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Plus! Guns, guts and glory in Sensible Software's war epic *Cannon Fodder* – first review, page 60

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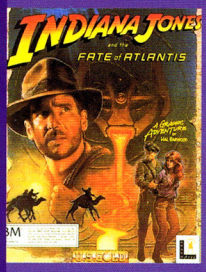

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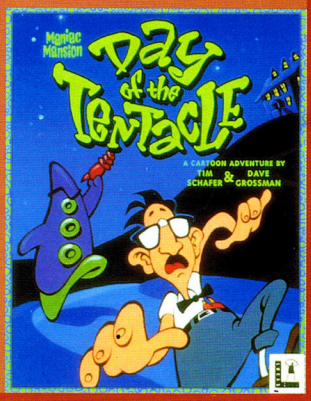

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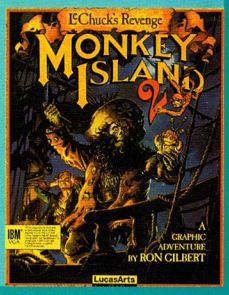

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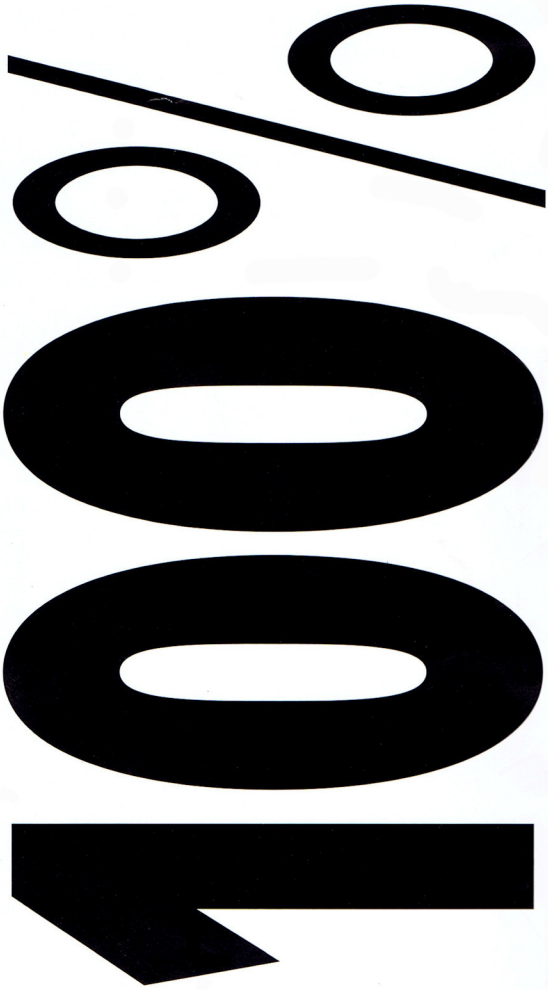

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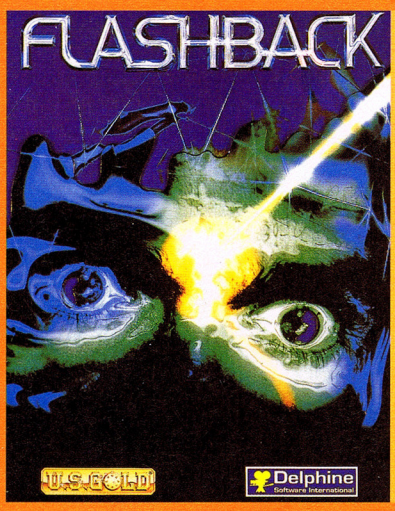



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43 All-Time Top 50

We researched. We argued. We played and replayed. We did, in fact, everything necessary to come up with the final, definitive, no-more-tears-I'm-the-Editor-and-my-decision-goes-or-you're-fired list of the 50 best games ever released on the PC. Spanning 14 pages, the Top 50 also has top celebs from the world of PC gaming (and elsewhere) naming their favourite batch of titles and coming up with a few choice quotes while they're at it. Having finally completed this mammoth task, we're off down the pub to recuperate. Now all you have to do is read it...



SCOOP!

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You know the drill. We hunt down the biggest games on the horizon and tell you all about them...

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From the makers of *Cosmic Osmo* (remember that?) comes a CD-ROM epic that promises to show *The 7th Guest* what adventuring is all about.

16 The Chaos Engine



From the makers of *Xenon* and *Speedball* comes a *Gauntlet*-style shoot-'em-up with a touch of class and olde worlde charm.

18 Fleet Defender



From the makers of just about every flight simulation – yet another one. What's MicroProse's excuse this time? Well, it's got something to with aircraft carriers, they tell us. We were intrigued too...

Coverdisks!







10 COVERDISKS BONANZA!

Yep, it's demos a go-go this month as *PC Gamer,* in an extraordinary fit of unbridled generosity, bring you not one but two (that's *two* and we're cutting our own throat, guvnor) great high-density coverdisks stuffed with playable previews of *DragonSphere* and *UFO: Enemy Unknown,* the latest hot new games from MicroProse.

Whether your taste is for strategy or adventure, you'll find something more succulent than a Taiwanese Ranch Style Jumbo Fish Burger to chew on here, so grab your forks, do some origami with your napkin – and dig in!

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War. What is it good for? Well, if absolutely nothing else it provides the basis for some rather good computer games. And that's never been more true than now, as Sensible Software's latest turns the wargame genre inside out (and back again) with an innovative mix of action and tactics as you strive to lead your team of soldiers through the thick of battle. You'll see why it's perhaps the most enjoyable simulation of ground-level army combat by turning to page 60... **By Gary Whitta**



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The team behind *Laser Squad* return with an updated version of their strategic RPG. This time you're commanding Earth's forces against invisible (and hostile) alien invaders. Think you can handle it?



76 D/Generation For Windows
A forgotten favourite returns in a completely new Windows-compatible version, with enhanced sound and gameplay as good as it ever was.



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In addition, we now publish these fine magazines in the United States: *Game Players, PC Entertainment, Computer Entertainment News, CD-ROM Today* and assorted *Game Players* specials

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Matt, we miss you. Blub.

Planet Gamer

Gary Whitta
Editor

WAHAY! AS IF you hadn't already guessed from the pants-bogglingly generous two disks affixed to this month's cover, we're in splendid party mood here at *PC Gamer*. And why not? The recent cold snap allowed for some top snowballing action at the local park – and we've had an avalanche of smart new games arriving in the office to boot. So why not take advantage of our good nature while it lasts and enjoy one of the best issues of *PC Gamer* to date?

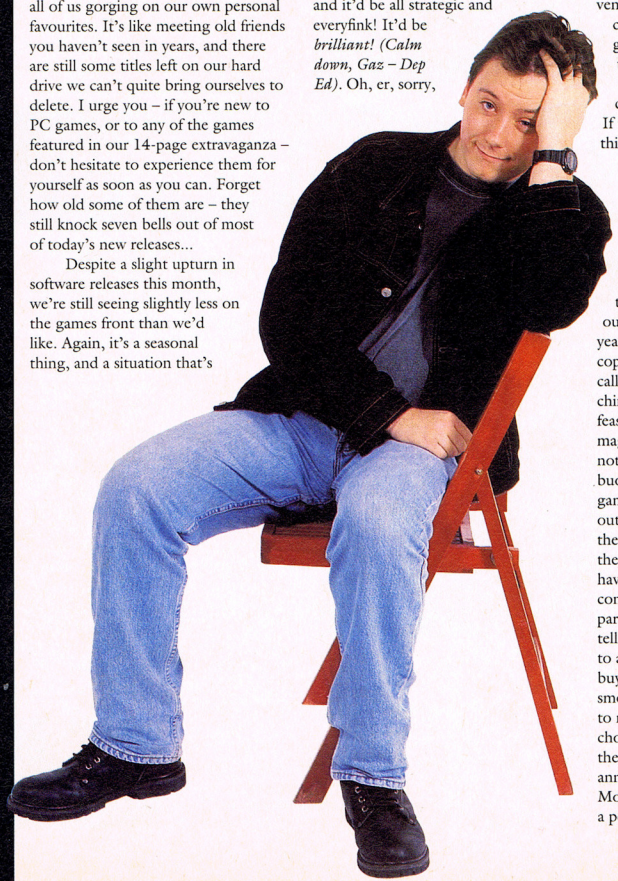
There's another reason for our jovial disposition this month, though. In the process of compiling our definitive Top 50 feature (starting on page 43), we've had good cause to spend large amounts of worktime 're-evaluating' some of our all-time favourite PC games. The last week has seen several rounds of *PGA Tour Golf*, three individual bouts of *X-Wing* and *Doom* (from start to finish), an entire *Star Control II* tournament, trips down memory lane with *The Secret Of Monkey Island* and *Lemmings*, more sessions on *Speedball 2* than can surely be healthy – and, of course, entire evenings lost to the black hole of spare time that is *SimCity 2000*.

What started out as a simple editorial exercise soon degenerated into a seemingly neverending banquet of self-indulgent games nostalgia, with all of us gorging on our own personal favourites. It's like meeting old friends you haven't seen in years, and there are still some titles left on our hard drive we can't quite bring ourselves to delete. I urge you – if you're new to PC games, or to any of the games featured in our 14-page extravaganza – don't hesitate to experience them for yourself as soon as you can. Forget how old some of them are – they still knock seven bells out of most of today's new releases...

Despite a slight upturn in software releases this month, we're still seeing slightly less on the games front than we'd like. Again, it's a seasonal thing, and a situation that's been aggravated by the increasingly popular European Computer Trade Show in London, at which the softies traditionally unveil their big guns for the coming year. Most of the titles we're waiting for will be launched officially here. In fact, the show, which opens its doors in early April, will probably mark the start of the big Spring selling season.

In the meantime, of course, we remain far from malnourished in the reviews department – just look at the likes of *Cannon Fodder, UFO, Starlord* and *Battle Isle II*, all of which had a strong claim to make for Game Of The Month this issue. However, it's that darn *TIE Fighter* from LucasArts that I'm growing increasingly impatient for... Playing the demo version of it this month got us thinking... How about a Star Destroyer simulation, eh, LucasArts? Imagine it – you could command TIE squadrons and blow up planets and it'd be all strategic and everyfink! It'd be *brilliant! (Calm down, Gaz – Dep Ed)*. Oh, er, sorry, got a bit carried away, there. But if you're reading this, George, how about it, eh?

"An independent sales audit on our first issue back in November last year reveals we sold over 50,000 copies!"



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The first of our Readers Polls, which we introduced to you last month, have started to arrive. It's still far too early to start making any guesses as to winners, but that hasn't stopped a fair amount of speculation among the team members. If you haven't yet sent in your form, do so – there are top Interplay games up for grabs for the first 20 entries we pluck from the fold, remember. We'll be printing the list of nominees in next month's issue, with a full-blown gala dinner awards night celebration thing the month after. We're currently looking into the possibility of giving away a free vol-au-vent on the cover and providing a cut-out bow-tie so you can really get into the mood. We're hoping that The Goodies will present the awards on the big night, but we can't find their number in the book. If the versatile Bill Oddie is reading this, please give us a call...

◆◆◆

To end as we began, on a positive note, there's just time for a little blowing on our trumpet. You might be interested to know that an independent sales audit on our first issue back in November last year reveals we sold over 50,000 copies! Only a few months ago, so-called pundits were scratching their chins and frowning about the feasibility of a games-dedicated PC magazine. This unprecedented figure not only proves them wrong about the buoyancy and enthusiasm of the PC games scene, but also discreetly points out that we are, by no mean distance, the most popular PC games mag of the lot. But, of course, we couldn't have done it without you, so congratulations on your good taste (in particular to the nice chap who rang to tell us he's cancelled his subscription to an inferior publication so he could buy *PC Gamer* instead) and a big kissy smooch of a thankyou. We'll continue to make *PC Gamer* the Number One choice for discerning gameplayers. In the meantime, I'm popping off to the annual Computer Arena conference in Monte Carlo for a week. I'll drop you a postcard. Until next month... PCG

Coverdisks!

In the first issue of *PC Gamer*, we made a promise to provide coverdisks of the highest quality, packed with only the best playable demos or complete games available. But this month we hit a little snag– how to choose between the superbly playable demos of *UFO: Enemy Unknown* and *DragonSphere*. The answer? Avoid the problem altogether and have *both* of them on our coverdisks.



This Month's Disk Stars...

Strategy games and graphic adventures are two of the most popular types of PC game – and *UFO: Enemy Unknown* (reviewed on page 62) and *DragonSphere* (reviewed on page 82) are some of the best examples from the two different genres that we've seen to date. Still, the proof is in the playing so why not see for yourself what the fuss is about?

UFO: Enemy Unknown

Disk 1
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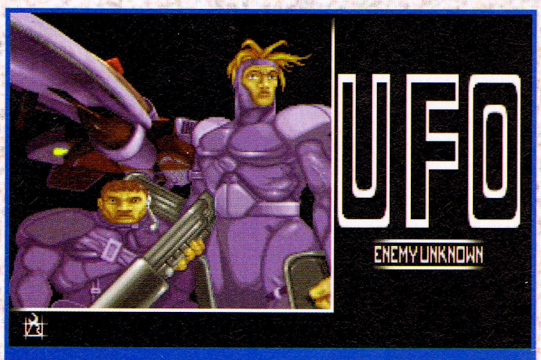


If you get to see this then you've got the game to work – well done. This is the title shot from the full game, and the first of many slideshow screens packed into the demo.

What Kind of PC You Need

According to Julian Gollop, the main programmer of *UFO: Enemy Unknown* (and the extremely nice chap who created this playable extract exclusively for *PC Gamer*), this demo requires a 386 or higher, with VGA and 2 Mb RAM. This is pretty much a minimum spec for modern PCs, but check to make sure you aren't going to run into any problems. The really good news is that the game is very lax in its base memory requirements. It only needs about 300K, so it should run on virtually *any* set-up. The demo supports Soundblaster and Gravis Ultrasound cards or compatibles, as well as the PC internal speaker. We recommend using a Soundblaster.

Installing It

Installing and running *UFO: Enemy Unknown* couldn't be easier, providing you have a machine that meets the minimum specifications (see above). Simply boot up your PC and place Disk 1 into the floppy drive. At the DOS prompt (the 'C:\>'), type 'A:' (that's 'A' followed by a colon) and hit Return. You can now access the disk. Type 'INSTALLD' and hit Return to start the install program. This automatically creates a directory called 'UFO' on your hard drive, decompresses the game files on the disk and then copies them straight onto the hard drive.

Once the install program has done its work, you'll find yourself in the *UFO* directory. Type 'UFODEMO' to run it. You'll be asked to choose a soundcard (and also sort out a few other details). Use the cursor keys to highlight your choice – and then hit the Return key to select it. Once you've done this, the demo will automatically load. See, we told you it was simple, didn't we?



One of the Geoscape views, showing South America. In the full version of the game, you have complete control over the maps.

Gameplay

This demo of *UFO: Enemy Unknown* is split into two sections. In the first you're introduced to the game and shown a series of screens from the strategy section of the full version. These cycle on their own – or you can click the left mouse button to skip past them. The slideshow finishes with the interception and shooting down of an alien craft over a small town in South America. Afterwards, you enter the playable section of the demo.

You are now in control of the *PC Gamer* team, who have been sent



An alien grenade explodes in the midst of your team. You've got to watch out for these – and avoid bunching the team-members up.

in by X-Com to deal with any surviving aliens. The mission begins with a screen showing the team's armour and equipment. Use the arrows at the top-right to view each member and their gear. The demo provides you with advanced equipment that would only be available in the game after a fair amount of research. Gary, Chris and Andy are all wearing tough power armour, whereas Dan, Maryanne and James are all kitted out in the slightly less effective personal armour.

As far as weapon go, each team-member is carrying a grenade and a gun of some sort, with a spare clip of ammo. If you want you can swap the weapons around between the *PCG* crew– click on an item to pick it up, then on the row of squares at the bottom of the screen to put it down. Move to another character and remove his or her weapon in the same manner, then replace it with the new one. Be sure to move ammo around as well (for those guns that use it).

When you're satisfied, right-click on the mouse to start the mission. The objective is simple – find and kill all the aliens in the town. The mission occurs at night, so vision is limited, and remember that you can only see what your troops can see – an alien right behind you won't show up on-screen, unless another troop member is looking in the right direction. Once you've finished the mission, the slideshow continues, enabling you to have a look at some other aspects of the strategy side of the game.

Control

UFO: Enemy Unknown is entirely mouse-controlled. Use the left button to select things and the right button to exit a menu or map without choosing anything. The soldier you're currently controlling is indicated by a pointing yellow arrow above his or her head. To move a soldier, simply move the cursor with the mouse and click the left button – he or she will then walk to that point. You can turn on the spot by clicking the right button (the soldier subsequently turning to face the cursor). If an alien comes into view, a small red box will appear in the bottom-right corner of the screen, with a number showing how many aliens you can see. Click on the box to centre the screen on the alien. Firing a weapon is just as straightforward – click on the picture in the bottom-left or right corner (depending on the hand used) and a menu opens up, giving you a choice of shots, their chances of hitting and the Time Units they require (see below). Choose the type of shot you want with the left button and the cursor changes to a crosshair. Place this where you want to shoot and the soldier will fire, assuming the target is visible.

Time Units & Opportunity Fire

Your soldiers can only do so many things in a turn. This is represented by **Time Units (TUs)** or **Action Points (APs)**. Every soldier has a set number of these, and doing things uses them up. Walking one step forward on even ground uses four, for example, turning 45° uses one (and so on). When a soldier has used his or her requisite number, he or she cannot do anything until the next turn. However, if a soldier still has enough TUs left at the end of a turn, he or she can shoot at aliens that move into his or her field of view. This is called opportunity fire.

The Control Panel

Move Up/Down
Click on these two buttons to move a soldier up and down (only used in the full game). This is for jetpacks and the like that enable your guys and gals to move in three dimensions (instead of the usual two).

Move View Up/Down
The screen automatically shows the view at the level of the currently selected soldier. By using these buttons you can move the level of view up and down. This allows you to see the roofs of buildings and so on.

Map
This brings up the map screen. X-Com soldiers are yellow blobs, aliens blue blobs and bodies white crosses. The two arrows to one side move the view level up and down.

Centre View
Centres the screen on the currently selected soldier.

Equipment
Click on this button to access the equipment screen you saw at the start of the game. Useful for shifting weaponry, such as grenades, around.

End Turn
This ends the current turn and starts the computer calculating the aliens' movements. The speed of your machine determines how long you have to wait.

Finish Mission
Use this to abort the mission and quit the game. If you win by killing all the aliens, the game finishes and the demo will carry on showing you other aspects of play.

Kneel/Stand
Press this button to make the selected soldier kneel or stand up. Kneeling soldiers are slightly more accurate with their weapons and can make better use of cover.



Weapon Hands
These two boxes show what, if anything, your currently selected soldier is carrying. Click on the icon to use the weapon.

Opportunity Fire Controls
These aren't used in the demo, but in the full game they enable you to reserve a certain amount of soldier TUs, which is vital for opportunity fire. (See Time Units & Opportunity Fire for more information.)

Rank
Clicking here brings up the full stats for your soldier in both numeric and bar graph form.

Next Soldier
Moves control to the next soldier in your group. By clicking on it repeatedly you can quickly cycle through your entire squad.

Soldier Finished
Click on this to finish the turn for the current soldier – you won't be able to control him or her again until the next turn.

Name And Stat Summary
The name of your selected soldier and a summary of his stats. TUs are green, energy is yellow, health is pink, and morale mauve.

Options
Brings up an options screen, enabling you to customise various parts of the game to your own taste and machine.

Single/All Level View
The default view shows only one level of detail – soldiers behind buildings are out of sight, for example. Click on this button to switch to the full view.



After the terrific explosion, only a few soldiers emerge from the smoke in one piece.

Hints And Tips

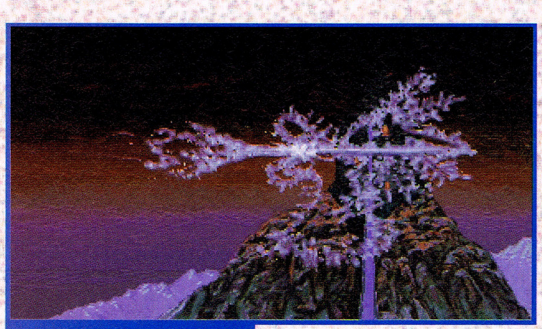
You are up against two main types of alien. The **Snakemen** are heavily armed and very tough. If you spot one of these, try and quickly activate your heavy weapons (the heavy laser is the deadliest you have), because these aliens are good shots. The **Chrysalids** are similar to the classic Alien from the Alien movies. They're deadly up close, and can impregnate victims with a rapidly maturing egg. An impregnated soldier or civilian subsequently turns into a mindless zombie – killing the poor soul releases the new Chrysalid. Try to lead your assault while wearing power armour, because this makes your guys and gals much harder to kill. Always use any cover available, and never end a turn with a character left out in the open. Always try to leave 20 or so TUs on each team member, so they can use opportunity fire. And remember to keep looking in all directions...



Dead aliens lie all over the place as Gary decides which invader to blow to bits.

DragonSphere

Disk 2
MicroProse



Part of the exceedingly pretty intro animation, showing a magical battle.

What Kind Of PC You Need

Once more, according to those insidiously clever bods at MicroProse, the *DragonSphere* demo requires a 386, running at 16 MHz or greater, 2 Mbytes of RAM, DOS 5.0 or above and a mouse. As always, check your system to make sure it's up to it. The *DragonSphere* demo supports Roland, AdLib and Soundblaster cards (and compatibles).

Installing It

DragonSphere is just as simple and easy to get running as the *UFO: Enemy Unknown* demo on Disk 1, although you do need a machine that meets with the minimum specifications outlined above. Simply boot up your PC and place Disk 2 into the floppy drive. At the DOS prompt (the 'C:\>'), type 'A:' (that's 'A' followed by a colon) and hit Return. You can now access the disk. Type 'INSTALL' and hit Return to start the install program.

Once it's loaded, you can choose to install the game to your hard drive or exit the program. Choose the install option and the game asks you what drive you want to install it on (usually A:). It then gives you a chance to change the directory if you so wish. The default is MPS\DSDEMO, but you can specify another (the program will make it for you). The game files will then be installed on your hard drive automatically.

Once the install program has finished doing its stuff, you'll be asked to specify which soundcard you have. Afterwards, the install program will quit itself. You'll now be in the demo's directory on your hard drive. Type 'DRAGON' to start the demo running.



The castlegrounds. Try talking to everyone, and see how they react to you.

Gameplay

First, an introductory animation, detailing part of the plot of the game. The world of *DragonSphere* had been terrorised for 100 years by an evil wizard, Sanwe. Fortunately, your father, the former king, and his court mage, trapped Sanwe and his evil tower with a magic spell. The mage created the DragonSphere to monitor the situation and provide warning should the wizard try to escape. The dragon in the sphere represents Sanwe, and the sphere itself the spell. For 20 years the DragonSphere has remained whole – and you have become king. But now it's beginning to crack, warning that Sanwe will soon be loose upon the world once more. This, is a graphical adventure in which, as king, you must find out how to deal with the evil wizard before he wreaks terrible revenge yet again. Our exclusive demo gives you a small part of the full game, comprising the castle and its courtyard, which you can explore at your leisure.



The eponymous stone. It may look fine from here, but closer examination reveals hairline cracks riddling its surface. This is not a good thing.

Control

Use the mouse to move the pointer over an object, person, or area of the screen and the game then suggests an obvious action, displayed in text along the bottom of the screen. If you move the pointer around the edges of the screen it changes shape to represent a direction you can go in, the destination being shown at the bottom of the screen. Normally, this system enables you to do most things by simply pointing and clicking, but if a more complex or less obvious action is required you can click on one of the verbs in the lower-left corner of the screen instead. To take something, for example, click on 'Take' and then the object. It's a very intuitive system.



In true medieval fashion, your brother is a nasty piece of work who wants the throne for himself.



Putting your scheming brother in his place is a satisfying experience, but as the demo shows, you can't trust him in the full game – he's a bit of a Prince John type.

Hints And Tips

The *DragonSphere* demo doesn't have a specific goal, but it does manage to give you a feeling for what the complete game is like. As such, there aren't any real 'hints' to be given. Try everything and anything you want – and see what happens. It's up to you.

To see a good example of the fluid animation, though, try jumping down the well... PCG

Got A Problem?

Special note: On certain machines, the *UFO: Enemy Unknown* installation program will finish and print a 'File Not Found' error message on the screen. Don't worry about this. The demo has installed properly. It's just an error in the installation program that only shows up on certain machines and configurations.

We do our utmost to ensure you'll have a trouble-free time with your coverdisks – however, there's always a slim possibility you might have problems. If they won't run, or if you're not getting sound or something, it may be that you haven't got enough memory or that your machine isn't configured properly, so check this first.

If you're still having trouble, or if the game(s) simply won't install at all, it's possible you have a duff disk(s). If you're convinced that a disk is dodgy, return it to the address shown below and a new, working version will be returned to you within 28 days.

Please note: We do our utmost to provide first class coverdisks that are fun to play. However, *PC Gamer* and its suppliers and distributors can accept *no* liability for damage caused by users of the disks.

Where To Send Your Dodgy Coverdisks

PC Gamer April Disks,
PO Box 21,
Daventry,
NN11 5BU.
Please enclose a letter detailing the problem with your disk.

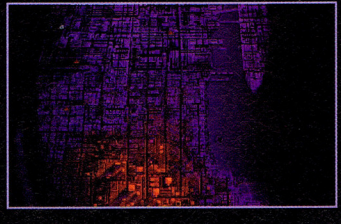
● These things can take time, unfortunately, so please allow 28 days for us to return a working disk. We'll do our best to sort things out as quickly as possible.

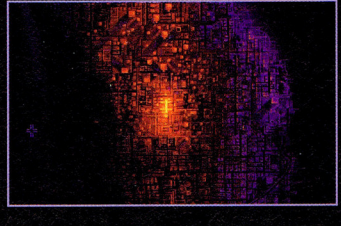
BLOODNET

Killer Bites and Megabytes in the Big Apple







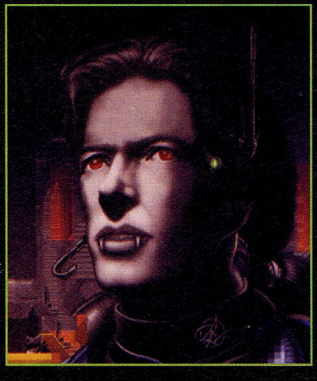




Manhattan 2094. An urban high-tech future, ruled by computer networks, oppressive global mega-corporations and cybernetics.

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

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



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

BLOODNET

The Cyberpunk Vampire Adventure Game

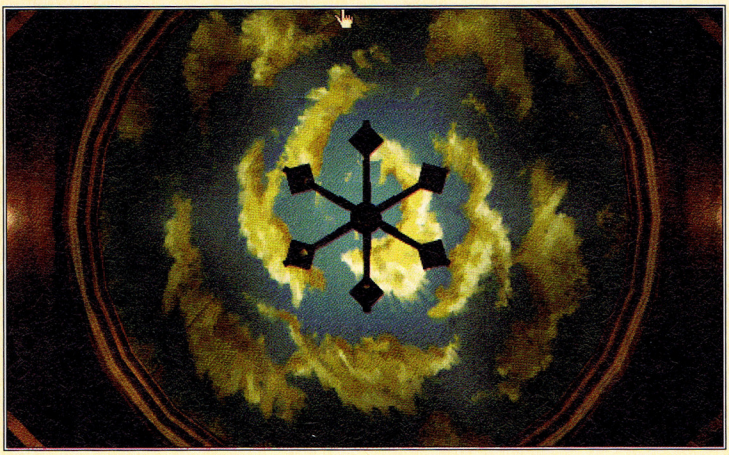
For IBM PC Compatibles and PC CD ROM.





MICROPROSE

THE RIDGE, CHIPPING SODBURY, AVON BS17 6AY, UK



MYST

Surrealism Rules, KO?

Broderbund leap on the CD-ROM bandwagon with an adventure that dares to call itself surreal (and there isn't a moustache-twirling Spaniard in sight).

BY CHRIS BUXTON

YOU'RE RIGHT. WITH GRAPHICS this pretty *Myst* has to be a CD-ROM title. And not just any CD-ROM title either, but "a surrealistic adventure that will become your world" – or so claim American publishers Broderbund. First released on the Apple Macintosh, *Myst* is one of only a handful of Mac to PC portovers, and brings the ingenious and extremely unconventional programming team of brothers Robyn and Rand Miller to the machine for the very first time.

Essentially, it's a point-and-click adventure – but one that, judging by the Miller brothers' previous efforts, looks likely to be more than a little out of the ordinary. Their first two projects were the Macintosh only games *Manhole* (1988) and *Cosmic Osmo* (1990) – both highly innovative titles that used a simple point-and-click interface (which was revolutionary at the time), together with some fine graphics and animation. Of *Cosmic Osmo,* Rand Miller says, "We put things into this program that the adults would pick up on and the kids would enjoy." After *Cosmic Osmo,* the Millers developed an educational game, *Spelunx And The Caves Of Mr Scudo.* However, *Myst* marks their return to pure game territory and it's their biggest project to date.

It's clearly aimed at an adult (16-plus) audience and has a decidedly surrealistic storyline. An author, named Atrus, has created a set of books that are doorways to extraordinary worlds known as the Ages. These books are now being destroyed (for an as yet unknown reason) and you've fallen into one

F.Y.I.

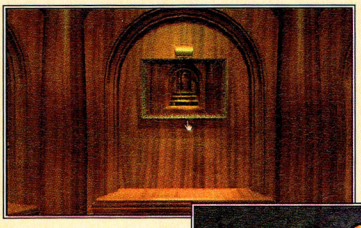
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

In a nutshell The *Labyrinth Of Time* without the labyrinth – a first-person perspective adventure, with some stunning photo-realistic graphics, set in a surreal Dali-esque world and using a simple point-and-click interface.

What's so special? The non-linear gameplay enables you to wander freely around the *Myst* world, toying with the puzzles dotted about the place and generally losing yourself.

Why should I care? Because designer brothers Rand and Robyn Miller have a pretty good track record with this sort of ambient gaming experience – and it's cheaper than going for a session with your therapist.

And when's it coming out? April, according to LucasArts (who are distributing the game in the UK). And it's a CD-ROM only title, remember, so don't apply if you're CD-ROMless.

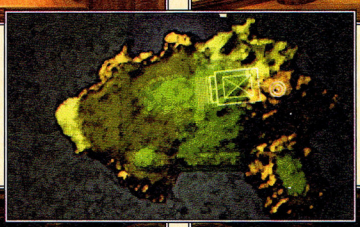


(Above) **One of Atrus' books, nestling in a small alcove.**



(Above) **Some of the books reveal entrances into other worlds – it is your task to travel through these places.**

(Right) **A map of Myst island.**



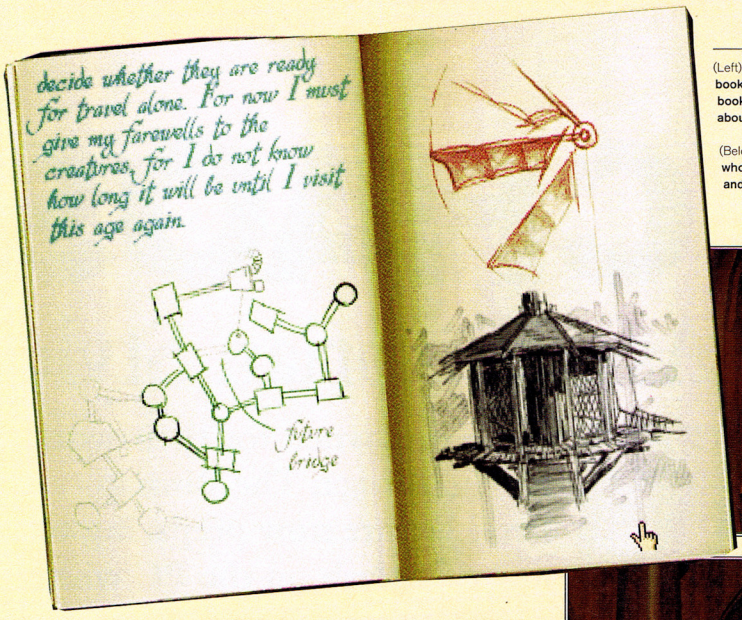
(Below) **The same circular room holds several of Atrus' books in identical alcoves.**



(Below) **Dare you walk through the arched doorway and into a new Age?**

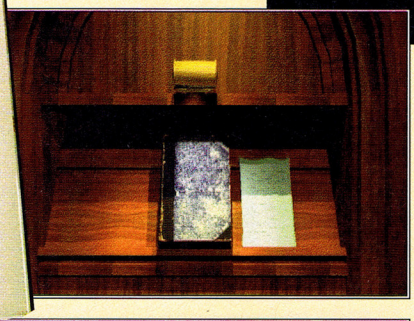


Game *Myst*
Developer Broderbund
UK Publisher Electronic Arts
Projected Price £TBA
How Complete? 75%



(Left) **There are clues galore in Atrus' books – these help you find the missing books and enable you to learn more about the strange world of Myst.**

(Below) **Atrus' books are the key to the whole game, doorways to other worlds and prisons for the mad one's two sons.**





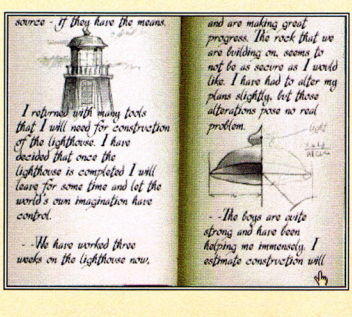
"We create a wireframe model of a tree, scan in a piece of bark and give the computer various parameters – lighting, fog, reflectivity and texture. When we came back many hours later, the 3D program has rendered an entire forest"

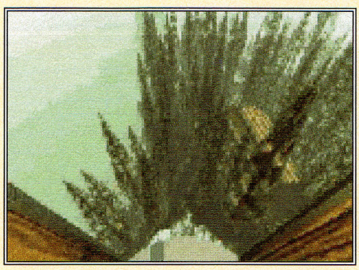
Rand Miller, programmer

and entered the appropriate Age. Atrus has also incarcerated his two sons in other books. Once inside, you have to find out why the books are being destroyed, what Atrus is up to and work out what to do. It all sounds very bizarre, but Robyn Miller is proud of the game's narrative structure. "We spent a lot of time planning the storyline," he says. "When you're working on kids' software, you can draw the door first and not have to know what goes behind it. But with *Myst*, everything had to make sense, with a story behind it that ties it all together. That's what adults like."

So are we in for another linear CD-ROM based game that takes you by the hand and leads you through a preset storyline? Nothing of the sort. As in their previous games, the Millers wanted to give players a feeling of exploration and discovery, so you don't have to solve the games puzzles in any sequence. In fact, you don't have to solve any puzzles at all if you don't want to – the game still lets you travel around the various Ages unhindered.

Once the brothers had established *Myst's* story and structure, they set about designing the visuals. All the game graphics were rendered in 3D, Rand explains. "We create a wireframe model of a tree,





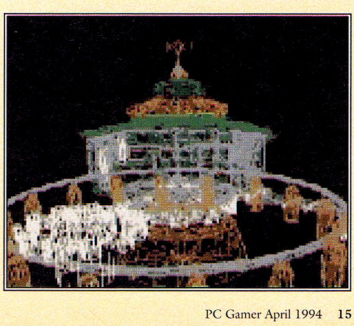
(Above) **Venture through the archway into a forest of pines.**

(Left, below-left and below-right) ***Myst's* bizarre and surreal world is the sort of game you can easily lose yourself in...**

scan in a piece of bark and give the computer various parameters, which include lighting, fog, reflectivity and texture. When we came back many hours later, the 3D program has rendered an entire forest." The graphics are indeed very impressive – beautifully detailed and atmospheric (although if you ask me the lush looking hardwood has been lifted straight out of the hotel in Twin Peaks). Music plays an important part too – Robyn composed every bar. "He's pretty talented in the area," adds Rand. "We got some new equipment that allows an orchestral feeling and Robyn created some rich melodies that really enhance the emotional impact of the *Myst* experience."

And, as always, it's better to describe Myst as an experience rather than a game. You start off completely clueless on Myst Island – your only lead a note from Atrus to his wife. This note guides you to a hidden chamber next to the dock, where you discover another secret message. The story slowly unfolds – through Atrus' writings – as you learn about the man and his creation of the Ages. Atrus suspects that one of his sons is destroying the books, and so he imprisons both of them – one inside a blue book, the other inside a red book. (He obviously hasn't heard the proverb about babies and bath water.) The books are hidden in a library and each one has a Quicktime video message from the son in question who proclaims his innocence. But which one to believe? There are also missing pages scattered throughout the Ages which you have to retrieve, as well as all manner of puzzles to solve – in one Age, for example, you have to guide water through pipes to trigger a series of switches that activate items such as lifts in the level.

CD-ROM based software and multimedia are still in their infancy and inhabit that virgin territory between games, books and films. In the past, the Miller brothers have done their best to make their games as 'user-friendly' as possible to entertain and show the potential of CD-ROM. Whether their simplistic, almost casual, approach to adventuring will succeed, however, remains to be seen. Whatever the case, *Myst* is certainly unusual and it will be interesting to see how it turns out. PCG



SCOOP!
Your First Look At...

THE CHAOS

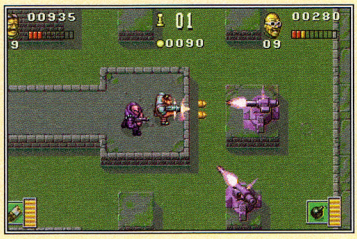
Kick Metal Ass, Victorian Style





(Above) **The object of each *Chaos Engine* level is to find and activate these nodes, which possess top mystical powers.**

(Right and below) **Top two-player antics ahoy.**



Long renowned for their work on the Amiga, The Bitmap Brothers are now preparing to make a splash on the PC with a new, enhanced version of their most elaborate game yet – *The Chaos Engine*

BY GARY WHITTA

F.Y.I.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

In a nutshell A Victorian Age steam-powered computer goes berserk, and it's up to you and a pal (in any of six suitably stylish guises) to team up and take on the hordes of mutant monsters it continually pumps out. It's like *Gauntlet* meets Upstairs Downstairs meets Full Metal Jacket, with heavily-armed players blasting and puzzling their way through a series of lavishly-decorated retro-future levels.

What's so special? The developers are promising no end of technical and gameplay enhancements over the really-very-good-actually Amiga original. Owners of high-spec machines in particular could be in for an arcade treat of true coin-op quality.

Why should I care? Because it's from The Bitmap Brothers, who are very good at this sort of thing. Because the Amiga original was tops. Because if this version is half as good as it claims to be it'll confirm the PC's position as *the* top arcade game engine. Because – oh, how much more do you want?

And when's it coming out? Very, very soon. We'll be reviewing it in next month's issue.

OF COURSE, THE BITMAP Brothers, those self-styled shade-wearing game gurus of the modern software scene, have had games appear on the PC before – the original *Speedball* (back in the sad old days of EGA graphics), *Speedball 2* (by far their best conversion job yet), and an average version of *Xenon II: Megablast*. But as the Bros initiate moves into the market and adopt the PC as their lead format, they're currently putting the finishing touches to what promises to be the last PC portover from those halcyon Amiga days.

The Chaos Engine was originally written at a time when The Bitmaps were at the peak of their powers, and looking for new ways to explore the stylised action genre that's always been their trademark. The result was a uniquely-presented *Gauntlet*-style multi-player, multi-directional shoot-'em-up set in a twisted, surreal version of Victorian England, where an inventor's steam-powered computer has gone insane and created an army of mutated monstrosities. The game was the brainchild of Bitmap man Eric Matthews and co-designer Simon Knight. "*The Chaos Engine* was created to take an established genre and to improve and add to it – to produce an extremely playable game which brought together arcade action, adventure and role-playing," says Simon, who's been overseeing the development of the PC version.

"After having produced *Speedball 2* and spending many hours playing all manner of multi-player games, we all felt that the best games are those in which there is a large amount of player interaction. We were determined to produce a game that was not only exciting to play with another person, but captured as much of that excitement as possible when played solo."

True, one of *The Chaos Engine's* most distinctive features in its previous incarnations has been the impressive multi-player options. Players choose from six unique characters (such as a priest, gentleman, mercenary or thug), and never go into battle alone, thanks to the simultaneous two-player option. But then, even if you do go it solo, the game teams you up with a computer-controlled character who's actually a useful ally, not just a bumbling fool who can't figure out how to walk through a door. In addition, the game encourages pairs of players to work as a team. Remember in *Gauntlet*, where you could nick all the treasure while some other poor sap took on all the monsters? You can forget about that in *The Chaos Engine*. Here, the amount of treasure and goodies you pick up on each level (which you can subsequently spend

"Co-designer Simon Knight cites a variety of influences, from the works of HG Wells and Charles Babbage to William Gibson's 'steampunk' novel The Difference Engine"

Game *The Chaos Engine*
Developer The Bitmap Brothers/AVME
UK Publisher Renegade
Projected Price £TBA
How Complete? 99%

ENGINE

in shops to buy extra weapons and powers) is divided among the players depending on how much work they did. If you didn't kill many monsters, don't expect much share in the treasure. You'll also need a head for puzzles – *The Chaos Engine* levels are constructed like mazes, with more than one route through each – and plenty of keys, secret passages and other obstacles to liven things up along the way.

Simon Knight cites a variety of influences for the game, from the works of HG Wells and Charles Babbage to William Gibson's 'steampunk' novel The Difference Engine. "We wanted to create a visual feel that would stand out from the run-of-the-mill medieval or space scenarios," he says, and for the most part they've succeeded – artist Dan Malone's stylish metal-and-stone visuals are uniformly stunning, even more so on this new version, the most colourful of the lot. "Characters, monsters and backgrounds all have separate, independent colours," explains Simon, "which means that, more than any other version, the PC version has a rich, colourful appearance." But that's not the only enhancement that's been made. Indeed, *The Chaos Engine* looks set to be the game that proves, once and for all, that the PC is as adept in the arcade department as any device you care to name.

> ***"Even those poor misguided people who hate all forms of action games will find something of interest here – even the most ardent flight simulator hack"***
> **Simon Knight, co-designer**

"Particularly with the higher spec machines and advanced soundcards, the PC is more than capable of doing everything the Amiga can – and a lot more besides," claims Simon. "With sufficient programming skills, the PC can be as well-suited to these games as the Amiga. Unfortunately, not everyone has a 486DX2 with Rolands and Soundblasters, so we have to ensure that the game can be played on less capable machines. To get *The Chaos Engine* to run at a speed which we find acceptable on slower machines can be extremely challenging and time-consuming, but we spend a lot of time ensuring that the game is every bit as well presented – and as much fun on the slowest machine we support as it is on the fastest."

The Bitmaps have also made a number of gameplay tweaks to this new version. An overlaid status panel (as seen in the console versions) provides a larger playing area. There's also an invisible border around the edge of the playing area which gives players more time to react to enemies appearing at the edge of the screen. Simon believes that owners of high-spec PCs will enjoy even smoother scrolling and better sound too.

He's also convinced that, as well as overcoming the technical problems, the PC version should score a hit with PC bods for whom arcade action isn't a normal part of their gaming diet.

"We feel that *The Chaos Engine* is an innovative, challenging game that appeals to a great variety of gameplayers," he says. "As such, we believe that even those poor misguided people who hate all forms of action games will find something of interest within it. The game, if played along its easiest, most straightforward routes, should be able to be enjoyed by even the most ardent flight simulator hack."

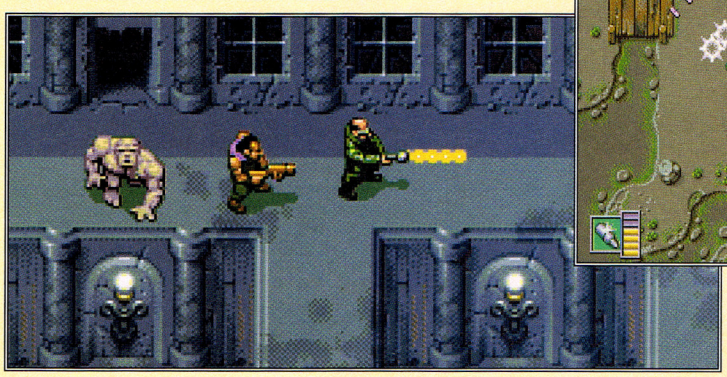
Work on *The Chaos Engine* is currently reaching its closing stages – it's actually being programmed by Audio Visual Magic Entertainment (who also handle PC conversions for Sensible Software), but under The Bitmaps' close supervision, and Simon Knight is happy with its progress. "The game's virtually complete in terms of code and is undergoing extensive testing at the moment," he explains. "We have a few bugs which need to be tidied up – and the music and sound effects need to be completed. Then it's testing, testing and more testing..." PCG

(Below) **Hey, it's true – two heads *are* better than one!**



(Above) **Later *Chaos Engine* levels take you beyond the castle grounds to the interior of the fortress, where the manic computer itself is based. Things, of course, get tougher...**





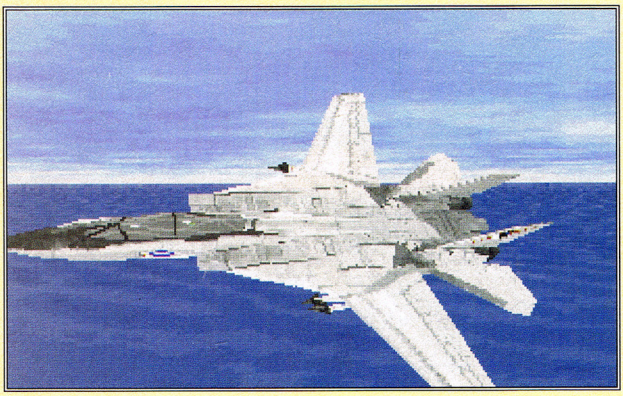


(Above) **Pick up the yin-yang symbols to save the game.**

(Above-left) **There are plenty of special weapons to pick up.**

(Left) **He may be bald, but this preacher guy is still rock hard.**

SCOOP!
Your First Look At...



FLEET F-14 What If The

Find out where Tom 'Lestat' Cruise went wrong in MicroProse's upcoming game of carrier–based warfare.

BY ANDY BUTCHER

MICROPROSE MADE THEIR name with flight sims, and for many years the company was the undisputed master of the genre, with titles such as *F-19 Stealth Fighter, Gunship* and the best-selling *F-15 Strike Eagle* series to their credit. Now, after several forays into other gamestyles, they're about to return to the arena with their first flight sim since *F-15 Strike Eagle III – Fleet Defender.*

Scott Spanberg, *Fleet Defender's* Producer and Lead Programmer, has been designing games for ten years. His past credits include *Airborne Ranger, M-1 Tank Platoon, Knights Of The Sky* and *F-15 Strike Eagle III.* With the huge number of flight sims already circling, why does he feel the need to develop another? "While there are quite a few flight simulations available," he replies, "with new technology and faster CPUs we have more avenues to explore on the graphic and AI side. We can go further in offering more sophisticated missions. Most importantly, it gives us the ability to improve the graphics to almost photo-realistic quality."

So why the F-14 and not *F-15 IV*? "After the completion of *F-15 III,* Wildman (George 'Wildman' Wargo is the game's Design Consultant, a retired Lt. Colonel of the US Air Force with over 4,000 hours of flying to his name) and I sat down and discussed what type of flight simulation we wanted to do next. Both of us agreed that since *F-15 III* was a ground attack simulation we should do a dogfighting simulation. The F-14 was a natural choice because its primary function is as an air-to-air fighter, with the added bonus of having carrier operations. After a trip to Oceana NAS, a tour of the carrier USS America and talking with the F-14 pilots, we concluded that an F-14 game would provide the excitement MicroProse flight simulations are famous for."

Fair enough, but as Scott goes on to explain, the F-14 scenario also offered the opportunity for him to do something new. "As well as the air-to-air capabilities for dogfighting," he says, "it gave us the chance to program realistic carrier operations, which have never really been done in detail before." It's this solely carrier-based setting that Scott feels is the game's most original feature (the F-14 Tomcat is an

F.Y.I.
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

In a nutshell A cutting edge flight sim that puts you in the cockpit of an F-14 Tomcat. Assigned to groups of aircraft-carriers in a string of interesting scenarios set throughout the '80s, you must defend the group itself and provide cover for strike squadrons on ground attack missions.

What's so special? The first flight sim to take an in-depth look at modern carrier operations. It not only boasts a realistic simulation of the F-14 and its weapon systems, the carrier group as a whole and the Soviet military, but uses one of the most complex artificial intelligence systems ever seen in a flight sim. Not bad.

Why should I care? Because of MicroProse's enviable reputation for producing superb combat flight simulations. The company virtually created the genre overnight.

And when's it coming out? According to Scott Spanberg, *Fleet Defender's* Producer and Lead Programmer, the game is "tentatively scheduled to be available in March. At this time the game is undergoing final gameplay tweaking by the team and our Quality Assurance department." Not long to wait, then.

