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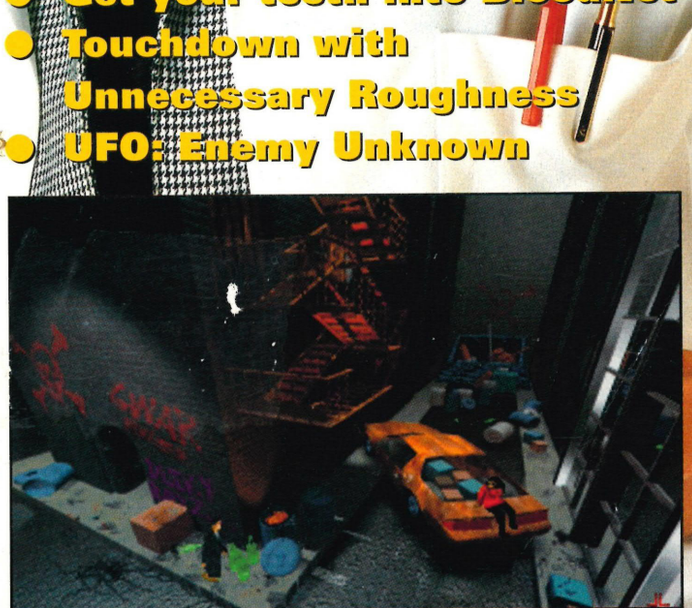

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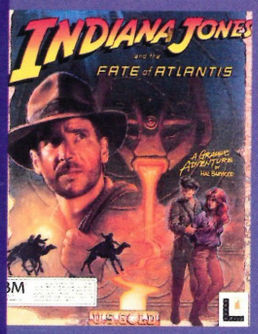

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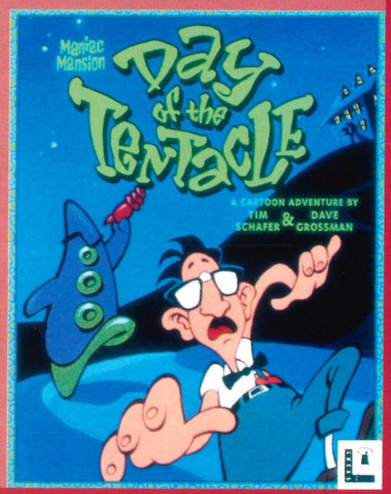

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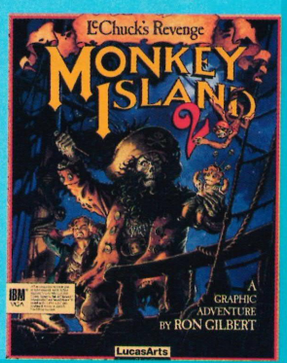

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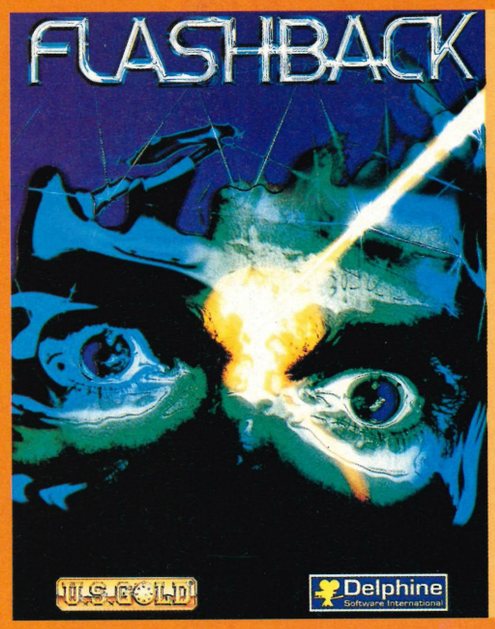



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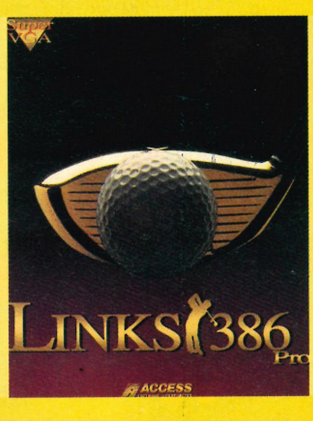

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97%

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

PC ZONE

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"Unrivalled classic, nothing comes close."

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93%

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

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Screen shot



PC Screen shot

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"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."

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mature with time

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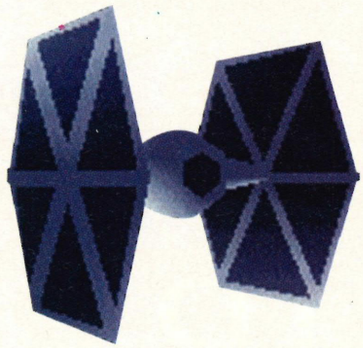

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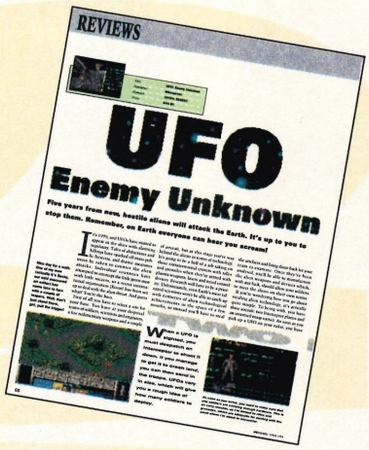
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COVER DISKS



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THE TEAM



CHRISTINA ERSKINE
Funnily enough, Christina swears that the best way to road test an Amstrad is to play SimCity on it for days on end. She's the boss, so who're we to argue? She also managed to fit in a quiet night with Donald Sutherland in Conspiracy.



JOHN BENNETT
John found yet another excuse to play Doom: he's been exploring the hidden areas for QED. "It's OK," he'd say, "I'm just mapping this level." Right, John. Once we'd persuaded him to leave the chainsaw alone, he got down to writing the final part of our music series.



CAL JONES
It's a wonder that Cal managed to get any work done this month — she's been playing Pinball Fantasies non-stop since it arrived. Still, she was forced to put it away for MicroProse's gothic thriller, BloodNet, and to save the Earth from alien invasion in UFO.

COVER DISKS

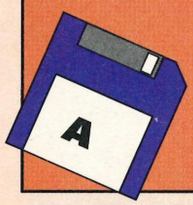
Check out the superb SimCity 2000 with this playable demo which gives you the chance to try out many of the features from the full game and build your own metropolis, either using the supplied 'starter city', or your own, from scratch.

This month also sees the first of our extended QED guides, with no less than FIVE adventure solutions on disk. Enjoy!



SIM CITY 2000

3.5" disks only



On disk A



SimCity 2000 is the revamped, revitalised follow up to the Maxis city building game. Enhanced 3D graphics, additional features and a soundtrack add a whole new dimension to an already classic game: build up a thriving metropolis and cope with fires, floods, earthquakes and rampaging alien monsters. Juggle your finances to provide police and fire protection, good schools and colleges, parks, seaports and even a subway system. Plan a beautiful city or create a polluted, urban nightmare ... it's all up to you.

In this exclusive PC Review demo you have 20 minutes of playing time to either expand the outskirts of the flourishing Democity or to create your own little town. So without further ado let's get down to some serious town planning ...

How to start

Log onto your floppy drive by typing A: [Enter] or B: [Enter] and type PCR to enter the Maxis install program. When prompted, choose the drive and directory where you want to install the SimCity 2000 demo and click on 'OK' to continue. After entering your name pick a compatible Super VGA configuration and click on 'OK' to continue. When SimCity 2000 has installed type 'SC2000' to play.

When the demo has installed to your hard disk, a lengthy help file is automatically displayed. If you have any problems with running the game or don't know what a VESA card is, this text file will clearly explain it all. To return to DOS click on 'Exit'.

How to use the SimCity 2000 demo

As soon as the game starts enlarge the game window by clicking on the up and down arrow in the top-right corner. You can scroll around the landscape using the bars at the bottom and left of the screen and zoom in/out with the magnifying glass on the tool bar.

Perhaps the best way to explain how SimCity 2000 works is to take you through the construction process. If at any point you find that things are moving a little too fast, nip up to the menu bar and click the mouse pointer on the 'speed' option to slow the passing of game-time.

In SimCity 2000 the map is made up of small, one acre squares which you must 'zone' (ie, designate as residential, commercial or industrial areas) before you can build anything at all. In the following pictures the land around the lake is a huge industrial complex with some cheap housing and a couple of small retail outlets.

Fig 1: Creating zones is a simple matter of choosing the type from the toolbar (residential, commercial or industrial) and then clicking on the map to place them. Holding down the left mouse button allows you to drag the zone out to cover as many squares as you like. You can make your zones almost any shape but you need to bear in mind that people won't build more than three squares away from a road. Your zones can also be low or high density. Low density zones are cheaper to build but seeing as we've given you almost a million dollars to spend you can afford to place high density zones all over the place.

Once you've created your zones — here for example I have three industrial zones (yellow), two residential (green) and one block of commercial (blue) — you must then add roads to provide transportation and finally power lines to supply electricity. If you want to get rid of anything you have built or zoned, use the bulldozer icon to remove it.

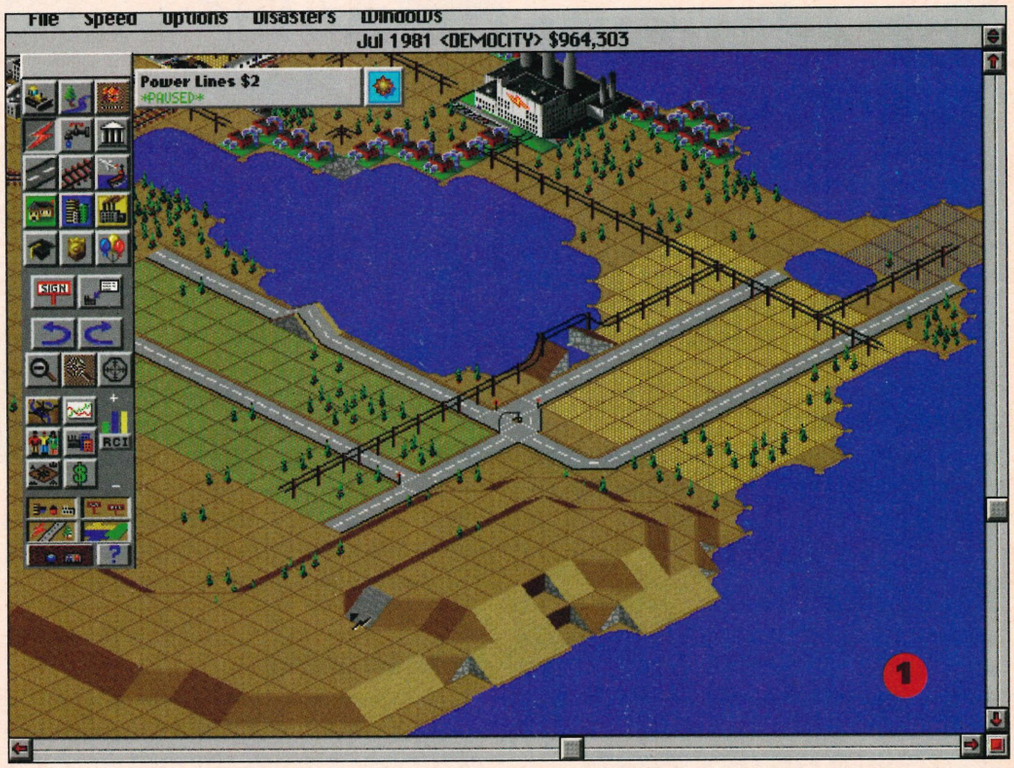


Fig 2: Before you know it your little development will become a thriving suburb. To make the city grow faster, go up to the 'speed' option on the menu bar and choose 'cheetah' speed. Other useful facilities and services — police stations, extra power stations, parks, schools and railway depots — can just be plonked down anywhere where they'll fit. Remember to link up your new buildings to the local electricity grid. If you don't a flashing electricity icon will inform you of the lack of power.

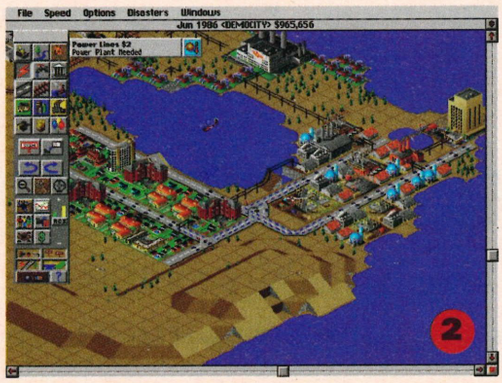
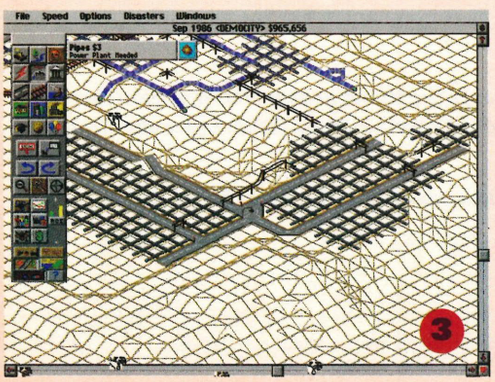


Fig 3: Getting things working smoothly above ground isn't the end of the story either. Building a new section of a city requires the laying of sewers and water pipes. Water pumps placed next to the river provide the fresh water and all you have to do is click on the water icon (hold down the left mouse button for a second or two to access the options), choose 'pipes' and connect the empty grey pipes to the main blue ones.

Of course the best way to learn how SimCity 2000 works is to jump right in and experiment and with only 20 minutes to build a throbbing capital you've got to be quick. When you've finished tinkering with the pre-built Democity why not have a bash at creating your own. Click on the 'file' menu at the top of the screen and choose 'new city'. Now fellow architects, you're on your own...



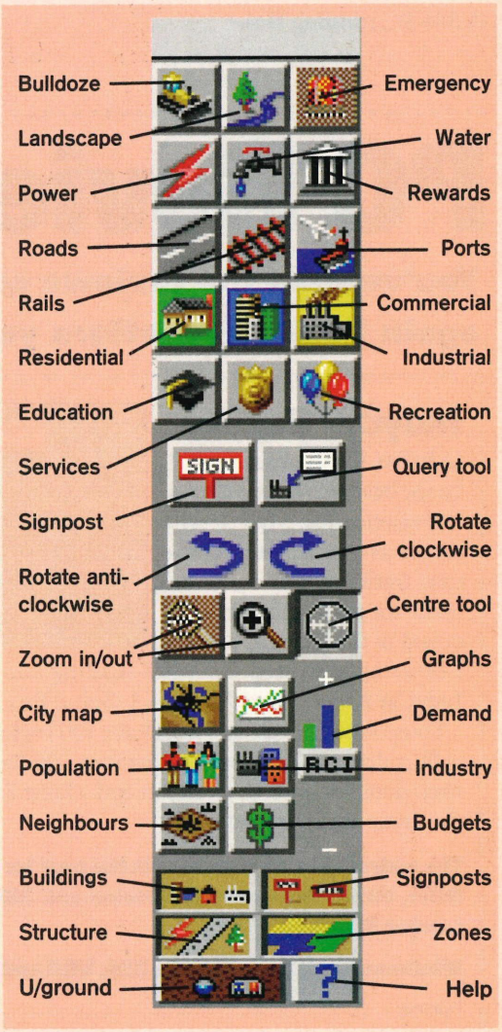
How to quit

To exit SimCity 2000 simply select the FILE menu at the top of the screen and choose the 'quit' option.

Hardware requirements

A minimum of a 386 PC with Extended VGA or Super VGA graphics, a mouse, 4Mb of XMS (extended memory) and about 600K of free base memory. XMS memory can be enabled by removing the EMM386.EXE line in your config.sys file. To do this from the Dos prompt, make sure you are in the root directory, ie, C:\ and type EDIT CONFIG.SYS [Enter]. Locate the 'device=c:\dos\emm386.exe' line and add an 'rem' statement at the beginning of it. The line should then look something like: rem device=c:\dos\emm386.exe.

Now simply reboot your machine, go into the directory where you installed SimCity 2000 and type 'sc2000' to load the game. If you are in any doubt about how to use the DOS editor consult your DOS manual for details.



Installing your cover disk: details on page 11

Five adventure solutions!

There are times when we just haven't got enough room to put all the adventure solutions that we'd like on to the QED pages, so this month we're including five complete solutions on the cover disk: Monkey Island, Star Trek: 25th Anniversary, Simon the Sorcerer, The Labyrinth of Time and Alone in the Dark 2.

How to start

Log on to your floppy drive by typing A: [Enter] or B: [Enter] and type PCRTIPS to view the solutions.

How to quit

To exit the solutions file, either keep pressing a key to scroll to the end or hold down Ctrl and C and then type 'Y' to return to the DOS prompt.

Hardware requirements

A 386 PC running Dos.

STARLORD

5.25" disks



Starlord

It's been a long time coming but I'm reliably informed (no, really I am) that Mike Singleton's epic tale of intergalactic domination is finally poised to hit our screens. Fancy a peek?

How to start

Log on to your floppy drive by typing A: [Enter] or B: [Enter] and type PCR. When the menu program appears press Return to select the Starlord demo and choose a directory to install it into. If you're happy with the default directory press Return. The demo is split across both disks so when prompted to insert the 'last disk of the backup set', remove disk one, put in disk two and press Return. You will now be told to insert disk one again. Do this and press Return to continue. When it has installed log on to the directory where you have installed Starlord and type 'starlord' to play.

How to use Starlord

Starlord is principally a self-running slideshow but you can jump in and control the 3D action by pressing the 'M' key. Use the mouse to move around and the space bar to fire. The aim of the demo is to destroy the enemy's Battlecruiser before they gather their forces and destroy yours.

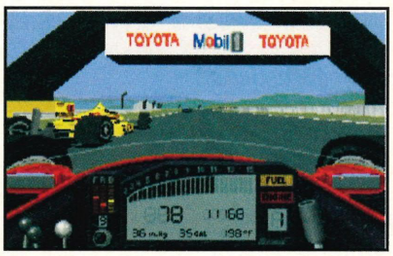
Controls

Fly the ship yourself	M
Fire lasers	SPACE BAR
Attack speed	ENTER
Toggle planet on/off	P
External views	F1 to F9

PC Review free demo offer

You've read the reviews so why not take a look at the games in action? Yes once again PC Review offers you the unique opportunity to try before you buy ...

IndyCar Racing



IndyCar Racing must surely be the best racing sim around. Experience the high octane thrills as you zip around the oval tracks at 200 mph, and jostle for position against the cream of the IndyCar drivers. Featuring advanced Gouraud shading and 3D texture mapping, IndyCar Racing beats Formula 1 Grand Prix hands down.

Those lovely people at Virgin have 100 copies of the IndyCar Racing rolling demo to give away to the first 100 letters that cascade on to their doormat with this coupon and a large SAE, suitable for posting the demo in, crammed inside.

The address? Pop your letter in the post to: IndyCar Racing Demo Offer, Virgin Interactive Entertainment, 338A Ladbroke Grove, London W10 5AH.

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

Name:.....

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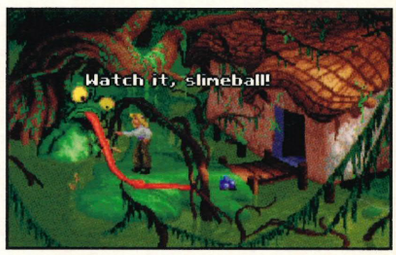
Hand Of Fate



Hand of Fate is the quirky but immensely colourful graphic adventure also known as Legend of Kyrandia 2. Follow Zanthia on her quest to save the land of Kyrandia from destruction. Mix potions, ride dragons, steal candy from a baby. Hand of Fate is probably one of the toughest adventures you'll play this year.

Those lovely people at Virgin have 100 copies of the Hand of Fate rolling demo to give away to the first 100 letters that tumble through their letterbox with this coupon and a big SAE, suitable for posting the demo in, stuffed inside.

The address? Pop your letter in the post to: Hand of Fate Demo Offer, Virgin Interactive Entertainment, 338A Ladbroke Grove, London W10 5AH.

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

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

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

How to use the cover disks

New to PC Review's cover disks? Don't worry! If you know your way around your PC, just read the quick guide, right, for installation instructions. If you're an inexperienced user, read the step by step instructions.

Step by step guide

1. Insert the PC Review cover disk — labelled SimCity 2000 — 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]**

if you want to install SimCity 2000 (3.5" disks only), or Starlord (5.25" disk edition only). If you want to see the adventure solutions, type

PCRTIPS [Enter]

The adventure solutions file will then be displayed on-screen. See the instructions on page 10 for relevant control keys.

4. Back to SimCity 2000 or Starlord. 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 SimCity 2000, move the arrow keys until the words SimCity 2000 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.

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.

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, unless otherwise directed on these pages. For example, type PCRTIPS to load the adventure solutions.
3. Select the program you wish to install from the menu.

SimCity 2000

4. After SimCity 2000 has installed to your hard disk, type SC2000 to begin playing the SimCity 2000 demo.

Adventure solutions

5. Type PCRTIPS [Enter] at the A: prompt to see the file containing the adventure solutions.

Starlord

6. After Starlord has installed to your hard disk — from both 5.25" disks — type Starlord to play the Starlord demo.

Faulty disk?

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

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

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

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

.....

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

If all else fails ...

Helpline

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

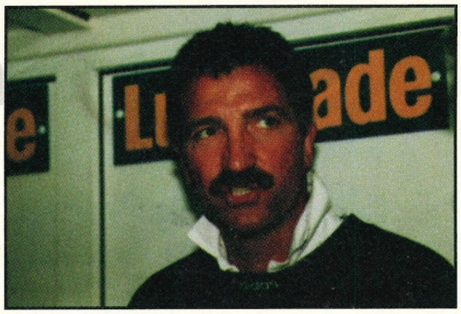
Disk Helpline: (0685) 350505

The helpline operates between 10.30 am and 12.30 pm weekdays.

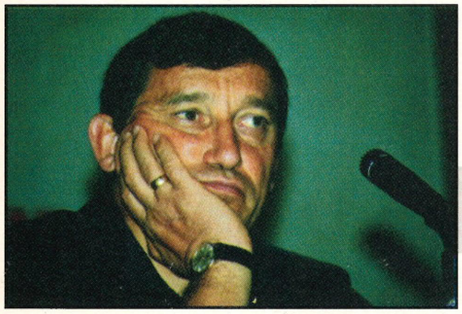
Please note

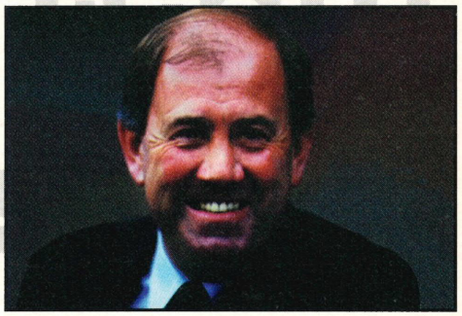
PC Review's cover disks are rigorously checked at each stage of production for all known viruses and duplicated under strict quality control.

- However, cover disks are used at the reader's own risk. PC Review can accept no responsibility for damage to either data or hardware caused by use of our cover disks.
- We also make every effort to ensure that the contents of our cover disks are exactly as advertised. If, however, circumstances should dictate that we are unable to supply the stated programs we will endeavour to provide alternative software.
- PC Review, its distributors and retailers will not be held responsible for any unnotified change to the contents of the disks.



They couldn't manage





Forget

Fantasy League.

This is for real.

PLAYER MANAGER gives you the chance to show your **skills** on and off the pitch. It combines the pace and the gameplay of the legendary **Kick Off** with the tough world of football management. Planning the right tactics, boosting team morale, picking your best team, managing the club's finances, wheeling and dealing in the transfer market, spotting new **talent**, even designing the team kit is down to you. The buck stops with you, the board and fans expect **results**, fail them and the boot beckons!

SNES
out now

PC & AMIGA
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imagineer

ANCO

PC compatibles: VGA min, 386 min, hard drive installation required, Min 1MB RAM

Amiga: 500/600/1200/2000 Min 1MB RAM

Super Nintendo version published by Imagineer (UK) Ltd, Unit 16, Progress Business Centre, Whittle Parkway, Slough, Berks SL1 6DQ Tel: 0753 671686 Fax: 0753 671682

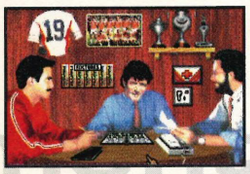


it...

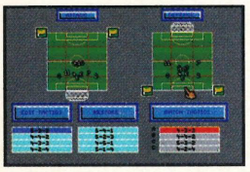


He can.

Will you?









"A blinder of a game"

CVG 95%

"Best ever football management simulation"

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PC compatibles and Amiga versions published by Anco Software Ltd, Unit 7, Millside Industrial Estate, Lawson Road, Dartford, Kent DA1 5BH Tel: 0322 292513 Fax: 0322 293422

COMMAND EARTH'S FORCES

UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTION
643-2(C)

CLASSIFIED-TOP SECRET

For Your Eyes Only - Read & Destroy

Re: Formation of Covert UN Combat Unit

Date of Inception: 1-1-1999

Name: Extraterrestrial Combat Unit (XCom)

The Threat:
The ever increasing appearance of hostile Alien craft. The indiscriminate landings; the terrorising and disappearance of civilians. The hysteria generated among the local population.

The Task:
To combat the Alien threat by scanning, tracking and intercepting all UFOs. To research superior alien technologies and apply that knowledge for manufacture of advanced weapons and craft to be used against the aggressors.

The Base:
A secret base (Alpha One) has been equipped with two leased Interceptors, a Skyranger transport jet and scientists, engineers and soldiers. The base will have to be enlarged and other bases MUST be built (see Finance).

The Finance:
XCom will exist entirely on world government funding. Each nation will allocate funds dependent on the Xcom monthly results in their specific area. Governments reserve the right to withdraw or reduce funds, at any time.

XCOM

Defend • Learn • Vanquish

UF

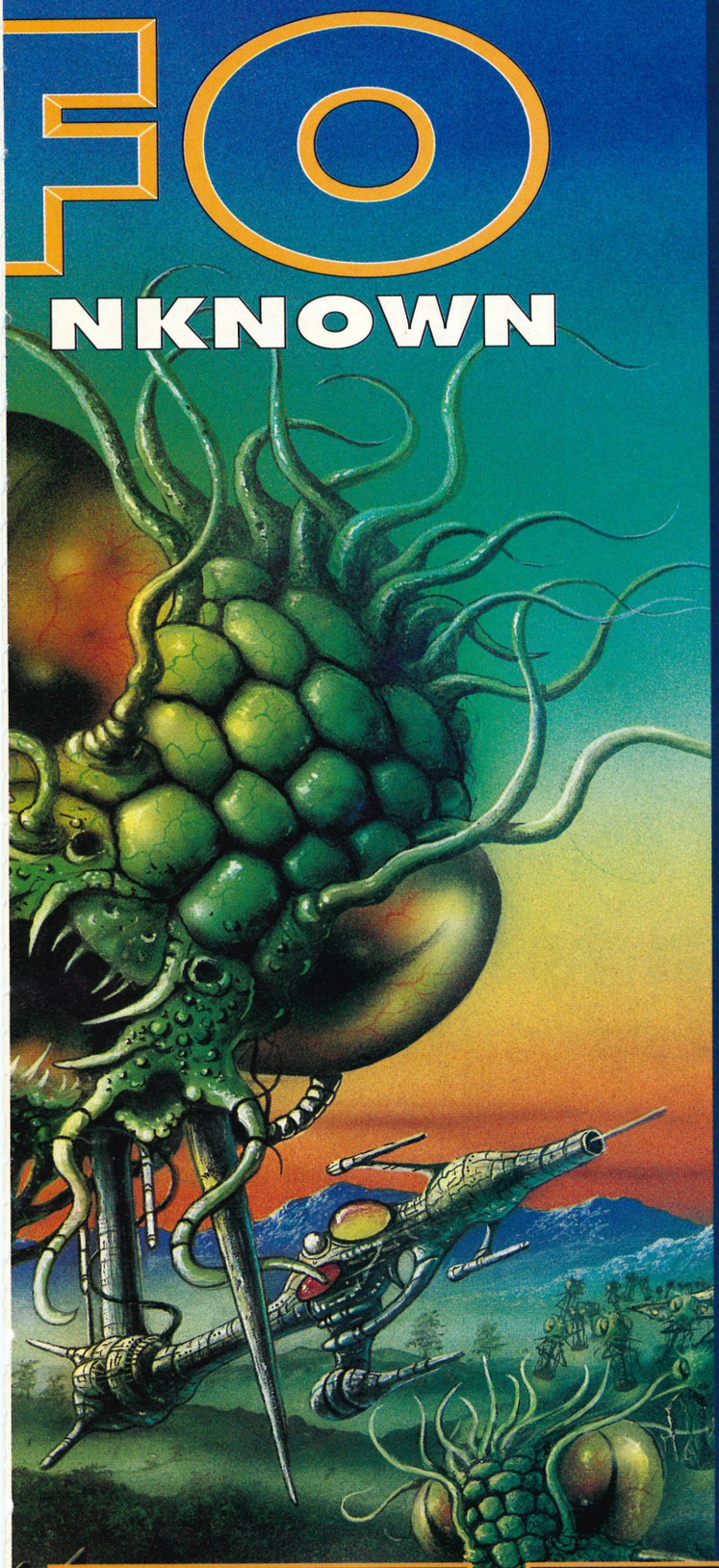
ENEMY U







AGAINST THE ALIEN TERROR



1999. You are in control of XCom; charged by the world's leaders to strike at the alien menace that's terrorising the Earth.

At first, you'll scan, track and shoot down the slower UFOs, but that will just be the beginning. Whenever a UFO crashes, or lands, you must be there; leading a squad of armed soldiers from building to building, from street to street, using all your tactical skills to capture or destroy the aliens.

If you succeed in your first missions, your scientists and engineers will copy the alien technology to create more powerful weapons and craft for your forces to use. Gradually, you'll build up a terrifying picture of this Unknown Enemy, and their real aims and desires, then you'll have to work out a strategy to stop them.

One thing is certain - it won't be easy!

For IBM PC Compatibles and Commodore Amiga

IBM PC screenshots shown.
Actual screens may vary

MICROPROSE







NEWS

Intel unveils faster 486

Intel has announced the fastest 486 chip yet, called the 486 DX4. Like the 486 DX2, it runs internally at a multiple of its external speed — in the DX4's case, despite its name, it runs three times as fast internally as it does externally.

There will be several variants of the Intel DX4: initially, the company will ship 75 and 100MHz versions (running externally at 25 and 33MHz respectively) and in the second half of 1994, Intel will ship an 83MHz version running internally at two and a half times the external speed of 33MHz.

Intel maintains it has added features over and above the clock tripling: internal cache size has been increased from the DX2's 8K to 16K, and thanks to 0.6-micron manufacturing processes, all DX4 processors will operate at 3.3 volts rather than five volts. This means they will require output buffers to operate in 5V motherboards, and therefore will not work in existing PC motherboard upgrade sockets.

According to Intel, the 100MHz DX4 is roughly 1.5 times as fast as the 66MHz DX2; its iCOMP speed rating of 435 compares with 297 for the DX2-66 and 510 for the Pentium-60. It is making the chips in two packages: ceramic for desktops and small-footprint quad flat pack (SQFP) for portables. The 0.6-micron manufacturing keeps the chips' power consumption low and should eradicate the sort of overheating problems that have dogged the Pentium; the chips are also SL-enhanced, and Intel is targeting the 75MHz DX4 in particular at notebook manfacturers.

Initial prices to manufacturers will be $649 for the DX4-100 and $499 for the DX4-75, which means that DX4-based systems should cost between £200 and £250 more than DX2-based systems.

Ambra bites the bullet

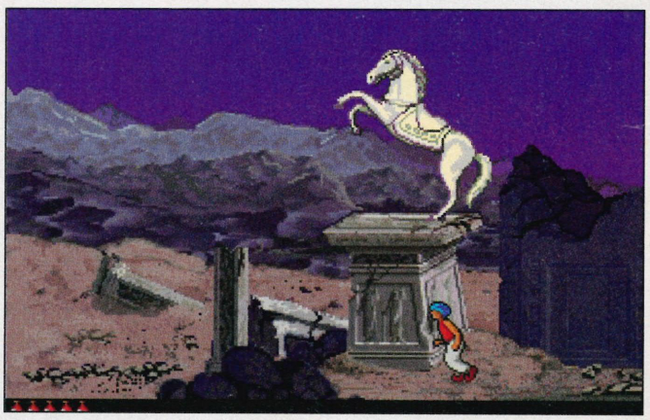
IBM has pulled the plug on its Ambra PCs a mere two years since the £10 million launch of the range. Ambra was launched at a time when sales of no-name clones were growing and achieved a one per cent share of the European market. However, consumers have since gone back to major brands with the result that the Ambra PCs are losing out to IBM's own ValuePoint and PS/1 ranges.

Bill McCracken, president of IBM PC Company Europe, said, "We launched Ambra in 1992 to gain presence in the low end of the PC market. However, changes in the structure of PC market, coupled with the progress in reducing costs and broadening our channels, has led to increased penetration of IBM brands such as ValuePoint in the markets segment and channels that Ambra was set up to address. It is clear that we can optimise both out customer offerings and financial returns by focusing on out IBM branded offerings."

Ambra customers will continue to receive warranty and service support for Ambra products, whilst IBM's ValuePoint, PS/1 and ThinkPad will take over the position previously held by Ambra.

EA and Broderbund join forces

Electronic Arts and educational software specialist Broderbund have announced that they are to merge in a deal quoted as being worth $400 million.



Broderbund's acclaimed Prince of Persia 2.

Broderbund will become a wholly-owned subsidiary of Electronic Arts and its chairman and chief executive officer, Doug Carlston, will join EA's board of directors.

The move consolidates Electronic Arts' claim to be the "biggest software company in the world", while for Broderbund, Carlston says that "This partnership enables us to expand our product offerings to next generation hardware systems, and to take advantage of Electronic Arts' investment in leading-edge tools and technology in that area."

Broderbund has been an EA 'affiliated label' since November 1991, with its products published and distributed by the larger company both in its native US and in Europe. Its brand name has not been particularly well-known in the UK, compared to EA itself, or EA's other sister company, Origin, despite the development of high profile programs such as Prince of Persia and Printshop Deluxe.

Broderbund specialises in educational tools and 'productivity' programs such as Printshop and DOS desktop organisers for use in the home. One result of the merger should be that its titles become more readily available in Europe than previously.

Putting Matisse on your PC

CGS ComputerBild has announced the release of Fauve Matisse, a powerful new Windows-based painting and editing package. Fauve Matisse is a creative painting program rather than an image editor for scans like PhotoFinish.

The software offers two particularly interesting features. Firstly, it uses a wide variety of predefined 'natural' brush styles like chalks, felt pens, watercolours, etc, rather like Letraset's award-winning Fractal Design Painter. These brush styles are combined with a layered object approach — something which is still rare even in the most expensive bitmap graphic packages. Object layering makes editing an image considerably easier than it is if the entire picture has to be edited as a whole.

Fauve Matisse is also compatible with both the Aldus Gallery Effects and Adobe Photoshop special effects plug-ins. CGS can be contacted on (081) 679 7307.



IBM to license Sound Blaster technology

Creative Technology, the Singapore based parent company of Creative Labs UK, has licensed its Sound Blaster compatibility to IBM. The deal allows IBM to release products featuring Sound Blaster compatibility as the industry standard, and IBM will also have the right to provide built in Sound Blaster support on PC and PowerPC products.

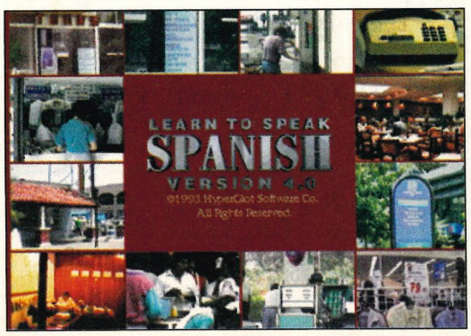
"We are very pleased to see this further recognition of Sound Blaster as the standard in both the home and multimedia markets by IBM Microelectronics Division," said K S Chay, president of Creative Technology.



Spanish made easy

Learn to Speak Spanish is a multimedia language tuition CD with video footage and digitised recordings of native speakers. It contains 30 chapters comprising of vocabulary, a video story and exercises.

The CD also includes cultural information about life in Spain and Latin America. Learn to Speak Spanish 4.0 QuickTime is priced at £116.33. Call Guildsoft on (0752) 606200 for details.



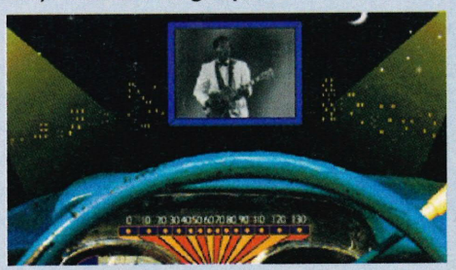
COMING SOON



Where would we be without more bouncy platform fun and frolics in Fantastic Dizzy from Codemasters?



Battle Isle 2 makes it's long-awaited entrance next month. The first release be on CD, and it's looking superb.



Take a trip down memory lane with The Rock and Roll Trivia Quiz from Supervision, the people behind The Lovers Guide CD.



Just to remind you, Ultima 8 is due out next month. Not bigger, but apparently even better than its predecessor.



On the subject of false starts, Starlord — the amazing disappearing game from MicroProse — is going to ship next month. Honest ...

IN BRIEF...

● Stuck in a game? Want to know how to get infinite lives on the latest shoot'em up? Kuma's PC Games, Hints, Tips, Cheats & Adventure Solutions should be able to help you out, covering a wide range of games from Alone in the Dark to Zak MacKracken and the Alien Mindbenders. Shunning hacks and technical jargon the book costs £9.95 and is available from Kuma Books on (0734) 844335.

● Whenever you add a new card to the existing set inside your PC, there's a good chance you'll spend the rest of the day arguing with irreconcilable IRQs and DMAs. To make life easier, Eurosoft has come up with a disgnostic package that should see you right. How does it avoid the problem of hardware conflicts within the PC? By adding another card to test all the others ...

● Last issue's Sound Card feature included two errors in the verdict ratings. The Orchid SoundWave 32 was the top scoring, PC Review Recommended, card and should have been rated 9, and the Advanced Gravis UltraSound rated 8. There is also a new driver available for the UltraSound. Contact Gravis on (0293) 538666.

More 16-bit sound for under £100

Following MediaVision's decision to launch its 16-bit Pro Sonic 16 sound card at £99, Aztech has responded by releasing the Sound Galaxy Basic 16 at the same price. This effectively rearranges the price point of entry-level sound cards, and makes the demise of 8-bit cards more inevitable.

The new Sound Galaxy 16 offers Sound Blaster 2, Sound Blaster Pro, Ad Lib, Windows Sound System, Covox and Disney sound support. CD-ROM drive support is becoming increasingly important with regard to the choice of a suitable sound card, and the Sound Galaxy's support is adequate, if not extensive: Panasonic and Mitsumi CD-ROM drives as standard, and an optional upgrade for Sony CD-ROMs.



Captured on video

Creative Labs UK has launched the Video Blaster SE (Special Edition), a video overlay and capture board that combines the qualities of the top-selling Video Blaster card with a range of new features.

The Video Blaster SE offers live and digitised video capability in multimedia applications, enabling users to mix video and to save and load images. The card also allows the overlaying of text and graphics with live video and, with the addition of the Creative TV coder — a VGA-to-video signal encoder — simultaneous display on a normal TV is also possible. This makes the Video Blaster SE ideal for presentations, demos, tutorials and even home movies.

Featuring S-Video input for higher video quality, the Video Blaster SE also comes bundled with various packages including Video for Windows, Aldus Photostyler SE and JPEG compression software.

The Video Blaster SE is priced at £269 and for more information contact Creative Labs UK Ltd on (0743) 248590.

Road Safety hits the hard drive



More than 300,000 road users are injured in accidents each year in the UK. Now Kosmos, together with RoSPA (the Royal Society for the Preventian of Accidents) has launched Journey into Safety, a software package which takes the drudgery out of learning the Highway Code.

It is designed to help all road users, including cyclists, pedestrians, learner drivers and experienced motorists who want to brush up on their road safety knowlege. The program comprises of six modules, from Drive and Learn, to Highway Challenge, a Highway Code quiz. Journey to Safety will run on any PC with VGA and a hard disk and costs £34.99. Call Kosmos on (0525) 873942 for details.

Age guidance for games

Most computer games published after April 30 will carry a logo indicating which age-groups the game is deemed suitable for. The members of the European Leisure Software Publishers Association (ELSPA) — which, in effect, means most mainstream publishers — have devised this voluntary, self-regulatory scheme after increasing pressure from MPs and newspapers.

The sticker shows four age-groups — 0-10, 11-14, 15-17, and 18-plus — and a tick or cross indicating whether the game is considered suitable for that age-group. The publisher of the game itself determines the age-rating.

The well-publicised concern over the level of violence in games has mainly been directed at Sega/Nintendo console titles such as Mortal Kombat and Streetfighter, which are more likely to be played by younger children. ELSPA has been working with the Video Standards Council for some months now to devise a voluntary scheme which would pre-empt any calls for statutory legislation.

Video CD arrives

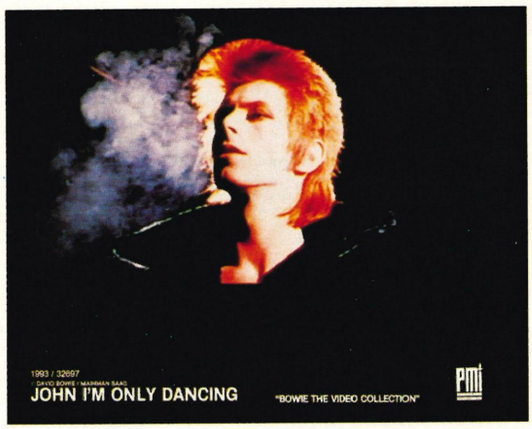
Multimedia takes another step forward with the announcement from several major record companies that they are planning to release video CDs. These will play on any PC conforming to MPEG (Motion Picture Experts Group) standards, ie, a 486-based PC, with Windows 3.1 and multimedia extensions, a soundboard, VESA card, CD-ROM XA drive and a video card such as ReelMagic.

Companies supporting this new format include BMG, EMI, and Picture Music International, the last of which has a library of 150 titles in VHS format, which it is planning to convert to video CD.

The discs will come in single, double or triple packs, depending on the running time. A single CD will run for 72 minutes and will retail for £14.99. Like their audio cousins, video CDs can be programmed for random play and instant track access. However, they cannot be run on a conventional CD-audio player.

The first titles, scheduled for release in April, will be a mix of straight conversions and updates of existing VHS tapes. The re-issues are The Video Collection, by David Bowie, Box of Flix, by Queen, and Delicate Sound of Thunder, by Pink Floyd. The updated video CDs, which include new footage are Simply the Best, by Tina Turner, The First Ten Years, by Iron Maiden, and Videography, by The Pet Shop Boys. There will also be some non-pop titles in the shape of Pavarotti's Nessun Dorma, Dinosaurs: Myths and Reality, and a History of Aviation.

As well as being playable on MPEG PCs, video CDs can be used on the Philips CD-i system, Amiga CD32 and 3DO.



Interplay
arrives in Hollywood

The entertainment giant MCA has taken a minority stake in Interplay Productions, publisher of Battlechess 4000, Star Trek 25th Anniversary, and the forthcoming Stonekeep and Star Fleet Academy, among others.

MCA, whose own parent company is the Japanese conglomerate Matsushita, will be making use of Southern California-based Interplay's game design expertise, while Interplay claims to be interested not so much in the licensng potential of the deal but in accessing MCA's resources, such as special effects artists, film footage and sets. The deal is unsurprising from Interplay's point of view; it has enjoyed close links with Hollywood over the last year or so.

For Interplay in the UK, marketing manager Alison Beasley was adamant that the deal does not mean that Interplay will lose any control over the games it produces, nor for what platform the games are developed for, and that Interplay's founder Brian Fargo retains complete control over the company.

However, the Interplay/MCA link-up is just one of a number of moves made by multinational entertainment companies into the interactive arena over the last year or so, the most prominent in the UK being Sony's takeover of Psygnosis last May.

Sign of the Times

One year ago ...

PC Review reported on all the latest developments from the 1993 Las Vegas Consumer Electronics Show. Among the celebrities present were the first 3DO machine, Garry Kasparov and the Gravis Ultrasound. CD-ROM looked like a good banker for prominence at future shows ...

Two years ago ...

They may be two years old, but they're still two of our favourite games — for it was April 1992 when Cruise for a Corpse and Star Trek 25th Anniversary were released.

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).

INFOGRAMES
Infogrames Ltd, 14 Smedley St, Clapham, London, SW4 6PF
Tel: 071-738 8199

Amstrad's back!

And this time it's brought out a CD-ROM drive

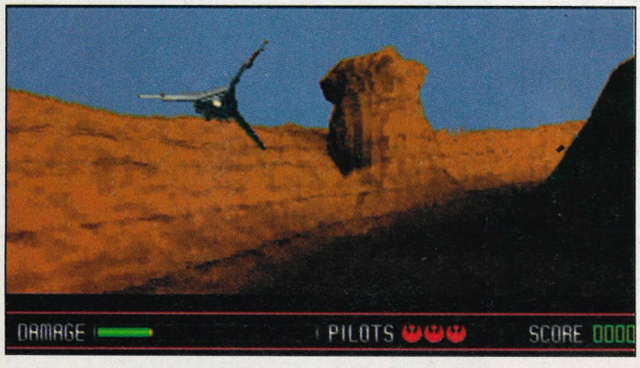
Amstrad has returned to the PC fold with a range of 486-based PCs and a CD-ROM-based machines. Dean Evans and Christina Erskine road-tested two models from the range



Although best known for its hi-fi's, VCRs, TVs and satellite dishes, Amstrad has been in the computer market since the early eighties and has played a considerable part in putting the PC in the home,with the likes of the venerable PCW8256. More recent offerings, both successful and otherwise, include the Mega PC (a combination of a 486 PC and a Sega Mega Drive) and the Pen Pad. The latest addition to the Amstrad range is the PC9000 series of 486-based PCs.

In the past, Amstrad has been criticised for producing PCs with a short life-span, machines that were superb for about a year after their launch but limited in terms of their future expansion potential. Consequently, future-proofing is a prime concern of the PC9000 series.

The company also has the beginner in mind, so the PC9000s all feature a consistent, user-friendly interface: on-screen tutorial software, and an icon-based menuing system that allows you to sidestep the perils of DOS and the foibles of Windows temporarily.



"It can be frightening to splash out £1,000 on a PC if you're a first time user," says David Hennell, Amstrad's director of international marketing, "so we've kept the hand-holding tutorial, and there's even help with inputting the time and date."

The new range includes an entry-level multimedia PC, and with the recent explosion in CD-based software we've put both the standard desktop PC and the all-singing, all-dancing multimedia PC to the test.

Amstrad PC9000 Multimedia

The 'multimedia' version of the 9000 series is essentially a low spec model in the range with an internal CD-ROM drive and built-in sound card.

At £1,249.99 it's competitively priced, although there are some mouth-watering bargains in the PC plus CD-ROM field at the moment — Elonex's latest range being a case in point. However, what you buy when you buy Amstrad, is a household name and, of more practical use, you get the software pre-loaded, and the Amstrad 'idiot-proof' front-end.

Now, if you know your way round Config.sys like the way to the bathroom and you're on pint-buying terms with Mscdex.exe and Sound Blaster interrupts, a graphic screen which protects you even from Windows is going to seem like a waste of time. But if multimedia is going to bring PC games to people who wouldn't buy a computer, but do like the idea of 'interactive entertainment', then it's virtually essential.

The problem is that it eats up system memory, and the Multimedia PC9000 is left with a paltry 509K free after the-default start-up. This means that to play virtually anything, you're still going to have to get your hands dirty, either with



boot disks, or with editing Config.sys. (I say "virtually anything", but to Amstrad's credit, this doesn't include the pre-installed Rebel Assault CD.)

Which brings me on to the Sony CD-ROM drive, a double speed, multi-session model,which performed speedily and consistently throughout testing.

The sound card is a Sound Power Pro 16, a proprietary model with Sound Blaster Pro compatibility. It comes with Jazz software for recording and sampling, and a CD audio player. Indeed, as I write this, the CD-ROM is playing the B52s — multimedia of a sort, I guess.

Unfortunately, the music is playing through the supplied Amstrad speakers. If I was going to use this machine on a long-term basis, the speakers would be the first things to warrant an upgrade.

The whole *raison d'etre* of the Amstrad PC9000 series is upgradability. Speakers apart, the components that you may want to upgrade sooner rather than later are the RAM, the processor and the hard disk. 4Mb RAM is enough for just about everything, but for games like Doom, and SimCity 2000, it's only just enough.

Still, upgrading with new SIMMs isn't difficult (just fiddly), and the inclusion of the zero insertion force (ZIF) chip socket means that you can put a faster chip in to the PC without too much agony.

At 130Mb, the hard disk is at the small end of workable sizes these days, but of course, if you're buying the bulk of your software on CD-ROM then the necessity for a massive hard disk should be diminished.

There are a number of things I like about the Amstrad. I like the keyboard, but keyboards are such a matter of personal preference that this hardly means a thing. I like the fact that it has performed absolutely as you would expect it to. I like the design of the machine — in fact, most of all, I like its size. Amstrad has returned to properly sized, albeit slimline, PCs, and it looks like a real computer, instead of a child's toy. I also particularly like the way Amstrad has made a genuine effort to make the machine accessible to PC newcomers.

Still, I wish it had a 33MHZ 486DX instead of the SX, and most of all I wish the monitor was the same model as supplied with the PC9486 without CD. Before I bought this machine, I would check carefully the relative price of buying, say, the other Amstrad 9486 reviewed here and adding an internal CD-ROM myself.

■ Christina Erskine

Amstrad 9486 (66MHz, 486DX2)

In the past, Amstrad has been responsible for some quirky PC design, with some tiny desktop casings and very limited upgrade and expansion potential. Not a problem if you wanted limited mileage from a computer, but if you wanted to add a CD-ROM drive or a new video card you soon found you werein trouble.

This is not the case with the new PC9486, which at the top of the range features a 66MHz 486DX2 PC that has the future very much in mind. It's a hefty desktop machine because of this, solidly built, cleanly designed but on the whole a little bit uninspiring. Stylish it definitely isn't: the reset and turbo buttons are fiddly and the monitor is a simple, no-nonsense 14" SVGA affair. In short, the PC9486 shouts the words "basic system" from the rooftops.

Remove the lid and you'll find that Amstrad has gone heavily for compatibility, using standard components and none of the mismatched innards that some of their older machines have been criticised for. The PC9486 has two free drive bays and a reasonably quick 214Mb Seagate IDE hard disk. The processor is mounted in the latest version 3 ZIF socket with a P24T pin-out (Pentium Overdrive, for what it's worth) and the Cirrus Logic graphics chip is built into the motherboard and has a standard 1Mb of VRAM.

Because it's a bulky case there is a fair amount of room inside to fiddle around and the five 16-bit expansion slots allow plenty of scope for further expansion. Unfortunately, messy drive cabling obscures one of these and makes another difficult to reach. The four SIMM sockets are also awkwardly placed. If you're upgrading, you'll probably find you have to disconnect the disk drives just to get at them.

Although it doesn't come with a mountain of software, it's still an attractive and useful bundle: PFS: Window Works, Windows 3.1 and DOS 6. As I mentioned this is a bare bones set-up, and if you want to turn the PC9486 into a top-notch games machine you're going to need to add a decent sound card and a CD-ROM drive.

But what is most impressive about the PC9486 is the friendly Amstrad welcome menu, which leads you gently and plainly through the pre-installed programs with tutorials and exercises that cut out the technical gibberish and make the whole thing far easier to use. It's nice to see a PC that is geared towards the complete novice and I must say that I'm very impressed by Amstrad's approach.

So where does it stand? For the beginner this is a dependable, solid performer and although it doesn't look a million dollars, Amstrad has achieved its aim of producing a future proof, stable and above all a friendly PC. It's not blisteringly quick — it boasts little in the way of state-of the art technology, but the PC9486 is a reliable buy for your money.

■ Dean Evans

Amstrad Multimedia PC9000

All specs as below, plus: 25MHz 486SX processor
4Mb RAM, 1Mb video RAM
130Mb hard disk
One 1.44Mb floppy disk drive
Local SVGA graphics card with Windows accelerator
14" colour monitor (max res: 1,024 x 768, 256 colours)
16-bit stereo sound card, speakers
Sony double speed, multi-session CD-ROM drive (internal)
Mouse, Keyboard
Amstrad Desktop, MS-DOS 6, Windows 3.1, PFS Windowworks v2 (integrated software package), Software Toolworks Multimedia Encyclopedia, Rebel Assault

Price: £1249.99 (including VAT)

The Amstrad PC9000 series

25MHz 486SX, 50MHz 486DX2, or 66MHz 486DX2 processors
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Choice of 130Mb, 214Mb or 340Mb hard disk
One 1.44Mb floppy disk drive
Local SVGA graphics card with inbuilt Windows accelerator
14" colour monitor (max res: 1024 x 768, 256 colours)
Mouse and keyboard
Amstrad Desktop (user-friendly front end)
MS-DOS 6, Windows 3.1 PFS Windowworks v2 (integrated package)

Price: between £997.58 (486SX model) and £1,527.49 (66MHz 486DX). Prices include VAT.

