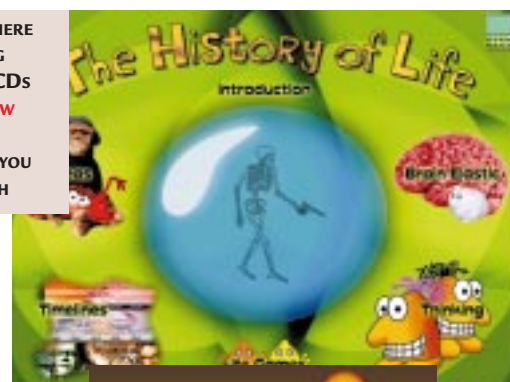


leisure lines

The games market has recently been flooded with superb offerings, and you won't be disappointed with any of the reviews in this month's *Screenplay* — they really are a selection of the very best. We have **HALF-LIFE**, **GRIM FANDANGO**, Settlers III, Gangsters — Organised Crime, Populous: The Beginning, and **STAR WARS: ROGUE SQUADRON**. If you think you may need a helping hand with your GCSE English exams this summer, take a

RIGHT SEE WHERE WE'RE COMING FROM IN THE **CDs** SECTION **BELOW** MIND YOUR LANGUAGE AS YOU LEARN ENGLISH



look at our comparison of revision titles in the *CD-ROMs* section.

Other reviews include IBM's new World Book and a CD taking you through the **HISTORY OF LIFE**. Titles in the *Kids* section are **CASTLE** from the new **FISHER PRICE** range, and Dorling Kindersley's The NEW Way Things Work. Learn about The History of Modern Computing in the *Books* section. Other titles reviewed are Competing on Internet Time and **INTERNET BASICS IN NO TIME**. If you love dance

▲ KNIGHT
FANTASTIC: FIND THE MISSING FIGHTERS IN CASTLE, THE LATEST KIDS' STUFF FROM FISHER PRICE

music and a free internet account sounds good, then the *Competition* page will be right up your street. The London nightclub **MINISTRY OF SOUND** has

▼ THE MAN (AND WOMAN) FROM THE MINISTRY: COOL PRIZES TO BE WON IN THIS TOTALLY SOUND COMPETITION

loads of goodies up for grabs, including subscriptions to its magazine, a copy of the new album, and T-shirts. MathSoft too is giving away software, especially for GCSE and A-Level students: forty copies of StudyWorks **MATHS AND SCIENCE**. A £20 book token is up for grabs in the **BRAINTEASERS** section, and you could be the lucky winner of a



new Chambers dictionary if you complete our *Prize Crossword*. And finally, alas, poor Oric: in *Retro*, Simon Collin reminds us of the rise and fall of the **ORIC-1**.

ETELKA CLARK, LEISURE LINES EDITOR etelka_clark@vnu.co.uk

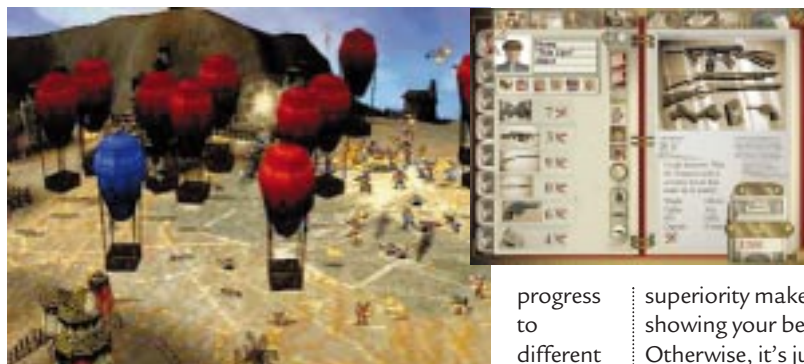
Populous: The Beginning

What a good graphics card is for: **conquering your enemy's** undulating territory.

This game makes you grateful for the fact that you lashed out on an extra fifty quid on a snazzy graphics card. Previous games from Bullfrog have been pretty impressive on the graphics front, but this one is truly superb. The graphics and sound serve to

create a very evocative atmosphere. Bullfrog has introduced a fully rotatable 3D world into this game, which you can zoom in and out of to see undulating territory over which you must take control. As a Shaman, it is your job to collect manna and develop powers that will enable you to conquer territories controlled by your enemies.

Populous: The Beginning starts off with a simple scenario that enables you to learn the basics of the game. As you



progress to different worlds,

new challenges are presented which bring the opportunity to use some of the more exciting features. As time goes on you will progress from training your braves as warriors and priests, to attacking the enemy via balloon and unleashing demons that swoop down and eat enemy tribe members alive.

Significantly, the scenarios in Populous: The Beginning are noticeably more difficult than those in Dungeon Keeper, a game I quickly grew bored

with. I spent seven or eight games trying to solve some of the puzzles in the new game, which made it a more enjoyable challenge.

This game's audio-visual

superiority makes it an ideal way of showing your beefy PC off to your mates. Otherwise, it's just a jolly good way to spend a Sunday afternoon.

DANNY BRADBURY

PCW DETAILS

★★★★★

Price £34.99

Contact Bullfrog 01753 546465

www.bullfrog.co.uk

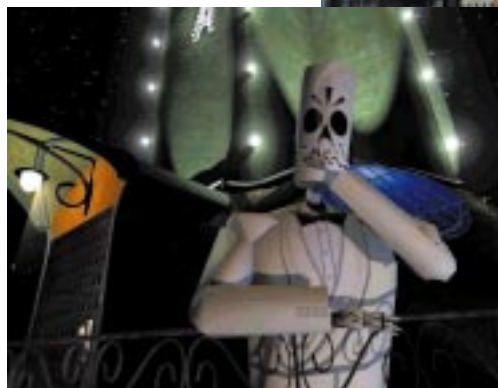
System Specification Windows 95/98, Pentium 133, 16Mb free RAM, 100Mb free hard-disk space, 4X CD-ROM drive.

Grim Fandango

Grimly fiendish fun based on ancient folklore.

