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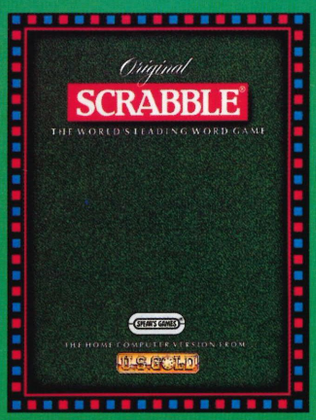

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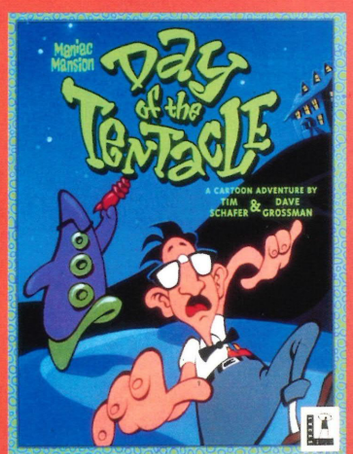

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Screenshots are intended to be illustrative of the gameplay and not the screen graphics which may vary considerably between formats in quality and appearance and are subject to the computer's specifications.

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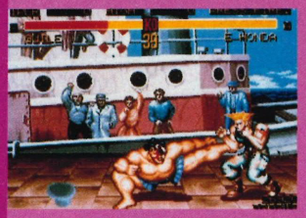

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PC Screen shot



AMIGA

CU AMIGA

97%

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

PC ZONE

95%

"Unrivalled classic, nothing comes close."

AMIGA ACTION

93%

"Frontier is probably the best game I have ever played. This offers everything you could want in a game of this type."

KONAMI

DA
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PRES

FRON

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96%

only the very best

Available on PC,

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Screen shot



PC Screen shot

VID BEN ENTS

TIER

I T E I

C & VG

96%

"One of, if not the, biggest games ever, Frontier is a title that will make the rest of your software collection obsolete."

AMIGA FORMAT

90%

"Frontier sucks you in and keeps you hostage. It's a monster."

PC REVIEW

9/10

"The best space game ever."

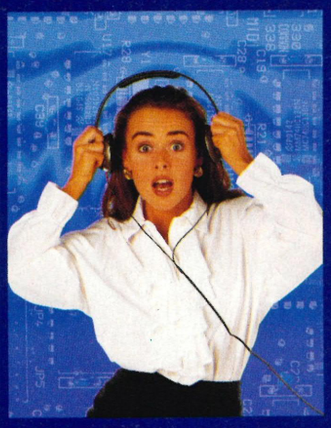
"Like Elite before it, Frontier is a game that rises above its feeble competitors like a colossus and will be talked about in awe for years to come. It's better than you could ever have dreamed it to be."

GAMETEK

mature with time

AMIGA, ATARI ST

by Konami. Distributed by Gametek



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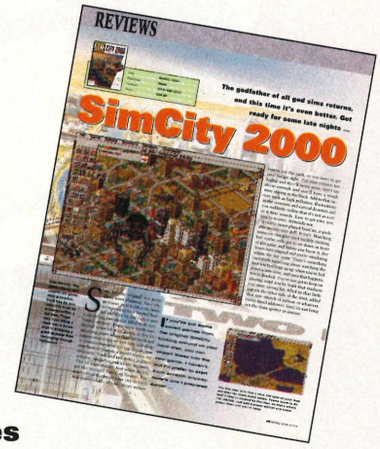
REVIEWS
SimCity 2000
The godfather of all god sims returns, and this time it's even better. Get ready for some late nights...


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Win an Amstrad 9486 Multimedia PC, plus SimCity 2000!

COVER DISKS



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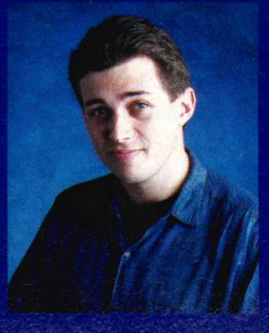
THE TEAM



CHRISTINA ERSKINE
After spending two weeks in the US, visiting the Consumer Electronics Show and seeing some of the latest in CD-ROM entertainment, the editor arrived back in Blighty to be promptly mesmerised by SimCity 2000. "It's far better than just an upgrade," she enthused.



CAL JONES
By the time Christina returned, Cal was already into the third millennium with a thriving metropolis of over one million Sims. Read here review on page 62. And that was after she'd been immersed in voodoo culture with Gabriel Knight, reviewed on page 58.



DEAN EVANS
Boldly going in Star Trek: Judgment Rites, laying down the law in Police Quest 4, tipped for promotion in Premier Manager 2 — it's all in a day's work for the versatile staff writer. And still time for a quick blast on everyone's favourite blastaway, Doom.

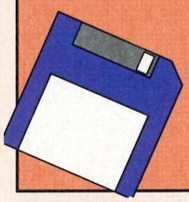
COVER DISKS

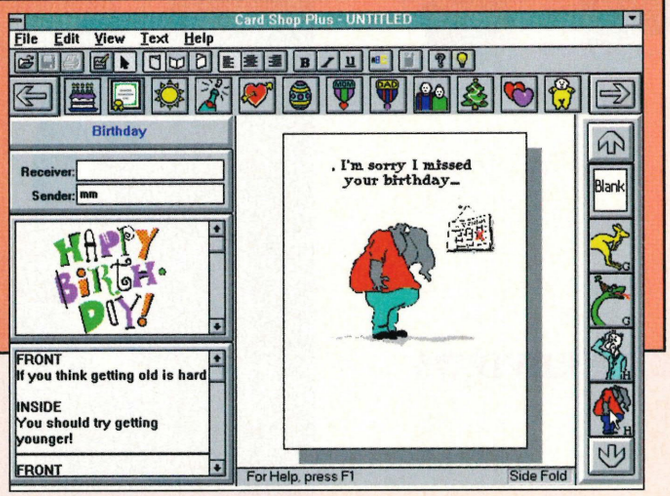
On this month's high density cover disk we bring you a superb interactive demo of Card Shop Plus, the flexible and easy-to-use greeting card design program from Software Toolworks. We've also got an addictive Windows strategy game called Mother of all Battles and a positive plethora of handy DOS utilities crammed in as well. Plus 5.25" disk owners can sit back and face the music with a rolling demo of SuperJAM!



CARD SHOP PLUS

3.5" disks only





Card Shop Plus is an intuitive and flexible Windows-based software program which enables you to select and design a wide range of greetings cards, birthday cards and party invitations.

In this exclusive PC Review demo version, you can use Card Shop Plus to create your own individual and unique cards, choosing from either a variety of pre-defined cards or making your own from the extensive libraries of clip art and text fonts. It couldn't be easier; simply select your card style, drag and drop a design onto it and add a witty line of prose or two.

How to start

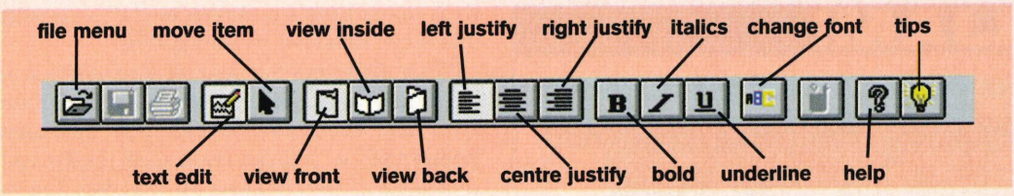
After you have installed Card Shop Plus from the PCR menu program, return to the C:\ prompt and enter Windows by typing Win.

When Windows has loaded, double-click on the File Manager icon in the Main folder and find the directory where you installed Card Shop Plus, ie, c:\card. Click on the folder and locate the file Setup.exe. Double-click on the Setup.exe file and choose a new directory when prompted. Card Shop Plus will now fully install into this chosen directory and add a Card Shop Plus file icon to the Program Manager. Double-click on the Card Shop Plus icon to start.

How to use Card Shop Plus

It couldn't be easier. When Card Shop Plus has loaded, move the mouse pointer over the picture on the left and click on it, holding the left mouse button down. Now drag the pointer over





to the blank card and release the button. The picture should now appear on the card and can be moved, resized or deleted at your leisure. To take a peek at a pre-built card, click on one of the designs in the right-hand vertical bar.

The best way to learn Card Shop Plus is simply to sit down and experiment but, if you're a bit fearful, there is an extensive on-line help facility which you can access by pressing the F1 key. Card Shop Plus also has an on-line tips file that can be accessed by clicking on the main tool bar at the top of the screen.

Unfortunately the Card Shop Plus demo doesn't allow you to save or print out your creations (although it will do just about everything else), so for further information about the complete Card Shop Plus package (which costs a mere £39.99) call the Software Toolworks on (0444) 246333.

How to quit

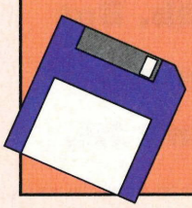
To exit Card Shop Plus simply select the File menu at the top of the screen and choose the exit option. Quit out of Windows in the normal way.

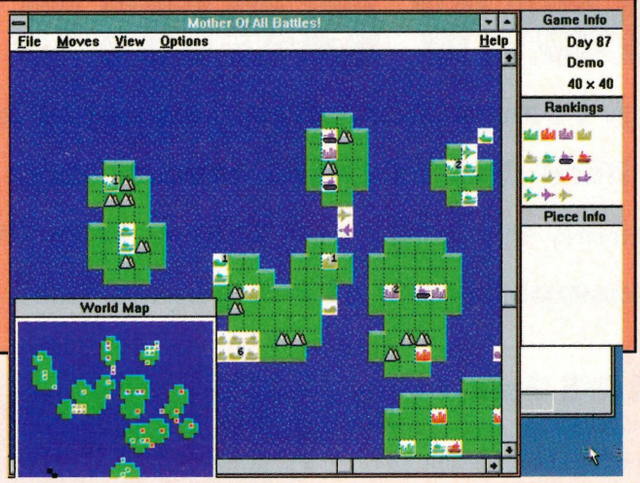
Hardware requirements

A minimum of a 386 PC with VGA and 580K of free base memory. Card Shop Plus is a Windows-based program only and requires a Microsoft compatible mouse. Card Shop Plus will not run directly from the DOS prompt.

MOTHER OF ALL BATTLES

3.5" disks only





Mother of all Battles is an intriguing and addictive Windows-based strategy game (very much in the Risk) mould for up to six players. The object is simply to destroy, kill, knock off, snuff out and eliminate all your opponents pieces by exploring new territory and by capturing both enemy and neutral cities.

How to start

After you have installed Mother of all Battles from the PCR menu program, return to the C:\ prompt and enter Windows by typing Win.

When Windows has loaded double-click on the File Manager icon in the Main folder and find the directory where you installed Mother of all Battles, ie, c:\mother. Click on the folder and locate the file Mother.exe. Double-click on the Mother.exe file to start the game.

Click on 'rules' to read the, er, rules and choose the 'new' option to begin a new game. Next select the number of players and click on 'OK' and finally change the file name to 'green' (in the top left box).

Your games are saved automatically after every four days of game time and when you decide to quit the game. If you want to get an overall idea of how the game plays, try choosing the 'demo' option at the menu screen.

How to quit

To exit Mother of all Battles simply select the File menu at the top of the screen and choose the exit option. Quit out of Windows in the normal way.

Hardware requirements

A 386 PC running Windows 3.1 and a mouse.

How to play

To select a piece or city, click on it with the right mouse button. To move a piece click on the square you wish to move it to using the left mouse button. To attack an enemy piece, simply move your piece onto a square occupied by the enemy. More detailed and eloquent instructions can be found by reading the on-line rules.

UTILITIES

We all know that DOS can be an absolute nightmare. It's fiddly, unfriendly and if you haven't got a handy program like Xtree Gold it can be a real pain to use. This month PC Review has eight simple utilities that will make DOS a much easier and happier place to work:

DELBUT — deletes contents of a directory apart from the files you choose

DOSEDIT — a handy file editor

EPSONSET — a TSR printer setup

FF2 — a file finder

RED — move a directory

SDIR — sort the contents of a directory

UNERASE — undelete files

VDEL — choose files to delete

How to start

After you have installed the utilities from the PCR menu program, return to the c:\ prompt and enter the chosen directory, ie, c:\utils. Type Utils to read the accompanying instructions.

How to use the utilities

All the utilities here are straightforward DOS commands and each utility has its own documentation (in a *.doc file). To read these files enter the directory where you have installed the utilities and either use the DOS editor or the Type command to view them.

For example, to read about Epsonset, type **Edit Epsonset.doc [Enter]**, or type **Type Epsonset.doc |more [Enter].**

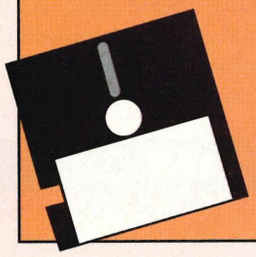
Hardware required

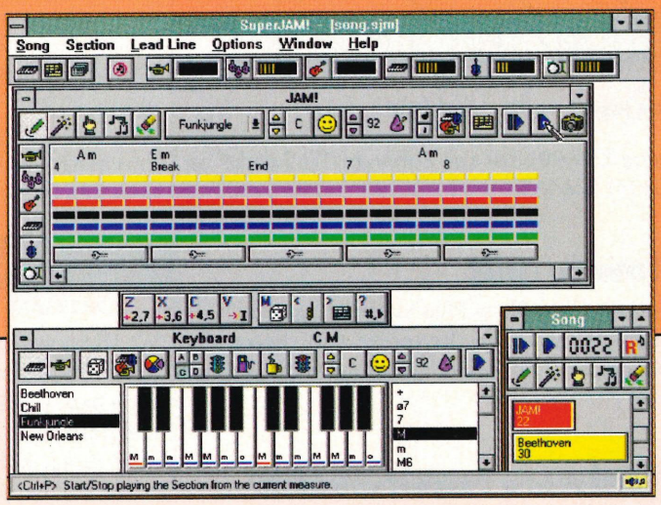
A PC that runs DOS.

Installing your cover disk: details on page 12

SUPERJAM!

5.25" disks only





If you've been intrigued by John Bennett's music series and might even be inspired and tempted to take the plunge for yourself, you're going to need a good but simple music package to hold your hand gently through the basics. This rolling demo of the music program SuperJAM! shows how this neat little package can be used to create professional music in a variety of styles. Yes never before has music been so easy. Why not take a look and a listen?

How to start

After you have installed SuperJAM! from the PCR menu program, return to the C:\ prompt and enter Windows by typing Win.

When Windows has loaded, double-click on the File Manager icon in the Main folder and find the directory where you installed SuperJAM!, ie, c:\disk1. Now click on the folder and locate the file Setup.exe. Double-click on the Setup.exe file and choose a new directory when prompted. SuperJAM! will now fully install into this chosen directory and add a a demo icon to the Program Manager. Double-click on demo icon to start.

Hardware required

A minimum of a 386 PC, VGA, sound card and a mouse.

Please note: you must install SuperJAM to the directory c:\disk1. Don't change the default directory on the PCR menu.

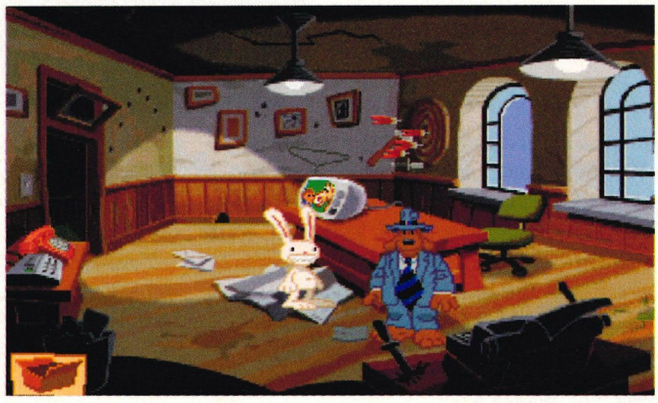
PC Review demo offer

Games are getting too big. I remember when you could have three, maybe even four games on your hard disk and still have change out of 20Mb. But it's not so today, even demos are huge and this is why PC Review now offers you the chance to sample some of the games that just wouldn't fit.

Sam and Max Hit the Road (US Gold)

There can't be many people who weren't wowed by Monkey Island and fewer still who could stop themselves drooling uncontrollably on the carpet when the superb Day of the Tentacle appeared. Sam and Max Hit the Road is the latest LucasArts graphic adventure, a tale of a crime-busting dog and his sidekick rabbit who cross America smashing injustice in their search for a missing Bigfoot and a giraffe-necked girl. Sam and Max features quirky full screen graphics (*à la* Day of the Tentacle), tricky puzzles (not like Day of the Tentacle) and more laughs than a lunch with Robin Williams. If you haven't seen the game yet here is your chance to have a peek.

Those lovely people at US Gold have 250 copies of the Sam and Max playable demo to give away to the first 250 letters that cascade on to their doormat with this bijou coupon and an SAE snug inside.



Minimum requirements are a 386 PC, VGA, mouse and 2Mb of RAM.

The address? Pop your letter in the post to: Sam and Max Demo Offer, US Gold, Units 2/3 Holford Way, Holford, Birmingham B6 7AX.

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

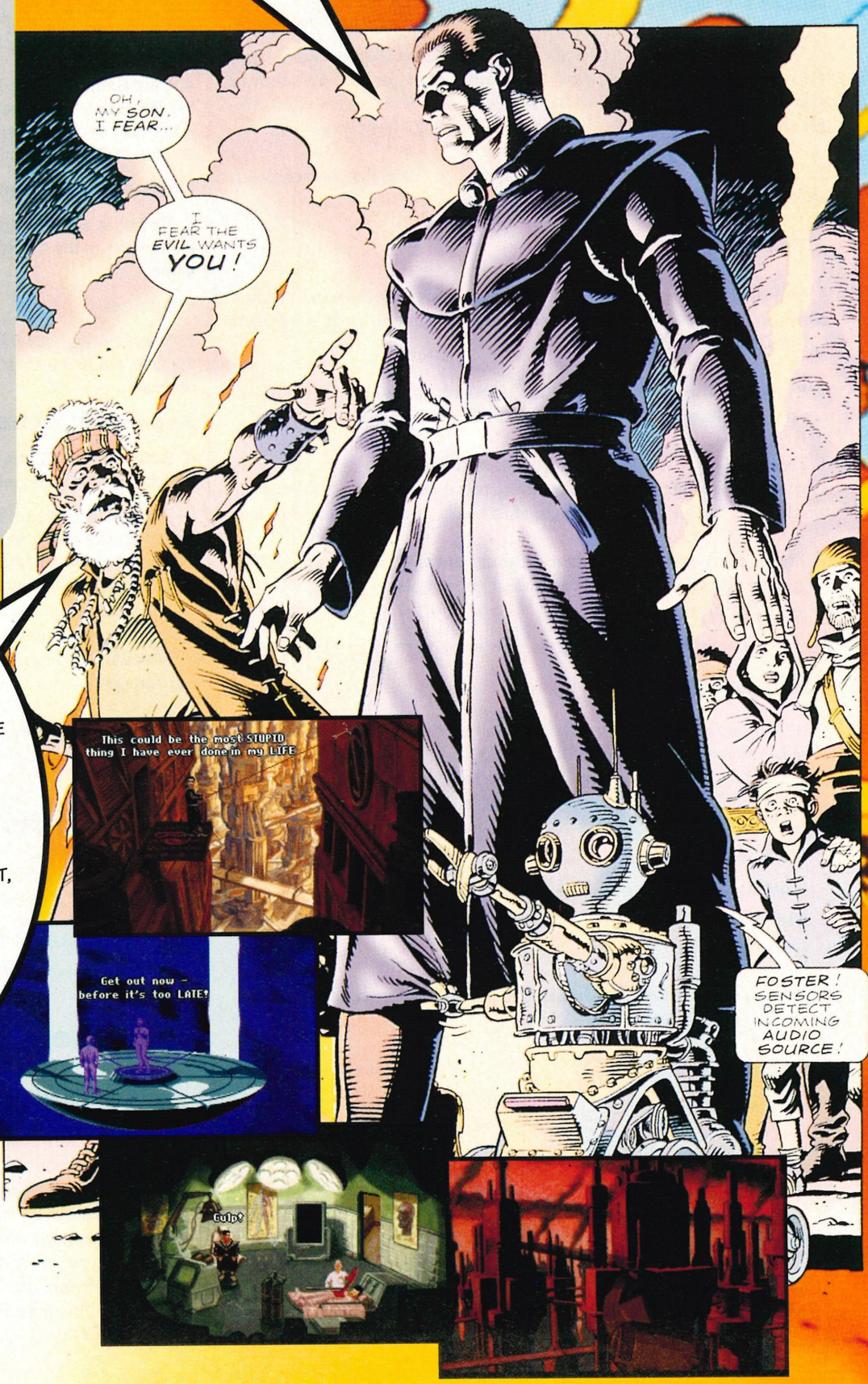
❑ **Tick this box if you don't wish to receive additional mail-outs**

PC GAMER 91%
"A must buy for all serious adventure fans."

PC PLAYER 4/5
"I recommend this game to all adventurers..."
"...it's a great game plain and simple."

PC REVIEW 8/10

BENEATH A STEEL SKY



FEATURING...

REVOLUTION'S INNOVATIVE VIRTUAL THEATRE SYSTEM AND STUNNING ARTWORK FROM AWARD-WINNING COMIC-BOOK ARTIST **DAVE GIBBONS**, BENEATH A STEEL SKY IS A GRIPPING SCIENCE FICTION THRILLER SET IN A BLEAK VISION OF THE FUTURE.

ROBERT FOSTER IS AN INNOCENT OUTSIDER STRANDED IN A VAST CITY WHERE OPPRESSED CIVILIANS LIVE AND WORK IN SOARING TOWER BLOCKS... WHILE THE CORRUPT, COVETOUS AND RICH LIE UNDERGROUND, SHIELDED FROM ALL POLLUTION.

ALONE, SAVE FOR A **ROBOT CIRCUIT BOARD**, FOSTER MUST FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL... AND DISCOVER THE SINISTER TRUTH BEHIND HIS ABDUCTION!

Virgin

REVOLUTION

How to use the cover disks

New to PC Review cover disks? Don't worry! If you know your way around your PC, just read the Quick Guide, left, for installation instructions. If you're an inexperienced user, follow the step by step instructions below.

Step by step guide

1. Insert the PC Review cover disk — labelled Card Shop Plus — into your floppy disk drive. This is normally called drive A:, but yours may be called drive B:, if you have two floppy disk drives. If this is the case, simply substitute the letter B for A in the following instructions.

2. Log on to this floppy disk drive by typing **A: [Enter]** at the on-screen DOS prompt. This prompt should then read A:>.

3. Type **PCR [Enter]**

4. You should hear some whirring and your floppy disk drive light should come on. You should then see a blue on-screen menu with PC Review Cover Disk Installer at the top.

5. By moving the arrow keys on your keyboard, you will highlight different program names in the box in the middle of the screen.

6. Pressing Enter will begin installation of the program name currently selected. So, to install Card Shop Plus, move the arrow keys until the words Card Shop Plus are highlighted in black, and press the Enter key.

7. The installer will ask you where on your hard disk you want the selected program to be stored. You can accept the suggested directory simply by pressing Enter.

Quick guide

1. Put the cover disk into your floppy disk drive and log on to it.

2. Type PCR [Enter] to load the cover disk installation menu.

3. Select the program you wish to install from the menu.

Card Shop Plus

4. Card Shop Plus is a Windows programs. In File Manager, locate the file Setup.exe in the Card Shop Plus directory and double-click on it to begin decompressing the files to a new directory, and to create an icon in Program Manager.

Mother of All Battles

6. Mother is also a Windows program. In File Manager, locate the file Mother.exe in the Mother directory. Double-click on it to begin the game.

Utilities

7. These run directly from DOS and are fairly self-explanatory. Read the Utils file in the Utils directory for specific instructions on each program.

SuperJAM! (5.25" disks)

8. SuperJAM! MUST be installed to the suggested default directory, c:\disk1,or it will not install properly.

9. SuperJAM! is also a Windows program. In File Manager, locate the file Setup.exe in the SuperJAM! directory and double-click on it to begin decompressing the files to a new directory and to create an icon in Program Manager.

8. The selected program will now be copied over to your hard disk. The installer will decompress files as it copies them across, and you will see your screen fill up with information about the installation process.

9. After you've installed the files, see pages 8-10 for instructions on using the programs.

Faulty disk?

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

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

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

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

.....

.....

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

If all else fails ...

If you've tried everything, and you still can't get the wretched disks to work, try the PC Review disk helpline:

Disk helpline: (0685) 350505

The helpline operates between 10.30am and 12.30pm 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 each disk are exactly as advertised. If, however, circumstances should dictate that we are unable to supply the stated program, we will endeavour to supply alternative software. PC Review, its distributors, and retailers will not be held responsible for any unnotified change to the contents of the disks.

a tale unfolds when a tail stirs



dragonsphere

from far, far away and long long ago comes a story to savour: a tale of courage, romance, sorcery, evil deeds and malevolent curses; a tale to lift the heart and strike at the senses.

your kingdom has suffered hard at the hands of the sorcerer sanwe. but it is 20 years since he and his dread castle were sealed within a magical force by the court wizard of your father; the then king.

now, the dragon representing the evil mage is stirring and the sphere that holds him is cracking open. the sorcerer has reawakened! your quest is clear: fight your way to the castle and defeat sanwe!



stirring adventure with a twist in the tail!

MICROPROSE

FOR IBM PC COMPATIBLES AND CD ROM

NEWS

New CD PCs from Elonex

Elonex, the British PC manufacturer and direct seller, was a bit wary about the CD-ROM market this time last year, but is now joining the irresistible rush towards multimedia with a range of devices, add-ons and a full series of multimedia-based PCs.

Of interest to upgraders must be its CD-ROM drive plus sound card bundle at £223.25. This package contains a Sony CDU31A CD-ROM drive and a Media Vision Pro Audio Spectrum 16 sound card. The Sony drive is a double speed, multi-session, caddy-less device, while the 16-bit Pro Audio Spectrum is Sound Blaster and Ad Lib compatible and has a joystick port and MIDI interface built-in.

Entry level PCs come with a 486 processor (from 25MHz SX to 66MHz DX and pretty well all points between), 8Mb RAM, 250Mb hard disk, 14" monitor, a Sony double speed, multi-session CD-ROM drive and Media Vision's Pro Audio Spectrum 16 sound card plus speakers. Prices for the PCs range from £1,545.13 to £2,032.75, including VAT.

The range is also available with more powerful speakers (Altec Lansing's ACS100 as opposed to ACS50 for around £40 more, and ACS300 for another £115).

However, if you feel like splashing out £3,300, you could buy Elonex's Pentium VL-bus Multimedia PC, which has essentially the same multimedia components, including the ACS300 speakers, and runs on a 60MHz Pentium processor with a 540Mb hard disk.

The speakers are also available on their own, priced between £64.63 for the ACS50s and £246.75 for the ACS300s.

Finally, Elonex is also making an upgrade kit available which is more complete than the drive plus sound card bundle, since it also includes the ACS speakers, and for which prices start at £287.88.

Further details can be gleaned from Elonex on (081) 452 4444.



Orchid releases video capture card

The Vidiola is a video capture, edit and playback system for the PC, which will save real-time video from VCR, video camera or TV to disk for editing, adding music tracks or special effects — and of course for playback, either in an on-screen window or zoomed out to full-screen size. It will also capture full motion video at 30 frames per second from a PAL or NTSC source.

The package includes Adobe Capture software to grab the video screens you require, Adobe Premiere for true digital video editing, with over 50 transitions and effects, and the business presentation package Asymetrix Compel PE, which will enable you to create slide shows and interactive presentations.



The complete package costs £410.08; further details from Orchid Europe on (0256) 479898.

Comic takes on game stars

Some of the most popular games characters have been brought to life in a new comic published by Dark Horse International.

While established cartoon characters such as Judge Dredd, Spiderman, Dick Tracey and even Sam and Max, have been digitised in computer games, Dark Horse is turning things around by giving games characters the chance to star in their own comic strips. The result is Max Overload!, a 64-page monthly publication which stars Lemmings, Chuck Rock and other characters, plus all the latest games news and features.

The articles will cover all formats, but will be mainly concerned with consoles. The first issue of Max Overload! goes on sale on February 15, priced at £1.95.



AMD signs up Gravis sound technology

Advanced Gravis, the Canadian joystick and sound card manufacturer, has signed a ten year licensing deal with chip company Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) to share their respective PC and multimedia technologies.

Gravis fought off bids from both Creative Technology — developer of the Sound Blaster — and Media Vison to secure the agreement. The immediate upshot of the deal is that AMD will be able to use Gravis' 16-bit UltraSound 3D sound card technology and incorporate it into its own chip design.

Although Gravis's UltraSound 3D sound technology is very impressive, it currently lacks the necessary widespread software support — particularly in the games software industry, where the most common sound standards remain the Sound Blaster, and Ad Lib cards.

According to Grant Russell, president of Advanced Gravis, the deal with AMD "establishes UltraSound as the standard for the entire software development community." AMD is the world's fifth largest manufacturer of integrated circuits, producing its own range of PC processors and add-ons. The company recently became embroiled in a complicated — and ongoing — copyright lawsuit with rival chip manufacturer Intel, but continues to produce a range of high-performance 386 and 486 PC chips for PC manufacturers.

ReelMagic to run CD-i movies

Sigma Design has announced that its ReelMagic video playback card, featured in Issue 21, will be able to play all of the Philips CD-i DigitalVideo titles. Over 20 movie and music videos are currently available for the Philips CD-i format, including Apocalypse Now, Top Gun, The Firm, The Hunt for Red October, Fatal Attraction and Star Trek VI.

The ReelMagic card uses MPEG compression to play high resolution games and video using a standard CD-ROM drive at quality and speeds approaching that of television. However, the card has come in for criticism for the lack of software available to run on it — several games and video titles promised for Christmas 1993 failed to materialise.



● EE Multimedia Productions is the latest company to join the list of ReelMagic software developers. With the Mozart series, EE Multimedia has combined classical music with scenes of beautiful landscapes (Mozart Visits Hawaii, Mozart Visits Yosemite) and the first educational titles (Learning Fly Fishing and The Nature of Hunting) feature full-motion video, illustrations, paintings and still photos.

Citizen's easy as ABC printer

Underlining its philosophy of making printers easy to use, Citizen Europe has introduced the Citizen ABC dot matrix model. At £222.08 (including VAT), the ABC has a 24-pin print head, and a control interface which Citizen terms "plug and play". The ABC comes with EasyStart, a software program which uses animated graphic images of the printer itself and takes the owner through the installation process.

It will print at an estimated 160 characters per second (draft mode at 10cpi) and comes with five letter quality fonts and two scalable fonts as well as draft mode. Two emulations, IBM Proprinter X24E and Epson LQ570, are included, and you can also fit a colour ribbon to the ABC.

For further details, contact Citizen Europe on (0753) 584111.



COMING SOON



Delta V is a fast and furious space racing game from Bethesda Softworks, featuring fully Gouraud-shaded, polygon graphics, and due to whizz into the shops in April.



Pinball Fantasies is the follow up to 21st Century Entertainment's Pinball Dreams. It features four new tables, improved scrolling and better sound. Available in February.



This is Sim Ant as you've never seen it before: Interplay's CD-ROM version with huge creepy-crawlies for a gruesomely realistic ant's eye view of the colony. Due out in April.



Zombie Dinosaurs is one of a batch of three Philips CD-i titles being converted to PC CD-ROM by Interplay, a children's game based upon identifying the extinct beasts.

Pirate CDs reach UK

With CD-ROM gaming fast becoming a boom area, a recent report by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) reveals that in 1992 the number of illegally produced compact discs imported into the UK reached a massive 700,000 units. In 1991 there were hardly any.

Illegally copied imports are increasing rapidly across Europe as a whole, and although this problem is largely affecting the music industry, with the growth of the commercial multimedia and CD-ROM markets, software publishers are obviously concerned that compact discs are being copied in such high numbers so soon.

Although CD-ROM piracy is currently minimal, with the huge amounts of money and the time now being devoted to CD projects, software companies cannot afford to take the piracy threat lightly.

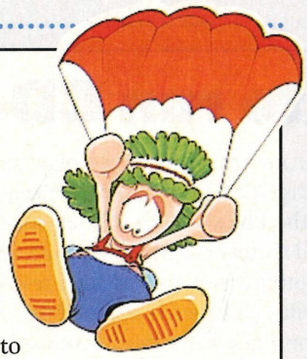
To help combat the growth of illegal CDs, Disctronics, one of Europe's leading CD manufacturers, has announced that it is now able to print holograms, in colour, directly on to the surface of the compact discs themselves.

David Mackie, chief executive of Disctronics commented, "In view of the amount of money illegal discs are going to cost legitimate producers, we feel this must be a good, simple and low-cost step towards security."

As with the humble credit card, the addition of a simple colour hologram it becomes virtually impossible to copy a CD without extremely sophisticated and expensive equipment.

Disctronics says that the cost of producing compact discs with such an optical security device will add very little to the cost of the compact disc and could, hopes the company, dramatically reduce the industry-wide piracy problem.

Psygnosis announces Lemmings 3





Psygnosis is celebrating the third anniversary of the release of the classic puzzle game, Lemmings, with the not-entirely-unpredictable announcement of a new addition to the Lemmings series.

The dumb but determined rodents, created by Dundee-based developer DMA Design, made their first appearance on February 14 1991 and became an instant hit. Lemmings was one of the few games that appealed to everyone, from flight sim enthusiasts and RPG-heads to arcade freaks.

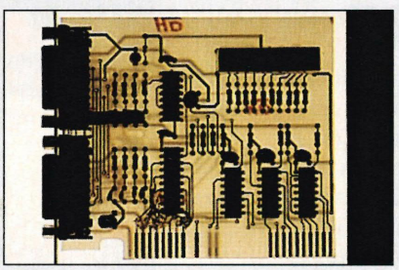
The award-winning original was followed by a data disk, Oh No! More Lemmings; a sequel, Lemmings 2: The Tribes and most recently, Christmas Lemmings.

According to Psygnosis, the forthcoming Lemmings 3 is designed to appeal to anyone who has enjoyed the previous titles in the series, and will feature bigger, better lemmings. In addition, Lemmings and Oh No! More Lemmings will appear together on PC CD-ROM, and a 3D Lemmings game is also in production. 3D Lemmings will be different in style to previous Lemmings games and is being developed by a new team, with DMA Design in an advisory role. Release dates and prices for Lemmings 3 and 3D Lemmings have yet to be decided.

Sign of the Times

One year ago ...
A dedicated CD-ROM game, promising "15 levels of arcade-style action" and provisionally entitled Star Wars 3D, was announced by LucasArts in March 1993 and caused much interest around the PC Review office. This, of course, turned out to be the one and only Rebel Assault.

Three years ago ...
Apart from Lemmings, above, it's also the third anniversary of such venerable oldies as the original Links, Red Baron and Rise of the Dragon. Also of the PC version of Kick Off, about which the less said is probably the better.



The Logic 3 SpeedCard joystick interface has two built-in 15-pin joystick ports and boasts selectable clock speeds from 25MHz to 66MHz. It costs £14.99 and SpectraVideo has all the details on (081) 902 2211.

IN BRIEF...

● This year Birmingham's huge NEC halls will play host to the annual National Computer Shopper Show. With a huge range of computers, printers and other periphals, the show is open from March 24-27, and for more information and advance tickets call the NEC box office on (021) 767 4343.

● With the growth of PC superstores, the First Stop Computer Group has opened two IBM PC Centres of its own. The centres, based in Harrods of Knightsbridge and Office World in Slough, offer the complete "computer retail experience". First Stop plans to open 50 PC Centres in the next few years.

● Software Toolworks is releasing a CD-ROM based on the life and works of Beethoven. As well as hearing Beethoven's music, the symphonies are described in detail, with video, orchstral commentaries and biographical timelines. Beethoven: A Multimedia Synphony is just the first in a series of CDs on composers — the next release, on Tchaikowsky, is due in May. Beethoven costs ú39.99; for further details, phone Software Toolworks on (0444) 246333.

● In the wake of the astonishing success of Doom, commercial publisher Mindscape is resuscitating the shareware classic Wolfenstein 3D, and will be releasing the full, no-holds-barred version for £19.99 in mid-March, to be published under the ID label.

● Oops! In our review of Dynamix's Aces over Europe (Issue 28), we called it "an excellent platform game ..." in the verdict box, which could have suggested a serious lack of observational powers on our part. What it should have said was, "Dated-looking but comprehensive flight sim".



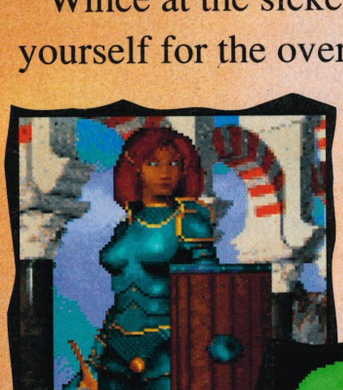
The Elder Scrolls ARENA



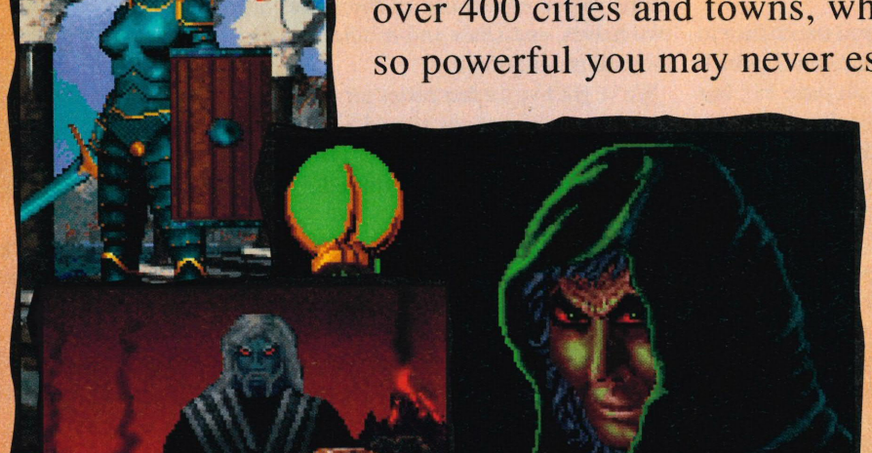
TO He who readeth this I say Peace be thine. For Fate Herself hast chosen thee to begin the most compelling Quest of thy life...

The Arena is but Chapter 1 of the Elder Scrolls, and truly an epic fantasy. Spin around with 360° movement to face dangers from any direction...use a unique combat control to leap, duck, slash with total freedom...and conjure up a bewildering array of life-saving spells.

Wince at the sickening sound of a mace ripping flesh, and prepare yourself for the overwhelming sight of full-screen 3-D smooth scrolling.



Here is a colossal fantasy world, encompassing generations of characters and over 400 cities and towns, where the realism is so powerful you may never escape Her depths...



PC SCREENSHOTS

AVAILABLE FOR PC & Compatibles (386 or higher).

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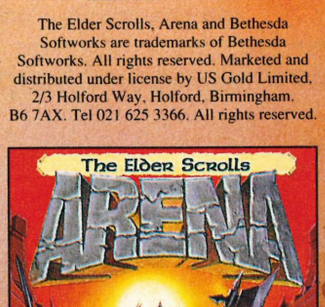

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WIN a video recorder and Premier Manager 2

We've got a feast of footie lined up for you in this special competition organised by PC Review and Gremlin Graphics, publisher of the very playable Premier Manager series of games.

Who needs the World Cup when you have the chance to manage your own football team from the quagmire of the Vauxhall Conference to the dizzy heights of the Premier League? Who could possibly care about the outcome in the US this summer when you could be sitting at home with a brand new video recorder watching the highlights from the 1993-94 season for a team of your choice? Yes, this could be you!

Not only are we giving you the chance to win a copy of Premier Manager 2 (which is reviewed in this issue on page 75), but our first prize winner will win a high spec Matsui VX2700 VHS video recorder, plus a 'season's highlights' video for the football team of your choice.

Then there are second and third prizes of copies of Premier Manager 2, the game in which you must take your football team through the divisions in league and cup matches. You have control over team selection, training requirements, gaining



sponsorship for your ground, dealings on the transfer market and much, much more, as you experience all the games of two halves, and trials and tribulations of football management.

We've got five further prizes for runners-up of Gremlin t-shirts to add a suitably elegant touch to your summer wardrobe so don't delay: fill in the form today!



How to enter

To stand a chance of getting your hands on all that loot, you need to answer the following questions correctly, fill out the form below and send it (or a photocopy of you don't want to spoil your copy of PC Review) on the back of a sealed envelope or on a postcard to:

Premier Manager 2 competition
PC Review
EMAP Images
30-32 Farringdon Lane
London EC1R 3AU

so that it reaches us before March 15, 1994. This is the closing date and we can't accept entries which arrive after that date.

Don't forget to fill in your choice of football team on the form — if you win, you'll also get a season's highlights video for that team.

The questions

1. In Premier Manager 2, which league do you start in?

2. Which country is hosting the 1994 World Cup?

3. How many teams are there in the Premier League?

Rules

- Employees of EMAP Images, Gremlin Graphics, Dixon's Ltd, their families and associates are not eligible to enter this competition.
- No multiple entries, please.
- No entries received after the closing date will be accepted.
- The editor's decision is unmistakably final.

NB If you wish to enter more than one competition per issue and put all the separate entries in a single envelope, to save on stamps, please mark CLEARLY on the envelope which competition forms you have enclosed.

Premier Manager Competition

Name .....
Address .....
.....
.....

Answers .....
.....
.....

Football team .....

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

Closing date March 15 *PC Review March 1994*

WIN a US Gold ski jacket (again)

In case you missed this competition last month (well, it was rather small), we have extended the closing date and are giving you a second chance to win one of these top quality waterproof and fleecy-lined ski jackets (pictured below), courtesy of US Gold.

Tastefully finished in grey and mauve ("heather", I think they call it), the US Gold ski jacket would suit both men and women, adults and children. The US Gold branding is discreetly, registered in the form of an embroidered logo on the right below the shoulder.

US Gold is branding these jackets to remind its public that its Winter Olympics game is now available in the shops, in which you can recreate on your PC all the thrills and skills of skiing, skating and bob-sleighing as displayed at the Olympics themselves in Lillehammer, Norway, next month.

The company is also giving three PC Review readers the chance to win one of these jackets. Yes, you could be the envy of your friends and cut a sartorial dash, whether in the Alps or your local high street, and keep warm at the same time.

How to enter

It's this easy: just answer the following question on the coupon below (or a photocopy of it if you don't want to spoil the magazine), fill in your name and address and send the form to:

US Gold ski jacket competition
PC Review
EMAP Images
30-32 Farringdon Lane
London EC1R 3AU

so that it reaches us before February 28, 1994. (note the new closing date).

Question

Which of these is NOT a Winter Olympics sport?

a) the luge
b) speed skating
c) heli-skiing
d) ice hockey

NB Previous entrants need not re-enter.



US Gold ski jacket

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Answer.....

Jacket size required: ❒ 36-38 ❒ 40-42 ❒ 44-46

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

Closing date February 28, 1994 *PC Review March 1994*

More hours to play
More characters
More backgrounds
More 3-D objects
More animations







but you're still...

ALONE IN THE DARK 2 ™

HELP!, HELP!, HELP!, HELP!, HELP!, HELP!, HELP!

If you need to shed some light on Alone in the Dark 1 or 2

CALL 0891 244444

Calls cost 36p per minute cheap rate, 48p at all other times (maximum cost £3.60).
Please get permission from the person paying the bill.
The above information is correct at time of publication (Feb 1994).

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SAM AND MAX	PHONE
RETURN TO ZORK	£25
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THE COOK REPORT



Quack games

Most games never manage to reach the level of brilliance claimed by their publishers ... In fact some don't even come close

There are some pretty naff games around, aren't there? My own recent nomination would be Innocent Until Caught, an animated adventure burdened with primitive puzzles and a game design that involves a lot of very dull running around. But there are other games around which disguise equally serious failings behind a pretty face.

US Gold's Scrabble springs to mind. Before I rant on any further, I confess readily that I play this game about five times a day and have done so for the last year. The Scrabble board game is eternally popular and the computer version, with its prospect of endless Scrabbling without the aggravations of a human partner, ought to make it a flagship for our industry. Instead you get a game that teases you with awesome Scrabble skills, but frustrates you in all other respects.

The interface is cranky and illogical (for example, select the hint icon in competition mode and it says you can't have a hint. Great. So why is the icon there?). A finished game is only saved if you get a high score against the computer in competition mode, and even then you can't replay it. You can't take back moves or set up challenges by manually selecting letter combinations.

Now to be fair to the developers, they were under restrictions from Spears, the licence holder, but you would think Spears might have spotted how adding interactivity and computer intelligence to Scrabble could improve the product. One typical example: in board Scrabble, you play blank tiles as 'jokers', choosing which letter you would like them to represent. In Computer Scrabble there's no reason at all why blanks should remain blank to look at, once played. But in this version, they do. Idiotic, or what? Still, there are games beside which Scrabble is the Elite II of word-game programs.

It wouldn't be so bad if these games were simply there to plague reviewers, but they turn up on the shelves as well. And that got me thinking about something which is often mentioned, but rarely discussed: the role of the distributor. After all, he (or she) is ultimately responsible for the selection of boxes on the shelf. Unfortunately, this industry has distributors who (with very few exceptions) put games on shelves without playing them.

Now take films. You've probably seen a few naff films in your time, but believe me, in terms of naffness, those were the good ones. Truly awesome degrees of naffness in film are only achieved by films in Wardour Street viewing theatres. Go to any of these, and chances are you'll see distributors knocking back champagne, politely sitting through two hours of The BathTub And Me, and then hiding in the loo until they can escape out of the back door. Film distributors watch films, not just marketing videos.

I don't want to overstate this: distributors in all areas of business will back a turkey if they think the public can be made to buy it, and good but less accessible products get held back. But in the games business we do tend, for example, to blame certain publishers for poor licences; yet it must be very tempting to slip a duff title past a distribution chain that often doesn't bother to check it out properly for themselves.

When game distributors start involving themselves with product as much as distributors in other media do, maybe the quality of games we buy will go up a notch or two as well.



Below: Scrabble might ask you what letter a blank represents (the 'g' at the end of 'snaring'), but it won't display it on-screen. Sticking a little rigidly to the real-life here, aren't we?

european computer user

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Ciarán Brennan

Having surpassed the capabilities of competing machines, the PC seems set for a games windfall in 1994

Better than the rest

Maybe the March issue of your favourite PC magazine is the wrong time and place to bring this up, but from my own small (but well-appointed) vantage point here in North London, it's beginning to look as though 1994 really is going to be the year of the PC.

Before we go shooting off into the near future though, let's take a little step backwards to examine why I should make such a ludicrously optimistic statement.

I first started working with PC games in 1989 (and I'm sure some of you out there even go back further than that), at which point the PC was very much the poor relation in the games machine stakes — compared to Commodore's Amiga computer and the new-fangled games consoles which were just beginning to take up space under the nation's TVs it didn't have a great deal to offer.

> **"There's always the possibility that another X-Wing is just around the corner"**

Of course, in those days we didn't mind too much because we knew that our machine had one thing which none of the others could boast — a built-in future. And while the original promise of infinite PC upgradability turned out to be something of a little white lie, the MS-DOS standard has certainly proved to be a lot more enduring and 'future-proof' that any of its rivals.

However, it's only now that this promise is truly beginning to be fulfilled. As other systems have come and gone (and gone and gone), ours has just got better and better. So your PC games looked bad? No problem, here comes VGA. But the sound was still a problem, right? Never mind, have a Sound Blaster.

Now, having waited in the wings for years as other less capable pretenders came and went, the PC looks finally set to emerge and take its fair share of the limelight.

The reasons for this are numerous: the Amiga is falling by the wayside (and desperately trying to reinvent itself as a keyboardless games console), the two major 16-bit games consoles look as though they're reaching the end of their natural life-cycles, and all of the long-promised, multi-functional games hardware is conspicuous by its absence — where is the great 3DO vs CD-i war we were promised throughout 1993?

Who cares?

The upshot of all this confusion is that the PC now stands alone as the only growing and commercially viable games machine for software publishers to produce their wares for — and, with the exception of a few Japanese game giants, that's just what most of them are up to.



Of course, one possible by-product of this is that all those developers which have until now plied their trade for less capable machines may find it difficult to produce games to the standard that we PC gamers now expect. But for every poor arcade game conversion, there's always the possibility that another X-Wing could be just around the corner.

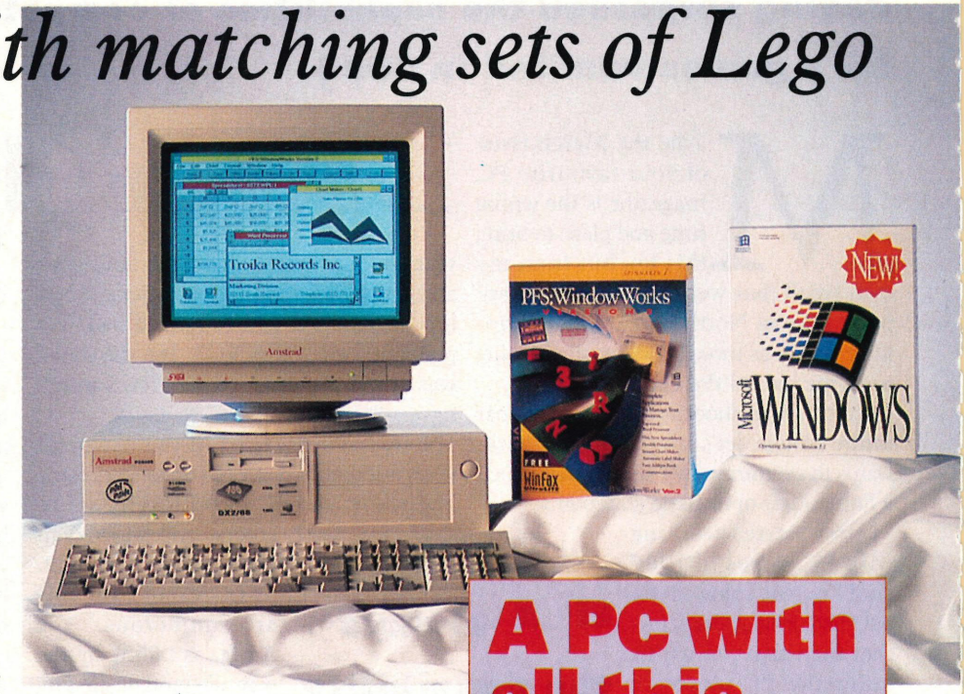
The ever climbing technology of a couple of years ago seems to have levelled off a bit — so with the 486 established, the Sound Blaster sitting pretty, and CD-ROM drives ever more affordable, things are looking rosy.

Of course, it's going to take a little while for this to filter down through the design and development stages to make a really significant mark on the amount of PC software on the shelves, but other than that, I can't see the downside.

Now that's definitely a cause for optimism.

WIN an Amstrad 486 multimedia PC

Plus five runners-up prizes of Maxis's SimCity 2000 with matching sets of Lego



Pictured right: the Amstrad PC9486. The winner of this competition will become the pround owner of the multimedia version of this 486 PC, complete with high-speed CD-ROM drive and sound card.

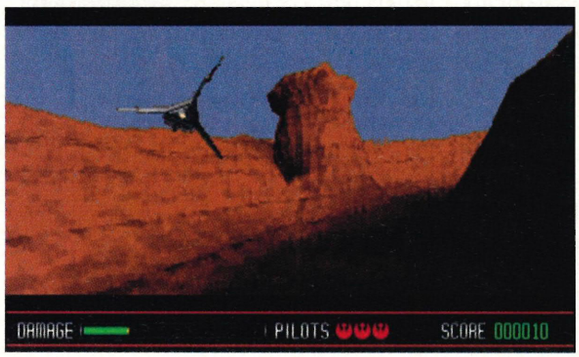
This month's competition brings you the chance to win Amstrad's latest desktop PC — the stunning PC9486 multimedia computer — complete with Intel 486SX processor, 4Mb RAM, 130Mb hard disk, Local Bus graphics, double speed CD-ROM drive, 16-bit sound card, speakers, the works. In short, this is a PC that comes with everything you need to make the most of games, business and leisure software.

You won't find many companies that can put together a more approachable, easy to use PC than Amstrad. The new PC9486 range concentrates on two main themes: ease of use and future-proofing. All the machines come with plenty of room for extra devices and RAM top-ups, an easily upgradable chip in a ZIF socket, as much of the gubbins built-into the motherboard as possible, and an online tutorial and menu system to guide even the most inexperienced PC user through those confusing early stages.

Five lucky runners up will get get a chance to test their creative city-building skills with Maxis's addictive SimCity 2000. The original SimCity game was designed — almost by accident, apparently — by Will Wright back in 1989, and has since spawned a whole new genre. If you want to know just how good SimCity 2000 really is, then have a look at our full review on page 62.

And finally, when the problems of rampaging unemployment, pollution and SimCity riots become to much to bear, those caring Maxis people have thoughfully thrown in a matching set of Lego for you to tinker with while you recover from the stresses of running your city!

● For further information about Amstard products, telephone (061) 877 4806. To contact Maxis, call (071) 490 2333.



LucasArts' Rebel Assault — one more good reason why a CD-ROM is an absolute essential for any PC game player.