(Right) **The game's cockpit views are modelled on those taken from a real F-14 Tomcat – the instruments are authentic too. Looks snazzy, doesn't it?**

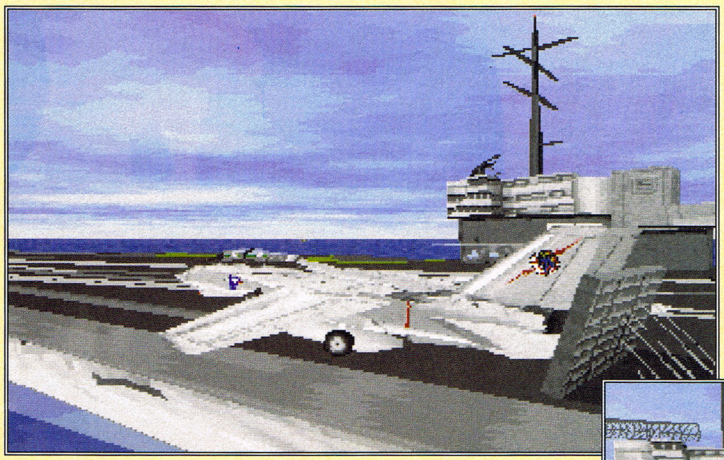
(Below) ***Fleet Defender*** **keeps accurate records of your squadron's successes and failures, enabling you to see your own history at a glance.**



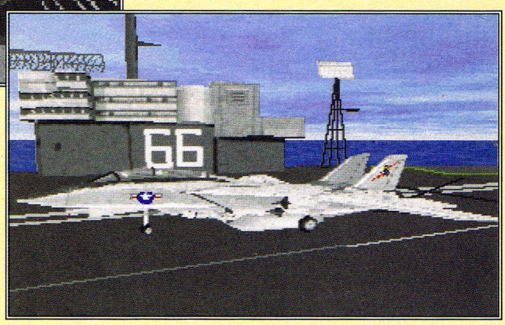
Game *Fleet Defender F-14 Tomcat*
Developer MicroProse
UK Publisher MicroProse
Projected Price £44.99
How Complete? 90%

DEFENDER TOMCAT

Cold War Had Heated Up?



"The enemies use real strategies and tactics employed by the Soviet military at that time. When you dogfight you will be taking on the nearest thing ever to the actual Soviet military"
Scott Spanberg, producer and lead programmer



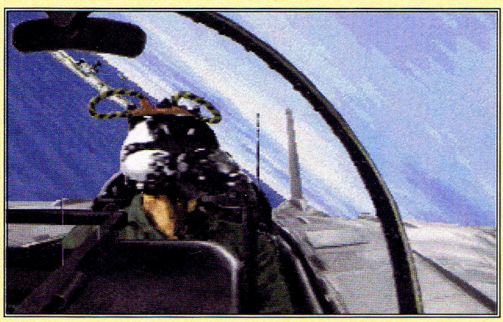
(Above) **When the developers talk about 'photo-realistic' graphics, this is the kind of thing they mean.**

(Right) **Another shot of the lovingly detailed F-14 Tomcat, sitting on the Carrier deck and waiting to take off.**

(Below-left) **Some of the game's internal views are just as stunning.**

interceptor designed to work as part of a carrier operation). But novel too is the '70s-'80s scenario – "We wanted to put the player in situations that would challenge an F-14 pilot," says Scott. "Many of these were in the '70s and '80s, when American presence in foreign waters was hotly contested."

The actual missions are of two main types – you're either protecting the carrier group itself, or defending a bomber group comprising F-18s, A-6s or A-7s. The ability to fly the F-14 as part of a 'strike package' is another feature that makes the game unique. As Scott explains, "In some flight simulations, you might see three or four planes in the air at the same time. In *Fleet Defender* it's possible you could see over 70 aircraft and ships in a single mission." Impressive stuff indeed. And then there's the much touted artificial intelligence – a critical part of any simulation (and one that's rarely been implemented well in the past). *Fleet Defender* gives you a wingman, which, as any flight sim buff knows, is essential in modern air combat. Scott is confident that the AI controlling these characters' actions isn't just top notch – it's better than anything else available. And he's equally proud of the AI routines behind the enemy aircraft. "The AI is as realistic as we could program it," Scott says. "The enemies use real strategies and tactics employed by the Soviet military at that time. When you dogfight in this game you will be taking on the nearest thing ever to the actual Soviet military." It's realism like this that put MicroProse at the top of the flight sim market in the first place, and *Fleet Defender* looks set to be their most impressive yet.



But while the simulation may be a shining example of realism, Scott is keen to point out it won't be just for experienced players. "As with *F-15 III*, we developed *Fleet Defender* to satisfy beginners as well as the advanced player. We've included many selectable parameters so the game can be as easy or hard as the player wants." It's creating this level of playability that has caused the team the most trouble. "I think the most difficult part of any project is the final few weeks of incorporating the realistic elements with the gameplay to create a game that is both entertaining and challenging," he says. "We realise that the player is the one the game is for, and we have tried with *Fleet Defender* to include many of the suggestions we've received over the years. We are always happy to hear from our players, so please continue to write to us with your comments." And there can't be many design philosophies better than that... PCG

COMMAND EARTH'S FORCES

UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTION 643-2(C)

CLASSIFIED-TOP SECRET

For Your Eyes Only - Read & Destroy

Re: Formation of Covert UN Combat Unit

Date of Inception: 1-1-1999

Name: Extraterrestrial Combat Unit (XCom)

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

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

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

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

XCOM

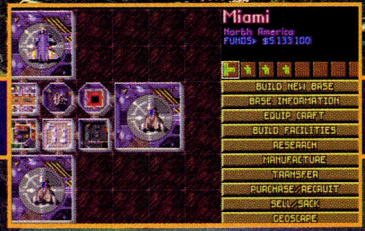
Defend • Learn • Vanquish

UFO

ENEMY U







AGAINST THE ALIEN TERROR

UFO
NKNOWN



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

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

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

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

For IBM PC Compatibles and Commodore Amiga

IBM PC screenshots shown.
Actual screens may vary

MICROPROSE

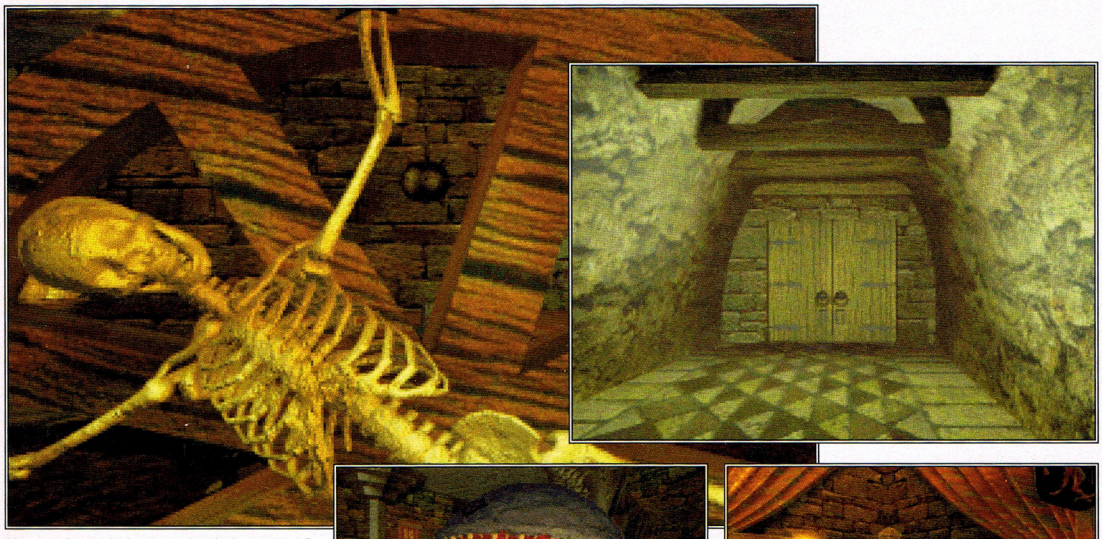






EYEWITNESS

Interviews, Opinion And – Yes! – News From The World Of PC Games



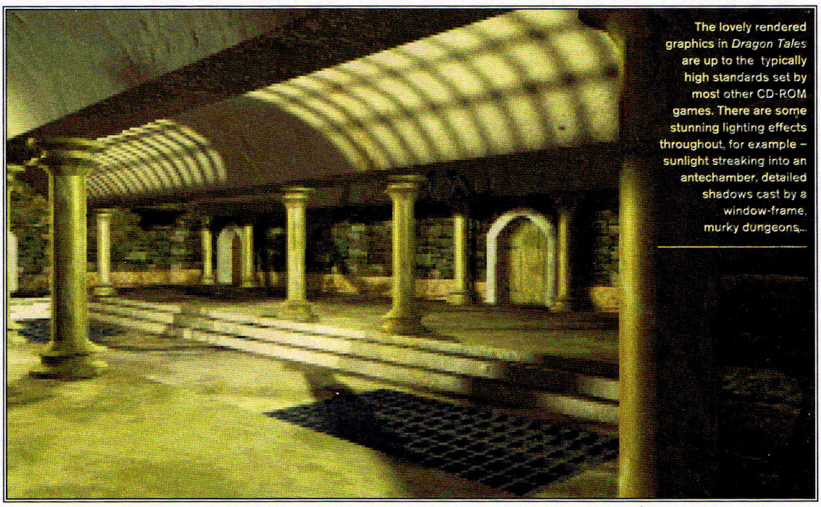




"A new plateau in fantasy role-playing games," claim American publishers **The Software Toolworks** about their latest title ***Dragon Tales***. More like a new CD-ROM based first-person perspective, 3D graphic adventure, with very nice visuals and the usual hokum storyline, say us. After centuries of peace in the remote valley of the Dragonknights, the treacherous Haagen Von Diakonov has murdered your father, destroyed your castle and left you with nothing but the armour you stand in. Your quest takes you on a search for wisdom, weapons and allies as you strive to regain what is rightfully yours. Convoluted but absorbing stuff, no doubt.

French developers, Cryo, are also responsible for the stunning looking driving game *Mega Race,* so it's no surprise that the rendered 3D graphics in *Dragon Tales* are looking as good as they do. The animation is particularly impressive – one giant scorpion we saw on an early demo, for example, looked straight out of a Ray Harryhausen flick, complete with bobbing gait and darting tail. The finely detailed, beautiful visuals mark Dragon Tales out as something a little special and well worth looking out for when it's released later in the year.

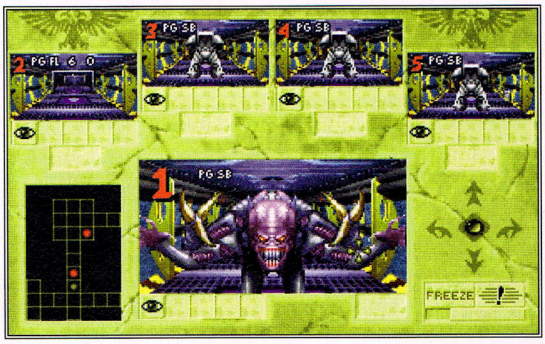
● Mindscape are all set to release their *Dragon Tales* on CD in May (no price as yet). A floppy version will follow at the end of the year.



The lovely rendered graphics in *Dragon Tales* are up to the typically high standards set by most other CD-ROM games. There are some stunning lighting effects throughout, for example – sunlight streaking into an antechamber, detailed shadows cast by a window-frame, murky dungeons...

Dragon Tales

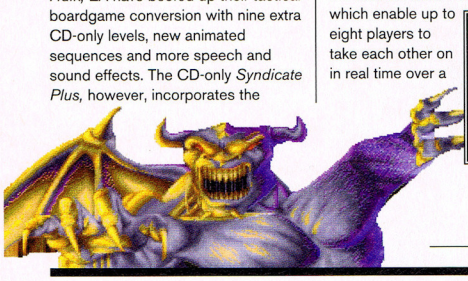
EA's CD upgrades



(Above and left) **For the CD version of *Space Hulk*, Electronic Arts have added nine exclusive levels – and improved the cosmetics of the game with better sound and graphics.**

Electronic Arts are releasing specially enhanced versions of ***Shadowcaster***, ***Space Hulk*** and ***Syndicate*** on CD. Origin's *Shadowcaster*, a smooth-scrolling first-person perspective adventure similar to the *Ultima Underworld* titles, will now come with new levels, new creatures, more powerful versions of the original monsters, full speech, improved sound *and* a new soundtrack. For *Space Hulk*, EA have beefed up their tactical boardgame conversion with nine extra CD-only levels, new animated sequences and more speech and sound effects. The CD-only *Syndicate Plus*, however, incorporates the original game and the great *American Revolt* expansion on one disc. There are also ten extra multi-player missions which enable up to eight players to take each other on in real time over a network. Improved music, speech and graphics are also promised. (For more on both *Syndicate* and *Space Hulk*, why not browse through our special Top 50, starting on page 43?)







(Above) **A squat monster bares its teeth at you in the original *Shadowcaster*.**



(Right) ***Shadowcaster* – bigger on CD.**

● ***Shadowcaster* is out now at £39.99. *Space Hulk* will be released in May at £39.99. *Syndicate Plus*, at £44.99, will also be released in May.**

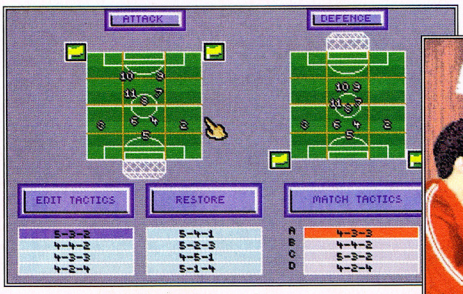
Player Manager



(Clockwise, from the top) **Select your squad, play the match, confer with your scout and physio, and change the tactics for the next game. Successfully mastering all the elements is vital in *Player Manager*. That, and a tight curly perm, of course.**

Many a Newcastle fan will be delighted to hear that they can, at last, *be* Kevin Keegan in a very real sense – because the permed one has just lent his name to **Anco**'s *Kick Off* derived ***Player Manager*** (although, thankfully, he didn't lend them his old copy of Head Over Heels In Love for the soundtrack). You control the destiny of a struggling third division team, with the express intention of leading the squad to cup and league success. You can alter team formations, choose which players to play and where to use them, buy and sell anyone in the squad – generally change any aspect of the team's set-up as you see fit. You can even choose to play or watch any of the games in a mini-version of *Kick Off*. Problems that would face a real manager crop up with quite distressing regularity: injuries and players not performing or demanding transfers can all drag you down, for instance. Fortunately, *Player Manager* has a much friendlier icon-based interface than other football manager games, and the arcade option could well tempt fans who don't want to wade through a pile of statistics. We'll be giving it a playtest next month.



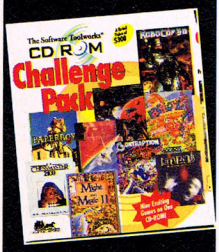




● **Imagineer's *Player Manager* is released in May (no price as yet).**

Compact challenge

The Software Toolworks' new CD-ROM **Challenge Pack** compilation contains nine PC games. Best of the bunch is undoubtedly ***D-Generation***, an enthralling isometric 3D arcade adventure that made it to number 44 in our Top 50 (which starts on page 43). Other highlights include ***The Chessmaster 2100*** and DID's original ***RoboCop 3*** game.



Their disappointing ***Epic*** is also on the pack, along with ***Paperboy 2***, ***F-29 Retaliator***, ***Push Over***, ***Contraption Zack*** and the role-playing game CD-ROM Challenge Pack is out now and retails at **£39.99**. (We review the new Windows version of *D-Generation* on page 76.)

Finally, the nominations...

The 1994 European Computer Trade Show Awards are decided by no less than 75 computer and video games magazines – and this year PC games and developers figure strongly in the nominations.

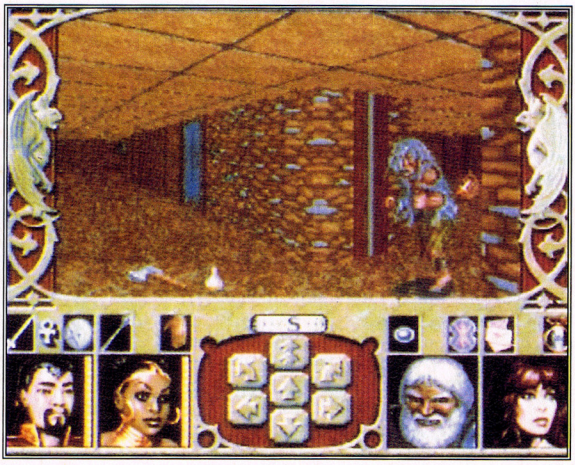
In the running for Developer Of The Year are LucasArts, Sensible Software, Origin, Westwood Studios and Electronic Arts. The Best CD Game shortlist features *Rebel Assault, The 7th Guest, Dune, Liberation* and *Thunderhawk*. Nominated for the Game Innovation Award are LucasArts (again), Electronic Arts, id Software, Virgin and David Braben. In the Computer Game category the nominees are *Cannon Fodder, Syndicate, X-Wing, Doom* and *Elite 2*. *Doom* and *Elite 2* are also up for Overall Game Of The Year, along with *Rebel Assault, Street Fighter 2* and *Super Mario All Stars*. PC developers also figure strongly in the Software Publisher Of The Year category – Virgin, EA, LucasArts, Origin and Konami have all been selected.

But who the hell nominated *Rebel Assault* three times is what we want to know. Were they drunk or summit?

(Right) **Inside the dungeons, everything's very *Ultima Underworld*. The smooth 3D first-person perspective view may be less impressive than Origin's, however.**



(Below) **This is more like the AD&D of our youth. Zombies in your face, a potion on the ground and an axe to collect.**



Ra

The latest in **SSI**'s Advanced Dungeons & Dragons range of games, **US Gold**'s ***Ravenloft***, is based on one of the classic adventure packs of all time. In fact, *Ravenloft* became so popular in its pencil and paper format that the guys at AD&D set about developing a whole world – a land of gothic horror, full of werewolves, vampires and other creatures of the night – in which the adventures could take place to satisfy the demand fans made for more.

The PC game takes the same approach as the *Ultima Underworld* series, with a smooth-scrolling, first-person perspective view of the action. Select a party of characters from a stock of different characters, and embark on a your quest to find a stolen amulet. There are over 30 different creatures and people in *Ravenloft* for your party to interact with, and, in keeping with the gothic nature of the world, they're continually affected by the periodic cycles of the sun and the moon, so keeping an an eye on the heavenly bodies is of paramount importance

Arcade Pool

Recapture the thrills of playing pool down the pub at lunchtime in **Team 17**'s new simulator. With a bevy of options and features, ***Arcade Pool*** has everything a pool table should have, apart from an overloud jukebox and a couple of surly bikers who don't appreciate you playing on their table.

UK or US 8 ball, 9 ball, 8/15 ball, Speed Pool (and other variants) are all catered for, along with single games, tournaments (which provide for up to eight human players), and 32 different computer opponents. Despite the basic look – there's just a simple overhead view of the action – the game should still turn out fairly playable, especially given Team 17's track record.

● **Team 17's impressive-looking *Arcade Pool* will be released on floppy very shortly and cost a reasonable £19.99.**

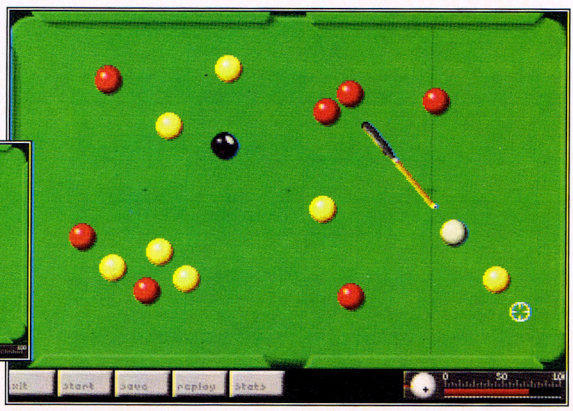


(Above) **By the strange action of chaos mechanics, the balls have aligned themselves into a triangle No? All right then, it's a break.**

(Right) **The British rules avoid confusion and let you play with just red and yellow balls.**

(Below) **Not the most outstanding graphics ever, are they? Still, the game's the thing.**





venloft







(Above) **On the arid plains of *Ravenloft*, a warrior confronts your small party of warriors.**

(Left) **Better deal with that snarling dog quick before it wipes out one of your band. A sword, methinks.**

(Top-left) **Interaction with the characters takes place on these text-based conversation screens.**

(especially when lycanthropes are in the neighbourhood). Atmospheric and attractive, *Ravenloft* clearly marks a change in direction for SSI's AD&D games, and if the challenge lives up to expectations it could be a real winner.

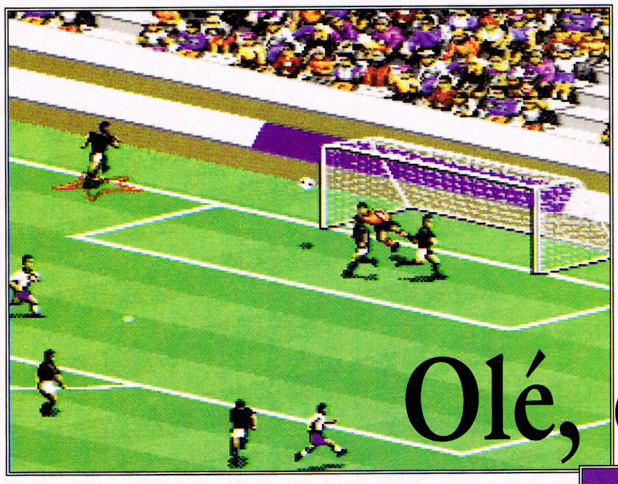
● ***Ravenloft* will be available from US Gold in late April (on both floppy and CD). No price details yet.**

Soccer Kid

Krisalis have announced that they are converting the unusual platformer ***Soccer Kid*** to the PC. In this curious little arcade adventure, you use said Kid's fantastic footballing skills – headers, volleys and kicks – to defeat on-screen enemies, solve puzzles and generally 'progress.' No news of a release date yet, but it wouldn't be too surprising if it came out in time for a major international football contest in June...

F1 Team Manager

Another **Krisalis** sports game, but this time a more sedate Formula One racing title. Most people want to be Nigel Mansell, Ayrton Senna or Alain Prost, but if you're just itching to be Ron Dennis or Frank Williams then ***Formula One Team Manager*** could have something for you. Taking charge of a small, underfunded F1 team, you have to decide on car specifications, drivers, sponsors and try to build up a serious challenge for the championship. It's too early to give price or release details, but we'll keep you posted. Could be good though.





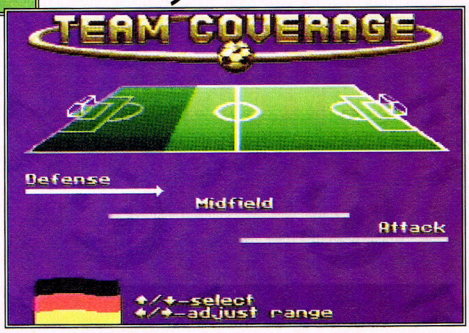
Olé, olé, olé olé!

(Above and above-right) **It looks good, moves well and the players are brilliantly animated.**

(Bottom-right) **The unique team set-up screens give you a lot of control over the team formations.**

Is it just us or has football suddenly become very hip? With the World Cup on the way, Fantasy Football League rekindling everyone's memories of shaggy perms and Manchester United playing brilliantly, you'd think footy had never had it so good. All great news for **Electronic Arts**, of course, whose chart-topping ***FIFA International Soccer*** game is currently being converted for the PC by EA Sports Canada. With an isometric view of the action and hundreds of frames of player animation to give the game a real character, the game promises to be both fast moving and playable. Let's hope the PC version, which promises smooth scrolling and improved graphics, matches the original.

● **EA's *FIFA International Soccer* is due out in September. No price as yet.**



Interplay intermingle

The owners of Universal Studios, US Entertainment giant **MCA**, have just bought a minority holding in software company **Interplay**. MCA are just the latest in a line of large corporations who are waking up to computer games – sorry, I mean 'Interactive Entertainment.' Brian Fargo, Interplay's founder, said recently, "I'm excited that Interplay will now have access to such a huge library of properties from MCA." Incidentally, MCA themselves are owned by the Japanese company Matsushita (Panasonic, Technics etc.), so you could say Multimedia Inc. is here already.

Lamborghini

French software firm **Titus** are to release their console title ***Lamborghini American Challenge*** on the PC. A simple arcade racer, it's very similar to Titus' *Crazy Cars* range and uses the same *Pole Position* inspired graphics and gameplay. If you've ever wanted to get behind the controls of a true Italian thoroughbred then this could be the game you've been waiting for. On the other hand, if more technical, realistic sims are your bag then this console-derived title might be a little lightweight for you. It's due out later in the year.

The lure of gold...

Compilations can be mixed bags, can't they? You might get a couple of stars you wanted to buy at full price, but you know full well there'll also be a few duffers to make up the numbers. **Empire**'s awkwardly-titled ***Award Winners Gold Edition*** isn't too bad, though, what with *Zool, Sensible Soccer, Elite/Elite Plus* and *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* packed in for a reasonable **£34.99**. It should be out in the shops now.



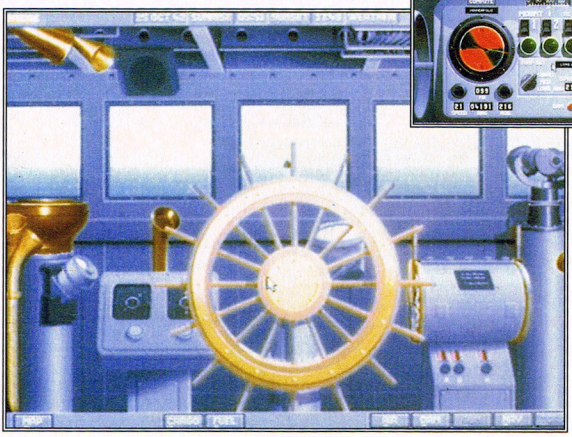
More Great Naval Battles

SSI's sequel to the original *Great Naval Battles*, ***Guadalcanal***, simulates the epic World War II battle between the Japanese and Americans. Featuring over 100 different kinds of ship (including carriers and subs) and 20 aircraft, the game boasts a good level of technical and historical detail, and offers a variety of options – five ship-to-ship tactical confrontations, three carrier battles and a full campaign.

Good aircraft operations are the key to success, with you in complete control – readying planes and launching offensive strikes (viewing operations from either the helm of your ships or the cockpit of one of your fighters). Via the main map, you can survey your fleet and check up on each ship's vital stats, such as gunnery range, torpedo range, visibility and so on. And if any of your ships get hit you can try to limit the damage by using the animated damage control screen which adds a little urgency to the strategy. *Great Naval Battles Volume II: Guadalcanal* looks far more approachable than other strategy games and sets itself in a period also occupied by MicroProse's *1942: The Pacific Air War* and Origin's *Pacific Strike*, both coming out soon.

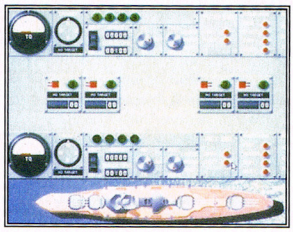
● **SSI's *Great Naval Battles Volume II: Guadalcanal* is due out in April on floppy and CD. It will cost £39.99.**





(Left) **Through the periscope you can see you've scored a hit.**

(Far left) **A typical WW II ship's bridge – there's even a horny intercom...**



(Above) **Damage control doesn't look the most exciting thing about the game. But war isn't fun, it's hell (as General Sherman said).**

A refreshing change

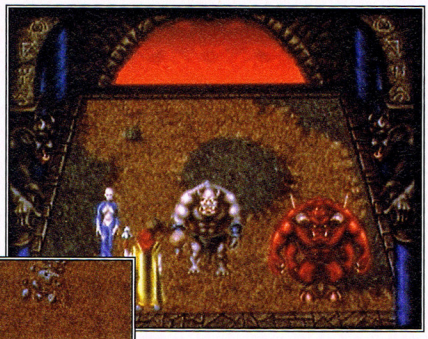
Silicon Knights' new fantasy game ***Dark Legions*** makes a refreshing change from the typical diet of RPGs and point-and-click adventures we're used to on the PC. It's a man-to-man (or man-to-creature) combat game, with two characters taking each other on in a small fantasy landscape. There are 16 different types to choose from, including giant trolls, fire demons, wizards, warriors and witches.

With shades of *Star Control II* – not a bad thing as *Star Control II* is an office favourite and makes it into our Top 50 (starting on page 43) – *Dark Legions* enables you and fellow players to create an army of up to 60 characters, and then take each other on. (The troll is virtually impossible to kill, for instance, but can only fight at close range.)

Create illusory creatures to confuse your enemies, set traps, collect magic rings which bestow special magic powers – the game even supports a modem link for multi-player shenanigans. Combat works by using an action point-based system common to most tactical wargames. All in all, this is shaping up to be quite a fun title...

● **US Gold's *Dark Legions* will be released in late April on floppy and CD. The price has yet to be decided.**

(Below) **Choose from a bevy of fantastic characters – it's all a bit like that chessy game in Star Wars, isn't it?**



(Below) **A troll rumbles towards one of the impressively-animated fire demon characters. *Dark Legions* could be one hell of a fun game when it comes out...**





(Above) **A mismatched bout between a giant troll and a small wizardy person. Ouch...**

GAMETEK

"For anyone who plays chess King's Table will prove to be an easy game to get to grips with, for others the game has been designed to be simple to play." **PC PLAYER**

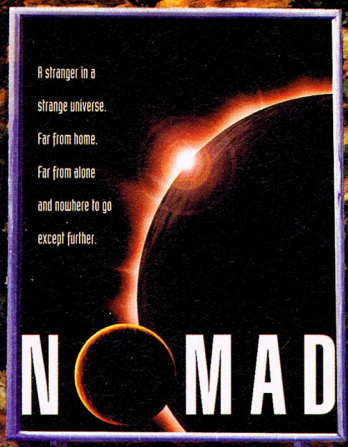
Available for PC COMPATIBLES, PC CD-ROM and CBM AMIGA





"Daemonsgate is a role-player's dream. It is a complex and masterfully done game which must be experienced to be appreciated." **EGM (94%)**

Available for PC COMPATIBLES and PC CD-ROM



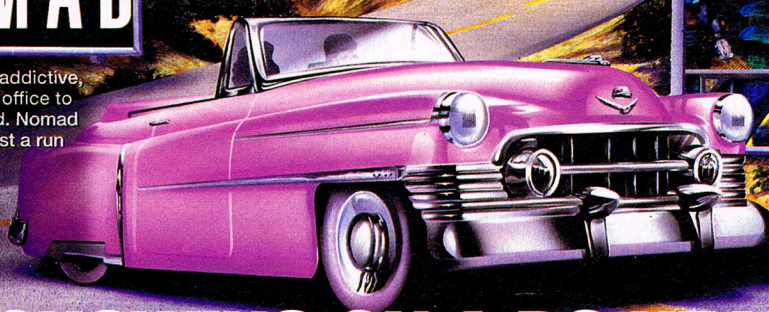
"I found Nomad very addictive, even coming into the office to play it at the weekend. Nomad certainly gives the best a run for their money." **PC PLAYER 4/5**

Available for PC COMPATIBLES and PC CD-ROM

"The Journeyman Project is a stunning game which you just have to buy. You haven't seen or played anything like this ever before – and it only costs £39.99." **PC POWER**

Available on PC CD-ROM and MAC CD-ROM





NOW SHOWING ON A PC NEAR YOU

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Daemonsgate is a trademark of Imagitec Design Inc. The Journeyman Project 1992 Presto Studios Inc. All rights reserved

SimCity 2000 is Number One

Here's an impressive feat – ***SimCity 2000*** topped the charts *before* it was even released. Publishers **Maxis** produced a special demo disk, giving 20 minutes' worth of play, and shipped it out to the stores where it went on sale a week before the full *SimCity 2000* game hit the streets – and at just **£2.99**. It's the first time a demo disk has been sold in this way. In fact, interest was so high it went straight to the top of the Gallup Budget charts. (See page 31.)

The CD-ROMs are coming!

Latest figures released by stat people Gallup show that PC CD-ROM has a strong share in the growing CD-ROM market. PC units now account for 22.4% of the market, which is up from 16.6% on the previous month. A pretty big climb, but bear in mind that the whole CD market (including Amiga CD^{32}, Philips CDi and Mega CD) counts for only 3.7% of total computer software sales. There, that made you think, didn't it?

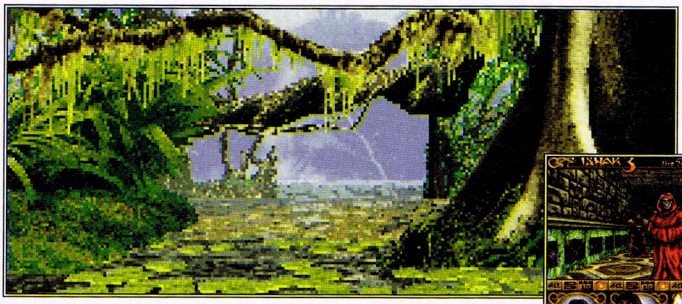
Virgin strike a Sensible deal

Virgin have signed a deal with **Sensible Software** to handle all of their PC games for the next two years – Virgin are already publishing the PC version of Sensible's superb *Cannon Fodder*, which is reviewed on page 60. Sensible Software's Managing Director and all-round good egg Jon Hare said of the deal, "We're both determined to make the next generation of Sensible titles the best yet."

What? Even better than the highly acclaimed *Sensible Soccer, Mega Lo Mania, Wizkid* and *Cannon Fodder*? Here's hoping...

Ishar 3

The mythical kingdom of Kendoria is in for yet more trouble...



(Left) **Typically verdant adventure woodland.**

(Below) **A cape-wearing skeleton looms menacingly before you. Hmmm, what to do – fight, run or talk?**





Your team of characters view the spectacular world of *Ishar 3* from a first-person perspective.

In the very first *Ishar* game, which **Silmarils** released in 1992, you had to venture into the evil Krogh's fortress, the Ishar of the title, and defeat him. By the second game, *Ishar 2: Messengers Of Doom*, the equally evil Shandar was attempting to enslave the population by using mind-controlling drugs – and, again, you had to stop him. Enter ***Ishar 3***, where Shandar (again) threatens to return from the dead. Your task is to prevent him from reincarnating in the body of Wohratax, last of the black dragons, by travelling back in time and attempting to stop a rare planetary conjunction.

Yes, if you hadn't guessed from the labyrinthine plot and faintly ridiculous names, *Ishar 3* is a role-playing game – and a French one too. Silmarils' previous *Ishar* games have been solid performers, with distinctive graphics and no-nonsense RPG

Multimedia menagerie

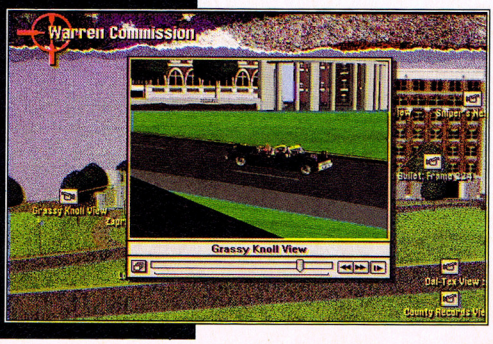
Not quite game and not quite entertainment, but somewhere in-between – CD-ROM-style.



***Midnight Movie Madness* is filled with clips from schlock horror flicks and sci-fi movies.**

Multimedia (an annoying buzzword if ever we heard one) is the future of games, films, music, books and just about *everything* if you believe what its champions say. Well, maybe the five Windows-based American multimedia titles about to be released in the UK – ***JFK Assassination***, ***Midnight Movie Madness*** and ***Exploring Ancient Architecture*** (from **Medio**), and ***Beethoven's 5th*** and ***Supersonic*** (from **MPG**) – will make things clearer.

You can watch the events in *JFK* from many angles – even zoom in or freeze the action.



JFK is the complete buff's guide to the 35th President's unnatural demise, and enables you to watch FMV footage of the shooting, including the important Zapruder film. There are impressive rendered 3D graphics replaying the shooting from a number of key angles – and even the entire text from the Warren Commission report. *Midnight Movie Madness* is a database of 100 horror and sci-fi B-movies, each with a small FMV clip and a few production details. *Architecture* enables you to take a tour around ancient Greek, Roman and Egyptian buildings – as they are now or how they were originally (thanks to some snazzy 3D reconstructions).

Beethoven's 5th, on the other hand, has an entire recording of the symphony, along with accompanying notes, guides to music structure, instruments used and a biography of the man himself. Easily the weakest package is *Supersonic* – a rather lacklustre encyclopaedia of military aircraft.



● Medio's *JFK, Midnight Movie Madness* and *Exploring Ancient Architecture* are out now and cost £49.99 each. MPG's *Beethoven's 5th* and *Supersonic* are also in the shops now, but cost £49.95 each.



(Above, right and below) ***Ishar 3's*** **storyline continues on from where the last game left off.**





gameplay. In *Ishar 3* you control a party of five characters that you create yourself, choosing race, class, appearance, characteristics – the usual stuff. One novelty, though, is the need to balance party members to avoid serious personality clashes. Otherwise your characters won't give a monkey's about each other in the heat of combat. *Ishar 3* is extremely detailed – night and day scenarios, animal companions to discover, animated film sequences and real-time fights are just some of the features on offer. You can even load a party from either of the first two *Ishar* games. More news soon...

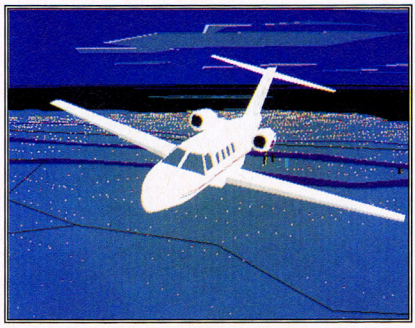
● **Silmarils' *Ishar 3* will be released in April and will cost £32.99.**

Travelling light

SubLOGIC's ***Flight Light*** is a serious flight simulator, a technical program cut from the same cloth as Microsoft's *Flight Simulator* – and about as far removed from a combat flight sim as you can get. Take the controls of a Cessna Citation Jet and fly across America, from New York to Boston, Chicago to Champaign, Los Angeles to San Diego or Dallas to Austin. Realism is the game's strong point, so you need to adjust the settings and work the controls of the plane as if you were inside a real Cessna.

But if all that sounds like too much hard work, there's always the 'no crash' practice mode, complete with on-screen visual cues to show which settings to adjust for climbing, descending, cruising and landing. *Flight Light* aims to get you flying like a pro and has been designed to run on even a basic 8 Mhz 286. An expanded version, ***Flight Light Plus,*** adds a second navigation radio and four more aircraft – a Piper Cherokee Archer, a Mooney 201, a Beechcraft Bonanza and a Cessna 172. More details, as always, next month.

● **SubLOGIC's *Flight Light* is out now and will set you back £24.95. *Flight Light Plus* will be released shortly afterwards at £39.95.**



(Left) **SubLOGIC's *Flight Light* is designed to be both a realistic simulation *and* an approachable flight tutorial for novice flyers.**

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







but you're still...

ALONE IN THE DARK 2
™

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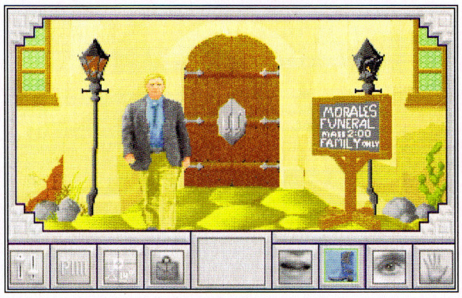
The above information is correct at time of publication (Feb 1994).

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

Red Hell



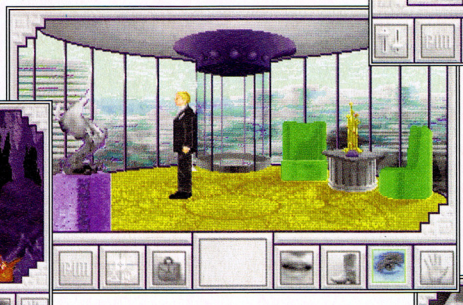




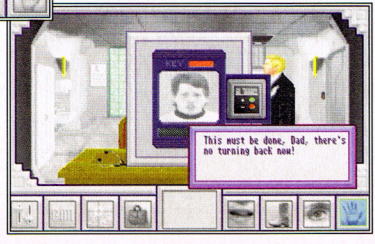












You might as well forget the new world order – because if **Cyberdreams'** ***Red Hell*** is anything to go by, history has taken a distinct turn for the worse. The Soviet Union has won World War II, developed the atomic bomb first and, by 2020 AD, conquered the USA. Unfortunately, Soviet industry is now plunging the world towards ecological disaster – and your son has been targeted for termination as a dissident. Thrilling stuff (no doubt Tom Clancy would've been proud of the storyline).

Developed by **Castleworks** in the USA, *Red Hell* is an RPG aimed at an adult audience – what's more, it's a role-player that's deadly serious about its science fiction. In trying to prevent your son's murder, you learn the secret of the Soviets' victory in World War II – and have to travel through time to save the world.

With plenty of film-like 3D animation, over 70 locations and lashings of digitised speech, Castleworks (and European publishers Cyberdreams) are obviously hoping for big things here.

● **Cyberdreams'** ***Red Hell*** **will be available at the end of April and cost £39.99.**

(Above) **That's a nasty blazer and chinos combo...**

(Right) **Look around the city from your penthouse.**

(Below) **There's a gruesome corpse in the caves.**

(From top to bottom) **You play Mark Constantine, a man whose son has been labelled a dissident and enemy of the state. To prove your child's innocence, you have to probe the secrets of Soviet America. On the surface, normal society prevails. But underneath? Well, you'll soon discover why the game's been called** ***Red Hell.*** **Very soon, in fact...**

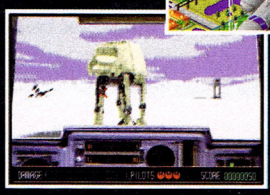
PC GAMER Charts

Up Down Non mover New entry

Yahoo! *PC Gamer's* opinions are reflected by the masses (naturally) as *SimCity 2000 (PCG* 4: 94%) storms straight in at Number One this month. Not only that, but the £2.99 20-minute playable demo disk has gone straight to the top of the Budget Charts too – that's a world's first. Cynics might argue that four sequels in the top five is a bad sign, but when they're all as good as this, who cares?

On the CD-ROM front, *Rebel Assault* still hangs on to the top spot – although we're sure it's more to do with the Star Wars licence than anything else. Interesting to note, actually, that nearly all the games in the CD Top 10 worth playing are enhanced versions of floppy-based titles – *Strike Commander, TFX, Gabriel Knight, DOTT* etc. On the original side, only *Iron Helix* stands out as a worthy buy. And with only one CD game in this month's *PC Gamer* Top 50 *(Strike Commander)*, the CD scene still seems to consist more of hype than of substance. Oi, developers – sort it out!





(Above) ***SimCity 2000*** **– raking in the cash, and deservedly so.**

(Left) **Fatally flawed, but popular – that's LucasArts' okayish *Rebel Assault.***

Full Price Top 40

			PCG		
1	★	SimCity 2000	94%	Maxis	£39.99
2	↓	Frontier: Elite II	90%	Gametek/Konami	£39.99
3	↓	Premier Manager 2	79%	Gremlin	£34.99
4	↓	Alone In The Dark 2	92%	Infogrames	£44.99
5	↓	X-Wing	N/A%	US Gold/LucasArts	£45.99
6	★	Mortal Kombat	79%	Virgin	£29.99
7	↓	Flight Simulator v.5	N/A%	Microsoft	£39.99
8	↓	IndyCar Racing	93%	Virgin	£44.99
9	↓	TFX	89%	Ocean	£44.99
10	↓	Sam & Max Hit The Road	93%	US Gold/LucasArts	£42.99
11	↓	Star Trek: Judgment Rites	92%	Interplay	£44.99
12	★	Police Quest 4: Open Season	74%	Sierra	£39.99
13	↓	B-Wing	80%	US Gold/LucasArts	£20.99
14	↓	Sensible Soccer '92/'93	N/A%	Renegade	£32.99
15	↓	Civilization	N/A%	MicroProse	£39.99
16	↓	Network Q RAC Rally	69%	Europress Software	£34.99
17	★	SimCity/Lemmings	N/A%	Infogrames	£29.99
18	↓	Zool	N/A%	Gremlin	£34.99
19	★	Indiana Jones & The Fate Of Atlantis	N/A%	US Gold/LucasArts	£37.99
20	↓	Championship Manager '93	N/A%	Domark	£29.99
21	↓	Premier Manager	N/A%	US Gold	£29.99
22	↓	Lemmings 2: The Tribes	N/A%	Psygnosis	£39.99
23	↓	Jurassic Park	70%	Ocean	£34.99
24	↓	Links 386 Pro	N/A%	US Gold	£45.99
25	↓	SubWar 2050	88%	MicroProse	£44.99
26	★	Gabriel Knight	80%	Sierra	£39.99
27	★	Monkey Island 2	N/A%	US Gold/LucasArts	£35.99
28	★	Nigel Mansell's World Championship	N/A%	Gremlin	£34.99
29	↓	Flight Simulator v.5: New York	N/A%	Microsoft	£19.99
30	↓	X-Wing: Imperial Pursuit	N/A%	US Gold/LucasArts	£19.99
31	↓	MS-DOS 6.2/Flight Simulator v.5	N/A%	Microsoft	£69.99
32	↓	MS-DOS 6.2	N/A%	Microsoft	£59.99
33	★	Curse Of Enchantia	N/A%	Core Design	£29.99
34	↓	Indiana Jones/Atlantis (action game)	N/A%	US Gold	£30.99
35	★	Championship Manager Italia	N/A%	Domark	£29.99
36	↓	The Chessmaster 3000	N/A%	Mindscape	£30.99
37	↓	Alone In The Dark	N/A%	Infogrames	£44.99
38	↓	Kingmaker	N/A%	US Gold	£37.99
39	★	Master Of Orion	79%	MicroProse	£44.99
40	★	BBC Gardener's World 3D Designer	N/A%	Europress Software	£19.99

American Top 10

1	★	SimCity 2000	Maxis
2	↓	Rebel Assault	LucasArts
3	↓	Flight Simulator v.5	Microsoft
4	↓	Coaster	Disney
5	↓	The 7th Guest	Virgin
6	★	Master Of Orion	MicroProse
7	●	Leisure Suit Larry 6	Sierra
8	↓	Police Quest 4: Open Season	Sierra
9	★	Links 386 Pro	Access
10	★	X-Wing	LucasArts

Budget Top 10

			PCG		
1	★	SimCity 2000 demo disk	N/A%	Maxis	£2.99
2	↓	The Secret Of Monkey Island	N/A%	Kixx XL	£16.99
3	★	Eye Of The Beholder	79%	Kixx XL	£16.99
4	★	Another World	N/A%	Kixx	£14.99
5	↓	Championship Manager '94 data disk	N/A%	Domark	£9.99
6	★	Police Quest 1	50%	Kixx XL	£16.99
7	↓	Fun School 2 Under 6	N/A%	The Hit Squad	£9.99
8	↓	Links - The Challenge Of Golf	62%	Kixx XL	£16.99
9	↓	Wing Commander	82%	The Hit Squad	£14.99
10	↓	Populous & The Promised Lands	N/A%	The Hit Squad	£14.99

This Time Last Year

1	Ultima Underworld II	EA/Origin
2	Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker	Virgin
3	Formula One Grand Prix	MicroProse
4	Comanche: Maximum Overkill	US Gold
5	Lemmings/Oh No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis
6	F-117A	MicroProse
7	NFL	Konami
8	Civilization	MicroProse
9	Monkey Island 2	US Gold
10	Indiana Jones & The Fate Of Atlantis	US Gold

CD-ROM Top 10

			PCG		
1	●	Rebel Assault	64%	LucasArts/US Gold	£45.99
2	↓	Gabriel Knight	81%	Sierra	£44.99
3	★	The Lawnmower Man	32%	SCI Interactive	£54.99
4	★	Iron Helix	80%	MicroProse	£39.99
5	↓	Day Of The Tentacle	N/A%	US Gold/LucasArts	£45.99
6	↓	The Journeyman Project	N/A%	Gametek	£39.99
7	↓	Comanche: Maximum Overkill	N/A%	US Gold/Novalogic	£49.99
8	↓	Dracula Unleashed	67%	Mindscape	£49.99
9	↓	Strike Commander	88%	Electronic Arts/Origin	£49.99
10	↓	TFX	N/A%	Ocean	£49.99

For weekly PC games software charts updates, try tuning in to Digitiser, page 470 of Teletext, on Channel 4

Official Gallup UK Charts.

Q&A The Unbelievable Truth

If you've got a problem and no-one else in the world can help, maybe you should hire *PC Gamer's* resident panel of experts? We're ready to tackle any query – from the trivial to the technical – and all it costs is the price of a stamp...

Q The idea of getting a PC has been in my mind for quite a while, but when I bought a copy of your magazine last week I finally decided to go ahead with my idea. What I want is 'The Ultimate Games PC,' if such a thing exists. I only have about £400 (£600 at a push) to spend at the moment. I know enough to be able to put the machine together, and have therefore decided (unless advised strongly against it) to assemble the machine myself. I've been scanning adverts for secondhand parts, but what I really need is a machine that will:

1. Run all games smoothly (i.e: fast) with no memory problems at all.
2. Be very expandable (as and when money becomes available).
3. Offer good sound quality.
4. Have as big a hard drive as possible.
5. Take a CD-ROM drive eventually.