Set in the land of the dead and based on Aztec folklore, in this game you are Manny Calavera, a skeletal figure armed with a scythe. Your job is to sell travel packages to help people in their four-year journey to the Ninth Underworld. Those who have been especially good qualify for a trip on the Number 9, a train that takes only four minutes to cross this land. When all of the good clients start going to Manny's

rival, Domino, and when the people who qualify for a trip on the Number 9 don't get one, it's up to you find out what's



going on. Control is via keyboard or joystick action: the mouse is not an option.

Lucas Arts has created another

winner here, a game that not only looks good but also has a truly brilliant plot. There are a couple of glitches, though.

Running into things turns Manny in a completely different direction, occasionally leading to him running onto the wrong screen. And when he passes objects of interest, he tilts his

head towards them, which can make it hard for you to line up with the object that you want to use. Grim Fandango is a real joy to play despite these niggles, however, and the tricky puzzles will keep you amused for hours. If you're an adventure-game fan, it's too good to miss out on.

DAVID LUDLOW

PCW DETAILS

★★★★★

Price £40

Contact Activision 01895 456700

www.lucasarts.com

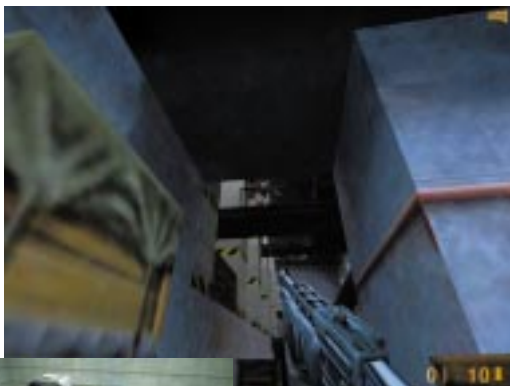
System Specification Windows 95/98, Pentium 133, 4X CD-ROM drive, 23Mb RAM, DirectX. (DirectX 6.0 is on the CD and must be installed before play.)



Half-Life

No half measures here as **nightmare creatures** threaten to destroy your world.

You are a Research Associate in Theoretical Physics at the Black Mesa Research Facility. An experiment involving the construction of a space/time portal goes awry, allowing various unknown life forms to leak through with catastrophic and truly horrific results. Adopting a first-person style, your ultimate aim is initially unknown. But through interaction with the various characters, you begin to realise what you must do. Advances on Quake 2's approach are skilfully grafted into the gameplay with scripted sequences occurring whether you're there or not. But your intervention may dramatically alter the outcome of the mission. Your enemies are deviously cunning and adversaries are allowed to evolve, with some even agreeing to team up with you against the monsters. The scenario is well thought out, with expert animation to enhance



the terrifying experience. The depiction of nightmare creatures from another dimension is truly scary.

Just when it all seems to be hopeless, seeping through on your radio headset come transmissions from a platoon of clean-up soldiers. Unfortunately, you and

all the surviving members of the research facilities are on the list of items to be cleaned up.

The beautiful landscapes and realistic motion are coupled with an excellent soundtrack styled to highlight the drama and atmosphere of certain scenes. With a dozen multi-player maps supplied on this CD alone, and further support and updates already in the pipeline, Half-Life may prove to be the new king of internet gaming.

IAN ROBSON

PCW DETAILS

★★★★★

Price £39.99

Contact Sierra 0118 920 9100

www.sierra.com

System Specification Windows 95/98/NT, Pentium 133 or equivalent, 24Mb RAM (32Mb rec.), 2X CD-ROM drive.



Star Wars: Rogue Squadron 3D

The force is well and truly with you in this **action-packed blast-fest**.

Short of fighting alongside

Ewan McGregor in the next Star Wars movie or employing the Force during Intel press conferences, my dreams came true when Lucas Arts first developed X-Wing for the PC. Natural evolution now brings us Rogue Squadron, the first of the Star Wars games to properly exploit 3D graphics accelerators.

General Rieekan briefs you on 16 new missions which take place between Star Wars: A New Hope, and The Empire Strikes Back. Luke Skywalker may have just destroyed the Death Star, but the mighty Empire is gathering strength for a determined all-out assault on the rebel forces. To save the Alliance, Luke and Wedge have assembled Rogue Squadron, 12 of the most skilled starfighter pilots in



the Galaxy. You fly A, V, X and Y-Wings along with Airspeeders in dogfights and air-to-ground combat against an enormous range of Imperial forces, including TIE fighters, probe droids and heavily armoured AT-AT walkers.

Gameplay is superb: you can get right into the missions, but serious effort is required to get beyond the first few. Like most Lucas Arts games, the graphics (supporting Direct 3D and Glide), sound

and attention to detail are excellent, although users with ATi 3D Rage Pro accelerators may need to install different drivers — the latest v5.23 drivers won't work.

If you ignore the Star Wars tie-in, Rogue Squadron is a fairly average PC 3D shoot-em-up. However, fans like me will absolutely love it and relish the most realistic opportunity yet to experience the Star Wars universe.

GORDON 'RED LEADER' LAING

PCW DETAILS

★★★★★

Price £39.95

Contact Activision 01895 456700

www.lucasarts.com

System Specification Windows 95/98, P166, 32Mb RAM, DirectX 6.0, 3D Accelerator, 2X CD-ROM drive. Supports Direct 3D and Glide.



Settlers III

Isn't it time you settled down and **built your own economy?**

Settlers, the third of a series, allows you to take control of a small group of shipwrecked people with enough wood, stone, tools and labour to start up a small colony. Your aim is to capture raw materials from the surrounding landscape and transform them from their natural lumpy state into something useful, like tools or weapons.

Essentially you have to build a thriving economy-in-miniature, including mines, saw mills, farms and bakeries, to make sure that everyone is fed, happy, and producing as much as possible.

The aim of Settlers III is to fully colonise the island your people have landed on. By building military structures and filling them with soldiers, you can expand your borders into the unknown.



At some point, though, you will end up hitting a wall of opposition in the form of a rival race. This will require conquering before you can fully achieve your goal.

