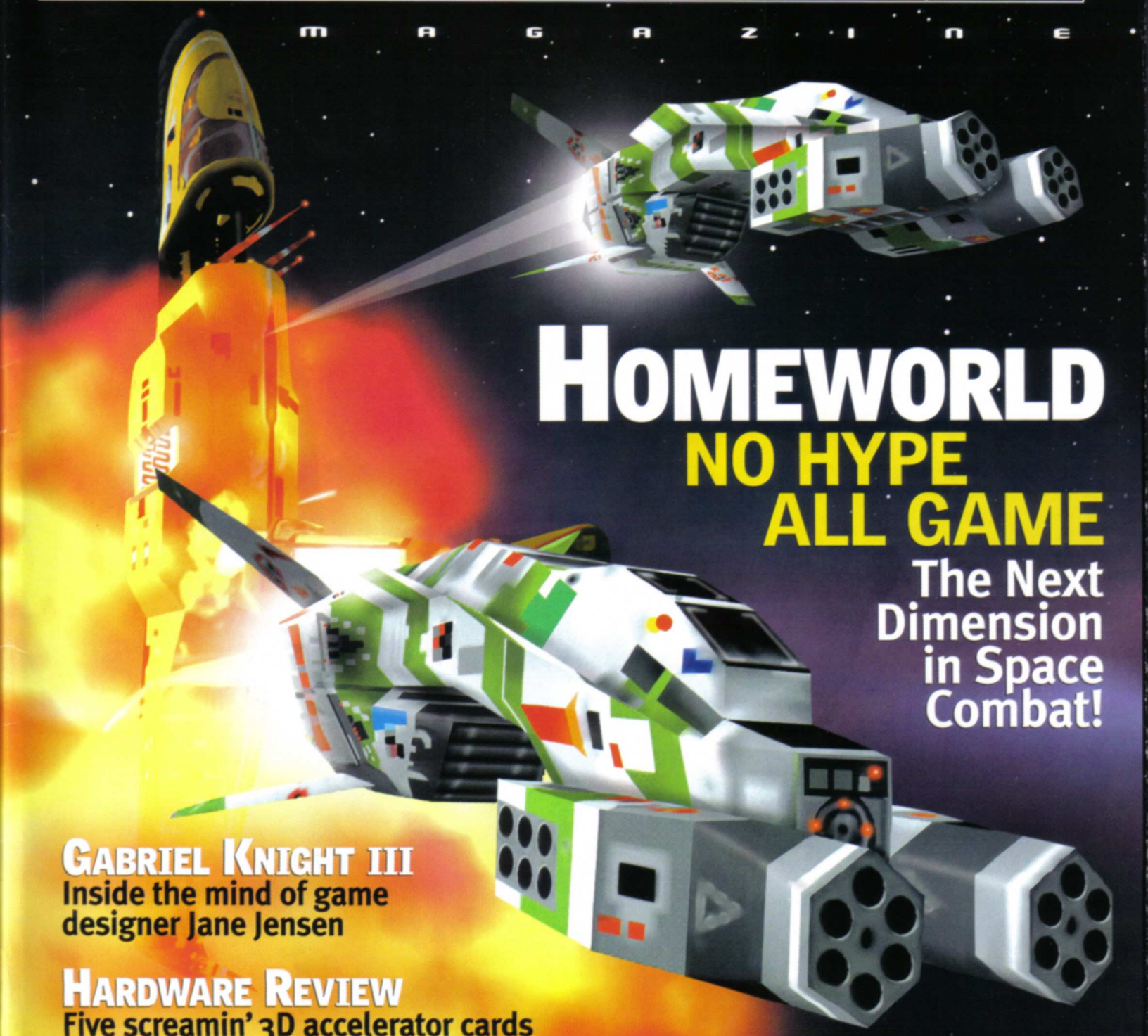
interaction

SPRING ISSUE 1999

MAGAZINE



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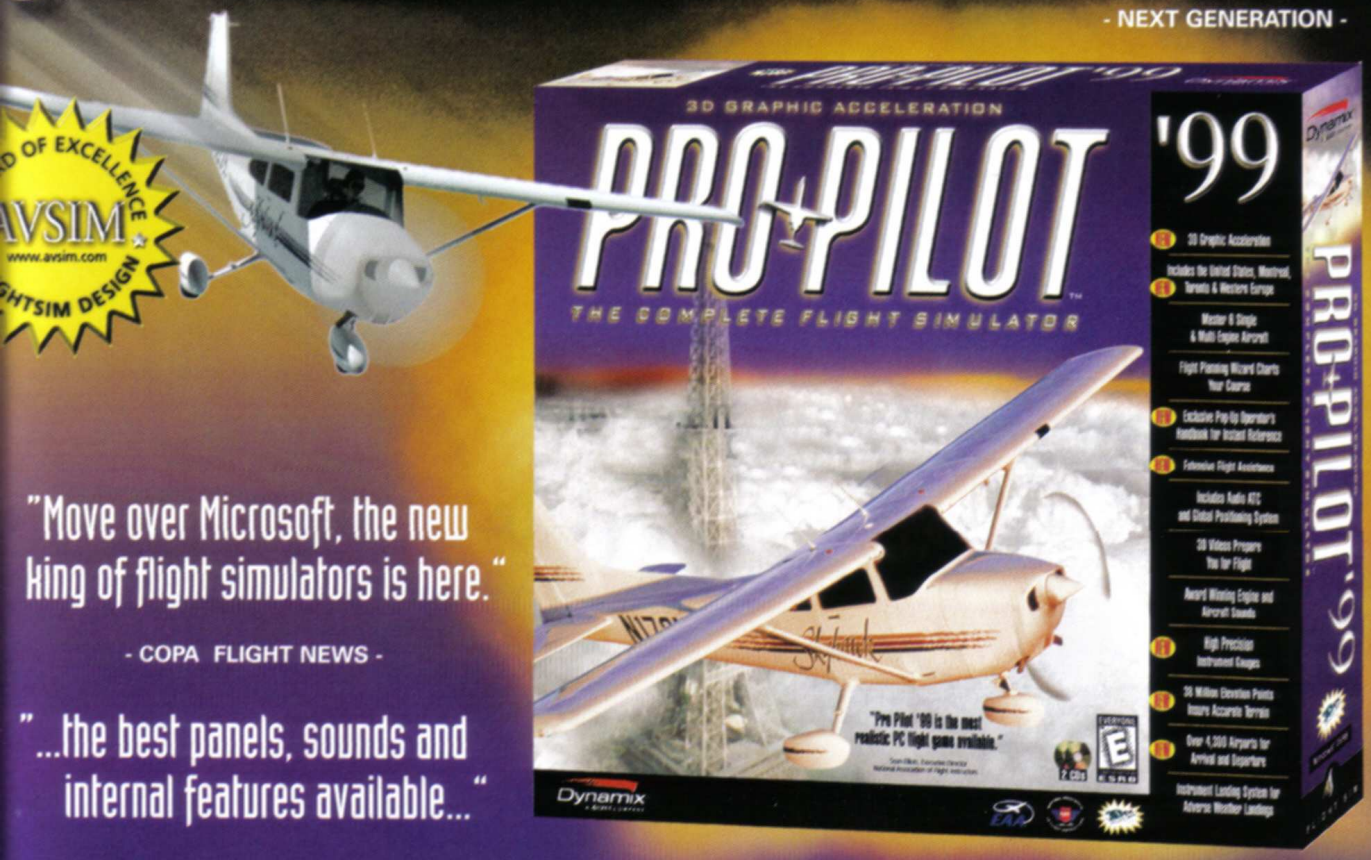

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EDITOR'S LETTER

So What's Up at InterAction Magazine?

To be brief—a lot. We started 1998 as part of the newly formed Cendant Software, a division of Cendant Corporation. Due to unforeseen circumstances, Cendant Software was put up on the block and it was anyone's guess who would buy us. Good news, though. As of mid-January 1999, Cendant Software officially became part of Havas Interactive, a French company. Vive la France! *French for Dummies* is loaded on all our computers, and at lunch it's a tossup between conjugating irregular French verbs and playing *Half-Life*.

Next, in the middle of all the craziness involved with the sale of the company, Dave Grenewetzki signed on as our fearless leader. Check out his inaugural column on page 6 and learn more about our new boss. A big part of his new duties will be to get his column in on time every issue.

Guest columnists are new this year as well. We've always expected them to speak their mind and it's no different this issue. Are games getting too violent? We asked game reviewer and sage Bill Trotter this question. He didn't mince words in his thought-provoking commentary on page 8. We didn't stop there. Slipping games are the bane of every gamer's existence, so we asked Mark Walker to investigate. You just might be surprised at what he uncovered on page 96 in "Where's My Game?"

We have several new titles shipping this year. Two of them are epic intergalactic releases coming soon to the PC universe. Check out *Homeworld* on page 22 from wonderkid Alex Garden and his team. Early hype says this is the game of the year and from what we've seen, it looks like that's a sure bet. *Babylon 5* debuts on page 34. It successfully makes the transition from the TV screen to the computer monitor with a rich storyline and stunning graphics. From the mysteries of space to the mysteries of life, see page 30 to learn what Jane Jensen reveals about creating the award-winning *Gabriel Knight* series. She also hints at what's in the upcoming *GK III: Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned*. And for you sports fans, the line between real golf and computer golf has blurred again. Compare the Sahalee course photographs and actual screens of *PGA Championship Golf–1999 Edition* on page 48.

Finally, we've had a few staff changes here at *InterAction Magazine*. There are new faces but you can expect the same high-quality insight and edge that keeps us on top of the gaming world. Catch ya next time.

Nancy B. King
Editor

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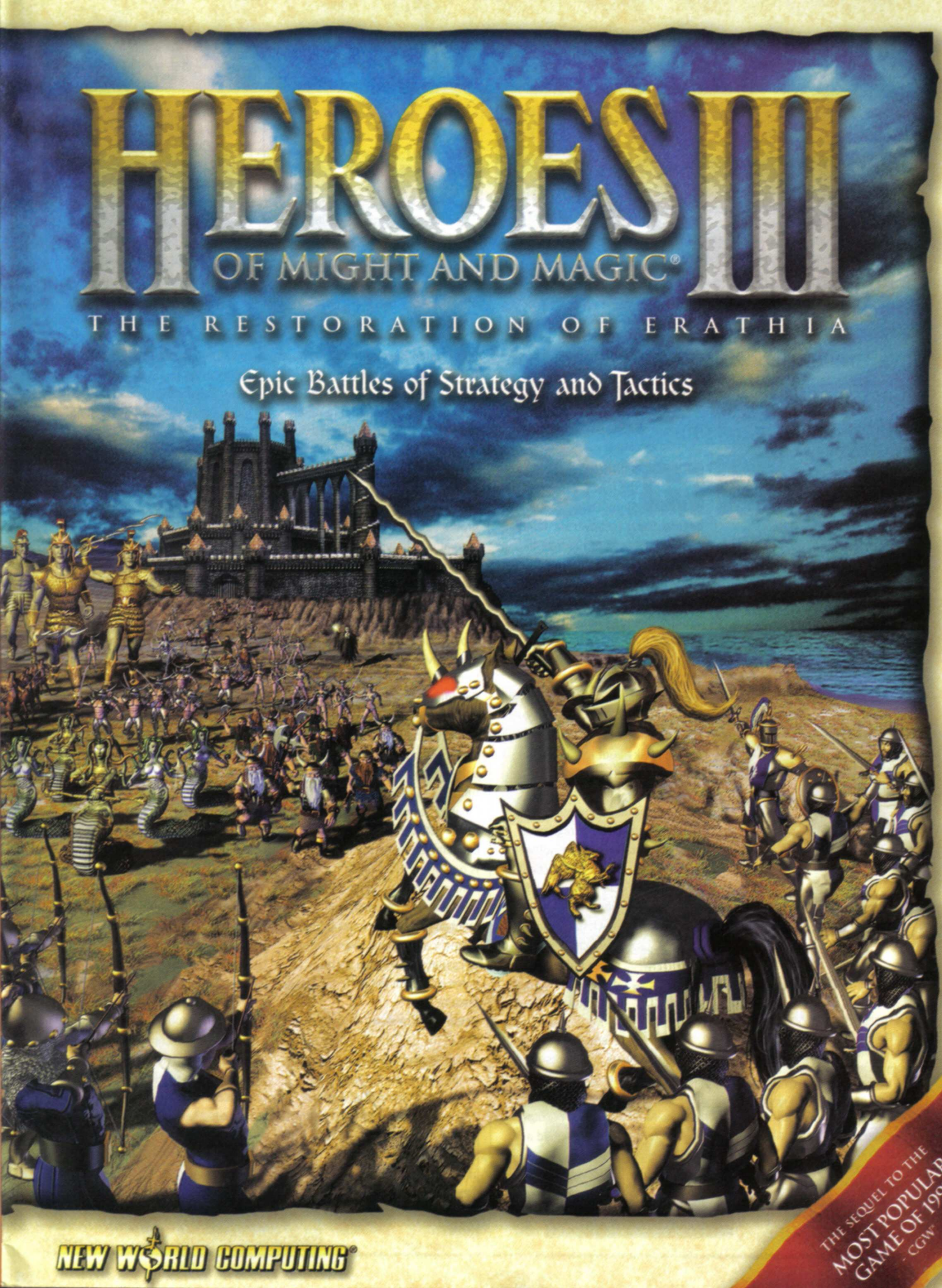
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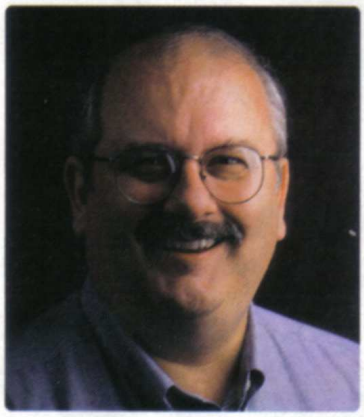
Signed on for the Whole Ride

Dave Grenewetzki, Sierra's new president, reflects on his decision to lead Sierra into the next millennium



Hi! I'm Dave Grenewetzki, the new president of Sierra On-Line. I've been at Sierra just over six months now and it's been a wild ride. In 1999, Sierra will be heading into its 20th year as a leader in consumer software. We've got one of our best product lineups ever and we're planning a number of special events tied to this milestone anniversary.

The folks at *InterAction Magazine* thought you might want to know a bit about my background, so before I talk about the future, let's talk a bit about my past.

I've been in the consumer software business for nearly 15 years. I founded a classic "garage business" and started writing software for personal computers in the early '80s. I was having so much fun, I quit my day job in the aerospace industry and decided to be a software guy.

I founded a classic "garage business" and started writing software for PCs in the early '80s.

My company was eventually absorbed into The Software Toolworks, where I became the director of software development. Toolworks later became Mindscape, and during my tenure there we published a bunch of now classic titles like *Chessmaster* and *Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing*. It was there I wrote my first game, the much underappreciated *Beyond the Black Hole*. It was a 3D game in the original sense of the word—it featured stereoscopic effects that required the player to wear 3D glasses during the game.

I left Mindscape after nearly seven years and went to game developer Accolade as the head of product development. Although my stint at Accolade was great fun, the grind of the daily three-and-a-half-hour commute took its toll and I decided to work closer to home. I then spent six months running product development at Palladium Interactive, only ten minutes from my house. Life was good at Palladium until I got the call from Sierra. The chance to move to Sierra and help shape the direction of one of the world's premier consumer software companies was an opportunity I couldn't pass up. Here's why I made the move to Sierra:

Great Legacy: A recent study of consumers revealed that Sierra is one of the most recognized names in the consumer software business. The company has reached legendary status in the industry and almost *every* serious or casual gamer has a Sierra game or two on his or her all-time-favorite list.

Great Development Talent: At the end of the day, this is a people business, and a talented development team is a requirement. With nearly 20 years of internal "organic" growth and recent growth by acquisition, Sierra is one of the product development powerhouses in the consumer software business.

Great Products: Everyone knows game franchises like *Trophy Bass*, the *Hoyle* card and board games, *King's Quest*, *NASCAR*, *Caesar*, *Gabriel Knight*, *YOU DON'T KNOW JACK*, *Red Baron*, *Krondor*, *Leisure Suit Larry* and the *3-D Ultra* line. On the productivity side, our growing line of home products includes titles like *MasterCook*, *Generations* and *Print Artist*.

Great Scale: The critical mass in the marketplace generated by such great products gives us the ability to support a strong sales and marketing program. In turn, this helps us establish our brands and promote and sell our products in an ultra-competitive marketplace.

Great Future: In addition to the incredible products and brands that we've already created, we've got a large number of "franchises in training" which shipped their first versions in 1998 or will release in 1999. New games like *Half-Life*, *Babylon 5*, *Starsiege* and *TRIBES*, *Homeworld*, *HeadRush*, new *3-D Ultra* products and *Grand Prix Legends* along with productivity offerings like *Fashion Trip* and *Web Studio* assure a bright future for Sierra.

It's an exciting time in the world of consumer software. Industry consolidation is combining software makers into larger and larger entities. At the same time, there's downward pressure on software pricing. Development budgets are increasing to meet the demands of discriminating consumers, and increased competition for consumer mindshare is raising the ante for every product released. The marketplace has no room for anything but the "best of breed" titles.

Technological advances are bringing us more power at lower prices. The sub-$1000, and soon the sub-$500, computers are bringing millions of new consumers into the software marketplace.

At Sierra we have all the resources needed to continue to be a long-term leader in this volatile market and I'm looking forward to our next 20.

See you next issue.

Dave

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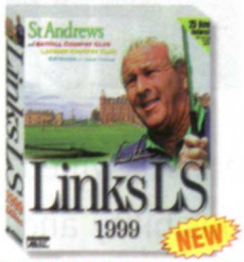

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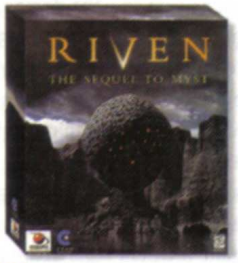

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VIOLENCE IN GAMES:

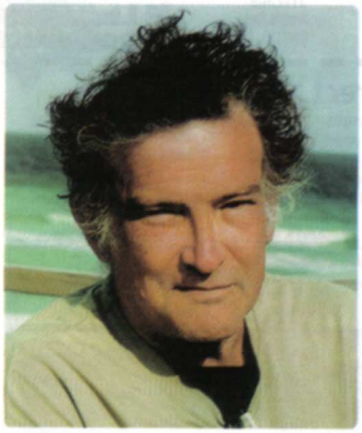
How Much Is "Too Much"?

Bill Trotter explores the intertwined issues of personal responsibility and violence in the gaming industry and why you should care about them

I WRITE THIS FROM THE point of view of 1) the parent of three sons and 2) a game reviewer with 11 years' experience. And still, I squirm.

In the 1950s, many a concerned parent wagged a reproachful finger at the 12-year-old who collected EC horror comics with their uncensored images of rotting corpses, dismemberment, and icepicks going into eyeballs.

Spurred by a sensationalistic book called *Seduction of the Innocent*, Congress did the Joe



McCarthy two-step all over the comic book industry, empowering an agency called the Comics Code Authority. Bye-bye "Tales from the Crypt," so long "Vault of Horror." The end result was two decades of emasculated comics (the Code was so strict, you couldn't even depict a dead body in a *war comic*!). When I first saw the demos of the game *Postal* at the 1997 E-3, a ripple of déjà vu curdled in my gut. It could happen again in the gaming industry. The puritanical right needs new targets and a segment of the gaming industry is waving a red flag. If the hammer came down again, it would squash not only those cretins responsible for *Postal*, it could de-fang and dumb-down the whole industry.

Postal, I think, defined "the floating line" between what is acceptable and what is contemptible. The ad campaign was relatively discreet (in ironic contrast to the skewered pedestrians in the ads for *Carmageddon*, not to mention the whip-wielding dominatrix in the ads for *Deathtrap Dungeon*), but the website was not. "Listen to victims moan and beg for mercy! Watch victims run around on fire, screaming for help....If they get on your nerves, just kill them."

Something very similar must have been roiling in the brains of the socially challenged teenagers who slaughtered their classmates last spring in Arkansas. "If they get on your nerves, just kill them...."

A case can be made that it's better to siphon-off excess testosterone with a keyboard than with an Uzi. As quoted in *The Wall Street Journal* (8/7/97), the publisher of *Postal* said: "It's still just videogame pixels. Everyone realizes you're just having fun."

Not, apparently, "everyone." While researching this piece, I visited the game's website and found: "You guys f***** rule, man! If you do a sequel, please have the victims beg for mercy more!"

One can picture, all too sadly, the pathetic adolescent who posted this message.

But wait! Something doesn't add up. According to surveys conducted by *The Wall Street Journal* and The Computer Game Developers Conference, the average hardcore PC game-buyer is a single, college-educated male in his mid-30s. Presumably, such an individual has more creative outlets for his "testosterone overload." So many games, so little shelf-space, so much money riding on titles... small wonder advertisers pander to the lowest common denominator. Most experienced gamers have become numb to the hype and, rightly, suspicious of it.

If you're an adult, you have every right to play any kind of game. If you're a parent, you have a trickier responsibility. Fortunately, most kids know the difference between fantasy and reality.

So I'm not too worried about game violence warping tender young minds. In four weeks of Internet and library research, I did not turn up a single authenticated case of juvenile crime that could be directly traced to exposure to violent games.

What worries me more is the very real possibility of outside intervention. If you want a frightening peek at what could happen to the gaming industry, check out the list of websites locked out by "Cyberpatrol," probably the best-selling "anti-smut" software on the market: sites for homemade beer brewing, blackjack strategies, chess, and *Star Trek* trading cards.

Even as I was drafting this piece, news came that Cyberpatrol has just blacklisted **game-revolution.com**, a responsible and respected video game newsgroup. The reason? One page (out of 12,000!) displayed a cartoon rendering of Lara Croft's breasts! Cyberpatrol did not "lock out" that one offending page, but the entire website. Ben Silverman, a spokesman for Game Revolution, said: "We're stunned and outraged. Is it OK to show someone's spine being ripped out in *Mortal Kombat*, but threatening to depict a set of cartoon breasts? This is crazy!"

If anyone's out of control in this business, it's the people who run Cyberpatrol and *Postal's* developers, who represent the fanatical extremes. As gamers and as parents, we must be vigilant and expend some thought as to where we want this industry to go after the next deadline.

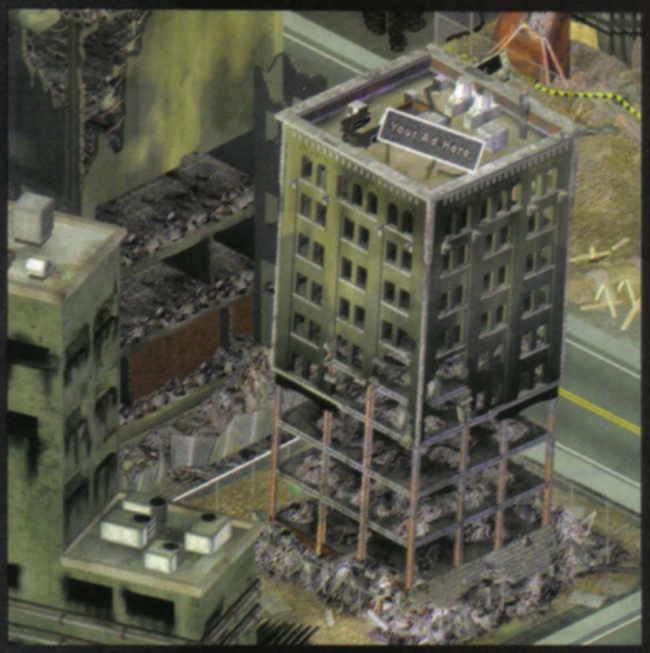
(Censorship) could defang and dumb-down the whole industry.

Reading all those old horror comics did not turn me into a sadist—but a lot of powerful interests thought they could, and they killed an entire industry.

Comic books in 1959...computer games in 1999?

Don't think it couldn't happen.

William R. Trotter is the author of 12 published books and more than 1000 articles, reviews, and short stories.



MR. ROGERS OR MR. HUSSEIN?

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TIME TO UPGRADE

I think you should make some more games that don't take up as much space. They keep getting to need more RAM, Pentium, and hard drive space. Our computer is only a Pentium 75 and all the games I like need about 133. I am also thinking about getting a N64. Is that a good decision, or do you think computer games are better? Please write back.

Michael Jugan
via email

Pentium 75? No offense, but we're using those as doorstops at InterAction Magazine. *The days of running new games on four year-old hardware are long gone. As far as the N64 thing goes, we have to say no way—friends don't let friends play console games.*

OUCH!

I was extremely upset to read that Sierra has entered into a five-year licensing agreement with *FIELD & STREAM* magazine. How sad that you will now be selling software, which promotes the killing and torture of animals for "sport." Hunting and fishing are disgraceful activities which show lack of concern for nature and which cause great suffering to the unwilling animal targets of this "sport" (studies, by the way, have demonstrated that fish feel pain probably more acutely than do humans).

I have owned Sierra *Print Artist* for years, but will no longer use it and will buy no more Sierra products.

Susan Gordon
New Jersey

Actually, Susan our studies have shown that fish and animals caught or killed in fishing and hunting simulations feel no pain.

LETTER OF THE ISSUE

My name is Gregory Laskowski and I am a supervising criminalist in Bakersfield, CA. Your two products, *Custom Home 3D* and *LandDesigner 3D* have been invaluable to me in aiding and performing crime scene reconstructions. I use your programs to present a 3D view of the scene of the crime. By being able to reconstruct the interior or even exterior of a house fairly accurately, I can prepare a diagram that is amazingly realistic and easy to present to a jury.

There is one drawback in using your products for this line of work and that is the lack of law enforcement (homicide icons or items) associated with crimes scenes such as: various weapons, cartridge casings, footprints, tire tracks, views of vehicles (explodable diagrams), blood stain patterns and bullet trajectory lines.

With the 3D-walkthrough feature I can even reconstruct the movement of a police officer in officer-involved shooting cases. There are other software programs on the market for law enforcement use but they don't have the realistic texture that your programs offer. Please consider offering a law enforcement upgrade package so your products can shine in the courtroom.

Gregory E. Laskowski
Bakersfield, CA

Great suggestion, Gregory, but the folks at Sierra Home tell us it will be a while (a long, long while) before a "blood stains and bullet-hole" add-on pack is available. Too bad—we've been trying to prove OJ guilty using CompleteHome *for a long time.*

PHANTAS FAN

Is Sierra coming out with a *Phantasmagoria 3* or is it even in the works?

tommy15
via email

We do not have anything in development for a Phantas 3. *However, the series—created by Sierra co-founder Roberta Williams—has been very popular, so you never know what the future may hold. Check* **www.sierra-studios.com** *for the latest news.*

DV-DON'T

Just wanted to let you know that I wholeheartedly approve of your decision not to release DVD games until the medium is more widely supported. Kudos!

Rob
via email

THANKS MOM

I've been receiving *InterAction* for some time, and I think that you guys have made many great improvements on your magazine. Compared to some of your previous issues, you really outdid yourselves in the latest Holiday 1998 issue — from the 3D cover to the last page, everything was easy to find, understand and read. Your magazine makes me want to own every one of your products! The combination of humor and useful information was perfect. I especially liked the short paragraphs at the end of your articles on each of the authors. Keep it up!

O. Mikheeva
Pacific Groove, CA

OK, which InterAction *staff member's family lives in Pacific Grove?*

ITALIAN FAN CLUB

My name is Marco and I'm Italian boy...so excuse me for my bad English. I have buy *Indy Car* but when I open in my computer (I have Power Mac 266MHZ) the preferences I can not setting my car. I can not also put my name and change the colour of my car. Please help me. I known that this game is old (1996) but in Italy is very hard to found a games for Mac.

If you known some shop in Italy for found your games tell me.

Marco
via email

Do you have MAC/OS 8.0 or newer? If so, Apple changed the default system fonts with the new OS, and there is no definite solution. You might be able to fix your problem by changing the system font (in Control Panels/Appearance) to Chicago, but we cannot guarantee this will work. If it doesn't, feel free to contact **hardware@sierra.com** *for more help.*

Morghan L.
Sierra Technical Support Specialist

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QUIT STALLING!

I've got a couple questions about *Pro Pilot '99*. When I'm actually flying, the clouds look really blocky, like a city in the sky. Can you tell me why? Next, a majority of the time, I can't get my plane started or it stalls right after I do get it started and I never get off the ground. What's up?

Lisa27
via email

The blocky cloud problem you describe may be the result of an incompatible 3D card or not having a 3Dfx card activated in the sim. Pro Pilot '99 uses 3Dfx brand cards exclusively. If you have one of these cards and the spinning 3Dfx logo does not appear when the simulation was started, it will be necessary to activate the 3D graphics acceleration. To do so, go to the View menu and select Full Screen.

Regarding your second concern: these are the steps for correctly starting the planes. Simply follow this keyboard letter sequence: Z, X, F, F, S. This sequence will turn on the batteries, avionics and fuel, and crank the starter. If the plane has an actual fuel pump toggle switch or fuel boost toggle switch, that will have to be activated by the mouse.

UP IN SMOKE

The other day I received an interesting advertisement in the mail, it was a brown folded card with a big yellow "SIERRA" on the front. I thought "Cool! A Christmas coupon or something!" but to my utter dismay what I discovered inside was a coupon for $3.00 off a carton of Brown & Williamson's newest cigarette called, *gasp* "SIERRA".

Well I may be a 32-year old kid at heart, but I wouldn't want my software company associated with a cigarette brand, and I most certainly don't think you should change your name, so the only thing to do is hand it over to your legal guys and gals and let them work on it.

Sorry, but I just know there must be a post-it note at the old cigarette company thinking up new and improved ways to attract kids.

John G. Williams
Milwaukee, WI

Thanks for the tip. We'll hand this over to the attack dogs in legal and see if they can't come up with a tobacco settlement that will set us all up for life.

RESTART/RETORT

In the Holiday 1998 issue (of *InterAction Magazine*) on page 122 "Restart" the mistakes and misinformation is worse than my spelling.

1) The "steam-powered 386MHz and 486MHz" is so wrong!!!!! They are but a version number on a CPU, not the speed that they run at, like a 486 DX2 @ 33MHZ.

2) The part about defragmenting has much to be desired. You must tell people to right click on the HDD of choice or they will never find the properties, tools, Defrag. 97% of people in this world have no clue to right click.

3) RAM comes in different sizes but in different pin counts as well, also paratie [sic] and non-paratie [sic]. On some mother-boards [sic] you must select (using jumpers) the banks that are to be used, not so easy to find all the time.

4) Not all mother-boards [sic] have all the different types of slots that are on the market, AGP, VISA local bus, ISA and so on. You can't just buy a 3D card and slap it in the wrong type of slot. That would be like putting milk in the gas tank of your car.

5) The CPU change is a joke. I would like to see your face after removing an Intel CPU and replacing it with a faster AMD or Cyrex CPU without changing jumpers on the mother board for the CPU type you're installing. If it's not right, it's toast! You just burned $200.99.

Do you people read what you write? Is all you know is how to play games? Is Mr. Walker's book in it's third printing because nothing in the first two tries worked? Do you spell CAT with a K?

Aside from my poor spelling, you folks make me feel like a brain. Do you need some technical help?

TopswaT –
a ditch digger with a PC
via email

Mark Walker responds:
While much of what you said is true, we had neither the time nor the space to teach computer science to the uninitiated. No, a 386 is not a speed, but it is an indication of age and that was my intent. I just defragmented my drive following my instructions. I didn't notice a problem. You are 100% correct about RAM. Again, we had limited space to convey the message. The point is as valid now as the moment it was written; more RAM=Faster Speed (usually). Very astute call on both the 3Dfx card and the CPU. I assumed that buyers will ensure they buy equipment compatible with their computer. But you know what they say about assuming. Anyway, thanks for the feedback. You obviously know your chips.

Mark Walker
INTERACTION MAGAZINE
Contributor

STRANGE BREW

I'd like to buy *Starsiege* (yaaay!) and I have a few questions. When I play the actual game, will I still be able to play with my buddies online? And can I pay in Canadian cash?

Sareth
Ontario, Canada

P.S. Please write back or I won't buy!

To answer your questions, yes, you can play Starsiege with your friends online and yes, you can pay with Canadian currency, but not in cash. Call 1-800-757-7707 for more details. By the way, we would have written back but you didn't include a return address with your letter. Then again, this is essentially writing back, eh?

Questions? Concerns? Kudos? Write!

Email: interaction@sierra.com
Postal: *InterAction Magazine*
P.O. Box 53008
Bellevue, WA 98015-3008

BIRD'S EYE OR BIONIC EYE?

We could rely on all kinds of sophisticated marketing angles to get folks excited about SimCity 3000™. But we'd rather rely on sophisticated viewing angles. The vivid new levels of zoom let you pull back to admire your metro masterpiece from ethereal heights. Or push in to see the garbage truck that caused the gridlock that caused the Sims to call for your head. So will it be rose-colored glasses or X-ray specs? We just give you the power. What you do with it's your business.

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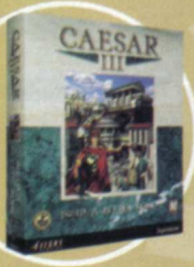
THE TOP FIVE

Sierra Games Winter 1998

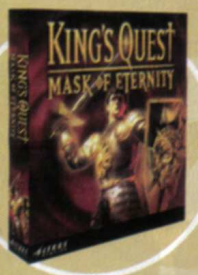
1 HALF-LIFE

2 NASCAR® RACING-1999 EDITION



3 CAESAR III

4 YOU DON'T KNOW JACK: THE IRREVERENT COLLECTION



5 KING'S QUEST: MASK OF ETERNITY

The 3-D Ultra Series Is Changing the Way America Plays

THE *3-D ULTRA* SERIES HAS PUT the definitive spin on some of America's most popular pastimes, and soon they'll do it again with four new titles: *3-D Ultra RC Racing*, *3-D Ultra NFL Pinball*, *3-D Ultra Cool Pool* and *3-D Ultra Trains*.

Race for the Checkered Flag

Here they are—souped-up, remote-controlled racers battling each other for position... through a backyard fantasyland full of gardening tools, children's toys and maybe even a "car-munching" dog. And that's only the beginning. Switch gears and try the Extreme RC Raceway—the ultimate RC Racing track. You can watch your racers from the top down and they'll go as fast as you like—you make the rules. It's straightforward, down-and-dirty racing where "take no prisoners" is the motto.

From 2- and 4-wheel drive buggies to trucks in stock or modified classes, *3-D Ultra RC Racing* has it all. Only this time, your mom can't confiscate your racer if you don't get your homework done on time.

Pinball Gets Physical

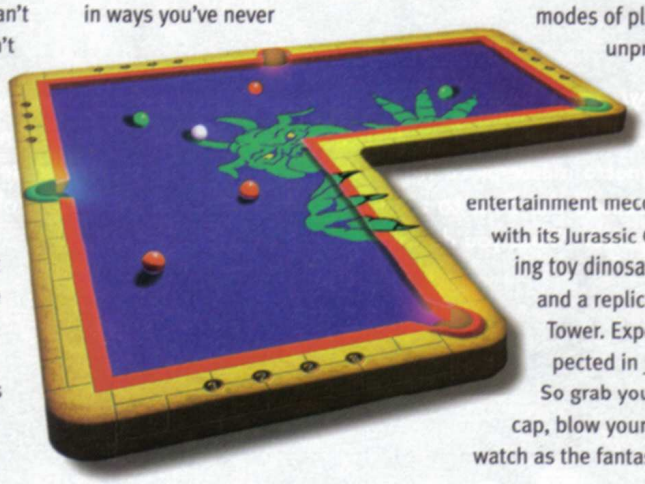
You may love PC pinball, but have you ever been playing and realized you could use just a little more... action? Welcome *3-D Ultra NFL Pinball* to your game roster. It's time to quit being nice and get your players into shape for the regular season. The first table features a practice field, where you turn your humble cast of misfits into a dominating powerhouse. The second table puts you on the playing field—this is when all those grueling hours of practice start to pay off.

In order to work your way to the SuperBowl of pinball, you'll have to make the best use of your offense, defense and special teams in each six-minute half. With more than 25 special challenges, including the Hail Mary, Flea Flicker, and defensive Blitz, this season will be a tough one. But, hey, at least you can go to the Snack Bar.

With NFL logos and exciting graphics to make your pinball experience even more vivid, *3-D Ultra NFL Pinball* brings the blood, sweat and tears of pro football to your PC—minus the jock straps, dislocated shoulders and pulled hamstrings.

Rack 'Em Up

For those of you who would love to own that regulation pool table but don't have the space, *3-D Ultra* has the answer. Not only can you play a classic game of pool on beautifully-rendered green velvet tables, you can shake, rattle and roll the game in ways you've never imagined. Rack 'em up for a competitive game of 8-ball, Straight Pool, Cutthroat and more. In the *3-D Ultra Cool Pool* universe, the game of pool can go beyond the limits of reality. You will find unusually witty table shapes, as well as animated creatures meant to confuse, interrupt and entertain. Clever games with unusual rules thought up by the intrepid *3-D Ultra* developers include Bombs Away, Fire and Ice, Slot Machine and Snake Poison, to name just a few. Exploding pool balls? Think nothing of it.



All Aboard!

Hop onboard *3-D Ultra Trains* for the wackiest, coolest and most unforgettable ride on the rails. Haul supplies through your hometown of Oak Valley and hustle up to the North Pole to lend a helping hand to Santa at Christmastime. You're a railroad mogul building an empire like no other. Choose from five different modes of play and five unpredictable environments including the Living Room, Back Yard and entertainment mecca wonderland with its Jurassic Corral (and living toy dinosaurs), pyramids and a replica of the Eiffel Tower. Expect the unexpected in *3-D Ultra Trains*. So grab your engineer's cap, blow your horn, and watch as the fantasy unfolds.

No Need to Die Alone

VALVE HAS RELEASED AN immediate multiplayer update for *Half-Life* that includes new maps, team-play mode, models, and improved bandwidth utilization for multiplayer games.

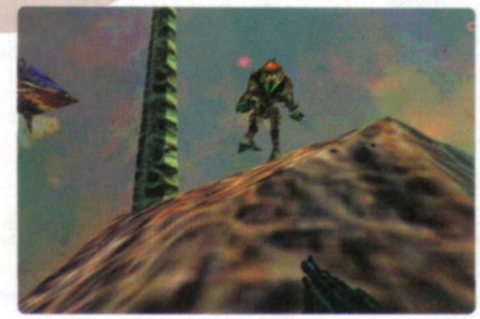
"We've come up with a number of techniques for encoding the multiplayer datastream that significantly improve overall latency on lower-speed connections," says Yahn Bernier, senior development engineer at Valve. "Most players will see a dramatic improvement in the smoothness of gameplay."