I need to know what to get initially, what order to upgrade in (again, as and when the money becomes available) and what I will have to pay (both new and secondhand, if possible) for each part. When the machine is finished I want it to still be easily upgradable as technology advances.

Nigel Thorne, Wickham, Hants

A *Blimey, don't want to know much, do you? If you're scouring for individual components and kit assembly deals, your best bet is to revert to the not inconsiderable advertising pages of our sister mags* PC Plus *and* PC Answers. *In the meantime, we can tell you that you're really not going to get much for £4-600 – a secondhand 386SX 25 Mhz with a 120 Mb hard drive is probably the best you can hope for. Once you've got the base station, though, expandability isn't a problem. The great thing about PCs is that you can bolt peripherals, including a CD-ROM drive, onto the machine to your heart's content. On the sound front we'd recommend the Soundblaster Pro from Creative Labs ☎ (0743) 248590 – that's what all our office PCs are equipped with – which comes in at £79 for the Basic version and £99 for the snazzier Deluxe edition. Our recommendation, however, is to hang on to your cash and continue saving. With PC prices coming down all the time, it shouldn't be long before you can afford a 486-based system, which is what the vast majority of* PC Gamer *readers have at home. This is fast becoming the staple system for 'professional' gamers.*

Q First, thanks for a brilliant magazine. Great reviews, great coverdisks, great tips (etc. etc.). However, I've got a few questions:

1. I'm a newcomer to PC gaming and at the moment I'm using my dad's 486DX 33 Mhz, but I hope to get my own PC very soon. Is it worth getting a 386? Are its days numbered? I'm a sim fan – could a 386 hack today's simulations?

2. I saved up a lot of money for a decent 16-bit soundcard recently and, after looking at its specifications, I bought the Gravis Ultrasound. However, I'm a bit disappointed with it. Some games don't work, and sometimes instruments are recognised as others and the soundtrack sounds awful. Also, the one program I've got which supports Ultrasound (your *Terminator: Rampage* demo) won't work with it. Have you any suggestions? Do you know of any games which support my Ultrasound card? Is there any hope left for me at all?

Jonathan Godsell, Ringwood, Hants

A *We'd have to recommend that you go for a 486. Good as it's been over the years, the 386 is fast falling out of favour with games developers and players. Currently, 95% of PC games run perfectly well on a 386, but titles like* Strike Commander *and* SubWar 2050, *which really need a 486, are already paving the way for the next wave of high-tech software. As for the Gravis Ultrasound, we've had problems too, but we suspect it's because, like any new soundcard on the market, it's going to take a while to find its legs. You may need to take another look at your configuration and hardware, however, because most other Gravis users have had no problems with our* Terminator: Rampage *demo.*

Q Whatever happened to 5.25 inch disk drives? After a long period of inactivity, I've decided to resurrect my old PC from under the dust cover so I can use it to play games – I've only ever used it as an office machine before. But it's got a 5.25 inch drive, and most of the games I've seen in the shop now appear on 3.5 inch floppy only. What's going on? Can you still get games on the old format, or am I going to have to upgrade?

Dean Hoyle, Warrington

A *Oh dear, we've got some bad news for you... We're afraid that 5.25 inch disk games are about as dead as a dead thing. They're the Betamax of the PC world. Apparently, these disks were prone to damage and couldn't hold nearly as much data as a 3.5 incher. You may still find a trickle of compatible software on the old format, but if you're serious about playing games with your PC, you're going to have to upgrade to the new drive format as of now. And from what we can ascertain about the age of your machine, you might want to chuck in a new processor, hard drive, soundboard and video card while you're at it.*

Q Can you settle an argument? During a recent conversation about the brilliant *Formula One Grand Prix*, a friend of mine claimed that the author, Geoff Crammond, also wrote the Formula One game *Revs*, which appeared years ago on the BBC Micro. Now I used to have a BBC, and *Revs* was my all-time favourite game. Quite coincidentally, *Formula One Grand Prix* is also my favourite game for the PC. I know the two games are similar, but I'm not at all sure that both games were programmed by the same person. I think my friend is trying to wind me up, but I can't prove it either way. Can you help?

James Barber, Bournemouth, Dorset

A *There's no wind-up at work here – both* Revs *and* Formula One Grand Prix *were indeed written by the same man, the multi-talented (but rarely heard-of) Geoff Crammond. Indeed, his racing game pedigree extends beyond even these two titles. He also produced the surreal arcade engine-fest* Stunt Car Racer, *which appeared in 1989. He's currently rumoured to be working on an IndyCar simulation, so stay tuned for more developments.*

Q A year or so ago, I remember reading a preview in *ACE* magazine of a game involving giant robots slugging it out in a futuristic arena. I'm not talking about *Rise Of The Robots* – this was a huge polygon graphics thing with Gouraud shading and it looked brilliant. I think Electronic Arts were releasing it, but I've heard hide nor hair of it since. Am I imagining things or did it really exist?

Derek Bannen, Trafford, Manchester

A *You're not imagining things – the game you're talking about was called* Cyber Fight, *and was indeed scheduled to be released via Electronic Arts during the latter half of 1991 or at the beginning of 1992. But while the 3D polygon graphics were indeed looking fabulous, the game itself wasn't coming together as planned.*

Delay followed delay as the game slipped further into development hell, until eventually it fell off the bottom of EA's release schedule altogether. Respected programmer Michael Powell (who had previously written Powerdrome, *also for EA) has since given us the excellent* SubWar 2050 (PCG *2: 88%), so that's all right then.*

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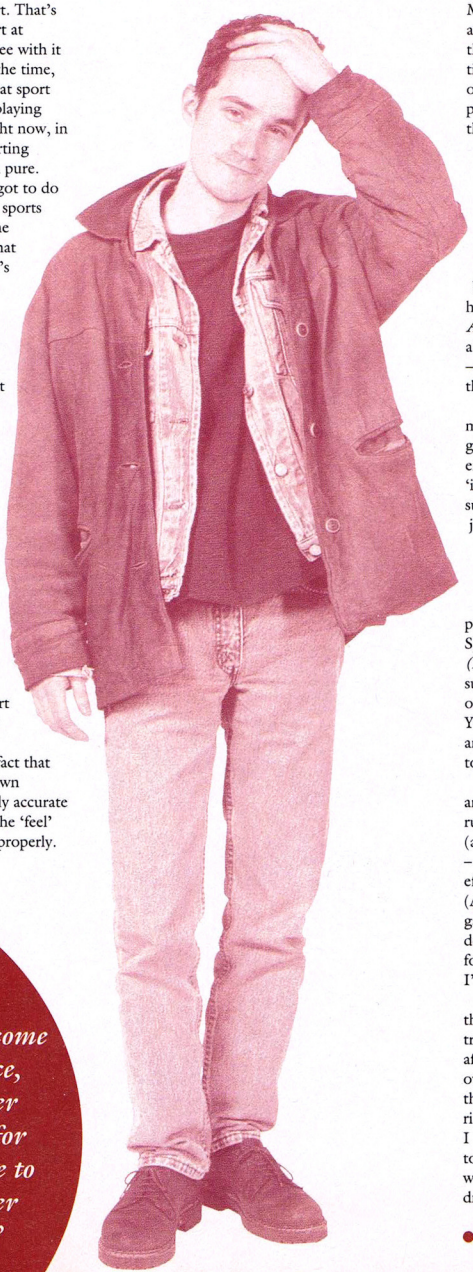
It's not the winning or the losing...

Chris Buxton

...that matters, it's the taking part. That's what I was always told when I played sport at school, and the older I get the more I agree with it too. Sure, it was just PE teacher speak at the time, designed to keep the ones who were crap at sport from nipping off to the other side of the playing field and splitting a packet of fags. But right now, in the full flush of bleary-eyed adult life, sporting competition seems honest, innocent, even pure. Still, what has my growing love for sport got to do with PC games? Well, what holds true for sports holds true for computer games. It's not the winning – and certainly not the losing – that *really* matters when I switch on my PC. It's the act of playing itself – that's where the fun's to be had. I'm fed up with arcade shoot-'em-ups that I can't finish, adventures that I give up on, and strategy games that I stare blank-faced at. What I want is a good time when I play a game. It doesn't matter to me if I can't make it off level 30 of *Lemmings* or I can't kill LeChuck in *Monkey Island 2*.

Sports titles, for me at least, are primarily *games,* in the true sense of the word. Remember *Daley Thompson's Decathlon* or the incredible *Match Day 2* on the Spectrum, for instance? And what about *Kick-Off, TV Sports Football* and the fabulous *Sensible Soccer* on the Amiga? More recently, the consoles took the sports simulation in their stride, with the excellent *John Madden Football, Super Tennis* and the superb *NHL Hockey*.

There's something about a great sport game that you just don't find in any other genre. They're a complete vehicle for competition, for starters – you forget the fact that it's a game and just concentrate on your own performance. Okay, none of them are really accurate simulations, but they sure as hell capture the 'feel' of the action involved when they're done properly.



"Arch cynics might take great pleasure in saying that games now come with in-built obsolescence, designed to keep the buyer happy just long enough for the next piece of software to come along, but I'd never say such a thing. Oh no"

More than that, they become a sport in themselves, as you learn the nuances of the controls, little tricks that help you score and tactics for play. And all the time you're playing the same game for 90 minutes, over four quarters, through five sets or whatever, probably on the same pitch and probably against the same people. No need for a convoluted storyline, fantastic graphics or amazing sound – the game's the thing.

So what's this all leading to? Well, I reckon that sports and sport games have a lot in common with the very first computer games. Both are simple, both use a fairly basic set of rules that define the game – and yet both provide the player with the freedom to play as he or she sees fit. Look at *Pacman, Defender* or *Asteroids*. You could write all you needed to know about these classic designs on the back of a beermat – and yet they're still utterly compelling years after they stormed the arcades.

The industry is now, disturbingly, placing more importance on the story of a game or on the game as an interactive movie than on a game as an entity in its own right. The chimera of the ultimate 'interactive' title – what rubbish! Even older genres such as flight sims and simple puzzlers are no longer just games to be enjoyed. They feature missions to complete, villains to vanquish and so on. Such complex titles have a replayability factor of zilch once you've finished them.

Truly open-ended titles – sport sims are a prime example – offer the most Plays Per Bucks Spent. It's as simple as that. Take *SimCity 2000 (PCG* 4: 94%), for example. It's a simple idea that succeeds because you can play it in a huge number of different ways and there's no end to the game. You just keep on playing (unless you're like Gary and sulk when a plane crashes, starting a fire which torches half your city – but that's another story).

The more games I play the more fed up I get anticipating that inevitable moment when the fun runs out. Either I've got as far as I'm going to get (and give up) or I've finished it. Whatever the result – and no matter how great the game – all I'm effectively left with is a hole in my bank balance. (Arch-cynics might take great pleasure in saying that games now come with built-in obsolescence, designed to keep the buyer happy just long enough for the next piece of software to come along, but I'd never say such a thing. Oh no.)

The games I want to keep on playing are titles that don't necessarily shower me with graphical treats (not that I'm against that). No, what I'm after is PC software that gives me a *game* I can play over and over again, and not some linear exercise that just lets me play in two different ways – the right way and the wrong way. Is it too much to ask? I don't know, but every now and then I do manage to find a gem of a title that makes the wait seem worthwhile. It's just a terrible shame about the dross in-between, that's all.

● Chris Buxton is Deputy Editor of *PC Gamer*.

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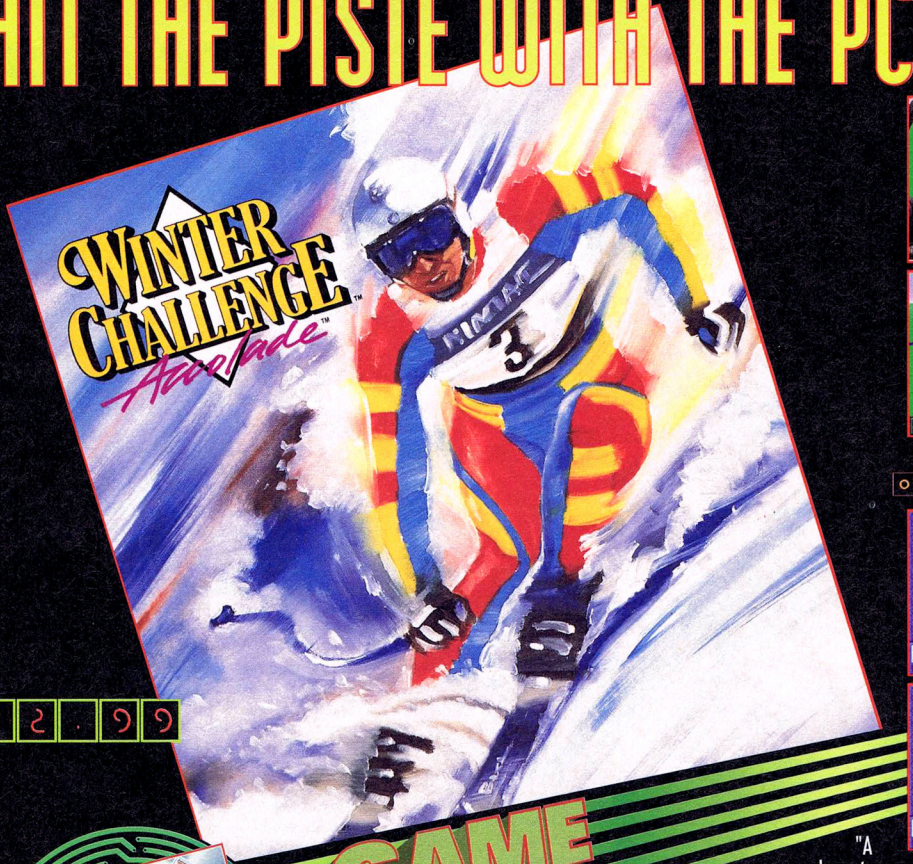

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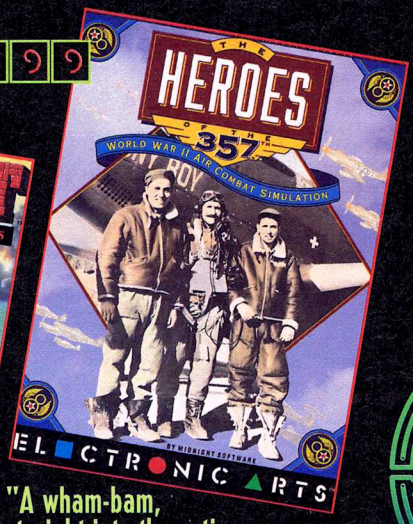

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We're all Doomed!

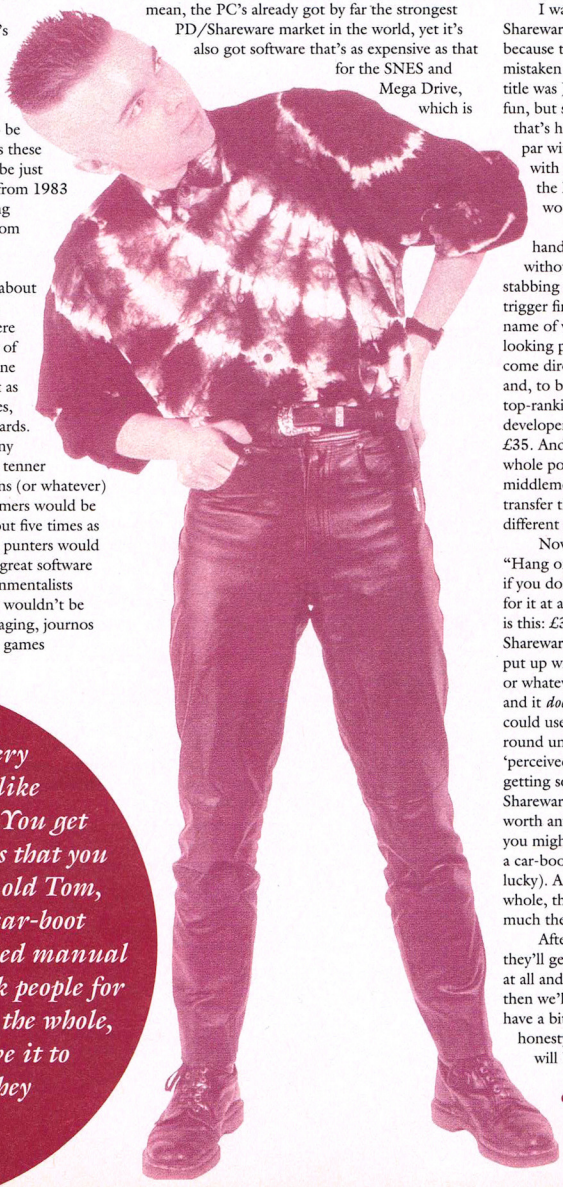
Stuart Campbell

Hello and welcome to my new, extended column (!). Blimey, I've got a lot of space haven't I? I wonder if the Art Editor would consider printing everything in really big type? (Puts finger to ear and listens intently.) Ah, apparently not. Sod it. Better get on with my bit, then.

I was playing *Doom* round at my mate Ken's house (natch) the other day. Fantastic, isn't it? I have to admit, it's the first game I've ever seen that made me want to go out and buy a PC – try as I might, I just can't see the appeal of *Wing Commander, X-Wing* and all the others that seem to be the big favourites of all you PC types these days. *X-Wing* in particular seems to be just *Codename MAT* (a Spectrum game from 1983 or thereabouts), but with less exciting graphics and baddies you shoot at from much further away.

Anyway, playing id's beautiful monster of a game got me thinking about Shareware. I started imagining some strange Xanadu kind of a world, where said software would be the lifeblood of the computer games industry. Imagine it – every new game first coming out as Shareware, on the cover of magazines, in computer shops or on bulletin boards. You'd get a copy of it, see if it was any good or not, and then send off your tenner for the updates/manuals/full versions (or whatever) if you decided you liked it. Programmers would be happy because they'd be getting about five times as much cash per copy as they do now, punters would be happy because they were getting great software for a fifth of the current cost, environmentalists would be happy because every game wouldn't be taking up half a tree's worth of packaging, journos like us would be happy because crap games wouldn't sell... In fact, everybody would be happy – except the shops who currently make four times as much money on every game as anyone else for the demanding job of sticking them on their shelves and waiting for people to come in and buy them.

And then I thought, "Yeah, well, if it's such a great idea, how come it isn't that way already? I mean, the PC's already got by far the strongest PD/Shareware market in the world, yet it's also got software that's as expensive as that for the SNES and Mega Drive, which is ridiculous because (a) there's an installed user base of about 17 grillion, (b) console software comes on expensive cartridges while PC games are on ten-a-penny floppies, and (c) the PC games market is a free and open one, not heavily controlled and price-regulated by the likes of Sega or Nintendo. What's going wrong?"



"Shareware, by its very nature, doesn't look like it's worth anything. You get a couple of tatty disks that you might buy from any old Tom, Dick or Darth at a car-boot sale, and a photocopied manual (if you're lucky). Ask people for £35 for that and, on the whole, they simply won't give it to you, however much they like your game"

I was a bit stuck at this point. Amiga Shareware, for example, never really caught on because the games were never good enough to be mistaken for the 'real thing' – the only successful title was Jeff Minter's *Llamatron,* which was great fun, but still looked like a PD game. However, that's hardly the case with the PC. *Doom* is on a par with anything else I've seen on the machine – with drop-dead gorgeous graphics/sound and the kind of gameplay hook that *Rebel Assault* would sell its grandmother for.

As ever, though, my mate Ken was on hand with the answer. (What would I do without him?) "Take a look at this," he said, stabbing at the Reset button with a still-twitching trigger finger and loading up something else, the name of which I won't reveal. It was a crude-looking platform game which could easily have come direct from the early days of the Spectrum, and, to be frank, it was rubbish. Apparently, it was top-ranking Shareware game from a well-known developer, and it had a registration fee of about £35. And there's the rub. I always thought that the whole point of Shareware was to cut out the middlemen, so the price came down, not to simply transfer the vast sacks of money made into a different group's pocket.

Now at this point you're probably saying, "Hang on a minute. The point of Shareware is that if you don't think a game's any good, you don't pay for it at all. So what's your problem?" My problem is this: £35, £30, even £20 is an unrealistic price for Shareware, even if it *is* good. Punters can just about put up with forking out £50 for *Strike Commander* or whatever, because it *does* come in a big shiny box and it *does* have a glossy instruction manual you could use as an occasional bed when friends come round unexpectedly. Marketing people call it 'perceived value' – it actually looks like you're getting something that's worth the money. But Shareware, by its very nature, doesn't look like it's worth anything. You get a couple of tatty disks that you might buy from any old Tom, Dick or Darth at a car-boot sale, and a photocopied manual (if you're lucky). Ask people for £35 for that and, on the whole, they simply won't give it to you, however much they like your game.

After they've done that a couple of times, they'll get out of the habit of paying for Shareware at all and start to treat it like Public Domain. And then we'll be right back where we started. Let's have a bit less greed from developers, a bit more honesty from customers, and just maybe things will be a bit better for all of us.

● Stuart Campbell doesn't own a PC, but spends enough bloody time playing ours to know what he's talking about.

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Software Affected Disorder

Gary Penn

Sigh, I'm so SAD. So very SAD. In fact, I'm probably the SADdest person in the computer entertainment software business. After 15 years playing thousands of computer and console games across dozens of different formats, only a handful still hold any appeal (and most of these are over five years old, which is why I like to harp on about how good the old days were before commercial considerations crushed creative ones).

And I'm sick to the back teeth with the following too...

● People moaning about the high price of PC software. Yes, it's expensive. So what? It *is* a luxury, remember. (And before everyone starts writing in and complaining, yes, it is easy for me to say this because I'm one of those 'jammy' bastards who gets to play everything for free.)

● Time-consuming program installation and having to prepare a boot disk every five freaking minutes, despite having a porky PC. What chance for the computer illiterate? Pushing the hardware to its limits is one thing, but creating software to flaunt alleged talent is another.

● Inept control modes relying on far too many buttons or keys when, with a little more thought, one or two would suffice and make the 'experience' all the more entertaining. With Interplay's *The Lost Vikings* an interesting idea went to waste, partly because of limited level design, but mainly because of an unnecessarily clumsy key-intensive control system.

● Icon-based games. Icons are perfect for grey applications software, not colourful games, where they distance the player from the action. Psygnosis' dreadful *Creepers* and *Bill's Tomato Game*, for example, are effectively glorified versions of *Deluxe Paint* – the challenge being to build the level before completing it. What rot. What next? Draw the pieces before putting them together? ("Thanks, Gaz. Great idea!" – Sad Developer's Voice.)

● Sloppy, formulaic presentation and software fat (the tedious 'conversation' crap in – yawn – *Wing Commander*, for instance. Atmospheric shatmospheric). Publishers and developers reckon the public wants them, so we have to put up with loads of unnecessary and uninteresting introductory sequences slapped on the front-end... Most aren't even worth a first viewing. Why not leave that film-like stuff to the people who have some understanding of it, eh?

And let's not forget those incongruous intermission bits – oh look, there's another lifeless picture of an aircraft or a soldier in uniform – selection screens and so on. Presentation is often an afterthought. Can't these people take a little more pride in their work and not just the cash from it?

● Options. I hate 'em. A well constructed game doesn't need options galore, especially selectable difficulty levels. The music and sound effects should be an integral part of the action, not an afterthought (it's that word again) with an on/off toggle. Options do not compensate for slack game design.

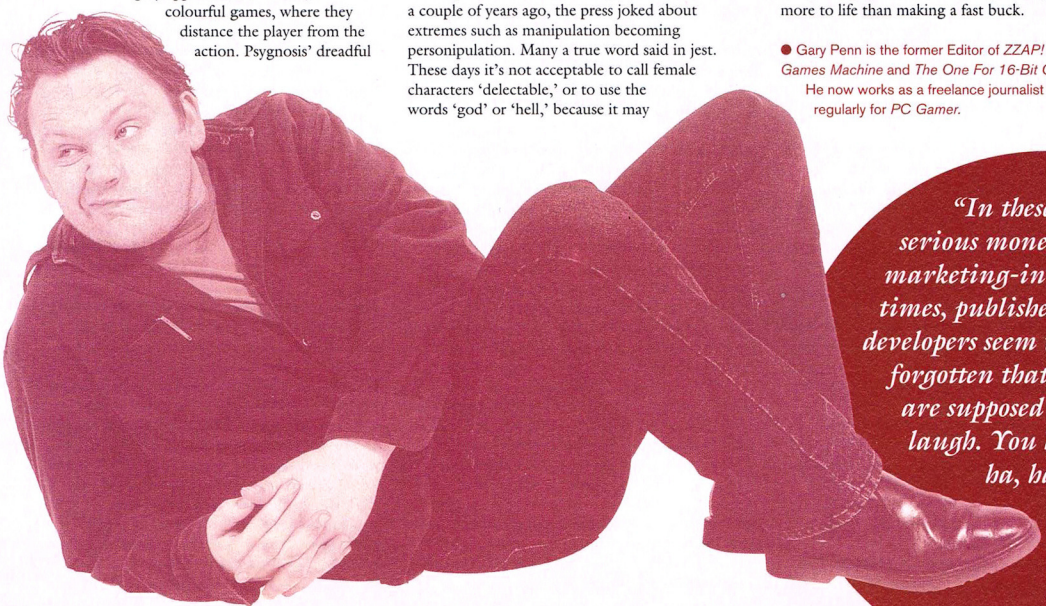
● 'Safe' software. Developers seem incapable of 'expressing' themselves for fear of rubbing some people up the wrong way. Political correctness is running wild. When PC emerged from the darkness a couple of years ago, the press joked about extremes such as manipulation becoming personipulation. Many a true word said in jest. These days it's not acceptable to call female characters 'delectable,' or to use the words 'god' or 'hell,' because it may offend someone somewhere. Jesus. You can't please all the people all of the time...

● Ill-fitting, tedious and dreary soundtracks and spot effects – and graphics, come to think of it. It's the same old crap over and over again, often with too much trivial detail, poor colour schemes and so on. An example: the Bitmap Brothers' continual use of bland blues, greys and browns, particularly in their only decent release, *Speedball 2*, where it's difficult to tell the difference between the two teams in the heat of the moment. The existing hardware isn't that limiting, for God's sake.

● A lack of imagination, style and *fun*. In these oh-so-serious money-and-marketing-intensive times, publishers and developers seem to have forgotten that games are supposed to be a *laugh*. You know – ha, ha, ha? No, obviously you don't. "We must be doing something right," say the creators, "because it sells." And so do the likes of The Birdie Song, Agadoo, Everything I Do (I Do It For You), Shaddap You Face (at least it kept Ultravox off the top), Save Your Love, Clive Dunn, The St Winifred's School Choir, Take That and so on (and on and on).

As I say, I'm SAD. I dream of the day when an influence outside the industry as it stands will emerge from the primitive chaos and show these poor souls the light. But perhaps the saddest thing of all is that I'm not yet bored with what I grew up with – irritated, yes, but not bored. In fact, even now I still couldn't leave it all behind for more mundane desk work. There *is* more to life than computer games. But, more importantly, there's more to life than making a fast buck.

● Gary Penn is the former Editor of *ZZAP! 64*, *The Games Machine* and *The One For 16-Bit Games*. He now works as a freelance journalist and writes regularly for *PC Gamer*.



"In these oh-so-serious money-and-marketing-intensive times, publishers and developers seem to have forgotten that games are supposed to be a laugh. You know – ha, ha, ha?"

Cables

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Speak your mind and preach to the public from the pulpit of *PC Gamer's* intensely readable letters pages. You write them, and we feign intelligence, wit and wisdom in our responses.

Rebel insulted

Dear *PC Gamer,*

Congratulations on this really good new magazine! I've just bought your second issue and I was enthusiastic about everything – the style, the various departments, the Scoops and Eyewitness reports with their quality photos and informative texts (don't let them shrink).

But let's come to the reason behind this letter. I read your magazine until I got to the *Rebel Assault* review. I read the Final Rating. I read the bold printed word. And I was shocked. I thought, "They can't do that! They can't give this superb game only 64% and write a few sentences that I'd better not repeat."

Hey, what's so bad about the game? It's not a flight sim, it's a shoot-'em-up. You don't need a week to get control of your ship. You just start the game and let the fun and action begin. Once you've started you just won't stop until you've finished the game, that's my opinion! And what's so bad about the steering? It's sensitive, that's all. And, hey, if you can't grumble about a game being slow, you grumble about it being too fast! But I want to hear more opinions and I'm sure you do too.

Dennis Herrmann,
Bochum, Germany

Sorry, Dennis, but we thought our review of Rebel Assault *was right on the money. In our opinion, it's yet another example of the 'thunder and lightning' syndrome – all very loud and flashy, but ultimately rather lacking in substance. We didn't review it as a flight sim and fully recognized that it was designed as a simple blaster. It's just that as a shoot-'em-up we felt it was sluggish, the controls lacked finesse and the whole thing didn't hang together very well. Is it the shape of CD games to come? We hope not and will continue to criticize games like it.*

Should have gone too...

Dear Gary,

For some time now I've been in that shall I or shan't I zone of whether to go all out for a PC or an affordable 1200 Amiga system. I came across Amanda Connolly's letter in issue 3 of *PC Gamer* regarding interest free credit. I, like her, do not carry gold bullion in my jeans pockets, but I can happily tell her, and anyone else who wants a PC and doesn't have a loose grand lying about, that there is a way of getting one.

Those nice people at Radio Rentals offer an Olivetti PC and an optional bubble jet printer for purchase (this PC, I'm told, is top-of-the-range stuff, 486DX, 33 Mhz, VGA screen...) for as little as £39 a month, minus insurance.

Now I know there are arguments about getting things on credit, but the joy is while you're paying for it you can always get it replaced should it develop a fault. And by making it affordable at under £40 a month it opens up the PC to those who can only dream of getting one and make do with an Amiga 1200 system.

Finally, may I offer my congratulations on a superb magazine. After ploughing through endless magazines on games it was good to come across one that is informative, unbiased, interesting *and* witty – The Sun it isn't! The first game I bought for my system was *The Eye Of The Beholder* and it's totally *bitchin'!* Does that mean I can apply for the staff writer post now?

Chris Hannant,
Poole, Dorset

You don't happen to work for Radio Rentals by any chance do you, Chris? There really is no easy way to buy a PC. It's going to be a huge chunk out of your bank balance whatever way you pay. Quality has its price, after all. As I understand it, under the Radio Rentals scheme you pay £39.99 for 36 months and then the PC is yours. But bear in mind that's charging 24.9% APR and works out at over £1,400 for the PC in the long run. Service, repairs and replacement are included, but that's still quite a commitment. It's one way to buy a PC, true enough, but like any rental or credit scheme you should take a careful look at your own finances before diving in. Caveat emptor, as they said in ancient Rome.

Things can only get (even) better

Dear Gary,

Congratulations on your first issue as Editor of *PC Gamer. PCG* 3 was just as brilliant as the previous issues. However, here are a few pointers to make it even better.

1. Please remove the "At last! From the..." at the top of each issue. All it serves to do is reduce the overall size of the front cover.

2. Please include demos of more than one game on the coverdisk. Not all people are interested in the same thing. The first issue had the best coverdisks, with each one having two or three programs. Why do you say that Public Domain software "isn't worth the hassle or bother" (coverdisk pages) when some of the best software is PD or Shareware (e.g: *Doom)?*

3. Why did the *Frontier* tips not tell you anything useful? How about telling us how to get hold of higher class military hyperdrives? And I would like to have known what benefits there are from progressing up the military ranks. Also, why was the *Frontier* cheat not shown for people who didn't know what it was? In case you didn't know yourself, trying to sell your ship with passengers on board is not allowed, but you still get the money as if you sold it. The cheat has appeared in *Amiga Power* and *PC Format* so why did *PC Gamer* leave it out. How about an intermediate/advanced guide next month as a follow up to the beginner's guide?

4. Please could you de-synchronise your release date from that of *PC Format's* because they both arrive on the same day and therefore I have no games magazines to read for three weeks at a time.

5. Please could you be a little stricter with your ratings? A lot of your games are scoring over 85%. This may be just because there are a lot of good games around at the moment, but please remember that 50% is an average mark.

Apart from all this, I think that *PC Gamer* is easily the best PC games magazine around – it certainly beats all the others out there (I refuse to buy *PC Zone...*).

Yours,

Gordon Johnston,
North Kelsey, Lincolnshire

Thanks for your comments – we do like to hear your opinions. As you will have already seen, the "At last! From the..." part of the cover has now been dropped to give you more information about what's in the issue. We'd love to have more games on our coverdisk each month, but it is quite an undertaking to acquire just one game as it is, and with issue one we had far more time than the usual month to bring everything together. Hope you like this issue's extra disk, though.

Our Frontier *tips were specifically intended as a beginner's guide to help people get into the game – it can be very intimidating to the uninitiated. As to more advanced tips, well, send them in and we'll print them. It's as easy as that. And speaking of printing, it's almost impossible for us to change our on-sale date to avoid clashing with* PC Format's, *because once a mag is running it can't be put back or brought forward a fortnight without spending serious money or forcing the staff to work 24 hours a day for a month (which none of us would be too keen on).*

Finally, our reviews policy. It's set out in our Reviews Intro page – 50%-59% is an average game, 60%-69% a reasonable one, but not without its flaws. Our ratings are strict and our reviews are written by some of the 'hardest' video games journalists in the business, like Gary Penn and Stuart Campbell. Games that score highly are genuinely exceptional.

In glorious SVGAvision!

Dear *PC Gamer,*

After buying *Flight Sim 5.0* with its glorious SVGA graphics, I'd like to ask software houses why they are not writing more games in this format. Okay, graphics aren't everything, but compared to VGA there's no comparison. No other machine offers this level of graphics quality – just compare *Links* to *Links 386 Pro* and you'll see what I mean. With the advent of CD-ROM surely even games that have motionless backdrops (*Monkey Island,* for example) could easily be rendered in SVGA?

Yours,

Karl Robinson,
Milton Keynes

There are several reasons why SVGA graphics aren't more common. First, it's a real headache for programmers to ensure compatibility with the hundreds of different cards available. Second, manipulating SVGA graphics is a very slow business – even a 640 by 400 screen has four times as many pixels to move as a standard VGA screen. The PC therefore has four times as much work to do, which obviously means everything's that much slower.

However, as you've said, the advent of CD-ROM does mean that space is no longer such a concern, and there are few reasons why static backdrops can't use SVGA – although having backdrops that look better than the main graphics might not be such a good idea (they also involve a lot

Cables

more work). Nevertheless, it seems likely that we'll be seeing far more SVGA games in the future.

Cheaper than advertised

Dear Ed,

I was recently walking around town doing some shopping with my girlfriend when I saw a Virgin Games Store (not a Megastore). In a desperate attempt to escape going into yet another clothes shop, I made a feeble excuse about seeing what new games were out and went in. The first thing that caught my eye was *SimCity 2000,* which had only just been released. The second thing I noticed was the price. Instead of the by-now-to-be-expected £40 price tag, it was on sale for a paltry £27. "Bloomy," I thought. "Something must be wrong with it." With this in mind I took a copy and went and asked an assistant what was going on.

He explained that the Virgin Games Stores had just been taken over by a company called Future Zone. It was Future Zone's policy to buy games that they thought were going to sell in bulk and then flog them off at cheap prices. However – and this is the bit that I found really annoying – if I wanted to buy the games at their reduced prices I would have to move fast. Apparently, a lot of other games retailers were angry with Future Zone for this 'stack it high, sell it cheap' policy, and have put pressure on Virgin to limit the period of the special sale. Indeed the future of the price policy is now in jeopardy, because of their actions.

I don't really intend to add to the great 'PC games prices – it's a bit unfair really' battle, but it does seem a shame that a high-street company is being penalised for delivering games at mail order prices, even if it is for a limited period, as a result of pressure applied by other retailers.

Finally, I just want to say that I'm not an employee of Future Zone or Virgin Games and never have been. I hope that Future Zone can continue its policy of selling new games at decent and reasonable prices, because in the end the winner is the average punter, like myself. (Needless to say, I bought the game.)

Yours faithfully,

Will Luxton,
London WC1

It's nice to see some discounting going on in the high-streets. With margins getting tighter now the console boom is waning, games stores are feeling the pinch and beginning to undercut each other. If things start to get really cut-throat, expect to see a few shop managers wearing concrete slippers and the odd torched gaff (Yes, we've seen The Underworld too).

Letter Of The Month!

Be afraid. Be very afraid...

Dear Gary,

Are we scared yet? Well, yes, we are actually. We're scared that 90% of CD-ROM games are going to be as bad as the ones on sale now. At the moment the novelty of (pseudo) FMV and enhanced sound are being used to compensate for an absence of gameplay. I hope this novelty wears off soon. I saw *Critical Path* at a recent computer show and, yes, it does look and sound impressive, but that's only because it's being done on a computer. If it were done on a video you wouldn't look twice, and you would have paid a lot less than 50 quid for the pleasure. The 'interaction' in games like this is negligible and it annoys me that many of the PC magazines on the shelves (and there are many of them these days) are rating them highly on purely audio-visual grounds. Thankfully, *PC Gamer* is not yet one of these.



I hope that the producers of such games will come to realise that the money wasted on these 'big budget small movies' would be better spent on developing original and entertaining software. Of course, they'd realise this soon enough if people didn't buy their CD titles. The again, people would be less likely to buy them if they weren't so over-hyped in the magazines. I have a CD-ROM drive and would dearly love to see a really great CD-based game, but when even the likes of LucasArts (who I hold in high esteem) turn out duffers like *Rebel Assault* it makes me wonder when (and if) that 'killer' game will ever appear.

CD-ROM doesn't have to be synonymous with FMV. I would be quite happy to see games on CD-ROM as unenhanced as floppy disk titles, as long as they're good. Games you can install from CD rather than from a dozen floppies (and run directly from the CD if speed is a problem), for instance. This is more convenient for players and cheaper for the publishers. If the game features enhanced audio then so much the better, but this isn't critical. I would like to see CD-ROM and 3.5 inch floppy versions of games next to each other on the shelves, just as 3.5 inch and 5.25 inch floppy versions were together a couple of years ago. CD-ROM as a replacement delivery medium is great (but not just for back catalogue stuff, please); CD-ROM as a platform for games sucks big time. I hope *PC Gamer* will not mark a CD game if it's not enhanced from the floppy version (at the same or a lower price, of course).

And while I'm here, let's not kid ourselves about CD-ROM and piracy. CD-ROM isn't going to stop it, only reduce it in the short term. Eventually, recordable CD technology will be cheap enough to be a common feature on PCs. Such equipment is already within the price range of professional pirates. It's only a matter of time before the kids in the playground can do it.

PC Gamer is by far the best magazine for its platform, just as *Amiga Power* was a couple of years ago – witty without being juvenile, and using reviewers who aren't afraid to say, "This is crap." Nice layout too. I hope it stays this way. Don't tamper with the style. Don't mess with the content. Don't overrate CD-based games, but do tell us if CD versions are available or proposed.

Best wishes for the future, yours and ours.

Mike Welch,
Basildon

There's no doubt that CD-ROM is the 'in' format for PC software and I agree that many of the CD games that have appeared so far have fallen under the spell of the technology and lost sight of the game. If you take a look at our Top 50, starting on page 43, you'll see that Strike Commander *is the only CD title in there (it's also one of those enhanced upgrades that you didn't seem so keen on, Mike).*

It's certainly true that CD-ROM titles which use FMV look far less impressive than your average, low-budget, straight-to-video horror/sci-fi video. But the video games industry in general is chasing after CD-ROM as 'the next big thing' and every developer, of both hardware and software, is plunging into the new territory with gusto. With that much interest and investment, we can only hope that the production values of CD games, and, most importantly, the gameplay, will improve. As for your views on Rebel Assault, *well, read on...*

It's a different world over there...

Dear *PC Gamer,*

Greetings from across the pond. I just thought I'd write you a long, rambling note telling you that you have the best and most popular PC games magazine around here – provided the local store carries it, of course (the typical corner store only has American mags).

The main reason I like *PC Gamer* is the reviews section – and the fact that if a game isn't the best around you'll say so. I fear that the 'Americanized version' of *PC Gamer* you were referring to in the February issue will lose the (seemingly) unbiased viewpoint that's the great thing about your mag – American marketing people are very insistent! Just compare an American automobile magazine to a British one and you'll get an idea of how sanitised things are. Nothing negative is stated and you have to figure out from what hasn't been praised just what's wrong with a given item. I'll keep the original *PC Gamer* thanks. (Mind you, if you're hiring for the American edition, I'll send a CV.)

The rest of the mag is excellent as well, but I just can't relate to the Diagnostics and Emergency 911 sections. All you have as to do is put the question up on FIDO-net, INTERNET or a regional network and you can get all the help you need, occasionally from the game's developers! Then again, from what I've heard about the British telephone system, BBS-ing isn't quite the same as it is here (What, No Freenet? Freenet lives!), so I'll live with these sections. After all, you also have to live with absolutely ridiculous prices for your PCs and hardware.

One thing you might want to add to the mag, though, is some mention of technical problems. For instance, *IndyCar Racing* still doesn't support modem play properly, although the documentation with the game says it does – the patch will be available "any day now" on Papyrus' BBS. This section could also cover old releases as well as new ones. There's a fix for *Falcon 3.0,* for example, that came out a couple of months ago which fixes a whole bunch of stuff. Although, I would be interested in problems with new games (i.e: the kind your advertisers don't want you to talk about), no doubt announcements of fixes for older games would interest some of your readers. Keep up the good work all.

Yours truly,

Craig Seko,
Ottawa, Canada

Have no fear, Craig. PC Gamer's *launch Editor Matt Bielby is heading up the team of the American edition and he's got no intention of turning out a sales brochure or bowing down to pressures imposed by advertisers. Sadly, the UK doesn't have the same BBS culture as you're used to, but conversely we do have a proportionally far bigger magazine market. That's why sections such as Diagnostics/Emergency 911 go down so well over here – without them your average gameplayer would be lost. As for a game update section, we'll bear it in mind.* PCG

Every month we send £50 of EA software to the sender of the most interesting letter, so what are you waiting for? This is your opportunity to rant, to rave, to praise, to say you love us (or loathe us), to revel in a moment of literary glory... The address for your missives, as always, is: Cables, *PC Gamer,* Future Publishing Ltd., 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.

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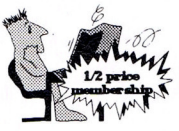

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PC GAMES OF ALL TIME

PC games come and go by the dozen every month, but some linger on our hard drives and in our memories longer than others. The PC has enjoyed more than its fair share of stunning releases over the years, but as technology advances and the software base increases, it becomes more difficult to sort the games that lay claim to greatness from those that actually achieve it – never mind placing them in any kind of order. So over the next 12 pages we present what we believe to be the definitive list of the best games ever to be released for the PC. Of course, the situation's ever changing, but for now, at least, these are, quite simply, the very best games you can own...

50 Unnecessary Roughness

Accolade £44.99

Date Released: February 1994

Recommended: 286



Not an American Football fan? Well, sadly you're missing out on one of the PC's best sports games. *Unnecessary Roughness* is a slickly-presented program, which blends the best from a number of older American Football titles. The wise bods at Accolade obviously decided to take inspiration from their rivals' successes – and in the process turned out the best gridiron bash on the PC. All the complexity which can stifle an American Football game is here, but so too is an extremely playable game that puts both your tactical brain and arcade skills to the test. Every NFL team and player is accurately modelled on the real thing and pictures of all the players are included. There are huge playbooks for both offence and defence, which you can customize totally. The presentation's superb – complete with ball-by-ball commentary and a very flexible camera system – but the gameplay's the real star. Down at the line of scrimmage the game 'feels' like the real thing. For fans and non-fans alike, there's no better American Football game on the PC.

49 Shadowcaster

Electronic Arts £44.99

Date Released: October 1993

Recommended: 486



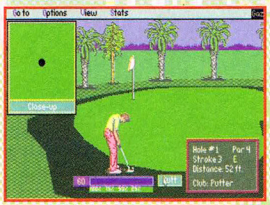
There's a welcome trend in the PC games market at the moment to make games easier to use and play. The software companies have at last realised what any gameplayer could have told them a long time ago – that awkward control systems and confusing statistics hamper gameplay, not improve it. One game type in particular has come under criticism for this: the RPG. Inheriting a large amount of complex statistics and numbers from its paper and pencil ancestry, the RPG often boasts confusing control systems which require a lot of effort to learn. The response to this has been a move towards simplicity and intuitive control systems, the most extreme example of which is *Shadowcaster*. Something of a cross between an RPG and a shoot-'em-up in the *Wolfenstein* (No.34) mode, *Shadowcaster* is an admirable attempt to show that RPGs don't have to be the boring, complex and number-heavy. It's easy to play, has some neat ideas and sports some great 3D. Maybe not the future of RPGs, but who cares? This is a fantastic game in its own right.

48 PGA Tour Golf Plus

Electronic Arts £34.99

Date Released: June 1989

Recommended: 386



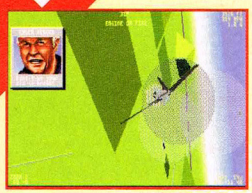
No doubt this will be a rather controversial choice – it's the only golfing game in our Top 50, after all, and there will always be those who prefer the likes of MicroProse *Golf* and the *Links* series – but *PGA* earns its place by being the most accessible and playable golf sim of the lot. Sure, there are games that offer more realistic representations, but do you really want to get bogged down in such fiddly technicalities as the angle of the clubhead and your feet positioning? Far more enjoyable is the *PGA* approach, which offers the illusion of realism without forcing you to learn reams of intricate (and irrelevant) details. Wind, club selection and the pitfalls of the course itself are all you need to worry about here, and since the swing-o-meter is so instinctive, you can concentrate on your game without having to battle against an overly complicated interface. It may be old, but games as good as this deserve a look-in even ten years down the line...

47 Chuck Yeager's Air Combat

EA/The Hit Squad £34.99

Date Released: June 1991

Recommended: 386



In these days of Gouraud shading and texture-mapped polygons, all too often the gameplay ends up a poor second to the technology. *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat* is the complete opposite. Featuring over 20 aircraft, past and present, this is a game that enables you to make virtually any silly duelling combination you can think of. It's simple to get into, immensely playable and, most of all, fun. It's not a game that pushes the PC to its limits, the graphics are dated and the computer opponents nowhere near as good as those in *Evasive Action* (No.12). But it's not meant as a serious challenge to the likes of *TFX* (No.26) or *Strike Commander* – it just offers the perfect hour or two of dogfighting. You don't need a powerful PC either.

46 A-Train

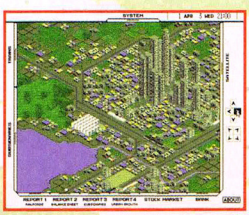
Ocean/The Hit Squad £19.99

Date Released: February 1994

Recommended: 286

Trainspotters will certainly get their kicks from this railway management game, but don't think it's just a computerized Hornby set-up. *A-Train's* a lot more than that. You get to control the planning and running of a railway company – laying new tracks, buying trains, planning timetables (and so on). As in the *SimCity* games, you're working with a few basic building blocks – tracks, stations, freight and passenger trains – but by using these you have to suss out how best to serve the community, make a profit and build up your business (you won't be surprised to learn that *A-Train* was originally a Maxis title). Once you've got a fairly stable railway set-up, you can expand into other areas by buying commercial property – and even playing on the stock exchange. *A-Train* uses the same kind of isometric graphics as *SimCity 2000* (No.1), but even if it pales next to Maxis' latest effort, it's still head and shoulders above all other business/city simulations.

Fascinating, absorbing and now quite cheap, *A-Train* is worth a place in any games collection – and don't be put off by the subject matter. It's brilliant fun.



My All-Time Favourite PC Game...

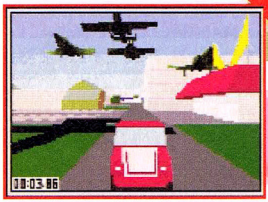
"Leaderboard – I remember the best thing about it was when we first got it and me and Chris were playing it, we couldn't work out which way the snap was going because we were really smashed"

Jon Hare,
Sensible Software

45 Stunt Island

Infogrames/Disney £39.99

Date Released: June 1993
Recommended: 486



If originality were the only criteria we used to evaluate games, Disney's *Stunt Island* would be the undisputed Number One in this Top 50. It's clearly the most inventive use of the flight simulator game style since computerised planes first took to the air. You become a virtual movie director on the Stunt Island of the title, storyboarding and shooting elaborate big-budget action scenes for a fictitious movie studio. Because every variable is user-definable – locations, objects, actions and so on – it's possible to create just about anything, from a stunning car chase through a big city to a fleet of attack helicopters taking on an alien invader. All you need is patience – and a little imagination. As in real movie-making, hours of meticulous planning and effort go into creating just a few moments of final footage, but the end results are well worth it. After flying your dangerous stunts, you can edit the raw footage and then save out the final movie and play it to audiences in the screening room. A great little package, but as with many 'games' of this type, its rewards are only visible if you're willing to invest time and effort. We strongly recommend you do just that.