Gameplay is exactly the same as in



PCW DETAILS

★★★★

Price £35

Contact Blue Byte 01604 232200

www.bluebyte.com

System Specification Windows 95, Pentium 100MHz processor, 32Mb RAM, 200Mb free hard-disk space.

the previous two releases, except you no longer need to connect your community with roads: your settlers are free to roam as they please. Beyond that, the graphics have changed and the obligatory internet multi-player option has been put in place.

Anyone who has never played the previous games but likes the idea of creating micro-economies for fun, will get a kick out of this.

Gamers who have played any of the other titles in

the series might be a little disappointed that despite the refinements, the game remains the same.

ANDY SHAW

Gangsters - Organised Crime

Gang warfare of a heavy kind as you make your mark with the mob.

Set in New Temperance, a Chicago-like town in 1920's prohibition, Gangsters is the strategy game where crime does pay. From extortion and intimidation to street execution and all-out bloody gang warfare, you are 'da boss' with the power of life and death over those you control. Your role as a new mobster is to become the city's crime overlord above three rival Gang Leaders. Each one starts off in a different quarter of the city and has the task of eliminating the competition.

The Gang Organiser is the strategy planning interface that attempts to recreate a world of gangland mobsters where you organise your teams, view city information and give orders to your



Gang. This is where your skills will be drawn upon to keep the 'business' running at a profit while ensuring your hoods are well looked after.

The Working Week is where you see the results of the orders, look for new targets and take immediate action against any intruders. Combining real-time action in a highly detailed isometric terrain, you

can watch eagle-eyed as your hoods terrorise the city for your gain.

With four fully interactive tutorials gently introducing you to the different aspects of this game, it can take a dedicated wannabe Godfather to wade confidently into the underworld. But the rewards are worthy of your efforts, with a highly inventive strategy approach and consuming animation drawing you further into the believable scenarios. With over 5,000 individual characters, Gangsters will provide hours of expert training.

IAN ROBSON

PCW DETAILS

★★★★★

Price £39.99

Contact Eidos

Interactive 0181 636 3000

www.eidosinteractive.com

System Specification Windows 95/98, Pentium 133, 16Mb RAM, 2Mb SVGA video card, 200Mb free hard-disk space, 4X CD-ROM, DirectX 6.0 compatible sound card. DirectX 6.0 included on CD.



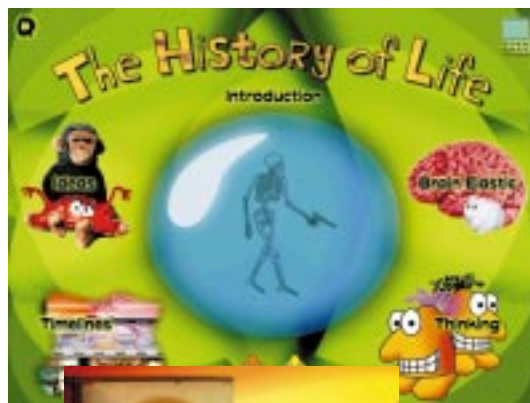
History of Life

Life on earth in pictures, music and animation.

History of Life is the sequel to the successful History of the Universe title from the same publisher. Targeted at an audience between 10 and 14 years old, it has a distinctive style and content.

As befitting a multimedia title, this CD is packed with pictures, music, sound effects and animations. But it isn't all song and dance. History of Life has some exceptionally well written pieces dealing with the various aspects of life on earth. You can begin the tour by studying the various theories about evolution: the piece on Charles Darwin goes into some detail aided by slide shows and animations.

Narration is mainly through an audio commentary with very few subtitles, but



this is not a problem as all of the topics are dealt with carefully and are not

rushed. There is a collection of quotes by famous scientists and philosophers, some of which, in the light of modern knowledge, are quite amusing.

The CD contains a Brain Elastic section with brainteasers. Some of the questions, like 'What is the point of sex?', may prove a bit too strenuous for youngsters. Still, the section is worth perusing. There are also two timelines, a quiz section and three games.

This multimedia CD is not a definitive guide. But after the contents have been exhausted, users can log on to related web sites and go through the material there. Altogether, well worth a try.

AJITH RAM

PCW DETAILS

★★★★

Price £19.99

Contact Ransom Publishing
01491 613711

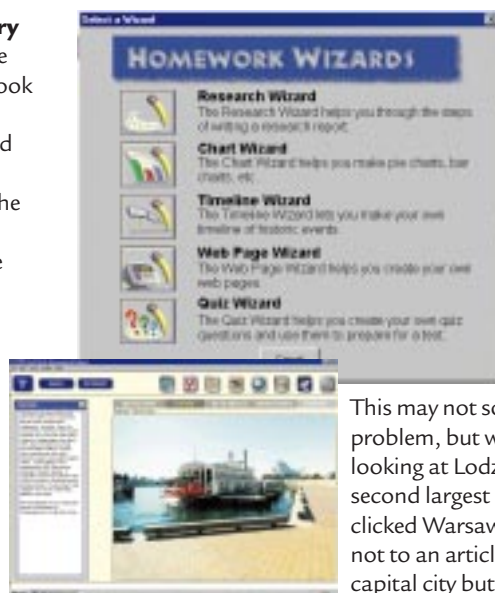
www.ransompublishing.co.uk

System Specification Windows 3.1 or higher, 486 DX, 8Mb RAM, 2X CD-ROM, Windows-compatible sound card and speakers.

IBM World Book 1999

Well, it's a pretty small US-centric world, if this **disappointing CD** is any guide.

Containing every article from the 22-volume World Book Encyclopaedia, this production promised a lot. The paper version is, after all, the biggest-selling print encyclopaedia in the world. I was a little disappointed with the uninspiring interface which had neither the appeal of Encarta nor the style of Britannica. I also found the lack of captions on street plans confusing and counter-productive. This is not always a problem if linking to a plan from an associated article, but if it's the result of a random selection from the 'Just Looking' section of the CD, then you can find yourself



somewhat lost. Hyper-linking is poor: double-clicking a word in an article links to the dictionary rather than related articles.