Contact: Amstrad (0277) 228888

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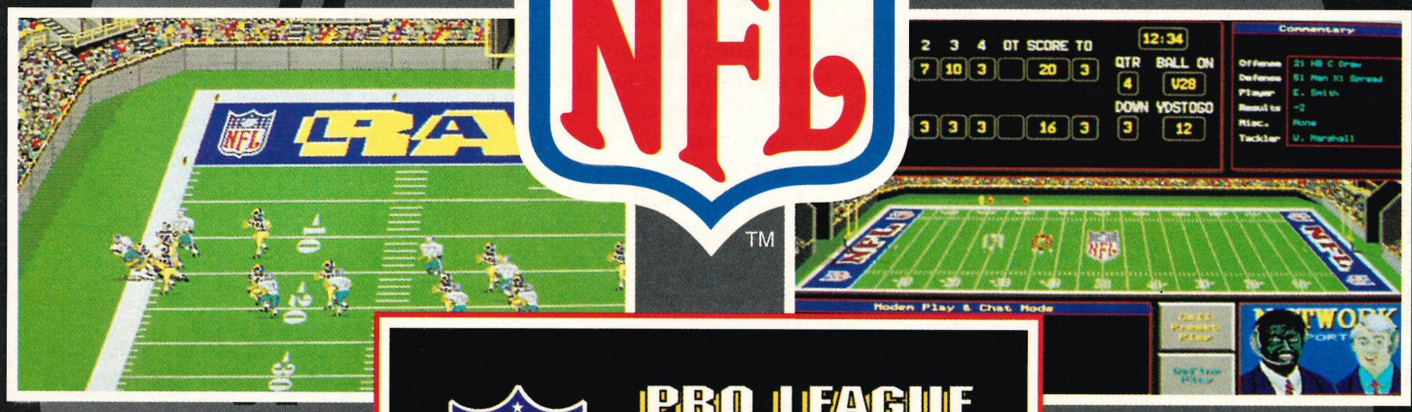
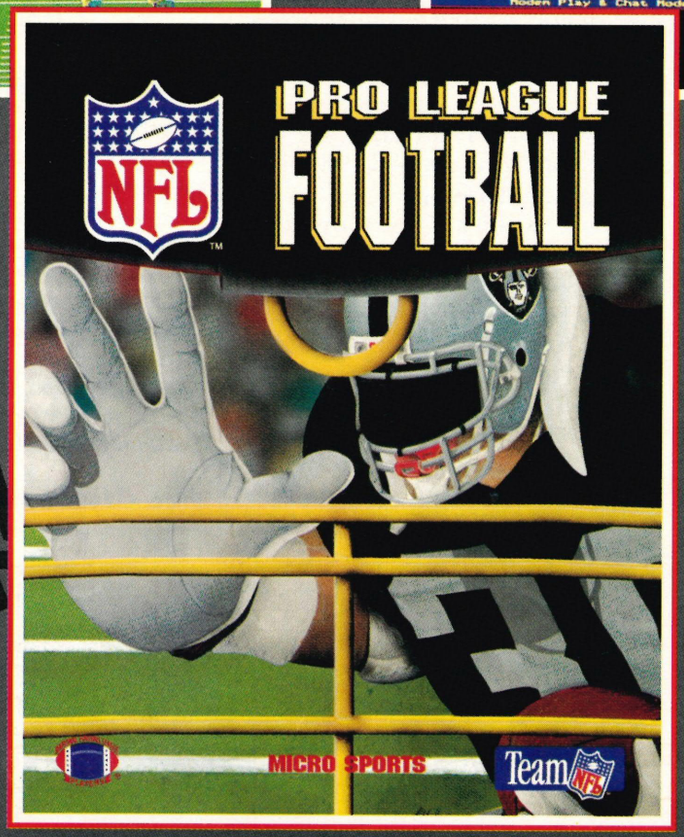


PC Screen Shots



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The development crisis

TV companies do good works. They have to, by law. I don't mean that their executives dress up in mufti and dish out soup under Waterloo Bridge. It is a statutory requirement for franchised TV stations to educate their staff, thereby helping to raise the standard of broadcasting throughout the nation and developing an asset for the country.

You may be wondering exactly what sort of educational process has lead to some of the rubbish we see on television, but at least they're making an effort to develop skills and build their industry. This is something that the games industry has conspicuously failed to do.

Readers of CTW, the industry newspaper, will know that Domark, along with Sega and others, has put together a college course in computer games design. I'll be writing more about this and similar initiatives in future columns, but for the time being I thought it might be interesting to sketch out some of the issues involved in education, as it relates to game development.

The development industry is currently in something of a crisis. In the last few years we've seen an unprecedented demand for products, principally for Nintendo, Sega, PC and, in Europe, Amiga. Nintendo now appears to be feeling its way through a world of vapourware, making occasional noises about Project Reality and, more recently, about its spurning of compact disc in favour of 12Mb cartridges. Sega is struggling with the Mega CD and the launch, now put back to late '95, of the Saturn. Sega is being very reclusive when it comes to development on the Saturn, so that only leaves Sony, Atari and 3DO in the fray.

Confidence in 3DO is currently at a low ebb, due to uncertainty about the company's financial model. There is also uncertainy about Atari's ability to give the Jaguar the platform it deserves. Sony, on the other hand, has even signed up the penguins at the South Pole. In development terms, this company — backed by a very exciting machine and the indefatigable Ian Hetherington — is driving the entire industry single-handed. And, of course, that just makes everyone even more nervous.

The crisis, then, boils down to this: in the short term, developers face a tough time. Publishers, on the other hand, realise that the demand for development resources in the long term will vastly exceed the supply. So almost all publishers, including a number of new entries, are taking chunks of equity in development companies. Facing an uncertain short-term future, most developers are not surprisingly deciding that now may be the time to realise their investment over the last few years, take the money, and go (at least partially) in-house.

"The demand for development resources in the long term will vastly exceed the supply"

This is going to make the problem even worse. Because when the upturn does come, there will be very few entirely independent developers around to greet it. When that happens, everyone is going to wish that the industry had got around to education a lot sooner than it has.

The root of the problem is, and always has been, that there are far too few skilled developers to service the market. Clive Sinclair's great contribution to the games market was to create a machine that actively encouraged you to learn about programming (I seem to remember the words Peek and Poke were actually printed above two of the Spectrum's keys). Try Peeking a SNES and you'll find it rather harder. The self-taught approach to programming simply isn't applicable to today's platforms, including the PC, which is bedevilled by an awesomely complex system of interrelated sub-systems. The only option is a formal educational structure. That, however, is easier said than done.

However, you can help a great deal. If you're in higher education and would like to see your college introduce facilities for studying interactive entertainment development and production, please write to me c/o PC Review at the address at the front of the magazine. I'll then get in touch with you to see if we can set up a meeting with your department. The future of the games business is in your hands!



The key to the future of games development is a formal education structure

COOKE REPORT

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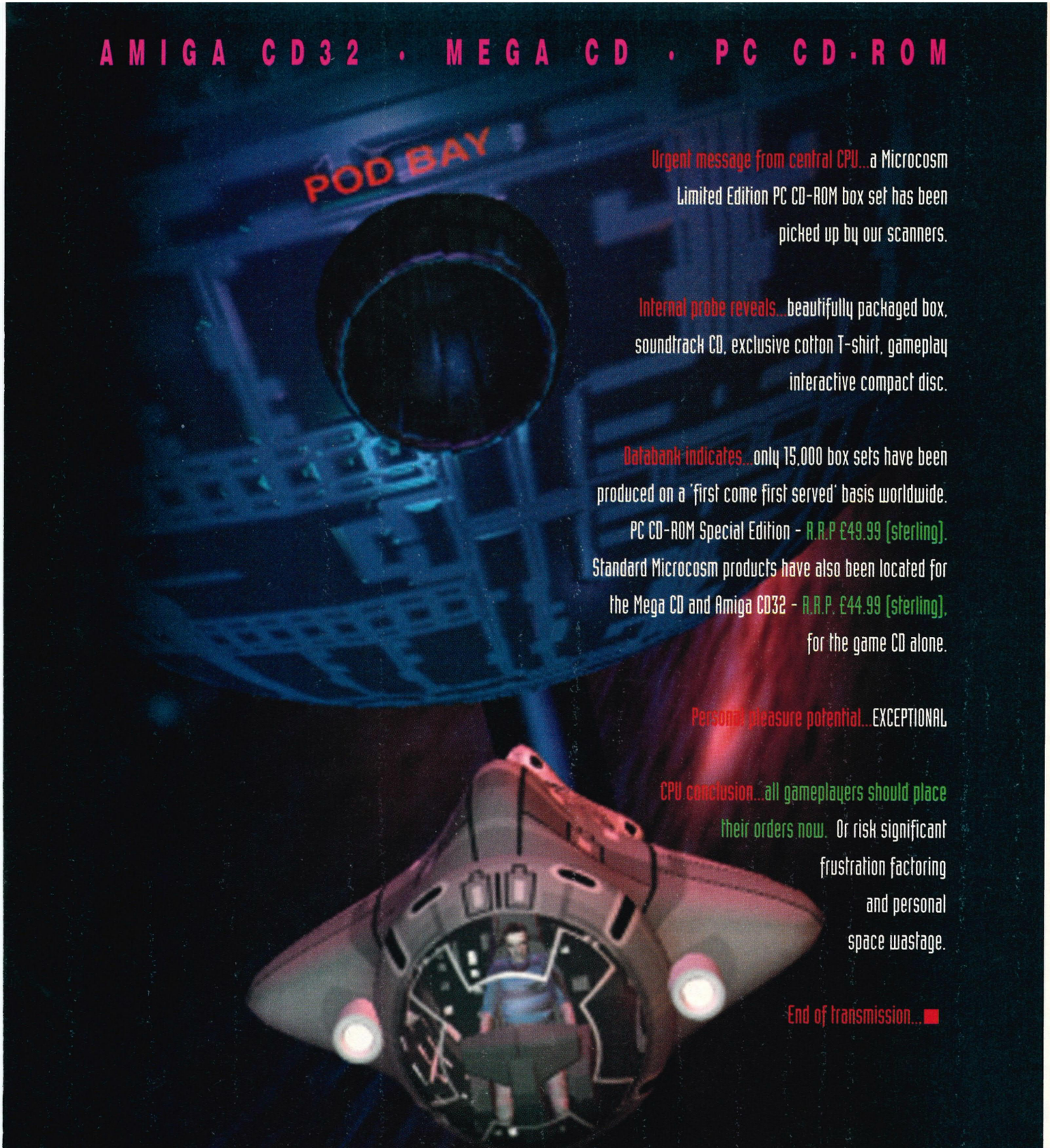

Urgent message from central CPU...a Microcosm Limited Edition PC CD-ROM box set has been picked up by our scanners.

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Databank indicates...only 15,000 box sets have been produced on a 'first come first served' basis worldwide. PC CD-ROM Special Edition - R.R.P £49.99 (sterling). Standard Microcosm products have also been located for the Mega CD and Amiga CD32 - R.R.P. £44.99 (sterling), for the game CD alone.

Personal pleasure potential...EXCEPTIONAL

CPU conclusion...all gameplayers should place their orders now. Or risk significant frustration factoring and personal space wastage.

End of transmission...■

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Ciarán Brennan

The video consoles boom of the early 90s has been nothing but a drain on resources which could have been put to better use developing for the PC

Video to kill the PC star?

Like it or not, the future of PC gaming is inextricably linked with whatever is happening in the world of video games, because there are so few game designers, programmers and publishers who dedicate themselves solely to working with the PC.

To me — and I'm sure to most of you too — this makes little or no sense at all. After all, jazz and classical music manage to distance themselves quite nicely from Take That.

But its for this reason that the likes of Street Fighter II and Micro Machines are produced for the PC when their very design works against them being successful.

> **"Jazz and classical music manage to distance themselves quite nicely from Take That"**

However, this in itself is not the biggest problem caused to the PC by its unnecessary affiliation with the video games business. By far the greatest problem is caused by the overwhelmingly fashion-conscious nature of the arcade games business and the hugely draining effect it has on development resources

In the early 1990s, just about everyone involved in the games business was happy enough to dedicate their best designers to develop games for Sega and Nintendo's 16-bit cartridge machines.

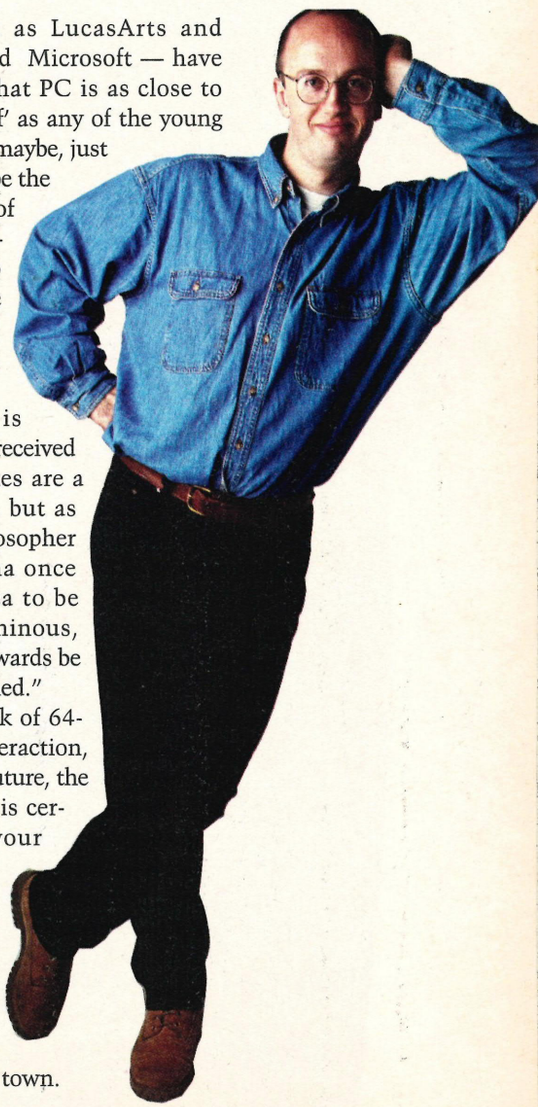
This, it turned out, was quite a good decision: the cartridge business boomed, everybody made a pile and Mario and Sonic the Hedgehog became instant celebrities. Last year, however, things took a turn for the worse.

Being generally business minded people, most of the software publishing community realised that Christmas 1993 was probably going to be the last big boom time for the current crop of video game machines. This was something of a problem — especially as contemporary games take a minimum of 18 months to develop.

So, with no obvious immediate successor to the 16-bit consoles waiting in the wings, did our friendly neighbourhood publishers do the decent thing and devote their scarce resources to producing bigger and better PC games?

Of course they didn't. Instead, with PC hardware now falling in price and becoming the only viable home computer, the vast majority of software developers, in their infinite wisdom, have chosen more or less to ignore the format in favour of whatever piece of wonder hardware will be the 'next big thing'.

But what will this be? Will it be CD-i? Atari's Jaguar? Sony's PSX? Sega's Saturn? Cable games? The truth is that no-one really knows. As far as I can see it though, the future is already here. Canny software developers such as LucasArts and Infogrames — and Microsoft — have already spotted that PC is as close to being 'future proof' as any of the young pretenders — and maybe, just maybe, 1994 will be the year when many of their contemporaries will stop their search for the unobtainable and join them in this belief.

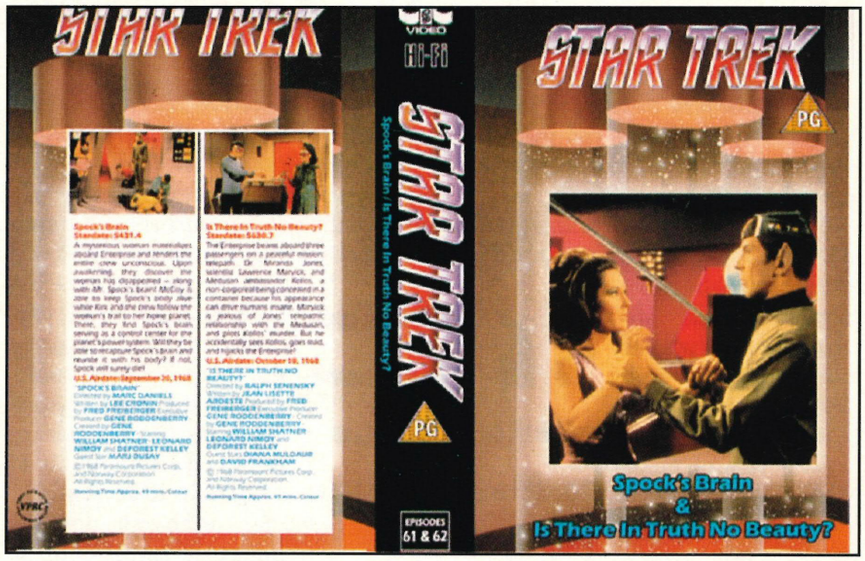


Maybe there is some truth in the received wisdom that games are a fashion business, but as the great US philosopher George Santayana once said, "For an idea to be fashionable is ominous, since it must afterwards be always old-fashioned."

For all of the talk of 64-bit processors, interaction, and games of the future, the only thing which is certain is that your unfashionable workhorse will still be setting standards long after the new chips on the block have become the oldest swingers in town.

WIN *a complete set of the original Star Trek TV series on video*

Plus! Interplay's Star Trek: Judgment Rites graphic adventure



And three runners-up prizes of Star Trek: Judgment Rites

This month's totally unique first prize will have Trekkies the world over chomping at the bit. The winner gets a complete set of the original Star Trek TV series on VHS video. A grand total of 40 episodes of classic space nostalgia up for grabs!

The videos come courtesy of Interplay, which by some wild coincidence happens to be the company behind the classic point-and-click style graphic adventure, Star Trek: Judgment Rites. Hardly surprising then that the definitive Star Trek adventure game should round off our big Numero Uno prize, as well as being the prize for the three lucky runners-up.

By another amazing coincidence Interplay will shortly be releasing the CD 'talkie' version of Judgment Rites, complete with the voices of all the original actors. And if this wasn't enough, later this year Interplay will be unveiling its next release, StarFleet Academy, a massive space combat simulation based on the Star Trek series.

How to enter

All you have to do is answer these 14 sneaky, underhand and decidedly irresponsible questions on the greatest space series ever to grace our TV screens. Where would we be now if Kirk and co had never decided "to boldly go where no man has gone before"?

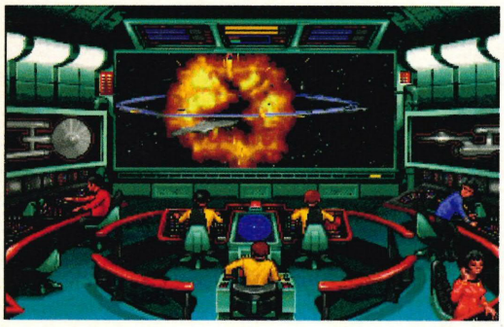
In the event of worldwide Star Trek trivia-failure, the winner and the runners-up will be picked from entries containing the most correctly answered questions. Take a look at the questions below, then fill in the answers on the coupon at the bottom of the page (or a photocopy if you don't want to spoil the magazine) and send it to the following address.

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

Could anything be easier?

Competition rules

- Only one entry per person, please.
- No employees, relatives or associates of Interplay, or any companies involved in this competition are eligible to enter.
- The editor's decision in all matters relating to this competition is assuredly final.
- Your entry must arrive by April 15th 1994; any entries that arrive after this date will not be put in the draw for the prizes.

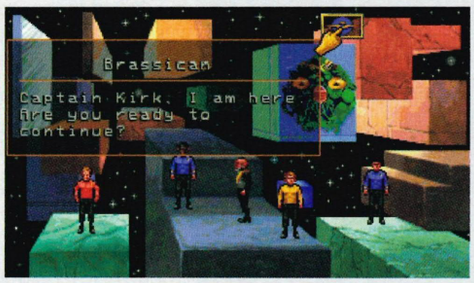


The questions ...

1 What does the 'T' in Captain James T Kirk stand for?
a] Tiberius b] Tracey c] Teflon

2 What is the name of Spock's mum?
a] Cher b] T'Pau c] Mrs Spock

3 Who played 'Bones'?
a] DeForrest Kelly b] Forrest Whittaker c] James Doohan



4 What colour jerseys did the Enterprise's security staff wear?
a] a fetching shade of lilac and pale cream b] red c] black

5 Where do you find the Captain's log?
a] In his chair b] In his cabin c] In the ship's holographic forest

6 The Enterprise has two offensive weapons. What are they?
a] lasers and proton torpedoes
b] Harsh language and kitchenware
c] phasers and photon torpedoes

7 What are Klingon warships called?
a] Birds of a Feather b] Birds of Prey c] Vultures

8 What energy source does the Starship Enterprise use?
a] Ni-CAD batteries b] Dilithium crystals c] Liquid crystals

9 What was the registration number of the Enterprise?
a] NCP 1701 b] MCP 1701 c] NCC 1701

10 What was Spock's position on board the Enterprise?
a] Geologist b] Science Officer c] Third from the right

11 'The Trouble with Tribbles'. What exactly were Tribbles?
a] Intergalactic haemorrhoids b] little furry creatures that breed a lot c] The ship's cats

12 How many Star Trek movies have there been?
a] Three b] six c] Too many

13 'Space, the final ...' What?
a] place b] frontier c] front ear

14 Which crew member left after the first series?
a] Yeoman Janice Rand b] Yeoman Paul Rand c] Yeoman Janet Street Porter



PC Review Star Trek competition

The answers to the Star Trek competition are:

1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 .....

8 ..... 9 ..... 10 ..... 11 ..... 12 ..... 13 ..... 14 .....

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

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

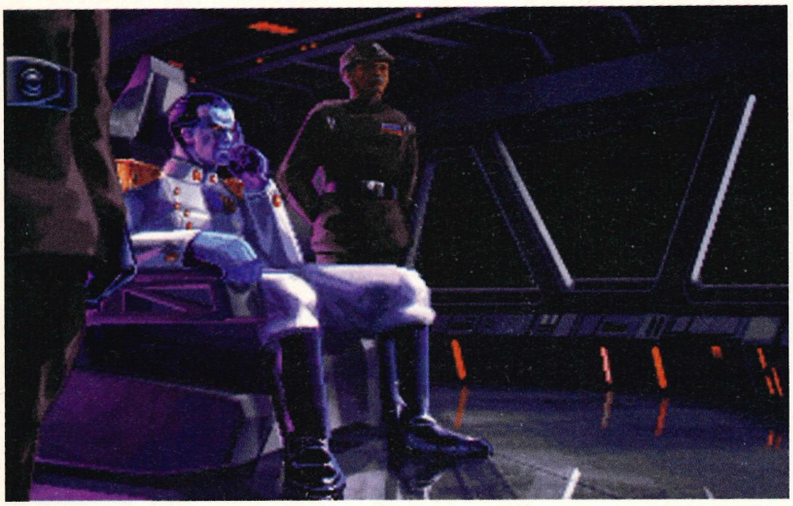
Closing date April 15, 1994

PC Review April 1994

Title	**TIE Fighter**
Developer	**LucasArts**
Publisher	**US Gold**
Contact	**(021) 625 3366**
Release date	**April 1994**
Genre	**space combat**
Price	**£TBA**

TIE Fighter

LucasArts' eagerly awaited epic puts you on the side of the Empire, but will come up against intergalactic competition in the shape of the forthcoming Delta V and Star Trek: Next Generation, also previewed on these pages

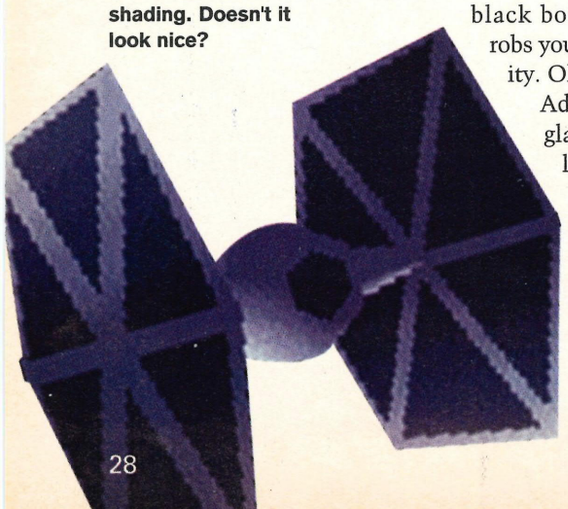


Behold Vice Admiral Thrawn, the only alien in the Empire's top brass and a peerless strategist and tactician. Here he ponders on matters military, while trying to shake a headache by massaging his temples.

Do you need another X-Wing fix? Do you want to fly one of those fragile little TIE Fighters and blow goody two shoes Rebel pilots into tiny glistening splinters? Of course you do, and when LucasArts releases the long-awaited TIE Fighter next month you'll have your chance.

TIE Fighter is the sequel to the hugely successful X-Wing and this time around you get to fly for the Empire, taking your place as an imperial pilot in training, historical combat missions and three tours of duty against the Alliance. Forget Obi-Wan and the force, now your task is to help enforce the Emperor's will, crush the rebel insurgence and wear that tight-fitting black body armour that robs you of your humanity. Oh well ...

Blocky polygon blues are a thing of the past now, thanks to TIE Fighter's stunning use of Gouraud shading. Doesn't it look nice?



Admittedly at first glance TIE Fighter looks little more than just an X-Wing rehash with prettier graphics and a new set of spaceships. But, created by designers Lawrence Holland and Edward Kilham, the same team responsible for X-Wing, TIE Fighter promises to contain more innovations. "We received so much positive feedback from fans of X-Wing," said Holland, "but we believe there's always room for improvement. So we set out to provide gamers with some important new features, including more non-linearity in the structure of the battles and a greater strategic insight into the missions."

TIE Fighter takes place after the battle for Hoth portrayed in The Empire Strikes Back. As the rebels evacuate the ice planet the Empire (and that means you) engage them in a series of huge running battles, each of which contains a smaller set of missions. In these early missions you'll get to fly a variety of ships — the bog standard TIE Fighter, the TIE Bomber, the TIE Interceptor, the Assault Gunboat — and will be under the command of the Emperor's top commanders including Vice Admiral Thrawn (he appears in Timothy Zahn's Star Wars novels so I'm told) and old wheezy-chest himself, Darth Vader. As you prove yourself as a pilot you will also get to fly the shiny new TIE Advanced Starfighter and an even more mysterious TIE craft designed by Vader himself. According to Kilham this new fighter "will have the capability to rival the Rebel's finest ships."

As you can see TIE Fighter uses the basic X-Wing 3D game engine but this time Holland and Kilham have jazzed up the visual appeal with Gouraud shading, a technique that has smoothed all the rough polygon edges and added realistic textures to the spacecraft. Like X-Wing the narrative story unfolds with the aid of cinematic sequences and the whole game is packed with digitally mastered sound effects, digitised speech and a suitably dramatic iMUSE musical score that changes with the pace and content of the on-screen action.

I hope you're ready for a challenge because TIE Fighter plays much harder than X-Wing (the TIE Fighter for example has no Hyperdrive or deflector shield) and because of this LucasArts have included three difficulty levels to suit all calibres of gameplayer. It's only when you fly for the other side that you get to realise just how frustratingly fast the A-Wings are and how those Y-Wings, if left unchecked, can cause a lot of damage to your fragile Correlian transports.

TIE Fighter is only a month away from release and will come packaged with a companion book/novella full of technical information and illustrations of the Empire's hardware. Nor will you have to wait long for the data disks, as LucasArts plans a TIE Fighter release frenzy, shipping two further campaign disks soon after the initial game launch.

● *Next month PC Review will carry an interview with Lawrence Holland in our special US Gold extra.*



Delta V



Title	**Delta V**
Developer	**Bethesda**
Publisher	**US Gold**
Contact	**(021) 625 3366**
Release date	**March 1994**
Genre	**3D combat**
Price	**£TBA**

Have you seen those Nintendo TV adverts for Starwing and the new Super FX chip? Don't they mention something about it heralding 'the future of gameplay'? Well, obviously I don't need to point out that anything the Nintendo can do the PC can do infinitely better and Delta V from Bethesda (the people who brought you Terminator Rampage) is a title that's shaping up to be the fastest and most frantic 3D game around.

Originally designed as a flight sim, Delta V is now a fast-paced 3D racer featuring smoothly shaded polygon graphics and a Cyberpunk-style plot. As usual the world has descended into ruin. It's an urban nightmare with decaying cities, cybernetic implants and a seedy underworld of hackers who 'jack' their brains into the global data network, pinching information for pleasure and profit. William Gibson's influential novel Neuromancer is an obvious source and if you look around there's a whole queue of games just waiting to leap onto the trendy cyber-wagon.

Although it might look very much like a space game from the screenshots, Delta V is set inside a computer. It has a similar look and feel to the forthcoming Chaos Control from Infogrames and if you take the hard-edged polygonal feel of Disney's movie Tron, but leave out the subdued neon lighting and Jeff Bridges, and you're halfway to getting the visual idea.

The Delta V story goes something like this: you are a top hacker or 'net-runner' and you must guide your 'trace' down a complex grid of datalines stealing information from the sort of huge, faceless corporations that always seem to appear in these gritty, futuristic scenarios. In glorious and stunningly fast 3D you are thrown into a computer world and must complete a series of individual 'netruns' which have you thundering down the data circuits, destroying other hackers and dodging gun turrets. In fact the courses and the obstacles are as much of a hazard as the enemies and even if you can pump the fire button until your finger falls off you've still got to have a delicate touch to negotiate the labyrinthine circuits.



If you have a high-end 486 PC, Bethesda is offering an in-cockpit Starwing; a fast-paced up, down, left, right and shoot type affair. If you thought Rebel Assault was a tad limited in terms of gameplay, Delta V promises to redress the balance. How good is it? You'll just have to wait until next month to find out.

Star Trek: The Next Generation

Title	**Star Trek: The Next Generation**
Developer	**Spectrum Holobyte**
Publisher	**MicroProse**
Contact	**(0454) 326532**
Release date	**Summer 1994**
Genre	**adventure**
Price	**£TBA**

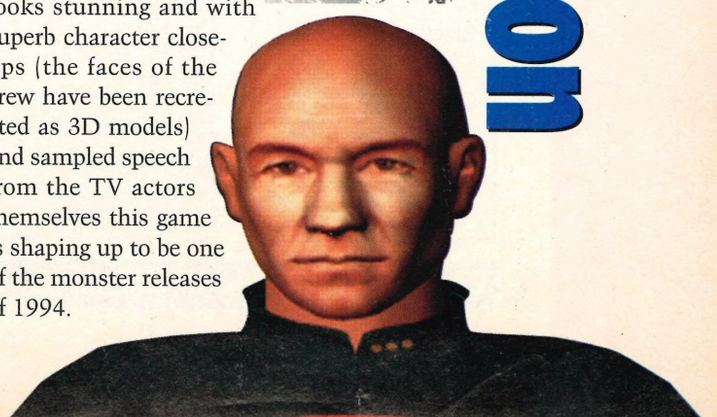
When Paramount announced that the Star Trek TNG licence was available, Spectrum Holobyte snapped it up quicker than you can recite the famous opening monologue.

Star Trek: The Next Generation is a CD-ROM only game, an ambitious project that has seen the bulk of the design time swallowed up by the development of the complex game engine. With the huge amount of space that CD affords, TNG combines several modes of gameplay including the normal graphic adventure format (*à la* Monkey Island), a top-down view and a nifty 'virtual bridge' which allows you to pan around and talk to all the crew. In fact in TNG you don't just play one character, you can play them all. Try being a starship captain with Picard, be butch and slightly heroic with Riker or why not wear a plastic hair band over your eyes and pretend that you're a Geordie?

With TNG, Holobyte hopes to recreate the whole Star Trek universe. In TNG you're not limited by the confines of a mini-plot, you can wander around and do (within reason) whatever you want: seek out strange new worlds and new civilisations and boldly go ... well you know the rest.

TNG places you in command of the USS Enterprise and in control of all of the major characters: Jean-Luc Picard, Counsellor Troi, Worf, Data, etc, and as you warp around the galaxy you will find adventures that test your decision-making skills, your management abilities and your puzzle-solving. There's even a bit of arcade action as well.

The game is still tightly under wraps at Spectrum Holobyte so there's no definite word on how it plays. But it certainly looks stunning and with superb character close-ups (the faces of the crew have been recreated as 3D models) and sampled speech from the TV actors themselves this game is shaping up to be one of the monster releases of 1994.



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PROCESSOR UPGRADE FEATURE

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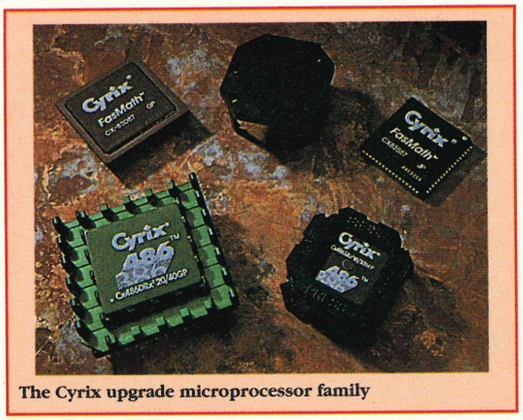

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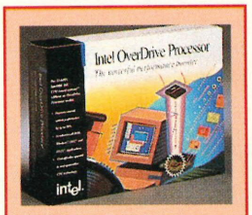

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NEC FEATURE

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NEW! NEC 3Xi

- Triple speed internal drive
- MPC I & II formats
- New loading mechanism
- 256K cache
- 195ms access time

NEC 3Xi £305
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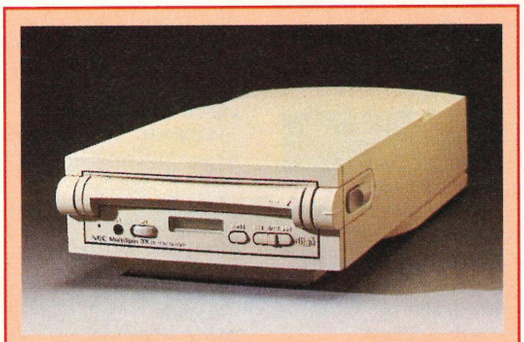
NEC MULTISPIN 3Xe

NEC CD ROM DRIVES

NEW! NEC MULTISPIN 2Xi

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- 256K continuous flow cache memory
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NEC

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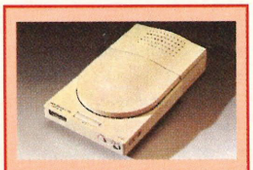
NEC MULTISPIN 3XP

NEC CD ROM DRIVES

NEW! NEC MULTISPIN 4X PRO

- Quad speed external drive
- 600K/sec sustained data transfer
- 180ms average access time
- 256K continuous flow cache memory
- Full function control panel
- Dust door and auto lens cleaning

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NEC 4X PRO WITH ISA KIT £699
NEC 4X PRO WITH ADVANCED ISA KIT £799

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- 450K/sec sustained data transfer
- 250ms average access time
- Full function control panel

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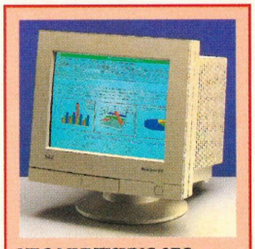
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- Multisession Photo CD compatible
- 340ms access time
- Includes cards, cables & software
- Tray loading
- UK model - not imported

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With Photo CD software £147

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- Double speed internal drive
- 250ms access time
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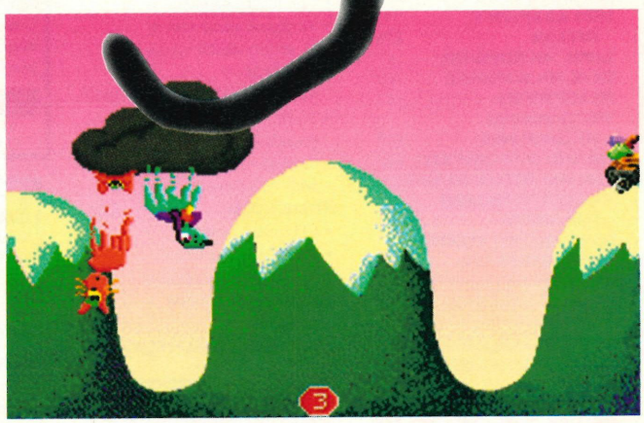
learning as you play

Educational games can be just as sophisticated as mainstream games, while introducing children to valuable skills. Sue James and a cast of young reviewers put a selection of new programs to the test

Slater and Charlie Go Camping (below and right) is about two friends and their adventures. It's also full of humour: the cloud, right, rains cats and dogs.

One of the chief attractions in buying a PC is its versatility. The idea that a single computer can be used for work to be done at home, for household business, for playing the latest and best games, and for the children to gain real educational benefit is a persuasive one. How many parents bought a BBC B micro — or a Spectrum, or a Commodore 64 — 10 years ago in the fond hope that minds would be broadened, school grades improved and the children fully equipped for the electronic age? Only to find, of course, that the machine was then used exclusively for Jet Set Willy, or Elite.





Educational software has a horrible reputation. Not even the most hopeful of parents could imagine that playing Maths Invaders would nurture a future Senior Wrangler. Fun With Spelling usually turned out to be anything but. Why expect any child to prefer blocky, four colour, slow moving screens with virtually no sound effects to a fast, exciting, well presented game?

If this reputation has been largely deserved in the past, it isn't now. There are some exceptional programs on the market now, which provide absorbing entertainment while teaching preschool and primary school skills. Inevitably, as with so many leading edge PC developments, many of them come from the United States.

American PC-owning parents simply wouldn't recognise the picture painted in the first two paragraphs. The PC has been a family computer in the US for 10 years — and if the PC has been bought partly for Junior's education, then Junior is darn well going to learn something.

What worries parents in the UK, of course, is that the American programs will include 'color' and 'offense' and baseball terminology in place of references to cricket. But even this is changing.

"We have a policy of adapting all our educational programs so that English spellings are used, British voices are used, yellow buses become red buses and back-yards are gardens. And we do the same for the French and German versions," explains James Morris at Mindscape.

Furthermore, the attitude that fancy graphics and presntation aren't necessary in this market is changing. Educational



Our testers' favourite games in Ozzie's Creativity Centre involved Wanted posters — this game is to match both before the dynamite ignites.

software can be just as technically demanding as games, using SVGA graphics — even full motion video — music and speech to the full. After all, if you're going to hold the attention of a six year old for any length of time, you're going to need every trick in the book. But these programs aren't just for six year olds. These days, there is software on the market for pre-school children — again, the American desire to give children a head start when they do start school has an influence here.

So, these programs are aimed at children who are too young to make consumer decisions — it is the parents who will be spending their money and will be looking for rather different qualities in the software from usual. Parents will want programs that they can trust as well as those that their children will find absorbing.

All too often parents who have tried to help their pre-school children take the first steps in reading, writing and arithmetic find themselves being criticised by teachers for using the wrong approach. However children of three and four are eager to learn and very receptive so it is well worth letting them explore words and numbers and helping them become familiar with concepts related to them. It is also important that children find these early experiences fun.

There have been educational programs for the very young before but they were restricted mostly to electronic finger painting programs and the like. These days, you'll find programs which will talk to the children. The point is that with speech you can write programs for children who can't yet read. If you have a sound card then the speech quality is excellent. If you don't have a sound card then some programs will still try to do something with the tiny speaker inside every PC. It may be that the computer of the future will communicate with us mostly by talking but at the moment it's the under fives who are leading the way!

Slater and Charlie Go Camping
Sierra On-Line
(0734) 303322
£34.99

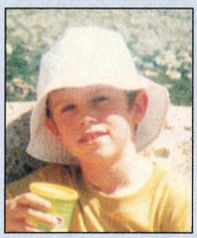
Slater and Charlie go Camping is a talking book which is full of visual humour. Each screen is a colourful picture, depicting a main event that is explained in a sentence printed at the bottom of each 'page' that is also read out by the computer. A sound card is vital to getting the most from this program as without one you do not hear the sentences spoken. You can make the computer repeat entire sentences by clicking on the 'blob' that precedes it and can also have single words read out by clicking on them. The program has two modes: Read To Me, in which the entire 12-page story is read out page by page with the words highlighted as they are spoken, and Let Me Play, in which you discover that each picture also has a lot of 'hidden' events. If you click on an object in any picture it will come to life — sometimes with a little cameo story of its own, sometimes as a spectacular event.

The program is aimed at children aged three to eight and there is plenty to appeal to kids at both ends of this range. The youngest member of our panel, Nicky, almost four, would happily have had the story repeated over and over for hours on end but quite a lot of the humour was lost on her — for example, the idea that the when you clicked the cloud it rained cats and dogs mystified rather than amused her. She even found some of the animated events a little scary — there were some objects she would only click if her big brother was with her.

The main reviewers



Nicky, aged three, enjoyed Slater and Charlie to the extent of finding some of the elements scary. She was also delighted by Shape World in Mario's Playschool.



Michael, aged seven, enjoyed making up the Wanted posters in Ozzie's Creativity Centre and particularly liked any program which included 'hidden' animations — finding the objects which then came to life on-screen.



Nine year old Sam also liked the Wanted posters, and spent much time locating Mario in Mario is Missing, to the extent that he now recognises the places shown in the program when they appear on TV.



Pinnochio is one of the stories on offer in Adventures in Fairyland.



The Wicked Witch turns the world on its head in Upside Town.



Wordland is for word recognition so clicking on any object gives it a label.

Michael (seven and a half) liked to get every last ounce out of every page. He soon discovered that there was a great deal more going on than is at first apparent and would click objects expectantly. In general he was impressed with the results — the more dramatic the better — and the idea that perhaps he had missed something was enough to keep him going back for another try. He also appreciated the facility to read a single word as he could read a lot of the text for himself but wanted the reassurance that he was right as well as help with some unfamiliar words.

The story strikes a good balance — it is simple enough to be understood by the youngest of its intended audience but has enough depth to interest the oldest among them.

The entire program is accompanied by background music and this seemed to enhance its attraction for the children — although not for parents sharing the same room! The quality of the voice is acceptable. It sounds like a teenage girl and the fact that this program comes from America is evident by a slight nasal drawl as well as the reference to "their own back yard". The sound effects bring the animations to life and often make them funnier — another reason for using a sound card.

Scops Software (0252) 722223

Scops has the distinction of being British edutainment specialists and sets great store by the fact that all the written material and spoken accents of its programs is "Queen's English" (by which I assume the company means 'received pronunciation', the established BBC accent), although multilingual editions are also in preparation.

Adventures in Fairyland £39.99 CD-ROM (£34.95 disk)

This is an interactive storybook for four to eight year olds, though we found it appealed more to the younger end of this range. It is available in a dual media pack comprising CD and a seven disk set as well as in a disk-only set. The program brings well loved children's stories to life, with Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Hansel and Gretel, Puss in Boots and Pinocchio each told in a traditional way in a series of about a dozen pictures, plus a slightly larger number of text frames.

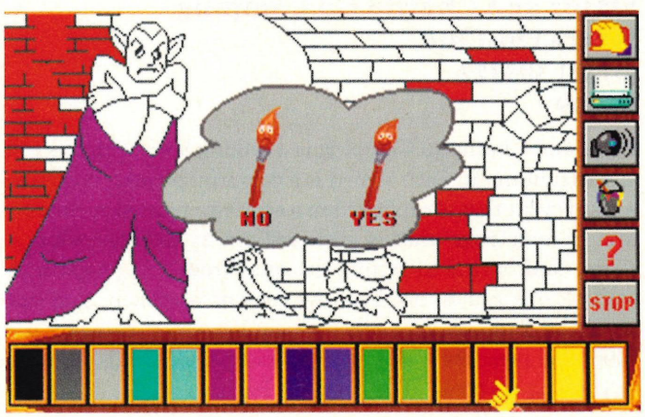
There are a number of different paths through the stories according to which yellow arrows are clicked on. Parts of the text can be repeated by clicking on the mouth icon and you can also hear and see labels for objects in any picture by clicking on them. Clicking on the movie projector icon causes an animation embedded in the scene to run. Our testers were disappointed with the animations, feeling cheated that the same one was repeated even when the story line had moved on.

There are also opportunities for interactive play by colouring a line drawing of the current scene and having the scene scrambled into a puzzle for the user to restore to the original arrangement. This activity has four levels of difficulty, going from an easy four by two grid to one that is 12x8, producing 96 pieces — which is quite a challenge.

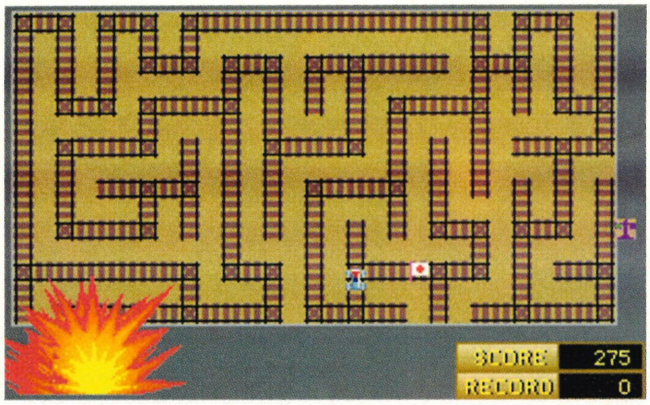
The program has a number of nice touches. There is an opening scene-setting screen with an explanation of how the fairy chooses children who love fairy tales to take into this magical world. This is followed by a series of small animations including a bolt of lightening with appropriate sound effects and various objects in a bedroom scene coming to life. The best feature is that all essential instructions are spoken so you do not to be able to read to use the software. The program has continuous background tinkling music.

Upside Town £34.95

Upside Town is an adventure game aimed at a similar age group to Fairyland: five to seven year olds. Its main character is a small boy called Pete and there are two forces — a wicked witch who delights in turning everything upside down and a kind magician who is the only power capable of setting things to rights. The task for Pete is to escape from his bedroom where he has been imprisoned by the witch and then rescue the magician by completing a series of puzzles involving jumbled pictures and memory games involving Peter himself appeals through the screen to the player for help — which our reviewers found greatly encouraging — and he then gives instructions about what to do. The voice is that of a young child, and, as with the other Scops programs, he speaks perfect BBC English.



When you leave the colouring book activity in Adventures in Fairyland the paintbrushes nod and shake their heads.



The maze puzzles in Mind Games were popular — but the prospect of the explosion at the end meant our testers sometimes preferred not to succeed!

Rainbow Rascal
£24.95

This is a painting program — with lots of extras. Our testers loved the different backgrounds, shapes and patterns in the program, which can all be combined easily to give very individual results. The distinctive sound effects, appropriate to the different tools, also found favour. For example, there is a pouring sounds for filling an area with colour and the sound of breaking glass for deleting certain objects.

Ozzie's Creativity Centre
£29.95

Scops also produces a series of smaller programs, the focal point of which is a character called Ozzie. Green, with a long pointy tail and floppy, pointy ears, Ozzie frankly lacks charisma. When asked to describe him further an adult observer called him a gremlin, while Sam, having played all three games in the series, thought he came from Australia — because of his name and also because of his wish to go on a world tour!

Ozzie's Creativity Centre is aimed at five to ten year olds for the development of a variety of mental skills — thinking ability, attention to detail and memory being among those listed. Colour recognition is also on the list but the colours in its palette are an odd selection. There is maroon and purple and lilac but no 'red' although there is a 'pink' which on the screens of our test machines was a strong colour that all of us, adults and children alike, would have described as red.

Activities in the Creativity Centre include both straightforward colouring and a colour recall game where a picture has to be coloured in exactly the same way as an original. The activity that appealed most to both Michael and Sam was assembling Wanted posters of wild west characters. This can be treated as a timed test or as a memory test where the aim is to recreate a poster you can see only part of or not at all.

Mind Games
£24.95

Mind Games, again aimed at five to ten year olds, was also popular with both boys as it included maze games that they particularly enjoyed and more picture puzzles which became very tricky at the higher levels of difficulty. One theme in this program is world travel and one of the games involves matching buildings, national costume and flags from various nationalities and requires recognition and memory.

Reading Adventures in Wordland
£24.95

Wordland is aimed at a slightly younger age group — four to seven year olds — and concentrates on early reading skills. . The child can explore new scenes by going into the house and through doors and can click on objects and see and hear what they are. There are four games that involve attaching labels to objects and matching words to pictures. The words are suitable for the age range and were well articulated by the voice even on the test machine that lacked a sound card. Indeed, as well as featuring well enunciated, clear English, the Scops programs are remarkable for the quality of speech reproduction through the PC's internal speaker.

The Scops range provides an approach to edutainment that combines recognisable storylines and traditional methods such as picture puzzles with computer technology.

Super Mario learning?

Our testers looked at four programs from Mindscape (call (0444) 246333 for details) that featured the Nintendo character Mario. These pay a great deal of attention to the educational content of the activities contained within the 'games', setting them in the context of attainment targets prescribed in the National Curriculum. Although at first I thought this a bit pretentious, once I had experienced the programs, I was impressed with the approach adopted and by the way in which children responded to them.

Mario's Playschool
£39.99

The first of these, Mario's Playschool, is aimed at pre-school children and is characterised by lots of praise and patience — just what is needed at this formative time. A sound card is highly recommended and the voice it produces is female, fair-



In Shape World in Mario Teaches Sums select the correct shapes to build a train.



Mario is Missing takes you around many different cities returning artefacts to their proper locations.



Build a picture by selecting the correct object in Opposite World in Mario's Playschool.

ly young and English as opposed to American. There are also 'localised' versions in French and German.

The program does not have any written instructions, relying instead on pictures. The main menu shows a number of islands and the pictures on them make it obvious what activity will be found on each 'world'. The child can also choose between two characters — Mario and Princess Toadstool — by clicking on one of them. Other instructions within each world are spoken as long as a sound card is available.

Most of the activities have two modes: discovery mode, in which Luigi, the 'resident' character is asleep, and learning mode, which starts as soon as you wake Luigi up and in which you perform tasks. For example, in discovery mode in Shape World the child just hears the names of the shapes and in learning mode he or she is told which to select and they are used to make up a picture. Nicky (aged almost four) was particularly keen on this world and found the praise and the applause that accompanied each completed picture excellent motivation.

The adults were also impressed by the outcome when the wrong object was chosen — which we had to do deliberately at the first level because the task was well within the capabilities of our child tester. There was no hint of no blame, just patient repetition of the object that had been found and in the case of a repeated mistake the program takes over and chooses the correct item. Our only criticism is that some of the events taking place on the screen are rather protracted — Mario or the Princess go through lengthy rituals for each choice, whether right or wrong, and this can lead to loss of interest rather sooner than might be the case if the program was speedier.

There are another other three discovery/learning worlds which are very similar in operation, including the high of helpful encouragement. In Colour World the child has to select colours; in Listening World he or she has to identify the animal that makes the sound produced and in Opposite World the task is to find objects that have qualities that are the opposite of "dry", "most" and so on. This is the hardest task but gives a parent an opportunity to introduce an important concept.

There are also three Fun Worlds where there is no task, just an opportunity to join in. In Body Fun World the child is invited to clap hands and so on, with activities that involve parts of the body indicated by Mario on the screen. In Sing Song Fun World there are five well known children's songs to sing along with — with animated accompaniment to encourage children to respond to the words and rhythms. Counting Fun World has two scenes with objects to count with numbers displayed so that children become well acquainted with spoken and written numbers.

Mario Teaches Sums
£39.99

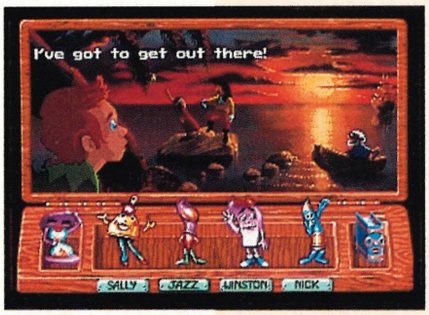
Mario Teaches Sums is the next step up the pre-school/primary school ladder. The title of this program is a little misleading as the topics it covers would better be described as pre-sums. The format is very similar to that of Mario's Playschool with the main menu showing a sea of islands — each worlds that Mario or Princess Toadstool can visit. There are three Fun Worlds — a Counting Fun World similar to that in the previous program, a Sing Song Fun World with five further animated songs and Pattern Fun World which explores rhymes as well as patterns both visual and numeric.

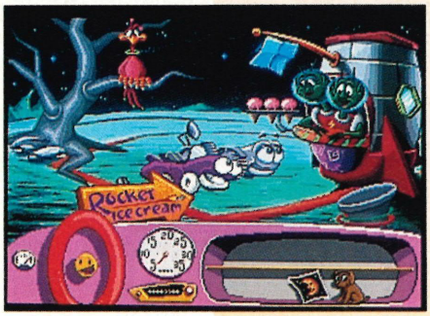
There is again a common format to the five Discovery/Learning Worlds — Shape (identify different shapes and sizes of shapes), Sorting (select by size, colour and shape), Difference (find the odd one out), Number (recognise the numerals one to 10) and How Many World (use numbers to quantify amounts). In each world, Luigi has a conveyor belt and as the child selects the correct object it is moved across it. Again, our reviewers' only complaint was that sometimes the action seemed rather too drawn out.

Luckily, Nicky (and the two older boys who both enjoyed Difference World and Sorting World despite their advanced years and more sophisticated outlook) found the background music intrinsically satisfying and it sustained their interestin the game. The music, however, tended to have the opposite effect on adults, especially those not directly involved in the activity.