44 D/Generation

Mindscape £19.99

Date Released: March 1992
Recommended: 386

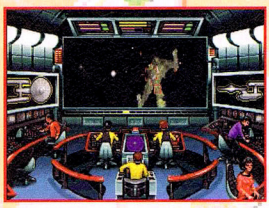


Originality seems to count for little with developers these days – which is why it's always great to see something like *D/Generation*, a type of game we don't often see on PC at all, let alone done properly. It's an isometric arcade adventure whose style harks back to the heady days of the 8-bit Ultimate games, but with the emphasis placed much more firmly on quick reactions and coronary-inducing shocks. Set in the near future, it casts you as a parcel delivery boy trapped inside the high-rise HQ of a scientific research company. Deadly genetically-engineered creations, Neogens, have escaped from their lab and are on the rampage. Much of the gameplay revolves around exploration – finding objects and clues which lead you to the mysterious Doctor Derrida – but your quest is constantly punctuated by arcade scenes where you come into contact with a Neogen and suddenly find yourself fighting for survival. The game's originality is based not just in the overall concept, but in the plethora of minor touches, such as the shapeshifting Neogens, who disguise themselves as innocent office workers on later levels, and no end of complex security mechanisms. The best game of its type on the PC.

43 Star Trek: Judgment Rites

Interplay £44.99

Date Released: December 1993
Recommended: 386



There will, of course, always be those who are only too glad to pooh-pooh anything associated with the original Star Trek TV series – but anyone who's ever enjoyed the adventures of Kirk (et al) will love this, probably the only game to faithfully capture the unmistakable mood of the series. Like its flawed prequel, *Star Trek: 25th Anniversary*, this is a weird hybrid of space combat action and graphical adventure, but the plot and game mechanics have been markedly improved, making for a game that is as satisfying as it is authentic. Instead of a feature-length single quest, you work your way through several TV-style episodes, each with its own storyline, and it works superbly. Everything here is as it should be, from the characters to the logical puzzles and appropriate musical score. Previous Star Trek titles failed miserably, but this one shows how well it can be done when the designers treat the subject with the respect it deserves.

42 Wizkid

Ocean/The Hit Squad £12.99

Date Released: February 1994
Recommended: 386

From Sensible Software, one of the few pop-star development teams to actually deserve all the adulation they receive, *Wizkid* is a game that's tremendous fun to play – but it's always difficult to explain why. It's anyone's guess what PC gamers made of this when it first appeared, since arcade games were a bit of a mystery to the machine, let alone one as eccentric and unusual as this. Split into two interweaving sections of arcade baddy-bashing and a series of mini puzzle-solving exercises, *Wizkid* is about as odd as they come. You play a disembodied head which looks like a split pea with eyes, and just about every other character and object you encounter is as weird – giant flying bags of peanuts, a dog reading the paper on the toilet... There's a great amount of lavatorial humour if you're willing to plumb the depths. The point is that *Wizkid* twists an innovative and playable arcade game with an exceedingly warped sense of humour in a way that only Sensible know how. It's a rare gem that deserves a place in everyone's collection, if only because it's totally unique.



My All-Time Favourite PC Game...

***"I don't play that many games on the PC, but I'd have to say my all-time fave was* Lemmings, *and the latest* Doom"**

Jez San, Argonaut Software

41 NHL Hockey

Electronic Arts £44.99

Date Released: September 1993
Recommended: 386



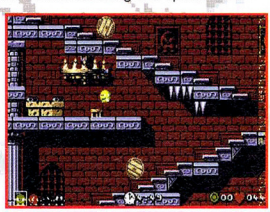
Ice hockey's such a minority sport in the UK it's a wonder this game ever got released over here. Luckily, EA knew they had a particularly fine title on their hands. The action is certainly fast-moving, with players careering down at high speed, firing shots and shoving each other into the barriers with aplomb. It's rough and tumble stuff, with matches consisting in the main of frantic scrambles from goal to goal and a few swift passes. The game creates a great feeling of being on the ice – your players are constantly on the move and it takes time to learn to control them well. Stick at it, though, and *NHL Hockey* works its magic. Pretty soon you'll be an ice hockey junkie, developing some nifty scoring techniques and learning how to foul without being reprimanded. If it's realism you value then *NHL* has it all – you'll find every one of the 24 NHL teams in here, along with over 500 players. One of the most enjoyable PC sports sim to date – and a game that's not just technically impressive, but damn playable too.

40 Fury Of The Furries

Mindscape £34.99

Date Released: November 1993
Recommended: 386SX

Platform games have a particularly bad reputation on the PC, primarily because the machine always has problems with scrolling and sprite movement. But French developers Kalisto recently proved that, when it comes to levels 'n' ladders laughs, Sega and Nintendo kids needn't have all the fun. *Fury Of The Furries* isn't just a good platform game, you see – it's a cerebral puzzler that'll have PC owners across the country scratching their heads in frustration. Players control a cutesy furball, with a mischievous grin and little hands and feet, who must make his way across 90 scrolling levels packed with perilous pitfalls. Good timing and dexterity are the order of the day, but so is a bit of thought to make best use of your furry friend's limited ability to change colour and pick up special powers (like swim underwater, spit fireballs, cast out ropes etc.). You can only complete many of the levels if you use your powers properly, so there's more to this than manic *Mario*-style brick-bashing and enemy avoiding. Complete with sumptuous presentation and rarely-seen console-style graphics that move like a dream, *Fury Of The Furries* is a must for anyone with a huge arcade appetite.



39 Ultima VII (Parts 1 & 2)

EA £39.99 (part 1), £44.99 (part 2)

Date Released: December 1992 (1), March 1993 (2)
Recommended: 386

The *Ultima* games easily form the most successful series in the history of computer entertainment, and have turned their creator, Richard Garriott, into one of the richest men in the industry and a minor celebrity to boot. It's fair enough. The two games that together form *Ultima VII* show exactly why the series has earned so much critical acclaim. Absolutely enormous – we are talking *months* of play here – with complex, absorbing and involving multiple sub-plots and storylines. Garriott's commitment to creating a complete fantasy world has been fully realised here. You once more take on the role of the Avatar, a hero from our world who is called to *Ultima's* Brittannia in times of crisis, and, accompanied by his traditional team of friends, must travel to previously unexplored lands in his quest to defeat the evil Guardian. As an RPG in the classical mould, there's little to criticise about *Ultima VII*, save that its sheer size almost works against it. It may not set the world alight technologically, but for sheer volume of gameplay, there are few games that can match it.

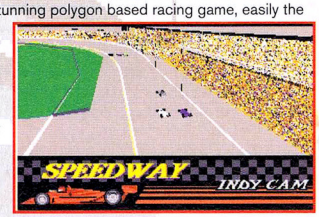


38 Indianapolis 500

EA/The Hit Squad £14.99

Date Released: December 1989
Recommended: 386

It's not difficult to understand the fuss *Indianapolis 500* created when it appeared – the first truly stunning polygon based racing game, easily the most realistic driving sim at that time and probably the fastest too. And all this gleaned from a single race around an oval track. But why? *Indy 500* was simply great fun – an elementary yet accurate Indianapolis circuit, complete with big corners and 32 other cars vying, like you, for those top positions. Despite having all the detail you'd expect in a top notch driving sim, *Indy 500* manages to provide more than enough excitement. Whether you're trying to dodge a pile-up in the pit lane or attempting to squeeze by another car at the top of the banked roadway, *Indy 500* gets the adrenaline rushing in a way few other games can match. Okay, the one circuit isn't that inspiring and it's not as amazing as *IndyCar* (No. 9) or *Formula One* (No.29), but what about those dramatic crashes and the gratuitous action replays? Pure racing action at its best.



37 Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker

Virgin: £29.99

Date Released: January 1993
Recommended: 386



Previously known for his fast-action blasters and beat-'em-ups, Archer Maclean's departure into the world of the green baize was as successful as it was unexpected. The trouble with games like this has always been that the balls simply don't move as they should, but Archer got around this problem by painstakingly recreating the physical dynamics of a real snooker table using lots of clever sums. The result is a virtual snooker table that not only looks incredibly realistic, but which you can view and play from any angle, thanks to the brilliant 3D. Most importantly, it plays like the real thing. The controls aren't difficult either, thanks to instinctive power and swerve controls that allow for stun, screw... just about any kind of shot. There's a library of worthy computer opponents and a great trick shot editor too. Brilliant stuff.

36 Strike Commander CD

Electronic Arts £49.99

Date Released: January 1994
Recommended: 486DX

Despite the hype surrounding the original game, Origin's long-awaited *Strike Commander* didn't live up to expectations – although it was still a major breakthrough, technologically speaking (the graphics have had a great influence on 3D games since). It's not as if it's a bad game – it was just that it wasn't quite the marvel we were all expecting. The CD version, however, redresses some of the balance. Combining the original game, the Speech Accessory Pack and the Tactical Operations add-on disk in a much more convenient format has produced the game as it should have been in the first place, and given us one of the best CD titles so far. The graphics are still amazing, and the strategy element (choosing which missions your mercenary outfit should take and trying to balance your funds) manages to turn a straight flight sim into something a little more interesting. If you've got a powerful enough machine, it's one of the most impressive combat sims available.



My All-Time Favourite PC Game...

"The Secret Of Monkey Island *was good – and I did like that Microsoft arcade games pack. I played* Missile Command *a lot on that. They were so close to the original they even had the bugs!"*

Archer Maclean, programmer

35 The Secret Of Monkey Island

US Gold/Kixx XL £16.99

Date Released: October 1990
Recommended: 386



When it was released, *The Secret Of Monkey Island* showed the world what graphic adventures could, and would, be like in the future – but the amazing thing is, three and a half years later it's still near the top of the pile. Since *Monkey Island* showed that humour *was* possible in computer games (unlike the *Leisure Suit Larry* series), every other adventure developer has cottoned on in a big way, making similar attempts at humour for themselves. Most have, and continue to, fail, but the increased interest from public and publishers alike has meant that the genre owes a tremendous debt of gratitude to this little tale of a young boy with big dreams of becoming a swashbuckling pirate. But it's for more than just historical reasons that the game earns a Top 50 place – despite its age and crude-by-comparison EGA graphics, *Monkey Island* holds its own admirably, and is still a better adventure, with more stories and puzzles per pound than most others in the market today. The word 'classic' has rarely been better deserved.

34 Wolfenstein 3D

id Software Shareware

Date Released : January 1993
Recommended : 386

Blood, guts, violence, enormous exit wounds – this is what we want from a game. A huge gun wouldn't go amiss either. And, of course, some repugnant Nazi villains. They help soothe the conscience of any gun-toting '90s man. Yes, *Wolfenstein's* unadulterated violence is just the thing to spice up any PC. It's a simple 3D shoot-'em-up with no pretensions to be anything more.



And even if *Doom* has cut it into small pieces (with a chainsaw no less), it's still great fun to play. You play a tooled-up American super soldier who has to take out the entire Third Reich single-handedly. Or so it seems. Levels are basic, and most of the time you sneak about the place opening doors and wasting everyone in sight. Complexity isn't *Wolfenstein's* strong point, but there's a fair bit of tactical thought required if you want to make it past the early levels. Hidden rooms conceal vital medical supplies and, more importantly, some vicious hardware. Unfortunately, finding the right objects isn't easy when the Nazi zombies are bearing down on you ten to the dozen. Nasty, brutish but great fun, *Wolfenstein* is a blast.

33 Star control II

Accolade £39.99

Date Released: December 1992
Recommended: 386

If ever a game deserved an award for being underrated, it's *Star Control II*. Little-noticed when first released, it's gained something of a cult following among those lucky enough to have played it. Effectively, it's two games in one – a one-player space exploration and strategy romp (involving diplomacy, puzzle-solving and trading) and a space battler set in a galaxy dominated by the evil Ur-Quan. And it's the two-player space combat section, using the same system as the main game, which earns *Star Control II* its Top 50 rating. You can choose from any one of the 40-odd ships, each of which has different capabilities, and then engage in thrilling combat with the PC or another player. All the ships are rated by a points system, thus enabling two of you to design armadas of equivalent power. Until *Evasive Action* (No.12) came along, this was by far the best two-player game on the PC, but even now it's still a close second. In fact, *Star Control II* is worth buying just for the head-to-head mode alone it's so playable.

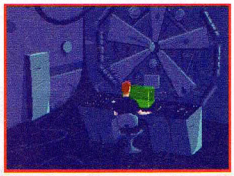


32 Another World

US Gold/Kixx XL £14.99

Date Released: April 1992
Recommended: 386

Eric Chahi is the man behind this miracle. Here's a platform game that isn't some slapdash tie-in or a hopelessly misguided 'original' game. Superb animation, evocative graphics and an outlandish storyline combine to give *Another World* a feel unlike any other platformer. Although the sequel, *Flashback* (No.17), has since surpassed it, the game remains exceedingly playable. You play scientist Lester Knight Chaykin, a guy who's screwed up an experiment and been blasted into, well, 'another world.' Pedants would call the title a simple multi-stage platformer, but every level is different and the whole package is very well designed. The main game is incredibly slick, and features a mixture of puzzles and arcade sections. Cinematic effects pepper the game with close-ups, zooms and point-of-view shots that break up the action. There's also a strong central story – as well as a set way to complete each level so the game plays more like an arcade adventure than a typical platformer. Music and sound combine with the peculiar yet attractive graphics to make a unique title that's enthralling, challenging, sometimes very frustrating, but always a great pleasure, to play.



31 Alone In The Dark

Infogrames £44.99

Date Released: November 1992
Recommended: 386



French games have a reputation for being quirky, strange and often downright bizarre. Just why this should be so is unclear. Is it some aspect of French culture that only becomes apparent in games design? Or possibly an inherent character trait of the French? Whatever the reason, this weirdness has produced a high number of original ideas, and many have also been very good games. One of the best, and certainly one of the most original, is *Alone In The Dark*. Using a unique blend of polygons for the characters and two-dimensional bitmaps for the backdrops, Infogrames create a strange and darkly atmospheric title, complete with cinematic camera angles and close-up shots. As a private investigator on a case, you are trapped in a spooky mansion and drawn into a nightmare world of the supernatural. Despite the somewhat quirky control method and criticisms about its lack of size and difficulty, *Alone In The Dark* remains a classic title.

My All-Time Favourite PC Game...

"Wing Commander, *although it'll be interesting to see how I remember* Doom *in a couple of years – there's something about taking out the Powers of Hell with a shotgun that makes me laugh"*

Terry Pratchett, author

30 Speedball 2

US Gold £9.99

Date Released: Winter 1991
Recommended: 386

If you've ever wanted to be Jonathan E from out of Rollerball then *Speedball 2* is for you. Futuresports are usually rather bland and uninvolving – not so *Speedball 2*, which is a totally convincing and very stylish game (the Bitmap Brothers' best, in fact). It's a no-holds barred nine-on-nine team sport that plays like a cross between football and homicide. Fortunately, the mechanics are basic enough to let you get on with it – mainly assaulting other players and storming across the stainless steel arena towards the opponent's goalmouth. Rules are kept to a minimum, so games are always a violent, fast flowing free-for-all. Get used to the basic techniques and you can go for some of the many inventive bonuses and power-ups that litter the arena. Management and training sections flesh out the action and give you the chance to build a squad powerful enough to win promotion and challenge for the title. *Speedball 2* is also a fabulous two-player experience – have a tube of Savlon ready for your blistered trigger finger. To top it all, the whole package is wrapped up neatly in some gorgeous bas-relief visuals and boasts a pumping soundtrack, showing just what The Bitmaps are capable of when at their peak.

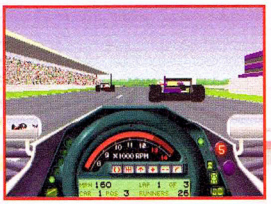


29 Formula One Grand Prix

MicroProse £44.99

Date Released: December 1992
Recommended: 486

Geoff Crammond is one of the few surviving programmers who likes to do everything himself. The high quality of his work bears out this philosophy – with *Revs* on the Commodore 64 and *Stunt Car Racer* on the Amiga clearly demonstrating he knows a thing or two about racing games. But *Formula One Grand Prix* – a game which set new standards for speed and realism when it was first released – is easily his masterpiece to date. An accurate simulation, painstakingly modelled on the real thing, the game can be tweaked and adjusted to play as tough or as easy as you like. The cars handle well too, sliding into corners and powering out of them as you jockey for position with your championship rivals. Realism and accuracy don't usually leap into bed with playability, but *Formula One Grand Prix* has plenty of dynamic racing thrills. Get in the driving seat, tear down the finishing straight and the only thing you'll miss is Murray Walker. Despite the superior *IndyCar Racing* (No.9), this is still well worth having in your games collection.



28 Ultima Underworld

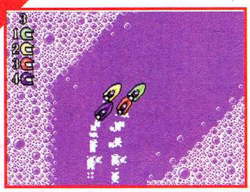
Electronic Arts £39.99

Date Released: December 1992
Recommended: 386 or higher

Origin's tour de force, the most influential RPG since *Dungeon Master*, turned the RPG field on its head when it was originally released and, along with its even more impressive successor, continues to be the bane of rival RPG developers everywhere. It's a single character, first-person perspective game, using a 3D engine nothing short of revolutionary at the time – and which is still amazing today. Realistic movement in all directions, the ability to look up and down – you can even fly with the help of certain spells. What's more, all this is achieved with an intuitive interface that's incredibly simple to use. But the game is far from just a technical marvel – it combines superb atmosphere with a very realistic, self-contained world, complete with a captivating story. Combine all this with the huge levels, deadly monsters, clever puzzles, nasty traps and unique characters, and you've got one of the best RPGs ever, second only to its amazing sequel.



27



Micro Machines

Codemasters £29.99

Date Released: February 1994
Recommended: 386 or higher

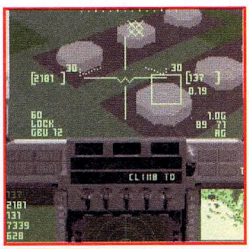
Driving games fall into one of two categories. There are the 'driver's-eye-view' types – *IndyCar Racing* (No.9) and *Formula One Grand Prix* (No. 29), for example, which the PC is the undisputed king of – and then there are the *Super Sprint* 'tiny cars on a big track' types. And the PC supports the best of these too in the small but perfectly formed *Micro Machines*. Race a tiny toy car (boat, tank or chopper) around giant-sized domestic tracks – pool tables, work benches, bath tubs, desks and so on – and marvel at how much fun it all is. Every vehicle has its own own distinct features and there's enough variety between races to keep you playing until you drop. As for the two-player game, well, it's *terrific*. Intensely competitive and frighteningly addictive. Who says the PC can't do arcade games?

26 TFX

Ocean £44.99

Date Released: November 1993
Recommended: 486

After the ill-fated *F-29 Retaliator* and *Epic*, both of which were wonderful to look at but severely knackered gameplay-wise, developers Digital Image Design finally came good last year with *TFX*, a game of modern air combat set against the topical background of a United Nations 'peace force.' In common with all of DID's games, it looks amazing, having some of the smoothest 3D around, a very impressive 'virtual cockpit' and the most effective sense of distance and height ever seen in a flight sim. Featuring three aircraft (the F-117A Stealth Fighter, the Eurofighter 2000 and the Lockheed F-22), a huge choice of weapons and a number of different scenarios around the world, *TFX* is easily varied enough to keep you happy for a long time. The only things that let it down are the poor documentation (another DID hallmark, sadly), the sometimes confusing mission structure that often leaves you unsure of the actual objectives, and a few omissions in the aircraft. Still, this is one of the best flight sims out on the PC and, with a bit of effort, a hugely playable game, especially for those interested in ultra-modern aircraft and weaponry.



My All-Time Favourite PC Game...

"The last PC game I played and liked was Minesweeper *on Windows. Since* Populous, *I don't think there's been anything that's strikingly new. I thought* Doom *wasn't up to much..."*

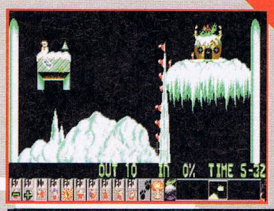
David Braben, programmer, *Elite II*

25 Lemmings

Psygnosis £39.99

Date Released: Winter 1990
Recommended: 286 or higher

Coming up with an original video game concept can be like trying to reinvent the wheel, but *Lemmings* is one of the few games that effectively did just that. Turning game design laws on their head by giving the on-screen 'heroes' a will of their own, rather than placing them under your direct control, *Lemmings* simply asks you to save a band of the eponymous rodents by guiding them safely across treacherous terrain to the exit. But you can't actually 'be' a Lemming. That'd be too easy. All you can do is make certain Lemmings perform specific actions, like stop, turn around, dig a tunnel, build a bridge, climb or whatever. It's staggeringly simple in theory, but the game rations the number of diggers, climbers and other talented Lemmings at your disposal, thus making each stage a more devious challenge. The Lemmings never stop walking, giving the game a relentless pace and forcing you to whip around the landscape at frantic place. The enormous number of levels keep you entertained and if you can't hack one you can still take great pleasure in 'nuking' all the Lemmings on-screen and hearing them cry "Oh no!" as they explode. A seminal title.

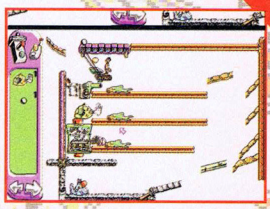


24 Sid & Al's Incredible Toons

Sierra £34.99

Date Released: January 1994
Recommended: 386

All it takes to turn a seemingly dull brain game into top entertainment is a dash of pazazz – as Sierra proved when they transformed their clever but rather staid *Incredible Machine* games into something everybody could get into by adding a cat, a mouse and a barrel-load of cartoon ker-raziness. The game itself remains the same – you build mechanical contraptions by placing pieces around a preset frame to achieve increasingly complex goals – but what previously may have looked dull and unrewarding is now made *fun* by the simple act of replacing every nut, bolt and character with a wacky cartoon creation and adding several coats of presentational gloss, Tex Avery-style. The simple act of selecting an options menu opens up realms of possibilities – every



23 Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space

Electronic Arts £49.99

Date Released: April 1993
Recommended: 386



On the face of it, educational games sound like a really good idea – what better way to impart information, after all? Sadly, they never seem to work. Perhaps the most telling evidence comes from the fact that the most successful piece of 'educational' software available for the PC isn't really intended to be 'educational' at all. *Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space* is a strategy cum management game that puts you in charge of the American or Soviet space program from 1957 to 1977, with the aim of attaining a manned lunar landing before the other side. Not only is it a superb strategy game in its own right, but, by using digitised footage from actual space missions and being as accurate as the game structure allows, it also gives you a real feeling for the stress and tension of the space race. In this way, you not only play a great strategy game, but almost accidentally gain a greater understanding of one of man's greatest achievements.

22 Lands Of Lore

Virgin £35.99

Date Released: December 1993
Recommended: 386

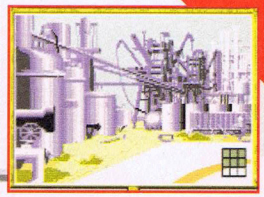
Ever since the two *Ultima Underworld* games (No.5 and No.28) hit the streets, RPGs on the PC have been thrown into some turmoil. The problem, quite simply, is that both games are so good – technically and in gameplay terms – that little else can compete. Using the simple square-based movement system that's been familiar to RPG fans ever since *Dungeon Master* and *Eye Of The Beholder*, and lacking a character generation system (to many, one of the essential parts in any RPG), *Lands Of Lore* wasn't off to a good start. But by concentrating on the storytelling and an involving plot, the game became one of the surprise hits of 1993, and is still one of the only RPGs to stand up against the *Ultima* series. It's not similar, by any means, but that's one of its strengths: it succeeds by being different. In addition, it's one of those rare titles that is simple to play (so perfect introductory fare for beginners), and yet challenging for veteran players.



21 Dune II

Sierra £39.99

Date Released: September 1993
Recommended: 386



Most licences are disappointing, so full credit to French developers Cryo for turning out a highly playable wargame that's surprisingly faithful to Frank Herbert's translation-unfriendly Dune novels. Wargames have a tendency to be dull, lethargic affairs, impenetrable to those not reared on hex-maps and die-cut counters. Not so *Dune II*. You choose to be one of the three warring factions on the planet Arrakis who are all hell-bent on wiping each other out and taking over the globe. You start off with a tiny spice refinery and a few troops, and then have to mine spice to raise funds so you can build your base and your army. Once your rival for the territory has got his own base sorted, you slug it out for ownership. The game's full of atmospheric sound effects – radio communications from your troops, for example – and, once you've got your base established, plays like a tactical wargame as you marshall your forces and look for a weak spot in the enemy's defences. A wargame for those who don't like wargames.

My All-Time Favourite PC Game...

"Doom *definitely. It's violent, it's clever, it's technically impressive and it's obviously designed by people who love games. The complexity is hidden beneath the surface"*

Mark Ramshaw, journalist

20 The Chessmaster 4000 Turbo

Mindscape £34.99

Date Released: December 1993
Recommended: 386 or higher



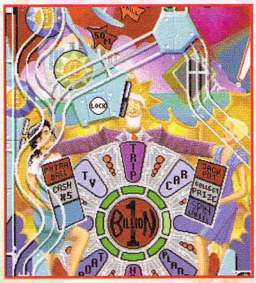
A chess game? In the Top 50? Well, why not? While anyone with an ounce of programming skill could knock out an okay chess title (the game design's been around for 2,000 years, after all), producing one that can challenge *all* levels of players and offer enough flexibility to keep you interested is a real achievement. The Software Toolworks have been producing the *Chessmaster* games for as long as anyone here can remember, but *4000 Turbo* is, for now at least, their best – not only does it offer computer opponents capable of beating just about every other chess program on the market, but the stunning options enable you to create computer opponents and customise their playing styles to provide whatever kind of challenge suits you. Add to that a brilliant tutorial mode that's perfect for all novice-to-average players and some gorgeous alternative board and piece designs (there's even a Salvador Dali-inspired board) and you've got a computer chess game that's got something for everyone.

19 Pinball Fantasies

21st Century £37.99

Date Released: February 1994
Recommended: 286 or higher

Not normally considered strong in the arcade department, the PC is at last beginning to display its feathers. This is best illustrated by the arrival of *Pinball Fantasies,* which proves that games consoles don't have the monopoly on smooth scrolling and speedy sprite manipulation. Even on a slow machine, *Pinball Fantasies* cuts a rug with the best of 'em, offering realistic ball movement, four exciting and varied tables, and plenty of user-friendly options. The most important thing to say is that playing *Pinball Fantasies* really feels like playing a real table – although advancements in the actual pintable world are so fast that it generally feels a little archaic compared to the latest video-mode, multiball extravaganzas in the arcades. But if Pinball's your thing, there's currently nothing on the PC (or any home system, for that matter) better than this, and the great thing about it is that, because it's pinball, you'll never really 'finish' it and get bored. There's always that elusive higher score to aim for. The developers are currently working on a third game, *Pinball Illusions,* which promises even more features, but in the meantime this'll do very nicely, thank you.

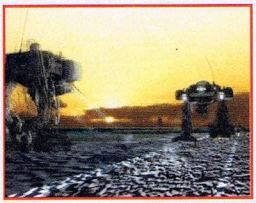


18 SubWar 2050

MicroProse £44.99

Date Released: January 1994
Recommended: 486

Ever since the critically acclaimed *Silent Service* back in the days when the Commodore 64 was the pre-eminent games machine, submarine simulations have been an integral part of sim life. Nowadays, of course, they're more detailed, with stunningly realistic representations of both underwater warfare *and* technology. *SubWar 2050,* on the other hand, makes something of a break from tradition. MicroProse, old hands at the simulation game, decided to drop the realism in favour of superb graphics and fast-paced gameplay. Set in a future where corporations fight over the rights to underwater mining and farming operations, you take on the role of a mercenary sub pilot, fighting in the new battleground of Earth's oceans. The game provides breathtaking 'computer-generated' views (justified by the futuristic scenario and all the sub technology that that implies) and there are all kinds of extra gameplay nuances too. While this may not be to the taste of traditionalists, *SubWar 2050* manages to wed the tension of underwater combat with an action-packed style similar to that in *X-Wing.* The result is a game that will appeal to almost everyone.



17 Flashback

US Gold £39.99

Date Released: July 1993
Recommended: 386



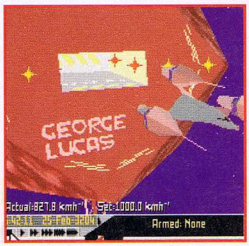
After *Another World,* great things were expected from Paris-based developers Delphine. They didn't disappoint – *Flashback* is definitely *the* best platform game on the PC. This is no simple arcade bash, though – the title successfully mixes graphic adventure conundrums with reflex-testing shoot-outs and enigmatic puzzles. The hackneyed story has you waking up with no memories of how you got where you are or even who you are, but, fortunately, everything's been put together with such panache you can't help but love it. Every time a significant event occurs the action cuts from the main platform view to cinematic close-up scenes that advance the storyline accordingly. It makes far better use of film-like presentation than many a so-called interactive movie – very stylish. Later puzzles are tough and you'll need to map the blighter to find your way around. Still, that doesn't matter because it's such a joy to play. Along with *Alone In The Dark 2* (No.7), *Flashback* proves that, when it comes to producing original, stylish and challenging games, there are few more adept than the French.

16 Frontier: Elite II

Gametek/Konami £39.99

Date Released: November 1993
Recommended: 386 or higher

The word 'classic' is much overused, but if any game deserves the adjective it's *Elite.* Arguably the most influential computer title ever, and years ahead of its time, David Braben and Ian Bell's creation was both a technical masterpiece and one of the first indications of the potential of computer games. Predictably enough, rumours about a planned sequel started almost as soon as the original BBC Micro version hit the streets, and continued for years afterwards. With the possibility of the biggest anticlimax in the history of gaming looming, it was just as well that the sequel turned out to be worth the wait in many ways. Easily the biggest game ever – it features the same open-ended design as the original – *Frontier* offers virtually unlimited gameplay. You can keep playing for as long as you like (which will probably be quite some time, given the game's addictiveness). The universe is yours to play in, and what you do is entirely up to you. Despite the poor presentation, *Frontier* is still a worthy successor to *Elite,* and another classic in its own right.



My All-Time Favourite PC Game...

"I love Syndicate, *although I hate it too because it's so hard. I also like* Laser Strike. *My all-time fave, though, has to be* Mechwarrior *by Activision"*

Phil South, journalist

15 Day Of The Tentacle

US Gold £42.99

Date Released: June 1993
Recommended: 386 or higher

The follow-up to LucasArts' first ever graphic adventure *Maniac Mansion* actually contains the entire 8-bit classic as a hidden game-within-a-game – just one of many thoughtful touches that lift *DOTT*, like most LucasArts adventures, head and shoulders above the competition. It's five years on and the hapless inventor Dr Fred Edison has inadvertently unleashed a mutant purple tentacle with megalomaniacal tendencies upon an unsuspecting world – and in true American movie tradition, it's up to three dippy college kids to save the day. You take control of bookworm Bernard, fat waster Hoagie and the seriously vacant Laverne at different stages during the story, which takes place mainly within the doctor's freakish mansion laboratory complex. A neat time travel twist has enabled the writers to come up with a story worthy of the Bill & Ted movies – in fact, the comparison extends into the lovably stupid lead characters, so Bill & Ted/Wayne's World fans will have a ball. The only problem (apart from experienced adventurers finding it a little short) is that a lot of the in-jokes have lost something in their journey across the pond. Still, a gilt-edged adventure worthy of all the acclaim it's received.



14 Tornado

Digital Integration £44.99

Date Released: June 1993
Recommended: 486

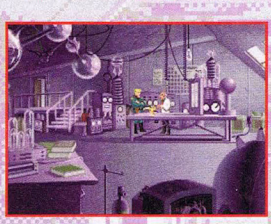
It may seem strange to some of you, considering the PC's reputation for flight sims, that not one has made it into our Top Ten. The reason is twofold – with the massive advances in games technology over the past 12 months, virtually anything over a year or so old has become hideously dated, and of the new generation of flight sims, every one has at least one major flaw. *Strike Commander* is too slow and jerky, for example, while *TFX* is confusing to get into and has some significant omissions (the lack of a cannon sight, for one). But while *Tornado* is admittedly overly complex, it still remains the best example of the genre. If you take the time to learn the game's many ins and outs, it's virtually flawless, as both an accurate simulation *and* a cracking good laugh. The simple vector graphics may not be technically breathtaking, but they move smoothly, and the emphasis on planning and strategy really lifts the gameplay well above the average – there's enough depth here to keep even the most ardent simmer happy for months. This level of long-term appeal and faultless attention to detail easily makes *Tornado* the best flight sim going at the moment.



13 Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis

Sierra £39.99

Date Released: December 1993
Recommended: VGA and 286



After scoring a major hit with their adventure adaptation of Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade, LucasArts went one better and wrote a completely new storyline for *The Fate Of Atlantis*. What we have here, then, is yet more whip-cracking, globe-trotting antics as Indy and his feisty love interest race against Hitler and his cronies in a quest for the fabled lost city of Atlantis. Remaining faithful to the Indy style throughout, LucasArts have constructed a story that begins innocently enough, but then quickly picks up pace as the plot unfolds and the characters are catapulted through a variety of lavish locations, unlocking the mysteries of ancient artefacts prior to the stunning, effects-laden climax. Every bit as complex and puzzle-led as any of LucasArts' other works, *Indy 4* is a sumptuous feast for adventure and Indy fans alike. It's so good you could almost think a film inspired it...

12 Evasive Action

Mindscape £34.99

Date Released: February 1994
Recommended: 386

There aren't many PC games that sport a simultaneous two-player mode. While this is no doubt partly a hardware problem – few PCs have two joystick ports – there's still been no real excuse for software companies to avoid the dual experience.Thank heavens, then, for *Evasive Action* – only a month or so old but already the best two-player title on the PC (and not bad in one-player mode either).

It's a dogfighting game, pure and simple, covering a century of aerial combat – you can fly aircraft from World War I, II, the present day – even spacecraft of the future. Author Glyn Williams removed the complexity usually associated with flight sims on the PC at a stroke, and optimised everything to make the game as playable – and as fun – as possible. It's a title where hotshot flying skills are all you need, not a good memory for complicated keyboard layouts. And with split-screen, serial link and modem options available it makes two-player gaming available to a whole new range of players. If that weren't enough, it has some of the best computer opponents you'll ever fly against too.



My All-Time Favourite PC Game...

"I suppose* SimCity 2000 *will become my best game. It's certainly the one I'm playing most just now. Either that or* Civilization. Premier Manager 2 *I quite like too"

Dominik Diamond, TV and radio presenter

11 Syndicate

EA £44.99



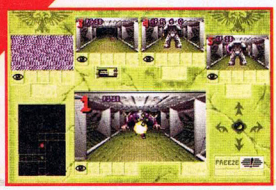
Date Released: June 1993
Recommended: 386 or higher

Grossly offensive behaviour always makes for a good computer game – and *Syndicate* milks the concept for all its worth. Wallow in wholesale destruction and slaughter innocent civilians as you attempt to seize control of a corporate world. The idea's simple: send in cyborg assassins, kill off (or recruit) your competitors – and gain vital territory in the process. Being a Bullfrog game, everything's on a grand scale (which is to be expected from the creators of *Populous* and *PowerMonger)*, with the whole game looking, feeling and playing like a nightmarish sci-fi movie. Your team has complete freedom to explore the city, steal or hijack cars, ride across town on the monorail (then blow it up) and even coerce passers-by into helping you (and stopping a few enemy bullets). As your syndicate grows more powerful, you can try to take over larger cities and fight in the streets with the cyborgs of rival syndicates, as well as the police. Very few titles provide an atmosphere as dark and seductive as the one in *Syndicate,* and it strikes just the right balance between strategy and arcade blasting. Fun for all the family.

10 Space Hulk

Electronic Arts £44.99

Date Released: June 1993
Recommended: 386, VGA



There are certain types of game that have a bad reputation among players and reviewers alike, and boardgame conversions are one of them. Mainly because most of them are of such appalling quality that they've come to be looked upon with very little enthusiasm and generally avoided. *Space Hulk*, however, is the exception that proves the rule. Based on the Games Workshop boardgame, it depicts an attempt by futuristic Space Marines to destroy hordes of vicious alien genestealers who are infesting a huge wrecked spacecraft, and succeeds for two main reasons. First, the original game itself provided excellent opportunities for computer adaptation. Second, the programmers avoided the temptation to produce the typical cop-out conversion, where the game is reproduced exactly and none of the potential of the new format is explored. Instead, *Space Hulk* keeps the same basic role-playing ideas and mechanics, but adapts them to make full use of the different platform.

"The tension created as you struggle against increasingly insurmountable odds is incredible"

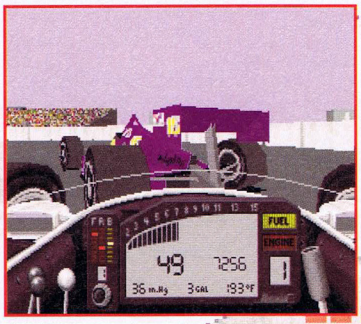
The boardgame used models on a tabletop, whereas the computer version provides you (or, more accurately, your marines) with a 3D first-person perspective view of the action, together with tactical maps of the area. Likewise, the original game used a turn system, whereas this runs in real time, giving you no time to relax. It's this thoughtful adaptation that makes *Space Hulk* one of the most challenging games available for the PC – the tension created as you struggle to keep your group alive against increasingly insurmountable odds is incredible. There's nothing in its field to match it – at least, not until the enhanced CD version arrives later this year...

9 IndyCar Racing

Virgin £44.99

Date Released: December 1993
Recommended: 486

No doubt about it, MicroProse's *Formula One Grand Prix* would have enjoyed a much higher Top 50 position had it not been for this recent arrival. Papyrus' sequel to their *Indianapolis 500* simulation (No.38) is clearly the best motorsports game on the PC, eclipsing Geoff Crammond's classic with an equally realistic racing model, backed up with terrific circuits, tremendous depth and the most realistic-looking texture-mapped visuals around. We could go on for ages about the incredible attention to mechanical detail, the amazing number of options, the player-friendly features and the loving presentation, but, ultimately, it's the splendidly speedy and solid 3D that brings it all to life. Quite simply, no other PC game recreates the wind-in-your-hair, seat-of-your-pants feeling of racing car driving like *IndyCar Racing*. The American basis of the simulation may leave a sour taste in the mouth for some, though, because Indy Car racing design allows drivers much less margin for error than Formula One. That aside, those looking for out-and-out racing thrills will find no more exciting game on the shelves today. Formidable – and well worth dipping into your pockets for.

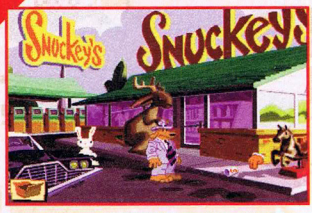


"Clearly the best motorsports game on the PC"

8 Sam & Max Hit The Road

US Gold £42.99

Date Released: November 1993
Recommended: 386



LucasArts has always had a reputation for producing consistently funny and playable adventures, but never more so than since the release of *Sam & Max Hit The Road*, their most critically acclaimed game yet. It's arguably also their bravest, making a departure from the company's familiar graphical and narrative styles to try something a little, well, 'different.' Based on the cult comicbook creations of Steve Purcell (who also co-designed the game), *Sam & Max* is like every surreal dream you've ever had all rolled into one, with the player in the role of Sam, a canine gumshoe detective whose assistant Max is a psychotic rabbit for whom anything is a great excuse for violence. The plot concerns a madcap chase across America to hunt down a Bigfoot who's run away from the local carnival – but that's only the beginning of a story that zips from coast to coast and situation to bizarre situation at almost breakneck speed. It's the fastest paced of all LucasArts' adventures and also the one that relies most heavily on the gags – almost every line of dialogue has a witty quip attached. Its consistently crazy world and humour (that often borders on the sick) may not make it to everybody's taste, but if you can laugh and think at the same time, there's not much around that can match *Sam & Max* for sheer entertainment.

"Like every surreal dream you've ever had all rolled into one"

7 Alone In The Dark 2

Infogrames £39.99

Date Released: January 1994
Recommended: 386, VGA

The PC games market seems to be a unique medium, in that sequels are regularly *better* than their forebears – *Alone In The Dark 2* is the first of three titles to make it into our Top Ten which is a significant improvement over its predecessor. If only Hollywood could manage to produce follow-ups of the same quality the film industry wouldn't be in such dire financial straits. Actually, the Hollywood analogy isn't a bad one because, unlike many CD games, with their poor quality video footage and linear gameplay, the *Alone In The Dark* titles are, in many ways, the nearest thing to an interactive movie so far. Combining complete control over your realistically animated character with moodily cinematic camera angles (close-ups, cut scenes and so on) and a well paced plot, both titles create an incredibly involving and film-like experience – and, yes, at times they really can be quite scary. *Alone In The Dark 2* also has all the hallmarks of a good film sequel – the same hero, a scenario similar enough to be familiar, but different enough to provide new situations, a neat twist to the story (halfway through you switch lead characters and become the little girl you're there to rescue) and even character development (the hero appears to have learned from his experiences in the first game). In addition, Infogrames have dealt with the two major criticisms levelled at the original title. *Alone In The Dark 2* is four times as big and much, much harder. But one word of warning – don't go all out for atmospheric effect and actually play it alone in the dark. It'll cost you a fortune in underwear.



"In many ways the nearest thing to an interactive movie so far"

Civilization For Windows

6

MicroProse £44.99

Date Released: January 1994
(Original version released December 1991)
Recommended: 386, VGA, Windows 3.1



Sid Meier is one of a number of game's programmers – David Braben, Richard Garriot, Al Lowe, Chris Roberts (among others) – who has become a minor celebrity as a direct result of the quality of his titles. After such classics as *Pirates!, Railroad Tycoon* and *F-15 Strike Eagle* (back in the days of the Commodore 64), the

"Widely regarded as the best strategy game ever – and justifiably so"

original *Civilization* was his crowning glory. Even three years on, it's still widely regarded as the best strategy game ever – and justifiably so. Few games are good enough to appeal to virtually anyone, regardless of their usual preferences, and fewer still are good enough to convert even ardent haters of the genre, but *Civilization* succeeded on both counts.

The idea is simple – take control of an emerging civilisation in the year 4000 BC and lead it to pre-eminence by either destroying any rival civilisations or by being the first to successfully colonise a new world. However, the sheer open-endedness of the thing – which gives you so many different ways to approach your task –makes it not only challenging but replayable too. And despite its apparent complexity, it's surprisingly easy to get into. This recently-released Windows version corrects the original's only major fault, replacing the rather dull EGA visuals with vastly improved hi-res graphics and sound.

Ultima Underworld II

5

Electronic Arts £39.99

Date Released: December 1993
Recommended : VGA and 286

Every now and then a game comes along that sets a new standard for a certain genre – a benchmark against which all subsequent games in the category are judged. Origin's *Ultima Underworld II* has been at the top of the RPG pile for over a year now, and nothing yet has seriously challenged it. "It's quite good, but it's not *Underworld II,* is it?" has become something



"The nearest you can get to virtual reality without a headset"

of a standard phrase in RPG reviews, and looks set to remain that way for some time to come – the only serious contenders for the title *(Stonekeep, Forgotten Castle,* etc..) having been delayed again and again.

Using the same first-person 3D perspective pioneered by the original *Underworld, Underworld II: Labyrinth Of Worlds* is better in every way. It's bigger and more complex, with far greater variety in the gameplay and much more character interaction. The plot is more involved and absorbing, and the graphics have been improved too. What's the same, though, is the superb atmosphere, which, combined with the amazing 3D engine, succeeds in creating a very 'real' world. This is the nearest you'll get to virtual reality without a headset. *Doom* may be faster, but it doesn't create quite the same feeling of space and reality that you get from *Underworld's* total swimming, jumping, flying, fighting and looking up 'n' down experience. *Ultima Underworld II* is the only RPG to make it into our Top Ten, and deservedly so. It's comfortably the best computer RPG yet.

Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge

4

US Gold £35.99

Date Released: December 1991
Recommended: VGA and 286

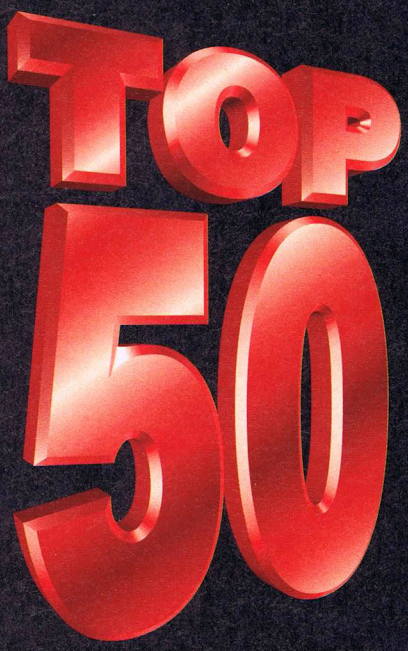
Regular readers of *PC Gamer* may find this high chart placing a little odd, as our review of *Sam & Max Hit The Road* in *PCG* 2 clearly stated that we thought this title to be the best graphic adventure around. However, after intense discussion, the collective favourite undoubtedly remained *Monkey Island 2.* All of LucasArts' recent adventures have been so consistently excellent it's difficult to separate them in qualitative terms, but if you think

"An entirely convincing and consistent self-contained fantasy world where anything can happen – and usually does"

about what makes this kind of game really work – an enticing story, intriguing puzzles and a proper sense of atmosphere – then there's little to touch *LeChuck's Revenge.* As with George Lucas and Star Wars, so with Ron Gilbert and the *Monkey Island* games, which created an entirely convincing and consistent self-contained fantasy world where anything could happen – and usually did. Swashbuckling pirates, buried treasure, ghosts, voodoo curses, exotic Caribbean locations – *Monkey Island 2's* got the lot, all wrapped up in a richly-plotted storyline liberally sprinkled with great characterisation and plenty of stylish gags. Like a good film, it's a



game with characters, jokes and situations that stay in fond memory long after you've finished playing. Anyone who claims to have an interest in adventuring cannot afford to be without this.



And Now, At Last,

The Final Top Three...

3 Doom

id *Shareware*

Date Released: December 1993
Recommended: 486



"The most impressive arcade game available on any system"

Although it's only been around for a couple of months, *Doom* has already done more to establish the PC's arcade clout than any other title in gaming history. The plot's a skimpy excuse for some good old-fashioned ultra-violence, which the program dishes up gleefully. Texture-mapped 3D games have been done many times before – especially on the PC – but *Doom* lifted them out of basic bungalow-style settings and brought in stairs, windows, balconies and cavernous rooms, generating a whole complex of very realistic buildings for you to tear around at your leisure. *Doom* outguns its immediate predecessor from id, the still impressive *Wolfenstein* (No.34), in every department. The 3D graphics are the best we've seen and give the game real atmosphere – everything moves smoothly and incredibly fast. And it all sounds great too – just listen to the noises the degenerate inhabitants make as you blow them to bits.



There are just so many good things in *Doom* – the way your vision is limited by dim lighting, the way you can look through windows and fences and see the rooms beyond in perspective, the way your view bobs gently up and down in time with your strides... It's all clever, stylish and lovely to look at. Then there are the weapons and the perversely satisfying impact wounds. Whether you're packing a chainsaw, a shotgun, a minigun or a plasma gun, you really want to get right up close to the enemy so you can see the pain! It's gruesome, true enough, but the game's not mindless by any means. On each level you have to hunt out the key cards to gain access to higher levels – not the most brain-stretching of tasks, but when you're racing about the complex peering through the gloom trying to pick out targets, things are intense enough already. The basic Shareware game is classy, but when you consider that when you register the game you get another *two* worlds (that's 24 levels in all) and a truly unbelievable multi-player game where you get to stalk each other over a PC network, it's hard to see how anyone could leave *Doom* out of their collection. Easily the best shoot-'em-up on the PC and, right now, the most impressive arcade game on any system.



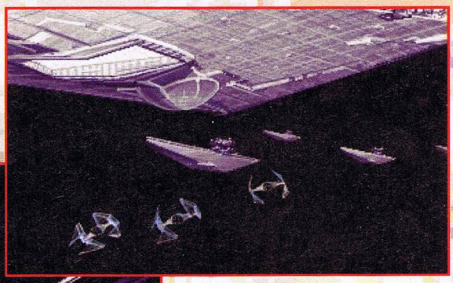
2 X-Wing

US Gold *£45.99*

Date Released: March 1993
Recommended: 386SX or higher

The idea's so simple it's almost perfect. Everybody loves Star Wars. PC owners love flight sims and LucasArts. So how about a Star Wars flight sim from LucasArts? Sounds almost too good to be true, doesn't it? Amazingly, *X-Wing* is every bit as good in reality as it sounds in theory, and even though it's not strictly a member of the genre, it's the game most often mentioned in response to the question: "What's your favourite flight sim?" – and rightly so. With *X-Wing*, LucasArts proved themselves capable of turning out more than just quality adventures. They drew a wealth of source material from their parent company to create a fully realised reconstruction of the unique Star Wars universe. Players train as Rebel pilots, then fly recreations of famous battles before taking on the might of the Galactic Empire in a series of ongoing campaigns. Fly X-Wings, A-Wings and Y-Wing fighters against TIE Fighters, Star Destroyers and a plethora of other Imperial craft as you strive to destroy the horrendously powerful starship – the Death Star. Although it doesn't look like much to start with (since it's in space there's no ground or sky to pretty things up, and ships are constructed from rudimentary polygons), there's much more to *X-Wing* than first meets the eye – it's by far the most action-packed and intense aerial combat game around, and the campaigns, flight recorder and career structure (you get promoted and win medals as you progress, as do your wingmen) make it as involving as any of the more conventional 'real life' flight sims. But most impressive of all is how the game achieves its primary objective – giving you the feeling that you really are in control of an X-Wing fighter. You can customise shield and laser settings for optimum performance in varying battle situations, for example, command your R2 unit to carry out repairs, communicate with other fighters in your group for formation attack plans... The whole thing just feels so, well, so *right*. It's the only game of its type that we constantly find ourselves coming back to, because it's a world you just don't want to leave. Ever.