This may not sound like a problem, but when I was looking at Lodz, Poland's second largest city, and clicked Warsaw, we linked not to an article about the capital city but to the dictionary definition of

warsaw (*sic*) — 'a large grouper of the south-eastern coast of the United States'.

We reviewed the International Deluxe English Edition, which included not only the content of the original World Book

but also a virtual tour of San Diego, homework wizards and a collection of tools designed to help students compile charts, timelines and reports.

From experience of past issues of the World Book CD-ROM, I did have high hopes for this 1999 version, but I was disappointed. A valiant attempt, but it failed to live up to Encarta.

NIK RAWLINSON

PCW DETAILS

★★★

Price £49.99 (£29.99 for Standard Edition)

Contact IBM 0800 214887
www.worldbook.com

System Specification Windows 98/95/NT4 or higher, 486/66 or higher, 16Mb RAM, 39Mb hard-disk space, 16-bit sound card, 16-bit colour recommended, 2X CD-ROM drive. For online access you'll also need an additional 8Mb free hard-disk space, a modem and an internet connection.

Software for GCSE English 99: a comparison

Testing times are ahead for students of the written word: will these **revision aids** help?

Exam time is nearing and the pressure will soon be on. You're either a student feeling like you haven't learnt a single thing in five years, biting your nails to the quick and wondering how you're going to pull it off, or you're a parent on your knees every night, praying that your son or daughter will scrape through. Well, help is at hand. Here we have rounded up three of the latest software packages to help you work towards the grade you want in GCSE English.

Anglia Multimedia: The Essential Companion to GCSE English 98-99

This CD starts off by presenting an animated bedroom as a contents interface. Here you can run the cursor over objects that will present you with a topic. Main features include sections where you can assess yourself and obtain tips for revision and for taking the exam, a To Do list that you can personalise to create your own revision schedule, examiners' views on passed exams, links to related web sites and mock exams.

In the Tutorial section you can brush up on your reading, writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar. The writing tuition is especially good as it helps students develop their structure, style, characterisation and dialogue.

This program does not benefit from background music or a voiceover for guidance. It feels impersonal, and would be impractical for students with bad eyesight and who rely on sound to study. Also, all sections, apart from the contents interface at the beginning, looked and felt dull and uninspiring — not what you need when you're trying to study.

Europress: GCSE English

The whole feel of this software is colourful, bright and lively. You are able to set the difficulty level to one you are comfortable with, and like the other titles it includes sections that aim to help you improve your reading, grammar, punctuation, spelling and writing, but



LEFT ANGLIA MULTIMEDIA'S ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO GCSE ENGLISH **LEFT, BELOW** EUROPRESS GCSE ENGLISH **BELOW** GSP'S REVISE FOR GCSE ENGLISH



with voiceovers accompanying you all the way. The writing section is particularly impressive, showing the student many different examples and explaining their purpose and audience. For instance, a character explains the tabloid newspaper from a journalist's point of view. She says that gossip and disasters sell newspapers, and conveys the pressure of having to find stories and meet deadlines.

This program is, however, very slow to run, with images lacking clarity and some activities not working. Although this is a fun and witty way to revise, I was a little suspicious about its reliability. The price is very agreeable, however.

GSP: Revise for GCSE English

I wonder how TV personality Sarah Greene feels about being portrayed as a midget cartoon character in this English revision software? She is merely a selling point for this CD-ROM.

GSP's packaging is very impressive, so I expected this CD to be jam-packed with fun ways to revise. To begin, you are asked to enter the realistic grade you expect to achieve and then the program sets you tasks to steer you towards this grade — a good idea, as the individual can work at the pace that best suits them. But the tasks set are mundane and very

similar. The user chooses a topic — for example, imaginative writing. Instead of then being introduced to the many types of writing in this category and the importance each one may have, you are given brief guidelines on how to write a story, and a choice of essay titles, then Sarah pops up with a board saying 'You have 30 minutes to

complete this task'. How dull. You may as well be at school. Overall, a very limited piece of software.

ETELKA CLARK

PCW DETAILS

★★★★

The Essential Companion to GCSE English

Price £45

Contact Anglia Multimedia

01603 615151 www.anglia.co.uk

System Specification Windows 3.1 or later, IBM 486 DX/66MHz, SoundBlaster-compatible sound card.

★★★★★

GCSE English

Price £19.99

Contact Europress 01625 855000

www.europress.co.uk

System Specification Windows 95 or 98, PC 486 DX-66MHz, 8Mb RAM, Windows-compatible sound card.

★★★

Revise for GCSE English

Price £19.95

Contact GSP Software 01480 496575

www.gspltd.co.uk

System Specification Windows 3.1 or 95, IBM-compatible PC, 486/66MHz processor, 8Mb RAM, 16-bit sound card.

Fisher Price Adventures: Castle

Activities and games galore as you **search the castle** for six missing knights.

Part of the Fisher Price Great Adventures series, this is an animated collection of puzzles and games that uses the popular QuickTime engine, making it colourful and fast as well as fun. It is best described as a virtual activity centre, with its different rooms and gadgets. The point is to rescue six knights hidden in the castle's many chambers, but along the way there are puzzles to work out and some very good games. There are areas for your child to be creative, such as designing a coat of arms, building a castle and creating a comic book. These areas use a palette of pre-drawn parts that the child can drag and drop on to a canvas, and the finished product can be printed out. Guides are on hand to talk the child through the various parts of the



game, although some heavy, fake Scottish accents

might cause comprehension problems for the youngster. In addition, the mouse pointer used to navigate around the castle and pick up objects is hard to see if you are running the game at a high resolution.

Parents will have fun assisting children, although Dad should resist the urge to take over when playing Shoot The Castle. One feature I liked was the gratuitously funny King's Cannon section, which has no educational value whatsoever but allows you to fire a variety of objects from a large gun. Try the penguin, the chicken and, my favourite, the cheese.