The Mario background is only incidental to the set of pre-school programs — although perhaps the plumbing connection explains why you point to a large drainpipe both to return to the main menu and to change levels! There two programs aimed at older children do however have storylines that involve not only Mario and Luigi but also the villain Bowser and the Koopas — evil turtles. Some prior knowledge of these characters does help in that it prevents questions (usually on the part of adults who come to spectate) that have little to do with the content of the programs.

As with the pre-school software, the programs claim that they have been designed to help children achieve key targets with-





Coming soon

Electronic Arts' wide range of educational games will be released under the label EA Kids in the next couple of months in the UK.

These are aimed at a variety of age groups, from EA Kids Art Centre (a paint program) and Cuckoo Zoo, for children as young as three, to Peter Pan (pictured left), which is part adventure, and part colouring program and for ages six to 10, to the Eagle Eye Mysteries, detective stories for ages eight and upwards. Selected programs will be 'localised' into Anglo, rather than American English.

Electronic Arts also publishes the Humongous Entertainment games featuring the adventures of Fatty Bear and Putt Putt, enjoyed by most ages (including the over-21s here at PC Review).

in the National Curriculum but while I would agree that the programs are worthwhile and do develop problem solving and information gathering skills many programs sold as computer games are also valuable in this respect.

Mario is Missing
£39.99

Mario is Missing is intended for children aged seven and over. At the younger end of the age range some help will probably be needed with reading the screens of facts and even when they are older, most children will enjoy working together on the problems posed. In order to rescue Mario — who has been kidnapped by Bowser and taken to the South Pole — Luigi has to visit five cities and in each of them rescue treasures and return them to the places they were stolen from.

The locations involved are all sites of great interest — the Brooklyn Bridge in San Francisco, the Coliseum in Rome, Tian a Men square in Beijing and so on — and in order to complete his mission Luigi has to answer questions about each of them. Luigi's other task is to discover where he is — in which continent, country and city — and during his quest he has to move around the city using a map.

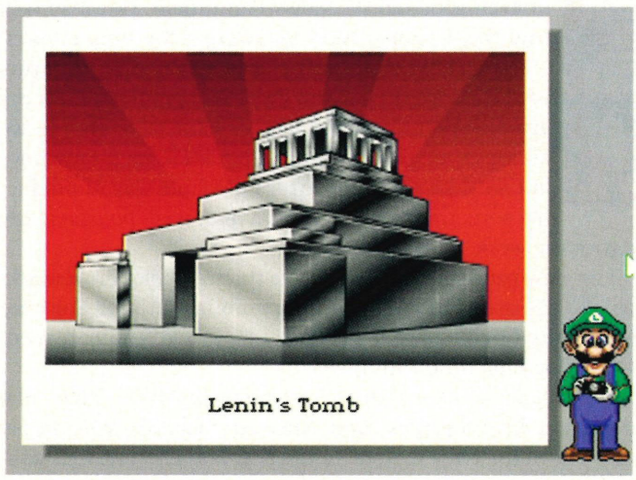
Sam found the combination of elements from an adventure game with unusual rewards such as being able to take snapshots of the sites where he had returned objects irresistible. The edutainment angle certainly worked for him — encouraging him to read screen of information that he would have found too heavy going had he encountered it in a real pamphlet and it encouraged his interest in the cities involved — which he now recognises when seen on the TV or are mentioned on the news.

Mario's Time Machine
£39.99

Mario's Time Machine is to history as Mario is Missing is to geography. The theme of the game is very similar — Mario again has to return artefacts which have been stolen from their rightful owners. With the aid of a time machine, the "Timulator", the villain Bowser has collected items from many characters in history and put them in a museum. Mario's task is to return these items to their owners — travelling to the appropriate times and places in the Timulator. Once he arrives at the relevant location Mario must complete his 'homework' by filling in the gaps in a written account about the person concerned. The answers are to be obtained by talking to the people Mario encounters, but as they are multiple choice answers, some of them can be inserted by a mixture of guesswork and background knowledge.







Above: before you can return Michelangelo's chisel to him you have to fill in all the blanks in an informative account about him.

Left: could this be where Mario is hiding, in Mario is Missing?

The value in the program is in the conversations which have a social history content as well as introducing names and dates from many different periods.

The program also includes some game-like features — dodging missiles and catching magic mushrooms as 'energy' for the time machine to work. This aspect added to the program's interest but it was the main content that appealed most to our testers, who ranged in age from eight to 13 years old for this game.

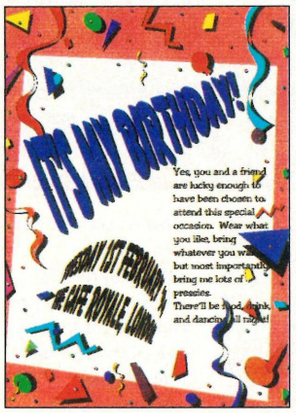
Conclusion

At first look, none of these programs seem to promise hours of entertainment. To an adult, they look limited and unrewarding — how wrong can you be! What is impressive is that the children who tried these programs showed no signs of becoming tired or dissatisfied with the software. They were always eager for another opportunity to use the computer and the older children chose this activity in preference to favourite TV programmes and even favourite games!

This is all the more remarkable because they were actually learning something and not just playing. All the children certainly improved their reading skills. In short, the programs did combine entertainment and education and were not the five minute wonder that you might expect.

DIY graphics

A picture can be worth a thousand words. Alan Clark shows you how to play your cards right with two easy to use graphics packages



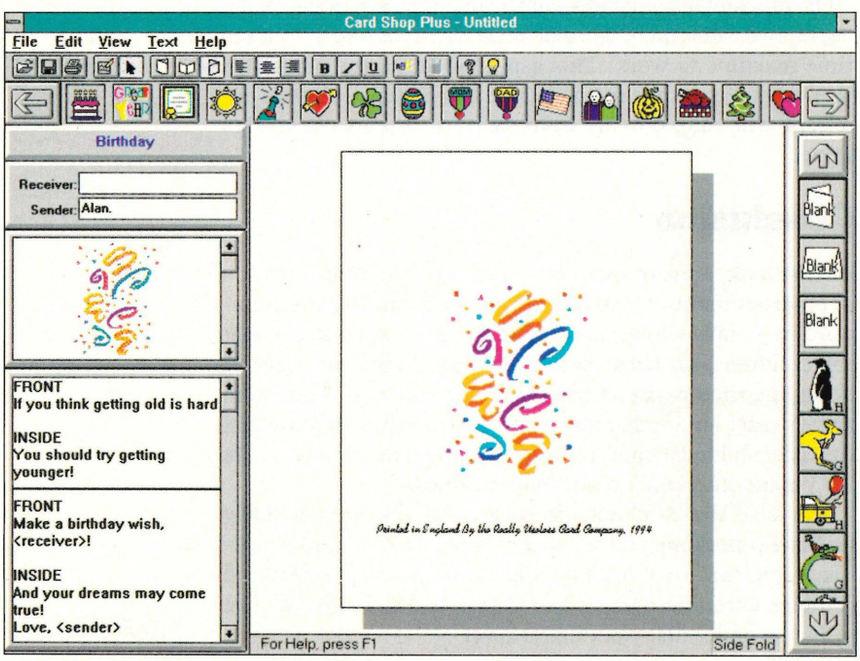
The idea of using your PC to design cards, invitations, fly sheets — anything that needs a mix of text and pictures is an attractive one. However, if you sit down in front of conventional art packages, such as Corel Draw, Micrografx Designer, or even good old Windows Paintbrush, you may well find them simply too heavyweight for simple tasks.

Thankfully, some companies have come to terms with the idea that, a] not every computer user has the artistic talents of Van-Gogh or Constable and, b] we all aspire to greater things than stick-men drawings, but we'd sacrifice fine art for a simple way of producing something that looks fun and, well, *polished,* any day of the week.

Two new packages may just make that possible: the remarkable DOS-based Print Shop Deluxe from Broderbund Software (distributed by Electronic Arts) and its jazzy Windows rival, CardShop Plus from Mindscape.

A complete inability to draw is no problem, either. That's the difference between these and other art packages; you simply don't have to. They include templates, and clip-art (files containing simple drawings of various images). You'll get a choice of a few text styles (fonts) and sizes, a choice of colours and some very basic art tools, but in essence, most of the hard work — the planning, the drawing — is done for you.

Card Shop Plus lets you dictate what type of card you want. The results can be as tasteful or as tasteless as you want them.



Print Shop Deluxe

Broderbund's Print Shop Deluxe is particularly beguiling for its ease of use. First of all, select what it is you want to design: a greetings card, calender, banner, or sign — the templates are all set up for you. Now you add your background, selected from a list of pre-drawn designs or you can just leave the page blank.

Now where do you want the text to go? A list of layouts are available for your perusal or you can create your own. Text boxes, picture frames and headlines can be arranged and sized anywhere on the page. Once the layout's complete all that's left is to fill the whole thing in.

The use of the text box is pretty obvious. A range of fonts are available with the usual bold and italic variations. Frames can be added to blocks of text and a dash of colour will liven it all up. Font sizes and justifications will make it look neater.

Picture frames are used to add little graphics to your design. Even with these you don't have to draw anything; just make your selection from a long and varied list of pre-drawn images and place it on the page.

Headlines can be used to add a little touch of creativeness to your text: the words "Happy Birthday" look quite boring don't they? So why not shape them. A list of effects are available to curve text, squeeze it into shapes, add perspective and generally make the whole thing that bit more exciting. And so on ...

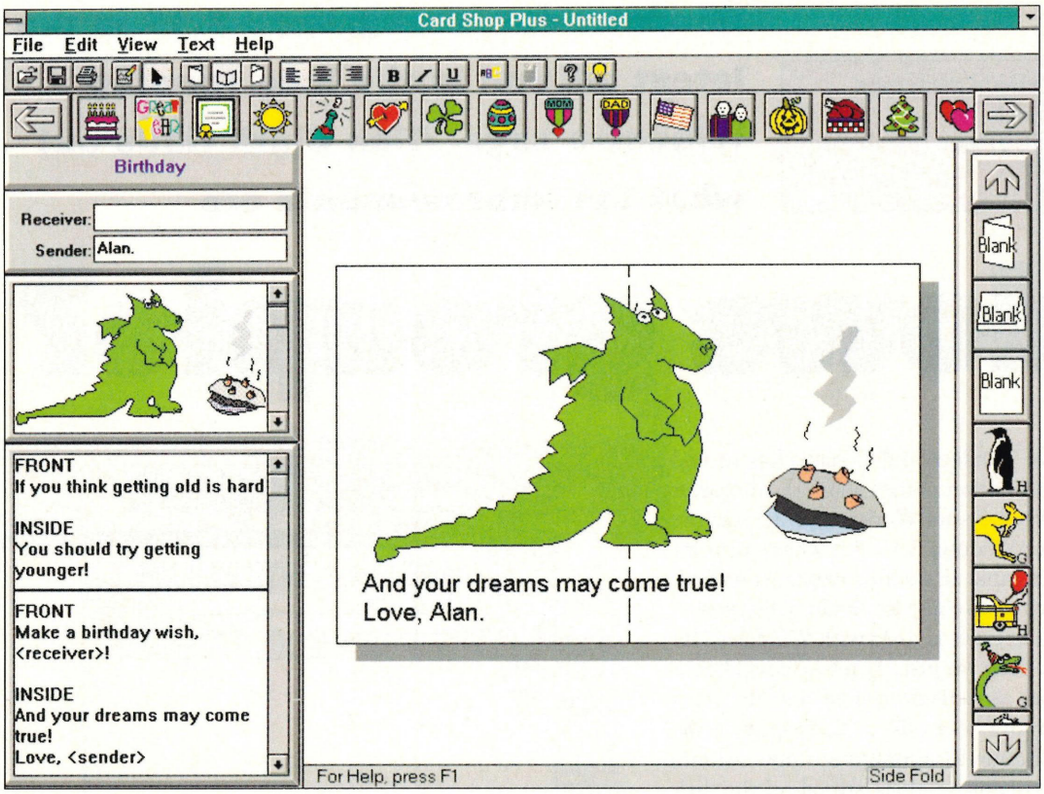
You can preview your design at any time and it's easy to undo anything that doesn't look quite right. The various elements of your design can be moved and resized at any stage and you can also work in layers: switching graphics and text between the background and foreground.

Once you've finished, it's just a case of getting a print-out and in three easy steps you've created a card, invite or whatever. Wasn't that quick and simple?

But for all its creativity and ease of use, there has been a big sacrifice. While you can move and resize graphics, squash them and change the colours, Print Shop Deluxe overlooks the fact that you might, just might, want to edit or even, God forbid, create your own backdrop or graphic; there's not a drawing tool in sight. And while the various backdrops and graphics can be exported to other file for-

Product: Print Shop Deluxe
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Telephone: (0753) 549442
Price: £59.99
Additional Graphics Libraries: £19.99
Verdict: Fun and extremely easy to use. No drawing tools are available to create your own images although add-on disks are available.

rating **8**



Where would you be without a green dragon on your birthday?

mats there aren't any facilities for importing graphics you've already drawn in other programs.

Another tiny gripe is to do with the fonts. Yes the ones provided are varied enough, but you can't beat the TrueType fonts available under Windows for their variety and quality when it comes to printing out large characters. The larger fonts from Print Shop Deluxe tend to look a little blocky and jagged.

But considering exactly what Print Shop Deluxe does and how easy it is, these little niggles can almost be forgotten. Besides, it's fun to use and anything that gets us using our computer in an even remotely productive manner instead of in a vicious circle of frustration has to be a good thing.

Product: Card Shop Plus
Publisher: Mindscape
Telephone: (0444) 246333
Price: £29.99
Verdict: The use of TrueType fonts produces better output of large characters and the ability to import your own graphics adds to the range of art available. A good package that does the job but ultimately isn't as fun as PSD.

rating **7**

Card Shop Plus

The creative process of Card Shop Plus is just as simple. Instead of selecting a card, banner or sign however, Card Shop Plus gives you a range of themes to choose from: whether your design will be a Christmas card, a Valentine card, a certificate, or a number of other things. As this is an American program these are all US-related. Your choice in this part of the program will determine what clip-art is available to you.

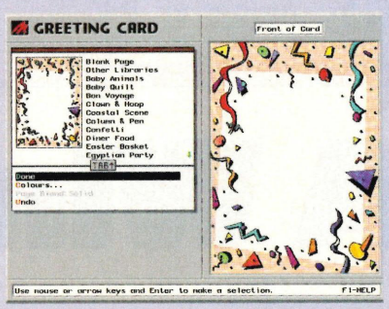
Once you've selected the theme of the card, you're presented with a list of pre-drawn graphics and suitable messages. These are then added, moved and sized as required; pre-written messages can be edited or you can create your own. Once the front is designed, move on to the inside and finally add that personal touch to the back.

Three styles of cards can be created: serious, humorous and general, with each style having its own suitable range of messages and graphics. But if the range of options available still isn't enough to kindle that spark of creativity, a number of pre-designed cards are available in the program within each theme.

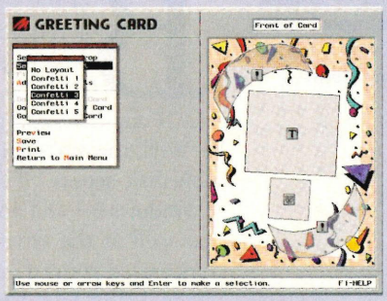
Being Windows-based, Card Shop Plus uses TrueType fonts, giving you better print quality on large fonts. But even with a huge list of available fonts, Card Shop Plus doesn't offer anything near the sort of effects obtainable from Print Shop Deluxe. On the other hand, where you were limited to the pre-drawn graphics of PSD, Card Shop Plus has the option of importing .WMF and .BMP files. Card Shop Plus doesn't have any drawing tools of its own but it will let you import your own graphics.

While it's a very competent package, with top quality clip-art and fonts, the whole thing just isn't as fun as Print Shop Deluxe. Whether the Windows environment of CSP takes away some of the 'kiddiness' of it, or whether it's because PSD is so blatantly simple I don't know, but I for one prefer the good old DOS-based simplicity and fun of Print Shop Deluxe.

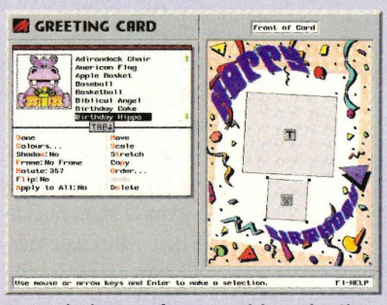
Print Shop Deluxe, step by step



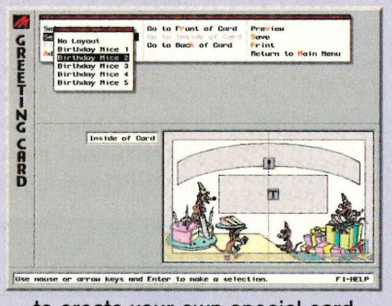
First of all, start by selecting a suitable background ...



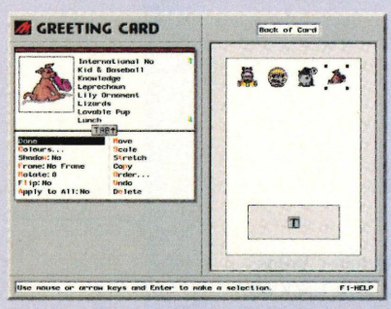
... now add a layout for all your text and graphics ...



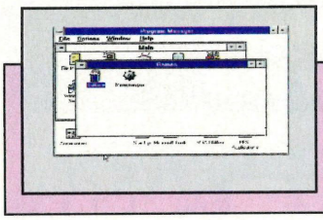
... and choose from a wide selection of clip-art, fonts and text effects ...



... to create your own special card.



Don't forget to add that special touch on the back!



Title	**Windows for Workgroups**
Publisher	**Microsoft**
Contact	**(0734) 270001**
Price	**£99**

Windows for Workgroups 3.11 is the latest edition in the long running Windows saga. Alan Clark finds out what the improvements are

A Windows groupie?

Microsoft at Work PC fax — in-built fax support everyone with compatible modems.

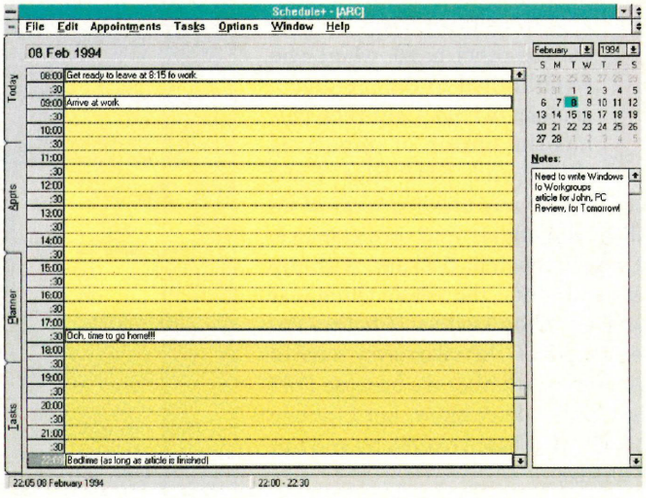
Between now and Windows 4.0/Chicago (or the end of the world, whichever comes sooner), Microsoft is promoting Windows for Workgroups 3.11 as the next upgrade to Windows 3.1. But what's in it for all of us who tremble at such as words as Novell, LAN and Ethernet (isn't that something for catching fish with)?

Well, the most noticeable upgrade is to do with Windows' 32-bit disk access. This has been improved and expanded over Windows 3.1 and now covers general disk activity and file access as well as the virtual memory 'swap file'. To help with the increased performance Windows for Workgroups now uses its own 32-bit File Allocation Table (a chart stored on the disk showing the computer where the parts of each file are), VFAT, having done away with the 16-bit version still used by DOS.

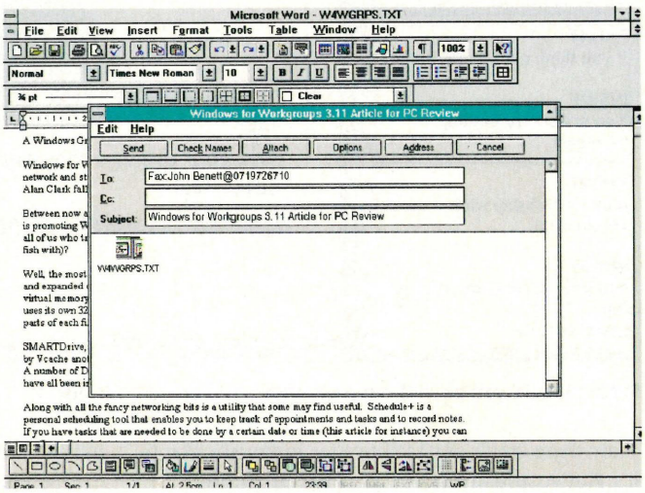
SmartDrive, the DOS disk caching utility, has now been replaced under Windows for Workgroups by Vcache, another 32-bit replacement combining with VFAT to improve disk and file access significantly. A number of DOS commands, including Himem.sys, Emm386.sys and SmartDrive have also been updated and improved.

You'll also notice that the old favourites File Manager and Print Manager now have a few more icons on the tool bars. These are to do with the network side of WFW 3.11 and don't really need to be bothered with (unless you've got your own home network and know what you're doing).

Along with all the fancy networking bits is a utility that some may find useful. Schedule+ is a personal scheduling tool that enables you to keep track of appointments and tasks and to record notes. If you have tasks that are needed to be done by a certain date or time, you can configure Schedule+ to remind you anything upto a month in advance of the completion date. As well as working on a day-to-day basis, the planner lets you



Schedule+ helps you keep track of appointments and things that need to be done.



to note any forthcoming appointments throughout the year. A useful gadget for the user with a busy personal life. Something of interest to those people with fax modems is Microsoft at Work PC Fax, which enables you to send and receive faxes to both fax machines and other users with fax modems. No other drivers or software are required: it's all built into the system.

To get all this up and running from the eight master disks can be a little traumatic. The set-up option gives you the opportunity to install over an existing copy of Windows or to create a separate directory. If you choose the former, it goes ahead and deletes the old Windows files.

Windows for Workgroups then boots up and starts auto-detecting your hardware. If something now goes wrong (as happened to me) you've got to start all over again — not just with Windows for Workgroups, oh no. Now, where did I put those Windows disks the last time I used them, about a year ago?

Once installed properly, WFW then goes on to update your system files; although for certain additional pieces of hardware you may need to make the odd change here and there yourself. But don't worry they're all documented in a readme file.

But is Windows for Workgroups one of those upgrades where if you didn't get it you'd regret it for the rest of your life? If you're going through the process of buying a new computer then it's definately worth making sure it's included in the package, or if you're still running version 3.0 and you're wanting increased perfomance without the wait for Windows 4.

For Windows 3.1 users, however, there aren't really enough new features for the standalone user to warrant this as a 'must buy'. No matter how long it takes for Microsoft to release it, you'd probably be better off waiting for Windows 4/Chicago. This is intended to be a full blown 32-bit operating system that should even out perform the enhancements of Windows for Workgroups 3.11.

EPSON LQ-150 Colour Printer

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EPSON

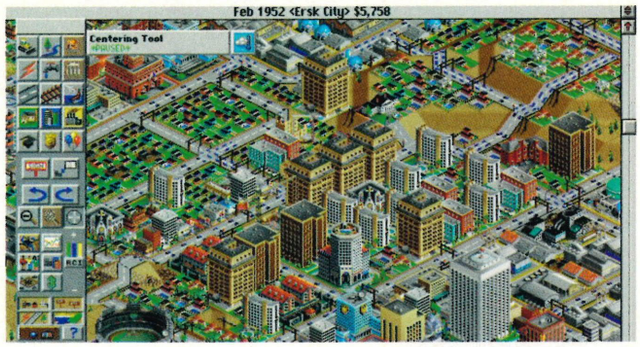
A tale of 6 cities

Are you a tunnel builder or do you prefer erecting tall buildings? Cal Jones grabs her microscope and puts the Sim City builders under analysis

Graphologists claim that they can determine someone's personality by studying their handwriting. Having watched several people playing SimCity 2000, I thought that it would be far more interesting to see whether their personalities were reflected by the cities they built. To test my theory, I took six willing subjects and placed them in a locked room with a crate of beer, a copy of SimCity 2000 and a brief: to build the best city you can in 50 years. The results were, er, interesting, to say the least.

Subject one:
Christina Erskine, editor, PC Review

Whilst Erskville isn't the largest city, it is attractive and prosperous, boasting a large number of luxury homes and shiny office towers. Christina raised land values by building lots of parks and forest areas in order to attract a better class of citizen. This has two possible implications: either Christina is a



caring person who values good living standards, or else she's a closet snob. By building plenty of schools, libraries and colleges, Christina made sure that Erskville's citizens were the best educated — a sign that she likes to plan for the future. The zero unemployment also indicates that she is efficient and dislikes waste. In short, Erskville is small but perfectly formed, just like Christina. *(Are you after a pay rise or something? Ed.)*

Subject two:
John Bennett, deputy editor, PC Review

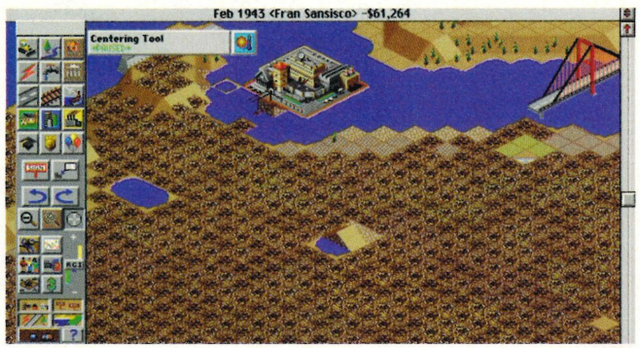
John, whose idea of dressing up is to tuck his shirt in, has never been the most organised of people. His city mirrors this perfectly. A city planner's nightmare, Raising, Arizona is a chaotic mess of randomly placed zones, with a marina in the industrial sector and a sewage plant right next to the houses. By creating a zone shaped like a pair of spectacles, John shows that he doesn't take things seriously. More importantly, John's preference for curvy, winding roads over straight highways could be a sign that he is trying to express the his feminine side, and the tunnel built just for the hell of it is very Freudian. Despite the randomness of his creation, John's city is quite successful. Although small, Raising has the lowest crime rate, pollution



and traffic of all the cities, as well as the second highest land values. Unfortunately, its citizens have the lowest life expectancy, a reflection of John's supremely unhealthy lifestyle.

Subject three:
Martin Klimes, trainee accountant

You might think that a trainee accountant would be good at balancing his books, if nothing else. Wrong. Martin began by taking out a huge loan, and finished the game owing more than $60,000. He might have been able to make up the deficit had it not been for an air disaster which set fire to his city, razing it to the ground. All that remains is a heap of rubble, a prison and the town hall. Consequently, Martin ended up with a pop-



ulation of zero and was ejected from office before he could complete his 50 years. Perhaps Martin ought to consider taking up another career — money management is obviously not his forte.

Subject four:
Dean Evans, staff writer, PC Review

Dean, a sensitive and artistic young man, was determined to create an ecological haven. Rather than spend money on anti-pollution measures, Dean decided that the best way to make his city greener was to build a lot of parks. Parks around the power station, parks in the industrial zone, parks everywhere. The result was an aesthetically pleasing and profitable city with very high land values but catastrophic pollution levels. This would



seem to imply that Dean, whilst well groomed and presentable, has lousy personal hygiene.

Subject five:
Chris Knight, European PR for Maxis

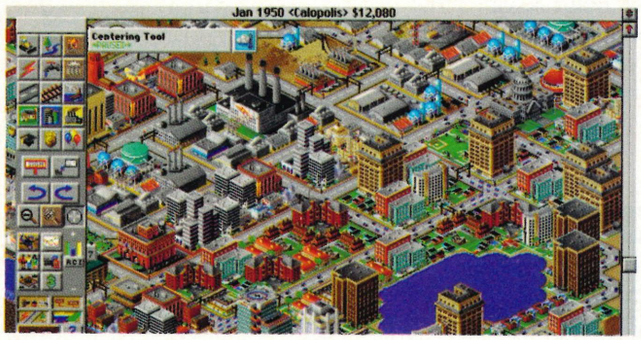
Chris's job is to market this game, so it seems he has an unfair advantage. This became evident when he managed to create a huge and very profitable city. Even so, Maxisland (a name which smacks of corporate loyalty) has no outstanding fea-



tures, and the shocking crime rate, pollution, traffic jams and lack of educational facilities make it an unpleasant place to live. This shows that Chris prefers quantity to quality, and often glosses over the details in order to get quick results.

Subject six:
Cal Jones, staff writer, PC Review

Self analysis has never been a healthy pursuit, but what the hell. Calopolis (the name itself is a sign of rampant egotism) is well ordered, with straight roads and houses placed well away from the industrial zone. This shows good organisational skills and a practical approach. However, Calopolis achieved only



average scores elsewhere, with the exception of education (second only to Erskville) and land values (the worst of the lot). This indicates that I am unlikely to rise to prominence and will achieve only average success in life. No, I don't like that at all. This analysis stuff must be a load of rubbish. Bah.

Win prizes with SimCity 2000!

OK, so that's the inner psyche of the PC Review team bared with SimCity 2000. Now, how about you? Wouldn't you like to see your city published in PC Review, analysed by the eminently unqualified Dr Cal Jones, and, hey, how about winning a SimCity prize while you're about it?

That's exactly what we have on offer. We want to see your cities — and every city we publish in the magazine wins a prize. But there is a catch: every city we publish also gets the Jones psycho treatment, as above. We'll be running this competition over the next three issues, so if you haven't yet bought SimCity 2000, don't worry, there's plenty of time.

How to enter

You have 50 years to build your city, starting from 1900. You may edit the terrain to begin with — all the cities in this feature used the same terrain as their base. In January, 1950, save your city, and send the saved game on disk to

Sim Analysis, PC Review, Priory Court,
30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU

The first batch of cities will be published in next month's issue.

Prizes, prizes

Every city we publish over the next three issues will win a Sim City related prize, such as a Sim City 2000 pen, T-shirt, or mayor's badge. The best cities — as judged by Dr Jones and city statistics such as education quotient, life expectancy, pollution levels, etc — will go forward to receive a copy of the Great Cities of the World SimCity 2000 add-on disk when released.

Particularly duff cities — with rampant crime, billowing pollution, no facilities whatsoever, etc — will also win a mystery booby prize, so send them in if you dare!

What about the cover disk?

As you may have noticed, Maxis has sneakily disabled the save game option on this month's cover disk (thanks, guys), which means that you can't use this month's cover disk as the basis for a city. Hang on to those disks, though. Next month, we plan to bring you a utility which means that we can open the psychiatrist's chair up to cover disk users as well.

Rules

Your entries should arrive on disk, and be in the form of a saved game from January 1950. Any saved games we receive of beautiful cities dated later than 1950 will be viewed with the utmost suspicion.

- Write your name and address and the name of your city clearly on the disk label.
- Please enclose an SAE if you absolutely must have your disk returned.
- Unlike most of PC Review's competitions, you may enter more than once. Send in as many cities as you like.

Stewards' inquiry

John Bennett wishes to lodge an objection against three of the Sim City 2000 contestants. The accused, Dean Evans, Martin Klimes and Cal Jones, were seen to raise additional funds by issuing bonds which they had no intention of paying back. Jones answered allegations by saying, "There's nothing wrong with using your initiative. Besides, I didn't see anything about it in the rules." Evans, however, tried to justify the loan by claiming that he needed the funds for his park building programme. "It's not fair," Bennett complained. The jury returns a verdict of sour grapes.

John Bennett brings the curtain down on the final part of our PC music series



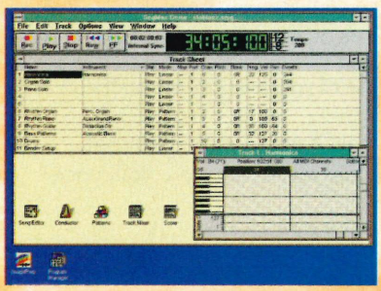
Music in the making

Trying to produce a tuneful sound from deep within the bowels of that ugly lump of metal and plastic on my desk has turned into something of a labour of love. When I started this series, I wanted to know whether anyone with a PC, a reasonable soundcard and an interest in music could create something passable-sounding without breaking the bank.

That is certainly the case. The PC is more than adequate for the job — if anything it's now the preferred platform for music. There's enough reasonably priced software out there to get you started if you use the PC as your sole 'instrument', or if you hook up any MIDI keyboard. The essential hardware isn't pricey, either. A sound card, speakers and MIDI adapter could set you back less than £150 all-in, if you shop around.

Making music with the aid of a computer is surprisingly easy to get into. The basics become familiar quite quickly, and then experimenting with some of the wilder and more esoteric features becomes less daunting and more likely to be succesful. And once you've got a song down on the PC hard disk, be it an audio or MIDI file, whatever, you can go on working on it and improving it beyond all recognition. Given the software that's available you can create just about any kind of noise, and the process of doing just that is fascinating.

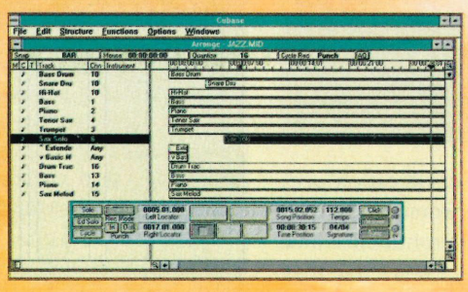
The best in music software ...



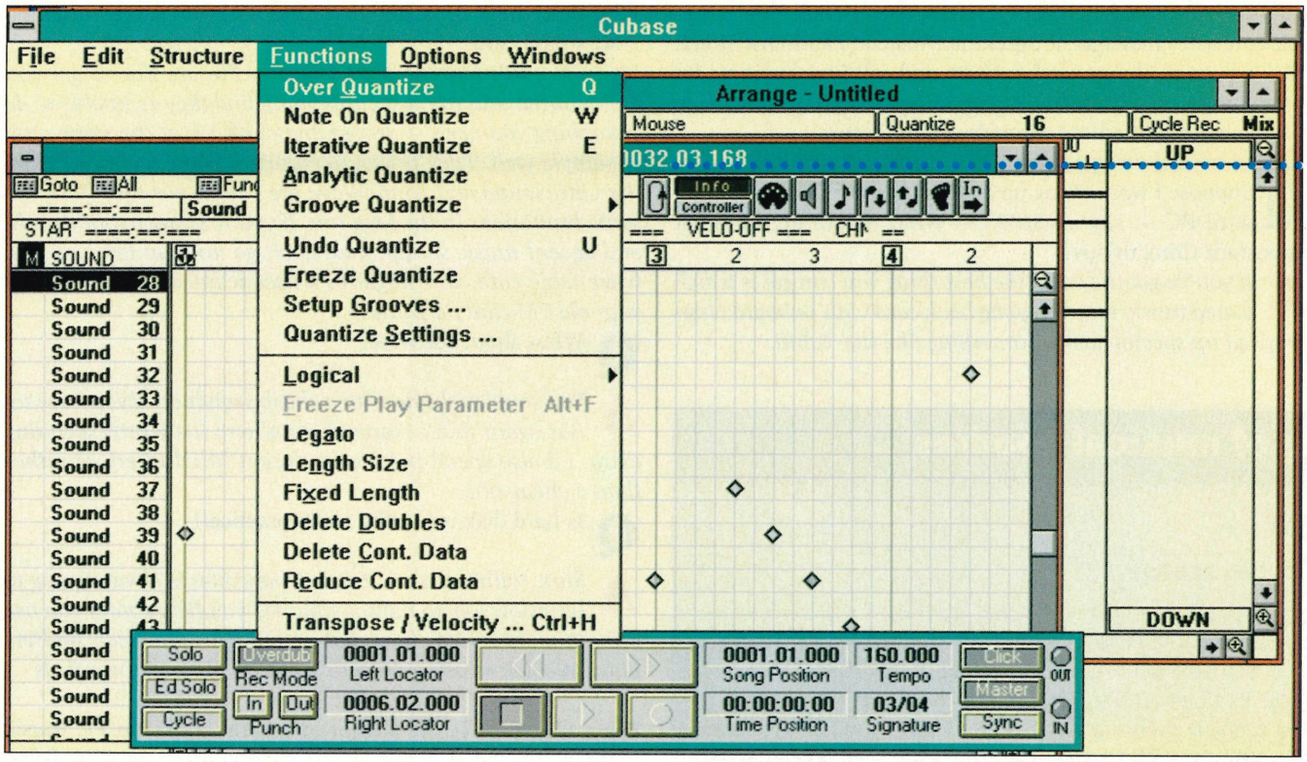
Steinberg Cubase 2.5
Description: MIDI sequencer/notator
£399, Arbiter Pro MIDI (081) 202 1199
Probably the best known music package for composition and sequencing, Cubase is a comprehensive tool for professional and semi-pro music makers. On the minus side, it is a convert from old Atari days, and as such it makes little use of Windows, has no on-line help and is generally rather unfriendly to learn. Has a unique 'graphic arrange page', but lacks the ability to include wave files.

Cakewalk Professional 2.0
Description: MIDI sequencer
£299, Et Cetera (0706) 228039
Good all-round sequencing software, and packed with features. Cakewalk is very popular in the US but not so well known over here. It's still rather complex for novice users, but a good upgrade once you've done some experimenting with low-end music software. Unlike Cubase, Cakewalk can cope with wave files.

MaxPack 2.0
Description: MIDI sequencer
£235, Arbiter Pro MIDI (081) 202 1199
MaxPack is actually five packages in one: SeqMax, LibMax, JukeMax, TapeMax and MixMax. It is probably a better bet for amateur rather than professional users, but it certainly packs in the features, is easy to use and undoubtedly good value for money. SeqMax Presto — which is just the sequencing portion of MaxPack — is also available for £129.



Encore 2.5
Description: MIDI notator
£469, Arbiter (081) 202 1199
Very easy to use considering the level of musical sophistication. Since Encore is a notator, it deals only in music score — with up to 64 staves — so it's one for the purists.



Cubase sums up a lot that's typical of music software, PC and otherwise. It's powerful, feature-laden and capable of producing amazing results. It's also complicated, unfriendly and overly specialised.

For the time being, I'm quite happy doing just that, tweaking, tinkering and learning new tricks as I go. In the long run, I should be able to produce reasonably high quality music recordings, but it will take time and effort. That, for me, has become a large part of the attraction.

Mind you, I'm now even more sceptical about some of the blithe assurances I've been given that anyone can make 'professional' quality music cheaply on an average PC, blindfolded and with one hand tied behind their back.

For a start this depends on your idea of a 'fair price'. Anything to a semi-pro level is going to cost you cash. My guess would be about £2,000 in all, not including the PC itself.

Then there's the more specialist software and hardware you'll need: it's not exactly the friendliest I've come across. Over the last four months I've had more than my fair share of incomprehensible manuals to deal with, system crashes, missing drivers and hardware conflicts — all of which I could well have done without. Some of the stuff that's out there requires a degree in music theory *and* software engineering. From my own experiences, I'd suggest that PC music is something to get into gradually — rather than diving in headfirst and splashing out several thousand quid on a PC home recording studio.

The professional viewpoint

To finish off the series, it seemed sensible to run through the major music software — hence the panel below — and get some opinions from the PC music business. So, in-between playing with an array of musical hardware that looked like it

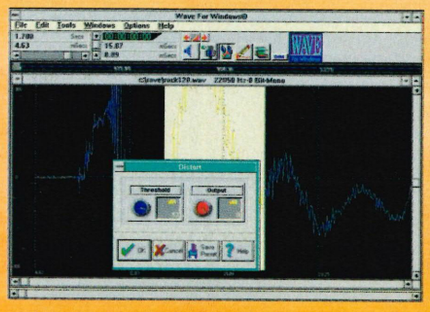
Band in a Box
Description: Simplified composition and arranging
£89, Arbiter Pro MIDI (081) 202 1199
A light-hearted package, Band in a Box enables you to apply a wide variety of set styles to chord sequences and simple compositions, and produce something that is actually quite passable with a mimimum of time and effort.

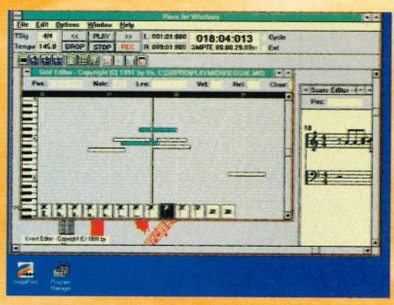
Band in a Box is considerably more sophisticated than something like the Mega Rock, Rap and Roll CD, and is hugely enjoyable.

SAW
Description: Hard disk recording software
£499, Et Cetera (0706) 228039
A unique package, the Software Audio Workshop is designed to make eight-track audio recording (four tracks in stereo) practical on the PC. Sound card support is limited to specialist music cards and the Sound Blaster 16.

Also, SAW can't apply much in the way of special effects, but it is the best package out there for recording live instruments or vocals on to the PC and editing them accurately. Very impressive.

Wave for Windows
Description: Wave editor
£116, Et Cetera (0706) 228039
Good fun, but still a very powerful wave-file editor. Wave has plenty of special effects and features, and unless you're going for professional recording, you shouldn't need much more than this. You do need a fast PC to cut down on processing time, though.





Rave
Description: MIDI sequencer
£69.99, The Software Business (0480) 496497
A good bet for sequencing and composition on a tight(ish) budget. Rave has the advantage that it will allow you to add wave files alongside your MIDI tracks, so you can start to edit 'live' and digitally created music together.

had been misplaced by NASA, I first spoke to Nick Howes, pro software sales manager at Sutekina Music in Denmark Street. Nick's been in the music hardware and software business for several years, spent a year touring with Ultravox and has been dispensing expert advice throughout this series:

Q Suppose I was setting up a music system on a good standard PC — say a 486/33 — what would be the most important thing to buy?

A *If you've got the cash, the best thing you can get is a dedicated music recording/playback card with onboard chips to speed up specific tasks. Something like the Tahiti.*

A mixed bag of musical goodies ...

MIDIEngine 2port/SE
(MIDI interface)
£299, Et Cetera, (0706) 228039

There's rarely room for a sound card in any portable, but surely there's a way round the problem of connecting the two? The answer is the Music Quest MIDIEngine 2port/SE, a neat little black box that connects to the parallel port of the laptop (or any PC for that matter). Plug the other end into your synth or other MIDI instrument, select a music program and away you go. It's also possible to synchronise a MIDI device via the PC and the 2port/SE with an analogue or other compatible recording device like a four-track tape recorder. On the whole it's pretty foolproof and it lets you do some impressive things with MIDI-compatible instruments (which these days is just about any electronic keyboard). Just the job for anyone with a laptop wanting to make a bit of a racket.

Shadow
(Guitar MIDI interface)
£200, Arbiter (081) 202 1199

To avoid the messy business of recording the guitar as an audio file, you can use a MIDI interface and do away with the humble microphone altogether. It simply attaches to the fretboard between the pickups, and translates even my ham-fisted attempts at a solo into a MIDI file — ready to be edited ...

Fatar Studio 49 Master Keyboard
£115, Arbiter (081) 202 1199

Since the PC can do most of the hard work on the MIDI side you don't need to shell out on a keyboard that duplicates these functions — you'd just be paying for something you've already got. The Studio 49 has full-size, velocity sensitive keys and is designed to be used in conjunction with a PC.

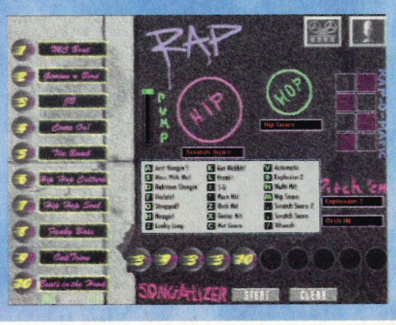
CD Grab
£59, Et Cetera (0706) 228039

A handy gadget if you're into sampling on the PC. CD Grab samples direct from a CD to the hard disk as a digital signal, thereby eliminating the noise and problems you'd normally get. The drawback is it's a DOS command-line program.

Songalized on CD
Mega Rock, Rap and Roll
£49.99 Arbiter (081) 202 1199

Choose from various styles (blues, rock, etc) and you get 10 basic song samples to play with. You can add effects over the top, then hit the 'Songalizer' button (I jest not) to hear your concoction. You can also use the PC keyboard to play over this in a very limited fashion.

It's fun, and the kids will love it, but won't hold your attention for long. Mind you, the Rap section is so funny it's almost worth the price on its own.



Q But where does this leave me with my games-oriented sound card?

A *FM cards like the Sound Blaster Pro are fine to get you started. But in most cases you'll find they're unable to do something you need — record and playback at the same rate, or sample well. They're just too limited. Wave table cards like the UltraSound and SoundWave are better, but they have the same limitations in the long run. If you're going to put together a decent music set-up, then don't go from an FM card to a wave table card, go straight to a decent music card and keep your old FM card for games.*

Q What about software?

A *You could make do with a cheap sequencer if you have to. But again that's somewhere where it's worth spending extra. I'd also spend more on a decent MIDI interface rather than a cheap one.*

Q Is hard disk recording really practical?

A *Sure, within reason. Editing wave files is always going to be a slow job no matter what PC you have, but if you use something like SAW, hard disk recording is practical. Andrew Lloyd Webber is using SAW to work on his latest musicals ...*

Brian Heywood is the author of several books on PC music making, and he also runs a music conference on CIX. Brian has been using PCs for eight years for professional music producion. "What most people don't realise is that the first professional sequencer actually came out on the PC, the old Voyetra Sequencer. But it was Windows 3.1 that made all the difference. At a single stroke it cancelled out all the major criticisms of the PC compared to the Apple Mac."

Q I've been trying to record to disk, and I'm rapidly running out of space. What am I doing wrong?

A *Recording to hard disk presents quite a few problems, not least of which is the 10.5Mb per stereo minute a track takes up.*

Q Is there any easy way round this?

A *You can get round it because it doesn't have to be a linear recording — it's not like a tape deck. Say you have a chorus that repeats itself, you only need to record it once then tell it where to punch in during the track." (Even so, plenty of disk space is vital. Brian's own system has a 1Gb hard disk.)*

Q What's the biggest problem with the PC and professional recording?

A *The IDE interface on a PC isn't fast enough to handle large music files well, and the result is usually a major loss in quality. There's always a trade off between the number of tracks and the sound quality. The real difference between professional systems and the high street stuff is that the pro systems have their own DSP (Digital Signal Processor) which is how you can manage eight and 16-track recording."*

Q Again, is there a way we can get round the problem?

A *Not really. But, if you are using a standard PC system, something to watch out for is disk fragmentation. If the hard disk has to search all over the place for bits of a file, it's going to have a tough time playing it back smoothly. Make it easier on your hard disk by regularly defragging it."*

Since this is the end of the series, we'd like to hear from anyone interested in PC music making. If you have any suggestions, drop a line to us here at PC Review.

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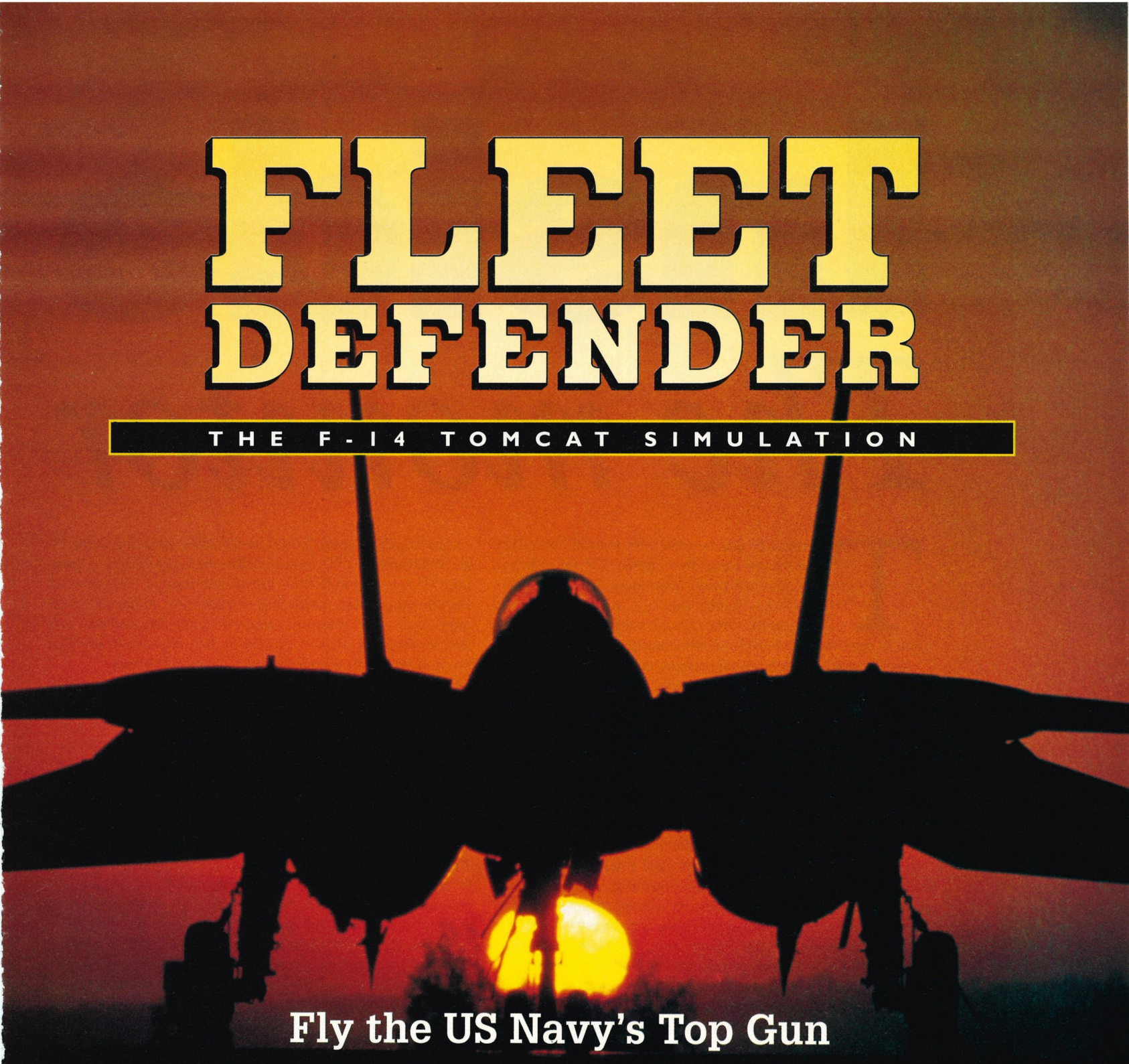

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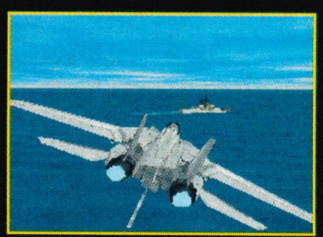



ACTUAL GAME GRAPHICS SHOWN

Inside The monitor

The monitor that you use with your PC isn't that far removed from the everyday TV set — but it has some important differences. The basic principle of any display that uses a cathode ray tube (CRT) is the same. An electron gun in the narrow end of the tube fires a beam of electrons at the screen.

An electron gun may sound exciting, but it is nothing more than a filament that glows red hot and boils electrons off into the vacuum. When the electron beam strikes the face of the tube it hits a chemical coating called a phosphor. This glows and makes the electron beam visible as a spot. To make a picture, the spot has to be scanned across the face of the tube as its intensity is varied. This is achieved by sets of coils which create a magnetic field which steers the electron beam. The magnets are driven by electronics which cause the beam to scan a line and then scan the line vertically to form a frame. The pattern of lines making up a frame is called a 'raster scan'.

The description so far has been in terms of a single electron beam. This is all you need to create a monochrome monitor. For colour you need three electron guns and three types of phosphor — one red, one green and one blue. The reason that these three colours — referred to collectively as RGB — are used is that they can be mixed to create any other colour. Well, to be accurate, there are colours which cannot be displayed on an RGB system but most of the time this doesn't matter.

Join the dots

The screen is coated so that at every point there are three dots — one of each colour phosphor. Each of the electron beams is aimed at a particular colour of phosphor dot to produce a red image, a blue image and a green image. As long as you view the screen from a reasonable distance the dots and images merge to give a single full colour image.

There is a technical problem of making sure that each beam only hits dots of the correct colour. Trying to steer the beams accurately on to target is just too difficult without help. The most common method is to use a shadow mask, a metal sheet with holes arranged so that when each gun fires its beam through a hole it hits a phosphor dot of the correct colour. There is another method of achieving the same result using vertical slots — the Trinitron system invented by Sony. This is supposed to give a higher quality image, and it certainly produces flatter, squarer tubes (FSTs).

So far the description would be the same for a domestic TV set. What makes a PC monitor different is resolution. A standard TV set scans 625 lines in two half frames. This method of scanning is called 'interlacing', because first all the odd numbered lines — ie, lines one, three, five, etc, are scanned and then all the even lines — lines two, four, six, and so on. The two half frames fit together to give a complete image.

Why bother? The reason is that it reduces the rate at which the screen has to be scanned. To produce a flicker free image you have to scan at better than 50 frames per second and scanning 625 lines in 1/50th of a second is too much for a domestic TV. The solution is to display two half frames every 1/50th of a second. This reduces the overall frame rate to only one every 1/25th of a second, but you don't notice the flicker because you see two half frames in this time.