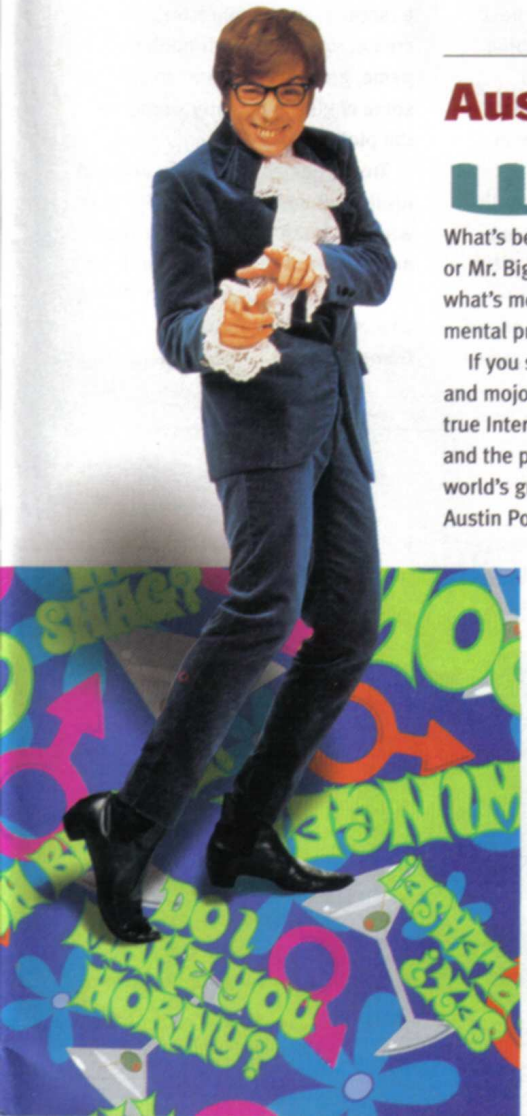
Helpful to players with less than stellar modem speeds, the update will also make *Half-Life* multiplayer games even more challenging.

Frenzy, one of two new maps, caters to small teams and requires less of your PC. On the other hand, Crossfire is for much larger teams and gives them a destructive new option: air strikes.

If you're wondering how to get the update, the answer is simple—you need only click the "Update" option located in the game's configuration menu, or download the update directly at a variety of gaming websites, including **www.won.net**.

Also available to the online gaming community is the *Half-Life* software development kit, which should spawn even more levels and mods for *Half-Life*. Check out **www.planethalflife.com/wavelength/tclist.htm** for all you ever wanted to know about *Half-Life* modifications (but were afraid to ask).





Austin Powers Gets Trivial

WHAT'S SEXIER—A HAIRY chest or a bald head? What's better—a "bird" in the hand or Mr. Biggelsworth in your lap? And what's more dangerous—mojo or mental prowess?

If you said a hairy chest, a bird, and mojo, congratulations! You're a true International Man of Mystery and the perfect partner for the world's grooviest secret agent, Austin Powers. Your mission: Match wits with Dr. Evil, foil his diabolical plan and save the world from imminent destruction.

Austin Powers: Operation Trivia is the fast-paced, psychedelic trivia game that tests your mojo and your mettle. Play as Dr. Evil's apocalyptic apprentice or as Austin Powers's paisley protégé, and answer questions about the pop culture, people, movies, TV shows, fads and gossip of the '70s, '80s and '90s. The stakes? The fate of the world.

Can you and Austin Powers vanquish the most adequate criminal mind of all time? Or will you and Dr. Evil prevail and enslave the globe? Whatever side you choose—swinger or square—you'll be the one to decide the fate of the world. Because let's face it; Austin Powers and Dr. Evil were human popsicles for the last three decades. Their knowledge of pop culture ended with pop art, and they're gonna need all the help they can get!

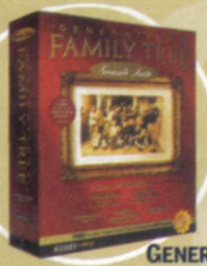
Austin Powers: Operation Trivia is in the works at Berkeley Systems, so you better beef up on your Beatles, Brady Bunch, breakdancing and Billy Baldwin until the game's scheduled release late this spring.

Do I make you horny, baby? Do I? Yeah, baby, yeah.

THE TOP FIVE

Home Productivity Winter 1998

1 PRINT ARTIST PLATINUM



2 GENERATIONS FAMILY TREE GRANDE SUITE

3 COMPLETEHOME

4 COMPLETE LANDDESIGNER

5 COMPLETE MASTERCOOK SUITE

Shutout or Skunk?

TIRED OF GETTING SKUNKED BY blue-haired Aunt Edna when you play cribbage at family get-togethers? Looking for a better backgammon partner than your semireclusive, Agent-Mulder-wannabe neighbor across the hall?

With the upcoming *Hoyle Classic Backgammon and Cribbage*, sanity is within your reach.

Not only can you choose from 10 very different animated opponents, you can also adjust their attitudes and conversation styles depending on whether you're in the mood to be feisty or friendly. Looking for someone who'll go easy on you those first few games? Well, you can raise your competitor's skill level as you improve, or lower it if you're in the mood to win. With these opponents, unlike when you play with auntie, you have unlimited access to one of the best features of all: You can turn down their volume.

You also benefit from knowing your chosen competitor is playing by the rules—the real rules. With Hoyle, you can rest assured you'll be free from any shifty game strategies or loaded dice. Finally, you'll be on the straight and narrow.

To make getting started and playing your favorites even more convenient, *Hoyle Classic Backgammon and Cribbage* employs an easy-to-use interface and also provides free play on the Internet. You can even change backgrounds, card styles, and the accompanying music. All of this will be available this spring.

And once you've perfected your game, you might even feel generous enough to invite your neighbor to play on the PC with you. With the skills you've honed, you can work on making even better use of that doubling cube.

Sierra Studios Predicts a Fallout

SIERRA STUDIOS AND TIM Cain, founder of Troika Games LLC and creator of the best-selling, award-winning RPG *Fallout*, have joined forces to produce the role-playing game for the millennium.

"Tim Cain, Leonard Boyarsky and Jason Anderson made a name for themselves with their work on *Fallout* last year," says Scott Lynch, senior vice president of Sierra Studios. "Their team has a combined 20 years in the games business, and we're excited to be working with them on their next project. We are confident Troika Games will produce another award-winning game and bring RPGs a new brand of quality in the genre."

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Leonard Boyarsky, Tim Cain, Jason Anderson.

"Over the course of six months I looked at a lot of different publishers," Cain says. "I went with Sierra Studios for one reason—trust. I trust them and their experience at handling big-ticket games. This is the RPG I've been waiting 15 years to make—it's got everything I want in an RPG: a cool story, a large variety of characters you can create, lots of paths through the game, great artwork and an awesome engine that really supports the plot."

Troika Games LLC was founded in April 1998 and *Fallout* was the 1997 winner of OGR's Game of the Year, and winner of RPG of the Year from *PC Gamer*, *Computer Gaming World*, GameSpot, Adrenaline Vault, and Games Domain, among others.

Loveless Souls Find Hope

LOOKING FOR LOVE IN ALL THE wrong places? *Acrophobia* may be your answer.

After one year online and more than 20 million sessions played, *Acrophobia*, Berkeley Systems' popular and critically acclaimed online game of quick wit, is spawning more than creativity.

"In August I flew to Texas from New York and met Admiral27 along with seven other Acrodome regulars," said *Acrophobia* enthusiast Denise D. "Every single one of these people will be my lifelong friend. Admiral27 and I hit it off from the second we met, and two months later he asked me to marry him in open chat in the Acrodome. It seemed only fitting."

Believe it or not, matchmaking is not *Acrophobia*'s sole purpose. This online only game consists of up to 14 players who must use their smarts to create a phrase from seven letters displayed onscreen. Easy enough, but the phrase must also fall under a designated category and players have only seconds to submit their gems. Participants then vote on their favorite phrases, and points are awarded for speed and humor. During the course of a game you can chat with Acro buddies, and special rooms have been created to accommodate teams for hardcore Acro matches.

Sound like fun? Well, thousands will agree with you. The game's phenomenal success has inspired conventions, chat rooms, friendships and, of course, love. In its first year online, *Acrophobia* also garnered a Best Online Game award from *FamilyPC Magazine* and picked up kudos from GameSpot as Best Online Only Game. To find your match (for life or maybe for just a few minutes), check out **www.acrophobia.com.**

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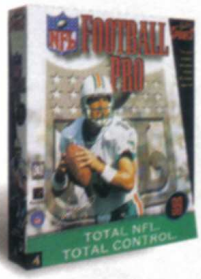
We Goofed!

PERHAPS IT WAS OVERENTHUSIASM or getting caught up in the moment, but the release of *NFL Football Pro '99* was premature. Sierra announced in January a total recall of the product because of errors in its programming code.



Sierra customers who purchased the game before January 20, 1999, may return the CD to Sierra (with a copy of the receipt) for a full refund and a certificate good for a complimentary Sierra product.

"I want to apologize to all our loyal customers for releasing a product before it was ready," said Sierra president David Grenewetzki. "We came through 1998 with one great product after another, only to stumble on virtually the last title we shipped in the year. We knew the potential for this product, but we let the impending end of the football season influence our decision process. We figuratively 'dropped the ball.'"

Customers who opt for the refund can send their CD and receipt to Sierra Software Returns, 4100 W. 190th St., Torrance, CA 90504 or call 1.800.757.7707 for more information. The free game certificate (retail value $29.95) will follow.

For those die-hard *Football Pro* fans who choose to keep the game, Sierra Sports has established the Football Pro Home Team. Members will receive a $20 rebate toward the purchase of *Football Pro 2000* and a Home Team T-shirt.

"The recall and reparation actions are the first step in correcting our mistake and restoring confidence in an exceptional product line," said Sean Gleason, Sierra Sports director of marketing.

It's All About the TRIBE

IN THESE HALLOWED HALLS, WE take our multiplayer gaming very seriously. After the release of *Starsiege TRIBES*, tech support, the staff here at *InterAction* and even upper management were often found waging tribal wars late into the evening.

What we wanted to know was—how many other rabid fans are out there and how do they find each other? We asked Dynamix web guru Blake Carper for some details:

"It's massive; simply massive. We are seeing the creation of 10 to 15 new tribes every day. (As of late January) we estimate there are more than 250 fan-based tribes."

If you're one of the many searching for a tribe to call your own, looking for skins, or hoping to participate in a forum about the glory of battle, check out **www.tribesplayers.com**. Recruiters, message boards and helpful links are integral parts of the site—you can even get information on how to establish and maintain a server.

"We have received overwhelming support for our Server Corps," Carper emphasizes. "This group is running rogue *TRIBES* servers, helping ensure a low ping game can be found throughout the country."

Especially creative fans can submit *TRIBES*-related art and fiction to **tribeswriters@dynamix.com**.

Man—that's what we call dedication.

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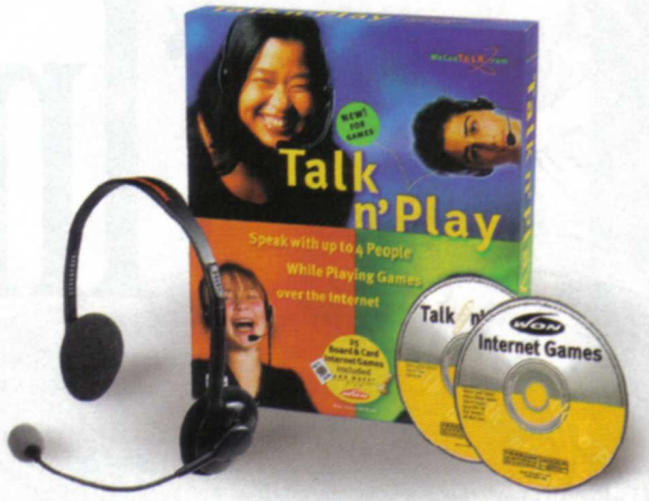

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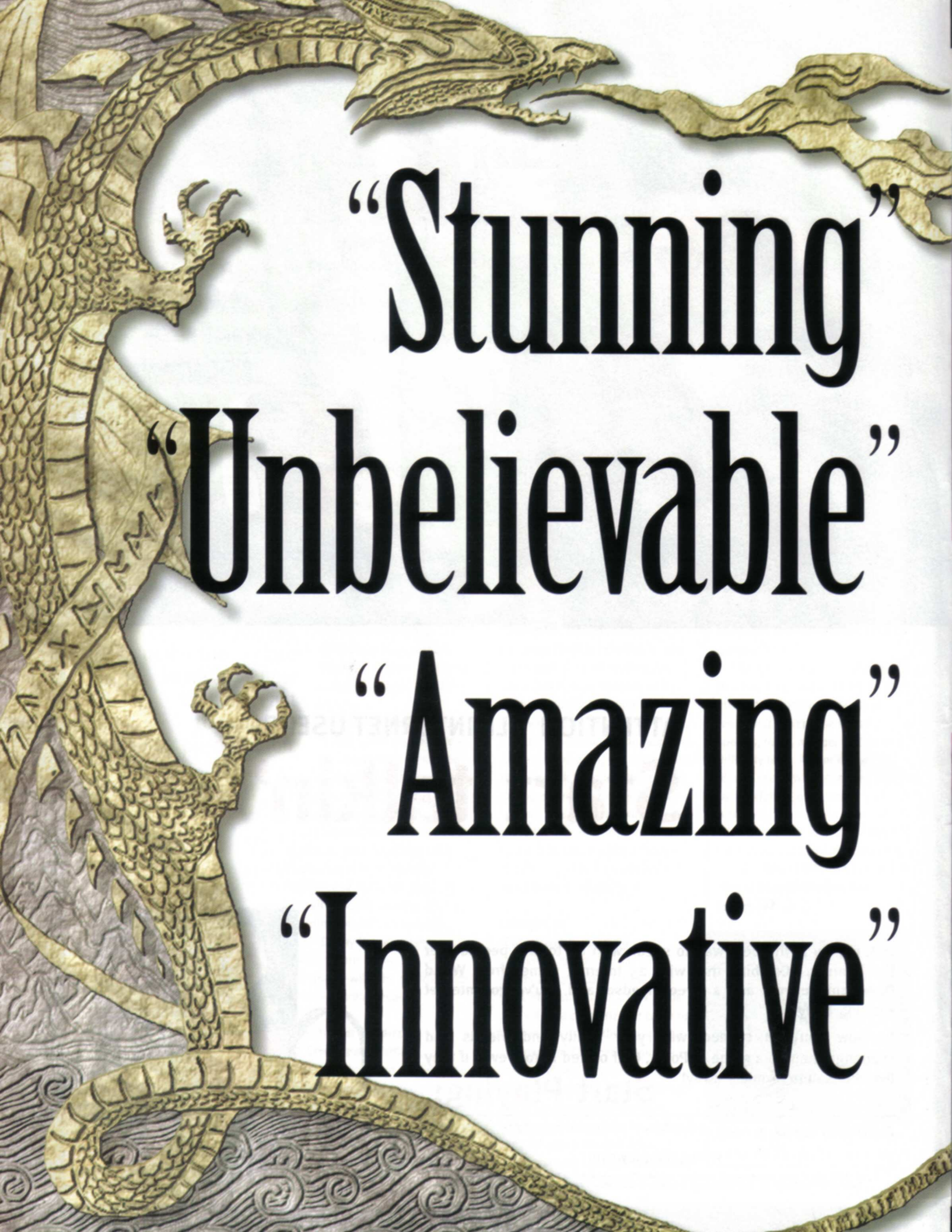
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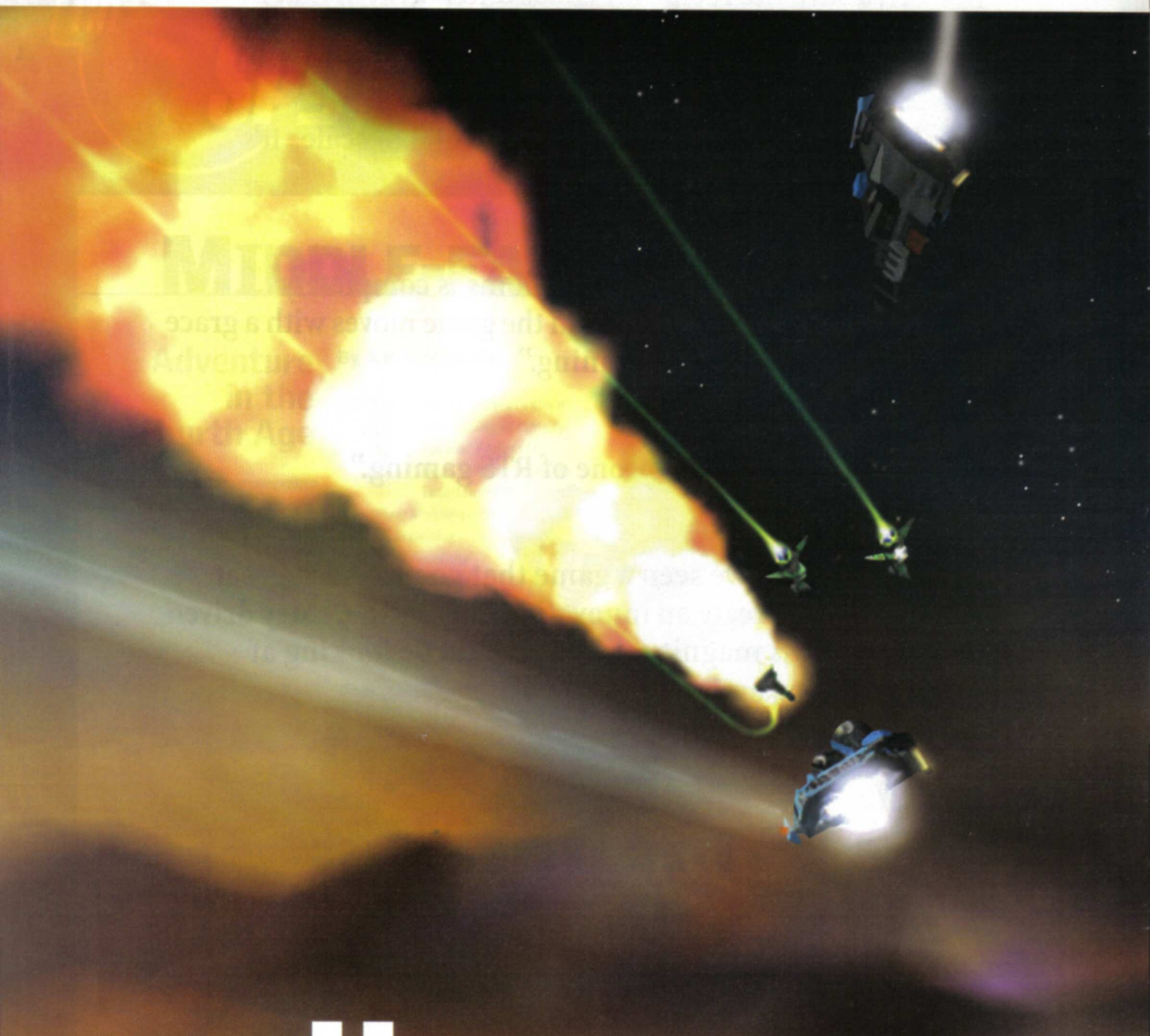


Homew

NO HYPE

orld

ALL GAME

By Arinn Dembo

"NO HYPE, ALL GAME." THAT'S QUITE a slogan in these PR-addled times—but spend a few minutes with Alex Garden and you can tell he means business. "I really don't want to hype the game," he says, without a hint of apology. "Hype is boring, and there's too much of it in this business."

He's sitting in a penthouse corner office on Homer Street in downtown Vancouver, British Columbia. At 23, Garden is in a position most men his age can only envy: He's got a picture of his motorcycle pinned to the corkboard wall, his electric guitar standing in the corner, and he created his own software company, Relic Entertainment.

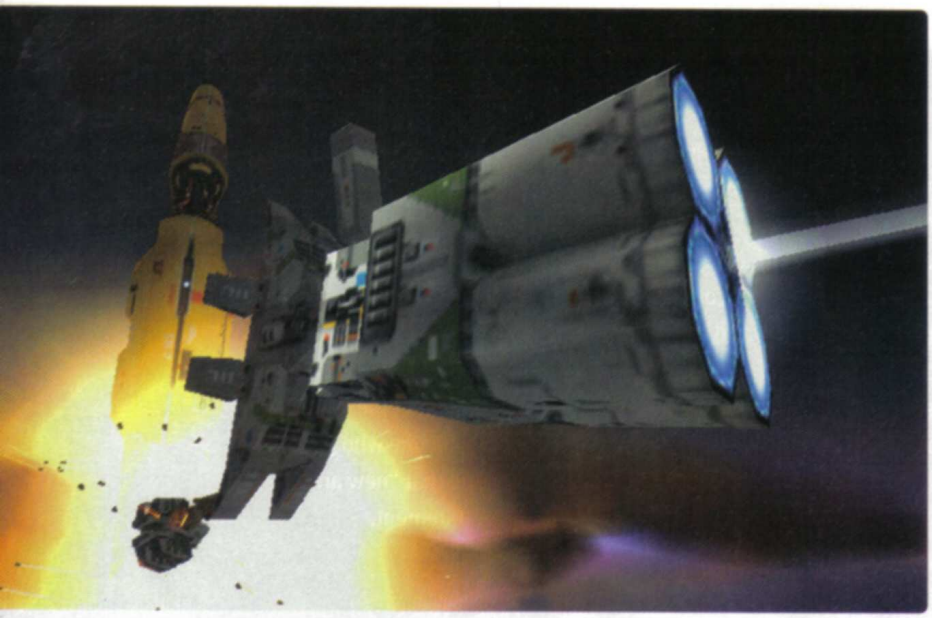
Relic's first game, *Homeworld*, is nearing completion, and Garden is no stranger to hype. As the point man for one of the most ambitious projects coming down the computer gaming pipeline for the last three years, he's had to learn to put up with it. Despite his best intentions, Relic Entertainment has become one of the most talked-about companies in the business, and *Homeworld* is one of the most previewed games of the year.

What's all the excitement about? Simple: It's about originality. Originality is the Holy Grail of computer gaming. It's what everyone wants, and what hardly anyone ever delivers. The promise of something genuinely new and different is enough to bring gamers out of the woodwork by the thousands—and anyone who gets a glimpse of *Homeworld* can see that "new and different" is probably an understatement.

The Big Black

First and foremost, *Homeworld* is a real-time strategy game. Gamers who loved every incarnation of *Warcraft*, *Command and Conquer*, or *Total Annihilation* will find the basic strategic gameplay of *Homeworld* very familiar—build units, harvest resources, research new technology, and send out your troops to death or glory. But right away, there's one thing that sets this game apart: fighting on a 3-dimensional battlefield. All the rules change when you're RTS-ing in space.

This one small leap in imagination has liberated *Homeworld*, and separates the game immediately from the rest of the RTS genre. The player is immersed in 3-dimensional space from start to finish. Every map is a sphere which represents a large sector of the galaxy, and the player has complete freedom of action. > > >



REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE: A Taiidan Salvage-Capture Corvette picks up the remains of a Kushan drone frigate for recycling into a Taiidan vessel.

Kushan Mothership
Mission: She does more than serve as a cryogenics chamber for the Kushan race. If they need more fighters, this is where they're built. This ship measures more than 7 kilometers from top to bottom.

Delta Taiidan Interceptor
Mission: It may be the runt of the fighting fleet, but it is fast, nimble, and vital to the survival of the Mothership–a key factor in completing your voyage to the Homeworld.

To visualize it, take every badly done, clumsy starship combat resolution engine that was ever tacked onto a strategy game like *Star Wars: Rebellion* or *Moo2*, and imagine what it would have been like if they had done it right. Now, imagine that you spend the entire game in that environment, facing the big, black, hard vacuum—on its own terms, without a planet in sight.

As Garden puts it, "It's an RTS and yeah, sure, another RTS is a yawn, but what makes it exciting is the way it's played." A new kind of battlefield automatically creates a new kind of battle. *Homeworld* is intended to give strategy gamers a chance to go where only sim-jockies have gone before—into the depths of the void...but without the limitation of the fighter-jock's first-person view.

A New Point of View

The *Homeworld* general watches the action from outside his ships, with a full-3D, God's-eye view of all the action. Relic has created a very powerful 3D engine for this game. It allows you to place the camera anywhere—select any ship or object, and spin your whole field of vision a full 360° on any axis, simply by holding down the right mouse button as you roll the mouse around. Zooming in, zooming out, or jumping to a view of the whole sector map is also at the player's fingertip.

Every object in the game is fully rendered in 3D, down to the last bullet. You can actually pause the game in the middle of a firefight, select a single bolt of steel en route to the target, and look at it from all sides, if you like. The textures and detailing of every ship and object are truly amazing; the in-play graphics are so rich that the few cut-scenes in the game are done by animating the same rendered objects—a completely seamless visual effect.

A great deal of loving time and effort has gone into the art of *Homeworld*, with every ship perfectly detailed, down to the individual guns and decals. Looking at any given vessel, it's possible to say immediately which race constructed it and even make an educated guess as to its function. "You see a frigate with dozens of gimbal-mounted guns down the sides, you can pretty much figure its an anti-aircraft battery," as Garden points out. To the educated eye, *Homeworld* is like the ultimate game of space combat miniatures; each unit is as intricately modeled as the figurines in *Starfleet Battles* or *Interceptor*.

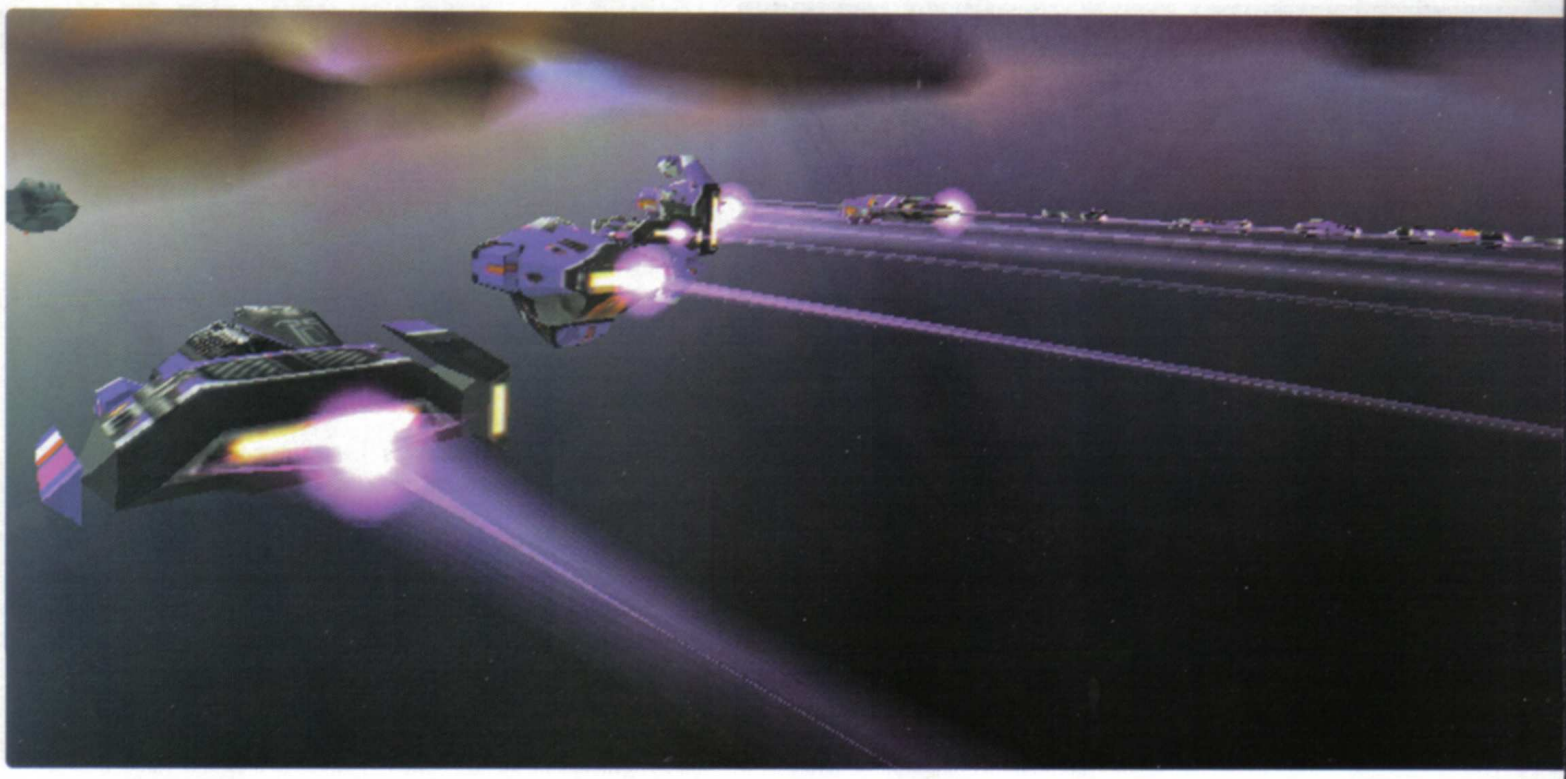
Fluid Dynamics

The graphics are very beautiful, but *Homeworld* is more than just a pretty face. It's also a whole new realm of tactical warfare. Watching two fleets engage on the screen makes it obvious this is a whole new ballgame, even if only because of the way things move. Units change vector and formation in perfectly flowing real-time, and open fire when they can bring their weapons to bear. Capital ships maneuver with a slow, heavy grace, trying to come around for a broadside or bring the enemy into range of a powerful beam weapon. Fighters dart around the big ships like fireflies in the dark, stitching up the hull of an enemy carrier with their forward guns. Everything is constantly in fluid motion at different rates of speed—a nice touch of hard science fiction there, as a ship's maneuverability is based on mass.

It takes an impressive AI to control all this motion, and *Homeworld* has one. In a big firefight, things would quickly become an unmanageable tangle if the player had to control the positioning and movement of all those dozens of fighters, frigates, missile carriers and defense interceptors. Fortunately, this isn't necessary; when you issue an attack order to a squadron of fighters, they know how to pilot their own ships. You can change formation or control the group by hand if you wish, but you don't have to—all of those nameless pilots know how to fly, and they will make impressively expert maneuvers.

To build and control a fleet in this brave new arena, the player needs a fast, simple-to-use, intuitive interface. "Menus are a crutch," Garden says. "We wanted the interface to be as clean and uncluttered as possible." Accordingly, the player can either micro-manage or automate any facet of gameplay with just a click. Commands are issued by mouse or a hotkey, and there are

Fighters dart around the big ships like fireflies in the dark, **stitching up** the hull of an enemy carrier with their **forward guns.**



LOOK OUT BLUE ANGELS: Homeworld allows for mixed flying formations that can be customized to fit any purpose—as demonstrated by these Kushan interceptors.

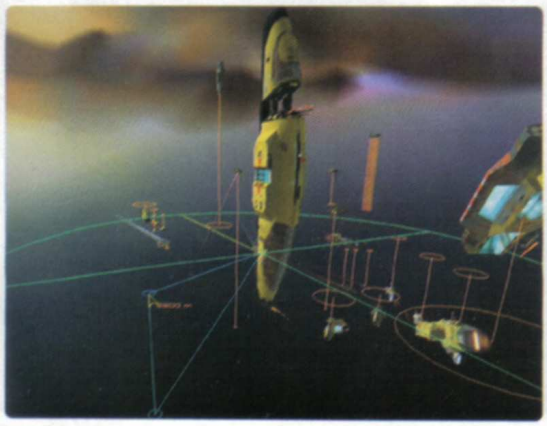
always at least two ways to issue any given command. Setting ships to a task can be done by giving them a general order, or by retentively setting the target by hand.

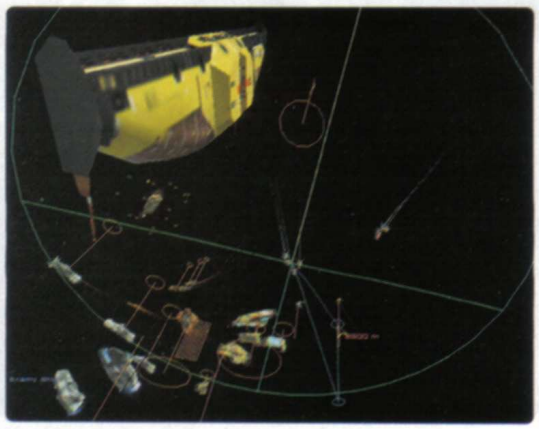
The opponent AI, which makes strategic decisions for the computer, is also pretty clever—but not artificially so. "We didn't let the AI cheat," says Garden. "We didn't give the computer any information about your location, or any way of knowing what's in your fleet." He points to the screen and a tiny enemy vessel that had just pulled into view of his battle group. "They have to keep sending out scouts to find out what's going on, and if you can keep destroying them before they get back to their Mothership—" he pauses here and directs a trio of fighters after the enemy probe ship, which is chased down and destroyed in short order, "then you can pretty much keep them in the dark."

Ultimately, the beauty of the design is the sense of immersion it gives the player—and the challenge of fighting in three dimensions. Most importantly, everything that a player has learned from years of ground-pounding missions will not apply. There is no base to build or defend; only the fleet, each ship with its own function—and all the conventions of the standard RTS game, which so many of us have memorized, are tossed out the window. There's never a choke point, never a superior firing position, and very rarely an ambush site in space.

Stellar Phenomena and Resources

Of course, saying there's "rarely" an ambush site is not quite the same as "never." The playing field in

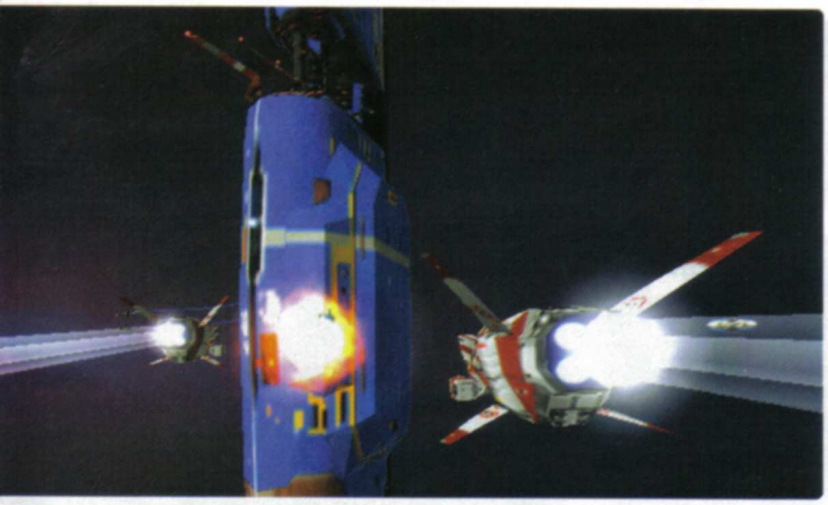




SAME SCENE, DIFFERENT VIEW: Homeworld's movement interface provides guides to help orient players in the infinite environment of space. Adjust the camera to view any angle as you plot your ships' positions.

Taiidan Generator

Mission: This gravity well generator can actually slow smaller Kushan ships, making them easier targets for Taiidan fighters.



SPIES LIKE US: Two Taiidan scuds fly reconnaissance to bring home vital information about the Kushan Mothership.

All the conventions of the standard RTS game, which so many of us have **memorized**, are **tossed out the window.**

Homeworld is uncluttered, but not completely empty. There are stellar phenomena out there, and you have to find them to harvest resources.

There are three major types of "terrain" in *Homeworld*: asteroid belts, nebulae, and dust clouds. All three of these have unique gameplay effects, but regardless of which of the three is nearest, the player will want to build some harvesting ships and send them out to collect resources. It makes no difference whether the material collected begins its life as dust, gas or solid rock—the harvesters gather it up and pass it all through a fusion torch, which converts that mass into plasma, and then they store it as a generic unit called an R.U.

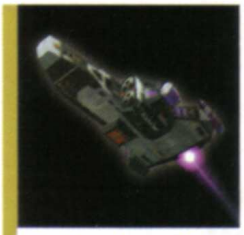
R.U.s are both a crude form of currency and a measure of a player's building power in the game. But an asteroid belt can be used for more than R.U.s; a tumbling field of stone is also one of the only places in space where a ship can hide. A wise player may want to break up the larger asteroids with weapons fire to keep enemy fighters from using them as cover; or, conversely, try to hunker down among them, and wait like a lion in the grass for enemy harvesters to come.

A nebula, on the other hand, is a nightmare for the limited-range sensors of the fleet. The electromagnetic effects created by those long, elegant streamers of gas are like a hall of mirrors; they can cover the movements of an armada, or even give the player telemetry for a squadron of ghost ships that aren't there. The only scanner you can really trust in the area is the old Mark-1 Eyeball.

Last of all, there are dust clouds. According to designer Erin Daly, these are the richest, quickest source of R.U.s in *Homeworld*, but they also represent a unique danger to the harvesting ships that venture near. The dust cloud is vulnerable to the ion beam weapon—if an ion beam is fired into the dust, it excites all the particles, generating a wild electrical storm. Lightning crackles through the entire cloud; it can arc from ship to ship and do a great deal of damage.

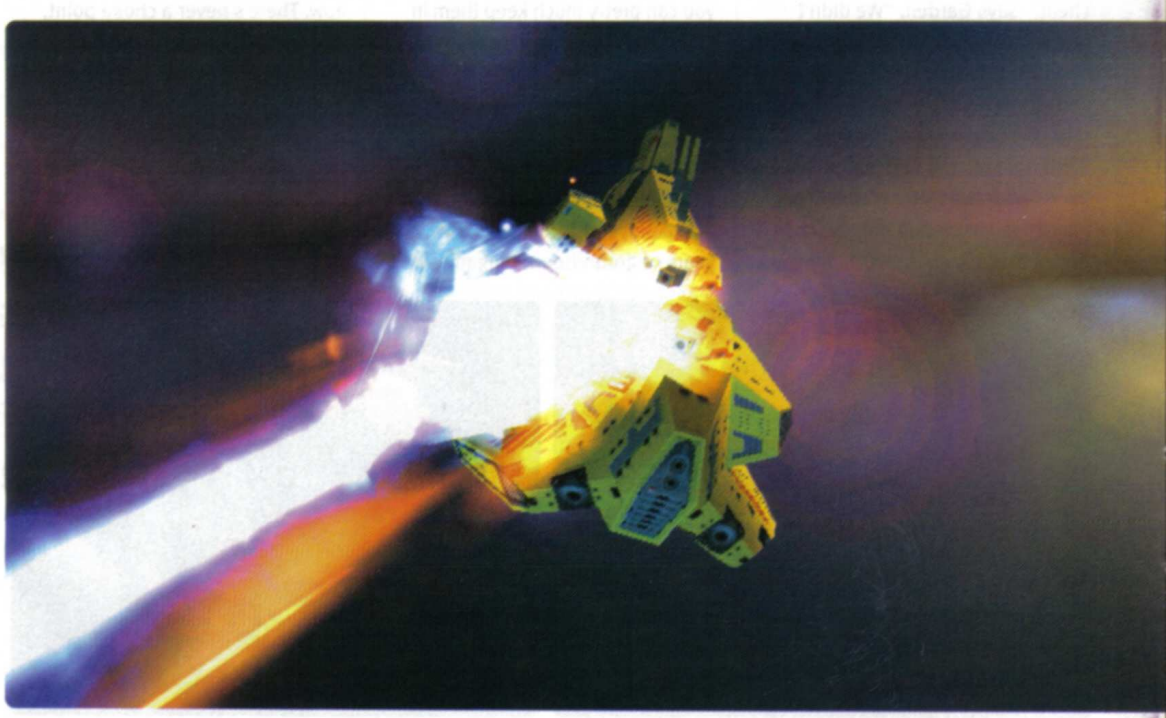
The Story of Homeworld

Of course, the beauty and danger of space is all very well and good—but it's just not enough for some people. Most players are going to want at least a hint of why they're out there,



Kushan Scope Ship

Mission: If you feel the need for speed, the Scope Ship is a fast, light attack craft. Used mainly to harass Taiidan ships, it can buy you some time before you send in the big guns.