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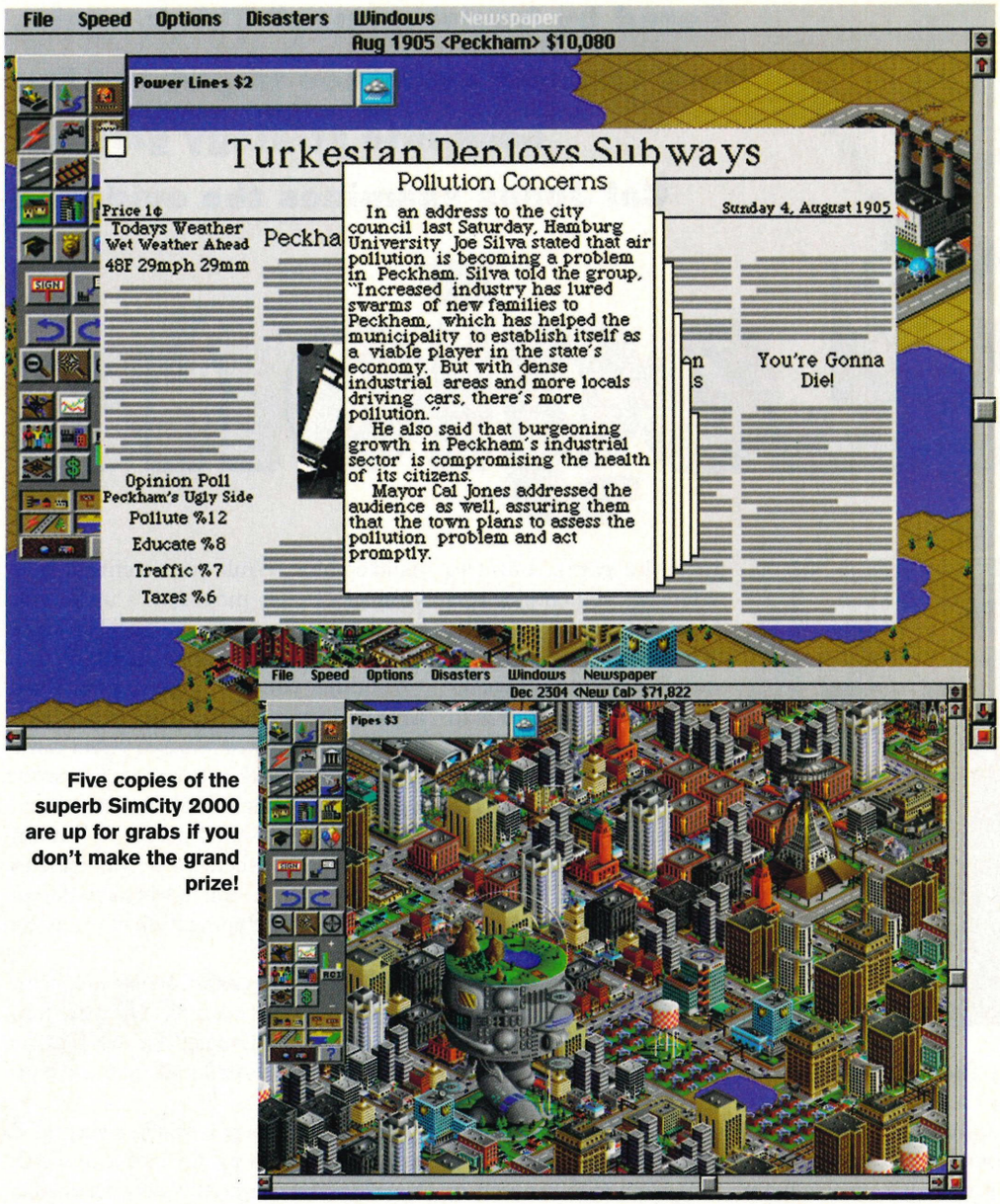

Five copies of the superb SimCity 2000 are up for grabs if you don't make the grand prize!

How to enter

This is easy with a capital E. All you need to do to have a shot at winning the Amstrad 486 Multimedia PC, or one of the five runners up copies of SimCity 2000 from Maxis, is come up with the answers to these three oh-so-simple questions below.

Put your answers on the form provided below (or a photocopy), stick the form on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope, and then send your entry to:

Amstrad 486 Competition
PC Review
Emap Images
Priory Court
30-32 Farringdon Lane
London EC1R 3AU

The questions

1. What football team is associated with Amstrad's chairman?

2. What epic CD-ROM space game comes bundled with Amstrad's brand new 9486 multimedia PC?

3. Who was the brains behind the original Sim City game?

Competition rules

- No entries received after the competition date will be considered.
- Only one entry per person, please.
- No employees, relatives or associates of Amstrad, Maxis, Emap Images, or any companies involved in this competition are eligible to enter.
- The editor's decision in all matters relating to this competition is final, and all normal competition rules apply.
- Your entry must arrive by March 15 1994, any entries that arrive after this date will not be put in the draw for the prizes.



Lego? What has Lego got to do with winning SimCity 2000? Well, very little to be honest, but why not win some anyway? You never know when you might need it.

PC Review Amstrad competition

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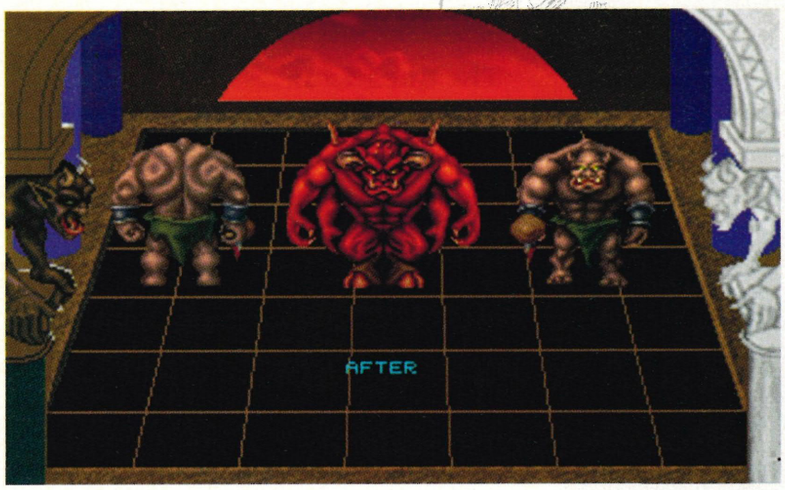
❑ Tick this box if you don't wish to receive any further information from companies associated with this competition.

Closing date March 15, 1994 *PC Review March*

Title	**Dark Legions**
Developer	**Silicon Knights**
Publisher	**US Gold**
Contact	**(021) 625 3366**
Release date	**April**
Genre	**Strategy**
Price	**£TBA**

Bored by board games? Think again. Dark Legions promises to put the fun back into strategy gaming. Cal Jones examines the evidence

Dark Legions



The graphics have undergone many changes during development, as you can see from these 'before' and 'after' shots of the playing area.

Dark Legions is the first release from a new Canadian company, Silicon Knights. It's a strategy board game with a fantasy theme which can be played by one or two people. Dark Legions looks similar to chess, in that there are various pieces — each with their own individual moves, but that's as far as the resemblance goes.

There are twice as many pieces (16 as opposed to chess's eight) and instead of rooks, pawns, knights and bishops there are vampires, conjurors, berserkers and, dare I say it, orcs. These pieces are each fully animated characters who storm around the board beating hell out of one another.

The rules are simple, making it easy for new players to get into the game, but the strategies you employ can be as complex as you wish. All 16 characters have their own strengths and weaknesses, and your aim is to exploit each to the full. For example, seers are physically weak but can see through illusions and are useful for finding traps, whilst trolls are incredibly tough but are useless at anything other than close combat.

To make things even harder for your opponent, you can also set up traps in the playing area. These remain invisible to the other player (unless found by a seer or thief) and can be fatal. Obviously, a fire trap won't harm a fire elemental as much as it would other characters, so placing traps will form part of your overall strategy.

Combat can be viewed from two different perspectives. The 3D view is designed to show long range combat, particularly magic attacks such as fireballs, while the overhead view is more suited to hand-to-hand combat. While you determine how your pieces are moved, it's up to you whether you control individual battles or leave the fighting to the computer.

Although you'll be able to play Dark Legions against the computer, it has been specifically designed as a two player game and supports both modem and network play. Silicon Knights believes that there is no substitute for human vs human competition and therefore network and/or modem play is central to the game design rather than just being tacked on as an afterthought.

Some characters have been created with this in mind: for example, the phantom is an invisible character but will only be invisible to the opponent, not the controlling player.

Dark Legions is potentially a very good game. It appears to have a lot of depth but at the same time it's very accessible, and the inclusion of a two player option will ensure its long term appeal. The graphics are excellent, but the game is strong enough to keep you playing even when the novelty of the animations has worn off. Dark Legions looks as though it could be a lot of fun.



Title	**Fleet Defender**
Developer	**MicroProse**
Publisher	**MicroProse**
Contact	**(0454) 326532**
Release date	**March**
Genre	**Flight sim**
Price	**£44.99**

Fleet Defender

High flying Dean Evans grabs his joystick and shouts "Tally ho!" one more time at the prospect of a new flight sim from MicroProse

If the World War Two flying in 1942: Pacific Air War (previewed in issue 28) is a little too sedate for your liking, MicroProse is about to satisfy all you fighter jocks with the release of Fleet Defender, a simulation of the US Navy's famous F-14 Tomcat.

Fleet Defender is set in the mid 1980's, against a suitably strained and dramatic background, with tension running dangerously high between the Soviet Union and America. As a new US Navy pilot you can take part in contrasting campaign theatres that will take you from the fragile instability of Libya and the Lebanon to the freezing shores of the North Cape and a theoretical invasion of Norway by Soviet forces.

Thrill as the steam catapult launches you into the air, marvel as you swoop low over rolling oceans and go "ooooh" as Russian and American aircraft carriers face off in a deadly game of military cat and mouse.

As you would expect, Fleet Defender is primarily about fast and heart-pounding air-to-air combat, the object of which is to successfully defend your aircraft carrier and its accompanying fleet. Using an enhanced version of MicroProse's successful F-15 III game and graphics engine, Fleet Defender boasts advanced 3D terrain technology, allowing you to zip, swoop and roll across realistically modelled landscapes. It also features a wealth of realistic weapons and aircraft, including the F/A 18 Hornet, the A-6 Intruder and the A-7 Corsair.

If you fancy flying the fighter that was paraded to millions of adolescent wannabee pilots in the movie Top Gun — if you feel "the need, the need for speed' — then Fleet Defender will be, ahem, winging its way across the Atlantic next month.



Title	**Outpost**
Developer	**Sierra**
Publisher	**Sierra**
Contact	**(0734) 303322**
Release date	**April**
Genre	**Space strategy sim**
Price	**£44.99**

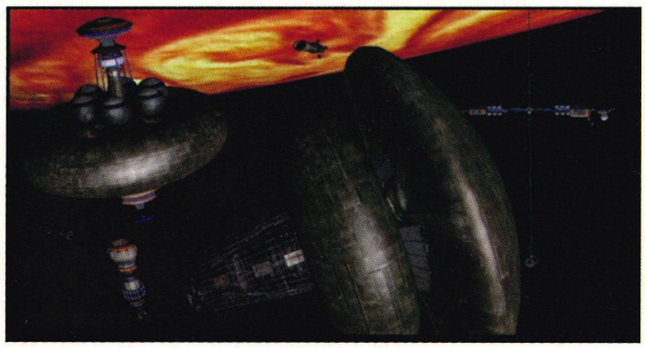
The Earth has been destroyed ... laid waste by man's greed. Fortunately, you, several hundred friends and tons of high-tech space hardware have survived. You must equip your spacecraft and then chart a course for the stars, to seek out a new world that you can colonise and call your own.



Nipping between the stars is not just a question of slamming on the warp engines and jumping into hyperspace. Outpost is based on and around science fact, not fiction. Towards this end, ex-NASA scientist, Bruce Balfour has designed Outpost so that the details of space flight and exploration are as realistic as possible. Outpost places a lot of emphasis on statistics: oxygen levels, engine burn times, mass/force ratios and so on.

Complex it may be but as you can see from the screenshots, Outpost looks absolutely ravishing. Featuring stunning 3D Studio rendered artwork and animations, the game is a neat combination of planning, strategy, and world building, progressing from exploration and planning to a turn-based colony building game highly reminiscent of Virgin's Dune 2.

Outpost is a strategist's dream and if you've got a CD-ROM drive, this is a game that is certainly worth a peek. Can you terraform a barren rock into a sparkling paradise with babbling brooks, green fields and chirruping birds? You'll have to wait until April to find out.



Sierra's first departure from adventures is an impressive looking space strategy game. Dean Evans reports

Outpost

WIN the Syd Mead video collection

PLUS a copy of CyberRace

Designer Syd Mead (pictured below) is acclaimed for his innovative and atmospheric work on such landmark films as Blade Runner, and 2010. His work can also be seen in the distinctive graphics of CyberRace, the craft-racing game reviewed in PC Review, Issue 27 (and rated 7).

Now, in an exclusive competition arranged by PC Review and Cyberdreams, publisher of CyberRace, we are pleased to be able to offer our first prize winner a unique collection — a copy, on VHS video, of all the films to which Syd Mead contributed: Blade Runner, Tron, 2010, and Star Trek: The Motion Picture, plus a copy of CyberRace for the PC.

Our second prize winner will receive a VHS video copy of Blade Runner, plus CyberRace; a third prize winner will get a copy of CyberRace and we have three CyberRace t-shirts for further runners-up.

CyberRace is a futuristic racing game, in which you must pilot your hover car over tracks in four different landscapes against some mean opponents — but you can take them out by firing off some of your available weaponry. With ray-traced vehicles and Voxel Spaced landscapes, CyberRace is graphically sophisticated, and particularly fast if played on a 486DX (minimum spec: 386 processor).



How to enter

Well, we're going to make it as easy as possible to enter this one. Just answer the ridiculously simple questions below, fill in the form, and send it (or a photocopy of you don't want to spoil your copy of PC Review) on the back of a sealed envelope or on a postcard to



CyberRace competition
PC Review
EMAP Images
30-32 Farringdon Lane
London EC1R 3AU

so that it reaches us before March 15, 1994. This is the closing date and we can't accept entries which arrive any later.

The questions

1. Cyberdreams has developed one other game before CyberRace, which was released in 1992. Was it:
a) Cybercon III?
b) Dark Seed?
c) Weird Dreams?

2. Which of the following starred in Blade Runner?
a) Harrison Ford
b) Mark Hamill
c) Mel Gibson

3. Which of the following graphic techniques does CyberRace use:
a) Wire-frame objects?
b) Voxel Spacing?
c) Gouraud shading?

NB If you wish to enter more than one competition per issue and put all the separate entries in a single envelope, to save on stamps, please mark CLEARLY on the envelope which competition forms you have enclosed.

Rules

- **Employees of EMAP Images, or Cyberdreams, and their families and associates are not eligible to enter this competition.**
- **No multiple entries, please.**
- **No entries received after the closing date will be accepted.**
- **The editor's decision is unambiguously final.**

CyberRace competition

Name .....
Address .....
.....
.....

Answer .....
1) .....
2) .....
3) .....

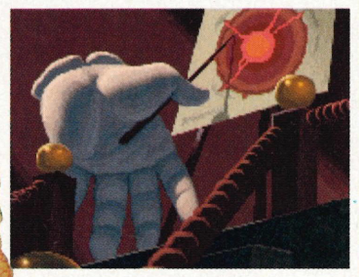
❒ **Tick this box if you do not wish to receive further information from companies associated with this competition**

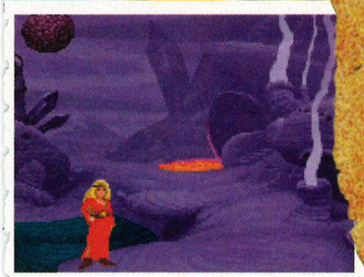
Closing date March 15, 1994
PC Review March 1994

FABLES & FIENDS

HAND OF FATE













"Now you see it. Now you don't.
The land of Kyrandia is disappearing piece by piece and all the evidence points toward one perilous conclusion:
A Curse!

Thus begins **The Hand of Fate**, second in the Fables and Fiends series, where you are the off beat, young mystic who must voyage to the centre of the world to break the spell. Out of sync and out on foot, your aberrant journey reveals nothing is what it seems. Everything is what it isn't. And you can count your friends on one hand. Literally".

P.C Review. 8 out of 10.
"The prettiest game of the year".

P.C Zone. "Recommended".
"Excellent graphics and an imaginative storyline".
"A great game".







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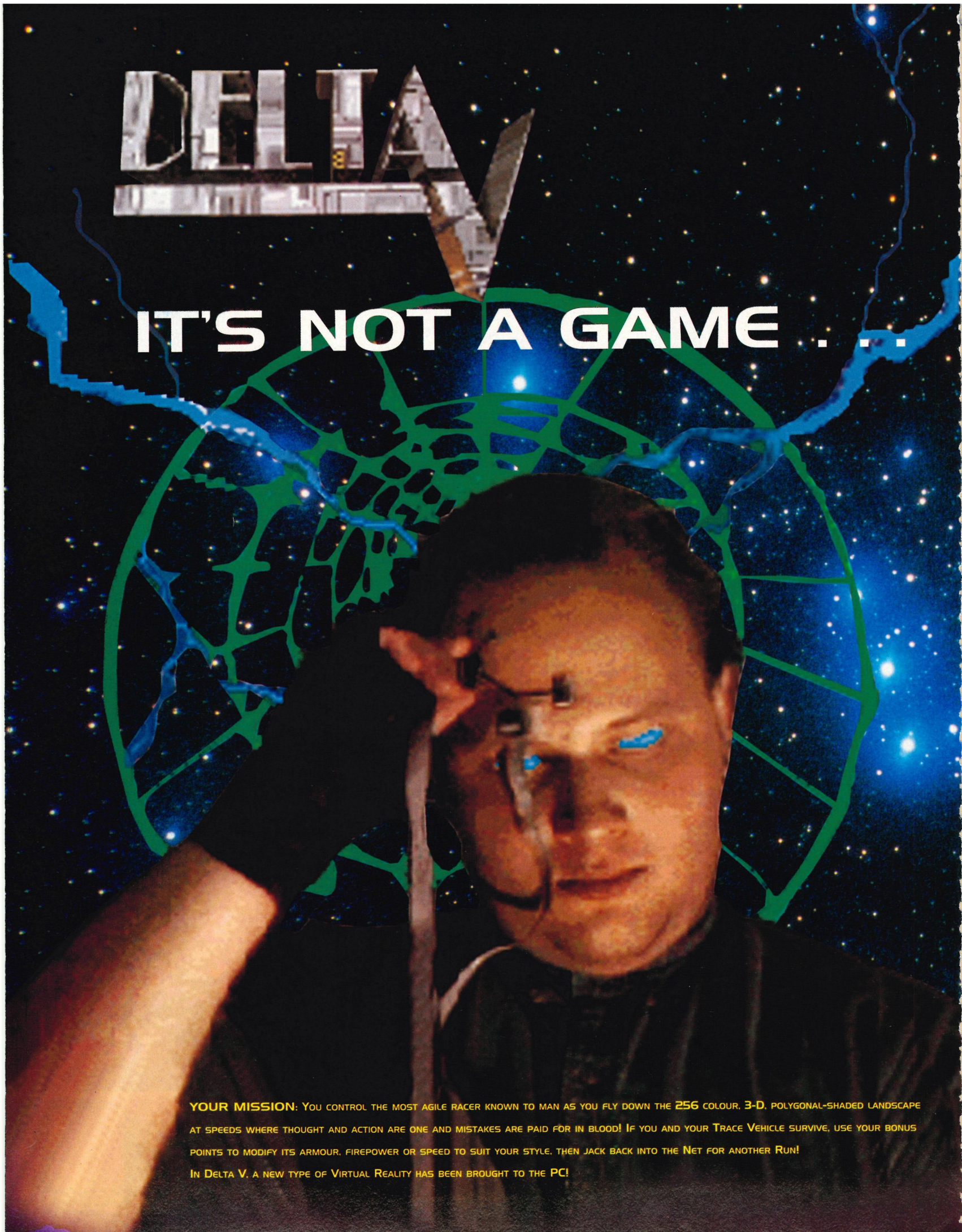
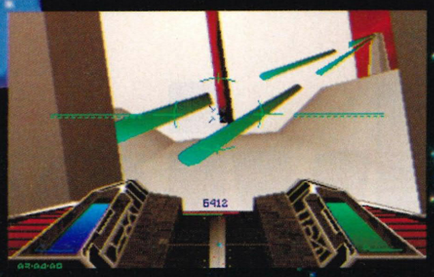
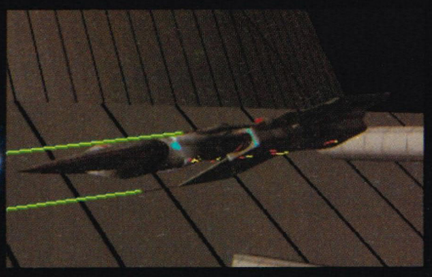
Virgin Interactive
Entertainment (Europe) Ltd.
338A Ladbroke Grove
London W10 5AH
Tel: 081 960 2255 Fax: 081 960 9900

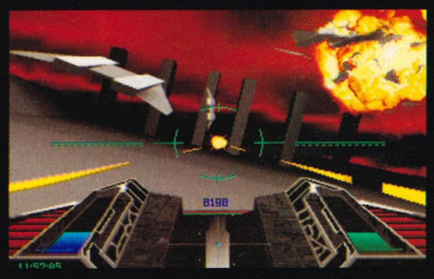
Westwood™ STUDIOS

Virgin INTERACTIVE entertainment


DELTA V
IT'S NOT A GAME . . .
YOUR MISSION: You control the most agile racer known to man as you fly down the 256 colour, 3-D, polygonal-shaded landscape at speeds where thought and action are one and mistakes are paid for in blood! If you and your Trace Vehicle survive, use your bonus points to modify its armour, firepower or speed to suit your style, then jack back into the Net for another Run!
In Delta V, a new type of Virtual Reality has been brought to the PC!







> L6 12-09-2147 - 17H34.48

> "So chummer, you want to know about runnin?

> "The Net's the most dangerous cyber-dream you'll ever have, 'cept it's not a dream. You gotta be ruthless and quick, huggin' the lattice like an Olthan lungworm on a Borian air-grazer. Once you jack in, it's just you and your Trace.

> "Like I always said, Netrunnin' is like a drug, the speed gets you higher than a 'ject of Cephilene Blue, but a mistake'll leave you deader than a jacked out straightliner.

> "That chum, is as permanent as it gets . . ."

> END

> GROTHAN JHIR, ex-Netrunner.

IT'S A STATE OF MIND

Available on: IBM PC AND COMPATIBLES
(VGA, minimum 386/33 processor, minimum memory 640k Ram, 2Mb EMS memory and high density disk drive required. Sonic support: Roland™, SoundBlaster and Gravis Ultrasound.)

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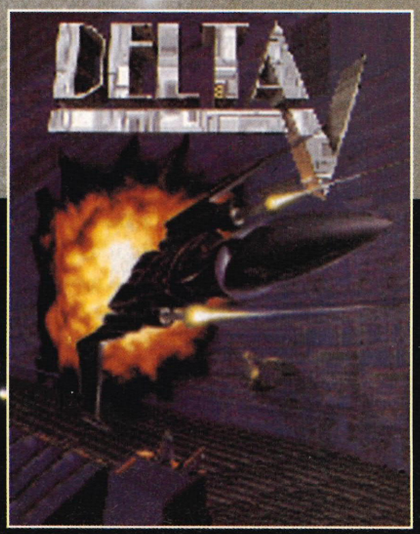

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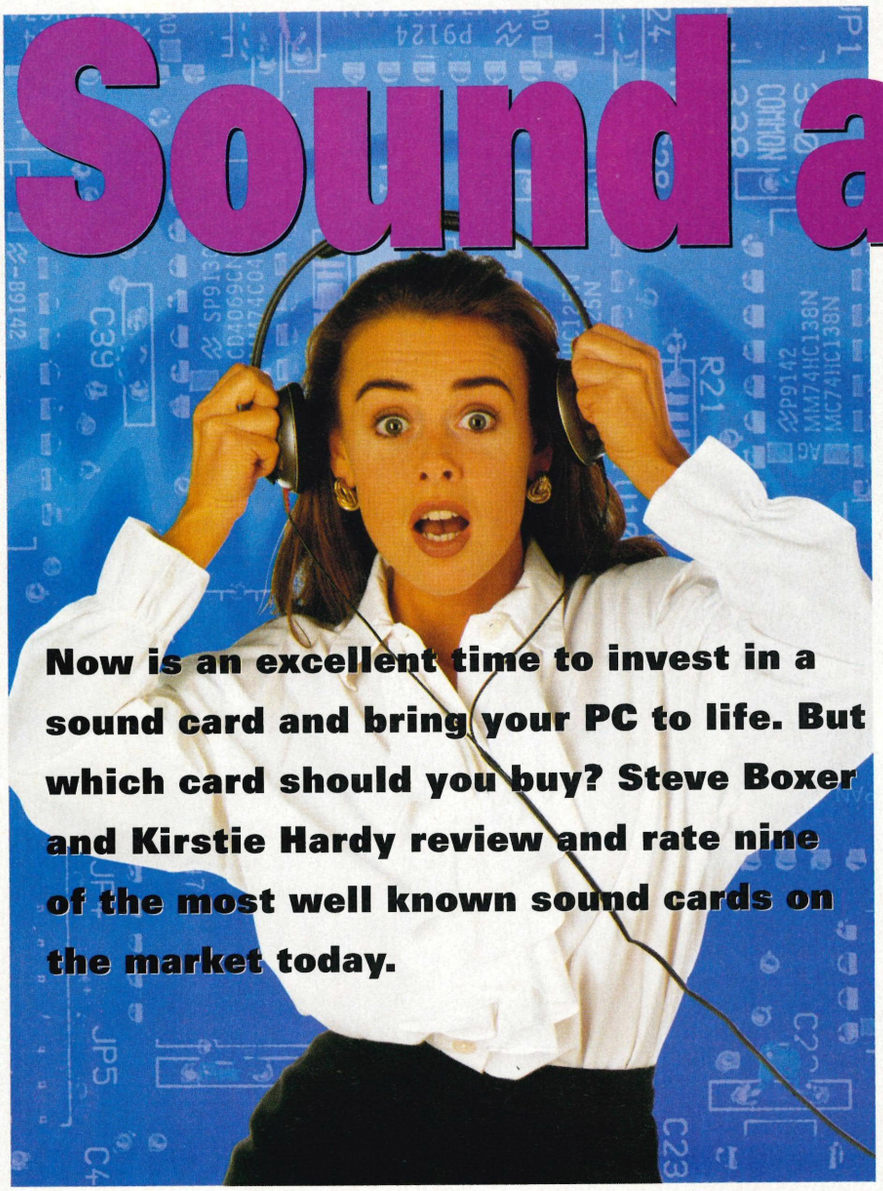
BETHESDA SOFTWORKS™

Sound advice



Now is an excellent time to invest in a sound card and bring your PC to life. But which card should you buy? Steve Boxer and Kirstie Hardy review and rate nine of the most well known sound cards on the market today.

Games would be intolerably dull without the music and sound effects they propagate, but to enjoy any sort of aural experience on a PC, you need a sound card — and these days, sound cards can be both inexpensive and powerful. And they also provide a welcome interface to plug your joysticks into, and, increasingly, take care of providing an interface for CD-ROM drives. In fact, they're the unsung heroes of the add-in card world.

But there's even more to sound cards than meets the eye. They're surrounded by a web of competing technologies, differing 'standards', fiddly jumpers and memory-hungry drivers. Wouldn't it be nice if you could buy a sound card and be sure you could take it home, install it in a matter of minutes and almost instantly add a new dimension to *all* your games? Indeed. And it would also be nice if a complete stranger knocked on my door and gave me the keys to a brand new Lamborghini Diablo, which is about as likely a scenario.

As a general rule of thumb, the more bog-standard a sound card is, the more likely it is to work happily with your games. However, some of the newer cards undoubtedly sound better than older, more compatible ones. So when you go out and buy one, you must make a conscious choice about whether to play safe or opt for the best technology.

What to look for

There are a number of basic essentials that you should expect all cards to have these days. Firstly, unless you're right on the breadline, forget 8-bit cards. They're a false economy, as sub-£100 16-bit cards are available and infinitely preferable, as 16-bit samples sound, well, twice as good as 8-bit ones.

Secondly, a CD-ROM interface. You might be planning to buy a sound card first and CD-ROM drive later. If this is your plan, beware. A number of cards have proprietary CD-ROM interfaces which tie you into buying a drive from a certain manufacturer. If you buy such a card, you'll probably be unable to take advantage of any bargains that are around when you add a CD-ROM drive, and it's likely that you'll have to accept less than ideal performance from the drive.

Thirdly, the technology that drives the card. Most cards are of the FM synthesiser type. On paper, FM synthesiser cards are inferior to those based on Wave Table technology, which constructs sounds from a library of real samples. MediaVision has further confused the technological argument by licensing a new technology called Wave Guide, which potentially has the flexibility of FM synthesis and the realism of Wave Table. But it's very early days yet for Wave Guide.

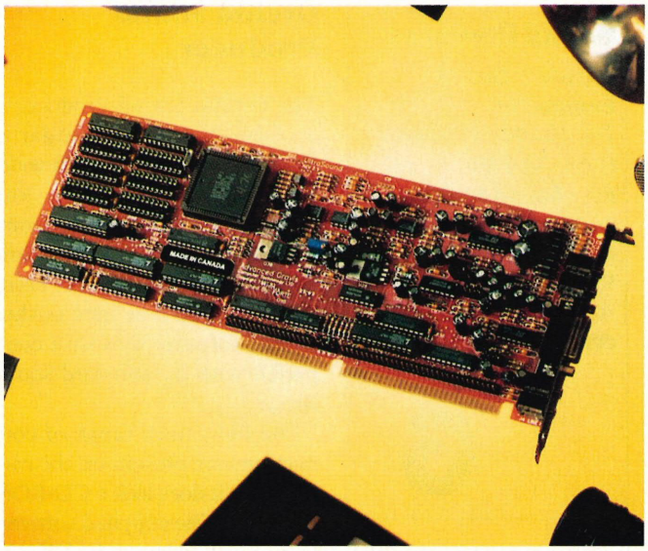
The problem is that few games directly support Wave Table cards, so if you opt for a Wave Table card, cross your fingers and hope it does a decent impression of an FM synthesiser card (in practice, this means a good emulation of the Sound Blaster).

Emulations are all-important with sound cards, in the same way that they are with printers. You'll find that all cards on the market emulate a Sound Blaster; they almost *have* to do so, as nearly all the games on the market support the Sound Blaster. Other popular emulations are for Ad Lib and Roland cards, which are supported by many games. Things are changing, though: games manufacturers know that things like, say, support for the Ultrasound's 3D sound can enhance their games, and as games get flashier, so they're starting to sound flashier. Believe me, a lot of lobbying goes on among sound card manufacturers aimed at getting native support for their cards into popular games.

Finally, look at what you get with a card. Some manufacturers add value by adding speakers and microphones. This tends to be more attractive on paper than in the flesh, as the speakers often sound like the sort of thing you'd buy down the market for 50p. You might also find a number of bundled software utilities. These tend to vary in usefulness, and the bundled software should be the last criterion on which you make a card-buying decision. But let's take a look at what's on the market.

Advanced Gravis Ultrasound

If the Ultrasound was human, it would wear Armani suits. You can tell it's not like other sound cards because it's red. And it certainly isn't like other sound cards. For a start, it's the original Wave Table card. It's also the only card of the bunch with



Left: the Gravis Ultrasound. People are writing support for it into games and it may one day be a force to be reckoned with. But not yet, unfortunately.

built-in support for 3D surround sound (the excellent manual wiffles on about binaural convolution which is, apparently, a superior version of Surround Sound).

Naturally, it's 16-bit, it comes with a vast amount of bundled software and utilities, and it emulates Sound Blaster and Ad Lib cards. But although there is a CD-ROM interface connector, there's no native CD-ROM support — if you want to add a CD-ROM drive at a later stage and power it from the Ultrasound, you'll have to get a daughterboard from Gravis.

On paper, it looks mouthwatering, and it gives you a lot of features for a price of £199 (you can pick it up on the streets for around £135). I really wanted to like the Ultrasound, as it's a bit different, technologically interesting and beautifully packaged. But I found it a bit too impractical to recommend.

It's true that the Ultrasound makes a very nice noise, and the 3D sound demos are superb, but there are only a handful of games which support 3D sound as yet. The worst news was flaky Sound Blaster and Ad Lib emulation which, unbelievably, requires a TSR called SBOS to be running. This disagreed with a game like Doom to such a violent extent that the latter wouldn't run when it was running. SBOS is inflexible, too; if the card is emulating a Sound Blaster, it won't let it reside at any IRQ adress other than 7, which just tempts conflicts.

Fine. I thought I'd try using Doom's native Ultrasound support. This proved fruitless as well, since when I'd configured this, Doom's tense music disappeared and the bone-crunching FX dwindled into a collection of hollow bleeps that wouldn't scare Mary Whitehouse. Sure, this isn't the Ultrasound's fault — it's down to Doom's developers — but it illustrates the card's compatibility problems.

This is such a shame, as the Ultrasound has the best bundled software of the lot — for music-making — and it sounds great. As it was the first Wave Table card, people are writing support for it into games and it may one day be a force to be reckoned with. But not yet. It looks great value, but it's a false economy.

Advanced Gravis Ultrasound

Supplier: **Zye Technology**
Tel: **(0293) 538666**
Price: **£199**
For: **Good features, excellent software.**
Against: **May be a thoroughbred, but has a temperament to match.**

rating **6**

Media Vision Pro Audio 16 Basic

The Pro Audio 16 Basic is, if you like, Steve Davis to the Ultrasound's Alex Higgins. It's worthy, solid, honest and won't let you down, but seems a little dull in comparison.

It's a 16-bit FM synthesiser card, using Yamaha's YMF262 chip which, for the record, is an OPL-3 chip — that is, one of the ones which constructs sounds using four rather than two sound waves. As a 20-voice card, it can play up to 20 synthesised sounds at a time. And it's cheap, hence the name Basic.

Well, it may be basic, but that doesn't mean that it doesn't do the business. Admittedly, it lacks a CD-ROM interface, but what do you expect at an RRP of £115? The usual Sound Blaster and Ad Lib emulations are there, and they work seamlessly — despite using the ProAudio 16 Basic with a large and varied number of games, I wasn't once able to trip it up. The sound is as good as you can get from a 20-voice FM synthesiser card — in practice, all such cards sound more or less the same, as most of them use the same chip. But 99 per cent of users won't even approach its acoustic limits. However, to some extent, it has been superseded by Media Vision's ProSonic 16, which offers much the same at a lower price. The ProAudio 16 Basic has done a good job, but has probably had its day.

Pro Sonic 16

Supplier: **MediaVision**
Tel: **(0908) 260160**
Price: **£99.95**
For: **Unbeatable VFM, solid, honest, workmanlike.**
Against: **Only has the basic features, but that's fair enough, really.**

rating **7**

MediaVision ProSonic 16

The ProSonic 16 is Media Vision's newest card. What's its angle? Well, it's basically the first 16-bit card to carry a sub-£100 (£99.95 to be pedantic) price tag.

What you get for this piffling outlay is the old familiar 20-voice FM synthesiser set-up, with Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and, unusually, Sound Blaster Pro emulation. There's no CD-ROM, but there are compression chips on it. The reason it's so cheap is that it uses Media Vision's new Jazz chipset which, apparently, is cheap to manufacture.

And you can't argue with that. In fact, I couldn't find anything to fault the Pro Sonic 16 with. It's so unobtrusive that you almost forget it's there.

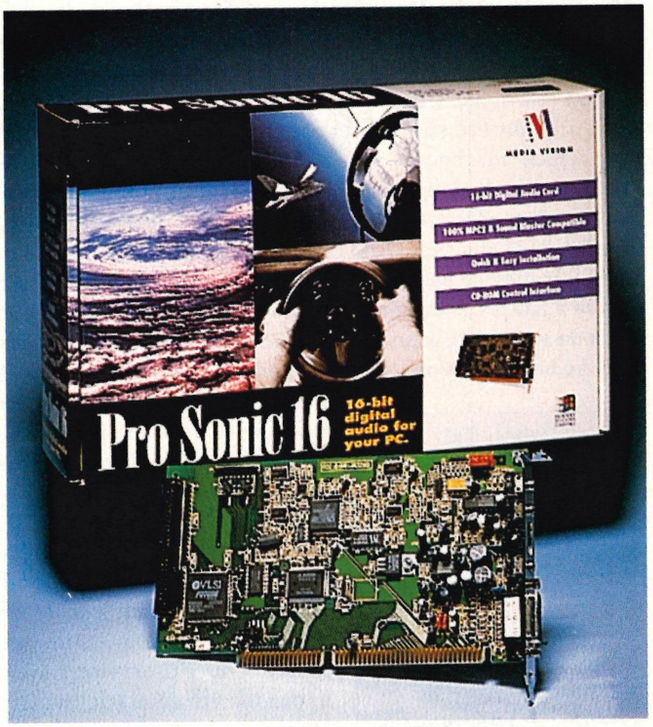
The Pro Sonic gives everything 99 per cent of the population could want from a sound card at an unbeatable price. Sound quality is typical FM synthesiser stuff, installation and documentation are exemplary (always Media Vision's strength) and it won't muck you around. Plus, you never know when that SoundBlaster Pro emulation might come in handy.

It's quite simple, really: if you've got about £85 to spend (that's what I'm anticipating street price will be), you couldn't spend it on a better sound card; in fact, you'd have to fork out about an extra £50 to find a card

MediaVision ProAudio Basic

Supplier: **MediaVision**
Tel: **(0908) 260160**
Price: **£115**
For: **No unnecessary frills, good value for money, rock solid emulations.**
Against: **No longer a value for money leader, thanks to some young pretenders.**

rating **5**



which is markedly better. The only downer for Media Vision is that it completely eclipses the Pro Audio Spectrum 16 Basic on value for money. Oh, well ...

A handy guide to sound card jargon

FM synthesiser

FM stands for frequency modulation, where one electronic signal wave is modified by another of a different frequency to produce a more complex wave and thereby approximate complex sounds. The latest FM synthesiser chips from Yamaha, known generically as OPL-3 chips, use a total of four, rather than two, waves of different frequencies, so they can create more complex sounds. The upside of FM synthesis is its flexibility — it can ape all manner of complex sounds. The downside is its low sound quality compared to other technologies.

Wave table

This technology was designed to eliminate the sound quality problems suffered by FM synthesiser chips. Wave table cards contain a number of sampled real sounds (known as patches) in ROM, in a table, each with addresses. These are then called up by software and combined to create more complex sounds. The downside is that you're restricted to a particular set of sounds. The upside is that they sound much more realistic than FM synthesiser cards.

Wave guide

Wave guide technology is set to progress from a Stanford University concept to actual products, particularly from Media Vision, which has licensed the technology. It resulted from research into what gives musical instruments their distinctive sounds, and produces complex waves by plugging parameters into a number of equations. These parameters include pitch and timbre, whereas wave table chips fudge the issue by adjusting existing sounds to perform this. It's powerful enough to emulate hypothetical instruments, such as 100-foot long guitars. Suffers none of the drawbacks of FM synthesis or wave table technology, but initial wave guide products are likely to be pricey.

MIDI

Stands for Musical Instrument Digital Interface, and is the standard interface between musical instruments and digital computers. MIDI files contain the instructions which tell sound chips how to generate the complex sounds. Games often contain soundtracks in raw MIDI format, which should generate the highest sound quality.

Sound Producer

Supplier: **Orchid Europe Ltd**
Tel: **(0256) 479898**
Price: **£49.00**
For: **Sound Blaster compatible, with better sampling. Good value for money.**
Against: **Lacks stereo and CD-ROM interface.**

rating **6**

Orchid Sound Producer

The Orchid Sound Producer is an 8-bit mono card similar to the Sound Blaster but with wider sampling capabilities, and greater versatility. It's also compatible with the Disney Sound Source and Covox Speech Thing (although you'll be hard pushed to find software that isn't compatible with the standard Sound Blaster).

The obligatory range of connections are present on the card although it does lack a CD-ROM interface. The supplied software is mostly entertaining and because of its flawless Sound Blaster support there's already a huge amount of software for it.

On the whole, the Orchid Sound Producer is a good alternative to the classic Sound Blaster with improved sampling capabilities and offering good value for money in a basic card.

Orchid Sound Producer Pro

The second, more advanced, card from Orchid, the Sound Producer Pro is a 20 voice stereo sound card capable of 8-bit mono and stereo samples with sampling to 44.1kHz mono, and from four to 22.05kHz, stereo, putting it on a par with the Sound Blaster Pro.

A couple of extra pieces of software are supplied with the Sound Producer Pro. A TSR mixer utility is available for mixing the various input levels along with bass, treble, balance, and volume. A CD-ROM driver and a utility to play audio CDs are also included, as are two new Windows utilities.

Orchid Sound Producer Pro

Supplier: **Orchid Europe Ltd**
Tel: **(0256) 479898**
Price: **£89.00**
For: **Compatibility and CD-ROM interfaces.**
Against: **Limited stereo sampling. Poor output quality.**

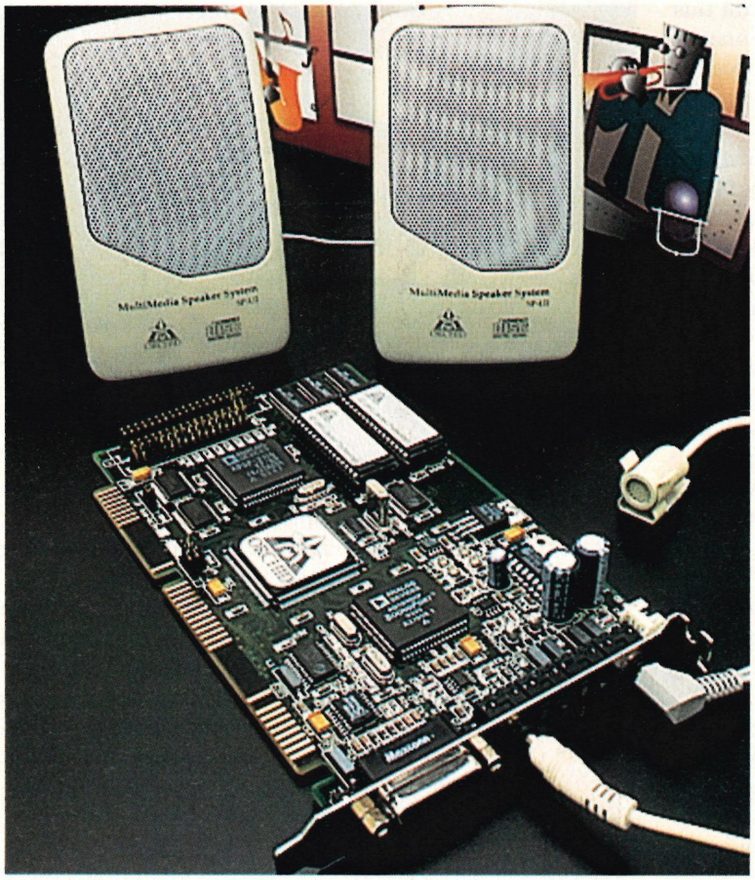
rating **6**

As with the Sound Producer, the Pro is a good alternative to its Sound Blaster equivalent. True, the sound quality is nothing to write home about, but the card does come with not one, but two CD-ROM interfaces; one for AT-Bus Drives such as the Panasonic, and another for SCSI drives. And with Orchid's recent price cuts, the Sound Producer Pro represents very good value for money.

Orchid SoundWave 32

As I write this, the SoundWave 32 is the card that's found its way to the top slot in my Compaq ProLinea testbed. There's a simple reason for this: it's my favourite.

The SoundWave 32 is pretty much everything the Gravis Ultrasound ought to be. It's a 16-bit, 32-voice wave table card with Roland, Sound Blaster and Ad Lib emulations. It directly supports Orchid's own CD-ROM drive, as well as double-speed Mitsumis and Sony's CDU31A. It comes with a cute little pair of speakers that really don't do its sound capabilities justice and a little microphone. And it's a little gem. The quality of



sound it produces is supreme — up to, if not slightly ahead of, the Ultrasound. And the clinching factor is that, unlike the Ultrasound, it's an absolute pussycat — I couldn't induce any form of misbehaviour, even with the most notoriously fickle games.

Installation is as simple as any I've come across, and the software supplied is pretty basic, but the emulations are solid as a rock, which is what counts.

In fact, the SoundWave 32 reaffirmed my faith in wave table cards. It had all the advantages — you really can tell the difference with modern games between a SoundWave and any of the FM synthesiser cards; it sounds warmer, more realistic and less like a robot. And when you start messing around with MIDI, it really comes into its own, although it doesn't come with such a huge software library of sound patches as the Ultrasound.

Admittedly, it's a touch pricey at an RRP of £199, but it's worth the outlay if you count yourself as a serious games enthusiast. Definitely the pick of the bunch.

Orchid SoundWave 32

Supplier: **Orchid Technology**
Tel: **(0256) 479898**
Price: **£199.**
For: **Superb sound, packed with features, very well-behaved**
Against: **Little speakers and restricted CD-ROM support.**

rating **6**

If you're not likely to use it for making music, you might want to investigate the GameWave 32, which has inferior MIDI recording and sampling capabilities, lacks the speakers and microphone, but must surely be the best sounding card you can get for a street price of roughly £130.

Roland SCC1

The Roland SCC1 is a little different to your ordinary sound card. Unlike the Sound Blaster and compatibles it doesn't use FM synthesis. Neither does use wave table *à la* UltraSound or SoundWave32. Instead, the SCC1

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The hardy Sound Blaster, right, may be a bit long in the tooth now, but at least you won't have any Sound Blaster compatibility problems.

Roland SCCI

Supplier: **Roland UK**
Tel: **(0252) 816181**
Price: **£335.**
For: **Wide range of instruments and effects available on ROM**
Against: **Expensive, no sampling, little games support.**

rating **7**

has a ROM chip on board that contains over 300 instruments, nine drum-sets and a collection of sound effects, all digitally sampled.

Whilst these are all varied and of good quality, the SCC1 doesn't have any sampling capabilities whatsoever. Nothing. Zilch. You see, it's not really designed for games (said with snooty accent), "it's a tool for serious musicians". It also comes with a serious musician's price tag too; £335. But you will find support for this card popping up from time to time in a few games releases for musical output while a Sound Blaster card plays all the sound effects.

Sadly for the games player this card is way over the top and is also a tad expensive. Lacking any form of sampling and compatibility with other cards, the SCC1 is better left to the musician.

Sound Blaster (v2.0)

Forget the Ad Lib Card. This is the sound card that has set the standards for others to follow. The first sound card capable of playing back and recording digital sounds and samples. It's also the only card that can guarantee to work with every piece of Sound Blaster compatible software!

Sound Blaster

Supplier: **WestPoint Creative**
Tel: **(0743) 248590**
Price: **£69.00**
For: **Set the standard for sound cards, and widely supported.**
Against: **Limited sampling capabilities, very dated, no CD-interface.**

rating **4**

An 8-bit mono card with 11 voices, the Sound Blaster is ideal for people who just want a sound card for games playing, although it does have basic sampling capabilities. Sounds can only be sampled at up to 11kHz, but the card can play back at 44.1kHz.

Various connections are found along the edge of the card for different inputs and outputs; speakers, a microphone, and a combined MIDI/Joystick port. A thumb wheel is also provided for adjusting the volume.

Unfortunately, the sound quality is as limited as the sampling capabilities — weak and tinny at the best of times. The Sound Blaster is an old, outdated card. But it is the standard that most other cards follow.

Sound Blaster Pro

Back to the old favourites: the Sound Blaster Pro has 20 stereo voices and is capable of producing 8-bit mono samples to 44.1KHz, and 22.05KHz in stereo. The Sound Blaster Pro is also compatible with the standard Sound Blaster.

With stereo voices and better sampling capabilities than the standard Sound Blaster, the Pro is ideal for people who want to create their own music as well as play games. Connections are the same as the Sound Blaster with the Pro having an additional CD-ROM interface ready to connect to a range of CD-ROM drives — without the need to buy any additional hardware.



A wealth of software is bundled with the card including a few multimedia packages and a couple of games.

It's not the greatest sound card you can buy. Not by a long way. But the Pro's great advantage is, not surprisingly, compatibility — based on the huge amount of both games and music Sound Blaster-compatible software already available. It is gettting rather dated compared to the latest 16-bit cards, but it remains a very reliable buy, particularly for games players.

Sound Blaster Pro

Supplier: **WestPoint Creative**
Tel: **(0743) 248590**
Price: **£115.**
For: **CD-ROM drive ready — no need for optional connectors, etc.**
Against: **Only 8-bit sampling, and outdated compared to 16-bit cards.**

rating **7**

1 There are several advanced cards coming into the Sound Blaster range from Creative Technology: the Sound Blaster 16, Sound Blaster 16 MultiCD, Sound Blaster 16 SCSI-2 and the Sound Blaster 16 ASP.

Although they all use FM-synthesis, they certainly offer an advance in sound quality over the 8-bit Sound Blaster cards and are going definitely worth con-

PC Review recommended: The soundest boards of all

It may sound like a delicate flower, but we hve no hesitation in picking the Orchid SoundWave 32 as our favourite. It's not cheap, but has an irresistible combination of exotic sound quality, high-end features and sweet temperament. The GameWave must also be a contender in value for money terms.

Also highly recommended is MediaVision's ProSonic 16 which, thanks to the company's new Jazz chipset, achieves new price-performance heights.

Finally, a mention for the good old SoundBlaster 2. OK, it's rather creaky these days, but it'll add sound (of a sort) to any of the games around, is consistently well-supported and ridiculously wallet-friendly with street prices hovering around the £50 mark.

As we write, Advanced Gravis and AMD are signing a 10 year deal to incorporate UltraSound chip technology with AMD chip design (see news story, this issue). The upshot of this is 16-bit sound built into the motherboard of your PC, rather than as an add-on card. Will this be the end of the sound card as we know it?

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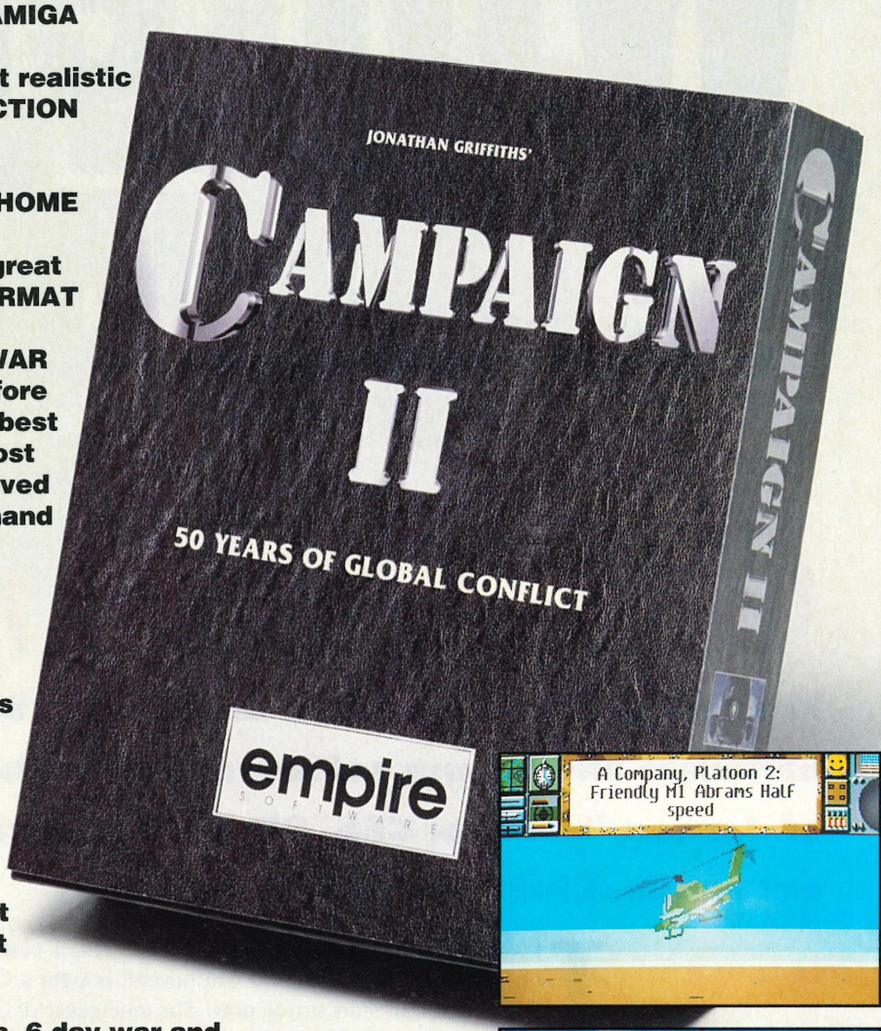
"Simple to use, but complex in nature, Campaign II is one of the most demanding games available... a well researched and truly compelling in-depth warfare simulation." **PC POWER**

"Highly playable, one can but hope for a third in the series." **CU AMIGA**

"It's strategy, it's simulation, it's downright realistic warfare." **AMIGA ACTION**

"Here's Campaign II - bigger, bolder, and flawless." **PC HOME**

"A complex game with easy controls and great depth - smart." **AMIGA FORMAT**



Campaign II heralds a new generation of WAR Simulations with more depth than ever before and fabulous 3D action. The sequel to the best selling "Campaign" has emerged as the most comprehensive simulation with new improved stragegy at any level in the chain of command (C.O.C.), closely resembling that of a real military situation.

