week without even considering the statistics for the Atari ST!

I read the ibm.pc.games group regularly, and the topics there range from benchmarking of video frame rate to the lack of sleep caused by playing *Sid Meier's Civilization*. The hottest topics right now are discussions of strategy (and cries for help!) in *Ultima Underworld II* and *Star Control II*.

The MS-DOS games archive is located on a computer at Lowell University in Massachusetts. (The internet address is ftp.ulowell.edu.) All the shareware titles from **Apogee** and **Epic** are available, as well as demos of many popular commercial titles. There is also a directory of nothing but text adventures and a large directory of miscellaneous games which run the gamut from a primitive *Space Invaders* clone to the impressive "shoot 'em up" *Galactix*, which rivals many current commercial offerings. Directories for patches and utilites can also be found here, and there is even a comprehensive archive of the electronic magazine *Gamebytes*, which features reviews (including screenshots!) of new and existing products.

Files are compressed with PKZIP, although several other compression formats are also used. The archive is maintained by Brian

"Doc" O'Neill, who checks uploaded files for viruses and to make sure the software is not copyrighted material. In fact, uploading copyrighted material to any Internet host is a big no-no. A large repository for user-created *Harpoon* scenarios was shut down by the administration at Kansas State University due to complaints from **Three-Sixty** about one copyrighted program which had been uploaded by an irresponsible user.

In addition, there are big MS-DOS game repositories at the University of Michigan [archive.msdos.edu] and Oakland University [oak.oakland.edu], among others, and a superb collection of *Windows* software at the University of Indiana [ftp.cica.indiana.edu]. There is even an archive at the University of Iowa which is devoted to game solutions, hints and walkthroughs! One of the largest general archive sites (probably the busiest as well) is the famous "wuarchive" at Washington University in St. Louis. [wuar-

chive.wustl.edu]. There is a daily influx of programs into the "MSDOS_UPLOADS" directory, and the latest demos and other new software are often posted there first. I recently downloaded a demo of the *Lemmings 2* game which was enough to revive Lemmmingmania for an all too short while.

There was a promise to say something further about *Diplomacy* on the Internet, and while space prohibits me from going into too much detail, suffice it to say that e-mail is lots quicker than postal play, and computer adjudicators (programs known to the Diplomacy faithful as "the Judge") are available on hosts in the U.S., Australia, and South Africa to handle most of the bookkeeping chores. Now if only someone would write an SVGA front end for the judge output!

Well, that's a whirlwind tour of Internet gaming. We docked at a few of the major ports of call, but there are many bayous and backwaters to be explored, and the good news is that there will soon be easy access to all of them. The growth of the Internet ensures that this vast ocean of data, discussion and diversions will soon be lapping at everyone's laptop, if it isn't soaking their shoes already. (So *that's* why my socks are so wet!) **cgw**

> *It is now possible to play computer games, talk about computer games, and even design computer games (in a fashion) on the Internet.*

Jacking into the Internet

Getting access to an Internet account isn't as easy as picking up a phone and subscribing, as with the commercial networks. Most users of the Internet have accounts through their association with an organization with Internet/Usenet access; usually a large company with government connections or a university. Some universities do offer accounts to private individuals for a fee, but most restrict access to members of the school.

The only other way for one to get access is through a private bulletin board system (BBS) that is an "official" Usenet/Internet site. Many private BBSs have access to a limited number of Usenet news groups and offer limited e-mail capability. Finding such a board is a matter of poking around the BBSs in your area. Phone numbers and information can usually be found in local computer weekly magazines and at local user-group meetings.

There are several good sources of information on the Internet/Usenet. A nice overview of worldwide networks is John Quarterman's *The Matrix, Computer Networks and Conferencing Systems Worldwide*, published by Digital Press, 12 Crosby Drive, Bedford, MA 01730 (800)-343-8321. Quarterman also publishes a monthly newsletter, *Matrix News*, which covers the Internet, among others. Contact Matrix Information and Directory Services, 701 Brazos, Suite 500, Austin, TX 78701, (512) 320-9031.

Other general sources include *Boardwatch Magazine*, 5970 S. Vivian St., Littleton, CO 80127, (303) 973-4222, and *Online Access*, which can be found on most computer publication newsstands. **cgw**

The Good... The Bad... And The Butt-Ugly.

In the Old West, you couldn't tell the bad guys from the good guys by how ugly they were (you had to rely on the color of their hats). But in *Freddy Pharkas, Frontier Pharmacist,* even a scrawny, sissified, one-eared Pharmacist can be a good guy.

Al Lowe, creator of Leisure Suit Larry, spins a yarn of schoolmarms and chorus girls with hearts o'gold, cowboys and Indians, and varmints and heroes. It's the brand-new, age-old tale of Freddy Pharkas, a gunslinger who gave it all up for his love of pharmacology. Together with his faithful Indian companion, Srini Bagdnish, Freddy sets out to save bucolic, boring Coarsegold from a fate worse than Hollywood adaptation.

So don't just groan at all those old horse-opera clichés. *Be one.* Strap on your spurs for a saga that skewers every Western under the sun. Mosey on down to your software store and ask for *Freddy Pharkas, Frontier Pharmacist,* And smile when you say that.

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Circle Reader Service #89

Into the Volcano of Death

A Trip Into the Fiery Environs of TSN's *Yserbius*

by Samuel (V'ger) Baker II

Twinion was a lovely port, ruled by a king. All races were welcome and times were happy. Then trouble arrived in the form of Arnakkian Slowfoot, a wizard that the king invited to live in a castle on the island. Arnakkian didn't play nice and one night, whether by intent or misadventure, evoked a volcanic eruption. The volcano (named Yserbius) buried his digs in lava. Now the place is only open to the more adventurous tourist trade. That's where we come in.

The Shadow of Yserbius is **The Sierra Network**'s entry into multiplayer roleplaying on the computer. Each person can run one character at a time and be joined by up to three other friends to hack, slash and puzzle their way through the depths of the volcano in which the action takes place.

The game presents a 3-D you-are-there perspective a la *Dungeon Master* or *Ultima Underworld*. There are 11 areas in *Yserbius*, each identical except for name, and they serve to separate the players into communities of 50 to 80. One may have as many as six characters in the stables ready for play and simply select the desired character before entering one of these areas.

During movement, the screen is split into three sections. The upper left window shows what the party sees. Underneath this is a small text window where dialogue from the players and game messages appear. The right side of the text window has a scrollbar that may be used to review past messages. In the middle of this bar is a lock that, when clicked upon, freezes the text window so that an important message can be studied.

The right-hand side of the screen shows the portraits of players in the party. Each of the portraits may be examined to gain further information about oneself and one's fellows. A large area in the middle may be used to show player information, a map of the level the party is on, or the names of players who are on the map. The bottom part shows icons for player inventory, spells, skills and game options such as saving the player's position.

All of the artwork is static. Though the look of the underground is pleasant, but not spectacular, the still shots of the monsters are very beautifully drawn, with few exceptions. The same pictures are used for monsters of the same category. For example, the picture that represents the sabertooth also represents ice lions, manticores (yech!) and others of the cat family. For now, no sound boards are supported, but Soundblaster support is promised

TITLE:	The Shadow of Yserbius
SYSTEM:	IBM
# PLAYERS:	Unlimited (four in one party)
PRICE:	$12.95/month for 30 hours on The Sierra Network, plus $4.00/month for access to Medieval Land.
DESIGNER:	Joe Ybarra
PUBLISHER/HOST:	The Sierra Network Coarsegold, CA (800) SIERRA1

Supposedly the wizard's castle is buried deep in the bowels of this mountain. It is his anguished spirit that keeps the volcano active.
Attempting to join Grizabella
Received OK to Join
Now Following Grizabella
(Grizabella) hi

Grizabella
Female Human
Level 16 Ranger
Harmony

for a future version. I quickly turned off the sounds from my PC speaker.

Your Presence is Requested

The first order of business in playing *Yserbius* is creating one or more characters. There are six classes, eight races, and two alignments (harmony and chaos). The classes are thief, knight, barbarian, ranger, cleric and wizard. The seven races are elves, dwarves, humans, trolls, orcs, gnomes, gremlins and halflings. To create a character, one chooses a class and a race. Then one can choose the artwork that will represent the character or design the character in detail and leave the art work until later. The faces are very believable, but it would be nice to have a greater selection of expressions and hairstyles. The player may freely jump back and forth in the creation process, but once one leaves a section, the points one has spent from that pool are set. One allocates points from separate pools to stats, spells and skills. The stats that one may raise are strength (the better to womp on you my dear), defense, (the harder to be womped on), agility which helps one elude spell effects, and initiative which determines who womps when. Three other stats (dexterity, hit points and mana points) increase naturally as one advances in level.

There are three groups of spells: attack, defense and utility, which modify attributes, heal or provide information. There are 24 spells. When allocating points for spells, one should take care not to pump up the level of a spell too much before one can see how much that spell will cost to cast per level. There are 12 levels for each spell, and one can only cast the level that one has paid their dues to. That may mean that a spell may be ineffective at low levels, or it may mean that one cannot afford to cast it at higher levels until one has gained several more experience levels.

The 24 skills are divided into groups by character class. Each class has four skills which are defaults for that class. Then, some skills from other classes will be acquired as one rises in levels, and others may be acquired as the reward for completing quests. Some skills are active all the time, such as weapon skills, others must be invoked during movement or combat. For the starting player, the emphasis here should be on weapon skills at first, because hacking will be the primary means of disposing of monsters for the first few levels.

There are only 27 places to carry items. Six of them for items worn, one place where items
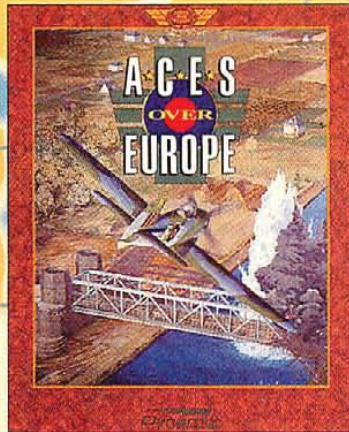
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exchanged between players appear, and 20 in two bags. This is not nearly enough to carry all the quest items one will acquire, special items that can cast spells, and potions to restore health points and mana. If it were not for the mana trick (explained later), players would be popping back and forth to the store after every other fight, a rather large nuisance and a process which I believe would quickly degrade the performance of the game.

The Reception

Upon entering the field of play, the first things one will see are the three structures that control a player's life. There is the Tavern where one may read posts from players and easily determine who is there. One may also converse with anyone in this area by clicking on their name and typing a message. Next, is the castle-like structure called the Guild Hall that serves as a training hall, general store and pawnshop. Before doing anything else, one should enter the keep and purchase equipment. Lastly, there is the volcano itself with a top and bottom entrance. The bottom entrance is for people who have saved their position and need to step out to the store to get a cup of mana or such like. One may teleport out and re-enter here without having to slog all the way back down on foot.

Combat works as a series of rounds, and each member of the party gets to act once every round. Each round one may hack with a weapon, cast a spell, use a skill or use something in one's pack. When all the party has been polled, their actions' results and those of the monsters are shown in the small text window below the picture of the monsters.

At this point, the player may be dead. A beginning player should expect to die *a lot*. However, in most cases, someone else in the party will be able to cast a resuscitate spell and bring the player back to life.

This spell will even work in combat, which is nice as one has to survive in order to collect the goodies. If all of the party dies, one is sent back to the opening screen and may enter again at the top entrance.

After a while, most fighting will become routine. All members in the party will cast death darts and most of the monsters will die. Those that are left will eventually succumb. Fortunately, most fights may be fled from. Since fighting takes more time than fleeing, this is welcome for those in a hurry to complete a quest before leaving. Except for location-triggered encounters, the number of opposing monsters is nicely tailored to the number of people in the party.

Quest for Story

This is not the case for quest encounters. Quests are the staple diet of adventurers in the volcano. The rewards for completing them are quite generous. In some cases, skills or stats are boosted or weapons are gained, rather than experience. Even at the highest levels, the later quests were quite exciting. I found my palms sweaty on several occasions, especially during the Quest of the Four Parapets. The final battle took about a half hour and was nip and tuck for a party of nineteenth to thirty-fifth level players. I was a level 19 wizard at the time. I did not die during the fight, but was occasionally down to under ten hit points. About 20 minutes into the fight, I had no mana points and was using items to cast spells. I had one charge left in a Staff of Life when Arnakkian finally expired. In the Enlikil quest, I was at level 25 and with a level 35 barbarian and a level 84 cleric. Several times during the running fights I was dead and these two players were down to 5,000 or fewer hit points. Since many high level monsters can deliver blows of multiple thousands of hit points we might well have all died. Most quests can be completed in one or two hours and may be resumed at a later time if necessary. A couple of the quests require the participation of another party. I thought this was a nice touch, and it was not hard to find another party that would cooperate.

Party Time

There is a social life growing under the volcano. This is assisted by the ease with which one may communicate while there. Just typing and hitting return sends a message to the party. One may speak to anyone in an area by typing their name followed by a colon. Messages may be sent to everyone on the same level by clicking on the map button with the mouse.

There are many guilds of players that hold organized events, and most of the guilds have staked out areas as "their" territory, where members of that guild may be found most of the time. A high majority of the people there are friendly, helpful and quite generous of their time. As a new player, I never had any trouble finding "older" players

Computer Gaming World

LEGENDS of FANTASY
LITERATURE

PRAISE A LEGENDARY NEW GAME

✤   ✤   ✤

ROGER ZELAZNY
Author of *The Prince of Chaos*

"A rousing and engaging game where the well-honed edge cuts well—*Betrayal at Krondor.*"

ANDRE NORTON
Author of *Witchworld*

"The idea of combining your game with a book seems to me to be enriching and I most heartily endorse it."

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Author of *The King's Buccaneer*

"I feel great pride and satisfaction that this beautiful piece of computer fiction was based upon my work."

EXPERIENCE the cinematic intensity of *Betrayal at Krondor*, a revolutionary fantasy role-playing game based on the *New York Times* best-selling *Riftwar Legacy* books by Raymond E. Feist. *Betrayal at Krondor* launches all-new legends of Midkemia, a breathtaking mystical land. Elegant story-telling and revolutionary 3Space visuals immerse you in the most realistic, detailed fantasy ever created.
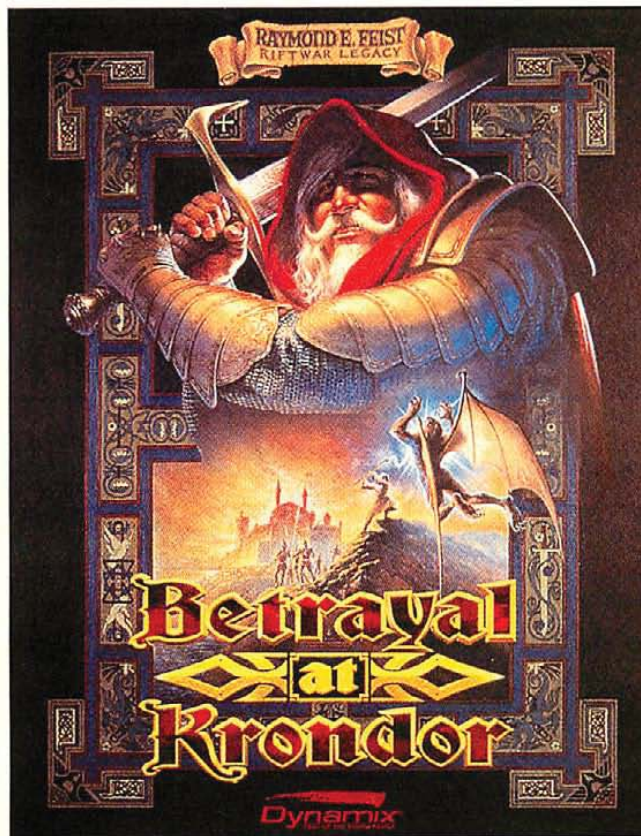
ENDURE savage enemy combat. Opponents not only act but *think* using revolutionary artificial intelligence.
SEE the wonders of Midkemia for the first time as over 2,500 frames of rotoscoped animation, exquisite hand-painted backgrounds and Dynamix's 3Space technology combine to create a "virtual" fantasy.
WIELD more than sixty unusual spells that unleash superhuman magical powers.

to go out with. Older players will frequently adopt a newbie and protect them, letting them accumulate levels quickly and teaching them the short cuts to fame and fortune. While leading on quests, I had frequent occasion to ask other explorers where to take an item or the order in which to do things. I always received a response that was friendly and helpful.

Here, as elsewhere on TSN, romance blooms. Many players go around in pairs and flirt while playing. I must admit I was not immune to this aspect myself. Women can expect quite a bit of attention under the volcano, given a friendly nature. Most of the time, everyone conducts themselves within bounds. Of course, in any large group of people, there will be a few laggards who have not fully understood good manners. One has only to complain by hitting the complaint button that appears on the TSN menu and action will be taken.

There are also guild wars where more organized conflict takes place. As part of the map and party section of the menu, it is possible to challenge other parties. Challenges of this nature produce nothing of value, no experience for killing other players, and no items (unless one has the pickpocket skill). Some people still do it though. A way out for this has been provided, however; one may simply "mute" oneself and not be liable to being challenged. One may also mute oneself against being joined so that one will not be joined by others while waiting for a friend.

Brickbats of Outrageous Fortune

The great majority of my experience with *Yserbius* has been positive. As always, though, there are a few flies struggling in the ointment. After the first ten levels or so, money ceases to matter. I have millions now

and there is not much to spend it on. On weekends the system can be sluggish as it reaches saturation. Also, crashes will happen as the network drops users it can no longer support. Since TSN relies on Telenet to carry it across the country, Telenet's problems are also theirs. Over New Years Day, Telenet crashed, bringing down c.10,000 users of TSN. In the time since, things are still a little flaky around the edges. Periods of group crashes have occurred, but things appear to be settling down.

A new revision of *Yserbius* is coming that will fix some of the bugs in the game. During my play, I found no bugs that affected the players in an adverse manner. There are several bugs that may be taken advantage of by the players, however. One in particular gives players 15,000 experience points for repeatedly entering and leaving a room without fighting the monsters there. This has produced players with levels in the hundreds who have been playing only a few days.

Journey's End

The game can be entertaining, but what made this an experience to be savored are the many good people with which I ventured forth. There is no substitute for the companionship of others and *Yserbius* gives one all the tools one would wish for the interaction that is the core of this game. I now have a number of people whom I consider good friends, and I will be playing long after this article is submitted. Most of the people I met were thoroughly addicted to *Yserbius* and to TSN in general. Those who possess the money would be well served to try out TSN and *Yserbius*. Those who choose to journey there, be sure and look for V'ger (or Vger elsewhere) and say hi. CGW

Circle Reader Service #86

Facebook's Exhibit No. 1025
Page 82

More Mind-Munching Madness from the Creators of *Gobliiins*.
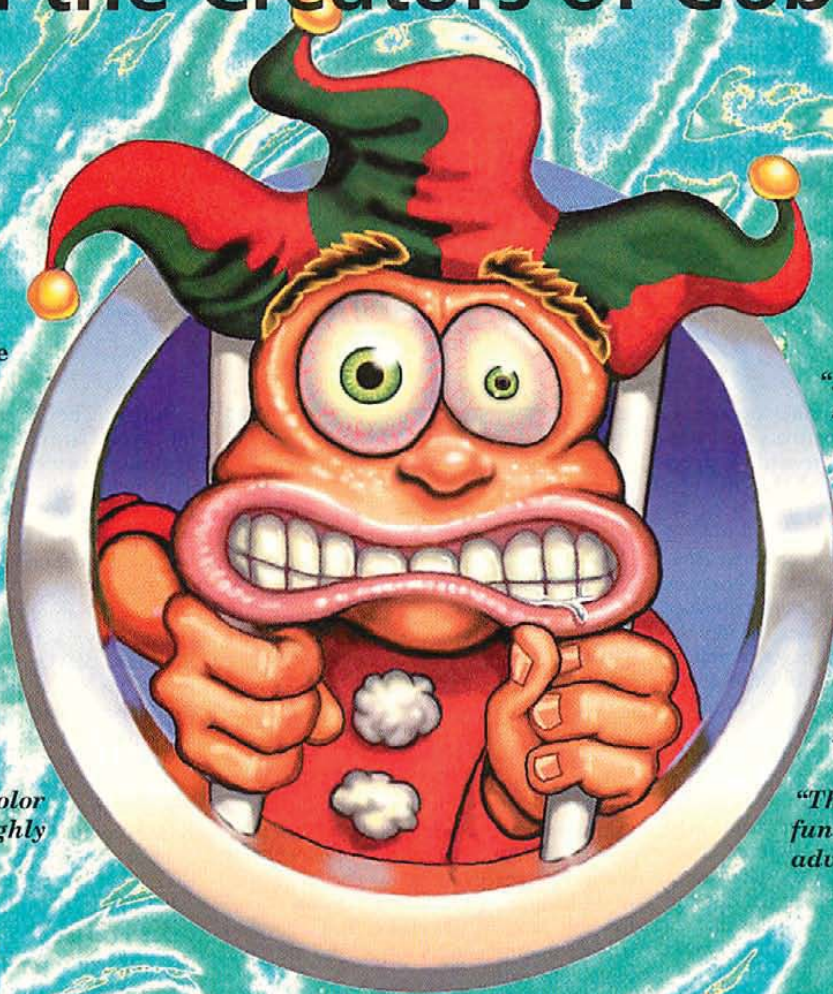
Here's what they're saying about *Gobliiins*:

"... a delightful mix of adventure and puzzle gaming that will leave your gray matter positively fried."
-Video Games and Computer Entertainment

"... graphics are hand-drawn, 256-color works of art . . . Highly recommened."
-Questbusters

"... you will want to snatch this one up. Its intelligent design and cute good looks will hook you right from the start."
-Game Players Magazine

"If you like the ultimate in brain teasers this game will meet your needs."
-The Newark Advocate

"There is plenty of good fun here for the graphic adventurer . . ."
-Computer Gaming World

"... as puzzling as a Rubics Cube with a bad attitude."
-The Newark Advocate

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A Survey of On-Line Games

While artificial computer opponents and role-playing partners are a convenient and often rewarding aspect of computer gaming, we feel that the best opponent/partner is a human one. At *CGW*, we believe very strongly that multi-player gaming in virtual, tele-communicated environments is the future of the hobby. No matter how sophisticated the artificial intelligence algorithms become, or how user-friendly the interface, the computer will never be able to match the perverse gaming brilliance of the human mind. And besides, the computer doesn't care much if you gloat.

This listing of games is designed to give readers an overview of the multi-player experiences available on several commercial on-line services. We hope that these brief descriptions might prompt some of those gamers who have never had the pleasure of human-to-human gaming to "reach out and touch" fellow hobbyists. You might make a friend or two, and you'll certainly have a good time.

Air Warrior on GEnie

When games are not part of the basic service fee, we will list the extra hourly/monthly costs separately.

Air Warrior (GEnie): Kesmai's classic game of multi-player air combat, covering the era from WWI through Korea, was one of the first on-line games to use a graphic front-end. The latest version, *SVGA Air Warrior*, is reviewed in this issue. Word has it that the Air Warrior section of GEnie is *the* hangout for air-combat jocks. $6.00/hr.
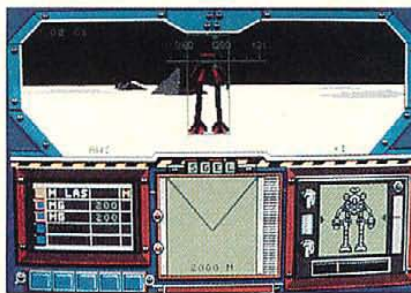
BattleTech on GEnie

Backgammon (The Sierra Network): Gamers who long for the good old days of gaming around the hearth or the kitchen table may be more inclined to find opponents for traditional strategy games on The Sierra Network. Included in TSN's extensive list of coffee-table games is this classic. You'll have no trouble finding players to role the old doubling-cube with.

Baseball Manager (Prodigy): Would-be baseball general managers should enjoy this new spin on the rotisserie/fantasy style of baseball. Gamers prioritize actual major league players for the draft, and rosters are controlled by the amount of money "paid" to the players drafted. Then, would-be managers set line-ups and line-up contingencies for head-to-head play. Rather than the weekly results one would get from a fantasy league, the on-line game uses a pool of statistics to figure out daily scores. $100.00 per season, plus monthly fee.

BattleTech (GEnie): With a role-playing shell that allows gamers to enlist in the armies of the various Houses of the BattleTech universe, or serve as maverick mercenaries, this version of BattleTech has possibilities that even the **Virtual Entertainment** BattleTech Centers don't have. The ability to participate, through the miracle of Kesmai's graphic front-end, in on-going campaigns from the comfort of one's own home is both addicting and satisfying. Fans of Activision's *MechWarrior* will not want to miss this next generation of the classic simulation. $6.00/hr.

Bridge (The Sierra Network): In today's busy world, it is more and more difficult to get bridge partners together for a few hands. This highly trafficked service makes it easy to find both a regular bridge partner and an impromptu rubber. It is regularly frequented by players ranging in skills from beginners to grand masters.

Chess (CompuServe, The Sierra Network, USA Today): Many networks have chess sections for PBEM games. Compuserve boasts a forum for postal play, real-time chess and simultaneous chess (four players simultaneously play two games each). The Sierra Network has plenty of face-to-face action and USA Today features a chess ladder (where players compete to reach the top). All three systems can boast an active and ardent group of chess-players with a broad range of expertise.

British Legends (CompuServe): This is your typical text-based multi-player role-playing game with an emphasis on magic. The

The Sierra Network Main Menu

goal of the game is to rack up the treasures and points needed to become a Wizard. As Wizard, the player is granted special powers, the most potent of which is the gift of invisibility. The unseen gamer can then slink about the on-line world wreaking mischievous havoc on unsuspecting underlings. $6.00/hr.

CEO (Prodigy): The basic monthly rate on Prodigy allows gamers to become the Chief Executive Officer of the company of their choice and compete with other Prodigy sub-

CEO on Prodigy

scribers within that industry. Players manage their companies through on-line reports and budgetary expenditures and constraints, while they attempt to outpace the competition in both efficiency and profits.

Cribbage (The Sierra Network): The classic game is always accessible on The Sierra Network. All one needs to do is examine the interests of those on-line, find a prospective opponent, and invite them to the game. Best of all, it automatically keeps track of the *Cribbage* scoring system so that it is impossible to forget (or steal points for) unspotted points.

CyberStrike (GEnie): Simutronics' new shoot-'em-up is described in the review on page 60 of this issue. The intense action, communicated through the graphic front-end, makes this an addictive on-line pastime. $6.00/hr.

Diplomacy (GEnie): Although play-by-E-mail *Diplomacy* (the Avalon Hill game of deal-making, back-stabbing and resource grabbing in pre-WWI Europe) exists on almost every network, *Diplomacy* games have been fully-automated on GEnie. Not only can one find ready opponents for the standard game, but there are several game variants, including "Gunboat Diplomacy" (no negotiating), and several other options, as well. $6.00/hr.

Empire Builder (MPG Net): The strategy game of railroad building/operating that spawned an entire line of railroad games (*British Rails*, *Eurorails*, *Japan Rails*) is now undergoing beta testing on-line. The game runs under Windows and sports a sharp looking graphic front-end of the map used in the boardgame. The entire interface is point-and-click and includes an "auto-move" feature that should speed up play in comparison to the boardgame version. $6.00/hr.

Fantasy Sports (CompuServe, GEnie, NVtel, USA Today): Almost every major on-line network has fantasy leagues where players draft major league stars and total up the stats of their actual performances. NVtel features draft leagues where teams play head-to-head over the course of a week. CompuServe has draft leagues where players compete against the rest of the league during every week of the season. GEnie and USA Today offer head-to-head fantasy leagues, but one must draft the team afresh each week. $6.00/hr.