HIT ME WITH YOUR BEST SHOT: A Taiidan destroyer on the receiving end of an ion cannon blast desperately fires its main guns. Every shot has the potential to upset your ships' delicate flight dynamics.

and what the ultimate goal of the game will be. So what exactly is the story of *Homeworld*?

When it comes down to the details—that is, what actually happens in the game during play—Relic Entertainment has a strict "don't ask, don't tell" policy; no one wants to ruin any surprises for the player. On the other hand, they were more than willing to reveal some of the back story, and the basic premise of the game.

Homeworld is a tale of exodus and return. Sometime in the distant past, the player's own highly advanced race was driven from its home planet, which was near the core of the galaxy, and forced to relocate to a planet that was tens of thousands of parsecs away, near the galactic rim. The voyage took at least a thousand years, and by the time the survivors of this once-great race landed on the desolate world of their exile, they had lost virtually all sense of identity, and all knowledge of their own origins. Soon, this lost race forgot even that they lived on a planet that was not their home.

They remained and struggled on this barren world until they were able to raise themselves up out of the dirt again, and had relearned enough science and technology to guess at their own origins. As the game begins, they have built the greatest structure ever created by their race: a gigantic Mothership nearly 15 kilometers long, with room enough to house nearly 500,000 people in suspended animation. Your goal, as the player, is to lead an expedition back to the heart of the galaxy, and take the Mothership back to the planet that was once your *Homeworld*.

The game begins with the launch of the Mothership and ends when you reach the *Homeworld*. Of course, it wouldn't be any fun if the journey wasn't fraught with peril, so you can assume there's going to be trouble along the way. There are at least five races modeled in *Homeworld*, each different from the others and all very different from the player's own race. Some of these alien races are not going to play well with others, obviously; some may be willing to help you, provided you don't attack them.

When you begin the game, you can choose from one of two races to play. There's no difference between the two so far as the plot in single-player mode goes; the two races are modeled mostly for the sake of the multiplayer suite, and their units are all mirrored except for one or two craft that are unique to each race. Regardless of which race you choose to play in the single-player campaign, the same story unfolds as you go.

Eventually the player will probably find out how his or her people—whoever they are—wound up on a godforsaken backwater world at the furthest edge of the galaxy.

What I found most interesting about the single-player campaign in *Homeworld* is that it abandons the standard mission-to-mission structure of the average RTS. Instead, the game is divided into a series of hyperspace jumps, each of which brings you closer to the galactic core. When your armada first arrives in a new sector of space, play begins with one or two mission objectives and some general recommendations from your Fleet Intelligence—but as you explore the area, those mission objectives will evolve, with new goals added as you encounter pieces of the plot and other races. How do you know when you're "done" in an area, and ready to move on to the next sector? There is a cue; when you first arrive in the area, your hyperdrive is off-line and it remains off-line until all the crucial mission objectives are achieved. This means that there's some flexibility as to when you move on to the next sector.

Some Assembly Required

The fighting units in *Homeworld* come in five basic weight classes. You have the Interceptor class, which are basically fighters. There are also Corvettes, which are a little heavier and better-armed. When the game begins, these are the only ships in your fleet besides your Mothership—but, naturally, that won't last long.

In order to build bigger, better and just plain old meaner ships, the player has to research new technologies. Once you do, you'll be able to build ships from the Frigate class, as well as Capital ships like Destroyers and Cruisers, and eventually Carriers. All of these different classes of ship have variations that are lighter or heavier, or armed with different weapons.

There are four basic types of weapons systems that any given ship can carry. The standard is your basic machine gun, a mass driver that hurls spears of metal at near-relativistic speeds. There are also missiles, which most of us have seen before; the physics of a missile in vacuum are a little different, but the principle is the same. In the more exotic category, there are also

BEAUTY GAME, EH?

The team at Relic Entertainment.

It may be a mystery to some that Alex Garden (second row, fourth from right) founded his own software company at the age of 21, but despite his age, Garden is an industry veteran, and has been in gaming off and on for several years. "I was 15 years old, working in a yogurt shop, when I first met Don Mattrick; he's the one who brought me on at Distinctive Software," Garden says. He began work at Distinctive as a game tester, and the rest is history; Garden worked at several software companies before he wound up as co-lead programmer on Triple Play Baseball for Electronic Arts, and finally decided to strike out on his own.

Relic Entertainment's current project, Homeworld, has been in production for almost 18 months. How did he start the company? "It's not a mystery," Garden says. "I had nine years' worth of favors to call in when I decided it was time to make this game." Putting together the best people he could find after close to a decade of working in the business, Garden seems to have found the formula for success: recruiting programmers, designers and artists from companies like Intersoft, Radical Entertainment, and EA Canada. He's created a young, bright, driven team of professionals who can pool their resumes and come up with contributing credits for at least a dozen different games.

Taiidan Sensors Array

Mission: It hovers near the Mothership and acts as a satellite to give you a more detailed picture of what's going on in other sectors of space.

Kushan Attack Bomber

Mission: Fairly fast, this attack ship holds a powerful bomb launcher programmed to annihilate your enemy's vessels.

"beam" weapons—the ion beam, which can be fitted to a large ship, and the defense laser, which can deflect the "bullets" of a standard mass-driver machine gun.

The most important and irreplaceable ship in your fleet is your Mothership. It isn't called the Mothership simply because it holds the future of your race within its belly; it's also quite literally a ship that gives birth to other ships. The forge onboard the Mothership is the heart of a player's production capability; it can build ships from any other class. The only thing it can't do is reproduce itself—you'll never have another Mothership.

Eventually, when the player has advanced far enough along the technology tree, it will be possible to build a Carrier class ship, which also has some production capability. The Carriers are able to build Frigates and smaller ships—but, like the Mothership, they aren't able to reproduce themselves, and Carriers are the lightest ship class that can carry a forge onboard.

What this means is, although the loss of the Mothership isn't the end of the game, it is the beginning of the end. Players can still continue with the Carriers they already have in service; it may even be possible to win. But those Carriers are the only production capability they will have, and the fight will become a desperate race against time once the Mothership is destroyed. In a multiplayer game, when the destruction of the Mothership and all Carriers is the usual victory condition, the enemy will know he has you on the ropes.

FROM VISION TO VIRTUAL

The ship designers at Relic tried to stay as true as possible to their original concepts in Homeworld. We compared early sketches with the final ship designs.

Coming Home

Homeworld is a courageous break from the "same old, same old" school of game design, and would have been a bold risk to take even from an established software company.

Does Alex Garden have any plans for the future? "Haven't met the right kind of girl yet," he says with a grin. "But seriously, though, Relic will begin work on our next project in '99. Eventually, I'd like to have a company of 50-60 people, working on two or three games at a time. And I want them all to be original content games: no licensing, no franchise games. The kind of work that pushes the industry in new directions. Games you've never seen before."

I think we can all say amen to that.

Arinn Dembo, a writer of fiction and criticism, has covered computer gaming for the last six years.

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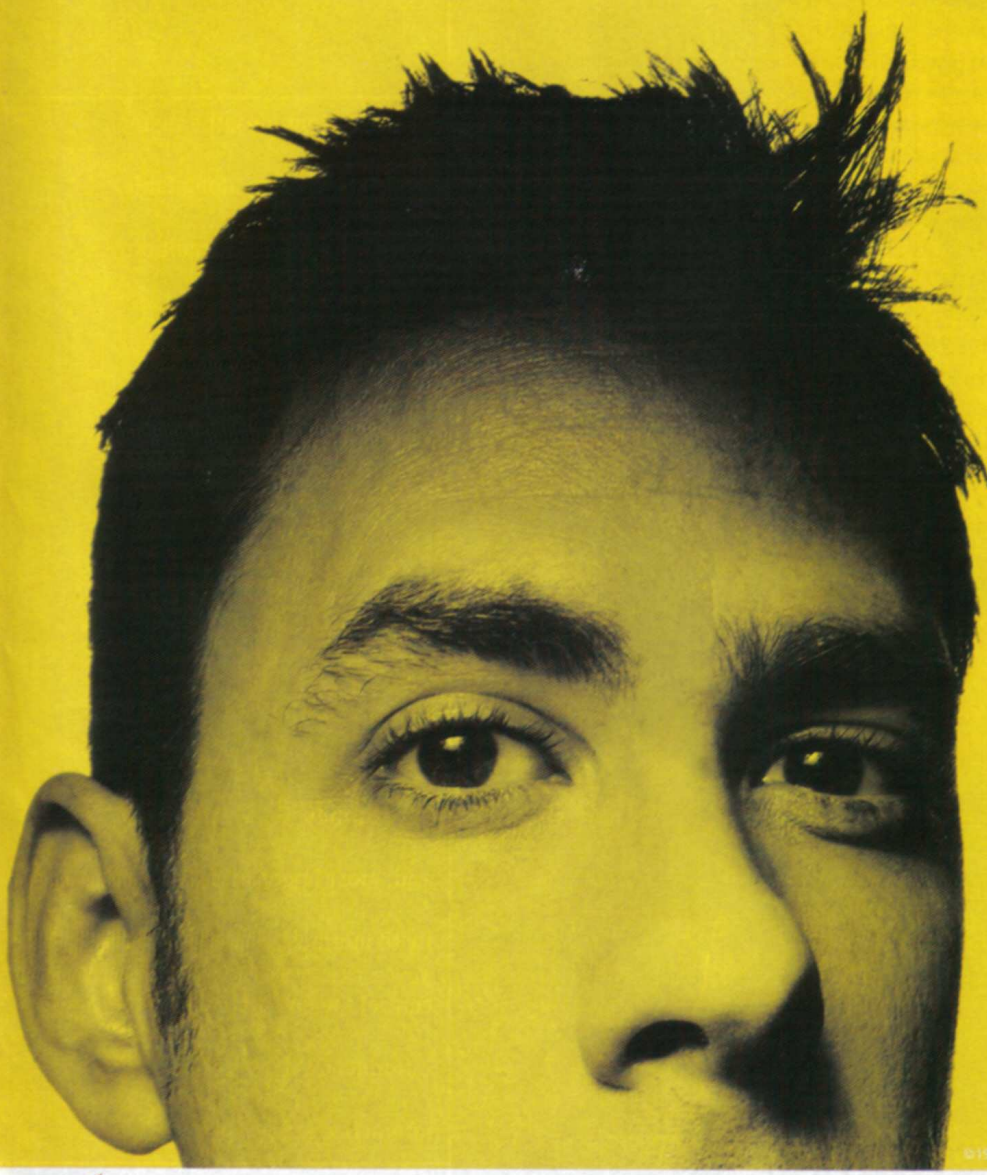

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Inside the Mind of an INTERACTIVE STORYTELLER

By Erik Twelker

For centuries, the custom of passing along fables and myths has kept traditions and spiritual beliefs alive. But it wasn't until the 20th century that storytelling became a multi-sensory experience – with visuals, sound and special effects. In the early 1980s, the computer provided an entirely new way to experience stories. Graphics, sound and, most importantly, the ability to interact with, shape and control the outcome of the story introduced the concept of interactive storytelling. > >

A Born Storyteller

Jane Jensen is an interactive storyteller. With a natural ability to bring to life elaborate tales from her imaginative mind, her stories have come to life in ways that the storytellers of the past could never imagine. Her storytelling medium is the adventure game.

"I wanted to be a writer, which I guess to me meant novelist, from the time I was young," says Jensen. "I've always been an avid reader. But when I got to college, I didn't think an English degree would make me very marketable, so I ended up majoring in computer science."

Jensen's degree led her into a career with Hewlett-Packard as a systems programmer for networking software. "Even when I was programming, I really hoped to be able to work my way into a career as a novelist," she says. Six years later, her writing dream came true. "I discovered computer games—*King's Quest IV* was my first—and decided it was a great combination of my writing interests and programming background, so I applied to Sierra." Before long, Jane was hired into Sierra's "Writer's Block" to help designers write text and dialogue for games.

Telling Tales by the Light of the Monitor

In 1991, the term interactive storytelling was rarely heard, and only in the past few years has it been recognized as a revolution in the story medium. "I guess it was in playing Sierra adventure games that I really saw the potential of the medium—to have a story in which the reader actually controls the main protagonist and has to unfold the story through effort and cleverness," she says.

"Getting into the games industry was really my creative break. Because it's such a challenge to write stories interactively, it forced me to improve my writing and, in particular, my plotting skills. And although I didn't know anything about games when I first dreamt of being a writer, they've become a very important creative voice for me," she says.

Jensen tackled the daunting challenge of writing interactive stories with excellent results. In her first three years at Sierra, she co-designed *Ecoquest: Search for Cetus* (1992), *King's Quest VI* (1992), and *Pepper's Adventures in Time* (1993).

A Hero Is Born

Asked to author and design a series of her own in late 1993, Jensen began scripting an adventure game that, when released in 1994, would throw the genre for a loop. *Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers* released to unprecedented fanfare—with rave reviews from the media, and Adventure Game of the Year awards from *Computer Gaming World* and *Computer Game Review*.

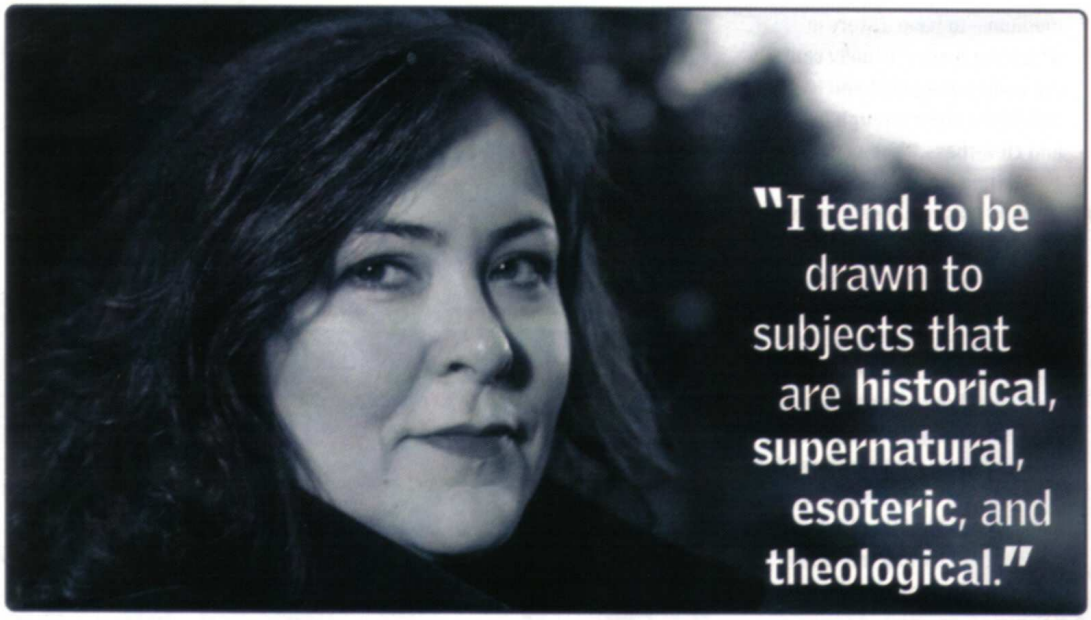
Two years later, *Gabriel Knight: The Beast Within* hit retail shelves. Exactly four days after the release of the game, an email reached Sierra begging for another installment. Hundreds more emails just like it followed, as did an avalanche of industry kudos. Not only did the game garner rave reviews, it was named Adventure Game of the Year by both *PC Gamer* and *Strategy Plus*; *Computer Gaming World* named it Game of the Year; and it received the Golden Triad Award from *Computer Game Review*. Heeding the call, work soon began on Jensen's most ambitious work to date, *Gabriel Knight III: Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned*.

JUST THE FACTS MA'AM: Madeline Buthane and Gabe do some investigating in Rennes-Le-Chateau.

New Story, New Challenges

Designing a story-rich adventure game like *Gabriel Knight III* is a demanding process, requiring months of research, writing and

THEY'RE BAA-ACK: Gabriel and Grace team up to get familiar with their case and the terrain.



technological planning. Jensen's first step in scripting this type of game is, like any other form of writing, finding a subject. "I tend to be drawn to subjects that are supernatural, historical, esoteric, and theological," she says. "For example, the Rennes-Le-Chateau mystery that is the basis of *Gabriel Knight III* is a perfect blend of all these elements—it has a weird conspiracy-theory element, a historical mystery side, and a current of religious heresy that I find fascinating."

Jensen's next step is to research the subject, then outline a plot. "I look for things that pull my eye or interest, things that give me chills—that make me think," she says. "I get as much material as I can find on that subject and go over it. As I read, I take notes on things that strike me—some of those items will work into the story and some won't. Research is only one part, though. I've still got to make a strong, original plot and that's the part that the research can't help you with—it just gives you the 'trappings'.

"The plot is a detailed outline of everything that takes place—of every scene and what occurs during that scene as well as sketching out all the characters. It takes me about five months. If I know it's going to be a game, I might write in a plot point that this is a good place for a puzzle, or even sketch what that puzzle might be if I have an idea. But basically I'm working on the story, not the puzzle or interactive bits at that stage. From there, usually the plot could be translated into a game or a book."

Teamwork, Teamwork, Teamwork...

The development of an adventure game requires attention to more than just a rich narrative. Without an immersive game environment, the player is left with the equivalent of reading a brilliantly written novel with illegible, smeared text. *Gabriel Knight III* introduces the G-engine, a new 3D environment that allows players to truly explore their environment. Here, the development team is working very closely with Jensen to ensure that her story is brought to life with realistic graphics, sound effects and music. "There's no point putting a lot of my time and effort into a great story if the technology sucks, because no one will look at it or buy it. On the other hand, I'm not interested in writing a bad story for great technology, or a bad story, period. I get excited by great technology just like Sierra does, and it's nice to know that your story will have that strong foundation," she says.

Jensen must work closely with her team to ensure that the result is a game that conveys the mood and plot of her story. "*Gabriel Knight III* producer Steven Hill is someone who has a lot of ideas about gameplay and feel, and so he and I have to agree about what direction to take. Typically we meet about the game every day that I'm in the office," she says.

Letting Go

But working with a team requires that, at a certain point in the game's development, the designer must rely on the talent of the team members. "In a book, you're completely in control. In a game, because it involves so much production and so many artists, you

THE DESTINY OF A SCHATTENJAGER AND HIS CREATOR

Seven years ago, Gabriel Knight, a Schattenjager (German for shadow hunter) was a fleeting thought in Jane Jensen's mind and one that wouldn't go away. She tossed the idea of creating a game around this tall, forbidding character and, within weeks, he became a writer in New Orleans with haunting nightmares and a chilling past that reached through the generations. It was enough to pitch the idea and get the go-ahead to make the game. And to use an old cliché, the rest is history.

Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers won numerous industry awards including CGW's 1994 Adventure Game of the Year.

It also left an audience hungry for more. In 1995, Gabriel Knight: The Beast Within was released. Computer Gaming World honored Gabe Knight II with its Game Of The Year award, and accolades kept coming. Now both games are available for $39.95 in the Gabriel Knight Collector's Edition, which includes the illustrated novels, Sins of the Fathers and Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned.

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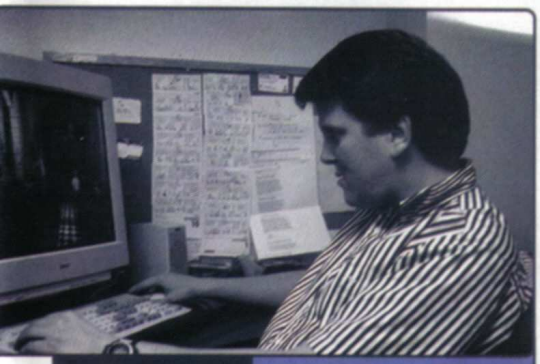
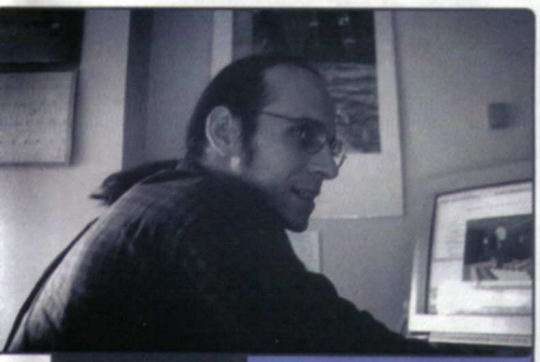
just have to be on top of what every one is doing," she says.

The *Gabriel Knight III* team is made up of a highly specialized group of technical wizards. Artists and animators, programmers and sound specialists face the daunting task of paging through Jensen's story and design document (an overview of character attributes, location details, puzzles and other vital details) and creating a cohesive game. None of this can be done without a strong relationship between the entire crew. "*GKIII* has a strong team, and they've had a great impact on the puzzles and the technology issues in the game. All the Sierra artists are great and typically knock me out with their work. With the programmers, it's more about getting the feeling of the gameplay right. There was no *Gabriel Knight III* until we had Jim Napier write a cool new 3D real-time adventure game engine," she says.

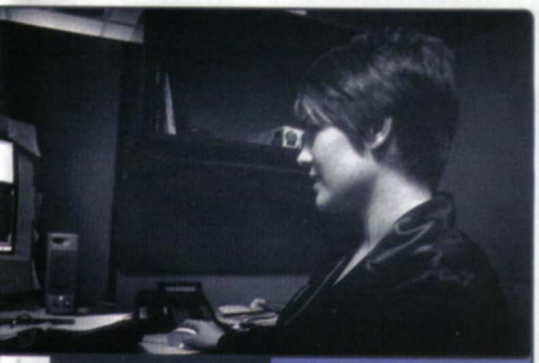
As the game evolves, Jensen works with different team members. "I approve the character models, backgrounds, and so on," she says. "Now we're more in the programming stage and I work with our art director, Richard Hescox, and Steven Hill to look over content, make sure the logic is all correct, and fine-tune issues. When new ideas or suggestions come up, we usually go over them as a team or at least a small portion of the team and try to come up with a final decision that everyone can agree with."



STEVEN HILL • PRODUCER



SCOTT HONN • LEAD PROGRAMMER



JESSICA TAMS • SCRIPTER

Daryl Affleck, one of the animators who creates the game characters, explains the initial merging of Jensen's design and the team's technological work: "For specific animations, we listen to the lines to get clues of the expression and mood, not just of the action. Does he laugh devilishly? Is he disgusted? Such issues affect the way we animate."

The game's music can play a very powerful part in the conveying of the story. "The music in the *Gabriel Knight III* game is more on a film paradigm since the games are so heavily story based," says Jensen. Returning to score the music is *GKI* and *GKII* composer Robert Holmes along with in-house composer David Henry.

"It supports the mood of locations and scenes and helps evoke the right emotion in the player," Henry explains. "If the music isn't right, the look and the story will all feel off. As a composer, I really am speaking to the player on a subconscious level to tell them what they should be feeling as all these events are taking place. This way, the music in the game will follow the flow of the events, and should bring the player deeper into the storyline."

TOURIST TRAPS: Local museums and landmarks offer a wealth of information about Rennes-Le-Chateau.

Into the Next Millennium

So, many surely want to know, what adventures lie beyond *Gabriel Knight III*? "I would love to be able to continue to do both games and books ad infinitum!" Jensen says. "But it takes Sierra and myself a long time to do a game—two years minimum these days—and *GKIII* will be even longer. With that kind of time line, we'll probably stay focused on the *Gabriel Knight* series to try to keep the wait between installments from getting too ridiculous."

We'll be waiting for the next chapter.

Eric Twelker, is a Seattle-based freelance writer.

Blood of the Sacred
GABRIEL KNIGHT
Blood of the Damned

GABRIEL KNIGHT III

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getting

A LOOK BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE UPCOMING

BABYLON 5

SPACE COMBAT SIMULATOR

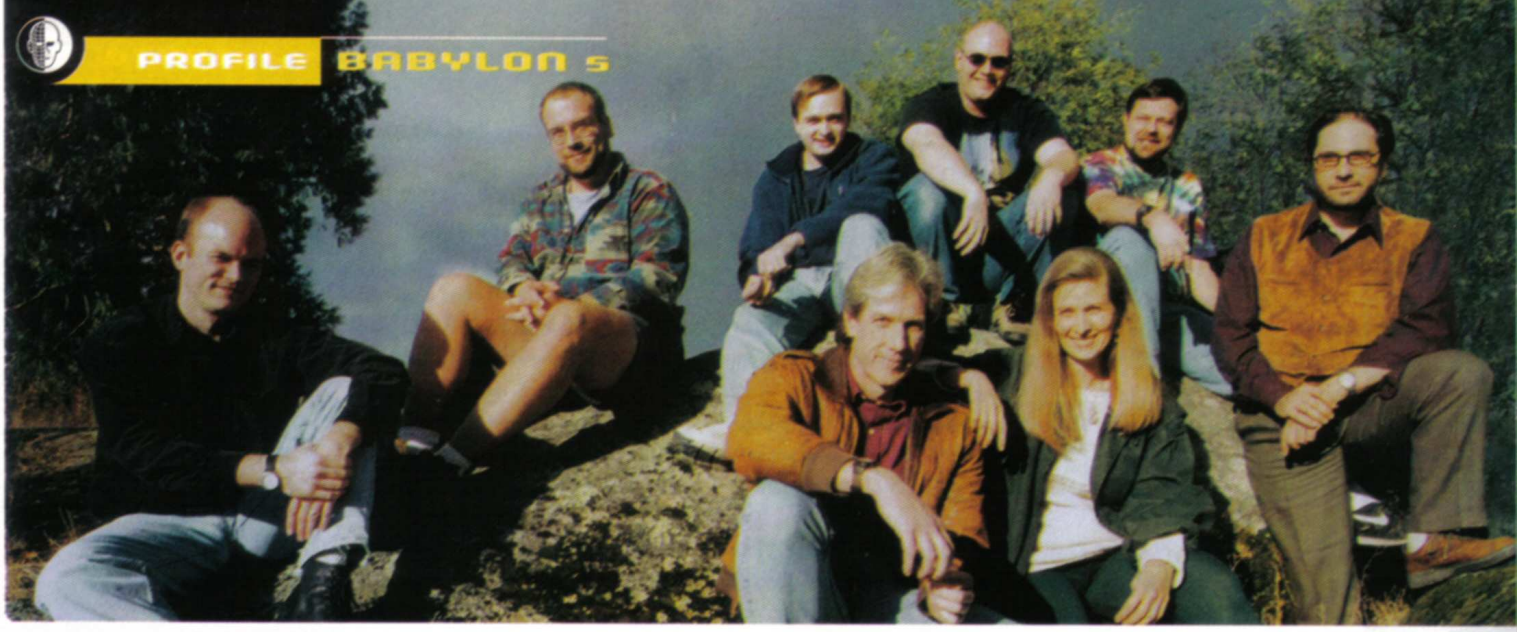
through the jump gate

By Paul McEnery

IN THE TINY MOUNTAIN TOWN OF OAKHURST, CALIFORNIA, THERE'S A studio causing quite the hush-hush hubbub. At first sight, there's nothing more going on than just another intergalactic-dogfight-tied-to-a-franchise game. Scratch the surface, and it looks like the *Babylon 5 Space Combat Simulator* from Sierra FX's development team, Yosemite Entertainment, is going to radically change the face of gaming.

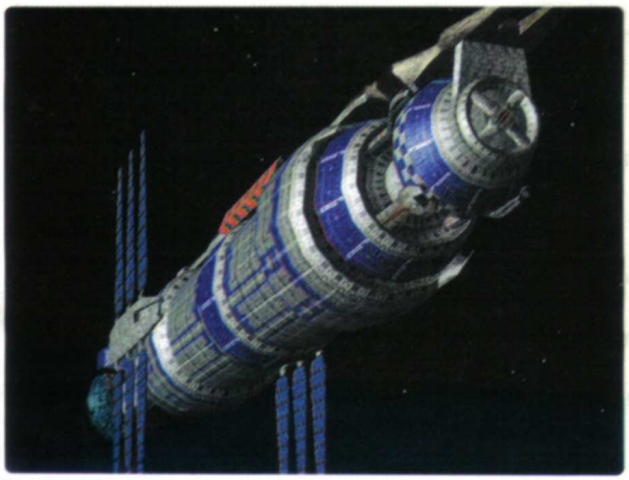
Bab5 takes place after the end of the five-year series and before the new TV series, "Crusade." In between, something mysterious and violent went down. *Bab5* outfits all the races seen until now with their own fully functioning fleets, opens the entire universe up to exploration, explains the murky workings of the Jumpgate, and includes real-time travel through hyperspace.

A range of new technologies is being created to tart up a tired genre. Call it radical "non-linear, non-branching" storytelling; a brilliant modular refit job on nearly five hours of Christopher Franke's music; plus an attention to the physics of space travel that will raise the high bar on space combat games for years to come.



BABYLON 5 DEVELOPMENT TEAM: (front row) Marc Hudgins, lead designer/art director; Randy Littlejohn and Christy Marx, writers. (back row) John Walker, programmer; Jeff Reitman, programmer; Dan Peters, artist; John Trauger, lead QA/assistant writer and Greg Tomko-Pavia, technical producer.

The creative team building *Bab5* is no less extraordinary with its three industry mavericks and programmer. The head designer is Marc Hudgins, "the idea and visual guy," as he likes to refer to himself. Dan Foy is the technical designer and "the calm but forceful voice of reason," according to Hudgins. The writers, co-designer Randy Littlejohn and Christy Marx are "the ones who are always trying to salvage the humanity of the game," Hudgins explains.



ALL ABOARD: (above) A Drazi Sunhawk performs a flyby. (below) Amazingly, the Babylon 5 station is five miles long.

"Dan and I tend to build the universe rather than the human part of it," says Hudgins. "It's just great having a technical designer because it means we can implement a) things that are possible and b) things I wouldn't think of because Dan's got his finger on the pulse of technology. But now I've come away asking how come space combat has been so stagnant? I haven't seen an awful lot of advancement on the games design side." Strong words from the inner child who vividly remembers seeing *Star Wars* for the first time. "Until *Star Wars* you never really saw space combat like that," he says.

Well, that and the fact Hudgins' mom taught high school to the kids of comic book legend Joe Kubert, artist on *Sgt. Rock* and father of Adam and Andy Kubert, who went on to draw *X-Men*. For most people, Saturday morning means cartoons. For 10-year-old Marc, it meant taking weekend art classes. It was an inside track he eventually rode to the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art, a school routinely grazed by top game recruiters.

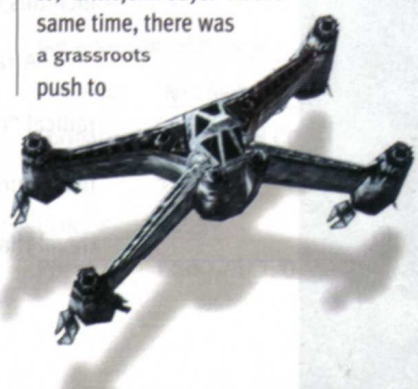
Hudgins leapt at the chance to work for Sierra, beginning with the animated frogs playing checkers in *Hoyle's Three*, and taking the art helm in *Quest for Glory III* and *IV* and *King's Quest VII*. When Sierra's animation team moved north to Washington, it turned out to be his big break. It was decided to try out a space combat game called *Starsiege*, and he hooked up with co-designer Randy Littlejohn.

Littlejohn took the pretty way to game design as well, graduating with a masters in film and theater, running sound boards for rock and roll bands before moving on to the infomercial beat. In the early '90s, he moved to Oakhurst "and just stumbled across Sierra."

"As luck would have it, they were just getting ready to do *Phantasmagoria*," Littlejohn says. "The first thing I did was help them build the studio." Since then, Littlejohn's specialty has become interactive storytelling.

Know the Competition

"Somewhere along the line there were some questions about how to be competitive in the market when we didn't have a franchise to tie it to," Littlejohn says. "At the same time, there was a grassroots push to



"In the [TV] show, you say, 'Oh, the ship just goes through the Jumpgate.' We had to figure out how in the hell the Jumpgates work."

—RANDY LITTLEJOHN

do a *Babylon 5* game. It was *the* premier franchise left! It also had its share of disadvantages. Ordinarily if you butt up against a design problem you can just do a work-around, but in *Babylon 5*, there are very distinct features that have to be there or it isn't authentic. In the show, you say, 'Oh, the ship just goes through the Jumpgate.' We had to figure out how in the hell the Jumpgates work. How does the Jumpgate manage traffic? We had to figure out how to make a universe that functions."

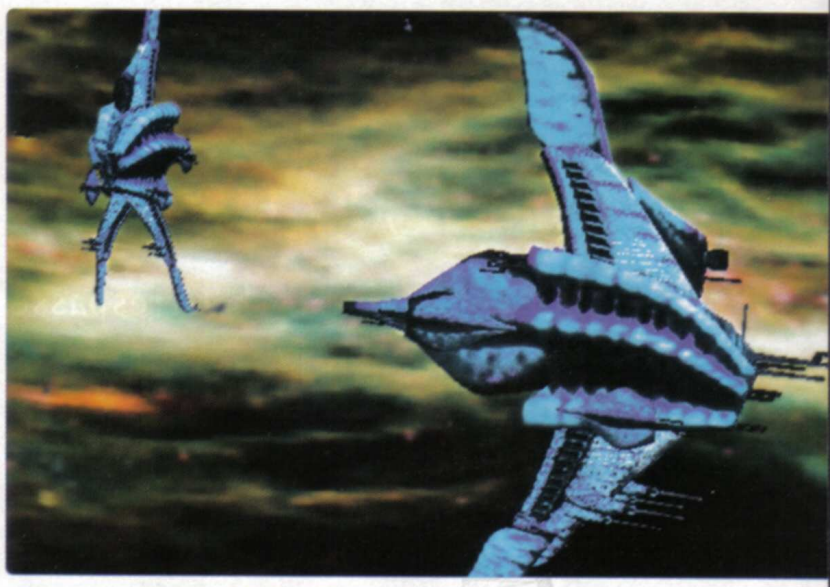
Serendipity at Work

By luck, there was yet another game designer in Oakhurst with a weird background: Christy Marx. She had written *Conan and Red Sonja* comics (and a barbarian chick title of her own, *Sisterhood of Steel*). A quick sideways shuffle to Marvel's *Saturday Morning Cartoons* led her to meet a young Joe Straczynski. She impressed him into taking her onboard his fledgling live-action show *Captain Power* and, later on, *The Twilight Zone*. But the writer's strike of 1988 closed the gates, and Marx ended up moving with her husband to Oakhurst and working for Sierra.

"It was a whole new form of media to learn," she says. "Up until then, the only game I had ever seen was this Mac game called *Cosmic Osmo*. The first thing I did was play Sierra games for weeks to get a sense of them, and the first game I designed was *Conquest of Camelot*. When I was halfway done, I took it down to a science fiction convention in Fresno. I realized that players were the forces of chaos, that nothing they did would make any sense, they would try anything in any order, and I finally got it. That's how you had to design."

After the writer's strike was settled, Marx got back into TV, scripting shows like *Reboot* and *Babylon 5*. Having her on their side turned the deal for Yosemite Entertainment. As Hudgins puts it: "The great thing about having Christy involved is she knows Joe and has written for the show, but she's also designed games for us in Oakhurst. Part of the challenge with this project is just getting everyone to understand where everyone else is coming from. Although we have some commonality, the cultures and terminology are very different. She speaks both languages, so she's the perfect bridge."

Back row: Stan Trujillo, Nicolas Gauvin, Dave Artis, Dan Foy (lead programmer), and Jeff Reitman. Front: John Walker and Vassily Fillipov.



SPECTACULAR VISTAS: Minbari Sharlin Cruisers stream by one of many brilliantly lit nebulas in Babylon 5.

Deal Maker

That's not to say making the deal was plain sailing for him. "Joe's a real poker face," Hudgins says. "You're trying to impress and he's gently nodding his head. It was hard to judge where we stood with him. Meanwhile, I'd been a fan of the show and all of a sudden the fanboy side of me comes out while trying to have a rational peer-to-peer meeting! And here we are, taking his baby away from him—and you can tell how much ownership he has of everything. To go down there and say, 'Well, Joe, now that we've got the license, here's what we're going to do to your show,' was pretty nerve-racking. But I'm a game professional. I know what's going to work."

It's an attitude that has paid off in spades. "Much of the game design has been a reflection of the show," Hudgins says. "There are features of the show that point you in the right direction. I researched naval battles and aerial combat, looking for the features I felt applied, but we had two number-one priorities. One was to be as faithful to the show as possible so fans feel like, 'Wow, this is like being in an episode.' The other was, 'Let's just make this great space combat game we want to play,' and that's what we're doing."

Paul McEnery has edited the pop-tech culture zines Mondo 2000, Axcess *and* Dark Carnival.

