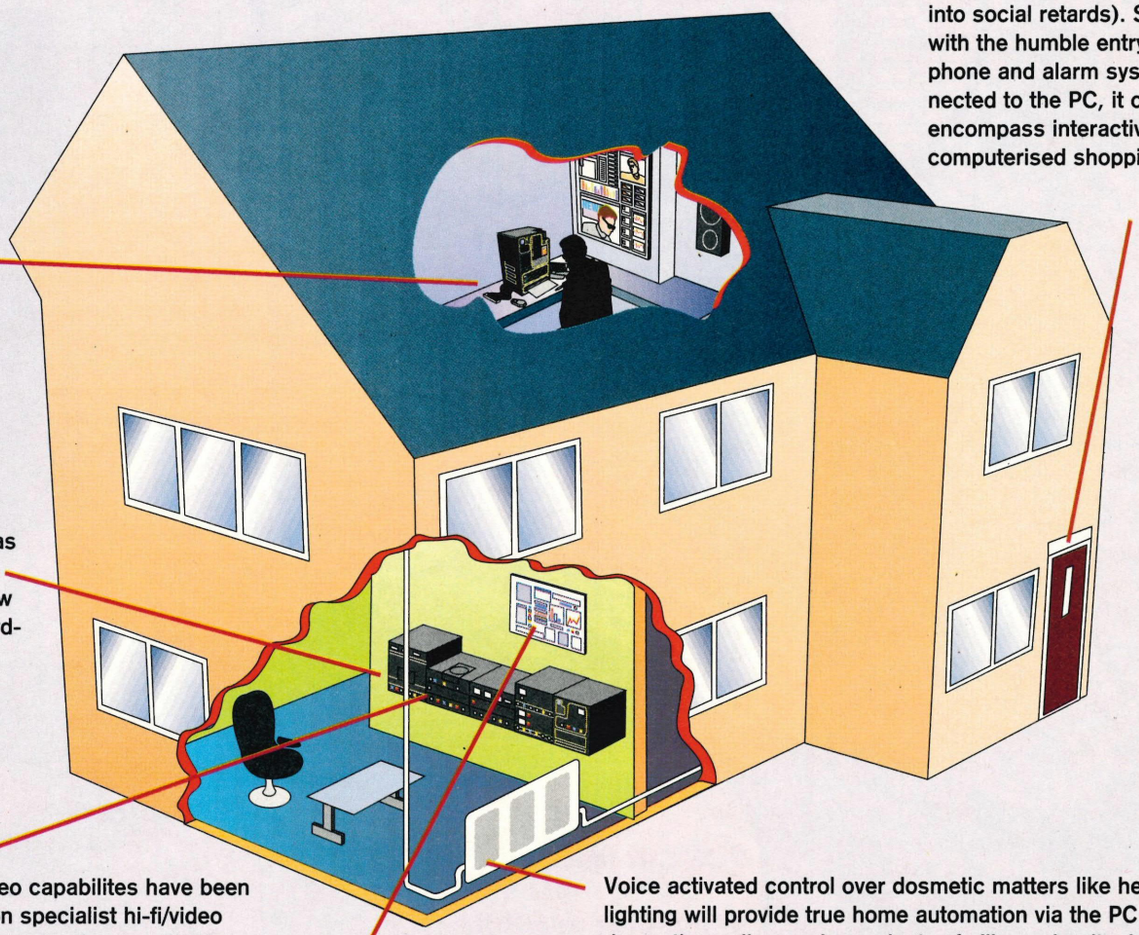
On the domestic side, the PC can be hooked up to all sorts of things. Most household appliances already come with some bits of silicon hidden inside them — including the humble washing machine. So in a few years time heating, lighting, shopping, home security, you name it, there'll be a way to access it or control it via the PC (Microsoft At Work is already scheming to do this for the office). But for this to be really practical — you can't keep legging it to the PC to flush the loo or run the bath — the PC still has to come with a sophisticated form of voice activation.

The PC itself

Just look at consumer goods like hi-fis. They don't need half the flashing lights and buttons they have, but that's what sells them, and we all fall for it. Then take a look at the circular, matt casing, nobs and dials, on the Escom PC in the news pages. It all seems rather familiar.

The PC has to be seen as a desirable consumer item if we're going to buy it in much the same way that we buy the latest hi-fi or video. It needs to look a whole lot better than it does right now — a lump of industrial debris complete with spaghetti junction cabling.

Putting the PC to work in the home of the future



The main PC terminal still takes pride of place in the study as a working device, and a games and leisure machine. More powerful processors, holographic displays, 3D sound and at last some decent application for virtual reality should take gaming to new heights.

Communication with the outside world is going to be one of the PC's greatest assets (that's if it doesn't turn us all into social retards). Starting with the humble entry videophone and alarm system connected to the PC, it can encompass interactive TV and computerised shopping.

The video recorder should, with any luck, end up inside the PC as well. Bought or rented films will be on the new VideoCD format, recording will be possible when we have rewritable CD-ROM discs.

PC TV, sound and video capabilites have been creeping steadily up on specialist hi-fi/video systems for the past couple of years. Tie the whole lot together and you have the ultimate leisure system.

Large, flat screen wall displays incorporating PC, TV, cable and satellite displays.

Voice activated control over dosmetic matters like heating and lighting will provide true home automation via the PC. Most domestic appliances have plenty of silicon circuitry in them already, so hooking it all up shouldn't pose too many problems. But what happens when it all goes wrong ...?

To promote this idea, what have we got in the way of computer ads on TV right now — IBM and the Pink Panther day and night, flying Intel processors and Compaq Presario 'lifestyle' ads? The big money is turning greedily towards the home market and taking a new approach to flogging us the same hardware. Fortunately they can't just do it with ads, the actual machine has to change as well.

So, the PC we will be buying in the future will come with a snappy, matt black stylised casing with lots of lights, buttons, bells and whistles. It doesn't matter if the buttons don't do anything, just so long as they're there ...

It'll be smaller and neater, too. PCMCIA (used on notebooks) puts PC devices like faxes, modems, sound cards and disk drives on something the size of a credit card. As costs drop for these cards we can wave goodbye to all that air in the PC for for 16-bit cards and bulky hard disks.

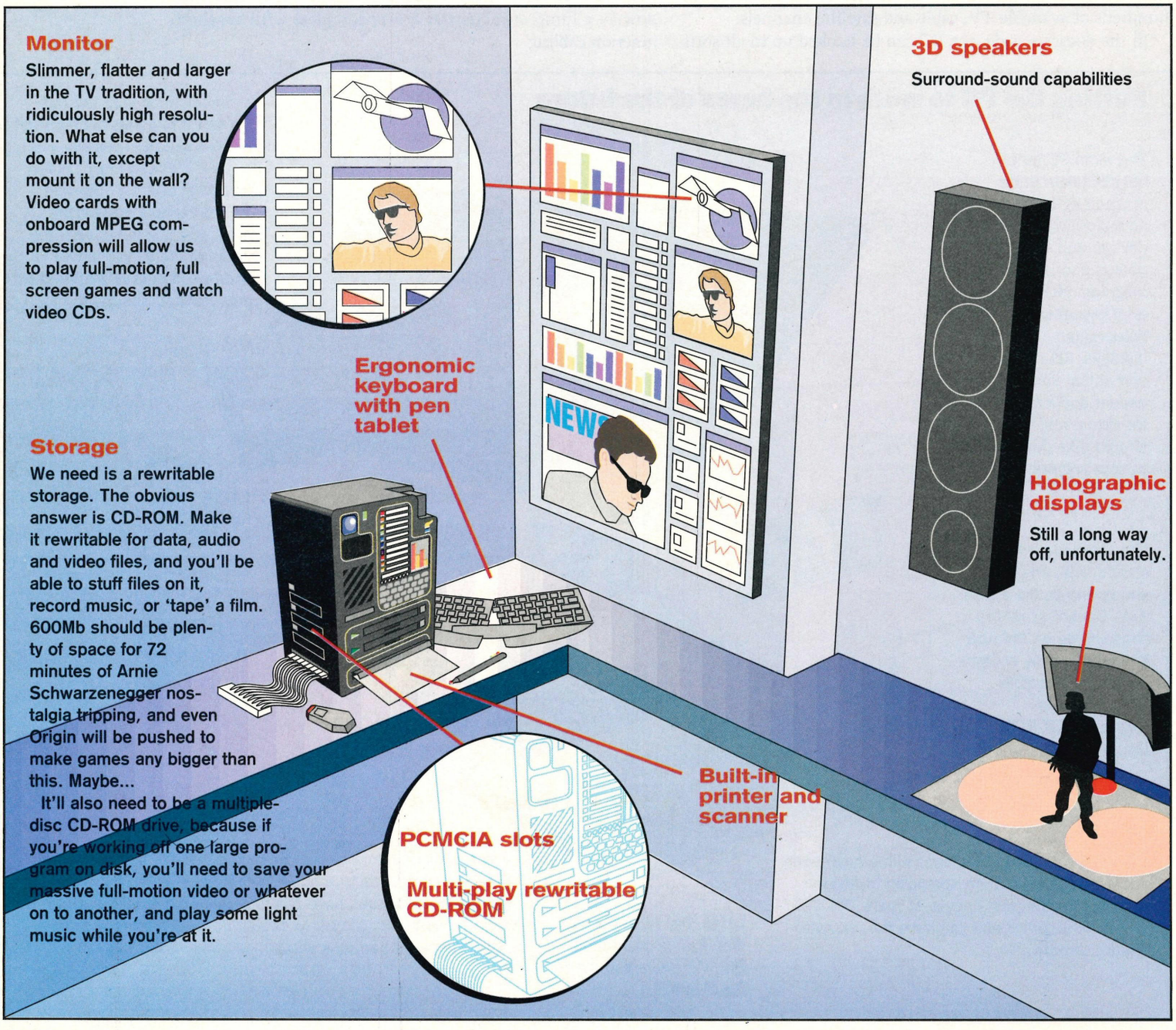
We'll have finally dumped DOS (hurrah!) for a radically improved GUI that can be understood by the most technically-challenged user. And, for a real tall order, how about a PC and operating system that's going to be self-diagnosing, with automatic configuration of hardware and software, and a modem link to the local branch of Configs-R-Us for a bit of outside help. It's not that implausible, though. The Plug and Play initiative, for example, has been set up to tackle the automatic configuration problem over the next few years.

As the box gets smaller, the basic spec will, of course, continue to grow. Look back a mere ten years, when PC XTs had 128K Ram and a 10Mb hard disk. That was your lot. Ten years on, the bare minimum is 4Mb of RAM and a 120Mb hard disk, or thereabouts. All change, please.

So, our imaginary 'standard' home PC will probably come with a minimum of, say, 32Mb of RAM and a two gigabyte hard disk for starters.

I'm sceptical about the immediate advantages of pen computing in the home. It has its advocates, and may yet be the death of the keyboard. But my guess is not for a long while yet.

But, although the keyboard should still remain mightier than the pen, what could happen is that the old Qwerty keyboard is



replaced by a new ergonomically designed job with a small pen tablet attached.

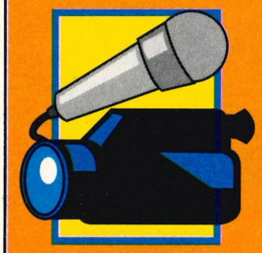
And what about the mouse? Will somebody rid us of this benighted rodent? Hopefully, soon. Voicė recognition will have a large part to play in the PC of the future, but until then both the mouse and keyboard are likely to toddle on, aided and gradually replaced by a combination of light pens and touch screens.

The power behind the throne

Finally, what about the power behind it all, the processor? Or should I say processors? There are various possibilities, but let's forget Hextiums and Heptiums, RISC chips, 686s, 786s, OverDrives or whatever, and go for parallel processing instead. The idea is simple enough. Have two Pentium processors working in parallel. Add two more to double the power. Then two more. And again. The sky's the limit, in theory.

They, the men in the lab coats, are already at a stage with this where it's possible to get more power in one £10,000 desktop PC than there was in the first multi-million pound Cray super-computer — a machine that would fill up a sizable chunk of Harrods' first floor in its day.

And to round it all off ...



Sound and video

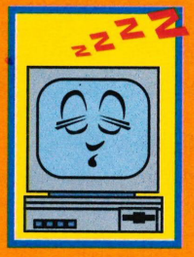
BT has brought the monthly rental of a video-phones down to just over a tenner. So, a built-in camera isn't such an impossibility for conferencing, entryphones, or Dial-a-Pizza.

There's no way we'll avoid a PC that talks back to us. Will we have 'voice-paper' instead of wallpaper? A synthesised contralto to tell you, "Sorry, this PC has been used longer than EEC rules permit. Have a nice day"?



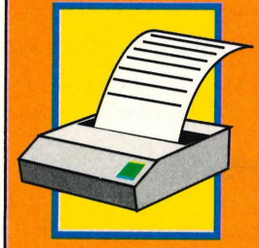
Personal VR headsets

Ah, Virtual Reality ... someone will come up with a sensible use for it, other than over-charging tourists in Leicester Square. When they do, it'll bring a new dimension to games, certainly, and a whole new slant to working with the PC. Sega is currently involved in mass-producing VR headsets and gloves for its consoles, so it's not so far away for the PC either. Let's hope the games are good.



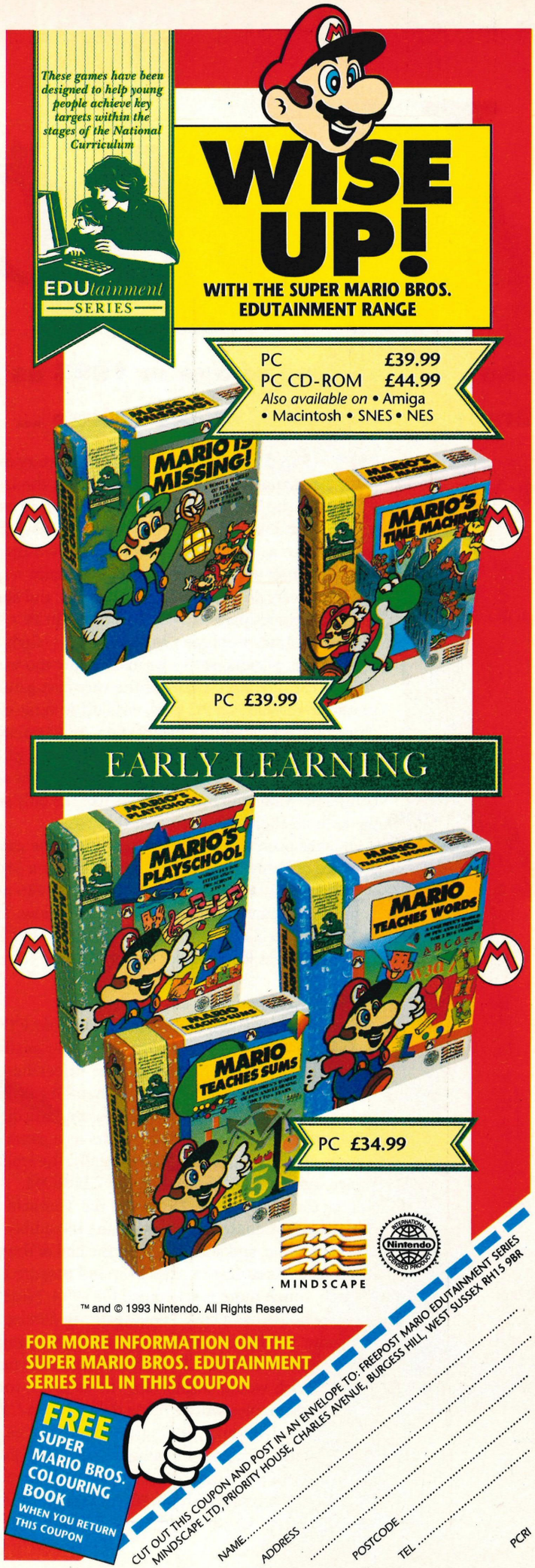
Open all hours

The PC that never sleeps. Screen savers will be a thing of the past; the PC will have a semi-intelligent sleep mode, that tells it when to power down and have a nap while still keeping one electronic ear open — like the Acer PAC 486 which has the ability to wake up to deal with fax or phone calls.



Printing

A home PC needs a home printer/scanner, but it doeesn't need to be that sophisticated. So we have an ultra-slimline built-in A4 scanner and colour inkjet printer. I know this is hardly a massive leap of the imagination, but it's the best of the current alternatives: laser printing is a technology, albeit a good one, that can't be taken much further.



Happy new

The PC has come of age in 1993 as a versatile all-rounder. Christina Erskine looks back to the future ...

If 1993 is going to go down in PC history for anything in particular, it must be that it was in the last 12 months that the PC grew up, and took its place as an all-round entertainment machine. Until recently, the PC had an image as a machine largely for grown-ups to use when they take their work home. True, it had many very good games, but there were doubts about its versatility and ability to appeal to general games players. People who bought PCs solely or largely to play games were seen as specialists — flight sim enthusiasts, or role players, say — or just simply too wealthy to care.

This year, however, many of the very best games on any format were released on PC only, with other versions either straggling a long way behind, or not even contemplated. The PC is now seen as an attractive trade-up option for games players of long standing, as well as its traditional strengths as an all-round computer. More and more, it looks like the only sensible option as the household computing workhorse.

This has been helped by the fact that at the moment there is a degree of hardware stability. If you bought a 386 PC in 1992, it was probably with a nagging feeling that 486 machines were going to plummet down in price real soon now. This year, with 486s at under £1,000, the Pentium (586) isn't lurking in the same way — at least not for the home user.

Multimedia here we come

Alongside affordable 486s came affordable CD-ROM drives with some reason to buy them. The wider availability of CD-ROM drives and more competitive prices has undoubtedly helped, but we have 7th Guest to thank for making people sit up and contemplate the possibilities of multimedia in PC games. Whatever Guest's merits or demerits as a *game*, the graphics, speech, animation, digitisation, basically, the whole Guest experience, turned a lot of people on to CD-ROM.

Since then, we've had the Day of the Tentacle talkie topping the CD-ROM charts for months, the incredibly beautiful rendition of Dune, and sneaking in at the end of the year, the stunning Rebel Assault (see page 118, and prepare to be amazed). Much, much more is scheduled for 1994. Nearly every major software house has a big CD-only game in development, and furthermore, publishers are hoping to shift the emphasis of away from floppy disk on to CD-ROM. By this time next year, many games which would comfortably fit on a not-too-extortionate number of floppies will be being delivered on CD-ROM.

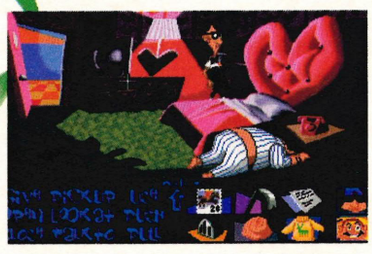
Apart, though, it's hard to spot any earth-shattering technological advances in games themselves. Even the entertaining Day of the Tentacle really only develops the graphic and comic features begun in Indiana Jones and Monkey Island. Ultima Underworld II offers more of the same and a more complex plot rather than radically new dungeons. Those RPGs which are using new techniques, such as Forgotten Castle or Stonekeep, are still in development hell. Flight sims continue to concentrate on authenticity *or* ease of play, although TFX probably comes closest to being an all-round happy marriage between the two.

After all, what do the following have in common: Serpent Isle, Battle for Arrakis, Frontier, The Homeworld, The Tribes, The Shadow and the Flame? They're all this year's sequels to tried and tested, highly successful, games of yesteryear: the number twos for Ultima VII, Dune, Elite, Gateway, Lemmings, and Prince of Persia respectively. This further development of themes has been largely characteristic of games on offer in 1993.

The games of 1993

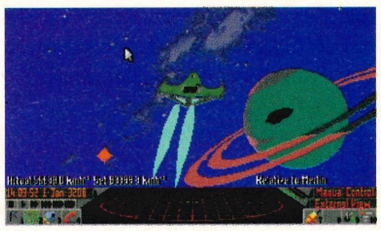
That's not to say we haven't seen some terrific games in the last 12 months. Looking back, I reckon that the following six games probably count as your essential purchases of 1993, marking you as a discerning games collector of fine judgement and ensuring that you won't have missed anything outstanding:

Day of the Tentacle (LucasArts, £42.99)



If you have a CD-ROM drive, spend the extra £3 and buy the talkie; if you haven't, just sit back and enjoy the humour, mishaps, scrapes and puzzles that made Tentacle the best *fun* we had with the PC all year.

Frontier: Elite II (Gametek, £39.99)



Much, bigger than the original, more gameplay variety and a tough challenge. Despite the wait, Frontier managed to see off the pretenders to its crown — Privateer, and MicroProse's Starlord.

Syndicate (Bullfrog/EA, £44.99)

Thank heaven for development teams such as Bullfrog, which still care about matters such as crafting *original* games with the emphasis on play rather than long-winded scenarios and novella-style introductions. All right, some of the missions are a bit

year

repetitive, and the whole thing is about shooting and mass destruction, but it's none the less absorbing for that.

TFX (Ocean, £39.99)



A breath of fresh air in the flight sim market. Neither heavily reliant on putting the right dials in the right place, nor so nakedly an arcade game that all pretence at realistic flight is abandoned, this manages to combine the sense of flying with fast, smooth gameplay.

X-Wing (LucasArts, £45.99)



Challenging gameplay linked with lovely cinematic sequences, *that* music, and a playing experience that has proved remarkably durable — with a new lease of life every time a mission disk is released (see review of B-Wing on page 119).

The games of 1994?

It may be far too soon name the games which will be setting your PC alight in 1994, but the following select list comprises titles which are well worth looking out for:

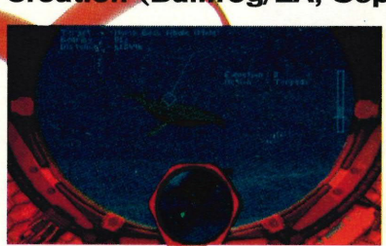
Adrenalin Factor (Mirage, October)

Instinct Design's follow-up to Rise of the Robots is a cyberpunk strategy game cum blast 'em up. While not a sequel to Rise, it will use similar graphic and playing techniques.

Bounty Hunter (Origin Systems, March)

An 'interactive movie' and Richard Garriott's first non-Ultima game.

Creation (Bullfrog/EA, September)



Strategy game of marine evolution and survival.

The Dig (LucasArts, April)

Archaeology in space, designed by Spielberg, written by Moriarty — a pedigree that's hard to beat.

Falcon 4 (Spectrum Holobyte, Summer)

New and improved version of the classic flight sim.

Flight of the Amazon Queen (Renegade, May)

Monkey Island style comic adventure, written by Australian team IBI.

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PC ZONE JANUARY 94

Forgotten Castle (Twin Dolphin/EA, January)



Full-screen RPG/dungeon exploration game.

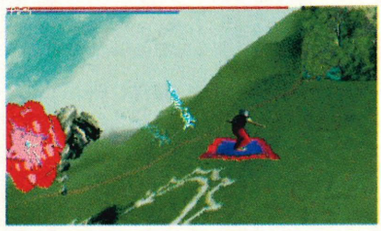
Rise of the Robots (Mirage, January)

3D rendered beat 'em up (see page 50).

Formula One Grand Prix 2 (MicroProse, November)

Geoff Crammond is updating F1GP with improved graphics and tracks.

Magic Carpet (Bullfrog, June)



Fractal-generated flying rug in Arabian Knights-style quest.

Sim City 2000 (Maxis, January)

The veteran town planner in detailed isometric 3D, plus different buildings, extra disasters, underground power and transport systems and lots of other new features.

Identity parade

This time last year, we asked numerous industry notables what they were going to be up to in 1993. Can you identify the following games, which were all due to be released this year, from the extracts below and fill in the blanks? Answers at the foot of the page.

1. " ... Death or Glory, a dogfighting simulation"

2. " ——— will introduce four new flight simulations, beginning with Aces Over Europe, and also a full line of sports products."

3. "We'll have our first PC CD-only game next year, with a working title of John Doe at the moment. We also have a wonderful golf game, as yet untitled ..."

4. "We have three PC originals due out in 1993, Creation, STP and ————, the last of which will be out at the end of February."

5. "A comedy western which Al describes as a 'funny interactive version of Blazing Saddles'..."

6. "An adult horror game with themes and visuals that people aren't exactly used to seeing on computers ..."

7. "Our next game is entitled Beyond the Abyss. We've spent over six months designing the background world and characters before any coding started."

Answers

1) Death or Glory was released as Dogfight, by MicroProse, in May 1993. It scored 5 in our Issue 20 review. 2) Dynamix promised to release four new flight sims this year; so far, only Aces Over Europe has stuttered across our screens. The full line of sports products comprised Front Page Sports Football Pro, and, er ... that's it, so far. 3) The identity of John Doe remains only a twinkle in Ocean's eye: it's still called John Doe, it's a strategy-based spy thriller and it's now due out next spring. The "wonderful golf game", meanwhile, was International Open Golf, rated 4 in Issue 22. 4) The blank is Syndicate, which was actually the only one of Bullfrog's games to see the light of day in 1993, and thus "the end of February" referred to must have been in 1994, or possibly 1995. 5) Freddy Pharkas, Frontier Pharmacist, believe it or not. 6) Phantasmagoria, then provisionally entitled Scary Tales (see CD-ROM releases, above). 7) Alias Beneath a Steel Sky, and reviewed this issue. The descriptions all came from 1993 And All That, PC Review, Issue 15.

Stonekeep (Interplay, February)

Full screen RPG with a mix of rendered and digitised graphics.

Star Trek Next Generation (Spectrum Holobyte, March)

Luscious-looking adventure/interactive movie.

Ultima VIII (Origin Systems, January)



Lord British rides again in more tales of Britannia with an improved isometric screen view and streamlined plot with fewer non-playing characters.

Tie Fighter (LucasArts, April)

Simulation-based follow-up to X-Wing.

UFO (MicroProse, February)

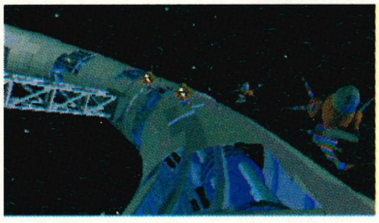
Action cum strategy game dealing with alien invasion of earth.

Z (Bitmap Brothers, May)

First PC-led game from the Bitmaps, a strategy action game.

On CD-ROM

Chaos Control (Infogrames, January)

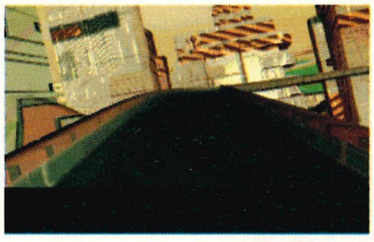


Fast and furious space combat with the emphasis on frighteningly good graphics (lots of 3D-modelling here)) moving at scarifying speed.

Liberation (Mindscape, release TBA)

Or Captive 2, Tony Crowther's sprawling first person exploration game.

Megarace (Mindscape, January)



Futuristic racing game developed by French team Cryo.

Outpost (Sierra, Summer)

Space trading game using SVGA 3D rendered graphics.

11th Hour (Virgin, April)

Back to the Stauf mansion 70 years on from 7th Guest, you investigate the disappearance of lost love Robin Morales.

Ravenlost (SSI, May)

TSR's best-selling RPG series makes it to the PC.

Under a Killing Moon (Access, March)

Multimedia movie featuring Tex "Martian Memorandum" Murphy and set in the future. On two CD-ROMs.


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Lines of



engagement

With one eye on his BT and Mercury shares, Brian Walker prepares us for the future of multi-player gaming via local networks and high speed modems. Games players of the world unite ...

Playing computer games has always been a mainly solitary activity — well, unless you count those infuriating times when everyone gathers round behind you, making 'helpful' suggestions. But if you've ever played a game like Sensi, or Dyna Blaster, or, well, just about anything with a two-player option, you'll know that playing with a living, breathing and even marginally intelligent opponent makes for a completely different and much more enjoyable game.

Firstly, there's the question of competition. Even the most brain-dead of your friends would offer a stiffer challenge than most computer opponents. This is especially true of strategy games, where good artificial intelligence is crucial, but which so often merely emphasises the 'artificial'. The same holds true for flight sims, though once again the AI is rarely up to scratch and players complain frequently about 'turkey shoots' (to use gulf war terminology), as silicon opponents continue to make suicidal manoeuvres.

However the two-player experience takes on another dimension if you play across a modem link. Now the two of you don't even have to be in the same room. You have a PC each, and — generally — a whole screen to play on.

Counting the cost

Modem use has a reputation for being expensive. This isn't necessarily so. The fact of the matter is that, off-peak, a local call costs £1.40 an hour. Split between two players, as these things invariably are, that works out at 70p an hour each. Long-

The games people play

We have tried to make this list of games which support play-by-modem as comprehensive as possible, but inevitably a few titles will have slipped through the net. Keep an eye on future reviews for the most up to date modem games.

'Full modem' capability means that you can connect two PCs over the phone line: you could be in Dover and your opponent in Inverness. A 'null modem' link is the connection of two PCs by a cable which plugs into the serial port of each machine. You are therefore constrained by the length of the cable and much more likely to be in the same room.

Flight sims

Falcon 3.0

Spectrum Holobyte

Possessed of full and null modem capability, this is one of the most in-depth sims currently available. Look out for the 'family' link-up with Spectrum's Electronic Battlefield.

Flight Simulator 4

SubLogic

Peaceful 'take in the scenery' simulation that is full and null modem capable

Tracon II

Mindscape

Stressful 'do your brain in' air traffic control simulation designed to work in conjunction with Sublogic's Flight Simulator 4.

Knights of the Sky

MicroProse

World War 1 dogfight sim. Not the best of its kind but modem play offers considerable compensation.

F-16 Combat Pilot

Digital Integration

Terrific game for its time and still worth a quick trip round the tower today. Null modem support only.

F-15 Strike Eagle III

MicroProse

Solid effort from 'the house of sims' that offers all sorts of options for modem heads: co-operative mode in which two players fly the same mission in separate planes. Head-to-head mode offers dogfights, while front/seat back/seat mode where one player is the pilot and the other operates the gunnery and sends panic-stricken instructions to unfortunate chum via the chat mode. This mode also includes canned messages ('negative,' 'blind, 'aargh!' etc). Can support up to 38400 bps. The faster the better.

Flight of the Intruder

Action Sixteen

'Nam-based game-of-the-film that offers null modem support only. Average game, naff film.



Strategy

Conquered Kingdoms

Mirage

Contact can be sporadic in this game. For this reason it is better suited to null rather than full modem play (sorry, but you'll just have to buy another PC).

Siege

Electronic Arts

the Dogs of War expansion disk is required to get the modem upgrade, but don't bother. Even at a heady 9600bps, play is far too slow to make it a viable option.

Empire Deluxe

US Gold

Numerous multi-player options for this fine, if ancient, game which even includes network support. Try the CGW pre-designed scenario for starters.

Command HQ

MicroProse

One of the all-time great modem greats from the daddy (mummy?) of the genre Dani (formerly Dan) Bunten. Look out for the recent upgrade produced by fans of the game.

distance calls, using BT's new weekend cut-price rate, work out at just under £2 an hour. At the time of writing Mercury looks set to respond with cuts of their own. Also, if there is a cable service in your area then check its prices too, since some of the suppliers even offer free local calls.

Modems are surrounded by jargon which many potential users find off-putting. However, with most modems conforming to current technical standards, much of this gibberish can be safely ignored. What is worth checking is that the modem is 100% Hayes compatible to ensure that it will be able to 'speak to' communication software packages.

Choosing hardware

The next question that needs to be asked is: what is the modem going to be used for? Is it going to be used for anything other than games playing, such as hefty file transfers? If the answer to this is yes, then a high speed modem is essential. For example, a one megabyte file can take over an hour to transfer at 2400 bps (bits per second). A 14400 bps can perform the same action in under a half an hour, thus offering both efficiency and a savings on phone bills. Indeed, the only reasons to buy a 2400 bps modem now is if you intend to use it only to play strategy games (most flight sims work better at high speeds) and log on to local bulletin boards. One point worthy of note: if you see a modem advertised as supporting 9600bps make sure that this does not refer just to the fax mode.

Useful numbers

Technology

BT	0800 181514
Mercury	071 528 2000
DS Ltd	03552 65500
CompuServe	0800 2893078
US Robotics	0800 225252
Adtech Micro	081 672 3628

Publishers

Digital Integration/Action 16	0276 684959
Electronic Arts	0753 549442
Impressions	071 351 2133
Interplay	0865 390029
Maxis	071 490 2333
MicroProse	0454 326532
Microsoft	0734 270001
Mindscape	0444 246333
Mirage	0260 299909
QQP c/o Mirage	0260 299909
Spectrum Holobyte	0454 326532
US Gold	021 625 3366
Virgin	081 960 2255

... in the middle of the day (or night)

Global Conquest

MicroProse
Disappointing conquer-the-world game that was too wacky for its own good. Can support up to four players with modems thanks to a 'splitter' available from the design team.

Global Domination

Impressions
The title speaks for itself. As is usual in such games, the human provides a far better opponent than the computer.

The Perfect General

Ubi Soft
The weak computer opponent makes this otherwise excellent game a must for modem play. However it's sluggish at 2400 bps, so buy that high speed modem now.

World War II: Battles of the South Pacific

QQP (import)
US vs Japan naval war game.

688 Attack Sub

Electronic Arts
A fine game and the only sub sim to support modem play. Doubly disappointing then, that it doesn't work. Look out for the forthcoming Sea Wolf from the same design team which promises modem support that will work.

Tank

Spectrum Holobyte
Dated now, but one of the few tank sims to offer modem support.

Omega

Mindcraft
Extraordinary design-your-own futuristic tank. You could spend the rest of your life reading just the manual.

Fireteam 2200

Storm
EGA graphics definitely date this strategic tank game, but the scenario editor and modem support make it good value still.

Armour Alley

Electronic Arts
Dire arcade game

Wordtris

Spectrum Holobyte
Real-time word game, not for Scrabble purists. Full and null modem play support.

Faces

Spectrum Holobyte
Real-time puzzle game. Includes full and null modem play support.

Robosport

Maxis
Lightweight and wacky, this is a fun way to kill half an hour and lots of opponents.

Populous

Electronic Arts
Modem play adds another dimension to the classic and pioneering world building game. Be prepared to run up a very large phone bill.



Populous II/Powermonger

Electronic Arts
See above.

When Two Worlds War

Impressions
In-depth space strategy game.

Battlechess

Interplay
Fun game for those who like the idea of chess, but don't want anything too deep and meaningful.

Checkmate

Interplay
It's the real thing? Zzz.

Sports

'Vette

Spectrum HoloByte
As in Corvette. As in Vroom!

David Leadbetter's Greens

MicroProse
Currently the only golf game to offer modem play.

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endurance

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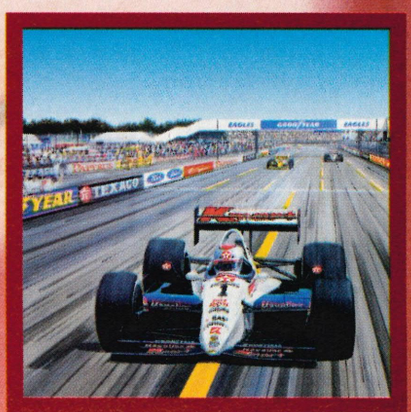


speed distance

Virgin







PAPYRUS™

The other major choice is whether to opt for an internal or external modem. External modems can impress your friends with their flashing lights, but internal ones can do the job just as well. Often the final decision is based on how much space is available both in your PC and on your desk.

The cost of modems has plummeted recently. A 2400 bps modem can be had for as little as £50. Many of these also offer a useful fax facility. Recently the speed stakes have been upped by the appearance of 14400 bps (V32bis) modems at a comparatively low cost. An update of the V32, most of these modems actually support V42 error correction which means a whopping throughput speed, when connected to a similar modem, of 57000 bps.

The high speed US Robotics Sportster and the Zoom 14400 both retail for just over £200 (inc VAT), while the Adtech Micro 14400 modem costs only £175. All these modems come with a fax facility and communications software. Sending faxes this way is a doddle, but your computer will have to be left on for them to be received. These prices make V32 modems, at around £150, seem redundant.

When buying a high speed modem such as V32 bis, it important to check whether it supports the V32 protocol or whether it simply drops straight down to V22. Many bulletin boards, such as CompuServe, only support up to V32.

Installation

The first thing to consider, even before buying the modem is what comm port it is going to use. Obviously it cannot use the same one as the mouse. Once this has been determined ensure that the modem cable has the appropriate plug (9 or 25 pin) to match the comm port.

Telling the modem which port it's in is a simple matter of changing the DIP switches on the back. If the mouse is on COM1 then set the modem for COM2 or 4, and if the mouse is on COM2 then select COM1 or 3 for the modem. Anyone using Windows communications software should immediately tell the program what COM port is being used to avoid error messages. The most likely reason for modem failure is conflict with another peripheral, usually the mouse. So check the comm port settings very carefully.

Most modems come bundled with some sort of communication software. It's generally fairly basic but serviceable, and if you're only planning to perform simple file transfers then it should prove adequate. Windows users should check out Micro Link, an excellent shareware program for their favourite GUI. Heavy duty users may want to consider the Procomm family (DOS and Windows).

CompuServe has its own software: CompuServe Information Manager (both DOS and Windows). If you do get on CompuServe then you may want to investigate off-line readers such as OzCis (shareware) which enable you to perform many tasks off-line, thus reducing the bills somewhat.

Protocols are the method used to check data being transmitted. Make sure the communications software you buy supports the Z modem protocol. This is the only protocol which, in the event of a disconnection during a data transfer, will restart the data transfer at the point of the disconnection. CompuServe has its own protocol (Quick B).

... all around the world

Grand Prix
MicroProse
A great game that gets even better when you ring someone, somewhere.

Tom Landry Strategy Football
Merit (import)
One of the few gridiron games to offer modem play, and a fine one at that.

NFL Pro League Football
Interplay (import)
One of the best strategic-level games on the subject. For (American) purists.

Play-by-mail

Links 386 Pro
US Gold
One of the best games in the world. In the absence of full modem play, the facility to transfer rounds by modem is an acceptable alternative. I suppose.

Battles of Destiny
QQP (import)
Huge global domination game in the manner of Empire. The sheer length of the proceedings make file transfers the undertaking of a lifetime.

Second Front/Western Front/Carrier Strike
US Gold
Save at the end of a turn and then send the files by post. For the truly dedicated only.

Coming Soon

Red Crystal
QQP
The first role-playing game to offer modem play, both co-operative and head-to-head.

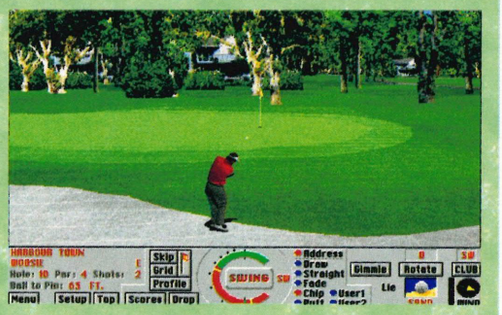
Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space
Interplay
The modem upgrade will initially come on the CD-ROM version, though will be available on floppies at a later date.

Sea Wolf
Electronic Arts
The long-awaited follow-up to 688 Attack Sub, this promises to have a modem option that actually works.

The Perfect General II
Mirage
A game that almost lived up to its title first time around, promises to do so in the sequel.

Links 486 Pro
US Gold
A modem option is probably the only thing that could be added to this classic game.

Dune III
Virgin
Yet another spin-off of the book that refuses to die. So far, the games have proved equal to the novel's lofty reputation. The addition of modem play should ensure that this does not change.

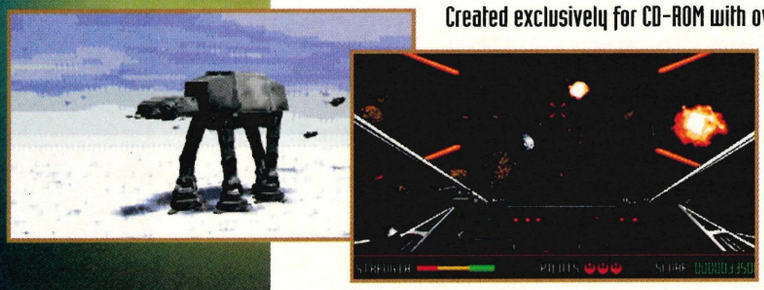


The Lost Admiral II
QQP
The original game was a highly cerebral affair, but one which was spoilt by some outrageous cheating on the part of the computer. The addition of a human opponent should render this irrelevant.

New!
The new data disk for Electronic Art's Syndicate, American Revolt, will include a facility to play the game on a network, with up to eight players being able to participate. Also on the disk are 24 new missions, plus another 10 custom designed for network play. Two new weapons are added as another bonus; air raid introduces some very big bangs, while cloning introduces the 'haven't I seen you somewhere before' factor.
If you're interested in the idea of playing Syndicate over a network, don't miss our full review specifically of American Revolt in network mode next month.

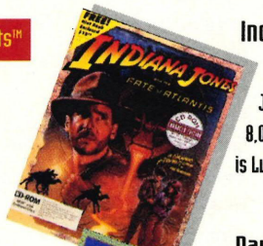


Hyper Into A New Experience In CD-ROM



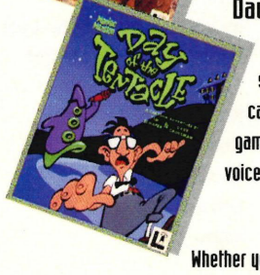
Created exclusively for CD-ROM with over 300 megs of full-throttle combat, Rebel Assault puts you in the pilot's seat for the ultimate duel between good and evil. Battle Imperial forces in over a dozen action-packed levels featuring mind-boggling 3D graphics combined with breathtaking full screen video from the Star Wars films. Defend Tatooine against Imperial attack, challenge the sinister walkers on the ice planet Hoth and fight the evil Empire in a series of all-out deepspace battles. May the Force be with you!

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Day of the Tentacle™ Enhanced CD-ROM edition

Dr. Fred's mutated purple tentacle is out to turn the human race into house pets and you've got to stop him in this wacky sequel to the award-winning Maniac Mansion®. Setting a new standard in cartoon adventures, Day of the Tentacle incorporates the original Maniac Mansion as a game within a game and contains over 100 zany sound effects and over 4000 lines of recorded dialogue, including the voice of Richard Sanders, best known as WKRP's Les Nessman.

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Screenshots are intended to be illustrative of the gameplay and not the screen graphics which may vary considerably between formats in quality and appearance and are subject to the computer's specifications.

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Have I got clues for you

Getting hopelessly, utterly and unavoidably stuck in a game is something that happens to the best of us. Cal Jones wades through a heap of clue books to find out whether they're worth your hard earned cash

We've all been there. After hacking your way through the noisome Swamps of Putrefaction, trudging across the windswept Waste of Time and defeating the wicked Wizard of Wandsworth with the legendary Halibut of Destruction, you've finally reached the fearsome Fortress of Frustration. Unfortunately, you can't get in. The only thing which stands between you and completing Legendary Gnome Slaughterers of Kingston is the key to the door, and you can't find it anywhere, of course. So where do you go from here?

Well, you could always go out and buy the clue book. "What? You mean I should spend eight or nine quid just to find out how to get into the Fortress of Frustration?" I hear you say. Er, yes. That's exactly what I mean. I know it hardly seems fair that, after spending £30 to £50 on a game, you need to splash out an extra eight quid or more in order to have the pleasure of finishing it. But what are the alternatives? You could run up a similar sum by calling a helpline, only to find out that the helpline is automated or the person on the other end doesn't know the answer. On the other hand, you could try writing to your favourite games magazine, but then you have to wait until your plea for help has been printed. Finally, you could give up on the game altogether. Of all the options available, the clue book is starting to look more and more attractive.

So, what do you actually get for your money? It varies from book to book, but usually you'll find a walkthrough of the game along with maps, tables of statistics and, if you're lucky, an illustration or two. The books I've reviewed here contain either an in-depth solution for one specific game or a brief solution for several different games. In both cases I was looking for good presentation and easy access of information.

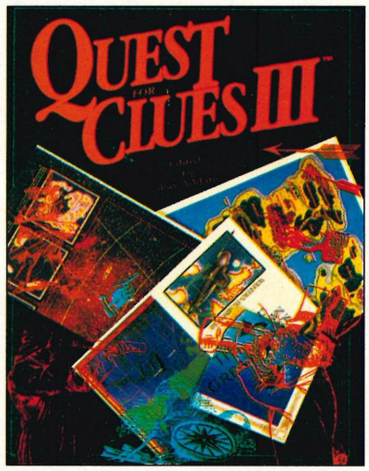
Multi-solution tips books

Quest for Clues

This series is available from Origin through Electronic Arts, and each book covers various different games from companies including Sierra, SSI, LucasArts, Magnetic Scrolls and, naturally, Origin itself. Solutions cover between two and eight pages of each book, so they tend to be rather to the point and lacking in frills. The advantage of buying a book that contains solutions to more than one game is that you'll be able to use it more than once, the disadvantage being that it might not go into enough detail to enable you to solve a specific problem. However, many of the games covered in the Quest for Clues compilations do not have their own clue books.

Quest for Clues III / Electronic Arts, £15.99

With solutions to 40 adventures and role-playing games, you're certainly getting value for money here. The following is a list of games covered.



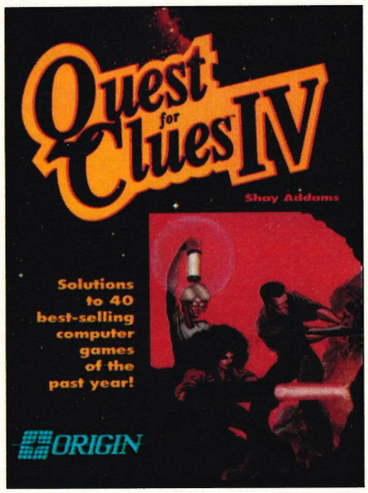
Arthur
Bad Blood
Battletech
Centauri Alliance
Chambers of the Sci-Mutant Priestess
Champions of Krynn
Circuit's Edge
Codename: Iceman
Conquests of Camelot
Curse of the Azure Bonds
Deja Vu II
Dragon Wars
Drakkhen
Fish
Future Wars
Gold Rush
Hero's Quest
Hillsfar
Hound of Shadow
Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade
It Came from the Desert
Journey
Keef the Thief
Knights of Legend
The Kristal
Leisure Suit Larry III
Loom
Magic Candle
Manhunter: San Francisco
Neuromancer
Police Quest II
Space Quest III
Space Rogue
Starflight I & II
Transylvania III
Universe III
Usurper: Mines of Qyntarr
Windwalker
Wizardry V

Quest for Clues IV
Electronic Arts, £15.99

No less than 39 solutions are covered in this compilation:

Altered Destiny
Bane of the Cosmic Forge
Bat
Buck Rogers: Countdown to Doomsday
Chronoquest I & 2
Countdown

The Dark Heart of Uukrul
Death Knights of Krynn
Demon's Tomb
Earthrise: The Solus Incident
Elvira
Escape from Hell
Eye of the Beholder
Fountains of Dreams
Hard Nova
Heart of China
The Immortal
James Bond: The Stealth Affair
Kings Quest V
Legend of Faerghail
Les Manley: Search for the King
Lord of the Rings I
MegaTraveller I
Might and Magic II
Mines of Titan
Quest for Glory II
Rise of the Dragon
The Secret of Monkey Island
Secret of the Silver Blades
Sentinal Worlds: Future Magic
Space 1889

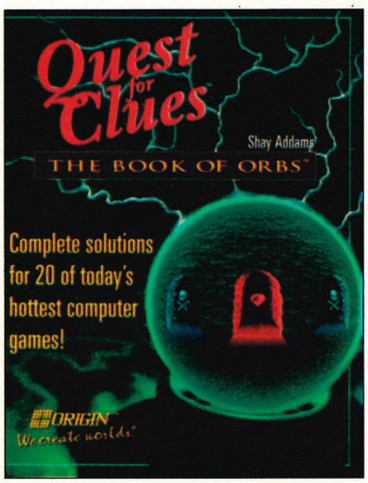


Space Quest IV
Spellcasting 101
Timequest
Tunnels and Trolls
Ultima VI
Ultima: Martian Dreams
Ultima: Savage Empire
Wonderland

Quest for Clues: The Book of Orbs
Electronic Arts, £15.99

The Book of Orbs is slightly down in size from earlier titles in the series, with smaller pages and fewer games covered. However, it's probably worth noting that the reduction in size has not affected the price. Unless you're running some sort of tips helpline, I'm not sure that this book offers enormous value for money.

The Adventures of Willy Beamish
Buck Rogers: Matrix Cubed
Conan the Cimmerian
Cruise for a Corpse
Elvira II
Gateway to the Savage Frontier
Hare Raising Havoc
Leisure Suit Larry V
Lest Manley in Lost in LA
Martian Memorandum
MegaTraveller II
Might and Magic III
Monkey Island 2
Police Quest 3
Pools of Darkness
Robin Hood: Conquest of the Longbow
Spellcasting 201
Star Trek 25th Anniversary

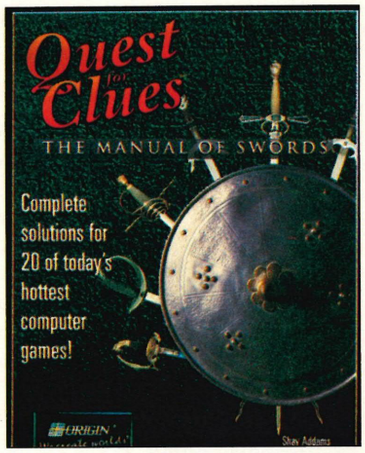


Ultima Underworld
Vengeance of Excalibur

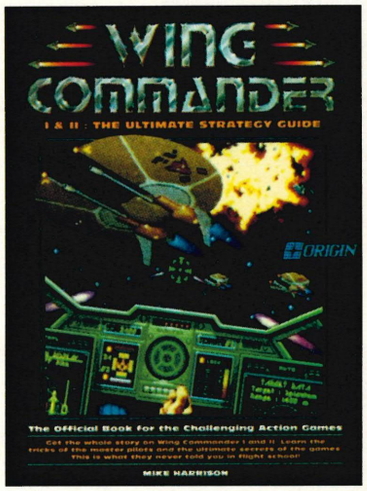
Quest for Clues: the Manual of Swords
Electronic Arts, £14.99

Twenty games and one data disk are covered in this manual which, like The Book of Orbs, is smaller than previous efforts. Like the other books in the series, the Manual of Swords isn't just restricted to the better known games, but also gives solutions to a few more obscure titles.

The Dagger of Amon Ra
The Dark Half
Dark Seed
Dune
Gobliiins
Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis
Kings Quest VI
Leather Goddesses of Phobos 2
Legend of Kyrandia
Lord of the Rings II
Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes
Might and Magic: Clouds of Xeen
Plan 9 from Outer Space
Planet's Edge: Point of no Return
Prophecy of the Shadow



Wing Commander I & II: The Ultimate Strategy Guide
Electronic Arts, £17.50



This weighty tome gives tips and strategies for the two Wing Commander games and the Secret Missions data disks.

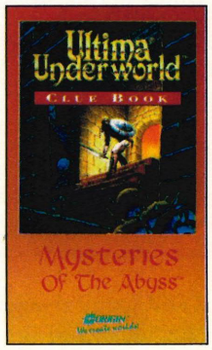
It's presented as the memoirs of Lt Colonel Carl LaFong, a veteran of the Kilrathi wars, and contains illustrated hints and tips on each mission, the various manoeuvres, profiles on both your fellow pilots and your enemies, and maps.

In addition, there's an interview with Chris Roberts, the creator of the Wing Commander, an Origin profile and a section devoted to how the game was made. The manual does not cover Privateer or the forthcoming Wing Commander III, however. Overall, it's an interesting read, but a little pricey nonetheless.

Single game tips books

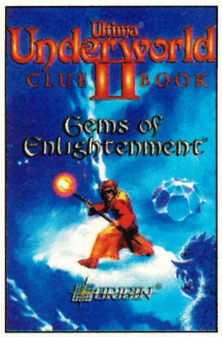
The following titles all cover individual games and are generally far more detailed than any of the solutions you'll find in the compilations. I've chosen a selection of clue books which give solutions to some of the most popular and taxing games currently available.