As seen on screen

So much for domestic TV. In the early days of the PC low resolution CGA graphics would work with a TV set but since then all graphics modes have needed a faster scan rate than a TV can work at. An SVGA monitor for example has to produce over 700 lines per frame and at least 70 frames per second. This makes an SVGA monitor more difficult to make and so more expensive than a TV set. When SVGA was first introduced, manufacturers resorted to interlacing to allow lower quality monitors to be used at such high resolution but an interlaced SVGA monitor flickers, and you can see it! The reason is that the sort of image a computer generates is often more regular than a TV picture. For example, to produce a grey tone, a machine might make all the odd lines white and all the even lines black. On an interlaced monitor this produces a disturbing shimmer rather than grey! This is one case where being non-something is better because a non-interlaced monitor is much better than an interlaced one.

Modern SVGA monitors avoid the flicker problem, not only by being non-interlaced, but by using even higher frame rates. Instead of 50Hz (ie, 50 frames per second) they use 70Hz or 75Hz to produce rock steady displays. Of course, even if you buy such a monitor you have to use it with a video card that will work at these higher frame rates.

A PC monitor also cannot get away with working at one line and frame rate. As you change graphics modes it has to adjust its line and frame rates accordingly. In practice, a monitor will

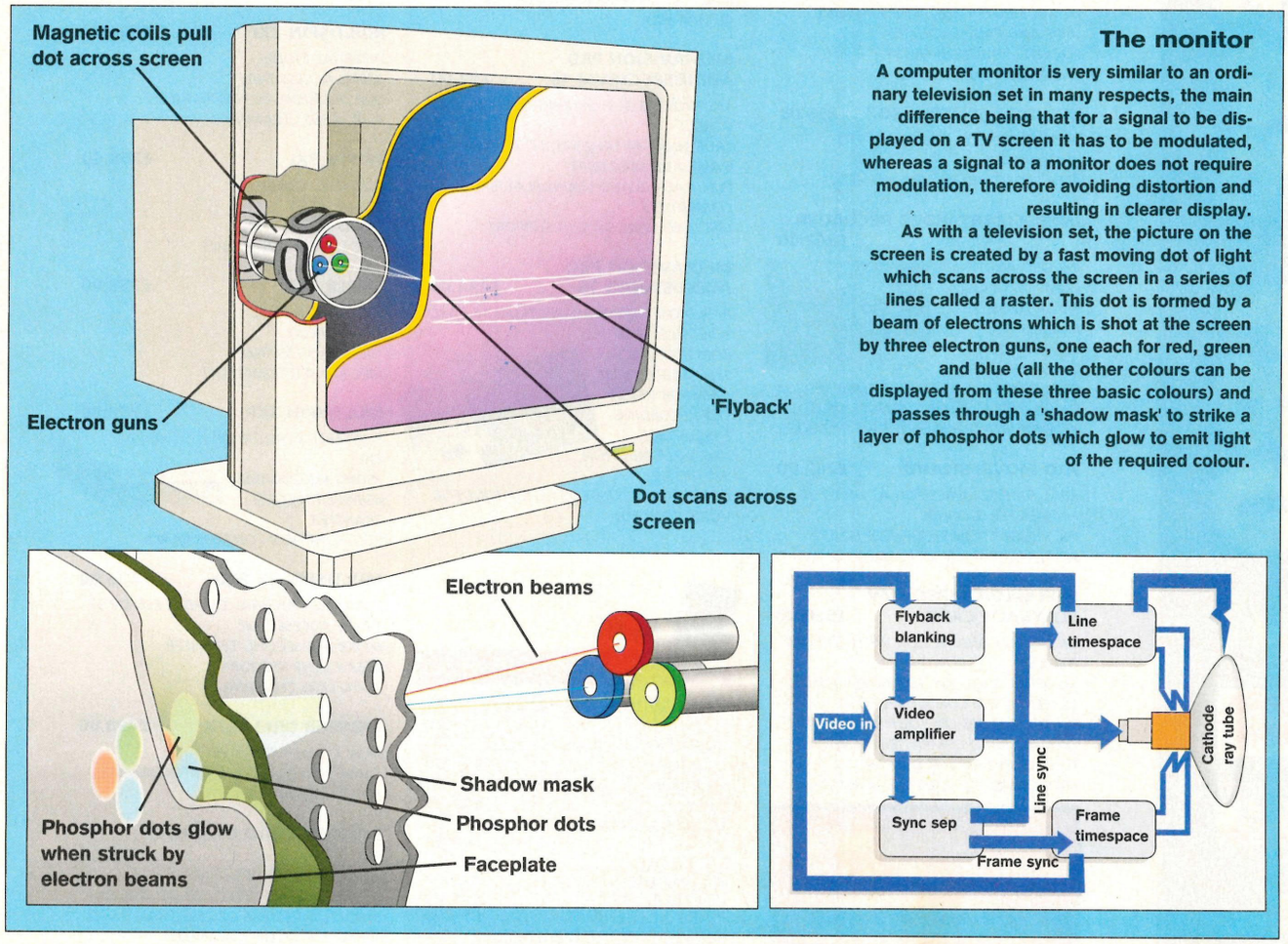
the PC

The innards of your PC monitor look much like those of a television set, using similar technology to display the images on-screen. Find a path through the jargon with Mike James

lock to a range of video rates automatically. However, if the line or frame rate moves outside of this range then the picture will roll or tear. Early SVGA monitors expected the user to change the working frequency using a switch. Then the Multisync monitor was invented. This locks on to line and frame rates over a very wide range and so needs no manual adjustment. Its advantage is that it will work with any combination of line and frame rates and so give a measure of protection against future changes. In practice what users really need is a monitor that can automatically switch between two operating ranges which roughly correspond to VGA and SVGA. This type of monitor is simpler and hence cheaper.

Another factor that affects the quality of a monitor is its 'dot pitch'. This refers to the distance between the phosphor dots. Standard monitors have a dot spacing of .35mm, better monitors get down to .28mm which does produce a sharper picture. Notice that the dot pitch doesn't actual affect the resolution of the graphics mode you are using, just how sharp the pixels appear.

Monitor manufacturers add lots of extra refinements in an effort to get a good crisp picture and to distinguish their particular models from the crowd. Refinements include 'auto-degaussing' to remove stray magnetic fields that defocus the beams, flat screens to reduce reflection, squarer screens so that there is less apparent wasted space at the edges and anti-reflective coatings. Picking a monitor is a highly subjective business and the only way to find out if any of these make any difference to you is to go and take a look.



The monitor

A computer monitor is very similar to an ordinary television set in many respects, the main difference being that for a signal to be displayed on a TV screen it has to be modulated, whereas a signal to a monitor does not require modulation, therefore avoiding distortion and resulting in clearer display.

As with a television set, the picture on the screen is created by a fast moving dot of light which scans across the screen in a series of lines called a raster. This dot is formed by a beam of electrons which is shot at the screen by three electron guns, one each for red, green and blue (all the other colours can be displayed from these three basic colours) and passes through a 'shadow mask' to strike a layer of phosphor dots which glow to emit light of the required colour.

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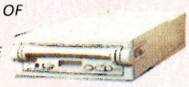

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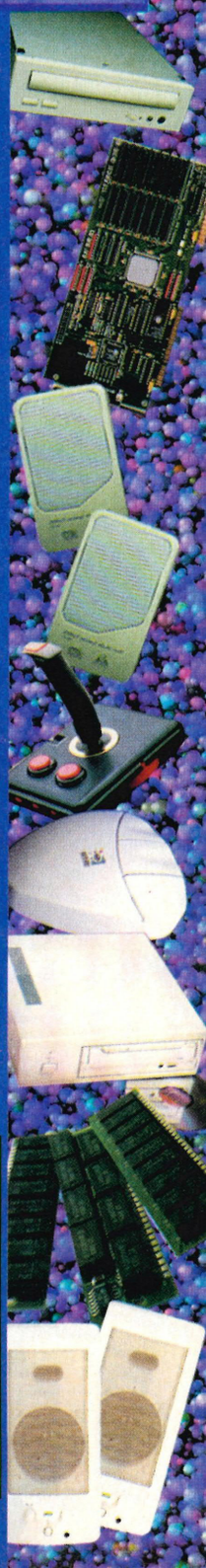

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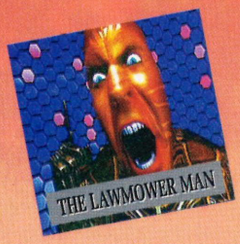



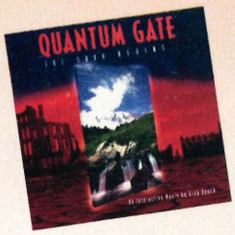

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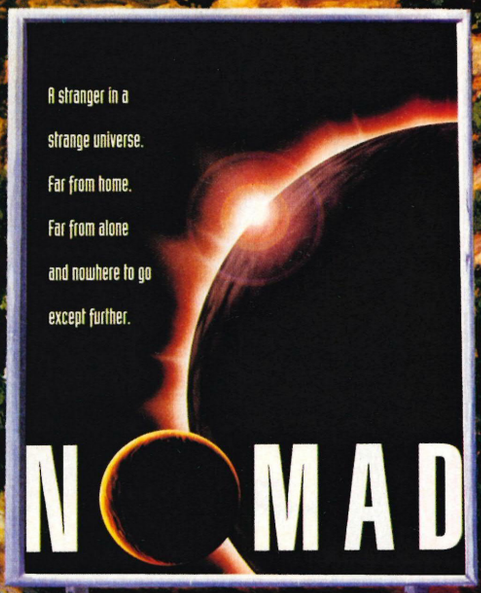

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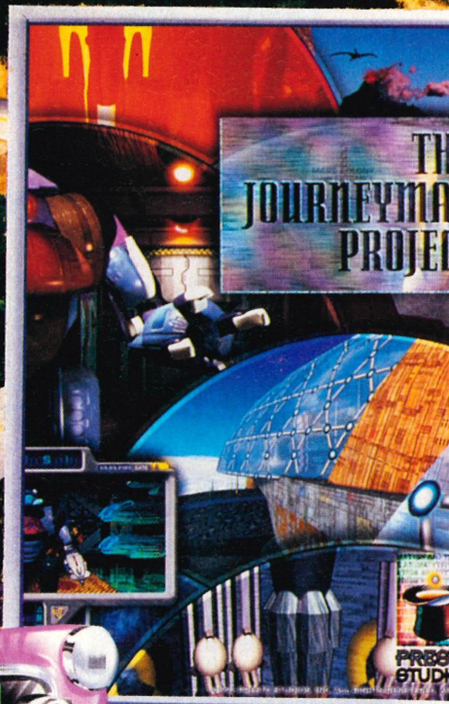

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REVIEWS INDEX

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

of jacking and hacking

BloodNet is non-linear, so you immediately have a large area to explore. You have to be careful, though, because any mistakes you make early on may hinder your progress later in the game. Let's start at the beginning.



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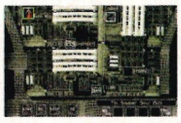

Your deck contains various chips, each of which serves its own special purpose. The soul box allows your mind to interface with cyberspace, and the better the model, the longer you can remain jacked in. Your current chip, the Tin Soldier, is the most basic.



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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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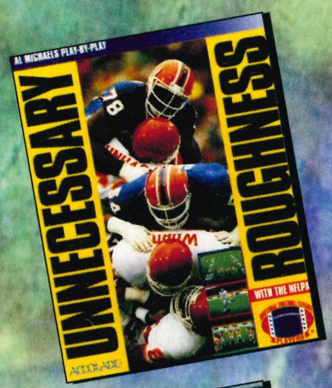
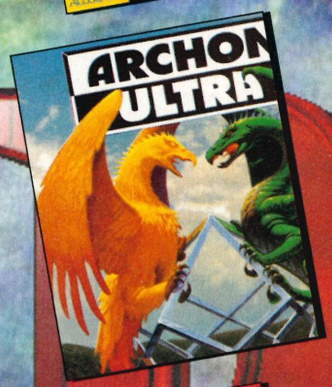


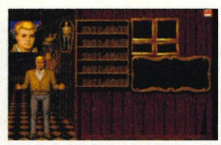




ALTERNATIVELY



Beneath a Steel Sky
Revolution/Virgin, £39.99
Rated 8, Issue 27
OK, so it's an adventure rather than an role-playing game, but if you're into cyberpunk, you should check out this stunning game from Revolution Software. It's a little more humorous than BloodNet and has none of that game's moral implications, but it's equally fast paced and involving. The futuristic graphics were inspired by the artwork of international comic artist, Dave Gibbons, and add an extra touch of class to an already impressive game.



Veil of Darkness
SSI/US Gold, £44.99
Rated 6, Issue 19
This role-playing game takes a more traditional approach to the vampire legend, but funnily enough also features a character called Deirdre. It starts with you crashing your plane in the heart of vampire country, and you, of course, must defeat the 'Dark Lord' in order to escape. It's pretty conventional as RPGs go, to the point of being positively staid. Reasonably entertaining thanks to the subject matter, but perhaps a little dull in the long term.

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

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



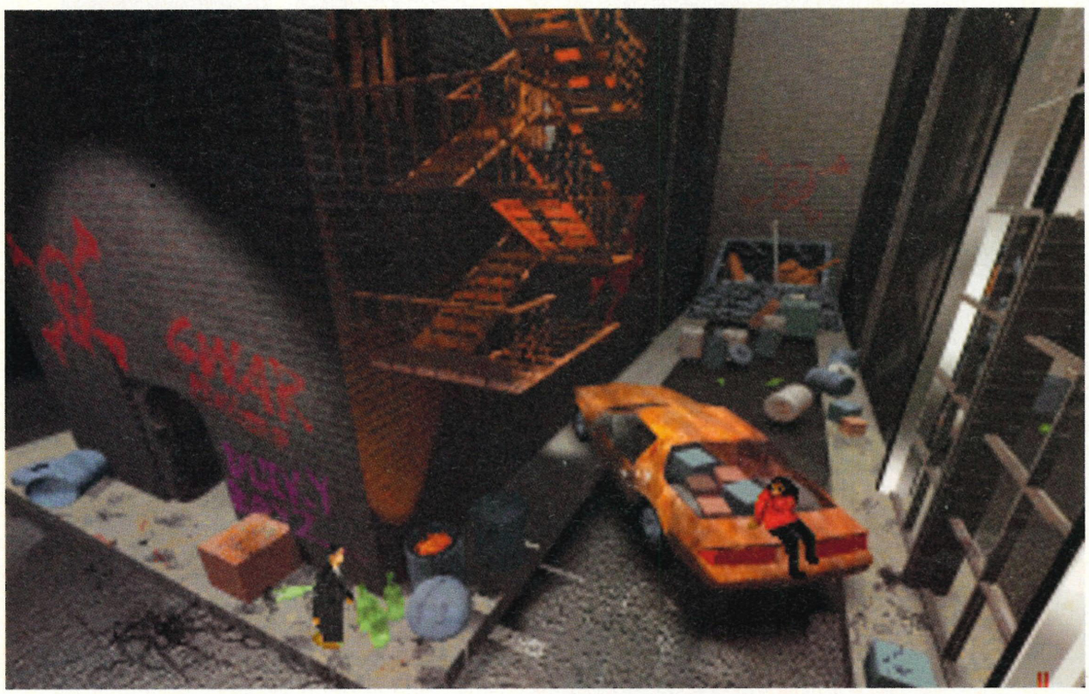


Title	**BloodNet**
Publisher	**MicroProse**
Contact	**(0454) 326532**
Price	**£44.99**

Cyberpunk meets Dracula in this high-tech, low-life thriller from Microprose

BloodNet

BloodNet is non-linear, so you immediately have a large area to explore. You have to be careful, though, because any mistakes you make early on may hinder your progress later in the game. Let's start at the beginning.



Manhattan is full of drug and arms dealers who sell their dubious wares from the boots of their cars. Here, Stark is paying a visit to Auntie Personnel to stock up on ammo.

I think Microprose is on to a winner with this game. BloodNet is described as "a cyberpunk gothic" (a cyberpunk gothic *what?*) which basically means that it combines two of the most popular themes around: cyberpunk and vampires. Set in Manhattan in 2094, the seedy techno-culture of BloodNet seems to have been lifted straight out of a William Gibson novel. It's a grim future in which corporations rule the world at the expense of individuals, crime and poverty is rife and future technology takes the form of sinister cybernetic body implants and super powerful computers.

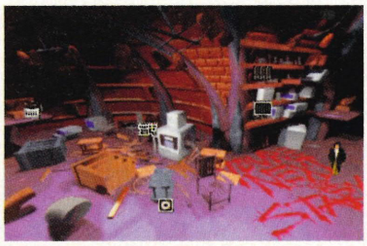
The central character is one Ransom Stark, a street mercenary and former employee of giant corporation TransTechnicals. His work for TransTech involved prolonged exposure to cyberspace (a virtual computer network) leaving him crippled with Hopkins-Brie Ontology Syndrome, a condition in which victims are unable to distinguish between virtual and actual reality. TransTech promptly sacked him and left him to fend for himself on the streets of Manhattan. Burnt out and insane, Stark was discovered by a teenage street gang who took him to the laboratory of scientist and TransTech enemy Deirdre Tackett. Ms Tackett was able to save Stark's sanity by implanting a device in his brain which returned his perceptions to normal, thus making it possible for him to start a new life as a top freelance mercenary.

Stark quickly established a good reputation, and everything was going well until he undertook a job for a beautiful and mysterious woman. On returning for payment, he was bitten and infected by Abraham Van Helsing, a vampire lord (wasn't Van Helsing the *good* guy in Dracula? Oh well...). Luckily, the brain implant prevented him from becoming a full vampire immediately, but as the game begins Stark has only a few days before the implant stops working and the transformation becomes complete.

At the start of the game, Stark discovers that Tackett has been kidnapped and must find her before he loses his humanity altogether. As Stark, you are forced to hunt for clues amongst the dangerous streets of Manhattan, dealing with heavily armed street gangs, vampires and cyberspace hackers. Character interaction forms a large part of the game: BloodNet is like Sierra's Gabriel Knight (reviewed Issue 29) in that most of your progress comes from talking to the right people.

In addition, you must interface with cyberspace to uncover certain information, although being a former Hopkins-

10 MINUTES of jacking and hacking



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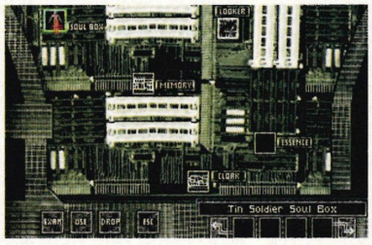

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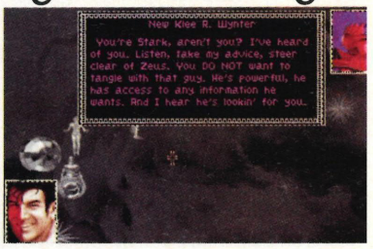
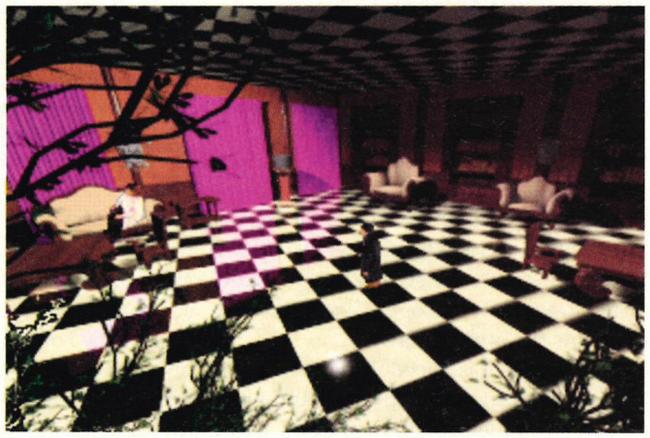


You can interact with other cyberspace users, who also appear in abstract form. Whenever you talk to someone, whether it's in cyberspace or back in the real world, the background fades to mono and dialogue boxes appear next to the character portraits.

Brie sufferer you can't afford to remain there for too long. Cyberspace can be accessed from any location with a computer link, provided that you possess a deck (a portable terminal). It consists of two areas: a virtual plane in which you may travel freely, and "WELLS" of information set up by the cyber-undeground which can only be accessed by entering the correct destination code in one of the "FATS" terminals located in the plane. In BloodNet, cyberspace is the creation of TransTech and access to it is limited to TransTech employees. It's possible to hack into it illegally, but getting caught can result in death or irreparable brain damage. Consequently, there's a huge black market in deck chips and cloaking devices, and part of Stark's aim is to find the means to upgrade his deck.

BloodNet throws up some interesting moral dilemmas. As a vampire, Stark must kill and drink the blood of his victims in order to survive. He's in a no-win situation. Every time he feeds he loses a little more of his humanity, but if he fails to satisfy his bloodlust he will either die or lose control and kill the nearest person, even if it's one of his friends. Since he doesn't have a lot of choice in the matter, Stark must carry on killing until he finds a cure for his condition. The real difficulty is deciding who to kill: none of the characters encountered during the game are wholly bad, and Stark must avoid killing anyone who may be of use to him later on. BloodNet may appear to be morally unsound, but ultimately it's all about survival. The BloodNet world is an unpleasant one, and Stark must be ruthless in order to triumph.

Although it looks and plays like a graphic adventure, BloodNet is, in fact, a role-playing game. No, you won't find any elves or goblins lurking in Manhattan's subways, but you do have to have to generate your character and there are a hell of a lot of statistics to deal with. In this case the statistics determine how well Stark can remain undetected in cyberspace, assemble high tech weapons from spare parts and talk his way out of trouble rather than how good he is with a bow and arrow, but they're there nonetheless.



The full screen graphics are moody and impressive, and sprites are roto-scoped (a technique also seen in Delphine's Flashback) to give the impression of realistic movement. In other words, it looks good.



The toolbar appears when the cursor is moved to the top of the screen, and you can access cyberspace, your decking unit and the Manhattan map from here. This Dali-esque location is Cafe Voltaire, the haunt of poets, artists and other pretentious gits.

In addition, Stark has to recruit people to help him in his quest. At the start of the game he has a certain amount of money, which can be spent on hiring mercenaries, buying drugs, weapons, hardware and information. Some people cost more to hire than others whilst a few will join for free, so Stark must choose his party members carefully. Bear in mind that not everyone will get along, and if you hire the wrong person, you may find it difficult to make progress. In any case, you should, as in all RPGs, try to assemble a balanced party. One or two members should be skilled cyberspace hackers, and it's also important to include several people who can hold their own in a firefight.

Which brings me on to combat. New York is a hazardous place in 2094 (not that it isn't now, you understand), and on occasion you can't avoid getting into trouble. Combat is turn-based, and you start off by placing your party members in strategic locations around the screen. You can either choose the quick combat option, whereby the computer handles everything for you, or you can get involved, issuing orders, choosing

ALTERNATIVELY



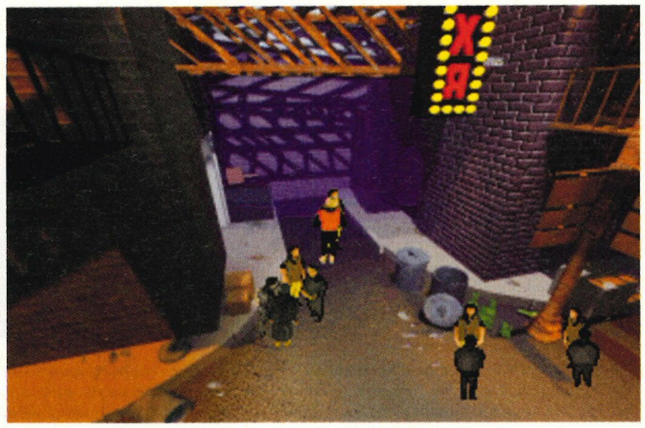
Beneath a Steel Sky
Revolution/Virgin, £39.99
Rated 8, Issue 27

OK, so it's an adventure rather than an role-playing game, but if you're into cyberpunk, you should check out this stunning game from Revolution Software. It's a little more humorous than BloodNet and has none of that game's moral implications, but it's equally fast paced and involving. The futuristic graphics were inspired by the artwork of international comic artist, Dave Gibbons, and add an extra touch of class to an already impressive game.



Veil of Darkness
SSI/US Gold, £44.99
Rated 6, Issue 19

This role-playing game takes a more traditional approach to the vampire legend, but funnily enough also features a character called Deirdre. It starts with you crashing your plane in the heart of vampire country, and you, of course, must defeat the 'Dark Lord' in order to escape. It's pretty conventional as RPGs go, to the point of being positively staid. Reasonably entertaining thanks to the subject matter, but perhaps a little dull in the long term.



During combat, the toolbar is replaced by a combat menu from which you can dictate the battle. Other party members only become visible during combat, remaining hidden for the rest of the game.

weapons and so forth. Messages appear to tell you who is attacking who and how many hit points are being lost, but if you can always turn this option off if you find it spoils the atmosphere.

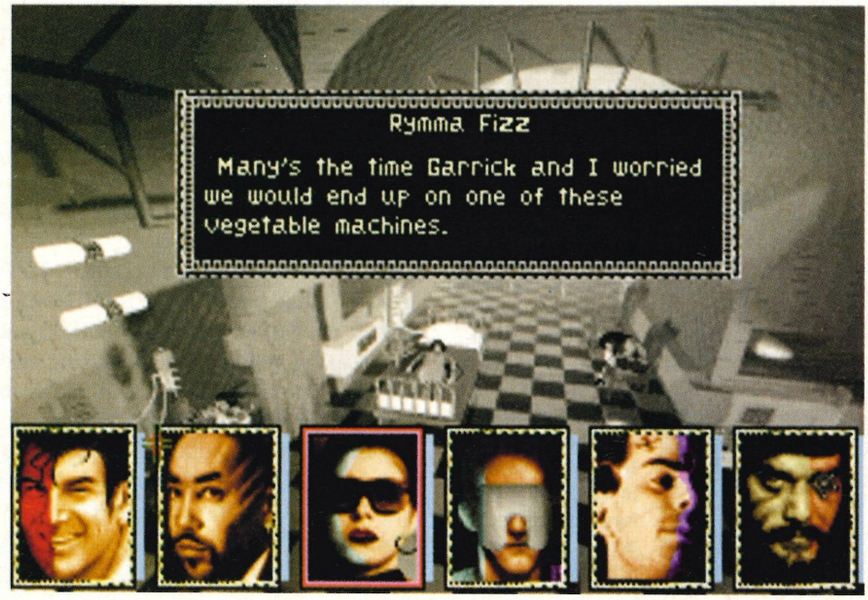
Involving as it is, BloodNet is not a game which you can simply pick up and play. There's so much you have to think about that it's impossible to make progress without having a good look at the manual. Learning how to use your deck, jury rigging (assembling an object from component parts), concocting designer drugs and even finding out what certain weapons do are all part of the game, and you can't bluff your way through it without acquiring some knowledge beforehand.

This even extends to the interface. I attempted to play it without reading the manual, and it was quite a while before I managed to locate the inventory screen. Most actions are accessed via a toolbar at the top of the screen, but you have to click at the bottom of the screen to bring up the character statistics and inventories. The control system is far from intuitive, and I think MicroProse could have made it far more user-friendly. Why not include stats and inventories in the party menu on the main toolbar? I guess there's a reason for it, but I'm damned if know what it is.

Another factor worth considering is the theme itself. Unless you're into the whole cyberpunk thing you'll probably find much of the jargon and dialogue incomprehensible. If, on the other hand, your bookcases are groaning under the weight of countless Gibsons, Sterlings and other cyberpunk authors, you'll love it. BloodNet explores cyberpunk in all its unwholesome glory, with numerous references to cyberspace, ICE (Intrusion Countermeasure Electronic: in other words, cyberspace data security programs), high-tech drugs and nanotechnology. It's a technofetishist's heaven.

BloodNet is extremely complex and as such is difficult to get to grips with, but it's refreshingly original, well researched and wonderfully atmospheric. I applaud Microprose for producing an intelligent, adult role-playing game which has absolutely nothing to do with orcs and dragons. If the subject matter appeals to you, you can't really go wrong with this one: BloodNet is a game you can really get your teeth into.

■ Cal Jones



Sometimes when you arrive at a location or meet a character, one of your party member will chip in with a comment. Vital clues may gleaned from this dialogue, so pay attention.

Techspec

As with most games these days, you'll need at least a 386 running MS-DOS 5.0 or higher, plus a mouse. A CD-ROM is also on the way — details will be given in an forthcoming issue.

Disk requirements					
	High density	✓			
	Hard disk only	✓			
	Space taken on hard disk	9Mb			
Graphic modes					
	CGA	×	EGA	×	Tandy ×
	VGA	✓	SVGA	×	
Soundboards					
	Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster ✓
Control					
	Joystick	×	Keyboard	×	Mouse ✓
Performance					
	Optimum speed	33MHz			
	Minimum memory	2MB			
	Free RAM required	570K			

rating **8**

Verdict
Squalid, seedy and utterly brilliant. A mature game with plenty of depth.

Immortal Combat



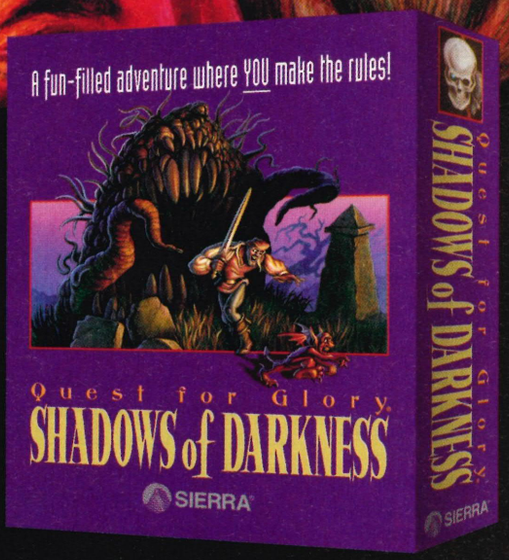
Choose the type of hero that suits your style—Fighter, Magic User, or Thief.



Pick a combat system – from pure strategy to thumb-twitching arcade action.



Dark settings and light-hearted humour combine in this fun-filled fright fest.



The Dark One awaits. A crazed cult has kept his evil image alive in an isolated mountain valley. Now a beautiful but deadly vampire has enlisted the aid of some wicked Wyverns, raucous Revenants, nefarious Necrotaurs, and even a wild-eyed wizard. The dark forces wait with weapons ready and fangs bared.

A Fun-Filled Fright Fest Where YOU Make the Rules!

- Create your own character, choosing a Fighter, Magic User, or Thief. Puzzles, combat, and obstacles change according to your character type and development.
- Start fresh or import your character from *Quest for Glory I, II,* or *III.*
- Fight monsters with a sophisticated new battle system that lets you choose skill level and combat type–from pure strategy to adrenaline-pumping thumb-twitching arcade action.
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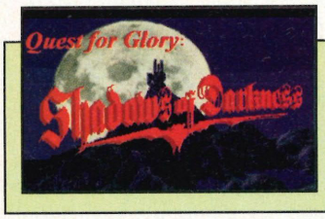


Title	**Quest For Glory: Shadows of Darkness**
Publisher	**Sierra On Line**
Contact	**(0734) 303322**
Price	**£39.99**



"Mordavia is a valley surrounded by mountains. There used to be a road which led from here, but heavy rains have created a swamp at the base of the mountains south of here. No wagons can get in or out, nor can any person, except perhaps you."

Quest for Glory
Shadows of Darkness

With three role-playing adventures already under his belt, surely the hero of Quest for Glory should consider retirement? Not yet ...

Unless you're a fan of Sierra games, you could be forgiven for being a little hazy about the Quest for Glory series. Even if you know all about Leisure Suit Larry, Roger Wilco, Laura Bow and King Graham, the ubiquitous 'hero' of Quest for Glory isn't so well known. Despite this, he's managed to cram in three adventures before now, all of which have been fairly well received.

The original Quest for Glory was Sierra's first attempt at a 'role-playing graphic adventure', a tradition maintained by this latest instalment. The good news is that you don't need to have played any of the other three to enjoy this one, although you can import characters from previous games if you wish. The bad news is that it's still a lot like the others, so if you didn't enjoy Quest for Glory III, it's unlikely that this latest episode will sieze you by the throat.

There isn't much plot to speak of, at least not at the start. Dark magic has sucked you into the territory of Mordavia, a cultural mixture of fantasy land and Eastern Europe. At first you don't know where you are or how you got there, but as you wander through the town of Mordavia and its surroundings you begin to discover why everyone is uneasy and what your job might be. The result is standard role-playing fare: evil creatures roaming the forest by night, a beautiful, mysterious maiden and your fair share of village idiots.

Before engaging in this scenario you need to create one of three characters to play with: fighter, wizard or thief, and if you've played any of the preceding games, you also get the bonus choice of a paladin (a kind of fighter with an added sense of honour). As you would expect, the three main characters emphasise skill with weapons, magic and stealth respectively, and they all have weaknesses which can be improved with experience during play. Each character has six abilities, nine potential skills and four other attributes: a good balance of complexity and simplicity.



Quest for Glory IV has a pleasing variety of puzzles. As well as the usual object-related problems, there are plenty of tasks unique to specific locations. This puzzle square opens the door to Dr Cranium's private laboratory.

You awake from a nightmare and find yourself in a shadowy world of petrified bones. Your backpack and its contents have disappeared — and you're supposed to be the thief! But where are you? And how did you get here?

ALTERNATIVELY



Quest for Glory III: Wages of War
Sierra On-Line, £39.99
Rated 6, Issue 14
This game has superb graphics, strong sound effects and just the right amount of difficulty, but is unfortunately let down by the dodgy combat sequences and a couple of annoying hardware flaws. Despite its faults, fans of other Sierra games should enjoy it.



Ultima Underworld II: Labyrinth of Worlds
Origin, £39.99
Rated 8, Issue 18
Labyrinth of Worlds was the sequel to one of the biggest RPGs of 1992. Its atmosphere is superb, with an impressive level of character interaction, a do-it-yourself plot and improved 3D graphics. An intuitive mouse interface and automapper are handy, too.



Land of hope and glory

The control system works well, enabling you to maximise your exploration time with relatively little hassle. Everything is icon/mouse-controlled. The mouse allows you to perform all the simple functions, such as move, examine, 'action' (used to open doors, etc), talk, and use an item in your hand. In addition, a panel of icons at the top of the screen gives you greater flexibility, particularly with magic (four basic spells for a fighter, with many more available), and special actions such as sneaking, sleeping, leaping, checking your character statistics and keeping an eye on the time, examining the contents of your inventory, or toggling with the game set-up configurations.

There are three characters to choose from (none of them female, incidentally): fighter, wizard and thief. The range of statistics isn't huge and all have some limitations, but increasing their skill levels is all part of the fun.

As you make initial progress QFGIV looks and feels like an adventure game, until you engage in combat for the first time. When you encounter a foe the single-screen 3D format changes to a side-on combat view, where you can choose to fight to the death with your opponent, or run away. The control system is tough to get to grips with at first, but once you've grown accustomed to it, the range of combat options makes this part of the game particularly satisfying.

Exploration mainly involves wandering from one screen to the next in the tradition of most Sierra adventures. You look around, examine a few things, pick up a couple of objects, maybe talk to someone and try out items you've previously collected. This would eventually become tedious were it not for two things.

First, the quality of the backgrounds is superb: there are over 100 locations and most of them are stunning. Second, there is always something happening. For example, if you hang around too long in one place a monster will often attack. Some screens have specific visual or musical puzzles, some have characters you can talk to, some simply contain objects and some offer clues which you can't use or fathom out until much later.

However, probably the best feature of Quest for Glory IV is that there is a strong incentive to play the game again once you've finished. This is because each of the three characters faces different challenges, with different puzzles. For example, in the Two Minutes panel below you can see a tightrope. The wizard has to levitate his way across using a wind current, the thief nimbly strolls across and the fighter traverses the chasm hand-over-hand. These differences are more than simply cosmetic: the way a thief completes the game involves different objects, different clues and different combat results from the methods used by a wizard or a fighter.

Techspec

Quest for Glory IV makes more hardware demands than any of its predecessors. You need a 386 minimum (486 and Windows 3.1 recommended if you're running the game in Windows), with 4Mb RAM, a mouse and MS-DOS 5.0 or higher.

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	**15Mb**				
Graphic modes					
CGA	✗	**EGA**	✗	**Tandy**	✗
VGA	✓	**SVGA**	✗		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	**Roland**	✓	**Sound Blaster**	✓
Control					
Joystick	✗	**Keyboard**	✓	**Mouse**	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	**33MHz**				
Minimum memory	**640Mb**				
Free RAM required	**590K**				

Verdict
Compelling and pretty, but not quite tough enough

rating **6**

Quest for Glory IV is *almost* an excellent game and relatively cheap by adventure/RPG standards. The only real drawback is that although you'll have fun solving the problems, theyaren't quite tough enough for more experienced adventurers.

If you've enjoyed any of the preceding trio or are new to RPGs, Quest for Glory IV: Shadow of Darkness is well worth buying. However, if you like your action very tough and free of arcade interference, look elsewhere.

■ **Gordon Houghton**

0 MINUTES of groping in the dark



The first thing you need to do is find some light. In a pile of bones you discover a flint. Strike the flint against steel to create a spark and light a torch.



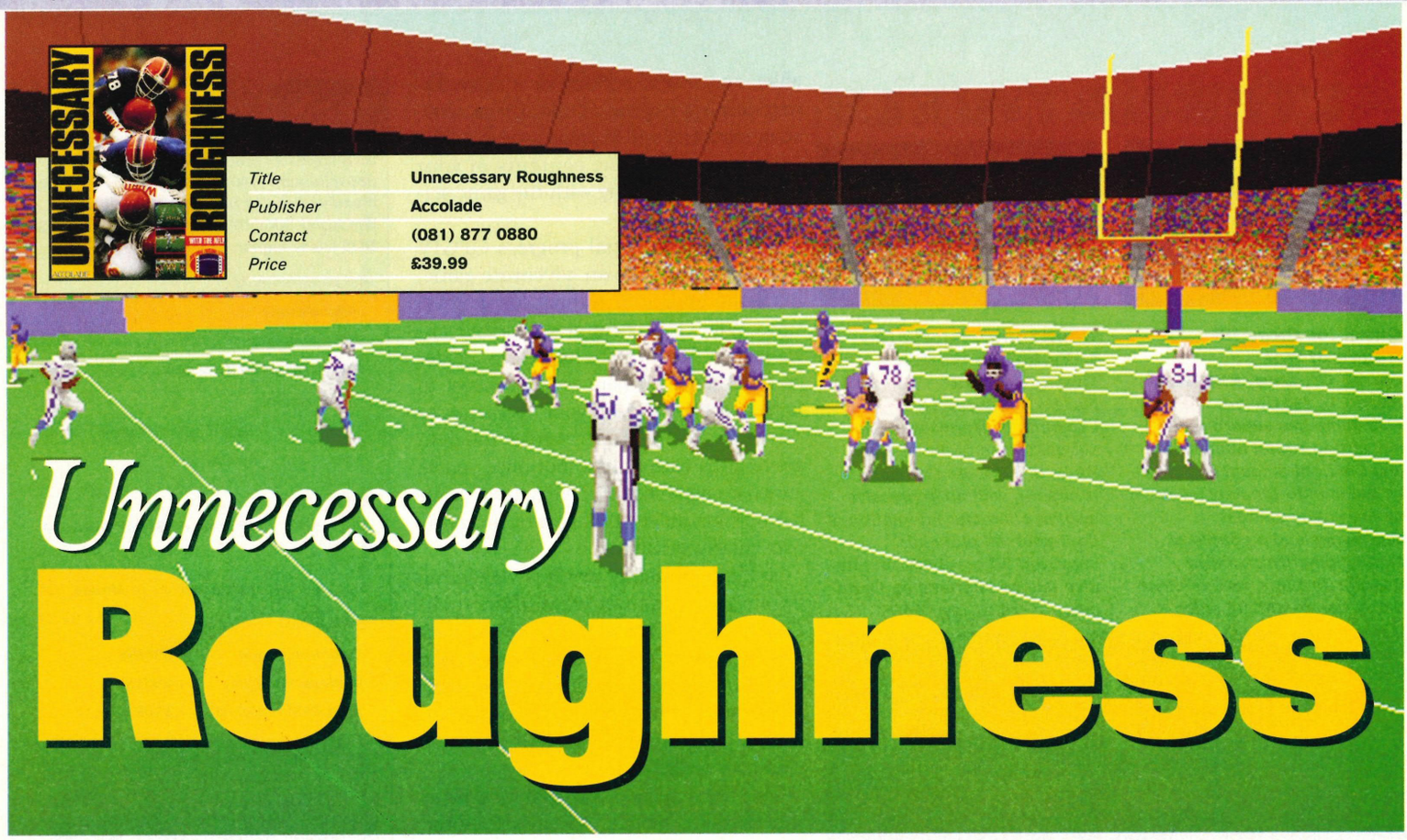
The mystery deepens when you finally struggle through to the next room: a strange stone altar, four blocked exits and two killer bats are all you find.



Having repelled the twin bat attack, you discover a previously unseen thief mark on a nearby boulder. Thief marks provide valuable clues to progress.



This garishly-coloured cavern features a puzzle and a nasty surprise. If you try to span the chasm without the aid of the tightrope the tentacle will catch you.

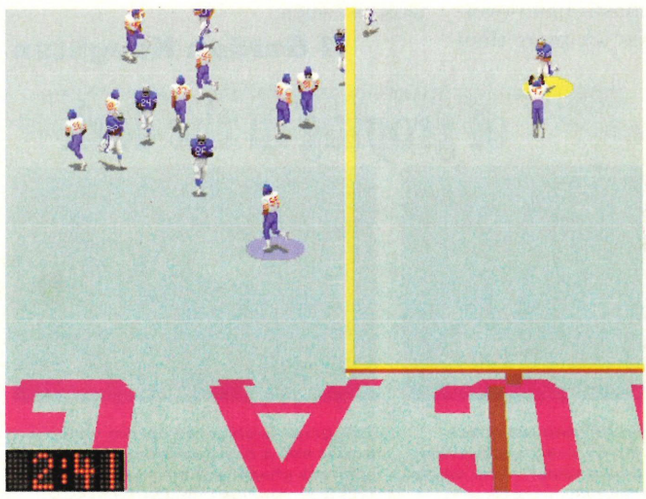


Come rain, sun or even snow those macho American Football types will be out on the field trying to win one for the Gipper. The view can be rotated 360 degrees and you can zoom in, zoom out, even shake it all about if the mood takes you.

The referee's voice crackles loudly over the address system. "Holding. Unnecessary roughness. Number 98, offense, 15 yard penalty ... first down."

Despite the fact that the American Football season ended in January, Accolade is unconcerned and poised to sell you Unnecessary Roughness, an SVGA football game that features more bells, whistles, flutes and triangles than your average philharmonic orchestra.

I hope American Football needs little introduction (lots of big guys in pads, cheerleaders, controlled violence, etc) but if you're thinking of adding UR to your game collection the questions possibly kicking around your head are either, a) hey, I'm new to all this PC business — is this the best American Football game around?, or, b) I'm perfectly happy with Coaches Club Football/Front Page Sports Pro (delete where applicable), so why on earth should I shell out £40 for this?



Whether you're a PC novice or a veteran gridiron player, there's always room for another football game; especially if it does things that the others don't or can't. Nobody has yet produced the definitive 'gridiron' sim: Coaches Club Football could have been prettier, Front Page Sports should have been more flexible and both of them lacked glamour, glitz and that elusive razzmatazz.

These days if an American Football game doesn't boast current NFL rosters, an extensive league and play designer, a replay feature, a two-player option and more camera views than a BBC outside broadcast unit, frankly it isn't worth buying. Thankfully UR has all these in abundance, but what really sets the game apart is the quality of the Super VGA graphics.

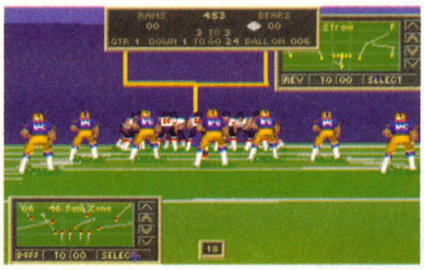
Nobody has done a football game that looks quite this good before. In SVGA the players are sharply defined, the once rough-edged stadium is now smooth as a newborn babe's behind and you can even see the numbers on the backs of your offensive linemen. The graphics are quite superb, arguably the game's best feature, and although you can play the game in normal VGA, without the SVGA graphics, UR looks little more than average.

As for the control system, it's very intuitive with four difficulty settings to get your teeth into — beginner, intermediate, advanced and pro — enabling even the novice to ease gently into the action. In beginner mode, for example, once you press the button to initiate a pass the action freezes and you can then flick safely through your available receivers. In contrast, choose the Pro setting and things start to get a little tougher. Everything is played in real time, so you've got to balance watching for open receivers and keeping an eye on the pass rush if you want to avoid being flattened by a lineman the size of a small tractor.

As for those whistles and bells, UR fea-

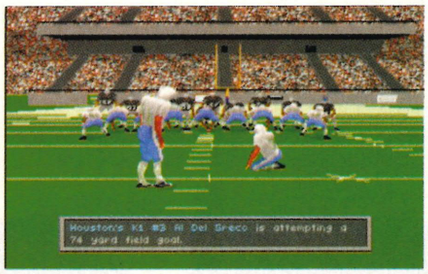
It's coming to the end of the fourth quarter, the Rams are down by six points, pinned back on their own 40 yard line. All I have to do is halt the next Dallas drive, grab the ball and charge to victory and Superbowl glory. No problem.

ALTERNATIVELY



Coaches Club Football
MicroProse, £44.99
Rated 8, Issue 25

Now I'm a self-confessed fan of MicroProse's Coaches Club Football: it plays beautifully and although the animation and the look isn't as good or perhaps as crisp as FPS it's more flexible, highly realistic and a huge challenge. Best of all, I still can't beat the damned thing.



Front Page Sports Pro
Sierra, £39.99
Rated 7, Issue 25

Slightly more than just Front Page Sports 'deluxe', this game gives you more stats, facts and figures than you could possibly need. Featuring good player animation, endzone dances and snow this game is a good alternative to Coaches Club. Doesn't play as well but it's a statistical heaven.

tures a wealth of statistical information. Every NFL player has his own digitised black and white photo. For example, if Jim Kelly makes a particularly heroic 'quarterback sneak' his mugshot appears on the screen next to the play report. UR also features a huge amount of digitised speech. The veteran commentator Al Michaels provides the voice and sentences are bolted together to provide an atmospheric but grating description of the last play. Like the photos, the speech is a nice touch but it's a bit disjointed and you'll probably find that you soon switch it off.

Sadly, UR, like Mike Ditka's Ultimate Football before it, is a bit too easy. I've got no problem with the graphics and none with the gameplay but there is one unbeatable play that allows you to notch up huge amounts of yardage. I found it and I suspect that you will find it too.

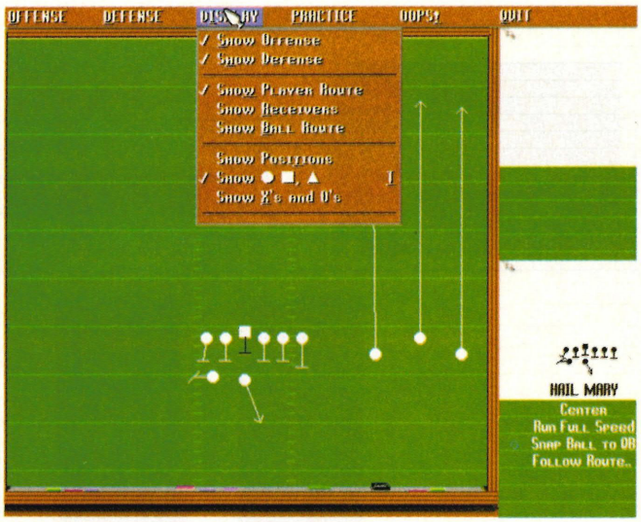
I'm afraid that once you know this play it's like playing Doom when you know all the cheats. You're always tempted to use it. Not convinced? Well look at it this way; it's coming to the end of the fourth quarter and you're down by a field goal. The clock is ticking slowly down ... but if you choose the right play all you have to do is chuck the ball high into the air, catch it and you can get a quick and easy TD.

This little flaw really spoilt it all for me and I finished my second game on the Pro setting beating Buffalo 67-3. In comparison I nipped back to Coaches Club Football and got soundly thrashed 47-0. If this proves anything it proves that Unnecessary Roughness and Coaches Club Football are worlds apart.

The player animation in UR is also a bit substandard compared to the competition and it's all a tremendous shame because there is so much potential in a good SVGA football game and Accolade only seem to have grabbed a small part of it.

But if you can overlook the faults and can bear the jarring speech, Unnecessary Roughness may just be a good first time buy. But if you're already a proud owner of FPS Pro or Coaches Club Football, there's not really much point adding this game to your software collection.

■ Dean Evans



Fed up with Hail Mary's, RB Counters and Reverses? Why not design your own plays with the Unnecessary Roughness handy play editor and designer?

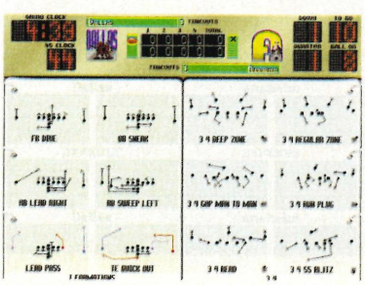
Techspec *You don't need to have a VESA Super VGA card to play this game but the ordinary VGA graphics are nothing special. Remember this game needs a huge 4Mb of memory.*

Disk requirements					
High density					✗
Hard disk only					✗
Space taken on hard disk					**6Mb**
Graphic modes					
CGA	✗	**EGA**	✓	**Tandy**	✗
VGA	✓	**SVGA**	✓		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	**Roland**	✓	**Sound Blaster**	✓
Control					
Joystick	✓	**Keyboard**	✗	**Mouse**	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed				**25MHz 486**	
Minimum memory				**4Mb**	
Free RAM required				**590K**	

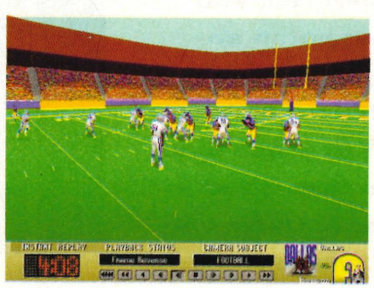
Verdict
Well presented but only an average player.

rating **6**

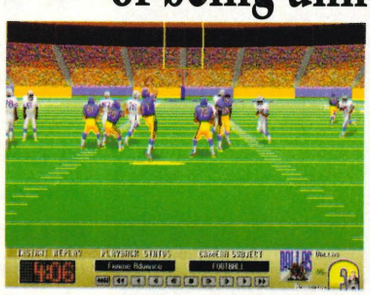
5 MINUTES of being unnecessarily rough



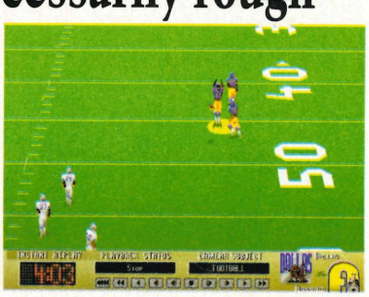
It's third and three and so choosing the right defensive play is crucial. Do you go for a zone? A man coverage maybe? Or do you throw caution to the wind and go for the blitz?



Stopping the drive with an all-out blitz on comes the big Los Angeles offensive line. Picking one of the sillier camera views, I opt for one of the longer passing plays and go for the snap.



Dropping back into the pocket another silly camera view gives me a ground-level view. Glancing to the right I can see that number 83 is wide open. Time to launch the matchwinning pass ...



...not only is 83 wide open but so are two more of my players who manage to run some effective blocking while my receiver charges quickly but joyfully into the endzone. Touchdown Rams!



Title	**UFO: Enemy Unknown**
Publisher	**Microprose**
Contact	**(0454) 326532**
Price	**£44.99**

UFO
Enemy Unknown

Five years from now, hostile aliens will attack the Earth. It's up to you to stop them. Remember, on Earth everyone can hear you scream!

It's 1999, and UFOs have started to appear in the skies with alarming regularity. Tales of abductions and killings have sparked off mass public hysteria, and drastic measures must be taken to counter the alien attacks. Individual countries have attempted to intercept the little green men with little success, so a secret international organisation (Xcom) has been set up to deal with the alien threat. And guess what? You're the boss.

First of all you have to select a site for your base. You have at your disposal teams of soldiers, scientists and engineers, a few rudimentary weapons and a couple of aircraft, but at this stage you're way behind the aliens in terms of technology. It's going to be a hell of a job taking on those extraterrestrial critters with rifles and grenades when they're armed with plasma weapons, lasers and mind control devices. Research will have to be a priority. Unfortunately, even Earth's most talented scientists won't be able to catch up with centuries of alien technological achievements in the space of a few months, so instead you'll have to steal the artefacts and bring them back for your team to examine. Once they've been analysed, you'll be able to manufacture the alien weapons and devices which, with any luck, should allow your soldiers to meet the aliens on their own terms.

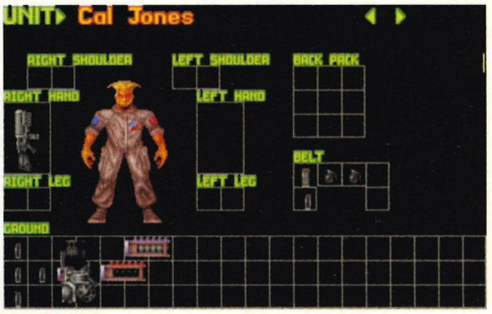
If you're wondering how you go about stealing alien technology, it's actually quite simple. To being with, you have three aircraft: two Interceptor planes and an unarmed troop carrier. As soon as you pick up a UFO on your radar, you have

Nice day for a walk. One of my men (actually it's Becky, our mild mannered art editor) has come face to face with a couple of reapers. Well, don't just stand there, girl, pull the trigger!