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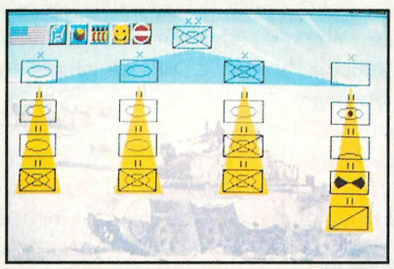
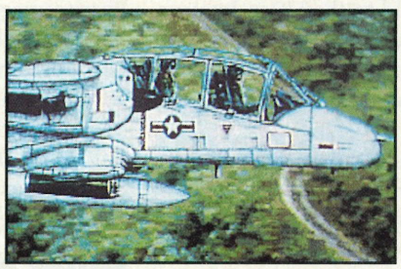
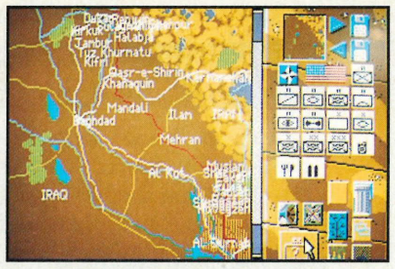
- **Including over 130 templates of the most significant military forces from 56 different nations of the last 50 years.**
- **Battle scenarios include: Vietnam, Korea, 6 day war and Dessert Storm.**
- **Pack includes sophisticated map and battle editor, 170 page equipment fact finder, extensive user guide and photographic journal.**









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SPECIAL SHOW REPORT

Winter CES



CD-ROM marches on

The twice-yearly Consumer Electronics Show is a showcase for the latest hardware and leisure software. And in the razzmatazz of Las Vegas, venue of January's Winter CES, CD-ROM applications, particularly games, stood out a mile. Christina Erskine reports

If you're planning to take any part in PC games-playing over the next two years and you haven't bought a CD-ROM drive yet, start saving now. The emergence of CD-ROM as a premier format for PCs seems unstoppable, especially as, while always popular with publishers, in the last four months it's also become popular with customers, with sales figures for CD releases becoming respectable compared to their disk-based counterparts.

The Consumer Electronics Show, held in the US in January and in June, is where the industry gathers to show off its new wares, and since the US leads the world's PC software market, you can bet that just about everything here will find its way across the pond sooner rather later.

On the grapevine

How do you follow up a great game like Beneath a Steel Sky? "Virgin sat me down and said they wanted a game that included knights templar and serial killers," says Charles Cecil of Revolution Software, who evidently relishes a challenge. The result will be Broken Sword, due for release in spring 1995.

Up until recently, games have been slow to catch up with CD-ROM. Giant reference programs such as encyclopedias, medical dictionaries, even lists of postcodes, have been available for years. But the history of CD-ROM games really began a year ago with 7th Guest, even though many of the titles on display in Las Vegas have been in development since before Guest's launch.

Now, however, CD-ROM originals and CD-ROM 'firsts' (with cut-down disk-based versions following later) were much to the fore. The Spielberg/Moriarty game The Dig, for example, has been put back until next winter, but will also now come out on CD-ROM rather than disk. However, the team has split up, with Brian Moriarty departing abruptly, and Steven Spielberg now involved only in monthly update meetings to see and approve the artwork so far. Moriarty's place on the team has been taken by Sean Clark.

Nearly all the major companies have original CD games in development: Electronic Arts' Noctropolis, Sierra's Phantasmagoria and Outpost, Spectrum Holobyte's Star Trek Next Generation, Virgin's 11th Hour, to name but a mere few. For more on some of the best CD-ROM games due out this year, see over the page.

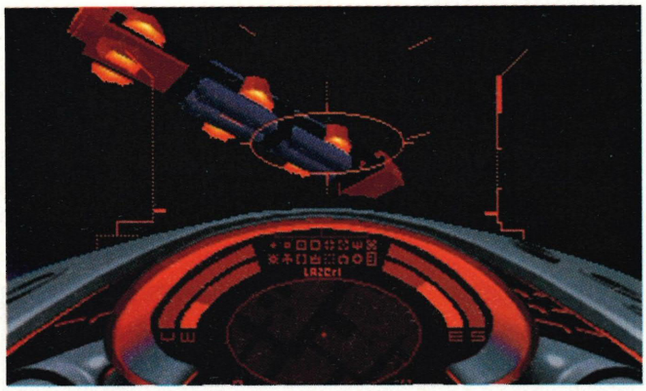
However, floppy disk isn't dead ... not just yet, anyway. What follows on these pages is a digest of the Consumer Electronic Show's most prominent forthcoming releases, games which you can expect to see on the PC later this year, or early in 1995.

Outer space

Inferno
Ocean, due out April

DID's follow-up to TFX promises to be just as exciting — successive development versions of the game just look stronger and stronger. Your job is to pilot your craft around myriad planets on a series of missions, through asteroid fields, into the labyrinthine interiors of alien buildings, and of course you get

to shoot pretty much whatever stands in your way. Created entirely using polygon graphics, it's smooth and fast, and it could just be a *really* playable Rebel Assult type game.



System Shock
Origin Systems, due out April

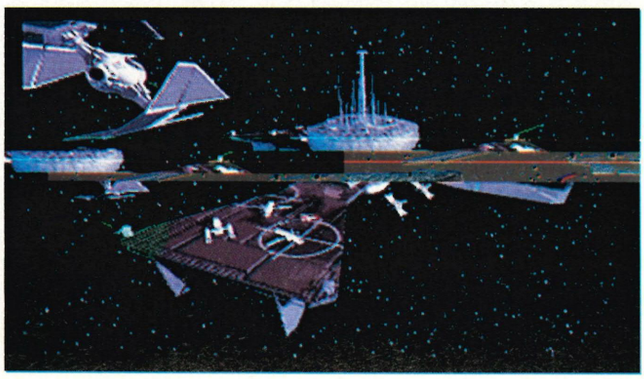
Aimed at Wolfenstein lovers who wouldn't object to some Ultima Underworld style strategy, System Shock is being designed by the same team which wrote the Underworld series, but with an all-new game engine. System Shock has double the screen resolution of the Underworlds while increasing the frame rate as well, and you can expect this new engine to be used for a number of future first person perspective games.



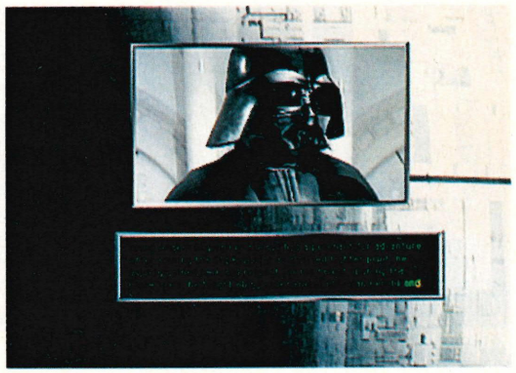
TIE Fighter
LucasArts, due out April

TIE Fighter may simply look like an X-Wing sequel, but this time you play as a member of the infamous Empire. Designer Lawrence Holland has introduced more craft into the finished version, and enhanced the game's strategy elements, according to LucasArts.

Now you'll be able to ask questions about your missions, and play in easy, medium or hard modes, but all using the same control interface as X-Wing for easy upgrading.



Star Wars Screen Saver
LucasArts, due out April



Inspired by the success of the Disney screen saver, LucasArts has used its valuable Star Wars licence to produce its own saver, complete with Darth Vader, the canteen scene and character biographies, which you can access by zooming into their on-screen visages.

Star Reach
Interplay, due out March

Interplay's entrant in the field of space strategy is a game of exploration and conquest in which you control a fleet of spaceships over 20 scenarios each with different planets. Most scenarios are concerned with taking over the near galaxy, but with economic management and trading factors coming into play as well. One of its main attractions is that all action is in real time rather than being turn-based and that you can also play with a friend at a single PC in split screen format.

Outpost
Sierra,
due out May



A massive Sierra project and the company's first non-adventure game, Outpost is a mix of empire-building strategy (Sim City-cum-Civilization in space is an approximate but not wholly inaccurate comparison) and galactic simulation (there's some pretty heavy astronomical data to be absorbed in here) created by Bruce Balfour, formerly of NASA. Earth is being destroyed and only you (but who else?) can save humanity by discovering new planets, making them inhabitable and running the communities which colonise them. You'll also need to keep your people happy to prevent them from going off to form rebel colonies.

Role-playing games

Ravenloft
SSI, due out in March

The successor to the Eye of the Beholder series, Ravenloft is a massive role-playing game which will come out initially, in March, on CD-ROM, before a reduced disk version some weeks later. The graphics, on a ascreen window twice the size of that in Eye of the Beholder, are produced on a proprietary SSI 'medium resolution' 320 x 400 screen, and some screens have been rendered in 3D Studio for greater visual effect.

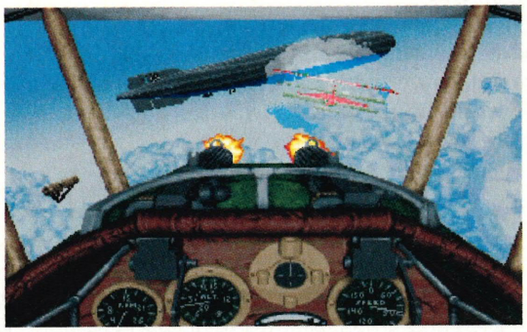
After choosng your characters, there are 80 non-playing characters to interact with, all in real time, including the combat sequences, a useful 'line of sight' automap feature and digitised voices and sounds. There will be over 300 digitised sounds alone in the CD-ROM version.



Al-Qadim
SSI, due out in March

A beginner's AD&D game from SSI, Al-Qadim is meant to be easy to get into, with an intuitive user interface, while keeping to the complexities of the original storyline. Due out in March on both CD and floppy disk.

World at War



Wings of Glory
Origin Systems, due out in April

The Strike Commander engine is put to good use in Wings of Glory, a flight simulation set in World War I over northern France and Belgium and spread over 40 missions, plus a custom mission creator. Since Wings of Glory was conceived in Texas (home of Origin Systems), some convolutions are required for you to play an American pilot attached to a British unit — until the US enters the war in 1918, when you are conveniently transferred to an American squadron! Pacific Strike, set in World War II, and from the same stable, is also nearing completion and is due for release in March.

Flight Sim Toolkit Deluxe
Domark, due out from April

After a successful launch of its flight sim designer program, Domark is already looking at potential add-ons and souped-up versions. FST Deluxe contains computer representations of the US Geological Survey's map of Seattle and environs, so that you can load in a highly accurate rendering of this part of the world to base your own sim on. Further terrain to come ...

Also, a flight model add-on for helicopters is now complete and being tested by Apache pilot Brian Wilson, a World War II scenario disk, with all relevant aircraft, objects and scenarios, is in preparation and you can also look forward to the head to head module: you create your environment, and play the scenario with a friend playing as the enemy.



Aces of the Deep
Dynamix, due out in May

Dynamix's latest in the Aces series runs on the same game engine as Aces of the Pacific, and Over Europe, but this time the action centres on the north Atlantic theatre during World War II.

You must control your submarine for the Allies against the Nazi U-boats, with detailed internal engine room screens as well as the externals, pictured here.

Network games

Battledrome
Dynamix, due out in the summer

Pit yourself against ten robot opponents in an arena reminiscent of laser paintball games such as Quasar or Lazer Tag. You can also negotiate with the opponents over extra weapons to carry, and there is a betting option to boost your earnings. But Battledrome's nicest feature is probably that it's 'modem ready', ie, there's a network option built-in for playing against human opponents.



Zephyr
New World, due out in June

Or you can try your hand at piloting a hover tank. New World Computing's Zephyr puts you at the helm of your hover craft — which model is determined by which 'company' is sponsoring you at the time — for a series of races taking place in one of the 36 arenas in each of the 12 worlds. With rendered graphics and the 3D theme extending to 3D glasses and screenshots in the box and a 3D intro screen. Perhaps Zephyr's most appealing touch is the provision for up to six people to play at once over a PC network — a recipe for mayhem.

Mechwarrior 2
Activision, due out April

Against the computer or another player via modem, you strap yourself into your gigantic BattleMech and fight to the death with up to 40 weapons at your disposal, in this second game based on the Battletech board games. Mechwarrior 2 has been realised in rounded 3D graphics with some almost strangely pastel backgrounds (do all BattleMechs fight in the misty early morning?), at least in the initial stages and promises some heavy bone-crunching action.



92% - PC ZONE
5*/5* - PC PLAYER
80% - PC GAMER
82% - PC HOME
9/10 - PC REVIEW
93% - GENERATION 4



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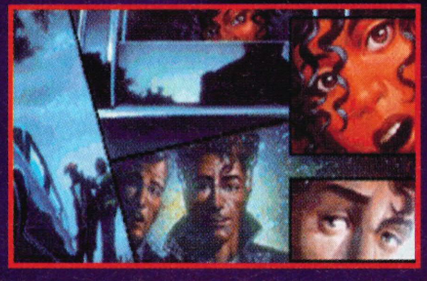

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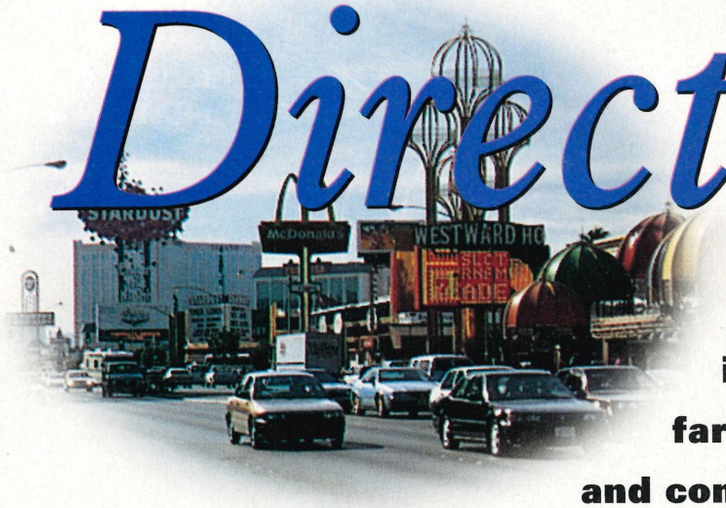
SPECIAL SHOW REPORT

Director's cuts



The day when Mel Gibson or Julia Roberts pester the likes of Electronic Arts for inclusion in its latest PC game may still be far distant, but the links between Hollywood and computer games are getting ever closer, with software companies using big-name actors for added realism and sophistication in their latest titles.

If the term 'interactive movie' has become a cliche, it hasn't stopped publishers from treating is as some kind of holy grail of programming. The ultimate idea is that computer games should look and feel like a film — but one in which you control the outcome of the story.

The emergence of CD-ROM has opened up a few opportunities. The 600Mb of storage capacity means that more pathways, or alternatives, to the storyline can be programmed in, thus contributing to the illusion that you really are controlling the outcome (whereas in fact you will only be following one of the pre-programmed routes through the story) and more detailed graphics, more locations and more background music and sound effects can be included to add to the atmosphere.

Current thinking is that a 'sophisticated' medium such as CD-ROM demands a sophisticated audience: the word most often used to describe many interactive movies now in development is 'adult'. Indeed, Jeff Lee of Electronic Arts, producer of Noctropolis, explains that the game is intended as "an adult comic book dealing with adult themes, such as seduction, betrayal and violence" (which doesn't really say a great deal for adults in general).

Roberta Williams' Phantasmagoria deals with the disintegration of a marriage under the strain of living in a haunted house — a haunted house created by a Silicon Graphics system rather than a Hollywood set, while in The 11th Hour — the sequel to The 7th Guest — you must eventually choose between your girlfriend and the colleague who helps you solve the mystery of Stauf's mansion.

For Under a Killing Moon, writer Aaron Connors, of Access, was concerned to bring the storytelling up to a level where "people don't view it as a kid's thing, but put the game into the same category of entertainment as the novel, movies, and so on". We seem to have come a long way from rescuing the princess, and ninjas of the nth dimension.

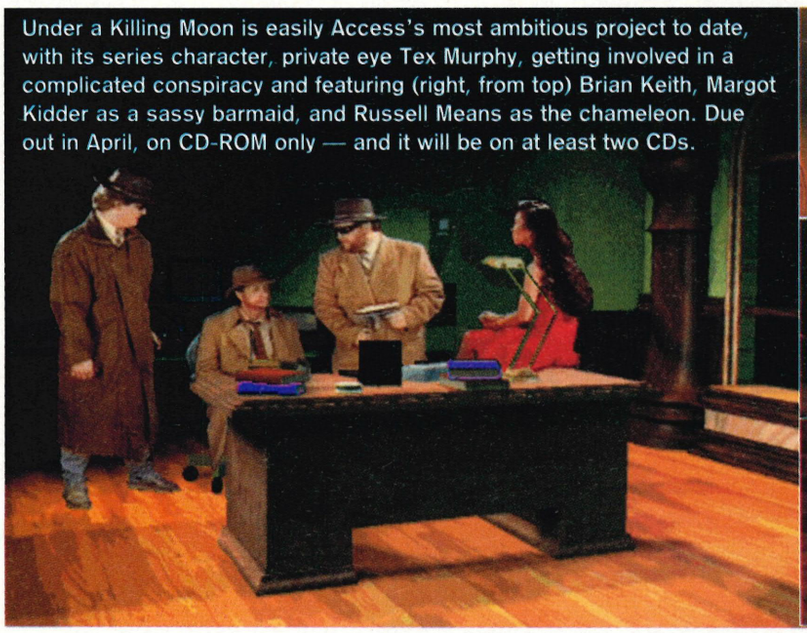
The techniques used to create these believable "virtual worlds" (Access's preferred term) are generally to create backgrounds and some animated objects with a rendering package such as Autodesk's 3D Studio, or with a full-blown Silicon Graphics workstation set-up. For the people, actors are filmed performing all the tasks required by the script, usually against a blue Chromakey background — Access and Sierra both have their own Chromakey-equipped studios — and all the necessary speech recorded. This footage is then cut out and laid over the computer-drawn backgrounds.

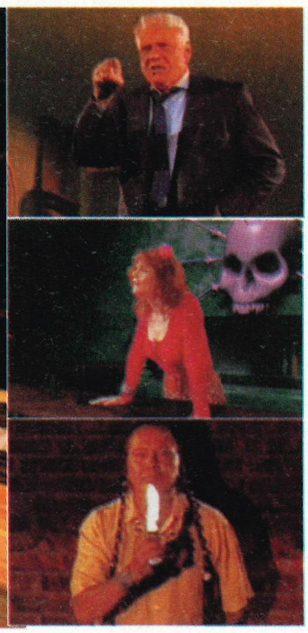
However, Origin Systems believes that using digitised video characters leads to "a lack of interaction". In Bioforge, the in-house programming team has created rendered images using 3D Studio overlaid on polygon graphics for its interactive movie. The idea is that movement of the games characters can now be entirely flexible rather than keeping to a set path of possible actions.

Using real actors conveys a realistic feel and a glamour that few publishers

Grapevine

Monkey Island and Maniac Mansion designer Ron Gilbert (now at Humongous Entertainment) is working on an adult adventure, called Bobo and Fletcher Go Deep into the Congo, starring a man and ape duo. A very different look and animation system from Monkey Island is promised — and it will be CD-only.





Under a Killing Moon is easily Access's most ambitious project to date, with its series character, private eye Tex Murphy, getting involved in a complicated conspiracy and featuring (right, from top) Brian Keith, Margot Kidder as a sassy barmaid, and Russell Means as the chameleon. Due out in April, on CD-ROM only — and it will be on at least two CDs.

can resist, however. And while early CD-ROM originals using real people were often unintentionally hilarious because the standard of 'acting' was so awful, publishers now reckon that true thespian talent is needed for a game's credibility.

Simply using an accomplished voice actor can add to a game's atmosphere: Patrick Stewart (Jean-Luc from Star Trek) doesn't appear in person in the CD version of Lands of Lore but his voice is used to good effect. Donald Sutherland, in Conspiracy (to be reviewed next month), and the entire original cast of Star Trek in the CD version of 25th Anniversary, give these versions of old disk-based games a whole new lease of life.

However, for games using digitised video, the whole actor is required and Access went to some lengths to sign up a quality cast in Under a Killing Moon. Margot Kidder, best known in the UK as Lois Lane in the Superman movies, was persuaded to take time out from filming in Access's home town, Salt Lake City, to play a streetwise barmaid — and Aaron Connors spent two days solid rewriting so that her role in the game was substantially beefed up. Brian Keith — who appeared in Young Guns, but also several US TV series — was an early Access choice for a prime role in the game, but when the eponymous 'Last Mohican' Russell Means became available, Access created the part of the shape-shifting chameleon around him.

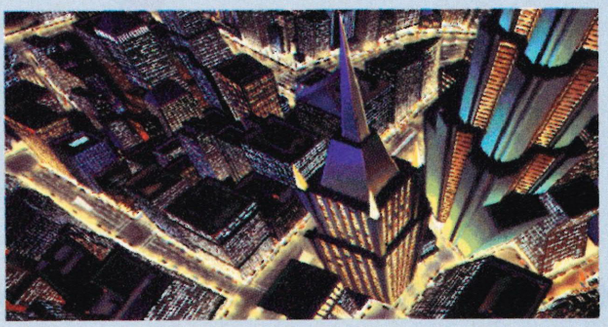
"Previously we worked with models who needed a lot of direction," says Chris Jones, Killing Moon's producer, who himself reprises the role of clumsy private eye Tex Murphy that he created in Martian Memorandum. "The professionals we used in Killing Moon could interpret the roles themselves, so that often we abandoned our own expectations because the actors' delivery was so much better."

Sierra has yet to finalise casting for Phantasmagoria, but landed Mark Hamill (Star Wars) and Tim Curry (Rocky Horror) for the lead roles in the CD-ROM version of Gabriel Knight. This includes a narrative on the making of the game with an entertaining interview with Tim Curry, who manages to sound completely nonplussed at finding himself starring in a computer game.

This reaction goes for Keith, Kidder and Means as well. "It was difficult to convince them to come in to do the performances. I think they first thought of computer games as meaning Nintendo and doing a Mario-style voice-over, but when they saw what we planned to do they were pleasantly surprised. Margot Kidder, for instance, was a really good sport about it, and her delivery was perfect," says Chris Jones.

But if Killing Moon is a dark comedy, Noctropolis (Electronic Arts) is dark and scary in comic book fashion. Development team Flashpoint (which includes ex-Access developer Brian Erikson) has eschewed big names for its actors and concentrates instead on creating a city that wouldn't look out of place in Blade Runner. Noctropolis will also be coming out on disk as well as CD-ROM, the disk version containing on-screen text for dialogue, the CD using speech throughout. There are 80 different locations in the city, which have all been originally hand-painted, then scanned into the program and retouched to create effects, such as lighting.

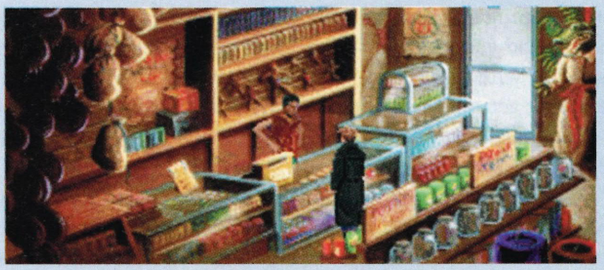
Of course, all the digitisation in the world can't cover up for weak storylines, and it is the ingenuity of the author/designer which will count for most in terms of gameplay. To become truly immersed in the plot, there should be plenty of flexibility in movement, as many 'tagged' items as possible (objects, or minor characters, who appear to be part of the story), and certainly more than one way to reach the ending. But if this can be done successfully, then well-acted, believable scenes which ooze with atmosphere can only add to the experience.



Peter Grey is just an ordinary guy who gets all mixed up with his favourite comic book character Dark Sheer in this futuristic nightmare. With violence, vamps and erotic dream sequences, Noctropolis will almost certainly carry an '18' sticker when released, in May, on both disk and CD-ROM.



The 11th Hour is the follow-up to 7th Guest. Stauf's mansion has fallen into disrepair and you play an investigative reporter assigned to cover the disappearance of a small child. Using the same graphic style of Guest, Trilobyte promises different types of puzzles and a whole new cast of characters.



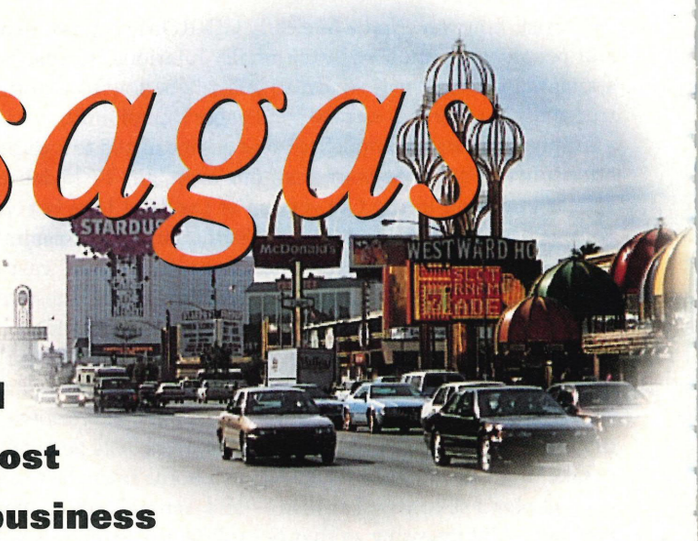
The CD version of Gabriel Knight (the disk version is reviewed on page 58) features the voices of Mark Hamill, Tim Curry and Efrem Zimbalist Jr among others, in this tale of witchcraft and historical investigation from Jane Jensen, co-writer of King's Quest VI.



There's none of that video digitisation malarkey in Richard Garriott's first non-Ultima game, Bioforge, which is due for release in late April, on disk.

SPECIAL SHOW REPORT

Sierra's sagas



Police Quest 4, Space Quest 5, King's Quest 6 ... Sierra's soap operas just keep on coming. Christina Erskine talked to the creators about some of the most durable games in the business

If a thing's worth doing, it's worth doing often" is not a maxim you'll find pinned to the wall anywhere at the Sierra On-Line offices in Oakhurst, California, but it is a stated policy to plan new games in terms of characters which can then be built up into a series.

Thus, there's little point in wondering if we'll ever get to see a second adventure featuring Gabriel Knight — the character was designed by author Jane Jensen to feature in a series of games. However, the same was true of Al Lowe's Freddy Pharkas, and, at present, no decision has been taken as to whether to continue with him, since sales were disappointing.

Mind you, Sierra's "disappointing" sales are probably still considerably higher than most: King's Quest VI and Leisure Suit Larry V both topped the 250,000 sales mark, according to figures compiled by the American Software Publishers Association.

Quest for Glory IV is set in Transylvania, pitting your character against werewolves and vampires, and features puzzles which require some intuition and understanding of the computer characters to solve rather than just the 'find and use' type of challenge.

It is a point of pride at Sierra that each of the games in its long-running series should outsell its immediate predecessor. This is the yardstick by which future development plans are made, so when I asked Leisure Suit Larry's creator Al Lowe if he wasn't getting a bit sick of the balding bungler and was surely dying to chuck him over the Riechenbach Falls or something by now, Al stood by his creation staunchly.

"People keep on buying Larry, and it's a market-driven commodity. Sure, I don't want to be doing nothing but Larry games. But I don't think I could just hand him over to someone else — I'd like to think that the personal humorous touch is integral to Larry."

At any rate, it seems to be a winning formula. Larry 5 was the top-seller so far in the series. Currently bottom of the Larry sales list is number two (the ever-increasing sales policy notwithstanding), which is ironic, since Lowe attempted to clean up Larry 2 receiving some negative comments about the original's risqué theme. So for Larry 3, the raunch factor was swiftly restored.

Indeed, Mr Laffer looks as though he may become even more visible in the future, since Lowe and Sierra are currently in discussions with film companies in Los Angeles about the possibility of producing a movie based on Larry's adventures.

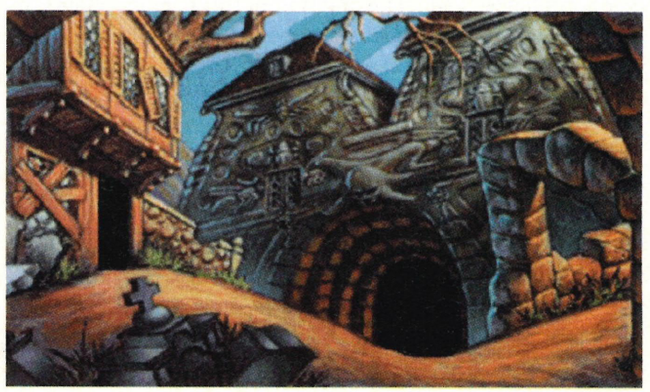
With so many long-running soap operas to schedule, Sierra now times release dates so as to avoid clashes. Larry comes out in 'odd' years, while Lowe is working on a possible new series, a "family game", for Christmas 1994. The Quest for Glory RPG series (written by husband and wife team and veteran D&D players Lori and Corey Cole) is updated every other year, and now that won't be in the same year as the two-yearly update of Roberta Williams' King Quest. However, with Quest for Glory, the end is definitely in sight.

"Quest for Glory number five will be the last one in the series," says Corey Cole. "It's been plotted that way right from the beginning. After Quest for Glory V, we'll start a new series, with different characters and a different setting. We're considering using a Oriental setting with samurai and things like that — and possibly a female protagonist."

"Also, in a series it's difficult to let the characters grow and change and mature. For example, King Graham [King's Quest hero] doesn't change a great deal," points out Lori.

Space Quest is an 'even' years series, so this Christmas will see the return of Roger Wilco, although this time he will probably be in 'innerspace', shrunk to the size of a pea and travelling through the human body, according to Sierra's Bill Lynn.

Sierra may still have a relatively small presence in Europe, but there are 300 people employed in their US offices, and over 650 worldwide. The company has recently expanded from its HQ in the small town of Oakhurst in the Californian Sierra Nevada (just south of Yosemite National Park), with the management team moving north to Seattle, and Al Lowe's development group based an hour down the hill in Fresno. This small-town environment (Sierra practically *is* Oakhurst), away from the hot-house atmosphere of Silicon Valley, contributes to the distinctive look and feel of Sierra's games, which has made it one of the relatively few software companies to become known for its brand name alone.



Grapevine

Conspicuous by its absence at Las Vegas was Forgotten Castle, the full-screen role-playing game being developed by Twin Dolphin Games, and which caused a bit of a stir for its graphics at the previous CES in Chicago last June. It appears that the fears of many commentators over the lack of gameplay in the early demos have been realised (see PC Review, Issue 25) and Twin Dolphin has been having problems with the play aspect of the game. Don't expect a release for the time being.

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Music in the making

Despite repeated complaints from the neighbours John Bennett carries on with his attempt to prove that it doesn't matter if you're tone deaf in part two of our guide to making music on the PC

Last issue I started to explore some of the possibilities of music recording on the PC. Since then I've tinkered with — and sworn at — an odd assortment of useful, sometimes incomprehensible, hardware and software, and generally made an unholy racket.

I've been working my way through the steps involved in creating and recording a song. For the sake of argument, let's say this song has four tracks and uses very basic instrument arrangements — tracks one and two: drums and electric bass; track three: my own devastating rhythm guitar playing; and track four: the vocals.

Here are the necessary ingredients:

- a PC ...
- a tape deck, amplifier and speakers;
- Cakewalk 2.0 (composition and sequencing);
- Wave for Windows (wave editing);
- a standard two pin phono audio cable;
- a MIDI-compatible sound card;
- a large hard disk;
- some talent (so people keep telling me).

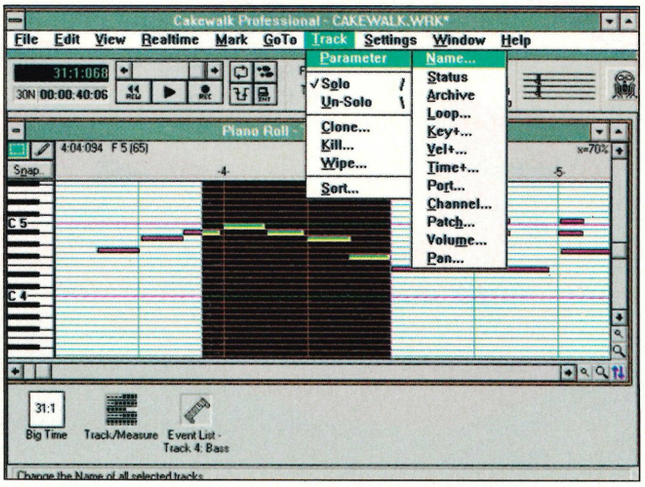
The idea is to record to the PC's hard disk, and then to a tape. My salary doesn't stretch beyond a bog-standard audio tape deck, but it could easily be a 4-track recording deck or a DAT tape. Either way, you're going to end up with a demo tape.



Below right: setting up a drum rhythm on a grid in Cakewalk Pro 2.0.

The rhythm method

Let's start off with the drum and the bass lines. I've decided to keep this as simple as possible, and use the standard MIDI patches without any alterations. To do this I need nothing more than the PC, the software and the sound card. As I've said before, I find music score tediously slow to work with, if

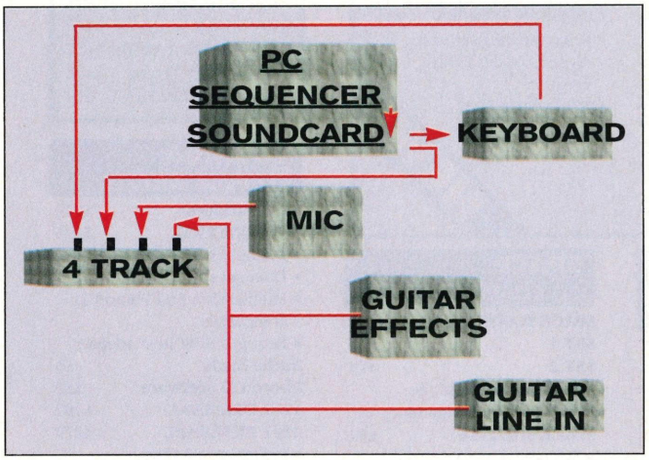


not completely incomprehensible. So, here I'm using the piano-roll grid in Cakewalk Professional 2.0 (£299) to create the drum and bass patterns (you'll need the full version of Cakewalk to do rather than our cover disk, I'm afraid).

As a system, it's very flexible and easy to use. Quite simply, you add notes by clicking with the mouse. You set the emphasis of a note with different shaded blocks, and change the length of a note by scrolling through grids from a palette. What it all comes down to is simply setting the track playing on a continuous loop and tweaking away at the individual bars on the grid till it sounds right, and then pasting them into position.

To add different drums — bass, snare, high-hat, etc, I just select a different instrument to overlay on the grid. After that, the bass is a relatively simple matter, using the same approach.

Because the two instruments aren't just going to trundle on repeating the same stuff, I have to record and save several versions of bars and riffs. At this stage it is easier to do it in chunks and put it all in order afterwards.



Setting up

To record the 'live' stuff, I connect up my PC, the microphone, the stereo amplifier and the tape deck. This is all pretty straightforward (see diagram above). The tape deck is connected via the mic/line-in socket, to the line-out on my PC sound card, for recording to tape. In the meantime I'm also using its amplifier and speakers to play back. The microphone goes straight into the mic socket on the sound card back plate, and you do usually need a jack adapter (about £1.50).

It could easily be a very different set-up from this, though. If, for example, you were going to record via a 4-track deck, you'd bypass the PC for the audio stuff, and send any MIDI-based digital music from synthesisers or software via the PC to the 4-track. In this instance the PC's most important role would be running the sequencing software — basically queuing everything to start and finish on time.

Now the bit I've been waiting for. Using a package called Software Audio Workshop (SAW, £499) specially designed for recording to hard disk, I've set it up to play the drum and bass tracks — MIDI channels one and two, while recording the guitar as track three. The metronome clicks away, the drums kick in, and I'm wailing away. And the beauty of it is I don't have to get it all note perfect — even if I wanted to.

Right, three minutes (of sheer bliss) later, and I have the guitar track recorded. The vocals — all right, I didn't sing so much as talk the words — are done in exactly the same way. I can't do them just yet, because I need to get the tracks running roughly together first.

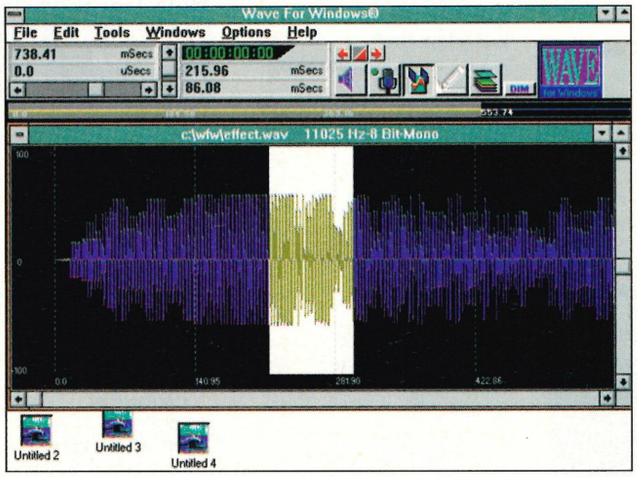
Papering over the cracks

The drums and bass aren't a problem — it's just a matter of tinkering with the grid till they're set up, then merging them into one track. Those are both computer MIDI files — so the merged track file is still editable. The guitar and vocals take a bit more work. mixed into one way

One advantage of Cakewalk over Cubase, the most poular powerful composition/sequencing software, is that Cakewalk can deal with mixing wave and MIDI files at the same time. So, the next job is to sort out the timing on the guitar track, getting the software to match it with the rhythm tracks so it starts and finishes on the right beat. Then doing the same with the vocal track.

Now for the 'clever' bit. Just suppose I've played one part badly ... instead of having to re-record the whole guitar track, I just re-play and record that dodgy bit till I get it right, then splice it into the existing track. SAW allows me to cut the wave file at up to 1/48000 of a second, which means I can accurately drop in the new stuff. The editing of wave-based audio files is tricky, but it does allow you to edit out that bum note or that flat vocal. After all that it's just a a matter of tidying up, adding special effects, etc, then saving it.

My only big mistake was forgetting that most sound cards can only deal with one wave file playing at the same time. So I had to merge the guitar and vocal tracks in SAW, before I could trigger it all CakeWalk and record the tape.



Below right: to edit wave-based audio files and add effects, you need a program like Wave for Windows

How does it sound?

Well ... to be honest, I don't think Buddy Guy, Eric Clapton or John Lee Hooker have a great deal to be worried about where my recording efforts are concerned. But I do have a song recorded on my hard disk that I can edit and tinker with to my heart's content — given that it's currently taking up 30Mb or so of my hard disk.

You can do a lot more. I've feel like I've barely scratched the surface of the software I've been using, and I expect it's going to take me a good six months before I do. The multiple tracks that the latest software packages support mean that you can bring in a whole orchestra should you feel the need — and if you have the time and the patience to put it all together.

One thing I did find was that the standard PC MIDI patches lack a certain feel. This is where you need to add specialist patches — which can be bought either as disk files, or ROM add-on cards for synthesisers. Alternatively, I could have used samples to generate my own sounds; taken either off disk or 'borrowed' from a favourite CD, it's reasonably simple to do, in theory ...

Next month: in part three of our music series, we will be looking at some of the more unusual or specialised music hardware and software available, and expert PC music makers will comment on what's available and any potential pitfalls involved in PC music making.

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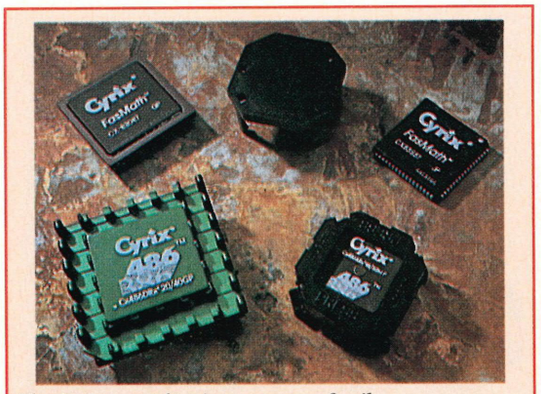

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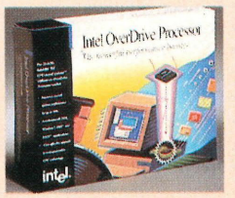

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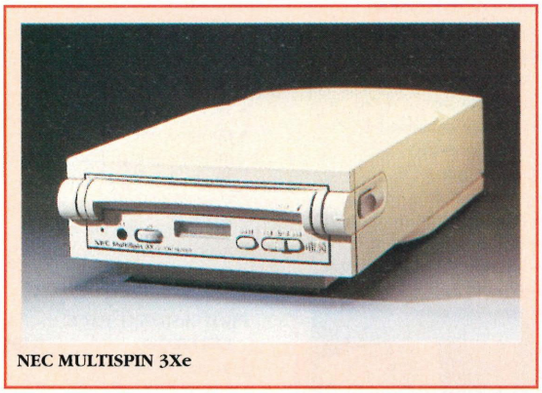
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Inside Joysticks

It originated in aircraft cockpits and is now used, with computers, for a multitude of games applications. Mike James gets a grip on the joystick ...

A joystick is an essential extra if you want to get the best out of a wide range of leisure software — but surprisingly it isn't something you find connected to the majority of PCs.

There are two components to a PC joystick — an interface and the joystick unit itself. The interface usually takes the form of a plug-in card, although some machines have the joystick or 'game' interface built in. In general, you can plug two joystick units into each interface, although most users only make use of one. Most of the electronics needed to make the joystick work is contained in the interface and not in the joystick itself.

This interface consists of a number of electronic outputs which can be turned on under program control. Once turned on, these outputs don't remain on indefinitely — they slowly turn themselves off again. How long they take to turn off depends on the amount of resistance connected to them. As well as turning on an output, a program can also sense its status — ie, whether it is on or off. By timing how long the output remains high it is possible for the program to discover how much resistance is connected to the output.

The joystick that you plug into this interface contains a pair of variable resistors. One — the y axis — is connected so that moving the joystick up and down alters its resistance. The other — the x axis — is connected so that moving the joystick from side to side alters its resistance.

Each variable resistor is connected to a separate output on the interface and so the program can read the position on both the x and the y axis by setting both outputs on and then timing how long each one stays on. Apart from the two variable resistors there is little else inside a joystick unit — no matter how fancy the case is! The usual pair of fire buttons are just simple switches that are connected to two additional inputs on the interface. About the only sophistication possible is the provision of an auto-fire circuit. This simply presses the fire button for you automatically and at a regular rate.

However, in a competitive market you can expect manufacturers to try to do better than the standard joystick. Models with all sorts of extras — useful and gimmicky — are available, but the extra knobs and switches are really only extensions to the keyboard, not the joystick itself. Unfortunately the standardisation of game ports has limited the scope for innovation and improvement in the stick itself.

Mechanics and compatibility

The electronics of the joystick are just part of the story. There is also the important question of how the joystick can be mechanically linked to the variable resistors. The traditional solution is to use a pair of standard rotary volume controls coupled to the joystick via a pair of gimbals. This isn't a cheap solution but it can be used to produce an accurate and reliable joystick. A more recent innovation is the use of a thick film of carbon deposited directly on a printed circuit board.

This technology is cheaper, but it sometimes causes reliability problems. What is important in the design of a joystick is that the resistance varies smoothly as you move the stick. Nearly all new joysticks work well. The problems start when dirt builds up on the movable contacts and the resistors. The solution is to clean the variable resistors using a suitable switch cleaner.

The main problem with any joystick is that it will only work if your PC and software are compatible. With older software or conversions from other machines this isn't always the case. What happens is that that the position of the joystick is measured as a time. Now, early programs assumed that all PCs ran at the same speed, and so the time could be measured in terms

the PC

of how long it took to carry out a standard instruction. This would have been fine if PCs hadn't become any faster over the years, but of course they have and will continue to do so. If you try to run a 'converted' program on a modern, fast PC you will discover that the joystick simply won't work. The only solution is to slow the PC down, or to use a joystick interface that can accommodate the faster machine by turning the joystick output off faster.

Some joysticks make the user go through a calibration routine. This involves moving the handle to extreme positions (eg top left, bottom right) and the centre, while others manage to auto-calibrate themselves without involving the user. Another important feature are the trim controls that most joysticks have. The trim controls allow the user to alter the resistance on the x and y axis so that when the joystick is centred the position on the screen is centred. If you use a joystick with trim controls it is important that you set them to the mid position before you go through any calibration procedures.

Digital vs analogue

One of the big confusions in the PC joystick world is the difference between digital and analogue joysticks — but in fact the it's simple. A digital joystick is just an extension of the keyboard. When you play some games you can control the movement by pressing the up, down, left or right arrow keys. A digital joystick allows you to control movement in the same way up, down, left and right. An analogur joystick, on the other hand, allows you to control movement smoothly in any direction not just up, down, left and right. Most PC joysticks are analogue joysticks. Most games console joysticks are digital joysticks, which allow movement in eight fixed directions. It really depends on the games you use it for, but in general analogue joysticks are preferable for PCs.

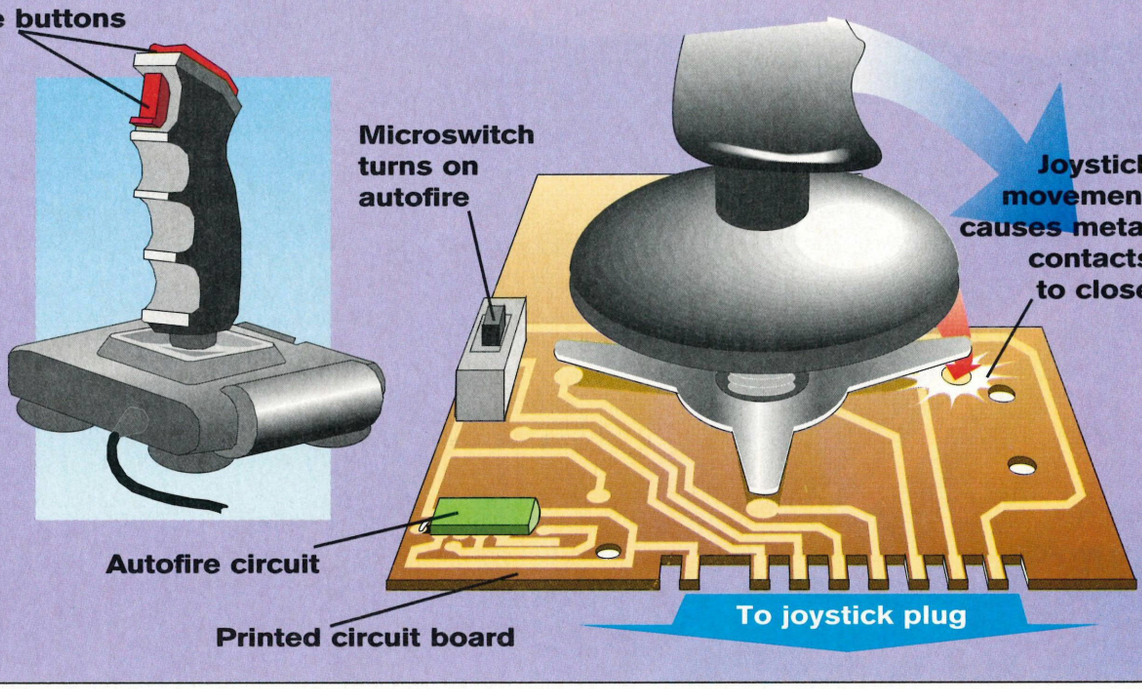
One final point: don't try to use a joystick designed for a games console or for another machine on your PC. In most cases these will not work and they might even cause damage. If you really need a digital joystick then you can find them specially designed for the PC, but don't buy one in preference to an analogue joystick — buy one as your second stick.

The joystick

When the joystick is moved in any direction, a plastic ring at the base pushes down a metal arm to touch a corresponding contact on the printed circuit board. This completes a circuit which sends a binary signal to the joystick port of the PC.

The PC constantly scans the joystick port in the same way that it does the keyboard, waiting for a signal which, when detected, is interpreted by the software being run to perform the desired action.

Most joysticks have a switch to turn on the their auto-fire function. This is a simple switching circuit which sends a constant stream of 'fire' signals to the joystick port.



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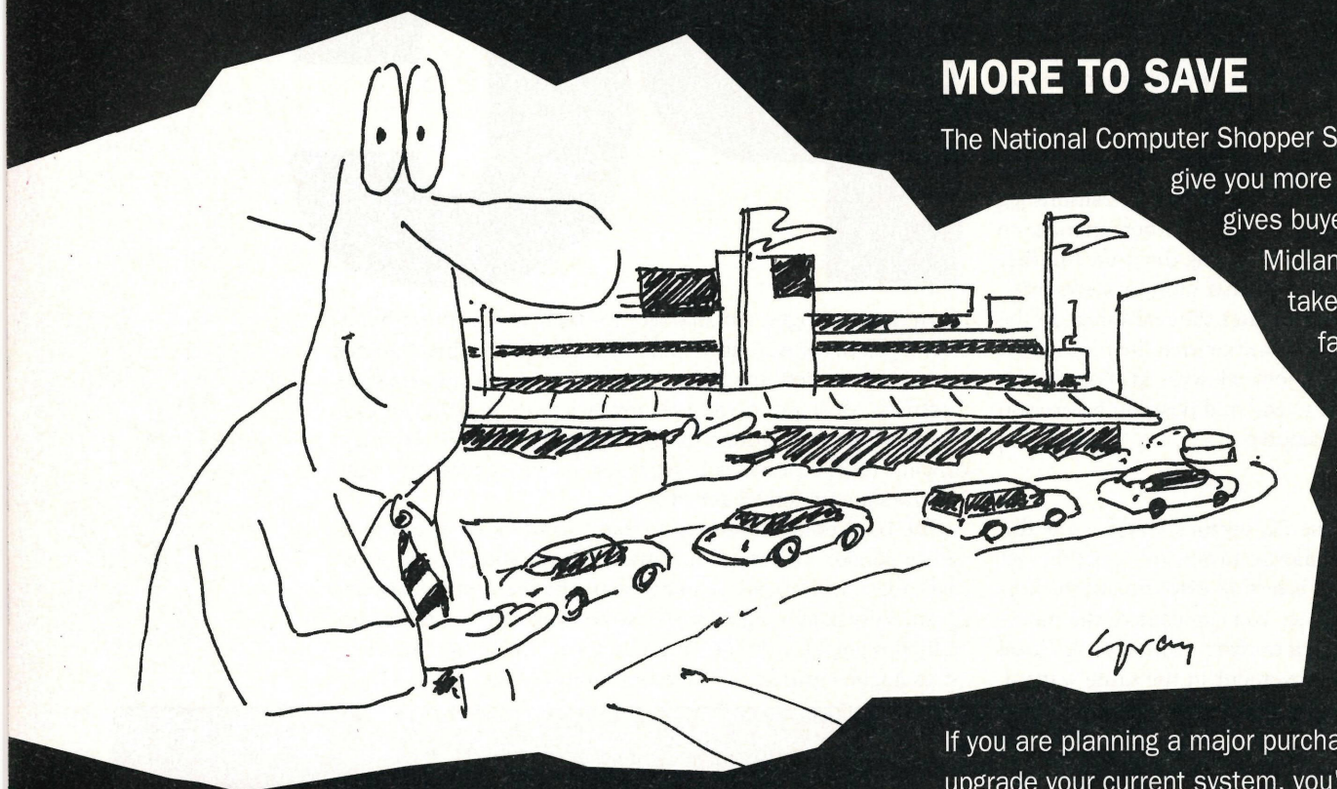

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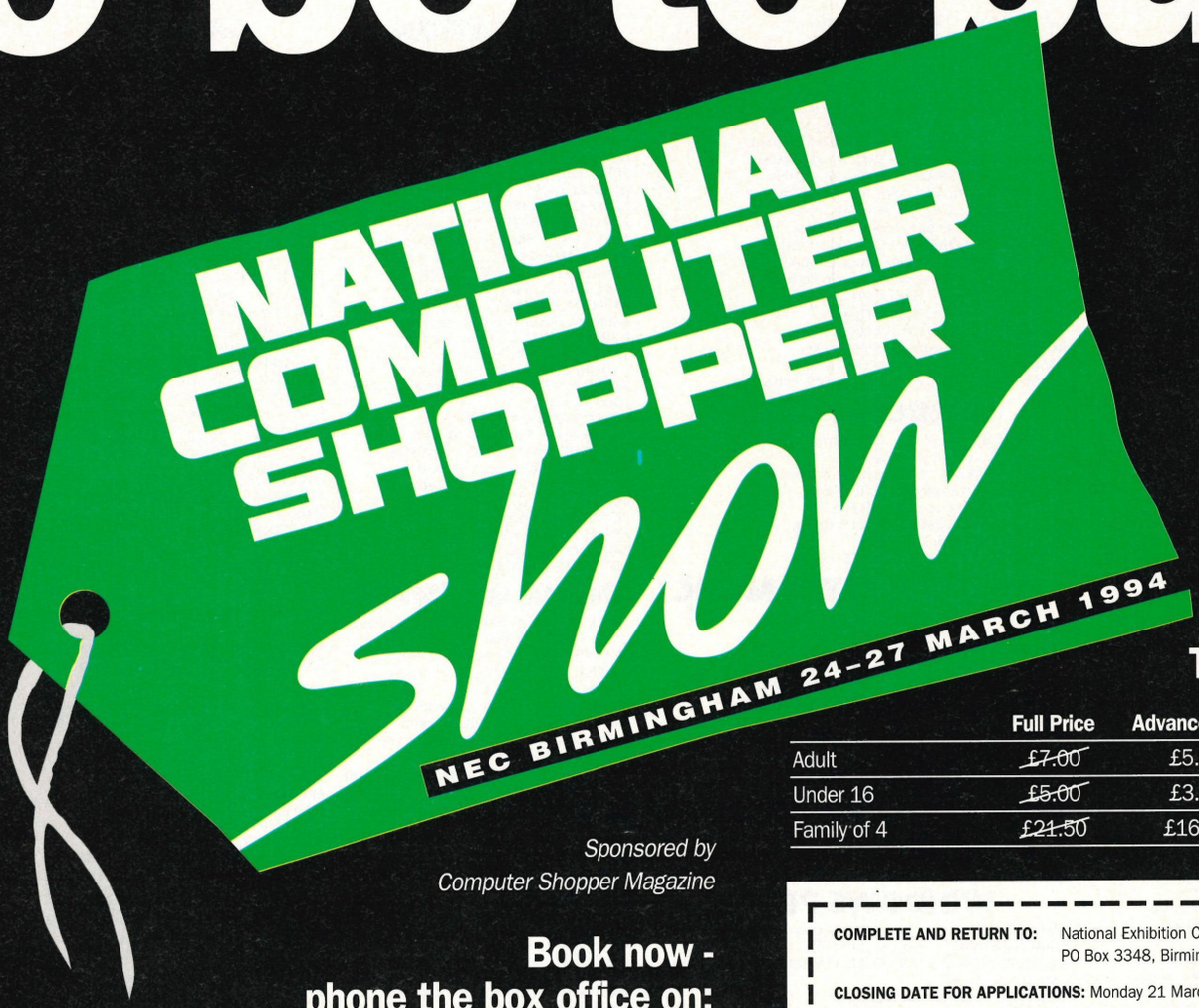

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DORK'S DREAMS -Starring Dork the Dinosuar.
DARTS GAME - Play 301, killer and other darts.
6 CARD GAMES - Bridge, Poker, Patience, Rummy
SQUAREZ - Best ever Tetris type game with bombs.
RAPID RESPONSE - Tactical war simulator by MVP.
WORLD CUP CRICKET - Cricket game simulation.
BARON BALDRIC - Good new platform game.
NIGHT RAID - Excellent new arcade game.
RESCUE ROVER - Rescue the dogs - by ID s/ware.
JOHNNY DASH in MONSTER BASH - New Apogee.
ZONE 66 - 91% review in PC Format. Epic games.
SOLAR WINDS - Strategic space RPG by Epic.
ELECTRO BODY - Top quality speaking platformer.
ELF LAND - Like Apogees Commander Keen.
JETPACK - Good platform game
HEXXAGON - One of the best ever puzzle games.