Ultima Underworld: Mysteries of the Abyss
Electronic Arts, £8.99



It may be nearly two years old, but the amount of queries we receive about this game proves that it's as popular as ever. Each level is described in detail, and there are maps and illustrations throughout. If you're a real Ultima addict, this book also includes a potted history of the Stygian Abyss to help set the scene for the game.

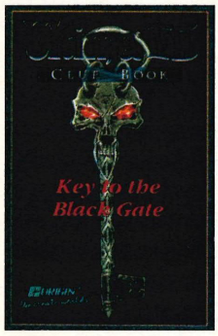
The manual contains plenty of general advice on playing the game and also gives the locations of all important items, a list of mantras, a translation of lizardman speech and a guide to combat. All information is easily accessed via the index in the back. A very good all round guide to the game which contains everything you need to know.



Ultima Underworld II: Gems of Enlightenment

Electronic Arts, £8.99

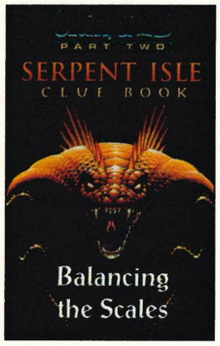
This book contains a few more pages than the first Underworld solution, and consequently is more detailed. Each world is described as if by one of that world's inhabitants, giving hints rather than an actual step-by-step solution. A detailed walkthrough is also included, if you need it, while the one page check-list of things to accomplish is very useful indeed. You'll find the usual maps, statistics and tables, which takes the bother out of finding runes and other items.



Ultima VII: Key to the Black Gate

Electronic Arts, £8.99

Like the Underworld and Serpent Isle clue books, there's a brief guide to the areas you will visit during the game, written rather like a travel guide. One thing it doesn't contain is a walkthrough, so if you've got a very specific problem, you might not find the answer in here. Instead there's a section devoted to questions and answers about the game, but these are of a general nature. The book is nicely presented with maps, illustrations and statistics, but is probably too vague to suit most people.



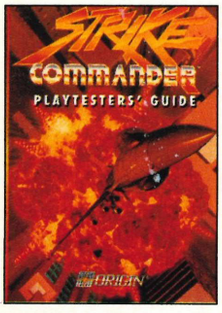
Ultima VII, Part II: Balancing the Scales

Electronic Arts, £8.99

We've had countless calls and letters from readers stuck in this game, so it's not surprising that I've become very familiar with the clue book.

Balancing the Scales is well presented, easy to use and contains two solutions; one cryptic, one more straightforward. The cryptic solution is presented as though it were a story narrated by Thoxa, one of the characters in the game, so the book is quite a good read in itself. It also contains a short history of Serpent Isle and a guide to local customs and philosophies.

There are maps of each area, and various tables showing the locations of artefacts, prices of goods, spells and a bestiary. It's pretty thorough, and you should be able to find your way around it quite easily.

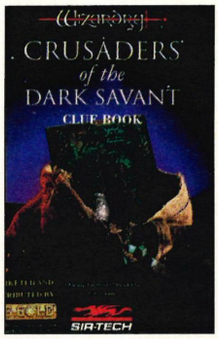


Strike Commander Playtesters' Guide

Electronic Arts, £8.99

This manual contains a wealth of information on planes, weapons and your fellow Wildcats. Unlike role-playing games and adventures, you'll need a certain amount of flying skill, even with the added benefit of detailed descriptions of mission tactics, so you might say that this is more of a playing guide than a full solution to the game. The information is still useful though.

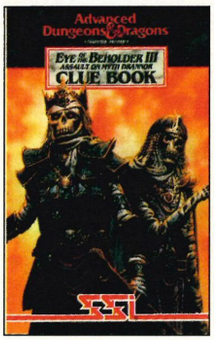
It's illustrated throughout with diagrams and photographs of planes, and is a good all round guide to the game. Unfortunately it doesn't cover the Tactical Operations add-on disk.



Crusaders of the Dark Savant

US Gold, £12.99

Undoubtedly the best looking book of the bunch, this book is packed with nicely drawn sketches. Granted, these won't solve your puzzles, but they break up the text and make it a bit more interesting to read. Each location is described in full and in stages, but with no index, you'll have to look carefully to find the section you want. There's a detailed bestiary, an armoury catalogue and blank pages for making notes. General hints and a question and answer section has also been included. Yes, there are maps. What did you expect?



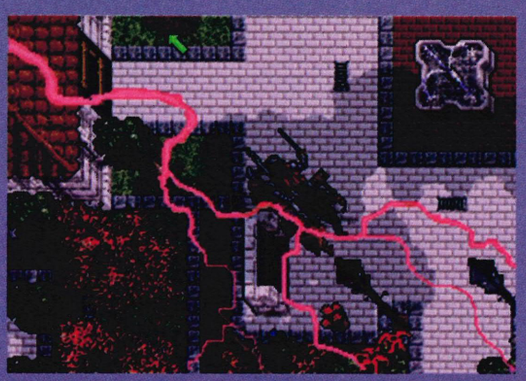
Eye of the Beholder III

US Gold, £9.99

A thin book for your ten quid, but it contains everything you'll need. Each level has its own map, and important locations are numbered with descriptions on adjoining pages. The bestiary is illustrated, the statistics tables are all there and you'll even find a history of Myth Drannor. This is one of the best clue books simply because it's so straightforward. Everything is laid out clearly and you'll always find exactly what you need to know. A good buy.

Clued up or clueless?

So, it seems that clue books are extremely useful if you get hopelessly stuck in a game, but are they actually worth buying? Having already forked out between £30 and £50 for a game, I can well understand why you might resent paying an additional (and often, not inconsiderable) sum just to have a chance of completing it. For what they offer, clue books do tend to be a bit pricey, especially when you consider that they become redundant as soon as you finish the game. The main problem is that, once you've bought a clue book, the temptation is to keep referring to it even when you don't really need to. Consequently, whilst they may provide the helping hand you need to get you through a sticking point, they can also spoil your enjoyment of a game. More importantly, is it actually worth buying a book just to get you past one small puzzle? You really have to ask yourself how desperate you are to complete that particular game.



One game that has been causing our readers all sorts of headaches is Origin's Serpent Isle. Would it help to buy the cluebook?

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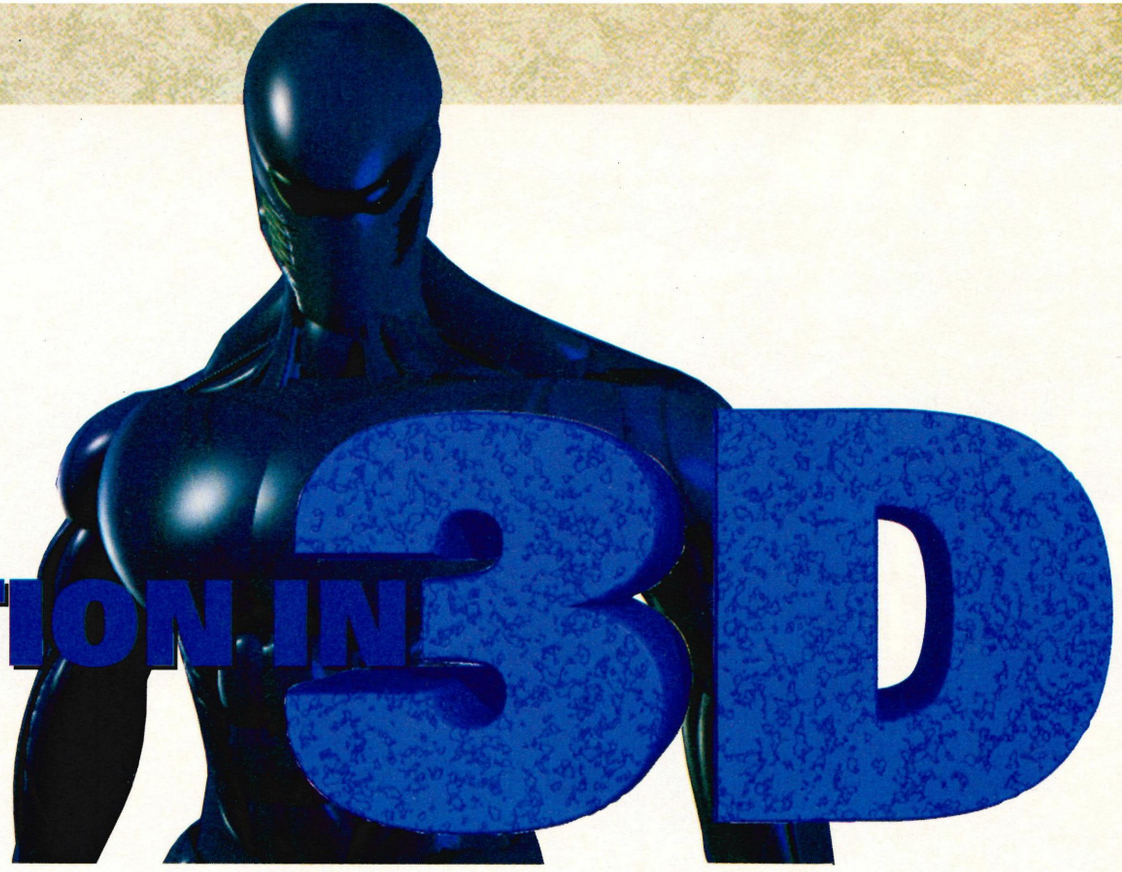
Nominated for the prestigious BBC TV "Going Live" game of the year award.

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CREATION IN 3D

The finishing touches

The more the design and development work on a game approaches completion, the more likely it is that unforeseen glitches will hold up the final assembling and debugging process. We postponed last month's report from the Instinct Software team at Mirage on Rise of the Robots until this issue in order to be able to show you some of the latest screen shots from the actual play in this entirely 3D-modelled beat 'em up, as opposed to robot design screens, which feature dmainly in our earlier articles.

As we reported in our first instalment in Issue 24, the robots were initially designed, drawn and animated in isolation from the game's backgrounds, using Autodesk's 3D Studio modelling and rendering package. Once this was done, the robots were placed on their respective backgrounds and the artificial intelligence and collision detection factors required to create fighting sequences programmed in.

Combining the robots with their locations and making the gameplay believable has proved a time-consuming process. Not only must the animations and moves look realistic and successful punches and kicks register properly in two-player mode — where each robot is controlled with the keyboard or joystick — but the computer-controlled opponents for the one-player mode must react credibly to the moves made by the human player. Furthermore, in adding artificial intelligence routines (so that, for instance, a computer-controlled robot doesn't just use the same moves each time) there couldn't be any loss of speed or smoothness in movement.

The whole team has been involved in 'tweaking' — making changes to the animation, the collision detection, the background lighting so that the play looks and feels authentic.

Some changes have been bigger than others. The final robot to be fully designed and animated was the 'supervisor', the last and most difficult of the opponents, with a 'liquid gold' appear-

Fighting talk

In one-player mode against the computer, you play the cyborg against each of the six computer-controlled robots in turn. You defeat one opponent and move on to the next by winning the best of three bouts. You start by meeting the loader, then moving on to the ape-like builder. Further on, the military droid is nimble and very quick, and the fighter is both quick, agile and strong.

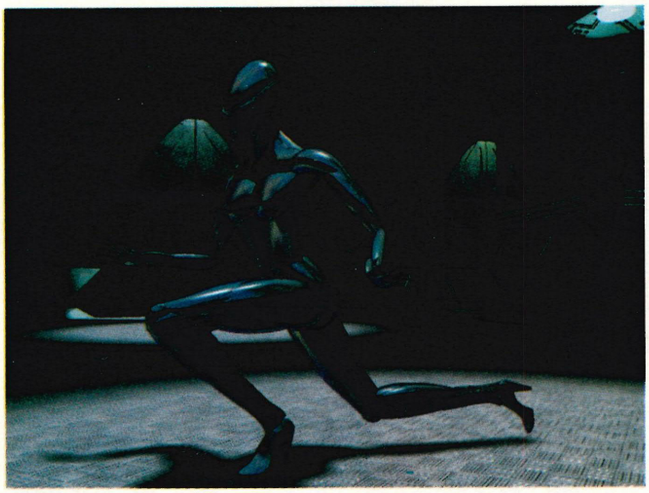
In two player mode, you can choose which robot to be. The keyboard and joystick controls have been designed to be comparable, ie, pull down and fire will induce a kick from each robot, but the design of the droids means that the kicks won't be identical in effect.



The builder may be huge, but it's not very bright, and it's one of the earliest robots you'll meet as the cyborg (left). This two-handed overhead slam is its special move — and you should be quick enough to get out of the way.



One of your most useful moves as the cyborg is this high tucked jump; just right for evading the slow builder as it tries to sweep you off your feet. It will also kick you with both feet balancing on his arms, punch you or even headbutt you.



ance and who will 'morph' in and out of various shapes. When the time finally came to transfer the supervisor from a pen and paper sketch to the computer screen, a momentous decision was taken. The supervisor now sports high heels and a distinctly womanly figure.

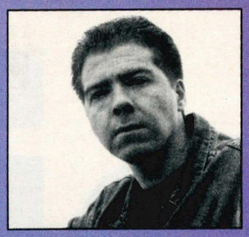
"It seemed appropriate," explains Instinct boss Sean Griffiths, "because all the early supervisor animations came out very sleek and moved very gracefully. It puts a new perspective on the game, we think."

Further to our last despatch from Mirage, the game now has a complete introductory sequence, showing you flying into the city and the HQ of Electrocorp to do battle with the robots which are running amok in the building. Also ready are the majority of the link sequences: the scenes which introduce each robot in his particular territory — the loader in the warehouse, supervisor in an 'ivory tower' like sanctum, complete with swirling ectoplasmic effects — and gives the player statistics about each opponent's fighting abilities.

Finally, musician Richard Joseph is sending completed sound effects regularly to Mirage for incorporation in the game. He'll also be responsible for the music, but this is likely to be one of the final elements included, since it's difficult to calculate exactly how long each snatch of music needs to be, or create just the right atmosphere, without a game as near to completion as possible to use for reference.

Rise of the Robots is due for release by Mirage Software at the end of January 1994. It will be available in both VGA and SVGA-specific versions and also a CD-ROM version. The price has yet to be finalised.

Instinct Software — meet the team



Sean Griffiths

Formerly of the Bitmap Brothers, Sean devised the game design for Rise of the Robots over a year ago. The team's boss, he is also largely responsible for the animation.



Sean Naden

Graphic designer who has been responsible for the creation of the robots themselves, from sketches on paper to the final rendered and modelled versions created using Autodesk's 3D Studio.



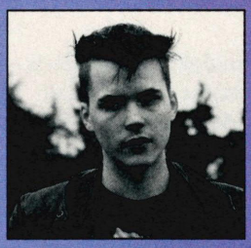
Kwan Lee

An interior designer by profession, Kwan was taken on by Instinct to create the backgrounds and locations for the game, including the detailed surface textures and lighting effects.



Andy Clarke

Programmer Andy has been in charge of creating routines for implementing artificial intelligence and collision detection routines for each robot.



Gary Leach

Gary's task has been to program the PC-specific version of Rise, taking the final animated robots and Andy's routines to implement in VGA and SVGA.



The cyborg — with your help — moves quickly and is fairly strong, while the crusher, for all its menacing appearance, is more static. It will crouches, rear up and claw down at you, or kick with its 'hind legs', or jump.



The cyborg's special move is a sliding shoulder charge which should knock the opponent backwards. The design of the military droid has been beefed up slightly since early stages, although he still retains a lithe, whippet-like appearance.



This is the military droid's special move — a whirling aerial kick designed to knock you right off balance. He also has a spectacular low flashing kick, delivered while balancing on one hand, as well as a vicious downward chop.



The last but one opponent is the fighter, heavily armoured and with moves based on martial arts manoeuvres. As well as being strong and well-protected, it is also quick on its feet and has a high level of intelligence built in.

Inside

How your printer

There are currently three important printer technologies — dot matrix, inkjet and laser. Each has its advantages, disadvantages and costs. The first thing to think about is what you actually want from a printer. The most basic requirement is simply to print text. In this case the simplest printing technology is usually both the fastest and cheapest solution. The trouble is that when you want to print graphics or text using fancy fonts this cheap solution becomes slow and sometimes unacceptable in terms of quality.

Dot matrix

By far the simplest, and oldest, technology is dot matrix — a development of the original typewriter mechanism. This involves an inked ribbon being pressed into contact with paper to leave a mark. The original dot matrix design used a print head with eight or nine pins arranged vertically. Each pin can be driven against the ribbon to leave a mark — a single dot on the paper. To produce a recognisable print-out, the pins are mounted on a print head which can be scanned across the paper. Each pass of the print head can print a horizontal band eight or nine dots high, giving us a flexible basis for an image.

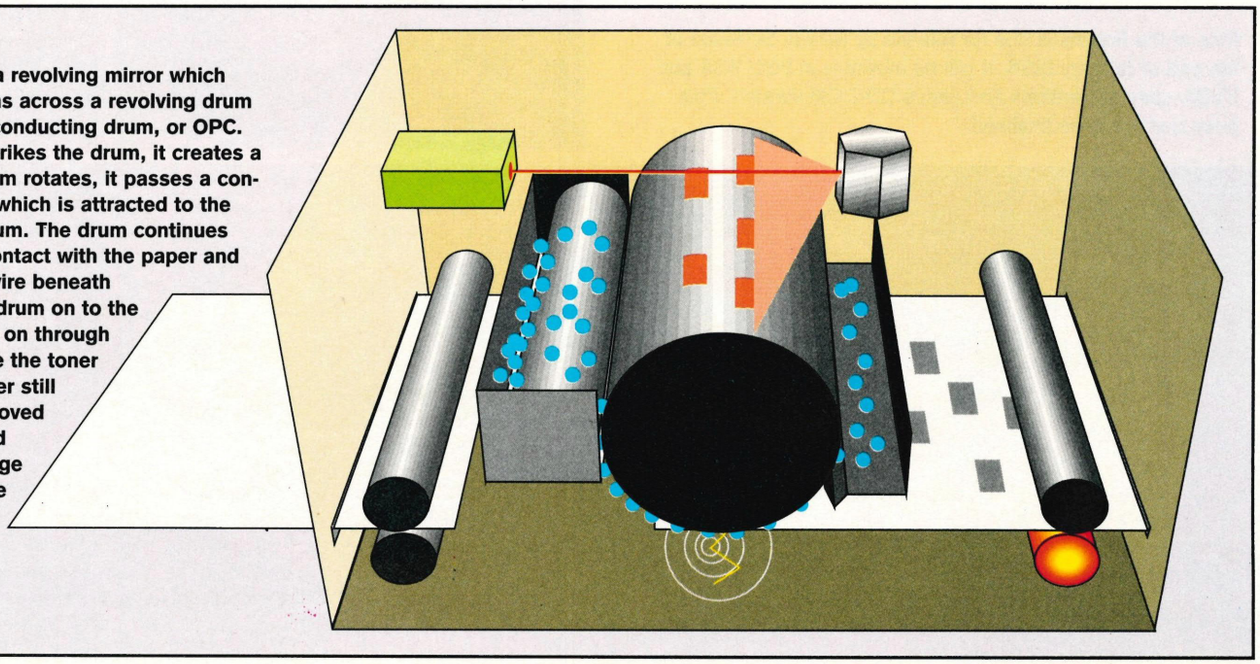
Now we come to a complication. The first dot matrix printers were designed to print fixed patterns of dots corresponding to the familiar letter shapes and punctuation marks, but little else. This resulted in dot matrix printers only being able to print text, albeit at high speed, and not graphics. Later dot matrix printers added the ability to print any dot at any position on the page — a so-called 'graphics mode'.

Even today, dot matrix printers can be used in either text or graphics modes. In text mode a dot matrix printer is fast but limited, while in graphics mode, although it is actually good enough to print almost anything, it can be painfully slow watching it build up an image dot by dot.

Another problem was that even if you could cope with the slowness of a dot matrix printer, the basic eight or nine dots per line did not provide sufficient resolution for most applications. One way around this limitation is to print the same line of dots more than once but shifted slightly. Each pass of the print head over the same area of the paper lays down a new set of

Laser printer

A laser beam is fired at a revolving mirror which deflects it so that it scans across a revolving drum called an organic photoconducting drum, or OPC. Where the laser beam strikes the drum, it creates a static charge. As the drum rotates, it passes a container of toner, some of which is attracted to the charged areas on the drum. The drum continues round and comes into contact with the paper and an electrically charged wire beneath pulls the toner from the drum on to the paper. The paper travels on through heated rollers which fuse the toner on to the paper. Any toner still stuck to the drum is removed by a blade and a charged wire neutralises the charge on the drum ready for the next image.



the *works* PC

All printers work by making marks on paper — but there are a number of different ways of achieving the same results. Mike James explains just what goes on when you print out a document

dots. Using this method a 9-pin dot matrix printer can behave as if it had 18 pins or even more. Of course the penalty is that the increased quality takes even more time.

A more direct method of increasing resolution is to simply use more points. An up-to-date dot matrix printer uses 24 pins to produce a higher quality at an acceptable speed, though unfortunately, even with 24 pins, the quality is still limited by the size of the dot that can be produced by striking the ribbon against a piece of paper.

So what can you say about a modern dot matrix printer — they sometimes achieve a good quality, they are usually very slow and they are always very noisy. The only thing they really have going for them is that they are cheap.

Inkjet

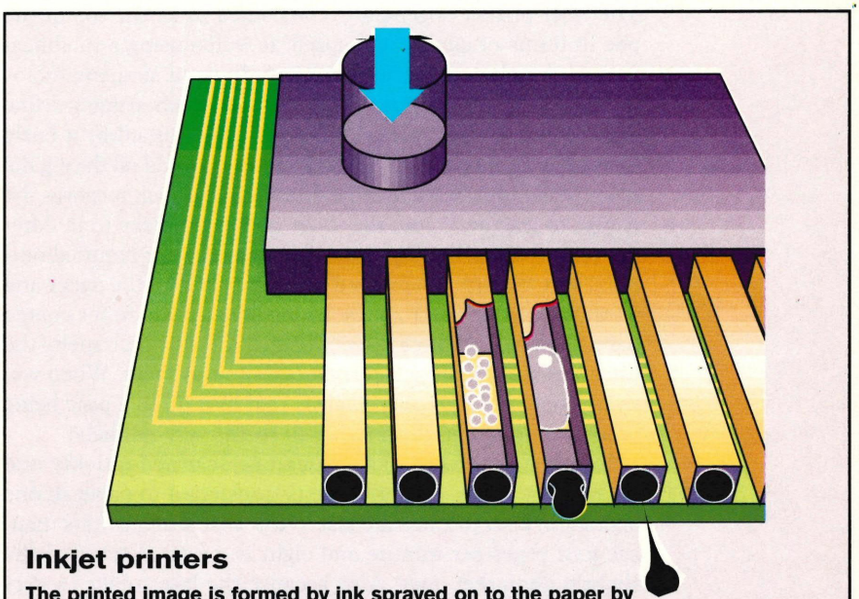
In an inkjet printer the ink is squirted in small blobs to make a dot on the paper. Shapes and images are formed by moving the print head across the paper and firing the ink to make the required pattern. Sounds easy? ... in practice it turns out to be very difficult to make it all work properly.

For a start you need the right sort of ink — and often just the right sort of paper. You also have to invent a way of firing small blobs of ink so that they land on the paper exactly where they are needed. This is all very difficult and early ink jets did suffer from a range of problems including clogged jets, messy puddles of ink and, in some cases, having to use special absorbent paper. These days however, most of these these hurdles have been more or less overcome.

There are a number of different types of inkjet printers, all of which work in different ways. For example, bubble jet printers produce the tiny blobs of flying ink by boiling it in the print head nozzle, while the very latest idea is to use a small quartz crystal head to vibrate the ink drops into space.

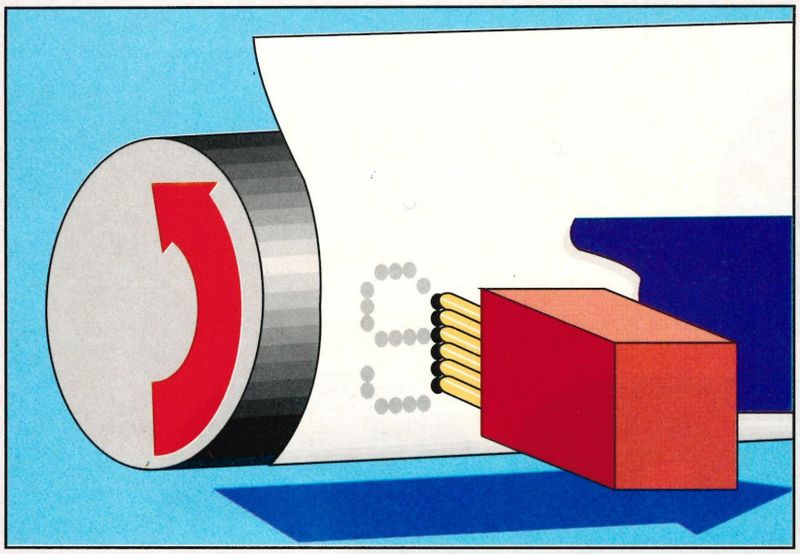
From a user's point of view, exactly how the ink drops are produced isn't really that important. What does matter is that the printer is quiet and achieves a very high resolution. Some people even claim that because the ink soaks into the paper a little, inkjet output actually looks best of all. The biggest problem however is that they are slow. You can wait up to a minute per page and sometimes even longer for complex graphics.

At the moment the biggest advantage that the inkjet printer has over its nearest rival, the laser printer, is colour. By using



Inkjet printers

The printed image is formed by ink sprayed on to the paper by tiny nozzles on the inkjet cartridge. The ink passes through a filter into a reservoir which supplies the nozzles. To eject the ink from a nozzle, a metal plate in the base is heated electronically. This heat is transferred to the ink in the nozzle which creates bubbles, which merge to form one large bubble. This expands to eject a drop of ink. When the plate ceases to be heated, the bubble contracts and creates a vacuum, which draws in more ink from the reservoir to refill the nozzle.



Dot matrix printers

A row of metal pins are fired sequentially by an electromagnetic coil, striking an inked ribbon and pressing it against the paper to leave an image. The print head and paper roller are moved accurately by means of stepper motors and the rows of dots form the desired characters.

three coloured inks — red, green and blue — in three print heads a full coloured image can be created. In practice, you also need a fourth head with black ink to produce a good black. If you are interested in colour, do make sure that you buy a colour inkjet with true black printing too.

Inkjets are more expensive than dot matrix printers but still cheaper than laser printers. In many cases they can produce results that are as good and so their only disadvantage is that they are slow.

Laser printers

The laser printer is generally considered to be the top of the pile in terms of quality and speed. It works using a modification of the photocopier principle. A drum of semiconductor material is charged up to a high voltage which attracts a fine black powder called 'toner'. The drum is scanned by a fairly low power laser beam which can be turned on and off during the scan. When this beam hits the drum at full power, it causes the charge to leak away and the toner no longer sticks to it. After the scan the drum toner forms an image of the required output. Next the drum is pressed into contact with the paper and so transfers the toner to the paper. Finally the toner coated paper is passed through a set of heated rollers which melts the toner and makes it stick permanently to the paper. When you think about the amount of stages that lead up to a page being produced from a laser printer it all seems very unlikely!

However, because the drum can be scanned quickly and because the image of a full page is transferred to paper in one operation, laser printers are fast — low cost laser printers manage four pages per minute and eight is a typical speed of the slightly upmarket ones. Also because the laser makes a very small dot on the drum the resolution is very high.

The disadvantages of laser printers are very few — mainly the high cost — although some users object to the slight smell of ozone and the toner particles that they emit as they get old! Also, while colour laser printers do exist they are very expensive. Inevitably though, their price will fall as the technology improves and they become more mass market orientated.

Suppliers

There are as many printer manufacturers as there are for PCs. Some of the best-known with the widest printer ranges are listed below.

Brother (061) 330 6531
Solidly made range of dot matrix and laser printers.

Canon (0800) 252223
Canon invented 'Bubble Jet' technology, which is the inkjet method described in this article. Canon's compact inkjet printers and laser printers are a favourite for quality printing at affordable prices.

Citizen Europe (0753) 584111
Versatile manufacturer particularly known for inexpensive dot matrix printers which produce high quality output.

Epson (0442) 61144
One of the longest established printer manufacturers. Expect any printer you buy to offer Epson emulation as standard.

Fujitsu (081) 573 4444
Wide range at a wide range of prices.

Hewlett-Packard (0344) 369222
Manufactures the leading DeskJet (inkjets) and LaserJet (laser printers). If you buy a laser printer, make sure it has a LaserJet emulation.

Kodak (0442) 61122
Many portable inkjets; also high performance colour printing.

NEC (081) 993 8111
Wide range: notable for laser printers.

Olivetti (0908) 690790
Long-established for printers as well as PCs; these days mainly in inkjets and lasers.

Seikosha (0753) 685873
Wide range, particularly for affordable dot matrix and inkjet printers.

Star Micronics (0494) 471111
Versatile range of very reasonably priced dot matrix, inkjet and laser printers.

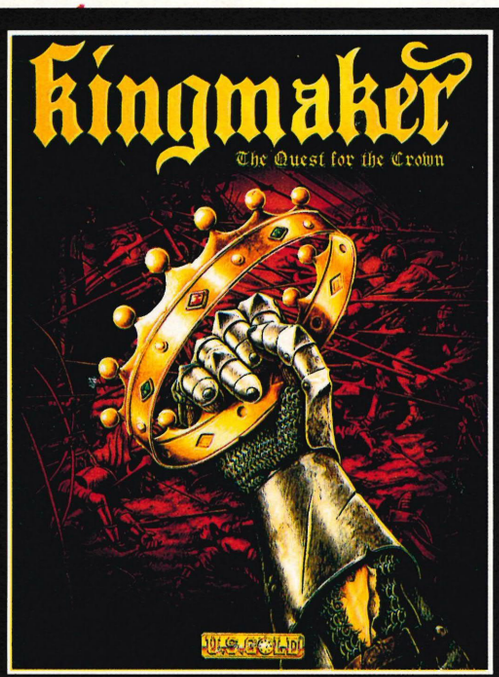
Toshiba (0932) 841600
In this market, mainly noted for portable inkjets.

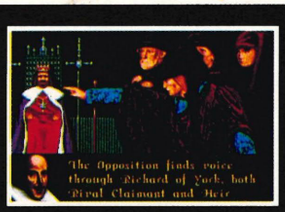
Warning note!

Although it is easy to just concentrate on the hardware aspects of printers it is important to realise that you need software that is capable of putting them to work. The software that you use must be able to work with the printer that you select and you should check this before buying any printer. The appropriate question to ask is 'Does X have a printer driver for Y?', where X is the name of the software and Y the printer type.

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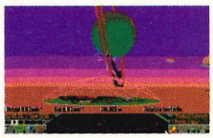
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REVIEWS INDEX

Our comprehensive reviews service starts here. Over the next 70 pages, you'll find the best in games, CD-ROM titles and budget releases appraised and dissected in PC Review's inimitable style, as detailed below

Two Minutes *of trading places*

You haven't exactly had the best start in life. Working in a fish processing plant on a distant planet isn't much of an existence, so when you inherit a spaceship and 100 credits from your grandfather, Commander Jameson, it seems like a dream come true.



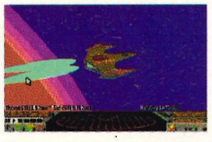
This is where it begins: Sirocco base on Merlin, a moon circling the gas giant Aster in the Ross 154 system. Merlin is a cold, inhospitable world, hence the domes covering the city. The sooner you get away from here, the better. Or so you think.



All you have at this stage is a rather basic Eagle fighter and 100 credits to start your business empire with. Your initial aim is to make money by trading, so it's a good idea to find out Merlin's major exports. Meat seems like a good bet.



Now it's off to the stock-market to get your pound of flesh. That's about all you can afford with only 100 credits, but I guess you have to start somewhere. When you've stocked up, find a system whose primary import is meat and plot a course there.



Before you leave, you must get permission to launch. If you forget to do that you'll get hit with a big fine, and if you fail to pay your fine you'll get hit by an even bigger laser. Once you're safely in orbit, hit that hyperspace button fly.

TWO MINUTES

This is the closest you'll come to seeing the game in action. We take a series of manoeuvres from the game and explain, step by step, the play required to get through the screens. Not only will you get a flavour of the gameplay, but you may even find some helpful hints in this section!

ADVENTURES
Sam and Max Hit the Road *LucasArts/US Gold* 62
Beneath a Steel Sky *Virgin Interactive* 76
Uninvited *Viacom/Mindscape* 104
Innocent Until Caught *Psygnosis* 108

ARCADE GAMES
Fire and Ice *Graftgold* 86
B-Wing (X-Wing add-on) *LucasArts/US Gold* 113
Alien Breed *Team 17* 117

BUDGET GAMES 127

CD-ROM TITLES
Rebel Assault *LucasArts/US Gold* 118
20th Century Video Almanac *Mindscape* 123
Advantage Tennis *Infogrames* 123
Oceans Below *Mindscape* 124
Newsweek Interactive *Mindscape* 124

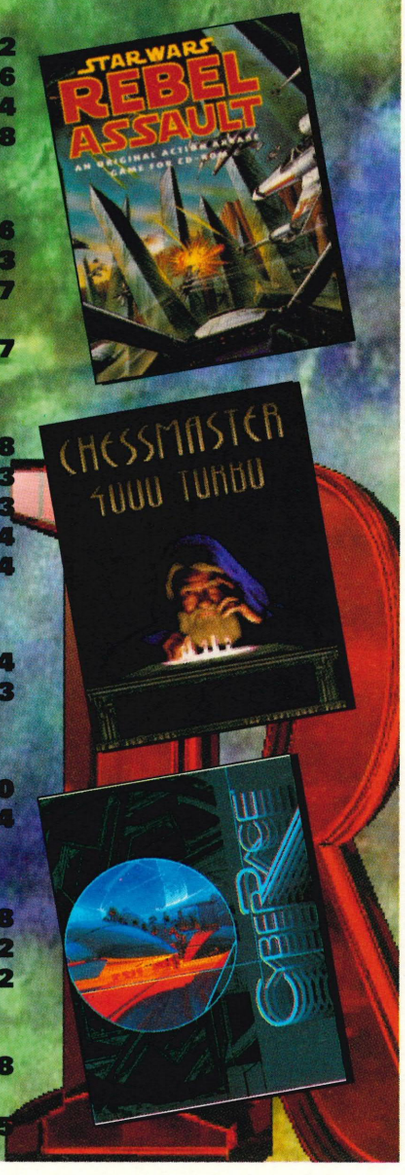
PUZZLE AND BOARD GAMES
Chessmaster 4000 Turbo *Mindscape* 94
The Even More Incredible Machine *Dynamix* 103

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES
Shadowcaster *Origin Systems* 70
Fantasy Empire *SSI/US Gold* 114

SIMULATIONS
IndyCar Racing *Virgin Interactive* 68
CyberRace *Cyberdreams* 82
Subwar 2050 *MicroProse* 92

STRATEGY GAMES
Master of Orion *MicroProse* 98

SHAREWARE 135



Alternatively...



Privateer
Origin, £49.99
Rated 5, Issue 26
Origin's answer to Elite, Privateer is a space trading game with similar style graphics and combat to the Wing Commander series. There are about 25 missions, if you can actually find them, but for the most part it involves an awful lot of aimless wandering. It has infinitely less depth than Elite, let alone Frontier, and the combat is inferior to X-Wing. Rather disappointing in all.



Space Legends
Empire, £34.99
Reviewed Issue 22
Three classic space games have been included in this value for money pack: Elite Plus, Wing Commander and the futuristic role-playing game, Megatraveller. Elite Plus has aged very well, and if you haven't played it yet, you might want to try it before graduating to Frontier. Wing Commander is more combat oriented, but remains good fun, and Megatraveller is entertaining stuff.

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 other games of a similar style, or subject matter, which may be more to your taste (or warn you off those which are inferior to the game bring reviewed).

Techspec *You need a 386SX with 2Mb RAM minimum.*

Theoretically, Frontier will work with versions as low as MS-DOS 2.0, but memory might be a problem so MS-DOS 5.0 or above is recommended.

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	x				
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 ✓			
Performance					
Optimum speed	33MHz				
Minimum memory	2Mb				
Free RAM required	580K				

Verdict *The best space game ever* **9**

TECHSPEC

Detailed and easy to read at-a-glance, this panel will tell you if the game is suitable for your PC. Note that a cross in the SVGA column means that no *specific* SVGA version is available (use VGA instead), and that the optimum speed rating is a PCR recommendation, not a manufacturer's stated minimum.

RATING

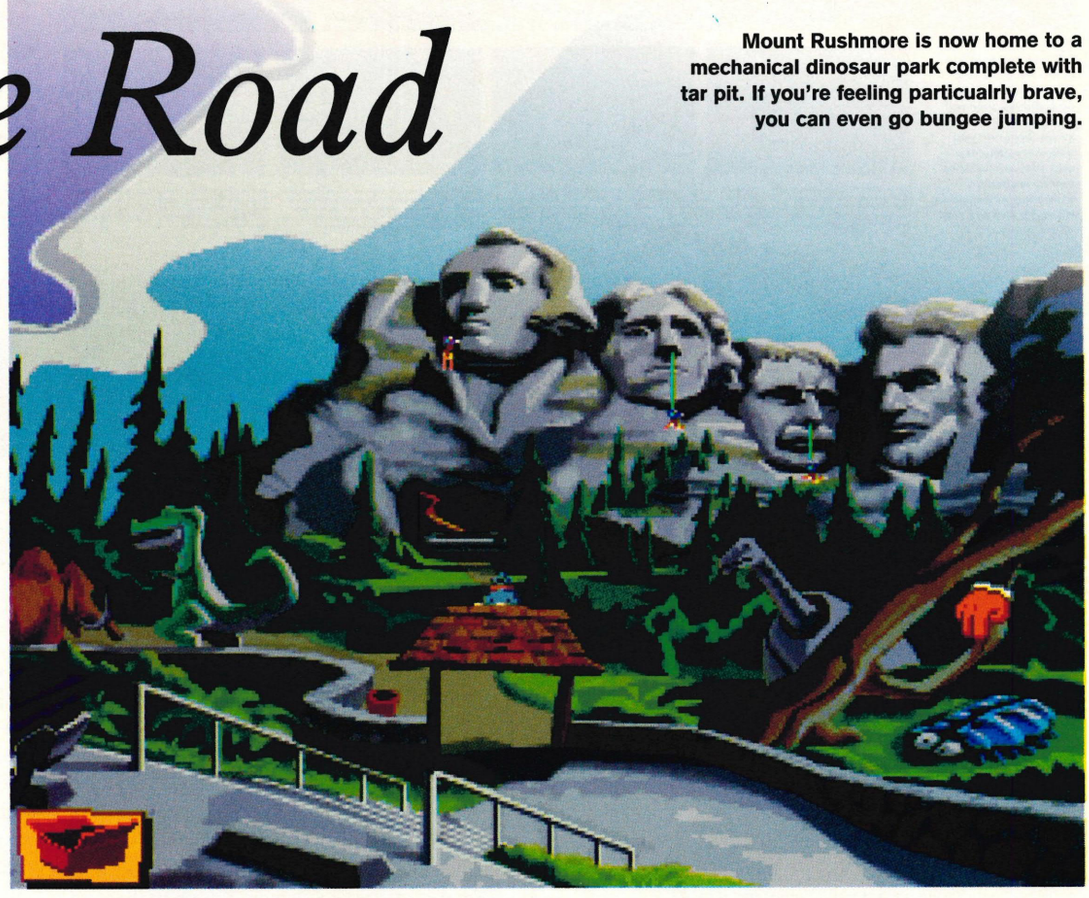
0-2	Dreadful	6-7	Good
3-4	Deficient	8-9	Excellent
5	Average	10	Perfect



Title	**Sam and Max Hit the Road**
Publisher	**LucasArts/US Gold**
Contact	**(021) 625 3366**
Price	**£42.99/£45.99 CD-ROM**

Aha! Here comes another all-conquering graphic adventure from LucasArts. But does it actually have anything new to offer?

Sam and Max *Hit the Road*



Mount Rushmore is now home to a mechanical dinosaur park complete with tar pit. If you're feeling particualrly brave, you can even go bungee jumping.

Sam and Max was one of those games I'd been looking forward to for a long time, but the idea of actually reviewing it filled me with trepidation. When I reviewed Day of the Tentacle back in in Issue 23 (September), I made the stupid mistake of saying that if a better adventure came out before Christmas, I'd eat my leather trousers. At the time it seemed a pretty safe assumption to make, but then I hadn't counted on seeing Sam and Max this side of 1994. Oops.

Based on a cult American comic strip, Sam and Max Hit the Road follows the adventures of a canine detective and his psychotic rabbit chum as they chase an escaped Bigfoot through America's tackiest tourist traps. It all starts when the deranged duo turn up at the fair to find that its star attraction, Bruno the Bigfoot, has gone missing. Has he been set free by his girlfriend, Trixie the Giraffe Necked Girl, or were they kidnapped by a sick minded freak collector?

The adventure takes Sam and Max to such wondrous locations as a rotating restaurant on top of the world's biggest



Below: Snuckey's sells junk. But they have the cleanest toilets in America, apparently.

TWO

A score card found in Trixie's trailer leads you to the Gator Golf Course in Florida. Who should you find here but Conroy Bumpus, the short, wig wearing country and western star who's obsessed with collecting Bigfoots. Does he know where Bruno is?



Funnily enough, Bumpus is far from happy to see you, and it all degenerates into a big punch up, Tom and Jerry style. Of course, Bumpus doesn't want to get involved personally, and lets his bodyguard do the dirty work instead.

ball of twine, an alligator infested crazy golf course and Mount Rushmore, where bungee jumpers dangle from the noses of the presidents. Let's face it, there's nothing even remotely sane about this game.

Sam and Max will appeal to anyone with a warped sense of humour. It contains a good deal of cartoon violence (just try playing the Wak-a-Rat game, for example) and isn't what you'd call politically correct. Still, who cares when it's this much fun?

Puzzle Perfect

The most important thing about any adventure is the puzzles. Some games look beautiful but are far too easy to complete, whilst others are so hard that they're virtually unplayable. Sam and Max falls somewhere between the two, being roughly on a par with Monkey Island 2 in terms of difficulty. It's tough, obscure, ridiculous and frustrating, but anything less would be a cop out. Whereas you could whiz through Tentacle in a couple of days, you'll take a fair bit longer to figure out this game. Sure, there's always going to be some smart Alec who can crack it in under ten minutes (not that I'm exaggerating or anything), but I feel that most people will find Sam and Max sufficiently challenging.



Old Death Breath here will stop you getting in to the carnival unless you have the necessary paperwork. Now where do you get that from? No, I'm not saying. Use your loaf.

Cartoon time

Visually, it's similar in style to Day of the Tentacle, with bright, colourful and often surreal cartoon-style graphics. The colours are a little more muted than Tentacle's, and the buildings and furniture don't lean over at quite such crazy angles, but on the whole the appearance is much the same. Does it look good? Stupid question. Of course it does, it's by LucasArts, for heaven's sake. But does it look fresh, original and distinctive? Ah well, now you've got me. Quite frankly, no, it doesn't.

The thing that impressed me about Day of the Tentacle was that it looked so fresh and original. Visually it's about as close as you can get to an interactive cartton without the gameplay, and I, for one, hadn't seen anything quite like it before.



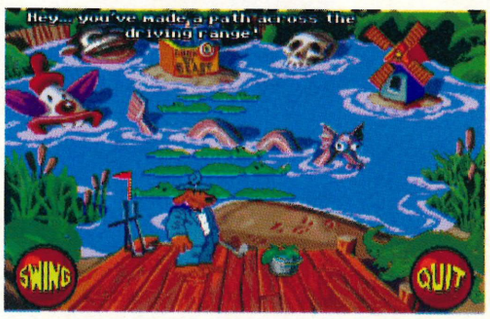
Sam and Max in the Tunnel of Love? Just what is their relationship, eh? Heavens!



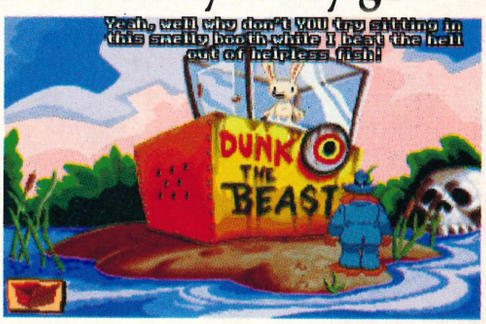
MINUTES of ridiculously crazy golf



Max may possess the strength of six psychotic sumo wrestlers, but he's no match for Bumpus's minder, and ends up being chucked high into the sky and into the Dunk the Beat tank on the far side of the course. So just how does Sam get him out of there?



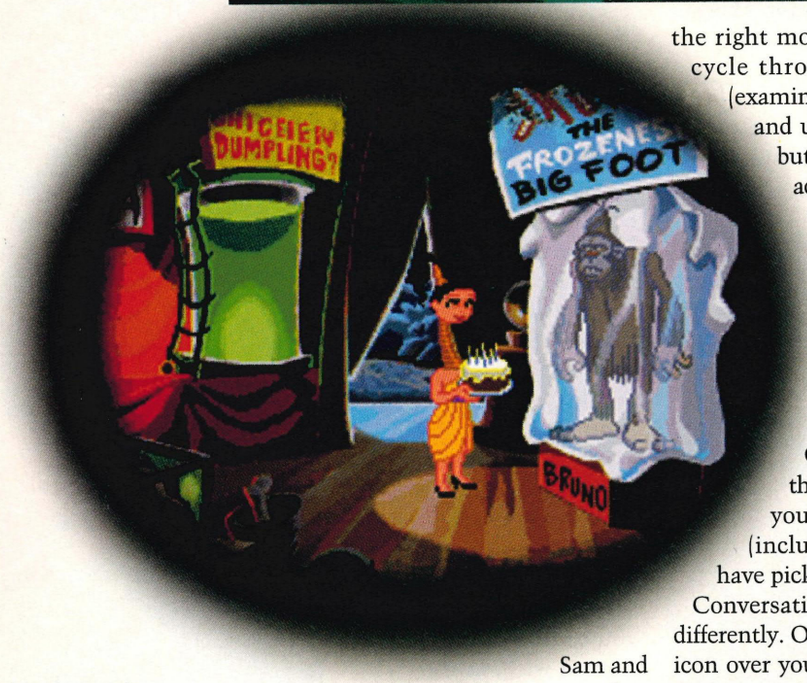
It's simple. Substitute the bucket of golf balls for a bucket of fish and whack them into the swamp to lure the alligators. Get it right and the gators will form a path to the Dunk-the-Beast tank, so all you have to do now is march straight across.



OK, so you've reached the tank — now what? Click on the door in the side of the tank to release your little pal, then go and investigate the big door at the front. Go inside and you might just stumble across a big clue.



There's something fishy going on here, methinks. Damn! Trust me to think of such an original caption.



Lovely couple, aren't they? Trixie is obviously infatuated with Bruno, but how did she get him out of that block of ice?

Sam and Max looks equally good, but its similarity to Tentacle takes away much of the novelty value. Nevertheless, the graphics suit the game perfectly, and even if it doesn't look blindingly original, it's still one hell of a good-looking game.

All change for SCUMM

One thing that has changed is the SCUMM interface. In Monkey Island, Indiana Jones and Day of the Tentacle, the bottom third of the screen was occupied by the inventory and control panel. This time around, however, the system has undergone a complete overhaul. Sam and Max boasts full screen graphics, and the inventory and actions are now handled via the cursor. Clicking the right mouse button allows you to cycle through the various actions (examine, talk to, walk to, pick up and use) whilst clicking the left button lets you carry out that action. So, for example, if you want to look at a bucket of fish, select the eye icon, place it over the bucket and click that left button.

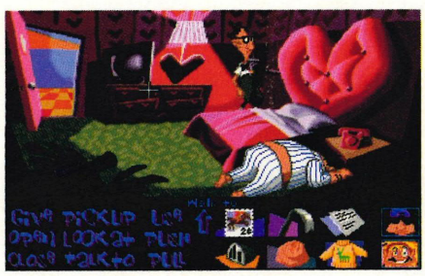
A single cardboard box icon in the bottom left hand corner of the screen represents the inventory. Clicking on this brings up the inventory screen, in which you can use any of the items (including Max, the rabbit) you have picked up during the game.

Conversations are also handled quite differently. Once you've clicked the 'talk' icon over your chosen subject, a row of options appear at the bottom of the screen. Actual words have been done away with in favour of more icons. Click on the question mark to ask a question (strangely enough), the exclamation mark to make a statement, the rubber duck to say something irrelevant or the hand to end the conversation. If the subject has any information on specific topics, this is represented by another icon. for example, if the person you're speaking to knows something about Bruno, a picture of him appears in a different box.

Less equals better?

In theory, this sounds like a big improvement, since it frees up the whole screen for the lovely graphics. In practice, though, it's a pain in the neck. The changing cursor is a good idea, but you'll invariably cycle straight past the option you need, which is not good if you're try-

ALTERNATIVELY



Day of the Tentacle
LucasArts/US Gold, £42.99
Rated 9, Issue 23

What exactly do you want from a graphic adventure? Good, colourful graphics and a lively soundtrack are essential, not to mention interesting characters, a crazy plot and lots of wacky, brain-teasing puzzles. Add to that a sprinkling of humour and you get DOTT. The only weak point is that it's a little too easy, but even so it's one of the best adventures around.



Simon the Sorcerer
Adventuresoft, £39.99
Rated 8, Issue 24

Simon is a decidedly British attempt at a LucasArts style game, and as such it does very well. It has a standard, SCUMM style interface, plenty of humour and some of the most attractive visuals I've seen in a game like this. It's a fair bit tougher than DOTT, so it'll keep you going a little longer. A good alternative, especially if American style humour is not for you.

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Nothing's as it should be inside the Vortex, so don't expect to get very far without a bit of careful thought, some experimentation and a pair of shades to ward off those bright colours.

ing to do something in a hurry. As for the inventory screen, I'm not sure that this is even a good idea. Revolution's Beneath a Steel Sky (reviewed on page 76) has full screen graphics, but the inventory system is far more accessible. In that game, if you move the pointer arrow to the top of the screen, the inventory slides down, but since this takes the form of a thin strip with your items in it, it occupies very little of the screen anyway. In Sam and Max, the inventory takes up virtually the whole screen, so, of course, you can't see what's going on behind it. If you want to try out the magnet with the fish tank on screen, you have to go into the inventory screen, select it, return to the main screen and then try it out. When that doesn't work out, you have to keep repeating the whole tiresome process until you find the object that gets results. The best way to play is to use a combination of the mouse and keyboard short cuts, but whilst this makes things a bit easier, it's far from ideal. The old SCUMM system may have taken up more room on screen, but at least it was easy to use. I can see what LucasArts has been trying to achieve with the new system, but, for me anyway, it hasn't worked.

Techspec

You'll need a 386 or better running MS-DOS 5.0 or higher and 2Mb RAM. Other then that, it's about as straightforward as you can get. Best played using a combination of mouse and keyboard.

Disk requirements						
	High density				✓	
	Hard disk only				✓	
	Space taken on hard disk				16.5Mb	
Graphic modes						
	CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
	VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		
Soundboards						
	Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✗	Sound Blaster	✓
Control						
	Joystick	✗	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance						
	Optimum speed				33MHz	
	Minimum memory				2Mb	
	Free RAM required				580K	

rating **8**

Verdict
Very polished, good fun but not too original

Loony toons

I can't really let a review go by without mentioning the music. Perhaps I should just say it suits the game and leave it at that. On the other hand, I can't honestly say that it grabbed me. If you asked me to hum a particular tune from Monkey Island I could not only provide you with a startling off-key rendition of that tune, but all the others as well. If you asked me to hum a tune from Tentacle, I might be able to remember one or two of those as well. But ask me to hum anything from Sam and Max and I'd be totally stumped. The only tune I can even vaguely remember *also* featured in Tentacle, but as for the rest, they're not in the slightest bit memorable.

To buy...

So, you may well ask, is it really worth buying a game which is, to all intents and purposes, very similar to Day of the Tentacle? The answer is yes, but it's a qualified yes. Firstly, if you like cartoon style adventures and couldn't get enough of games like Monkey Island,Day of the Tentacle or AdventureSoft's Simon the Sorcerer, there's absolutely no reason why you shouldn't enjoy this.