TWO

When a UFO is sighted, you must despatch an Interceptor to shoot it down. If you manage to get it to crash land, you can then send in the troops. UFOs vary in size, which will give you a rough idea of how many soldiers to deploy.



As soon as you arrive, you need to make sure that you soldiers are carrying enough hardware. This is an early mission, so I'm limited to rifles and grenades, which are adequate for dealing with the small aliens I'm about to encounter.



This is my first base. Adding a larger radar allows you to pick up more UFOs, but ultimately you're going to have to build other bases in order to keep the entire Earth covered.



When you send an Interceptor after a UFO, you'll see this display as soon as the UFO is within range. You can choose to attack it in a number of ways, from cautious to aggressive.

to send out one of the Interceptors to shoot it down. If you're successful, you can then send your troops to the crash site to kill any surviving aliens and bring back as many goodies as they can.

That's the theory, anyway. In practice, a UFO might manage to outrun the Interceptor, and you then have to choose whether to return to base or patrol the area in the hope of finding it again. In addition, the UFO will sometimes be totally destroyed, killing the aliens but also destroying its precious cargo.

However, most of the time the UFO will crash on land, and you can then send in the troops. Before despatching your Skyranger troop carrier, check that you've placed your troops and equipment on board. There's nothing more frustrating than arriving at the scene of the crash and finding that you forgot to pack the ammo. Once you're satisfied that everything is in order, it's time to begin the mission.

All movement during the mission is turn-based. Each soldier has a number of action points for each turn which are spent by moving forward, crouching down, turning round and using a weapon. Making the most of these points requires careful planning. You might, for instance, move a soldier within firing range of an alien, only to find that you don't have enough points left to shoot him. This will leave your man vulnerable to alien attack.

When you arrive, you'll see all your men inside the Skyranger — first get them outside without getting them killed. If one of your men can see an alien, a red square appears on the right hand side of the screen. If the alien's position isn't obvious you can go to the overhead map where the alien will be represented by a blue dot. It's up to you whether you try to shoot him or run away and hide — your options may be limited by the number of action points you have left.

If you do choose to take a shot, that way in which you shoot is also determined by action points. A carefully aimed shot costs more points than a snap shot, but is more accurate. The risk you take is that even an aimed shot can miss its target, and might not leave you with enough points to get your man back under cover.

Once you've moved all your men, the aliens begin their turn. This part of the game can be very dull. You'll be able to see the moves of the aliens within your visual range, but for the rest of the time you have to sit and look at a plain grey screen with the words "Hidden Movement" emblazoned across it. This isn't too bad when there are only a couple of aliens left, but in some missions there are loads of the little blighters and half of the time is spent waiting for them to move around. I wish there had been an option to bypass this.

At the end of each mission you are given a score. Points are awarded for aliens killed and items recovered, but you lose points for every man killed. If the mission is going badly, you can abort it, but unless you move your surviving soldiers back on board the Skyranger they're counted as missing in action. Worse still, if the entire squad is wiped out, you'll lose the Skyranger as well.

There's a nasty little Sectoid waiting inside that building, so Dean had better look out. Sectoids are small but pack quite a bit of fire-power — don't underestimate them.



MINUTES

of First Encounters of theLethal Kind



This is a night mission, so vision is limited. When leaving the ship, you have to be very careful to keep your men covered in case the aliens are waiting for you. At this stage, the alien weapons are superior to your own and can kill very easily.



Hurrah! I've finally found the alien ship. The red square on the right indicates that an alien is nearby, and lo and behold, there he is inside the ship. Now all I have to do is blow him away. Watch out, though: like buses, aliens tend to come in threes.

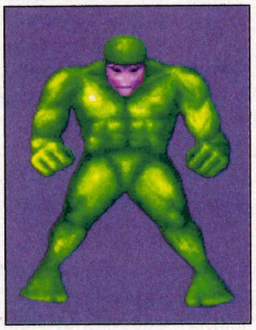


The debriefing screen tells you how well you've done. You get plus points for killing or capturing aliens and bringing back artefacts, but minus points if you lose any of your men. I've managed to do well this time, but it gets a lot tougher later on.

Know your enemy



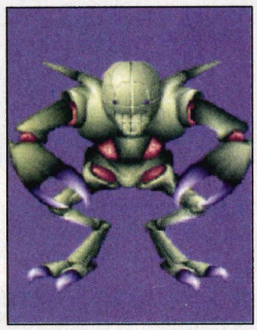
The Ethereals are the real bad guys of the game. They don't venture to Earth very often, but get other alien races to do their dirty work for them. They're physically weak, but more than make up for it with their incredible mental powers.



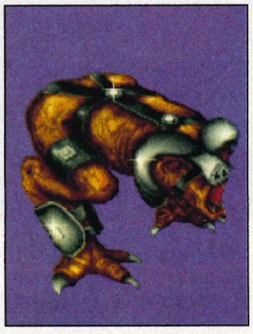
Mutons are large, ugly humanoids which subsist on a diet of raw flesh. They have a strong mental bond with the Ethereals, but will collapse and die if that mental link is broken. Cybernetically enhanced, Mutons are fierce fighters.



Floaters are genetically engineered combat specialists. The lower half of their bodies have been removed and replaced by an anti-gravity unit which allows them to float above the ground. They are extremely vicious and not to be trifled with at any time.

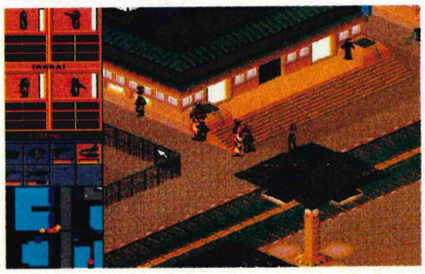


The insectoid Chryssalids are very nasty. Instead of killing their prey, they lay their eggs in the unfortunate person. A fully formed Chryssalid will then erupt from the still-living victim. Hmm. You could base a film on that sort of idea.



Reapers are bipedal carnivores which have one aim in life: killing. They are extremely primitive and have brain implants to help control their though processes. Reapers are very large and take quite a bit of killing.

ALTERNATIVELY



Syndicate
Bullfrog/Electronic Arts, £44.99
Rated 9, Issue 21
Syndicate is set in a future where corporations fight each other using teams of heavily armed cyborgs. Combat is real-time rather than turn based but like UFO you must research all the latest weapons and cybernetic body parts to keep up with the opposition. Bloody good fun — literally.



Sabre Team
Krisalis, £29.99
Sabre Team uses a similar combat system to UFO, but this time you're fighting terrorists rather than aliens.

Unlike UFO, there's no research to do or bases to run, so less strategy is involved. It's much more combat oriented and looks as though it will be a lot of fun when released in he next month or so.

Not all the missions involve investigating crashed UFOs. Sometimes the aliens invade cities and you'll be called in to help. You lose points for every citizen that's killed in the melée, but with all those aliens running around it's tricky enough keeping your own men alive. You might also be unlucky enough to suffer a base attack, and if you fail to drive off the alien scum you'll lose the base and everything in it.

In between missions you can get down to the business of running of your base. You can buy and sell everything you need including weapons, aircraft, additional base facilities and personal. However, funds are limited and you can't afford to overspend. Alien items are handed to your scientists, and it's up to you which projects then take priority. The more scientists you employ, the quicker the research comes to fruition.

Later on, you'll need to build bases in other countries to cover as wide an area as possible. Countries which feel they aren't getting enough protection will withdraw funding, and may even sign a pact with the aliens. If your performance is really miserable, you'll soon find that funds dry up altogether and you're out of a job.

UFO is an involving game, and can be quite addictive. Its main weakness is the combat, which is laborious at times. Bullfrog's Syndicate is along similar lines, but is more exciting because the combat is real time and still manages to incorporate quite a bit of strategy. Also, UFO's graphics are adequate rather than spectacular, and a little more polish wouldn't have gone amiss. On the whole, though, UFO is fun to play and is sufficiently challenging to keep you going for quite some time.

■ Cal Jones



After killing an alien, you can have it dissected. This takes time, but are useful for finding out more about the enemy.

Techspec ***UFO is not overly demanding by today's standards: a 20MHz 386SX with MS-DOS 5,0 or higher is the minimum requirement. Most major sound cards are supported.***

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	10Mb				
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	33MHz				
Minimum memory	2Mb				
Free RAM required	560K				

Verdict
Quite addictive but combat could have been a bit more exciting.

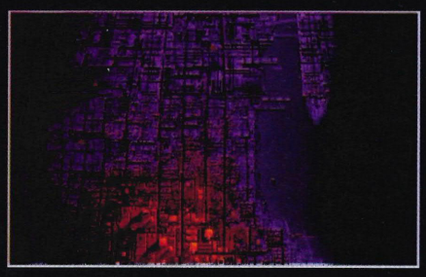
rating **7**

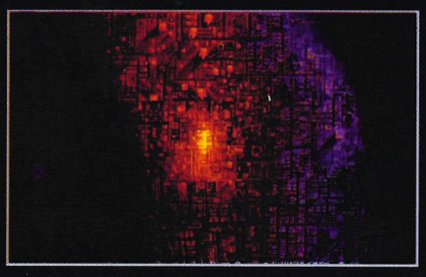
BLOODNET

Killer Bites and Megabytes in the Big Apple











Manhattan 2094. An urban high-tech future, ruled by computer networks, oppressive global mega-corporations and cybernetics.

TransTechnicals Inc sits at the top of the corporate heap controlled by another network - VAMPIRES: dangerous, treacherous and terrifying.

You are Ransom Stark, freelance investigator. Struggling against the effects of a vampire's bite, you travel the city's subway recruiting cyberpunk gangs, mercenaries and computer hackers; exploring the far reaches of Cyberspace virtual reality, fighting against the insiduous influence of TransTechnicals and trying to restore your humanity.

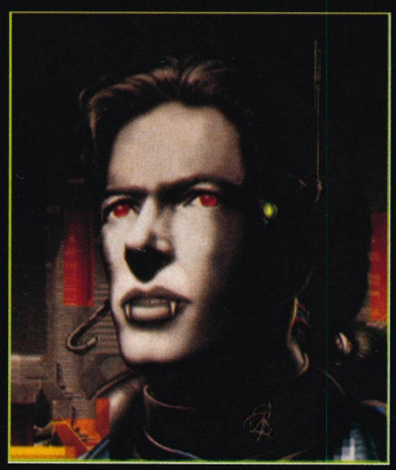
But time is running out and you're beginning to feel thirsty . . . for blood.

BLOODNET

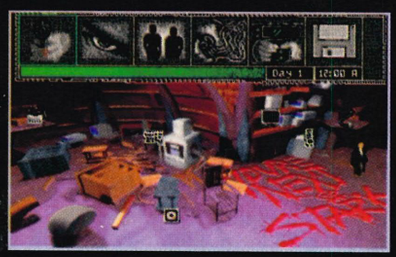
The Cyberpunk Vampire Adventure Game

For IBM PC Compatibles and PC CD ROM.

MICROPROSE







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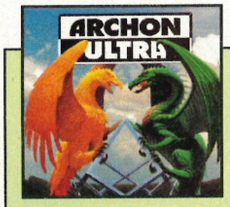
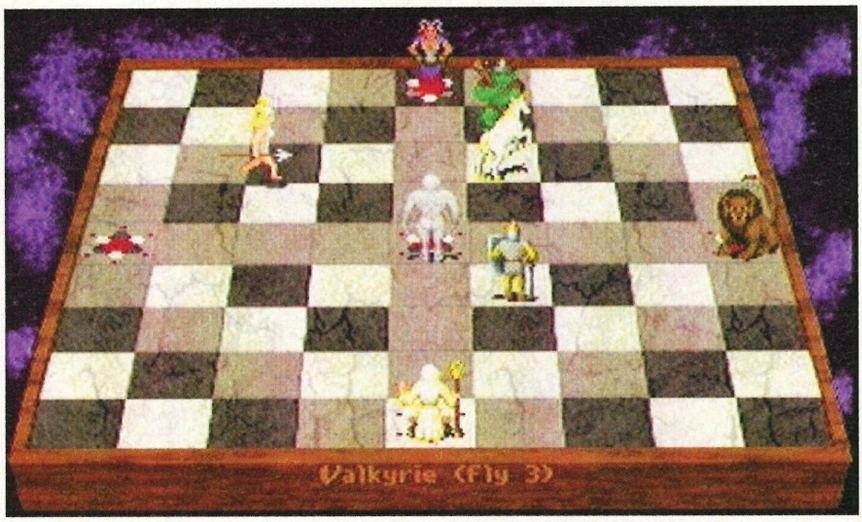


Title	**Archon Ultra**
Publisher	**SSI**
Contact	**(021) 625 3388**
Price	**£30.99**

Archon Ultra

There may be nothing new under the sun, but Archon Ultra proves that substantial cosmetic enhancement really can breathe new life into an ancient game



Archon's 'chessboard' mutates through time. While some squares remain permanently white or black, others cycle from dark to light, affecting your fortunes accordingly. Sometimes you have to wait to launch that vital attack.

The original Archon was a mini-classic. It was initially released a decade ago by Electronic Arts, and the first PC version featured unspectacular CGA/EGA graphics. Archon Ultra is not a sequel to this game, but a substantial revision. The nine-by-nine 'chessboard', rules, ultimate goal and much of the strategy remain the same, but the board is now presented in 3D, the graphics and sound have been given a radical overhaul, and more sophisticated tactics are required to win.

If you haven't played Archon on any format, much of what you've just read will be unfamiliar to you, so let's begin at the beginning. Archon is similar to chess. It features opposing armies known as 'light' and 'dark', which are ranged against each other across a board consisting of 81 squares. Each army contains mythical creatures such as unicorns, mages, shapeshifters, knights, dragons and trolls. Each character has different movement abilities and powers, and (within limits) any character is capable of destroying another. If one side kills all of its enemies, or at any moment is in possession of five key points (power points) on the board, the game is won.

The situation is made more complicated by the layout of the board and by what occurs when two opponents compete for a square. As well as white and black squares, there are some spaces which change gradually from white to black, and back again — a process known as the 'luminosity cycle'. This is vital in determining when you should launch an attack. Characters have a much stronger chance of beating an opponent if they are fighting on a square of their own colour.

Combat is the area in which Archon Ultra most differs from chess. Instead of being quietly removed from the board, pieces contesting a square are whisked off to a mythical 3D battlefield where they must fight to the death, arcade-style, for possession of the square. The colour of the square is important: white squares (favourable to the Light army) feature grass, trees and clear water, black ones (better for the Dark forces) have volcanic rock, strange fungi and lava. All characters can move in eight directions and have a couple of fighting skills, ranging from a simple sword to huge, devastating fireballs.

And that's magic ...

Those are the basics of the game, but there are two other major factors which make Archon compelling in the long term. The first is magic. Only the two mages can cast spells, the wizard (light) and sorceress (dark), and each mage can cast any particular spell only once. It's strategically vital that you choose the optimum moment to use magic.

There are seven spells in all: teleport (moves any one of your pieces to any other square on the board), heal (instantly restores the health of any piece wounded on the battlefield), shift time (reverses the direction of the luminosity cycle), exchange (swaps the positions of any two pieces on the board), summon elemental (allows you to attack the enemy with one of four elementals), revive (restores a killed piece to the board), and imprison (freezes a piece for the period of one luminosity cycle).

The second compelling factor is, as in chess, the almost infinite depth of strategic options available to you, particularly when your opponent is human. You soon learn to manoeuvre your pieces on to favourably-coloured squares, move your vulnerable corner pieces early and create

Archon Ultra is like chess: once you learn the rules and some basic strategies, it's a simple game that can lead to profound complexities. Unlike most chess programs, it features some nifty, animated arcade sequences, too ...

openings for your less mobile characters. After that, the way you construct attacks is up to you, and it takes a very long time to discover and take advantage of your enemy's weaknesses.

A small variety of options prolong the game's lifespan even further. For a start you can play either light or dark, and the tactical requirements for each are subtly different. Options allow you to handicap either yourself or your opponent, giving you the chance to work your way up against the computer or compete against a more experienced (human) player. More help is offered on the battlefield, with a choice between simple (assisted) and standard (more flexible) firing options.

No doubt this all sounds pretty good to anyone who likes board games, but there are a few areas in which Archon Ultra could be improved. Because it derives its inspiration from chess, Archon is asking to be treated like a chess program. For that reason, I would have liked a standard 'overhead' view of the board which would make tactical decisions much easier. The animations are impressive, but if you want to concentrate on pure strategy, the visual effects can get very messy mid-game. There is a 'half-size piece' option which clarifies things a little, but I still missed the chess-style 2D view.

Archon Ultra also suffers a lack of options. The most important omission is that you can only save one game at a time. This is significant because there are occasions when you have played a particularly satisfying or very poor game, and you might want to save it to disk and compare it with other similar games or simply print out the moves. If Archon is to be taken seriously as a chess-style strategy game, it should have at least some of the analytical features and frills associated with chess programs.

There are other more minor drawbacks, too. The graphics on the board are superb, but the visual effects on the battlefield are comparatively disappointing. The sound effects aren't exactly stunning. Also, if you don't have a joystick, your ability to win the arcade sequences is reduced. Luckily, there is an option to play a purely tactical game, with the computer determining the outcome of a contest.

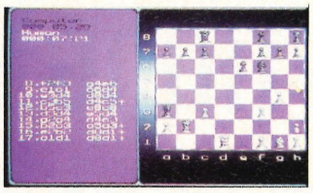
Archon Ultra is an impressive strategy game, but with a few more bells and whistles and some kind of analytical framework, it could have been excellent. It's ultimately much better when playing with a friend via modem, but the computer intelligence is reasonable and if you manage to get hooked in the first few minutes, it will be a very long time before you get bored.

■ Gordon Houghton

ALTERNATIVELY



King's Table (Ragnarok)
Gametek, £39.99
Rated 5 (as Ragnarok), Issue 18
A sort of hybrid between chess and draughts with some token arcade sequences thrown in, Ragnarok has now been released as King's Table, but the game is the same. The white pieces are surrounded on all four sides of the board by the black forces (superior in number), and black has first move. The technical superiority of more conventional board games ultimately overshadow Ragnarok, but this is still a reasonable, if quirky, diversion.



Battlechess 4000
Interplay/Electronic Arts, £34.99
Rated 6, Issue 18
Battlechess 4000 offers a more mainstream alternative to Archon's sword and sorcery. The original Battlechess was released in 1990, and stunned chess players with its superb animations and sound, if not the strength of its artificial intelligence. This updated version, released last year, still has characters who look as if they are living, breathing and fighting on the board, but also still lacks intelligence compared to other chess games.



The arcade battle sequences usually involve contests between opponents of different strengths. You need joystick-wielding skills as well as a good grasp of tactics to defeat your opponent.

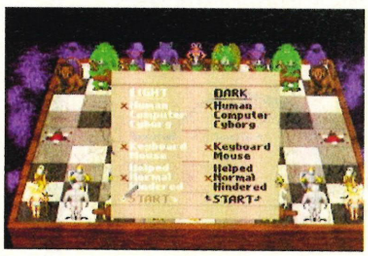
Techspec *Archon Ultra requires a 386 or better, MS-DOS 5.0 or higher and a 100% Microsoft compatible mouse. For modem play, both modems must be 2400 baud or faster. A joystick is preferable to mouse or keys for the arcade sequences.*

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	33MHz				
Minimum memory	640K				
Free RAM required	550K				

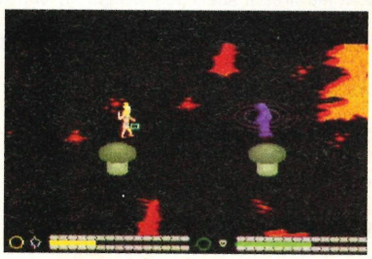
Verdict
A compelling strategy game which only lacks frills.

rating **7**

# of life in the light ... and death in the dark



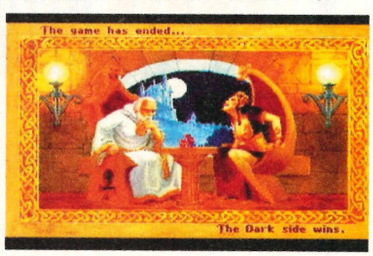
First select the type of game you want to play from the menu. At the start of the game, the opposing forces of Light and Dark have equal power and potential. It's a good idea to move poorly-located pieces on to more favourable squares.



When two pieces come into conflict, the colour of the square determines whether the battlefield favours Light or Dark. A weaker piece can overcome a stronger one, but only when the skill gap is relatively small and you have a sound grasp of tactics.

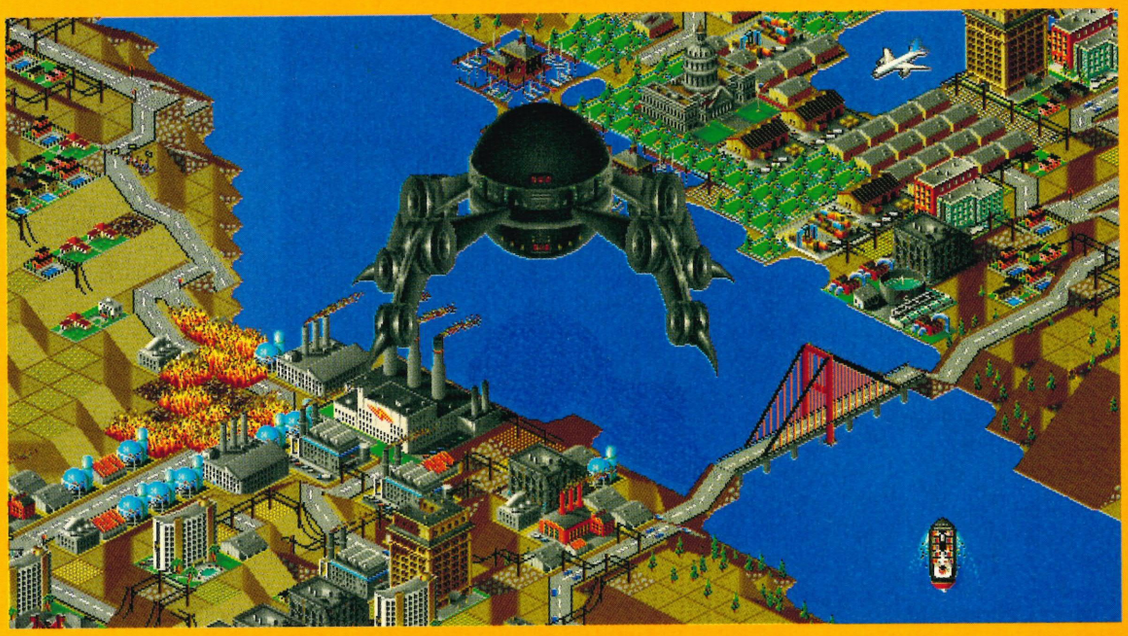


After several bruising encounters, neither side has gained much of an advantage. It could be time for your magic-wielders to cast some spells and turn the tide, or you could wait until the board's luminosity cycle favours your colour.



The ultimate aim is for one side to occupy all of the five power points, or to annihilate the opposition. As you increase your knowledge of the game and its tactics, you begin to recognise that some situations are hopeless long before the end arrives.

EVERYTHING YOU'D EXPECT IN A REAL LIFE CITY...



...(GIVE OR TAKE THE ODD ALIEN SPACESHIP).

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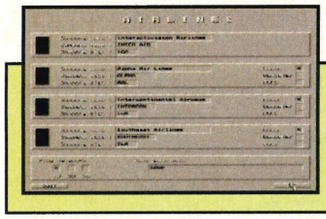
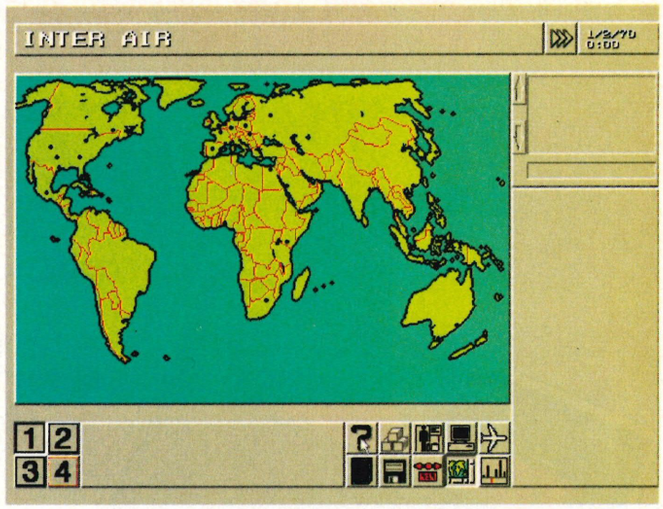


Title	**Airlines**
Publisher	**Interactivision/Kompart**
Contact	**0727 868005**
Price	**£34.99**

Running your own airline gives you the chance to emulate Richard Branson — or Freddie Laker

Airlines

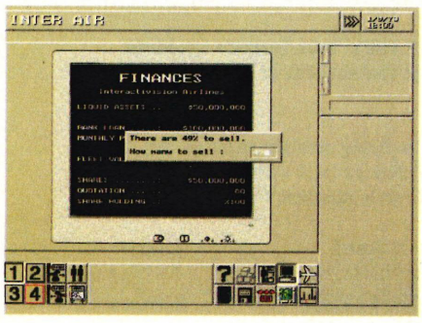


Above: The main map where most of the action takes place. Functions are accessed by clicking on the icons bottom right. You establish flying routes by clicking between airports on the map.

There's something very attractive about the idea of running your own airline. A residue of romantic mystique still hangs over what is, after all, only a means of getting from A to B, and you'd think that a business game about building up an airline from humble beginnings, *à la* Laker or Branson, ought to be more exciting than, say, building up a dull old railway line. Yet Railroad Tycoon is a great game, whereas nothing I've ever seen to do with aeroplanes has stirred in me even the faintest flicker of excitement. And this new offering from Danish company Interactivision isn't about to change matters.

Airlines is one of the most boring products ever to lodge on my hard disk. In fact, it would be a perfect complement to an overnight transatlantic flight — play for five minutes and I guarantee you'll be fast asleep until touchdown.

It's an abstract exercise in deconstructing balance sheets, not really a game at all. There is a little map of the world on which you get to plan your routes, but you won't actually see anything happening. At least in Impressions' Airbucks, a completely ordinary game which is fast beginning to assume an aura of genius in jaundiced retrospect, you get to see the little planes moving about on the map. In Airlines the only indication that anything's happening is the movement of the clock in the top right hand corner.



Left: The financial side of the game is pretty rudimentary. This is the share-dealing screen. If you want to sell part of your stake to raise cash you just type in a percentage.

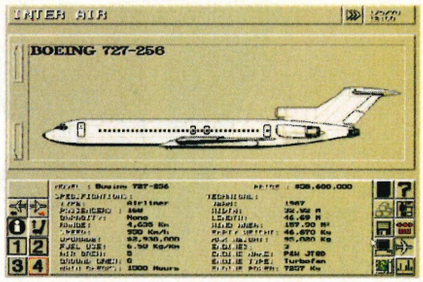
You can access a number of other screens which allow you to borrow money from the bank and sell shares, to buy new planes or look at some exciting graphs detailing your wage structure, but there's nothing to inject any life, atmosphere, tension, fun ... nothing to suggest you might actually be playing a game.

It's also hard to work out what's going on, and the (thin) manual isn't much help. I'm still baffled by the business of ticket pricing, probably the key element in the game. Much as in Airbucks you set up a route and establish a price, but at least in the Impressions game there's some indication of market tolerances. Here you just get a blank space. What do you type in? 10? 100? 1000? The only way to find out is to start plucking numbers out of the air and to keep earnestly peering at those profit and loss graphs. It's typical of the game that if you want to buy a plane and haven't got enough money it won't actually inform you of how much cash you do have — to find that out you must go to another screen.

There must be scope for a good game on this subject, but this isn't it. Airlines, I'm afraid, has crash-landed on take-off.

■ **Simon Shaw**

Right: If you want to buy a new aeroplane go to the purchase screen. A whole range of technical stats is displayed. The key factors are range, capacity and price.



Techspec

Airlines is not processor intensive, but then it is pretty bog-basic — no sound cards are supported.

Disk requirements

High density	
Hard disk only	
Space taken on hard disk	**1.8Mb**

Graphic modes

CGA	**EGA**	**Tandy**
VGA	**SVGA**	

Soundboards

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

Joystick	**Keyboard**	**Mouse**

Performance

Optimum speed	**20MHz**
Minimum memory	**640K**
Free RAM required	**600K**

Verdict

Could give air disasters a bad name

rating **2**

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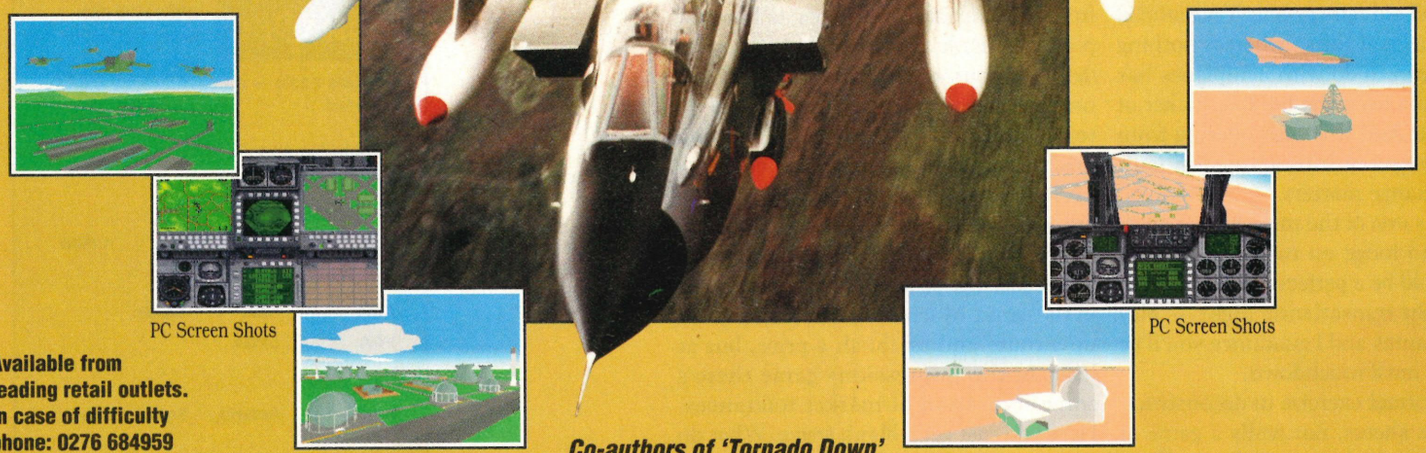

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Title	**Micro Machines**
Publisher	**Codemasters**
Contact	**0926 814132**
Price	**£29.99**



Micro Machines

Codemasters' miniature racing sim took the consoles by storm, but on the PC, good things don't necessarily come in small packages

Recently, the trend in PC gaming has been towards bigger and bigger games — games that take up too much hard disk space, games that clog up memory, games that only work with the latest version of DOS.

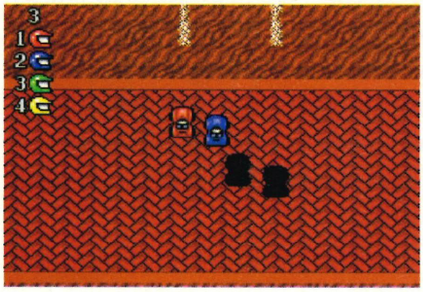
Therefore, it came as something of a relief when Micro Machines landed on the desk — it didn't even need installing to the hard drive! Bliss. Funny how first impressions don't always last.

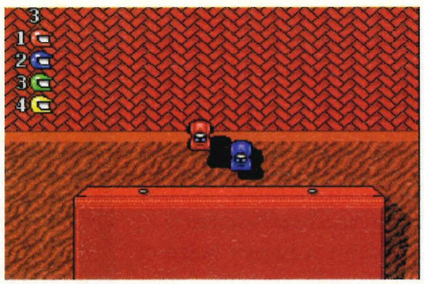
Apart from its unobtrusive software dimensions, Micro Machines also came with a wealth of good press in tow, having previously scored huge successes (both critical and commercial) on both of its previous releases (in Sega Mega Drive and Commodore Amiga form).

So, with this embarrassment of goodwill still lapping around the box, Micro Machines was finally slotted into the disk drive and put to the test — and almost immediately the cracks began to show.

Essentially, Micro Machines is the ancient art of racing model toys around your bedroom floor — except this is every little boy's dream in that the cars run under their own steam.

Freed from the constraints of reality, the game designers have let their imagination run riot and pitched tiny speedboats against one another in the bath (watch out for the plug hole!), cars on the pool table and beach buggies in the sand pit.





There are two ways to play — either head to head against an opponent, or in a challenge against a number of computer opponents in groups of four.

At first this seems like good clean fun. Apart from the fact that the scrolling is a little jumpy on the breakfast tablecloth (well, very jumpy), it all moves along quite nicely and, in particular, seems to offer the beginner an easy ride.

But then you realise that this easy ride isn't just for the beginner — it simply doesn't get any more difficult as you go on, and on, and on, and on.

After you've beaten even the toughest competitors by more than a lap (which should be fairly difficult in a three lap race) for the umpteenth time, you start to realise that maybe there is something to those hard disk-hungry games you've been consuming for the past few months.

Micro Machines suffers from a bad case of PC — not political correctness, but poor conversion. What cuts the mustard on a dedicated games machine isn't necessarily going to do it again on a powerful home computer — and, quite simply, it hasn't.

Above: here's the opposition, lined up and ready for your selection. As you can see, each of your opponents' characters is summed up in a single word. Some are rash, some are smooth, but in reality, no matter how good or bad the opposition you select is supposed to be, you easily beat them out of sight within the first lap — not a recipe for a lasting challenge.

Above and left: here we are on the first lap of the 'desktop dropoff' — so called because the action takes place across two table-tops, and if you're not careful you could find yourself heading for the classroom floor. Even this shouldn't manage to stop you from winning though.

It also rankles that you're being asked to pay nearly £30 for something which would make adequate shareware.

It would have been nice if Micro Machines had turned out to be a pleasant little time filler which could have been picked up whenever a free moment presented itself. But it's not, and therefore has very little chance of finding a space in anyone's software collection.

■ **Ciarán Brennan**

TechSpec *This is something of a rarity in that it doesn't need a bank-breaking PC in order to do justice – it acn even run directly from floppy disk if you prefer it that way.*

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✗
Space taken on hard disk	**0.65Mb**

Graphic modes

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

Soundboards

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

Control

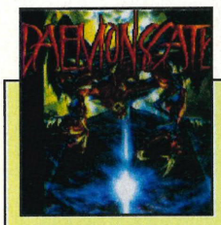
Joystick	✓	**Keyboard**	✓	**Mouse**	✓

Performance

Optimum speed	**25MHz**
Minimum memory	**640K**
Free RAM required	**400K**

Verdict
A good example of the difficulties in bringing arcade action to the PC

rating **4**



Title	**Daemonsgate**
Publisher	**Gametek**
Contact	**(0753) 553445**
Price	**£29.99**

Daemonsgate

Imagitec's huge, sprawling world of people, problems and perilous quests proves that size doesn't always guarantee a great role-playing experience

Daemonsgate is a role-playing game in the Ultima mould. The action is presented from a bird's eye view, with functional sub-screens giving access to conversation, character and inventory sheets and combat. The good news is that the playing area is massive and the plot complex. The bad news is that there are few laughs, the graphics lack sophistication and the music is dour at best.

The story, which binds together a collection of sub-missions, puzzles, conversations and fights, is a tale of daemons and heroes in the lands of Hestor. Hordes of evil creatures have flooded in from the southern land of Elsopea and are laying siege to the city of Tormis. The people of Tormis have instructed Captain Gustavus to gather a band of mercenaries, find a way out of the city, unravel the web of betrayal spun by a despicable ruler and seek help from a mysterious Sage.



The inventory screen is initially confusing. Click on a specific area on the character's body on the right, and you're given a list of the inventory items which that area contains. Items can be manipulated using the boxes on the left.

No surprises so far. However, what is refreshing about Daemonsgate is its attempt to pull back from the statistical overload provided by many similar RPGs. When you finally manage to assemble a happy band of hired hands, you notice that there is barely a numerical rating in sight. Characters' skills are evaluated adjectivally — so for example, they are described as 'inept' at picking locks, or 'adept' at haggling.



The character sheets reflect Imagitec's intention to reproduce an old-style role-playing atmosphere. You'll struggle to find a statistical evaluation anywhere — characters' skills are evaluated in word form.

This is more than just a cosmetic effect, and is typical of the game's overall approach to role-playing. The action is not so much a sequence of linear, formal tasks as an imitation of the looseness and opportunity of real life. Although this sounds appealing, it also proves to be Daemonsgate's downfall. You can wander at will, but it quickly becomes tedious.

The game system is simple enough. You begin with one character (Gustavus) whose movement and actions are mouse-controlled. Holding down the mouse button on the playing area moves your character in the direction indicated by the pointer, although things can get frustrating when there are plenty of objects on screen and you have to constantly readjust your pointer to negotiate them.

This isn't the main problem, however. The size of the playing area means that it takes a few minutes to walk from one end of the city to the other, and that's without entering any of the buildings. Travelling is made even more tedious because many of the locations and characters look the same. This makes exploration an unstructured, uninterest-

The Daemon hordes have invaded from the south. Captain Gustavus has been ordered to gather a band of mercenaries, flee the besieged city of Tormis and find out what the dodgy ruler of Atteia has to do with it all.



ing affair which is made even worse because you feel as if you have to engage every character in conversation. The conversation system is useful for extracting information, but unfortunately there are a limited number of answers to any particular inquiry. Even if you do get a response other than 'I haven't the foggiest idea', many of the responses are exactly the same as those you have already heard.

Other actions are selected from a bank of menus at the top of the screen. These allow you to pick up items, open doors, buy and sell objects, review the knowledge you have gleaned from conversations, look at the character sheets, manipulate objects in the inventory, and load or save a game.

Big but dull?

The action gets a little more interesting once you escape the city, although I felt as though I'd wasted a lot of time trying to achieve that first major goal. Every time you visit a new town, a little more of the plot is revealed and you'll find a few subquests to keep your interest going. You also get to whizz around on a large scale map looking for places of interest, travelling on ships to prearranged destinations and interacting with other groups of people, monsters and Daemons.

Hostile encounters lead to the combat screen , so if you haven't read the manual already, it becomes absolutely necessary now. The action switches to a composite screen giving a view of the party on a slightly larger scale. The characters are poorly defined and the action is far from breathtaking, particularly when using the radar view. By clicking on an individual adventurer's portrait you can instruct him to wait, attack, move, cover, use an item, shoot or flee. Group commands include allowing the computer to decide your strategy, rout, reform, and a number of offensive and defensive tactics.

Travelling gives you an opportunity to camp and improve your party's skills, recuperate or gather food. This is one of the more interesting aspects of the game, since you can do almost anything from making a potion to summoning a daemon. It also provides a welcome alternative to wandering aimlessly around searching for clues.

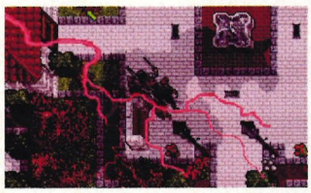
Everything about Daemonsgate is huge. There are thousands of screens to travel through, over 150 hours of playing time, a 70,000 word conversation system, and a massive number of objects, weapons, characters, and mini-missions. Unfortunately, I found it consistently dull, particularly at the beginning. It really does require a lot of effort to keep wandering around and asking the same old questions, retracing your steps, and finding another minor quest.

No one does you any major favours, either. If you want someone to give you an object or a piece of information badly enough, you usually have to do something for them in return. It's too unstructured and too close to real life, because it includes all those boring moments when you're travelling from one place to another or waiting for a certain hour before you can do anything. If you want to enjoy Daemonsgate, patience is something you're going to need in spades.

It's obvious that a huge amount of effort has been put into the design, and if it hadn't been for the tiresome game system, the depth and variety of the action would have made this worth a couple of marks more at least. As it stands, Daemonsgate is huge but ultimately tedious.

■ Gordon Houghton

ALTERNATIVELY



Serpent Isle
Origin, £44.99
Rated 7, Issue 20
This is the second Ultima VII game,with great atmosphere, intricate plot, and excellent graphics. A rewarding role-playing epic, which isn't recommended for novices.



The Magic Candle III
Electronic Arts, £34.99
Rated 6, Issue 20
Everything you would expect from a solid RPG — good combat, magic, and intelligent NPCs. Problems include a weak menu system and occasionally fuzzy graphics.

Techspec

Don't be fooled by its old-fashioned' appearance: Daemonsgate works best on a fast PC. If you're very patient you can play at around 16MHz, but at this speed the sluggish scrolling affects an already slow game. A mouse is by far the most practical control method, although even this can cause problems with movement in restricted areas. All major sound cards are supported, although you're not missing a great deal if you haven't got one.

Disk requirements					
	High density	✓			
	Hard disk only	✓			
	Space taken on hard disk	**5Mb**			
Graphic modes					
	CGA	✗	**EGA**	✗	**Tandy** ✗
	VGA	✓	**SVGA**	✗	
Soundboards					
	Ad Lib ✓		**Roland** ✓		**Sound Blaster** ✓
Control					
	Joystick ✓		**Keyboard** ✓		**Mouse** ✓
Performance					
	Optimum speed	**33MHz**			
	Minimum memory	**640K**			
	Free RAM required	**575K**			

rating **5**

Verdict
Great depth, but a mediocre game system

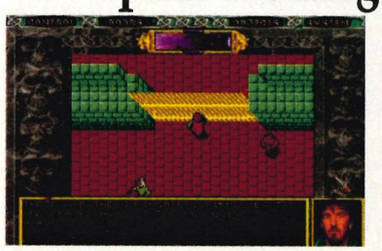
0 MINUTES spent looking for hired hands



Gustavus' first task is to recruit a group of people to help him on his mission. After laboriously exploring the city of Tormis and asking a seemingly endless list of questions, he finds the Mercenaries Guild. This seems like a good start.



Using the conversation screen, Gustavus chats with Ingolf. Gustavus can recruit up to seven other people, but Ingolf recommends four mercenaries in particular. Only one, Dark Sky, can be found in the immediate vicinity.



Having recruited enough hired hands, Gustavus decides it's time to leave the city. The northern gates are firmly closed and all the ships are out of action for the duration of the siege, so he needs to look elsewhere. The Thieves' Guild may have an answer.



Information gleaned from conversations is stored on the Knowledge screen. A tortuous route of contacts, and questions leads Gustavus to his goal. Most of the noblemen have been escaping via the sewers — so why shouldn't he do likewise?

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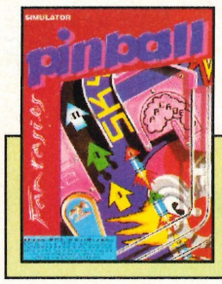


Title	**Pinball Fantasies**
Publisher	**21st Century Entertainment**
Contact	**(0235) 851533**
Price	**£37.99**

Pinball Fantasies



Had you asked me a couple of weeks ago, I would have said that 21st Century's Pinball Dreams (reviewed Issue 24) was easily the best of the current bunch of pinball games. It isn't exactly perfect, but it has reasonably realistic ball action and is frighteningly addictive into the bargain.

Now 21st Century has brought out a sequel to Pinball Dreams: Pinball Fantasies, combining the playability of the original with improved sound, smoother scrolling and extra features, adding some variety to the gameplay.

Like Dreams, Fantasies has four tables to choose from: Partyland, Speed Devils, Billion Dollar Game Show and Stones and Bones. The tables are brighter, more colourful and more interesting to play than those in Dreams, with Partyland being my personal favourite. You can now choose whether to play with three balls or five, and it's also possible to alter the tilt of the table and vary the scrolling. Normally each table is three screens high, and scrolls with the ball so you never see the whole table on screen at once. In fact, by setting screen resolution to 'high' you can change it so that the table is two screens high instead, but I preferred to leave it as it was.

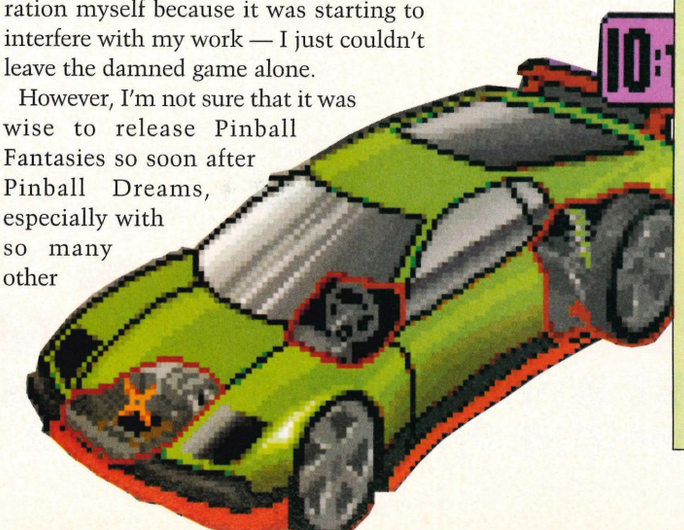
Pinball Fantasies is just as addictive as its predecessor — you might sit down with the intention of having a quick, ten minute game, only to find that you're still playing it two hours later. I was forced to ration myself because it was starting to interfere with my work — I just couldn't leave the damned game alone.

However, I'm not sure that it was wise to release Pinball Fantasies so soon after Pinball Dreams, especially with so many other pinball sims taking up shelf space in the shops. If you want a pinball game, then Pinball Fantasies is definitely the one to get, but if you already own Pinball Dreams, it's not really worth shelling out for what is really just an update.

Above right: Party Land is a high scoring table. The targets and ramps represent various funfair rides, and if you complete all the different combinations, you can move on to Happy Hour where every target hit is worth a million.



Left: Speed Devils is my second favourite table, but it's far less generous with the points than Party Land. You'll have your work cut out to get your name on the high score table.



■ **Cal Jones**

TechSpec

Pinball Fantasies is undemanding and will run on a 16MHz 286 or better with MS-DOS 3.3 or higher. It uses 530K base memory without sound and 560K with sound. It supports most sound cards.

Disk requirements

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

Graphic modes

CGA	x	EGA	x	Tandy	x
VGA	✓	SVGA	x		

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✓	Roland	x	Sound Blaster	✓

Control

Joystick	x	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	x

Performance

Optimum speed	20MHz
Minimum memory	640K
Free RAM required	530K

Verdict
The only pinball sim worth having

rating **8**

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CRYSTAL CAVES - Brilliant massive platform game.
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ZONE 66 - 91% review in PC Format. Epic games.
SOLAR WINDS - Strategic space RPG by Epic.
KEN'S LABRINTH - Wolf 3Dtype game (2Mb RAM).
JILL OF THE JUNGLE - 16 level good platformer.
KILOBLASTER - Fast EGA/VGA 3D level shoot em up.
BRIX - 100 levels of an excellent puzzle concept.
PHYLOX - Jetman style game with good graphics.
OVERKILL - Brilliant scrolling arcade game.
ANCIENTS 1 DEATHWATCH - Brilliant RPDG.

TOP GAMES

CD-MAN - Pacman enters the 90's Graphic levels.
BIP BOP II - Addictive Arkanoid /Breakout game.
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JETPACK - Good platform game.
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FORD SIMULATOR III - We have it on 1 disk.
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HUGO II WHODUNNIT - Solve the murder.
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MOREJONG - New monster mahjong.
PICTURE PUZZLE- Superb jigsaw puzzle game.
SNAKES AND LADDERS - Superb VGA game.
MAHJONG - Addictive oriental tile game.
SPACE FLIGHT SIMULATOR - Rocket Sim
CADDY HACK GOLF - 18 hole 3D game.
MEGATRON 3D (2) - Rle playing adventure.
INDIANA JONES FATE - Shareware version.
MARIO VGA - Collect coins tip up tortoises.
SANDSTORM - Gol war Sim with scuds.
DRACULA IN LONDON - Graphics adventure.
GALATIX - 100 level brill shoot em up.
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.

WINDOW GAMES

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

SOUNDBLASTER MUSIC

TETRA COMPOSITOR (2) - Superb new MOD file editor, player & sampler.
BLASTER MASTER 5.2 - Edit sound files.
WOW II - MOD music player.
MUSICOLOGY - Play Amiga music.
DRUM BLASTER - Electronic drum machine.
GF MUSIC - 255 Track prof midi sequencer.
SEQUENCER PLUS - Elaborate midi control.
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UNREAL - 386 + Top Future Crew demo.
SECOND REALITY (2) - The ultimate new demo from the Future Crew with unbelievable grafx so good that it needs a 486 with 4 Mb RAM.
ASSEMBLY '93 INTRO - New from Future Crew.
WALKTHRUST & FLYBYS - New from Future Crew.
MENTAL SURGERY - Future Crew demo.
CRYSTAL DREAMS II (2) THE WORLDS SECOND BEST DEMO - By Triton 2 Mb RAM rated 10/10.
CASCADA CRONLOGIA - Brilliant demo.
DIGITAL MATRIX - Large demo by Legend Design.
INTRO 30 - Make your own intros and demos.
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UTILITIES

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FILE COMPRESSORS PK ZIP ,ARJ, ARC.
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Title	**Hired Guns**
Publisher	**Psygnosis**
Contact	**(051) 709 5755**
Price	**£39.99**



DROP ZONE Hired Guns

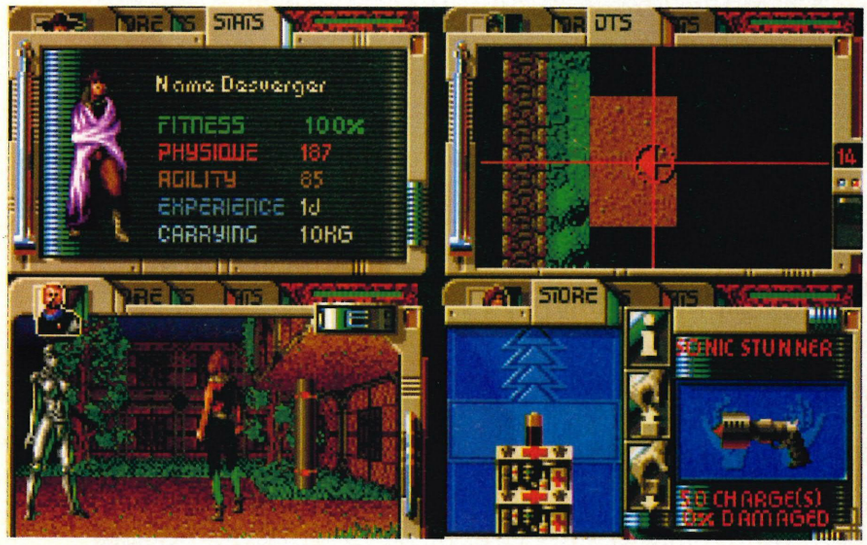
It's dark, you're knee deep in freezing water and you've got a nasty feeling that something evil is waiting just around the corner. Slowly you inch your way forward, trying desperately to make out the shapes which lurk in the shadows ... but less about the horrors I experienced when defrosting the fridge last weekend. Hired Guns is DMA Design's latest release; a mixture of strategy and role playing with a hefty dose of arcade action thrown in for good measure. The object is to guide a team of four mercenaries through a series of increasingly dangerous missions, killing, maiming and generally causing damage to anything that gets in your way.

The first step is to pick your team, which can include anything from a two year old alien stormtrooper to a 100 year old female cyborg. Every mercenary has his or her own special skills, physical attributes and supply of weapons and equipment, so it's a good idea to pick a balanced team. Unlike most RPGs, characters are moved individually rather than of sticking together like tourists on a sightseeing tour. That way, each mercenary can be assigned a specific role to suit their abilities.

The playing area is viewed in 3D, with the screen being split into four so that you can see where each mercenary is at a glance. You can take charge of the whole team, or you can play with up to three other people with each taking control of one or more characters. You'll be able to see the other characters if they're standing in front of the mercenary you're controlling at the time, but it's quite easy to lose track of them if you're not careful. Fortunately, there's an automapping facility, provided that at least one of your characters has a mapping device. It's then up to you to get all your characters to the exit with the minimum of fuss and damage. One word of warning: don't open fire willy nilly because bullets will harm team members just as easily as they harm monsters, and you won't earn any points for fragging your fellow mercenaries.

Hired Guns is an original and compelling game, and it's nice to find an RPG which isn't firmly entrenched in the realm of goblins, orcs and elves. The one major drawback is that it's hard to get into: the control system takes some getting used to and the rate at which your mercenaries die is pretty disheartening at times. On top of that, the graphics are considerably less sophisticated than those we're used to seeing on the PC. Having been thoroughly spoiled by games like Doom and Ultima Underworld, I found the flick scrolling and dull colours a bit of a let-down. Still, if you're not put off by the cosmetic details, Hired Guns is a fast paced and challenging game which will keep you happy for weeks to come.

■ Cal Jones



A quarter of the screen has been assigned to each mercenary. Top left shows the character's statistics; top right, the automap; bottom left is the character's view and bottom right show the inventory screen.

A mission as seen through the eyes of your team. The red smear in the bottom left screen indicates that one of your guys is getting a kicking.