"There's much more to X-Wing *than first meets the eye"*

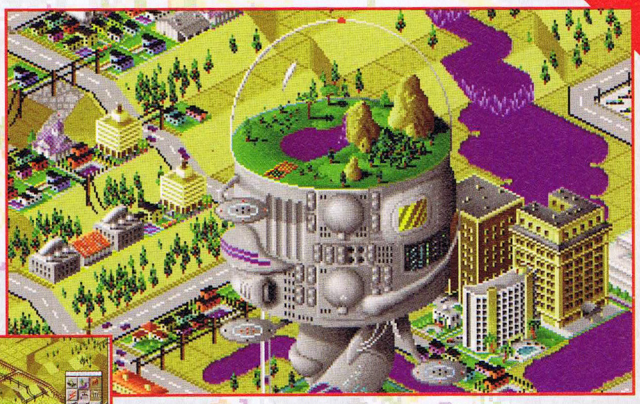
SimCity 2000

1

Maxis £39.99

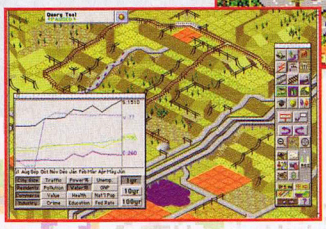
Date Released: February 1994

Recommended: 486



So this is it, then. King Of The Hill. Top Of The Heap. Number One.The Best PC Game Ever. Well, we said as much last month, so we can hardly recant so soon. But what makes us so sure? How can we confidently place a game that's only been on release for a couple of months above dozens of established titles? Is there such a thing as an instant classic? Probably not, but in a less than perfect world this is about the closest thing you'll get.

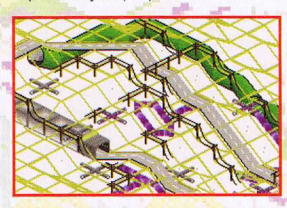
It's no doubt a controversial decision to shoot this straight in at Number One, and one we didn't take lightly – we did try to give this Top 50 some thought, you know – but while the office discussions frequently turned ugly as the likes of *X-Wing* and *Doom* made their bids for the top spot, one irrefutable argument quashed all dissent – that while the rest of the games in our Top 10 are genuine greats, they're all, to variable extents, a matter of taste. Some people hate *X-Wing*, others think *Alone In The Dark* too slow, and still others just don't like graphic adventures, so that's it for *Monkey Island 2*.



But *everybody* loves *SimCity 2000*.

Hey, don't ask us why. If we knew exactly what makes the game so universally attractive, we wouldn't be eking out a sad living as grubby games journalists – we'd be making a fortune as top software impresarios, having coconut oil rubbed into our backs by dusky maidens on some Caribbean beach (but that's another story). Without getting too bogged down in the psychology of it all, it's probably because *SimCity 2000* is unique in the task it sets the player. Just about every computer game ever devised revolves around violence or destruction of some sort – but like its more simplistic predecessor, *SimCity 2000* is an exercise in construction rather than demolition. The result is an immensely enjoyable experience that serves to remind you just how mentally satisfying it can be to actually create something from nothing.

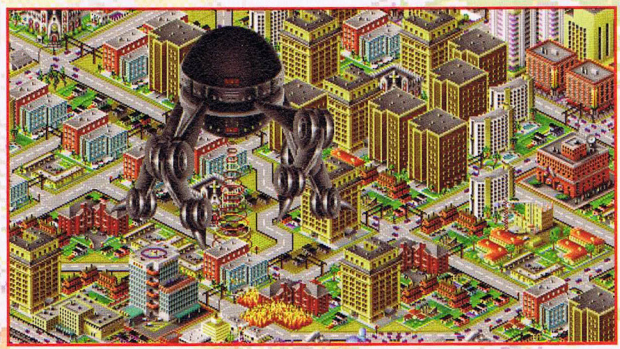
You begin with a major plot of unexploited land and set about building a place for your people to live and work. The process begins with the construction of a power plant, a road network and zoning of residential, commercial and industrial areas. As you create these facilities, people move to your new town, setting up home and shop. It's a snowball effect from here on in – your city has to grow to accommodate the needs of your expanding population, so you have to bulldoze more bare ground to make way for shops, houses, factories... And so it goes on.





Oh, but there's more. So much more. Just because you've created a city, that doesn't mean it's a desirable place to live. You've got to create a city that works – that means a functional transport system, education, police, fire cover, electricity and water supply, leisure facilities... It sounds mundane, but the constant juggling of so many complex and diverse elements in order to keep your populace happy means there's never a dull moment. Even when you think your city is doing fine, there's always some way you can improve or optimise your set-up. The perfect city may not exist, but you'll have a damn good time trying to create it. A cool head for figures is also handy, although not necessary, because you also have to address taxation and public funding to keep the city on an even keel. Things hot up still further as the game progresses, with the introduction of future tech like Arcologies (towering self-contained mini-cities) and disasters such as earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, riots and even space monster attacks. Newspaper reports and advisors are on hand to tell you how you're doing but, ultimately, it's down to you to decide the faults and merits of your actions as they affect thousands of invisible lives.

> *"You'll lose sleep, forget about everyday life – you won't even want to stop to eat"*



The most amazing thing about *SimCity 2000* is that, even after this detailed explanation, we've still only scratched the surface of what it's got to offer. So accessible is the interface (your cities are depicted in beautifully-drawn isometric 3D) and so subtle the nuances for those who are prepared to delve deep, it's possible to become completely absorbed in its utterly realistic little world. You'll lose sleep, forget about everyday life – you won't even want to stop to eat... By the time you realise how engrossed you are, it's far too late to do anything about it. Near perfect in conception and execution, *SimCity 2000* does what most games never even dream of. Buy it and get lost.

So There You Have It...

...the 50 best PC games ever released. You may disagree with some of our selections, but then a list like this is always going to be subjective. We like to think we've pretty much got it right, mind you – it took us long enough to compile, and there's been no shortage of healthy arguments along the way. But, as we said in the introduction, the situation's ever changing. Certainly, some of the games reviewed this month (but not yet released), like the outrageous Cannon Fodder, UFO: Enemy Unknown *and* Battle Isle 2, *will all be strong contenders for a Top 50 place when we next update it. Who knows? At the rate PC games are improving, by then we may even have a new Number One too.*

That PC Gamer Top 50 In Full

1. **SimCity 2000** (Maxis)
2. **X-Wing** (US Gold/LucasArts)
3. **Doom** (id Software)
4. **Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge** (LucasArts)
5. **Ultima Underworld II** (Electronic Arts/Origin)
6. **Civilization For Windows** (MicroProse)
7. **Alone In The Dark 2** (Infogrames)
8. **Sam & Max Hit The Road** (US Gold/LucasArts)
9. **IndyCar Racing** (Virgin)
10. **Space Hulk** (Electronic Arts)
11. **Syndicate** (Electronic Arts/Bullfrog)
12. **Evasive Action** (Mindscape)
13. **Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis** (US Gold/LucasArts)
14. **Tornado** (Digital Integration)
15. **Day Of The Tentacle** (US Gold/LucasArts)
16. **Frontier: Elite II** (Gametek/Konami)
17. **Flashback** (Virgin)
18. **SubWar 2050** (MicroProse)
19. **Pinball Fantasies** (21st Century Entertainment)
20. **The Chessmaster 4000 Turbo** (Mindscape)
21. **Dune II** (Virgin)
22. **Lands Of Lore** (Virgin)
23. **Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space** (Electronic Arts)
24. **Sid & Al's Incredible Toons**(Sierra/Dynamix)
25. **Lemmings** (Psygnosis)
26. **TFX** (Ocean)
27. **Micro Machines** (Codemasters)
28. **Ultima Underworld** (Electronic Arts/Origin)
29. **Formula One Grand Prix** (MicroProse)
30. **Speedball 2** (Kixx)
31. **Alone In The Dark** (Infogrames)
32. **Another World** (Chris)
33. **Star Control II** (Accolade)
34. **Wolfenstein 3D** (id Software)
35. **The Secret Of Monkey Island** (Kixx XL)
36. **Strike Commander CD** (Electronic Arts/Origin)
37. **Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker** (Virgin)
38. **Indianapolis 500** (The Hit Squad)
39. **Ultima VII** (Electronic Arts/Origin)
40. **Fury Of The Furries** (Mindscape)
41. **NHL Hockey** (Electronic Arts)
42. **Wizkid** (The Hit Squad)
43. **Star Trek: Judgment Rites** (Interplay)
44. **D/Generation** (Mindscape)
45. **Stunt Island** (Infogrames/Disney)
46. **A-Train** (The Hit Squad)
47. **Chuck Yeager's Air Combat** (The Hit Squad)
48. **PGA Tour Golf Plus** (Electronic Arts)
49. **Shadowcaster** (Electronic Arts/Origin)
50. **Unnecessary Roughness** (Accolade)

F.Y.I.
For Your Information

The Highest Placed...

Strategy Game: *SimCity 2000 (1)*
Graphic Adventure: *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge (4)*
Role-Playing Game: *Ultima Underworld II (5)*
Arcade Game: *Doom (3)*
Flight Simulation: *X-Wing (2)*
Arcade Adventure: *Alone In The Dark 2 (7)*
Racing Simulation: *IndyCar Racing (9)*
Puzzle Game: *Sid & Al's Incredible Toons (24)*
Sports Game: *Speedball 2 (30)*
Company With The Most Games In The Top 50: *Electronic Arts (10)*

And that's it. *The end. Finis. Now that we've reached the conclusion of this marathon countdown, we'd love to hear what you think. The* PC Gamer *Readers Poll nominations will be printed in the next issue, so we'll get some idea of your personal faves then, but in the meantime, what's your opinion of our opinions? Let us know – if something like this can't get the old controversy glands pulsing, nothing can. Drop a line to Cables,* PC Gamer, *30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW. And remember – urinating in his own shoes keeps no man warm for long. (A Finnish proverb, apparently.)*

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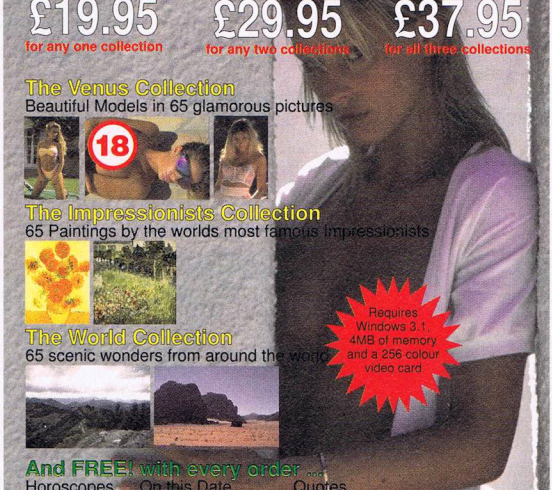

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The PC GAMER Review Directory

April 1994

Full-Price Reviews
All the latest releases reviewed and rated, starting over the page...

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Cheap doesn't necessarily mean nasty, you know. Find out why on page 86...

Oh, What A Lovely War

Sensible Software go into battle with Cannon Fodder *- over the page.*



Cannon Fodder

GAME OF THE MONTH PC GAMER April '94

That PC Gamer *Review Policy In Full*

How we rate and review our games...

1 We undertake to review every new, finished game we can get our hands on, be it full-price, budget, re-release or add-on module. We won't ignore a game simply because it's deemed unfashionable or "not worth reviewing." We don't discriminate against particular genres, either, such as arcade titles or strategy games.

2 We use the best reviewers in the business. By the best, we mean eminently experienced PC gameplayers whose opinions you can trust because they know what they're talking about. We make sure all our testers spend a considerable amount of time playing the games they review.

3 We don't believe in massive, vacuous reviews that ramble on for page after page before telling you if the game is any good or not – sharp and to the point are the watchwords here. It's thus very rare for a *PC Gamer* review to run for more than two pages. We're not an instruction manual – our job is to tell you whether a game is worth buying.

...and, of course, how we mark them.

Our marking system is easy to get the hang of. We have to be tough, because we're all well aware, as you are, how expensive PC games are these days. However, we're not afraid to award software high marks when we feel it deserves it. Here's roughly how our ratings stack up...

100%-90%
A classic game – unreservedly recommended to anyone with an interest in PC gaming.

89%-80%
An excellent game. Well worthy of attention, but perhaps not the best of its breed. Also, some benchmark games of decidedly specialist taste.

79%-70%
A good game which we'd have no hesitation in recommending to fans of the type. However, there are bound to be superior examples of the genre.

69%-60%
A reasonable game that is above average. It may be worth playing and, perhaps, buying, but is flawed in significant respects.

59%-50%
Very average. By no means an embarrassment, but hardly the best way to spend your cash.

49%-40%
Poor quality. There may be something slightly more interesting about it than games which fall into the abyss of the last category, however.

39% or below
Dreadful rubbish. Avoid at all costs.

Finally, those awards...

We have two of these. The big Game Of The Month award goes to the most impressive piece of software to come our way during the course of the issue, while Recommended merits are slapped on any other titles that we believe are well deserving of your cash.



After each mission, another bunch of disposable suckers join your army, ushered in by the recruiting sergeant. A chilling reminder of the men lost in battle as graves mount up on the hill in the background. War isn't all thrills and spills...

Cannon Fodder



Heroic

GAME OF THE MONTH PC GAMER April '94

With more gung-ho than John Wayne and Sam Peckinpah put together, Sensible Software's latest boldly boasts that "war has never been so much fun." Whatever would Monty have said?

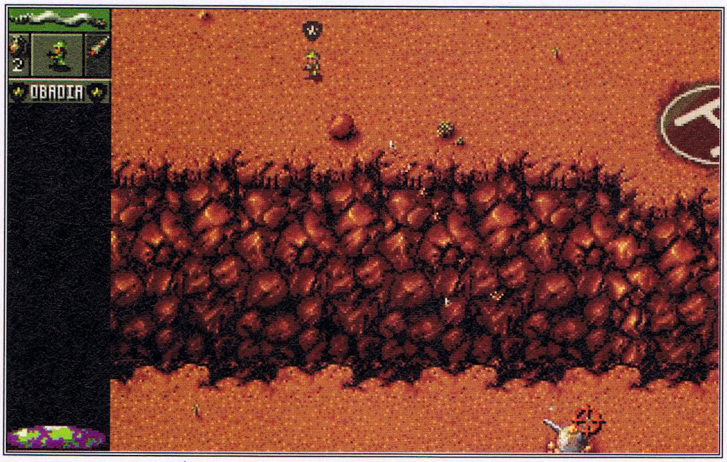
Publisher	Virgin
Developer	Sensible Software/AVME Ltd.
Price	£35.99
Minimum System	386SX, VGA, 1 Mb RAM
Recommended	386SX
Sound Support	Roland, Soundblaster
Release Date	March

'THIS GAME IS NOT in any way endorsed by The Royal British Legion' is the first thing you see when you load up *Cannon Fodder* – and with good reason. Said body of old soldiers were none too chuffed about the game's controversial use of the Remembrance Day poppy when it first appeared on the Amiga late last year. In fact, the subsequent tabloid furore led to the image being removed from the box altogether (even though it still appears as part of the in-game presentation) and the inclusion of the aforementioned disassociating message.

Whether or not *Cannon Fodder* is in poor taste is open to endless debate, but that it's a triumphant exercise in innovative game design and – dare we say it? – fun is never even up for question. Sensible Software has a long history of doing things that little bit differently – the likes of *Wizball* and *Wizkid (PCG* 4: 90%) proving that great games needn't belong to familiar genres. Even *Sensible Soccer,* by the team's own admission based on ideas first used in *Kick Off 2,* brought a new level of instinctiveness and realism to the simulated sport. And now we have *Cannon Fodder,* which effectively turns the whole wargame genre on its head by mixing military strategy and tactics with (shock, horror, blasphemy!) high-octane arcade action.

"Spike pits impale, but don't kill, your men, so you have to shoot them yourself to put them out of their misery..."

You're a frontline military commander charged with completing 23 missions, each split into a number of phases (levels). With each comes an objective ('destroy enemy buildings,' 'rescue hostages,' for example) and a squad of soldiers with which to carry them out. No explanation is given for the missions or the fictitious war as a whole. *Cannon Fodder's* approach is effectively to boil everything down to its simplest form, so out goes the superfluous data about scenarios or the strategic



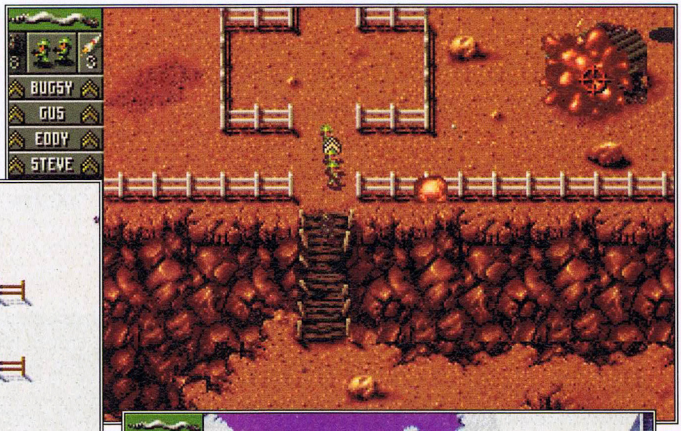
One of the later desert levels – and an enemy helicopter is ripe for the stealing (although you've only got one man in your squad for this phase, so there's zero margin for error). Choppers can be easily shot down by enemy guns, though.

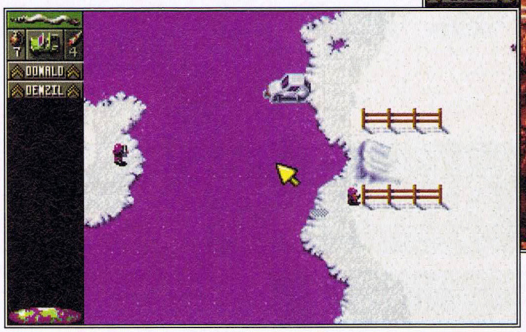
(Right) **Across bridges like this, it's best to send men over one at a time in case of booby traps (you don't want to lose *everyone*).**

(Below) **A snowcat awaits to carry you across the frozen wastes.**

(Below-right) **Take out the local villages for bonus fun points.**

(Far below) **The underground base levels are the toughest of the lot.**







"It's in the gung-ho department that Cannon Fodder *really excels"*

importance of what you're doing in the long run.

After the mission briefing, it's down to the nitty gritty. Play begins just after your squad's been dropped behind enemy lines – and, boy, is it fun. Everything's so easy to do. You've got your team of soldiers (squad size varies with the complexity of the level), and you guide them around the eight-way scrolling map simply by clicking where you want them to walk. Firing's just as easy – a right-button click turns your directional arrow into a crosshair and then you can strafe away (with unlimited ammunition, of course) to your heart's content. An easy dual-click action activates rockets, grenades and other special weapons. That's all you need to know to get started. But you'll need a little more to stay alive...



Ever played paintball? *Cannon Fodder's* a lot like that, with missions a mixture of tactical thinking (should we attack head-on or use the cover of the treeline to go the long way round and surprise them from the rear?) and all-out blasting. Now as clever as all this strategic stuff is (you can split your squad into smaller groups and issue preset orders to each, so you can attack from two directions at once, for example), it's in the gung-ho department that *Cannon Fodder* really excels. Although the sprites are small and the graphical style more comical than photo-realistic, there's a tremendous amount of on-screen violence, with blood, fire and the screams of the wounded coming thick and fast. Both sides can lose a hell of a lot of men in the course of a single firefight – but your job is to make sure that losses to your side never rise beyond the acceptable. New recruits join your fighting force after each mission, but since you have to try again with new soldiers each time you fail a level, it's easy to lose men faster than they join up.

The nice part is that soldiers who complete a mission and survive get promoted, and their experience translates into better weapons skills – accuracy, range, rate of fire and so on. This means you can get very protective about the men who've been with you for a few missions – and feeling genuinely sorry for them when they finally get cut down by the enemy.

I could go on. About how amazingly vicious the enemy soldiers get on later levels. About how you can capture vehicles like tanks, helicopters and snowcats and run amok in them, driving over soldiers and using their weaponry to torch enemy installations. About horrible little touches like the spike pits that might impale one of your men but not kill him, so you have to shoot the guy yourself to put him out of his misery. About... Oh, all sorts of things that make *Cannon Fodder* the most enjoyable wargame I've ever played. But if what's gone before hasn't been enough to convince you already, I don't know what is.

What we have here is that most endangered of species – a game that successfully combines action with strategy, a game where each element not only shines individually, but combines to create something better than the sum of its parts. And without all that boring techno-frippery which can bog down a traditional wargame, *Cannon Fodder* lets you get on with having *fun*. And for what it's worth, I actually like the poppy. It's one of many touches that, among all the humorous malarkey that identifies *Cannon Fodder* as a Sensible game, remind you that the real business of war isn't much fun at all. Bloody brilliant.

GARY WHITTA



Rumbles in the jungle... Watch every step you take, because a landmine or punji pit might be lying in wait just ahead of you...

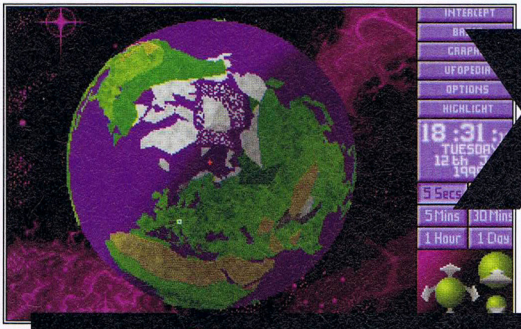
PC GAMER Final Rating

93%

Highs Superbly instinctive controls, great presentation and loadsa killing.

Lows A little more variety in the missions wouldn't have gone amiss.

The Verdict Bad taste or not, war really has never been so much fun.



Xeno

RECOMMENDED PC GAMER April '94

UFO: Enemy Unknown

Publisher: MicroProse
Developer: Mythos Games/MicroProse
Price: £44.99
Minimum System: 386, 2 Mb RAM
Recommended: 386DX
Sound Support: All major cards
Release Date: March



(Left) A UFO has been forced down in rural Europe – and you've sent in your trusty troops to secure the area. After leaving the transport, they begin to spread out...



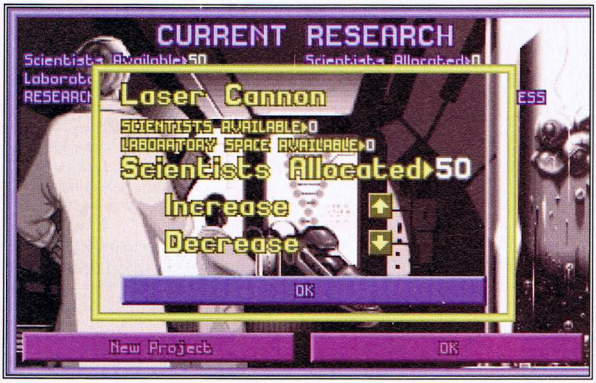
(Below) Later on in the same mission you move Recruit Miller onto the roof of a barn. Hopefully, this will provide your colleagues with enough cover should they come under attack by the alien forces.

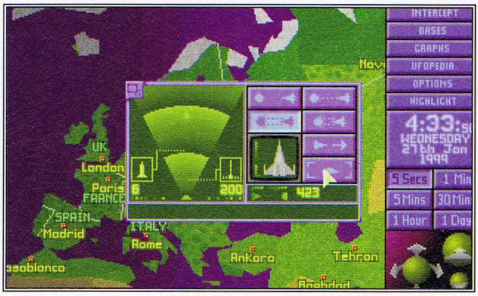
Forget those purple haircuts and Ed Straker – this is a different (and far superior) experience...

IF THERE'S ONE THING THAT misspending your youth playing computer games teaches you, it's that you can't trust aliens. One minute they're acting all cute, phoning out for pizza and getting resurrected in thinly veiled biblical analogies, the next they're jumping at the chance to invade the world, subjugate humanity and have their evil way with whatever they please – whether it's shipping us back to their homeworld as food, stealing all our water, turning perfectly reasonable people into vegetables (breaking the tabloids' monopoly) or just nicking our planet because it's got a better view than theirs.

UFO: Enemy Unknown is a case in point. It's 1999 and for absolutely no good reason aliens are attacking the Earth. What makes it worse is that they haven't even tried to open diplomatic negotiations, so nobody knows who they are, where they come from or even what they want (those clever bods at MicroProse haven't called it *Enemy Unknown* for nothing). In response to this extraterrestrial threat, several of the world's governments have pooled their resources and formed a global defensive organisation, called X-Com. As leader of this organisation it's your job to keep Earth safe from the alien threat.

The game is split into two main sections: the Geoscape and Tactical. The Geoscape segment features a fully-detailed 3D global map, which you can zoom in/out from and rotate. X-Com begins with one base, and it's your task to slowly expand



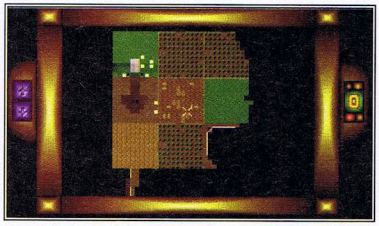


(Above) One of your Interceptors engages an alien craft and prepares to attack.

(Left) New technology will often give you the edge over the invaders.

phobic









(Above) **From your research you gradually learn about the aliens' technology.**

(Top-right) **A desert mission and the map.**

(Left) **Standing over the frazzled bodies of his comrades, a trooper blasts an alien.**

the network by building new bases until the entire planet is covered by a protective sensor net (which can then warn of incoming UFOs).

Once you spot an alien craft, you dispatch interception craft to blow it up or shoot it down. If, however, the craft crashlands, or if aliens are reported on the ground for any other reason (the two most common being secret aliens bases and 'terror sites' – areas where aliens are running amok and killing or capturing local citizens), you can dispatch a troop carrier to the area. At this point, the game's second section comes into play – a tactical wargame where you control your troops directly in an effort to deal with any remaining aliens and capture their equipment or craft.

Although the basic idea is simple, the game itself quickly becomes more complex, forcing you to carefully consider your choices. By using your scientists to research the information and hardware recovered by your troops, you can develop new technologies (the aliens are much more advanced than us) and eventually develop effective counter-measures – weapons for your ground forces, new craft based on UFOs, advanced installations for your bases (and so on). This is an absolutely vital aspect of the gameplay, because over the course of the game the aliens begin to recognise the threat posed by X-Com, and start to get much more aggressive, attacking your craft and even invading your bases. In addition, by examining the corpses of dead aliens, and eventually capturing and containing

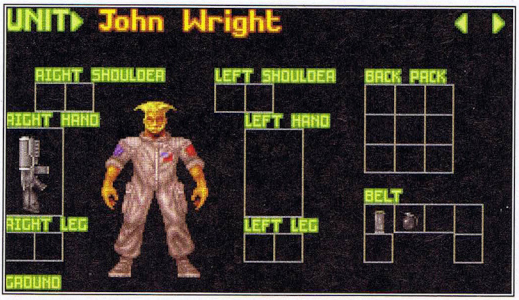
> *"Nobody knows who the aliens are, where they come from or even what they want..."*

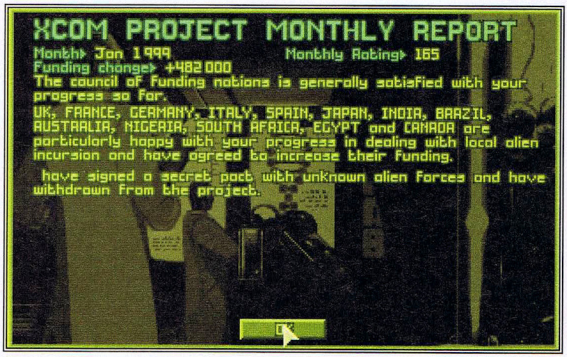
live ones, you can discover what's going on, why the aliens are attacking and where they're coming from. The motives behind the invasions are of the upmost importance – because not all is as it seems...

The idea of combining two styles of game is by no means a new one, but for some reason it's hardly ever worked. *UFO: Enemy Unknown* is by far the most successful attempt so far, the two parts fitting together seamlessly. The strategy section is well thought out, combining as it does the management of your individual bases with the formation of large scale plans. And because of the limited funds available to X-Com, it forces you to make a lot of strategic decisions in allocating resources, and is therefore open enough to cater for a wide variety of playing styles. The tactical section is also superb. But this is hardly surprising when you realise that UFO was developed by the same people who wrote the classic *Laser Squad* (in fact, it began life as the sequel to that title). Using a stunning isometric view and highly detailed graphics, the section looks as good as it plays, which is to say that it looks very good indeed, with ten different terrains and a random map generation system, so you'll never play over the same area again. Little touches like the atmospheric sound effects serve as the icing on an already impressive cake.

UFO: Enemy Unknown is that rarest of games on the PC – simple enough for beginners and yet more than challenging enough to keep even the most experienced of players hooked for months on end. The blend of strategy and tactics complement each other perfectly. Even if strategy games aren't normally to your taste, this is an undeniably superb game that's brilliantly presented, absorbing and extremely addictive.

ANDY BUTCHER





(Above) **At the end of every month, the funding nations evaluate X-Com's performance and adjust their commitment accordingly.**

(Left) **This screen enables you to examine your troops' equipment.**

PC GAMER *Final Rating*

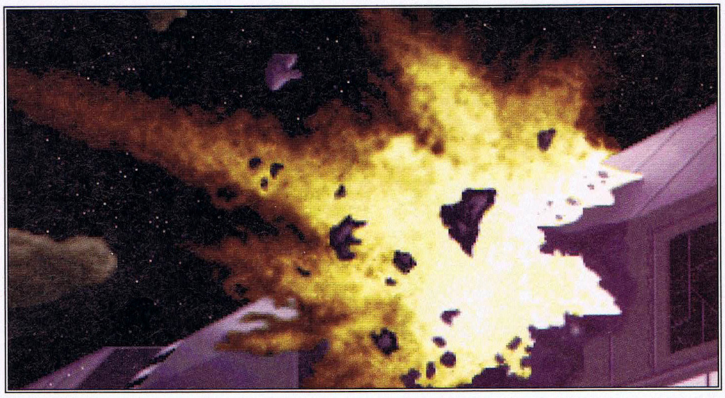
91%

Highs Superb blend of strategy and tactics...

Lows ...although some might find it a bit tough to start off with.

The Verdict Great alien-kicking fun for everybody.

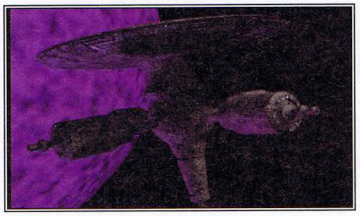
Nebul



Starlord

MicroProse give us yet another chance to rule the universe in a tyrannical fashion – but is becoming emperor of the galaxy really worth the effort?

Publisher	MicroProse
Developer	Mike Singleton
Price	£44.99
Minimum System	20 Mhz 386, VGA, 2 Mb RAM
Recommended	486, 4 Mb RAM
Sound Support	All major soundcards
Release Date	Out Now



(Left and above-left) ***Starlord's*** **presentation is generally very nice. Here are a couple of examples: one from the intro sequence, the other from a random in-game event.**

MIKE SINGLETON has a long and highly impressive pedigree. In the early days of the Sinclair Spectrum, he gave us his astonishingly forward looking *Lords Of Midnight* (soon to be released in a vastly updated version on the PC), and then, several years later, the equally revolutionary *MidWinter* and *Flames Of Freedom* on the Amiga and ST. Needless to say, he's acquired an enviable reputation. *Starlord,* however, is something of a departure from his usual style, based as it is on a huge Play-By-Mail (PBM) game he used to run several years ago. In it the aim was to become the ruler of a galaxy made up of a 1,000 star systems, each one controlled by a separate player.

While there have been several attempts in the past to convert PBMs into computer games, they've never met with much success. Although the game mechanics are often quite simple and suitable for conversion, the task of simulating a multi-player game in a realistic and believable way has to date proven too much of a challenge. *Starlord,* however, meets the task head on. The idea behind the game is the same as in the original PBM – become the ruler of the galaxy through diplomacy, strategy and warfare. What makes this different from other titles, though, is the setting. The universe of *Starlord* is governed by a feudal system – each starlord has a rank in the hierarchy, from Emperor down to Lord, and owes loyalty to his superior (while at the same time enjoying the obedience of those he outranks). Thus a Duke is responsible to one of the five Kings, and rules a number of Earls, who each rule over a number of Lords. Higher ranking or 'Liege' Lords can call on the lower ranking 'Vassal' Lords they command for support in their military operations. Likewise, Vassals can call on their Lords for aid and protection in times of crisis.

In addition to this system of aristocracy, each Lord is a member of a family. The bonds between family members are stronger than those of rank, you see, so you can always rely on blood ties when things get particularly bad and you need assistance.

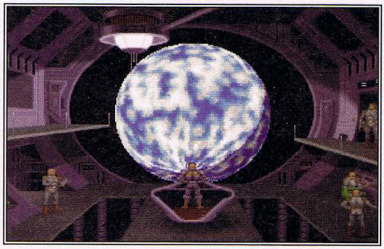
"Although this is all very clever, it requires a great deal of dedication to keep track of everything that's going on"





Oh well, another battle lost. Luckily, it's very hard to actually *die* in these space combats. You just find yourself back home, with your resources suitably stripped.

ous



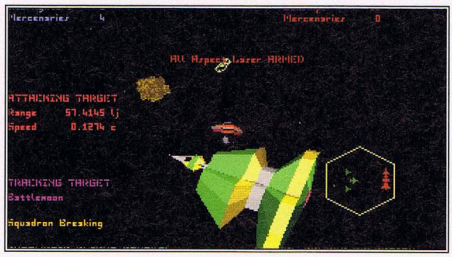
(Above) **The bridge of your ship – from here you can access the other important screens.**

(Left) **The space combat section, although virtually unplayable, is pretty to look at.**

This system sets up an atmosphere different to that found in any other game of this type. In many ways, it's very similar to the gothic mood of Frank Herbert's Dune novels.

The game itself is quite simple in theory. There are three scenarios to choose from, each depicting a different period in the history of the galaxy, and in each you can choose whether to control a single starlord or a complete family (as well as set your initial rank). Conquering starlords of equal rank enables you to set a family member in their place and thus spread your family's influence. Defeating a Lord of higher rank, however, enables you to take his position. To win the game you must set family members as the five Kings, and become the Emperor yourself.

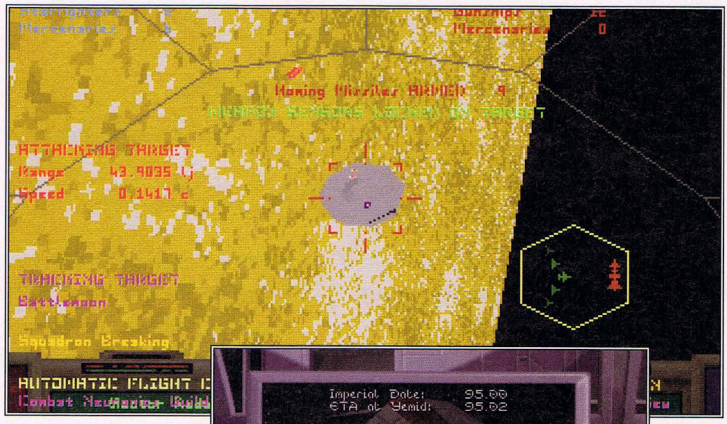
Starlord is a very mixed game. Although the principles are simple, the control method is awkward and the game very tough to get into. Initially, you find yourself stumped again and again, and the distinct lack of help from the game manuals is annoying in this respect. It's only if you put in the initial effort that you begin to appreciate the game's subtlety. Mike Singleton has spent a great deal of time developing a system of 'genetics' to control the computerised starlords. Over time the various families begin to display certain characteristics, some of which make them more or less successful. Some families concentrate on economics, for example, spending their efforts on trading and amassing wealth, while others are more warlike, cowardly, diplomatic (or whatever). Your actions, in turn, also have consequences – by defeating a member of a certain family, for instance, you make enemies of his relations. The problem is although this is all very clever, it requires a great deal of dedication to keep track of everything that's going on. There are so many different families and Lords that, without a lot of work and constant reference to the library data and starcharts, most of it goes completely over your head, denying you both enjoyment and a better chance of winning. On top of this there's a completely pointless 3D combat section, where you can fly your battlefighter in any of the conflicts between you and other lords. While it looks very impressive, it's virtually impossible to play because of the poorly thought out controls and terrible instrumentation. Successfully combining two styles is never easy, even when both are well produced, but *Starlord* doesn't bring its component game-parts together in anything like a competent manner (unlike *UFO: Enemy Unknown*, reviewed on the previous page). It makes you wonder why the 3D section was even included, save to give MicroProse some nice graphics to put on the box.

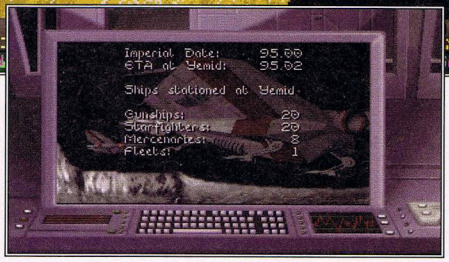


It's a shame, then, that *Starlord* suffers so badly in so many areas, because underneath all these problems lies a strategy game of exceptional depth and lastability – and one that's incredibly atmospheric too. If only it had been made easier to play and understand, it would have been a game of the first order. As it is, *Starlord* demands far too much work – and there are several other strategy games of equal or higher quality out there that have none of these significant drawbacks *(UFO: Enemy Unknown* and *Battle Isle 2*, reviewed on page 80, for example).

ANDY BUTCHER

"This system sets up an atmosphere different to that found in any other game of its type – in many ways it's very similar to the gothic mood of Frank Herbert's Dune novels"







(Above) **The 'waiting' screen, which pops up when you're travelling.**

(Top) **More pretty 3D...**

(Left) **Use the starcharts to plan your campaign.**

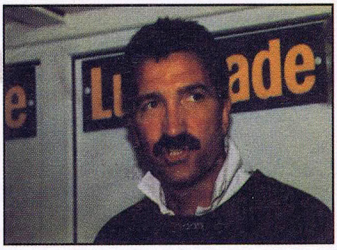
PC GAMER **Final Rating**

78%

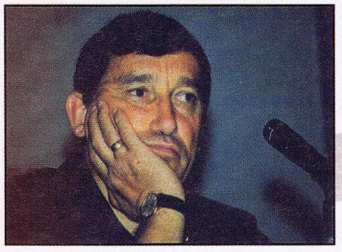
Highs Huge and highly replayable strategy game with some interesting ideas...

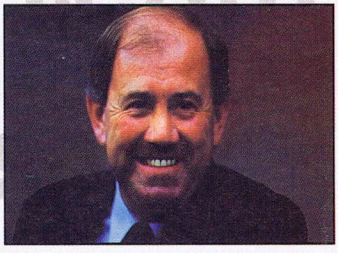
Lows ...but let down by a pointless 3D section and high initial difficulty.

The Verdict If you're willing to put in the effort it's a good game. Otherwise, forget it.



They couldn't manage





Forget

Fantasy League.
This is for real.

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

SNES
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PC & AMIGA
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Imagineer

ANCO

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

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

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



it...

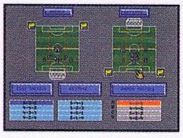


He can.

Will you?









"A blinder of a game"

CVG 95%

"Best ever football management simulation"

NMS 89%

"Soccer mayhem second to none"

SNES FORCE 90%

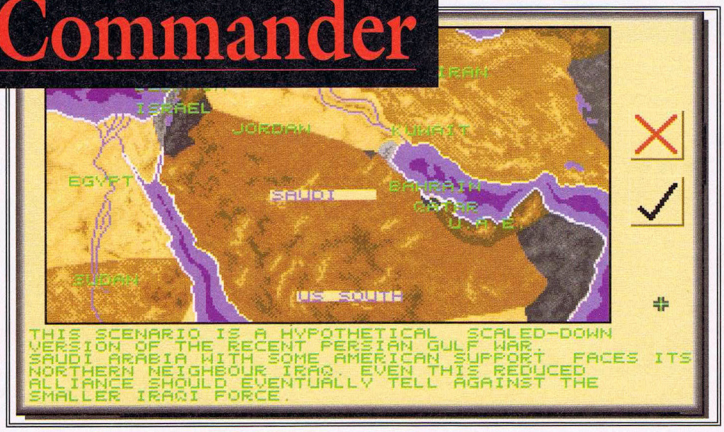
PC compatibles and Amiga versions published by Anco Software Ltd, Unit 7, Millside Industrial Estate, Lawson Road, Dartford, Kent DA1 5BH Tel: 0322 292513 Fax: 0322 293422

Dotty

Air Force Commander

Publisher	Impressions
Developer	Novatrade Software
Price	£34.99
Minimum System	286, VGA
Recommended	386SX or higher
Sound Support	AdLib, Soundblaster
Release Date	Out Now

A tough and hugely abstract depiction of modern warfare – but it's not quite a wargame or a flight sim. It's something else altogether...



Where would you be without the ubiquitous satellite map and mission briefing, eh? As the test explains, the action's all set around a Desert Storm-style Middle East scenario.

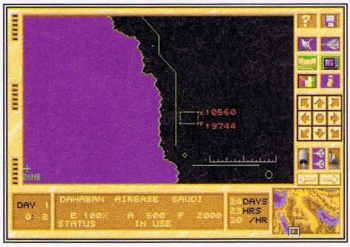
YOU CAN USUALLY FILE games containing the words 'air' and 'force' straight into the flight sim pigeonhole. Not so Impressions' *Air Force Commander,* which is a strategic game pitched at command level. The main setting is the present day Middle East, complete with 27 scenarios – some based on real events *(Desert Storm,* for instance), others on purely hypothetical situations. Strategically, it's not that interesting a theatre, but, fortunately, there's a WW II data disk (again, with another 27 scenarios) to avert the tedium.

> *"It has more in common with an air-traffic control program than a flight sim or wargame"*

You play the game primarily via three maps: satellite, radar and strategic. On the satellite map, you locate bases and send units into action, while using the radar map to track their progress and the strategic map for remaining moves. Launching a squadron is a simple matter of selecting the desired unit, de-mothballing it, and then sending it out to play. The interface is found wanting here – for some strange reason it's only possible to launch units one at a time. Quite often you want to give the same orders to multiple units, but then you have to move to and fro between a couple of screens. If this sounds pedantic, it isn't. This is a real time game where every second counts.

Planes and missiles are represented by poles on the radar screen. Indeed, the only time you actually get to see units is at the airbase. Radar is a key component, especially in the Middle East scenarios, and knocking your opponents eyes and ears out should be considered a top priority. Resource management is also important, because equipment and supplies are finite.

Air Force Commander is aggravating because it's so detached from the action – its hard to get excited about a series of dots and lines. In a real war this is how it must look at Command HQ, but at least the guys there know what the dots and lines represent. In its favour, the 'as it happens' gameplay at least means the action never stops, and the pace can be quite alarming at times.

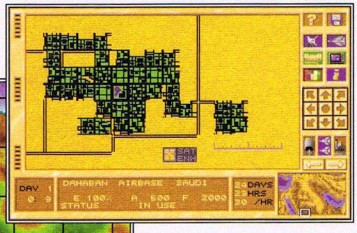


One of the most important sections in the game – this is where you plan out the flight and attack paths for your planes. You'll have to learn to decipher all those lines and dots to keep your strike force away from enemy radar.

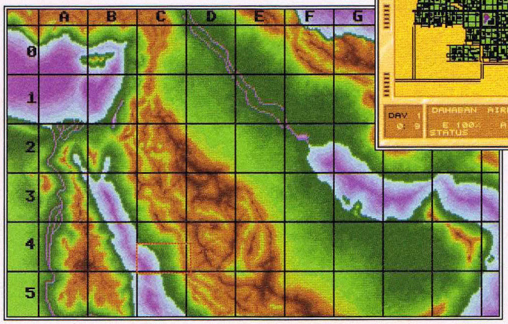
The manual provides some useful historical notes and strategy tips, but what's missing is more information on the individual scenarios. The VGA graphics are serviceable, but the sound is disappointing – just a series of occasional bangs. Some sort of voice commentary, as in *Dune II,* could have provided the game with some much needed atmosphere.

This is very much an acquired taste. It has more in common with an air-traffic control program than a flight sim or wargame. However, if your local Job Centre has any vacancies for a quick-thinking general with a knowledge of the political and military situation in the Middle East, then *Air Force Commander* would definitely make for a good training program.

BRIAN WALKER



(Above) **Here's an enemy city for you to bomb. That yellow stuff is sand, in case you were wondering.**



(Left) **And this is a larger-scale map of the Middle East milieu for you to drool over.**

PC GAMER Final Rating

70%

Highs Original approach to a strategy wargame.

Lows Abstract screens aren't particularly involving.

The Verdict Good at what it does, but very much an acquired taste.

Feed your brain

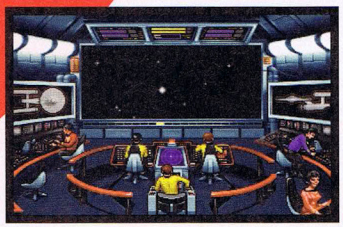


This a CD-ROM disc, just like the one you'll find on the cover of every issue of *CD-ROM Today*.

It's packed to the brim with an amazing 650 Megabytes of data, the equivalent of over four hundred floppy disks. Just imagine if we'd decided to attach four hundred disks to the cover of the magazine!

The disc is dual format for PC and Macintosh, so if you have either machine you'll find it's got lots of interesting goodies for you to simply mess about with. And it's really easy to use.

Here's just three examples of what you'll find on our first amazing disc...



Great game demos - Mac owners will be absorbed by the astonishing Myst from Electronic Arts, while PC people will be engrossed in the new Star Trek, featuring dialogue from the Trek actors!



Videos - Famous Faces from Jasmin Multimedia would normally cost £70 for 100 royalty-free QuickTime or Video for Windows video clips, but we're giving you 20 of them entirely for free! Oh, plus we're including run-time versions of both Apple's QuickTime and Microsoft's Video for Windows for you to use. And if you can recognise the famous faces, you could win a video camcorder!



Multimedia do-it-yourself - Authorware from Macromind would normally cost a mind-bending £4,000, but we're giving you a special version which is fully functional up to a 50-operation limit. We'll also give you all the materials and all the know-how you need to try your hand at creating you own multimedia presentations. You'll be surprised how easy it is, and you could find it very useful.



There's a lot more on the disc too, including our unique interactive reviews - but we'll leave you to discover all that when you buy the magazine!



And this is our magazine. We'd like to help you explore the amazing new world of CD-ROM for the Mac and PC.

You'll find it in the shops from Thursday March 31st – the day before Easter weekend. So we'll see you then!

Turgid

(Right) **The LA Raiders get ready to snap the ball from the Pro Set offence.**

(Below) **There are lies, damn lies and...**



NFL Pro League Football

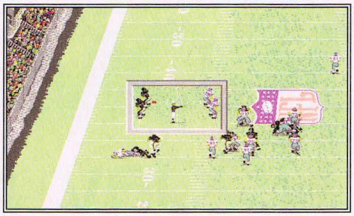
The fourth new American Football game in recent months is a management sim. Watch out for that barrel of Gatorade...

Publisher	Digital Integration
Developer	Micro Sports
Price	£39.99
Minimum System	386, VGA, 4 Mb RAM
Recommended	386, 25 Mhz
Sound Support	All major soundcards
Release Date	Out Now

THE FIRST THING YOU should know about *NFL Pro League Football* is that if you don't have a fairly detailed knowledge of American Football you may as well forget it. This is a girdiron title for converts only. There is no arcade interaction – it's strictly a management game, with you playing the roles of headcoach and offensive/defensive co-ordinators. Using an enormous number-crunching statistical engine, the title features actual team and player stats taken from the last five seasons (thanks to the NFL Player's Association licence).

Out on the pitch you can play the game in a number of ways. Call each and every play on both offence and defence, and then watch while your players carry it out; let the computer call plays and sit through the entire game; or just leave your faithful PC to simulate everything and then calculate a result for you.

Every team has its own changeable gameplan, which sets up what plays will be called and when. A gameplan may say, for example, that run plays will be called 75% of the time on first down or that the defence will respond to an offensive set-up in a certain way. Of course, if you call the plays yourself you don't need to use the gameplan, but it does provide for modem play or even play-by-mail (you send a disk with your plan on to an opponent).



"The game's been buried underneath a mountain of detailed statistics"

Now while I can't fault *NFL Pro League Football* for its incredible attention to detail, I can't help but feel that the game's been buried underneath a mountain of statistics. True, when you're on the sidelines, calling in the plays, it can be exciting and, at times, you probably feel as helpless as a real coach, but a lot of the time it's infuriating and just plain dull.

Games are played in real time too – 15 minutes a quarter and with all the pauses and stops and starts that anyone who's sat through a Superbowl will recognise all too clearly. Realistic, yes, but games can easily drag on into the early hours. If you're trying to play a whole season you'll probably only stomach a couple of games a week – the only alternative is to let the computer determine the result. And that, of course, makes the whole thing a tedious results generator instead of a game.