Secondly, if you're a fan of the original Sam and Max comics, this game manages to capture their anarchic spirit perfectly. You couldn't really hope for a better adaptation. And thirdly, the difficulty level is spot on. Nuff said.

...or not to buy?

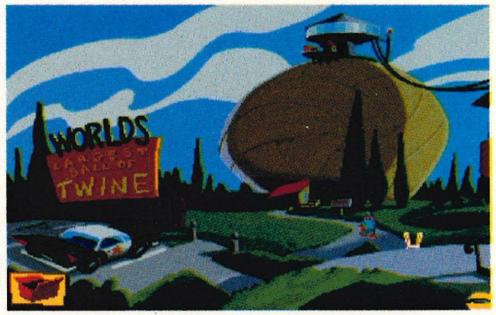
But is there any reason why you might not want to part with your hard earned cash? The answer in this case is also yes. Dodgy interface aside, if you've already played Tentacle or Simon this year, you might not feel like playing another comedy graphic adventure so soon after.

The other thing that might possibly put you off is the humour. Sam and Max definitely has its funny moments (I loved the bit where Sam and Max ride the Cone of Tragedy at the carnival), but many of the jokes passed me straight by. I know the humour will appeal to a lot of people, but it's a bit too American for my taste.

When it comes down to it, Sam and Max is a very nice game, but I didn't enjoy it quite as much as Day of the Tentacle or Monkey Island. I'm not just saying that in order to avoid eating my trousers, either, because it's a view shared by other members of the PC Review team as well.

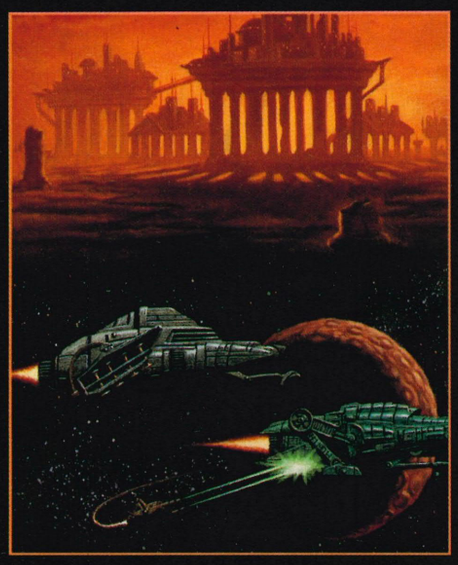
I think the main problem is that Sam and Max has arrived too soon after Day of the Tentacle, and despite having many things in its favour, it lacks that game's energy and originality. Having played both Tentacle and Simon the Sorcerer this year, I really don't see the need for another game in the same mould; at least, not just yet. Still, if you haven't already overdosed on comedy adventures, then go ahead and add it to your collection. I'm sure you'll enjoy it immensely.

■ Cal Jones



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Title	**IndyCar Racing**
Publisher	**Virgin**
Contact	**(081) 960 2255**
Price	**£44.99**



IndyCar racing

IndyCar roars down the inside lane to steal pole position from F1GP in the PC racing simulation states

Before we get into the nitty-gritty of Papyrus' excellent IndyCar Racing, there's one burning question that has to be answered. Where's Nige? ... All the other drivers, cars etc have managed to make it across the Atlantic, so where is he? Is this some sort of American conspiracy to rewrite the history books without the efforts of our Nigel Mansell? Is a Limey champion really too much for the Yanks to bear?

Come to think of it, it would appear that some of the Indy circuits have gone AWOL, too. Like Indianapolis for starters.

The answer to these (let's face it very valid) questions lies in the old problem of licencing and rights. Virgin admit that a data disk for IndyCar is a possibility next year, and maybe this will rectify the situation — but then again, maybe not.

But anyway, back to the game. The basic structure of the IndyCar Racing is much as you'd expect; driving your choice of car in single races or championship seasons, with practice laps, warm ups, and qualifiers to put you to the test. You can start at a simple level — automatic clutch, no car damage, that sort of thing, and get straight in to it. But once you're ready to move up a gear, there are a host of detail and difficulty options to decide on. This is really where IndyCar stands head and shoulders above the rest — the attention to detail and the way this has a direct impact on the gameplay.

Like the real thing, racing in IndyCar is more than just a manic thrash round a strip of concrete (it just looks that way). It's all about preparation. The idea is to set the car up perfectly for each type of track, race distance and the prevailing weather conditions, if you want to have a competitive drive. Finding the right combination of tires, wings, shocks, fuel and gear ratios can only be achieved by time well spent on the test track and on practice laps. The slightest alteration makes a real difference to the handling of the car, not just the straight-line speed. Too big a tweak to the front wing settings and the rear shocks, say, and you're heading for a severe case of oversteer. End result? You fishtail into a spin on the first bend.

With or without all this fine-tuning, the 'feel' of the car is excellent. There's a genuine sense of forward motion and the weight of the car in your hands. When you're fighting a skid or you spin out of



That, not surprisingly, is my tire flying off. Next time I'll go the right way round the track.

TWO

Setting up your car for the current conditions is vital if you want to have a competitive ride. The choice of options is extensive, and will make all the difference to the way that the car handles on the race track.

ALTERNATIVELY



Formula One Grand Prix
MicroProse, £44.99
Rated 8, Issue 15

Unquestionably the best racing simulation on the market until the arrival of IndyCar Racing. F1GP boasts polygon graphics, with external views a-plenty, and a superb combination of realistic driving model and playability as you fight it out on the Grand Prix circuits.



Car and Driver
Electronic Arts, £34.99
Rated 8, Issue 16

More polygon graphics, but this time it's sports cars getting the treatment in Car and Driver, with a variety of dream machines to do your worst in. It Includes both real and fictitious tracks, but even though it's a good drive, it doesn't come close to IndyCar.



control, the car's momentum feels just right. IndyCar is the perfect drive — fast, responsive and very, very drivable. It needs to be, because the margin for error is very slim. Tip that concrete wall at 200mph plus and you can kiss your tires goodbye, at the very least. Rev too hard or screw up a gear change, and crunch; a blown engine.

These wipe-outs are spectacular, with car wheels bouncing off down the track, sparks, smoke and dust everywhere.

Street circuits like Long Beach are much harder to take on than the ovals for reasons of visibility. Suddenly discovering a hairpin at 200mph is not what you need.

Avoiding collisions takes seat of the pants driving. The idea of traversing an oval circuit may seem simple, but weaving your way through the traffic, with ten cars climbing up your exhaust, two scattering debris in your path and another three bunching ahead of you means that you need absolute concentration.

The one problem I had that couldn't be put down to ham-fisted driving was figuring out what was coming up in front of me before it was too late. The oval tracks and super speedways aren't too bad (lets face it, how lost can you get driving round and round in a circle 500 times), but the street tracks, with their vicious hairpin bends and sudden changes of direction, are a nightmare to follow. You have to memorise every bend just to stand a chance of getting through the first lap at more than a crawl, because with the texture-mapped track and scenery graphics it can be difficult to work out what's ahead of you at times. There are no big, red turn indicators conveniently placed alongside the track like you'd get in an arcade racer. But then again this fits in nicely with the thinking behind IndyCar; practice, test and warm up laps are there for a reason after all.

Otherwise, it's hard to fault the quality of the texture-mapped graphics, which are as polished as I have ever seen in a motor racing game. The only thing that's missing is a choice of external views while you're in the hot seat, which is one area where F1GP has a definite edge.

Mind you, the replay facility, with its variety of camera angles, chase car, close-up and blimp views does make up for this to a degree. For a spot of light relief, there's nothing better than piling, full tilt, into a jammed-up stretch of track and then sitting back to watch the carnage on the replay.

Alternatively, since IndyCar comes with a multiplayer modem-link-up, why not dial up a friend, shunt them off the track, and savour that replay instead?

Techspec *IndyCar runs remarkably smoothly for a complex, texture-mapped game, but a 486 is still a necessity. If hard disk space is tight, you can always chose to install only selected tracks, which will save you several megabytes, depending on your selections.*

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	17Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✗	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✗
Performance					
Optimum speed	25MHz				
Minimum memory	2Mb				
Free RAM required	585K				

Verdict
The new king of the racing sims

rating **9**

The new King

Yes, IndyCar Racing topples MicroProse Formula One Grand Prix from its throne. But it's a close thing. There's not a lot to chose between them in terms of the driving model and atmospheric gameplay. But IndyCar steals it with more technically advanced, better looking graphics, a greater challenge and marginally greater depth of simulation.

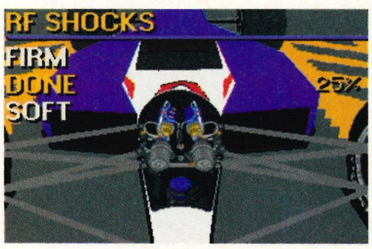
Until F1GP2 (what a mouthful) emerges from the pits at MicroProse early next year, IndyCar Racing is *the* racing game to buy. It's tough, looks great, sounds good, plays brilliantly. No Nige, though. I think that sums it up.

■ John Bennett

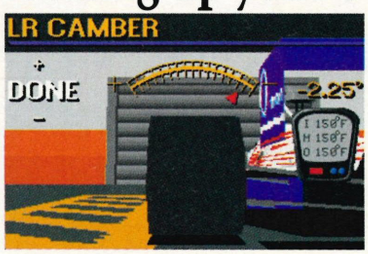
0 MINUTES of looking up your own exhaust pipe



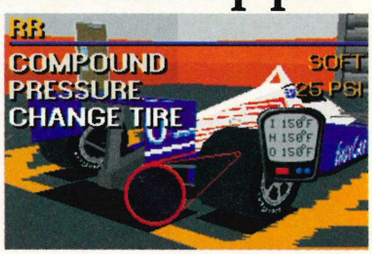
Stagger is simply the difference in size between the rear wheels on either side of the car. The correct stagger is really important on oval, banked tracks.



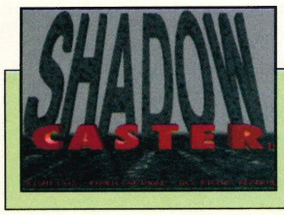
More than just there to give a comfy ride, the correct shock settings will counter weight shifts within the car due to acceleration and braking.



Angling the tyres inwards or outwards vertically is used to get the most grip and compensate for other adjustments, like stagger.



Tire choice is critical. Check the temperature of each tire during testing. Chose a harder compound if they're overheating.



Title	**Shadowcaster**
Publisher	**Origin**
Contact	**(0753) 549442**
Price	**£44.99**

TWO

One minute I'm having a cosy chat with Grandad in front of a roaring fire; the next I've been dumped in a strange land full of weird, carnivorous creatures. That's what you get for being a character in a role-playing game.



I've killed the first nasty monster, but how do I get through this door without a key? Brute force doesn't seem to do the trick, so unless I indulge in a bit of lateral thinking, I'm stuck on this very small level.

Shadow

Ultima Underworld meets Wolfenstein and finally ends up bumping into Cal Jones in the most action packed role-playing game ever. Will anyone live to tell the tale?

If the idea of role-playing games doesn't appeal to you, don't panic. Shadowcaster might have come galloping out of the Origin stable, but as far as role-playing goes, it breaks the mould. You don't have to spend hours rolling up your character, you won't ruin your eyesight pouring over a manual packed with useless statistics and as for having to learn to read in Britanian, chanting mantras and composing spells from mystic runes, forget it. Shadowcaster is all about killing things. And having fun.

The one thing it does have in common with most other RPGs is a strong, if rather far-fetched storyline. Prepare to suspend your disbelief for a moment. Once upon a time there was a chap named Kirt, a fine figure of a man with an impossibly square jaw, an improbably macho name and a penchant for martial arts. Basically, a guy with the word 'hero' stamped all over him in huge letters.

Orphaned at birth, Kirt was raised by his grandfather. One stormy day, grandfather took Kirt aside and told him that he wasn't a normal human being after all, but one of the last descendants of a race of 'shapeshifters' called the People. Once powerful, the People were decimated in a war with an evil shapeshifter race. Although the People eventually triumphed, one evil being, Veste, survived and his great power allowed him to destroy most of his vanquishers. Now Kirt is the only surviving member of his race powerful enough to defeat Veste, so it doesn't take a Mensa level IQ to figure out the aim of the game.

Taking the role of Kirt, you begin the game by being magically transported back to your homeland by your grandfather. Most of the levels you'll explore contain



The head werewolf is even more finely attired than the rest of the mob, and what's more, he's a dab hand at baton twirling.

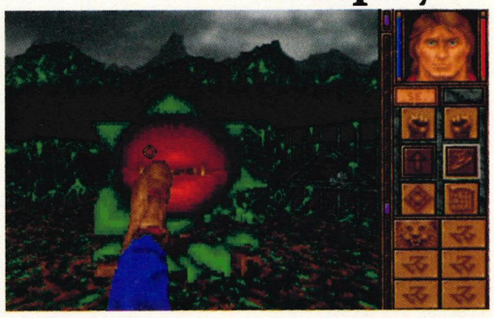
MINUTES of shadow play



Just in front of the door is this strange obelisk. I wonder ... Clicking on the obelisk causes a flash of light, and gives me the ability to take the form of the Maorin, a six-legged, six foot tall cat.



Believe it or not, it has also unlocked the door. The plot thickens! Right around the corner I find a sparkling paving stone. A teleport, perhaps? Let's hope it takes me somewhere a bit more interesting!



My hunch proved correct, but now I've landed myself in even deeper trouble. This level is chock full of killer tomatoes! Argh! Get away from me! I hope that the rest of the flora and fauna are a bit more friendly.

Caster



Defeat Veste and you earn the undying gratitude of the shapeshifter people. Not bad for a guy in a bomber jacket and a pair of tatty trainers.

an obelisk, which you must touch to make contact with the gods. Every time you touch an obelisk, you are granted the ability to assume the form of a different creature. Each creature, or 'metaform', has its own specific abilities, and certain parts of the game can only be completed by assuming the correct form. For example, you can't expect to walk across lava without taking damage, so you need to morph into a Ssair or Opsis and fly.

Much of the game depends on your ability to fight. Some metaforms are better suited to combat than others, while a few are able to cast spells. Weapons and wands can be found on each level, but often enough it's easier to deal with your foes by giving them a straightforward smack in the gob.

Kirt doesn't have any statistics as such, but he does have hit points and power points. Every time you take damage during combat you'll lose hit points. When they reach zero, you die. Some metaforms have more hit points than others, so it's better to become the toughest creature available if you know you're going to be involved in a big punch-up.

Hit points are restored by allowing Kirt to heal 'naturally', which is slow, by picking up healing potions scattered around the levels or, best of all, once you have the ability to change into the Caun metaform, you can cast a healing spell which allows you to heal ten times faster than a human. This is the quickest method, but if you're low on power it isn't always possible.

Power points are used for maintaining each metaform, as well as for casting spells. If you lose all your power points you revert to human form, which can be fatal if you're flying over lava or swimming underwater. Like hit points, power points can be restored by drinking potions, but Kirt is the only metaform able to regain power of his own accord.

Power and hit points increase when you add to your score by killing monsters. Each metaform has its own specific score, although a percentage of the score earned in non-human form is added to the score you earn as a human. This means that Kirt will gain points even if you prefer to use another metaform for combat. Obviously, the metaform you use most

As soon as you arrive in the shapeshifter realm you come face to face with this monstrosity. If the teeth and claws don't get you, the lurid orange and purple colour scheme will.



Metamorphosis



Kirt is human in appearance and has basic human abilities, such as punching, kicking and using weapons. Kirt is the only metaform able to regain power without drinking potions. If your power runs out, you will always revert to the Kirt metatype.



The Maorin are a race of tough, six-limbed cats. Maorin are faster than humans, can give and take more damage but don't like water and drown quickly. In the early stages of the game, the Maorin is your best bet for combat. He doesn't have any spells in his arsenal but can still use wands and other magical items.



The tiny Caun are pixie-like creatures whose frail bodies are not suited to combat. They are adept magic users and have the ability to heal ten times faster than a human. Their spells include light, protection and stealth, and they can create swarms of insects to sting enemies. They are also able to leap over high objects.



The Opsis is a large, floating eye equipped with tentacles. A poor fighter, the Opsis more than makes up for this lack of martial prowess with its awesome spellcasting ability. It can cast spells of fear and paralysis, but the death blast, guaranteed to kill any foe stone dead, is by far and away the most impressive.



The frog man or Kahpa is the only metaform able to swim and breathe underwater. Although not the best fighter of the bunch, he's a good all-rounder and can hold his own in most fights. He has some magical ability and his electric shock and sonic attacks do extra damage in water.



Looking something like a legless red dragon, the Ssair is a vicious fighter who can inflict great damage with his claw and tail attacks. A good option for combat, the Ssair is quite tough and can cast fireball spells. He can fly a great deal faster than the Opsis, but his magic is not nearly as devastating.



The toughest creature of the lot is the Grost, a huge stone giant. Grost can take an enormous amount of damage and are formidable fighters, if a little slow. In this form you have the ability to punch through some walls and cause earth tremors to disrupt your foe. This is undoubtedly the best form in which to fight Veste.



I'd never imagined that werewolves wore vests and shorts, what with all that excess body hair, but apparently they do. Yet another childhood illusion is shattered.

often will become far more powerful than those used less regularly.

The puzzle element is not what you'd call strong. It's basically a case of finding a certain object and using it in the correct place. Some games, including Eye of the Beholder and the Ultima series, involve a fair bit of brain-storming to complete, but Shadowcaster doesn't require too much thinking at all. The only thing which slows your progress is coming up against some of the tougher monsters, thus regular use of the save game facility will see you through in the end.

What I really liked about this game is the fact that it doesn't conform to the usual fantasy stereotypes. You won't find any orcs, goblins, elves or dwarves. The only familiar monsters are skeletons, werewolves and the odd giant spider, but most of the other creatures are true originals. There are killer mushrooms, killer tomatoes and a whole load of nasties which defy description. Needless to say, they're all extremely unpleasant.

The graphics in Shadowcaster are very impressive. It has the best game engine I think I've ever seen in a first-person perspective game, including Underworld. Although released through Origin, it doesn't employ the Underworld engine, but instead uses a souped-up version of the engine ID created for Wolfenstein 3-D. The game runs extremely smoothly and is almost fast enough to give you motion sickness. It's much less blocky than Wolfenstein, and monsters actually look like monsters, rather than a random collection of coloured pixels.

Unlike Underworld, there are no slopes or stairs to run up and down, but yet you're not restricted to a single viewpoint. The tiny Caun sees the world from much lower down than a human, for example. The Ssair and Opsis can alter the height at which they fly, and if you morph into the amphibious Kahpa, you can dive underwater and swim around.

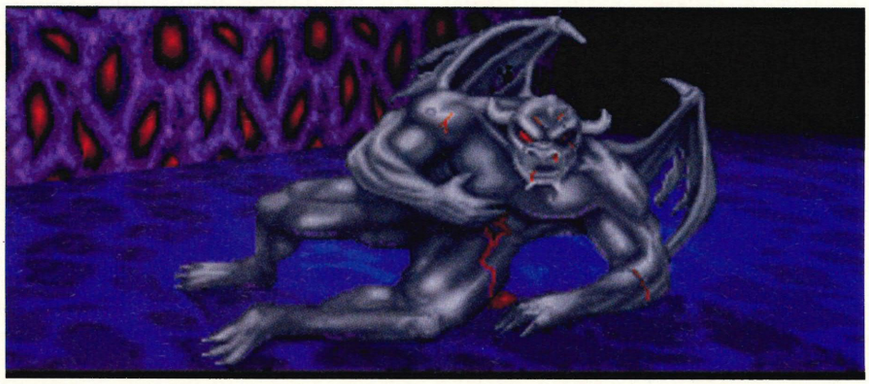
Another point in Shadowcaster's favour is that each level looks very different, so there's plenty of incentive to go out and explore. Some levels are inside, some outside and a few are even submerged beneath water or, in the case of Veste's realm, blood. You'll come across a mediaeval style castle, a temple, mines, lava pits and a mist-shrouded level in which skeletons loom out of the fog in a most alarming way. Different graphic styles make a game far more interesting, especially when there's little variety to the actual gameplay.

The background sound is not at all bad either, but it's by no means exceptional. You won't exactly come away from the game humming the tunes. Although each level has different music, some of which is all right, it does get downright irritating after a while and I soon needed a rest from it.

The sound effects are better, though. I particularly liked the noises that Kirt



Don't expect conventional monsters in this game. These revolting creatures dangle from the ceiling and flash at you if you get too close. Horrible.



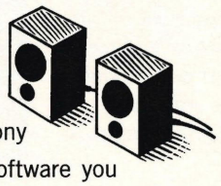
Veste is a tough nut to crack, but he was no match for the Grost. Punch his lights out and you've won the game.

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Through the keyhole



This moody blue interior is enough to send anyone to sleep. That's not a good thing when you've got half a dozen rabid beasts after you.



The werewolf castle is more traditional in appearance, with shields and paintings decorating the walls. No tourists though.



Teleport into Veste's realm and you fall straight into a river of blood. Could it be that he's a purvayor of fine black pudding?



Around the corner you'll find a fine example of late 1980s acid house party decor. Quick! Send for the interior design police.

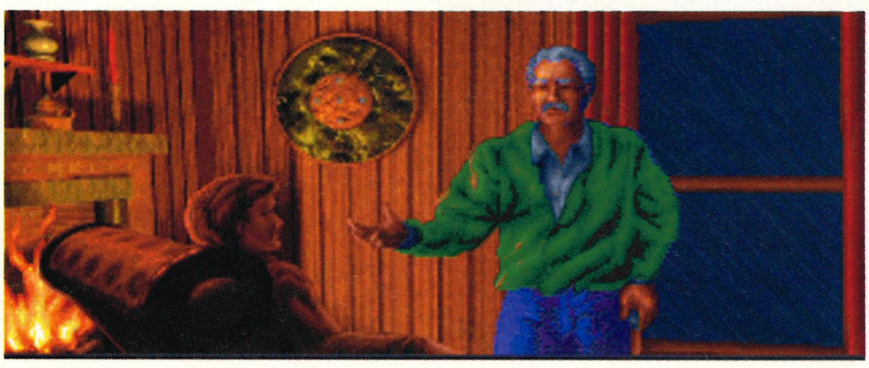
makes when he dies. If he dies on land you get a grunt followed by a death rattle, whereas if he drowns, he screams and then a gurgle (though how anyone manages to scream with a lung full of water I'll never know). Even so, the music and sound does not reach the standard of the Ultima games.

Shadowcaster is best played with a mouse, although it's easy enough to play using the keyboard. It has a straightforward point and click interface and a very basic inventory system, so you won't have to keep referring to the manual in order to do things. There is also an automap feature which I found very useful.

Although I've mentioned both Ultima Underworld and Wolfenstein 3D in the course of this review, the one other game Shadowcaster really reminded me of was Bram Stoker's Dracula from Psygnosis. With no character interaction and very little in the way of puzzles, Shadowcaster, like Dracula, is really no more than a glorified beat 'em-up. It's a role-playing game for people who don't really like role-playing games, with far more emphasis on action than on mental activity. I enjoyed it a lot, but it did get a bit monotonous after a while. Once you look beyond the expertly polished veneer, you'll find that the game underneath isn't really all that hot. The difference between Shadowcaster and Dracula is that with better graphics, more atmosphere and more variety, it just about gets away with it.

On the whole, I think that a lot of people will enjoy this game. The strong combat element and lack of off-putting statistics means that it will appeal to a wider audience than, say, Ultima Underworld, but I wish that there had been a little more to it. I got through the entire game in a weekend, and I'm sure that any experienced role-player will do the same. On the other hand, it's a fine introduction to role-playing, and if you fancy something a bit less heavy than your average RPG, I can't think of a better game to buy. If there's a sequel, as I'm sure there will be, I hope that it has a bit more depth. Then it really would be a game worth waiting for.

Cal Jones



In the opening sequence you learn of your true heritage. One of the few surviving members of a race of shapeshifters, you must embark on a quest to destroy the evil Veste and restore your people to power. And so on.

ALTERNATIVELY



Ultima Underworld II
Origin, £44.99
Rated 8, Issue 19

Following in the Ultima tradition, Underworld II is an involving and atmospheric game. As the Avatar, you must rescue Brittania from the evil Guardian by entering eight different worlds, solving puzzles and slaying monsters. The compelling plot is backed up by excellent graphics and sound effects.



Bram Stoker's Dracula
Psygnosis, £39.99
Rated 5, Issue 25

Loosely based on the film of the book, this game is probably best described as a 'stake 'em-up'. Playing Jonathon Harker, you have to destroy the undead by placing holy wafers on their graves before coming face to face with the Count. Comparable to Shadowcaster, but the action and atmosphere don't even come close. Average.

Techspec *You'll need a 386DX or better plus a Microsoft compatible or Logitech mouse. It has been tested with DoubleSpace but is not guaranteed to work with similar utilities. If you are running Smartdrive, Origin recommends disabling it prior to installing the game.*

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	4MB				
Free RAM required	550K				

Verdict
A sophistticated action game - just don't expect it to be any more than that.

rating **7**

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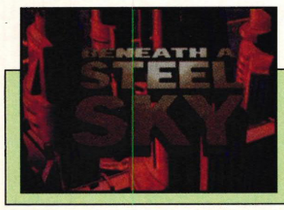
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Title	**Beneath a Steel Sky**
Publisher	**Revolution/Virgin**
Contact	**(081) 960 2255**
Price	**£39.99**



Beneath a Steel Sky

Dave Gibbon's involvement is evident in this shot from the intro. Steel Sky claims to be the first computer animated comicbook adventure, and with sequences like these, you can't really fail to agree.

Revolution and famous comic artist Dave Gibbons combine to bring you the first ever interactive graphic novel. Believe me, it's something special

If I asked you to think of a decent adventure, chances are that the first game to spring to mind would be an American product. But what if I asked you to name a decent *British* adventure? "Um," you'd probably say, "Er, hmm, ah..." See? It isn't easy, is it? And that's depressing. With the possible exception of Adventuresoft's Simon the Sorcerer, a game obviously influenced by LucasArts' adventures, the only truly innovative home-grown product I can come up with is Revolution Software's Lure of the Temptress.

What made Temptress different from other adventures was a system called Virtual Theatre. Rather than have all the action centred around the main character, things continue to happen even when you can't see them. For example, follow a character around and you'll notice that he goes to work in the daytime and returns home at night, usually via the local tavern. Although the system wasn't perfect, it did help to make the setting a little more convincing. Now Revolution has released another adventure based on the same (though now much improved) system. Beneath a Steel Sky, however, is a very different game altogether.

The story is pretty complicated, with elements of Bladerunner, the Fugitive, Escape from New York and the novels of William Gibson creeping in there. The central character (that's you, in other



The inventory box only becomes visible when you move your mouse to the top of the screen. You might just find something to add to your collection if you look beneath the pillow.

TWO

Robert Foster is in trouble. At the start of the game he has been stranded on the highest level of the city, while the security force has disabled the lift to prevent him from escaping. His first priority is to get that lift working, but how?



The controls for the lift are are locked behind the panel on the left; try to open it and the old codger will smash you over the knuckles with his spanner. To get him out of the room, ask Joey to help you let off steam. It takes two, you know.

words) is one Robert Foster, an outcast who lives in a vast and barren area known as the Gap. For reasons unknown to him, Foster is kidnapped by armed troops and flown back to the city. When their helicopter crashes, he manages to survive, but finds himself stranded with little hope of getting back to the Gap.

During the course of the game, Foster learns of his true identity and the reason why the security forces want him so badly. The city in which he's been stranded (based on Sydney, Australia, in case you're interested) is composed of numerous levels which are only accessible by lift. The working classes are confined to the seedy upper levels, whilst the rich live lower down. Doors are opened using an access card which contains information on the social standing of its bearer, so the number of areas accessible to each individual is limited by their status. Foster's initial aim is to get himself an access card and find his way down to ground level. This, of course, is far more complicated than it sounds, especially since he is also trying to avoid being captured.



Yikes! this ledge doesn't look like the sort of place you'd want to be if you suffered from vertigo. The guard has followed Foster out here, but where's he hiding?

To help him he has a robot companion, Joey, but at the start of the game Joey has been damaged and Foster must find a new robot shell for Joey's circuit board. Depending on which shell he's currently inhabiting, Joey has a number of on-board tools which are useful for solving problems. However, Joey is often stubborn and Foster usually has to sweet-talk him into co-operating; almost a puzzle in itself.

As with any adventure, problem solving forms a large part of the game. Rather than the usual insane 'stick the mango in the laundry basket to attract the axolotl' type puzzles, the problems you'll come across in Steel Sky are far more logical. For example, how do you get into the store room without setting off the alarm? The solution involves Joey, a welding torch and a fuse box.

The puzzles are difficult enough to make you think, but not so outlandish that you'll only ever solve them by sheer luck alone. Just as well, really, because sometimes a mistake can result in death. The moral? Save your game regularly.

The most obvious thing about Beneath a Steel Sky is the very high standard of the graphics. This game looks absolutely stunning. Yes, I know, I know, there seems to be at least one game in every issue which has 'stunning' graphics (and probably more than one in this issue), but in this case I'm certainly not exaggerating. Honest.

The visuals have a decidedly comic-book feel, which is hardly surprising when you consider that they are the result of a collaboration between the talented Revolution design team and graphic novel artist Dave Gibbons. Gibbons is probably best known for the award winning Watchmen, but you might also have



Hobbins the handyman doesn't like you standing on the lift because it sets off umpteen alarms. Perhaps you can use this to distract him.

MINUTES of thumbing a lift



Now, all that remains is for you to get that panel open. Perhaps something in the factory will help. The storeroom is the most likely place to look, but it's only accessible to robots. Once again, Joey comes to the rescue by disabling the alarm.



The putty you found in the store turns out to be plastic explosives, but you need to find a way to trigger the explosion. What about that handy light socket? Turn off the power before you plug in the plastic, or it won't just be the door that blows.



Once the door is blown, pull the main switch to reactivate the lift. Now go back to the lift, wipe your stolen card through the slot and, hey presto! You've got your transport to the next level. Just make sure you don't leave without Joey, though.



You won't find any bright, primary colours in this game. The subtlety of the backgrounds suits Steel Sky's dark and sinister mood perfectly, and the attention to detail is amazing.

come across his Give Me Liberty, Batman Vs Predator and the Rogue Trooper strip. He provided much of the conceptual art for Steel Sky, including the main characters and wonderfully detailed painted backdrops. He was also responsible for the eight page comic which comes with the game.

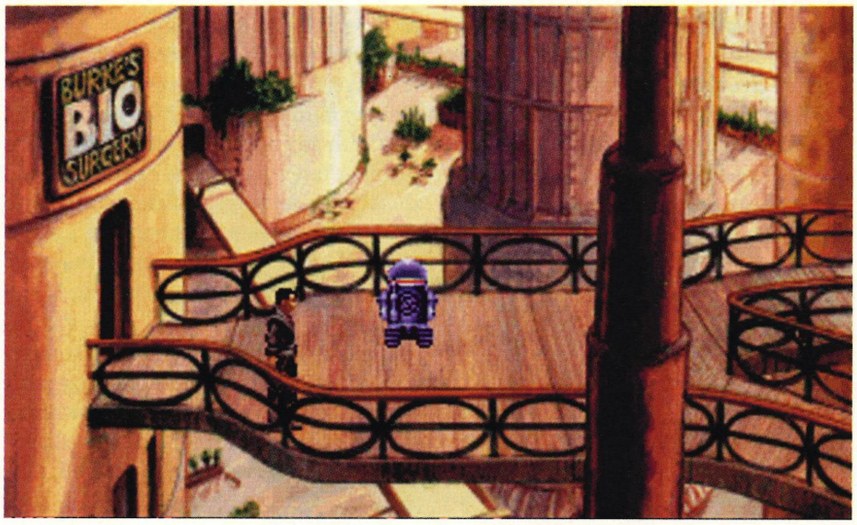
The overall appearance is quite understated, moving away from the bright colours and cartoon style graphics which seem to be dominating adventures these days. After playing my way through a succession of brash and gaudy American games, I must say that I found this immensely refreshing. The richness of the detail is very impressive. Virtually every location has something going on in the background, whether it's machinery moving in the factory, steam billowing from buildings far below the walkways, or people going about their daily business. This attention to detail brings the game to life and makes it very easy to become totally absorbed in it.

I have one small, piddling little criticism though: the sprites are, for the most part, nicely animated (when you reach the park, just watch the dog sniffing his way around and you'll know what I mean), but you only ever see them either from the side or head on. This means that whenever one of the characters walks across a room, they take a very circuitous and unnatural route which involves lots of right-angled turns. OK, this doesn't detract from the gameplay, but it does look a bit odd.

Steel Sky's music is, on the whole, appropriate to each setting. It sounds clanky and mechanical in the factory, kitsch and poppy in the noveau-riche Belle Vue area, and ominous and menacing underground. The accompanying sound effects add greatly to the atmosphere which is, in any case, superb (it's definitely the most atmospheric game since MicroProse's Return of the Phantom).

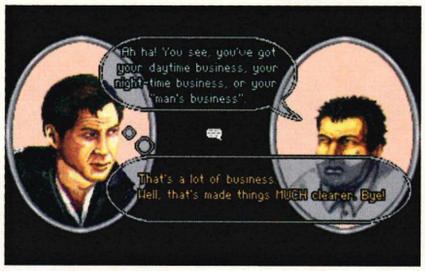
One of the best things about Steel Sky is the user-friendly point and click interface. Clicking on an item with the left mouse button, whether it's in your inventory or on screen, allows you to examine it. To use the item, just click on it with the right button. When you 'use' something, the action will always be appropriate to that object, so, for example, clicking on a door will open or close it; clicking on a person will allow you to talk to them and so on. This does away with messy verb boxes, vague commands and endless frustration.

The graphics take up the whole screen, thanks to an easily accessible but non-



Foster may not be interested in nose jobs and liposuction, but Burke's Bio Surgery does have one operation he can make use of. It'll cost him his family jewels, though.

ALTERNATIVELY



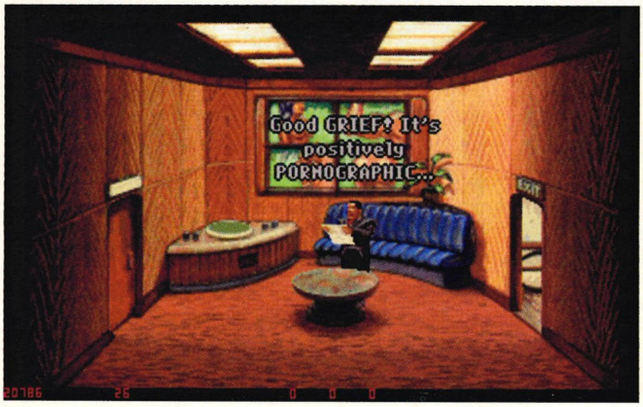
Innocent Until Caught
Psygnosis, £44.99
Rated 6, Issue 27

Another graphic adventure with a cyberpunk setting, Innocent Until Caught features the exploits of one Jack T. Ladd, small time crook, big time drinker and womanizer. It contains quite a bit of humour, but whether its particular brand of wit appeals to you is largelya matter of taste. Graphics are average, but whilst this game isn't as classy as Steel Sky, it's still pretty decent.



BAT II
Ubi Soft, £34.99
Rated 7, Issue 15

Yet more cyberpunk. This time you play a 22nd century cybernetic agent from the Bureau of Astral Troubleshooters. BAT II is, first and foremost, an adventure, with the emphasis on exploration and gaining information. There are, however, some arcade sequences including combat and gambling machines. The graphics are fairly good and add to the moody atmosphere, and on the whole it's an enjoyable game.



Techspec

Other than needing a 386 or better, Beneath a Steel Sky is pretty flexible and seems to cope with most set-ups. It's an advantage to have at least 2Mb RAM because it cuts down on disk accessing, but it's not mandatory.

Disk requirements					
	High density	✓			
	Hard disk only	✓			
	Space taken on hard disk	9Mb			
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	640K			
	Free RAM required	550K			

rating **8**

Verdict
A cracking good game, with stunning visuals and an intriguing plot.

intrusive inventory box. Moving the pointer to the top of the screen brings down the inventory bar, so it isn't actually on screen until you need it. Items in your inventory are used exactly the same way as items on screen, so, for example, should you decide to try and use your crowbar on a door, click on it with the right button, drag it across to the door and click again. Hey presto, Rob will either whip the bar out of his coat and start jemmying away, or else he'll stand there and shrug, meaning that this isn't the right solution to your problem.

Although the atmosphere is, for the most part, sinister and moody, Beneath a Steel Sky does have an element of humour. Don't expect slapstick Day of the Tentacle or Sam and Max type gags, though, because the jokes in this game are far more subtle (unless you count the episode involving the little dog and the see-saw, that is). You could almost describe it as a black comedy. I think I enjoyed it all the more because the humour is very British, with more emphasis on sarcasm and irony (which the Americans don't understand too well, apparently) and a merciful lack of references to apple pie, Twinkies and gridiron. Beneath a Steel Sky won't have you in stitches, but it'll afford you the odd wry smile.

In all, Beneath a Steel Sky is a very impressive product. The clever interface, engrossing plot and testing but logical puzzles make it a joy to play. With around 100 locations, it's hardly small, and will keep you going a fair bit longer than the two or so days it takes to complete most adventures. However, it doesn't have as much instant appeal as, say, LucasArts or Sierra games, and it takes a few hours' play before you start to appreciate its finer points. Don't let that dissuade you though, because this game has a lot of depth.

Steel Sky is one of the classiest adventures I've played in a long time, and it's very reassuring to see that a British developer can come up with something as excellent as this. Given a straight choice between this game and LucasArts' Sam and Max (reviewed page 62) I'd take this any day. But perhaps I'm just getting old.



■ Cal Jones



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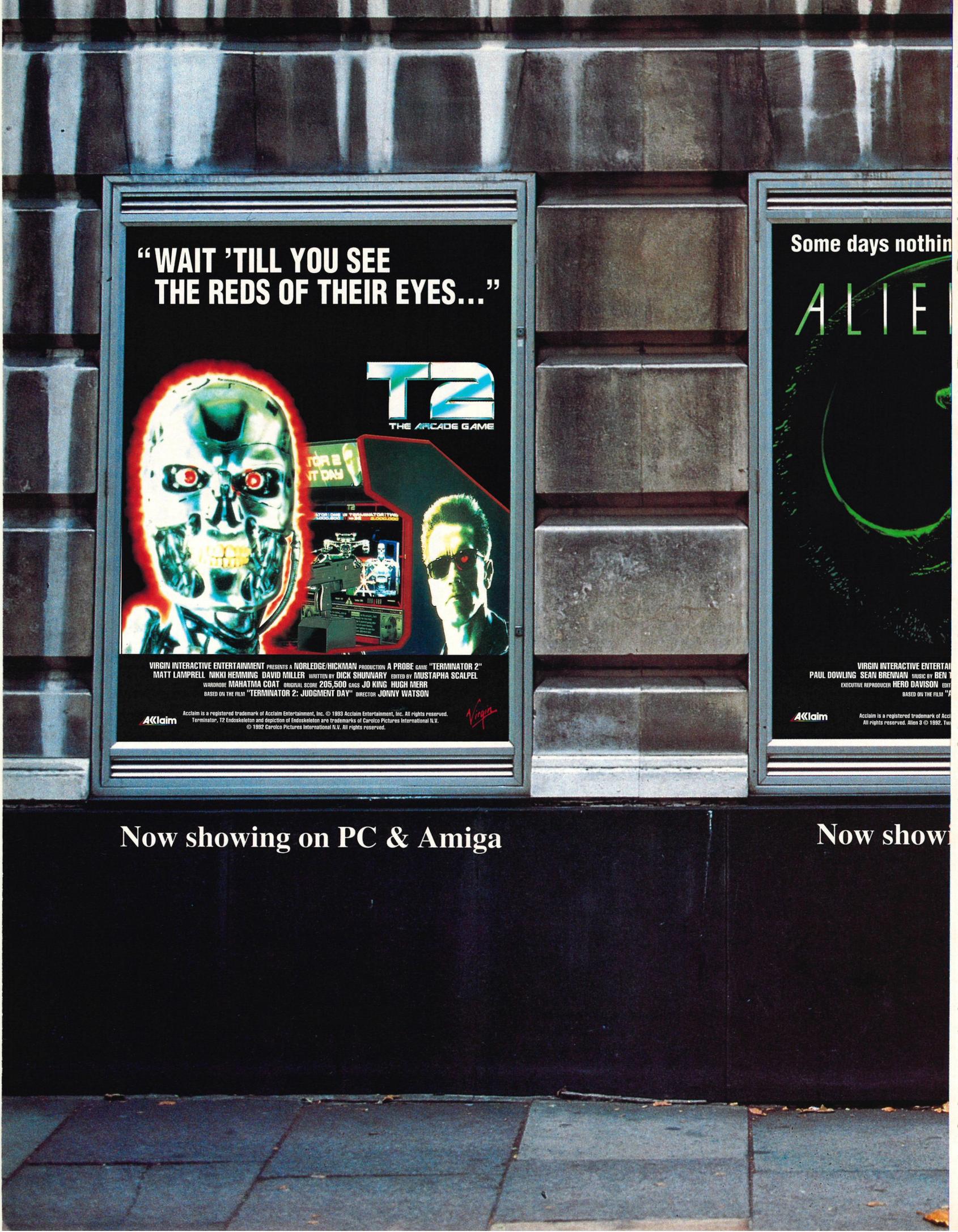
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Title	**CyberRace**
Publisher	**Cyberdreams**
Contact	**(071) 328 3267**
Price	**£44.99**

Fast cars, guns and glory: Cyberdreams' high octane racing game supplies the lot. Who better to review it than the only person in the world capable of wheel-spinning a Lada?

CyberRace



The scenery may be pretty but you can't afford to let your mind wander. Spend too long admiring the view and you'll wind up with a hole in your chassis.

After I saw Star Wars at the tender age of nine, I desperately wanted to drive a hovercar like the one Luke Skywalker used for speeding across the desert. Seventeen years later I finally got my wish. Well, sort of. CyberRace is a futuristic racing game where not only do you get to drive a hovercar at extreme speed across a desert, but you are also allowed to shoot your competitors. If this doesn't sound appealing enough already, the game also features the work of futurist Syd Mead, whose designs have been seen in films such as Bladerunner, Aliens and Tron to name but a few. So far, so good. CyberRace has a fine pedigree and looks as though it'll be a lot of fun, but will it live up its early promise?

Set in the distant future, CyberRace takes place in a galaxy which has been laid waste by the war between the Terrans and their enemies, the evil Kaladasian Empire. To prevent any further destruction, the ruling council has decreed that the two sides and associated allies should settle their differences on the cyber track. You play Clay Shaw (a ridiculous name if ever I heard one), the son of top Terran racer John Shaw. Clay has inherited his father's talent for racing, but when John is killed during a race by arch-enemy and all-round unpleasant fellow Mugyor, Clay decides to quit. Unfortunately for him, the Terran Emperor is not overly impressed by his decision and kidnaps his girlfriend to force Clay back on to the cyber track. If Clay does well, he gets to exchange pleasantries with her for a few minutes, but if he makes a mess of things she ends up being carted off to the torture chamber for a spot of shock therapy. Nice chaps, the Terrans. And they're supposed to be the good guys.

Racing demon

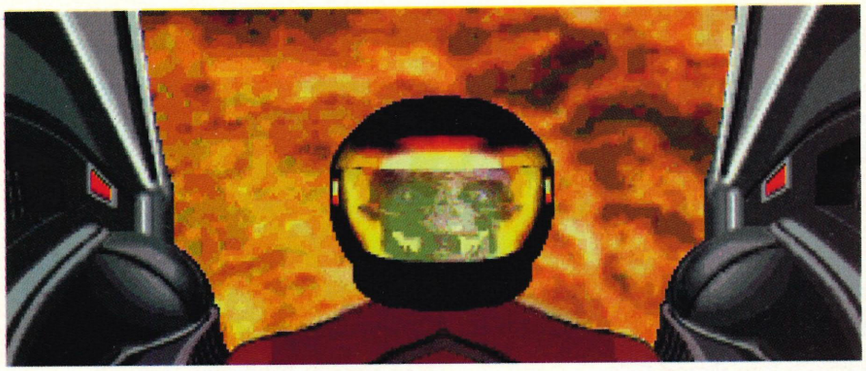
Obviously, your aim is to win races. The races take place over four different landscapes with two tracks each, so you'll never have to race on the same track more than once during the course of the game.

TWO

You may have inherited your father's talent, but you've also inherited a hell of a lot of responsibility too. Not only is your own life at stake, but also the life of your girlfriend and, indeed, the future of the Terran empire.



Before the race you'll need to fit out your vehicle with every fancy bit of kit you can afford. This could include weapons, armour or even an autopilot to keep you on track. Your pit boss will give you a few hints about race tactics, so listen up.



The actual course is indicated by a double row of holographic pylons which you are meant to fly between. There's nothing to stop you flying off course, however, which is often the only way to avoid getting a missile rammed up your tail pipe.

Which brings me on to the small matter of combat. Everyone in the race has been kitted out with a number of weapons, and the easiest way to get past a rival is take him out with a well-placed missile. Each sled can take a certain amount of damage before it becomes inoperable, but get hit too often and you'll grind to a halt. When that happens, you're a sitting duck. Take any more hits and chances are you'll suffer a horrible fiery death. Game over, in other words. The first lap is always pure mayhem, with everyone taking pot shots at each other and sleds spinning off left, right and centre. If you make it through this stage, you can get down to the serious business of racing. Dogfighting with the other racers requires quick reflexes, because if you get too close, they'll probably drop a mine in front of you. Mines do big damage, as well as causing you to spin off-track. It's not always possible to avoid every mine or missile, but if you manage to miss most of them, you stand a good chance of finishing the race.

Most of the races are fairly straightforward affairs, with the winner being the first person to complete 10 laps. Credits are awarded according to how much of the track you manage to cover, so that while the winner will receive the most cash, if you spend the entire race cowering behind the sand dunes you'll get nowt. Every now and then you get to take part in a free for all, which is basically a demolition derby. There is no race-track to follow in this sequence; instead you just zoom around taking pot shots at anything and everything that gets in your way.

As you might expect, there is more to the game than the races themselves. There are interactive sequences between races, or what I think of as the 'soap-opera bits', which feature the obligatory digitised actors. As well as showing you how the story is progressing, you're able to visit the bar where use your hard-won cash to bet on the upcoming race, buy black market upgrades for your vehicle, trade information or even arrange for a shady character to sabotage your rivals.

If you'd rather stay within the law, you can always equip your vehicle in the pits, but whilst this is cheaper than buying parts on the black market, the technology doesn't become available until a race or so later.

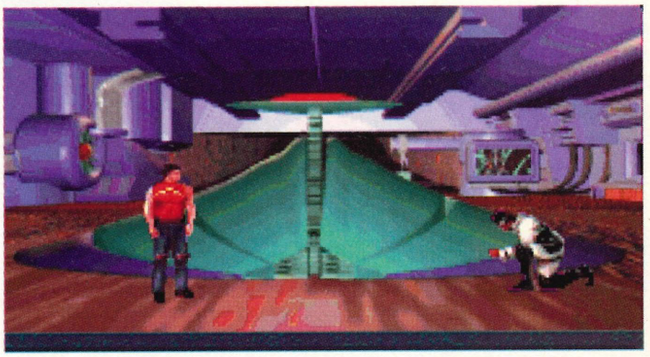
Gun runner

All this costs money, of course, and unless you've won enough of the stuff on the race-track, you won't gain much of an advantage over the opposition. In the first couple of races you can get by with only basic equipment, such as homing missiles, mines, a laser and light armour for your vehicle. Later on you can buy better weapons, fuel boosters and a holographic device which projects a decoy image of your vehicle to confuse opponents. The better the equipment, the more it will cost you. One item I never got round to buying was the autopilot, because although it keeps you on track throughout the race, it makes it impossible for you to dodge the mines your enemies leave behind them.

What you have to remember is that your enemies can also buy all this wonderful equipment. This means that unless you do well and earn plenty of cash in the first few races, you'll find yourself falling behind in the technology stakes.

As with many PC games these days, the first thing you notice about CyberRace is the graphics. All the race vehicles are ray-traced and the landscapes have been created using a technique known as Voxel Spacing, previously seen in games such as Novalogic's Comanche: Maximum

If you're unlucky enough to get killed, you get to watch yourself burn to death. Gruesome.



It's the pits — literally.

MINUTES of hover bovver



Your sled is designed to hover a certain distance above ground, so you don't have to worry about crashing. Just concentrate on keeping the enemy in your sights and blow them all away. Here, a Kaladasian scumbag prepares to eat missile.



Boom! Nailed the sucker. Since it appealed to the sadistic side of my nature, I found this game a great means of letting off steam. Just watch out that you don't get so caught up in trying to kill things that you come a cropper yourself.



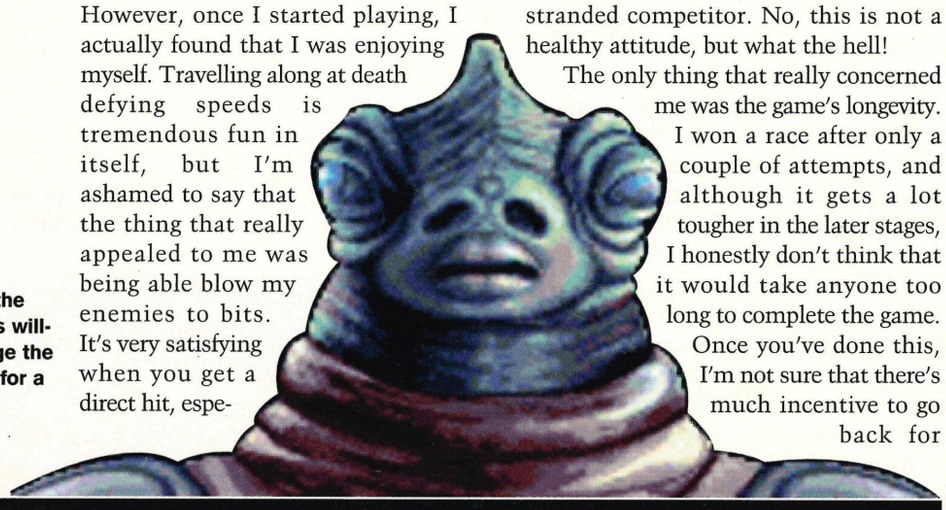
Now, that's what I like to see: my name at the top. It's not the taking part but the winning that counts in CyberRace. After all, it's a lot more than a sport. Now all I have to do is keep up the good work and not get too complacent.

Overkill and Xenobots. This gives the terrain a more realistic look than might be achieved with polygons or bitmapped graphics. Unfortunately, the screen shots don't quite do it justice, because it looks infinitely better in motion. The landscapes can appear quite pixellated close up, but when you're in the thick of the action with a large missile on your tail you'll be moving to quickly to notice.

To see the game at its best you really need a 486DX. It isn't nearly as smooth on less powerful machines, and you'll probably have to turn the detail level down to get it up to a decent rate.

Sled astray

I'll admit that I was a bit dubious about the game to begin with. It's all too easy to get tricked into buying a product because it has pretty pictures on the box (and CyberRace has a very nice box indeed) before finding that it's decidedly lacking in the gameplay department. However, once I started playing, I actually found that I was enjoying myself. Travelling along at death defying speeds is tremendous fun in itself, but I'm ashamed to say that the thing that really appealed to me was being able blow my enemies to bits. It's very satisfying when you get a direct hit, especially when it completely vaporises a stranded competitor. No, this is not a healthy attitude, but what the hell!



Freckles (?!) the alien is always willing to sabotage the opposition — for a price.

The only thing that really concerned me was the game's longevity. I won a race after only a couple of attempts, and although it gets a lot tougher in the later stages, I honestly don't think that it would take anyone too long to complete the game. Once you've done this, I'm not sure that there's much incentive to go back for another go. CyberRace will keep most people happy for a couple of days or so, and it's fun while it lasts. It's well presented and the gameplay is there, so it's definitely worth getting if you don't mind spending £45 on a few days entertainment. On the other hand, if you're looking for a game to last you a bit longer, CyberRace may well fall short of your requirements.