BARRY DE LA ROSA

PCW DETAILS

★★★★★

Price £14.99

Contact Cendant Software
0118 920 9100

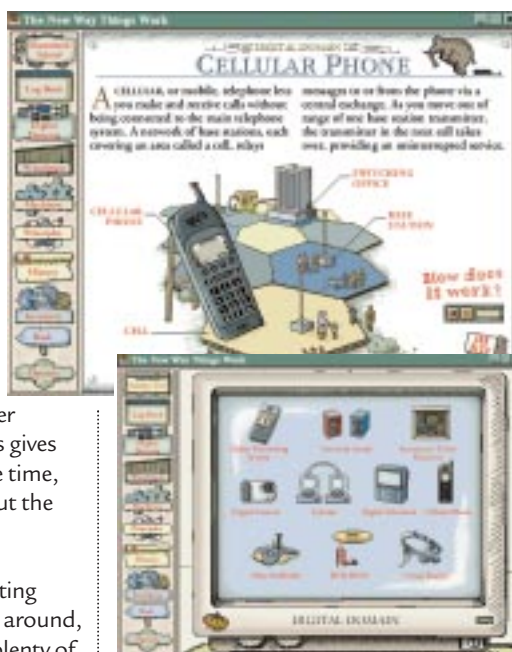
System Specification IBM PC compatible, 486/66MHz or faster processor, 6Mb free hard-disk space, 4X CD-ROM drive, SoundBlaster-compatible sound card, 256-colour, 640x480 display.

The NEW Way Things Work

The development of **human technological achievement**, presented in a friendly fashion.

This CD-ROM marks the tenth anniversary of the original book on which this program is based. This updated edition presents more animations, gadgets and gizmos explaining and demonstrating the history and workings of 21st century technology. Stretching back to Antiquity, and up to our Silicon Age, the development and progress the human race boasts can be mapped by the user through the History section. This gives examples of the inventions of the time, and provides brief synopses about the principles of how they work.

The user interface is an interesting landscape for the user to wander around, with clear links throughout and plenty of references to other related subjects. Cartoon sketches and small animations bring to life the words and explanations for each subject and item that is covered. With the personal log book, the user is



able to gauge where they have been and what sites are left to visit. Additionally, personal progress can be measured by participation in the brainteasers on offer in the Mammoth School House, where

the user's knowledge acquired from this CD-ROM is put to the test. Mammoth Movies add a nice touch, giving animated snippets of information. However, they end abruptly and leave you wondering, without direction, which movie you should watch next in order to further the explanation.

The New Way Things Work is a nice but unspectacular production. It's a fairly good resource for children aged eight upwards to learn about the principles and history of technologies, and the inventors behind them.

HELEN FORTGANG

PCW DETAILS

★★★★★

Price £29.99

Contact Dorling Kindersley
0171 753 3488
www.dk.com

System Specification PC: 486 DX/33MHz+, minimum 8Mb RAM, 8-bit sound card, 256-colour at 640x480 pixels (16-bit recommended), 2X CD-ROM.

Rules of entry

These competitions are open to readers of *Personal Computer World*, except for employees (and their families) of VNU Business Publications, Ministry of Sound and MathSoft. The Editor of *Personal Computer World* is the sole judge of the competition and his decision is final. No cash alternative is available in lieu of competition prizes.

How to enter the MoS competition

To enter the MoS competition, just call **0870 909 8200** and order a free starter pack, and tell the operator that you are entering the PCW competition.

How to enter the MathSoft competition

1. Via our web site at www.pcw.co.uk, or
2. Write your name, address and daytime telephone number on a postcard or on the back of a sealed envelope. Mark your card 'PCW/MathSoft Competition' and send it to: P.O. Box 191, Woking, Surrey GU21 1FT, to arrive by Friday 26th March 1999.
• Please state clearly on your competition entry if you do not wish to receive promotional material from other companies.

Win a Ministry of Sound internet account!

The famous London-based nightclub, **Ministry of Sound**, has launched its own ISP internet connectivity service, ministryofsound.net, and an internet content subscription service within its existing web site ministryofsound.co.uk.

Aimed at existing online dance music enthusiasts, ministryofsound.net will provide subscribers with traditional internet access facilities such as free technical support, 20Mb of free web space and access to a VIP area of the enhanced ministryofsound.co.uk web site.

The VIP area of the site contains exclusive premium material including competitions, daily news, and Live Real Audio streaming mixes from the world's greatest DJ talent. The existing web site includes daily editorial covering dance music, club fashion, music technology, travel, and lifestyle issues. Ministry of Sound has simultaneously launched a **Digital Record Label** allowing

amateur dance music enthusiasts to publish their music on the internet and so bring it to the attention of the professional music industry A & R executives.

The subscription fee for three months' connection to ministryofsound.net is £12.50 (ex VAT) and £10 (ex VAT) each month thereafter.

♦ **Five PCW readers** can each win a free internet account for a year, plus a year's subscription to *Ministry* magazine, a copy of the new album, *Clubbers Guide to Ninety Nine*, and a Ministry of Sound T-shirt.



Win a copy of MathSoft StudyWorks!

Exam time is fast approaching and GCSE and A-Level students must be quaking in their boots at the thought of the ordeal ahead. But for anyone preparing to take maths and science exams, **MathSoft International** has come to the rescue. The company is giving 40 PCW readers the chance to win a copy of the latest version of its popular **StudyWorks** series, worth £24.95 each.

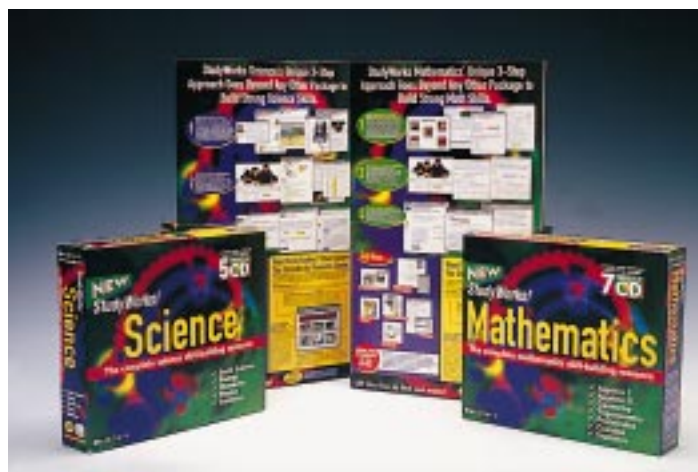
The series comprises **StudyWorks Mathematics and Science** titles. Both are ideal study aids for students taking GCSE or A-Level exams, as they contain a wealth of information.