BABYLON 5

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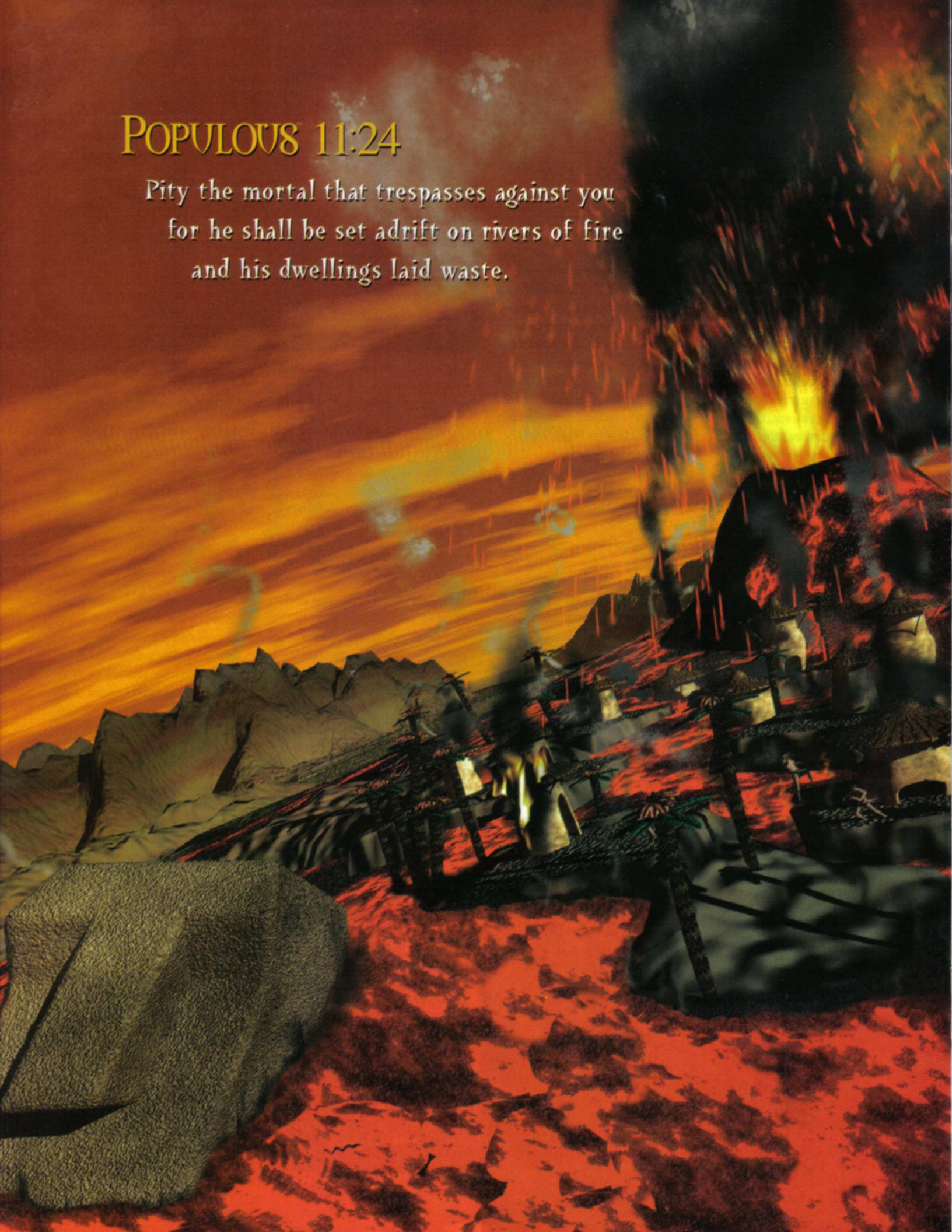
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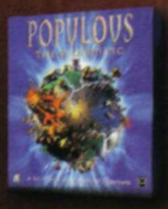

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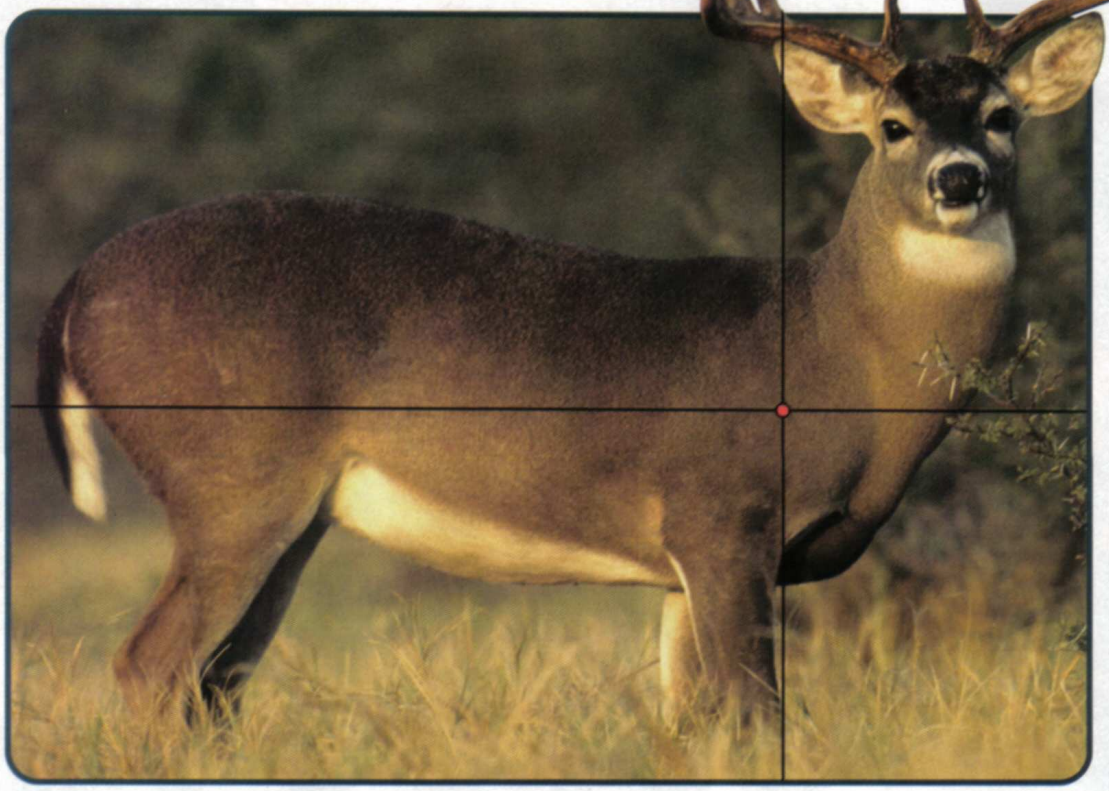
FOCUS

Home, Home on the Range



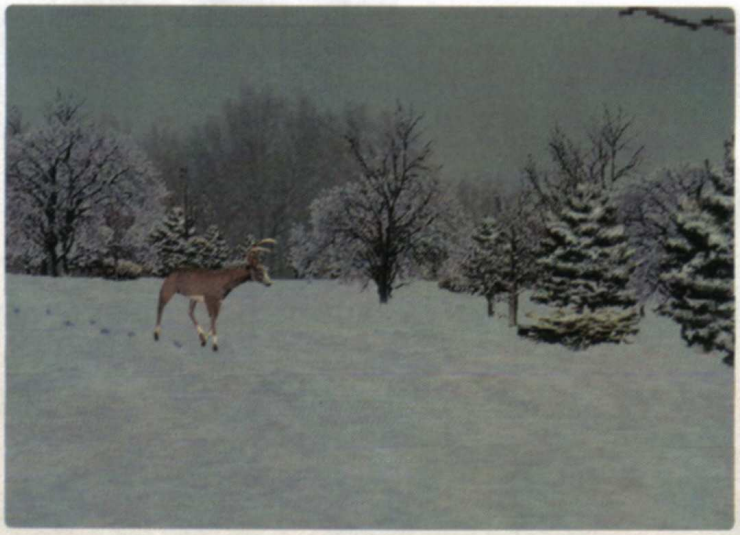
SIERRA SPORTS AND FIELD & STREAM SET THEIR SCOPES ON THE TOP OF THE HUNTING SIM GENRE WITH TROPHY BUCK

By Rob Smith

I'VE LOST COUNT OF HOW many hunting sims were raced to game store shelves in the months following *Deer Hunter*'s blistering rise to the top of the sales charts. It's a bandwagon that nearly everyone has jumped on as they approach the hunting sim genre from varying positions. The *Trophy* line of products has already reaped rewards, with the fishing variants—*Trophy Bass* and *Trophy Bass 2*—securing dominant positions in the sales charts. And, hey, if fishing can be turned into a computer pastime, there's no doubt that the eminently more active sport of hunting has its place.

If trudging through inhospitable locales, sitting silently in a single position, sensing changes in wind direction and listening for the faintest sounds of movement in the brush is the kind of thing you'd rather tackle from the comfort of your desk chair, then *Trophy Buck* aims to please. But where many of the games in this ever-expanding genre aim to satisfy some primal blood lust by essentially lining up the deer to be peppered with lead, FIELD & STREAM's involvement in the *Trophy Buck* project has ensured a firm direction toward creating an accurate simulation of the hunt.

FIELD & STREAM has been the magazine for the outdoorsy type for over 100 years, covering all elements of hunting and fishing. They've lent their licensing weight



WINTER WONDERLAND: Tracking in the winter has its advantages; your footsteps are muffled as you follow hoof prints in the snow.

NEITHER SLEET, NOR SNOW: Trophy Buck allows you to hunt the whole season long from September to December in all weather conditions.

and vast knowledge to *Trophy Buck* in an attempt to create the definitive hunting simulation. By creating a game that is a true mirror of the tactics, methods and ethical approach to deer hunting, *Trophy Buck* could educate as well as entertain.

The Fundamentals of Deer Hunting

For the novice—or the city slicker—the great outdoors can hold many mysteries. A good buck requires a hunter to understand its environment, which includes wind direction, scents and movement. The accomplished hunter has mastered the art of patience and has a profound respect for this magnificent game animal.

To ensure that hunting novices are well catered to, *Trophy Buck* features a wealth of extensive background information in text and video format. A fully interactive preview option highlights all the functions and features within the game. In addition, the audio voice-over comments on the rules and regulations of hunting to ensure the most stringent safety measures are taken. It may be a game, but should you ever move from home to wilderness, you won't bring bad habits with you.

You can shoot them, but doe (girl deer) don't score any points (though their heads look quite cute on the plaques you're awarded for your trophy room).

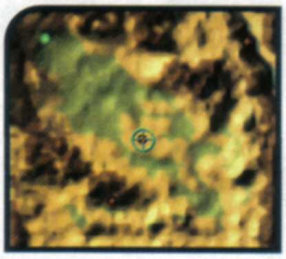
Preparation for the Hunt

Trophy Buck covers quite the range of firearms to take with you to the hunting grounds. There are 12 different types of rifles available, each with brief information on its ideal use, range and effectiveness. On top of that, two different-gauge shotguns can be brought along, one of three bows, or the slow and unwieldy muzzleloader. First stop should certainly be the shooting range—a very handy feature that gets you used to the control interface used when you're ready to fire. The range has a variety of targets of different sizes and ranges, and a target camera lets you see where your bullet or arrow hits. The trickiest targets are the static bucks, since shooting them is not just a case of hitting them, but trying to ensure you take just one shot to fell them. During the game, you get scolded by the commentator for wounding a buck and are instructed to track it down (by following its bloody trail) and finish it off so as little suffering as possible is inflicted.

The control method is quite straightforward, consisting of using the arrow keys to move around the landscape, and then tapping the space bar to raise your firearm. When in firing mode you cannot move, and with another key-press you're controlling the scope and trying to get the buck in your sights. Get a clean, fatal shot and you're congratulated—now head on over to the felled creature and find out what size and point total it's worth. Remember, though, this is *Trophy Buck*—that's buck as in boy deer. You can shoot them, but doe (girl deer) don't score any points (though their heads look quite cute on the plaques you're awarded for your trophy room).

Getting Geared Up

Eight different regions of the U.S. have been modeled to supply a



DON'T BE CHOOSY, PICK AN UZI

Rifles: By far the most popular deer hunting firearm type, rifles come in three broad categories: brush guns (such as the quintessential .30/30), general-purpose rifles, and beanfield rifles.

Bows: Sometimes the best tech is low-tech...although there's nothing primitive about these silent deer-killers. If you're the sort of hunter who's never challenged enough, the bow is definitely your firearm of choice for the simple fact that it makes the hunt a lot harder. If you can put yourself inside 35 yards of a deer, draw your bow without being detected, and make a clean, lethal shot, you deserve to be especially proud. On the purely practical side, bows extend the time period of the hunt, because bow hunting seasons are typically longer than gun seasons! (Also, if you miss a shot, you don't send a thundering warning across the fields for all creatures great and small to hear.) Bows come in three basic types—long, recurve and compound bows.

Shotguns: The shotgun has become a legitimate 100-yard deer gun that can put three shots in a three-inch or smaller group at that distance. Once relegated to shooting only Foster slugs through smoothbore barrels—not the best vote for accuracy—modern shotgun hunters can choose from a dedicated slug gun that will be used only for deer or deer guns that easily convert to duck or turkey guns.

.308 Autoloader
Excellent deer gun. Accurate, light recoil, sufficient power. Effective range: 250 yards

7mm Mag Bolt Action
Designed for stunning accuracy at long range. Effective range: 350 yards

.30/30 Rolling Block
The Mid Range Sporter packs moderate power. Effective range: 150 yards

12 Gauge Pump Action
Everything you need in a slug gun. Effective range: 100 yards

.30/06 Bolt Action
A great general purpose rifle. All the power you need. Effective range: 300 yards

Also Available:

.35 Bolt Action
.270 Bolt Action
7mm/08 Bolt Action
.208 Autoload
.300 Mag Bolt Action
.243 Autoloader
.45/70 Rolling Block
.25/06 Bolt Action
20 Gauge Pump Action
Muzzleloader
Compound Bow
Recurve Bow
Long Bow

variety of environments in which to test your hunting skills. The range covers the dry brush of Texas, the snowy mountains of Colorado and the open range of Oregon. Within each region you can choose to hunt in any of the four months of the hunting season—September through December—and set the weather and wind speed and direction. These regions also cover the two main types of deer—the whitetail and mule deer. There's information on characteristics of each in the How To section.

Getting near the deer is the key issue, especially if you're hunting with bows that can have a maximum range of 60 yards. Approaching deer isn't just a case of sneaking slowly toward them (you can sneak as well as run around the areas) since they use their sense of smell to recognize and elude danger. First you need to spot them. In the Quick Start option, a Deer Finder button highlights on the map where to find the deer—this option is not available for fairness reasons in the single-player career and tournament modes.

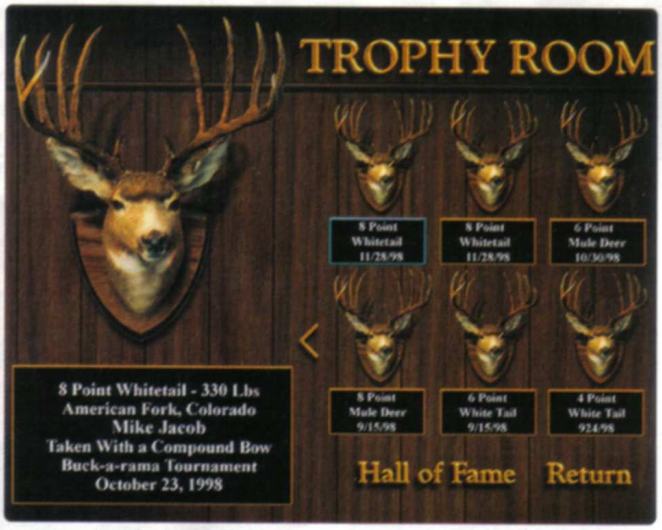
Binoculars are one of four items you can take with you. A second is your firearm, and that leaves two other options that you can select depending on what you've learned about each location, and what works and doesn't work for a certain time of year. Take a camera to snap those picture-perfect moments or, for the more practical hunter, bring antlers to rattle, a deer caller to hoot or scent to either attract bucks or neutralize your own scent.

The Thrill of the Chase

In single-player mode you can play a career game—visiting each location and your kills over a series of seasons—or in a tournament. *Trophy Buck* makes a strong point that it doesn't condone tournament hunting, but since this is a game, and games are generally about competition, you can take part in contests against computer-controlled opponents. Setting options such as the daily limit and number of days to hunt, you begin the hunt at 7 a.m. and wander the wilderness through the day waiting for that trophy buck to walk by.

This is where the patience comes in. It's very easy to bag the first buck you see and be done for the day. While it's quick, it's not likely to win any prizes, even on the easi-

DEER FINDER: Taking a shot before you're in good range is pointless. Creep closer, stay downwind, and be patient.



HE SHOOTS, HE SCORES: Using the Boone and Crockett rating system, if you score enough points you'll make the Hall of Fame.

est of the three difficulty settings (there are fewer buck and they're much savvier on the harder levels). You need to be patient and wait until you see that one that's going to grab the headlines—and then make sure it doesn't spot you first and bolt for the trees. Buck leave behind them droppings, scrapes and even tracks in the snow. You use these to find them by looking carefully at the environment as you move through it in first person.

Sometimes the only sound will be the rustling of the wind through the bushes or your own footfalls (or gasping breath should you run too much and tire yourself out), so you have to keep keenly focused on the job, take your time and when you get the chance, pick your shots carefully.

It's a Lonely World

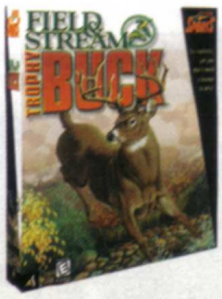
While hunting can be a peaceful solo pastime, it's apparently best done with buddies, so *Trophy Buck* is supported online over the WON network (**www.won.net**). There, several rooms have been created for novices or more advanced tournament competitors to get together, chat, then go out and hunt deer. Connection to this service is an absolute breeze, and navigating its simple functions should hook you up with like-minded hunters very quickly.

Navigating all the menus in *Trophy Buck* is very simple. The main screen features your viewer in a window that can be expanded to take up the full screen (if you have a hardware accelerator card). It's a good idea to stick with the default viewing so you can use your deer call, antlers and sprays with a simple click of the mouse button. It's also important to have the map available, as it may take a little while to get used to navigating with a compass.

Such are the subtleties involved in hunting—moving downwind, setting scent trails, sitting patiently in one position possibly for hours—that after the shot there's a real sense of anticipation as you approach your deer to discover its point score. And if there are names ahead of you on that leaderboard, it means they found the bigger trophies. So gear up, assess your tactics, and head out the next day anticipating that moment when you bag the elusive *Trophy Buck*.

Rob Smith is executive editor of PC Accelerator, *a nature lover and an aspiring sportsman.*

PICK YOUR SHOT CAREFULLY: The explosion of your gunfire warns of your approach and the deer will scatter. Take your time and take the sure shot.



FIELD & STREAM TROPHY BUCK

www.sierrasports.com	
Developer	Sierra Sports
Format	WIN95 CD
Price	$29.95
Order #	70598
Phone	1.800.757.7707

FOCUS

Multiplayer for the Masses

TAKING IT TO EXTREMES, THE MAKERS OF HALF-LIFE BUILD A TEAM FORTRESS

By Tom Chick

A FEW YEARS AGO, ROBIN Walker and John Cook were just two guys in Australia, going to school and playing *Doom* (not necessarily in that order). One day, they stumbled across a multiplayer map called Fortress, which had a very rough concept of player classes in the form of teleporters that would take players to rooms containing specific weapons. A player could pick which weapon he/she wanted by stepping into a particular teleporter. Once the weapon was chosen, the goal was to be the first player to work a series of buttons that would open the enemy's base.

"It was the sort of game we wanted to play on our LANs," says Walker. "I think it's more fun to play with people to accomplish a specific objective than to just shoot things indiscriminately."

Three years ago, as technology marched on and *Doom* became yesterday's news, Walker and Cook started work on their own version of the Fortress map for *Quake*. But their map soon took on a life of its own and became an almost entirely new game. The first official version of this extensive modification was dubbed "*Team Fortress*" when it was released in 1996. It proved so popular—500,000 gamers downloaded it—that Walker and Cook found themselves working on it full time; they eventually formed a company around their technology and began supporting an international following from their homes in Australia.

Who Do You Want To Be Today?

In *Team Fortress*, teams match up against each other to achieve specific objectives. Each player on a team has a specific role, or class, and you choose the class you want to play. You can play a Field Medic, whose role is healing fellow teammates, a Spy, whose job is to infiltrate the enemy and bring back information, or any of the other nine classifications. The class you choose determines what weapons, armor, and ammunition you have, as well as how fast you can move and whether you have any other special abilities. The point of the game is that you must cooperate with your teammates to win. "Through the weaknesses of a class, you force teamplay," says Walker. For instance, the Commando can demolish an enemy's base, but since he's not well armed, he might need Heavy Infantry to defend him. The Heavy Infantry can't move quickly, so he might need Light Infantry to cover his back and scout ahead. And everyone needs the Field Medic for healing.

Although *Team Fortress* evolved

DON'T LET 'EM SEE YOU COMING: A few stealthy soldiers watch as enemy troops and vehicles struggle through the canyon.

over the next few years, it was the delicate interrelationship between the classes that required the most attention. "Balance was 75 percent of the work," says Walker, explaining the impact of something as seemingly simple as ammo. Reducing the Medic's gun capacity from 200 to 150 had quite an impact, as it limited how long he could fight before returning to a supply point to reload his gun. "The challenge was coming up with weaknesses that don't get in the way of having fun," says Cook.

While these two guys from Australia were visiting the States to work on an advanced version of *Team Fortress* for Valve's *Half-Life* engine, Valve founder Gabe Newell made them an offer they couldn't refuse: He acquired their little company, its technology, and its founders, making them all part of Valve. "We really agreed with them from a design point of view," says Newell. "We'd talk about the social aspects of multiplayer gaming and what sort of experience it should give people, and we were really in sync. We'd talk about *Team Fortress* and it was exactly what we were thinking of doing at Valve, but Robin and John had already done it." So Walker and Cook moved from sunny Australia to the gray skies of Seattle, helping their new colleagues as they finished up *Half-Life* and working on their latest innovation—*Team Fortress 2*. And now they're poised to release it as a stand-alone game using the *Half-Life* engine.

Keepin' It Real

One of the most significant additions to *Team Fortress* will be an artificial intelligence for computer-controlled players, known as Bots. Building on the AI that runs *Half-Life*'s ruthless government soldiers, Valve's *Team Fortress 2* will work as a single-player game. "*Team Fortress 2* is first and foremost a multiplayer game," says Newell, "but you'll be able to play it in single-player mode." Bots can be used to fill in for enemy soldiers and teammates. In fact, the player could even choose the role of Commander, a class that doesn't actually appear on the map, and direct the actions of a team of Bots, playing the game almost as a hybrid between a first-person action game and a real-time strategy game.

Team Fortress 2 will ship with 20 maps, each of which is a complete scenario with unique objectives. But the maps aren't just assemblies of architecture and geography. The program uses a sophisticated scripting language to make each map play like a separate game. Some maps are traditional Capture the Flag scenarios akin to the *Fortress* map for *Doom*, in which you must steal the enemy's flag and bring it back to your own base. There's a variant of Capture the Flag in which you must plant an airstrike marker in the enemy's base. In some maps, a team must destroy its enemy's base.

But these are just the basics. *Team Fortress 2* will include variants similar to those in strategy games. In Hunted, one player is the president and his teammates are bodyguards. If he can get from point A to point B, his side will win. But the other team's objective is to kill the President before he reaches point B. In Palace, a computer-controlled dictator appears in a random location in a huge palace. Each team is responsible with finding him and escorting him to its extraction point. If a team accidentally kills the dictator, it loses points. Territory games will have larger maps divided into sectors, each with a flagpole. At regular intervals, each team scores a point for every territory in which it has raised its flag; these games play like an action ver-

The point of the game is that you must cooperate with your teammates to win.

TWO'S COMPANY: A medic patches up a wounded comrade. Above: Troops avoid enemy fire in a bunker.

TEAM UP TO KICK SOME ENEMY BUTT

They're a part of your team for better or worse, and how well you play your role may determine their fate.

Lt Infantry
The Light Infantry move the fastest, making them ideal for scouting and reconnaissance. They wield submachine guns with grenade launchers.

Rocket Infantry
They pack the biggest punch with their machine guns and heavy armor, but they're slow and can't fire effectively unless stationary.

Engineer
He builds defensive sentry guns and cameras for the Commander and moves his side's front line closer to the enemy with supply points for reloading ammo.

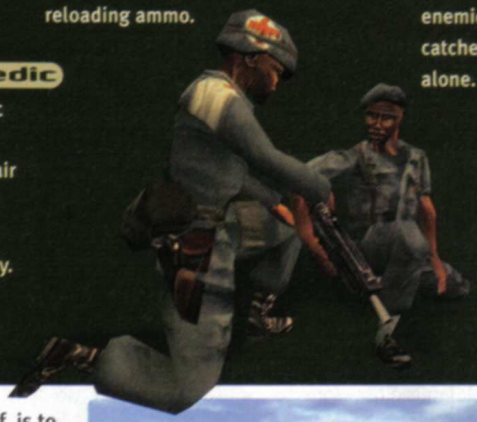
Commando
The Commando is vital for setting explosives to destroy enemy emplacements and equipment. He's particularly valuable on maps where the objective calls for demolitions.

Spy
He can change his appearance to look like a member of the enemy team. He's useful for scouting and can perform one-shot kills against enemies if he catches them alone.

Commander
A Commander's team can be organized into squads whose efforts can be more easily coordinated. He can look through any character's perspective as well as through cameras on field.

Field Medic
The Field Medic can restore health and repair armor. He also serves as the medium infantry.

Sniper
The Sniper surveys the battle from a distance and picks off enemies from long range.



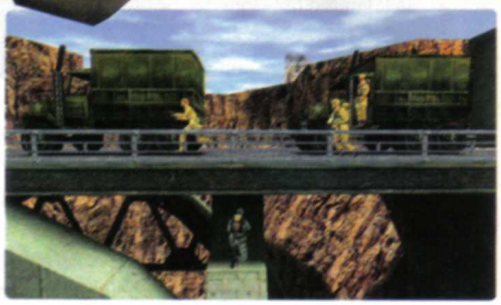
sion of *Risk*. Characters who are killed can be "respawned" only in territories controlled by their team. One map is an homage to *Command and Conquer*. It begins with players having only a single class available to their team. Their first task is to carry oil drums back to their base, where they can barter oil to buy new classes, defensive guns, and airstrikes.

Other maps are arranged into campaigns. Invasion is a three-map campaign inspired by "Saving Private Ryan." On the first map, Team A arrives in boats while Team B is camped out behind defensive emplacements. Team A has to get as many soldiers as possible over the wall on the other side of the map. On the second map, Team A has to destroy Team B's structures, but it only has one "life" for each man who made it over the wall. On the third map, Team A has to defend a bridge from Team B, whose power depends on the number of structures it was able to defend on the second map.

The whole idea behind these campaigns, and behind *Team Fortress 2* itself, is to make the player feel like part of a cooperative effort in which strategy can beat raw skill. "Being a valuable member of your team," says Walker, "doesn't necessarily have anything to do with how well you can aim." Some classes are better if you avoid combat. Different classes require different skills, so players can play the easier classes to learn the game before trying some of the more complex roles, such as the Spy and Engineer. There will also be a Boot Camp, similar to *Half-Life's* Hazard Course, where a drill instructor will teach players the details of gameplay, complete with marching troops in the background calling cadence and penalty pushups for slackers.

Although it's playable as a single- player game, *Team Fortress 2* will always feel like a multiplayer game. As Sierra's Doug Lombardi says, "It's a multiplayer mentality, but you don't need other people to play it." Newell simply wants to make the best multiplayer game ever. "We want to make it fun, and we want to make it easy for people to get into a game. We think we can bring together the elements that will make the multiplayer experience more attractive to a much broader group of people." As Walker puts it, "With *Team Fortress 2* we want to do for multiplayer gaming what *Half-Life* did for single-player." It's an ambitious analogy, but if anyone can pull it off, it's Valve.

Tom Chick has been writing about the gaming industry for the past five years.



PEEK-A-BOO: A team dispatches from mobile transports, while the enemy watches below.

TEAM FORTRESS 2

www.teamfortress.com	
Developer	Valve
Format	WIN95/98 NT
Price	$49.95
Order #	70596
Phone	1.800.757.7707

SAVE $1.00

Adult Diapers

SAVE $1.00

New "Niagara Strength" Adult Diapers provide the ultimate in adult protection -- for those times when you just can't hold it in!

This product has been found to be a helpful aid in the playing of the CD-ROM game YOU DON'T KNOW JACK® Yes folks, now you can laugh all you want. The patented self-activated Liqui-guard™ system absorbs the unsightly mess, holding it comfortably away from your skin. And now, with our new triple-action heavy-duty reservoir receptacle, you'll stay dry up to 6 games of YDKJ longer than with the other leading brand. Actual results may vary. Do not use in conjunction with fancy upholstery. Use only as directed. By the way, if you're reading this you have way to much time on your hands.

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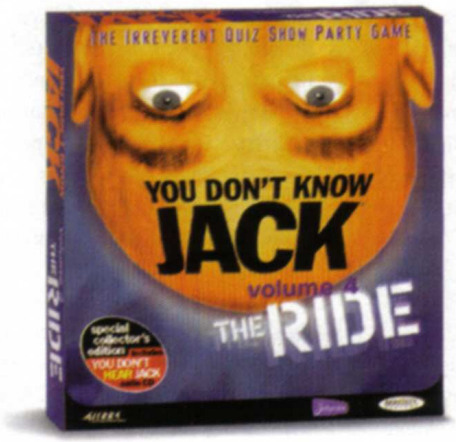
A game this funny requires a certain degree of preparation.



Prepare to laugh hard. Really hard. The latest YOU DON'T KNOW JACK® mixes high culture with pop culture in a fast-paced, trouser-drenching CD-ROM game. It's JACK like never before. So be prepared to lose it. But be warned: appropriate attire is recommended.

The irreverent quiz show party game.

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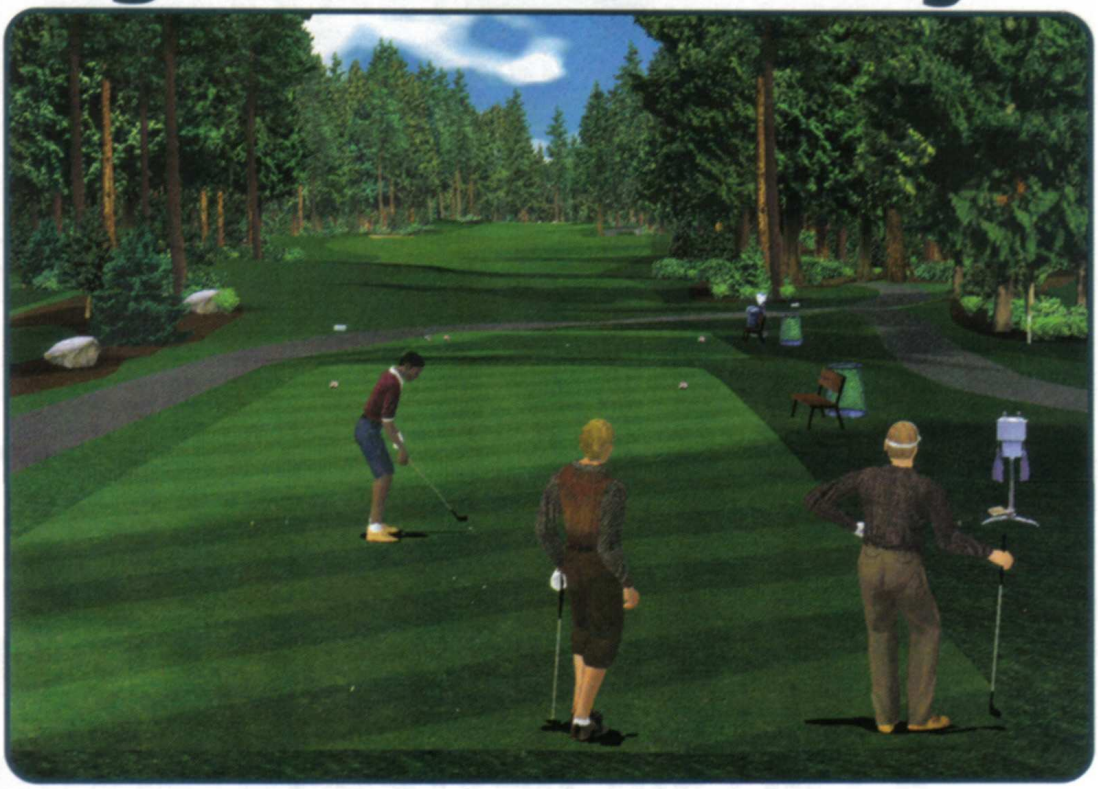
FOCUS

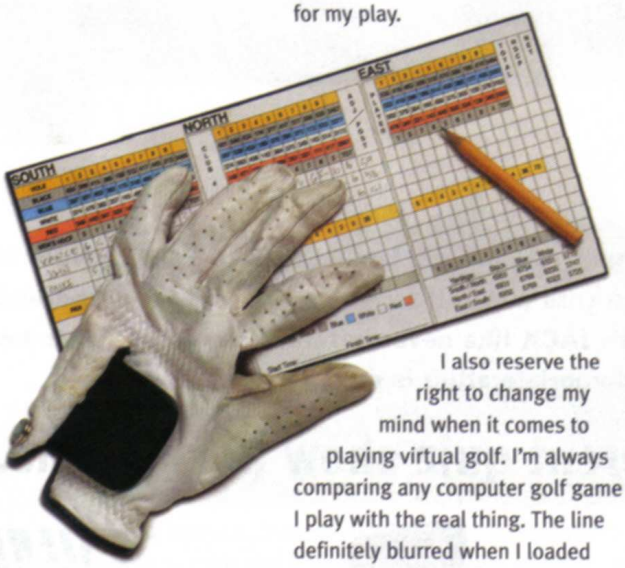
Tee It High and Let It Fly



YOU DON'T NEED A NEW DRIVER TO LOWER YOUR GOLF SCORE; YOU NEED A NEW GAME

By John Tipping

TO ME, THERE'S NO SUCH thing as too cold, too wet, too hot, too sick, too tired or too sore to play golf. There is just no such reason. However, I always reserve the right to use any of these as an excuse for my play.



I also reserve the right to change my mind when it comes to playing virtual golf. I'm always comparing any computer golf game I play with the real thing. The line definitely blurred when I loaded *PGA Championship® Golf-1999 Edition* onto my hard drive and played a couple rounds.

This is a genre that has come a long way since *PGA Championship '99* designer Vance Cook worked on "porting" the World Class Leaderboard from the Commodore 64 to the Apple II in 1987. His next major golf project was developed at Access Software, where he served as project manager and lead programmer. Cook and the team changed the face of golf sims with their innovative work with *Links* and *Links 386 Pro*.

In 1992, Cook formed his own computer company, Headgate, Inc. His association with Sierra began in 1996 when Headgate designed the award-winning *Front Page Sports: Golf*. The innovations continue with *PGA Championship '99*.

An Inspired Golf Partnership

A little over a year ago, Sierra Sports and the PGA of America created an arrangement that would allow Sierra to use the name "PGA Championship Golf" and re-create courses used in major championships around the world. The latest addition is Sahalee Country Club in Redmond, WA, site of the 1998 PGA Championship. The roster also includes Royal Birkdale, site of the 1998 British Open Championship.

In researching this article, I met with Cook and played golf with him at Sahalee to get a better feel for the course and compare it to what I had experienced while playing *PGA Championship Golf 1999 Edition*. We brought along screen shots from the sim to compare them with the scenes before us. The detail and accuracy is incredible, right down to the ball washers and benches. The lengths to which Cook's team went to get the simulation to this point were equally amazing.

Re-creating a Wonder

"Replicating one of these courses takes several different steps," Cook says during our round at Sahalee.

"The first step is to survey the course. We survey many points around the course and we make sure those points we survey are identifiable from aerial photography. Then we fly an airplane at about 1,000 to 2,000 feet above the course and shoot dozens of photographs onto pieces of nine-inch film. In about two flight strips, we have the whole course.

"Once we collect the survey data and the aerial shots we go through a process called photogrametry. That's the process of taking photographs, identifying the survey points on the photographs, and running them through some fairly sophisticated software. From that we extrapolate to within a few inches the elevation of any spot on the terrain that we can see."

It is this level of detail that allows players to get the full effect of a championship golf course like Sahalee.

It is this detail that allows players to get the full effect of a championship golf course like Sahalee. Every mound and dip, the edges of the fairways, and the water hazards are exactly as you see them while playing the real thing. The definition even extends beyond the course boundaries and incorporates houses that border the course. Actual sounds are included, natural and otherwise; even a crow on the 12th hole recognizable to all of Sahalee's members.

The visuals are not limited to what is before you. The golfers within the game can turn around 180 degrees and see what's behind them. They can see through the rows of trees to other fairways, sometimes more than a couple of fairways away from their position on the course.

"There's a lot of work that goes into massaging the terrain once we've done the photogrametry and have the basic elevation model," adds Cook. "We bring a photographer with us who shoots a bunch of stills. They shoot a lot of trees to get representative trees and everything out here."

Ball washers, tee markers, all the bushes, textures of the ground, shots of all the structures (including the clubhouse) from various angles—all are photographed. The stills are then taken back to the office in Salt Lake City where the real work takes place.

"We can get a course created in three to four months using three or four people and a couple of outside services," Cook says.

Draws, Fades and Shanks

PGA Championship '99 incorporates all of the innovative concepts and technology created by Cook for its predecessor, *FPS: Golf*. It includes TrueSwing™, the new Course Architect, which allows you to re-create your favorite course or fantasy course that PGA Tour pros could only dream of playing, and new innovations in viewing the game. Now, different camera angles allow you to look forward or backward or to see a replay from one of several different angles.

TrueSwing helps bring *PGA Championship Golf-1999 Edition* so close to the real golf experience you'll feel the same grief and frustration that most of us do during a typical weekend round. Of course, some of us experience more misery than others.

With TrueSwing you can control the flight of your ball, working a fade or a draw, a low runner, punch shots, flop shots—whatever the situation requires. This is not your old-fashioned three-click backswing, swing and connect. Your mouse skill determines your shot-making skill.

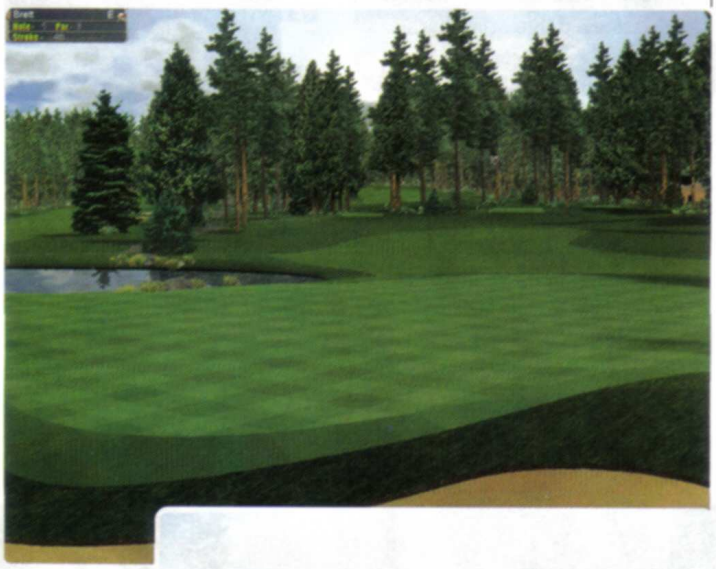
There were a couple of occasions during both my round at Sahalee and my simulation round that required ball flight control. On the ninth hole, a medium-distance par 3, the pin was placed in the back left corner protected by water. On a normal round I have no chance of drawing the ball to the pin, which is the shot required. My ball usually fades. With TrueSwing,

WATER HAZARD: Above: Vance Cook surveys his approach shot to Sahalee's second hole. Left: a golfer in PGA Championship '99 faces the identical shot.

JUST LIKE THE PROS: Vance Cook lines up a downhill 30-footer on the fourth hole at Sahalee's championship course. No problem.

I was able to play a draw by pulling the mouse back to the left, then forward and slightly out. This gave the ball a definite right-to-left flight.

On the 12th hole, a par 5 the PGA pros tore apart last August, there is a tree that stands in the middle-right in the fairway about 80 yards from the green. To reach this hole in two usually requires a fade around the left side of the tee or a mammoth shot up and over the top, which most players don't have. This fade effect is reached the opposite way of a draw: pull the mouse back slightly to the outside, then return through to the inside.



WHAT YOU SEE...is what you get. Every undulation, nuance, and break from the real course is present.

"The original version of TrueSwing had only a couple of control elements," Cook explains. "The power/velocity element was managed by how fast you pushed your mouse forward. The faster you moved it, the more clubhead speed you achieved. The second element was sidespin. If you pulled the mouse back and returned it to the right as you pushed forward, you would get an inside-out shot (draw or hook). Slide it to the left for the fade or slice shot.

"We've kept these, refined them and added a couple more features. You must now return your mouse to where it started to create solid impact. If you pull your mouse back straight and then slide to the right as you push forward, your mouse will end up to the right of where it started. This is comparable to not hitting the ball with the center of the club in real golf. It will create loss of distance, ball starting left of target, shanks, or even complete misses. If your mouse ends up left of where it started, it is like hitting toward the toe of your club in real golf."

This is golf. These are actual problems and concerns that come into play during every round played on real grass. Cook has managed to include them, for better or worse, and you'll handle them as your skill level dictates.

One of the main concerns for tour players during the actual PGA Championship at Sahalee was the four- to six-inch rough they had to deal with should their shots drift slightly out of the fairway. During a round I played at Sahalee just prior to the Championship, I found myself thankful to be able to punch out of that deep grass, forget about making a good shot. It's no different in *PGA Championship 1999*. Players

...you can create cart paths, water hazards, bunkers, elevation—everything needed for a first-class course...

need to adjust to conditions like rough and sand.

