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The World's Best-Selling PC and CD-ROM Games Magazine

The Second Annual PC Gamer Awards

BEST GAMES You Can Buy

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PLUS: An exclusive look at Links LS and The Golf Club

Vol. 3 No. 3
MARCH 1996

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It's easy to stay cool when you watch computer games on a monitor.

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Product Information Number 115
Second Annual PC Gamer Awards
1995 was a great year for PC gaming, and after considerable discussion and just a few arguments, we're ready to announce the best of the best. We couldn't convince Billy Crystal to host the proceedings — but then again, we won't stop every five minutes for another Pepsi commercial.

An Exclusive Look at Links LS and The Golf Club
Brace yourselves, PC golfers; an amazing update of *Links* is on the horizon — and it's going to have some pretty impressive competition.

Scoops!
Get an in-depth look at some of the games you'll be playing in the near future.

Afterlife
Forget about managing little cities, puny civilizations or mere galactic empires. That's child's play, best left to mere mortals. Now it's time to take charge of Heaven and Hell!

Robert E. Lee's Civil War General
How well would you do if you were in General Lee's boots? The creators of *Caesar II* turn their talents to the War Between the States.

Jet Fighter III
Mission Studios' new air combat sim lets you hop into the cockpits of some of the world's finest fighters — without spending hours memorizing manuals.
The Cream of the Crop

It's a common misconception that entertainment critics love nothing more than ripping apart another person's work. But — with the notable exception of Rex Reed — that's just not true.

Sure, when we come across a PC game that's truly, blatantly, unabashedly awful, we get a little kick out of saying so in no uncertain terms and warning our readers to spend their cash elsewhere. But heck — we have to play these games, whether they're good or not, so we'd much rather get our hands on a really great one.

There's nothing like popping that fifth or sixth new game of the week into the old CD-ROM drive — then suddenly realizing three hours have passed like three minutes, and you're still playing it.

We enjoy giving those games special recognition: a glowing review; a high rating; maybe even Editors' Choice honors.

But what about those games? Sure, they deserve even more attention. That's where the PC Gamer Awards come in. They start on page 84, so put on your tux or formal gown, and we'll meet you there.
The AH-64D Longbow as seen by an enemy tank.

The radar dome pops up above tree level. You spot an enemy tank. It doesn’t spot you. Until it’s too late. This is as close as you’ll ever get to flying an AH-64D Longbow without security clearance.

SVGA resolution gives the rolling terrain a look and feel that puts you there, right there. Probably closer than you want to be, and definitely closer than your enemy wants you to be.

Striking new graphics technology delivers fully textured objects and terrain so realistic you can almost smell the carnage. It’ll blow your mind, and the industry standards, to bits.
The design team used every resource available, from combat pilots to live fire exercises and actual manufacturer's flight manuals, so you get precision avionics and accurate flight modeling. In other words, learn this game and you could fly the real thing.

This simulation is based on exclusive, authentic and up-to-date information from Jane's Information Group (the world's largest publisher of military information). It includes a fully interactive Jane's combat reference guide packed with photos, technical specs, and 3-D models of the weapons and vehicles of war. You can even pull up video footage of the AH-64D Longbow pulling the same maneuvers you pull. For a lethal game of hide'n seek.

Jane's is a registered trademark, and AH-64D Longbow is a trademark of ORIGIN Systems, Inc. Reference work from Jane's January 1995. Jane's is a registered trademark of Jane's Information Group Limited. Call 1-800-771-3772 for information on game ratings.

Product Information Number 105
Only for Pentium™.

Only for Windows™ 95.

Only from Epic MegaGames.

Play the latest Epic MegaGames shareware games: http://www.epicgames.com
Ultra-realistic super-smooth scrolling pinball tables from the award-winning development team, Epic Megagames.

Multi-level playfields filled with exciting pinball devices. Up to 6 balls in play at once.

SGI-rendered 3D animated dot matrix sequences. Digital sound effects and music that brings each table to life.

Enjoy 1-4 player pinball action for PC CD-ROM or Sony Playstation.

"The greatest pinball game of all time" PC Gamer

The "new pinball wizard... it rocks!" Strategy Plus
Welcome back to PC Gamer country. Go ahead and pop The CD into your computer, and be sure to say hello to our receptionist, Cheryl.

We'd like to say our offices aren't always this cluttered, but frankly, this is as good as it gets. And we can always find what we're looking for. Eventually.

Speaking of which, the Case of the Missing Monkey continues. If you've been playing along, you've probably already got the name of the dastardly villain who kidnapped Rikits, the official PCG monkey. But we still don't know where he's hiding—and we can't go harassing every mysterious guy who happens to be hiding a monkey under his trench coat. In this town, that could take years.

So we still need your help. Write down the full name of the kidnapper and keep it somewhere safe. And if you happen to find his address in this month's CD, jot that down, too. Don't call or E-mail us just yet—we've got to keep the lines open in case the kidnapper calls again. Keep watching The CD in the coming months; when you've got all the pieces of the puzzle, you'll know what to do.

Entering Our World

You begin in the secluded alley that leads to the hiding PC Gamer elevator. Move your mouse pointer around the screen, and you'll notice it turns into an arrow. Click, and you'll move in the direction of the arrow.

Click on the door handle to open the elevator, then click forward to step inside. Turn around until you're facing the front of the elevator and click on the elevator button. (If you need more help with the elevator, check out the hints on page 8.)

Once you're in the offices, you can move around using the mouse. To check out the game demos, click on the jukebox. When you're ready to leave, move your mouse to the top of the screen, and a menu will appear with an exit option.

Quick Start for The CD

Our new front end is Windows-based, so setup couldn't be easier:

1. Insert the CD and load Windows.
2. From the RUN option (found under the File menu in Windows 3.1 or under Windows 95's Start menu) type X:SETUP (where X is the letter of your CD-ROM drive).
3. This will create the PC Gamer icon group. Click on the icon, and The CD will launch.

After you've visited our offices, this jukebox will appear in the alley. It's a shortcut that'll let you bypass the elevator and go directly to the game demos in future sessions.

This is the elevator. Click on the handle to enter.
### Using the Jukebox

**System Requirements**
- 486/33: 4MB RAM; 8MB hard-drive space; Mouse (Win 3.1 users will need to be sure they've got the SHARE.EXE utility loaded)

These requirements are for loading our front end program only. Each game demo will have its own additional requirements, so be sure to read them carefully.

**Free Demos**

Newsstand buyers now have the choice of purchasing either the CD-ROM Edition of PC Gamer for $7.95, or PC Gamer without a CD-ROM for $3.99. If you purchase the edition without a disc, you can still get free game demos because all PC Gamer demo sites have the opportunity to get demos and other goodies in a couple of different ways:

To manually install a demo, take a look at the Command Box located to the right. This box contains a list of demos along with their directories and installation commands.

To get up and running using the Command Box, first switch to your CD-ROM drive and change to the appropriate directory by typing `CD/DIRECTORY`, where `DIRECTORY` is the one listed in the Command Table next to the game you're trying to install. Once in the appropriate directory, type the Install Command, then press Enter. For example, to install the Heroes of Might and Magic demo:

Type `CD/HEROES` and press Enter
Type `INSTALL.EXE` and press Enter

The demo of Heroes of Might and Magic will then be installed on your PC.

---

**Installation Shortcuts**

In the event our front end doesn't load or run properly on your machine, you can still install each demo, bypassing our front end altogether.

To manually install a demo, take a look at the Command Box located to the right. This box contains a list of demos along with their directories and installation commands.

To get up and running using the Command Box, first switch to your CD-ROM drive and change to the appropriate directory by typing `CD/DIRECTORY`, where `DIRECTORY` is the one listed in the Command Table next to the game you're trying to install. Once in the appropriate directory, type the Install Command, then press Enter. For example, to install the Heroes of Might and Magic demo:

Type `CD/HEROES` and press Enter
Type `INSTALL.EXE` and press Enter

The demo of Heroes of Might and Magic will then be installed on your PC.

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**Attention Win95 Users**

The new PC Gamer front end should work fine with Windows 95. To install and run some DOS game demos, you may need to reboot into a DOS session. If the videos appear as full-screen sequences, you should enter the Control Panel's Multimedia option and set it to View in Window.

**Elevator Hints**

So, you've broken the PC Gamer elevator, huh? Some guess you turned out to be.

If you can't figure out how to start the elevator moving down to our offices, think like a car thief. Have you ever hot-wired an elevator? Click on the sparking wires that were exposed when the elevator control panel fell apart, and you'll be on your way down to PC Gamer country.

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* on chart at right = Must install through Windows. Silent Thunder, Pitfall, Full Tilt Pinball, EarthSiege 2, and Shockwave Assault require Windows 95.

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**PC Gamer** March 1996
All 16mm full-motion video, it's got the look and feel, the characters and plot, of a feature film. And it's got you, Jack Fremont — TV trivia geek with an empty fridge. Now your days of simply watching the screen are over. You've got to observe. Think. Decide. Act. And watch your back — every moment, every move. You've got 24 hours to save the world, get the girl, and return the tux. How it ends — and there are 10 possibilities — is entirely up to you.

So don't just sit there... IT'S YOUR MOVE.

Capcom Digital Studios in association with Evolutionary Publishing Inc. present FOX HUNT. See it at http://www.capcoment.com

PC/MAC CD-ROM

This official seal is your assurance that this product meets the highest quality standard of SEGA. Buy games and accessories with this seal to be sure that they are compatible with the SEGA SATURN system.

Soundtrack on RHINO

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Heroes of Might and Magic

Company: New World Computing, Inc.
Tech Support: (818) 899-5650
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Strategy
Required: 480x320, 8MB RAM; 25MB hard-drive space; SVGA, Mouse
Install: HEROES\INSTALL.EXE

There's no better feeling than achieving complete world domination. If you're hankerin' for just such an experience, check out the demo of Heroes of Might and Magic, the PC Gamer Editors' Choice Award winner we still can't put down.

From the start, you're cast in the role of a king (not a bad way to begin). By directing the movement of your heroes, you can expand your kingdom outward from your keep, battle villainous monsters guarding precious items, and wage wars on other kings. Adding to your keep will bring in more creatures for your armies; for example, building an archery range gives you access to elven archers. To recruit more heroes, simply fork over the right amount of cash, and they'll follow you — as long as they're on the winning side.

The interface is as intuitive as the graphics are colorful. All commands are issued at the click of a mouse. To move your hero, click the left mouse button on the map while the on-screen cursor is shaped like a horse. The path the hero will take will appear — green colored lines indicated that, if you click again, the hero will travel along that path; red indicates he or she won't be able to travel that far in the current turn. To switch to different heroes, click their portraits on the right side of the screen.

The castle can be built up through several layers. Click on the keep, and you'll see the building/recruiting screen. By clicking on various buildings, you can recruit creatures to swell your armies. To add to your domain, click on the keep itself. Certain structures give you access to useful creatures, while others enable special abilities, like the mage tower that provides your heroes with magical spells. If there is a check-mark in the corner of a picture, you already have that structure. If there's an X, it means you cannot build it right now — you probably need more resources.

New World Computing has provided a whopping 19 single games to let you try out the various tricks and strategies of Heroes of Might and Magic, and you'll have 20 game-days to gain control over as much territory as you can. In the full version of the game, you'll have even more missions, as well as the ability to take on campaigns and battle other human opponents in multi-player action.

HINT

There's plenty to explore in each of the scenarios you can play. Whenever possible, go to structures that are not guarded. There's a good chance you'll find something that will help you build a better, stronger army to challenge the guardians of the more precious treasure.
Lie to your opponents.

Break treaties.

Cheat mercilessly.

In other words, think of it as a training program for a career in nation building.

CONQUEST OF THE NEW WORLD™
BEGINs APRIL 24, 1996.
I Have No Mouth, And I Must Scream

Fear in the future, mankind entrusted the very existence of the world to a supercomputer named AM. The computer, put in charge of all the nuclear weaponry of the world, hides deep in the bowels of the world. Much to mankind's dismay, AM became sentient, and grew to hate the very beings that had created him. So, naturally, AM destroyed them all — all except five helpless people, forced to live out their lives playing the sadistic games AM sets before them. AM's torture of the five humans has continued unabated for one hundred and seven years. But it's about to end.

Based on the award-winning short story by science fiction legend Harlan Ellison, I Have No Mouth, And I Must Scream contains one of the most gripping and terrifying story lines ever seen in a graphic adventure. You control each of the five humans in a quest to end his or her misery, a goal only attainable by beating AM at his own game and confronting him directly. In this demo, you control Ellen, a computer science engineer who has been charged by AM to recover his basic components. Tormented by your past and terrified of the color yellow, you'll get a feel for the psychological drama portrayed in a graphic adventure that is definitely not for children or the faint of heart.

**TECHNICAL NOTE:** This demo is based on an early version of the game, so some video cards may not be directly supported. If the video doesn't look right when you start up, you may have to load the universal VESA driver. To do this, start the game by typing "SCREAM VESA" at the DOS prompt.

---

**Company:** Cyberdreams  
**Tech Support:** (818) 222-3348  
**Release Date:** Available Now  
**Category:** Graphic Adventure  
**Required:** 486/33, 4MB RAM, 2MB hard drive space; VESA compatible VGA card w/1MB RAM; Mouse  
**Install:** VINSTALLEXE

---

**HINT**

Some of the puzzles in this demo require you to perform certain actions in one location before you can access options in another place. For example, you won't be able to ask Anubis about the sarcophagus before you look at it and try to open it. If you get stuck at any point, make sure you've tried doing everything you can think of with every object you come across.

---

**ROM Resolution**

Anubis may be the Guardian of the Dead, but you'll need to get past him to open the sarcophagus and finish the demo.

You'll need to supply power to this computer console before you can use it. Once you take the ROM chip from Anubis' chest and put it in the burner, you can change his program to make him much more friendly.

Once you've reprogrammed the guard, he'll give you the code you need to open the sarcophagus. Of course, you may not like what you find.

---

**See MARGE. MARGE is A COW. MARGE Likes GRASS.**
Introducing Silent Thunder: A-10 Tank Killer II! 24 action-packed missions take you through Central America, the Middle East and Korea in one of the most devastating ground attack planes ever created. Huge explosions and new texture-mapped terrain reduce other flight sims to twisted wreckage. Whether it’s the ground-shaking action of Silent Thunder or the precision dog fighting of the upcoming Red Baron II, the Dynamix Aces Flight Series delivers its ordinance on target. Just ask Pepé’s goat.

Pepé was quietly tending his goat when he strayed too close to the anti-aircraft position.
And, MAN, he blewed up GOOD.
In Heretic, you defeated the evil Serpent Rider D'Sparil. But that's not the end of the Serpent Riders. There are two more, and the second Rider is wreaking havoc on a world known as Hexen, in the Cronos dimension. Three of the last surviving members of its society—a wizard, a warrior, and a cleric—have banded together to fight the menace, only to be separated during their travels. Now, each goes his own way, hoping to defeat the creature that has virtually destroyed his world. But before he can do that, he'll need to battle through the mirrors, traps, and puzzles the evil Serpent Rider has left behind.

When you start a new game of Hexen: Beyond Heretic, you can choose whether to play as the warrior, wizard, or cleric. Each has his own special abilities and weapons: the warrior is the toughest, hacking and pounding at foes with close-in attacks; the wizard is weaker, but has long-range magical weapons attacks that will hammer the enemy down; and the cleric, a balance of warrior and wizard, uses a combination of hand-to-hand weapons and long-range spells.

Whichever hero you choose, the controls are the same. The keyboard commands are exactly like those in Heretic, but if you haven't played that game (and why the heck haven't you?), here's a brief rundown: The cursor keys let you turn and move backward and forward. Pressing the Control key lets loose with whatever weapon you have ready.

You select the different weapons you've picked up by tapping the numbers keys, 1 through 6. Use the Alt key to "strafe" hold it down while pressing the left or right cursor keys to sidestep in that direction without turning away from your target. Holding down the Shift key while pressing the up or down arrows will make you run backward or forward. Press Escape to access the main menu, where you can configure play options and save or load games.

This four-level demo will give you a taste of the full product; multi-player support is also included, so you can try out the online possibilities with your buddies. Heretic may have had the Morph Ovum, but there's nothing better than turning an online enemy into a cute little pig with Hexen's Porkalator.
HardBall 5

Company: Accolade
Tech Support: (408) 296-8400
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Sport Sim
Required: 486/33; 4MB RAM; 13MB hard-drive space (optional); SVGA; Mouse
Install: HB5DEMO.EXE

Atter up! Accolade, known for their award-winning HardBall series of baseball simulations, serves up another heaping helping of baseball goodness. You can pick the teams, change the stats, trade the players, adjust positions and line-ups, and even create your own teams. Combining arcade baseball action with statistical depth, HardBall 5 can make you both a batting pro and a supreme manager. And with none other than Al Michaels giving the play-by-play commentary, you'll start wondering where the hot dog vendor is!

In this demo, you'll try your skills against the computer for two full innings in an exhibition game. Whether you're batting or pitching, the controls are the same, and they're simple enough: A box will appear with several options in it.

Getting the timing right when you're batting can be a frustrating ordeal at first. To get some practice at it before continually striking out, warm up in the Homerun Derby. You'll be able to swing at pitch after pitch until you get the hang of it. Just watch those fastballs—they can sneak up on ya!

HINT
Getting the timing right when you're batting can be a frustrating ordeal at first. To get some practice at it before continually striking out, warm up in the Homerun Derby. You'll be able to swing at pitch after pitch until you get the hang of it. Just watch those fastballs—they can sneak up on ya!

Press the appropriate cursor key to select the swing or pitch you want to use, and confirm your choice by pressing Enter (if there's a box next to the option instead of an arrow, that means you just have to push Enter). If you are using a joystick or a gamepad (which we recommend), the stick and fire buttons correspond to the cursor keys and Enter.

Timing is the key ingredient, of course, so you may need to practice a bit before you're hitting them into the cheap seats. If you hit the ball, your batter will automatically run for first base. The arrow keys correspond to the bases—for example, to make a hit a double, press the up arrow key to make your runner go to second base. Press the left arrow key to go to third, and the down arrow to go home. During your next at-bat, your runners on base will automatically lead off. To increase the lead, press the arrow key in the direction of the next base. To steal, press the arrow key that corresponds to the base you want to grab, and hit the Backspace key (or Button 2 on the joystick) when the pitcher throws the ball.

Pitching is similar to batting; first, select the pitch you want to throw. To throw it, press Enter. You'll see a box appear with white crosshairs in the middle of it. You can control the general location of your pitch by moving to crosshairs with the arrow keys. There's no guarantee that your pitch will land where you want it just as in real life—but you'll be able to throw to the inside and outside corners of the strike zone. You can pick off a runner who's trying for a steal by pressing the cursor key corresponding to the base and hitting Enter. When the batter hits the ball, fielding is accomplished by directing the controlled player—usually the one nearest the ball—with the arrow keys. If it is a fly ball, you'll see a white target on the ground where it will land, and you can direct your player to that location to catch it. You can throw the ball to a base by pressing the cursor key in the correct direction and hitting Enter.

Figure out what kind of swing you want to bring to bear, and step up to the plate.
The epic sequel to the best selling interactive movie ever!

A civil war threatens the Confederation.

Only you can stop it.

- Shot just like a movie — on film, not video
- A cast of favorites, including Mark Hamill, Malcolm McDowell, John Rhys-Davies and Tom Wilson
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http://www.ea.com/origin.html Electronic Arts® Direct Sales 1 800 245-4525

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Product Information Number 138
What’s yours?

IN COLLABORATION WITH

WILLIAM COLBY

CIA

FORMER DIRECTOR

OLEG KALUGIN

KGB

FORMER MAJOR GENERAL

As a CIA agent you defy life and death every day. Facing extreme situations like those William Colby (former CIA Director) and Oleg Kalugin (former KGB Major General) experienced in their high-profile careers. It’s hard to imagine what the pressure could do to you... But now you don’t have to. The moment death stares you in the face, you’ll know exactly what kind of agent you really are. CIA... Russian mafia... or both.

Introducing Spycraft: The Great Game, the first authentic spy thriller on CD-ROM. Featuring actual secrets from the real world of espionage, a true online gaming link and shocking global predicaments from today’s front-page headlines.

Unsurpassed film production enriches hours of realistic spycraft in a chilling world of intrigue.

Gather intelligence online by linking to real websites and accessing up-to-the-minute information.

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THE SPY HUNT IS NOW ON DOS/WINDOWS® 95 CD-ROM.


Every spy has a breaking point.
Professor Tim is back with more wild and witty gadgets that could stump Rube Goldberg himself. The Incredible Machine Version 3.0 is the latest installment of the perplexing puzzles presented by the prestigious Professor. Using a variety of items, from rubber bands to laser guns, you can accomplish various mundane tasks like turning on a light, popping a balloon, or even feeding a pet mouse. It may sound simple, but believe us, it's not. The demo will give you five levels to test your mettle; the full version will challenge you with more than a hundred. You'll also be able to design your own puzzles in the professor's workshop to challenge your friends, and play head-to-head in a contest of wit and speed.

The interface is a lot simpler than the machines you'll be building. When you start the demo, select the first box on the left to begin solving puzzles. To use an object, left-click on it in the tool window, and bring it out to the playing area. Click again to drop it where you want it. There'll be several icons surrounding the item — use these to put it back in the tool window (the garbage can), rotate it into various positions (the circular arrows), or display the name and uses of the item (the magnifying glass). Once you've placed the items and aligned them where you like, click on the green flag button at the top right of the screen to set your machine in motion.

If you accomplish the tasks set before you, you'll soon see a box signaling your victory, and you'll have the option to continue working your way through the puzzles.

Good luck. And be sure to keep this in mind: just because you're given several different items in the tool window doesn't mean you have to use them all to solve the puzzle!

---

**Advanced Civilization**

Long before Sid Meier came out with Civilization, there was Advanced Civilization, the boardgame from Avalon Hill that not only required intense strategy to win, but took about 6 to 8 hours to play — and that was if you could get at least four of your buddies to play with you. Now it's available as a computer game, and it's got all the fun and playability of its predecessor.

The goal of the game is exactly the same — expand your realm and build up your cities to gain technologies, known as Tools, to win the game. You'll be able to play more than half of a full game, so you'll get a good idea of what Advanced Civilization is all about.

To start off, you'll have a population marker. Place it in the territory of your choice. When your turn comes around, your population will double. Keep moving markers to carve out an empire for yourself — if you have markers in the same territory as an opponent, a battle will ensue and markers will be removed. When you have a large enough population, you can build a city. Do this by placing six markers in the same area as one of the dark red squares you'll see scattered over the map. Once you have a city, you can start researching technologies and moving up through the evolutionary scale.

Trading will play a major role as you find new Tools and trade them with other countries. They take the form of cards, and when you trade, you have to do it in sets of three. You only have to be honest about two of the three cards, however, so you can use trades to get rid of calamities like floods and famine.

You'll have the chance to build ships to go across the seas, and when you discover astronomy, you'll be able to go even further. As long as you keep ahead of the competition in finding new technologies and gaining more Tools, you'll be a winner. At the end of the demo, you'll see a scoreboard rating your progress compared to the seven other computer opponents.

It takes a lot of strategy and ingenuity to keep ahead of the computerized players. Make sure you expand quickly and trade wisely. It's only a few short steps between the Stone Age and the Industrial Age, but you'll have to be an intelligent leader to get your people there.
When Sanctuary Woods came out with their innovative wildlife simulation, Wolf, it was the first of its kind in the market. Now, what Wolf did for lupine life, Lion does for our African feline friends. Lion puts you in the role of one of these majestic creatures, and your job will be theirs — find food and water, survive, and reproduce.

This demo will give you an example of the simulation mode of the full game. You'll be able to form a pride (a large family) of lions to control, and your main job will be to hunt and survive. There'll be plenty of poachers, so beware. In the full version, you'll also be able to play twenty different scenarios, from hunting game for your cubs to finding a suitable mate.

You control your lion with the mouse. Move the mouse to make the lion walk or run in the direction the cursor is pointing. The further from the lion the cursor is, the faster the lion will go.

There are several ways to look at your environment. If you right-click the mouse or hit the spacebar, the cursor will enter the control bar at the bottom of the screen. From here, you can click on the lion portrait to use the lion's senses — click on the ears to listen, the eyes to see in the direction it's facing, the nose to smell the scents in the air, and the mouth to eat or drink (hold down the mouse key and you'll have the choice between eating, drinking, and roaring). You can also switch to other members of your pride by clicking on the portraits of the other lions.

The handiest way of viewing your surroundings, however, is by using the map. Click in the box in the control bar or hit the Z key to see your surroundings. The highlighted lion is the one you currently control, and you'll see any creatures around you, including the poachers. Your sense of smell extends further than the map, however, so use it often when looking for prey.

The life of a lion isn't all lounging in the grass. You'll have to work hard to earn that first kill, and it'll take the cooperation of the entire pride. To make a kill, sneak up on the prey and then click on it with the mouse. Your lion will leap, and, if you're lucky, bring it down. It may take several tries, however, before the feast can begin.
IF TREASURE QUEST™ WAS HALF AS TOUGH, YOU STILL WOULDN'T HAVE A CLUE.

Pay attention, smart stuff. Here's the plan: A rich prof distilled a totally ace mystery called Treasure Quest. He was so sure it was unbeatable, he left a million bucks in his will to the first brain-banger good enough to solve it.

Not so fast, brainiac. You may have cracked other CD-ROM puzzles, but Treasure Quest is uphill all the way. Search the professor's extreme 10 room mansion to discover clues. Be clever and Terry Farrell, star of TV's Star Trek: Deep Space Nine, will show you the way. Listen to the clues on the audio CD of the original soundtrack. And swap gray cells with other Treasure Quest seekers when you sign onto the Internet with free SiriusNet™ software.*

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Silent Thunder

Company: Sierra On-Line
Tech Support: (206) 644-4343
Relakanr: Austin May
Category: Air Combat Sim
Required: Windows 95; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 16MB hard-drive space; SVGA
install: Silent SETUP.EXE

Silent Thunder is currently working on a simulation of the A-10 Thunderbolt II jet, a craft built for air-to-ground attacks, and we’ve managed to get our hands on a demo so our readers can have a sneak peek at this impressive new title. Along with some incredible graphics and a fantastically accurate flight model — all running under Windows 95 — it could be one of the best air combat sims to come out for quite some time.

This demo was taken from a very early beta version of Silent Thunder, so if you have anything less than a Pentium with 16 megabytes of RAM, the demo will crawl on your system. But Sierra promises the full product will have a much better frame rate and should run with a 486/66 and 8MB RAM.

There’s not a lot of documentation to go along with the demo, but a few essential keyboard controls will get you through. You can toggle a map of the area by hitting “M.” You fire your cannon with the spacebar and control your movement with the arrow keys (since this is an early version, there’s a bug in the joystick driver that causes the plane to roll left when the joystick is pushed up — we suggest you stick to the keyboard).

Even the explosions are beautiful in Sierra’s newest flight sim.

CHALLENGE
Things happen pretty quickly in this demo; the object is to take out the armored convoy that’s directly below you when you start the game. If you can manage that, you’re one heck of a pilot.

Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure

Long ago, Activision’s Pitfall was one of the biggest hits on the Atari 2600. Now, Pitfall Harry returns, but this time he’s been captured by the evil warrior spirit Zakelus, and it’ll take the courage and daring of his son, Harry Jr., to free him.

Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure is light-years away from the older version. The idea of the game is similar, however: avoid fatal obstacles and kill the creatures that get in your way.

You can control Harry Jr. with the keyboard or a gamepad. To guide him with the keyboard, check out the control keys listed in the Help menu when you run the game. The gamepad is simple to use — the directional pad gets you moving, Button 1 jumps, Button 2 fires your selected weapon, Button 3 uses your whip, and Button 4 cycles through your arsenal. Before you can use your gamepad, however, you’ll need to select Preferences from the File menu and enable the joystick. You’ll also be able to configure the joystick or keyboard controls to suit your tastes, as well as adjust sound and difficulty.

You’ll have five minutes to explore as much of the first level as you can. There’s plenty to see and do — and to avoid. Making it to the end of the first level won’t be easy to do in five minutes, but once you get the hang of it, it can be done.

These idols you find along the way will tell you where to go to find the end of the level and get closer to Harry Jr.’s father.

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EarthSiege 2

EarthSiege 2 will feature some incredible graphics, as well as all the great gameplay that made the first one a hit.

Company: Sierra
Tech Support: (206) 644-3343
Release Date: May
Category: Action
Required: Windows 95; 486, 8MB RAM; 11MB hard-drive space; SVGA
Install: EARTHSGSETUP.EXE

When you enter the cockpit of a HERCULAN armored unit (HERC), you can feel the power at your fingertips. In EarthSiege 2, the Cybrids are back, and it’s up to you to lead your squad to victory over the invaders, and face Prometheus, the artificially intelligent computer that started the EarthSiege Wars.

In this demo, you’ll try out one of the missions of the full game. Your objective: make your way to a landing pad and destroy everything in your path. Sound easy? Well, since the demo defaults to invincibility mode, it is. But the action is so hot, you’d be dust in seconds if Sierra didn’t give you super powers.

EarthSiege 2 is a little tricky to control, but you’ll get the hang of it with a bit of practice. You drive your HERC with the joystick — moving it from side to side turns the legs on the HERC, and moving the stick up or down increases and decreases your speed. You can toggle the joystick from leg to turret control by hitting the Insert key. Use the T key to auto-track your current target and the Tab key to lock onto targets; it’ll be a lot easier to keep pumping the enemy full of laser fire.

You can run the demo in two different resolutions — 320x240, or 640x480. If you don’t have a Pentium with at least 16MB RAM, however, you should probably stick to the lower resolution.

Also, if you don’t already have Win95’s DirectX files installed on your computer, you might need to add them. Take a look at the README.WRI file in the EARTHSGSE subdirectory on The CD for more information.

Full Tilt Pinball

You’ve never seen pinball like Maxis’ Full Tilt Pinball. Running exclusively under Windows 95, our demo lets you try out Space Cadet, one of the three tables included with the full version. As a space cadet, you’ll need to finish training, refuel your ship, reload your weapons, and complete a number of tasks. You can see your next objective by reading the messages on the light board to the right of the table, and by looking for the blinking blue arrows that point to your next target.

Keep an eye on the circle of dots in the middle of the table; if you complete enough tasks to light the entire outer circle, you’ll start on the inner dots. Light the inner circle, and the gravity well will come into effect, which is an experience you have to try to believe.

In the Full Tilt demo, you get to play with a single ball for as long as you can keep it on the table. Use the Z key to activate the left flipper, and the right flipper is triggered by the / key. Hold the spacebar down to pull the plunger, and let go to launch the ball. You can bump the table up, right, or left with the appropriate arrow keys.