Federation II (GEnie): Gamers become intergalactic traders in this text-based space trading game. The spirit of community among regular gamers is extremely high, and players who are promoted to the highest levels get to design planets upon which all traders may adventure. It is also billed as an "adult" gaming environment where risqué forms of textual interaction are less of an exception than a rule. $6.00/hr.

Galaxy II (National Videotex): AUSI has used a similar interface to that in their on-line *Diplomacy* game (GEnie) to facilitate this map-based space conquest game. Gamers get to establish both the history of their people (in terms of passivity and aggressiveness) as well as the current stance of said empire with regard to aggression. Then, gamers make economic and military choices that determine

Empire Builder on the MPG Net

Kingdom of Drakkar on the MPG Net

how much of the game's universe they can conquer. $6.00/hr.

Gemstone (GEnie): Simutronics' highly recommended text-based game of multi-player, fantasy role-playing. The game uses Iron Crown Enterprise's *RoleMaster* rules. See the update that introduces the new graphic front-end on pg. 90 of this issue. $6.00/hr.

Hundred Years War (GEnie): Jim Dunnigan's extremely detailed game of medieval politics, economics and warfare is now available on-line. The game can be played strictly by E-mail or it can be played as interactively as one desires. See the update on pg. 96 of this issue.

Island of Kesmai (CompuServe, NVtel): This classic text-based fantasy game has stood the test of time. It was one of the first commercially available multi-player CRPGs and

is still worth playing. The game consists of two segments: the Basic Game, consisting of several "lands" for beginner and intermediate players, and an Advanced Game for veterans. New lands and challenges are added all the time. It is now available on U.S. Videotex, as well as CompuServe. $6.00/hr.

Kingdom of Drakkar (MPG Net): Imagine a multi-player fantasy game where everything is graphically portrayed. That's *Kingdom of Drakkar*. See the brief review on pg. 69. $6.00/hr.
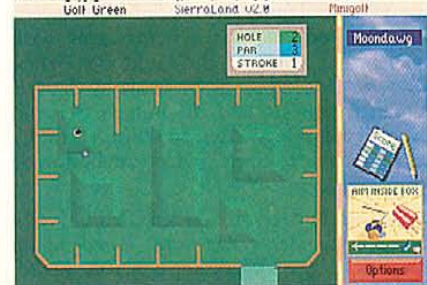
Legends of Future Past (Digital Dreams Network): This virtual environment is a text-based role-playing game which uses live Game Masters to keep the action moving and the "cyburban" populace working together. It is a rich, dynamic, and lovingly supervised world of the imagination. One can play a number of races with different skills, join special guilds and secret societies with secret agendas, and the system sponsors special "major quests" once a week where the whole populace of the realm may get involved in a large scale adventure. There have even been "wars" on the system, where an entire city was called to arms to fight off an army of baddies. Like most of these games, this one is extremely addicting — perhaps even more so. $6.00/hr.

Miniature Golf (The Sierra Network): TSN provides a colorful playground in which one to four players can putter around and have a few laughs. Like their real-life counterparts,

the holes are wacky and often fiendishly devised, providing many opportunities for players to playfully jibe one another's shots. Beware: the course seems to have a law of physics all its own!

Modem-to-Modem (CompuServe): CompuServe provides this forum (GO MTM) for gamers who want to connect with other gamers in modem-to-modem games like *Knights of the Sky*, *Falcon 3.0*, *The Perfect General*, *Command HQ* and more. The new *Empire Deluxe*, in particular, was designed to work through this forum (but only for two-player, head-to-head competition). $6.00/hr.

Neverwinter Nights (America On-line): This is the ever expanding AD&D Forgotten Realms universe custom designed for network, real time, multi-human player action. Based on the highly successful SSI "Gold
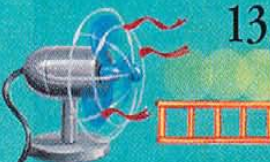

Mini Golf on TSN

Operation Market Garden on the MPG Net

Box" series of computer role-playing games, *Neverwinter Nights* stays faithful to the universe and game system where parties of several players can roam together on quests. With a time limit element added to the tactical combat system and the ability to page other players anywhere on-line, the system seems well thought-out. Fans of the Gold Box series know what to expect as far as the mechanics of the system go, and the human element makes it that much better. $6.00/hr. + $14.95 for the graphic front end (which can be downloaded).

Operation Market Garden (MPG-Net): Board wargamers take note. Based upon Game Designer Workshop's classic board wargame, this two-player game based upon the famous airborne operation of late WWII, is the only game currently available of its kind. With hexes and counters and the traditional board wargaming symbology, this game is *the* game for the grognard who can't seem to find opponents. $4.00/hr.

Paintball (The Sierra Network): This game features an overhead view of two teams maneuvering over a variety of terrain features. The goal is essentially, "Capture the Flag," but both sides have "paintball" weapons with which to blast each other for additional points. The interface and the graphics are fluid and elegant, but the TSN sound support (*splat!*) gives getting hit by "enemy" paintballs a whole new dimension.

Poker (The Sierra Network, USA Today): USA Today has a poker ladder for those who wish to play poker by E-mail or compete for high scores in their video poker section. The

Shadow of Yserbius on TSN

Sierra Network offers "face-to-face" competition for Larry Bucks in Larryland under a dealer's choice system. $6.00/hr. (USA Today), +$4.00/mo. for all of LarryLand (TSN).

Rebel Space (Prodigy): Space marauders with a megalomaniacal bent will find many worlds to subdue in this turn-based play-by-E-mail game. Players can side with a universal cause as either Militarist, Environmentalist, or Scientists, or play the maverick as an individualistic Rogue. The game is very simple, and thus recommended for the newcomer to

Sniper on CompuServe

PBEM games. The player plots four moves for his four ships and decides what sorts of modules should be built on each ship. Daily, weekly, and bi-weekly turn games are available.

Red Baron (The Sierra Network): Based on the award winning Dynamix computer game (recently inducted into the *CGW Hall of Fame*), the on-line version of *Red Baron* adds the human opponent element that can never be matched by any artificial intelligence. Complete with a scoring system and weekly


Rebel Space on Prodigy

top rankings, each game can be played by 2-4 joystick hot shots. The person calling the game can designate player's airplanes, starting altitudes, weather conditions and more, so that each battle will be particularly interesting. Although some problems were found in earlier versions of the game, at press time TSN was about to release a major revision of their on-line *Red Baron* product which was supposed to address many of these problems.

Shadow of Yserbius (The Sierra Network): When TSN does on-line role-playing, every-

one wants to delve into their dungeon! Although there is an extra $4.00/mo. fee to play in the MedievaLand section of TSN, the legions of eager *Yserbius* players find it well worth it. Each player becomes a single character from one of six different classes and can run through the ever expanding maze levels solo or in parties with up to three others. Using an interface reminiscent of other popular, first person perspective role-playing games, *Yserbius* has become a way of life for a very socially interactive crowd. See the article on pg. 72.

Sniper! (CompuServe): Roughly based on the SPI boardgame, this is a two-player game of small unit maneuver. Originally a game where players commanded ASCII characters to move through ASCII terrain, the game now features a graphic interface with full-color characters and terrain. As players are successful, they move through the ranks of the on-line elite. $6.00/hr.

Star Cruiser (MPG-Net): *Wing Commander* on-line? Almost. While the action is a bit slower than Origin's space-combat action
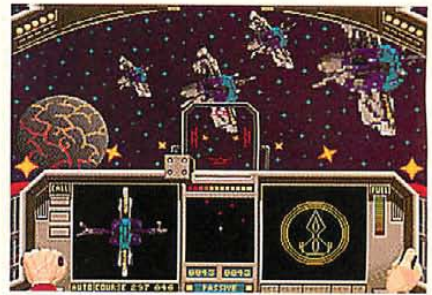
Star Cruiser on the MPG Net

game, and the graphics are less detailed in many ways, *Star Cruiser* is still a hot multiplayer shoot 'em up. The future holds many exciting things for this system. Within the next few months, a trade option will be added so that players can improve the technology of their ships. In addition, MPG-Net has plans to add a role-playing segment based upon the *2300 AD* people-and-paper RPG universe. $4.00/hr.

The following are voice contact numbers for the services mentioned in this article:

America On-Line: (800) 827-6364

Compuserve Information Service: (800) 848-8990

Digital Dreams Network: (800) 274-2814

GEnie: (800) 638-9636

Multi-Player Games Network: (800) GET-GAME

National Videotex (NVtel): (800) 336-9096

Prodigy: (800) 822-6922 x566

The Sierra Network: (800) SIERRA1

USA Today Sports Network: (800) 826-9688 **CGW**

Gemstone Gets A GUI Makeover

The New Graphic User-Interface For GEnie's Multi-player Role-playing Environment

by Jay Kee

To the people who design them, and to many of the people who play them, on-line multi-player games (MPGs) may represent the first real glimpse of Virtual Reality. Current VR hardware relies on clumsy attachments to produce simple graphics that fail to deliver an illusion of reality. But MPGs like **Simutronics's** *GemStone III* — minus the hardware, helmet and gloves — have managed to create that illusion by focusing on the one sense that needs no bio-mechanical enhancement: imagination.

A fantasy role-playing game based on I.C.E.'s *Rolemaster* and *Shadow World* paper-and-pencil systems, *GemStone III* has achieved tremendous success without any graphics support whatsoever. Relying on a text-only interface, it has been the number one entertainment product on GEnie since its release over three years ago. Its success and popularity is, to some degree, a testimony to the quality of design and originality of scripting. But good writing and clever programming alone won't keep people coming back time and again to play a game at $6.00 an hour (off-prime rates).

There's something more, something seductively different.

Power To The People

That something — the one thing that sets *GemStone* apart from conventional computer RPGs — is that all the characters a player encounters within the game are controlled by other *people;* not algorithms in a program. In *GemStone*, up to 60 people at a time can be on-line together, each playing their own character, pursuing their own goals, contributing their own perspective to an ongoing drama. Almost any kind of interaction that can be experienced in real life can be found in the game: talking, partying, fighting, making friends, making enemies, even getting married.

But characters are not the only element controlled by people. **Simutronics** employs the largest staff of designers, programmers and writers of any on-line game currently available: six full-time GMs, five assistants, two part-timers and a World Coordinator — enough to run a small country. They can create, modify or even upgrade the game environment in real-time, without shutting it down. Which means that new features can be added, special events can be introduced, and surprises can be sprung at any time, with all of it coordinated and controlled on-line. A recent enhancement to the *GemStone* system that factors role-playing ability into scoring and character advancement, could not be done without the participation of human controllers. As Simutronics CEO David Whatley points out, it gives *GemStone* a legitimate claim to being the first true fantasy role-playing game.

For the players, it's like being an active participant in both the writing and creation of a fantasy adventure. The only difference is that this story always starts in the middle, and never ends.

The Front-End, Top To Bottom

So why mess with success? Why introduce a front-end graphics interface, when the text-based game has been such a hit? The answer, simply, is "Why not?" Simutronics didn't replace the text-based interface with this new graphic front-end; they merely added to it, enhancing what was already there. The result is a slick terminal program with VGA graphics, animation, digital sound and a macro editor that makes playing the game a lot easier.

Although the *GemStone* front-end is still in the Beta stage (currently version 1.6), it's fully-functional and surprisingly bug-free. Unfortunately, it's only available for IBM compatibles at the moment, but

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Simutronics confirms they are considering the possibility of producing a Mac version.

The program is located on GEnie at page 930, in the GemStone Software Libraries, file #68. Download time will run about an hour with XModem at 2400 baud, but the package contains everything a player needs, eliminating the necessity of downloading any other files. Installation is simple: just type "GS3FEB16", and hit <enter>. The self-extracting archive will unpack and write all the files to disk.

From The Top

The first thing that needs to be made clear is that the *GemStone* front-end is not a stand-alone program. Although a player can change settings and use the macro editor off-line, the graphics displays, animations and sound effects only work on-line or in the *GemStone* area. The other point is that players do *not* need to have the front-end to play the game.

That said, let's take a look at what the front-end has and what it does. The first thing a player sees when running the program is a logo animation. But once the front-end loads, all that's left is a black screen and a cursor. It almost looks like the system's hung up, but there's nothing wrong; it's just the default off-line display. Hopefully, future versions will bring up something more interesting.

There are no mouse-activated menus, even though mouse support is included, so getting around is handled through the keyboard. Not a problem for someone raised on DOS, but a minor nuisance for those of us used to mouse-control-led environments. Of the several Alt-key combinations that access all the principle options, the most important is Alt-H. It brings up a help screen that displays all func-

tions supported by the program and the key combinations that activate them. This panel can be called up at any time, on-line or off, so players don't need to memorize anything (just as long as they don't forget Alt-H).

Configuring the front-end is simple, once you know where to look. The Settings screen can be accessed from anywhere in the program by pressing Alt-S. It brings up a panel that allows the player to set everything from screen display and terminal preferences, to baud rate and network delay. As straight-forward as it is, first-time users will probably want to familiarize themselves with the rest of the program before playing around with it.

Down The Middle

The main screen, or Terminal, is automatically called up when the player enters *GemStone* or can be accessed by pressing Alt-T. It's divided into three sections, with the upper third of the screen devoted to graphics displays and the lower two-thirds dedicated to the main text display.

The text display is the central part of the system. It performs the same functions as any terminal program, but with a few interesting wrinkles. First, a separate command line, or Chat area, at the bottom of the screen permits commands and communications to be entered independent of the main text display. It will handle paragraph-length entries, eliminating the need to chop things up into short statements; maintain an easily accessed command-line history; and repeat the last two commands given simply by hitting CTRL or ALT-enter.

Next, a split-screen feature lets players control and monitor a Familiar (a cat, wolf, hawk or falcon), while maintaining the main text

display. Finally, a "scroll-back" feature permits rapid scanning of the review buffer with the arrow or page-up/down keys. Players can save the entire buffer to disk with a single keystroke, or toggle a "Chronicles" option to record and save selected portions. Since the front-end works as a terminal program, it can be used in any area, roundtable or bulletin board on GEnie. It can even be used on any other on-line service; a nice plus, and worth the download all by itself.

At the top-left of the main screen, a display panel with icons and bar-graphs gives the player a visual reference to their character's status and health. A tiny human figure reflects certain activities, such as hiding, kneeling, sitting or lying down. And a compass rose displays all visible exits.

One of the big advantages of the front-end is that players can move around without typing in directional commands. All they have to do is press a directional key on the numeric keypad and their character will automatically go in that direction. Having a compass on-screen at all times makes getting around in the *GemStone* universe much simpler.

Next to this panel, in the upper right corner, is a small section used for graphics displays. Although small, these images are beautifully done, depicting idyllic forest settings, spooky graveyards or rustic shops. Some scenes, like the forest or the armoury, are accompanied by digitized sound effects; others are animated.

The only problem is that there just aren't enough of them. Only a few areas have graphics and even fewer have sound effects. None of the player characters can be seen, only a couple of the NPCs are depicted, and (other than the Gnoll) none of the monsters are pictured.

Of course, this is still a Beta version and Simutronics promises that future versions will include monsters and characters, plus extra scenes, animations and even musical scores. On the plus side, players will not be required to download the whole program all over again every time there's an upgrade, just individual resource files that one can easily add to the main program.

One of the most impressive features of the *GemStone* front-end has nothing to do with graphics. It's the built-in macro editor. Although the front-end's macro language is small, the editor has almost unlimited possibilities, allowing players to build macros to handle everything from log-on to combat. Accessed by pressing Alt-K, the editor comes up in a windows-style panel with individual slots for each of the 12 function keys. The slots can be selected by the mouse or keyboard, and macros of up to 512 characters can be entered into each one. Each function key can be assigned to any one of four combinations: Normal, Alt, Ctrl or Shift. And these in turn can be assigned to any one of nine control-keys, providing a possible total of 432 macros!

The Bottom Line

There really isn't anything out there at the moment to use as a benchmark when evaluating the *GemStone* front-end. It has to stand or fall on its own merit, but has to be viewed within the context of the game it was designed to enhance. Within that framework, Simutronics has done an admirable job. It adds to the enjoyment of the game without getting in the way, and makes it easier to play.

For the price of the download — roughly $6.00 — it's well worth having. New users can contact GEnie by modem at 1-800-638-8369. **CGW**

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"I Came, I Played, I Conquered"

Art by Rodger MacGowan; Copyright 1993 RBM Graphics

COMPUTER WARGAMING WORLD

In this issue . . .

Network Wars: CompuServe vs. Prodigy in CHQ
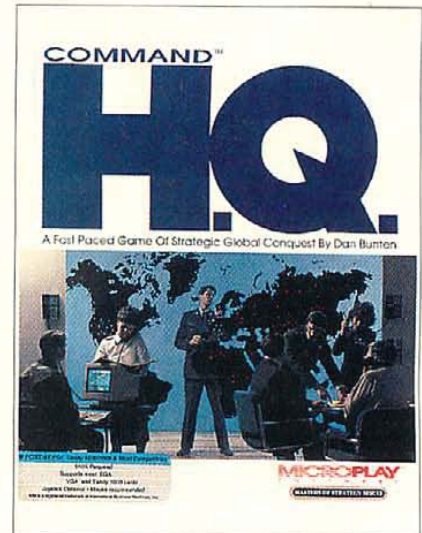
by Alan Emrich

Before we move to the lead story, let me bring up one item of new business. An interesting product has just landed on my desk which, I'm sad to say, I have not had adequate time to thoroughly examine. However, *Aide de Camp* from **HPS Simulations** looks like a product that I've long dreamed about. It is a "design your own play-by-email kit" for board wargames. In other words, I could pull virtually any **Avalon Hill, GDW, SPI, 3W** or other board wargame off my shelf and, using this program, put it "on disk" for easy electronic transfer of my moves and combat. It takes some time to create the maps and counters (they are graphically represented, not just lists of hex numbers and unit IDs), but it is a product I've longed to see. Designer Scott Hamilton said he created it for his own personal use and has now marketed it. I can't wait to spend some time with *Aide de Camp*.

Battle of the Network Wargamers

Last issue, in the preface to the *Empire Deluxe* tournament announcement, I hypothesized, "Wouldn't it be great to get the *Command HQ* players on CompuServe to play the ones on Prodigy?" Well, the truth is that they actually have been. This issue, I'd like to report on it. *Command HQ* is a rousing, real-time game designed for wargamers connected by modem. The map represents the entire globe, and units represents armies, fleets and air forces in a grand strategic scale.

Each group of *CHQ* players had a leader emerge to parlay the ground rules for the competition. Representing CompuServe was BobP [76170,1537] while the legions from Prodigy selected "The General" Robert E. Lee, Jr [BSWW20A] (and, yes, that's his real name). They agreed to set up four teams of five players each. Each player would play two games against each opponent from the same team, for a total of ten games per player with each player initiating one phone call against each opponent (to keep the phone bills reasonable).

They agreed that all games would be the "????" scenario, where each player begins with a capital on a world where the cities and resources have been placed randomly. Due to the possibility of beginning with an obviously unbalanced start, "restart" rules were created, agreed upon and enforced to assure fairness for individual games played. Interestingly, both network teams had their own ideas about what the restart rules should be, so each devised their own set and whoever was the caller determined which set of rules would be used for that match.

The Call of Destiny

Both networks generated a lot of messages about this tournament. Mostly it was the players recalling their tales of games won and lost. Some of the stories were very amusing (so much so that many bystanders would stop in to read them on-line). The Prodigy Players got off to an early lead over the CompuServe Comm-rades, but shortly after the halfway mark, CompuServe had pulled up very close in the win/loss column. This inspired Prodigy leader R.E. Lee to post the following address to his troops:

"Team Prodigy, Fhall in! Atteeehhhnnn-SHUN! Har Ease.

"Men, I don't need to tell you the importance of our mission. The very fate of the free world lies on our shoulders, not to mention the braggin rights for *all* the *CHQ* players on our Prodigy ladder, which you represent.

"We have been chosen to perform a sacred duty for God, country and the Prodigy Information Service — and in this effort we must not fail! I know it's rough out there on

the *CHQ* battlefield, but no matter how rough it gets, *we must persevere.* Did we give up when the Germans bombed Pearl Harbor? [*Germans? Well, he's on a roll. -Ed*] No! Did Norman Schwartskopf give up before capturing Saddam Hussein? Well, that's a bad example...

"The point is we cannot afford to fail. They are depending on us back home! We are *CHQ* soldiers, not heroes. A hero is someone who dies in cyberspace defending their information service. Our job is to make 'heroes' out of the enemy. The only thing we have to fear is fear itself — and a quick Cap Kill.

"You know the rules of engagement. Take no prisoners! You know how the dock scan technique works — use it! You know how to outflank your enemy — do it! You know the importance of defending your captitol from a surprise attack — defend it! You know the average airspeed of an unladened swallow in the '????' scenario... [*African or European? -Ed*].

"We are at a critical juncture. The battle is halfway over and there is still no clear victor in sight. We cannot lose sight of our goal. Of the 200 games to be played on the *CHQ* battlefield, we must claim victory in 101 of them or die trying. Now, go forth, secure in the knowledge that truth, liberty and flat monthly rates are on your side. We shall not let their hourly usage charges bankrupt our society. We must defend our honor against the Evil Compunist Empire. God is on our side. (I know. She told me.)

"That is all. Team Prodigy, Atteehhnnn-SHUN! Dhis-missed!"

C'mon folks, where else in wargaming can you read such wonderful stuff? Another Prodigy player, D. Dawson [PMRR89A] wrote that he discovered a new disease: *CHQitis.* He listed symptoms as including a reduced ability to type due to hasty messaging back and forth during a real time game (sighting a sample sentence as "Nivce glame, yu relly suurpised m wit tat clap atach!!!"), strained relations with members of the opposite sex, dreams involving little blue and red squares, and the use of the phrase "warmongering enemy" in everyday conversation.

There Were Only Winners

This was one of those cross-cyberspace rivalries where every player was certainly a winner. We all know that there is a kindred spirit among fellow wargamers, and in this tournament it lived and laughed aloud. Unfortunately, when I had to write this article, two games remained unfinished (and the suspense stood at excruciating!). The score stood at Prodigy 100, CompuServe 98. However, CompuServe had more winning "teams" than Prodigy did, so as far as this observer is concerned, *both* networks can claim a legitimate victory. Let me end this month's column with a roster of the matches. Perhaps next time, you'll be on-line and enjoying this kind of wargaming camaraderie. **CGW**

CHQ Tourney Update Feb 28
CompuServe/Prodigy CHQ Tournament

Team A Results

		Robert Lee	Leo T.	Devon D.	Ralph F.	Robert Moore	
		PA1	PA2	PA3	PA4	PA5	Tot
Bob P	CA1	1-1	1-1	1-1	2-0	2-0	7-3
Dave Browne	CA2	1-1	1-1	0-2	1-1	2-0	5-5
Joe Bolnick	CA3	2-0	0-2	0-2	2-0	0-2	4-6
MAK	CA4	2-0	1-1	1-1	2-0	1-1	7-3
Paul McClellan	CA5	2-0	1-1	0-2	-	2-0	5-3
						TOT=	30-20

Team B Results

		Larry L.	Mark Davis	Jeff Miller	Jason D.	Kevin A.	
		PB1	PB2	PB3	PB4	PB5	Tot
Chris Hartman	CB1	1-1	0-2	2-0	1-1	0-2	4-6
Kevin Holcomb	CB2	2-0	1-1	2-0	2-0	2-0	9-1
Peter Harty	CB3	1-1	1-1	2-0	1-1	2-0	7-3
Skulker	CB4	2-0	0-2	1-1	1-1	0-2	4-6
Steve Kershaw	CB5	2-0	2-0	2-0	1-1	2-0	9-1
						TOT=	33-17

Team C Results

		Dave W.	Barry Stuart	Tim M.	Mark K.	Tim C.	
		PC1	PC2	PC3	PC4	PC5	Tot
William Louis	CC1	0-2	0-2	1-1	2-0	2-0	5-5
Bob Brennan	CC2	0-2	2-0	0-2	2-0	2-0	6-4
Dave Willis	CC3	-	0-2	0-2	0-2	1-1	1-7
Leonard Coyle	CC4	1-1	0-2	1-1	1-1	2-0	5-5
Marc Dultz	CC5	1-1	2-0	2-0	2-0	2-0	9-1
						TOT=	26-22

Team D Results

		Doug D.	Tim D.	Jon H.	Joe Seidel	Joel Stanford	
		PD1	PD2	PD3	PD4	PD5	Tot
Daniel Black	CD1	2-0	2-0	2-0	0-2	2-0	8-2
Emil Polito	CD2	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-10
Marshall Lott	CD3	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-10
Mike Elliott	CD4	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-10
Rob MacArthur	CD5	0-2	1-1	0-2	0-2	0-2	1-9
						TOT=	9-41

Tournament Summary:
CIS-Prodigy   Team results (head-to-head)

Team A	30-20	CServe Team A declared victorious over Prodigy Team A
Team B	33-17	CServe Team B declared victorious over Prodigy Team B
Team C	26-22	CServe Team C declared victorious over Prodigy Team C
Team D	9-41	Prodigy Team D declared victorious over CServe Team D
Total	98-100	
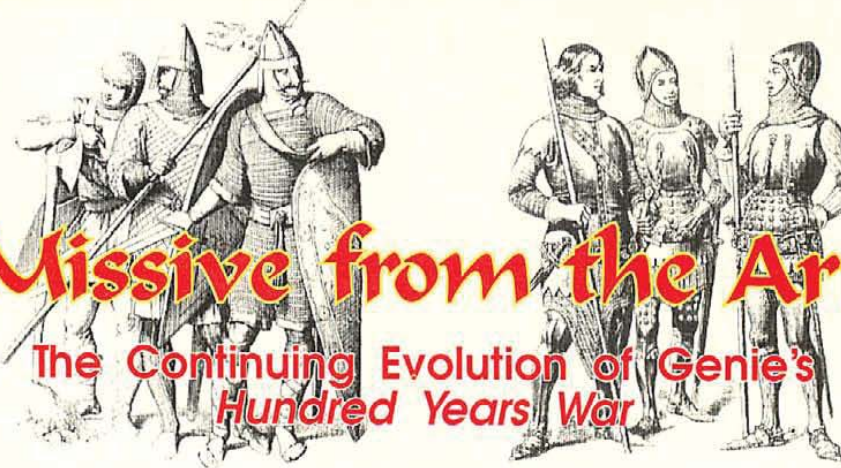
A Missive from the Army
The Continuing Evolution of Genie's Hundred Years War

by David M. Wilson

If the reaction to *Computer Gaming World's* preview of **GEnie's** *Hundred Years War* is any indication, lots of people are fascinated by the intrigue, politics, warfare and social climbing available in this on-line gaming experience. Beta testing is now complete and the *Hundred Years War* (*HYW*) is now on in earnest. Here is the latest on this feudalistic virtual society.

HYW offers one a chance to assume the character of a French, English or "other" (anything besides French or English) noble and participate in such "noble" endeavors as diplomacy, social climbing, economic management and warfare as conducted under the ever-binding rules of chivalry.

A relatively new feature allows for a player character to switch (one time only) between husband and wife. Thus, if a husband is killed, a wife may remarry and switch to the husband. The disadvantage of being a woman is that a woman is not permitted to command an army. Not to worry, even if one chooses to play a female character, an NPC under her control may be appointed as commander of her army, eliminating any real disadvantage or inconvenience to the player.

The *HYW* staff obviously paid attention to the earlier article, since they have changed some aspects of the game in keeping with our suggestions. The economic structure of the game was changed, and free flow of cash was limited by doubling all army costs. By doubling the amount of army costs, the designers have effectively brought a slower pace to the game. Now, one must conserve resources for a reasonable amount of time in order to build up enough to recruit an army. While the change serves the positive function of keeping players from being overrun in a single season, it also forces a lot of nobles relegated to relatively minor positions to either become lackeys to wealthier nobles or to drop out. While the change has helped bring a historicity to the game, it has also effectively taken some of the

joy out of the game for those whose main purpose for playing the game is leading armies in military encounters.