Made to Order

The Course Architect feature was also retooled in the game. It allows you to create your own course starting with a simple plot of land the program provides for you.

"When you're ready to lay out the hole shapes," Cook says, "you click on the area where the ball should land. Then click the next position. Tee boxes, greens, pins—all are created for you, including fringe around the green. These basic hole layouts are done before you start moving earth around. This way you know that your course will fit the land."

From here you can create cart paths, water hazards, bunkers, elevation—everything needed for a first-class course with the help of guidance programs built into the simulation. You could spend an hour or a month on your course, depending on how detailed you want it to be.

18 Holes, No Waiting

Another novelty in the game is ReadyPlay™. During multiplayer games over the Internet, ReadyPlay lets each player see other players' shots from an individual vantage point, as if they were actually standing on the golf course.

"All of the golf simulators render a view right behind the golfer," says Cook. "Then that person hits. Then when you're playing online, all the cameras render over and behind the other golfer and everybody watches while he or she hits. Now with ReadyPlay, all the golfers are in view.

"This keeps the pace of the round going. It really makes you feel like you're out there golfing with other people."

Now on the First Tee...

After all of this technical prattle, you might wonder how the game plays. Does it feel like real golf? I played several rounds, but after the first two holes I found it very similar to the way I really play golf. I can be good—but I can be terrible. I was—and I was.

I hit my 3-wood 253 yards off the first tee, leaving me just 115 yards to the pin. I pulled a wedge out for my second shot, but didn't get all of it. I was still 23 yards from the putting surface. Again I used the wedge and played a punch shot that landed 13 inches from the cup. A one-putt par. A par! On my very first hole.

My beginner's luck was about to run out.

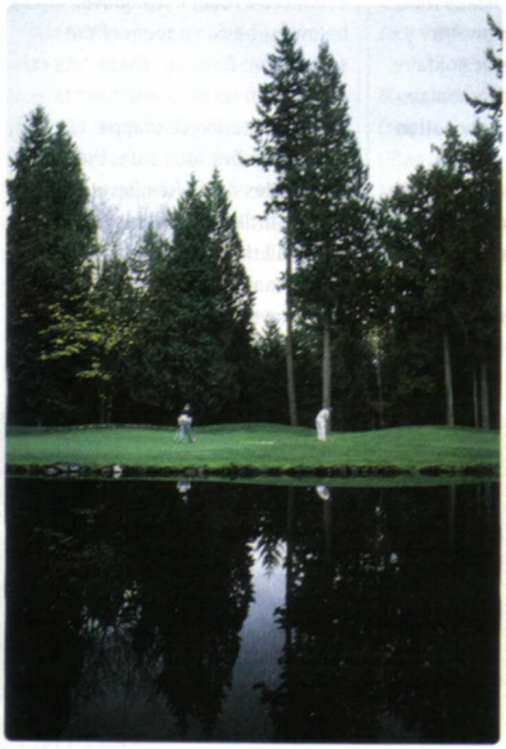
The second hole is a 505-yard par 5. During my real round with Vance, I carded this hole. On the computer, I shot a nine. I hit a good drive, 254 yards down the middle. As I tried to lay up short of the water hazard, I pulled a 3-iron into the woods to an unplayable lie.

My free drop and penalty stroke still left me in the deep rough 81 yards from the green. Though I managed to get out of the rough, I was still a long 65 yards from my target and now sitting five. I again played a punch wedge to the green, then three-putted and moved on to number three.

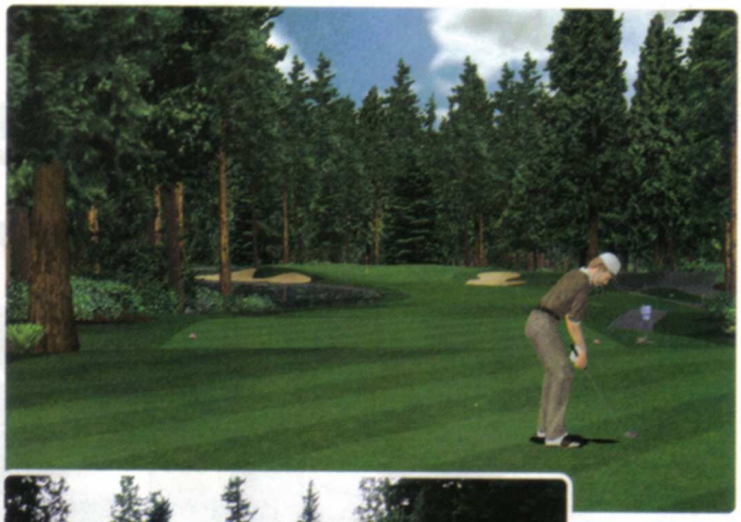
The putting takes some getting used to. The grids that appear on all greens and fringes are very easy to read and allow you to judge the break. For me, speed was a bigger problem. Fringe, sand and rough are variables that only practice and experience can prepare you for. I like the fact that, even though the computer gives you suggestions on shot and club selection, ultimately it is up to you.

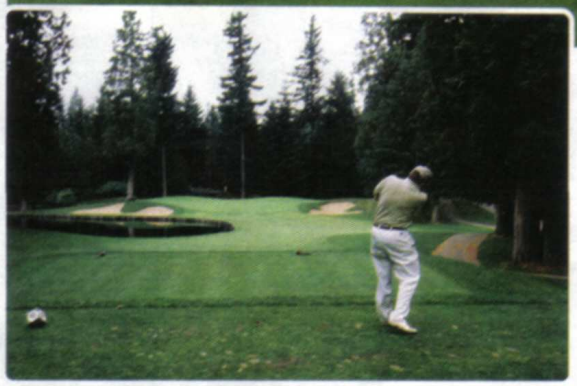
I loved this game. It's the closest I've seen to the real thing. The only thing missing from Sierra Sports' *PGA Championship Golf-1999 Edition*'s version of Sahalee Country Club was an authentic Northwest rainstorm. But who misses that?

John Tipping is publisher of Golf Washington *magazine.*

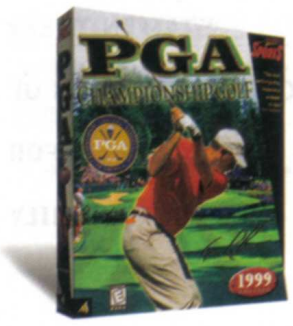


EASY PUTT: Getting on the green and avoiding the ever-present water hazard was the hard part.





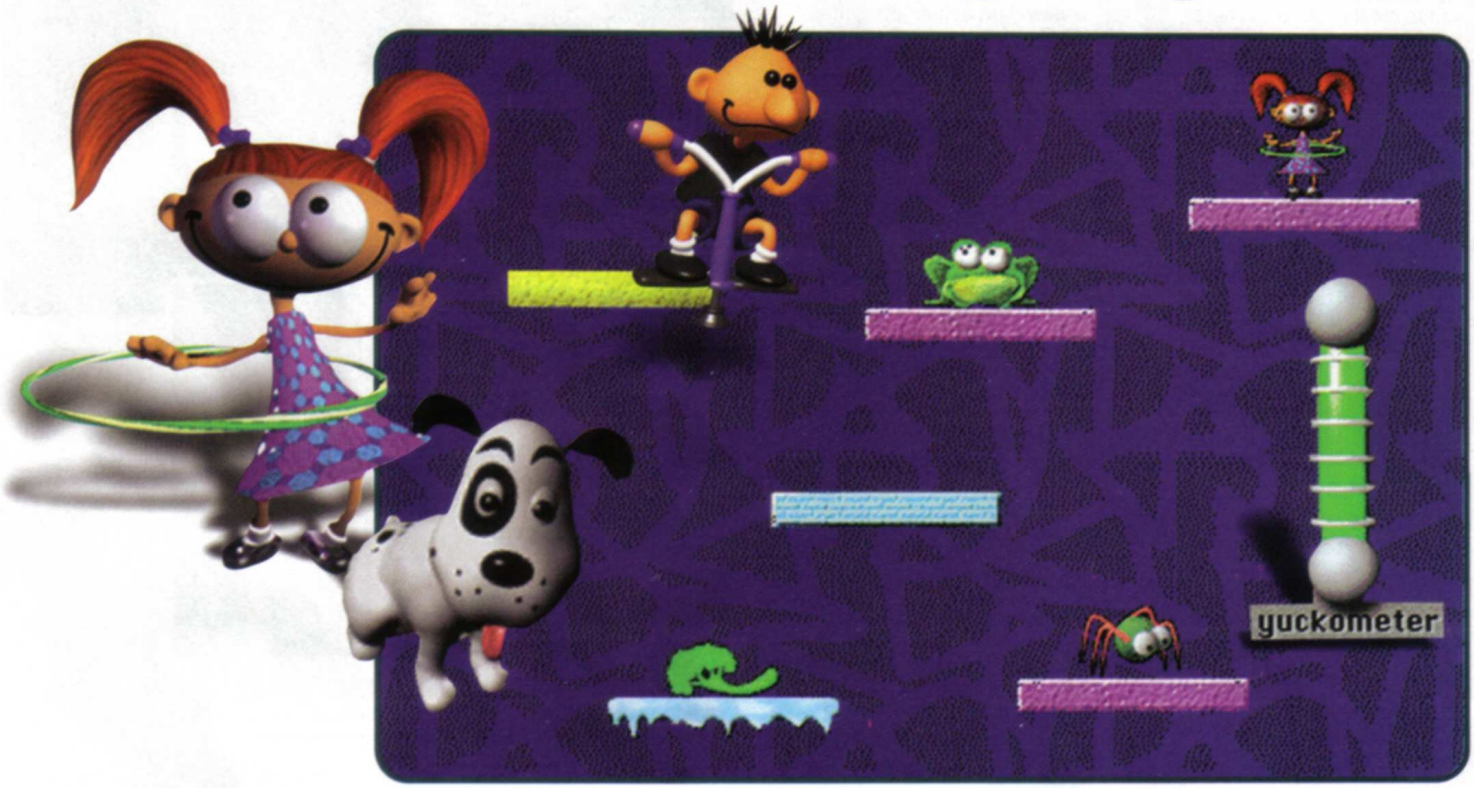
QUIET PLEASE: When utilizing TrueSwing avoid sliding your mouse to the right on the ninth hole.



PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF-1999 EDITION

www.sierrasports.com	
Developer	Headgate
Format	WIN95 CD
Price	$29.95
Order #	70487
Phone	1.800.757.7707

Games Toasted Lightly



By Candi Strecker

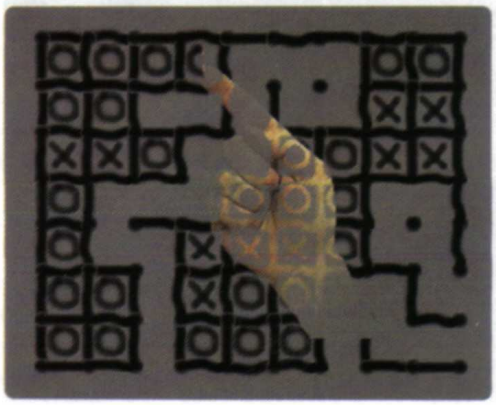
YOUR FAVORITE SCREEN-SAVER IDOLS STAR IN THEIR OWN COLLECTION OF WACKY GAMES FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY

IF YOU'VE EVER WANTED TO take the controls of the famous flying toaster from the *After Dark* screen saver, it's time to put on your pilot's cap and fasten your seatbelt. In the new *After Dark Games*, the toaster stars in one of 11 playful challenges based on Berkeley Systems' best-selling line of screen savers. Each family-friendly game is infused with the sense of whimsy that has helped make these screen savers so popular on computers all over the world.

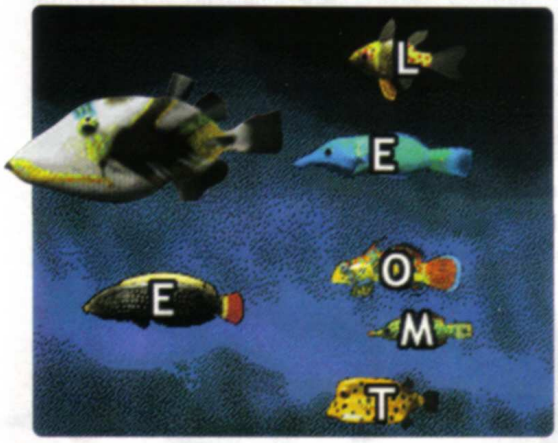
As does one of those snack-packs with mini-boxes of cereal, *After Dark Games* offers something for every taste. For those who crave a sugar-buzz, there are several pulse-pounding arcade-style games, including one based on the beloved flying toaster. For those who prefer high fiber, there are brain-teasing puzzles and word games, plus a beat-the-clock trivia challenge. Standing in for the box of corny old flakes that everybody loves, there's an *After Dark*ified version of classic solitaire. Hardcore alien-blasting gameplayers may pooh-pooh the very notion of "playing with your screen saver," but *After Dark Games* packs enough thrills and entertainment into one handy package to satisfy almost anyone.

Up on the Roof

Probably the most addictive game in the collection is "Roof Rats." You must rescue the odd-ball tenants stranded on the roof of their apartment building, represented by a grid of room-blocks in five different colors. You lower them to the ground by blasting rooms out from under them with a double-click, but you can only eliminate a room if it's above, below, or beside a room of the same color. Different characters can get down from different heights—the burly marine can rappel his way down from five rooms up, the roof rat scuttles down from level one, but the little old lady has to be eased all the way to the ground. For the ultimate strategic challenge, rescue every tenant *and* demolish



SMART THING: This hand must have a brain somewhere, because it's a tough competitor.



BRAWN AND BRAINS: Blast rooms in Roof Rats (above), and spell your way through Fish Schtick (below).

every room. The only game not based on an existing *After Dark* screen saver, but definitely one worthy of the collection.

Phasers on "Toast"

The screen saver's flying toaster always looked as it was on some kind of a mission. In "Toaster Run," we finally learn what the rush is. Acting as a sort of robo-nanny, it must explore a house, locate runaway Baby Guy, and put him back in his crib where he belongs. This luxurious home was built with total disregard for safety codes: flames shoot from its stove burners, the ironing board falls unexpectedly out of its cabinet, and the glow from the TV screen works like a disintegrator ray. Evade these hazards by flappy-flying the toaster around in three dimensions, moving from room to room and even up into the overhead airspace. Along the way, pick up Baby's discarded rattles and bottles for bonus points. Don't forget to power-up on toast and wall sockets; otherwise, your Toastosterone Meter falls to zero and you go down in flames. Be sure to drop your toaster into the dining room punchbowl at least once, just to watch it frantically try to paddle its way out.

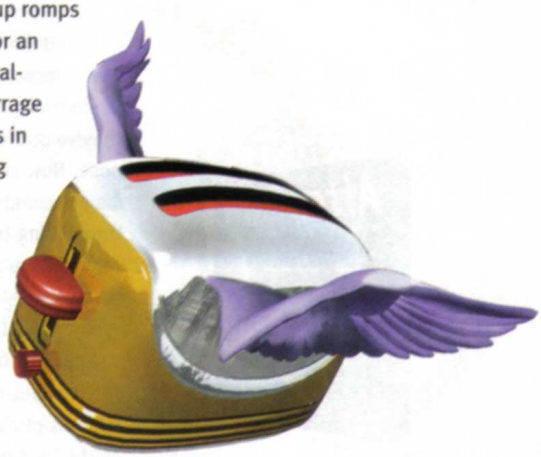
After Dark Games includes three more challenges to your arcade skills. In "Hula Girl," hip-swinging Hula-Hooper Balula is one of those "sugar and spice and everything nice" gals. So when you hop her down from one rising platform to another, make sure she lands on the ones carrying things she loves, like cupcakes and milkshakes, not the ones with "yucky stuff" like frogs and spiders and broccoli. Watch out for flip-flop platforms, slippery ice platforms, and the ones carrying Cruela, her hoop-stealing evil twin sister. As the scrolling screen speeds up, you'll be glad the controls that keep Balula alive and twirling are so easy to master—just two fingers: one on the left and right arrow keys.

Once upon a time, screen saver "Mowin' Man" serenely kept computer displays looking like well-manicured putting greens. Now, as "Mowin' Maniac," he scoops up goodies for bonus points and avoids menacing watchdogs, zombies, and rake-waving groundskeepers. Special power-ups let you shift into high gear and (pardon the pun) mow down your enemies—and temporarily tie 'em up in lawn bags. Five different turf challenges include Park, Golf Course and Cemetery.

"Roger Dodger" is a more abstract contest of pursuit and avoidance. You navigate a pulsating purple polygon through 2D space, pouncing on red spiral targets while fleeing swift, merciless pursuers. It takes concentration and split-second timing to advance from one nerve-wracking level to another, and beyond.

More Fun in the Dark

After Dark Games' brainier challenges begin with "Fish Schtick," based on the classic underwater-theme screen saver. A school of fish swims into sight, bringing along a set of letters. Your task is to form a word from them before the fish languidly cross the screen. Another word game, "Bad Dog 911," begins with a slapstick mishap. Clumsy but lovable Bad Dog knocks down the ropes supporting a clock-cleaner's platform, leaving him dangling from the tall tower clock's hands. Rescue the guy by spelling every possible word from a set of scrambled letters while the frisky pup romps around your screen. For an old-fashioned trivia challenge, face down a barrage of true/false questions in "Zapper!" You're racing against the clock for the highest score here; three right answers in a row add extra time to your round.



Test your strategic skills in *After Dark Games* with these two entertaining puzzles. "Foggy Boxes" brings a classic pencil-and-paper game to the computer. Separated by a fogged-up pane of glass, you and your opponent—an eerily disembodied hand—draw lines connecting a grid of dots into boxes. Instead of a flourish of trumpets or a fancy graphic explosion to signal the end of a game, the silent

finger simply draws "u win" or "I win" on the misted glass.

Next, there's the "MooShu Tiles" puzzle option, in which tiles are embellished with images from *After Dark* screen savers (including a flock of flying toasters, past and present). Based on the 114 tiles of the classic Chinese game mahjong, the tiles are stacked into one of five possible multilayered arrangements. Every tile has a twin, and you must remove them by pairs, but only certain edge tiles are free for removal. (The "Hint" button proved very useful as I struggled to spot matching tile pairs.) If you want an authentic mahjong experience, try the classic Chinese art version. Clear the table, and a fortune cookie rolls out bearing a silly proverb, like "It's a dog's life. Stay off the furniture."

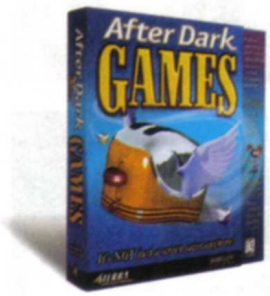
Rounding out *After Dark Games* is a sweet version of classic solitaire, with famous *After Dark* characters starring as the ace and face cards. When you win, the "Bad Dog" kings bark with glee. Lose, and the toaster-aces are trapped in birdcages, the hula girl-queens collapse in a pile of hoops, and the joker-fish are served up on a platter.

TOTAL TRIVIA: The more you know, the faster you'll move through "Zapper!"

A Screen Runs Through It

To make *After Dark Games* work as hard as it plays, install its optional screen saver. In this mode, it cycles through sample screens of all 11 games. At the bottom, it displays a row of icons representing each of the games, so a fun break is always just a click away. Since the sample screens are almost indistinguishable from the games themselves, it won't be long before office slackers realize that this software provides them with the ultimate excuse: "I'm not playing games at work. That's just my screen saver!"

Candi Strecker studies American pop culture (and writes about it) in San Francisco.



AFTER DARK GAMES

www.sierra.com

Developer	Berkeley Systems
Format	WIN95/Mac CD
Price	$29.95
Order #	70571
Phone	1.800.757.7707

Ten Years of Toast

Screen savers remain one of the most popular software accessories for home and business computers, even though they've outlived their original purpose. Now screen savers personalize our computers and keep us from taking these machines (and the work we do on them) too seriously.

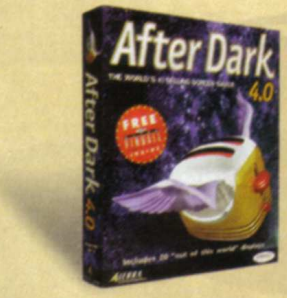
The *After Dark* line of screen savers is by far the most popular, with various versions inhabiting millions of computers around the world. Its most popular module, the flying toaster, has become a beloved American pop-culture icon, right up there with McDonald's golden arches or Elvis Presley's lips. This year, Berkeley Systems celebrates ten years of leadership in the field of appliance aviation.

In all there have been four versions of the flying toasters. The first, Proto-toasters, was created in 1989 but not published until 1992, when it was included in the "Art of Darkness" book about *After Dark*. It used the original artwork Jack Eastman made when he programmed the first version as an icon animation experiment.

The second, *After Dark 1.0*, was the basic flying toaster that debuted in 1989 at the Macworld Expo. It gave consumers the option of light or dark toast. Tasty! *After Dark 2.0* was a slightly modified version of 1.0.

1994 brought *After Dark 3.0* with new, improved stunt toasters and that best-selling karaoke theme, "On Mighty Toaster Wings." And finally, the most current version, *After Dark 4.0*, has 3D-rendered toasters with even more tricks and stunts. In its 10-year run, the magnificent toaster has gained nuance and detail, not to mention toast on the side.

From the beginning, *After Dark* users could interact with their screen savers, using control panels to tweak the number of toasters on-screen or tinker with sound effects. A smidgen of gameplay was added as early as 1991, when the *More After Dark* collection of add-on modules included the space-shoot-'em-up "Lunatic Fringe." An early version of "Roger Dodger" was added to subsequent editions of *After Dark*. With *After Dark Games*, the role reversal is complete, with screen saving taking a back seat to gameplay. We can only guess where the next step in toaster evolution will lead.



AFTER DARK 4.0

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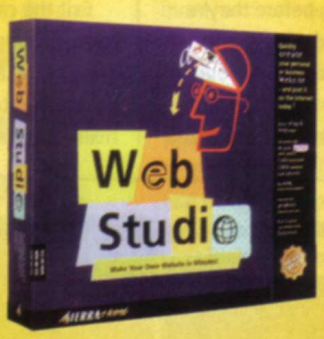

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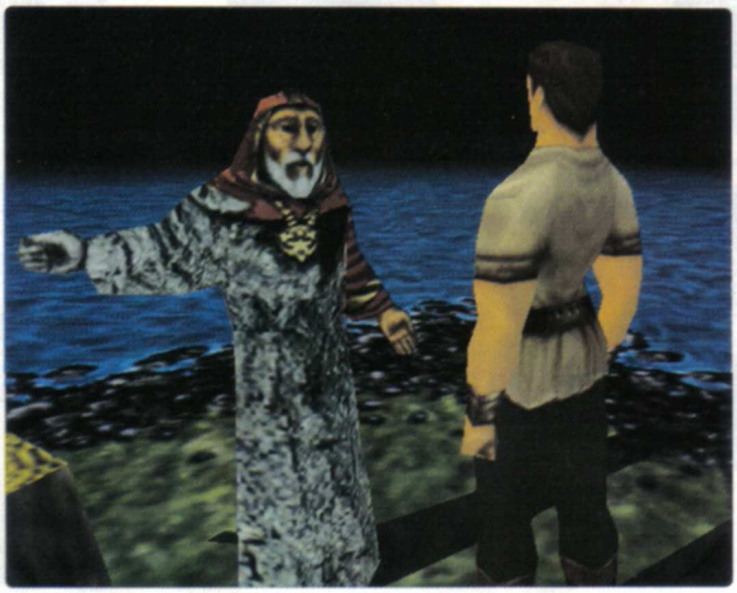
By Mark H. Walker

STRATEGY

King's Quest: Mask of Eternity

▶ A WALK THROUGH DAVENTRY

YOU ARE CONNER, A SIMPLE PEASANT. A MAN destined for greatness. It's a morning much like any other. Things are about to change—change evilly. A tempest begins to blow as you speak with your sweetheart to be, Sarah.



▲ Conner is beckoned to follow a Raven toward a wizard—half stone, half man. The wizard informs Conner of his quest and gives him advice.

Suddenly she, along with almost every other being in the land, is petrified. Your only hint to the petrifaction is a piece of a mask that falls at your feet. From this humble beginning you must solve this evil puzzle and return Daventry to its former glory. Here's how to start.

Follow the Raven to the church. There you discover that you are not alone—well, kind of not alone. You find a wizard—half stone, half man. Fortunately, his vocal chords are not impaired, and he tells you the tale of the *Mask of Eternity*'s five fragments. You must find and return these pieces to the Realm of the Sun. Only then will the land return to life.

To begin your search, head up the path. Keep a wary eye on the Spriggan archer winging arrows toward you from the church. You can handle him after you get more experience. Grab anything you find (i.e. mushrooms, water, crystals, potions, gold and the occasional piece of armor). All of these things—no matter how trivial—will be needed in the quest. Be careful when rounding the corners of the village buildings. Monsters love to lurk there, and a few chops to an unwary adventurer can send you back to the main menu.

Frequently, the slow, hunchback Goblins will be your first test. These creatures are easy to best, but numerous battles can quickly drain your strength. Spriggan are other early foes and they, unlike their brownskin brethren, pack a devastating-for-this-stage-in-your-quest blow. And, to heap insult on the injury they are already inflicting, they travel in packs. Nevertheless, perhaps the most disconcerting creature you'll meet in your embryonic town exploration is the Zombie. Capable of emerging from the ground without notice, they take a stiff beating before they're willing to lie back down. By the way, don't forget to loot all your victims for booty.

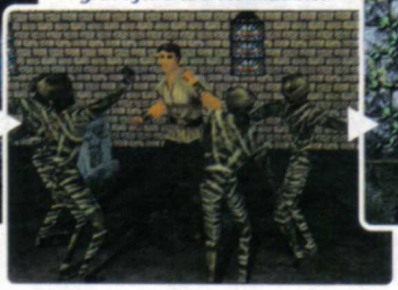
Work your way to the castle, and kill the knight's tomb guardian. Once you conquer the creature, the knight's ghost appears and briefs you on the door of Divine Origin and the urn that opens it. Search the castle, but be ready to pay for your loot. The citadel's halls are laced with wily adversaries and traps. Make note of the locked door down the hall on the left; you'll need this information later.

Exit the castle and roam the town, solving minor quests and slaying creatures to gain experience. Head toward the mill at the river, but ignore the millstone for now. Continue down the road, and drink heartily from the fountain to restore your health. Mosey over to the covered bridge and get ready to rumble. There are several Goblins to fight. After destroying the brownskins, continue up the road. You'll see an Alchemist's shop; unfortunately, the door is barred.

An Unwelcome Visit and a New Weapon

A house emerges from the shadows hiding the horizon of the murky road. The sound of a windmill beats your ears. Search the grounds, but

▲ The slow, stupid, hunchback Goblin is easily conquered.



▼ Zombies in the church graveyard are formidable.

▲ Listen to the wise words of the knight's ghost.

▼ Inside the windmill is a tool vital to your quest.

watch out for the monster in the outhouse. You'd be grumpy too if a sword-slinging peasant walked in on your potty break.

Continue up the hill toward the windmill. Approach the twirling vanes with caution; you'll need to off a couple of creatures (a Goblin and a Spriggan) before you can enter. Inside you'll find an axe. Gee, I wonder where we could use that? On exit you'll bump into a wispy armored ghost knight with designs on your new weapon. Kill him and return to the barricaded Alchemist's shop.

Chop the Alchemist's barred door. Once inside, scarf up the potions and other sundries. Cart your axe-belabored self over to the mill and chop the leaning tree. The felled wood will stop the flow of water to the millstone. Jump onto the stone, then leap again before grabbing the rope and hook.

Wade to the island in the middle of the river. Use the rope/hook combination to climb to the house. Explore the interior, and take the note penned by the magic quill (along with anything else you've found) when you leave.

The Castle Daventry is next on your dance card. Unfortunately, a rockslide blocks the way. Climb to the top of the waterfall. There you'll find a man frozen in stone and a table covered in stone blocks. Push the blocks in the water to reveal a portal. The portal leads to the Castle Daventry.

At the end of the passage is an unlit candle. Pull the candle and the passage will open into an elegant, yet rustic room. Do what all spouses do and adjust the off-center portrait. A key appears; take it. Move toward the passage on your left. Pick up the torch ashes (you never know when a spell might call for them). This hall empties into the King's throne room. A magical mirror, mirror on the wall beckons you near and a man appears within the shiny frame. He laughs at your feeble attempts to cleanse the evil clinging to the land and then fades away. Retrace your steps to the Castle Daventry's portal entrance. Exit and climb the hill to the other castle.

Open the castle's sealed door with the crooked-portrait key. In this room rests the teleporter that returns you to this land from the others you will visit. Leave the castle, drop by the tomb and axe the door. Rob the corpse of the knight and talk to his ghost. Once again he will speak of the door of Divine Origin and the urn.

Leave the tomb and mosey over to the church. The tempest has blocked the doors, but you may catch your hook on the roof and crawl up its rope. Drop through the hole in the roof and remove the candle from the table in the room below. Move into the sanctuary, and push on the urn in the corner to reveal a portal in the adjacent crypt. Leave the church, head to the graveyard, axing the graveyard Zombies as you go. Enter the graveyard tomb and make the leap into the Dimension of Death.

Your only hint to the petrification is a piece of a mask that falls to your feet. From this...you must solve this evil puzzle...

▲ Magic and wisdom. Seek the advice of many to open doors and accept their gifts of magic.

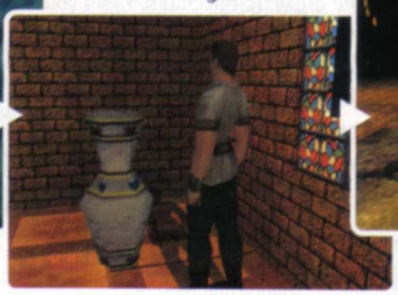
The Dimension of Death

Ah, but you thought you had it made. On the other side of the portal is a demon with a bad attitude. Quicker than you can say, "Wait a second" you're back in the land of the living with a warning never to return. Once again, however, the Raven is your salvation. The bird leads you to the wizard, who in turn recites a list of trinkets, elements and powders he needs to make a ring capable of defeating the demon's magic. Bring him his due and he will deliver the ring.

Now return to face the demon, but this time with the power of the magical ring. After killing the attitude-enhanced spirit, buff up your experience points by exploring the outer sanctum and hacking up the Skeleton warriors that are roaming about. The Skels are good for some gold, a sword, and some other trinkets. Sooner or later you'll stumble across the Spectre of Death watching over the Lever of Life. Take the lever and insert it into each of the slots of the four pedestals and turn the key. After you turn the last key, the door to Lord Azriel's chamber will open.

▲ The rope and hook prove useful in overcoming roadblocks.

▼ This urn opens the door of Divine Origin.



▲ The Lever of Life fits perfectly in the pedestals.

▼ The Door of Death opens to reveal a new challenge.

Pop in and solve the puzzle. Jumping on the correct stone opens the door to Lord Azriel's chamber, while incorrect choices send you back to Go without collecting 200 gold coins. After Lord Azriel's chamber opens, he presents the key to the gate and advice on how to reach the Realm of the Sun. Open said gate and enter the Dimension of Death.

Three boxes wait at the realm's entrance; smash and loot them. Move to your right, enter the maze, and kill the five Skeletons that assault you. Don't let the victory go to your head. The Skels get much tougher as you stride deeper into the dimension. Wander through the maze, slashing whomever you meet.

Slash not, however, the dying lad. Listen well, for without Azriel's hammer to cross the river of death, you will die. Pledge to find his sister and move on. A Weeper waits at the next corner. Your only defense is to run like hell.

Work your way to the left side of the dimension. There you will find a large room. Pushing on the steel boxes in each corner of the room releases the hidden buttons. Move all four boxes and the Sylph of Inner Beauty will appear. She asks for rust and mold so she can brew a potion of protection for you. Head to the back of the room and shatter the urns. Collect their contents and then jump up on the walkway and collect a few rocks. Cross the bridge and use the rope and ladder to reach the ground below. Drop a rock on each of the four buttons, and bash the Zombies waiting below the surface. When you return to the maze, you'll find that four new portals have opened.

Be careful of the River of Death. The deadly water flows between you and some tempting goodies.

Take some time to wander the maze and build experience. Be careful of the sporadic bits of fire. You may jump over some of the flames, but will have to sidle by others. Use the key lifted from one of your earlier Skeleton kills to open a practice room filled with Skeleton warriors. They will ignore you until you pick a fight. Pick it, kill them, loot them, and move on.

▲ Conner arrives in the Dimension of Death only to be thrown out by the ill-tempered Shadow.

Continue through the labyrinth until you find the teleporter. The entrance is well guarded, so be ready to rumble. Once the teleporter is located and the guard defeated, you can travel freely between Daventry and the Dimension of Death.

Head to the northwest corner of your area map. There lies a boathouse and in it a boatman. Pump him for information (especially on the portals to other dimensions). Pick a building in the maze (you can do this anytime, not just after you visit the boathouse) and use the hook/rope combination to climb it. You may find valuable potions. On the other hand, you may find the Commander Skeleton. Be careful with this sack of bones—he is tough. Force him off the building and take his armor.

As you head back to the main room, a child's crying catches your attention. Climb the stones along the back wall of the great room and break up the crates. There you will find the dying lad's sister. She has been imprisoned in the room behind these crates for days. Move the steel crate that is blocking the passageway. She tells you how she got there and thanks you for saving her. Conner offers to take her to the portal back to Daventry but she declines and heads home.

Now it is time to enter the main room portals. You'll find a few Skeleton archers and a helpful item or two. Be careful, however, of the River of Death. The deadly water flows between you and some tempting goodies. Use your brain here; one globule of water from the river will drop you instantly. Another room leads to the scales of justice, and yet one more to the sacred heart. Heed the boatman's words on portals and all will fall in place.

Although this is the end of the Dimension of Death, it is just the beginning of your adventure. *Mask of Eternity* is an immense undertaking, but one you must tackle. After all, you are Conner. You are destined for greatness.

Hints

The Death Dimension

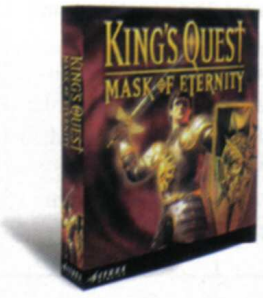
Heed Lord Azriel's advice, and you just might make it to the River of Death.

Lord Azriel asks Conner to finish his quest and restore order to the land.

The dimension welcoming committee gives Conner the royal treatment.

Lord Azriel presents Conner with the key to the dimension.

Once Conner defeats the Shadow and departs, he will not be allowed return to this dimension.



MASK OF ETERNITY

www.sierrastudios.com

Developer	Sierra Studios
Format	WIN95 CD
Price	$49.95
Order #	70090
Phone	1.800.757.7707

By Mark H. Walker

Quest for Glory: Dragon Fire

▶ TWO DAYS IN THE FIRE OF THE DRAGON

YOU CAN PLAY *QUEST FOR GLORY* AS ONE OF FOUR characters: Fighter, Wizard, Thief or Paladin. This guide features you as the Fighter. *DRAGON FIRE* opens with you hovering before Erasmus and his rodent, Fenris.

The wizard explains that you've been selected to join the Rites of Rulership and uncover the King of Silmaria's murderer. Although you have a choice between the path of danger or the road to Silmaria, this time you'll head to the city.

In an instant you'll materialize in a gazebo surrounded by a lush, vibrant forest. Remember the gazebo's location—it could come in handy since it's the portal to Erasmus' house. Follow the dirt path to Silmaria. Enter the arena and talk with Ferrari. He explains what's up with the playing field and encourages you to compete.

Exit the stadium and move west, past the well-guarded mansion. Next, stop by the Hall of Kings. Speak with the guards and they'll let you pass. Once in the hall, Logos encourages you to join the Rites of Rulership competition. Pump him for information and then continue along the dusty path into town. Enter the bank on the right and open your Rites of Rulership account. Leave the bank and clop across the stone bridge spanning the aquifer and cattails. Buy some fruit from the vendor and ask him for news about the town.

All the Sweet Comforts of Home

After bidding farewell to the fruit-man, stroll past the red-clay-tile-roof homes toward the ocean. Drop into the Weapon Smith's place, buy a few throwing spears, and ask him about your competition. After your visit, climb the hill to the bookshop. Borrow a book on swimming from your correspondence master, The Famous Adventurer—you'll need it later.

Continue to explore the coastline until you reach the Dead Parrot Inn. This is the brokerage for wagering on the arena fights. Place a bet if you feel lucky and head downstairs to the bar. Sip a brew and chat with the barmaid and other patrons before checking in at the Gnome's Inn. Innkeeper Ann says hi as you enter and serves you a heaping plate of—what, you're not exactly sure. (Seems there was a mishap in the kitchen.) Gulp down the feast. When you're done, Ann gives you the key and tells you not to sweat the bill for a month—it's taken care of. Unfortunately, you discover all the room's accoutrements are gnome-sized. Oh well, borrow an extra sheet, lay down on the too-short bed and sleep.

▲ Hang with Erasmus and Fenris for an ego boost.

Day Two: The Quest at Science Island

On rising, head to the docks by the Dead Parrot and chat with Andre. Stroll over to the Magic Shop and buy a set of magical magnets. Trust me, you'll need them. Stock up on some Health pills at the Apothecary and have the folks slap some free healing on you.

Mosey down to the shore, picking up rocks as you go. Head over to the windmill and release the brake. Next, force the gondola brake and replace its shattered remains with a throwing spear. Board the gondola and pitch stones at the spear until it releases.

Ride the gondola to the island, solve the quiz, chat with the professor, and note the bulletin board as you leave. Once on shore, stop by The Famous Adventurer's place. Brag a little and he'll buff your Pegasus Island knowledge.

Time for a little break. Kick back; enjoy the arena fights and a drink at the Dead Parrot. Buy Ugarte a drink and tap him for rumors. Check the betting board. Collect your winnings and head back to your short-bedded room. Be sure to hide a magnet in the chest before falling asleep. Rest well; there is still a massive adventure ahead.

▼ When you need Erasmus, kick this gazebo and answer a riddle.

▲ The Gnome's Inn is a nice escape from hard training.

▼ All the comforts of home, only a bit shorter.

QUEST FOR GLORY V

www.qg5.com

Developer	Yosemite Entertainment
Format	WIN95/98 Mac CD
Price	$49.95
Order #	70325
Phone	1.800.757.7707

By Mark H. Walker

Return to Krondor

▶ Chapter One: An Evening Stroll with Jazhara

The first thing to do in Return to Krondor is speak with the gate guards. The conversation is a portent of the Hollywood-class voice acting found in the game and a reminder of the task at hand (finding the new court mage and escorting her to the palace).

Click the *Krondor* button in the lower left of your screen and select Map. Up pops a blueprint of *Krondor*. Glide the mouse to the center top. Click on the highlighted North Gate sector and you'll appear at the North Gate Sector obelisk.

Head to James' right, cinch your belt, and knock on the first door you pass. Behind the door could wait a confrontation with thieves, a chest brimming with really cool stuff, or nothing but a few squeaky rats. Assume there are thieves behind the postern and be ready to rumble.

▲ The North Gate Sector: It is here you will meet Jazhara.

This Is Not a Welcoming Committee

It's a good idea to set your Attack Style to Conservative for these first few encounters. Doing so gives James a defensive bonus. Face it, *Krondor* is a tough town, and neophyte sword swingers need every advantage they can muster in these thinking man's turn-based brawls. Nevertheless, you should be able to off these first villains (or villain), search their bodies for loot, and exit the building without undue tribulations.