■ Cal Jones

ALTERNATIVELY



Formula One Grand Prix
MicroProse, £44.99
Rated 8, Issue 15

This award winning game is one of the best driving game to have appeared on the PC so far. Although this is a far more serious simulation than CyberRace, it's fast, furious and a lot of fun. The polygon based graphics are excellent, and it sounds almost as good as the real thing. You can't shoot things, of course, but when a game's this good, who cares?



Comanche: Maximum Overkill
Novalogic/US Gold, £45.99
Rated 6, Issue 16

Not a driving game but a high-tech helicopter sim, Comanche has more in common with CyberRace than it would first appear. Both involve heavy use of weapons and lots of large explosions, and both have Voxel Spaced graphics. Although good looking and initially fun to play, Comanche lacks depth and is easy to complete. Good for a quick blast, but not a serious sim.

Cockpit layout



Techspec

CyberRace needs a 386 or better, running MS-DOS 5.0 or higher. It's best if you use a joystick, particularly a Thrustmaster. It won't run with EMM386 installed, so you'll have to edit your Config.sys file. Instructions for doing this are contained in the manual.

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	25Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✗	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✗
Performance					
Optimum speed	33MHz				
Minimum memory	4Mb				
Free RAM required	550K				

Verdict

Excellent fun, but lacks long term appeal

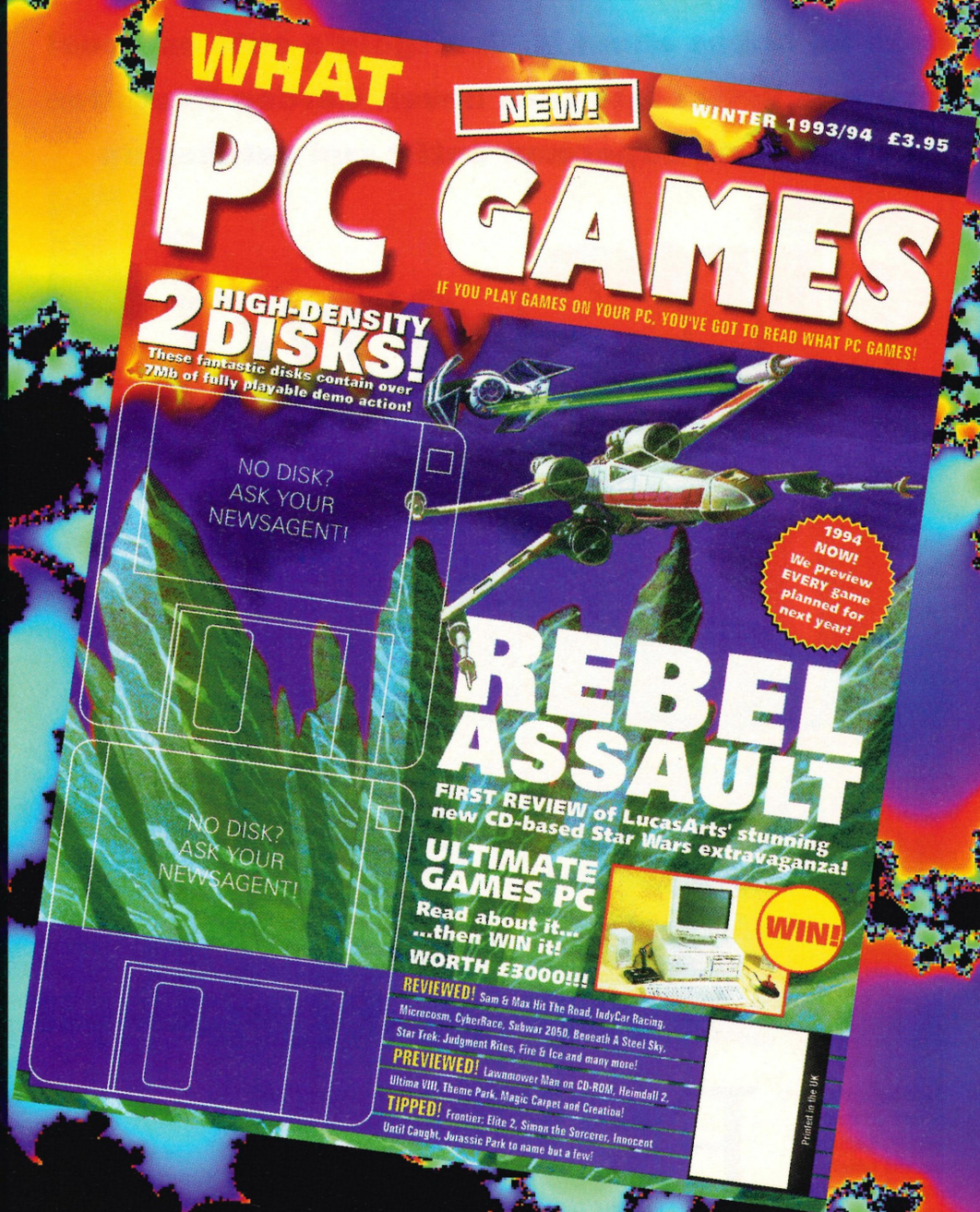
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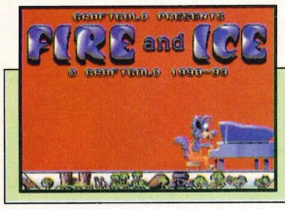
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Title	**Fire and Ice**
Publisher	**Renegade**
Contact	**(071) 481 9214**
Price	**£29.99**

Make no bones about it, Graftgold's cute and cool coyote is better late than never. Gordon Houghton dons his Acme superman outfit and catches up

Fire and Ice

Cool's journey takes him through seven countries, each divided up into as many as five levels. His task in almost every stage is simple: collect all the parts of the key which opens the exit door.



Some hazards are specific to each country. Region four, the jungle, features invincible, snapping fly-traps, flaming arrows and a regularly erupting volcano. It's time for a sharp exit.



Following a grim period in which many software publishers tended to treat the PC as a 'serious' simulation, adventure and role-playing machine, the number of top quality platform games available has increased steadily over the past couple of years. Renegade itself has released Magic Pockets and Gods, Gremlin has unleashed Zool and Interplay has chipped in recently with The Lost Vikings. As a result, Fire and Ice has some serious competition.

First impressions aren't all that favourable. The graphics are only 16-colour VGA/EGA when many current arcade games feature 256-colour backdrops, the sound effects are sometimes weak and the music won't appeal to everyone. The action is also a little tough to begin with — you will die dozens of times before you even get to grips with your coyote's controls.

What's it all about then? Well, an evil wizard called Suten has escaped from somewhere else in the solar system, and is currently holidaying on the banks of the Nile (he likes the heat). Glemm, a good wizard, has scoured the Earth for a worthy adversary to Suten, and has chosen Cool Coyote, a piano-playing prairie-wolf currently residing in the Arctic Circle. Cool's job is to journey to Egypt and defeat the wicked mage.

The journey takes in seven regions: the Arctic, Scotland, underwater, a jungle, an Inca temple, a bonus region in the air, and Egypt itself. Each region consists of up to five stages. Each stage is about 20 screens in size, and is packed with monsters, obstacles and secret goodies. To complete a level you have to assemble a key from pieces dropped by dead enemies, and use this to unlock an ice door at the end of the stage. You can finish the game by completing fewer than two dozen of the levels, but true canine heroes will want to conquer all.

Hot and cold

The action is fronted by excellent presentation. Apart from the title screen — which shows Cool playing the piano and barking in accompaniment — a menu allows you to practice on any of the first four regions, turn the music and sound effects on/off, redefine keys or use a joystick, turn off the pre-level maps (to make life harder), and listen to 16 different in-game tunes. During loading, you can also select one of three difficulty levels, which affects the speed of the game.

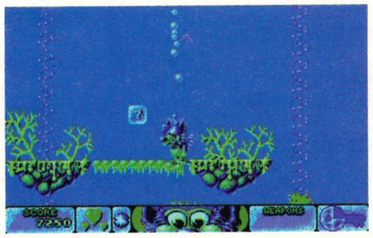
Once you've overcome the initial disappointments (see above), you'll begin to realise that Fire and Ice is a very good game indeed. Each of the seven regions is completely different in style, with its own graphics, musical themes, hazards, enemies and secrets. Each has its own special effects, whether it's volcanoes erupting in the jungle, a crocodile-infested moat in Scotland (!?), or huge falling snowballs in the Arctic. In some of the stages Cool wears special equipment too: for example, in the Arctic he sports a pair of ski goggles, and in the underwater region he uses a snorkel.

Cool can walk, jump, slide and use ice

60 MINUTES under sea with Cool Coyote



This is world 3-1, and two denizens of the deep are headed your way. If you fail to freeze them with your ice pellets you lose a life when they hit you. Walk or jump into a frozen enemy and it shatters — sometimes releasing a piece of the key.



Like all the other countries, this fishy land contains plenty of secrets: hidden bonuses, secret rooms and concealed weapons stores. If you strike this icy question mark with your ice pellets some powerful weaponry is yours for the taking.



Further on you discover a cave packed full of treasure. After destroying a couple of fiendish guardians you can collect all the goodies at your leisure, with a substantial points bonus. There's another hidden weapons block here, too.



At last, the exit! It's been a long, hard struggle and Cool has lost a couple of lives along the way, but the door is finally open, giving safe passage to the next stage. Remember: it's impossible to leave a level without all the parts of the key ...

bridges and steps to travel around. Falling from a great height doesn't usually harm him, but it can be fatal if he's running short on time or he lands on an enemy without disabling it first. His basic defence is a ready supply of rapid-fire ice pellets, but there is a formidable range of limited-supply extra weapons to be collected too.

Special weapons include snow bombs, air bombs, rain clouds, mines, a 'Sonic Bark' and the 'Puppy Multiple'. Using the latter allows Cool to accumulate several puppy outriders who will trail him doggedly, firing ice pellets and killing enemies.

Once an enemy has been frozen by one of these weapons, cool is given a only few seconds to shatter it and pick up any key pieces it may have been carrying, after which the creature recovers. The nearer Cool gets to his destination the harder progress becomes, because in hotter lands ice is less effective and opponents thaw out more quickly.

A rapid sequence of day and night effects marks how much time is left in the game, and once the final limit has been reached the evil Suten will make things very hot.

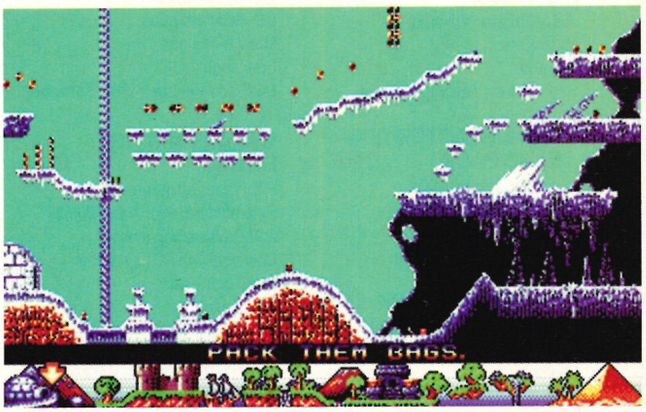
Extra lives are available. The most sensible method of getting them is to collect the masses of treasure lying around and achieve the appropriate points targets. You can also pick up Bone-us (urgh) ice bones, or guide any puppies you have acquired through the exit doors.

Joystick control is beautifully responsive, though keyboard control is, as usual with platform games, a little unwieldy. The variety of routes through each region will keep you coming back for more and the level designs are simply superb.

The animations are consistently good (particularly when Cool is wearing equipment or being struck by lightning), there is a large range of appropriate tunes, and the overall attention to detail is excellent.

I have only a couple of minor gripes. Some of the action, particularly in the jungle levels, would have been easier to follow with 256-colour background graphics; in fact, the game as a whole would have benefited from more colours. Second, some of the sound effects are a little weak, but you can always turn them off and listen to the great tunes instead.

Neither of these complaints is a serious drawback, and they certainly shouldn't prevent arcade game fans from adding this little gem to their collection.



Each level is introduced by an optional mini-map giving some help with exploration.

■ Gordon Houghton



Techspec

Fire and Ice is packed on to one 720K disk. You can play from floppy, but installing to a hard disk dramatically reduces loading times; and you can use just about any processor. The game cannot be run from Windows.

Disk requirements		
High density		
Hard disk only		
Space taken on hard disk		1Mb
Graphic modes		
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VGA	SVGA	
Soundboards		
Ad Lib	Roland	Sound Blaster
Joystick	Keyboard	Mouse
Performance		
Optimum speed	20MHz	
Minimum memory	640K	
Free RAM required	570K	

Verdict
A good game, even though it lacks 256 colour

rating **6**

ALTERNATIVELY



Zool
Gremlin, £34.99
Rated 7, Issue 20
Zool is still one of the best arcade games available on the PC, boasting eighteen levels plus bonus stages. Excellent joystick response and redefinable keys complement smooth, eight-way scrolling and some nifty music tracks. Eighteen levels doesn't sound much for £35, but the potential to increase your score by annihilating every enemy and finding all the hidden treasures, coupled with three well-graded difficulty levels, should guarantee long-term fun.



The Lost Vikings
Interplay, £34.99
Rated 8, Issue 23
Just marginally better than Zool, The Lost Vikings is technically well up to scratch, featuring 256-colour background graphics, cute sprites, smooth scrolling and digitised sound effects. With three main characters, each of whom has different attributes, 37 levels of platform action spread over six different worlds, and plenty of fighting, leaping and puzzle-solving, The Lost Vikings is a big, very enjoyable and occasionally frustrating platform game.

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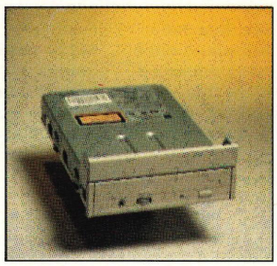
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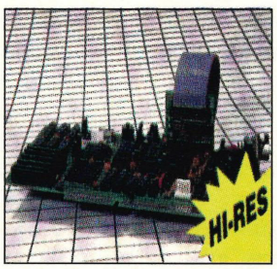
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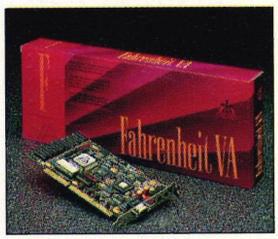
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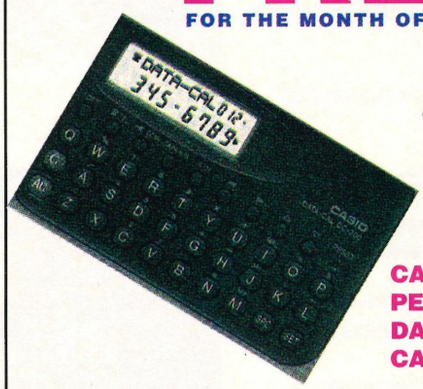
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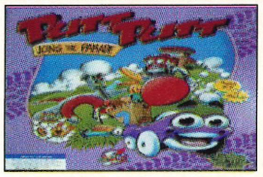
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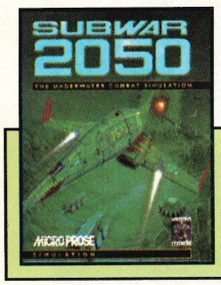
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Title	**Subwar 2050**
Publisher	**MicroProse**
Contact	**(0454) 326532**
Price	**£44.99**

So you think you can pilot a sub huh? Do you? Huh? Well it's not as easy as you might think. This mission's a tough one. Pilot your sub to waypoint 3 and free the whales.

Submarine sims don't exactly fire the imagination, do they? Let's face it, sheer brain-bending excitement is a rare occurence in your average average sub game. These usually involve little more than sitting quietly on the ocean floor and imagining what's happening outside, with only sonar for company. But now, along comes Subwar 2050, with more ocean views than a series of Jaques Cousteau's Undersea World.

The submarines don't actually have windows (the water pressure would crack them in seconds), but you do get to see the outside world courtesy of 3D graphical data from the sonar, which is projected on to the inside of the cockpit, giving a unique and wonderful view of the ocean, the seabed and it's myriad aquatic life.

There are no periscopes, no sitting on the sea bed dodging depth charges, no U-Boats and no tortuous plotting of torpedo intercept courses. Subwar 2050 is an undersea combat sim, a strategic but often frantic shoot-em up, that owes more than a small nod of recognition to films like the Abyss and Deep Star Six.

It is the year 2050 and you are a free-lance submarine pilot touting for work from corporations that are mining the ocean floor. As mineral resources have become scarce, undersea mining has become enormously profitable and, with billions of dollars at stake, many of the corporations are willing to use whatever means necesssary to get what they want, whether it's sabotage, demolition, or even wholesale murder .



At the weapons selection screen you can customise your sub with a variety of missiles.

You control a high-tech fighter submarine in four seperate campaigns. In each, your corporation bosses send you out to a mothership (a sort of underwater aircraft carrier) and pay you enormously large amounts of hard currency for completing missions. These range from luring whales away from your enemy's whale farm, to attacking surface vessels and destroying undersea mining complexes.

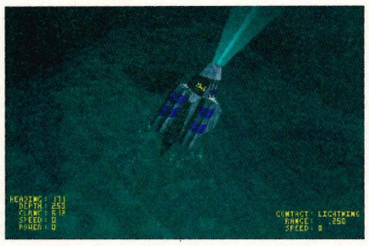
As far as structure and gameplay are concerned, Subwar 2050 closely resembles a fight sim. But for a closer comparison Subwar has a kindred spirit in Origin's Wing Commander.

What stand out most in Subwar 2050 are its stunning graphics.

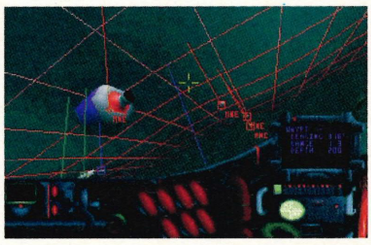
Seen the Abyss? Watched SeaQuest DSV on Sundays? Why not recreate that underwater feeling with Subwar 2050 from MicroProse

Subwar 2050

0 MINUTES of wet warfare



Subwar looks absolutely gorgeous, so much so that I spend the first five minutes with the external view, twisting and turning and watching bubbles rise off the hull.



But down to business. Time to do my bit for whale-kind. The great mammals in question are confined in a whale farm ringed with mines. So I just dodge the mines. Simple ...



Not so simple after all, I'm spotted by the enemy and they despatch a sub to intercept. A couple of well-placed torpedoes and $27 million of sub becomes $27 worth of scrap metal.



I've freed the whales, my heart is filled with happiness and I feel I've done, in my own small way, my bit for the environment (you can shoot them if you want though).

No-one has ever done an underwater game like this before.

Fighter subs duel over a gorgeous texture-mapped landscape, spotlights pierce the gloom, waves ebb and flow on the surface and shaded subs shoot shaded whales, shaded squid and shaded sharks. It's superb (the graphics that is, not the shooting helpless aquatic life part).

The four campaigns will take you as far afield as the Sea of Japan and the icy Arctic Ocean, with each scenario containing up to ten missions. Like Wing Commander you have to complete the missions in order of appearance.

Your progress is complemented by an ongoing narrative that informs you of the enemy's reaction to your last mission. For example, if you destroy the Westingford Corporation's mining vehicles it will probably launch an attack on you. Your next mission might be defensive, or a rescue mission as a result.

Despite the similarities, Subwar 2050 is far more than just a flight sim underwater. This is borne out by the fact that if you use your finely honed flight sim moves in Subwar, you'll end up as shrapnel in under two minutes.

Obviously when you're submerged the more noise your sub makes the more visible you become to other subs using sonar. To minimise your sound signature you've got to slow down and perform gentle and gradual manoeuvres. More importantly, success often depends on the way you use the thermal layers. These are hot and cold sections of water, represented by green and red grids. Sonar cannot penetrate water of a different temperature, so by dodging above a thermal you can literally hide from your enemies and even fool homing torpedoes. It doesn't always work, but the principle is solid enough.

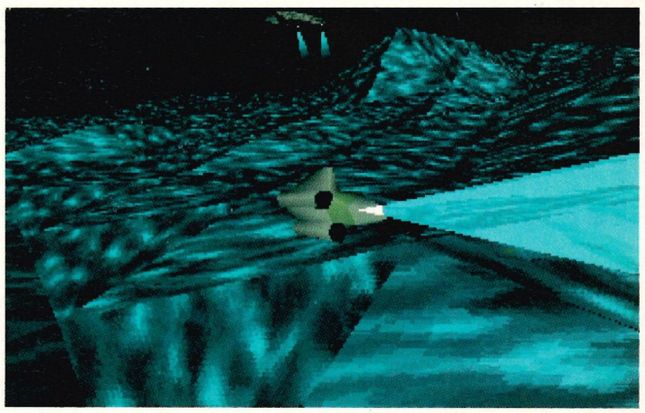
On the minus side, the game can get a bit repetitive, but you can tailor the difficulty level to suit, and even tone down the graphics if you have a slower machine. You'll find that turning off the texture-mapped sea bed results in a wire-frame landscape, and the whole thing starts to look like that old arcade favourite, Battlezone.

Subwar 2050 is a nice idea, but isn't innovative enough to warrant a higher score. It hasn't really got any great advantage over Wing Commander or modern flight sims, it just does virtually the same sort of things underwater (even though the control responses are different).

Despite this, Subwar 2050 is a great game and a refreshing move away from the usual, often dull sub sim. It's also nicely presented, with 3D Studio modelled animations and an accompanying book called 'Under Currents', a sort of pilot manual and What Sub? magazine combined.

If you fancy something that plays well but looks really different, as an alternative to either a combat flight sim or a sub sim, then wander down to the shops to look at Subwar 2050. You won't have seen anything like it before, I guarantee it.

■ Dean Evans



Subwar features texture-mapping and Gouraud shading, so for full detail you're going to need a fast 486.

Techspec

To get the best out of Subwar you really need a fast 486 machine. The texture mapping slows it right down, but you can turn it off. Playing with wireframe graphics isn't as bad as it sounds and I had some good games in this mode.

Disk requirements

High density	
Hard disk only	
Space taken on hard disk	14Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	EGA	Tandy
VGA	SVGA	

Soundboards

Ad Lib	Roland	Sound Blaster

Joystick	Keyboard	Mouse

Performance

Optimum speed	33MHz
Minimum memory	2Mb
Free RAM required	585K

Verdict
A gorgeous-looking sub game with lots of action.

rating **8**

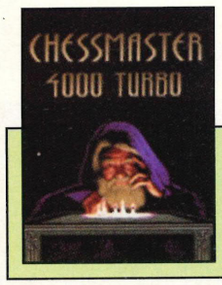
ALTERNATIVELY



Privateer
EA/Origin, £49.99
Rated 5, Issue 26
Subwar can be compared to the Wing Commander series due to its texture mapping, waypoint navigation and the fact that you fly from a mothership. Privateer is the latest Wing Commander incarnation and although it didn't score very highly last issue, it still remains the best-looking clone on the market. So if you're after a good alternative, pick Privateer. It doesn't have any water but the gameplay is almost identical.



SSN-21 Seawolf
EA, £44.99
Previewed Issue 26
If you want to stay firmly underwater then the forthcoming SSN-21 Seawolf sub sim looks like a good bet. The sequel to the highly acclaimed 688 Attack Sub, Seawolf boasts 33 very difficult missions and features the most realistic sonar system I've seen in a sub sim, so far. With digitised ships, over 100 sampled sounds and intense, atmospheric gameplay, Seawolf sounds like being a very impressive game indeed.

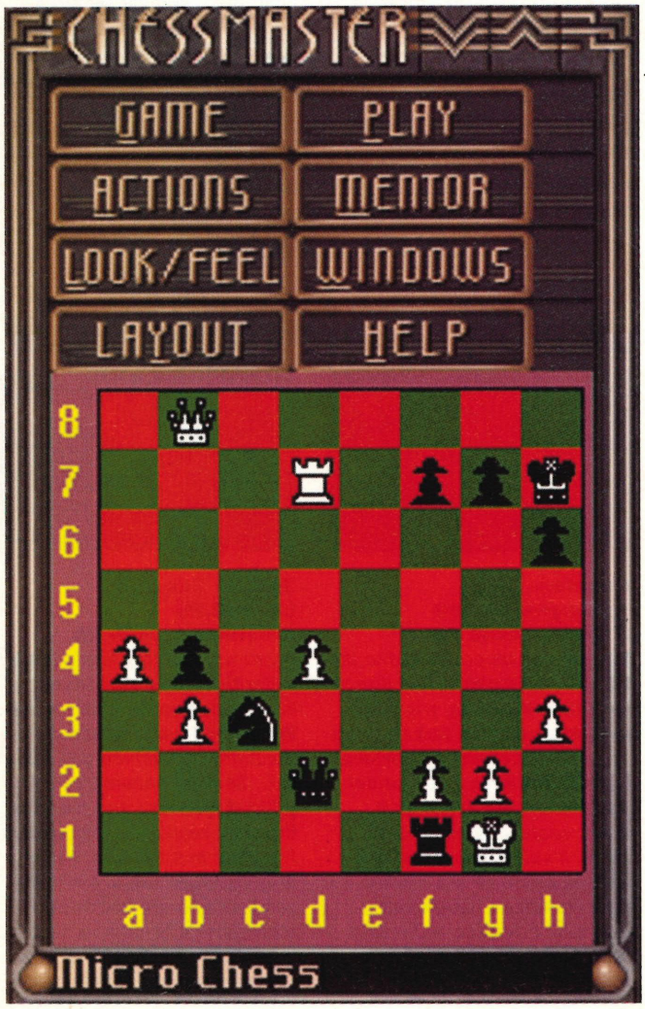


Title	**Chessmaster 4000 Turbo**
Publisher	**Mindscape**
Contact	**(0444) 246333**
Price	**£34.99**



Chessplayers around the world are fainting beside the shelves at the prospects of 'awesome power', 'auto-annotation', 'LAN support' and a shopful of other horrors, all courtesy of Chessmaster 4000 Turbo. Should you flee? Or buy?

Chessmaster 4000 turbo

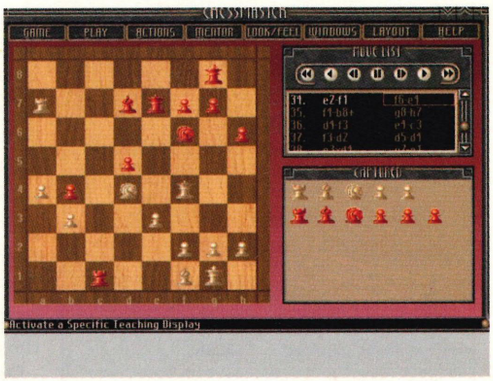


Chessmaster is the Freddy Kruger of computer chess games. Anyone who's seen Nightmare on Elm Street (any of them) will know what I mean. Just when you think you've heard the last of Freddy, up he pops in a new incarnation, brandishing a whole new arsenal of sharp weapons and tactics and colourful phraseology, hell-bent on revenge. Each version of Chessmaster appears in the same way, packed with sexy-looking new chess sets and 3D viewing options, uttering digitised screams of maniac glee. And then down it goes again (just like Freddy), checkmated at the very first hurdle by just about any of the more serious computer chess programs.

But now Chessmaster's back. And this time it's mad. The 4000 Turbo incarnation boasts a wicked array of accoutrements. Although some of these (the annotation feature, for example) are elaborations on previous options, others, such

two

I never expected Fritz, running on my 16MHz 386, to beat Chessmaster 4000 on a 486 33MHz machine, but the old German trooper did me proud. After Fritz had lost two games with the opening book turned off, I gave each player the option of consulting its list of openings.



Queen's Gambit Declined / Orthodox Variation / Lasker's Defence.
On move twenty-four, Fritz rated both programs as having equal chances. Six moves later, however, things had changed and Fritz was a pawn down, with two isolated pawns to boot. Above is the position on move 34.

as networking support, are new. But can the Freddy Kruger of the chequered board make it to the check-out this time? Or, like its big screen equivalent, is it time to face the final curtain?

Let's be clear from the start that Chessmaster's strength has always been its comprehensive range of features and graphical presentation, rather than its pawn power. The more serious chess programs, like M-Chess and Fritz, are pretty dull fare. They play chess very well, solve problems, and interface with chess databases but that's about all. Most of us don't want a program that can just beat us every time, we want it to jump through hoops of fire while it does so.

Chessmaster 4000 Turbo puts on a tremendous performance. There are windows that you can resize and put anywhere on the screen, allowing you see the computer think, display move lists and captures, analysis and scores and even automated annotations to previous moves. These windows are better designed than in previous versions, where it was not always easy to create the custom arrangement you wanted because of unavoidable overlaps. The display options in this version are faultless.

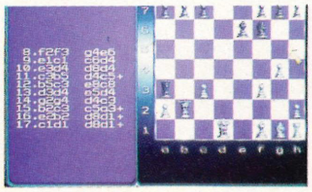
You can choose from a flamboyant variety of 2D and 3D board designs and a dozen different chess sets. As usual though, the 3D options are almost impossible to use for serious play. The main reason for this is that although chess programmers love to write 3D display routines for the boards, the hardware isn't punchy enough to cope with the light-source rendering and 3D pieces that such an approach demands.



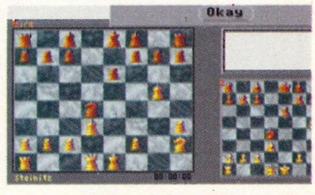
Chessmaster is not just a pretty screen though. If you're interested in learning about chess there's a comprehensive tutorial, divided into 35 sections, ranging from the basic moves through to combinations (tactical sequences of moves) and strategy. You can also overlay various display options on the boardwhich do things like warn you of isolated pawns, of pieces *en prise* (subject to possible capture) and so on.

The previous version, Chessmaster 3000, offered what was, at the time, the impressive option of 'game analysis'. The program would, if instructed to do so, shut down for a predetermined amount of

ALTERNATIVELY



Battlechess 4000
Interplay £34.99
Rated 6, Issue 18
This is the painted Jezebel of computer chess. Sheer pawnography, it provides an adequate chess engine overlaid with ludicrous computer animations of bellydancers and suchlike. Capture a piece and you get a crazy and very brief sequence that, for the first couple of times at least, is mildly engaging. Otherwise, lacking in features and reasons to buy.



Kasparov's Gambit
Electronic Arts £44.99
Rated 8, Issue 26
Capitalising on Gazzamania, this program is better than it might have been. As yet we haven't had a chance to carry out a controlled evaluation of its performance against other programs. Best recommended for its tutorial options, which include worked examples from a database of famous games. And (amazingly) the 3D display is almost usable...

MINUTES of chess history



34 f6e4 35 f4b8+ g8h7
36 d4f3 e4c3 37 f3d2 d5d4
... the game is about to explode. Fritz tempts White's pawn on e3 into a capture, opening the file for the German's queen. This, by the way, is Chessmaster's 'War Room' display ...



38 e3xd4 e7e1 39 h2h3 e1d2
40 a7d7 c1xf1+
Fritz has completely turned the game around. This is Chessmaster's Dinosaur set. If you have (understandable) trouble working out what's going on, the same position is shown, far left, using the MicroChess screen.



41 g1h2 d2xf2 42 d7e7 f2g1+
43 h2g3 f1f2 44 b8a8 c3e2+
45 e7xe2 f2xe2
Fritz is ready to bring his King side pawns forward to assist in trapping the White king. The listing for the rest of the game is on the next page ...



Above: The finale.
46 a8-d5 g1f2+
47 g3g4 g7g6
48 h3h4 f7f5+
49 g4h3 e2e3+
50 d5f3 e3xf3+
51 g2xf3 f5f4
52 a4a5 f2g3++
Fritz actually missed a quicker mate. Can you spot it?

time and ponder your position. It would then create a report (in coherent English) on the situation.

This feature has been added to in 4000 Turbo with the introduction of an 'auto-annotator'. Annotation, for those of you human enough to require an explanation, is the addition of learned comments to the list of previously played moves. If, for example, it was clear that White's exchanging his Queen for a black pawn was a dubious move, an appropriate annotation might read:

"32 Qxe6 f7xe6: The move of a complete fool. Better would have been Qxc6++, but apparently White was unable to spot this obvious mate in one."

Annotation takes Chessmaster rather a long time: you can choose how many seconds he takes to ponder each move but if he thinks for only 20 seconds a move, a typical game may well take at least half an hour to annotate.

You could write a whole book on Chessmaster's features (Software Toolworks has tried: the game documentation is great on chess but not so hot on the program itself). However there are three particular additions to this version that go beyond the cosmetic and the quirky. The first is an undoubted improvement in playing strength. Chessmaster has always been one of the weakest contenders and the new version gave me some decent games.

That doesn't mean that it's much good for analysis, I'm afraid. Although it finds mates quite quickly, it does so erratically. In one problem, for example, there were two lines of play, but Chessmaster insisted that there was only one.

The funny thing about the 'advice' option is that it seems to operate quite independently of the game engine. On one occasion, for example, I had the opening book turned off and was playing White's role in the Four Knights opening. Suddenly Chessmaster recommended that I take Black's king pawn with one of my knights. Said pawn was defended, but Chessmaster assured me that Black would not take my horse. Intrigued by this bit of nonsense, I made the move and — ho, ho — Chessmaster promptly took my piece.

In a similar vein, Chessmaster will spend ages analysing a move for the purposes of annotation, and then add something like ,"queen defends pawn" — when the move introduces a brilliant combination resulting in a forced mate.

It is always conceivable, of course, that these quirks are evidence of advanced artificial intelligence, demonstrating spontaneous attempts at humour.

Back to the good news. To increased playing strength, you can add a much improved opening book and, as in the previous version, you can also customise the playing style of your computer opponent, an option which has now been enhanced.

Finally, there's a new modem/LAN option for playing over the phone or over a network. The LAN option could be tremendous fun in the office, although I wasn't able to try it out for this review.

The basic principle is that you share a directory on the server (or elsewhere) in which game details are stored. One of the players' workstations is nominated as the 'Master System' and determines the gameplay parameters. I suspect that you are legally required to buy two copies of the program if you are going to link up: there is no mention of a site licence arrangement in the documentation.

I've reviewed several chess programs over the last few years. I stick with Fritz because he uses only 500K of disk space which is useful for playing on my notebook. Chessmaster requires more than 10 megabytes and, to be honest, ringing his bells and blowing his whistles has never been sufficient reason to keep him on my hard disk.

This version has changed my mind. Not because of the annotations or even the increased strength or the fact that he will now play melodious background music if you have a MIDI soundboard, but simply because I like the way I can configure the display. This means, I suspect, that Chessmaster has reached critical mass where options are concerned; almost anyone will find, hidden away in one menu or another, a feature that — for them — puts it ahead of the competition.

■ Steve Cooke

Techspec

The official minimum spec for this game is a 16MHz 386 or higher (40MHz recommended) but I have to say this is really a 486 product. DOS 5.0 or better, a mouse and Windows 3.0 are required. A Windows video accelerator is also recommended.

Disk requirements							
	High density	✓					
	Hard disk only	✓					
	Space taken on hard disk	**11Mb**					
Graphic modes							
	CGA	✗	**EGA**	✗	**Tandy**	✗	
	VGA	✓	**SVGA**	✓			
Soundboards							
	Ad Lib	✗	**Roland**	✗	**Sound Blaster**		✓
Control							
	Joystick	✓	**Keyboard**	✓	**Mouse**		✗
Performance							
	Optimum speed	**33MHz**					
	Minimum memory	**4Mb**					
	Free RAM required	**580K**					

rating **9**

Verdict
The best choice, unless you're a very strong player



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life in modern-day
NEW ORLEANS



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The Darkest Knight is Still Ahead

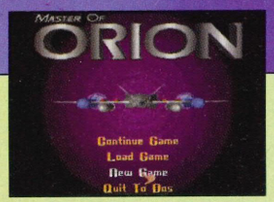
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Title	**Master of Orion**
Publisher	**MicroProse**
Contact	**(0454) 326532**
Price	**£44.99**



This is the ship design screen, where you can let your imagination run amok. This is my ship — armed to the teeth with state of the art weaponry.

Master of Orion

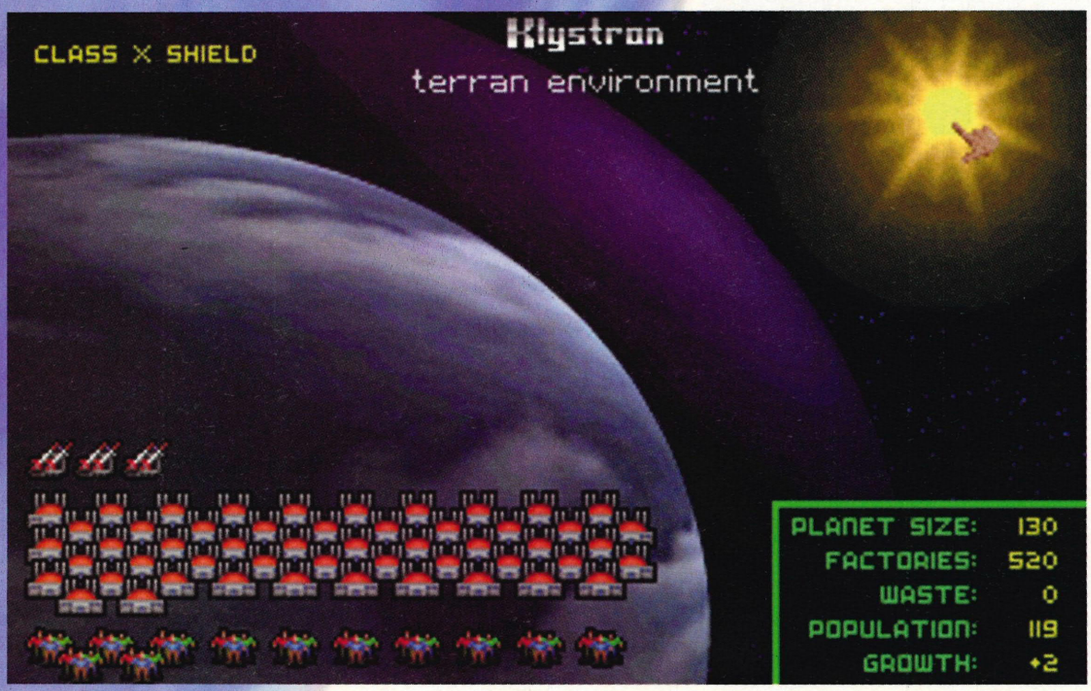
Billed as 'Civilisation in Space', could MicroProse actually trump their own ace with a new space strategy game?

The planet Klystron, as shown in the later stage of a game. Through terraforming (planetology) I've been able to increase the planet's base size, and after developing advanced robotics (computers) I've industrialised heavily.

It is the 23rd century and, by some mysterious fluke of technological synchronicity, ten races have simultaneously acquired the wherewithal to colonise deep space. You begin Master of Orion modestly enough as emperor of one of the races, but only a very easily satisfied megalomaniac would stop there. Your ultimate aim is nothing short of galactic domination, which does sound suspiciously like the sort of service that could be found advertised in an inter-stellar phone-box, but is, I'm assured, much more mentally and physically satisfying.

Master of Orion starts you off on one of the races' home planet with a single colony Ship and a couple of scouts. Naturally the universe is unexplored, so the only way to find out if another system has habitable worlds is to go out there and have a look. Initially your ships have a very limited range, but this is enhanced as your scientists make technological breakthroughs. It is up to you to allocate your planetary budgets, juggling resources between research, ship construction and global improvements like defensive shields. As your planets develop and your knowledge increases, the options open to you become ever more sophisticated.

Sounds familiar? It ought to, because there isn't much in Master of Orion that's original. Almost every idea in it has been borrowed or refined from another source, with the lion's share deriving from Civilization. Look at it this way: you begin with one planet (city) and send out your primitive ships (triremes) as far as they will go looking for resource-rich new areas. If you encounter another race you



TW

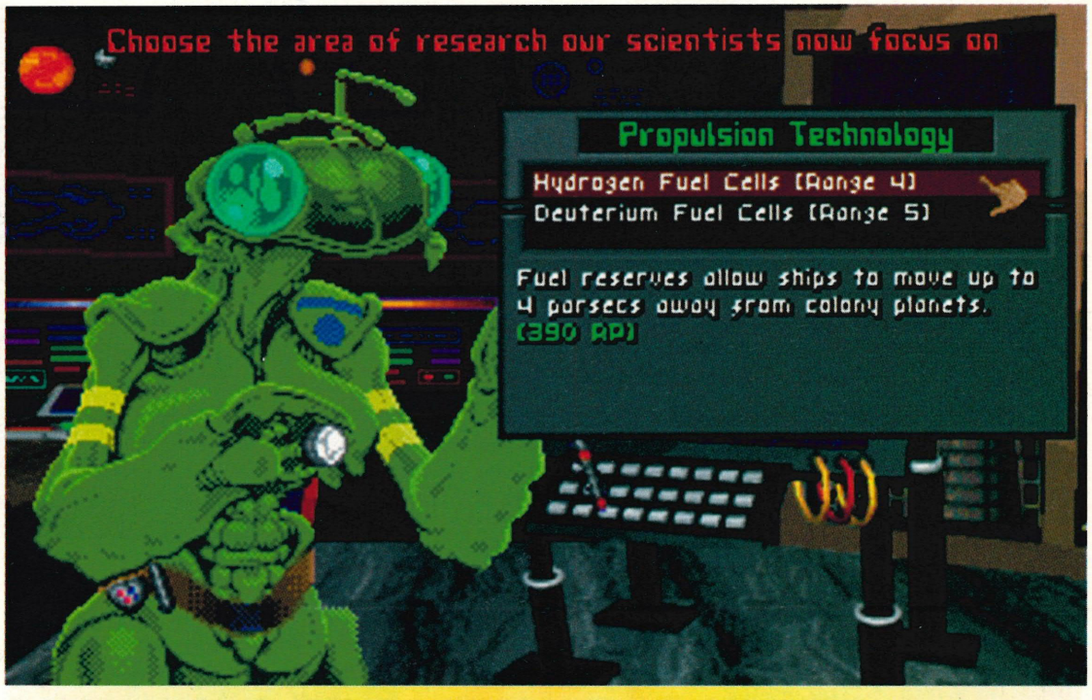
Taking off exactly where Civilization left off, it's time to rev up your warp drives and take your first tentative steps towards mastery of the universe. Just hope you don't bump into Dolph Lundgren.

can exchange a technology with them or send a spy to steal one. You can trade, offer placatory bribes and, inevitably, fight, preferably picking on someone weaker than yourself (the equivalent of overwhelming musketeers with armour and battleships). At the same time you mustn't forget the home improvements, or else industrial waste (pollution) will affect your productive capacity.

The similarities to Civilization are legion, but this is certainly not a bad thing. However, as David Selznick rightly observed; you can't improve on success — the important thing is to get the ingredients right, and in this the designers have been largely successful here. Master of Orion is an excellent game.

Much of the challenge, as in Civilization, lies in finding the right balance. You exercise control over your planets by means of sliding bars with which production ratios are allocated to five key areas: ship construction, defence, industrial growth, ecology and technology. Click on 'technology' and you'll be taken to another screen where more sliding bars are used to invest in six fields of research: computers, planetology, force fields, construction, propulsion and weapons.

At the beginning of the game you desperately need to improve the range of your ships, so you should put your maximum effort into propulsion, but later on the choices become harder. You may, for example, come across a race with superior weaponry, but it's not going to be much use throwing your all into developing a better laser beam if the enemy's force field technology is way ahead of your own. Perhaps you should be developing more destructive missiles instead, or concentrating your efforts in construction with the aim of improving your ships' armour. And while all this is going on, you'd better keep a close eye on your planetology level, because unless you maximise your potential for growth your industrial base will be insufficient to meet all the bills.



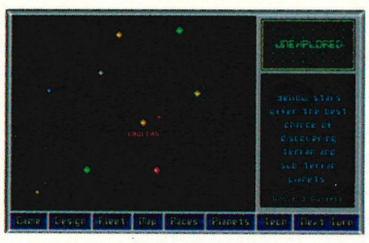
Another recurring problem is the state of your space fleet. You'll need a powerful one if you're to expand and conquer, but the constant stream of technological innovation means that obsolete designs quickly become more of a liability than an asset. You can have up to six ship types in service at any one time, and you should also be prepared to go back to the drawing board frequently in order to keep up with the intergalactic Joneses. Do you want fast, lightly armed fighters, or slow heavy dreadnoughts? If you go for the bigger option it may pack one hell of a punch, but the real blow could be to your budget, or even your pride — it's not much fun when your triumphant new design proves wholly inadequate and has to be scrapped.

As this description implies, there is, on the whole, greater attention to detail in Master of Orion than in Civilization (I'm sorry to keep harping on the comparison, but it does rather smack you in the face at every turn). However, this isn't necessarily an improvement, because one of the beauties of Civilization is the essential simplicity of the game mechanisms. It may not be realistic for an ironclad to take out a battleship, or a chariot a walled city, but the emphasis on general principles rather than specific instances makes the game flow.

Combat simulation is very detailed in Master of Orion and unfortunately this can slow down the pace of the game. Battles occur whenever you enter an occupied solar system, and take place on a special screen where you perform rudimentary manoeuvres, choosing targets and firing off your various weapons as you get within range. With small fleets a decision can be quickly resolved, but when it comes to massing your forces

Our chief boffin offers us a choice of which technologies to research. On special offer this week are two types of fuel cell, but with a complexion like that he might be better off investing in some advanced cosmetics.

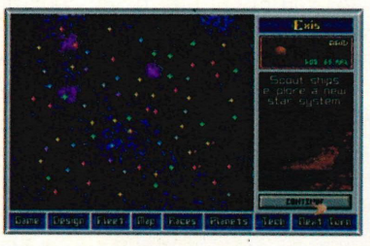
0 MINUS of trekking to the stars



My first decree as emperor of the Klackons is to send out my starships to boldly go where no Klackon has gone before. They must move quickly to stake out territory and seize the best planets. Those yellow stars offer hope.



Although my colony ship only has a range of three parsecs, the scouts are equipped with extra fuel tanks and can rove farther afield. Handled aggressively, they can be used to frighten rivals away from plum planets.



And we've discovered our first habitable system — Exis. It's an arid planet capable of supporting only a limited population, but it's the first step towards the Klackon Imperium. My colony ship is on its way.



The colonists arrive and plant the Klackon flag. We Klackons are a highly productive race and we'll soon have the planet licked into shape. And now a clutch of new star systems is within range of our scouts.

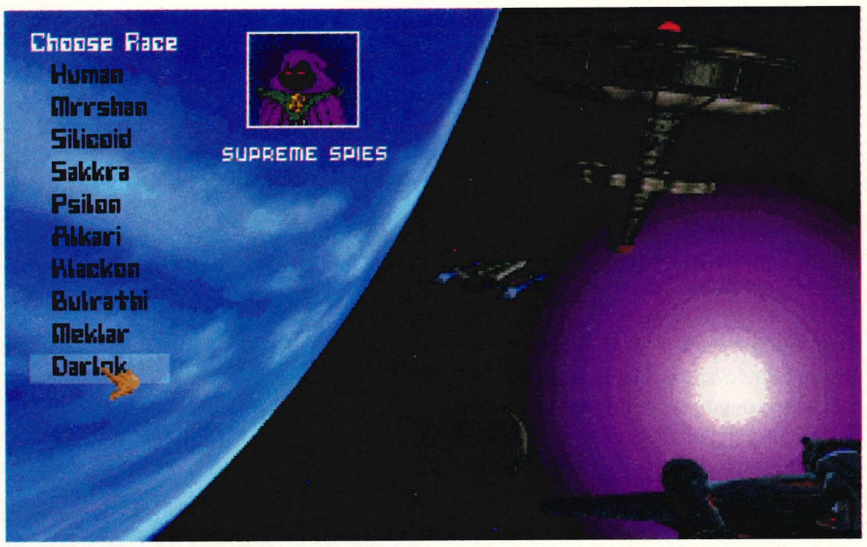
ALTERNATIVELY



Civilization
MicroProse, £39.99
Rated 7, Issue 1
What more remains to be said about Sid Meier's masterpiece? It's brilliant, addictive, and maddeningly playable, the kind of game that'll keep you up until the small hours without you really noticing. Although you can beat the AI with practice, it's still the best strategy game in the known universe.



Utopia
Gremlin, £29.99
Rated 7, Issue 12
More SimCity than Civilisation, Utopia puts you in control of a single planet, which you must explore, develop and, ultimately, defend against alien invasion. It's the usual balancing act, making limited resources go round. Now that it's available on a budget label Utopia is well worth a look.



At the beginning of the game you choose which race to control. Here I've plumped for the Darloks, who are supreme spies and adept at filching secrets. Unfortunately this doesn't make them very popular with the other races, and nobody likes a Darlok. They're the galactic equivalent of Millwall fans.

against evenly matched opponents you get the equivalent of a pair of unimaginative heavyweights slugging it out over the full twelve rounds. A battle can go on for so long that when it's over you're hard put to remember why it was fought in the first place.

This is the one area of the game which is a little off-balance. Even then, the problem is intermittent rather than constant, but in the denser later stages of a game it can irritate. My other criticisms are minor.

Operating the sliding bars can be awkward, and the featurelessness of the main map (just a lot of stars) means that it's difficult to remember exactly where everything is located. While the documentation is adequate, it's not quite up to MicroProse's usual high standard, and one or two of the game mechanisms aren't made perfectly clear. But these are minor niggles. Master of Orion scores well in most of the major areas.

For one thing it boasts a distinctive character. Strategy games often have a flat, abstract feel, but as you travel through deep space in Orion you'll encounter plenty of atmosphere. The races you meet will all behave in different ways, and depending on which ones you bump into first you may have to radically doctor your plans. Many planets, for example, have distinct alien environments which cannot be tamed until you make the relevant breakthrough in planetology. These are often the most mineral-rich worlds, so if you come across one that's within range of your starships you'll want to acquire the relevant science and colonise it as soon as possible.

Unfortunately there's a race called the Silicoids, who are crystalline creatures immune to the most hostile conditions, so you may end up wasting a fortune on funding the research only to find that the planet is already taken. You might, then, be tempted to play the game as emperor of the Silicoids, but the downside with them is that they only reproduce at half the standard rate, and thinly populated worlds produce little revenue. The real beauty of the game is that each race has it's own distinct characteristics.

All of the races have their pros and cons, and part of the fun is experimenting with them. My own favourites are the insect-like Klackons and the robotic Meklars, both immensely productive, and the logical superior Psilons, who qualify for a large automatic research bonus. incidentally, playing the Humans isn't much cop. Your chief asset is an edge in trading, and on the hostile harder levels of this crazy galaxy that isn't going to amount to a hill of fibrous nutrients.

There are in fact five levels of difficulty, and though the game isn't impossible to crack, mastering Orion will take a lot of playing hours. It's no good indiscriminately attacking everyone you meet, because the aim of the game is to be elected high ruler of the galaxy, and election candidates need votes. A bit of subtlety is needed to see you through.

Despite the obvious and heavy influences, this is a fine and absorbing game. It may not be as good as Civilization, but then, what is? For we addicts marooned in limbo while Sid tinkers maddeningly with Civilisation 2, Masters of Orion provides a timely fix.

■ Simon Shaw



Techspec ***Master of Orion is adequate on a 386, though can be slow. Don't forget to save games regularly; I've suffered too many crashes for comfort. But then if it didn't crash from time to time, how would we know it was a MicroProse game?***

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	x	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	33MHz				
Minimum memory	2Mb				
Free RAM required	590K				

Verdict
Superior strategy

rating **7**

sinclair DIRECT



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Title	**The Even More Incredible Machine**
Publisher	**Dyramix/Sierra**
Contact	**(0734) 303322**
Price	**£39.99**



The Even More Incredible Machine

Dynamix's mad scientists are back, with 160 puzzles requiring the PC equivalent of sticky-backed plastic and the inside of a toilet roll to solve

The Incredible Machine was great fun and ingenious to boot. With objects such as a see-saw, rope, balloons and conveyor belts, you had to construct solutions to problems: burst all the balloons, put the bowling ball in the basket, and so on. It made budding nutty professors out of everyone who tried it.

The Even More Incredible Machine gives you 160 new puzzles to solve, and also retains the freeform mode, in which you can design your own wacky inventions and try them out on your friends.