Also in our preview, Johnny Wilson suggested that the French should elect their king from the more experienced players. A King and a Crown Prince are elected for each side at the beginning of each game. If the king passes away, the Crown Prince becomes king. The Crown Prince and King spend the remainder of the game swapping positions each time the king dies. In this manner, more than one player actually gets to play the part of the king (and hence, to share the burden of extra decision-making).

Another new feature is jousting. The jousting routine is similar to the dueling routines, with a few simple commands that allow the player to spur and rein his charger, adjust his shield, and aim his lance. Each successive win aids the player by raising his tournament rating. I was unable to really get the hang of jousting. While it is a neat feature and broadens the appeal of the game somewhat, its main attraction is that it provides, like the interactive court, another place to hang out and act like a 14th century knight.

Brawling in the Interactive Court (IC), by the way, can get really wild. Players can throw chairs at one another, bash each other with pewter mugs, knee each other in the groin, or simply punch each other out. Brawling is statistically-based, but getting whipped in a brawl doesn't affect the player's health outside the IC. The Interactive Court provides a place for the players to brawl or just sit and talk about anything under the sun.

HYW provides heralds, who are usually on duty each night to assist the player. The Heralds will explain menus and options, suggest strategy, assist the king in communicating with his loyal (or disloyal) followers or maybe just listen to a player vent-off anger about what another player has done to him. I have had extensive interviews with all of the her-

alds, but especially commend Barbara Byro and Bob Kasten for their good work.

One problem that continues to plague *HYW* is that of players abusing dual accounts. Many players have access to more than one GEnie account and can register to play as many characters as they have accounts. While this is a minor problem, when an abuse occurs it generally angers many. A player who angers another player may have to deal with this player in as many as three personas (yes this really happens). A player who has two positions will transfer funds and properties to his favorite persona, without regard for borders. In some cases, the player with double accounts will have a player who is privy to both the English Private Court and the French Private Court, eliminating the possibility of having military secrets and reducing the level of suspended disbelief.

The *HYW* staff wants the players to police the game. If they don't like what another player is doing, they are expected to team up and exact justice in 14th century style. While their stand is understandable in some ways, a simple statement from the *HYW* staff that such behavior is not exactly chivalrous would stop most players having double accounts from abusing them.

Also in our preview (#100), Ken St. Andre made a point about how much time the game takes to play. Though there is some dispute about this, I think it is fair to suggest that the average player will have to play about 30 minutes to an hour per day to keep up with the game. So, the *HYW* staff has responded by opening a "slow" game for players who only want to play a couple of times per week.
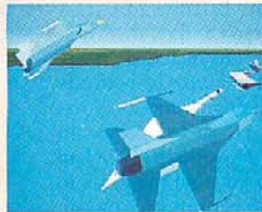
In summary, a word of warning is required. Players who like to remain aloof from their games may want to stay away from *HYW*, since those who are involved often become so immersed in the game that they frequently have to be reminded, "It's only a game!" **CGW**

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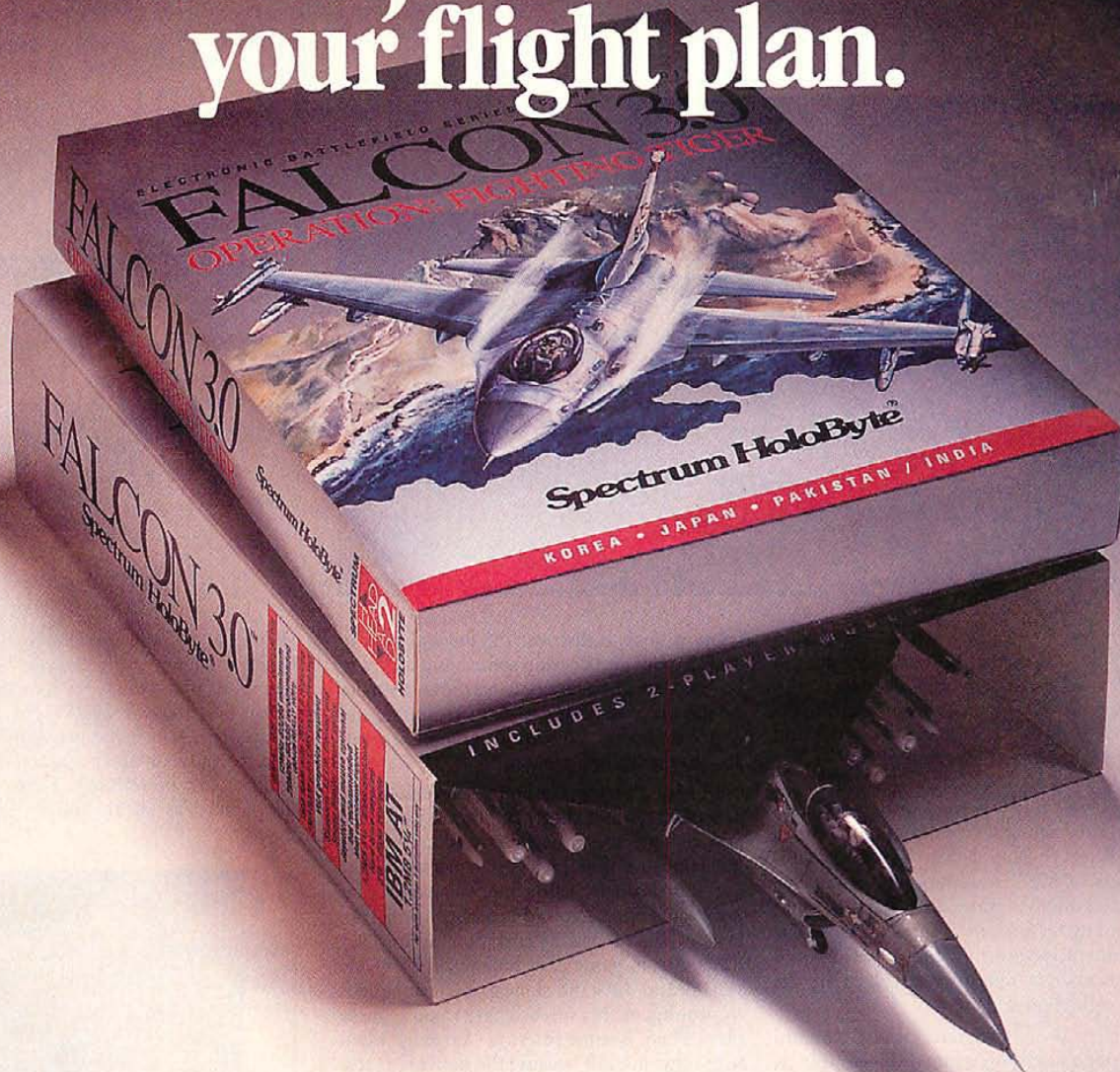
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Arena for Aerial Gladiators

SVGA Air Warrior

by Doug Fick

What happens when a simulation combines the most accurate aircraft performance models ever seen with real, human aviation nuts from around the country? The result is the most intense and realistic flight simulation yet designed for network play.

Air Warrior (*AW*) is the **GEnie** network's aviation program that covers air combat from World War I through Korea. The program is an on-line game that allows people from all over the country to plug into the **GEnie** network and fly for any one of three nations. The environment is *big*. On a typical evening, 30 or more aircraft might be involved in the on-going dogfights.

While the boxed program sold by **Konami** allows single-user play against the computer, the real thrust of the game is to get people into the multi-player *Air Warrior* arena. In single user mode, any of the aircraft can be selected and up to four other computer controlled pilots take part. The computer-controlled aircraft can be either allied with, or opposed to the gamer. Single-user play provides a good

learning tool to discover the ins and outs of each aircraft and develop some basic tactics to be tried on-line. The best part about single-user mode is the ability to play in real time and toggle on additional realism modes not available to the on-line version.

Due to the huge amount of data being processed on-line, the game plays at half speed and such nuances as buffeting and spins aren't taken into account. Half speed may sound like moving through Jell-o, but isn't really that noticeable once involved in a huge furball. In fact, at first I had a hard time seeing any difference in game play between the on-line version and the stand alone game. The benefit to running at this speed is *very* smooth game play. There is some jittering (warping) when near other aircraft because the network is trying to calculate exact positions for two or more planes in close proximity, but it's not too bad.

The program has aircraft that run the gamut from fabric-covered Spads to jet-propelled Sabres, but the real emphasis is on World War II fighters. World War II aircraft included are the Spitfire Mk IX, A6M5a Zero, A-26 Invader, P-51D Mustang, P-38J Lightning, FW-190A, KI-84 Frank, Bf-109 and F4U-1 Corsair. From the Korean conflict, the MiG-15 and F-86 Sabre jet are included. Every detail of aircraft performance is perfectly nailed. Each aircraft's strengths and weakness are faithfully reproduced to the *n*th degree. In fact, while I was on the network, the P-38 had been temporarily removed from the game in order to tweak the climb performance model. Such attention to detail shows a serious ongoing commitment from the game's designers and bodes well for GEnie members.

Typically, each theatre of play (European or Pacific) rotates every third week. Within each three week block there are jet nights for the Korean war fans and WWI nights for the von Richthofens. When the player joins the *AW* arena for the first time, any one of the three countries can be selected. These are generically labeled as A, B, and C, and form a
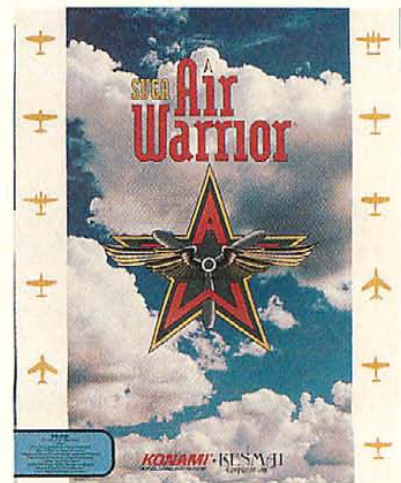
TITLE:	SVGA Air Warrior
SYSTEM:	IBM with 640K, SVGA and modem
PRICE:	$59.95
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Kesmai Corporation
DISTRIBUTOR:	Konami Corporation
	Wood Grove, IL
ON-LINE SERVICE:	Genie
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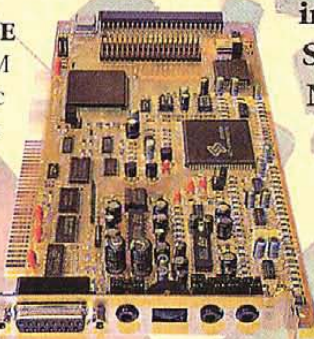
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triangle with common edges. Once a nation is selected, any one of the aircraft available in that theatre can be picked. This makes for some interesting gaggles as traditional allies square off against one another. Normally, two thirds of the combatants in Europe are Spit-fires, as they are excellent all-around performers which most players prefer over all others. My personal favorite was the trusty Mustang. I had to pick my fights with care, though, as the agile Spit could rip me up in a turning fight (learned through painful first-hand experience), but given some altitude and four or five fast passes busting through the fight at high speed brought death and destruction to the scurvy dogs of B and C nations (tee hee).

As anyone can tell from my sudden burst of enthusiasm, this program emphasizes proper employment of aircraft type. The flight modeling is so well done, and the human adversaries so much better than any computer could hope to be, that it forces the player to wisely choose and use whatever aircraft they select, or they are likely to die repeatedly until the correct tactics are learned.

When I first jumped into the *AW* community, I was a little apprehensive. I wondered how new players would be received. Would

there be cliques or a holier than thou attitude among the seasoned players? The answer is "No!" From the first moment on, I felt right at home and welcome among the group. People went out of their way to help me and other newcomers learn the nuances of the program. There is even an Air Warrior Training Academy to help neophyte pilots get their feet wet. This sense of camaraderie impressed me more than anything else in the *AW* world.

While the rose smells sweet, there are a few thorns. The game is not cheap to play. The basic GEnie subscription is $4.95 a month and the *AW* access cost is $6.00 per hour. That can add up in a hurry if one isn't careful about watching the clock.

Graphically, the Super VGA graphic rendition of the cockpit and instruments is very well done, but views outside the players aircraft are fairly spartan. To run the network at a smooth speed, other aircraft and land detail is skimpy. Aircraft appear as tiny dots until very close, then expand into small grey polygon renditions of the plane. Even at very close range the aircraft are shown an eighth the size an actual aircraft at that distance would appear to be. It felt like shooting a BB gun at ants crawling up a wall from across the room.

One other item that annoyed me was that every sortie starts from the ground within

one's own country. Sometimes the battle might be miles away and trying to claw for altitude while covering territory at only 75 knots (150 knots typical climb speed divided by two for the network half speed) can eat up a lot of time. In addition, to receive full credit for any kills scored, the player has to fly all the way home and land. In fact, the program won't let the player exit unless they land or bail out/get shot down. At times, I found myself hanging around the fight long after fuel and ammo dictated a withdrawal, just to avoid the long flight home.

At 10 cents a minute, all this droning can add up. I would have liked to occasionally see the option of airborne start points. Something like five thousand feet of altitude within friendly airspace and not so close to enemy aircraft that it would provide an unfair advantage would be nice. Also, if I decide to egress the fight and get well clear of any enemy aircraft, let me exit with full credit. This would make the game much more combat-

oriented and reduce droning considerably. I'm not saying Kesmai should totally replace the airfield starts, just have an occasional quick combat night.

Amazingly, with just a little work, the single-user version of the game would blow away any of the competition (hint, hint). Upgrade the graphics, write a dozen or so types of missions, give it a career flavor and it would find space on my hard drive in an instant.

For the record, though, the multi-player game is great and highly recommended for any serious aviation enthusiasts. The combination of tough adversaries and realistic performance makes *Air Warrior* a winner. **cgw**
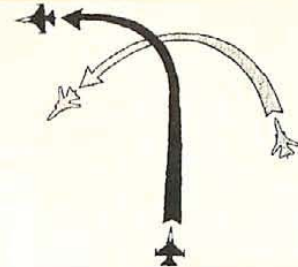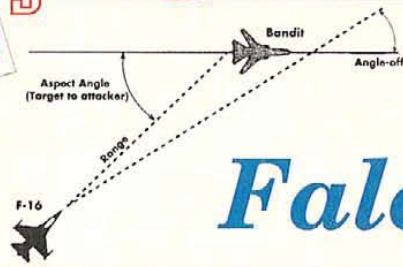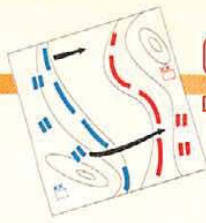
Falcon 3.0

Getting The Enemy In Sight Via The Padlock View

by Tom "KC" Basham

Tom Basham is the co-author of Falcon 3: The Complete Handbook, published by The Waite Group.

Su-27s and Mig-29s devouring your F-16? MiG-19s turning unbelievable circles around your mighty Falcon fighter? Tired of hearing your wingman scream, "Atoll, Atoll!" as your missile lock warning light flashes in panic? Sick of Bitchin' Betty casually announcing "Warning" as your jet tumbles out of control? Then this article is for you. Air-to-air combat in any version of *Falcon 3.0* is extremely difficult, especially for those who are game enough to use maximum difficulty settings. To survive, you must have an edge: the padlock view.

Becoming proficient with the padlock view should be your top priority. While it may be disorienting at first, it allows you the ability to maintain visual lock on the adversary while operating your flight controls, just as though you were swiveling your head in a real aircraft. Combat pilots live by a motto: *Lose sight, lose the fight!* In a dogfight, the pilot never takes his eyes of his target until it is dead. Padlock view allows you to do exactly this.

Gaining proficiency with the padlock view is a three-step process. You must begin by learning to fly your F-16 from within padlock. Try creating a Red Flag mission with no adversary aircraft anywhere near you. Then, just fly in padlock mode, using the mini-HUD in the upper right-hand corner and the data block in the upper left-hand corner to control your aircraft. Don't necessarily try any precision, Blue Angels style maneuvers, just get the feel for basic flight. Ignore the other windows in padlock and focus solely on the two in the upper corners. These will tell you your bank, pitch, speed, and altitude — everything you need to keep from colliding with the ground.

Once you can reasonably control your aircraft, add another aircraft to your Red Flag mission that starts near you. Preferably, use an allied aircraft in a separate flight, and give it many waypoints so that it will maneuver. Lock this target in the padlock mode and begin the second step of learning padlock: use the upper middle window.

The upper middle window is a 360 degree, wrap-around view. In the center is your HUD and, on either edge rests the left and right edges of your head rest. The red rectangle, or targeting box, shows the position of the padlocked target relative to your air-

craft. If the box overlays the small HUD symbol, the target is directly in front of you. If the box is at either edge of the window, the target is directly behind you. If the box is at the upper edge of the window, you would have to look directly through the top of your canopy to see it.

Steer your aircraft by watching the targeting box. Don't worry too much about your flight attitude, airspeed, or altitude, as long as you don't stall or go below 4,000 feet AGL. Instead, focus on your target and steer your jet relative to it, *not* relative to the ground. Practice maneuvering the F-16 such that the targeting box moves to cover the HUD symbol.
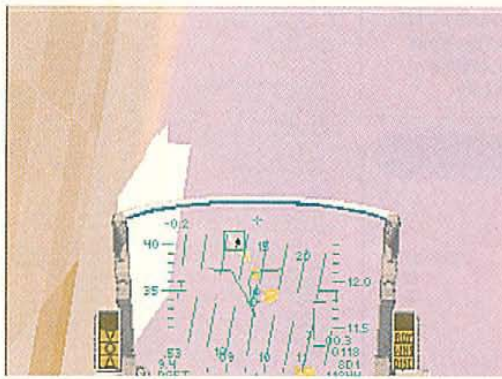
Now comes the third phase of padlocking, learning to use the lower, full-width window. This window shows you exactly what you see as you look at the target. The upper middle window shows you how your neck is turned, the lower full-width window shows you what you see with your neck turned that way.

Although this is one of the most important components of padlock mode, it is also one of the most confusing. Often, your viewing angle through the lower window is different than that of the normal "front view," simulating a pilot leaning forward and looking below the aircraft. The HUD may be in the lower window, but the bandit is well below your nose. This often causes disorientation among *Falcon 3.0* pilots. The key is in how you use the lower window. Do not use it to employ weapons, but solely to watch your opponent's movements. Watch how his wings bank and make a counter-maneuver before he forces you to overshoot. Watch his nose; if he's above you but pointed down, then shallow your climb, roll inverted and dive after him as he passes below you. By watching his movements in this window, you can predict where he's heading and make preemptive moves to beat him there, gaining a tight position on his six o'clock!
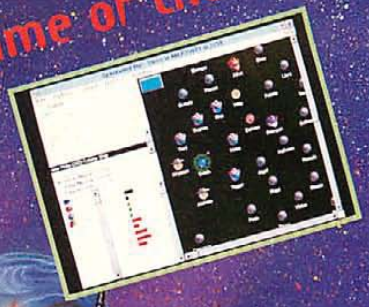
Once you're on his six, the fight isn't over. You still have to "saddle up" or get into a position where you can fire weapons with a high probability for success. Because of the shifting view angle through the lower full-length window, it is often difficult to employ heat-seeking missiles or guns while in padlock mode. In these final moments of combat, when

you are firmly planted on the bandit's six, it's time to exit padlock mode.

For the final stages of combat, try using the forward-up view, accessed by pressing the "3" key followed by the "Scroll Lock" key. This will place your HUD at the lower edge of your screen and allow you to see more of the sky directly in front of you. By using padlock view, you should now have your bandit in view, slightly above your HUD and in the middle of your screen. Increase your turn rate, either by pulling more Gs or executing a series of Yo-yo turns, trading small units of speed for small bites of altitude, to pull your target directly into your HUD. Watch your speed closely; if you stall, the bandit will pull away and ruin your shot. If your speed goes too high, you'll overshoot and the bandit will reverse onto your tail, putting you on the defense!

Once you've pulled the bandit in the HUD, it's time to fire. If the bandit is less than 1.5 miles away, firing a missile has little effect. Rarely will a missile hit at this range, although the launch of a missile may frighten your opponent into making a reckless move. Your best bet is to switch to your 20mm cannon. Use short, controlled bursts of gunfire while watching the gunsight "funnel" on your HUD. Maneuver so that the wing tips of your target touch both edges of any point within the funnel and open fire. If the target fills the gap between the lines at any point on the funnel, you should score a hit. Be warned, however, gunfire hits cause unpredictable damage — it may take several hits to down the target, so use your ammunition sparingly.

The Padlock view also works for defensive maneuvers. Using the above procedure, you can quickly locate bandits at your six o'clock position, and maneuver to force them in front of you. More importantly, perhaps, is the ability to padlock incoming missiles. Introduced in version 3.0d, the padlock view will lock onto any missiles headed your way. This is an excellent tool in evading missiles.

To avoid an inbound missile, switch to padlock. Usually, padlock will immediately lock onto the nearest incoming missile, although sometimes you may have to press the "t" key to cycle through several targets before locating the missile. Look at the upper left hand window and identify the missile type. Knowing whether the missile is radar or infrared guided is extremely

important. If the missile is radar guided, use whatever amount of throttle you need to maintain a corner velocity of 380 to 400 knots. If, however, the missile is a heat-seeker, you should reduce throttle and reduce your heat signature. Begin firing chaff or flares depending on the missile type. Since enemies may fire both missile types at you simultaneously, it is advisable to always fire chaff and flares in unison.

Now that you have the missile padlocked, turn in any direction you choose to gain a 90 degree flight path offset from the missile (i.e., your heading is 90 degrees different from that of the missile). That means, turn your F-16 until the red targeting box in the upper middle window is positioned halfway between the HUD symbol and either edge. Maintain enough turn to keep the red box in this position. Don't turn too tight or you will turn head-on into the missile. If you have an ECM pod, turn it on now, regardless of the type of the incoming missile—your enemies launch a different missile with a different guidance type while you're preoccupied with the first.

At this point, the missile should appear as a white dot in the lower window. As it approaches it will get larger and begin to look like a missile. At some point you will be able to see the exhaust plume behind the missile and, shortly thereafter, the missile will impact. To evade the missile, you must execute a perfectly-timed, high-G break in the direction of your turn, just before the missile hits. Timing of the turn is both critical and extremely difficult to judge. Just as the missile changes from a small white dot to a recognizable shape, you want to execute your break turn. Pull the stick all the way back to the limit and dump chaff and flares like there's no tomorrow (if you don't succeed, there may not be).

If you're successful, the missile will buzz harmlessly past you in the lower padlock window in dramatic fashion. If you fail, Betty will quickly notify you of such! Proper timing of the break turn is much more of an art than a science, but the above guidelines in conjunction with practice should provide satisfactory results against both surface-to-air and air-to-air missiles. Through the padlock view, your improved defensive ability in conjunction with your greater offensive skills will make your F-16 the most feared weapon in the simulated sky! **CGW**
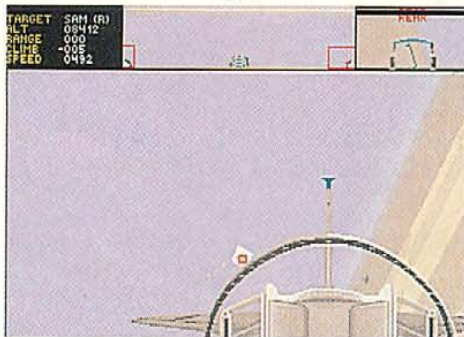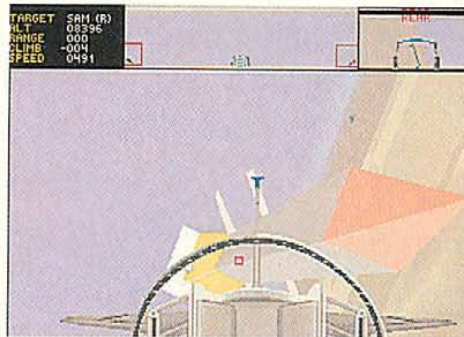
Becoming a Fighting *Falcon 3.0* On-Line

by Victor "Duke" Zaveduk

One of the most popular modem games being played in **Compuserve's** MTM-Lobby is *Falcon 3.0* from **Spectrum HoloByte**. *Falcon* puts gamers in the cockpit of an F-16 fighter jet with some of the most realistic flight modeling this side of a multi-million dollar military simulator. Modem play takes ultimate advantage of the simulation by pitting one human player against another in a classic one-on-one dogfight.

The game is so popular that an ongoing competition ladder has formed. Over 70 players have signed up since the competition began last October. This means that, at any given moment, nearly 50 active players are competing in a continuing struggle to determine the top "Ace" among **CompuServe** members. While there are a couple of active or ex-military pilots competing, most of the players are armchair fighter jocks. Put them behind the controls of *Falcon 3.0* and their adrenaline starts pumping, and the experience becomes as exhilirating and exhausting as "real" aerial combat.

The MTM-Lobby often resembles a fighter jock hangout with a large number of Falcon pilots looking for "friendly" matches to keep their competitive edge finely honed. Anyone interested in joining the competition ladder should contact Victor "Duke" Zaveduk at 76711,27 in the MODEMGAMES Forum or just drop by the MTM- Lobby for a little "friendly" competition. Just make sure to have that helmet strapped on and that parachute packed. **CGW**

For Want Of A Hint A Kingdom Was Lost

## Strategy Tips For QQP's *Conquered Kingdoms*

by Randall Black

With a rich armory full of pieces and a vast playing area, *Conquered Kingdoms (CK)* from QQP has the feel of chess on steroids. Only by careful placement and a mastery of the strengths and weaknesses of the 16 kinds of units can the player consistently beat *CK's* strong artificial intelligence (AI). Winning the game requires persistent attention to key principles and, most importantly, not losing — the campaign game penalizes each loss so that success breeds success as bonus pieces and gold pile up for use on the next map.

The far flung scale of the playing surface rewards speedy acquisition of key objectives (castles, resources and cities) and transforms the first few turns into a foot race for the goods. The choice of starting cities is crucial to victory. However tempting it may be to occupy cities based on victory points alone, prudence demands starting at some low point cities for their strategic positions.

Occupation of castles should be *top* priority, and the winning player sets up fast units such as cavalry to move in as soon as possible. Once occupied, castles are vastly more difficult to take. With even a single friendly unit inside its walls, a castle can be reinforced with cheap-but-deadly units like catapults and archers that can snipe with impunity from the protected keep. Manage to take all the castles, and the enemy can't reinforce, even with a mountain of gold.

The only source of replacement units, resources, are as important as cities for ultimate victory. The proximity of these sinews of war — gold, coal and wood — should exert a strong influence on the choice of starting cities before the initial mad dash begins. If possible, keep balanced supplies of wood and coal to maximize their purchasing power.
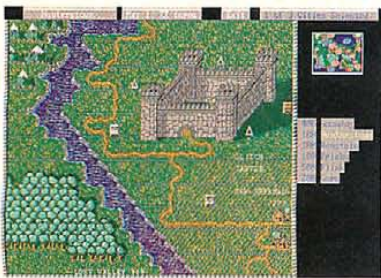
Cities should be occupied as soon as possible, but usually require well-planned garrisoning with strong forces to hold them over the long haul. An early sprint to a city by a single fast unit is often rewarded by a crushing attack, especially at the high value cities which act like magnets for enemy units.

Units purchased during the initial set-up should reflect the need for speed. Except on maps with lots of obstacles (mountains, oceans and rivers), cavalry are ideal starting units and should account for up to half of the initial budget. Spies are a must, at least one in each starting city, not only for vital intelligence but also for high-speed travel to resources and uncontested cities. Wizards may seem like powerful fighters, but they are most valuable for their speed, teleporting themselves and adjacent units to objectives 15 squares away. Beware: a wizard-borne army can be quickly decimated if it rematerializes in the midst of enemy forces.