APOGEE GAMES

SPEAR OF DESTINY - Follow up to Wolfenstein.
WOLFENSTEIN 3D - Virtual reality, shoot the Nazis.
WOLFENSTEIN EXTRAS - Maps, cheats, pacmen.
CATACOMB ABYSS 3D - 3D Fantasy adventure.
COSMO'S COSMIC ADVENTURES - Best platformer.
MAJOR STRYKER - Excellent parallax shoot-em up.
KEEN DREAMS - Latest Keen platform game.
COMMANDER KEEN 6 - Aliens ate my babysitter.
COMMANDER KEEN 4 - Goodbye Galaxy best Keen.
COMMANDER KEEN 1 - Marooned on Mars.
DUKE NUKEM - Save the world from evil Dr Proton.
REDUKE - 12 extra levels for Duke Nukem
SECRET AGENT 006 - Top licensed to kill platform.
CYRSTAL CAVES - Brilliant massive platform game.
PAGANITZU - Superb 20 level Boulderdash game.
DARK AGES - Protect kingdom against a warlord.
MATHS RESCUE - The best maths education.
WORD RESCUE - The best spelling education.

EPIC MEGAGAMES

KEN'S LABYRINTH - Wolf 3D type game (2Mb RAM)
JILL OF THE JUNGLE - 16 level good platformer.
KILOBLASTER - Fast EGA/VGA 30 level shoot em
BRIX - 100 Levels of an excellent puzzle concept.
PHYLOX - Jetman style game with good graphics.
OVERKILL - Brilliant scrolling arcade game.
ANCIENTS 1 DEATHWATCH - Brilliant RPG.

TOP GAMES

LAST HALF OF DARKNESS - Graphics adventure.
FORD SIMULATOR III - We have it on 1 disk.
HUGO'S HOUSE OF HORRORS - Rescue Penelope.
HUGO II WHODUNNIT - Solve the murder.
HUGO III JUNGLE OF DOOM (2) - Best adventure.
PC PRO GOLF - Play a round of golf on one course.
POWER CHESS - Top chess game.
CLASSIC PINBALL - V.good pinball simulator.
SHOOTING GALLERY - 7 different shooting events.
WIZRDS LAIR - Fantasy D&D adventure game.
GLOBAL WARFARE - Like the board game Risk.
DULLES TOWER AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL - Sim.
INSTRUMENT FLIGHT TRAINER - Pilot training.
ONE-NIL - The best football management game.
BATFISH SUBMARINE COMMAND - Sub Sim
CATCH IF YOU CAN - Good baseball game.
STARFIRE - Excellent space arcade game.
MORAFF'S WORLD - Best D&D game.
MORE J JONG - New monster Mahjong.
JIGSAW PUZZLE VGA - Good for kids.
SNAKES AND LADDERS - Superb VGA game.
MAHJONG - Addictive oriental tile game
SPACE FLIGHT SIMULATOR - Rocket sim
GREEN - Good puzzle, many levels & EGA+
CADDIE HACK GOLF - 18 hole 3D game.
CAPTURE THE FLAG - VGA animated combat.
MEGATRON 3D(2) - Role playing adventure.
INDIANA JONES FATE - Shareware version.
MARIO VGA - Collect coins, tip up tortoises.
SANDSTORM - Gulf war sim with scuds.
MORKIN 2 - D&D game kill the wizard.
DRACULA IN LONDON - Graphic adventure.
GALACTIX - 100 level brill shoot-em-up.
AVARICIUS - Amusing adventure in Pompeii.
ZENTRIS - Excellent Tetris game.
1993TRIS - Updated Tetris variation.
SCORCHED EARTH - VGA battle tanks.
MELTDOWN - Prevent nuclear disaster.
XMAS LEMMINGS - Dressed as Santa.
LLAMATRON - Best shoot-em-up 100 levels.

WINDOWS GAMES

THE GREENS - NEW mini golf game.
MAHJONG - Windows version.
DARE TO DREAM - Epic nightmare 2Mb.
CASTLE OF THE WINDS - Epic RPG.
POP QUIZ - Test your knowledge.
5 GAMES FOR WINDOWS inc Pacman.
BACKGAMMON & CHESS.
BATTLE ON DISTANT PLANETS - 2Mb.

SOUNDBLASTER MUSIC

BLASTER MASTER 5.2. - Edit sound files.
WOW II - MOD music player.
MUSICOLOGY - Play Amiga music.
JMPLAYER - 15/31 instrument Amiga player.
DRUMBLASTER - Electronic drum machine.
GFMUSIC - 255 track prof MIDI sequencer.
SEQUENCER PLUS - Elaborate MIDI control.
PANIC - Brill Future Crew demo with gfx.
UNREAL - 386+ top Future Crew demo.
TRAKBLASTER - Play Amiga MOD files.
TREKVOCS - 6 Star Trek VOC files.
MUSIC STYLES MIDI FILES - Blues, Drums, Reggae, Motown, New Wave, Rock.
SOUND EFFECTS VOC FILES - Car starting, breaking glass, nuclear explosion, barking, cannon firing, gun shot, water dripping, etc.

WINDOWS PROGS

MULTI-LABEL - Avery laser label printer.
DRAG AND VIEW - View any text file.
CORTEX BUSINESS MANAGER - English accounting and database with VAT.
WINFRACT - Fractint for Windows.
WINSPELL - Spellchecker for Write.
WALLPAPER ART - 12 BMP pictures.
WYNDFIELDS - Relational database.
ABOVE & BEYOND- Task scheduling.
PC PROJECT - Project management.
FRONT WINDOW - File manager.
JAMWARE AFRICAN ANIMALS BMP £13.
JAMWARE ICONS - nearly 2000 of them.
IKE - Icon editor/designer.
TRUE TYPE FONTS - 140 fonts and an installer - all for £15.
ADOBE TYPE FONTS - As above £15.
MDRAW - Easy to use CAD.
RFFLOW - Flow chart maker.
TOMMYSOFT CAD(2) - Brilliant CAD
GRAPHICS WORKSHOP 1.1F
WINZIP - Front end of PKZip, Arj.
VISUAL BASIC TOOLS & UTILS (2).
VXBASE - Visual basic library.
PAINT SHOP PRO - File converter/viewer.
CD PLAYER - Play & catalogue CD's.
WINCHECK - Blank account manager.
WOPR - Word for Windows macros.

UTILITIES

FORMATQM & COPYQM - Quick multiple.
MCAFEE ANTI VIRUS v1.04.
FILE COMPRESSORS PKZip, Arj, Arc
QUIK MENU III - Icon front end.
POWERMENU - Top selling front end.
HYPERDISK - Disk caching.
SAFEPAK - Disk defragmenter.
SYSTEM 76 - Menu, file & disk utils.
INTEGRITY MASTER - Virus & system checks.
PC TALK - Make talking batch files.
POWER BATCH - Make EXE batch files.
SYDEX UTILS - Convert from CPM.
4DOS - Extra DOS commands.
DISK TREE - Like XTREE.

EDUCATION

GCSE MATHEMATICS - Calfacts.
GCSE PHYSICS - Multiple Choice.
GCSE SCIENCE - National curric.
GCSE COMPUTER STUDIES
HORRAY FOR HENRIETTA - Maths for 4-10 years.
HENRIETTA'S BOOK OF SPELLS.
SPELLBOUND - Spelling 4-10 yrs.
ANIMAL QUEST - About animals.
ANIMATED ALPHABET - for infants.
ANIMATED MATHS - for infants.
AMY'S FIRST PRIMER - infants games.
BERT'S DINOSAURS - drawing fun
SENIOR PHYSICS FACTS - age 15+
SAVE THE PLANET - Excellent.
MONKEY BUSINESS - Infants story.
FRENCH TUTOR - Learn French.
GERMAN TUTOR - Learn German.
SPANISH TUTOR - Learn Spanish.
LANGRANS - French translator.
WORD TRANSLATOR - German & Danish 1000's of words.
WORD TRANSLATOR - Russian, Portuguese & Spanish 1000s of words.
ATLAS OF THE WORLD - database.
PC TUTOR - All about computers.
PC CAI - make interactive lessons.
KIDS TRIVIA - Quiz for 10 to adult.
PC FASTYPE VGA - typing tutor.
ABC FUN KEYS - Music & pictures.
BILLBOARD VGA - Colouring book.
ADVENTURE MATH for 5-8 years.

DBASE & S/SHEET

FILE EXPRESS(3) Powerful menu driven dbase with on screen help.
WAMPUM4.2. 400 fields per record.
PC FILE 7 (3) Report gen, charts & graphs, simple dbase.
AS EASY AS 5.5 - Top spreadsheet.
INSTACALC 3 - powerful s/sheet.
PC CALC PLUS 2(3) - Integrates with PC file and PC Write.
EXPRESSCALC 4.1(2) - Large s/sheets up to 16384 cells.
INFORMATION PLEASE - Free format text storage/retrieval.
ZEPHYR - Relational FoxPro 2 compatible DBMS.
LOTUS LEARNING SYSTEM - Learn Lotus 123 v2.01.
LOTUS WORKSHEET COLLECTION - Macro learning & loads worksheets.
HYDROFLO - Linear hydraulics.
KWIKSTAT - Statistics package.
CATALOG-ON-A-DISK For any goods.
HOUSEHOLD REGISTER - Keep a list of contents for insurance.

HOBBIES/INTERESTS

NIGHT SKY(2) - Plots 24000 stars.
ASTROMART - Produces astrological charts with planet positions.
ASTRO(2) - Astrological analysis.
ASTRAL WINDOWS - Produces charts for any major town from 1800-2000.
HORARY HELPER - Horary astrology.
BIORHYTHMS UNLIMITED
BROTHERS KEEPER(2) - Genealogy.
TREES - Printed tree diagrams.
FOOTBALL FORECAST - Win the Pools.
PUNTERS PAL - Horses predictor.
OWZAT - Keep cricketing stats.
CLUB MEMBERSHIP SYSTEM
ORGANISE RECORDS & TAPES.
ORGANISE YOUR BOOKS/MAGS.
ORGANISE YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS.
CYCLISTS COMPANION.
10 pin BOWLING LEAGUE SECRETARY.
VIDEO LIBRARIAN - video collectors.
THE MOVIES DATABASE - 4500 films.
STAMP COLLECTOR - for philatelists.
EDNAS COOKBOOK- recipe database.
FREDS RECIPES(2)- 3500 for Ednas
CASSY - Dewey books library system.
LEAGUE MANAGER - for sports clubs.
VIDEO MANAGEMENT SYSTEM - for video rental/sales shops.
SHAREGENIUS - Monitor shares.
HAM RADIO - Loads - please ring.
MEDPAS(2) - medical reference.
DIET ANALYSIS - Lose weight.
GARDENERS ASSISTANT
LANDSCAPE PLANT MANAGER.
HOME PLAN - Create floor plans.
FAMILY TREE JOURNAL - Make family history books.

GRAPHICS

ENVISION PUBLISHERv1.54 - Top DTP.
NEOPAINT v2.04 - Best graphics prog.
NEOPAINT FONTS 1 - 20 extra fonts.
NEOPAINT FONTS 2 - 20 more fonts.
NEOSHOW - NEW Presentation maker.
JURASSIC CAD - Design & draw dinosaurs - needs 2Mb RAM.
GRAPHICS WORKSHOP for DOS.
MVPAINT - Create & edit PCX in VGA & SVGA.
DESKTOP PAINT - Create & edit BMP.
SCREEN THIEF - Screen capture that captures everything, even games.
PERSISTENCE OF VISION (2) - POVRAY amazing raytracing package 2Mb.
DKBTRACE - Predecessor to POVRAY
POV-CAD - Computer aided design.
MORAY - editor for POVRAY.
T-SQUARE(2) - Wire frame CAD.
DANCAD 3D(3) - Superb 3D CAD.
PC-DOGS(2HD) - Once on 9 disks.
DRAFT CHOICE - Easy to use CAD.
PROTOCAD - Very powerful CAD.
CHARTS UNLIMITED - Produce flow & all kinds of charts.
QUICKROUTE -PCB circuit design.
PC TRACE - Circuit board design.
PADS PCB(3) - Professional PCB design.
CAL CONFUSION AND LIGHT - Fractal drawing from CGA to SVGA.
RECURSIVE REALM - Mandlebrot fractal generator.
FRACTINT v17 - Fractal generator.
PRINT PARTNER - Make banners, cards, signs, etc.
TURBOFLOW - Good flowchart prog.
EXPRESSGRAPH - Graphing system.

BUSINESS/ACCOUNTS

PAGE FINANCIAL CONTROLLER(2)
FREEWAY CASHBOOK v4.5(3)
FREEWAY LEDGERMASTER 2.1(3)
FREEWAY PAYEMASTER v2 (3)
NOYES SIMPLE ACCOUNTS v3.0
NOYES P11d EXPENSE ANALYSER
NOYES ACCOUNTS v2.0b
NOYES CASHBOOK ANALYSER V6.0
ULTIMATE SALES PROGRAM(2) v4
FORMGEN II - Superb form generator.
FORMGEN FILL - Fill in Formgen forms.
FORMGEN HOME FORM COLLECTION
FORMGEN BUSINESS FORM COLLEC.
EZ FORMS EXECUTIVE - Forms gen.
625 BUSINESS LETTERS for your WP.
MR LABEL - Top labelling package.
PLAIN VANILLA LABELS - Easy to use.
ODYSSEY COMMS V1.5.
KERMIT v1.3 - Standard world comms.
PC WRITE ADVANCED LEVEL v4(2) - top WP from Quicksoft.
WORD FUGUE v3(2) - Good WP
GALAXY LITE v1.7 - Ram based WP.
PC TYPE IV(2) - Major WP.
PC WRITE STANDARD LEVEL v2(2)
BY DESIGN - Graphics add on for Word Perfect.
WORD PERFECT 5.1 LEARNING SYS.
MACRO PROGRAMMING WITH WORD PERFECT 5.1 - Tutorial
PAGE CHEQUEBOOK - Home accounts.
SHAREGENIUS - Monitor shares.
625 BUSINESS LETTERS - All sorts.
TASK MASTER - Project management.
ODYSSEY - Top comms package.
LEADMASTER - For sales offices
SUPERSTOCK - Stock control
GEOCLOCK 5 - Map & time
JORJ DICTIONARY - Superb RAM based pop up dictionary.
THESAUR & THESAUR PLUS.

CLIP ART PCX/GIF

JAMWARE AFRICAN ANIMALS - 21 screen 256 colour photo quality pics supplied on 5 disks GIF or PCX £13.
MOSSBURN FAMOUS FACES PCX
DINOSAURS & PREHISTORIC GIF.
HOLIDAY SNAPS (2) - Xmas, Easter, Halloween and many more PCX.
COOPER CARTOONS(2) - 329 pics of your favourite cartoon characters PCX.
COOPER SET PCX(2) - 1800 various pics compressed.
100 GIF FILES(5) In full colour loads of colour & mono GIF & PCX files - please call for requests.

Access

0474 325802

VISA

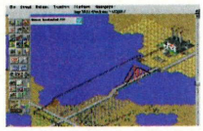
PD SELECTION THE WHITE HOUSE, IMPERIAL BUSINESS ESTATE, CLIFTON MARINE PARADE
GRAVESEND KENT DA11 0DY

REVIEWS INDEX

Our unbeatable reviews service starts here. Over the next 50 pages, you'll find the very latest games, CD-ROM titles and budget releases appraised and dissected in PC Review's inimitable style, as detailed below

TWO MINUTES

If you've got some saved games from the original SimCity kicking around on your hard disk, you can import these into the new game. I haven't, but I'd prefer to start from scratch anyway. Here's one I prepared earlier ...



The first step is to find a nice, flat spot on your map and then lay down some zones. Towns seem to do well if they're located by the river, so that's where I've started. Just add a power station and some power lines and you're away.



People have started to move in and set up home, so I'm going to put in a water supply. You'll need to build some water pumps, preferably by the river, and then go to the underground map and link them to the water grid with some large pipes.



Peckham is growing steadily, and buildings are starting to pop up everywhere. To attract people to your town you'll need a fairly low tax rate and a healthy environment — too much crime, pollution and unemployment will deter them from moving in.



With that in mind, I'm going to adjust my budget. Your financial advisers and service managers will tell you where you need to invest your cash, but with limited funds, you can't always afford to keep them all happy. Just do your best.

of urban sprawling

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!

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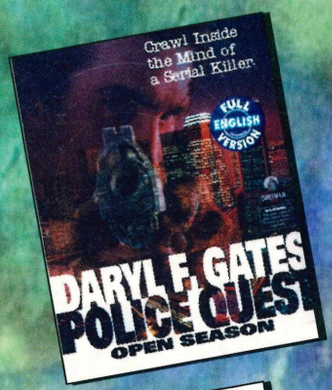
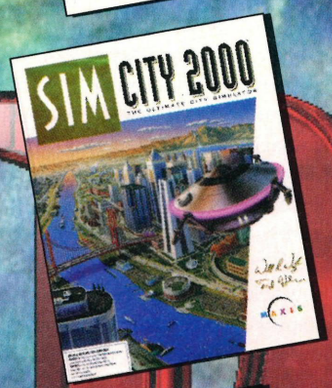
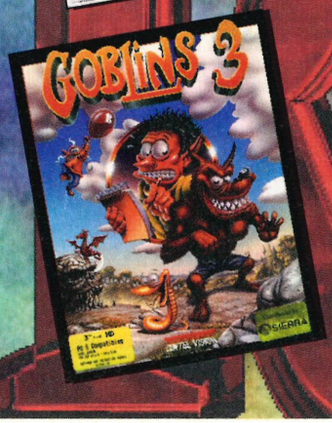






ALTERNATIVELY



Beneath a Steel Sky
Revolution/Virgin, £39.99
Rated 8, Issue 27
If you like your adventures mean, moody and atmospheric, Steel Sky should suit you down to the ground. Unlike Gabriel Knight, Steel Sky has a bleak, futuristic setting, but its fast paced action and black humour is equally appealing. Renowned comic artist Dave "Watchmen" Gibbons provided the artwork, and the graphics are truly marvellous. A compelling and challenging game.



Alone in the Dark 2
Infogrames, £44.99
Rated 9, Issue 28
Alone 2 is a different style of game from Gabriel Knight, but shares its spooky voodoo theme. It is both bigger and tougher than the original Alone in the Dark, and also has a tad more humour. The graphics are exceptionally good, blending highly detailed bitmapped backgrounds with quirky, polygon-based sprites. Be warned, though, it's hellishly difficult.

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

A 386 is the minimum, but I'd recommend a 486 for speedier loading and smoother scrolling. You'll need 4Mb RAM, 3Mb of which should be expanded memory. A sound card is highly recommended too — the humorous voice effects and music are worth a listen.

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	30Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	×	EGA	×
VGA	✓	SVGA	×
Tandy	×		

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓
Sound Blaster	✓		

Control

Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse ×

Performance

Optimum speed	33MHz
Minimum memory	640K
Free RAM required	580K

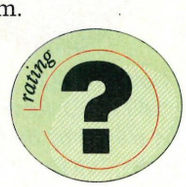
Verdict
A compelling and humorous arcade puzzle game.
7

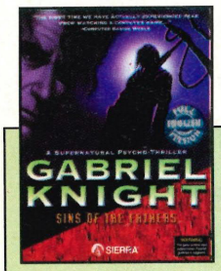
TECHSPEC

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



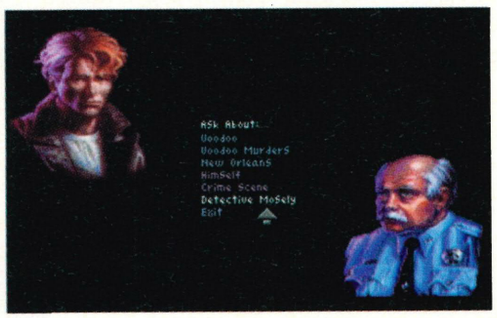


Title	**Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers**
Publisher	**Sierra**
Contact	**(0734) 303171**
Price	**£39.99 disk/£44.99 CD-ROM**

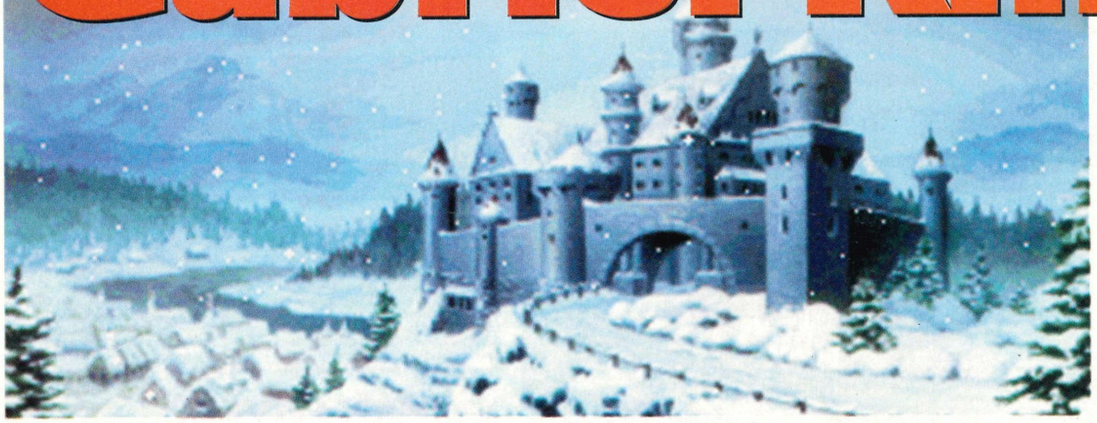
It doesn't have the word 'Quest' in the title and it isn't a sequel. Good grief, it finally looks as though Sierra has decided to do something new

Gabriel Knight:

One of the first things you should do on day one is to ask your assistant Grace if there are any messages for you. Apparently, your friend Detective Mosely called, saying that he has left some photos for you at the front desk of the police station.



When you arrive at the police station, it turns out that Mosely has gone to the scene of a crime — another Voodoo murder, perhaps? Desk Sergeant Frick refuses to give you the location of the crime scene, but he'll let you have those photos.



Schloss Ritter in Germany is one of the many interesting places Gabriel gets to visit.

If there's one thing a graphic adventure needs, it's atmosphere. Sure, it has to look good and, more importantly, be fun to play, but unless it has atmosphere it will lack that element of escape which makes a good adventure so thoroughly absorbing. Gabriel Knight doesn't just have atmosphere, it redefines the term. Have you ever read a book so gripping that you lose track of time? I had the same experience playing Gabriel Knight. It's so well written, so compelling and so intriguing that it's all too easy to lose yourself in it. And like a good book, you won't want to put it down until it reaches the conclusion.

If I'm starting to sound like the person who writes Sierra's adverts, I apologise, but I haven't enjoyed an adventure as much as this since I played the first Monkey Island game. Gabriel Knight had me glued to the screen for ten days solid: every new discovery keeps you wanting to play for that little bit longer. Few games are able to maintain a high level of interest throughout, but in Gabriel Knight, your interest actually increases as you progress. Just when you think you're close to finishing it, the plot takes another unexpected turn and you find yourself facing a whole new set of challenges.

Set in modern day New Orleans, Gabriel Knight is a supernatural thriller which explores the darker aspects of Voodoo. Gabriel is a struggling writer whose taste for alcohol and expensive women is not exactly helping bank balance.

After reading about a series of murders which seem to be connected with voodoo, Gabriel feels inspired to write a novel and sets about researching the facts. His investigation leads him in to a series of dangerous situations, and soon he finds that his life is at risk. What he doesn't realise is that a voodoo priestess once placed a curse on his family after his ancestor, a witch hunter, loved and then betrayed her. The only clue he has to this



Gabriel Knight. In the 'talkie' CD version, he is played by British actor Tim Curry.



Grace Nakimura is Gabriel's assistant. She doesn't put up with any nonsense.



Grandma Knight raised Gabriel after his parents were killed in a car crash.



Mosely is in charge of the murder investigation. Mark Hamill plays him in the CD version.

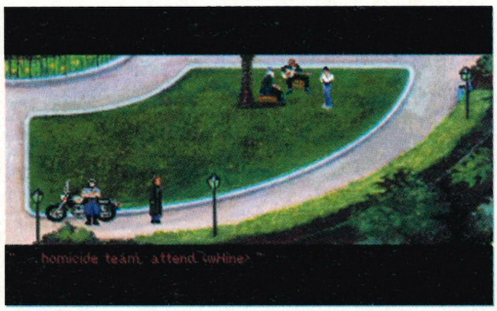


Malia Gedde is the beautiful heiress and murder suspect who Gabriel falls for.

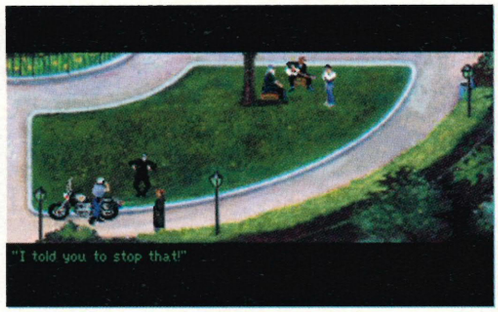


Dr. John owns the Voodoo Museum and is played by Michael "Worf" Dorn on CD.

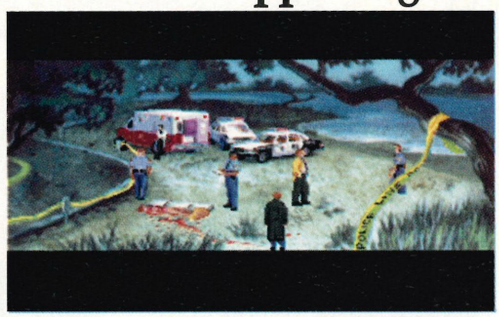
MINUTES of sinister happenings



Jackson Square is the local haunt for musicians and entertainers, as well as people who fancy a bit of fresh air. This cop has a police radio on his bike — if you could distract him for a little while you might be able to get close enough to listen in.



The mime artist is making a nuisance of himself by following people around and mimicking their behaviour. Try luring him over to the cop and see what happens. Once the cop has run off in pursuit of the mime, you can make good use of that radio.



Sure enough, you find out exactly where the murder has taken place. You arrive at the crime scene just in time to get a good look at the corpse, which seems to be missing its heart. Time for a chat with Mosely, the guy who's wearing the tasteful yellow jacket.

Sins of the Fathers

murky past is a series of recurring nightmares, but as the game unfolds, he begins to discover more about his family history and must strive to break the curse.

Gabriel Knight has been billed as an adult game, which is just as well when you consider the disturbing nature of its subject matter. This is definitely not a game for the weak of stomach. Skulls are smashed, hearts are ripped out and there are gruesome close-ups of murder victims and twitching, mutilated chickens. The violence isn't entirely gratuitous because it's integral to the plot, but if you prefer your games cute and fluffy, this probably isn't for you.

As well as being a cracking good story, Gabriel Knight also presents the player with plenty of challenges. Most of the puzzles are very logical and involve uncovering evidence and getting information out of people. That doesn't make it easy, however. Progress comes in fits and starts, and it's very easy to miss a vital clue or two. It can become frustrating at times, but fortunately this is the kind of game in which you'll want to keep on plugging away because you're anxious to find out what happens next.

Another thing which might slow your progress is the fact that you can get killed. You should get through the first few days of the adventure with few problems, but after day nine I died with frustrating regularity. Still, I'm glad I persisted because the climax is well worth waiting for. Gabriel Knight is so enjoyable because you're never entirely sure just what's around the corner, so I'm not going to spoil it for you by giving too much away.

All of the characters have a very strong identity — there isn't a weak one

Voodoo ceremonies seem to involve lots of half naked people dancing around a fire at midnight. No wonder Gabriel's interested.





Willy Walker runs the Dixieland Drug Store which sells all sorts of Voodoo paraphernalia.



Magentia Moonbeam is a Voodooienne who likes to dance with her pet boa constrictor.



Professor Hartridge is an expert on African religions, particularly Voudoun.



Madame Cazaunoux is a staunch catholic but that doesn't stop her believing in voodoo.



Crash is a drug addict and informer who operates within the criminal underworld.



Wolfgang Ritter is the mysterious German who's anxious to get in touch with Gabriel.

New Orleans French Quarter



A. St George Bookshop — Gabriel's home.
B. Jackson Square.
C. Jackson Square Overlook.
D. St Louis Cathedral.
E. Napoleon House.
F. The Police station.
G. Dixieland Drug Store.
H. The Voodoo Museum.
I. St Louis Cemetery #1.
J. Magentia Moonbeam's Voodoo parlour.
K. Madame Cazaunoux's house.

ALTERNATIVELY



Beneath a Steel Sky
Revolution/Virgin, £39.99
Rated 8, Issue 27
If you like your adventures mean, moody and atmospheric, Steel Sky should suit you down to the ground. Unlike Gabriel Knight, Steel Sky has a bleak, futuristic setting, but its fast paced action and black humour is equally appealing. Renowned comic artist Dave "Watchmen" Gibbons provided the artwork, and the graphics are truly marvellous. A compelling and challenging game.



Alone in the Dark 2
Infogrames, £44.99
Rated 9, Issue 28
Alone 2 is a different style of game from Gabriel Knight, but shares its spooky voodoo theme. It is both bigger and tougher than the original Alone in the Dark, and also has a tad more humour. The graphics are exceptionally good, blending highly detailed bitmapped backgrounds with quirky, polygon-based sprites. Be warned, though, it's hellishly difficult.

amongst them. Gabriel himself is very likeable, despite the fact that he's vain and fancies himself as a bit of a Don Juan. Much of the game's humour revolves around his vanity and promiscuity, and his friends Mosely and Grace are always ready with a sarcastic put-down.

Something else this game has in its favour is beautiful presentation. Like Revolution's Beneath a Steel Sky (reviewed in Issue 27), Gabriel Knight comes packaged with a scene setting comic (Sierra describes it as a graphic novel but I think 'novella' would have been more apt). It's pretty classy as comics go, so don't be put off if it isn't your usual kind of reading material.

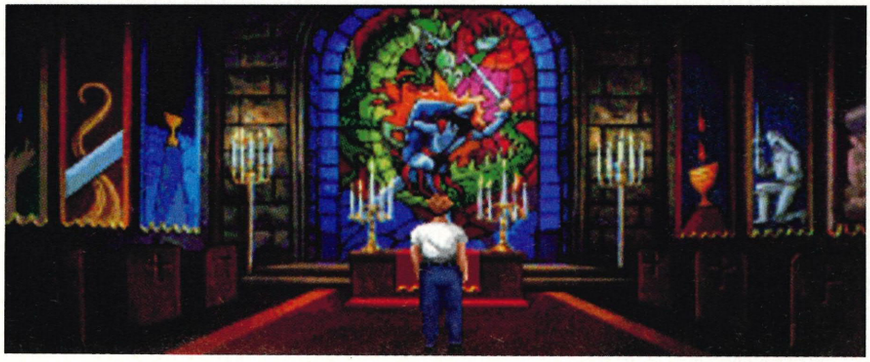
The graphics are colourful and detailed, whilst the animation is, for the most part, very good. One thing I wasn't quite sure about was Gabriel's walk — his legs looked a bit rubbery and he sometimes appeared to skate across the floor instead of walking. This is a minor point though, and didn't detract from the overall game.

Unlike Steel Sky and LucasArt's Sam and Max, the graphics aren't full screen — you get the same kind of letterbox effect that you would if you were watching a wide screen movie on television. The top strip houses the control bar, from which you can access the inventory and game controls, whilst the bottom strip is used to displaying messages. The control bar normally only appears when you move the mouse pointer to the top of the screen, but you have the option to keep it on display all the time.

The interface isn't the simplest I've come across, but it works well enough. Actions can either be selected by using the right mouse button to cycle though the available options (walk, pick up and so on), rather like Sam and Max, or you can swap actions via the icons on the control bar. Using the latter option is easier if you're in a situation which requires careful timing, because if you're trying to change actions with the mouse it's very easy to go straight past the one you want.

Gabriel Knight has the best soundtrack I've heard since Monkey Island, and a CD 'talkie' version is also on the way which features — shock horror — well known actors rather than the usual bunch of movie extras and soap stars.

So far I've had nothing but praise for Gabriel Knight, but it has a couple of small problems which cause it to fall just short of perfect.





The inventory box can be accessed via the control bar at the top of the screen. You'll find yourself carrying around a host of bizarre objects, but fortunately Gabriel has bottomless pockets.

While playing, I got a couple of odd error messages, though nothing serious, but the most annoying thing for me was the length of time it took to load a saved game. If you try to load a saved game from within the game environment, it seems to take forever. The first few times I tried it I thought my PC had hung, and I found it quicker to exit to DOS and then load the game from there.

Small annoyances aside, Gabriel Knight is a lot of fun, and it's not often that you come across a game which has both quantity and quality. Most adventures take me around two or three days to complete, but I played this one almost solidly for ten days. It's even good enough to play a second time, if you feel so inclined.

LucasArts' Day of the Tentacle was my favourite adventure of 1993, but unfortunately it was too brief a pleasure. Could Gabriel Knight be the best adventure of 1994? It's too early to say, but it is, in any case, the best adventure Sierra has ever produced. I'm looking forward to the sequel already.

■ Cal Jones

Bottom left: The chapel at Schloss Ritter is the scene of one ceremony which has absolutely nothing to do with voodoo whatsoever.

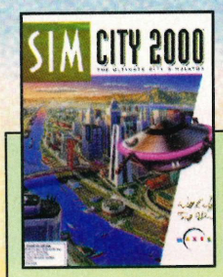
Techspec

Gabriel Knight can be installed to run under either DOS or Windows. You'll need a 386 or better, running MS-DOS 5.0 or higher or, if you're installing it under Windows, a 486 running Windows 3.1 in VGA 640x480 256 colour mode.

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	**33MHz**					
	Minimum memory	**4Mb**					
	Free RAM required	**585K**					

rating **9**

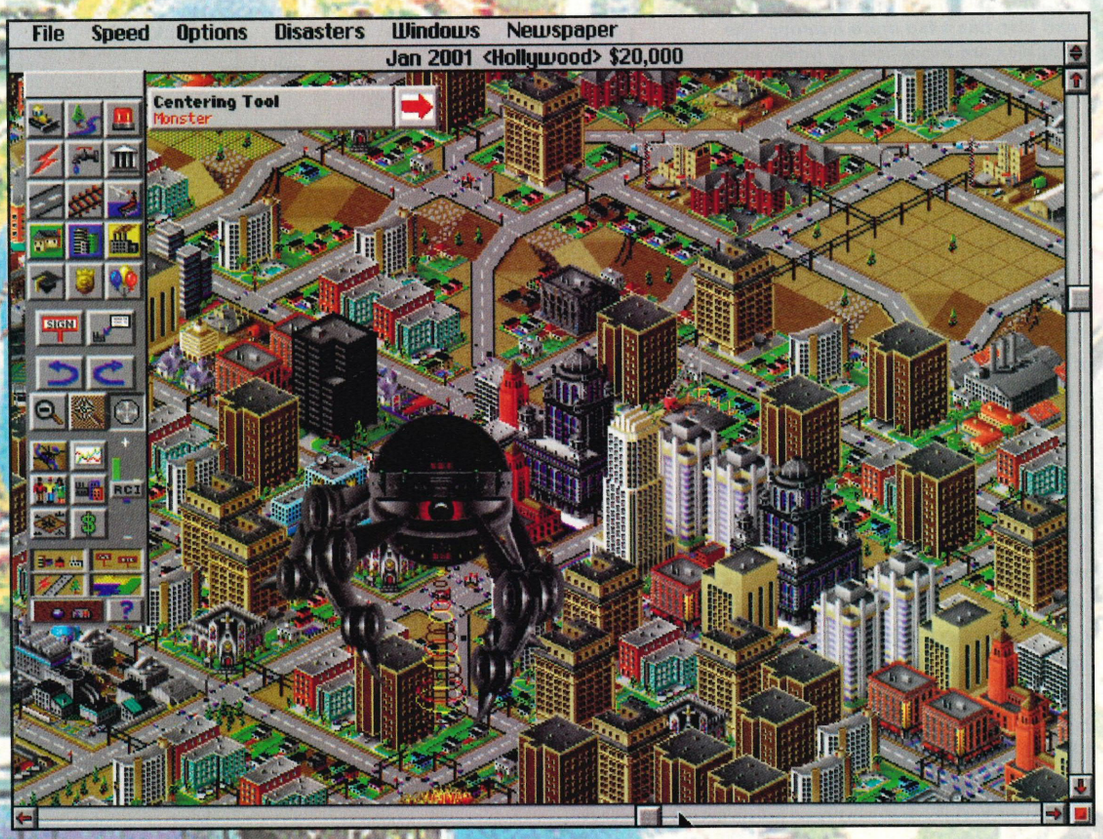
Verdict
Thoroughly captivating, Gabriel Knight must surely be one of the high spots of 1994



Title	SimCity 2000
Publisher	Maxis
Contact	(071) 490 2333
Price	£39.99

The godfather of all god sims returns, and this time it's even better. Get ready for some late nights ...

SimCity 2000



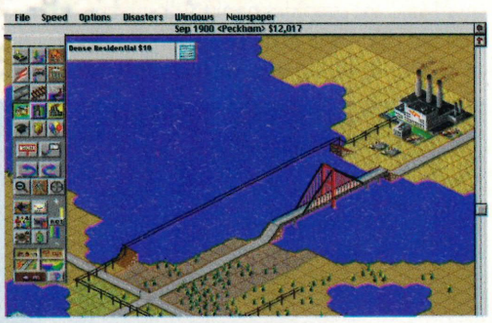
Like SimCity, this game comes with several pre-generated scenarios. Each has its own objective must be achieved within a set time. These vary from lifting a town out of recession to stopping a giant monster from rampaging through Hollywood.

SimCity (the original) is a game about town planning. Your job, as mayor, is to build a city from scratch using your limited budget and then try and turn it into a sprawling metropolis filled with contented citizens. Every town needs residential zones for your people to live in, industrial zones where they can work and commercial zones so that they can shop or conduct business. On top of this, you also have to provide a power station for electricity, roads and rail, police and fire stations, education and leisure facilities. This all costs money. And where do you get the money? Taxes, of course. You can't afford to extend your city or even maintain what's already there unless you've got the cash, so you have to get your budget right. Tax your citizens too highly and they'll move away; don't tax them enough and you'll have a tough time staying in the black. Add to that factors such as high pollution, fluctuations in the economy and natural disasters and you suddenly realise that it's not as easy as it first sounds. Easy to get into, yes; easy to master, definitely not.

If you've never played SimCity, it probably sounds very dull. It isn't. Watching someone else play isn't terribly exciting, but you've only got to sit down in front of the game and before you know it, five hours have elapsed and you're wondering where the day went. There's something incredibly satisfying about watching the first few buildings go up when you've laid down a new zone, and once that happens, you're hooked. You've just got to keep on playing until you've built that stadium you were saving for, filled in that little gap on the other side of the river, added that new stretch of railway or whatever. Never mind addictive, SimCity can bring out the train spotter in anyone.

TWO

If you've got some saved games from the original SimCity kicking around on your hard disk, you can import these into the new game. I haven't, but I'd prefer to start from scratch anyway. Here's one I prepared earlier ...



The first step is to find a nice, flat spot on your map and then lay down some zones. Towns seem to do well if they're located by the river, so that's where I've started. Just add a power station and some power lines and you're away.



Waterfalls are the ideal site for a hydroelectric dam, as well as being a tourist attraction. Funny how the yachts can sail upstream, though.

Once you've achieved a population of 120,000, you can build an arcology (see arrow below). These weird constructions are cities within cities, and can house up to 60,000. There are four different types, and this baby at $200,000 is the most advanced.

So if it's that good, why did I ever stop playing it? Well, like all the other god-sim type games, once you've achieved a certain level of proficiency, your interest wanes and you move on to something else. Another reason, albeit a superficial one, is the graphics. SimCity is four years old and looks it. Consequently, Maxis has given the game a complete overhaul and a new name.

SimCity 2000 looks very different from the original, although it works along the same principles. Whereas the original used a two-dimensional top-down view, SimCity 2000 has 3D isometric graphics which allows for the inclusion of hills, valleys and all manner of other geographical features. In this respect it bears a strong resemblance to A-Train, the Maxis railroad sim, but unlike A-Train you can rotate the landscape through 360 degrees and zoom in and out to make it easier to build things in the right place.

Breaking new ground

The terrain can be edited before you start building your city, which is quite fun in itself. Land can be raised or lowered Populous-style, trees added and lakes and rivers created. If you're planning to power your city by building an eco-friendly hydroelectric dam, then you'll need to create a large waterfall first. You can even write your name across the landscape using trees There's nothing to stop you altering the landscape once you've started your city, but it's very expensive so you're better off doing it beforehand.

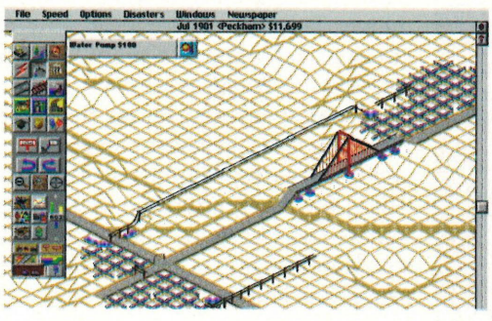
The differences between the two games aren't confined to appearances. SimCity 2000 has a lot more to it: there are many more things to build and financial planning is more complex. The first thing SimCity veterans will notice is that you don't place zones in the same way. SimCity had small, rectangular zones of pre-determined size which you plonked down onto the map. In SimCity 2000, the map is made up of small, one acre squares, and you can click and drag the zones to cover as many squares as you like. You could make your zones almost any shape, whether it's rectangular, square or L-shaped, but you need to bear in mind that people won't build more than three squares away from a road.

In addition, zones can be high or low density. Low density zones are cheaper to build, but the population won't be able to grow as large as in a high density zone.

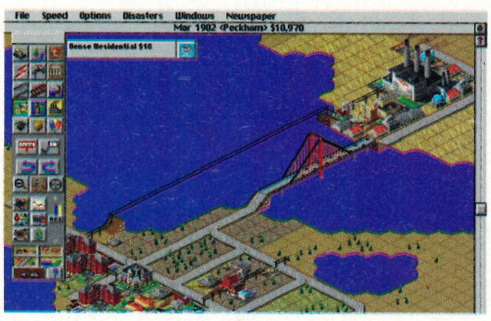
There are many more ways to power your city, too. In SimCity you could choose between coal and nuclear fission power stations, and both of these have been included in SimCity 2000. You also have the choice of oil, gas, microwave, nuclear fusion, wind, solar and hydro-electric power. All power sources have their advantages and disadvantages: some are cheap but inefficient, some pollute more than others and some are just plain expensive. All power plants have to be replaced every 50 years, which is worth bearing in mind if you're thinking of investing $40,000 in a nuclear



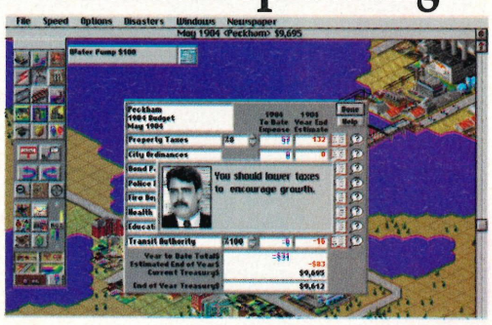
MINUTES of urban sprawling



People have started to move in and set up home, so I'm going to put in a water supply. You'll need to build some water pumps, preferably by the river, and then go to the underground map and link them to the water grid with some large pipes.



Peckham is growing steadily, and buildings are starting to pop up everywhere. To attract people to your town you'll need a fairly low tax rate and a healthy environment — too much crime, pollution and unemployment will deter them from moving in.



With that in mind, I'm going to adjust my budget. Your financial advisers and service managers will tell you where you need to invest your cash, but with limited funds, you can't always afford to keep them all happy. Just do your best.

The newspaper is a good source of information. The editor's comment lets you know how popular you are and where you're going wrong, and you'll also be informed when new inventions arrive or the power station needs to be replaced.

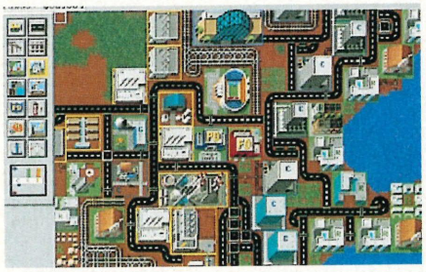
fusion reactor.

New technology only becomes available once it has been invented, so don't expect to be able to build a nuclear fusion plant in 1920. This also holds true for the various modes of transport: if you choose to start the game in 1900, you'll be restricted to roads and railways — tube trains, raised freeways and bus depots come later.

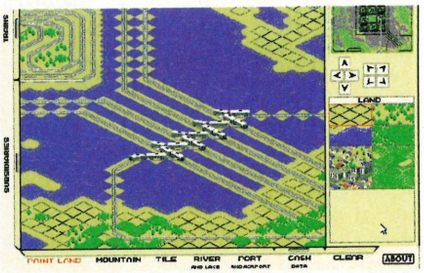
So what else is new in SimCity 2000? The ports and airports are still there, constructed in the same way as any other zone. The leisure facilities have expanded to include zoos and marinas along with stadiums and parks, and there are more city services to provide. Not only will you have to find funds for the police and fire departments, but you'll need hospitals, prisons, schools, colleges, libraries and even museums. Not all of these services are essential, but they can make all the difference between being mayor of Hicksville, Arizona and Metropolis, New York.



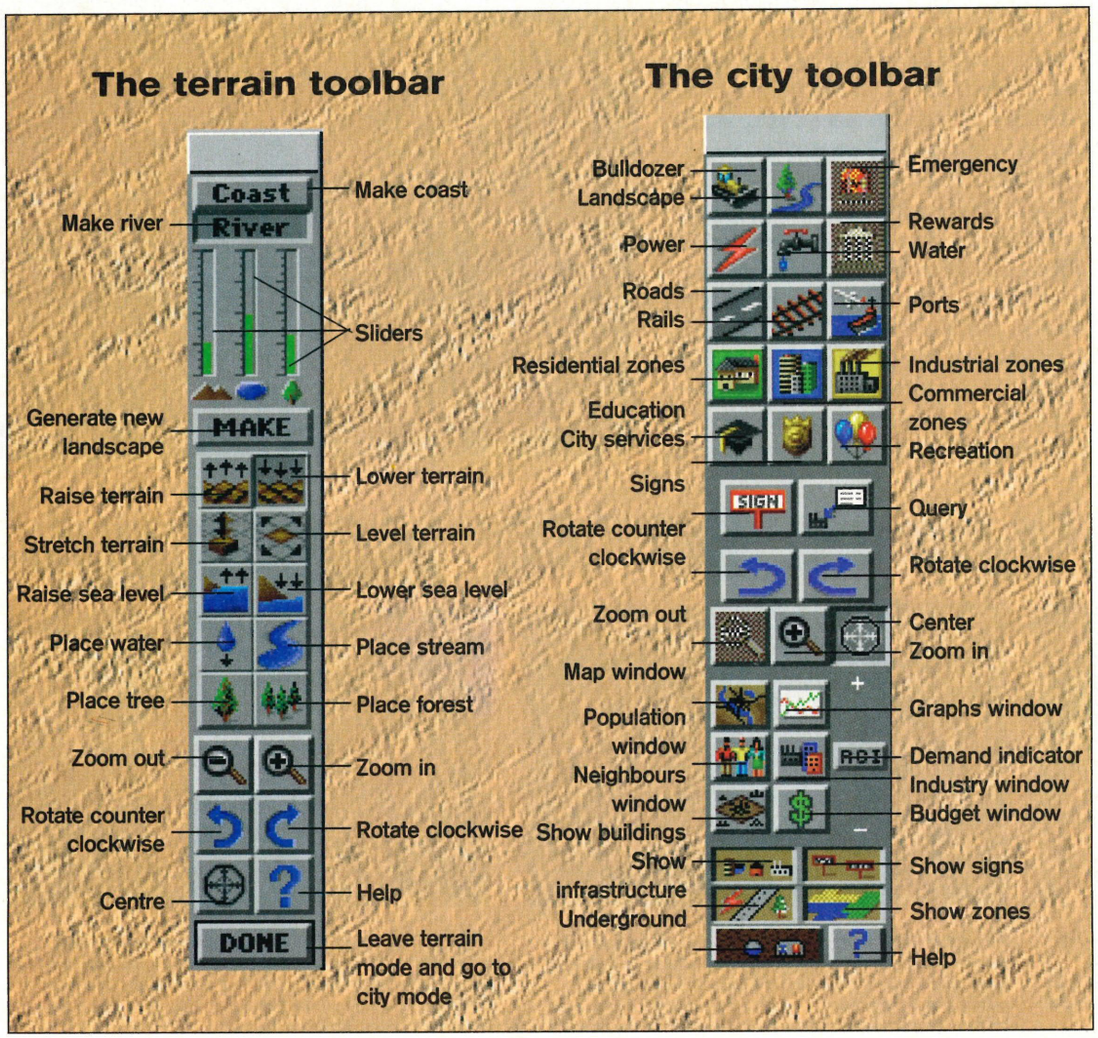
ALTERNATIVELY



SimCity Classic
Maxis, £17.99
Compared to SimCity 2000, this game looks somewhat primitive. The objectives are the same but there's a lot less to it: you don't have to worry about water, finance is simpler and there are fewer things to build. Even so, it's almost as difficult to get right. It was something of a classic in its day, but I'd rather pay extra and get SimCity 2000 instead.



A-Train
Maxis, £40.99
Rated 7, Issue 12
A-Train is cross between Railroad Tycoon and SimCity. You start off some cash and a piece of sparsely populated land, and you must link the small townships by rail with the aim of creating a thriving city. As in SimCity, money is central to your success, and there are a dozen ways to make or squander it. Not just for trainspotters.



Balancing budgets

With so much needed to get your city up and running, you're going to have a tough time paying for it all. Property taxes are you main source of income, and can vary from 0% to 20% with 7% being the standard. There are other ways to make money, however. The budget window automatically appears every January (unless Auto-Budget is selected), but can be opened at any time during the game. From here you can adjust property taxes and the amount of funds available to police, fire cover, education, health and welfare and transport. You'll also see a couple of unfamiliar options: city ordinances and bond payments.