Continue down the street. Out of the shadows will slide a couple of *Krondor*'s less than respectable citizens. Not a tough fight, but the dialogue alone is worth the price of admission. Make sure to pillage the leather armor and press on. The street will soon spill into a large area bordered by an orphanage, the priests of Prandur's barracks, and their temple. Duck into the temple and let the kind father salve your wounds with his blessings.

Once healed, retrace your steps to the North Gate Sector obelisk. Have James walk the other street away from the column. This leads to the North Gate itself. There he will find Jazhara patiently waiting. Polite introductions and a couple of hundred experience points later, it's time to head back to the palace.

It Takes a Thief

Ah, but the night is not yet over. James and Jazhara no sooner arrive at the palace gates than a young girl picks Jazhara's pocket. Chase the urchin down and listen to her tale of misery. Follow your heart and help the poor child.

The cruel factory she speaks of lies in the bad section of town. Unfold your Krondorian map and click on the Poor Quarter. You'll appear in a dark alley; in the distance chickens cluck as they peck seed from the cobblestone road. Advance down the street. Feel free to knock on the doors, slay the thieves inside, and gather their bounty, but keep an eye on your team's health. There is a series of challenging fights ahead and you will need all the health points you can muster.

Show Him the Steel

At the alley's end you'll run into a Keshian guard. Don't talk; show him the steel. He's a bad guy, trust me. Pick the Scimitar off his dead body and give it to James. Burst in the door behind the Keshian. Yussef, the owner of the sweatshop, and one of his thugs will give

▲ Your quest begins at the North Gate obelisk.

▼ James is hurting, as evidenced by his yellow ring.

▲ Stop at the temple for a break to regroup.

▼ This Prandurian priest will heal you for a price.

▲ Squire James finally meets Jazhara in the North Gate Sector. After a quick icebreaker, they walk to the palace.

▲ William's girlfriend Talia lies fatally wounded. She describes her assassin to the group and pleads for revenge.

battle. James should advance on them, then "defend." If you're lucky, this will draw Yussef and his friend to James. Jazhara can use the time to ready a Lightning Blade. With James slashing and Jazhara flinging bolts, the opposition will soon fall. Search both Yussef and his office.

With Yussef's key in hand, bound up the stairs. Kill the two waiting thugs with the same tactics you employed in the battle for Yussef's office. Approach the cage of children and set them free. Boy, doesn't that feel good?

At last it's time to rest. Return to the palace, proposition Jazhara—she'll politely turn you down—then catch some shuteye. Your first day in *Krondor* has ended.

The Second Day Dawns

Squire James spends the greater part of the second day showing Jazhara her new hometown. That evening she asks about her childhood friend, William. James hustles her over to the Rainbow Parrot, a bar that William frequents.

The bar is in turmoil; Talia, William's girl, has been severely wounded and several of her assailants are trying their best to slice and dice William. You must save them. Have Jazhara throw a Contest of Wills on the mercenary archer, while both James and William hack the axeman and the other sword-swinging henchman. Now off the paralyzed archer (Contest of Wills paralyzes both the caster and the target), and pat yourself on the back.

Unfortunately, Talia will die in William's arms, but not before she describes her "bearish" assassin and vows her revenge.

Loot the mercenaries' bodies, and exit the bar. In the distance you hear a loud boom, and an orange fireball blooms above the roofs of *Krondor*. It's the jail! You sprint to the stricken building's rescue only to find that more of Bear's mercenaries have pinned down Garruth, captain of the Krondorian Guard, and his men. You have two options: You may answer his pleas and assault the jail, slowly working your way down the long alley amid a hail of archer's arrows, or you may take flight. Remember, flight here is not a cowardly way out.

It's a good idea to set your Attack Style to Conservative for these first encounters.

Assault the Jail

Fly by the Krondorian soldiers and duck into the next alley. Continue down this side street until you reach the burning jail. You can enter the jail and lay into Bear's mercenaries guarding the building's interior or press on. If you choose to proceed, you'll arrive on the flank of the archers. Have James wade into the archers while Jazhara moves into position to fling a few Lightning Blades. Leave William to guard the rear; a tricky mercenary lurks in the shadows cloaking the corner of the jail. Unchecked, he will thoroughly rend Jazhara. A similarly deceitful sword bearer will emerge from the opposite side of the alley, but Jazhara and James have ample time to react to his advances.

Once the alley guards are properly disposed of, you may enter the jailhouse. Four more of Bear's men await you—hey, nobody said this was going to be easy. It takes guts to have fun. There is no perfect tactical approach to this fight. If you

▲ This pickpocket will lead you to one of your first quests.

▼ Yussef isn't so bad if you take out the alley guard.

▲ Jazhara hurls a Lightning Blade at Bear's archers.

▼ Head inside this burning orphanage to make a rescue.

Hints

TROLLING THE SEWERS

Talk with the treasure hunters at the T junction. They can help you more than they realize.

Kill the Sewer Monster to gain vital experience points.

Drink the poison antidote after slaying the five assassins sent by the Sewer Monster.

can move to block the assailants' access to Jazhara, do so, and let the Lesser Path Mage bombard them from afar (her Chain Lightning scroll works well here). On the other hand, you may set both William's and James' Attack Style to Aggressive and strut into the bad guys with swords blazing. Either way, you'll need to dispose of them all and burst into the next room.

There are three more unpleasant fellows in here. Kill them all, and then check in with Captain Garruth. He gives you the somewhat dubious honor of checking the second floor and the basement.

Spring up the stairs. Ignore the bound scribe and rush into the adjacent room. Surprise, surprise. There are three more of Bear's troops waiting for you. Kill them and return to the scribe. Interrogate him, but don't take his word at face value. Continue to press him, and eventually he'll show his true colors. Slay him and search the desk. The newly discovered papers seem to support your suspicions—according to the parchment, there is a man named Knute being held in a jail cell. Knute has some important information; go pay him a visit.

Unfortunately, you arrive too late. Talk with the old man about Knute's demise and then return to the Captain of the Guard. As you speak with the Captain, Bear escapes. Follow him to the North Gate.

The North Gate Sector: Part Deux

The sector is in turmoil. Bear and his band of merry men have attacked the North Gate and set the orphanage on fire. Speak with the Krondorian soldiers and then head to the blazing orphanage. You can help, and the orphan master will explain how. Have Jazhara hit you with the Fire-Eater spell and head into the orphanage. Once inside, move briskly; Jazhara's spell wears off quickly.

There are seven urchins to rescue. The first two are against the wall to James' left. Approach them and speak with them. They'll rise and scamper out of the building. The next two are on the opposite side of the room. Once you have saved their smoky hides, trot into the back bunkroom. There you will find one child on the left wall and two spaced out on the rear wall. Rescue them all and hightail it out of the building.

Speak with the citizens outside of the orphanage. They will point you to Ye Bitten Dog. Take the point and head over to the seedy bar. Saunter up to the counter and speak with Lucky Pete. Pay him, and pay him again for information. Eventually he will hand over the key to Knute's room. Make sure your party is shipshape and head up to Knute's boudoir.

Once again you are late. (Are you beginning to sense a pattern?) Three bad men lurk in the room. Kill them, listen to the character's dialogue and head into the sewers and Chapter Two.

The Sewers

To access the sewers, open the door in the back of the Rainbow Parrot. Once the characters have finished speaking, move out. Head in the direction from whence the Sewer Monster came. Trace this passageway until you come to a T junction. Wait here; four treasure hunters appear. You may choose to fight them, but you'll garner more experience points with diplomacy.

Cure the poison injected by the Sewer Monster's claw as soon as possible. The damage accumulates every turn...

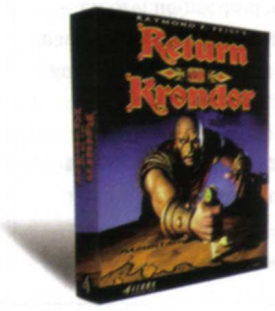
Speak with the thieves and then head down the left branch of the T. Follow the cobbleway until you meet the Sewer Monster. He looks mean, but he's tame as a kitten (kind of). Better still, he spews lots of experience points when he dies. Continue past the monster and bear (pun intended) left (James' left) at the following fork in the passage. Keep on keeping on until you enter the circular spillway. Two ruffians will confront you on the spillway. Invoke Prince Arutha's name and they will not only fade away, but throw green "+100" experience-points signs above your heads.

If you move clockwise about the spillway, you'll soon trigger an ambush by five Keshian Assassins. Obviously, killing Yussef didn't sit well with everyone in Jazhara's homeland. These folks are carrying poisoned daggers, but otherwise should pose no problem. Slay them, drink some poison antidote, and get on with your life.

On the other hand, if you move counterclockwise (or if you continue counterclockwise after wasting the Keshians) you'll find a tunnel marked with a strange Z-like shape on the wall above it. Scoot into this tunnel and follow it until an old Mocker stops you. Listen to what he has to say.

Return to the spillway if you choose to accept the offered quest. The adjacent tunnel has a drawing of a cupped square with a dot in the center. This is the passage that leads to the Sewer Monster's domain. Follow the corridor to a T junction. Take the leg of the T and follow it to the Sewer Monster's lair. Make sure to slide a poison antidote into each party member's knapsack, descend into the lair and get ready to rumble. Have James and William hack the green-skinned creature while Jazhara tosses a Lightning Blade or imbues one of her fighter friend's weapons with Demonblade.

Treat the poison injected by the Sewer Monster's claw as soon as possible. The damage accumulates every turn and, at this stage in the game, can soon lay a character low. Finish off the monsters and then locate their eggs. Crack the eggs and the menace will be finished. Return to the elder Mocker to claim your free passage to Lucas and the rest of the fascinating world of *Return to Krondor*.



RETURN TO KRONDOR

www.sierrastudios.com	
Developer	PyroTechnix
Format	WIN95/98 CD
Price	$49.95
Order #	70559
Phone	1.800.757.7707

By Mark H. Walker

Caesar III

▶ WALKING THROUGH THE EARLY LEVELS IN CAESAR III

CONSTRUCTING AN EMPIRE OF EPIC PROPORTIONS—including those vital elements of life: feeding, taxing, policing, entertaining, and protecting the plebeians and nobles of a town—is the task of *Caesar III*.

Your first assignment takes you to a rural and remote area of Italy.

The initial goal is to establish a settlement of 150 people. Set up your tents along the northeast road. Soon, hopeful peasants will arrive and your population will grow.

After the first fire in your city, you will be instructed to build Prefectures. Be sure to plop them near (but not too near) these tents; the Prefects will prevent fires and theft but inhibit population growth. Similarly, after the first building collapse, you will be able to construct an Engineers Post. Build at least two or three of them to keep the architecture in tiptop condition.

Erect at least two Temples to assuage the citizens' moralistic guilt and attract people to your fair city. Once your population cracks 150, Caesar will promote you to Clerk.

Governor of Brundisium

As Clerk you must establish another village. This time your population must reach 650. Start by removing the brush and trees at the northwest road entrance, establishing Prefectures and Engineers Posts, and clearing lots for tenants.

Construct a path to the yellow tufted terrain below the road and pitch a few tents beside the waving grain, which denotes fertile land. Stand up a Prefecture, Engineers Post, Granary and Market at the edge of the fertile valley and your nearby citizens will man them. The Market must have good access to the Granary and houses, so keep that in mind. Your first goal will be to put some wheat into that Granary, so build two to three wheat farms. You cannot establish Reservoirs until that time.

With wheat in your Granary, erect Reservoirs adjacent to the river and near both of your inhabited areas, then link them with Aqueducts.

Examine the water overlay—the pipes indicate areas covered by a Reservoir. Once you drop some Fountains in these districts (they then will appear blue in the overlay), the citizens will rejoice, and the tents will evolve into better housing, increasing the population and wealth of the city.

Read My Lips

Unfortunately, it's time to bring in "Big Brother." Click on the "Build Government Structures" button and erect a Senate near the intersection of your path and the east-west road. These are the tax collectors, and Caesar demands his due.

▲ Behold your dream city—complete with a Market, Forum, Temples and Gardens.

Speaking of taxes, you'll speak less and collect more in affluent neighborhoods. Increase the "housing affluence" by building Gardens and Fountains near your tents and improving accessibility to Theaters (don't forget the Actor Colonies). You'll need a population of at least 250 before you can erect many of these structures.

Expand the road network into blocks but make it simple for your citizens to move about. A Prefect won't patrol a neighborhood if he cannot reach it. Construct some Temples, a Market, a School and a Bath within walking distance of the residential area farthest from the wheat farms, and observe as the tents and shacks evolve into Casas.

Consult regularly with your advisors to gauge the gods' will, people's morale and your funding. Once you have 450 people, you can begin establishing industrial buildings such as factories and warehouses. Commerce will help boost your economy, and two units of pottery stored in your warehouse will spark the final population spurt needed to complete the mission. Caesar will be pleased, and you will be made an Engineer.

But rest not on your laurels, young Roman. There are new challenges ahead, so be patient. What did you think—that Rome was built in a day?

▼ Erect your tents and the people will come.

▲ Build Granaries to store your wheat harvest.

▼ Build Reservoirs and Aqueducts for your thirsty citizens.

CAESAR III

www.caesar3.com	
Developer	Impressions
Format	WIN95 CD
Price	$49.95
Order #	70558
Phone	1.800.757.7707

STRATEGY

Starsiege

By Rob Smith

▶ THE CYBRID THREAT IS BACK AGAIN

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT THE CARNAGE HAD finished, humanity's forces again find themselves in a desperate fight for survival against the marauding Cybrids.

Not only is complete control over a range of the signature Hercs (the mammoth walking weapons that duel toe-to-toe for dominance) vital to success, but in *Starsiege*, a thorough command of battle tactics is necessary to keep you alive. Pilots are highly sought commodities in these terrible times of interplanetary war, so keeping your butt in one piece is in the interest of your commander, as well as your mother. Listen up and you just might live to tell her the tales of your heroic exploits yourself.

Keeping It Together

HERCULANs, or Hercs, are big, extremely large hunks of carefully crafted high-tensile metal that are capable of causing a great deal of damage to both themselves and their pilot (you) unless you know what you're doing. First things first; get yourself a comfortable control scheme. For many people, especially those new to this big-robot combat style, the mouse and keyboard will work fine. Functions are essentially similar to those in most first-person action games (such as *Half-Life*), with some notable differences. Hercs don't strafe (move side to side)—think of it as driving a car. You can see (and therefore shoot) whatever is in front of you, but nothing else.

The ability to effectively group and direct your squad is a vital strategy that sets leaders apart from pure combat fighters.

Maneuvering your Herc behind an enemy is one of the most vital tactics you can bring to this interplanetary conflict. So get comfortable with a control configuration. Many joysticks provide a wide range of buttons that you can configure for the important controls, such as enemy targeting, shield recharging and your movement speed. Hit the training ground and try out all the options at your disposal. When you're comfortable, it's time to show these Cybrids that humans don't die easily!

▲ Whatever your piloting style, you'll find the right vehicle—from heavy behemoths like the Olympian (above) to the lighter Emancipator (below).

Weapon targeting is vital to executing the most effective ammunition combat encounters. Hercs are capable of hitting targets at distance with a range of weapons from the blasters, cannons and, more importantly, the radar-guided missiles. When an enemy is targeted, a red box outlines its position and a green circle indicates where you need to fire in order to hit him/her. This targeting system takes into account the enemy's range and movement direction, as well as your weapon's range. This information lets you "lead" an enemy; that is, fire in front of it as it runs to one side so the bullets or laser still hits. Judging the firing time is particularly important for missiles, which can be the most effective weapons on the battlefield when used correctly, as well as the most likely to be wasted by erratic firing.

Select your firing chains carefully, especially when you're piloting one of the more hulking Hercs, such as the Olympian (with its six weapon mounts). Make sure you are able to select which weapon to use at specific points—blasters at close range, cannons at medium range, and missiles at longer range.

When the action gets up close and personal, remember that Hercs are made of multiple parts, and it's easier to focus your fire on one area than spray damage over the entire lump of metal. Aiming at legs, for example, can bring down a powerful Minotaur quite effectively so long as you temper your shots. Don't fire maniacally, since ammo is limited. Selecting your shot and only pulling the trigger when you know you're going to hit it is difficult in the heat of a plasma-riddled battlefield, but can help bring an enemy down faster. And that's the idea, after all.

▲ No shields? You're toast. The key to victory is knocking down the enemy's shields so your weapons can chew up your target's armor.

Hints

Robot Awareness Training

Knowing your enemy is the key to any effective strategy. Below is the lowdown on some of the main miscreants you battle in Starsiege.

TALON

Armed with shoulder-mounted lasers, it races in and turns to move full-speed around you. Hit its legs to ensure it doesn't get too far.

MINOTAUR

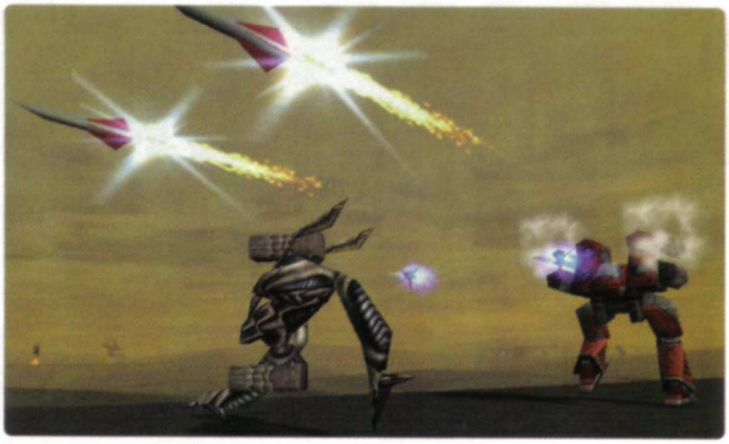
Its laser and autocannon attack and excellent armor and shield regeneration make the Minotaur a formidable foe.

BASILISK

Often armed with missiles, its wide torso makes a large target. Concentrate your firepower on its missile pack.

PALADIN

Its Sparrow missile pack whittles your shields fast. Install a Guardian Jammer to prevent it from getting a lock.



▲ In Starsiege, the rule is: If you don't keep moving, you're dead. Here a Cybrid Goad darts through a deadly salvo from an Apocalypse.

Teamwork

After just a few missions in which you get to prove yourself to Harabec Storm, the hotshot general of the Free Martian Alliance, you'll find yourself in charge of other pilots. The ability to effectively group and direct your squad is a vital strategy that sets leaders apart from pure combat fighters. Up to the task?

Remember to watch what your team is doing and never be afraid to give an order. It's easy when there's just one squadmate. Generally, you just ensure that he or she is doing the same thing you are: attacking the same target to bring it down quickly, or moving together closely to avoid enemy contact.

When you've got an entire squad at your command, understanding the squadmates' strengths and weaknesses (depending upon which Herc you've equipped them with) will keep you one step ahead of the game. Balancing your squad to cover long- and short-range battles, fast movement with precision attacks, and defensive capabilities with brute firepower can be tough. It's easier to go with squads of similar abilities so you're all doing the same thing at the same time. Some missions don't allow this simplicity and require you to send off your squadmates to perform vital duties while you concentrate on other matters. In this situation, know your pilots' machines and styles by heart and then select the right one for the right job. If your Herc is more suited to battling the fast-moving Talons, send your heavier Dreadlocks against the Paladins. Decisions like these can save your life as well as theirs, so always take careful note of the mission briefings and understand your support.

Salvage and Upgrade

Out on the battlefield there's scrap to be won that can turn the tide of battle. Before you go into a mission, get a sense of the requirements from the briefing and then check your rig to ensure you're equipped for the task. Armor, sensor and engine upgrades are always possible, so find out what's available and determine what's going to make you more effective. Keep in mind that you can't exceed your mass limit. It's easy to focus on the weapons and arm up with Heavy Blasters and Shrike Missiles, but you need more. Sensors can give you an extra 100 meters of range, armor can supply additional protection and laser-targeting devices allow you to use artillery—any and all can make the vital difference between success and a sorry pile of smoldering metal on the battlefield.

Remember to equip your squadmates with the equipment necessary for the task at hand. You're in charge, though, so equip your own rig with the laser-targeting devices and scanners—don't rely on the other grunts to do your work. In *Starsiege*, you're set to be a hero and so you have to step up to the plate in order for the missions to succeed—there's no playing second fiddle to anyone else and riding their coattails to glory.

The combinations of weaponry, support devices, armor, sensors and engines can keep an engineer busy designing for hours. Always go into battle with the best machine for the job, equipped with the best salvage available in the hangar bay—this will always give you the best chance of staying alive.

Also remember to use the environment. You can't be shot at if you can't be seen. So if you're high-tailing it away from a pursuing band of enemies, get behind hills, over ridges or deep into gullies so they can't see you and take a shot. Buildings or the carcasses of structures all can provide cover against attacks. As you're instructed, it's more vital to complete a mission objective than it is to destroy every enemy. If the pursuing enemy looks stronger, take the strategic option out and save your skin—you can always live to fight another day.

And when the Earth is at stake, that's what counts.

STARSIEGE

www.starsiege.com	
Developer	Dynamix
Format	WIN95/98, NT
Price	$49.95
Order #	83675
Phone	1.800.757.7707

By Rob Smith

STRATEGY

Starsiege TRIBES

▶ PREPARE FOR TEAM DOMINATION

DOMINATING THE COMPETITIVE ONLINE WORLD IS GOING to take determination and organization as well as skill and cunning. Following these tactics should ease you through the learning curve and enable you to make a name for yourself as a tribe leader.

Get in Control

First-person action games are defined by their control method. Quite simply, you have to get used to the mouse/keyboard combo, with the mouse controlling your viewpoint and your movement directed by the keyboard. Given *TRIBES*' 3D rolling terrain, hills, gullies, ridges and valleys, the ability to look around the environment quickly is vital, and that's why you should get used to using the Free Look option. While it may be more confusing at first to orient yourself, keeping the mouse held steady as you move around using the keyboard is crucial. Left and right movement is controlled with the mouse—ensure that as you turn with the mouse, you keep it moving on a level horizontal plane. This will give you speed of movement and aiming (vital for pegging opposing team members) and also the ability, with practice, to spot enemies as they approach from the air (or below you if you're high on a ridge).

The next vital control point is the jetpack. The most comfortable option is having this function on your right mouse button. Not only does the jetpack let you get to places from any point within the 3D space, it's also a key escape mechanism—when multiple enemies attack, it can be harder to hit you with the more damaging explosive weaponry if you're airborne. The blue bar at the top left of the display highlights the power in the pack; watch this decrease as you leap, hit the jetpack and cruise around. Be careful of "cratering"—the embarrassing situation of flying through the air, running out of power and plummeting like a stone to the ground. When out of power in midair, don't panic; let the power recharge and use a quick burst of whatever's left to stall your descent. You may still take damage, but it's less likely that the hole in the terrain will be your grave.

TRIBES' use of 3D space makes assessing which of the weapons to use, and when, a crucial combat factor.

On the control front, get used to watching where the enemy is moving by using both the zoom command and accessing the control map. Spotting enemies in the distance can be difficult due to the weather conditions. Also, the map shows your base, your enemies' bases and where all the team members are located. Clicking in and out to watch for movement will give you an advantage, particularly in defensive strategies as you view an opponent's tactics unfolding.

▲ Position a few heavies with multiple weapons and turrets at your base to protect your flag.

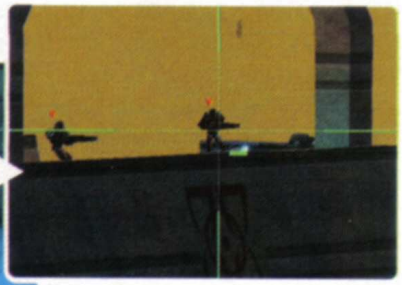
Right Weapon at the Right Time

TRIBES' use of 3D space makes assessing which of the weapons to use, and when, a crucial combat factor. Weapons like the Stormhammer, Grenade Launcher and Heavy Mortar are highly effective against targets on the ground. Their "splash" damage (as they explode on contact with a surface) is what's likely to chip away at armor. Don't fire these weapons at enemies who are using the jetpack unless you hit them full on; otherwise you won't inflict any damage.

Airborne enemies should be pegged with the Chaingun or the Blaster. A useful tactic is to lob Grenades or Discs (from the Stormhammer) at an opponent on the ground, then use the jetpack to fly over them, switch to the Chaingun and fire down on their position. In close combat, the ELF is extremely effective. Coordinated attacks of Stormhammer Discs from you and a buddy at one dodging enemy can be very effective.

▲ Your jetpack can save your life, but a fall from 100m can kill.

▼ Camping heavies are easy to kill with the Plasma Gun.



▲ Keep tabs on the enemy with the scope and zoom in for the kill.

▲ Attacking the enemy's base with many troops in a variety of armor causes serious havoc and increases your chances of capturing the flag.

Defensively, it's quite easy to spot Discs, especially when fired at long range, so as a team, bombarding a group of enemies with a Disc volley, then following with Chaingun and ELF shots can be a fast and devastating attack style.

In team games, have one warrior as a sniper, armed with the Laser Rifle. While limited to light armor protection, the ridges and gullies as well as floating platforms on the various levels should provide enough cover. Arming the sniper with mines to place at key locations will help his/her lifespan (the sniper should also use the map regularly to check for enemies). The Laser Rifle should be used sparingly. It's most effective when fully powered, so choose your shots carefully, wait for it to recharge fully, then fire again. Rapid firing will also give away the sniper's position very quickly.

Know Your Way Around

TRIBES comes packed with an array of varied maps that use both terrain and constructions to create intriguing cat-and-mouse games.

With one player on the team selected as the Commander, waypoints should be set for two-man teams to work around in attacking. Remember, some people are needed to defend the base, too. Not only is the base the home of the flag in Capture the Flag games, it also houses a power generator, weapons supply and armor repair console. This enables you to adjust tactics within a game—if you're not needing a lot of speed or aerial movement ability, switch to heavy armor and get a heavy mortar; if you want a fast-paced offense unit, take your luck with the light armor.

In the popular eight-a-side games, try fighting with two heavy-armored defenders, four medium-armored midfielders and two speedy, light-armored offensive units. The medium-armored units can support an attack on the enemy base while the fast guys zip in, grab the flag (or do whatever damage is necessary in the mission objectives) and get the hell out.

The Laser Rifle should be used sparingly. It's most effective when fully powered, so choose your shots carefully...

On the snow-covered levels, where visibility is low, the use of the command map becomes more important. Watch for footprints in the snow, especially in games of just one-on-one or two-on-two where knowing your opponents' location is vital.

Control points on most levels tend to be the highest point of the map, be that a ridge, tower or isolated hill. Knowing the maps (use the training mode to get a feel for the layout) helps immensely, as an advantage is often gained by the team out of the starting gate first. When there's a bridge to control, getting there first and getting settled in prime defensive position gives you the chance to mount the first offensives.

Defensive turrets on some of the maps can be absolutely devastating to a single attacker. These situations require teamwork, as two or three squad mates make themselves targets for the turret while a light-armored, fast-moving guy races behind the turret to the base. On the defensive side, the turrets often pick up the movement of attackers before your eyes do, so when they start shooting, watch where they're focused. Then check the command map to ensure it's not a decoy distracting the automated defenses while another force wanders in untouched.

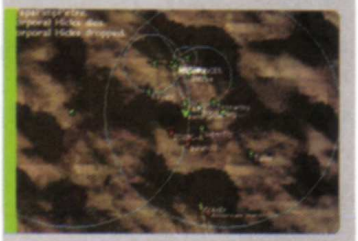
On all the maps, communication between team members is critical. Quick access to the set commands, alerting teammates to offensive rushes and the timing of your offensive movements will make the difference between the quality squads and the also-rans. It helps, therefore, if you have a regular squad to play alongside, so patterns can be developed. That said, speed, control and movement skill honing could all be done in the chaotic environment of the mass deathmatch. Watch what other people are using as both armor and weapons combos and learn from the top players.

Most important of all to remember is that *TRIBES* is designed as a mass team-based game. All the standard deathmatching tactics are relevant and useful, but the communication with team members is vital. With practice on the training levels, and under the tutelage of more seasoned warriors, the tactics to be used on the various maps will become apparent. It's then a case of doing your job for the betterment of the team—it's the team that works together most effectively that will make a name for itself in the continuing battle of the *TRIBES*.

Hints

TRIBAL BONDING

Choose the right armor and weapons for the situation.



View the map quickly and get back to the game. Sitting ducks die fast.

Speed is essential—set up your favorites at the ATM ahead of time.

STARSIEGE TRIBES

www.starsiege.com	
Developer	Dynamix
Format	WIN95/98, NT
Price	$39.95
Order #	83667
Phone	1.800.757.7707

By Rob Smith

STRATEGY

Half-Life

THE ZEN OF XEN

SO, YOU MADE IT TO THE ALIEN WORLD, EH? Congratulations, and hopefully your aches and bruises aren't causing you too much grief. Why? Because what you've experienced so far is nothing compared to the challenges that lie in the alien world of Xen.

What you're about to learn could save your life as you uncover the mysteries and the Zen of Xen.

First, the long jump. While the Hazard Course alerted you to this skill, the battle through the Black Mesa complex didn't require any extended jumps. That's saved for Xen, where your jump pack is vital. Remember, the key to successful long-jumping is keeping the crouch button depressed as you hit the jump key.

All set? Well, see that platform below your starting location? You need to get there. But even in this lighter-gravity world, falling that far is deadly. The safest route is via the two other static platforms. Prepare that long jump and leap to the first platform. Repeat to the second, and watch for any aliens deciding to have a closer inspection of your progress. From here you should be able to make a safer jump to the moving platforms, or even survive a fall to your destination.

Find the blue-hued healing pool to sooth those pains and, while regaining health, look for the small crawlway in the rock. Through there on the left is a destructible mesh. In this next area, open the three claw-shaped devices by activating them with your Use key, then smash the protector around the fireflies to power the teleporter.

Remember, the key to successful long-jumping is keeping the crouch button depressed as you hit the jump key.

Gonarch. 'Scuse You.

You're going to survive much longer if you can stay away from Gonarch. The key is to hit it in the HeadCrab sac. While it fires out HeadCrab spawn, keep moving around the central rock. Never ever stop. Use the pistol on the little creatures, make sure the LAW is loaded and fire a few rockets into it. If your aim is any good and you hit it, it will retreat by breaking through the mesh blocking your way. Let it come back for seconds, repeat the exercise (grab the health pack only when you really need it) and when Gonarch retreats, pursue it with your Marine-style determination.

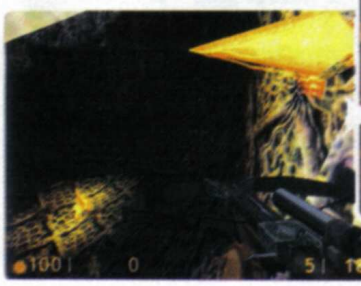
In this next area, use the central hole as cover from its spawn and pop it again. It'll soon clear off. Don't give up; keep chasing. In the next area, grab the powerups (watch for the spiky tentacle stabbing health points you can ill afford to lose) and fire up at it. When it spews baby HeadCrabs in its dying frenzy, switch to your hivehand and you'll find the hornets can zero in on the ghostly spawn and clear them out by the dozens. As the Gonarch burrows, look for the healing pond before heading in to the teleporter.

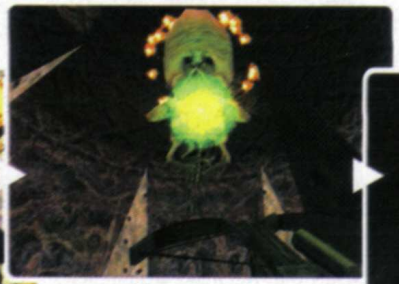
▲ Resist the urge to shoot at these pods. They contain happily incubating Alien Grunts who will not resist the urge to shoot you.

When the Guns Are Silent

Your next challenge signals the final run to the big boss. In this first area, head to the left and into the sinkhole between the two rising poles. Go into the cave, work your way down through the lowest chambers, taking caution in the room of poison gas jets, and smash out the fibrous webbing at the root of one of the spike trees. The tree will retract, so you can jump onto its tip and ride all the way back into the sky. From here, be on the lookout for Xen Masters; use your Python to pick them off as you proceed to jump to ever lower floating platforms. Your final jump will take you to a rock at the side of the island opposite the

▼ In the Nihilanth's lair, try to blow up these crystals





▲ The Nihilanth fires green teleportation balls at you.

▼ If you get caught by a ball, you'll end up in this guy's pool.

▲ Don't bother messing with the aliens here; just hop on this elevator to the next level, then jump on top of it and head for the conveyor belt.

teleporter, but there is a constant stream of electric-blue beamers travelling across the map. Jump on one of these as it passes by your perch and ride it across the island until it carries you to the teleporter. You'll have to jump for the teleporter before your ride zaps out of existence.

Now grab the Gluon Gun. Out of the tunnel it's to your left. You'll need that long jump working to make the jump. Head back the other way and grab as many weapons and ammo as you can find laying around. Hop across the chasm. There are grenades and other bits in the Tentacles' lair, so stay silent to avoid their tapping and work your way around and over them carefully. Distract them by lobbing grenades as far away from your position as possible whenever you have to make a complicated or potentially noisy move.

Once in the alien's bad guy factory, it will come as a pleasant surprise to notice that you're not attacked. So don't antagonize them—just jump on the elevator to the first level, hop off, wait for it to go back down, hop onto the upper part of the lift, and ride that to the conveyor belt. Deep breath and off the end....

When Guns Are Needed

These aliens aren't so friendly, so speed is of the essence. Keep your finger off that trigger. Move around the ledge and use the pumping pipes to get to the top. Don't stop—just keep moving. You can also make your way backward against the path of the conveyor belt and find an alternate route.

Now it really is a mad race. Follow the path upward, perhaps using your claymores to dissuade any pursuing beasts. Be careful not to hit any of the pods in the corridor; if you do, you'll free the incubating Alien Grunts. When the corridor is blocked you've no choice but to use grenades on the barrel, and then on the Alien Grunts it reveals. Protect your back with claymores and make short work of the Grunts with grenades. Or you can lay down a couple satchel charges and take care of them at the same time you demolish the pods. Race down the red tunnel, up the ramp to your left and onto the rotating elevator.

Those two red doors lead to another area housing monsters—be careful not to awaken the Grunts—and weapons. Grab all you can and head back through to the other room and up the second elevator. Take every opportunity you get to soak in the healing booth (there's one on this level) before heading back out to get the final elevator up to the rotating teleporter. If you still have ammo in that Gluon Gun, those flying Xen Controllers will think twice about getting close.

Nihilanth. Bless You.

The Nihilanth is not about to give up its domain easily. You'll discover you're not the first human to travel this far in the alien dimension, but you're the only one with a real chance of getting out. How do you manage that?

That large bulbous head looks like the perfect target for a few well-placed missiles. It's not easy to hit from the ground, though, so you're going to have to get close. Use those handy trampoline devices to get to the top platforms and unload with whatever ammo you've got left. Keep your eyes open for its energy bolts and, more importantly, the green teleporters. Try to run away from these when you're trying to fight.

But you'll need more ammo. Nihilanth has its own health replenishment supply in the form of three crystals around the side of the cavern. You will notice that after you have injured the Nihilanth, it will draw energy from one of the three crystals. You will want to destroy all three of these to prevent the Nihilanth from healing up. In the meantime, it will be doing its best to zap you into one of its arenas. These are very bad places to be but, fortunately, the doomed survey team that preceded you left lots of health and ammo for you to scavenge.

The Ichthyosaur's pool and BullSquids' pit are hideously inhospitable, but you need them. Grab everything you can and leap back to the cavern. Nihilanth only becomes vulnerable once the three crystals have been destroyed. For the grand finale, you're going to have to make it right to the top platform, get eye to eye with the beast (or in its scalp) and fill its brain with lead. You can leap right over the gaping cranium and fill it with bullets, snarks, rockets, or whatever you have. If you're feeling particularly daring, or if you're all out of ammo, you can try landing inside the Nihilanth's skull and whacking away at its crystalline brain with your crowbar.

As the bright lights pulse in the air, take a moment to revel in your power. This hell is finally over. Or has it only just begun...?

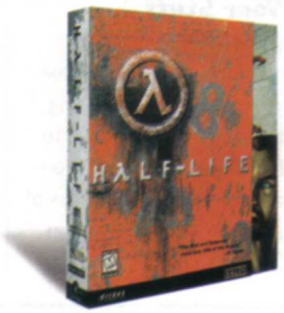
Hints

NASTIES IN XEN

The aptly named Gonarch will make your time in Xen a living hell.

The Nihilanth won't hesitate to give you a piece of its mind.

Don't let the nice suit fool you: This guy is up to no good, and he makes a final appearance in Xen.



HALF-LIFE

www.sierrastudios.com	
Developer	Valve
Format	WIN95/98, NT
Price	$49.95
Order #	70365
Phone	1.800.757.7707

By Jeff Kitts

Red Baron 3D

▶ INTRODUCTORY FLY-THROUGH

BEGIN A CAMPAIGN BY CLICKING THE START CAMPAIGN button and creating a British, German, French or American pilot. Before taking to the skies, you'll need to study the flight plan for a given mission, memorize the waypoints, get the mission briefing and see photos and diagrams of the battlefield.

For more detailed information, click the Intelligence button to see top-secret squadron files, pilot profiles and intelligence reports via authentic film footage.

There are 40 different styles of aircraft dotting the skies of *Red Baron 3D*, 22 of which are available to the player, including Albatrosses, Fokkers, and Spads. Each plane has its own characteristics, physics and break-apart threshold, so it's wise to spend time learning the subtleties of each craft. Use the Fly Now portion of the game to train, then fly single missions and ultimately begin a campaign.

Know Your Stuff Before You Fly

Regardless of which mode of gameplay you select, the key to making any headway in *Red Baron 3D* is to become familiar with the flight controls. Remember, these warplanes of yesteryear were quite unforgiving; push too hard and pieces will start snapping off your plane.

The first thing you'll need to learn is getting airborne. While stationed on the runway, press the Tab key to start the engine, then increase the throttle by pressing 1 through 0, 1 being an idle setting, 0 being 100% full throttle. As your plane picks up speed, gently pull back on the joystick and watch as the plane pitches upward and eventually leaves the ground. At this point, try some basic maneuvers to get a feel for your aircraft's flying characteristics. Push the joystick up to point the nose downward; pull back to climb. Left and right turns are a two-step process: For a left turn, push left to roll your plane left and then pull back; for a right turn, push right to roll your plane right and then pull back. Remember, no sudden or jerky movements! Guns are fired by using the joystick's main trigger button or the Spacebar. Bombs are dropped with the B key. The F key on the keyboard toggles between various first- and third-person camera views; the E key targets the next enemy; U unjams your guns when they seize up; R fires rockets; Ctrl + A activates the autopilot (helpful when you get lost) and J, when tapped three times, causes your pilot to bail out of his wounded craft (albeit without a parachute).

▲ A member of Manfred von Richthofen's squadron pilots this Fokker Dr.I to friendly territory.

The warplanes of yesterday were quite unforgiving—push too hard and pieces will start snapping off your plane.

Prepare for Battle

For multiplayer fans, *Red Baron 3D* offers an easy-to-use system which allows you to join any number of games currently being played on the Internet. You can also compete against or fly with at least 64 other players. Simply launch the multiplayer version of the game by clicking the *Red Baron 3D* Multiplayer shortcut found in the Start ⟶ Programs ⟶ Sierra ⟶ *Red Baron 3D* folder.