NFL Pro League Football is a comprehensive American Football management simulation that can be rewarding, enjoyable and even exciting. But the unwieldy menu systems that steer you through the simulation are off-putting, and the actual games themselves (surely the heart of the package) are a bit of a hit and miss affair. The EGA graphics don't help – the game looks decidedly ancient, especially when compared to recent arcade American Football titles. Although I love the sport I can't say I loved *NFL Pro League Football*. In theory, I should have wanted to play it for days. In practice, it was too much like hard work.

CHRIS BUXTON

(Middle) **Just watch helplessly as your team put the plays you call into action – and then fumble the ball.**

(Right) **You can alter almost everything in the game set-up screen – do you want to call the plays or would you rather let the computer do it for you? What month do you want to play in? What do you want the weather to be like? Comprehensive, yes, but is it any fun?**



PC GAMER Final Rating

60%

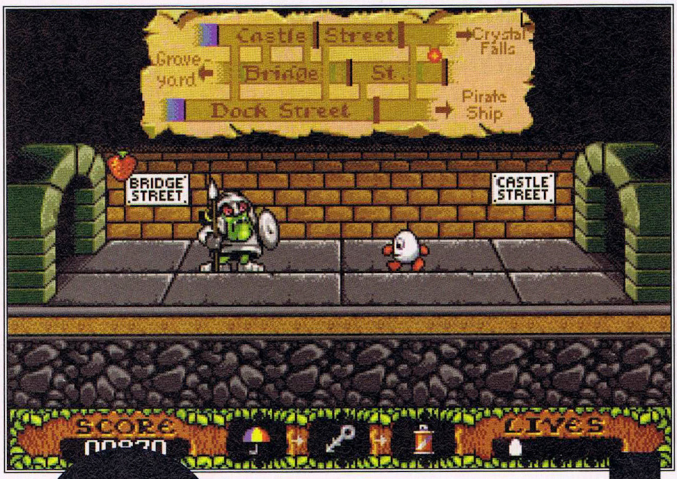
Highs Intensive and highly accurate simulation.

Lows Unfriendly interface and mostly dull gameplay.

The Verdict As much a statistical engine as a game, this feels too mechanical for its own good.

Fantastic Dizzy

Publisher	Codemasters
Developer	In-house
Price	£29.99
Minimum System	286
Recommended	386 or higher
Sound Support	Soundblaster
Release Date	Out Now



Fantastic Dizzy? Really Not Very Good At All Dizzy, if you ask us.



Cracked

WELL, IT'S NOT exactly *Doom*, is it? *Fantastic Dizzy* comes to the PC via a long ancestry of conversion, starting out in life on the humble 8-bit Nintendo. Inexplicably, though, it seems to have become steadily worse. On the Mega Drive, it was zippy, pretty and fun, with boppy sound and lovely parallax-scrolling backgrounds which gradually changed colour. When it moved onto the Amiga, it grew two dirty great black borders down the side of the screen in order to keep the screen small enough to get all the colours on. And now, on the flashiest, most capable, most expensive popular hardware format in the world, it's lost practically everything. The backgrounds are completely gone, replaced by permanent midnight darkness, the sound's scratchy and nasty, and the scrolling...

"Frankly, almost any game you can buy on the PC offers more tangible value for money than this"

Gameplay is similarly unsurprising. The little boxing glove-clad egg dude wanders around a leafy forest (as well as a medieval-looking town, a lost mine and an underwater section), picking up bizarre objects and using them in even more bizarre ways to solve puzzles so bizarre it's not even funny anymore. *Fantastic Dizzy* also introduces a few arcade subgames to the standard *Dizzy* formula, including an *Operation Wolf*-style shooting gallery and a tile-shuffling puzzle game where you can win extra lives and suchlike. The fact is, this was an endearing game on the other formats – despite the hackneyed nature of the design – but on the PC it's been so badly done it's impossible to like. You find yourself constantly annoyed by the shoddy programming and thinking, "For another fiver I could get *Doom* instead, or *X-Wing* for another tenner, or..." Frankly, almost any game you can buy on the PC offers more tangible value for money than this, because no matter how much game there is in here, you just can't shake off the feeling of having been ripped off. Perhaps at budget price (and I mean *real* budget price, like £7.99) this might have been more or less acceptable. However, at its current price, there's no way anyone's going to feel they've got their money's worth.

I've said it before, but I'm afraid I'm going to say it again – on a £1,000-plus format like the PC, which can manage to scroll around astounding 3D texture-mapped environments like the ones in *Doom*, there's no excuse whatsoever for making such a poor attempt at one of the simplest platform gamestyles ever invented. If you make enough allowances for this, you'll eventually discover the gameplay, and if you concentrate really intensely you might just be able to ignore how diabolically it's all been put together, but why make yourself work so hard? Why not just buy a good game in the first place?

STUART CAMPBELL



(Top-left and above) **Dizzy plods gamely on, oblivious to the outside world's plunging level of interest in his overdone antics.**

(Top-right) **An amusing crash, in which Diz decides to run left and dashes headlong into the Viking dude until he dies. Great.**

PC GAMER *Final Rating*

53%

Highs Can I have a while to think about this one?

Lows Technically dire – it's worse than the NES version in most respects.

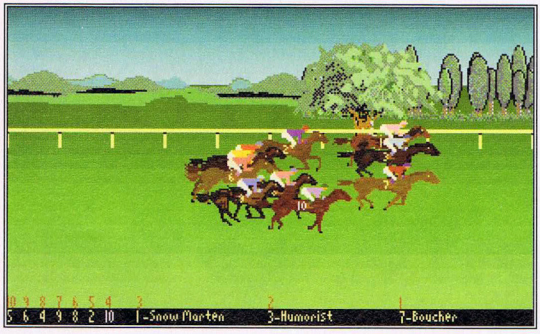
The Verdict A huge leap backwards for cute platform puzzle games. And civilisation generally.

Good To Firm



(Above) **With enough stats to satisfy number lovers, *Good To Firm* manages to be both accurate and fun to play.**

(Below) **A day at the races – and all rendered in beautiful 256-colour VGA. It's nice to see the horses moving realistically too.**



Publisher	New Era Software
Developer	In-house
Price	£24.99
Recommended	386SX, SVGA
Release Date	April

AS FAR AS HORSE-racing games go, it's really a case of neglected nags on the PC, isn't it? The last game to appear on the subject was *Omni Play Horse Racing* back in 1989. Now, five years later, *Good To Firm* updates things by providing crisp SVGA screens for the text and scrolling graphics for the actual races. Your first job as the trainer-cum-stable owner is to decide the size of your stable – and then buy some horses at the auction. A full guide to the horses' parentage (and other important information) is provided, so it's not just a question of bidding blind. Once you've bought what you want, you can train your horses for particular distances, although you can only glean their best attributes by watching them in action a few times.



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The betting, both on course and off, is nothing if not comprehensive. In all there are 28 kinds of bets available, including Trixies, Dixies, and Super Heinz (57 varieties!). Even so, you can still play purely as a punter and ignore all the stuff about owning stables, if you want, although you'll be missing out on a lot.

Each race has its own criteria for entry. A horse that's already won a race, for example, cannot enter a maiden stakes. It's important to check out the form of rival nags to make sure your horse isn't overmatched too. Entering races costs money, remember, and takes its toll on your horses' fitness. Jockeys also play an important part – the more successful they are the more they cost to hire. Come race day, the graphics switch from 16-colour SVGA to 256-colour VGA. Trying to depict a field of galloping geegees has always proved tricky, but in *Good To Firm* the graphics work just fine. And hard-to-please punters will be pleased to hear that you can always skip the race and go instantly to the finishing post.

There are 24 meetings in all, the winner being the owner with the most dosh after the last race. The thing is it doesn't matter how you acquire loot – what matters is that there's a wealth of information provided so you can easily study form. The race results never feel random, nor is there any obvious 'cheating.' Winning races gives you the satisfaction of having done your homework – a key element behind any good game. Of course, this isn't going to appeal to anyone turned off by the subject matter, but to those who thrill to the thunder of hooves, *Good To Firm* is the winner by a furlong. BRIAN WALKER

PC GAMER Final Rating

83%

Highs Excellent rendition.

Lows For horse buffs only really.

The Verdict One of the best examples of a rarely seen genre.

Barbie

Publisher	Hi Tech Expressions
Developer	In-house
Price	£TBA
Recommended	286 or higher
Release Date	Out Now



(Left) **Barbie's in bed reading an interesting book. Little does she know what horrors await her when she falls asleep. Poor girl.**

(Right) **'Oh no!' exclaims Barbie as she collides with a bouncing ball. By throwing a Diamond Charm at her furry friend at the top of the screen, by the way, she can push that valuable token to the ground and pick it up.**



WELL, LOOKY HERE – a game for gals, starring their one-time youth icon, Barbie. "A magical quest full of fun, fashion and fantasy!" proclaims the box. And condescending crap, I'd like to add. *Barbie* is a cheap plastic platform romp packed with terribly sad, sexist stereotype sludge. Stock Review Information... Doll-face has fallen asleep and is dreaming of nice pink girly interests, namely Ken's Fantasy Ball. But if she's gonna make that hot date, she'd better collect the pieces of her enchanted gown. This involves leaping to and from platforms, avoiding adversaries (such as tennis balls, clothing (!) and leaping fish), and using her ample charms to inspire her friends (dogs and cats, mainly) to help her out in times of crisis. A few examples – Diamond Charms make her friends move, Bow Charms make them stop, and Heart Charms make them do 'something special.' Wow.

Of course, nothing horrid ever happens – like Barbie dying (she is Barbie, this is for girls – and it's all a dream anyway). Zees (zeds) represent Barbie's energy, and when she has no more, she simply wakes up. And waking up means starting from scratch (not recommended). Fortunately, Barbie can collect Dream-Ups for extra zees, and (allegedly) cool glamour items such as Perfume Bottles and Rhinestone Glasses (!) for bonus points.

The worst thing about *Barbie* is that it's obviously aimed at young girls (I guess I lacked the incentive to see Ken's Fantasy Ball). For the sake of fairness, I bought some young girls to look at the game. Guess what? They were all confused and completely disinterested – in fact, most of them were happier to play that established feminine favourite, *Pac-Man* instead. Suffice to say, *Barbie* looks and sounds dog-rough, and – remarkably – plays even worse. What next? *Tiny Tears Adventures*, in which the star shuts her eyes and wets herself when the going gets tough? Author credits are not in evidence (understandably), so there's no way of knowing whether or not Barbie was written by a woman. If it was, she should be ashamed of herself. I dread to think how her kids will turn out, I really do. GARY PENN



What should Barbie do? Wake up and get herself a decent fur coat, if you ask me.

PC GAMER Final Rating

12%

Highs The first true TV glam game.

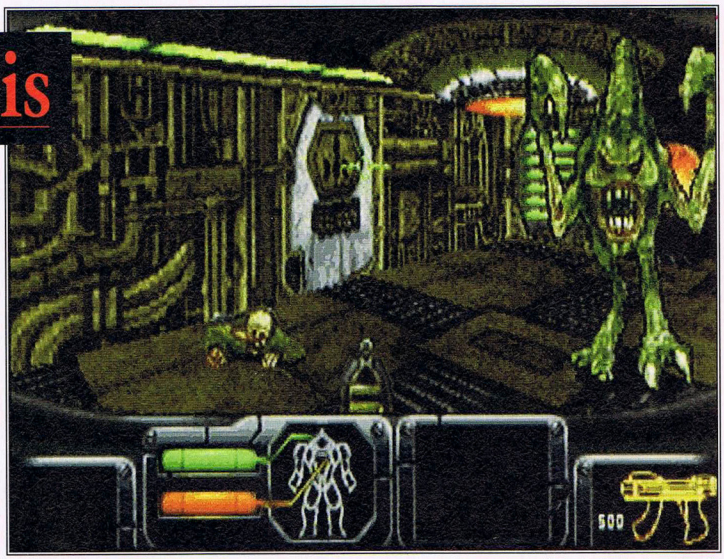
Lows Too much for this little box...

The Verdict Flim, flam, flom – it makes more sense than this title.

Doomed

In Extremis

Aliens meets *Doom* – sounds good, er, doesn't it? Well, we thought so too...



(Above) **The aliens don't gel with the backgrounds at all well – and you'll laugh your head off when you see how badly they're animated. As flat as a piece of paper (and almost as scary), these ETs aren't so much funny as ridiculous.**

Publisher	US Gold
Developer	Blue Sphere
Price	£37.99
Minimum System	386, 15 Mb
Recommended	486
Sound Support	All major soundcards
Release Date	Out Now

FIRST THINGS FIRST: *IN Extremis* is not *Doom*. The French coders, Blue Sphere, must have been quietly beavering away at their game thinking, "Ah oui, c'est un bon jeu. Trés fantastique, n'est-ce pas?" Then along comes id's magnus – and the Gallic ones are left muttering something under their breath about setting fire to 486s and dumping them outside the US embassy.

All contact has been lost with research lab BETA 217, and you've been sent in to find out what's happened, stalk around the levels, fight off aliens and search for security cards so you can move to the next level. On the way you'll find more powerful guns, spare oxygen tanks, drug injectors to boost your energy and even the odd mightily destructive bomb. Then there are the access codes which you need in order to call up relevant maps and open containers holding those all-important power-ups. Stupidly, though, the game doesn't record these vital codes automatically – you have to write them down for yourself.

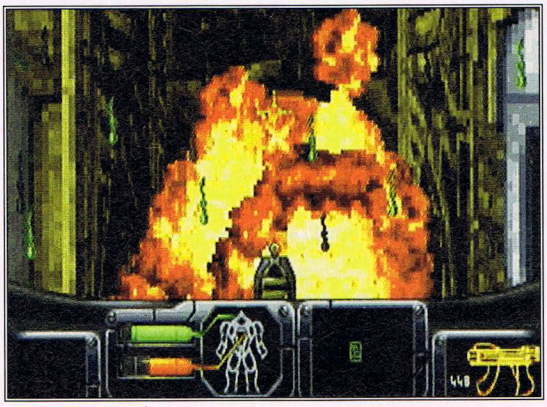
In Extremis is a very simple game – you clear a zone and then move up to the next, tooled up with harder weapons and touting the necessary codes and cards. Successive levels don't change that much – you just get a different breed of alien and some new background graphics. But that isn't saying much, because the visuals are incredibly dreary. Despite the obvious homage to the Alien movies, everything is chunky and undetailed, the colours drab and there's none of that depth-cued shading which gave *Doom* such an air of menace. The aliens are a strange bunch too – they're completely two-dimensional. You always see them from the front and can't attack them from behind. They're not that scary either. In fact, most of them look like ridiculous monsters from some old Terry Gilliam cartoon.

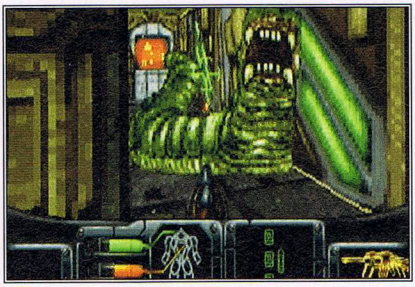
However, it's not just the graphics that spoil *In Extremis*. The levels are extremely linear – you just have to plough through, shooting everything in sight and collecting everything you find. After a few levels you've seen what the game has to offer and it all becomes a chore. There are no steps to climb or windows to look out of, and most of the rooms are small, rectangular and of the same height. And then there are the sound effects. Samples – apparently taken directly from the original Alien movie – sound good, sure, but they're hardly original, are they, guys?

I didn't really enjoy this title and it's not just because I've played *Doom*. It's because *In Extremis* is simply a rather shallow blaster.

CHRIS BUXTON

***"I didn't really enjoy* In Extremis *– and it's not just because I've played the vastly superior* Doom"**





(Above) **You have to see this giant worm thing moving to truly appreciate quite how (unintentionally) funny it is.**

(Left) **Destroy an alien when it's close to you and its green blood flies right in your face.**

PC GAMER Final Rating

58%

Highs The Alien scenario has plenty of potential.

Lows Dull graphics, repetitive gameplay and crap aliens.

The Verdict Vastly inferior *Wolfenstein/Doom* style shoot-'em-up.

Tense

Publisher	Mindscape
Developer	Robert Cook
Price	£19.99
Minimum System	386SX, 4 Mb RAM, Windows 4.1
Recommended	386SX or higher
Sound Support	Soundblaster
Release Date	Out Now

D/Generation For Windows

RECOMMENDED PC GAMER April '94

Great gameplay, tons of atmosphere and there's not an 'interactive movie' buzzword in sight. Who need progress with games like this?



(Left) **The Genoq receptionist is less than helpful.**

(Below) **Chat to the old geezer for some vital clues.**



PLACED AT NUMBER 44 IN our All-Time Top 50, Robert Cook's innovative isometric adventure looks set for an even higher placing next time round, thanks to this new Windows-based version. The enhancements made are minimal, admittedly, but they still make an already superb game even tastier. Set in a futuristic high-rise genetics research lab, *D/Generation* reads like a Michael Crichton novel – an experimental breed of biologically engineered 'smart' weapons (called NeoGens) have broken free and gone berserk around the Genoq Corporation building. With the security systems in operation, all of Genoq's employees have either been killed or trapped. At the start of the game, you touch down as a jetpacking messenger boy on the roof of the Genoq building, with a package for the mysterious Doctor Derrida. But is Derrida still alive? What awaits you on the building's lower levels? And just what are the more advanced NeoGens capable of?

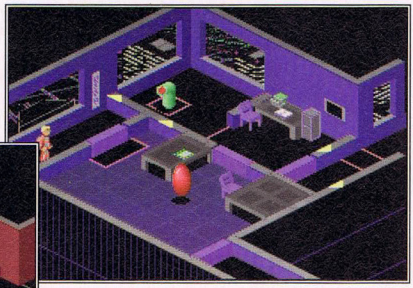
Although nothing particularly original, *D/Generation* is one of most creative examples of its type I've seen in a long while. There's nothing aesthetically stunning. In fact, it looks and feels like a throwback to the days when gameplay counted for everything because machines didn't have fancy graphics and sound capabilities. What we have here is an old-fashioned, nicely-balanced mixture of arcade action and simple puzzle-solving. Each level is made up of a series of interconnected rooms (which can be anything from an office to a meeting room or corridor), with the objective simply to search each for clues (from trapped Genoq employees – when you find them – or computer terminals – if you have the correct codes) and then find the elevator to the next floor.

The problems start almost immediately when you come up against Genoq's over-zealous security systems. Nearly all doors are locked, and you can only open them by hitting the correct touchpad or using the right key. Revolving laser cannons blast virtually anything that comes into their line of sight. Electrified floor panels switch on and off in complex sequences. And let's not forget the NeoGens. They come in four varieties: A/Generations are red spheres that become semi-invisible and home in on their targets. B/Generations are blue columns that can hide in the floor, making them difficult to detect even at close range. C/Generations, which crop up on later levels, can disguise themselves as people or objects (very Terminator 2-esque) and decapitate their targets once in range. Finally, there's the D/Generation, of which there's only one. It's so unspeakably horrible that, well, it's best not to speak about it really.

> *"It looks and feels like a throwback to the days when gameplay counted for everything"*

The back of the *D/Generation* box says "ingenuity and determination are your only weapons," but that's not strictly true – you can also pick up a useful laser pistol (the bullets bounce of walls, so you can fire round corners and the like) and there's even a limited supply of grenades to be had. The point is, while these weapons are useful (you've no chance against the NeoGens without them), problem-solving skills and thoughtfulness are far more critical in the long run.

Don't be put off by *D/Generation's* apparent simplicity. There's a hell of a lot under the surface to get your teeth into, believe me. With some superb new sound effects further enhancing the already tense atmosphere, this is proof positive that a tight, solid game design is still more important than all the ridiculously flashy graphics and well-oiled presentation in the world. GARY WHITTA





(Above) **One of the easier rooms from the 80th floor – simply blast the lone A/Generation, then flip past the gun turret.**

(Left) **Not so easy, this – electrified floor panels a go-go!**

PC GAMER Final Rating	
89%	Highs: Great design and very atmospheric.
	Lows: Nothing bad enough to put you off.
The Verdict	Add it to your collection immediately.

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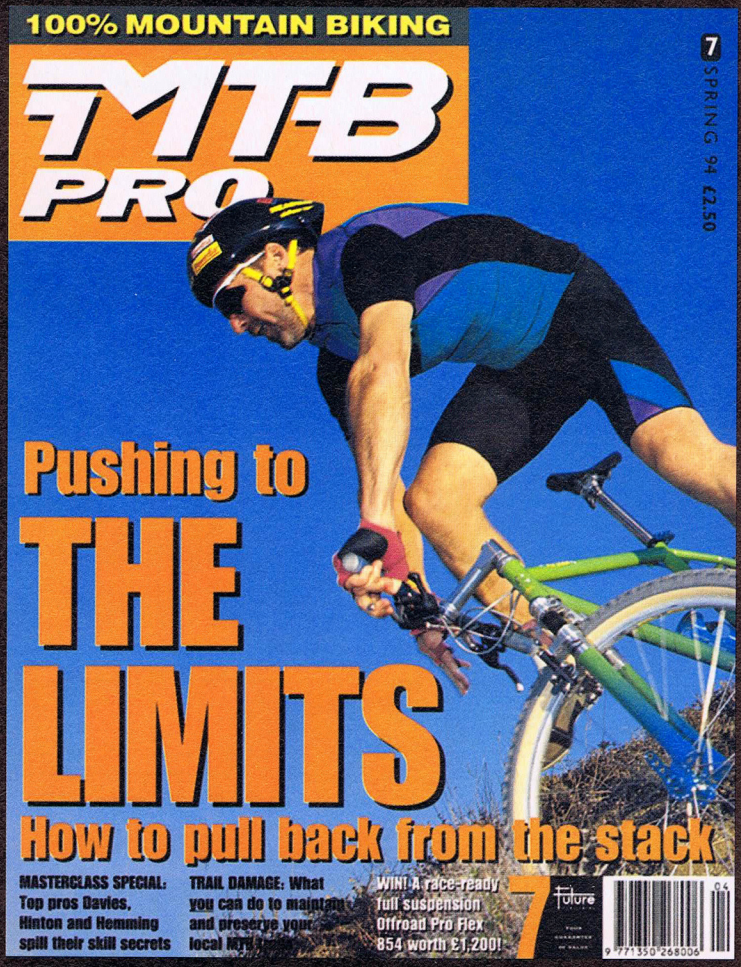

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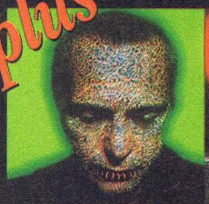

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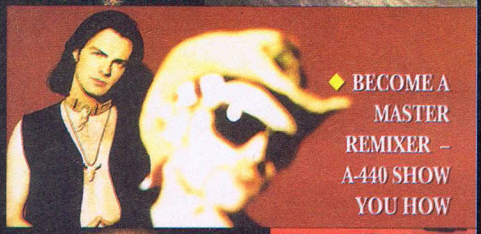

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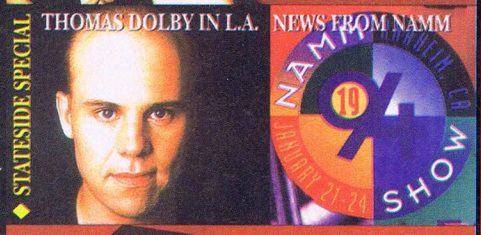

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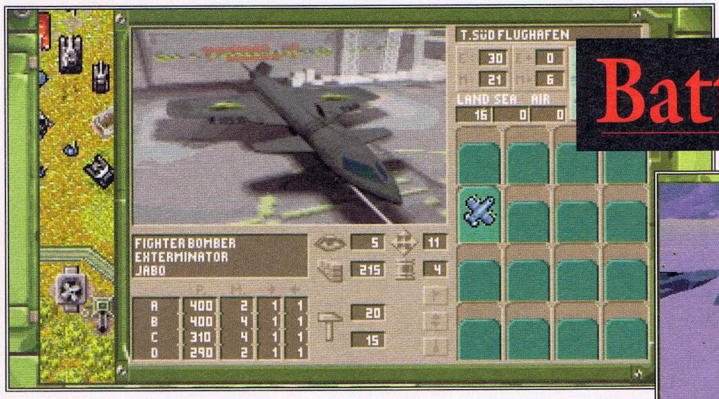
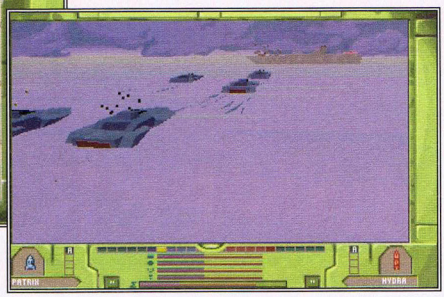
Battle Isle 2CD





(Above) **A unit of Patrix patrol boats opens fire against an enemy Hydra torpedo ship, and** (above-left) **the equally impressive graphics for the Exterminator information screen.**

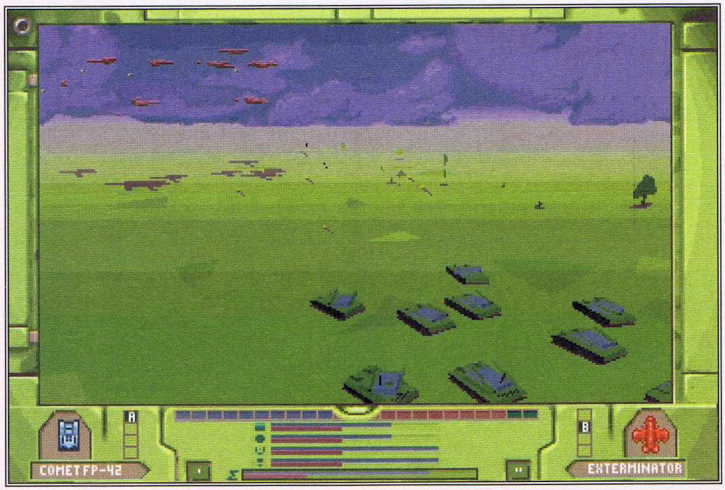
Illustrious German programmers Blue Byte sure know how to design playable wargames – but with this sequel to the runaway hit *Battle Isle* they've gone one better.

THE ORIGINAL version of *Battle Isle* was something of an anomaly when it first came out. Depicting the titanic struggle between the beleaguered Drullic Empire and the might of TITAN-NET (an artificially intelligent supercomputer bent on world domination), it single-handedly dispelled everyone's preconceptions about wargames in virtually one fell swoop. In fact, people who ordinarily wouldn't go near a game with hexes unashamedly sang its praises. Now Blue Byte have finished the imaginatively titled sequel *Battle Isle 2* – and gone and done it again. Once more, you are in charge of the Drullic forces in their continuing campaign – and, once more, the game is superb.

On the surface there are many similarities between the two titles – most obviously, the presentation, still an area of weakness in other wargames, which is utterly flawless throughout. The main map graphics are superb too – clear, well designed and highly detailed – and complemented by some impressive ray-traced animations for each vehicle type, as well as a new 3D combat view that uses smoothly moving polygons to show the results of clashes between units. Some of these scenes are truly breathtaking – the static screenshots on these pages just can't do justice to the imaginative camera angles and fluid animation. The sound is likewise excellent, from the unobtrusive tunes to the wonderful sound of enemy vehicles exploding.

Battle Isle 2 still uses a hex-based map, admittedly, but the hexes themselves have been made even less intrusive, which, combined with the detail and variety of the new maps, makes them virtually invisible most of the time.

A few minutes' play is enough to make you realise that *Battle Isle's* sheer playability hasn't changed a jot. But there are many improvements – the most obvious being the loss of the original split-screen display as direct a result of the different turn structure (more of that in a moment). As well as making the screen easier to understand, this also has the effect of doubling the area you can see at any one time, which provides you with a clearer picture



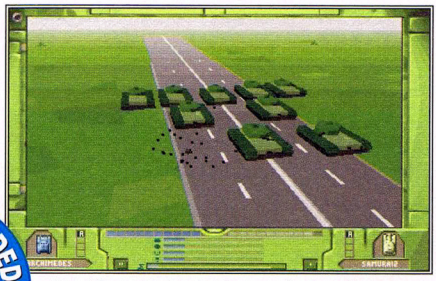


(Above) **The weather is vitally important to your strategy.**

(Left) **Comet anti-aircraft guns fight off some Exterminator fighter bombers in one of the stunning 3D battle sequences.**

ous

RECOMMENDED
PC GAMER
April '94



(Above) **Samurai battletanks take a pounding from a long-range Archimedes rocket vehicle. A powerful beast.**

Publisher	Blue Byte
Developer	Blue Byte
Price	£44.95
Minimum System	386, VGA, 4 Mb RAM, CD-ROM
Recommended	486, 8 Mb RAM, double-sided drive
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	March



(Left) **At the start of the third battle in the campaign – and some nasty surprises await just out of scanner range...**

of the overall situation. Yes, the turn system is different – but don't fret. Instead of the original's alternating turns (where you could only either move or attack), you can now do *both*. This makes the game much easier to get to grips with.

Your field of view has also been improved. Previously, you could see the whole map, together with all the enemy forces' positions. Now you can only observe what your units' sensors can detect. Each type of vehicle has a different 'vision' range, you see, which the enemy can jam if they so wish. This is perhaps the most important change to the game. Reconnaissance is vital, as is anticipating the enemy's likely moves. No longer can you be sure of what he is doing or even where he's doing it, and the uncertainty adds immeasurably to the gameplay. Radar installations and vehicles with long sensor ranges become important strategic targets, because what you can't see you can't shoot.

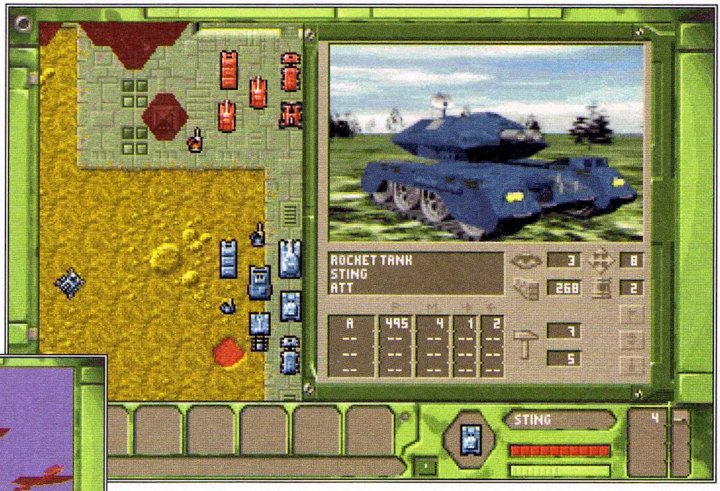
Blue Byte have also simplified the control system, which previously used a cursor that changed to represent different actions. The various options open to a selected unit are now displayed as icons in a window along the bottom of the screen. As you move the cursor, each one is clearly identified and highlighted, so you don't even have to remember what the icons mean. There are few enough PC games you can sit down and play instantly without reference to a weighty manual anyway, but with a wargame? It's got to be a first. Beyond these obvious changes are many of a more subtle nature. Units now have a given amount of ammunition for each of their weapons and use fuel to move around. This adds a whole new dimension to the gameplay. Destroying your opponent's supply vehicles, for example, can cripple his war effort.

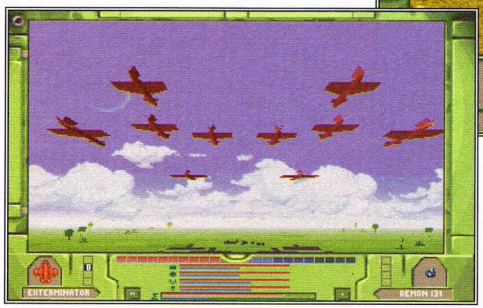
The last of the big changes is in the game's structure. You can still play individual battles against the computer – using the familiar password system (which has amazing AI) – but the original two-player option has now been dropped in favour of a stunningly superior multi-player mode. *Battle Isle 2* supports up to *seven* players, in fact, and allows for any combination of human or computer opponents. And then there's the all-new campaign mode. Here you play through 20 combat situations in a fixed order, each with its own specific objectives, which vary from battle to battle. How successful you are in each affects the entire campaign – do well and you can distribute experience gained between your units.

There are few faults with *Battle Isle 2*. Aside from the sometimes confusing statistics on a few of the information screens and the occasional pause while accessing the CD, there's not much else to moan about. There is, however, a great deal to praise. Blue Byte have a taken a successful concept and turned it into a classic game that is excellent in almost every way. Few games are good enough to appeal to virtually every taste, but *Battle Isle 2* is one of them.

ANDY BUTCHER

"There's not much to moan about. There is, however, a great deal to praise. A classic game that's excellent in almost every way"





(Above) **Another info screen, this time showing a Sting Rocket tank. There are over 50 types of unit in the whole game, each lovingly rendered in 3D.**

(Left) **Demon light infantry robots are easy prey for a squadron of Exterminators on the prowl.**

PC GAMER Final Rating

93%

Highs: Huge in size and scope, simple to play and intensely addictive.

Lows: Slow CD access at points and some info screens are confusing.

The Verdict: The best strategy/battle game around, especially in the multi-player mode.

(Right) **You can use your signet ring at any time to return to this courtyard outside your castle, but...**

(Bottom-right) **...don't get any ideas about jumping down that well – it won't do you *any* good.**

(Below) **Talk nicely to this old shapeshifter – he'll give you a great deal of useful information.**





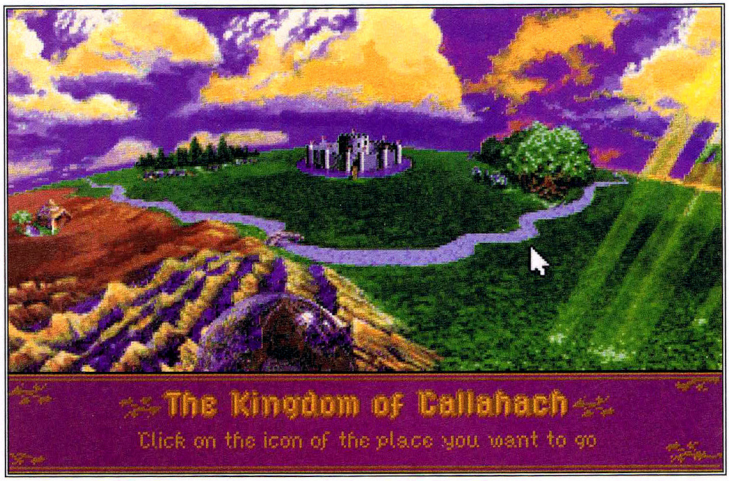


Round

Publisher	MicroProse
Developer	In-house
Price	£39.99
Minimum System	386, VGA, CD-ROM
Recommended	486
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	April

DragonSphere CD

I say, I say, I say. What do you get if you cross a CD with a graphic adventure? The well-polished *DragonSphere*, that's what.



Leave the courtyard and you'll go to this screen showing the five main areas of Gran Callahach. There's your splendid castle, the desert realm of the Soptus Ecliptus, the forest of the Faeries, the strange land of the Slathan and the DragonSphere itself.

ARE WE ALL SITTING comfortably? Then I'll begin... (Adopts booming baritone voice...) The powerful sorcerer Sanwe ravaged the land of Gran Callahach for 100 years before he was captured by the King and imprisoned inside the magical DragonSphere. At that time, Prince Callash was a boy of 13. Now, 20 years later, *he* is the King – and must face up to the fact that the DragonSphere is cracking and Sanwe could soon be free. Your task, as Callash, is to journey into the realm and defeat Sanwe before he can rape the land once more.

So it's your average Save-The-World-From-A-Fate-Worse-Than-The-Last-One story, then? Well, yes, but *DragonSphere's* executed in fine fashion, with convincing attention to detail, both in the graphics and animation and in the game's story and structure. The format of animated graphic adventures like *DragonSphere* is pretty rigidly defined– more than anything it's a game's story, humour or atmosphere that gives it an edge over the rest of the puzzlefests. (Think of LucasArts' fine *Indiana Jones* or *Monkey Island* games and you'll see what I mean). *DragonSphere* doesn't have the advantage of a big licence and doesn't play things for laughs, so credit to MicroProse for producing something that still manages to keep you playing.

Things start off simply enough, with you waking up in the castle and wandering around familiarising yourself with the gameworld. (Check out our coverdisk demo – all the info you need is on page 12 – to see a portion of the castle for yourself). Chat to the missus and she'll give you a bit of casual banter, your evil brother will make a few snide

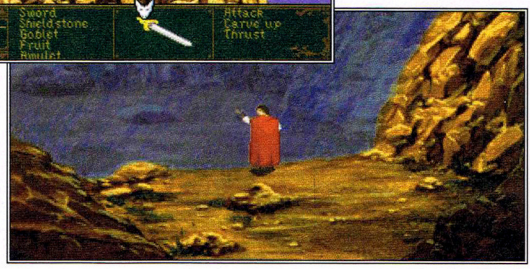
(Right) **Climbing up a mountain, you'll come across this beast and the comely Llanie de Summers (sounds like a Page 3 girl to me).**

(Bottom-right) **Breaking into the DragonSphere is easy. However, beating the sorcerer Sanwe who is magically trapped inside it isn't.**

(Below) **In the Faeries' maze you have to talk to the flickering sprites to find out when it's safe to move past the the guardian globes on the left.**







"A satisfying story – and with more than the odd unexpected twist"

ed

(Below) **This is the oasis where the Caliph of the Soptus Ecliptus resides. To reach it you'll have to find your way through a barren desert. And the only safe route through the desert is known by a solitary Bedouin-like trader who only speaks the bizarre native tongue of the Soptus Ecliptus. And just how d you learn the language? Well, I'll leave that for you to find out.**



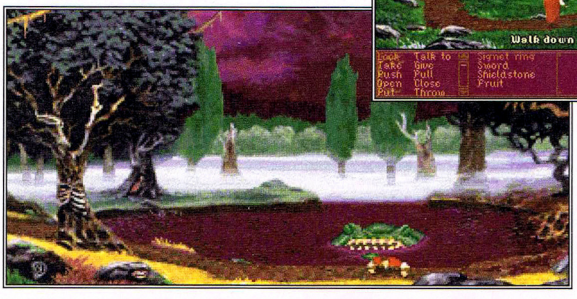
remarks while sat on your throne, and you can even flirt with a scullery maid. All this gives you a lot of useful background information about Gran Callahach, but it doesn't tax the brain much. However, get out among the people and you'll soon discover that there are three other races who share the land with you – the shapeshifting Slathan, the Soptus Ecliptus and the annoying Faeries.

You need to visit each race to find out how to beat the sorcerer Sanwe and to uncover vital items in your quest. It's not easy, though. The Faeries just want to torment you with verbal games and you'll have to learn how they think to get anything out of them. To understand just how annoying they can be imagine a race made up entirely of child movie stars and you'll get the idea. The Soptus Ecliptus don't even speak the same language as you. A few words that you'll pick up here and there are all you have to get you safely through a desert to their Caliph. The Slathan are the most troublesome of the lot. No-one likes or trusts them, your own guards won't let you near them and, somehow, you've got find their magic powerstone, which is vital to your quest. Bummer, eh?

The game interface is as smooth and logical as any I've seen. You enter commands by building sentences in the now-standard verb, object, person, place way. Simple and efficient, even if it is a bit restricting. As ever with this sort of adventure, the puzzles are at the heart of the gameplay. Some are simple, self-explanatory tasks ('Hmm, what shall I do with that empty flask next to that chemical experiment?'), others far more challenging conundrums, demanding a fair amount of lateral thinking. The conversations you have with the characters are equally important though. When you speak, you get a set of multiple choice questions and responses from which you learn how to deal with particular races to get what you want.

"Imagine a race made up entirely of child movie stars and you'll understand how annoying the Faeries can be"





(Above) **To get into the land of the shapeshifting Slathan you'll have to talk your way past the guards.**

(Left) **Get by the guards and you'll have to find a way of getting past this man-eating octopus beast-type thing.**

Sound familiar? Well, if that's the case you've probably had enough of these kind of games anyway. Inevitably, the story is linear and you can easily get stuck in a rut. Fortunately, there's a Novice option which provides all the visual and textual clues you'll need. Switch to the Challenging mode, however, and there's much less info to play with, forcing you to figure things out for yourself. Whatever you choose, *DragonSphere* is tough but rewarding – and beginners shouldn't be scared off.

Although it's like many other fantasy graphic adventures, *DragonSphere* is still an enjoyable game, with a well-plotted tale that, unlike its rivals, plays it straight and doesn't look to waggishly deconstruct the graphic adventure genre or take the mickey out of D&D yarns. There's a satisfying story at its heart too, with more than the odd unexpected twist. However, it's the game's presentation that really lifts the whole thing up. King Callash is beautifully animated, as are all the other characters, and fits in superbly with the attractive and varied background graphics. Every action is accompanied by unique bit of slick and classy animation. And with this being a CD-ROM game, there's masses of excellent digitised speech. In fact, the talking's so good, it gives this MicroProse title an extra dimension that few other adventures can match. Not the sort of game that blows you away, admittedly, but still a well-designed piece of software. CHRIS BUXTON

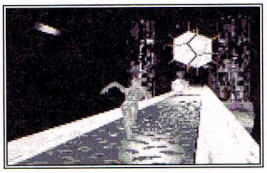
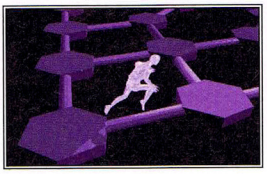
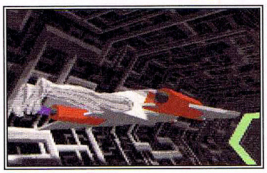
PC GAMER Final Rating

80%

Highs Lovely animation and speech.

Lows Takes a standard approach to the format.

The Verdict A solid graphic adventure that makes good use of the CD and spins a neat yarn.

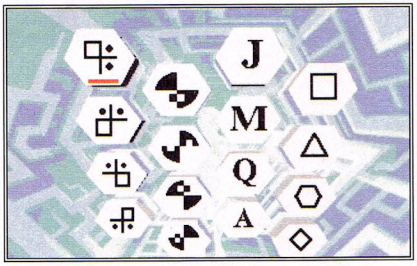





(From left to right) **Doctor Angelo's cyber persona runs away from a virtual lawnmower at the game's outset, before leaping between platforms in a guesswork subgame.**

The Lawnmower Man CD

Weedy

As the movie says, the world of Virtual Reality is limited only by your imagination. So why doesn't this game demonstrate any?





(Above) **Pierce Brosnan pops up in one of the many irrelevant digitised scenes from the movie that seem to have been dropped into the game to strengthen the tie-in.** (Left) **Meanwhile, yet another glorified puzzle to ponder over.**

Publisher	The Sales Curve
Developer	In-house
Price	£54.99
Minimum System	386, VGA, 2 Mb, CD-ROM
Recommended	486, 4 Mb
Sound Support	Soundblaster
Release Date	Out Now

THE LAWNMOWER MAN is a short horror story by Stephen King in which a man murders his next-door neighbour with – you guessed it – a lawnmower. It bears almost no relation at all to The Lawnmower Man movie, which – for a while, at least – claimed to be based on King's story. After reading the script, the horrormeister demanded that his name be removed from the film's credits, so Stephen King's The Lawnmower Man became simply The Lawnmower Man. He was right to get out when he did – otherwise he might have found his name associated with this tatty CD-ROM 'adaptation' as well.

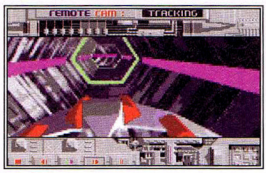
The Lawnmower Man is quite an achievement – in one single sweep it embodies everything that is wrong with both movie licences and CD-ROM games today. Like most tie-ins, it isn't very much like the film on which it's based (although those who've seen the movie may regard this as a plus). And like most CD-ROM games, it consists almost entirely of impressive graphic sequences and super sound, but with almost no tangible gameplay to back up the aesthetics.

Many developers would have looked upon *The Lawnmower Man* as a dream conversion. What subject matter – a scientist's experiments in VR which warp the mind of a simpleton gardener – could be more suited to a computer leisure title? As the game's intro points out, with VR your world is limited only by your imagination. Unfortunately, The Sales Curve's first stab at such an adaptation (a second version, with enhanced graphics and supposedly better gameplay, is due later in the year) can be filed firmly under 'missed opportunity.'

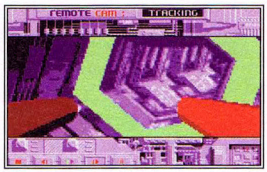
> *"It embodies everything that is wrong with both movie licences and CD-ROM games today"*

It's all just such a mess. Things start off well with an atmospheric introduction sequence depicting scenes from the movie, but as soon as that's all over you're stuck with a series of depressing and poorly-designed subgames with only the most tenuous of structural fibres connecting them. The story, such as it is, picks up where the movie left off. Jobe, the dunce gardener turned computerised superbeing by Dr.Angelo's VR experiments, has infiltrated the world's computer systems, taking the doctor's pals hostage along the way. Angelo, similarly transmogrified into a virtual person and propelled into Cyberjobe's domain, must pass a series of tests, based on his own VR games, in order to rescue his chums.

The story's basically just an excuse for the most unimaginative and careless of game designs – each individual subgame that Angelo encounters, once stripped of its fancy rendered 3D imagery, is easily identifiable as some archaic arcade game from yesteryear. That old Amiga PD favourite *Tank* is here, along with a version of the musical memory

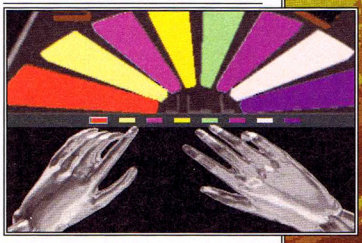




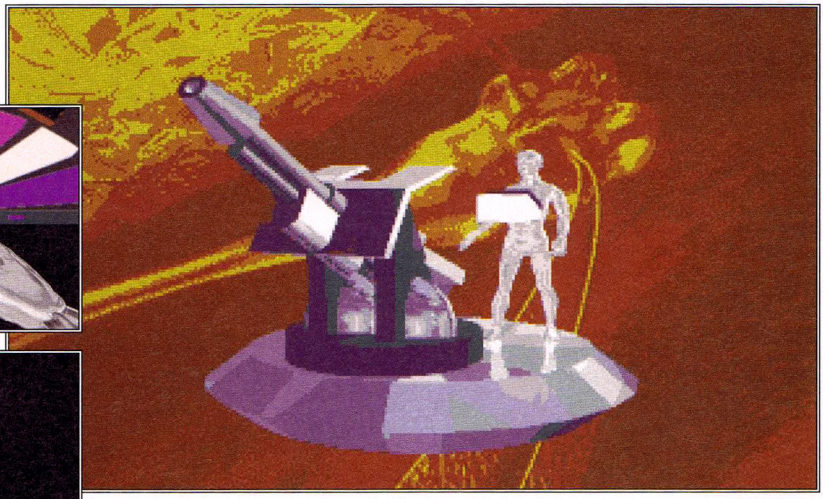




(From left to right) **CyberBoogie – where you fly down tunnels and, every now and again, hit a button to turn a corner or shoot open a door. If playability were as good as the visuals, this would've been formidable. Alas...**





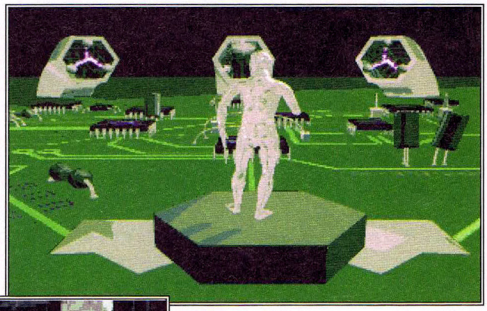


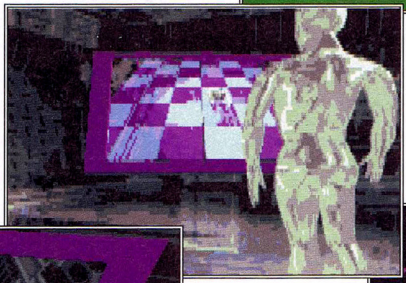
(Left, top, above and below) **Flashy graphics like these are typical of *The Lawnmower Man's* deceptive presentation – it's all lovely to look at, but hideously slow at times, and rarely worth the effort. Note the rip-off of the simplistic Simon memory game.**

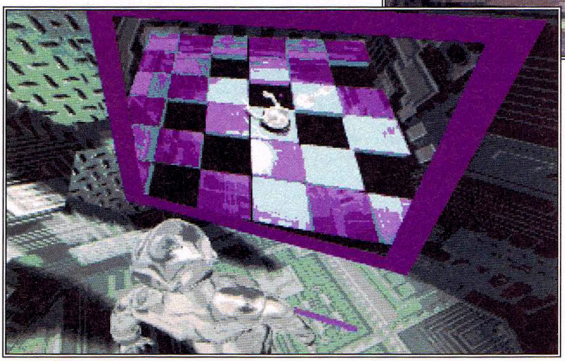
game Simon – and even a rip-off from that bit at the end of the ancient BBC 2 show The Adventure Game, where celebrities had to make their way across a grid while pursued by an invisible enemy known as The Vortex. This is shocking enough in itself, but the real horror comes when you realise that the original games, in some cases more than a decade old, are actually *better* than these new versions! At least when I used to play Simon or *Tank* years ago, I didn't have to wait what seems like ages for a CD-ROM drive to access the relevant information after each turn.