City ordinances are the various programmes you can run to generate extra cash or improve the quality of life within the city. For example, you can introduce

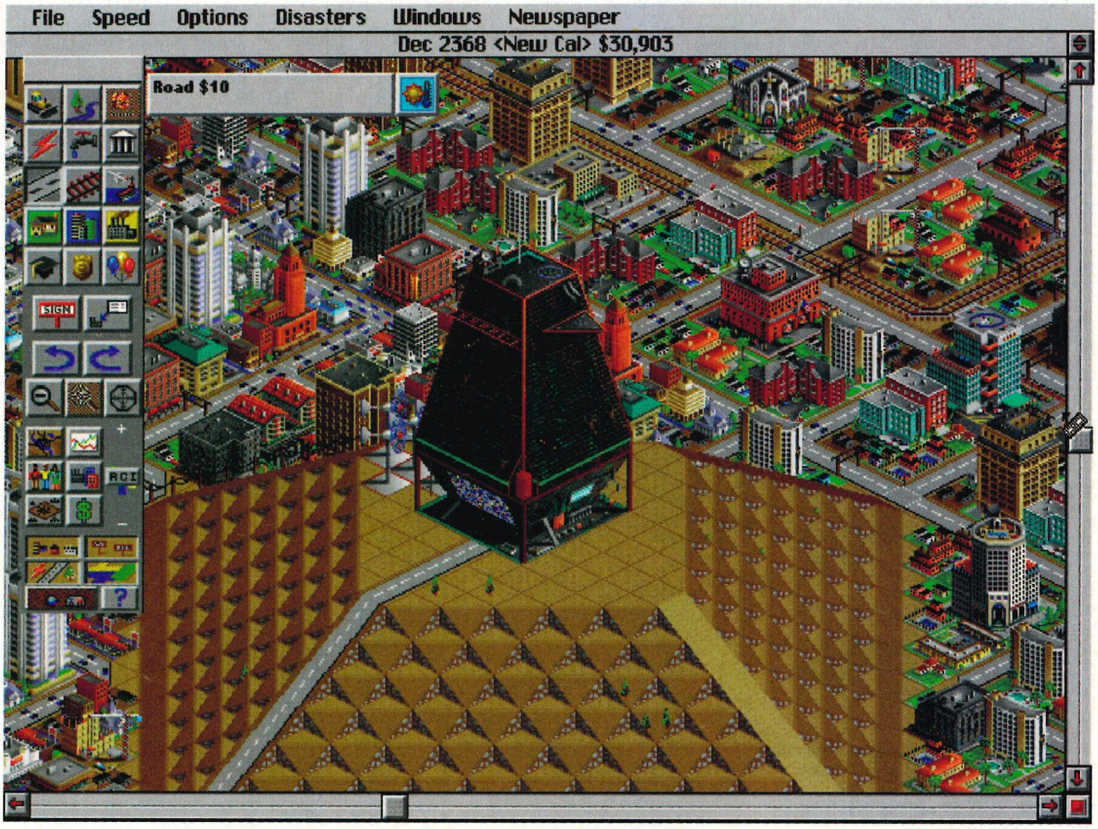
a sales tax, but this will affect the success of your commercial sectors. Legalising gambling can be lucrative but will cause an increase in crime, whilst introducing parking fines are a good way to cut down heavy traffic.

Money may also be spent on things such as energy conservation, free health clinics, tourist advertising or a neighbourhood watch scheme. All the programmes you pay for will have a positive effect on your community, but at a price.

Funding for city services such as police or education can be broken down to avoid wasting money, but be careful not to underfund. Each service has its own adviser who'll tell you where you need to invest your money, but ultimately it's your decision.

If you're really strapped for cash, you can issue bonds. In simple terms, this is how you borrow money from your citizens. All bond payments must be paid back with interest, so it's better to do without them unless there's a real emergency.

To complicate things further, you've also got competition. Bordering your own city are rival towns (many of which seem to be named after the characters from Red Dwarf, for some inexplicable reason) and you can build road or rail links to them at a cost.



Bright lights, big city

So how do you know when you're doing well? The first and most obvious thing is that your population will grow. Every time your population reaches a certain level, you get a reward, beginning with a mayor's house at 2,000. At a population of 120,000 you can build an arcology (a mini-city in a glass bubble), providing that they've been invented by that stage. At 60,000, the government will ask you if it can build a military base, which it chooses. An army, navy or airforce base can bring in extra trade, but you might also get stuck with missile silos which aren't so advantageous (and you'll run the risk of this even if you've chosen to declare yourself a nuclear-free zone).

SimCity 2000 has enormous depth, and like its predecessor, is terrific fun to play. It has enough new features to attract and challenge those who know the original without being so different that it alienates them, and new PC owners will find it fairly easy to get to grips with. The only thing that managed to get me away from the game was the threat of being hung, drawn and quartered by Christina if I didn't finally sit down to write this review, so if you do buy it, do yourself a favour and book some time off work.

Sim City 2000 is an all too rare example of an update which really does take advantage of present day technology. It may essentially only comprise enhanced graphics and some extra features, but the improvements are enough to make this a whole new gaming experience, one that should keep you entertained for longer than most adventures, flight sims and arcade games.

After umpteen false starts and god knows how many hours' playing time, I've finally managed to cover my entire map with thriving city. If you get this far, you're doing very very well.

■ Cal Jones



This display removes all the non-public buildings from view so that you can see where you've laid your zones.

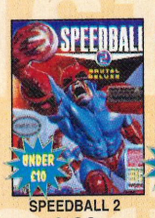
Techspec

SimCity 2000 requires a 386 or better running MS-DOS 3.3 or above and a mouse. It's uses extended memory so remove the EMM386 line in your Config.sys file to get it working. You'll also need a SVGA graphics card with at least 512K video RAM.

Disk requirements					
	High density	✓			
	Hard disk only	✓			
	Space taken on hard disk	8Mb			
Graphic modes					
	CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy ✗
	VGA	✗	SVGA	✓	
Soundboards					
	Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster ✓
Control					
	Joystick	✗	Keyboard	✗	Mouse ✓
Performance					
	Optimum speed	25MHz			
	Minimum memory	4Mb			
	Free RAM required	600K			

rating **9**

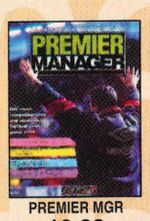
Verdict
Awesomely addictive



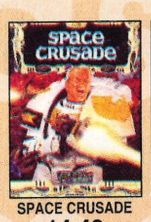
SPEEDBALL 2
8.99



CHAMP MGR 1
9.99



PREMIER MGR
12.99



SPACE CRUSADE
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ZOOL
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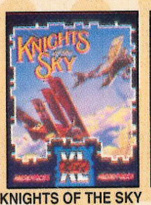

KNIGHTS OF THE SKY
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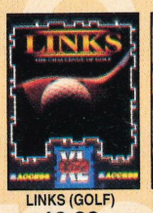
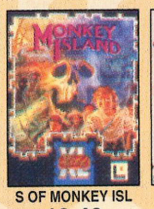


LINKS (GOLF)
12.99



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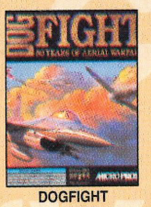

DOGFIGHT
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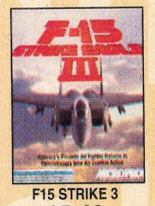
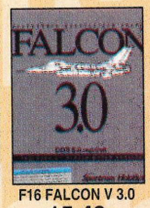
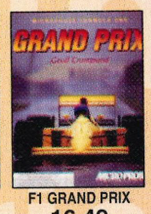


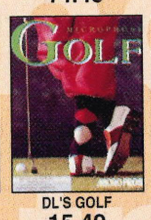
F15 STRIKE 3
15.49



F16 FALCON V 3.0
15.49



F1 GRAND PRIX
16.49



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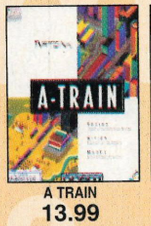

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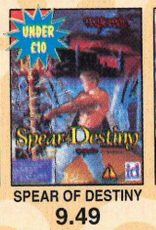

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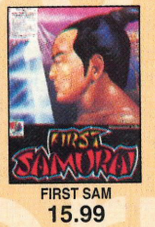

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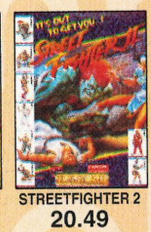

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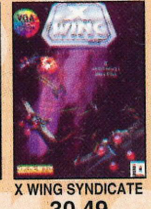

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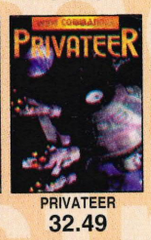

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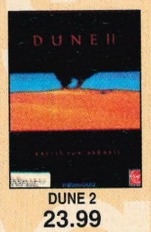

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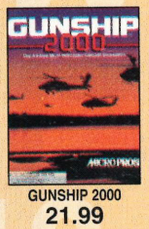

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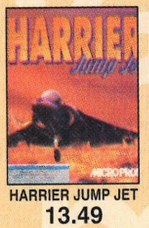

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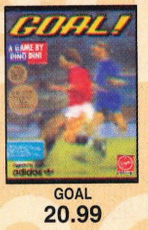

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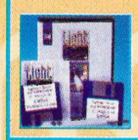

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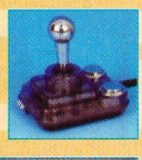

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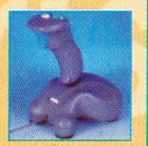

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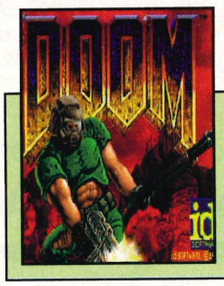
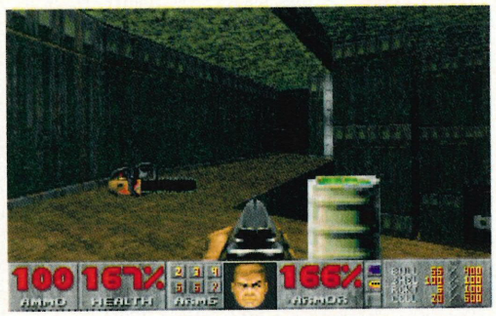


Title	**Doom**
Publisher	**ID/Transend**
Contact	**(0274) 622228**
Price	**£34.75**
Shareware Price	**(Chapter One only) £3.75**

DOOM

There's something about a game with a chainsaw that does strange things to otherwise perfectly normal(ish) people. Today, Johnny and his pet chainsaw, Billy, decide it's time to go and meet the new neighbours ...



The chainsaw is usually well hidden. Funnily enough though, once people know where it is they usually make a beeline straight for it. I can't imagine why.

There's no doubt about it, Doom dishes out action, atmosphere and mayhem of the grossest kind with complete abandon

Imagine a cross between the first Alien movie and The Evil Dead; a mixed bag of nightmarish tension and sick splatter horror. Turn that into a game, and you'll have some idea of what Doom is like (if you haven't already played last month's demo), the latest, and by far the best, in the long line of grim, nasty 3D first-person perspective action games started by Wolfenstein 3D.

So far, the many Wolfenstein wannabees — Terminator Rampage, Dracula and Spear of Destiny, plus the 3D parts of Jurassic Park, spring to mind — can hardly be said to have set the games-playing world alight.

Doom is a different kettle of fish altogether. It's still patently in the Wolfenstein tradition (although Texas-based ID Software has split from Apogee to develop it alone) and has a very similar character. But, it's a more sophisticated game to play in every department; bigger, meaner, harder and more involved.

Graphically, it's certainly a real eye-opener. Given the right PC (there's always a catch), the panning is smooth, and there's a remarkable impression of scale and solidity to the scenery, coupled with detailed texturing and superb visual touches like monumental structures rumbling out of the floor and bullets richochetting off walls.

The most important visual effect is that you're no longer restricted to a flat, horizontal plane of action. Doom takes place on all sorts of levels, and avoids the 'dungeons and corridors' cliche by varying the terrain as much as possible indoors and out. One minute, you might be running for cover along a ditch, or hiding behind an immense supporting pillar, the next minute you'll be racing up winding stairs and picking off soldiers in the courtyard below. Basically, if you can see it, you can shoot it or get to it.

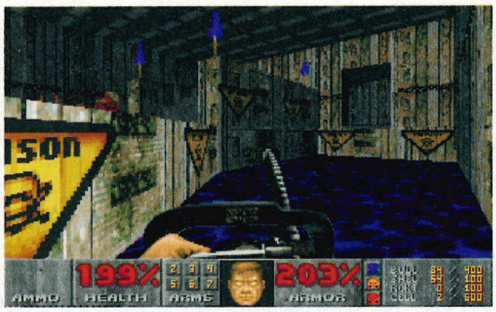


As you can see, it's lovely day outside — just right for a little target practice.

MINUTES in a carvery



Here we go; chainsaw frenzy time. See the way the other bad guy is cheerfully gunning someone else down in the background? Bless his little cotton socks.



Several bloodstained moments later ... and now I'm hopelessly lost and up to my knees in some poisonous liquid or other. Do I care? 'Course not.



Suddenly I've got more company than I need, and it looks like they want to play. Fine, if that's the way they want it, that's how they'll get it.



Meet Stumpy. You'll find him and his friends hanging out in all sorts of strange places. Well, Doom was never going to be strong on tastefulness, anyway.

No pain, no gain

You play a space marine based on Mars, who's sent out to Phobos to sort out a spot of bother involving a dimensional gateway, demons and assorted psychopathic ex-squaddies. Your team has been murdered, and you're left hopelessly lost, clutching what amounts to a water pistol, and surrounded by monsters. It's time to kick ass ...

It won't take you more than two seconds to figure out that your fundamental strategy is going to be 'shoot first and ask qestions when the game's over'.

The short-term objective is to use whatever weapons or handy gadgets you can find along the way, figure out where you are with the automap, conserve your ammo ... and shoot, punch or run away from anything that moves.

The game is split into three main parts; Knee Deep in the Dead, The Shores of Hell, and Inferno. Each has about eight main levels, and a couple of hidden levels, and there are four levels of dificulty — with charming titles like, 'I'm too young to die' and 'Ultra Violence' ...

It doesn't take long to get the hang of Doom. The basic controls are very straightforward: simple direction keys, the Shift key to run, Alt to side-step, plus fire and use buttons. It's not necessary to have the reflexes of a hyperactive eight year old, either. The most important trick to master is the 'Alt key shuffle': a quick side-step into a doorway, let rip with the chain-gun and then side-step back to safety again.

Everyone quickly develops their own underhand tactics for surprising the enemy. A particularly effective combination is to use the mouse and keys simultaneously. It takes a bit of co-ordinating, but provides deadly accurate.

And you do need to be accurate, because you're up against some real choice beasties. They'll go for your throat as soon as look at you, naturally, but they'll also sneak round behind you when you least expect it, open doors and chase you from room to room, take potshots at you from a far off window, and do their level best to make life as hard as possible.



What is rather nice though, is that it's not just you they're pissed at, it's everybody. If you manage to draw them into a crossfire they'll cheerfully turn on each other and all you have to do is sit back and watch the ensuing carnage. It's rather a novel, and very satisfying, experience.

While all this is going on, amidst toxic waste, slime and lava, you'll hopefully be making some attempt to find the exit.

This is usually not that difficult, in itself, but there are any number of hidden rooms, passages, traps and panels to figure out on each level. These can involve quite complex sequences of well-hidden switches, timed pressure plates and buttons to activate an entire room

There are some moments when, try as you like, you just can't get at 'em with the chainsaw, so it's back to the trusty shotgun.

Gangland killings

Doom can be played by up to four people on a network, either co-operatively or in a 'Deathmatch' — which needs little explanation. Each player wears a different coloured suit of body armour, there are slightly different rules about collecting items, weapons and secret rooms, and you can send messages to the other players.

As a gaming experience, it's unique, monstrously addictive, maybe too frantic, and quite different from the one-player game. Strategy tends to go right out of the window as you all pile into each other ... which is when you really find out who your friends aren't. At the moment, the program is a bit choosy about the network setup and it's not the most stable system in the world.

However, you'll probably find that problem in the real world is 'the Management' — who tend to take a dim view of employees loading games on the company network. So unless you happen to be 'the Management' yourself, watch out — Doom broadcasts in a highly indiscriminate manner and can tie up an entire network. Network Doom is special, but not special enough to lose your job over it.



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ALTERNATIVELY



Terminator Rampage
US Gold, Price: £35.99
Rated 6, issue 28
Not a bad game by any means, but it has nothing special to offer. Rampage uses single plane horizontal action, and is definitely the poor relation by comparison with Doom.



Space Hulk
Electronic Arts
Price £34.99
Reviewed issue 20, rated 7
Simple, flick scrolling 3D, but an excellent game for all that. What it lacks in fluid movement, it makes up for in atmosphere and greater emphasis on strategy.

full of machinery, a lift or a drawbridge. If you hit lucky, you may discover one of the secret levels in each chapter, and working out how to get to a particular spot can be as much fun in its own way as the action.

Texas chainsaw massacre

Doom reminds me a lot of horror movies, albeit more of the video nasty than the supernatural thriller. The first requirement of any horror movie is gore, and Doom's got that by the barrow-load. It is undoubtedly the most stupidly, senselessly and beautifully violent game I've ever played. It's enough to make even the most hardened and cynical gamer wince.

If you want to blow chunks out of a soldier's chest with a pump-action shotgun at close range? Punch someone's head till it explodes, or chainsaw a minotaur to pieces? Then get a copy of Doom.

But gory action isn't enough on its own. Shock effects need a build-up of suspense to work well, and this is what makes Doom special; you just don't know what's going to jump out at you next. Anyone who's played Doom through and says they've not experienced a moment of blind panic — back-pedalling at full speed firing wildly as something comes tearing at you — is, simply, a liar. Doom can be genuinely frightening.

Credit for this has to go to the way the game draws you in with both sound and lighting effects. Gunshots and screams echo in the distance. Something snuffles away on the other side of a wall, footsteps are coming towards you, and you can hear the ragged sound of your own breathing ... do you really want to edge your way into that half-lit room? Not without a very big gun you don't. Spooky stuff.

Last rites

Despite having the sort of atmosphere that most games can only dream of, Doom is admittedly far from perfect. The biggest drawback is the type of PC set-up you need to do it justice; it won't run with less than 4Mb of RAM, and it really needs a 486 PC. Anything less, and and you'll find that the scrolling gets too jerky leaving the game unplayable. Other than that, the display can be too dark on some monitors (even with gamma correction), the joystick calibration stinks and you may also need to tinker with the set-up of your PC to change the hard disk cacheing. Even after all this it'll still bomb out on you every now and again.

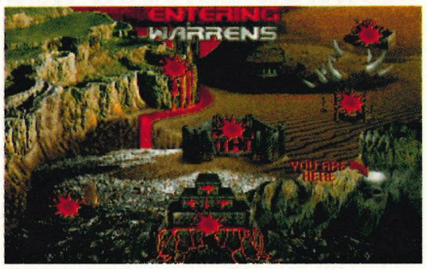
Those are techie niggles, though. In terms of gameplay, it's very difficult to fault Doom if you take if for what it is and don't object to the violence. To be honest, the four difficulty levels are a bit of a waste of time — it's Ultra Violence or nothing, if you want a decent challenge.

If you've played last month's cover disk, you'll have had plenty of time to make your own mind up, so maybe I'm preaching to the converted. To me, Doom's combination of tension, frantic, violent action and awesome visual imagery is absolutely compelling. It's not deep, it's not meaningful, but it is atmospheric, simple to get in to, excellent value, and an absolute riot to play.

■ John Bennett

Public health warning

Doom is an adult game, and it is undeniably over the top when it comes to gratuitous violence. 'Outraged from Purley' is going to have his or her work cut out with Doom. And I don't exactly blame them. If you subscribe to the 'violent images make people do violent things' argument — or you're just plain squeamish — I'd suggest you don't touch Doom with a bargepole. I personally believe that it's just cartoon violence, a heavily armed 3D Tom and Jerry, and nothing more. But until we have an enforceable rating system — not just warning stickers used to boost the sale of games — games like this will be available to people who shouldn't have them — kids. I certainly wouldn't want a child under 13 playing Doom — it would give them nightmares for life.



Left: The 'thinking' part of the game is all about finding hidden levels.

Below: The Automap, without which you'd probably end up hopelessly lost.



Techspec ***Doom can very troublesome. Try experimenting with the disk cacheing settings on your PC to get the best performance. Sound support is for the Gravis Ultrasound and Sound Blaster compatibles.***

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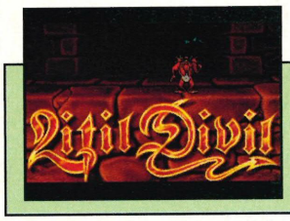
	Space taken on hard disk	***12Mb***				
Graphic modes						
	CGA	✗	***EGA***	✗	***Tandy***	✗
	VGA	✓	***SVGA***	✗		
Soundboards						
	Ad Lib	✓	***Roland***	✗	***Sound Blaster***	✓
Control						
	Joystick	✓	***Keyboard***	✓	***Mouse***	✓
Performance						
	Optimum speed	***33MHz***				
	Minimum memory	***4Mb***				
	Free RAM required	***585K***				

rating **9**

Verdict
Stunning. Buy it and kill something for me



Title	**Litil Divil**
Publisher	**Gremlin**
Contact	**(0742) 753423**
Price	**£39.99**

Litil Divil

Gremlin's long-promised arcade adventure has a lot to offer ... five labyrinthine levels and over 50 challenging tasks, not to mention cartoon-quality graphics and sound

Size isn't everything, but it helps. If Litil Divil only occupied 1Mb of hard disk space, like most arcade games, then a £40 price tag might seem excessive. But it doesn't: it takes up 30Mb, most of which is dedicated to graphics.

The still graphics, as you can see from the pictures on this page, are pretty good but not amazing. However, what you can't gauge from the accompanying pictures is the amount and quality of the animation.

Litil Divil is packed with scrolling 3D corridors, an eight-way animated main character, and over 50 rooms with unique (often animated) backgrounds and creatures. Once you've played the game for a few minutes, the price begins to look a little more acceptable.

The box contains a manual and installation guide and also includes 20 illustrated templates for mapping the game's labyrinths.

It takes 15 minutes to install the software and a few more seconds altering your CONFIG.SYS file to conform with the expanded memory requirements, before you can actually start playing.

Devilishly good fun?

Litil Divil tells the story of Mutt, a lazy divil who spends most of his time asleep. Every year, the divils hold a Grand council to decide which of them should undertake the perilous quest for the Mystic Pizza of Plenty. The selection process is simple: they draw straws from a bowl, and the shortest straw gets the quest. No prizes for guessing who ends up taking orders for extra toppings.

Mutt's journey takes him through the five-level labyrinth of chaos into the overworld. Each of the labyrinth levels consists of a maze of tunnels and rooms. There are over 40 rooms with puzzles and challenges, and additional rooms containing goodies helpful to your quest. Along the way, Mutt needs to find three artefacts and also release the lost souls of divils who have failed on previous pizza retrieval missions.

The first thing you see, once you've despatched the green guardian who watches over the entrance to the Labyrinth, is a tunnel screen. An automapper helps you through the maze of corridors, but you're better off making your own complementary map with more detailed notes, using the templates provided. You also have an inventory to remind you of any objects you acquire.

The tunnels are packed with surprises, including a range of traps which reduce your health (holes in the floor, fire-breathing gargoyles and spikes, for example) and plenty of random rewards (mainly food and money, but you also occasionally find health bonuses and mysterious keys). Health, represented by the diminishing bar at the foot of the tunnel screen, effectively acts as a time limit. Once your energy has expired, the shadowy entity drags you off to his dungeon and tortures you on the rack. Game over.

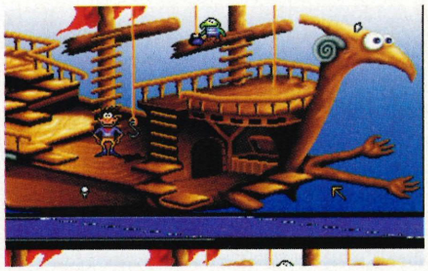
Exploration is initially marred by a couple of slight problems. The joystick and keyboard controls are equally good for



There are more than 50 rooms spread over five levels of the Labyrinth. The maze itself contains all sorts of hazards, but plenty of goodies too. This stray cash is particularly handy.

Mutt the divil has drawn the short straw. The grand council of divils has chosen him to seek out the mystic pizza of plenty. Many have tried and failed before him, and everyone is getting pretty hungry now — so get a move on ...

ALTERNATIVELY



Goblins 3
Sierra On-Line, £49.99
Rated 7, Issue 28
If you like your puzzles more difficult (and with fewer arcade interludes) you won't find many more frustrating challenges than Goblins 3. This latest instalment boasts the best presentation of the trio but suffers from an over-generous help facility. Even so, the excellent cartoon-style graphics, occasionally brilliant sound effects and a good sense of humour keep you coming back for more.



Heimdall
Core Design, £34.99
Rated 8, Issue 7
If you want an isometric arcade adventure with a little more depth than Litil Divil, Heimdall supplies it. Icon-controlled battle sequences provide an element of role-playing and provide an alternative to the thirty different tasks spread across as many islands. Exploration, puzzles and combat should appeal to arcade fans and novice adventurers alike, and with good graphics and sound this is still worth a look.

most purposes, but it's sometimes awkward working out which joystick action corresponds to the direction in which you want to travel. In addition, Mutt sometimes has to retrace his steps by walking towards you, which means that you often step on to a trap before you have seen it. After playing for a couple of hours though, these gripes become easier to deal with.

Rooms are where the real game takes place. They lie at the end of corridors, and you never quite know what they contain until you've kicked down the door and stepped inside. By far the greatest number of rooms contain puzzles or challenges.

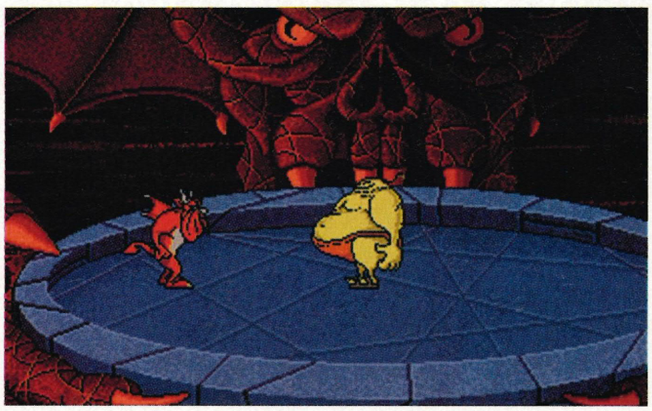
It's a good idea to test your joystick controls before you try to solve any problems which lie ahead. For example, you might face an opponent in a beat 'em up where a range of fighting options are available, or you might have a simple exploration task, where eight-way movement and jumping are the only options.

Some rooms are impossible to complete until you have the correct object in your inventory and you're standing in the correct position on the screen; in others you need to perform a complex series of manoeuvres before the goal is reached. If you are in a hand to hand combat situation, it usually takes several comprehensive defeats before you know how your opponent fights and can beat him.

Whatever is happening though, excellent, silly sound effects combine with superb graphics to create a very enjoyable experience. It's even funny when you die.

Despite its minor disorientation problems and the disappointing ease with which you can complete a small number of the rooms, Litil Divil is an impressive game. Once you've completed it, there isn't much incentive to play again, but until then, you'll have a lot of fun guiding Mutt to his goal.

■ Gordon Houghton



You never know what lies behind a door until you enter ... it could be a simple puzzle, a test of your joystick-wielding skills, a room full of goodies, a chance to save the game, or a beat 'em up like this.

Techspec

A 386 is the minimum, but I'd recommend a 486 for speedier loading and smoother scrolling. You'll need 4Mb RAM, 3Mb of which should be expanded memory. A sound card is highly recommended too — the humorous voice effects and music are worth a listen.

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	30Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✗
Performance					
Optimum speed	33MHz				
Minimum memory	640K				
Free RAM required	580K				

Verdict
A compelling and humouous arcade/puzzle game

rating **7**

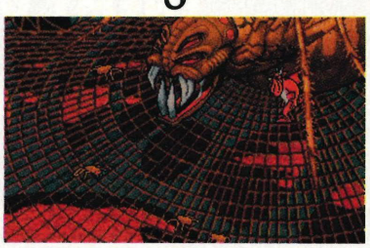
0 MINUTES of lurking in the labyrinth of chaos



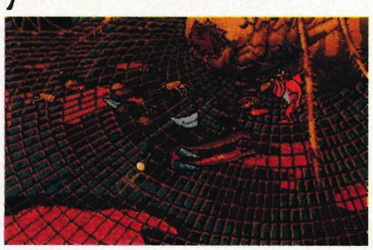
Before he even enters the five-level labyrinth of chaos, Mutt has to do battle with this grisly green guardian. This isn't difficult, but does provide valuable combat practice for the game ahead. After a few tried and tested kung fu manoeuvres, it's all over.



Mutt enters the Labyrinth, turns left at the first junction and finds a room full of goodies. These items are very useful for the puzzle rooms ahead, but they cost more than he can afford. It's time to wander a little deeper into the maze and seek out some cash.



Having found some small change, Mutt buys a can of Spider-B-Gone and accepts the first challenge. Avoiding or stamping on the baby spiders disgorged from the huge arachnid's mouth, Mutt nimbly negotiates the web and sprays the mother where it hurts.



Success! Assaulted by more chemicals than you would ever think necessary, the spider's skull implodes. In the messy aftermath Mutt discovers a torch (strange, but true) — but what possible use could it have? Who cares? It's time to move on.

WE'LL GIVE YOU THE EARTH...



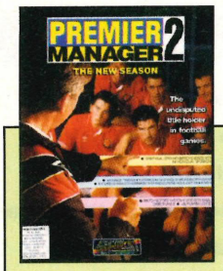
but the Aliens will make you
pay a terrible price

UFO
ENEMY UNKNOWN

COMMAND EARTH'S FORCES AGAINST THE ALIEN TERROR

MICROPROSE

FOR IBM PC COMPATIBLES AND COMMODORE AMIGA



Title	**Premier Manager 2**
Publisher	**Gremlin**
Contact	**(0742) 753423**
Price	**£34.99**

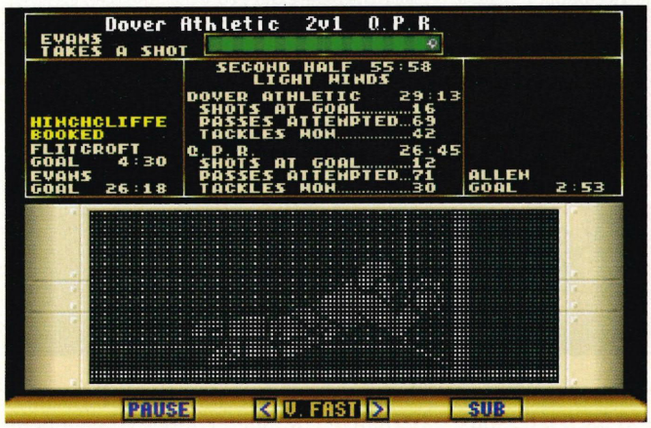
From the Conference to the Premiership, grab a bit of football glory with Gremlin's excellent management game

Premier Manager 2

I loved the first Premier Manager. It didn't have great graphics and it didn't have much sound to speak of, but I was literally lost for days struggling to take Wycombe Wanderers from Vauxhall Conference obscurity to Premier Division glory. Yes, sadly I was transfixed for hours, watching a small brown dot whizz back and forth on a thin brownish line. This was the heart of the game and to others its appeal was a mystery.

Now Gremlin has revamped the game, stuck a '2' on the end and added a wealth of new options. Like the original, in Premier Manager 2 your task is to take a small-time conference team up through the divisions to the dizzy heights of the premier league. Using your management skills you must organise and train your players, clear out any dead wood, invest in new talent, improve your stadium and juggle your finances to keep the whole club afloat.

All the problems that can beset a manager are crammed in here; injuries, contract negotiations, falling attendances and you can even get sacked if the team aren't doing well. Although PM2 features all the options present in the original, it goes much further by incorporating significant improvements to the level of control you have over your club and finances.



The in-game graphics aren't stupendous by any means — but they make it all that little bit more exciting. Come on you reds!!

Dover Athletic doesn't resemble a poor, lowly conference side anymore. I've injected millions of pounds of new talent in my side, including a rather gifted number eleven.



PM2 includes a wider range of playing styles, new and more varied formations, player morale levels, contract negotiations, improved match tactics and even a European angle. You can now also buy and sell players on the continent which, in turn, brings its own problems — like the four foreign players rule for European games. The in-game match graphics have also been improved but, as you can see from the screenshot above, they're still not anything to rant and rave about. They're not actually an integral part of the game anyway, they just liven it all up a bit.

Of course a typical Premier Manager season would not be complete without its fair share of ill-timed disasters and these are varied and numerous.

After superbly (if I do say so myself) taking struggling Dover Athletic from the backwaters of the conference to the Premier League and European Cup Glory, my star striker Wright (not the Arsenal Ian variety I might add) cracked his skull and was out for the rest of the year, Des Walker retired mid-season to run a country pub and most of my midfield sauntered off regularly to play for their countries. Oh the pressures of top flight management! Is there no end to it all?

If you like football and you adore the reams of statistics that can come with it (home form, possession time, the buoyant transfer market, etc) then Premier Manager 2 is undoubtedly the game for you. Remember, it isn't Sensible Soccer, PM2 is strategic only.

So is there any point shelling out for PM2 if you've got the original? Well to be honest, I can't really say there is. Premier Manager 2 is more complex and involved than the original game, But isn't sufficiently different. Having said that, if you're in the market for a decent management game, I have no hesitation in recommending it.

■ Dean Evans

Techspec *Premier Manager comes on one high density disk and takes up a mere 1.5Mb of your precious hard disk space. Oh, and if you haven't got a mouse you can't play it.*

Disk requirements

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

Graphic modes

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

Soundboards

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

Control

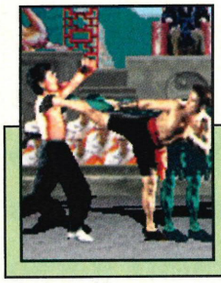
Joystick	✗	**Keyboard**	✗	**Mouse**	✓

Performance

Optimum speed	**20MHz**
Minimum memory	**640K**
Free RAM required	**580K**

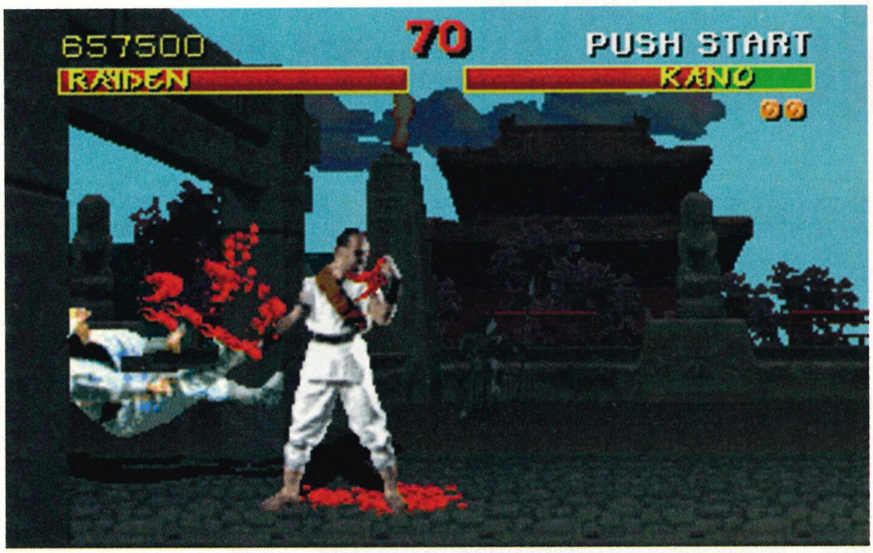
Verdict
Undoubtedly the best football management game on the market

rating **7**



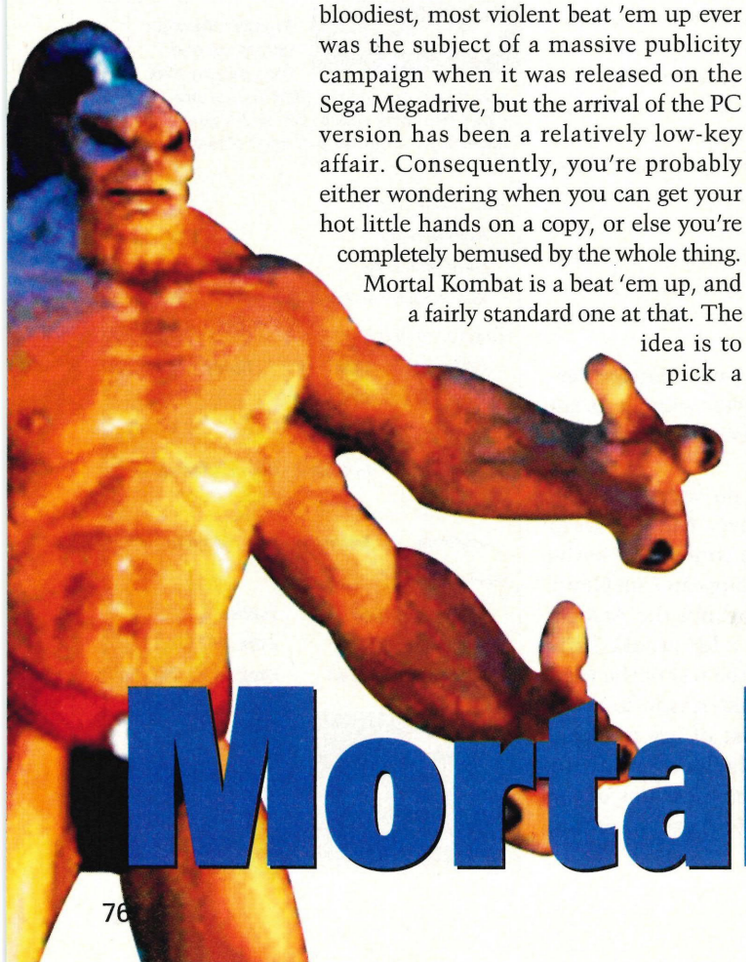
Title	**Mortal Kombat**
Publisher	**Virgin**
Contact	**(081) 960 2255**
Price	**£29.99**

Every character in the game can punch, kick and throw their opponents all over the shop, but it's the special moves which make all the difference between winning and losing. I wonder who has the unpleasant task of cleaning up after these guys?



Right: Mortal Kombat must be the goriest game ever (except for Doom, of course). Even a straightforward punch will send gouts of blood flying around the screen.

Bottom right: When you defeat your enemy, you get the chance to 'finish him' with a special death move. Kano's is to rip the loser's heart out and display it, still beating, to the crowd. Yum.



Unless you've spent the last year dead for tax reasons, you can't have failed to have heard of Mortal Kombat. The biggest, bloodiest, most violent beat 'em up ever was the subject of a massive publicity campaign when it was released on the Sega Megadrive, but the arrival of the PC version has been a relatively low-key affair. Consequently, you're probably either wondering when you can get your hot little hands on a copy, or else you're completely bemused by the whole thing.

Mortal Kombat is a beat 'em up, and a fairly standard one at that. The idea is to pick a character and then beat the hell out of a human or computer controlled opponent over the course of three rounds. No, I know it doesn't sound very subtle, but there's a bit more to Mortal Kombat than you might think. All the characters have their own strengths, weaknesses and special moves, so you need to adopt a different approach for playing each one or fighting against them. In the single player game, you take part in a tournament in which have to fight each character in turn. If you manage to survive that, you go on to the 'endurance' matches where each bout consists of fighting two different opponents in quick succession, and then you take on Goro, a giant, dragon/human hybrid with four arms and an unfair advantage. Finally, (yes, there's more ...) you must defeat Shang Tsung, the sadistic tournament organiser. Or you could just play against your friends in two player mode.

Mortal Kombat is large, complex, and is not the sort of game you can rush through in a weekend. The PC version of Street Fighter II was disappointingly easy, but I'm sure that you'll find this game t a good bit tougher. All the individual characters and special moves take time to master, and it'll take more than a few attempts to work your way up the tournament ladder. It has all the requisite elements of a good beat 'em up, but there's one thing which sets it part from other games in the same genre. The blood.

I know people are concerned about the effect that violent computer games have on children, but let's be honest, the main reason why Mortal Kombat was so popular in the arcades was the amount of blood flying around the screen. Heads explode, hearts and spines are ripped out, people are immolated ... and that's just for starters. When Mortal Kombat appeared on the consoles it was toned



Well, it's finally here. After all the hype, Mortal Kombat stomps its way on to the PC and prepares to trash the opposition

Mortal Kombat

0 MINUTES of gore galore



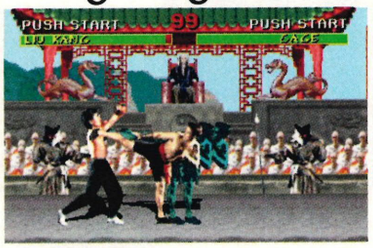
Sonia Blade might be the only woman in the tournament, but she's no wimp. The US Army lieutenant has a frightening array of acrobatic moves in her arsenal, but this energy beam attack will really fry her opponents.



Sonya is on a secret mission to arrest the ruthless criminal, Kano. He isn't going to make it easy for her, though. Kano's cannonball somersault does a lot of damage, but isn't nearly as messy as this dagger attack.



Scorpion and Sub-Zero are ninjas from opposing clans, and hate each other with a vengeance. If Scorpion can avoid Sub-Zero's paralysing freeze attack, he can unleash his own special move, the gruesome harpoon.



Johnny Cage is a chop-socky film star, whilst Liu-Kang has the much more humble occupation of Shaolin monk. Both characters have their own fireball moves, but Cage is also able to perform this nifty shadow kick.

down somewhat, but the PC version is completely unadulterated. If you want blood you've got it; if you don't, I very much doubt whether you'd care for beat 'em ups in the first place.

In terms of appearance, the PC version of Mortal Kombat is very faithful to the original, from the digitised characters and backgrounds to the aforementioned blood and guts. It has, without a shadow of a doubt, the best graphics of any beat 'em up currently available on PC. Unfortunately, my praise does not extend to the speed at which it moves. The characters are well animated, but even on a 33MHz 486DX they move with all the urgency of a herd of overweight hippos in a mud bath. Well, maybe that's a little harsh. The game isn't unplayably slow, but if you're familiar with the arcade version you'll find it sluggish in comparison. It's not as if the speed is consistent, either: the action tends to speed up or slow down depending on which background is being used. You can improve matters by turning down the graphic detail (there are three levels: low, medium and high), but you really shouldn't have to on a 486.

Despite its problems, Mortal Kombat is probably the best beat 'em up available on PC right now, albeit in a very weak field. The graphics and sound compare well to the arcade version, and it's reasonably priced. I didn't find it as responsive as I'd have liked, but if you haven't played Mortal Kombat in the arcades, you won't find this quite so much of a problem. The game is more challenging than either Street Fighter II or Team 17's Body Blows, so I'd have to say that it's your best bet if you're desperate to add a beat 'em up to your collection. On the other hand, you could just head down to your local arcade with a pocketful of loose change.

■ Cal Jones



Above: Sub Zero fillets an opponent. Death moves are secret, you must discover them yourself.

Techspec

I didn't have any problems getting Mortal Kombat to run, but you'll need a 386 or better. I recommend you use a digital (as opposed to analogue) joystick.

Disk requirements						
	High density	✓				
	Hard disk only	✓				
	Space taken on hard disk	7Mb				
Graphic modes						
	CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
	VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		
Soundboards						
	Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control						
	Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✗
Performance						
	Optimum speed	50MHz				
	Minimum memory	4Mb				
	Free RAM required	570K				

rating **6**

Verdict
Strong on visual appeal, but moves too slowly

ALTERNATIVELY



Street Fighter II
US Gold, £29.99
Rated 6, Issue 25
The grand-daddy of all beat 'em ups, Street Fighter II is still enormously popular in the arcades. The PC conversion was slightly disappointing, however, since it lacked the speed that made the arcade and console versions so much fun. The characters are faithful to the originals and animation is smooth, but the sound is pretty poor. For my money, Mortal Kombat is the better of the two, but not by a huge amount.



Body Blows
Team 17, £29.99
Rated 5, Issue 25
A fairly standard beat 'em up with a good choice of characters and lots of special moves. It's at its best in two player mode, but there's also a single player story mode in which you must defeat everyone before taking on Max, the ultimate bad guy. The animation is a bit wooden and gameplay is somewhat too easy against the computer characters, so you'll probably lose interest in it quite quickly.



Title	**Star Trek: Judgment Rites**
Publisher	**Interplay**
Contact	**(0865) 390029**
Price	**£39.99**

Star Trek: *Judgment Rites*

Once again Interplay and the USS Enterprise return, boldly going where no-one has gone before, seeking out new life and ... well you know how it goes

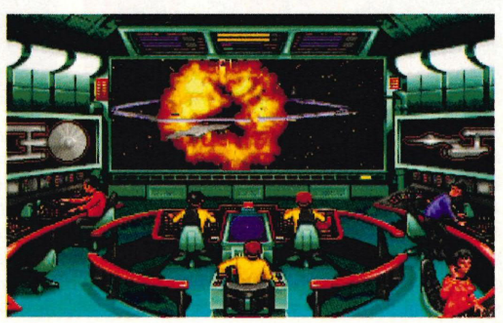
I think it's fair to say that everyone loves Star Trek. Whether you're a life-long fan of the original series or a recent convert to the Next Generation, there's something about the USS Enterprise and that "Space ... the final frontier ..." line that really gets to you. Star Trek inspires fond, misty-eyed memories and the show seems to have been as much a part of people's childhood as good old Doctor Who. Well, at least it was for me anyway.

Who can forget the endless philosophical bickering between McCoy and Spock? Or Kirk's unsettling ability to snog every woman he met? And what about that poor security guard who you knew was always going to get killed (crushed by falling rocks, shot, eaten by slime creatures etc) two minutes after beaming down on to the strange alien planet? It was superb television: a multinational crew, violence, sex, goody two-shoes morality and wild imagination plus a huge dose of scientific speculation. In fact, perfect material for a computer game.

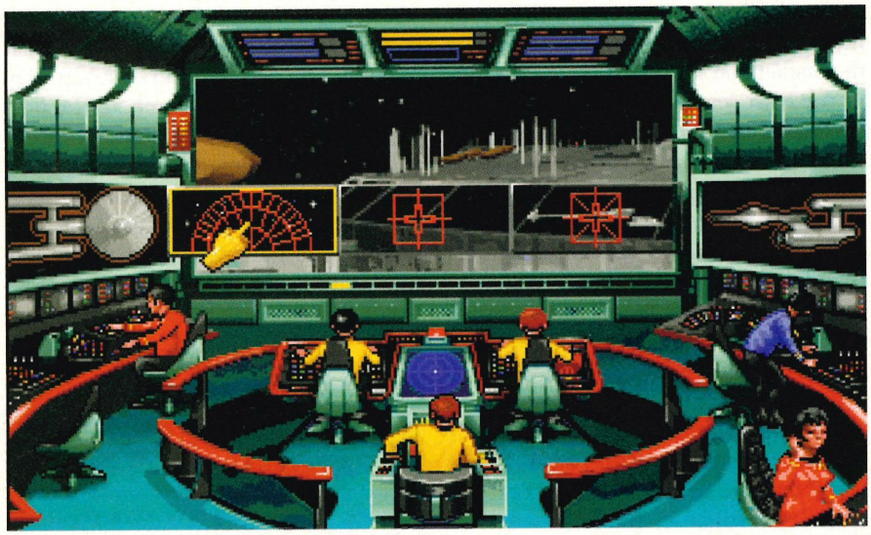
Star Trek: Judgment Rites is the second official Star Trek game since Interplay

TWO

In true Star Trek tradition the whole universe teeters on the brink of destruction. But disband your powerful armies and cast aside your super death weapons because all you really need to save the day is a Kirk, a Bones and a pointy-eared Vulcan ...



The game begins in dramatic style as the USS Alexander, commanded by veteran captain Luke Rayner, explodes. Rayner explains that they have just returned from the future and that in eight days time the universe will be destroyed!



On the bridge of the Enterprise you can raise or lower your shields, fire phasers and photon torpedoes and whoosh around the galaxy to your heart's content.

acquired the licence from Paramount over a year ago. As you can see from the screenshots, like the original 25th Anniversary Star Trek, Judgment Rites is a point-and-click graphic adventure which once again puts you in command of the USS Enterprise, controlling Kirk, Spock, Bones et al. In fact, it's exactly like the original game, but I'll come to that later.

Judgment Rites is split into eight self-contained mini-adventures or 'episodes' that mix graphic adventuring with a sprinkling of 3D space combat. Not only do you get to control a landing party on a variety of alien planets and space stations, but you can dogfight Elasi pirates, fire your phasers and destroy poor old Scotty's delicate warp engines with wild abandon.

One of the strengths of Judgment Rites is the way that it brilliantly captures the mood and feel of the old TV series. The intro features the voice of William Shatner impassively reciting the famous "Space ... the final frontier" monologue and of course the theme music plays along cheerily in the background (although it sounds as though it's being played on a cheap old Bontempi organ). The fact that the game is split into episodes, that Chekhov calls you 'keptin' and Spock and McCoy are always at odds, also helps recreate the old TV experience. In fact, if Kirk had managed to kiss a woman in each episode the game would have been complete. Ah well ...

Kirk's sex life aside, each Judgment Rites episode begins on the bridge of the Enterprise. After a serious mission briefing from Starfleet Command, you must zoom off across the galaxy to save whatever pastel planet needs saving from the rampaging forces of evil. During the voyage you may encounter a few Elasi pirates, a Klingon warship and even come under attack from a red World War I tri-plane (!). You can't run away either, so if you find yourself in a skirmish with a Romulan Warbird you've got to win or reload your last saved game.

After the rigours of space combat comes the all-important graphic adventure bit, where your small landing party is beamed slap-bang into the middle of whatever dangers await them at their destination. Forget about sensor scans or covert arrivals, your team just leap into the transporter and beam down regardless. Exciting yes, tactical no.

Landing parties number four and usually consist of Kirk, Spock, Bones and somebody else. This somebody could be Sulu, Uhura, Scotty or that poor, unsuspecting security guard I mentioned earlier, the one who always fails to realise he's got the words 'expendable plot device' and 'shoot me' tattooed across his forehead. Once you've beamed down you'll need to use each character's talents and knowledge to solve the puzzles and obstacles placed in front of them. If you have a complex scientific problem maybe Spock and his trusty Tricorder can help; if you're baffled by alien organisms then talk to Bones.

Unlike the original game, the eight episodes that make up Judgment Rites aren't entirely separate — they do share a common underlying sub plot. The plot, in true Star Trek tradition, concerns a powerful alien race called the Brassica who have finally decided to end their eons of seclusion and introduce themselves to the galaxy. However, they're a bit worried about the mettle of the races currently dominating the spaceways and so have set them a bizarre series of tests to sort them out. Naturally Kirk and his crew have been chosen to take part.



Ah it's the old 'set fire to your cell to escape' ploy. Why are all the game characters (including Uhura) drawn with the physique of champion weightlifters? Hmmmmm ...

MINUTES of getting captured



Warping to the Espoir Station (the Alexander's last known position), we beam down for a friendly chat but are immediately captured by my arch-enemy the evil Breddell. He's going to destroy the universe, apparently.



Oh the indignity! Chucked in the brig with not even a fluffy blanket to sleep on. Shall we beat the guard up or talk him round to our side? Me, I tend to favour mindless violence every time. However McCoy seems to be against it.



Strangely, the main computer is tangled up with a chess program. If I can defeat it I can disable the whole caboodle. Luckily I was Starfleet Academy chess champion three years running. Knight to Queen's Bishop Four. I think ...

ALTERNATIVELY



Star Trek: 25th Anniversary
Interplay/EA, £34.99
Rated 7, Issue 6
A marvellous graphic adventure that brilliantly captures the feel and mood of the old Star Trek series. Guide Kirk, Bones and Spock across the galaxy, righting wrongs, seeking out new life and civilisations and boldly going where no man (or woman come to think of it) has gone before. In style.



Space Quest V
Sierra, £39.99
Rated 7, Issue 19
If Star Trek isn't your scene but you still fancy the idea of a space adventure, then Space Quest V might just be for you. Follow the adventures of Roger Wilco, galactic janitor extraordinaire, as he treks across the galaxy to save it from toxic waste and pollution. Humorous and lots of fun to play too.

And as far as gameplay goes there's not really much more to it than this. If you've played 25th Anniversary you'll find that the gameplay element has remained exactly the same, and if you were expecting major changes (cosmetic or otherwise) you're going to be disappointed. The interface is the same, the graphics are essentially the same and, bar a few tweaks here and there (a weapons lock, different views, a combat on/off switch), Judgment Rites is little more than eight new episodes — a data disk if you like.

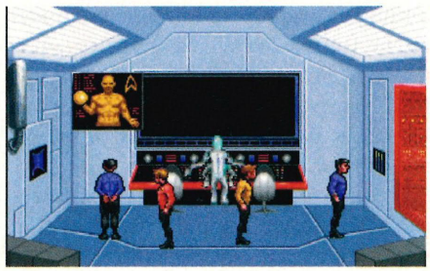
As there are no major changes, I feel the same criticisms that were levelled at the original are just as relevant to Judgment Rites. The control system is still extremely fiddly and there are times where, although you know what you should be doing, the blasted interface simply won't let you.

Like the 25th Anniversary before it, Judgment Rites does have atmosphere by the bucketload but, and this is a big but, as the episodes are self-contained mini-adventures with a small number of locations and objects, solving the problems is a lot easier. Why? Well, if you have limited locations and objects it's a simple matter of using one with the other until the solution handily presents itself.

Normally, in order to making an adventure harder, programmers tend to use a greater number of locations and include even more objects. This way, even if you use every object, in every location, you will still eventually find the answer — but it will take you much, much longer to get there. Unfortunately Interplay seems to have completely ignored this idea in Judgment Rites.

If you liked the first game and are content to play more of the same, Star Trek: Judgment Rites won't disappoint you. But if you were looking for Interplay to do something a bit different this time, or are in the market for a much harder graphic adventure, I suggest you look elsewhere.

Although I love Star Trek, I have to admit that I was completely underwhelmed by all this game. It did nothing for me at all and I'm afraid I don't think Judgment Rites is sufficiently different or exciting to merit a higher mark.



Basically Judgment Rites is just another themed graphic adventure, a game that uses the Star Trek legend to reach deep into your memory and grab all the nostalgia that's associated with the series by the lapels. At least Star Trek 25th Anniversary had novelty value on its side, whereas if you Strip away the Star Trek trappings in Judgment rites, then sadly there isn't really much of a game underneath. And it's a shame.

Dean Evans

Techspec

Judgment Rites makes doesn't make any quirky demands on your PC, but I did find that you really need a 486 to run it. Anything less and the game gets so slow it's almost unplayable.