Techspec *Hired Guns needs a 386 or better running MS-DOS 5.0 or higher. An updated version will include support for the Ad Lib soundcard: check the details on the box before buying.*

Disk requirements					
	High density	✓			
	Hard disk only	✓			
	Space taken on hard disk	**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	**540K**			

rating **6**

Verdict
An intriguing game — let down by unimpressive graphics and control



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Title	**Championship Manager '94**
Publisher	**Domark**
Contact	**(081) 780 2222**
Price	**£34.99**

One of the better football management games, Championship Manager has been updated for the current season

Championship Manager 93-94

Domark's Championship Manager series is a port from the Amiga and looks like it. Low resolution graphics and little or no sound (the Sound Blaster card is not supported!). Also, the '94 data disk must be loaded from drive A: otherwise the system will crash.

To its credit, the player database is huge: the Premier League plus three divisions all with real player names. There are statistics a-plenty but these have little in common with reality. For example, there is no distinction between the attributes of defenders and forwards; the latter are rated for their tacking ability but not for shooting! Even more bizarrely, their tackling is often rated higher than that of defenders.

The game carries all the cup competitions, including European ones. These add colour, but become irritating extremely quickly. Even on a a very fast machine it takes quite a while for the computer to tabulate the results on match day. In domestic games this is just about bearable, but having to wait to see how Dukla Prague got on against Young Boys of Berne stretches ones patience.

Come kick-off time, messages flash across the screen detailing signifcant plays in the game. This sounds very prosaic, but it does generate considerable tension as the clock ticks away. Tactical changes and substutions can be made at any time during the game.

If your club starts to do well then opportunites for career advancment with other clubs will present themselves — the Osvaldo Ardiles option, if you like, but I suspect most players will be loyal to the teams they so carefully nutured.

There is a non interactive two player option, while available separately is a data disk that will appeal to fans of Channel Four's Football Italia. This enables you to take charge of any Serie A team. A Windows version has also been released but from what Iíve seen does not differ significantly from the DOS version.

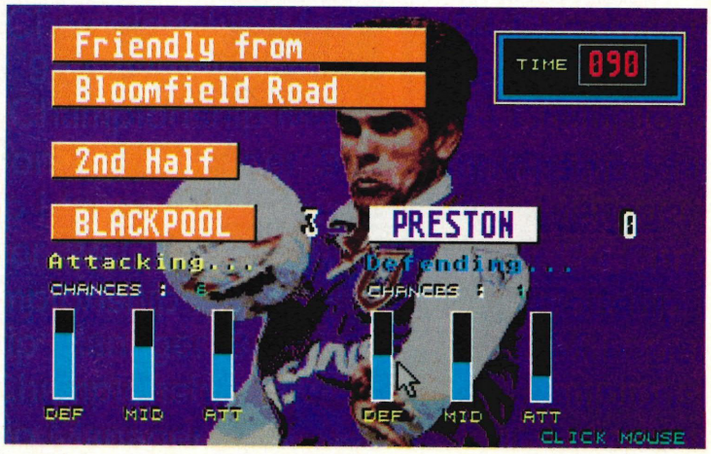


The statistics given here for each player should probably be taken as referring to their abilities only in the game, rather than in real life.

The key to producing a successful game of this type is providing players with a strong framework in which their imagination can run riot. Championship Manager comes close to achieving this, but all the good work is undone by a very serious flaw. There is a particular strategy, which will guarantee you success in every match: basically, play the game with five up-front and five midfielders and you'll always win.

If this blemish can be overlooked then Championship Manager '93 is the best football game on the market. Unfortunately this is a bit like saying that Cardiff City is the best team in Wales: true, but look at the opposition.

■ **Brian Walker**



You can see how the match is progressing from the on-screen 'spirit levels', but significant fouls, goals or near misses will flash up as a message. Nail-biting stuff.

Techspec *The faster the machine the quicker the numbers will be crunched. The manual includes instructions for making a new Autoexec.bat and Config.sys file if memory proves a problem. The mouse is mandatory.*

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	**2Mb**

Graphic modes

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

Soundboards

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

Control

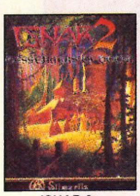
Joystick	✗	**Keyboard**	✗	**Mouse**	✓

Performance

Optimum speed	**66MHz**
Minimum memory	**2Mb**
Free RAM required	**560K**

Verdict
Flawed but still fun

rating **6**



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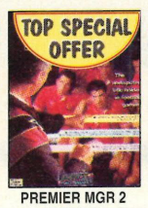

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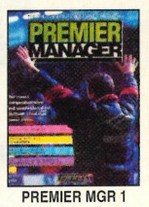

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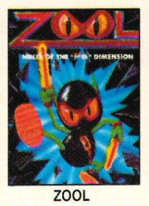

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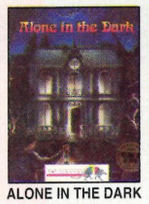

ALONE IN THE DARK
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EYE OF BEHOLDER
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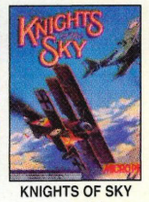

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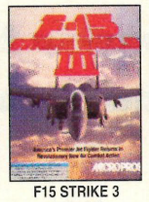

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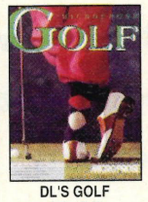

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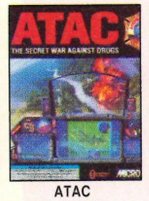

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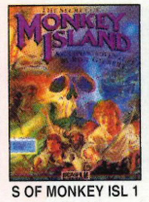

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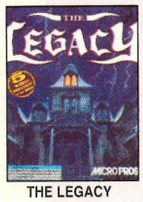

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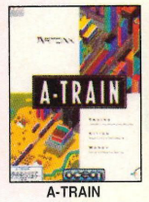

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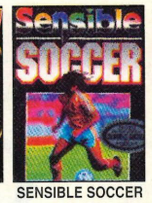

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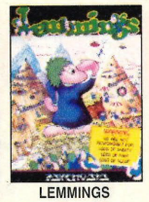

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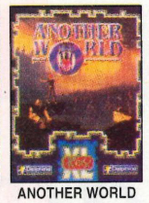

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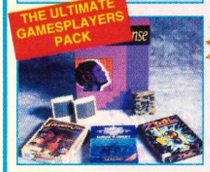

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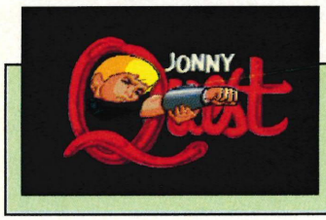

Title	**Jonny Quest**
Publisher	**Hollyware/Software Business**
Contact	**(0480) 496497**
Price	**£34.99**



Jonny Quest

Curse of the Mayan Warriors

Jonny Quest is one of Hanna-Barbera's less well known cartoon characters. His adventures aren't exactly hilarious, but they contain "fast action and an exciting storyline" (or so the box says). The plots follow the 'boy solves the mystery while the adults are messing around' formula, so you play Jonny, accompanied by his adopted brother Hadji and dog Bandit.

This week's exciting instalment involves Jonny trying to locate the five wonders of the Mayan civilisation. Some unknown agency in Guatemala is ripping off the nation's treasures and the government has asked Jonny's father to help, Dad being a world famous scientist (sporting what looks like a false beard). As soon as the plane touches down in the jungle, Jonny starts to wander ...

The action is a combination of exploration, puzzle-solving and beat 'em up. The exploration part sees you wandering around the jungle and the labyrinth inside an ancient Mayan temple. There are plenty of objects lying around which prove useful later on in the game, all of which can be stored in your inventory.

You also have a chance to talk to some of the locals, using Jonny Quest's extremely basic conversation system. This consists of a brief question-and-answer format with two or three response options. Some conversations give you the chance to undertake minor missions, such as catching a fish for one of the villagers.





Above: Jonny's wrist communicator allows him to summon help from either Race Bannon or his father, Dr Quest. If you can't stun or run away from an enemy though, it's time to fight.

If you run across a guerrilla in the jungle or one of the half-man, half-lizard creatures which lurk inside the temple, combat ensues. Jonny has 13 combat and defensive manoeuvres, but unfortunately, combat mode is badly flawed. You can defeat most enemies simply by leaping around the screen and waiting for Hadji to unleash a few magic bolts — and with a stun gun in your inventory it's easier still.

If Jonny is defeated in a fight or captured in the jungle he is thrown into jail. The first time this happens Bandit helps out by finding the key to the cell door, allowing you to make full use of the crude inventory. This contains a box of objects you are carrying, plus a box of objects or places you can interact with in the surrounding area, and four icons allow you to pick up, drop, use or combine objects.

There are a couple of good ideas in Jonny Quest, but a far greater number of average or inadequate features. It's too easy (you can usually avoid enemies, and finding the treasures isn't too difficult), exploration is dull and awkward (particularly when Hadji and Bandit get in the way), combat is poorly implemented and too simple and the music is irritating. On the positive side, the beat 'em up and submission elements provide a little variety from the exploration, and some of the puzzles will stretch your imagination. However, if you're looking for an innovative, gripping arcade adventure with plenty of depth, this isn't it.

Above left: a scenic outside view of the Temple of Tikal.

Left: the Temple of Tikal is much like the jungle that surrounds it — a maze of passageways, blind alleys, rooms, objects and enemies. However, if it's artefacts you're looking for, this is a good place to start.

■ Gordon Houghton

Techspec ***Jonny Quest runs well on a 386/486, but on a 16MHz 286 the scrolling is too slow. All major sound cards are supported, though if you haven't got one you're not missing much. A joystick is preferable, particularly in combat mode.***

Disk requirements

High density	
Hard disk only	
Space taken on hard disk	***6Mb***

Graphic modes

CGA	***EGA***	***Tandy***
VGA	***SVGA***	

Soundboards

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

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

Performance

Optimum speed	***25MHz***
Minimum memory	***640K***
Free RAM required	***580K***

Verdict

A tedious and simplistic arcade adventure

rating **3**

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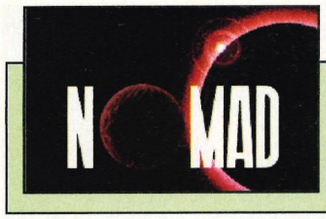
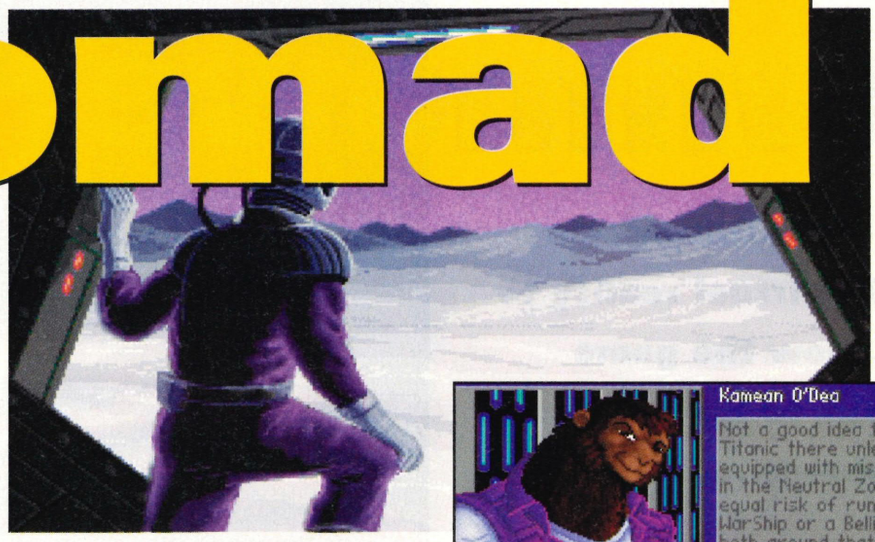


Title	**Nomad**
Publisher	**Gametek**
Contact	**(0753) 553445**
Price	**£29.99**

Space combat and trading games are in fashion as everyone shapes up for the potential Elite-beater

Nomad



The story behind Nomad is that an alien spaceship has been found mysteriously intact in the Arctic and earth scientists have unravelled its secrets. Now it's been made ready for relaunch into space and you are the pilot. Your aim is to explore strange new worlds and to boldly go where no one has gone before — except in every other sci-fi game you've played.

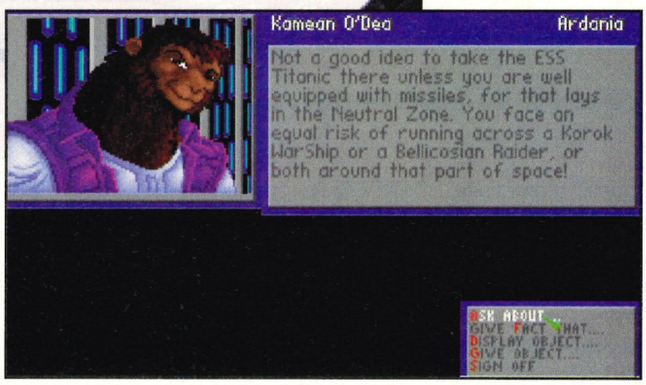
Immediately you get aloft you're hailed by a passing friendly Alliance ship and told that all is not hunky-dory in the galaxy. An evil robot race, the Koroks, are intent on ruthless conquest and destruction (for a change), and it's up to you to stop them (no change there either). You do this by engaging them in combat, but as weapons are expensive and you don't have any, you have to make some cash on the side by trading and errand-running. This brings you into contact with an ever-widening circle of new alien acquaintances, and it's all perfectly harmless fun. Unfortunately, though, even at its best it's no better than a B-cast remake of Elite.

Combat is especially dull. Manoeuvres and weapons are rudimentary and graphics sadly below par. Fortunately the rest of the game is better, but it's not been enough to get me enthused. The universe is suitably large and there's plenty of potential gameplay, but the trading aspect requires too much tedious list-taking. There's no universal currency, you see, and different races value different commodities. Even that $20 bill in your wallet might prove attractive to somebody or something, and it seems that aliens can't get enough of earth chocolate.

At first all this is quite engaging, as, for example, you discover that a race called the Musin have a refined sense of smell, and that the Ahn Rose you have blooming uselessly in your hold might actually be worth something, but how do you know what to take in exchange for it? Trial and error is the answer, but trial is a repetitive business and the scope for error almost limitless. By the time you've sketched out a workable trading plan for the entire galaxy I suspect you'll have long since lost interest. Breaking off for a bout or two of combat is unlikely to provoke even a mild adrenalin surge.

Nomad isn't a bad game, and quite a lot of thought seems to have gone into making the various races distinctive, but despite some original touches it rarely rises above the humdrum. It also shows its influences too obviously, and the comparisons are far from flattering. If you want a vast, open-ended trading/fighting space game, frankly there's just no substitute for Elite.

■ Simon Shaw



Below: each planet has a representative, who will keep you updated on the galactic struggle and may reward you for errands well run. Logging into the planetary communication network allows access to the mission roster.



Below: hail a passing friendly ship and you'll be offered the opportunity to trade. Bartering skills will come in handy, but although you get to see a little snapshot of what's on offer, assessing its worth is another matter.

Techspec *You'll need 600K of expanded memory on top of your conventional 640K, and the mouse is compulsory. You'll also need to play this on a 386 or better.*

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	**6.2 Mb**

Graphic modes

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

Soundboards

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

Control

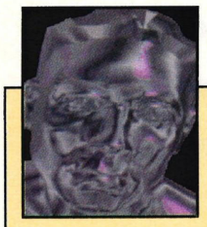
Joystick	x	**Keyboard**	x	**Mouse**	✓

Performance

Optimum speed	**25MHz**
Minimum memory	**1Mb**
Free RAM required	**590K**

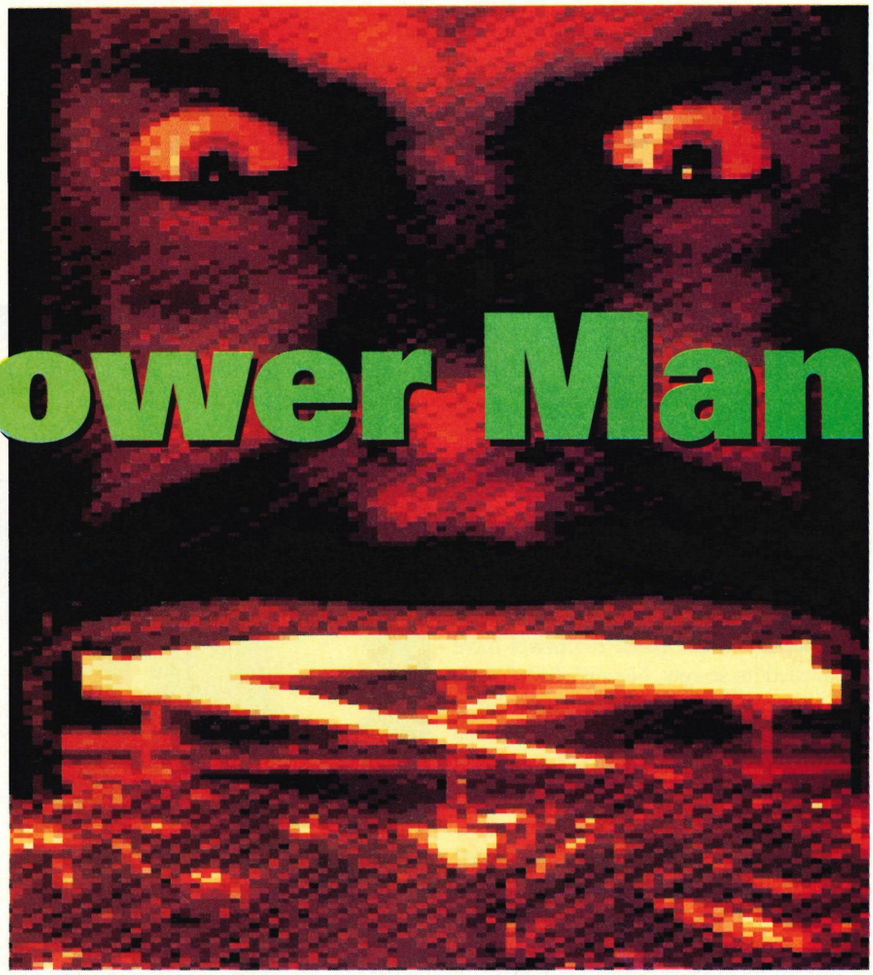
Verdict
Engaging, but the competition does this sort of thing better

rating **5**



Title	**The Lawnmower Man**
Publisher	**Sales Curve**
Contact	**(071) 585 3308**
Price	**£55**

The Lawnmower Man



The film of The Lawnmower Man brought virtual reality to the screen. Now the game brings it back to the computer, where it belongs ...

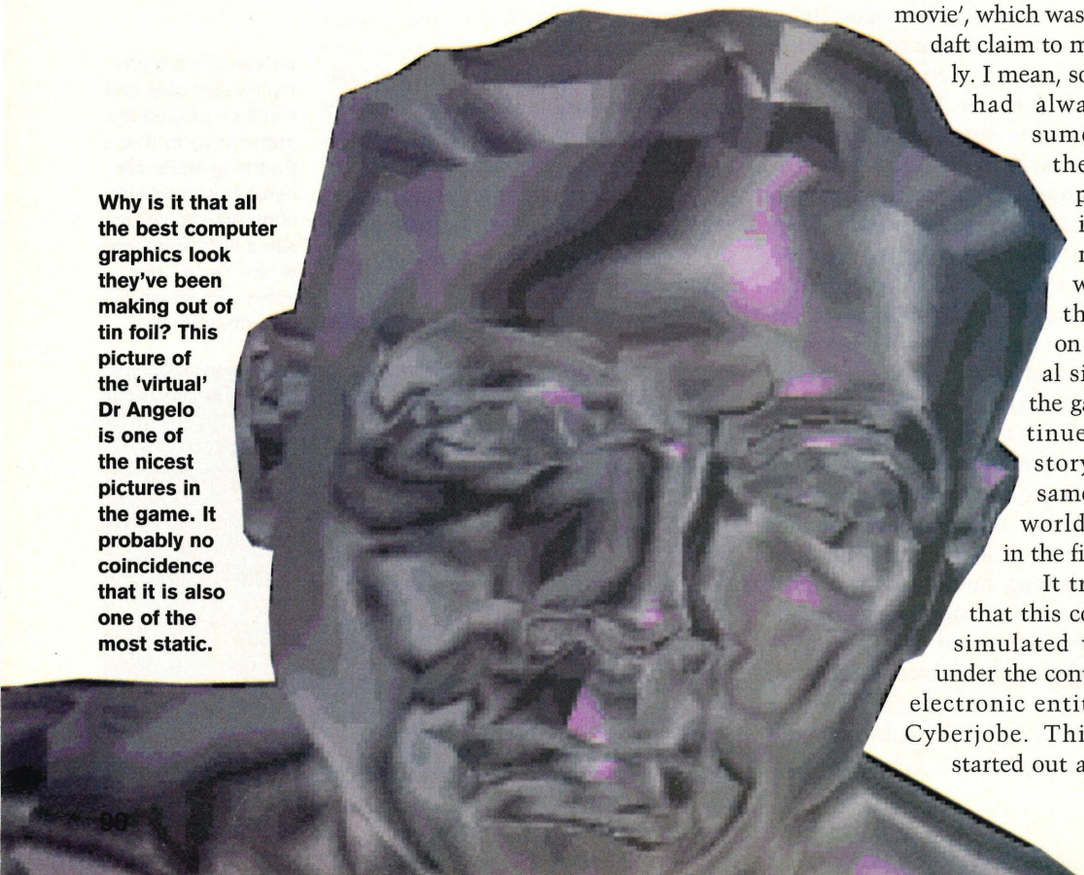
Right: I didn't quite manage to leap over that mine in time! If you fail to complete a level, you are whisked off to virtual oblivion to be subjected to the tender mercies of 'Mr Motormouth', Cyberjobe.

First, there was the Stephen King story - which, incidentally, had a lot of lawns, but no computers at all. Then there was the film, which had rather fewer lawns, but a lot of computers and a fair amount of flashy computer animation. And now The Lawnmower Man has finally and inevitably made its way on to the PC in the form of a CD-ROM-based multimedia computer game, which is probably the most appropriate place for it.

The film, you may remember, was promoted as 'the world's first Virtual Reality movie', which was a bit of a daft claim to make really. I mean, some of us had always presumed that the reality portrayed in every movie was more than a bit on the virtual side. Now the game continues the story in the same 'virtual world' shown in the film.

It transpires that this computer-simulated world is under the control of an electronic entity called Cyberjobe. This entity started out as a fairly dim-witted and harmless lawnmower man, Jobe, who became warped into a psychopath after his mind was fed into a gigantically powerful computer network.

Dr Angelo, the man who first introduced Jobe to the virtual world now has to enter the computer network in an attempt to defeat Cyberjobe. When he does this he is given an appealing virtual incarnation as a muscular, silver cyberperson who can jump over virtual chasms and fly through virtual air (after sprouting a handy pair of virtual wings). In the film version, there was also a bit of virtual sex but this has, alas, has been excised from the computer game.

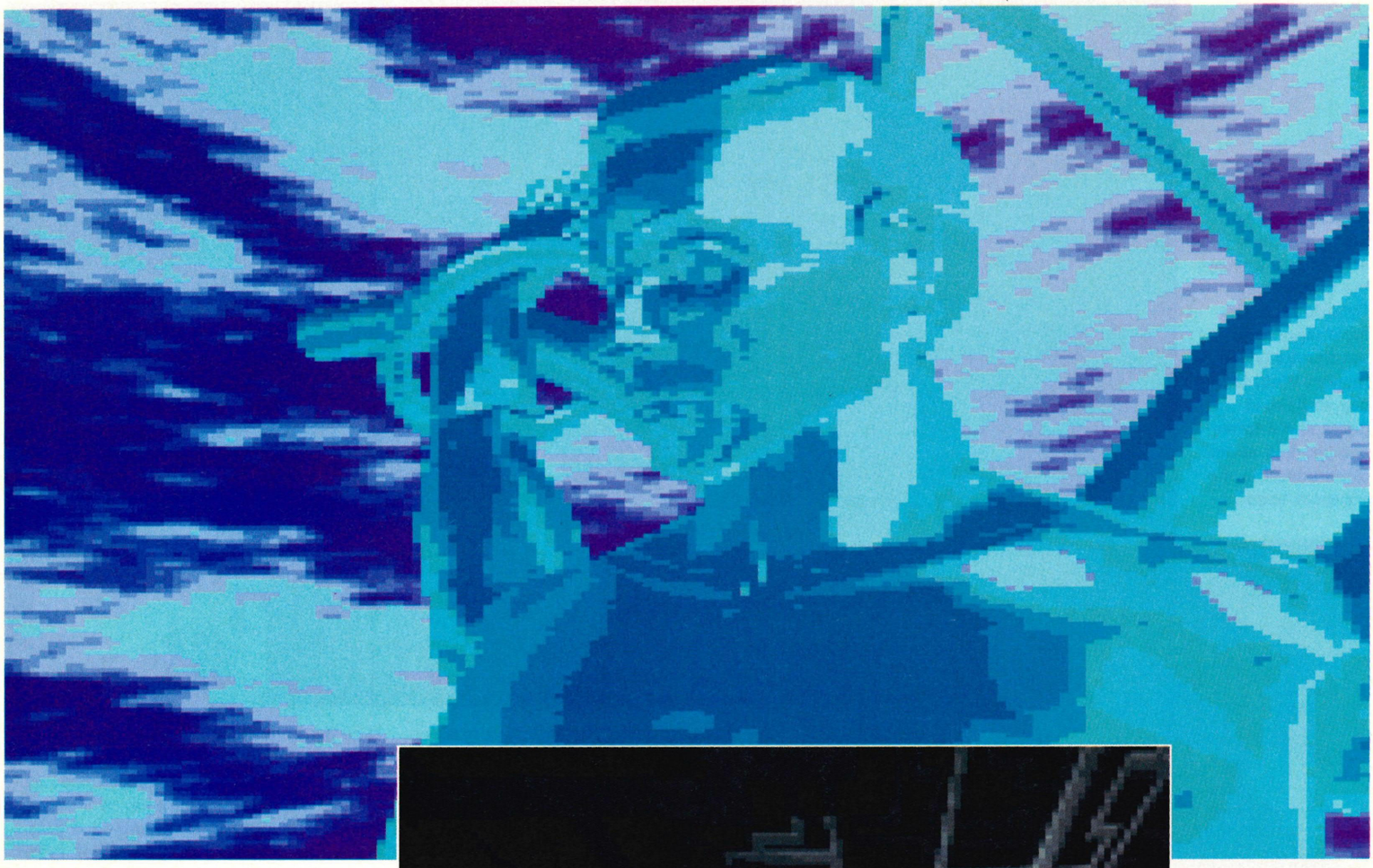


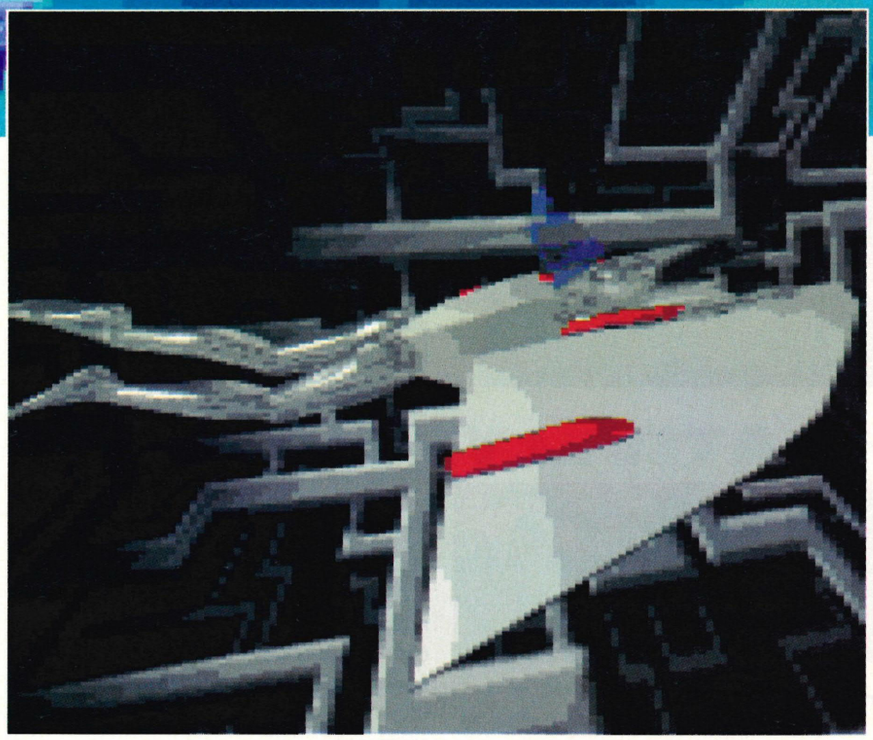
Why is it that all the best computer graphics look they've been making out of tin foil? This picture of the 'virtual' Dr Angelo is one of the nicest pictures in the game. It probably no coincidence that it is also one of the most static.

Virtually well-drawn

At its best the game can look pretty snazzy. By PC standards anyway. Glittery metallic ray-traced graphics are, after all, what computers are good at, and The LawnMower Man has lots of those.

Don't expect the same quality graphics as in the feature film, though. The graphic resolution of the game is only 320x200 with 32 colours (a 256-colour version is due for release in September). Some scenes, particularly those with fairly fast animation, are quite crudely painted. The best effects are achieved in the near stat-





Above: you are a brilliant computer scientist who's just been sucked into a nightmare computer-generated world on a quest for a vindictive, virtual villain ...

Left: here Dr Angelo has sprouted wings which allow him to fly through a twisting labyrinth. Motion is controlled fairly clumsily from the keyboard, however. It certainly won't offer much of a challenge to flight-sim enthusiasts.

ic scenes when the game can afford the leisure to paint the screen in moderately high resolution.

While some of the graphics look fairly good, the game-play is almost uniformly disappointing. What you have to do is to guide Dr Angelo through twelve levels of puzzles and hazards. Control over his movement is done exclusively from the keyboard with no mouse or joystick options.

The cursor arrows move you up, down, left or right while the Space bar or Enter key fires weapons, when appropriate. And that's pretty much all there is to it. In some respects, for all its fancy graphics, it's a bit like a traditional platform game in which you have to make little cartoon characters leap over obstacles and pick up treasures.

In LawnMower Man you have to leap over floating mines and pick up 'decryption units' which will help to release some friends of yours who have also been trapped in the virtual world.

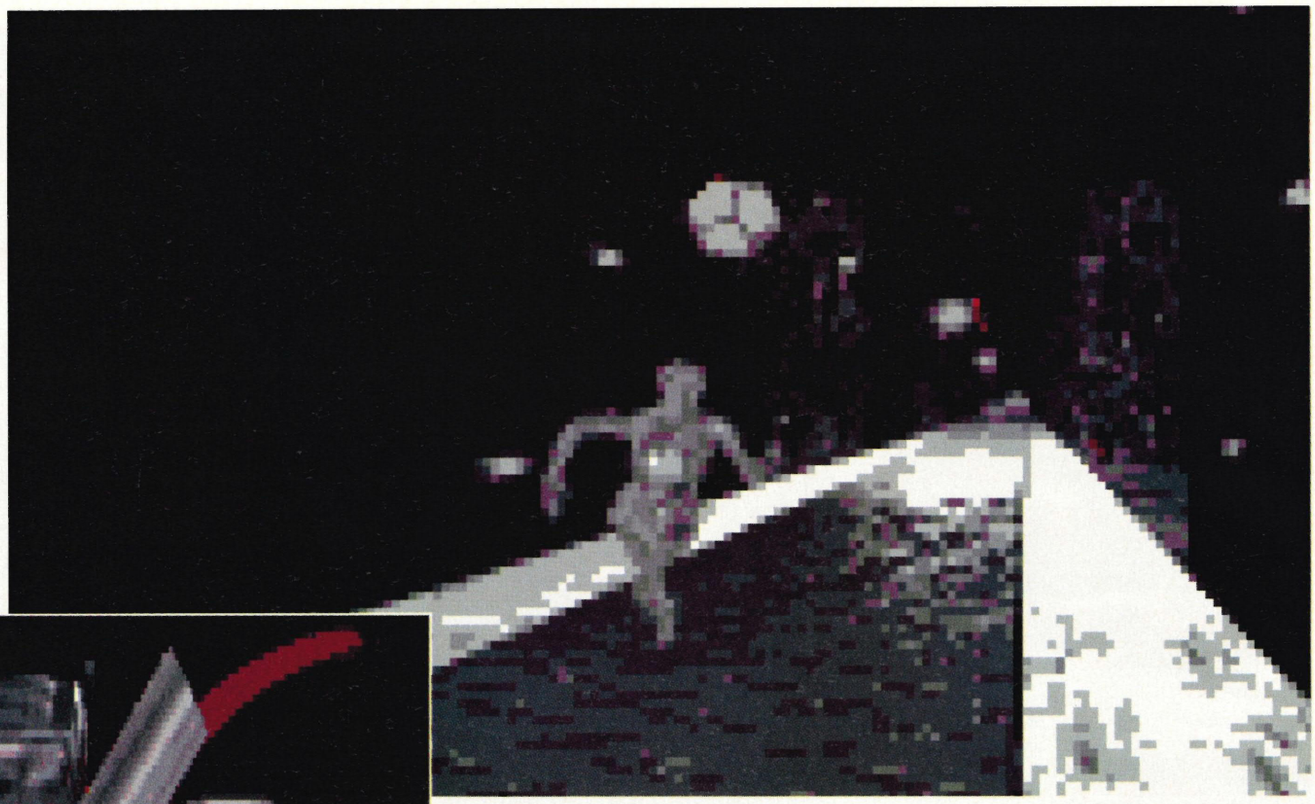
When you first start off, a voice warns you whenever a mine or other hazard is approaching and tells you whether you need to jump up, jump down or veer to the left or right. As the game progresses the hazards come thicker and faster and you are given increasingly fewer hints about which avoiding action to take.

Logic puzzles

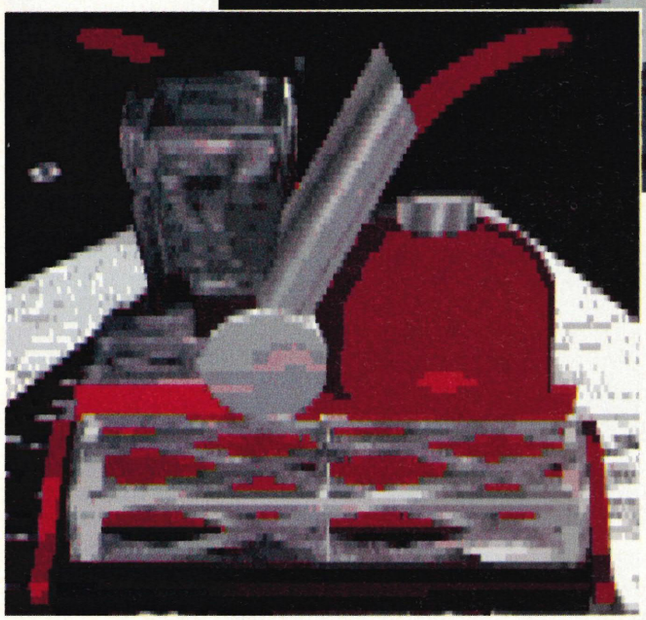
There are twelve levels in the game and you must find your way through each level in order to get to the next one. Between levels you have to solve logic or memory puzzles. For example, one puzzle demands that you find the odd ones out from lists of numbers and symbols. In another puzzle you have to remember and reproduce sequences of notes played by an on-screen keyboard.

You are given three attempts at solving each of the puzzles, just as you are given three attempts at getting past all the hazards on a given level. If you fail after the third try, Cyberjobe wins and you are mown to death by a virtual lawnmower.

And that, believe me, is really irritat-



In the first level of game play, Dr Angelo is chased along a hazard-strewn pathway by his arch enemy, Cyberjobe, in the incarnation of a murderous lawn-mower. Well, they say all flesh is grass and it looks like yours is about to be added to the compost heap!



Now there are mines zooming through the air and gaping chasms opening in the floor. Using the cursor keys, you have to make the running figure jump over all obstacles. Notice that as the action gets faster, the graphic quality becomes ever more 'virtual'...

ing. Because once you have been killed, you have no option but to start the game again from the beginning. You can't restore to a saved position because there simply isn't a game save option.

Save and prosper

The lack of game saving was the final straw for me. I do not find being repeatedly forced to go through all those levels of game play as entertaining as, presumably, it is supposed to be. Playing each level once or twice is about as much as my low boredom threshold can take. Having to go through the rigours of several levels at a time just because I happen to have got myself lawn-mowered at a higher level, really hacks me off.

Initially I was very much looking forward to this game. But I wasn't more than a couple of hours into it before I was already wishing I was doing something else. After a couple of days of it, The LawnMower Man was beginning to seem like a test of endurance rather than entertainment.

My advice to you is that if you get your kicks from watching flashy computer graphics, go and get the video of Terminator II. If you'd prefer to play a challenging game in a complex virtual world, get yourself a copy of Doom. On the other hand, if you have trouble getting to sleep at nights, a few hours with The LawnMower man should send you off a treat...

■ Huw Collingbourne

ALTERNATIVELY



T2: The Arcade Game
£35.99
Rated 5, Issue 28

Another spin-off from a film that boasted state-of-the art computer graphics. In T2 you take control of Arnie's back-to-the-future cyborg.

Unlike The Lawnmower Man, this game uses a first-person (first-android?) perspective and features tons of mindless violence. The graphics are OK, though not spectacular, and on the whole it's disappointingly average.



Doom
£3.75 (shareware), £34.75 (commercial version)
Rated 9, Issue 29

Forget The LawnMower Man, if you want to experience a really terrifying virtual world, play Doom. This is a superb 3D perspective, first-person point of view, fast action game that takes you through multiple levels of increasingly dangerous game-play. It's all a distinctly gory and violent but terrific fun if you don't mind the sight of blood.

Techspec

This game is a real hardware hog. It comes on CD-ROM, but you'll still need to install a minimum of 20Mb on your hard disk. If you have a single speed (150K/sec) CD drive, you'll get better performance by installing on disk as much of the game as possible — say 40Mb or even more. You'll need 2Mb of extended memory, but even though the game says it requires 640K of base memory, we were able to run it on a system with just 500K free.

Graphic modes

VGA	✓	SVGA	✗

Soundboards

Ad Lib	✗	Roland	✗	Sound Blaster	✓

Control

Joystick	✗	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✗

Performance

Optimum speed	33MHz
Minimum memory	2Mb
Free RAM required	500K

Verdict

Occasionally pretty, rarely interesting.

rating **5**

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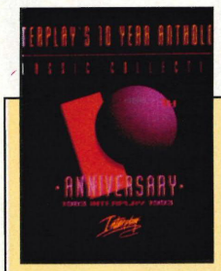


Title	**Interplay's Ten Year Anthology**
Publisher	**Interplay**
Contact	**(0865) 390029**
Price	**£49.99**

Ten years is a long time in video games, and Interplay's celebratory CD compilation goes to prove that nostalgia ... well, it ain't what it used to be

Interplay's Ten Year Anthology

Right: The Bard's Tale stands up to present day RPGs in terms of gameplay quite well, and it's worth remembering that it was something of a pioneer in its field.

What were you doing ten years ago? If memory serves, I was playing with my Commodore 64 and having fantasies about my German teacher, but over in Irvine, California, a bunch of committed individuals were setting up Interplay Productions, a development house which was to become one of the major specialists in computer role-playing games.

To celebrate Interplay's first decade of games publishing it has put together this CD package bearing ten of its titles, one from each year it's been in the business.

Anyone remember CGA?

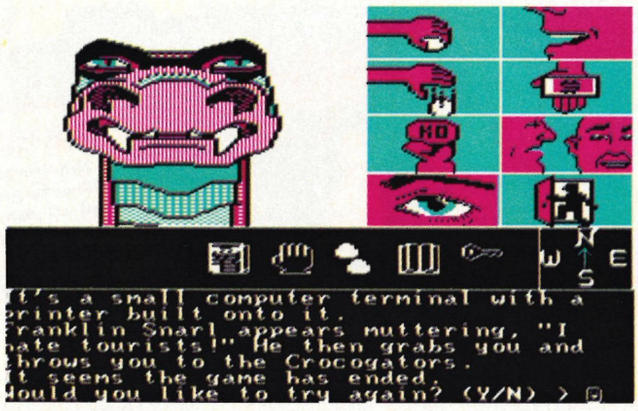
Back in 1984, Mindshadow garnered rave reviews for its 'high resolution graphics' for each location and full sentence parser. All clever stuff in those days, but, oh dear, time and tide wait for no adventure game.

As the game opens, you're coming to on the shore of a desert island with no memory of how you got there, and the object of the game is to find clues which help you piece together the events of the recent past and witness the plot thickening. The plot may be interesting, but the story-telling is terse with confusing or unhelpful responses to commands. One of the game's most annoying features, though, is the way your character's demise often comes right out of the blue. That's CGA blue of course, as all the screens are done out in lurid magenta and light blue with chunky black shading, so if the instant deaths don't put you off, the ghastly graphics will.

Much the same can be said for Tass Times in Tone Town. It does sport simply animated graphics, though, and the command system is a slight improvement in that it provides a set of icons for commands such as 'get' and 'north'. The story isn't as interesting as Mindshadow's, giving you the job of tracking down a kidnapped inventor in an alternate dimension where punk rock apparently never died out, and where people talk in impenetrable style jargon.

It's not easy to follow, and one wrong move results in death at the fangs of a giant snake, so when the game asked, "Do you want to start again?" it was the 'N' key for me every time.

Below: Tass Times in Tone Town had a bit of a cult following in its day. It's a bit like finding a Billy Idol album in your record collection and remembering he was once quite cool.



Graphically challenged

The Bard's Tale is what you might call the seminal PC RPG. It has its basis in D&D board games, and has you guiding a team of wizards and warriors around cities, dungeons and wastelands, acquiring weapons, learning spells and duffing up monsters in a quest to defeat an evil mage called Mangar.



Among other things, The Bard's Tale was the first game to give you a 3D view of the world around you, though by current standards, the EGA graphics look very basic. The other thing that might put players off the game these days is the long-winded combat-by-rounds. Mind you, if you can stand that, you should get a lot out of Bard's Tale because it's a very open-ended game with vast scope for developing your characters and dozens of spells and abilities to master.

Dragon Wars is similar, but with much-improved graphics. Combat is by rounds again, but there's a useful keyboard macro system which lets speed things up by putting 32 strung-together combat commands on a function key. Dragon Wars also has the rather quaint feature (probably an anti-piracy measure) of asking you to look up numbered paragraphs in the



manual, like the descriptions in a Fighting Fantasy book, when you come across something of interest.

Wasteland also uses these bizarre manual consultations to fill in the details while your party of desert rangers treks across post-holocaust dunelands looking for trouble. The graphics here are a bit feeble, but the gameplay is a very similar mix of 50% wandering empty desert, 30% combat and 20% plot revelations. I prefer to have less of the wandering empty desert and more of the other two, so I didn't really go for this one.

Recent offerings

Lord of the Rings is in a similar vein to these last three RPGs, but the plot is that of the first book of Tolkien's trilogy. If you're expecting something akin to Tolkien's gripping prose, though, you may be disappointed. The simple graphics and pretty colours aren't exactly the sort of images I had in my head when I was reading The Fellowship of the Ring.





There's certainly a lot to of ground to cover as you build up your party of hobbits, elves and humans on the way to Mount Doom, but the action is sparse and I didn't find the excitement or the atmosphere of the book came across very well.

Battle Chess is the representative for 1989, when it drew much interest because the playing pieces were actually sprites for the bishop, knight, queen, et al, which walked around the board and had a punch-up to claim their squares.

It still looks pleasant, but the novelty of the graphics soon wears off, revealing that what Battle Chess really lacks is the meaty set of play options that most chess enthusiasts seem to like. It's perhaps best suited to youngsters learning the game, partly because of the attractive graphics and partly because of the well-written manual which offers a good overview of chess and takes the novice through the basic strategies clearly.

There's more strategy available in Castles, in which you, a Saxon king, have to hire enough builders to construct castles around the kingdom of Albion, and deploy enough soldiers to defend them from raiding Celts. There's a smattering of diplomacy and some interesting little sub-plots in there, but most of the time seems to be spent just cajoling masons into putting your four walls up.

Out of this World may be an unfamiliar title, but in fact it's Delphine's excellent Another World, which Interplay published under a different name in the US. In this combination of platform game, puzzle and adventure, you play Lester Chaykin, a scientist mysteriously transported into another dimension full of ravenous black beasts and belligerent, spud-headed guards.

The graphics are unusual in that they're all filled vectors, but they're very smooth, and the Sound Blaster effects are great. The only problem is that the controls can be a bit flaky, failing to produce the expected effect and always at the wrong moment, making the game annoyingly difficult in places.

My favourite game of the whole compilation is Star Trek 25th Anniversary, which earns my admiration mainly for the way the designers have captured the spirit of the Trek so accurately. Kirk's unmistakable brand of leadership is evident, as is the McCoy/Spock sniping, a bit of Vulcan neck pinching, some deep space phaser-fighting against Romulans, space rogue Harry Mudd, and even the jokey bit on the bridge at the end of each mission.

The thing I like most about this game is that solving the puzzles is easier if you ask yourself what Captain Kirk would do in this situation. Trek fans will love it.

Down memory lane

So, this compilation is a bit of a mixed bag, all in all. It's not as if there's something for everybody here, because even the best of the bunch have been surpassed in recent years and the rest of the games date from the time when RPGs were played exclusively by people who were well into the genre.

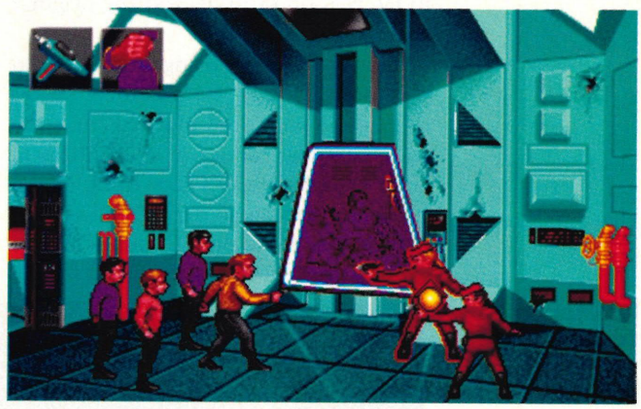
If you were one of those people, the nostalgia trip is worth the money, but it's still £50 which confirms that things just ain't what they used to be in PC games. Thankfully.

■ Paul Glancey

Left: Castles is a strategy game based in Merrie England. Well and truly superseded by Castles II, there's a CD-ROM version of the latter in development at the moment.

Far left: Lord of the Rings develops the Bard's Tale style RPG theme further, although Tolkien purists may find the presentation doesn't hit the right note.

Below: Star Trek 25th Anniversary, my personal favourite, because, unlike Lord of the Rings, it captures the essence of the original perfectly.



Techspec

None of the games run directly from the CD — they must be installed on to the hard drive first. Castles, Star Trek, Out of this World, Battle Chess and Lord of the Rings are best played on a 33 MHz 386 or better with VGA, but the rest could be played on an 8086.

Disk requirements

High density	✗
Hard disk only	✓
Space taken on hard disk	16Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	✗	EGA	✓	Tandy	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		

Soundboards

Ad Lib ✓	Roland ✓	Sound Blaster ✓

Control

Joystick ✓	Keyboard ✓	Mouse ✓

Performance

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

Verdict
Some ups and downs, but good value for hard core RPG fans

rating **6**

Fame at last ...

While the installer program copies your chosen game from the CD to the hard drive it also presents you with pics of the coding grunts responsible, along with extracts from their memoirs in which they reminisce about what hard work programming this game was, but, hey, what a wild'n'crazy time they had doing it. Those marketing guys and their wacky ideas, having to scrap your working design and redo it all from scratch in no time flat — it all sounds just like working for PC Review.



Title	**Conspiracy**
Publisher	**Virgin Interactive**
Contact	**(081) 960 2255**
Price	**£44.99**

Conspiracy

KGB is a year-old adventure set in post Cold War Moscow — now reborn as Conspiracy with a multimedia facelift



The actor Donald Sutherland has just the right long-lugubrious face to play a Soviet dissident, which makes it all the more of a shame that there isn't more of him in Conspiracy. As things stand, he's the one distinguishing factor between this CD-ROM version of KGB, and the original disk release.

The trend towards using 'real' actors to play parts on CD-ROM games, rather than some poor soul plucked from the company post-room for 15 minutes of fame, is undoubtedly a good thing. We've had some truly awful 'acting' and monotonous voice-overs on CD games before, and if this interactive multimedia entertainment — or whatever this month's buzz-phrase is — thing is ever going to gain any real credibility, then the more big names and genuine heavyweight talent the better — and I'd certainly put Sutherland into this category. Having signed him up, though, couldn't Virgin have milked more out of him than a spoken intro and odd bits of 'advice' throughout the game?

The original KGB was a thoroughly enjoyable piece of nonsense set in Moscow in 1991, in which you played a rookie KGB agent investigating a black market dealer ring, which turns out to be something altogether nastier and tied in with the mysterious death of your parents in a booby-trapped car. With distinctive, slightly caricatured graphics, and credible on-screen dialogue, it successfully evoked a seedy, down-at-heel Moscow in which everyone is on the make, and no-one can be trusted.



KGB, sorry, Conspiracy's Muscovite's are all pretty unhappy with their lot: only a real cad would bully Irina, who holds some vital information in Chapter One.

As a computer adventure, in terms of the interface and depth and complexity of the puzzles, it's a very conventioanl adventure game, but the scenario was fresh, and it told a good story well, with some nice touches.

So where does the veteran Canadian screen actor come in? Sutherland plays a narrator's role, as the ghost of your dead father. He introduces the game, explaining the background to the plot in a thoroughly plausible Russian accent (although his speech is also subtitled on-screen (is this a hangover of the tradition

that all dialogue in computer games has to be written up on screen in a clunky typeface, or does Virgin anticipate users having memory problems outputting the speech?). He is also occasionally available during the game to give spoken help: if you've reached a dead end, for example, he will tell you, rather than you wasting your time 'looking', 'inspecting' and 'using' your items to no avail. You can choose whether you want a lot of Donald's help, or just a little — I reckon you'd have to be pretty green at adventures to need the former option.

He sounds excellent, giving the game a gravitas which it probably doesn't altogether deserve — there is a vein of humour running through KGB — so it's also a pity that he looks as though he's talking to you through a thick mesh security grille, but then memory-economic digitisation has some way to go yet in technological terms.

But those excerpts apart, what we have here is the original KGB. And if you've played KGB, you've played KGB: it's not really a cut-and-come-again adventure, even for the Sutherland factor. If you're that keen on him, rent a copy of Don't Look Now instead. If KGB means nothing to you, this is definitely worth a look,although as a CD-ROM release, it's a rather half-hearted attempt at multimedia.

■ **Christina Erskine**

Life is spartan in early 90s Russia — which at least makes the graphics clear and screens uncluttered. Despite the often bleak look of the game, there is a faint air of parody around the dialogue and characterisation.

Techspec

You'll need a double speed CD-ROM drive and a fast machine to keep the pace of the game going. The installation program — which copies a batch file to your hard drive for loading — obligingly tests the speed and consistency of your CD drive and will warn you if it thinks it will end up running the program slowly.

Graphic modes

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

Soundboards

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

Control

Joystick	x	**Keyboard**	x	**Mouse**	✓

Performance

Optimum speed	**33MHz**
Minimum memory	**2Mb**
Free RAM required	**540K**

Verdict
An effective performance by Donald Sutherland adds weight to an old game

rating **6**

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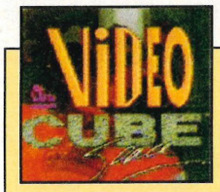
PC REVIEW MARCH 1994

Video Cube: Space



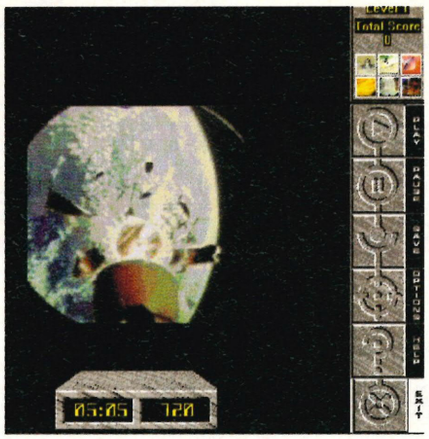
Title	**Video Cube: Space**
Publisher	**Active / Aris**
Contact	**(081) 838 1280**
Price	**£34.99**

Video Cube: Space eschews the violence and pace of space combat for the healthy and exciting challenge of picture reassembly. It runs under Windows only, and presents you with a square grid of jumbled cubes. On each side of each cube is part of six digitised space-type pictures, and you have a limited amount of time to move the cubes around until those parts join up into one of the six pictures. Unlike sliding block puzzle games, the cubes don't move around the grid, they just swivel in place, left, right, up and down, when you click on one of their edges. After uncovering a few similar-looking fragments you get an idea of what the whole picture is, so keep clicking until the image of an astronaut, rocket or satellite is revealed in all its grainy glory.

Once the pic is completed, it turns into one of 108 full-motion video sequences supplied by NASA. So the astronaut gets stuck into some extra-vehicular activity, the Titan rocket launches, and the satellite drifts into the atmosphere of Venus, while some slightly insipid music escapes from your speakers. But, there's no time to be left awestruck, because you still have five more pictures to unjumble before you finish the level — and there are 17 more levels to go before you finish the game!