Clusters Bomb! (Avoiding Diminishing Returns)

The early battles, usually taking place among clustered forces, are the most treacherous. The AI excels at maximizing damage in a cluster fuss, and a review of the casualty report often reveals huge losses during these early battles among bunched forces. Preserving one's units can hinge on the ability to avoid large, uncontrolled battles. Remember the strategy made famous by brave Sir Robin and his fellow Holy-Grailsmen: run awaaay!

When forces are bunched up, a single fireball can ruin your whole day. Goad fully loaded wizards into fireballing early by baiting them with a couple of units before approaching with larger numbers. Although touted for their ability to kill kings, a pair of spies are another great way to take out a 9x wizard. Dragons, too, punish clustered forces by hitting both units in a square. Spread out units to a square when these fearsome beasts are present.

Paying Scale (Dragons and Gargoyles)

Dragons may seem expensive, but they constitute an extremely desirable offensive unit. For 20 gold pieces one gets a fast, all-terrain unit that can attack at a distance, often from the safety of mountains and seas. Notice how much the AI likes dragons. In clustered battles at close quarters they can dish out up to 16 points of damage per round of combat. Once most of their impressive 32 points of damage are depleted, severely weakened dragons can move off to make excellent sentries for cities and resources. A badly crippled dragon can destroy wave after wave of small units blundering into range of its city, and dragons don't frighten easily.
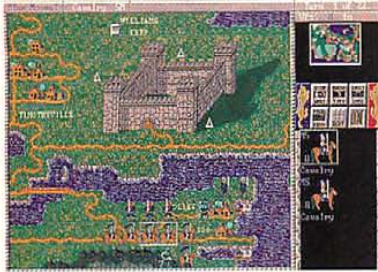
A poor man's dragon, the gargoyle, is good for crossing bad terrain to tap resources and attack out-of-the-way cities. Without ranged firing, however, gargoyles have to mix it up during combat and eventually get whittled away. At nearly half the price of a dragon, these escapees from Notre Dame are best left for spreading out over inaccessible terrain or attacking archers.

A Wiz at Some Things (Overpriced Units)

When starting in the lap of the enemy, a wizard or two can be a good

insurance policy but their best roles are those of long-range transports or keep sitters, not pitched battle fighters. Limit purchases of these exotic luxuries to the demands of specific missions.

Certain units hardly seem worth buying, except in very special circumstances. Phantoms are valuable for "scaring" in clustered fights, but given their low speed, exorbitant cost of 15 gold pieces, and the fact that one should be avoiding those massed attacks anyway, they are of dubious value.

At a cost of seven, land bound and remarkably vulnerable ogres aren't much of a bargain, even though they can attack at a range of one and inflict damage without making contact. Glorified lancers, trolls can heal (if they live), but they cost as much as three-and-a-half regular lancers. Instead of a troll, one should try buying a squad consisting of a swordsman, a lancer and an archer for the same price. Take along an officer and they can heal as well.

Arch-enemies (The Archer Ploy)

One of the most effective and satisfying ploys in *CK* is loading boats with archers. Cruising out of reach of many land units, and hard to kill even with the most powerful units, archers in boats are a terror to coastal cities and make an excellent counter to dragons. When things get hot, their high speed can get them away from trouble (spelled g-a-r-g-o-y-l-e-s).

Perhaps, the most important key to success in *CK* is the ability to anticipate. Knowing where enemy units will be *next* turn is often more important than where they are now. One should set up ranged units (archers, catapults and dragons) just within striking distance of squares where the enemy units will be *after* they move. This allows for a double barrage; first, at the end of the AI's turn, and then again on the player's turn. By simply mixing it up with enemy units, one will only trade hit points. By taking advantage of action at a distance and picking the right fights, the player's units can exact a toll (or troll) without getting a scratch.

Mixmaster (Strategic Overview)

Much of *CK's* charm lies in the scissors/rock/paper interaction of the units. Even the lowly Rog can be incredibly deadly when a weakened AI begins to spit out droves of cheap lancers. Yet, a single lancer on a bridge can stop a massive cavalry charge. A knight can walk right into a castle held only by archers. Every unit has an Achilles Heel that can be exploited. Becoming too reliant on a few favorites can give the AI an opening. The right tool for the job is the right strategy for *Conquered Kingdoms*. **CGW**
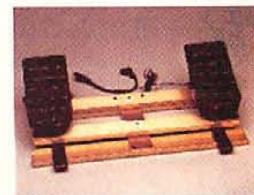
Tegel's Mercenaries from Mindcraft

by Paul C. Schuytema

The time is solar year 2198 and the human race still hasn't learned from its history. "Destroy or be destroyed!" is the motto of the Consortium and a growing number of corporations. Enter the mercenaries. Napalm and lasers for hire, these go-getters are the backbone of order throughout a multitude of worlds. Still, mercenaries are a volatile, egocentric lot and they need a lot of discipline; they need a leader.

Their leader is the B.O.S.S., the Base Operations Squad Sergeant. The B.O.S.S. maintains control of a handful of hand-picked mercenaries through a real-time Tactical Imaging and Synthesizing Fabricator, which gives the sergeant a bird's eye view of the entire operation and a channel of communications to each of the mercenaries.

Tegel's Mercenaries, the latest science fiction game from **Mindcraft**, follows the ongoing adventures of a group of mercenaries bankrolled by the gruff, enigmatic and very rich general Tegel. The player has just washed out of the Officer's Training Academy and is a little slim on prospects. Enter the good general and an opportunity to make a fast and bloody buck by commanding a crew of mercenaries and, before the player can think through the options, the first mission begins.

Tegel's Mercenaries is a squad-level game of combat and command where one's progress is registered by an accumulation of credits for each scenario successfully completed. A scenario begins with a short briefing from general Tegel, leaning over his desk and staring out of very beady eyes. The general explains the mission goals in general terms and how the mission fits into the overarching plans of the Consortium. Then, the player must select and recruit up to six mercenaries per mission from a stable of 20. The mercenaries vary in skill, weaponry, species and sense of just compensation — some are available dirt cheap, while others want a hefty sum for the risks they may take.

After assembling the crew, a drop ship brings the squad into the thick of the sortie and it is up to the player to issue the orders necessary to complete the mission, whether it is as simple as protecting a diplomat or as complex as weaving through a maze-like building to destroy various communications centers.

While the general premise of the game is attractive, the execution is anything but flawless. Once on the planet, the view is reminiscent of the skewed 3-D which works so well on the new *Ultima* series. The player controls a cursor with a mouse, and selecting a mercenary will bring up an opaque window which lists the various orders the player may select. Some orders, like those controlling movement orders, then require a mouse click on the location to which the player would like the mercenary to move.

The interface is poorly executed and the display flickers in blocky sections or freezes altogether while trying to hand out orders. The mercenaries themselves seem to be a bit spaced out (perhaps the oxygen mix of their suits is a bit off), because a simple movement order through a door can be an exercise in futility. The mercenary may simply keep bumping into the wall until the player reorders the movement, and the mercenaries seem to have amazing trouble walking around anything lying on the floor (like a body of a fellow mercenary).

The mercenaries can either be toggled to an aggressive or passive posture, attacking any enemy on sight or needing direct orders. Unfortunately, the combat in *Tegel's Mercenaries* is the most frustrating aspect of the game. It is very difficult to tell if a being is an enemy or only a bystander (there are no friends). The only litmus test is to wait and see if the entity fires on the mercenary. A

TITLE:	Tegel's Mercenaries
SYSTEM:	IBM
GRAPHICS:	VGA
SOUND SUPPORT:	AdLib, Sound Blaster
PRICE:	$59.95
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Robert Bonifacio & Dan Burke
PUBLISHER:	Mindcraft
	Torrence, CA
	(800) 525-4933

V FOR VICTORY

UTAH BEACH • VELIKIYE LUKI • MARKET GARDEN
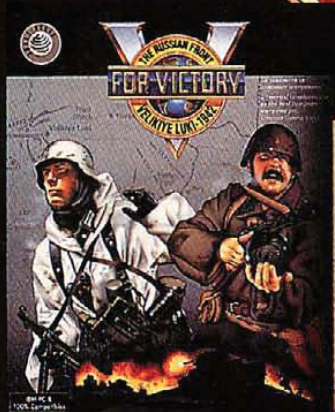
WARGAMING WITHOUT COMPROMISE

Strategy Plus Game of the Year - V FOR VICTORY: UTAH BEACH

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more functional approach is to simply kill everything in sight. Not terribly realistic, but it is a touch safer.

LEFT CLICK TO TARGET THIS OBJECT

When the mercenaries are set to initiate attacks themselves, they seem to deliberately turn their backs from the foe and fire off in random directions. It appears to take direct attack and target orders to get the squad to accomplish anything at all.

Generally, the missions are a combination of retrieval and combat, with completion requiring the elimination of one or two specific entities, and perhaps the retrieval of a data disk. At times, doors will be locked, and a card key is necessary, which generally means finding another entity, killing it, and searching the body.

Combat, as I mentioned earlier, is best handled by a direct order. When an entity appears to be hostile, order every squad member in the area to specifically attack the enemy. Grenades seem to work the best, and they appear to be the only weapon which makes the foes stagger back from the hit. This, at least psychologically, is far more satisfying than the less efficient weapons.

Since mercs are a precious and unmodifiable commodity, a tactic to generally ensure success in a mission is to save the game immediately when the mercs are deployed. Then, scroll around the map and figure out what points need to be hit, accessed or interacted with. Bring up
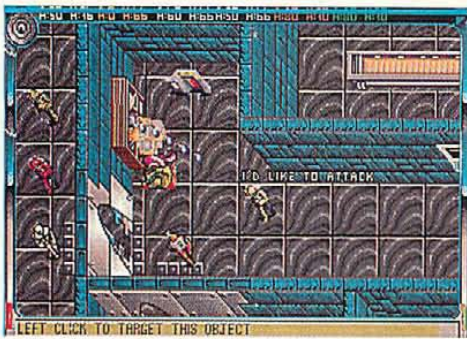
the file screen and reload the mission, this time armed with concrete information.

When the mission is complete, the player is paid in credits, with fees deducted for needless casualties (an odd stipulation since it's hard to tell a needless casualty during the run) and squad members killed. General Tegel will immediately issue orders for another mission, and recruiting may begin again. Since there is only a stock stable of mercenaries, it is very possible for the game to end due to a lack of warm bodies for hire. One problem with the credit system is that mercenaries aren't all that expensive to hire and there is no provision for purchasing new weapons. The only way to get new weaponry is to find it or pull it from a warm corpse. Having the option to re-equip
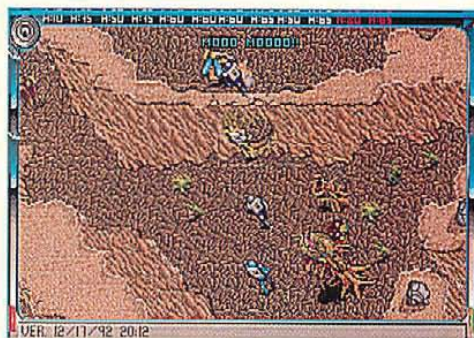
the mercs would make the logistical aspect of the game much more appealing.

The overarching mission of the game is to find and kill the K'kistik queen who controls a race of aggressive insectoid creatures. Each mission assigned from general Tegel moves towards this end, generally by analyzing the data captured from the mercenaries' previous mission.

Beyond the standard missions, *Tegel's Mercenaries* sports a custom mission builder. The player can load any of the blank scenario maps and create a custom mission. Mission goals may be set, and enemies are placed, with the designer able to control such things as armor
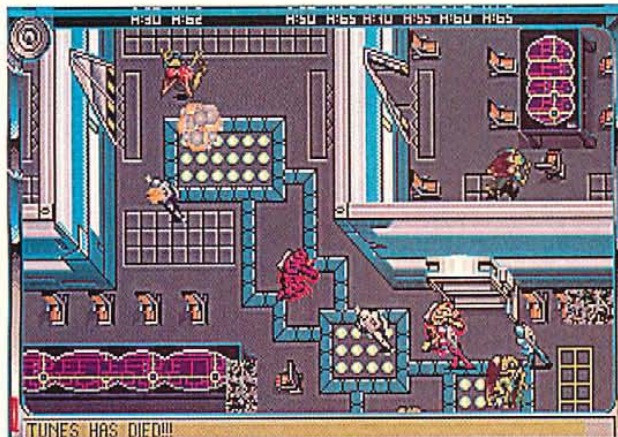
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Circle Reader Service #50

strength and the actions of the entities. The mission builder is a very helpful tool which enables the player to learn the logic behind Tegel's missions, and it is a good idea, once the player has some familiarity with the game, to go in and build a mission. When returning to Tegel's scenarios, the player is armed with a wealth of information which makes the whole system a lot clearer.

Building the missions is a trial and error affair, since the interface is as clunky and as inconsistent as it is in the game. At one point a menu will pop up which warrants a mouse selection, at another time, the player cycles through choices with the left mouse button, and in yet another instance, the player must type in the requested information from the keyboard. To make things even more inconsistent, these parsers seem to pop up everywhere: at the top of the screen, on another menu screen, or in an almost invisible message box.

The manual provides a slight and abbreviated tutorial, but nowhere does the manual even mention how to use the custom tools. It took me several attempts before I found the "Custom Game" menu selection when starting the game to be able to access my scenarios.

The graphics are probably the strongest point of *Tegel's Mercenaries*. The artists chose a cartoonish look which seems to work very well. There is very little dithering, and the colors are all vibrant, making the screens stand out exceptionally well. When in the scenario mode, the entire screen is filled with the overhead view, and menus are accessed by clicking on a squad member or one of two unobtrusive buttons. Clicking on the red button brings up the file save and exit menu, while the green button brings up a somewhat muddled, but helpful, overhead map of the entire scenario.

Sound is generally well handled, with a refreshing sparseness to the musical scores. Digital sounds are provided, but the version I reviewed was missing one of the needed drivers. The only problem with the game sounds is that they don't really help the player assess the mission any better. Sometimes a weapon makes a sound, other times not, and the threats seem to be uncomfortably quiet, making the player pay extra attention to all of his squad members to find the little blue puffs of combat smoke.

All in all, *Tegel's Mercenaries* is a pretty game with a handful of good ideas. The problem is, not many of those ideas are very well executed. Control is clunky, inconsistent, and downright frustrating at times. The logistics aspect is downplayed to a fault, and the successful completion of the scenarios is accomplished more through rote than through any intuitive and creative decision making.

Hopefully, future editions will clean up the game and add the depth needed to keep a player's attention. Until then, the twenty-second century is a hit or miss proposition. **CGW**

Facebook's Exhibit No. 1025
Page 111

Arrakaholics Anonymous

A Twelve Step Guide to a Happier, Healthier Harkonnen

by Jeff James

While **Virgin Game's** first computer gaming foray into the world of Frank Herbert's *Dune* books was well-received by many gamers, others wished the first *Dune* game was a little meatier. With the introduction of *Dune II*, Virgin Games and developer **Westwood Studios** have created a game that, among other things, contains more strategy muscle than its predecessor.

In *Dune II*, gamers can choose one of three houses to champion their conquest of the planet Arrakis: House Atreides, House Harkonnen or House Ordos. While the goal of each house is the same (supreme rulership of the planet), each house approaches its goal with a slightly different set of tactics. Regardless of whether gamers choose the guile of House Ordos, the overt military might of House Harkonnen or the balanced military doctrine of House Atreides, winning at *Dune II* can be an arduous task at best.

To aid aspiring conquerors in their conquest of Arrakis, the following strategy tips and guidelines (gained at the expense of thousands of simulated Atreides, Harkonnen and Ordos soldiers) should provide invaluable insight into the maniacal aggressiveness of a computer-controlled opponent. Although computers may have a "head for business" with regards to playing *Dune II* (after all, their tiny electronic brains are fashioned out of sand), a healthy dose of useful human behaviors (i.e. deception, trickery, chicanery, etc.) combined with the steps outlined below will help gamers along the sandy path to victory.

1. Speed is life (and victory).

From building structures to attacking the enemy, speed is invaluable. Building structures as fast as possible is the key to survival in many of the scenarios, where a fast-moving foe could easily overwhelm slowly prepared defenses. Build initial structures as quickly as possible in the following order: windtrap, outpost, light factory, windtrap, and refinery. This will work well in most scenarios. Building at least two refineries at the start of the scenario helps keep spice, the lifeblood of any military campaign on Arrakis, flowing in adequate quantities. Finally, when an opportunity presents itself, players would be wise to capitalize on it as quickly as possible.

2. When in doubt, run them over.

Although often overlooked in the combat role, the spice harvester can be a very effective weapon against infantry and troopers. No need for fancy weapons to do the job; simply point the anterior end of the harvester at a line of enemy troops and proceed to squash them into jelly. Tanks (of all varieties) also work well at clearing out thickets of infantry, with the added benefit of being more heavily armored and sporting weapons to defend themselves.

3. Lay the foundations of success.

The victorious commander in *Dune II* is not just one who can lead a brilliant attack or manage troop production and spice refinement, but one who can plan ahead, literally, from the foundation up. Players of *SimCity* will certainly have the prerequisites necessary for building a military-industrial complex that is functional and efficient. When the scenario begins, take a moment to survey the landscape and visualize the optimal military base within the specific confines of the scenario. Plan to leave a nice, breezy thoroughfare through the middle of the complex so that units can quickly get to defensive positions on any side of the base. Also, try to place Spice Refineries and their attendant Harvester docking-bays such that they are easily accessible and closest to the majority of Spice Fields. Leave room for defensive structures at the edges of the base. Often, the hasty commander will build an important structure at the very edge of the sand, leaving no room for those essential Rocket Launchers.

4. Blatant, in-your-face deception is the best policy.

Directing large-scale assaults right at the center of an enemy base is usually a recipe for ignominious defeat. The enemy will usually (especially in the last few battles) pour out units en masse to meet any threat. Then, they will systematically proceed to grind any attacking force into Sand Worm patties. Taking a less direct (i.e. sneaky and deceitful) approach is the best path towards victory. First, fully explore the area around an enemy base. When a large section of rock is discovered next to the flanks of that base, sending units to gather at that point in anticipation of a massed assault is a good idea. A good production strategy is to create two units for the defense of the player's own base, then one for attacking the enemy base. Once a force of about 7-10 vehicles has been assembled at the rendezvous, they should be sent to attack the flanks of the enemy. This strategy may take some practice; assembling units too close to the enemy base will cause them to be attacked before the force is large enough, while gathering forces too far away gives Sand Worms ample opportunity to munch on them as they stream across great distances of open desert.

5. Accentuate the deadly, eliminate the ineffectual.

Learn the strengths of each house. Each demands different tactics to emerge successful. For House Ordos, maximize the speed advantage of raider trikes and other speedy units by performing slashing hit and run raids. House Harkonnen? Try to concentrate the superior firepower of this house's units on selected targets, then proceed to divide the enemy into small, easily eliminated groups. For House Atreides, a mixture of the aforementioned doctrines is essential: use firepower on the Ordos, while emphasizing a more stealthy approach when dealing with the Harkonnen.

6. Ride the rocks.

If one thing is constant in *Dune II*, it is that Sand Worms are always on the lookout for a meal on the cheap. Also, since the favorite snack of any rapacious Sand Worm always seems to be the most expensive of military units, keeping those units out of the gullet of an ornery Sand Worm is a top priority. Since Sand Worms can't travel through rock, gamers would be advised to plot lengthy unit movements so they travel across as much rock as possible. Wheeled and tracked vehicles seem to attract an inordinate amount of attention from Sand Worms, so a wise commander would keep those units on rock at all times, even when guarding a stationary position. Troopers and infantry, while occasionally getting munched, are usually much safer guarding on open sand than any other units. When in doubt, however, keep all of your units stationed on rocks (unless the strategic value of placing them on open sand is more valuable than losing a unit or two).

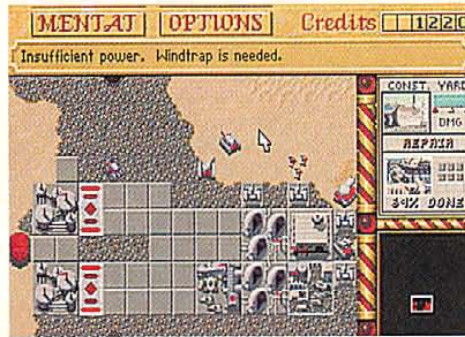## 7. Become one with the Shai-Hulud.

Although Sand Worms are extremely difficult to kill, they can be forced to alter their course. Pitched battles on open sand always seem to attract a great deal of attention from sandworms. In situations such as this, wise commanders will expend just enough firepower on a troublesome worm to have it change course away from his units and towards those of his enemy.

8. Follow the leader.

Using this tactic, players can lure enemy forces away from their base and into pre-defined "kill zones" around their bases. To begin with, a defensive cul-de-sac (lined with turrets and potent offensive units, such as tanks and trooper squads) should be created in front of a player's base. Next, a half-dozen or so trikes or quads should be created and then, sent to attack the enemy base. When the attacking units arrive at the enemy base, they should be directed to engage as many enemy units as possible. After fighting for a brief period of time, the attacking units should then be ordered to retreat to the "kill-zone" next to the player's base. Many of the engaged enemy units will happily follow the retreating units, allowing them to be cut apart when they arrive within the confines of the "kill zone." Used in conjunction with tactic #4, a player could use this tactic to draw off a substantial number of enemy units from their base before a surprise flank attack is performed.

9. Rockets galore.

For attacking enemy bases, nothing beats the rocket launcher (also called a missile tank). Rocket launchers have greater range than almost every other unit in the game, making them well-suited to dismantling enemy gun and rocket turrets from a safe distance. A prudent commander will often use rocket launchers in conjunction with tactic #4, performing a sneak flank attack with long-ranged weapons of destruction.

10. Turrets, turrets and more turrets!

Although bashing an opponent into smithereens with waves of fast moving tanks is every commander's dream, a more pragmatic approach must also take the defense of a player's home base into account. Chief among the defensive weapons are gun and rocket turrets. Inexpensive, easy to produce and deadly accurate, a well-designed defensive wall of rocket turrets can effortlessly slice an attacking enemy force into shreds. Avoid using defensive walls; they are almost useless in the last few battles, easily falling under the heavier guns of powerful units.

11. Deal with the (Death) Hand you're dealt.

In the last few scenarios in *Dune II*, each House may build a palace. In addition to being a well-fortified defensive structure, a palace gives its owner a powerful offensive weapon. In the case of House Atreides, powerful Fremen troopers can be summoned to fight the enemies of the Atreides. The palace used by House Ordos grants the ability to create a saboteur, a stealthy unit which can heavily damage enemy structures. Finally, the palaces used both by the Harkonnen and the Emperor himself grant the ability to launch the Death Hand missile, possibly the most powerful offensive weapon in the game. Developing an effective strategy against these special weapons is crucial for victory.
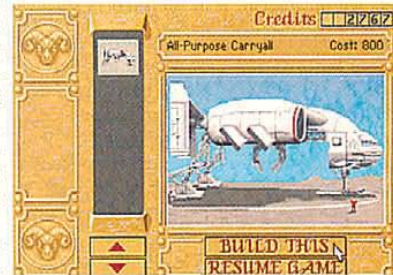
As the most powerful special weapon, the Death Hand deserves special attention. The best way to deal with the deadly Death Hand missile is to simply save the game often. Although inaccurate, a Death Hand can destroy several structures with one strike. In addition to restoring your game, creating another construction yard on a section of rock a considerable distance from most structures will serve to minimize the effect of the Death Hand.

12. Getting Your Fix

The original release of *Dune II* crept out with a few bugs (not including our Sand Worm friends). If playing with the original version, one may occasionally notice that 1) the Frigate that is supposed to service the Starport may never show up when called, 2) a Harvester may dock in a Spice Refinery and decide that it is not going to leave, 3) Team Movement does not exactly work as described in the manual. According to Virgin, these problems and more have been corrected in an update that is currently available. Call the customer support line given in the game manual for more information.

Although the tactics listed here should prove successful, many more tactics and strategies for *Dune II* can be devised by either altering the ones presented here, or by experimenting. Indeed, a *Dune II* commander with an active mind and a willingness to experiment can make the best of any situation. **CGW**

Hawker's Descendant

Domark's AV8B Harrier Assault

by Paul Rigby
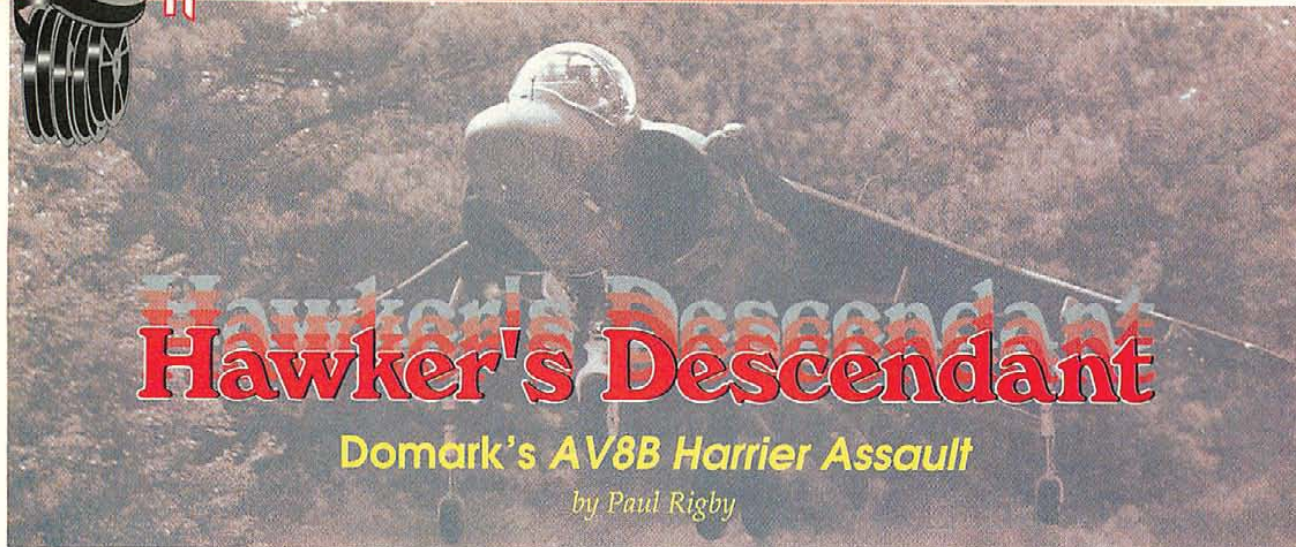
It has taken until the aircraft has become well and truly combat proven in the recent Gulf War for a seemingly worthwhile flight simulation of the latest version of the Harrier family to appear on a floppy disk. Now, two new simulations have appeared almost simultaneously. *Harrier Jump Jet* from **Microprose** and **Domark's** *AV8B Harrier Assault* (*HA*). The premise to the latter simulation is that Indonesia has invaded East Timor and has occupied it since 1975. Now, hard-line factions in the Indonesian army are oppressing the indigenous island population rather heavily, and their continual poor treatment of said population, as well as frantic appeals from the legal government in exile, have pushed the United Nations into action.

The only detachment in the area is the player's own amphibious force of US Marines. It is not, however, a full-strength Marine Expeditionary Brigade. Only the Tarawa assault ship is able to launch the limited number of AV8B Harriers. Limited Harrier replacements are available from the other assault ships along with a variety of helicopters plus special force troops and the marines themselves (who are equipped with LVTP-7 assault vehicles). No reinforcements are available, so the player must utilize what he has to complete the campaign.

Obviously, the game comes complete with a ready-made campaign and plenty of pre-generated missions which allow the player to experience some first person simulator action via the AV8B flight model. It is really a blend of two genres: flight simulation and wargame. Indeed, it may well be the first successful integration of such a system. That is, both genre types do (just) stand alone as games in their own right.