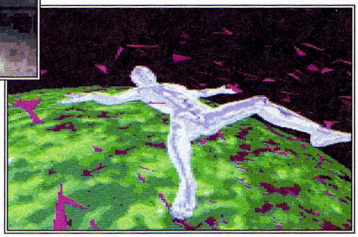
Nowhere is *The Lawnmower Man's* lack of interactivity more evident than in the 'CyberBoogie' sequences that link the subgames together. Angelo turns into a spacecraft and hurtles down a network of tunnels – and all you're required to do is hit the appropriate cursor key whenever a turn appears (on early levels there are even voice cues to tell you when to press). As with the games themselves, gameplay consists of simple reaction tests, no more sophisticated or challenging than Dragon's Lair.

So there you have it. Don't be fooled by the Virtual Reality blurb that the lavish packaging proudly proclaims – there's nothing of the sort on offer here. What you do get is Megabyte after Megabyte of occasionally impressive conceptual graphics based on the movie's VR visuals, a supposedly appropriate music score that sounds like it's been culled from a bad ambient album and... Well, that's it really. Oh, and a ludicrous £54.99 dent in your bank balance. If for some perverted reason you simply must own a The Lawnmower Man game, at least wait until the new, double-speed version arrives in a few months. Unless significant changes are being made I can't see how it'll be much of an improvement, but at least there's hope. For now, leave well alone. Your PC is capable of – and you deserve – much more than this. GARY WHITTA









(Right) **The beginning of the overlong death sequence...**

(Left and above) **In this subgame of remote control, you guide a slave robot over the chequered floor of a room towards a key. As always, success relies mainly on basic memory and reaction skills. Oh, and also patience as you wait ages for the CD to access the relevant section on the disc. Oh dear, oh dear.**

PC GAMER Final Rating

32%

Highs Technically impressive graphics and sound.

Lows No imagination, no fun and definitely no value.

The Verdict A string of tedious and depressingly slow mini-games do not a top CD game make.

Rampart

Publisher	The Hit Squad
Developer	Bitmasters
Price	£12.99
Recommended	386 and VGA
Release Date	Out Now



(Above) **Rebuilding your castle after a battle stage, and** (above-right) **a battle stage in progress. There are some new weapons in this version too, such as the propaganda balloon.**

ARCADE GAMES HAVE always been few and far between on the PC, despite a recent increase in their numbers. Thank God then for *Rampart*, based on the Atari coin-op, which is a real breath of fresh air.

The idea is so simple it's positively medieval. There are two modes: a one-player mode, and a two/three-player mode. In the one-player game, you choose a territory to conquer, a castle on the map as your own, and receive a number of cannons to place inside your walls. A turn then starts – several types of enemy ship bombard your walls, some landing troops if they reach the coast. You now have to blow as many ships out of the water as you can in the time given. You then get a variable amount of time to rebuild your walls, using *Tetris*-like blocks. If you fail to completely seal off your castle in the time provided, you lose. If you manage to enclose extra territory or even other castles, you get bonus points. The battle then continues until you destroy enough enemy forces or fail to build a wall, with extra cannons being awarded at the start of each turn, depending on the number of castles you've enclosed. Once you've conquered a territory, you move onto another, tougher one, and the process is repeated.

In two or three-player mode, the game remains similar, but the objective is to destroy the other players' castles without the messy business of attacking ships – and, as with most two-player games, it's here that game really comes into its own.

Rampart is great fun, mixing variety with just enough mindlessness to be entertaining. It's a bit too difficult (just like the original), and lacking in long-term appeal, but it's still a cracking good game. Well worth a look. ANDY BUTCHER



(Left) **Later in the same battle – and you've lost control of the second castle. Luckily, the enemy haven't managed to land any ground forces yet. It's only a matter of time though.**



PC GAMER *Final Rating*

79%

Highs Plenty of good, mindless fun.

Lows Tough – and gets repetitive.

The Verdict A great little arcade game that's fun while it lasts.

The Games: Winter Challenge

Publisher	The Hit Squad
Developer	Accolade
Price	£12.99
Recommended	386 and VGA
Release Date	Out Now

THE '80S CRAZE FOR multi-event sports games (whose controls kept joystick manufacturers in business the world over, seemingly) died unmourned with the decade. Since then, such games have thankfully relied more on timing and skill than on finger and wrist speed.

The Games: Winter Challenge is one such example, and covers eight winter sports – Downhill Skiing, the Luge, Cross Country Skiing, the Bobsled, Speed Skating, Giant Slalom, the Biathlon and Ski Jump. You can play the events independently, practice, or enter a tournament. This tournament mode is easily the game's strongest feature. Up to ten players can compete against each other, each taking it in turn to participate in the various events, and there are three levels of computer opposition if you haven't got any friends (you know who you are). You can tackle the events in whatever order you like, and the game keeps track of points and medals for each nation competing. Saving your position in a tournament is no problem either. What's more, each competitor has the option of viewing and saving a replay of their, er, 'efforts' after each attempt.

But so much for the good news. The bad news is that the events soon pall – they're all pretty repetitive – and actually achieving a good time is tough work, seemingly more down to luck than any other factor. In addition, even the worst computer opponents seem to take great relish in beating you easily, which is quite disheartening to say the least. The graphics and sound are adequate, and *The Games: Winter Challenge* is fun for a while, but you're unlikely to come back to it after the initial interest fades. Good fun with a few other players, but don't expect the thrills of Lillehammer if you're playing solo. ANDY BUTCHER



(Above) **The Cross Country event is one of the simplest on offer – it just requires you to pay attention to the energy meter in the bottom-right corner of the screen.**



(Bottom-left) **The more tired you are, the harder it is to shoot accurately in the Biathlon.**

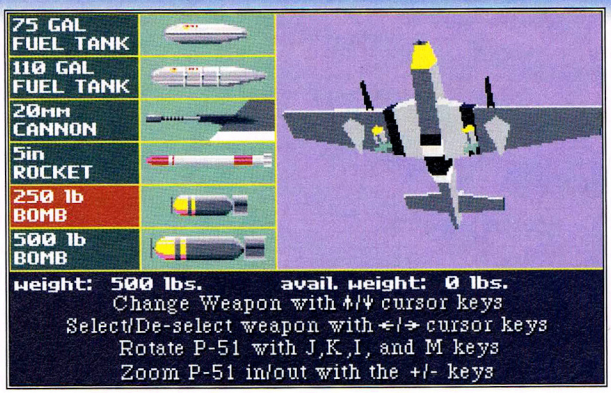
PC GAMER *Final Rating*

63%

Highs Good variety of events.

Lows Gameplay soon grows dull...

The Verdict There are worse ways to spend an hour or two.





(Above) **Taking in (or should that be out?) the sights as you attack Paris in spring.**

(Left) **Your P-51D Mustang can't hold much more than a couple of extra bombs.**

The Heroes Of The 357th

Publisher	The Hit Squad
Developer	EA/Midnight Software
Price	£14.99
Recommended	386
Release Date	Out Now

WITH ORIGIN'S *Pacific Strike* and MicroProse's *1942: The Pacific Air War* both taking to the skies of World War II in the near future, *The Heroes Of The 357th* still remains something of a yardstick title, even two years after it first hit the streets. It's an air combat sim rather than a flight simulation, so there are no take-offs or landings to master. You start each mission in the air just outside the combat zone, flying a P-51D Mustang (one of the best fighter planes of the war) through four different missions.

Most of the time you're flying on bombing runs, escorting B-17 Flying Fortresses while taking on the German fighters which attack them. On strafing missions, you have to attack ground targets, swooping in dangerously close to the ground and using your cannons/bombs.

It sounds quite good, doesn't it? A nice bit of atmospheric, leather-flying-jacket-on-back, Betty-Grable-postcard-in-cockpit action. Well, it *is* fun – but as a flight sim it's not really that impressive. There's no radar to help you out (obviously, because it's a historical sim), so to shoot a plane or hit a ground target you have to get right up close. In the air, this means you really have to know how your plane moves to be able plot a course to a target. Fair enough, but the game gives you no assistance whatsoever. The external views don't help and it's easy to get lost. Ground-attack missions are also flawed. There's little ground detail and it's very easy to plough into the ground (some of the buildings also have quite 'generous' collision detection).

I'm a big fan of historical flight sims and *The Heroes Of The 357th* has plenty of WW II atmosphere which really helps things along. At times, the combat is truly exhilarating. However, you'll be frustrated by the game's limitations – the dashes of imprecision and the 'realistic' lack of information about your surroundings.

A second division primer for the two new World War II big boys – but not much else. CHRIS BUXTON

PC GAMER *Final Rating*

68%

Highs Atmospheric; nice visuals.

Lows Frustrating combat.

The Verdict Fun, but everything feels too hits and miss.

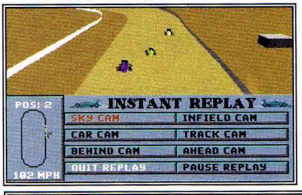
Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge

Publisher	The Hit Squad
Developer	Electronic Arts
Price	£12.99
Recommended	386 and VGA
Release Date	Out Now

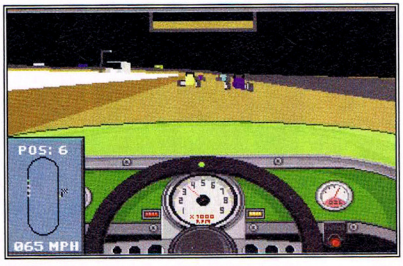
RACING GAMES ON the PC have gone through some radical changes in the last year. After a series of decidedly poor efforts, the genre came into its own with the release of MicroProse's *Formula One Grand Prix,* which has only recently been superseded by the amazing *IndyCar Racing (PCG* 1: 93%) from Virgin. *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge* was one of the few early games to show any promise, mainly because of its unique 'career' feature, which enables you to race in six different classes, from the tiny Sprint cars to the elitist Formula One. You start the game with $20,000, enough to set yourself up in Sprint cars, and then have to win enough money to move up to the next class, and so on. It's an interesting idea, and one which developers should try to implement more fully.

As it stands, though, *Mario Andretti's* isn't very impressive. The cars are uniformly hard to control, especially with a joystick (which is normally ideal for racing games). They have this annoying tendency to skid at the slightest provocation too, which doesn't help matters. The fact is, there isn't *that* much difference between classes and competitors. All the cars seem to handle in almost exactly the same way, reducing the variation between classes to a simple matter of top speed. In a like manner, the competitor cars all seem to be pretty much the same. While this is the case in some classes, such as Stock Car racing, it's certainly not true of Formula One.

If you're looking for a budget racer *Mario Andretti's* isn't a bad choice. But *Indy 500 (PCG* 2: 89%) is far better, and for another £30 you can get *IndyCar* or *Formula One Grand Prix,* all of which are covered in our All-Time Top 50 (starting on page 43). ANDY BUTCHER







(Above and left) **Two views from two of the game's many cars.**

(Above-left) **The limited instant replay feature, which enables you to examine the last 30 seconds or so of the race from several angles.**

PC GAMER *Final Rating*

60%

Highs Career options; loadsa cars.

Lows Poor controls – cars skid easily.

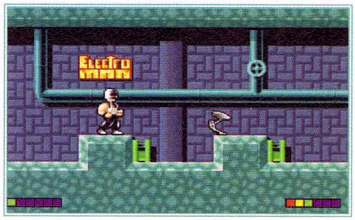
The Verdict Moderate racing game, but nothing special.

Shareware

EPIC exploration

Take one PC, a modem, a bunch of bored journalists, unlimited supplies of PG Tips and what've you got? Our monthly round-up of the Shareware scene, as only *PC Gamer* can bring it to you, that's what...

BY GARY WHITTA



(Above) **He's Electro... he's Electro... he's Electro... Man! What's this? A *likeable* cutesy character? Yes, and he's harder than he looks too – or can be when you charge up his gun and transform it into an incredibly super-powerful blaster.**

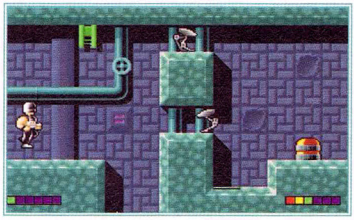
Whenever it's slow

going in the office, there's nothing better to alleviate the boredom, we find, than to brew a cuppa and pay some leisurely visits to our favourite bulletin boards via the trusty *PC Gamer* modem. Apart from racking up a phonebill that would give Maureen Lipman a heart attack, we never fail to have a right laugh downloading things that look like fun – and then finding if they are or not. But some months are understandably better than others, particularly when **Epic MegaGames**, those master purveyors of quality Shareware, release a new batch of top titles.

Along with the likes of Apogee and id Software, Epic MegaGames are one of the few Shareware companies you can actually rely on to turn out consistently high-quality Shareware. ***Epic Pinball***, the rather groovy game that gives even the full-price *Pinball Fantasies* (*PCG* 3: 89%) a run for its money, catapulted them into the Big Time. However, never ones to rest on their laurels, Epic have now just released a new wave of freebies onto the BBS/Shareware circuit.

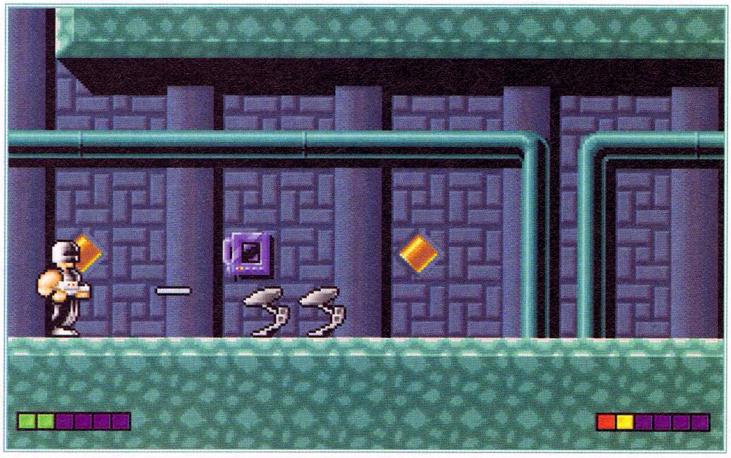
Electro Man

First up is the rather spiffing ***Electro Man***, a cutesy platformer-cum-arcade adventure in the *Rick Dangerous* mould. It's a European effort previously released in a slightly different form under the name of *Electro Body*. This new version fiddles with the maps, bonuses and adds some new features that makes things just that little bit jollier all round. The main character, sort of a cross between RoboCop and Big Ted, is a right geezer, capable of milling around in a suitably robotic fashion, and jumping 'n' firing energy bolt type thingies at the myriad of baddies which accost him. The backdrops are often as deadly as the nasties that patrol them, with all manner of lasers and the like. The puzzle (such as they are) aren't quite as sophisticated as those in *Rick Dangerous*, but – hey! – what do you expect for free? Oh, and there's rather nice speech in there too. The Shareware version gives you the first level, while registering gets you the remaining seven. Very jolly.



(Above) **Electro Man may have lots of top skills, but he can't hover – it's just that we've caught him here in mid-jump. The green thing up top is a laser gun, so stay out of its way.**

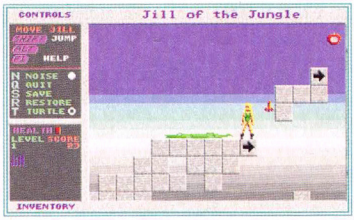
(Below) **Killer robots? Pah, no match for Electro Man and his big gun. I've just time to polish these off, then I'm off back home for a packet of custard creams and EastEnders.**



Xargon & Jill Of The Jungle

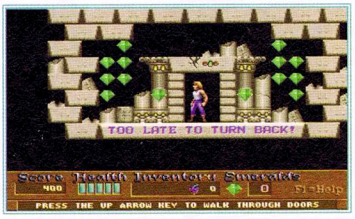
Continuing in the platform vein are two other titles, which boast similar graphic and gameplay styles, but radically different scenarios. It's all a matter of taste – if D&D mysticism is your thang you'll love ***The Xargon Trilogy***, but fans of leopardskin-clad lovelies climbing up vines and taking on sabre-toothed tigers like something out of a bad '50s B-movie would be well advised to check out the atmospherically-titled ***Jill Of The Jungle***. Both games are exquisitely presented, offering no end of on-line help and demonstration tutorials (why can't full-price games be as friendly and thoughtful, I wonder?), and both offer a fair amount of puzzle-type stuff within their arcade adventure framework. Surprisingly, they're both technically





(Above) **Lovely graphics, jolly sound and fab presentation all add up make *The Xargon Trilogy* very good indeed.**

(Left) **Not quite so lovely graphics in *Jill Of The Jungle*.**



(Below) **Brilliant block-boggling bunkum in *Brix*, based on Taito's *Plotting*. Or was it *Puzznic*? Oh, we don't remember. They both had bricks in them and they were both French. We're all confused now – we'll have to go and lie down...**

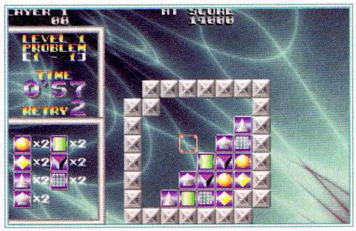


accomplished too. Scrolling Shareware arcade games normally bring new meaning to the word 'jerky,' but *Jill* and *Xargon* move along very nicely, thank you, proving once more that the PC can handle arcade material as well as anything else on the market.

Despite its samey fantasy storyline, *The Xargon Trilogy* is the best of the two, with slightly more going on to keep you interested (in a retaliatory move, Jill tells us she can mystically transform into a bird, frog or fish, but she's somewhat missing the point because then we wouldn't fancy her anymore). It's actually one of the better arcade games we've seen on PC so far this year, and arcade adventure fans whove been chronically short-changed on the arcade adventure front to date could do a lot worse than look it up. Shareware versions of both *The Xargon Trilogy* and *Jill Of The Jungle* give you the entire first world, with the rest (two more worlds for each) available once you register.

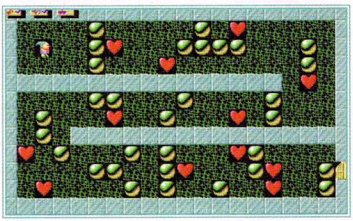
Brix

Technical merit doesn't count for everything, however, and the award for our personal favourite Shareware game this month goes to the rather splendid puzzler ***Brix***. Like much successful Shareware, *Brix* quite unashamedly rips off an existing game idea (in this case,



Those Contacts

You should be able to get most of the new **Epic** releases from all reputable Shareware libraries and bulletin boards – modem users should try **After Hours ☎ (0785) 228214** or **The 021 Connection ☎ (021) 520 7615**. Alternatively, you can order directly from Epic MegaGames themselves at: **11 Baker Avenue, Potton, Bedfordshire SG19 2PJ.** Telephone **☎ (0767) 260903**; **CompuServe 100265,213**



(Above) **The *Boulderdash* clone *Heartlight* – we couldn't even get past the first level. Still, the taking part's the thing.**

(Left) **A Mario-stylee bonus room from *The Xargon Trilogy*.**

Taito's little-known strategic block-manipulation coin-op *Plotting*, which Ocean brought to home machines a couple of years back). It's a tad like those infuriating little sliding-block puzzles, but there's a bit more strategy and forward planning required as you attempt to move blocks of the same design next to each other to get rid of them. It's, erm, like a mix between Mah Jong and *Tetris*. Or something. But it's really good – and though it starts off simple, soon gets tricky enough to have you scratching your chin like a good 'un.

Not only is this version free, of course, but it's actually that bit better than the original, with spruced-up VGA backgrops, variable difficulty levels and no shortage of jolly tunes. The Shareware version dishes up a generous amount of levels, with another 112 – and an excellent level editor – available to those who register. We have to admit we've lost quite a few work hours on this little doozy over the past few weeks, which is always a sure-fire sign of its prowess.

Heartlight

Finally, I was going to tell you about ***Heartlight***, a rather scrappy *Boulderdash* clone, but we spent all day playing it and none of us could get off the first level. Now since we are obviously all such great gameplaying gods, it can only be a fault with the game itself that's making things difficult... Er, so we'll just say that only expert Rockfords need apply – and leave it at that. See you next month, and keep up the downloading. PCG



(Above) **Not exactly the bestest graphics in the world, but tons of fun nevertheless – that's *Heartlight*.**

(Left) **Another screen from *Brix*. Lah-de-dah-de...**



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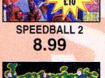

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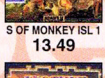

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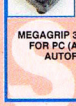

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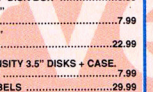

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Diagnostics

Where Gaming Problems...

Find Their Solutions.

Alone In The Dark 2

Diagnostics • Diagnostics • Tips winner • Diagnostics • Diagnostics

Alone In The Dark 2 (PCG *3: 92%, Infogrames, £39.99) is currently one of the most impressive games you can get for the PC. But if you're still struggling against those occult forces and Unseen Powers, rest easy. Help is at hand in the form of this complete solution sent in by Mr C W M Lee from Walthamstow. Mr Lee receives his choice of game from this issue's Shop-O-Matic (page 110)...*

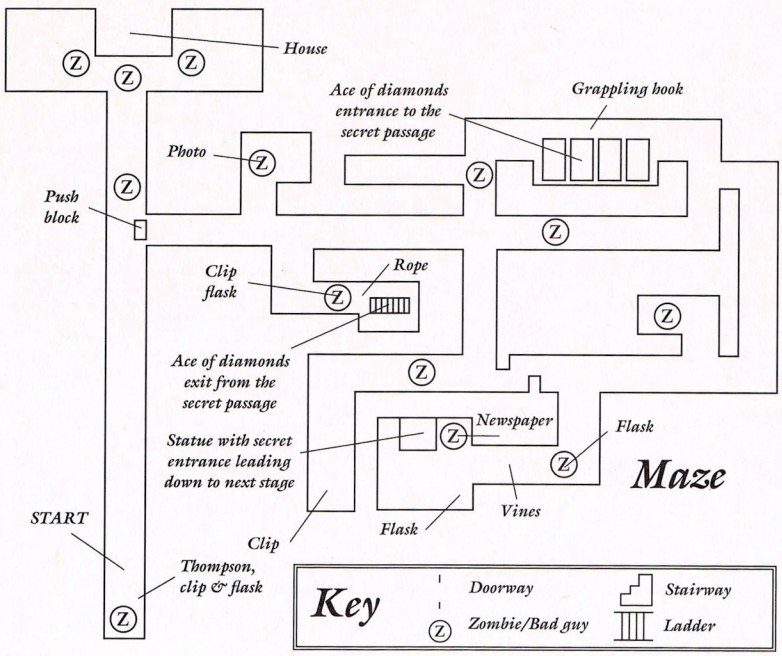


The secret trapdoor opens up and our hero prepares himself for what may lie below (he hasn't read the rest of our handy guide, you see, so he doesn't know). Stay well clear of the other cards – a single touch can mean death.

The Maze

Kill the zombie just inside the gate and get the Thompson, clip and flask. The flask heals you, and the clip reloads the Thompson. Be careful to reload only when you have to.

Walk up the path towards the house and you'll encounter four zombies. After killing them, push the stone block (the one with the anchor on it) to enter the maze. The first zombie leaves a photo once killed, the next a clip and a flask. You'll also find a rope lying nearby. At the crossroads there are two zombies, one ahead and one to the left (this one leaves behind a book). Kill them and then take the other lanes. Now turn right, kill the zombie, turn left and get the clip at the dead end. Go back to the crossroads and continue on, turning to the left and left again. Get the grappling hook and touch the ace of diamonds on the ground. This then opens up. Don't touch any of the other cards – they'll kill you.



Beneath The Maze Go right, kill the zombie and then get the torn notebook. Push the chest and pick up the metallic jack playing card. A ghostly shadow-creature will now come towards you. Shoot it to obtain a sabre. Move over to the altar which has risen up from the ground and use the playing card to open the other trapdoor. Go to the ladder opposite the altar, take the flask and climb up and out. You'll find yourself standing where the ace of diamonds is located.

Back In The Maze Head back towards the crossroads. Turn right, left (through the zig-zag bit of hedge) and then right again. Kill the zombie and take the flask. Ready the sabre and continue along the path. When the vines appear, chop them with the sabre. Carry on, but watch out for the peg-leg zombie. Kill him and he leaves a newspaper. Use the rope to tie it to the hook. Now stand in front of the statue and throw the hook. Sit back and watch...

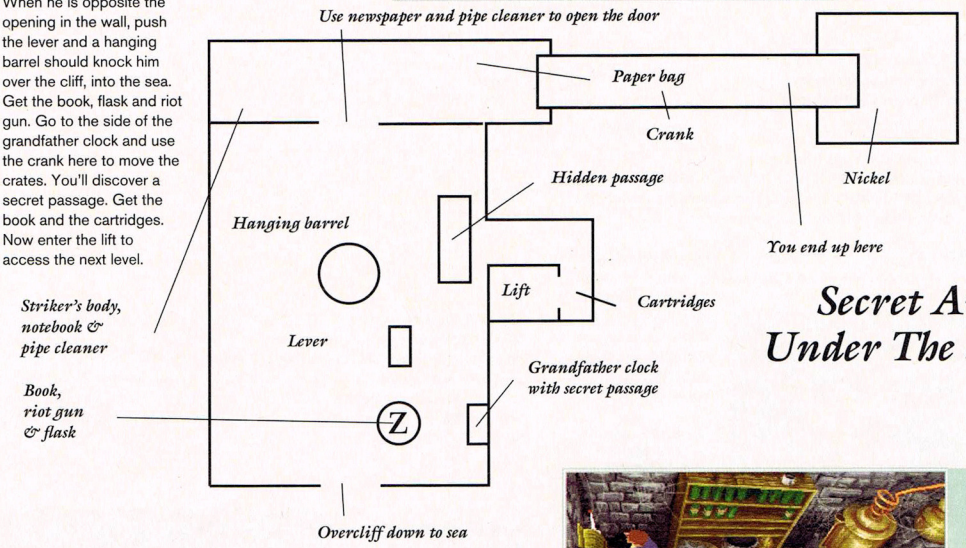
Under The Statue

You lose all your weapons here, so save as often as possible – this section isn't easy. Go back towards where you came down and get the nickel. Pick up the crank that's lying on the plank and the paper bag. Continue along and you'll find Striker's body. Get the other half of the notebook and the pipe cleaner from the body, then use the notebook to join the two parts together. Go to the locked door and use first the newspaper, then the pipe cleaner. Afterwards, use the key to open the door. It's good idea to save here.

In the storeroom, move over to the lever and save your game. To blow up the paper bag simply *use* it twice. The zombie now gets up and comes towards you. When he is opposite the opening in the wall, push the lever and a hanging barrel should knock him over the cliff, into the sea. Get the book, flask and riot gun. Go to the side of the grandfather clock and use the crank here to move the crates. You'll discover a secret passage. Get the book and the cartridges. Now enter the lift to access the next level.



When hacking the animated vines to bits, use the downward slash – the other moves are too risky.

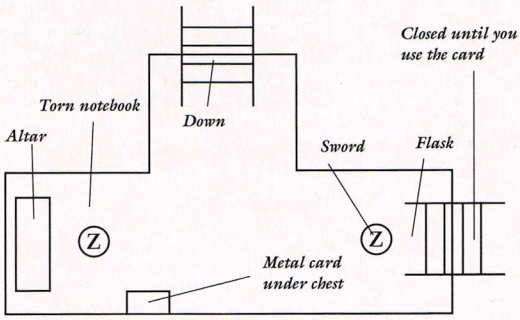


Secret Area Under The Statue



Our hero's luck is amazing – no matter how many times you play, you always win.

The Shooting Gallery And Connected Room Shoot the two zombies and get the cartridges on the table by the door. Go to the very end of the room and use the battledore to turn the blocks. Whacking a block rotates the faces twice. To rotate the faces only once, stand with your back to them and use the up cursor attack. When all the faces are showing diamonds, the door in the corner opens and another zombie comes out. Enter the room, get the books from the far end (one on either side), the whiskey and the flask. Use the nickel on the slot machine to obtain two tokens. Leave the room and shoot the zombie in the corner by the coat-stand (alternatively, put the whiskey down in front of him). Get the sack – and open it to get the Santa suit. Put it on. Now go upstairs.



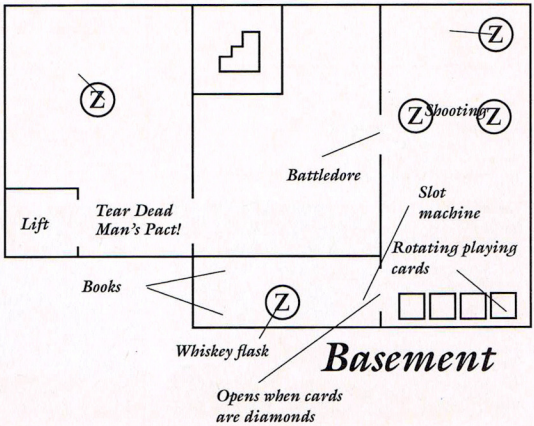
Passage Under Cards

The Basement

Tear the Dead Man's Pact (which was the newspaper) in front of the music man zombie to kill him. Pick up the hook that he leaves behind, go through the door, and then nab the battledore. Now go through the door into the next room – the Shooting Gallery.

Having cunningly disguised himself as Santa (he's not sure why just yet...), Carnaby prepares to enter the house proper.



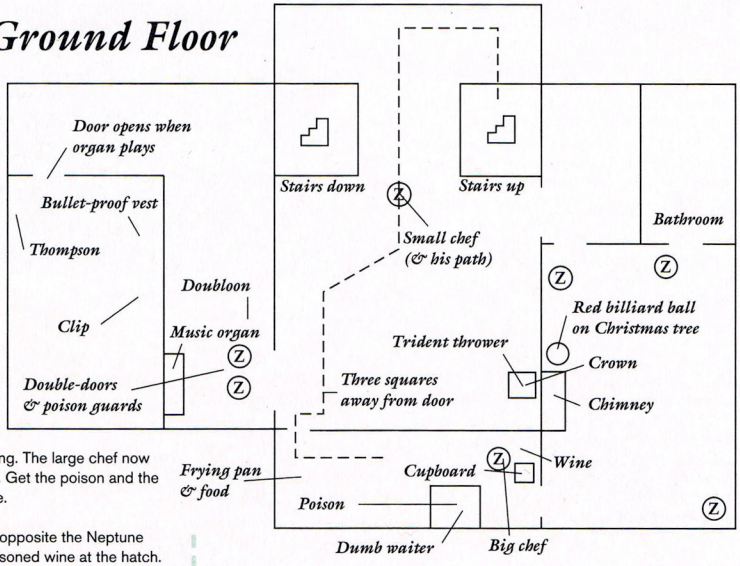


Basement

Diagnostics

The Ground Floor

It's a very good idea to save here. Don't try to kill the little chef zombie – just follow him into the kitchen. If you don't follow the correct squares on the floor, the statue of Neptune will throw his homing harpoon at you, don't forget.



The Kitchen Get the fried eggs (which you can eat) and the frying pan. Wait until you hear the ping. The large chef now heads to the dumb waiter. Kill him with the frying pan. Get the poison and the wine, then use the poison to create some deadly wine.

The Organ Room Go to the double-doors opposite the Neptune statue (try not to set the harpoon off), and put the poisoned wine at the hatch. Step away from the door (being careful where you step) and two zombies should open the doors, come out – and die. Use both the tokens at the front of the organ. This makes the door at the far end of the room open and a doubloon appear next to you. Pick up the doubloon and go through the door Nab the bullet-proof vest and the clip. The Thompson soon jams, but don't use the clip just yet – save it until you find another Thompson.

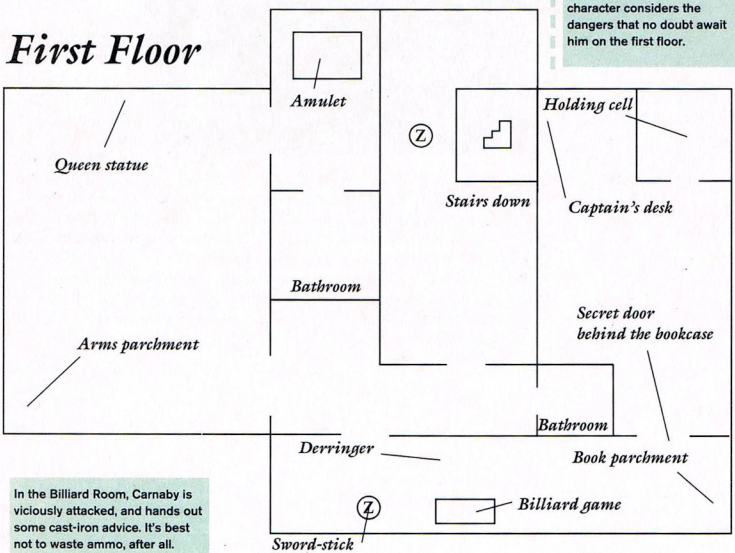
Get the crown from Neptune and then go upstairs. Don't go into the other rooms on the ground floor yet. Kill the zombie at the top of the stairs and then go through the door.



The zombie chef has a sudden psychotic episode, and has to be dealt with in the appropriate manner – with a good frying pan about the head.

A brief pause for thought, in which our inspiring central character considers the dangers that no doubt await him on the first floor.



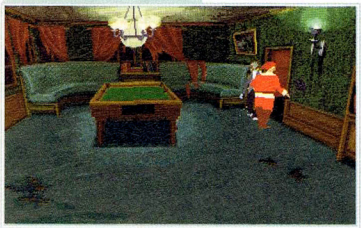


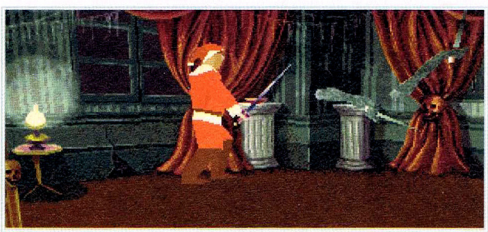
The First Floor

The Billiard Room Go through the door in the opposite wall to enter the billiard room. Kill the zombie near the billiard table – you may need to use the derringer the zombie throws at you when you first come in to do this. Take the sword-stick that it leaves behind, go to the bookshelf at the back of the room and extract the book and the torn parchment. Leave the room and turn left into...

The Bedroom Use the sword-stick to get rid of the two arms on the wall (you need to thrust at them, then step back before you get hit, and so on). Pick up the other piece of parchment from the pedestal (where the arms were located), and join the two pieces together by using one of them. Use the crown on the white bust near the room's other door. Now go into the connecting room and get the amulet. This transports you to the attic.

In the Billiard Room, Carnaby is viciously attacked, and hands out some cast-iron advice. It's best not to waste ammo, after all.



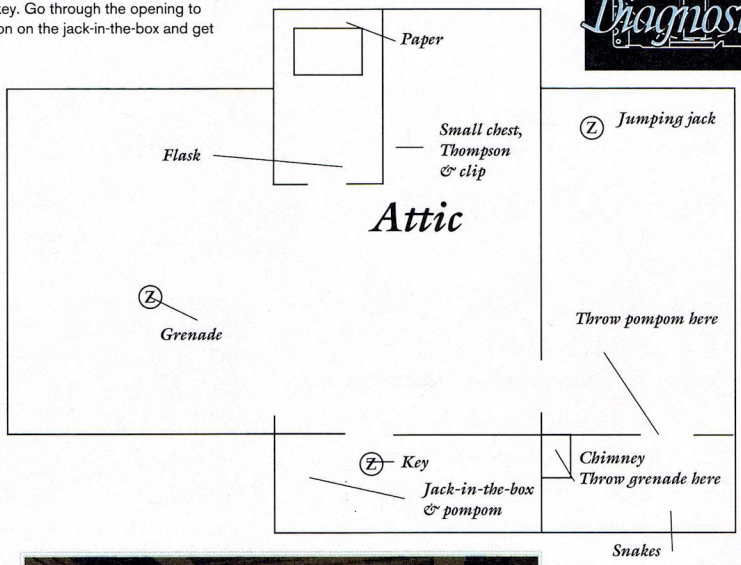


Our hero discovers the best way to deal with the animated arms. Stand here and thrust, then back off before the right-hand arm hits you. Repeat as necessary.

The Attic

Get the flask and the message from the small room, then leave and go to the small chest round the corner to the left. Here you'll find a Thompson and a clip – although you don't have to pick them up if you don't want to. Kill the two zombies, then get the grenade and the key. Go through the opening to what looks like a storeroom. Use the doubloon on the jack-in-the-box and get the pompom.

Go through the door in the other room and stand in front of the opening to the right. Throw the pompom into the observatory, then move out of the way of the opening. The jumping jack goes after the pompom into the observatory, where the snakes then kill him. Enter the observatory, stand in front of the chimney and throw the grenade into it. This kills a zombie downstairs. Use the bullet-proof vest, and get your Thompson ready for some heavy use. Now go straight down the flue.



The Ground Floor (Again)

The Piano Room You'll tumble down the chimney – only to find three zombies with Thompsons after your blood. Get the red billiard ball from the Christmas tree – if you leave the room quickly enough, you won't have to kill the zombies – and head back upstairs to the Billiard Room.

The First Floor (Again)

The Billiard Room Insert the red ball into the billiard game machine – to do this you have to be standing directly in front of the game's front glass panel. You should see the ball go down, and a secret door will be revealed. Unlock the door using the key you picked up in the attic. Go in...



An unusual camera angle serves to make this scene far more spooky than it should be – after all, you've only come here to get a red pompom. Still, the life of a supernatural investigator is never without its risks, however unnecessary – it comes with the territory.

Getting Captured It's dark in here. There are some nasty noises. You feel someone pushing carelessly into you. You stumble, hear what sounds like a rusty door... The lights come on and... You are now the prisoner of One-Eyed Jack. Well done.

You see One-Eyed Jack and Grace, the little girl you've come to rescue. He tells you his story, and then Grace makes a run for it. One-Eyed Jack chases after her. Use the hook from the music man to pick the lock, then head downstairs toward the statue of Neptune.

Elisabeth comes in through the front doors. Make a run for it – it won't do any good, but it's a fun diversion. She'll use her voodoo (a bit unsporting, but that's baddies for you), and you'll be captured once more...

A heroic roll into the midst of the enemy. Not the brightest of moves, but gutsy nonetheless. Just be sure to get up shooting.



So, Until Next Month

That's right, the final part of our detailed solution will be in next month's issue of *PC Gamer*. Find out how to escape from the dread pirate ship with the help of the ever-so-cute Grace – and deal the evil One-Eyed Jack and his decaying goons the fatal blow.

Still Stuck?

Then you'll be happy to learn that Infogrames have a dedicated Alone In The Dark 2 *help-line available on ☎ (0891) 244444, and even a tips book, written in the form of the hero's memoirs, available from Infogrames, 14 Smedley Street, Clapham, London SW4 6PF. Spook...*

Alone In The Dark 2

Alone In The Dark 2 is published by Infogrames and costs £39.99. It earned 92% and our Game Of The Month accolade in the February issue of *PC Gamer*. PCG

Diagnostics



Being a member of the caring, sharing and terribly liberal-minded Federation, it's better to talk this guard into letting you go than smack him around the place.

Star Trek: Judgment Rites

Part 2

In this, the second part of our guide to Star Trek: Judgment Rites, *we deal with the next three missions. As before, a complete walkthrough would have taken up too much space, so this guide tells you how to deal with just the main problems you'll encounter in each mission.*

No Man's Land

Fighting Trelene's Triplane

Concentrate your firepower upon it, and if Trelene starts to head straight at you, quickly move the Enterprise out of his field of fire.



Helping this guy is a lost cause – the dastardly Trelene has seen to that – but he does provide you with one of the vital power items.

Leaving The Storeroom Start a fire by doing the following: collect some sticks and then use Kirk on the case in the upper-right corner of the room. Take some schnapps, use it on the hay and then use the sticks on the hay. Now use Spock on the guard or talk the guard into letting you out.

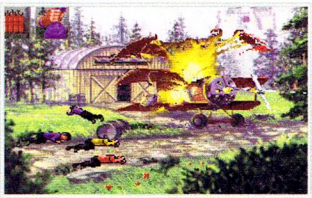
Helping The Old Man Use Kirk on the guard, then use the medkit on the old man. You can only ask him one question.

Getting To Trelene You must destroy Trelene's power items. You can collect three of these – the **clock** in the store, the **chalkboard** from the school and the **soldier's locket** in the trench to the left of town – easily, but the fourth (the Triplane) is located to the right of the town. You also need some TNT.

The Dog And The Armoury Get some food from the store and give it to the dog. Now use McCoy on the doberman while it's distracted.

The Armoury Guards You need to drug the beer in the tavern by using the medical kit on it.

The Clock Power Item Help the one-armed man in the apartment *(Sounds like something out of Fire Walk With Me... – Ed)* by sweeping his floor with the broom from the store. Take the money he gives you to the poker game in the back of the tavern and use it on the table to play. Take the winnings (if only real life were that easy) to the store and buy the clock.



Oh dear, it looks as if Trelene's power items have all, quite suddenly, exploded. How unfortunate for him. I wonder if that TNT had anything to do with it? (Snigger.)



There's nothing like a few hands of poker to calm you down when the pressure starts to rise. Besides, it's a nice little earner.

The Chalkboard Power Item You have to trick the teacher into giving the chalkboard to you. To do this you must get Sundergard to spread a rumour in his paper by getting transfer papers for his son. After drugging the guards in the armoury, tie up the guard commander and get a rifle from the wall. Use McCoy to wake the commander and then threaten him with the rifle. He now signs the transfer papers for you. Take the papers back to Sundergard in the poker room, and then talk to Schiller in the tavern about the chalkboard rumours. He'll give you a letter to take to the teacher.

The Locket Power Item Use the medical tricorder and then the science tricorder on the wounded soldier. Talk to him about the locket and he'll give you a letter to his girlfriend. Take this letter to Gretel in the tavern and then return to the soldier and talk to him about the locket.

Getting The TNT Use the rope to tie up the armoury commander. Use McCoy to wake him up, then use Spock on the commander to get the combination to the safe. Afterwards, use Spock on the safe.

Trelene's Triplane After you've collected the other three power items (see above), take them to the plane. Use each item on the aircraft – then activate the TNT to blow the thing up.

If Trelene Freezes Ellis Tell Trelene to release Ellis immediately and take you instead.

Releasing The Enterprise By talking to Trelene you can make him realise that war is *not* a game. Try and talk him into showing you a historical trench scene, then lecture him on the evils of war. Eventually, he will repent.



Just follow this guide to achieve huge scores and untold amounts of praise from Starfleet command. Not bad, eh?

Maximum Score To get the maximum score you must talk to Ellis to determine his problem, defeat Trelene's Triplane in the beginning, persuade the guard to leave in the storeroom, save the old man from the guard and heal his wounds, defend Gretel without provoking the guard, obtain the broom, rope and food by talking to the boy, not use the rifle on the fallen guard in the armoury, offer to heal the retired gentleman, use Spock to fix his phonograph, not use the rifle (or the TNT) on the cat, attempt to heal the wounded soldier, not fight with Ellis, get the kids to vote, not threaten the kids, tricorder the castle, resolve the conflict between Ellis and Kirk, attempt to destroy Trelene's painting, not use the rifle on Trelene, look at the Enterprise in a bottle, trick Trelene into looking for the

babysitter, persuade Trelene to take you to the real trench – and then force him to lose his composure.

Light And Darkness

What's Going On Your goal is to successfully combine two lifeforms – one of light, one of darkness – into their destined single form. To do this you need genetic samples from each.

Getting Help From The Beings Talk to each representative being and convince them that they are of a very similar race. Once you do this, they will want to be joined together, and will give you the samples you need.

If You Waste A Sample Simply go back and talk to the beings. They will give you another sample. If you need to summon an image of the being, use Spock on the keyboard of their genetic storage computer.



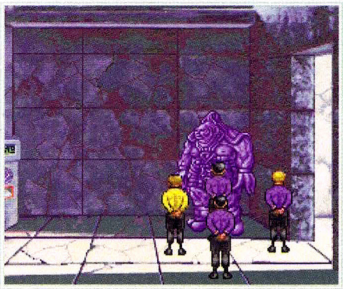
Just when you think you've finished, and you're ready for a hearty self-congratulatory slap on the back, something else goes wrong. Life's tough for a starship captain. Sigh.

Combining The Samples You need to sequence and replicate the samples, then use the replicated samples on the large computer in the room to the north of the entrance. The sequencer is on the left (in the entrance-way), the replicator on the right. Use the samples on the sequencer door, then use Jons, the genetic specialist, on the sequencer computer.

If Jons Cannot Sequence The Dark Sample Jons is deliberately failing to sequence the sample. You need to talk to him and convince him that he has no right hindering the wishes of the two races.

If The Replicated Sample Is Bad You need to remove the organic material on the replicator by shooting your phaser (set on stun) at it.

Using The Replicated Samples Take both replicated samples to the computer in the northern room and use them on the access port.



He may not be pretty, but judging a book by its cover can get you in a lot of trouble with weird alien races. Don't do it – it's not big and it's not clever.

Fixing The Transmission The transmission is breaking up because the antennae on the outside are failing. Exit the complex and go right to find them.

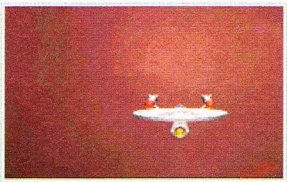
Powering The Antennae The antennae are powered by a geo-thermal device. Use the science tricorder on the control panel of the first antenna, then attempt to use your phaser (set on maximum power) on the rocks. Use the science tricorder on the rocks just above the antenna, then contact the Enterprise with your communicator.

Aligning The Antennae Go straight to the second antenna and use the science tricorder on the control box. Contact the Enterprise with your communicator, then use Spock on the control box. Afterwards, return to the transmission room.

Maximum Score To score the maximum number of points you must successfully contact the Brassica, clean the replicator before making a sample, tricorder the building from the outside, get Jons to do his job without direct accusation, not annoy Azrah or Vizznr, not use the faux-delta sample and scan all three sensor dishes.



Oops, you've gone and thrown a spanner in the works here – a pillar of light and more alien shenanigans.



There are some lovely animated sequences in *Judgment Rites*, so we thought we'd show you a bit from one. No particular reason – it's use a nice screenshot, that's all...

Diagnostics

Voids

Exiting The Bridge Talk to everyone on the ship's bridge – and, lastly, Spock. Use him on the science station twice, talk to him and then use him on the science station one more time. Afterwards, use the science station. You can now exit through the turbolift.

Helping Spock Spock has been captured by an alien – and you must rescue him. Head for auxiliary control.

Getting A Medical Scan Of The Alien You have to make a hole in the door before you can do anything else. Fire your phaser (maximum power) at it, then use the medical tricorder.

Gassing The Vurian Take the scan to McCoy in sickbay. Talk to him, then take the gas canister to engineering. Use the gas canister on the life-support mixer to the right. Now use the life-support controls on the left.

Finding Out Where The Vurian Went Use the sensor controls in auxiliary control – they're on the far right.

Strengthening The Ship Use your communicator and talk to Scotty. Have him divert energy to the shields. This will buy you more time to track down the Vurian.

Following The Vurian Once you have the coordinates of the Vurian, go to the transporter room.

Talking To Spock Spock is delirious, so use the medkit to calm him down. Remember, you still have to free him from the grasp of the Savant.

Talking To The Vurian Talk to the Vurian and get as much information as possible. He then summons the Savant, the alien behind your problems. This fellow will subsequently appear in the large hole to your right.

Talking To The Savant The Savant won't let you and Spock return to the Enterprise together, so don't bother hassling him for this. You must be careful not to return without Spock, or talk the Savant into destroying itself. You must force the Savant to return *with* you instead.

Returning To The Enterprise Use the pouch on the blue gems. Now summon the Savant – by talking to the Vurian – and throw the pouch at it. Don't be nasty when you talk.

Maximum Score To score the maximum number of points, you have to keep hull damage above 84%, give orders to fully boost sensors or shields, talk to Scotty, Sulu and Chekov on the bridge, choose Spock to be transported first, phaser the auxiliary control room door only once, not use maximum power phasers on the Vurian, get the Vurian to aid the party, not use Walker on the blue gems without the pouch, examine the stones with both tricorders, not threaten the Savant (the Savant cannot be angry when you first summon him), and not use the pouch of stones on Spock.

Star Trek: Judgment Rites

Interplay's *Star Trek: Judgment Rites* costs £39.99 and was reviewed in *PCG* 1, where it earned 92% and a Recommended award. PCG

Diagnostics



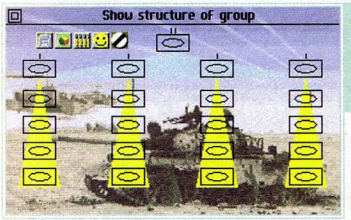
Campaign II

A strange blend of strategy, wargaming and arcade simulation, **Campaign II** *(PCG 3: 45%, Empire, £39.99) is an ambitious title that, if our Diagnostics mailbag is anything to go by, many of you need help with (which is hardly surprising because it's not the easiest game in the world). Here, then, are a few handy hints, courtesy of the people who made it.*

Battles

While your overall strategy is very important in *Campaign II*, lack of expertise in individual battles can lose you the game. Here are some tips for using the various units at your disposal.

Helicopters Helicopters are (surprise, surprise) enormously powerful if you use them skilfully, but it *is* difficult to both fly and fight at the same time when you're using them. The best answer is to have a two-player team – with one person flying and the other firing missiles or using the gun.



Be sure to make full use of *Campaign II's* extensive structure displays in order to remain aware of your forces' composition and organisation.