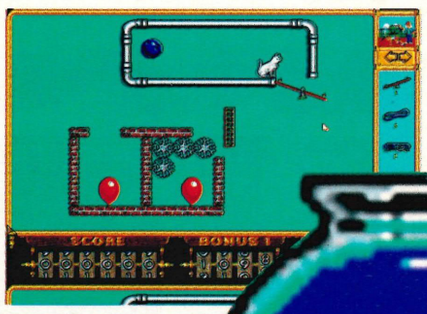
In each screen you are given a set task, and a limited number of the program's tools at your disposal, which must be fitted together logically to set your machine in motion and solve the puzzle. If you tackle the screens in order, you'll find them graded so that new components are introduced in a tutorial level at the start of each section.

However, if you've played the original, you won't need to sit down and learn the mechanics. What you get here is essentially more puzzles, rather than different ones. For the first 88 levels, the same tools as used in the first game appear again: the cycling monkey, the hamster-wheel, the teeter-totters, so that the same techniques are required to complete the tasks. It's in the second 72 puzzles, for which you need the passwords given for completing earlier levels, where you can play with new components: the boiling kettle (pushes things up), pinball buttons (bounces balls, etc, around the screen), vacuum cleaner, or alligators, among others.

Now this wouldn't matter a jot if it weren't for the price. We've had a lot of fun with Even More — just as much, really, as with the. If this was an add-on disk, it would be welcomed with open arms. But it isn't: it's £40 in its own right and that seems an awful lot for a set of new puzzles which experienced Machinists will probably solve in less than a week. In fact, I suspect much of this £40 is for the packaging, which is a wacky incredible machine in itself and virtually guaranteed to fall to bits within two days (well, ours did, anyway).

Still, if you never played the original, this is great fun and a refreshing change from goblins or orcs, or 45 flying missions to rid the Gulf of drugs barons.

■ Christina Erskine





Below left is puzzle 30, and the screen as you see it at the beginning. Your job here is to pop the balloons. The accompanying picture below shows the solution. I think we can deduce that either Jeff Tunnell, or Kevin Ryan, the designers, aren't too fond of cats.

Techspec *The original Incredible Machine worked, albeit slowly, on a 286, but this sequel requires at least a 386SX to run. Use a mouse: keyboard control is sluggish and frustrating.*

Disk requirements					
	High density	✓			
	Hard disk only	✓			
	Space taken on hard disk	**1.1Mb**			
Graphic modes					
	CGA	✗	**EGA**	✗	**Tandy** ✗
	VGA	✓	**SVGA**	✗	
Soundboards					
	Ad Lib	✓	**Roland**	✓	**Sound Blaster** ✓
Control					
	Joystick	✗	**Keyboard**	✓	**Mouse** ✓
Performance					
	Optimum speed	**25MHz 386**			
	Minimum memory	**640K**			
	Free RAM required	**550K**			

rating **6**

Verdict
Ingenious fun, but doesn't diversify much from the original



Title	**Uninvited**
Publisher	**Mindscape**
Contact	**(0444) 246333**
Price	**£29.99**

Mindscape's latest offerings promote the theory that if you can't release an original game, you should resurrect an old one. As a result, four classics have been redesigned, repackaged and re-released

Uninvited



The range of object manipulation options is impressive. In this bathroom you can turn on the taps in the bath and sink, smash the fish tank and mirror, open baskets, rub soap and water on the towels, and pick up some handy items.

Many old games deserve to be buried and forgotten, some remain surprisingly playable years after release and a very few demand to be rewritten to current standards. MicroProse's Elite was successfully transformed from a basic EGA offering with weak presentation to a stunning, 256-colour game with an improved interface and sound board support; Magnetic Scrolls' Guild of Thieves, Corruption and Fish were redesigned using the excellent Magnetic Windows interface and released as a compilation.

Icom Simulations' ageing graphic adventures, Uninvited, Shadowgate and Deja Vu I and II, have long been ripe for redesign. The icon-directed game engine which drove them was revolutionary in its day, but the command interface, graphics (mostly CGA/EGA) and sound effects appear primitive compared to today's adventures.

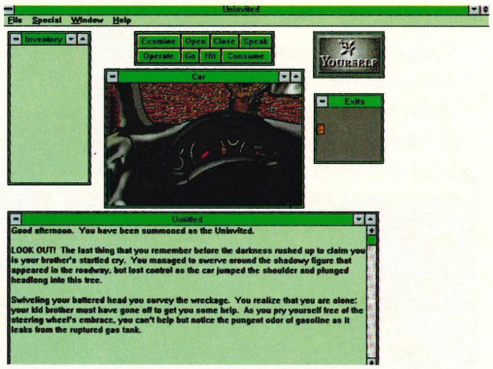
Mindscape's decision to release these classics at a relatively low price (£29.99 each) seems like a great idea. Each adventure has a unique, radically different plot with a dramatic and mysterious opening, the old systems have been swept away in favour of a more friendly Windows engine, and the graphics and sound have been



Your inventory holds a limited number of objects, although the capacity can be increased with boxes and other containers. To collect objects you simply 'drag' them to the inventory window.

TWO

Although their plots are radically different, Uninvited, Shadowgate and Deja Vu all operate using the same flexible system of windows, icons and button-commands to manipulate objects and solve puzzles. This sequence from Uninvited is typical.



You find yourself in a crashed car outside an old mansion. To leave the car, you can repeatedly click on the door with the mouse, highlight the door and use the 'open' and 'go' commands, or simply select the appropriate exit in the Exits window.

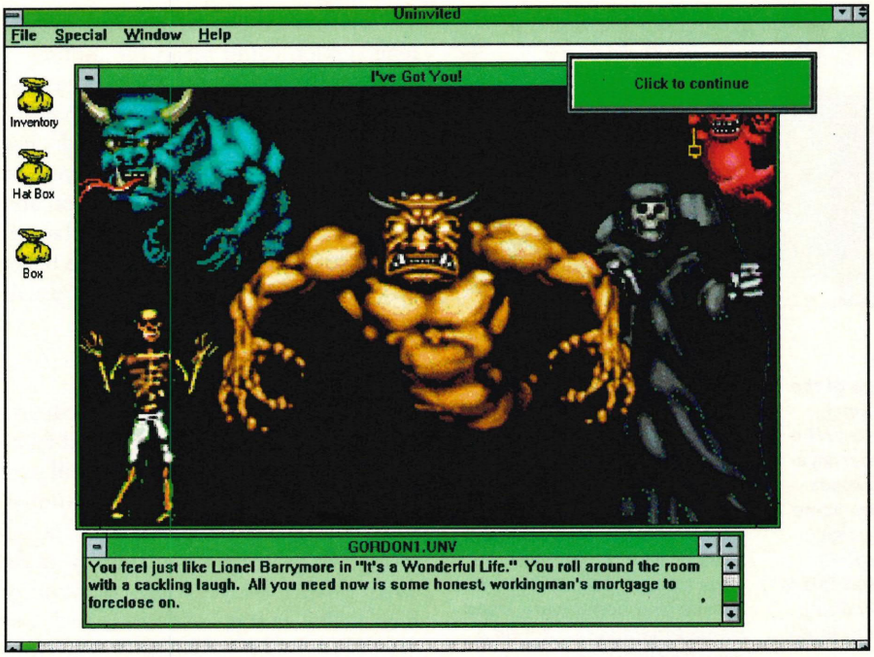
improved, with SVGA graphics and digitised effects.

Old versus new

Uninvited begins with you behind the wheel of a crashed car. Your brother, who was in the car with you before the accident, has disappeared — and there is a mysterious mansion nearby which holds the key to his fate. The adventure which follows is a haunted house story, packed with the walking undead, blood-stained towels, hell hounds and other miscellaneous demons, lots of raging storm effects, black magic, bizarre furniture and plenty of opportunities to be ripped limb from limb. The still screen location graphics feature occasional (limited) animations, and the action pauses periodically to treat you to digitised sound effects.

If you haven't played the original Uninvited with its clumsy game engine, you'll just have to take my word for it that the new Windows environment is a massive improvement. There are six basic windows: the main graphics screen (where you can interact with objects directly), a 'self' icon (clicking on this allows you to wear/drink/eat items), an exits display (a quick way to travel through locations), an inventory (expandable to accommodate a huge number of objects), a text window and a bank of eight command icons (examine, open, close, speak, operate, go, hit, consume).

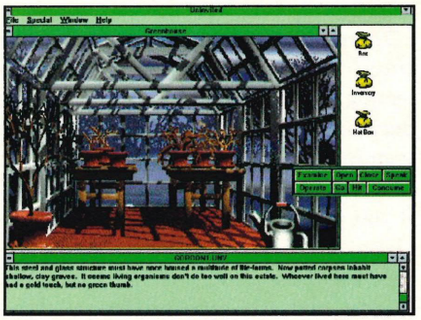
This system isn't quite as flexible as I would have liked. Only the inventory and text window can be rescaled and reshaped; the other boxes can be moved around the screen and enlarged, but their proportions remain stubbornly the same. The completely flexible Windows-style environment found in The Legacy (rated 8, Issue 19) is still the one to beat.



This is one screen you will want to avoid, although you're likely to encounter it many times in the search for your brother. Save the game!

Having rearranged the environment to suit your needs you can take a look at the other options. Various pull-down menus allow you to load/save games (saving handily preserves your screen layout), play around with the sound effects, access a large and useful help menu and even change the font used in the text window. Once you've grown tired of playing with the toys, it's time to get down to the serious business of adventuring.

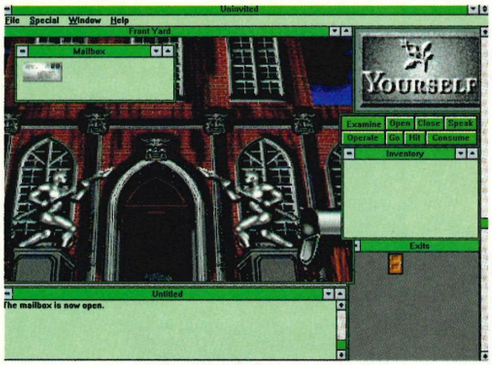
Exploration couldn't be much easier. If you want to walk through a door, you click on it to open and click again to walk through. You can highlight every object on screen and either drag it directly into your inventory or combine it with the eight command icons to create interesting results. The freedom to interact with almost everything in the game environment is one of the reasons why Uninvited is a pleasure to play.



The quality of graphics is unwaveringly good, and a vast improvement on the original's CGA offerings.

The main reason however, is the plot itself. The text descriptions are always succinct and well written, with a dry, subtle sense of humour running throughout. Examine an antique wheelchair and you're given the response, 'This antique wheelchair is your favourite piece of furniture in the house'. Ok, so you won't exactly split your sides on a regular basis, but the accumulation of dry comments generates a lot of good humour.

MINUTES in the house of horrors



If you're not satisfied with the original windows layout you can manipulate the environment to suit your needs. New windows are created when, for example, you open a mailbox: the contents can be 'dragged' into your inventory using the mouse.

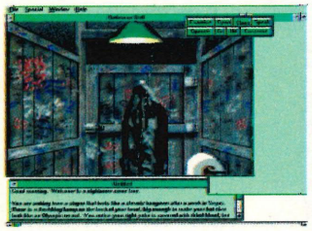


If you're not satisfied with the original windows layout you can manipulate the environment to suit your needs. New windows are created when, for example, you open a mailbox: the contents can be 'dragged' into your inventory using the mouse.



Try to speak, touch or walk past this ghostly woman and she'll reveal her own personal brand of hospitality, resulting in an instant and grisly demise. Next time, you could try exploring upstairs and hunting out a few useful objects ...

ALTERNATIVELY



Deja Vu I and II
Mindscape, £29.99
This is the only package of the three to contain two games, both enhanced versions of the original EGA/VGA murder mysteries. The plots and puzzles are quite simple and the game worlds are small. If you like detective stories and sifting through mounds of clues this is a fun experience; if you don't, this is the weakest of the three releases.



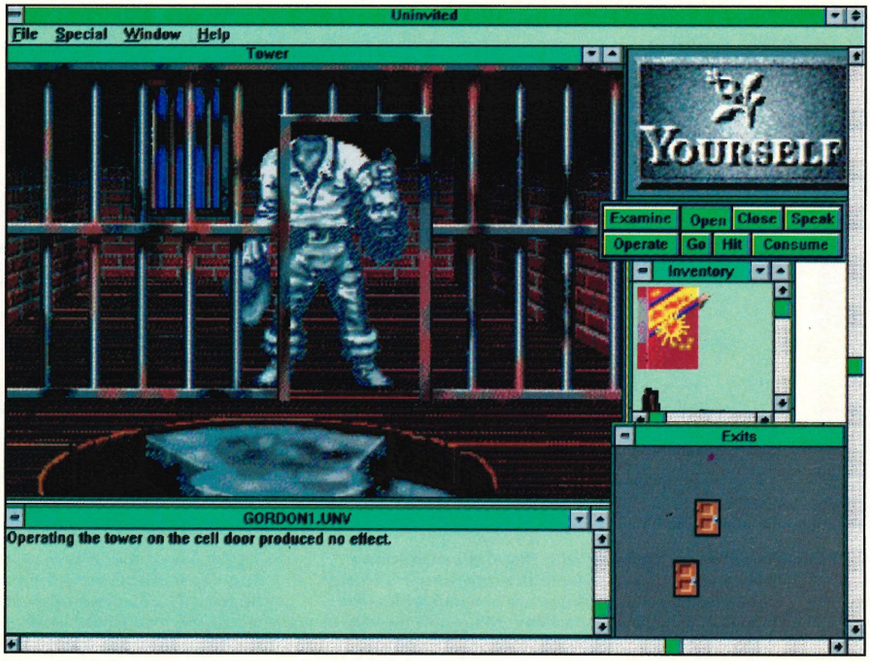
Shadowgate
Mindscape, £29.99
Like the other two releases reviewed here, Shadowgate opens with a mystery. The text, as with all these games, is succinct and beautifully written, and the quality of graphics is generally good. Its combined strengths (plot, graphics, object manipulation) and weaknesses (few commands, occasional frustration) put it on a par with Uninvited.

Sometimes when the text descriptions are particularly lengthy, it helps to have a small graphics window and all the peripheral windows completely visible. Hot keys to save/load your favourite layouts would have helped, however.

The puzzles are simple but well structured. Much of your time is spent collecting objects, examining them and then deciding which ones you should keep in your inventory. You can carry more when you find boxes and other containers and if you decide to wear various weird articles of clothing. Most objects have a specific use (paralysing spiders, eliminating ghosts), but some appear to have no function whatsoever ...

Trying out the icon commands on an item (or yourself) is also a large part of the puzzle-solving process. On an unfriendly note, most of the ghosts prefer to shred you rather than talk, and even if you do find someone willing to talk to you, you'll need to decide what to ask them to further your progress.

Uninvited is occasionally blunt in its warnings. This headless fiend cautions you not to enter the cell behind him, and if you completely ignore his advice and wander inside, you'll slowly starve to death.



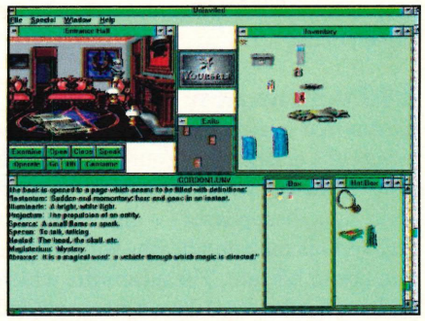
Every so often you have to face a challenge which could mean the difference between life and death. These occasions aren't so commonplace that you have to save the game every thirty seconds, but they are regular enough to keep you on your toes. Make the wrong decision and you can easily end up hacked, clawed, ripped or starved to death. At the bitter end, a suitably grim snippet of organ music heralds your demise.

Flogging a dead horse?

Uninvited certainly isn't at the cutting edge of technology. Its style is old-fashioned, its story offers little that will surprise experienced adventurers, and its puzzles obey a basic, linear formula. Its major advantages are a friendly game environment, low price and consistently high quality writing — features which just about justify rereleasing this adventure to a new audience.

The big question for those of you who have already played the game in its original state is: 'has it changed enough to justify me buying this new version?' The answer has to be no, unless you are particularly nostalgic or you hated the game when it was first released. If you did dislike the original and gave up before the end, you might just find that this fresh approach improves the game drastically.

Naturally, there are some irritating flaws. The digitised sound is sporadic, and when effects do occur they tend to interrupt the action, creating an annoying buffer which interferes with your immediate progress. The PC speaker effects are genuinely terrible and the animations appear unsophisticated by today's standards, but the sound and



graphics are otherwise more than adequate. Some other program quirks are less important. For example, the environment sometimes lacks realism, because many small objects remain where you drop them on the screen — even if that means they are left hanging in mid-air. You do get used to it though.

Even though the price is low, I feel that Mindscape could have made all three releases even better value by grouping the games together in one package and charging slightly more, much as Magnetic Scrolls did with its redesigned compilation. For people who have played these adventures before, there isn't really enough here to justify spending £90 simply to recreate the experience. For everyone else, the three up-dated releases covered in this review will provide a good introduction to an interesting, if slightly old-fashioned, series.

■ Gordon Houghton

Techspec

Uninvited comes on three disks and needs to be installed via Windows 3.1 with 4Mb of RAM, Super VGA and a mouse. A minimum 286 CPU is recommended, but at this speed enjoyment is hindered by slow mouse response and an annoying buffer.

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	8Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	x	EGA	x	Tandy	x
VGA	x	SVGA	✓		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	x	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	x	Keyboard	x	Mouse	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	33MHz				
Minimum memory	640K				
Free RAM required	590K				

Verdict
An aged adventure successfully revived

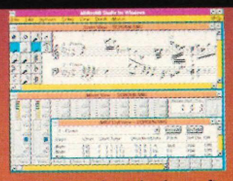
rating **7**

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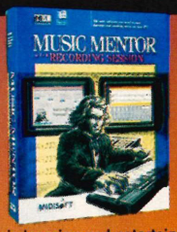
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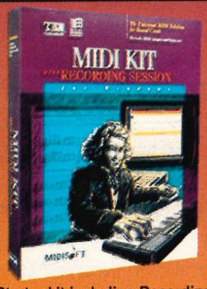
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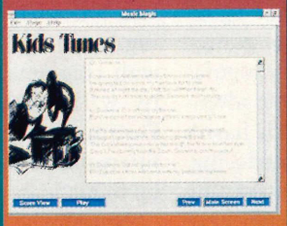
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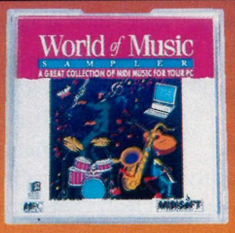
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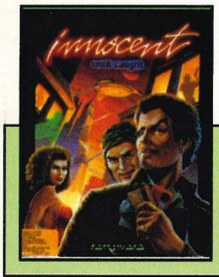
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Title	**Innocent Until Caught**
Publisher	**Psygnosis**
Contact	**(051) 7095755**
Price	**£44.99**

Jack T. Ladd, known pilferer, is in big trouble. He owes the tax man the kind of cash that makes grown criminals weep, but hasn't got a single credit to his name. Having landed on the planet of Tayte, he urgently needs some readies.



After wandering around town for a while, Jack encounters this gang of bikers. One of the gang has a coat made of 2,368 half-credit pieces, and if Jack can rescue the chief biker's most treasured possession from the local brothel, the coat is his.

Innocent Until

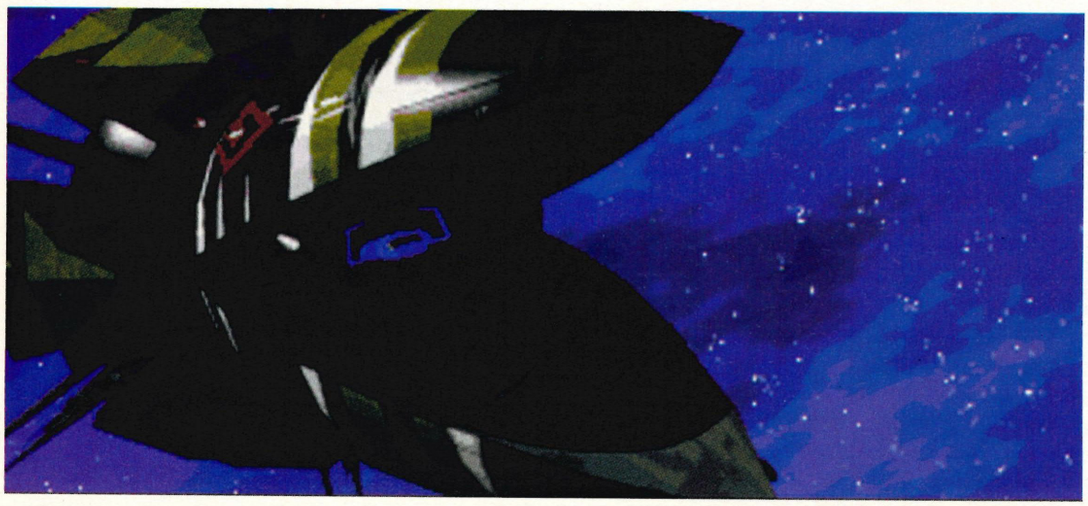
If Leisure Suit Larry and Roger Wilco got together and spawned a child (unlikely as this may seem), his name would be Jack T Ladd — the hapless hero of this sci-fi graphic adventure from Psygnosis

Psygnosis has established a good reputation amongst games players, but it's not a reputation founded on graphic adventures. Fortunately, this hasn't prevented the company from producing, in Innocent Until Caught, an interesting and humorous story which should have fairly wide appeal.

The action is set in a seedy, cyberpunk-style future, where the criminals and bureaucrats are equally corrupt. Its hero, Jack T Ladd, is just another chancer trading in contraband, a small-time crook with a big-time ego. However, after a run-in with the Interstellar Revenue Decimation Service (IRDS), a sort of intergalactic tax collection agency, he's up to his brass neck in debt.

Naturally he's broke, and with only 28 days until the debt is due he needs some work — legal or illegal. Jack's attempts to perform favours, help out friends, steal artefacts and risk being eaten by wild beasts to gain measly rewards will take up most of your time playing this game. However, there's also a mild love interest, a few hairy encounters with real crooks and some help (and hindrance) from an unhinged, long-lost friend.

The introduction is impressive, a series of brief animations detailing Jack's unfortunate encounter with the tax men.



Money, money, money ...

After a smart introduction sequence in which you find yourself landing on Tayte, the third planet in the Indaway system, you enter the Spaceport customs hall, where you can start to experiment with the game controls.

There are six control icons in all: take, use, move, look, scan and talk. This might appear limited, but these icons are just the basis for a wider variety of actions during play. For example, to give someone an object, you 'take' it (your cursor automatically transforms into the appropriate item) then click on the person you want to give it to. Similarly, 'using' some objects, such as an oil can or perfume, allows you to perform special functions such as lubricating something or spraying someone. The system becomes even more flexible when you realise that you are able to combine two or more objects

MINUTES

spent desperately seeking moolah



Unfortunately, the madam at the brothel also wants a favour before she'll let you have the biker's goods. Conversations like this are where many puzzle sequences begin: you find out what people want, where it is and what you have to do to get it. Simple? Not quite.



For example, the madam wants a vase. The pawnbroker has the vase, but won't let you take it without cash upfront. You have no money of course, and can't steal the vase without finding another object to conceal it first. Wasn't there a sack lying around somewhere?



The brothel owner has her vase, the biker has his ornament, and you have a big bag full of cash. Now, what you really need after all that hard work is a drink. The local bartender is happy to oblige if you pay him, but he won't take the bag of money from you. Problems, problems ...

Caught



to produce a new item, opening up a whole new range of special applications.

Most functions can be carried out with the mouse (left-click selects an icon, right-click scrolls through the list), but it's easier to combine the mouse with keyboard short-cuts. As well as the six control icons, you also have a button which takes you to the status screen, where you can save/load a game (there are 99 slots), get basic help, fiddle about with the sound, place items in Jack's pocket and check your progress report. There are two other major features on the main playing screen: the inventory and the map. The inventory box is at the foot of the screen. It's not big, but because you can place objects on top of each other (as well as placing items in Jack's pocket on the status screen) you can store a lot. The inventory is also the place where items are combined to make new tools.

The map is a basic diagram of the current screen(s) and any exits to new locations — exit arrows appear on the map when you visit new screens. Simply clicking on an arrow instructs Jack to travel directly to the corresponding exit in the playing area. Well, that's the theory: in practice you have to be infuriatingly precise about where you place the cursor and when you click.

There is plenty of variety in the locations and tasks, and dozens of characters to meet too, although they don't always have a lot to say once you've gained the required information from them. However, there are a few more complex characters, including the Tayte crime boss, Jack's aforementioned love interest and his long-time friend.

The puzzles are adequately challenging, but most won't prove excessively difficult for experienced adventurers. Novices might have more trouble but the key to a puzzle often lies in how you treat people who might be able to offer clues: If you're sarcastic from the start your informers tend to clam up, so a little charm is needed at first.

Initially, the major challenges involve acquiring objects for people who want them, but some of the items you're instructed to find are more useful if you keep them for yourself. One of the more subtle features in Innocent Until Caught is discovering what to do with objects: should you combine them with other items, return them to their rightful owners or save them for later use? It's also a good idea to remember that Jack is a thief and that he will quite happily pilfer anything that isn't nailed down, as long as no one notices. If in doubt, steal.

Jack isn't the smartest of adventurers, so when he describes something as boring or useless you can sometimes take it to mean the opposite. The crate in the background should help you out with animal trouble.

The 'use' icon transforms some inventory objects (such as the perfume shown here) into tools. Objects can also be used on each other to create new, useful items.





The inventory system is unsophisticated but allows you to do the job easily enough. Objects can be stacked on top of each other, so that you can store everything in one small box on the main screen.

But is it funny?

Whether or not you find the game funny depends on your sense of humour (and, to a lesser extent, your sex). Many of Jack's jokes and observations will hold more appeal for men than women, but there are lots of other things to laugh at.

The quality of the graphic effects varies. The introductory animation boasts some stunning sequences, but the game itself isn't consistently impressive. It's often difficult to tell what an object is when it's lying on the ground — this is nothing new for graphic adventures — but it's also occasionally difficult even when the item is in your inventory.

The still graphics are generally successful at conveying the squalor of the criminal underworld and the animations are mainly pretty good, though the sprite scaling tends to squash Jack when he walks into the 'background'. On the whole though, the visual effects generate a convincing atmosphere of seediness and sleaziness.

Sound offers you a choice between sampled effects and continual musical accompaniment. I'd recommend the effects but not the grating tune, though I do know people who found the music enjoyable to listen to.

There are a few basic faults in Innocent Until Caught. Travelling around is a little fiddly, because if you want to exit a location you can't point the cursor at the edge of the screen and click — you have to position it carefully on the exit graphic. Grabbing hold of objects is a tad overprecise, too, sometimes making it difficult to pick things up and use them.

In general, Innocent tries to be as simple as possible so that you can enjoy the game without worrying about half a dozen inventory/map/status screens. It almost works, but not quite. The inventory box can look messy after you've begun to make real progress in the game, and the mapping facility — though unusual for a graphic adventure — doesn't really provide enough information. The status screen, too, is very basic by role-playing standards, though again it's unusual to find one in this kind of game. On the positive side, the icon system works very well and the use of objects to create new icons and actions is excellent.

If its sense of humour and subject matter appeal to you, Innocent Until Caught will offer a sustained, interesting challenge. It's not an adventure out of the top drawer, but it is unusual enough to command your attention until the very end.

■ Gordon Houghton



The conversation system is simple but useful. You often have a choice of several questions, most of which lead up humorous blind alleys. You'll always get that vital information in the end though.

ALTERNATIVELY



Space Quest V: the Next Mutation
Sierra On-Line, £39.99
Rated 7, Issue 19.
The latest episode in the crazy life of bumbling Roger Wilco sees him in command of his own starship. Cheating, bizarre puzzle solutions, nimble work with the mouse and a good sense of humour are required to complete Roger's ecologically correct quest to clean up the galaxy. If you can avoid the seemingly endless death-traps, the excellent graphics, sound and plot should keep you busy.



Leisure Suit Larry series
Sierra On-Line, £39.99 each
Larry Laffer is the original computer game Jack the lad, a laid-back lounge lizard wearing the obligatory John Travolta white suit, embarked on a constant quest for love (ie, sex). The humour in all four games is legendary but usually tends to be more Carry On than come-on, while the puzzles are more intriguing than challenging. If marriage, divorce, love affairs and bankruptcy sound like your kind of thing, you won't go wrong here.

Techspec

You'll need a 286 or faster to appreciate the game; you also need at least 1Mb RAM, and more if you want the Sound Blaster sampled sound effects. Free RAM required is 570K, but add an extra 30K for Sound Blaster effects, 26K for Ad Lib and 17K for Roland.

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	17Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	x	EGA	x	Tandy	x
VGA	✓	SVGA	x		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	33MHz				
Minimum memory	640K				
Free RAM required	570K				

Verdict
An entertaining 'adult' adventure

rating **6**

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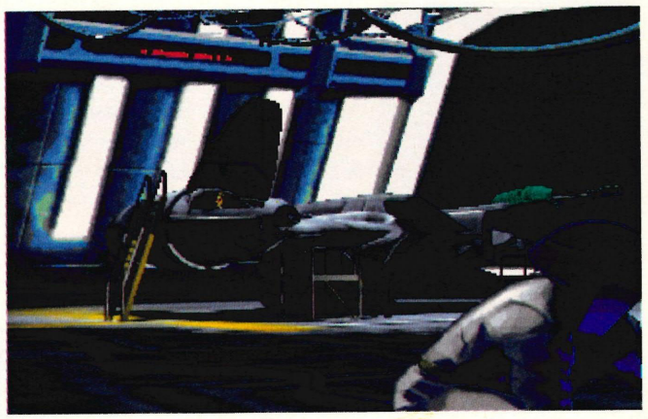
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STAR WARS

Title	**B-Wing X-Wing Tour of Duty Disk**
Publisher	**LucasArts**
Contact	**(021) 625 3366**
Price	**£20.99**



B-Wing Tour of Duty

A long time ago in a Galaxy far, far away ... Ciarán Brennan began to learn the alphabet — starting with X

There's just no end to this fight against the Empire, is there? And good thing too, because if you did ever manage to finally defeat Darth Vader and his evil hordes, it would presumably mean an end to the X-Wing series, and that just wouldn't do.

B-Wing, the second X-Wing data disk offers more of the same, with one major difference — there's a whole new fighter to play with.

The B-Wing (which actually looks more like a Crucifix-Wing or a T-Wing) was developed by the Rebels' boffins in order to counter the Empire's use of Corvettes and Nebulon-B Frigates.

More of a replacement for the Y-Wing than a whole new weapon, it is faster, more manoeuvrable and more heavily armed than its predecessor. Of course, thanks to the standardisation of controls between all of the Rebels' craft, the X-Wing expert will instantly recognise the new cockpit.

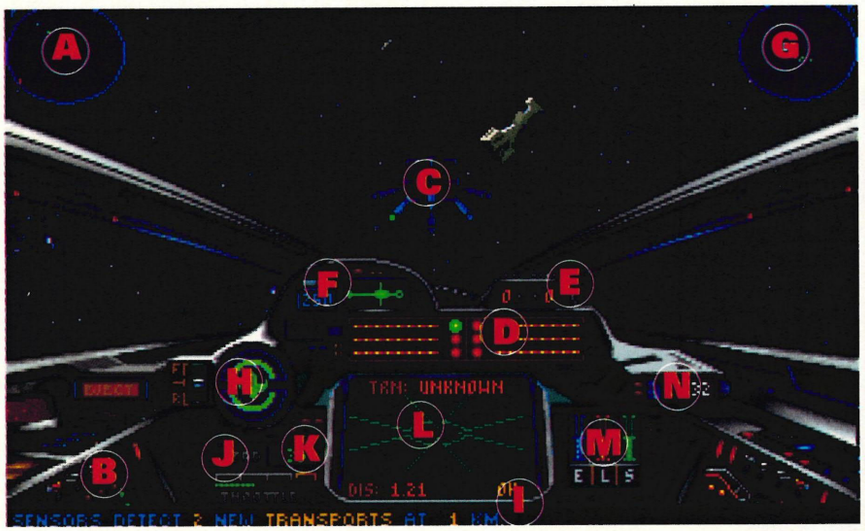
The plot involves the Rebel Alliance ieeking a new base, while being harried on all sides by Empire. They also meet up with some new races and there are cameo appearances by the likes of Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia.

Although X-Wing can no longer be regarded as the ultimate in space-based combat games, it is still the best option for those of us who have yet to take the plunge and invest in a CD-ROM player.

If you've spent much of the last year playing X-Wing and Imperial Pursuit to death, then this will keep you happy for quite some time to come.

■ Ciarán Brennan

Here it is — your new wagon, the B-Wing. It's not quite as fast as the X-Wing or as manoeuverable as the Y-Wing, but it sure packs a punch.



A. Forward Sensor
B. Flight Recorder
C. Targeting Sight
D. Laser Cannons
E. Proton Torpedoes
F. Ion Cannons
G. Rear Sensor
H. Hull/Shield Strength Indicator
I. Communications
J. Throttle
K. Speed
L. Combat Multiview Display
M. Power Configuration System (Engines, Lasers and Shields)
N. Digital Clock

And of course things look a little different on the inside too. Here's a brief guide to the B-Wing's dashboard...

TechSpec *Since B-Wing is a data disk, you'll need to have the original X-Wing installed on your PC, plus an additional 2Mb hard disk space. Running requirements are more or less identical, but check with US Gold for information on compressed drives.*

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	✓

Performance

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

Verdict
A welcome fix for X-Wing junkies

rating **8**



Title	**Fantasy Empires**
Publisher	**SSI/US Gold**
Contact	**(021) 625 3366**
Price	**£35.99**

Beginning with just one province and a handful of heroes, can you unite the whole of Mystara under your rule? As there are 98 separate regions to conquer, it's going to be a long slog ...

Fantasy Empires

It's time for D&D fans to unsheath their swords and prepare to set out on the Glory Road once more. Only this time there aren't actually any dungeons to explore. Could this be a mistake?

Fantasy Empires is an ambitious game which attempts to marry together the strategic and role-playing genres. Unfortunately, as marriages go, this is one that's headed straight for the divorce courts.

At the heart of it is a perfectly nondescript, harmlessly average strategy game which sees you starting off in control of one province in the magical world of Mystara, and sets you the customary goal of global domination. You collect revenue from your territories, spend it on raising armies or building defenses, and attack your neighbours, at which point you have the option of switching to a real-time tactical battle. The trusty and familiar D&D elements of magic and character role-playing do add some extra ingredients to the pot, but the designers have made only one real pitch for originality with the game's presentation.

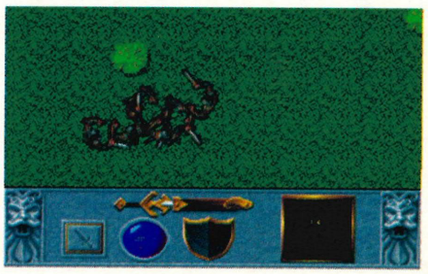
Fantasy Empires is constructed on the premise that the 'dungeon master' exists as an additional non-playing character and is in control of the action. He appears at the top of the screen wearing the traditional 'Father Christmas Shops At Oxfam' look, and as you move the mouse pointer from side to side over the map his eyes follow it, like an umpire at an unending Wimbledon tennis rally. If you have the right sound card you get to hear him dispensing valuable advice, but, since the game's production values are on a par with those of day-time Brazilian soap operas you're unlikely to see his lips move in sync.

The game's control system is clumsy and long-winded. If you want to move some troops from one province to another you must first click on the relevant button at the bottom of the screen, then click on the preferred destination. At this point you'll have to wait (with patience on a 386) for a menu to appear, which has a manifest of all your forces in both provinces. Finally you highlight the type of troops you want to move and transfer the required number by positioning the mouse pointer and keeping the right button pressed down until either: a) you've done the business or, b) atrophy sets in.

Unlike a normal strategy game, in Fantasy Empires, if you want to construct something you won't just be shown a plain old menu from which to make a choice. Instead you get a little animated sequence, in which the Dungeon Master produces a biblical-sized tome, which, with a wave of his hand, he throws open at a page depicting a building. You can turn over the pages by clicking on an arrow, but since you can only go through them sequentially, you'll have to pass all the others before you can get to the one at the end (which is inevitably going to be the one you want). When, finally, you make your selection, the book disappears, the DM looks at the magical orbs he is



In advanced play you can interact with your rivals, draw up treaties and exchange birthday greetings. They each have personalities and alignments, which will affect the way they respond to your character.



An overhead view of the fighting on the tactical screen. There's not much subtlety involved: if it moves, whack it!

0 MINUTES of dungeon and drudgery



This is my home province, marked by a white shield. Neutral provinces are easily conquered and I should be able to stake out a decent-sized chunk of territory before encountering my rivals.



It's time to recruit some troops. You begin with two armouries, each capable of training three units at a time. Fighters are cheap and cheerful and only take one turn to produce.



The Wizard's Tower in the dungeon master's mail order catalogue is an expensive item, but having one is the only way to get more magic-users. Wizards take four turns to train.



Fortunately I've begun the game with one magic-user already, along with a cleric, a dwarf, a fighter and an elf. The best way to increase their experience is to send them off on a quest.



Although I've expanded rapidly, so have my rivals. As I've started in a corner of the map, I'll have to strike quickly if I'm to avoid being hemmed in. A showdown looks inevitable...

holding in his hands and, once they've filled up sufficiently with ecto-energy, he hurls a miniature edifice of the kind you ordered on to your chosen territory. You go through exactly the same process whenever you want to cast a spell.

OK, the first time you watch this little animation it's quite amusing. The second time it begins to get mildly irritating, but thereafter it will drive you very rapidly around the bend. Of course, if you've also made the mistake of not switching off the infuriatingly repetitive music at the first opportunity, you may be around the bend already.

I suppose that all this flim-flammery is meant to add atmosphere. Alternatively it might just be a pitiful attempt to cover up the game's shortcomings. On both counts it fails. And, believe me, matters do not improve when we arrive at the real-time tactical battle option.

In one respect this may actually be the most disappointing aspect of the game, because superficially at least it looks quite good. You get to control a figure, usually a hero, whom you send scurrying over the battlefield swiping at baddies. The overhead view and the graphics are quite attractive, but, unfortunately, once you actually start fighting, the gloss soon evaporates. The joystick controlled movements are limited and cumbersome, and no tactical skill is required. Luckily pressing the Esc key causes the computer to project a final result and will bring merciful release.

Is there anything positive to be said for Fantasy Empires? Well, die-hard D&D fanatics may derive comfort from the habitual mass of statistics available, but if you're hung up on numbers I'd suggest that reading a bus timetable might prove more exciting. There is a multi-player option, so if you do have up to four friends whom you think might want to play, you'd better warn them to bring a good book, as the action is slow.

Underneath all this, as I said at the beginning, is an OK, if unexceptional strategy game, but you'll have to hack your way through a massive amount of dead wood in order to get to it. As there are much better strategy games on the market, it would hardly justify the effort.

■ Simon Shaw

ALTERNATIVELY



Conquered Kingdoms
QQP/Mirage, £44.99
Rated 3, Issue 24
Conquered Kingdoms is the kind of game that makes Fantasy Empires look like a masterpiece. Dull, repetitive gameplay, breathtakingly sub-standard graphics — frankly it's got the lot. Fortunately there are better fantasy strategy games around.



Stronghold
SSI/US Gold, £34.99
Rated 7, Issue 24
SSI's other recent fantasy strategy offering is the pick of the bunch. What distinguishes it from Fantasy Empires is the coherently-structured gameplay and intelligent and original ideas. The only thing that mars it is a tad too much tweeness, but it's bearable.

Techspec

Although Fantasy Empires works quite well on a 386 (which is what's recommended), some of the more involved moves are extremely slow, making a 486 preferable. Digitised speech is good with a Sound Blaster.

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	15Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	x	EGA	x	Tandy	x
VGA	✓	SVGA	x		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	33MHz				
Minimum memory	3MB (XMS)				
Free RAM required	512K				

Verdict
A good cure for insomnia

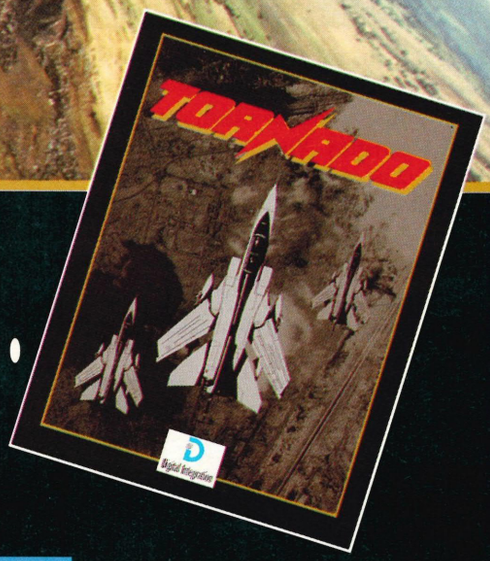
rating **4**

TORNADO

Imagine the thrill...



Now experience it...



200 ft. 600 kts. You lead a formation of six Tornados deep into enemy territory. Terrain following system on. Mission planned to the last detail. Split second timing for a synchronised attack with pin-point accuracy. Discover what real Tornado pilots mean by a "target-rich environment". Go it alone or take the squadron - the choice is yours. Tornado. Unbeatable.

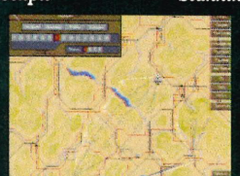
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PC Screen Shots


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Stunning detail


Navigator's cockpit


Sophisticated mission planning


Awesome missions

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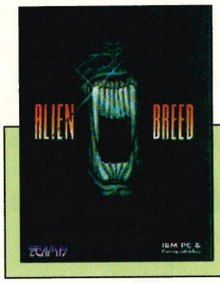
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Atari ST/STE - £34.99

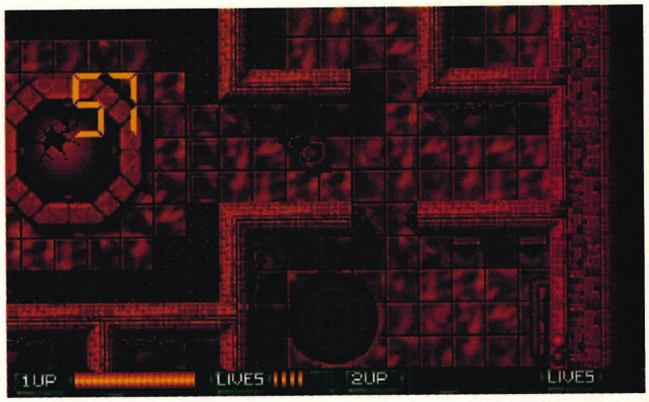
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BARCLAYCARD VISA Access



Title	**Alien Breed**
Publisher	**Team 17**
Contact	**(0924) 291867**
Price	**£29.99**



In space no-one can hear you scream — so Ciarán Brennan voices his disappointment

Alien Breed

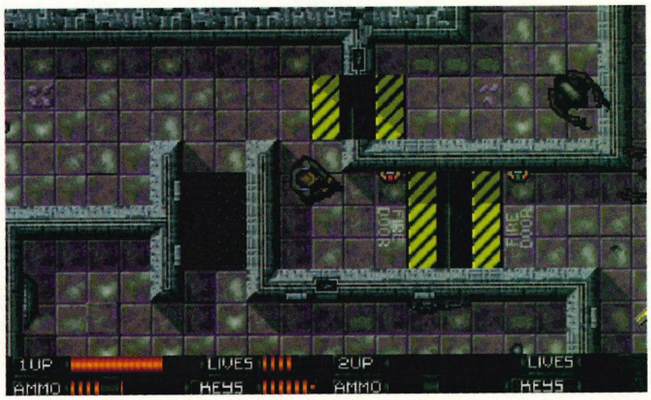
Imagine yourself alone (or very nearly alone) on a near-derelict space station, armed with a paltry pistol and facing the threat of vicious alien beasts around every new corner. Welcome to Alien Breed.

The latest shoot 'em up from Team 17 is a one or two-player game which places its participants in an environment similar to the movie Aliens. All you're asked to do is emerge 18 levels later with the entire place razed to the ground.

Alien Breed does actually have a scenario of its own — something about the Inter-Planetary Corps and a corporation called Intex Systems — but the look, feel and style of the thing is so close to James Cameron's science fiction roller-coaster that the supplied plot becomes redundant almost as soon as the action starts.

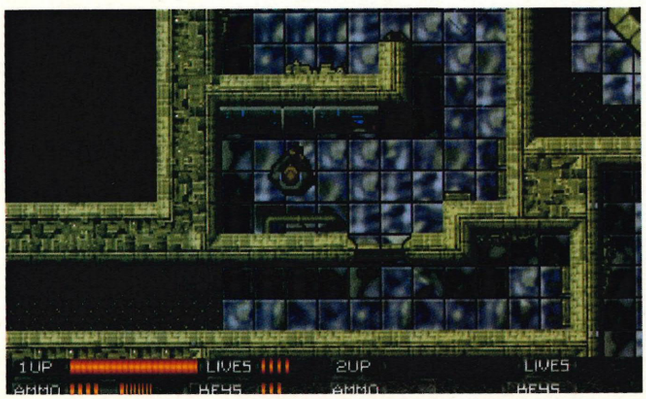
In a nutshell, the idea behind Alien Breed is that the player (or players — it is actually much better when played in company) explores each level of the space station, killing every alien in sight, collecting money, keys, ammunition and first aid kits along the way.

However, before even the greenest of novices has completed the first level, he or she is bound to have noticed that all is not as it should be. For example, the gameplay may borrow from one of the greatest movies of the 1980s, but the screen flicker which you have to endure owes more to something from the early days of the silent film.



Don't expect to be able to buy any weapons here though. Firstly it's impossible, and secondly it's so much easier to just tap the keyboard.

You will have to access the computer to enter your level pass codes though.



Worse still, the game just stops inexplicably every now and then — leaving the player with no option but to press the reset button and start all over again.

This poor workmanship filters right down into almost every aspect of the program upgraded weapons cannot be bought from the computer terminal as they should be, but by simply pressing on the '1' key you can have access to any gun you like — right from the very start!

I've never liked game reviews that harp on about how good a game, any game, is on other machine formats, but sometimes the comparison is necessary. I first saw Alien Breed on the Amiga and loved it. This version is something else.

The saddest part of all though is that the glorious gameplay does make some effort to shine through the sloppy presentation and implementation. Unfortunately, this only serves as a reminder of what might have been.

If you've never played this game before (and really fancy it), have two digital joysticks, the self-discipline of a Foreign Legion officer (to steer clear of using the all-too-easily-accessible cheats) and the patience of a saint, then Alien Breed might just be worth a look.

But then again, maybe not.

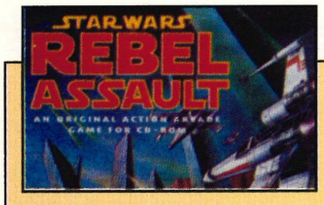
Ciarán Brennan

Techspec *For what it's worth, this will work on a 286, but the packaging warns that some of the 'performance' will be lost. Incidentally, use of a digital joystick is highly advisable.*

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	**790Kb**				
Graphic modes					
CGA	✗	**EGA**	✗	**Tandy**	✗
VGA	✓	**SVGA**	✓		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	**Roland**	✓	**Sound Blaster**	✓
Control					
Joystick	✓	**Keyboard**	✓	**Mouse**	✗
Performance					
Optimum speed	**33MHz**				
Minimum memory	**2Mb**				
Free RAM required	**588Kb**				

Verdict
A disappointment of infergalactic proportions

rating **4**



Title	**Rebel Assault**
Publisher	**LucasArts/US Gold**
Contact	**(021) 625 3366**
Price	**£49.99**

Rebel Assault, the latest LucasArts Star Wars spin-off, packs more reasons for buying a CD-ROM than any game to date

Rebel Assault

Lets get one thing straight right from the start; Rebel Assault is nothing like X-Wing. There are no simulator-style external views or banks of controls, and the freedom to fly around wasting your 'red leader' instead of the enemy, is non-existent. The control system consists, for the most part, of up, down, left, right and fire, because underneath the full-motion trappings, Rebel Assault is an arcade shoot-em up — nothing more.

That doesn't stop it being the finest game I've played this year, though. If you remember the old wire-frame arcade version of Star Wars, Rebel Assault has all the same playing qualities — concentration, accuracy, control and 'seat of the pants' flying.



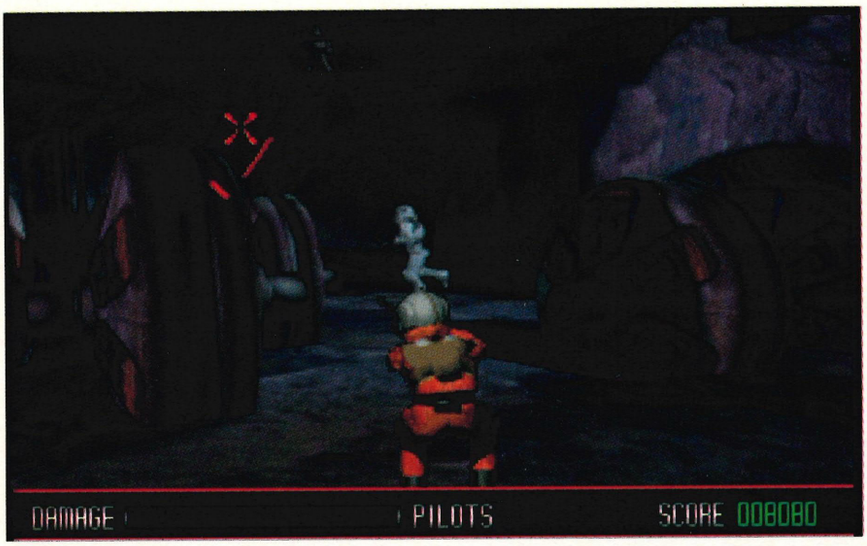
The action comes in four different guises: an in-cockpit, X-Wing-style view, a chase-plane view, an overhead isometric view, and the superbly animated one-off on-foot 'ice tunnels' sequence. The game is divided into four principal passworded sections, and a total of 15 chapters.

Unlike most arcade games though, nothing really repeats itself. In Rebel Assault you won't find yourself endlessly cycling through harder versions of the same screens, because each chapter has its own objectives, and once you've achieved them you move on to an entirely new series of events. Yes, you do come across more than one set of Tie fighters, and true, the viewpoint is always the same (depending on the craft you're flying). Similarly, the canyon, trench and riverbed scenes are all the same in principle. But you never do exactly the same thing twice — unless you die.

Starting on Tatooine as a rookie pilot in training, you have to defend the planet against both a star destroyer and land attacks. Then it's on to the ice planet Hoth, with walkers, probe droids and a spot of foot slogging, before you're called up to protect the transports as you flee the Imperial forces. The rebels consolidate on Yavin and you begin training for an assault on the approaching Death Star. The culmination of the game is one of the best known sci-fi scenes of all time — the white-knuckle ride down the Death



The rebel base on Hoth has been discovered by probe droids. Now as they prepare to evacuate, you dump your snow speeder and set out on foot to recover your X-Wing. Darth's lads have got it wheel-clamped, apparently.



Star trench to hit the exhaust port.

LucasArts has rather an unfair advantage in having access to this sort of material for a game — a series of phenomenally popular movies with instantly recognisable and evocative characters, images and sounds. It has made the most of it. Visually and aurally, Rebel Assault is an experience not to be missed: there's speech throughout, the music is the original, stirring stuff, courtesy of the London Symphony Orchestra, and the full-motion video and animations used for the cut scenes are, frankly, flawless.

Within the game sequences, the effects have all the same bone-shaking qualities they did in the movie, and the texture-mapped graphics evoke a marvellous sense of perspective and scale, coupled with quirky details like having shadows chasing along behind you in the cavern sequences.

I'd be the first to admit that I'm usually a complete philistine when it comes to animations and cut scenes. Give me the game and forget the pretty pictures. But Rebel Assault is the first game where I've watched every scene through, from start to finish. When you combine the action with the cut scenes you have a game that is as close as I've yet seen — to use a much maligned term — to an interactive movie. You're told what's going on, as it happens, by narrators, filled in on past events with flashbacks, told why you need to do something by commanding officers and fellow pilots, and then you're given a chance to play your part.