Come Fly With Me (Flight Model)

The flight model, which can be explored with the use of the growingly popular *Thrustmaster* controls, is one of the best available. It doesn't top *Falcon 3.0*, but does present the feeling that multiple tons of metal are being thrown around the sky. This illusion is both enhanced by the flight model's inertia effects that hang on every movement of the Harrier and other unique Harrier skills which are well-depicted. For example, the Harrier's capacity to gradually come to

a dead stop from high speed and hover is well-presented, as is the famous VIFFing technique first seen in the Falklands campaign.

The one dubious element of the flight model is the rudder interpretation. Releasing the rudder control forces the Harrier to bounce back onto (or near) its original orientation. It appears that **Simis** (designers of the flight model) attempted to copy the effect of high inertia resulting from strong air-flow acting upon the airframe. The idea being that any movement away from the central axis will be resisted by the air-flow which, in turn, will attempt to bring it back to the original position. If this was the intention, the effect doesn't quite come off.

The sound support doesn't quite come off, either. The engine noise tends to stutter on take-off, and this is more than a little unnerving. Fortunately, the graphic appeal is more fulfilling. There is an excellent haze effect which obscures distant features and the day/night transitions are nicely portrayed. The blackout effect and the jolt which occurs when one is hit are also very well done.

Hunter/Killer (Limited Options)

Weapon systems are numerous and include: LGBs, Mavericks, Iron Bombs and Rocket Pods. Laser-guided ordnance is illuminated via special force troops. The whole subject of laser guidance opens up a can of worms in the game, though. For example, laser-guiding a Harrier via special forces is all well and good, but what about Harriers illuminating targets, via laser, for each other? The option is a well used one and was amply demonstrated by the RAF's own Buccaneers, who illuminated targets for their Tornado colleagues. Modern Close Air Support (CAS) aircraft, including the AV8B, should have the option, but it is not available in *HA*. Harriers can easily be sent on reconnaissance missions in the game to acquire targets, so it is not as if a hunter/killer option is out of the question on theoretical grounds.

Indeed, even if the idea of hunter/killer packs could be mooted, the notion would be doomed in *HA* because wingmen are not available. This also means that Harriers must fly missions on their own with no
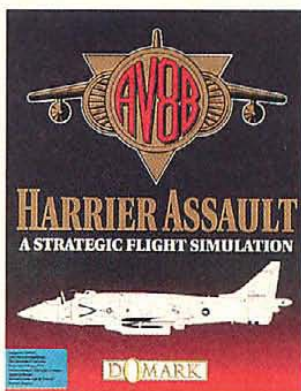
TITLE:	AV8B Harrier Assault
SYSTEM:	Amiga, IBM
PRICE:	$59.99
PROTECTION:	None
DEVELOPER:	Simis
PUBLISHER:	Domark c/o Accolade San Jose, CA

Combat Air Patrol (CAP) options to cover each other's "six." This is a dangerous situation and one which led me into severe trouble on many occasions.

This trouble leads to the subject of air threats. I found the opposition too severe — especially for the supposed quality of the enemy I was facing. This situation was made more aggravating by the limited information received by the attendant AWACS (who offer air threat bearing, but not range), plus the poor performance of the AIM-9M Sidewinders which had a lower than expected performance.
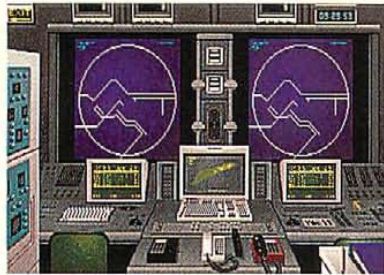
Don't Rain on my Campaign
(Campaign Construction)

If the player does not wish to follow the game's campaign he can design one of his own. Using the campaign manager, TAWADS, one can allocate waypoints for Harriers (attack and reconnaissance), helicopters (attacks, reconnaissance and troop insertion) and troops (via landing craft). The fleet, itself, can be allocated waypoints along the coast of the island. However, even though TAWADS utilizes mouse commands and a menu tree, th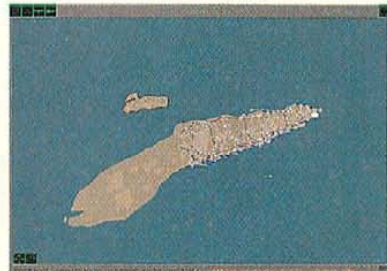e system is long-winded and tiring to use. The command system cries out for global commands to speed up campaign orders and tactical decisions. The frequent slow screen updates that blank the screen also help to irritate, especially during the heat of the action.

Eccentricities also occur when using TAWADS. For example, in the

wargame view, Harriers become invincible apart from the odd loss over a target (presumably from SAM attack). Also, helicopters are similarly impregnable. I never lost one chopper during the whole campaign. The Harrier situation is a temptation to cheat, however. If one's Harrier is under attack from an enemy aircraft during the simulation mode, merely switching to wargame/campaign mode defuses the threat. **Domark** has admitted that the game switches to a simplified wargame set of rules. This one point is typical of the generally poor AI routines in the game. Another difficulty presented via TAWADS is the lack of air threat representation on the map; the only air threat seen is the infrequent supply C-130.

One final criticism is the no-win situation. Winning the game is, apparently, triggered upon achieving 70% occupation of the island. I managed to occupy 89% of the island without seeing a "win screen." This is a bug, it appears.

On the positive side, though, the real-time action seen on the TAWADS map is made more atmospheric when one realizes that all of the movements are actually happening in 3D. It brings the normally staid 2D map to life. In addition, the map can be zoomed almost indefinitely and the presentation is commendable via the hires screen.

Amiga owners have their own problems, I'm afraid. This version does not include night missions. **Domark** alleges that the lack of RAM in most Amigas is to blame. However, when one considers that night missions merely warrant a simple palette change and that **Domark** recommends a 68020 Amiga to play the game (and most 68020 Amiga owners have 2 MB+ of RAM), this seems unlikely.

End of Strafing Run (Conclusion)

Even worse is the fact that it is so obvious that the whole thing hasn't been properly tested, just rushed out of the door. Even limited playtesting would have prevented many of the problems occurring in *HA*. **Domark** deserves to be strafed with cannon fire for this simple lack of thought.

However, despite the criticisms *HA* is worth a look. There are enough innovations and hooks in the game to warrant spending some time on *HA*. Doubly so when an update is promised which will tackle many of the problems described. **CGW**

The Magic Candle III
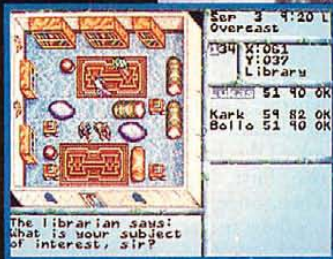
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MINDCRAFT

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(Actual screens may vary.)

Circle Reader Service #74

It's A Small, Small, Real-Time World

Crossing Computer Gaming with Miniatures

Design Notes from Impressions' Ed Grabowski

In the fall of 1989, I first decided to create a computer system whereby I could fight some of the great heroic battles of yesteryear. I had spent a large part of my youth in painting, literally, thousands of miniature soldiers and attaching them to cardboard bases for ease of movement (and for reconstruction of the battlefield whenever my sister wreaked mass destruction equivalent to an act of God).

In spite of the obvious gratification earned from this pursuit, I always felt that the "turn-based" rules could never recreate the incredible mental challenge of simultaneously commanded thousands of troops. Instead of taking the sensible approach and creating said computer program in my spare time, I decided to leave my career as a systems analyst, working in Management Information Systems which utilized large water-cooled IBM mainframes, and go for it! My original game was *Rorke's Drift*, and it has been followed by a series of games based upon new historical subjects and full of refinements.

Aiming High

So, what did I really want to accomplish. The basic aim was to recreate the same resplendent battle formations one could command on the table-top, but allow gamers to command these units in "real-time" with artificial intelligence controlling each soldier. I didn't want to lose one bit of the visual splendor of the armies, and I desired to animate the troops as well.

This meant that, while the battle is taking place, the machine would have to perform the following calculations for each soldier depicted on the screen:

- work out the AI for each soldier. (Which means deciding if a soldier should stay put or move, as well as reload or fire, depending on his own

Conquest of Japan

local AI and the orders set by the player.);

- carry out the move and decide on the animation pose required. Three frames of animation are used for each soldier's walk, but 24 total frames are required to reflect the eight different directions in which he can walk;

- detect if said soldier has collided with

An epic simulation of Samurai conquest

Impressions

a fellow soldier and work out how they can move around each other to allow both soldiers' orders to be fulfilled;

- detect collision with the enemy;

- if firing, automatically seek out the most suitable target and attack it;

- resolve any missile firing; and

- finally, draw the soldier on the screen!

Of course, the most difficult part of this algorithm is that it all has to be done in as short a time as possible — ideally, five times per second. To further complicate matters, gamers need to be able to scroll around the battlefield while all this is happening, so the computer must also detect and keep track of mouse clicks and key presses.

High Road or Low Road?

The next decision I had to make was whether to use a "high level" language like C or a faster "low level" assembly language. I solved this by electing to use a mixture of the two. First, I would write the routine in C. Then, once I had it working, I would often rewrite it in assembler in order to speed it up.

So, with a game that was both playable and working reasonably well on a 20 MHz MS-DOS machine, I suddenly discovered what a difference a higher clock speed can make. The game played entirely too fast on a 33 MHz machine. The computer executed its battle plans so quickly that I was being outmaneuvered before I knew it. There I was, busy getting my men in formation for an assault on the enemy's left, when the rascally computer had already attacked and routed most of my right with his cavalry. So, I would have to turn and try to rally my right while the computer nonchalantly charged my center.

In short, I was being out-fought, not because I was being out-thought, but because everything was happening too quickly. I

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didn't have time to react. Therefore, I was forced to introduce an option which may increasingly appear with new generations of faster machines — a speed reduction option. With this toggle in place, the game player can set how fast the men move on the screen. This, of course, provides time to see what's happening and respond appropriately.

Looking Good

When designing this system, I wanted to select a viewpoint which would give an impression (pun intended) of a three-dimensional battlefield. I rejected a straight overhead view because I wanted the player to see as much of the uniforms as possible. After all, miniatures players spend days researching and painting the clothing and armor of a given period. I decided that my design shouldn't offer any less.

I chose, therefore, the isometric 3-D view which is used in some arcade action games. Naturally, this solution had its attendant problems, the biggest being that once a piece moves behind a tree or building, it can become temporarily hidden. My solution was to give the player the option of viewing the conflict from the opposing player's viewpoint. To do so meant having to draw the scenery graphics from two viewpoints. I didn't have to worry about the soldiers, since all of their angles were already drawn, but I did have to do this for the scenery.

The Loyal Opposition

In the discussion to this point, I have neglected to speak of another major programming conundrum, the AI. Getting the computer to control an army is a never-ending task. The more we work on the AI, the more changes we come up with. Right now, I work on a general rather than specific approach.

Since I design campaign games (like *Conquest of Japan* and the upcoming *Blue & Gray*) where the size and composition of both armies and the terrain can be different in any battle, using general AI routines is mandatory. If I were only simulating a particular conflict, I could use pre-programmed attack/defense movements. So, I rework the general AI for the period (tactics, weapons and unit types) and geography (basic terrain advantages and disadvantages) in which the game takes place.

My routines work by looking at the army's composition, position and morale. It evaluates these points at three levels: Overall, Unit and Individual Soldier. First, it examines the overall strength of the army against the opposition, measured both numerically (number of men) and positionally (what type of terrain is held). If the AI algorithms controlling the player's units perceive that he has numerical superiority and terrain advantage, it shifts to attack mode.

Next, the routine examines each unit and follows the same procedure by zooming down

to that individual unit's perspective. Keeping in mind what overall strategy has already been factored into the process, the AI decides what the unit is most likely to do.

Naturally, however, the whole affair boils down to whether the individual soldiers are going to follow orders or not. The AI performs the same calculations on an even smaller scale for each soldier depicted on the screen. If the evaluation shows the soldier to be too weak or his morale to be too low, he simply will not obey the commands from the higher levels.

These general calculations are then supplemented by algorithms for fighting units with unique skills, such as artillery and cavalry. This keeps units from performing atypical attacks such as artillery units charging cavalry (The Charge of the Lugubrious Brigade?).

Historical Notes

Hopefully, this article has given some insight into the way my miniatures wargaming system originated and evolved. After *Blue & Gray*, we hope to create fantasy, W.W.II and space games which utilize the system. **cgw**
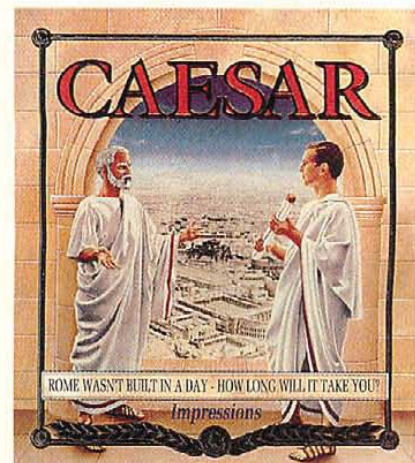
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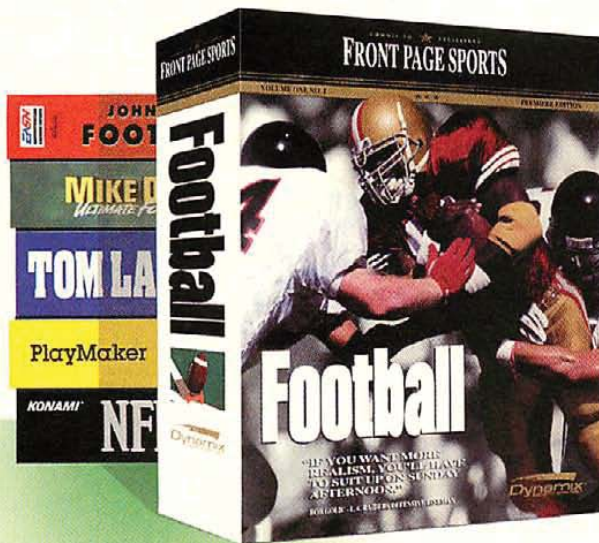From drafting teams to forming leagues to designing plays and running the action, only *Front Page Sports* Football has it all. And now you can get $8.00 just for treating yourself to the the best. Here's how:

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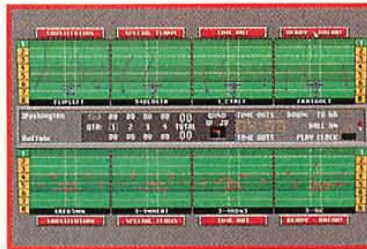
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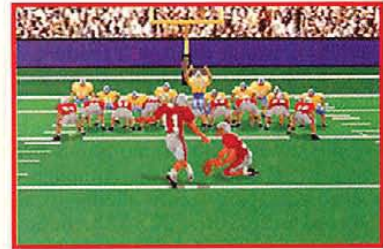
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Come to the Green Beret, My Friend

Special Forces from MicroProse

by Jeff James

For years, strategy gamers have used traditional pen-and-paper games to simulate the actions of squad-level infantry units. Boardgames such as **Avalon Hill**'s *Squad Leader* allowed armchair infantry commanders to tackle the problems a real-world infantry leader might have to. From destroying ammo dumps to securing small villages, small infantry squads have traditionally served as a deft and deadly arm of a country's armed forces.

Like most other board-gaming products (such as **TSR**'s *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*), several attempts have been made at bringing the visceral appeal of squad-level infantry combat to the computer screen. **MicroProse**'s *Airborne Ranger* took the "lone wolf" approach, allowing gamers to assume the persona of a single American paratrooper. Other games, with **Interstel**'s *D.R.A.G.O.N. Force* as a prime example, took a broader approach, giving gamers a crack at commanding an entire squad of grunts. As the latest attempt at simulating small-scale infantry action, **MicroProse** has released *Special Forces* (*SForces*).

While MicroProse has positioned *SForces* as the sequel to *Airborne Ranger*, the two products have almost nothing in common. While *Airborne Ranger* was originally developed here in the states by MicroProse U.S.A. for the venerable Commodore 64 and IBM-compatible computers, *SForces* was developed in England by **Sleepless Knights** and published on the Amiga by **MicroProse U.K.** I had hoped that the transatlantic connection between the U.S.A. and U.K. branches of MicroProse would result in a product with a global outlook on the units the player could command. Instead of offering specific, individualized units, MicroProse has unfortunately attempted to cover all the bases with an amorphous, overly generalized unit of soldiers. Although the product packaging subtly alludes to such renowned units as the U.K.'s SAS, the Soviet Union's Spetsnatz, and America's anti-terrorist Delta Force, they are nowhere to be found in the game itself. Other elite military units such as the Navy SEALS, USMC Marine recon, US Army Rangers and others are nowhere to be found. Giving gamers the chance to choose from the world's most elite special forces would have been a welcome program feature.

Boot Camp Basics

The game begins with the roster screen, where players have the opportunity to give a custom name to their unit. After choosing one of four difficulty settings, the player is presented with a file cabinet holding all 16 missions included in *SForces*. These 16 missions are divided into four geographical regions: arctic, tropical, temperate and desert. The missions in each zone pit the player against unnamed terrorist groups, militaristic drug lords or a maniacal despot patterned heavily after Saddam Hussein. Missions can be chosen at random or played in order, allowing gamers to enjoy a quick game or to invest more time in a lengthy campaign. The objectives in each mission range from planting laser target designators (LTDs) next to scud missiles to

assassinating the leader of enemy forces. Players who wish to create and name their own soldiers are out of luck; gamers can only select troopers from the included, pregenerated eight man roster. Four soldiers can be used in a mission and each can be equipped with a variety of hitech weapons. A variety of pistols, rifles, grenades and rocket launchers are included. Explosive charges and LTDs round out the included armaments, ensuring that nearly every obstacle a player faces can be overcome by the vigorous application of copious amounts of firepower. Once the player's team is briefed, assigned and loaded with weaponry, the war zone may be entered.
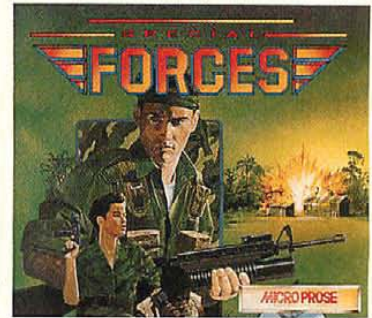
Into The Breach

Upon arrival into the war zone, the game shifts to an overhead view of the currently selected team leader and his surroundings. Two levels of magnification are supported, including a scaled terrain map which displays the entire warzone at once. Once the four troopers are on the ground, the player has a number of formation and movement options with which to order them about the countryside. By pressing the F-keys on the keyboard, gamers can direct soldiers under their command to operate in one of three different unit formations: individually, in pairs, or in team support mode (where all soldiers work in a triangular formation around the team leader). Soldiers can be moved directly by pressing the appropriate soldier's function key (F1 - F4) and steering them to their objectives with a keyboard or joystick. For more strategically minded players, movement can be set at the scaled terrain map level by establishing waypoints.

When traipsing through enemy territory, soldiers can either move in stealth mode (shooting at enemies only when necessary) or sniping mode (shooting everything that comes close). For heavily defended objectives, I discovered that the stealth mode worked best; for less armed objectives, the sniping mode seemed to be the superior choice. Regardless of which mode is chosen, the four grunts that the player controls seem to possess an incredible amount of stamina. Even at the most difficult play settings, these soldiers seem to absorb an unearthly amount of damage, taking several rounds of fire from a machine-gun pillbox at close range. Although the inherent invincibility of the soldiers can be argued for the sake of playability, gamers looking for a more accurate representation of damage received during combat will be disappointed. In many instances, *SForces* plays more like a version of the arcade blast-fest *Ikari Warriors* than a detailed wargame of small-scale infantry actions.

Purple Hearts And Promotions

Once the objective for the current scenario is accomplished (retrieving a valuable object, assassinating the enemy leader, et al), the player must shepherd units back to "pickup zones." Once the team arrives at one of the designated retrieval points, a helicopter can be called in to pluck the players from the warzone. Even here, *SForces* leans more towards the arcade end of the computer gaming spectrum. Even if the pickup zone is surrounded by dozens of enemy soldiers, gun emplacements and other enemy units, the player's chopper happily zooms into almost certain death, slowly picks up the team, and vanishes from the combat scene without even a single shot being fired in its direction. If any soldiers end up being captured by the enemy, the player has the opportunity to fly back into the warzone and retrieve the missing soldiers. If any soldiers are killed in action, that soldier is permanently removed from the eight-man roster. After playing through the majority of the scenarios at a respectable level of difficulty, this loss of soldiers can be crippling. Once lost, a soldier is not replaced; players may find themselves braving the last scenario or two with less than a complete squad of four soldiers. Once the mission has been accomplished, each of the soldiers that participated in the mission are given the opportunity to be promoted or decorated. This process is entirely in the hands of the player, allowing gamers to reward favorite soldiers with a greater allotment of rewards. Once the 16 included scenarios are completed, the game ends and the player's squad is retired from active duty. Players can attempt those same scenarios at a higher difficulty level with a new squad, although the scenarios themselves will remain largely unchanged. One can only hope that MicroProse will release additional mission diskettes (or a scenario builder) to give the game playing appeal after the included scenarios are accomplished.

The playing interface is the strongest feature of *SForces*. Although mouse support is not included in the actual combat portion of the game, moving soldiers about by way of joystick or keyboard is clean and straightforward. Switching between soldiers can be done quickly, while changing weapons is as easy as selecting the appropriate character and using the "+" and "-" keys to scroll through that character's available weaponry. Graphics, though not excessively detailed, are crisp and bright, making the flora and geographical features of the battlefield easily distinguishable. Sound is limited to firing weapons and exploding ordnance, although a fittingly somber military melody is played whenever a mission is completed. The 88-page instruction manual is somewhat of a disappointment coming from MicroProse, which has historically produced some of the most well-written game documentation in the industry. While I had hoped that the manual might devote a dozen or so pages profiling the elite military units of several countries, backed by a brief history of the accomplishments of special forces used throughout history, it did neither.

Mission Incomplete

I had hoped that MicroProse U.K. would have heaped the same amount of lavish detail upon *SForces* that other U.K. designed MicroProse products have exhibited (with *B-17 Flying Fortress* being a prime example). Unfortunately, *SForces* ends up being a rather unexciting and easily forgettable entertainment product. With the game playing emphasis resting more upon arcade action than shrewd tactical maneuvering, *SForces* appears to be aimed squarely at male computer gamers in their early teens. Yet, even if *SForces* was classified as a true "shoot em' up," it fails miserably to compete with more focused arcade offerings. In summation, *SForces* is a product which unsuccessfully attempts to straddle the barbed wire between arcade action and detailed, realistic infantry combat. Gamers looking for a vague, oversimplified introductory simulation of small-scale infantry operations might see something to admire in this game. Unfortunately, more serious minded gamers looking for a detailed, factually correct simulation of squad-level infantry actions should count *SForces* as missing in action. **CGW**

Better Late?

A Sneak Preview of Virgin's *Reach for the Skies*

by Paul Rigby

Many moons ago, two flight simulations appeared to be on the brink of release to commemorate and celebrate the Battle of Britain. The product from **LucasArts**, *Battle of Britain: Their Finest Hour*, became a huge success. The **Mirrorsoft** game, *Reach for the Skies*, a polygon-based simulation produced by **Rowan Software**, never materialized. Due to more tweaks than one could shake a stick at, *Reach for the Skies* has undergone a variety of changes. After the death of publishing magnate, Robert Maxwell, which caused great disruption to his Mirror Corporation and its subsidiaries like Mirrorsoft, the product was picked up by **Virgin Games** and is now finally being published in the U.S.

From Either Side of the Channel

The game focuses upon 70 crucial days of the Battle of Britain, beginning on June 10th, 1940. Depending on the difficulty level selected, play begins with the player as either a pilot (active in combat or practicing in a training mode) or a controller (where a selection of targets is offered and one's set of responses is issued). The player can control either British or German forces. In theory, the course of history can be changed by applying different tactics (as the German side) or just failing to cope with German onslaught (as the British side).

After running through the introductory demo that features digitized

scenes from WW2, plus digitized noises (e.g., Churchill's voice, sirens, etc.), one will observe that *Reach for the Skies* employs an attractive feature regarding the campaign. That is, it splits the operation into four phases; they are the German airforce's attempt to lure the RAF out into the Channel; the German attack on the radar installations; the attack on RAF airfields; and the attack on industrial and civilian targets, better known as "The Blitz."

RAF Command

As the British commander, one is supplied with intelligence about the known German threats for each particular day. These are highlighted on a strategic map. The player will be told what direction the "bandits" are flying in, what type of bombers they are, their speed, and the size of their force. Only one wave of German bombers will ever appear at a time, although secondary fighter squadrons may be poaching after the bombers have swept by. Once a force is on the way, forces can be scrambled from any of England's ten Fighter Command airfields. The number of aircraft for an attack can be selected, as can their heading. Each airfield only holds one type of allied aircraft, either Spitfire or Hurricane.

From the H.Q. to the Cockpit

During flight, the player can control up to four aircraft per British squadron (or eight for the Germans). At any time, as in *Flight of the Intruder* (another **Rowan Software** production), the RAF player can transfer to the cockpit of any allied aircraft. Similarly, as in *Flight of the Intruder*, wingmen are available. They will watch each other's "six" but, unfortunately, no orders can be given to one's fellow pilots. The player's wingman will follow his actions while the other aircraft will take events as they come. Radio messages in textual form (and digitized via a sound card) from the radar stations and other aircraft will appear on the top of the screen as the intercept progresses.

For the Germans one can fly Me 109s, Me 110s and Stukas (plus the rear gunner).

It is a shame that the heavier bombers (i.e.: He111, Do17, Ju88) cannot be piloted. One can only be a tail or forward gunner. Rowan has been quoted as stating that flying the heavy bomber is an unexciting job; that they merely flew to the target, dropped their bombs and flew back again. Try telling the actual He111 pilots that their mission was never exciting! The decision not to allow the player to fly the heavy

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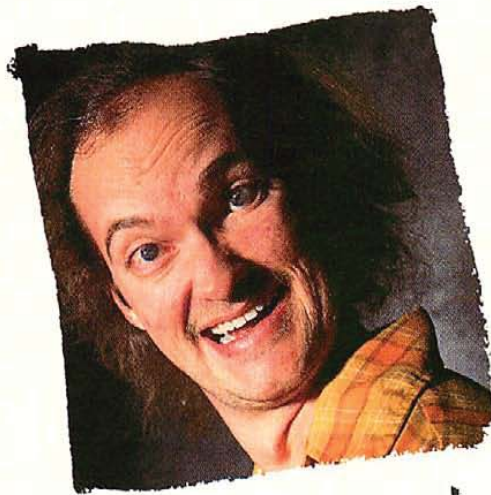
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bombers is a *poor* one. It should have been up to Rowan to provide that excitement and leave it to the players to decide.

Readers may be pleased to know that Rowan has implemented a workable rudder into the program, controlled by either the keyboard or separate pedals (even two joysticks are supported). However, Rowan failed to include auto-centering for keyboard users. Manual centering is a trial and is completely unnecessary.

Cockpits for the British side are generic. On the German side there are three different gunner positions and a one-off cockpit for the Stuka. A generic cockpit is given to both the Me109 and Me110.

Esprit de Flying Corps

Unfortunately, there are no medals awarded — only points. A player flying for the British, if he does well on a particular mission, receives a visit from the King. Why the King would spare time to visit a pilot just because he had a "good day" and not toss him a DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross) through the post instead, is beyond me. I firmly believe that the awarding of medals and promotions is more satisfying. Post-mission reports could have been better structured, too. As it is, they are rather woolly and, possibly, confusing to some players.