Unlike competing products, the geographical examples used in StudyWorks are interactive, so students can input their own figures into sums or equations. This way, they can develop a fuller understanding of the topic. Students also benefit

from the facility to design graphs, pie charts and other graphical representations that help to support their work.

♦ **Forty PCW readers** have a chance to win a copy of StudyWorks Mathematics and Science in this great competition.

➔ For details of how to enter these competitions, see the panels on the left of this page.



Tangerine dream

The Oric-1 tasted the **fruits of success** but, as Simon Collin remembers, the rot soon set in.

Back in the early eighties, the computer industry trifled briefly with fruit. Apricots and Apples are well known and documented, but was there ever a pear or banana? Unlikely. There was a Tangerine however, and this company provided the core of a brash, low-cost home computer that arrived, with much advertising and unlikely backing from British Car Auctions, in 1983.

Tangerine was heavily involved with the Prestel online information service and designed the Microtan range of computers. These designs were part of the Tandata offshoot of Tangerine that was sold off to make way for a software company, Tansoft (the glimmer of a family name might begin to be apparent). Tangerine continued to work on hardware designs and soon came up with a Prestel-capable computer that also provided its own computing power; other Prestel units were often rather dumb display terminals.

To move these designs into production, Tangerine set up the Oric company and worked towards producing a home computer that was Prestel-capable, cheap, powerful and business-friendly. The Oric-1 was born. Oric had plenty of time to watch the mistakes of the other major players in the home computer market. The company could have noted the supply and quality control problems that dogged early Sinclair Spectrums and the BBC Micros. Unfortunately, Oric did not.

Oric had plenty of time to watch the mistakes of the other major players...

The Oric-1 was launched at a grand party in early 1983. The computer was roughly the size of a Sinclair Spectrum, had a clicky keyboard with rather small keys and was priced aggressively at £129 for a basic 16Kb model. This unit had a 6502 processor running at 1MHz with up to 48Kb of RAM as standard or 64Kb via a clever bit of bank-switching control software. The Oric-1 had teletext-style



▲ **ONE TO WATCH: THE ORIC-1 COULD HAVE BEEN A GREAT HOME COMPUTER, BUT ITS SUCCESS TURNED SOUR**

colour graphics functions built-in with 240x228 pixel resolution. To provide audio effects, three channels of sound were available together with a BBC-style white-noise generator that buzzed and hummed unless, as a real techno-music guru, you knew how to control it.

Initial sales of the Oric-1 were very impressive, with first orders of 30,000 units from individuals hoping for delivery by Christmas. Details of high-street stores taking up to 200,000 units were printed and the Oric-1 seemed on a fast-lane to success. Unlike the competition, the Oric-1 was also a success outside the UK — notably in France, where good distribution ensured excellent sales. What could go wrong? Unfortunately, supplies of the ROM chips were delayed and deadlines slipped.

Not a great start after all. Budding programmers could get their hands dirty with a built-in version of Basic, but as there was no real resident editor, correcting mistakes was a pain. If you wanted to load a game or business software, the only initial was a cassette-port socket. This cassette port was fitted as a short-term solution with promises of a real, high-capacity disk drive unit very soon. The disk drive never arrived and the cassettes were often hard to load, a fault later blamed on the tape duplicators rather than the hardware.

The result was thousands of cassettes being

returned to Oric from the high-street stores that stocked the computer.

As well as the disk drive, Oric also promised a modem, moving the computer towards the more serious, business end of the market. Neither of these appeared. Instead, there was a flurry of games, assemblers and expansion boxes.

After a couple of years, the company received a fresh injection of capital and produced the Atmos computer. This included an updated ROM, better keyboard and yet more promised add-on products. This time, the micro-disk drives did appear, after a certain delay. And from this point on, the Oric history turns into an epic. A rival company with a similar name started in France; both promised bigger, better Oric computers. No computers were launched; legal fights started and then the receivers moved in.

The Oric-1 sold well but was not a qualified British success. The company had time to study the problems and pitfalls of the competition, had a reasonable product with a few unique features and, if it had delivered all it promised, would have produced a great home computer that could have been the start of a great range. □

books

Internet Basics in No Time

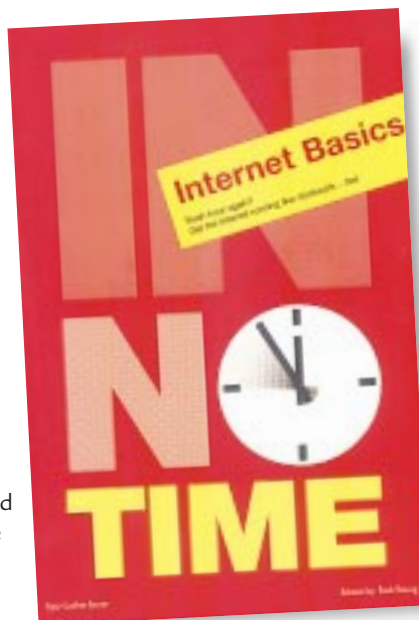
With the internet being the huge growth area and buzzword that it is, more and more people are signing up to use it. But for the uninitiated, this can be a daunting and difficult task: how the internet works, and how you can learn to get the most from it, can leave you floundering. Into this vacuum comes Ingo Lackerbauer, with this book written in plain English.

He starts off with a brief history of the internet and a quick overview of the principles that make it a reality. This lucid and non-patronising section quickly

brings the reader up to speed on how the internet is made up. It also has some much needed information on relatively obscure topics such

as the meaning of IP addresses.