You're scored along the way for the damage you inflict, your successes and any bonuses you pick up. Like me, you may get through a chapter unscathed but with a targeting ratio of 10 percent or something equally pitiful, a knackered X-wing, and few bonus scores for good behaviour. That's the incentive to keep on playing.

Rebel Assault is a game that certainly draws the crowds, and that's always a good sign. With the lights turned off and the music cranked up loud, we've had more people in to watch this one game than any other this year. Not since Alone in the Dark has there been such interest. My only reservation about Rebel Assault is its long term playability. Between three of us here, we'd completed it in a couple of days.

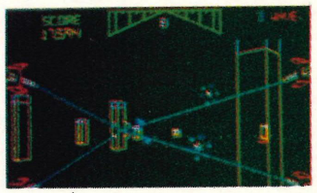
I'm still hard at it though, dodging Tie fighters, blasting Imperial walkers and trying for better scores, or a cleaner run. Completing the game has not stopped me going back for more and unless you have a pathological hatred of all things arcade-style, you can't ask for more when it comes to action.

If you've got a CD-ROM drive, go out and buy Rebel Assault. This is CD-ROM gaming as it should be — great looking, atmospheric *and* fun. If 7th Guest sold wagon loads of CD-ROM drives, Rebel Assault should sell even more. If a better arcade game appears on the PC this year, I'll eat Cal's leather trousers.

ALTERNATIVELY



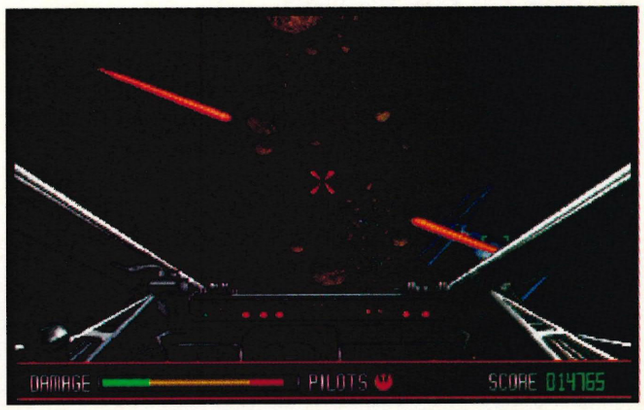
X-Wing
LucasArts/US Gold, £44.99
Rated 8, issue 19
X-Wing, B-Wing and Imperial Pursuit, take your pick as an alternative, because the theme's the same as Rebel. But these are sims rather than arcade games, with far more depth to the gameplay. They're also as tough as they come.



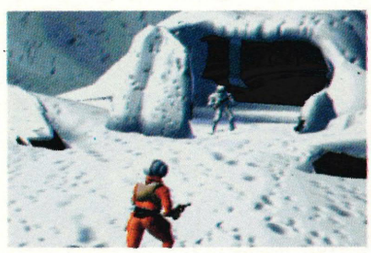
The original Star Wars arcade game
God only knows where you'll be able to get your hands on one of these — it must be all of eight years since I first flew down its wire-frame Death Star trench. But the gameplay in Rebel Assault owes a huge debt to this game. Rumour has it there's one in Newquay ...

Above left: Rookie One; 'Er, excuse me has anyone seen my X-Wing?' Simple shoot-em up meets state of the art graphics in the 'on-foot' part of Rebel Assault.

Below: Lightning reflexes are needed to get you through the asteroids and past the Tie fighters.



0 MINUTES of snowball fighting



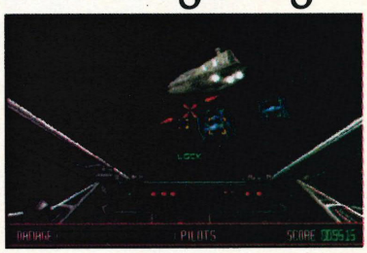
It's not all fancy flying, this Star Wars stuff you know. I'm sure the recruitment ad said nothing about freezing your butt off on an ice planet, then taking on the entire Imperial army by hand.



These 'on-foot' scenes — for want of a better way to describe them — look great, but are actually very limited. Dodge left or right, and shoot anything that moves is as far as it goes. They're still fun though.

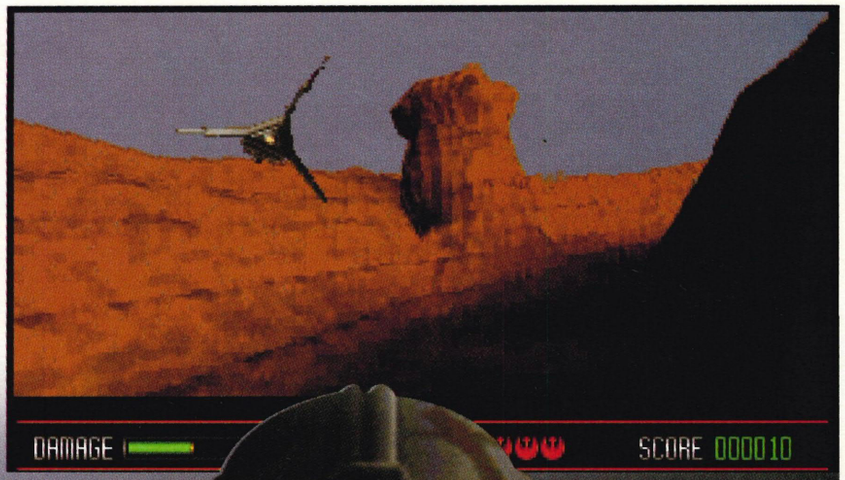


Legging it past the startled Imperial troopers, Rookie One shoots his way through the abandoned base, dives into his X-Wing, does up his safety belt and blasts off to protect the escaping rebel transports.



That transport will make hyperdrive in a couple of seconds, provided you can clear the wave of Tie fighters attacking it. They're quick and heavily armed, believe me, and this is going to be no turkey shoot.

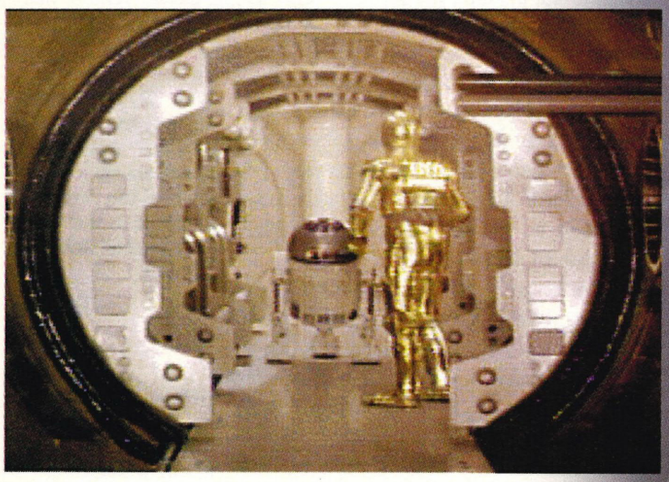
Rebel Assault



Training on Tatooine

Rebel Assault starts you off back on barren Tatooine at the beginning of the first Star Wars movie. The characters you'll come across in the next 15 chapters — in either full-motion footage or delightful animation — will be all too familiar; the game wouldn't be complete without the likes of Princess Leia, R2D2, C3P0 and, of course, old Darth himself.

Before you can do any serious damage, you've got to prove yourself in training. This includes canyons runs, overhead-view drone target shooting, and a spot of asteroid dodgems. The early stages shouldn't prove too tough to complete, but you'll still need some skill and a spot of luck if you're going to rate a decent score.

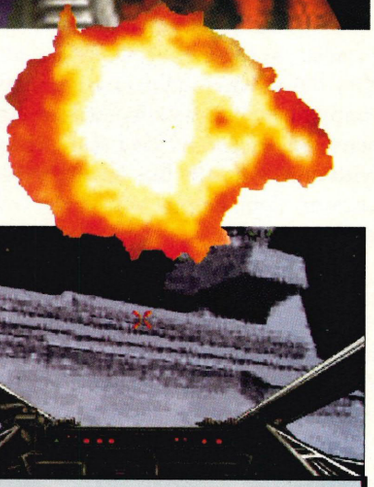




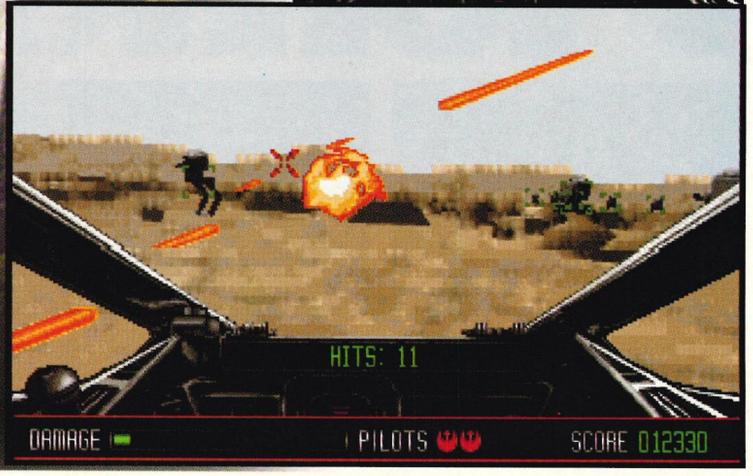
Attack on the Rebels

Hardly have you finished your training when you're pitched straight in against the attacking Imperial forces. There's not even time to chat up the local pilots. The immediate priority is to take out the massive Star Destroyer orbiting the planet (a toughie), then it's back down to the surface chasing Tie fighters in the canyons and Imperial walkers over Moss Eisley (a turkey shoot). Then the tables are turned as the Tie fighters chase you through the asteroid belt.

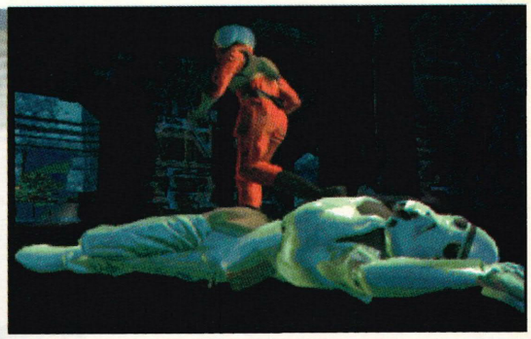


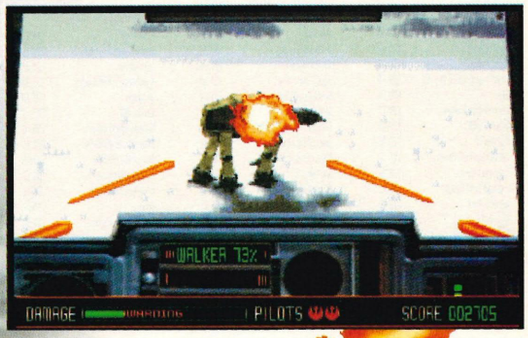












Caverns, walkers and foot-slogging on icy Hoth

After the Rebels flee from Tatooine, they hide away on the ice planet Hoth. Unfortunately, they're discovered by Darth's probe droids. The first chapter has you hunting the droids in the maze of ice caverns.

Then it's time to blast the AT-AT walkers — simple in-cockpit style gunnery, and an easy scene which would have benefited from a bit more enemy laser fire. Although free will is limited, you do get to decide the attack run.

Next, it's on to one of the most unusual and beautifully rendered sections of the game, as you fight your way on foot through the empty rebel base only to discover that the Empire's wheel clamped your X-Wing. Lastly, it's back to the in-cockpit view to protect your transports from the Tie fighters. Let one wave past and you've had your chips.





The Death Star

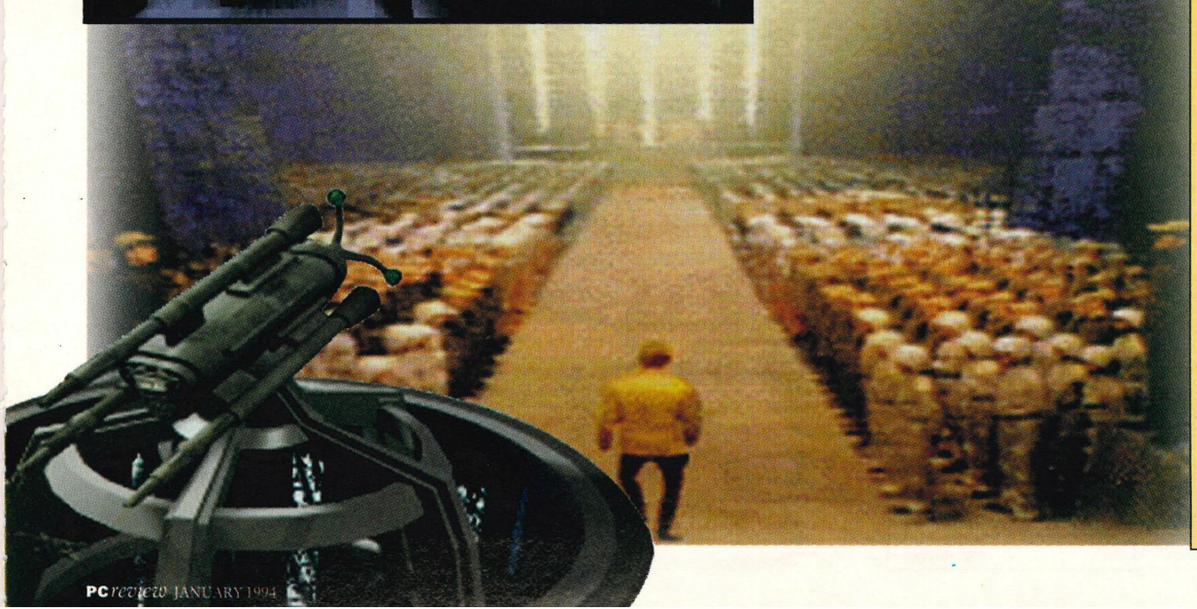
Before the grand finale, it's back for a spot of light training on Yavin. Rebel Assault, like X-Wing, culminates in the battle to destroy the Death Star.

First you've got to fight off wave upon wave of TIE fighters. If you survive, you dive onto the Death Star and the view switches from in-cockpit to overhead as you weave across the surface taking out as many installations as possible.

Next comes the real toughie, taking out the laser cannon at the start of the trench. This means knocking out its blue shielding and diving down, right inside, to disable its power relays.

Finally — the trench. Still screen shots really don't do justice to this part of the game. It's not the most difficult section to fly, but hitting the target with that torpedo is as satisfying as you'd expect.

■ **John Bennett**



Techspec *It's worth taking a bit of time setting the game up to make best use of your CD-ROM drive. Use an analogue joystick for best results.*

Graphic modes

VGA	✓	SVGA	✗

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✗	Roland	✗	Sound Blaster	✓

Control

Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✗	Mouse	✓

Performance

Optimum speed	25MHz
Minimum memory	2Mb
Free RAM required	585K

Verdict Simple, but beautiful nonetheless

rating **9**

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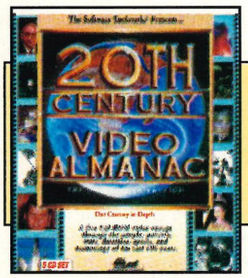
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CD-ROM reviews

The rest of the latest CD-ROM titles — whether originals or 'enhanced' versions of disk releases — are put to the test



Title	**20th Century Video Almanac**
Publisher	**Mindscape**
Contact	**(0444) 246333**
Price	**£159.99(five disc set)**

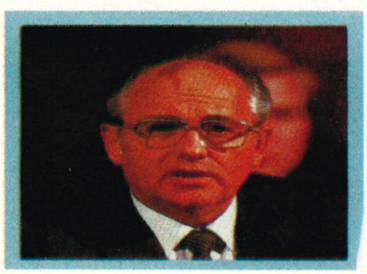
20th Century Video Almanac

This multimedia newsreel of the 20th century is available in two versions: a single-disc 'best of' at £79.99, or a five disc set covering people, politics and war, science and technology, and sports, as well as the 'best of'.

Each item can be selected by country, from the overall index, from a word search, or from the 'timeline', in which you input a date and see all the events included in the almanac pertaining to that day. From the tables of contents, items appear as either a still photograph or animated video, some with audio, accompanied by a short descriptive article placing the picture into context. Some are double-indexed, identical pieces on the Falklands conflict appearing under both the UK and Argentina.

It's been produced by Software Toolworks in the US, so it's inevitably slanted towards an American world view: the sports disc, for example, is admirably detailed in terms of baseball, basketball and American Football, and the events chronicled for the UK seem rather skewed towards the births, marriages and deaths in the royal family, although all aspects of the second world war are covered in some detail.

For all that, it's an interesting collection which certainly helps you gain a new perspective on the events of the century, and enables you to place things in context.



Techspec *You must have a VESA compatible graphics card to use the program: that's a 256-colour, 640 x 480 SVGA card with at least 512K of video memory. Using a mouse is so highly recommended as to be pretty well essential for any ease of use.*

Graphic modes

VGA x SVGA ✓

Soundboards

Ad Lib x Roland x Sound Blaster ✓

Control

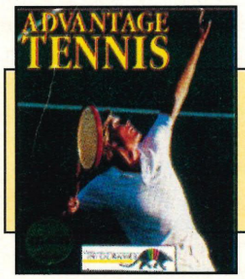
Joystick x Keyboard ✓ Mouse ✓

Performance

Optimum speed	**33MHz 486**
Minimum memory	**1Mb**
Free RAM required	**580K**

Verdict
Interesting, if not very detailed look at 20th century events

rating **5**



Title	**Advantage Tennis**
Publisher	**Infogrames**
Contact	**(071) 738 8199**
Price	**£35.99**

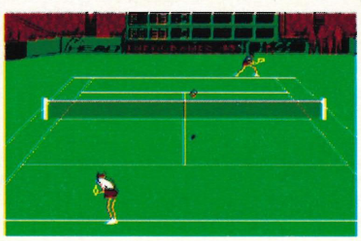
Advantage Tennis

This year-old tennis simulation plays a straightforward game with a comprehensive set of options to play on different court surfaces and in practice of tournament matches. We did not, at the time (Issue 4), rate it as highly as Ubi Soft's Pro Tennis Tour 2, which offered a more exciting game and a doubles match feature, but there's nothing too much wrong with Advantage Tennis, if you discount the very spindly and frankly unfit look of the on-screen players.

Some rather nice introductory screens and sampled tennis crowd noise lull you into a false sense of security on the CD-ROM version. Once you've made your playing selections, you are dumped unceremoniously back to 16 colours and tennis players with rickets for the match itself.

In addition, Advantage Tennis always was forgiving of lowly-specified PCs — we tested this initially on a 33MHz 486 without a Turbo switch, on which it ran so fast that the players whizzed around in a blur. Switched down to 8MHz on another model, things became playable — though you can always switch up again once the 'slow' version has become too easy!

Compared to the sophistication of custom-designed CD games, Advantage's 16-colour screens look positively ancient, and while there's a perfectly enjoyable tennis game in there, which will keep you amused for a while, especially in two-player mode, it all seems rather a waste of a compact disc.



Techspec *The actual tennis program will run with just about anything; it's the bells and whistles (sampled sound and extra intro graphics) which have upped the specs. Aside from that, there's no playing difference between disk and CD versions.*

Graphic modes

VGA ✓ SVGA x

Soundboards

Ad Lib ✓ Roland x Sound Blaster ✓

Control

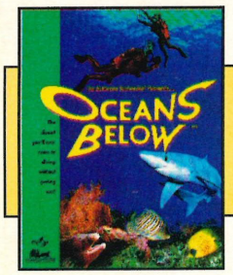
Joystick ✓ Keyboard ✓ Mouse ✓

Performance

Optimum speed	**16MHz**
Minimum memory	**2Mb**
Free RAM required	**550K**

Verdict
Looks very dated but plays OK. Best fun with two players

rating **5**



Title	**Oceans Below**
Publisher	**Software Toolworks/Mindscape**
Contact	**(0444) 246333**
Price	**£39.99**

Oceans Below

Oceans Below is, frustratingly, one of those programs which *sounds* original and interesting, but doesn't really deliver the multimedia experience it promises. It's a scuba diving simulation set in locations around the world.

You select where you wish to dive from 17 possible sites. You are then treated to a series of holiday snaps — pretty exotic holiday snaps, I'll grant you, since the locations include the Caribbean, Hawaii, Papua New Guinea and the Red Sea — showing the area and the two scuba divers (spookily reminiscent of Barbie and Barbie's boyfriend Ken), who 'accompany' you, and provide the narrative.

Once you choose to jump off the side of the boat, there are more still pictures of the ocean, with Ken and Barbie counselling you on safety precautions. Down on the ocean floor, the screen photo is crammed full of marine life. Click on any fish or plant and you'll be treated to a small (very small) digitised video of the thing moving around and more commentary from Ken/Barbie.

The video animations are too small and blurred to give you much idea of what is going on, which is a shame, because I would guess they are meant to be the showcase part of the program. Apart from that, there are screens showing and describing diving equipment, and going over the safety aspects again. There's also a small games element in the search for lost treasure on the sea bed, from which you learn a bit about shipwrecks.

OK, so it's multimedia, mixing graphics, with photos, speech and video, but in all honesty, it's not very thrilling, and given the poor quality of some of the animations, not even all that interesting.

Techspec *As with the Video Almanac on the previous page, you need a VESA compatible graphics card, and although it will run with a 386, a 486 is recommended to get any sort of speed going from the program. The mouse is essential.*

Graphic modes

VGA ✗ SVGA ✓

Soundboards

Ad Lib ✗ Roland ✗ Sound Blaster ✓

Control

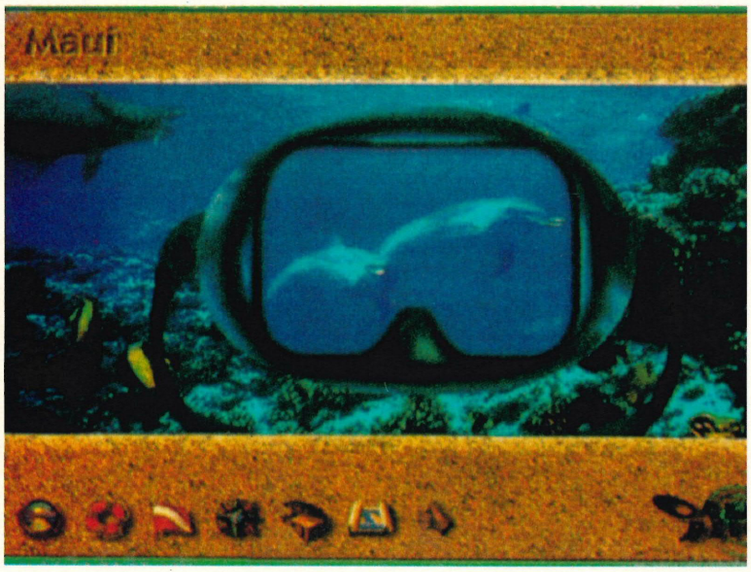
Joystick ✗ Keyboard ✗ Mouse ✓

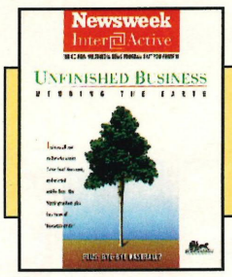
Performance

Optimum speed	33MHz 486
Minimum memory	1Mb
Free RAM required	580K

Verdict Unexciting deep sea diving simulation

rating **4**





Title	**Newsweek Interactive:Unfinished Business**
Publisher	**Mindscape**
Contact	**(0444) 246333**
Price	**£39.99**

Newsweek Interactive: Unfinished Business

Here's an excellent idea which actually goes some way towards keeping a few of those multimedia promises, turning articles from Newsweek (or articles that could have appeared in Newsweek) into documentaries, using photos, narration, videos, animated charts, on-screen text, anything, really to help get the message across. It's nicely done, as well: the pictures are clear and digitised from good quality photos to start with and the commentary is detailed and well presented.

The contents can be accessed not only just by viewing and listening to the items, but through a list of all the pictures, videos, speeches, etc, used on the disc, or with the novel Face to Face option, in which you can 'ask' a number of pre-set questions to the digitised visages of relevant celebrities or experts. There are also text screens taking articles from the Washington Post to complement the Newsweek material.

There are two main items on this, which is intended to be the first in a series of Newsweek CDs, updated every three months. Bye Bye Baseball investigates overspending in the sport, while Mending the Earth looks at the impact of current climatic conditions and pollution on endangered species — including humans. It's well illustrated, although the script seems to skip from one aspect of this large topic to another rather quickly and with little in the way of narrative links.

The quality and presentational detail behind the program is admirable throughout: lavish with the photos, video and speech elements, and careful to make it easy to access. Some day, they say, all magazines will be like this.

Techspec *You need to have at least 4Mb RAM to use Newsweek Interactive, with 2Mb free configured as EMS. Your CD-ROM drive should have a transfer rate of 150K per second at least, and you need 3Mb free On the hard disk for installation files.*

Graphic modes

VGA ✗ SVGA ✓

Soundboards

Ad Lib ✗ Roland ✗ Sound Blaster ✓

Control

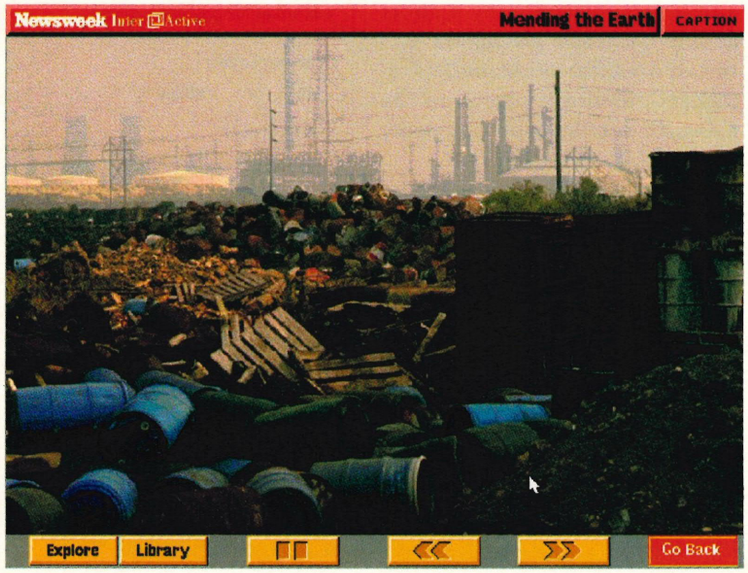
Joystick ✗ Keyboard ✗ Mouse ✓

Performance

Optimum speed	33MHz 486
Minimum memory	4Mb
Free RAM required	580K

Verdict Well presented — especially if your're interested in baseball

rating **7**



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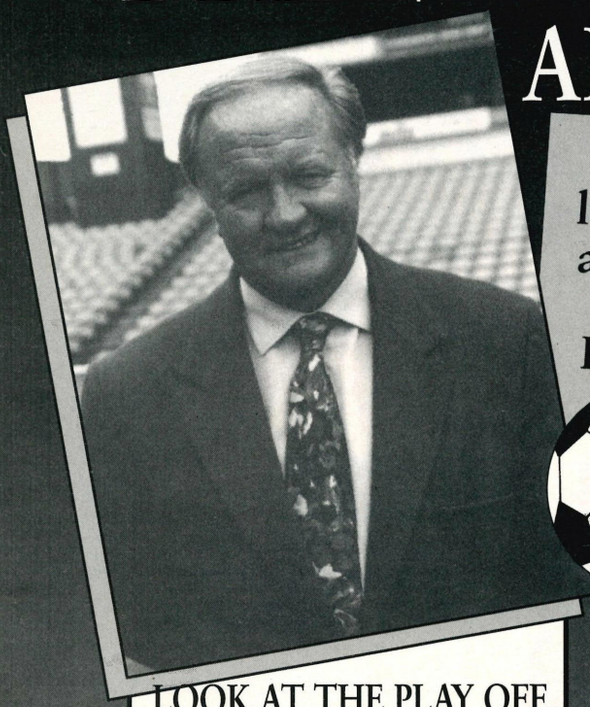
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BUDGET reviews

Games needn't cost a fortune, and there are plenty of decent titles for under £15. This month we rummage through the bargain bin to sort out the stocking fillers from the Christmas turkeys.



Ultima VI: The False Prophet Hit Squad £14.99

Origin's Ultima series, now nearing its eighth instalment, has been incredibly successful over the years. If you've played some of the recent Ultimas, the prospect of being able to buy Ultima VI at a reduced price will seem very attractive. In this episode, you, the Avatar, must help Lord British overcome the gargoyles who threaten Britannia. As with other Ultima games, Ultima VI takes place over a large and varied area and consists of many interwoven plots and subplots which are tricky but satisfying to solve.

After playing Ultima VII, Ultima VI is a bit of a shock. Not to put too fine a point on it, the graphics look distinctly dated. The view window occupies a little less than half the screen, the sprites are minute and the interface is fiddly in comparison. I'd already played Ultima Savage Empire, which uses a very similar interface, but even that game looks considerably more polished than Ultima VI.

Even so, the depth of plot and characterisation is excellent. If you're prepared to put up with the outmoded interface, this game still has much to offer, and manages to create a world which is far more convincing that many that have featured in contemporary RPGs. In short, it may not be pretty, but it's a damn good story nonetheless.



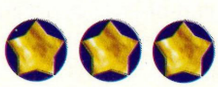
Bubble Dizzy Codemasters £9.99

Dizzy the mutant egg has starred in many a Codemasters title, and this time he's diving for pearls. The idea is to ride the bubbles to the surface before your oxygen runs out, collecting pearls en route and avoiding the killer fish.



It sounds simple enough, but in practice it's a tricky and occasionally frustrating game. Bubbles rise from the bottom to the surface, but stand on one for too long and it'll burst. You have to leap from one to another to avoid floating back down, but this requires a fair bit of luck and timing. Easy it ain't.

Even so, Bubble Dizzy is highly addictive, and although it's nothing special to look at, it's a pleasant enough way of killing time.





F-29 Retaliator Hit Squad £14.99

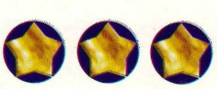
More of a flight game than a flight sim, F-29 was first released in 1990 by DID, who have since gone on to create the stupendous TFX. It's not an especially accurate game, but with its heavy emphasis on aerial combat, it's still quite good fun. The graphics look dated by today's standards, but unlike newer, more sophisticated products, it'll run quite happily on a lower end PC. Good for a quick blast.



Wing Commander Hit Squad £14.99

First released by Origin in 1991, Wing Commander revolutionised the 3D space combat genre with its innovative use of scalable bitmaps, Gouraud shading and cinematic sequences. A shoot 'em-up on a very grand scale, this game is still fun to play with its frantic dogfighting action. It may look a bit old hat in comparison to both the sequel, Wing Commander 2, and LucasArts' X-Wing, and doesn't have the variety of Frontier: Elite 2. However, it's very entertaining and you won't find too many better games for under £15.





Indianapolis 500 Hit Squad £14.99

Released in 1989, Indianapolis 500 is one of the fastest and most exciting racing games around. Although the graphics look dated, the gameplay is still excellent. Good enough to be voted Classic Game of the Month in our November issue, its popularity was no doubt influenced by the inclusion of high speed crashes and an action replay feature. If you can't wait for the follow up, IndyCar Racing, or own a lower end PC, this is one game you should consider adding to your collection.





The Lords of Power
Ubi Soft
£39.99

At just under £10 a game, Lords of Power is certainly good value for money. It contains four very different simulations, each of which is a decent game in its own right.

In Railroad Tycoon, pictured above, you must build a money-making railway empire and outwit rival companies. First released by MicroProse in 1990, this Sid Meier classic is short on visual frills but still remains an enjoyable and engrossing game.

Also from MicroProse, Silent Service II is a good example of the submarine simulation genre. Set in the Second World War, there are eight missions of varying complexity plus a number of random engagements in which you select the date and type of submarine you wish to command.

Ubi Soft's own The Perfect General is a two player wargame which allows you to take on either human or computerised opposition. Fought over a series of maps containing a concealed hex grid, it's one of the more attractive wargames on offer, and is also very accessible. The only drawback is the limited number of maps available.

Last but not least is Red Baron, Dynamix's First World War flight combat sim. Red Baron gives you the chance to fly a number of different planes including Fokkers, Eindeckers, Spads and Sopwith Camels, and you can also dogfight all the famous aces on both sides.

Red Baron hasn't aged significantly, although the graphics are quite basic and there's little ground detail. Still, the frantic dogfighting action is the perfect antidote to all those dull, modern scenario games in which the enemy never gets bigger than a dot on the horizon.

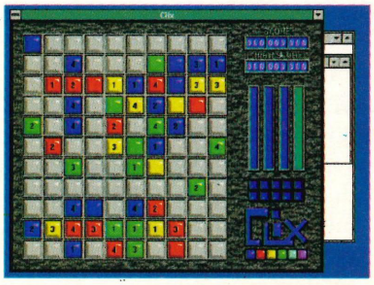


Air Combat Classics
LucasArts/US Gold
£45.99

This pack contains three award winning flight sims along with bonus missions. Battlehawks 1942, released in 1989, is a historical reconstruction of the Pacific battles in which you can fly for either the Japanese or American sides. Their Finest Hour (1990) is set during the Battle of Britain, and finally, Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe (1991) takes place during the last months of the war and features a collection of experimental German planes.



All three games are more entertaining than accurate, with plenty of combat action. The main problem with this collection is that the games are rather too similar. Of the three, SWOTL (pictured above) is the least dated, but even it doesn't measure up to many of the flight sims currently available. It's a nicely presented collection, and might have some historical interest for LucasArts fans, but personally I'd rather spend my money on one state of the art flight sim than three which are getting a bit long on the tooth.

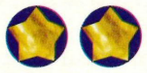


Clix
Genesis
£7.99

The point of this game is to create lines of the same colour with squares that randomly appear on the board. Clicking on a square will cycle through its colours. Each square is embossed with a number which shows how many more times it can be clicked.

Higher scores are awared for making two or more lines with a single click. If you get three lines or more with one click, you get a 'clix.' Get eleven of these and the board clears and the whole thing starts again ... and that's all there is to it. The graphics are very basic, but do their job well enough and to be honest you don't expect amazing 3-D textured-mapped graphics in a puzzle game anyway. The music and sound effects, on the other hand, are amazingly bad, but thankfully you can turn them off.

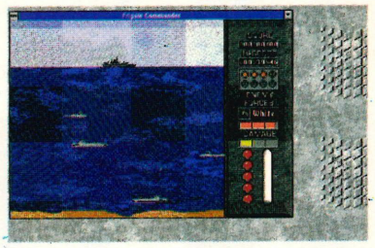
Unfortunately Clix isn't very addictive and that *is* the whole point of a puzzle game. With no variation on the playing screen and rather dull gameplay, there's no incentive to continue past your first few turns. It also becomes quite confusing when the screen starts to fill up with a mass of colours — I found myself clicking anywhere and hoping for the best. Overall, Clix is a very mediocre game and even at £7.99 it's no bargain.



Frigate Commander
Genesis
£7.99

Frigate Commander is the latest game in the expanding range of titles from Genesis Arcade. The concept behind Frigate Commander revolves around destroying the submarines which pass beneath your ship. This is done by depth charges at the correct moment. It does require some skill and judgement, since the bombs drop very slowly and you must also be careful not to hit the whales that swim past at various points during the game.

The submarines fire back at you from time to time and if you get hit too often you'll have to abandon ship and guide your lifeboats to safety. Should you succeed in destroying the requisite amount of submarines, you'll end up face to face with the end-of-level guardian, which is — you've guessed it — another submarine.



If this all somehow sounds remarkably exciting, it's not. Believe me. Gameplay is basic and consists of nothing more than moving left or right and dropping charges, while the action (if you can call it that), moves at a very slow pace. The final nail in the coffin has to be the poor graphics. There is little to recommend about Frigate Commander. The graphics are terrible and the gameplay is dull. Cheap? Yes. Playable? No.



Reviewed

The Lords Of Power	★★★★★
Wing Commander	★★★★
Bubble Dizzy	★★★
F29 Retaliator	★★★
Indianapolis 500	★★★
Ultima VI	★★★
Air Combat Classics	★★
Clix	★★
Frigate Commander	★

Budget Ratings

Essential Purchase



Well worth adding to your collection



OK if this is your kind of game



Not really worth it even at budget price



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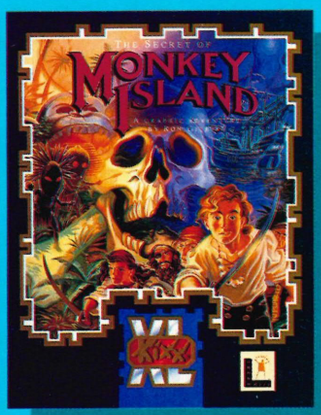
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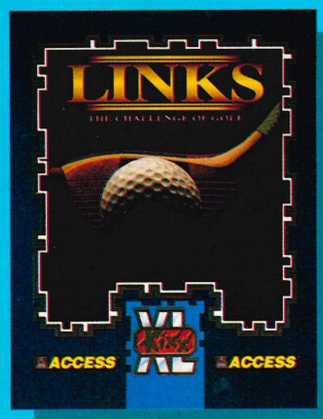
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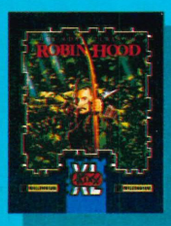
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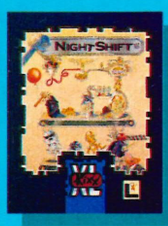
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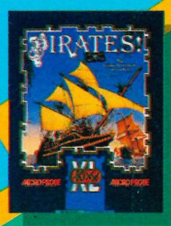
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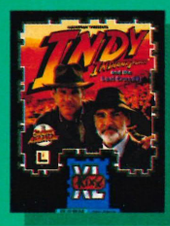
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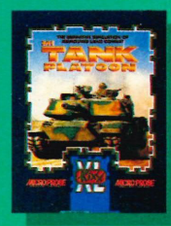
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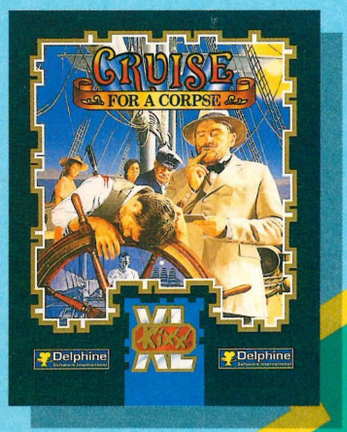
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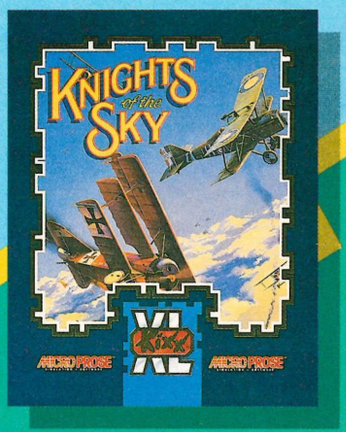
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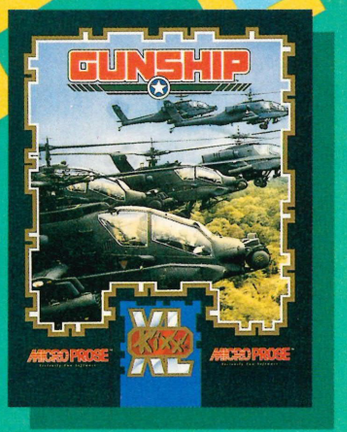
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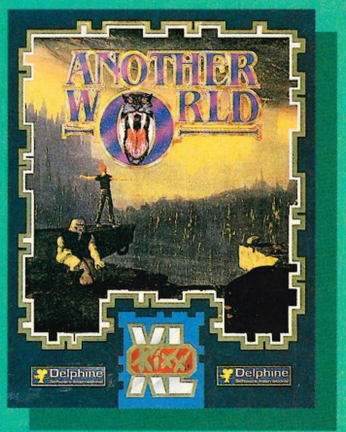
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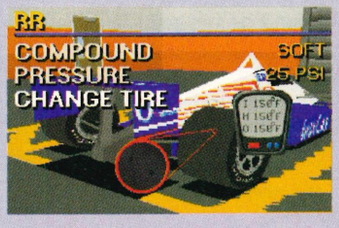
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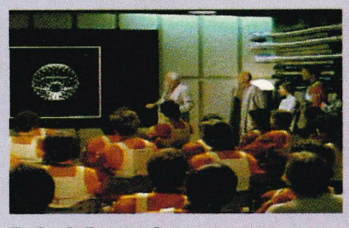
Frontier: Elite II
Gametek, £39.99
Following in the footsteps of the much lauded Elite, Frontier has to be the biggest space sim of the decade. An exciting mixture of combat and trading, Frontier has enough to keep anyone happy for months. A must have.



Chessmaster 4000 Turbo
Mindscape, £35.99
This game boasts an awesome array of features, including a choice of 12 sets, 2D or 3D view, resizable windows, annotations, tutorials and a LAN/modem option. It has a stronger engine than Chessmaster 3000, too.



IndyCar Racing
Virgin, £44.99
If you thought MicroProse F1GP couldn't be beaten, think again. IndyCar is the new king of the racing sims. The cars are responsive, the wipeouts are spectacular and it looks terrific. Tough, challenging and full of depth.



Rebel Assault
LucasArts/US Gold, £49.99
Rebel Assault is the first game we've seen to make proper use of CD-ROM. This Star Wars spin-off is an exciting arcade shoot 'em up with cinematic quality sound and graphics. More importantly, it's brilliant fun.

PC Review Recommended

Win this month's top games

Answer ONE question only and send the form to PC Review Recommended, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, to reach us by January 10, 1994, and your entry will be placed in the prize draw.

❑ Chessmaster 4000 Turbo
Q: Who did Gary Kasparov beat to become world champion?
A: .....

❑ IndyCar Racing
Q: What team is Nigel Mansell now racing for?
A: .....

❑ Rebel Assault
Q: Who was the voice behind Darth Vader in the original movie?
A: .....

Name .....
Address .....
.....

WIN!

PC Review Recommended games

Not only do you have the advantage of knowing that these are currently the best games in their class, but we give you the chance to win a copy of a PC Review Recommended title. We have five copies of each newly Recommended game to give away to the winners of this competition.

How to enter

If you'd like the chance to win a copy of the Recommended game of your choice, simply answer the question on the form, left, and send your entry on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope to PC Review Recommended, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

The closing date is January 10, 1994, and any entries received after that will not go into the prize draw. All normal competition rules apply, particularly the one about not sending in multiple entries. One form per person, please!

Charts: *the PC Top 10*



1. Frontier: Elite 2	*Gametek*
2. B-Wing	*LucasArts/US Gold*
3. Flight Sim 5	*Microsoft*
4. Links Pebble Beach	*US Gold*
5. Day Of The Tentacle	*LucasArts/US Gold*
6. Jurassic Park	*Ocean*
7. Shadowcaster	*Origin*
8. X-Wing	*LucasArts/US Gold*
9. Privateer	*Origin*
10. Streetfighter 2	*US Gold*

Charts courtesy of Virgin Retail.

Computers in the movies

Nothing ages like science fiction. Watch any old sci-fi film and you'll notice all sorts of interesting anachronisms, particularly where computers are concerned. But it isn't just the old films. Some more recent screen offerings also contain amusing anomalies, so here are a selection of the best and most ridiculous.

THE TERMINATOR: Arnie may have been an awesome, futuristic killing machine back in 1984, but by today's standards he's obsolete. The instructions that scrolled down his field of vision in the film were written in 6502 machine code — something that was well out of date even then. Hmm.

THE SPY WHO LOVED ME: Using only a Unix administration manual for reference, James Bond reprograms a computer in under two-and-a-half minutes so that a pair of nuclear submarines blow each other up instead of destroying the world. Right.

SUPERMAN 3: Richard Pryor demonstrates the ingenious program he has written to his disbelieving boss, but it's actually no more than a list of printer statements.

TERMINATOR 2: John Connor manages to hack a cashpoint machine using an Atari Portfolio. If only.

JURASSIC PARK: "Ah, it's a Unix system," says Lex as she hacks into the park's computers. Unusually, it's Unix running on an Apple Mac — it also has a strange and meaningless graphical front end. In reality, Unix is just a load of text symbols.

DOCTOR WHO: Back to the small screen now. In the mid-eighties, the good Doctor's Tardis was controlled by BBC Micros. Later it received an upgrade — to an Acorn Archimedes.

And that's just a handful of examples. If you know of any others, strange or otherwise, drop us a line and we might just print them.

REVIEWED THIS MONTH

Chessmaster 4000 Turbo	**9**
IndyCar Racing	**9**
B-Wing	**8**
Subwar 2050	**8**
Beneath a Steel Sky	**8**
CyberRace	**7**
Master of Orion	**7**
Sam and Max Hit the Road	**7**
Shadowcaster	**7**
Uninvited	**7**
Even More Incredible Machine	**6**
Fire and Ice	**6**
Innocent Until Caught	**6**
Fantasy Empire	**4**
Alien Breed	**3**

CD-ROM GAMES

Rebel Assault	**9**
Newsweek Interactive	**7**
20th Century Video Almanac	**5**
Advantage Tennis	**5**
Oceans Below	**4**

The PC Review elite

The number of games in the prestigious 9/10 club is growing slowly, but surely. Those titles which have been awarded a 9 are as follows:



Alone in the Dark
AV8-B Harrier Assault
Chessmaster 3000
Chessmaster 4000 - turbo
Day of the Tentacle
Falcon 3.0
Frontier: Elite II
Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis
IndyCar Racing
Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker
Monkey Island 2
Rebel Assault
Sensible Soccer
Syndicate
TFX
Tornado
Ultima Underworld



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Shareware reviews

Sam McKenzie expands his word power this month, then settles down to more relaxing pursuits — if you can call fighting Klingons relaxing ...



Breeze

Breeze 5.1 is the latest UK version of a word processor that originated in Australia. Although it lacks the fancy interface that is demanded of a commercial word processor it has some interesting special applications and is a good example of what shareware has to offer.

One of the best features of Breeze 5.1 is that it will monitor your spelling as you type — something that has only just been introduced into the very latest version of Microsoft Word for Windows. Breeze supports the use of a mouse and can display multiple windows, allowing a number of documents to remain on screen at any one time. There is also a clipboard to make copying between documents very easy. Online help is good and context sensitive.

One of Breeze's extra options is a text to .Exe converter which converts documents into self-displaying executable programs complete with menus — in this respect it could be useful as a programmer's word processor. It also has features for those who need to work with numbers, including a pop-up scientific calculator and the ability to perform statistical analysis on columns of numbers. You can also get Breeze to assess the readability of your text — an option that works better the longer the sample you ask it to analyse.

Breeze can handle large files (up to 320K) and includes a macro feature and printer spooling support. It also features an autosave option and a screen saver. Text manipulation is comprehensive — you can find and replace text, index on words and sort by specific word in a line, or by paragraph. Unfortunately, mail merge and print preview are omitted from the shareware version in order to fit it onto a single distribution disk — and as an incentive to register!

Supplier:	*Springsoft*
Telephone:	*(0352) 770049*
Product code:	*Breeze*
Price:	*£2.49*
Registration price:	*£29.99*
Registration pack:	*Extra facilities - Mail merge, Print preview, extra programs, printed manual*
Minimum spec:	*EGA, VGA*
Disk space:	*760K*

Product
Breeze 5.1

shareware tech spec · 1994 ·

KEY Search

Key search allows you to find files when you can't remember their saved name or when your Windows File Manager's search isn't comprehensive enough. The big disadvantage of the Windows Search is that although it is fast, it doesn't allow you to search individual files for particular pieces of information. This is where using KEY search is an advantage.

When you set up KEY Search you can specify the type of files you are interested in eg .Doc files or .Txt files and so on. Then 'log' the drive — in simple terms this means reading every file of the specified type(s) and constructing an index. This index includes every sequence of characters that could reasonably be recognised as a word. If you want to work in a foreign or special language you can even redefine the characters and symbols that are assumed to be part of a word.

The indexing process takes a long time and the manual actually suggests leaving it overnight. However, each time the log-in process is started it only re-indexes files that have changed since the last index, so by running KEY Search now and again one can be constructed for the entire disk and kept up-to-date by regular logging.

Supplier:	*Nildram Software*
Telephone:	*(0442) 891331*
Product code:	*KEY Search*
Price:	*£3.00*
Registration price:	*£2.95*
Registration pack:	*Manual, tech support and upgrades*
Minimum spec:	*All windows, keyboard and mouse*
Disk space:	*500K*

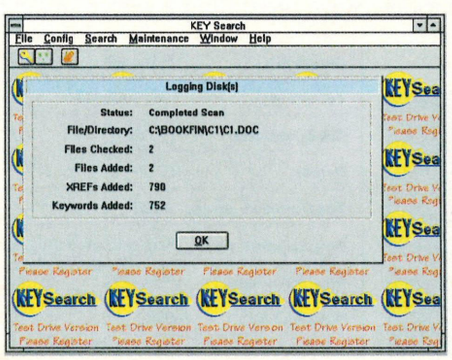
Product
KEY Search

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Once an index is built you can search for files containing any word, or combination of words. You can also perform multiple searches and have the results of each search visible in its own window. Double clicking on one of the files in the list will start the application running so that you can view it.

Up to this point I may have made it sound as though KEY Search will only be useful to forgetful people. It is, but its real value is in building cross-referenced databases of information. If you have a collection of articles or any reference material on disk you could use KEY Search to find groups of files that might be relevant to a particular subject. You can even include graphics files and other non-text files into your database.

Key Search is a useful product which has many applications.



VGA Trek

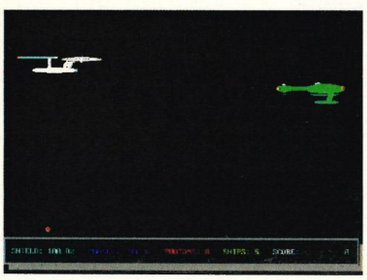
If you remember the old Star Trek game, the one that was a bit like battleships except with Klingons instead of ironclads, then VGA Trek will come as a bit of a surprise. The original was a game of strategy (and luck). You moved around the galaxy one square, sorry sector, at a time bumping into other ships and selecting weapons, scans and other courses of action in an attempt to beat the rest. VGA Trek isn't anywhere near as cerebral.

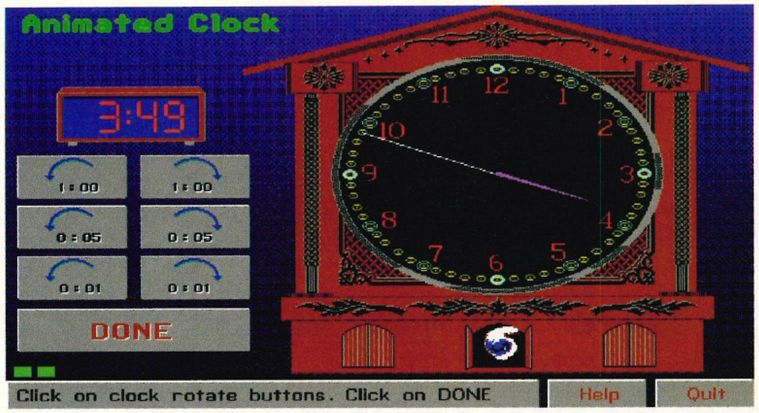
You, the Enterprise, are nose to nose with a bird of prey (a Klingon warship), slugging it out with phasers and photon torpedoes, while the Klingon just fires relentless bursts of Klingon weaponry. Apart from fighting, your only option is to move up and down the screen in an effort to dodge them. You can also hit the PageUp button to transfer some weapons power to the shields and use an 'experimental containment field', but that's about the limit of your strategy. However to make the game a little more interesting the Klingon can cloak itself.

The game is nicely presented as the VGA part of its name would suggest but it isn't stunning. The best bit, sound wise, is the rendition of the Star Trek theme at the start of the game. You get a reasonable number of ships to play with before being killed off and there are a claimed 32,000 levels.

The keyboard response was very sluggish on some of the machines I tried the program out on. I also managed to crash the game a couple of times, which is amazing given the simplicity of the program. So be warned.

If you are a Star Trek fan, old generation that is, you might get a few minutes of fun from this game. If you remember and yearn for the original Star Trek shareware game then keep well away from this comparatively crude shoot-em-up!