It is good to see that morale plays a big part in the campaign. It is based, or scored, upon *average* morale of the whole airfield rather than upon individual pilots. Although, if a pilot arrives from an airfield of low morale to an airfield of high morale, the average morale of that airfield will be reduced. If an airfield is garnering a lot of kills, morale will go up — improving their overall skill. If they are losing pilots regularly, morale will fall. There is a slight morale loss for damaged aircraft too. Left to recuperate, airfields with low morale will improve in morale, but only very slowly.

Where do Airplanes Come From?

There are four aircraft factories producing one aircraft each, every four days. From these, airfields can be re-stocked. Aircraft also can be repaired at home bases. However, if an airfield is damaged, aircraft repair is slowed. If factories are damaged, they will stop producing aircraft until fully repaired. If the British force drops down below 50% then Britain is proclaimed lost.

What's in the Sights

Two welcome cosmetic features are gouraud shading and light sourcing, highlighted by the addition of a 256-color VGA palette. Imagine observing a 3-D rendition of a Spitfire from the external viewpoint. Then, roll the aircraft. The effect of light-sourcing means that, as the wing's upper surfaces roll over to face the ground, the color of the upper wings progressively darken. Well, they turn away from the sun don't they? Conversely, lower surfaces lighten. It is an extremely nice effect to see.

Sound can be driven by both Roland LAPC-1 and SoundBlaster simultaneously (via a mixer of some sort) providing satisfactory noises, but never anything special.

The basic flight model for *Reach for the Skies* is a generic form that obeys the fundamental laws of aeronautics. Rolls and loops are well implemented, as are stalls. Progressively tipping a wing on a lazy roll will result in a loss of height and a possible stall which is easily recovered from. Height is realistically lost while flying straight and level with the throttle pulled to minimum.

Checking the Specs

There are supposed to be overlaid patches that specify the charac-

teristics of each individual aircraft. However, I couldn't find any. For example, even though the Spitfire Mark 1 carried eight guns, only two are simulated; its historical straight-and-level speed of 360 MPH can never be reached (speed tops out at 300 MPH); and high speed diving enforces no problem on the Spitfire where, in reality, it almost locked the ailerons, allowing only a little movement in the rolling axis, if any. Further, negative G or bunting never initiates the Merlin III engine modeled in the game to cut out as it did in real life (a significant feature and one of the very real disadvantages compared to the Me109 which never suffered from this complaint — resulting in challenging dog-fights for RAF pilots).

Flights can be recorded using a range of different orders, angles and so on, with the game's VCR utility. Recordings are portable and recorded files can be extremely long since the game uses expanded memory to store the information. However, options are limited and will never scale the heights observed in *Red Baron*, for example. One odd but handy utility is a DOS file that tidies extraneous files on the hard disk, depending upon what one wishes to dispose of. This is, indeed, a thoughtful gesture.

A Real "No Brainer"

Until this point in the review, one might weigh the pros and cons and decide that *Reach for the Skies* is a pretty good simulation. Alas, I have yet to speak of the game's artificial intelligence. Actually, it has none to speak of — or very little, at best. For all of its technical and cosmetic excellence, *RFTS* is too easy. The enemy is no where near aggressive enough.

While playing the RAF, I was never aware that I was under the cosh, a struggling nation keeping the mighty Luftwaffe at bay. Playing the RAF in *RFTS* is like shooting ducks at a penny arcade. Bombers can be easily brought down from any angle one wishes to fire from. The German escorts are poor and almost Gandhi-like in their aggressive-ness. Another thing: German bombers hardly ever hit their targets. After dozens of missions flown in all phases of the campaign, flying as the RAF, I experienced one target hit — *one!* I often repelled entire waves of German bombers plus their escorts with a single Spitfire.

Playing the Germans is not much better. Again, another duck-shoot. Spitfires sit on a bomber's six, just waiting to be shot down (they always are, too). Fellow German bomber pilots/bombardiers are, again, very poor and hardly ever hit their targets, making the player very frustrated and itching to get into the cockpit — which, of course, they can't.

Thus, for this extremely important reason, *Reach for the Skies* cannot be recommended as a viable flight simulation. This is a shame because the game has a lot going for it. It is far more simulation-oriented than Lucasfilm's *Their Finest Hour*. However, it hardly contains a single percent of that game's challenge and gameplay. **CGW**

Slow Screen Redraw Needn't Be Par For The Course...

You know what we're talking about... those *other* golf simulations that seem to take forever to draw the screen. Well, *Wilson® ProStaff® Golf* puts an end to all that waiting with *fast-action* screen redraws! So what does this get you? Faster game play and less frustration, for one thing. Need we say more? O.K., since you asked, we should also mention the wide variety of side-game options — things like Shoot Out, Stroke Play, Match Play and Best Ball. You get a whopping ten options in all to customize your round... simply pick and choose to create your own personal playing style.

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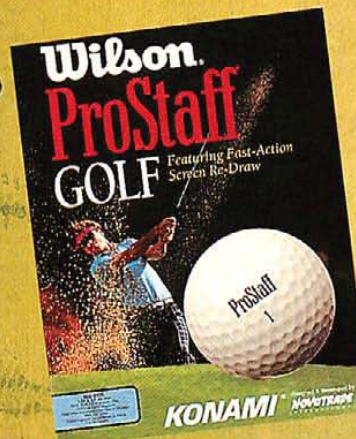
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Strategy

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Ambush	4/93	.
Ancient Art of War Skies	37	.
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Centurion	16	.
Civil War Vol. 1, 2 or 3	27	32
Cohort 2	18	.
Conquered Kingdoms	37	.
Conquest of Japan	37	.
Discovery of Columbus	37	.
Genghis Khan	37	.
Gettysburg	39	.
Gold of the Americas	26	29
L'Empereur	38	.
Liberty or Death	37	.
Merchant Colony	32	.
No Greater Glory	22	.
Nobunaga's Ambition 2	39	.
Paladin II	37	.
Prelude to Jutland	26	.
P.T.O.	3/93	.
Rampart	25	.
Red Baron (VGA)	42	42
Mission Builder	19	.
Romance of 3 Kingdoms	42	.
Romance of 3 Kingdoms 2	42	.
Siege	38	.
Dogs of War	19	.
Warlords/Enhanced	19	.
Warlords II	6/93	.
Waterloo	19	.

World War II

	IBM	Mac
Aces of the Pacific	47	.
WWII: 1946!	25	.
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Aces Over Europe	1Q	.
Campaign Disk I	2Q	.
Action North Atlantic	26	.
Action Stations v3.2	32	.
Data Disk	17	.
Air Raid Pearl Harbor	26	.
Air Warrior	37	.
B-17 Flying Fortress	38	.
Banzai	26	.
Battletank Barbarossa	39	.
Bismarck	26	.
Campaign	37	.
Carriers at War	42	35
Const. Kit	37	30
Carrier Strike	42	.
Expansion Disk #1	21	.
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Fleet Commander	6/93	.
Fleet Med	39	.
German Raiders Atlantic	26	.
Grand Fleet	39	.
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High Cmd. Enhan. SVGA	5/93	.
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Malta Storm	39	.
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MBT Kursk	39	.
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Pacific War	42	.
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Patton Strikes Back	17	19
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DO-335 plane disk	20	.
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P-38	20	.
P-80	20	.
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Silent Service 2 Classic	22	.
Task Force 1942	39	.
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V for Victory: Stalingrad	3Q	3Q
Victory at Sea	1993	.
Warlords	.	37
Western Front	22	.
WW II: Battles of Pacific	5/93	.

Modern

	IBM	Mac
7th Fleet	39	.
A.T.P.	39	.
A-10 Warthog	12/93	.
A Line in the Sand	19	.
ATAC	29	.
Air Force Commander	37	.
Allied Forces	29	.
Comanche: Max. Overkill	43	.
Expansion Disk 1	25	.
Expansion Disk 2	25	.
Conflict: Korea	19	.
Conflict: Middle East	19	.
Crisis in the Kremlin	42	.
F-117A Nighthawk (VGA)	40	.
F-15 II Classic	22	.
F-15 III	42	.
F-15 III Voice Commander	18	.
F-19 Voice Commander	18	.
Falcon 3.0	45	.
Operation: Fighting Tiger	25	.
Falcon MC	.	42
Flight Sim 4.0	40	.
Flight Planner	27	.
Sound and Graphics	27	.
Rescue 911	19	.
Scenery Design	28	.
Global Effect	34	.
Gunship 2000	38	.
Campaign Disk I	22	.
Halls of Montezuma	27	29
Harpoon v1.3	25	37
Battleset 2 or 3	20	20
Battleset 4	22	24
Harpoon Designer Series	32	32
Harpoon Scenario Editor	25	25
Harpoon Challenger Pak S.E.	49	49
Harpoon II	1993	.
Harrier Assault	37	.
Jet Fighter 2	42	.
Add on disk	18	.
JF2 w/add on disk	47	.
Jump Jet	34	.
Jump Jet "Ace Pack"	38	.
KGB	22	.
M1 Tank Platoon	29	.
MacArthurs War	32	.
Megafortress	28	.
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This kit allows modification of existing CAW scenarios or the creation of new scenarios. New scenarios include Wake Island, Guadalcanal, and Tarawa.

IBM/Mac $37

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Shuttle	38	.
Special Forces	32	.
Utopia	32	.

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Breach 2	19	.
Cyber Empires	31	.
Fireteam 2200	34	.
Global Effect	31	.
Imperium	25	.
Mantis	41	.
Speech Pack	18	.
Mechamander	10/93	.
Mercenaries	37	.
Mercenaries 2	6/93	.
Reach for the Stars	28	28
Robosport (Windows)	38	37
Rules of Engagement	39	.
Rules of Engagement 2	4/93	.
Second Conflict (Windows)	34	.
Space Inc.	6/93	.
Spaceward HO! (Windows)	37	.
Spaceward HO! (DOS)	37	.
Spectre	37	.
Star Legions	37	.
Star Legions SVGA	37	.
Star Legions 2	8/93	.
Theatre of War Classic	31	.
When Two Worlds War	37	.

General

	IBM	Mac
A-Train	42	42
Construction Set	24	24
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Are We There Yet?	16	.
Battles of Destiny	37	.
Battle Chess	22	32
Battle Chess (Windows)	32	.
BattleChess 4000 (VGA)	32	.
BattleChess 4000 (SVGA)	37	.
Buzz Aldrin's Race to Space	42	.
Caesar's Palace	.	18
Caesar's Palace (Windows)	18	.
Chessmaster 3000	34	.
Chessmaster 3000 (Windows)	43	.
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Civilization Master Edition	45	42
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Classic 5 (Windows)	2Q	.
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IBM/Mac $43

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Facetris III	17	17
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Gobliins	37	.
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Grand Slam Bridge II	34	.
Heaven and Earth	32	.
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Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	31	.
Hoyles/Classic	32	.
Incredible Machine	32	.
Ishido	.	34
Lemmings	32	32
More Lemmings & Game	33	.
More Lemmings	22	.
Lemmings 2	37	37
Lexi-Cross	27	32
Life & Death II	32	.
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Lost Admiral Enhanced	12/93	.
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Monopoly Deluxe DOS/Win	37	.
Origin F/X Screen Saver	25	.
Perfect General	38	.
WWII Scenario Disk	22	.
Great Battles 20th Cen.	25	.
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PowerHits: Movies	32	.
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Risk (Windows)	32	.
Sargon V	32	32
Scrabble Deluxe (Windows)	32	.
Sharif On Bridge	32	2Q
Sharif On Bridge (Windows)	32	.
Shuttle	38	.
SimAnt	38	38
SimCity	32	.
SimCity (Windows)	38	.
SimCity Supreme I	.	37
SimCity Supreme II	.	47
SimCity 2000	3Q	.
SimEarth	42	42
SimEarth (Windows)	42	.
SimFarm	3Q	.

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	IBM	Mac
4-D Boxing	16	31
All-Amer. College Ftbll 92	37	.
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Super Tetris (Windows)	32	.
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Utopia	32	.
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Ween: The Prophecy	37	.
Wordtris	29	32

	IBM	Mac
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Earl Weaver Baseball II	16	.
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Front Pg. Sports: Baseball	3/93	.
Front Pg. Sports: Bsktball	'93	.
Games: Summer Challenge	35	.
Games: Winter Challenge	35	.
Grand Prix	37	22
Grand Slam Bridge II	32	.
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MLBPA Player Disk	15	.
Stadium Disk	18	.
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Indy 500	16	.
Jack Nicklaus Sig. Ed. Golf	37	.
Course Disk #2	15	.
John Madden Football II	31	.
Jordan - Flight	37	.
Links	42	.
Links 386 Pro	42	.
Mauna Kea Crse. Disk	19	.
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NCAA College Football '92	37	.
NFL Challenge	56	.
NFL Video Pro Football	47	.
PGA Tour Golf	19	37
PGA Tourn. Crse. Dsk.	15	15
PGA Tour Golf (Windows)	37	.
PGA Tourn. Crse. Disk	15	.
Pool Shark	22	.
Pro League Baseball	37	.
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Tony LaRussa Ult. Baseball	19	.
Add-On Disks	15ea	.
Tony LaRussa 2	37	.
92 Stats Disk	12	.
AL/NL Stadiums	18	.
Fantasy Draft	12	.
Wayne Gretzky Hockey 2	36	.
Hockey League Sim.	28	.
Wayne Gretzky Hockey 3	37	.
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World Circuit	34	.

Keyboard Overlays

A-10 Tank Killer	10
A.T.P.	10
Aces of the Pacific	10
B-17 Flying Fortress	10
C. Yeager Air Combat	10
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F-117A Nighthawk	10
Falcon 3.0/3.0.1	10
Flight Simulator 4.0	10
Jetfighter I and II	10
Megafortress	10
Secret Weapons Luftwaffe	10

CD-ROM

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Battle Chess Enhanced	47	47	Murder Makes		
Blade	.	57	Strange Deadfellows	37	.
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Case of Cautious Condor	37	.	Pacific Islands II	32	.
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Lost Treasures Infocom II	37	37	Wing Commander/Ultima VI	57	.
M-1 Tank Platoon	57	.	Wolfpack	3/93	.

Circle Reader Service #118

EASTWARD HO!

A Replay of Columbia Games' *EastFront*

by Michael Peck

German player: Paul Saunders

Soviet player: Michael Peck
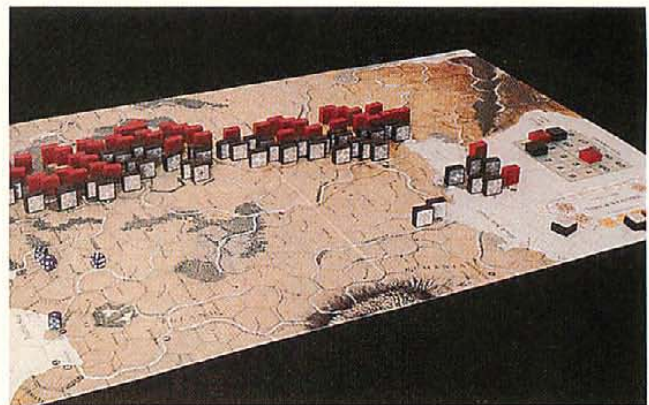
The following article is a replay of *Computer EastFront* by Columbia Games Inc. *Computer EastFront* is a faithful translation of the popular board game of the Russo-German war. The article describes the opening terms of the Summer 1942 scenario, when the Germans grasped their last opportunity to defeat the Soviet behemoth. The scenario was played using the game's electronic mail feature.

Situation and Deployment

The Germans stared into the jaws of a strategic dilemma as they gazed across the immensity of the endless Russian steppes. With the Russians still groggy from their drubbing the previous summer, the Wehrmacht still dominated the battlefield. Yet, it was too weak to seize all of its strategic objectives. The Germans had a good shot at taking Moscow, Leningrad or the Caucasian oil fields, but *not* all three. Moscow and Leningrad were right on the front lines, but surrounded by dense forests and rivers. So, the Germans opted to thrust across the open southern steps between Moscow and Rostov. To ease the way, they used the game's limited intelligence feature, which hides the strength and type of enemy units not in combat, as well as the ability to reallocate steps among units before a scenario begins. Each of the corps in front of Leningrad and Moscow were depleted to their minimum one step, and their strength points were used to bring the armor and infantry in the south to full strength. The southern armor was also dispersed so as not to tip off the Soviets. The German plan was to kill Soviet units (and get victory points) and then execute a hook on Moscow from the south.

For their part, the Soviet dilemma was no less acute and a lot more frightening. The front was huge and their units and HQs were weaker than their German counterparts. Seeing what appeared to be strong stacks around Moscow (and not knowing their strength) the Soviets

built a strong line in the north to hold the vital production centers. An infantry screen was left in the south with reserves in the cities behind the front.

Turn 1 (First half of June 1942)

The great drama along the Don unfolded as the Soviet defenders in the south melted under waves of dust-covered panzers. Voroshilov fell, and the gap between the Don and Donets rivers was threaded. The Germans struck in groups of four panzer corps — the maximum allowed by stacking. Although not bringing along infantry maximized striking power, it also meant the expensive armor absorbed all the losses.

The Germans had ordered one HQ to blitz, which gave a second movement and combat phase, though at the cost of depleting the HQ. German armor and infantry pour through the ruptured line to penetrate as far as the outskirts of Stalingrad. Two German infantry corps also tried to seize Rostov, but suffered heavy losses in the built-up terrain. The Soviets moved swiftly to plug their shattered line. Because using HQs is expensive, they only activated the STAVKA HQ, which had an unlimited command range. But with a six-unit limit, STAVKA couldn't both maneuver units in the south and pull reinforcements down from the north. So, the Soviets used local forces to form a hasty line along the Don and in front of the open terrain near Stalingrad. Even a precious HQ, locked in combat with a panzer corps, was left behind to shore up the line. As a small consolation, two German mech corps out of supply range of a friendly German rail hex suffered attrition.
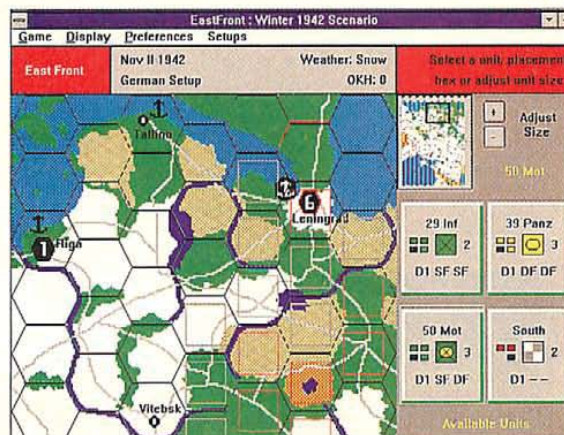
Turn 2 (Second half of June)

The Germans chose not to blitz this turn. Blitz commands deplete an HQ's strength, and with two turns to go before replacement time, HQ's must be rationed. Yet, the Wehrmacht still created big headaches

for the Red Giant when an isolated panzer corps used strategic movement to move into empty Stalingrad. Meanwhile, three infantry corps piled onto the fortress of Sevastapol while the panzer battering ram again slammed the Soviet line between Rostov and Voroshilov. The Sevastapol and Rostov defenders inflicted heavy losses upon the attackers, but again the Soviet line was ruptured.

Fortunately, no blitz gave the Soviets time to again reform their line. But Marshal Zhukov cursed as the swastikas flew over Stalingrad. With units only able to move two and three hexes normally, rail movement is vital, and a hostile Stalingrad blocked rail transit between Moscow and the Caucuses. This time, the Soviets activated STAVKA and the local southern HQs to take advantage of a fragmented German line. With supply restricted to two hexes from a friendly rail hex, supply effects are harsh, particularly since cutting supply lines depletes enemy units at the end of the friendly turn. Soviet armor managed to cut German supply and rail lines, and seven German mech corps lost a step apiece at the end of the Soviet turn. Still, after one month the Germans have managed to open a bulge between the Caucuses and Voronezh south of Moscow.

Turn 3 (Beginning of July)

During production, the Germans and Soviets both gave priority to augmenting their HQs first. Without them, combat units are essentially paralyzed. The Germans used their remaining resources to augment panzer forces. The Soviets concentrated on rebuilding destroyed cadres. Though more expensive than augmenting on-map forces, STAVKA wanted as many maneuver units as possible in the south. The new cadres were placed in the Caucuses and on the rail lines on the eastern edge of the map.

In July the Germans begin with attacks at two crossing sites over the Don south of Voronezh. One was repulsed, but the other established a bridgehead. In the North, the Germans finally stirred with a bloody and unsuccessful assault into the fortress of Leningrad. The Soviets responded by forming a line south of Moscow. In a sneaky move, a lone tank corps locked in battle east of Rostov disengaged and moved to cut the German railhead in the south. The Germans watched with dismay as a panzer corps in Stalingrad and two infantry corps in Rostov died for lack of supply, while several other units suffered attrition. Dismay turned to confusion as they realized it shouldn't have been happening. In the board game, units locked in battle or out of supply exert no zones of control, so some of their corps should be able to trace a line along the Don. A computer glitch seems to be the only explanation.

At this point the game is called, with the Germans well ahead on points. Although the Soviets will be stronger by winter, they have lost too many cadres and a precious HQ. In hindsight, the Red Army should have been stronger in the south. But the Germans needed to be more careful of their supply lines, and probably should have tried more to husband their armor.

Tips

Since *Computer EastFront* is a faithful translation of the board game (except for tracing supply lines), many of the same cautions apply.

First, think long and carefully before activating HQs and, especially, blitzing with them. Blitzing consumes two steps in a single turn and, with two turns a month and only one step replaced at the beginning of each month, players can easily find themselves with a pile of useless HQs. The Soviets must be particularly careful; once their two-step HQs blitz, they are completely depleted. The three-step German HQs have a slightly easier time. One good technique is to cluster two or three HQs together and blitz on alternate turns. Nonetheless, with only four or five HQs on each side, only select portions of the front will be in command. That's why the STAVKA and OKW high command HQ's are so valuable; they can command units anywhere on the map. One should also remember that units can make unsupported attacks. Although their offensive power is halved in such a case, it is a way to get units into a hex in preparation for a later attack.

Next, decide where to concentrate. *EastFront* is an attritional game, and units tend to die slowly unless hit by strong forces. Particularly in cities and forests, where the defender takes one-half or one-third normal losses, dislodging a strong force is nearly impossible. It is easier to try and isolate those points and let supply attrition do the work. Remember that four corps may stack in a hex, but only two may cross a single hexside in a single movement phase, so plan on striking the enemy line from multiple hexsides. Only one unit may cross an enemy-controlled river line at a time, so use less expensive infantry to force the bridgehead — and take the losses — and then, move the armor across.

Though the computer chooses losses, it will always take from the strongest piece first. This puts players in a dilemma since striking with pure armor doubles offensive power, but lets armor get shot up. The Germans must be especially watchful because their replacements are twice as costly as each Soviet step. Also, players must decide whether to allocate replacements to existing units or return destroyed cadres to the map. German replacements are more expensive but their cadres are cheaper compared to their Soviet counterparts. Nonetheless, cadres start weak and only one step can be added to them per month, so losing a cadre means that corps won't be full strength for three or four months.

A vital factor is supply. Despite the glitch, the computer version still demonstrates the danger of outrunning supply lines and of a narrow thrust. A two-hex range is short, and rail lines can be easily blocked by zones of control. A hard-pressed defender can try to maneuver along the attacker's flanks and cut his supply lines. What is devastating is that enemy units suffer attrition at the end of the friendly turn, so they don't have time to re-establish supply.

Finally, both the computer and the boardgame fiendishly use hidden combat values to turn any game into a tense game of bluff and feint. Probe the enemy line to see how strong he really is and use fast mech units to suddenly descend on an outnumbered defender. Enjoy the feeling of surprising an opponent, and don't be surprised when that stack of weak infantry turns into an armored unit that completely turns the tables. **CGW**
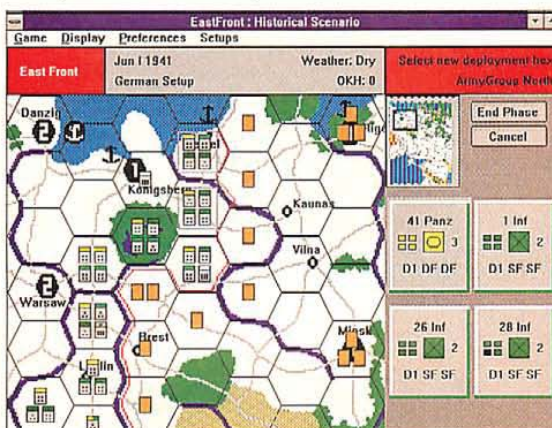
Access Software, Inc.
4910 West Amelia Earhart Dr.
S. Lake City, UT 84116
(800) 800-4880

MAUNA KEA - LINKS CHAMPION-SHIP COURSE: Aloha — the very versatile Hawaiian word meaning "hello," "good-bye," and "the pig is burning" — can also replace "Fore!" in the vocabulary of the golfer, at least if the golfer is in Mauna Kea. Access' excellent golf system does a beautiful job of depicting this paradisiacal tropic landscape, with graceful palms, rich azure seas, and coarse volcanic rock. The new course can be used with any of the three Access-developed programs; *Links, Links 386 Pro,* and *Microsoft Golf.* Hang loose but watch the hook left. IBM ($29.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

Activision
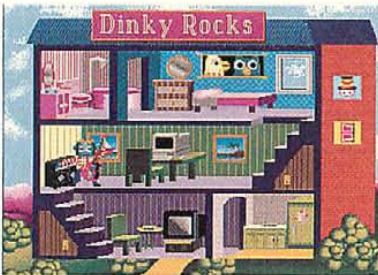11440 San Vincente Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90049
(310) 207-4500

RODNEY'S FUNSCREEN: "Provides five essential games," reads the package designed to parody the typical children's cereal box. "Sold by fun not by volume," warns the side panel, and fun it may be for its preschool audience, though there's plenty of volume in the copious sound effects and narration from Rodney. The five games included are very simple and are designed to introduce very young kids to the computer and its mysteries. At Dinky's House, kids will try to find which shade-drawn window Dinky is hiding behind. Kids can also go inside the house and click on the various rooms to see what Dinky does in his daily life. (See screen shot.) There is a primitive paint program that allows kids to draw silly accessories on provided faces. Other games include the typical Concentration adaptation, a monster counting exercise, and a cute diversion that introduces kids to the alphabet. All told, a great tasting, mentally nutritious bowl of goodies for the young ones, though it may get soggy in milk. IBM, Mac ($49.95), IBM CD-ROM, Tandy VIS ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

Bethesda Softworks
1370 Piccard Drive
Rockville, MD 20850
(301) 926-8300

HOCKEY LEAGUE SIMULATOR II: Criticizing the general manager of one's favorite team seems to be the sports fanatic's pastime of choice. Either a trade

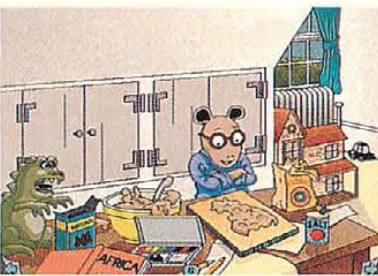Mauna Kea - Links Championship Course

Rodney's Funscreen

Hockey League Simulator II

B-Ball - Pro Basketball for the Computer

Arthur's Teacher Trouble

was poor, or a coach should be fired, or a draft was ineptly run. Regardless of the situation, the armchair GM can usually do better. Now they can prove it with this update of Bethesda's original hockey league simulator. The new version sports an improved interface and menuing system, better negotiation artificial intelligence, and a horde of other gamer-suggested enhancements. The program is fully compatible with *Wayne Gretzky Hockey III,* so one can draft a team, organize its schedule, hire or fire its coach, and then play each game of the season with either *Wayne Gretzky* or with a quick simulation mode. It's an excellent simulation of franchise sports from the executive's box. IBM ($44.95). Circle Reader Service #3.