CHALLENGE

It’s difficult to get very far with only one ball to go on, but we managed to rack up a whopping 6,000,000 points! If you want to try to beat our score, you’ll need to find out where to get the biggest bonus in the easiest manner.

The Space Cadet table featured in this demo will pit you against the hazards of space, survivable only by placing the silver ball correctly.

It’s the ultimate combat sim I’ve experienced... nothing compares.

—SurfDog, Hanalei, HI
SurfDog@aloha.net

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Star Rangers

Line 'em up and fire away, and a fireball might be your reward for a job well done.

Star Rangers puts you in the role of an interstellar police officer working for law and order. It’s your job to patrol the highways and byways of the galaxy in your heavily armed fighter.

But Star Rangers isn’t just a space combat game—you’ll have to think as smartly as you fly to take out the criminals that populate space. You’ll have to judge your energy reserves and decide if you should make that critical flight across the quadrant to save a lone freighter from piracy, or hold onto your reserves to take on the enemy fleet heading for a densely populated space port. Every decision you make affects the outcome of the mission. Keep your wits about you, and you may become the most decorated Ranger on the force. Make the wrong choices, and you’re space dust.

In this demo, you can fly one mission of a campaign against the bad guys. You can also practice your skills in a five-minute foray against an unlimited onslaught of enemy ships. When you start the demo, you’ll be in the practice session. It’s timed to last five minutes, so you can either play it all the way through, or hit Escape to go to the main menu. If you elect to fly a new campaign, you’ll receive a briefing on the situation and read up on your wingman.

Your mission will be to take out all the enemy ships in the quadrant. When you destroy all the bad guys in your immediate area, hit M to see the navigational map. Move the mouse to the next bunch of fighters you want to take on, and click the left mouse button to choose that spot as a jump point. Then hit W to engage the warp engines, and you’ll enter the warp tunnel. Steer carefully through the tunnel, and when you come out of warp you’ll be near enough to more enemies to take them out. Continue doing this to destroy all the enemies on the map, but be careful you don’t use up too much energy in your travels, or you might find yourself stranded in space.

Check out the keyboard commands above for how to control your ship. The demo is best played with a joystick, but you can use the cursor keys to steer your fighter.

You’ll need a steady hand while navigating the warp tunnels to your next destination.
Vigilance on Talos V

Company: Square Wheel Studios
Tech Support: (914) 705-3123
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Platform Shooter
Required: 386; 4MB RAM; 11MB RAM; VGA
Install: TALOSV\INSTALLBND

Killian Jarraad and his daughter Colese were traveling on a colony transport when it was attacked by the Xenos. Before his very eyes, Killian’s daughter was taken from him, kicking and screaming. Somehow left alive, Killian spent years training with mercenaries in the art of killing, and has battled the Xenos ever since in revenge for the loss of Colese. Recently, another mercenary, known only as E. Red, told Killian of a planet where the Xenos took their human slaves. Hoping to one day be reunited with his daughter, Killian decided to find the planet. So begins Vigilance on Talos V.

Vigilance is a pretty standard platform shooter. You control Killian with the cursor keys. To fire your weapon, press the Alt key. Press Control to jump. When you start gathering items, such as missiles, you can use them by pressing the spacebar to switch to item mode and pressing the Alt key. Your life is measured in energy — if it reaches zero, you’re dead. You can gather energy units, supplies for your weapons, and special items in certain places along the way, or you can get them from the creatures you kill. You’ll max out at 99 points of power to start, but you can find additional reserve tanks to build up your limit. Save your game in a savegame pod — when you find one, step into it and press the up arrow. You have five slots to choose from. There are also transporters, such as the one at the very beginning, that will move you to another part of the level.

Check out the file called MANUAL.TXT for a list of the special items you can find on the way, like the Saturn Ball and Jump Boots. You’ll also learn about some other tricks that are handy to know while exploring the world of Talos V.

At the end of this corridor is the Saturn Ball. You’ll need to shoot these electrical barriers before you can continue on your way.

HINT

At the very beginning, there are going to be plenty of places where you’ll need the Saturn Ball to get through. With it, you’ll be able to turn into a spinning ball with a touch of the down arrow key. To find it, immediately take the first transporter you see when you start the game. Then you’ll need to move to the room on the right. You’ll have to make your way upward via some platforms that move when you land on them. It’s difficult to get the hang of it at first, but once you get the timing, it’s no problem. Once you make it to the top, go through the door to the left, and make your way left to the end of the corridor. You’ll need to shoot the energy beams that block your way. When you make it to the end, just jump and land on the ball icon, and you’ll be squeezing through tunnels with the click of the keyboard key.

“A new benchmark in graphics and textures...I’m very impressed.”

—Psycho, Enid, OK
74367,2519@compuServe.com

FlightMaster™ Profile:

* Air force vet with 15 years of real flight experience
* Combat flight-sim credentials of 13 years and more than 1,000 hours
* Degree in aerospace engineering

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Product Information Number 118
You've Got Just Enough Time To Save The Galaxy . . . 
If You Play Smart!

Your elite ranger force is on a critical mission: patrolling the outer reaches of the galaxy. Like rangers of the old west, your primary responsibilities are upholding law and order, and protecting the galactic citizens. You’re armed with the latest weaponry and flying the finest 23rd century starships. But time is not on your side!

You’re thrust into one life or death mission after another and you’ve got quick decisions to make. You can hyperspace across the galaxy to protect a distant base . . . but will you have enough fuel to return to protect the closer ones? And how many enemy ships are attacking your other bases? Can you get there in time?

A detailed galactic map helps you ID enemy strength and positions, as well as navigate through the galaxy to engage the enemy in one heart-pounding battle after another. But in Star Rangers, you’ve got to shoot straight and think smart. The citizens are looking for a hero . . . could it be you?

PC CD-ROM
Civilization has finally discovered faster-than-light technology, a find that allows contact with alien life forms. With the new contacts come new business and an environment rich with opportunity for a budding entrepreneur. It's into this ripe climate that you step as a beginning businessman, and your job is to expand your business to all reaches of the galaxy through trade and negotiation with other planets. As the CEO of one of five major companies, you'll need to watch supply and demand carefully, bargain wisely with planets for landing rights, and earn profit with productive trade. Keep an eye on your competitors, though; the winner is the one who accumulates the highest company value.

You'll start this ten-year demo with a single ship on a single planet. It's from this meager beginning that you can build an empire that would put Bill Gates to shame. You'll need to start by bidding for landing rights on a nearby planet. Then you'll set up a profitable trade route. Once the money starts rolling in, you can buy more ships, bargain for other planets, or build your own spaceport to increase the quality of trade.

Since your ship is not terribly advanced, you won't be able to travel far, so you'll have to find a nearby planet to trade with. Each planet's name is displayed in a certain color that indicates which company currently owns it (your color in this demo is red). Planets with gray names are up for bid; if the name is purple, that means a rival company has put in a bid for landing rights on it. Find a nearby planet and select it, then hit the negotiation button. Click on Submit to start bidding, and soon the name of the planet will change from gray to purple to red. Then you can start trading.

To set up a trade route, click on the Build Route button, then click on the starting planet, then on the planet you want to trade with. Finally, click on Accept Route. Once that is accomplished, you'll see your ship traveling from system to system.

You'll be able to tell what each button does by looking at the information bar at the bottom of the screen whenever you place your mouse over a button. For a full tutorial, print out and read the README.WRI file in the SBUCKS directory on the CD-ROM. For the best results, open it in Windows Write, the word processor that comes with Windows.

**TECHNICAL NOTE:**
Space Bucks is pretty demanding on system resources. If the demo doesn't load after installation through our front end program, you may have to run it by itself from Windows. Just exit to Windows and double-click the Space Bucks icon in the Sierra folder.

---

**HINT**
Ten years is a short time to build a profitable business. To utilize your time more efficiently, hit the P key to pause the game. You'll still be able to do management tasks, such as building trade routes and configuring cargo holds for your ships, but you won't be using valuable time until you're ready for things to start moving again.

---

**DEADHEAD:**
Bad to the Bone.

In the war of the Gearheads, this guy's M.O. is dead simple: Scare the other toys silly.

Hey, no problem. One glimpse of that fiendish skull, bulging, bloodshot eyes, cracked cranium, and clattering jaw and what would you do—introduce him to your sister?
"It makes pretty much every PC game we've ever seen pretty much every PC game we've ever seen - DOOM included - look slightly dull. Honestly."
— PC Gamer

"Duke truly looks like a 3D supermodel of a game: sleek, sexy and gory with lead-thrashing action."
— Strategy Plus

FULL MOVEMENT CONTROL lets you run, jump, crawl, swim, and jetpack your way thru hostile environments as you look up and down from any vantage point to survey the situation around you.

FANTASTIC 3D REALMS, with stunning graphics supported in optional SVGA modes, await you as you thrash sinister aliens thru the streets of L.A., out to an orbiting station, and onto the surface of the moon itself!

WITH "BUILD" TECHNOLOGY you will explore an interactive, fully immersive world of towering skyscrapers, deep canyons, and murky bodies of water - complete with sloping surfaces, realistic earthquakes, functional subways, and many never-before-seen special effects.

A DYNAMIC COMBAT™ features let you duke it out one on one via modem, and craft from 3 or more battlefields over your network. Also, send prerecorded taunts to your human opponents via Duke's unique RealtimeRumble™ system.

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Recommended for Mature Players: Violence - Adult Themes

Developed by 3D Realms Entertainment

Recommended for Mature Players: Violence - Adult Themes

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Product Information Number 112
In the year 2095, a new sport has taken over as the most popular spectator event on the planet. The sport, called Locus, is simple — players riding hover-cycles try to put small red balls into the opposing teams’ goals. Three teams of two players play at once, and the winner is the team that can score three times on each of the others’ goals while defending their own.

There’s a lot more to Locus than this, however. The hover-cycles are equipped with magnetic receptacles for capturing and holding the balls. They have the ability to jump, which is handy when an opponent is trying to steal your ball from you, and they have lasers that can lash out at unsuspecting cycles that get in your way.

Each arena is unique as well, conforming to the desires of the team that builds it. In this demo, there’s a gravity well that will pull you off course, and an afterblast option that will give you a burst of speed when you drive over it.

You control your cycle with the keyboard. The Z key accelerates, the A key decelerates, and the Enter key fires your lasers. Hit the Left Shift key to activate your magnet and capture the ball, and press the Spacebar to jump. Turn your cycle to the left and the right with the “I” and “J” keys, respectively. You can also look around without changing your direction of travel by using the cursor keys. You can reconfigure all these keys to your liking in the Options menu.

Once you’ve got the ball, make your way to the nearest goal. If you’re not quick enough, an opponent may steal the ball away.

**ZAPBOTS:**

He’s a real live wire.

Feeling rundown? Lost your zip? Then maybe you’ve been zapped. Zapbot gets a big charge out of draining energy from other Gearheads. So, unless you want an overdose of shock therapy, get out of his way.

---

**Shockwave Assault**

Aliens are invading Earth, and the only people who can stop them are a small group of fighter pilots in orbit around the planet. In a series of fifteen action-packed missions, you’ll deal the aliens a death-blow, and save the world as we know it.

When the demo starts, you’ll be able to see a sampling of the full-motion video Shockwave Assault has in store. To skip it, hit the Escape key. You’ll start in the cockpit of one of the most advanced fighters the future has to offer. With it, you’ll destroy hordes of alien craft and save the lives of helpless citizens in the cities below you. To control your craft, use the cursor keys for up, down, and sideways movement. The Control key will fire your laser weapons, and the Alt key launches your missiles. Hold down the Shift key to engage your turbo engines. Check out the chart below for an explanation of the readouts in your cockpit. To pause the game, hit P.

The first mission is pretty hairy, so keep an eye out for refueling drones — they’ll appear as light blue dots on your radar map. And make sure you stay in the cleared pathway — if you don’t, a rain of enemy fire...
Command the army of your dreams!

Behold – a fantasy strategy game that faithfully re-creates the easy-to-use interface, superior art and combat that made the award-winning Panzer General™ so wildly popular!

Battle the Shadowlord and his minions across five continents as any one of four Fantasy Generals. Choose from over 120 distinctive fantasy units. Lead your inexperienced army well – only the most experienced troops will be effective against the Shadowlord’s forces!

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To Order: Visit your local software retailer or call 1-800-601-PLAY with Visa/MC (North America only).

For Game Rating info, call 1-800-771-3772

Product Information Number 162
FormGen has teamed up with S.E. Software to bring us a realistic flight sim centered on the F/A-18 Hornet, the advanced Marine strike fighter. You'll be able to use some of the most technologically impressive weapons that have seen action, from television-guided missiles to the smart bombs that were used in Desert Storm.

This demo will let you fly several training and combat missions from more than fifty in the full version. You can test your skill using different air-to-air weapons as well as those for air-to-ground attacks. There's training for take-off and landing the craft, and enough flight instruction to make even the most avid computer flight jockey learn something new.

When you first load the demo, the training options will be set to invincible and unlimited weapons, to help you get the hang of flight (you can turn these aids off by accessing the Configuration menu). You'll receive instruction on how to fly the craft, including keyboard commands, as you fly.

The flight instructor will tell you many things, from the most effective angle for climbing, to which buttons to push to activate a myriad of computer controlled readouts. Once you figure out how to perform the various actions, you can shut off the automatic flight instructor from the Configuration menu.

The full version of Black Knight also will let you perform unlimited free-flights for practice, build you own missions, and use a flight recorder to replay your glorious victories over and over. You can check out the flight recorder in the demo by playing back the opening flight sequence. Black Knight may not be the prettiest flight sim out there, but the designers have put a lot of effort into the realism. And it will even run on old 386 machines, so if you've been waiting for a flight sim that will run on your old workhorse, check it out.
Add-Ons & Patches

As the Ides of March pass us by, and we've gorged on all the Valentine's Day candy we could find on sale after February 14, it's nice to know that we can always rely on dedicated gamers out there to provide us with even more hours of enjoyment by creating add-ons for our favorite games.

This month, we've got a whopper of a WAD from the author of last month's EVILDOG.WAD for Doom II. The title of this one is HEROES.WAD, and it's a complete, 36-level replacement for the levels in Ultimate Doom. A compilation of some of the best WADs out there, this is one of the most impressive add-ons we've loaded up. Unfortunately, if you don't have Ultimate Doom, you'll only get access to the first 27 levels (three episodes) — and most of the best stuff is in the last episode.

For you Doom II fans, there's "Mountain King," a WAD built for deathmatch, which uses a Capture-the-Flag concept to make things interesting. If you're into Doom IIing with your buddies, this one is a must. And check out TOWNHOUS.WAD, one of the most detailed single-level WADs we've seen. Of course, we'd be remiss if we didn't include some killer Heretic, Descent, and Hexen levels. We've got FLENZER2.WAD and LAVALORD.WAD for Heretic, plus the Deathmatch levels. ELEMENTS.WAD and THESWAMP.WAD, for Hexen. You'll explore asteroids in "Creeping Death" for Descent, as well as swarms of robots in "Meridian."

We've also got more custom save games for Warcraft: Orcs and Humans. In "Battle Between 2 Towns," you'll have to think strategically and utilize passageways to overcome the Human influence. Another interesting save game is "Megatropolis." It's one of the biggest towns we've ever seen in Warcraft!

Check out the README.TXT file in each subdirectory if you don't know how to use these add-ons. Each game has its own subdirectory. For example, if you're looking to load the HEROES.WAD, look in the \DOOM subdirectory on the CD-ROM.

We've also got all the patches mentioned in the Extended Play column on page 149. They're in the PATCHES subdirectory. Please note that you may need to use the program PKZIP to unpark files with the ZIP extension. A shareware version of this program can be downloaded from virtually any BBS or online service, or purchased at many software stores.

America Online

Hop onto the 'Net with America Online, one of the leading online services in America today. With AOL's excellent Windows interface as your guide, you'll send and receive electronic mail all over the planet, browse the Internet's World Wide Web for new and fascinating information, read and contribute to Usenet Newsgroups (an incredibly huge forum for discussions on just about any topic you can imagine), enter live chat chambers, and exchange views with hundreds of people at any given time. You can even attend live conferences with celebrities, from movie stars to leaders in scientific exploration. AOL could be your doorway to the Information Superhighway — so go ahead and log on and give it a try.

In The CD's cover sleeve this month, you'll find an account number and password. All you need to do is get yourself up and running is to open Windows and select Run from the File Menu. Type "D:AOLSETUP," where "D" is the name of your CD-ROM drive. The setup program will then walk you through creating a new account on the fastest growing online service in the industry.

Once you customize your account, you'll receive your first 10 hours — as well as your first month's service — absolutely free. After that, the service is a low $9.95 a month, which includes five free hours, and $2.95 for each additional hour.

AOL has tons of great forums to suit any taste, plus a wealth of information services. Do a little exploring, and you'll find it hard to log off.

ATTENTION Pinball Illusions Contestants!

Back in October, we featured 21st Century's Pinball Illusions demo and contest. The folks at 21st Century challenged our readers to send in their top scores — verified by a special code — to find out just who the reigning pinball wizards were. The deadline has passed as we go to press, so we can finally announce the names of the five PC gamers who won the contest and a complete library of 21st Century games. Every one of the winners scored well over 1 billion points. These guys sure play a mean pinball!

Jimmy Brumble — Winson-Salem, North Carolina
Frederick Cook — Port Hope, Ontario
Lee Roy Cox — Amherst, MA
Brad Leonard — Waterloo, New York
Tom Snyder — Amherst, New York

If Nothing Works...

We cannot provide technical support for problems you may encounter with the demos on The CD. Should your copy fail to run at all, with error messages that indicate your CD-ROM drive cannot read the disc, return it to the following address for replacement: PC Gamer, The March CD Disc 2: Replacement, 130 North Hill Drive, Suite 40, Brevikke, CA 98220. Please indicate any error message you receive.
Welcome to the Battle of the Century. Gearheads: A fast-paced, wacked-out, wind-up toybox full of fun. Say hello to Disasteroid, Zapbot, Deadhead, Kangaruffian and company. You'll pick a team for speed, power and maneuverability. Then launch them against an opponent or your computer.

You'll tackle a variety of different environments, each with increasing levels of difficulty. You'd better have a strategy and think fast. 'Cause the one who ends up with the most toys wins.

Gearheads, for grownups who still like to fight over toys. For Windows and Mac CD-ROM.


Product Information Number 140
ZORK PLACED MILLIONS UNDER ITS SPELL...
THE SPELL IS YET TO BE BROKEN.

First came the classic ZORK text adventure series. Then the award-winning best-seller, Return to Zork. Now the newest addition to the Zork universe beckons you to journey to the darkest corners of the Great Underground Empire... Explore five fantastically detailed, 3-D realms as your senses devour stunning graphics and sound that set a new standard in computer adventures.

ZORK Nemesis. Dare enter the forbidden lands.

• Dozens of innovative puzzles in over 40 hours of immersive gameplay
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Available on DOS and Windows® 95 CD-ROM
Uncover the mystery at http://www.activision.com

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Product Information Number 90
**Afterlife**

OK, boys and girls, can you spell “eschatology”*?  

You’ve been playing God for years in games like *SimCity, Populous, and Civilization*. Now Lucas-Arts gives you power over Heaven and Hell in the ultimate god-game.

—William R. Trotter

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**In a nutshell:**

Looking for a new and interesting career? What if you get a job as Manager of Heaven and Hell? On one hand, you’ve got people who must be made happy; on the other, you’ve got folks who deserve misery.

**What’s so special?**

*Afterlife* is the newest creation from the twisted mind of Mike Stemme, whose previous off-the-wall game, *Sam and Max Hit the Road*, was one of the zaniest, most original games since the dawn of PC entertainment.

**Why should I care?**

Well, where do you want your soul to go when you die? Is there a more profound existential question? Is there a more focus topic for absurdist, surreal, gaming dementia? Would Bill Gates go to Heaven or to Hell? And what would you do with him when he arrives? (Think hard before answering...he may be listening.)

**And when is it coming out?**

Late first quarter, 1996

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*as in any good simulation game, disasters must be coped with in a speedy manner. But what should you do when Hell freezes over?

---

**eschatology: n., branch of theology which deals with the final end of man and of the universe, from the Greek eschatos, last + logos, word.**

The deadlines roll by; games come and games go; what pushes the envelope one year is fodder for the bargain bins the next — yes, dear readers, after eight years of reviewing PC games, it all tends to become a kind of blurry continuum.

But there are landmark occasions that stick in the memory: days when I got my first look at something and knew, just knew, that the industry would never be the same again.

One such occasion was the day a friend of mine — a confirmed Macintosh loyalist — asked me to come take a look at “something really weird and wonderful.” When I arrived, he boot up a new program called *Sim City*, and I watched, spellbound, as he click-clicked and created a city from nothingness, a customized urban dreamscape whose roads were soon thronged with tiny “Sims” going about their business.

And I knew things would never be the same in the gaming industry. It was like watching the birth of a new star system: I knew there would soon be plenty of planets orbiting this conceptual sun. I went away that day thinking: “My God, consider the possibilities!”
Continued

Thus was a genre born, and it thrives to this day. We have transport sim, farming sim, island sim, Roman Empire sim, theme park sim—something for every taste.

Well, almost every taste. One thing all the existing sim games share is the fact that they are grounded in what we mortals comfortably refer to as "reality." And "reality" carries with it the baggage of built-in assumptions and "common sense" rules: "don't put your nuclear power plants in the middle of a residential zone," or "railroad lines work better if they go around, not over, mountain ranges."

But what if the player were plunked down in a "simulation" of an environment that has no provable basis in "reality?" A realm that until now has been the province of theologians, philosophers, and poets? A realm where "the rules" were not known beforehand?

In the new LucasArts simulation, *Afterlife*, the player finds him or herself in charge of the Great Beyond, the proverbial "Undiscovered Countries" of Heaven and Hell. You are given the job of Regional Manager of two distinct planes of the hereafter, both of which float in a void on your computer screen, above and below the alien world whose inhabitants will provide the raw material, in the form of millions and millions of souls.

Your task is to accommodate the needs—punishments or rewards, depending on the belief held by the individual soul—of all those wandering souls. Efficiently manage the happiness of one plane and the discomfiture of the other, along with the karmic transportation of migrating souls, and you'll be rewarded with funds in the form of "Pennies from Heaven." If you fail to meet the afterlife needs of your two populations, or if you can't cope with the natural disasters and rebellions that may occur, well, everything just goes to hell rather quickly. (Sorry, but the puns come built into the game; there is No Escape!)

Your employers are mysterious off-screen entities known only as "The Powers That Be," and even though you don't often see them, or even know They're there, They keep careful tabs on your job performance.

So what's a typical Day at the Office for the Regional Manager of Heaven and Hell? Well, you have to greet the new arrivals, tally up their good and bad deeds, and decide which plane to send them to—interestingly, the individual soul's beliefs and expectations figure into the process as much as, if not more than, simple naughty-and-nice calculations. If a soul expects to go to Hell, but has really not led a bad life, that soul may actually become a dangerous malcontent if assigned to Heaven.

Some of the arriving souls will believe in reincarnation, so you'll have to build a reincarnation network to move them efficiently to the various "Karma Stations," where they can await their trans-substantiation contentedly. Many of the arriving souls will be genial, forgiving types who believe that everybody ends up in Heaven, so you'll have to make sure there's

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**Master of Heaven and Earth**

A chat with Mike Stemmle

In contrast to so many of the seemingly committee-designed games coming onto the market, *Afterlife* is a very personal creation—though admittedly it is backed by all the formidable expertise and market-clout of LucasArts—so PC Gamer went directly to the source. Project Leader Mike Stemmle to find out What's Going On.

Not unexpectedly, Mike's comments did not make for a typical cut-and-dried interview:

**PCG:** This sounds like the zaniest game to come along since Sam and Max...

**M.S.:** "Zany" is one word, but I think "warped" is more appropriate.

**PCG:** How did the inspiration come to you?

**M.S.:** I guess I started a few years ago, when a bunch of us were sitting around taking pot-shots at "cut-and-dried" software, and we started riffing on the Carmen San Diego series and how that had been milked to death, and naturally somebody suggested the title Where in the Hell Is Carmen San Diego?

At about the same time, I decided that, after Sam and Max, I'd really had my fill of adventure games, and that I was starting to really enjoy Theme Park and SimCity 2000, games like that. The third factor was that I've always been a big fan of Dante's Inferno. At some point, all three strands of thought connected and the light bulb popped on in my head, and surprisingly enough, the company read my proposal and bit.

**PCG:** Is reincarnation a form of "promotion," or can you be reincarnated downward, as a centipede or something?

**M.S.:** I've dodged that issue. Basically, after a soul has finished its assigned time in Heaven or Hell, it goes to a "Karma Station," via the "Soul Train," of course, and they head toward these cosmic portals where they're transported to the planet where they live their next life.

The two afterlife planes are not stable places: all sorts of disasters can happen. Hell can freeze over. Heaven can get the blues, there's a 'Disco Inferno' that occasionally rumbles through and makes a total mess of things. As you can gather, there are more puns in this game than are really safe or legal.

**PCG:** How did you get around the possible reaction of the religious right? I mean, you are flirting deliciously with blasphemy, here.

*Continued on page 38...*
"Hell can freeze over, Heaven can get the blues, there’s a ‘Disco Inferno’ that occasionally rumbles through and makes a total mess of things. As you can gather, there are more puns in this game than are really safe or legal.”

— Mike Stemmle, Afterlife project leader

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**SCOO!**

Your first look at...

**M.S.** Yeah, that’s why we set it in an alien world. But the aliens are sort of humanoid-looking, big-jawed, ping-pong-eyed. Muppet-looking creatures. I saw no point in opening the can of worms of individual religious beliefs — what matters in the game is what the alien souls believe about the afterlife, vis-a-vis their own culture.

For the same reason, we keep the God concept rather nebulous. You have overlord bosses, so to speak, but they remain aloof and offstage — you can project whatever image you’re comfortable with when you’re thinking about them or dealing with them.

**PCG:** Is there a definite goal to the game, a point at which you “win”?

**M.S.** No, like most sim games, the goal is just to keep building a bigger and better afterlife, really. Now, there are some losing scenarios — if you bungle the job, the unnamed Powers That Be will unleash the Four Surfers of the Apocalypse and just wipe out your whole afterlife creation. Or, your planet could suffer a terminal catastrophe, and without a continual supply of fresh souls, your afterlife will just wither and die. You have to be careful not to employ more Demons and Angels than you need, because, after all, fickle hands are the Devil’s playthings, and they’ll become unruly and start launching raids against the opposing realm. From time to time, you need to raise the wages of sin, just to keep the operation humming along.

I’d like to emphasize that we have over 200 different punishments and rewards. One of my favorites is “Taco Hell,” which is a Gluttony punishment a nice little eatery where not only are the dishes too hot to touch, but the food is scaldingly inedible. In the Heaven plane, we have the “Dream-a-Dice,” where you can live out your dreams or other peoples’ dreams. And then there’s the “Lava Lamps of Lust,” where souls get blasted into gooey lumps of matter that burn with desire but cannot actually touch each other.

**PCG:** So, what is it in a nutshell?

**M.S.** It’s the first absurdist, surrealistic sim-game. It will be for Windows 95 and DOS. It will be all things to all players. And it will be perfect when it slips.

**PCG:** Can we quote you on that?

**M.S.** If you do, you’ll burn in Hell forever.

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Game development has a full head of steam, and the product should be in the stores about a month or so after this issue of PC Gamer hits the stands.

Afterlife may be the strangest game you’ll ever play. It is a serious strategy game, with plenty of depth, about one of Humankind’s most persistent ontological issues, but it’s done so whimsically, so light-heartedly, that it promises to turn the conventions of the sim genre inside-out. I, for one, can’t wait to get my hands on it!
Everything from games to reference to "real-world" entertainment.

Take 2 CD-ROMs for $9.95 ea.
Plus 1 more at great savings! (See details below.)

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Introducing Descent II.

10 new weapons, 30 new levels.

Toggle floodlights, afterburner speed doubler.

Twice the 360-degree insanity.

You're going down.

Again.

30 new mind-twisting levels • 10 new destructive weapons systems including the fully automatic Gauss Cannon. • Pure 360-degree 3D madness!

New "guidebot" ally leads you through levels. • Toggle beam floodlights that turn on and off. • Afterburner that doubles your speed.
30 new robot enemies with advanced artificial intelligence. They learn your moves, react and kill. * Modem and 8-player network play with player controlled surveillance cameras.

Download the 3-level demo at http://www.interplay.com

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Product Information Number 124
Everybody loves the underdog, especially wargaming fans. So this new simulation of the Civil War has the right title — and all the right elements — for success.

—T. Liam McDonald

Designed by long-time wargamer Jeffery Fiske, Impressions' Civil War General may just be what wargamers and CW buffs have been longing for. CWG feels like a Civil War version of Steel Panthers, with very sharp high-res graphics, a good interface, and plenty of depth under the hood. The project found its genesis in another Impressions title — Front Lines — which had some interesting potential that it never quite fulfilled.

“This game started off as a high-end graphical Civil War version of Front Lines,” Fiske acknowledges. “That was a high-quality graphics program which, if it had done a little more time in development, would have had much better gameplay. So, we started to do a Front Line conversion, and started moving further and further away from it as we went on. We finally wound up with what we have now, which is very sophisticated graphically, and has a very detailed game engine. Games like Panzer General — which was fun and had ease of use — came out in this time

Game: Robert E. Lee's Civil War General
Developer: Impressions
Publisher: Sierra, 3380 148th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007
(800) 757-7707
Projected Price: N/A
Amount Done: 75%

In a nutshell:
A Civil War game with the good looks and playability of SSI's Steel Panthers.

What's so special?
There are seven battles and a full campaign game, online history, and extensive use of reenactment footage.

Why should I care?
Civil War games are rare enough, but good Civil War games are even more rare. This one might just be one of the good ones.

And when's it coming out?
April
The distinctive art of Mort Kunstler will not only be used on the cover of Robert E. Lee's Civil War General, but also throughout the game itself.

The online multimedia history offers biographies, tactics, and history to provide a backdrop for the game.

The distinctive art of Mort Kunstler will not only be used on the cover of Robert E. Lee's Civil War General, but also throughout the game itself.
JetFighter III

Global peace through deadly force

Last year was a pretty good one for air-combat aficionados — and if JetFighter III is any indication, 1996 could be even better.

—Stephen Poole

Developing flight sims must be one of the most gut-wrenching experiences in the software industry. On the one hand, you’ve got to try to satisfy the thirst for realism of the serious simulation enthusiasts — the ones who seem to be able to rattle off the roll rates, thrust measurements, and armament variations for every warplane created over the past 40 years. These serious sim buffs — call ‘em the “hard-core” crowd — won’t shy from telling anyone and everyone if there’s a technical flaw in a game, and that’s not the sort of word-of-mouth publicity anyone wants.