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Disk space:	*120K*

Product
VGA-Trek

shareware tech spec 1994

Animated Clock

In the age of digital devices it is often difficult to find a clock which is still equipped with hands so that you can teach young ones to tell the time. Animated Clock provides a colourful and flexible solution. The program claims to be aimed at children aged two years to eight, but four to ten is probably a more realistic age range. It can be used via the keyboard or a mouse and if you opt for the mouse the pointer is shown on screen as a real mouse.

There are five choices on the menu. The first is intended for very basic practice — an introduction to hours and minutes, the idea of a digital display, and a clock with a big hand for hours and a little hand for minutes. This level would need some input from a person talking the child through it, as well as the program itself.

The next three levels test understanding of digital and analog time displays, while the final option is a current time display. There are five levels of difficulty, which simply involves selecting questions to provide practice in increments of hours, half-hours, fifteen minutes, five minutes and one minute.

This is a high quality program with attention to detail throughout. The animation that accompanies the Flix Productions opening titles is impressive and after 10 correct answers the user is rewarded with what the documentation calls 'a full-screen silly animation'. Animated Clock is worth checking out if there are young ones about.

Supplier:	*Testware*
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Disk space:	*1Mb*

Product
Animated Clock

shareware tech spec 1994

Back to the Forest

Just when you thought that platform games had died, another one comes along. The main attraction of this game is the quality of its animation. The background moves in three different planes to give the impression of depth (known as 'parallax scrolling' in programming jargon), and the implementation is very smooth.

Skunny the squirrel, the hero of the game, walks and runs very conventionally, using cursor keys or joystick, but when yo[illegible]e key or re-centre the joystick he skids to a halt rather than stopping dead. Touches like these make the game fun to watch as well as play.

But life, even for a squirrel, isn't just all about zooming across the landscape at ultra high speed, every now and again Skunny must vault over or avoid objects in his path.

Unfortunately, apart from the super quality of the animation there isn't really any new ground broken in Back to the Forest. It's very much a case of running around picking up objects such as nuts and nut cakes and trying to avoid the nasties, which include snails and insects of various sorts.

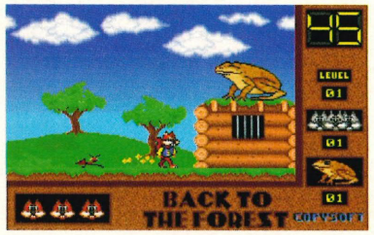
Scunny doesn't have a gun (who ever heard of a squirrel with a gun — answers on a postcard please), he kills nasties by jumping on top of them. The object of the game is to kick a giant toad (RSPCA, please take note) and you can only do this once. The only power-up is called a 'super-life' which is gained by picking up a 'superlife nut'. Once you're a super squirrel you'll be able to fly which allows you to find the toad and kick him off his hut ... (hold on, shouldn't that be a toadstool) that bit faster.

Back to the Forest is actually mildly interesting and worth adding to your collection. It doesn't break any new ground but is still well designed and implemented and is good, inexpensive fun.

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Product
Back to the Forest

shareware tech spec 1994



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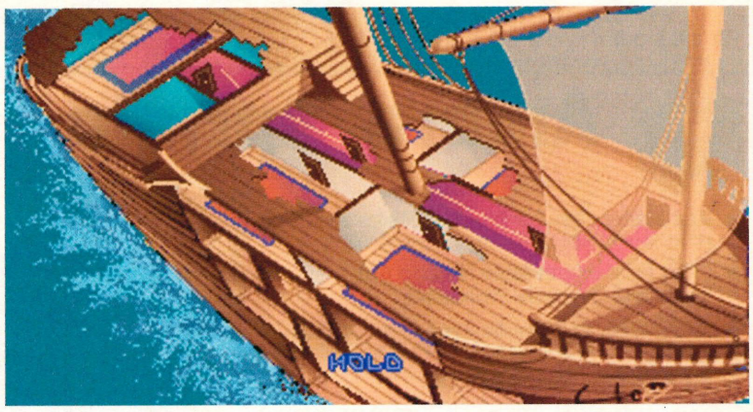
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QED

You'll spend much of the game stranded on board the Biscarde. Let's hope you don't get seasick!



Lost in Time? Don't worry. Cal Jones comes to the rescue with the first instalment of a two-part solution to one of the toughest adventures around

Lost in Time

As soon as you wake up on board the ship you realise that something is wrong. Somehow you've travelled back in time to 1842. How on earth are you going to return to the present day?

To begin with, you'll have to escape from the hold of the ship. Examine the stool and remove the nail with your pliers. Next, examine the barrels and take the lamp. Use the lamp to illuminate the barrels behind the post to find the sponge. Wet the sponge in the bucket of water and use it to remove the poster from the wall. You'll find a knot in the wood which can be removed with something sharp.

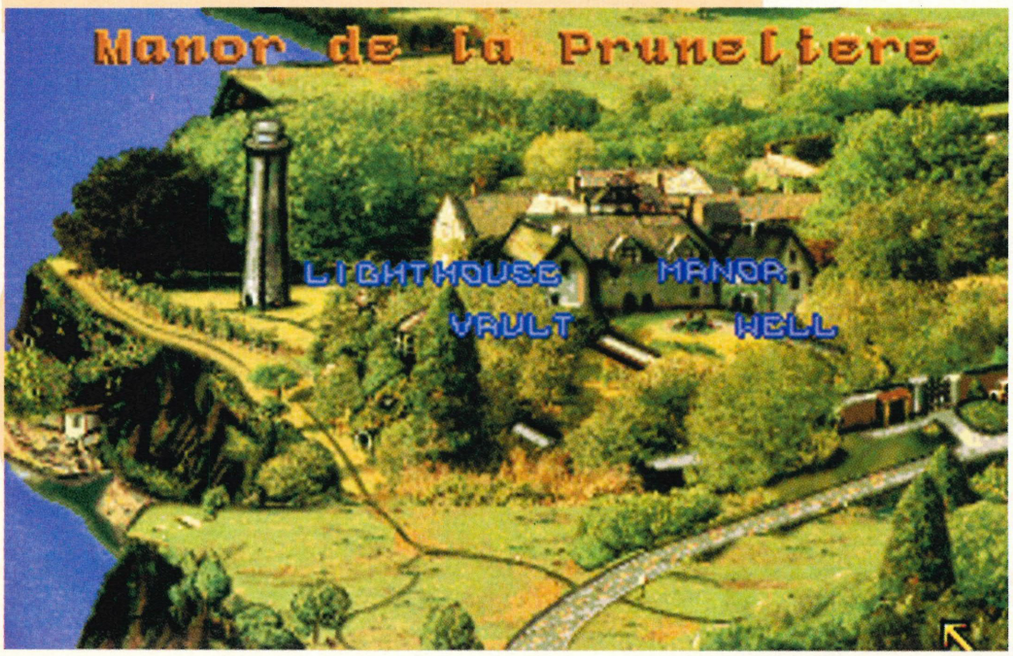
Use the lamp on the opening in the floor. Climb down, examine the cask and take the palm oil. Use the palm oil to grease the pump, then use the pump to drain the water. Now examine the chain. Take the corkscrew and climb back up.

Use the corkscrew on the knot in the wall and talk to the slave, Yoruba. Use the knife he gives you to carve a notch in the post, and climb up to the deck above.

Look at the rack and use the pliers to extract a wooden pin (you may need to try this a few times before you are successful). Then walk two steps towards the back of the ship and turn left. Look at the containers and take the towel. Then go to the back of the ship and use the towel on the ring. Take the soap from the cache. Don't forget to pick up the broken oar just to the right.

Next, go to the front of the ship and turn right. Look at the rusty cannon, then use the soap on the chip to make soap shavings. Return to the front of the ship and use the soap shavings to open the door. Inside you'll find Melkior, an agent of the Space Travel Operational Police. After talking to him, you'll get a flashback to 1992 which leads you to the second section of the game.

You've just inherited this lovely property, but it could cost you your life.



Back to the manor

This section is much trickier than the first. You'll find yourself in front of an old manor, but the gate is locked. Start by examining the tractor. Take the apple from the basket on the roof. Then look inside and take the battery and cigarette packet. Check out the tool box to get the pipe.

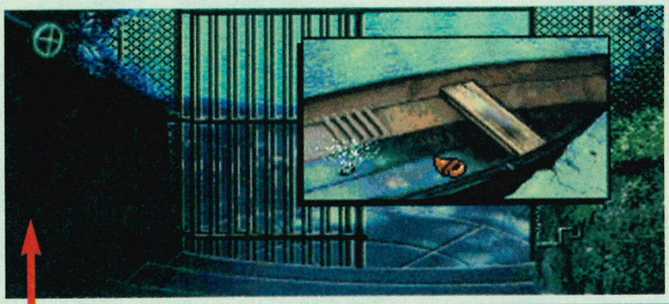
Before you can get to the gate, you'll have to move the horse by tempting him with the apple. Then look at the gate. Read the note and take the dart before examining the lock. To break the lock, use the pipe on the battery and then burn the lock with the battery acid. You're in!

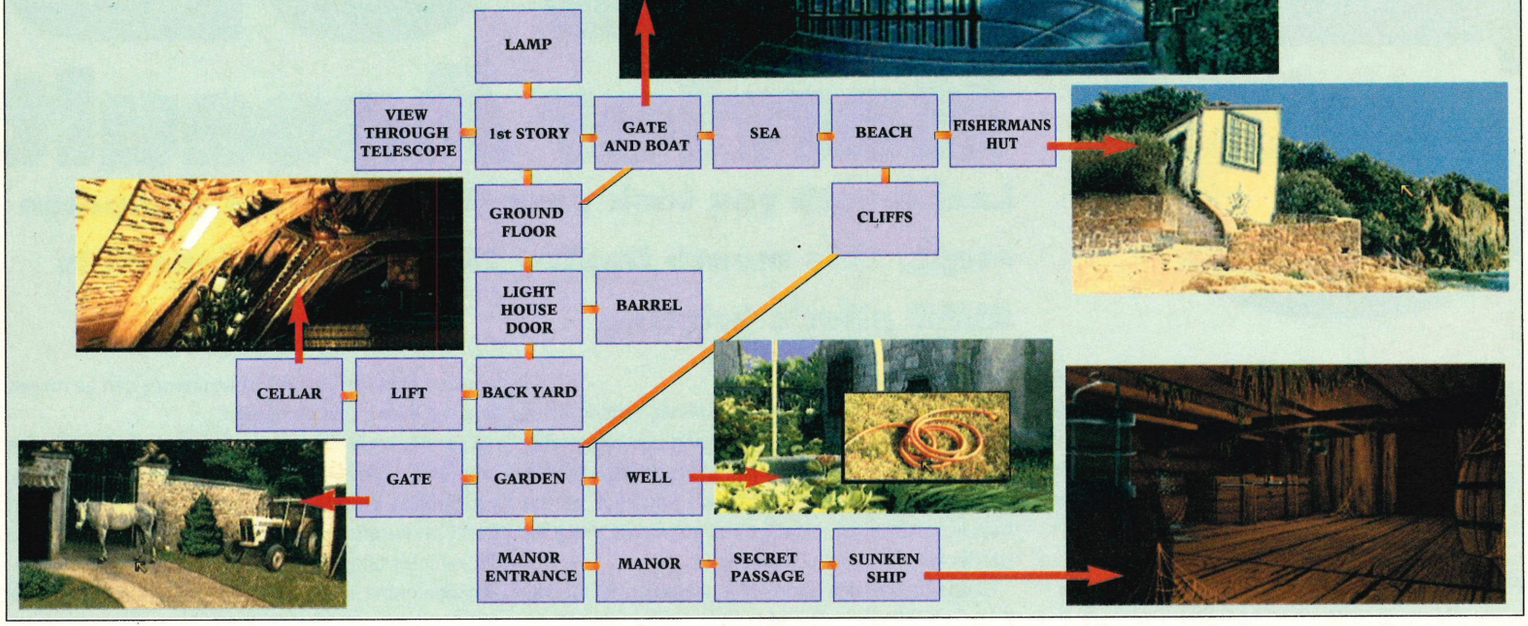
Enter the garden and find the entrance to the house. Keep the door handle which comes away in your hand and use the dart to push the key onto the floor. Then take a log from the pile and the portrait which is hanging above the door.

Next, go to the back yard and find the strange building. Place the portrait in the hole on the steps. Click on the portrait, enter the number "35" on the tombstone and press the cross. The building should open, revealing a lift. At this stage the lift won't work, so return to the back yard and visit the lighthouse. Go to the north of the building (to the right of the door) and

Brittany Manor 1992

Finding your way around the manor is probably the hardest part of the game. You won't be able to get into every location straightaway, but persevere and you'll soon get to the bottom of it all. The map below will give you a rough idea of your surroundings.





pick up the bottle. Use the dart on the barrel cork, then take the barrel as well.

Return to the manor door. Use the vinegar in the bottle to fill the battery. Wrap the wire from the portrait around the door handle and use it on the battery to make an electromagnet. Place the magnet by the gap under the door to draw the key.

In the manor, get the oar from the recess and the roasting spit from the fireplace. Take the rod and place it on the fireplace, along with the log. Open the fuse box and take the copper wire and resin. Mend the fuse with foil from the cigarette packet.

Shed some light on it

Go back to the north side of the lighthouse and break the window with the spit. Take the hosepipe and return to the lift. Now that the fuse is mended, you'll find that the lift works. Press the button and go down to the cellar. In the cellar, put the barrel on the floor and take a bottle. The bottle on the beam is too high to reach. Climb down, open the bottle and use the cork to knock the other bottle off the beam (the cork will fly out through the window). Take the rust remover and go back to the lighthouse.

Getting the lighthouse door open is far from straightforward. Tie the hosepipe to the door handle. Walk back to the lift and tie the other end to the railing. Examine the control panel, press the button and send the lift down to the cellar. Collect the damaged hose and return to the lighthouse. The door will be open.

Once inside, pick up the wooden shoe from the stairs. You'll find a rusty key inside it. Go upstairs and use the field glass to look at the wreck. Note the shapes and colours of the three shields. Open the drawer and take the book and paint remover. Then open the dresser with the oar and pick up the razor.

Next, go upstairs to the lamp. Examine the curtain and get the kerosene. Use the razor on the curtain to make a rag. Return to the ground floor and open the door with the key. Collect the glass from just inside the door before going down the steps and turning the canal valve.

Find the algae just to the right of the gate. Soften it with the paint remover, then scrape it off using the glass. Use rust remover on the mechanism and then insert the roasting spit to make a handle. Use it to open the gate. Examine the boat. It isn't exactly watertight at the moment, but don't worry for now.

Return to the lift and press the button to recall it. Go down to the cellar and examine the trunk. The shields on the wreck are the key to the combination. Take the ship's log and fibreglass from the trunk, then return to the front garden and look at the well. You must retrieve the cork from the bottom. Attach the leaky hose to the tap. Mend it using the fibreglass and resin and then put the end of the hose in the well. Turn on the tap, fill the well and collect the cork.

In deep water

Go back to the boat and use the shoe to bail out all the water. Bung the hole with the rag and use the cork to plug it. Once the boat is watertight, you'll be able to use it.

The next sequence sees you paddling out to sea, but unfortunately you capsize and have to swim back to shore. You'll find yourself stranded on a beach next to a fisherman's hut. You can't scale the cliffs, so you'll have to find something to help you.

First examine the roof and you'll see a buoy. Then enter the hut. Open the dresser to get the ship in the bottle and the Nuoc Mam. Get Melkior's notebook from the chair and take the handkerchief, nail and bread from under the sweater in the basket.

Use the chair to reach the chandelier. Use the nail to loosten the handle and examine the chandelier to get the anchor, floats and candle.

Go outside. Use the Nuoc Mam (whatever that is) on the bread and place it on the roof. A seagull will swoop down and knock the buoy onto the floor. Cut the buoy rope with the razor and then tie it to the anchor to make a grappling iron. You can now climb the cliffs and return to the manor.

Next month, find out how you ended up stranded in the past, and discover how to escape back to your own time!

Getting into the lighthouse will cause you all sorts of problems. The strange building on the left has the answer.



SEQ

AV8B Harrier Assault

Last month you took your first faltering campaign steps, this month Dudley Wheeler concludes his AV8B pilot's briefing

So now you can dogfight like a pro but just shooting down enemy aircraft isn't going to win you the campaign. To win at AV8B you've got to adopt a harsh 'scorched earth' policy, and this means destroying everything on the ground.

Fixed targets

Initial attacks at SAM sites should be made with 3-4 HARM missiles to weaken the warning defence system. Subsequent missions can carry AGM-65 and HYDRA rockets. As F-16 aircraft come into operation, so the danger increases of making a straight run into the target. Don't be greedy; after getting some sort of hit, cut and run back to the carrier. Use Page-up (with Num Lock off) to get a better view of targets when using HYDRA rockets.

Develop the technique of pulling your Harrier flight path across the targets at low level and strafe the buildings with bursts of HYDRA fired eight at a time. The HYDRA follow the curve of the flight path and give a better chance of hitting more than one target.

Use Auto as a rapid way of recovering the Harrier from awkward or difficult situations. It's a big life saver particularly when attacking at low level. Try and keep a finger over the "A" key whilst attacking targets so you can take instant action the moment you get into any difficulty.

Enemy convoys

Messages will always advise of moving convoys. These convoys (red diamonds) will proceed along the roads and whilst moving can only be attacked by Harriers (using Hydra rockets is most effective).

If enemy convoys rebuild at their destination you can readily re-attack new installations with either helicopters or Harriers. The most common rebuilds occur at Tutuala, Lore, Vato Carabar, Viqueque/U, Fato Berliu and Same/44.

If you already occupy the destination town, move your forces out before they arrive. This will protect your valuable forces and leave the enemy more susceptible to air attack. Your troops can be moved back in later when the dust has settled.

Running away.

If arriving at the target area is difficult, getting away again can often be extremely testing and often fatal. Having got away, the temptation is to save time by setting the waypoint to "T" (Tarawa) and click on the Auto key. However, this does not guarantee that your Harrier will survive the return flight.

To ensure the safe return of your Harrier, hit the Alt-X key combination after you have set the aircraft on Auto to waypoint "T". Note that your weapons must have reached their targets before hitting Alt-X or else they don't register.

Even before the Harrier has hardly left the target area, you can be setting up another Harrier attack. Repeated attacks like this, taking out one part of a target at a time are the secret of making steady progress in your overall campaign.

Sending in the troops

Troop landings should only be allowed when fixed targets have been eliminated. The TF troop vehicle strength should roughly match up with what the enemy have left in these particular towns and villages. This is not too critical as your remaining forces can be moved forward later in the campaign.

Every town/village has to be visited until the Intelligence window shows that it is either occupied by your troops or left unoccupied. Occupy airports but don't be surprised if C130 flights still arrive. As the TF vehicles take a long time to get over to the northern side of the island, you can use the travelling time to take out remaining fixed targets .

Watching the action

To watch a realistic attack on the fleet outside Viqueque, for example, sit a Harrier on the flight deck and hit the "O" key. The fleet sails away (with the Harrier), but you are left to watch the incoming aircraft circling around the fleet which retaliates with SAMs and occasional strikes.

To watch the TF troop landings or mopping up operations, take off and hover nearby with the action out in front of you. Hit the 'O' key and the Harrier will fly away but leave you in the 'camera' position to view the troops landing or hammering the enemy forces out of existence. It really is gripping stuff!





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FIELD

Blue Force

part two

Following our starter guide last month, here's the final part of Robin Matthews' complete, cryptic solution to Tsunami's cop thriller adventure that seems to improve as you progress...

After last month's tips you should have made two arrests and finally arrested the pick-up boys. Check that you are booking in four items after the stop and search — three items from the truck and the concealed weapon of Homey number 1. Go home to grandma and make sure you react to the message.

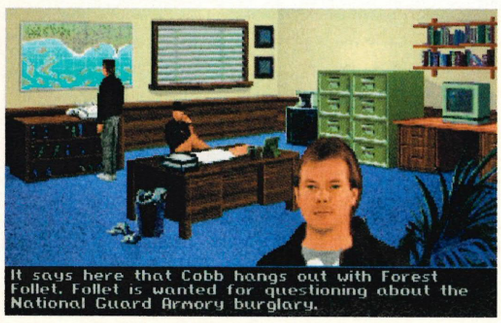
Next stop it's back to the dock. Go left at the main entrance. Scour the noticeboard on the wharf and take the correct notice to Carter to recover the item.

Skip will be over the moon, but is he your character's real interest? After eating some food, go for a stroll with man's best friend. You'll have to take some stick to get another clue but now you can send your pal to get the absentee. Grandma has dug up some old heirlooms and the key to progress is artistically framed. The computer holds another fragment and this time a file holds the way in. Hard copy is what you need and then it's time for bed.

DAY TWO

Into work, calling at Lyle's on the way — make sure you attend role call and afterwards clean your gun (perhaps taking a save first!). Mundane police work now takes precedence and a punchy toolkit will solve the first problem. Make sure that you work the radio otherwise you'll get in trouble. When Lyle's out examine the files and microfiche and then fax the printout to the Police.

Take Lyle up on his offer and get streetwise. The speakeasy is the place to go, but first bend Barry's ear with a real rap to get some pictorial assistance. If you still can't get through, 'badgering' people can be the





answer and Kaye should give you a lead to the Weasel. Ten pins provide the next link to the Snake but you need to show some authority to get your way — even to the extent of using some 'caution'. Afterwards check with the owner to pick up a single key. At Bikini Hut open the trailer and search it carefully, in particular the footwear, at very close quarters. Show this to Lyle to trigger the end of a productive day.

DAY THREE

Start off by going down to the Marina, once there, give Carter one of his boat hire tickets and he'll offer you the keys, distract him by showing the coin from the shoebox and get the key to the Future Wave. Board it, use the keys and re-enter the first room. There is a hidden key here ... Now go back to Carter's and before you board the rental boat grab the net on the other side of the jetty (hint: there is also a hook in the fire box on the main wharf). Use the key on the boat and it's off to Marble Head Island.

Upon landing, open the crate and take the fuel and rags — you'll need them later. At the compound throw the net over the dog and use the single key you found on Green's boat to unlock both gates. Make a careful note of what you do here - when you leave everything must be as you found it. Switch the lights on and take the black cable.

Plug one end into the generator and switch it on. In the circuit breaker box there are two hidden compartments, open these and plug in the other end of the cable. Now press the revealed button and a secret passage will open up. Examine the crates and obtain some hard evidence. Now replace everything else, including the original switch settings ... if a little later you get a message about the ATF finding an empty warehouse you know you're overlooking something. Close up and use the hook to recover the net. Show Lyle the deciding evidence and sleep on it!

DAY FOUR

The final stage. Go to the Marina and hire another boat. Lyle will join you on your Island trip, but this time board the other visitors' boat. Green is holed up and needs to be smoked out of his hiding place. For this you will need the fuel and rags (from the crate on the island) and a flare (open the storage compartment on the side of the Future Wave with the screwdriver from the back of the seat of the rental boat). Stuff these into the air vent and Green will soon appear. Save here to try some alternatives, but in the end the only way to succeed is to say the right things. Cuff and search him to improve your firepower.

Now land on Marble Head and use the pineapple on the gunman — don't forget to search him as this provides an alternative to the net technique and gets you back into the warehouse. Once you're in don't waste too much time, but close down the options.

When Lyle is ready, open sesame and then remember that the word is mightier than the .38 calibre — Tie a Yellow Ribbon should strike the final chord, but for every door that opens, another may have to close (again). If revenge is what you want, Blue Force does allow you to save here and administer your own justice — but it's not to be recommended...

At last! Sit back and watch the final credits to see the black hats get their just deserts ...



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QED

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.

Privateer

Already completed Privateer? Colin Smith of Hatfield has found a secret adventure hidden in the game. Here's how to get at it:

Make a temporary directory, eg:

MD \PRIVATEER\TEMP

Copy this special file as follows (the renaming is important):

COPY\PRIVATEER\TBTNE.VDA
\PRIVATEER\TEMP\ADVENT.BAT

Then move it to the temporary directory and run the batch file as follows:

CD \PRIVATEER\TEMP
ADVENT SETUP



This will create an adventure which you can run by typing:

ADVENT

Bio Menace

If you're having trouble getting through Apogee's platform romp, Luke Parnell from Southampton has this useful tip. Press the "up" key until you hear a strange noise, then without releasing the key, press "fire." A huge fireball will issue forth from your character, causing all sorts of carnage. Be warned, though; every fireball released will cost you a hit point.

Simon the Sorcerer

Cal Jones has been taking a break from more violent pursuits to try her hand at solving Adventure Soft's latest. This advice is for Lorraine Alexander, who is stuck in the goblin realm and is sick of watching the guard picking his nose. "Instead of trying to get past him, just slip on Gollem's ring and waltz on down those stairs. All you have to do now is rescue the druid from the torture chamber and you're away."



Another World

This game has been causing all sorts of problems for our readers, but luckily Gosagan Gopal has come to the rescue with this list of level codes:

1 LDKD	2 HTDC	3 CLLD
4 LBKG	5 XDDJ	6 FXLC
7 KRFK	8 KLFB	9 TTCT
10 XRJT	11 HBHK	12 TFBB
13 TXHF	14 CKJL	15 LFCK

Ultima Corner

The Ultima series seems to cause more headaches than all the other games of the last ten years put together. Last month we received three pleas for help, and Kees Voorneveld, Jeroen D Grasdijk and Nadine Banis, all of the Netherlands, have each written in with the answers.

P Cooper of Kidderminster couldn't figure out how to use the serpent gates in Serpent Isle. First make sure that you've put the teeth in the jawbone. Then double click on the gate and you'll be teleported to the Dark Path. Here you can gain access to various locations in the Serpent Isle.

Meanwhile, the curiously named Blodwin P Teabag is having trouble with the gargoyles in Ultima VI and needs to find Captain John. I'm told he's in the lower levels of dungeon Hythloth, which can be entered from the Isle of the Avatar or the gargoyle land. Don't speak to any gargoyles before meeting Captain John. He'll teach you to speak Gargish, the gargoyle language.

Finally, Jon Ramstad of Norway can't find the secret entrance by the red bush. The entrance is an illusionary wall and you can walk straight through. Just walk along and into the wall until you get to the other side. the cave is divided into two rooms, the second of which lies beyond an illusionary wall to the north of the first. You'll find a lot of hidden doors in the game, so keep practising.

In addition, Jeroen D Grasdijk has this general tip for Serpent Isle. Let one of your characters fight using the Firesword, because it will illuminate your surroundings. It never runs out, and saves you having to lug round a lifetimes supply of torches in your backpack.

Hare Raising Havoc

If Roger Rabbit has you tearing your hare (sorry) out, Simon Pulo of Malta has a neat tip which allows you to speed through the game. Press Ctrl, Alt and F5 together to take you to the next level.

HELP WANTED

The Dagger of Amon Ra

I'm stuck on Act 5 and don't know how to stop the dark figure who comes after me. Also, what do I do with the cheese and how can I get into the Employees Only room near the armoury?

R Nortcliff
Yorkshire

Eye of the Beholder II

How do you open the seal beyond the crimson door on Level 1 of the Silver Tower? Plus, where are the six polished shields needed to open the door to the Medusa's Labyrinth?

Joseph Dimmer
Fareham, Hampshire

Flashback

How do you free the man on Level 6 (easy mode)? I've tried every combination of switches with the mechanical mouse and am still stuck.

Ben Gilman
Powys

Serpent Isle

I am stuck in the northern part of Serpent Isle on the icy plains. I have talked to the Gwani, killed the ice dragon and got the blood for the sick Gwani child. I have also found the Magebane sword but I can't get any further. I can't find my way to Batlin or, as the Great Earth Serpent tells me, the entrance to the temple in which I should find the Eye of the Moon. I hope that there is someone who can help me because I've tried everything I can think of.

Kees Voorneveld
The Netherlands

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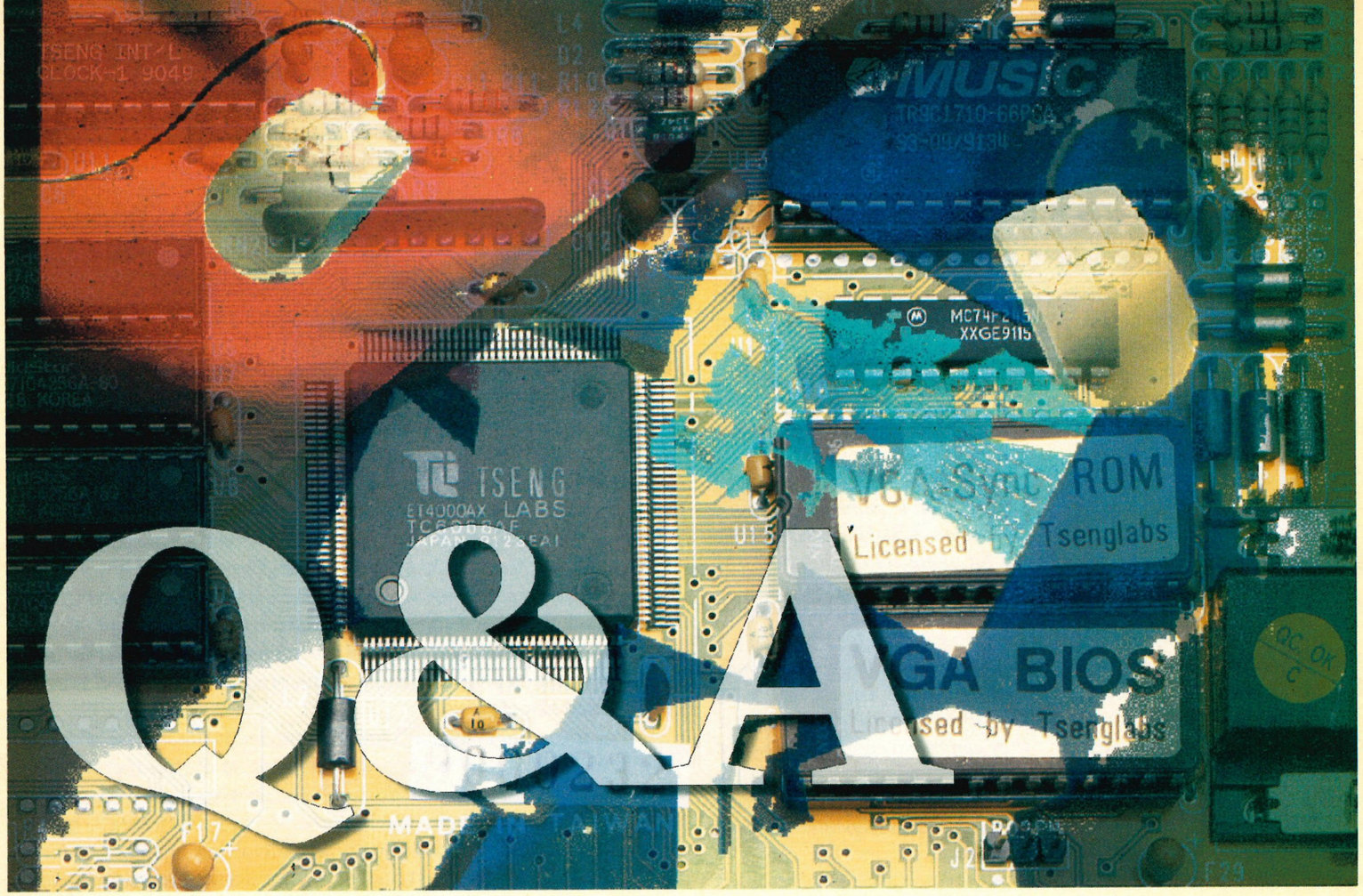
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Bemused, befuddled, or bewildered about your PC? If your hardware gives you headaches and you're stricken with software seize-ups, share your problem with Q&A's Mike James and he'll endeavour to help

Slow machine cure?

Q As owner of an Amstrad PC2086, I'm finding that for everything (apart from word processing) it is completely inadequate. If possible I'd like to upgrade to a 486 (25/33MHz) with 4Mb RAM. Would it be possible to get a motherboard to replace my existing one? What would it involve? Would there be problems with software and my existing monitor and keyboard compatibility? Would there be any problems if I was to install a CD-ROM or an external 3.5" high density drive.

I'd be grateful for your opinion as I've had no luck with any computer shops around my home.

Patrick Olszouski

A *I can't forgive Amstrad for selling old XT machine designs well beyond the time when most people thought they were obsolete. The 2086 uses nothing more advanced than an 8086, and as you note it really isn't up to running anything more than word processing software. OK, there's a huge library of MS-DOS applications, mostly available now as shareware, that work very well on an 8086, but your machine isn't anywhere near up to running today's state of the art software. You might be able to fit a replacement motherboard but you would need to check to make sure that the one you choose would fit the case.*

The reason why I haven't spent much time trying to track one down for you is that I really can't recommend it as a course of action. The 2086 has an integrated disk controller and video card. This means that when you replace the motherboard you would also have to buy a new disk controller and video card. After this there wouldn't be much left of your original machine — especially when you also add the fact that a 40Mb hard disk is far too small and would also need replacing!

The point is that you would be better off selling the machine to someone who only wanted to word-process or run old MS-DOS applications and buy yourself a completely new machine. Similarly I wouldn't bother adding a high density 3.5 inch disk or a CD-ROM drive — even if it was possible.

The speed question

Q I own a 386DX40 and would like to know, if I upgrade to a 486SX25, would there be a great increase in speed or would I be better paying more and getting a 486DX? But this would mean saving up for a longer period of time before I could upgrade.

Secondly, could you recommend a good SVGA card? I have a Trident (1Mb) at present but it is slow on Windows and also on games such as 7th Guest, where it is only 37 percent of recommended speed on the pre-game test.

Also could you explain what a local bus video card is?

M Hog
Lancs

A *There isn't much to choose between a 386DX40 and a 486SX25 and it certainly isn't worth the upheaval of a motherboard swap. To make a big difference to your machine's performance you would need to upgrade to a 486SX or DX-33 which are approximately twice as fast, or a 486DX2-66 which is about three times as fast.*

I don't like recommending particular video cards, because I don't get to see a wide enough range in extended use. However, the Trident card that you have is about as slow as an SVGA card gets these days so you should notice a significant jump in performance by swapping to almost any modern 16-bit graphics card, especially one described as a graphics (or Windows) accelerator. However, if you are considering a motherboard swap then a local bus design might be a better option.

A local bus is a set of connections that work at the same speed as the main processor. It is difficult to be accurate at the moment but a local bus video card can, in theory, be up to eight times faster. In practice, the speed-up isn't as great, but local bus video cards are among the best performers irrespective of technology. Of course, you can't use a local bus video card unless you have a local

bus motherboard and this is where the motherboard swap comes in. It's not a cheap option, but once you have a local bus you can also use local bus disk controller cards which speed up the machine even more. It is important to note, however, that at the moment there is a downside in that some games simply cannot cope with the increased speed offered by the local bus video card — see the next question. I guess this problem will vanish when they catch up.

Trouble with the local bus

Q Having just invested in a really good PC I am encountering a problem with 'red' graphics on a number of games — Ultima UnderWorld, Indy and the Fate of Atlantis, and Civilisation. I am told that the problem is due to my local bus graphics card, but the solution seems far from clear. I first contacted Electronic Arts about Ultima UnderWorld and I was told to send a letter to request a patch. Unfortunately, I am using the CD-ROM version and this cannot be corrected by a software patch. EA subsequently suggested I contact Western Digital — the maker of the local bus video card — for a solution.

MicroProse suggested, rather unhelpfully that I should try a slower graphics card!

The retailer from whom I purchased the equipment (Watford Electronics) merely offered the explanation that this "is the price of advancing technology."

Other games do not have the problem so it must be to do with the software I'm running. If this is the case, how do I get the software companies to take action, or should I demand a refund on my PC and purchase a non-local bus system? Also, why have I not seen any mention of this problem anywhere?

Colin Cooper
Leigh-on-Sea
Essex

A *The reason that you haven't heard of any problems with local bus video cards is that they are fairly rare. There are a range of different types of local bus cards and not all of them cause problems. I can fully understand your attitude at having bought the best only to discover that it doesn't work. However, I can also see Watford's side of the situation because this is indeed the risk of buying the most advanced technology. There is an old computer saying which runs something along the lines of "never buy new technology until enough other users have debugged it for you."*

Most games programmers have enough trouble making their efforts work on a standard PC (whatever that is!) let alone something new and unusual. As local bus video becomes the norm — and I am sure it will — then they will indeed have to get their act together and make it work. I can't say I think much of MicroProse's attitude but I suppose they can make enough profit from selling to standard PCs. This means that if you pressure them then their simplest option is to offer you your cash back!

Yes, it is a software problem, in the sense that the solution is a slight rewrite of the video handling in each of the games you have mentioned but I don't think you will get very far trying to motivate the software producers to do anything about it.

So what should you do about it? I don't think I would scrap the local bus machine. If you really want to go back to a non-local bus video card all you have to do is plug one in. Just because the motherboard has a local bus socket it doesn't mean you have to use it. I'm sure Watford would swap in your local bus video card for a standard ISA bus card if you ask them. Personally I don't think much of having to go back to a slow video card but it might allow you to play the games until the software catches up.

Battling technical departments

A Further to the reply you gave to a customer in Q&A (Alone and in the dark?, Issue 24), I would like to make a number of observations.

It had been suggested that the memory resident part of Dr Solomon's Anti-Virus Toolkit (probably a reference to VirusGuard, as this is set up automatically when the Toolkit is installed), might be using too

Q&A update

Faster video

Given that you have a really fast processor — a 486DX2-66 say, then the only performance issue that is likely to worry you is how fast, or should I say slow, your video card is. The current video standard, VGA and SVGA, has some serious design faults that make it very difficult for programmers to create fast graphics. One of its most irritating features is that its 'memory map' is folded to fit into a small upper memory allocation. You may have a video card with 1Mb of video RAM but this can only be accessed by a program in 128K chunks. If you want to get at a part of the screen that isn't currently switched in you have to first swap to the correct VGA page. All of this slows VGA down and how fast a screen display can actually be updated depends on the ingenuity of the programmer and the exact video mode selected.

A problem common to all PC graphics modes is the ISA expansion bus. It is just too slow to cope with the amount of data that has to be moved between main memory and video memory to produce complex or animated displays. The first solution to the problem to gain much acceptance took the slightly devious route of reducing the amount of data that needed to be moved to create an image. Instead of sending the data for each dot that makes up, say, a circle, from main memory to video memory, the processor simply asks the graphics card to draw a circle at a particular location and size. A graphics card that knows about circles and other common graphics shapes and operations is called a graphics accelerator.

Graphics accelerators speed up graphics without needing to speed up the bus used to connect them to the rest of the system — but they only work if the software knows about them and makes use of their special abilities. Just after graphics accelerators became popular the VESA Local Bus or VL-bus was introduced. This is a speeded up expansion bus and a VL graphics card should work faster than a standard VGA or SVGA card in all cases because it can move the graphics data faster. When you add to this the fact that there is nothing stopping anyone from building a local bus graphics card with a graphics accelerator — you have the ultimate in graphics speed!

In fact the VL bus is so fast that it actually shows up the shortcomings of the specialised graphics processors used in the accelerator cards. At first it was enough for them to be 16-bit processors — about the power of a 286. Now you can buy 32-bit graphics processors that are as powerful as a 386. To keep up with the VL bus however you need a full 64 bit graphics processor that would probably turn in a performance better than a Pentium! And that's the latest step. The first 64-bit graphics processor has been announced by S3, one of the best known accelerator manufacturers. It should cost around $300 for a finished board making it a reasonable choice for a top performing 486 machine.

Apart from 64-bit graphics accelerators there are other enhancements on the horizon but they are all concerned with making better use of the existing SVGA modes rather than introducing startlingly higher resolution. And of course the cost of all of this development is likely to be a relaxation of standards. Put another way, in the future you can expect to find lots of software that doesn't work with the new hardware that's available. It's early days yet ...

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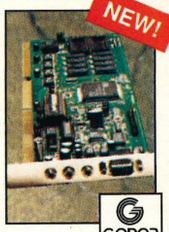
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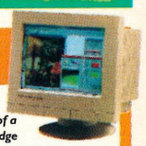
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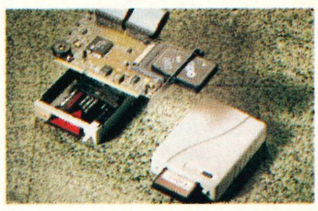


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much conventional memory. It is of course, possible that VirusGuard finds insufficient memory to load: however as this TSR occupies a little over 7K it is, I feel, rather unfair to suggest that it uses 'too much' memory.

There may be occasions when the use of more than one TSR causes the PC to behave abnormally. However in the small number of cases where this has been reported to us in relation to the use of VirusGuard, I cannot recall a situation when it has not been possible to overcome the problem by making small modifications to the way VirusGuard is loaded — for example by changing its position in Autoexec.bat.

We would certainly welcome the opportunity of investigating the problem in greater detail rather than leave a customer without an important element in his defence against possible virus infection.

David Emm
Technical Support Department,
S&S International Ltd

A speechless guest...

Q I recently purchased The 7th Guest, but I am having a problem with the sound. When I reach a part of the game where there is digital voice and action, the sound breaks up. Sometimes the game is aborted with the message, "Error 20: Sound buffer failure. This can be caused by a DMA conflict on your sound card or by running your machine in virtual DOS session."

Is there some sort of conflict or is my CD-ROM just too slow for the program? I run a 33MHz 486DX Ti'ko machine, with a Sound Blaster card and an Hitachi 1700S external CD-ROM drive.

Dominic Oldman
London

A *This is a difficut question because there are many possible explanations. What happens is that the sound card receives data from the CD-ROM directly into its sound buffer without the intervention of the main processor — which is hopefully getting on with moving pixels to produce the graphics. The electronics that carry out the moving of the sound data is called a DMA (Direct Memory Access) chip and the problem is that there are only a small number of DMA channels available.*

In a standard PC there are eight DMA channels but only three — those numbered 5,6 and 7, are usually free. If two hardware expansion cards are set to use the same DMA channels then your machine will crash. It might not crash all the time because it takes a program like The 7th Guest that uses the sound DMA channel and the conflicting device at the same time to show up the shortcoming. The solution is to change the DMA channel that the sound card uses.

Another reason why the sound buffer can fail even if there is no DMA conflict is that when a PC is run in virtual mode, blocks of memory can be moved around almost instantly and without warning. In most cases this is a desirable feature and it is what gives the extra power to programs such as Windows. Unfortunately if an MS-DOS program that knows nothing about virtual mode tries to allocate memory to be used as DMA data buffers then it gets upset when the operating system moves the memory without warning. Most modern programs and hardware know about this problem and incorporate a special mechanism known as Virtual DMA — but The 7th Guest seems not to be able to cope with this. The only solution is not to run it in virtual mode. What this means in practice is that you shouldn't run it under Windows or any of the MS-DOS multi-tasking extensions.

What is less obvious is that you also have to get rid of memory managers such as Emm386, Qemm386 and 386Max because these make use of virtual mode to create expanded memory. If you don't want to get rid of your memory manager then you could try just disabling its creation of expanded memory.



More Maths help

Q I would like to add to the reply to the letter from F Hewitt (PC Review, Issue 19) regarding GCSE Maths revision. I obtained a piece of shareware from Testware UK Ltd (46, The Avenue, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG1 4QD) called Maths Utils for GCSE. It is very easy to use, accurate and very cheap to register. I can recommend it.

John Bright
Suffolk

Where to after GW-Basic?

Q I have been using GW-Basic on my PC for a few months now and want to move on to something better. Can you recommend a version of Basic — I have heard that Visual Basic is the thing everyone is using.

D Markham
London

A *The trouble is you don't say what it is you want out of a new improved version of Basic. I do think that the natural successor to GW-Basic is Visual Basic for DOS. It is also the natural successor if you are planning to move from QBasic. It has everything that these languages had and much more.*

Other versions of Basic that are worth considering are Power Basic and True Basic. Power Basic is a fast compiler similar to QBasic. True Basic is an elegant, easy-to-use and fast language designed by the people who invented Basic in the first place — and there is a student version which is very cheap. Try Software Paradise (0222) 887521 for all these versions of Basic.

Music notation

Q Being a musician and a computer user, I was wondering whether or not there is a program on the market that would enable me to print out my own music compositions. If so, what sort of system do I require to run such a program? How much would it be and where can I obtain one?

Paul Ingram
Bristol

A *There are a number of full priced commercial music notation packages on the market but you might as well start of with a shareware product to discover what your needs really are. Noteworthy (3649 PDSL) should meet your needs — as long as your machine has EGA or VGA graphics. Finally I would like to point out that your PC can do much more than notate your compositions. With the addition of a sound card you can actually hear what you have written and notate as you play.*

Some more tracker software

A *In Software Search, Issue 21, you printed a letter from Joris Wittenburg from the Netherlands. He had bought a Sound Blaster Pro and was searching for a sound tracker style program. I have a SB Pro myself and use a shareware program called Fast Tracker. It has all the features of a sound tracker on the Amiga, uses the Mod standard for music modules, is completely mouse driven, supports stereo and requires VGA with a colour monitor.*

Jan Backman
Denmark

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8-bit COMPARISON

	MONO		STEREO	
	AZTECH SOUND GALAXY BX II	CREATIVE SOUND BLASTER VERSION 2.0	CREATIVE SOUND BLASTER PRO II	AZTECH SOUND GALAXY NX PRO EXTRA
No Of Sound Standards	2	2	3	5
AdLib	●	●	●	●
Sound Blaster Version 2	●	●	●	●
Sound Blaster Pro II		●	●	●
Covox Speech Thing			●	●
Disney Sound Source			●	●
FM Synthesiser - OPL2	●	●		
FM Synthesiser - OPL3			●	●
Manual Volume Control	●	●	●	●
Digital Software Volume Control			8 STEPS	16 STEPS
Digital Bass & Treble Control			●	
Sampling Rate, Recording Up To:	23KHz	15KHz	44.1KHz	44.1KHz
Sampling Rate, Playback Up To:	44.1KHz	44.1KHz	44.1KHz	44.1KHz
Game Port, With MIDI Option	●	●	●	●
Dynamic Filtering For Better Sound	●			●
CD Audio In	●			●
Can Use Microphone And CD During Digital Playback	●		●	●
SMT Board For Better Reliability	●		●	●
Free Speakers	●			●
CD-ROM Interface (AT-Bus)				●
Panasonic Interface				●
Mitsumi Interface				●
Sony Interface				OPTION
CD-ROM Interface (SCSI)				OPTION
Microphone AGC Amplifier	●		●	●
Stereo Microphone Input				●
Software Selectable IRQ, DMA & Address Setting Configuration Retained When Power Off				●
Mixer Support From More Than One Source During Recording	●			●
Built-In Amplifier	●	●	●	●
Stereo Lines In And Out			●	●

16-bit COMPARISON

	STEREO				
	AZTECH SOUND GALAXY NX PRO 16	AZTECH SOUND GALAXY BASIC 16	CREATIVE SOUND BLASTER 16 ASP	AZTECH BUSINESS AUDIO BOARD	MICROSOFT M'SOFT WINDOWS SOUND SYSTEM
No Of Sound Standards	6	6	2	2	1
AdLib	●	●	●	●	
Sound Blaster Version 2	●	●	●		
Sound Blaster Pro II	●	●			
Microsoft Windows Sound System	●	●		●	●
Covox Speech Thing	●	●			
Disney Sound Source	●	●			
FM Synthesiser - OPL3	●	●	●	●	●
Digital Software Volume Control	●	●	●	●	●
Digital Bass & Treble Control	●	●	●	●	●
CD Quality Sampling Rate, Record & Playback Up To:	44.1KHz	44.1KHz	44.1KHz	44.1KHz	44.1KHz
Game Port, With MIDI Option	●	●	●		
Dynamic Filtering For Better Sound	●	●	●	●	●
CD Audio In	●	●	●	●	
Can Use Microphone And CD During Digital Playback	●	●	●	●	●
CD-ROM Interface (AT-Bus)					
Panasonic Interface	●	●	●	●	
Mitsumi Interface	●	●		●	
Sony Interface	OPTION	OPTION		OPTION	
CD-ROM Interface (SCSI)	OPTION			OPTION	
Microphone AGC Amplifier	●	●		●	●
Stereo Microphone Input	●	●		●	●
Software Selectable IRQ, DMA & Address Setting Configuration Retained When Power Off	●	●			
Mixer Support From More Than One Source During Recording	●	●	●	●	●
Option For Upgrade To 16-bit Wave-Table Synthesis	●	●	●		
Stereo Lines In And Out	●	●	●	●	●

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SOU 9016 **£9.99** +VAT = £11.74

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SCSI EXTENSION BOARD
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8-bit MONO

2 SOUND STANDARDS



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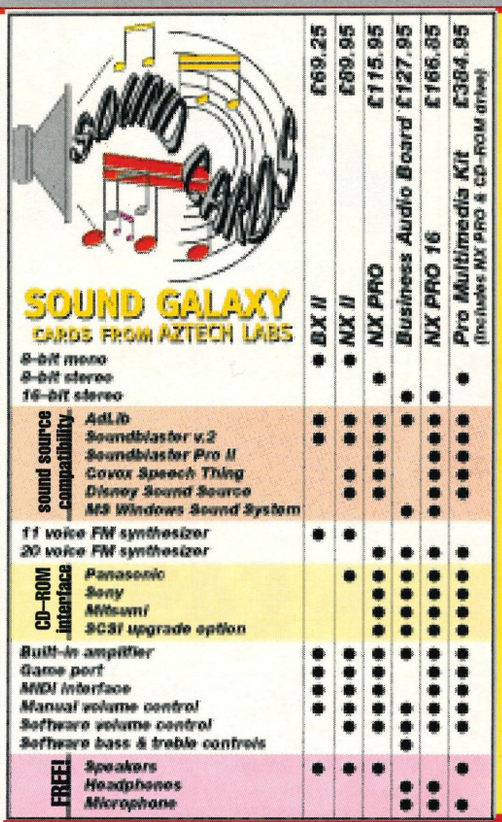
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Letters

PC Review welcomes letters on any subject under the PC sun. The editor will chop them to fit if need be, and we'll assume letters are for publication unless you state otherwise. Send your mail to letters, PC Review, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Star letters win software prizes!

Soundbytes

As a stickler for detail I must write to correct Mike James' assertion regarding volume control on the PC in his first reply in the November issue of PC Review. Can I refer you to the educational program First Shapes (from First Byte) in which the user has the option of controlling the speech volume on a scale of nine to one and all through the PC speaker. This is a software solution that other producers of games, etc, could take a look at.

Mark Lantair
Salisbury

Lands lover

Having been an avid yet silent fan of your magazine since inception, I was disappointed to find a somewhat disparaging review of Lands Of Lore in the October issue.

Having played RPGs since their conception (on the computer format) I have found very little originality in any author's work since FTL's Dungeon Master. The area I feel is most weak is in the creature/NPC construction/intelligence/persona. In relation to Lands Of Lore the above are dealt with really well.

Storyboarding is another area weak in most RPGs today, but I believe Sierra On Line's Betrayal At Krondor is superb. Moving, mixing and renewing acquaintances is a feature that should be used more often.

As for comparing Lands Of Lore with Might and Magic, I think your reviewer must have been tired or inept (or both!). Maybe Wizardry VII or Betrayal, but never Dark Side of Xeen ...

Given the money and talent I would like to see the following in a game:

- The graphics of Lands of Lore.
- The animation engine of Origin's Underworld
- Shadowlands' combat engine (for strategy and magic) and Lands of Lore)for first person blows and spells)
- Storyboard by Sir-tech (plot)
- Creature and NPC conception as in Lands and SSI's Dungeons and Dragons

Not a lot to ask is it?

PS When are we going to see an online graphics RPG (as in Sierra's networked Yserbius)?

Stephen Page
Cranleigh

Hair-brained logic

Surely I am not alone in the deep abyss of assembler programming, trying to make sense out of logic and still keep my hair. If there is anyone else out there in Britain who wants to exchange hints and tips in assembler programming , with a view to writing commercially viable games software and enduring the fame and success of it all, then please contact me.