With those basics out of the way, the book moves on to focus on its main point — connecting to and using the internet. From this point on, the author has had to make some basic choices as to which software the reader will be using. Lackerbauer has decided to stick with Windows 95/98 and Internet Explorer. While these choices take the Microsoft approach, it is really the



most efficient way to provide the required help. He then proceeds to explain the chosen program in a systematic fashion. These lessons are assisted by detailed screenshots of the programs. In this way, you can compare the results you see on your screen to those in the book. You move from simply connecting to the internet, to browsing, downloading files via FTP, and installing video viewers.

Should you be an internet novice but are keen to learn, then you could do a lot worse than starting off with this book which covers the most important aspects of the world wide web in sufficient detail.

DAVID LUDLOW

PCW DETAILS

★★★★★

INTERNET BASICS
IN NO TIME

Author Ingo Lackerbauer

Publisher Prentice Hall
Europe

ISBN 0-13-977661-3

Price £12.99

A History of Computing

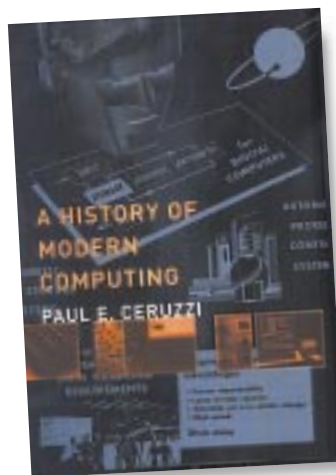
Spanning nearly fifty years, this new history of modern computing is a minutely detailed, engaging and insightful overview of the development of modern computing from the mid 1940s to the mid 1990s. Covering all the major events from their inception to the advent of the internet, Paul E. Ceruzzi has written an authoritative guide that will stand as a landmark.

Beginning with the ENIAC, the first machine truly deserving the title 'computer', through the work of John von Neumann and on to a treasure-trove

of machines that span the decades to the mid seventies when the personal computer became a reality, Ceruzzi at no time

allows himself to be overwhelmed by the information he is handling. He deftly recounts technical development, but tempers this with a discussion of the human contribution to computing history. Much of this has already passed into folklore. Each decade is analysed, and the machines, personalities and organisations described in detail, but detail that never becomes stale. The part played by IBM, DEC, Hewlett-Packard, Unisys and Texas Instruments, now household names, but then, new companies finding their feet in a new market, is covered in depth.

Much of the historical timeline is a



fascinating read. Acronyms come to life and fit into the overall picture of the computer's development. Once the age of the personal computer is reached, beginning with the Altair, the story becomes more familiar. Ceruzzi packs in the detail, providing a breadth of information that infuses the story with some excitement as each new development is explained. Names such as the TRS-80, Apple II and Commodore PET all come under the spotlight, and are put in their rightful place in the historical evolution of digital computers.

This is an highly readable and information-rich history of the development of the modern computer, but a history that doesn't forget the human contribution to this industry.

DAVID HOWELL

PCW DETAILS

★★★★★

A HISTORY OF MODERN
COMPUTING

Author Paul E. Ceruzzi

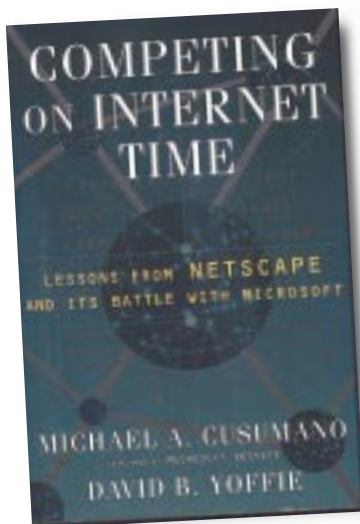
Publisher The MIT Press

ISBN 0-262-03255-4

Price £24.95

Competing on Internet Time

Netscape started its astonishing growth in 1994. In a short space of time, it became the world's fastest growing software company, completely dominating the web browser market. Then along came Microsoft to spoil Netscape's party. *Competing on Internet Time* takes a look at this battle in great detail. Rather than just making the book a simple profile of Netscape, the authors have aimed for something



tactics used — agile and ever-changing. The fact that the bulk of the book is based on interviews with Netscape staff, gives us a great insight into how Netscape works internally. Split into sections, starting from how the company was created, down to how both Netscape and Microsoft used various strategies to gain market

PCW DETAILS

★★★★★

COMPETING ON INTERNET TIME

Authors Michael A. Cusumano and David B. Yoffie

Publisher Simon Schuster

ISBN 0-684-85319-1

Price £18.99

rather more substantial. They have used the conflict to let us learn more about the decisions that both Netscape and Microsoft made. They name the 'Judo'

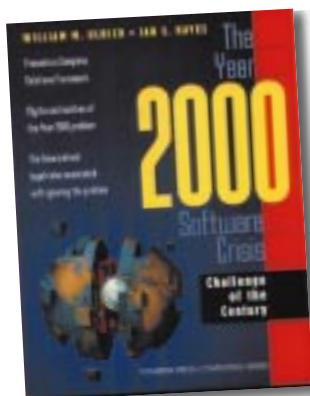
share, it's an involving read: every business could learn something here. Even minor details like the hiring policies of the two companies are analysed.

There are some important business lessons to be learnt from this book. But even if you are really just interested in the whole Netscape vs Microsoft issue, you should still find much to appreciate.

DAVID LUDLOW

The Year 2000 Software Crisis: Challenge of the Century

Aimed at those people who need an in-depth description of the issues involved in the millennium bug, namely IT professionals, this book provides guidance for implementing the various solutions. It starts



problem is, then presents an overview of the various strategies to be adopted. *Challenge of the Century* serves as a guide to the steps you should take; from identifying those systems that are affected, to controlling the changeover process. There is even a section on how to choose the correct tools for the job. As a guide to solving the problem of the Y2K bug, this

off with a couple of well written chapters explaining what the

book does serve very well. Unfortunately, the affected firms have less than a year left to solve the problem. For those that are severely affected, this book may have arrived a little too late.