BOBBALL, Inc.
1523 Felton Road
South Euclid, OH 44121

B-BALL - PRO BASKETBALL FOR THE COMPUTER: Originally created as a tool for NBA teams to analyze team and player performance, this text based statistics program is now being marketed to the general gaming public. The package comes with team statistics for all teams from 1973-93. Players can coach single games or statistically generate an entire season of games and stats. A "prediction" module allows rotisserie league gamers to play their rotisserie team against other teams in the league to predict statistical outcomes. The statistics generated are incredibly detailed, including league leaders, single game highs and lows for teams and individuals, and top league performances. Though it is not the most user-friendly program, it seems like a must-have tool for rotisserie players and stat freaks. IBM ($29.95). Circle Reader Service #4.

Broderbund Software
PO Box 6121
Novato, CA 94948-6121
(800) 521-6263

ARTHUR'S TEACHER TROUBLE: The person has probably not yet been born who would dislike one of Broderbund's "Living Books." Following up on their delightful *Just Grandma and Me,* *Arthur's Teacher Trouble* is even better. The story is of one Arthur, your average third grader suffering the afflictions of grammar school: a tough teacher, a pestering younger sister, a landslide of homework, and a school-wide spelling contest next week. Each word of the story's text is highlighted as the story is read aloud, allowing kids to follow along and improve their reading skills. In addition, every scene is a point-n-click toy box full of highly amusing animations and sounds. The package also includes a story-book that early grade-schoolers can enjoy when

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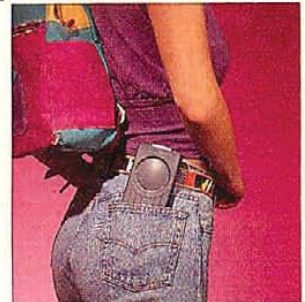
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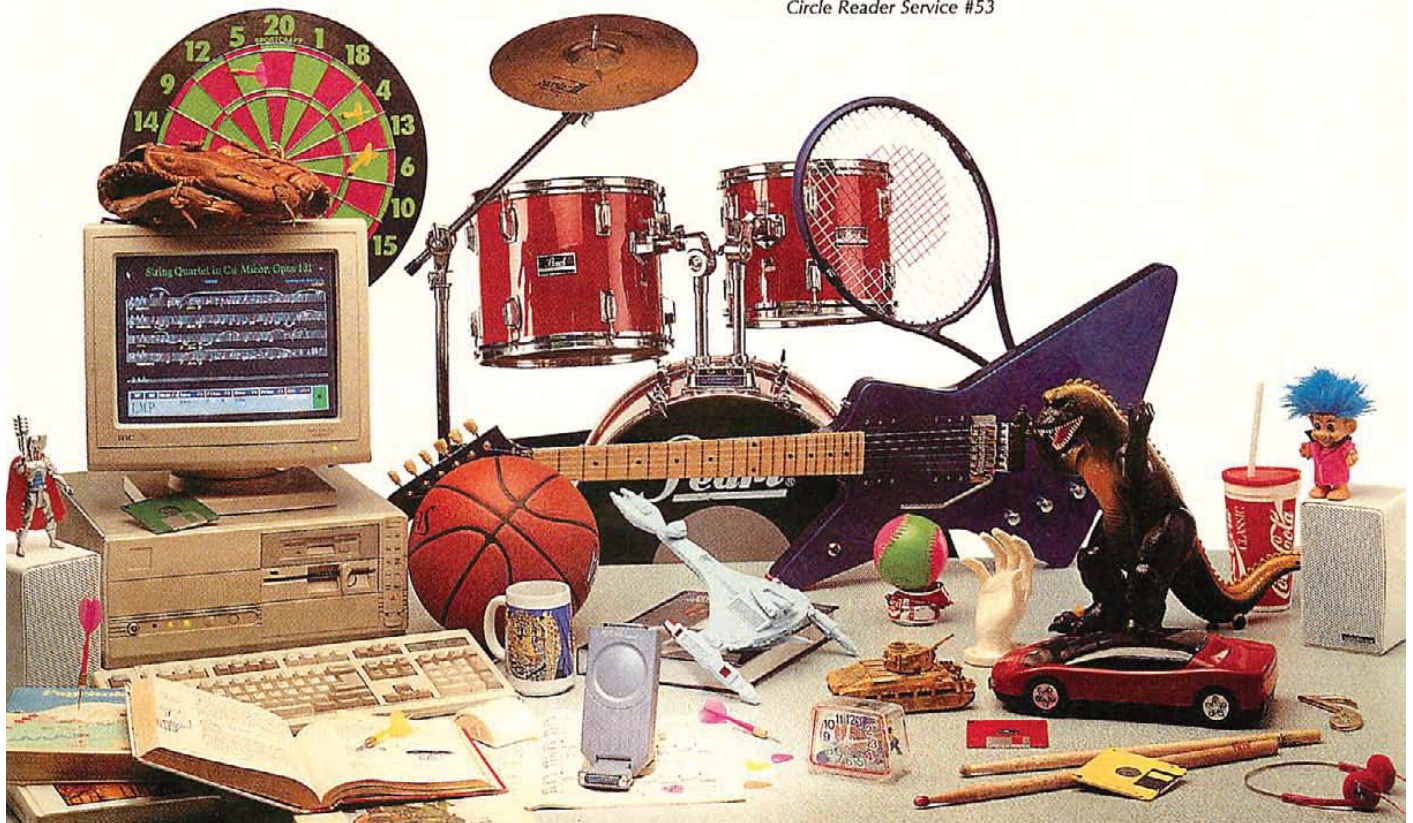
they can't get Mom or Dad off the computer. Macintosh CD-ROM, IBM CD-ROM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #5.

Capstone
7200 Corporate Center Dr. Suite 500
Miami, FL 33126
(800) 468-7226

TRUMP CASTLE 3: This latest incarnation of the *Trump Castle* casino games offers several interesting new features. In addition to SVGA graphics and sound, more casino games have been added, including a good selection of slot machines and an adequate range of poker games (which, ironically, are illegal in New Jersey, site of the real Trump Castle). Even keno and baccarat have been added to the roster. Gambling buddies can even play together using the two-player modem option or the one-to-four-player network option. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

Ebook
c/o Electronic Arts
San Mateo, CA
(800) 245-4525

TWELVE ROADS TO GETTYSBURG: "If I had something like this when I was in high school…" seems to be the favored response to this *excellent* multimedia documentary of a seminal period in the American Civil War. While it couldn't touch the acclaimed *Civil War* PBS special on its detail and breadth of scope, this CD-ROM has one advantage over the television documentary — it's interactive. Players watch animated battles from a bird's-eye view as the narrator calls the dance for the blue and red units as they illustrate the progression of the battle. Period engravings add extra flavor to the narration, while hypertext "hot spots" allow the user to access descriptions of the personalities and places that played crucial roles in the battle. Frankly, all previous CD-ROM releases from Ebook have failed to meet our expectations; this product makes amends. A must for CD-owning history buffs. IBM with CD-ROM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #7.

Impressions
7 Melrose Drive
Farmington, CT 06032
(203) 676-9002

CAESAR: As previewed in *CGW* #103, *Caesar* can glibly be described as "*SimCity* with columns," but it is much more. While one must build up provincial 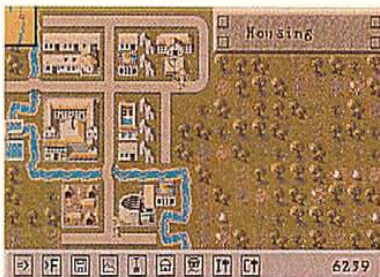capital cities by placing the necessary urban features a la *SimCity*, one must also protect it from roving barbarians. The various urban elements include water supplies, troop barracks, roads, plazas, walls, forums, temples and many others. Unlike
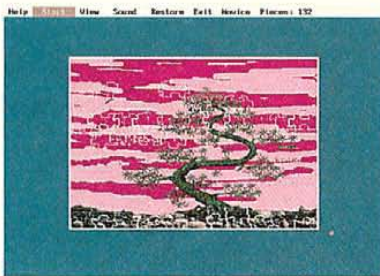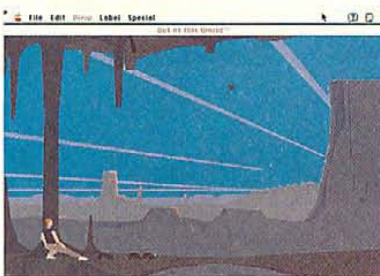

Trump Castle 3

Twelve Roads to Gettysburg

Caesar

Jigsaw Puzzle

Out of this World

SimCity, the player's city does not operate in a bubble; the economic model is based upon the performance of the player's city, the province in which it is located, and the Empire as a whole. If the player is successful as urban planner/military leader, he or she may be promoted to governor of another province, and, ultimately, to Caesar. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #8.

InTime Corp.
PO Box 1873
Brookline, MA 02146
(617) 232-3264

JIGSAW PUZZLE: Is it just us? Or does jigsaw puzzling seem like one of those activities that need not be computerized, like backpacking or crochet? Well, for those who might find it appealing, there is *Jigsaw Puzzle* from InTime which offers 15 VGA puzzles and "six hundred game variations" (which they arrive at by generating all possible permutations of puzzles and the 40 different ways that they can be cut). Players can either take their time and relax while solving a puzzle, or they can race against the clock. In Expert and Master modes, if one doesn't place pieces fast enough, the computer will start removing the correctly positioned pieces and place them back in the unplaced pile (the computerized equivalent of a young child or the household cat). While it is a decently made piece of software, we still see little advantage of the computer version over the real thing, except perhaps that one won't get that cardboard dust in the cracks of the coffee table, and it would be very difficult, short of a power outage, to lose a piece. IBM ($34.95). Circle Reader Service #9.

Interplay
17922 Fitch Avenue, CA 92714
(714) 553-6678

OUT OF THIS WORLD: While this game is actually a conversion of the earlier Amiga, IBM, and cartridge product, we thought we'd take the opportunity to introduce a new division of **Interplay Productions**. **MacPlay** is a group of "MacHead" programmers whose purpose in life is to bring more quality products to the hard drives of Macintosh gamers. Their first release, *Out of this World*, is an adaptation of **Delphine Software**'s excellent polygon-graphic action game. Gamers take the role of Lester Chaykin, the young, Coke-pounding, *particle physics prodigy*, who finds himself in the middle of one of those everyday laboratory accidents that open doors to another space-time plane. The alternate reality in which he finds himself is rife with nasty foot-long leeches, bloodthirsty beasts, and a race of enslaving aliens. Escaping these horrors requires solving a series of action-oriented puzzles interspersed with cine-

Facebook's Exhibit No. 1025
Page 135

matic sequences. The Mac conversion is a faithful one, and if its quality is any indication of **MacPlay**'s potential, Mac gamers can look forward to an increased selection of quality games in the coming months. Mac. Circle Reader Service #10.

Keyboard Commander Corp.
4839 SW 148 Ave., Suite 402
Davie, FL 33330
(800) 262-6066

F-3.01 KEYBOARD TEMPLATE: The situation is probably familiar to most flight sim jocks: while madly searching for that vital key on the keyboard, one's tail gets peppered by machine gun fire from a Mig. During that slow parachute ride to the ground, one has just enough time to go back to the manual and find the key that could have saved the mission. An equally frequent problem with complex sims is the re-learning curve necessary when jumping between, say, *Falcon 3.0* and *F-15 Strike Eagle II.* Keyboard Commander's series of keyboard templates are designed to reduce this confusion and increase one's gaming pleasure. The templates are printed on card-stock and fit nicely over most keyboards, and have color-coded icons for quick access (i.e. flight controls in blue, navigation commands in peach). Templates are available for most complex sims including, but not limited to *Falcon, Aces of the Pacific, S.W.O.T.L, Chuck Yeager, A-10,* and *Megafortress.* IBM Enhanced Keyboard ($11.95). Circle Reader Service #11.

LucasArts Games
PO Box 10307
San Rafael, CA 94912
(415) 721-3300

X-WING: Stepping into their Star Wars universe, LucasArts has put together a package that is aimed to impress the many dedicated fans of *Wing Commander.* With considerable panache, *X-Wing* starts the player on a safe, slow learning curve as he joins the Rebel Alliance as a new recruit. Training missions and "historic" simulations will bring pilots up to speed as they acquire the feel for their X-Wing, Y-Wing and A-Wing craft. The three campaign games included (and more are promised in future expansion disks) each progressively develop the Rebel cause and place an important role on the player's shoulders. For space combat simulator buffs, *X-Wing* is an absolute must. IBM ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #12.

Mallard Software, Inc.
3207 Justin Road
Flower Mound, TX 75028
(800) WEB-FEET

ATC: Ulcers, neuralgia, arteriosclerosis, nervous break downs — all the occupa-

F-3.01 Keyboard Template

X-Wing

ATC

Rescue Air 911
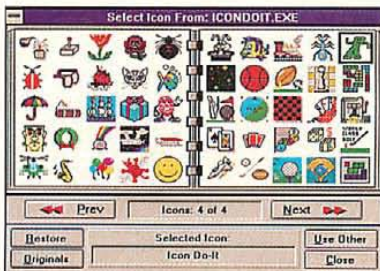
Icon - Do It

tional hazards of game designers and air traffic controllers. Now gamers can experience the nail-biting drama of directing dozens of aircraft under dangerous conditions. *Air Traffic Controller* is a revised version of Wesson International's acclaimed simulation, *Tracon.* The new version allows gamers to direct pilots in six heavily trafficked metropolitan airports, the player-controller vectoring departing and arriving traffic under normal and emergency conditions. The *revision* adds new weather and pilot models, and spoken word communications from the pilots and controllers with most major sound cards. Ardent enthusiasts can even hook up by modem or null link with four friends flying aircraft in Microsoft's *Flight Simulator,* who can then be ordered around by the master controller. IBM (runs under DOS and Windows), Mac ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #13.

RESCUE AIR 911: A few issue back we "peeked" Mallard's *Aircraft and Adventure Factory,* a program which allows creative sim-fanatics to create their own *Flight Simulator* scenarios. If one hasn't the time or the talent to create their own, Mallard has provided a few ready-made scenarios with digitized audio voices. *Rescue Air 911* takes pilots through eight rescue scenarios varying from fires to auto wrecks on the interstate. Two other adventures are currently available as well. *Flight Adventures Nos. 685* and *701* include short-hop flights under both VFR and IFR flight rules. A great way for "real" pilots to practice for their VFR/IFR certifications. IBM ($24.95 each). Circle Reader Service #14.

Moon Valley Software
706 East Bell Road, Suite 112
Phoenix, AZ 85022
(602) 375-9502

ICON MAKE IT - DO IT - HEAR IT: Some people seem compelled to assert their individuality. Personalized license plates, bumper stickers, "shocking" fashion choices, pink trim on their houses. These same people may enjoy these three packages that allow one to add a touch of the human to his or her Windows environment. In addition to screen-savers and Windows wallpaper, *Icon Do It* offers 200 designer icons and 50 custom cursors to replace the drab ones that come as factory equipment on the PC. *Icon Hear It* adds 200 more icons, 50 more cursors, and 50 animated icons, in addition to 100 sound effects that one can link to any application. *Icon Make It* hands the creative power to the individual, allowing one to create their own animated icons, mix and dub their own sounds, and put it all together into an iconic movie of sorts. Creative types and office practical jokers will have a blast. IBM with Windows (*Do It* -

You stumbled back to your office after a long day of detective work. But before you can get cozy with a whiskey bottle, there's a message waiting on the phone machine.

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System requirements: 286 or faster machine with 640K RAM; hard disk with min. 8 megabytes of available space required, mouse recommended. Graphics compatible with EGA, MCGA and VGA (VGA highly recommended). **Sound support:** Sound Blaster Pro, Adlib Gold

R RATED R (This program is voluntarily rated due to the partially violent and adult nature of the graphic imagery.) This program is intended for mature audiences only!!! No sales to minor under 18 and where prohibited by law.

Circle Reader Service #69

BOND WAS HOT STUFF.
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$29.95, *Hear It* - $49.95, *Make It* - $69.95). Circle Reader Service #15.

Ocean of America
1855 O'Toole Avenue, Suite D-102
San Jose, CA 95131
(408) 954-0201

ESPANA - THE GAMES '92: The last straggling competitor in the Olympic games rush of 1992 has finally limped across the finish line. Despite their poor sense of timing, Ocean has put together a decent collection of Olympic contests. With over 30 events, *Espana* offers the most variety we've seen in this sort of game, including rarities like the steeple-chase (both the 800m and 1500m varieties), judo, wrestling, boxing, and several less popular swimming styles. Like Psygnosis' *Carl Lewis* program, *Espana* allows the player to train athletes before the events, designing training programs that will maximize their stamina and skill without causing burn-out. Beyond all this, *Espana* is the same joystick breaking, keyboard pounding diversion that blistered our hands on the Atari 2600 and will continue to blister our hands in 1996, 2000, 2004, ... Amiga, IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #16.

HOOK: Based upon the flashy Spielberg film, Ocean's *Hook* is the tale of Peter Pan's quest to recover his children from the nasty hook-fisted pirate of the title. It is a typical graphic adventure which flirts with mediocrity. It's a point-and-click adventure with a five-icon command system, and it has more than its share of typical graphic adventure problems (we haven't seen so many "Why-would-you-want-to-look-at-thats" and "You-can-do-that-he-res" in quite a while). It has a colorful setting and a decent story, but fans of recent Sierra and LucasArts adventures will probably feel as if they've taken a flight back to graphic adventure never-ever-again-land. Amiga, IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #17.

PUSH-OVER: Once beyond the contrived fictional set-up, one finds *Push-Over* to be a rather nice puzzle game with a lovable protagonist, G.I. Ant. With an acknowledging nod to Psygnosis' *Lemmings*, *Push-Over* is composed of multiple levels of puzzles set in nine different graphical settings. On each level is a configuration of dominoes which must be toppled over by G.I. Ant. G.I. only has one "push" in him per level, so the dominoes must be arranged such that they all fall in one continuous reaction. To ensure a complete domino effect, G.I. must lug dominoes around the screen and place them in the proper sequence. To make things especially interesting, there are eight special domino types with special
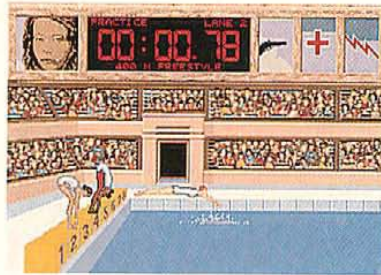
Espana - The Games '92

Hook
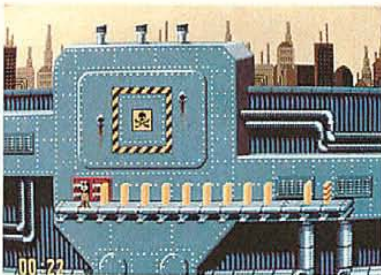
Push-Over
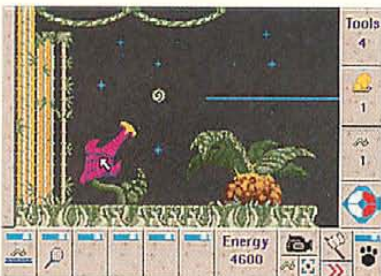
Creepers

Space Quest V - The Next Mutation

properties to deal with. G.I.'s antics are as cute as any lemming, and the puzzles are devious enough to provide gamers many hours of delicious frustration. Amiga, IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #17.

Psygnosis
29 St. Mary's Court
Brookline, MA 02146
(617) 731-3553

CREEPERS: There seems to be a regular phenomena in computer gaming. A company puts a new sort of product on the market with limited expectations of success, and then finds, to their surprise, that the product is a major hit. Then they try to recreate the phenomena with successor products that employ the new idea in another way. Without exception, the successors don't enjoy the same sort of success. Witness *SimCity*, and now *Lemmings*. *Creepers*, like Psygnosis' recent *Bill's Tomato*, is undeniably a *Lemmings* "me-too." It has cute but stupid creatures (in this case, inchworms) that require the guiding hand of the gamer through multiple levels of puzzles. It has a menu bar at the bottom of the screen that provides access to a number of tools necessary for the task (in this case, the tools are fans, ramps, girders, and fly swatters). It even borrows the cute "paws" command from *Lemmings*. Unfortunately, the inchworms aren't half as endearing as the lemmings, the puzzle screens are cluttered and confused, and the game is simply lesser in many ways. Puzzle gamers may want to wait for the eventual return of our original furry friends in *Lemmings 2*. IBM ($49.99). Circle Reader Service #18.

Sierra On-line
Coarsegold, CA
(209) 683-4468

SPACE QUEST V-THE NEXT MUTATION: The Space Quest series is nothing but garbage, and will always be nothing but garbage — at least as long as Roger Wilco, janitorial prodigy, is involved. In his latest mis-adventure, Roger has faked his way through the Space Academy and has taken control of his own ship — a garbage scow. Mounted proudly upon his reeking steed, Roger rides out to save the universe from your everyday nefarious race of mutants. In the process he will: die many horrible deaths; encounter a grab-bag of very silly though deadly aliens (a baby-faced hugger with unusually acidic, uh, liquid waste product); and meet the woman from the holodeck in *Space Quest IV*. It's all very twisted and juvenile and pant-loads of fun — just the sort of thing the editors of *CGW* enjoy, though they'll never admit it. IBM ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #19.

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Falcon 3.0	44.95
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Great Naval Battles	43.95
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Red Baron	39.95
Secret Weapons	42.95
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Task Force 1942	41.95
Theater of War	19.95
V for Victory	43.95

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Links 386 Pro	41.95
Mauna Kea Add On	19.95
Pinehurst Add On	19.95
NFL (Konami)	29.95
NFL Pro Ftbl 1992	34.95
NFL Video Football	44.95
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Road to Final Four	35.95
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GAMES
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Castles II	35.95
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Magic Candle III	37.95
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Paladin II	35.95
Planet's Edge	36.95
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Sim Ant	35.95
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Goferwinkel Comic Book	32.95
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Mantis w/Speech	47.95
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MS Musical Instrum.	54.95
MS Video for Win.	127.95
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Phoenix 3.0 (Shareware)	42.95
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Putt Putt Joins Prade	44.95
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Willy Beamish Enhanced	41.95
Wing Commnder II Dlx	56.95

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Distant Suns (Astron.)	47.95
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Kid Pix	34.95
Mavis Beacon Typing	35.95
Entertainment Pack ea	27.95
Monopoly Deluxe	34.95
Microsoft Golf	42.95
MS Sound Bits ea	27.95
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Origin FX Scrn Svr	24.95
Playmation (Animatr)	299.95
Power Politics	29.95
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Right Paint	63.95
RoboSport	34.95
Scrabble Deluxe	29.95
Sim Ant	34.95
Sim Earth	42.95
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Beauty & Beast Print	14.95
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Delux Paint 3	85.95
Expert Animator	11.95
Expert Color & Paint	11.95
Fractile Paint Plus	77.95
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Music Time	162.95
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NFL Clip Art (Konami)	19.95
Print Shop Deluxe	45.95
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Vista Pro	54.95
Vista Pro Flight Director	41.95

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Circle Reader Service #101

Sound Source Unlimited
2985 E. Hillcrest Drive #A
Westlake Village, CA 91362
(805) 494-9996

VISUAL CLIPS - STAR WARS: The quest to personalize our computing environments continues. Screen savers, animated icons, sound packages, oak cases for CPU chassis, large fuzzy dice hanging from our screens — why not video footage to accompany system events? With this package for 68020+ Macs, your computer can now greet you with a scene from the alien cantina, turn your system beep into a wookie's cry or an android's prattle, eject your disks with a disgusted remark from Lord Vader, or empty your trash can with the violent destruction of Alderaan 2. Once past the arduous installation procedure (probably designed by Vader himself), one will have a large library of video clips to impress friends and irritate neighbors. Look for collections from *Empire* and *Jedi* to follow shortly. Mac ($89.95). Circle Reader Service #20.

Strategic Simulations, Inc.
675 Almanor Ave. Suite 201
Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901
(408) 737-6800

VEIL OF DARKNESS: Fans of Event Horizon's adventure *The Summoning* may find love at first byte in their new tale, *Veil of Darkness*. Set in an isolated community in the Romanian highlands, this 3-D isometric adventure pits the solitary adventurer against an ancient vampire and his possessed minions. Event Horizon has really spruced up their graphics in this one, offering extraordinarily rich visuals and strong cinematic cut-screens. Though the game mechanics may be a bit over simplified for some, the story is artfully told and the setting refreshingly different (no Orcs!). Packaged on three disks, it won't suck much hard drive blood, though it may suck away your late night hours. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #21.

Waite Group Press
200 Tamal Plaza, Suite 101
Corte Madera, CA 94925
(800) 368-9369

FRACTAL CREATIONS: After running our article on fractals in the February issue, we were bombarded with e-mail suggesting that we check out this book/software from the Waite Group. We'd like to thank you all, because the book and its program FRACTINT turned out to be quite a find. Developed by a group of programmers on the CompuServe network, FRACTINT is a fractal creation program that not only includes dozens upon dozens of formula for the

Visual Clips - Star Wars

Veil of Darkness

Fractal Creations

The Image Lab

Aladdin Print Kit

quick generation of fabulous fractal images, but allows one to program his or her own formula. In addition to generating the images in two dimensions, it also has the ability to "stretch" an image through three-dimensions. Very neat stuff! It supports a huge variety of video cards and screen resolutions, and generates the most beautiful fractals we've yet seen on a personal computer. The companion book offers a nice introduction to fractal geometry and clearly covers the specifics of the program and all its wonders. Highly recommended for the beginning fractal buff. IBM DOS & Windows ($34.95). Circle Reader Service #22.

THE IMAGE LAB: Along with *Fractal Creations* came an intriguing collection of shareware programs packaged with a companion book, *The Image Lab*. The book offers both a general introduction to the fascinating and complex world of computer graphics, and a step-by-step tutorial of the software. Among the collection of programs is PICLAB, a shareware image processing/enhancing tool that does color reduction, image sharpening, contrast adjustments, and the addition, subtraction, and overlaying of images. CSHOW allows its user to display any image regardless of one's screen resolution. IMPROCES is a Super VGA paint program that does special effects, mirroring, flipping, color reducing, etc. IMAGE ALCHEMY is a handy tool that converts any graphic format to any other. But the most interesting program is POV-Ray, or Persistence of Vision Ray Tracer, which generates incredible ray traced images like the one on this page. These programs are not as easy to use as the fractal program mentioned above (one will have to invest some time with the book and program) but the diligent user will be rewarded with a set of very powerful creative tools. IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #23.

Walt Disney Computer Software, Inc.
500 Buena Vista Street
Burbank, CA 91521-6385

ALADDIN PRINT KIT: Forty-six images from the Disney hit *Aladdin* are awaiting a master who can rub the magic mouse and allow them to serve his or her desk-top publishing desires. Abu, Aladdin, Genie, Jasmine, Rahjah, and even that bad guy whats-his-name are all here, along with 18 borders and several fonts. Suggested uses include the creation of letter-head, posters, placemats, signs and greeting cards, though budding publishing Sultans can certainly do as they wish. IBM ($19.95). Circle Reader Service #24.

CGW

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD
HALL OF FAME

The games in *Computer Gaming World's Hall of Fame* have been highly rated by our readers over time. They have been rated for their impact on the computer gaming hobby during their peak period of influence and acceptance by our readership. Note that the dates listed for each game are the copyright dates and may precede the actual release dates. Specific formats listed are those which *CGW* has in its possession. This month, we welcome a much loved game to these hallowed halls.