But what good is achieving complete authenticity in flight models and cockpit design if the only people who truly appreciate it are actual pilots — or gamers who’ve flown so many sims over the years that they could probably qualify in an F-16 tomorrow? No, the magic of any PC game is in its ability to take the user into another realm — and it doesn’t help someone suspend his disbelief and experience the thrill of flight when he has to plow through a weighty manual, or spend several nights memorizing keyboard commands just to stay alive for more than 30 seconds during combat.

Finding that perfect blend of realism and playability is sort of the Philosopher’s Stone of flight-sim development, and it’s at the very heart of Mission Studios’ upcoming JetFighter III, the long-awaited sequel to JetFighter II: Advanced Tactical Fighter. I’ve been playing an early version of the game for a couple of weeks now, and unless something goes seriously wrong over the next couple of months, this could be the best all-around jet combat sim for some time to come.

Matthew Harmon, vice-president of development at Mission Studios, doesn’t beat around the bush about his goals for the product. “We want to be real up-front about this: We are not trying to make the ultimate, precise, end-all military flight simulator,” he says. “We don’t want people to even begin to think that’s what JetFighter III is about. Our goal is to make people feel like they’re flying
an airplane, and we want to do anything we can to achieve that."

That's just the sentiment espoused by Robert Dinnerman, creator of the first two JetFighter games and the Amiga classic, F/A-18 Interceptor, and the man responsible for some of the amazing technological achievements that lie beneath the user-friendly exterior of JFIII.

"The one most important thing in a flight sim is whatever it is that makes you feel as if you're really there," Dinnerman says. "You could toss out all the glitz and still be immersed in this environment — where you feel like you're really participating. That's the key."

One of the things that'll make you feel as if you're participating is the way the sim has been structured. You play the role of a pilot in the United Nations Rapid Deployment Force, stationed aboard the aircraft carrier U.S.N. Peacemaker. And you really are on board a ship. Smoothly scrolling first-person cinematic sequences take you from your cabin to the ship's library (which features an excellent online military encyclopedia with data on more than 50 craft and weapons) to briefing and debriefing rooms — you can even check out the menu that's being served in the galley each day, or check on e-mail from around the world.

You'll definitely fly the F-22, (which, in reality, is a ground-based fighter, not designed for aircraft carrier service), and there will be at least two other aircraft available. Mission Studios was a little tight-lipped as to exactly what those jets would be, but likely candidates include the Navy's F-14 and F-18, and a "mystery" plane that is not a U.S. fighter.

Harmon says a lot of time was spent creating a modular design for JFIII, one that would allow for easy expansion.

"We wanted to make an open-ended system that could use 'plug-in' stories — every campaign is really like a story," Harmon explains. "We also wanted some story ideas that would show off our scenery and terrain technology; that's why we ended up in Argentina and Chile. The story may be just a little sci-fi, but that's a pretty volatile region, so it's also grounded in reality — and the variety of terrain in those areas really lets us show off Bob's terrain engine."

And talk about showing off terrain! During the course of the sim's 100-plus missions, gamers will fly over more than two million miles of scenery — an incredible number, made even more mind-boggling when you consider that it's all real-world, texture-mapped terrain of breathtaking quality.

"For JFIII, Bob created a true, perspective-correct texture engine," says Harmon. "The problem with that is that it's slower than a 'fake' texture engine — the kind where you see the ground bending and warping — but it's worth it, because that warping completely destroys altitude cues which are so important to a pilot. So Bob said, 'Hey,

I'm going to do it the right way even if it's a little bit slower, because computers are getting twice as fast every year, and they'll soon grow into it.' What amazes me is that he still managed to make the damn thing run fast."

Other impressive features in JFIII include a very smooth virtual cockpit; moving and pitching carrier surfaces during landing and takeoff; translucent clouds and smoke (yes, you can really see through them!); and realistic missile trails. Harmon is especially proud of the missile trails.

"They're really just a by-product of the [translucent] cloud technology," Harmon says. "But I think when we look back at it those missile trails are going to be one of the most important features of JetFighter III, because it really gives you an idea of the scope of the battle that's taking place — where everybody is and all the weapons that are out there flying around."

But there probably won't be a lot of "looking back" with JFIII, because Dinneman built the game's graphics engine to last a long, long time.

"My original concept [when designing the engine] was to not have any limits. The only limitation would be memory and processing power, and of course both of these things will only increase with time," Dinneman says. "Given those things, the engine, which has been in the works for quite some time now, is designed to handle as much detail as [3D Scenery Designer] Mike Woodley can create."

What's even more amazing is that, in addition to providing new, better scenery and missions, add-on disks will actually enhance the basic JFIII engine itself.

"There are most definitely going to be more features and improvements on the engine itself in every mission disk that's released — no doubt about that," says Dinnerman. "Modem and network play, for instance, won't be in the first release — we were more concerned with getting the engine running as flawlessly as we could — but it's an extremely high priority for the first mission disk."

There are also plans to support VR helmets and the new breed of 3D accelerator cards, but both Harmon and Dinneman say they'll have to wait and see which products set the standards in those respective areas before making firm plans.

There's a ton of technology crammed into JFIII; that's why it took so long to complete. But while everyone at both Mission Studios and RD Technologies is justifiably proud of the technological achievements, it all boils down to what Harmon says: "The important thing to us is that you feel like you're flying — and the word you've got to underline four or five times is 'feel.' We think JetFighter III does that pretty damned well."
DO YOU EVER WISH YOU WERE 60 FEET TALL, HAD CANNONS FOR ARMS, GUIDED MISSILES ON YOUR SHOULDERS AND COULD FLY AROUND AND KICK ROBOT BUTT?

WEIRD, US TOO.

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— Denny Atkin
Computer Gaming World
Where Gamers Gather

The Total Entertainment Network gears up for the big time

The Total Entertainment Network (TEN) is one of the most promising entrants in the burgeoning field of online game services. One thing that immediately sets TEN apart from the competition is a commitment to a specific demographic: computer gamers between the ages of 18 and 35. This is reflected in the number and quality of the game titles they've acquired, as well as the interface they've designed.

Titles currently available on the beta test version of TEN include Terminal Velocity, Duke Nukem 3D, and CivNet, the online version of Sid Meier's classic Civilization. Other titles that TEN has confirmed include Panzer General, Space Traders: 2525, SimCity, Shadow Warrior, Blood, and the eagerly-awaited Falcon 4.0. All these games will be available to users in multiplayer format, and TEN is hard at work acquiring even more titles. Most of these games will ship with the TEN connection software built onto their CD-ROMs, so that each TEN subscriber doesn't have to buy and install every game; rather, they play any of the games they already own that support the TEN connection.

But even with this impressive lineup of available online games, TEN is determined not to be a one-dimensional, games-only network. Besides such typical services as E-mail, file areas, and chat rooms, TEN will offer seamless integration with other Internet resources, allowing users to use their existing Internet tools, such as Netscape, without leaving TEN itself.

Although they've been beta-testing in the San Francisco area for a while and have been working on development for many years now, TEN isn't scheduled for a major launch until the end of 1996. TEN began as a merger of two older online gaming networks: Outland and Planet Optigon, and determined from the outset to address what they saw as a lack of quality multiplayer games on the Internet. "This is our territory," said Daniel Goldman, the president of TEN. "We've been doing this a long time. We're going to be the best."

The service's interface is sleek and attractive, and users will be able to customize it to suit their mood. They can also upload any graphic file they want to represent themselves online. Another note: this service is for adults only. You must be 18 or over to play. Part of the reasoning behind this was to neatly sidestep the whole issue of censoring content, which causes so many problems on other services. TEN hopes that their users will be mature enough and rational enough to behave like adults while online, without some sort of nanny Chat Host watching over them.

One idea they're kicking around to deal with troublemakers is to set up a Purgatory room. The way it would work is if everyone in a chatroom agreed you were just too obnoxious, you would be booted into a special misfits chatroom just for your kind, with no way to leave.

Another thing they hope to do is put together virtual environments where characters can interact (a replacement of text-based chatrooms) and to eventually allow users to create their own custom chat environments.

To access TEN, you'll first need an Internet PPP dial-up account, as there will be no local access numbers. That means you will be paying both for your local Internet provider and for the TEN network. TEN doesn't see this as a long-term problem, though, as more and more big telecom companies offer Internet access as part of a basic package, and connection rates for Internet service should drop dramatically.

TEN's proposed rate structure is comparable to other online services: there is a basic $9.95 fee for five hours and $2.95 for each hour after that. The current system requirements are a 486+ platform, Super VGA graphics, a 9600-baud modem and a CD-ROM drive, as the service will be distributed via CD-ROM. For the time being, TEN will be DOS-based, although there will also be a Macintosh version — although we're not sure what that will mean, given the small number of games on the Mac.
On the ViRGe...

S3 introduces 64-bit graphics accelerator chip

For a while, PC owners have tolerated the arrogant bragging of game console owners, whose toys feature superior 3D graphics at a fraction of a PC's price. Even though comparing an Intel processor to a game chip is something like comparing a semi truck to a scooter, consoles are designed for one purpose — games — and so 3D graphics hardware is built-in.

But the end is near for game consoles; this year the first wave of 3D accelerators will be available for the PC. It's a competitive field, but one of the largest manufacturers of graphics chips, S3, is poised to take PC graphics to the next level.

S3's new "ViRGe" line of 64-bit graphic accelerator chips will be used on third-party vendor add-in cards, as card-makers are usually among the first to adapt new technologies. Companies such as Diamond, Orchid, Hercules, and Number Nine have endorsed the new chip, and many are developing new 3D cards around the ViRGe chip. Hercules, for one, has already debuted its ViRGe-based Terminator 64/3D, which should retail for around $239.

By the end of the year, OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) will be incorporating the ViRGe directly into systems, adding only about $50 to systems prices. By that time, Microsoft's Direct3D API should be in place and fully supported, so any properly designed game will run on any system, taking full advantage of whatever 3D hardware is on-board.

The key to 3D graphics is of the demanding graphics processing burden off the system CPU, allowing designers to attempt much more ambitious visuals without slowing overall game performance. So far, this has meant concentration on two main graphic components: geometry, and the actual object rendering.

The geometric calculations are handled by the processor. Rotating and translating the objects according to the viewpoint of the user requires millions of calculations per second, something easily handled by a Pentium processor.

But rendering the graphics — actually drawing them, and covering them with realistic textures — is left to the pixel-processing hardware that chips like the ViRGe are designed for. By taking care of those processor-intensive advanced graphics techniques, such as tri-linear MIP mapping and other rendering functions, the accelerator free's up the Pentium to calculate the next frame, vastly increasing overall speed.

And now, the techno-talk: The ViRGe 3d graphics engine supports all these features, as well as its own proprietary MUX buffering, which allows for Z-buffering with no additional memory requirement. Working together, the ViRGe and your processor can create real-time, photorealistic 3D environments unheard of in PC Gaming. Doom meets Myst.

The ViRGe also does what your typical higher-end graphics card on the market does today, including 2D Windows GUI acceleration and MPEG-1 audio/video decoding. It supports high screen resolutions of 256 colors at 1280x1024, 64,000 colors at 1024x768, and even 16 million colors at 800x600. Furthermore, it includes drivers for all major operating systems, including OS/2, and even non-x86 CPU support for Power PCs. The ViRGe will be available in 1 MB, 2 MB and 4 MB DRAM configurations.

The potential is exciting. 3D acceleration technology actually gives game developers a way to develop superior games with far less time wasted worrying about hardware. It's a watershed event, comparable to the introduction of sound cards, CD-ROMs, or the original VGA card.

One final word of advice: sell those PlayStations this summer, while you can still get a good price for them.
UP IN THE HEAVENS,
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From the creators of Master of Orion, Computer Gaming World’s 1994 Premier Award winner, comes the sequel you’ve been waiting for.

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Product Information Number 133
Online Adventure

Sierra On-Line is at work on The Realm

Most computer roleplaying games aren't true roleplaying games at all; roleplaying means taking on the role of an imaginary character and then interacting with others doing the same. On the other hand, online RPGs have tried to get back to the original concept, from text-based MUDs (Multi-User Dungeons) on the Internet to early ventures such as INN's Shadows of Yserbius and AOL's Red Dragon Inn. Still, no one has quite pulled off a full-blown, graphically attractive, multi-user online campaign yet.

That may change. Sierra On-Line is now at work on something called The Realm, which will offer graphical adventuring over an Internet TCP/IP connection. You can band with other adventurers to explore the land, fight horrible monsters, and then return to the taverns to brag of your prowess in a nice, cozy chatroom.

Currently, system requirements are listed as a 486/50; 8MB of RAM; a 9600 modem; Win 3.1 or 95; SuperVGA; and a SLIP/PPP Internet account. As of press time, it was still possible to register for a free beta tester account. Point your web browser to http://www.realmserver.com/ and check it out.
An update on OS/2 gaming

A tiny band of rebels still defies the gargantuan might of the overlords, bravely fighting on when all seems lost. No, we're not talking about a new Star Wars game here, but about OS/2 users who scorn Microsoft's Windows 95 — and continuously bombard us with complaints about a lack of coverage for their platform. After all this is PC Gamer, not Microsoft Gamer, they say, and so this month we've a little peace offering for the holdouts.

A newcomer to OS/2 publishing called Warped Software is preparing Blade Warriors, a game that puts you in roller blades and sends people out trying to kill you — all for the benefit of some jaded television audience of the future. This game promises to be a fast-paced action game, hardly common among native OS/2 titles. The game features 2-8 player TCP/IP connections, configurable "gore" levels, and numerous arenas and terrain types to challenge even the most adept skater. Look for it toward the end of March.

Another OS/2 loyalist, Stardock, is famous for Galactic Civilizations, billed as the number one OS/2 game of all time. Practically unknown outside the OS/2 world, die-hard galactic emperors swear by this sci-fi strategy game. The sequel, Galactic Civilizations 2, features a revamped interface, updated graphics, automatic research management (a big headache in the original), and improvements on the computer player's AI. Stardock also deserves a galaxy of credit for offering upgrades from the original version for half the retail price. For more information, call (313) 453-3328, or visit the Stardock website at http://seolone.com/~stardock.

Somewhat belatedly, Maxis has released the OS/2 version of SimCity 2000, the updated classic of the original SimCity, as well as SimTown and Widget Workshop, two children's titles. SimCity 2000, in case you didn't know, lets you build and manage an entire metropolis through the decades. All of these titles are available now, to order call (800) 525-2947.

And one more gaming tidbit: A good web site for finding info on how to optimize your DOS games under OS/2 is http://eye-lab.msu.edu/os2games/.

Galactic Civilizations was the first major OS/2 game. Will Galactic Civilizations 2 be the last?

Continued from page 52

bare feet, and will need to find boots as well as weapons.

The second game, Die Harder, is billed as a traditional arcade game. You'll chase the terrorists through the besieged Washington International Airport on foot and on a snowmobile.

Die Hard With a Vengeance puts you behind the wheel for some terrorist-chasing, street-racing driving. You'll use fifteen different vehicles, everything from a Yugo to a Ferrari, as you finally take the fight to those pesky terrorists.

Bare feet and a Yugo? Don't ask me. But three games from three movies on one CD sounds like a good idea to me. Look for it this Spring. Yippie ki yay...

----------Continued on page 55

"This already looks like the best game of the year."
-Strategy Plus

"...my vote for best game of the show...
-Computer Game Review

DUNGEON KEEPER PC-CD (for more information) http://www.sci.com/billing.html

Product Information Number 106
“I just escaped two poachers, brought down a wildebeest, and kept a pack of hyenas at bay... all before lunch!”

Here’s a game you can really sink your teeth into.

You are "the King of Beasts," in this incredible wildlife simulation. Experience the thrill of the hunt! Sniff out prey. Attack the stray buffalo. Pounce on gazelles. Feast on zebras. Life is good when you're King... or is it? Poachers and predators abound. Food and water are scarce. It's 'Survival of the Fittest' in the brutal wilderness of the African Serengeti.

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Hone your killer instincts. Master the skills of survival. Choose from 5 difficulty levels in the free-form simulation, then dominate the vast terrain. Fast, fluid 3-D graphics and dynamic sounds create the ultimate simulation. Experience the ferocious power of Lion today! Where else can you be rewarded for your animal behavior?

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SANCTUARY WOODS®
Product Information Number 144
Game-Weaving on the Web

Conquer the White House — or even the Galaxy!

Make that browse do something useful — play some games on the World Wide Web. Although the WWW may be the worst gaming platform to date, it's not for want of trying. There's a lot of creative efforts out there, and here's a quick look at some of the best.

Reinventing America may sound like a campaign slogan, but in fact it's a web-based political game. As the '96 election race heats up, you can get involved by participating in this virtual political arena. More than 2,000 participants vote, debate, and form political alliances as they deal with the great issues of the day.

There's no cost to play: you merely need to register as a user on the system. Check out this interesting blend of politics, the Internet, and sim gaming at http://www.pathfinder.com/reinventing/ as soon as possible.

Although this game has been in progress for a while, the same team is launching a new presidential race game, allowing you to become a campaign manager for a virtual candidate. Again, the game is free for all users, merely requiring you to register. Check it out at http://www.crossover.com/pres96.

If becoming leader of the whole galaxy is more your style, definitely check out Stellar Crisis. The first and only Web-based multiplayer science fiction conquest game, it's something you just have to see. Stellar Crisis lets players build ships, colonize planets, attack each other, and even chat. The server updates each player's page every three to five minutes, so it's perfect to run on your desktop while doing other — ahem — work.

Take your forms-compliant browser to http://www.liberty.net.org:8080/sc and stomp some planets.

"All right troops, through the fence and watch for exploding robots." It sounds like Total Mayhem is about to break out!

Another Domark title due out this Spring is Flying Nightmares 2, an air combat sim. You have your choice of the Harrier jumpjet or the Super-Cobra attack helicopter, as you battle a resurgent communist threat. The multiplayer option will allow up to eight networked players to duke it out in team vs. team aerial combat.

Fully compatible with the Yamaha and S3 graphics accelerators, Flying Nightmares 2 will be one of the first multiplayer aerial combat games to take advantage of the new built-in 3D graphics hardware.

PC Gamer Empire Map

Help is available.

Plants

Sold

Systems

M.C.

Dictionary

Click on a system for a map view.

Here's the map system where you'll run your Stellar Crisis Empire. Witness the powerful PC Gamer Empire just before it conquers the entire known galaxy.

Each empire chooses an icon to represent them on the starmap. Gosh, they're ugly!
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- Computer Gaming World

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The Association of Shareware Professionals goes online

The Association of Shareware Professionals (ASP) has long been seen as the leader of the shareware community, and they've recently expanded their presence onto the Internet with a new ftp site and web site.

The ASP has a membership of more than 1500 developers. The association's stated purpose is to promote shareware as an alternative form of software marketing and to supports its members with distribution.

Through traditional marketing, instead they release an evaluation copy of their software, be it a spreadsheet or an arcade game, to the public through bulletin boards and the Internet. Although the quality of these releases can vary, there have been some excellent, landmark products over the years that started out as shareware. PKZip, Eudora, Netscape and — of course — Doom, to name but a few, all got their start as shareware.

Thenware companies depend on users to register their products after they try them, paying a small fee for the full version of the program. For games, this typically involves a bunch of new levels, plus things like cheat codes, additional weapons, more enemies, level editors — in short, a full package.

Now you can visit the Association of Shareware Professionals' Internet sites, and check out the latest offerings. The website address is http://www.asp-shareware.org, while the ftp site is ftp://ftp.asp-shareware.org.

The ASP also maintains the ASPFORUM forum on CompuServe and the ASP forum on the Microsoft Network. When you download those shareware titles, remember to support their authors as well, so they can continue to produce creative, innovative, and inexpensive alternatives to commercial retail software. It's the right thing to do.
The most radical game on the PC is about to kick your butt! It's Arcade America, the only CD-ROM game that truly separates the tough guys from the mondo weenies. Get One! (now)

Satisfaction Guaranteed

Visit your retailer for a free demo or download the Arcade America promo from the Web (www.7thllevel.com) in AOL, MSN, CompuServe or Prodigy use SEVENTH. For more information or to place an order, call 1-800-884-8863, ext. 124.
The Ultimate Gamer

Could IBM's new Aptiva be it?

Car lovers dream about Maserats, audiophiles about their own home recording studio, and computer gamers about, well, the perfect game machine.

IBM hopes they've hit on the latter, as they've just released a limited edition machine called the Ultimate Gamer, from their popular Aptiva line (yes, the one with the annoying world-music-type commercials, and George Clinton standing on a rock in the desert).

The Aptiva M91 features a 133MHz Pentium, 16MB of RAM, a 28.8/14.4 data/fax modem, and two — count 'em, two — 1.5GB hard drives. It's fully loaded for Multimedia too, with a 6x CD-ROM drive, an IBM Mwave sound card complete with speakers and a subwoofer, and one of those new-fangled 3D accelerator cards, a Matrox MGA Millennium.

The Ultimate Gamer comes bundled with quite a few games too: Descendant, Cyberia, Silent Steel, Jack Nicklaus Golf, Endorfun, Pinball: The Mayan Adventure, 3D Pinball, Flight Unlimited, and an enhanced version of NASCAR. And to play all these games, there's a brand new Logitech Wingman Extreme joystick.

Oh, and just in case you're feeling a little guilty about using all this horsepower just for a few games, IBM has thrown in quite a few non-gaming titles, too, under a heading it calls, appealingly enough, "Productivity." Here you'll find spreadsheets, word processors, and other action titles.

Whether you become more productive, of course, is up to you.

But all this is just icing on the cake. What you're paying for is power: a very fast CPU, 16 meg of RAM, over three Gigabytes of storage, and all the latest multimedia gadgets and doodads pre-installed and pre-configured.

The price? A mere $4,495, including a 17" monitor. But if you're still out of the loop at this point, you might as well go for the 17" monitor option, at only $4,995. Call IBM's direct sales line at (800) 426-7255 for details, but hurry: supplies are, we're told, limited.

The PC Gamer Playlist

It's quite a challenge playing every single game that comes out, and the only way we can do it is by giving up sleep altogether. Although the sleepless lifestyle is rough at first, after the first few months it's not so bad. We've actually gotten quite good at it, and have come to enjoy it. Anyway, the games must go on. Here's who's playing what:

1. Warcraft II/Blizzard Entertainment — Everybody
2. Command & Conquer/ Virgin Interactive Entertainment — Dan, Todd
3. The Dig/ LucasArts
4. CyberMage/ Origin — Dan, Jason
5. Capitalism/Interactive Magic — Jason, Carol, Joe
6. Beavis and Butthead/ Viacom New Media — Everyone
7. Descendent II/PlayWay Productions — Mike, Dean
8. Heroes of Might & Magic/New World Computing — Jason, Joe
9. Destruction Derby/Sony Interactive — Dan, Dean, Carol
10. EF2000/ Ocean of America — Todd, Dan, Jason

Warcraft II's orcs are tough.
The CHaDs Has just begun

Check out our hot new Web site at: http://www.nwcomputing.com
The city lies before you ripe for the taking. Your forces are ready to rip through it killing, intimidating, bribing or extorting anyone who gets in your way. Victory is assured...until this guy shows up.

- Multiplayer compatibility for up to 6 players over network and/or modem
- Over 10 different gangs, a dozen scenarios, and 50 different weapons technologies to research
- Intuitive “point and click” interface
- Diverse scenario objectives

Available at your local software retailer or order direct from New World Computing at 1-800-251-9562. (818) 397-1216 outside the U.S.), or by mail: P.O. Box 4302 Hollywood, CA 90078-9302.

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Product Information Number 135
INTRODUCING NCAA CHAMPION

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Home court floor graphics, team colors and fans-in-the-stands signage give you the whole flavor of the NCAA college hoops experience.

Advanced Artificial Intelligence.
Wild student sections bring built-in home court advantage to life. Players improve over four years. Performance varies with game pressure, age and skill ratings.

4,500 Frames of Player Animation.
Over 100 player moves include alley-oops, slam dunks and behind-the-back dribbling. All with real-time SGI motion-capture graphics. If it were any more realistic, you'd see it on the 11 o'clock news.
TO THE DANCE?

Even the bench gets into the action. Coaches pace the sidelines when the score’s tight, and keep you pumped up when you’re on a run. By analyzing stats, developing game strategies, and recruiting prospects, you get into the action, too.

Options make the game more realistic. You can choose between exhibitions, regular season games, or tournament play—from 2-min. to 20-min. halves. And control tempo, pick the rules, and decide who’s a walk-on and who’s an All-American.

Better perfect your moves, 'cause there are 63 NCAA challengers who wanna go, too.

It’s a college dream come true.
It’s about adrenaline. Bragging rights. And wall-to-wall basketball.
Welcome to the nirvana of college hoops. The Big Dance.
The NCAA Basketball Tournament.
It’s 64 of the top Division I teams in the country. Playing in their own colors. In their own arenas. With all the excitement of the college crowds and rivalries built-in.
And artificial intelligence so advanced, your players’ skills actually improve as they go from true freshmen to savvy seniors.
Consider this your official invitation. An “at-large” bid to the celebration they call March Madness.
Lace up your high-tops, Cinderella. ’Cause you’re going to the dance.

GTE Entertainment

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Product Information Number 119
The Year's Best Games

It may be the hardest thing we do all year — picking the year's best games out of a raft of excellent titles.

by the Editors of PC Gamer

Normally, this is where you'd read a lengthy explanation of how we go about picking the winners — the highly scientific, computerized process we use to determine which games deserve the PC Gamer Award.

But we're not going to kid you. We picked the best of the best the old-fashioned way: we sat everybody down and argued about it.

After a nice Christmas lunch at one of the Bay area's nicer eateries, we all headed back to the office, stuffed and sleepy, and hole up in a claustrophobic conference room, where we cajoled, persuaded, and contradicted each other for hours. We didn't come out until we had a list of winners we could all agree on.

It's early January as we go to press, and here they are, as we see 'em — the best PC games of 1995.
Game of the Year

Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness

Developers: Blizzard Entertainment
Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment
19840 Pioneer Ave.
Torrance, CA 90403
(310) 793-0060

Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness is the game that made the list this year. The attention to detail and variety within the game make it a standout of 1995.

Frankly, this one was easy. There were plenty of other great games in 1995, but no one loved the real-time strategy action of Warcraft II more than the staff at PC Gamer.

With this one, the talented and dedicated people at Blizzard clearly did exactly what you have to do if you want to develop a terrific game: they kept the players in mind at every step of the way. They started with a fantastic game — Warcraft: Orcs and Humans, one of the finest, most addictive games of 1994, and a runner-up for last year’s Best Strategy Game award — and they listened very closely to the suggestions of fans and critics as they designed its sequel.

The result was Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness, a sequel that was in every way superior to its excellent predecessor. There were larger maps — some of them four times the size of the maps in Warcraft. An improved interface made it much easier to select groups of Orcs or Humans and send them into battle. The gorgeous Super VGA graphics took our breath away. The new buildings and military units included naval and airborne assets like destroyers, submarines, zeppelins, and dragons. The scenario editor and a random mission generator made sure the game was always fresh, even after we’d completed the preset campaign missions. The sly humor, the expanded multi-player options; all these elements combined to make Warcraft II stand out — way out — as the most impressive, most entertaining, game of 1995, and one we’ll be playing long into 1996. We can’t wait to see what new wonders Blizzard has in store for us this year.

Best Action Game

MechWarrior 2

Developers: Activision
Publisher: Activision
11601 Wilshire Blvd.
Suite 1000
Los Angeles, CA 90025
(800) 477-3650

This one was a long time in coming, but it truly was worth the wait. Activision insisted that the follow-up to MechWarrior should be light-years ahead of the original — and the competition — even to the point of scrapping a game design that was well under way and starting almost from scratch with a new team.

Activision probably didn’t make many friends with that move — not even among gamers, who were eager to get their hands on the new MechWarrior game — but their determination to produce the best game possible paid off in spades. MechWarrior II has everything an action game needs — beautiful graphics; great sound effects; smooth animation, even at high resolution; lots of options; and tons of firepower — all set against the wonderfully rich background of FASA’s Battletech universe.

There aren’t a whole bunch of giant-battling-robot games on the market — but even if they were as numerous as Doom clones, it’s clear that MechWarrior II would be the best of them.
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Product Information Number 172
Adventure Game

Beavis and Butt-Head in Virtual Stupidity

Publisher: Viacom New Media
Developer: Viacom New Media
1615 Broadway
New York, NY 10036
(800) 468-2539

No, we're not kidding. Beavis and Butt-Head in Virtual Stupidity really was the best adventure of 1995. And we're not just saying that because we're big fans of MTV's willfully stupid and endlessly hilarious delinquent duo. It's also because Beavis and Butt-Head does so well at what it sets out to do.

This game is a textbook example of the right way to bring material from another medium to PC gaming. It's not at all what we've come to expect from a game based on a TV license — i.e., a mediocre game that's expected to sell, not because it's entertaining, but because it's attached to a famous name or two. Instead, it's a solid graphic adventure that just happens to be about Beavis and Butt-Head. If you don't like the boys, you probably won't like Virtual Stupidity — but we thought it was a blast. And it's probably the best PC game based on a TV show since Interplay's Star Trek: 25th Anniversary game.

Best Arcade Game

FX Fighter

Publisher: Argonaut Software
Developer: GTE Entertainment
P.O. Box 4388
Carlsbad, CA 92017
(800) GTE-TODAY

Maybe it's because some people still can't stop thinking about the PC as a serious business machine — even though it has become a fantastic platform for gaming — but really good arcade-style games are still very hard for PC gamers to come by.

GTE's FX Fighter was an exception to that rule. A one-on-one fighting game that combined all the characters and special moves found in the arcade version — and looked very nearly as good as the big coin-op machine. FX Fighter added a new twist to the now-classic stand-and-fight paradigm, with 3D, texture-mapped combatants and a roaming "camera" that moved to give the best view of the battle. Best of all, the more sophisticated graphics didn't come at a high price — FX Fighter's animation was quite smooth on a reasonably fast 486-based PC. We can only hope that FX Fighter's success means that the Mortal Kombat games will no longer be some of the only big-name arcade games adapted to the PC; meanwhile, GTE has given us something to keep us out of the arcades for a little longer.

Best CD-ROM Enhancement

TIE Fighter Collector's CD-ROM

Developer: Lucas Arts
Publisher: Lucas Arts
P.O. Box 10307
San Rafael, CA
(800) 782-7927

We're not sure how much longer this category will last, in fact. 1995 may have been its final year. Now that the great majority of PC games are coming out first on CD-ROM and skipping floppy disks entirely, an award that praises the best adaptation to CD of a floppy-based game is an endangered species. Fortunately, 1995 brought us a game that clearly deserves the honor — and, not too surprisingly, it's the sequel to the game that won our Best CD-ROM Enhancement award last year.