DAVID LUDLOW

PCW DETAILS

★★★★★

THE YEAR 2000 SOFTWARE CRISIS: CHALLENGE OF THE CENTURY

Authors William M. Ulrich, Ian S. Hayes

Publisher Prentice Hall

ISBN 0-13-655664-7

Price £29.95

TOP

10

books

- 1

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- 2

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- 3

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Little iMac Book
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 £13.99

Prices include VAT on disks and CD-ROMs. List supplied by The PC Bookshop, 21 Sicilian Avenue, London WC1A 2QH. Telephone: 0171 831 0022 Fax: 0171 831 0443

h1>brainteasers

Quickie

What is the greatest number of 1 inch cubes that can be placed in an empty box 4 inches wide, 4 inches deep and 4 inches long? By the way, the answer is NOT 64.

This Month's Prize Puzzle

This month's problem will test your ability to manipulate data, rather than test your mathematical prowess.

Among the tools of my trade, I have three important files:

- A file of prime numbers
- A file of palindromic numbers
- A file of exact powers of numbers

I combined these files, removed duplicate entries, all values with more than 6 digits, and sorted the rest to give one sequential file.

What value, on this sequential file, is the one where the sum of all values before it is most nearly equal to the sum of all values after it?

Send your answer on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope, to: PCW Prize Puzzle - April 1999, P.O. Box 99, Harrogate, N. Yorks HG2 0XJ, to arrive not later than 20th April 1999.

We will also accept solutions by email. Send the solution only (no explanatory notes or program listings etc.) to jj.clessa@btinternet.com.

Winner of January 1999 Prize Puzzle

The annual crossnumber puzzle obviously appeals to many of you, and as usual attracted a flood of entries — well over 300. The winning entry, chosen at random from the pile, came from Mrs F

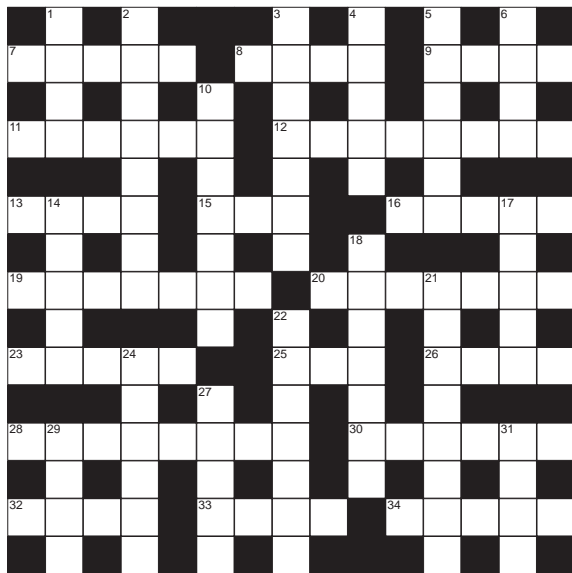
Littlewood of Kippax in West Yorkshire. Congratulations, Mrs Littlewood, your prize will be with you shortly.

Meanwhile, to the also-rans, keep trying, it could be your turn next.

JJ CLESSA

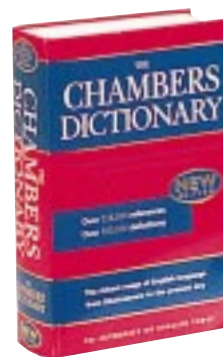
	3	8	4	5	1	5	5	7	
2	7	8	6	4	1	1	1		6
1	7		5	4	0	1	8	1	5
5	4	2	7	3	9		6	8	9
5	0	9	1		3	2	8	9	6
	1	8	5	1		9	1	8	1
4	8	0		9	1	7	1	3	6
8	3	9	2	6	5	0		1	6
2		7	5	0	1	9	9	8	5
	3	2	8	3	2	1	1	8	

h1>prize crossword



Each month, one lucky PCW crossword entrant wins a copy of the new *Chambers Dictionary*. This time, it could be you. Send your completed crossword to 'PCW April Prize Crossword', VNU House, 32-34 Broadwick Street, London W1A 2HG, to arrive not later than 26th March, 1999.

Please state clearly on your entry if you do not wish to receive promotional material from other companies.



THESE ARE THE SOLUTIONS FOR THE MARCH '99 PRIZE CROSSWORD PUZZLE.

ACROSS

7 Serial port 8 File 9 Imported 10 Sector
11 Attach 13 Volumes 15 Decrypt
17 Hot link 19 Buffers 21 Report 24 Dialog
26 Transfer 28 Word 29 Error codes
DOWN
1 Permeate 2 Dig out 3 Plot 4 Moody
5 Otis 6 Alcove 8 Factual 12 Capar 14
Ozone 16 Raffled 18 Nattered 20 Unison
22 On show 23 Storm 25 Glee 27 Ais

ACROSS

- 7 Computer's sound capability (5)
8 Tiny information parcels (4)
9 Command to look through code (4)
11 Net archive search program (6)
12 Digital protection against external peril (8)
13 Free and incomplete software version (4)
15 Net addressing system (abbrev) (3)
16 Ones' code accompaniment (5)
19 The 'U' of 15 across (7)
20 Booted up (7)
23 Packets of saved data (5)
25 Common extension (abbrev) (3)
26 Unwanted Net communication (4)
28 Accepted rules for Net communication (8)

- 30 Server in charge of others (6)
32 Net language (inits) (4)
33 Classic operating system (4)
34 Error signals (5)

DOWN

- 1 Cat's contented sound (4)
2 Repel (5, 3)
3 Drawback, danger (7)
4 Oust (5)

- 5 Idly surf (6)
6 Bucket (4)
10 Need (7)
14 Boredom (5)
17 Musical drama (5)
18 Small rivers (7)
21 Opposed (8)
22 Hold forth, speak (7)
24 Praises (6)
27 Rugby formation (5)
29 Speed (4)
31 Catch sight of (4)