The Bard's Tale (Electronic Arts, 1985)
    Many formats
Chessmaster (Software Toolworks, 1986)
    Many formats
Dungeon Master (FTL Software, 1987)
    Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
Earl Weaver Baseball (Electronic Arts, 1986)
    Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
Empire (Interstel, 1978)
    Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64, IBM
F-19 Stealth Fighter (MicroProse, 1988)
    IBM
Gettysburg: The Turning Point (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1986)
    Amiga, Apple, C-64, IBM
Gunship (MicroProse, 1989)
    Amiga, C-64, IBM
Harpoon (Three-Sixty Pacific, 1989)
    Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
Kampfgruppe (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1985)
    Many formats
King's Quest V (Sierra, 1990)
    Amiga, IBM
M-1 Tank Platoon (MicroProse, 1989)
    Amiga, IBM
Mech Brigade (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1985)
    Many formats
Might & Magic (New World Computing, 1986)
    Apple, C-64, IBM, Mac
M.U.L.E. (Electronic Arts, 1983)
    Atari 8-bit, C-64
Pirates (MicroProse, 1987)
    Many formats
Railroad Tycoon (MicroProse, 1990)
    Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
Red Baron (Dynamix, 1990)
    Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
SimCity (Maxis, 1987)
    Many formats
Starflight (Electronic Arts, 1986)
    Amiga, C-64, IBM, Sega
Their Finest Hour (LucasArts, 1989)
    Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
Ultima III (Origin, 1983)
    Apple, Atari ST, C-64, IBM
Ultima IV (Origin, 1985)
    Amiga, Apple, Atari ST, IBM
Ultima VI (Origin, 1990)
    Amiga, IBM
War in Russia (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1984)
    Apple
Wasteland (Interplay, 1986)
    Apple, C64, IBM
Wing Commander (Origin, 1991)
    IBM, Sega
Wizardry (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
    Many formats
Zork (Infocom, 1981)
    Many formats

The Newest Member to the CGW Hall of Fame

**Red Baron
(Dynamix, 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Mac**

Red Baron may well be Damon Slye's masterpiece. Damon is the designer/programmer who has been pushing the edge of 3-Space since his first vectored graphics game of space-age tank combat, the original *Stellar 7* on the 8-bit computers. At **Dynamix**, Damon moved the company through the *Skyfox* and *Airfox* series of 3-D action games (published by **EA**) and on toward their current success with *A-10 Tank Killer*, *Red Baron* and *Aces of the Pacific*.

Red Baron not only features terrific graphics that dress up the traditional polygon-filled look with occasional bit-maps and shading, but offers campaign play from both sides, the largest selection of aircraft in a WWI air combat simulation, and a multitude of quick-combat missions. It is a rich, satisfying simulation that not only held a prominent position in the top ten of *CGW*'s Top 100 for more than a year, but still stands as the high watermark of realistic air combat for many gamers.

Top 100 Games

	Game	Company	Type	Score
1	Conquered Kingdoms	QQP	WG,ST	10.76
2	Links 386 Pro	Access	SP	10.75
	Civilization	MicroProse	ST	10.75
4	Ultima Underworld	Origin	RP	10.45
5	Front Page Sports Football	Dynamix	SP	10.43
6	King's Quest VI: Heir Today...	Sierra	AD	10.40
7	Wing Commander II	Origin	AC	10.31
8	Solitaire's Journey	QQP	ST	10.26
9	V for Victory: Velikiye Luki	Three-Sixty	WG	10.20
10	Star Control II	Accolade	AD,AC	10.12
11	Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis	LucasArts	AD	10.02
12	Monkey Island 2: Le Chuck's Revenge	LucasArts	AD	10.00
13	Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	Electronic Arts	ST	9.85
14	Wolfenstein 3-D	Id Software	AC	9.80
15	Comanche: Maximum Overkill	NovaLogic	SI	9.77
16	The Perfect General	QQP	WG	9.75
17	Les Manly in: Lost in L.A.	Accolade	AD	9.73
18	The Secret of Monkey Island	LucasArts	AD	9.72
19	Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes	Electronic Arts	AD	9.71
20	Quest for Glory III	Sierra	AD,RP	9.66
21	Falcon 3.0	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	9.63
	V for Victory: Utah Beach	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.63
23	Wizardry VII: Crusaders of Savant	Sir-Tech	RP	9.60
24	Hardball III	Accolade	SP	9.58
25	Eye of the Beholder II	SSI	RP	9.56
26	Sherlock Holmes CD	ICOM	AD	9.55
27	Great Naval Battles	SSI	WG,ST	9.54
28	Stunt Island	Disney	SI	9.53
	Aces of the Pacific	Dynamix	SI	9.53
30	Links	Access	SP	9.47
	Warlords	SSG	WG,ST	9.47
32	Might & Magic III	New World Computing	RP	9.45
33	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World	RP	9.43
34	Ultima VII	Origin	RP	9.39
35	Battles of Destiny	QQP	WG,ST	9.36
36	Amazon	Access	AD	9.34
37	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	SSI	WG	9.33
39	Dune II	Virgin	SI	9.32
	Chessmaster 3000	Software Toolworks	ST	9.32
41	High Command	Colorado Comp.	WG	9.29
42	Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf	Accolade	SP	9.27
43	Lemmings	Psygnosis	AC	9.21
44	Second Front	SSI	WG	9.17
45	Spellcasting 301: Spring Break	Legend	AD	9.16
46	Carriers At War	SSG	WG	9.15
47	Tetris Classic	Spectrum HoloByte	AC	9.14
48	The Castle of Dr. Brain	Sierra	AD	9.11
49	Eye of the Beholder	SSI	RP	9.10
50	The Dagger of Amon Ra	Sierra	AD	9.09

Top Adventure Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	King's Quest VI: Heir Today...	Sierra	10.40
2	Star Control II	Accolade	10.12
3	Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis	LucasArts	10.02
4	Monkey Island 2: Le Chuck	LucasArts	10.00
5	Les Manly in: Lost in L.A.	Accolade	9.73
6	The Secret of Monkey Island	LucasArts	9.72
7	Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes	Electronic Arts	9.71
8	Quest for Glory III	Sierra	9.66
9	Sherlock Holmes CD	ICOM	9.55
10	Amazon	Access	9.34

Top Role Playing Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Ultima Underworld	Origin	10.45
2	Wizardry VII: Crusaders of Savant	Sir-Tech	9.60
3	Eye of the Beholder II	SSI	9.56
4	Might & Magic III	New World Computing	9.45
5	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World	9.43
6	Ultima VII	Origin	9.39
7	Eye of the Beholder	SSI	9.10
8	Bane of the Cosmic Forge	Sir-Tech	9.05
9	Ultima V	Origin	9.00
10	Elvira	Accolade	8.82

Top Simulation Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Comanche: Maximum Overkill	NovaLogic	9.77
2	Falcon 3.0	Spectrum HoloByte	9.63
3	Aces of the Pacific	Dynamix	9.53
4	Stunt Island	Disney	9.53
5	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	LucasArts	9.33
6	Gunship 2000	Microprose	9.06
7	Chuck Yeager's Air Combat	Electronic Arts	9.06
8	Red Storm Rising	MicroProse	9.04
9	Silent Service II	MicroProse	9.03
10	F-117A	MicroProse	8.92

Top Strategy Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Civilization	MicroProse	10.75
2	Solitaire's Journey	QQP	10.26
3	Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	Electronic Arts	9.85
4	Chessmaster 3000	Software Toolworks	9.32
5	Dune II	Virgin	9.32
6	The Lost Admiral	QQP	9.05
7	Mech Warrior	Activision	8.94
8	Populous II	Electronic Arts	8.90
9	Hoyle Book of Games, Vol. 3	Sierra	8.78
10	Siege	Mindcraft	8.77

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD
The Premier Computer Game Magazine

The Computer Gaming World Poll

A monthly survey of the readers of Computer Gaming World Magazine.

Top 100 (continued)

#	Game	Company	Type	Score
52	Conflict: Korea	SSI	WG	9.09
	Chuck Yeager's Air Combat	Electronic Arts	SI	9.06
	Gunship 2000	Microprose	RP	9.06
54	Bane of the Cosmic Forge	Sir-Tech	ST	9.05
	Red Storm Rising	QQP	SI	9.05
56	The Lost Admiral	MicroProse	AD	9.04
	Conquests of the Longbow	Sierra	SI	9.04
58	Silent Service II	MicroProse	SI	9.03
59	Quest for Glory II	Sierra	AD,RP	9.02
60	Police Quest 3	Sierra	AD	9.01
61	Ultima V	Origin	RP	9.00
62	Space Quest IV	Sierra	AD	8.98
	Western Front	SSI	WG	8.98
64	The Adventures of Willy Beamish	Dynamix	AD	8.96
65	Mech Warrior	Activision	ST,SI	8.94
66	F-117A	MicroProse	SI	8.92
	Oh, No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis	AC	8.92
68	Populous II	Electronic Arts	ST	8.90
69	Rise of the Dragon	Dynamix	AD	8.89
	Martian Memorandum	Access	AD	8.89
71	Terminator 2029	Bethesda	AC	8.85
72	Indianapolis 500	Electronic Arts	SP	8.83
73	Elvira	Accolade	RP	8.82
74	Command HQ	MicroPlay	WG,ST	8.81
75	Rex Nebular	MicroProse	AD	8.79
	Gateway to the Savage Frontier	SSI	RP	8.79
77	Hoyle Book of Games, Vol. 3	Sierra	ST	8.78
78	Siege	Mindcraft	ST	8.77
79	The Summoning	SSI	RP	8.76
80	Heart of China	Dynamix	AD	8.75
81	Castles 2: Siege and Conquest	Interplay	ST	8.72
	Battles of Napoleon	SSI	WG	8.72
	Battlechess	Interplay	ST	8.72
	Gateway	Legend	AD	8.72
85	Starflight II	Electronic Arts	RP	8.71
86	F-15 Strike Eagle II	MicroProse	SI	8.69
87	Action Stations	RAW Entertainment	WG	8.68
	Pools of Darkness	SSI	RP	8.68
89	Typhoon of Steel	SSI	WG	8.67
90	Armada 2525	Interstel	ST	8.63
91	Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball	SSI	SP	8.60
92	Buck Rogers	SSI	RP	8.57
	Legend of Kyrandia	Virgin	AD	8.57
	Carrier Strike	SSI	WG	8.57
95	4-D Boxing	Electronic Arts	SP	8.56
96	Megafortress	Three-Sixty Pacific	SI,ST	8.55
97	NFL Pro League Football	Micro Sports	SP	8.54
98	Out of this World	Interplay	AC	8.51
99	The Games:Winter Challenge	Accolade	SP	8.50
	Martian Dreams	Origin	RP	8.50

Games on unnumbered lines have scores equal to the line above.

AD=Adventure, RP=Role Playing, SI=Simulation, ST=Strategy, WG=Wargame, AC=Action, SP=Sports.

Top Wargames

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Conquered Kingdoms	QQP	10.76
2	V for Victory: Velikiye Luki	Three-Sixty	10.20
3	The Perfect General	QQP	9.75
4	V for Victory: Utah Beach	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.63
5	Great Naval Battles	SSI	9.54
6	Warlords	SSG	9.47
7	Battles of Destiny	QQP	9.36
8	Pacific War	SSI	9.33
9	High Command	Colorado Comp.	9.29
10	Second Front	SSI	9.17

Top Action Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Wing Commander II	Origin	10.31
2	Wolfenstein 3-D	Id Software	9.80
3	Lemmings	Psygnosis	9.21
4	Tetris Classic	Spectrum HoloByte	9.14
5	Oh, No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis	8.92
6	Terminator 2029	Bethesda	8.85
7	Out of this World	Interplay	8.51
8	Conan the Cimmerian	Virgin	8.10
9	Speedball 2	Konami	7.92
10	Ancient Art of War in the Skies	MicroProse	7.32

Top Sports Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Links 386 Pro	Access	10.75
2	Front Page Sports Football	Dynamix	10.43
3	Hardball III	Accolade	9.58
4	Links	Access	9.47
5	Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf	Accolade	9.27
6	Indianapolis 500	Electronic Arts	8.83
7	Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball	SSI	8.60
8	4-D Boxing	Electronic Arts	8.56
9	NFL Pro League Football	Micro Sports	8.54
10	The Games:Winter Challenge	Accolade	8.50

Poll is based on reader survey cards in each issue of *CGW* and published two issues subsequent. Data on more than 100 games is archived and top ten lists may contain games which scored below the Top 100 cutoff.

PC Research Hits List of Top-Selling Software

January, 1993

PC Games (MS-DOS)

Rank	Title and Source
1.	F-15 Strike Eagle III (MicroProse)
2.	Ultima Underworld II (Origin)
3.	Front Page Sports: Football (Sierra On-Line)
4.	Comanche: Maximum Overkill (Nova Logic)
5.	Wing Commander (Origin)
6.	Kings Quest VI (Sierra On-Line)
7.	Sim City (Maxis)
8.	Microsoft Flight Simulator (Microsoft)
9.	Falcon 3.0 (Spectrum HoloByte)
10.	Links 386 - Pro (Access)
11.	Civilization (MicroProse)
12.	Silent Service II (MicroProse)
13.	F-15 III Aces Pack (MicroProse)
14.	Police Quest (Sierra On-Line)
15.	Links - Mauna Kea (Access)
16.	Aces of the Pacific (Sierra On-Line)
17.	Hardball III (Accolade)
18.	Monopoly (Virgin Games)
19.	Star Control II (Accolade)
20.	Beat the House (Konami)

Amiga Games

Rank	Title and Source
1.	688 Attack Sub (Electronic Arts)
2.	AD&D Gateway to Savage Frontier (Strategic Simulations)
3.	Realms (Virgin Games)
4.	AD&D Eye of the Beholder (Strategic Simulations)
5.	Operation Combat (Merit)

Macintosh Games

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Civilization (MicroProse)
2.	Prince of Persia (Broderbund)
3.	Sim City Supreme (Maxis)
4.	Microsoft Flight Simulator (Microsoft)
5.	Award Winners: KQ V & Red Baron (Sierra On-Line)

CD-ROM Products

Rank	Title and Source
1.	MPC Wizard (Aris Entertainment)
2.	Cinemania (Microsoft)
3.	Wing Commander/Secret Missions I & II (Origin)
4.	Battle Chess (Interplay)
5.	Street Atlas U.S.A. (Delome)
6.	World View (Aris Entertainment)
7.	Mantis (MicroProse)
8.	Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego (Broderbund)
9.	Lost Treasures of Infocom (Activision)
10.	Adventures of Willy Beamish (Sierra On-Line)

This list is based on units sold by Software Etc., Babbages, Waldensoftware and Electronics Boutique. For more information, please contact PC Research at (703) 435-1025.

What You've Been Playing Lately

The Feedback Forum of Reader Response

Every month our mailbox fills to capacity with hundreds of Reader Input Cards from our many loyal and outspoken readers. Over the years we've found these cards to be an invaluable source of feedback. Within 10 days of the release of our latest issue we can expect to see dozens of cards begin pouring in with comments, suggestions, encouragements, tirades and many good laughs, in addition to the data for our Top 100 game poll. Through your efforts, we know which articles were hits, which flopped, how many typpos an grammatical errors we've let slip through -- in addition to the many well-articulated opinions on anything and everything related to gaming. This column is set aside to give our readers a voice, and to display the results of our "Playing Lately?" field on the Reader Input Card. Thanks for taking the time to fill them out—and keep 'em coming!

Playing Lately? Results For CGW #104, March 1993:

1.	Conquered Kingdoms (QQP)
2.	Ultima Underworld II (Origin)
3.	Civilization (MicroProse)
4.	Front Page Sports Football (Dynamix)
5.	Wizardry VII: Crusaders of the Dark Savant (Sir-Tech)
6.	Dune II (Virgin)
7.	V For Victory: Velikiye Luki (Three-Sixty)
8.	Star Control 2 (Accolade)
9.	F-15 Strike Eagle III (MicroProse)
10.	Gary Grigsby's Pacific War (SSI)

Mandates from the People

"The depth and realism of Shadow President are so good that sometimes I think I can understand why the world is so screwed up. This game is a classic!"

— J. Tusk, Des Plaines, IL

"I never enjoyed a football game like I do with Front Page Sports Football. Just outstanding. A touchdown for sports fans."

— Kirk Williamson, Mosinee, WI

"Sex is great but Front Page Sports Football is better because you don't need a helmet!"

— M. Crudder, Hobbs, NM

"In your Star Control 2 review you mention a modem option. I have been unable to locate such a feature. Am I missing something?"

— Chris Haswell, Austin, TX

[Ed: No, the editors are. Star Control 2 does not have a modem option. Sorry. Those responsible for the sacking have been sacked (again).]

"All auto racing simulations need to use the algorithms from World Circuit. It is as close to being in the cockpit as there is. Well done!

— Anonymous Enthusiast, Waco, TX

"Playing lately? As in late night, every night and every morning before work and lunch time also. My wife is in the process of making a SirTech voodoo doll.

— Bill Sasscer, Chesapeake, VA

"Travel agents should keep copies of Underworld and Underworld II stocked with their brochures of other exotic destinations. As someone who travels extensively, I prize new opportunities for adventure and discovery. The Underworld games have given me a wonderful way to visit yet another vacation spot — and at a very reasonable fare."

— Brian Schutt, North Lauderdale, FL

[Ed: Uh huh. Try telling your Significant Other that you're taking him/her on a two-week vacation to Britannia. We don't think you'll get far, no matter how lovely the Gargoyles are in Spring.]

The Patch File

Computer game programs have grown so massive and the number of possible configurations has become so huge that incompatibilities and glitches seem to be breeding at an exponential rate. Consumers and publishers are both frustrated at the need for adding patches into "buggy" programs, but they seem to be an interim solution that is going to be with the hobby for a while (presumably, until a standard platform configuration is agreed upon). So, until the golden age of standardized platforms and bug-free programs, *Computer Gaming World* will publish a regular list of the latest updates of which we are aware.

These patches can usually be downloaded from either Compuserve or GEnie, but can also be obtained from individual software publisher's own BBSs and direct from the publisher, with proof of purchase. We continue to urge publishers to keep us updated on the latest versions/patches to their games.

("*" indicates new files.)

Air Force Commander Slowdown Patch: Makes the game playable on high-powered machines. 11/24/92

Amazon Raft Bug Fix: Fixes the problem getting the raft out of the box in the airplane. 12/12/92

B-17 Flying Fortress Version 2 Update: Adds many new features and tweaks some of the existing ones. 11/17/92

Batman Returns Update: Latest version of Konami's Bat-venture. 1/24/93

*Civilization Version 1.0.8 (Macintosh): Latest and greatest version of the reigning king of strategy. 2/23/93

Darkseed Version 1.5 Update: Latest version of CyberDreams' adventure. 1/20/93

F-15 Strike Eagle III Install Update: For those having trouble with the install program. 12/23/92

F-15 Strike Eagle Help Info Text: Text file containing known problems and suggestions for those having problems with the sim. 1/08/93

*F-117A Stealth Fighter V.04: Update to MicroProse's jet simulator. 1/29/93

*Front Page Sports Football: A new version is available which improves upon the original release in many ways. 2/15/93

Full Count Baseball V5.1 Upgrade: Expands play-by-play and offers a new screen layout. For owners of V5.0 only. 12/06/92

Greens Version 02 Update: Addresses the problems reported with scoring, Sound Blasters, etc. 11/22/92

*Great Naval Battles/North Atlantic Update: Updates all GNBNA files to version 1.2. 2/23/93

*Gunship 2000 Islands and Ice Patch Version .085: Corrects keyboard lockout problems some gamers are having. 2/11/93

Hockey League Simulator 2 Update V1.11: New version for the IBM. 2/3/93

Island of Dr. Brain Update: Fixes "Ooops 10" error, music room puzzle, and several other problems. 12/23/92

Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition Rev 1.5: Fixes the Mini-Moss effect caused by several objects being placed after a hill crest. 12/16/92

Links 386 Pro Update Version 1.08: Allows game to run under OS/2 and other DPMI operating systems and software. 11/14/92

*Magic Candle III Version 1.16: Fixes problems with Sound Blaster support, mirror of honesty/candlewick problems, difficulties with tranferred characters from MC2, and other minor glitches. 2/17/93

NFL Pro League Football '92 V1.1: Contains many upgrades, fixes, and additional schedules. 1/26/93

Pacific War V1.06: Fixes the bombardment bug, the West Coast defense bug, the missing unit bug, etc. An "unofficial" upgrade from Gary Grigsby — not supported by SSI. 1/24/93

Power Politics Update: Fixes all known bugs. 12/11/92

Quest For Glory III "B" Patch: Corrects all known game play errors. 12/03/92

Rex Nebular Update 8.49 (IBM/VGA): Corrects the chicken-bomb and poly-cement problems. 11/13/92

*Shadow President Update Version 1.0b: This version will run in ca. 30k less memory than the previous version. It also includes minor adjustments to the internal processing. 2/12/93

*SimLife Upgrade V2: Fixes minor problems in Maxis' A-life simulator. 2/10/93

*Solitaire's Journey Patch V1.03: This is a patch for those having problems with saved Tournament games and those having mouse troubles. 2/12/93

Spelljammer Update V1.1: Latest version of the game. 11/21/92

Star Control 2 V1.1: Fixes several small problems. 12/11/92

Star Legions Update: Fixes some machine-specific lock-ups, problems with phasers firing out of the FOV, changes to mission ratings, fixes to award sequence. 1/15/93

Stunt Island Update: Fixes a minor bug in the Install program that was causing some system lockups after the hardware autodetect sequence. 11/27/92

*Task Force 1942 Update: Corrects the waypoint problem, among others. 2/15/93

*TL's Ultimate Baseball V1.1: Upgrades SSI's baseball simulation to the latest version. 1/29/93

Tom Landry Football V. 1.02 Update: Corrects problems with modem play, excessive penalties, Sound Blaster problems, and improved animation choreography. 12/03/92

Twilight 2000 Colonel Upgrade (VGA only): Adds extra sounds and graphics, and adds a new ending to the game. 2/2/93

*Ultima VII Version 3.4: Lord British fixes some minor leaks in the roof of Castle Britannia. Updates from Version 3.0 to 3.4. 2/17/93

*Ultima Underworld II Patch: Fixes the "strike" problem, local bus difficulties, and a few others. 2/24/93

Wayne Gretzky Hockey 3 Version 1.10: Fixes many bugs, including the Canadien.VOC file, the computer scoring problem, CH FlightStick problem, penalties, referees, coach's clipboard and others. 11/24/92

The PRODIGY Weekly Top Ten

Computer Gaming World is Prodigy's on-line games expert. Look for us in their Game Center, a forum where users read articles posted on-line by CGW and exchange messages on the bulletin boards (we can be reached there at EXPT40B). The Prodigy Game Poll is run by Prodigy based on a list of games provided by CGW and is updated weekly. Note that it is not a cumulative rating over time (like the CGW Top 100 Poll). Instead, the Prodigy Game Poll is a weekly "snapshot" of game popularity with gamers rating their favorites on a 1 - 10 scale. The highest total point earners make their Top 10. We provide this data to our readers as another barometer of "what's hot" in computer gaming.

Awards —
Thy Name Is Controversy

State of the Industry: Last issue, we touched on the issue of awards. We observed that appending a superlative like "Best" to any product is tantamount to painting a bull's-eye upon it. This virtually allows any would-be critic to come along and castigate the flawed selection process, alleged political influences and supposed ignorance of the voters. Awards selected by members of the press represent the elitist perceptions of jaded critics who are out of touch; those chosen by working members of an industry represent unenlightened selections from those who are so focused upon their own products that they do not know the products of others; and those selected by the public are mere popularity contests because the "great unwashed" cannot possibly understand the subtle nuances of each new innovation.

The **Software Publishers Association** probably didn't help their case with the selection of the new nickname for their annual "Excellence in Software" awards. Believing that a gala black tie dinner and dance, complete with celebrity MC and multi-media fanfare, did not sufficiently emulate the ceremonies surrounding the Oscars, Emmys, Tonys and Grammys, the SPA nicknamed them the "Codies" (one wag immediately maligned them as the "Cooties"). Nevertheless, there were only a couple of surprises and plenty of the criticism typical of any system of award selection.

SimLife was selected as Best Simulation. In a sense, this seems a reasonable choice. It does an admirable job in simulating biological systems and it has the abbreviation "Sim" in its title. Yet, one wonders if it is truly a simulation in the tradition of first-person perspective, 3-D polygon-filled graphic games which simulate vessels and vehicles. **Maxis** has ruled this category for four years, but even **Maxis'** president, Jeff Braun, seems uncomfortable with their dominance in the category. He wishes there was a "software toy" category so that "so many of the other worthy products" would be able to win "without us having to lose."

Maxis continued their winning streak with *A-Train* being selected as Best Strategy Program. *CGW* readers didn't seem to gravitate toward *A-Train*, having trouble with an economic model that seemed foreign to U.S. business practices. It is very likely that they would have selected **Dynamix'** *The Incredible Machine* or **Virgin's** *Dune II: The Building of a Dynasty* as the winner in this category, since the buzz has been more favorable for the latter two products. Note, however, that SPA winners in the strategy category have rarely squared with gamers' tastes.

One close observer of the SPA awards pointed out the obvious fallacy of the Best Fantasy Role-Playing/Adventure category. The observer commented that any organization that could combine the two genres had a fundamental misunderstanding of both genres. A graphic adventure from a new player won the honors in this category. **Cyberdreams'** *DarkSeed*, an intense graphic experience built around the fantasy art of H.R. Giger (designer of the original *Alien* creature). Again, the game offers a certain aesthetic quality which appealed to the voters, but does not

rate highly among *CGW* readers.

In the Sports category, golf games from **Access** have won the award for several years in a row. This year, the competition from **MicroProse's** *World Circuit*, **Dynamix'** *Front Page Sports: Football*, **Accolade's** *Jack Nicklaus Golf: Signature Edition*, **Accolade's** *Al Michaels Announces Hardball III* and newcomer **Merit Software's** *Tom Landry Strategy Football* seemed to offer the stiffest test yet. *Links 386 P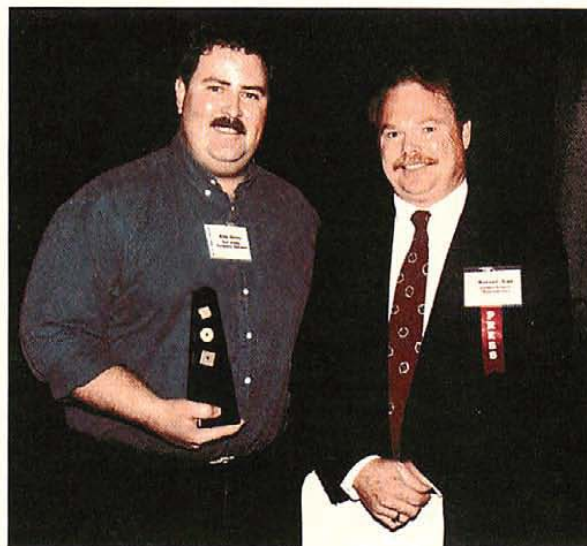ro* continued the domination of the category for **Access**. Upon being congratulated for their victory, company representatives said, "Wait till you see the technology in our next generation product!"

It may well be, however, that the Action/Arcade category brought the biggest surprise. In an awards process where politics often seems to rule, the underdog managed to win. *Wolfenstein 3-D*, **id Software's** first-person 3-D action game (published by **Apogee Software**) took the prize. To our knowledge, it is the first time that a shareware game has taken honors in the SPA voting. Further, **id Software** is probably the smallest software house to win such honors. The entire operation is six employees (two programmers, two artists, one creative director and one business person).

As noted earlier, no awards process is so removed from potential flaws that it does not engender some debate and dissatisfaction. One SPA award that has consistently reduced the amount of controversy has been the Critics Choice Awards. These awards are selected by a panel of judges who cover their respective fields all year long. This year, The Critics Choice Award for Best Consumer Product went to **Walt Disney Software's** *Stunt Island*. The winning margin seemed to be the game's unique capacity for filming, editing and saving to disk a custom "film" of one's play session. After several years, the Critics Choice seems to be the one award that most often rewards design innovation.

Yes, awards can be controversial. Without awards, though, what would we have to talk about? **cgw**

CGW Publisher Russell Sipe presents Critics Choice award for *Stunt Island* to Disney Software's Kirk Green.