Playing Video Cube is like completing a jigsaw as fast as you can, because you just have to keep spinning all the cubes, trying different pieces until you spot familiar bits of rocket fuel line that join together. What makes it surprisingly playable, though, is the Krypton Factor, against-the-clock element which gets more intense as you play. The grid is divided into more cubes as the game progresses, and by the time you get to level three you have to re-associate 36 snippets in about 90 seconds — enough to get my visual cortex in a right twist.

It wouldn't impress your mates because the full-motion video window is small and the graphics are slow and grainy. After going through the first levels one satellite/ astronaut/ rocket begins to look much like another, and my enthusiasm for solving another 80 puzzles to see more of the same starts to drop off markedly.



■ Paul Glancey

Techspec

The packaging recommends a 486-25 or better, but when I switched my 486 into 25 MHz mode the animation and the control response both became jerky. As well as a 150 K/sec CD drive, you need 4Mb RAM, and an SVGA card with 512K of RAM which can display Windows 3.1 at 640x480 in 256 colours.

Graphic modes

VGA ✗ SVGA ✓

Soundboards

Ad Lib ✗ Roland ✗ Sound Blaster ✓

Control

Joystick ✗ Keyboard ✗ Mouse ✓

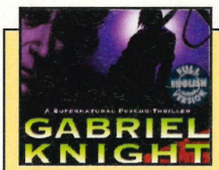
Performance

Optimum speed	**33MHz**
Minimum memory	**4Mb**
Free RAM required	**565K**

Verdict
Enjoyable puzzle game, which misses some opportunities

rating **5**

Gabriel Knight



Title	**Gabriel Knight**
Publisher	**Sierra**
Contact	**(0743) 303322**
Price	**£44.99**

Gabriel, a struggling novelist, stumbles across a series of brutal Voodoo murders when researching a book, and ends up battling the supernatural for possession of his soul. This atmospheric and thoroughly captivating adventure will keep you on the edge of your seat right up until the end, and the plot contains several dramatic twists. It was excellent on floppy disk, (rated 9, Issue 29), but it's even better on CD.

The fact that this version is a 'talkie' is unremarkable, but what *is* surprising is that the roles are played by well-known actors. British actor Tim Curry plays Gabriel himself, Mark "Luke Skywalker" Hamill (so *that's* what happened to him) takes the part of Detective Mosely and Michael Dorn (Worf in Star Trek: The Next Generation) is Dr John. The speech quality is excellent, and what's more, the lip-synching is near-as-dammit perfect — something of a first!

In addition, there are more animations, more sound effects and the music has been enhanced. It doesn't run at its best on a single speed drive — the animations are jerky and it couldn't cope with speech and music at the same time. Running it on a double speed drive is an altogether different experience. The animations flow better and there are no problems with the sound at all, other than the odd click if you opt for minimal installation.

As a bonus, there's a video on the making of the game, including some entertaining interviews with the cast. If you haven't already bought the disk version, give this CD consideration. You won't be disappointed.



■ Cal Jones

Techspec

Graphic modes

VGA ✓ SVGA ✓

Soundboards

Ad Lib ✓ Roland ✓ Sound Blaster ✓

Control

Joystick ✗ Keyboard ✗ Mouse ✓

Performance

Optimum speed	**486 20MHz**
Minimum memory	**640K**
Free RAM required	**585K**

Verdict
A stunning game — and doubly impressive on CD.

rating **9**

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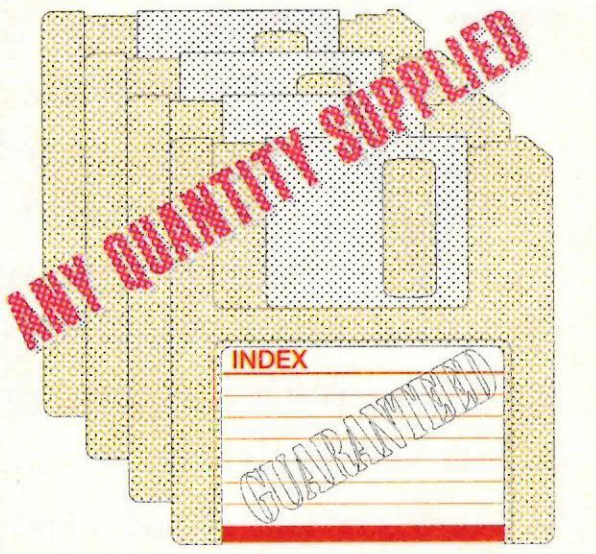

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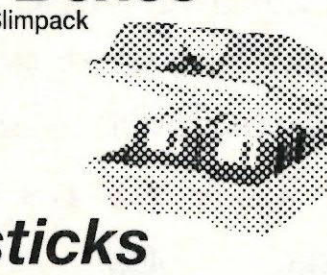

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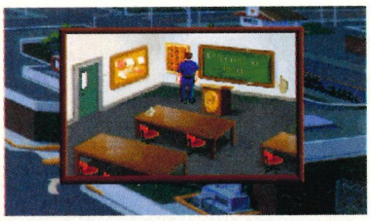
BUDGET reviews

A brilliant buy or a waste of time? We sort out the best from the rest in this month's budget bargains

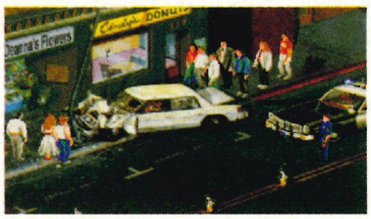


Police Quest 1 — In Pursuit of the Death Angel
Kixx XL
£16.99

Don't be surprised if you find yourself tearing your hair with frustration at your progress in Police Quest 1. Sierra produces the sort of police adventure which requires an extremely observant player at the best of times, and PQ1 is where it all started (there are now four game sin the series altogether). The emphasis is on realism and police procedure, so bewarned. This is serious stuff.

Anyway, the game puts you in the role of a street cop who gets promoted to an undercover job in the Drugs Squad infiltrating the "Death Angel" Gang. That's your mission, should you chose to accept it, and the traditional adventure gameplay, in which you'll need to know your police procedure, is enhanced by a scoring feature and multiple solutions.

Ahough it's been several years since Police Quest 1 first made an



appearance, it has stood the test of time well. The graphics may not be what's considered state of the art nowadays, but they're detailed enough and, in some scenes very gory. So if you enjoy a good, tough and semi-realistic adventure game, but are feeling financially challenged — put your cash on Police Quest 1. It'll be well worth it.



Steg The Slug
Codemasters
£9.99



Steg is a happy-go-lucky green slug who travels through deep, dark caverns trying to feed his children (affectionatley known as T'yungunz). The only problem is that he has no legs or hands to capture food with, so he has to blow bubbles around maggots and float the maggots to the T'yungunz nest. It's all very, very strange.

To help him on his quest for food, Steg picks up various pieces of equipment lying around in the caverns. These include NitroPills, Bionic Legs and (best of all) Rocket Packs.

There are plenty of levels to play through, and some quite awkward little problems to solve along the way. Although the graphics aren't the best in the world, but they are well defined and the colours are



bright and cheerful. Mind you, the music willalmost certainly drive you up the wall with its tedious beeping, so turn the sound right down, or better still right off.

For a tenner, Steg is a quirky variation on the standard, and very tired, platform game. But once the novelty of the puzzles wears off it quickly becomes dull. It's a good bet for kids, but if you're into double figures I wouldn't bother.



Eye of the Beholder
Kixx/XL
£16.99

This was the first of the Advanced Dungeons and Dragons trilogy and remains — arguably — the best of the bunch. The fact that the tabletop game was released in the 1970s, and computer variations are still going strong 20 years later only goes to show that the popularity of fantasy role-playing remains constant.

However, although the concept and the quality of the overall story may have weathered rather well-since Eye of the Beholder was released, the technology has dated-rather badly.

When compared to more modern smooth-moving RPGs, the very basicflick scrolling is so slow and jerky that before long it had me reaching for the Aspirin to combat eyestrain.

This does lessen the enjoyment, but not enough to spoil an otherwise excellent game of swords and sorcery.

Eye of the Beholder is a fantastic adventure which will always deliver a great game, tough puzzles and a great storyline. A classic, and-definitely worth £16.99.





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

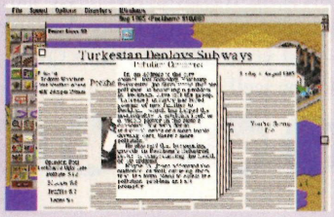
RECOMMENDS RECOMMENDS RECOMMENDS RECOMMENDS



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 Gabriel Knight on CD-ROM — recommended this month

Answer the two questions below and send the form to PC Review Recommended, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, to reach us by April 10, 1994, and your entry will be placed in the prize draw.

Please note that this is a separate competition to the PC Review Recommended competition for the disk-based version of Gabriel Knight published last month. There are five copies of the CD-ROM up for grabs as well as five copies of the disk-based program.

❑ Gabriel Knight (CD-ROM)

Q: What is Gabriel's occupation?

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

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PC Review Recommended games

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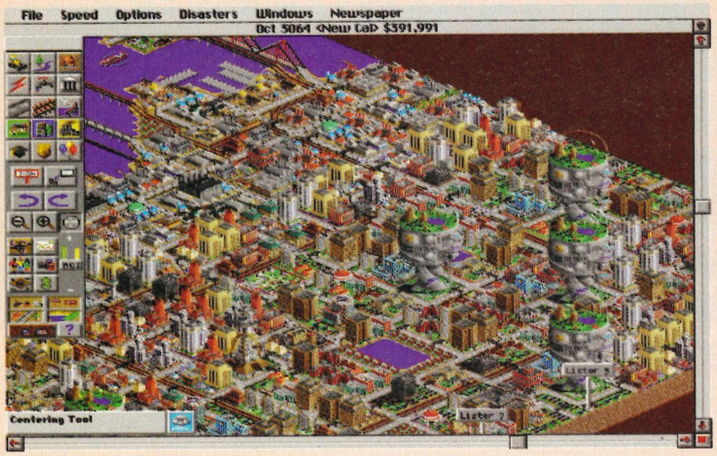
If you'd like the chance to win a copy of Gabriel Knight on CD-ROM, simply answer the question on the form, left, and send your entry on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope to PC Review Recommended, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

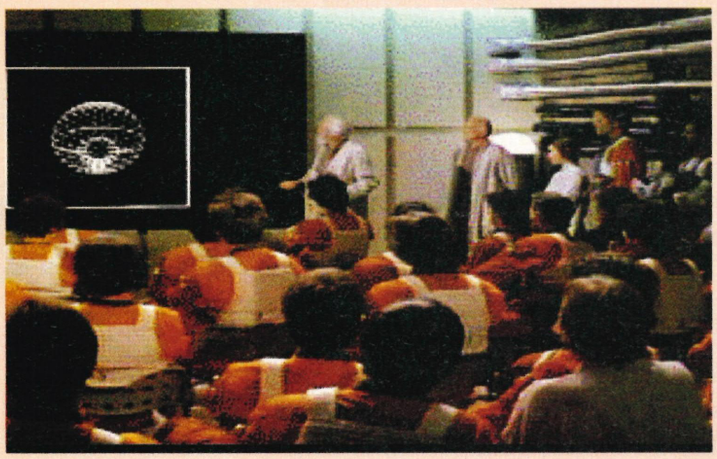
The closing date is April 10, 1994, and any entries received after that will not go into the prize draw. All normal competition rules apply, particularly the one about not sending in multiple entries. One form per person, please!

Disk charts: *the PC Top 10*



1. Sim City 2000	*Maxis*
2. Police Quest 4	*Sierra*
3. Premier Manager 2	*Gremlin*
4. TFX	*DID/Ocean*
5. Flight Simulator 5.0	*Microsoft*
6. B-Wing	*LucasArts/US Gold*
7. Mortal Kombat	*Virgin*
8. Frontier: Elite 2	*Gametek*
9. X-Wing	*LucasArts/US Gold*
10. Alone in the Dark 2	*Infogrames*

CD-ROM charts: *the PC Top 10*



1. Rebel Assault	*LucasArts/US Gold*
2. Lawnmower Man	*The Sales Curve*
3. Gabriel Knight	*Sierra*
4. Iron Helix	*MicroProse*
5. TFX	*DID/Ocean*

Charts courtesy of Virgin Retail

REVIEWED THIS MONTH

BloodNet	**8**
Pinball Fantasies	**8**
Quest for Glory IV	**8**
Archon Ultra	**7**
UFO: Enemy Unknown	**7**
Championship Manager	**6**
Hired Guns	**6**
Unnecessary Roughness	**6**
Daemonsgate	**5**
Nomad	**5**
Micro Machines	**4**
Jonny Quest	**3**
Airlines	**2**

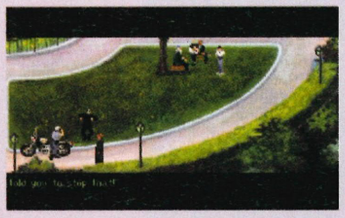
CD-ROM GAMES

Gabriel Knight	**9**
Conspiracy	**6**
Ten Years of Interplay	**6**
Lawnmower Man	**5**
Videó Cube	**5**

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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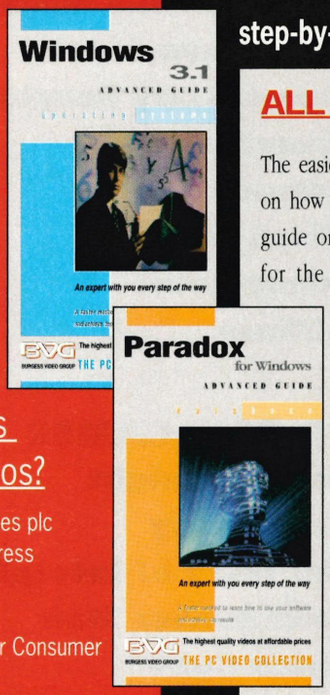

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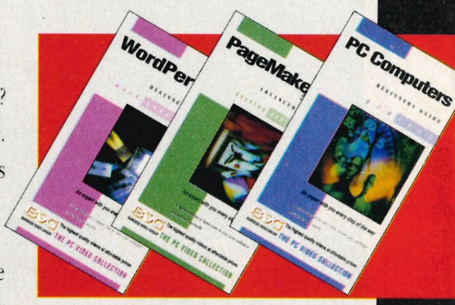

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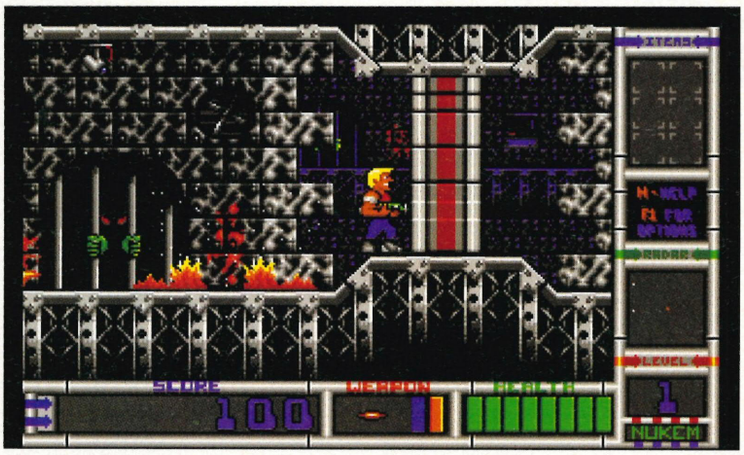
Shareware reviews

This month Sam Mackenzie checks out the sequels to two classic shareware games, Blake Stone and Duke Nukem, while practising his music composing skills in slow motion and at night



Duke Nukem II

Duke is back, still bouncing around and shooting like a lunatic, but this time the animation is better: the game is now in full VGA and uses parallax scrolling to give a 3D effect, the sound effects and music are also excellent although they sound terrible through the internal speaker.

Supplier:	*Springsoft*
Tel:	*(0352) 770049*
Product code:	*NUKEM II*
Price:	*£2.49*
Registration price:	*£29*
Registration package:	*Three more episodes plus a tips book*
Minimum specification:	*A 286 is the minimum but a 386 with 560K RAM would be preferable. Supports VGA, Ad Lib, Sound Blaster and joystick.*
Disk space:	*3.5Mb*

Product Duke Nukem II

shareware tech spec - 1993 -

At the start of the game there is a long graphical introduction to the storyline, which is basically as follows: Duke has been kidnapped by evil aliens who are going to suck all the knowledge from his brain and turn him into a zombie. Enjoyable first time around, this intro sequence can, thankfully, be bypassed in subsequent games.

Duke Nukem II is basically a platform game, the object of which is to get out of the prison and zap everyone you can on the way. Duke has four weapons at his disposal — a blaster, a laser cannon, some missiles and a flame thrower. The flame thrower can also be pointed down and used like a jet pack.

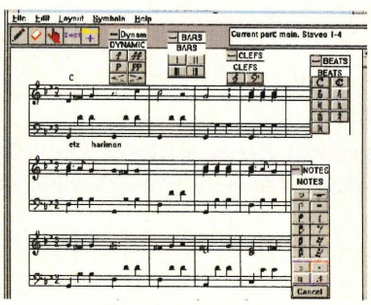
The shareware version has one of the four episodes — you get the other three when you register.

This sequel really is just an improved Duke Nukem. If you enjoyed the first game and played it to the end then you will want this second instalment, but don't expect anything too ground-breaking.

Muzika 2.0

If you want to write music, then a way of transcribing it that doesn't involve hours scrawling with pen and manuscript paper must be useful. Muzika 2.0 is a notation program for Windows that is much less expensive than commercial notation programs — but don't expect perfection for the price.

When you start the program, you are presented with a blank sheet of paper on to which you can place ledger, notes, etc, by dragging symbols from a range of icon toolbars. You can also create simple melodies and group notes to make chords. The placement of notes is realistically intelligent, in that they are formatted according to where they are on the stave — a middle C has its stem going up while the C above is automatically the other way up. Ledger lines are added as needed and chords are formed when multiple notes are placed together. It's as easy as using a word processor for music. The program can handle up to 16 parts with multiple staves per part. Text can be added anywhere on the page for notes or for songs but only short phrases can be edited at one time.

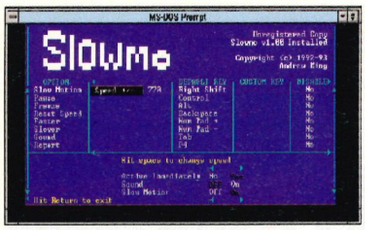


Supplier:	*PDSL*
Tel:	*(0892) 663298*
Product code:	*3965*
Price:	*£6.00 or less*
Registration price:	*No registered version*
Registration package:	*No registered version*
Minimum ppecification:	*PC with windows*
Disk space:	*800K*

Product Muzika 2.0

shareware tech spec - 1993 -

Once you have composed or transcribed your masterpiece you can use the MIDI Setup command to assign voices to the parts and then generate a MIDI file. The MIDI file can then be played by Windows Media Player — assuming that you have a sound card fitted. This is where I hit trouble with the program. The sample MIDI file played OK, but every time I tried to create a new MIDI file the program crashed with a general protection error. The file was created and it played, but it didn't sound as it should. I tried the program on two other machines with the same result. I hope the program doesn't normally behave like this, but I couldn't make this aspect of it work satisfactorily. This reservation aside, I can recommend Muzika 2 as a cheap alternative and introduction to music software — provided you are familiar with music notation.



SlowMo

Up-to-date or well written software makes use of the machine's timer to ensure that each step takes the same amount of time no matter how fast the machine runs. Older software often uses delay loops — small sections of code that waste time. Unfortunately how much time a delay loop wastes depends on how fast the machine is running. So if you run a game written for a slow machine on a 486 the result can be quite amazing — and a clue to just how slow PCs used to be.

SlowMo uses the machine's timer to slow any program down. You load it before you run the game and it attaches itself to the standard timer routine. SlowMo simply introduces a delay before the timer routine is allowed to return to the running program. You can configure SlowMo to alter the delay, but you can also change it interactively by pressing hot keys. There is also a pause and freeze facility.

SlowMo can be also used to master programs that require just a little more skill than you actually have. When the action gets too fast just hit the slow-down hot key.

SlowMo will not work with all programs. Some interfere with the timer interrupt for their own purposes and this deactivates SlowMo. So it's a case of, when it works it's wonderful, and when it doesn't you're no better off.

Supplier:	*Springsoft*
Tel:	*(0352) 770049*
Product code:	*BLAKE*
Price:	*£2.49*
Registration price:	*£4.00*
Registration package:	*Latest version*
Minimum specification:	*Any machine*
Disk space:	*28K*

Product
SlowMo

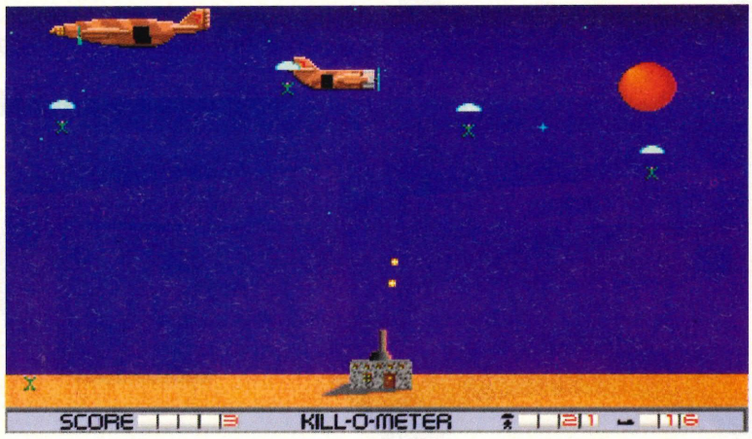
shareware tech spec - 1993 -

Blake Stone: Aliens of Gold

Blake Stone is best described as Wolfenstein with a ray gun. The game consists of a 3D maze that you, as Blake Stone, walk through. Some of the people you meet are belligerent, some are not. Quite simply, you shoot the enemy and talk to informers, and try not to get shot yourself. The maze effect is convincing, with lots of interior detail and even surface textures.

Blake Stone has many improvements over the original 3D maze games. It uses higher resolution and has animated presentations between each level. There are also a range of new traps and problems to solve — one-way doors, crates that can be blown apart, electrically linked doors, roving mines and so on.. There are also 20 different types of people that you will run into — guards, aliens, mutants and interactive informants.

Once again this isn't anything new, just a different story line and some technical improvements. Blake Stone, like Doom, is certainly worth trying, however to make the program work you do need to have a machine using DOS 5 or better and 605K of free conventional memory. You also need a fairly fast machine to do the animation justice — a 486SX preferably. If your machine isn't up to this then read the help files because they tell you how to disable some of the game's features to make it run faster. It is important that the game runs fast enough to give you the feeling that you are in complete control over Blake — otherwise it all falls apart. Although you don't need a sound card to run the program, the sound effects and the music are good enough to make you go and buy one! Blake Stone tops the original Wolfenstein in technical implementation and playablity, and almost comes close to Doom. Check it out, if you can handle the gore.



Supplier:	*Springsoft*
Tel:	*(0352) 770049*
Product code:	*BLAKE*
Price:	*£2.49*
Registration price:	*£34.08 (for three levels) or £49.95 (for six levels)*
Registration package:	*Three or six levels and a cheat book*
Minimum specification:	*386 with 605K RAM and MS-DOS5 or better. Supports VGA, Ad Lib, Sound Blaster and joystick.*
Disk space:	*from 3.3Mb*

Product
Blake Stone: Aliens of Gold

shareware tech spec - 1993 -



Night Raid

In Night Raid you are bunkered up with a big gun and an unlimited supply of ammo. Planes fly over and parachutists jump out, trying to land and overpower you. To stop them, you blast away at anything that moves. If three parachutists manage to land, they will blow your bunker up. However, if you keep your finger on the fire button you can spray bullets in all directions and, basically, kill everything.

The quality of the animation is outstanding (watch out for the alien space ship and the pizza deliverer) and the humour. If you hit a parachutist then the result is gory, and if you have a sound card the effects add superbly to the experience!

Also, given that each bullet you fire costs you a point and each attacker you hit gains you points you might even be tempted to play the game more skilfully than just spraying bullets everywhere — but not at first!

Night Raid is a lot more fun than I initially expected and I was tempted to register just to see what other attack waves it had in store.

Supplier:	*PDSL*
Tel:	*(0892) 663298*
Product code:	*H339*
Price:	*£6.00 or less*
Registration price:	*£15.00*
Registration package:	*More levels*
Minimum specification:	*286 or better with 535K RAM.*
Disk space:	*800K*

Product
Night Raid

shareware tech spec - 1993 -

QED

A helping hand amidst all the blood, gore and severed limbs ...

DOOM

Been there, done that, bought the chainsaw ... If you grabbed a copy of last month's PC Review, you'll have had the chance to play through the first chapter of Doom. A month on, it's a fair bet you'll have found most — if not all — the hidden weapons, crucial keys and the secret level.

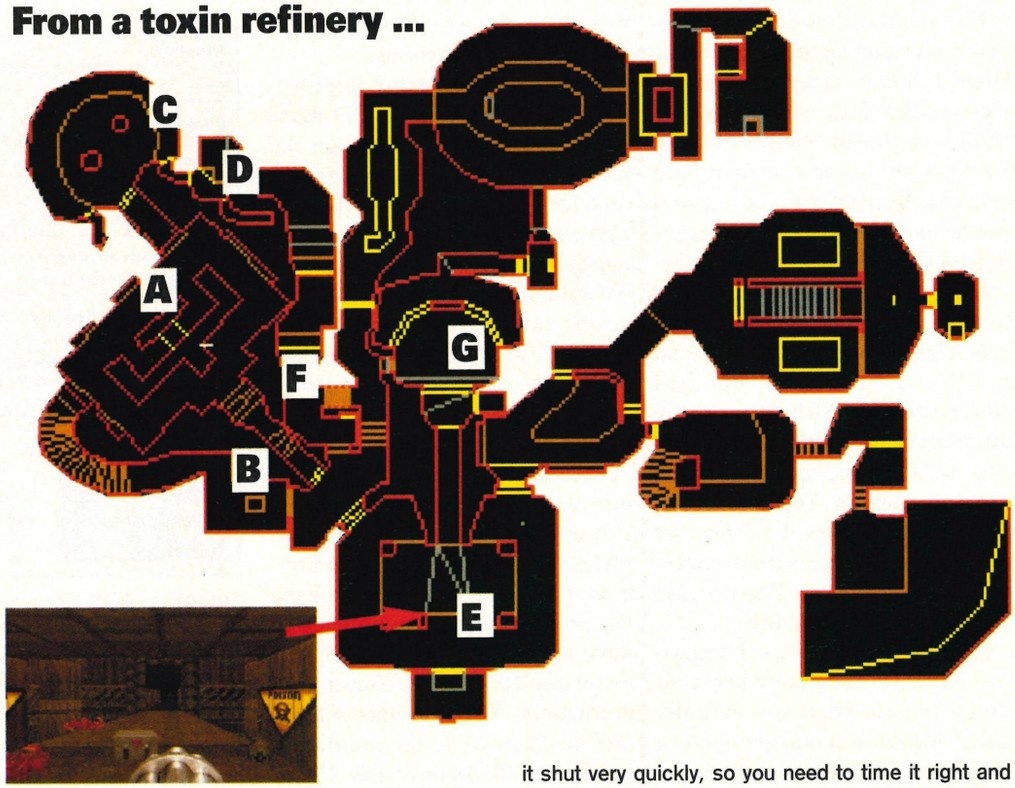
Ah, the secret level. Well, just in case you missed the military base in chapter one, here's the way to get to it:

The military base is found from the toxin refinery (level three, chapter one). Getting to it is tricky. You need to get through the hidden door at A, activated by the pressure plate at B (see the map, right). If you turn the sound up you'll hear the door opening in the distance when you stand on the plate. You'll also hear it shut very quickly, so you need to time it right and move at full speed.

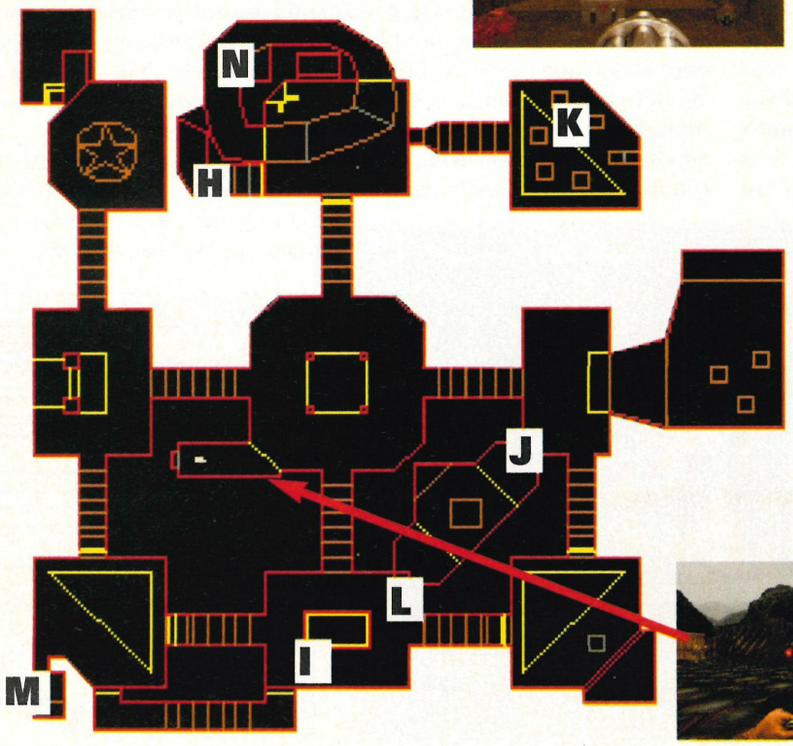
From there you need to drop down into the toxic waste at C, then follow the road ahead. The switch at D will lower the drawbridge at E, and there is a secret panel right next to it. Carry on through there, and you'll come back to the main area at F. Return to the starting point, cross the drawbridge, plough on regardless of the opposition, and the secret exit is dead ahead of you (G).

When you've got there, you'll find that the military base is — not surprisingly — crawling with soldiers, so come out shooting straight away. It'd spoil the fun to give away too much here, but the key points are marked on the map, left.

From a toxin refinery ...



... to a secret military base



H Secret passage
I Blue Key
J Lift
K Tricky, but worth it
L Lift
M Secret passage
N Triggers door at A



The warrens

Chapters two and three — The Shores of Hell and Inferno — appear in the registered version of Doom (£34.95, from Transend). Along with the abnormally large dollops of completely mindless violence they both pose similar problems to the first chapter, but on a bigger scale.

So, here comes the route to the secret level on

QED

Inferno, secret level number three in the Doom scheme of things — the warrens.

The routine is quite simple. Starting in Erebus in chapter three, you've first got to survive the level — use the usual techniques: go slowly, kill everything that moves.

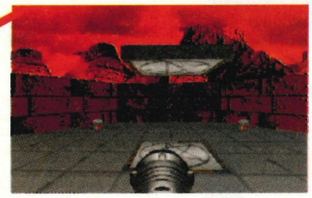
Make very careful use of any supercharge, invulnerability and rad-suits you find, because you'll need to hot-foot it across a fair bit of lava in the process. The main exit is marked at [1] as marked on the on the map, right.

The secret exit involves opening the panel at [2] (see right). To do this you need to have been on the ledge at [3], then drop down into the blue stuff, head round to the far side of the blue box and start hitting that spacebar. The teleporter at [4] will take you back to [5] in the middle of the map if you feel the need.

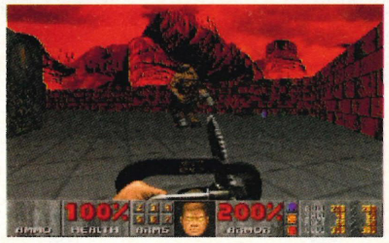
When you start in the warrens, don't be surprised if it all looks rather familiar. Things will only start to get out of hand when you stand on the teleporter.

From Erebus ...





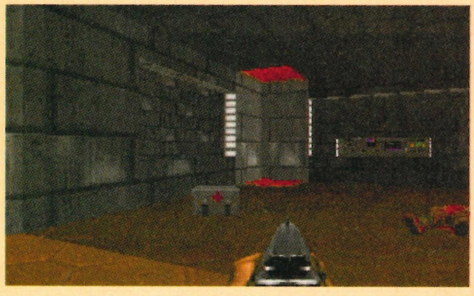
... to the warrens





Backtracking

It's always worth working your way back through a level to see if you've accidentally triggered any doors or panels. For example, an easy one to miss is at the start of chapter two. As you scythe your way through the level, you'll come across a button. This opens a teleporter right back at the start where you found the blue key (see picture, below left). If you pop back there for a visit, you'll find you can teleport into this (bottom left) chamber. Rule number one: come out shooting. Rule number two: don't leave till you've found the rocket launcher.





Hearing aids

Keep your ears open when playing Doom (provided you have a sound card, of course). You can hear doors opening in the distance when you step on a trigger plate, then home in on the sound. This is the only way to find some of the secrets.

Dangerous barrel alert

Until you get hold of a suitable weapon of mass destruction, you'll have to improvise. This is where the 'barrel shot' comes in:

Step one: poke your gun out from round a handy corner.

Step two: aim at the barrel.

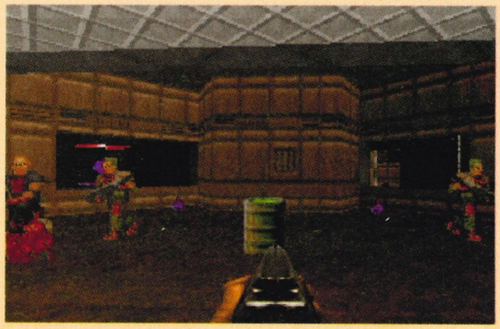
Step three: wait

Step four: here come the neighbours

Step five: fire

Step six: squelch, flop, splat

Step seven: laugh manically and say something Clint Eastwood-ish ...

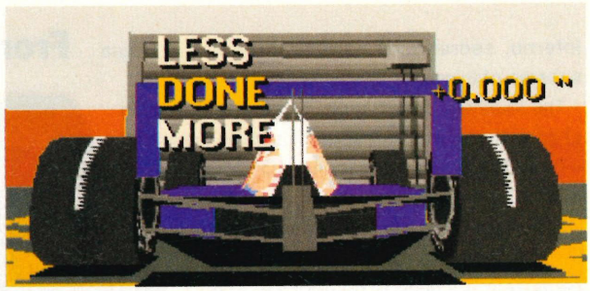




The sidestep ...

Simple, effective and oh, so enjoyable. Mastering the Alt-key sidestep is vital if you want to take out the bad guys before they come through the front door.

QED



Virgin's F1GP-beater can be a frustrating drive for speed freaks, but there are many ways of squeezing your Cosworth or Buick to the limit. Martin Klimes offers a few hints for the budding driver, manager and mechanic

Indycar Racing

The key to success on the track in IndyCar Racing is to build up your skill gradually. When first looking for a place to race, pick one of the oval circuits — Michigan, Milwaukee or New Hampshire.

In the main menu set the maximum number of opponents to eight (to avoid traffic jams) and run them at 95% of full speed. Be sure to leave the pace lap on, since Formula One style grid starts are guaranteed to lose you places.

Before practising, stop in at the garage and do a little messing about under the bonnet. Take half of the fuel out of the tank (it's just excess weight) and then turn the stagger up to the full +1" to help with steering around the consistently left hand corners of the oval circuits.

Now you're ready for a few practice laps, getting the feel of the corners and where to find the best line. Begin with your turbo-booster low, on about four, and slowly build it up to a top speed you can handle without losing control.

A bit of fine tuning is now all that stands between you and some major racing. Head into the garage again and modify the wing settings. Try dropping the angle (both front and back) by two degrees for a substantial increase in speed. Overdo it and you may blow an engine, though, so less is more on fast circuits.

Manual operation

Fairly soon you should be putting in some pretty respectable performances and it's time to start making life a little tougher for yourself.



Firstly, try putting gear-changes on manual. It takes a bit of getting used to but soon gives you the racing edge. At the same time, try experimenting with the gear ratios in the garage. Here small changes are the order of the day, since it's easy to find yourself blowing a dozen engines or not being able to get into sixth gear at all.

When you figure you've got the ovals sussed, put the number of opponents up to 16. Once you can weave your way through the traffic, you may find yourself winning all your races, so slowly increase their speed in the main menu to 100%. They'll be a lot tougher from now on.

Road circuits are a different kettle of herrings altogether and the first time you go round a new one you'll probably slide off at every corner, so take it easy and get used to the bends. There's really no other way if you're going to stand a chance in a race. Turn down the turbo again, and build up speed from scratch. However, few IndyCar thrills can beat the hard braking and accelerating at Long Beach.

On the road to excellence

The next stage on the IndyCar excellence trail is to make your races longer and race in random weather. If you can handle the pit-stops for tyre changes and fuel then you're on to a winner, and a championship title could be waiting at the end of a full season.

Finally, if you can win over the eight races, then switch collision damage on and try it all for real — no ramming opponents off the track, no cavalier antics like swerving into the path of the car behind, and no bouncing off walls when you take that hair-pin bend too fast. If you've built up your skill bit by tiny bit, there shouldn't be a problem. Happy racing.

Sim City 2000

QED

City building can be a tricky business. How do keep your sims happy? How can you possibly balance the budget? Let Maxis lead you through the finer points of metropolis creation

Building a successful, prosperous city can be a real pain in the backside. There you are with your carefully planned community — and things start to go horribly wrong. People move out, whole areas become derelict, a water shortage is reported and just when you thought it couldn't get any worse, your entire city centre is levelled by a earthquake. You're broke and your city is broke.

But whether you're starting from scratch or rebuilding ravaged areas of a current city, money is always a problem. While your city is still in the early stages, you'll find that cash can escape your clutches faster than a remand prisoner from a Group 4 van. So if your finances are a little restricted but you've got big plans, why not try the Maxis money-building scheme?

The Maxis money-builder

The easiest way to begin is to find a huge flat area of land and start a new city. Place a suitable power station near the edge of the map and place a 3x3 residential area several squares away. Adjacent to this zone, place a block of 1x2 commercial, and a block of 2x2 industrial to create a neat little rectangle (see picture, right).

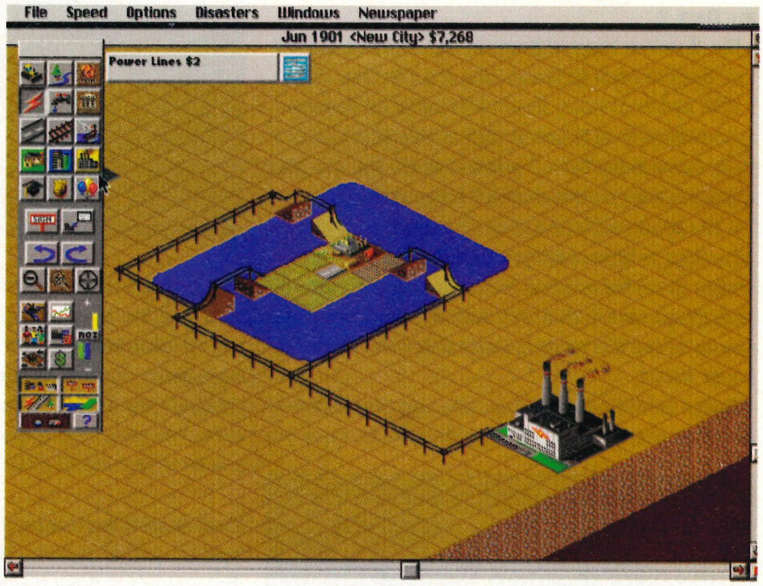
Place one block of road on the centre square of residential to join everything up, then surround it all with three blocks of water and connect it up to the power station. Repeat all this to build more mini-cities at three block intervals.

Why? Well, you will have created small but high land-value cities with no crime and no pollution and these will cheerfully make you money, while you concentrate on your major city elsewhere.

Perfect planning

But once your city gets bigger things get complicated. Some of the elements that influence progress in your city are surprisingly subtle. For example ...

Building your city in a corner means you can connect to a nearby city quicker; the benefits are increased trade and an influx of new settlers. As for power, it's worth remembering that hydroelectric and wind-powered stations don't spontaneously combust after 50 years!



Why not declare your metropolis a nuclear free zone? You won't be able to build a nuclear plant but your city will be a more desirable place to live. In fact, don't worry too much about city ordinances; your sims will prefer to live in a grubby city with low tax rates than a pristine community that takes a big chunk out of their wages.

Build water pumps close to water, because their efficiency is increased. Try to lay your main water pipes underneath the roads to ensure good connections.

Sims are essentially lazy and won't travel far to work. If you want to create a large residential zone, put some light commercial buildings on the street corners to give them employment opportunities.

The quality of your schools depends on teacher/pupil ratios as much as funding. Their rating will drop quickly down to Bs and Cs if there are too many children on the register — if the school is more than half full, in fact. Just build a few more schools, and watch the ratings rise. The same goes for police stations: once your city has reached a certain size, building more stations will have more of an effect on the crime rate than tinkering with the funding.

If you want big luxury apartments and commercial buildings, such as the office towers, theatres and corporate HQs, you'll need blocks of at least 3x3 squares, zoned densely, and land values around the £200,000 mark. Bump up the land value quickly by designing your dense zones in a square around a big park (see picture, left). You can also increase land values by about £10,000 per square by planting trees next to it.

Build arcologies next to police stations which reduces the crime in one fell swoop.

And finally ... don't play with the disasters switched off — what's the point, huh?



QED

Alone in the Dark 2

This month sees QED explode boldly from these humble pages and invade the cover disk with complete solutions to five of the top PC games around. Not only have we solved the marvellous Star Trek: 25th Anniversary but also the original Monkey Island game (now making a timely appearance on the Kixx XL budget label), The Labyrinth of Time, Simon the Sorcerer and even the Infogrames smash hit Alone in the Dark 2.

STAR TIP

So, if you're bogged down in any of these games, turn back to page 10 to see how you can take a peek.

With all this in mind, this month's star tip deservedly goes to Mr C W M Lee of Walthamstow for his complete Alone in the Dark 2 solution which you can read at your leisure on this month's cover disk.

If any of you intrepid gamers have solved a current adventure or have mastered a classic oldie, instead of writing down the solution on paper why not do the hi-tech thing: save it on a disk and send it in to QED — you could use this month's cover disk when you've finished with it.

Space permitting, we'll then take your words of wisdom and pop them on the cover disk. And if there are



any solutions you'd like to see included on the cover disk please don't hesitate to drop QED a line and let us know. In fact if you have any thoughts about QED at all, if you want more tips, more maps, or fewer tips, no maps, but even more solutions, or whatever, jot down your ideas and put them in the post to: QED, PC Review, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Cheers.

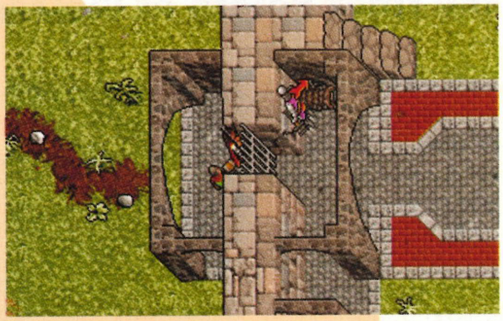
Indiana Jones & the Fate of Atlantis

S Gray from London is in the process of playing this superbly atmospheric LucasArts adventure. On the team path, Sophia has captured and dumped in the dungeon, meanwhile Indy is struggling in the canal trying to repair the sentry statue.

OK, first use the ladder on the statue and open its chest. Connect the spoked wheel to the centre peg, put the bronze gear on the top-left peg and the crescent-shaped gear on the two pegs on the right. Fix the statue part to the centre peg on top of the spoked wheel. Drop an orichalcum bead in the statue's mouth and it will then move its right arm. Climb down the ladder and connect one end of the chain to the bronze ring on the door and the other to the statue's right arm. Now climb back up the ladder and move the bronze gear to the bottom left peg. Use another orichalcum bead and hey presto the door will open.

Ultima corner

Two people from somewhere (I apologise, but I've filed away the letter and can't find it again) are hope-



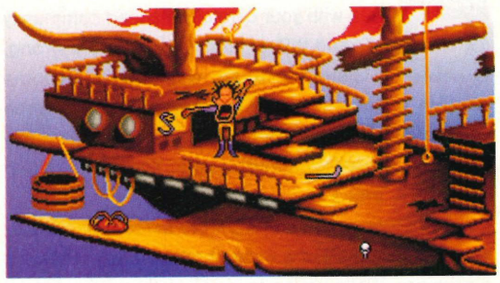
lessly stuck in Ultima Underworld 2. They've completed all the worlds, possess the banner, the horn and the air demon, found the sigil of binding, gained all eight gems and cut off the eight power lines. But ... although soaring to 15th level, gaining 15,000 experience and searching every world completely they are unable to find the basilisk oil. Where is it?

Basilisk oil is a clear potion which is identical to the 'restore mana' potion. This means, unfortunately, that you could have drunk some unwittingly. It can be found in a couple of locations.

There's a bottle in the pits of carnage, which you'll find in a chest in the room in which you waved Altara's wand. Another bottle is located in the section of the ethereal void which you access via the vault in the exam. The problem is that if you've already drunk it by mistake, you're well and truly stuck.

Staying firmly in Garriott-land, Rick Bond, from Plymouth, can't get into the cave at the shrine of the Codex on the Isle of the Avatar. His keys have mysteriously disappeared from his backpack. How do you get the keys back?

I'm afraid that if you've lost the keys it's not going to be easy getting them back. Unfortunately there is a bug in the game and sometimes if you go to sleep with your backpack on the keys will sprout little legs and go walkies. No, you can't get them back so you can either, a) load up a saved game and take your backpack off BEFORE you sleep, or, b) try to pick the locks with a lockpick. There's no other way we know of.



Goblins 3

Jan Bachman Andersen from Denmark has a game-spoiling cheat for the Coktel Vision puzzler Goblins 3 which goes like this ...

"If you're desperately stuck, use the five jokers to get to the home of Fourbalus, taking note of each joker. Now quit the game, don't bother saving it and erase the file Cat.inf from the GOB3 directory.

"This will restore the five jokers but sadly erase any saved positions. Restart the game and use 10-15 minutes to reach the home of Fourbalus again, but without using any jokers this time. Now use the jokers to advance five levels. Repeat the steps above to complete the game."

Rex Nebular & the Cosmic Gender Bender

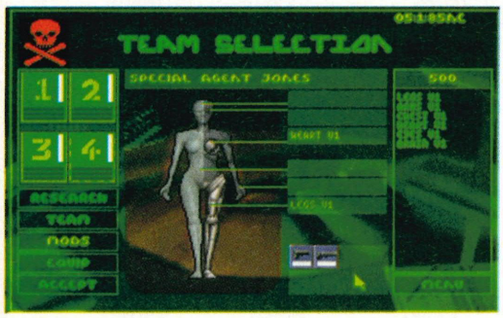
James Walsh is bogged down in this quirky MicroProse space adventure. After the building the time bomb how on earth do you find food for the monster?

It all comes down to how good a shot you are with a stuffed chicken. After you've made the bomb, travel to the Sandbar restaurant, open the cash till and take out the key. Pick up the fishing rod and disassemble it to get the fishing line. Go to Williams Bypass and unlock the control box of the winch. The boat above the restaurant will now descend to the floor.

Go to Sledges Mall and up to the maintenance platform. Attach the line to the hook on the concrete post. Return to the Sandbar, take the fishing line and tie it to the boat. Go to the North Sea window and put the timebomb on the ledge under the window. Return to the maintenance platform to await events.

Now... pull the fishing line to bring the boat to the platform, climb in and set off for the tower. When confronted by the sea monster, put the bomb in the chicken (you did pick up a chicken didn't you?) and throw it at the serpent.

QED



Syndicate

Jon Haluor Stridskier from Norway has a cheat, tip, hint (call it what you will) for Bullfrog's Syndicate. When you start the game try calling your team "COOPER TEAM" and in return you will get lots of nice things like version three bodyparts on every agent, lots of money and weapons and you can even choose what mission you want.

History Line 1914-1918

Michael Czarnecki from Ascot has been proving that he's no military pushover in the challenging History Line 1914-1918 game from BlueByte. You want all the level codes? Well, you got it. Oh and while we're at it, have all the codes for Battle Isle '93 too.

History Line 1914-1918

1. PULSE	11. PLANE	21. AMPER
2. CIVIL	12. FLAME	22. KHEIN
3. MOUSE	13. GOTHA	23. CANDL
4. VENOM	14. BALON	24. STERN
5. NOISE	15. PAUSE	
6. KIGHT	16. ELITE	
7. ORKAN	17. INFRA	
8. FRONT	18. HILLS	
9. RATIO	19. COBRA	
10.PARTS	20. ATLAS	

Battle Isle '93

ONE PLAYER

1. LUMIT	2. LUNAR	3. LUTOF
4. SONIX	5. SOSOO	6. SONAF
7. RACHE	8. RAMPE	9. RANGG
10.PARTS	11. FIEST	12. FINXT
13. EBENE	14. EBSYL	15.EBONY
16. EBTAR	17. KARST	18. KANTO
19. KAROT	20. KAISR	21. SYBIL
22. SFINX	23. SYNOM	

SECRET CODES

32. DIONE
33. NAIAD

Alone in the Dark 2

Mark McDermott has been wandering cautiously around in Infogrames' excellent Alone in the Dark 2. If you cannot get through locked doors and you have the sword-stick, all you have to do is press the space bar and the up arrow key to lunge forward and you will appear the other side of the door. Apparently this cheat works on most of the doors but sadly not all of them. It's just a case of trial and error.

Remember, if you're totally and utterly vexed, troubled or stumped by Alone in the Dark 2, don't forget there is a complete solution hidden away on this month's cover disk.

Strike Commander

Steven Gould from Shropshire has a little cheat for Chris Roberts' aerial tour de force. Stuck on a mission? Want to know how to skip it? Here's how:

"Firstly accept the selected mission and when you are sitting in your cockpit got to the game options menu by pressing ALT-O. At the menu select the 'game play' option and at the next menu select 'exit game'. When it gives you the option to 'restart', 'abort', 'continue' or 'exit' you should choose the 'continue' option which will then load up the next mission and the next set of pre-flight screen."



HELP WANTED

I am writing as I am hopelessly stuck in Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders. I have managed to reach Mars, I've entered the pressurised cabin, used the train and entered the Mars pyramid but I'm now stuck. In the great chamber I cannot get past the forcefield to get the keys.

Mr C A Lynn, Basingstoke

Thanks for your help with Ultima 6 in your last issue. However I've got stuck again already and I'm determined to finish this game one day. My problem is this: how do I repair the Violet Lens (or get a new one)? Can any of your readers help?

Blodwyn P Teabag, Leicester

I am stuck at the end of King's Quest V. I have stopped the blue monster with the peas and the cat is in the bag. I have the mouldy cheese. I have not met Sam — the princess's friend (who is he?). How do I use Mordack's strange machine?

Heather Blain

On the last level of The Lost Vikings, when I face Tomator for the third time, I am stuck. How can I obtain the red key (to open the door)?

Also, how many EXP points do you need to gain levels in Ultima Underworld II?

"Uncle Bjorn the Avatar", Norwich

QED GUIDES

Stuck in Sam and Max? Puzzled by Ultima Underworld? Why not write to an adventure veteran? Jeff Cornwall (bless him) has completed the following computer games, and is offering hints and help on all of them:

1. Kings Quest 1 (solution)
2. Kings Quest 2: Romancing the Throne (solution)
3. Kings Quest 3: To Heir is Human (solution)
4. Kings Quest 4: The Perils of Rosella (solution)
5. Space Quest 1: The Sarien Encounter (solution)
6. Space Quest 2: Vohaul's Revenge (solution)
7. Space Quest 3: The Pirates of Pestalon (solution)
8. Space Quest 4: Roger Wilco and the Time Rippers (hints only)
9. Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards (solution)
10. Leisure Suit Larry 2: Looking for Love ... (solution)
11. Leisure Suit Larry 3: Passionate Patti In Pursuit of the Pulsating Pectorals (solution)
12. Leisure Suit Larry 5: Passionate Patti Does a Little Undercover Work (hints only)
13. Leisure Suit Larry 6: Shape Up or Slip Out (solution)
14. Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade — Graphic Adventure (solution)
15. Police Quest 1: In Pursuit of the Death Angel (solution)
16. Police Quest 2: The Vengence (solution)
17. The Secret of Monkey Island 1: (solution)
18. Ultima 5 (hints only)
19. Ultima 6 (hints only)
20. Dungeon Master (solution)

If you're stuck in any of these, drop an SAE to Jeff at the following address: 49 Port Road East, Colcot, Barry, South Glamorgan, South Wales CF62 9PY. And remember if you don't send an SAE you won't get a reply.

GET SWIT

GET A FREE V



MORTAL KOMBAT

"Probably the best beat 'em up available on PC right now." Cal Jones. March 1994.

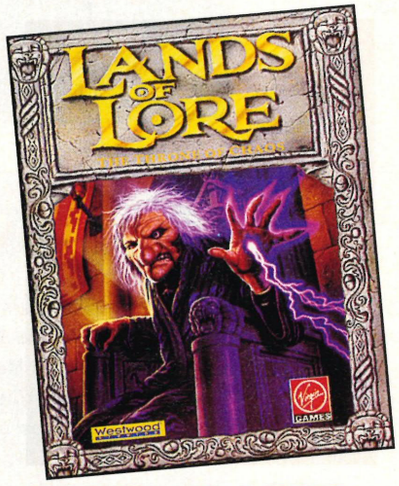
- Requires: 386 minimum + VGA graphic card + 4MB RAM + keyboard / joystick.