In producing the TIE Fighter Collector's CD-ROM, LucasArts didn't just slap their excellent, Star Wars-inspired space-combat game on a silver disc. And they didn't just shovel the original game and the add-on scenario, Defender of the Empire, onto the same disk. Instead, they added full digitized speech, new spacecraft, new missions, and — most impressive of all — high-resolution SVGA graphics. The result is an enhanced CD-ROM version that comes close to being a whole new game, and is well worth having even if you've already got the original TIE Fighter.
Best Educational Product

Elroy Goes Bugzerk

Developer: Headbone Interactive
Publisher: Headbone Interactive
Seattle, WA 98122
(206) 323-0073

The first in a series inventively titled What the Heck Will Elroy Do Next?, Elroy Goes Bugzerk follows the adventures of an irrepressible ten-year-old and his dog, Blue, as they search for a very rare bug in hopes of winning the 10th Annual Insectathon. It's an innovative graphic adventure that very sneakily teaches younger gamers about insects as they solve the problems Elroy faces.

The graphics in Elroy Goes Bugzerk are of special interest: they're far from the polished, hand-drawn-and-digitized stuff you find in most games today. In fact, they're pretty primitive, but they convey more emotion than the more sophisticated visuals in other games can manage, and they draw you into the action despite themselves. The game's sense of humor is perfectly aimed at its intended audience, and the story is well-written and engaging. Elroy Goes Bugzerk does better job of hiding educational content in an entertaining game than any other title from 1995.

Best Multi-Player Game

Warcraft II

Developer: Blizzard Entertainment
Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment
19840 Pioneer Ave.
Torrance, CA 90503
(310) 793-0060

Our pick for best game of the year gets another nod for its excellent multi-player support. As with the best multi-player games, Warcraft II's modem and network options weren't just tacked on as an afterthought—they were obviously in the designers' minds throughout the development process. Setting up a multi-player session in WCII is a simple, seamless process, and as many as eight people can play the game over a local-area network.

Best Puzzle Game

3D Lemmings

Developer: Psygnosis
Publisher: Sony Interactive
2400 Broadway, Suite 510
Santa Monica, CA
(800) 825-8802

Just when we thought we'd seen everything the Lemmings had to offer, those suicidal little mop-tops came through again—this time, in 3D.

The simple premise of the Lemmings series has made it one of the most successful runs of puzzle games in PC history: these cute, fuzzy creatures march across your PC screen, unwittingly headed for oblivion, and it's your job to activate their special skills to divert them from disaster and onto the path to safety.

Always before, the silly action took place in two dimensions, but 3D Lemmings brought its familiar characters into a world of 3D, texture-mapped graphics and provided a whole new set of tools for looking at their surroundings. Suddenly, left and right weren't the only wrong turns the Lemmings could make—there were also up, down, backwards, and forwards. The game very literally added new depth to an already successful series. If you love puzzle games, 3D Lemmings should be in your collection.
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Product Information Number 159
THE 11TH HOUR
{the five stages.}

1 Shock.
You finally figure out The 7th Guest*, only to hear that its sequel, The 11th Hour is going to be released.

2 Disbelief.
This can't be true! You read the articles, memorize the reviews, & talk incessantly about The 11th Hour. Friends shun you.

3 Resentment.
They said it would be out, and you believed them. Where is it?! Why would they lie to you?!

4 Acceptance.
It's out!!! Finally! It's everything they said it would be & more. Now, if you could just figure out what is behind the....

5 Death.

Visit our web site at http://www.vie.com

You can stop grieving now. The 11th Hour has finally arrived. This PC CD-ROM game fuses incredible 3-D graphics and mind-numbing challenges with a full-length psychological thriller. It's also 12 times bigger and two CDs longer than its predecessor, The 7th Guest. So, is The 11th Hour really worth the wait? Well, we think it's totally killer.

Product Information Number 176
Best Roleplaying Game

No Winner

It was a very tough call, but we ultimately decided there wouldn’t be a PC Gamer Award winner in the roleplaying category this year. Sure, some good roleplaying games were published in 1995. Thunderscape was a very good game; it brought us a glimpse into the new fantasy universe SSI has created, now that they no longer hold the rights to do games based on TSR’s Advanced Dungeons & Dragons games, and it gave us hope for much better games in the future. And borderline-role-playing games from Sir-tech, like Druid and Jagged Alliance, were impressive, too. But the last true role-playing game worthy of a PC Gamer Award was Sir-tech’s Star Trail: Realms of Arkania — and it won the 1994 award.

The good news is that 1996 should bring an upswing in the quantity and quality of roleplaying games: we should see Shadows Over Riva, the sequel to Star Trail, as well as Daggerfall, the follow-up to Bethesda Softworks’ The Elder Scrolls: Arena, which garnered runner-up status last year. With any luck, we’ll have as hard a time choosing between all the great RPGs of 1996 as we had in deciding not to choose one for 1995.

Best Simulation

Apache

Developer: Digital Integration
Publisher: Interactive Magic
P.O. Box 13491
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
(919) 461-0722

Last year was a pretty good one for simulations, with excellent flight games like EF2000, Flight Unlimited, and Apache, and system simulations like Capitalism. When all was said and done, though, we had to give the nod to Apache for its appeal to a wide range of gamers.

With all of its difficulty and realism options cranked up to maximum, Apache can be played as a hard-core simulation of the world’s best attack helicopter, rewarding hours and hours of practice with an experience that feels extremely true-to-life. On the other side of the coin, novice air-combat pilots — or those who simply enjoy a good shoot-em-up — can reduce the difficulty level until Apache plays like a fast-paced, no-holds-barred arcade-action game.

Take that versatility and add impressive Super VGA graphics, multiplayer options, and a highly detailed campaign mode, and you’ve got a sim package that’s hard to beat. Interactive Magic only published their first titles in 1995, and already the North Carolina-based company is building a reputation for quality sims. It’ll be interesting to see what they bring us this year.

Best Strategy Game

Command & Conquer

Developer: Westwood Studios
Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment
18001 Fitch Ave.
Irvine, CA 92714
(800) 874-4607

Not only is this real-time combat title the best strategy game we played last year, it took a back seat only to Warcraft II in the Best Multi-Player Game and Game of the Year categories. Based on Westwood Studios’ Dune II, which basically kicked off the whole real-time strategy genre, Command & Conquer pits the noble Global Defense Initiative against the terrorist organization known as the Brotherhood of Nox. It’s a fight for nothing less than world domination, fueled by greed for a mysterious new energy source known as tiberium — and you can play either side! (More likely, you’ll want to play both sides, since GDI and the Nod both have their own complete campaign games, and finishing one campaign will only leave you wanting more action.)

With multi-player options that let as many as four gamers go head-to-head, and voice acting and a rocking musical score, Command & Conquer belongs in every strategy gamer’s library.
"AN EXPONENTIAL LEAP OF CINEMATIC REALISM AND GAMEPLAY FROM THE ORIGINAL MILLION COPY BESTSELLER."

ZAK'S BACK, RESURRECTED FROM A LIVING DEATH TO PUT HIS CYBERHERO SKILLS TO THE ULTIMATE TEST.
High performance graphics and action, hot gameplay and music, two CDs of action and mystery. Like its predecessor, Cyberia² sets the new standard.
Best Sports Game

**Virtual Pool**

Developer: Celeris
Publisher: Interplay Productions
17822 Fitch Ave.
Irvine, CA 92714
(800) 969-4263

This one has a pretty big supply of multimedia flash, with its full-motion video clips on the history of pool, plus tips and trick shots executed by champion shooter "Machine Gun" Lou Bum. But that's not what made it the best sports game of 1995. It was Virtual Pool's elegant simplicity that persuaded us to call it the best game from what turned out to be a very good year for sports sims.

Before the multimedia material was added, an early version of Virtual Pool would have fit on a single floppy disk. And we're talking about everything: Super VGA 3D graphics, jaunty pool hall music, true-to-life sound effects, multi-player support, and the most uncannily realistic physics we've ever seen in a PC pool game.

And yet, as small as the core of Virtual Pool was, it provided huge entertainment value. For weeks after its release, the sounds of pool balls clacking together and dropping into the pockets was about all we heard in the PC Gamer office, and Virtual Pool is still a big hit around here.

Best Wargame

**Steel Panthers**

Developer: SSI Special Projects Groups
Publisher: SSI
675 Almanor Ave., Suite 201
Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901
(408) 737-6800

The tighter the scale of a PC wargame, the harder it is to design. It's one thing to let gamers move whole fleets and divisions across a map of the world—it's another task entirely to drop down to the tactical level, where you're dealing with individual tasks, guns, and infantry squads. Leave it to Gary Grigsby (the creator of classics like Kampfpgruppe, Second Front, and Pacific War) and SSI's Special Projects Group to tackle the job—and to succeed in style.

That Steel Panthers, a World War Two-era tactical game, works at all is an impressive achievement; that it works so very well is what earned it our award. Underneath the attractive terrain graphics and convincing sound effects is a very solid wargame, with sharp, realistic enemy AI and an easy-to-learn interface. Topping it all off is a roll-your-own scenario editor, which lets you use the game's detailed database of more than 200 types of armor and 120 weapons to create just about any battle you can imagine. This is easily one of the best tactical simulations ever developed for the PC.

And How Could We Forget...

Naturally, there were quite a few excellent games that almost wound up with the pulse-pounding honor of receiving a PC Gamer Award. We'd hate to see those games go unrecognized, so here are our runners up for 1995. Each of these games is a gem in its genre, and well worth your gaming time and money.

**Game of the Year**
- Command & Conquer, Virgin
- Crusader: No Remorse, Origin
- FIFA Soccer '96, Electronic Arts

**Best Action Game**
- Crusader: No Remorse, Origin
- Dark Forces, Lucas Arts
- Descent, Interplay

**Best Adventure Game**
- Bioforge, Origin
- Full Throttle, Lucas Arts
- Ripley's Believe It or Not: The Riddle of Master Lu, Sanctuary Woods

**Best Arcade Game**
- Full Thrill Pinball, Maxis
- Mortal Kombat 3, Acclaim

**Best CD-ROM Enhancement**
- Harpoon II Deluxe: Multimedia Edition, Capstone

**Best Educational Product**
- History Through Art, ZCI
- Kid Phonics, Davidson
- Kids World, Bit Jugglers

**Best Multi-Player Game**
- Command & Conquer, Virgin
- Descent, Interplay

**Best Simulation**
- EF2000, Ocean
- Capitalism, Interactive Magic
- Flight Unlimited, Looking Glass Technologies

**Best Strategy Game**
- Caesar II, Sierra
- Heroes of Might and Magic, New World Computing

**Best Sports Game**
- FIFA Soccer '96, Electronic Arts
- NHL '96, Electronic Arts
- Tony La Russa 3, Stormfront Studios

**Best Wargame**
- Battleground: Gettysburg, TalonSoft
- Battleground: Ardennes, TalonSoft
- Strategia, Avalon Hill
Special Achievement in Dialogue

Beavis and Butt-Head in Virtual Stupidity

Publisher: Viacom New Media

You probably think we’re a little nuts for awarding Beavis and Butt-Head a special achievement in dialogue, since, as anyone who’s seen the MTV cartoon show or played the game knows, these boys aren’t exactly known for their evocative prose. But the truth is, of all the dialogue we’ve seen this year, the only game that managed to have everyone on our staff rolling with laughter was Virtual Stupidity.

Who could forget that tension-filled moment when Butt-Head asks “Can I go when this starts to suck?” Or how about when Beavis discovers that “Air has a big schlong!” as the boys prepare to make a balloon-animal out of a condom?

Seriously, though, the quips weren’t just very funny — the dialogue in Virtual Stupidity effectively set the tone for the entire game while remaining absolutely faithful to the television show.

Special Achievement in Graphics

Flight Unlimited

Publisher: Looking Glass Technologies

The graphics wizards at Looking Glass — responsible for such innovative and impressive first-person games as the Ultima Underworld series and last year’s Best Adventure Game, System Shock — surprised everyone with the quality of their first-ever flight simulation, Flight Unlimited. While it requires the most sophisticated computer hardware on the market to be enjoyed, Flight Unlimited rewards gamers with some of the most stunning scenery ever seen in a flight sim.

Special Achievement in Innovative Design

Descent

Publisher: Interplay

1995 was a remarkably innovative year for computer games, bringing full-motion video, stellar new graphics, and clever new designs to the table. But after carefully looking over the list of titles, it always came down to Descent. This futuristic shooter went beyond even Doom, giving you unprecedented, 360-degree freedom of movement, a truly three-dimensional environment to explore, and some of the most breathtaking, hair-raising head-to-head action this side of Doom itself.

Special Achievement in an Installation Program

Command & Conquer

Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment

When they designed Virgin’s Command & Conquer, Westwood Studios proved that all installation programs are not the same. First, they made sure their program did what they all should (but frequently don’t), like making sure you’ve got enough room on your hard drive, leading you through the configuration of your sound hardware — and letting you test it before you try to run the game. Then they added graphics and sound effects that made the whole procedure fun to watch. Westwood clearly put as much thought into C&C’s installation program as some developers put into a whole game.
Special Achievement in Musical Score

**Full Throttle**

**Publisher:** LucasArts

Music is an element that often gets overlooked in game development, but it can be every bit as effective as flashy graphics or fast-paced action.

LucasArts, who've always been known for their stellar production values, pushed the sonic barrier to the limit with their hard-rockin' adventure, *Full Throttle.*

By bringing in the Gone Jackals, a down-and-dirty rock-and-roll band, LucasArts was able to deliver just the right musical score to accompany their rough-and-tumble action hero Ben throughout his biker adventure. From the catchy opening song to the crunchy closing riffs, *Full Throttle* showed the world that every game can benefit greatly from a good musical score.

LucasArts chose just the right mix of music for *Full Throttle.*

Special Achievement in Sound

**Dark Forces**

**Publisher:** LucasArts

After listening to dozens of games filled with simple, off-the-shelf beeps, buzzes and bangs, we've come to understand that creating effective and realistic sound effects for a computer game is no simple task; it takes as much thought and effort as any other element of game design.

And if your game is based on something as instantly recognizable as the legendary Star Wars universe, getting the sound right becomes even more important.

The attention to detail that went into *Dark Forces'* sound effects was evident from the moment we first ran the program. Blaster fire, shouting stormtroopers, and weird machine noises were just a few of the painstakingly accurate sound effects that helped pull us into the game and made *Dark Forces'* sound stand out from the crowd.

Get yourself a good sound card and some surround-sound speakers and really turn up the volume on *Dark Forces* — your neighbors will thank you.

Special Achievement in Tutorial Design

**Capitalism**

**Publisher:** Interactive Magic

There's nothing more frustrating than firing up a hot new game, getting stuck immediately, and then discovering that the manual is a hefty brick of hopelessly incomprehensible instructions.

That's why we've included this special achievement award in tutorial design. Complex games need to have clear and effective documentation, whether it takes the form of a manual, a tutorial, or an online help file.

The tutorial for Interactive Magic's *Capitalism* deserves to be singled out; it's by far the best of the year. A tutorial this complete and user-friendly should come as standard equipment with every complex simulation.

*Capitalism*'s tutorial shows you how to get started by using the actual game to demonstrate the basics, while a narrator's patient, digitized voice explains what's going on. You can actually get well into *Capitalism* without ever cracking the manual — and considering how complex the game is, that's quite an accomplishment.

The complexities of *Capitalism* are made clear, thanks to its outstanding online tutorial.
Solving the Mystery means Visiting the Dark Pit of your Soul.

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“A first rate strategy title.”
Computer Game Review

“Heroes is one of those games that DEMANDS to be played.”
PC Gamer

“This game is excellent, possibly the best strategy game my wife and I ever played together.”
Arthur Asin, aol.com

“One word: Addicting!!”
Roctor, aol.com

“The graphics and sound are fantastic, but most importantly it is just plain FUN.”
Anthony Granada, aol.com

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Golf is the world's most metaphysical sport. Oh, the baseball crotch-scratchers might argue differently, but even baseball fans can't claim the sheer mania that infects those bitten by the Sport of Physicians. They wax poetic about the "inner game" of golf, about the profound sense of personal peace to be found on the links, about the gestalt of the experience. The Japanese are so obsessed, they even created a Goddess of Golf.

Golf has become one of the leading categories in computer game publishing, with half a dozen titles out already and another half dozen set to come this year. In sheer numbers, golf games actually outsell flight sims. (No, really.)

Why? Golf sims, at best, can only — kinda, sorta — replicate a feeling of the experience of golf. Most, which use a power bar to determine the strength and accuracy of each swing, don't require more exertion and manual dexterity than it takes to click a mouse button three times consecutively. So why do people flock to them so much? Why do I play every Links 386 course as it comes out? Is it some mania?

Bruce Carver has an idea, but then again he should: he's president and co-founder of Access Software, publisher of Links and Links 386 Pro, two of the most successful PC games ever. Let him explain it:

"For the guy who golfes, and all of us at Access are avid golfers, the golf experience is, first of all, impossible to do on the computer," Carver says. "But the experience is more than just hitting a ball around a grassy area and knocking it in the hole. There's so much of nature in it and so much hand-eye coor-

The near future of PC golf includes a returning champion and a feisty challenger, with even more surprises on the horizon.

By T. Liam McDonald
He died while clutching his neck to utter those words, utterly too late. At peace now in his postmortem state, he was a beaten, emaciated man trying to leave the town of Silverload. No one seems to know exactly what befell him, and not much was learned from the delirious rambling that came from his painfully parched lips. He spoke of vampires and vultures feasting on his legs, and something about cannibalistic children. Of course, we don’t have a clue as to what he was talking about...

Come visit us soon; we’ll be waiting for you. The folks at Silverload.
The Legends of Sports

Access was founded in 1982, and in 1984 released their first title, World Class Leader Board for the Commodore 64, which went up against the first computer golf game, Mean 18. The terrain was pretty flat, and only holes were modeled at first. Access decided to try to render an entire course in the machine at once, the idea being that they would do a good job that all the great courses would be baring on their door to be simulated. When better systems allowed them to create a decent terrain-rendering system in 1989, Links was born, and then, with the advances in color rendering and processing speed, Links 386 Pro came along in 1992.

For the last two years, we’ve heard talk about a Links Pentium, but Intel proved too fussy about the use of their Pentium trademark, and so, after many title changes, Access has settled on Links LS 1996 for the mean time (the “LS” stands for “Legends in Sports”).

Links 386 is such an embarrassment of gaming riches that it’s hard to know where to begin.

For three solid years, Links 386 has been the only golf game in which other PC golf games are measured, which shows exactly how far ahead of the technology curve it was when it came out. But Electronic Arts’ PGA Tour series is catching up, and other contenders are entering the ring, so the timing for the long-awaited Links LS couldn’t be better.

Carver sat down with us to discuss just what Access has been up to in their Utah offices in between working on the new course disks they’ve released bimonthly.

“We’ve been spending a great deal of time over the last three years developing new technology, and we’re now finalizing the latest and greatest version of Links,” Carver said. “We don’t much look at our competition to see what they’re doing, since we have our own goals. But the computer is just getting to the point where the power is there—and of course we keep pushing it—to help us give people more and more of what the actual experience is. It’s a very complex experience, and one of the most important elements is the course itself. The engine is really only a means to an end; it’s what we use to present this course. When we go play a beautiful course like Pebble Beach, we have just incredible experiences, and what I’m trying to do is give people that sense on a computer and, if they can, encourage them to go play the course.”

No other golf sim is even in the same park with Access in regards sheer volume and beauty of courses produced. Now, Links LS is going to take that one step further. The new game’s engine will not only focus on the course, but also the amenities. In what Access is calling “The Resort Series.” This series will feature “destination resorts” with numerous courses, and it’ll offer not only the links, but also the clubhouses, hotels, and other structures. Using their Under a Killing Moon technology, gamers will be able to walk around the lavish clubhouse in real time, in a 3D world, and examine various memorabilia or even go into the pro shop.

The first resort, which will be included in the new release, will feature all three courses at Kapalua on Hawaii’s Island of Maui. (And if time doesn’t allow all three courses to make it to the release, Carver says the third course will be offered as a free upgrade when it’s ready.) There will also be a fourth course included in the initial release (which may run to four CD-ROMs by the time it’s ready) — and that course is the key to another important feature of Links LS.

Virtual Arnie

That fourth course is Latrobe, in Pennsylvania, the home course of golf legend Arnold Palmer. Like Kapalua, Latrobe will also be modeled in full, with a multimedia look at its rich history and a virtual tour of the facilities, including Palmer’s club-making shop and library. Palmer and his co-designer at Latrobe, Ed Seay, sat for extensive interviews about the course. And since a round at Latrobe wouldn’t be the same without Arnold Palmer as a partner, Access worked hard to make sure he helped put the “Legend” in “Legends in Sports.”

For Links LS, golfer animations have taken a giant step forward. Access began by spending $50,000 on a motion-capture machine so they could create computerized golfers at very high
The Competition

Naturally, the forthcoming games from Access and Headgate won’t be without rivals. The leader board includes some current hits, some intriguing future titles, and one that’s gone missing.

PGA Tour 96 (Electronic Arts)

EA’s PGA Tour series is clearly the current leader, offering multiple types of play, actual year players, and a good engine. Producers/Designer Steve Curtwright has a few words to offer about the future of the series: “We’ll continue to improve the core product, and also start to branch out the way other companies have done,” he says. “We’ll provide a new course with some new players, and maybe a new tournament type. Right now, Links has a better system, with all the add-on courses they offer. But I feel we have a better core product, and we want to build on that. We’re working on modern play, and ideally we’d like to offer a tournament where you could play with 100 other people anywhere in the world.”

EA’s excellent PGA Tour 96 challenges Links 386 Pro as the finest golf sim on the market.

Jack Nicklaus Golf (Acadcia)

At press time, things didn’t look good for Accolade’s strong Jack Nicklaus series, which was unique in that it offered a good course designer as well as a solid sim. Accolade was allegedly almost completed with a new version when the project was allegedly cancelled. For now, Accolade is mum on what did the distinguished series in, although they are saying that it was not a licensing dispute with Nicklaus himself.

Greg Norman

Ultimate Challenge Golf (Galer/Friendly Softare)

This one came out of nowhere, but this deceptively simple program has some good aspects to it. Graphics are good, and dozens of statistics related to swing go together to create golfer’s profiles. Although it’s far from a full-featured sim, it still has some good elements.

Picture Perfect Golf (lyric)

An appalling little program that uses still photos and has absolutely no options. A simple power bar makes a half fly into the picture, seemingly from out of nowhere, since there’s no onscreen bar.

Untitled Golf Sim (Looking Glass)

Looking Glass’s strength lies in the fact that they are far ahead of everybody in the development of a “real-world physics” engine. This, coupled with the fact that the designer of Mean 18 — the man who invented the power bar used in all the current sims — is at the head of the project, make it one to watch for in late 1996 or early 1997.

graphic resolutions and with more elaborate animation. Golfers now waggle, step back and take a practice swing, and even jump when a shot goes in. In addition to Palmer, two male and two female golfers were captured and fully rendered in 3D. The downside of these virtual golfers is that so much went into rendering them that any animations the user wants to see must be loaded onto the hard drive rather than read from the CD-ROM. That’s about 25MB eaten up per golfer for full animations, but with some features turned off, this can go as low as four megabytes.

And Palmer isn’t the only pro who will be part of what Access is calling the Tour Pro Series. Though Access isn’t ready yet to release more names, Carver plans to release an add-on disc with a new “Legend” golfer, his home course, interviews, and a virtual clubhouse tour, about every six months. This is addition to the six-month schedule of resort courses (Troon North is a possibility for the first set, and Pebble Beach and Sun City are two more Carver would like to see done) and the traditional bimonthly single-course disks, none of which will be backward-compatible with Links 386.

There will certainly be no shortage of world-class courses to choose from, since Carver golfs all over the world and even employs a full-time course acquisitions man, Zeke McCabe. McCabe’s job is to attend the tournaments and golf on the best courses partly as a scout and photographer and partly to help raise awareness of the Links line and build relationships with course and tour pros. (Talk about your dream job!) It’s worked out well: course representatives now call Access to ask about being a future Links course.

Duffer’s Paradise

But how much is the actual Links experience going to change?

Quite a lot, in some ways. While every feature of Links 386 has been carried forward, it’s all been streamlined, improved, and overhauled. The Links series has always been the most visually sumptuous of products, and the new game pushes the envelope even further. The 256-color limit is a thing of the past, as graphics move to full high-color graphics at 800x600 resolution, which can be scaled up to 1600x1200. Nothing less than 2MB video card will suffice.

The entire game engine has been redone in order to accommodate more sophisticated, spine-based, texture-
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Product Information Number 125
mapped terrain, with beautiful skies, clouds, trees, and extensive shadowing. As Carver points out, "We're just illusionists, and we want people to buy into the illusion and we don't want to disturb that. It's similar to playing any kind of game. The magic of a good game is getting a person immersed in this illusion and keeping them there. Don't screw them up with a bad interface so that every time they turn around their brain says 'I'm really just playing a game.' We spend a lot of time trying to create an illusion as close to the real thing as possible and keeping the person in it, so graphics are very important.

"Ultimately, we would like people to be able to move around the course in real time," Carver says. "But that's still a ways away, simply because we keep pushing the quality of the image up. Dynamic scenery, moving trees and water, are other technical hurdles way down the road. We hope to get that in the 1997 version." As to the screen design, almost everything has been removed from the screen or changed in some way. What the gamer will see is a golfer a bit off to the left, shooting diagonally. To the right of the golfer is a very sharp-looking 3D power bar, which has been laid flat. Since high-color allows for transparency, little transparent icons showing all information and functions you need can be placed on the screen or turned off as you like.

All the traditional views have been preserved, but now windows are completely scalable and can be configured however you like. Reverse angles and new side views also now show the virtual golfer (in 386, the golfer was removed from the screen), and the traditional top view has been completely rendered. You can also preview holes from different places on the course, and other golfers even show up on the course. When you're ready to swing, all of these can be removed to show the full-screen shot of the fairway. There are also more impressive ball flight animations and dense new 3D sound effects, from the sound of the clubhouse to the surf at Pebble Beach—all of which can be customized.

One thing they did have to give up, and one which Carver considers a "risky issue," is synchronized swinging. Before, your golfer moved with the power bar. Now, because of the elaborate golfer animation, you have to "pre-swing" by hitting the power bar, then watch as the swing is executed. Access wanted to give the gamer both, but found that trying to synch power bar and animation became too difficult. On the upside, now you can really watch those spiffy animations instead of keeping an eye on the power bar. "Some will miss it," Carver acknowledges, "and I expect some people to chew me out good."

to add features that didn't make the cut this time.

First off, although Links LS 96 will install and run painlessly under Windows 95, it will not be a true Win95 application. The 1997 version will be.

And, while the 96 version includes different types of games, such as stroke play, match play, best ball, and skins, one big feature is still in the works: modern play.

"We wanted modern play and spent a lot of time on it, but we couldn't do it and ship on time," Carver explained. "Our plans for network and modem play are significant. I want the player to be able to look around and see his friends—but that will have to wait for the 1997 edition."

The Golf Club

Vance Cook is intimately familiar with the Links family of products; he began working at Access in 1986, converting the Commodore 64 version of World Class Leader Board to the Apple format. His modern standard was a pretty primitive program, but it was successful, and when Access decided take it to the next level, Cook got the job.

"I took that chance to rethink everything," he explains. "I thought we were at the point where we could do three-dimensional terrain. We switched from modeling a single hole to modeling the whole course, so if you hit off the fairway to the right a bit, that was where you ended up. On Links, I created the rendering engine and the ball dynamics, working alone for about a year. Then other programmers got involved, and in the end it became a good product. Consumers at the time were very patient; it was the 286 days, and we had 20-30 second redraws: the types of things we'd get lambasted for now. Even though we pushed it maybe too far, I think people were very intrigued by the new look of three-dimensional shaded terrain. They appreciated the fact that we pushed their machines, even though we probably pushed too far."

Cook helped push Links 386 Pro
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and it ain’t gonna be me.

I’ve got you in my sights
and you look like a sucker.

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Filibuster — Strategy/Action
You'll fight for your political life in Filibuster, a hot new political simulation from Pernickel Productions. This strategy title brings you all of the heart-pounding drama of floor votes, budget referendums, and the reading of the congressional record to a roomful of empty chairs. Your mission: Tack on an amendment to pending firearms legislation that will give each and every American the right to drive their cars on the sidewalk. How long can you hold the floor before the Speaker of the House calls in the Marines?

U.S. Navy Recruiters — Graphic Adventure
With the fall of the Soviet Union, enrollment in the U.S. Navy has sunk to an all-time low, and only Chief Petty Officer McGraw can save the day. You assume the role of McGraw in this thrilling new graphic adventure as you investigate a mysterious drop in the number and quality of new swabbies. You've got your quota, now go out there and get a few good men!

Lawn Darts 96: The Deadly Game — Sports Sim
Lawn Darts, the popular children's game from the 1970s that gave your parents night-sweats, bursts into the 1990s as an action-packed computer game. Now you can finally revel in the mischievous joys of flinging those brightly colored projectiles at anything your heart desires. Realistic graphics and terrific sound effects bring to life the experience as you master your throwing technique in scenarios that range from Miss Your Little Sister and Tabby Terror, to Neighbor Kid and Mr. Johnson's Head.

The Magic Hero Adventure Quest Trilogy — Fantasy RPG
You play Bobbit, a young hero who lost his family to the evil undead-wizard-dragon-goblin Uggo, and must now hike to the Seven Extremely Distant Places to reclaim the Mighty Mysterious Magic Things, and then battle through the thirty eerily identical levels of the Dungeon of Lost Keys, where you will finally engage the evil Uggo (and the game designers) in hand-to-hand combat with a tire iron.

Hardware Requirements
With each PC Gamer review, you'll find two very important pieces of information: the game's minimum hardware requirements and the hardware configurations we recommend as the least you'll need to really enjoy the game. While a game will run on the minimum system the manufacturer specifies, it might not run all that well. Because of this, we test each game on several systems so we can bring you a more realistic assessment of what you'll really need.

THE PC GAMER RATINGS SYSTEM

100%-90% CLASSIC
Not many games can earn a rating over 90%, and even fewer can approach the magic 100. Anything that we rate over 90% is an instant classic — a game that's truly significant in both content and design, and one that we'd recommend without reservation to anyone interested in PC gaming.

89%-80% EXCELLENT
These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your attention, though it may not make any significant advances over its rivals. Also, some genuine benchmark games of decidedly specialist taste will fall into this area — it may be the best 7th Cavalry simulation on the market, but not all of us want to relive Little Bighorn.