Disk requirements					
High density	3				
Hard disk only	3				
Space taken on hard disk	**21Mb**				
Graphic modes					
CGA	8	**EGA**	8	**Tandy**	8
VGA	3	**SVGA**	8		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	3	**Roland**	3	**Sound Blaster**	3
Control					
Joystick	3	**Keyboard**	3	**Mouse**	3
Performance					
Optimum speed	**25MHz 486**				
Minimum memory	**2Mb**				
Free RAM required	**580K**				

Verdict
Nice enough but offers little more than just another eight missions

rating **6**

A trek down memory lane



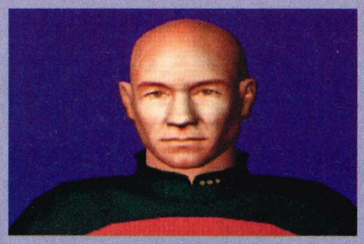
VGA Trek
Before the 25th Anniversary appeared, if you wanted to command the Enterprise you could only do it with bland shareware games like VGA Trek. Although tacky and badly drawn, games like this enabled you to prowl the universe, gunning your warp engines and killing Klingons.



Star Trek: 25th Anniversary
At last a good-looking Star Trek game. Shunning the "let's fly around the galaxy killing Klingons" angle, 25th Anniversary combined graphic adventure with some space battle sections to produce an innovative and enjoyable game.



Star Trek: Judgment Rites
The sequel to Star Trek: 25th Anniversary, Judgment Rites is just more of the same. If you hurry you may just be able to nip down the shops and get the Limited Edition boxed set — complete with free Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan on video.



Star Trek: The Next Generation
Coming soon from Spectrum Holobyte, Star Trek: The Next Generation promises to be something really special. A CD-only game, Star Trek TNG features life-like characters and stupendous visual effects. At least that's what they tell us.

TORNADO

At the eye of the storm

PC ZONE - 93% Classic Award
"Tornado is simply brilliant"

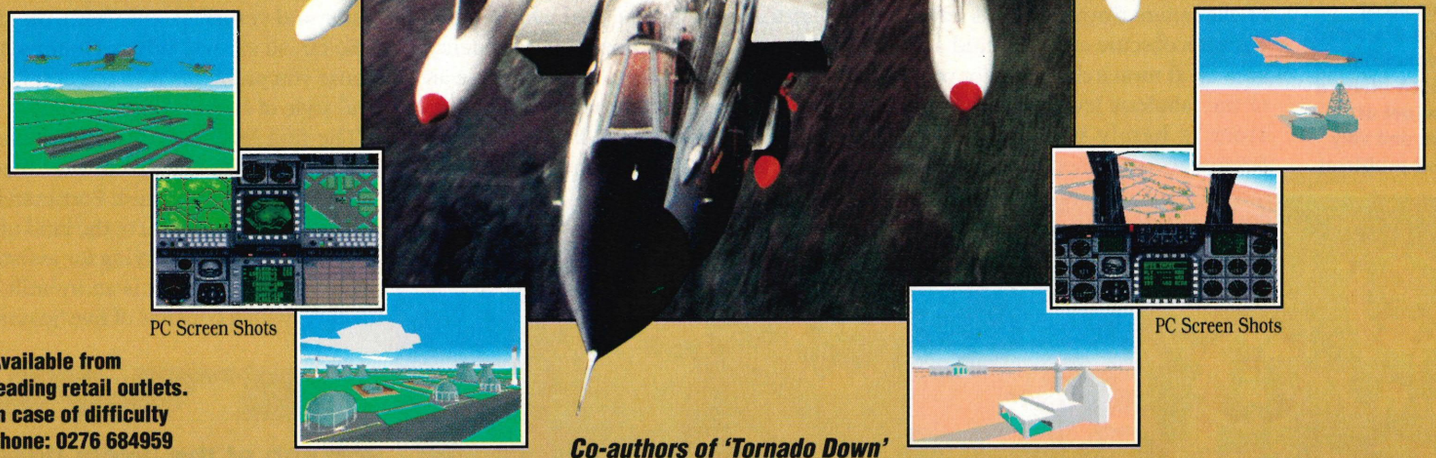
PC REVIEW - 9/10
"A superb simulation"

STRATEGY PLUS
"Tornado is a must buy"



TORNADO
CD ROM - £49.99
IBM PC - £44.99
Amiga - £34.99

OPERATION DESERT STORM
IBM PC - £19.99
(This product requires original TORNADO)



PC Screen Shots

PC Screen Shots

Available from leading retail outlets. In case of difficulty phone: 0276 684959

VISA Access

Co-authors of 'Tornado Down'

"What an excellent simulation! It flies like the real thing." - *Flight Lieutenant John Peters*
"Outstanding - as close as you'll get without joining the RAF." - *Flight Lieutenant John Nichol*

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.

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

The special limited edition includes both Tornado and Operation Desert Storm add-on scenario (PC & CD ROM). For existing owners of Tornado, Operation Desert Storm is available as a seperate item.

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It's 0100 hours, January 17 1991. Your Tornado squadron has a mission - to obliterate the airfields of Iraq. You're the only logical choice.

In a few hours time you'll be flying straight through the middle of the densest air defences in the Gulf, and in a hostile desert landscape there is nowhere to hide.

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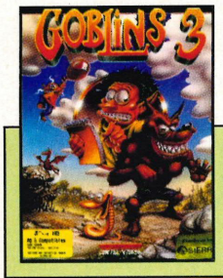


Title	**Goblins 3**
Publisher	**Sierra On-Line**
Contact	**(0734) 303322**
Price	**£49.99**

The weirdest, funniest and most frustrating series of puzzle games continues — but is this third instalment simply flogging a dead horse?

Goblins 3



In the trio of Goblins games so far — Gobliiins, Gobliins 2 and the game reviewed here — Coktel Vision has come close to defining their own genre. All three are part adventure, part puzzle, part arcade action and part interactive cartoon. They are all renowned for their difficulty, humour and virtually redundant plot; but, above all, they are notable for their maliciously illogical problems.

Unlike its predecessors, this latest episode features only one main character, a reporter for the Goblin News named Blount. Assisted and hindered by a variety of characters throughout his adventures, Blount's obscure aim is to find and interview rival monarchs vying for possession of the fabulous Jewel of the World. This story is barely worth remembering, because its sole function is to act as a limp excuse for binding together a score of increasingly difficult puzzle scenarios.

Before telling you what Goblins 3 is all about it's worth bearing a few things in mind. First, the game costs £50 — £15 more than its immediate predecessor. Second, for this substantial amount of cash you get a tiny metal badge, six pages of English in a multilingual manual, and the game itself. Third, if you've played either of the preceding instalments there is little here, apart from the superb presentation, that is different enough to urge you to buy.

The action is divided into areas, each with a large, general goal which is gradually attained by completing a sequence of minor puzzles. There are 19 of these areas on the main game map, and they all consist of at least two scrolling screens' worth of graphics. This might not sound like much, but the game's strength lies in the quality of its problem-solving rather than the quantity of ground you can cover.

Once you've completed an area by fulfilling the requirements revealed on the map screen, a series of high-quality animations continues the plot and links you to the next scene. The requirements of each level are very different, providing genuine variety from one area to the next. For example, in the first three scenarios you have to help Blount escape from a flying ship, fall in love with another character and resurrect him from the dead.

So far, so simple. Where Goblins 3 will cause you problems is in the crazy, illogical style of its puzzles.

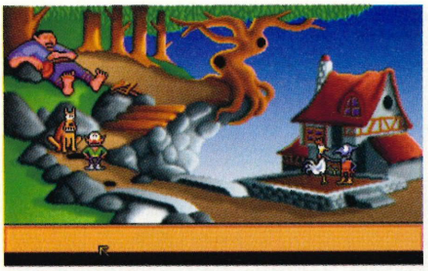
The first level acts as an introductory one, and is bad enough, but after that the problems get really weird. Fortunately — or unfortunately, if you're the kind of person who can't resist crying for assistance at every stage — there is an in-built help facility, which consists of five 'jokers'. In



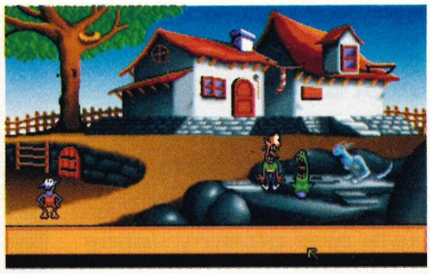
This map screen reveals all of Goblins 3's weird and wonderful levels. Each offers a unique set of bizarre and very difficult problems.

Each of the levels poses a unique problem, but all have something in common: you need to use objects and interact with characters to complete the stage. The first level is typical. You have to try and escape from the boat before it's destroyed.

ALTERNATIVELY



Gobliiins (CD-ROM)
Coktel Vision, £44.99
Rated 7, Issue 26
This CD-ROM version is probably the only way you will get your hands on the first game in the series. It features typically perplexing puzzles, a brilliant opening sequence and the same strange-yet-appealing sense of humour. You control three goblins in a plot without great depth or much point, but the overwhelming weirdness makes it compelling. The CD-ROM boasts enhanced sound and music.



Gobliins 2
Coktel Vision, £34.99
Rated 7, Issue 16
Like Gobliiins and Goblins 3, this is also available on CD-ROM (for £10 extra). Also like the other two games in the series, it's packed with practical jokes and bizarre solutions to complex puzzles. This time you take control of two goblins and guide them through a weird fantasy land peopled by some of the oddest creatures ever to be seen on your PC. A tough test, and not recommended if you're impatient.

Techspec *Goblins 3 performs well at 16MHz or faster, on any machine. If you want to get the most from the excellent visual and aural effects, I'd recommend 256K of extended memory and a Sound Blaster card. The minimum graphics requirement is 256-colour VGA.*

Disk requirements					
	High density	✓			
	Hard disk only	✓			
	Space taken on hard disk	8Mb			
Graphic modes					
	CGA ✗	EGA ✗	Tandy ✗		
	VGA ✓	SVGA ✗			
Soundboards					
	Ad Lib ✓	Roland ✗	Sound Blaster ✓		
Control					
	Joystick ✗	Keyboard ✗	Mouse ✓		
Performance					
	Optimum speed	33MHz			
	Minimum memory	640K			
	Free RAM required	580K			

rating **7**

Verdict
A tough, very enjoyable puzzle game — but overpriced

effect, if you play a joker a complete solution to the current area appears on screen.

This would seem to be a pretty silly idea, particularly when it's combined with the saved game facility. There is very little to stop you whizzing through the first five levels purely on the basis of the supplied solutions, saving the game and starting again from scratch with a fresh set of jokers.

What really keeps you coming back for more is a combination of the superb effects and the variety of tasks from one scene to the next. The graphics are responsible for most of the slapstick humour, with dozens of different animations in every scene. Blount has a huge range of expressions and responses to objects and places, and whenever he interacts with other characters the results are always funny. The overall effect is that of an interactive cartoon, so that even your mistakes produce an enjoyable result. The sound effects and music complement the graphics well: the tunes are jolly without being nauseating, and the spot effects are always worth waiting for.

Goblins 3 is a difficult, expensive game which won't appeal to anyone who likes to solve puzzles in rapid succession. It's funny and almost always enjoyable, but once you hit that first, head-throbbing puzzle it becomes a very frustrating experience indeed. If you're a fan of Lucasfilm-style, snappy, logical solutions, you could find Coktel's alternative approach to problem-solving a strain.

The presentation is almost faultless — the only drawback is the rather-too-tempting hint facility — and the quality and number of visual and aural effects is outstanding.

If you haven't played either of this game's two predecessors, you should definitely consider it. It may not offer great value for money, but ultimately it's a highly polished, very enjoyable title.

■ **Gordon Houghton**



Above: Once a level has been completed, a sequence of superb animations lead on to the next stage.

0 MINUTES of parrots, parachutes and peculiar puzzles



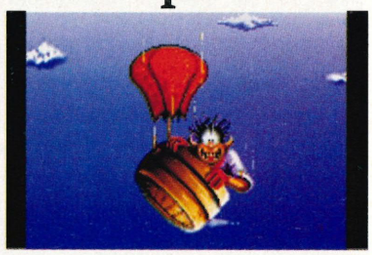
The basic rule in Goblins 3 is; try anything. Scour the deck and you can pick up a golf club, a bag of pepper and a plunger. Interact with the background and you'll find a couple of ropes, one initiates an amusing animation. The other releases a parrot.



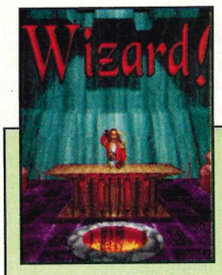
Your feathered friend comes in very handy when you ask him to perform tasks. By attaching a hook to that rope and ordering the parrot to lift the weight on the other end, an umbrella is magically fished from the area below deck. Grab it quickly.



Suddenly, you notice that the ship has its own parachute. Surely the solution can't be this easy? All you have to do is grab it, slip it on, and glide to safety ... unfortunately, if you try to pick up the parachute the deck crumbles beneath you. Think again.



Eventually, having pulled every hair out of your head in frustration, the solution is finally revealed. Using a barrel as a life boat and the umbrella as an improvised parachute, you quit the ship and float gracefully down to the next stage. Until the umbrella fails you ...



Title	**Wizard**
Publisher	**Psygnosis**
Contact	**(051) 709 5755**
Price	**£TBA**

'Twas an evil day, and the winds didst blow most bitterly as the mighty magician set forth to rule the world. In a dark and gloomy valley he didst construct a fortress, and 'twas there that he imprisoned the four gods of magic.



And so the heroes of the land assembled to compete against one another in a trial of strength. And lo, there was much partaking of ale and other beverages most foul, and there was much puking and passing out until only four remained.

Wizard

Watch out, Origin! Psygnosis has attempted to create the Liverpudlian answer to Ultima Underworld

Psygnosis isn't well known for producing role-playing games (the lacklustre Obitus being the only one I can think of), so the release of this potential Ultima Underworld beater comes as something of a surprise. Wizard is the latest game to climb aboard the Wolfenstein/Underworld bandwagon, with its texture mapped backgrounds and multi-directional scrolling. So far, so good, but as I've said before, it takes more than fancy scrolling routines to make a game enjoyable. Does Wizard have enough gameplay, atmosphere and depth of plot to make it worth buying?

I began to have doubts about the game as soon as it had loaded. Your first task is to choose a team of four characters from the 16 on offer, who comprise warriors, wizards, rangers and assassins. This, in itself didn't worry me because it's standard RPG procedure, but as soon as I noticed that the characters were called things like G'Narr Helmcleaver and Borgath Axeldeth, I began to get that sinking feeling. I mean, could you identify with a character called Mistral Merryweather? I'd much rather make up my own character names, thanks.

Choices made, it's time to get moving. This is when you find out just how well those fancy scrolling routines have been implemented. Let me put it this way: unless you've got a take-no-prisoners PC, complete with go faster stripes, don't bother. It moves well enough on a 50MHz local bus 486 and isn't bad on a 25MHz 486SX, but on a 20MHz 386SX it's like wading through porridge in concrete boots. In addition, the graphics are very pixellated. One look at games like Doom (reviewed on page 68) will tell you that the graphics could have been done so much better. If Psygnosis is hoping to get any more life out of this game engine, it needs some serious tweaking.



Graphics aside, Wizard is standard RPG fodder. The main objective is to rescue four gods who have been imprisoned by an evil magician (there's always one, isn't there?), and this entails stumbling down darkened corridors, solving problems with levers and pressure plates and braining orcs with whatever weapon comes to hand. You know the kind of thing.

As games go, it's pretty tough. You know how most RPGs break you in gently with a few slugs to kill and some simple puzzles? Not Wizard. The moment you set foot inside the castle, you'll find yourself under attack from ratmen, demons and many other nasty creatures. You're going to die, and you're going to die often. Luckily, the castle contains

Right: Wizard has a full screen mode which can be accessed by pressing F10.



Getting stuck in a dead end is not too clever, especially when a whole platoon of rat men descends upon you with teeth bared.

MINUTES of wicked wizardry



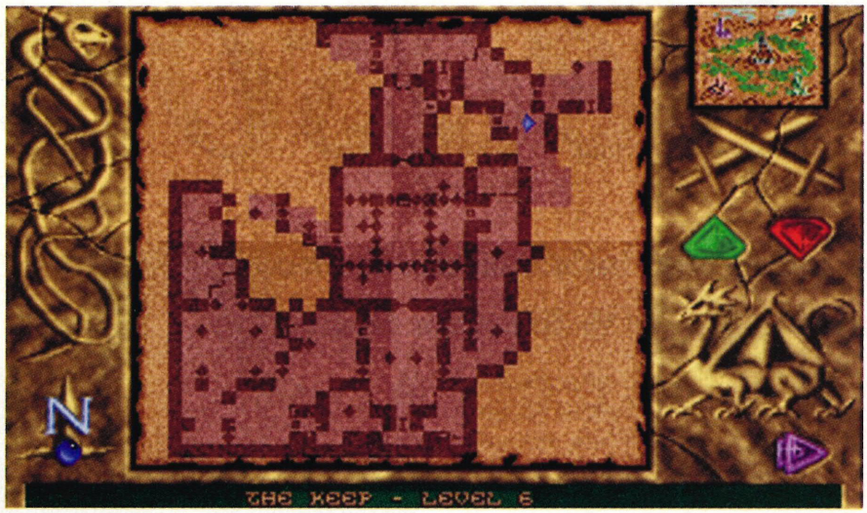
These four went forth unto the fortress, where they wouldst endeavour to free their gods from bondage. And there they didst chance upon ye olde shoppe, where they didst exchange their hard won gold for victuals and arms.



And verily, they didst journey into the corridors of the damned, and there was much slaying of orcs and goblins. But horrors! They were set upon by the wicked witch of the pixellated cleavage, who didst smite them most cruelly with her eldritch magic.



Thus were the heroes slain, and there was much wailing and much gnashing of teeth. But lo, the player of games didst speak, "methinks 'tis time to reload," and there was much rejoicing, for the magician knew not of the power of the save game.



The automap feature is useful for finding your way around. You can scroll up and down the map by clicking on the arrows.

chambers in which you can resurrect dead party members, but you can't always find one when you need it.

Every time you kill something, you'll be rewarded with a bag of gold which can be spent in one of the castle's various shops. Why anyone would want to set up shop in a deserted castle instead of the local town is beyond me, but they do exist, so make good use of them. Food is one essential item you can buy here (you can't regenerate hit or spell points if you're starving), and you'll also need plenty of torches. These are your only source of light, and as they burn down things gets dimmer until you're left in complete darkness.

Gold is also used for buying new spells whenever your characters move up a level. All characters can cast spells, irrespective of vocation, but as you might imagine, wizards are a good deal better at it than other character classes.

The combat and magic system is very odd. Your characters take care of the fighting while you handle the spellcasting, which involves little more than frantically clicking the right mouse button. I got used to it after a while but didn't find it very satisfactory. To make matters worse, all the items which you find casually strewn about the castle are also picked up using the right mouse button, and unless you're standing in exactly the right place, you'll end up wasting your magic points by accidentally casting a spell.

Although I haven't been very complimentary about Wizard so far, it did start to grow on me after a while. It isn't the easiest game to get in to, but once I'd grown used to the control system I found it quite diverting. There are plenty of levels to keep you going, should you have the patience to see it though to the end, even though it isn't exactly bursting with originality.

If you're an RPG fanatic who's desperate for a fix until the next Underworld arrives, Wizard passes the time quite nicely. If, on the other hand, you're more selective about what you spend your money on, you're better off waiting until something more exciting comes along.

■ Cal Jones

ALTERNATIVELY



Ultima Underworld II
Origin, £39.99
Rated 8, Issue 18
Both Underworlds have the depth and atmosphere that Wizard so badly needs. There are plenty of quests and subquests to keep your interest high, and the combat and magic system is better thought out.Highly recommended.



Bram Stoker's Dracula
Psygnosis, £39.99
Rated 5, Issue 25
Dracula is based on the same game engine as Wizard, and consequently suffers from the same problems. You play Jonathon Harker, and the main aim is to kill off the Count and rescue your wife, Mina. Briefly diverting, but no more.

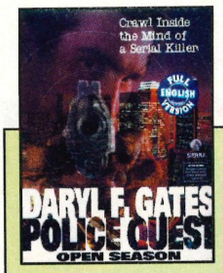
TechSpec

In theory, Wizard will run on a 286, but you really need a 486 to see it at its best. It uses 450K RAM if you're using the PC speaker, 560K with Sound Blaster and 480K with other sound cards.

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	5Mb				
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	40MHz				
Minimum memory	640K				
Free RAM required	450K				

Verdict
Not bad, but it isn't the most original RPG around.

rating **5**



Title	**Police Quest: Open Season**
Publisher	**Sierra**
Contact	**(0734) 303322**
Price	**£39.99**

Police Quest: *Open Season*

There's a maniac on the loose and he's murdering cops. Crawl inside the mind of a serial killer with Sierra's fourth Police Quest

Right: if you want to know the full details of a murder you've got to jump in your squad car and nip down to the morgue. Real police work isn't just an exciting string of car chases and gun battles, you know!

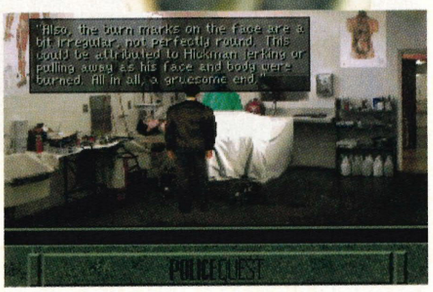
Below: trying to interview a suspect is a bit difficult if you've got six foot of brick wall bodyguard standing in your way.

Let's get one thing straight right from the start: I don't like sequels. I don't mind the odd one or two but any more is definitely pushing it. By the time you get to version four and five, you tend to be flogging the same old idea all over again, without even noticing that it has rolled over and died after game number three. The Leisure Suit Larry series is a fine example, Aces over wherever is another. Because of this, I have to admit that I was deeply rooted in cynic mode when Police Quest 4 arrived on my desk, with a weighty and ominous thud.

Police Quest 4 marks a change of direction for Sierra since Jim Walls (the brains behind Police Quests 1-3) jumped ship and toddled off to rival software house Tsunami, the creators of Blue Force. Left with a gaping creative hole to fill, Sierra has turned to Daryl F Gates, the retired LAPD police chief.

Using Gates' specialist police knowledge, Sierra has plucked a gritty, real-life case from the headlines and recreated it on the small screen.

Police Quest 4 opens in a grim suburb of South Central LA. Now South Central is not renowned for its chat and cheery friendliness, so it's unsurprising that the police have discovered a body. Dumped half-naked in an alleyway, the corpse is that of your ex-partner. He's been tied up, stabbed, burnt, and had his eyelids glued shut. It's a brutal killing and you have been put in charge of the investigation.



The first thing you'll notice about PQ4 is the quality of the graphics. These stun-

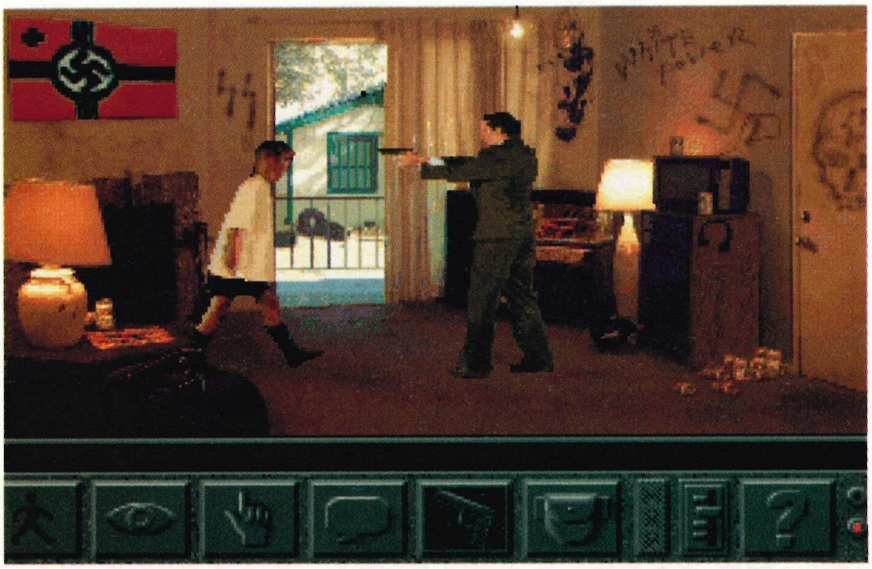
TWO

It's early in the morning, you're tired and already you've got to investigate a brutal gang murder in South Central LA. Drinking down two mugs of black coffee you sigh, smooth down your brown suit and stroll wearily into action.





A good cop must follow police procedures, and you can't investigate a crime scene without your notebook and a handy field kit which contains plastic gloves, bags, chalk and other useful items.



It's a mad woman and she's got a knife. Tact and caution are called for, so talk to her gently into putting the knife down. Then cuff her, read her rights and take her down the station. It's simple and, dare I say it, kind of heroic ...

ning, starkly realistic images were filmed on location, in and around Los Angeles, using the latest digital photographic techniques. Thus the alley is a real alley, the morgue is a real LA county morgue and you'll recognise the Police Academy gate from the films of the same name.

PQ4 is directed (for want of a better word) by Tammy Dargan, the producer of the TV show, America's Most Wanted and the visual style injects a massive dose of realism and atmosphere —in short, PQ4 looks absolutely great. Just as cartoon quirkiness suited Day of the Tentacle, what Police Quest really needed was gritty realism and at last it's got it, in abundance.

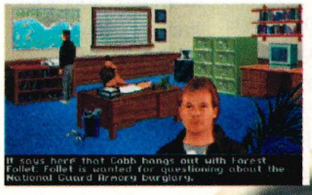
But how does it play? Well, the strong point of the Police Quest series has always been that you have to conduct your investigation strictly by the book. You can't just go around threatening suspects who won't talk to you, or shooting women just because they confront you with an eight inch carving knife. No, there are proper police procedures that must be followed if you're going to get anywhere at all. Evidence must be carefully handled, paperwork must be completed and violent people must be arrested, not pumped full of 9mm shells.

If you're a veteran of the Police Quest series you'll find that PQ4 is just as tough as its forbears. Despite the fact that Sierra is still refusing to do anything with digitised speech on floppy titles (come on Sierra everybody else is), I'm heartened by the fact that with both Gabriel Knight (reviewed this issue on page 58) and PQ4, Sierra are at last returning to something resembling their former brilliance.

If you're looking for something that's both challenging and a little bit different from the current crop of adventures, then pop down to your local software emporium and check out Police Quest: Open Season. It's gritty, it's earthy and most of all, it's downright frustrating. But, then a good adventure should be, right?

■ Dean Evans

ALTERNATIVELY



Blue Force
Tsunami, £39.99
Rated 7, Issue 22
When Jim Walls left Sierra, he leapt into the welcoming embrace of rival software house Tsunami. Blue Force is Tsunami's Police Quest beater and although it's not as stunning as PQ4 it's still a very good adventure game indeed.



Cruise for a Corpse
USGold, £16.99
Rated 8, Issue 6
If the thought of police procedures and paperwork fills you with dread, then take a look at Cruise for a Corpse (now making a timely budget appearance), a graphic adventure in the Agatha Christie tradition. Similar to Death on the Nile.

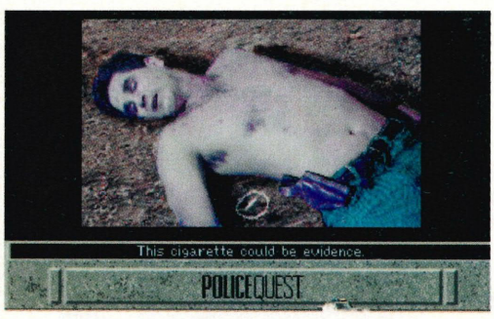
Techspec *Like Larry 6, Police Quest 4 can be installed to run under either Dos or Windows, and because it's an adventure you don't need a superbly fast machine. I recommend you play it on a 486 though — it was very slow on my 386.*

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	22Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	x	EGA	x	Tandy	x
VGA	✓	SVGA	x		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	x	Keyboard	x	Mouse	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	25MHz 486				
Minimum memory	1Mb				
Free RAM required	580K				

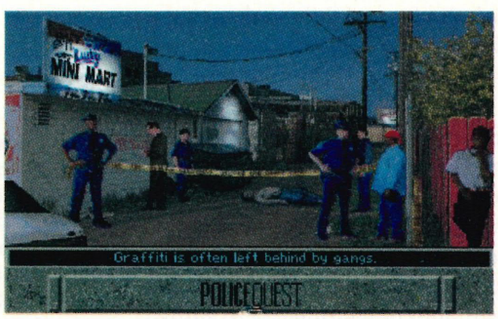
Verdict Atmospheric, starkly realistic and very challenging

rating **7**

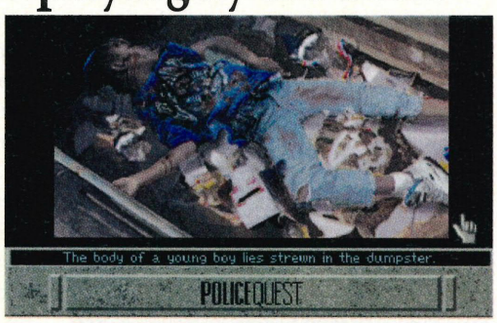
MINUTES of playing by the book



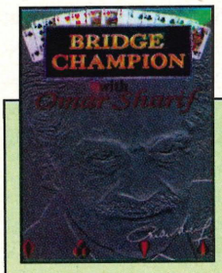
It's your ex-partner Bob Hickman. You'll have to wait for an autopsy for the exact cause of death but, notebook in hand, you jot down any evidence. Aha, a suspicious looking cigarette end. A clue perhaps?



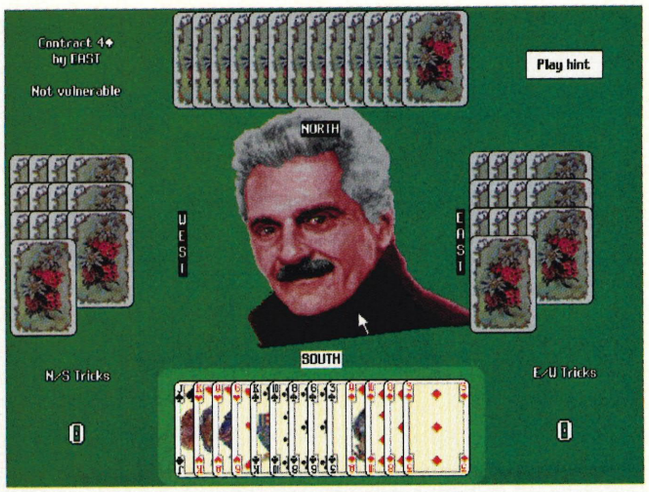
What else is there? Well, interviewing the police officers and any witnesses that are still hanging around is a good idea. Noting the gang graffiti on the wall you get Chester to photograph it for evidence.



With the details recorded you decide to have a nose around. When you check the Mini-Mart dumpster you find the body of a small boy. Are the murders connected? Who did it? Welcome to Police Quest.



Title	**Bridge Champion with Omar Sharif**
Publisher	**Oxford Softworks**
Contact	**(0993) 823463**
Price	**£39.99**



Bridge Champion *with Omar Sharif*

Film star and bon viveur Omar Sharif has put all his cards on the table in the second version of Oxford Softworks' bridge sim. A bridge too far perhaps?

When Bridge Master was originally reviewed reviewed (by Christina Erskine in Issue 9), the conclusion was that, while the program was a fair attempt at a bridge simulator, it fell far short of being an expert player and also incorporated some presentational drawbacks.

Now, almost two years on, we have an updated version which, to be fair, has had the majority of those cosmetic drawbacks ironed out ... but are the improvements enough to warrant a new purchase?

Being a relative newcomer to the game (I've only been playing for about 18 months, and as any real player will tell you, this is mere infancy), I approached this new package with different hopes and needs to our editor's (who is an experienced player). I felt that I needed a Bridge program which would both stretch my abilities and occasionally surprise me.

Unfortunately, Bridge Champion with Omar Sharif did too little of the former and a good deal too much of the latter.

In terms of graphics and sound this version has made staggering improvements over the original. In fact, graphically it's very close to being state of the art (although users without SVGA have to put up with a relatively plain interface).

If you have a Sound Blaster you will be treated to the soothing tones of Omar himself — mostly as he talks through the bidding. OK, the results are a little like listening to the directory inquiries person (imagine, "The contract is three no trumps by West" in the style of, "The number you require is ...") but it still adds a great deal to the overall atmosphere and enjoyment.

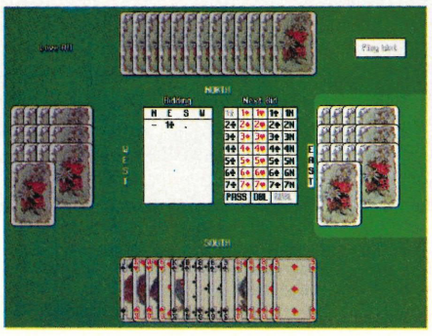
However, the proof of any Bridge game must be how it plays, and it's here that Bridge Champion lets itself down a little. It does play a fairly respectable game (and there are quite a few difficulty levels to play about with), but it also seems to have retained a few of the quirks of its predecessor — leading trumps at awkward times for example.

It's difficult to know just who Bridge Champion is going to appeal to — beginners might find it useful (even though the tutorial is rather short and there are only 10 practice games), but more experienced players would really be better off sticking to their Sunday night foursomes.

If, on the other hand, your Bridge appetite is insatiable, you can't find three like-minded individuals to join you whenever you get the urge, and you can't stand the basic presentation of other programs (the plain but compelling Micro Bridge Companion is still my favourite) then maybe this is the one for you.

Micro Bridge Companion is also the only PC bridge program we can find with the option to play duplicate bridge (where your performance is compared to the computer's, playing with the same hands). It's options like this which would have allowed this program to offer practice beyond the norm. Perhaps in the next release of Omar Sharif ...?

■ Ciarán Brennan



SVGA owners are treated to a variety of tabletops, including plain baize, Omar's face or cork — others aren't so lucky, having a choice of plain green or Omar.

Should you so desire, a spotlight follows bidding around the table. This, like the other graphic niceties (including choice of deck) can be switched on and off to suit individual player's taste.

TechSpec

Not a particularly demanding program — the only time when specification problems become a nuisance is if the SVGA option is selected.

Disk requirements					
High density	**x**				
Hard disk only	**✓**				
Space taken on hard disk	**6.7Mb**				
Graphic modes					
CGA	**x**	**EGA**	**✓**	**Tandy**	**x**
VGA	**✓**	**SVGA**	**✓**		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	**✓**	**Roland**	**✓**	**Sound Blaster**	**✓**
Control					
Joystick	**x**	**Keyboard**	**x**	**Mouse**	**✓**
Performance					
Optimum speed	**25MHz**				
Minimum memory	**640K**				
Free RAM required	**560K**				

Verdict

A nice looking, but ultimately disappointing

rating **6**

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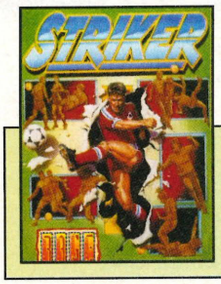


Title	**Striker**
Publisher	**Rage**
Contact	**051 933 2688**
Price	**£29.99**

It would have been nice to have run 'two minutes of Ireland vs England' at this point. Nice, but not very realistic in the current circumstances ...

Striker

A game of two halves? A marathon, not a sprint? These platitudes sum up the glory game of association football, but how do they apply to Rage's computer version?

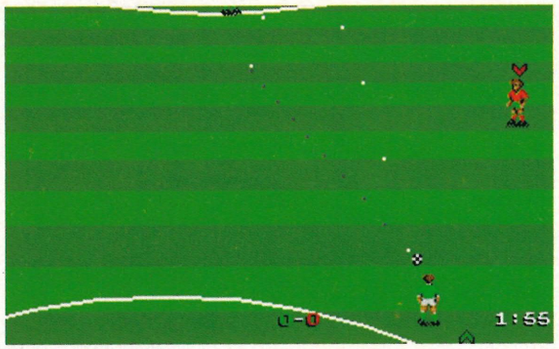
It's a sad fact that your average British PC owner can use his games machine to play everything from powerboat racing to American Football, but still can't get a decent kickabout going.

There have been quite a few attempts made in the past of course — and some would even argue that Sensible Soccer is just the ticket (although I belong to the small minority who think that, while Sensi Soccer is a perfectly acceptable arcade game, it has very little to do with football), but, believe me, there's still room for the definitive soccer game.

Enter Striker — a graphically beautiful 'arcade simulation' which made quite a lot of noise when it first appeared for the Amiga computer well over a year ago.

For good or bad, Striker arrived in the PC Review office carrying an inordinate weight of expectation on its shoulders. Not only does it have the distinct advantage of being developed in the UK (and better still, in football-mad Liverpool), it also comes from a team of developers that have been completely immersed in the thriving Amiga computer football culture.

And at first sight, Striker has lots going for it. For a start, it looks terrific. No football game has ever managed to get the 'top of the stand behind the goal' viewpoint just right — Striker does.



Free kicks are executed by moving an adjustable dotted line from the player's foot to the ball's intended destination. This is one of Striker's few notable innovations.



It's Super Cup Time, with the Rep Of Ireland ranged against Germany. No chance, Jack.

This view has always had advantages over the other two favourites, top-down and side-on: the former doesn't work because it simply doesn't look real (who watches a football game from the Goodyear blimp?) and the latter fails because it's almost impossible to gauge perspective.

The game's good looks are complemented by equally fine animation: the ball floats realistically and the players move realistically (avoiding that 'floating across the pitch' look that often bedevils football games), diving, sliding and kicking in a variety of convincing animations. And it's not just the look, either. The control method is both instinctive and quite flexible — it doesn't take forever to get used to passing, shooting and tackling like it does in some other games — and the computer-controlled players move and react in a logical and realistic way too.

The range of options is noteworthy. Just about every international team you can think of is available in Striker, complete with real squad names and more or less accurate ability levels.There are also a

0 MINUTES of skill and thuggery



Instead, we choose Ireland versus Cameroon from the table of 64 international teams — a far more feasible potential encounter from World Cup '94.



First things first... choose your best squad from the list provided. Ample stats on each player's abilities are provided at this point. And you should recognise some of the names.



Next, choose your strategy. Once again there's plenty to look at here — and the formation and style of play which you choose really does have a bearing on the ensuing action.



Now, however, the game completely parts company with realism. Not only has Cascarino actually scored, he's also executed a near-perfect somersault to celebrate. Utter nonsense.

number of competitions to enter (both knockout and league), full save and load facilities and single- and two-player options (as ever, it's better fun with two).

However there are a couple of glaring errors — for example, all of the players are white (including Les Ferdinand and the entire Cameroon team) and, worse still, the England team are almost as unbeatable as Germany — more of which later — while the Striker incarnation of the Republic of Ireland couldn't win a raffle.

Unfortunately, despite its many good points, Striker falls a long way short of being the perfect footie game — or, come to think of it, even being a very good one. The main reason for this is its terminal lack of depth.

While the control method is very user-friendly, it has achieved this by losing any sort of lasting appeal. Once you've mastered what moves are available, it all becomes a matter of routine — and this happens very quickly indeed.

And that's not all. The other major failing is the disparity between the different countries' ability levels. Of course in real life, the Germans, Dutch and Brazilians are streets ahead of most of their international counterparts, but surely not to this extent.

The German team in particular is so fast, powerful, skilful and worthy of worship that any novice can pick up the game and, provided they have chosen to play as Germany, get well into the Super Cup (which is, to all intents and purposes, the World Cup by another name).

It's always the mark of a poor football game when it's easy for an individual player to dribble the ball all the way up the pitch and score magnificent solo goal — but that's what usually happens when one of these impressive blond-haired demigods finds the ball at his feet.

The final problem with this PC incarnation of Striker is that it displays its Amiga origins all too obviously — the music and sound effects are well below what's currently taken as an acceptable standard for PC games, while the 256-colour graphics mode is also a serious letdown. In fact, the whole package suffers from the 'PC as a second language' syndrome, that unfortunately mars so many games which start life on other formats.

At the end of the day (Brian), Striker is a neat and playable football game which could have been great — but isn't.

It's a sad thing to reflect on what might have been, but in this case it's also quite relevant. Regardless of the imminent arrival of this year's World Cup, it's about time that there was a decent football game for the PC — one which treats the sport with the same devotion and respect as is handed out to American sports such as basketball and ice hockey (by American programmers of course).

However, just as every fat person contains a thin person trying to break free, Striker seems to have consumed a really good game and is now struggling valiantly to keep it down. Let's hope that its massive potential won't go to waste. Let's hope we see a truly worthwhile Striker 2 in the not too distant future.

What's that player doing in the centre cirle at kick off? you might well ask. It's small points of inaccuracy such as this which tend to take the shine off otherwise sound programs.

■ Ciarán Brennan



Techspec

The work of a team more used to dealing with Amiga games, Striker is understandably quite basic when it comes to matters technical. The good news is that it will run on a 286, but whatever your procesor it may require a little memory management.

Disk requirements

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

Graphic modes

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

Soundboards

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

Control

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

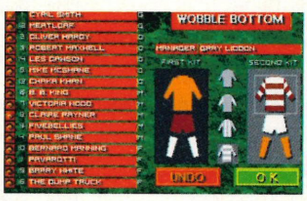
Performance

Optimum speed	**16Mb**
Minimum memory	**640K**
Free RAM required	**555K**

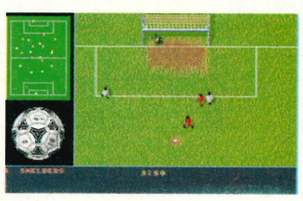
Verdict
So close, and yet ...

rating **6**

ALTERNATIVELY



Sensible Soccer
Renegade, £34.99
Rated 9, Issue 22
Regarded by many as the greatest football game in the history of the universe, Sensible Soccer provides plenty of pinball-fast action and knowing footie humour. However, purists may find it more than a little lacking in realism.



Goal!
Virgin, £35.99
Rated 7, Issue 26
A 1993 update of the classic footie game Kick Off (which, sadly, never even approached its full potential on the PC), Goal! offers a little more realism than Sensi, but not really enough to make it a viable alternative to the Renegade best-seller.

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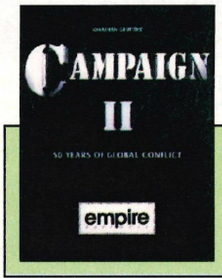
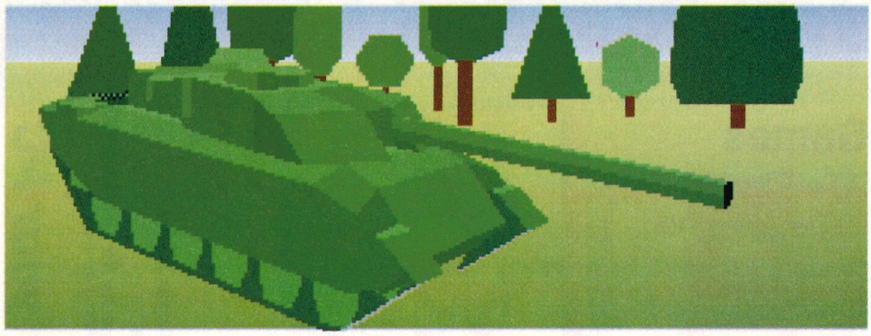


Title	**Campaign II**
Publisher	**Empire**
Contact	**081 343 7337**
Price	**£39.99**



Campaign II

Like the original, Campaign II promises a lot ... but fails to deliver. Tanks, but no thanks

The original Campaign (reviewed, issue 16), was a large-scale game of world war two strategy and tactics which proved extremely popular and sold well. I must say that this mystifies me, I thought it was dire.

The sequel, which picks up where the original left off and covers the last fifty years of global conflict, heralds a 'new generation of war simulations', according to the hype on the packaging. I sincerely hope not.

Campaign II is a classic game of two halves; approach play on a strategic map, followed by a slugfest at the tactical level. The strategy element is just about adequate, though it doesn't begin to compare with the more heavyweight war games on the market. The tactical game, which I suspect will attract most players, is really just very silly.

There's been some development from version one (you now get infantry as well as armour), but basically it's the same old business of controlling a tank on the battlefield, shooting up enemies who behave in the most moronic fashion imaginable: For no apparent reason a clutch of enemy vehicles will suddenly rush up to you, turn around, veer crazily all over the place and do pretty much everything short of looping the loop. This is not a tank battle, it's dodgems.

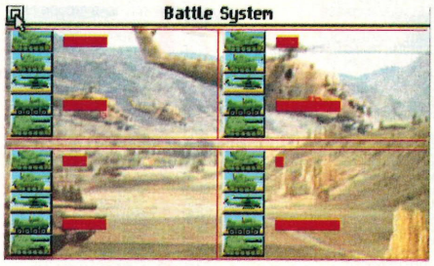
Meanwhile, the primitive control system reminded me of childhood games I used to play with a toy tank which fired matchsticks. Indeed, the more I suffered Campaign II, the more I found myself yearning for a matchstick tank.

The puzzling thing about all of this is that the designers really do seem to think they've come up with a realistic simulation. The choc-a-bloc manual reflects this.

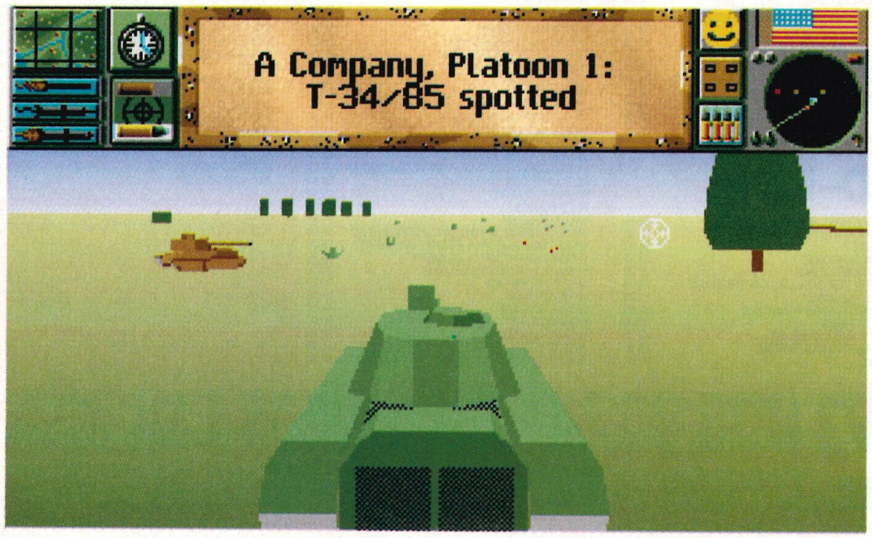
As Campaign II insists on being taken seriously, let's just consider, from a realistic point of view, one aspect of armoured warfare. In any tank battle from World War II to the present day, the optimum tactical position has always been hull down, which is commonly achieved by lingering behind the brow of a hill and showing as little of the turret to the enemy as possible. You can't recreate this tactic in Campaign II because there aren't any hills. There are roads, buildings, trees etc, but the landscape is completely flat. Exactly like the game.

If you want a tactical tank game, I'd recommend sticking to the venerable M1 Tank Platoon.

■ Simon Shaw



A fine selection of armoured vehicles, against a background featuring one of their worst enemies: a Mil-24 Hind helicopter gunship.



An enemy T34 hoves into view on the tactical battle screen. You control your tank by means of the keyboard. Bad guys appear as red dots in the circular mini-screen top right.

A Challenger 1 Main Battle Tank. Campaign II offers you the opportunity to play in a number of 'Real war' scenarios, most of which are set in the Middle East.

Techspec

To run Campaign II you will need 2MB of expanded memory and an expanded memory manager. Action is a little slow on a 386 on the larger strategical maps, but the tactical section is pretty smooth. The introduction takes up about 2.5 Mb

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	**4.5Mb**				
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	**550K**				

Verdict
Give peace a chance

rating **4**

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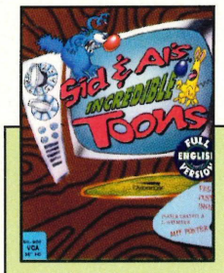
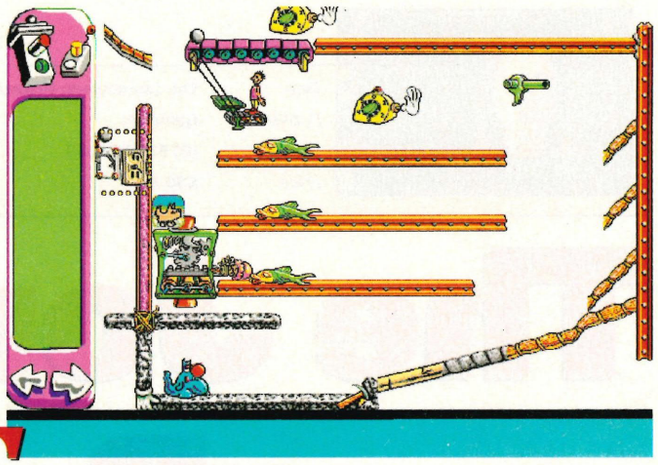


Title	**Sid & Al's Incredible Toons**
Publisher	**Dynamix**
Contact	**(0734) 303322**
Price	**£39.99**

Sid & Al's *Incredible Toons*



The goal of this particular teaser (called, strangely enough, 'Oh What A Life!') is to feed the three fish to Al. This, however, is not quite as simple as it might seem at first glance — it's all a matter of timing.

The cat got a raw deal in The Incredible Machine. But it's back — and it's mad. Is this just an old game in new clothes?

My philosophy on humour has long been that if a joke gets a laugh the first time, keep telling it. Obviously, the game designers at Jeff Tunnell Productions work to a similar creed, as Sid & Al's Incredible Toons is a very close relation of the identical twins that were The Incredible Machine and The Even More Incredible Machine.

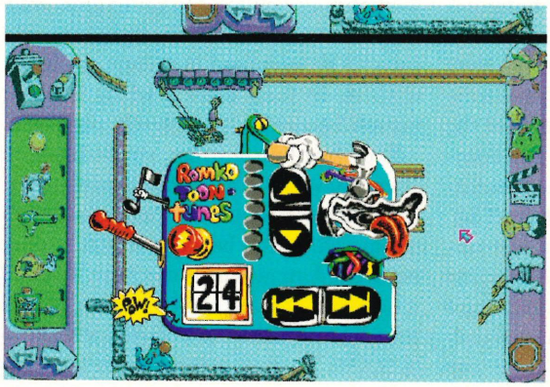
Like both of those noted brain teasers, Sid & Al's Incredible Toons is essentially a series of single-screen puzzles where wacky components are shoe-horned together to achieve a stated goal. This time around though, the nutty professor elements have been discarded to allow the introduction of the game's eponymous heroes: Sid Mouse and Al E Cat. Like their more famous cat and mouse predecessors — Tom and Jerry, Itchy and Scratchy — Sid and Al are locked in a seemingly eternal battle for supremacy, and don't have too many scruples about how they treat each other.

Alongside Sid and Al, the program also introduces a number of minor characters, including Bik Dragon, Eunice Elephant and Hildegard Hen. However, this is just about all that it does introduce, as once you're into the thick of the action, it becomes apparent very quickly that this is really nothing more than The Incredible Machine with a little cosmetic surgery.

This, of course, will probably sound like manna from heaven to die-hard TIM fans who've found life hard to face since completing the Even More Incredible sequel, but it does seem as though a lot of unnecessary work has been lavished on making it look different, when simply producing a second sequel would have been a far easier (and equally satisfying) option.

Obviously, Tunnell and his team decided to use the cat and mouse characters to introduce a little humour into the proceedings, but the essentially repetitive nature of computer games makes the injection of humour a very difficult goal to achieve and this will probably have to go down as another failed attempt.

The trouble is that, at most, Sid and Al's antics are never going to inspire anything more than a wry smile, which is likely to disappear after you've seen the same sequence a dozen times running. Also, a cartoon sequence which didn't really do anything for you first time around is really going to grate when it appears for the tenth time to mock your inability to solve the puzzle that it accompanies.



Sid & Al's Incredible Toons is an extremely polished package — it's lovely to look at and listen to, and the clever control method makes it extremely easy to manipulate (easier, in fact, that either of its predecessors). It also benefits from a clever 'do it yourself' puzzle construction section and a well structured system of bonus screens.

However, all of this isn't enough to hide the fact that this is just The Incredible Machine by another name — and third time around it doesn't really seem so incredible any more.

■ Ciarán Brennan

The game's cartoon style pervades every aspect of the program — this array of icons for adjusting the music and sound effects being a very good example.

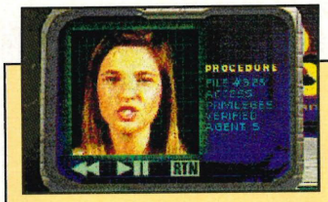
Techspec

It might not be a memory muncher of Strike Commander proportions, but Sid and Al's Incredible Toons still makes serious demands of your processor and set-up (for example, it requires 570,000 bytes of conventional memory and 737,280 bytes of EMS).

Disk requirements					
	High density	✓			
	Hard disk only	✓			
	Space taken on hard disk	**3.4Mb**			
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	**570K**			

rating **6**

Verdict
A not so incredible package



Title	**The Journeyman Project**
Publisher	**Gametek**
Contact	**(0753) 553445**
Price	**£39.99**

The Journeyman Project

Two way communication in the 24th century. She doesn't look happy, does she?

It's big and it's beautiful, but what does The Journeyman Project offer in terms of gameplay?

It's the year 2318, and Earth now consists of one unified country. You, the principal character, are an agent working for a shadowy organisation called the Temporal Security Agency. Your job is to travel back in time repairing temporal rips — discontinuities in the space-time fabric that occur when someone else travels back in time and fools around — which cause all sorts of havoc. Of course, the problem is that you have to repair these rips before they happen, in order to ensure that they never actually occur (this time travel business gets complicated). Still with me? Good.