● The chin turret on modern helicopters can follow the movements of the weapon officer's head by using devices mounted in the helmet. This is impossible to implement in a game, naturally, so it's best to use the gun automatically by selecting targets using the crosshair.

● A stable platform is always necessary when using the weapons, so try to avoid high speed manoeuvres while aiming your missiles. Otherwise you'll almost certainly lose the lock.

Tanks Using the auto-gunner is a good idea, because it is pretty accurate. However, it doesn't take account of speed, and just aims at the target's current position rather than where it will be when the shell hits. Your skill in shooting will be better than the automatic system once you learn how to anticipate target positions properly.

● It is always sensible to drive across the enemy's field of view, rather than directly towards or away, since doing this prevents the enemy from anticipating your movements. You will almost certainly be hit if you stay still, so keep moving.

● With the modern fully-stabilized turrets, it is possible to 'jink' (drive in a zig-zag manner) and keep aiming at the target. This is an accepted tactic in real warfare, but requires practice, especially if one player is both driver and gunner.

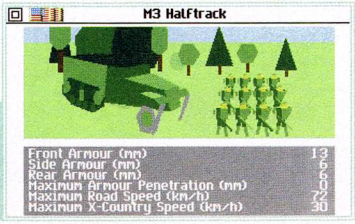
● You can split the duties of gunner and driver between two players. You'll have to change the keyboard layout (for one to use a joystick), or for the gunner to select targets using the crosshairs.

APCs The older APCs (M113, FV432, BTR-70, etc.) have only a machine gun for local defence. This is no use except against infantry in the open so, as soon as you spot an enemy, disembark your infantry. They will be armed with a selection of weapons, which will probably include an anti-tank missile.

● It is important to disembark your infantry in good time, since the individual soldiers will only select targets and shoot when they are standing still.

● When using the new MICVs (M2 Bradley, BMP, etc.), don't forget to use the guided missiles. These are very effective against the enemy, but require careful guiding on your part.

● As soon as an enemy vehicle spots an APC with infantry, it will open fire with its machine guns, so there is always a risk while soldiers are disembarking. However, your soldiers' ability to fight back often outweighs this.



Always keep tabs on the capabilities of your forces. Cross-country speed and high armour values are particularly important.

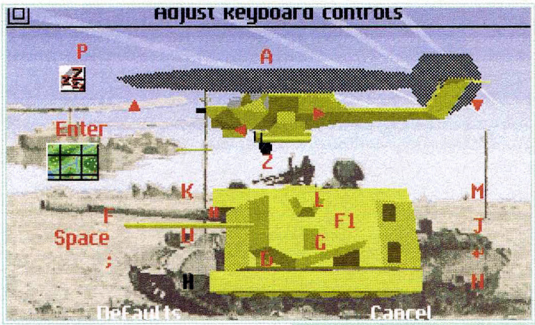
Air Defences Successful air defences can make a huge difference. Some vehicles (Strela 1 & 10, Rapier, etc.) have anti-aircraft missiles, which can home in on their target automatically. Use these vehicles to provide effective defence. With practice, they can be extremely useful. They fire automatically too (although manual targeting is quicker). Since each missile homes in on its selected target, the vehicle can fire multiple missiles against multiple targets simultaneously. Lock, fire and then repeat until all targets are accounted for.



Yet another of the many organisation screens – they may not be fun to look at, but using them properly is the key to military success.

● The automatic gunner should be used for gun-based air-defence vehicles (such as the ZSU-57-2, ZSU-23-4, M163 Vulcan, etc.), unless you are very skilful indeed. The automatic systems are good at staying with targets, unless they move too close or too far away.

Artillery Don't forget that artillery shells won't land for about 30 seconds after targeting. Also, they end up scattered across a fairly large area, so keep your forces well away from the impact zone.



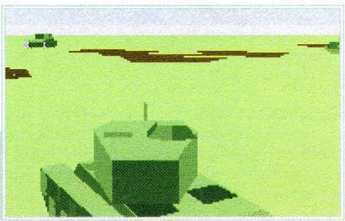
Use these option screens to make sure you're comfortable with the controls for each type of vehicle in the game.

Campaigns

● **Adopt a sensible order of battle formation for your forces. Depending upon the enemy, you need to advance in line astern (to avoid detection, except by the intended target) or line abreast (to attack or defend across a broad front).**

● Use dumps to ensure that your forces are always well provisioned. If they run out of fuel, they stop and dig in. This is okay when the enemy are looking for you, but not vice versa. Running out of ammunition is more serious – afterwards your forces can only conduct very limited operations. Running out of food is the most serious problem of all, however. Your troops then surrender immediately.

● Ensure that your forces are each provided with artillery, aviation and air defence sections. These play a decisive role in battles. Both automatic and manual battles can use these vital supplementary forces. PCG

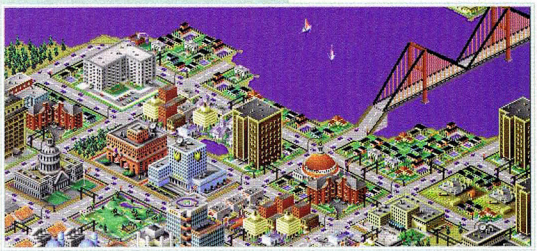


One of your tanks scans the horizon, looking out for enemy vehicles and infantry. Nothing to kill so far. What a shame.

SimCity 2000

You've probably heard enough hyperbole about Maxis' latest (PCG 4: 94%, Maxis, £39.99) to last a lifetime, so we'll just wave these general urban building tips in your direction and let you get on with it in your own time. Enjoy...

Successful, sprawling cities like this one here are really quite simple to create – but they don't necessarily make nice living environments. Use all the information at your disposal – namely your advisors and all the papers (just skim through them quickly) – to do the best job you can.



Mini Cities

This guide will help you build a small, totally self-sufficient city 'block,' which you can then repeat across the map again and again.

1. Place a power station near the edge of the map. The corners are even better than the edges (if you have one with the right terrain).

2. Find a piece of flat terrain with no water or hills (and make sure it's not too close to the power station).

3. Create a **R**esidential zone of three by three squares.

4. Create an **I**ndustrial zone of two by two squares right next to it, along one edge of the residential block.

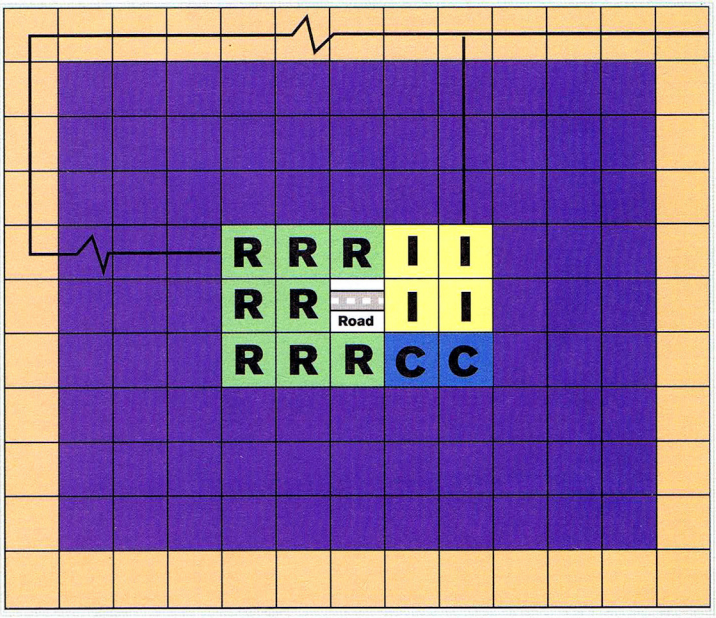
5. Create a **C**ommercial zone of one by two squares bordering the industrial zone and the residential zone, forming a rectangle (as shown to the right).

6. Place one block of **Road** in the residential zone next to the industry.

7. Surround the entire mini city with a buffer of three blocks of **water** on all sides.

8. Connect power to the residential zone – or the residential and industrial zone – to speed things up.

Your mini city is now complete. The land values will be very high, creating large tax returns, and there will be no crime or pollution. It may look strange, but you can build up a grid of these city blocks and gain the highest approval rating possible.





It's a good idea to avoid building on hilly terrain such as this – before you start, use the terrain editor to flatten out the irregularities and then you can create wider, more practical terraces for your sim inhabitants to build on.

General Hints

Here are a few odds and ends that should prove handy for virtually any city, be it the mini-metropolis outlined above or one of your own making...

1. Start you cities near the edge of the map to facilitate links to neighbouring towns. These help make your industry more successful. Build freeway links as soon as possible, and if your city is on the coast, build a seaport as soon as you can to increase trading (don't wait for your citizens to ask for one, just wait for enough cash and go for it).

2. You can safely ignore demands for fire and police protection – at least at the outset. If you build them too early you risk draining your income too much. Likewise with schools and hospitals – wait until your income is high enough to support them before spending your mooley.

3. When building your road network, be sure that no zoned tile is more then three tiles away from a road, otherwise it won't develop at a useful rate.

4. The quickest way to put out a fire when you haven't got enough stations is to use the bulldozer tool to raise the land levels around the blaze (this isolates the fire and stops it spreading). You can also surround it with water, which causes less damage to the surrounding buildings (however, this can be quite expensive).



Don't forget to personalise your city with the numerous options available – use the signs and information tools to point out all of the major landmarks and features.

5. Be careful when using the terrain editor – it's pretty to have lots of hills, but make sure you can still run roads and power lines up the sides. You can't build on triangular tiles or bridge certain combinations of angled tiles, remember.



Ensuring that your city's population has adequate water supplies increases the maximum level of growth in your zones – it's well worth the effort.

6. Finally, type 'porn' (all lower case) during the game, and listen out for Will Wright (the game designer) passing strange comments on the game.

Coming Soon...

In the next issue of *PC Gamer* there will be a detailed guide outlining the best strategies for success in *SimCity 2000*, along with more hints and tips to help you deal with common problems and how to improve your city's prospects. Don't miss it... PCG

911 emergency

Got a problem? Then write to: *PC Gamer*, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.

Complementing Diagnostics' guides, tips and solutions is Emergency 911 – the part of *PC Gamer* where you get answers to specific gaming problems. Just write in to the address shown on the left, and the Emergency 911 posse will do their bit to resolve the difficulties. But no technical queries please – only gaming hints and tipettes in our mag.

Your gameplay queries answered by the experts

X-Wing



Q I'm about halfway through *X-Wing* and although I think it's an excellent game it's beginning to get very hard. I'm having particular trouble with the missions where you have to try and do several things at once – I just don't seem to have time to do everything and fight with the Imperial forces. Do you have any suggestions?

Michael Trawson, London

A *Success in the later missions of* X-Wing *depends very much on your wingmen. Without good pilots backing you up, you have to do everything yourself, and on some of the missions this is, quite frankly, impossible. So first off, some facts. You know the screen just after the briefing room, where you can assign pilots to any other rebel starfighters involved in the mission?* X-Wing *rates these computer-controlled pilots on a five-point scale – rookie, officer, veteran, ace and top ace. If you don't specifically assign these guys to enemy craft, the computer automatically flies them as rookies, which means that in the later missions you'll be outclassed by the Imperial forces, whose skill increases as you get deeper into the game.*

There are two ways to get good wingmen and thus counteract this unhelpful trend. One is to start several pilots and put them all through enough historical and real missions to increase their skill (as shown on the assignment screen). The other is to make duplicates of your main pilot. By the time you're halfway through the game, you should be quite highly rated. To do this go into the X-Wing *directory and type COPY SMITH.PLT JONES.PLT, where SMITH is the name of your pilot, and JONES the name of the new pilot you want to make. By doing this several times you can build up a stable of pilots, and whenever your combat rating goes up, you can repeat the process to get better wingmen.*

Bear in mind, though, that wingmen gain experience from every mission they're involved in, although not nearly as much as you do, and that they can be killed.

The Secret Of Monkey Island

Q In *The Secret of Monkey Island*, how do you kill the sword master in the three trials, and how do you get into the governor's house? I've done everything that I can think of, but I just can't seem to solve either of these problems.

Tristan Kinch, Wicklow

A *Once you have bought a sword from the store, go east and exit the village. East from Lookout Point is a house (in the southeastern part of the island), where you can give the fish to the troll. Use Captain Smirk to start your sword training, then go back to the intersection to the west of the fork – and wait. You should meet some wandering pirates who will challenge you. By fighting them you can learn the various insults. Before challenging the sword master you must master all four major insults and comebacks, plus the 16 minor ones...*

To get into the governor's house, head to the fork in the road and into the forest. Pick up the petal from the yellow flowers, then use the petal on the meat. Go to the house and give the drugged meat to the dogs. They'll fall asleep. You can now enter the house.

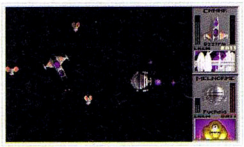
Star Control II

Q I recently bought *Star Control II*, and I'm having a lot of trouble with the combat sections in the game – the aliens keep killing me and I'm getting nowhere. Please help.

James Cox, London

A *First, stay away from the hostile aliens at the start of the game. As the star map is updated, you'll be able to see what beings control what areas – and from that work out what you can cope with. Second, avoid using your main ship in combat – it's too valuable to risk. Use other ships instead. Third, bear in mind that nearly every craft in the game has one ship that it's ideal for fighting against, and one ship that's its nemesis. By experimenting with various combinations, you should be able to work out what's good against what, and the strongest ships overall. The melee subgame is ideal for this, because you can choose whatever match-ups you fancy.*

If all else fails, let the computer control your ships in combat by choosing the cyborg option from the game settings menu. Be aware, though, that this ***doesn't*** *guarantee success – choosing the right ship is still important, and a highly experienced human player will always be better than the PC.* PCG



Arcade games that refuse to be completed; adventures that continue to perplex; flight simulations that never end... The answer? Emergency 911. We're waiting for your calls.

911 emergency

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Comms without frills

Which Modem?

Games don't just come on floppy disks. Fit yourself up with a modem – it needn't be complicated – and all sorts of info and on-line games are yours to explore in an instant.

BY SIMON WILLIAMS

***Fed up** of squeezing triggers and wrenching yet another joystick from its unhappy bearings? Fancy something a little different? Easy access to just about every Shareware and Freeware game ever marketed? Endless hints and tips on difficult levels or awkward adventure puzzles? Multi-user games where you're only one of many live players? Thought so.*

But where's all this fun and frivolity, I hear you ask. Why, at the other end of your telephone line, I reply modestly. All you need is the necessary hardware to get at it, software to control it and some spare sponds to pay your telephone bill. It's not that difficult to set up either, despite the mindless abbreviations the comms industry is notorious for...

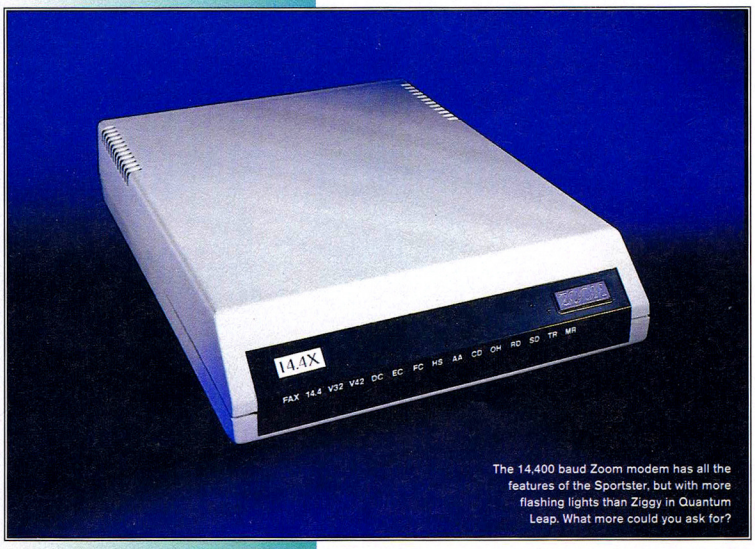
The Hardware

Setting up your PC for modem communications is a lot more straightforward than you might think. First off, of course, you need to buy a modem. This is a small box which converts signals from your PC into a form that can be passed down British Telecom or Mercury telephone wires.

Of all the various abbreviations modem suppliers use to describe their wares, the key one is **speed**, measured in **bits per second**, or **baud**. That's bits per second, not bytes, though – a modem capable of 2,400 bits per second could only have a top speed of 300 bytes per second, for example. Depending on the state of the telephone line, this may be reduced by the need to check and re-send parts of the data to correct mis-read bytes.

You should always buy the fastest modem you can afford, because the speed directly affects your telephone bill. A 14,400 baud modem normally sends and receives data six times as fast as a 2,400 baud machine. The costs of going on-line are the telephone time (naturally), plus any charges made by the services you connect to (more about these later).

Modems used to start at around £100, but now the **White Box** modem from **Express Technology** is being pushed at a mere **£60** – and that includes software, fax support and a CompuServe trial pack. The modem runs at 2,400 baud (to the V22 bis standard) and is fully BABT approved. BABT approval is always required if you want to use a modem legally on the UK's telephone system. Although you can



The 14,400 baud Zoom modem has all the features of the Sportster, but with more flashing lights than Ziggy in Quantum Leap. What more could you ask for?

"There are three main software packages worth considering* – Odyssey, ProComm Plus *and* WinDOS Pro 2 – *of all these,* ProComm Plus *is the most versatile..."

Enter The Internet

Once upon a time, there was a network set up by the US Defence Department, called ARPANET. This grew and grew, gradually acquiring a base of users from other areas – schools and universities, for instance – until it ended up as the world's largest inter-related set of networks, known as the **Internet**. The Internet is truly worldwide and multi-cultural. You can 'type-talk' to anyone on any continent and join conferences on anything from Pantyhose to Roommates from Hell.

However, there's also extensive games coverage on Internet, via its conferencing section, **Usenet**. Here you'll find not only groups interested in all kinds of board games, adventures and RPGs, but a PC games Top 100, Game Bytes – an on-line games mag – and plenty of hints and tips. Once you know your way around, you can log onto remote computers and download all manner of Shareware and Freeware goodies.

So how do you get at all this stuff? As mentioned, most universities and colleges have access to the Internet and you may be able to get yourself an account this way. You can also connect through a gateway with other services, such as CompuServe or CIX.

If your appetite has been suitably whetted, you should get hold of one or both of the following excellent books, both by net gurus Harley Hahn and Rick Stout. The biggest is **The Internet Complete Reference (ISBN 0-07-881980-6, McGraw Hill, £23.95)** with over 800 pages telling you just about anything you'll need to know. It's not written by propeller heads and it's easy to read, with masses of hints and asides. **The Internet Yellow Pages (ISBN 0-07-882023-5, McGraw Hill, £22.95)**, however, is just that – a directory of thousands of interest groups and how you can join them.



Petite and easy to set up, the Pace MicroLin FX runs at up to 2,400 baud. There's a 14,400 version too, which should cut your telephone bills down.

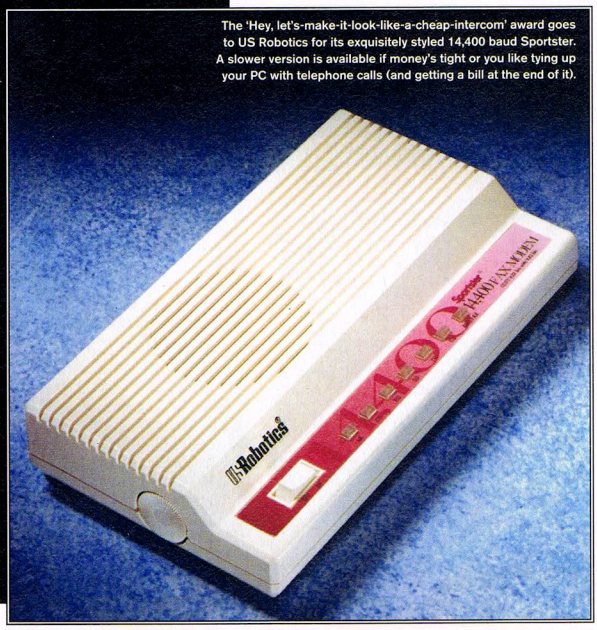
buy non-approved modems, you could theoretically be nicked for using them! If you need a modem which you can slip in your pocket and run off a battery, Pace's **MicroLin FX** has the same sort of facilities as the White Box, but works for hours from a single PP3 cell.

There are two US modem suppliers who have recently started to market their fast 14,400 baud (the V32 bis standard) modems in the UK. **Zoom** produce a modem in a desktop case, with the traditional row of little flashing lights along the front – it must be good if it's got lots of flashing lights, right? In fact, most of these are redundant and only add to the string of abbreviations which frighten many beginners. The modem itself is fine, though, and offers up the latest data compression and error correction. Data compression speeds transfers up by sending shorter files, while error correction prevents files corrupting in transit.

"You should always buy the fastest modem you can afford, because the speed of data transfer directly affects the cost of your telephone bill"

US Robotics, a big name in US modems, are also releasing a range of units over here, including the **Sportster** fax modem, which is similar to Zoom's. It's small, which may be convenient if your desk is cramped, but unfortunately looks more like a Tandy baby minder than a modem.

To set up any of these devices, you need a BT jack socket on the wall and a spare serial port on the back of your PC. You connect the end of the modem's phone lead to the jack socket and a normal serial cable to the PC. Check the type necessary with your dealer, as serial leads aren't always supplied with modems.



The 'Hey, let's-make-it-look-like-a-cheap-intercom' award goes to US Robotics for its exquisitely styled 14,400 baud Sportster. A slower version is available if money's tight or you like tying up your PC with telephone calls (and getting a bill at the end of it).

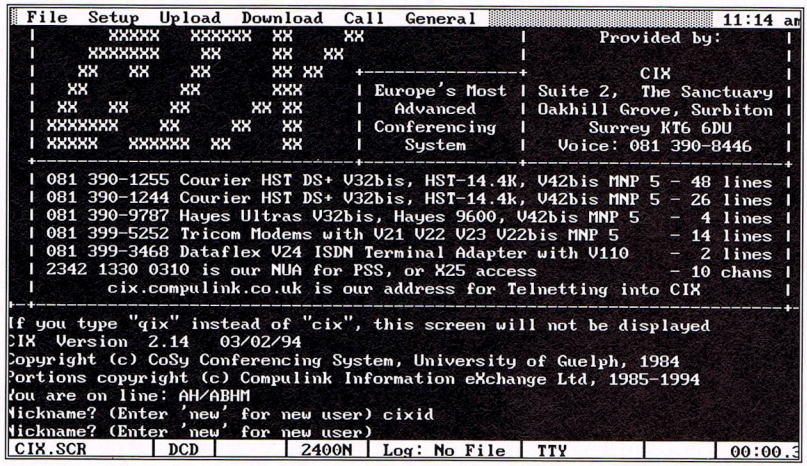
The Software

Once connected up, you need software to control your modem and communicate with bulletin boards or conference services at the other end of the line. There are plenty of choices in communications software, but here are three packages well worth considering. At the entry level, specifically for ☛

☛ DOS users, is *Odyssey*. This is a Shareware package just out in version 2. It has all the features you'll need for modern comms, including support for fax send and receive. You can control it using either the keyboard or mouse – and there are even memory facilities so you can dial your regular numbers automatically.

If you're a Windows user, *ProComm Plus*, which also started life as a Shareware program, is one of the best available. As well as the usual dialling directories, it has extensive scripting facilities which enable you to automatically connect to almost any service. You can capture the text and codes that come back from bulletin boards too, which can help with these automatic log-ons.

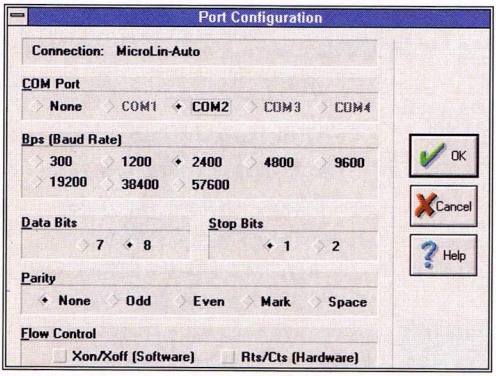
If you need Windows, DOS communications *and* fax facilities, then *WinDOS Pro 2* is a good bet. Both versions of the program are provided in the one box and, again, there are automatic facilities that make dialling different services quick and easy. Although the package isn't particularly cheap at just under £160, it's pretty comprehensive – and might save you money in the long run.



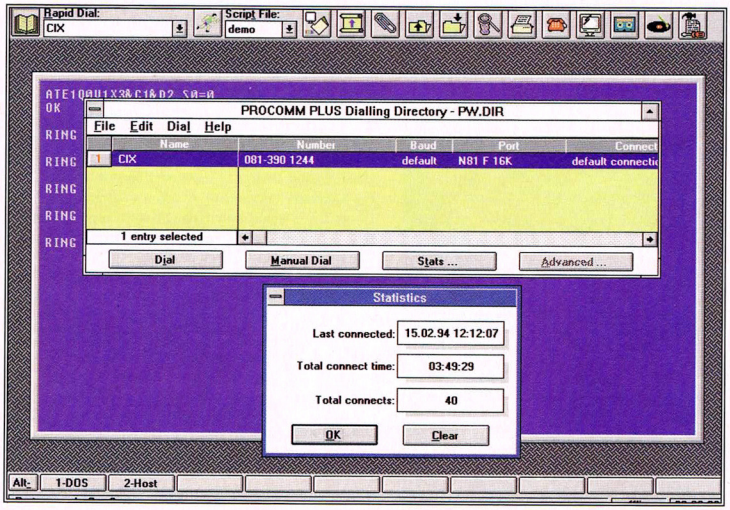
Odyssey comes complete with pre-defined script files for CompuServe and CIX – and costs just under £86. Even better, under test, it dialled and logged onto CIX without any special set-up or faffing about. Great if you're DOS-bound and strapped for cash.

The Services

There are plenty of games-orientated bulletin boards available – and it only costs a phonecall to access them. Try some of the following to get you started: **Faint Breeze** ☎ (021) 788 1754, **PC Forum** ☎ (0483) 451540, **After Hours** ☎ (0785) 228214 and brummie board **The 021 Connection** on ☎ (021) 520 7615. Once you get into one, you'll soon find details of others. Commercial services also provide useful game information – two that come particularly well recommended are **CompuServe** ☎ (071) 490 8881 and **CompuLink Information eXchange** (known as CIX) on ☎ (081) 390 1255. PCG



(Left) **Trans-Send's** *WinDOS Pro 2* **works in Windows and DOS, and takes care of both comms** *and* **faxes, although the fax module is basic. Still, the games are the thing...**



Probably the best known comms software on the market, the Windows version of *ProComm Plus* supports all the best download protocols. It's also great value, coming in at just under £120 (the DOS version is slightly cheaper).

Sources and Prices

(All prices include postage & packing and VAT, except CompuServe which necessarily quotes all prices in dollars)

The **White Box** from **Express Technology** on ☎ **(0784) 421123** is probably the cheapest current 2,400 baud fax modem doing the rounds at **£60**. Then there's **Pace**'s pocket **MicroLin FX**, which you can have for under **£130** if you shop wisely. Both the **Zoom** and **US Robotics** devices have street prices of just under **£200**. Try **Technomatic** ☎ **(081) 205 9558** for the Pace or US Robotics, and Express Technology for the Zoom.

Odyssey is readily available from **Shareware Publishing** ☎ **(0297) 24088** for **£85.77** registered or **£11.75** on a 'try before you buy' basis. Trans-Send's **WinDOS Pro 2.0** will cost you **£158.62** from **Trans-Send International** ☎ **(081) 207 5165**. *ProComm Plus* (for Windows), the best value of the three, comes in at **£116.32**, with the DOS version around **£12** cheaper. The street price for both these versions, however, can be lower.

Commercial information services prices vary enormously, depending on the areas you access, but **CompuServe** currently charges **$8.95** membership per month for the basic services. However, most of the gamey stuff is in the extended services area, for which there's an access charge of **$9.60 per hour** with a fast modem or **$4.80** at 2,400 baud or below. There's an additional **$7.70** surcharge during prime time (between eight in the morning and seven in the evening).

CIX charges a one-time registration fee of **£25** and then between **£2.40** and **£3.60** per hour, depending on the time of day you make your calls.

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Title	Price
SIMCITY 2000	£37.99
PINBALL FANTASIES	£34.99
TFX	£37.99
ULTIMA 8	£39.99
RISE OF THE ROBOTS	£38.99
AS ABOVE SVGA VERS.	£43.99
COASTER	£POA
AV8B HARRIER (SVGA)	£32.99
TIE FIGHTER	£40.99
F-14 FLEET DEFENDER	£37.99
CHAOS ENGINE	£32.99
ALONE IN THE DARK 2	£38.99
KYRANDIA 2	£34.99
STONE KEEP	£42.49
B-WING	£16.99
MORTAL KOMBAT	£24.99
INFERNO	£38.99
INDYCAR RACING	£37.99
FRONTIER	£30.99
THEME PARK	£POA
BENEATH A STEEL SKY	£34.99

CD ROM

Title	Price
BENEATH A STEEL SKY	£37.99
REBEL ASSAULT	£37.99
TFX	£37.99
INFERNO	£43.99
RISE OF THE ROBOTS	£49.99
STAR TREK 2	£35.99
STAR TREK: T.N.G	£POA
7TH GUEST	£39.99
SAM & MAX	£39.99
IRON HELIX	£35.99
MICROCOSM	£39.99
LAWNMOWER MAN	£45.99
SUPER STRIKE COMDR	£39.99
ALONE IN THE DARK 2	£38.99
DELTA V	£35.99
DRACULA UNLEASHED	£39.99
JURASSIC PARK	£35.99
TORNADO	£39.99
ULTIMA 1 - 6 COMPO	£45.99
UNDERWORLD 1 & 2	£44.99
JOURNEYMAN	£37.99

CD ROMS

Drive	Price
MITSUMI SINGLE SPEED	£134.99
MITSUMI DUAL SPEED	£164.99
PANASONIC DUAL SPEED	£169.99
SONY DUAL SPEED	£169.99
ORCHID DUAL SPEED	£164.99

SOUNDCARDS

Card	Price
**SOUNDBLASTER	£71.99
SOUNDBLASTER PRO	£94.99
SOUNDBLASTER 16	£159.99
ORCHID GAMEWAVE 32	£154.99
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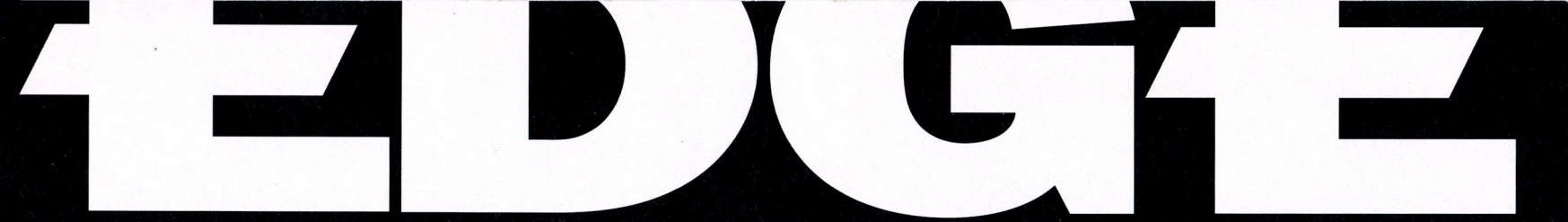

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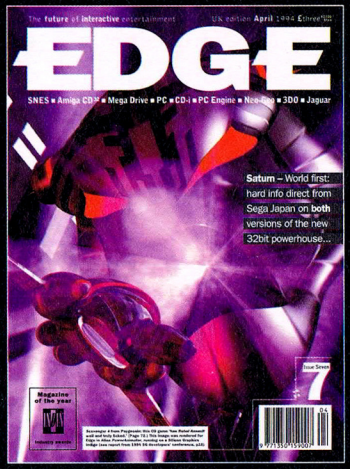

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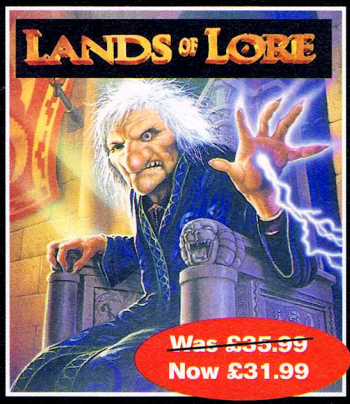
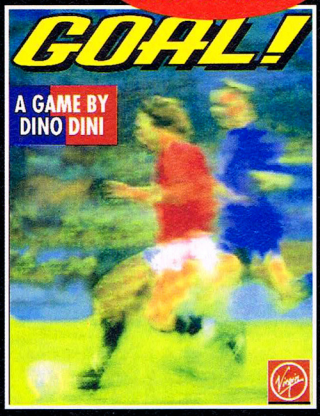


"Easily the best of the traditional 'square-block dungeon' role-playing adventures, *Lands Of Lore* trounces rivals like *Dungeon Master* and *Eye Of The Beholder III*, and gives the new breed of texture-mapped 3D games like *Ultima Underworld* a good run for their money. Great presentation, a wide range of locations and very user-friendly for those new to RPGs. A modern day classic."

MATT BIELBY

Goal!

Virgin ~~Was £35.99~~ Now £31.99



Order code PCGGO5

"We've seen plenty of fine sports sims on the PC, but few can rival Virgin's *Goal!* for sheer pick-up-and-play accessibility. Packed with options – you can play either horizontally or vertically, for instance – and boasting a nifty control system, it's great in both one and two-player mode. It was, of course, going to be called *Kick Off 3*, which should give you some idea of the quality."

GARY WHITTA

Leisure Suit Larry 5 Sierra

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Order code PCGLSO2



"Sierra's (second) most recent Larry game is a perfect example of the saucy adventure genre. This time, the PC's favourite Lothario is on a quest to find the sexiest woman in America, but before long the Mob get involved and all hell breaks loose – all of which adds a fair degree of depth to Larry's normal will-he-or-won't-he-get-a-shag? exploits. Hilarious (for Porky's fans, that is)."

ANDY BUTCHER

IndyCar Racing

Virgin ~~Was £44.99~~ Now £34.99



Order code PCG10

"Boasting even better graphics than the best of the old driving school driving games, plus superlative gameplay, *IndyCar Racing* easily snaps pole position from its predecessor *Indianapolis 500*. And if you thought the Action Replay was good in Papyrus' first game, just wait until you see what *IndyCar Racing* has to offer... I don't think I'll ever get bored of it. This game deserves to sit high, very high, on your Must Buy list."

MATT BIELBY

Aces Of The Pacific

Sierra



Order code PCGAPO1 ~~Was £39.99~~ Now £34.99

"The follow-up to *Red Baron*, *Aces Of The Pacific* is a flight simulation set in the Pacific during World War II (so you get Americans versus the Japanese). It's vast in scope and packed with pleasing attention to detail (take a look at the cockpit view and you'll see what I mean), but you'll need a 386, at least, to run it. A 486, however, is ideal."

GARY WHITTA

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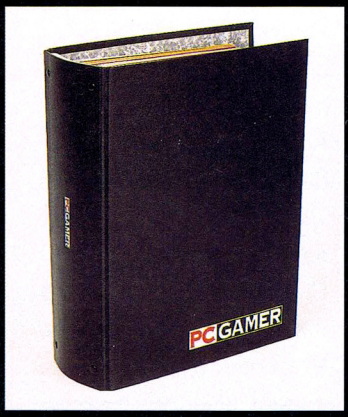

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Space Quest V

Sierra

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"The humour in *Space Quest V* may not be to everyone's taste – it relies too much on rather tacky sci-fi gags (pass the sick bucket) and cheap insults for my liking – but the gameplay has a lot to recommend it, including beautifully drawn locations, an easy-to-use point-and-click interface and a certain not-too-demanding charm. That said, I'd be much more into it if you didn't die quite so often."

MATT BIELBY

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Win!

A Pioneer Laserdisc Player

It's a tradition of ours to proffer nothing but the finest and most desirable merchandise. You won't find tatty baseball caps or goodie bags in our Quiz pages. And this month it's no different – in conjunction with MicroProse and that rather smart new *UFO: Enemy Unknown* game of theirs (Reviewed on page 62), we're putting an undeniably arousing prize up for grabs – a top-of-the-range Pioneer CLD-2850 Laserdisc player worth a wallet-murdering £700!

But what's a top-of-the-range Pioneer CLD-2850 Laserdisc player got to do with MicroProse and *UFO: Enemy Unknown,* we hear you ask? Well, not much, to be honest, but you've got to admit it's a top bit of techno-sex all the same. And to create a tenuous product link, we'll bung in a couple of science-fiction movies on laserdisc to get your collection started. Like Total Recall or something. And probably Aliens as well (if they've got it down the shop down the road).

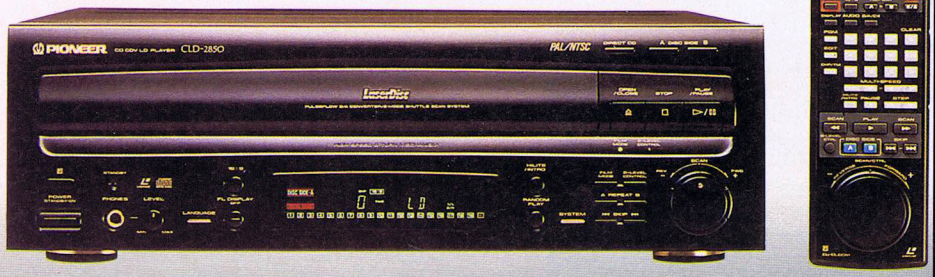
THE 'DO-IT-YOURSELF' UFO QUIZ

Not so much a quiz as an activity challenge, which should make sure that the prize goes to the most deserving person. This Pioneer player is a real film buff's bit of kit, you see, with laserdisc movies often coming in a top widescreen director's cut format, and with lots of extra bits and bobs thrown in. We were round Steve Jarratt (he of Edge fame) the other night, watching the special Terminator 2 limited edition box set – and it was terrific, with documentary bits, scenes cut out of the original movie and... *(Get on with it! – Ed.)* In other words, it's a bit good.

So what we want you to do is get a video camera from somewhere (in this age of cheap technology you've probably already got one, but if you haven't you can always borrow off a friend or hire one) and make a *UFO*-style movie of your own. You know, an alien invasion, War Of The Worlds type thing, with lots of martians and stuff.

That's it. That's your brief. The rest is up to you. Obviously, we'll be judging entries on technical merit (special effects, direction, costume, editing and so on), but it's originality that counts the most. You can produce anything from a serious piece to a spoof – it's up to you. But try to keep your movie shorter than 15 minutes long, because we haven't got much of an attention span. (Our Dep Ed Chris dozes off after about five minutes, in fact.)

This Pioneer Laserdisc Player Could Be Yours!



Worth £700!

WHERE TO SEND YOUR ENTRIES...

THE ADDRESS FOR ENTRIES (VHS TAPES ONLY PLEASE) is, as ever, **PC Gamer Quiz 5, Future Publishing Ltd., 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.** Because of the time it'll no doubt take to produce anything of value, what with scripting, casting and all that guff, we've extended the normal competition deadline. **So the closing date for entries is Friday 27 May 1994**, giving you a couple of months to get your act together. The *PC Gamer* panel of experts (including Chris, who goes to film evening classes and everything, so we know what we're talking about) will judge the entries and we'll be printing stills and mini-reviews of the finalists in a future issue. Who knows? Your work could get noticed by a major movie producer and make you a millionaire! As a final hint, we all like a good laugh round here, so anything chucklesome will probably stand more of a chance.

PC Gamer *Quiz 3 the answers*

And the winner?

Congratulations to **Mark Thomas** from **Littleworth, Stafford**, who – like many others – managed to extract all ten of the games in our visual jumble, and – unlike all the others – was lucky enough to be pulled from the vast *PC Gamer* tombola. For his trouble, he picks up a copy of every PC game EA are releasing throughout 1994. Not bad going. For the record then (and for anyone still scratching their heads), the games featured were:

1. ***Dungeon Hack***
2. ***King's Table***
3. ***Sid & Al's Incredible Toons***
4. ***Critical Path***
5. ***Litil Divil***
6. ***Unnatural Selection***
7. ***Sam & Max Hit The Road***
8. ***Pinball Fantasies***
9. ***Fire & Ice***
10. ***Iron Helix***

THE SMALL PRINT (READ THIS BIT)

1. Right, like we said, nothing longer than 15 minutes, okay?
2. Make sure you send your VHS tapes in some sturdy packaging to ensure they aren't damaged in transit, and remember to enclose a stamped-addressed envelope if you want your cassette back.
3. Employees of Future Publishing Ltd. and MicroProse are, as always, not allowed to enter in any shape or form. Ever.
4. The decision of the *PC Gamer* moving picture academy is final and no correspondence will be entered into concerning the result. Not even a little bit, so don't think about writing in if you're not happy with our decision.

Next month

in

PC GAMER

With Your Favourite Host, 'Honest' Gaz

Hi! 'Honest' Gaz the Ed here with the new, personalised next month bit. You see, while other magazines pontificate vaguely about what may or may not be in their next issue, I've decided that you deserve something better. So here I am, as honest as the day is long, to tell you personally what's going to be in the May issue. Hey, you know you can trust me, I'm the Editor.

Reviews! Right, no mucking about. This time we really *are* going to have reviews of Origin's Spring biggies *Ultima VIII* and *Pacific Strike* in next month's issue. Well, *Ultima VIII* at least. Honest. We've just got off the phone to Electronic Arts and they promised us we'd have the review copies in plenty of time. Sort of. No, really. We'll also have reviews of *Fleet Defender, Sam & Max* on CD (honest injun), *Mega Race, The Chaos Engine* – and loads of other stuff too. (But not *TIE Fighter*, because we've just heard that it won't be out until June. Damn.)

Scoops! Your first look at Origin's futuristic RPG *System Shock*, Microsoft's *Space Simulator* and something else we can't tell you about because it's top secret. *(In other words, he doesn't know what it is yet – Dep Ed.)* Oi, on the contrary I know *exactly* what it's about... Oh, you'll just to get next month's issue and find out, won't you?

Plus! We lift the lid on multi-player games – are two heads better than one? Plus a definitive look at football management sims, an idiot's guide to freeing up PC memory (so you can kiss goodbye to those boot-disk blues) and *two* high-density coverdisks packed with playable demos. As if that wasn't enough, Ex-Ed Matt Bielby reports live from the US on the development of *PC Gamer*, the USA edition!

PC GAMER

May issue out Thursday 28 April

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Why the hell...

...can't life be a bowl of cherries? John Tapper is a man who wants answers.

Why the hell... are brilliant games like *Doom* and *Epic Pinball* (Shareware) free whereas games like *Rebel Assault* (Frustrationware) cost over £40 (rrp)?

...do different magazines sometimes give conflicting reviews on the same piece of software?

...is my disk box full of boot disks for all my games because they all require different set-ups?

...do some magazines use a coverdisk game as a major selling point for their magazine and then, in either the same or a future issue, give the full version a slagging off or (the ever popular) 54%?

...do I get a feeling of déjà vu every time a preview has something like "graphics look great from these preview shots, but you'll just to wait to read our exclusive review to find out if the gameplay lives up to them"? I mean, what happened to originality in journalism? Can't someone think of something more interesting than pointing out what I can see for myself? Consider my intelligence insulted.

...does every computer magazine have hidden somewhere in its pages a patronising 'Thank you' from the Editor to me for buying the mag? I got fed up reading Stephen King novels for roughly the same reason. That and the interminable boredom, I think.

...do static screenshots in magazines and on packaging actually look better than the animated graphics (I'm talking about most flight sims here)?

...did anyone anywhere rave about *Street Fighter II* on any format? I remember the fateful day that machine was installed as a replacement for an archaic *Bubble Bobble* machine at a local service station. No-one played it because it was crap. Okay, so I'm weird and I like *Bubble Bobble*. I liked *Asteroids* too. I still think that game had more of a learning curve and sheer adrenaline gameplay than most of today's 65,000,000 colour digitised 'press the button at the right time' atrocities. (Showing my age a bit, aren't I?) Anyway, why the hell...

...do people bother trying to justify why they play video games? You know what I mean. All these kids going on about how it helps with co-ordination and reflexes and learning and memory and arithmetic and history and... What rubbish! We play them because it's fun and it's more interesting than talking to our folks or watching the news.

...did I used to spend so many enjoyable hours playing games like *Cobra* and *Manic Miner* on my Spectrum and now feel disappointed by games like *Rebel Assault* and *Litil Divil* because they have minor irritations that should have been picked up in the first hour of playtesting? To explain: with *Rebel Assault* it's obvious, isn't it? The controls are as wobbly as an old wheelbarrow and the second asteroid chapter is a bastard nightmare. As for *Litil Divil*, well, I hate games with time limits and I hate walking towards myself and falling down holes I can't even see.

...does everyone moan about the price of games? Forget consoles for a second, that's just the Japs getting us back for Fat Man and Little Boy. What I'm talking about is this: you pay two grand for a computer – a big 486 with tons of memory, a CD drive and a 16-bit soundcard. Which you really need, right? Then you whinge like billy-o because someone wants £40 off you for a game. That's like a Ferrari owner complaining about the price of tyres. Wake up and smell what you're shovelling.

PC GAMER

Articles of around 600 words should be sent to: **Why The Hell, *PC Gamer*, Future Publishing Ltd., 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.** We award £100 worth of PC games software to the sender of each article we print. Please note that we reserve the right to edit submissions, and that the opinions expressed herein are those of individual contributors, not necessarily those of *PC Gamer*.

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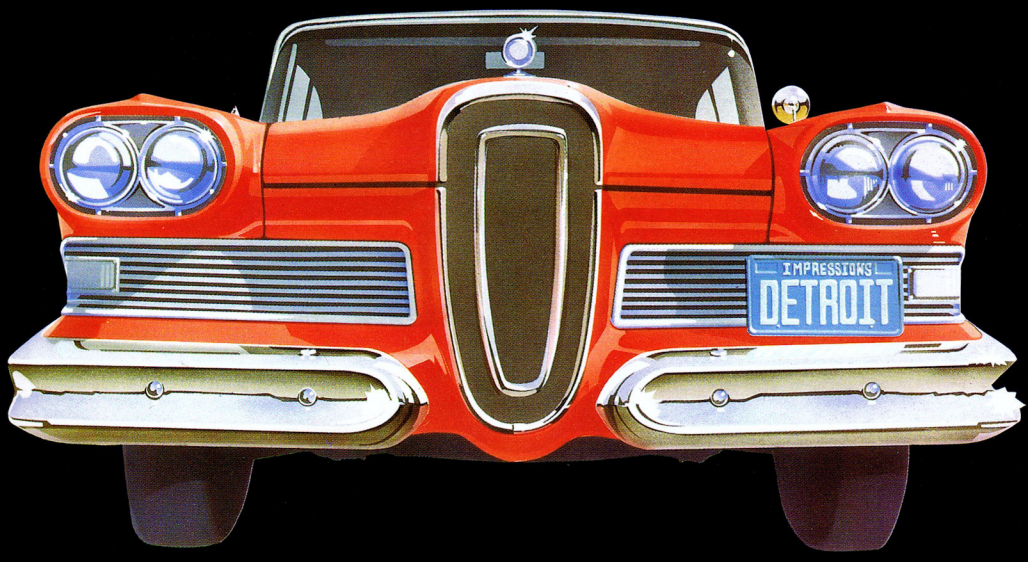

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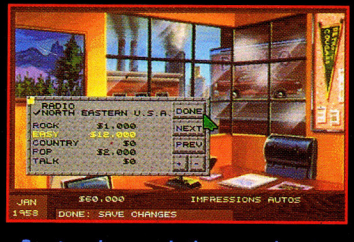

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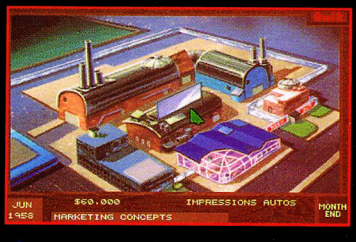

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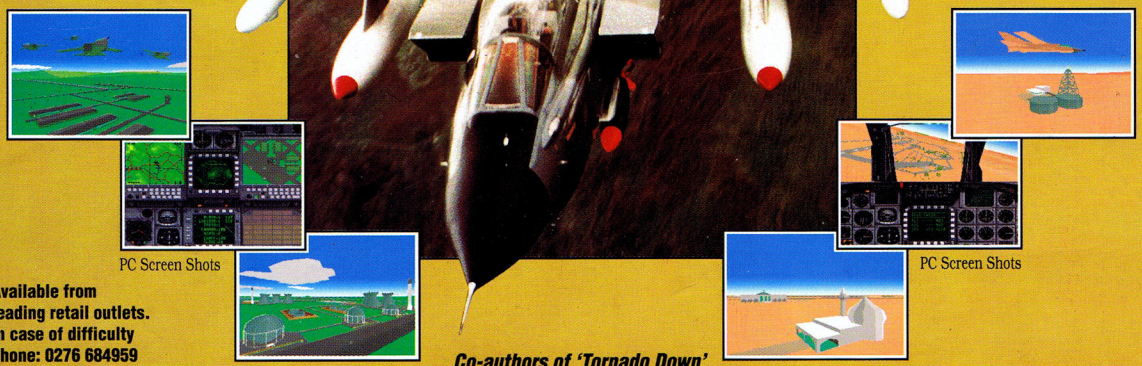

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