Red Baron 3D is a detailed flight sim with a fairly steep learning curve—but understanding these basic controls will have you in the air and dogfighting against the likes of German ace Manfred von Richthofen in no time!

▼ Study your mission's waypoints before you head out.

▲ Go through the pilot profiles to know your enemies.

▼ Learn the strengths and weaknesses of enemy aircraft.

RED BARON 3D

www.sierra.com	
Developer	Dynamix
Format	WIN95 CD
Price	$39.95
Order #	70469
Phone	1.800.757.7707

THE LEGEND BEGINS

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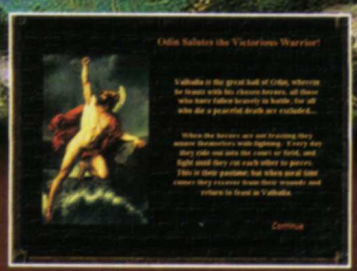
A New Generation of Board Games.



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3D Acceler

The Next Generation for High-Powered Gaming

By Bryan Edge-Salois

It's been about a year since I wrote my last article on 3D accelerators, and the next generation of accelerators now overflows the shelves of every computer store and game shop around. Last year's models, while still capable, are already middle-aged (in computer years). "In my day, we had Pentium 200s, Voodoo1, and 30-frames per second—and we were *happy*!"

The new 3D accelerators have more than doubled the power of their predecessors, leaving legions of gamers drooling over massive frame-rates and graphics that make your eyes bleed. Last year's contenders still offer a lot of bang for fewer of today's bucks, so even budget-conscious gamers (or their parents) should be able to afford a 3D accelerator. If you were too confused, too intimidated, or too cheap not to invest in a 3D accelerator a year ago, you should jump on this wagon—*now*. 3D technology is here to stay, and if you want the most from your gaming, you *need* a 3D accelerator.

The new 3D accelerators have more than doubled the power of their predecessors.

Selecting a 3D accelerator, however, can still be daunting, particularly for the technologically uninitiated. While new technology lines the shelves, the old guard is still present and boasting much lower prices. There are more chipsets, benchmarks, terms, and technologies available than ever. So before I delve into the specs and features of this year's roundup, I'd like to mention some important considerations that need to be made before buying your next video card or 3D accelerator.

Understanding 3D APIs

More important than the video chip you buy are the APIs, or Application Programming Interfaces, which your video card supports. An API is a set of instructions for programming a particular piece of hardware. The major APIs commonly supported are Direct3D, OpenGL, and Glide (which is specific to Voodoo-based accelerators; more on this later).

The reason APIs are important is because not all games are written to use all APIs, and not all APIs will support all games. For example, if you buy a game that is programmed to take advantage of OpenGL and/or Glide and your video board supports only Direct3D, your new game won't be able to benefit from the 3D acceleration your video card offers. It is best to be aware of what APIs support your favorite games before you empty your wallet for the wrong accelerator (and vice versa).

The Test: Putting the 3D Accelerator to the Metal

I used Sierra's *Viper Racing* to test the Direct3D frame-rate performance of these cards. All tests were run in 16-bit (high) color on the following test system:

ators

Pentium 2:300 CPU
64 MB SDRAM
4.3 GB UDMA hard drive
32X Toshiba EIDE CD-ROM
Microsoft mouse & keyboard
Creative (Ensoniq) AudioPCI sound card

All graphical features (and hardware acceleration) in *Viper Racing* were set to the maximum levels.

Creative Labs 3D Blaster Voodoo2: The Second Coming of Voodoo

The much-awaited Voodoo2 chipset burst onto the gaming scene boasting three times the power of its predecessor, 8 MB or 12 MB of RAM, and the ability to be paired with an additional Voodoo2 board in a single system for even more horsepower. Needless to say, the 3D Blaster Voodoo2 does not disappoint. And though it is still relatively expensive, it is also still heralded as the top dog of 3D. The competition has managed to catch up considerably, but 3Dfx and Voodoo still hold a high percentage of mindshare among gamers.

One particular advantage to owning the Creative Labs 3D Blaster Voodoo2 board is simply the fact that 3Dfx managed to make a huge impression on the market, and Glide, the 3Dfx API, is well supported. A few games support only the Glide API, or they may support Glide and OpenGL but not Direct3D.

On the downside, this board and many of its ilk lack any extra features such as S-video/TV-out, which are more often found on 2D accelerators. Additionally, if you're piecing together a system, the 3D Blaster Voodoo2 is still a relatively expensive 3D solution, since you'll also need to purchase a standard Windows 2D accelerator to be paired with it.

These things considered, if you can spare the PCI slot and the extra cash, the Creative Labs 3D Blaster Voodoo2 will please. Not only is the Glide API a well-supported API in its own right, the Voodoo2 does Direct3D and OpenGL just as well. For that little extra output you get some peace of mind knowing all your 3D games will kick butt.

Diamond Viper V550: A Challenger for the 3D Throne

The Riva 128TNT chipset powering this accelerator is a mighty beast indeed, keeping pace and besting the 3D Blaster Voodoo2 by a hair. The Viper V550 also includes a good software bundle, Windows performance on par with the Matrox G200, and much improved image quality over its predecessor, the Riva 128ZX. This is a good card but a little pricey, and if compatibility with the Glide API isn't important to you, this is a fast 2D/3D solution. It comes with Microsoft's *Motorcross Madness*, an excellent game, and a CD game sampler with dozens of demos. If you're thinking the V550 is the best card for you, make sure your favorite games all will benefit from it. If you think they will, you won't be disappointed in the image quality or frame rates it has to offer.

3D technology is here to stay, and if you want the most from your gaming, you need a 3D accelerator.

Red Baron 3D screen shot in software mode.

Red Baron 3D with the Glide API and the Creative Labs 3D Blaster Voodoo2.

Diamond Monster Fusion: The Best of Both Worlds

Strapped for cash? Or do you need an accelerator that offers 2D and 3D acceleration? Worried about Glide compatibility? Look no further than the Diamond Monster Fusion. The Fusion is a 2D/3D accelerator that uses the Voodoo Banshee chipset—essentially a Voodoo2 chipset with a single Texel processor instead of two. Think of this chipset as a Voodoo2 + 2D accelerator hybrid. Offering excellent Windows performance and 3D performance only a little below a standard Voodoo2 (for some games), this board does it all. If you need a single 2D/3D solution but want to be able to run virtually any 3D game, this is the card for you. The Monster Fusion supports Glide, OpenGL and Direct3D.

It's best to be aware of what APIs your favorite games support before you empty your wallet for the wrong accelerator.

The only downside to the Fusion (or Banshee chipset in general) is that there are a few minor compatibility issues not present with a standard Voodoo2 accelerator. However, as this card is relatively new, driver updates are bound to cure these minor technical gremlins, and the extra horsepower provided by the TNT chipset won't do you any good unless all your games use Direct3D or OpenGL. Most likely, they will be history by the time you read this. For the money, this is a hard card to beat for cost-conscious gamers.

Matrox Millennium AGP G200: The Prettiest 3D Accelerator

The Matrox G200 boasts some of the best 3D image quality, though its superiority isn't shown well in *Viper Racing* because of the type of graphics used in the game (i.e. you'll have to take my word for it). On top of this, it is the cream of the crop for 2D Windows acceleration, and it can be had for a modest price. However, I wouldn't recommend the Millennium G200 for die-hard gamers. The software bundle is negligible (from a gaming standpoint), and overall performance—while certainly competitive in my informal tests with *Viper Racing*—is still middle to low end for more demanding software, such as *Half-Life*.

On the other hand, I couldn't recommend a better mate for the Creative Labs 3D Blaster Voodoo2. If you can afford both, you'll have some of the best 2D/3D money can buy.

Quantum 3D Obsidian X-24: If Money Is No Object

The Quantum3D Obsidian X-24 is far and away the ass-kickingest 3D accelerator. This card packs the power of two Voodoo2 accelerators into a single board with 24 MB of RAM. This allows for higher resolutions (it was the only one that would run *Viper* at 1024 x 768) and astronomical frame rates—notice that frame rate at 1024 x 768 was scarcely less than the frame rate at lower resolutions and, at 800 x

	Chipset	512 x 384	640 x 480
Creative Labs 3D Blaster Voodoo2	3Dfx Voodoo2	51.6	51.2
Diamond Viper V550	Riva 128TNT	52.3	52.6
Diamond Monster Fusion	3Dfx Voodoo Banshee	52.8	51.9
Matrox Millennium AGP G200	Matrox G200	51.6	51.3
Quantum 3D Obsidian X-24	3Dfx Voodoo2	53.0	52.8

600, about 15 frames per second higher than the competition. The Obsidian also boasts S-video/TV-out and an RCA connection so you can connect it to your TV set for big-screen gaming. And who doesn't?

All this horsepower comes with a price to match—but if you can afford it, you won't be disappointed, and you'll probably have enough 3D horsepower to last into the next millennium.

And the Whoop-ass Award Goes To:

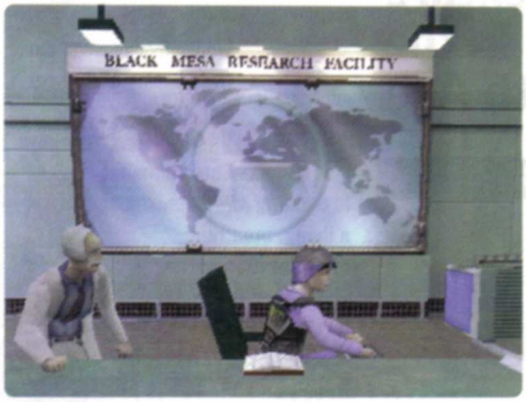
While all of these cards performed well and produced sharp, arcade-quality images, I'm personally still reluctant to give up compatibility with 3Dfx's Glide API, since it is still well supported, sometimes in preference to other APIs such as Direct3D. Until this changes, I'd have to recommend a Glide-compatible accelerator (i.e., Voodoo) at this point. The Obsidian X-24 is great but just too expensive to recommend to all but the most power-hungry (and rich) gamers out there.

The Matrox G200, while awesome in 2D and competitive in 3D, just doesn't have the fire necessary to keep a die-hard gamer happy. I liked the Diamond Viper V550, but it is a little pricey (as of this writing) and, as I said, it doesn't support Glide (nor will it ever). On the other hand, if Glide-compatibility is unimportant, the Viper V550 is well worth a look.

My recommendation—this issue's whoop-ass (Whoopie) award—for a 3D accelerator would be for either a plain-vanilla Voodoo2 accelerator such as the Creative Labs 3D Blaster, or the Diamond Monster Fusion, which can be had for even less and will cover your 2D/3D needs. Both should pack enough polygon-pounding power to keep you gaming well into this year and probably the next...of course, this assumes you've got the CPU horsepower to keep up! But *that* is another story altogether.

Bryan Edge-Salois is a tech support veteran, computer guru, avid gamer and freelance writer.

Half-Life screen shot with the Quantum 3D Obsidian X-24 video card.



Half-Life screen shot in software mode.

800 x 600	1024 x 768	API Supported	RAM	Interface	Software Bundle	Best Points	Worst Points	Price
37.3	N/A	Direct 3D OpenGL Glide	12 MB	PCI	*Ultimate Race Pro, Incoming, G-Police*	Some of the best and most popular 3D performance around.	Requires an extra PCI slot, making it relatively more expensive.	$149.00*
37.9	N/A	Direct3D OpenGL	16 MB	PCI or AGP	*Motorhead,* Windows 98 Game Sampler	Awesome Direct3D performance. Includes S-video connector.	Incompatible with Glide (3Dfx API).	$169.95*
38.4	N/A	Direct3D OpenGL Glide	16 MB	PCI or AGP	*Unreal* (11 levels), *Motorcross Madness*	Glide compatible, 2D/3D video solution.	Still some incompatibility issues with Glide software.	$149.95*
36.7	N/A	Direct3D OpenGL	8 MB	PCI or AGP	*Picture Publisher, Simply 3D, Netscape Communicator, PointCast Client, Imagination Software*	Awesome image quality.		$119.95* (after $50 mail-in rebate)
52.6	45.6	Direct3D OpenGL Glide	24 MB	PCI	Game Demos CD	Top dog in features and performance.	Also top dog in price. Lame software bundle.	$349.00*

A note on frame rates: The human eye cannot distinguish the difference between anything beyond 25 frames per second, with 30 being the optimal frame rate. A faster frame rate allows for a quicker reaction time. Fall below 25–30 frames per second and your game may appear a little choppy.
* Manufacturer's suggested retail price.

THE i-Spy

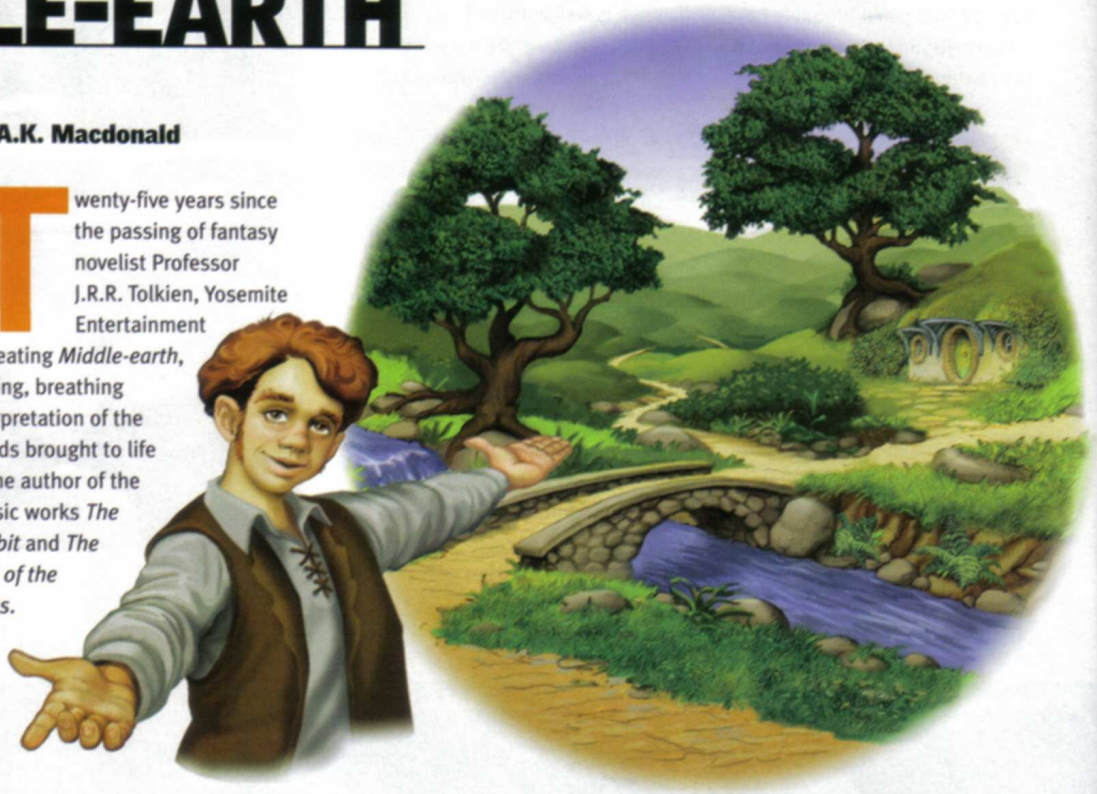
After a brief hiatus, The i-Spy returns. Check out the latest information on upcoming Sierra titles. We've got the goods on the newest RPG from Yosemite Entertainment, the hottest sports titles from Sierra Sports and the scoop on an exotic flight sim in the works at Dynamix. These development teams are unearthing the newest storylines, testing the latest technology, and making the most of what's out there. You may wonder, how did we manage to get all this dirt? It wasn't easy but, hey, we're here for ya....

MIDDLE-EARTH

Adventure in the Fourth Age

www.middle-earth.com

By A.K. Macdonald



Twenty-five years since the passing of fantasy novelist Professor J.R.R. Tolkien, Yosemite Entertainment is creating *Middle-earth*, a living, breathing interpretation of the worlds brought to life by the author of the classic works *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

The Road goes ever on and on
Down from the door where it began.
Now far ahead the Road has gone,
And I must follow, if I can,
Pursuing it with eager feet,
Until it joins some larger way
Where many paths and errands meet.
And whither then? I cannot say.

J.R.R. Tolkien

Role-playing games have had their stars and legends, but some might propose that all RPGs owe a colossal debt to the creator of the fantasy-adventure genre. It may be heresy to suggest, but some critics have even ventured to say that virtually *all* RPGs—book, board or screen—are in some way derivative of the works of J.R.R. Tolkien.

Why a player version of Tolkien's classic work now? The answer is simple—state-of-the art technology, scale and style. Yosemite has undertaken the huge task of adding an interactive dimension to this epic adventure because it's one of the few development houses capable of producing such a project. Imagine a world simultaneously traversed by thousands of die-hard fans, all expecting nothing less than the best game and story authenticity, combined with masterful visual imagery.

Middle-earth is a massively multiplayer game, where up to 10,000 players (you read correctly) explore and enjoy a landscape upward of 400 million square feet in size. Perspective is third person from an overhead view. For a visual frame of reference, players are enabled with a "camera" that centers on them. The player can choose to rotate the camera on either the horizontal or vertical plane, or zoom out for a better view.

What Will It Be?

Players choose their race: Hobbit, Human, Elf or Dwarf. Customized personal options let them create a face, feature by feature, with a huge array of heads, lips, chins, noses, even hairstyles, plus a vast choice in clothing, weapons, and armor styles.

After deciding what to look like, it's time to pick a profession. Players can be anything from Warrior, Ranger, Bard, Thief, Healer, Blacksmith, Barbarian, Brigand, Sorcerer, Enchanter, Assassin, Alchemist, or Loremaster.

Characters can also form families, both by marriage and "adoption." The reputation of family members can affect player status, so players need to watch what their relatives are up to. Players may also own pets (wild or tame), maintain a home in a location consistent with their race, decorate or remodel it, and pick up and move on to a new city if they choose. Of course, getting around is not all that simple or quick. Players have two choices: on foot or on horseback. In order to

maintain integrity with Tolkien's works; "recall" spells and teleportation will not be available. And, oh yes, fog, snow and rain may make the journey even more interesting.

Attainment of skills in *Middle-earth* is based on profession. Skill level is built on a triad of skill sets: Affinities (can do this with my sword behind my back), Aversions (could do this, but with a lot of practice and mistakes) and Abstentions (not now, not ever, can't even fake it).

HI NEIGHBOR!: Beware of these mountain-dwelling Hill Trolls.

Players enter the world in one of the many well-known settlements of *Middle-earth*, for example, Minas Tirith or the Grey Havens, many generations after the War of the Ring. A long era of peace is threatened by the rumor of gathering forces of evil. It will take more than a village to best it; indeed, Hobbit, Human, Elf and Dwarf all are called upon in the task.

Getting the Scoop From the Far-flung Reaches of Middle-earth

With a full IRC chat system imbedded into the game, players can also locate and converse with groups in the game around the world. Non-player characters (NPC) also serve the important purpose of interacting with players using sophisticated intelligence, advancing the game. A NPC could be a prestigious local leader or a nefarious rogue with an ear for gossip and a bad motive. Interact with them frequently (but cautiously) to learn what information they hold.

Because of its sheer size and complexity, system requirements for *Middle-earth* are expected to be somewhat steep, but this may well be the game that becomes the reason to step up to the plate. Anticipate a minimum of 300 Mhz Pentium-class processor, 32MB of RAM, 500 MB free hard drive space, and a Direct 3D- compliant graphics accelerator. Well worth it.

There has been, as one might imagine, a groundswell of interest in *Middle-earth*, with thousands of hits worldwide to **Middle-earth.com** since its launch on September 22 (the birthday of both Bilbo Baggins and his nephew Frodo). Tolkien fans are an avid and astute lot, so Yosemite should expect plenty of contribution and comment on both the site and game.

Early peeks into this vast game give great promise that the lyrical language and lore of J.R.R. Tolkien will be retained in a wonderfully woven, ongoing storyline, with technology that is up to the task.

GO WEST: Cirdan pilots his swan-ship far from Middle-earth.

Just as John Ronald Reuel Tolkien had no idea that the tales he told his children of a curious creature named Bilbo Baggins would be published to critical, worldwide acclaim, it's doubtful that in even his most fertile imaginings he could have envisioned the new direction his works have taken.

FIELD & STREAM® TROPHY BASS 3D

The Big Mouths Are Back

www.sierrasports.com

By Todd Mowatt

Sierra Sports is getting ready to spawn yet another addition to its long line of award-winning fishing games with *FIELD & STREAM® Trophy Bass 3D*. A work in progress, *Trophy Bass 3D* carries on the tradition of *Trophy Bass* and *Trophy Bass 2* with new state-of-the-art 3D technology.

Besides the addition of the FIELD & STREAM license, the design team has added some new lures to your interactive tackle box, including "Zipper" style worms, skirted grubs, finesse worms, and jumbo topwater plugs for world-record largemouth fishing. This time there's no excuse if you can't land the big one.

The LureCam follows the lure in the water and lets you see under the surface to observe how the fish react to your lure presentation.

Another new feature, the LureCam, follows the lure in the water and lets you see under the surface to observe how the fish react (or don't react) to your lure presentation.

Anglers will have 15 new lakes to choose from, including Lake Champlain in Vermont, Lake Okeechobee in Florida and Lake Russell in South Carolina. Videos featuring four of the top bass pros—Denny Brauer, Kevin VanDam, Larry Nixon and Penny Berryman—will offer you their tips on how to break records.

Accurate Down to the Last Detail

To get the physics of the fish accurate, the team consulted state fish and wildlife biologists, Army Corps of Engineers and local fishing guides. The information gathered helped them localize weather, catch rates, sizes and feeding behavior. The AI of the fish will be more sophisticated and there is more detail given to fish species such as specific "bite and fight" behavior based on weather, tackle, etc. Using a Global Positioning System simulation, you will be able to bookmark favorite fishing spots so you can return to them often.

Once you catch the fish, you can place them in your live well where you will be able to take a "snapshot" of them to view later in a scrapbook-style interface.

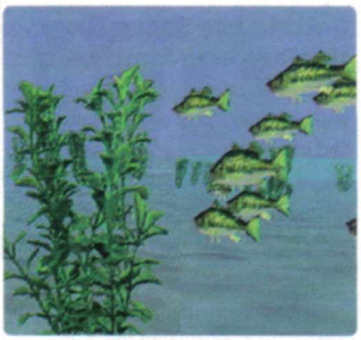
REEL IT IN: With detailed water translucency and shoreline and vegetation views, you can avoid those secret trips to the grocery store.

Single or Tournament Play

Gameplay modes include single player and standard tournament play. Big Fish prize is a new mode that offers a cash prize for catching the biggest fish of the day and/or tournament. Elimination tournaments will see players eliminated before the last day of competition. Holes tournaments will require anglers to fish in a specific, defined area for a given length of time. Then everyone changes over to the next hole. Think of it kind of like a game of golf.

Multiplayer anglers will be glad to know the game will offer cooperative and tournament games in which you can choose target species, rules, number of days and difficulty level. Angler ratings will let you see how experienced and/or successful the other anglers are. A ranking or a ladder system will allow players to advance through skill levels based on performance.

FIELD & STREAM Trophy Bass 3D should be available late this spring.



HERE FISHY-FISHY: With LureCam, these fish have no place to hide.

NASCAR® 3

Not Your Typical Sunday Drive

www.sierrasports.com

By Jeff Kitts

NASCAR fans know their place—which is on the edge of the living room couch every Sunday afternoon between February and November, watching their Winston Cup heroes do battle at high speeds for high stakes on some of the most exciting speedways in all of professional motorsports. But there isn't a NASCAR fan around who hasn't thought at one point or another, "Gee, I wonder what it would really be like to rocket around the high banks of Talladega at over 200 miles per hour," or "Whew, imagine the excitement of racing bumper to bumper at a short track like Bristol...what a rush." Nearly everyone knows what it's like to throw a computer touchdown pass, smack a PC homer over the left-field wall or score a virtual goal on a slap shot from the blue line—but few can proclaim they know the thrill of darting across the finish line in a 700-plus-horsepower NASCAR Winston Cup car. Sierra hopes to change all that in the summer of 1999 with the release of the long-awaited *NASCAR Racing 3*, the one racing sim coming this year that is guaranteed to re-create all the hair-raising thrills and spills of a true Winston Cup event.

> ...the one racing sim coming this year that is guaranteed to re-create all the hair-raising thrills and spills of a true Winston Cup event.

STEADY NOW: With its updated physics engine, overdriving into the turn will likely leave you eating dust.

The Tradition Continues

In development at Papyrus, Sierra's motorsports division and the team responsible for the original *NASCAR Racing*, *NASCAR Racing 3* promises to be their most authentic and technologically advanced racing simulation yet. It will feature teams, drivers and tracks based on the 1999 Winston Cup season, all with their rightful sponsors and car paint schemes. They'll battle it out on tracks including Atlanta, Texas, Darlington, California, Michigan and others, all updated to reflect their current configurations.

NASCAR Racing 3 is not merely an update of *NASCAR RACING 1999 Edition*, but a complete reworking that will boast graphic changes and gameplay enhancements on a par to make it the premier attraction in computerized motorsports this year. Among the new additions are 16-bit graphics, double-file restarts after a yellow flag, more detailed car setup options and a more realistic physics engine based on the one used in Papyrus' groundbreaking *Grand Prix Legends* sim.

Newton Would Be Proud

The physics engine not only allows you to feel you're driving the actual cars, it makes them more internally complex and that much more difficult to master. *NASCAR Racing 3* replicates the delicate interaction between features such as the independent springs, drive train torque, shock compression and rebound, and tire pressures at extremely high speeds, resulting in an exceptionally realistic sense of dynamic forces and motion you would expect in an actual racecar. *NASCAR Racing 3* will also support 3D accelerator cards for truly state-of-the-art graphics.

Fans can also look forward to a *NASCAR Grand National Series* expansion pack, complete with drivers, teams and tracks from NASCAR's Saturday afternoon series, which will be released as an add-on package soon after *NASCAR Racing 3*.

PRESSURE: Feel the roll of the car as you drive the track at Watkins Glen.

DESERT FIGHTERS

Change the Course of History

www.dynamix.com

By Jeff Kitts

In the works at Dynamix is a new flight sim that represents a radical design departure from the traditional *Aces Great Warplanes* series.

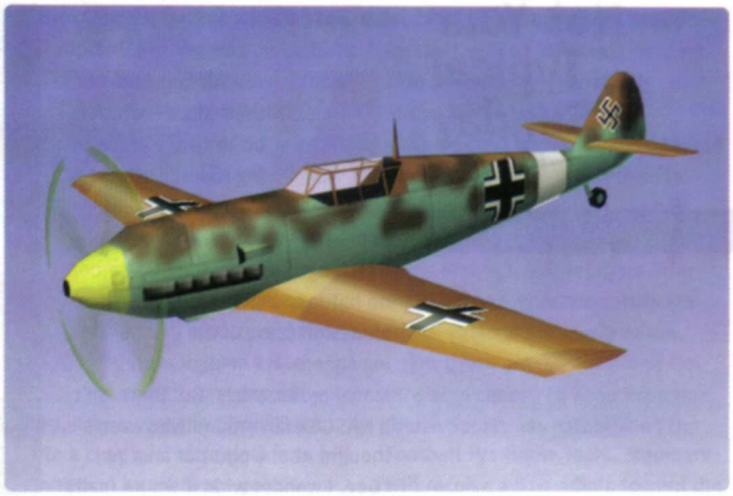
Desert Fighters, set in North Africa during World War II, will allow you to affect the course of the war by your performance in the air. Knock out a couple of cargo ships heading for Tripoli, and the Germans won't have the tanks or supplies to stop the latest British desert offensive. Miss those ships, and Rommel will have enough strength to take Tobruk and send the Brits scurrying for the Alamein line.

Mission types will include vehicle convoy attacks, fighter sweeps, escorts and intercepts, as well as anti-ship strikes.

This new, dynamic campaign system will be based on the resupply race that characterized the war in North Africa. The more supplies your squadron destroys, the worse off your enemy's army becomes—and the more ground you will capture. Supplies can be knocked out in ship convoys, in vehicle convoys or at camouflaged supply dumps. Do a good job as a German pilot, and Rommel just might take Alexandria after all.

Bombs Away

Your goal is to support your own army and weaken your enemy's, so ground targets are plentiful, as are vehicles. Already included in the game are Panzer IIIGs, trucks and two different types of half-tracks. Vehicles have their own AI and will scatter when attacked from the air. Large convoys can be seen for miles as they kick up huge plumes of dust. Smaller convoys have smaller dust trails and thus, are a little harder to spot. Right now, the artists are working on getting the vehicles to leave tracks in the sand as they go.



MEDITERRANEAN NIGHTMARE: The Messerchmitt was the first Bf-109 model to serve with the Fliegerkorps X.

Ten flyable aircraft from four nations are included in the game. The Italians will be represented by the Macchi-200 and 202, plus the non-flyable SM-79 three-engined bomber. German players can pick from the Bf-109F, Bf-110 or the Ju-87 Stuka. German non-flyables include the He-111 and Ju-52. Allied aircraft include the Hurricane IID "Can Opener," Spitfire, P-38, P-40, and P-51 plus a host of non-flyables like the A-20 Havoc, Blenheim, Wellington and the B-25 Mitchell.

Mission types will include vehicle convoy attacks, fighter sweeps, escorts and intercepts, as well as anti-ship strikes. Multiplayer missions will add in a team melee option.

Sightseeing on the Side

Ground textures include dunes, sandstone outcroppings, dry river beds and sunken roads. Rocky cliffs and deep canyons will stud the landscape as well. Fly over the Mediterranean Sea and you will pick out whitecaps on the waves.

Time of day will determine just how the ground terrain appears, as light source strength and direction is modeled for the sun. For instance, at high noon, the terrain will appear tan, while toward dusk, the sand takes on a slightly reddish hue. Historic landmarks, like the Pyramids and the Sphinx, will also be included.

A customize plane option will allow you to individualize your fighter plane as you see fit. A spot on the fuselage will be available for placing unique squadron emblems, so entire on-line outfits can be similarly marked.

Desert Fighters is scheduled for release in late 1999 and will support both Glide and Open GL 3D cards.

The package looked hot.
The descriptions were glowing.
The screen shots sizzled.

And my fifty went up in smoke.

Choosing a game by the packaging is always risky. They all look good. That's why you need to go to GameSpot. There you can download the latest demos so you can try before you buy, read in-depth reviews by top editors and gamers, get hints and tips to play better and much more. **AND, IT'S ALL FREE.** So before you buy another game, go to GameSpot... because you've got better things to burn than your money.

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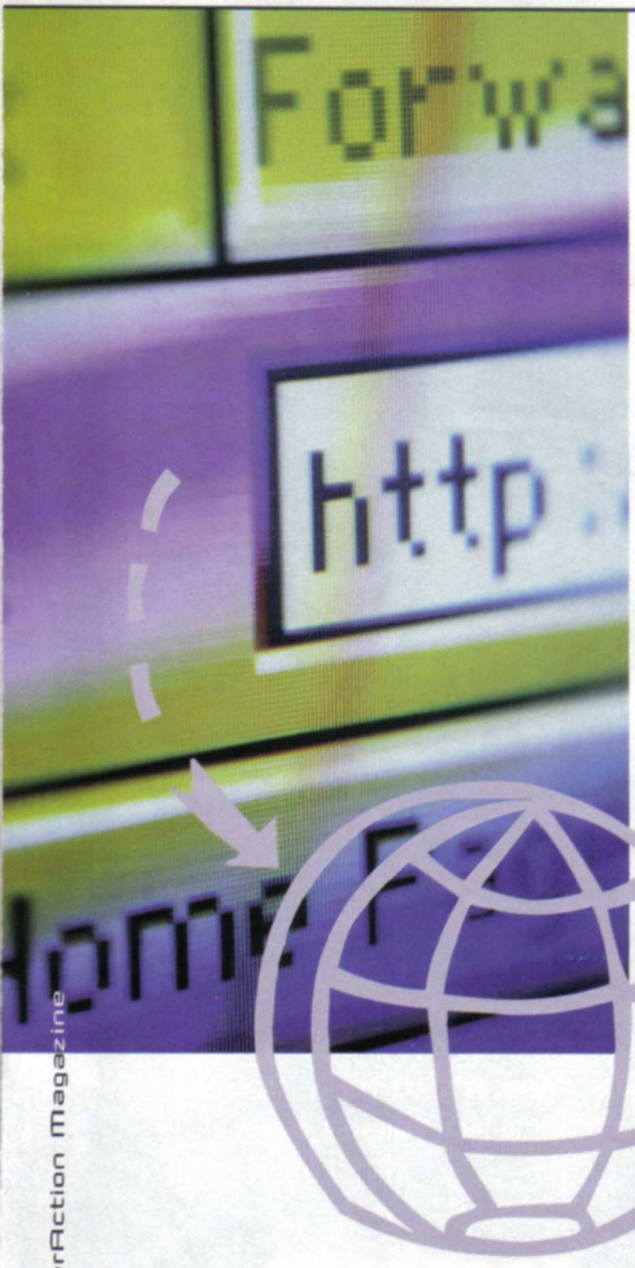
Create Your Own Website in Minutes!



By Dan Rabin

TRUE OR FALSE? TO CREATE A REALLY COOL WEBSITE YOU NEED 1) A MASTERY of computer graphics to generate eye-catching images, 2) a command of HTML, the language that describes the content and layout of web pages, 3) a knowledge of JAVA, for creating attention-grabbing special effects, and 4) several days (or more) to learn the intricacies of a web authoring program.

Not long ago, the answer to this question would have been True. Building professional-looking websites used to be a complex and time-consuming endeavor done only by those with a lot of technical savvy. Today, however, all you need is *Web Studio*, the next generation of web authoring software from Sierra Home and some news or information you want to share with the world.

With *Web Studio*, even novices can create an impressive website in under an hour. The program features a set of easy-to-use design tools and an extensive library of graphics and animations that will bring your web pages to life.

When you launch *Web Studio* for the first time, a quick perusal of the tutorial will get you up and running in minutes. It provides an overview of how to create a website and post it on the Internet. You'll learn how to insert graphics, text, and other objects from *Web Studio*'s design galleries. The tutorial also explains how to edit objects, apply special effects and create hyperlinks.

To create a website, you can either build it from scratch or use one of the sample websites, or templates, to jumpstart your design. *Web Studio* provides over 100 templates including family and personal pages, announcements, holiday greetings, online newsletters and editorial sites. You can modify a template to quickly create an attractive website, or you can use the templates as inspiration for your own web page designs.

A Little Help From the Wizard

Web Studio makes it easy to modify a template with guidance provided by the web page wizard. It appears as soon as you select a template. Using the wizard, you can quickly change the template's background and buttons. You can also add your own titles, text, and graphics, and import photos to replace those on the template. In the few minutes it takes to make these changes, you've personalized the web page while maintaining the template's basic look and feel. If your goal is to create a great-looking website in the shortest possible time, templates are the way to go.

Building a website from scratch gives you an opportunity to flex your creative

You can spend your time **experimenting** with **design ideas** instead of wrestling with obscure program commands.

muscles. Before you dive into a design, however, there are a few short tasks to complete. A click on the website Properties button displays a dialogue box in which you enter some general information about the site that you're creating. This includes the size of your web pages, and colors for visited and unvisited links.

This dialogue box is also where you'll list key words for your site and enter a brief site description. Search engines—such as Yahoo, Alta Vista, Excite, and others—will use this information to find your site and direct web surfers to it.

The other task you should complete before you begin designing is determining how many pages your website will contain and creating that number of blank pages. A click on the Add Page button creates a new page in your site. For each page you create, *Web Studio* generates a hyperlink that you can attach to buttons, graphics or text to guide viewers around your site. Don't worry if your plans change as your design evolves, as you can easily add or remove pages at any time.

With these preliminary tasks completed, it's time to fill those blank pages with graphics, text, buttons, animations, and all the other objects that will combine to make your site an informative and entertaining experience for your visitors.

Purple Hearts or Pink Bunnies?

All objects that can be placed on a web page are found in the design galleries located at the top of the *Web Studio* screen. They consist of a series of tabs labeled with the different object types and a row of thumbnails—small graphic representations of the objects in each gallery.

The method of selecting and locating objects is simple. You click on the Gallery tab labeled with the type of object you want to insert, then scroll through the thumbnails to find the specific object you want to use. Once you've chosen an object, use the drag-and-drop method to place it on your web page. To do this, you point to an object, hold down the left mouse button, and drag the object to the desired location on your web page. When you release the mouse button, the object becomes attached to your page.

The design galleries contain a wide variety of objects. You'll find backgrounds, clip art, photos, animations, buttons, signs, dividers, text, sounds, links and special effects. Since you work with all types of objects in a similar way, you can spend your time experimenting with design ideas instead of wrestling with obscure program commands. The design process becomes a stimulating and enjoyable activity rather than a frustrating and laborious chore.

The background sets the tone of your website, so it's wise to select a background before placing other objects on a web page. Like all objects in the design galleries, you insert a background using drag-and-drop. If, at any point, you decide to change the background, just drop a new background on top of the existing one. You can also create custom backgrounds. Graphics, photos, or even text can be used as a background image.

Easy Images

Web Studio makes it easy to import and place your own photos and images into your website. ❶ Scan your photo and save as a 72 dpi jpeg file. ❷ Place it into the "My Stuff" gallery, and a thumbnail will appear. ❸ Just drag and drop your image into place.

Design Like a Pro

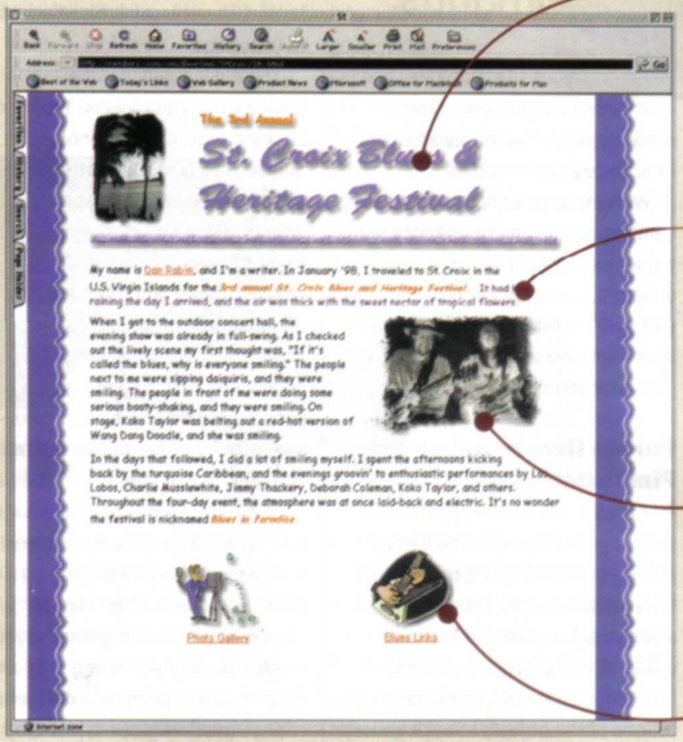
We asked Dan to create a website from scratch using Sierra's *Web Studio*. It took this novice designer only four hours to create his three-page site. Dan used *Web Studio* to choose icons, add interest to photos and experiment with type. Check out the page pictured below at **http://members.xoom.com/BeerGeek/StCroix/**.