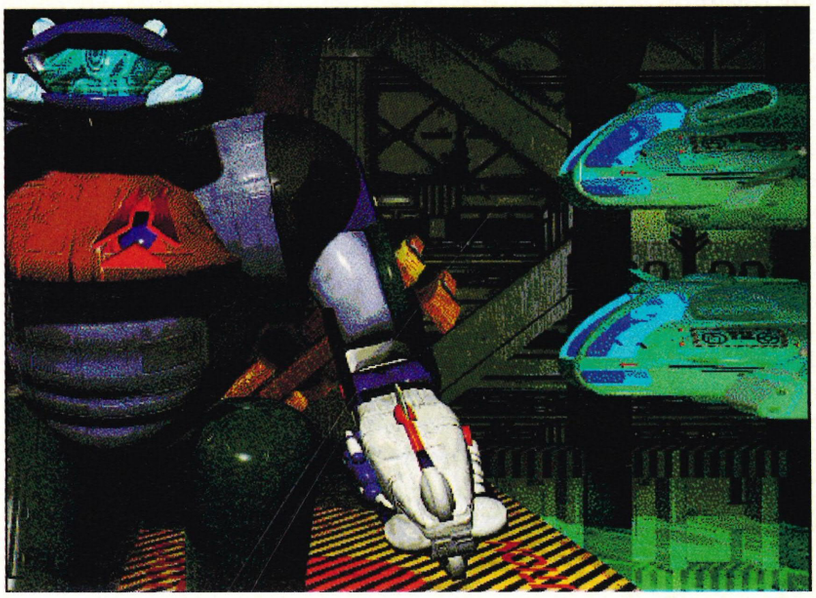
A few years before 2318, a group of aliens made contact with Earth and promised intergalactic diplomatic relations in the future if we remained good ... and thus, Earth's inhabitants are now due to take their place in an interplanetary pantheon. The Journeyman Project actually starts the day this momentous event is supposed to happen. And understandably, everyone is rather excited about the prospect.

After waking up in your poky but futuristic flat and finding yourself late for work, you have to dash to the office — which, as you will find, isn't neccessarily the easiest thing to do in the 24th century. They tend to do things differently in the future.

Once on the job things don't get any easier. The Agency's sophisticated hardware has detected a temporal rip which could threaten the alien fraternisation enterprise before it ever gets off the ground — and it's up to you to stop this happening.



On a mission — this time in a spaceship. That robot in front of you is definitely one of the most humourless characters you're likely to come across in a PC game.



To prevent a temporal rip you must have a real version of Earth's history at your disposal. Luckily there is one, stored in a vault at 200 million years BC, before any temporal rips could have happened. The first thing you have to do is jump into a time machine and retrieve the unsullied disc for comparison with the present-day disc back at the TSA.

This comparison enables you to pinpoint hiatuses in events, and that's where your job really starts — you time-leap back to the discontinuous events and influence things secret-agent style, with whatever means you can find, to make sure that everything happens as its supposed to. You have to use a reasonable amount of initiative, eg, your discs contain news bulletins, and you have to remember the differences between the real and the altered ones.

The missions you get sent on are wonderfully varied — you have to rescue things, get to grips with the workings of spaceships, become involved in shoot-outs and many more.

Journeyman is definitely out in a league of its own. Don't worry, I know it sounds complex, but you don't need a degree in astrophysics and logic to get to grips with it. It is complex, but in the right way, and I would be surprised if anyone got bored with it. In fact, after a while I found myself becoming completely obsessed.

If you buy Journeyman, you're likely to spend days, if not months, playing it. Sadly, though, that's not just because it's so involving. It's because it places phenomenal demands on a machine. I played it on Elonex's latest top-of-the-range multimedia machine — a DX2/66, with 8Mb of RAM, VL-Bus graphics and a whop-

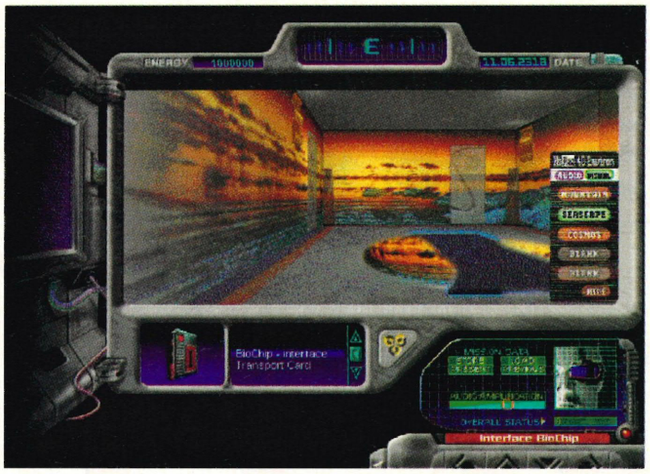
ping double-speed CD-ROM — but even then it couldn't be described as fast. I wouldn't contemplate even attempting to play it on anything less than a 486DX-33 with at least the same sort of RAM, graphics and CD-ROM drive.

There's another flaw, too — saving games is bug-ridden. Although it's possible, you have to be very careful. The problem is that by default, Journeyman tries to save games to the CD-ROM, which of course can't be done, and if you give a game any name other than the default one, it disappears into an abyss. Which is soul-destroying, as it takes about 10 minutes just to boot up after you double-click the Windows icon.

But — and believe me, this is something I'd *never* normally do — I'm prepared to forgive it to a large extent. Not only is it brilliant as a game but it's, well, a whole experience. The graphics are up with the best (they're the result of sophisticated 3D modelling work), the sound is wonderful and there are some marvellous cyberpunk-style touches, especially in the time travel sequences.

In a way, I would say that The Journeyman Project is a game for connoisseurs — if you don't think your machine spec is up to it, don't buy it, as you'll find it horribly frustrating. But if you do have the hardware, you'll find Journeyman might well go some way towards justifying all that money you lashed out on it.

■ Steve Boxer



In the corridor outside your flat, there's a comfy-looking reclining chair. Sit in this and you'll find it's the ultimate chill-out apparatus.

Techspec *A 33MHz 386DX with 4Mb RAM, a CD-ROM, Windows 3.0 or above, an AdLib or SoundBlaster-compatible sound card and a 640x480 resolution 256-colour graphics card are minimum requirements. Although you can install it on a hard disk if you've got (gulp!) 400Mb free space hanging around ...*

Graphic modes

VGA ✗ SVGA ✓

Soundboards

Ad Lib ✓ Roland ✗ Sound Blaster ✓

Control

Joystick ✗ Keyboard ✓ Mouse ✓

Performance

Optimum speed	66MHz
Minimum memory	4Mb
Free RAM required	600K

Verdict Impractical but marvelous

rating **7**



Title	**Strike Commander CD-ROM**
Publisher	**Origin/Electronic Arts**
Contact	**(0753) 549442**
Price	**£49.99**

Strike Commander

The game that launched a thousand missiles is back ...

Strike Commander isn't a favourite amongst hardcore flight-sim fans, mainly because the emphasis on dogfighting and movie-style interaction has little to do with realistic air combat. But it still has a lot to offer in the fun stakes, and it's glorious to look at — provided you have a fast and powerful 486 to play it on.

So what does the CD version give you above and beyond the norm? Well, the Tactical Operations data disk is included with the main game, there's a whole new intro sequence, what the packaging calls an 'awesome' MIDI-based music score (it's not 'awesome', by the way. It's okay) combined with speech during combat scenes and key sequences. Other than that, 'not a lot' is the answer.

However, the CD-version of Strike Commander does have two things in its favour, the first of which is convienience. The basic 42Mb game, tends to clog up hard disks. Thus it's a lot more manageable on CD. Secondly, it's also much better value that its disk-based equivalent. On disk, the game itself costs just under £50, Tactical Operations, £25, and the Speech pack another £19.99 — in terms of lightening the load on your wallet, the CD version is a £50 better bet.

As a complete package, the Strike Commander CD looks rather impressive. There's plenty of quality gameplay and the added speech contributes immensely to the atmosphere of the game. And it doesn't clog up your hard drive either!

■ John Bennett

Strike Commander CD includes the Tactical Mission disk and the speech pack — both of which are seperate purchases with the disk version.



Techspec *Strike Commander CD can be very slow loading scenes, so a 486DX is essential — anything less will have you tearing your hair out at jerky flying and interminable screen refreshes.*

Graphic modes

VGA ✓ SVGA ✗

Soundboards

Ad Lib ✓ Roland ✗ Sound Blaster ✓

Control

Joystick ✓ Keyboard ✓ Mouse ✗

Performance

Optimum speed	33MHz
Minimum memory	4Mb
Free RAM required	600K

Verdict Much happier on CD

rating **7**



Title	**Inca II**
Publisher	**Coktel Vision**
Contact	**(0734) 303322**
Price	**£54.99**

Inca II



Is it a space sim? Is it an adventure? No, it's the latest offering from French developers Coktel Vision

Top: Eldorado, the man in the golden mask.

Right: Not only will you be shot at in space, but you'll also get attacked on the train. Good job some considerate soul has installed guns.

Inca II is a very odd game. First you have to imagine the members of an ancient civilisation whizzing around in gold-plated spaceships and blowing the hell out of Spanish conquistadors, also in spaceships. Fine. But what if I were to tell you that this game was an adventure? That's right, an adventure with space combat. Or maybe it's a space combat sim with puzzles. Who knows? Either way, it's odd.

The central character is one Eldorado who, in the first Inca game, completed the quest to become Grand Inca. He's now somewhat older, and married with an adult son, Atahualpa. Everything seems to be going well until a mysterious asteroid appears in orbit. Atahualpa (played by you in the first part of the game) takes it upon himself to steal a



Yuna owns an observatory in the middle of the Australian Outback. She'll help you repair your damaged ship.



spaceship and investigate, but manages to anger his father *and* his father's arch-enemy, the conquistador Aguirre. When Atahualpa fails, you step into Eldorado's shoes to continue the investigation.

Visually, Inca II is a bit of a corker. It mixes fractal-based landscapes with digitised film footage to good effect, and comes as close to being an interactive movie as any game I've seen. This impression is enforced by the wonderful cinematic music, and the space combat sequences give Rebel Assault a run for its money in the presentation stakes.

There are two small things which detract from the presentation: the first being that the lip synching is not quite right, and the second is that many of the characters speak with atrocious American accents. Whilst neither of these points affect the gameplay, it doesn't half ruin the atmosphere when Atahualpa sounds like some US High School brat. Aguirre has a Spanish accent, so why couldn't the Inca characters sound South American?

Inca II is certainly one of the most impressive CD-ROM products on offer, but the game itself is a little weak. The puzzles are very logical, and similar in style to those in Lost in Time, but I didn't find them overly taxing. The space combat is a little more challenging, especially if you opt for the action game, but if you've played X-Wing or any other space combat sim, you'll find them pretty straightforward. Whilst Inca II is beautiful and original, it isn't going to keep you entertained for very long. More's the pity.

■ Cal Jones

Techspec *The minimum specification for Inca II is a 25MHz 386 PC, with 256 colour VGA and a Microsoft-compatible mouse. An MPC driver is recommended.*

Graphic modes

VGA	✓	**SVGA**	✗

Soundboards

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

Control

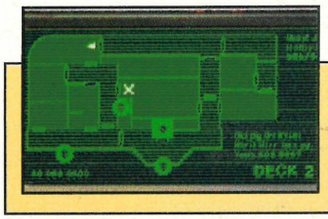
Joystick	✓	**Keyboard**	✗	**Mouse**	✓

Performance

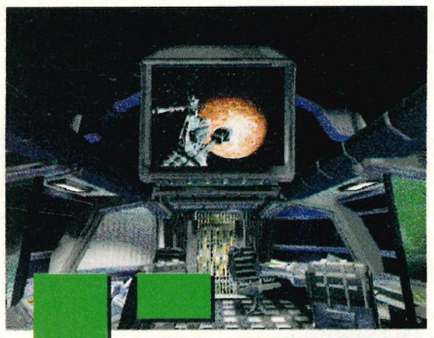
Optimum speed	**25MHz**
Minimum memory	**1Mb**
Free RAM required	**590K**

Verdict
A stunning game, but the appeal is short-lived

rating **7**



Title	**Iron Helix**
Publisher	**MicroProse**
Contact	**(0454) 326532**
Price	**£39.99**



The eerie, but highly atmospheric intro, shows the rogue Jeremiah O'Brien succumb to a virus and target the wrong planet!

Iron Helix

In the far-flung future a military training exercise goes drastically wrong. Can you stop the destruction of a defenceless planet?

In the dim and distant future, where mankind travels amongst the stars and everything is dark, moody and lit dramatically with neon, a terrible tragedy needs to be averted. A horribly beweaponed spaceship — the Jeremiah O'Brien — has fallen foul of a mystery virus which has wiped out the crew and caused its delicate computer system to go haywire. Now this might not sound too bad to you and me, but it's terrifying, trouser-spoiling news to the small, peaceful planet of Calliope because the Jeremiah O'Brien, with its planet-busting weapon, the Iron Helix, has locked the poor planet firmly in its sights.

As humans can't board the ship because of the killer virus and an errant defender droid, you must guide a remote-controlled robot around the stricken vessel. There are three sections to the game and you've only a mere 80 minutes to complete it. In the first section you must prowl the deserted corridors, dodge the aforementioned defender droid, and pick up fragments of the crew's DNA. You'll need the DNA codes to get to to other parts of the ship and the second part of the game.

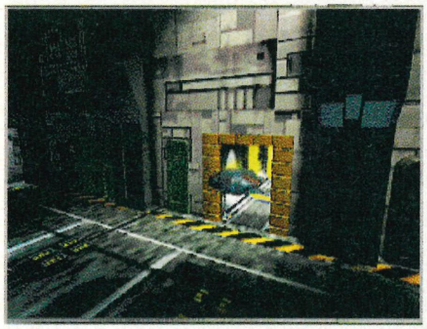
After this you must collect and piece together a huge number of video clues that have been left behind by the doomed crew. These clues, when properly deciphered, will not only tell you how to defeat the rogue defender droid but also how to find the correct access code to disable the Iron Helix. Of course, if you fail the pastel blue world of Calliope will be blown into billions of little pieces, millions will die and it will be all your fault. It's no laughing matter, I can tell you.

Iron Helix is a strange mix of gaming styles, a game that fuses board game-like play with video footage and a bit of strategic planning. Of course, this is no Rebel Assault and if you're looking for a comparison then Critical Path (see page 100) is the closest you're going to get.

Like Critical Path, Iron Helix is a nice-looking game and highly atmospheric, but for a CD title it doesn't really break any new ground. The gameplay is irritatingly simple: the ship must be explored, the clues found (by either trial or error) and then everything pieced carefully together. At times it seems little more than one big jigsaw puzzle that pins its hopes firmly on to the novelty value of video footage.

Iron Helix is one of a batch of CD-based games feature very simplistic gameplay and tiny quarter-screen video windows. This seems to be the dominating feature of the so-called CD revolution at the moment and it's not particularly inspiring. But, having said that, Iron Helix is a good, atmospheric game. It's a little simple for my taste, but remarkably cheap compared to its CD rivals, and although it isn't a game that's worth buying a CD-ROM drive for, it's not a bad addition to the blossoming CD catalogue.

■ Dean Evans



Left: a lavish but extremely tiny animated cutscene as your remote-controlled robot enters the O'Brien.



Below: the main game screen with its dinky little game window (top left), map and controls.

Techspec

Iron Helix is one of a growing number of CD games that only run under Windows. The game dumps some essential code and over 10Mb of sound files on to your hard disk but hauls the graphics straight off the CD. Minimum transfer rate is 150K/second and you must have a 256 colour Windows display.

Graphic modes

VGA	✓	**SVGA**	✓

Soundboards

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

Control

Joystick	x	**Keyboard**	x	**Mouse**	✓

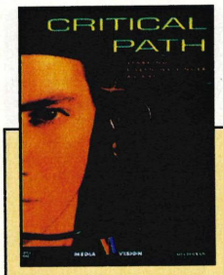
Performance

Optimum speed	**16MHz**
Minimum memory	**2Mb**
Free RAM required	**600K**

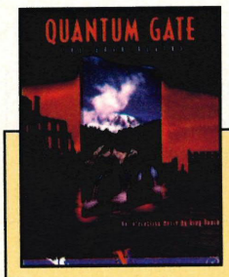
Verdict

Atmospheric and tense but values its tiny video clips a little too highly

rating **6**



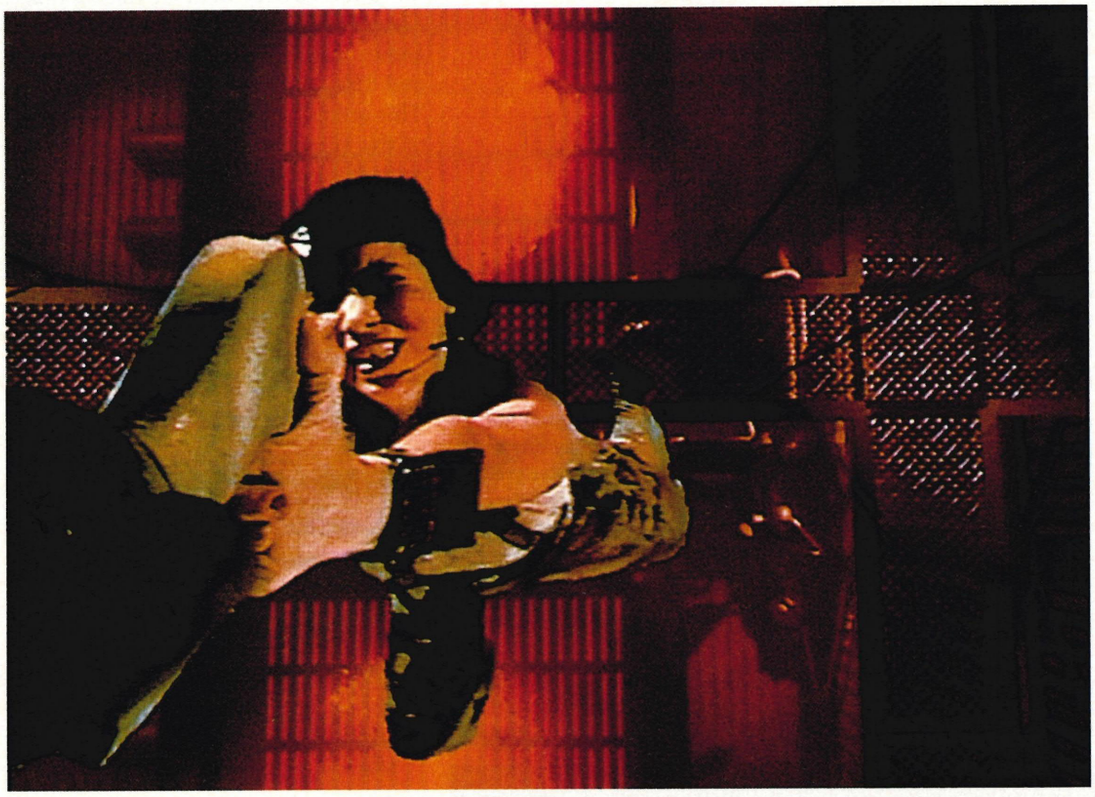
Title	**Critical Path**
Publisher	**Media Vision**
Contact	**(0279) 412441**
Price	**£49.95**



Title	**Quantum Gate**
Publisher	**Media Vision**
Contact	**(0279) 412441**
Price	**£49.95**

Quantum leap?

With two new futuristic games, both of which make use of cinema techniques, sound card and CD-ROM manufacturer Media Vision is moving into the software arena



Media Vision, a company best known for its sound cards, has finally decided that it is time to get a piece of the action and release its own interactive adventures. Hence Critical Path and Quantum Gate, a pair of Windows programs produced by Mechadeus and HyperBole respectively, two development teams based in the home of movie making, California.

Critical Path is set in a dark and desperate world and, as you soon find out, it's just not your day. Over three quarters of the world's population has been slaughtered in a nuclear and biological war and most of the survivors have gone mad. One of the few sane people left, you find yourself in a helicopter flying to a safe haven when mechanical failure forces you to land on a nearby factory roof, only to find that the factory is run by an insane despot, general Minh.

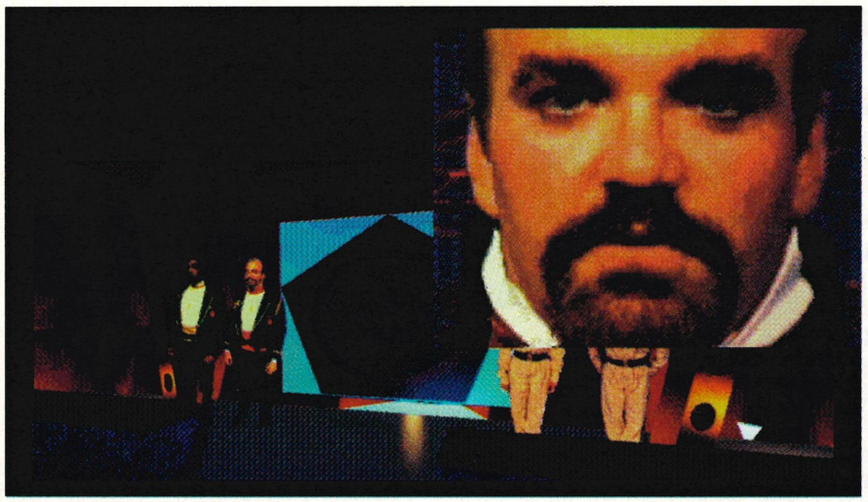
To make things worse, your pilot has been killed by a booby-trap and your wingman has also been shot down by Minh's minions, leaving only one other survivor, Kat. Because you have been injured and cannot move, Kat, armed with a gun and just nine rounds of ammo must fight her way from the wreckage of her chopper, into the factory and up to you on the roof — and all this happens before the game even starts!

It's the sort of plot that lends itself to a fast-paced action game; fighting through masses of insane mutants over 30 levels of booby-trapped factory. But not this time. Instead of controlling Kat in a mad blood-fest, Media Vision has plumped for making you think about things rather than testing your shooting reactions. You play yourself, lying injured on the control centre roof, helping Kat through the perils of the factory before she loses her nine lives (I kid you not).

Fortunately, there are several things in the battered control centre to help you out. The MilCom Link is your direct contact with Kat and as you watch her proceed via a headset camera she wears, you can give her directions and warn her of impending danger by hitting the alert button. You also have access to the switches that activate the factory operations such as conveyor belts, cranes and the like. Doing the right thing at the right



There's a Militerm console on every corner should you get lost, want to read your post or check the news. Music is for officers only, though.



time is essential if you are to stop Kat swan-diving into a vat of molten lead, Terminator 2 fashion, among other unpleasantries.

Finally, you can also use Minh's own booby-traps to your advantage. By deciphering the mad rantings scribbled in an old notebook he seems to have discarded, you can figure out the detonation codes for a series of useful bombs, machine guns and other implements of destruction.

Critical Path is very much a case of figuring out what to do and when exactly to do it; a series of 15 scenes, each one a simple riddle in Minh's diary or a bit of lateral thinking. Unfortunately it's all far too simple. I was left wishing for more substance to the game, if only because the video cut sequences are quite well scripted and shot. The standard of acting is good by Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective standards, and there are none of the fake German accents that hounded the CD-ROM version of Indiana Jones and The Fate Of Atlantis. When Kat was screaming for help there was genuine tension and the sound and graphics added to the atmosphere without showing off.

And Quantum Gate?

Quantum Gate, on the other hand, does everything it can to show off its multimedia credentials. In the role of Drew Griffin, a reluctant soldier, your job is to save the world from would-be eco-disaster in the year 2057. Over 45 minutes of full motion video, using 30 actors, reading from a thousand pages of text supposedly unravels one of the most confusing plots in the history of gaming, while the, quite frankly, surreal instruction leaflet offers little extra explanation.

It's all about mining Iridium Oxide on a planet called AJ3905. This apparently involves fusion washing, large insects, Militerm, and the quantum gate as part of the Eden Initiative. The quantum gate, in case you are wondering, is "... a device that allows access to the parallel reality frequencies that surround our own." Yes, that old thing.

None of this makes any sense whatsoever, but it is the sort of clap-trap jargon that is supposed to set the scene and enthuse you to watch the 'interactive' movie. In fact it isn't particularly 'interactive' at all — occasionally deciding what Drew says in conversation doesn't seem to change the course of events one bit.

Quantum Gate uses a new Virtual Cinema system of presentation, where only the middle of the screen is used for the graphics. This leaves both the top and bottom of the screen blank, robbing the visuals of any atmosphere they might have created, without ever fooling anyone that they've really bought a wide-screen film. Over this, at strategic and poignant moments, are layered mini close-ups of characters' faces during conversation. Animating still photos of actors rather than actually filming them acting the script has also succeed in producing amazingly wooden facial expressions, that dampen the scene even further.

Add to this a distinct lack of good sound and jerky video, even using a PC and CD-ROM drive, both of which are operating their recommended speeds, and you start to look to the gameplay for redeeming features. At which point you realise that there isn't really any gameplay. None whatsoever. Although lack of gameplay has sadly been the trademark of interactive movies, Quantum Gate reaches a new low: you can wander around in some scenes, occasionally choosing what to say, but it doesn't seem to get you anywhere. There doesn't seem to be any clear aims in the game at all.

I think HyperBole may have realised this too, in the final stages of development, because, strangest of all, they appear to have thrown in a sub-game to keep you going: the pseudo-VR parts of Quantum Gate are effectively a shoot 'em up in the Battle Zone vein.

This would be great if only it wasn't the saddest excuse for an arcade game since 3D Space Invaders on the ZX81. In fact it's slower, graphically inferior, and just as pointless.

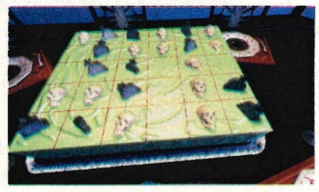
Now I apologise wholeheartedly to Media Vision if I am missing something here, but personally I feel I would get far better value out of my fifty quid by simply hiring a video for the evening. Quantum Gate is simply out-classed by the competition.

At the end of the day Critical Path has something to offer a games player, or even

ALTERNATIVELY



Dracula Unleashed, Mindscape, £49.99
Rated 6, Issue 26
The latest from the creators of Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective. Some excellent video sequences and a game of sorts. The game also contains the worst video accents (cockney and American) in history.



The 7th Guest Virgin, £69.99
Rated 7, Issue 20
The game that kicked off the craze for CD movie action on the PC. Unfortunately it suffers from an all too common lack of gameplay. Widely thought to be too easy, but a visually splendid trend-setter nonetheless.

Quantum Gate: The new arrivals briefing, run by a very laid back looking Colonel Saunders. Welcome to AJ3905!

Critical Path's action all takes place at this set of beat-up consoles. Watch Kat fight insane minions on the edge of a vat of boiling lead from the safety of the factory roof, but if you let her die nine times then you're next.



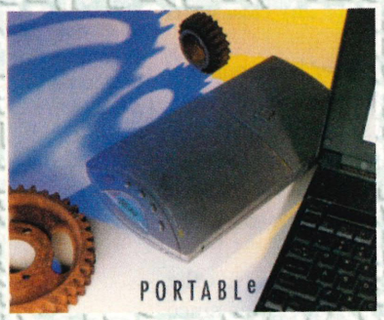
Media Vision

Apocalyptic visions aside, Media Vision is a company that has a good pedigree in multimedia. Since being founded in Fremont, California in 1990 its business has quickly expanded.

The strategy has been simple enough. Start by selling sound cards and expand the business into graphics cards, CD-ROM drives and multimedia upgrades. In fact, Critical Path and Quantum Gate may be the first games from Media Vision but it already has a huge share of the 16-bit sound card market in the US (see Pro Sonic 16, right) and has just launched two new CD-ROM drives, designed very much with the style conscious consumer in mind.

The Memphis is an external, double speed, multi session CD-ROM drive, while the Reno is a portable drive, built to the same specification, but with added user friendly CD audio functions, so that it basically serves as a dual purpose — CD-ROM plus audio — system.

Last year saw Media Vision move into software design. Critical Path and Quantum Gate are only the first in a range of planned CD-ROM games, to be backed up with a series of licensed games compilations. There are educational programmes like Forever Growing Garden for younger children and even a desktop organiser system, PlanIt, with a colour photo for each day in one of three themes: adrenalin, swimsuits or wildlife.



The Reno portable CD-ROM, from Media Vision, combines high spec and good looks with audio CD capacity.



Left: The Pro Sonic 16 sound card. Media Vision is far better known for products such as this.

someone who just wants to see what can be done with multimedia. It has some originality in the interface, dramatic tension in the plot, and at least a little bit of a challenge. I was frustrated that it took longer to get the software installed than it took to finish the game, but maybe there is is something here that Media Vision can build on for future titles.

I wish the same could be said of Quantum Gate, but alas, it can't. Believe you me it's best forgotten. I'm trying to.

■ Martin Klimes

The evil Minh's avant-garde taste in decor adds to the atmosphere. Given spray paint and shadows it's remarkable what you can do with an electric chair and a few knick-knacks.

Techspec *Critical Path requires a 386 33MHz with 4MB RAM running Windows 3.1 in SVGA graphics. A sound card and CD-ROM drive with 150kb/sec transfer rate are also needed. A 486 with 8 MB RAM and accelerated SVGA card are recommended for best results.*

Graphic modes					
VGA	x	SVGA	✓		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	x	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	33MHz				
Minimum memory	640K				
Free RAM required	580K				

Verdict Another potentially great CD-Rom game that just falls short

rating **5**



Techspec *Quantum Gate needs a 486SX, 8MB RAM, a 150KB/sec transfer rate CD-ROM drive, and Windows 3.1. It installs into 10MB of hard disk space and will run with a 256 colour SVGA card and 8-bit sound, although a 65,536 colour card and 16-bit sound are recommended.*

Graphic modes					
VGA	x	SVGA	✓		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	x	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	33MHz				
Minimum memory	640K				
Free RAM required	580K				

Verdict About as much fun as self-mutilation

rating **3**

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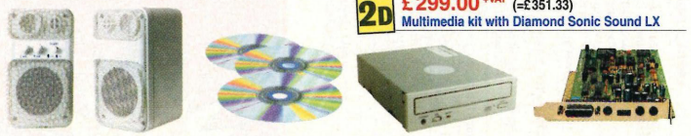

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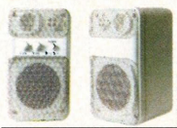

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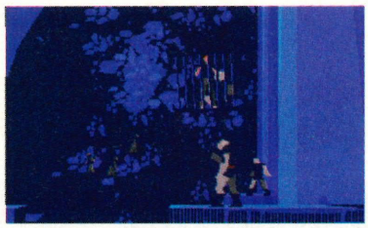
BUDGET reviews

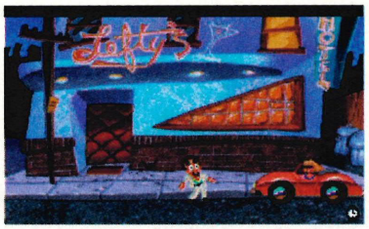
There are plenty of budget re-releases and value for money compilations in the shops these days. Shawn Henry takes you through the latest titles



Another World
US Gold/Delphine Software
£14.99

Delphine's adventure is a classic tale of alienation and struggle to survive. You play a scientist who has been transported to another dimension as a result of his experiments in particle acceleration. The object of the game is to escape back to earth. Sounds easy? It's not. While trying to escape you meet lots of strange-looking aliens, most of whom aren't very helpful. All is not bad however — you do have an alien 'friend' who helps you out from time to time. Another World is an adventure puzzle game which involves a lot of thinking before you act. It may be over two years old, but it's still good enough, both graphically and in terms of difficulty, to match current games. At this price you can't go wrong.





Leisure Suit Larry
Kixx XL
£16.99

This re-release features the VGA graphics version of Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards, rather than the original EGA version, which is particularly welcome. Unfortunately, the annoying multiple choice data protection routine remains intact — you still need to be an octogenarian American history professor to answer the questions correctly.

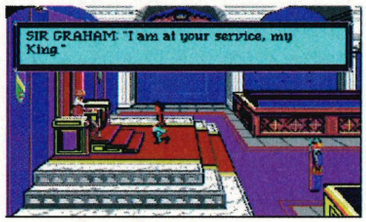
Larry is out on the town to 'fulfil his fantasies' with as many women as he can in one night. You must roam through the streets, night clubs and back alleys (watch out for the punks hiding in alley's, they just want to beat you up), to find suitable candidates for your on-screen ego extension, and persuade them to submit.

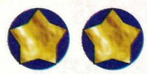
The jokes aren't really funny as I found them the first time I played the game some years ago and the theme is well-worn (and terribly politically incorrect) now. Despite the graphics update I'll think you'll find Leisure Suit Larry looks a little dated.



King's Quest 1
Kixx XL
£16.99

The King's Quest tales have been around for even longer than Larry himself, but this saga has evolved far more, both graphically and in narrative complexity, than that starring the leisure-suited one. This is immediately apparent when you load up King's Quest 1 — it looks old. The game gives you a vast land to roam in search of treasures for your king. If you manage to obtain all he asks for then he will reward you with the kingdom. It's an involving adventure but by modern standards, it's rather plain, the most notable shortcoming being the very small vocabulary. Those used to old style text adventures will no doubt enjoy Kings Quest, but anyone reared on modern graphic interfaces should try one of the later versions.





Spellcasting Party Pak /CD-ROM
Legend
£39.99



Party Pak comes with three Steve Meretzky games; Spellcasting 101, 201 and 301, each with their suspiciously similar plots: you are a novice wizard, whose only pastimes are learning spells and 'making it' with babes. The only (slight) plot variation comes in 301, in which you are on vacation and get to test out your spells on beach babes. The graphics vary little between all three games and the format is that of graphics and text adventure. The humour is very juvenile and 1970s Animal House American. However, with three games in the bag for this price, it's worth checking out if you and Steve Meretzky share a smutty sense of humour and you've got a CD-ROM drive.





PC review recommended

We don't give PC Review Recommended awards to many games, but you can be assured that those that do get this accolade will be, in our opinion, outstanding in all areas. A PC Review Recommended award is a guarantee of excellence

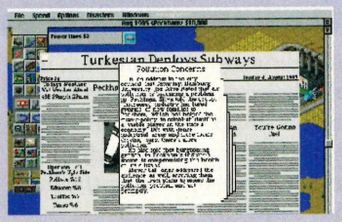
RECOMMENDS RECOMMENDS RECOMMENDS RECOMMENDS



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.



Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers, Sierra, £39.99 (disk), £44.99 (CD-ROM)
Gabriel Knight is a supernatural thriller set in New Orleans. Strong characters and a gripping plot make it one of the most compelling adventures around, though not for the squeamish.



SimCity 2000
Maxis, £39.99
SimCity 2000 is more than just an updated version of the classic city building sim: 3D graphics and many additional features make it a whole new gaming experience. Guaranteed to keep you entertained for ages.



Doom
ID/Transend, £34.75
The true successor to Wolfenstein, Doom is definitely one of the most violent games ever — and also one of the best looking. Taught, tense and rivetting, the first episode is available as shareware at £3.75.

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 March 10, 1994, and your entry will be placed in the prize draw.

❑ Doom
Q: In which Mad Max movie did Mel Gibson use a chainsaw in a fight?
A: .....

❑ Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers (disk-based version)
Q: Name the police detective who is also Gabriel's best friend:
A: .....

❑ SimCity 2000
Q: Name two other Maxis 'Sim' games:
A: .....

Name .....
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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 March 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*

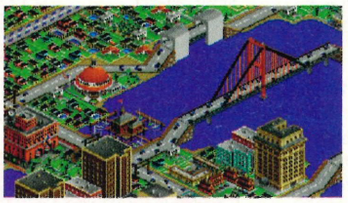


1. Alone in the Dark 2	*Infogrames*
2. TFX	*DID*
3. Flight Sim 5.0	*Microsoft*
4. Sam and Max	*LucasArts/US Gold*
5. Rebel Assault	*LucasArts/US Gold*
6. Premier Manager 2	*Gremlin*
7. Frontier: Elite 2	*Gametek*
8. B-Wing	*LucasArts/US Gold*
9. Kingmaker	*US Gold*
10. IndyCar Racing	*Virgin*

Charts courtesy of Virgin Retail.

Sim psychology

It seems you can tell a lot about someone from the cities they build using SimCity 2000:



Christina has gone for quality rather than quantity with up-market Erskville. Most of Erskville's residences have their own swimming pools and after a hard day at the office, sim-yuppies can relax in one of Erskville's many parks, go sailing at the marina or improve their knowledge of the Classics at the Byron Library.

Unfortunately, Erskville can never grow very large without losing its distinctive character. Any increase in pollution, heavy traffic and the working class would lower the tone.



Cal, on the other hand, thinks size is important. New Cal has been flattened and zoned to allow for maximum growth, and if that means a city full of high rise buildings, so be it. Because of its size, New Cal's biggest problems are traffic and pollution. That doesn't seem to stop people from wanting to live there, though. With a population of over two million, New Cal contains 20 arcologies, five stadiums, two airports and a Llama Drome. It may not be posh, but it's making money.

REVIEWED THIS MONTH

Doom	**9**
Gabriel Knight	**9**
SimCity 2000	**9**
Goblins 3	**7**
Litil Divil	**7**
Police Quest: Open Season	**7**
Premier Manager 2	**7**
Striker	**7**
Bridge Champion with Omar Sharif	**6**
Sid & Al's Incredible Toons	**6**
Mortal Kombat	**6**
Star Trek: Judgment Rites	**6**
Wizard	**5**
Campaign 2	**4**

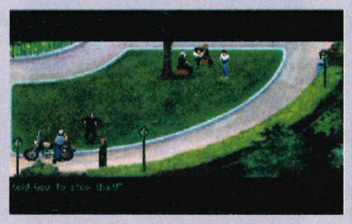
CD-ROM GAMES

Inca 2	**7**
The Journeyman Project	**7**
Strike Commander	**7**
Iron Helix	**6**
Critical Path	**5**
Quantum Gate	**3**

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
Doom
Falcon 3.0
Frontier: Elite II
Gabriel Knight
Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis
IndyCar Racing
Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker
Monkey Island 2
Rebel Assault
Sensible Soccer
SimCity 2000
Syndicate
TFX
Tornado
Ultima Underworld





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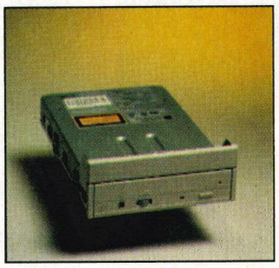

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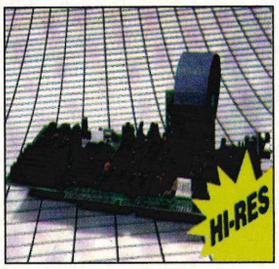

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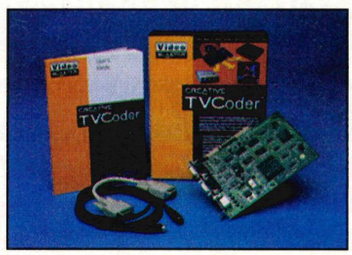

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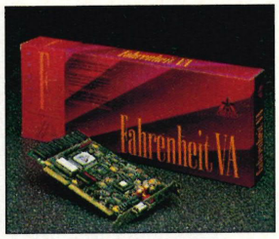

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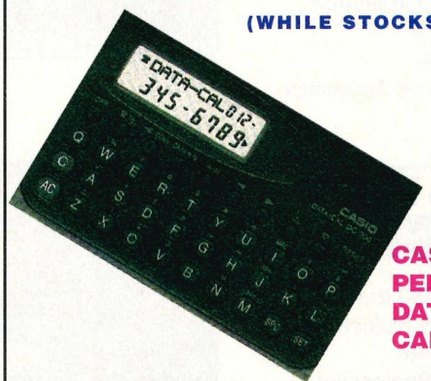

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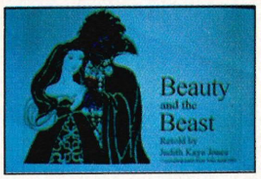





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Shareware reviews

Sam McKenzie flexes his artistic muscles, turns his hand to a spot of landscaping, and ends up having to rescue a dog. All in a days work ...

Top Draw

Top Draw is a shareware art package that compares favourably with the best professional drawing packages available — Corel Draw, Micrografx Designer, Freehand, etc. Basically a drawing program, it doesn't allow you to apply colour to any part of the page. However, once you have drawn outlines, you can specify a fill colour. This may sound a bit restrictive but a drawing can easily be edited and it doesn't have a fixed resolution. Because of this, drawing programs are ideal for technical illustration, diagrams, logos and, once you get the hang of it, just about anything!

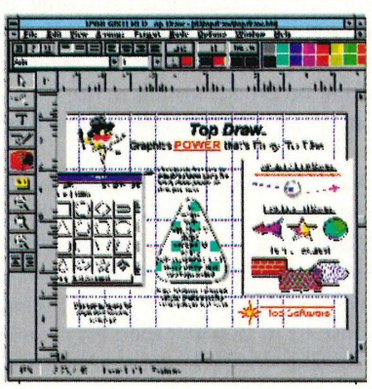
Top Draw has a good range of drawing tools and, by making use of libraries of pre-drawn shapes, you can create a design very quickly. It supports a range of line and fill styles — including texture and gradient fills. Although it lacks the special effects of the more expensive packages you can still achieve the same results with a little ingenuity and effort. If it has a real flaw, it's in text handling. You can enter text directly into a drawing and format it paragraph by paragraph — but you cannot stretch or rotate it. The ability to treat text like any other graphic is promised for the next version.

Top Draw stores drawings in its own format but you can read in WMF and BMP files and you can export to WMF format. You can also copy and paste drawings into other applications. Top Draw seems to be fast and stable — ie, it works! Given it only takes 2Mb of disk space it is well worth considering.

Supplier:	*Nildram*
Telephone:	*0442 891331*
Product code:	*Top Draw*
Price:	*£3*
Registration price:	*£34 or £49 with manuel*
Registration pack:	*Support and upgrade*
Minimum spec:	*Any windows*
Disk space:	*2Mb*

Product Top Draw

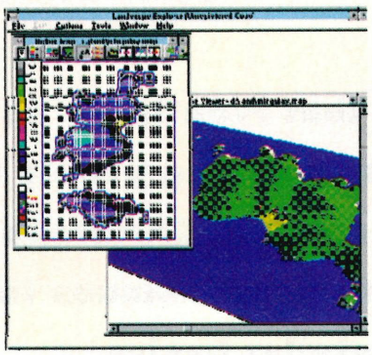
shareware tech spec 1994



Landscape Explorer

If you have a map or any other 3D data you can use Landscape Explorer to view it as a 3D surface. Once you have entered the map you can view the surface from any position and magnify the vertical dimension so that you can exaggerate the shape of very flat landscapes.

With all modelling and visualisation programs the problem is getting the data in. Landscape Explorer does what it can to make this easy. You can define the height of any point on the map simply by clicking and typing the relevant value. If you had to do this over the entire map you'd soon give up!



Instead, you can draw contour lines which set all points on the contour to a particular height.

Once you have specified sufficient contours you can ask Landscape Explorer to fill in the missing heights. You can do all of this freehand or scan in and trace an existing map.

There are algorithms that will allow a 3D object to be viewed and manipulated interactively but Landscape Explorer uses a simpler and slower method. My advice is to keep the maps small, unless you have a Pentium to run in on!

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Telephone:	*(0786) 825406*
Product code:	*Land*
Price:	*£3*
Registration price:	*£35*
Registration pack:	*latest version*
Minimum spec:	*386 or better*
Disk space:	*2Mb*

Product Landscape Explorer

shareware tech spec 1994



Rescue Rover

The basic idea in Rescue Rover is that a robot keeps on stealing Rover the dog and Roger, his pal, has to rescue him — and no, this isn't a platform game!

Each time Rover is stolen he is hidden in a room, but you can't go straight to him because of obstacles like killer robots, lethal beams and so on. You can move crates, mirrors and other objects to foil the robots, divert the beams and bridge water.

There is no music and the game is EGA only. What you think of Rescue Rover will depend on how quick you are at solving the puzzles. I've seen players struggle over level one for 10 or more goes and I have also seen the level completed in one try. The shareware version has 10 levels and, basically, it's good fun but not compulsive playing.

Supplier:	*PDSL*
Telephone:	*(0892) 663298*
Product code:	*3832*
Price:	*£6.00 or less*
Registration price:	*$19.95*
Registration pack:	*12 more levels.*
Minimum spec:	*XT, 286, 386, 486*
Disk space:	*320K*

Product Rescue Rover

shareware tech spec 1994

Frontier: Elite 2

There's no denying that Frontier is an impressive game, but if there's one thing people have been moaning about it's combat. Christopher Supronas takes time out from the spacelanes to guide you through some interstellar basics ...



Combat is arguably the most important part of Frontier. It not only requires skill, but also sound attack and counter-attack strategies.

There are really only two types of basic combat techniques; powered and unpowered. Powered comes in two forms, either by using the forward and reverse engines to manoeuvre you around and lock on to your attacker (although as you encounter more dangerous vessels which consider ramming you as a legitimate form of fighting, you will soon find out that it is not necessarily the best approach) or by using constant acceleration.

Start off by practising in a quiet star system like Barnard's Star or Sol. Jump in and wait until you have stopped completely. Then turn to face your entry cloud. Start by flying up to it using main engines for a count of five seconds, then use the reverse engines to push you away. Learn how it feels and experiment until you can approach the cloud confidently from any angle.

As for constant acceleration, this is achieved by keeping the main engines burning continuously. Start in space by initiating the main engines, keep them burning and turn as you go. The ship will quickly accelerate and decelerate but never stop, thus making you a more difficult target. When you do face larger ships this will allow you to accelerate away when they come head on. You can then tail after them when they start to run. I used this technique continually to achieve my Elite status in combat, but it does require practice and skill.

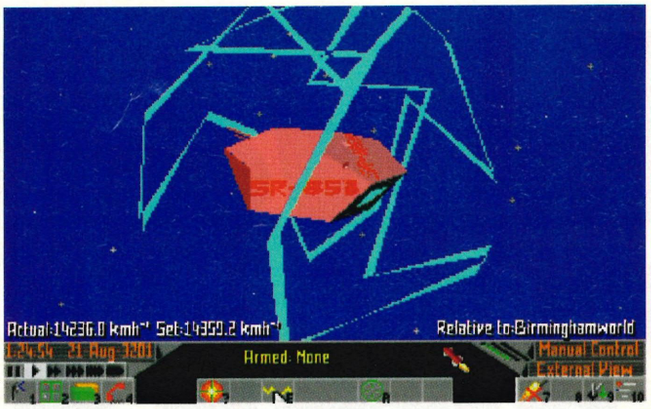


Have you got the power?

Unpowered manoeuvring is best left until you have a large vessel. The technique is as follows: Kill all power to the engines and let yourself coast, using only the manoeuvring jets to rotate your ship. Your enemy will fight using one of four different tactics; 'hit and run', 'swing ball', 'chicken' and 'chase me, chase me'. As soon as you are attacked, hit pause, switch to the external view to target the ship and ready yourself for battle.

Hit and run is a tactic where the enemy stays out of laser range for three quarters of the time, swirling from either side or behind and darting in every so often to take the odd pot-shot at you. The best time to let them have it is on each turn, as the vessel appears to stop and then flip round.

Swing ball attackers are a bit of a pain. This



attack occurs when a vessel quickly spins around your ship, continually firing and turning. This type of tactic is best countered by breaking your enemy's routine, usually by launching a missile. With a missile on its tail your opponent will often flee or resort to different tactics.

Chicken is exactly what it sounds like; head-on attacks. They are dangerous and my advice is not to play their game. Move quickly to the side and start hammering them. Remember: always keep your nose pointing at the bad guys during these chicken runs because if they can't point in your direction, then they can't shoot you! Think of combat as being like a triangle. You're at one corner of it (the apex) and your opponent is moving up and down the opposite side. It's all very simple really.

Chase me, chase me is the most frustrating type of combat. Your opponent runs in and out, teasing you to follow, but never gets within a reasonable (1.5K to 3K's) gun range. Simply turn and head on towards your destination. Hit the fastest time compression control and your opponent will appear again and this time only a few klicks from you. Now is the time to hammer him!

Of course there is nothing to stop you from doing unpowered manouevering in smaller ships — just be ready to quickly engage the main engines to get you out of trouble.

Missiles and mines ...

If a missile doesn't take you out straight away, then you can often dodge it. As soon as you get a missile warning, you can do one of two things: (a) hit your ECM and destroy it or (b) if you don't have an ECM turn quickly away from the attacking ship and run like nobody's business.

If you decide to run, look for the blue line encircling you (on the scanner) and then dive away putting some distance between you and the missile. Now turn around towards your target. It sounds stupid but you're actually in very little danger. You see, the combination of both the enemy's attacking manoeuvres and you chasing after him will stop the missile getting that final lock on you.

Remember to keep an eye on the scanner and as soon as the missile turns into you again, swing away from it. Missiles only have enough fuel for one minute's flight — after that they explode. Please note that you have to be under constant forward power to outrun them. Use any other combat technique and the missile will lock — and you'll end up piloting a spinning gravestone.

Proximity mines are similar to missiles but are unpowered. I personally don't like them because as soon as you hit the power it drifts uselessly away and so it's a waste of money.

Of course, if missiles and mines don't scare you, and you're getting to be a really accomplished flier, then you can try locking on to the missile and shooting it. Your best chance of doing this is if the the missile is a naval design. It still takes a lot of practice and accuracy though.

Lastly, there is one other thing an opponent may have — an energy bomb. In this case the best thing to do is to try and nail them before they detonate it, or have at least 4 shield units on board (assassins take note!!). Enemies will either detonate it immediately or give you so much time before they finally blow it up (sometimes if you're lucky and you hit your opponent the right way the bomb is destroyed) that you can shoot them in the usual way.

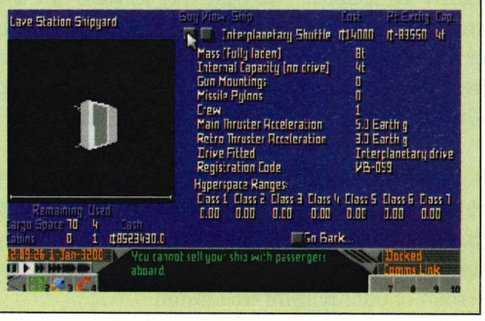
It's worth getting the hang of Frontier combat because there's a lot more to the game than initially meets the eye. Sadly though, combat is a part of the game that tends to put people off. It's undoubtedly the most realistic space combat I've seen in any space game. If you're an X-Wing or Wing Commander veteran I'm afraid that you're never going to be able to stop on a pinhead, turn 180 degrees and power off in a different direction in Frontier. Learn to fly and go out and explore the universe. It's a lot more fun than you might think.

Are you an Elite veteran? Do you know where to find secret hardware, alien bases or really tough missions? If you do, why not share your good fortune with others and write to QED ELITE, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

That Elite cheat again

OK, we understand. It happens to all of us. If you're fed up with perseverance and you're bored ferrying robots from A to B, there is a cheat that opens the door to unlimited wealth. Firstly and most importantly you've got to start from scratch again, I'm afraid you can't use this cheat on a game that you've been playing for months.

Use the Lave starting point and sell absolutely everything on your ship bar the vessel itself (including the hyperdrive engine). Once empty, buy a single passenger cabin, go to the bulletin board and accept the first Leesti mission. Now go to the 'new and used ships' option at the shipyard and try to sell your ship. You'll be told that you can't (see picture below) but your money will mysteriously increase. Nothing to it really.





QED

Subwar 2050

Charging headlong into battle is brave if you're flying an F-15, but downright stupid if you're piloting a fighter sub. Learn to tip-toe through the oceans with PC Review's Subwar hint guide

1. If you're on a stealth mission, or things are getting a little bit tricky under the sea, don't forget to use the thermal layers. Any sub tracking you will automatically lose their lock (as will homing torpedoes), enabling you to run away or repair a partially damaged system. Hiding in the thermals may not be the most exciting way to play Subwar, but believe me it's by far the safest.

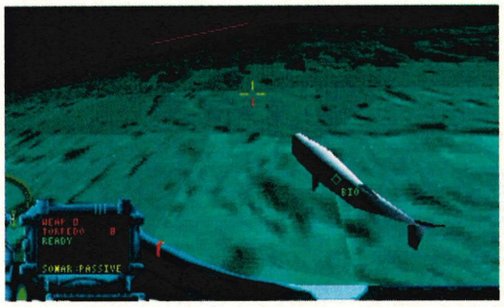
2. Instead of locking on to a target and waiting for the sub's main battle computer to identify it, use the object viewer. You may find it easier to make the display bigger by pressing the semi-colon (;) key.

3. Don't shoot the Bio's! It may be a laugh to blow squid and whales up with a well-placed rocket, but it isn't very nice and you'll lose a lot of points. You have been warned.

4. It's worth taking time to practise your 'knuckle' manoeuvres. Knuckling is all about creating a disturbance in the water that will fool the sonar of homing torpedoes. So if you've exhausted your decoys and your being chased by an enemy torpedo, try flying towards the ground or an enemy submarine. When your as close as you dare, turn hard at the last moment and hopefully the torpedo will acquire the newly created knuckle as a target and slam into the seabed or better still the enemy sub. Trust me!

5. Go slow. The faster you travel the more noise you're going to make. If you must make hard turns or direction changes, slow right down to minimise your sonar signature. Remember, if you can see the enemy on passive sonar, he can probably see you.





6. Choose rockets over torpedoes. Not only are rockets lighter, but you can aim and fire them using the crosshairs. Torpedoes can easily be confused and if successfully evaded will lock on to the nearest thing, even if it is a whale. Rockets, on the other hand, will strike anything that gets in the way. Much more reliable.