Graham Gagan
22 Kingscliffe St Moston
Manchester M9 1NL

Howe to free memory

I am a student who has just recently got into computers, and I have had problems with free amounts of conventional memory space. Many of my friends have had this problem too, so for anyone else out there with the same difficulties this is how I got 616k worth of free memory while using Stacker.

```
*** CONFIG.SYS FILE:
DEVICE=C:\WINDOWS\HYMEM.SYS
DOS=HIGH,UMB
DEVICE=C\WINDOWS\EMM386.EX
E noems
DEVICEHIGH=C:\DEV\RCD.SYS
FILES=40
BUFFERS=20
SHELL=C:\DOS\COMMAND.COM/P/
E:1024
STACKS=9,256
DEVICEHIGH=C:\DOS\MOUSE.SYS
DEVICEHIGH=C:\STACKER\STACK-
ER.COM C:\STACVOL.DSK
DEVICE=C:\STACKER\SSWAP.COM
C:\STACVOL.DSK/SYNC

*** AUTOEXEC.BAT FILE:
SET
```

```
PATH=C:\WINDOWS;C:\QPW;C:\STACKER;
SET TEMP=C:\TEMP
LOADHIGH=C:\DOS\SHARE.EXE
LOADHIGH=C:\DOS\KEYB UK
C:\WINDOWS\SMARTDRV.EXE
SET COMSPEC=C:\DOS\COMMAND.COM
PROMPT $P$G
rem MOUSE
```

The Stacker line is obviously left out if you don't run Stacker! I hope this helps some people. To be impressed by the results simply type: Mem/c More, at the DOS prompt.

Matthew Howe
Jersey

Mail order — reliable?

A couple of months ago, my family and I sent £10.00 to a mail order company for some shareware — two episodes of Commander Keen and some .wav files for our sound card — for a special "buy four titles for £9.99" deal. We sent off our tenner in good faith and the hope that they wouldn't go bust after cashing our cheque, which (surprise) they did. We didn't receive any software from them, not even a letter.

I have recently become interested in buying Zool, since your review made it sound just like the game for me, and the hardware demands are not too great for our 386sx/16Mhz 40 meg hard disk. After looking in Virgin and HMV games, and numerous shops, the lowest price I could find was £29.99. After looking through mail order company adverts, I found one company selling it for £18.99, almost half the original price. However, I do not really want to send off £20.00 if the company is going to take my money and run.

Can you restore my faith a bit by telling me the advertisements in your excellent magazine aren't fakes as well.

Ben Stephenson
Berkshire

You'll often find that mail order companies offer games more cheaply than the shops. They can afford to do this because they don't have the same overheads (light, heating, rates, staff to be paid) that retail premises have. The two main disadvantages of buying mail order are that you have to wait for your game to arrive by post instead of walking out of the shop with it, and that a mail order company will always be more of an unknown quality — if a shop closes down, you can see that it's not there and you can't buy from it any more — but if you buy mail order there is that interim period between sending off your cheque and the axe falling.

Having said that, many people swear by mail order buying and can't understand why anyone should pay full-price. Certainly, if you find a reliable company which gives you good service then you can save a good deal of money over the years — although personally, I'd hate the running down to the letter box every morning to see if my long-awaited game had arrived!

Star Letter
Catch 22

The monsters were dead and the treasures looted. Level one of the dungeon in SSI's Eye Of The Beholder held no more secrets. Deciding that level two and below would be good entertainment during an imminent business trip, I used Laplink to move the game over to the hard disk of my laptop.

At an altitude of 30,000ft somewhere over the North Atlantic I fired up the laptop and tried to climb down to the second level of the dungeon. Instead of seeing a new room in the dungeon, I was faced with an instruction to type the word 'blagh' from page 'oogh' of the manual — the first look-up request I'd met in the game. Where was that manual? Sitting on my desk in an office back in the UK.

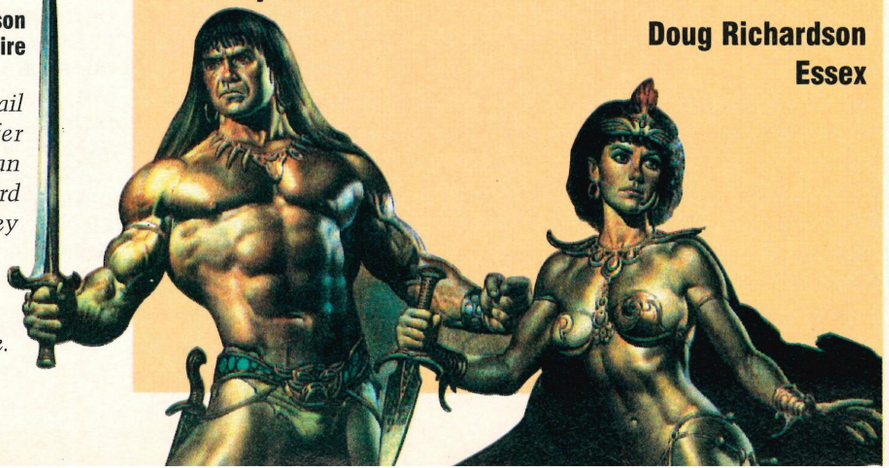
On my return to the UK I mentioned this little problem to a colleague, only to discover that he'd had a similar experience with another game during his last trip abroad.

Copy protection isn't just a problem when travelling. having spent most of a recent weekend using my computer for work, I decided to play SSI's Great Naval Battles for an hour or two before quitting for the day. I started the game, selected the side I wanted to play, chose a scenario, only to be presented with a look-up copy protection check. The manual was safely stored in a file box below a three foot deep teetering pile of reference material. There was no way I was going to carry out the archaeological excavation required needed to get down to it, particularly since I'd need that research material to be to hand when I restarted work the following morning. I swore and hit the off switch instead.

When I want to play, I want to play now — not spend 15-20 minutes grovelling in search of a mislaid manual, codewheel, look-up chart or keydisk. By mislaying the manuals, I was effectively locked out of one game for a year, and am currently denied the use of another. The day I accidentally leave my folder of codewheels, look-up charts and keydisks on a train or plane, I'll be the unhappy owner of a large collection of useless software.

Since game packages don't say if copy protection is used, may I suggest that this information be included with future reviews. The only way that copy protection can be eliminated from games is by games players boycotting products which use it. Had I known that copy protection was being used, games such as Conan the Barbarian, Eye of the Beholder, Great Naval Battles, Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe, Silent Service II, Their Finest Hour and Ultima VI would still be sitting on the dealer's shelf and not on my hard disk.

Doug Richardson
Essex



The price is wrong

I was interested to read Ciarán Brennan's article in Issue 25 about the high price of software. The PC games software industry is overpricing, and in some cases, I feel that they are taking PC games players for a ride.

We are led to believe that games piracy is a huge problem to publishers and that therefore paying customers must bear the cost of the dishonest gamers. Perhaps games publishers should implement better forms of copy protection on their games to prevent piracy. Some games come with no form of copy protection whasoever and others are limited to 'find the word' in the manual. If the software is of such a high standard, you would think they would come up with an ingenious form of protection rather than the less ingenious policy of overpricing to make up the difference.

For my own part, my budget only allows me to buy about 12-15 full-price games a year. If the games were cheaper, I would not hesitate to buy more. Also, lower prices would encourage more people to move form the competing formats to the PC, which would increase the volume sold.

Paul Rodrigues
London N8

CD-ROM EXPLAINED

WHAT IS CD-ROM?

CD-ROM is a storage technology for large amounts of information, which can be accessed from a PC via a CD-ROM drive. CD-ROM technology uses Compact Discs (CDs) as its information storage medium. These disks can store high resolution colour images, millions of words, full audio sound tracks and much, much more.

THE CD-ROM ADVANTAGE

There are numerous advantages in having a CD-ROM drive. CDs can hold the equivalent of up to 600 floppy disks and software developers can design more sophisticated and complex programs to take advantage of this large storage capacity. Cheap production costs, compact design and the practically indestructible nature of CDs also makes them ideal for software storage.

KODAK PHOTOCD COMPATIBLE

Kodak have recently introduced a new technology called Kodak PhotoCD. This allows normal photographs from a camera to be stored on CD discs, which can then be viewed on your PC. Photographs can be enhanced or manipulated using KODAK ACCESS or GRAPHICS WORKS software, to give you the results you need for your business presentations or the "family album".

MULTI-SESSION COMPATIBLE

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. All four CD-ROM drives featured are multi-session compatible, which means that they can read all of the information which has been written to a CD in this way. Inferior, single-session 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, which can update CDs with additional photographs, require a multi-session drive to read all the information which may be stored on the disc.

MULTIMEDIA (MPC) COMPATIBLE

The Mitsumi, Panasonic and Sony CD-ROM drives are ready for all types of multimedia applications. They are fully compliant with the Multimedia PC (MPC) standard, full compatibility with existing and future multimedia programs.

REELMAGIC COMPATIBLE

All four CD-ROM drives featured here are fully compatible with ReelMagic, making them ideal drives from which to run the next generation of future software that ReelMagic makes possible.

DOUBLE SPEED TRANSFER

Double Speed Transfer indicates that a drive is able to stream data from the CD-ROM drive to the computer up to twice as fast as a single speed CD-ROM drive. The most obvious benefit of dual speed can be seen when viewing AVI or Quicktime movies from CD-ROM. MPC Applications that need high speed transfer of graphics and audio data, such as the latest photo-realistic games, will also benefit from the increased data transfer rate of double speed drives.

DO I NEED AN INTERFACE CARD?

The four CD-ROM drives shown on this page do not require an additional interface card when used with a PC sound card, eg the Sound Galaxy range, which includes an appropriate Mitsumi/Panasonic/Sony interface. The Mitsumi CD-ROM drive includes a 16-bit AT interface card as standard. The Sony CDU-31A-02 drive comes with a Mediavision 16-bit stereo sound card and therefore, does not require an additional interface. The Panasonic and Sony CDU-31A-03 drives do not include interface cards and would therefore need to be used with an appropriate sound card, eg the Sound Galaxy range (Sony drive has a Sony/Mitsumi adaptor), or an interface card, both of which are available from Silica. AT interface card for Panasonic or Sony CD-ROM Drives - CDR 4072 £19.95+VAT.

EASY TO INSTALL AND USE

All the drives are easy to install. Just slide them into a spare 5.25" drive bay in your PC*. They do not require disc caddies and disc loading is via a manual slide mechanism on the Mitsumi drive and a motorised tray loading mechanism on the Panasonic and Sony drives.

***NOTE:** Some drives may require slide rails - check your PC drive bay.

MITSUMI Panasonic SONY

CD-ROM DRIVES



Model shown - Panasonic CR562B CD-ROM Drive

Silica are pleased to present four top quality CD-ROM drives from world leading manufacturers, Mitsumi, Panasonic and Sony. The Sony CDU-31A-02 comes with a Mediavision 16-bit Stereo Sound Card, worth £99+VAT, included for an amazing low price of £149+VAT! Silica also include a free CD with every CD-ROM drive. The Anecdote CD compilation from Nimbus features Databases and Books, plus Utilities, Education, Video and Animation Software.

PRICES FROM **£115** + VAT

INTERFACE OPTIONS

The Mitsumi CD-ROM drive includes an AT interface. The Sony CDU-31A-02 drive includes a 16-bit sound card and therefore does not require an additional interface. Both the Panasonic and Sony (includes Sony/Mitsumi adaptor) CDU-31A-03 drives require an interface. They can be used with sound cards which have Panasonic/Mitsumi/Sony interfaces eg the Sound Galaxy range, or an AT interface card, both of which are available from Silica. AT Interface card for Panasonic and Sony CD-ROM Drives - CDR 4072 £19.95 inc VAT

	MITSUMI LU005S CD-ROM (PC Magazine UK Editors' Choice Dec '93)	SONY (CDU-31A-02) CD-ROM DRIVE + 16-BIT STEREO SOUND CARD	PANASONIC CR562B CD-ROM DRIVE	SONY CDU-31A-03 CD-ROM DRIVE
Plays Audio CD's	✔	✔	✔	✔
Access Time (ms)	350	460	320	460
Data Transfer (Kb/s) - Single/Dual Speed	150	150	150/300	150/300
MPC Compatible	✔	✔	✔	✔
Kodak PhotoCD Compatible	✔	✔	✔	✔
ReelMagic Compatible	✔	✔	✔	✔
Cache Memory	32K	64K	64K	64K
Multi-Session	✔	✔	✔	✔
5.25" Internal Drive Mounting*	✔	✔	✔	✔
RCA Style Headphone Connector	✔	✔	✔	✔
Motorised Tray Loading Mechanism	–	Soft-Eject	✔	Soft-Eject
Interface/Sound Card Included	AT Interface	16-Bit Stereo Sound Card	–	Sony to Mitsumi Adaptor
Warranty Period	2 Years	1 Year	1 Year	1 Year
Anecdote CD Software	Free	Free	Free	Free
	£115 +VAT = £135.13 CDR 3005	**£149** +VAT = £175.08 CDR 4251	**£159** +VAT = £186.83 CDR 4097	**£159** +VAT = £186.83 CDR 4040

*NOTE: Some drivers may require slide rails - check your PC drive bay.

THE MULTIMEDIA ADVANTAGE

The ability to combine many different media via your computer system, will allow you to experience the new and exciting world of 'Multimedia Computing'. Silica are official suppliers for a wide range of the world's best multimedia products which, along with our expert help and advice, can provide you with an unrivalled source of entertainment, education and practical applications. We will send you full details of our multimedia product range on receipt of the coupon below. The following are just some of our most popular products.

SOUND GALAXY

SOUND CARDS

Silica are official dealers for the Sound Galaxy range of competitively priced 8 and 16-bit sound cards.

8-bit Cards From **£49+VAT**

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ReelMagic

REELMAGIC

ReelMagic is the world's first MPEG full screen, full motion video card that plays games and films in 32,000 colours on your PC. It includes a full 16-bit stereo sound card and a 5 year warranty.

ReelMagic (VID 1024) **£399** INC VAT

CD-ROM SOFTWARE SAVE UP TO £245!

Silica are pleased to offer KODAK ACCESS, GRAPHICS WORKS and the interactive movie game 7TH GUEST CD software at very special low prices, when purchased with the Mitsumi, Panasonic or Sony CD-ROM Drives from Silica. See below and right for features and prices.

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	–	✓
Vector Based Drawing	–	✓
Picture Image Library	24	1000
Clipart Library - Over 10,000 Images	–	✓

KODAK ACCESS

The Kodak Access 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
- Export to Other Programs
- Crop & Resize Images
- Change Colours
- Rotate & Flip Pictures

RRP ~~£85~~ +VAT **£20** +VAT=£23.50 CRK 5001

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!

RRP ~~£285~~ +VAT **£50** +VAT=£58.75 CRG 5100

7TH GUEST - Whodunnit?

INTERACTIVE MOVIE GAME

The legendary interactive movie 'whodunnit', with incredible 3D colour graphics and CD quality stereo sound. Investigate the disappearance of toymaker Henry A. Strauf, famous for his lifelike dolls and fiendish puzzles. Six brave souls have already been foolish enough to turn detective in the hope of finding what happened to the inventor. Now, you must become the seventh guest. Enter the property, probe Strauf's secrets and hope to come out alive. This title is, quite rightly, regarded as one of the best and most popular pieces of multimedia entertainment, an ambassador for the future of gaming.

RRP ~~£68~~ +VAT **£34** +VAT=£39.95 CRA 1129

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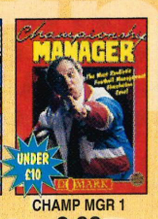
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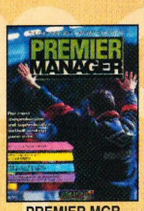
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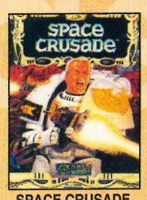
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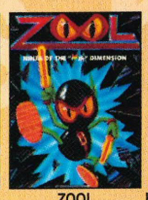
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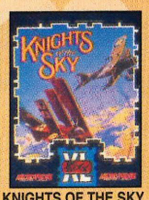
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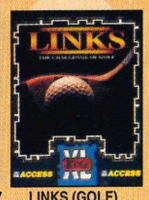
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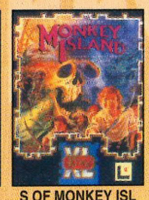
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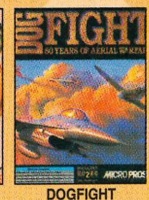
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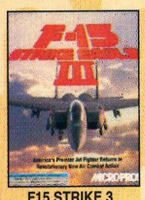
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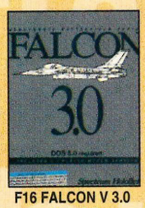
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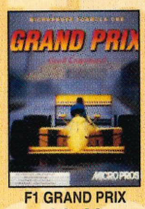
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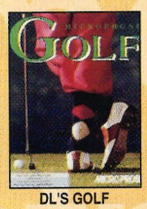
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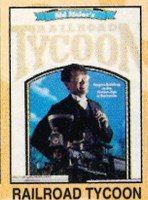
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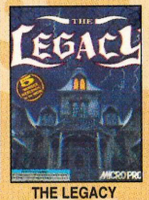
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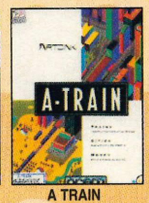
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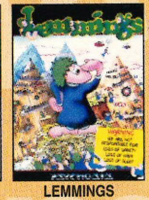
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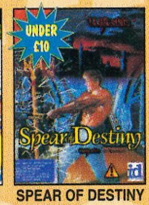
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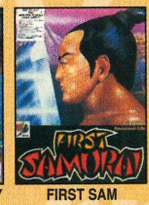
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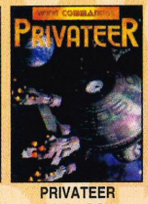
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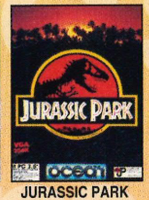
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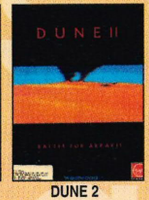
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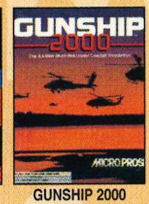
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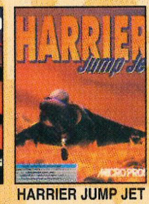
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E = EGA (Enhanced Graphics Adaptor)
V = VGA (Video Graphics Array)
SV = Super VGA
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MB = Minimum requirement of RAM
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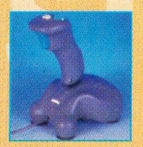
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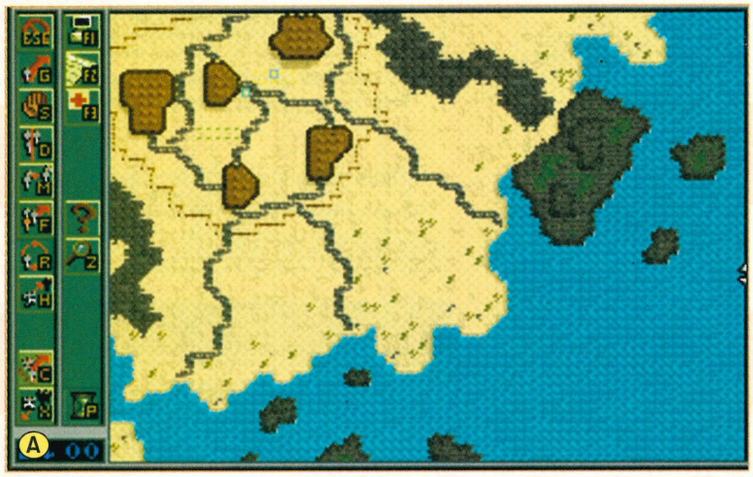
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Reviews compendium

Since the last index six months ago, nearly 100 more PC games have undergone the ultimate test of PC-worthiness — a PCR review. This is a guide to all the games we've covered and rated, from Issue 1 to Issue 26.

Title	Publisher	Rating	Issue no
3D Construction Kit 2.0	Domark	6	16
7th Guest	Virgin	7	20
A-Train	Maxis	7	12
A-Train Construction Set	Maxis	5	17
A Line in the Sand	SSI/US Gold	3	18
Aces of the Pacific	Dynamix/Sierra	8	11
Advantage Tennis	Infogrames	6	4
Adventures of Willy Beamish	Dynamix/Sierra	5	1
Air Bucks 1.2	Impressions	5	21
Air Warrior	On-Line Entertainment	7	21
Alone in the Dark	Infogrames	9	14
Ambush at Sorinor	Empire	5	22
Another World	Delphine/US Gold	8	7
Archer Maclean's Pool (256 col)	Virgin	8	25
Archer Maclean's Pool	Virgin	8	19

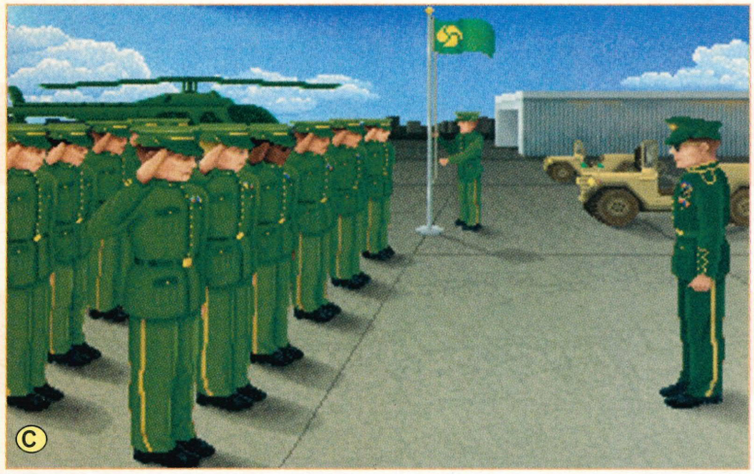


Title	Publisher	Rating	Issue no
Ashes of Empire	Mirage	7	17
ATAC	MicroProse	8	14
AV-8B Harrier Assault	Domark	9	15
B17 Flying Fortress	MicroProse	6	12
Bard's Tale Construction Kit	Electronic Arts	7	3
BAT II	Ubi Soft	7	15
Batman Returns	Gametek	5	25
Battle Isle	Ubi Soft	7	3
Battle Isle 93	Blue Byte	7	21
Battlechess 4000	Interplay	6	18
Battletech: Crescent Hawk's Revenge	Activision	5	3
Beauty and the Beast	Disney/Infogrames	8	22
Betrayal at Krondor	Sierra	5	22
Big Deal	Accolade	4	1
Birds of Prey	Electronic Arts	5	13
Blade of Destiny	US Gold	3	23
Bloodwych	Mirror Image	5	2
Blue and the Gray	Impressions	6	26
Blue Force	Tsunami/Accolade	7	22
Body Blows	Team 17	5	25
Bodyworks	Guildsoft	–	15
Bram Stoker's Dracula	Psygnosis	5	25
Buzz Aldrin's Race into Space	Interplay	6	20
Cadaver	Bitmap Brothers	7	3
Caesar's Palace	Virgin	4	25
Caesar	Impressions	7	16
Campaign	Empire	4	16
Captive	Mindscape	6	15
Car & Driver	Electronic Arts	8	16
Carrier Command	Kixx	5	15
Carrier Strike	SSI/US Gold	6	10
Carriers at War	SSG/Elect. Arts	7	13
Casino Gambling	Accolade	3	1
Castle of Dr Brain	Sierra	8	4

Title	Publisher	Rating	Issue no
Castles II: Siege and Conquest	Interplay	6	16
CD-ROM Games Pack (CD-ROM)	Software Toolworks	–	3
Championship Manager	Domark	4	13
Chemistry Works	Guildsoft	–	15
Chess Maniac 5 Billion and 1	Spectrum Holobyte	4	21
Chessmaster 3000	Software Toolworks	9	4
Civilization	MicroProse	7	1
Clash of Steel	SSI/US Gold	7	24
Coaches Club Football	MicroProse	8	25
Comanche: Maximum Overkill	NovaLogic/USG	6	16
Compton's Multimedia Encyclopedia (CD)	Compton's New Media	–	3
Conan the Cimmerian	Virgin Games	4	4
Conquered Kingdoms	QQP/Mirage	3	24
Conquests of the Longbow	Sierra	7	3
Contraptions	Mindscape	6	17
Creepers	Psygnosis	5	18
Crisis in the Kremlin	Spectrum Holobyte	6	11
Cruise for a Corpse	Delphine/US Gold	8	6
D/Generation	Mindscape	7	6
Dagger of Amon Ra: Laura Bow II	Sierra	8	12
Dark Sun: Shattered Lands	SSI/US Gold	7	26
Darklands	MicroProse	5	14
Darkseed	Cyberdreams/Mirage	4	9
Daughter of Serpents	Millennium	7	18
Day of the Tentacle	LucasArts/US Gold	9	23
Deluxe Trivial Pursuit	Domark	5	15
Disney Animation Studio	Disney/Infogrames	8	7
Distant Suns for Windows (CD-ROM)	Emerald Creative Technology	7	25
Dogfight	MicroProse	5	20
Double Dragon III	Storm	2	13
Dracula Unleashed	Icom/Mindscape	6	26
Dreadnoughts	Turcan Research	6	9
Dune	Virgin	7	8
Dune 2 — Battle on Arrakis	Virgin	7	16
Dune (CD-ROM)	Virgin	8	24
Dungeon Master	FTL/Psygnosis	6	12
Dyna Blaster	Ubi Soft	7	14
Earl Weaver Baseball 2	Electronic Arts	6	2
Eco Quest	Sierra	7	8
Eight Ball Deluxe	Amtex/Supervision	5	26
Elf	Ocean	6	7
Elvira: the Arcade Game	Accolade	7	4
Elvira II: Jaws of Cerberus	Accolade	7	6
El-Fish	Maxis	5	18
Epic	Ocean	4	10
Eric the Unready	Accolade	7	18
Eric the Unready (CD-ROM)	Legend/Accolade	5	24
Eternam	Infogrames	8	10
European Championship 1992	Elite	7	10



Title	Publisher	Rating	Issue no
Eye of the Beholder II	SSI/US Gold	7	4
Eye of the Beholder III	SSI/US Gold	6	21
F15 Strike Eagle III	MicroProse	8	16
Falcon 3.0	Spectrum Holobyte	9	4
Falcon 3.0c	Spectrum Holobyte	9	9
Family Choice (CD-ROM)	Britannica	–	1
Fantasy World Dizzy	Code Masters	5	12
Fascination (CD-ROM)	Coktel Vision	6	9
Fatty Bear's Birthday Surprise	Electronic Arts	7	24
Fields of Glory	MicroProse	7	23
First Samurai	Ubi Soft	7	14
Flashback	Delphine/US Gold	8	22
Flight of the Intruder	Action Sixteen	8	15
Floor 13	Virgin Games	7	2
Formula One Grand Prix	MicroProse	8	15
Fort Apache	Impressions	3	7
Freddy Pharkas: Frontier Pharmacist	Sierra	5	21
Free DC	Cineplay/US Gold	4	5
Front Page Sports: Football	Dynamix/Sierra	7	16
Front Page Sports Football Pro	Dynamix/Sierra	7	25
Frontier: Elite 2	Gametek	9	26
Fun School 2	Hit Squad	7	15
Future Wars	Kixx XL	6	15
Games: Winter Challenge	Accolade	7	3
Gateway II: Homeworld	Legend/Accolade	6	25
Gearworks	Software Business	6	25

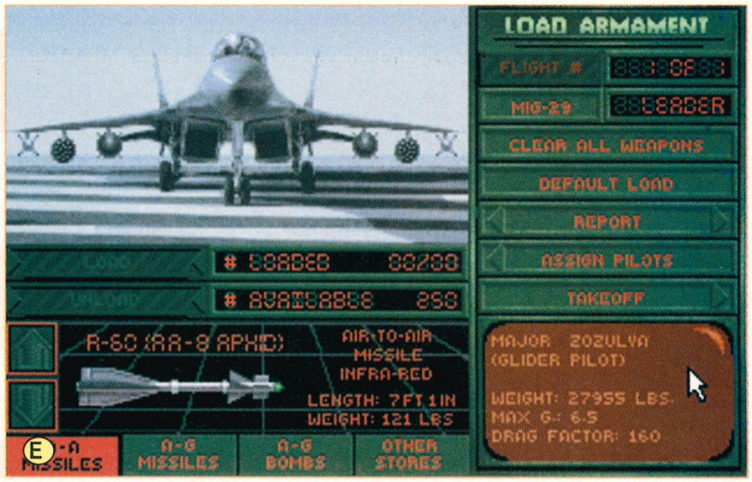


Global Domination	Impressions	7	26
Global Effect	Millennium	4	11
Goal!	Virgin	7	26
Gobliins 2	Coktel Vision	7	16
Gobliiins/Gobliins 2 (CD-ROM)	Coktel Vision	7	26
Gods	Bitmap Brothers	8	4
Golden Eagle	Loriciel	7	5
Grandmaster Chess	Accolade	7	12
Great Cities of the World (CD-ROM)	InterOptica	–	4
Great Naval Battles	SSI/US Gold	8	15
Guinness Disk of Records (CD-ROM)	Britannica	–	1
Hare Raising Havoc	Activision	6	5
Harpoon Datadisks	360/Electronic Arts	8	5
Harrier Jump Jet	MicroProse	6	17
Heimdall	Core Design	8	7
Heroes of the 357th	Electronic Arts	8	10
HeroQuest	Gremlin	5	4
Historyline 1914-18	Bluebyte	8	18
Home Alone	Accolade	4	3
Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	Electronic Arts	8	12
Humans	Mirage	7	17
Hyperspeed	MicroProse	7	4
Immortal	Electronic Arts	6	2
Imperial Pursuit	LucasArts/US Gold	8	23
Inca	Coktel Vision	8	14
Incredible Machine	Sierra	8	17
Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis (action game)	US Gold	7	9
Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis (adventure game)	LucasArts/US Gold	9	11
International Open Golf Championship	Ocean	4	22
Ishar 2: Messengers of Doom	Silmarils	6	22
Jack Nicklaus Golf and Course Design: Signature Edition	Accolade	6	9
James Pond 2: Robocod	Millennium	6	22
Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker	Virgin	9	11
Jordan in Flight	Electronic Arts	7	19
Jurassic Park	Ocean	6	25
Kasparov's Gambit	Electronic Arts	8	26
KGB	Virgin Games	7	13
King's Quest VI	Sierra	6	15
King's Quest V (CD-ROM)	Sierra	5	8
King's Quest VI (CD-ROM)	Sierra	7	24

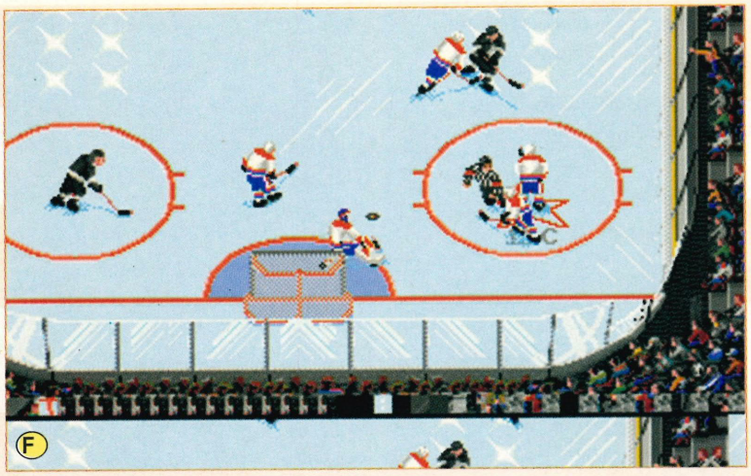
Title	Publisher	Rating	Issue no



Kingmaker	US Gold	6	26
Laffer Utilities	Dynamix/Sierra	3	4
Lands of Lore: Throne of Chaos	Virgin	5	24
Laser Squad	Blade	5	13
Leather Goddesses of Phobos 2	Activision	6	10
LeChuck's Revenge: Monkey Island 2	LucasArts/US Gold	9	3
Legacy	MicroProse	8	19
Legend	Mindscape	7	9
Legend of Kyrandia	Virgin	7	13
Legends of Valour	US Gold	8	15
Lemmings 2 — The Tribes	Psygnosis	8	19
Les Manley: Lost in LA	Accolade	7	5
Lord of the Rings (CD-ROM)	Interplay	3	24
Lord of the Rings II: The Two Towers	Electronic Arts	4	12
Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes	Electronic Arts	8	13
Lost in Time	Coktel Vision	8	25
Lost Vikings	Interplay	8	23
Lotus: The Ultimate Challenge	Gremlin	6	23
Lure of the Temptress	Virgin	8	10
Mad TV	Rainbow Arts	7	1
Maelstrom	Empire	5	21
Magic Candle II	Electronic Arts	6	7
Magic Candle III	Mindcraft	6	20
Magic Pockets	Bitmap Brothers	7	11
Magnetic Scrolls Collection	Virgin	7	1
Mammals: a Multimedia Encylopedia (CD-ROM)	Software Toolworks	–	2
Manager, The	US Gold	6	11
Mario is Missing	Mindscape	5	17
Mario Teaches Typing	Interplay	5	14
Martian Memorandum	Access/US Gold	6	1
Matrix Cubed	SSI/US Gold	4	6
Maupiti Island	Ubi Soft	6	6
Microsoft Golf for Windows (CD-ROM)	Microsoft	5	25
Midwinter 2: Flames of Freedom	MicroProse	7	5
MiG-29: Deadly Adversary of Falcon 3.0	Spectrum Holobyte	7	24
Might and Magic III	New World/US Gold	7	1
Might and Magic IV: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	7	18
Might and Magic V: Darkside of Xeen	New World/US Gold	6	23
MiG-29M SuperFulcrum	Domark	7	2
Mike Ditka Ultimate Football	Accolade	7	3
Monopoly	Supervision	4	23
Moonstone	Mindscape	6	13
Motor Stars	Revell	7	23
Multimedia Beethoven (CD-ROM)	Microsoft	–	6



REVIEWS


F

Title	Publisher	Rating	Issue no
National Pro Tennis Tour 2	Ubi Soft	8	2
New Grolier Encyclopedia (CD-ROM)	Mindscape	–	5
NFL Football	Konami	6	10
NFL Pro League Football	Interplay	5	1
NHL Hockey	Electronic Arts	8	24
Nigel Mansell's World Championship	Gremlin	5	20
North Polar Expedition (CD-ROM)	Virgin Games	4	8
Nova 9	Dynamix/Sierra	6	4
Oh No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis	7	5
Omar Sharif's Bridge	Oxford Softworks	6	9
Orbits	Guildsoft	–	15
Pacific Islands	Empire	7	7
Paperboy 2	Mindscape	2	5
Patrician	Daze Marketing	6	22
Patriot	360 Pacific/Electronic Arts	5	26
Patton Strikes Back	Broderbund/Electronic Arts	8	2
Perfect General	Ubi Soft	7	8
PGA Tour Golf for Windows	Electronic Arts	5	12
Pinball Dreams	21st Century	7	24
Pirates! Gold	MicroProse	6	23
Pit-Fighter	Domark	4	4
Plan 9 from Outer Space	Gremlin	5	8
Police Quest 3	Sierra	7	2
Pools of Darkness	SSI/US Gold	5	1
Populous II: Trials of the Olympian Gods	Bullfrog/Electronic Arts	8	15
Powermonger	Bullfrog/Electronic Arts	8	3
Prehistorik 2	Titus	5	21
Premier Manager	Gremlin Graphics	7	22
Presidents, The: It All Started with George (CD-ROM)	National Geographic	5	13
Prince of Persia 2	Broderbund/Electronic Arts	7	21
Privateer	Origin Systems	5	26
Protostar	Tsunami/Accolade	5	21
Quest for Glory III	Sierra	6	14
Ragnarok	Mirage	5	18
Rags to Riches	Interplay	5	22
Railroad Tycoon Deluxe	MicroProse	7	23
Reach for the Skies	Virgin Games	7	14
Realms	Virgin Games	7	8
Return of the Phantom	MicroProse	7	23
Return to Zork	Activision	6	26
Rex Nebular and the Cosmic Gender Bender	MicroProse	8	14
Ringworld: Revenge of the Patriarch	Tsunami/Accolade	6	19
Ringworld (CD-ROM)	Tsunami/Accolade	6	24
Risky Woods	Dinamic/Electronic Arts	4	16



G

Title	Publisher	Rating	Issue no
Road & Track Presents Grand Prix Unlimited	Accolade	7	13
Rocketeer	Disney/Infogrames	3	5
Rome AD92	Millennium	6	17
Rules of Engagement	Impressions	6	23
Samurai: The Way of the Warrior	Impressions	5	8
Scrabble	US Gold	7	16
Scream Tracker	Datamex	7	10
Seal Team	Electronic Arts	6	24
Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	LucasArts/US Gold	6	1
Sensible Soccer	Sensible Software	9	22
Shadow of the Comet	Infogrames	7	19
Shadow President	DC True/Empire	8	17
Shadowlands	Domark	8	9
Shadoworlds	Krisalis	7	18
Shanghai 2	Activision	7	1
Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective (CD-ROM)	Icom/Mindscape	–	7
Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective II (CD-ROM)	Icom/Mindscape	7	16
Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective III (CD-ROM)	Icom/Mindscape	7	23
Shuttle	Virgin Games	8	5
Siege	Electronic Arts	7	13
Silver Seed	Origin Systems	6	25
SimAnt	Maxis/Ocean	7	6
SimFarm	Maxis	5	26
SimLife	Maxis/Mindscape	6	17
Simon the Sorcerer	Adventure Soft	8	24
Software Toolworks World Atlas (CD-ROM)	Software Toolworks	–	2



H

Title	Publisher	Rating	Issue no
Solitaire's Journey	QQP/Mirage	4	24
Space Ace II: Borf's Revenge	Readysoft/Empire	2	5
Space Crusade	Gremlin	4	19
Space Hulk	Electronic Arts	7	20
Space Quest V: the Next Mutation	Sierra On-Line	7	19
Spaceward Ho!	New World Computing	6	20
Spellcasting 201: Sorcerer's Appliance	Accolade	7	1
Spellcasting 301: Spring Break	Accolade	6	14
Spelljammer	SSI/US Gold	7	17
Sports Masters	Empire	7	18
Star Trek: 25th Anniversary	Electronic Arts	7	6
Steel Empire	Electronic Arts	5	7
Stellar 7 (CD-ROM)	Sierra	-	7
Storm Master	Silmarils	5	7
Street Fighter II	Capcom/US Gold	6	25
Strike 2	Millennium	7	2
Strike Commander: Tactical Operations	Origin Systems	7	26
Strike Commander	Origin	8	20
Stronghold	SSI/US Gold	7	24
Stunt Driver	Action Sixteen	5	15
Stunt Island	Disney/Infogrames	8	17
Summoning, The	SSI/US Gold	5	14
Supaplex	Digital Integration	6	5
Super Space Invaders	Domark	5	6
Super Tetris	MicroProse	4	8
Syndicate	Bullfrog/Electronic Arts	9	21
Take-a-Break Pinball	Sierra	4	24
Taking of Beverly Hills	Accolade	2	7
Task Force 1942	MicroProse	7	16
Team Suzuki	Gremlin	7	1
Terminator	US Gold	1	1
Terminator 2	Ocean	2	2
Terminator 2029	Bethesda/US Gold	5	21
TFX	Ocean	9	25
The Belfry	Access/US Gold	6	23
Theatre of War	360/Electronic Arts	6	12
Thunderhawk	Core Design	8	5



Title	Publisher	Rating	Issue no
Titus the Fox	Titus	6	7
Tony La Russa's Baseball II	SSI/US Gold	5	20
Tornado	Digital Integration	9	22
Town with No Name (CD-ROM)	On-Line Entertainment	3	11
Treasures of the Savage Frontier	SSI/US Gold	4	9
Troddlers	Sales Curve	7	24
Trolls	Flair Software	7	17
TV Sports Boxing	Cinemaware/Mindscape	6	3
Twilight 2000	Empire	7	5
Ultima Underworld	Origin	9	8
Ultima Underworld II: Labyrinth of Worlds	Origin	8	18
Ultima VII	Origin	4	9
Ultima VII: Part 2 — Serpent Isle	Origin	7	20
Unlimited Adventures	SSI/US Gold	4	20
Unreal	Ubi Soft	2	6
Utopia	Gremlin	7	12
V for Victory: Gold Juno Sword	Electronic Arts	8	26
Veil of Darkness	SSI/US Gold	6	19
Wacky Funsters	Tsunami/Accolade	1	19
Walkthroughs and Flybys (CD-ROM)	Pitman Publishing	8	25
War in the Gulf	Empire	6	21
Waxworks	Accolade	7	15
Where in Space is Carmen Sandiego Deluxe?	Broderbund/Electronic Arts	7	24
Wilson Prostaff Golf	Gametek	6	25
Wing Commander/Ultima VI (CD-ROM)	Origin	6	6
Wing Commander + Secret Missions 1 & 2 (CD-ROM)	Origin	7	6
Wing Commander 2	Origin	7	1
Wing Commander Academy	Origin Systems	5	24
Wizardry VI: Bane of the Cosmic Forge	Sir Tech/US Gold	6	10
Wizardry VII: Crusaders of the Dark Savant	Sir Tech/US Gold	8	13
Wizkid	Ocean	8	16
World Class Leaderboard — the Series	Kixx XL	2	15
World Class Rugby	Domark	2	20
World Tennis Championships	Mindscape	6	11
Wrath of the Demon	Readysoft	4	1
Wreckers	Audiogenic	6	6
Xenobots	NovaLogic/Electronic Arts	5	20
XF5700: Mantis Experimental Fighter	MicroProse	3	14
X-Wing	LucasArts/US Gold	8	19
Zool	Gremlin	7	20

Pictured on these pages: A) Ambush at Sorinor; B) Eye of the Beholder II; C) Global Domination; D) Lands of Lore; E) MiG 29; F) NHL Hockey; G) Railroad Tycoon Deluxe; H) Stronghold; I) TFX; J) Ultima Underworld II.



BUDGET *reviews*

Battlehawks 1942	Kixx XL	★★	24
Blue Angels	Hit Squad	★★★	26
Chuck Yeager's Air Combat	Hit Squad	★★★★★	26
CJ's Elephant Antics	Codemasters	★★★	26
Grand Prix Circuit	Hit Squad	★★★	25
Hard Drivin' II	Hit Squad	★★	25
Hardball	Hit Squad	★	24
Hook	Hit Squad	★★	26
Kwick Snax	Codemasters	★★★	26
LHX Attack Chopper	Hit Squad	★★★★	24
Links: The Challenge of Golf	Kixx XL	★★★★	26
Loom	Kixx XL	★★	24
Magic Candle II	Hit Squad	★★	26
Maniac Mansion	Kixx XL	★★★★	24
Mean 18	Hit Squad	★★★	24
Night Shift	Kixx XL	★★★	26
Secret of Monkey Island	Kixx XL	★★★★★	25
Shadowlands	Hit Squad	★★★★	25
Steel Thunder	Hit Squad	★★	26
World Class Rugby	Audiogenic	★★	26
Zak McCracken	Kixx XL	★★★★	24

CD-ROM *guide*

In Issue 14, we ran a gude to CD-ROM games in which we rated all the CD-ROM games which were then available:

Adventures of Willy Beamish	Sierra	6
Battlechess Enhanced	Interplay	7
Castle of Dr Brain	Sierra	7
Chessmaster 3000	Mindscape	8
Conan the Cimmerian	Virgin	3
Eco Quest	Sierra	7
Fascination	Coktel Vision	5
Family Choice	Compton's New Media	6
Guy Spy	Empire	3
Infocom Collection	Virgin	5
Jones in the Fast Lane	Sierra	6
Just Grandma and Me	Broderbund/Electronic Arts	7
Dagger of Amon Ra: Laura Bow 2	Sierra	7
Loom	LucasArts/US Gold	8
Lost Treasures of Infocom	Activision	8
Magnetic Scrolls Collection	Virgin	5
Mixed Up Mother Goose	Sierra	7
Secret of Monkey Island	LucasArts/US Gold	6
Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	LucasArts/US Gold	6
Software Jukebox	Compton's New Media	5
Spirit of Excalibur	Virgin	6
Stellar 7	Sierra	6
Supremacy	Virgin	5
Ultima I-VI	Origin Systems	7
Zork Trilogy	Virgin	5

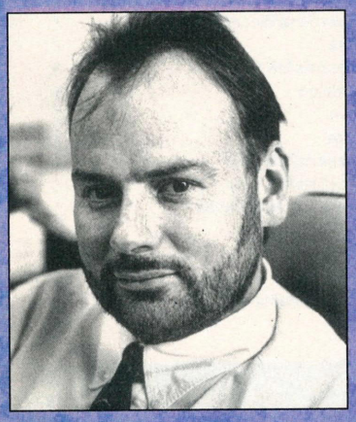


Take to the air with Chuck Yeager at the new low price of £14.99.

Charles Cecil's *Classic game of the month*



Alone in the Dark



"I see this game as a landmark in our advance towards the — sorry to use the cliché — interactive movie. Through the cinematic use of camera angles the designers managed to create enormous atmosphere — a technique that was and still is unique. This was helped by superb polygon figure animation."

Alone in the Dark is a popular choice on this page. Its mix of innovative polygon graphics and those distorted camera angles added a spooky, suspenseful atmosphere to this arcade-style orientated adventure game. You play either Edward Carnby, or Emily Hartwood (each has slightly different basic skills), investigating a mysterious death in a mansion populated by all kinds of supernatural baddies; your task is to eliminate them and survive. So, while part of the play centred on exploration and collection of clues and objects, there was also a strong shoot 'em up element.

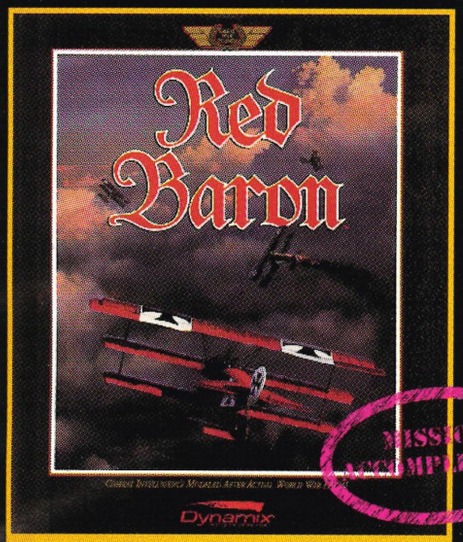
While the overall 'look and feel' of Alone in the Dark was roundly commended, many people, Charles Cecil included, felt that the gameplay was a bit limited after a while — Cecil says he "lost interest halfway through, frustrated by the need for advanced arcade skills (which I lack)". This is one area that Infogrames is trying to address in the forthcoming sequel, which you can try out for yourself on this month's cover disk in our exclusive mini-adventure from the game.

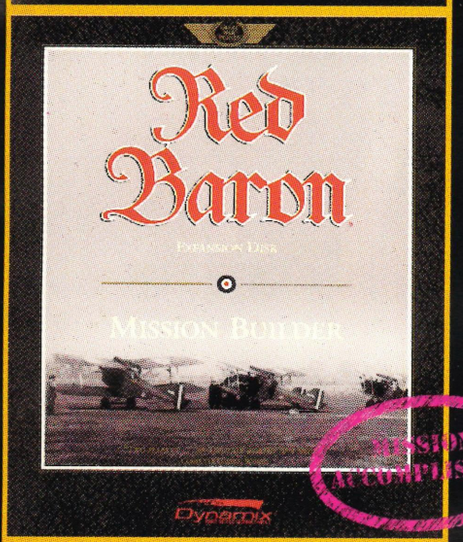
PROFILE

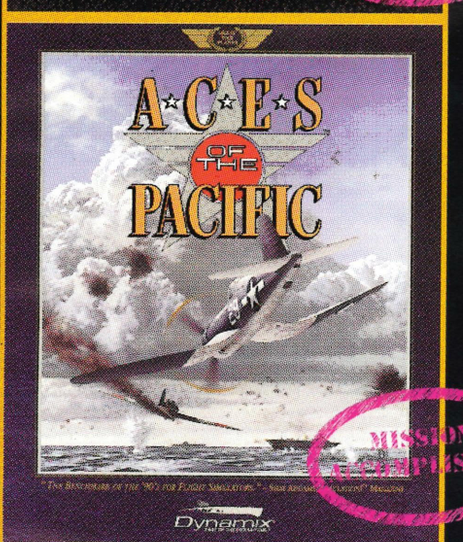
Charles Cecil began writing games on a ZX81 while studying for an engineering degree at Manchester University. His early titles, such as Ship of Doom and Espionage Island, were published by Artic Computing. In 1986, he joined US Gold as development manager, and in 1988, went to the UK division of Activision in a similar capacity. That incarnation of Activision closed down in 1991, and Cecil subsequently formed Revolution Software with two former colleagues, Tony Warriner and David Sykes.

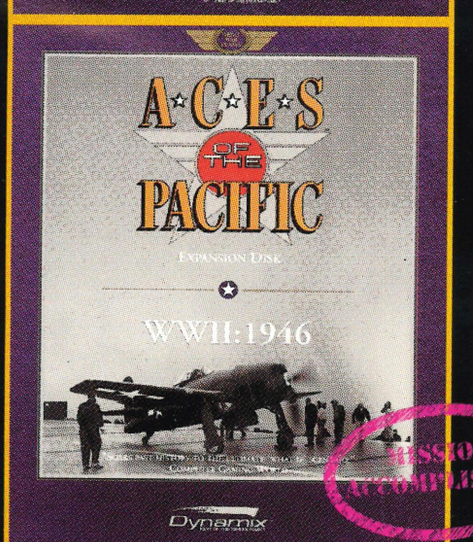
Revolution's first product, Lure of the Temptress, used a proprietary game engine called Virtual Theatre, intended to provide a base for a number of different graphic adventures. Originally signed up by the late Robert Maxwell's Mirrorsoft, Revolution switched allegiance to Virgin Games after Maxwell's demise, and Temptress was eventually released in 1992. Revolution has stayed with Virgin for its current game, Beneath a Steel Sky, which is reviewed in this issue on page 76.

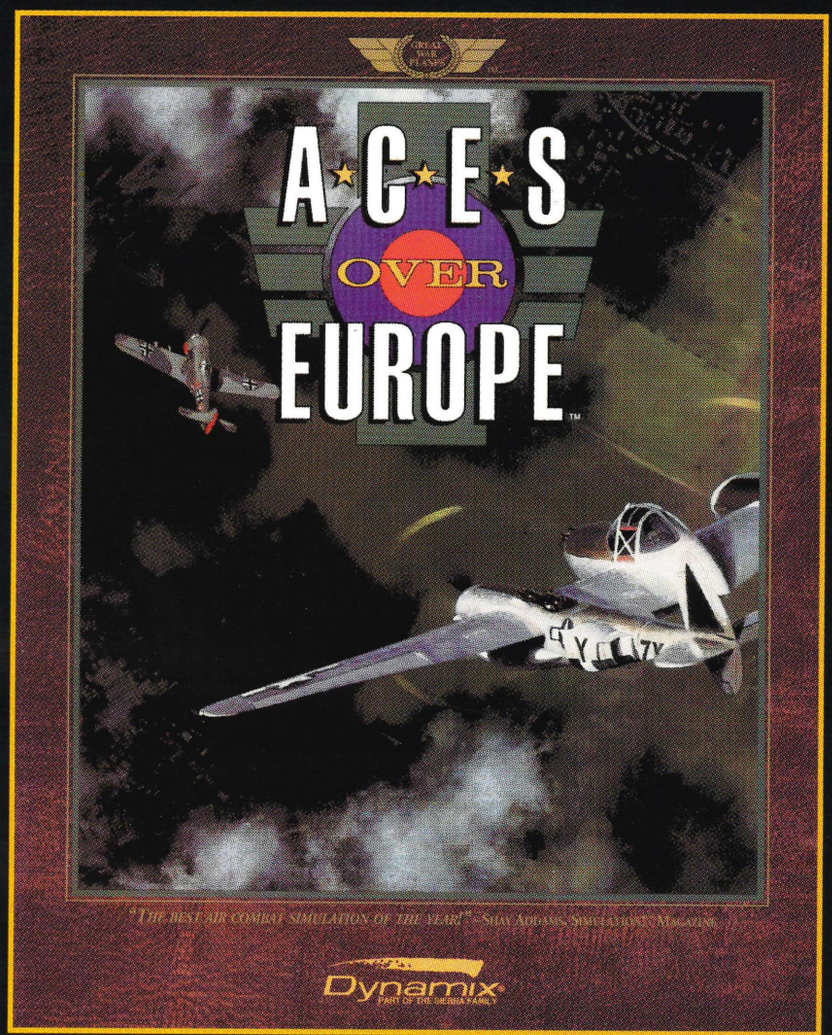
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