79%-70% VERY GOOD
These are pretty good games, which we would recommend to fans of the particular genre — although it's a safe bet that there are probably better games out there.

69%-60% GOOD
A reasonable, above-average game. It may be worth buying, but probably has a few significant flaws that keep it from earning a higher rating.

59%-50% FAIR
Very ordinary games. Not completely worthless, but not a very good way to spend your gaming dollar, either.

49%-40% BELOW AVERAGE
Poor quality. Only a few, slightly redeeming features keep them from falling into the abyss of the next category...

39%-0% DON'T BOther
Just terrible games — and the lower you go, the worse they get. Avoid these titles like the Plague — and don't say we didn't warn you!
Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness

Category: Strategy
Developer: Blizzard
Publisher: Blizzard, 19840 Pioneer Ave., Torrance, CA 90503 (310) 793-0600

Required We Recommend
CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; 28MB Hard-drive space; Mouse; SVGA
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 16MB RAM; Windows 95; Supported sound card

There is a simple (and some might say unpleasant) truth: Gamers like bashing the crap out of little things on screen. Most of us started with the simple pleasures of coin-op shooters, then moved on to PCs, where we started to gobble up Doom and Heretic and Dark Forces. And if those didn’t satisfy our craving, we’d head over to the heavier stuff, like Command & Conquer or Steel Panthers. And as more gamers get into strategy and wargames, we can at least pretend that we’re playing something akin to chess, or some other thinking man’s game — while we are, in essence, killing things.

But when I watched a hulking Ogre stomp a Footman flat in Warcraft II (reducing him to a red splotch like a slow opossum on the white line), I knew I’d found a game that had just about everything. There was strategy (building villages, managing supplies), warfare (land, sea, and air), magic, and good ol’ fashioned blood-n-guts, just like mom used to make. It only took a little time for me — as it did for Dan, Todd, Joe, and the rest of us at PC Gamer — to know this was, indeed, the most entertaining game published this year.

What makes it so damn hot? Let’s start at the beginning. Blizzard’s 1994 hit Warcraft: Orcs and Humans offered a fantasy wargame that set new standards for smoothness of play, invention, and sheer fun. The orcs and humans (you could play either) fought each other across a couple dozen scenarios of ever-increasing difficulty. Your units were isolated on an unexplored, blank map, and you had to gather resources, build an army, then charge off to find the enemy and kill them. You harvested gold and wood to create new units, and built and protected cities. The result was real-time strategy that felt almost like an action game, in which battles were won or lost by units pounding the bejesus out of each other until one was dead.

Warcraft II follows much the same pattern, only magnified to a wonderful new extreme. You see, the orcs enjoyed kicking human butt so much they built ships, crossed the sea, and now threaten the humans in their new home. As with the original, Warcraft II unfolds with a beautiful learning curve, introducing a few units per mission and giving you a very specific task to accomplish. These battles get progressively more difficult, and in turn the units at your disposal become more powerful and complex. But once naval warfare (including submarines), better units, and magic enter the picture, things get tough fast. Towns must be protected with ever more elaborate towers, ports and oil derricks must be built (and protected) to allows ships to be built, spells must be studied, Gnomish inventors hired, and specialized missions performed.

Aside from new units, there are boatloads of other new developments for Warcraft II. First off, head-to-head play

- The orcs face off against the humans in a showdown in the wastelands.
- Handsome cut scenes introduce each new chapter and set the stage for the action to come.
- A small party of human footmen come upon some orcs, and the battle is on.

Warcraft II earned PC Gamer’s Game of the Year Award for one simple reason: It kicks ass!
IF YOU BUILD THEM, THEY WILL KILL

Whether you play as the Orcs or Humans in Warcraft II, you'll find that they have comparable units on each side. Since each unit is very different in the weapons they use and the way they attack, a careful study of their abilities will help you get a jump on deploying your forces.

**PEASANT/PEON**
The backbone of your operation, and also the weakest units. They harvest wood, mine gold, and build all the structures, but can also deliver a limited attack when things get rough.

**FOOTMAN/GRUNT**
The dogface. The grunt. These are your frontline troops early on, and build faster and cheaper than other combat units. Always handy in battle.

**ELVEN ARCHER/TROLL AXETHROWER**
What they lack in armor they make up in lethal long range attacks with arrows (for Archers) or throwing axes (for Axethrowers).

**K N I G H T / O G R E**
The biggest, meanest dog on the playground. Knights wield warhammers from the backs of their warhorses. Ogres are moving mountains of flesh with two heads. They'll pound just about anything into dust.

**PALADIN/OGRE-MAGE**
Paladins are an order of Knights with magical powers such as healing. Ogre-Mages are smarter than Ogres, and have nasty death magic spells.

**B A L L I S T A / C A T A P U L T**
Assault weapons that can strike from long distance, with devastating results. Essential for siege warfare.

**M A G E / D E A T H KNIGHT**
The Mage has a nifty bag of tricks featuring flame shield, lightning, fireball, invisibility and other spells, while the Deathknight can throw death, whirlwind, raise dead, and other evil spells.

**DEMOLITION SQUAD/GOBLIN SAPPER**
Bomb-loving ants who can demolish an obstacle and will go kamikaze if need be. Deadliest in large numbers.

**GRYPHON RIDER/DRAGON**
The fighter-bombers of the game, they deal death from above. They’re expensive, but worth it.

**OIL TANKER**
When sent to an oil patch, they can build a derrick, and then continuously transport oil back to port.

**TRANSPORT**
These are amphibious assault craft for delivering your troops across bodies of water.

**ELVEN/TROLL DESTROYER**
Fast, well-armed seacraft, they can also strike at land and air targets.

**GNOMISH FLYING MACHINE/GOBLIN ZEPPLIN**
This basic unarmored scout aircraft is your eye in the sky, and gives you important reconnaissance of the enemy camp.

**GNOMISH SUBMARINE/GIANT TURTLE**
Submersible craft, these can only be seen by towers, aircraft, and other submarines.

**B A T T L E S H I P / O G R E J U G G E R N A U T**
The well-armed and armored monsters of the sea for both the humans and orcs. They move slow but strike hard.

The terrain and scenario builder that works in Windows 95 (but only in Win95). This is an ingenious and welcome addition that gives Warcraft II an inexhaustible amount of replayability.

And, of course, there are those new units, most notably the sea and air units. No longer are you limited to carrying out battles on land with foot soldiers. With the addition of the Elven Destroyer, Battleships, and Submarine (Human units), or the Troll Destroyer, Ogre Juggernaut, and the submersible Giant Turtle (Orcs), things take a new turn. Both sides get troop transports as well, which are essential for the numerous amphibious operations throughout the game. Once again, it's essential for naval operations, oil tankers, drilling platforms, and refineries become crucial to success.

Warfare on the high seas changes everything; enemies can be crippled by bottling up their harbor or nailing their derricks. Deciding where to land units and how to coordinate combined arms attacks becomes a crucial part of play. And that doesn’t even take into account the subs, invisible beneath the surface as they raid shipping.

The addition of air units has a slightly lesser effect on play. Goblin Zeppelins and Gnomish Flying Machines are great for scouting but very vulnerable, while the Dragon and the Gryphon Rider, armed with potent weapons, can create some nasty surprises.

Warcraft II is utterly engrossing and compulsively playable. There’s no point denying the simple fun factor of this game, which elegantly melds real-time action with careful strategies like few other games have. Only Command & Conquer comes close, and while folks will continue to argue the merits of one over the other, I think the added mission editor, better graphics, and sense of fun put Warcraft II ahead — although I’ll happily continue to play both.

Once you pick up Warcraft II, you won’t put it down again until you feast on the bones of the last infidel, whether he be Orc or Human. It’s as engrossing as gaming gets.

—T. Liam McDonald

**HIGH:** Diverse and challenging play; excellent mission editor; technically superb hand-to-hand play.

**LOW:** There are the usual occasional holes in AI, but nothing serious.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Engrossing strategy fun for the whole family.
They Came.

They Saw.

They Kicked Some Butt.

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Destruction Derby

Category: Racing
Developer: Psygnosis
Publisher: Sony Interactive, 919 E. Hillsdale Blvd., 2nd Floor, Foster City, CA 94404 (800) 438-7794

Required

Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX; 8MB RAM; 25MB hard-drive space

We Recommend

Pentium; Joystick or steering wheel; Supported sound card

I those after-work traffic jams have left you cold, and you're looking for a little excitement to take the edge off, this could be your game. Destruction Derby is a wild dose of racing madness, with enough wrecks, smoke, and squealing tires to satisfy the demon driver that lurks inside all of us.

I spend most of my computer time behind a steering wheel, trying to take the checkered flag in serious sims like NASCAR Racing or IndyCar Racing, but Sony's Destruction Derby delivered so much hard-drivin' action that it pulled me off of the NASCAR circuit and had me locking bumpers with 3000 pounds of screaming metal within moments.

Usually, a driver's goal in a race is to avoid wrecks, but in Destruction Derby, wrecking your opponents is the name of the game.

Part of what makes Destruction Derby such a treat are the spectacular visuals that bring to life the most jarring collisions I've seen on a computer. Pieces fly from the cars as they slam together, and impacts send cars sliding very realistically. The damage is depicted beautifully, with dented doors and crumpled fenders that look just right.

But there's much more here than just eye candy; as you crash into your opponents, each car sustains damage, and their performance suffers. They don't steer as well, they lose speed, blow smoke, and overheat when the radiator gets smashed. Abuse them enough, and they finally sputter to a halt. By the end of a race, the track is littered with their twisted remains.

To add a little variety to the action, you can choose from four traditional racetracks and The Bowl, an huge circle of asphalt where you slug it out in the Destruction Derby itself. Somewhat surprisingly, these demolition derbies are pretty realistic. You can't just mindlessly smash into other cars; this is thinking man's destruction. Too many head-on collisions, and you'll quickly smash your radiator; then it's only a matter of time until your ride quits running. To survive these wreck-fests, you have to throw it into reverse and hunt for something to hit.

This attention to damage is a nice touch of realism that adds to the otherwise unadulterated arcade fun. The downside to the action stuff is that, even when at the highest level of difficulty, it's no real challenge to win on any track. There's a points championship to be won, too, complete with a full field of opponents with wacky names. But like the individual races, it's too easy to win the series, even at the toughest difficulty level.

But these little problems aren't nearly enough to wreck the fun this game can provide. Kids — real ones, and older ones like me — will love Destruction Derby. It's easy to jump into the driver's seat and start racin' and wreckin', and the sheer fun of watching cars turn to smoking heaps is instantly addictive. I just don't want to be on the road when the kids who learn to drive from this game get their licenses.

—Lee Buchanan

Car damage shows up beautifully, with dents, crumpled fenders, and smoke pouring from a smashed radiator.

REVIEW

From start to finish, Destruction Derby delivers more smash-'em-up action than a bull in a china shop.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHs: Great slam-bang action; modern and network play
LOWs: The computer opponents are pretty wimpy.

88%

BOTTOM LINE: Destruction Derby is a blast, and a welcome change of pace from high-end driving simulations.

PC GAMER March 1994

99
Police Quest: SWAT

Part multimedia textbook, part shoot-em-up, SWAT plays more like an interactive "Cops" show than a graphic adventure.

Several years ago, Sierra brought a new level of intensity to adventure games by incorporating the procedures and dangers faced by America's law enforcement officers into their Police Quest games. Now Sierra has released the fifth game in the series, Police Quest: SWAT, but this time around, it's not a graphic adventure based loosely on real-life cases; instead, this is a tactical simulation of the day-to-day activities of the Special Weapons And Tactics division of the Los Angeles Police Department.

You start your career as the newest member of D Platoon, where you'll take part in the dangerous missions SWAT officers face on a daily basis. If you do well, you'll be promoted to the rank of Element Leader — the guy who calls the shots.

If you're interested in knowing more about this specialized division of the police force, SWAT provides a great way to take it all in; there are pages and pages on procedures and interviews with real-life SWAT sergeants, and virtually every mission is representative of what might be encountered out in the field. Unfortunately, for all that information on how to be a police officer, there's little to no information about how to successfully play the game.

Using technology similar to that in Sierra's Phantasmagoria, SWAT uses full-motion video of digitized actors placed in a computer-generated set. In this setting, you'll listen to your superiors instruct you with lengthy speeches and informative lectures. When you get out in the field on a call, you're given a chance to participate in the interrogation of witnesses, then you receive instructions from your sergeant. After that, the frustration begins.

The missions in SWAT rely very heavily on police procedure rather than on the kind of intuitive gameplay you expect to find in adventure games. If you approach each mission as part of a traditional game, you'll have no idea what to do next. Sure, you're ordered to reach a location or to cover a team member — but unless you've poured over the training manuals and passed all the exercises, in most cases you'll end up with a crazed civilian firing a gun in your face.

The problem is compounded by the fact that, if you fail a mission but survive, you'll get a lecture from your sergeant telling you nothing more than that you acted irrationally and not in the best interests of the team. And unless you sift through loads of procedural text and briefings, you're sure to repeat your mistakes and continue to stumble blindly through each mission. As a result, an initially exciting adventure quickly becomes a tiresome and frustrating reading exercise, as you try again and again to figure out what you're doing wrong. It's more like work than fun.

Police Quest: SWAT has a lot going for it, representing police procedures and situations in ways few of us have ever seen. It's got some great digitized video and special effects, and it even has some fairly decent acting. Unfortunately, what it gains in these areas is countered by the lack of good, old-fashioned fun. Only someone completely dedicated to learning the ins and outs of police procedure in Los Angeles would be tolerant enough to play SWAT for long.

— Mike Wolf

PC Gamer

Finally

70%-

HIGHS: Good graphics, interface; the ability to choose multiple careers.

DEZ: iDiating a given scenario is tough.

BOTTOM LINE: The emphasis on procedure over gameplay brings an intriguing idea to life. Only wannabe police officers need apply.
The face that launched a thousand starships.

"Best game I've ever been in!" Harika, Allen

"Visually rich—a captivating sequel!"
Fred Ford and Paul Reiche III,
Designers - Star Control and
Star Controll II

STAR CONTROL 3
THE FATE OF A THOUSAND WORLDS IS IN YOUR HANDS...AGAIN.

Created by Legend Entertainment and based upon characters created and used under license from Paul Reiche III and Fred Ford.
Product Information Number 85
They're being built to destroy countries that don't even exist yet.

**B-2A General Arrangements**

- **Max T-O Weight:** 375,000 lb
- **Powerplant:** (4) GE F118-GE-116 Non-Afterburning Turbofans
- **Crew:** Two
- **Armament:** RL/A 50,000 lb. Payload

If not being detected is your thing, climb aboard the B-2 Stealth bomber. It took an army of engineers to make you invisible to enemy radar. And we got all the specs.

Advanced 3D graphics and digitized special effects add to the realism. Also multiple states of damage (watch your target explode into bits) and digitized explosions.

Electronic Arts is a registered trademark, and Advanced Tactical Fighters is a trademark of Electronic Arts. Reference work from Jane's Library: 1991 Jane's Information Group.
This simulation is based on exclusive, authentic and up-to-date information from Jane’s Information Group (the world’s largest publisher of military information). It includes a fully interactive Jane’s All The World’s Aircraft Guide with blue prints, weapons information, engine diagrams, and cockpit layouts. You can even pull up video footage of the actual fighters in test programs pulling the same maneuvers you pull in the game.

This is your opportunity to experience U.S. tactical and technology trends, like the X-31’s post stall maneuvers and high angles of attack. In scaleable resolution modes for maximum performance on multiple processor speeds (320 x 200 all the way to 1024 x 768).

Modern and network play lets up to 8 players dogfight in authentically detailed F-22’s. Simulons through fully texture mapped terrain ranging from deserts to islands to cities.

3 all-new Air Power Campaigns of the Future with different and unique threat environments. The kind that require the extreme shooting accuracy of the F-117A to take out hard targets. Just beware the air defenses of the new enemy foes.

Be the first civilian to experience air combat in the advanced tactical fighters of the early 21st Century in this sequel to US Navy Fighters (the standard for simulations in 1995). Fly aircraft that are just starting Pentagon test programs.
This game offers a surprising level of interaction, but its limitations become painfully clear before you reach the fourth quarter.

It's no secret that Digital Pictures has been committed from the start to the idea of full-motion video as the basis for all of their games, and more often than not their previous titles have suffered from the restrictions of that medium, offering limited interaction and little replay value. But to their credit, their newest FMV offering, Quarterback Attack, is a substantial improvement over Night Trap or Scotty Pippen's Slam City. The bad news is that, for most fans of PC football games, that's just not good enough.

You play Quarterback Attack as a rookie facing his first game as starting quarterback, and it just so happens that this is The Big Game. After watching video of a kickoff and return, you'll select your choice of play (there are 110 in all — 100 passing and ten running).

Here's what you see when you drop back to pass. This view lets you see oncoming pass rushers, but you can't throw the ball from here — you have to focus on each receiver individually to do that, leaving yourself open to be sacked.

assign a snap count, then watch as the camera pans up and down the line of scrimmage. On the running plays, you have no control beyond the timing of the snap count; on passing plays, you see the action from behind the quarterback — until you hit a key to zoom in on a particular receiver and throw the ball. If you don't find an open man and return to the pocket view, you can take off on a scramble (i.e., a run up the field, dodging a little to the left or right to avoid tackles).

On the easiest difficulty settings (there are six skill levels in all), completing passes is simply a matter of clicking the mouse at the right time; on the higher levels, you actually have to lead the receiver by placing a target cursor — and it's here that Quarterback Attack works best. You can really get involved in the action as you read the defense and call audibles to take advantage of blitzing defensive backs.

But the excitement soon wears off, for several reasons. The most glaring problem with Quarterback Attack lies in the video footage itself. Standard 320 x 200 resolution makes for a fairly grainy picture, and the solid-color uniforms worn by both teams scream high school football (or at least Division III). But the real problem is the amount and variety of the footage: chances are good that you'll see the same video clip more than once before the first quarter is played (the tapes get repeated by the time you've played two or three games, you've pretty much seen everything Quarterback Attack has to offer in the way of visuals).

Then there's the problem of perception on the field: call a running play, and you could swear the guy rushed for five yards — until you see that it's second and eight. Hit a receiver on a deep post pattern after he's beaten his defender, and you expect him to cruise untouched into the end zone — but the defender always catches up with him. The on-field perspective that works well when you're in the pocket and checking receivers just isn't the best angle for getting the full impact of the play (how often do you see the action from an on-the-field camera during a televised game?). Consequently, you can throw what appear to be forty-yard bombs on a single drive — and end up only going from one 20-yard-line to the other.

Quarterback Attack is probably the most interactive video-based football game ever created, at least in terms of on-the-field action. Too bad it doesn't have the legs to last an entire season. —Steve Poole

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**Final Verdict**

**HIGHs:** Decent video and a straightforward interface; provides some challenge.

**LOWs:** You start seeing the same clips over and over, playing as the same teams get old fast.

**BOTTOM LINE:** GBA provides a few kicks, but the video-based format kills any replay value.

---

**104 PC GAMER March 1996**
Battle it out for supremacy in the cyberspace combat zone where one false move may cost you your cologne! Choose from three assault rigs and thirteen fully-upgradable weapons. Careen across jump-ramps, sky-ways and movable blocks in a pulse-pounding race against the clock. It's virtual war out there. Time to show 'em how they're hanging.

http://www.sony.com

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Product Information Number 104
Worms

Category: Strategy/Action
Developer: Team 17
Publisher: Ocean of America, 1870 Little Orchard St, San Jose, CA 95125 (408) 298-1411

Required We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 386DX 33; 4MB RAM; Mouse 486DX66; Supported sound card

Don’t let the simplistic look of Worms fool you; this isn’t your standard Lemmings-style puzzler or run-and-jump action game. Instead, this humor-filled offering transforms the side-scrolling platform format into a turn-based action-strategy game in which you control a team of well-armed worms (what else?) and try to defeat as many as three teams of adversaries controlled by the computer or other gamers. It’s a clever idea that’s just far enough off the beaten path to attract those who’ve grown tired of more demanding strategy games, and humorous enough to entertain everyone else.

The rules for playing Worms are deceptively simple: During each turn, you move a member of your team as close as possible to your opponent, or into a position where he can do the most damage, then let loose with weapons that range from bazookas and shotguns to air strikes and dynamite. If you’re successful, you’ll be able to take away health points from your opponents before they do the same to you.

Believe me, it’s much more fun than it may sound. Watching your little characters bomb, blast, and beat each other into oblivion is a great deal of fun, and more often than not, you’ll find yourself laughing out loud at their antics. Score a direct hit, and your opponents fly across the screen, bounce down rocky hillsides, or plunge to a fiery death in lakes of lava.

Aside from the humorous elements, Worms has a number of nice touches; attractive cut scenes, randomly generated landscapes for almost limitless replay value, and user customizable options for each team that let you name each unit, assign more health points or weapons options, or configure the game for as many as 16 players on one computer.

Unfortunately, Worms didn’t support modern or network play at press time; according to Ocean, a patch will be available to add those features. But even with its limited multi-player capabilities, Worms should strike a chord with gamers who’ve been looking for a challenging and inventive alternative to more serious strategy offerings.

— Todd Vaughn

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT
HIGH: Clever design, cute graphics, and loads of fun with more than one player.
LOWS: Turn-based action is a bit slow against computer opponents.
BOTTOM LINE: Worms is a humorous and enjoyable take on strategy games, and fun for the whole family.

82%

If you’ve ever puked in your shoes, you’ll love this game.

When you play Simon the Sorcerer II, puking in your shoes is just one of the many twisted little moves you’ll make to survive an adventure filled with over 100 bizarre characters. Like woodworms, wizards, gargoyles, runts and washerwomen, to name a few.

And when you’re not worshipping the old porcelain goddess, Simon’s killer hand-drawn graphics, brain-scorching riddles and ear-pummeling, CD quality sound will be more than enough to keep you gagging for more.

Simon the Sorcerer II
So much fun it’ll make you sick.


Product Information Number 157
Knight Moves

**Category:** Puzzle game  
**Developer:** Kinesisoft Software

**Publisher:** Spectrum HoloByte, 2490 Mariner Square Loop, Alameda, CA 94501 (800) 695-4263

**Supported sound card**

**Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; Mouse**

In Spectrum HoloByte’s latest puzzler, Knight Moves, the age-old challenge of chess has been taken into new territory with the addition of a healthy dose of action. Knight Moves challenges you to control an animated knight who leaps around a chessboard stocked with enemies, hazards, and power-ups. Your knight can only move in L-shaped patterns, as it would in chess, which means you’ll need to plan ahead if you’re going to avoid the hazards and collect the treasures. And, unlike chess, Knight Moves doesn’t let you ponder your move for hours; the knight is constantly in motion, so you have only seconds to choose its next target square. If this basic formula sounds familiar — abstract, spatial thinking backed by quick reflexes — it should, because the game is based on an idea by Alexey Pajitnov, the creator of Tetris.

But Tetris is a hard act to follow, and Knight Moves doesn’t have quite the same appeal. For one thing, the game takes place on a three-dimensional board rather than a flat screen; as you move around the playing field, parts of it are always hidden as some sprites move in front of others. This makes the knight harder to control than it should be, since you can’t always see where you’re sending it.

Constant play of Knight Moves might be of some small help in your chess game, since the knight is the hardest chess piece to learn to use effectively. But as an action/puzzler game, this one is more forgettable than fun, providing only modest challenge to avoid puzzles and frustration to novices.

— Jason Bates

**PC Gamer**

**Final Verdict**

**Highs:** Interesting concept that mixes chess-style thinking with arcade reflexes

**Lows:** The 3D interface is awkward; no-frills manual and lack of features makes this as slim as some shareware releases.

**Bottom Line:** More fun than Under Pressure, or Endorlan, but it’s not Tetris.

Full Tilt Pinball

**Category:** Arcade  
**Developer:** Cinematronics

**Publisher:** Maxis, 2121 N. California Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94596-3572 (800) 336-2947

**Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM; 486/33; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse**

**Supported sound card**

Maxis, the makers of the wonderfully diverse line of Sim titles, have taken a break from the city-building and budget-busting challenges of SimCity and SimTower and have decided to throw their hat into a very different category: pinball.

Their first (and, with any luck, not their last) pinball package, Full-Tilt Pinball, is a surprisingly good one, delivering a lot of bang for the buck. With its realistic pinball feel, it even compares well to the almost legendary series of pinball games from 21st Century.

What makes FTP such a treat is the thoughtful design of the three tables included in this package. Ranging from the sci-fi theme of the Space Cadet table to the medieval fantasy of Dragon’s Keep, each has the look and feel of actual stand-up pinball machines and comes filled with bumpers, targets, and ramps to shoot at, as well as special bonuses that hold your interest as you work your way towards each table’s big payoff.

These big finishes are classic pinball challenges: Create a black hole in Space Cadet, or defeat a menacing dragon in Dragon’s Keep, and they give FTP plenty of replay value.

The same attention to detail has been lavished on the physics of the game, as well, with believable ball movements throughout most of the game. You’ll still notice a few gravity-defying quirks now and then, but they won’t be enough to turn off pinball purists.

On the downside, FTP doesn’t have some of the graphic options that other games offer; you can’t adjust the screen size, so unless you have a really big monitor, the ball can be hard to follow at times. And for some odd reason, you can configure the flippers to be activated by anything but the left and right shift keys, which are probably the most comfortable and natural choices.

But that’s easily forgiven; once you start slapping those flippers, Full Tilt Pinball provides hours of fun. Sure, it doesn’t have the bells and whistles of some current pinball titles, but it certainly delivers what every pinball fan truly craves: fast-paced, realistic action.

— Todd Vaughn

**PC Gamer**

**Final Verdict**

**Highs:** Good sound effects; slick graphics and nice table design.

**Lows:** Only three different tables; not enough graphic options for some.

**Bottom Line:** As pinball simulations go, Full Tilt Pinball is hard to beat — but there are still better ones out there.
A two thousand year old mystery riddled with danger.

The Riddle of Master Lu

Can you unravel it... or will it unravel you?

Are you part detective, part thrill-seeking adventurer? You'd better be! Join Robert Ripley, famed explorer and collector of the bizarre, to solve one of the most intriguing true-life mysteries of the ancient world.

Thrust into the year 1936, you uncover a secret plot to rule the world using an age-old talisman of mystic power. Now, it's up to you to stop the sinister plan of an evil nemesis. But time is running out! Race to exotic locations, gathering clues to unlock a 2,000 year old riddle. Defy diabolical death traps and solve mystifying puzzles! Can you survive up to 60 hours of incredible globe hopping adventure packed with intrigue and danger?

Explore more than 200 breathtaking and historically detailed environments. Interact with over 40 live video characters. Super VGA graphics, a richly textured soundtrack, and breakthrough technology deliver captivating realism like never before... Believe It or Not! Don't miss out on the adventure of a lifetime! Take the challenge of this revolutionary gaming experience home!

Available for PC CD-ROM. Coming soon for Macintosh.
Visit us on-line @ http://www.sanctuary.com and find out how you can get a demo of The Riddle of Master Lu.

"...one of those seemingly rare adventure games that manages to merge both graphics and story..." — Strategy Plus

"Exotic locales, cliff-hanging situations, fast-paced storytelling, fascinating characters, diabolical puzzles. The Riddle of Master Lu seems to have it all." — PC Gamer
HEAD-TO-HEAD PLAY:
Up to 16 players

EXPLORE, EXPLOIT AND CONQUER:
Research, economics, espionage and diplomacy

UNLIMITED UNIVERSE GENERATOR:
Ensures that no two games are alike

TOTAL DESIGN FREEDOM:
Develop everything from alien species to entire star systems

PAX IMPERIA
THE GALACTIC EMPIRE SIMULATOR
YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT YOU’LL FIND
The sequel to the 1993 Strategy Game of the Year
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Issue orders to your Admirals and receive reports as massive battles unfold in three-dimensional detail.

Design, construct and launch ships on missions of trade, espionage or war.

Establish colonies and expand your empire to control the galaxy.

Coming Spring 1996 for Windows 95 & Macintosh

OUT THERE . . .

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www.blizzard.com
The real thrill of flying today's most advanced aircraft is in the incredible avionics and weapon systems. Black Knight gives you the most realistic cockpit avionics you're allowed to own! You get a full array of weapons systems, including today's most advanced television-guided missiles and smart bombs (as seen in Desert Storm).

**State-of-the-art simulation technology gives you:**
- advanced cockpit graphics and unmatched ground detail
- cockpit DDI's simulate actual F/A-18 weapon systems, including television-guided smart weapons
- real-world fog and cloud effects enhance realism
- on-board flight instructor talks novice pilots through the most difficult missions
- flight recorder with virtual camera and VCR controls lets you replay the action
- smoothest flying action of any current simulator
- full navigational and ILS system (Instrument Landing System)
- automatic missile view tracks smart weapons right into the target - letting you live the moment of impact
- 3D stereo sound from real F/A-18s heighten excitement
- novel scoring system rates your skill
- over 50 complete combat missions you can fly in any order, plus unlimited free flight

Black Knight allows you to experience a level of realism only possible with the assistance of the U.S. Marines. Immerse yourself in the latest advances in simulator technology for your PC.
Anvil of Dawn

While it's not original, Anvil of Dawn serves up enough hack-and-slash enjoyment to warrant a look from roleplaying fans.

A few years ago, Westwood Studios introduced gamers to Lands of Lore, a fantasy role-playing game that offered a great story line, terrific graphics, and an interface that was as much fun for gaming veterans as it was easy for newcomers to use. Intent on building on their success, Westwood has been hard at work on a sequel, planning even more spectacular effects and graphics as part of the package.

Unfortunately, the slow development process for Lands of Lore 2 has left fans of its predecessor out in the cold. But there's a little hope on the RPG horizon. New World Computing's Anvil of Dawn uses the same basic play mechanics as LOL, and features a solid story line that should keep everyone happy until the cavalry arrives.

Anvil doesn't waste any time getting started: After selecting your character from the five types available, you begin exploring a mysterious castle and soon discover that a dark warlord has taken a fancy to an object of immeasurable power and is preparing to use it against mankind in a coming war. Naturally, you're thrust into the fray, magically set behind the battle lines in order to stop this menace before it can spread its evil through the land.

Very traditional fare, so far. But as the game continues, you realize there's much more to your mission than meets the eye, and soon your quest takes on a deeper importance as you attempt to save your countrymen. Like Lands of Lore, Anvil's story may not sound too original when taken as a whole, but the individual plot elements are well written and presented in an expert manner that is far superior to your average kill-the-bad-guy story line.

The dark world around you is rendered in a cartoonish but effective style reminiscent of that of Lands of Lore. The visuals are passable, if not inspired, and give the player a fair feeling of what it's like to be in a land where evil is king.