HAND OF FATE : LEGEND OF KYRANDIA 2

"I'd recommend it to almost anyone." Cal Jones. March 1994. 8/10

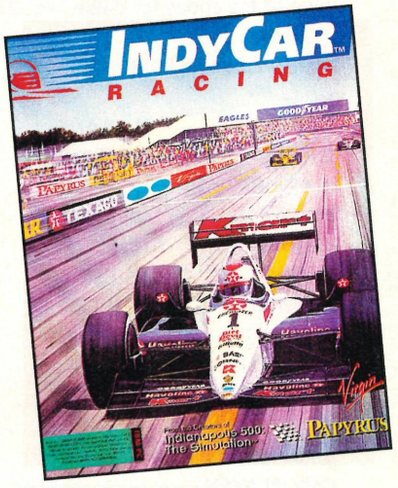
- Requires 386 minimum + VGA graphic card + 2 MB RAM + Microsoft compatible mouse.



LANDS OF LORE - THE THRONE OF CHAOS CD

Your quest is to find the truth stone and defeat the evil hag in this superb fantasy, role playing adventure.

- Requires : 386 minimum + VGA graphic card + 640 K memory + keyboard / mouse



INDYCAR RACING

"...**the** racing game to buy. It's tough, looks great, sounds good, plays brilliantly." John Bennett. January 1994. 9/10

- Requires : 346 minimum (486 recommended) + VGA graphic card + 2 MB RAM + joystick / keyboard.

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TCHED ON

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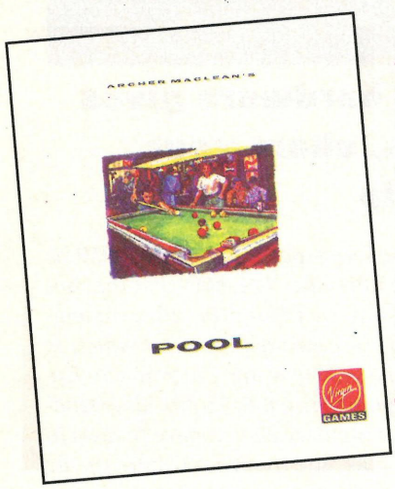

ARCHER MACLEAN'S POOL

" A cracking good game."
Christina Erskine. November 1993. 8/10

Experience real-life pool on your home computer with this unrivalled simulation.

Practise on your own, play with a friend or choose from 20 individual computer-controlled opponents.

● Requires : 386 minimum + VGA graphic card + 1 MB RAM + mouse.



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PC review

Virgin INTERACTIVE entertainment



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

Media player problem

Q I purchased a PC a year ago and was delighted to discover so many great things were easily possible by using Windows, especially the sound recorder and the media player. To my disbelief, however, my media player has stopped working. The sound recorder still works fine, but nothing will play on the media player. My computer is a 486SX-25 with a Sound Blaster card.

Paul Young, Surrey

A *I have to agree that Windows sound is fun and even useful, so a silent Media Player is a bit of a problem. Unfortunately you haven't given me much to go on. I assume that the Sound Blaster card works in other programs and games outside Windows — if not, the cause is obvious. If it does still work, then we have to look at Windows for the fault. The most likely cause is that a sound driver has been removed or has been corrupted by some other program. To check this, run the Control Panel which is usually to be found in the Accessories group. Once you have the Control Panel open, run the Drivers utility. This enables you to set up sound and other multimedia devices. Make sure that included in the installed drivers list are '[MCI] Sound' and a suitable Sound Blaster driver, either 1.0, 1.5 or Pro. If any of these are missing then you need to add then by clicking on the button marked Add and following the instructions. If this doesn't solve the problem then the only remaining possibility is that the Sound Blaster driver isn't configured to use the correct port address and IRQ number. You can check these using the test program that comes with the Sound Blaster but make sure that you run this under DOS, not under Windows.*

Flattery works

Q I regularly read PC Review and I must admit, I do find it useful and very informative. The game reviews are excellent, as is the Q&A section. The questions and answers that are printed have helped me in the past, but I have a problem and am not able to solve it. The problem is to do with memory. I recently purchased Doom which needs 2Mb to run. The problem is I cannot run it even though I have 4Mb of RAM. How do I go about getting 2Mb (ie, free 2Mb)? I have run MemMaker but couldn't free 2Mb. I hope you can do something for me, Mike, because I can't wait to play this game.

A Chohan, Luton

A *I have to agree with you about PC Review and of course modesty forbids me to comment on the Q&A section, but ...*

The solution to your problem is much easier than it might seem at first — the trick is to give up trying to free 2Mb of memory!

The reason is that no matter how hard you try you cannot succeed because free memory generally refers to free conventional memory and that's limited to around 640K at the best of times. This is why MemMaker couldn't do anything for you. It optimises free conventional memory and so expecting it to 'free' 2Mb is a tall order. The 2Mb that the program needs has to be either expanded or extended memory which is the only way any program can use more than 640K. To provide extended memory all you have to do is to make sure that your Config.sys file starts with

```
DEVICE=C:\DOS\HIMEM.SYS
```

This automatically makes all of the available memory into XMS standard extended memory.

To make some expanded memory available you need to add the line

```
DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE 1024
```

to the Config.sys file, AFTER the line mentioning Himem. This converts the number specified at the end, ie, 1024K (which is 1Mb) in this case, to expanded memory. If this isn't enough, increase the figure from 1024 to whatever is needed to make it work.

It's a case of swings and roundabouts, though, because you convert XMS to expanded memory and

so what you gain in expanded memory you lose in XMS.

If you are using MS-DOS 6, and as you have MemMaker you must be, you don't have to decide how to carve up the extended memory in this way. The reason is that the version of EMM386 included in MS-DOS 6 will create expanded memory out of XMS memory as demanded by the applications you are running.

If this doesn't work for any reason it could be that your machine needs a slightly more complicated configuration. In this case, run MemMaker and when it asks if you have any applications which require expanded memory, answer yes. This will add the line or something similar involving EMM386 to your Config.sys file automatically — but you will have to wait while it spends time configuring your machine again.

The dreaded PSA

Q I have recently bought a second hand IBM PS/2 55SX and I wonder if you would be kind enough to answer a few question that I have. Firstly, everybody seems to mention the XGA video adapter when talking about IBM machines. I wonder if you could tell me whether this is standard on an IBM, and if it is, what is it? Is it more advanced than SVGA/VGA? More to the point, do any programs use it?

Secondly, I was thinking about purchasing a sound card, but I hear that the IBM range tends not to take the standard expansion cards. Please can you tell me if this is correct, and if so, how do I fit a sound card in this machine? Also is this likely to cost me a lot more?

Philip Burney, Cumming

A *The PS/2 range is a problem because there are many aspects of this IBM design that, strange as it may seem, are not IBM compatible. The XGA video standard, for example, is something that IBM introduced late on in the life of the PS/2 as an upgrade to VGA. It isn't the same as SVGA, but it offers the same resolution. To make it work you need to install an XGA driver with any software that you are using. Not all software has an XGA driver and in this case simply select a standard VGA driver. XGA's advantage is that it was the first of the graphics accelerators — ie, it was clever enough to make your programs go faster.*

When it comes to expansion cards, it all depends if your PS/2 machine uses the ISA or MCA bus. The MCA bus was introduced by IBM as a way of gaining control of a market that it was in the process of losing. What actually happened was that its non-standard nature made sure that it lost control of the market all the quicker! Some PS/2 machines didn't use the MCA bus but the PS/2 55 did. This means that all of the expansion cards that you buy have to be MCA cards and not the more common ISA cards. While there may be MCA sound cards that are Sound Blaster compatible you can be sure that they will be more expensive and you will have less choice.

A good idea

Q Do software manufacturers — in particular, games publishers — ever accept ideas, designs or 'scripts' for new games from outside parties?

To be more precise, if I, or anyone else, had a startling revelation and came up with a brilliant idea for an equally brilliant game, would a large software firm be likely to buy the idea, or even consider it? After playing several games (and being new to computers) it struck me that many do actually try to tell a story, as well as dazzle one with technology.

I also read a piece about a game 'designed' by Syd Mead of Blade Runner fame. I assume that Syd didn't have much to do with the actual programming, but rather influenced the look of the game, and perhaps the story line and sequence of events. This input into games design is what I would like to hear more about.

N A Smith

A *If you did have a brilliant idea for a brilliant game then I'm sure one of the UK-based games producers would be interested in hearing about it — but it all depends on what you mean by brilliant. The most difficult part in producing a game is implementing it. It takes many programmers months, and sometimes years, to turn out a finished game. Looked at from this point of view the original idea for the game looks*

Q&A update

Disk errors

I usually receive a lot of letters about problems with disks. Often the writer doesn't realise that it is a disk problem which is even worse. I'm sure that you know that disk drives aren't reliable and you should back up any valuable data on to floppies or something — and I'm not going to bore you by going over this again. What is more interesting is to take a look at how you can find out if your disk is in good health and what errors and strange behaviour you can blame on it.

Before a disk can be used it has to be formatted. This divides the disk up into small chunks called 'sectors' which are the smallest part of the disk that can be used. If you want to write even a single character to the disk then a whole sector is allocated for the purpose. Don't be worried by this because a sector is a very small amount of storage. In fact, it is so small that MS-DOS groups them together to make larger units of storage called a 'cluster'.

OK, that's the theory! What you should now be in a position to realise is that any error message that claims to have a problem with reading or writing a sector is a disk error. If the error message says that there was a data error in a sector then you don't have to panic very much because all this means is that some data has been changed since it was written. A more threatening error message is one that says, "sector not found". What this means is that the problem that the disk has is so bad in one area that the formatting information which marks it out into sectors cannot be read — let alone the data that you expect to find there! In either case you should be worried and do something about it. The question is, what?

In practice, you shouldn't even let it get to this stage. There are diagnostic programs that will examine your disk for problems before they have caused an error message to appear. In all versions of MS-DOS there is Chkdsk, which will find a variety of errors but by no means all. Some users think that running Chkdsk regularly will be enough — it isn't. Chkdsk will make sure that all the directories on the disk contain sensible information, but it doesn't test the that the files are readable and it doesn't test that every sector on the disk is usable. For this you need a diagnostic that will perform a file scan and a surface scan. A file scan actually reads every file on the disk and compares it with the corresponding directory entry. The surface scan reads every single sector on the disk to make sure it is still there and readable. This is exactly what the new ScanDisk utility included with MS-DOS 6.2 does and it is worth the upgrade price! Alternatively, you could buy a set of disk utilities such as the Norton Utilities or Central Point Tools.

Not only do these file and surface scan utilities detect problems, they also attempt to put them right. Yes, they are also the answer to the "what to do about it" question! In particular, any sector that cannot be read during the surface scan is marked as bad and will not be used in future to store data — this stops the disk error before it happens. Any errors in files are also corrected. Sometimes the act of fixing the file can seem to lose you data, but in fact the data would already have been lost — it's just that you didn't know it.

Mike James

like a small part of the whole. If your idea is just another story line for a shoot 'em up or a variation on a platform game then the chances are that the software companies wouldn't put much value on it — unless there was a publicity angle in using your name!

If the idea was for a type of game that no one had ever thought of before, then this would be of much more interest. However, you would have a problem convincing them that the idea was workable.

For example, suppose I suggested to you a game that involved falling blocks the aim of which is to stack them up into rows. It sounds as boring as watching TV, but any Tetris player will tell you that it's highly addictive! The trouble is that if your idea is really radical, you probably need to program a demo to show what it is all about.

Risks of compression

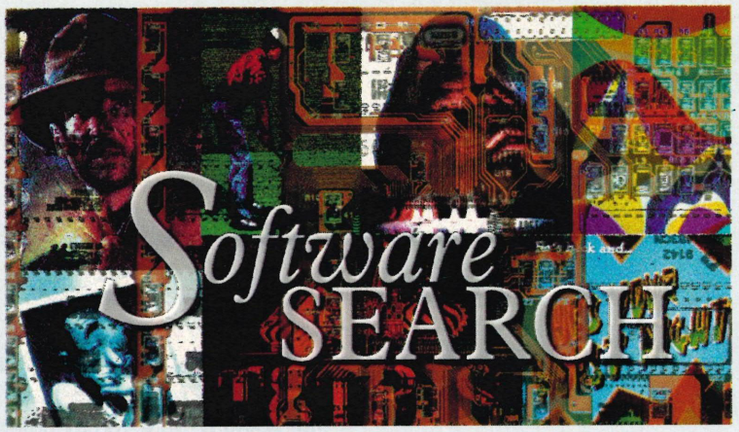
Q I am again considering using disk compression because now that MS-DOS v6.2 is out, it is supposed to be safe. Is there any remaining risk or disadvantage, or should I go ahead and compress my disk?

K Johns, Denmark

A *Yes it is true that MS-DOS 6.2 has made it about as safe as it can be to compress your disk, but there are still pitfalls. As long as your disk drive and machine are working perfectly, there is no increased risk. You may find the occasional piece of software that doesn't work on a compressed disk — but you simply install it on the uncompressed host disk.*

The risk is increased only when there is a fault. MS-DOS 6.2 contains much better disk diagnostic and repair facilities in the form of ScanDisk, so if you use this on a regular basis your data should be safe. Even so, when a problem does occur you are more likely to lose data on a compressed disk than an uncompressed disk. For example, if a power cut occurs while you are working on a file then recovery of the data is more likely if the disk isn't compressed.

To put the risk into perspective, all I have to say is that as a result of getting MS-DOS 6.2 I have now compressed my own disk.



OCR for music

Q I would be extremely grateful if you could supply me with any ideas for OCR (optical character recognition) software for musical score sheets.

G Elie

A *This is an interesting question because, at first it appears to be simple, but it isn't!*

There are optical character recognition programs that can be trained to recognise new fonts and it would seem at first sight that this is all you need.

However, the problem is much harder to solve than this because recognising the notes only gives you the note duration. To discover the pitch you have to recognise where it is on the stave. This is something that standard optical character recognition programs cannot do.

This means that an OCR program for scores would have to be specially written for that one purpose. On asking around, I was told of a couple of research projects currently in progress, and maybe something that would be available soon for several thousands of pounds, but nothing on the market at a reasonable consumer price tag. Two alternatives were suggested, although which one might be useful to you will depend on what you want to do with the scores once they are scanned in.

The first suggestion is to use an automatic notator — something like Musicator, from Soho Soundhouse — whose telephone number is (071) 379 5148 — or Fanale 2: contact Computer Music Systems on (081) 758 0311.

In this case you would have to play the music from the score on a MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) instrument connected to the PC and the program would record and notate the performance. You would then have to edit the score to make sure it was a faithful copy. Once you have the score in this form, you could play it back on another MIDI instrument or print it out on paper.

The second suggestion is to use a conventional drawing package, such as Corel 4, to scan in the score and then trace it. This would give you something that could be printed out as a document but it wouldn't be able to control a MIDI device — that is, it wouldn't play anything!

If anyone does know of a reasonably priced optical character recognition program for music scores, please write in and let us know.

TrueType editor

Q I need a program to edit TrueType fonts in windows. Most font collections don't support the three extra letters we Norwegians have tacked on to our alphabet so I need to add them to the various fonts myself.

I know of several commercial offerings, but it would be nice to find one that would not cost me an arm and a leg.

Alf Johanssonn
Norway

A *At first I thought this question was going to be easy — after all, there are lots of font utilities listed. In practice, it hasn't turned out to be that simple!*

The difficulty seems to be that TrueType is a scalable vector font and while there are lots of editors for bitmap fonts, equivalents for scalable fonts are very rare. In fact, I couldn't find a single low cost scalable font editor!

There are a number of special effects editors which will apply a transformation to the entire font — but none that allow you to change a single letter in isolation. The reason is that the TrueType (and PostScript Adobe Type 1) font is a very complicated format and creating an editor for it is hard work. The only product I could come up with is Fontographer (from David Pollard on (0865) 240048) but this still costs around £300, and it isn't very easy to use just to add a single character.

The people who create the fonts obviously have font editors but they are expensive items — for example, over £2,000 for URW's font creator — and in some cases they are simply not for sale.

Radio controlled

Q I want a radio controlled model plane, but I have been told that they are difficult to fly at first. I am a bit worried about losing control, crashing or even injuring an innocent onlooker when I first try my hand at flying it.

Is there any software that I could use as a trainer? Given that flight simulations of Jumbo Jets and other aircraft exist, surely there must be something just as realistic for model aeroplanes?

Martin Johns, Liverpool

A *I have to admit not knowing much about radio controlled modelling, but I understand that there are special beginners planes that are easier to fly.*

In addition there are simulators for model planes and they are available with dummy radio control handsets that connect in place of a standard joystick. I can't say how much they help, because I haven't managed to graduate to flying a real model (yet!).

I think that at the very least it helps get the reflexes working in the right directions — if you see what I mean. The company to talk to is the joystick and flight controller specialist RC Simulations on (0272) 550900.

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Letters

PC Review welcomes letters on any subject under the PC sun. The editor will chop them to fit if need be, and we'll assume letters are for publication unless you state otherwise. Send your mail to letters, PC Review, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Star letters win software prizes!

Errant mouse

I think I may be able to help Mr Jones (Q&A, Issue 28). I too have a VTech 486SX/25, and had exactly the same problem with the Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes: the mouse pointer would not move onto the right hand side of the screen. I rang up Electronic Arts' technical support line, and they told me that the problem was due to a mouse driver which was not 100% Microsoft compatible. I borrowed the 100% compatible driver from my sister's computer downstairs, and had no problems thereafter. As to why it affects the keyboard and joystick as well, and whether or not it would work in the other games he mentioned, I have no idea.

Peter John
Balliol College
Oxford

Manual labour

I read with interest your cover story article in Issue 26, How to buy a PC. The advice you gave was both sound and concise, but considering the article was probably aimed at new or inexperienced users of the PC, there was a strange omission in your checklist. I was surprised to see no mention of what documentation is provided with PC, either in the article or the checklist.

To a new user, opening the box of their newly delivered PC to find a plethora of OEM manuals for motherboards, monitors, mice and of course the dreaded DOS manual, can be totally bewildering. PC suppliers vary tremendously in the documentation they provide, from the basic OEM manuals and — if 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 manual took me through plugging in the machine up for use in straight-forward 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. I have also experience of the other side of the coin with OEM manuals written more for the benefit of the PC manufacturer and absolutely nothing else.

As a reasonably experienced PC user the latter has not caused me any problems, but I can see how new users could face anguish, not to mention a hefty phone bill, pestering their supplier with basic questons on getting started.

The question of how suppliers provide bundled software was another area not dealt with in detail, especially the current trend of pre-loading the hard disk and not providing master disks. This can result in the unwary accidentally deleting vital files and finding themselves with a useless machine and no immediate remedy for the problem.

Richard Pawlowski
Rochdale
Lancs

Radio days

On Sunday 26th June 1994, we are holding the 37th Longleat Amateur Radio Rally, organised by the Bristol Group of the Radio Society of Great Britain.

The rally takes place on Sunday 26 June from 10am at Longleat park near Warminster in Wiltshire. (Follow signposts to Longleat House, not the safari park) The event is much more than just a radio/electronics gathering. It is the largest single annual event to take place at Longleat. Last year the attendance was 5,189 paying adults.

In addition to all types of communications equipment being sold, this year we will be encouraging an even greater number of exbitions/traders selling and showing all aspects of computers and associated peripherals. Seven large marquees will house a total of around 200 different traders. A major feature of the rally will be the bring and buy section; last year this had a turnover of nearly £40,000.

Admission to the grounds and

rally are frozen at last year's prices: £2.50 for adults, £1.50 for pensioners and 50p for children.

For further details of the rally or information on table bookings please contact the following address.

Shaun O'Sullivan
15 Witney Close, Saltford
Bristol BS18 3DX

Too many cheats

I am writing to you in the hope that you can answer this question, not just for me but for all the other serious games players in the country. Why do you have to spoil your magazine with a cheats section, which more often than not, covers all the major new releases?

I know we do not have to use them but if a little problem (which can be solved) causes us to use them, we should not be playing the game — cheating takes away the enjoyment of completing the game. I believe you should leave all major new releases for at least a year, give tips only for games that are over a year old, or not give tips at all.

Is there some connection between magazine publishers and game publishers? Are you giving away cheats so that players can finish the game and go out and buy another?

It does seem strange that a new game released a week ago is suddenly broken wide open, and what should take days to complete is now done in hours. Take Doom, for instance, just released, and suddenly there is a map of all levels of the shareware version. Why do you magazines rave on about a brilliant game and then go a break it wide open.

It's fair enough if readers find the cheats, but do not encourage them by offering money for the best cheats. I always thought magazines were for advice on machine set-up, reviews of major new releases and advertisements, not spoiling the days of enjoyment a game can give.

Mr P Jones
Deganwy
Gwynedd

We publish tips and players' guides in response to readers' demands — while it may spoil your enjoyment to see a map of levels for Doom, for others it may the key that unlocks the game for them and enables them to progress. I agree that the "do this, open that, turn left" type of solution can be annoying; that's why we often try to publish cryptic tips, maps and 'how to play well' guides to get people going without giving everything away. I'm afraid the old response of "don't read it if you don't want to know" still applies here.

I think you're in a minority in finding tips published quickly morally offensive, but as ever, we'd welcome other readers' views on this point, so write in and let us know.

Incidentally, no, there isn't a connection between us and games publishers to get readers back to the shops quickly, and PC Review doesn't pay money for tips (we give away software).

For those who are stuck in a game and desperate for help, please note that from this month, we have started including solutions on the cover disk. Write in and tell us if you find these useful — or not.

Whatever happened to shareware?

Call me old-fashioned, but I thought shareware was analagous with low cost, cheap, no gimmicks, just fun, etc.

So how come Id Software and its friends and family in the UK are asking us to fork out £44-plus for a piece of shareware? Don't get me wrong: Doom is a damn fine game, very playable, one of the best of 1993, and like traditional shareware you get a playable demo. But now the publishing houses also offer playable demos, so what happened to the £10 registration fee?

So this is where I go back to the cost. The big publishing houses tell us that they charge £40 for advertising, promotion, packaging, etc, and the design and programming. Yet shareware companies profess that they just want to pay the programmers for the development of the software and the distribution is handled by other shareware companies who may or may not add a few quid more.

Do shareware companies turn into media moguls when they discover a winner, or are prices rising and that's that?

Karl Reynolds
Chertsey, Surrey

Actually, Doom is £35, which compares favourably to other full-price games. Id has never claimed that the full version of Doom was intended as shareware; the shareware version is level one, Knee-Deep in the Dead.

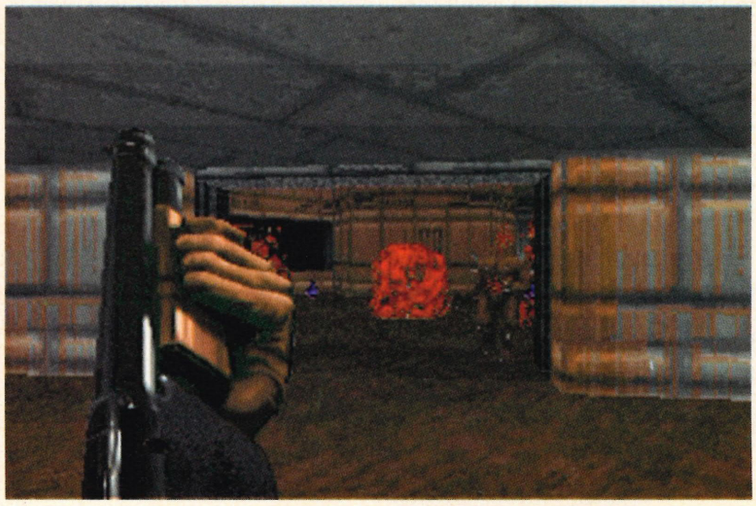
Star Letter

Undocumented evidence

I don't mind paying for games which work, and to be fair most do, but I do resent trying for ages to get a game to run properly and in desperation phoning technical support only to be told either, a) yes, we know about that bug ... there's a bug fix out next week (eg, Virgin's IndyCar memory lock-up patch disk), or, b) yes, it's not in the manual but you, i) press Control C to quit Elite, ii) press Z instead of Y or N to exit History Line, iii) start Archer Maclean's Pool with "Go" to obtain a game without sound effects.

Is it just me, or do other readers experience the intense frustration of having to tinker with Config files to make the games work at all, or reset their computers to quit games? Or do they face the not inconsiderable expense of holding on technical support lines at peak rates to find answers to questions that should have been in the manuals? Apart from the RAM lock-up problems with Indycar, I would like to congratulate Virgin and US Gold for Links 386 Pro for having the foresight to include a memory manager in the game. This does save the chore of making a boot disk, and means that the game will work first time from DOS.

David Foster
Carlisle
Cumbria



Prices squeezed

The debate about games prices continues. Much is made of the argument that piracy causes the software houses to keep prices high, leading to more piracy, leading to higher prices, more piracy, ad infinitum. But one thing I observed this week has led me to draw new conclusions. I live in a city with a Virgin Megastore, a Future Zone, a Game Ltd, and a small independent store all within a few hundred yeards of each other. Naturally, they occasionally attempt to undercut each other, but I could not have predicted the recent events on the recent release of SimCity 2000.

Having rung up Maxis to discover the release date, I phoned a few shops in advance to discover what the price would be: £39.99. On the day of release, I found out that the small independent is selling at £31.99, so I made my purchase.

The next day, I did the rounds of the other shops to discover prices of £29.99, £27.99 and £24.99. The bargain I thought I had turned out to be rather expensive. This drop in price could only be caused by one thing: shops reducing their profit margins to get more sales.

Don't get me wrong — I have absolutely no objection to paying £31.99 for a game such as SimCity 2000 and would be very keen for a price war on all releases. But next time you reckon it's the software houses forcing the prices up, think again — it may be your friendly neighbourhood store.

Neil C Wilson
Bristol

Ultra-harsh?

I am writing to complain about the cover story from Issue 29. I have owned my Gravis Ultrasound card for over a year now,and after a few problems (it conflicts with my motherboard, which was Elonex's fault), it works well at emulating Ad Lib and Sound Blaster. Gravis is continually updating the SBOS driver (Sound Blaster support TSR) and there is also a program called Mega-Em that emulates the Sound Blaster, Roland and Covox sound cards immaculately, so you can have the best of both worlds in games such as X-Wing.

My main complaint is about your criticism of the Ultrasound with Doom. How did you come to your conclusion, unless you have a version of Doom earlier than the official release of v1.1? This is the version that I have purchased and the sounds are astonishing! I am amazed at the quality, and it puts the Sound Blaster's tinny range to shame. I cannot understand your ignorance in printing such rubbish about the Ultrasound.

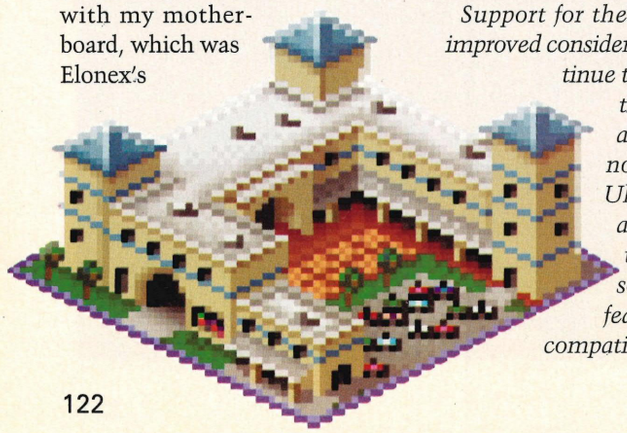
As for the criticism of the fact that there is little support for the Ultrasound, I can name a few now: Doom, Zone 66, Terminator, etc, but there are loads coming out in the next few months, such as Delta V. There are also patches for Privateer, Strike Commander, 7th Guest, Syndicate, SimFarm and SimCity, all of which can be obtained by bulletin boards, etc.

I would recommend the Ultrasound above all other sound cards.

Paul Mason
Leeds

No one disputes that wave table cards such as the UltraSound make an infinitely better quality noise than FM cards. In its native mode, the UltraSound sounds superb. The point the writer was trying to make about Doom is that it is not the sound card at fault — it's the games software. The last thing you want, having spent forty quid on the latest game is to find it won't work on your sound card —whether it's the game or the card that's to blame.

Support for the UltraSound has improved considerably and will continue to do so. However, the issue is what is actually available now, and with the UltraSound there is an element of trade- off between sound quality and features, and games compatibility.



Competition winners

Microcompo (Issue 26)

Answers: 1) b — Incredible Journey; 2) c — the stomach (this one caught a lot of people out!); 3) b — Troddlers.
1st prize of a signed gold CD-ROM of Microcosm: Dennis Kwek, Colchester. Runners-up prizes of Psygnosis games: Tony Mars, Gerrards Cross, Bucks; Dr R Gerlis, Harlow, Essex; N Randall, Weymouth, Dorset; Mr A K Gazzard, Helston, Cornwall; David Bird, Frenchay, Bristol; Simon Booth, Didsbury, Manchester; Robert Paul Symcox, Leicester; John Young, Abthorpe, Northants; Colin Goswell, Alperton, Middlesex; Gareth Spring, Newcastle under Lyme, Staffs.

Unica 486 competition (Issues 26-27)

Answers: 1) c — Gary Oldman; 2) any three from Hutchinson Encyclopedia, Guinness Disc of Records, Animals, Hot Stuff!, 7th Guest; 3) b; 4) Bram Stoker; 5) Mina; 6) b — 600Mb.
1st prize of a Unica 486 Multimedia PC: Anthony Toole, Chelmsford, Essex. Runners-up prizes: Geoff Skittrell, Cheddleton, Staffs; Michael Robertson, Stretford, Manchester; James Marshall, Hull.

Christmas Stocking (Issue 27)

Answers: Across: 1) VGA, 2) Tornado, 3) Windows, 4) Multimedia, 5) Screen saver, 6) Day of the Tentacle, 7) Sound Blaster Pro.
Down: 1) Digital Integration.
1st prize of a Sound Blaster 16 plus CD-ROM drive: Phil Lewis, Hexham, Northumberland.
There simply isn't room here to print the list of nearly 200 runners-up, but a list of winners is available from PC Review at the usual address. Runners-up prizes have been despatched.

PC Review Recommended (Issue 27)

Chessmaster 4000 Turbo: Garry Kasparov beat Nigel Short to become world chess champion. Winners are Mr Y Lee, Walthamstow, London E17; Naveen Goud, Hayes, Middlesex; Mr D Baker, Maidenhead, Berks; M J Johansen, Lowestoft, Suffolk; Mr P G Williams, Letchworth, Herts.

IndyCar Racing: Nigel Mansell now races for Newman-Haas. Winners are Richard Weeks, Yealverton, Devon; Mrs H Gill, Twickenham, Middlesex; David Lee, Whitwick, Leics; Colm McLernon, Coalisland, Co Tyrone; P E Frost, Lindfield, W Sussex.

Rebel Assault: James Earl Jones was the voice behind Darth Vader in the original Star Wars movie. Winners are Mark Perry, Cobh, Co Cork; S P Hones, Leigh on Sea, Essex; B G Hodges, Bradford, W Yorks; Niall Williams, St Mellons, Cardiff; Sarah Pymm, Penn, Wolverhampton.

PC Review Recommended (Issue 28)

Alone in the Dark 2: 1) Grace Saunders; 2) California (in the game); 3) 1924. Winners are Mr H F Field, Thames Ditton, Surrey; Steven Hampshire, Barnby, Suffolk; Andrew Sharp, Market Drayton, Shropshire; Gerard Chak, London SW19; Mark Rasheed, Swindon, Wilts.

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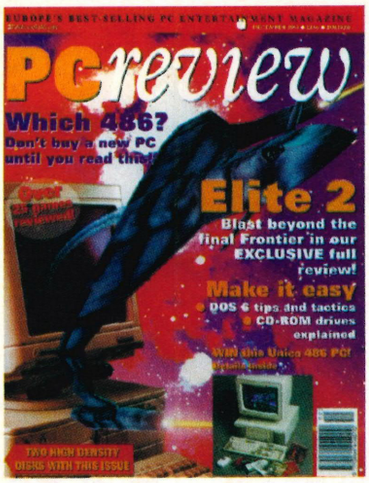

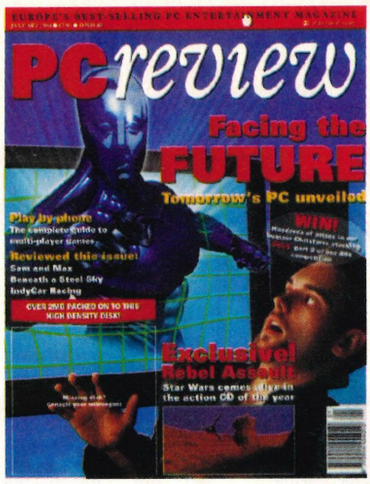





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Classic games on a tight budget

Good games never die, they just reappear on a budget label. John Bennett and Danny Vice pick out some durable gems you can buy for under £20

Game playing tastes are so fickle and many games so dependent on technology that yesterday's smash hit, 'must have' game can be a complete turkey six months later, whether it costs £5 or £50.

It's also fair to say that a large proportion of the budget games filling the shelves right now are simply dreadful — such dismal failures first time round that they should never have been kept on life-support long enough to appear as budget games.

But it's worth sifting through them, even so. In these financially-challenged days it's quite possible to pick up a game costing anything between £5 and £20 that will give you as much, if not more, enjoyment than the latest state-of-the-art full-price game. Not only that, but in most cases budget games have the advantage that they don't require heavyweight hardware. So if you're still waiting to upgrade your 286 or 386 and wonder why every new game you buy runs like a heavily drugged tortoise, budget games may be the answer in the meantime.

There's plenty of choice, of course. The number of budget titles has increased considerably in the past half year or so. The most prolific distributors are still the Kixx XL (US Gold's re-release division) and Hit Squad (from Ocean) labels, but there are many other labels producing bargain games, such as Codemasters, The Genesis Arcade and Action Sixteen (Digital Integration).

So, it all comes down to sorting out the dross from the old masters among them. The best way to start is to look at the different types of game you can buy on budget labels:



If you liked Flashback, you'll love its predecessor, Another World, available both on the Kixx XL label, and under its American title, Out of this World, on the Interplay anthology CD.

● Strategy/empire building

Definitely the genre least like to suffer from premature ageing, strategy games depend first and foremost on thoughful and addictive gameplay. Games like Populous, Battle Isle, SimCity, Railroad Tycoon, A-Train and Midwinter have enough staying power to last a decade.

● Role-playing games

Fantasy role-playing games shouldn't date too badly. There's still plenty of mileage in a good well-told story and plenty of Dungeons and Dragons fans to match. Watch out for Eye of the Beholder and the veteran Dungeon Master. But as we're moving towards smooth scrolling, high resolution stuff — and maybe even digitised actors *à la* Return to Zork — these may soon look like they're out of the ark.



Arm your players and make sure they're fit before you venture into the ring to play Speedball 2: a veteran and still very playable classic game.

● Flight, combat and racing

These are bound to date more than any other genre, being the most technology-led of the lot. When you get used to the Gouraud shading, texture mapping and photo-realistic scenery of games like TFX, Flight Simulator 5 and IndyCar Racing, it hurts to sit down in front of a crude, polygon jobbie like F15.

There are a few exceptions, where the gameplay is good enough to overcome the technological limitations: notably M1 Tank Platoon, Red Baron and Knights of the Sky.

● Adventures

Point and click adventures are not a bad bet in some instances, as the storyline and the quality of the puzzles are usually of greater importance to your enjoyment than the quality of the graphics (Maniac Mansion, pictured below, is a cas ein point). Mind you, some of the really old games date back to the days of EGA graphics, and personally I find these too crude and painful even if the underlying story is a good one.



● Puzzle games

Rather like strategy games, a good puzzle game with an addictive hook to it should stand the test of time. The ones to beware of are usually the newer cheapo games which are often just rip-offs of traditional games like solitaire, and very light in the long-term entertainment stakes.

● Sports sims

It's difficult to second guess a budget sports title because there have been very few truly excellent sports games on the PC — full-price or otherwise — so when they reach budget status the vast majority are truly appalling. The only real exception to this are the better budget golf games.

● Platform and arcade games

Platform games are rarely that expensive to start with. As a genre they have a nasty tendency to merge into an amorphous blob of sameness. Then again, whiling away the odd hour with a platform game is hardly taxing on the old grey matter and a good way to unwind for a few quid.

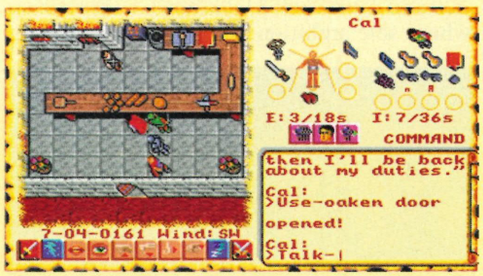
A few games stand out from the crowd because they've managed to bring in a halfway decent storyline and a variation on the standard bounce, bounce, shoot approach: notably Prince of Persia and Another World — see picture, above left.

The games to go for ...

These are the pick of the bargain bins: the games that won't cost you an arm and a leg, but will give you plenty of enjoyment.

● RPGs

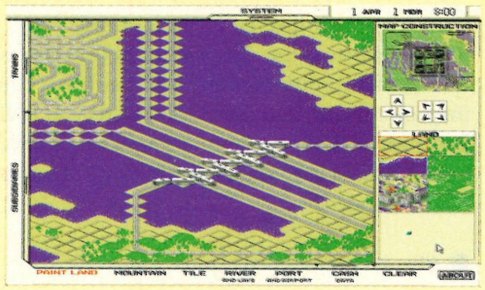
Ultima VI
Hit Squad, (061) 832 6633
£14.99



It's that time of year when the Avatar must help Lord British overcome the gargoyles threatening Britannia. If that's how you like your role-playing then you can't argue with Ultima VI. A huge playing area, involved storyline with various twists and sub-plots, and excellent characters, Ultima VI is only let down by a slightly naff interface.

● Strategy/empire building

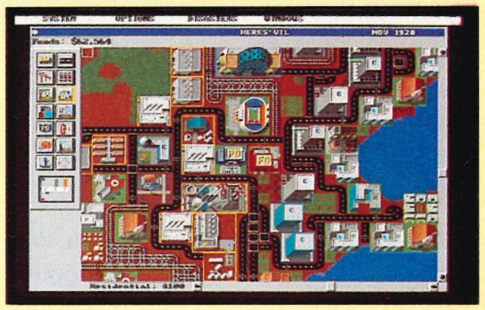
A-Train
Hit Squad, (061) 832 6633
£19.99



A-Train is a game in which the player has to construct and extend a railroad around towns of various prosperity, wealth and population. Once the railroad becomes successful, the inhabitants of the towns begin to build, people begin commuting even more and the towns start to make money.

I know it sounds like the archetypal train-spotters' wet dream, but A-Train is actually one of those addictive games with genuine all-round appeal. An absolute must for the strategist and empire building enthusiast, A-Train is good for months and months of gameplay.

SimCity Classic
Hit Squad, (061) 832 6633
£14.99

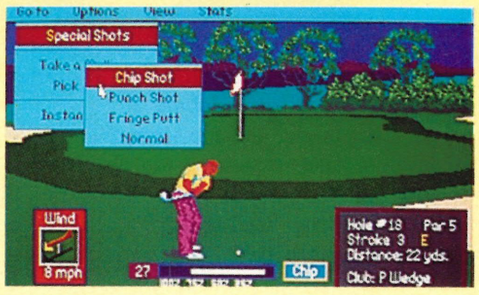


This is the original SimCity, re-packaged and with the word 'Classic' thrown in for free.

You have to make a town prosper by making money and bringing people into the community. To do this, you must construct facilties and services which will generate activity within the town. Like A-Train, it's dangerously addictive.

Although Sim City Classic is nowhere near as sophisticated as Sim City 2000 (reviewed this issue), it will keep you in front of the screen for hours on end. You can't ask for more than that for £14.00

● Sports simulations



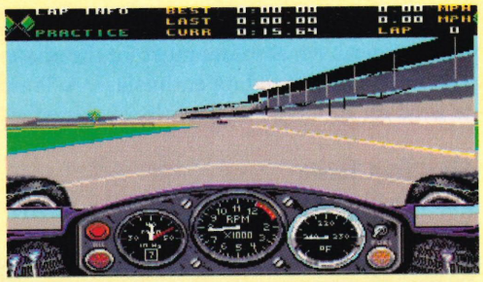
PGA Tour Golf
Hit Squad, (061) 832 6633
£14.99

God, this looks so old. But that doesn't stop it being a brilliant game through and through. The graphics are basic, but the easy player controls and simple but accurate game structure make PGA Tour endlessly playable.

Alternatively, there's Links (Kixx/XL) — ten times more sophisticated than PGA Tour with detailed scenery, complex stroke selection and extensive options. Mind you there's not much to chose between them in playability, and Links does need a faster PC — preferably a 486.

BUYER'S GUIDE

Indianapolis 500
Kixx/XL, (021) 625 3366
£14.99

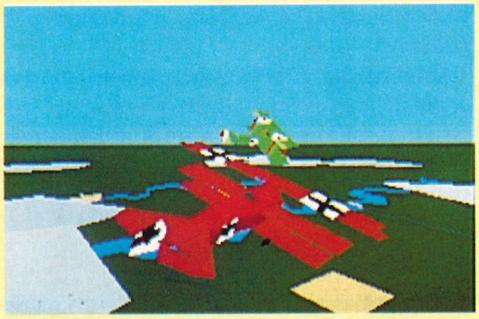


It may have come out over five years ago, but Indy still feels fast and exciting to play. The graphics look ridiculously dated compared to the likes of F1GP and IndyCar Racing. Then again, they cost £25 more and need a fast 486.

● Also recommended: M1 Tank Platoon, Wing Commander, Chuck Yeager's Air Combat, Silent Service 2

● Flight Simulations

Knights of the Sky
Kixx/XL, (061) 832 6633
£14.99



Knights of the Sky is a simple game. A game of bandits at six o'clock, chugging biplanes, trenches and barrage balloons.

The flight model and the scenery are undeniably very basic, but as a game, there's plenty going on, a good campaign structure and you can also play head to head against other players on a network.

● Platform games

Another World
Kixx XL, (021) 625 3366
£14.99

The forerunner to the altogether brilliant Flashback, Another World owes a lot to the even older Prince of Persia, but is nevertheless a marvellously atmospheric platform adventure in its own right. The only criticism is that you can finish it too quickly once you get the hang of the play. It's also available on Interplay's Ten Year Anothology compilation.

● Also recommended: Prince of Persia

● Arcade

Speedball 2
Kixx/XL, (021) 625 3366
£9.99

A vicious little football game in the best Rollerball tradition, Speedball 2 is about fast and furious mayhem-making and multiple scoring opportunities.

Speedball 2 takes a bit of controlling unless you have a joystick, and it could be a bit tougher to beat, but it's still an excellent an unusual little game for a tenner.

● Also recommended: Xenon 2

● Adventures

Secret of Monkey Island
Kixx/XL, (021) 625 3366
£14.99

You play naive young Guybrush Threepwoood, whose sole ambition is to become a pirate in

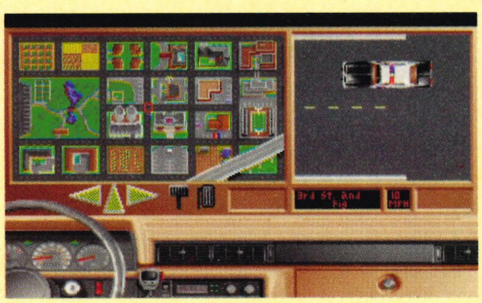


this swashbuckling tale of life on the Caribbean high seas. Ron Gilbert's adventure has all the LucasArts hallmarks: quirky atmospheric graphics, great soundtrack, absurd sense of humour and a cleverly constructed plot which makes the game a delight to play.

Cruise for a Corpse
Kixx/XL, (021) 625 3366
£14.99

All very Agatha Christie (butler included), Cruise for a Corpse is a classic murder mystery adventure game. The victim in this case is a Greek shipping tycoon, and you play the inspector trying to unravel the mystery. It still looks surprisingly modern, it's easy to get into, but it's also a very tough nut to crack. Highly recommended.

● Also recommended: Police Quest (below).



Compilations

If you want real value for money, it's worth checking out some of the latest compilations, particularly the mammoth CD collections.

Interplay's Ten Year Anthology

Interplay, (0865) 390029
£34.99 (CD-ROM)
Mindshadow, Tass times, Bard's Tale, Wasteland, Dragon Wars, Battle Chess, Lord of the Rings, Castles, Star Trek 25th Anniversary, Out of this World



Spellcasting Party Pack

Accolade/Legend, (081) 877 0880
£39.99
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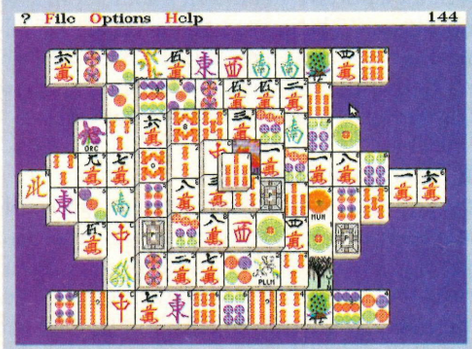

Air Combat Classics

US Gold, (021) 625 3366
£45.99
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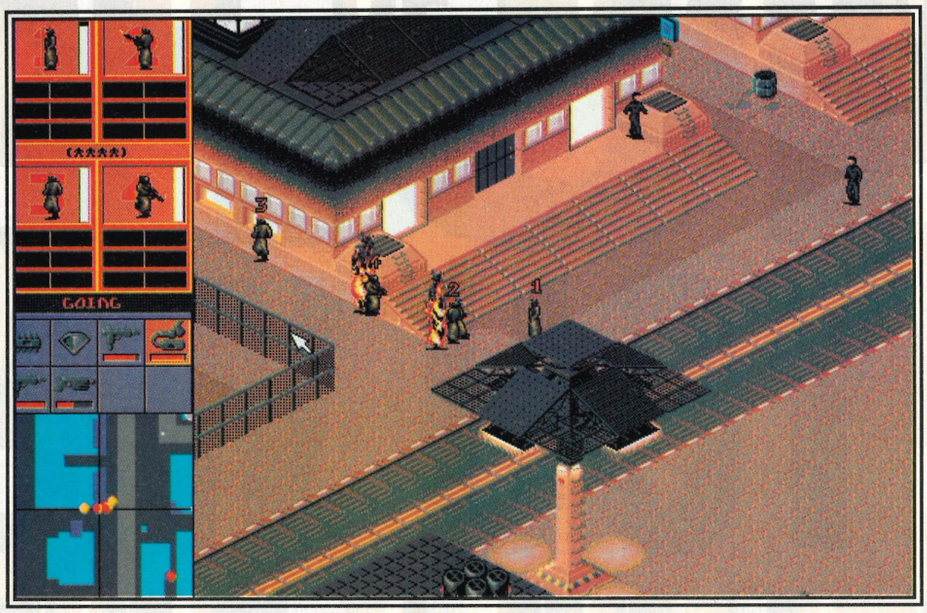
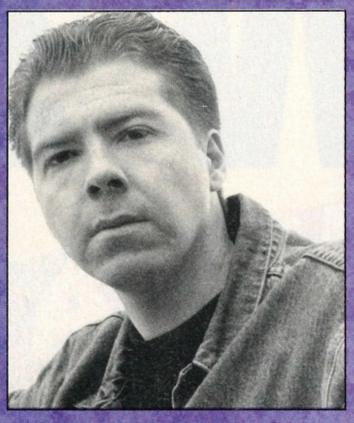
Sean Griffiths' *Classic game of the month*



Syndicate



"Peter Molyneux and Bullfrog are dead clever. I like the way this plays as a strategy game — but it's not just a strategy game, because you can also play it as an arcade game. And I know people say that all Bullfrog's games are isometric, but I thought that perspective worked really well here."

Syndicate is a game of world domination, divided into 50 missions, with a depth of playing potential that far exceeds any brief description of your objectives in the game. You must control your party — syndicate, even — of up to four people, having first chosen bodyparts, armour and weaponry to suit the tasks that await you. This isn't as straightforward as it sounds, since you can choose to play Syndicate more or less as a strategy game, or lean more towards the arcade-style possibilities offered by the weaponry at hand.

As you progress, bodyparts and weapons become ever more sophisticated, and the missions tougher. Each is set against a background in which life for normal citizens appears to be carrying on with their daily routine, so your agents can really wreak some havoc. All the scenarios are beautifully presented in high resolution graphics, which adds to the futuristic look of the game and its air of quiet menace.

PROFILE

Sean Griffiths has been writing computer games for 15 years. His first effort was a game for the Tandy TRS80 called The Watcher, which despite being submitted to several software houses, failed to find a publisher. "One company wrote back saying that arcade games just weren't in any more. They went bust shortly afterwards," remembers Sean.

His first published title was Zoot, for the Spectrum, which was released by Bug Byte, followed by the blood'n'guts of Barbarian for Palace Software. Next, he co-wrote Super Thief, also for Palace, but, like The Watcher, this never saw the light of day. After a brief excursion into the realms of cartoon licences with Snoopy (Atari ST), Griffiths joined The Bitmap Brothers and designed Magic Pockets for the ST, Amiga and PC, before becoming the founder member, team leader and game designer of Instinct Design, part of Mirage Software. Instinct's first game, Rise of the Robots, is due to be finished in the next couple of weeks and should prove that arcade games are very much 'in' at the moment.

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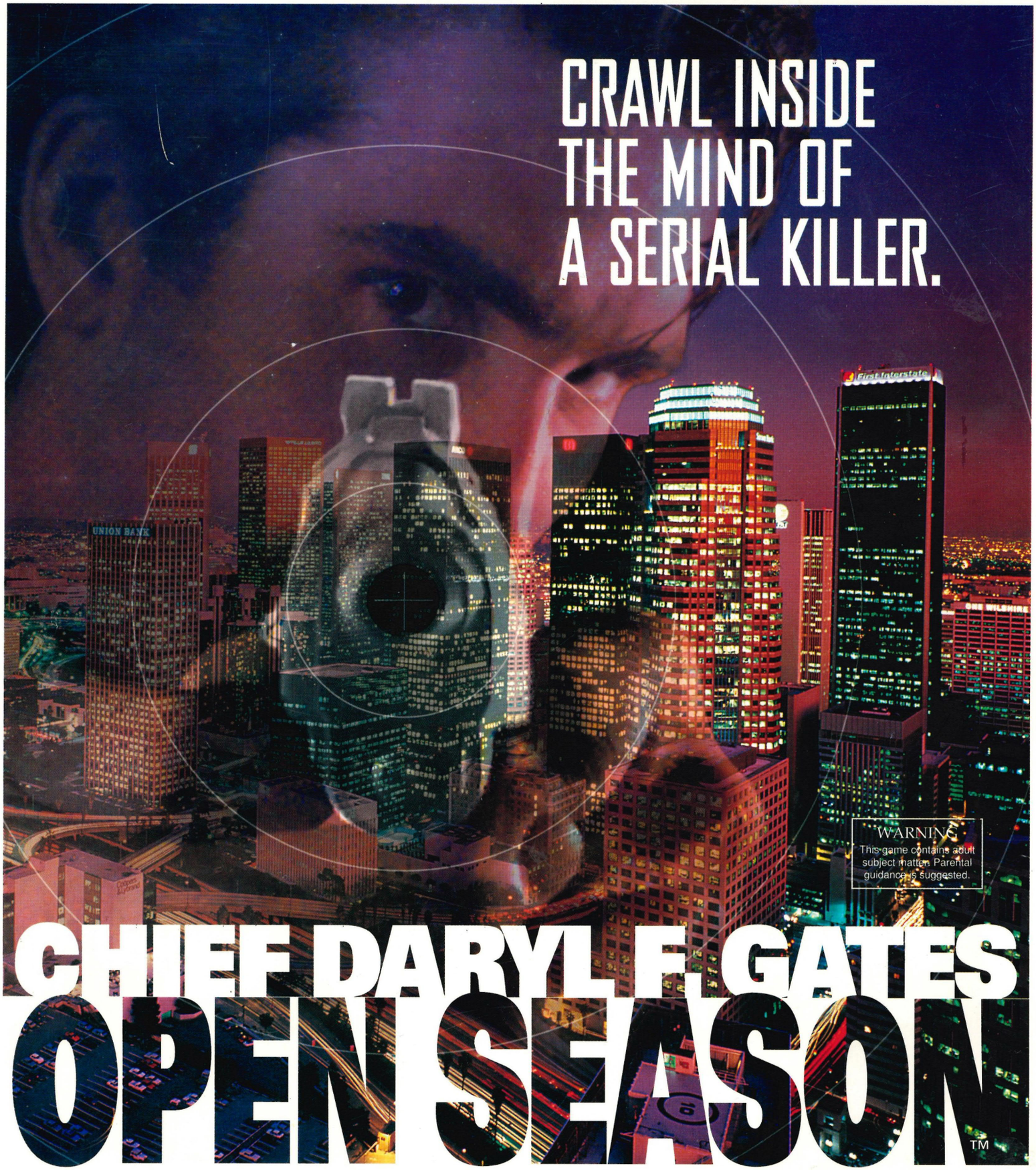

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