■ Keep your site interesting and on topic by providing useful information or links to relevant sites. Categorize content for easy navigation.

■ Less is more when it comes to web design. Photos, sounds and animated graphics make page loading times longer, so use them sparingly.

■ The right background can make a page stand out...but if it's dark purple with lime-green text, it won't stand out in a good way. For ease of onscreen reading, use lighter backgrounds with dark, contrasting text. Size text at a readable 16 pt. (larger for headers).

■ Watch out for dead-ends. Every page within your site should be linked to your home page. Include a navigation bar at the bottom of each page with intra-links to every area of your website and your email address.



Have an overall goal in mind that helps unify your web pages. Tie it together with a theme or idea.

Stick with easy-to-read fonts. Several new typefaces have been developed in the past few years that work particularly well for onscreen reading. Some favorites: Verdana, Myriad and Arial. (Don't use them all, though!) Funky fonts can be hard to read, but you can still experiment here and there.

Scan photos in a low-resolution JPEG format at 72 DPI, which is the universally accepted standard. If you're including a photo gallery on your site, break it up into separate pages with a maximum of five images per page, to keep loading times down.

Organize links and label them clearly. Choose pertinent links; don't link just because you can.

Your choice of objects to insert on a web page is virtually unlimited, because in *Web Studio* you can insert your own objects including graphics, photos, text, and sound files. These can be imported from your hard disk or a CD. Photos or other graphics can be acquired directly from a scanner or digital camera.

If you'll be using a lot of your own graphics or photos, *Web Studio* provides an easy way to access these files. The design gallery titled My Stuff can be filled with the contents of any folder on your hard disk that contains graphics files. After loading the gallery, thumbnails of all the images in the folder appear whenever you select the My Stuff tab. Graphics and photos in the My Stuff gallery are placed on a web page using drag-and-drop, just like all other objects in *Web Studio*'s design galleries.

One of the design galleries is aptly named Cool Stuff. Here you'll find a collection of special objects that really add pizzazz to a website. The Cool Stuff gallery includes side-scrolling text, time and date displays, a calendar, slide shows that display images you select, and lots of other fun stuff.

It's easy to apply sophisticated visual effects to text and graphics using selections from the Special Effects gallery. You can instantly add great-looking drop shadows to graphics or text and place fancy edges around photos. You can also posterize, emboss, or blur images, and apply numerous other effects to give your graphics a professional appearance.

The photo correction wizard in the Special Effects gallery is invaluable. By dragging this onto a photo or other graphic on a web page, you can dynamically adjust the brightness, contrast, hue and sharpness of that image. This is a quick and simple way to improve the quality of any less-than-perfect photograph.

Truly eye-catching results can be achieved by applying several different special effects to an image. If you decide you don't like the results of the special effects you've applied, you can restore the

The Cool Stuff gallery includes side-scrolling text, time and date displays, a calendar, slide shows, and more.

Web Studio has a built-in browser that allows you to **preview your website** as it will appear on the Internet.

image to its original appearance using *Web Studio*'s unlimited Undo feature. Undo allows you to step backward through your design, reversing the results of each action you've completed.

Surfin' the Easy Way

Hyperlinks are used to guide web surfers around your site and to other websites you think may interest them. Links get attached to objects on your web pages, so when viewers click on the linked objects, they're taken to the location you've specified.

Creating links between the different pages of your website is easy in *Web Studio*. The Links gallery will display a list of all the pages you've created. To establish a link between pages, you simply click on a page name and drag-and-drop it on a button, graphic or text entry. You'll know a link was created because a box will appear around the object (or text will change color). The box won't be visible when your site is viewed on the Internet. In addition to links that guide people within your site, you can create links that direct viewers to other websites. You can also create links to your email address to make it easy for people to send you messages.

At any time, you can also preview your website. *Web Studio* has a built-in browser that allows you to view your website as it will actually appear on the Internet. The appearance of some objects, like animations and objects from the Cool Stuff gallery, will be different in a browser than in the design environment. Previewing your site lets you see your site as others will see it and allows you to test your links to make sure they lead to the destinations you intended.

Once you've previewed your website and are satisfied with the results, it's time to post your site on the Internet for the world to see. *Web Studio* includes a utility that automatically uploads your site for you. You fill out a short form with information about your host, and *Web Studio* automatically generates HTML code and transfers all the required files.

The tools required to create dazzling websites are no longer in the sole possession of those whose native tongue is computer-ese. With *Web Studio* as your escort on the information highway, your journey into website design will be a joyride.

Dan Rabin is a freelance writer based in Boulder, Colorado.

CHOOSE A FONT: You don't need to be a pro to add custom touches to your website.

Find a Good Home

Once your website is finished, you'll no doubt be anxious for the world to view your masterpiece. So what do you do next? Your final task is to find a host who will provide you with a prime piece of Internet real estate. But how do you find a host and how much will it cost?

Finding a home for your home page is easier than you may think. There are a number of Internet businesses that would love to provide you with a generous chunk of server space at no charge!

Just who are these gracious hosts, and why are they so nice? Some of the more popular players include Talk City, Fortune City, GeoCities, Homestead and Tripod. They make money by selling space to advertisers whose ads pop into view when the sites are visited.

The best way to learn more about these service providers is to visit their websites or online communities. While you're there, check out some of the websites created by their members. You'll find them organized by subject matter (computers, kids, hobbies, music, travel, etc.).

When you sign up with one of these hosts, you'll be allotted 5 – 20 MB of server space for your site. Unless you plan to include your entire album of wedding photos, this should be quite sufficient. Other amenities may include free e-mail, chat rooms, message boards, and even downloadable clip art collections. Hey, just because they're free doesn't mean they're cheap!

- **Talk City (www.talkcity.com)**
- **Fortune City (www.fortunecity.com)**
- **GeoCities (www.geocities.com)**
- **Homestead (www.homestead.com)**
- **Tripod (www.tripod.com)**

WEB STUDIO

www.sierrahome.com	
Developer	Sierra Home
Format	WIN95 CD
Price	$49.95
Order #	70613
Phone	1.800.757.7707

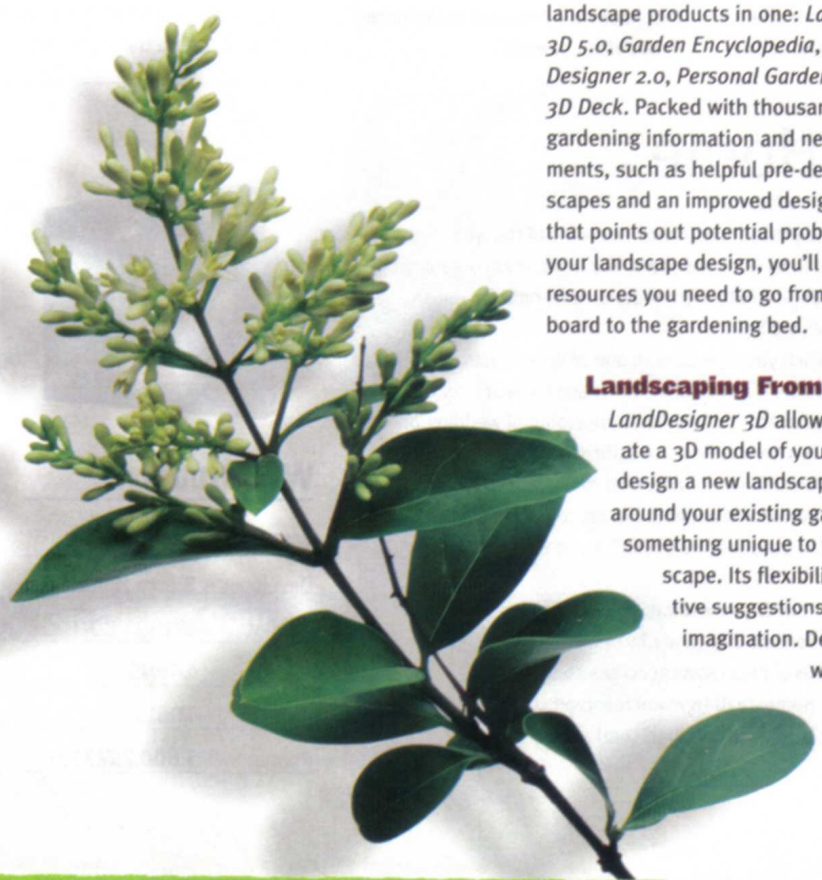
Designing your Botanical Sanctuary

Design, enhance and beautify your garden to suit your home and lifestyle right on your PC

By Kylisa Lundstedt

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW? Is it a whimsical design of flowers, shrubs and trees? Is it a barren tract of dirt with a plant here and there? Formal or informal? Something in between? Whatever it is, there's one gardening tool any gardener—from the aspiring green thumb to a horticultural expert—can use to create or improve any landscape: Sierra Home's *Complete LandDesigner 5.0*.

A comprehensive garden and deck design center, *Complete LandDesigner 5.0* is five landscape products in one: *LandDesigner 3D 5.0*, *Garden Encyclopedia*, *Photo LandDesigner 2.0*, *Personal Garden Planner* and *3D Deck*. Packed with thousands of ideas, gardening information and new enhancements, such as helpful pre-designed landscapes and an improved design review that points out potential problems with your landscape design, you'll have all the resources you need to go from the drawing board to the gardening bed.



Landscaping From Scratch

LandDesigner 3D allows you to create a 3D model of your home to design a new landscape scheme around your existing garden or add something unique to your landscape. Its flexibility and innovative suggestions cater to the imagination. Design wizards walk you right through each creative process. Examine what your back yard would look like with a bulb garden, cherry trees and a stone walkway. With a simple mouse-click, see what that garden would look like next fall or winter, or even two years from now. You can explore the endless possibilities of landscaping and view the potential appearance of your design at any future time or season.

Once you've created your unique landscape, click on the design review sheet icon to allow the computer to evaluate your layout. "It will point out problems like plants situated under others," explains David Elliott, *CLD 5.0* producer. "A plant that likes full sun planted under a tree that covers it in shade too much every day won't work. *LandDesigner 3D* alerts you if certain plants are too close together or too close to the house or sidewalk, or if plants that are grouped together have different watering requirements."

The problems addressed are logistical difficulties that can be easily changed on the computer using the feedback and tips provided. Kirstin Garcia, a gardening enthusiast, busy mother of two and a member of the National Home Gardening Club, finds this feature essential. "I think it is such a great asset that could really save people time and money," Garcia says. "Imagine if you didn't realize you were planting a sun lover next to a plant that requires a lot of shade. I would sure appreciate being told that it wouldn't work before I spent the money on the plants and wasted that time in the garden."

So Many Plants, So Little Time

Once you find out what the potential problems are, use *Garden Encyclopedia*'s database to find plants that will work with the other foliage you have chosen. "It takes all the guesswork out of it since the computer does your homework for you," Garcia says.

Garden Encyclopedia features thousands of plants, vegetables, trees and shrubs, which are each displayed in full color photos. Each plant has an individual file card at your fingertips that details its attributes and gives you the correct pronunciation of its botanical name. This program makes choosing the perfect plants easy. It eliminates the mistakes often made by choosing a plant that requires sun exposure, soil acidity or climate different from where you live. Tips on organic pest control and disease prevention are found throughout this program, and informative demonstration videos show ideas on starting seeds, caring for your garden and choosing plants.

Stroll Your Virtual Garden

With your landscape designed, take a walk around to look at your creation in 3D. The 3D WalkAbout™ feature has been improved to make your experience as realistic as possible. "This program's lighting abilities have been greatly enhanced," Elliott says. "It is a very real way of showing realistic shadows, highlights, and various lighting effects."

"This is another great way to see what your yard is actually going to look like before you make the commitment to include specific plants, trees or shrubs," Garcia says.

While the WalkAbout feature is available only for full daylight viewing, you can select positions around your landscape to observe during various times of the day, which shows you different lighting that will occur, as well as the visual effect it will have on your design.

"You may want to look at the front yard from your front porch at 10:00 a.m., at midday, and again at 4:00 p.m., or look at your backyard in the late afternoon," Elliott says. "As you take the WalkAbout, there will be important views to you, such as through the kitchen window, from a chair in the garden, or from the front porch."

BEFORE AND AFTER: Once you've entered a photo of your home, add trees, plants, and hardscapes to your landscape and view them as they will actually appear. Not happy? You can start all over without tearing up your yard and emptying your wallet.

A Garden for All Seasons

SEASONAL DELIGHTS: Watch your garden evolve from season to season with the Growth Over Time and Seasonal Change features in LandDesigner 3D. It's a window into the future of your landscape.

You also can save these viewpoints and specify if you would like to see high-quality versions of them. Once the positions have been saved, you can ask the computer to "render these images in very high quality" in a batch mode. The computer then builds each image's lighting structure at the time of day you have selected. Once this process is complete, you can view these pictures as snapshots.

"I can't express how important [the WalkAbout] is," Garcia says. "I have endured experiences in my own gardening where I really liked how a tree looked in the morning, but its definition disappeared in the late afternoon shadow. I would have loved to have seen this transformation before planting it next to my house."

You can record a WalkAbout to play back later by clicking on the recorder icon found on the toolbar. After recording the trip around your house, you may realize that what you originally created is not the look you were attempting to achieve. Make some mental notes as you see these things, modify the landscaping, and record another walkthrough.

"The Personal Garden Planner is filled with helpful reminders that allow a user to remember when it's time to water the lawn, spray botanical pests, or weed the garden."

– DAVID ELLIOTT

You can then go back through your saved recordings and make modifications until you are absolutely happy with the outcome.

"The advantage is that as you modify the landscape, you can really see the changes," Elliott says.

Bring Out the Barbecue

Looking forward to spending long summer days outside admiring your masterpiece? The design possibilities in *3D Deck* are limitless, allowing you to create a deck that is any size and shape, with a wide variety of additions from which to choose. After formulating a logistically sound plan, take a look at your shopping list to find the supplies needed for your new deck, as well as an estimated budget. Better yet, the shopping list is automatically and continually updated to reflect necessary materials whenever you make a change of plans.

High-Tech Reminders

"The Personal Garden Planner is filled with helpful gardening reminders that allow a user to remember when it is time to water the lawn, spray botanical pests, or weed the garden," explains Elliott. "For example, you can set up the program so you are reminded every three days to water your lawn between the months of May and September."

The main menu includes standard, helpful hints dealing with installing storm doors, cleaning out gutters, pruning roses, or planting bulbs that you can pick and choose from to customize your calendar. "You can also create new reminders for your individual needs," Elliott emphasizes.

"The maintenance calendar is a perfect addition," Garcia says. "It would be a huge help for me since it's often easy to forget some of these things."

Mix and Match

Scan or import a photograph of your home in *Photo LandDesigner* to use as the actual background to create your dream landscape. Simply use the mouse to click and drag images of plants, trees, outdoor furniture and more onto your design to create your landscape. Have you dreamed of adding a vegetable garden or a cedar bench near your rose bushes? Find out exactly what those changes will look like before investing the labor and money.

The House Wizard for *LandDesigner 3D* has been improved and expanded to include even more stock houses and shapes to replicate your unique home. You can now choose from a greater variety of new doors and windows, and you can manipulate these objects on your home image much more easily to create a very realistic picture.

Once you create your dream deck with every feature you could possibly imagine, you can then import that deck directly into your *LandDesigner 3D* design. This feature can save you the time you would spend duplicating the image and creates a more realistic, accurate picture of what you would be landscaping around.

The textures have also been enhanced to show greater detail and give a more realistic feel to hardscapes such as wooden fences, garden furniture, brick walkways and iron lampposts.

"Everything in this program looks so realistic I feel comfortable basing my decisions on what I see on my monitor," Garcia says.

We Are Family

Once you've finally completed your landscape redesign, get up on the Internet and share your helpful hints and tips with other garden enthusiasts. Here are a few web resources Sierra Home recommends for intellectual gardening exchanges.

- Arboriculture Online **spectre.ag.uiuc.edu/~isa/**
- Don't Panic, It's Organic **www.invisiblegardener.com**
- The Bug Store **www.bugstore.com**
- American Fern Society **www.visuallink.net/fern**
- Garden.com **www.garden.com**

Visit **www.sierrahome.com** for the latest gardening techniques and landscaping resources to make your PC gardening investment an even stronger one.

Lending a Helping Hand

"I think this program is a necessity for anyone who is going to do any landscaping at their property, whether it is a major project or simply adding some new foliage," Garcia says. "It is a big time and money saver that gives you endless opportunities to use your creativity in designing new landscaping or updating your existing landscapes. This is a huge investment for your home for just a little bit of money."

So as the weather improves and you begin to feel the itch to go outside and get some dirt under your fingernails, get some help from *Complete LandDesigner 5.0* before you venture into your garden bed or make a trip to the local garden center. You'll feel confident you're creating the botanical paradise you always dreamed about—and you're doing everything right the first time.

Kylisa Lundstedt is a Seattle-based freelance writer.

HIT THE DECK: Looking for the perfect spot for that new hot tub? 3D Deck gives you the guidance and suggestions you need and even compiles the shopping list.

COMPLETE LANDDESIGNER 5.0

www.sierrahome.com	
Developer	Sierra Home
Format	WIN95/98 CD
Price	$49.95
Order #	70729
Phone	1.800.757.7707

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Play three challenging golf courses in *All American Golf* featuring TrueSwing, the most realistic shot control available. Or, hook up with a lunker bucket-mouth for exciting fishing action on five photorealistic lakes in *All American Trophy Bass.*

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#STRBB *(Win 95 CD)*

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Lighthouse™
Antara®

Enter a parallel universe of invention and discovery to solve the challenging puzzles and mystery of *Lighthouse.* Then help restore the balance of power and master magical challenges in the ultimate fantasy role-playing world of *Antara.*

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Fast and furious arcade action! *3-D Ultra MiniGolf* gives you two nine-hole courses packed with exciting challenges. And *3-D Ultra Pinball: Creep Night* gives you rapid-fire pinball action with three manic tables.

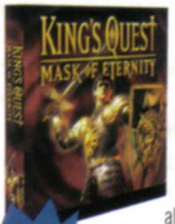
#ARCBB *(Win CD)*

FAMILY!

Easy Family Tree™
Print Artist™ Craft Factory™

Start your family history project with *Easy Family Tree,* the genealogy program that helps you organize all your family information. And kids ages five and up will have fun creating cards, banners, stickers and much more with *Craft Factory.*

#FAMBB *(Win 95 CD)*



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The best-selling adventure series of all time returns with a rich, immersive story, the latest 3D technology and camera control that lets you switch between first-person views and cinematic third-person views. It also adds combat sequences to the thought-provoking puzzles that promise to make this *King's Quest* as challenging as its predecessors.

#70090 Win 95 CD **$49.95**

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In 1984, Roberta Williams introduced the first *King's Quest* adventure. That game, and the six adventures that followed, set new standards for adventure games. Now you can get all seven *King's Quest* adventures in one package together with three additional Roberta Williams hits: *Mixed-Up Mother Goose Deluxe, The Dagger of Amon Ra* and *The Colonel's Bequest.* That's 10 games in all!

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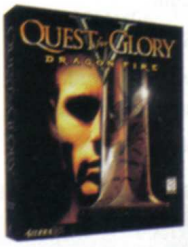

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Torn from the pages of ancient Greek mythology, *Dragon Fire* combines the best elements of role-playing with pulse-pounding, real-time action. Set in an amazing 3D realm, the newest *Quest for Glory* takes you on a journey fraught with peril, mystery and enchantment. Join the quest as Thief, Warrior, Wizard or Paladin.

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Battle across the universe as a Terran operative, Martian rebel or Cybrid death machine in the game that delivers the future of explosive mechanized combat! Deploy HERCs, tanks and fliers as you hunt your mechanized prey across the vast landscapes, fortified bases and war-ravaged cities of an engaging 3D world. Includes 45 highly detailed missions, explosive graphics, over 30 combat vehicles and advanced multiplayer options that let you create your own game server.

#83675 Win 95 CD **$49.95**

Starsiege™ Tribes

Eleven hundred years have passed since the final EarthSiege. Hundreds of tribes are scattered across the galaxy. Join them in the oldest struggle of all—the battle for survival. Features eye-popping 3D terrain, with seamless movement between interior and exterior spaces. Includes push-button access to network and Internet play. Create your own server for up to 32 players and tackle scripted missions, or use the built-in mission generator to create your own multiplayer challenges.

#83667 Win 95 CD **$39.95**

Half-Life™

Half-Life is the most acclaimed action game of all time, with intricate environmental challenges, a rich story line and frighteningly intelligent adversaries that add up to a new kind of first-person challenge—one that demands you use your weapons and your wits. An advanced graphics engine features 24-bit color (with 3D acceleration) or 16-bit color. Skeletal animation creates the most fluid and intricate motion ever seen in an action game. *Half-Life* is so alive, so intelligent, so real, you'll swear it has a pulse!

#70365 Win 95 CD **$49.95**

Worldcraft™ Pro

Introducing a powerful new program that makes first-person game level design fast and easy for experienced level designers as well as for those just getting started. *Worldcraft Pro* is so powerful, it was used for the creation of *Half-Life*. Includes support for *Quake II*, *Hexen II* and *Half-Life*. A texture browser makes it easy to use a library of image textures while a preview mode makes it easy to see the results of moving objects.

#70493 Win 95 CD **$49.95**

Aces® Collection Series

Get six complete Aces challenges. Includes the original all-time classic *Red Baron®*, plus *Aces of the Pacific®*, *Aces Over Europe®*, the original *A-10 Tank Killer®* and *Silent Thunder®: A-10 Tank Killer® II*. This special collection also includes the gripping WWII submarine simulation *Command: Aces of the Deep®*. That's more than $200 worth of combat games, all for under $30.

#76280 Win 95/DOS CD **$29.95**

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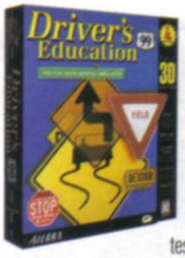
#70477 Win 95 CD **$39.95**



Driver's Education™ 99

Now learning to drive can be safe, fun and easy with 70 extensive lesson plans and thousands of real-life test questions. You'll learn driving preparation, defensive driving skills and traffic laws for all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia. Includes a complete 3D driving simulation that features realistic driving conditions.

#70490 Win 95 CD **$29.95**

Pro Pilot™ 99

Fly six civilian aircraft, each rendered with a photorealistic instrument panel and an absolutely lifelike flight model. Detailed texture-mapped graphics include dozens of cities and millions of elevation reference points throughout North America and Western Europe. Features all-new 3D-accelerated graphics, a new pop-up operator's handbook, new instruction for novice pilots, interactive Air-Traffic Control and on-board GPS to make this the most realistic flight sim available.

#70482 Win 95 CD **$49.95**

Best of Sierra Volume 1

Here's an opportunity to experience six of Sierra's best-sellers. Includes *Print Artist 4.0* with 10,000 graphics, the incredible stock car racing thrills of *NASCAR® Racing 2*, the thrilling adventure of *Titanic: Adventure Out of Time*, the explosive combat of *EarthSiege 2*, the strategy challenge of *Caesar II*, and the hilarious game show fun of *YOU DON'T KNOW JACK Volume 1*.

#70684 Win 95 CD **$39.95**

EarthSiege 2

NASCAR® Racing 2

Print Artist 4.0

Red Baron® 3D

Experience close-range WWI dogfighting at its best. Fly 22 different vintage aircraft in single missions or campaign play. An innovative mission generator produces ever-changing missions and a unique mission builder lets you create your own aerial challenges. This new, upgraded version adds support for 3Dfx graphics to create a world so real it requires an extra dose of courage just to step into the cockpit. More realistic textures not only improve the appearance of planes, buildings and explosions, but also create enhanced smoke, fog and glare effects. And improved cloud effects and ground terrain provide a more realistic sense of altitude and speed.

#70469 Win 95 CD **$39.95**

GET 2 FREE!
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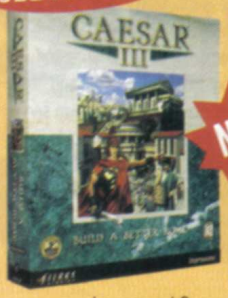
Order Direct From Sierra

STRATEGY!



Caesar™ III

NEW!

Build a better Rome! The sequel to *Caesar II* — one of the top-selling strategy games of all time — challenges you to create, rule and defend a Roman city of your design. As a provincial governor charged with expanding the borders of the empire, your mission is clear: Build cities, foster trade and industry, and bring glory to the emperor. You'll expand Rome's legendary network of roads, open trade routes and defend against barbarian hordes. Fail and you'll be fed to the lions. Succeed and you may be crowned Caesar. The all-new *Caesar III* features real-time strategic challenges with rich detailed graphics, enhanced music and sound effects, a wide variety of terrain to conquer and an all-new intuitive interface.

#70558 Win 95 CD **$49.95**

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Lead the fight to preserve the Union—or to gain independence for the Confederacy—in three incredible strategy games that re-create the experience of the Civil War. *The Great Civil War* includes the classic real-time strategy of *The Blue & The Gray*, the top-selling *Civil War General™* and the expansive *Civil War General™ 2*. That's three strategy hits for under $40.

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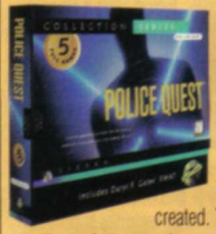

Police Quest® Collection

Walk the thin blue line with the most gripping series of crime games ever created. The all-new *Police Quest Collection Series* gives you five riveting simulations and adventures. You'll learn the laws, the weapons, the procedures and the meaning behind the badge as you hit the mean streets in a gritty world of crime, corruption and carnage. Includes the original *Police Quest: SWAT*.

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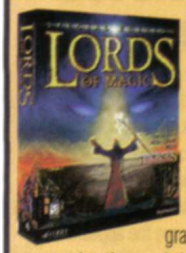

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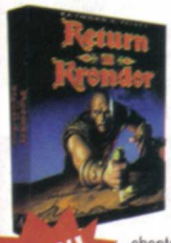

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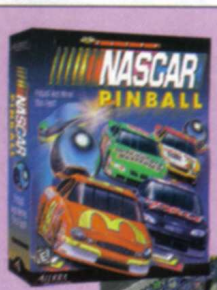

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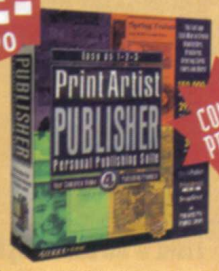

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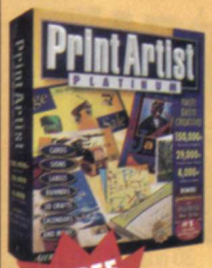

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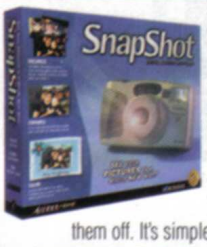

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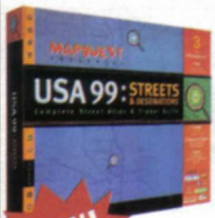

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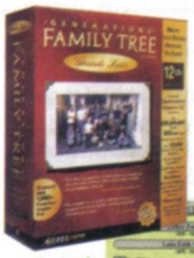

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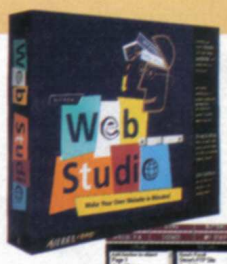

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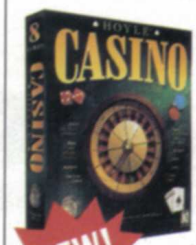

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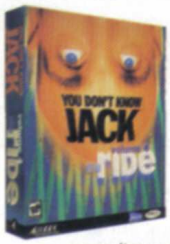

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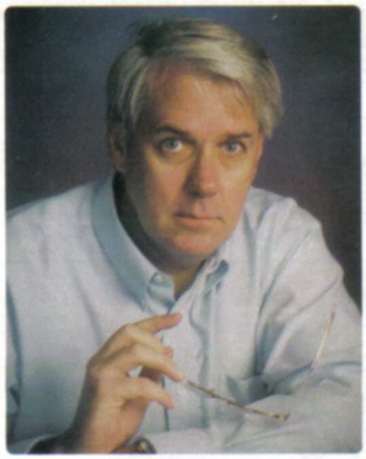
Where's My Game?

Mark Walker investigates why games miss their launch dates and discovers it's not business as usual

I LOVE TO GAME. I LOVE everything about it. I love browsing through the games on the shelves, dashing home with my new obsession, ripping off the shrink wrap (and not even taking time to throw it away), popping in the CD, and playing. I love everything about it.

But I don't like to wait. Yet sometimes it seems that we gaming types spend more time waiting for a piece of software that's missed its release date than we do playing. How come?



The answer isn't easy. It would be nice to blame the mythical "suits" (a title development teams throw on anyone who bathes regularly and owns a blue power suit) but the blame is not wholly theirs. Neither—as some pundits would have you believe—is it your fault for demanding too much bang for your bucks.

Imagine this: Joe Gamer says, "I want a good game!" The publishing company says, "You want a *good* game? Well, in that case, we'll have to delay the release six months but, remember, this is your fault. After all, you're the one who asked for a *good* game."

Face it, making a computer game is a 24-month endeavor—sometimes more, but rarely less. This fact is often overlooked, ignored, or impossibly hedged on by every element in the process. The results: delays, hurt feelings and dissatisfied customers.

Frequently the problems start before (way before) the first line of code hits a computer screen.

Scenario one, executive board room, John Doe Publishing:

EXECUTIVE ONE: "We have a hole in the release schedule 16 months from now."

EXECUTIVE TWO: "Well, action games are big. Let's plug in a first-person shooter."

EXECUTIVE ONE: "Done."

I'm not kidding. Certainly not all games are birthed this way, but many are. Executives, most of whom have never pounded a line of code in their lives, set a date based on the company's fiscal needs. No development team, no design document, no story boards, just a date. A date everyone knows will be missed.

But as I said before, the suits are often just the most convenient alibi. A game's development is fraught with time-suckers. Perhaps the most deadly of these insidious parasites is the "scope creep." A sponger that normally resides in the hearts of the development team, it has also been known to infest the marketing folks. Although most game parameters are set in the aboriginal design document (a 100-page missive that includes everything from the odds of connecting with a rocket launcher to the names of each character, weapon and location), the designer and programmers may decide to add fresh technology or unit capabilities in midstream. Hence the scope of the game increases, and the time it takes to complete the game tags right along.

Often these changes are for the better—for instance, well-conceived and artfully implemented technological or creative enhancements. Unfortunately, the creep all too frequently has little to do with the quality of the game, and more to do with the bullets on the back of the box. If real-time strategy game "A" has 30 levels, then real-time strategy game "B" must have 30 levels. It doesn't matter if "B" told an enthralling story in its 25 levels.

Face it, making a computer game is a 24-month endeavor—sometimes more, but rarely less.

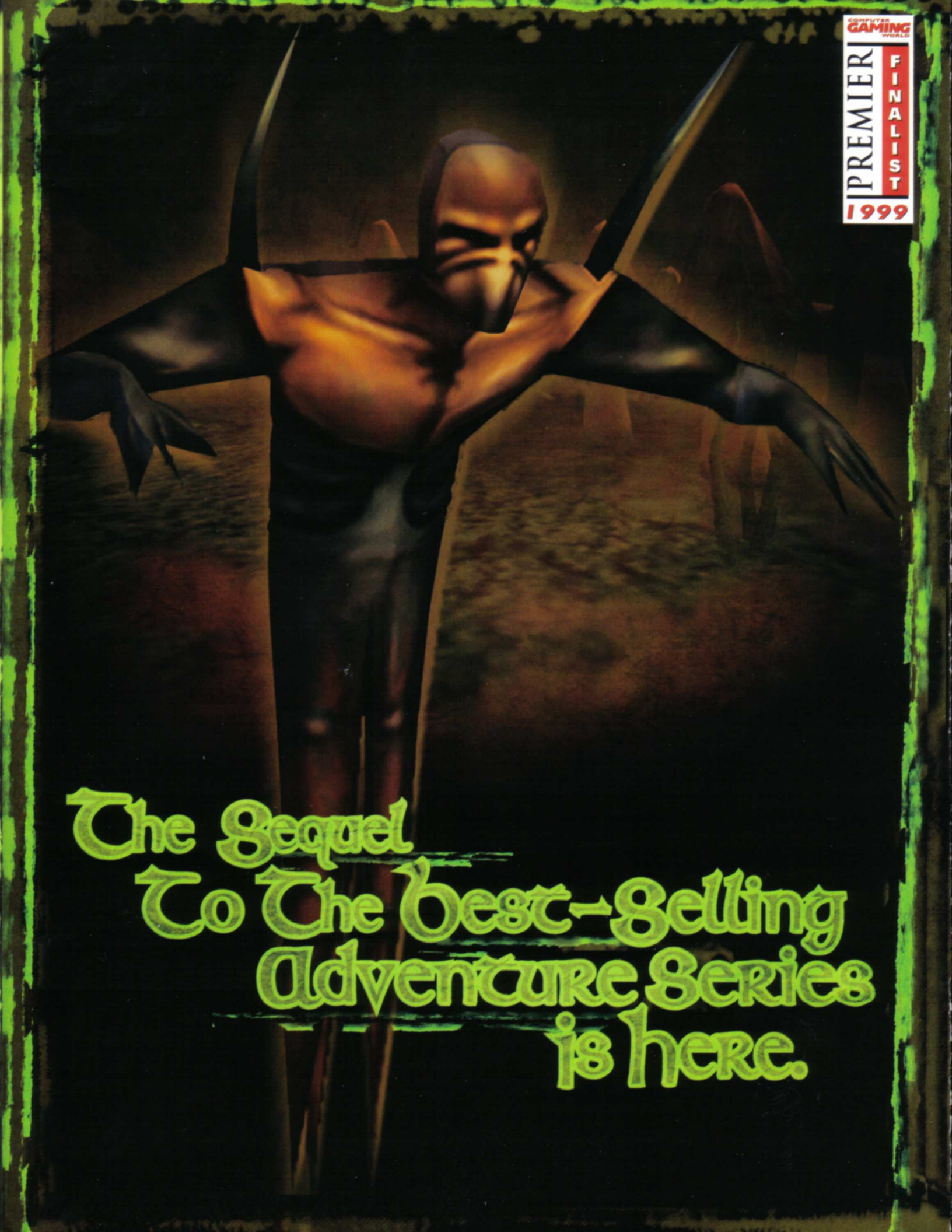
The marketing team wants five more levels—no matter how repetitive they may be.

There is, however, one other cause for delay that cynical gaming journalists often overlook. Perchance the software is delayed because the development team, the marketing team, publishers, art directors, and folks that clean the building at night want to make sure the game is as good as it can be. Sometimes delays are merely an indication of a team that will release no gaming wine before its time.

I'll wait for that.

I bet you will too.

Mark H. Walker is a noted electronic entertainment author whose How to Use the Internet *is in its third printing.*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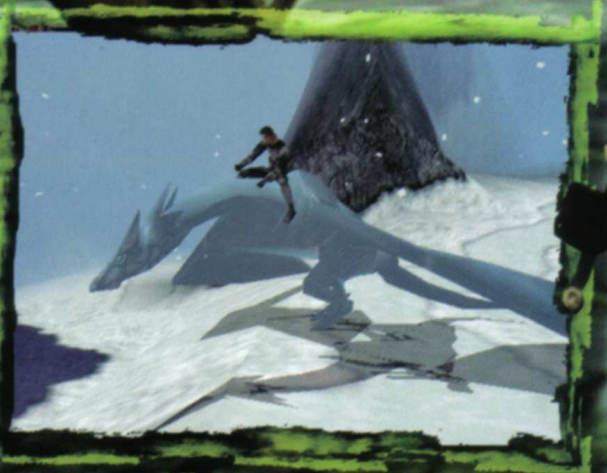

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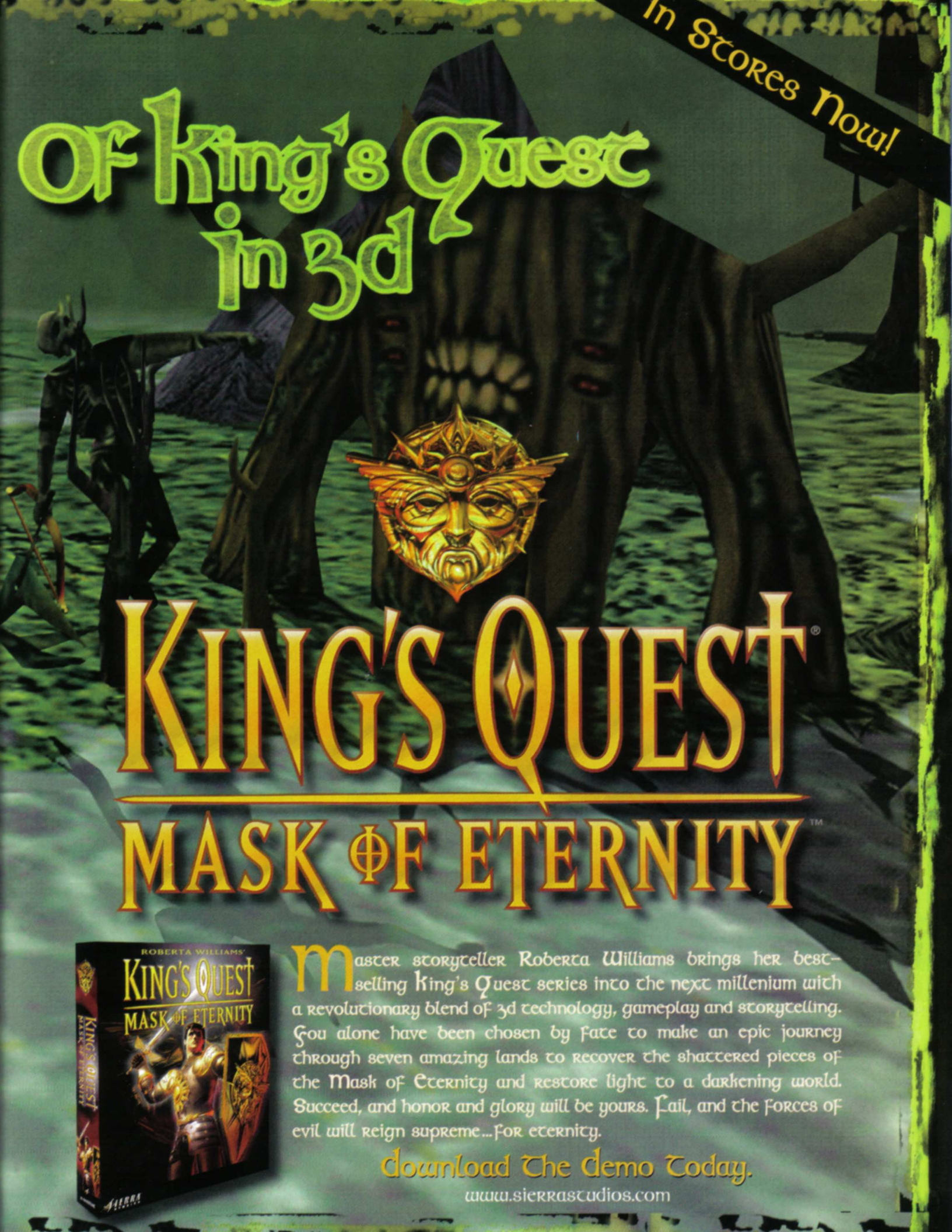
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