The inventory screen lets you take a look at what your character is currently holding, and also allows access to spells and your journal.

Sound and voice acting are pretty much the same story, never distracting from the actual gameplay, but not enhancing it tremendously, either.

Appearances aside, though, it's the gameplay that players will appreciate. With Anvil's completely intuitive, mouse-driven interface, would-be heroes can move through their world one step at a time, arming their character with weapons they find, as well as learning new magic spells and plundering treasure in a blend that sits somewhere on the scale between action games and puzzles.

Aside from a well-written script, the game never manages to stand out as much more than a clone. In the end, Anvil of Dawn is best seen as fodder for roleplaying fans looking for something to tide them over while they wait for the blockbusters to come.

—Trent C. Ward

**REVIEWS**

**FINAL VERDICT**

**73.7**

**HIGHS:** An easy-to-learn interface and some solid, if mindless, role-playing action.

**LOWS:** Mediocre graphics and sound effects; an almost complete lack of innovation.

**BOTTOM LINE:** An attractive and enjoyable RPG that doesn't stretch the boundaries very far.
Absolute Zero

This game had the potential to breathe new life into the space-combat genre, but it’s crippled by a frustrating design.

One glance at the box copy for Absolute Zero and it’s clear what this game aspires to be: “Even veteran wing commanders will have trouble keeping their suits dry in this rocket-fast adventure.” Well, the truth is that Absolute Zero is no Wing Commander; in fact, it doesn’t even come close.

Then again, few games do. But what really makes AZ so disappointing is that it sets out to be much more than another Wing Commander clone — and it almost manages that, with its strong, gripping storyline and innovative game structure.

The game is set in the 24th century, on the frozen Jovian moon of Europa, where mankind has established a colony to extract water for fusion reactors. When one of the mining facilities accidentally discovers members of a long-buried alien race, the creatures awaken to slaughter all the miners and destroy the colony’s capital city. Using only the minimal defensive equipment located on the colony, it’s up to you to thwart the attack until help arrives.

Each mission casts you as a different character in the unfolding drama, as you take the helm of seven different vehicles on a variety of missions. In the first mission, for instance, you fly a fighter-style craft on a mission to drop reconnaissance pods; in the second, you switch characters and operate a turret gun in a ground-based vehicle leading a search for survivors.

But as interesting as the premise was, AZ greeted me with frustration even before I’d gotten into the first mission. The problem arose when I tried to figure out how to configure the game for joystick control.

The manual casually mentioned joystick support, but gave no clue on how to activate it; both the Manual Revision booklet and the README file that came with the game referred to a Visor Control screen that could be accessed by moving the mouse cursor to the top left corner of the screen, but it simply didn’t appear. I finally hit paydirt on the last page of the Manual Revision booklet, in a listing of miscellaneous keyboard commands. It was the key that brings up the Visor Control menu: F2. It took a good 20-30 minutes of poring over the manual before I was able to choose a joystick and fly my first combat mission.

The frustration quotient only grew once I got into battle. The game’s design is very linear; you’re doomed to replay the exact same mission over and over until you win it. That’s bad enough, but what’s maddening is that it’s quite possible to lose the same mission a dozen times, even following the hints you’re given each time you fail. I finally read the step-by-step walkthrough included in the README file, and it still took two or three more whacks before I finally emerged victorious from that first mission.

The lack of a time compression or autopilot option means you’ll fly long stretches between Navigation points, and after three or four tries at a mission you’ll be praying for a Warp feature to zip you straight to the next bit of action.

There may be a point, many hours into Absolute Zero, where the hook finally sets, and you’re magically transported from your computer desk to an exciting and action-packed world where the fate of mankind rests in your hands. But if that’s true, the odds are that most gamers won’t make it far — and the ones who do may wonder if it was worth all the time and effort.

— Ned Gaskins

PC Gamer Final Verdict

61%

Highs: Playing as a variety of characters gives AZ depth; the story is well-written.

Lows: Only persistent gamers will be able to deal with the linear gameplay.

Bottom Line: An exercise in frustration that will put off all but the most patient gamers.
You’ve Trained For This

A New World...
**Virtual Karts**

**Category:** Arcade  
**Developer:** MicroProse Software, Inc.  
**Publisher:** MicroProse Software, Inc., 180 Lakefront Drive, Hunt Valley, MD 21030-2245 (800) 879-7529

<table>
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<th>Required</th>
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<tr>
<td>486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Mouse</td>
<td>Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Driving wheel; Supported sound card</td>
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With **Virtual Karts**, MicroProse puts you behind the wheel of those agile, lawnmower engine-powered racers as they scream along at 100mph. But while this is the first attempt to simulate pro go-cart racing, it just doesn’t have what it takes to compete with the better racing sims — or arcade games, for that matter — on the market.

There are plenty of options to tinker with in this game; you can pick your jersey and car color, tires, and even the weather. They aren’t the kinds of realistic options you’d expect in a sim like NASCAR Racing, but at least they do give you something more to do than just run laps around the track.

And that’s important here, because the gameplay is severely limited by oddball physics that make the driving action more chore than fun. The controls feel imprecise, and it seemed no matter how I tried I couldn’t do much more than slip and slide around the track. And even when I did slow down enough to make a smooth turn, the other racers just flew on past me.

If you can get past the dodgy controls, you’ll find enough variation from track to track to keep the laps interesting for a bit. But then the game’s stiff system requirements kick in, making any machine but the fastest Pentium seem like an old 286. On the minimum recommended system, a 486/66, even the lower VGA mode can become terribly slow during an actual race. The difference between qualifying alone on a track and racing with other drivers can be frustratingly drastic. The SVGA mode is beautiful — but almost unplayable.

All in all, **Virtual Karts** just has too many flaws to be much more than a mediocre game. Sure, it’s something different — but in this case, different ain’t good enough.

—Michael Wolf

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**You Don’t Know Jack**

**Category:** Trivia game  
**Developer:** Jellyvision  
**Publisher:** Berkeley Systems, 2095 Rose St., Berkeley, CA 94709 (510) 549-2300

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<th>Required</th>
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<tr>
<td>Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486SX/33, 8MB RAM; Windows 3.1 or higher; 15MB hard-disk space; Sound card</td>
<td>Windows 95; 486/66; 16MB RAM</td>
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</table>

When’s the last time you played a trivia game with categories like “If you can’t best ‘em, lick ‘em,” “Whatcha talkin’ about, Willis?” and “80s bands that can’t accessorize?”

You’ll find all these categories and more in this entertaining trivia game from Berkeley Systems, the company best known for their After Dark screen savers. The rules of the game are simple: choose either a 7- or 21-question game, pick a category, and answer the multiple-choice questions by ringing in with your “buzzer” (an assigned key on the keyboard).

The questions are clearly geared for players in the 25-35 age group; they focus on 1970s and 1980s TV shows and movies, farm animals, grammar basics, and anything else that you can think of. It’s an eclectic, yet delightful, mix of topics. There are also Gibberish Questions, in which you are given a mixed-up phrase to sort out. Answering questions correctly earns you money, and the player with the most money wins.

The game uses crisp, clear, text-based graphics throughout, and there are no silly video clips or lengthy animations to get in the way. This simple production is given a lot of personality by the game’s host, whose voice-overt sound a lot like comedian David Spade with a dash of Richard Dawson mixed in.

Playing Jack by yourself is fun, but it’s a real blast with a group. The keypad-buzzer configuration makes it easy for three people to play at the same computer, and the manual comes with simple instructions for playing tournament-style with larger groups.

The only complaint about You Don’t Know Jack is the obvious one: if you don’t like trivia — even clever and fun trivia — you won’t like this game. But if trivia’s your thing, you’ll find a lot to like here.

—Lisa M. Howie
You’ve Assembled The Team

A New Hope...
Shivers

**REVIEWS**

**Category:** Graphic Adventure

**Developer:** Sierra On-Line

**Publisher:** Sierra On-Line, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707

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**Required**

Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; Windows 3.1 or higher; Supported sound card; Mouse

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**We Recommend**

Pentium; Windows 95; 16MB RAM

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**Shivers' supernatural story, brain-teasing puzzles and riveting graphics will finally give Myst fans something new to talk about.**

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After spending just a few moments with Sierra's Shivers, you'll realize that comparisons between it and earlier titles like Myst and The 7th Guest are inevitable. But fortunately for Sierra — and for puzzle fans — most of those comparisons will be quite favorable.

The similarities are obvious: In Shivers, you use a single cursor (a la Myst) to explore its huge game world, and throughout much of the game you'll solve puzzles that are basically variations on classic logic exercises. Success with these can result in several things: a passageway might be opened, or you might learn an important clue to the solution of another puzzle.

But where Shivers stands out is in establishing its own mood and story. Set in Dr. Windlenot's Museum of the Strange and Unusual, the game challenges you to make sense of a collection of historic and occult artifacts, natural oddities, manmade devices, and plenty of objects considered by respected researchers to be just plain hokum.

Most of the scientific community scoffed at Windlenot's theories, but in truth one of his finds is the real McCoy — a set of centuries-old earthen pots once used to imprison luipi, evil entities that, when released, drain the life force from any passerby. But that's not all. Apparently a couple of teens wandered into the museum 15 years earlier, never to be seen again. Are they long dead, or have they somehow survived, intent on keeping their presence a secret for some unknown reason?

The luipi were somehow freed from their containers while Windlenot was away on an expedition, and early on you learn that he was one of their first victims. His ghost informs you that the only way to protect yourself against the luipi is to find the two matching parts of each container (you'll have to assemble ten containers in all), then use it to imprison the luipi it once held. Stumble across an luipi when you're not carrying its container, and you lose a portion of your life force.

The single cursor and lack of inventory are intended to simplify play, but gamers may tire of clicking on every object in sight to ensure they didn't miss something important. And all the running back and forth can grow wearisome, too.

Fortunately, a book in the library explains where the luipi are likely to be hiding — ashes, water, tar, fabric, etc. — but on the other hand, there are several habitable homes in the museum for each one of the evil critters. Discover an luipi in one location, for instance, and he may have switched to another by the time you return to capture him.

The puzzles are challenging (though sometimes that's only because the ground rules aren't immediately clear), the graphics and musical score are top-drawer, and the plot is well-conceived and executed. But there are a couple of aspects of the game sure to turn off some players. Unless you have a screen capture utility and a printer, you'll need pencil and paper handy to draw hieroglyphs, make notes for puzzles, and record locations. (There's a Flashback feature that lets you review things you've seen, but it can't be viewed simultaneously with the puzzle.)

My other problem with Shivers is that, in the end, it's just not scary. Sure, the museum is full creepy critters and horrifying devices, but any atmosphere of terror they create vanishes when you face the cartoon-like luipi — they're closer to Casper than to the essence of evil, and distinguish themselves as the game's weakest graphics element.

But for fans of puzzle adventures, these are minor flaws, easily shrugged off once the brain-teasing problems and absorbing story line get their hooks in you. And with a game this classy and inviting, that shouldn't take too long.

— Steve Poole

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**PC GAMER**

**FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHs:** Stunning graphics; good sound; well-conceived plot; a good variety of puzzles.

**LOWs:** Doesn't deliver any real horror; lots of backtracking; not much character interaction.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Puzzle fans who enjoyed Myst have a new one to add to their collection.
An Old Enemy

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Coming March 1996

Time To Kick Ass

http://www.lglass.com
Druid: Daemons of the Mind

Sir-tech brings their roleplaying experience to the adventure game genre, and it's a fun — but somewhat muddled — experience.

down perspective is rendered using some of the best graphics seen in any RPG to date, and the interface is stripped down and simple. Your character moves wherever you click the mouse, and exit arrows lead to other screens. Combat is executed by clicking on the target, and a high bash or low-cutting attack is available. Unfortunately, the controls do have their drawbacks. Your character will often spin wildly as you move your mouse around the screen, and I also found it hard to click on objects when the character is standing too close. The point-and-click combat can get tedious, too. These problems are a nuisance, but not fatal.

Magic is executed with an interface based on icons for earth, fire, air,

ir-tech doesn't have to worry about their reputation as publisher of some of the best role-playing games around. Between the Wizardry titles and the Realms of Arkania games, they've given the genre some of its best moments. So when they steer RPG design into a new area, it's with the confidence of someone who has nothing to prove.

Druid: Daemons of the Mind, developed by Synthetic Dimensions, doesn't even try to pass itself off as a conventional RPG; even the banner on the back of the box proclaims "action adventure." But there are too many standard roleplaying elements — magic wielding, combat, hit points and magic points, quests — for this to be considered a traditional adventure game. While it resembles Origin's Ultima VIII a bit, it's certainly a better try at creating a user-friendly and simplified RPG.

Druid's story revolves around four powerful Druid brothers: Lawson, Curak, Havnar, and Astor. Each brother worships a particular element and controls his own island inside the world of Navan. One of the powers of the druid is the ability to instantly travel to any place once it's been seen, but the brothers never visit each other's realms, instead meeting on common ground to discuss subjects of importance to Navan.

This means that when Lawson mysteriously disappears, they are unable to search the other islands for him. So they send you, the grandson of a druid, on a quest across the realms to uncover their lost brother. This is just the beginning of an intriguing story, which unfolds as your character speaks to dozens of NPCs, fights monsters, solves puzzles, and gains new insight into the mysterious world of his ancestors.

The premise of Druid was to create an instantly accessible roleplaying experience for the uninitiated. The skewed top-

Required

Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33, 4MB RAM; 12MB hard-drive space; Mouse; SVGA

Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66, 8MB RAM; Supported sound card

We Recommend

Druid: Daemons of the Mind is a lot of fun.

—T. Liam McDonald

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

81%

HIGHS: Inventive story and game content; simple magic system.

LOWS: Fussy interface, repetitive combat sequences.

BOTTOM LINE: An engaging adventure/RPG that purists may hate and newbies and adventure gamers will enjoy.

PC GAMER March 1996
**Reviews**

**EF2000**

**Category:** Flight simulation

**Developer:** Digital Image Design

**Published:** Ocean of America, 1870 Little Orchard St, San Jose, CA 95125 (408) 298-1411

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**Required**

- Double-speed CD-ROM; 486/66; SVGA graphics;
- 8MB RAM; MS-DOS 5.0 or higher;
- Mouse

**We Recommend**

- Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card; PCI or VESA local bus graphics card;
- Joystick

---

If you've ever wondered how far some flight simulation fans will go in pursuit of the ultimate dogfighting experience, just read on: Every now and then, a dedicated group of gamers will check into a hotel somewhere, each carrying a few pieces of luggage and a computer. It's not vacation; it's war. These joystick-fighter jocks hook up their machines on a local area network and battle against each other for air simulation supremacy.

For these flight sim fanatics, as well as many simer sim fans, Spectrum Holobyte's Falcon 3.0 has been the weapon of choice, delivering a realistic canvas on which to carry out the high art of air combat. But now there's a new top gun in town that's about to change all that. Digital Image Design, the makers of TFX: Tactical Fighter Experiment, have created EF2000, the heir apparent to Falcon as the ace of aces for the hard-core flight-sim crowd.

Along with the excellent U.S. Navy Fighters, EF2000 is one of the most impressive simulations of modern air combat available for the home computer. And with its multi-player capability, EF2000 pushes the envelope a little farther than U.S. Navy Fighters and is sure to satisfy even the most demanding sim fan with its dogfighting capabilities.

With the sophisticated Eurofighter 2000 as its basis, EF2000 has just about everything you could hope for in a high-tech flight sim: realism, playability, and stellar graphics. Those graphics are sure to tease a lot of Falcon fans into the fray; the terrain graphics in particular are miles above any I've seen in an air combat sim — or in any game, for that matter. While the texture-mapped terrain does tend to become pixelated at very close range, it's otherwise breathtaking, even at low altitudes. I enjoyed taking the Eurofighter up just for joy rides, checking out the fjords along the coast of Norway. The terrain was so convincing, I found myself looking closely at the beach to see if I could see waves splashing ashore.

In flight sims, of course, smooth animation is everything, and this is one of the most demanding sims around. You'll need a lot of power to get it running smoothly. Don't even think about running EF2000 on anything less than a Pentium. For acceptable performance, consider a Pentium 90 and 16MB of RAM as required equipment.

But if you have the horsepower, EF2000's graphics yield the visual punch that many sims promise, but fail to deliver. And the you-are-there feeling is carried through to other aspects of the game, as well. Pull too many Gs in a dive...
WHAT in the WORLD is an EF2000?

W ant to sit at the controls of the hottest fighter aircraft in the world? Meet the European Fighter 2000. The Eurofighter is a multi-role fighter designed to outfly and outfight any plane in the world, including the expected upgrades to the Russian MiG-29 Fulcrum and the SU-27 Flanker. As retired RAF Group Captain Ned Frith says in the game's manual, “parity is not good enough.”

The single-seat, twin-engine EF2000 is a high-supersonic aircraft — capable of topping Mach 2 — with a performance emphasis on high-speed, high-altitude turning. Built primarily of carbon-fiber composites, the EF2000 is 30 percent lighter than similar aircraft.

How does that translate into performance? According to the RAF, the EF2000 can go from a standing start to Mach 1.5 and 35,000 feet in less than two and a half minutes. Powered by two Eurojet turbo-fan engines delivering 40,000 pounds of thrust, the plane can take off under full load in about 300 meters and seven seconds.

There are a few bugs, of course. You can have up to four wingmen at your command, and they generally behave fairly intelligently. But they still pull some bone-headed tricks sometimes, just as they do in most other air combat simulations. And there are a few other rough edges that I hope DID will smooth out, including a tricky padlock view that makes the game nearly unplayable.

While the multi-player crowd drools at the chance to go head-to-head with other pilots, EF2000 soars pretty high as a stand-alone sim, too. Russia, naturally, is the culprit in the futuristic European crisis. A Russian force is attempting to take control of Norway and Sweden as a foothold to an invasion of northern Europe. The Eurofighter is called upon to perform a variety of missions that take advantage of its versatility, from combat air patrol to ground strikes. Missions are generated each time out to avoid duplication.

Despite its complexity, EF2000 is a fairly friendly program for rookies. The autopilot capabilities, as well as the training missions, should get most gamers up and flying pretty quickly. The flight model and characteristics of this advanced fighter also help new pilots get their wings without leaving too many embarrassing craters behind. But, make no mistake, EF2000 is a simulation, not a game. If you’re ready for the hottest combat aircraft in the world, here’s your chance.

—Lee Buchanan

**REVIEWS**

**FINAL VERDICT**

**HIGHs:** Cutting-edge graphics, good flight engine, network play

**LOWs:** Very steep hardware requirements; a few bugs hamper the realism of the game.

**BOTTOM LINE:** A must-buy for hard-core flight simmers and a great game for novices.

---

The enemies of EF2000 come in many shapes and sizes, but most of the opposition you’ll run into is composed of Russian-made MiG-29s.

The virtual cockpit of EF2000 lets you check your instruments with ease, even when you’re chasing down a bogey.
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Finally, a sim that lets you sleep all day while the wife does the hunting — it's good to be King of the Beasts.

With the release of their award-winning sim, Wolf, Sanctuary Woods started the gaming community by producing a role-playing simulation that detailed the everyday life of wolves in the wild. By challenging the player's skill in hunting, killing, mating, and survival, Wolf proved to be more than just a clever new concept; it also delivered some much-needed insight to the dilemmas of these misunderstood predators. This fresh approach to "edutainment" painlessly enlightened us, while entertaining as few games have done before.

Now Sanctuary Woods is back with the second in the Predator Series, this time detailing the trials and tribulations of the King of the Beasts — the lion.

Since I raise wolves, I'm constantly being asked what it's like to be near these predators. I say, "Imagine having a cat in a really big dog's body!"

Now, lions are a whole other story. Imagine having a cat in a huge cat's body! It's a rare wolf that exceeds 150 lbs. outside of the arctic regions. Your average lion, though, weighs from 400 to 500 lbs., with teeth and claws that make the wolf's look like niblet corn.

Both lions and wolves are social animals, living and working together in closely-knit family units; wolves in packs, lions in prides. And it is precisely these similarities which make Lion the logical, and worthy, successor to Wolf.

As in Wolf, Lion offers you 20 different animals to choose from, in existing prides or handpicked groups you assemble yourself. You may control a single nomad or all members within a pride. Each animal has its own distinct capabilities, weaknesses and success ratios with different prey species; one may excel at bringing down warthogs but fare poorly with zebras.

Unlike the three disparate game worlds in Wolf, Lion takes place in only one — the savanna grasslands and wooded plains of the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania, albeit with four distinct seasons. The Serengeti is home to seven other predators besides yourself (including hyenas, leopards, and, of course, man), and competition for the 70-odd prey species is fierce.

Lion offers play in two forms: a series of 20 increasingly difficult, mission-based scenarios, or a free-form simulation of day-to-day life on the Serengeti. Although the game mechanics have been improved, much of the gameplay remains identical to that in Wolf. You walk, sleep, play ives, even lions take a break, and every now and then you kill something and eat it.

Of course, that's not as easy as it sounds. Most of the animals you like to eat are faster than you, and even though a lion has a better chance of making a solo kill than a wolf, their stamina is far less than you'd imagine. And for a nice change of pace, these activities are scored on a point system so family members can compete for high scores with their own saved games.

To complement the game section, there is The Lion Safari — an interactive guided tour of leonine life on the Serengeti. This tour presents a fascinating look at the life of these big cats; if you're not careful, you may even learn a thing or two about being a better lion.

With gameplay and scenarios similar to its predecessor, Lion isn't quite the step beyond Wolf you might expect, but it does have its nice little touches that add to the realism of the whole experience. You can use the long grass to creep up on your prey; vultures circle overhead at the kill site; and your eyes glow a fierce amber in the darkness of the savanna night.

Like the blurb on the box says, Lion is a game of strategy, skill, instinct, and persistence. It's also a thoughtful and intriguing look at the lives of animals most of us never get to see in their natural habitat. And, besides, it's probably the only chance you'll get to kill and eat a water buffalo with your family.

—Scott Wolf
Total Distortion

With **Total Distortion**, Pop Rocket introduces yet another PC gaming category: the Music Video Adventure Game.

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**You control the cameras and special effects as Punk princess Betty Pink performs at the L.A. Stage.**

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**The Video Sequencer allows you to mix the back-, mid-, and foreground elements of your video, as well as the audio and titles.**

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**The Radio Aquarium offers a variety of programming, accompanied by Elvis the Fish and assorted special effects.**

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Road Warrior

No, it's not based on the Mel Gibson film — it's the violent and humorous sequel to Quarantine.

A matter what you think of Road Warrior, one thing's for sure: it won't score any points with the politically correct set. Anyone and everything that Road Warrior producer Rod Humble could think to lampoon gets the treatment here, and though the humor occasionally verges on the tasteless, I get the distinct impression that he doesn't really care if he offends....

Come to think of it, I don't either. Not when it's done in the spirit of fun — and that's exactly what Road Warrior is all about. From the moment you get behind the wheel of this futuristic driving game and listen to the crunching heavy-metal riff that opens the game, all the way through to the truly astonishing climax, you'll be laughing out loud as you destroy everything in sight.

The game picks up exactly where Quarantine ended, using a series of comic-book cut scenes set to an ominous big-band score to tell the story. Drake Edgewater, a renegade cabby in the 21st-century prison city of Kemo, has just driven his heavily armed hover-cab to freedom — only to find that things aren't a helluva lot better on the outside. After crashing his hovercab on the plateau surrounding Kemo City, he's picked up by some unsavory desert denizens who immediately throw him and his car into that night's Killduel.

Win the Killduel and the race that follows it, and you get to the meat of Road Warrior, as you head out on dozens of missions aimed at destroying OmniCorp, a mega-company whose agenda ranges from filling balloons at a theme park with the ebola virus to using captured pets in their bargain-basement hot dogs.

Along the way, you'll receive mission assignments from a wonderfully insane cast of characters whose briefings contain verbal jabs at everyone from game reviewers ("It's so much easier to destroy than to create") to inbred hillbillies ("I know there's a big supply of cow drugs in those silos, 'cause I like to inject myself with it once in a while for kicks"). Like I said before, there's stuff here some people are bound to find offensive, but the stylized comic-book art helps put it all in perspective.

Depending on the mission you're given, you'll have missiles, flamethrowers, gating guns, mines, and other goodies at your disposal, and as you race to beat the timer on each mission you'll hear a great variety of background music, from speed-metal riffs reminiscent of Ministry or White Zombie to a toe-tapping bluegrass number that'll have you thirsting for a shot of moonshine.

Both graphics and sound effects are improved over those in Quarantine. Players with fast Pentiums will savor the crisp VGA graphics, the background art is sharp and colorful, and a whole slew of new enemies in the air and on the ground bring variety to the action. The sound effects are just about perfect: Clowns laugh and cry as you run them down at the OmniLand theme park, mutant hillbillies scream "Kick his ass!", and a robotic Torva Yu 11 solemnly intones, "I will crush you, pathetic worm." It is, in a word, righteous.

If I had my druthers, there are a couple of things I'd like to see changed in Road Warrior. The missions often end just as you're getting pumped up, and I really miss the absence of the "work ethic" of Quarantine — picking up fares to earn money for better weapons and armor. It gave the action a little more urgency — and, yes, just a touch of realism.

Realism? Jeez, maybe I've been playing games for too long....

— Steve Poole
Unnecessary Roughness '96

The football sim playoffs heat up as UR '96 charges onto the field sporting a new look, revised stats, and bone-crunching action.

plays, and deeper, more realistic statistics take Unnecessary Roughness '96 from also-ran to Super Bowl contender. Basically, anything you could ever want in a football sim is here: You buy a team, make the trades, set a league salary cap, and manage rosters and injuries. Then you put on the headphones and call the plays, or step into Troy Aikman's shoes. The enhancements over previous versions are numerous and well conceived, giving you more plays, specific injuries, realistic results, and better animations.

The most welcome improvement in UR '96 is its reworked statistics. Previous versions were plagued by ridiculously high scores and statistics, such as runners with 4,000-yard seasons. There are still a few humps — too many interceptions, for example — but the statistics and game results are a vast improvement.

The play-design feature is also a big surprise, and it's one of the best I've seen in a game of this type. Designing offensive and defensive formations and plays is about as simple as it can be. You can even assign specific audible calls for each play, and your playbook can include 1,300 plays.

While it has certainly come into its own as complete sim package, UR '96 delivers the most punch with its bone-crunching arcade action. The automatic pass reception feature is an especially nice touch, allowing you to play quarterback and then let your receiver do his job, instead of having to suddenly jump into the receiver's shoes after you release the ball.

There are a few slight concessions to arcade play that hurt the game slightly as a coaching-only sim. Passes seem to float lazily toward the receiver, rather than bulging through the air. That doesn't look realistic, but it makes it easier to play both quarterback and receiver in arcade mode.

If you're a veteran of computer football sims, you're probably wondering how it stacks up against the latest version of Sierra's Front Page Sports: Football. It's no secret that FPS has been the champion for years, and, in my opinion, still deserves the crown — but only if you're as interested in coaching as I am.

Unnecessary Roughness '96 features better arcade play, so if you want to mix it up on the field (especially in two-player mode), this game's the better choice.

In a past review, I concluded that this sim was, truly, "unnecessary." That was true, then — but the developers have been working hard in the off-season, and that work has paid off with a fine football simulation. If you've ignored Unnecessary Roughness in the past, it's time to give this one a look.

—Lee Buchanan

On the field, this year's version of Unnecessary Roughness is a whole new ball game. Improved animations bring new life to the action.

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—Lee Buchanan
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Ultimate Challenge Golf

Pro Golfer Greg Norman lends his expertise to this attractive golf simulation, but it's still a bit under par when compared to the competition.

While he may not be as famous as Jack Nicklaus or Arnold Palmer, pro golfer Greg Norman is a true titan of the links, with something like eighty tournament victories under his belt. Now, with Friendly Software's Greg Norman Ultimate Challenge Golf, this talented golfer has brought his winning insights and knowledge of this popular game to the PC. Ultimate Challenge Golf is based on the Medalist Golf Club in Florida, which Norman helped design. Throughout the game, Norman acts as your host, giving fly-by-narrations of each hole, and will even accompany you on a round as a second golfer.

Even without the input of this star duffer, UCG would have a lot going for it, starting with its sharp, photo-realistic graphics. In many ways, UCG looks better than most of the competition, with good use of shadows and backdrops to accentuate the beauty of this course. This beauty does come at a price, of course; it processes woefully slow on my P60 with 24MB of RAM when you use the game's smaller 15MB install. There's also a 50MB install that can remedy much of this problem — but that's a lot of hard-drive space to sacrifice for a golf game.

Sluggishness aside, UCG brings some innovative twists to the golf sim genre that are welcome changes from the norm. There are two modes of play — arc or sim — that allow you to dial in just the type of game you want. All the info you need is on the game's control bar: lie, wind force and direction, and even the slope of the ground where the aiming pin is set. You can control direction, force, spin, and club height for each shot, and the icon bar even gives you a warning when a shot is particularly risky, like those occasions when you put too much power into your drive.

The difference between arc and sim mode comes in the swing. In arc play, you have the traditional three-stage power bar, where you click once to start your swing and click again to set the power. Throughout the game, I found the power bar a little too sensitive and somewhat erratic, although you have the option of slowing it down for better control.

In sim mode, however, manual dexterity is replaced by a simple click that makes the golfer swing according to his profile. Each profile can be customized for forty different skills, a golfer can have a good long-range game, but be weak in the wet, or fair in sand traps but bad in the tall grass, and so on. Using these settings, you can create a well-rounded golfer that takes into account aim, force, spin, and club height, as well as that golfer's strengths and weaknesses. Heck, you can even pick from three distinct types of golf balls!

These two distinct styles of gameplay, coupled with the graphics, are Ultimate Challenge's strongest features. But dig a little deeper, and you'll find that it still comes up short against the competition. There are no options for replaying a spectacular shot, no pros or players other than Greg Norman. Despite the attractive graphics, the aiming pin can be hard to locate, and there's no feature that points your place in it. Plus, there's only the one course, and while it's certainly a challenging one, that's far from enough.

While there are some exceptional features that make Ultimate Challenge notable, it's disappointing that Friendly Software didn't follow through on its strengths to help it really stand up against PGA Tour 96 or Links 366. In the end, this is a passable golf game for novice duffers, but serious Links fansatics should steer clear.

—T. Liam McDonald

REVIEWS

Pro: Unique golf profiles and great graphics.

Cons: Not enough features to make it competitive; looong load times.

Final Verdict: 78.7/100
FPS: Football Pro '96

You won't find many improvements in the latest addition to the Front Page Sports lineup, but this is still the finest football sim around.

If you're a die-hard follower of Sierra's Front Page Sports: Football series, I have to warn you: this is not a new game. It's not even a major upgrade, and if you already own Front Page Sports: Football Pro '95, there's little reason to rush out and buy '96.