7. In the rescue missions you can protect your wingmen by stopping a fair distance from the target and ordering them to 'remain in position'. You can then move onwards and deal with the enemy. If there are enemy fighters around, deal with these first as, although they are fast, they are lightly armoured. The best way to take out the enemy is either to get behind them (on their six) or dive down as deep as possible and attack them from below. The enemy subs won't detect you until it's too late. Kaboom and hello death.

8. In crowded seas, make sure that you don't get caught underneath falling wreckage or you'll be dragged down to the bottom. Shooting enemy sensors (appear as a structure) can also delay the arrival of enemy reinforcements.

The Labyrinth of Time

Stuck in the mirror maze? Vexed by the old laundry chute? Don't worry, Dean Evans takes some time out to help you overcome the labyrinth

When I first played The Labyrinth of Time I wandered around for a bit, said, "ooh, that's pretty", wandered around a bit more and then got completely and hopelessly stuck. For those of you crammed into the same boat of frustration as me, here are a few scattered hints and blatently solved puzzles.

The game begins in the subway car and all you have in your inventory is a quarter (a unit of American currency, for the uninitiated). Don't use this coin for anything but the phone in the booth of the 1950's diner on the upper level.

The door to the south of the subway car is opened with the screwdriver, which you can find on a workhorse in the construction site on the upper level. Loosen and remove the screw, open the door and enter the city streets. Remember, don't use your quarter on the newspaper machine, save it for the phone. If you want to drop down to the lower level, just cross the city street. But let's wander in the other direction, into the hotel. The locked door in the south wall can be opened with the gold key which can be found in the toolbox in the construction site.

In the servant's room there is a sheet of paper that must be taken to the printing press in the old wild west town. Once you have printed the paper, return it to the servant's room and place it underneath the sign on the wall. The dirty shirt (found on the lower level) must be popped into the laundry chute. It will appear later, washed and pressed, underneath the sign.

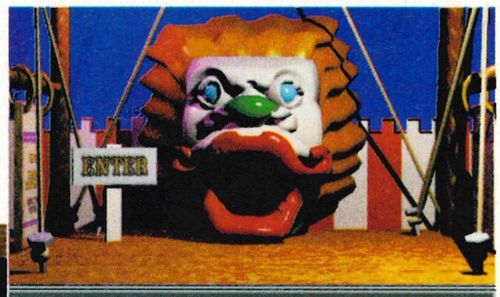
To unlock the wardrobe in the hotel, go to the western town and get the brass key from the drawer in the sheriff's office. Opening the wardrobe will reveal a card key for the teleport at the end of the mirror maze. There is also a journal here which not only reveals the combination of the lock on King Minos' tomb too. The combination can be found after the dirty shirt has been put in the chute and the newspaper put under the sign in the servant's room. The combination is Corelius' birthdate, which is 4/8/72.

What about that mirror maze, then? Once you have entered the clown's mouth go straight, right, left, straight, left, left, right, left, straight, right, right, straight, left. Morgan the fortune teller lies in the centre of the maze. Once through the maze, use the cardkey in the teleporter slot; green for the library, the blue button for the museum.

The cave and the mountain road can be reached by teleporting from the southern most room of the library. The first time you exit the cave and walk across the road the falling rocks will not injure you. However, any time after that you must be wearing the helmet found in the south-east corner of the mediaeval maze.

Mediaeval maze? Where? Well, the maze in question is located on the middle level to the east of the cave and the Cretan palace. To navigate through it to the helmet go: right, left, right, straight, left, straight, straight, left, right and right. You should find yourself in the far-east corner. Get the helmet and make your way back using the map for reference. To get out of the maze to the upper level enter the maze from the Cretan Palace, go: right, left, right, straight, left, straight, straight, left, left, right, straight, right, straight, left, straight, straight.

Now you're on your own. You don't want me to spoil all your enjoyment, do you?





QED

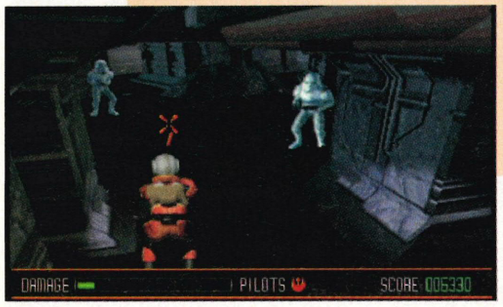
Do not attempt the tips marked with this icon unless you are sure you understand what you are doing. In any case, it's sensible to make back-ups of the files before you start tinkering around with program editors. PC Review is not going to accept any responsibility for damage to data incurred when trying 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.

Rebel Assault

It's one of the most stunning CD games to appear this year (well, at least we at PC Review think so) and what would a good arcade game be without the odd cheat or three. Thanks to Dennis Kwek, from Colchester, we bring you all the tips you need to enjoy and complete this LucasArts extravaganza.

Let's begin with those all-important chapter codes:

EASY	NORMAL	HARD	CHAPTERS
FALCON	BIGGS	ACKBAR	4,5,6
ANOAT	KAIBURR	FORNAX	7,8,9,10
YUZZEM	MYNOCK	BESPIN	11,12,13,14
BRIGIA	DAGOBAH	KESSEL	15
GREEDO	MIMBAN	ORGANA	End sequence



OK, so you can begin at the various chapters, but what if you want to play the ice-tunnel sequence? Well, instead of playing through the caves and the AT-AT assault, you can bypass these and skip straight there. How do you do it? Read on ...

At the start of the game, when the LucasArts logo appears on the screen in front of the Death Star, perform the following actions on your trusty stick of joy:

1. Move your joystick up to the top and press fire.
2. Move your joystick down to the bottom and press fire.
3. Move your joystick to the left and press fire.
4. Move your joystick to the right and press fire.

If you are successful in performing the above four steps, you will hear 'enthusiastic' voices saying "LucasArts" (probably the voices of the programmers after a long night of testing!) on the logo screen. Of course, if you haven't got a sound card you won't. I've no idea what happens with with an internal speaker.

Now you should be able to do the following:

1. Press the '+' button on the numeric keypad to increase your damage (?!).
2. Press the '-' button on the numeric keypad to decrease your damage (that's more like it).
3. Access the various chapters by typing in the hexa decimal equivalent of the chapter number using the normal keyboard. eg, If you want to play chap ter fifteen, which is 0F in hex, type in '0F' and you will find yourself playing the Death Star Trench!

The various chapters, hex translated are:-

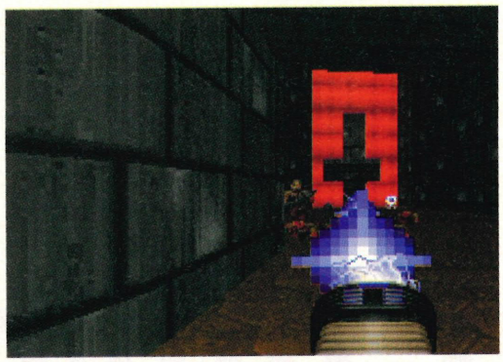
No.	Hex	Chapter
1.	01	Fighter Training
2.	02	Asteroid Field Training
3.	03	Planet Kolaador
4.	04	Star Destroyer Attack
5.	05	Tatooine Attack
6.	06	Asteroid Field Chase
7.	07	Imperial Probe Droids
8.	08	Imperial Walkers
9.	09	Stormtroopers
10.	0A	Protect Rebel Transport
11.	0B	Yavin Training
12.	0C	Tie Attack
13.	0D	Death Star Surface
14.	0E	Surface Cannon End Scene
15.	0F	Death Star Trench

Doom

You've played the demo, you may even have shelled out for the full game so here, for your killing and maiming enjoyment, are a few simple Doom cheats, as sent in by Lee Hickin from Sambourne:

When the game has loaded, start a new game and when it begins, type any of the following codes:

IDKFA — Very Happy Ammo (all guns and full ammo for each of them)



IDDQD — Degreeless mode on/off (god mode/invulnerability)

IDBEHOLD — Menu (rad suit, lite lamp, allmap etc) use the first letter to select the one you want.

IDSPISPOPD — Clipping mode on/off (walk through walls).

Just remember though, these Doom cheats could seriously spoil your enjoyment of the game. You don't have to use them if you don't want to, because suddenly you'll be able to kill everything, discover all the secret rooms and finish the whole game. And where's the fun in that huh? Still, it's up to you.

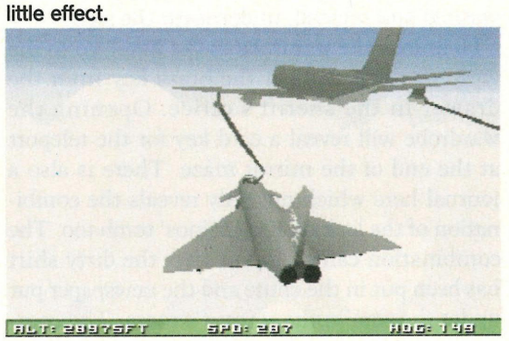
TFX

Graeme Finlayson from Liverpool has been playing the brilliant flight sim from DID and, because he's such a good-natured and thoroughly kind bloke, he's decided to share the secrets of his success with everyone. So if you're dying faster than a bad comedian in a working men's club, or just can't avoid those deadly missiles, these tips are the tips for you.

Defensive tactics will vary depending on what type of mission you are flying. eg, if you are flying an air superiority mission then don't use the stealth option. This is because you have to let the enemy aircraft lock onto you before the AWACS will give you permission to fire. When permission is granted, switch your ECM on. For a bombing mission where you do not need to engage enemy aircraft with stealth on, you will not need your air-to-air radar until the enemy spots you.

Evading missiles is quite easy. When you see the launch light go red, check to see what type of missile has been fired and switch the ECM on. Now wait until the missile is quite close (if you have a sound card the computer will tell you to 'break') and then use the appropriate decoy.

It is important to let the missile get really close to you as some missiles are launched over 30 miles away where firing off chaff and flares will have little effect.



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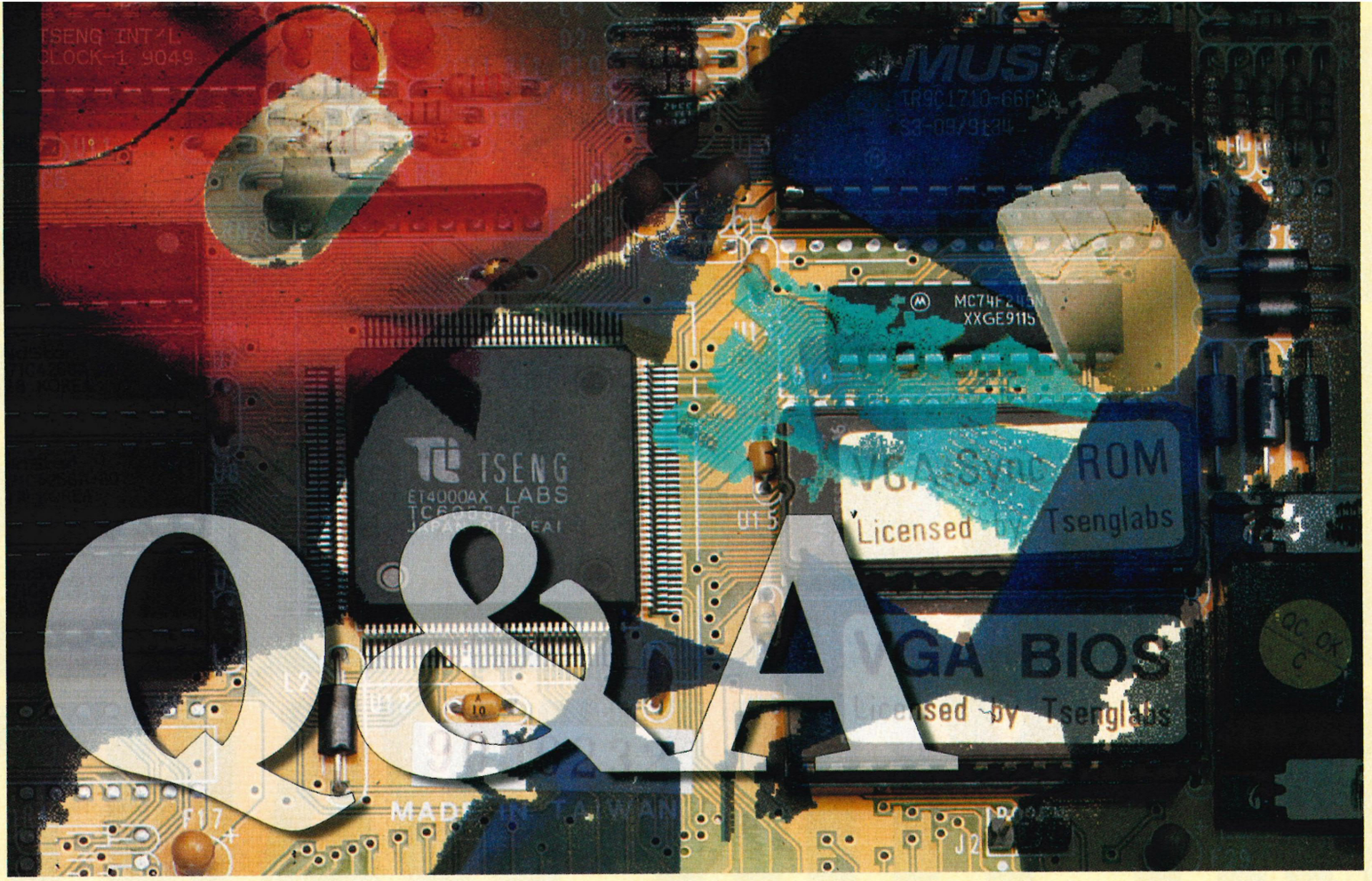


Bemused, befuddled, or bewildered about your PC? If your hardware gives you headaches and you're stricken with software seize-ups, share your problem with Q&A's Mike James and he'll endeavour to help

DoubleSpace problems

Q I own a 386 DX40 and have recently purchased DOS 6. I installed and used DoubleSpace which worked fine. However I soon found that it was swallowing up huge portions of memory, so I decided to get rid of it. I read the Readme file and did as it suggested, gradually moving files from the compressed section (C:) to the uncompressed section (D:). But when I went to use the Dblspace/size command I found that it wouldn't work — or any other command or program. All I get is the following message: "Error creating temp file of drive D:" "Invalid path". What should I do? I cannot use my computer at all.

M Payne, Cleveland

A *Getting rid of DoubleSpace is a horrible problem. This is one reason why many users consider it dangerous and use Stacker instead. In practice though, DoubleSpace isn't that bad. Its problems have largely been solved in MS-DOS 6.1 — so get yet another upgrade if you are working with 6.0. Dealing specifically with your problem, you seem to have followed the instructions, but something has gone wrong. You are told to move files from C: to D:, until D: starts to fill up, and then reduce the size of the compressed drive C: to free more space on D:. While this is going on it is very likely that software which thought it was running on C: will fail to work. However, your problem suggests that something has changed on D: that shouldn't have. As long as you haven't removed the DoubleSpace drivers from the Config.sys and Autoexec.bat file then drive D: should be working as normal. It could be that you have moved the DOS commands to drive D:, in which case you should make drive D: the default and change directory to D:\DOS before trying to use the dblspace/size command. When you succeed in moving everything to drive D:, it's time to remove the DoubleSpace drivers from Config.sys and Autoexec.bat — in other words delete any line that mentions Dblspace. After this, D: will no longer exist and drive C: will be uncompressed. You then need to make sure that any programs that once used drive D: are changed to look to drive C: for their temporary files, etc.*

The future in Chicago

Q The article in Issue 25, about Windows 4 (Chicago), written by John Bennett, started me wondering if this new operating system would be able to run the huge selection of PC games now available. John mentioned that Chicago would include DOS, but that it would "be hidden away so that you need never come across it", so would it be able to support games? For example; some games use shortcuts to gain speed, and such shortcuts may not be allowed by Chicago. Of course this situation could be got around by games publishers and producers by offering upgrades that work under Chicago. But how long would this take? Would they be faster or slower under this new system? What about old favourites like Railroad Tycoon or Speedball 2: would these be converted too?

Martin Vickers, Sheffield

A *The future promised by Chicago looks very interesting. I also agree that the backward compatibility offered by the next generation of operating systems is a worry.*

However, consider the problem of running games programs under the current Windows. Some games manufacturers make sure that their programs will run in a "DOS box" under Windows, but most don't. And when they do, the sluggish running speed usually means that you don't want to! The problem is that state-of-the art games usually need the entire machine to themselves, and that isn't something a state-of-the-art operating system can tolerate. However, it is usually possible to cope with older programs that don't make such heavy demands on the machine. What this means is that, ironically, it could be your old favourites that work without modification under Chicago.

As to how we will cope with games programs that don't run well under Chicago, we will have to wait — after all it's still in alpha testing and hasn't as yet moved on to beta. It

may well be that a dual boot, ie, Chicago and MS-DOS 6/7 is what we may end up using.

286 upgrade

Q I 'm about to upgrade my family's PC, as my son and daughter use it for games as well their homework. Increasingly the games they wish to run are for 386 PCs and upwards. Our current PC is a Brother and my intention is to upgrade it with a new CPU motherboard. Before I go to the expense of purchasing one, could you please advise me on the feasibility of changing the current 16MHz 286 chip for a 386SX without changing the printed circuit board itself. You say in issue 23 ("When the chips are down") that this can be done. If so, can you please answer the following questions.

1) What processor speeds are ava ialble for 386SXs?

2) What do I have to change along with the actual processor?

3) Where can I buy the parts?

4) Is it a feasible alternative?

Just to set your mind at ease before I begin ripping the PC apart — the processor is fitted with a chip carrier, and I am a qualified electronics Engineer. I have worked on micro processor-based equipment down to component level for a number of years. The only problem is that this time the PC is mine, and I'll have to bear the cost if it goes wrong. Therefore I'd appreciate any advice you could give me on the subject.

Martyn Worrall, Lancs

A *Changing a 286 processor to a 386SX processor isn't difficult as long as you are reasonably practical. However, it isn't just a matter of unplugging one chip and plugging in a new one. It takes some extra electronics to make it all work. Some enterprising companies have made a small printed circuit board that holds the new chip and the extra electronics and this printed circuit board is fitted with a chip plug that fits into the chip socket containing the current processor. Thus, replacing the chip is a matter of unplugging it and plugging in a printed circuit board. The main problems are that the additional printed circuit board needs space and so a range of replacement boards are made to suit different machines. It is possible that an individual socket will not allow a printed circuit board to be fitted at all. Of the three types of sockets in use when the 286 was common only one is a problem — where the chip is held in place by a spring.*

To answer your specific points:

1) Replacements are available in a range of speeds, but 25MHz is the most common.

2) As well as plugging in the replacement PCB you will have to install software — most probably a cache manager — but this and the necessary instructions are supplied.

3) There are a number of possibilities, but I have found Memory Direct (customer support line is on 0252 316060) of great help.

4) A replacement machine is never as fast as a true 386SX board because the RAM that is used with a typical 286 isn't as fast. Apart from this there is no major difference.

Urgent problems!

Q After many hours of enjoyable play on Bullfrog's Syndicate, I have come across a problem. I had completed all but seven levels, and saved the game. When I returned to continue playing, I tried to load my saved game only to be greeted by this message: "Sector not found reading drive C. Abort, Retry, Ignore, Fail?" The strange thing is that if I save a new game, in a different save "slot", then it works fine. Is there any remedy to this problem?

Setf Dashper, Nottingham

A *One of the problems with using a PC is that it isn't always easy to work out how important or general an error message is. In this case the message is very serious and fairly general in that it refers to a fault on the disk drive and not with any particular program. In other words there is nothing wrong with Syndicate — it just happens to be the unfortunate program which tried to use the area of the disk where the fault developed. This is also the reason why when you save to a different "slot" the error vanishes as then the program uses a different area of the disk where there are no problems. My advice is to buy a set of diagnostics such as Norton or Central Point and check the disk out. I would also back-up any valuable data from the disk to floppies in case the problem gets any worse.*

Q&A *update*

Ever increasing performance

Game software is about the most demanding sort that you can run on a machine. This is the reason why so many questions in Q&A are about performance and how it can be increased. So far the answer has been easy because every few years or so a new processor is produced and clock speeds increase and so the answer is just to buy a new machine based on a new processor.

The performance gains over the past ten years have been amazing. If you compare an early machine such as the Apple II to a fast 486 PC then you are looking at a 2,000-fold increase in speed. Even when moving from one processor to its successor you are never likely to find a speed increase of less than two times. You could almost say that Intel didn't think it worth producing a processor if it wasn't twice as fast as the previous chip!

However, things have changed, and the very latest in the Intel range, the Pentium, isn't twice as fast as an equivalent 486. On average you only get 1.5 as much power out of it. This is disappointing and there are reasons to believe that in the future we will not see such massive speed increases. A large fraction of that 2,000-fold increase can be accounted for by clock speed increases and the change from eight, to 16, then to 32 and now to 64-bit computing. When you allow for all of these simple changes, the speed increase over ten years due to better design amounts to only a factor of four. Yes that's right, if you took a Pentium PC and slowed its clock down to the same speed as the Apple II and chopped its memory access down from 64-bit to 8-bit then it would be only four times as fast.

A speed increase of four in ten years doesn't sound so impressive. But now that clock speeds and bus widths have reached close to their maximum, this is the sort of increase we can look forward to in the future. For the user this is both good and bad news. It means you can be more confident that the PC you buy today will not become too slow too quickly. It also means that there are no longer simple solutions to the problem of increasing performance. You will have to look at subtle design differences between PCs.

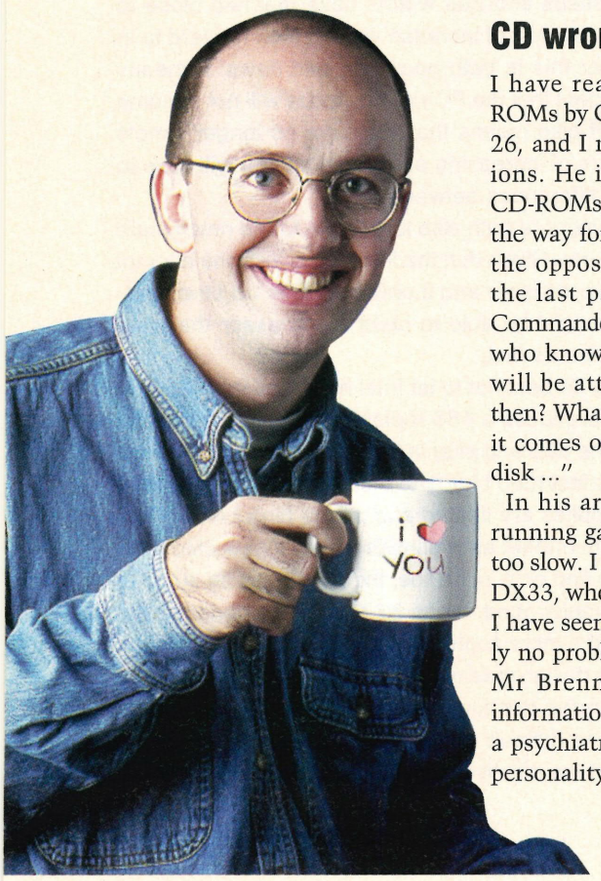
This loss of an easy upgrade path also leaves the future much more open to other chip makers. Given that the Pentium is just one attempt to optimise the 80x86 processor and it only manages 1.5 times better, other companies might be able to build a processor that gets closer to the magic twice as fast.

Indeed, Cyrix is doing its best not to let Intel have it all its own way. The company already produces a 486 replacement chip for the Intel 386. You just unplug the 386 and plug in the Cyrix chip and you have a PC that runs twice as fast (don't hurry to the shops just yet because it's early days and supplies are limited and prices high.) Now Cyrix is taking on the Pentium market as well, with a new a new chip family — the M series. The first chip in the line, the M1, should be out later this year. On paper it looks good. It has 32 registers as opposed to the Pentium's eight and a more sophisticated dual processor design. A peculiarity of the M1's design means that it will run non-Pentium optimised code faster than the Pentium can. All in all, until samples of the M1 are available it is difficult to know if it really is better, but it does make it clear that we still live in very interesting, evolutionary, times.

■ **Mike James**

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!



CD wrong?

I have read the article on CD-ROMs by Ciarán Brennan, in Issue 26, and I must question his opinions. He is obviously criticising CD-ROMs, saying that they are not the way forward, but surely this is the opposite to what he says in the last paragraph of his Strike Commander review. I quote: "... but who knows what Roberts and co will be attempting to pull off by then? Whatever it is, let's hope that it comes on a nice shiny compact disk ..."

In his article, Ciarán says that running games from CD-ROM is too slow. I have a friend with a 486 DX33, who has just got 7th Guest. I have seen it and there is definitely no problem with speed. I think Mr Brennan should check his information again, and perhaps see a psychiatrist about having a dual personality.

Greg James
Watford
Herts

Ciarán Brennan replies: OK, it's a fair cop ... almost. If you take these two pieces as they are, out of chronological order and out of context, it does look as though I suffer from a split personality disorder (and being a Gemini, this accusation isn't exactly new to me). However, as the two pieces were written more than six months apart, I do feel that I'm more guilty of excercising my journalist's prerogative to change my mind than anything else. The fact is, when I wrote the Strike Commander review I was still struggling with a 50Mb hard drive. As Strike Commander took up nearly all of this space, my wish that Chris Roberts would provide his next game on CD was made more for selfish and practical reasons than anything else.

Six months is a long time in the PC games business though, and by the time I wrote the second piece, the consensus on CD-ROM gaming had changed. With all the compatibility and data access speed problems that have reared their ugly heads in the intervening period — not to mention the idea that CD will simply be used as a delivery device to bring data to ever growing hard drives — the idea of playing CD games is no longer as appealing as it once was. And so the story ends ... or does it? Having seen Rebel Assault , I am now beginning to warm to the concept of CD games once again. But then, isn't the constantly changing playing field just one of the beauties of PC gaming?

Manual labour

I read with interest your cover article in Issue 26, "How to buy a PC." The advice you gave was sound and concise, but considering the article was probably aimed at new or inexperienced users of the PC, there was an unusual omission in your checklist. I was surprised to see no mention of the documentation which is provided with the PC, either in the article or in the checklist. To a new user, open-

ing the box of their new PC for the first time, the plethora of OEM manuals for motherboards, monitors, mouse and, of course, the dreaded DOS manual, can be totally bewildering.

PC suppliers vary tremendously in what documentation they provide. From the basic OEM manuals, and if you're lucky, an A4 duplicated sheet showing the user how to plug in the PC, to excellent manuals which lead the new owner gently into the mysteries of PC computing.

My first PC was an Amstrad PC3286 and one of the things I was grateful to Amstrad for was the excellent manual supplied. This took me from plugging in the machine to formatting the hard disk and setting the computer up for use in straightforward steps. I have since upgraded the RAM and the processor to a 386SX and added a joystick port. All with the help of the manual. However, I have also experienced the other side of the coin, namely OEM manuals which were written to benefit the manufacturer rather than the user.

The question of how suppliers provide bundled software was another area which was not dealt with in detail, especially the current trend of pre-installed software. This can result in unwary newcomers accidentally deleting vital files, suddenly finding themselves with a useless machine and no immediate remedy for the problem.

Richard Pawlowski
Rochdale, Lancs

Customise your memory

Having started to make full use of my PC by installing a CD-ROM and sound card, I noticed that many games were difficult, if not impossible to run due to the unreasonable demand for conventional memory.

Running DOS 6's Memmaker only improved the situation by a small amount — I was registering 574K. Manually listing all Device drivers in order of their memory usage only gave me an extra 2K.

Perserverance and a desire not to be beaten by the problem, led me to find a neat way of instantly upping my memory from 576K to 614K by running Memmaker, via its custom options and answering *yes* to the question, "Use monochrome region B000-B7FF for running programs?"

As long as you have a VGA monitor, that is all you will have to do. If you possess an SVGA monitor, you need to add a Device command to the System.ini file, under the [386] section, as follows:

```
DEVICE=C:\DOS\MONOUMB.386
```

(Assuming C:\DOS is where your MS-DOS files are.)

Then, simply save the changes, reboot and run Memmaker as described.

R O'Brien
Luton

Third dimension

After watching an episode oftomorrow's World before Christmas, I discovered that the 3D glasses which were on sale for Children in Need could be used, while playing side-scrolling games (shoot 'em ups, platforms etc). The results were very good indeed. I hope that this information will be of use to other readers.

Andrew Kane
Newtownards, Belfast

Reely great?

Am I the only person in the world who thinks that full motion video is, at the moment, a waste of time? ReelMagic, for instance, is a nice bit of kit, but once you've shelled out for the card, what use is it? There aren't any good games that use full motion video, video CDs come on two discs which have to be swapped halfway through a film and, since most people have 14 inch monitors, why not just watch a real video on a real TV?

I'm sorry, but I'm just not impressed. Give me graphics over film every time.

Jeff Robard
Hackney, London



Star Letter
CD journalism

I read, with interest, John Bennett's article on the future of the PC in the home (Issue 27) and it got me thinking about the future of computer journalism. Will I still be reading a glossy version of PC Review in five or 10 years time? I fact I fancy the Idea of getting a nice shiny CD through the post every month — instead of reading articles, I could just load up the disc and select whatever reviews and features I was interested in from a menu system. We could then have a TV-style article about the game (along the lines of Watchdog and Equinox), while the reviewer commentates using their own or a synthesised voice. However, the the most appealing thing would be animated screenshots. Cal Jones said in her review of CyberRace that the screenshots in the magazine don't do justice to the graphics, but on CD you could. You could also include some of the game's sound track on the CD to give some impression of the FX available.

As for portability, a CD magazine could be viewed on my portable notebook PC, brought in to work and shown off to workmates. Speaking of which, a CD may not even be necessary. You could simply download copies of PC Review on the phone line, directly to my hard drive. If I wanted a hard copy, for old time's sake, I could print out the magazine on my colour inkjet.

Obviously this would be a big jump forward, but you could start it right now with your cover disk. I don't know about anyone else, but I'd rather have more sound-tracks and animated screenshots (like the gallery you used to have), than some five year old, outdated shareware game — and I have no doubt that developers would like this idea too, if it makes people buy more of their games. Perhaps you should use another questionnaire to find out what other readers think of this.

On a different note, the high spec of future machines was also commented on in the article, and this brings up the problem of large software developers exploiting our hardware. Strike Commander, for example, takes up 35Mb on a hard disk. Conversely Frontier: Elite II only takes 2Mb, but still boasts texture mapped 3D graphics and 200,000,000,000 star systems. It seems that individual developers (in this case David Braben) seem to be using their resources a lot better then others (Strike's Chris Roberts). Just because we possess the hardware doesn't mean that programmers should get sloppy. 600Mb may seem to give CD storage a lot of capacity but so did a 10Mb hard disk ten years ago. Apparently, Rebel Assault uses around 300Mb on its CD. Should I be awestruck at the size of the games some designers have created — or should I be cringing at bad programming?

David Evans
Usk, Gwent

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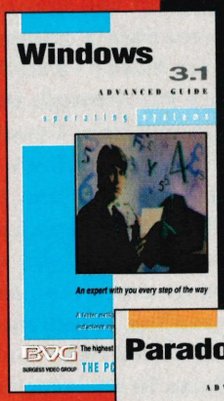

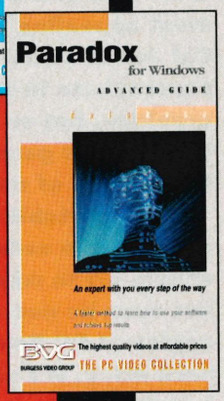

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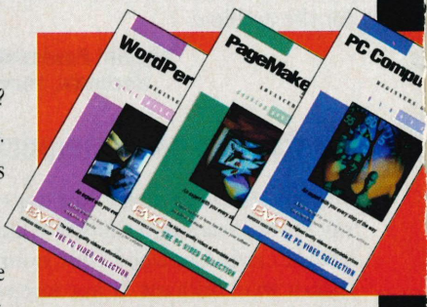

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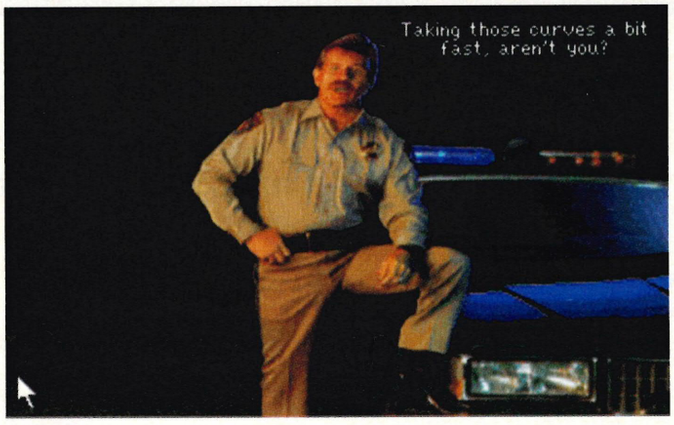
Watching the detectives

Crime doesn't pay? Don't you believe it! The detective format is alive and well and thriving on the PC. Simon Shaw investigates

Aficionados of crime fiction divide the genre into two broad categories, the 'cosy' and the 'hard-boiled'. The latter pretty much describes itself: this is a trip down Raymond Chandler's mean streets, a look at the festering underbelly of low life, often through the eyes of heroes a great deal less romantic than Philip Marlow. Gritty realism is the aim, the private eye investigation or the police procedural the usual vehicle. Most American crime stories are hard-boiled.

The cosy, on the other hand, is often thought of as an English form; Chandler referred disparagingly to the 'Cheesecake Manor' school of fiction. Of course there's nothing cosy about a murder, irrespective of geography, but the bag and baggage of the classic Christiesque detective story, picture-postcard English villages, deductive spinsters, curates and cucumber sandwiches, is quite obviously not in the same category as, say, a tale of Uzi-toting drug traffickers shooting it out with the cops of the 87th Precinct.

Sometimes these categories are very broad indeed, with all manner of attendant exceptions and qualifications, but it's revealing to note that



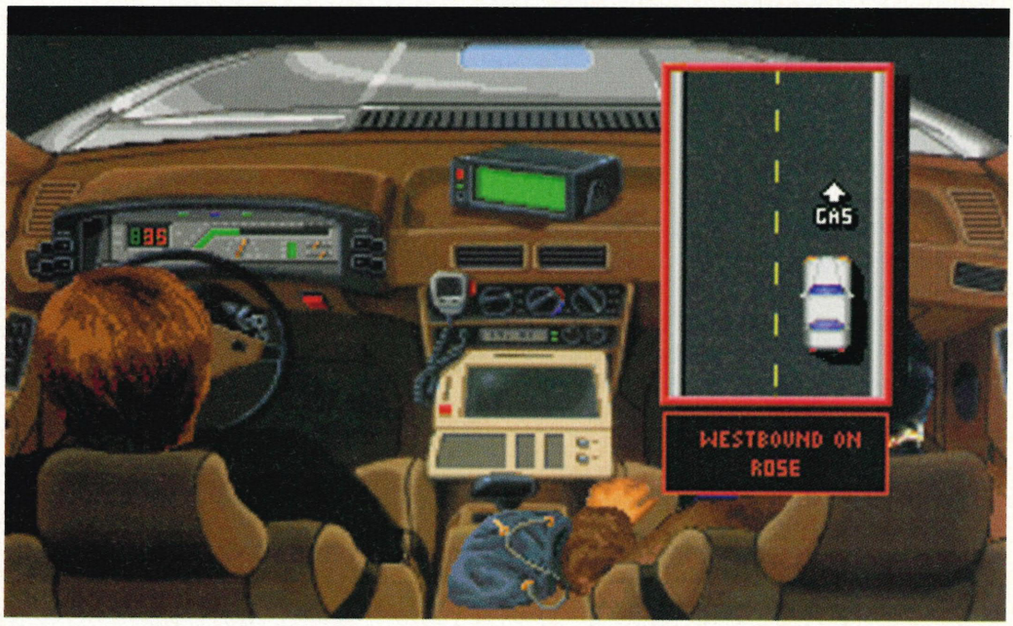


Sierra's Dagger of Amon Ra has a traditional detective novel background.

'detective' games on the PC also seem to follow these general lines of demarcation, though as yet we haven't had anything as strongly conforming to cliché as a country-house murder mystery.

On the other hand, the characteristic period setting of the cosy is very much in evidence. See, for example, Cruise for a Corpse (complete with a ringer for Poirot) and, my personal favourite, Sierra's Laura Bow series. The Dagger of Amon Ra boasts a classic Golden Age background (ie, prewar) and is full of lovingly recreated authentic detail, not to mention the usual dodgy complement of foreign-sounding principal suspects — and foreignness, as any Hollywood observer knows, is a sure sign of incipient crookery. It's not vicious crookery, though, for this is a genre in which, however dastardly the crime awaiting solution, nothing truly unpleasant is going to occur. This is not the case with the hard-boiled story.

The games that fall into this category are all police procedurals, Sierra's Police Quest series and Tsunami's Blue Force (also from the Jim Walls stable). These are games with contemporary settings, so you can be sure that whoever dunnit, it wasn't the butler. You take the role of a rookie cop (Sonny Bonds in Police Quest, Jake Ryan in Blue Force) and, as you progress, you'll



Perhaps not surprisingly, you spend a lot of time as a cop patrolling the city in your car. Although the driving interfaces vary between games, none of them is wholly satisfactory. Getting about is probably easiest in Police Quest 2.

encounter a variety of violent thugs, drug barons, serial killers and corrupt officials, not to mention ruthless traffic offenders. There's a main storyline plus a few sub-plots, all designed not merely to test your initiative but also your fitness to be a cop. There's more to it, you see, than just playing the game — you've also got to enter into the spirit. The chief bar to this is probably the principal characters. Occasionally plodding storylines don't help either, but Sonny and Jake aren't exactly out of the mould of all-action superheroes. On the contrary, they both sport that ethereal plastic look of models in a mail-order catalogue; Jake, indeed, probably started out having sand kicked in his face in a Charles Atlas ad, while PQ3's Sonny appears to have had a charisma bypass operation.

Parole-playing?

Police Quest and Blue Force look and play like standard role-playing/adventure games, and require the solution of puzzles that would not seem out of place on Monkey Island or Fate of Atlantis. There are, however, a number of significant differences.

The most important is that these games are actually based on reality, not fantasy. In an Indiana Jones game you might think that you're playing the role of Indy, but the illusion is only sustained by the flow of one-liners and the atmosphere. You don't actually ask yourself at any stage "Now how would Indy react in this situation? ..." Why should you? There's no premium in trying to simulate the hero's thought processes. There is in a police game. If you learn to think like a cop, you'll live a lot longer.

Take a situation, for instance, where you encounter an armed, suspected felon. Do you approach him single-handed? Only in a movie. In real life (and in a police game) you call for back-up and hang back until you've got someone covering you. You keep your gun ready, you handcuff, search, and read him his rights. Failure to observe the correct procedure can have fatal consequences. The list of dos and don'ts may at times seem blindingly obvious, but even the obvious can trip you up if you're not careful — I felt pretty stupid in Blue Force when I decided it might be a clever idea to clean my gun; it would have been a lot cleverer if I'd remembered to unload it first ...

The emphasis on correct procedure imposes a structure on the gameplay that isn't to everyone's taste, but it also affords you the opportunity to feel satisfaction at a job well done — I was tremendously pleased with myself the first time I apprehended a suspect and booked him in at the station using the correct violation codes. It may not be as much fun as leading a party of adventurers into the dragon's lair, but as someone reared on the catchphrase, "Book him Danno, Murder 1", I get a considerable second-hand kick out of helping to keep the streets safe for Democracy and the American way.

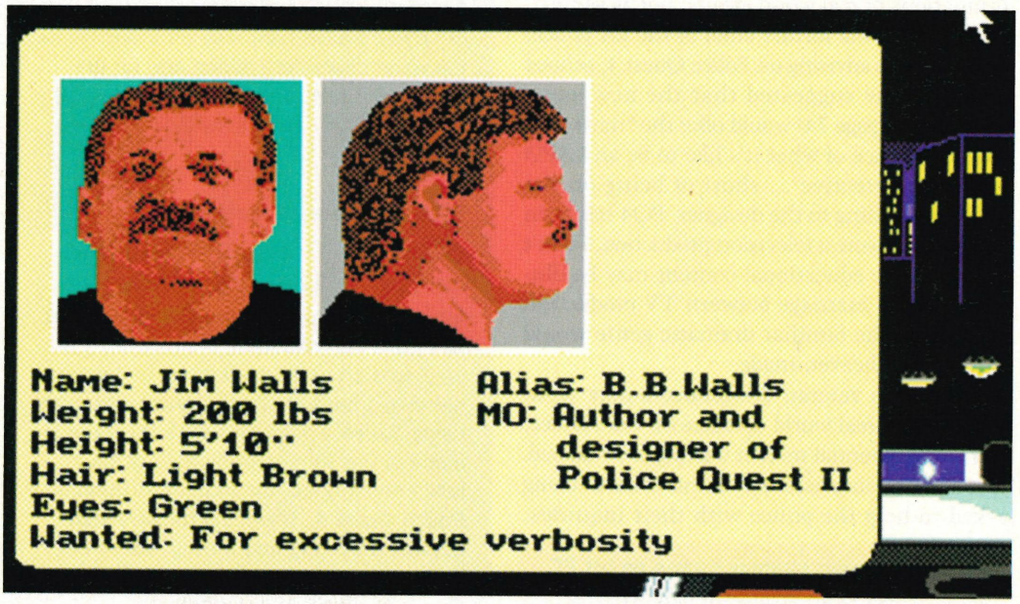
And this is the essential point that sets these games apart: we all know the territory and have a pretty good idea of what's expected of us. Because of the accessibility of the genre, I think we can expect to see a great many more games of this kind in future.

Familiar territory

As PC prices continue to fall, as the holy grail of a true plug-and-play, idiot-proof machine draws ever nearer, the leisure market is bound to attract a massive influx of virgin games players.

And closer to Holmes ...

Such is the appeal of the world's most famous detective that it took no time at all for Sherlock Holmes to make the transition from the printed page to the silver screen and we've already had a clutch of Sherlock Holmes games on the PC, and bearing in mind that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's works are now out of copyright, I think we can expect to see a great many more. The most striking offerings thus far have been Icom's three-volume Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective series, though it's fair to say that they haven't necessarily been striking for the right reasons. Initial awe and wonder at the beautifully presented video clips which drive the narrative tend to be dispelled the moment the (American) actors open their mouths. EA's Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes, presented in traditional adventure format, is a much better detective game.



If you play any of the early Police Quest games you'll have to get used to the ubiquitous Jim Walls popping up all over the place. In PQ3 he's there to tick you off for bad driving every time you crash one of the department's precious squad cars. He gets better looking in later games (see bottom left).

But this process is undoubtedly being slowed down by ignorance.

Faced, for the first time, with a sophisticated computer game most people simply don't have a clue where to start or what's expected of them (Steve Cooke's report, a few issues back, of one woman he spoke to who thought that you had to wear platform shoes to play a platform game, made a big impression on me). Try explaining what goes on in a Dungeons & Dragons game to the uninitiated without sounding like a nerd.

However, describe detective games to an audience of average people and you'll get a very different response. This is something they'll be able to grasp the point of. My own survey along these lines ended with one of my friends writing down a shopping list. The only non-detective title he was interested in was Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis.

Why? Because it's based on a film. It's the same with books — go into any WH Smith's and the first rack you see is the one marked Film and TV. As CD-ROM gets into its stride, as we get used to seeing original video clips and recognisable actors, software companies are bound to cotton on to the fact that first-time punters are more likely to be attracted to a form they recognise.

Movie licences will obviously have a head start, but the majority so far have been mindless shoot 'em ups, precisely the kind of game that will turn away new players in droves. I say this because, in my experience, a great many people who use computers but don't play games, refuse to be sucked into the leisure market because they perceive it as being largely trivial.

There is a loophole though — educational games. In the last issue of InterAction (the Sierra in-house magazine) Ken Williams discussed the future of reality role-playing, and stated that his goal was for the series to be viewed as "serious simulations of real world events, not as games". Daryl Gates, the former chief of the LA police, who has been advising on Police Quest 4, echoed this when he suggested that the new game (reviewed on page 74) would offer the "most realistic experience of what it's like to be an LAPD homicide detective ... short of being on the force." According to the designer, PQ4 has been made as if it were a television production. I don't doubt it. The educational content may be illusory, but the marriage between TV production values and the familiar dramatic genre would appear to be heaven-made.

Hard-bitten veteran dungeoneers may scoff, but there's a real world up there on the surface, and a vast potential market waiting to be tapped. Just don't be surprised if you find yourself being asked to help the police with their inquiries.

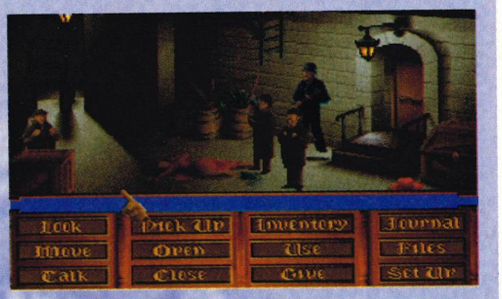
When not playing strategy games on his PC, Simon Shaw is an award-winning writer of crime fiction. His fourth novel, Dead for a Ducat, is published by Gollancz at £4.99.

The wanted list

A round-up of the best detective games available on the PC today.

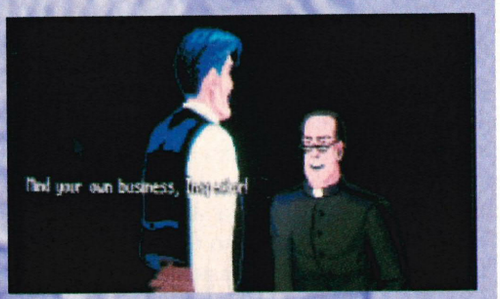
The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes (Electronic Arts, £39.99)

An excellent adventure game which, despite the odd anachronism, moodily evokes the gas-lit streets of fin de siecle London. The portrait of Holmes himself doesn't seem quite right to me, and the murder has a gruesomeness out of character with the essential cosiness of the stories, but there are a number of authentic touches. A CD-ROM version and a disk-based sequel are both in development.



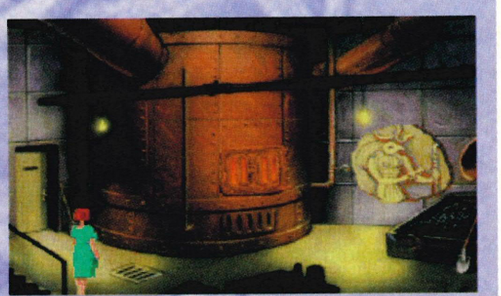
Cruise for a Corpse (Klxx XL, £14.99)

A Christie-clone if ever there was, this excellent French game boasts a cast of characters that could have stepped straight out of the Orient Express, and a setting to match. A Greek shipping tycoon has been murdered on board his yacht and you, as Inspector Raoul Dusentier have to investigate — and yes, there is a butler. Cruise is now available as a budget game and it's very good value, but be warned — it ain't easy to crack this one.



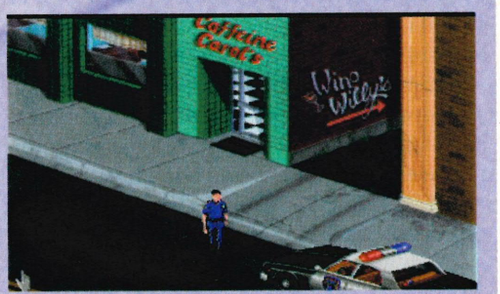
Laura Bow 2: The Dagger of Amon Ra (Sierra, £39.99)

Another game with a beautifully evoked period setting, you play cub reporter Laura Bow on the trail of a missing Egyptian artifact in 1920's New York. This is one of Sierra's very best, good enough on disk, but a must-have purchase on CD-ROM — the vocal characterisations are, on the whole, first rate, and the game has a genuine filmic feel. This is my pick of the bunch.



Police Quest series (Klxx XL: PQ1, £14.99, and Sierra: PQ2-4, £39.99)

A hardy perennial, the fourth in the series has just been released. If, however, you want to start at the beginning, the original game has been revamped and redesigned using Sierra's point-and-click interface in place of the old parser system. It also looks pretty good, though not as good as Police Quest 4. There's a bit too much pointless walking and driving about, but then a cop's life is just like that. Police Quest II has yet to be updated.



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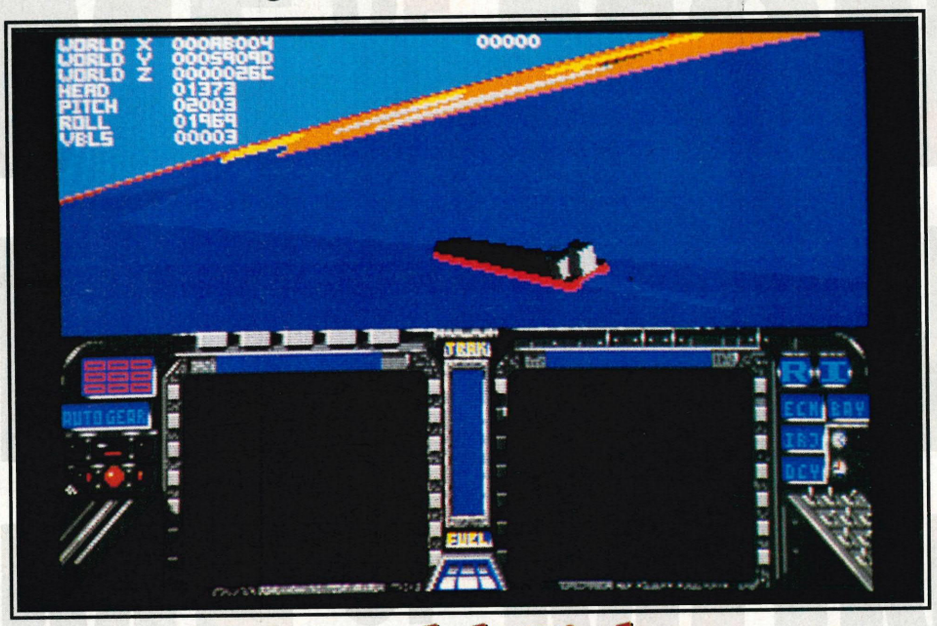
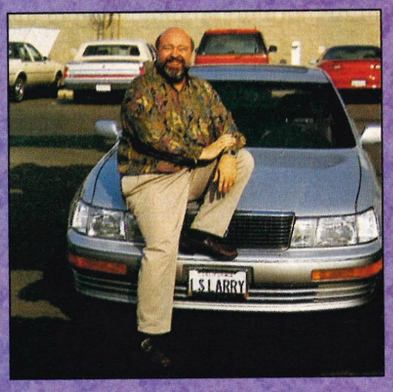
Al Lowe's *Classic game of the month*



F19 Stealth Fighter



"I would say that one of the Larry games was at least three months late because of F19. It was just incredibly addictive — we were playing it all the time."

There have been so many high quality flight sims in the last two years that MicroProse's four year old F19 Stealth Fighter is now less well-remembered than it deserves to be. The missions are set over four theatres of war: Libya, the Persian Gulf, North Cape and Central Europe, with variable degrees of difficulty and toughness of opponents. Your Lockheed Stealth Fighter, practically undetectable by radar, flies in strike or air-to-air missions, while other forays involve photographing secret installations, or dropping off supplies to rebels, so variety in the play and flying techniques is guaranteed.

F19 sported 16-colour VGA graphics, which were pretty stunning for the time, although they do look a bit basic these days — but it was the depth and subtlety of the gameplay which lifted it above the norm. It also boasted one of those renowned MicroProse manuals, packed with aeronautical and historical information, as well as flying tips.

PROFILE

Al Lowe had a successful career as a music teacher and high school administrator in California before he began programming on an Apple II as a hobby and then for profit. His first programs were educational games for his four year old son, which he found he was able to sell. When publishers came knocking at his door for the rights to sell his programs, Al chose Sierra simply "because they offered the most money".

Joining Sierra in 1982, Al designed the children's games Winnie the Pooh and the Hundred Acre Wood, Donald Duck's Playground, and Dark Crystal. Leisure Suit Larry was born when Al offered to revive an old Sierra text adventure, entitled Soft Porn, which had been languishing in the vaults since 1981, on the condition that he was allowed to create a parody of it, rather than an updated version. Al took the puzzles from the text adventure and created Larry, the hopelessly naff womaniser, around them. Larry has now appeared in five adventures; Al says he'll keep writing Larry games for as long as people want to buy them.



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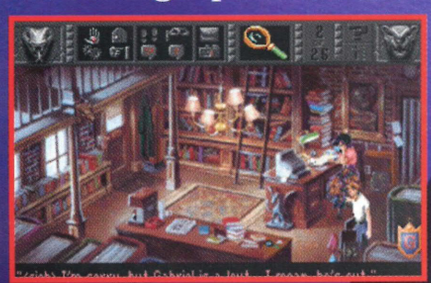

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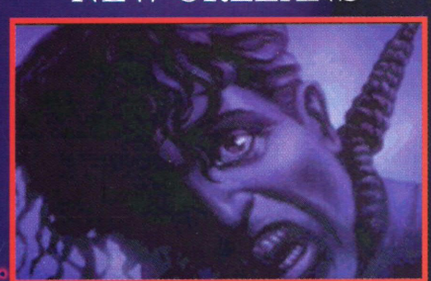

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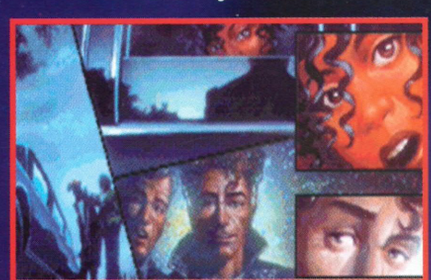

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