This one certainly looks better, sporting new high-resolution graphics that deliver some of the lastest SVGA gameplay around, but that's about all that's new for this version. Sure, there are the expected changes from the 1995 edition: new stats, player names, and the addition of expansion teams, the Carolina Panthers and the Jacksonville Jaguars — but little else about gameplay has changed.

Having said that, Front Page Sports: Football Pro '96 still demands a very high rating. For my money — and yours — it is still the best-looking, most realistic, most detailed football simulation available. While the enhancements are minor, the Front Page Football dynasty shows no signs of giving up the crown of Super Sim Bowl champ just yet. The strengths that made the original game the best football sim around are still there, starting with its host of options that let you dial in the type of gameplay you want. From action-oriented, hands-on play that lets you take charge of every player on the field, to the outstanding career play, where you call the shots as coach and general manager on draft day and during trading. Other sims have tried to followed suit with similar options, but the FPS series was the first to offer a simulated football career, and it's still the best.

While the SVGA graphics of Football Pro '96 are a welcome improvement, the higher resolution isn't quite as impressive on the football field as it is on objects with more texture, like mountainous terrain in a flight sim, for instance. Still, it's a noticeable step up, and you get to see those pretty new graphics from more camera angles than ever before, including a free-floating perspective. The player animations are still the best in the business, but thanks to the enhanced graphics, they come at the price of steep hardware requirements to get them running smoothly. Tackling, passing, running, and blocking look more like the real bone-crunching thing than in any other computer football game. You can actually see things happen on the field, such as linemen jumping offside, or a holding call on a play when the quarterback seemed to have just a bit too much time to pass.

A word of caution about those graphics: don't bother unless you have a Pentium machine, and 16MB of RAM won't hurt, either. There have been plenty of complaints about choppy graphics and sound from players using Pentiums with 8MB of memory, so take these hardware recommendations seriously.

Unfortunately, the sound effects — one of the more noticeable weaknesses in the series — haven't benefited from any noticeable improvements. It's the same signal-calling, grunting, and lame crowd noises that have plagued every one of these games. Let's hope they don't forget about audio in next year's version.

With its rock-solid gameplay combined with tweaks to the graphics and updated stats, this is easily the sharpest FPS game yet, and if you're already a Front Page owner who's dying to get Jacksonville and Carolina in the league — or if you just have to have those SVGA graphics — you'll be happy with Football Pro '96. But if you already own last year's version and expect major improvements, think twice about forking over the bucks for this year's model. Wait for Sierra to come up with a serious upgrade to the FPS series in 1997.

— Lee Buchanan
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Product Information Number 122
Once upon a time, there was an innovative little game company called Cinemaware, whose games boasted the best graphics in the industry. Unfortunately, the company specialized in designing for the Amiga platform and stubbornly clung to that format even as the PC began to dominate the field in the late 1980s, a decision that eventually spelled its doom.

One of Cinemaware's more successful titles was a medieval strategy game called Defender of the Crown, in which the player assumed the role of a minor knight in 11th-12th Century England and attempted, through guile and brute force, to claw his way to the kingship.

When PC Gamer first ran a scoop on Conqueror, we got the impression that this game openly took inspiration from Defender of the Crown and rehashed it with spectacular graphics, great music, and terrific sound effects. Now, more than a year has passed, and Conqueror seemed to have turned into vaporware until, lo and behold, it appeared as a Sierra title.

Unfortunately, little if anything seems to have been done to flesh out the gameplay beneath Conqueror's gorgeous graphics. You get the impression of a hastily-licensed product gushed-up in a spectacular package and shoved out the door to turn a fast buck as best it can.

The pity of it is, with some creative redesign and some minor additions to the basic engine, Conqueror could have been a classic medieval strategy game, worthy to inherit the mantle of Defender of the Crown.

Conqueror starts you off as a young knight in control of a small fiefdom. Once you develop the local economy and raise an army, you have two (not mutually exclusive) basic paths to take: Expand your power and wealth until you're ready to march on London and rip the crown from William the Conqueror's head, or search out and destroy the enormous and elusive dragon that's been scorching the countryside for years.

On the positive side, the game is gorgeous: the scrolling landscapes, dotted with great cathedrals and majestic castles—russet in autumn, blue-white in winter, and lush with that special "wet-green" pastoral beauty of England in the spring—are magically evocative, almost Tolkien-esque.

But beneath that beautiful surface lies a threadbare roleplaying adventure, driven— all too often — by predictable and ultimately annoying arcade sequences.

One of the chief ways to make extra money is to enter, and win, jousting tournaments. The manual recommends that you spend a lot of time in the "practice mode" before actually entering the lists. It is here that you start to have your doubts.

To put it bluntly, the "practice" jousting mode is an infuriating waste of time. Mouse control is so impossibly mushy that it reminds me of a scene from one of those God-awful action games where you have to be on exactly the right pixel at...
Olde Englands certainly looks beautiful in these scrolling landscapes — but looks aren’t everything in a game.

Ah, the ladies in the jousting stands! One will end up being your wife, although you may have to prove yourself many times before she pays serious attention to your suit.

Field battles are fun, though often bloody and marked by dire casualties, even if you’re winning the battle.

exact the right nanosecond in order to get through a scene.

Just as an experiment, I tried 50 “practice” jousts in one sitting and won exactly two bouts. It’s like trying to stick a piece of cooked spaghetti through a ring while galloping full-tilt on a horse.

To make matters worse, the mouse-controlled “lance” handles very differently in a real joust than in the practice mode: instead of being squishy and light, it suddenly becomes impossibly heavy and ponderous. I suppose if you did it a few hundred times, you’d develop a Zen-like instinct for hitting the target, but — trust me — you’ll grow heartily sick and tired of the whole nonsensical business long before you reach that level of expertise.

Then there’s the matter of castles. To put it bluntly, castle-building is a pain in the ass. Mouse control is so twitchy and unreliable that you’ll spend more time “erasing” misplaced towers and wall segments than in actually completing your design.

And despite what the manual implies, there’s no real reason to waste time and money on a castle during the game’s early stages. Reason: there is no siege warfare in the game. To capture an enemy castle, you just burst in through the front door and slaughter the garrison — as if all those mighty walls and towers simply weren’t there at all.

These inside-the-castle skirmishes are fun, for a while, since you can collect a lot of valuable loot as you pass from room to room, killing whoever gets in your way.

But after a half-dozen or so, they begin to feel as repetitive as the hack-and-slash dungeon crawls in a mediocre fantasy RPG.

And the economic sub-game, in which you develop your fiefdom’s resources and bring in ever-greater numbers of serfs, is a mess. The total space available for village, farm, and forest development is a single fixed screen. And on the big tactical map, there is no connection between any part of your fiefdom and the main road network of the kingdom — yet you’re encouraged to build roads. Since they do not connect with any other village or trade routes, one can only wonder what their purpose is.

Logging is a profitable enterprise, but there are no sawmills. And what about deforestation? Crop rotation? Do more serfs settle in your village if you build two tanneries instead of one? Who knows?

Travel is necessary if you want to win purses at the tournaments and court the lady of your choice, but the game makes it pointlessly difficult. The big map shows your home fief and the major cities, but not the roads. Nor is there any icon on the big map to show where you and/or your army happens to be at any given moment.

You have to switch back and forth constantly between the landscape map and the big map of England, scrolling around looking for your icon and some point of geographical reference you can aim toward. Granted, there is a microscopic icon for your party on a tiny inset map, but, again, no road network is shown. Half the time, you set out for a tournament, only to arrive too late to participate.

Yeah, sure, travel was difficult in the Middle Ages, but the frustration involved in simply getting from one place to another is needless and could easily have been corrected by a few simple modifications.

Sierra certainly had the skills to take the outwardly beautiful tapestry of Conqueror and flesh it out with the kind of internal consistency that so distinguished Caesar II. If they had, Conqueror could have been a great game as well as a beautiful one.

—William R. Trotter
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Air Power

Rowan returns to the skies with Air Power, their most inventive and stylish flight sim yet — but this one still has its quirks.

In order to win the throne, you must travel from region to region, building support and waging war.

That’s a shame, because missions like fighter sweeps, ground attacks, and swirling battles around armed blimps are such a delight. The SVGa graphics are simply beautiful and run quite smoothly despite the high resolution. Rowan has also improved on their sound effects, with good gun sounds and wingman chatter. Unfortunately, they left in the bewildering, inexplicable keyboard commands from their previous games, with over thirty keys for views alone, all of them mystifying and awkward.

Aside from these few points, Air Power is a real delight as a general flight sim and distinguishes itself with a good story and strategy angle. Hard-core sim fans will be frustrated by the awkward controls and elaborate keyboard commands, but gamers interested in some genuinely engaging action will find it in Air Power.

—T. Liam McDonald

VERDICT

Final Verdict 82%

Highs: Imaginative concept and strategy elements; beautifully executed graphics.

Lows: Control feels unresponsive; unusual keyboard commands.

Bottom Line: So close to being a classic, but misses it by just an inch.
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March 26th 1996
TalonSoft set out to design the best Battle of Gettysburg simulation yet. No question about it: they have.

Civil War games have always been history buffs' darlings. The latest and greatest, however, is Battleground: Gettysburg, produced by TalonSoft, a company well-known for its historical simulations. The game takes you right into the middle of the battle, allowing you to experience the chaos and intensity of the Civil War firsthand.

Remember the first time you saw Atlanta's famous Cyclorama painting of the battle, or when you looked at a map and wondered what it was really like to be there? Well, that's what Battleground: Gettysburg offers. You can feel the heat of the battle, the noise of the cannon fire, and the smell of smoke and gunpowder. The game is true to history, with detailed maps, accurate troop placements, and realistic graphics. You can even see the battlefield as it was during the Civil War, with its rolling hills and tree-lined streets.

The game is packed with features, from the detailed graphics to the interactive music and sound effects. You can choose from a variety of modes, including single-player, multi-player, and historical. You can also play as different generals, each with their own strengths and weaknesses.

One of the most exciting features of the game is its ability to recreate the battle in real-time. You can watch the action unfold on the battlefield, and make decisions as the battle progresses. It's a thrilling experience, and one that you won't soon forget.

In conclusion, Battleground: Gettysburg is a fantastic game, and one that any history buff or Civil War enthusiast should have in their collection. It's an accurate, detailed, and engaging simulation of one of the most important battles in American history. If you're looking for a great way to experience the Civil War, then this is the game for you.
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Product Information Number 131
last year turned out to be a pretty busy one all around for Microsoft’s Flight Simulator, from the final batch of programs and add-ons to Microsoft’s acquisition of The Bruce Artwick Organization (BAO). And, by and large, I managed to miss all of it in this column, so taking a look back at how the wonderful world of Flight Simulator grew in 1995.

Let’s start with the December news: MS bought BAO, the designers of the Flight Sim programs, and are relocating many of the programmers to MS headquarters in Redmond, Washington. Under the terms of the agreement, Bruce Artwick will consult with Microsoft in the design and development of new titles, with the first expected title to be (not surprisingly) MS Flight Simulator for Windows 95.

Microsoft also released Flight Sim 5.1, a CD-ROM port that made a number of important changes to the game. There are 200 additional airports in the CD version now that the entire world is mapped, with all seven continents depicted in graphics supplements that load on-the-fly (so to speak). Graphics have been polished a bit, and the sim’s weather system is now more realistic. Version 5.1 also includes some flight model changes, and it addresses other realism issues.

Three new scenery packs were also published in 1995, including Japan, the Caribbean, and Hawaii. All look good, with some special treats like erupting volcanoes and other special tours thrown in.

BAO is catering to the hard-core sim market with two expansion programs for Flight Sim: Tower and Flight Shop. Tower is actually a stand-alone program that can tie, via modem, into another computer running Flight Sim. An air-traffic controller program, it is obviously for very dedicated flight buffs. You have the chance to control incoming and outgoing air traffic at O’Hare, Washington National, or an imaginary airport in the west.

By typing commands and using BRITE and ASDE radar displays, you direct planes to the proper runways and handle all the issues related to landing.

I personally found this one about as much fun as picking ticks off of my dog, but I realize there are certainly people who will find this a fascinating experience.

Definitely more up my street is Flight Shop, which features two Windows-based tools: ATC Workshop and Aircraft Factory.

ATC Workshop provides a wide set of tools to use for making your own special mission and flight paths. You can use it to set up a custom flight plan complete with random events, such as engine failures or storms. It’s a very nice addition to the Flight Sim family.

Even better is the Aircraft Factory, which lets you design all the specs and flight characteristics for your own plane. Based on an interface intended to look like an aircraft factory, you can make blueprints for a new plane, create individual parts such as engine or intakes, assemble and paint it, assign flight dynamics, and then fly it in Flight Sim.

This is definitely not for everybody, since it takes a prodigious amount of knowledge and understanding to do this right (and the manual

1995 was a very good year for fans of Microsoft’s venerable Flight Simulator; they got a new CD version, some nice new scenery discs, and a couple of intriguing expansion packages.
only helps somewhat). Still, the package comes with several new, “ready-to-fly” planes such as the U.S. Marines’ F/A-18 Hornet, a 747, a DC-3 and several others. All in all, a very nice addition to Flight Sim.

**Coming Attractions**

Several things arrived just as this month’s column was going out the door, and I couldn’t keep ‘em under my hat until next month:

1. **First on deck** is the long-awaited CivNet, a head-to-head version of Sid Meier’s Civilization that plays over local area networks, modems, and the Internet (it also offers an old-fashioned “hot seat” option for multiple players using the same computer). This is a Windows title, and early reports indicate that it plays pretty cleanly online. Next up are the enhancements for Activision’s MechWarrior 2. The first new mission pack — Ghost Bear Legacy — has arrived, and it looks to have a sweet mix of new challenges.

By the time you read this, NetMech and MW2 for Win95 should also be on the shelves. MW2 for Win95 comes with NetMech, but DOS users will need to buy it as an add-on pack. Last but not least is the continuation of the Bioforge saga in the form of a new add-on disk from Origin. Look for all these exciting things and more in the next thrilling installment of “Extended Play.” Ain’t the suspense a killer?

**Bug Patches & Cheats**

Patches and cheat programs are available on the CD-ROM edition of PC Gamer in the X:\PATCHES directory, in online sources such as the Internet, CompuServe, and America Online, and through game publishers. One good source is The Games Domain on the Internet at http://www.gamesdomain.co.uk/ Be warned: it can be slow at times, since it gets a lot of traffic.

**Advanced Civilization**

v. 1.01: Fixes many small problems and addresses the Win95 city construction problem.

**Ascendancy**

Antagonizer AI Module and Patch: Due to some criticism that the AI in Ascendancy was too easy, Logic Factory has issued an Antagonizer AI patch to make the AI more challenging. There’s also a patch available that fixes all known bugs, and this can be downloaded with or without the AI patch. The web site is http://www.logicfactory.com and FTP is ftp://logicfactory.com.

**CivNet:** This upgrade is mostly to make hot-seat play more secretive, but it also addresses some multiplayer tech issues.

**Comanche 2.01D:** This primarily addresses modem compatibility issues.

**Command & Conquer 1.18P:** Fixes all known bugs and makes some game balance changes.

**Flight Sim Toolkit Final Update:** Handles a lot of problems, including improved AI dogfighting; torpedo use; team play (red vs. blue); improved AA guns; carrier landings and development; bombers can be constructed and implemented; improved flight model with better thrust ratios.

**Frontier Elite: First Encounters v. 1.06:** General maintenance patch.

**Great Naval Battles III v. 1.2:** General maintenance patch.

**Hardball 5 v. 5.11:** Fixes erroneous “out” call after force was taken off by tagging a runner, and problem which prevented customized stat selections to be reloaded when booting the game.

**Harpoon Classic for Windows v. 1.56:** Fixes various problems and contains the Windows Scenario Editor.

**Heretic and Hexen:** New driver for the VFX1 virtual reality headset.

**The Hive:** Update makes the game a bit easier to play.

**Mechwarrior 2 Patch for DOS:** Addresses such issues as the right side taking more damage than the other on some mechs, added joystick support, and Win95 crashes.

**NHL 96:** Specifically for playoff lock-ups or problems with playoff games saving to the hard drive.

**Rise of the Triad:** New driver for the VFX1 headend.

**Steel Panthers v. 1.2:** Test update fixes various bugs and game-play issues.

**The Civil War: 1861-1864 v. 1.1:** Addresses both the Campaign and Battle AI as well as updating naval battles, city supply, and route planning.

**The Road from Sumter to Appomattox:** Corrects retreat rule problems, allows Confederate recruiting in Kentucky and Missouri even if under Union control, and corrects other unspecified bugs.

**Tower:** Update deals with running Windows 3.1 or higher errors.

**Werewolf 1.01D:** Primarily addresses modem compatibility issues.

**Wizardry: Bane of the Cosmic Forge:** Corrects the divide overflow problem experienced by some users with 486 and Pentium computers.

**World Series of Poker v. 1.01:** Fixes bug in Caribbean Stud.
Finally, a game that’s worthy of the film license. Terminator: Future Shock will make Dark Forces seem positively lame.” —PC-ZONE

"...the more I play Future Shock the more it continues to amaze me. It’s really quite incredible. I’d expect it to run very slowly considering the amount of graphic detail and amount of on-screen polygons, but it screams!” —NEWTYPE GAMING

If you don’t believe our statement, that Terminator: Future Shock heralds a new age of 3D games, surpassing all the existing ones, then try out the demo... But you were warned!” —SCORE

"Look for Bethesda Softworks to have competitors running scared in the near future...” —Computer Game Review


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Product Information Number 98
If it snowed in my office, small rodents could ski on the mountains of software; most months, I look at a veritable blizzard of new programs. This month I chose to write about three that seem as different from each other as snowflakes.

Actually, they all have one thing in common: each package tricked me with a deceptive first impression. Edmark's Strategy Games of the World seemed trivial at first, but I had never seen a lightweight product from this company before. Baba Yaga and the Magic Geese looked attractive. It entertained my son for a while, and it measured up to many other electronic storybooks; still, it seemed a little slushy. And Jump Start Preschool inspired a similar sense of discomfort — the program worked well, the activities were educationally sound, but I wondered why you would want your preschooler to learn these things from a computer.

With all that uncertainty — and the high insurance expenses of running a ski resort for mice — weighing heavily on my mind, I reconsidered my initial evaluations. I listened to my gut. Here's what it told me.

**Strategy Games of the World**

Simple, traditional games like Nine Men's Morris take on a whole new flavor when you play against Leif Ericson. Sailing on a Viking Ship with the first Europeans to head for North America, anyone might startle a bit when the great sea captain slams his fist on the Nine Men's Morris board, causing one of his tokens to jump into position. Few people will startle, though, when they find out that this lush background was created by Edmark. The company doesn't release merely average programs, and Strategy Games of the World is no exception.

Aimed at children ages 8 to 14, Edmark's latest product features three venerable games: Nine Men's Morris, which has been found in such civilizations as ancient Egypt and Stone-Age Ireland; Mancala, which is played throughout Africa, the Middle East, and the world. It takes a little time to appreciate the tips and tactics stuffed into Strategy Games of the World. For example, a sage-like frog told me not to fear fierce opponents. A little bird told me, "If you can't win with your current strategies, throw them out and start with a new set." These apparent gems of wisdom seemed vacuous to me, but after several more rounds, the advice became more interesting. A cheetah recommended a seemingly innocuous tactic that set up powerful moves for the future. A seagull pointed out a particularly strong arrangement of playing pieces. Other tips advised me to remember powerful moves and look for opportunities to use them again in future games.

Gaming tips weren't enough for Edmark, though. Strategy Games of the World aims to help kids develop a repertoire of strategies for life too, so Edmark included video clips of people in the real world sharing their strategies for problem solving. These Real World Solutions are cleverly related to the games as well. An astronaut recommends planning ahead; a school counselor recommends reviewing events leading up to a crisis; a choreographer recommends choosing an overall pattern and identifying individual moves that fit into that pattern. And the game is packed with loads more. The best strategies, however, rec-
Learning Game

Baba Yaga and the Magic Geese
Take a nasty witch, a gaggle of wisecracking geese, and two wide-eyed innocents lost in a forest. What do you get? You get a Russian folk tale with a modern accent. Davidson’s latest entry in the electronic storybook market is a humorous rendition of an old, familiar tale.

Part of a series of interactive folk tales from around the world, Baba Yaga and the Magic Geese will feel familiar even to people who have never heard the story before. It has elements of Hansel and Gretel as well as a story used in Jim Henson’s movie, Labyrinth, and Maurice Sendak’s book, Outside Over There.

As a story, the original tale is harrowing, creating a terrifying conflict with bleak odds for Tasha, the main character. In the end, the goodness of the good guy defeats the badness of the bad guy, and all terrors and heartaches are forgiven, just as you would expect from a story of such mythic proportions.

Davidson’s take on the story isn’t nearly as powerful, though. The overall tone of the tale is diluted by the wisecracks, the lack of characterization of the hero, and the incidental animation that is profusely sprinkled throughout the program. If the witch is so powerful and so cruel, why does she let the geese masquerade of her? Her credibility as a fearsome foe wanes as the story progresses. What is it about Tasha that inspires the forest creatures to save her and her brother? The story tells very little about her. And how do sneezing chimneys, coughing pipes, and other slapstick sequences fit into the time or atmosphere of the story? Some of these interjections were actually gruesome — vegetables turning into skulls, dandelions growing ferociously, an eerie cow-skull mooing and drooling. If Davidson wants to introduce kids to Russian folklore, the company should make the point-and-click spots enrich the setting with Russian themes.

Although the plot stumbles a bit, the programming struts. Baba Yaga and the Magic Geese features some of the best animation I’ve seen in a cartoon-style program. The backgrounds nearly shimmer. The characters are obviously animated in fewer colors than the background, but they move smoothly through the scenes. Even with their limited colors, most blend well with the landscape. The voice characterizations are fine, and the geese, unlike the other characters, have strong personalities.

My four-year-old son enjoyed Baba Yaga and the Magic Geese, laughing at the goofy antics of flip-flopping animals and slithering socks. He eagerly pointed out various spots to me, and he ran the program several times. It’s a safe bet that most kids will be equally amused. However, I wish the storytelling had been as rich as the programming.

Jump Start Preschool
Jump Start Preschool makes one of the best arguments against computers in the preschool curriculum that I have ever encountered. The program works beautifully, but it offers no activity that wouldn’t be more valuable using real materials. Offering all kinds of important cognitive activities, Jump Start Preschool is filled with terrific mental exercises for children. However, motor activity and sensory intake supports intellectual activity, and there’s very little of these two vital ingredients in most computer programs.

Young children need to be working with paper and pencils to develop their fine motor skills. They need to be holding the things they are counting, feeling how the weight and shape of the load in their hands changes as they count them out. They need to paint the paint-by-number pictures with real paint that feels squishy under their brushes. They need to work with materials that offer infinite possibilities for new discoveries. Truly, there isn’t enough time in the day to do all the concrete things children need to do. We shouldn’t whittle away what little time they have by sitting them in front of a computer.

This doesn’t mean you should never let your child explore one-to-one correspondences on your home computer. It doesn’t mean you shouldn’t let your child be consumed by an electronic coloring book once in a while. It simply means that a computer program is not even equal to a concrete activity for young kids, let alone a better alternative. And in preschool settings, the thin experience of computer learning isn’t what you’re paying for.

And even though Jump Start Preschool is a fine example of educational software, don’t buy it if you think it excuses you from sitting on the floor of your kitchen with a bowl of beans or a clip box of crayons. Your child needs to make the mess, among other things, and it helps them learn how to clean it up.

PC Gamer March 1996
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Product Information Number 114
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Product Information Number 168
Faster Than the Speed of Sound

You’ll have to excuse me if I seem a little emotional; I just had to let a friend go, and my life’s a little emptier for it.

I can’t tell you this friend’s name, but the initials are Falcon Mach V.

I recently had the pleasure of trying out one of these amazing PCs from Falcon Northwest (288 South Bayshore Dr., Coos Bay, OR 97420, (800) 258-6778), and I can’t tell you how hard it was to send it back when my time was up.

In keeping with Falcon’s philosophy of catering to gamers by offering the hottest technology in a complete package, the Mach V I evaluated was a 133MHz Pentium PC with all the trimmings: Intel’s Triton chipset; 16MB of RAM; a 1.6 gigabyte hard drive; a quad-speed CD-ROM drive; a Sound Blaster 16 sound card; Sony speakers and subwoofer; a 17” CTX monitor; and a CH Flightstick Pro joystick.

Wow...Where do I start? I guess the thing that strikes most people first about the Mach V is how bleeding fast it is. Anybody can build a fast PC around a 133MHz Pentium chip, but this puppy’s state-of-the-art pipelined burst cache and EDO RAM make it scorchingly quick.

Even games with notoriously high graphic detail and low frame rates were as smooth as silk on the Mach V. You can bet U.S. Navy Fighters, NASCAR Racing, and Flight Unlimited were among the first games I installed on this machine — and I was very pleasantly surprised at how smoothly they all ran, even in their high-resolution, Super VGA modes with all the detail options cranked up. MechWarrior 2 is great fun even on a fast 486, but it’s a whole new game on a machine like the Mach V.

And if you think Doom is already as good as it can get on your fast 486, you haven’t played it on a really fast machine. It’s not just faster, it’s much smoother, which means you can spin on a dime and fix your shotgun’s sights on the enemy with pinpoint accuracy. On the Mach V, you’re not just an ill-fated space marine — you’re Clint Eastwood.

All the Mach V’s other trimmings were impressive, too. A 17” monitor isn’t a necessity for gaming — and it’s not standard equipment on the Mach V — but if you’ve gotten used to staring at a 14” or 15” screen, the larger monitor will feel like virtual reality. That extra real estate can make a huge difference.

The quad-speed Toshiba CD-ROM drive was nice and quick — but it’s bound to seem sluggish compared to the 8-speed drive that’s now standard equipment on the Mach V (no, that’s not a misprint; we’re talking about a data transfer rate of 1.200K per second).

The Western Digital hard drive’s generous 1.6GB capacity is only surpassed by its amazing speed, provided by an Enhanced IDE interface and 10ms access time. Between the hard drive and the fast CD-ROM drive, I got through even the biggest game installations in record time. If data flew through this PC any faster, it would hum like high-power lines.

The audio end of the Mach V isn’t spectacular, but it’s more than adequate. A Sound Blaster 16 ensures total compatibility with any game on the market, and the combination of shielded stereo speakers and subwoofer provide plenty of volume. The Sony speakers don’t have quite the high-frequency response as similar combos from Altec Lansing or Jazz, but they crank out enough low-end punch to rattle any gamer’s teeth.

The Mach V has a couple of flaws that keep it from being the perfect PC. Falcon Northwest gave their PC a feature that lets you change the clock speed displayed in the LED readout on the case by pressing and holding the reset button. That saves you from messing with DIP switches or jumpers when you upgrade your processor, but the numbers tend to “drift” on the review system. More than once, I powered the Mach V up, only to find it had decided it was now an 85MHz or 184MHz machine.

Another problem has to do with the system’s high-speed dual joystick port, which seems to have trouble with Windows 95. Even with the single gameport built into the Sound Blaster 16 disabled, Win95 continued to detect it and the ports on the dual-port card, which caused conflicts that made it virtually impossible to correctly calibrate a joystick.

Games that ran in a full MS-DOS session (i.e., after a reboot) worked fine, but joystick control was basically nonexistent under Win95. I finally took the drastic measure of removing the dual-port card and enabling the gameport on the SB16, which resulted in perfect calibration.

Neither of those problems is a really big deal, but they’re significant annoyances in a system so expensive — and so polished in every other respect.

At press time, Falcon Northwest quoted a price of $4,081 for the Mach V with all the options the review system had; by the time you read this, it should go for less than four grand (the new 166MHz Pentium is available, too).

If you’re willing to do a little comparison shopping with some of the other direct-mail system dealers, you’ll almost certainly find a comparable system for fewer greenbacks. It might even be as well built and use the same premium components as the Mach V. But if you want to cut out the detective work and be certain you’re getting a complete, dead-serious PC designed by hard-core gamers for hard-core gamers, give Falcon Northwest a call.
Springtime Sites For Sore Eyes

If it sometimes seems as though the linked-from-everywhere "dinet central" computer network is becoming the Big Brother of online information services, consider this: So what? They're doing a damned fine job, and they've just centralized their huge shareware library on the World Wide Web.

Log on at http://www.shareware.com, where over 160,000 software titles are listed by popularity, new arrival, and subject matter (there's also a new featured title every day). While you're there, don't forget to subscribe to Shareware Dispatch, their free weekly newsletter E-mailed to your very own electronic mailbox. Go on — give that Microsoft Mail/Win95 Inbox something useful to do.

In other shareware news, my mention of AOhell in the January issue prompted reader Scott "Sir Wolfe" Alberta to write and inform me of BPS Software's PowerTools for AOL, a safe and legal enhancement program for the pretty-but-dumb America Online.

PowerTools is a set of powerful, professional-level tools and utilities for using AOL more productively, more enjoyably, and at less expense (and it lets you get back that busy cursor!). It gives casual users an entire suite of new functions and provides AOL Hosts, Guides and staff with a wide array of productivity tools, all fully integrated into the America Online toolbar. And it's completely customizable, as well.

PowerTools' Control Panel attaches to the top of your AOL window and provides buttons and controls for many tasks, including an Action Recorder, Hotlist Manager, Session Copy Manager, Power Chat window, IM Manager, Power Search, Auto SignOn, Text Phrase Manager, WAV Manager, Master Keyword Directory, Log Manager, Session Timer and Alarms, and a versatile Billing Log.

Registration for this revelation is $29.95 (there's a 20 percent discount if you register before the end of the 20-day evaluation period). You can download the Power Tools shareware from AOL (PWRT1_91.EXE — Keyword: WINFORUM) or at BPS' Home Page on the web: http://www.bpssoft.com. You can also E-mail Brad O'Keefe as BPS Brad@aol.com.

While at the BPS home page, I also downloaded an amazing demo of the Chroma Zone Screen Saver by Steve Gibson; author of the SpinRite hard-drive utility. Written in pure assembly language, Chroma Zone takes up just 132K of hard-drive space, yet delivers limitless interactively editable, three-dimensional, animated, multi-million color (these are Steve's words, by the way) screen presentations that can automatically be displayed whenever your computer is idle.

The demo lets you sample more than one hundred different examples and fool around with their settings, although you can't save your preferences. But wait — there's more! If you mention that you snagged it at the BPS Software web page, Steve will give you a special discount off the regular $39.95 price. That's right, the full registered version of Chroma Zone can be your for only $24.95 E-mail him at steve@bps@aol.com.

Tell him you heard about it in PCG, and he may even knock off another $1.09! (Then again, he may not.)

My Back Pages

Yes, these are some of the bookmarks stored in my own personal Netscape, Mosaic, and AOL web browsers. You may enjoy or deride them as you see fit.

- http://www.booked.net/users.eob9/simcap.htm — Nestled comfortably in Calana Software's warm web is Simcap, Inc.'s Intercept, The Journal For Combat Flight Simulation Pilots. Calana's web site also has a convenient link to the PCG site, as well.

If you think there's no better way to celebrate Spring than sitting indoors at your computer, Scott's got plenty of cool web sites to keep you busy.

Scott Wolf

Magazine, a 'zine published in the United Kingdom.

- Bart Kamps' unofficial, but excellent, U.S. Navy Fighters home page in the Netherlands (be sure to note that there's no dot after "www" in the site's URL).
- http://www.fender.com
- It's the Super Strat Site — home of Fender Guitars!
- http://www.gibson.com
- Hungry for photos of sunburnt Les Pauls? Gibson Guitars now serving.
- http://tigerden.com/ Wolf-park/Welcome.html — Wolf Park in Battle Ground, Indiana. I was a member before feeding my own animals bled my wallet dry.
- http://www. doonesbury.com — Garry Trudeau's been ripping the net in his comic strip; now he's officially part of it, courtesy of Mindscape Online Publishing.
- http://www.kaos. stanford.edu/wii/br/ off-world.html — With Westwood Studios hard at work on the long-awaited Blade Runner game, this Off World site for all things replicant should be hopping again. I still play Vangelis' Blade Runner soundtrack CD while I'm writing this crap.

Well, I know it's time to quit when I feel something on my shoulder and it turns out to be the floor. I'll bid you all a fond farewell until next month. Be Seeing You.
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A Tale of Two Licenses

A fantasy title based on the original Krondor engine. Why is so much showing up so late? The story goes something like this:

In order to make games based on the Riftwar universe, Sierra/Dynamix had to purchase the rights to Feist’s story from Feist, who happily agreed and even helped a bit in the game design. Betrayal at Krondor was completed, packed with a manual into shiny boxes, and shipped out to stores. Everyone was happy.

Now here’s the critical point. The first version of Betrayal was sent out exclusively on floppy disks (lots and lots of them, as I remember) at a time when CD-ROM gaming was just poking its nose into the PC arena. Much to everyone’s disappointment, the game just didn’t sell very well. The company decided that this just wasn’t going to be a profitable venture after all, packed up all of their Krondor goodies, and sold the rights to the universe back to Feist. Everyone was unhappy.

The funny thing about all of this is that when Sierra decided later to squeeze what money they could out of what they thought was a flop by releasing it on CD-ROM, it sold scads of copies.

Reviewers loved it, people wanted it, and there was general harmony in the RPG and adventure communities. Except for one little hitch... By all accounts, Feist had enjoyed working with the gaming medium, and was very interested in seeing his characters come to life again. After talking with a few different interested parties, he ended up reselling his Riftwar license to 7th Level, a California-based software company that immediately began production on a sequel called Return to Krondor. Working with Feist, the team created a whole new set of characters (not wishing to get to close to the potential legal trap of reusing the cast of Betrayal) and also starting work on an all-new interface.

So far, the results have been pretty impressive. The new game creates an interesting blend of art and technology by taking sizable polygonal characters and moving them around in a 3D space mapped out on the screen with the use of painted 2D backgrounds (yes, I know it doesn’t sound like it would work, but does...truly, Feist and Sierra’s scholarship helped a good bit with the story line to ensure that it will fit with the existing books and games.)

The thing is, even without the advantage of the Riftwar license, Betrayal at Krondor would have been a great game. The chapter-based structure, the smooth interface, the object interaction — all of these things would have worked just as well with Conon, or Elicia, or even Clifford the Big Red Dog (well, maybe not Clifford...).

So what do you do with a great RPG system and no license? You make up your own story line, of course, and that’s exactly what Sierra has done with their latest project, Antara. Hiring an all-new development team, the company has taken everything that was great about Betrayal, replaced all of the characters and objects with new ones of their own design, and set about fixing the few problems with the first title that people complained about (read: graphics and sound).

According to the designer, Antara’s graphics will run at 640x480 resolution with 256 colors, and may feature digital audio as well. A new magic system is being added, along with some truly cool new weapons and magic items (how about a magic chain that links your party together and ...). The design is taken to any single member across the entire group?). The end result is another cool product, and the unique setting ensures that, even if initial sales are weak, Sierra can’t run off and sell the rights to it (meaning we could see sequels in the future).

Both Antara and Return to Krondor are getting ready to ship, and it’s going to be a hard call (and one that I, fortunately, don’t yet have to make) as to which one will be the stronger title. Either way, the long wait to continue the adventure we all started a few years ago is at an end. Now, if we can just get those guys at New World Computing to get that next Might and Magic game on the shelves...
ne of the nicest things my parents did for me, when my obsession with history surfaced in junior high school, was to give me a birthday subscription to American Heritage. The magazine is still around, but it’s hard to spot on the newsstand because it long ago gave up its distinctive format: deluxe hardcover books with full-color reproductions of historical paintings. AH also published a series of big, lavishly illustrated coffee-table books on all the major American wars (their World War One volume, with text by S.L.A. Marshall, is perhaps the best book on the subject ever designed for the non-specialist reader), and their Civil War history, with text by Bruce Catton, was a landmark production in every respect.

I was delighted, therefore, to receive for review a big, lavishly designed multimedia set titled American Heritage: The Civil War, which promised not only a hour’s worth of exciting re-enactment footage and discussions of the war’s causes and issues by noted historian James McPherson, but a full-scale “strategy game” as a bonus. American Heritage has published board games before, back in the 1970s, and while they were certainly pitched to the novice gamer, they were very respectable introductory-level wargames. As I opened the box and loaded the two CDs (under Windows 3.1 — I refuse to buy Windows 95 until it becomes absolutely necessary, which will probably be sometime in the next, oh, ninety days), I was hoping for the best.

I should have been tipped off by the fact that this is not, strictly speaking, an American Heritage production, but rather a too-many-cooks concoction blending the efforts of Simon & Schuster Interactive (a company that was once known as a publisher of Serious Books, but which has now become every bit as pandering and profit-driven as the worst schlock publishers in the business), and Byron Preiss Multimedia (which did its best work publishing underground comics back in the 1970s).

McPherson’s “discussions” of the war’s issues and themes are cogent, but all too brief. The “animated battle maps” consist of four or five panels each, superficially at first. The scale felt right, the time scale felt right, and the interface was simplicity itself. Movement and transfers-of-command were easily accomplished. Playing the Confederates (of course), I chose to go on the strategic defensive in Virginia, beefing up the garrison in West Virginia so as to retain control of that quadrant of the line, and adopt a cut-and-thrust war of maneuvers in the west. Success at first attended my efforts, as the rebels quickly seized and managed to hold on to St. Louis.

And then, in the autumn of 1861, things began to get screwy. A replacements screen appeared, offering me 40,000 recruits. I created a new force for the East, the “Army of the Carolinas,” gave them 25,000 men, and put Robert E. Lee in charge, headquartered in Raleigh. Then I hit the Enact button to confirm my orders ... and the entire army vanished. Oh, it was still listed as being on the CSA roster; it just never appeared on the map. The computer helpfully informed me that the “Army of Missouri” was now, for some unfathomable reason, located in Mexico.

The battle was handled in the same slipshod manner: units converged, as ordered, and sometimes overlapped each other on the map — presumably engaged in combat. But nothing ever appeared on the map to show that a battle had taken place — by accessing a Field Report, I got a list of engagements and winners/losers, but no casualty figures.

After that point, matters just became hopelessly fuzzy. I began to wonder how anyone could design such a game and leave out something as basic as a combat icon or casualty stats. And the game itself began to crash in the winter of 1861-62. I tried periodic saving to get around the problem, but was informatically told that “this Civil War file does not exist” even though the save game function had apparently worked fine.

In short, this entire package is a farrago of bugs, bewildering design choices (how much more effort would it have taken to make everything halfway realistic?) and missed opportunities.

What a disappointment.

For novice gamers and students with a budding interest in the Civil War, the Ted Turner/Swfte Gettysburg package remains a good choice. It packs more information on one CD than this product does on two; the game portion, while still simplistic, is at least playable; and as a bonus, you get to hear Shelby Foote’s bourbon-mellow narration.
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Sierra Snaps Up Papyrus

When Sierra snapped up Papyrus in December, computer gamers — especially fans of racing sims — held their collective breath. What will the acquisition mean for Papyrus, the king of hardcore racing simulations? Concern among gamers is understandable. Acquisition of software developers has been a mixed bag, at least as far as the quality of the product is concerned. Sierra has recently bolstered its position as the largest entertainment software company by swallowing several other companies, and sometimes product lines have not fared as well under new ownership.

When Dynamix released Front Page Sports: Football through Sierra several years ago, it was clearly the finest football sim on the market. It still is, but as Sierra gradually absorbed Dynamix, FPSF has almost stopped evolving. It looks a little better, and each year’s new version incorporates the latest rules changes, but it’s basically the same game as the original.

Sim fans all remember when Dynamix’s Red Baron and Aces of the Pacific were the hottest air combat games around, but lately, Dynamix has been pretty much grounded when it came to new sims. Sierra is promising to deliver Red Baron II this spring, but it’s been a long, dry spell.

But acquisition doesn’t have to dampen the creative spark. At a smaller software publisher, Sierra bought Impressions, which then released Caesar II, easily the best Impressions title to date and one of the best economic/strategy games of 1996.

Still, computer racers who’ve grown accustomed to seeing sure winners roll out of Papyrus’ garage will be watching closely as the company starts operating under its new corporate parent. There are no better computer simulations available than NASCAR Racing and the IndyCar Racing games, period. Now that Papyrus has been swallowed up by the Sierra giant, what will happen to that high level of quality and realism?

Lee Buchanan

Not to worry, say the folks at Papyrus. The new ownership will bring only positive change, especially a relative freedom from financial concerns. “Sierra acquired us because of our success, our talent, and our people,” says Ann Marie Gianantoni of Papyrus. “They plan to keep everything intact.”

“The people here are pretty excited about the acquisition,” she says. “With the new resources, we have the ability to acquire other technical expertise from the other Sierra companies.” Those resources can mean even better games, and possibly more of them. Sierra is “anxious to see what we can produce here,” Gianantoni says. “Everyone’s kind of buzzing and thinking about the things we can do, how we can make our existing products better.”

Should you look for other types of products from Papyrus, something other than first-class racing sims? Not right away, anyway; driving sims are a hot category, and nobody does it better than Papyrus. But “there are other ideas floating around,” Gianantoni says. “Products other than racing simulations are definitely being discussed.”

What’s next from Papyrus? Plans aren’t definite, but a Mac version of NASCAR Racing looks doubtful. Meanwhile, their multiplayer online racing service remains in development, although a possible release date hasn’t been set.

Sierra’s Rebecca Buxton says Papyrus will operate as a separate division. “Papyrus is a super-successful and popular company,” she says. “We have absolutely no intention of changing the flavor of Papyrus products. One thing the company is excited about is that Dynamix and Papyrus can work together and exchange technologies.”

All that positive spin seems encouraging, but history has plenty of examples of creative fires that were snuffed out by acquisition. Still, the folks at Sierra seem determined not to change a winning formula, and why should they? Let’s keep our fingers crossed. If nothing else, Papyrus simply must produce at least one copy of NASCAR Racing II.

And send it to me.
Unless you run a corporate data network or manage a computer-aided design lab, Intel says you don’t need to worry about its new Pentium Pro. These CPUs are quite a bit faster than our now-amateur-grade Pentiums, but the official line from Intel is that Pentium Pros are meant for network server systems and technical workstations, not for desktop PCs.

Now, we’ve heard this line before. The 386, 486, and Pentium chips were also aimed at technical users first, since the earliest systems were too expensive, too fussy, or too limited in some way for the general market. But it was only a matter of months before each of these CPUs became the standard for all types of personal computers. So why should the Pentium Pro be any different?

It has something to do with the way Pentium Pro chips are made. For each new processor chip, Intel has usually unveiled a new, more compact fabrication process, packing more circuitry into each square millimeter of silicon. But the Pro uses the same process and the same feature sizes as a standard Pentium chip. All of the Pro’s added speed comes from the circuit elements—from what chip designers like to call “architectural” changes. But along with the new design come higher costs and some other limitations that are supposed to keep this CPU out of the mass market.

In high-performance CPUs, instructions are passed down a pipeline of execution units, an assembly line where each unit performs part of the work needed to execute instructions. The Pro has twelve execution units in its pipeline, compared to five units in a standard Pentium. Each unit performs a smaller bit of processing, and instructions pass from stage to stage more quickly, letting the Pro operate at a 33 percent higher clock speed.

For the Pentium Pro’s “superpipelined” architecture to work, instructions must keep flowing smoothly through the pipeline stages, and it isn’t easy to guarantee this will always happen. Several things can go wrong: “Data dependencies” will stall the pipeline if one instruction calculates a value used by the next instruction; the CPU can’t execute the second instruction until the first one finishes.

To keep every transistor as busy as possible, the Pentium Pro uses an approach that Intel calls “Dynamic Execution,” as long as it doesn’t affect the logic of the program, instructions can be processed out of order. If one instruction isn’t ready to execute, the CPU can look as far as twenty instructions ahead to find one that’s ready to go. Some of the more complex instructions can be broken into simpler micro-operations, and even these can be executed out of order.

Branch Instructions (instructions that send the CPU off to a different part of the program if a logical condition is satisfied) also cause problems, since the instruction to be fed into the pipeline next depends on whether or not the branch is taken. The Pro’s Branch Prediction Unit tries to keep the pipeline moving, correctly guessing the result of a branch instruction more than 90 percent of the time.

Intel also designed some clever new packaging for the Pentium Pro. There are actually two chips inside the package: the CPU itself, plus a level-two memory cache chip. Computers that use 486 or Pentium processors usually include the level-two cache as part of the system’s motherboard; by including the processor chip and 256 or 512 kilobytes of cache in the same package, the Pro can integrate them more tightly for better overall performance.

It sounds wonderful so far, but there are a couple of reasons why the Pentium Pro is a high-end-only chip. Cost is one: with 3.5 million transistors on board the processor, it’s a big chip, so a wafer of raw silicon doesn’t yield very many finished CPUs. Initial prices range from about $1,000 for a 150MHz Pro with a 256K cache to nearly $2,000 for the 200MHz, 512K package that will be available later this year.

Another drawback stems from Intel’s decision to optimize the Pro for 32-bit code—at the expense of 16-bit performance. That’s no problem for workstation and server operating systems like Windows NT and Unix. But most general-purpose applications still use 16-bit code, and the Pentium Pro is reportedly slower than a standard Pentium when executing these instructions. Even Windows 95, a 32-bit operating system, has to include a fair amount of 16-bit code to ensure total compatibility with MS-DOS and Windows 3.1.

But there might be another reason why Intel is saying that the Pentium Pro isn’t for us. Think about the “SX/DX” issue. The 386DX was a full 32-bit processor; while 386SX CPUs had a 32-bit internal core and a 16-bit bus connecting it to the rest of the computer. Later, all the 486 CPUs were 32-bit processors both internally and externally, but the 486DX chips included math coprocessors while the 486SXX didn’t. It wasn’t apparent at first, but those names said less about technical features than they did about how Intel positioned and priced the chips. The “Pro” designation might turn out to be the same kind of thing.

The Pentium Pro is finally here, but Intel isn’t aiming it at desktop users—and gamers should know it may not be as fast with some games as their tried-and-true Pentiums.
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“This thing is "Flamin' AWESOME!" Digital Revolution Evening Post ONE CD WELCOME TO THE FUTURE the most ultra-high-resolution surround sound quest for the VOYAGE
The Strategy Central crew drew straws to see who could fight off the side-effects of Warcraft II withdrawal just long enough to put together some hints, tips, and cheats for this amazing strategy game. While there was only one winner, the rest of the crew had fun, too, learning the secrets of Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure and helping a reader through the dark corridors of Aliens.

**Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness**

**Destroy the Horde with these devastating strategies!**

After many sleepless nights of battling orcs, ogres and dragons, the Strategy Central crew finally destroyed the last remnants of the despicable Horde, putting an end to the reign of terror that terrorized the humans out of Azeroth. Though the cost in casualties was high, these brave generals were eager to lend their sage advice for beating the tough scenarios in *Warcraft II*. So without any further ado, here are some tips for surviving a career as the human commander.

**In the Beginning...**

As you get beyond the basic tutorial missions, you'll find that the strategy of simply building an overwhelming force isn't enough to defeat your opponents in *Warcraft II*. While the variety of missions means it's hard to develop a set strategy, one thing remains constant — cranking out farms and peasants so you can maximize resource-gathering should always be at the top of your list. You should have at least ten peasants going into the mines, five or six chopping trees, and one guy building farms and the essential upgrades — the smithy, the stable and the lumber mill.

Hold off on building a lot of military units until you can build knights (or ogres), and then just build enough to secure your path to the mines. Don't expend a lot of effort scouting around with foot units; wait until you can get some cheap aerial scouts — the zeppelins or gnomish flying machines. And definitely don't waste a lot of time and energy making small raids with light forces; they'll only let your enemy know what direction you're coming from and distract you from building a major fighting force.

**Managing Advanced Weaponry**

Once you've got the basic units in plentiful supply and you've upgraded your town hall, you'll want to start experimenting with some of the new firepower available to you. Researching magic is important, although you'll need to remember that mages are relatively weak and should be kept well away from the front lines. But with two mages and the invisibility and blizzard spells, you can wreak some major havoc on unsuspecting orcs. Have one mage make the other invisible, then take the invisible mage towards the enemy's town, where a wall of axe throwers and ogres is probably waiting just outside. Unleash a blizzard spell on them, then follow up with a group of nine paladins or other heavy units. This will succeed against all but the most prepared opponent.

If you're isolated on an island, you will also need to build a superior naval force. Keep mixed groups of naval units, with at least one flying unit grouped with your battleships, subs and destroyers, so you'll be able to spot the submarines and destroy them. Keep three or four oil tankers going, and keep a battle group both at your main oil platform and near your harbor. Do some aerial scouting of the enemy's shipping; you may find some units left without aerial pickets, just waiting for a task force of three submarines to take out. Remember that without subs or aerial forces, even the battleships are helpless against your submarines.

**Down and Dirty**

A very nasty trick (especially in a multiplayer game) you can use against your opponents is to load a transport with six powerful units, then cast an invisibility spell on the transport. When the transport unloads, preferably in your enemy's town, the six units seem to attack from nowhere. This works especially well if you load the transport with demolition squads; six bomb squads take out a barracks or even a town hall in short order, bringing enemy production to its knees. For the same reason, you should keep pickets along your shore.

**Mission Walkthroughs**

**The Ninth Mission**

In this one, you have no peasants — only ships and men — and you must run a gauntlet of cannon towers, catapults and destroyers to rescue the Lightbringer from the northwestern...
corner of the map and take him down to Caer Darrow in the southeast corner. The key to success is selectively applying overwhelming force to exposed enemy units.

First, scout around with your flying machines to get an overview of the naval situation. You should see that there is a long, narrow channel lined with catapults, cannon towers, and destroyers that will put you at the bottom of the sea if you try to crash through head on. There are also plenty of enemy forces waiting to cause havoc in the southeast.

Now that you are aware of the situation, you need to clear out the sea between the channels. Group your destroyers and battleships together and move south, clearing the two enemy destroyers out of the open seas. Try to have all your warships firing at once, so you can sink the enemy without losing any of your own.

At this point, with most of your force intact, it is a good idea to completely secure the sea route to the city. Take out the enemy towers one by one by bringing in your battleships and blasting away at the nearest, while staying out of range of the others. When fighting catapults, you can actually dodge enemy fire by moving just as he fires. An amphibious landing on the north island to engage the enemy catapult and axe throwers is also a good idea; the human ships with orange banners are your enemies as well.

With your rear secure, it’s time to get the Lightbringer. You need to lure the remaining enemy destroyers out of the channel. This can be difficult, but you can use an empty transport to go into the channel, just barely, and then head back to safety. This will bring the destroyers out into the bay, where you can crush them with your battleships. Be careful of your ships don’t get too close to the shore and take fire, or they will move in and get sunk.

At this point, you can now bring your battleships into shore and take out the towers one at a time, without getting in range of the other towers. The southern island is less defended, and if you can completely clear it, the rest of your ships can hug the shore when crossing the channel. With the enemy firepower along the shore greatly reduced, you can now make a run for the Lightbringer. Send all four transports and any remaining destroyers straight through the channel, all the way up to the Ambassador. If you’ve taken out enough towers and catapults, you can get through with hardly a scratch. Load the ambassador on the transport that has taken the least damage and send them through again. Regroup, and it should be clear sailing to the city.

The 11th Mission

In this mission, you must liberate the peasants and magus and destroy the treacherous nation of Alteroc. Since you again start with no peasants or buildings, your first priority will be the rescue, so you can build up your forces for an assault on the town.

It will take a lot of old-fashioned blundering around to locate the peasants, and if you don’t find them quickly, your armies will be too worn down to liberate them. If you want to find them for yourself, don’t read on.) The peasants are locked up in the northeastern corner of the map, guarded by walls and cannon towers. You need both ballistae and dwarven sappers to take out the towers, and you’ll have to use your other troops to screen them from enemy land units. Once you’ve liberated the prisoners, immediately send everyone back to your town and start building. You’ll want lots more dwarven sappers to take out the gun towers of Alteroc

The 13th Mission

This mission is extremely difficult, with a frantic pace and damaging onslaughts right from the start. You will run out of resources and be hit by constant assaults of dragons and landings of frenzied Orcs, so your first priority is putting the town and gold mine behind a defense wall.

Block off most of your town with cannon towers and farms. (Since you can’t build walls in single-player games, farms will do just as well, and they actually have more hits points than towers.) Watch over your woodcutters, making sure they hollow out the forest without creating any gaps for the enemy to sneak through.

When you run out of gold, you’ll have to clear out a couple of the neighboring islands and begin mining there. Once the island is secure, ship your peasants in and begin mining. Rather than transporting the gold by ship back to your main keep, build another town hall near the new mine; your gold production will go much faster.

Warcraft II Cheat Codes

Just like the original Warcraft, there are a few cheat codes for Warcraft II to help you out when things get rough. Keep in mind, thought, that these cheats affect your opponents as well — so don’t be surprised if a cheat gets you killed! To use the codes, hit the Enter key during a game, type the code you want, then hit Enter again.

**VALDEZ** — Gives you 5000 oil

**MAKE IT SO** — Rapid construction and unit training

**THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE** — Shows you the final

**NOGLUES** — Renders magical traps useless

**HATCHET** — Chop down trees with two hits

**ON SCREEN** — Reveal map, even in multi-player games

**SHOWPATH** — Reveal map

**IT IS A GOOD DAY TO DIE** — Make your soldiers invincible
Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure

The secrets of the Mayans revealed!

With the release of Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure, Activision returned to the familiar jungle setting of their classic Atari 2600 game, Pitfall, and brought it into the 1990s with fast graphics and even faster action. Like most gamers, we've enjoyed the bungie-jumping antics of its swashbuckling hero, Harry Jr., as he whips, jumps and fights his way through deadly swamps, treacherous cliffs, and rickety mine shafts. But this one eventually had even the gaming veterans at PC Gamer begging for mercy. So when we caught wind of a few cheat codes that could make things a little easier for our arthritic thumbs, we knew we just had to share them with our readers. To enable the cheats, simply type them at any time during the game.

FRAMERATE — Displays the frame rate
HATMAN — Turns Harry Jr. into a stick figure
HATMAN (second time) — Turns creatures into stick figures
HATMAN (third time) — Returns the game to normal
LETSDOTHETIMEWARP — Access the secret Atari 2600 level of Pitfall
IDBUYTHATFORADOLLAR — Gives you access to every level, including the orig-
inal Pitfall level
IDDOD — Try it!
MEOWMEOWLIKEMEOWMAN — Gives the player nine lives
PUMPYOUUP — Reloads weapons with 99 of each
EATMOREBRAN — Gives you nine continues
FIVEEASYPIECES — Access the first five levels

To see the Pitfall designers display their sense of humor, type the IDDOD cheat.

Reader's Requests

Aliens: Give the man a hand

Dear Strategy Central,

I just purchased Mindscape's graphic adventure, Aliens, and managed to get through the first few puzzles in the game without much trouble (landing the ship, feeding the crew, etc.), but now I'm stuck. After sending my crew through the station, I've managed to explore most of the complex and have come across a hand scanner that should give me access to more of the station, but I can't figure out where I can find a hand to activate the scanner. I've got the red passcard and skybot, but I don't know where to go from here. Can you help?

Robert Thompson
via AOL

Amidst the fallen colonists, you'll find a switch located at the stairwell; it's your key to getting that hand.

Use this terminal to give you access to the white door in the docking bay.

We'd be happy to help, Robert, although you're already close to finding the answer on your own. Near the elevator on the second level (where you found the red passcard and skybot), there is a red box. Use this box to activate the white door in the docking bay (you'll see a red light when it's active). Now return to the docking bay and use the terminal on the raised platform to open the white door. On the other side of the door, you'll find a dead colonist that can provide the helping hand you need. Use Lora to cut the hand off of the colonist, and don't forget to take the CD-ROM.
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CD ROM
e're not entirely sure, but we're beginning to think some of our more eloquent readers are trying to send us secret messages via the PC Gamer mailbag. What may seem to be an innocuous note about multi-player gaming or the latest volley in the ongoing operating system debate may actually conceal information vital to our national security — if only we could decipher the code in time. That's not paranoid, is it?

Spawning Extra Orcs

Dear PC Gamer,

I just bought Blizzard's great game, Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness. Blizzard did something with this game that I think is just spectacular — they made it possible for the person who bought the game to copy it over to a friend's computer so that they both can enjoy the multiplayer part of the game without having to buy two copies of the game. This is something that other game developers should try to do. I mean, let's face it; when you buy a game because it has multi-player options, you can't expect that all of your friends are going to buy the same game just so they can play against you over the modem. The thing that Blizzard did to curb pirating was to make it so that only the multiplayer option is available to the person who does not have the Warcraft II CD-ROM in their machine; this way people don't just give all of their friends a free workable copy of the game. I don't know if Blizzard invented this simple concept, but it is clear that they had the gamer in mind when they included this feature.

Thank you, Casey Mann
tx@aol.com

P.S.: I hate it when game developers only include network multi-player support and not modem support. Who the hell out there on a network (like people at their jobs, not at home) has the time to play computer games? People play this stuff at home, over a modem!

Warcraft II isn't the first game with the ability to "spawn" copies of itself for multi-player purposes has gamers cheering.

OS Wars: A New Player?

Dear PC Gamer,

It amazes me how the PC industry has "waged" war back and forth between DOS, OS/2, and Windows 95 while ignoring the real operating system contender: Linux. Why would anyone want an OS that suckled down 8MBs of memory to run poorly and is targeted only at 486 machines and up, when we're able to run a more complex OS on 386 machines. There are no games out for Linux, one might argue. That, however, would be ignoring Doom and Abase, which run quite nicely simultaneously under the X Window System. Hmmm, workstation power on a PC. Nope, we would not want anything so powerful. Besides, running networked games would be much too easy, since X was designed to reduce network load by distributing apps to other machines and redirecting the output to your screen. Just imagine, you could run Doom on the idle machine down the hall while you get to see all the action. Not to mention this platform is a game-developer's paradise. Perhaps we should send the message to the developers before 32MB is the minimum required memory for MS Paint to operate properly.

Sincerely,
Mark Van Noy
via AOL

Let's Hear From You!

Write to:
PC Gamer Letters
150 North Hill Dr.,
Suite 40
Brisbane, CA 94005
or E-mail to:
peeceegee@aol.com
74431,3433@compuserve.com

You're neglecting one extremely important element of any operating system that's going to be used at home, where most people do their gaming: user friendliness. Linux and X are powerful systems, but they can't hold a candle to Win95, or even OS/2, in the ease-of-use arena. And if PC gaming is going to reach its full potential audience, it's going to have to be as accessible as possible.

The Sweet Science

Dear PC Gamer,

I'm an avid reader of your magazine. After graduating from the realm of Nintendo and Sega platforms, I now sit behind the wheel of a 486 multimedia PC. My question is this: Where are the boxing games? There are Kung Fu fighters, wrestlers, robot warriors, and even fighting animals! I would give my left mouse-click for even one game/aim to represent the sweet science of boxing. If I have overlooked any (and believe me, I've looked), I would appreciate your superior abilities to locate such a prize.

Thanks,
Gene Bingham
Lipan, TX

Unfortunately, you're right about the shortage of boxing games on the PC. Gene. The bad news is that the last really good one, Electronic Arts '40 Boxing, came out several years ago. The good news is that you can probably still find a copy (at a sizable discount) if you're willing to do a little hunting — and since it was designed in the
days of the 386, it should run beautifully on your machine. If you're willing to try a state-based game without arcade action or flashy graphics, you might look for Comp-U-Sports' Title Fight Pro Boxing for Windows, which lets you pit history's greatest pugilists against each other.

Primal Rage. Is it something in the software? I have one heck of a long load time for Battle for Jason's Star missions, yet Origin's Wing Commander III loads expediently.

Sincerely,
Jim Woodard
Virginia Beach, VA

“Hitching” — that's as good a word for it as we've heard. These annoying little freeze-ups are often tied to disk access; the game has to pause for a bit while it reads data it needs from the hard drive or CD-ROM. About all you can do short of buying even faster drives is to make sure you're putting some of your memory to work in the form of a cache, a program that stores disk data in RAM for faster access. The SmartDrive cache that comes with MS-DOS is a pretty good one — with 16MB of memory, you should be able to set up a 2MB cache without taking too much RAM from your games. SmartDrive won't solve all your problems — and it can actually slow down some games that do their own caching — but it usually brings some improvement. For details on SmartDrive, check your DOS manual, or type “HELP SMART-DRV” at a DOS prompt.

Reviewing History

Dear PC Gamer,

I would like to leave a note in your suggestion box. Have you ever considered doing brief reviews on older games that came out before you started PC Gamer? You might want to consider telling gamers about other games that are a whole lot better than the cheap garbage that companies are shelling out today. Games like those in the Kings Quest and Monkey Island series are a lot better than some of the stuff on the market these days, and I feel that they don't get the credit they deserve. Some of the old timers still have a lot of pep in them.

Sincerely,
Kirk Battle
Conway, SC

We've gotten a few other requests like yours since we started PC Gamer. Kirk. Unfortunately, space just doesn't permit us to look back at older games. The magazine is quite a bit bigger today than it was just a year ago, but the gaming industry has grown, too — so it's all we can do to keep up with all the new titles being published every month.

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